

Local Economy

Overview

Winthrop's economy needs to be viewed through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed every aspect of daily life. At this time, it is not possible to predict the long-term impacts of the virus on the town, but by planning for a range of possibilities, the town can be well prepared. The statistics and data presented in this plan are based primarily on information from the early 2020s, and as such will not reflect the sudden changes brought on by the coronavirus; however, this data should be used as a baseline for the essential components of Winthrop's local economy. This chapter reports on the economy from two perspectives: statistical information and local business issues.

Per Capita Income vs. Household Income:

The most conventional measure of a town's economic health is the income of its individuals and families. The Census reports two basic types of income measures: "per-capita income," which is the aggregate income of the town divided by its population, and "household income," which is the median income of the households within the town. The latter is more helpful from a planning perspective.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF PER CAPITA VS. MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

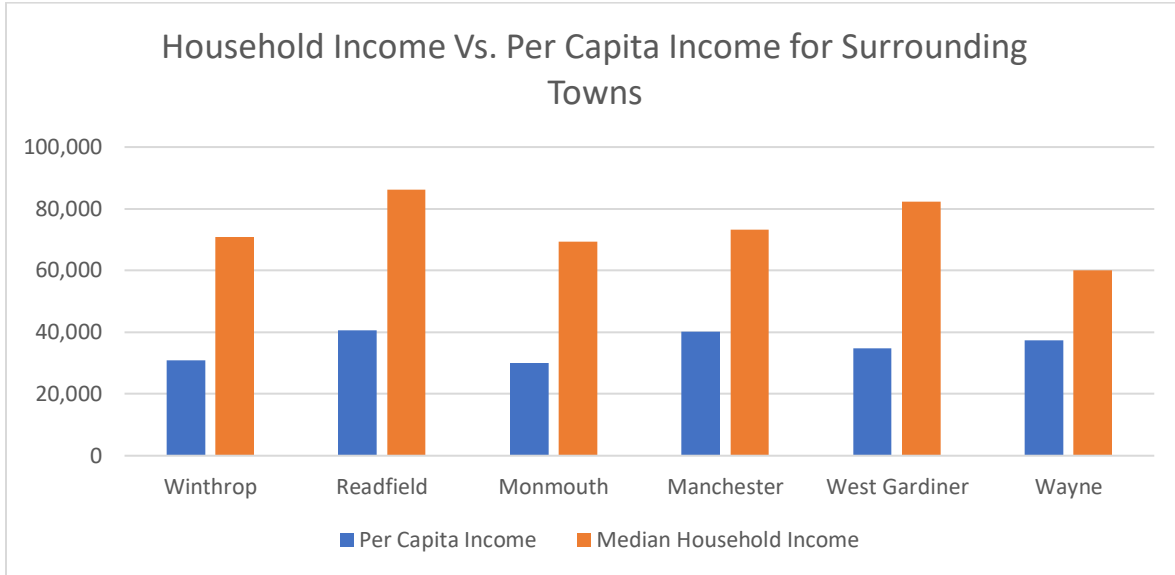
	Winthrop	Readfield	Monmouth	Manchester	West Gardiner	Wayne
Per-Capita Income	\$30,925	\$40,608	\$30,116	\$40,250	\$34,901	\$37,312
Median Household Income	\$70,828	\$86,156	\$69,328	\$73,188	\$82,390	\$60,125

Source: 2020 American Community Survey (ACS)

Median household income represents the total gross income received by all members of a household within a 12-month period. The median divides the income distribution into two equal parts: one-half of the cases falling below the median income, and one-half above the median income. Two factors distinguish it from per capita income:

- 1) Decreasing household size over time,
- 2) Changes in the number of members of the household with income.

FIGURE 1: PER-CAPITA AND MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES OF SURROUNDING TOWNS

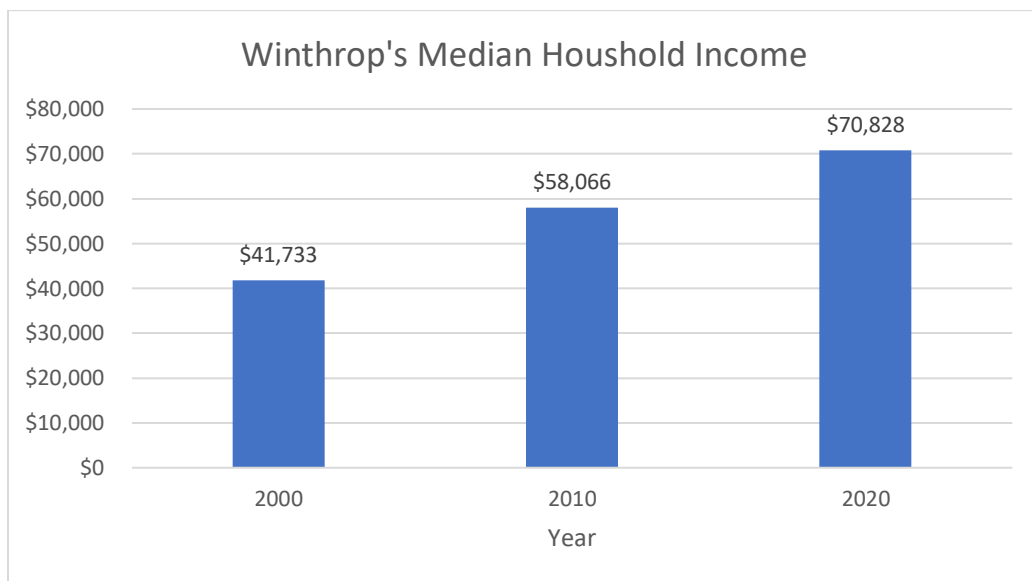


Source: 2020 ACS

Figure 1, above, presents the same data as Table 1, but in a different format. It shows the per-capita income of Winthrop and surrounding towns alongside the household income.

