

TOWN OF

# DEXTER



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2026

# ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS***

Thank you to all the Dexter community members who contributed their time and insight to this comprehensive planning process. This plan would not have been possible without the dedication and engagement of Dexter’s residents and the Comprehensive Plan Committee, all of whom provided valuable feedback throughout.

A special thank you to the members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee, who have worked diligently since January 2025 to guide the planning process — reviewing data, engaging with the public, and helping shape the community’s vision, values, and goals.

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## ***Special Thanks To...***

Dexter Historical Society  
Dexter Lakes Association  
2012 Dexter Comprehensive Plan Committee



## Table of Contents

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... 1**

*Preface .....3*

**INTRODUCTION ..... 5**

**POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS..... 12**

**HOUSING ..... 25**

**TRANSPORTATION..... 39**

**ECONOMY ..... 62**

**WATER RESOURCES ..... 74**

**NATURAL RESOURCES ..... 92**

**AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES ..... 111**

**HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES ..... 120**

**RECREATION..... 132**

**PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES..... 142**

**FISCAL CAPACITY AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN ..... 165**

**EXISTING LAND USE..... 174**

**FUTURE LAND USE PLAN..... 184**

**Appendix..... 197**



## Preface

Dexter's Comprehensive Plan is a community-made vision, grounded in the heartfelt values that bind the town together. The residents share a deep pride in Dexter's supportive, volunteer-driven spirit. This spirit shows in the hundreds of citizens who participate in town initiatives.

Civic participation is woven into Dexter life. The Fire Department is staffed by volunteer firefighters, and many local nonprofits run on volunteer leadership. For example, the Dexter Public Health Association which was founded in 1930 and governed by a volunteer board, provides home-care, wellness checks, and health services to residents of Dexter and neighboring towns. The parks and recreation programs bring neighbors together: the Town's Recreation Department offers roller-skating, sports leagues, walking programs, and other activities to keep youth and families active. Clubs and organizations like the Kiwanis Club, American Legion, Knights of Columbus, the Sunshine Club, and VFW post fill schedules with service projects, holiday parades, and community events. These volunteer-led efforts are the life of Dexter. They knit families and generations into a caring community fabric.

Wellness, in every sense, is a town priority. Dexter celebrates the outdoors and our environment by improving Lake Wassookeag's beach and trails. Residents and the Dexter Development Association have been collaborating to revitalize the waterfront with activities like the inaugural "Beach Bash" festival on Lake Wassookeag, featuring music and children's activities to draw families together. These efforts reflect our commitment to environmental health and community fun alike. Economically, Dexter is building on local strengths by supporting small businesses and regional partnerships. From senior center events to youth camps, Dexter also fosters a sense of wellness that is evident in inclusive programs that make sure no one in town is left out. (In fact, just this spring, the Town Council allocated grant funds to enhance youth summer programs, and to restore the lakeside bathhouse, noting that much of the work will be done by volunteers.

As this plan is presented, it is done with a confident sense of momentum. The town has already seen what the community can accomplish together. This Plan Figures a path for sustainable growth, emphasizing opportunity *and* community wellness. It assures policymakers, residents, and investors that Dexter welcomes new ideas and investments, but always in partnership with hometown values. Dexter is fortunate to have committed citizens and collaborative leaders.

In the pages that follow, you will find both practical strategies and the story of Dexter's collective aspirations. The town has shaped a vision that is professional in scope yet personal in spirit. It is a vision grounded in pride and rooted in volunteerism. Whether you're a neighbor, a public official, a local business owner, or someone considering a new venture here, know that Dexter's strength lies in its people. We invite you to join us in moving this vision forward. With shared commitment to economic, social, environmental, and physical well-being, our Town will continue



to thrive as a healthy, connected community. This Plan belongs to all of us, and with it, we stand ready to turn its goals into reality for Dexter's next decade.

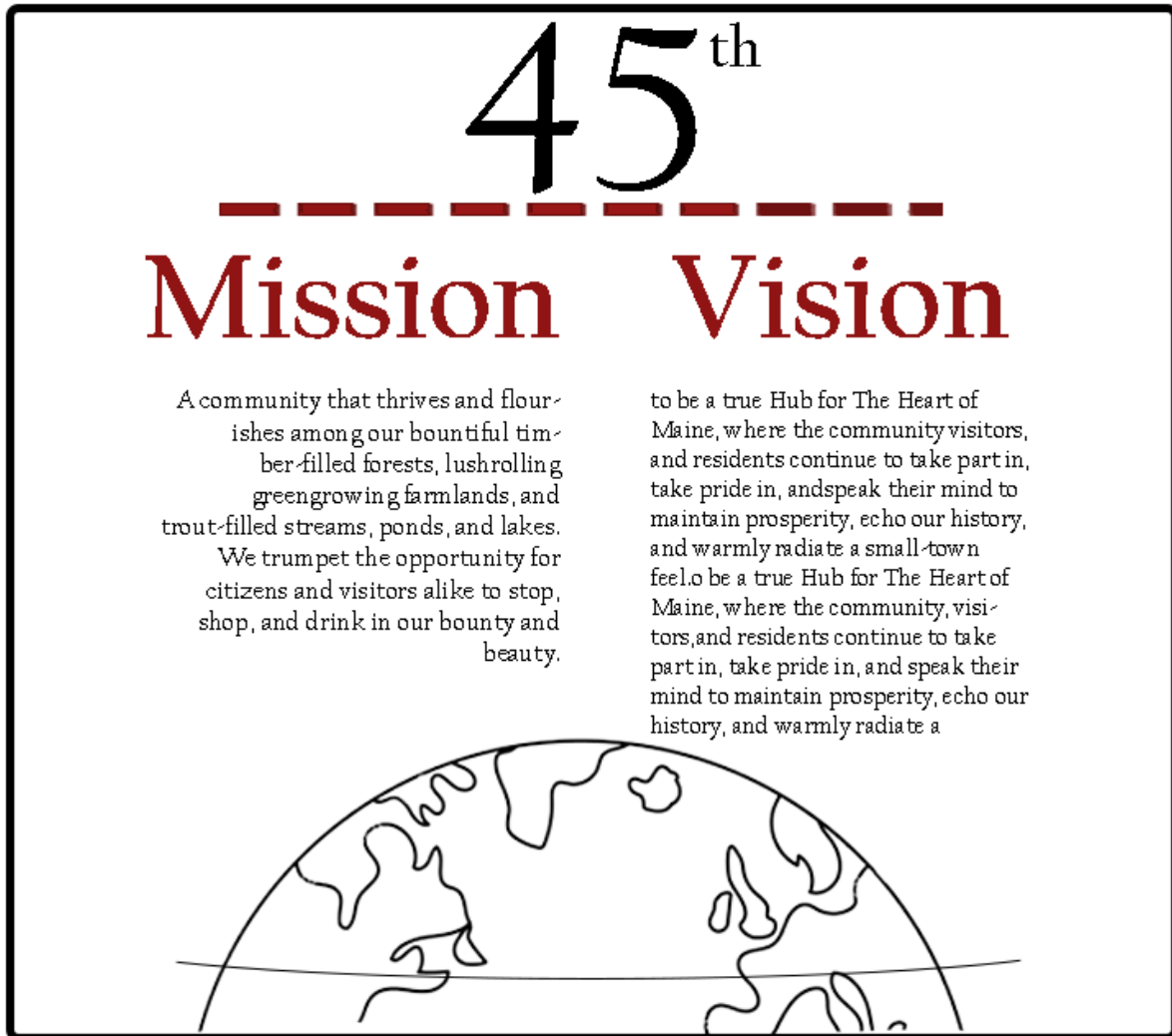


## ***INTRODUCTION***

A comprehensive plan guides the future growth of a municipality and creates a collective vision for local community and economic development. As a long-range plan, the document serves as an inventory of current community conditions and trends and identifies characteristics important for local growth. Adopting a comprehensive plan consistent with the State of Maine's Growth Management Act has numerous advantages including preferential consideration when applying for state grants, promoting local resource protection, and providing a foundation for land use related decision-making. Following a framework established by the State of Maine, the Dexter Comprehensive Plan contains chapters in which related goals, analyses, policies, and strategies direct future growth and emphasize community values.

- Population and Demographics
- Housing
- Transportation
- Economy
- Water Resources
- Natural Resource
- Agricultural and Forest Resources
- Historic and Archaeological Resources
- Recreation
- Public Facilities and Services
- Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan
- Existing Land Use
- Future Land Use





## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This document describes the current state of the town of Dexter, going over its people, history, physical structures, natural resources, financial situation, and other such relevant topics to guide municipal decision-making for the next decade. It goes over the strengths, opportunities, and problems facing the community, and helps develop a direction for the future.

This update integrates quantitative data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Maine State Economist projections with qualitative input gathered through a town-wide public survey and extensive volunteer-led committee work. These methods ensure the Plan reflects both technical realities and lived community experience. The result is a practical document intended to support consistent, transparent decision-making by municipal officials and regional partners.



This Comprehensive Plan presents a balanced, forward-looking strategy that connects community values with actionable policy by focusing growth where services already exist, expanding housing opportunities, and strengthening the downtown and lakefront as community anchors. Dexter is well-positioned to enhance affordability, livability, and economic resilience while preserving the qualities that residents value most.

## ***A PLAN FOR DEXTER***

Dexter is a caring, welcoming community on the banks of Lake Wassookeag and along the 45<sup>th</sup> parallel in western Penobscot County. Dexter's Comprehensive Plan reflects a community-driven vision for the next 10+ years of the town's future. It is a resource for elected and appointed officials, City staff, residents, property owners, and business owners. The planning process is led by a volunteer committee of local residents, drawing on Dexter's strong tradition of civic involvement. Dexter's identity as a small town is built on volunteerism and neighbor-to-neighbor support.

This plan represents extensive research and hours put in by a committed cadre of volunteer committee members who put Dexter first. It seeks to articulate and commit to a clear vision for the town and provide a blueprint for land use and community development by creating goals, policies, and strategies to guide decision-making. Written by the community, for the community, this plan analyzes past, present, and projected data trends to inform recommendations created through a broad range of public participation and building on research into every aspect of life in Dexter.

Recognizing the importance of economic sustainability, Dexter supports the growth of small businesses, professional services, and commercial centers both within and outside of its downtown. The town works to bring back local employment opportunities, acknowledging the role of schools and other institutions as major employers while fostering new businesses that provide services and jobs close to home. The hope of the comprehensive plan is to solidify the Town's efforts and make it that much easier for Dexter to move forward. Strategic development, including pedestrian and transportation connections, will help ensure that residents can access jobs, services, and community amenities efficiently.

The following 13 chapters provide a detailed look at current conditions in Dexter and how the town has evolved over the past decade. The insights gained from these chapters shaped community engagement, informed the vision, and guided the development of goals, policies, and strategies in this plan. It is our sincerest hope that you use this plan and join Dexter in its efforts to make a warm and welcoming place for all its visitors and residents alike.

## ***PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SUMMARY***

In the last update, over 230 Dexter citizens responded to a public survey. This broad public input ensures the Plan truly reflects community values.



Throughout, the tone of the Plan is optimistic but realistic. Dexter has long been known as a quintessential small Maine town, one where people look out for each other. That community spirit is woven into every chapter. Fostering entrepreneurship, enhancing the downtown, and promoting tourism and the arts, will create greater avenues for Dexter to diversify beyond its traditional industrial base. The Plan is firmly grounded in the town's strengths and challenges, and it encourages innovation that fits the town's scale and values. With the active involvement of volunteers and citizens at every step, Dexter will move forward as a vibrant, self-reliant community. Over the next decade, this Comprehensive Plan will guide Dexter toward a future where the caring small-town character continues to thrive alongside new economic and social opportunities.

## **REGIONAL COORDINATION**

As a small community, Dexter actively collaborates with neighboring municipalities to foster regional development and improve residents' quality of life. As it contains the head of the east Branch Sebasticook River, there are important ecological processes throughout the state that depend on Dexter's waters' environmental stability. As such, the town continuously monitors its waters with other communities to ensure the continuous health of its lake and waterways.

Without a major hospital, Dexter depends on EMS Services provided by Mayo Regional Hospital in Dover-Foxcroft. As the regionalization of EMS and fire continues to be the normal trend, regional coordination becomes that much more important. Dexter and surrounding communities are meeting to see what options may exist for continued coordination on this matter.

As for schools, Dexter collaborates with several local school districts, including MSAD 46, AOS #94, and Tri-County Technical Center (TCTC). Dexter's schools serve students from Dexter, Exeter, Garland, Harmony, Ripley, and Athens. TCTC serves Dexter Regional High School, Forest Hills High School, Foxcroft Academy, Nokomis Regional High, Piscataquis Community Secondary School, Penquis Valley High School, and Greenville Consolidated School. As far as education goes, Dexter is truly a regional hub, and strives to maintain its operation as such.

Partnerships and communication are the backbone of a stable society. With those partnerships, Dexter utilizes shared strengths to address common challenges, thereby building a more robust and resilient rural community. The town will continue to effectively manage essential resources, including education, emergency services, natural resources, and water. Given the necessity for and success of continued coordination of Dexter and its neighbors, no conflicting policies or strategies have been identified.

## **EVALUATION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The community will routinely monitor the degree to which future land use plan strategies have been implemented, the location and amount of new development, and the completion of capital investment projects. As new data become available over time, the existing data in the



Comprehensive Plan chapters will be updated to ensure its contents are current and relevant. To remain useful, the plan requires routine monitoring and periodic updates. An internal review should be completed every 3–5 years to refresh inventory data, assess progress on priority actions, and adjust short-term work plans as circumstances change. The Comprehensive Plan Committee (or successor) will lead that review and report its findings to the Select Board and Planning Board.

## ***SUMMARY OF THE PAST PLAN***

### ***Dexter Comprehensive Plan (2012)***

Dexter’s 2012 Comprehensive Plan set forth a broad vision for the town’s future. The plan addressed similar concerns revolving around land use, housing, economic development, recreation, and town celebrations. The 2012 plan successfully captured the town’s need to diversify from a single-industry past, protect natural assets, and strengthen downtown assets. Its effectiveness is now judged against realistic municipal capacities: for a small town that lost a major employer a decade earlier, success is incremental. The demographic floor held (no catastrophic out-migration), some adaptive reuse and small business formation occurred, and the town maintained the institutional capacity to revisit the plan (2018 assessment;). However, the plan did not produce a single replacement employer or a demographic rebound by 2020; large-scale industrial revitalization did not materialize in the decade after adoption. Local entrepreneurial projects and small manufacturing pilots represent partial realization of the plan’s diversification goals but remain limited in scale. Since then, broader trends have reshaped the context for Dexter. Maine’s post-2020 remote-work boom drew many newcomers to the state and tightened housing supply.

The 2012 Comprehensive Plan provided an appropriate strategic framework for Dexter’s recovery and evolution in the years preceding the plan that was written right after Dexter Shoe closed. Outcomes were mixed: the plan helped stabilize municipal decision-making and supported modest local initiatives, but it did not deliver a structural economic replacement of the shoe factory’s employment footprint. The 2026 update is therefore timely: it allows Dexter to (a) inventory completed actions, (b) reframe economic goals toward realistic asset-based strategies (downtown placemaking, small-scale advanced manufacturing, housing and infrastructure readiness), and (c) craft measurable implementation milestones and funding pathways to increase the chance of transformational outcomes.

## ***DATA***

The population and demographic data in this Plan come primarily from two sources in the U.S. Census — the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates. To calculate ACS estimates, the Census Bureau selects a random sample of addresses to fill out questionnaires. The 5-Year Estimates are calculated using data that is collected over a 60-month period. It should be noted that the 5-Year Estimates often have a large margin of error due to the small size of the



sample subset. For example, the 5-year estimates from the ACS count 76 people between the ages of 15-19 living in Dexter, with a margin of error around  $\pm 49$ . This is a large margin of error, even if the ACS remains one of the most reliable sources available for this information. It is noted that this Plan presents Census data, however the Census data is not reliably reflective of all trends observed since 2020, especially considering changing trends associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.





# POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

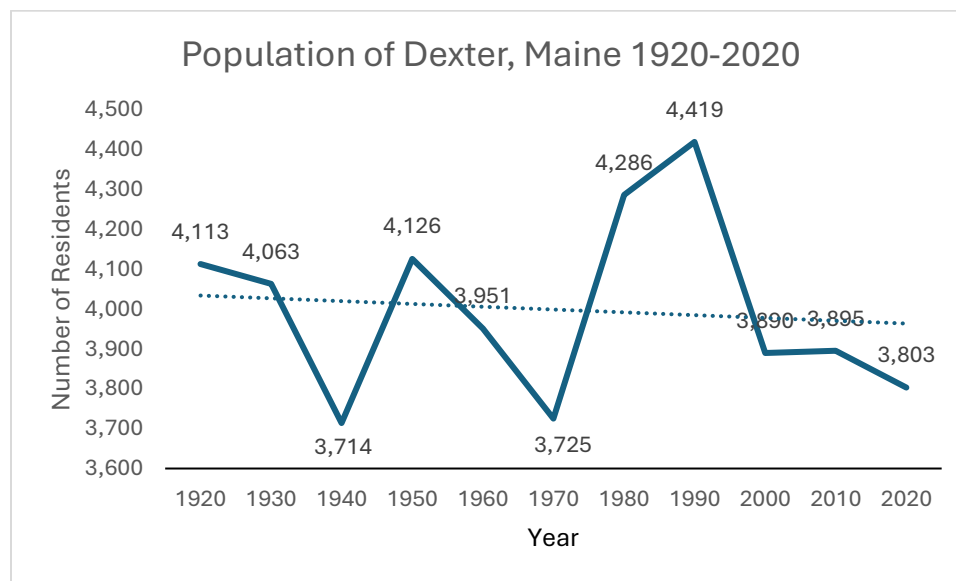


## POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

### Population Growth

Dexter is currently ranked as the 10<sup>th</sup> biggest town in Penobscot County, with a population of 3,812 in 2023.<sup>1</sup> Originally the land of the Penobscot Nation, European colonizers settled into the area in 1801 before incorporating it as Dexter in 1816, then as part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts before Maine was granted statehood in 1820.

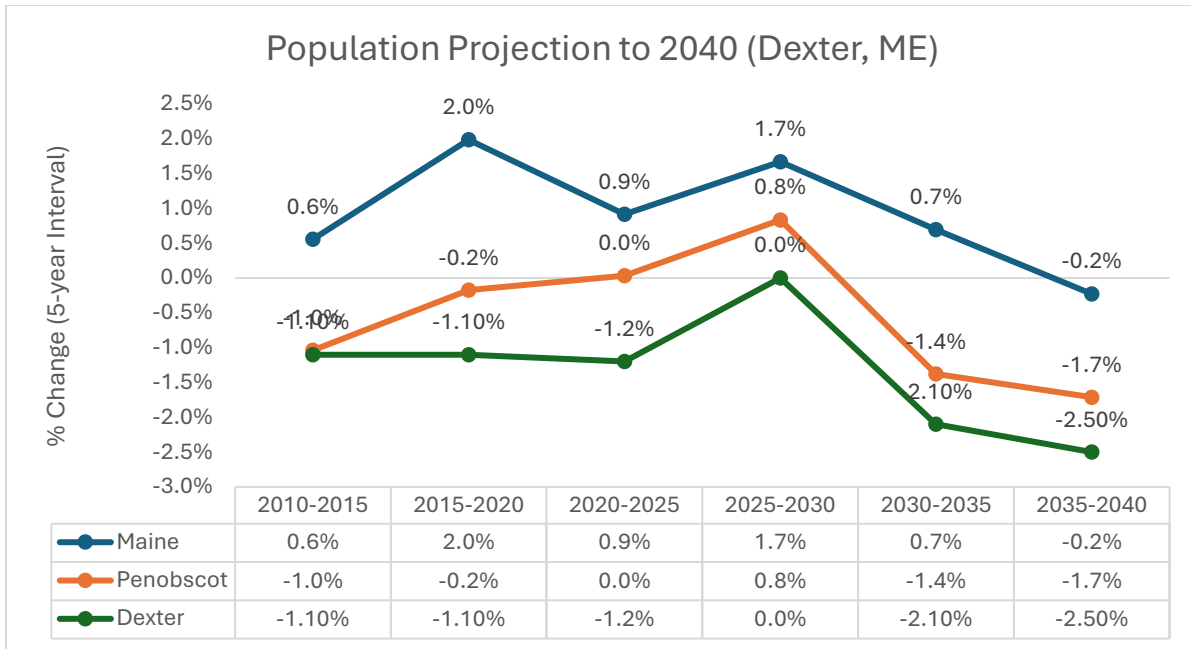
As seen in Figure 1.0, Dexter's population has seen some fluctuation over the last 100 years but has overall decreased by 310 people. This pattern and population shrinkage is in line with industrial changes seen throughout the state. Utilizing projections prepared by the State Economist, the population of Dexter is projected to continue its decline over the next 15 years (Figure 1.1). Between 2025 and 2040, the town is expected to decrease by an additional 6%. However, these estimates might easily be subject to change given an improvement in the local economy or an unpredicted surge in demand. The town may well see a different outcome than that anticipated in the below figure; the small size of Dexter makes it especially vulnerable to a population surge.



**Figure 1.0:** Population Fluctuation in the last century (1920-2020) in Dexter, Maine. Source: US Census Bureau.

<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau



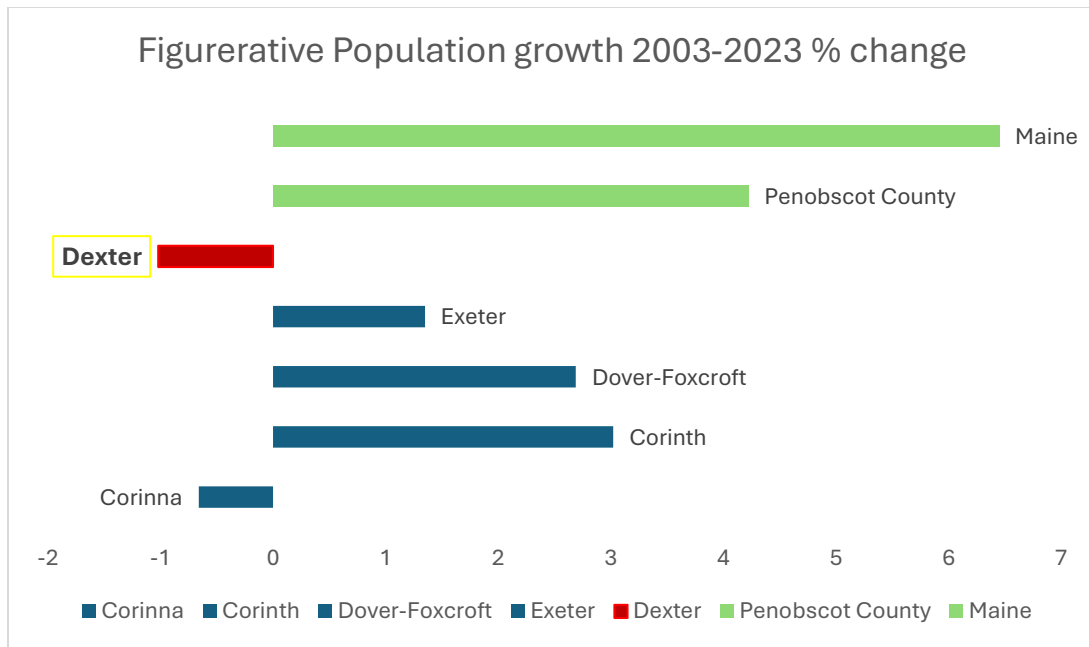


**Figure 1.1:** Projected population fluctuation of Dexter, Penobscot County, and the State of Maine within 20 years. Source: Maine State Economist

The next Figure below describes comparative population change in the last decade (2013-2023). While the state’s overall population increased by 6.45% (from about 1.31 million to 1.40 million) and Penobscot County grew by 4.22% (from around 148,759 to 155,312), Dexter and the surrounding towns present a more mixed picture. Dexter, in particular, dropped from 3,914 residents in 2003 to 3,812 in 2023, reflecting a 1.02% decrease. Seeing this trend may prompt Dexter to reevaluate its municipal budget priorities, invest in efforts to attract new residents or remote workers, and strengthen partnerships with neighboring towns. Dexter has the opportunity here if it does not want to focus on increasing its residential population, to prioritize events and programs that encourage civic engagement and strengthen community ties.

As Dexter is not a service center, and where its major employers do not create a daytime population that is larger than its resident population, there are no additional efforts needed to serve this type of population.





**Figure 1.2:** Comparative Population Growth of Dexter, Penobscot County, and the State of Maine in 20 years. Source: US Census Bureau

## Population and Housing

Following past and projected trends, it is likely that there will be less demand for housing, municipal, and school services. With fewer residents, there may be a surplus in housing units, leading to decreased property values and potential challenges in maintaining housing stock. Reduced population also impacts the demand for municipal services such as waste management, road maintenance, and public utilities. The town may need to reassess service levels based on the shrinking population, while also maintaining flexibility in case of a sudden shift.

If these projected trends do not come to fruition, life would become all the more difficult in Dexter as housing prices have already sky-rocketed, leading to more foreclosures and unaffordability within town. Where the bulk of the population is also aging (discussed below), there may be increased demand for senior-specific housing options such as assisted living facilities or accessible housing. Although it is important not to waste resources, for the sake of the future of Dexter's residents, it is even more important to plan for resiliency.

Additionally, Dexter experiences a seasonal influx of visitors—particularly those traveling to Lake Wasookeag, which only occupies 1.8 square miles of Dexter's 37.16 square miles.<sup>2</sup> This seasonal

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lakesofmaine.org/lake-overview.html?m=0227>

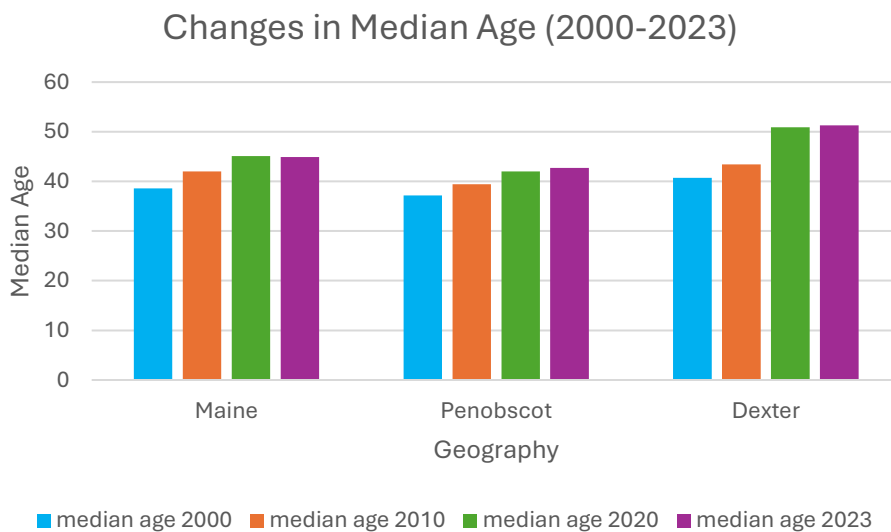


population typically includes tourists, vacationers, and outdoor enthusiasts attracted to the natural beauty and recreational opportunities in the area.

Dexter’s economy may benefit from seasonal tourism, but it is not solely reliant on it. The town currently has good infrastructure to support tourist activities that involve staying in town. This can be in part attributed to the Maine Red Hot Dog Festival they put on each year in August. Despite its sporadic tourist attractions, Dexter’s economic development strategies are geared to encourage year-round economic activity and community development.

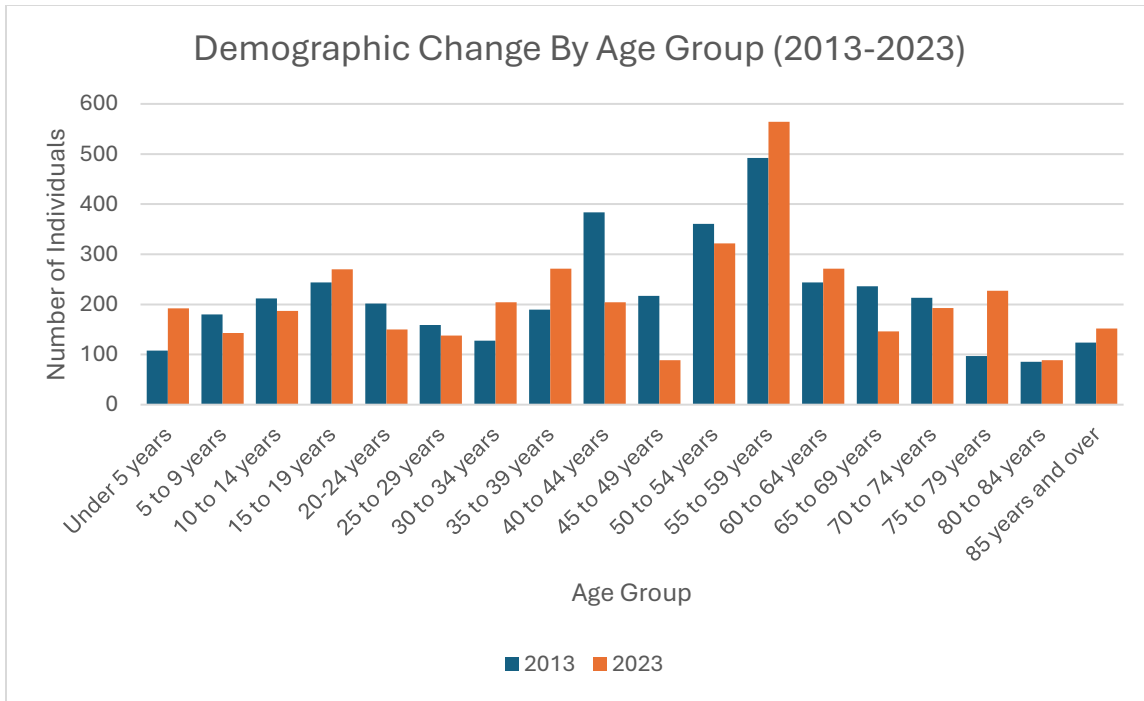
### Age Distribution

In addition to overall population decline, town residents have also been aging steadily. Over the past two decades, Maine and Penobscot County have seen steady increases in their median ages—from the high 30s in 2000 to the mid-40s by 2023—indicating an overall aging trend. Dexter, however, has experienced a sharper rise: its median age jumped from 40.7 in 2000 to over 50 by 2020 and sits at 51.3 in 2023. This pronounced aging in Dexter suggests that the community could face future challenges tied to an older demographic, such as a shrinking labor force, increased demand for healthcare services, and a need to attract younger residents or families to sustain long-term growth and economic vitality. This rise, however, is not dissimilar to other communities of a similar size in Maine. Knowing this can allow for greater collaboration on navigating the implications of these trends.



**Figure 1.3:** Median ages in Maine, Penobscot County, and the Town of Dexter within 20 years. Source: US Census Bureau





**Figure 1.4:** Demographic Changes in Dexter, Maine over a 10-year period. Source: US Census Bureau

In alignment with the characteristics of an aging population, Dexter’s older demographics have shown notable growth between 2013 and 2023, with the 75–79 age group more than doubling during that period. Meanwhile, many prime working-age brackets have declined significantly—most notably, the combined 40–49 age group shrank by around half—indicating a reduced presence of middle-aged families. Younger cohorts under 25 saw mixed changes, with slight gains in some brackets offset by decreases in others, suggesting that few new families with young children are moving into the area. These shifts collectively highlight an increasingly older population in Dexter, mirroring broader demographic trends and raising potential concerns about workforce availability, healthcare needs, and community sustainability. On a more optimistic note, Figure 1.4 also highlights that there has been an increase in children under 5 years almost equal to the decrease of the 65-69 cohort. This may indicate that people having children at older ages. Dexter may see more kids in the school system in the near future.

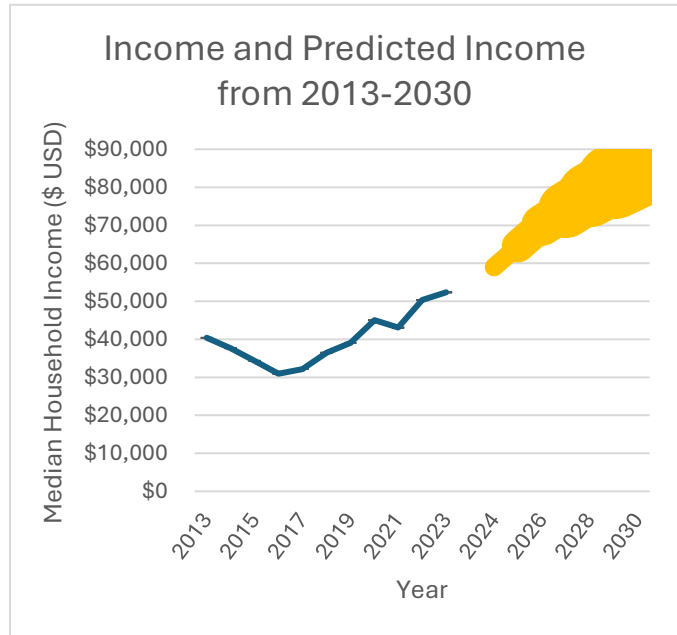
### **Income**

Between 2013 and 2023, Dexter’s overall median household income rose by \$11,982 - an increase of 22%. Year-over-year, household income has fluctuated, as seen in Table 1.0. Income in Dexter has been steadily increasing since 2016. Although U.S. Census Bureau data only shows data up to 2023, we may look a tad further with a regression analysis to predict potential income fluctuation. As the data are limited though, the standard deviation is quite high and becomes less reflective as we look further out. Still, it’s interesting to use this calculation to reflect on potential wage growth of the town over the next 5 years.



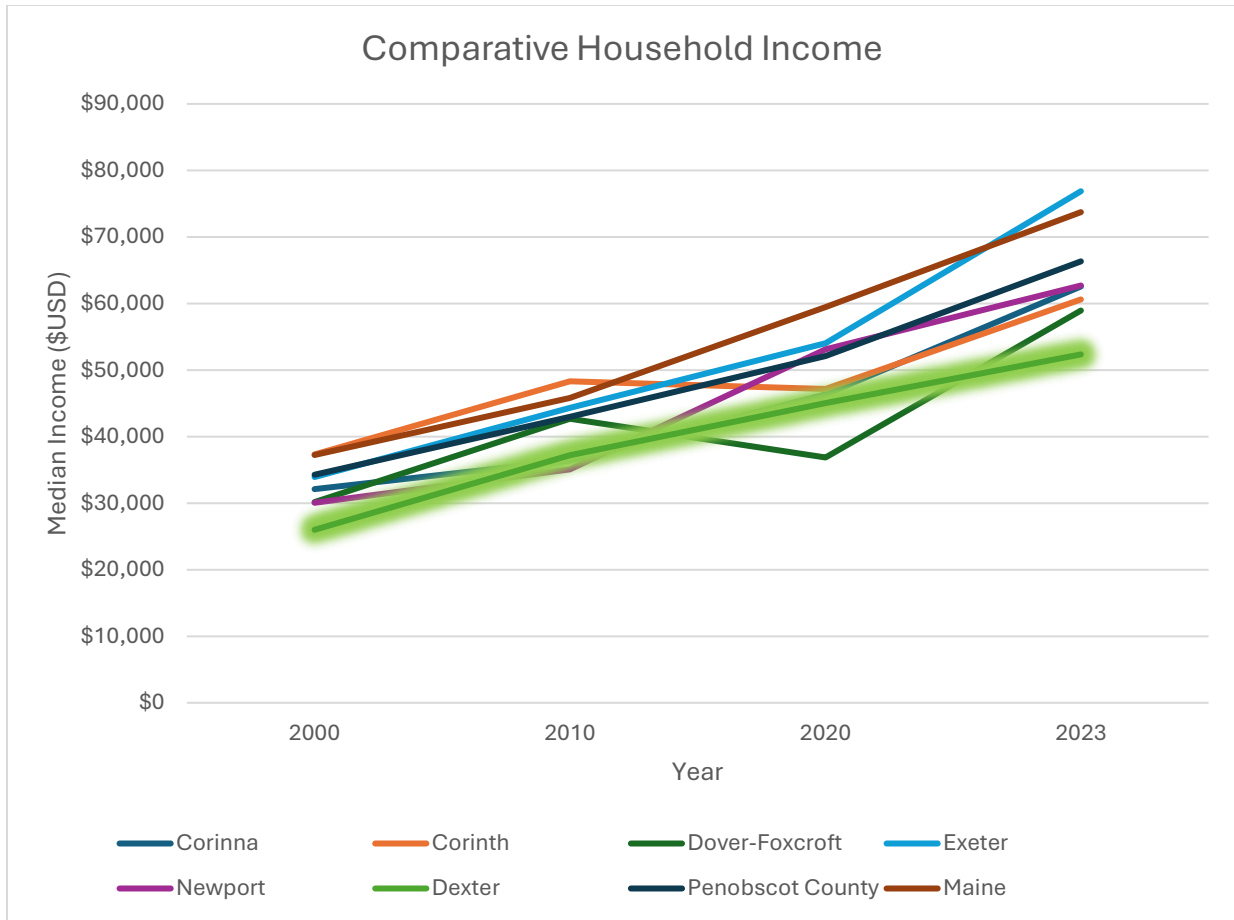
**Table 1.0 and Figure 1.5:** Income and Predicted income in Dexter, ME. 2003-2023. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Year	Median Household Income	
2013	\$40,371	
2014	\$37,647	
2015	\$34,318	
2016	\$30,938	
2017	\$32,188	
2018	\$36,448	
2019	\$39,052	
2020	\$45,020	
2021	\$43,073	
2022	\$50,319	
2023	\$52,353	
	Predicted Median Household Income	Standard Deviation
2024	\$59,000	±\$1,000
2025	\$64,500	±\$1,500
2026	\$70,000	±\$2,000
2027	\$74,000	±\$3,000
2028	\$78,000	±\$4,000
2029	\$81,500	±\$5,500
2030	\$84,500	±\$6,500



Widening the scope and comparing the incomes of Dexter’s to neighboring towns and Penobscot County, Dexter shows consistent growth. In addition to decennial data, 2023 is presented to exemplify how quickly income has risen since the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the sharp rise in income between 2020 and 2023, This has still not been enough to compete with the rise in housing prices, which will be touched on in the housing chapter. Furthermore, income in Dexter towns has risen less sharply than in neighboring towns. This may imply that these other towns have greater income volatility. In short, Dexter may have greater income stability over time.

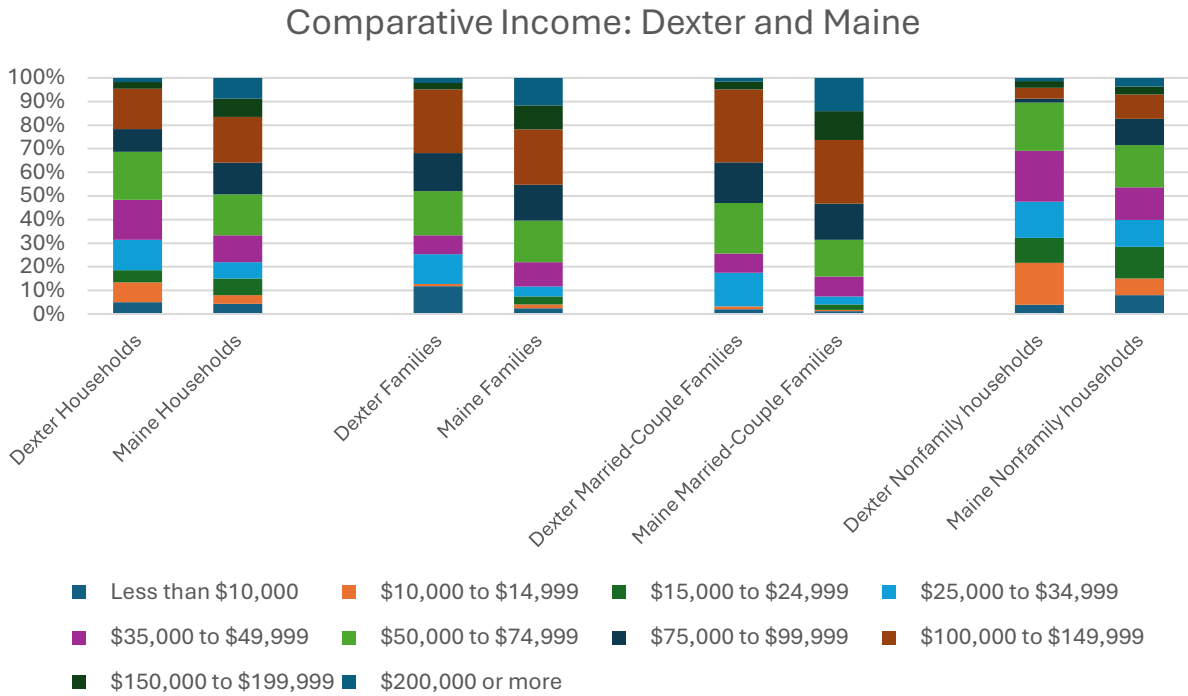




**Figure 1.6:** Comparative Median Household Income In for Dexter, Maine, Neighboring Towns, and Penobscot County. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

As for comparing Dexter’s income to Maine’s, the data show a very similar story between the income of Dexter in comparison to the state as a whole. This means Dexter may be able to take what the State of Maine does in reference to income and related policies and easily implement similar strategies for itself. The data show that Dexter’s income is also on the lower end of comparative growth. However, while the cost of living may be relatively lower compared to larger towns like Bangor, residents still consider the cost of living to be higher than they would like.



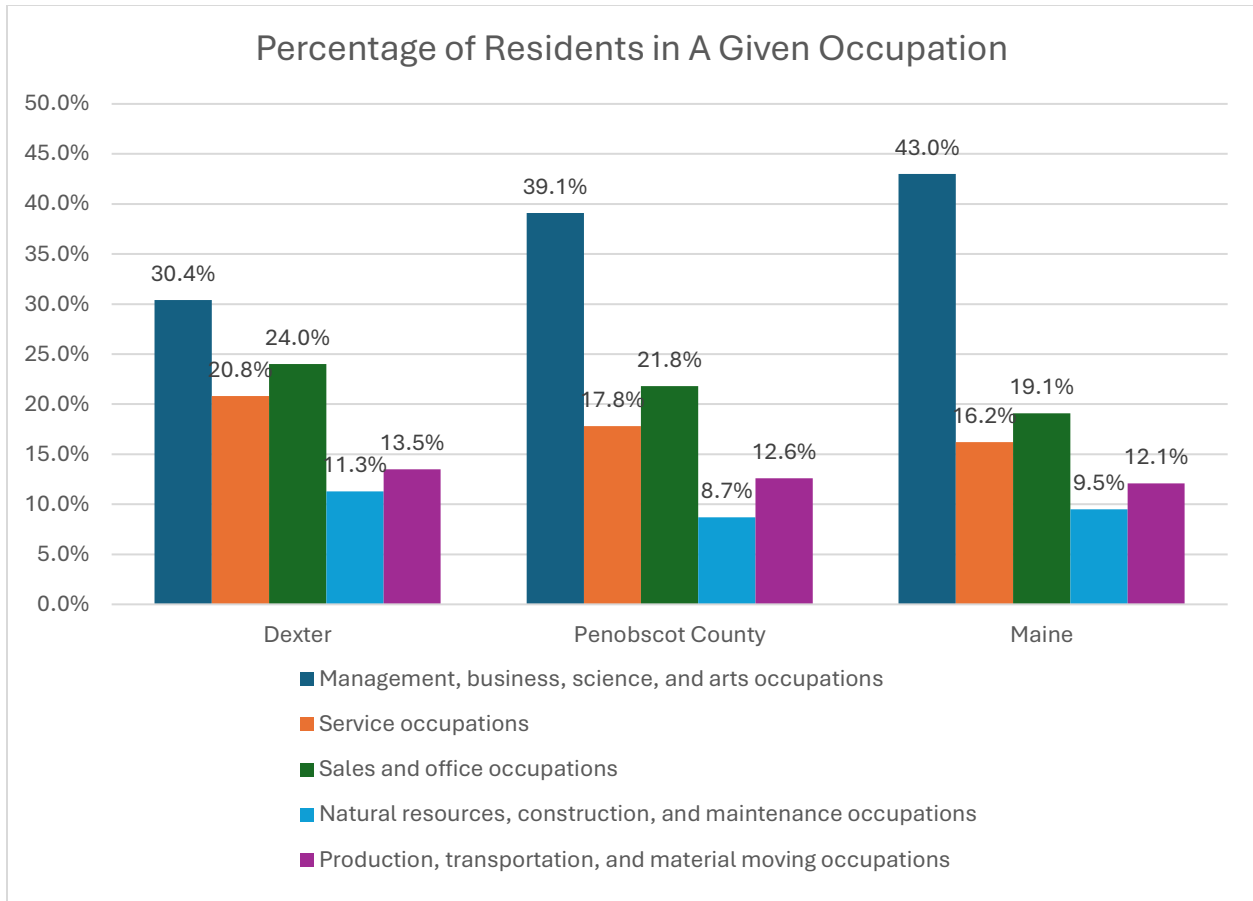


**Figure 1.7:** Comparative Income of Households, Families, Married Couples and Nonfamily Households in Dexter Maine in 2023. Source: US Census Bureau ACS Data.

## Employment

Among the population of 1831 employed in Dexter, there is a rather even distribution across noted occupations, with the most workers in sales and office occupations -by 2.9% concentrated in service occupations (Figure 1.8). Looking at the state and county, most employment is concentrated in management, business, science, and arts occupations.





**Figure 1.8** Percent Employment By Occupation in Dexter, ME. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Looking from a different angle, employment by industry shows a much more diverse picture of specialty work produced by residents. This Figure shows similar Dexter to have similar characteristics to Penobscot county and the state, with some exceptions. There is heavier employment in Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services, and much less employment in the arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services. Dexter may use these data to further investigate favored industry’s and decide where to diversify or concentrate more resources.

The town has the benefit of having the tri-county technology center, where high school students can enroll in specialty trade learning programs. This institute is key to moving Dexter and surrounding towns toward the economic future it desires.



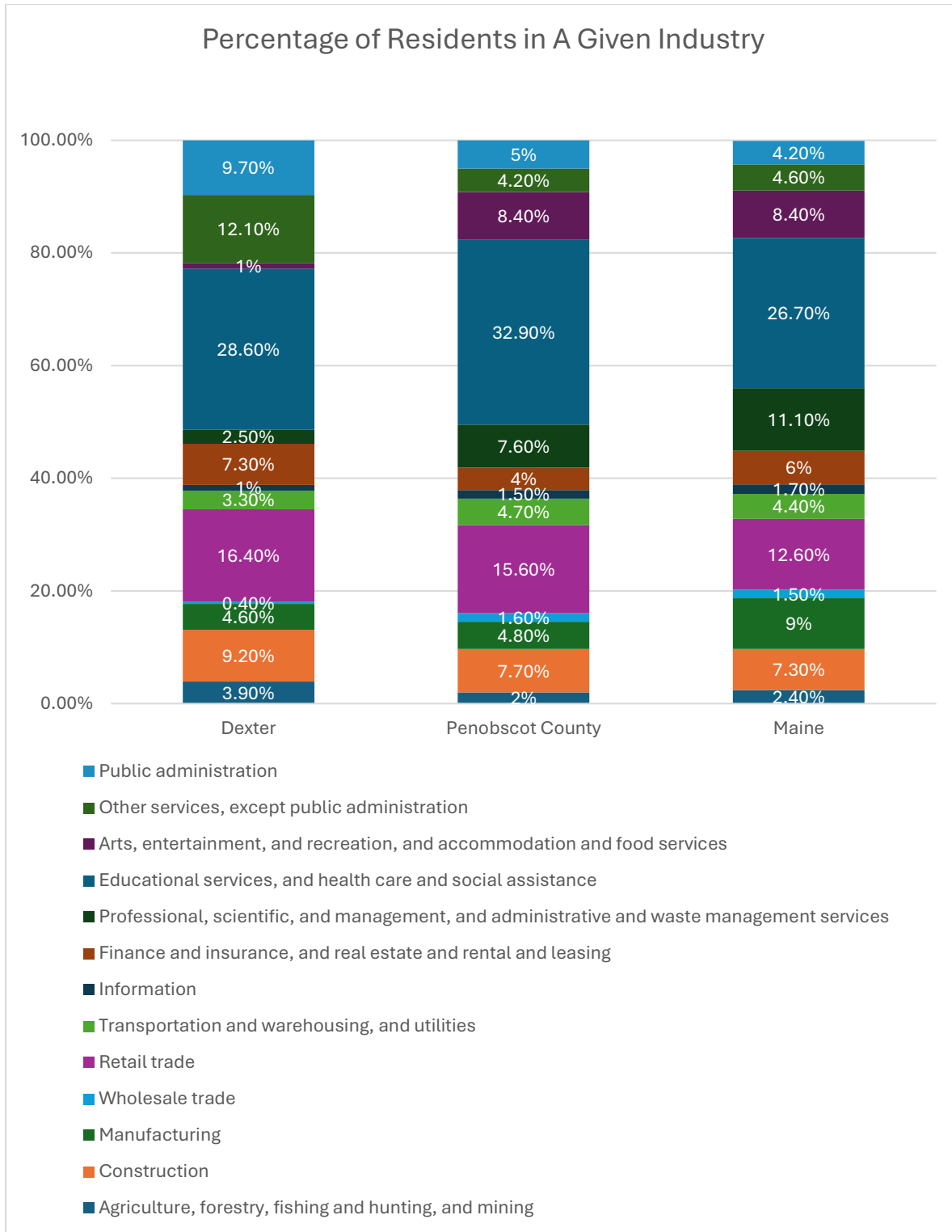
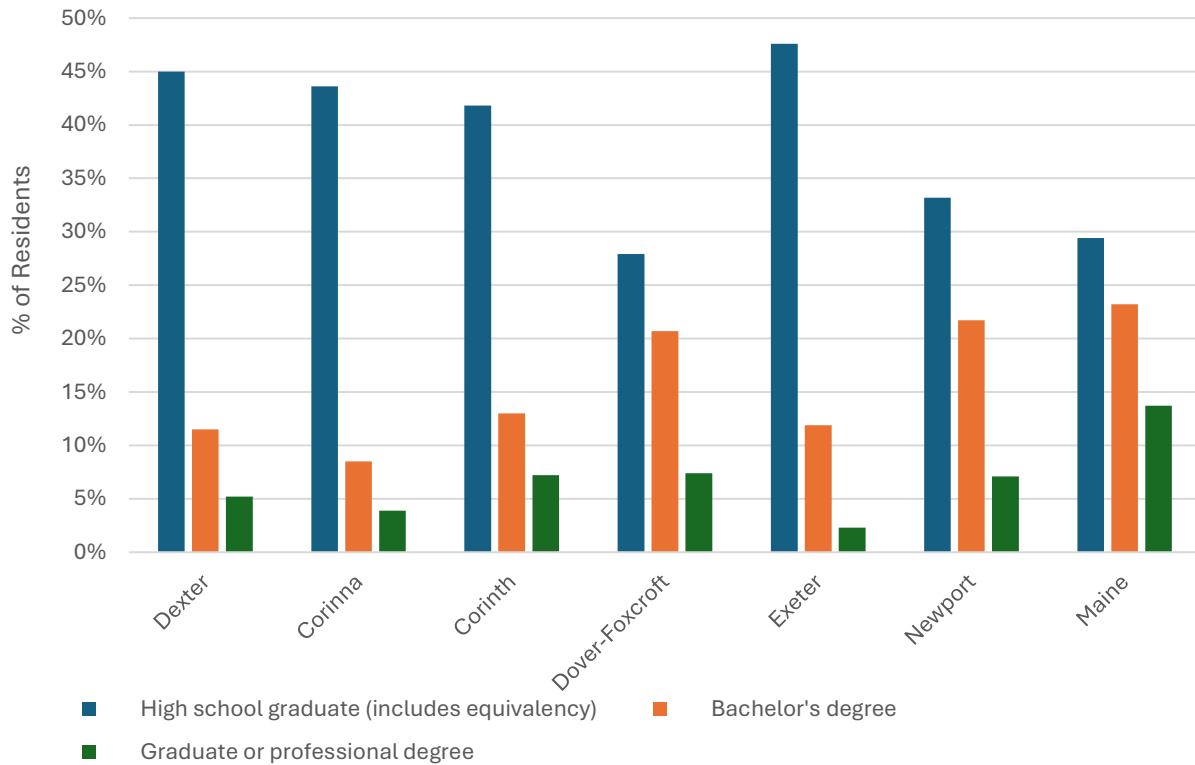


Figure 1.9: Residents Employed by Industry Type, Dexter, ME, 2023. Source: U.S. Census Bureau



## Education

Comparative Educational Attainment of Residents 2023



**Figure 1.10:** Comparative educational attainment of Residents 25 and over in Dexter, Corinna, Corinth, Dover-Foxcroft and Maine, 2023. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 1.1 outlines the educational attainment levels in Dexter compared to Penobscot County and the state of Maine. Notably, while 91.8% of Dexter residents have achieved a high school education or higher (slightly below the county and state averages) the percentage holding a bachelor’s degree or higher is markedly lower at 16.7% compared to 30.6% and 37.0%, respectively. This disparity suggests that while the basic educational foundation is solid, there is a pronounced gap in higher education attainment, which could have long-term economic implications. Additionally, Dexter exhibits a higher proportion of residents who only completed high school (45.0% with equivalency) relative to its peers. This high rate of basic educational attainment suggests that the community has a reliable pool of residents who are prepared for further skill development and vocational training. These statistics imply a need for targeted educational programs, workforce development initiatives, and potential incentives for higher education, all of which may be integrated into the Comprehensive Plan to stimulate economic growth, attract new industries, and ultimately enhance the community’s competitiveness in a rapidly evolving job market.



**Table 1.1:** Educational Attainment of Residents 25 and Over for Dexter, Penobscot County, and Maine in 2023. Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS Data

	High school graduate or higher	Bachelor's degree or higher	Less than 9th grade	9th to 12th grade, no diploma	High school graduate (includes equivalency)	Some college, no degree	Associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Graduate or professional degree
<b>Dexter</b>	91.8%	16.7%	3.0%	5.2%	45.0%	17.3%	12.8%	11.5%	5.2%
<b>Penobscot County</b>	94.2%	30.6%	1.9%	3.9%	32.5%	20.1%	11.0%	17.3%	13.2%
<b>Maine</b>	94.9%	37.0%	1.8%	3.3%	29.4%	18.0%	10.5%	23.2%	13.7%

Following the trend of a declining population, changes potentially occurring to education in Dexter may increase the need for local community involvement and partnerships, as a decreased population can lead to further consolidation of school systems and decreased class sizes. That said, Dexter is already a well-connected regional hub of education. In the future, we may say Dexter lean into this more, acting as *the* hub for education in Maine.

Relatedly, if younger demographics are leaving the town, or not entering the population through birth or migration, this can impact demand for school services. Fewer students may require adjustments in school budgets, staffing, and facility usage.



# HOUSING



# HOUSING

## *State Goal*

To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.

## *Policies*

To encourage and promote adequate workforce housing to support the community's and region's economic development.

To ensure that land use controls encourage the development of quality affordable housing, including rental housing.

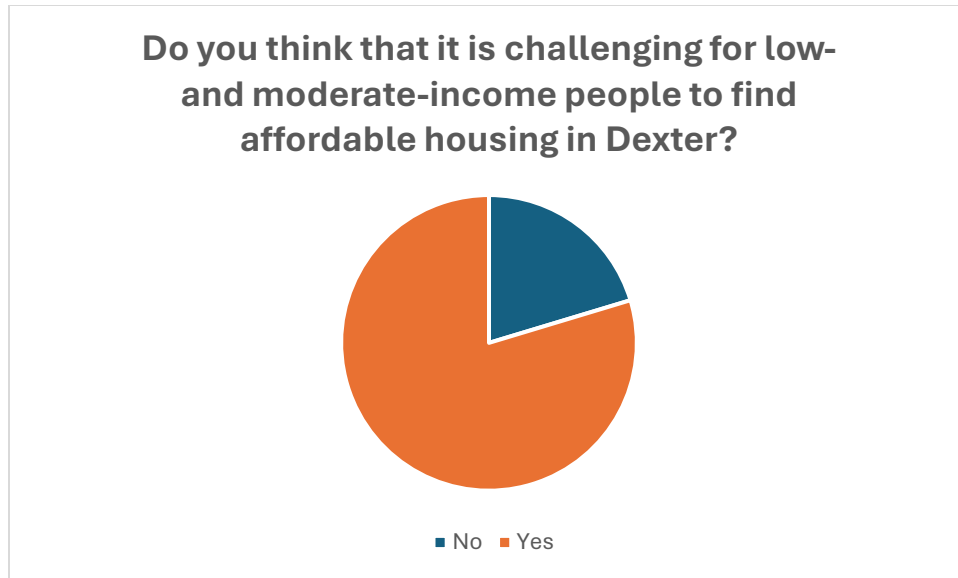
To encourage and support the efforts of the regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.

## *2025 Community Survey Results*

The results of the 2025 Community Survey reflect concerns in Dexter that align with broader trends across rural Maine. The survey, which was distributed to the public, received responses from a diverse group of engaged community members, with 3.9% of respondents residing outside the town. Findings indicate that 88.8% of respondents are homeowners, while 9% are renters.

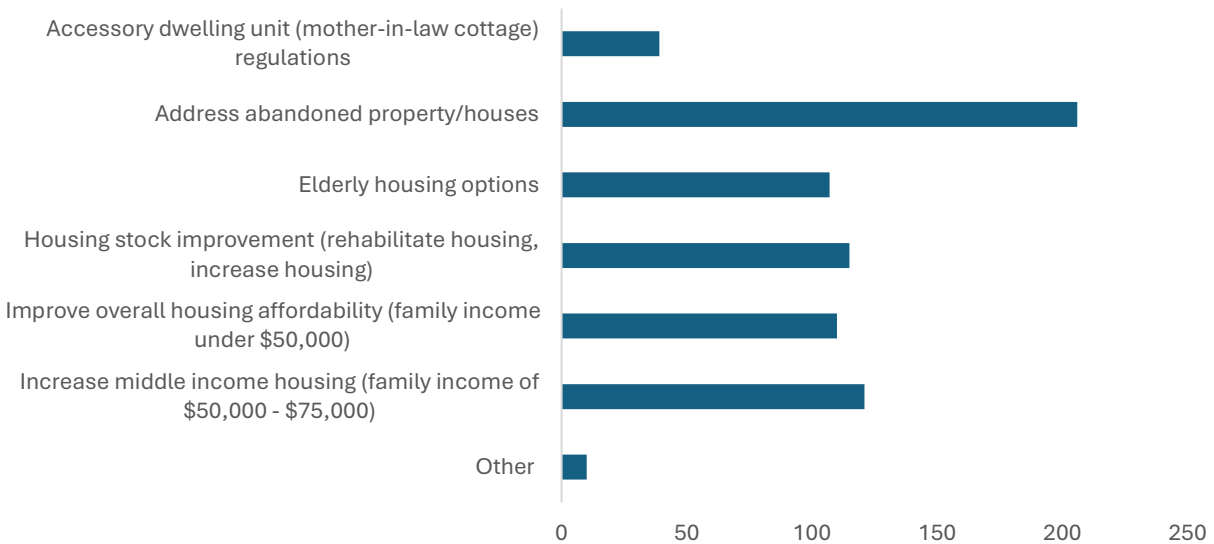
When asked about housing availability, 80% of participants expressed that low- to moderate-income earners face significant challenges in securing affordable housing. Additionally, when identifying key housing concerns in Dexter, the majority of respondents prioritized addressing abandoned properties and vacant homes. Other significant concerns, ranked by importance, include increasing middle-income housing, improving overall housing stock, enhancing affordability, and expanding elderly housing options. Given these findings, the town may explore strategies to repurpose and revitalize abandoned properties as part of its long-term land use planning efforts.





