

Economy

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

Conditions & Trends

Windham's Economy – A Brief History

The economy of early Windham was focused around the Presumpscot River. The River was a means of transporting goods, including floating King's Pines down to Falmouth, and a source of power for the first saw mills and woolen mills in the settlement of New Marblehead, which later became the Town of Windham. The first settlement in what is now Windham was located along River Road near Anderson Road at the southern end of Town.

The Presumpscot remained the single biggest driver of the local economy through the 1800s. South Windham Village in Windham and Little Falls village in Gorham grew up around the mills located there. Further up the River, the [Oriental Powder Mill](#) located at Gambo Falls in the Newhall area was a major employer in the community for most of that century. Popeville grew up around the mills on the Pleasant River, in the vicinity of Gray Road (Route 202) and Pope Road.

The first half of the 1900s saw both the decline of Windham's large industrial employers along with the rise of the roads as the predominant transportation mode for shipping goods over long distances. Trucks began to replace rail, just as rail had replaced reliance on the [Cumberland & Oxford Canal](#) as a means of transporting goods to markets in Portland and beyond.

By the end of the 1900s, Windham's economic center had moved from South Windham Village to the crossroads of US Route 302 and State Routes 115/35 in North Windham. This new economic center was built around the mobility provided by the automobile.

Windham's Economy Today

Windham's Role in the Regional Economy

North Windham plays a significant role in the Greater Portland area's economy as a regional retail center. It is the largest retail center between Portland and Conway, New Hampshire and draws customers from a wide geographic area. North Windham offers convenience shopping, but also the kind of comparison shopping that few communities in our region provide, such as automobile/recreational vehicle sales and home building supplies. The Windham Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) commissioned a retail study in 2012. ~~The Figure 1 below is the~~ "Primary Retail Trade Area Map" ~~below is~~ from that study.

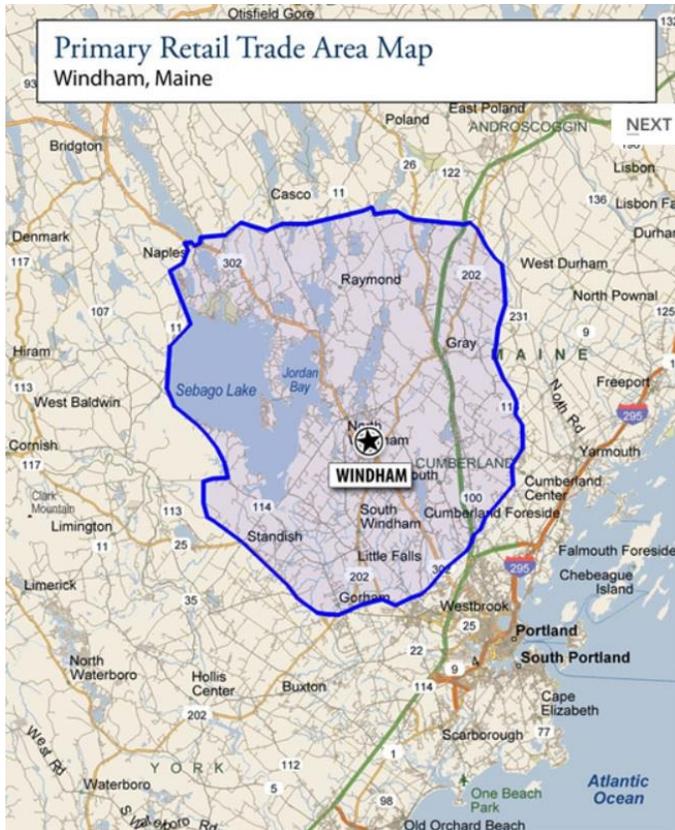


Figure 1 - Retail Trade Area Map from Retail Study, 2012

The Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG-) has been involved in a multi-year regional planning project called Sustain Southern Maine (SSM). One of the first tasks of the SSM project was to identify “Centers of Opportunity,” which are existing commercial or mixed used activity centers that were classified by the types of businesses they contain, and the areas that these centers serve. Though no centers in Windham were among the subset of those identified for further study and technical assistance, this effort did map centers in the Town. A complete map of centers identified, along with a closer view of the centers identified in Windham appear below. The “Centers of Opportunity: Typology” report, dated December 2013, can be [found here. \(fix link\)](#).