Figure 2, below, shows the increase in household income over a 20-year period. Since 2000, the household income in Winthrop has increased nearly 70 percent. The increase from 2000 to 2010 was 39 percent; from 2010 to 2020 the increase was 22 percent.

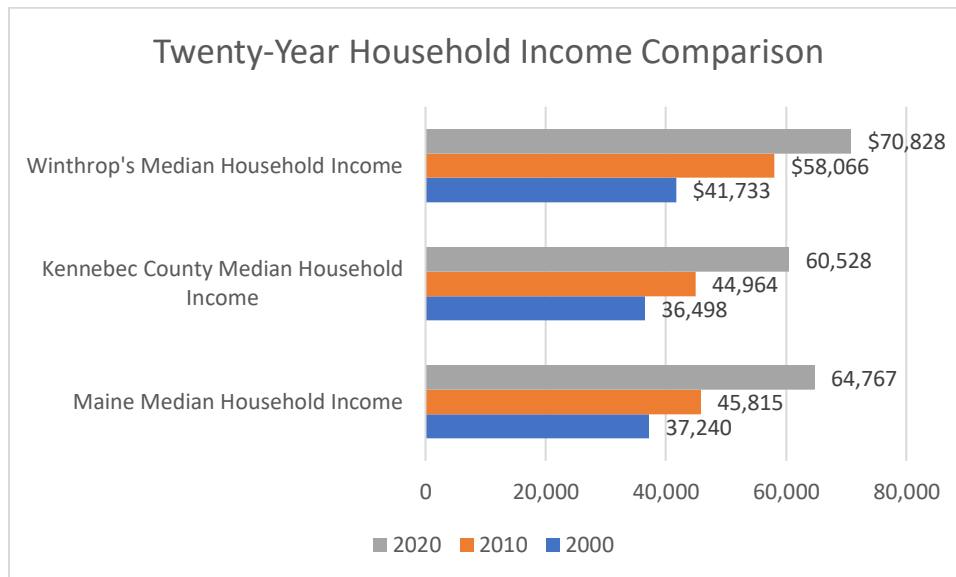
FIGURE 2: INCREASE IN MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Source: 2020 ACS

Figure 3, below, shows the median household income for the state of Maine and Kennebec County compared to Winthrop over the past three decades.

FIGURE 3: 2000, 2010 & 2020 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES: WINTHROP, KENNEBEC COUNTY AND MAINE



Source: 2000 & 2010 Census, 2020 ACS

Both Kennebec County and Maine have had lower household incomes than Winthrop from 2000 to 2020, although from 2000 to 2020, Kennebec County saw an increase of nearly 66 percent and the state saw an increase of nearly 74 percent. Both increases were similar to Winthrop's 70-percent increase in household income in this same period.

These income levels are also a way to assess housing affordability. A house is considered affordable if a household whose income is at or below 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) can live there without spending more than 28 percent of their income on housing costs (including heat, electricity, insurance, etc.). What this means in practice differs for rentals than ownership. For rentals to be considered affordable at 80 percent of the AMI, the household should be able to live there without spending 30 percent of their income on housing expenses.

As an example, in Kennebec County, 80 percent of the AMI by family size is as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Family of 1: \$42,250 | Family of 2: \$48,250 |
| Family of 3: \$54,300 | Family of 4: \$60,300 |
| Family of 5: \$65,150 | Family of 6: \$69,950 |
| Family of 7: \$74,800 | Family of 8: \$79,600 |

This data is from 2021 and can be found on the Maine Housing website. In Winthrop, 80 percent of the median household income comes to nearly \$57,000. Roughly 45 percent of Winthrop's 2,556 households fall below this income level.

The American Community Survey identified 478 households with Social Security income, about 26.7 percent of all households. It also identified 508 households with retirement income; however, there is probably a significant overlap between the two. The 2020 ACS identified 181 families receiving public assistance income.

Local Labor Force and Employment:

The labor force refers to the number of people either working or available to work within the working-age population. To the Census, the working-age population is everyone over the age of 16, including those of retirement age.

According to the 2020 ACS, Winthrop's labor force consisted of 3,244 people, 66 percent of the working-age population. The 3,244 individuals, broken down by sex, equates to 1,516 women (47 percent) and 1,728 men (53 percent). There are 2,556 households in Winthrop, which means an average of 1.26 workers per household. This is higher than the Kennebec County average of 1.14 workers per household.