**Figure 2.0:** Perceived housing challenges to low- and moderate-income residents by survey respondents in Dexter, Maine. Source: Dexter Community Survey

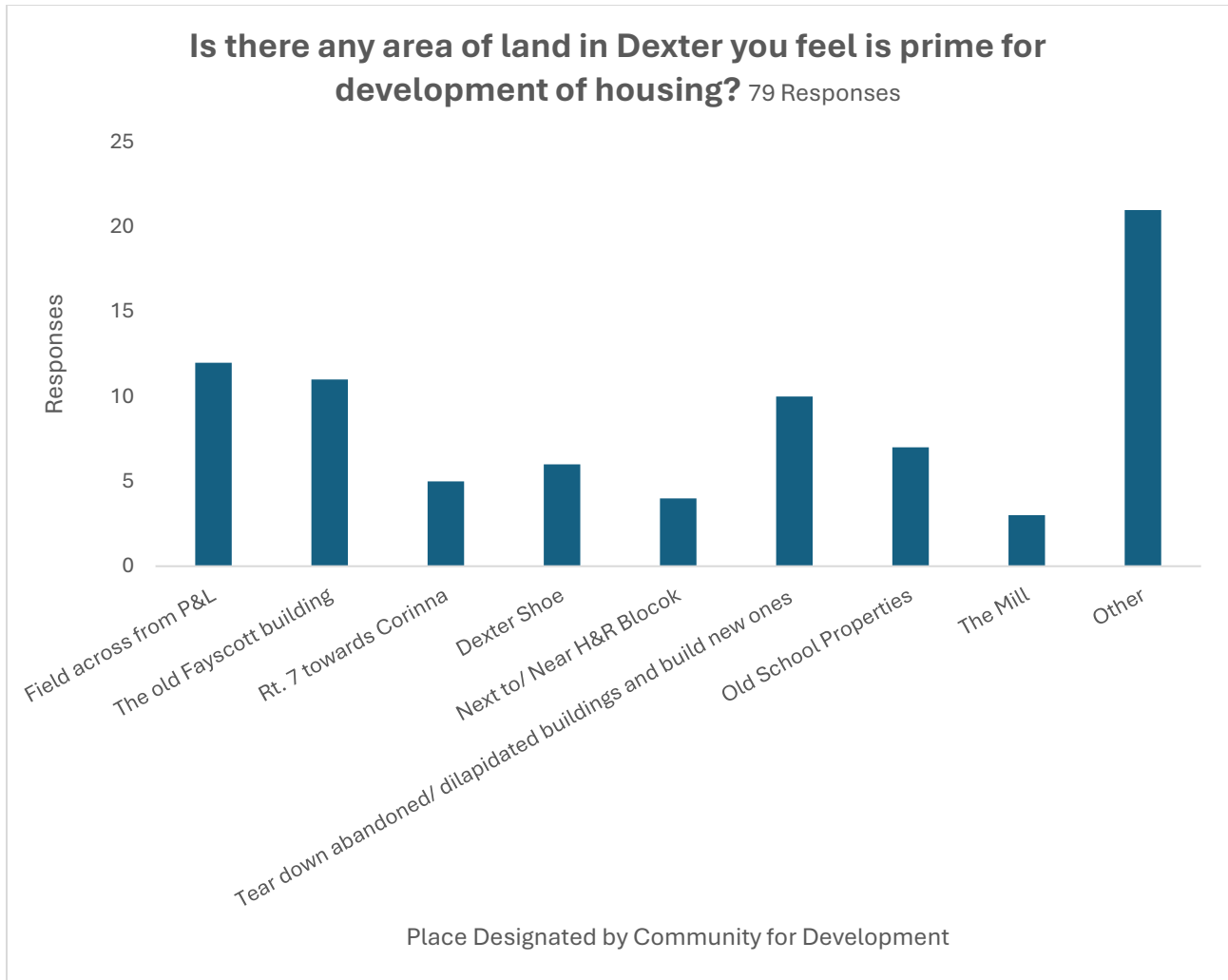
**What housing issues do you think Dexter should address? (Please select all that apply) 236 Responses**



**Figure 2.1:** Perceived housing issues by survey respondents in Dexter, Maine. Source: Dexter Community Survey

Also asked of the town, was if there were any areas they felt like a good opportunity for housing development. Responses were varied, but a few similar answers stood out. These were recorded in the Figure below. The Town of Dexter may use this information when deciding what areas to prioritize for future housing development.



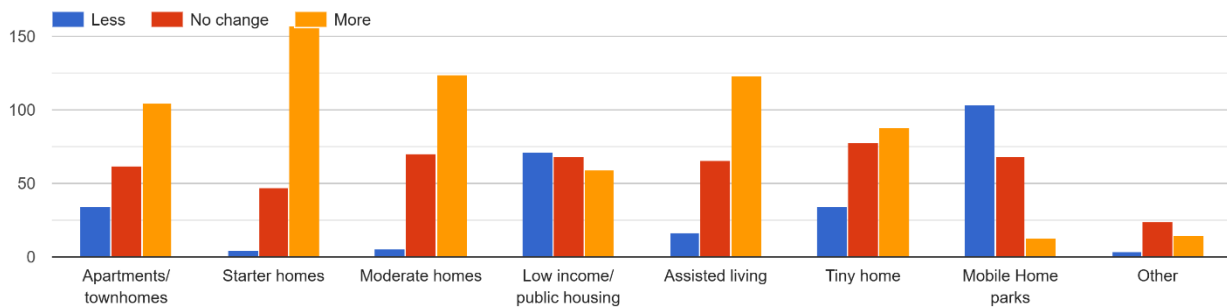


**Figure 2.2:** Perceived Places where the community feels is ready for housing development. Source: Dexter Community Survey.

To go along with Figure 2.2, Figure 2.3 pinpoints exactly what kind of development survey respondents desire in housing.



Next to each option below, please indicate the following types of residential development you would like to see more, less, or no change of in Dexter.

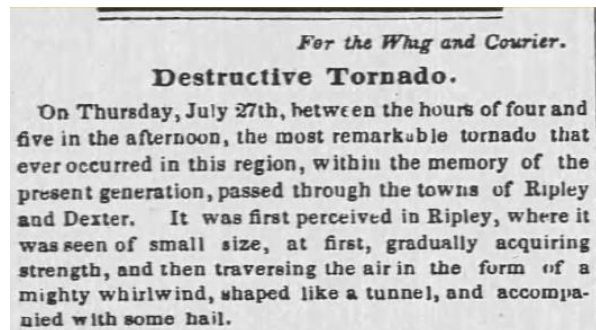


**Figure 2.3:** Perceived Housing needs of survey respondents in Dexter, Maine. Source: Dexter Community Survey

Community members seem to want more of almost every type of housing except mobile-home parks and low-income/ public housing. Generally, Figure 2.3 outlines a great need for every type of housing. It is clear that housing has not kept pace with population needs in Dexter.

## Housing Over Time

Housing in Dexter has been largely shaped by industry. From settlement in 1801, the town's location on the east branch of the Sebasticook River provided excellent [water power](#) for mills. Woolen Mills were the most popular and ran in Dexter from the 1830's to the 1970's. As the United States experienced an unprecedented economic boom period, most housing units were built prior to World War II (Figure 2.4). Despite a tornado in 1848, which commenced at the head of Ripley Pond, "...created upset, as many of the town's strongest buildings, including homes were destroyed", the town proved resilient and was able to build back.<sup>3</sup>



Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dexter has experienced normal development for a town of its size, which can be seen in housing built over time. In Figure 2.3, it is evident that Dexter's housing stock was mainly built prior to 1939 (again, similar to most Maine towns). From 1960-2009, there was an uptick in housing built, due, largely, to the presence of Dexter Shoe. After the company's departure in 2001, very little housing units have been built, and fewer people are living together,

<sup>3</sup> RIPLEY - DEXTER TORNADO OF 1848. James Wintle. <https://www.thedaily.me.com/Jim/jim3.html>



despite a larger amount of households (Figure 2.4). The number of households expanding, plus the decrease in household size, is no doubt adding to the housing crisis being felt across the state.

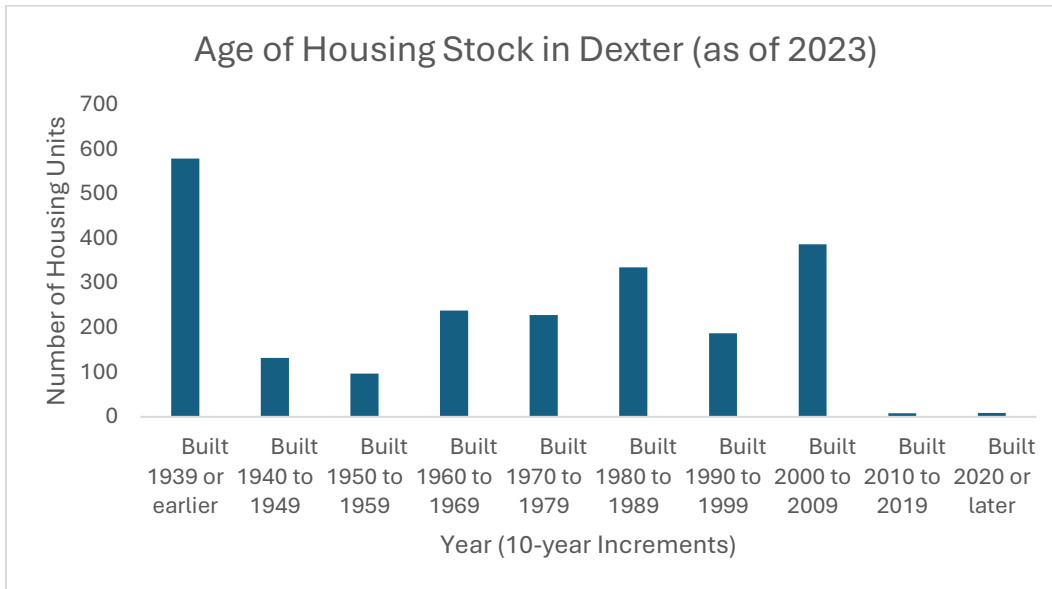


Figure 2.3: Housing Stock of Dexter Maine in 2023. Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

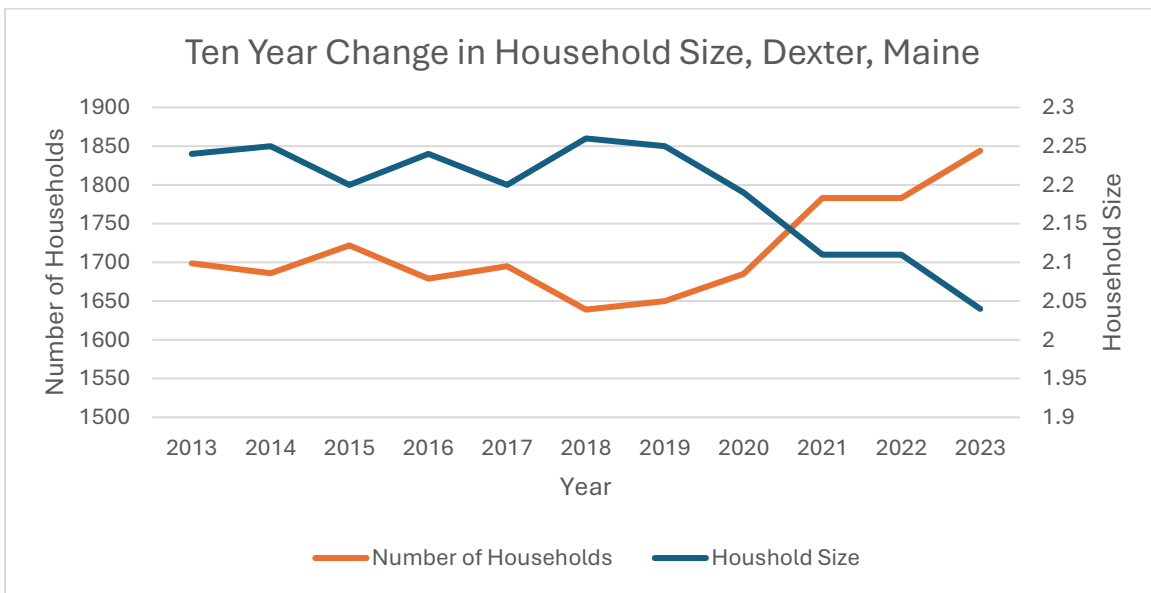


Figure 2.4: Household Size Changes in Dexter, ME from 2013-2023. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

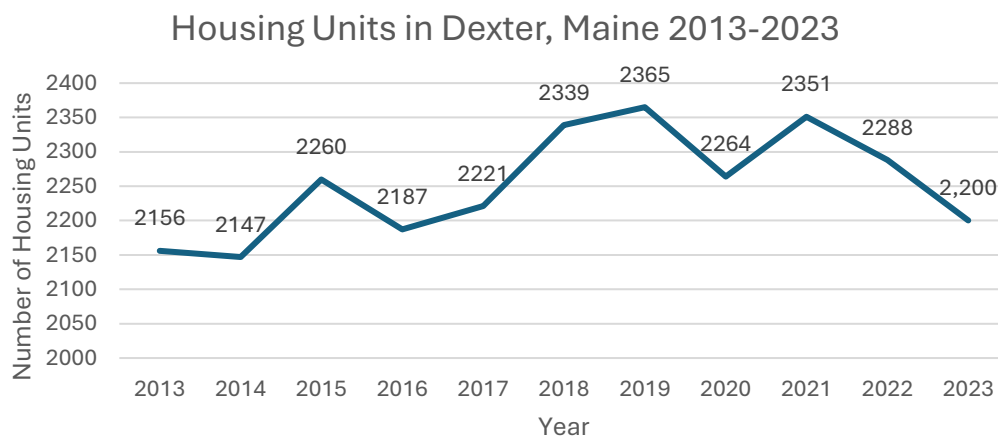
### Housing Stock and Occupancy

From 2013 to 2023, The American Community Survey (ACS) revealed that Dexter’s housing stock fluctuated (Figure 2.4). Overall, there was an increase of 44 units. As we are in a housing crisis



where there needs to be a marked rise in home building, the town needs to produce 20 housing units per year to meet the goals set by Maine’s Housing Production Needs Study.<sup>4</sup> Noting the way in which housing fluctuated over the last decade, the town may facilitate a concerted effort to foster an increase in units to 2030.

Although the number of occupied units has risen from 2019 to 2021, and overall homes also went up in that time, they have since gone down to pre-pandemic levels, while population continues to grow.



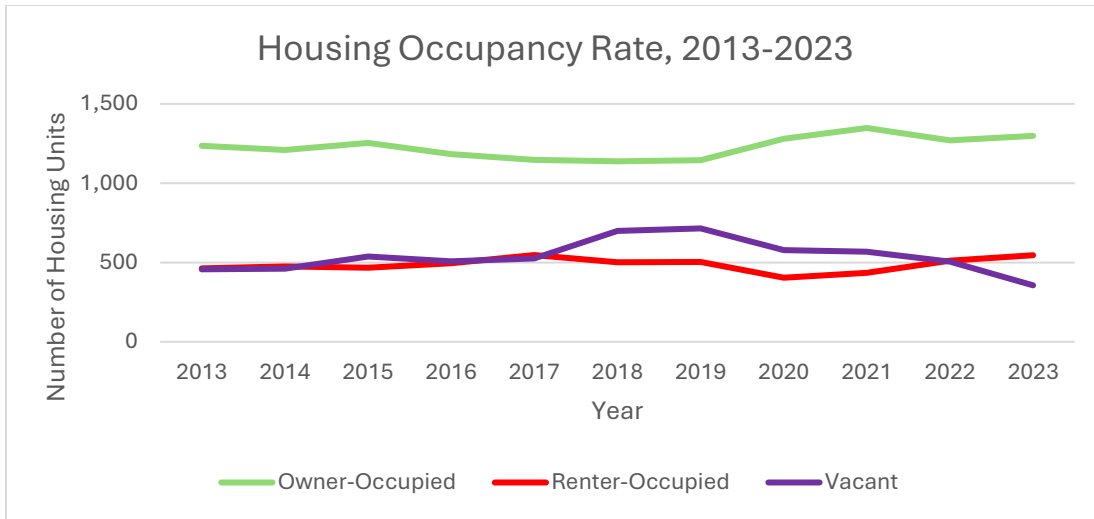
**Figure 2.5:** Change in housing units over the Last 10 years in Dexter, ME. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

One trend in housing is that vacant homes have gone down since 2019, emphasizing a slight shift to full-time residential ownership (though there has been little effect so far on the community). Overall occupancy rate slightly rose from 2018-2023, from 1,639 to 1844 occupied homes and 700 to 356 vacant ones. Of these changes, 1298 were owner occupied while 546 were renter occupied as of 2023. The increase in occupation and decrease in vacant housing fits in line with (Figure 2.3) which shows decreased household size, but also tells an expansive story; that this may reflect broader socio-economic factors such as an aging population, an increase in single-person or smaller family households, and shifting lifestyle preferences among residents. As such, these findings not only underscore a tightening housing market but also highlight the need for adaptive strategies in housing policy and infrastructure development. Also, this shows the small decrease in homes used as seasonal housing (a subsection of those recorded as “vacant”), though seasonal homes have a marginal, low-impact place in Dexter’s housing stock.

Dexter also has three small mobile home parks within town limits.

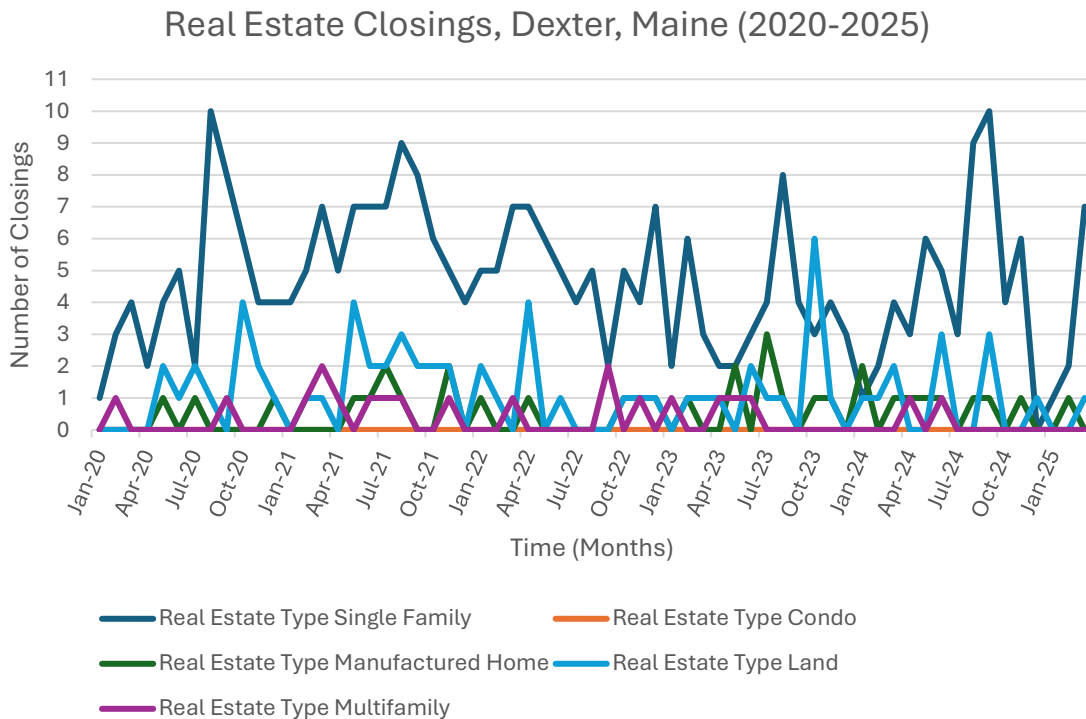
<sup>4</sup> [https://mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/state-of-maine-housing-production-needs-study\\_full\\_final-v2.pdf](https://mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/state-of-maine-housing-production-needs-study_full_final-v2.pdf)





**Figure 2.6:** Housing Occupancy Rate over the last decade in Dexter, ME. Source: Maine State Economist

The data on types of housing sold are available on the municipal level through MaineListings.com.<sup>5</sup> Looking to these data collected, a total of 419 properties were sold in Dexter in the last 5 years (2020-2025) (Figure 2.7). We can use these data to determine what types of housing Dexter should focus on in the next decade.



**Figure 2.7:** Real Estate Closings in Dexter ME, 2020-2025. Source: Maine Listings.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.maine listings.com/>



Additionally, regional data around housing stock changes were taken into consideration to see a more complete picture of Dexter’s – and Maine’s – housing crisis. In Table 2.0, Dexter’s stock falls slightly from 2010-2020, but then rises from there into 2023. The only towns with higher rates of housing stock growth are Corinth and Dover-Foxcroft. The town may use these data to increase housing production for new residents.

**Table 2.0:** 2010-2023 Regional and State Housing Stock around Dexter, ME. Note that this Figure includes all housing units, rather than just occupied units. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Geography	2010	2020	2023	Rate of Change from 2010-2020 (%)	Rate of Change from 2020-2023 (%)
Dexter	2141	2134	2200	-0.3%	3.1%
Corinna	1075	1093	1004	1.7%	-8.1%
Corinth	1233	1249	1288	1.3%	3.1%
Dover-Foxcroft	2459	2390	2717	-2.8%	13.7%
Newport	1766	1799	1830	1.9%	1.7%
Penobscot	62966	74878	76102	18.9%	1.6%
Maine	721830	739072	757424	2.4%	2.5%

### Housing and Income

The Maine Economist offers a Housing affordability Index for all Maine Towns. Generally, The Homeownership Affordability Index is the ratio of Home Price Affordable at Median income to Median Home Price. An index of less than 1 means the area is generally unaffordable – i.e., a household earning area median income could not cover the payment on a median-priced home (30-year mortgage, taxes, and insurance) using no more than 28% of gross income.

These statistics are separated by homeownership and rentership. Renter data is less readily available but available at the same website.

County Name	Town Name	Year	Index	Median Home Price	Median Income	Income Needed to Afford Median Home Price - Annual	Home Price Affordable to Median Income	Households Unable to Afford Median Home (%)	Total Households	Percentage of Homes Sold Unaffordable at Median Income	Total Homes Sold
Penobscot	Dexter	2023	0.67	\$198,000	\$50,263	\$75,296	\$132,173	66.9%	1,678	70.5%	44
		2022	0.89	\$148,000	\$44,647	\$50,045	\$132,037	55.6%	1,589	54.8%	62
		2021	1.05	\$125,000	\$37,813	\$36,025	\$131,206	48.8%	1,568	45.9%	74
		2020	1.24	\$110,000	\$39,859	\$32,054	\$136,783	42.3%	1,556	32.1%	53
		2019	1.19	\$95,000	\$35,384	\$29,718	\$113,114	42.7%	1,567	32.4%	68
		2018	1.15	\$101,200	\$37,206	\$32,360	\$116,356	45.8%	1,606	43.6%	55
		2017	1.23	\$93,840	\$35,355	\$28,791	\$115,233	43.2%	1,609	35.0%	60
		2016	1.91	\$69,000	\$39,313	\$20,626	\$131,513	26.6%	1,615	11.1%	36
		2015	1.89	\$62,000	\$34,098	\$18,006	\$117,407	28.0%	1,617	20.9%	43
		2014	1.96	\$68,500	\$39,098	\$19,897	\$134,601	28.0%	1,644	16.7%	36
		2013	1.48	\$83,250	\$36,977	\$24,996	\$123,151	37.8%	1,630	31.3%	32

**Figure 2.7:** Housing Index for Dexter, ME. Source: Maine State Economist



As shown above, housing has only become unaffordable by these standards set by the Maine Economist in the last 2 years of available data. Even with these data points, residents of Dexter will say that housing has been unaffordable longer and remains unaffordable in 2025. The fact that the income needed to afford a house is much higher than the actual median creates a worrying disparity and will lead to people either leaving or becoming homeless. Dexter may look into building more houses to lessen this price burden for future home buyers.

### ***Affordability***

Dexter, like every other town in Maine, desperately needs housing. Prices of a home in Dexter may have decreased from 2010-2020 by \$48,000, which is to be expected with the absence of Dexter Shoe as the major industrial employer. However, prices shot up during the post-pandemic period (2021-2023) by \$64,600 (69.2%). This rise mirrors the pattern seen around the state. As the school system is the largest employer in Dexter, and incomes have not risen greatly since 2020 (Figure 2.7), income has not been able to keep pace with the price of housing.



Property Name and Address	Housing Type				Units Accessible	Type of Assistance*		Contact Information
	Elderly			Family / All		Income Based Rent	Rent Limit Unit	
	55 and older	62 and older	With Disabilities					
<b>Bishop Hill</b> 100 Zions Hill Road	●	●	●		24 units 1, 2 br	●		Multi-Management Group (207) 990-2099
<b>Chaia Apts.</b> 44 Main Street		●	●		15 units 1, 2 br	●		Guerrette Properties (207) 623-2323
<b>Fairway Knolls</b> 140 Zions Hill Road	●	●	●		23 units 1, 2 br	●		Alice Theriault (207) 534-7370
<b>Hillside Park</b> 33 Prospect Street				●	24 units 1, 2 br	●		Maine Development Associates (207) 947-6795 www.mainedevelopment.com
<b>Silver Lake Housing</b> 30 Summit Road			●		24 units 1, 2 br	●		Multi-Management Group (207) 990-2099

\*Income-Based Rent means tenants generally pay about 1/3 of their household income on rent. Rent Restricted means rents are typically based on a specified percentage of the median income for the area. Income limits are restricted.



**Table 2.1:** Affordable housing developments of Dexter. Source: Maine State Housing Authority



## Zoning for Housing

Dexter’s current zoning was updated last in 2007. As such, the zoning map reflects simple residential zoning standards made to meet the needs of the town facing multiple choices. The dimensional standards for residential zoning are as follows:

<b>Minimum Lot Area</b>	
With Public sewer	7,500 sq. ft.
Without Public Sewer	20,000 sq. ft.
<b>Minimum lot frontage</b>	
	100 feet
<b>Minimum structure setbacks</b>	
Front	10 feet
Side	10 feet
Rear	10 feet

**Table 2.2:** Zoning standards for Dexter, ME

Although these standards help regulate development density, they may limit opportunities for infill housing and diverse housing types. To better support housing growth, the town may consider reducing minimum lot sizes, particularly in areas served by public sewer, to allow for smaller, more affordable lots that encourage infill development. Lowering the minimum frontage requirement have also been shown to increase the number of developable lots and improve land efficiency, particularly for multi-unit housing. Additionally, allowing for reduced side and rear setbacks or establishing flexible setback requirements for specific housing types (such as duplexes, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) could maximize land use without compromising neighborhood character.

## Regulation and Policy

Several laws passed through the Legislature in Augusta to address the housing crisis in 2025. These include:

- LD 427 - An Act to Regulate Municipal Parking Space Minimums. This restricts parking minimums and allows developers additional options to satisfy the ones that remain.
- LD 997 - An Act to Allow Residential Use Development in Commercial Districts. This does exactly what the title says; municipalities must now allow residential use in areas where they allow commercial use. This bill is designed to encourage the development of “mixed-use” housing development, where shops, businesses, and residents are all allowed such that residents have easy access to their jobs and/or commercial needs.
- LD 1829 - An Act to Build Housing for Maine Families and Attract Workers to Maine Businesses by Amending the Laws Governing Housing Density. This is the marquee housing bill for 2025. It raises the limits on density that towns can put on residential units (especially in growth areas) and makes it easier to build ADUs, among other reforms.



Beyond these recent bills, other options were posited during regional housing events and interviews as part of EMDC’s work using Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) Grant Funds. One solution sought to tax second homes, designated as seasonal, or vacation homes at a higher rate. In the past, LD 1337 was proposed in 2021, which would have let towns impose a vacancy “impact fee” on non-resident camps. It failed amid concerns over heritage and tourism impacts.<sup>6</sup> If this were to be re-proposed, it could focus on a second-home surcharge (e.g. an extra 0.5–1% of assessed value) on properties not designated as primary residences, with revenue dedicated to local housing trusts.

## ***Strategies***

Stabilize housing prices for the elderly

Better Median house prices

Promote Land Use ordinances to support establishment of greater senior and low-income housing

Maintain, enact or amend growth area land use regulations to increase density, decrease lot size, setbacks and road widths, or provide incentives such as density bonuses, to encourage the development of affordable/workforce housing.

Support the efforts of local and regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.

Maintain, enact or amend ordinances to allow the addition of at least one accessory apartment per dwelling unit in growth areas, subject to site suitability.

Create or continue to support a community affordable/workforce housing committee and/or regional affordable housing coalition.

Designate a location(s) in growth areas where mobile home parks are allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(3)(M) and where manufactured housing is allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(2).

Meet the requirements of the housing study to help alleviate the housing crisis by setting housing production and reinvestment targets at the local level and consider the different housing typologies that can support housing production across the income spectrum

Support the efforts of local and regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.mainechamber.org/mscc-blog/camp-tax-defeated-in-house?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.mainechamber.org/mscc-blog/camp-tax-defeated-in-house?utm_source=chatgpt.com)



Seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development built or placed during the next decade be affordable.





# TRANSPORTATION

# **TRANSPORTATION**

## **State Goal**

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

## **Town Goal**

Explore funding opportunities and options for a multimodal study to improve the transportation network in town.

## **Policies**

To prioritize community and regional needs associated with safe, efficient, and optimal use of transportation systems.

To safely and efficiently preserve or improve the transportation system.

To 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.

To meet the diverse transportation needs of residents (including children, the elderly and disabled) and through travelers by providing a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation network for all types of users (motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists).

To promote fiscal prudence by maximizing the efficiency of the state or state-aid highway network.

## **General Overview**

A community's transportation system is vitally important to future development. Traditionally, the roadway system has been second only to education in the amount of tax dollars expended annually. Dexter has approximately 45.85 miles of totally town-maintained roads. In addition, there are some 16 miles of road for which the State Department of Transportation has summer maintenance responsibility and which Dexter plows and sands in the winter. In the winter, the town plows 58.51 miles of the roads. Dexter's transportation network has developed in tandem with its industrial and commercial growth. The town now faces the challenge of balancing



investment in roads with the need for multimodal access and complete-streets design. In 2024, the public works budget spent cumulatively \$852,000 on roads. \$426,844 on winter maintenance, \$325,160 for the summer, and \$100,000 on paving.

### ***Importance of Mobility***

In order to sufficiently connect people to their daily needs, including education, healthcare, food, and job opportunities, reliable transportation is essential, particularly in a rural setting like Dexter. Without access to transportation, residents' participation in the local and regional economies is limited. While the majority of local residents rely on private vehicles to access their daily needs, continual monitoring of any transportation challenges that may arise will be key to ensuring long-term community prosperity. When it comes to transportation infrastructure, regularly assessing opportunities for the enhanced connectivity of people to local trails, businesses, and the downtown area will advance both community and economic development.

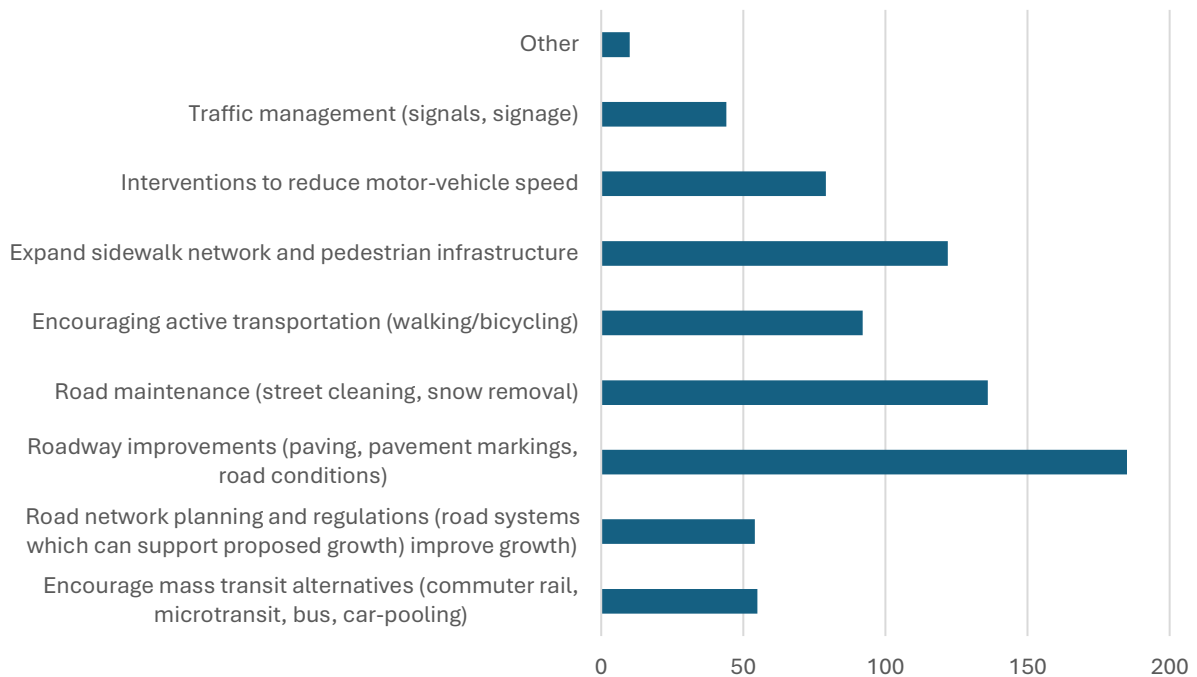
### ***Community Concerns***

As part of the analysis, a community survey was distributed to Dexter to gauge concerns for transportation in the community and region. Below are those results, as well as the town's plans to address those concerns.

The survey showed residents of Dexter were concerned with roadway improvement and road maintenance. These include services like paving, pavement markings, and road conditions. The 3<sup>rd</sup> most important concern for Dexter residents was expanding the sidewalk network and pedestrian infrastructure like walking and biking. The graph below gives a snapshot look into what will be reviewed in more detail in the following paragraphs.



### What transportation initiatives do you think Dexter should support? (Please select all that apply) <sup>236 responses</sup>



**Figure 3.0:** Community Response to Potential Transport Initiatives in Dexter, ME. Source: Town of Dexter Community Survey

More concerns exist around the lack of bus service for the municipality's senior community. A regular service to Bangor, Dover-Foxcroft, or Newport would be convenient. The only ride service available in town is Moosehead Taxi, which is not easily accessible. In addition, Dexter is concerned with losing the Lynx service through Penquis CAP. Uber and Lift services are present in town, but also quite expensive. As the State of Maine embraces renewable energy, increasing the number of electric vehicle charging stations will be crucial. Eastern Maine Development Corporation is currently working on a strategy to support a future increase of electric vehicles in northern Maine communities.

The last concern of greatest import is connected to walkability. Specifically, to and from the beach. Without marked crosswalks or bike lanes, reaching that beach (or the elementary school and ballfields along Lakeside Road) requires driving or taking the gravel trail. In short, parks, schools and shopping lie beyond easy walking distance, so most residents must use cars or ATVs even for short trips.



## Walk/Bike-ability

Dexter’s village core is anchored by a historic Grist Mill Park (complete with its 2002 covered pedestrian bridge) and a few small shops on Spring Street, but most travel remains car- or ATV-based. In practice, only short sidewalk segments exist along Main and Spring, so pedestrian trips are scarce. For example, local news reported that town planners even proposed routing ATVs onto Spring Street “providing access to all the existing businesses in the downtown area”.<sup>7</sup> This is a clear sign that vehicles (including off-road vehicles) dominate downtown circulation. Local landmarks like Toot’s Deli or the Dexter Variety store sit at that Spring/Main junction, yet connections beyond are not walk-friendly.



By contrast, state and health agencies emphasize that walkable towns bring big benefits. MaineDOT’s Active Transportation Plan calls for safe pedestrian/bicycle routes in villages to “support economic development” and “enhance... quality of life”.<sup>8</sup> It specifically envisions linking people to jobs, education, healthcare, and recreation, which connections Dexter currently lacks. Moreover, the agency notes that many pedestrians are children and elderly neighbors who walk to save money, so sidewalks and bike lanes in Dexter would improve equity by giving non-drivers affordable mobility. In fact, research shows that walkable communities see increased retail sales, enhanced safety, and less congestion; exactly the kind of vibrancy a downtown grocery or cafe (like Toot’s or the Variety store) needs. Reflecting this, Dexter’s age-friendly plan explicitly lists “improve sidewalks” as a priority to keep seniors active.<sup>9</sup>

## State Routes and Town Roads

State Aided roads in Dexter span approximately 12.74 Miles of the 61 Miles of road in town (excluding private drives).

The town’s primary arteries are served by State Routes and a State Aided Route. North Dexter Road, Corinna Road, and Ripley Road give access to the town from established routes and serve as the town entry points from each part of town. The MaineDOT gives levels of priority to these roads as seen in Map 3.0. It’s also pertinent to note that AADT counts have gone up on all state

<sup>7</sup><https://observer-me.com/2018/04/23/news/dexter-council-looks-to-open-seven-streets-to-atvs/#:~:text=of%20helping%20community%20businesses%20and,393%20at%20the%20November%20referendum>

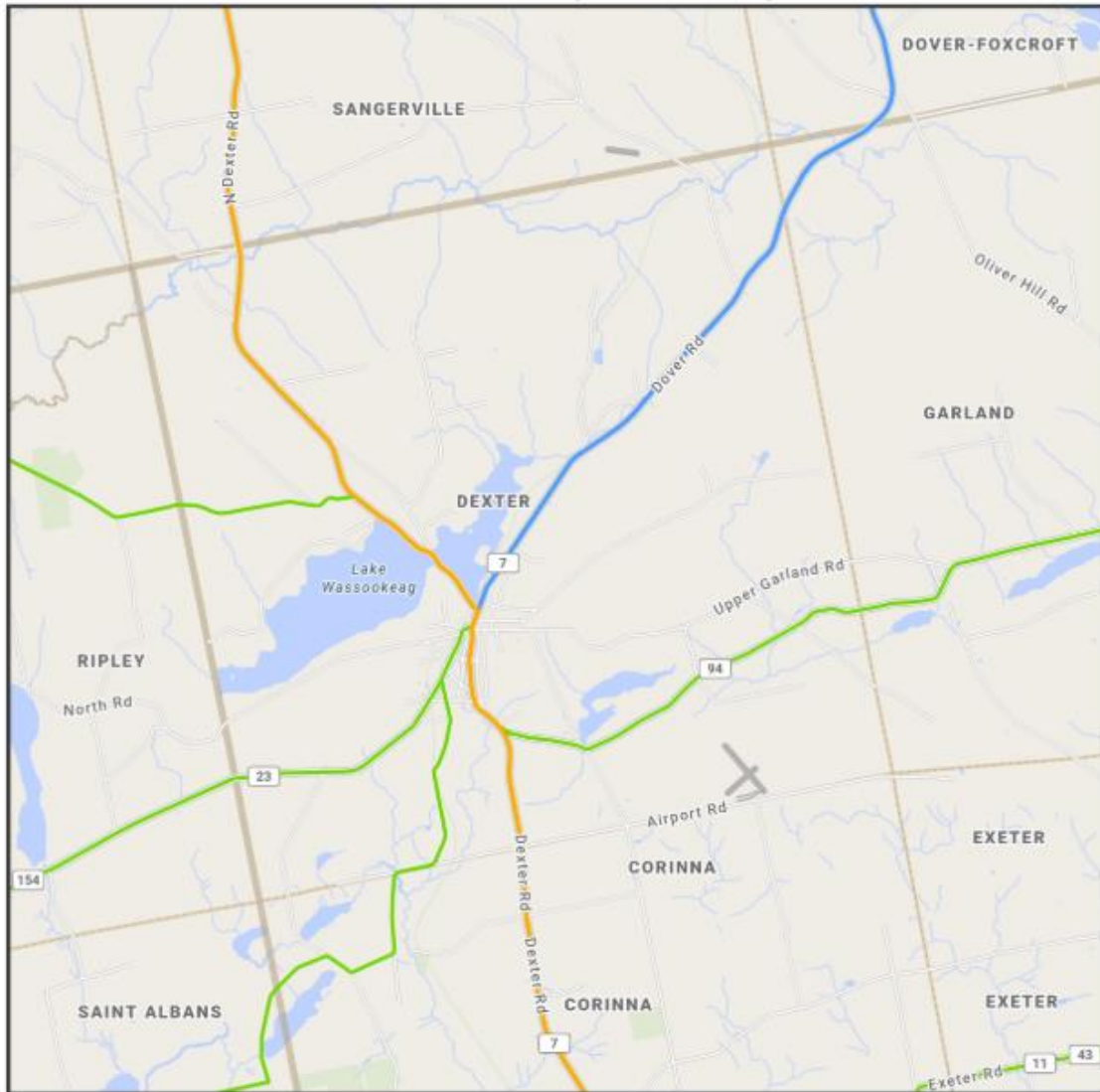
<sup>8</sup>[https://www.maine.gov/dot/sites/maine.gov.dot/files/inline-files/AT%20Plan\\_RUAC\\_2\\_22\\_23.pdf#:~:text=Vision%20MaineDOT%20will%20maintain%2C%20improve%2C,Maine%20people%20and%20visitors%20alike](https://www.maine.gov/dot/sites/maine.gov.dot/files/inline-files/AT%20Plan_RUAC_2_22_23.pdf#:~:text=Vision%20MaineDOT%20will%20maintain%2C%20improve%2C,Maine%20people%20and%20visitors%20alike)

<sup>9</sup> <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/network/dexter-maine/>



routes in Dexter. The only conflict caused by the state-owned roads that run through town is the traffic they sometimes bring, especially during the summer holidays. The state of traffic and road safety in Dexter are discussed later in the section.

### STATE ROUTES, DEXTER, ME



The Maine Department of Transportation provides this publication for information only. Reference upon this information is at user risk. It is subject to revision and may be incomplete depending upon changing conditions. The Department assumes no liability if injuries or damages result from this information. This map is not intended to support emergency dispatch.

1.5 Miles  
1 inch = 1.83 miles

**LEGEND**

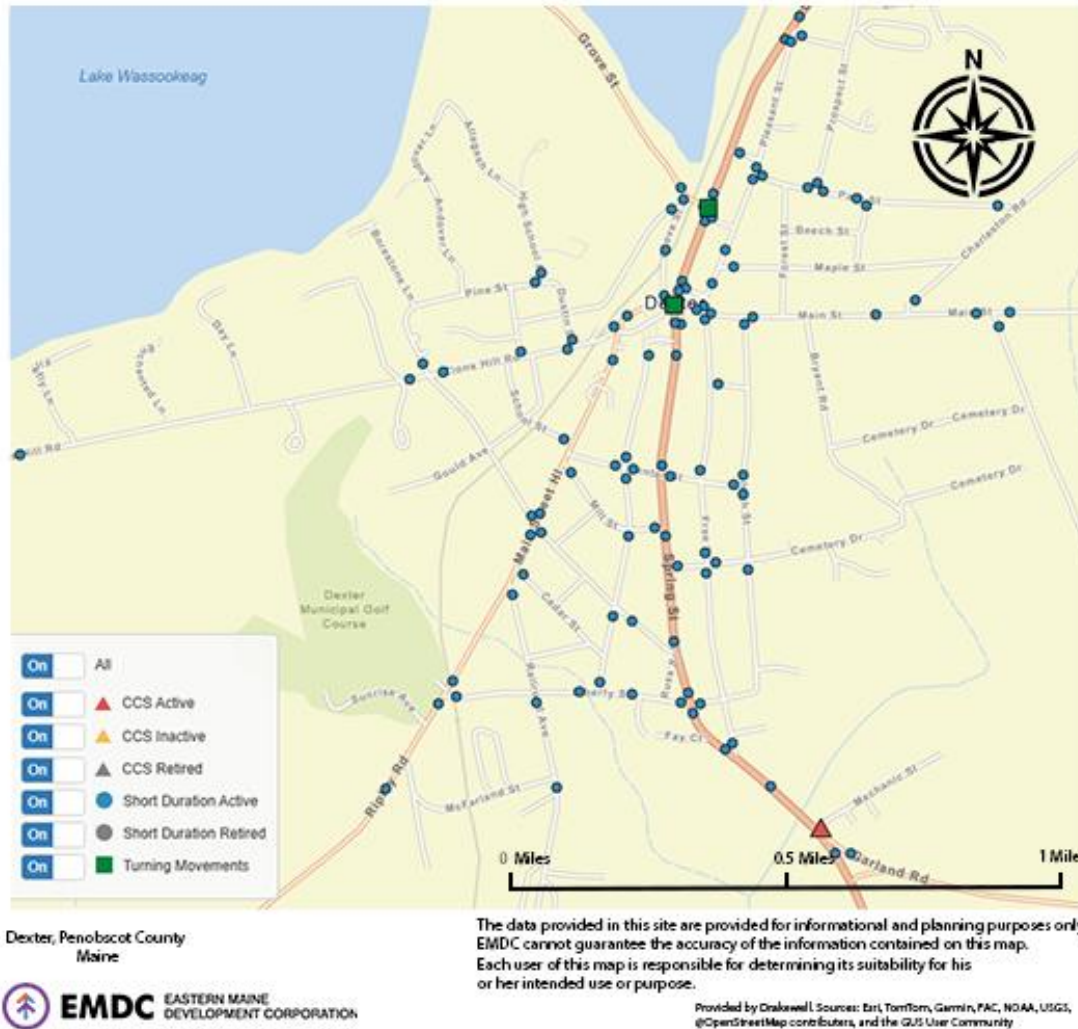
MEDOT.HCP_5	MEDOT.HCP_4	MEDOT.HCP_3	MEDOT.HCP_2	MEDOT.HCP_1	Building
HCP	HCP	HCP	HCP	HCP	Building
Priority 1	Priority 1	Priority 1	Priority 1	Priority 1	
Priority 2	Priority 2	Priority 2	Priority 2	Priority 2	
Priority 3	Priority 3	Priority 3	Priority 3	Priority 3	
Priority 4	Priority 4	Priority 4	Priority 4	Priority 4	



**Map 3.0** State Routes in Dexter, ME, colored in accordance with highway Corridor Priority. 2025. Source: MaineDOT.

The reports for traffic count data can also be found on the Maine DOT Website.<sup>10</sup> Data is taken from the sites seen in Map 3.1, where reports can be downloaded. This map shows only Dexter’s village center collection spots.

## Dexter, Maine Traffic Data Points



**Map 3.1:** AADT Data points in Village Center of Dexter, ME, 2025. Source: MaineDOT.

<sup>10</sup> Traffic Count Data. MaineDOT. <https://mainedottrafficdata.drakewell.com/publicmultinodemap.asp>



**Table 3.0:** Dexter, ME 2025 Road Inventory. Green Highlight indicates State Aided Road.

Road Name	Maint. Division	Direction of Travel		Length (Miles)	Surface Type	Traffic Volume	Condition 2025
		(From Street)	(To Street)				
ABBOT HILL ROAD	Town	Pine Street	Abbot Apartments	0.25	Asphalt	Low	Good New Paving 2023
ACADIA STREET	Town	Church Street	Dead End	0.34	Asphalt	Medium	Poor shape both Sidewalk and Road, cracks and uneven
AIRPORT ROAD – 1	Town	Jennings Hill	Gravel	1.5	Asphalt	Medium	Fair, culvert needs grinding and repaved
AIRPORT ROAD – 2	Town	Airport Road-1	Dead End	1	Gravel	Medium	Good, grading yearly to remove pot holes.
AIRPORT ROAD – 3	Town	Route 7	Jennings Hill	0.7	Gravel	Medium	Fair, paving has cracks, gravel need grading every year for pot holes
ARNO ROAD	Town	Route 23	Dead End	0.83	Gravel	Low	Good, Needs Grading Every year for pot holes
BEECH STREET	Town	Elm Street	Forest Street	0.13	Asphalt	Low	Ground and paved 2024
BRYANT ROAD	Town	Main Street Hill	Cemetery	0.23	Asphalt	Low	Good, Paved 2020
BREWSTER STREET	Town	Crosby Street	Bus Garage	0.1	Asphalt	Low	Good paved 2023
BUGBEE ROAD	Town	Crockett Road	Dead End	0.43	Gravel	Low	Good, Needs Grading Every year for pot holes



<b>CAMBRIDGE ROAD</b>	State	Route 23	Town Line	1.72	Asphalt	High	Good, State Road we do winter maintenance, paved 2023 skim coat
<b>CARR ROAD</b>	Town	Upper Garland	Garland Road	0.59	Gravel	Low	Poor, bad during mud season- needs work
<b>CEDAR STREET</b>	Town	Main Street	Water Street	0.21	Asphalt	Medium	Good, Paved and ditched 2022
<b>CENTER</b>	Town	High Street	Main Street	0.31	Asphalt	Low	Fair, Water Street part need work-Hill both sides
<b>CHARLESTON ROAD- 1</b>	Town	Main Street Hill	to Gravel	1.7	Asphalt	Medium	Good, Paved 2022
<b>CHARLESTON ROAD- 2</b>	Town	Start of gravel	Kaeton Pond Road	0.96	Gravel	Medium	Good, Needs Grading Every year for pot holes
<b>CHARLESTON EXTENSION</b>	Town	Kaeton Pond Road Garland Line		0.8	Gravel	Low	Poor, Summer Maintenance only, Narrow, gravel needed on upper section
<b>CHURCH STREET</b>	State	Main Street	Arcadia Street	0.8	Asphalt	High	Good, State Road Rt 7, Paved 2020, side walks poor
<b>CLEVELAND AVENUE</b>	Town	Jackson Street	Dead End	0.08	Asphalt	Low	Good, Paved and ditchwork done 2023
<b>COMMON STREET</b>	Town	Church Street	Pleasant Street	0.06	Asphalt	Medium	Good, short street
<b>CRAWFORD ROAD- 1</b>	Town	Ripley Road	Corinna Town Line	0.6	Asphalt	Medium	Poor, alligatored pavement, needs di



<b>CRAWFORD ROAD-2</b>				0.66	Gravel	Medium	Good, Needs Grading Every year for pot holes
<b>CROCKETT ROAD-1</b>	Town	RT 23	#10 Gravel	0.57	Asphalt	Medium	Rough uneven, ditches need work
<b>CROCKETT ROAD-2</b>	Town	#10 North	Gravel RT23	0.95	Gravel	Medium	Good, Needs Grading Every year for pot holes
<b>CROSBY STREET</b>	Town	Pine Street	Zions Hill	0.12	Asphalt	Low	Paved 2023 to the school bus garage, shut down Zions Hill end in winter
<b>CROSS STREET</b>	Town	Church Street	Pleasant Street	0.05	Asphalt	Low	Good
<b>DAM STREET</b>	Town	Church Street	Grove Street	0.02	Asphalt	High	State Road paved 2021
<b>DEARTH ROAD</b>	Town	Silvers Mills Road	Dead End	0.1	Gravel	Low	Fair, needs brush cut back, very short road
<b>DEXTER STREET</b>	Town	School Street	Zions Hill	0.12	Asphalt	Low	Paved 2023
<b>DUNN ROAD</b>	Town	Garland Road	Dead End	1.2	Gravel	Low	Good /Poor needs gravel on corner, Needs Grading Every year for pot holes
<b>DUSTIN STREET</b>	Town	Zions Hill	Pine Street	0.12	Asphalt	Low	Good paved 2023
<b>EATON ROAD</b>	Town	Cambridge Road	Dead End	1.25	Gravel	Low	Poor, needs gravel gets soft in spring time
<b>ELM STREET</b>	Town	Park Street	Maple Street	0.12	Asphalt	Low	Poor, cracks, needs ditch work



<b>FANJOY ROAD</b>	Town	Railroad Avenue	Dead End	0.18	Gravel	Low	good, Dead End, narrow
<b>FARRAR ROAD</b>	Town	RT 7 North	Dead End	0.3	Gravel	Low	Good, Needs Grading Every year for pot holes
<b>FAY COURT</b>	Town	Liberty Street	Dead End	0.18	Asphalt	Low	Good, paved 2021
<b>FELLOWS ROAD</b>	Town	RT 23	Dead End	0.14	Gravel	Low	Good, Needs Grading Every year for pot holes
<b>FERN ROAD</b>	Town	Garland Road	Main Street Hill	1.27	Gravel	Medium	Good, Needs Grading Every year for pot holes, gets lots of use for dirt road
<b>FOREST STREET</b>	Town	Main Street Hill	Park Street	0.23	Asphalt	Medium	Bad, needs new pavement, lots of cracks and uneven
<b>FREE STREET</b>	Town	Spring Street	Main Street Hill	0.78	Asphalt	Medium	Good Paved 2019
<b>GARLAND ROAD</b>	Town	Spring Street	Garland Town Line	3.91	Asphalt	High	State road , winter maintenance only, paved 2024, skim coat
<b>GILBERT ROAD</b>	Town	Old Dover Road	Turn Around	0.23	Gravel	Low	Good, needs grading every year for pot holes
<b>GOFF ROAD</b>	Town	Route 23	Sangerville Town Line	0.56	Asphalt	Medium	Good, paved 2023, floods during heavy rains
<b>GOULD AVENUE</b>	Town	Lincoln Street	Dead End	0.3	Asphalt	Low	Good, paved 2023



<b>GROVE STREET-1</b>	Town	Main Street	Dam Street Intersection	0.19	Asphalt	High	Poor, pot holes, cracks, uneven, UD needs to put in new water lines
<b>GROVE STREET- 2</b>	Town	Dam Street Intersection	Float Bridge	0.5	Asphalt	High	Good, State Road, winter maintenance only
<b>HALL STREET</b>	Town	Church Street	Pleasant Street	0.05	Asphalt	Low	Good paved 2019
<b>HIGH STREET</b>	Town	Main Street Hill	Liberty Street	0.66	Asphalt	Medium	Good paved 2019
<b>HIGHLAND AVENUE</b>	Town	Grove Street	Dustin Street	0.38	Asphalt	Medium	Good, did bank work in 2022, paved 2023
<b>HIGHWAY GARAGE ROAD</b>	Town	Railroad Avenue	Town Garage	0.1	Asphalt	Low	Good, paved 2022
<b>ISLAND AVENUE</b>	Town	Church Street	Dead End	0.07	Gravel	Low	Good, narrow
<b>JACKSON STREET</b>	Town	Silvers Mills Road	Cleveland Avenue	0.2	Asphalt	Low	Good paved 2022
<b>JENNINGS HILL ROAD</b>	Town	Garland Road	Airport Road	0.83	Asphalt	High	Poor, hill in bad shape from frost heaves paved 2015
<b>JEWETT DRIVE</b>	Town	Railroad Avenue	Dead End	0.1	Gravel	Low	Good, narrow
<b>KAETON POND ROAD</b>	Town	Charleston Road	Dead End	0.2	Gravel	Low	Good, needs ditch work, needs grading every year for pot holes
<b>KING STREET</b>	Town	Free Street	Dead End	0.06	Gravel	Low	Poor, paving coming up lots of cracks, culverts need replacing



<b>LAKEVIEW AVENUE</b>	Town	Church Street	Prospect Street	0.11	Asphalt	Medium	Good paved 2022
<b>LIBERTY STREET</b>	Town	Lower Main Street	High Street	0.56	Asphalt	High	Good paved 2021
<b>LINCOLN STREET</b>	Town	Spring Street	Pine Street	0.79	Asphalt	High	Good, paved 2023
<b>MAIN STREET</b>	State	Spring/Church Intersection	Skimmer Lane	0.8	Asphalt	High	Good, in town is town, then state road, paved 2024
<b>MAIN STREET HILL</b>	Town	Spring/Church Intersection	Upper Garland	0.95	Asphalt	High	Good/poor, cracks paved 2019
<b>MAPLE STREET</b>	Town	Pleasant Street	Charleston Road	0.41	Asphalt	Medium	Poor, cracks, needs ditch work, uneven
<b>McCLELLAN STREET</b>	Town	Cedar Street	Lincoln Street	0.07	Asphalt	Low	Good paved 2022
<b>McFARLAND STREET</b>	Town	Railroad Avenue	Skimmer Lane	0.26	Asphalt	Low	Good paved 2022
<b>MECHANIC STREET</b>	Town	Spring Street	Dead End	0.25	Asphalt	Low	Poor, cracks, needs ditch work, uneven
<b>MIDDLESEX AVENUE</b>	Town	Main Street	Parking Lot	0.08	Asphalt	Low	Street discontinued
<b>MILL STREET</b>	Town	Main Street	Spring Street	0.22	Asphalt	Medium	Poor, cracks, needs ditch work, uneven
<b>NELSON ROAD</b>	Town	Charleston Road	Dead End	0.2	Gravel	Low	Good, needs grading every year for pot holes
<b>NUMBER 10 ROAD</b>	Town	Crockett Road	Dead End	1.9	Gravel	Low	Good, needs grading every year for pot holes, needs brush to be cut back
<b>O'BRIEN ROAD</b>	Town	Main Street Hill	Dead End	0.12	Gravel	Low	Good, short, needs grading every year for pot holes



<b>OAK STREET</b>	Town	Church Street	Prospect Street	0.05	Asphalt	Low	Good paved 2022
<b>OLD DOVER ROAD</b>	Town	RT 7	RT 7 North	0.98	Gravel	Low	Good, needs grading every year for pot holes
<b>OLD POND ROAD</b>	Town	Shore Road	Dead End	0.3	Gravel	Low	Good needs grading every year for pot holes
<b>ORCHARD STREET</b>	Town	Lincoln Street	Mill Street	0.09	Asphalt	Low	Poor, cracks
<b>OWLESBORO</b>	Town	Old Dover Road	Dead End	1.53	Gravel	Low	Poor, needs ditch work, gravel, brush cut back, summer maintenance only
<b>PARK STREET</b>	Town	Pleasant Street	Charleston Road	0.47	Asphalt	Medium	Good paved 2022
<b>PINE STREET</b>	Town	Zions Hill	Dustin Street	0.25	Asphalt	Medium	Good paved 2023
<b>PLEASANT RIDGE ROAD</b>	Town	Number 10 Road	Dead End	0.42	Gravel	Low	Good, needs grading every year for pot holes
<b>PLEASANT STREET</b>	Town	Main Hill Street	Park Street	0.52	Asphalt	Medium	Good from main street heel to common paved 2019, rest poor has cracks and uneven
<b>POST OFFICE ROAD</b>	Town	Main Hill Street	Spring Street	0.04	Asphalt	Medium	Good paved 2019
<b>PROSPECT STREET</b>	Town	Park Street	Dead End	0.46	Asphalt	Medium	Good paved 2022
<b>PULLEN ROAD</b>	Town	Garland Road	Garland Line	0.93	Gravel	Low	Good needs grading every



							year for pot holes
<b>RAILROAD AVENUE</b>	Town	Lower Main Street	Corinna Town Line	1.84	Asphalt	Medium	Good/poor State road paved 2022 slim coat
<b>RIPLEY ROAD</b>	State	Skimmer Lane	Ripley Town Line	2.15	Asphalt	High	Good State road winter maintenance only paved 2024 skim coat
<b>RUSS STREET</b>	Town	Liberty Street	Dead End	0.07	Asphalt	Low	Good/poor, cracks
<b>SCHOOL STREET</b>	Town	Lower Main Street	Zions Hill	0.21	Asphalt	Medium	Good paved and ditch 2022
<b>SECOND STREET</b>	Town	Mechanic Street	Dead End	0.03	Asphalt	Low	Poor, short, cracks
<b>SHEPHERD ROAD</b>	Town	Number 10 Road	Mckusi ck Fields	0.43	Gravel	Low	Good/poor Single lane road, summer maintenance only
<b>SHORE ROAD</b>	Town	RT 23	Ripley Town Line	2.5	Asphalt	Medium	Poor first half, cracks, ditches need to be done, second half good paved 2022
<b>SILVERS MILLS ROAD</b>	Town	RT 7	Sangerville Town Line	1.4	Asphalt	Medium	Good/poor, cracks, need brush cut back
<b>SKIMMER LANE</b>	Town	Ripley Road	Dead End	0.18	Asphalt	Low	Good paved 2021
<b>SPRING STREET</b>	State	Main Street RT 7 Intersection	Garland Road	1	Asphalt	High	Good State road winter maintenance only paved 2019



<b>SPOONER STREET</b>	Town	Garland Road	Spring Street	0.06	Asphalt	Low	Poor, edges of road coming apart
<b>ST. FRANCIS STREET</b>	Town	Railroad Avenue	Cedar Street	0.11	Asphalt	Low	Good paved 2021
<b>SUMMER STREET</b>	Town	Free Street	High Street	0.06	Asphalt	Low	Good paved 2023
<b>SUMMIT ROAD</b>	Town	Abbot Hill Road	Dead End	0.15	Asphalt	Low	Good
<b>SUNRISE AVENUE</b>	Town	Lower Main Street	Dead End	0.23	Asphalt	Low	Good, paved 2022
<b>TOWN FARM ROAD</b>	Town	Ripley Road	Dead End	0.17	Gravel	Low	Good, grading for pot holes annually
<b>TREMBLAY ROAD</b>	Town	RT 23	Dead End	0.55	Gravel	Low	Good grading yearly for pot holes
<b>TROTTER PARK ROAD</b>	Town	RT7	Dead End	0.21	Gravel	Low	Good, grading annually for pot holes
<b>UPPER GARLAND ROAD-1</b>	Town	O'Brien Road Intersection	Wing Road	1.13	Asphalt	Medium	Poor alligatored pavement, pot holes, edges bad, needs ditching
<b>UPPER GARLAND ROAD-2</b>	Town	Wing Road	Garland Line	1.8	Gravel	Medium	Good, needs yearly grading for potholes
<b>VALLEY AVENUE</b>	Town	RT 7	Dead End	0.06	Gravel	Low	Good, needs annual grading
<b>WATER STREET</b>	Town	Municipal Parking Lot	Liberty Street	0.67	Asphalt	Medium	Poor, cracks alligatored pavement, uneven, brush needs to be cut back
<b>WING ROAD</b>	Town	Garland Road	Upper Garland Road	0.49	Asphalt	Low	Poor, needs gravel, very soft in spring



<b>WINTER STREET</b>	Town	Spring Street	Cemetery	0.22	Asphalt	Medium	Good from main street to High Street, from High Street to cemetery cracks, ditching
<b>ZIONS HILL</b>	Town	Main Street	Ripley Town Line	2.45	Asphalt	Medium	Good/poor, needs culverts pavement to be ground and repaved

The community currently does not have local access management or traffic permitting measures in place, nor mechanisms to prevent or shorten dead-end roads. Road network expansion is not a regular occurrence in Dexter.