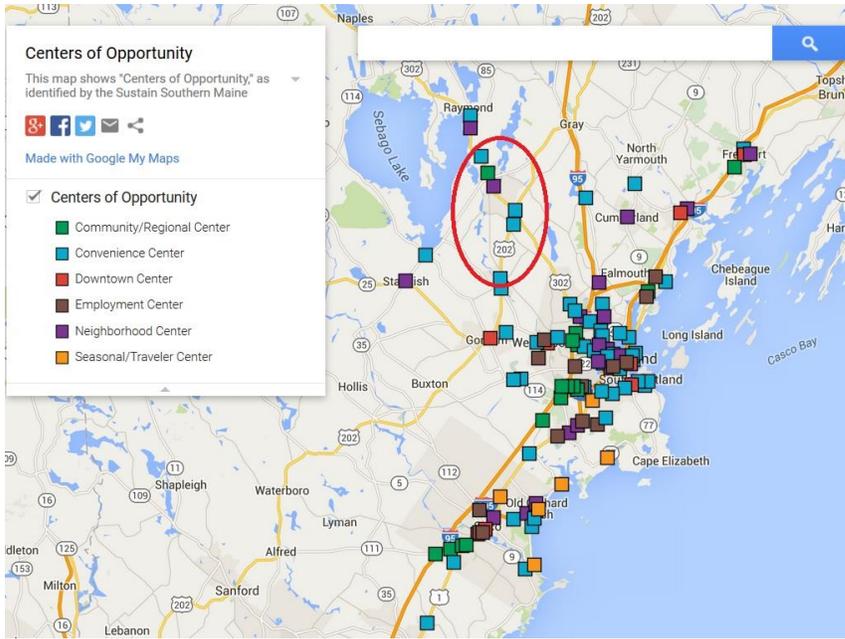


Figure 2 - Regional "Centers of Opportunity," Sustain Southern Maine. Windham "centers" circled in red.

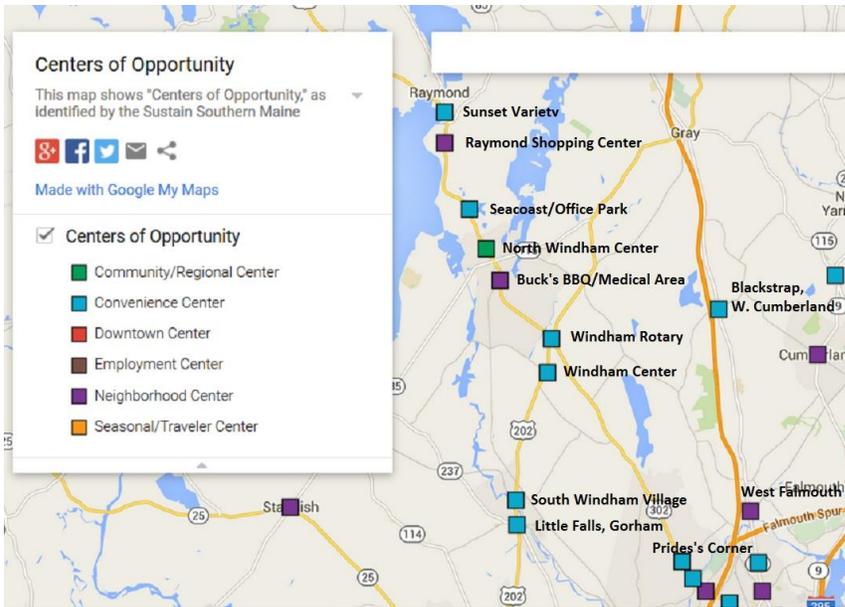


Figure 3 - Windham & other "Centers of Opportunity," Sustain Southern Maine

Workforce

As might be expected, labor data estimates from different sources and from different dates vary slightly. Source data is noted for all the numbers below in order to put these discrepancies in context.

Employment

The American Community Survey (2006-2010) from the U.S. Census bureau estimated the employed population at 8,660 in 2010, compared to 8,009 in 2000. This represents an increase of 8%, compared to an increase in the overall population for the same time period of 14%. As noted in the Population & Demographics chapter, this is a reflection of the higher numbers of school age children and those over retirement age in the community.

Figure 3 shows Windham's unemployment rate almost exactly mirrors the County rate (about 6%), and both are consistently and notably lower than the state (about 8%) and the nation (about 9%). This information comes from the Maine Labor Department, and is included in the state data set provided to communities for comprehensive planning purposes.

