

The Local Economy

Introduction and Overview:

As with many central Maine communities in recent times, Readfield has had challenges with regard to economic development. The Historic Profile outlines the active role that community leaders and citizens in general have played in purposefully attracting employment and tax base to Readfield throughout the town's history. These efforts continue to this day, as the town must try to keep up with changes in economic activities as they have shifted from manufacturing and agriculture to a more service-oriented economy, as well as changes in commercial retail patterns.

This chapter seeks to describe current conditions, outline Readfield's role in the regional economy, identify economic development assets, examine visible trends and areas of need, incorporate public sentiment and lay out a direction and strategy to guide the town's economic development efforts for the foreseeable future.

Readfield's economy needs to be viewed through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed nearly every aspect of daily life. At this time, it is not possible to predict the long-term impacts of the virus, but by planning for a range of possibilities, Readfield should be well prepared. The statistics and data presented in this plan are based primarily on information from early 2020s, and as such will not reflect the sudden changes brought on by the coronavirus. The statistics and data should be used as a baseline for the essential components for Readfield'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 simply the aggregate income of the town divided by its population, and "household income" which is the income (usually the median) of the households within the town. The latter is more helpful from a planning perspective.

One use of per capita income is for comparison with surrounding towns. According to the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS), Readfield had a per capita income (PCI) of \$40,608, on par with Manchester and Belgrade (Table 1 and Figure 1). For median household income, Readfield was significantly higher than the surrounding towns, with only Belgrade in a similar range (Table 1 and Figure 1).

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF SURROUNDING TOWNS' PER CAPITA VS. MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES*

Town	Per Capita	Median Household Income
READFIELD	40,608	86,156
BELGRADE	45,494	80,375
MANCHESTER	40,250	73,188
FAYETTE	28,529	48,409
MOUNT VERNON	30,969	59,844
WINTHROP	30,925	70,828
WAYNE	37,312	60,125
VIENNA	24,395	60,625

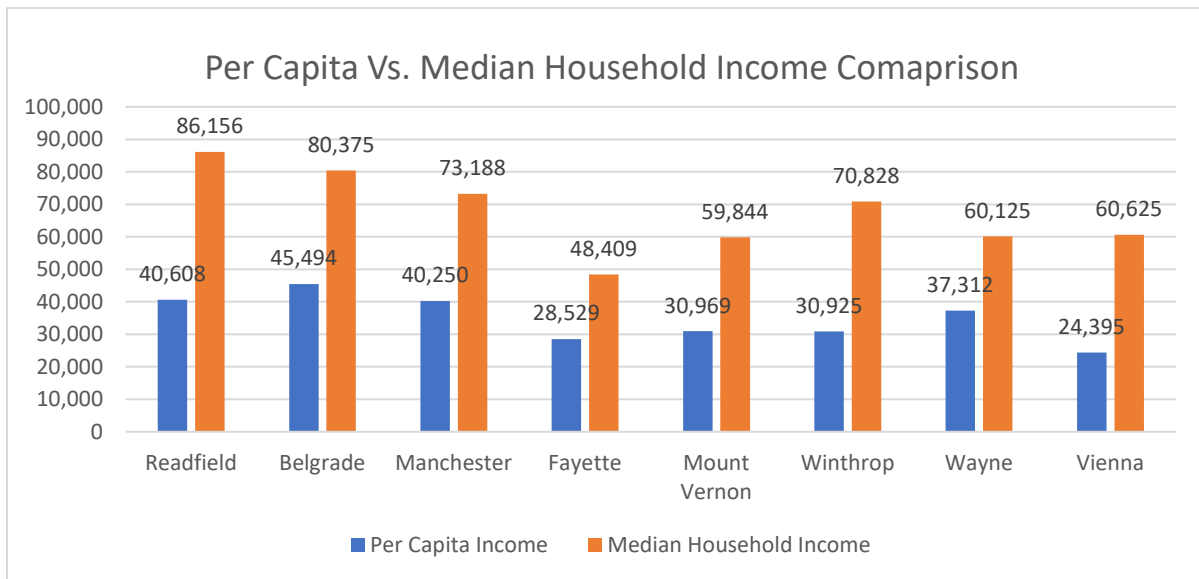
Source: 2020 American Community Survey (ACS)