### ***Maine Department of Transportation Work Plan***

Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) produces a work plan for roads and facilities every 3 years. Below is Dexter's work plan for 2025-2026.

<b>Road</b>	<b>Work Plan Year</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Scope of Work</b>	<b>Estimated Costs</b>
Dexter Regional Airport	2026	Allocated funds for the Dexter Regional Airport.	Reconstruct and pave west access-repair drainage, cracks, and overlay	\$435,000
Dexter Regional Airport	2027	Allocated funds for the Dexter Regional Airport.	Aviation Runway/Taxiway New Construction	\$200,000
Dexter Regional Airport	2030	Allocated funds for the Dexter Regional Airport.	Aviation Runway/Taxiway New Construction	\$1,800,000

**Table 3.1:** Maine Department of Transportation Planned Capital and Maintenance Work 2025-2027 (Dexter Maine). Source: Maine Department of Transportation. <https://www.maine.gov/mdot/projects/workplan/data/workplan/town/Dexter.pdf>

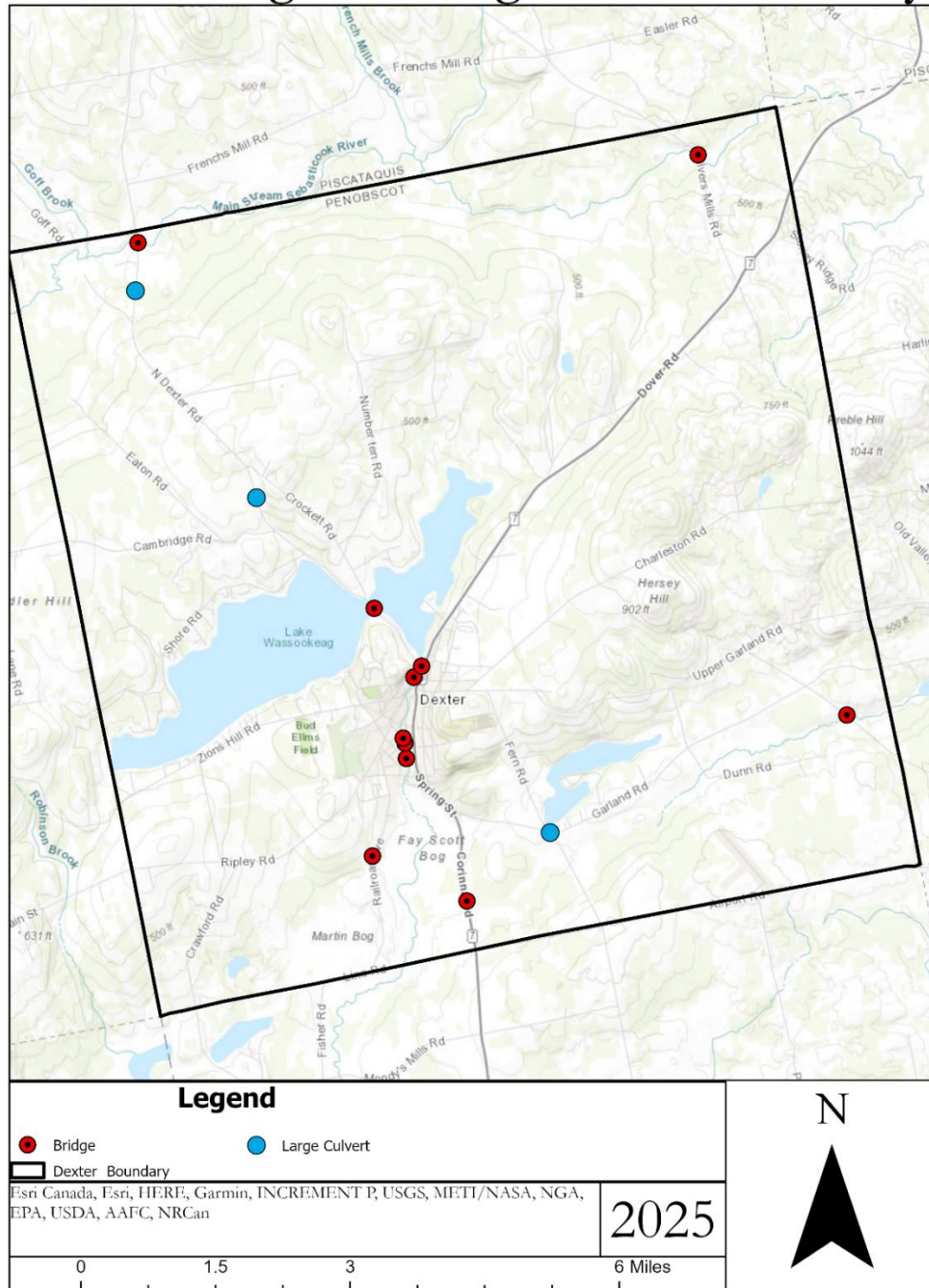
### ***Bridges and Large Culverts***

The Maine Department of Transportation maintains an inventory of bridges and culverts in the state, including those in Dexter. Regular inspections ensure these structures meet safety standards and function effectively. Proper maintenance of bridges and culverts is essential for



preventing disruptions and ensuring the resilience of the transportation network. There are currently 11 bridges in Dexter as shown in Figure 3.0. There are 2 additional bridges on the town line with Corinna. Of these 11, airport road is Dexter at least 5 are maintained by the town. The bridges are all in good shape, with the Water Street bridge needing some work done.

### Dexter Bridge and Large Culvert Inventory

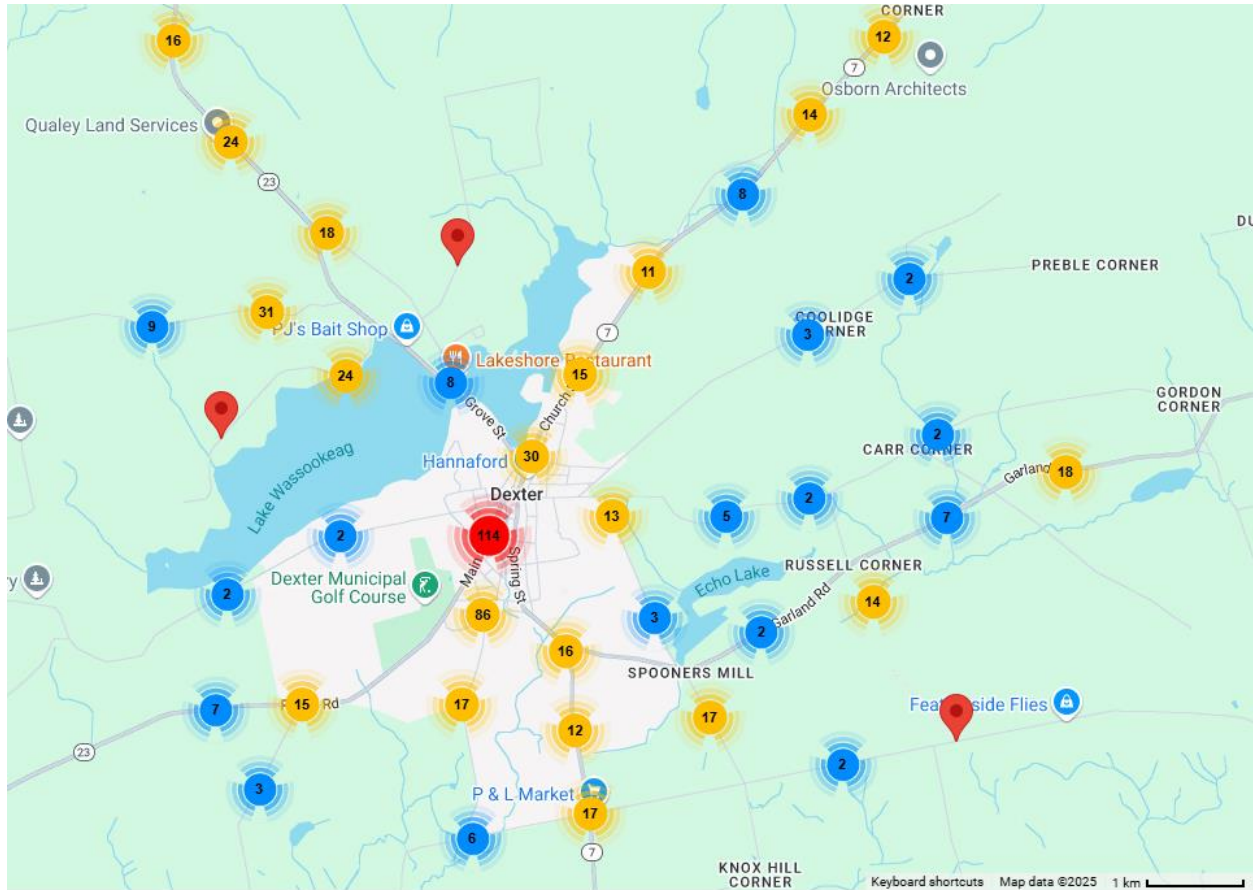


Map 3.2: Dexter, ME Bridge and Large Culvert Inventory 2025. Source: Maine DOT.



## Traffic and Safety

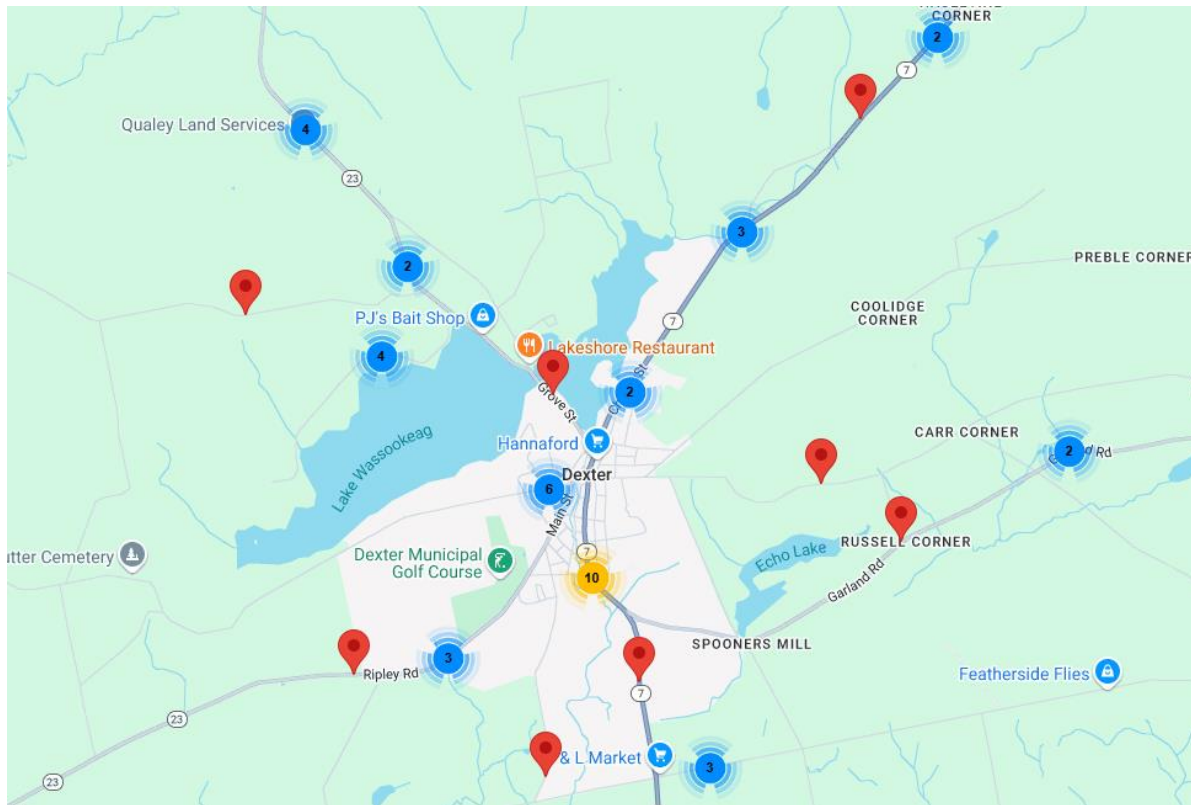
The map below shows crashes over the last 10 years. There were 639 crashes during this period, making the average crash rate 64 crashes per year. The most common type of crash is when a car goes off-road, closely followed by hitting a deer. 75.7% of crashes in Dexter result only in property damage, in-line with the 76.0% of crashes statewide. More crashes happened in the winter (November-January). Looking more closely at the data, most crashes happened around work hours (8 am, 12 pm, and 4-5 pm) in town. These trends are similar to most communities in Maine.



**Map 3.3:** Crashes in Dexter, ME from 2015-2025. 639 crashes are mapped. Source: Maine Public Crash Query Tool, Maine DOT, <https://mdotapps.maine.gov/MaineCrashPublic/PublicQueryMap>, obtained May, 2025

Taking a closer look at recent crash data, Dexter saw 50 crashes in 2024 (Graphic 3.1). During this year, most incidents were caused by going off-road or trying to avoid/hitting deer, and most crashes occurred between November and February. During this time, most crashes occurred in town on Route 7, or along Ripley Road.





**Map 3.4:** Vehicle crashes in Dexter, ME in 2024. 50 crashes were recorded. Source: Maine Public Crash Query Tool, Maine DOT, <https://mdotapps.maine.gov/MaineCrashPublic/PublicQueryMap>, obtained May, 2025

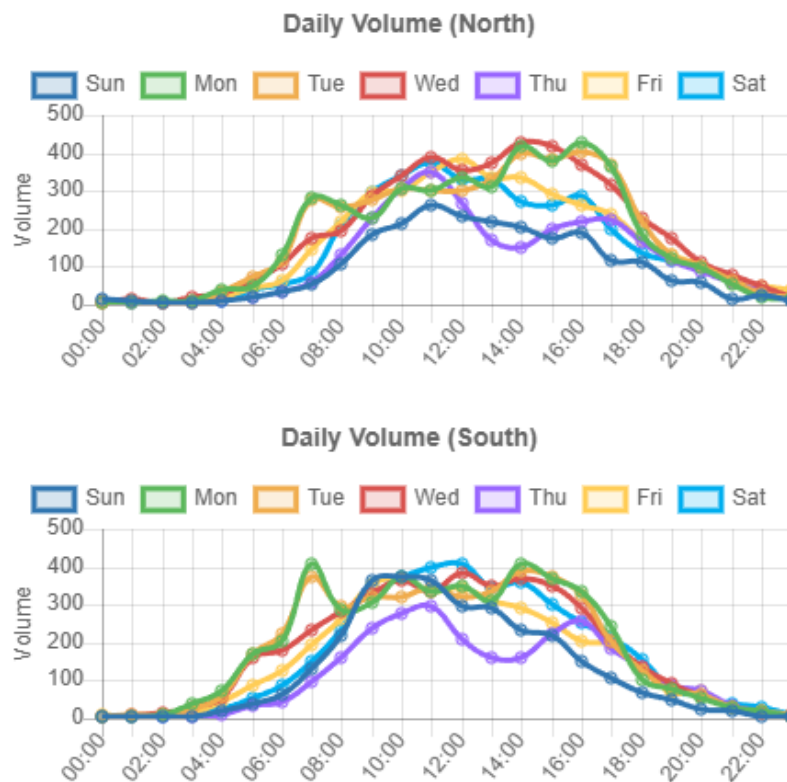
Currently, the most concern lies with the intersection of Route 7 and Route 23, just south of downtown Dexter. This intersection does not see many crashes, but near-misses that leave most residents more wary of driving through the area. Looking closer at high-crash areas. Airport Road/ Line Road, and Railroad Ave are often spoken of as high-risk areas by residents (shown on next page). This may be fixed within the planning period by adding speed bumps or other infrastructure to improve safety.



Most daily traffic in Dexter is actively monitored at two points (Corner of Corinna and Garland Rd., and on Route 94). Figure 3.1 shows the Daily Volume of Cars coming into and leaving town via Route 7, where traffic peaks in correspondence with the 9-5 workday and 7-3 school schedule.



The trend reflects patterns described by residents. Traffic here has also been rising steadily since 2015, with only a slight interruption during the 2021-2022 period, suggesting an effect corresponding with increased remote work and schooling.<sup>5</sup> After the 2021 dip, traffic volumes have since increased.



**Figure 3.1:** Average Daily Traffic Volumes on Route 7 in Dexter, Maine. Source MaineDOT<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [https://mainedottrafficdata.drakewell.com/sitedashboard.asp?node=MAINE\\_DOT\\_CCS&cosit=1319140045](https://mainedottrafficdata.drakewell.com/sitedashboard.asp?node=MAINE_DOT_CCS&cosit=1319140045)



## Public Parking Facilities

There is plenty of parking available in Dexter. Big events are sometimes crowded, especially by the lake. Dexter provides parking through municipal lots, street parking, and facilities at public buildings. Assessing current parking availability and future needs can help accommodate residents and visitors, especially during community events or peak tourism seasons. More specific information about available municipal parking can be found in the Recreation Chapter.

## Connectivity

**By Rail:** Dexter does not have direct passenger rail service. The closest Amtrak station is in Brunswick, approximately 93 miles away.

**By Air:** Dexter has a well-maintained airport for smaller crafts. The nearest major airport is Bangor International Airport, located about 35 miles from town, offering flights to various destinations along the East Coast.



**By (Private) Bus:** Intercity bus services, such as those provided by Greyhound and Concord Coach Lines, operate out of Bangor, approximately 35 miles from Dexter.

**By Public Transit:** Dexter currently lacks public transportation options. Given the town's rural setting and low population density, establishing sustainable public transit services presents challenges. The town may explore demand-responsive transit solutions to benefit residents without personal vehicles.

**By Taxi/Ride Share/Ride Services:** Traditional taxi services are not readily available in Dexter. Ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft may operate in the area, but their availability is limited and depends on the driver's presence. Organizations like Lynx offer transportation services in Penobscot County, which may serve Dexter residents. Transportation information can be found on the Penquis website<sup>12</sup>

## Airport

Dexter Regional Airport is owned and operated by the town of Dexter, and has two runways that mostly serve single-engine aircraft. The airspace above the town, as well as the surrounding towns, is owned by Dexter in order to keep it clear for users. The town has also maintained trees and plant life to prevent hazards.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.penquis.org/services/transportation/>



## ***Community Wishes***

The future of Dexter’s multimodal transportation framework is predicated upon five interrelated services: taxi operations, freight logistics, air-side capacity, active-transport infrastructure, and rail connectivity. Dexter aims to increase these modes of transport without adding to the car-dependent road infrastructure. In order to increase its walkability, rideshare opportunities, airport traffic, and greater access to rail, the town may pursue several options.

Dexter may employ a grant-supported approach to expand the transportation network. A phased rollout of a taxi cooperative funded by potential rural transit grants, and supported by Private-public partnerships would be evaluated against on-time departure rates and reductions in single-occupancy vehicle trips. A county-level freight demand study, using origin-destination matrices and commodity-flow surveys, would underpin Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) applications aimed at shifting some percent of local truck traffic to rail. Airport improvements will follow FAA AIP guidelines, with a marketing plan to increase annual operations and corresponding revenue gains. A sidewalk project, easily justified through a health-economics cost-benefit analysis (incorporating metrics such as estimated reductions in BMI and cardiovascular risk), may seek funding via MaineDOT’s Transportation Alternatives Program. Finally, a feasibility study would inform grant proposals to establish passenger rail or shuttle connections. These wishes and associated funding options are just a few examples of what the town may achieve in the planning period or beyond. These routes would certainly help achieve greater mobility, economic resilience, and community well-being, and foster greater community satisfaction on the whole.

## ***Strategies***

Develop or continue to update a prioritized improvement, maintenance, and repair plan for the community’s transportation network.

Initiate or actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts.

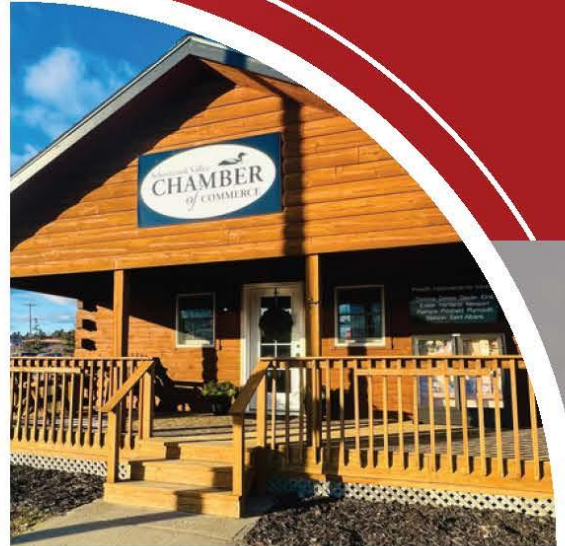
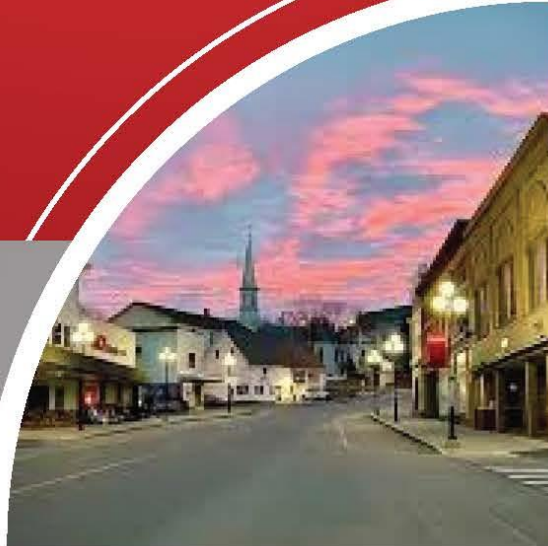
"Maintain, enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to address or avoid conflicts with:

- a. Policy objectives of the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (23 M.R.S.A. §73);
- b. State access management regulations pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704; and
- c. State traffic permitting regulations for large developments pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704-A."

Maintain, enact or amend ordinance 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.



# ECONOMY



# **ECONOMY**

## **State Goal**

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

## **Policies and Town Goal(s)**

To support the type of economic development activity the community desires, reflecting the community's role in the region.

To make a financial commitment, if necessary, to support desired economic development, including needed public improvements.

To coordinate with regional development corporations and surrounding towns as necessary to support desired economic development.

Look into expanding the tourism industry

## **Economic Overview**

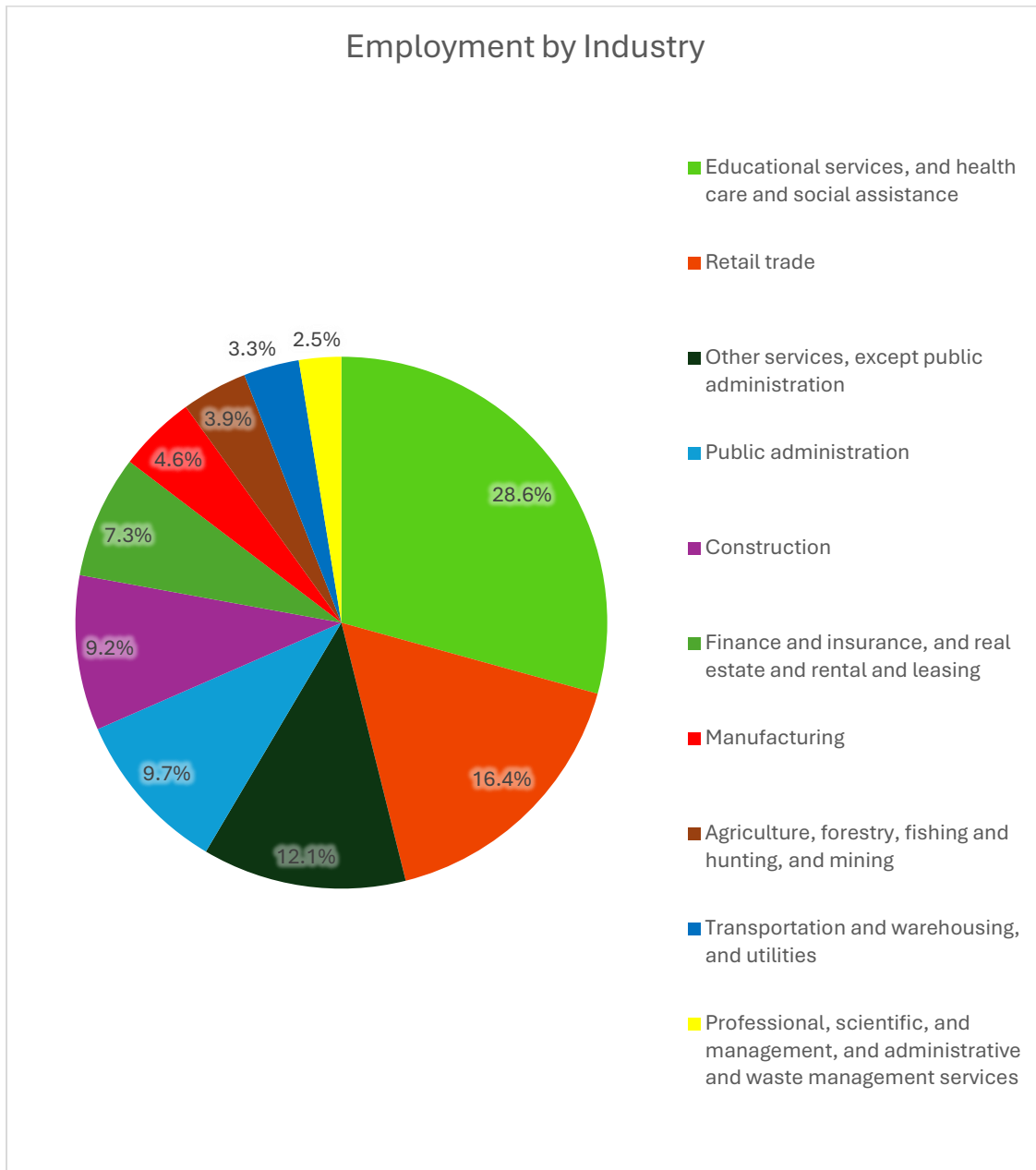
Dexter's economy has experienced periods of transformation reflective of broader regional and national trends. Once a thriving manufacturing center known for its shoe industry, Dexter has shifted toward a more service-oriented and diversified local economy in recent decades. While economic challenges persist, especially, in light of rural population trends and shifting employment landscapes, the town has shown resilience and potential for growth by leveraging its geographic location, heritage, natural resources, unique celebrations, and strong community spirit.

The town is not undergoing a dramatic economic transformation, but subtle shifts are impacting the population and municipal tax base. The closure of traditional manufacturing industries has affected employment levels and tax revenues; however, the town is making deliberate efforts to reposition itself. Dexter's employment base is now more spread across healthcare, education, retail, and small business sectors. Many residents commute to nearby service centers like Bangor, Newport, or Dover-Foxcroft for work, underscoring Dexter's role within a regional labor market. In turn, the community has become a desirable residential location for those seeking more affordable housing and rural quality of life within commuting distance of larger job markets.

In total, the civilian workforce (ages 16 and over) of Dexter was 1831 in 2023. As seen in Figure 4.1, the workforce is more concentrated in the educational services, as well as health care and social assistance. Looking deeper, this industry includes occupations like community and social



service occupations, legal occupations, educational instruction, library occupations, arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations. Of those, Dexter sees more employment in schools and those that involve medical services.



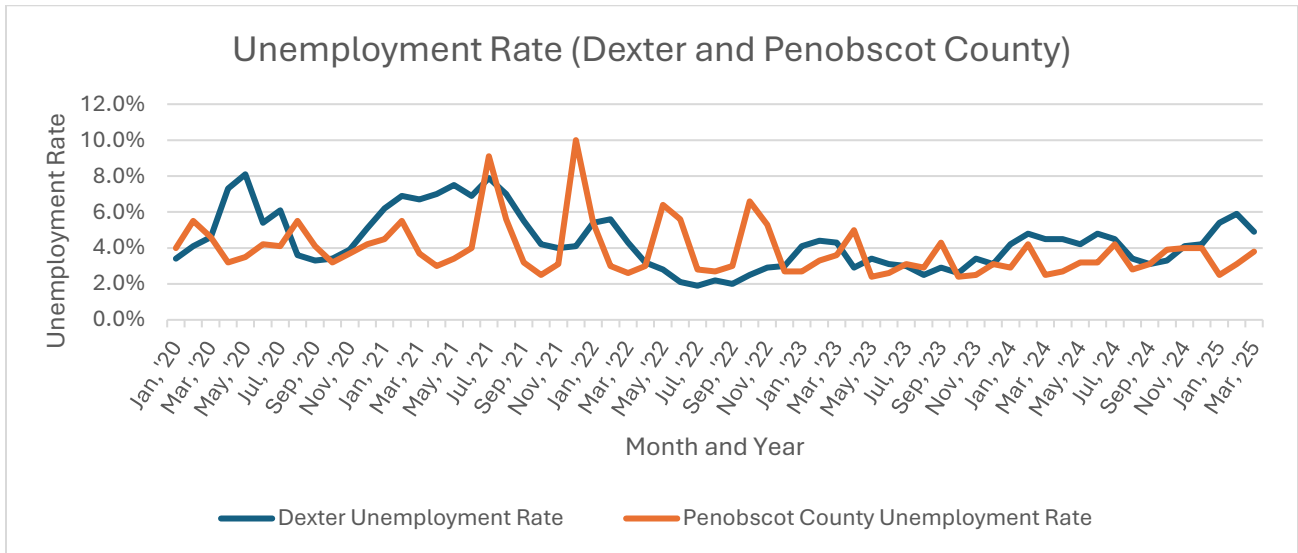
**Figure 4.1:** Employment by Industry in Dexter, ME 2023. Source: American Community Survey.

As for unemployment, the last 2 years have seen less volatility as our economy transitions to the pre-pandemic economic norms. While Penobscot County goes through regular seasonal changes, Dexter shows a more even flow between summer and winter. Figure 4.2 shows a pattern of increased stability between summer and winter months as we get closer to 2025. This may

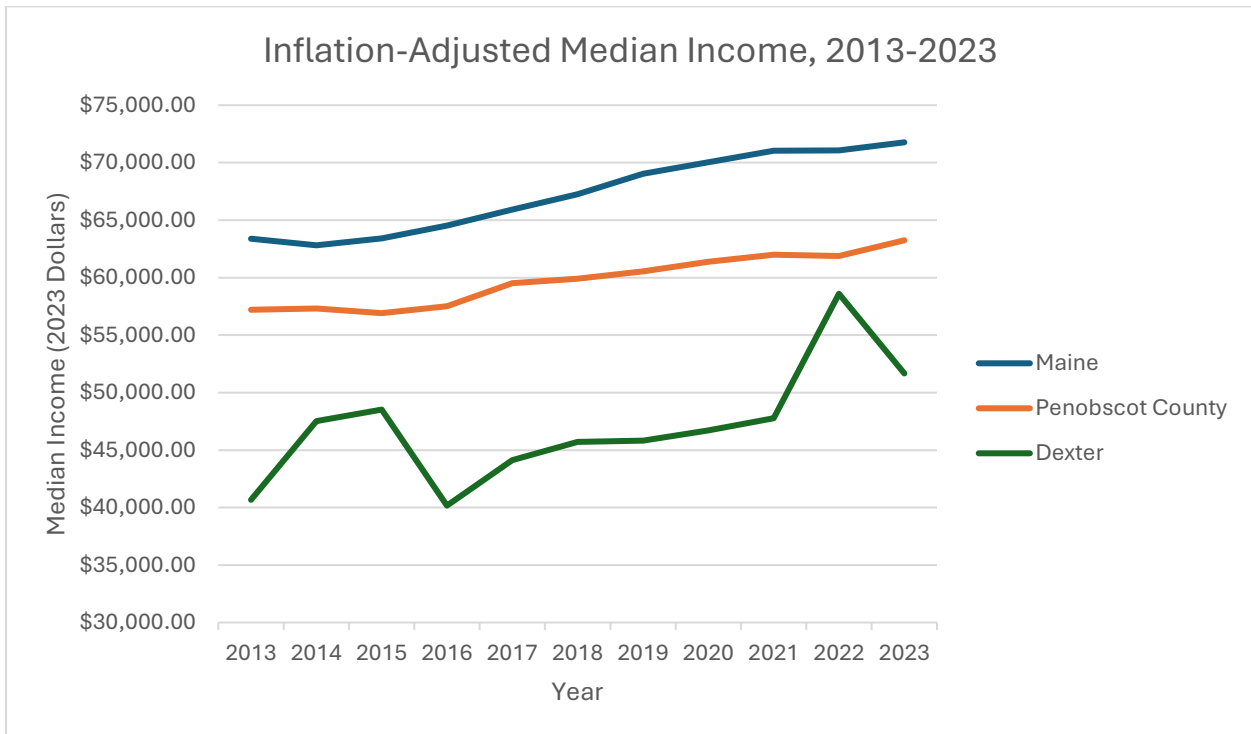


indicate that although Dexter is dependent on tourism, it is increasingly serving a stable, year-round population of workers and consumers.

Both sales and real income in Dexter has been on a turbulent-but-upwards trajectory for years, but income levels remain significantly lower than median incomes in the wider county and state.

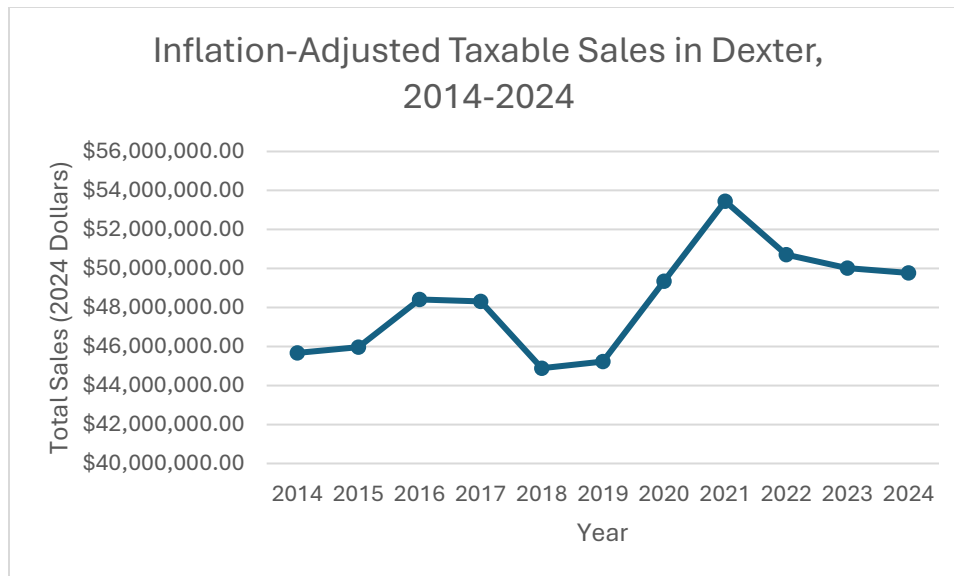


**Figure 4.2:** Unemployment Rate for Penobscot County and Dexter, Maine. 2020-2025. Source: Maine State Economist.



**Figure 4.3:** The inflation-adjusted median income for Dexter and surrounding regions. All values are in 2023 dollars. Source: Census ACS 5-year survey, BLS for inflation adjustment





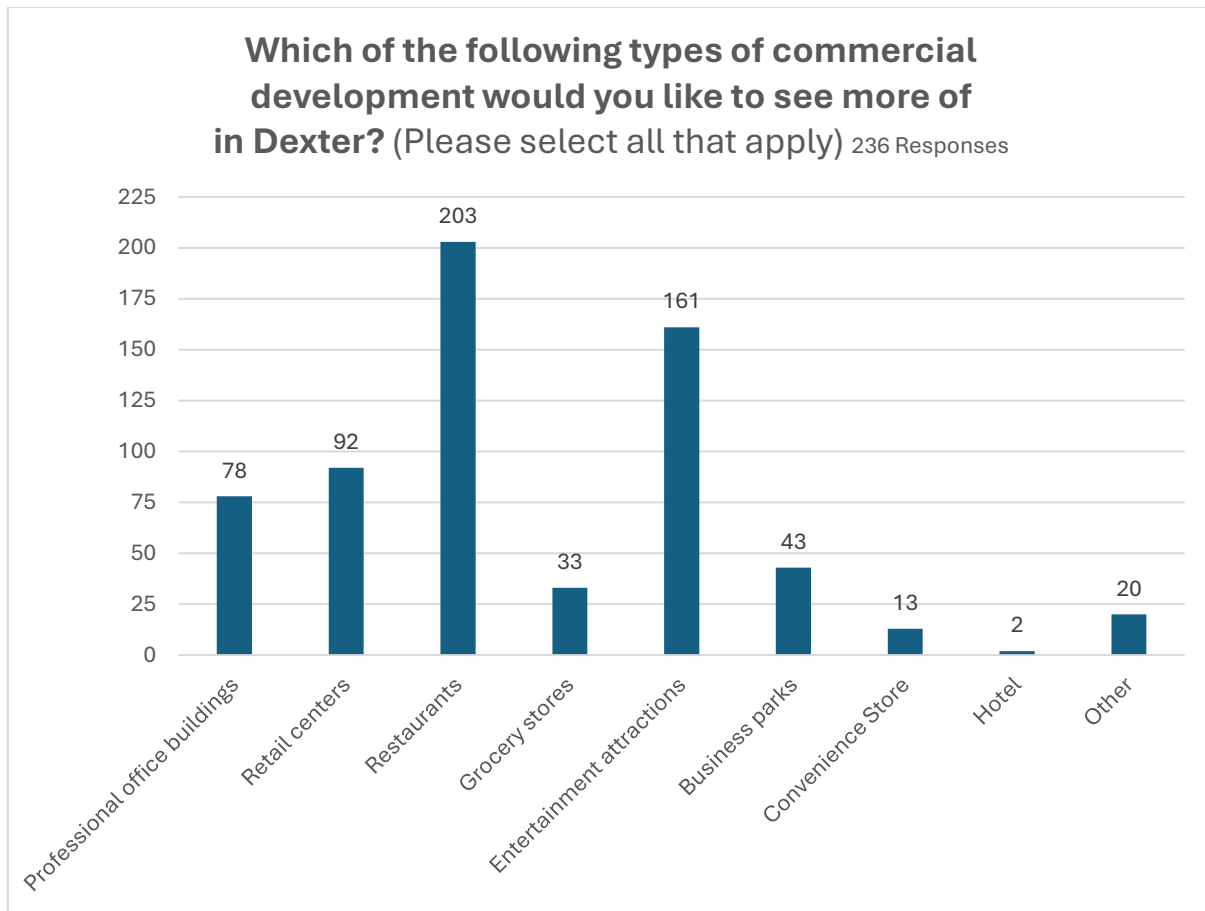
**Figure 4.4:** The inflation-total taxable sales for Dexter, 2014-2024. All values are in 2024 dollars. Sources: Maine Revenue Services for data, BLS for inflation adjustment

## ***Community Buy-In***

Decidedly, residents of Dexters showed most preference for more restaurants and entertainment attractions. There are currently several restaurants in Dexter, offering diverse cuisine options for residents and beyond. Even so, residents described an interest in expanding Dexter’s dining options.

Entertainment attractions can be described as natural locations, objects, or constructed facilities that have a special appeal to both tourists and local visitors. Dexter currently has the lake, its fitness center, the nonprofit community space “Gatherings 4 Main Street”, tennis courts, a golf course, a riding club, and more. More ephemerally, Dexter has the Maine Red Hot Dog Festival in August, which can draw upwards from 5,000 people to the town, a 4<sup>th</sup> of July boat parade, fishing derby, and quite a few other activities.





**Figure 4.4:** Community Survey Preferences in Dexter, ME. Source: Town of Dexter Community Survey

## ***Commercial and Industrial Development***

Dexter today offers a compelling mix of under-utilized industrial land and a stable downtown commercial core, setting the stage for targeted commercial growth that complements the town's heritage and natural assets. The two vacant, industrially-zoned parcels adjacent to the airport and the former Dexter Shoe site (Route 7 corridor) come equipped with three-phase power, making them prime candidates for light manufacturing, value-added wood products, or logistics operations. Unlocking these sites will require sewer and municipal water extensions along the Corinna town line, as well as adoption of performance standards, like landscaping buffers, design review, noise and lighting controls, to ensure compatibility with nearby residential and shoreland districts.

Dexter's economy also stands to benefit from expanding visitor-oriented enterprises that leverage Lake Wassookeag and the town's event calendar. Small-scale lodging (B&Bs, cabins), outdoor-recreation outfitters, and artisan studios may cluster near the lakefront. With broadband fully rolled out (Dexter pre-empted most fiber roll-outs by partnering early with Fidium Fiber) and a growing base of remote workers seeking affordable rural living, commercial spaces offering



co-working, tech support, and hospitality services can thrive without compromising the town's vibrant spirit.

Dexter is not short on commercial businesses. This year, 136 were recorded, not counting those that don't make enough to require registration (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1:** Types of Businesses present in Dexter, ME in 2025. Source: Town of Dexter

Business Type	Number of businesses	Business Type	Number of businesses
Auto Parts	2	Lawyer	1
Banks	3	Misc. Services	10
Bed/ Breakfast	2	Nursing Home/ Assisted Living Facility	2
Cannabis Shops	2	Plumbing	2
Car Sales	2	Property Maintenance	4
Childcare	3	Real Estate	3
Churches	8	Recreation	6
Construction/ Carpentry	17	Redemption	2
Convenience Stores	3	Salons	8
Dental	4	Schools	3
Electricians	3	Shopping	9
Flowers	3	Storage Units	2
Food and Beverage	10	Tack Shops	2
Grocery	2	Taxi	1
Hardware/ Lumber	2	Thrift Shop	2
Healthcare	5	Towing	2
Hotels	2	Veterinarian	2
Insurance	2	<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>

## *Closer to Home*

Small-scale enterprises, such as jewelry makers, auto repair, print studios, and food producers, already operate successfully in Dexter from home-based setups or shared workshop spaces. These types of businesses contribute to the economy, offer flexible employment options, and



foster local self-sufficiency. Encouraging home occupations through clear, supportive ordinance provisions can further stimulate grassroots entrepreneurship without compromising neighborhood character or residential quality of life.

As Dexter looks to strengthen its economic foundation, it may look into expanding its ordinance language to better accommodate and encourage home-based businesses. This would include simplifying permitting processes, identifying zones where low-impact home businesses are allowed by right, and clarifying use standards to ensure predictability for both entrepreneurs and neighbors. Making it easier to start and scale home enterprises is especially critical in rural areas like Dexter, where access to commercial space can be limited, but creativity and skill are abundant. Supporting these businesses not only aligns with the State of Maine's Economic Development Strategy, (particularly Strategy E, which calls for strengthening entrepreneurship through supportive infrastructure) but also empowers residents to generate income, build equity, and diversify the local economy from within.

Additionally, aligning these efforts with targeted infrastructure investments, updated performance standards, and localized marketing (even leveraging the Eastern Gazette's 17,000-reader reach) positions Dexter to attract light industry, grow its service sector, and reinforce its dual identity as both a lakeside destination and a dependable commercial hub for western Penobscot County.

## ***Major Employers***

The Dexter School Department remains a cornerstone of the local labor market, employing certified teachers, support staff, and administrators who not only educate the next generation but also drive community engagement through after-school programs and facility use. Hannaford offers a wide range of career paths in retail management, logistics, and customer service. In the manufacturing sector, A.E. Robinson and H.H. Brown continue the region's long tradition of precision production, providing skilled-labor positions and supporting ancillary supply chains. Completing the retail mix, Reny's, employs local residents in sales, warehousing, and merchandising roles. Together, these employers account for a significant share of Dexter's wage base, and reinforce the town's reputation as both a commercial destination and a manufacturing base.

To build on this foundation and attract new employment opportunities, Dexter has the opportunity to pursue initiatives like stronger partnerships with its schools and technical institute to align curricula with industry needs, ensuring a ready pipeline of skilled workers. leveraging its existing commercial infrastructure, Dexter may work with Hannaford and Reny's to help enhance supply-chain resilience and create new transportation and warehousing jobs. Also, as part of a broader placemaking effort, the Town may further invest in utility upgrades and workforce housing near industrial and commercial nodes to make Dexter more attractive to prospective employers and employees alike.



## ***Downtown Dexter***

A bustling downtown, or commercial center, is the cornerstone of an economically thriving town. Dexter's compact downtown remains stable, anchored by historic landmarks (Abbott Memorial Library, Universalist Church, etc.) and a cluster of restaurants, financial services, and media outlets with relatively low vacancy, which generally translates to signs of a slowly revitalizing village.

Within the traditional downtown, almost every storefront is occupied, yet incremental investment, like façade improvements, streetscape enhancements, and pedestrian lighting, could elevate the historic core into a more vibrant commercial hub. Further improving this space is key to future economic growth.



## ***Dexter and Tourism***

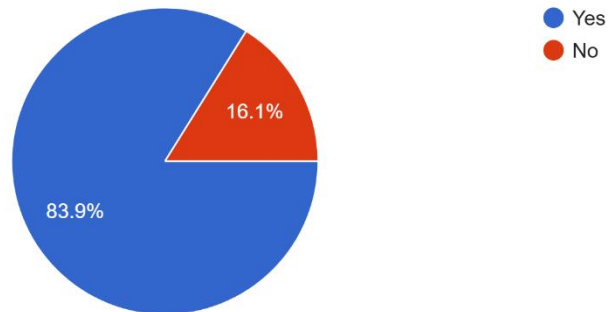
Tourism is widely viewed as vital to Dexter's economy. The town maintains its airport, public boat launches, and lakeside parks to serve summer visitors, and plans are underway to develop shoulder-season events.

Survey results indicate that tourism is important to Dexter's way of life, and that it should be expanded upon.



Is tourism important to Dexter?

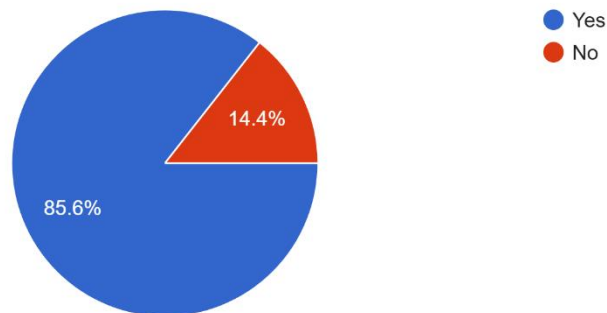
236 responses



**Figure 4.5:** Perceived importance of Tourism in Dexter, ME. Source: Dexter Community Survey.

Do you think tourism in Dexter should be promoted?

236 responses



**Figure 4.6:** Perceived importance of Tourism promotion in Dexter, ME. Source: Dexter Community Survey.

Tourism plays an important role in Dexter's economic vitality, bridging the town's historic character, natural beauty, and small-town hospitality to generate jobs, tax revenue, and off-season spending that benefit every corner of the community. Lake Wassookeag, its forested shoreline, and public boat launches draw anglers, paddlers, and weekenders from across central Maine; meanwhile, signature events (the aforementioned Maine Red Hot Dog Festival each August, the annual fishing derby, the summer concert series, Fourth-of-July boat parades, and various winter programs) transform Dexter into a year-round destination for families and outdoor enthusiasts.

Over the last several years, town leaders have quietly laid the groundwork for tourism growth. Dexter invested in maintaining its municipal airport, ensuring that small-plane pilots can fly in to



fish, golf, or enjoy a lakeside weekend. Public boat launches, picnic areas, and the “Bring Back the Beach” shoreline-restoration campaign are refreshing key recreation sites. Broadband upgrades and reliable three-phase power across town have also signaled to lodging operators, bed-and-breakfast owners, and remote-work visitors that Dexter is open for business.

### ***Economic Development Priorities***

The town of Dexter has not formally identified any specific economic development priorities beyond those in the previous comprehensive plan, nor is it part of any larger economic planning efforts beyond being within the region covered by the 2021-2025 Eastern Maine Development Corporation’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Dexter can still foster a more robust and resilient economy in the long run; a focus on supporting existing businesses and local entrepreneurs, alongside a diversified approach to industry clusters and technology investment, can lead to greater innovation and adaptability. Dexter has invested more so in education to help provide a good foundation for a skilled local workforce. Building on this principle, Dexter is unique in that it offers a summer camp that shows kids how to build on community pride and offer service to their community. Every 2 years, kids do community service around town (building ramps, painting homes, etc.). The largest cohort recorded was in 2019, with 450 kids working on 60 houses. The town tries to keep it at 250 now, and contributes about 70% of participants while (other towns make up remaining 30%). Furthermore, the town has invested in offices that act as a business incubation hub.

### ***Future Public Investments***

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a flexible finance tool used by municipalities to leverage new property tax revenue generated by a specific project or projects within a defined geographic district. This new revenue can be used to finance or maintain public or private projects. There are currently no TIF districts in Dexter. However, the Dexter Development Association (DDA), in partnership with EMDC (the town’s Economic Development District) and the Sebeco Valley Chamber of Commerce, is positioned to pursue CDBG grants and a future TIF district to finance these improvements. Such a TIF could capture incremental tax revenues from new commercial activity along Spring and Church Streets, funneling them back into public infrastructure and placemaking projects that encourage boutique retail, cafes, and professional services.

The Bring Back the Beach campaign also represents a targeted public investment in Dexter’s lakeside amenities that will yield both direct and spill-over economic benefits for the town and broader region. Through funding shoreline stabilization, water-quality improvements, and upgraded public facilities, the campaign will enhance safety, comfort, and year-round usability of Dexter’s premiere recreational asset. Improved beach infrastructure not only attracts day-trippers and vacationers (thereby boosting local lodging, dining, and retail sales), it also strengthens community well-being by providing healthy, inclusive outdoor spaces that raise property values and encourage longer stays. In turn, heightened visitation generates increased tax revenue and



creates seasonal and permanent jobs in hospitality, maintenance, and guiding services, reinforcing Dexter's identity as a lakeside destination.

Beyond the Bring Back the Beach initiative, Dexter's Comprehensive Plan will spotlight future public investments to diversify and deepen its economic base. Expanding high-speed broadband throughout town supports remote work, fosters tech-driven start-ups, and allows existing home-based businesses to reach global markets. Upgrading pedestrian and bicycle linkages between the downtown, school campus, and waterfront can stimulate foot traffic for local merchants and improve livability for residents of all ages. Together with continued use of TIF districts for targeted infrastructure and façade grants, these investments form a cohesive strategy to leverage public dollars for tangible economic growth, enhanced quality of life, and long-term community resilience.

## ***Strategies***

If appropriate, assign responsibility and provide financial support for economic development activities to the proper entity (e.g., a local economic development committee, a local representative to a regional economic development organization, the community's economic development director, a regional economic development initiative, or other).

Enact or amend local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development.

If public investments are foreseen to support economic development, identify the mechanisms to be considered to finance them (local tax dollars, creating a tax increment financing district, a Community Development Block Grant or other grants, bonding, impact fees, etc.)

Participate in any regional economic development planning efforts.



A scenic sunset over a lake. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow across the sky and reflecting on the water's surface. A large, leafy tree is in the foreground on the left, its branches framing the view. The sky is filled with colorful clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and blue. The water is calm with gentle ripples.

# WATER RESOURCES

# ***WATER RESOURCES***

## ***State Goal***

To protect the quality and manage the quantity of the State’s water resources, including lakes, aquifers, great ponds, estuaries, rivers, and coastal areas.

## ***Town Goal(s)***

To learn and enact practices to better maintain the current water levels in Lake Wassookeag.

To successfully administer the “Bring Back the Beach” campaign for indefinite, sustainable use of Lake Wasookeag

## ***Policies***

To protect current and potential drinking water sources.

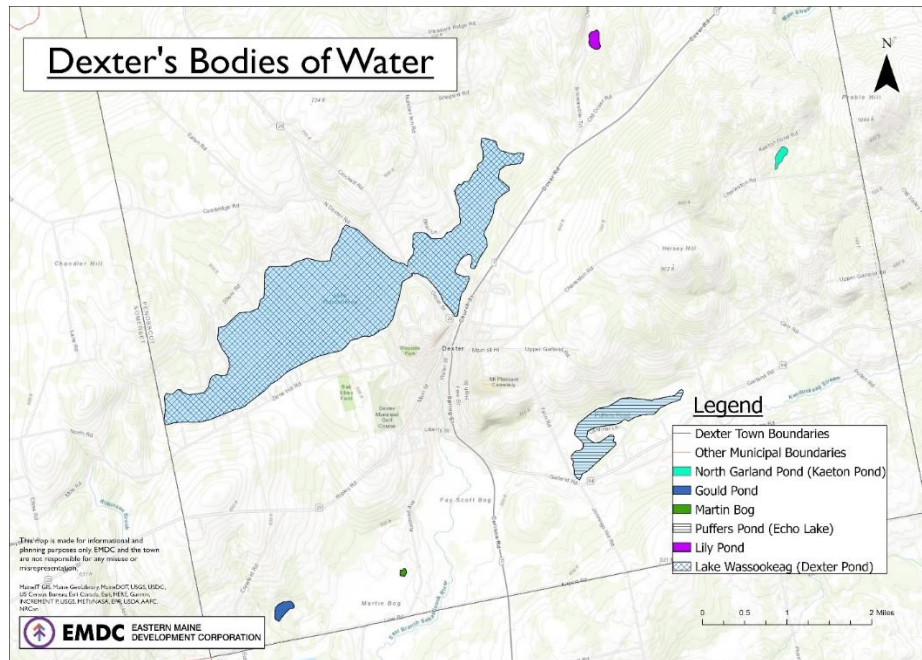
To protect significant surface water resources from pollution and improve water quality where needed.

To protect water resources in growth areas while promoting more intensive development in those areas.

To minimize pollution discharges through the upgrade of existing public sewer systems and wastewater treatment facilities.

To cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources.





**Map 5.0:** Waters of Dexter Maine. Source: State of Maine

## Overview

Water is a critical natural resource for humankind and the future of our planet. Although water is our largest natural resource, it's both finite and irreplaceable. As populations expand and demand for water grows, understanding how changing temperatures and precipitation patterns impact global water supply is important. Water is at the core of sustainable development and is critical for socio-economic development, energy and food production, healthy ecosystems and for human survival itself.