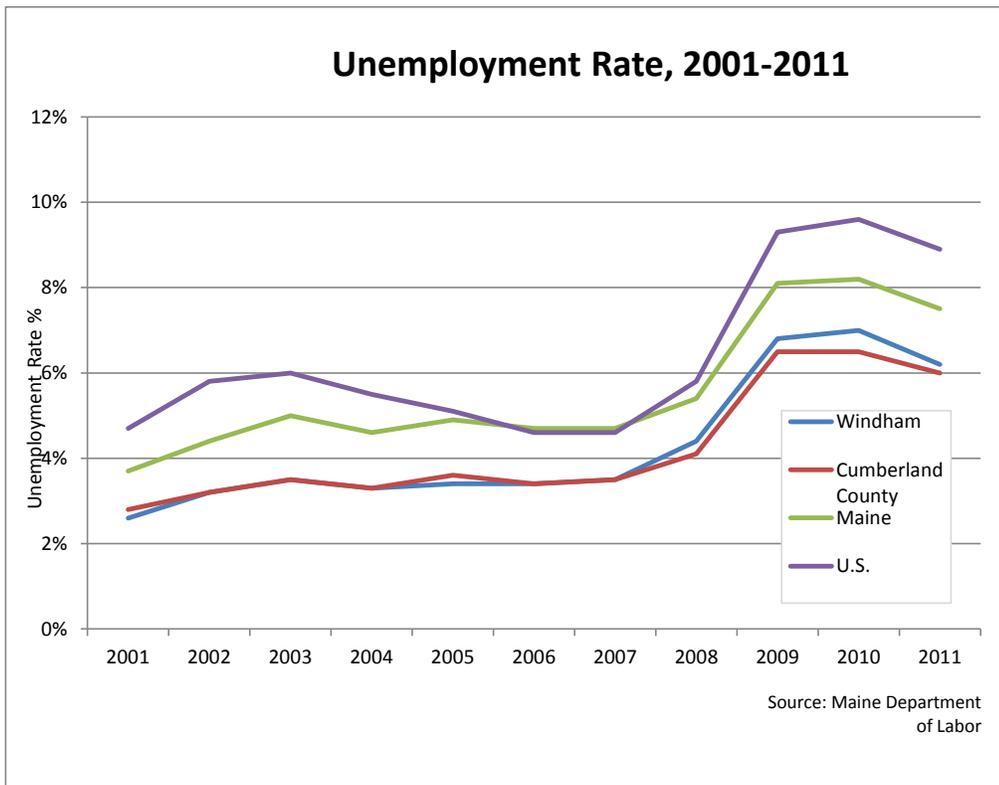


Figure 3 - Unemployment Rate

Jobs

The Maine Department of Labor estimates the number of jobs in Windham decreased slightly from about 5,162 jobs in 2001, to there were 5,111 jobs in Windham in 2011. This compares with about 6,162 jobs in 2001. This represents a slight decrease in the number of jobs in Windham over that time period. Figure 43, below, was provided by the state data pack for Windham for comprehensive planning purposes. It shows changes in job growth from 2001-2011, which is the change in growth from one year to the next. Any point above zero is growth, any point below zero is decline, and zero means that the job numbers did not change from one year to the next. The numbers are show this modest decrease for the Town, are flat for the state, along with modest overall increases for Cumberland County, New England overall, and the nation. Note tTwo interesting points-items are shown in Figure 43; first, the variability in the Windham line, likely because it is the smallest scale of data shown on the graph, and second, that at all levels the sharp decline in the job growth rate between 2008 and 2009 was followed by an almost equally dramatic “bounce” in the growth rate between 2009 and 2010 and positive growth in 2011. This shows a decline, and then holding at that level, as again this chart shows change from one year to the next, and positive growth in 2011, except in Windham, which saw more continued to see job losses in 2010 and 2011.

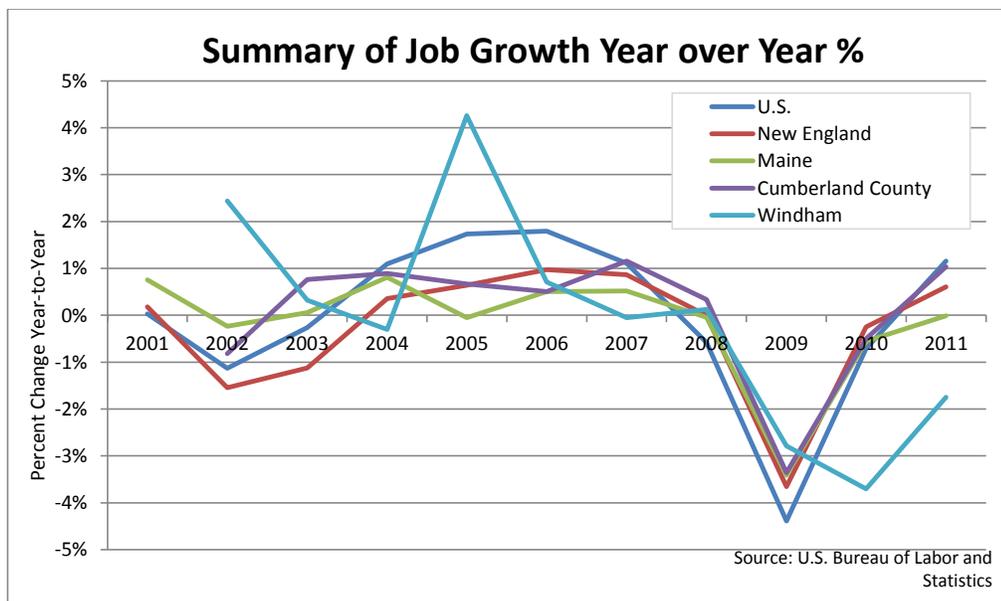


Figure 4 - Job Growth

This chart seems to tell a very different tale from Figure 3 on the preceding page. A relatively low unemployment rate combined with a growing workforce seems to fly in the face of relatively flat job growth. This interesting dichotomy can be explained by a relatively mobile population and growing number of job-commuters.

Employment Distribution

The American Community Survey (2006-~~2000~~2010) from the U.S. Census bureau estimated the employed population at 8,660 in 2010. This is close to the 8,380 estimate used in the Journey to Work data noted in the Population & Demographics Chapter of this Plan. In that chapter, it was noted that about 1,940 Windham workers work in the Town of Windham out of a total of 5,202 jobs, which leaves the Town to deduce that 3,262 Windham jobs are filled by workers from other communities. The table below is ~~synthesized~~ synthesized from data used by GPCOG and the Regional Transit Providers (RTP) in a report of the Lakes Region Bus, so the “jobs filled by...” column is only broken down by municipalities served by the Lakes Region bus, but the numbers are still informative.

