

Public Facilities and Services

Municipal Services:

The Town of Winthrop, by itself or in collaboration with neighboring towns and other partners, offers comprehensive public facilities and services to residents, workers, and visitors. The following section contains a summary of those services.

The Town Office:

The Winthrop Town Office is the base of operations for general government services. It includes offices for the Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Assessor, Town Manager, General Assistance, Finance Office, Code Enforcement Officer, Planner and Executive Assistant, as well as meeting space for the Town Council and other municipal boards and committees. The Winthrop Public Schools' administrative office is also accessible through the Town Office. The Town Office is open for the normal conduct of business 45 hours a week.



Located at 17 Highland Avenue, the Town Office (pictured) is located within the Winthrop Grade School. The space was renovated and occupied by town staff in 2004. The Town Office has its own entrance and parking and is sufficient to meet the needs of the town for the foreseeable future.

Public Safety:

Winthrop is served by municipal police and fire departments, and a regional communications center and ambulance service. The Winthrop Police Department provides 24/7 police protection to the town, supplemented by mutual aid agreements with the Monmouth Police Department and the Kennebec County Sheriff's Office. The department currently consists of 10 full-time officers and currently (as of mid-2023), shares a police chief with the Town of Monmouth.

The department is housed in the old Town Hall building at 15 Town Hall Lane. That structure was remodeled in 2009 to better accommodate police operations. Given the building's age, additional work may always be necessary. Police equipment replacement is scheduled as part of the town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

In the year ending June 30, 2022, Winthrop Police responded to 4,831 calls, an average of 13 per day. The types of calls include, but are not limited to, domestic disturbances, burglary, theft, mental health crisis, assaults, child abuse, citizen assists, animal complaints, traffic complaints and traffic crashes. Actual crimes totaled 166 with a clearance rate of 38 percent. Clearance rates are a measure of crimes solved by the police. They are calculated by dividing the number of crimes for which a charge is filed by the total number of crimes recorded.

The Winthrop Fire Department is an all-volunteer department consisting of an average of about 25 members. Currently, the Fire Department has no junior members, but it is always recruiting members of all ages. The department responds to fire, smoke, alarms, and accident calls, as well as storm responses to clear roads of trees and power lines, and mutual aid calls with the neighboring towns of Monmouth, Manchester, Readfield, Wayne, Mount Vernon, Augusta, Wales and Fayette. In 2022, the department responded to 227 calls. One of the most important functions of the department is training to keep abreast of modern practices and building standards. Between training and response time, volunteers contribute approximately 5,500 hours of service to the town annually.

The Fire Department moved into its new fire station on Route 202 adjacent to Carleton Mill in 2018. The structure boasts 9,600 square feet plus a 1,500-square-foot mezzanine. It has four large bays for equipment, a locker room for personal protective equipment (PPE), a hose tower with several training features incorporated, and an area for decontaminating gear and equipment after calls. The lobby area stores an antique fire truck, as well as some artifacts and awards. The station also has a large meeting/training room, a commercial kitchen, offices, and a crew area with two bedrooms, a fitness room, and a bathroom with a shower.

The Fire Department currently has five trucks: engines dating from 1999, 2009 and 2021, an aerial truck that was acquired in 2004, a 1995 Kubota utility task vehicle (UTV) equipped with tracks, and a water rescue boat that is being replaced with a larger craft. Personal protective equipment costs an average of \$5,000 per member.

The Winthrop Regional Communications Center, located inside the police station, provides dispatching services to Winthrop, Wayne, Wales, Readfield, Mount Vernon,

Vienna, and Fayette. The Communications Center is staffed by five full-time dispatchers, who are Winthrop Police Department employees. Initial Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) or E911 calls go to the Androscoggin County Communications Center in Auburn and are forwarded to Winthrop's center. In 2022, the center logged over 10,000 calls for police, fire, or ambulance.