It is important that residents of Dexter act as stewards of their water resources because the town's lakes, ponds, streams, and watersheds are vital to the community's health, economy, and way of life. Clean and abundant water supports local recreation, agriculture, and wildlife, while also ensuring a safe drinking water supply for current and future generations. Lake Wassookeag makes the town especially vulnerable to pollution from runoff, septic systems, and development, meaning community action is critical to protect these resources from degradation.

The waters of Dexter remain the lifeblood of the community. Traditionally it has powered the mills of the town, but today it is the primary source of community activity and the sole source of public drinking water for the town. As the town has changed, its important relation with and reliance on its waters has remained the same.

Through both luck and the community's stewardship, Dexter's bodies of water have avoided invasive plant infestations and significant environmental devastation. Even so, these bodies



remain vulnerable to damage and pollution, underscoring the need for continued work and investment in protecting natural resources. A basic overview of these water resources is listed below in Table 5.0.

<i>Lakes and Ponds of Dexter, Maine</i>							
Lake Name	Area (ac)	Perimeter (mi)	Mean Depth (ft)	Max Depth (ft)	Invasive Plant Presence	Fishery Management	Water Quality Statement
Lake Wassookeag (Dexter Pond)	1152	12	27	86	None known	Coldwater + Warmwater	Above average
Lily Pond	8	0.4	N/A	N/A	None known	N/A	N/A
Puffer's Pond (Echo Lake)	115	3.6	16	52	None known	Coldwater	Average
Martin Bog	1	0.2	N/A	N/A	None known	N/A	N/A
Gould Pond	10	0.5	12	27	None known	Warmwater	Below average
North Garland Pond (Kaeton Pond)	6	0.5	N/A	N/A	None known	N/A	N/A

**Table 5.0:** Lakes of Dexter, Maine. Data last updated in 2010. Source: Lake Stewards of Maine

## Lake Wassookeag



The name of this lake means “Shining Water” in Eastern Abenaki and was named thusly by the Penobscot Nation. At 1,152-acres, this is the largest lake in the community. It is composed of two water bodies (colloquially known as the “Big” and “Little” lakes) separated by a causeway and bridge. The larger body on the west side of the lake has the lion’s share of the water and is, at its

maximum, 86 ft deep. The Little Lake is much shallower, with much of its area created by the



construction of a dam designed to control the flow of the Sebasticook River; before its construction, the lake was about 20 feet lower than it is today. During that time, what is now called Little Lake Wassookeag was mostly a wet and muddy bog area. The lake as it is now is colder, with an ample, rocky beach and a shore to lounge by. Wassookeag has a public boat ramp, beach, and a large portion of the downtown by its shores. It is also the sole drinking source for the Dexter Utility District (discussed later in Public Facilities).

Lake Wassookeag is the center of the community both literally and metaphorically, and the lake is the pride and joy of the town's residents. The lake acts as a natural gathering place for various celebrations like concerts, fishing derbies and the annual boat parade. In recent



times, an initiative to “Bring Back the Beach”



acts as a fundraiser for the stewardship of the lake and the lakeside beach area. The Dexter Development Association hosts a weekly pop-up to raise money for these efforts to make the 5-acre public shore an area that everyone can enjoy for generations to come.

## The Common Loon and Loon Count

There is an annual Loon Count each year, as part of Maine Audubon's Loon Count Project. In Maine, the common loon (*Gavia immer*) population is the largest in the eastern U.S., which makes the breeding success of loons here critical to the regional population at large. Nesting typically begins in early May and continues through August. Although they're quite numerous here, it's important to maintain monitoring efforts due to their role as an indicator species for mercury and acid rain.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond their important role in the scientific community, these birds have acted as a prominent subject in stories and cultures throughout time immemorial.<sup>14</sup> In Maine, its presence and song continues to be a source of joy and beauty for all residents. Like so many other native species, its existence is integral to our community.



<sup>13</sup>Schcoh et al. 2014. The Impact of Mercury Exposure on the Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) Population in the Adirondack Park, New York, USA. <https://bioone.org/journals/waterbirds/volume-37/issue-sp1/063.037.sp116/The-Impact-of-Mercury-Exposure-on-the-Common-Loon-Gavia/10.1675/063.037.sp116.short?tab=ArticleLink>

<sup>14</sup> Loon art by Sam Bullard, Fine Artist. <https://www.sambullardfineartist.com/>



On the morning of the third Saturday of July each year, more than 1,600 volunteers venture onto lakes and ponds across the state to count loons. The observations recorded by community scientist volunteers provide an excellent “snapshot” of Maine’s loon population.



Dexter has participated in the loon count since its inception in 1983. In 2025, 12 adults and 1 chick were seen on Wassookeag. On Puffers Pond, 4 adults and 1 chick were counted. The data from years past on Wassookeag is shown below (Table 4.1). The estimated loon population has risen overall, which is good news for the health of both the loons and Maine’s waters.

**Table 5.1:** Maine Loon Count since 1985 on Wassookeag Lake, Maine. Source: Maine Lake Association.

Year	Adult	Chicks	Year	Adult	Chicks	Year	Adults	Chicks
1985	11	0	1999	10	0	2013	2	0
1986	10	0	2000	13	2	2014	No count done	
1987	19	2	2001	13	1	2015	No count done	
1988	8	1	2002	7	0	2016	3	0
1989	9	2	2003	10	1	2017	No count done	
1990	8	0	2004	25	1	2018	No count done	
1991	10	0	2005	19	1	2019	9	1
1992	6	0	2006	18	2	2020	15	1
1993	13	0	2007	9	0	2021	8	1
1994	12	1	2008	1	0	2022	24	1
1995	16	0	2009	No count done	-	2023	17	0
1996	17	0	2010	7	0	2024	10	2
1997	14	1	2011	5	0	2025	12	1
1998	10	0	2012	6	0			



## *Puffer's Pond/Echo Lake*

This water body (pictured right) was initially named after the Puffer family, who were some of the earliest settlers in the area. The lake was officially renamed Echo Lake in 1955 by the state legislature, but the traditional name remains in everyday use. The lake itself is still used by residents for fishing and other forms of recreation and is home to many varieties of fish (most notably brook trout and smallmouth bass). Like Wassoogeag, it's dammed to regulated water flow.



## *Other Waterbodies*

Other recognized bodies of water in the community are North Garland /Kaeton Pond, Gould Pond, Lily Pond, and Martin Bog. These are much less prominent than the other two lakes (altogether they are only 25 acres in area, a little more than a fifth the size of Puffer's Pond and 1/46<sup>th</sup> the size of Wassoogeag). These small, mostly spring-fed bodies fill an important ecological role in providing clean, fresh water to flora and fauna in the area.

The exception to this is Gould Pond, which has a small dam and has previously suffered in water quality due to nearby agricultural activity. There have been restoration efforts over the past decade, but there have been no additional water readings taken to ascertain their effects.





*Lesser Water Bodies of Dexter. Starting top left, going clockwise: North Garland Pond, Lily Pond, Gould Pond, and Martin Bog. Note that Martin Bog was photographed at a closer scale than the others for the sake of clarity.*

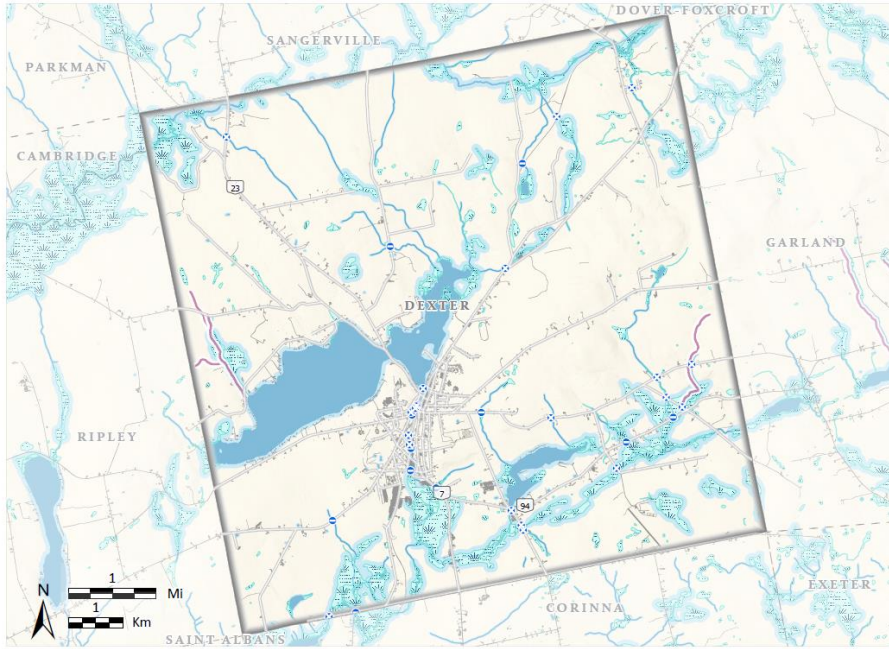
## ***The Sebasticook River***

The East Branch Sebasticook River flows south from Lake Wassookeag, affecting the larger Sebasticook River System flowing through central Maine. This river system is home to many rare and endangered species, such as the Tomah mayfly, the Yellow Lamp Mussel, and the Black Tern. The Sebasticook was the home of the sighting of the largest group of bald eagles ever documented in New England, who were hunting the many fish that live in the river. It flows south for 72 miles, before eventually flowing into the Kennebec River.



# Dexter

## Water Resources and Shoreland Habitats



*This map is nonregulatory and is intended for planning purposes only*

**Organized Towns**

**Maine Stream Habitat Viewer Road Stream Crossings**

- Barrier
- Potential Barrier

[Find crossing details on the Stream Viewer - beginningwithhabitat.org/maps](https://beginningwithhabitat.org/maps)

\*Crossings on private roads not shown.

**Wild Brook Trout Priority Conservation Areas**

Reflects surveys on selected Maine streams.

**Wetlands**

National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) uses aerial photographs to approximate wetland locations. NWI data typically under represents the presence of wetlands on the landscape.

Areas are delineated by ME Dep. of Environmental Protection's Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act, which includes areas within 250 feet of great ponds, rivers, and wetlands, and within 75 feet of streams. The regulations within each shoreland zone depends on the town, and towns may regulate greater areas than what is shown here. For more information, please visit: <https://www.maine.gov/dep/land/slz/>

**Shoreland Areas**

**Developed**

Impervious surfaces including buildings and roads.

Beginning with Habitat (BwH) equips Maine communities, landowners, and conservation partners with tools to protect, restore, and connect important habitats and ecosystems in a changing climate. [www.beginningwithhabitat.org](http://www.beginningwithhabitat.org) April 2025

**Map 5.1:** Water Resources and Shoreland Habitats in Dexter, ME. Source: Beginning with Habitat

TOWNSHIP BOUNDARIES - Maine Office of GIS (2020)  
 ROADS - ME Office of GIS, ME Dept of Transportation (2022)  
 HYDROLOGY - USGS National Hydrography Dataset (2016)  
 DEVELOPED - CCAP NOAA impervious land cover (2022)  
 NATIONAL WETLANDS INVENTORY - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (2020)  
 SHORELAND AREAS - ME Office of GIS, ME Natural Areas Pgm(2011)

BROOK TROUT PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS - ME Dept of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (2020)  
 MAINE HERITAGE FISH WATERS - ME Dept of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (2022)  
 ATLANTIC SALMON HABITAT - ME Dept of Marine Resources (2024)  
 SHELLFISH - ME Dept of Marine Resources (2010)  
 ME ROAD STREAM HABITAT CROSSINGS - ME Dept of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife Service (2022)

## Wetlands

Wetlands (bogs, peatlands, fens) are one of the most productive ecosystems in the world, comparable to rain forests and coral reefs. They're important for maintaining stream flow and stabilizing groundwater levels in addition to providing very important habitats for wildlife. For humans, wetlands provide natural water quality improvement, flood protection, shoreline erosion control, opportunities for recreation, and aesthetic appreciation and natural products. State law requires this wetland to be zoned Resource Protection under the Shoreland Zoning Laws. Dexter has taken the appropriate steps in protecting its high value wetlands. All these forested wetlands have been protected under the Dexter Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.



## Wild Atlantic Salmon

Maine is home to the only remaining population of wild Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) in the United States, a population that has been considered endangered since the year 2000.<sup>15</sup> Even since their designation, they have faced a dramatic decline in total population and the habitats available to them. The pressures of pollution, overfishing, habitat degradation, increased water temperatures, migration barriers, and the spread of invasive species all contributed to this decline. These

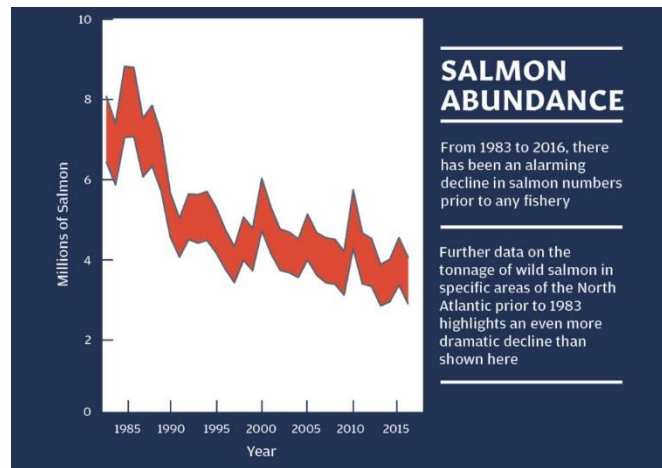
pressures have also damaged the ability of the salmon population to recover; nowadays, only half as many salmon grow to adulthood per egg laid as they did in 2007.<sup>16</sup>

Without a healthy and growing population, there can be no sustainable harvest of the fish, hurting the social and economic vitality of communities that rely on fishing. Their removal can also filter up and down the food chain, heralding dramatic consequences for other parts of the natural world.

The French Stream watershed is one of the remaining habitats for the wild Atlantic salmon. Furthermore, Dexter holds the start of the Sebasticook river, another important habitat; whatever Dexter does will be felt downstream. This underlines the importance of conservation in the area. If the community wishes to pursue conservation further, it may work with the state or nonprofits such as the Downeast Salmon Federation (which primarily serves Washington and Hancock counties) or the larger American Salmon Foundation for assistance.

## Water Quality

The Lake Stewards of Maine also track water quality for the three largest bodies of water in the town.



<sup>15</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/dep/water/monitoring/rivers\\_and\\_streams/salmon/index.html](https://www.maine.gov/dep/water/monitoring/rivers_and_streams/salmon/index.html)

<sup>16</sup> <https://nasco.int/atlantic-salmon/state-of-salmon/>



**Table 5.2:** Water quality of major lakes in Dexter. Source: Lake Stewards of Maine.

Lake	Date Sample Taken	Sampling Depth	pH	Color (SPU)	Conductivity (uS)	Alkalinity (mg/L)
Lake Wassookeag (Dexter Pond)	8/23/2018	10	7.95	4	96	35
Puffer's Pond (Echo Lake)	8/27/2015	5	7.89	16	141	70
Gould Pond	8/23/2018	4	7.81	11	153	64

The Dexter Utility District also analyzes the water they draw from Wassookeag for the presence of contaminants. The results from their 2024 tests are recorded below. In the below Figure, Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG) is the level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety. Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL), on the other hand, is the highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water by regulation. MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology. All contaminants are far below unsafe levels.

**Table 5.3:** Dexter Water Quality Report, 2024. Source: Dexter Utility District. Starred readings (\*) are the 90% value for this test, meaning that 90% of reading were below that number.

Contaminant	Level Detected	Unit Measurement	MCLG	MCL	Likely Source of Contamination
Total Coliform Bacteria	0 positive	Highest monthly # of positive samples	0 positive	1 pos/mo or 5% (e. coli)	Naturally present in the environment.
Turbidity	0.2140	ntu	n/a	5	Soil runoff.
Chlorine Residual	Average: 0.123 Range (1.09-1.33)	ppm	4 ppm	4 ppm	By-product of drinking water chlorination.
Total PFAS	2.93	ppt	0	20	Man-made chemicals in a wide variety of consumer products and industrial applications. Stain- and water-resistant fabrics, carpeting, non-stick cookware, cleaning products and paints, Class B Firefighting



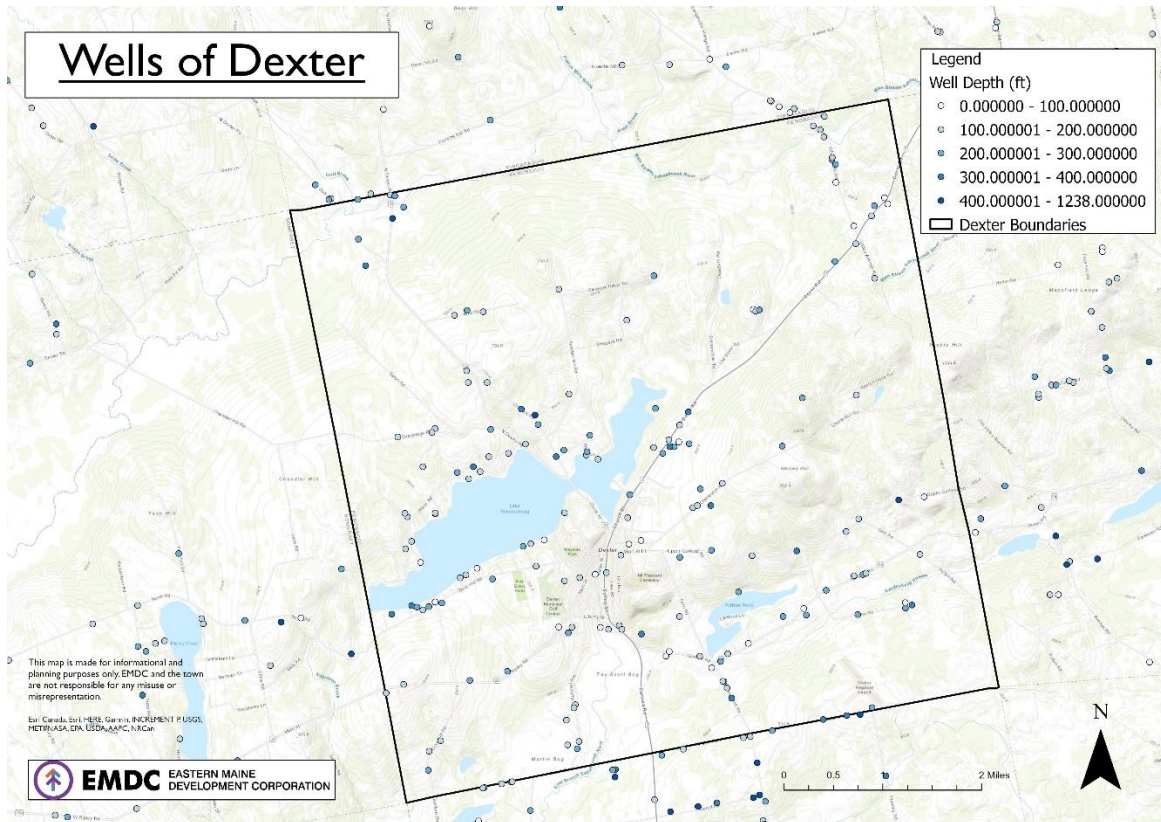
					foam (AFFF) foam and industrial processes.
Barium	0.0014	ppm	2	2	Discharge of drilling wastes. Discharge from metal refineries. Erosion of natural deposits.
Fluoride	0.98	ppm	4	4	Erosion of natural deposits. Water additive which promotes strong teeth. Discharge from fertilizer and aluminum factories.
Nitrate	0.05	ppm	10	10	Runoff from fertilizer use. Leaching from septic tanks, sewage. Erosion of natural deposits.
Copper*	0.33 <i>Range (0.059-0.36)</i>	ppm	1.3	1.3	Corrosion of household plumbing systems.
Lead*	3.8 <i>Range (0-6.9)</i>	ppb	0	15	Corrosion of household plumbing systems.
Total Haloacetic Acids	20 <i>(Range 17-22)</i>	ppb	0	60	By-product of drinking water chlorination.
Total Trihalomethanes	17 <i>(Range 16-18)</i>	ppb	0	80	By-product of drinking water chlorination

## Wells

Even though there is a public water which draws from the lake, there are many wells drilled across Dexter. The map below shows all known and geographically-identified wells in Dexter.

There are no sand, gravel, or other form of aquifer known within Dexter's territory.





Map 5.2: Dexter, ME wells as of 2025. Source: State of Maine

## Threats and Threat Management

### Point Source Pollution

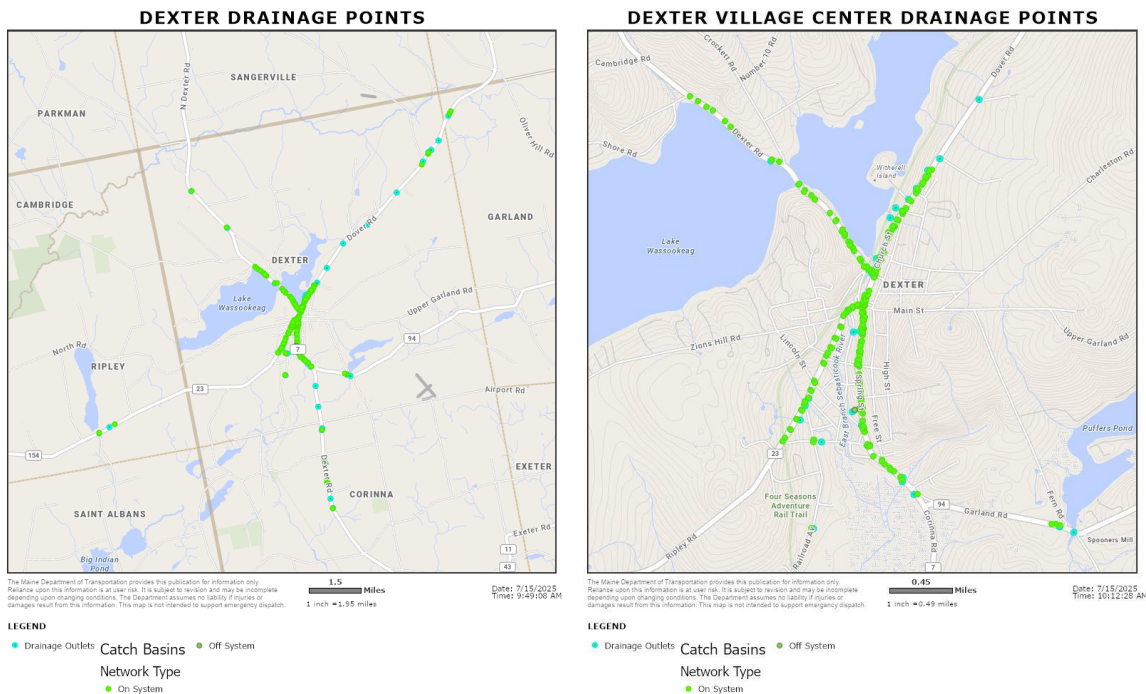
Point source pollution comes from specific, identifiable sources such as industrial facilities or wastewater treatment plants discharging contaminants directly into water bodies. This can lead to localized pollution and possible adverse effects on aquatic ecosystems. There are currently no known sources of point source pollution in Dexter. There has been a past incident when state officials cleaned road salt from these routes by washing it into the river, which has since been resolved with a fine and cleanup.

### Nonpoint Source Pollution

Nonpoint Source (NPS) Pollution is more diffuse and arises from multiple sources, making it challenging to pinpoint a specific origin. This can include runoff from forested, agricultural, construction, or camp sites carrying pollutants (fertilizers, oils, pesticides, etc.) into waterways during rainfall events. The Maine Department of Human Services has identified a few land uses in the area which may pose a threat to local water quality, noting the handling and storage of materials such as petroleum, road salt, and ash. However, it was noted that, since these activities are present in the eastern part of the Wassookeag watershed where the lake flows towards the



outlet, they are unlikely to affect the lake's water quality. Routes 7 and 23, which go through the center of town, are also potential sources of runoff to monitor.



**Maps 5.3 and 5.4:** Drainage Points and Catch Basins as of 2025 in Dexter, Maine. Source: State of Maine Department of Transportation

Citing its negative clarity trend, sediment chemistry, and status as a public water system, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) lists Lake Wassookeag as “threatened” and lists it as a priority for protective investments in its Maine Nonpoint Source [Pollution] Management Program Plan for 2025 – 2029. This is the primary focus of water conservation efforts in Dexter.<sup>17</sup>

The last major conservation initiative surrounding this type of pollution was the Dexter Lakes NPS Watershed Project, which completed in late 2010.<sup>18</sup> This focused on the areas around both Lake Wassookeag and Puffer’s Pond, identifying and fixing 25 NPS sites, providing technical assistance to local property owners, and engaging in several efforts to raise awareness surrounding conservation (such as establishing a “Dexter Lakes Day”).

The Kenduskeag Stream watershed, which extends into eastern Dexter, is considered threatened as well due to the threat of nearby agricultural activity. The French Stream watershed (mostly in the nearby town of Exeter, but also within southeast Dexter) is given a higher designation as a

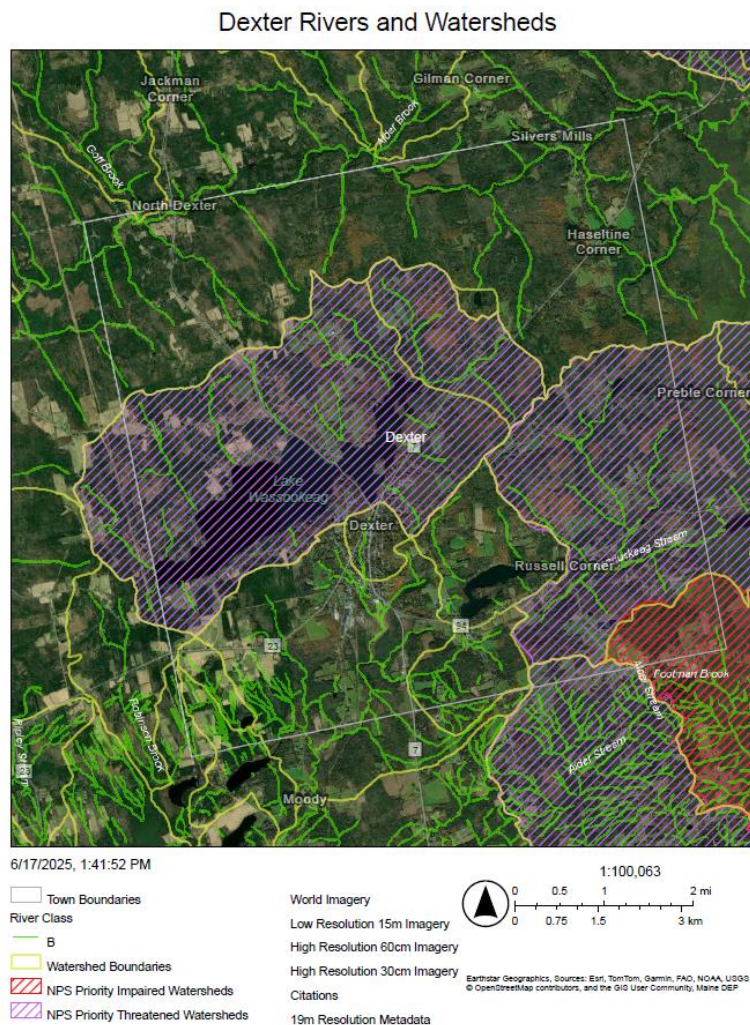
<sup>17</sup><https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-11/maine-nps-mgt-plan-2024-2029-final-draft-11sep24.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gulfmaine.org/kb/files/9854/2008RR05%20Dexter%20Lakes.pdf>



priority impaired stream due to the higher-than-acceptable load of pollution entering the watershed and its protected salmon population.

Given the threatened status of Lake Wassookeag and the Kenduskeag Stream watershed and the impaired status of French Steam watershed, Dexter would be given priority status if it decided to apply for a Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Control Grant ("319 Grant") from the Maine DEP to develop or implement another watershed-based plan, if funding were to once again become available.



**Map 5.5:** Watersheds of Dexter Maine and surrounding Communities as of 2025. Source: State of Maine

### Invasive Species

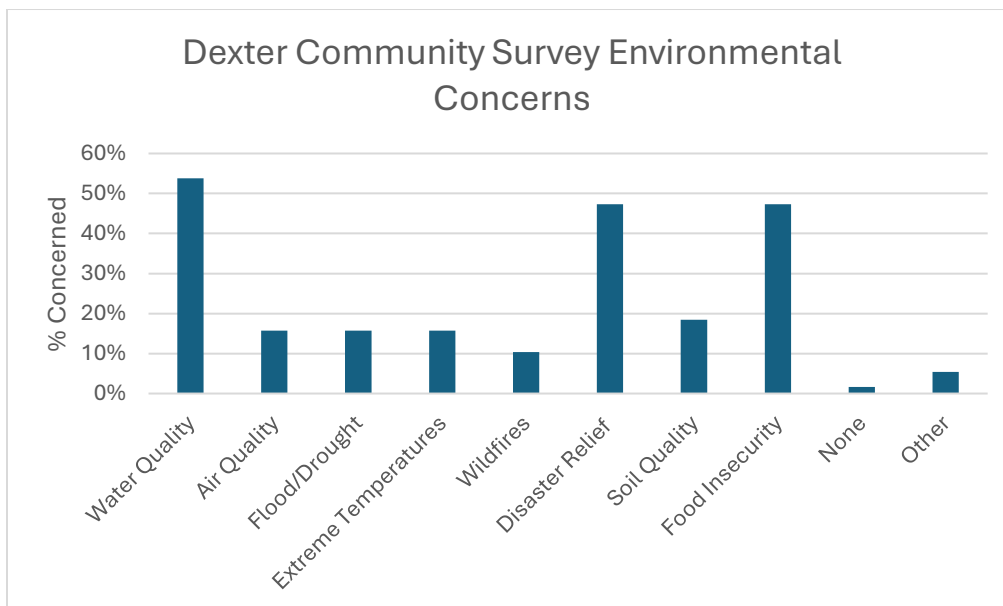
Even though there are no identified invasive species in Dexter's lakes, there is always the threat of them spreading into the town. Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) and Eurasian Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) are two invasive plant species of special concern, as they have been



identified as growing in lakes near the town. The Dexter Lakes Association has worked to raise awareness of these threats and posts information regarding them on its website. There is also a field guide available, created by the Lake Stewards of Maine to help identify and monitor waterbodies for invasive species.<sup>19</sup>

## Community Water Protection Efforts

The community cares deeply about conserving the waters of Dexter. When asked about their environmental concerns regarding the town, surveyed Dexter residents cited water quality as the top (and only majority) issue they were concerned about.



**Figure 5.0:** Which of the following environmental concerns do you have for Dexter? (Please select all that apply). Disaster Relief was specified as “warming center, temporary shelter, professional support”. Source: Dexter Community Survey.

As such, they have implemented a variety of policies to protect these natural resources. The town has shoreland zoning (to the state’s standards) with a designated Resource Protection District zone within it and a Watershed Protection Area, all of which restrict activities near water resources that might cause harm to the ecosystem. Water conservation is placed throughout Dexter’s zoning ordinance, with the very first criteria surrounding subdivision approval being that it “will not result in undue water or air pollution”. Dexter’s Public Works Department follows best management practices to protect water quality on town-owned property and town projects, and works with the DEP to maintain these standards. Furthermore, training that goes above and

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.lakestewardsofmaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/LSM-FieldGuide-2018.pdf>



beyond what the state mandates is required for all crews doing work around the lake. Other protection methods are discussed further in the “Natural Resources” section.

As discussed throughout this section, the Dexter Lakes Association has put significant time and effort towards the goal of protecting Dexter’s water resources. Of the roughly 300 people who live around the lake, 60 attend each meeting of the organization. They also occasionally partner with the nearby Sebasticook Lake Association for issues that affect the larger watershed.

Whether through responsible land use, maintaining septic systems, reducing pesticide use, or supporting conservation initiatives, Dexter’s residents can help preserve the quality and availability of their water. Local engagement fosters long-term resilience to climate change and supports the ecological health of the region. Strong consideration must be given to how humans interact, and change the surrounding ecosystems and potential impacts, including flooding, changes in precipitation, and long-term impacts on water quality in local lakes, ponds, and wetlands in general. There are several climate resilience resources available to the town through the [Maine Climate Change Adaptation Toolkit](#), an interagency initiative led by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. The community should refer to these resources when considering preventative measures against impacts that arise from changes in the climate.

## ***Strategies***

Adopt or amend local land use ordinances as applicable to incorporate stormwater runoff performance standards consistent with:

- a. Maine Stormwater Management Law and Maine Stormwater regulations (Title 38 M.R.S.A. §420-D and 06-096 CMR 500 and 502).
- b. Maine Department of Environmental Protection's allocations for allowable levels of phosphorus in lake/pond watersheds.
- c. Maine Pollution Discharge Elimination System Stormwater Program

Consider amending local land use ordinances, as applicable, to incorporate low impact development standards.

Where applicable, develop an urban impaired stream watershed management or mitigation plan that will promote continued development or redevelopment without further stream degradation.

Maintain, enact or amend public wellhead and aquifer recharge area protection mechanisms, as necessary.

Encourage landowners to protect water quality. Provide local contact information at the municipal office for water quality best management practices from resources such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, Maine Forest Service, and/or Small Woodlot Association of Maine.



Adopt water quality protection practices and standards for construction and maintenance of public and private roads and public properties and require their implementation by contractors, owners, and community officials and employees.

Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect and, where warranted, improve water quality.

Provide educational materials at appropriate locations regarding aquatic invasive species.

Open stream connectivity anywhere possible in Dexter to protect from flooding damage and improve conditions for aquatic wildlife following Stream Smart principles.



# NATURAL RESOURCES



# ***NATURAL RESOURCES***

## ***State Goal***

To protect the State's other critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, sand dunes, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas.

## ***Policies***

To conserve critical natural resources in the community

To coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources

## ***Beauty and Sustainability***

Maine has long valued and enjoyed the natural world. The beauty of our state's nature is core to the appeal of living in Maine, and we have done much to steward it while making it available to those that live and visit our state. It is important, therefore, to get a fuller understanding of our surrounding environment so that this stewardship can continue to be effective and that those that come after can enjoy Maine as we have.

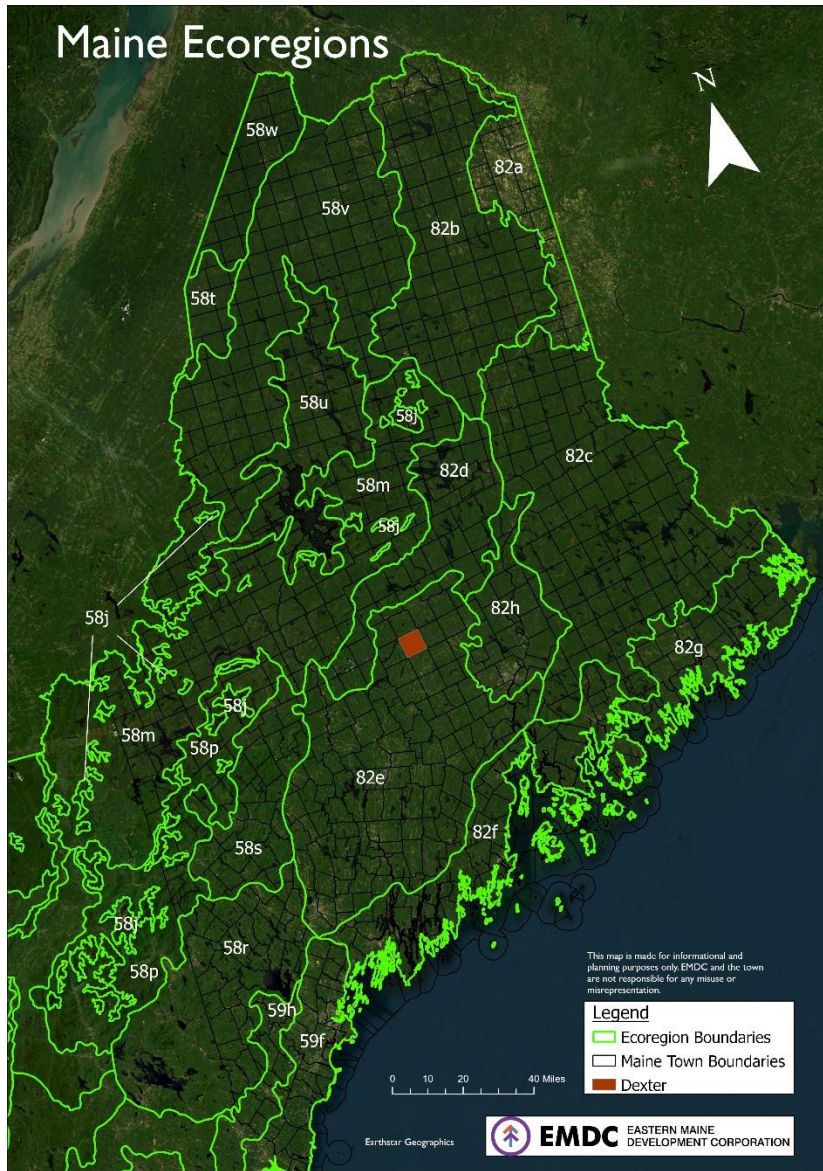
## ***Natural Community & Landscape***

According to the State of Maine, Dexter lies within central and Eastern Lowlands, while the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Level 3 and 4 ecoregions map. Dexter lies within the Acadia plains ecoregion. More specifically, the town is located within the Central Maine Embayment, otherwise categorized as 82e.<sup>20</sup> Region 82e is generally rolling plains with some hills of varying sizes. There are numerous small lakes, some swamps and bogs, and some large river valleys and low to moderate gradient streams. The bedrock consists of metasedimentary rocks of varying grain sizes, but many of them calcium-rich. There is also some granite and metavolcanic rock. This is covered with more recent marine deposits and glacial till, and there are glacial features including eskers and kame terraces. The high calcium content in soils tends to buffer this region's soils and waterways against acidity, and make it more suitable for farming than most areas this far north.

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<sup>20</sup> [https://dmap-prod-oms-edc.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/ORD/Ecoregions/ma/new\\_eng\\_front.pdf](https://dmap-prod-oms-edc.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/ORD/Ecoregions/ma/new_eng_front.pdf)





#	Ecoregion Name
58	Northeastern Highlands
58j	Upper Montane/Alpine Zone
58m	Quebec/New England Boundary Mountains
58p	White Mountains/Blue Mountains
58r	Sebago-Ossipee Hills and Plains
58s	Western Maine Foothills
58t	Upper St. John Wet Flats
58u	Moosehead-Churchill Lakes
58v	St. John Uplands
58w	International Boundary Plateau
59	Northeastern Coastal Zone
59f	Gulf of Maine Coastal Lowland
59h	Gulf of Maine Coastal Plain

**Map 6.0:** Ecoregion of Dexter, ME. Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency.

#	Ecoregion Name
82	Acadian Plains and Hills
82a	Aroostook Lowlands
82b	Aroostook Hills
82c	Eastern Maine-Southern New Brunswick Hills
82d	Central Foothills
82e	Central Maine Embayment
82f	Midcoast
82g	Downeast Coast
82h	Penobscot Lowlands



Current land use is a mix of forest and agriculture. There is some pastureland as well as cropland that produces mostly silage corn, potatoes, and hay. This is the most populous interior region of Maine, including the cities of Augusta, Lewiston, and Waterville, and it has a dense road network, which leads the forests here to be highly fragmented, even if total forest cover is high. There is some forestry, but generally less than some of the more interior regions. There will be greater discussion about this ecoregion in the Agriculture and Forestry Chapter.

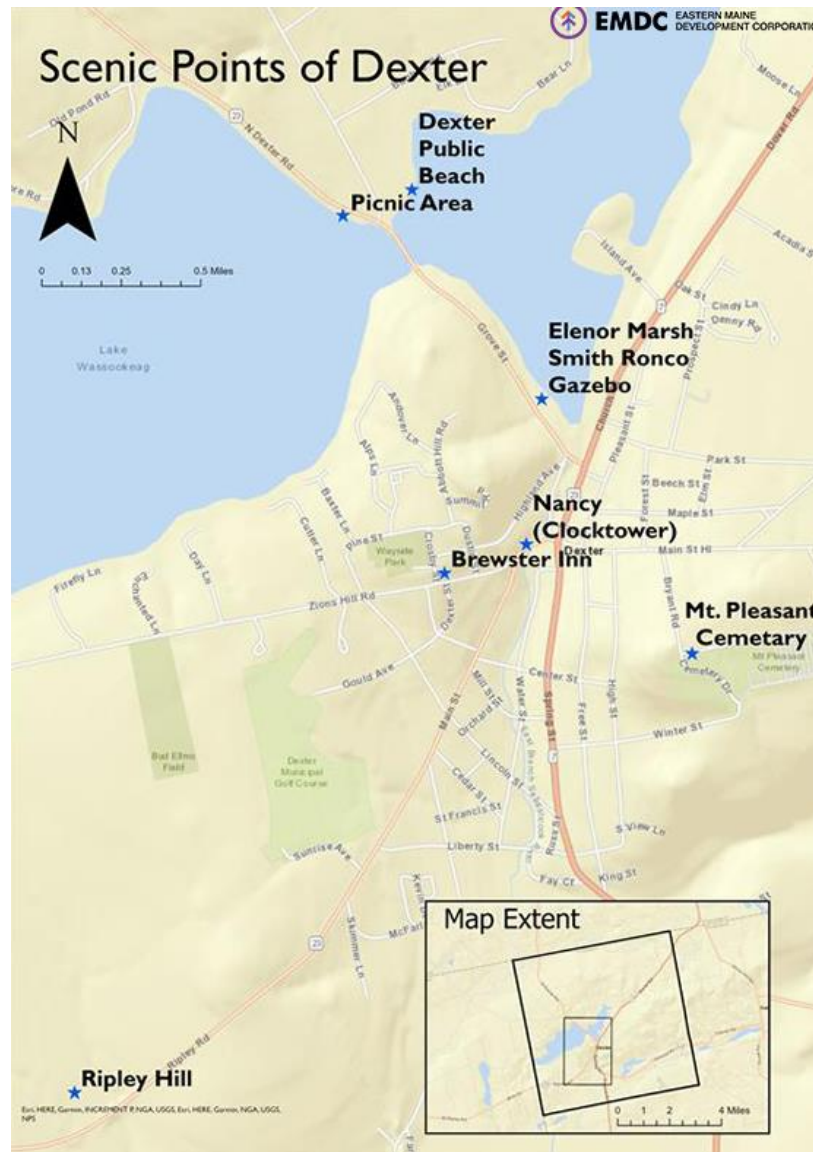
The town derives significant benefits from its natural resources, which contribute to both its local economy and quality of life. The lush forests provide timber for the forestry industry, offering job opportunities and contributing to the region's economic stability. The pristine lake and ponds offer recreational activities like fishing, boating, and swimming, enhancing residents' leisure and well-being. Additionally, the picturesque landscapes and diverse wildlife attract tourism, bolstering the town's revenue and fostering a sense of community pride. These natural assets sustain Dexter's economic vitality, nurtures a harmonious balance between nature and human habitation, and enriching the lives of its inhabitants.

### ***Scenic Areas***

There are plenty of scenic areas in Dexter for visitors and locals alike to admire. The Dexter Public Beach, recently restored, offers a place to rest and enjoy the lake, as does the nearby picnic area. The Eleanor Ronco Smith Gazebo also offers a stunning view of the lake from the other shore. Ripley Hill is the highest point in town, offering the best views of all. One of the most beloved landmarks of Dexter is “Nancy”, a clock tower rising above the Town Council chambers named after the architect’s wife. The Brewster Inn, whose history is discussed in the Historical Resources section, maintains beautifully landscaped gardens for visitors. The Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, meanwhile, is place for peace and reflection outside the town proper.

The Old Valley Avenue Road, once the principal route connecting Bangor to points in the Wassookeag lake region, was journeyed by Henry David Thoreau in his travels through the Maine woods. Because of its location, Dexter also has a relatively dark sky that enables stargazing, which should be protected from lighting facilities that could interfere with this valuable resource.





**Map 6.1:** Scenic Points of Dexter, Maine. Source: Town of Dexter

## *Topography and Geology*

Topography, along with soil characteristics, tends to dictate appropriate land uses and environmental values. Slopes exceeding 15 percent tend to make poor building sites; Slopes of less than 3 percent are characteristic of wetlands, but if well-drained may be good agricultural land. The steepness of slope and soil type also determine how erodible a soil may be and how well water drains through it. In Dexter, Ripley hill is the highest peak, with a summit of 1986 feet.



## Soils

Dexter has various soil types within its boundaries, with about 67 types recorded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service's soil survey.<sup>21</sup> Below are 10 most representative types throughout town:

**Table 6.0:** 10 most prominent soil types in Dexter, ME. Source: United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service

Soil Symbol	Soil Name	Percent of towns soils	Soil Symbol	Soil Name	Percent of towns soils
TRB	Telos-Chesuncook-Ragmuff association, 0 to 8 percent slopes, very stony	11%	W	Water	7.6%
CEC	Chesuncook-Elliottsville-Telos association, 3 to 15 percent slopes, very stony	10%	TcB	Telos-Chesuncook complex, 0 to 8 percent slopes, very stony	6.8%
TmB	Monarda-Telos complex, 0 to 8 percent slopes, very stony	9.7%	MVD	Monson-Elliottsville-Abram complex, 8 to 30 percent slopes, very rocky	5.1%
EXC	Elliottsville-Monson complex, 3 to 15 percent slopes, rocky	8.9%	MMB	Monarda-Monson-Telos association, 0 to 8 percent slopes, rocky	5%

The soil types in Dexter are quite diverse, and the dominance of these soil types denotes uses congruous with farming and forestry.

## Critical Natural Resources

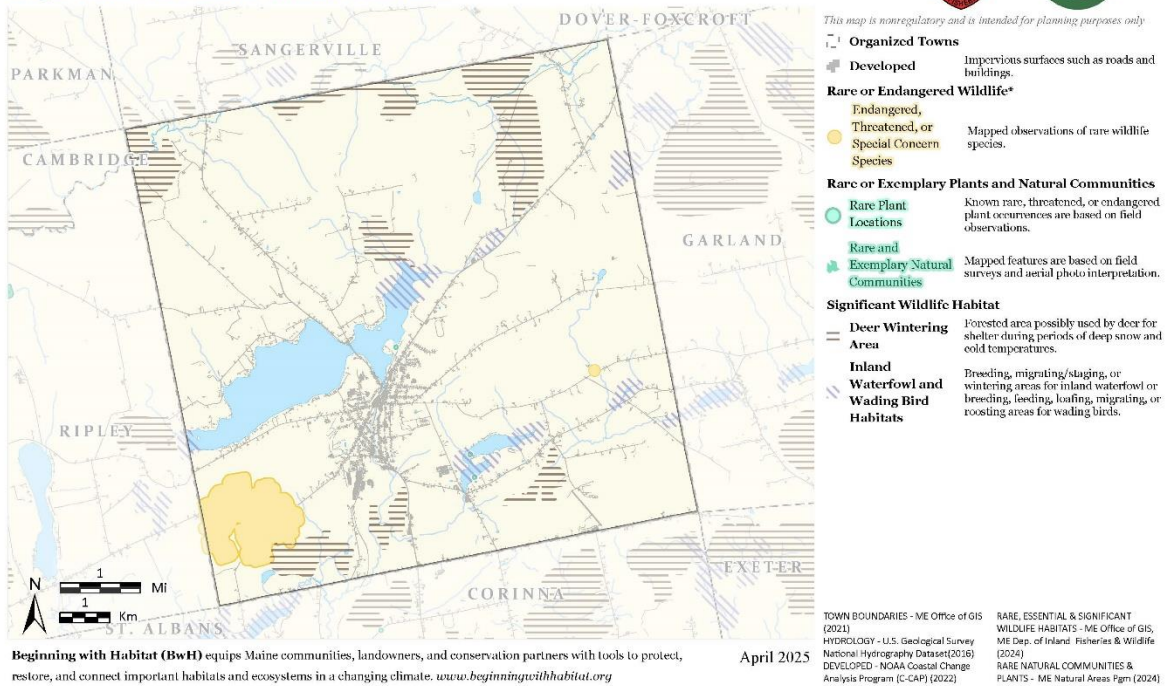
As defined in the State's Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule, "critical natural resources" are natural resources which under federal and/or state law warrant protection from the negative impacts of development. These include deer wintering areas, inland waterfowl habitats, and the habitats of endangered, threatened, or special concern plants or animals. There are plenty of areas in which deer winter and waterfowl live, as shown on the map below. There are no endangered species whose habitats are in Dexter, although there are at least three other at-risk plant and animal species present.

<sup>21</sup> <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx> Accessed July, 2025



## Dexter

### High Value Plant and Animal Habitats



Map 6.2: High Value Plant and Animal Habitat in Dexter, Maine. Source: Beginning With Habitat

## Deer Wintering Areas

Deer Wintering Areas (DWAs) in Maine plays a pivotal role in the broader context of natural resource management. These habitats are critical for sustaining white-tailed deer populations, as they offer essential elements for winter survival, including thermal cover and accessible forage. Effective management of these areas is integral to maintaining a balanced ecosystem. Robust management practices not only ensure the well-being of deer but also have cascading effects on other wildlife species and vegetation. By preserving and strategically managing DWAs, we contribute to biodiversity conservation, enhance forest health, and promote ecological resilience. Recognizing the interconnectedness of these habitats with the overall ecosystem underscores the relevance of their robust management in the broader spectrum of natural resource stewardship. This is a Significant Wildlife Habitat type regulated under the Natural Resources Protection Act.

## Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat

These are significant ecosystems that support a diverse array of avian species. The state's numerous lakes, ponds, and wetlands provide critical breeding grounds and stopover points for waterfowl and other birds like herons, egrets, and ibises during their migratory journeys. These habitats offer abundant food resources, nesting sites, and protection for birds. Birds often rely on the rich abundance of aquatic life found in these habitats, including fish, amphibians, and invertebrates. Maintaining and preserving these habitats is essential for the conservation of birds,



contributing to biodiversity and maintaining ecological balance. Like DWAs, this is a Significant Wildlife Habitat type regulated under the Natural Resources Protection Act.

## Organisms of Note

There are several threatened species and species of special concern that have one or more habitat ranges in or around Dexter.

### ***Gyrinophilus porphyriticus* - Northern Spring Salamander**

The Northern Spring Salamander is a brightly-colored member of the lungless salamander family (*Plethodontidae*). It resides in cool water springs and streams, and eats insects, spiders, worms, crustaceans, small invertebrates, and other salamanders. It is currently considered “Special Concern” in the state of Maine and resides in eastern Dexter.



Populations are threatened primarily due to deforestation and agriculture.



### **Upland Sandpiper - *Bartramia longicauda***

Upland Sandpipers (colloquially known as “uppies”) are considered “Threatened” by the state. They are grassland birds known for their buff plumage with brown markings. They primarily eat grasshoppers, crickets, and other insects. Their current breeding habitat is limited to the few remaining large grasslands and blueberry barrens in the state, including southwest Dexter.

Upland sandpipers were more common in Maine in the 1800s when a higher percentage of the state was in farmland. Maine farmlands diminished from 33 percent of the landscape to 6 percent, as grasslands have reverted to forests or have been fragmented by residential and commercial development. As grasslands disappeared from the landscape in the 1890s, so did upland sandpipers. In the past 100 years, populations have probably stabilized or slightly increased. In the Northeast, hayfields were traditionally harvested in late summer and provided good habitat throughout the breeding season. Today most hayfields are mowed earlier and more frequently, or planted to crops. Pastures can be suitable habitat unless they are subject to heavy grazing. Extensive row crops or fields uniformly covered with mat-forming grasses are not suitable. Some agricultural pesticides negatively affect grassland birds or their insect food.

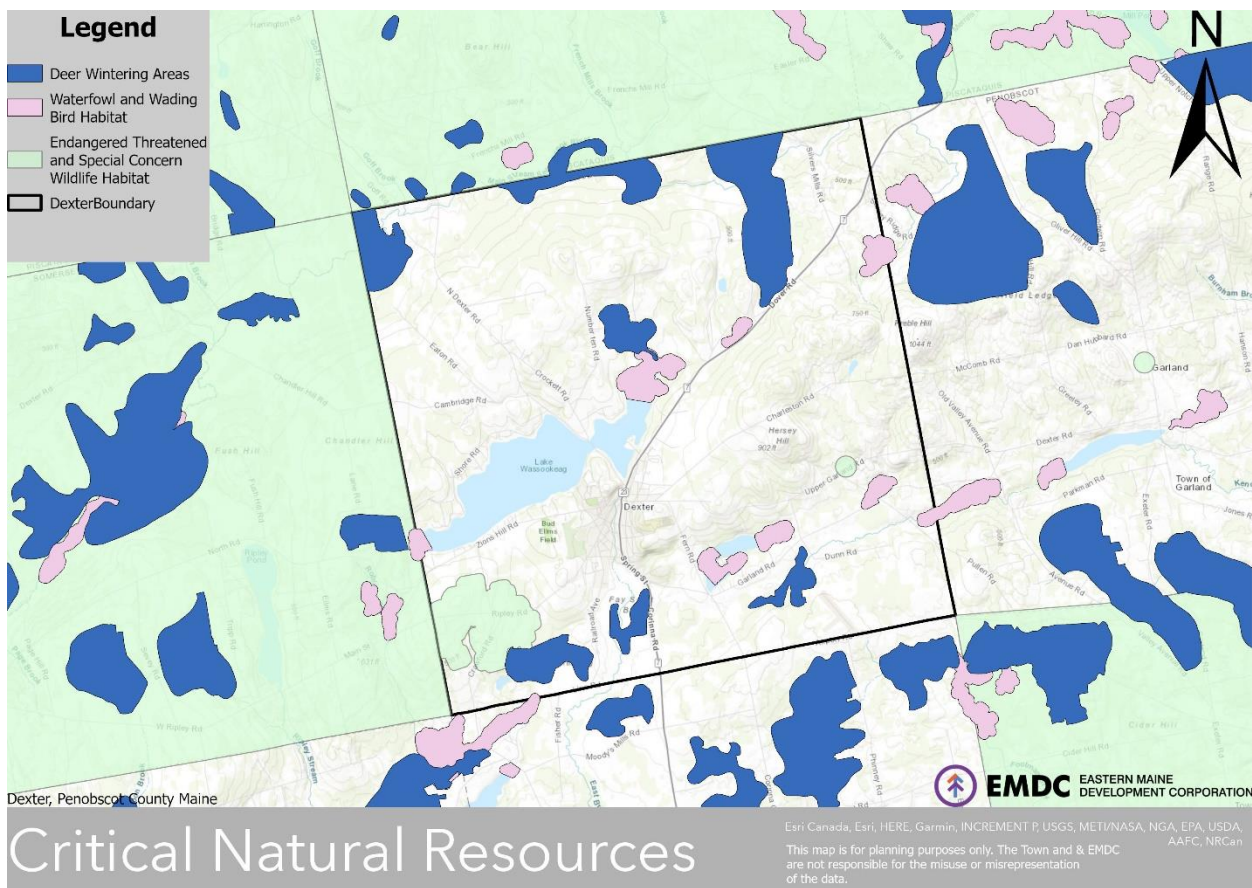


**Vasey's Pondweed - *Potamogeton vaseyi***



Pondweeds are aquatic, perennial herbs with reduced, inconspicuous flowers, which in many species, are elevated above the surface of the water. This species is found in bays of large soft-water lakes as well as rivers and ponds. Blooming occurs throughout July, fruiting early-August through early-September. The optimal identification period for this species is throughout August.

This rare pondweed is imperiled in Maine and is at high risk of extirpation in the jurisdiction due to restricted range, few populations or occurrences, steep declines, severe threats, or other factors. This species is also listed as a “Species of Special Concern” in the state.



**Map 6.3:** Critical Natural Resource of Dexter, ME. Source: State of Maine. \*

*\*Unlike Map 6.2, Map 6.3 offers an additional view of critical natural resources around the town. Rare plants are not included in this map.*

When doing any development around any areas where there are prominent water resources, the town follows the shoreland zoning code. Local shoreland zone standards are consistent with the Dexter Comprehensive Plan



state guidelines and are at or above current state levels. There are also several additional measures in place, such as a ban on digging during the winter months that might result in damage to the local environment and a ban on carving a hole in the bottom of an ice fishing shack to prevent the dumping of garbage into the lake. Subdivisions on Lake Wassookeag also require a study on the impact of potential phosphorous runoff from new construction. Finally, no new plumbing system variances are permitted on the lake. These help to ensure that no new development will threaten the integrity of the town's most important water supply.

Potential additional measures the town is discussing include increasing setbacks between neighboring buildings on the lake, as well as expanding sewer to reduce the reliance of lake properties on septic systems.

Few conservation lands exist in Dexter. Protecting habitats through easement, fee, or other methods is a great way to protect wildlife habitat while providing opportunities for the community. Cooperation with Sebasticook Regional Land Trust may be beneficial here. There are certainly plenty of natural resources to consider protecting; two Significant Wildlife Habitats and plenty of at-risk plants/animals have been recorded in the town. Deer wintering areas and Inland Waterfowl/Wading Bird habitats are both regulated under the Natural Resources Protection Act (<https://www.maine.gov/dep/land/nrpa/>) and are found throughout Dexter. Upland Sandpiper, a State Threatened bird and grassland specialist, have been recorded as breeding in agricultural fields here. Northern spring salamanders are a State Species of Special Concern and have been recorded in Dexter's streams, further emphasizing the importance of maintaining cool, free-flowing streams with riparian buffers. Canada Lynx, a Federally Threatened/State Special Concern species, have been recorded in forested habitats in northern Dexter. Puffer Pond provides habitat for Vasey's Pondweed, a State Special Concern plant (state rank S2, global rank G4) which can also be found on the shores of Lake Wassookeag.

The variety of species and habitats present in Dexter emphasizes the importance of conservation in this area. Funding conservation can be challenging, though through cooperation and the use of creative strategies, projects can be achieved that meet the needs of both people and wildlife. Maine state organizations such as Beginning with Habitat are available to assist with these efforts. Additional potential efforts include encouraging enrollment in tax programs that reduce property tax costs for private landowners, such as Maine's open space or tree growth tax law. Agricultural assistance is available with Maine's private lands biologist (Joe Roy; [joseph.roy@maine.gov](mailto:joseph.roy@maine.gov)) and the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/state-offices/maine>).