Table 1 - Workforce Distribution

Windham residents work in...		Windham jobs are filled by people from...	
Portland	2,615	Windham	1,940
Windham	1,940	Raymond	370
South Portland	755	Casco	300
Westbrook	630	Naples	155
Scarborough	330	Westbrook	145
Falmouth	290	Portland	150
Gorham	290		
Other places	1,810	Other places	2,142
Total employed	8,660	Total jobs	5,202

Major employers and industries

Windham does not have a single large dominating employer, like a mill or shipyard. Rather, the jobs landscape is made up of many small and medium sized employers. The following table shows Windham employers with over ~~100-50~~ employees in 2012. *(Based on the quality of this data, I recommend keeping this to the largest employers – over 100 employees.)*

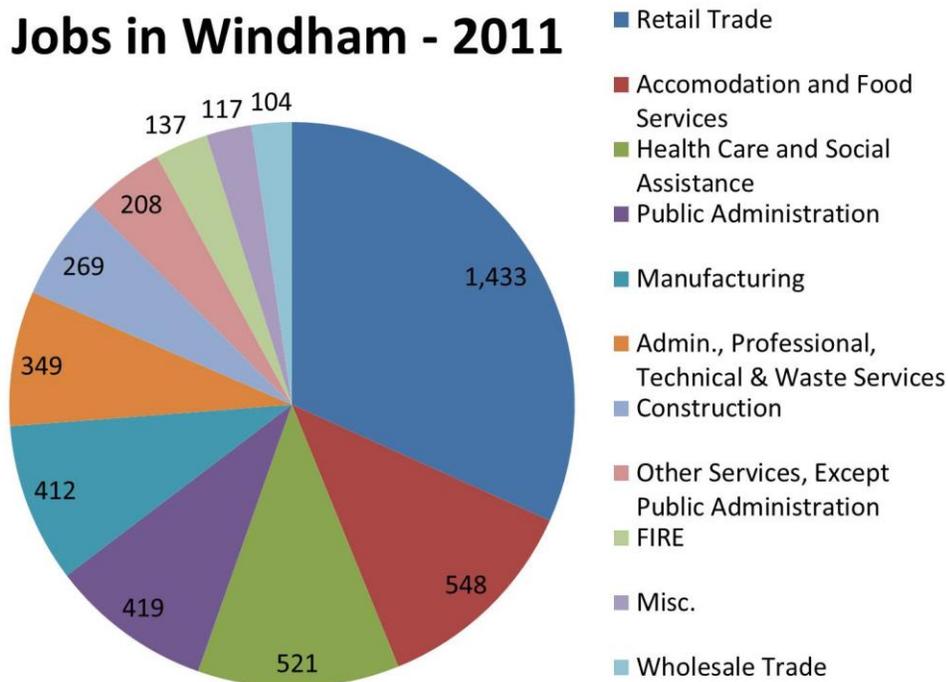
Employers in Windham with Over 20 Employees (2012)		
Company Name	Employer Size	Industry
Hannaford Supermarket and Pharmacy	100-249	Retail
Home Depot	100-249	Retail
Ledgewood Manor Inc.	100-249	Health Care
Lowe's Home Improvement	100-249	Retail
Maine Correctional Center	100-249	Public
Maine Standards Co.	100-249	Manufacturing
Shaw's Supermarket	100-249	Retail
Walmart Supercenter	100-249	Retail
Windham Fire Department-Department-Public Safety	100-249	Public
Windham High School	100-249	Public
Windham Middle School	100-249	Public
Windham Primary School	100-249	Public
Hancock Lumber	50-99	

Manchester Elementary School	50-99		
McDonald's	50-99		
Mercy Windham Family Practice	50-99		
Mullen's Driving School	50-99		
New Gloucester Police Department	50-99		
Suburban Security Inc.	50-99		
Windham Adult Education	50-99		
Windham Millwork Inc.	50-99		
Windham Millwork Inc.	50-99		

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In Windham, the single largest sector of the economy by employment is the retail sector (28% of all Windham jobs). This sector employs almost three times as many people as the next leading major sector of the economy in Windham. The other major sectors in Windham are Accommodation & Food Services, Health Care & Social Assistance, Public Administration and Manufacturing round out the top five sectors (10.7%, 10.2%, 8.2% and 8.1% respectively). Again, these are 2011 numbers attributable to the Maine Department of Labor. The chart below shows the size of each sector in Windham.

Jobs in Windham - 2011



Between 2001 and 2011, there were several shifts of note within the number of jobs in Windham, especially when compared to the overall job mix in Cumberland County. These can be sorted into the good news and the bad news.

- **Bad News**
 - Construction jobs. 375 in 2001 to 269 in 2011, down 28.3%.
 - The County was down only 11% in the same period.
 - Analysis: Recently, we experienced a significant slowdown in new commercial and residential construction (the last 3 years of the time period). However, this time period also includes many very active building years (the first two thirds of the time period). It remains to be seen if these jobs return to Windham or elsewhere in the region as construction activity continues to increase.
 - Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing jobs. 21 in 2001 to 14 in 2011, down 33.3%.
 - The County was up 37% in the same period.
 - Analysis: These are very small numbers, and some members of the community have questioned them based on local knowledge. However, it does seem that Windham has not seen an increase in the number of people involved with farming or forestry despite the growing demand for local food products and general move away from fossil-based heating sources.
- **Good News**
 - Retail jobs. 1,379 in 2001 to 1,433 in 2011, up 3.9%.
 - The County was down 12% in the same period.
 - Analysis: Even though this is a modest increase in local retail employment, it has occurred in the face of drop of retail jobs County-wide. This reinforces the view as a strong, growing retail center for the region.
 - Manufacturing jobs. 256 in 2001 to 412 in 2011, up 60.9%.
 - The County was down 31.5% in the same time period.
 - Analysis: Most encouraging, and perhaps most surprising among all the data related to changes in employment mix, is the increase in manufacturing jobs, especially given the drop County-wide. More should be done to understand this trend and encourage further development.