In 2000, the labor force consisted of 3,361 people (1,709 women and 1,652 men), 67 percent of the working-age population. In 2010, Winthrop had 3,422 individuals in the labor force, 69 percent of the working-age population, of which 1,774 were women (52 percent) and 1,648 were men (48 percent).

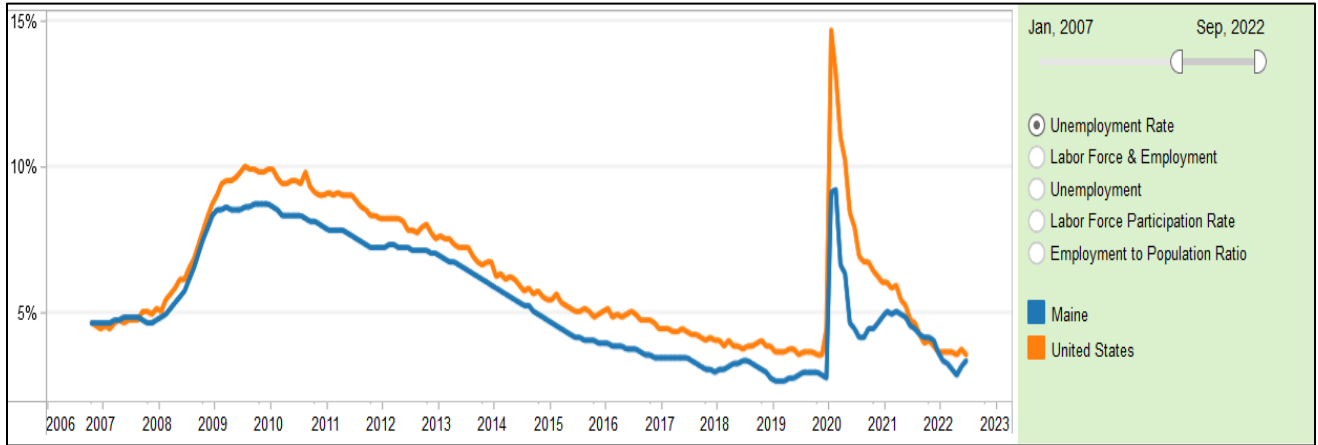
In the past 10 years, the balance between men and women in the labor force has changed, and the number of people in Winthrop's labor force decreased by slightly more than 5 percent.

Being in the labor force is not the same as being employed. The labor force is the sum of the employed plus the unemployed. Thus, 3,244 is the number individuals *available to work*. According to the 2020 ACS, 82 people in Winthrop were unemployed (22 women, 60 men) for an unemployment rate of 2.5 percent. For comparison, in 2010, the unemployment rate was 4.1 percent. It should be noted the Census defined "unemployment rate" only as representing the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the civilian labor force. It does not specify if those individuals counted toward the unemployment rate were those only collecting unemployment.

Unemployment is better reported by the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), which conducts periodic surveys. Figure 4 is a graph of unemployment in the United States and the State of Maine, of which Winthrop is a reflection.

The MDOL defined unemployment as the number of people who are not employed but are actively seeking work. Included are those who are waiting to be called back from a layoff or are waiting to report to a new job within 30 days. The unemployment rate is measured monthly through a sample of surveyed households.

FIGURE 4- UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN MAINE AND UNITED STATES



Source: Maine Department of Labor

The graph in Figure 4 depicts the trend of dropping unemployment until 2020. When the global pandemic hit, the unemployment rate skyrocketed until mid-2021. Maine did not see the extremes in high rates of unemployment or length of time as the United States as a whole during the pandemic.

Figure 5, below, shows Winthrop’s unemployment rate, taken from the first month of each year. Winthrop did not see the same high rates of unemployment as the state and country did during the pandemic, but the town has taken longer to rebound from those effects.

FIGURE 5: WINTHROP’S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



Source: Maine Department of Labor

Labor Market:

Winthrop is a contributor to the regional Augusta Labor Market Area (LMA), which must be considered in any economic development analysis. The LMA had a labor force of 41,779 in 2008; of this, Winthrop contributed 8.52 percent. Table 2 shows Winthrop's contribution to the LMA.

TABLE 2: LABOR FORCE & EMPLOYMENT IN WINTHROP & AUGUST LABOR MARKET AREA

Year	Geography	Civilian Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
2021	Augusta Micro	40,274	38,615	1,659	4.1%
	Winthrop	3,261	3,117	144	4.4%
2020	Augusta Micro	39,944	38,152	1,792	4.5%
	Winthrop	3,226	3,080	146	4.5%
2015	Augusta Micro	40,684	39,064	1,620	4.0%
	Winthrop	3,292	3,173	119	3.6%
2010	Augusta Micro	41,635	38,534	3,101	7.4%
	Winthrop	3,377	3,140	237	7.0%
2008	Augusta Micro	41,779	39,703	2,076	5.0%
	Winthrop	3,560	3,398	162	4.6%

Source: *Maine Department of Labor*

Table 2 depicts Winthrop's unemployment rate as a reflection of the Augusta LMA, with a few variations and usually trending slightly lower.

Winthrop is a net contributor of workers to the regional economy, as are all small towns in the area. Augusta is the only net importer of workers.