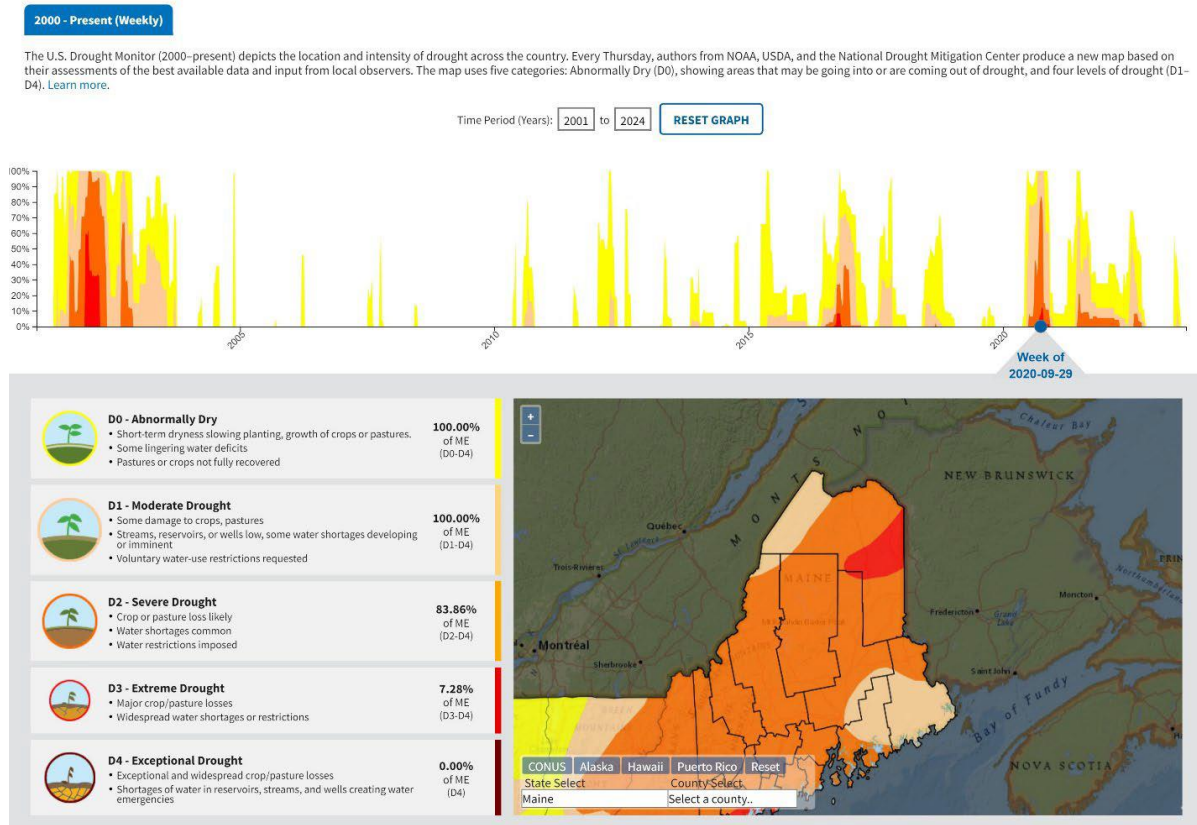
## **Threats**

The community has sought to vigorously protect their natural resources, especially Lake Wassookeag. There is only one place on the lake that is open to public access, and the town has strictly regulated private development along the lakeside. There is an emerging potential threat through the conversion of summer residences into year-round residences, intensifying their use, but there have been no incidents thus far (though the town continues to monitor the trend).



## Drought

Maine has seen increased instances of drought throughout the state since at least 2000. Drought in Dexter would mean losses to plant growth, increases to fire and insect outbreaks, altered rates of carbon, nutrient, and water cycling, and at worst, local species extinctions. The following graphic shows drought conditions from 2000 to the present, with a highlight point on a certain week in 2020 when recent drought conditions were at their worst.



To mitigate the effects a drought may have, Dexter should continue to include strict regulations into their shoreland zoning. Their practices are discussed in the next section.

Acid rain may no longer immediately threaten ecosystems but recent fires all over the country (and beyond) have caused prevailing winds to bring the smoke to our region, causing a phenomenon called “dirty rain”. Despite more fires in Ohio, California, and parts of Canada, Maine has not yet received deposits of harmful chemicals from dirty rain. If drought conditions persist throughout the US, causing more fires, the likelihood of dirty rain depositing chemicals into Maine’s soils and waterways becomes more likely. To mitigate this, Dexter can use similar tactics it may use to prevent runoff or non-point source pollution, being cautious of when a dirty rain event may occur and monitoring the towns ecosystems for harmful chemicals.

## PFAS

Another, newer problem occurring throughout Maine is due to our growing understanding of polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). PFAS break down very slowly and are persistent in the



environment. This means that PFAS may build up in people, animals, and the environment over time. Health agencies are working to understand more about the health effects of low level, long-term exposure. As of now, our understanding of PFAS is that exposure may cause several different health risks:

Potential Health Impacts from PFAS
Decreases in fertility or increases in high blood pressure in pregnant women
Reduced ability of the body's immune system to fight infections including reduced vaccine response
Child development effects including low birth weight, accelerated puberty, bone variations, or behavioral changes
Increased risk of some cancers including prostate, kidney, and testicular cancers
Interference with the body's natural hormones
Increased cholesterol levels and/or risk of obesity

**Table 6.0:** PFAS risks. Source: Maine EPA

According to Maine's EPA, technology for the treatment, concentration, and destruction of PFAS is still in its early stages and at this time, there is no universal, cost-effective way to remove PFAS from all media. Furthermore, technologies currently available to manage PFAS vary based upon the type of media. For example, removing PFAS in water requires different considerations and processes than removing PFAS from soil, sludges, leachate, vegetables, milk, beef, or other contaminated media. This is because each media type has unique characteristics which may pose challenges with existing technology. Both the federal government, the State of Maine, multiple academic institutions, and private industry are researching new technologies and methods for treating, concentrating, and destroying PFAS. It is anticipated that options will be evolving rapidly over the next few years. To mitigate any potential presence of PFAS in Dexter, residents can continue to keep its standards for drinking water via both municipal water and private wells updated. PFAS can be found in several household products, firefighting foams, cleaning products, and more. Another potential source of PFAS is sludge and septage spread as fertilizers. The town is aware of potential sources of PFAS in the old mill and landfill in town, and will continue monitoring for the presence of PFAS elsewhere.

### **Ticks**

There are many species of ticks within Maine, which form a threat to both humans and animals alike. Tick populations are mostly concentrated by the coast but have spread to every county in Maine. Since many die in colder temperatures, the recent increase in temperatures means that these bugs are becoming more numerous and more dangerous. They thrive in a cool, moist environment such as tall grass or low, dense foliage and leaf litter, particularly in shaded areas, and seek out warm-blooded animals to feast on. Dexter is filled with such environments and the animals that live in them; ticks remain an ever-present threat to the community.



## Habitat Fragmentation

Habitat fragmentation is beginning to become prevalent in Dexter. The area surrounding Lake Wassookeag and the downtown area have seen large reductions in habitat, as well as increasing fragmentation along Route 93. Concentrating development near the center of town or in areas along Route 93 that are already would be useful to mitigate damage to additional habitats and reduce sprawl. Lake Wassookeag is an important cold-water fishery, and provides a breeding population of lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*). Protecting this lake and other water features can be accomplished through strategies like adopting Lake Smart practices<sup>22</sup> and using Living Shoreline practices to stabilize banks<sup>23</sup>. Brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) habitat also occurs throughout Dexter, including multiple brook trout priority conservation areas. Brook trout require cool, unimpeded flows; unfortunately, much of Dexter’s waterways are significantly choked by undersized culverts and several dams. These structures prevent aquatic species from moving between locations and alter habitat by slowing and pooling water, often making conditions more competitive for invasive species (e.g., low oxygen, high temperatures). Federally Endangered Atlantic salmon critical habitat also extends from the coast to Dexter. Improving aquatic connectivity is also frequently associated with reduced damage to infrastructure; areas that experience chronic flooding may benefit from improved stream crossing structures.

## Invasive Species

### Invasive Species—Terrestrial Plants

There are several invasive plant species present in and around Dexter. These can damage the soil, crowd out native flora, and reduce the grazing and foraging areas for native fauna.



Multiflora Rose - *Rosa multiflora*  
Photo courtesy of the Maine DACF



Black Locust - *Robinia pseudoacacia*  
Photo: Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft.,  
Bugwood.org

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.lakes.me/lakesmart>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mgs/explore/marine/living-shorelines/>





Glossy Buckthorn - *Frangula alnus*  
Photo courtesy of the Maine DACF



Common Buckthorn - *Rhamnus cathartica*  
Photo courtesy of the Maine DACF



Morrow's Honeysuckle - *Lonicera morrowii*  
Photo courtesy of the Maine DACF



Japanese Knotweed - *Fallopia japonica*  
Photo courtesy of the Maine DACF



European Barberry - *Berberis vulgaris*  
Photo: Arnstein Rønning



Climbing Nightshade - *Solanum dulcamara*  
Photo: Mary Ellen (Mel) Harte,  
Bugwood.org



### ***Invasive Species—Aquatic Plants***

Thankfully there are no known aquatic invasive species in Dexter, but they have the potential, like their terrestrial counterparts, to wreak havoc on the local waterbodies by crowding out native plants and reducing the food available to fish. Both Hydrilla and Eurasian Water Milfoil have been seen in water bodies south of Dexter and their spread remains an ever-present concern. The Dexter Lakes Association advocates for boat inspections and active stewardship to prevent any cross contamination from other water bodies.



Hydrilla - *Hydrilla verticillate*

Photo: Michael Lo



Eurasian Water Milfoil - *Myriophyllum spicatum*

Photo: Alison Fox, University of Florida,  
Bugwood.org

### ***Invasive Species—Insects***

Beyond plants, there are several species of insects invasive to Maine which can threaten Dexter. The Spongy Moth and Browntail Moth are known to feed on and defoliate trees, damaging the local environment; both have been known to cause allergic reactions in some people. The European Fire Ant can also be a nuisance, as their stings are especially painful. These ants also aggressively displace other ant colonies and disrupt seed dispersal by native plants, even helping the seed dispersal (and therefore spread) of invasive plant species). Next, the Spotted Wing Drosophila can decimate fruit populations if left unchecked.

Finally, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is one of the most serious invasive species threatening our ash resources and forests. All species of (*Fraxinus*) ash trees that grow in Maine are susceptible to injury and death by the EAB (though [*Sorbus*] mountain ash trees are not). Although there is no known infestation in the town, it is close enough to the infested area to be within the “potential infested” and quarantined areas (Map 7.0). The town is aware of its existence and may soon take steps to mitigate its presence if successfully identified within the community.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest\\_health/invasive\\_threats/eab/index.shtml](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/invasive_threats/eab/index.shtml)



In addition to the threats to forestry posed by EAB, Spruce Budworm (SBW) is responsible for defoliating or killing vast acreages of balsam fir and spruce annually. Although this insect is spreading fast across Northern Maine, SBW has not yet been detected in or near Dexter. There are both currently a SBW Task Force, and a Maine Spruce Budworm Coalition monitoring and mitigating the situation. More information about these two insects can be found in the Agricultural and Forest Resources chapter.



Spongy Moth - *Lymantria dispar dispar*  
Photo: Didier Descouens



Browntail Moth - *Euproctis chrysorrhoea*  
Photo: Donald Hobern



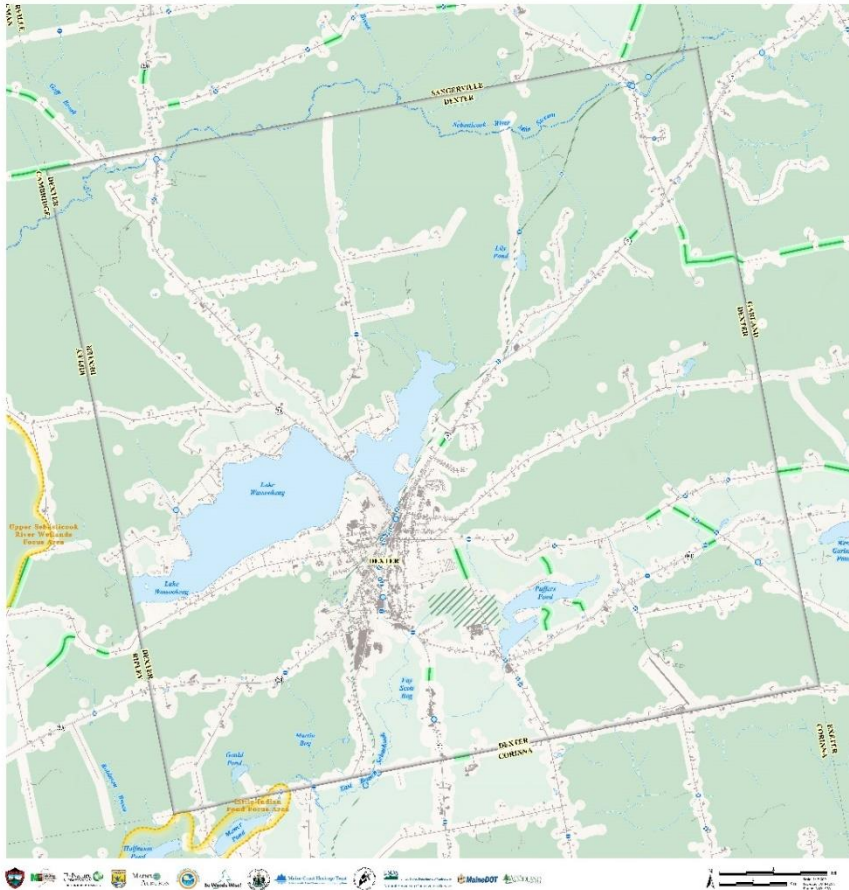
European Fire Ant - *Myrmica rubra*  
Photo: Eli Sarnat, Antkey, USDA APHIS PPQ,  
[Bugwood.org](http://Bugwood.org)



Spotted Wing Drosophila - *Drosophila suzukii*  
Photo: Hannah Burrack

Dexter is working to educate landowners about the threat of these species and prepare for and/or mitigate their impact on the community.





**Map 6.5:** Undeveloped Habitat Blocks and Connectors and Conserved Lands in Dexter, Maine. Source: Beginning With Habitat.

## Protection

As Maine’s natural resources are a vital part of our economy and way of life, their sustainable management is at the crux of our continued future. Maine has various regulations which are instituted at state and municipal levels. Federal regulations have weakened and conserved lands are not necessarily covered by municipal, state, or federal regulations, so it is important more so now than ever that Maine leads in the effort for the sustained health of our natural resources. There are some conserved lands in Dexter, which are worth our continued stewardship.



Beginning With Habitat (BWH) helps towns conserve their water, soil, and scenic resources through natural areas, roads, and stream crossings. BWH is an environmental education center.  
[www.beginningwithhabitat.org](http://www.beginningwithhabitat.org)

### Habitat Connectivity Conserved Lands, Undeveloped Habitat Blocks & Habitat Connectors

- Area of Interest
  - Organized Towns
  - Impervious Surface
  - Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance
  - Maine Stream Habitat Viewer Road Stream Crossings
    - Barrier
    - Potential Barrier
    - No Barrier
  - Development Buffer
  - Habitat Connectors
    - Likely Road Crossing Areas for Wildlife
  - Conserved Lands
    - Fee and Easement Conservation Land
- Habitat Blocks**  
 Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (DACF Chapter 208) requires blocks >500 acres be considered important natural resources for town comprehensive planning.
- 0-500 Acres
  - 500 + Acres

## Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance

Explore more Focus Areas on the BWH Map Viewer



TOWNSHIP BOUNDARIES: ME Office of GIS (2021)  
 IMPERVIOUS: CMAP/NOAA Impervious land cover (2021)  
 HYDROLOGY: US Geological Survey (2016)

CONSERVED LANDS: ME Dept. of Ag., Cons., and For., Land Use Planning Comm'n., ME Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (2024)  
 UNDEVELOPED HABITAT BLOCKS: Beginning With Habitat (2022)

FOCUS AREAS & HABITAT CONNECTORS: Beginning With Habitat (2022)  
 MAINE STREAM HABITAT VIEWER CROSSINGS: ME Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (2022)



## ***Regional Cooperation***

Wildlife (and organisms in general) do not recognize municipal or human-made boundaries, making management on a regional level crucial to sustainability. Shared ecosystems, such as the water sheds, and some overlapping habitats demand synchronized efforts to address common challenges, such as invasive species propagation, habitat degradation, and water quality maintenance. Collaborative initiatives enable the pooling of expertise, data, and resources, fostering the development of comprehensive strategies that account for regional variations and collective impacts. The integration of scientific research and local knowledge within a collaborative framework enhances the efficacy of conservation actions, facilitates data-driven decision-making, and maximizes the long-term viability of natural resources. In an era marked by escalating anthropogenic pressures and environmental uncertainties, the unity of Dexter and adjacent municipalities may serve as a model for prudent and sustainable natural resource management.

The town cooperates with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department of Agriculture (DoA) to maintain the town's natural resources. The town also coordinates with the Dexter Lakes Association (DLA) alongside other nearby lakes associations for regional conservation efforts.

The Maine DoA specifically assists with maintaining trails and preventing their usage from damaging the natural environment. They own the Newport/Dover-Foxcroft Rail Trail that goes through the town (named for the old rail line it is built over) and prevent dust and refuse from the rail bed from falling into the lakes.

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife worked with the DEP and local lakes associations to assess the water quality of watersheds within Dexter.

## ***The Future of Natural Resources Through Land Use Planning***

It is important to prioritize land use planning through the lens of natural resource management, as using ecological standards help to foster greater sustainability and indefinite use. The trajectory of future land use planning holds the promise of advancing ecological sustainability. A data-driven approach, grounded in spatial analysis, remote sensing technologies, and ecological modeling, can further inform the identification of critical habitats, ecological corridors, and areas of high conservation value. Integrating this scientific foundation with stakeholder engagement and participatory processes can yield dynamic land-use strategies that harmonize human needs with ecosystem imperatives. Adaptive management frameworks, underpinned by ongoing monitoring and assessment, may be implemented to refine land-use plans in response to changing environmental conditions. Moreover, a forward-looking approach should encompass climate resilience considerations, acknowledging the potential impacts of human-driven changes in the climate, on natural resource dynamics. Ultimately, the prospective evolution of land use planning in Dexter pivots upon the fusion of scientific rigor, community collaboration, and holistic ecological stewardship to foster both human and natural systems.



## *Strategies*

Ensure that land use ordinances are consistent with applicable state law regarding critical natural resources.

Designate critical natural resources as Critical Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.

Through local land use ordinances, require subdivision or non-residential property developers to look for and identify critical natural resources that may be on site and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.

Through local land use ordinances, require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to include as part of the review process, consideration of pertinent BWH maps and information regarding critical natural resources.

Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.

Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important natural resources such as through purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.

Distribute or make available information to those living in or near critical or important natural resources about current use tax programs and applicable local, state, or federal regulations.

Encourage use of native plant species in yards to provide microhabitat and restore some native that is lost from development, with the primary beneficiaries being birds, amphibians, and insects (especially pollinators)



# Agricultural and Forest Resources



# **AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES**

## **State Goal**

To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.

## **Policies**

To safeguard lands identified as prime farmland or capable of supporting commercial forestry.

To support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.

## **Importance of Forestry and Farming**

Forestry is one of Maine's oldest and most valued industries, with the dense woods of Maine providing lumber and kindling for generation upon generation. In keeping with its larger decline in the state, the census records a small number of workers in the field in Dexter. That being said, there is ample forested land in the town and strong support for its preservation and conservation. Current forest management practices are adequate for the community's needs.

Farming, once the center of American life, does not hold the same value as a profession as it once did. Over the last 100 years, small family farms have been concentrated and consolidated inside and outside the state in favor of larger agri-business. Even with these changes, farming has remained intertwined in the spirit of Dexter. There has been a more recent trend toward local eating, farmers' markets, and the popularity of farm-to-table operations. Farmland can provide food for both the community and wildlife, as it may help control flooding, protect wetlands and watersheds, and maintain air quality. Farmlands can filter and absorb wastewater and provide groundwater recharge, where surface water is able to move downward in the water table. Well-managed farmlands are integral to a community's health.<sup>25</sup>

Most farms in Dexter are smaller-scale or for non-commercial use, and their total number has been on a slight decline. Despite that, the profession receives strong community support. Dexter

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<sup>25</sup> Cai *et al.* 2020. Values of the Farmland Ecosystem Services of Qingdao City, China, and their Changes. <https://www.researching.cn/ArticlePdf/m30025/2020/11/5/05000443.pdf>



farmer’s market, for example, is open on Saturdays 12-3pm from June to October. Dexter has a volunteer-run community garden for the benefit of the Heart of Maine Resource Center. Additionally, the nonprofit Top of the Hill “Flea Market” hosts many farmers and their works from 10am to 3pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Fridays of each month, May to December.



### Community Policies

The town of Dexter allows forestry to occur with a permit in its rural zones, which take up a majority of the town’s land area. Timber harvesting in the town’s shoreland zones is regulated by the Maine Bureau of Forestry. The town also allow agriculture in rural and commercial areas with a permit. The town has passed an ordinance designed to limit the amount of solar built in Dexter in an effort to preserve farmland, though the impact of it has yet to be assessed.

The Fern Family Farm remains the only conserved land in town, protected via easement with the Maine Farmland Trust. The local school also owns some wooded land, which they use for natural education and forestry lessons for students. Dexter may consider partnering with the state or a nonprofit to better conserve more its natural resources by encouraging land stewardship.

### Timber Harvesting

Below is the compiled timber harvest for Dexter. “Shelter wood harvesting” removes trees in two or more stages; the initial harvest removes most mature trees, leaving enough behind to act as sources of both seeds and shade for the next generation. “Clearcut harvesting” removes most or all of the trees in one harvest, with regeneration occurring via natural seeding. “Land use change” denotes the full removal and sale of trees in an area, in order to facilitate its development.

**Table 7.0:** Data compiled from Confidential Year End Landowner Reports to Maine Forest Service. To protect confidential landowner information, data is reported only where three or more landowner reports reported harvesting in the town. Source: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry - Maine Forest Service

**Dexter Timber Harvest data: 1991-2021**

Year	Shelter Wood (ac)	Land Use Change (ac)	Clearcut Harvest (ac)	Totals (cords)	# of Reports
1991-2001	384	111	229	6020	230



Year	Shelter Wood (ac)	Land Use Change (ac)	Clearcut Harvest (ac)	Totals (cords)	# of Reports
2002-2011	779	49	15	4404	192
2012-2016	427	5	4	2828	103
2017-2021	642	20	83	1962	83
Total	2232	185	331	15214	608

## Threats

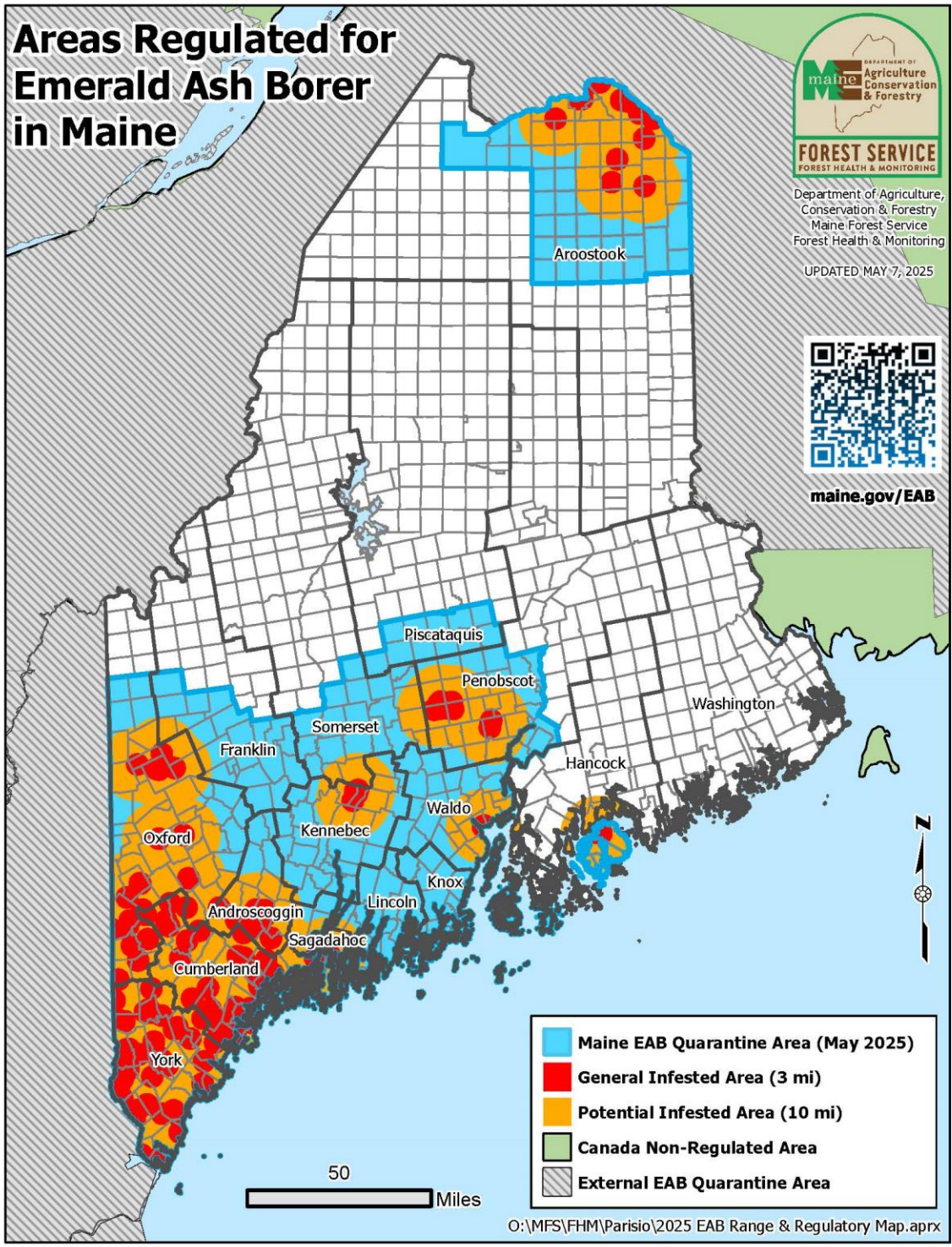
The current level of development has little threat to the current forestry and farming practices in the town. There are a few areas that may be developed in Dexter. There are only two vacant lots currently for sale in the town, totaling a combined 124 acres in size. There is also property near Owlsborough Rd. that is being eyed for development. Beyond these, there is no land projected to be sold and developed in the near future. Unless there is further sewer expansion, more development with likely be difficult in Dexter.

Beyond threats of development, invasive species like the emerald ash borer (EAB), *Agrilus planipennis*, is one of the most serious invasive species threatening our ash resources and forests. All species of (*Fraxinus*) ash trees, but not (*Sorbus*) mountain ash, that grow in Maine are susceptible to injury and death by the emerald ash borer. Dexter is currently in the Active Quarantine Zone (Map 7.0). As such, the community is taking steps to mitigate its presence if successfully identified within Dexter.<sup>26</sup> The abutting town of Corinna detected EAB in 2023, while Exeter found the insect in 2025.



<sup>26</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest\\_health/invasive\\_threats/eab/index.shtml](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/invasive_threats/eab/index.shtml)





Map 7.0: Heat Map of Eastern Ash Borer in Maine (May 2025). Source: State of Maine



In addition to the threats to forestry posed by EAB, Spruce Budworm (SBW), *Choristoneura fumiferana* is responsible for defoliating or killing vast acreages of balsam fir and spruce annually.

Although this insect is spreading fast across Northern Maine, SBW has not yet been detected in or nearby Dexter. There are both currently a SBW Task Force, and a Maine Spruce Budworm Coalition monitoring and mitigating the situation.<sup>27</sup>



### Tree Growth Program

This program, run by the state of Maine, provides a tax benefit for owners of at least ten acres of forested land used for commercial harvesting. A forest management and harvest plan must be prepared and a sworn statement to that effect submitted with the application. Applications must include a map of the parcel indicating the forest type breakdown as well as all other areas to be excluded from the tree growth program. There has been some significant uptake of this program in Dexter, but it has not changed dramatically since 2013.

**Table 7.1:** Land enrolled in the Maine Tree Growth program, 2013-2023. 2023 is the most recent record. Source: Maine Revenue Services

**Tree Growth Program Enrollment in Dexter: 2013-2023**

Year	Number of Parcels	Softwood (ac)	Mixed Wood (ac)	Hardwood (ac)	Total Acres	Total Value (2023 Dollars)
2013	102	961	3,631	1,407	5,999	\$968,308
2023	107	868	3,848	1,431	6,147	\$938,108

### Other Forest Protection

To protect forested lands, the town primarily depends on the work of The Penobscot Nation, University of Maine, Maine Forestry Service, and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) And the Tri-County Technical Center (TCTC). The Penobscot Nation works closely with state agencies for sustainable management of forested lands. This same strategy is used by each municipality adjacent to lands currently acknowledged as belonging to the Penobscot Nation. Dexter does not feel like it needs to take further action at this time, as there have been no incompatible uses affecting the local logging industry. Furthermore, there are no large tracts of industrial forest land that have been sold since the construction of Loconte Storage. If there

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest\\_health/insects/spruce\\_budworm\\_2014.htm](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/forest_health/insects/spruce_budworm_2014.htm)



are any ecological changes, the town plans to address them as needed, and is open to working together to preserve the vital wetland area, and progress into the future.

## ***Farms in Dexter***

As stated previously, Dexter does not boast many farms, or those that are considered large-scale. Dexters farmers are small family-run operations that work locally. One such farm is Stormy Blue, which prides itself as a family farm, and specializes in flowers and Woolly cows. It is 5 acres and open to the public during the summer months for you-pick flowers and pictures. Another, Briggs, specializes in vegetables. Western Sherburne & Sons Inc. is a dairy farm located in the southern part of town. There is also, Heart of Maine Homestead, J&H Farm, and Little Red Veggie Stand, to name the town's most prominent.



*Above: A cow from Stormy Boue, flowers from Two Roads, and braided Garlic from Heart of Maine Homestead.*

Places like these are important for multiple reasons. They give Dexter residents direct access to fresh produce, meat, flowers and honey, which is especially important when larger supply chains are stressed, they add economic resilience and jobs, they preserve working landscapes and local knowledge, among other cultural and ecological services. Making sure that residents have access to farmlands for generations to come helps preserve working landscapes, strengthen the local food system, and sustain a diversified rural economy. Dexter would be in support of expanding farmers' markets and other related farm endeavors if the opportunity and funds were presented to do so. The sentiment is similar throughout the heart of Maine region.

## ***Farmland Program***

The Farmland program can also provide tax benefits to landowners. To enroll in this program, the property owner is required to have at least five contiguous acres in their parcel of land. The land must be used for farming, agriculture or horticulture and can include woodland and wasteland. Additionally, the parcel must contribute at least \$2,000 gross income from farming activities each



year. There has been some additional uptake for this program, but the inflation-adjusted value of the land in the program has decreased even as the acreage has increased.

**Table 7.2:** Land enrolled in the Maine Farmland program, 2013-2023. Woodland and farmland enrolled in this program are recorded separately. 2023 is the most recent record. Source: Maine Revenue Services

**Farmland Program Enrollment in Dexter: 2013-2023**

Year	Number of Parcels	Total Farmland Acres	Total Farmland Valuation (2023 Dollars)	Total Woodland Acres	Total Woodland Valuation (2023 Dollars)
2013	54	1,045	\$508,024	1,775	\$290,879
2023	63	1,115	\$420,650	1,908	\$298,090

**Other Farmland Protection measures**

*Farm and Open Space Tax Law* - Farmland is eligible for the Farm and Open Space Tax Law Program (Title 36, MRSA, Section 1101, et seq.) if that farm consists of at least five (5) contiguous acres in a single town and has shown gross earnings from agricultural production of at least \$2,000 during one of the last two years or three of the last five years. The Farm and Open Space Tax Law encourages landowners to conserve farmland and open space by taxing the land at a rate based on its current, rather than potential, use if landowners agree not to develop their property. The benefits of this program are that it enables farmers to continue their way of life without being forced out of business by excessive property taxes, which can be brought about by rising land valuations. Benefits recognized include public recreation, scenic resources, game management, and wildlife habitat. Dexter does not have any land enrolled in the Open Space program.

*Farmland Registration Program* - Another program is the Farmland Registration Program designed to protect the farmers' right to farm their land. Upon registration, a farmer is guaranteed a 100-foot buffer zone between the productive fields and new incompatible development, such as residential development. The Farmland Registration Program also lets new and potential abutter know that a working farm is next door.

*Mandatory Shoreland Zoning and Subdivision Law* - State legislation provides environmental guidelines and mandates shoreland zoning and subdivision which consider agricultural issues.

The Maine Farmland Trust continues efforts focused on protecting its farmlands. Still, old farmers are retiring, causing further reduction of agricultural pastures. The town may investigate regional programs or more local groups to protect the farmlands it already has to incentivize growth, or those on the state level to promote the protection of farms from development or altered uses.



*The Food Sovereignty Act* – This piece of legislation empowers local communities by granting them the authority to regulate the production, processing, and distribution of locally produced foods. This act significantly benefits towns like Dexter by fostering local food systems, encouraging small-scale farming, and enhancing food security. By reducing bureaucratic barriers and allowing residents to purchase directly from local producers, Dexter is able to support a more agricultural economy, promote sustainable practices, and ensure that fresh, healthy food options are accessible to residents. Local control strengthens community ties and promotes economic resilience. Dexter anticipates that these efforts will continue to attract new farmers to the area and stimulate investments in sustainable agriculture.

## **Strategies**

Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing any land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices as required by 12 M.R.S.A. §8869.

Consult with Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing any land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.

Amend land use ordinances to require commercial or subdivision developments in critical rural areas, if applicable, maintain areas with prime farmland soils as open space to the greatest extent practicable.

Limit non-residential development in critical rural areas (if the town designates critical rural areas) to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism/outdoor recreation businesses, farmers' markets, and home occupations.

Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs.

Permit land use activities that support productive agriculture and forestry operations, such as roadside stands, greenhouses, firewood operations, sawmills, log buying yards, and pick-your-own operations.

Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local or regional economic development plans.

Encourage wildlife-friendly farming practices, especially in fields to the west such as managing for short grass meadows, providing perch points, etc. for the benefit of upland sandpipers.





# HISTORY

AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

# **HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

## **State Goals**

To preserve the State’s historic and archaeological resources

## **Policies**

Protect to the greatest extent practicable the significant historic and archaeological resources in the community.

## **History**

Before colonial American settlement, this area was stewarded by the tribes of the Wabanaki Confederacy.<sup>28</sup> The first known full-time American settlement in what would become Dexter was established in 1801 by a man named Ebenezer Small, who was looking to set up a cabin in the deep woods. Around this time, another man named Samuel Elkins began clearing land in the area and planning for further settlement, plotting out locations for a mill; the first recorded name for this area, Elkinstown, comes from him. That name didn’t stick for long as the town incorporated in 1816 as Dexter, choosing to name itself after Samuel Dexter: a former Representative, Senator, and Secretary of both War and the Treasury, as well as then being a candidate for Governor for Massachusetts.<sup>29</sup>

The East Branch of the Sebasticook River, going through the south of Dexter, provided sixteen different falls that could be exploited for hydropower. The first business to use one was a grist mill opened in 1818; by 1886 each one had at least one business attached to it. Through these, Dexter became a notable industrial center. There were several large businesses in Dexter in the late 1800s and early 1900s, including several mills and the Fayscott Foundry. These attracted workmen from across the state; the population jumped from 885 in 1830 to 1,948 in 1850, and to 2,875 by 1870. Dexter would receive another population surge after the industrial investments of World War One and has stayed at around 4,000 people ever since.<sup>30</sup> The impact of these historic patterns

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<sup>28</sup> It was ceded to Massachusetts (of which Maine was then part) by two treaties in 1794 and 1796 between the tribes and the state—in violation of federal law. The legal land claims from these treaties were resolved, in the eyes of the government, by the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980 which gave the affected tribes \$81.5 million (around \$319 million in 2025 dollars) in exchange for their land claims and restrictions on tribal sovereignty. The terms of the Act remain contested today.

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Dexter would go on to lose that election to John Brooks of the Federalist Party by a margin of 2,206 votes, though he would win what is now Maine handily. The town of Brooks, Maine in Waldo County (also incorporated in 1816) is named after his opponent.

Dexter, Michigan (est. 1830) was also named in his honor by its founder—his son, Samuel W. Dexter.

<sup>30</sup> It’s highest population since the war was 4,419 in the 1950s, while it lowest was 3,714 during the Depression.



of settlement are still felt in the location of the downtown and most of the development in Dexter—on the south side of the lake, close to the falls and the sites of former factories.

Dexter would eventually face industrial decline alongside much of the rest of Maine. The Small grist mill closed in 1965, Abbott Mill closed in 1975, and Fay Scott closed in 2003.



ALL

46 Bangor Daily News, Monday, January 21, 1957 (1 of 3.483)

From the beginning . . .

## TO PROSPER meant to WORK

The people of DEXTER, MAINE are working for a better INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITY—for THEMSELVES and for their CHILDREN.

The industrialists who investigate opportunities in Dexter, Maine will receive a warm welcome from the townsmen, leading executives of the companies now located there, and from the Dexter Development Association.

Dexter is a small Maine town of slightly more than 4,000 people in the heart of the State. Situated by the shores of beautiful Lake Umbagog, the town is a shopping, trade and employment center for a wide area.

The services of the Dexter Development Association and the members of its staff are at the disposal of any person interested in knowing more about Dexter.

RESEARCH, SURVEYS and ASSISTANCE are available to all who are interested in the industrial potential of Dexter. All correspondence may be addressed to EDGAR T. OSBORN, President of the DEXTER DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION.

You Are Invited to Come to Dexter and See its Industrial Potential

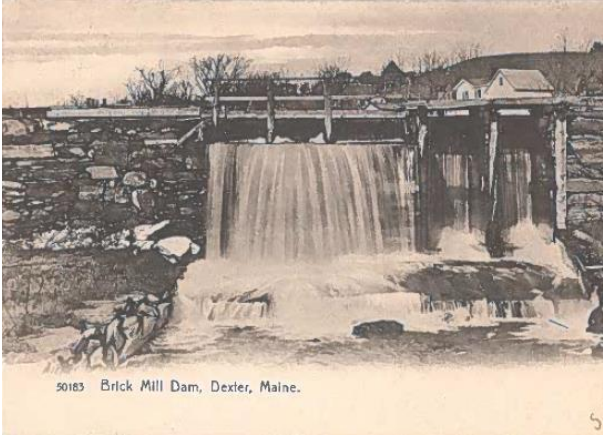
*An advertisement in the Bangor Daily News, 1957*

Berkshire Hathaway acquired Dexter Shoe for \$443 million in stock in 1993 but was unable to stop it from closing its last Maine factory in 2001.<sup>31</sup> As shown in the Economy section, today only 3.8% of Dexter’s workers are in manufacturing.

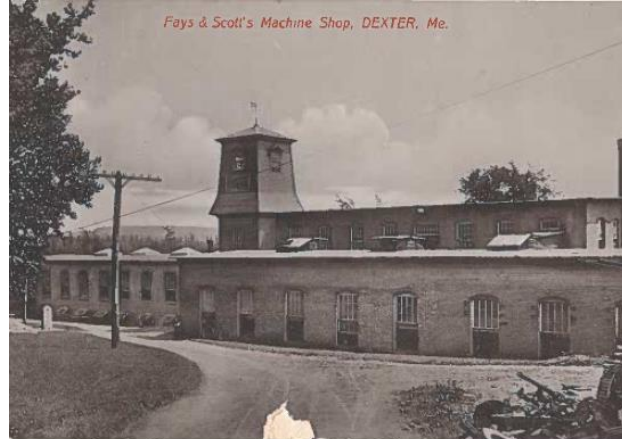
<sup>31</sup> As of 2025, that stock would be worth around \$17.9 billion dollars. Warren Buffet, CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, has referred to this acquisition as the “most gruesome” decision he had made in his entire career and remarked that “as a financial disaster, this one deserves a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records.”

<https://www.berkshirehathaway.com/letters/2014ltr.pdf>





*Brick Mill Dam, 1906*



*Fay & Scott's Machine Shop Postcard, pre-1952*

## ***Dexter Celebrities***

There are several prominent people who were raised in Dexter, such as politician Ralph Owen Brewster (who served Maine as both Senator and Governor) and movie actor Sterling Walter Hayden (most famous for his roles in *The Asphalt Jungle* and *Dr. Strangelove*).<sup>32</sup> Harold J. Crosby, also born in Dexter, was a composer who became famous for his brass-band marches during WWI, even working with John Philip Sousa as a guest conductor before his untimely death; the H.J. Crosby Community Band in Dexter is named in his honor, and performs his marches every year on the anniversary of his birth.

The most prominent person associated with Dexter is Sir Hiram Maxim, a prolific inventor whose patents included the automatic fire sprinkler, the curling iron, and (most famously) the fully automatic machine gun. Born in the neighboring town of Sangerville, he had worked as an apprentice in Dexter during his teenage years. He invented his gun and made his fortune while living in Great Britain, and would periodically return to Maine—on one occasion in 1890 holding a public demonstration of his gun in Dexter (believed to be the first such demonstration in the United States), firing hundreds of bullets from Abbott Hill into Lake Wassookeag to the awe and delight of onlookers.

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<sup>32</sup> Hayden was born in New Jersey and spent his adolescence in Dexter.





*Ralph Owen Brewster, picture undated*

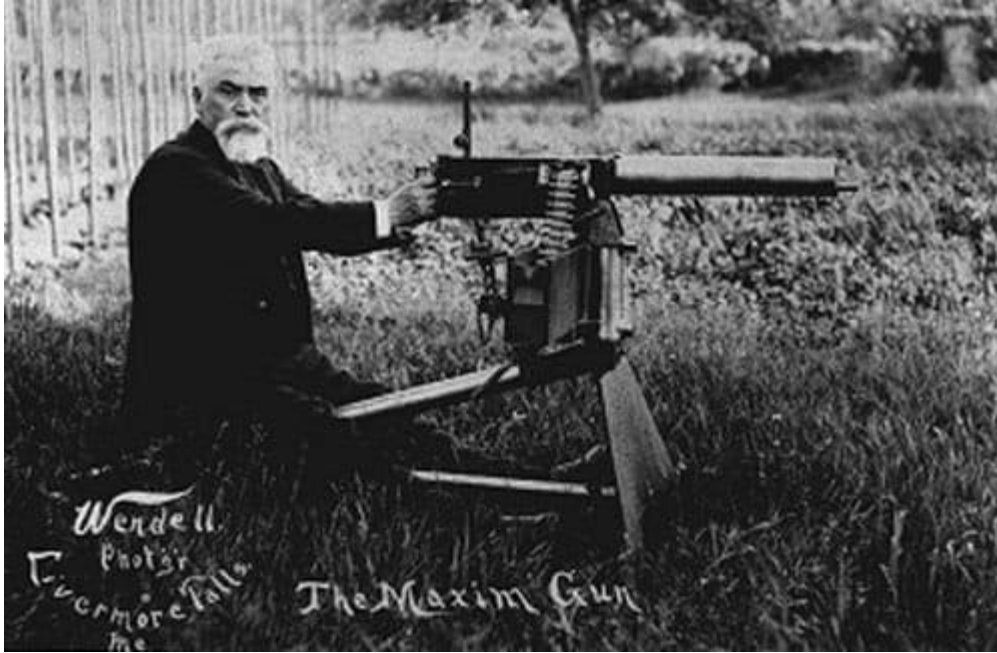


*Sterling Walter Hayden, 1950*



*A Brewster Rally in Dexter, 1926*





*Hiram Maxim in Maine, 1897*



*H. J. Crosby, picture undated*

## ***In The Media***

Dexter has made an appearance in classic media like Creepshow, a Stephen King show filmed in 1987, as well as a Vaseline Commercial in 1981.<sup>33</sup> The town is proud of its appearances in features like these, as it brought greater pride through town-wide participation.



<sup>33</sup> Vaseline Intensive Care Commercial. 1981. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nAB45ecFDM>



## The Lake

Lake Wassookeag has had several names over its history, such as Silver Lake, Dexter Pond, and Pleasant Pond. At first, the lake was only able to be crossed by ferry. The community built a floating bridge in 1824, upgraded to stone in 1860 and finally to concrete in 1947. The dam on the lake, which created almost all of Little Lake Wassookeag, was constructed in 1914. Though historically the rivers that flowed from the lake were more important to the town's character, the lake has always been an important source of water, and of recreation.



*Dexter's 1860 stone bridge, picture undated*



## Historic Buildings

As of 2024, the National Register of Historic Places found 5 buildings in Dexter worthy of designation.

### Dexter Grist Mill

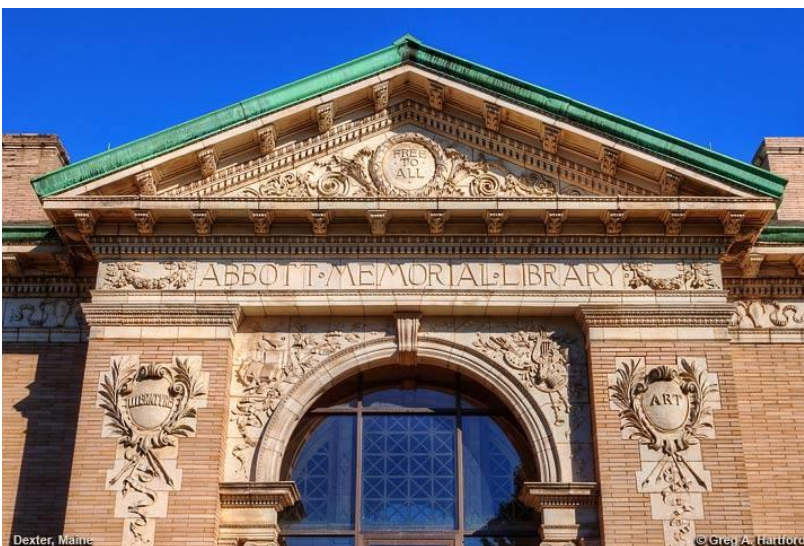
A grist mill is designed to grind grain into flour and was a staple of rural economies for centuries. This mill was established in 1818, shortly after the town was incorporated. The building was updated and adapted several times over its century-and-a-half existence as an active mill but eventually closed in 1965. The building was acquired by the town



shortly afterwards and its use was granted to the Dexter Historical Society, who turned the property into a museum which includes the miller's house and the Carr schoolhouse (from 1825 and 1846, respectively).

### Abbott Memorial Library

The Abbott Memorial Library was built in 1894, a gift from the wealthy George Amos Abbott to the town. In George's own words, "Throughout my life, I had enjoyed reading and I knew the

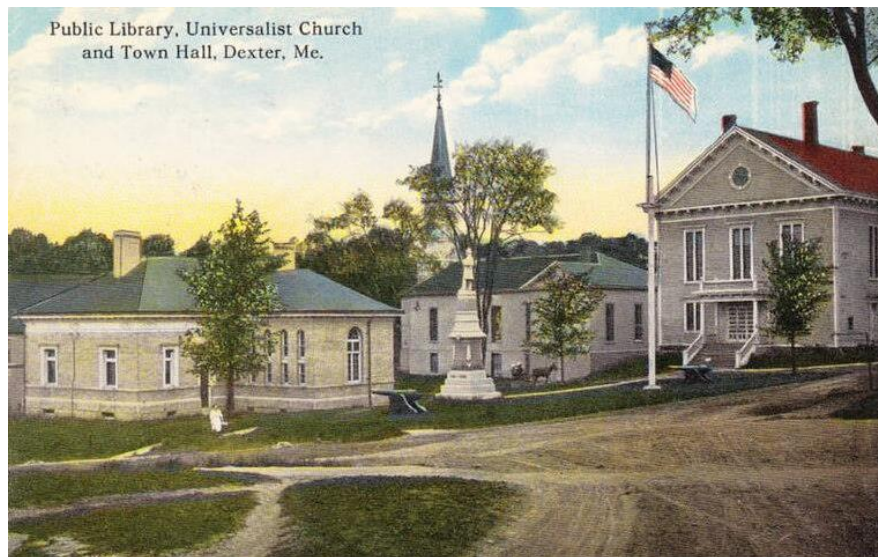


benefits to be derived from having a well-stocked library available; I wanted to give the townspeople and the generations to come an opportunity to realize some of those same benefits." Indeed, it is still an active library, open five days a week. It was extensively renovated in 2018 to ensure it can continue to operate for decades to come.



### ***Dexter Universalist Church***

This church was the first religious building of any kind raised in Dexter. It has been serving congregants since 1828 but was extensively redesigned in 1870 by architect and minister Thomas W. Silloway, who achieved some note for designing churches throughout New England (as well as writing many books on both architectural design and theology). Dexter Universalist Church is considered among his best architectural work.



### ***Ralph Owen Brewster House***

This house was once the childhood home of politician Ralph Owen Brewster. He purchased it from his father in 1929, after serving two terms, and redesigned it into a property suitable for a prominent politician. Indeed, the house would host national politicians such as Harry Truman and Robert A. Taft. Brewster's significant expansion and landscaping additions are still preserved today. Nowadays, the property serves as the Brewster Inn.



### ***Bank Block, 15 Main Street***

The bank block was a joint venture by two local banks, First National Bank and Dexter Savings Bank, built in 1876. It is known for elaborate ornamentation in the Italianate and Romanesque Revival styles, as well as the architectural incorporation of a Masonic Hall. The building has not held banks since the 90s; most recently it has held an antiques shop (though it has since moved).



*Bank Block, picture undated*

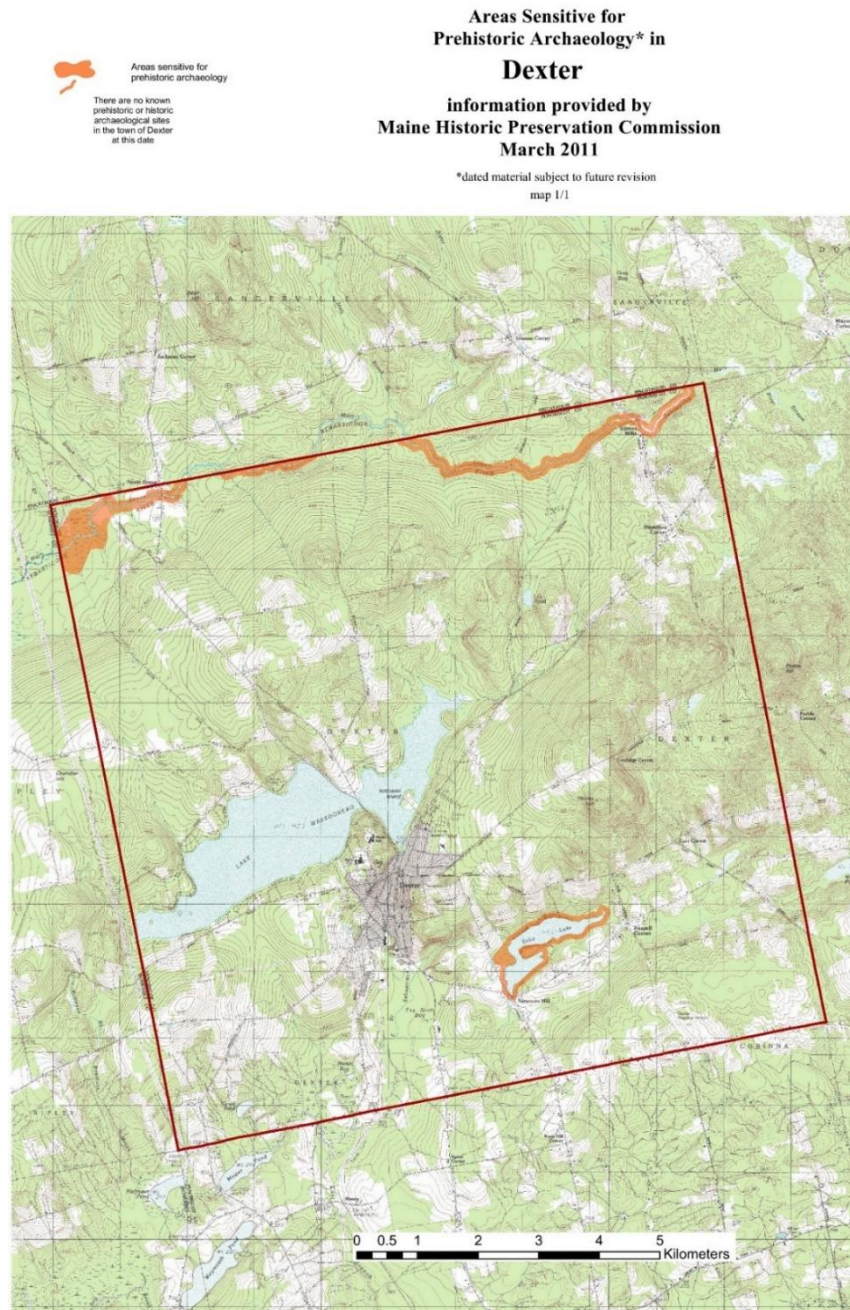
### ***Historic Archeological Sites***

Leith Smith of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) reports there are no known historic archaeological sites in Dexter. However, no professional town-wide surveys for historic archaeological sites have been conducted in Dexter, precluding their identification. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission recommends that future archaeological survey should focus on the identification of potentially significant resources associated with the town's agricultural, residential, and industrial heritage, particularly those associated with the earliest Euro-American settlement of the town in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

### ***Prehistoric Sites***

There are no known prehistorical archaeological sites in Dexter. That being said, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission has identified two areas of interest that they believe might offer sites, the Sebasticook River shore and valley as well as the Puffer's Pond/Echo Lake shoreline (Map 8.0).





**Map 8.0:** Potential prehistorical archeological sites in Dexter. Source: Maine Historical Preservation Commission.

## Historic Preservation

The laws of Dexter provide some protection for historic and prehistoric resources. The Dexter Subdivision Ordinance contains special provision for the “preservation of natural and historic features” that the Planning Board deems relevant (though they do not require a formal survey to identify such features). The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, meanwhile, protects the shoreline from disturbance by requiring setbacks from streams to be at least 75 feet and 100 feet from great Dexter Comprehensive Plan



ponds, protecting the identified potential prehistoric sites. The town also owns and maintains historic structures such as the library and the town hall, and maintains a wooden grandstand for public events.

The Dexter Historical Society (founded 1966) runs the museum in the old grist mill, miller's house, and Carr schoolhouse, as well as a related museum in the former Abbott & Co. woolen mill office building. They maintain an ever-growing collection of artifacts and documents important to the town's history, as well as a website documenting them. Their efforts are quite extensive and were invaluable to the creation of this section.

The Unitarian Church has few congregants and is maintained with the additional support of the Friends of the Dexter Meetinghouse, a community group which organizes fundraisers and other events to help preserve and utilize the space.

## ***Strategies***

For known historic archeological sites and areas sensitive to prehistoric archeology, through local land use ordinances require subdivision or non-residential developers to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.

Adopt or amend land use ordinances to require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to incorporate maps and information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into their review process.

Work with the local or county historical society and/or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to assess the need for, and if necessary, plan for, a comprehensive community survey of the community's historic and archaeological resources.





# RECREATION

## RECREATION

### State Goals

To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters

### Town Goal(s)

To have adequate recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.

### Policies

To maintain/upgrade existing recreational facilities as necessary to meet current and future needs.

To preserve open space for recreational use as appropriate.

To seek to achieve or continue to maintain at least one major point of public access to major water bodies for boating, fishing, and swimming, and work with nearby property owners to address concerns.

### Recreation for All in Mind

A community's quality of life is an important factor for most people deciding on a place to live and is often related to the growth and development of a Town or area. Dexter's parks, open space, and recreational assets play a vital role in the lives of residents. Town-owned facilities and fields are heavily used by the public, and programs are often at capacity. Parks and open spaces provide a variety of active recreational opportunities, and the community recognizes the important physical and mental health benefits of outdoor recreation.



*Dexter residents enjoying the roller rink at town hall*

Dexter offers a broad range of aquatic recreational opportunities, including boating, paddling, fishing, ice fishing, and swimming. While maintaining recreational amenities is important to



residents, continuing to improve facilities with a focus on increasing inclusivity and accessibility for people of all ages and abilities is also a priority. Residents value these amenities, both natural areas and built facilities, and view recreation as an important aspect of health and well-being.

These factors, paired with the town's sense of volunteerism, lends itself to a hearty suite of recreational opportunities, as well as the astute recognition of improvements that need to be made.

## ***Parks and Recreational Facilities***

### ***Bud Elms Field***

This sporting park contains a Little League and softball field, a tennis court, and has hosted disc golf in the past. It will also connect to a walking/cross-country skiing trail system which will go around town. There is a porta-potty for visitors.

### ***Crosby Park/Dexter Community Park***

This public park (right) has a baseball diamond, basketball court, and other sporting fields (like an equestrian show rink) and through a 2015 refurbishment has added plenty of playground equipment for children to enjoy (as well as benches and picnic tables for parents to sit on). It also includes a large pavilion (and porta-potty) for public events.



### ***Dexter Municipal Golf Course***

This 9-hole, regulation golf course (pictured below) is owned by the municipality for the public to enjoy. It also connects to the upcoming walking/cross-country skiing trail system which goes around town (and is maintained by the municipality).



### ***Eleanor Marsh Smith Ronco Park***

This municipal park (pictured right) is located by the south of the lake shore and is among the most scenic locations in Dexter. Both it and the gazebo in it are named in honor of a longtime public servant and city councilor.



### ***MSAD #46 Recreation Complex and Ridge View Community School***

The municipality has use of the gyms, athletic fields, and playgrounds of the public schools of Dexter.

### ***Pleasant Street Ice Skating Rink***

This is a public, municipally owned outdoor ice rink with a recently added “skate hut” that rents skates and provides refreshments.



### ***Town Hall Rec Center***

The old town hall is being used by the municipality as a public gym and rec center. Currently, there is an ongoing initiative by the town manager to add showers to the facility. During the winter, it is also open for roller skating.

### ***Veterans Memorial Park***

This small park on Dam Street is dedicated to those from Dexter who served in the armed forces.

### ***Wassookeag Lake Rest Area, Boat Launch, and Dexter Municipal Beach***

This area by the north lakeshore includes a rest area with picnic tables next to a seafood restaurant, two places to launch boats (one on each of Big and Little Lake Wassookeag), and the town’s public beach, recently the subject of a town-wide restoration campaign (“Bring Back the Beach!”). As part off this effort, he town is planning to install 3 small pavilions and one large one. The town is also offering swim lessons here, and maintains a bathhouse, parking lot, and porta-potty.