Current Planning Efforts and Initiatives

Based on the community survey conducted in October 2014, and based on the visioning work at the start of the planning process for this plan update, it is clear that Windham residents want to increase the number of jobs available in Windham, and increase the diversity of jobs available in Windham. The planning document produced by the WEDC is focused on these two major goals.

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WEDC Plan

In 2013, the Town Council adopted the “Economic Development Strategic Plan,” developed by the WEDC. This plan can be accessed by clicking [here](#) (fix link). The vision for this plan is “to create a business friendly environment that provides a high-quality of life, a vibrant economy, and a welcoming atmosphere, while protecting our town’s rural characteristics and natural resources.” In order to achieve this vision, the plan is focused on the implementation of four objectives:

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- Plan for the Future – implementation of policies and programs to support economic growth
- Support Business Growth and Prosperity – business recruitment, promotion and marketing efforts
- Create and Maintain an Efficient Review and Approval Process – simplify, streamline permitting processes and guide new businesses through this process.
- Develop a Support System for Economic Development – develop advocacy, partnerships and funding capacities.

The WEDC organized itself into sub-committees focused on the implementation of each of these areas: Planning, Business Growth, Review and Approval Process, and Community Engagement. Each has worked with municipal, community and other partners to complete priority strategies for each objective. The WEDC is currently in the process of evaluating progress on the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Tax Increment Financing

Windham has used Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts for many years, as a way to dedicate ~~toward funds for~~ expenses related to economic development. TIF districts are established by the Town Council, ~~and capture the additional value and when the of~~ property ~~that~~ is developed ~~within a TIF district,~~ ~~the amount of~~ additional taxes based on the increase in ~~property~~ value from when the district was established to the ~~current-new~~ taxable value (the tax increment) are dedicated to a segregated fund that is separate from the Town’s general fund. These TIF funds can be used for a variety of specific uses per state statute, but they must be related to capital improvements or other expenses that are meant to increase economic activity in the community.

The Town of Windham has four TIF districts, shown on Figure 5, below.

- ~~The~~ The New Marblehead Credit Enhancement Agreement is an affordable housing TIF, which encourages and supports the development of affordable housing.
- ~~The~~ The Roosevelt Promenade TIF captures the value associated with the development of the Home Depot, Lowes, and Goodwill store properties.
- ~~The~~ The Pipeline TIF applies to the oil pipeline right-of-way that extends from the Raymond town line all the way to the Westbrook town line.
- ~~The~~ The Gateway North TIF applies to a dozen properties along Route 302 in the vicinity of the Anglers Road/Whites Bridge Road intersection and Enterprise Drive intersections. These properties include the Microtel Suites hotel, Seacoast Adventure Park, and the WEDC’s property at Anglers Road.

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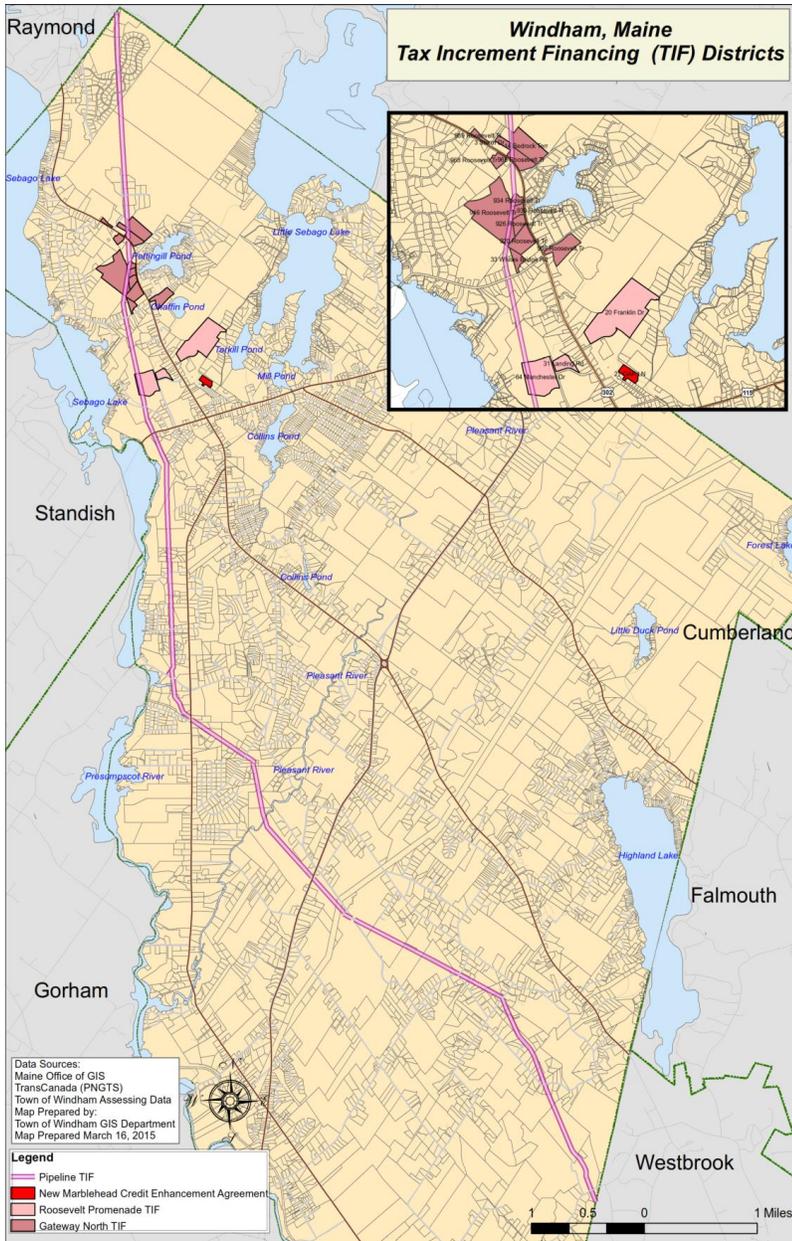