For the 2020 ACS, 2,609 respondents supplied information on the location to which they commuted; this information is different than the actual number of those in the labor force and the number and percentage in Tables 3 and 4 are based on this.

Table 3 shows that as of the 2020 ACS, 2,609 Winthrop residents held jobs, with 635 employed in the Augusta Micropolitan Area (24.3 percent), followed by 374 employed in Winthrop (14.3 percent).

TABLE 3: WORK DESTINATION FOR WINTHROP RESIDENTS

Location	Count	Share
Augusta	635	24.3%
Winthrop	374	14.3%
Lewiston	233	8.9%
Waterville	111	4.3%
Auburn	109	4.2%
Portland	75	2.9%
Monmouth	71	2.7%
Bath	64	2.5%
Bangor	51	2.0%
Gardiner	49	1.9%
Other Locations	837	32.1%

Source: 2020 ACS

According to the 2020 ACS, 374 individuals worked and lived in Winthrop, and 1,675 worked in Winthrop but lived elsewhere. Most of the people who come to Winthrop to work were from Augusta.

Table 4 shows other locations that supply Winthrop’s employees. The numbers and percentages are based on the 1,675 Census respondents who provided this information.

TABLE 4: WHERE WORKERS LIVE WHO ARE EMPLOYED IN WINTHROP

Location	Count	Share
Winthrop	374	22.3%
Augusta	108	6.4%
Monmouth	101	6.0%
Readfield	52	3.1%
Manchester	42	2.5%
Lewiston	34	2.0%
West Gardiner	33	2.0%
Leeds	32	1.9%
Belgrade	29	1.7%
Gardiner	29	1.7%
Other Locations	841	50.2%

Source: 2020 ACS

Unsurprisingly, these statistics differ little from those presented in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan.

Winthrop has one Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district. The purpose of a TIF is to capture the future tax benefits of real estate improvements, in order to pay for the present cost of those improvements. TIFs are usually used to channel funding toward improvements in underdeveloped areas where development would not otherwise occur. Accordingly,

Winthrop’s TIF district is in the Village District and encompasses the Commerce Center campus with the purpose of redeveloping the former textile mill and promoting use of the empty spaces. The Commerce Center is in the Village District, which is part of the designated growth area, delineated in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan (see *Existing Land Use Map* in the appendix).

As Winthrop is primarily a bedroom community, there is little in the way of economic development goals aside from those determined in the Comprehensive Plan. The town’s economic center is growing, however. The newly created position of Town Planner will assist with directing and encouraging economic development in appropriate locations in town. An update to the Zoning Ordinances will also serve to ease the permitting process and clarity of requirements for incoming businesses.

Since Winthrop does not have express economic development goals or priorities outside of those described by the Comprehensive Plan, they are not reflected in regional economic development plans.

Job Types:

Table 5 lists the occupational categories of Winthrop’s workers for 2010 and 2020. Nearly half of Winthrop’s workforce was in management, business, science and art in 2010. That number stayed about the same for 2020. The percentages of workers in the other job categories have changed little since 2010, as well.

TABLE 5: OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE FOR WINTHROP’S WORKERS

Occupation	2010	% Of Total	2020	% Of Total
Management, business, science, and art	1,413	43.1%	1341	42.4%
Service	437	13.3%	458	14.5%
Sales and Office	742	22.6%	774	24.5%
Natural resource, construction, and maintenance	338	10.3%	411	13.0%
Production, transportation, and material moving	352	10.7%	178	5.6%

Source: 2010 & 2020 ACS

The ACS breaks down the category of management, business, science, and art to include management, business, and financial occupations, computer and mathematical occupations, architectural and engineering occupation, life, physical, and social science occupations, community and social service occupation, legal occupations, educational instruction and library occupations, art, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations, health diagnosing and treating practitioners and other technical occupations, and finally health technologists and technicians. This all-encompassing occupational category is the reason for such a high number of employment results that far surpasses other job categories.

Winthrop’s workforce can also be broken down by industry of employment (Table 6). This

is not as specific as describing a person’s actual job because manufacturing, for instance, may include secretaries, managers, sales staff, and skilled workers. However, breaking industries down in this way provides information to gauge which sectors of the economy are doing well. An additional advantage is that this is the classification that the Maine DOL uses for its annual updates.

TABLE 6: INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION FOR WINTHROP’S WORKERS

Industry	2010	% Of Total	2020	% Of Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	0	0%	86	2.7%
Construction	248	7.6%	275	8.7%
Manufacturing	352	10.7%	189	6.3%
Wholesale trade	91	2.8%	103	3.3%
Retail trade	325	9.9%	384	12.1%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	101	3.1%	131	4.1%
Information	29	0.9%	89	2.8%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	211	6.4%	220	7.0%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	311	9.5%	315	10.0%
Educational services, health care and social assistance	825	25.1%	908	28.7%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	184	5.6%	101	3.2%
Other services, except public administration	189	5.8%	158	5.0%
Public administration	416	12.7%	194	6.1%

Source: 2010 & 2020 ACS

The data in Table 6 shows the major industry for Winthrop’s workers in both 2010 and 2020 were the educational services, health care, and social assistance sectors, by a significant percentage in both decades. For 2020, the industry with the next highest percentage was retail trade, which had an 18 percent increase since 2010. The most surprising increase was in the agricultural industry; it went from none in 2010 to 86 in 2020.