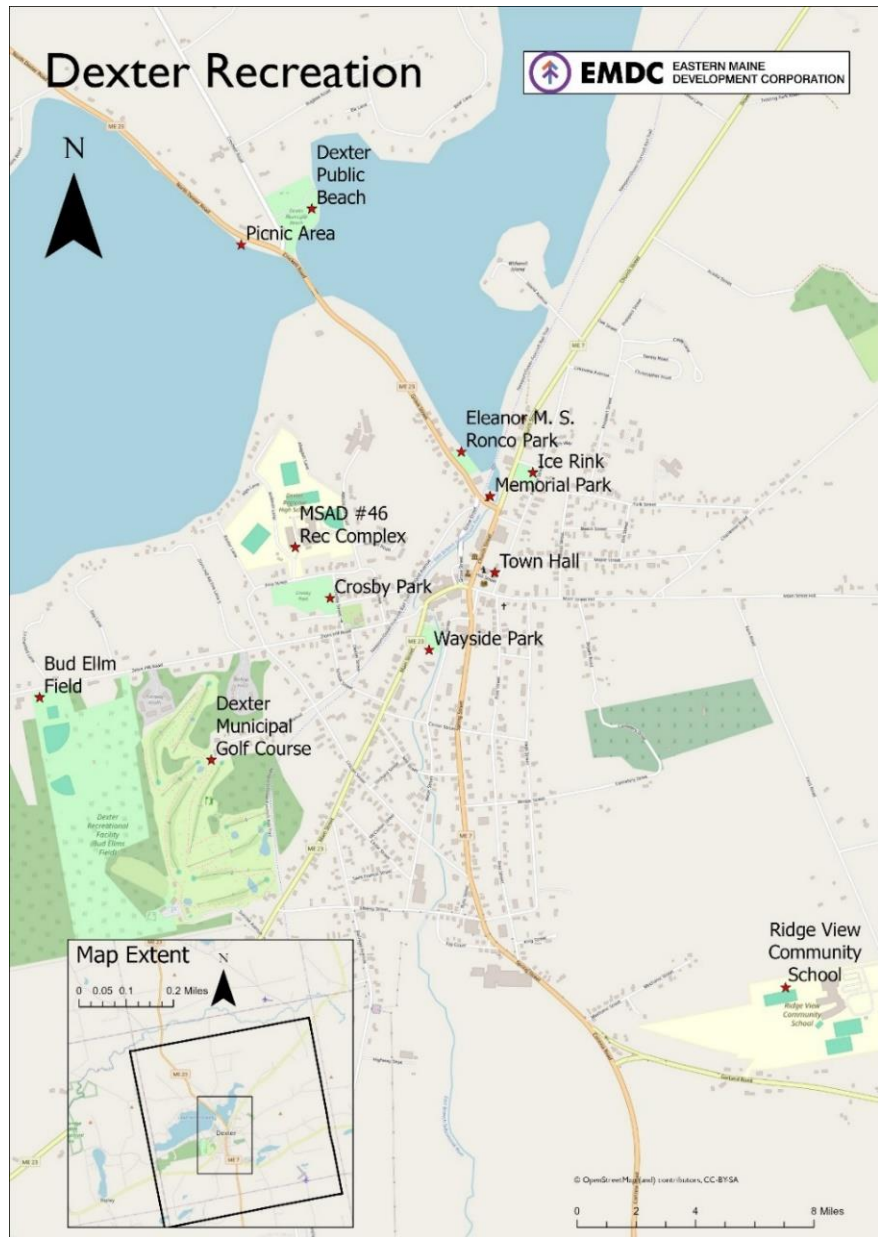


**Wayside Park**

This park in has a very short walking trail as well as a covered bridge, benches, and a gazebo. It's also host to a popular concert series that runs during the summer months on Fridays for residents and visitors alike.



Dexter Chamber of Commerce Presents: **MUSIC IN THE PARK** Summer Concert Series Fridays at 6:30

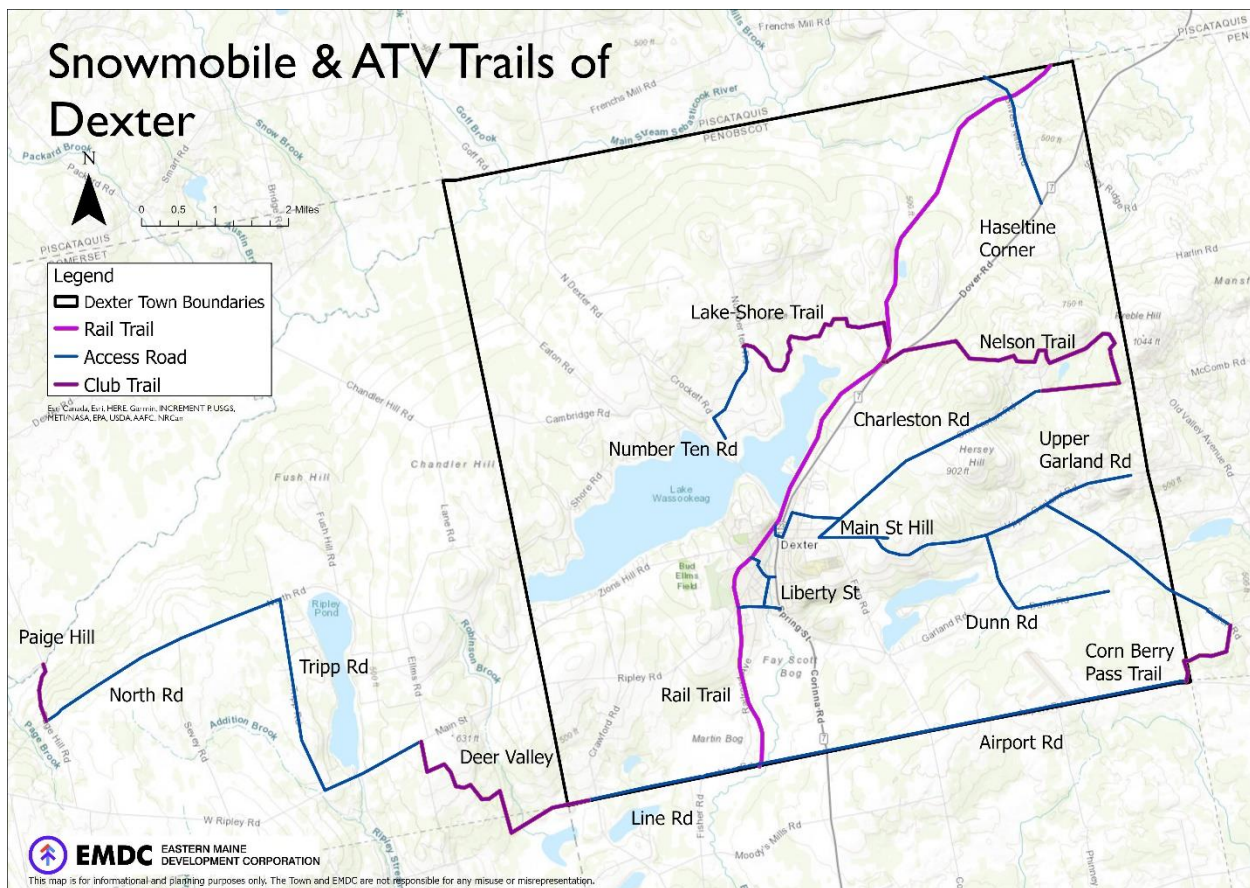


**Map 9.0:** Recreational Facilities of Dexter. Source: Town of Dexter



## Snowmobile and ATV

Snowmobiling and ATV riding have taken off in popularity since the pandemic, in Maine generally and Dexter specifically. The Wassookeag Snowmobile Club rides on and helps maintain the snowmobile trails of Maine, especially around Dexter. They, as well as the nearby Ripley Trail Riders and Corundel Raiders, are part of the Maine Snowmobile Association in good standing. Meanwhile, Dexter Rail Riders is the primary ATV club in the area, filling a similar function outside of the winter months. These clubs also work to keep landowners from removing these lands from public use, cracking down on irresponsible riders who might damage privately-owned lands as well as hosting landowner appreciation dinners and sending gifts to those who agree to have their land used for recreation; as a result of these efforts, the restriction of traditional recreation lands are less of a concern in Dexter than elsewhere.



Map 9.1: Snowmobile & ATV trail map of Dexter. Source: Dexter Rail Riders



The main vehicle trail through the community is the Four Seasons Adventure Trail/"Rail Trail", which is maintained primarily by the state. It extends from Newport in the south to Dover-Foxcroft in the north. There are no known significant use conflicts on this or other trails.

## Recreation Programs

Dexter's Recreation Department organizes a variety of events and programs for the children of the town. These range from basketball to tennis to golf to cheerleading. The school system also offers events for students. On the other end of the spectrum, the Age Friendly Committee holds events for older adults, as well as doing advocacy to make Dexter more accessible to less mobile people. There are fewer programs available for those ages in between; particularly teens. Town officials and concerned residents are reviewing the gap in programming for teenagers (a perennial problem for society at large). The above-mentioned snowmobile and ATV clubs offer recreation opportunities, and there are also private golf organizations active in town.

## Festivals and Celebrations

Festivals and celebrations are an integral part of recreation for any town. These weekly, monthly, annual or one-off events allow people who wouldn't otherwise interact with their community to congregate for the purpose of light-hearted fun. This can be as simple as a farmers market, or as intensive as the red hot dog festival. These occasions



create approachable, joyful opportunities for residents and visitors to connect, celebrate local culture, and animate public spaces. They strengthen social ties, encourage volunteerism, and make the town's shared places more welcoming and vibrant.

Not only is it good for Dexter, but these events may create so much fanfare, that multiple communities farther away come just for such a celebration. At the same time, well-supported events deliver tangible economic and organizational benefits. Festivals attract visitors from surrounding communities, increase foot traffic for shops, eateries, and lodgings, and generate seasonal revenue that sustains local businesses. Additionally, these events may require intensive organizing, bringing the community closer together through group coordination, building capacity and leadership that benefit other community initiatives.

## Regional Recreation

Within just an hour's drive of town, the greater Heart of Maine area boasts some of the most beautiful recreation opportunities in the region.

### Baxter State Park

Baxter State Park is in the heart of Maine, with Mt. Katahdin as its crown jewel. Baxter State Park, a wilderness area of 202,064 acres, was a gift to the State of Maine by former Governor Percival



P. Baxter. In 1930 he made his first land purchase of 5,960 acres which included Katahdin, the highest mountain in Maine. This land was given to the State in 1931. By resolve of the Maine Legislature in 1933, the area was officially designated as Baxter State Park and the summit of Katahdin was named "Baxter Peak" in his honor. His final gift of 7,764 acres was made in 1962.

The Park is a paradise for the naturalist, mountain climber, hiker, and photographer. Many orchids, ferns, alpine and other plants grow in abundance. Geologists will find interest in Baxter's rhyolite, Katahdin granite and many fossil types. Bird watchers, wildlife enthusiasts and winter trackers will find a variety of wildlife to pursue. Recreationalists can enjoy Alpine Skiing, Hiking, Technical Climbing, Camping and Winter Camping. There are 46 mountain peaks and ridges, 18 of which exceed an elevation of 3,000 feet, the highest being Baxter Peak at 5,267 feet. The park is intersected by about 175 miles of trails.

To protect the wilderness resource, the park limits access to parking lots/trailheads. Access is based on a first-come, first-served basis when parking lots fill up, that area is closed. Early arrival is recommended for day-use.

### ***Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary***

Borestone (pictured right) is nearly 1,600 ac of wilderness managed by the Audubon Society. It includes trails, a small museum, three lakes (named Sunrise, Midday, and Sunset) as well as rental lodges for visitors to stay the night. Access is free to Maine Audubon members, but non-members must pay a small fee before entering.



### ***Bud Leavitt Wildlife Management Area***

The Bud Leavitt WMA (formerly the Bull Hill WMA) is 30 minutes east of Dexter by car. It was named after a local sports and outdoor writer for the Bangor Daily News in 1987. Its 6,530 acres are composed of active and abandoned farm sites, with the latter reverting to woodland and some wetland. This WMA provides opportunities for hunting (white-tailed deer, black bear, snowshoe hare, wild turkey, ruffed grouse and American woodcock), fur trapping, hiking, ATV riding (restricted to gravel roads on the WMA), birdwatching, and snowmobiling. There is also a short trail on Hi-Cut Hill that leads to a rock outcropping that once held a fire tower; it offers a view of Mt. Katahdin from the top.



### ***Sebasticook Lake***

Sebasticook Lake (pictured right), just downstream of Dexter in nearby Newport, is a large lake that offers swimming, boating, canoeing, snowmobiling, and fishing (it has been advertised as “one of the best bass fishing lakes in the state”). There are private campgrounds on the lake as well.

### ***Peaks-Kenney & Sebec Lake***

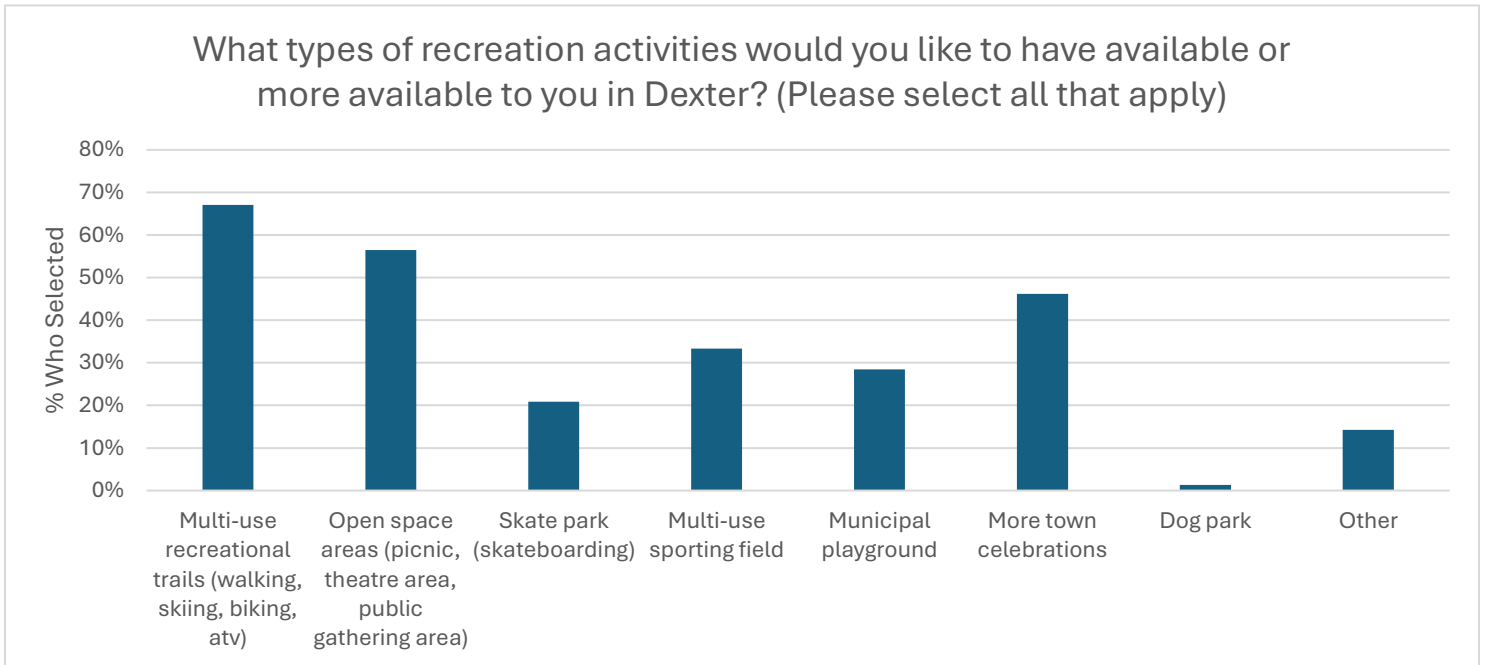
Peaks-Kenny State Park is an 839-ac. state park on the shores of Sebec Lake, located in the town of Dover-Foxcroft. There are plenty of recreational activities available to park-goers, ranging from hunting to hiking to camping to birdwatching. The lake itself has a boat launch as well as a sandy beach that is staffed by a lifeguard in the summer.

## ***Recreation Needs and Concerns***

Given population trends and recent facility usage, the size of existing recreational facilities meet the current and projected future needs of the community. That said, Dexter is actively working to engage residents to further improve recreation successes. As discussed above, many of the existing facilities have either been recently improved (Crosby Park, the Skating Rink) or have improvements actively planned (Town Hall Rec Center, the Beach, and teenage programming). The town is also actively looking for grants to help expand recreational programs. As these initiatives (and the below survey) show, the community has a strong desire to maintain and expand outdoor recreation opportunities. The community has ample access to the major water



bodies (with access points owned by the town and of ample capacity for their usual crowd of visitors, including at Puffers’ Pond), and recreational facilities are largely publicly owned and open to all; outside of festival days, parking is widely available in Dexter. Much of the recreational land is protected by some level of government and/or open to the public, though the town does not currently have an open space fund, direct partnership with a land trust, or other such mechanism to ease acquisition of open spaces or other such lands.



**Figure 10.0:** Recreation survey. Source: Dexter Community Survey.

## Strategies

Create a list of recreation needs or develop a recreation plan to meet current and future needs. Assign a committee or community official to explore ways of addressing the identified needs and/or implementing the policies and strategies outlined in the plan.

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 where possible.

Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.

Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property. At a minimum this will include information on Maine’s landowner liability law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A. §159-A.



# PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES



## ***PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES***

### ***State Goal***

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

### ***Policies***

To efficiently meet identified public facility and service needs.

To provide public facilities and services in a manner that promotes and supports growth and development in identified growth areas.

### ***Local Partnerships, Collective Growth***

Public facilities and services are the backbone of a thriving community, and Dexter recognizes the importance of these resources in ensuring the well-being and quality of life of its residents. This chapter outlines its commitment to providing essential public functions while addressing the evolving needs of the community. The town is dedicated to maintaining and improving its public facilities and infrastructure to meet the demands of its residents. Efficient facilities that promote connectivity and accessibility are of increasing importance. Dexter currently maintains all facilities and equipment well. The physical condition of these facilities continues to improve, no doubt lending itself as part of the reason public services are viewed favorably.

### ***Municipal Administration***

Dexter has a Town Council-Town Manager form of government, which was established in 1975. The Dexter Town Council has regularly scheduled monthly meetings the second Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM. Special meetings relating to various issues are held occasionally. The Town Council consists of seven members. There are many boards and committees for residents to engage in, such as the Age Friendly Committee, the Airport Committee, the Planning Board, the Cemetery Advisory Committee, etc. which aid in the administration of the government.

The Dexter Municipal Office Building (Morrison Memorial Building) houses many of the Town employees and provides rental space. Located in the building on the first floor are the Town Manager, the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Finance Director, Tax Collector, and Assistant Finance. The second floor of the building houses the Tax Assessor, Code Enforcement/Plumbing Inspector, Human Services Director, Clothes Closet, Dexter Utility District Office, and the Dexter Public Health and Woman-care Program. Yoga and dance classes have used the third-floor rooms.





This three-and-a-half story brick structure was built in 1901. Added in 1925, the large Town clock (Nancy) mounted on the roof, together with a well-maintained early twentieth-century exterior, adds to the character of the central business district. Centrally located, the building is easily accessible from all parts of Dexter. There is ample parking available in nearby areas. The Town Office building (and our entire downtown) is a prestigious icon for the Town of Dexter. The Morrison building's historic preservation and restoration will require professional services and acquisition of grants similar to those completed for our revitalized Town Hall. A complete facility analysis and energy and life cycle cost report can both identify and prioritize an immediate and long-term corrective action plan.

The Town Hall, originally designed for town meetings, is now used principally for recreational purposes. The gym is used for roller-skating, elections, and other community gatherings. The building also contains adult education programs, Facilities Department workshops, and the Recreation Department office. The building has a small kitchenette that the town is working to adapt into a full kitchen, and is planning to install showers to aid in hygiene, post-recreation.

The Town Hall is a well-constructed two-story building appropriately located in the center of Town on the corner of Hall and Pleasant Streets. It was built before the turn of the century, but is in excellent condition. The building is well-insulated with new windows and siding. A \$165,000 Grant helped to improve the Town Hall in 2006. With these funds, the



building was made handicapped accessible in 2007-2008 with the installation of a handicapped ramp and elevator, and a handicapped bathroom. The funds were granted to the Town from the State CDBG program. Parking has been noted as a problem. The lot is small and contains parking space for no more than 20 cars; and additional parking on adjacent streets is sometimes



inadequate. There does not appear to be any solution to this problem with the lack of available space in the area.

The Abbott Memorial Library was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This distinctive building remains much as it was when the corner stone was laid over a hundred years ago. The library has been the focus of much cultural and civic life over the years, and the backdrop for many iconic photos of Dexter. The main floor contains the children's room, a computer and reading room, a room of audio books and videos, as well as the library's main collection of books and periodicals. The basement with outside entrance, contains storage for older documents and records, as well as a meeting room where many local groups gather for lectures, classes, and holiday events. These programs have covered everything from art displays, book talks and signings, beekeeping, meditation, job searches and health issues, to crafting classes such as painting Ukrainian Easter Eggs, gardening, knitting, spinning, and quilting. You can find out more about the library on their website, which is kept up-to-date on all events happening there.<sup>34</sup>



### ***Municipal Services and Changes***

Resources for municipal services are well-positioned to accommodate a modest rise in population. The town's existing municipal services have been maintained and scaled to handle potential growth. Dexter is ready to respond proactively to shifts in population and demographics, ensuring that its infrastructure and services continue to meet the needs of residents.

Whether the population rises or falls, Dexter's municipal services are well-equipped to meet the needs of its residents. That said, a declining population may reduce strain on some municipal resources, and an aging demographic brings its own set of challenges and opportunities. For instance, older residents may require enhanced healthcare access, expanded senior services, and more intense infrastructure improvements such as pedestrian-friendly streets and ADA-compliant public spaces.

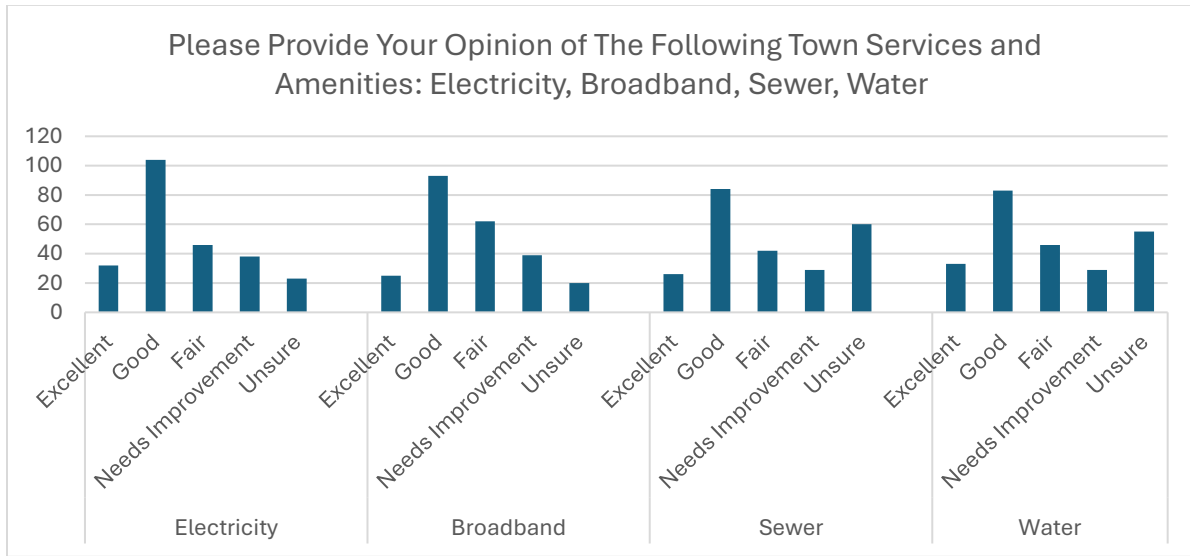
<sup>34</sup> <https://www2.abbott-library.com/index.php/library-services/>



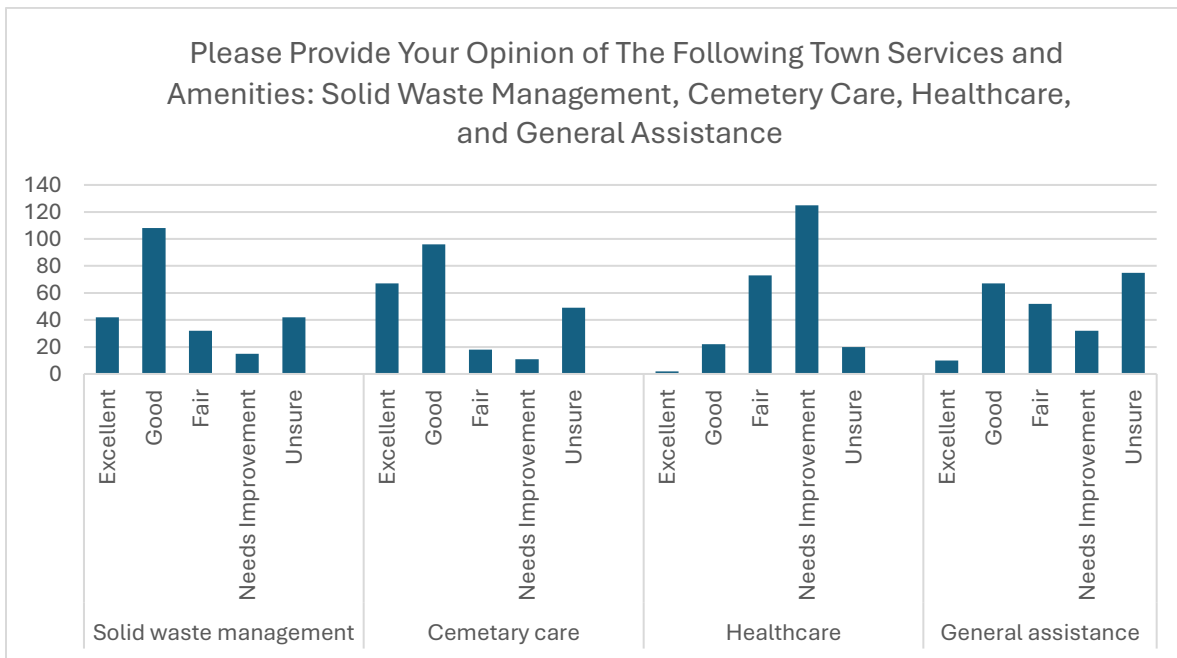


## Community Response

For a tightly woven community like Dexter, meaningful engagement doesn't just inform decisions: it builds trust, uncovers local knowledge, and helps the town allocate limited resources where they will deliver the most public benefit. Figures 10.0-10.4 denote where the community is currently doing well, while 10.5 shows what residents want to prioritize.

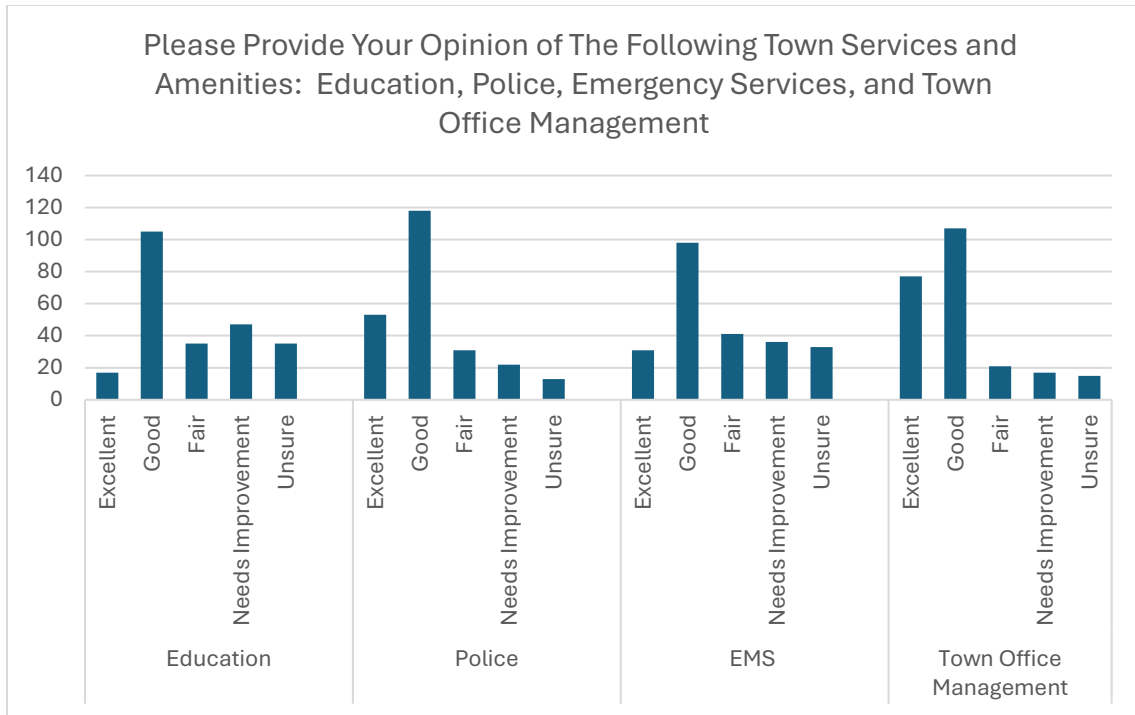


**Figure 10.0:** Dexter Residents' Perceptions Toward Electricity, Broadband, Sewer, and Water in Dexter, Maine. Source: 2025 Dexter Community Survey

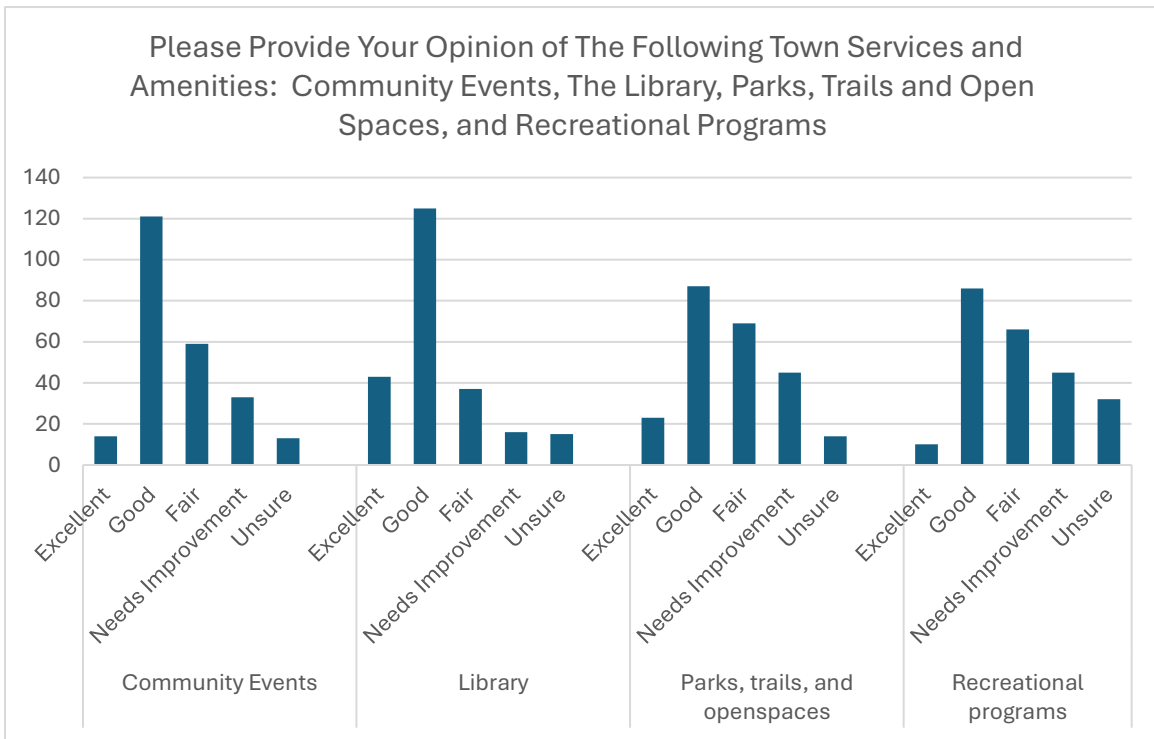


**Figure 10.1:** Dexter Residents' Perceptions Toward Solid Waste Management, Cemetery Care, Healthcare, and General Assistance in Dexter, Maine. Source: 2025 Dexter Community Survey



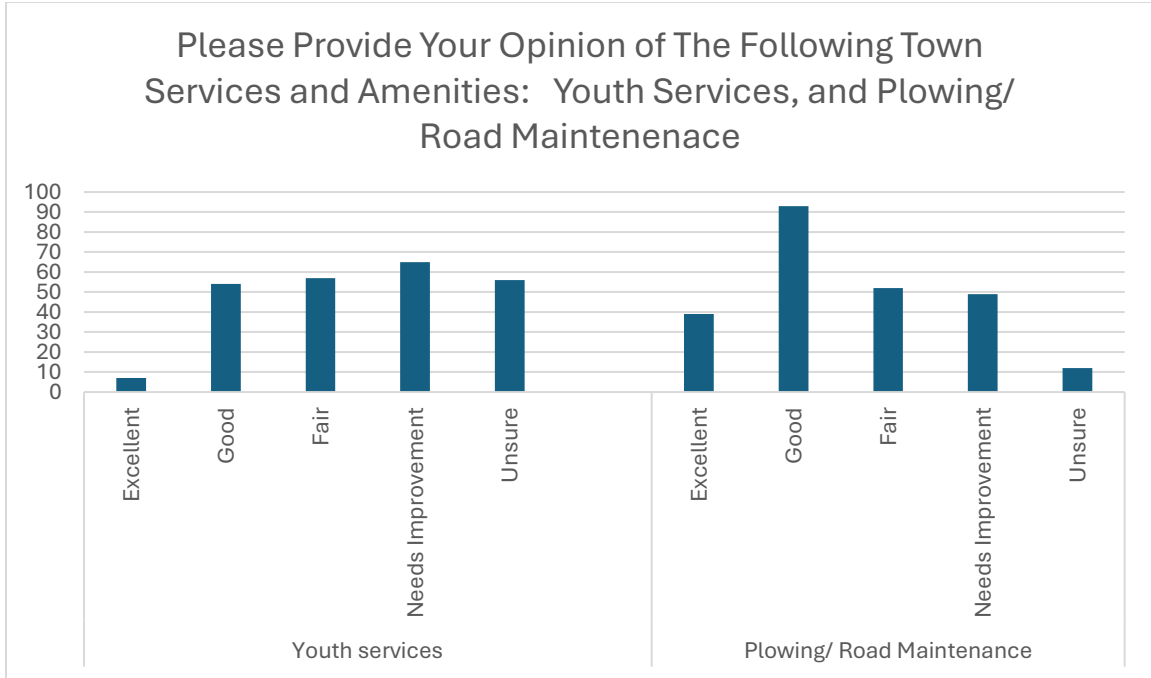


**Figure 10.2:** Dexter Residents’ Perceptions Toward Education, Police, Emergency Services, and Town Office Management in Dexter, Maine. Source: 2025 Dexter Community Survey



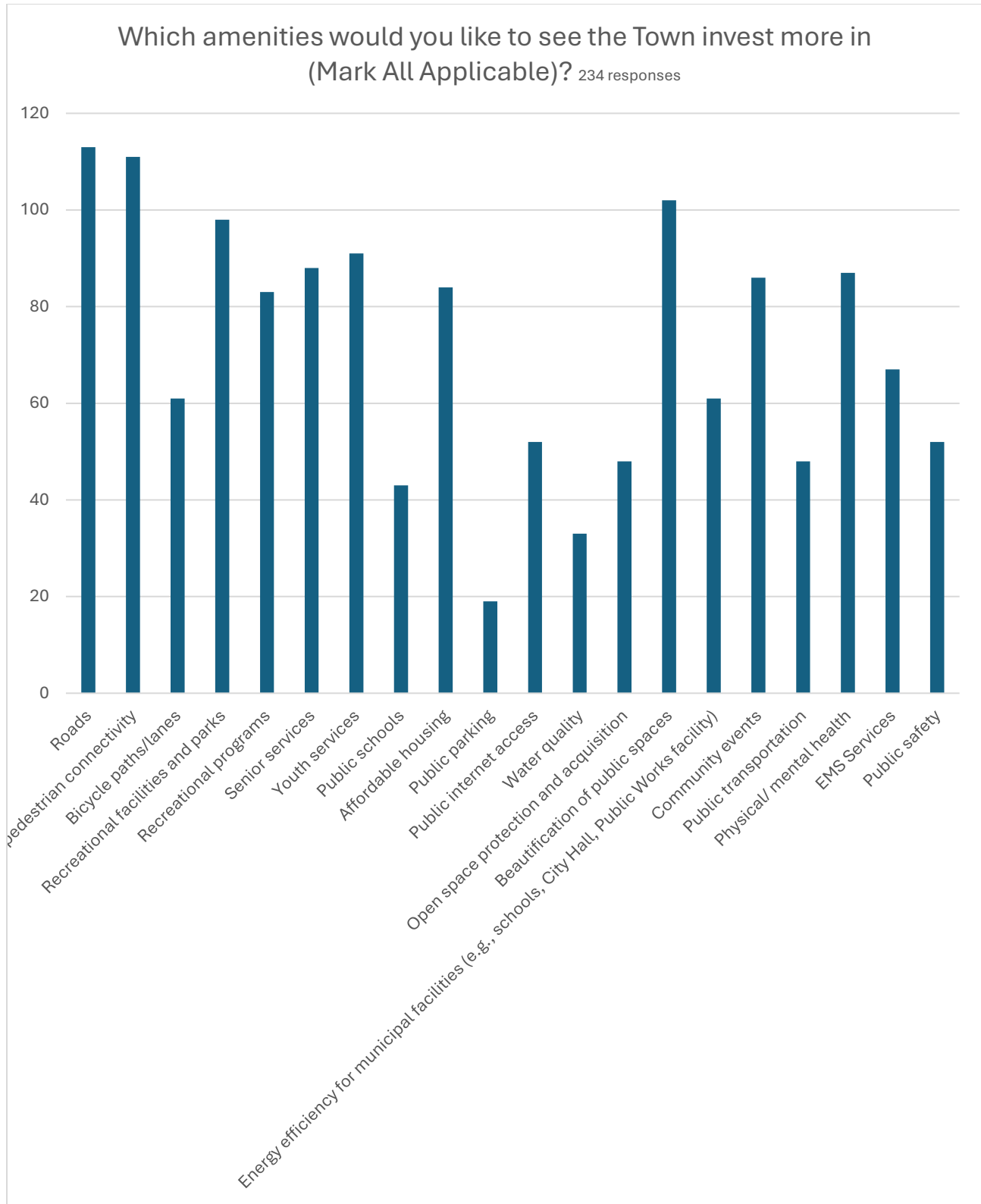
**Figure 10.3:** Dexter Residents’ Perceptions Toward Community Events, The Library, Parks, Trails and Open Spaces, and Recreational Programs in Dexter, Maine. Source: 2025 Dexter Community Survey





**Figure 10.4:** Dexter Residents’ Perceptions Toward Youth Services, and Plowing in Dexter, Maine. Source: 2025 Dexter Community Survey





**Figure 10.5:** Amenities Dexter Residents would like to see improved in Dexter, Maine. Source: 2025 Dexter Community Survey



During the survey, 234 residents weighed in on where Dexter should invest over the next decade. The results make one thing clear: people want a town that moves well, looks cared-for, and supports residents of all ages. Nearly half of respondents singled out roads (113 responses) and sidewalks and pedestrian connectivity (111 responses) as areas for more investment. Close behind were calls for beautification of public spaces (102) and improvements to recreational facilities and parks (98). These top responses point to a strong community desire for both reliable transportation and attractive, usable public places where people gather.

Residents also emphasized social infrastructure. Youth and senior services ranked high (91 and 88 responses, respectively), and dozens more prioritized recreational programs, community events, and physical and mental health supports. In short, Dexter's citizens want public places that invite use and programming that helps neighbors stay active, connected, and healthy. Affordable housing also emerged as a consistent concern (84 responses), signaling that housing affordability to be part of the town's planning conversation alongside parks and streets.

Not every need was chosen by a majority, but several moderate-scoring items point to future directions worth planning for now. EMS readiness and emergency services, broadband and public internet access, bicycle infrastructure, and municipal energy efficiency each received meaningful support. Lower tallies for items like public parking or water quality should not be read as unimportant; rather, they may reflect areas residents feel are currently adequate or less visible day-to-day.

## ***Sewer and Water***

The Dexter Utility District located on Corinna Road, manages the water and sewer for the community. It is independent from the town and is managed by five elected trustees. Lake Wassookeag is the sole water source for the town.



The pumping station is located on the shore of Lake Wassookeag just below Grove Street, (Route 23) bridge on 5.5 acres. This station takes water through a suction line from the lake through 3 sand filtration systems. The water is chlorinated and treated with fluoride before it is pumped into the distribution system.

The water supply system consists of 25 miles of piping and is operating at about 50 percent of capacity. A total of 15 miles of the piping has been replaced in projects since 2001. The 700,000-gallon capacity system pumps an average of about 333,000 gallons per day. In some areas of the



distribution system, water lines are of inadequate dimension to provide adequate water pressure for fire protection and to accommodate additional growth. The District has no plans to expand the capacity of the system or increase the service area at this time. There are nearly 2350 water users within the service area. The 16 miles of water main that needs replacement will be replaced as grant money becomes available. Already, a section on King Street has been replaced.

The sewer system consists of primary treatment with three facilitative ponds for aeration and two storage ponds with 990,000 gallons capacity licensed to spray 273,000 gallons per day between April and November. December through March the ponds are used for storage. There are nearly 2300 users, with no significant industrial users. The sewer system is 273,000 gallon per day plant that was designed for current use. There is very little extra capacity to serve future growth. The system’s winter storage capacity and ability to spray on land in the winter are the limiting factors. The District does not have any plans to expand the capacity or service area of the system.

Beyond the District, there is a non-community water system for Lakeshore Restaurant.

**Table 9.0:** Dexter Utility District Number of Bills. Source: Dexter, Maine

	2022	2023	2024
Class 1 Residential	832	828	828
Class 2 Commercial	87	88	88
Class 3 Industrial	0	0	0
Class 4 Government	15	15	15
Class 7 Fire Protection	17	16	16
<b>Total Bills</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>947</b>



**Map 10.1:** Dexter Water System. Source: Dexter, Maine





**Table 10.2:** Dexter Lagoon System Information. Source: State of Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

Design Flow	0.275 MGD
Actual Flow	0.225 MGD
Discharge To	Land Application
Year Built	1987
Design Engineers	Coffin and Richardson
Septage Received	No
Collector System	20 miles gravity sewer, 350 manholes, 4 pump stations
Staff Size	2 Full Time, 1 Part Time
Number of Users	900 services
Billing Software	Northern Data Systems
Comments	Effluent is spring irrigated during summer and fall months and stored during winter and spring. There are 1,700 effluent sprinkler heads covering 176 acres of spray area.

As for private septage, residents who are not on the public sewer system hire private contractors to pump septic tanks. When pumping of private septic systems is needed, the town is not involved in the disposal process.

### ***Solid Waste***

Solid waste is handled at the Mid Maine Solid Waste Association (MMSWA) in the nearby town of Corinna, which also handles waste for other towns in the region. They also provide recycling services. The Transfer Station and Recycling Center are located at 63 Airport Rd., in Corinna, and serves Cambridge, Corinna, Dexter, Exeter, Guilford, Ripley, Sangerville and St. Albans. It's open from 8 am to 5pm Monday-Thursday, and Saturday.



**MID MAINE SOLID WASTE ASSOCIATION**

Telephone:  
Transfer Station (Beige Building)  
924-3650


Recycling Center (Green Building)  
924-5917

Hours of Operation  
Monday – Thursday  
8:00am – 5:00pm

Saturday 8:00am – 5:00pm

Closed Friday and Sunday

**Serving Towns of:**  
Dexter, Corinna, Ripley,  
Exeter, Saint Albans,  
Cambridge, Sangerville and  
Guilford



Mid Maine Solid Waste Association is a Transfer Station, Recycling Center, and Construction Debris Landfill. The facility is funded by tax dollars and revenue from recycling. It is governed by a Board of Directors, the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) and other government agencies. Our attendants try to keep the facility clean and save for our residents. If you are unsure about what to do with your waste *please ask* as the laws and rules change frequently.

**We ask that you help us handle the waste in accordance to the ordinances and rules.**

*\*Users must display a current permit*

**Mandatory Recycling Items:**

- Corrugated Cardboard
- Newspaper & Magazines
- White office paper
- Clean Cans and Jars
- #2 Plastic Jugs (milk jugs, laundry detergent and kitty litter jugs, etc)
- Fluorescent Bulbs, CFL's, Ballast

**Other Recyclables Accepted:**

- Rechargeable Batteries
- Motor Vehicle Batteries
- Non-contaminated motor oil
- Paper Board (mixed paper, cereal, cracker, and soda boxes, junk mail)
- Water base Paint (see attendant)

**Items not accepted:**

- Hazardous waste
- Antifreeze, gasoline, etc.
- Asbestos
- Animal Carcasses

*Please put waste in appropriate location*

**Recycling Building:**

- Recycled Items
- Motor Oil

**Transfer Station:**

- Household Trash (MSW)
- Carpet, Tarps (Cut up > 4' square)
- Upholstered Furniture
- Paints-Waterbase, Stains, (see attendants)

**Demolition Area:**

- Asphalt Shingles
- Insulation (in bags please)
- Drywall- wall board
- Treated Wood (pressure or resin)
- Windows
- Toilets – ceramic items (sinks)

**Wood Storage Area** – Separated wood only

- No demo or pressure treated wood

**Scrap Metal** – white goods (stoves, washers, dryers, etc.) See attendants with refrigerators, freezers and air conditioners – charge associated with these items

**Compost area-** leaves, grass, garden waste only

- No brush, branches, trash

*\*please keep compost clean- where it is free to residents when finished composting.*

**Items with Fees Charged for Disposal**

- Mattresses, Box Springs, Couche, Chairs
- CFC's (refrigerators, air conditioners, freezers, dehumidifiers, Freon containing appliances)
- Tires
- TV's and Monitors
- Demo Wood
- Drywall
- Roof Shingles

*\*MMSWA is an equal opportunity employer*

Graphic 10.0: Mid Maine Solid Waste Association Accepted Materials. Source: Town of Dexter



## *Services*

MMSWA operates a Transfer Station and Recycling Facility, offering a range of disposal services. In addition to solid waste disposal, the facility handles demolition debris, composting, tire disposal, white goods (e.g., refrigerators and appliances), universal waste (e.g., televisions and monitors), and metal disposal.

The transfer station has addressed a steadily increasing amount of waste over the past five years, with the Association processing 8,731 tons of material in 2020 and 10,278.5 tons of material in 2024. Broken down by type, that waste is:

- 7,200 tons of municipal solid waste (MSW) (household waste)
- 1,300 tons of wood waste (1,000 tons of which were burned on-site)
- 700 tons of landfill debris
- 125 tons of compost
- 43 tons of universal waste
- 10.5 tons of food waste
- Over 900 tons of recyclables, including 1,500 gallons of paint

MMSWA's recycling rate hovers around 40%, which is below the 50% target mandated by the state.

## *Operating Budget*

MMSWA's budget in 2020 was \$1,045,780, the majority of which was for household waste disposal (\$540,000). This has increased over the years to \$1,364,266 in 2024, with an even higher share of spending going to household waste disposal (\$806,960). This is still a modest increase in real/inflation adjusted terms (the 2020 spending would be around \$1.25 million in 2024 dollars). Though MMSWA's revenues are supplemented by the sale of recyclables (with \$147,000 raised through this method in 2024) much comes from contributions from its eight participating municipalities.

## *Solid Waste Management Needs*

The Transfer Station has long provided municipal solid waste (MSW) disposal and recycling options to the community. Community members drop off waste and sorted recyclables. The Town contracts with private haulers to bring it to disposal facilities and materials recycling facilities (MRFs). As of this writing, the Town sends MSW to EcoMaine and recycling to one of three MRFs: Clynk, Casella, and Berwick Iron. Other community members choose to use one of several private residential waste collection companies operating in the Dexter area.

Issues and potential needs for solid waste and recycling in Dexter include:



- Volatility of costs and return on recycled materials as some materials’ demand can change quickly and substantially. Demand influences the price that recycled materials can be sold for, and the sale price helps offset the cost of recycling.
- Increases in the price of recycling

**Table 10.3:** Reported tonnage of recycling and waste from Dexter MMSWA from 2020-2024. Source: Town of Dexter

Waste and Recycling in Mid Maine Solid Waste Association for Dexter, ME, 2020-2024					
Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Waste Incinerated (tons)	2420.00	2235.10	2123.50	2235.60	2243.70
Waste Recycled or Otherwise Diverted (tons)	69500	663.71	620.31	402.77	371.38

### Stormwater Management

The existing stormwater system throughout the Town of Dexter includes approximately 22- miles of storm sewer pipe, 358 manholes, 48 detention ponds, and 24 outfalls.

Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are discharges of untreated wastewater from municipal sewage systems that carry mixtures of sanitary sewage, stormwater, and sometimes industrial wastes. Discharges from CSOs occur during and shortly after rain events or snowmelt. Flows within the combined sewer system during these wet weather events can be as high as fifty (50) times the normal dry weather flows. Currently, Maine has 34 CSO permittees located in 31 communities (Portland, Lewiston, and Bar Harbor have two permits each). These communities collectively have 130 individual CSO discharge points.

The Town’s stormwater infrastructure, with currently-planned maintenance and investment, should be adequate for the upcoming decade.

### Power and Communication

Versant and Central Maine Power provide electrical service in Dexter. There is reliable three-phase power, broadband internet, and cable across the community. Only 15.6% and 16.3% of polled residents said that electrical and broadband services “need improvement”, respectively (cable was not polled).<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Data from the Dexter Community Survey.



## Emergency Response



### Police Department

Dexter has 24/7 police protection service staffed by four full-time officers and the chief (alongside an admin assistant and a school resource officer). At one point there was a k-9 unit. However, the dog known as Zelda belonged to a specific officer. When they left the department, the dog went as well.



The Town's level of police response services should be adequate for the upcoming decade.

### Fire Department

Dexter has a 24/7 fire department with 6 members (including the chief) at Church Street. The Department is responsible for "on-call" volunteer fire department that provides 24-hour fire protection to the towns of Dexter and Ripley. Mutual Aid is provided among Garland, Corinna, and Dover-Foxcroft. The Department receives funding from the Town, supplemented with its Dexter Fire Fighters Association, which usually raises \$5,000 to \$7,000 per year. The supplemental funds donated go to the purchase of equipment that is not funded by the taxpayers. The Association is currently seeking 501.C.3 non- profit status.

The Department has 27 volunteers, which is down from 40 in 2012. Fire call dispatching is done through the Penobscot Regional Communication Center. The Town has the emergency 911-system since 1993.

The Town's level of fire protection should be adequate for the upcoming decade.



**EMS**

Ambulance services are provided by Northern Light Mayo Hospital ambulances. The closest hospital is in nearby Dover-Foxcroft, about 20 minutes away by car, they quarter ambulances in Dexter for faster response.

The Town’s level of emergency services should be adequate for the upcoming decade.

**Education**

The local school district is known as is Maine School Administrative District No. 46 (MSAD 46) within the larger Alternative Organizational Structure No. 94 (AOS 94). They include Dexter Regional High School, Ridge View Community School, Harmony Elementary School, Athens Community School, and the Tri-County Technical Center; together they serve all grade K-12. These cover the communities of Dexter, Exeter, Garland, Harmony, Ripley, and Athens, Maine. The school board.

**Table 10.4:** Maine School Administrative District 31, Apportionment Of Membership. Source: MSAD 46.

<b>Maine School Administrative District 46<sup>37</sup></b>	
<b>Apportionment Of Membership</b>	
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Number of School Board Directors</b>
Dexter	7
Athens	5
Exeter	2* 1 Vacant
Garland	2
Harmony	5
Ripley	2
TTCC	1
PVAEC	1



<sup>37</sup>

[https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded\\_file/4241/AOS43/4657039/MSAD\\_31\\_Board\\_2024-2025.pdf](https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/4241/AOS43/4657039/MSAD_31_Board_2024-2025.pdf)



Children who are part of MSAD #46 attend Ridgeview Community School for K-8 Learning, (106 enrolled), and then Dexter Regional High School (DRHS). Total enrollment in 2023 for DRHS was 131 students. No school construction is planned for the future.

In the last 10 years available (2015-2025), Maine’s Department of Education (DoE) reports enrollment shrinking overall across not only Dexter, but all Maine schools on average (Tables 10.5 and 10.6). That being known, Dexter’s enrollment, particularly in their High School (DRHS), has grown since 2022, from 266-277 (Table 10.5). This is not a significant shift, but as Dexter moves to focus more on the next generation of residents, it may create an even more welcoming and robust learning environment to support the community’s place as one of Maine’s education hubs. This may include highlighting its mentoring position at DRHS, which underscores the message that each child is supported. Encouraging alumni involvement and showcasing student projects can also raise community pride, which in turn helps keep families invested in local schools.

Some schools have successfully drawn students by offering unique programs, with hands-on learning, and deep community ties. For example, Bucksport High built a *FIRST Robotics* Competition Team that became the pride of the town, doubling its size and including athletes, arts and honors students, and even becoming over 50% girls<sup>38</sup>. Such clubs give students engaging, project-based learning that districts like Dexter can emulate.

**Table 10.5:** Enrollment data for Dexter Regional Highschool, Ridge View Community School, and Home school. Source: Maine Department of Education

School Year	DRHS	DRHS Change	% Ridge View	Ridge View % Change	Home School	Home School % Change
2015-2016	321		635			
2016-2017	299	-6.9%	624	-1.7%		
2017-2018	302	1.0%	616	-1.3%		
2018-2019	313	3.6%	600	-2.6%		
2019-2020	314	0.3%	610	1.7%	49	
2020-2021	297	-5.4%	561	-8.0%	70	42.9%
2021-2022	282	-5.1%	555	-1.1%	78	11.4%
2022-2023	266	-5.7%	571	2.9%	74	-5.1%
2023-2024	270	1.5%	562	-1.6%	82	10.8%
2024-2025	277	2.6%	528	-6.0%	93	13.4%

<sup>38</sup> Baer, E. 2025. Bucksport robotics' golden moment. [https://www.bangordailynews.com/2024/03/26/engineers\\_week\\_2024/bucksport-robotics-golden-moment-0vzoa9n507wn/](https://www.bangordailynews.com/2024/03/26/engineers_week_2024/bucksport-robotics-golden-moment-0vzoa9n507wn/)



**Table 10.6:** Enrollment data for Highschool, K-8 Schools, and Home school. Source: Maine Department of Education

School Year	Maine HS	HS % Change	% K-8	Maine K-8 % Change	Home	Home School % Change	Overall	Overall % Change
2015-2016	56550		120089				182,008	
2016-2017	55877	-1.2%	119645	-0.4%			180,920	-0.6%
2017-2018	55689	-0.3%	119340	-0.3%			180682	-0.1%
2018-2019	55730	0.1%	118984	-0.3%			180817	0.1%
2019-2020	55631	-0.2%	118502	-0.4%	6779		180336	-0.3%
2020-2021	55490	-0.3%	112238	-5.3%	12046	77.7%	172474	-4.4%
2021-2022	55569	0.1%	112052	-0.2%	11060	-8.2%	173237	0.4%
2022-2023	55497	-0.1%	112164	0.1%	10139	-8.3%	173906	0.4%
2023-2024	55117	-0.7%	111107	-0.9%	10884	7.3%	172561	-0.8%
2024-2025	54480	-1.2%	110131	-0.9%	11785	8.3%	170330	-1.3%

With all this in mind, Dexter does not expect a significant change in student enrollment for the next 10 years. However, if changes occur, the town will prepare accordingly. Given the oscillation of student enrollment around the presence of Dexter show, Dexter already has a blueprint to look to.

### Healthcare

The Northern Light Mayo Hospital in nearby Dover-Foxcroft has 25 hospital beds and provides services such as a Birthing Center, imaging, lab, 24/7 emergency department, emergency medical services, family medicine, and specialty care services to include general surgery, orthopedics, OB/GYN, behavioral health, and more.

Primary care in Dexter closed in 2024. In the community survey, it was a sticking point that residents want primary care in town, or closer than it is now. Despite the lack of traditional



primary healthcare in town, the Dexter Public Health Association still stands as an impactful force in the community. A Non-Profit organized in 1930, it provides various home care services. The Association is operated by a volunteer Board of Directors and supported by the contribution of Town funds, local charities, private gifts, and bequests. It is not only available in Dexter, but Garland and Ripley as well. It also carries a limited supply of medical equipment available for loan at no charge. Donations of equipment to increase the loan inventory are always greatly appreciated.

Currently, it holds a Blood Pressure Clinic on Wednesdays from 8am to 10am.



## Street Tree Program

The purpose of a tree street program is to establish and sustain a healthier, safer, and more attractive public realm by planting, maintaining, and protecting public trees along streets, downtown, schools, parks, and public facilities. Strategically placed canopy trees calm traffic and improve pedestrian safety along school routes and Main Street; they moderate summer temperatures, reducing energy costs for downtown businesses and residents; and they intercept and slow stormwater, reducing pressure on roadside drainage and improving water quality. All of these are valuable in a small municipal budget context. Street trees also create a stronger sense of place that supports local commerce and tourism: shaded sidewalks and well-treed downtowns consistently attract more foot traffic, longer customer visits, and higher property values.

Most roads in Dexter are two-lane roads without a sidewalk or “planting zone” – the buffer strip between the sidewalk and the street where there are trees that are typically maintained as part of a street tree program. For the areas suitable for a street tree program, Dexter is partnering with Project Canopy. Project Canopy provides towns with two essential resources: technical expertise and targeted funding to plan, plant, and maintain healthy urban and community forests. For a town like Dexter that is building capacity on multiple fronts, Project Canopy lowers barriers to action. The program helps cover the cost of an accurate tree inventory and an Urban Forest Management Plan, which are foundational tools that allows Dexter to move toward plantings guided by data-driven decisions. That means the town can identify priority corridors, reduce risk from aging or hazardous trees, diversify species to avoid pest vulnerability, and set measurable canopy goals that align with the town's public safety and economic development objectives.

Projects that engage TCTC, the public schools, service clubs, and business sponsors create a strong network of volunteer opportunities and workforce training ties that serve to deepen civic ownership and lower maintenance costs through documented in-kind support. Dexter is currently



on year two of a three-year grant cycle with Project Canopy. The town has received 55 trees and 25 bushes to plant.

## ***Dexter Regional Airport***



Dexter Regional is a public, town-owned airport located approximately 3 miles east of Dexter’s downtown on Airport Road. The airport serves general aviation (recreational, instructional, and small business) aircraft and provides 24/7 self-serve fuel. It’s managed by a committee of 8 people.