Figure 5 - TIF District Map

Analysis

Changes in the Windham Economy

The economy of Windham is not experiencing the kind of radical change associated with the loss of a major employer, as many Maine towns have had to deal with over the years. The loss of a mill or military base can shift the ground under a community's feet. However, even with no radical changes, the economic landscape in Windham is continuing to change~~ing in Windham~~.

Since at least the turn of the 21st century, the number of jobs in Windham has not kept pace with the number of people moving to Town. Many of the people who live in Windham work in the large job centers of Greater Portland. Indeed, as noted above, eight of the twelve largest employers in Windham are building supply stores, grocery stores and the public schools. The idea-vision of Windham as a large bedroom community for Portland held by some residents is not a completely accurate view of the Town, but that conception fits in many ways.

As the amount of residential development continues to outpace the amount of commercial development, the overall difference in value between residential and commercial/non-residential development will continue to expand, resulting in a~~the~~ higher ~~the~~ burden will be on individual residential property owners to pay for additional services or expansion of existing municipal and school services. As the number of Windham residents who work in Portland, South Portland, Scarborough and Falmouth increases, the challenge of maintaining mobility on the major roads that connect to the job centers in the region will need to be addressed. This includes Route 302, as well as River Road and Falmouth Road.

Description of Commercial Development Areas

Earlier in the chapter, the work of the Sustain Southern Maine (SSM) project to categorize existing commercial and mixed use areas in Greater Portland identified six "activity areas" in Windham. These are described below. The SSM typography, or categorization of these activity areas are based on the types and sizes of businesses and the market areas they serve. The hierarchy of these categories, from smallest to largest is listed below. For more information on these centers, and other types of centers not currently found in Windham, please refer to the [Center of Opportunities: Typography Report by clicking here](#) (fix link).

- Community Center
 - Not every town in Greater Portland has this type of large center.
 - Anchored by grocery store/supermarket and goods and services that people will travel to or involve comparison shopping. These centers have "gravity" and draw people from larger areas, especially in rural or suburban settings.
 - Characterized by additional uses like "big box" stores, offices and a wide variety of services such as medical and banking, clothing, automobiles and appliances.
 - Generally serves a primary trade area of 30,000 to 40,000 people.
- Neighborhood Center
 - Anchored by grocery store, with greater mix of retail and day-to-day items.

- Characterized by additional uses like banking, fast food, small restaurants and coffee shops, small businesses and services, professional offices. Routine goods and services many people want close by.
- Generally serves a primary trade area of 12,000 to 25,000.
- Convenience Center
 - Most common. Every community has one, Windham has several.
 - Located conveniently along busy roads or at key intersections.
 - Characterized by uses like gas stations, take-out food, ~~single and single~~ grocery item ~~shoppings~~.
 - Generally serves a primary trade area of 3,000 to 5,000 people
- ~~Neighborhood Center~~
 - ~~Anchored by grocery store, with greater mix of retail and day to day items.~~
 - ~~Characterized by additional uses like banking, fast food, small restaurants and coffee shops, small businesses and services, professional offices. Routine goods and services many people want close by.~~
 - ~~Generally serves a primary trade area of 12,000 to 25,000.~~
- ~~Community Center~~
 - ~~Not every town in Greater Portland has this type of large center.~~
 - ~~Anchored by grocery store/supermarket and goods and services that people will travel to or involve comparison shopping. These centers have “gravity” and draw people from larger areas, especially in rural or suburban settings.~~
 - ~~Characterized by additional uses like “big box” stores, offices and a wide variety of services such as medical and banking, clothing, automobiles and appliances.~~
 - ~~Generally serves a primary trade area of 30,000 to 40,000 people.~~

The activity centers identified by SSM are listed below, and this Plan recognizes the value of comparing commercial activity centers based on the mix and intensity of uses and service areas, but does not use the labels in the SSM report.

North Windham

Regional Retail Center, Local Services, Mix of National and Regional/Local Restaurants

When people from outside our community think of Windham, whether they are from surrounding towns or from out of state, they think of North Windham. For many people around the state and throughout the Northeast, North Windham is the only impression of Windham people have. North Windham was identified as a Community Center in the SSM report.

Windham’s regionally strong retail sector is centered in North Windham. Shopping options range from small specialty shops for clothing and jewelry, to “big box” style general merchandise stores, discount department stores, to large specialty retailers for automobile parts, office supplies, and two large national pharmacies.

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North Windham hosts almost all of the dining options in Town outside of several notable ~~pizza and convenience~~ food options in other parts of the community. National and regional fast food chains are augmented by great local options such as Rustler's Steakhouse, Gilbert's Chowder House, Bob's Seafood, Masa Grill and many others.