Winthrop needs to upgrade its emergency radio infrastructure; this will include upgrades to the school system, Public Works, ambulance services, the Fire Department, the Police Department, and the Communications Center. The upgrade would include a new radio tower and building. The current tower is approximately 70 feet tall and below the tree canopy. Recent analysis recommends a structure of approximately 160 feet tall to rise above the canopy. The immediate need is to purchase the present tower site from Consolidated Communications so the Town can move forward with its emergency communications improvement plan. The project's anticipated cost is upwards of \$1.2 million and would be divided among the towns that would be served by the communications system.

Emergency medical service is provided on a regional basis to Winthrop, Wayne, Mount Vernon, Readfield, Fayette, Manchester, and Monmouth. In the calendar year 2022, the service responded to 2,160 emergency calls for service, roughly 50 percent of which were from Winthrop. Depending on the location and nature of the call, transport may be to any of six hospitals in Augusta, Lewiston, Waterville or Farmington. The ambulance service consists of eight full-time employees (a Chief, a Deputy Chief, three full-time Paramedics, three full-time Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), and 42 part-time EMTs and paramedics.

In 2008, the service moved into its current facility on Old Western Avenue at the former Winthrop Health Center. The building can house all four of the service's ambulances and eight staff members. The building is expected to be adequate for the long term, though the need for improvements is anticipated within the coming 10 years. There are no reserve funds for vehicle or station replacement in the town's Capital Improvement Plan.

The Fire Chief is the Emergency Management Director for the town. The town is up to date with all of its planning and preparation requirements.

Overall, Winthrop's emergency response system is adequate, although needs for future improvement have been identified, such as the \$1.2 million project to improve emergency communications. This cost would cover the entirety of the project.

Public Works:

The Public Works Departments consists of three divisions: streets, waste management, and cemeteries.

The streets division consists of a Public Works Director, a supervisor and six full-time crew members in the winter and five in the summer, with 14 pieces of equipment. They

are responsible for winter maintenance for 57 miles of roadway and summer maintenance of 47 miles of road, and stormwater drainage facilities. Additionally, the Public Works Department cares for 4.7 miles of sidewalk. More detailed information on road conditions and needs is located in the Transportation chapter. The highway garage is located at 36 Main Street. The garage was built in 1988 and is insufficient for current needs; a replacement should be considered in the foreseeable future.

Existing stormwater management facilities are adequately maintained, though improvements could be made in the frequency with which stormwater catch basins are cleaned. The town's existing stormwater management system can sufficiently handle the expected future development in this planning period.

The transfer station is located off of Route 202 and is run by a staff of four. The facility was built in 1989. Waste is transported to the Maine Waste to Energy facility in Auburn. The cost of waste disposal in 2023 is \$83.62 a ton compared to \$77.31 a ton in 2022. The transfer station includes a recycling facility. In the fiscal year 2022-2023, the station processed 2,217.12 tons of household trash, 725.37 tons of demolition material, 33.22 tons of tires, and about 1,000 tons of miscellaneous recyclables. Income from recyclables is about \$60,000 per year. A new scale and a hot top will be needed for the facility in the near future.

Currently, the waste management facilities and recycling operations meet the needs of residents. The availability of the recycling operation serves to reduce the community's reliance on waste disposal. Aside from a new scale and hot top, mentioned above, no improvements are necessary to meet the needs of the future projected population.

Winthrop is responsible for the care of five cemeteries: Glenside, Maple, Lakeview, East Winthrop, and Metcalf. By far the most active cemetery is Glenside. Recent expansion provided enough capacity at Glenside for at least five to 10 years, and additional expansion is feasible. A Cemetery Committee has been formed to help guide the care and maintenance of the town's burial grounds.

Currently, the town does not have a street tree program.

Land Use Planning and Regulation:

Winthrop employs a fully certified, full-time Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) to uphold the town's land use ordinances and Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC). The CEO is staff to the Planning Board, which consists of seven highly motivated, knowledgeable volunteers. The CEO has become increasingly busy with permit applications and code enforcement work in recent years. To assist the CEO, the town recently created the position of Executive Assistant to be shared between the CEO and the Town Manager.