The airport sits on roughly 311 acres at an elevation of about 533 ft above mean sea level, and contains 2

runways. As with other municipal airports in Maine, maintaining safe, reliable general aviation service supports economic resilience and emergency access. Coordination with MaineDOT’s Aviation Division and FAA programs can help the town sustain and improve these roles.<sup>39</sup>

Expansions and repairs are set to start in 2027 – 2030 to prepare Dexter for greater traffic as it has experienced increased traffic several years in a row.



## ***Cemeteries***

Dexter has five cemeteries within city limits; Four of them are town-owned. These are the Green Cemetery (corner of Charleston Road & Maple Street), Elmwood Cemetery (Liberty Street), Storer Cemetery (Old Pond Road), and Mt. Pleasant Cemetery (Bryant Road). The town website provides maps for at least Mt. Pleasant and Elmwood, a linked “Burial Locations” spreadsheet, and the current fee schedule for lot purchases and interments (resident vs. non-resident lot prices and burial rates). The town keeps detailed records of cemetery occupancy. Any type of growth that Dexter may experience would be easily accommodated here.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/dot/programs-services/aviation?>



## *Strategies*

Identify any capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public services to accommodate the community's anticipated growth and changing demographics.

Locate new public facilities comprising at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas.

Encourage local sewer and water districts to coordinate planned service extensions with the Future Land Use Plan.

If public water supply expansion is anticipated, identify and protect suitable sources?

Explore options for regional delivery of local services.

Explore and implement avenues to support a larger EMS District



# FISCAL CAPACITY AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT



# **FISCAL CAPACITY AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN**

## ***State Goal***

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

## ***Policies***

To finance existing and future facilities and services in a cost-effective manner.

To explore grants available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.

To reduce Maine's tax burden by staying within LD 1 spending limitations.

## ***A Strong Financial Future***

A significant component of planning for future growth is determining which capital investments are most essential for achieving the community's vision. The next step is to consider sources for how the capital investments will be funded, whether that be through grants, or donations. By having a Comprehensive Plan that is found consistent with the Growth Management Act by the State of Maine, the community will be given preferential consideration when applying for state grant programs. In turn, this will assist the community in funding their capital investment projects.

The primary funding source for municipal government is through property tax revenues. In order for a municipality to maintain a consistent mil rate year to year, town government must operate in a manner that is fiscally responsible. Large fluctuations in the tax rate can cause public outcry and can also discourage economic development. Stable municipal finances are the fundamental responsibility of town government, although the priorities change from one election year to another. It is important for Dexter to diligently handle all yearly expenditures while concurrently planning for the Town's long-term objectives. As is the case with any business, the physical assets of Dexter must be properly maintained through capital reserve accounts to protect the Town's continued economic health.



**Tables 11.0 & 11.1:** Revenues and Expenditures for Dexter Maine. Source: Town of Dexter

Dexter Public Revenues						
Fiscal Year	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Taxes (including Homestead Exemption)	\$4,541,667	\$4,648,463	\$4,608,068	\$4,828,090	\$5,002,503	\$5,030,977
Excise Tax	\$622,711	\$720,509	\$691,445	\$647,590	\$683,493	\$713,521
State Revenue Sharing	\$416,408	\$580,788	\$807,605	\$906,290	\$926,410	\$1,133,311
ARPA Funds	\$0	\$0	\$195,933	\$195,933	\$0	\$0
Investment Earnings	\$26,849	\$110,461	(\$71,269)	\$138,974	\$245,235	\$250,468
Interest and Fees on Delinquent Taxes	\$57,300	\$58,471	\$54,332	\$36,134	\$33,021	\$41,994
Other	\$715,826	\$498,215	\$1,503,958	\$496,740	\$823,350	\$1,271,707
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$6,380,761</b>	<b>\$6,616,907</b>	<b>\$7,790,072</b>	<b>\$7,249,751</b>	<b>\$7,714,012</b>	<b>\$8,162,185</b>

Dexter Public Expenditures						
Fiscal Year	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Administration	\$842,737	\$902,611	\$954,826	\$959,945	\$969,516	\$1,091,849
Public Safety	\$514,680	\$555,589	\$757,158	\$664,290	\$748,040	\$792,033
Mid Maine Solid Waste Association	\$259,682	\$274,766	\$297,603	\$306,552	\$312,189	\$320,000
Roads	\$875,564	\$731,818	\$1,379,349	\$1,341,967	\$687,316	\$1,206,774
Education	\$2,028,723	\$1,955,120	\$1,924,892	\$1,895,617	\$1,980,158	\$2,056,953
Cemetery	\$93,893	\$107,433	\$108,672	\$126,762	\$127,696	\$145,977
Airport	\$32,775	\$15,333	\$17,905	\$22,444	\$24,094	\$22,755
County	\$314,288	\$320,682	\$360,285	\$375,396	\$404,269	\$422,491
Library	\$101,885	\$97,703	\$119,498	\$116,483	\$121,200	\$123,409
Other	\$947,166	\$974,661	\$1,289,792	\$871,008	\$1,751,648	\$1,617,216
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$6,011,393</b>	<b>\$5,935,716</b>	<b>\$7,209,980</b>	<b>\$6,680,464</b>	<b>\$7,126,126</b>	<b>\$7,799,457</b>

Looking at the more interesting trends of the tables above, it shows that general taxes grew steadily in the last 5 years, while excise taxes fluctuated slightly. Intergovernmental revenues rose as well. Investment revenues seemed more volatile, with a major spike in 2021 to \$110,461, followed by a drop to 2022, which was preceded in another spike in 2023 to \$138,974, culminating to its peak of \$250,468 in 2025.



Highlighting some expenditures, increased costs of public safety reflect growing investments in this sector. More generally, we can see the cost of almost every sector going up in the last 5 years. This shows greater overall investment in the community in all aspects. The town will continue to monitor its fiscal health more closely to ensure sustainable growth and financial stability.

### Debts

#### Long-Term Debt

The town currently has no long-term debts.

#### Short-term Debts

The town has taken out a \$1.3 million loan in 2023 with a 7-year maturation date.

In FY 2024, Dexter’s indebtedness was divided between governmental activities and business-type activities. In accordance with the State of Maine, the town is subject to a statutory limitation of its general long-term debt equal to 15% of the State’s valuation of the town. Following the 2021 state valuation of Dexter, which totaled \$263 million, the town’s long-term debt is well below the statutory limit of \$39 million.

### State and Local Valuation

Table 11.2: State and Local Valuations for Dexter, Maine. Source: Maine Revenue Services

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
State Valuation	\$236,950,000	\$236,950,000	\$246,300,000	\$271,450,000	\$302,000,000
Local Valuation <sup>40</sup>	\$212,518,350	\$214,497,950	\$217,954,650	\$230,365,800	\$263,357,778

The local valuation is the result of the efforts of local assessors. The state’s valuation is informed by field work, meetings with local assessors, and a sales ratio study which measures the assessed value of residential and certain commercial properties relative to their actual selling price. It is used to determine things such as the levy of county taxes and state funds for education and revenue sharing, as well as to establish bond debt limits. Since the state valuation process takes about 18 months to complete, this valuation lags behind actual market values and municipal assessments by nearly two years by the time it is final and certified.

<sup>40</sup><https://www.maine.gov/revenue/taxes/property-tax/municipal-services/valuation-return-statistical-summary>



## Mil Rate

Dexter’s 2024 mil rate was 19.60%, which is an increase of 1.9% over the last 10 years. Accounting for changes since the pandemic, this increase is rather small, compared to the state mil rate, which varied greatly from 2012-2022, decreasing by 2.78%.

A higher mil rate indicates better funding for the community's services and facilities, meaning there is more funding for schools, libraries, public transportation, and emergency services. Strong schools, in particular, are a big draw for many homebuyers, which is something Dexter prides itself on. Strong public services can make a community more desirable, which helps maintain or even increase property values over the long term.

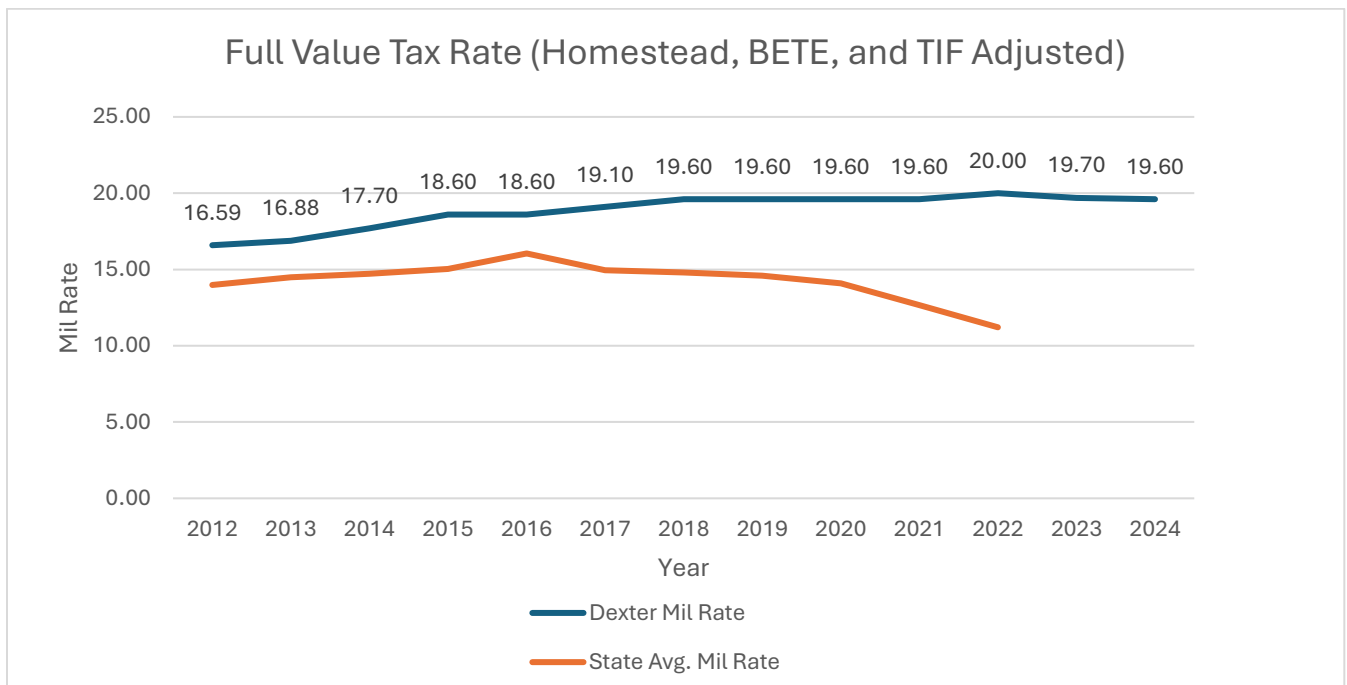


Figure 11.0: Mill Rate for Dexter, and the State of Maine (2012-2024). Source: Maine Revenue Services

## Capital Improvement Plan

Most communities need more capital improvements than they can afford at one time. The cost of constructing new facilities, and rebuilding old ones, usually has to be spread out over a period of years. In part, capital improvement construction is spread out over time so that the future population, who benefit from the facilities, will help pay for them.

The comprehensive plan recognizes planned growth and a diverse mix of land uses within the town as an important aspect of fiscal planning. The primary implementation strategy for the fiscal



capacity section is the development of a capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The purpose of CIP is to establish a framework for financing needed capital improvements. A CIP guides budgeting and expenditures of tax revenues and identifies needs for which alternative sources of funding, such as loans, grants or gifts will be sought. Capital improvements are investments in the repair, renewal, replacement, or purchase of capital items. Capital improvements differ from operating expenses or consumables. The expense of consumables is ordinarily budgeted as operations. Capital improvements generally have the following characteristics: they are relatively expensive (usually having an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more); they usually do not recur annually; they last a long time (usually having a useful life of three or more years); and they result in fixed assets. Capital items can include equipment and machinery, buildings, real property, utilities, and long-term contracts and are funded through the establishment of financial reserves.

Capital improvements are prioritized each year during the budget process based on the availability of funds and the will of the community. A complete CIP describes expected yearly investment and allows for both changes in priorities and reduction of available funds. The CIP is intended to prevent an unavoidable capital improvement from occurring in a single fiscal year. The unexpected purchase of a sizeable improvement can overburden the tax rate and cause large fluctuations in tax bills from year to year.

A CIP attempts to illustrate all expected capital improvements over a number of years. The longer the useful life of a capital item, the lower the annual provision for its eventual improvement. It is important that capital improvements be financially provided for each fiscal year, minimizing later expenses. The CIP is important because it alerts both municipal officials and citizens about future expenses and allows the town to find the most cost-effective way to finance the Improvement

For the purpose of this plan, the total costs have been recognized with an indication of the expected time frame for each item that is desired. It is safe to assume that requests for improvements will exceed the available dollars. Therefore, setting priorities is a necessity. To be effective, the CIP must be based on well-thought-out priorities. A way to determine priorities is to have criteria for evaluating each project and to determine the funds available to pay for these projects as well as their operating and maintenance costs for the later years.

For easy digestion, Priorities are broken down into three categories: low, medium, and high.

#### **High Priority: Urgent**

high-priority projects that should be done if at all possible. These include projects that are required to complete a major public improvement; projects that would address an emergency, or remedy a condition dangerous to public health, welfare, and safety; projects that would provide



facilities for a critically needed community program; and projects vital to the economic stability of the Town. A special effort is made to find sufficient funding for all of the projects in this group.

### Medium Priority: Important

High-priority projects that should be done as funding becomes available. These include projects that would benefit the community; and projects whose validity of planning and validity of timing have been established.

### Low Priority: Desirable

Worthwhile projects to be considered if funding is available. These are projects that are adequately planned, but not absolutely required, and should be deferred to a subsequent year if budget reductions are necessary. Projects may have been eliminated from consideration if it was determined that they pose a serious question of community need, adequate planning, or proper timing.

**Table 11.3:** Dexter Capital Investment Plan. Source: Town of Dexter

#### Dexter Capital Improvement Plan Guide

Item	Estimated Cost	Priority	Approx. Timeline	Funding
PW Equipment (2 Plow Trucks) (Loader)	\$750,000	Medium	3 years	Loans, Taxation
Clock and Building Repair (Morrison Building)	\$300,000	Medium	5 years	Grants, Taxation
Town Hall – Recreation Center (interior work, showers, updating)	\$100,000	Low	5 years	Taxation, Grants
Paving (Road Improvements)	\$1,500,000	High	Ongoing	LRAP Funds, Taxation
Crosby Park (Tennis Courts, Pickle Ball, Paving)	\$300,000	Low	5 years	Grants, Community Partnerships, taxation
Airport Runway Paving	\$1,300,000	Medium	4 years	FAA Grant, DOT Grant, Taxation
Catch Basin re-setting (paving projects)	\$50,000	High	Ongoing	Taxation
Gravel (Crushing 20,000yds)	\$180,000	Medium	10 years	Taxation



Gravel Roads (Road Improvements)	\$100,000	High	Ongoing	Taxation
Town Office (updating)	\$20,000	Low	10 years	Taxation
Cemetery (roads)Paving	\$50,000	Low	10 years	Perpetual Funds
Park Gazebo’s (Ronco, Wayside)	\$80,000	Low	10 years	Community Partnerships
Downtown Revitalization	\$500,000	Low	10 years	Grants, Taxation

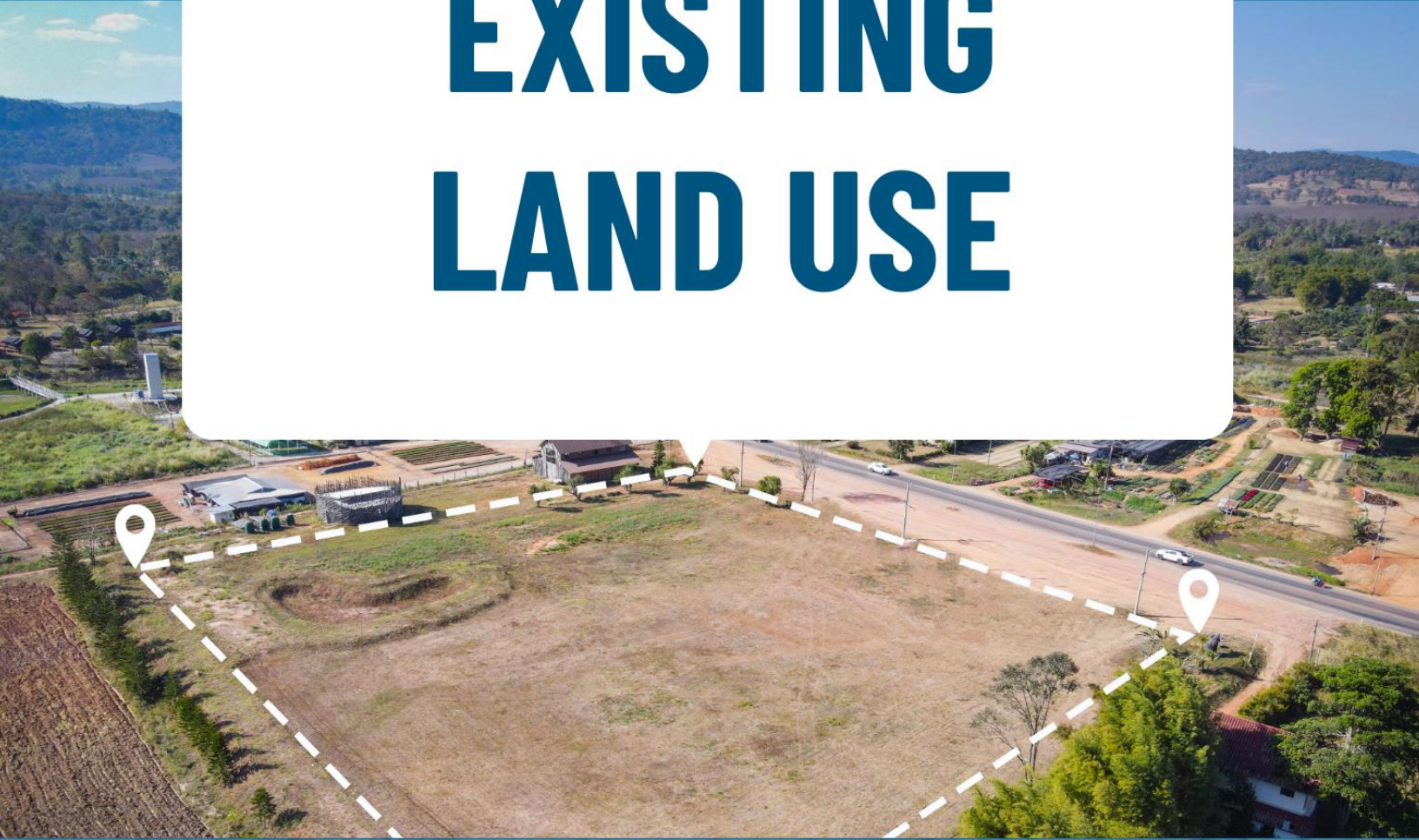
The items listed in the Capital Investment Plan will be accomplished by utilizing a variety of funding mechanisms, including municipal grants, donations, volunteer labor, and municipal low-interest loans. Outside funding to achieve anticipated capital investments will be sourced from state grants, bank loans, and private funders for projects such as writing out private funder possibilities.

**Strategies**

Explore opportunities to work with neighboring communities to plan for and finance shared or adjacent capital investments to increase cost savings and efficiencies.



# EXISTING LAND USE



## **EXISTING LAND USE**

One of the most important elements of a comprehensive plan is an analysis of how land is used within a community. An inventory of current land use can be used to identify past trends, areas of seemingly incompatible uses, areas where future growth is likely to occur, and how existing regulations are influencing the development of the Town. All these factors, among others, provide valuable information for future planning.

This section provides an analysis of land use in Dexter and is accompanied by a graphic representation of the Town's overall development pattern. Such information should help in the development of a land use plan for the future that promotes orderly growth, protects rural character, makes efficient use of public facilities and services, and prevents sprawl.

The Town of Dexter is located in the southwestern portion of Penobscot County, approximately 30 miles northwest of the City of Bangor, in central Maine. It is bordered by the Town of Sangerville to the north, the Town of Dover-Foxcroft to the northeast, the Town of Garland to the east, the Town of Exeter to the southeast, the Town of Corinna to the south, the Town of St Albans to the southwest, the Towns of Ripley and Cambridge to the west, and the Town of Parkman to the northwest. Approximately 73 percent of the land area of the Town is forested, approximately 19 percent is agricultural or open, and 8 percent is urban. Development in the Town is heaviest in and around its business core at the outlet of Lake Wassookeag, and along the shorelines of Lake Wassookeag and Echo Lake. Past residential and commercial development has been greatest within and near the urban area. Residential growth has also occurred along many of the rural roads.

### ***Key Findings and Issues from Previous Comprehensive Plan***

In the last plan, commercial and industrial activities remained concentrated along major transportation and service corridors, consistent with local ordinances designed to minimize land-use conflicts and reduce infrastructure costs by locating higher-intensity uses where municipal services are already available. At the same time, the plan notes that much of Dexter's rural and shoreland areas require continued resource protection, reinforcing the need to balance development with environmental stewardship. While the town has a solid regulatory framework the plan acknowledges that zoning does not fully align with its growth area designations, limiting the town's ability to direct new investment and respond to contemporary housing and economic needs.

Today, downtown revitalization remains a major opportunity, as many buildings are suited for adaptive reuse and small-scale commercial activity, yet will require updated standards and targeted incentives to attract reinvestment. Collectively, these findings highlight several implications for Dexter's future land use: the need to concentrate growth where services already exist, expand opportunities for mixed-use and diverse housing types, update zoning to reflect the plan's land-use vision, invest strategically in infrastructure to support designated growth areas,



and maintain strong natural resource protections while enabling infill in appropriate locations. Refreshing Dexter's land-use data, parcel inventory, and zoning framework will ensure that development patterns support Dexter's economic resilience, housing availability, long-term fiscal sustainability, and so much more.

## ***Current Zoning Ordinance***

The current zoning ordinance divides Dexter into the following four districts. These are shown in Map 11.0 and described in the sections below.

### **Commercial**

The Commercial District is intended to serve as the community's focal point for cultural, business, and service activities. It is designed to optimize utilization of in-place facilities, thereby reducing the fiscal burden of new infrastructure construction on all residents of Dexter.

### **Residential**

The Residential District is intended to provide an area that restricts intensive uses so that residents may enjoy a measure of quietness and privacy in their homes, while optimizing the utilization of in-place facilities, thereby reducing the fiscal burden of new infrastructure construction on all citizens of Dexter.

### **Rural**

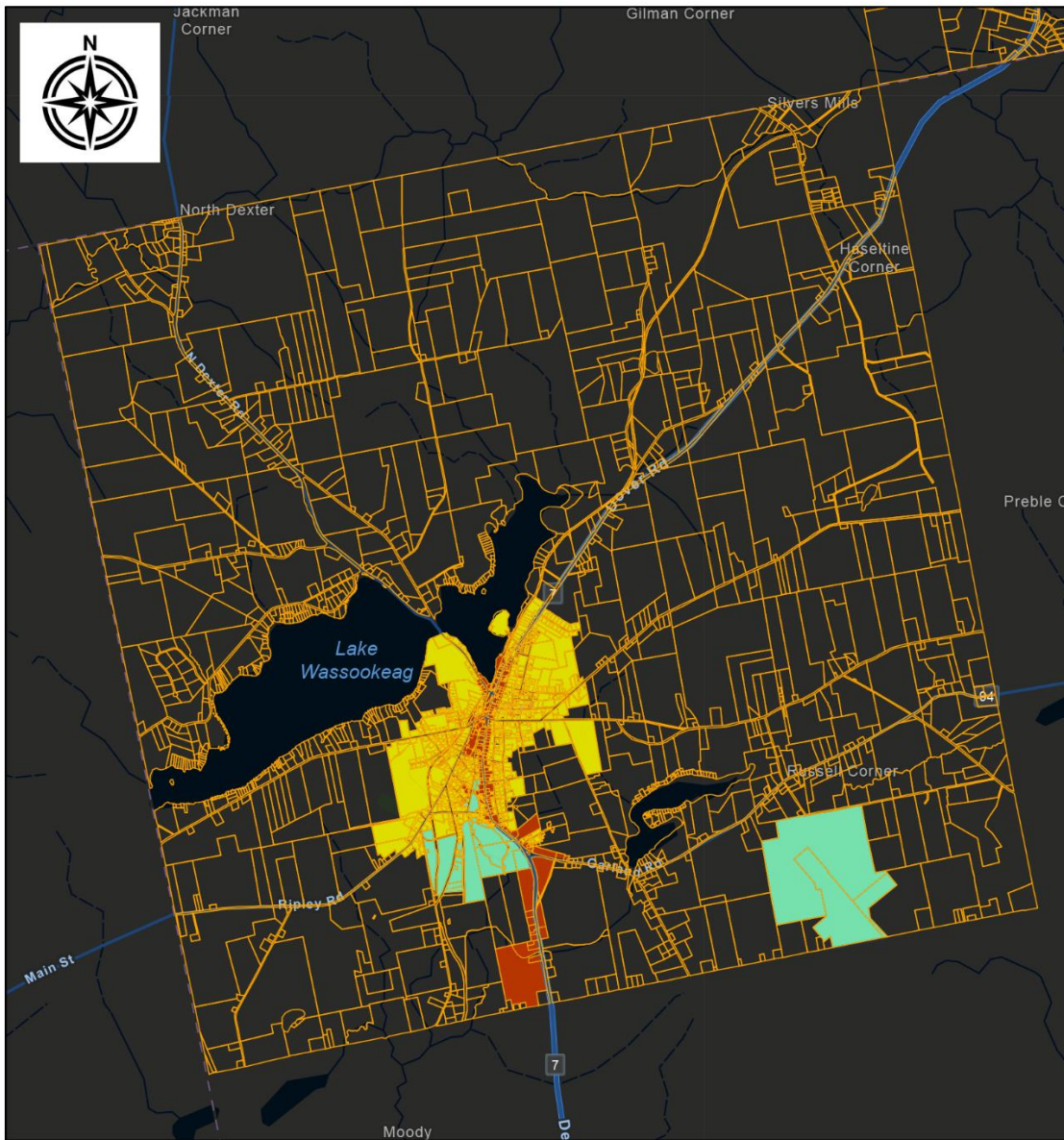
The Rural District is intended to preserve areas which are presently rural or agricultural in character and use. This district is designed to accommodate a variety of residential development opportunities for those who desire low density living and are willing to live in more remote locations and to assume the costs of providing many of their own services and amenities, thereby reducing the fiscal burden of new infrastructure construction on all citizens of Dexter.

### **Industrial**

The Industrial District is intended to provide land which is conveniently located with respect to transportation corridors and where municipal services are available and other conditions are favorable to the development of industry, and which at the same time is so located as to prevent undesirable conflict with residential and other business uses, thereby reducing the fiscal burden of new infrastructure construction on all citizens of Dexter.

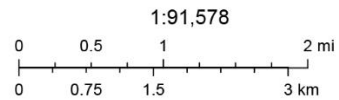


### Dexter Zoning Map



Town of Dexter, Penobscot County, Maine

-  Dexter Parcels
-  Commercial Zone
-  Residential Zone
-  Industrial Zone



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

The data provided in this map are for informational and planning purposes only. The Town and EMDC are not responsible for the misuse or misrepresentation of the data.



Map 12.0: Dexter Land Use Map. Source: Dexter, Maine and EMDC



## Lot Dimensions

For each district in Dexter, there are different dimensional and setback standards. The current standards are as follows:

**Table 12.0:** Dexter lot dimensional standards, 2025. Source: Town of Dexter

Districts	Commercial	Residential	Rural	Industrial
Minimum Lot Size				
<i>With Public Sewer</i>	10,000 sq ft	7,500 sq ft	7,500 sq ft	10,000 sq ft
<i>Without Public Sewer</i>	20,000 sq ft	20,000 sq ft	1 ac	20,000 sq ft
Minimum Lot Frontage	75 ft	100 ft	150 ft	100 ft
Minimum Structure Setback				
<i>Front setback</i>	10 ft	10 ft	10 ft	10 ft
<i>Side setback</i>	None	10 ft	10 ft	10 ft
<i>Rear setback</i>	None	10 ft	10 ft	10 ft

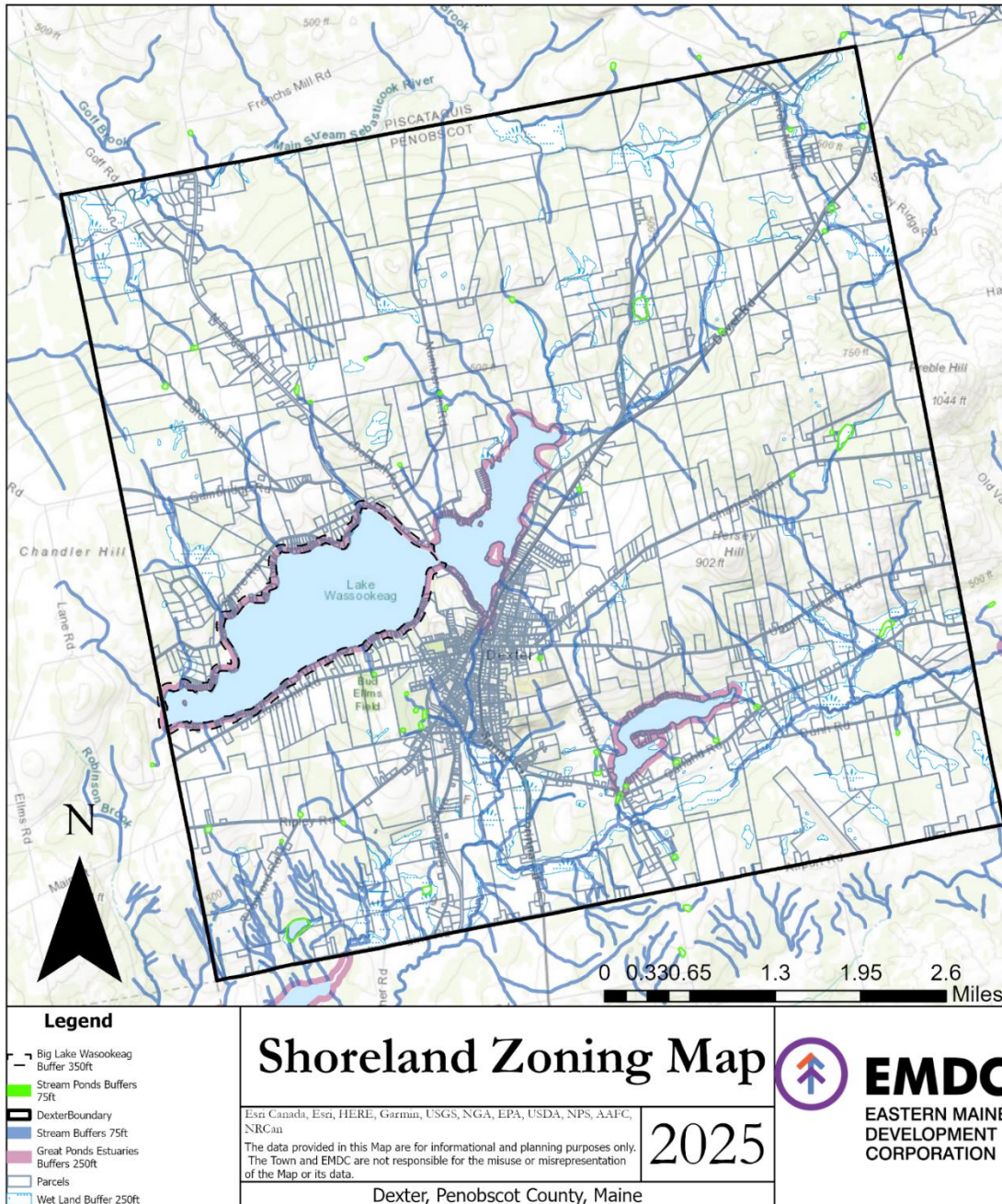
It's worth noting that with the addition of new legislation, general land use as it pertains to housing will only get easier to manage, as standards have been loosened in favor of creating more and more equitable housing. The benefits will be felt by residents looking to downsize, looking to buy their first home, and younger populations looking to move closer to services and amenities.

## Shoreland Zoning

The town adheres to regulations set by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, ensuring that any development along water bodies complies with environmental standards to protect natural resources. Shoreland zoning ordinances manage construction activities within a designated distance from the shore, limiting land use to avoid environmental degradation.

Dexter's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance is designed to protect natural resources by regulating land use within 350 feet of Big Lake Wasookeag (making it more strict than what the state requires), and 250 ft of all other water bodies and wetlands. Within this buffer zone, activities such as excessive vegetation clearing, unpermitted construction, and the installation of poorly managed wastewater systems are prohibited, as they could degrade water quality. These regulations ensure that development is conducted responsibly, preserving the ecological integrity of the area while allowing sustainable land use practices.





Map 12.1: Dexter Shoreland Zone Map. Source: State of Maine and EMDC









## Flood Mapping

Dexter’s ordinances include provisions for managing land use within floodplains to reduce the risk of damage from flooding. The regulations may require developers to follow specific building practices, ensuring structures in flood-prone areas meet safety standards.

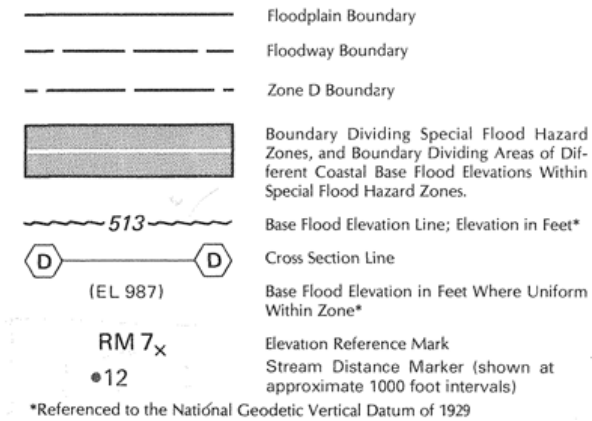




**LEGEND**

-  FLOODWAY AREAS IN ZONE AE
-  OTHER FLOOD AREAS
-  ZONE X Areas of 500-year flood; areas of 100-year flood with average depths of less than 1 foot or with drainage areas less than 1 square mile; and areas protected by levees from 100-year flood.
-  OTHER AREAS
-  ZONE X Areas determined to be outside 500-year flood-plain.
-  ZONE D Areas in which flood hazards are undetermined.
-  UNDEVELOPED COASTAL BARRIERS
-  SPECIAL FLOOD HAZARD AREAS INUNDATED BY 100-YEAR FLOOD
- ZONE A** No base flood elevations determined.
- ZONE AE** Base flood elevations determined.
- ZONE AH** Flood depths of 1 to 3 feet (usually areas of ponding); base flood elevations determined.
- ZONE AO** Flood depths of 1 to 3 feet (usually sheet flow on sloping terrain); average depths determined. For areas of alluvial fan flooding; velocities also determined.
- ZONE A99** To be protected from 100-year flood by Federal flood protection system under construction; no base flood elevations determined.
- ZONE V** Coastal flood with velocity hazard (wave action); no base flood elevations determined.
- ZONE VE** Coastal flood with velocity hazard (wave action); base flood elevations determined.





## Administration

Dexter has a code enforcement officer which is shared with some of the nearby towns. They monitor development and offer permits for less intensive proposed land uses. Additionally, Dexter has a seven-member planning board that is tasked by the town with reviewing and voting on more intensive proposed land uses.

## Development and Trends

Over the past decade, Dexter has experienced measured growth concentrated along established road corridors and in a handful of small residential subdivisions. Newly created lots and primary structures are predominantly single-family residences and accessory structures with sporadic commercial infill and limited industrial expansion on existing industrial parcels. New residential lot creation has been focused near Route 7 and along secondary roads radiating from the Village center, while most commercial activity has been adaptive reuse or renovation of existing Main Street buildings rather than large new footprints. Institutional development has been limited to modest expansions and renovations of existing community facilities rather than new campus-style construction.

### Residential

Recent development in Dexter primarily occurs on a lot-by-lot basis, with occasional subdivisions. In the last 10 years, residential growth has been the most common type of growth in town, with a mix of year-round homes and seasonal dwellings being built along the lake. This trend is likely to continue if projected population growth remains stable.

### Commercial

With the legalization of Cannabis, storefronts have been erected all around Maine. Dexter has seen the creation of one such dispensary known as Puffers Place near Echo Lake, and Delta Solutions on South Route 7. The town has also P&L Market has also been opened at the town line. In-town (close to village center), a Dollar General has been built, and the Family Dollar has been moved further away from the town's center to where the Rite Aid once stood. Dexter's



Downtown remains stable, and the town is looking for opportunities to help maintain and expand it.

### **Industrial**

There have been no new industrial developments in the last decade. The town of Dexter is no longer as reliant on an industrial economy. However, like many other former mill or factory towns, it has the experience and, therefore, has a better opportunity than most to position itself to welcome any type of industrial boom or new plan for those spaces that may arise with the changing focus of Maine's industrial sector. As said in the previous plan, the shoe factory shut down in 2001. However, the infrastructure remains, and is currently for sale. The Millworks building however, has been transformed into a thriving commercial space and has added greater life into downtown Dexter.

## ***Anticipated Growth Accommodation***

At the conclusion of the Existing Land Use and Housing chapters of this plan, population projections, and land consumption estimates were presented based on current and historic trends, ordinances, and minimum lot sizes.

The State Economist's Office predicts a population of 3,665 people by 2042 — a decrease of 147 people (4 percent).

Regardless of population changes in terms of numbers, Dexter's population is also changing demographically. Two impactful areas undergoing significant changes are median age and average household size.

Dexter's average household size has declined steadily for several decades and as of the 2023 ACS, is at 2.07 people per household. While average household size cannot shrink indefinitely, continued decline should be taken into consideration when projecting the anticipated need for housing. If a five percent decrease in average household size is assumed over the next 15-year period, the average household size would be 1.97 persons per household. Counterintuitively, smaller household sizes require more housing just to accommodate the same number of people.

The median age in Dexter has been increasing for decades, as well. Since 1990, the median age has increased by nearly 43 percent.<sup>41</sup> As of 2023, Dexter residents' median age was 51.3 years old.

Currently, Dexter has a housing stock of 2,200, including seasonal housing, and a population of 3,812 people. Detailed more thoroughly in the Housing and Existing Land Use chapters, if the State Economist's population projections are fulfilled, and the average parcel size is accounted for, then Dexter will need about 50 acres in the next 10 years to support growth for development.

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<sup>41</sup> Age, Fertility, and Household and Family Composition. Maine:1990. <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1990/cp-2/cp-2-21.pdf>. pp. 287

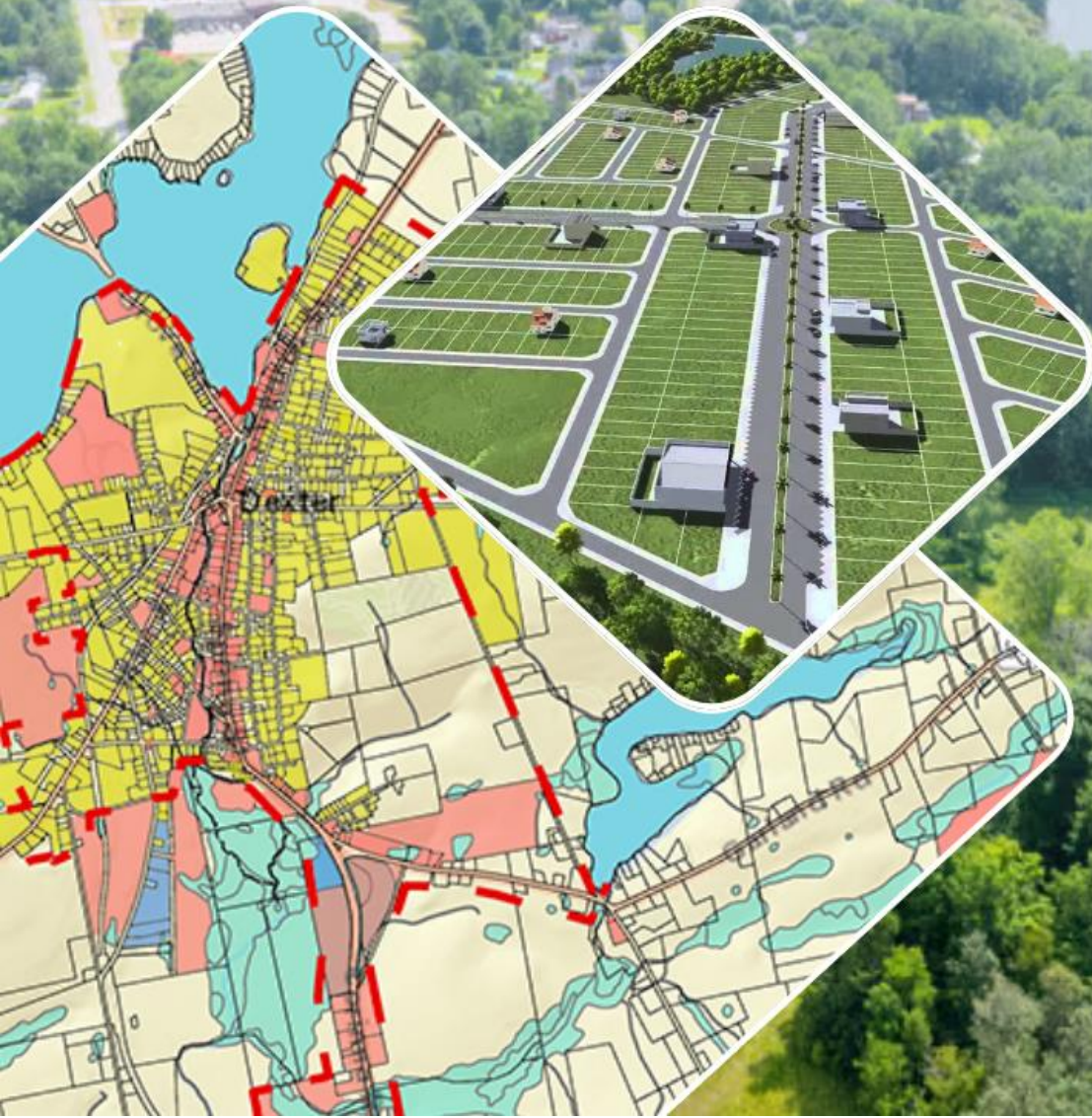


Due to housing unit prices and general shortages of housing units in the region, Dexter could likely add 5 or more housing units to its housing stock per year, and there would still be a need for additional housing. However, it is important to bear in mind the style and type of housing unit that is needed. What appears to be in highest demand are right-sized housing units for seniors looking to downsize, single-person households, or small families just starting out. Currently, there seems to be less need for large, 3- to 4-bedroom houses on large lots.

DRAFT



# FUTURE LAND USE



# ***FUTURE LAND USE PLAN***

## ***State Goal***

To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the state's rural character, making efficient use of public services, and preventing development sprawl.

## ***Policies***

To coordinate the community's land use strategies with other local and regional land use planning efforts

To support the locations, types, scales, and intensities of land uses the community desires as stated in its vision.

To support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas.

To establish efficient permitting procedures, especially in growth areas.

To protect critical rural and critical waterfront areas from the impacts of development.

## ***Future Growth Requires Careful Thought***

The Future Land Use section of Dexter's Comprehensive Plan is designed to guide the town's growth and development over the next decade. With the vision of sustainable and balanced development being ever-present, this plan outlines strategies for preserving Dexter's unique past and present character while promoting economic vitality, and preserving environmental stewardship. As the town faces the challenges of shifting demographics, evolving needs, and changing economic drivers, careful land use planning is critical to ensuring that future growth aligns with community values and goals. The proposed land use patterns seek to protect natural resources, encourage responsible residential and commercial development, and support infrastructure improvements that enhance the overall quality of life for Dexter's residents. This section aims to provide a framework for making informed decisions that will shape Dexter's future in a way that fosters long-term prosperity and resilience.



## *Alignment with Community Vision*

The Future Land Use Plan identifies growth areas where new and improved development are projected to occur in the planning period. The community's vision, which emphasizes the Town's role as a small-town Hub that people take pride in, captures how Dexter plans to actualize its future land use plans. The Town also took cues from its community Survey. The results provide clear insight into the values, concerns, and aspirations that residents want reflected in future land use decisions.

Overall, respondents expressed strong support for a balanced approach to growth that revitalizes existing neighborhoods and downtown area while protecting the natural and rural character that defines Dexter. The survey highlights several priorities that directly align with the goals of this Comprehensive Plan as well as the mission and vision, and provide a foundation for shaping Dexter's land use strategy over the next decade.

A major theme emerging from the survey is the community's desire to improve and diversify Dexter's housing options. Residents repeatedly emphasized the need to rehabilitate aging housing stock, address blighted or abandoned properties, and expand choices for middle-income families and older adults. Many respondents identified specific redevelopment opportunities, including legacy industrial buildings such as Fay-Scott, Dexter Shoe, and the former mill, as well as underutilized corridors like Spring Street and Route 7. These sites were commonly mentioned as prime candidates for new housing, mixed-use development, or adaptive reuse, indicating strong support for targeted infill that strengthens Dexter's core rather than encouraging sprawl.

Property maintenance and code enforcement also surfaced as clear concerns among survey participants. Calls for stronger enforcement of existing ordinances, clearer standards for mobile home placement, and policies addressing vacant or deteriorated structures reflect a desire for cleaner, safer neighborhoods and more consistent municipal oversight. Together, these responses highlight the importance of strengthening regulatory tools, improving communication around enforcement, and incentivizing reinvestment in existing residential areas.

Environmental protection (particularly regarding Dexter's Lake and other sensitive natural areas) was another recurring priority. Many residents expressed support for maintaining or enhancing shoreland protections, addressing undersized septic systems near the lake, and exploring sewer or infrastructure improvements to safeguard water quality. While opinions on large-scale renewable energy installations were mixed, the community showed clear support for preserving agricultural lands and maintaining the scenic, rural landscapes that contribute to Dexter's identity.

Survey responses also reveal strong interest in revitalizing Dexter's downtown and improving community infrastructure. Residents noted the need for sidewalk repairs, road improvements, beautification efforts, and strategic investments to attract new businesses and visitors. These comments underscore the importance of a coordinated approach to streetscape enhancements, pedestrian connectivity, parking management, and placemaking that supports local commerce and boosts Dexter's appeal as a destination.

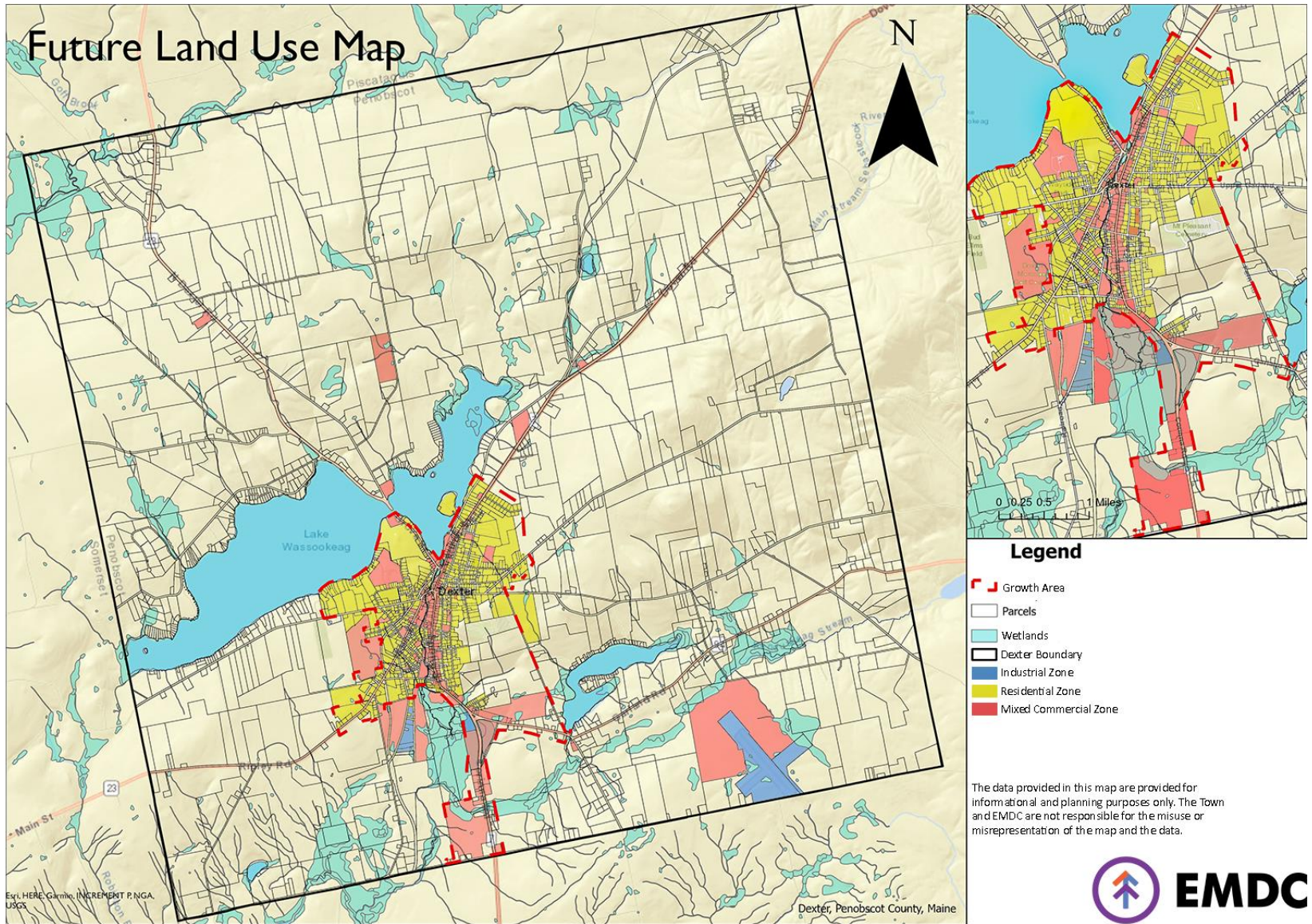


Finally, the survey indicates broad recognition that Dexter's land use ordinances need modernizing. Many residents expressed dissatisfaction with current regulations and asked for clearer zoning, mixed-use opportunities, and more flexible standards that reflect present-day development trends. This feedback aligns directly with state planning goals and supports the comprehensive effort to update zoning to achieve a more efficient, predictable, and community-driven development pattern.

Looking at Dexter's future land use map (Map 12.0) Dexter distinguishes that the updated zoning will establish mixed use in both commercial and residential zones, paving the way for more efficient and comprehensive uses.

Future growth in Dexter depends on pinpointing not only development constraints, but also keeping environments like wetlands, sensitive wildlife habitats, conserved land, and the region's terrain pristine. Dexter is poised for the kind of future growth that holistically balances development and conservation by keeping its community values at the forefront. The deliberate identification of these areas offers a glimpse into the potential for upcoming development, all the while upholding a respectful consideration for, and admiration of Dexter's historical legacy. Within the framework of the Future Land Use Plan, Dexter anticipates a blend of rural, mixed-use residential, and mixed commercial growth in designated zones. On a smaller scale, rural life continues to be an integral part of the community's identity today. The rural areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan may witness increased farming activities in the years ahead, reinforcing the town's enduring agricultural heritage, and future needs. Below is a proposed future land use map.





Map 13.0: Future Land Use in Dexter, Maine. Source: EMDC

Dexter Comprehensive Plan



## *Natural Evolution of Land Use*

Map 12.0 is largely similar to the previous iteration of Dexter’s Future Land Use map. While the earlier map separated the community into distinct commercial, residential, and rural zones, the updated map shifts toward a more flexible and integrated mixed-use framework. Instead of drawing firm boundaries between commercial and residential areas, the new map recognizes that Dexter’s town center and major corridors function best when housing, small businesses, and community facilities coexist within walkable, serviceable areas. This transition from three clearly separated zones to a more blended set of mixed-use areas reflects a recognition that modern small-town land use patterns often thrive when residential and commercial uses overlap—supporting downtown vitality, expanding housing opportunities, and creating a more resilient local economy.

Another notable difference is the modest expansion of the designated Growth Area. The new map slightly enlarges the area where residential development is encouraged, allowing Dexter to accommodate growing demand for middle-income and senior housing while still directing most new development to areas already served—or easily served—by public infrastructure. This expansion aligns with the community’s survey findings, which expressed strong support for diversified housing options and the rehabilitation or reuse of underutilized parcels. By enlarging the growth boundary in a controlled and strategic way, Dexter positions itself to meet future housing needs without encouraging unnecessary sprawl or compromising its rural surroundings.

These changes also mirror the broader trajectory of land use planning in Maine. Across the state, municipalities are moving toward more holistic and sustainable planning approaches that emphasize compact growth, adaptive reuse of existing buildings, flexible zoning, and the integration of housing, economic development, and infrastructure planning into unified mixed-use areas. Maine’s planning guidance increasingly encourages towns to identify clearly defined growth areas, protect natural and agricultural lands, and promote development patterns that reduce infrastructure costs and environmental impacts. Dexter’s updated map fits squarely within this statewide shift. By incorporating mixed-use designations, expanding the growth area selectively, and placing continued emphasis on natural-resource protection, the new Future Land Use Map positions the town for a thoughtful next decade—one that supports revitalization, housing opportunity, and environmental stewardship in equal measure.

## *Maine’s Changing Zone Landscape*

Maine’s recent policy has shifted, removing several traditional barriers to denser housing and placing clear expectations on municipalities to enable accessory dwelling units (ADUs), allow multiple units on lots where residential uses are permitted, and adopt zoning that supports affordable housing development. State guidance from the Department of Economic & Community Development and subsequent rule updates and statewide strategies emphasize streamlining municipal ordinances, permitting, and infrastructure planning to accelerate housing production while preserving protections for sensitive resources. These statewide changes mean



municipalities are now expected to review residential districts, and update definitions and dimensional standards where greater density and multi-unit development are permissible.

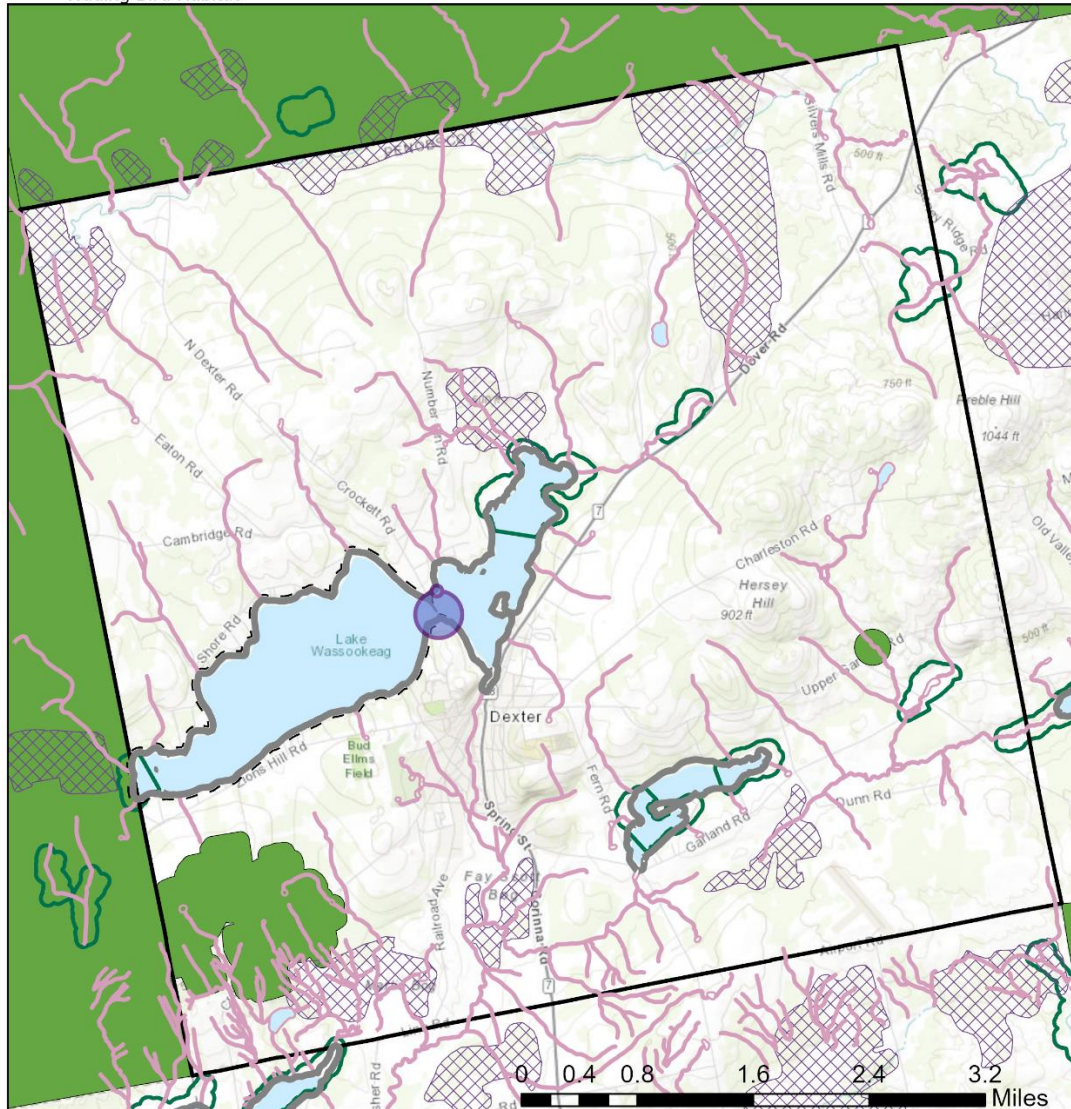
### ***Development Constraints***

The configuration of Dexter's designated growth areas has been influenced by a combination of natural and infrastructural factors. The town's geography, including wetlands, floodplains, and wooded areas, plays a key role in shaping where development is feasible or desirable. Areas identified for growth have been chosen based on the physical suitability of the land for development, with a focus on areas with fewer environmental constraints. Proximity to existing public facilities, such as schools, government buildings, and the Dexter Wastewater Treatment Plant, further shapes the growth areas, ensuring that new development is supported by infrastructure. Additionally, the transportation network, including access to major roads like Route 7 and 23, has influenced the configuration of growth areas to ensure efficient connectivity and minimize traffic impacts.