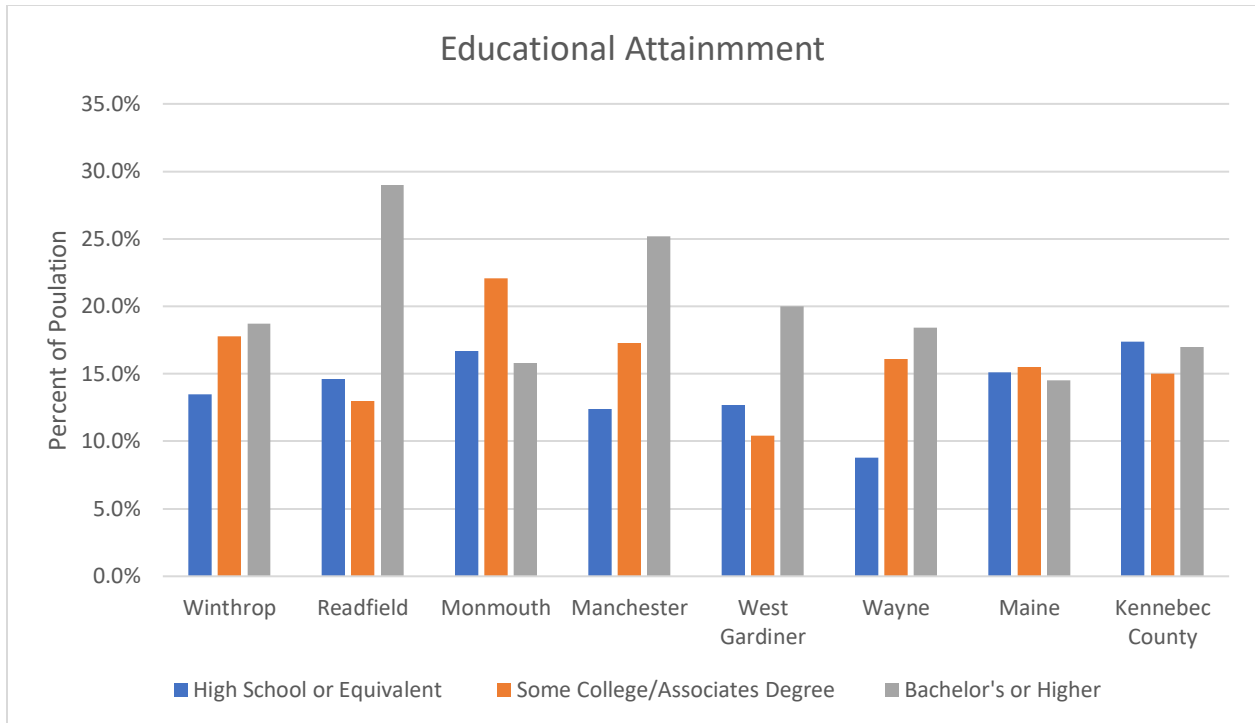
Overall, these figures are consistent with the Augusta Labor Market Area with a high percentage in educational services and in retail trade.

Educational Attainment:

Another measure of how likely a town is to progress economically is the educational attainment of its residents. College graduation is a basic requirement for many professional, managerial, and educational professions, and wages are higher for jobs demanding higher educational attainment. Figure 6, below, represents the level of

education achieved by the population between the ages of 25-64.

FIGURE 6: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT COMPARISON WITH SURROUNDING TOWNS, COUNTY, AND STATE



Source: 2020 ACS

Winthrop's high school or equivalency attainment is higher than Manchester, West Gardiner, and Wayne, but lower than Readfield, Monmouth, the state, and Kennebec County. Winthrop has more residents who have an associate degree than Readfield, Manchester, West Gardiner, Wayne, the state, and Kennebec County.

For higher education, more Winthrop residents have a bachelor's degree or higher than Monmouth, Maine, and Kennebec County. Overall, Winthrop residents have an average educational attainment when compared with surrounding towns, and a higher average than the state and Kennebec County.

Winthrop's Local Business Climate:

Winthrop had its economic heyday back in the mid-20th century, from the 1940s to the 1980s. Local businesses on Main Street and in other downtown locations included a five-and-dime, a fruit and quick market, a coffee shop, and a hardware and sporting goods store. Since then, many contributing factors have resulted in the disbursement of those active retail businesses, not the least of which is the influx of national chains, mergers and purchases, and big-box chain establishments. But Winthrop has the potential and is poised to become a thriving small town once again.

In recent years, many new businesses and service providers have opened in downtown Winthrop and remain hugely successful, as are existing businesses that have been established for years. Downtown Winthrop is also home to the Winthrop Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce, which provides resources for local businesses in Fayette, Manchester, Monmouth, Mount Vernon, Readfield, and Wayne, as well as Winthrop.

The small businesses in Winthrop's downtown serve the needs of Winthrop residents and those passing through. The major retail/commercial centers are downtown, though there are other businesses spread throughout town, too. The downtown area is Winthrop village, which is currently thriving with several new businesses opening in the last five years.