In addition, a need has been identified for an on-staff Town Planner to work with the Planning Board, the CEO and the Town Manager. The town is interviewing for that position, which will also be supported by the Executive Assistant.

The Zoning Ordinance was last updated in 2019, although it will need to be updated at the completion of this plan. Upon updating, the Zoning Ordinance will need to be amended to reflect the requirements of the new affordable housing legislation that came about in 2022 (LD 2003).

Winthrop's Subdivision Ordinance was last updated in 1995 and needs to be reviewed and rewritten, as well.

Municipal Staffing:

The Town of Winthrop employs an able staff of 45 full-time dedicated public servants who provide the community with a range of high-quality services. During the peak summer season, the full-time staff is supplemented by up to 60 part-time employees. Terms of employment for police officers, paramedics and emergency medical technicians, and general employees who are not in supervisory positions are dictated by union contracts.

Despite offering a competitive compensation package, the Town has been plagued by employee turnover that diminishes efficiency and efficacy, creating service and knowledge gaps. Vacancies have at times marred employee morale, which further impacts effectiveness. Improving employees' job satisfaction could yield the continuity of service and knowledge that would best serve the citizens. In addition to providing competitive wages and benefits, opportunities to shore up job satisfaction include instituting job descriptions, annual performance reviews, merit raises, cross-training and succession planning, providing for professional development, and ensuring adequate staffing.

Education:

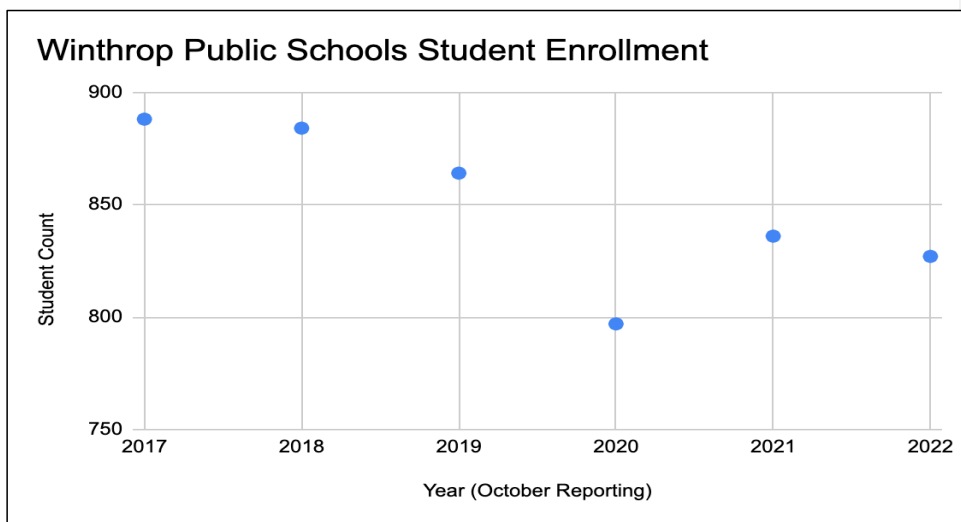
Public education in Winthrop is provided by Winthrop Public Schools (WPS). Facilities include the Winthrop Grade School on Highland Avenue, Winthrop Middle School, and Winthrop High School, which are co-located on the Rambler Road campus at the western edge of downtown. WPS offers students a wide variety of academic and extracurricular opportunities to promote their core values of Respect, Compassion, Integrity, Responsibility and Cooperation. Winthrop Public Schools is commonly acknowledged as one of the top school systems in Maine. The district's new strategic plan focuses on continuous growth to strengthen academics, building relationships, and implementing capital improvements.

In recent years, WPS has made a significant investment in the upkeep and maintenance of its facilities. New roofing, boilers, and lighting were installed in all three buildings. A large focus has been on the grade school, which includes updated handicap accessibility, paving projects, and a new fire suppression system. Currently, construction is underway

on a new turf field, the first step in the development of the Winthrop Athletic Complex, which is being gifted by community donors.