*Adjusted for inflation

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*



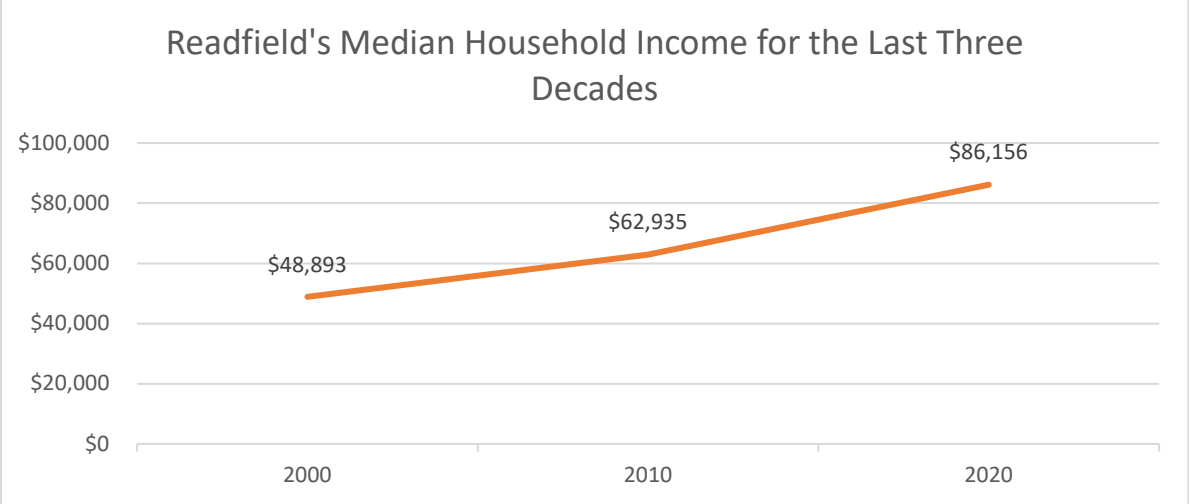
Source: 2020 ACS

*Adjusted for inflation

Readfield's income profile most closely resembles Belgrade's. For comparison, in 2020 the State of Maine had a PCI of \$87,756 and a median household income of \$ 64,767.

Kennebec County had a PCI of \$ 74,079 and a median household income of \$60,528 in 2020. Readfield’s PCI is comparable to that of the state, but higher than that of Kennebec County. Readfield’s median household income was higher than both the state and Kennebec County.

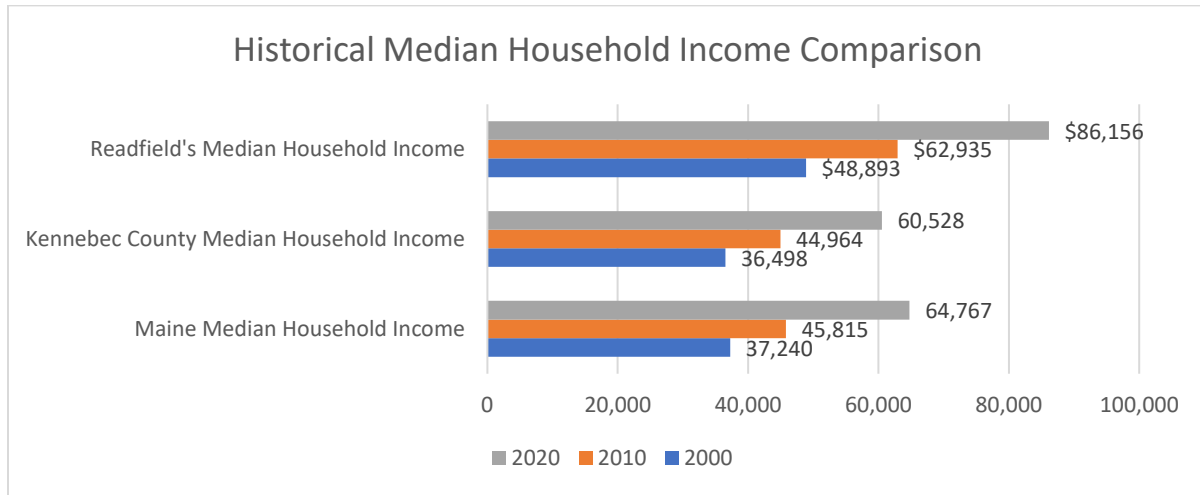
FIGURE 2: INCREASE IN MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Source: 2020 ACS

Changes in Readfield’s household income are illustrated in Figure 2. From 2000 to 2010, Readfield’s median household income increased by almost 28 percent and between 2010 and 2020 it increased by almost 37 percent. In light of the recent upswing in the economic conditions, these changes are not surprising; however, they are considerably larger than those of the state and Kennebec County (Figure 3).

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



Source: 2000 & 2010 Census, 2020 ACS

*The data for 2020 has been adjusted for inflation

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 rental and ownership units. 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 Readfield, 80 percent of the median household income comes to nearly \$69,000. Roughly 30 percent of Readfield’s 977 households fall below this income level.