Banking services are concentrated in North Windham, as are professional offices and personal services.

River Road/Turning Leaf Drive

This activity center on Route 302 ~~is~~ just to the south of the North Windham activity center described above. It was classified differently and considered separately from North Windham based on the lower intensity of uses. Even though there are banks, medical offices, more great local restaurants, and automobile and repair services found here, there are no "big boxes" in this area, and it has a different feel than the rest of North Windham. The difference in character between these two areas was noted and acknowledged in the 21st Century Downtown Plan for North Windham, where this lower-intensity commercial area was identified as a gateway into North Windham. This area was identified as a Neighborhood Center in the SSM report.

Enterprise Drive

This section of Route 302 is just north of the North Windham activity center. Similar to the River Road/Turning Leaf activity center above, it is still in what many consider "North Windham" but might be considered a separate center based on the scale and types of uses. This center ~~is the northern gateway to the more intensely developed North Windham center, and is the area around in the vicinity of~~ Seacoast Adventure Park, the adjacent office condominium development, and the commercial condominium projects on the corner of Enterprise Drive and directly across from Enterprise Drive on Crimson Drive.

In early 2015, the Town's first hotel in a branded chain opened its doors. The Microtel Suites by Wyndam Hotels opened in North Windham, between the intersections of Anglers Road/Whites Bridge Road and Enterprise Drive, across Route 302 from Seacoast Park.

This area was called out in the SSM effort as a Convenience Center. With the new hotel, relatively new development on Crimson Drive and with future development potential on the hotel site and within the Quarry Ridge Business Park on Enterprise Drive, this area could soon be, if not already be considered a Neighborhood Center that has more "gravity" (draws customers from a larger area) than a Convenience Center.

Route 302 Rotary

This area is located primarily on Route 302 on either side of the Route 302/Route 202 rotary close to the geographic center of Windham. Mercy Quick Care and Hancock Lumber are located in this vicinity, as well as Windham Automotive, Seavey's Appliance, Hall Implement, Lee's Family Trailer, Pyro City Fireworks and other convenience retail and food services. This activity area was classified as a Convenience Center by SSM.

Windham Center

Located at the crossroads of Windham Center Road and Gray Road (Route 202), Windham Center is one of the original activity centers in Windham. Convenience food and grocery needs are served at Corsetti's, known for its pizza and breakfast sandwiches, as well as serving as a social crossroads during the busy morning times. Corsetti's benefits from the vehicle and foot traffic associated with the RSU School Campus and Town Office building nearby. For the purposes of this classification, the Windham Center activity area could also include the Windham Hill area near the crossroads of Windham Center Road and Pope Road, as well as the Popeville area at the crossroads of Pope Road and Gray Road. This activity area was classified as a Convenience Center by SSM.

South Windham

South Windham has a long history as a commercial and residential area in Windham. South Windham Village could be considered the traditional "downtown" for Windham, but from an economic activity standpoint, the Village has not rebounded since the closure of the Keddy Mill. SSM classified this Convenience Center around the Blue Seal store. For the purposes of this analysis, this Convenience Center could include the areas of South Windham Village along with the convenience shopping provided by Ruggerio's at the River Road and Gray Road and Thayer's Store on River Road and Newhall Road. It would also include the Dolby Funeral Home area, the Post Office on Gray Road, and the soccer field facility at Gambo Road.

The Home Occupations and Rural Economy and Home-based Occupations

Not all economic activities are in the "commercial" activity areas noted above. By definition, the rural economy does not take place in a center. Commercial activities that depend directly on the land, such as farming, forestry, and mineral extraction are the main types of businesses associated with a rural economy. The first two of these are discussed in greater detail in the Agriculture and Forestry Chapter.

Mineral extraction businesses fall into two categories in Windham – pits and quarries. Pits are sites where sand and gravel are extracted and processed, while quarries involve the extraction and processing of stone. Because of the difference in materials, blasting is not usually required at pits and usually is required at quarries.

There are fourteen gravel and sand pits in Windham of various sizes at locations throughout Town. There are two quarries, the Busque Quarry, owned by Shaw Brothers Construction, at the corner of Nash Road and Roosevelt Trail, and the Windham Quarry and Pit owned by RJ Grondin & Sons at the end of Enterprise Drive in North Windham.

Home Occupations play a significant role in Windham's economy. Home-based businesses can be services such as child care operations, personal services like hairdressers and barbers, or small engine repair shops. Home occupations also serve as new business incubators, where a home or garage is used on as cheap start-up business space.

Though not strictly a home based business as defined by the land use ordinance, there are many people in Windham who work remotely for employers based in other places. These employees might work from home for a few days a week and go into an office in Portland or Boston the other days, or their

home may be a satellite office for a company further away. Improvements in telecommunications and internet speeds make this type of work arrangement more common as time goes by. It is difficult to quantify the number of workers that use a home in Windham as a base for telecommuting, as the state and national level statistics are not currently geared to pick up these workers.