Declining enrollment has been an issue in the past and threatens to increase the costs of education. Student enrollment has steadily declined over the last few years, reaching its lowest during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020). Currently, enrollment hovers around 820 students. Figure 1 below shows declining school enrollment.

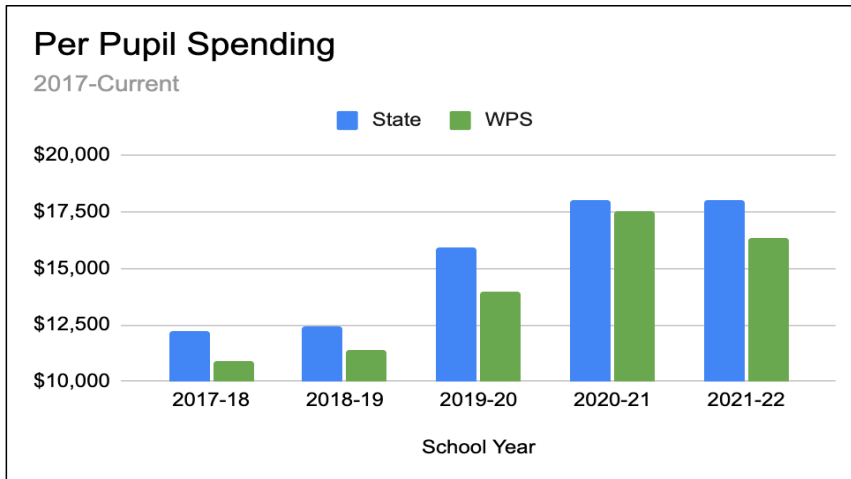
FIGURE 1: PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT: 2017-2022



Source: Winthrop Public Schools

Winthrop Public Schools' per-pupil costs are below average for the area. For the 2021-22 school year, the Winthrop expenditure was the third lowest in Kennebec County at \$13,871.77 per student. This can be compared to RSU 2, which includes Monmouth, at \$16,467.97, and RSU 38, Maranacook, at \$15,345.79. The average per-pupil costs statewide were \$16,248.36. Figure 2 below shows a cost comparison between the state and Winthrop Public Schools, on a per pupil basis.

FIGURE 2: PER PUPIL COST COMPARISON BETWEEN THE STATE AND WINTHROP PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Source: Winthrop Public Schools

Due to declining enrollment over the past five years, no expansion of the existing school buildings is anticipated. Further, several improvement projects are complete or in progress to meet the needs of the current student population.

Winthrop Grade School is in the Village District and the Rambler Road Campus, which houses both Winthrop Middle School and Winthrop High School, are in the Limited Residential District. Both the Village District and the Limited Residential District are designated growth areas, where residential development, as appropriate, would be encouraged.

Leisure Services:

Leisure services in Winthrop consist of the library and recreation facilities.

The Charles M. Bailey Public Library is a lifelong learning center offering diverse resources for people of all ages. The library was originally founded as the Winthrop Public Library in 1889 and became the CM Bailey Public Library in 1916 when famous industrialist Charles M. Bailey donated the rock-faced and chiseled granite building still in use today.



After a successful fundraising campaign started in 2010, a 4,000-square-foot addition was opened to the public in 2015. This was followed by a successful fundraising campaign for a new parking lot, which was opened to the public in 2021. The 2015 addition was designed by Winthrop architect Philip M Locashio.

The library became a free library in 1970 and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. The library is staffed by three full-time librarians: a Director, an Adult Services Librarian, and a Children's Librarian, in addition to six part-time staff members. The library boasts an impressive and up-to-date collection of 30,000 books for all ages, in addition to 10,000 films, and audio materials. The library also has a collection of specialty items to lend, including fishing poles, snowshoes, birdwatching kits, air-quality monitors, and more. A collection of items for a makerspace -- a place where library users can make things and engage in hands-on learning using a wide range of tools for creativity -- is also available for the public to use.