The American Community Survey identified 279 households with social security income, about 29 percent of all households. It also identified 203 households with retirement income, however there is probably significant overlap between the two. The 2020 ACS identified only 9 families with 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. For the purpose of the Census, the working-age population is everyone over age 16 including those of retirement age.

In 2020 Readfield's labor force was 1,477 people, all of which were classified as being in the civilian labor force and consisted of 69 percent of the working-age population. This is an increase of 11.2 percent or 149 individuals since 2010. These 1,477 individuals are made up of 597 women and 880 men. That means there is an average of 1.51 workers per household, out of the 977 households in Readfield. Put more practically, every second household in Readfield was a two-worker family. This is higher than the Kennebec County average of 1.14 workers per household, which may help to explain Readfield's higher income levels.

Readfield has a significant number of working spouses. The percentage of women in the workforce is 40 percent, whereas comparatively, the percentage of men in the workforce is 60 percent. The 2008 Comprehensive Plan showed that the workforce consisted of 54 percent men and 46 percent women, so this balance has changed little in those 14 years.

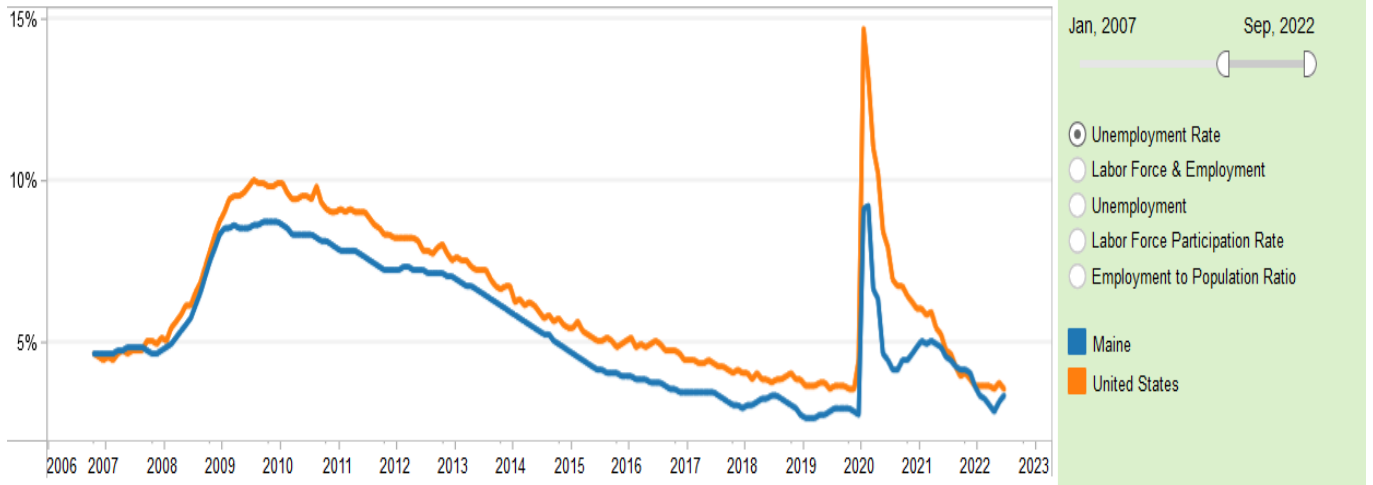
According to the 2020 ACS, of the 1,427 employed in Readfield's civilian labor force, 1,050 individuals or 73.6 percent were classified as private wage and salary workers, 264 people or 18.5 percent worked in government, and 113 individuals or 7.92 percent were self-employed in own not incorporated businesses. None of the civilian labor force were classified as unpaid family workers in Readfield.

Being in the labor force is not the same as being employed. The 1,477 is the number of people *available to work*, while the actual number of those *employed* is 1427. The labor force is the sum of the employed plus the unemployed. According to the 2020 ACS, 50 people in Readfield were unemployed (2.7 percent women, 1.5 percent men) for an unemployment rate of 2.3 percent at time of survey. For comparison, in 2005, the unemployment rate was 4.5 percent. It should be noted that 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 only those collecting unemployment.

Unemployment is better reported by the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), which conducts surveys. Figure 4 is a graph of unemployment in the United States and the State of Maine, of which Readfield 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 lay off or are waiting to report to a new job within 30 days. The unemployment rate is measured on a monthly basis through a sample of surveyed households.