An improving local economy could be anticipated to entice new residents to move to Winthrop. While population projections do not predict a significant population increase, these predictions are rarely accurate and can be influenced by many outside factors. Any population change will be tracked, and the town will respond accordingly to manage population growth, employment, and municipal tax base.

Winthrop also has many small businesses that are home occupations, though the exact number is unknown; the Code Enforcement Officer intends to track those moving forward. Home occupations play a key role in the community by keeping business local and serving specific needs of residents and people from nearby communities. Under the Zoning Ordinance, home occupations are permitted in all zoning districts with the approval of the Code Enforcement Officer. In the same way that home occupations boost the local economy, so do telecommuters who are more apt to shop locally rather than shopping in Augusta or Lewiston as they are driving home from work.

As Winthrop has an abundance of seasonal homes, camps, visitors passing through, and day-trippers, the town's economy is dependent on tourism. One way the town has worked to preserve the market for tourism is through partnering with the Cobbossee Watershed District. The town has a Cobbossee Watershed Trustee board to protect the watershed and water quality. Studies by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection have found that degraded water quality results in decreased property values. This correlates directly to protecting the watershed to ensure future tourism.

Winthrop's Health Service Providers:

Local access to high-quality professional medical care in small communities is difficult to find. Winthrop is uniquely fortunate with the MaineGeneral medical facility located in the Winthrop Commerce Center, 149 Main Street. The building that houses these medical offices was formerly a woolen and textile mill and has been partially renovated to accommodate these offices. The four-story building houses medical service providers on every floor level, all under the auspices of the larger, regional medical provider, MaineGeneral.

There are eight, independent medical practices located in this facility:

- Winthrop Family Medicine
- MaineGeneral Sports Medicine
- MaineGeneral Orthopedics
- Winthrop Outpatient Rehabilitation Services
- MaineGeneral Laboratory Services
- Winthrop Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine
- MaineGeneral Radiology and Diagnostic Imaging
- MaineGeneral ExpressCare

The local availability of these medical services and providers is uncommon in small towns in Central Maine. Multiple factors contributed to MaineGeneral choosing to locate in Winthrop. The town's ideal location within proximity to the State's capital of Augusta and the regional hospital, combined with the availability of space at the Commerce Center, resulted in a perfect match between the town and MaineGeneral.

This resource is a boon to the town's older population, but all generations benefit from having medical services in Winthrop. The Family Medicine and Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine offices are top-notch, and the urgent care (ExpressCare) facilities are just as valued by Winthrop's residents.

Recently, concerns have been raised that MaineGeneral may vacate its offices in the Winthrop Commerce Center in favor of a new location. For obvious reasons, this would have a detrimental impact on the town.

Winthrop's Downtown:

Winthrop has a compact and healthy downtown area, which nevertheless has room for improvement. Although the downtown area, as defined by the "village" district in the Zoning Ordinance, is bounded by Route 41/133 to the west, Route 202 to the south, and roughly the elementary school to the east, the core of it is Main Street. Main Street from the Commerce Center (previously the Carleton Woolen Mill) westward contains most of the downtown commercial buildings and the highest density of development.

In 2000, a Downtown Revitalization Plan was conducted; since that time, many of the plan's recommendations were implemented. The town should consider updating that plan every 10 years or so to keep it current and viable in providing the best improvements and goals for the downtown area.

Numerous grants are available from which Winthrop could benefit. These grants could be used for rejuvenation and revitalization, as well as economic development benefits, such as exploring options for the creation of a new municipal position to oversee economic development.

The 2010 Comprehensive Plan noted challenges for Winthrop's downtown area that are still relevant today. They are:

Commerce Center: An excellent job has been done to restore and redevelop a portion of this building. There is still ample space for housing or other ventures on upper floors while the first floor is predominantly retail space. In fact, a large portion of the first floor is used by a wildly popular bazaar, but it is only open one weekend per month. Issues of note include the broad, blank façade on Main Street and parking limitations.

The western gateway/Royal Street: Main Street, where it joins Route 133, is not an attractive entrance to downtown. A combination of signage, landscaping, and curb improvements could improve this gateway.

Downtown Parking: As discussed in the Transportation Chapter, parking is perennially cited as a problem in all downtowns. One potential solution would be the development of a shared, public parking lot near the downtown where patrons can park and walk to their destination.

Traffic Movement: Another issue discussed in the Transportation Chapter is traffic speed along Main Street. While traffic speed indicates a lack of congestion, which is a benefit, it can discourage walkability and make pedestrians feel unsafe. Traffic calming measures can be taken to slow traffic through infrastructure and policing.

Walkability and Bike-ability: Connectivity and walkable downtowns instill a sense of place for people. Although improvements have been made, pedestrian circulation is not yet 100 percent. As noted in the Transportation Chapter, commercial entrances interrupt sidewalks in Winthrop's downtown. These over-wide driveways are intimidating to pedestrians, making it less attractive to traverse Main Street via foot or bicycle.