Winthrop's public library adds value in the lives of Winthrop residents by providing collections, programs, and leadership that help to develop the skills needed to succeed in all stages of life, and by creating occasions for the exchange of ideas, cultural experiences, and discovery. The design of Winthrop's public library is for people of all ages and interests, and includes advisory, information, and digital services, but with an eye on new services. The library hopes to introduce at-home delivery, self-checkout, improved digital infrastructure, and enhanced makerspaces in the future. The 2015 renovation supports the values and strategic priorities of the library, and the use of this space for the community should be constantly evaluated, although the library building, and its current offering can easily accommodate the future projected population.

Winthrop's recreation services are provided jointly with the Winthrop YMCA. Most of the community's recreation facilities fall under the heading of "outdoor recreation" and are discussed in the Recreation chapter. Significant facilities include the town beach and

Norcross Point, tennis, pickleball and basketball courts, a skate park, and ballfields below the grade school. Additionally, the old fire house/ambulance building is a possible home for a new teen center for Winthrop. Programs include a summer swim program, sports camps year-round, and arts and crafts. Almost all of the programs and facilities are oriented toward young people, though there are adult tennis and golf tournaments.

Winthrop High School hosts the Winthrop Performing Arts Center, which is expanding its reach beyond traditional education activities. The center has featured shows and concerts aimed at the community at large. The center is still underutilized and has been spoken of in terms of out-of-town use and regional production.

Utilities:

Public water and sewer service is provided to a portion of Winthrop by the Winthrop Utilities District. The district is governed by a three-member Board of Trustees who are appointed by the Town Council and serve three-year terms. The systems roughly parallel each other on Route 202 and the downtown area. A small portion of East Winthrop is served by the Greater Augusta Utility District. The sewer system feeds into the Augusta trunkline on Route 202, carrying waste (including septage) to the Augusta Sanitary Treatment Plant. The trunkline is owned jointly by Winthrop, Monmouth, Augusta, and Manchester. Sewer and water services are profiled as a Community Issue.

The availability of public water supply and sewer systems is a principal factor in growth and development. The availability of public sewer connections enables homebuilders to avoid the state-minimum 20,000-square-foot lot size mandate, permitting greater density of development. All but the smallest and lowest-impact commercial uses demand more water and waste disposal service than can be met through on-site facilities.

Portions of Winthrop are served by both water and sewer service, in roughly concurrent geographic areas, managed by the Winthrop Utilities District (WUD). The water system serves the entire downtown area, up most of Memorial Drive and Annabessacook Road, and Route 202 west of the downtown, consisting of about 1,040 individual customers. The water source is Upper Narrows Pond, and storage consists of a 525,000-gallon storage tank at High Street as well as a 300,000-gallon tank on Metcalf Road.

The sewer system serves the downtown, Memorial Drive, East Winthrop and Route 202, although portions of the lines along the highway are pressurized (as opposed to operating with gravity flow). Pressurized lines, if damaged, can spew substantial amounts of sewage into the environment. So, the Utility District has a longstanding policy prohibiting new hookups to pressurized lines to avoid the possibility of their being damaged. Thus, pressurized lines are inaccessible to new users. The “trunk line” along Route 202 is part of a multi-town system that transports sewage to the Augusta Sanitary Treatment Plant.

The closure of the old mill (formerly Carleton Woolen Mill) on Main Street eliminated the single-largest financial contributor to the system, leaving the lines underutilized and ratepayers bearing larger burdens. Conversely, the mill’s closure has allowed for greater

capacity to serve residences. That said, the district is limited in its ability to expand the service area to acquire new users. The water system charter was amended by local and legislative vote in the early 1970s to prohibit ratepayers from bearing the cost of system expansions. The sewer system, while not operating under the same charter, utilizes the same policy.

That means extensions of sewer (or water) lines must be funded by the town, or through grants or private developers. While this has occurred several times in decades past, it is a random occurrence, not tied into any logical scheme for development in Winthrop's village or growth areas. The ideal situation for directing growth would be to pre-install water and sewer extensions in areas designated by the comprehensive plan for growth.