### Legend

- Source Water Protection Area
- Endangered Threatened and Special Concern Wildlife Summarized
- GreatPondsEstuaries Buffers 250ft
- Dexter Boundary
- Deer Wintering Areas
- Big Lake Wasookeag Buffer 300 ft
- Stream Buffers 75ft
- Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat
- Stream Ponds Buffers 75ft



	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Development Constraints</h2> <p style="font-size: small; margin: 0;">Esri Canada, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, USGS, METI/NASA, NGA, EPA, USDA, AAF, NRCaa</p> <p style="font-size: x-small; margin: 0;">The data provided in this Map are for informational and planning purposes only. The Town and EMDC are not responsible for the misuse or misrepresentation of the map or its data.</p>	<p style="font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">EMDC</p> <p style="font-weight: bold; font-size: small; margin: 0;">EASTERN MAINE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">2025</p>		
<p style="margin: 0;">Dexter, Penobscot County, Maine</p>		

**Map 13.1:** Development Constraints for Dexter, Maine. Source: State of Maine and EMDC. Map does not include rare plants.



### ***Critical Natural Resources***

The Natural Resources chapter of Dexter's Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the importance of protecting critical natural resources such as wetlands, wildlife habitats, shorelands, and scenic areas. The town seeks to balance conservation with sustainable growth, focusing on preserving its lakes, ponds, and forests. Dexter promotes regional cooperation, working with neighboring communities and state agencies to protect shared ecosystems like the Sebasticook river, and other significant natural areas.

Key strategies for preserving these resources include maintaining local ordinances, such as shoreland zoning, that align with and exceed state standards, and ensuring developers account for critical natural habitats. The town may also look into strengthening Resource Protection Districts around its wetlands. The town recognizes the need for ongoing regional collaboration, especially given the shared habitats and ecosystems that transcend municipal boundaries. Initiatives such as the Beginning with Habitat program are essential for protecting biodiversity and advancing long-term ecological stewardship. Looking forward, Dexter plans to incorporate ecological sustainability into future land-use planning, guided by scientific data and regional partnerships. Partnerships are the biggest crucial element to sustainability and resource protection.

### ***Relations to Developmental Trends and Existing Zoning***

The community has seen some growth in residential and commercial development, with the former being the most common. In line with the above priorities, the proposed growth area will ensure that projected future development will not infringe on critical natural resources (nor be built on physically unsuitable land), while also allowing concentrated growth that reduces per-person utility costs and increases the stock of desired housing at all income levels. Though this will not directly affect most of the industrially-zoned areas, a burst of concentrated development would increase the viability of any potential industrial project that might wish to take advantage of the experience and infrastructure of the town. This proposed plan is completely compatible with Dexter's existing zoning and level of development, just designating the core of the community, where there is already a higher level of development and more permissive zoning as the prime growth area. More detailed descriptions of changes to come in Dexter are as follows:

#### **Residential Use**

Reconfiguring selected traditional residential districts, particularly those along transit routes, near the downtown core, and in sewered neighborhoods, into a more Mixed-Use style Residential zone that permits a broader range of housing types alongside small-scale neighborhood services normalizes and reinforces what residents in Dexter are already trending toward: creating business out of their home. An allowance for greater breadth of uses here would also make way for more accessible corner stores, neighborhood offices, and community amenities (day care, small clinics). The scale and design controls will preserve neighborhood character while enabling gentle density and housing variety.



residential districts that account for some mixed-use allowances spread the benefits of downtown vitality into surrounding neighborhoods, making it easier for workers, elders, and young families to live near jobs and services. This pattern supports Dexter's identity as a regional hub by creating compact, serviceable neighborhoods that feed the local economy and provide a sense of place residents can celebrate. Increasing housing choice away from the center also helps retain younger households and provides workforce housing needed by local employers.

### Commercial Mixed Use

Transforming Dexter's traditional commercial districts into an expanded Mixed-Use Commercial designation prioritizes ground-floor, street-oriented commercial activity with complementary residential and civic uses above and behind storefronts. This district will accommodate retail, restaurants, offices, community services, and artisan/manufacturing uses at street level while permitting upper-story and rear-lot housing (rental or for-sale), short-term business incubator spaces, and live-work units. The intent is to concentrate daytime and evening activity in walkable corridors and create a compact, economically resilient downtown core.

This district will reinforce Dexter as "the Hub for the Heart of Maine" by concentrating commerce, services, and community gathering places where people naturally converge. Active ground floors, upper-story housing, and public spaces increase foot traffic, extend business hours, and create the civic presence (plaques, storefronts, farmer's market spaces, small performance venues) that people can point to with pride. The mix of uses also makes downtown more resilient to retail cycles and seasonal swings, supporting year-round employment and local entrepreneurship.

Mixed-use districts activate more hours of the day, diversify the local tax base, and make downtown businesses less vulnerable to single-sector declines. In a rural/regional hub like Dexter, clustering services and housing strengthens the market for local entrepreneurs and tourism-related spending.

Maine communities are experiencing demand for a variety of housing sizes and price points (smaller units, rentals, workforce housing). Allowing modest increases in density creates supply in areas that already have infrastructure, reducing sprawl and the cost of new public services. Directing new housing and commerce to locations with existing roads, sewer, and pedestrian networks reduces per-unit infrastructure costs for the town and supports more sustainable public investments.

Mixed-use centers also create visible public life (markets, storefronts, community events) that help residents identify with and take pride in Dexter as the regional hub. Design standards and public investments make these areas legible, walkable, and memorable. National and regional trends favor walkable, amenity-rich downtowns and flexible housing types. Adjusting Dexter's zoning to allow mixed uses positions the town to attract remote workers, retirees seeking village life, and businesses that want a visible community presence.



## ***Regional Efforts in Land Use***

In shaping the future of Dexter, efficient permitting procedures, and general approaches to land use planning are always being monitored for future improvement. Marked by strategic capital investments and collaborative initiatives with neighboring communities as well as planning organizations, Dexter plans to support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas. This chapter not only aims for show efforts towards standardization and efficiency but also sets the stage for sustainable development. By pooling resources and insights through regional collaboration, Dexter ensures a cohesive and interconnected approach to land use that transcends individual boundaries. The unwavering commitment to a substantial financial investment underscores the town's determination to build the necessary infrastructure for any growth areas that may arise in the near future, laying the foundation for a resilient and prosperous future, and continuing its role as the Hub of the Heart of Maine.

The Future Land Use Plan chapter sets a framework for the responsible development of Dexter while honoring its past and protecting the town's uniqueness and natural assets. It is a flexible guide that will be adapted and updated as the town evolves, ensuring that the needs of current and future residents are met while respecting the environment that makes Dexter a special place to live and work.

## ***On Implementation***

The challenge in the creation of this Plan is to work with the current rate of development and to manage it in such a way as to reduce the impacts it will have on both the town's rural character, natural resources, and on town services. The best way to accomplish this is by encouraging new development to be located close to existing public services and near each other, rather than in rural areas. Dexter's designated growth area fits the criteria for directing new development into more densely settled areas and close to existing town services, but the town needs to find a way to successfully encourage most new development, particularly residential, to locate in the designated growth areas, either through regulatory or non-regulatory measures, to realize the town's vision.

Tracking and monitoring growth and development by tracking and documenting permits issued is an option to implement change. The Code Enforcement Officer in conjunction with the Planning Board, are instrumental in tracking permits issued and subdivisions. Permit trends may be reviewed annually to monitor growth patterns and ensure that development aligns with the town's overall vision. If growth begins to exceed expectations or occur in areas not fully supported by current infrastructure, this review provides an opportunity to evaluate the town's ability to accommodate these changes effectively. The goal is not to restrict development, but to ensure that the necessary facilities and resources are in place to support growth in a way that maintains the town's character and meets the needs of its residents. This ongoing review allows Dexter to



adapt to growth, ensuring that the community's needs and long-term vision are well-supported. Tracking the following applications considered:

- The location of new residential structures.
- The location of new commercial structures.
- Conversions from seasonal camps to year-round residences.

The Dexter Comprehensive Plan is the town's guiding document for land use, municipal investments, and partnerships. It will serve as a practical reference for the Comprehensive Plan Committee (or an appointed successor), the Planning Board, the Select Board, town staff, volunteers, and outside partners, including MaineDOT, regional land trusts, EMDC, and others, when making decisions about public capital, permitting, and program priorities.

This Comprehensive Plan is a document that the Comprehensive Plan Committee, the Planning Board, the Select Board, other town volunteers, and town staff can lean on when making decisions about public investments, prioritizing work plans, and informing the work of outside agencies and partners, such as the MaineDOT, regional land trust organizations, EMDC, and many others.

Regular review will determine how many local and state future land use plan strategies have been implemented; how much of municipal growth-related capital investments occur in the Town's growth areas; how much new development is occurring inside the growth areas and how much is occurring elsewhere; and what critical natural resource, critical rural, and critical waterfront areas have been protected through acquisition, easements, or other measures.

This update should involve opportunities for public input to revisit priorities. Adoption of this plan marks the beginning of sustained, coordinated work. Implementation will require clear assignment of responsibilities, periodic monitoring, and sustained collaboration with municipal staff, boards, volunteers, and regional partners. When used consistently in decision-making, this plan will help Dexter concentrate growth where it is desired, preserve the town's natural and rural character, and position the community to seize new opportunities while safeguarding the qualities residents value most.

## ***Strategies***

Using the descriptions provided in the Future Land Use Plan narrative, maintain, enact local ordinances as appropriate to:

- a. Clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development;
- b. Establish or maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures, and explore streamlining permitting procedures in growth areas; and



c. Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources.

d. Clearly define protective measures for any proposed critical rural areas and/or critical waterfront areas, if proposed.

Include in the Capital Investment Plan anticipated municipal capital investments needed to support proposed land uses.

Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan.

Periodically (at least every five years) evaluate implementation of the plan in accordance with Section 2.7.

Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.

Provide the code enforcement officer with the tools, training, and support necessary to enforce land use regulations, and ensure that the Code Enforcement Officer is certified in accordance with 30-A M.R.S.A. §4451.

Track new development in the community by type and location.



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# Appendix



## Strategy Implementation Table

The table below lists strategies in applicable chapters of the plan and local groups and entities that will play lead roles in their implementation along with a timeline that is broken down into the following categories:

- Ongoing – The strategy is something the Town is actively working on and is encouraged to continue doing as part of the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Immediate – A strategy that is on the verge of completion and the Town is able to start and/or complete within five (5) years of adopting the Comprehensive Plan.
- Long-Term – These strategies require a significant lead-time that may involve prior actions to be completed. These strategies are anticipated to take more than five (5) years to complete.

Estimated timeframes for strategy completion are also provided. In addition to these strategies, Dexter may annually review the Strategies in the Comprehensive Plan.

<b>Chapter Title</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Responsible Agent(s)</b>	<b>Timeframe for Completion</b>
<b>Housing</b>	Stabilize housing prices for the elderly	Town Council, Planning Board, Age Friendly Committee	Long-term
	Foster production and management of a diverse range of housing options to promote attainable and affordable housing for residents at various income levels.	Town Council, Planning Board, Land Owners, Developers	Ongoing-Longterm 3-10 years
	Promote Land Use ordinances to support establishment of greater senior and low-income housing	Town Council, Planning Board	Long-Term, 5-10 years
	Maintain, enact or amend growth area land use regulations to increase density, decrease lot size, setbacks and road widths, or	Town Council, Planning Board, EMDC	Ongoing



provide incentives such as density bonuses, to encourage the development of affordable/workforce housing and tiny homes.		
Support the efforts of local and regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.	Town Council, Planning Board, regional stakeholders, EMDC, Maine Housing	Long-Term
Maintain, enact or amend ordinances to allow the addition of at least one accessory apartment per dwelling unit in growth areas, subject to site suitability.	Town Council, Planning Board	Ongoing
Create or continue to support a community affordable/workforce housing committee and/or regional affordable housing coalition.	Town Council, Town Manager	Long-Term
Designate a location(s) in growth areas where mobile home or tiny home parks are allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(3)(M) and where manufactured housing is allowed pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4358(2).	Town Council, Planning Board, Code Enforcement	Immediate
Meet the requirements of the housing study to help alleviate the housing crisis by setting housing production and reinvestment targets at the local level and consider the different housing typologies that can support housing production across the income spectrum	Town Council, Planning Board, Regional Stakeholders	Immediate 1-3 years
Support the efforts of local and regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.	Town Council, Town Manager, regional stakeholders, EMDC	Ongoing
Seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development built or placed during the next decade be affordable.	Town Council, Planning Board, Developers	Long-Term, 5-10 years



<b>Transportation</b>	Develop or continue to update a prioritized improvement, maintenance, and repair plan for the community's transportation network.	Town Council, Maine DOT	Ongoing
	Initiate or actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts.	Town Council, Maine DOT	Ongoing
	Maintain, enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to address or avoid conflicts with: a. Policy objectives of the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (23 M.R.S.A. §73); b. State access management regulations pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704; and c. State traffic permitting regulations for large developments pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A. §704-A	Town Council, Planning Board	Immediate, 3-5 years
	Maintain, enact or amend ordinance 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.	Town Council, Town Manager, Planning Board	Immediate, 1-3 years
<b>Economy</b>	If appropriate, assign responsibility and provide financial support for economic development activities to the proper entity (e.g., a local economic development committee, a local representative to a regional economic development organization, the community's economic development director, a regional economic development initiative, or other).	Town Council, Town Manager, Dexter Development Association, EMDC	Immediate, ongoing, 1-3 years
	Enact or amend local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development.	Town Council, Town Manager, Planning Board, DDA	Ongoing



	Identify the mechanisms to be considered to finance public investments in support of economic development (local tax dollars, creating a tax increment financing district, a Community Development Block Grant or other grants, bonding, impact fees, etc.)	Town Council, Town Manager, DDA, EMDC	Ongoing/ Immediate
	Participate in any regional economic development planning efforts.	Town Council, Town Manager, DDA, EMDC, Other Municipalities, regional stakeholders	Ongoing
<b>Natural Resources</b>	Ensure that land use ordinances are consistent with applicable state law regarding critical natural resources.	Town Council, Town Manager, Planning Board, Maine DEP	Ongoing
	Designate critical natural resources as Critical Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.	Town Council, EMDC, Beginning with Habitat	Ongoing
	Through local land use ordinances, require subdivision or non-residential property developers to look for and identify critical natural resources that may be on site and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.	Town Council, Planning Board, Maine DEP	Ongoing/ Immediate
	Through local land use ordinances, require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to include as part of the review process, consideration of pertinent BwH maps and information regarding critical natural resources.	Town Council, Town Manager, Planning Board, Beginning with Habitat	Ongoing
	Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.	Town Council, Planning Board, Dexter Lakes Association, EMDC, regional stakeholders	Ongoing, Immediate
	Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important	Town Council, Town Manager, Dexter	Ongoing/ Immediate



	natural resources such as through purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.	Lakes Association, Maine Land Trust	
	Distribute or make available information to those living in or near critical or important natural resources about current use tax programs and applicable local, state, or federal regulations.	Town Council, Dexter Lakes Association	Ongoing
	Encourage use of native plant species in yards to provide microhabitat and restore some native that is lost from development, with the primary beneficiaries being birds, amphibians, and insects (especially pollinators)	Town Council, Planning Board, Maine DEP	Immediate/Long-Term
<b>Water Resources</b>	Adopt or amend local land use ordinances as applicable to incorporate stormwater runoff performance standards consistent with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Maine Stormwater Management Law and Maine Stormwater regulations (Title 38 M.R.S.A. §420-D and 06-096 CMR 500 and 502).</li> <li>b. Maine Department of Environmental Protection's allocations for allowable levels of phosphorus in lake/pond watersheds.</li> <li>c. Maine Pollution Discharge Elimination System Stormwater Program</li> </ul>	Town Council, Town Manager, Planning Board	Ongoing
	Consider amending local land use ordinances, as applicable, to incorporate low impact development standards.	Town Council, Town Manager, Planning Board	Ongoing
	Where applicable, develop an urban impaired stream watershed	Town Council	Long-Term



	management or mitigation plan that will promote continued development or redevelopment without further stream degradation.		
	Maintain, enact or amend public wellhead and aquifer recharge area protection mechanisms, as necessary.	Town Council, Planning Board, Code Enforcement	Ongoing
	Encourage landowners to protect water quality. Provide local contact information at the municipal office for water quality best management practices from resources such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, Maine Forest Service, and/or Small Woodlot Association of Maine.	Town Council, Dexter Lakes Association, Residents	Ongoing
	Adopt water quality protection practices and standards for construction and maintenance of public and private roads and public properties and require their implementation by contractors, owners, and community officials and employees.	Town Council, Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer, Maine DOT	Ongoing
	Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect and, where warranted, improve water quality.	Town Council, Dexter Lakes Association, regional stakeholders	Ongoing
	Provide educational materials at appropriate locations regarding aquatic invasive species.	Town Council, Dexter Lakes Association	Ongoing
	Open stream connectivity anywhere possible in Dexter to protect from flooding damage and improve conditions for aquatic wildlife following Stream Smart principles.	Town Council, Town Manager, Dexter Lakes Association, regional stakeholders	Ongoing
<b>Agricultural and Forest Resources</b>	Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing any land use regulations	Town Council, Planning Board	Ongoing



<p>pertaining to forest management practices as required by 12 M.R.S.A. §8869.</p>		
<p>Consult with Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing any land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.</p>	<p>Town Council, Planning Board</p>	<p>Ongoing/ Immediate</p>
<p>Amend land use ordinances to require commercial or subdivision developments in critical rural areas, if applicable, maintain areas with prime farmland soils as open space to the greatest extent practicable.</p>	<p>Town Council, Planning Board</p>	<p>Immediate. 1-5 Years</p>
<p>Limit non-residential development in critical rural areas (if the town designates critical rural areas) to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism/outdoor recreation businesses, farmers' markets, and home occupations.</p>	<p>Town Council, Planning Board</p>	<p>Ongoing/ Immediate</p>
<p>Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs.</p>	<p>Town Council, Town Manager, Town Clerk, Tax Assessor</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Permit land use activities that support productive agriculture and forestry operations, such as roadside stands, greenhouses, firewood operations, sawmills, log buying yards, and pick-your-own operations.</p>	<p>Town Council, Planning Board, All Dexter Residents</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local or regional economic development plans.</p>	<p>Town Council, EMDC, regional stakeholders</p>	<p>Long-Term</p>
<p>Encourage wildlife-friendly farming practices, especially in fields to the west such as managing for short grass meadows, providing perch points, etc. for the benefit of upland sandpipers.</p>	<p>Town Council, Planning Board, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife</p>	<p>Long-Term</p>



<b>Historical and Archeological Resources</b>	For known historic archeological sites and areas sensitive to prehistoric archeology, through local land use ordinances require subdivision or non-residential developers to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.	Town Council, Town Manager, Dexter Historical Society, Penobscot Nation	Long-Term, 5-10 years
	Adopt or amend land use ordinances to require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to incorporate maps and information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into their review process.	Town Council, Planning Board, Dexter Historical Society	Ongoing
	Work with the local or county historical society and/or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to assess the need for, and if necessary plan for, a comprehensive community survey of the community's historic and archaeological resources.	Town Council, Dexter Historical Society	Long-Term
<b>Recreation</b>	Create a list of recreation needs or develop a recreation plan to meet current and future needs. Assign a committee or community official to explore ways of addressing the identified needs and/or implementing the policies and strategies outlined in the plan.	Town Council, Town Manager, Recreation Committee, Appropriate Resident Stakeholders	Immediate 3-5 years
	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 where possible.	Town Council, Town Manager, Recreation Committee, regional ATV and snowmobile clubs, EMDC	Ongoing
	Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organizations to pursue	Town Council, Town Manager, Recreation Committee	Long-Term



	opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.		
	Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property. At a minimum this will include information on Maine's landowner liability law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A. §159-A.	Town Council, Town Manager, Recreation Committee, regional ATV and snowmobile clubs (Rail Riders and Wasookeag Snowmobile Clubs)	Ongoing
<b>Public Facilities and Services</b>	Identify any capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public services to accommodate the community's anticipated growth and changing demographics.	Town Council, Town Manager	Immediate 1-3 Years
	Locate new public facilities comprising at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas.	Town Council, Town Manager	Ongoing
	Encourage local sewer and water districts to coordinate planned service extensions with the Future Land Use Plan.	Town Council, Town Manager, Dexter Utilities District	Ongoing
	If public water supply expansion is anticipated, identify and protect suitable sources	Town Council, Dexter Utilities District	Long-Term
	Explore options for regional delivery of local services.	Town Council, Town Manager, EMDC, Other Municipalities	Ongoing
	Explore and implement avenues to support a larger EMS District	Town Council, Town Manager, Hospitals, Other Municipalities, and the EMS Departments	Long-Term (5-10 years)
<b>Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan</b>	Explore opportunities to work with neighboring communities to plan for and finance shared or adjacent capital investments to increase cost savings and efficiencies.	Town Council	Ongoing
<b>Future Land Use Plan</b>	Assign responsibility for implementing the Future Land Use	Town Council, Planning Board	Ongoing



Plan to the appropriate committee, board or municipal official.		
Using the descriptions provided in the Future Land Use Plan narrative, maintain, enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to: a. Clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development; b. Establish or maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures, and explore streamlining permitting procedures in growth areas; and c. Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources. d. Clearly define protective measures for any proposed critical rural areas and/or critical waterfront areas, if proposed.	Town Council, Planning Board	Ongoing
Include in the Capital Investment Plan anticipated municipal capital investments needed to support proposed land uses.	Town Council, Town Manager	Immediate
Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.	Town Council, Town Manager, Adjacent Communities	Immediate, Long-term, 1-5 years, 5-10 years
Provide the code enforcement officer with the tools, training, and support necessary to enforce land use regulations, and ensure that the Code Enforcement Officer is certified in accordance with 30-A M.R.S.A. §4451.	Town Council, Town Manager, Code Enforcement Officer	Ongoing
Track new development in the community by type and location.	Town Manager, Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer	Ongoing
Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan.	Town Council	Long-Term, 5-10 years



Periodically (at least every five years) evaluate implementation of the plan in accordance with Section 2.7.	Town Council, Town Manager, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee	Immediate, Long-term, 5 and 10 Years
Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.	Town Council, Neighboring Communities	Immediate, Long-term, 5 and 10 Years
Provide the code enforcement officer with the tools, training, and support necessary to enforce land use regulations, and ensure that the Code Enforcement Officer is certified in accordance with 30-A M.R.S.A. §4451.	Town Council, Town Manager, Town CEO	Immediate, Long-term, 5 and 10 Years

Any good Comprehensive Plan requires a bold planning process that engages the public in a meaningful way to garner input. Without a strong public participation component, there is a risk of developing a plan that lacks broad community support, or a plan that elicits little debate, resulting in a plan that is so cautious it is essentially ineffective.

Communities should always work toward a significant level of public participation and outreach. Many communities, however, struggle with sustaining public interest over the time it takes to develop the plan. Despite efforts to be inclusive, the individuals responsible for the Comprehensive Plan update often encounter poorly attended meetings and decreased interest. Often, it is not until the public votes on the plan that a large segment of the town’s residents voices their views in support of – or in opposition to – the document.

No simple formula exists for increasing the level of public participation in plan updates. Often, encouraging involvement and engaging citizens gets more challenging as time goes by. The public participation process should include creativity, persistence, and a strategic focus to combat declining public interest.

Strong public participation is a must to create “buy-in” to the plan. People will rarely embrace change unless they think there is a problem in the first place. Committees may be stymied in their efforts to address important local and state goals unless a strong case is made for why these goals



are pertinent to the community – and important for the town to pursue. Public “buy-in” is necessary before the community can focus on remedying problems with a sense of common purpose.

A sense of public ownership for goals and planning concepts must be fostered to discredit the belief that the plan is a response only to state requirements. Lack of real support for the plan can lead to poor implementation, blunting its effectiveness. Ideally, there should be a long-term process of building awareness of planning and how it addresses specific goals that ultimately benefit the community.

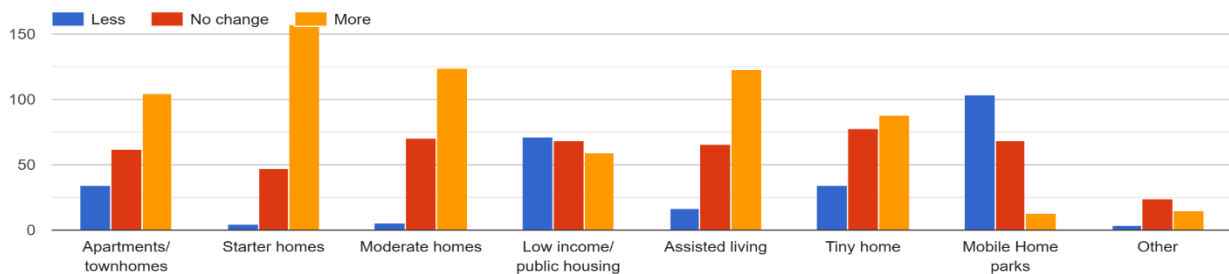
Creating public ownership of the plan and its related goals, policies, and strategies is essential in its effectiveness. A community should strive to avoid the plan simply becoming a response to state requirements rather than to the community’s own needs.

### Dexter Community Survey Results

In February 2025, two-hundred and thirty-six (236) individuals living in Dexter, Maine participated in a survey to assess public perceptions of quality of life as well as community opportunities and challenges. Based on 2023 census data, Dexter has 3,812 residents occupying 2,200 full time dwellings. While not all respondents answered all questions, unanswered questions are classified as “No response,” for the purposes of capturing the total number of respondents throughout the survey analysis. This survey and analysis are a joint effort between Eastern Maine Development Corporation and the town of Dexter.

### Housing

Next to each option below, please indicate the following types of residential development you would like to see more, less, or no change of in Dexter.

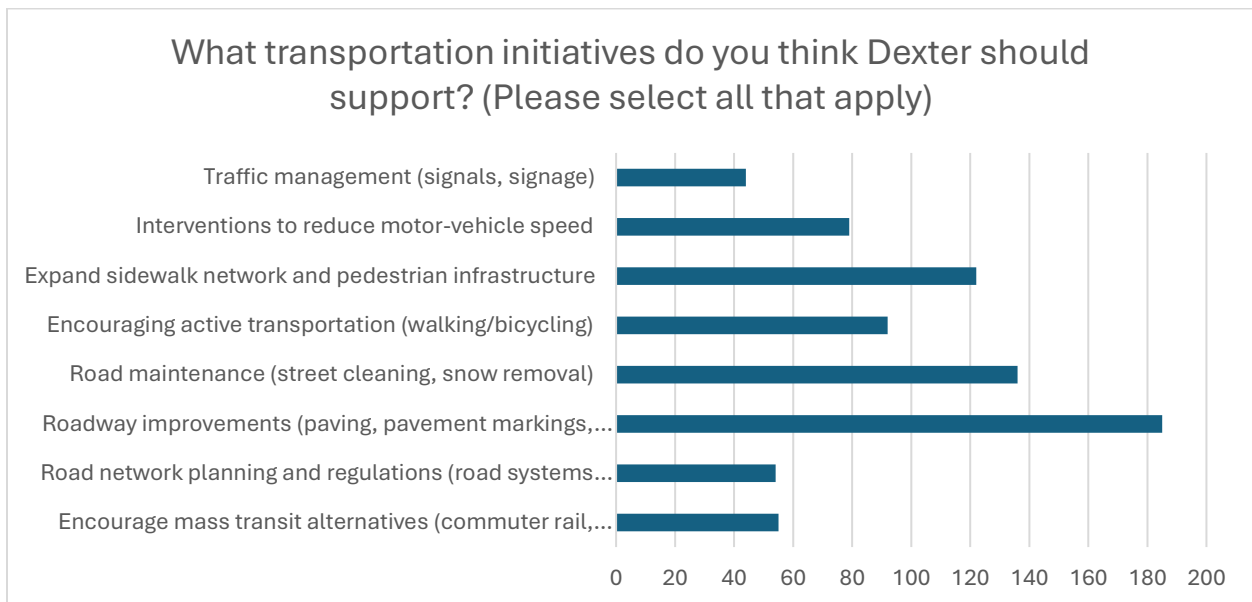
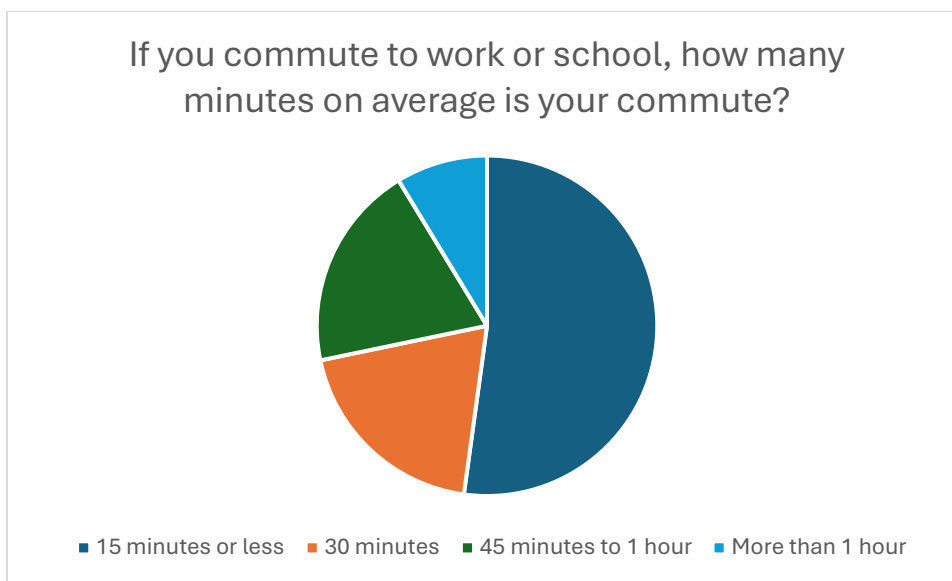


<b>What housing issues do you think Dexter should address?</b> (Please select all that apply)	
Housing stock improvement (rehabilitate housing, increase housing)	115

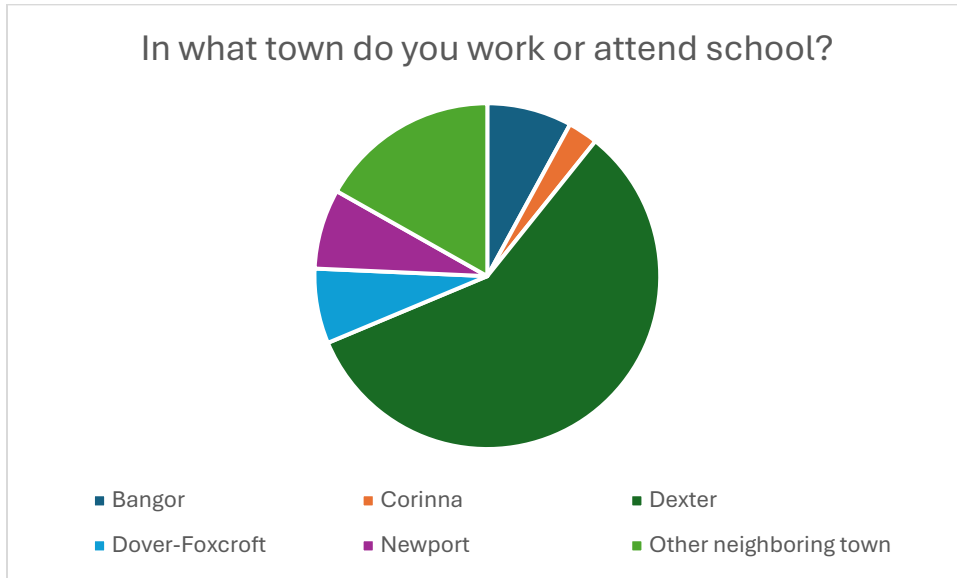


Increase middle income housing (family income of \$50,000 - \$75,000)	121
Improve overall housing affordability (family income under \$50,000)	110
Address abandoned property/houses	206
Elderly housing options	107
Accessory dwelling unit (mother-in-law cottage) regulations	39
Other	10

## Transportation



## Transportation



Do you work remotely from home? Responses	
Hybrid (sometimes)	24
No	151
Not applicable	40
Yes	17

If you answered yes to the above, how many times do you go into an office? Responses	
1ce every few months	5
1ce per month	3
1ce per week	17
2-3 times per week	4
3 - 4 times per week	8
Never	1
1ce per Year	1



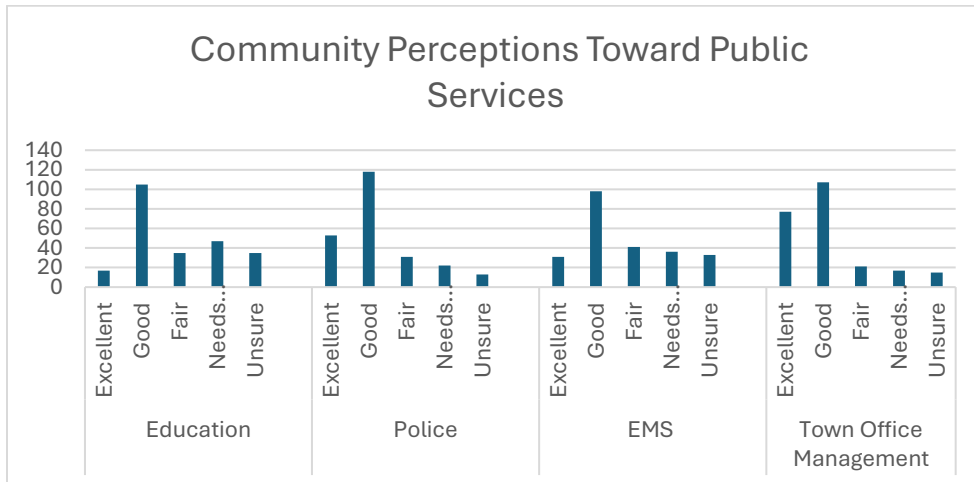
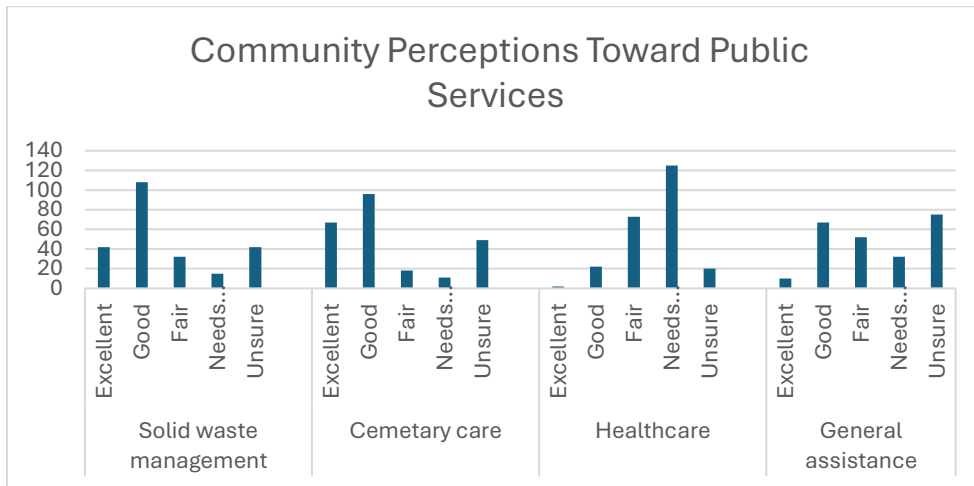
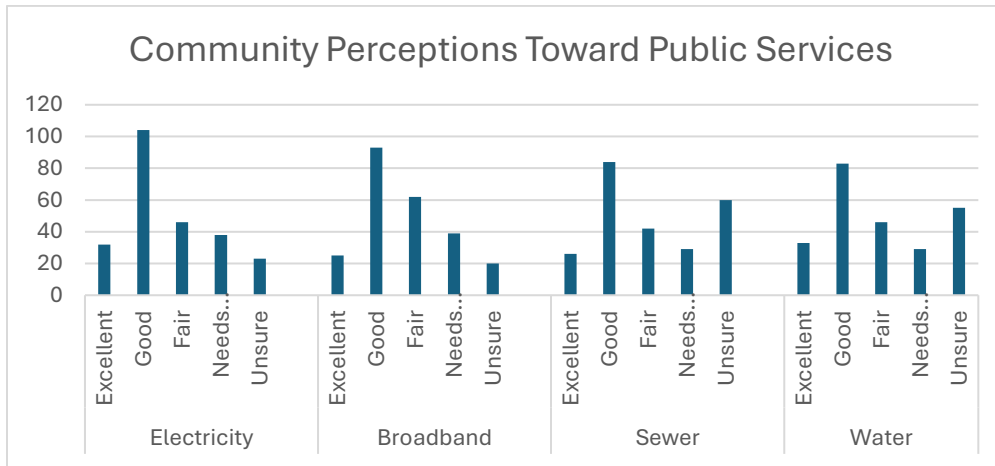
Which of the following best describes your employment? 236 responses	
Business owner	18
Full-time employee	92
Full-time homemaker	7
Part-time employee	16
Retired	69
Self-employed/independent contractor	21
Student	2
Unable to work	9
Unemployed	2

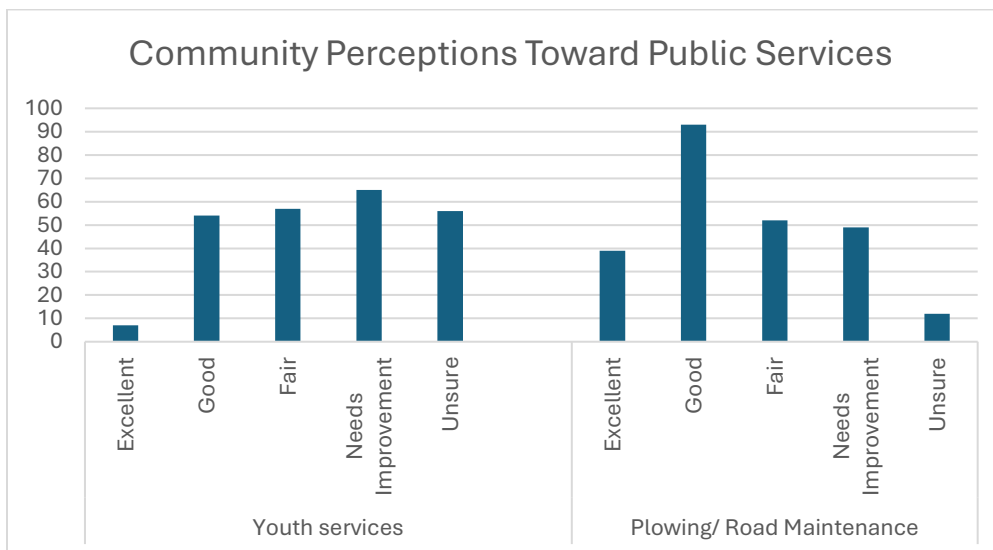
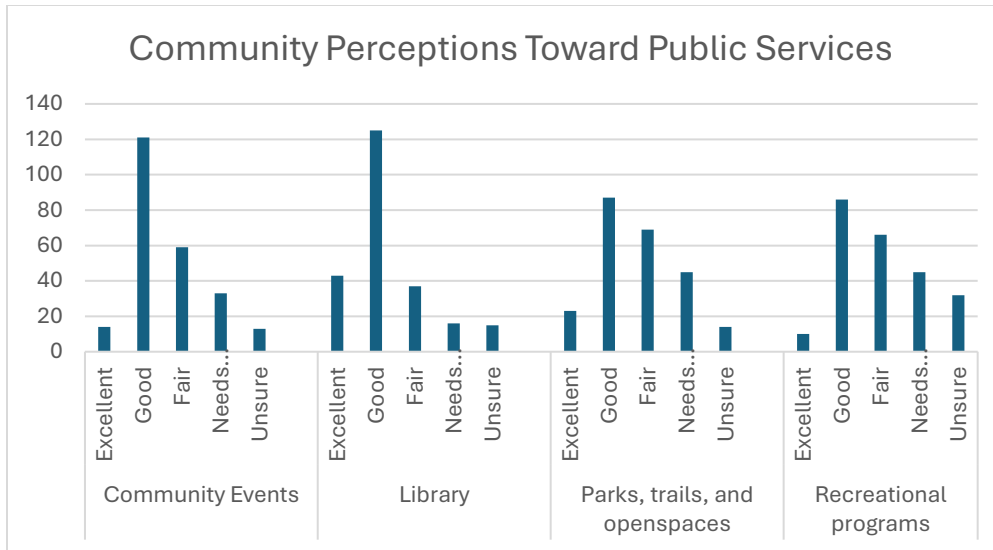
## Recreation

<b>What types of recreation activities would you like to have available or more available to you in Dexter? (Please select all that apply)</b>	
225 responses	
Multi-use recreational trails (walking, skiing, biking, atv)	151
Open space areas (picnic, theatre area, public gathering area)	127
Skate park (skateboarding)	47
Multi-use sporting field	75
Municipal playground	64
More town celebrations	104
Dog park	3
Other	32



### Public Facilities



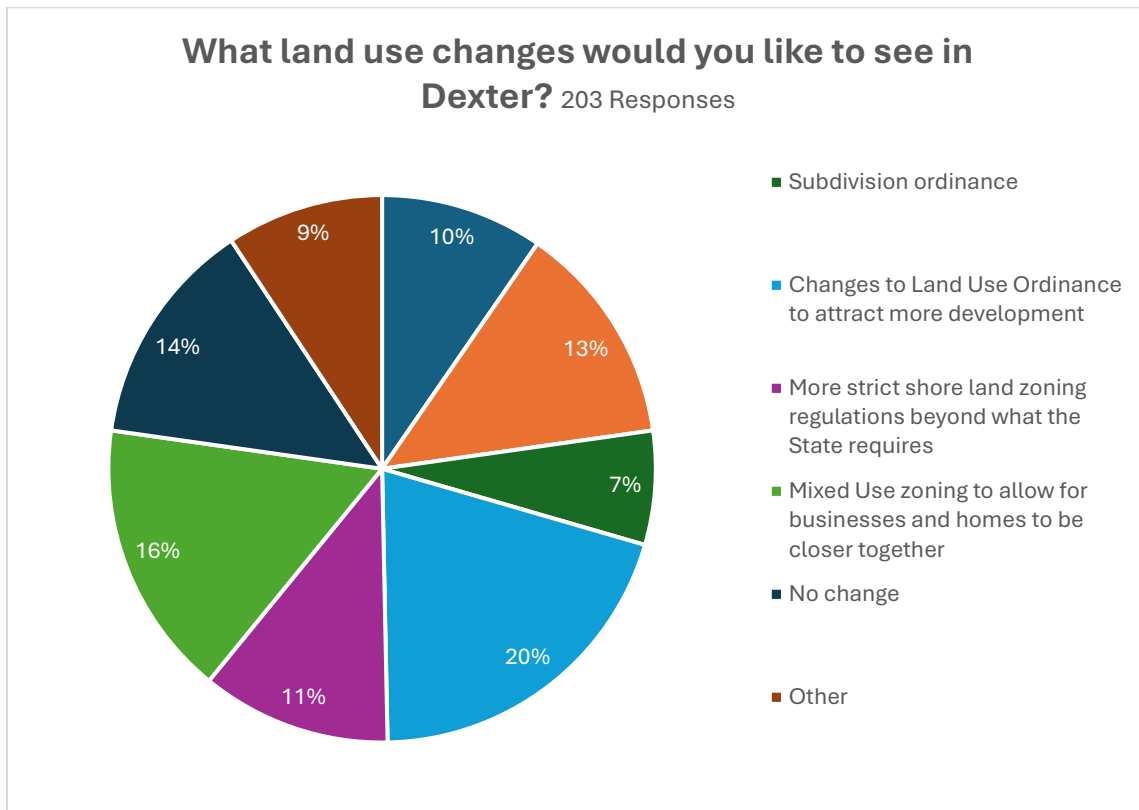
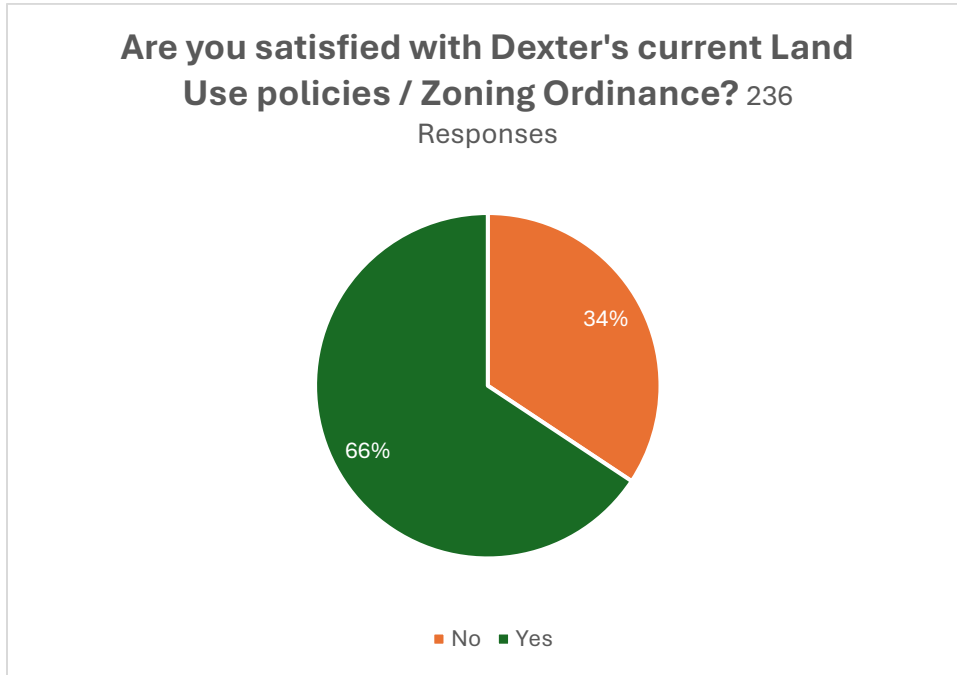


**Are there any additional services you would like to see provided?** 200 responses

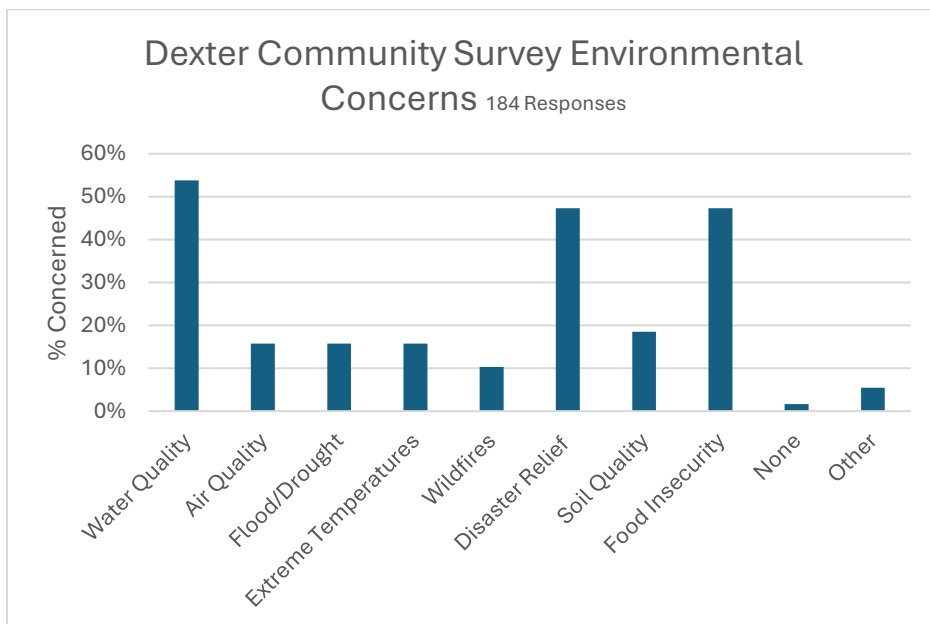
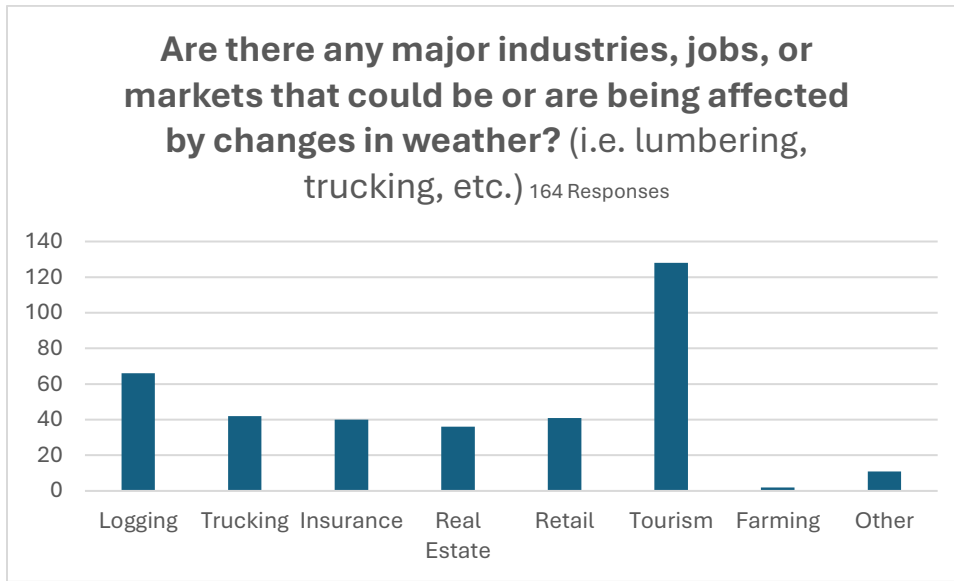
Yes	141
No	59

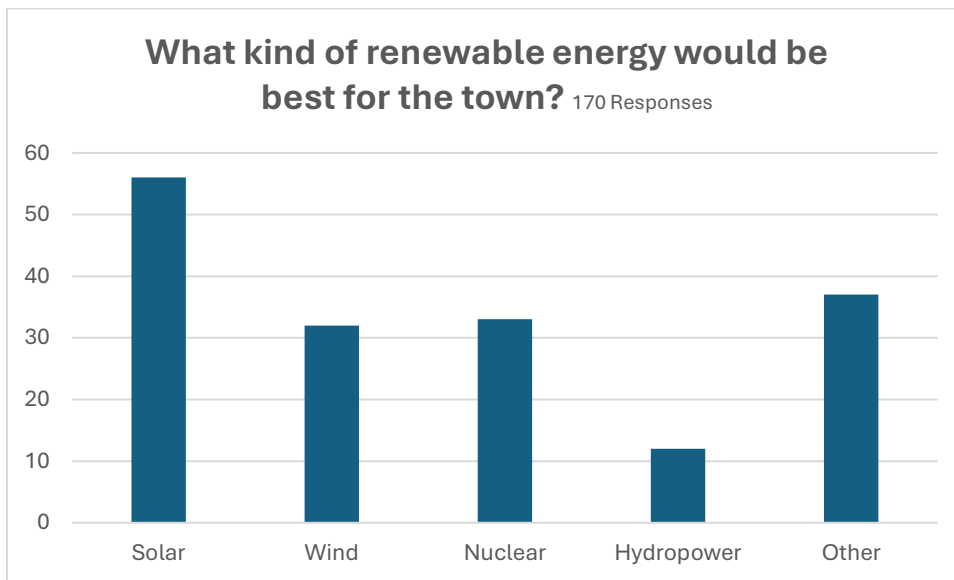
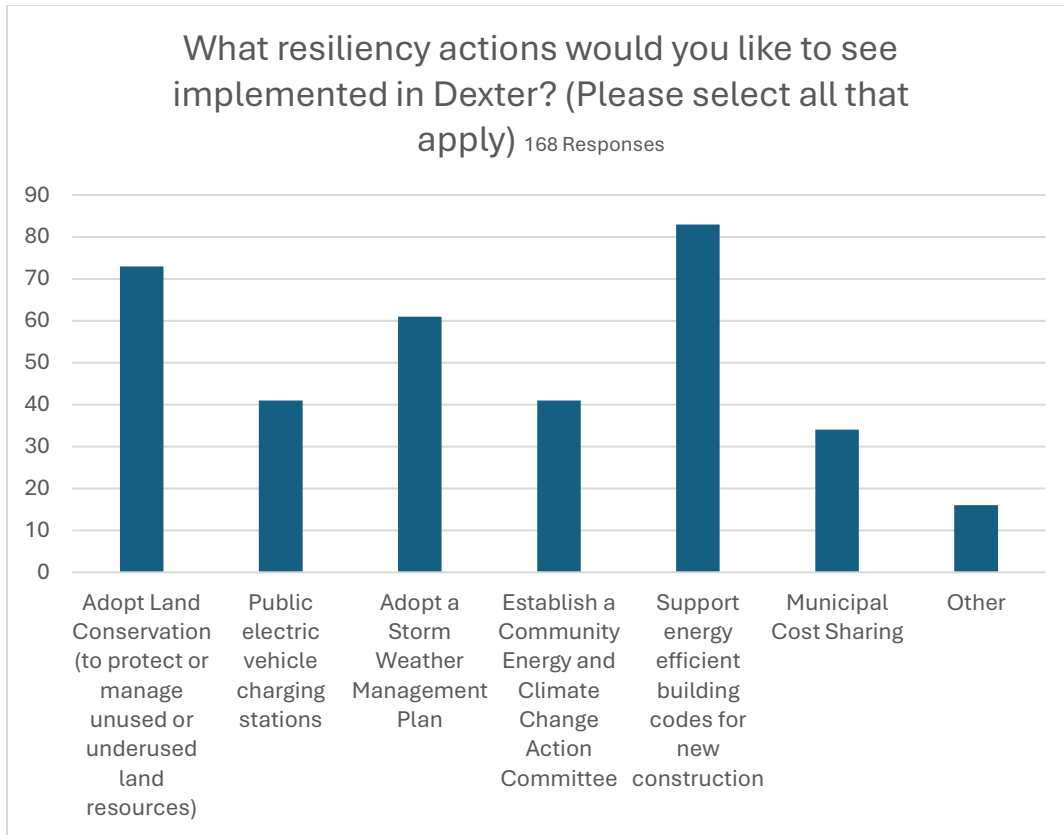


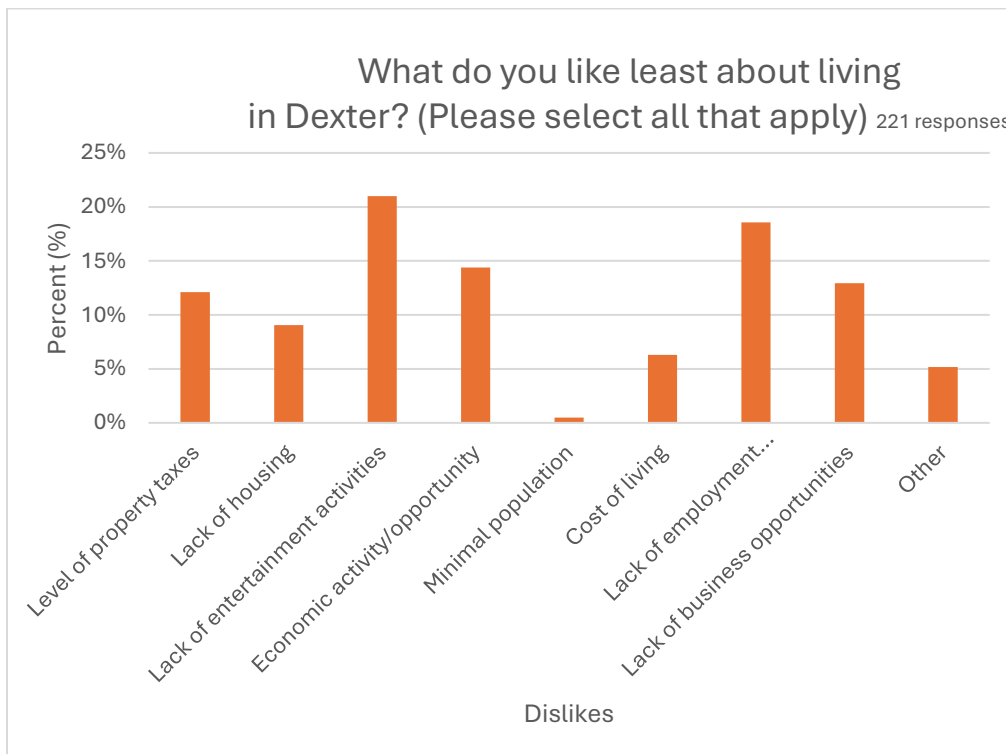
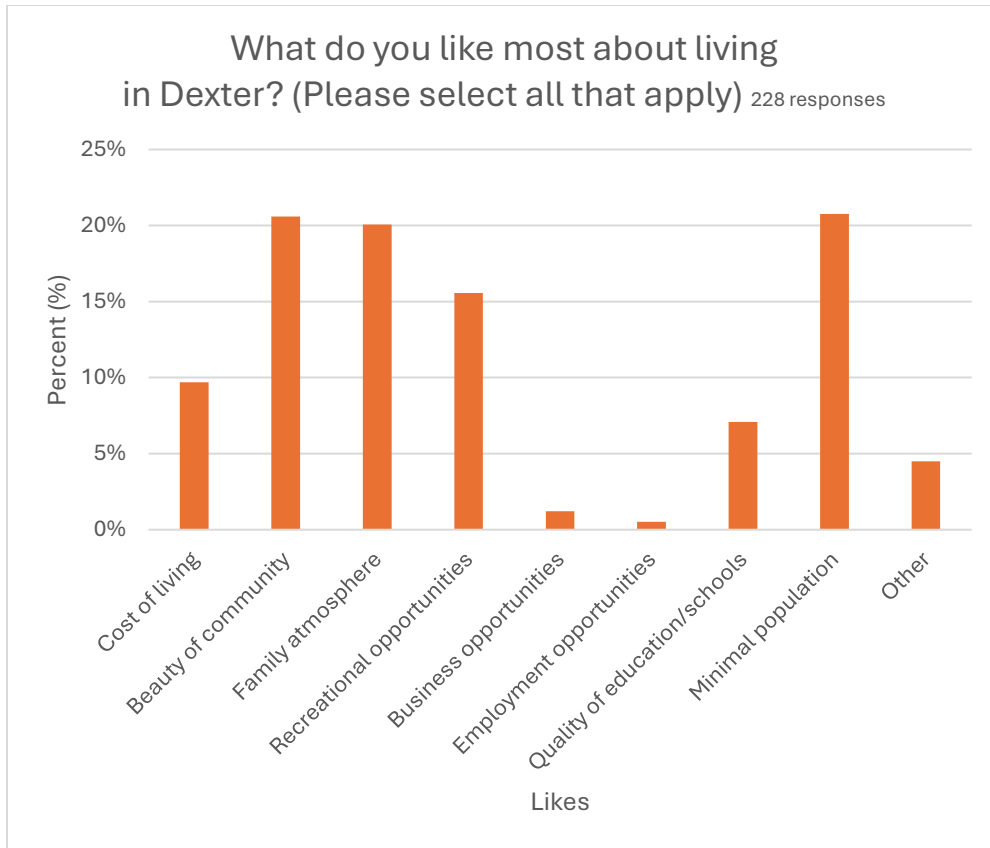
### Land Use



## Resiliency







**In one word, what is your vision for Dexter in the next 10 years?**