Public Space: Main Street does not have adequate places for the public to gather, relax, eat lunch, or enjoy the ambiance. The cemetery is the only green space. There are only a handful of benches in the downtown area. In addition, the area around the municipal parking lot was intended to be green space but is not well maintained by the town. This lack of upkeep has resulted in frequent comments and requests by residents that the town improve maintenance.

Green space need not necessarily be green. The downtown might benefit from an outdoor café, or similar establishment.

Business Capacity: Downtowns become vibrant and thriving when they attain a critical mix of businesses. This means more than just full capacity, though that, too, is a goal. A downtown should have either an anchor store or a complementary mix. Although Hannaford Supermarket and Walgreens are technically at the edge of downtown, they do not contribute to the mix. If the Commerce Center becomes available for retail, that could contribute.

Regulation of Economic Development:

Winthrop's Zoning Ordinance breaks the town into 10 unique districts, each with allowable

land uses (covered further under the Existing Land Use chapter and the Future Land Use chapter of this plan). See the **Existing Land Use** map in the appendix.

Although allowable in small scale in the General Residential and Village districts, the districts created for the intention of directing commercial and industrial development are the Limited Commercial District for low- and medium-impact commercial activities, the General Commercial District for high-impact commercial uses, and the Industrial District for intensive commercial or industrial enterprises. Table 7 below details this in table format.

TABLE 7: ZONING ORDINANCE SUMMARIZED FOR COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES

	General Residential	Limited Commercial	General Commercial	Industrial	Village	Rural
Low-Impact Commercial	PB	PB	PB	CEO	CEO	CEO
Med.-Impact Commercial	PB	PB	PB	CEO	CEO	PB
High-Impact Commercial	No	No	PB	PB	PB	PB
Manufacturing	No	No	PB	PB	PB	PB
Reestablishment of Industrial	No	No	PB	PB	PB	PB

Source: Winthrop’s Zoning Ordinance

Definitions for high-, medium-, and low-impact commercial uses can be found in Article VI - Definitions of Winthrop’s Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance can be accessed via the town’s website: www.winthropmaine.org.

PB= Planning Board, CEO= Code Enforcement Officer, No= Not Allowed

General Residential District - The purpose of this district is to include areas suitable for residential and limited public and commercial development. It extends to additional areas to provide locations suited to mixed residential and commercial development of a limited scale, compatible with existing development and close to town services and utilities.

Limited Commercial District - Includes areas of mixed, residential, and low- and medium-impact commercial uses. This district is devoted to a mix of residential and low-intensity businesses and commercial uses.

General Commercial District - Established areas intended for high-impact commercial uses, which may not be as compatible with other land uses, such as residential or recreational activities. It is located to provide an area suited to such development due to site conditions such as soil type, slopes, proximity to highway access, and public water and sewer services.

Industrial District - Establishes an area intended for intensive commercial or industrial enterprises, which may not be compatible with other land uses, such as residential, recreational, or agricultural activities. It is located to provide an area suited to development due to site conditions such as soil types, slopes, proximity to highway and railway access, and public water and sewer services.

Village District - Includes the most highly developed areas in town. Development is denser than in other areas and covers a broad mix of land uses including commercial, recreational, public, and residential. This district seeks to maintain the existing character and land use mix.

Rural District - Includes lands presently characterized by low-density development, forests, abandoned fields, and farms. This District seeks to protect the existing open space, forestry, agricultural and residential uses, and to restrict commercial activities.

Overall, the designated districts have been created to prevent any incompatible land use issues. In addition to allowing commercial and industrial activities in designated districts, the Zoning Ordinance sets performance standards for the development and creation of these land uses. The performance standards in the Zoning Ordinance could benefit from an update to more current language and practices -- for example, including Best Management Practices for stormwater management and limitations on impervious surfaces. To give the Planning Board the utmost oversight, the development of a Site Plan Review Ordinance would be ideal.

A Site Plan Review Ordinance would allow the Planning Board or other prescribed party the authority to review applications and site plans. In addition, the adoption of this ordinance would allow the prescribed party purview to review commercial, industrial, and other nonresidential development applications to assure they meet public health, safety, and environmental concerns. This is different than zoning and more similar to a subdivision review in that the proposal will be reviewed to ensure it meets specified standards. A Site Plan Review Ordinance would establish processes and standards for local review of retail, industrial, office, service and all other nonresidential development; however, a Site Plan Review Ordinance could also include processes and standards for the review of multi-family housing developments, as well. The review procedures and standards are adopted by the local community to address the types of development and issues the town may be concerned about.

Economic Growth Projections:

Historically, Winthrop's economic growth has happened in incremental changes. Currently, Winthrop has a strong economy supported by many new businesses as well as existing, established businesses.

Winthrop, as is much of Maine, is home to a small but growing population of individuals who work from home and are increasingly dependent on internet access. This trend boosts the demand for improvements to that infrastructure.

In 2020, Winthrop had 262 people working from home. In 2010, 158 people worked from home. That is an increase of 104 people in 10 years, or 66 percent, of individuals working from home. And the 2020 data was collected before the height of the pandemic, which triggered a massive movement of transitioning to remote work. There are undoubtedly more people working remotely today than ever before. While it is hard to determine trends based on such small numbers, it would be expected that working from home will continue to increase, given adequate infrastructure, particularly after this type of work has proven successful for many businesses. This trend boosts the demand for improvements to that infrastructure.