Neither the water nor the sewer system has significant issues regarding capacity or maintenance. Both are in good order, except for normal aging issues. The water system has one undersized junction at the intersection of Route 133 and Summer Street, which would only present a bottleneck if service were extended up Route 133. The WUD has identified many lines with the capacity to be extended. Among them are:

- West of Route 133, High Street/Charles Street/Birch Street;
- Old Lewiston Road, by way of Cross Road or Mayflower Way;
- Highland Avenue, south of Route 202;
- Route 133 north of the village;
- East of Greenwood Avenue, extending up Metcalf Road or connecting to Greenwood or Pennwood.

Winthrop's plan supports both expansion of growth areas and better utilization of existing growth areas. Extension of water and sewer lines is an excellent way to achieve this objective. The obstacle to doing so is the lack of a funding stream. This obstacle may be overcome through a grant or through earmarked funding by impact fees or a residential district Tax Increment Financing District. New hookups currently pay only the cost of running individual sewer or water lines to their buildings; the developer pays the entire cost of new common facilities. Under an impact fee or TIF, the entire new structure is installed up front, with developers paying only their share on a pro-rated basis, in theory reducing the net development cost.

Commented [JC1]: This is referring to the Future Land Use plan. We don't know yet if the Planning Board thinks the designated growth areas need expansion. If they do, this paragraph is great! If not, we can rework it.

Electric power is distributed in town through Central Maine Power facilities. Winthrop itself has no significant generation capabilities. Three-phase power is generally available in the commercial areas of town and is not an issue. Broadband internet access is easily accessible.

Septic Waste Disposal:

Winthrop is mostly served by private septic systems, in addition to the public sewer connection, as detailed above. When pumping of private septic systems is needed, the town is not involved in the disposal process. When pumping is needed for a private system, it is accomplished through a third-party licensed contractor.

Public Health and General Assistance:

The town's Public Health Officer, who is also Winthrop's Code Enforcement Officer, is responsible for tracking communicable diseases. Through his or her designee, the Town Manager oversees public welfare (General Assistance). There are several public health concerns that have or will present significant issues to Winthrop citizens, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the opioid crisis, brown-tail moths, land and water contamination, climate change, radon threats, and the fire safety of structures.

Recently, the biggest draw from the General Assistance budget has been the establishment of group homes for those recovering from drug addiction. Winthrop's General Assistance funds often go towards paying a portion of rent for those in the group home recovery programs.

Winthrop is home to several medical facilities (more detail on these is provided in the Local Economy chapter) and within a short drive to other services, including social services programs, larger, regional health care facilities and doctors in Lewiston and Augusta. While many of the residents' health care needs can be met in the immediate area, for health care needs that are not available in Winthrop, additional health care facilities are within a short distance.

Fiscal Management:

A significant element of the public services picture is the ability of the town to finance and maintain its services. Town governments are faced with multiple challenges: ordinary population growth, sprawling new patterns of development, new technology and mandates from state and federal government, and more sophisticated demands from residents for leisure services, protection, education, and more. Coupled with a heavy reliance on property taxes, fiscal management is key to delivery of all other services. Local property values were last assessed in 2007. The market has changed dramatically since then, particularly on the lakefront and after the COVID pandemic struck in 2019; out-of-staters flocked to Maine, seeking refuge from both the pandemic and urban lifestyles. In mid-2023, the Town Council began exploring the possibility of a revaluation, as the town's minimum assessment ratio turned downward to the 70 percent required by state law.

Comprehensive plans are not intended to dictate day-to-day financial decisions of local government. They are intended to identify long-term trends and needs resulting from growth and development. These needs are usually resolved by new or expanded capital facilities or an increased range of public services. These needs must be balanced with the capacity of a town to fund them.

Winthrop, despite being a service center, is primarily a residential town in terms of taxable property. Of the \$705,670,900 in taxable valuation in town in 2023, 80 percent of it comes from residential property. Nine percent comes from commercial property, with the

remainder coming from industrial property, exemptions and personal property. Tax-exempt property is relatively minor. The two summer camps (YMCA and Methodist), the American Legion Hall and post offices are the most significant examples of tax-exempt entities. Another modification to valuation is one tax increment financing (TIF) district for historic building renovation, approximating \$45,000 per year. Tax revenue, including excise taxes, equated to \$13.8 million in 2022, approximately 80 percent of overall revenues.