~~This section will discuss:~~

- ~~● the Rural Economy
 - ~~○ generally, not to the extent of the Agriculture & Forestry Chapter~~
 - ~~○ WEDCs goals to support and grow this part of the economy.~~~~
- ~~● home based occupations in otherwise residential or rural areas
 - ~~○ what role will these activities play in Town today?~~
 - ~~○ What place is there for home occupations in the future? Any changes anticipated in how or where?~~~~

Infrastructure needs

~~Most of the discussion in this plan regarding infrastructure will occur in other chapters. For example, roads will be addressed in Transportation and water, sewer, gas and 3-phase power will be addressed in the Utilities chapter.~~

It is worth noting here where there are infrastructure deficits that need needed to be addressed in order to meet community and economic development goals.

Sewer

All of the residential and commercial development in North Windham is served by private subsurface wastewater systems (septic systems). To be sure, the larger users and systems that handle grease and other restaurant waste are more sophisticated engineered systems compared to the types of systems used in single family homes. However, the exclusive use of these systems in North Windham presents issues from several standpoints.

- Space required for development. Requiring every commercial development to find space on their own property to locate a septic field means that developers must purchase more land for a given use that would be required if the development were served by some type of sewer system.
- Limitations of types of commercial development. Certain types of commercial uses require a lot of water, like certain manufacturing uses and brewing. The rule of thumb when thinking about wastewater is “water in = water out” meaning that in general, big water users require big septic systems. Very large water users find a lack of sewer infrastructure a critical limitation when making decisions on where to locate or expand, even if public water is available.
- Inability to meet community development goals on conventional septic systems. Some of the main goals from the 21st Century Plan and the Economic Development Strategic Plan deal with increasing the number and diversity of jobs in North Windham. In addition, the 21st Century

Plan calls for increasing the number of residents in North Windham. These goals focusing increased density and diversity of uses in North Windham to create a strong sense of place where people choose to spend time, spend money, and find community will be difficult to fully realize or the reasons noted above.

- Aquifer/groundwater considerations. The Town has been monitoring nitrate levels in the groundwater for years. The presence of nitrates in groundwater is associated with septic systems. The level of nitrates in North Windham groundwater has been increasing over time, even accounting for seasonal variations in the levels of nitrates detected based on groundwater levels. In general the higher the groundwater level, the more water is in the ground, and the concentration of nitrates and other measurable pollutants (salt, suspended solids, organics, etc.) is lower based on dilution. In dryer times of the year, the lower the groundwater levels and the higher the concentrations of nitrates in the ground.

Broadband Internet

Certain types of businesses and telecommuters require internet speeds that are currently not generally available in Windham. The WEDC is spearheading an effort with St. Joseph's College and the Towns of Raymond and Standish to connect to the high-speed fiber optic infrastructure that was installed around the state with federal stimulus funds as part of a plan to bring high-speed internet (1 gigabyte +) to rural Maine. This system is known as the "3-ring binder" network, and the closest point to this fiber "backbone" is in Standish at the intersection of Routes 35 and 114. It remains to be seen exactly how and on what timeline access to this infrastructure will be provided to North Windham or the Town more generally, but a 21st century economy needs a 21st century infrastructure. Access to this high-speed network will be important to expanding the options for Windham businesses in the future.

Uniquely Windham

What are Windham's unique assets such as recreational opportunities, historic architecture, civic events, etc. for economic growth?

Windham hosts two unique events that serve to build community and attract people to the region. Either of these events could be used as vehicles for additional future economic growth.

Windham Summerfest is a daylong celebration of community and fun that takes place on the school campus property on a Saturday each June. This event includes a parade, a car show, events for children, music, carnival rides and fireworks. The event is also a fundraising opportunity for community groups that run food booths through the day. Historically, this event served as a homecoming day of sorts and has been focused on providing an opportunity for community building, renewing community spirit and socializing for Windham residents.

Until 2013, this event was planned by Windham Parks and Recreation staff, with the support of a volunteer board of community members. In 2014, this Summerfest became an all-volunteer effort.

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The Sebago Lake Rotary Ice Fishing Derby is held each February. The event is organized by the Sebago Rotary Club. This event brings people from around the state and New England to the Sebago Lake area for a weekend of fishing competition.

One way to potentially build on that event would be to hold an organized complimentary event in Windham, such as a “Taste of Windham” event that weekend, or a Windham Winterfest on days leading up to or following the fishing events. Events like these could serve as an attraction to those competing (or their families!) to bring people to Windham on the weekend itself, or encourage visitors to extend their time in the area for another day or two.

Policies and Suggested Strategies to Implement Policies

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

Strategy 1. Enact or amend local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity and location of future economic development.

Strategy 3. Continue to implement the Town’s Economic Development Strategic Plan, and update this plan every 5 years.

Strategy 4.

Strategy 5.

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

Strategy 5. Assign responsibility and provide financial support for economic development activities to the Windham Economic Development Corporation.

Strategy 6. Identify the mechanisms to be considered to finance public investments that support economic development (local tax dollars, creating a tax increment financing district, a Community Development Block Grant or other grants, bonding, impact fees, development districts, etc.)

Strategy. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that includes infrastructure projects in order to prioritize needed investments, allows the Town to incorporate local improvements with outside agency projects, (including MaineDOT, Portland Water District) and plan for required funding needs over time.

Strategy 7. Focus on implementing existing and future plans that support economic development and create a true sense of place in North Windham and other villages within the Town of Windham.

Strategy: Implement the 21st Century Plan in a manner that creates a true town center.

Strategy: Develop neighborhood or district plans for Windham Center and South Windham.

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

Strategy 7. Participate in any regional economic development planning efforts.