The town is mostly served by public water and sewer service in the areas where commercial growth is meant to be projected and directed. Winthrop's proximity to Augusta has also ensured that it has adequate broadband access, though some employers may need and demand even greater bandwidth than is currently available. To date, the Code Enforcement Officer knows of no development that has been hampered by access to three-phase power. The town's new fire station is a fairly recent example of the ease with which a facility was connected to three-phase power. In short, Winthrop appears to have the infrastructure needed to support commercial growth.

Depending on which population projections are viewed, there is either a loss of residents or minimal population growth. But as stated in the Community Profile chapter, these projections are rarely accurate for a town the size of Winthrop. There will likely be population growth to some degree and undoubtedly a change in population demographics. Population growth and population changes will affect all aspects of life, from jobs to housing.

Because Winthrop is a small part of a regional economy, it is likely most new jobs will be out of town. As only 14 percent of Winthrop residents work in town, with the other 86 percent commuting to work, this will have an impact on public services, especially the transportation system. Routes 133, 135, 41, and 202 are the major commuter routes to other areas of employment. As the population in Winthrop grows and changes, traffic and wear and tear on the main corridors will increase.

Winthrop has dedicated certain areas for various levels of commercial and industrial land uses, limiting the prospect of incompatibility. The districts earmarked for high-intensity industrial and commercial development are not at capacity, nor are the districts where light to medium commercial development is permitted.

In creating separate districts to accommodate commercial and industrial land uses, Winthrop is protecting its more rural areas, natural resources, and residential districts. The town's Zoning Ordinance has effectively located economic activities in specific areas. Those tools have focused economic development efforts in the downtown area, and the appropriate commercial and industrial districts.

The result of this is a downtown area where many of the businesses are small and

privately owned, in keeping with the community's vision of an attractive town with a prosperous economy that provides the fundamental needs of residents. The downtown area also has mixed uses, and a higher density than any other district in town, all in keeping with the historic character of the town.

Some public investment may be needed to encourage the desired growth, particularly in the Commerce Center (formerly the Carleton Woolen Mill) in the village area. However, the municipal sewer and water systems cover nearly all the land suitable for commercial development. Route 202 and Main Street have access to 3-phase power for industrial operations and broadband telecommunications infrastructure.

Winthrop's Unique Assets:

Since Winthrop's total geographic area is approximately 17 percent water, one of its most prominent, unique assets are the numerous lakes, ponds, and other water resources. The influence of Winthrop's vast water bodies cannot be overstated in their importance to the economy and as an attraction. Other contributing factors include the town's numerous cultural, natural, and historical assets.

The town has a significant seasonal population, in addition to hosting day-trippers and those passing through. Winthrop leverages this asset through its wide offering of various locally owned businesses and restaurants, which are an important representation of Winthrop's small-town character. The thriving, vibrant downtown also attracts visitors and serves as a center for commerce and recreation for residents.

Other unique assets include the abundance of open space and conserved land, which contributes to its appeal for outdoor recreation; Winthrop's ideal location and ease of access via transportation infrastructure; and an actively engaged community and residents invested in the town's long-term best interests.

Summary of Analysis:

Winthrop's labor force decreased by approximately 5 percent from 2010 to 2020; however, the unemployment rate also decreased from 7 percent in 2010 to 4.4 percent in 2020 (Maine Department of Labor Statistics). From this information, it can be assumed the decrease of those in the labor force was more likely a result of changing demographics than unemployment. The decrease in the unemployment rate indicates a healthy local economy.

The largest local private-sector employers in Winthrop are Hannaford Supermarket, Progressive Distributors, MaineGeneral, and Alternative Manufacturing Inc. (AMI); however, more residents work in Augusta (24 percent) followed by 14 percent in Winthrop, 8 percent in Lewiston, and 4 percent in Waterville (Table 3).

The largest employers in the public sector include the school system, with approximately 150 full-time employees, and the Town of Winthrop itself, which has 45 full-time

employees.

Currently, Winthrop does not participate in many regional economic development programs or plans aside from the Winthrop Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce and Kennebec Valley Council of Governments.

KVCOG is a non-profit organization, owned and operated for the benefit of its members. KVCOG provides a coordinated approach for planning and economic development at the local and regional level and has been a leader in economic development for the past 50 years.

Other economic development incentives include the availability of public water and sewer connectivity, three-phase power, and broadband. While expansion would allow accommodation of future growth, there are currently no plans to expand these services.

The abundance of water resources draws a seasonal crowd each year, and the town relies on this seasonal population for an economic boost. Other attractions include open space and outdoor recreation, the downtown area, and the ease of access from the transportation infrastructure.

Issues for Further Study and Discussion:

- ❖ Is there an interest in promoting additional work from home as an economic strategy? If so, what infrastructure investments need to be made?
- ❖ How can the town ensure its small businesses remain vibrant and continue to contribute to the quality of the community?
- ❖ Does the town need to take steps such as seeking grants to improve broadband to increase the ability of local businesses and residential access to the internet?