Total revenues for 2022 equaled \$17.3 million, and include licenses and permits (\$197,376), intergovernmental revenue (\$2 million), and charges for services (\$1.3 million) as contributors. The \$17.3 million revenue total is up about 19% from \$14.5 million in 2019. The property tax component is up by only \$155,000 (2 percent) since 2019. Overall total taxable value has increased by \$6 million (1 percent) during that time.

As illustrated in Table 1, municipal expenditures track fairly closely with revenues. Public education costs account for nearly 50 percent of total expenditure.

TABLE 1: REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE HISTORY, 2019-2022

	Cultural & Recreation	360,862	391,482	392,772	445,951
	Public assistance	20,848	31,256	27,433	7,619
	Intergovt. assessment	725,834	736,749	807,889	801,969
	Unclassified	-	5,000	10,000	-
	Capital purchase transfer	223,611	537,800	-	68,472
	Debt service	457,333	880,610	715,165	1,137,743
		7,092,149	7,946,089	7,532,329	8,405,688
Other financing sources (uses)		2019	2020	2021	2022
	Transfer from other fund	9,986	18,074	75,000	307,993
	Transfer to school ops	(6,579,352)	(7,753,931)	(7,053,706)	(7,043,681)
	Transfer to other funds	(233,384)	(469,710)	(1,127,103)	(1,160,993)
		(6,802,750)	(8,205,567)	(8,105,809)	(7,896,681)
	Net change in fund balance	621,554	(213,300)	882,525	1,007,866

Source: Town of Winthrop

Winthrop has stayed within its LD1 limits three out of the past six years. LD1 is a state law that attempts to limit the growth of town budgets by requiring a vote if the property tax levy limit, which is determined by the LD1 formula, is exceeded. LD1 Limits on Municipal Commitment are shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: WINTHROP'S LD 1 LIMITS

LD 1 Limits: 2017 - 2022	
2017	\$3,067,992
2018	\$4,515,433
2019	\$4,447,201
2020	\$4,377,028
2021	\$4,032,893
2022	\$5,082,273

Source: Town of Winthrop

The principal threat to a stable budget is the one-time, large ticket expenditure, such as new buildings or equipment. In Winthrop, capital investments are funded through a combination of appropriations, reserve funds, grants, lease programs, and bonding. A Capital Improvements Plan is adopted by the Council annually. Table 3 contains the most recent edition of the plan.

The extent to which investment in facility improvements is directed to growth areas is proportional. Most capital infrastructure is in roads, which are throughout town. Primary public buildings, such as the town office, the library, fire department, Norcross Point, and schools are all within or adjacent to the designated growth area.

Funding for the CIP comes from a variety of sources. Some capital improvements come from appropriations, most notably the \$500,000 dedicated annually to paving. Such improvements are possible because the CIP anticipates and staggers these needs. The Town Council and town manager plan to resurrect reserve funds that were previously in place for items such as highway equipment, fire trucks, and transfer station equipment. Bonding is used when necessary; the most recent bond was in 2017 -- \$1.8 million for a fire station. Long-term debt is at 0.44 percent of state valuation, including school debt -- well below the 15 percent legal cap.

The Winthrop Utilities District also maintains a 20-year capital improvement plan (CIP) which identifies aging infrastructure for replacement or expansion. The Utility District's CIP is updated annually and financed through user fees.

In addition to long-range planning, the town is active in seeking ways to reduce capital expenditures by further regionalizing services. The town's dispatch center and ambulance service are shared by multiple towns. The town shares a street sweeper and a police chief with Monmouth. The Winthrop Utilities District is also active in regional cost-sharing.

The district provides operations services by contract with Monmouth and Readfield and is experimenting with providing sewer cleaning service to Manchester.