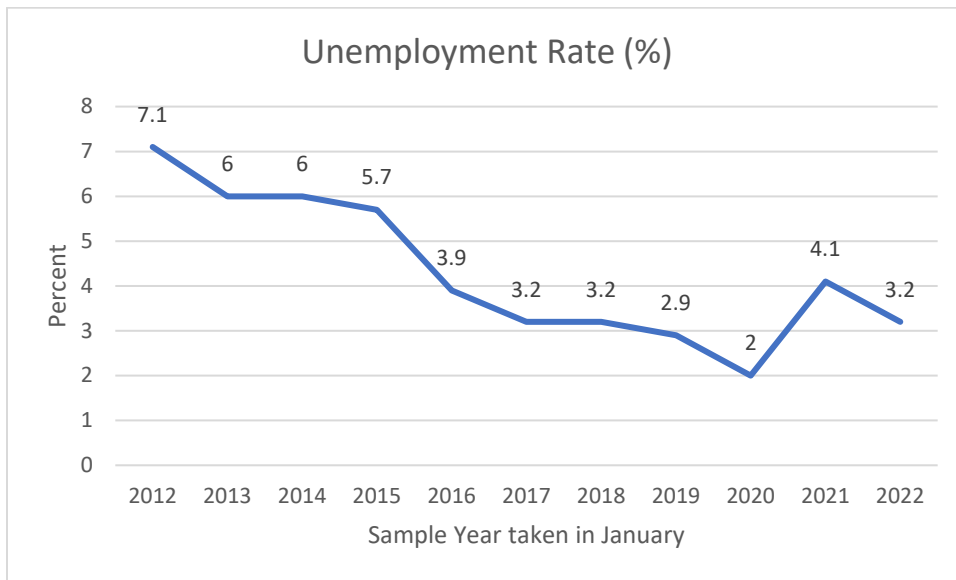
FIGURE 4- UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN MAINE AND UNITED STATES



Source: Maine Department of Labor

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

FIGURE 5: READFIELD’S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



Source: Maine Department of Labor

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

Labor Market:

In 2008, the MDOL estimated there were 1,400 persons in the Readfield’s labor force. By 2010, the MDOL estimated there were 1,455 persons in the labor force, an increase of nearly 4 percent in two years. In 2022 the MDOL reported that Readfield had 1,409 individuals currently in the labor force, a decrease of approximately 46 people. Table 2 shows that the number of those in Readfield’s labor force fluctuates depending on outside factors.

Readfield is a contributor to the regional Augusta Labor Market Area (LMA), which must be considered in any economic development analysis. Table 2 shows Readfield’s contribution to the LMA, and unemployment rates for both Readfield and LMA. Readfield’s unemployment rate is a reflection of the Augusta LMA, with a few variations and usually trending slightly lower.

TABLE 2: LABOR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT IN READFIELD AND THE AUGUST LABOR MARKET AREA

Year	Geography	Civilian Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
2021	Augusta Micro	40,274	38,615	1,659	4.1%
	Readfield	1,409	1,362	47	3.3%
2020	Augusta Micro	39,944	38,152	1,792	4.5%
	Readfield	1,396	1,345	51	3.7%
2015	Augusta Micro	40,684	39,064	1,620	4.0%
	Readfield	1,430	1,376	54	3.8%
2010	Augusta Micro	41,635	38,534	3,101	7.4%
	Readfield	1,455	1,364	91	6.3%
2008	Augusta Micro	41,779	39,703	2,076	5.0%
	Readfield	1,400	1,335	65	4.6%

Source: Maine Department of Labor

As of the 2019 ACS, 1,275 Readfield residents held jobs with only 121 employed in Readfield. Broken down further, 355 (27.8 percent) of Readfield’s residents worked in the Augusta Micropolitan Area. Lewiston was the second highest employment location with 56 individuals (Table 3).

TABLE 3: WORK DESTINATION FOR READFIELD RESIDENTS

Location	Count	Share
Augusta	355	27.8%
Lewiston	56	44.0%
Portland	50	39.0%
Waterville	43	34.0%
Winthrop	43	34.0%
Hallowell	37	29.0%
Auburn	36	28.0%
Bangor	23	18.0%
South Portland	23	18.0%
Bath	20	16.0%
Other Locations*	589	46.2%

Source: 2019 ACS
*Includes Readfield

According to the 2019 ACS, there were 459 individuals working in the Town of Readfield, and 121 of them were Readfield residents, leaving 338 individuals employed in Readfield and living elsewhere. Most of the people who come to Readfield to work were from Augusta. Table 4 shows other locations that supply Readfield’s employees. When calculating the percentages, the ACS included the 121 workers who live in Readfield.

TABLE 4: WHERE WORKERS LIVE WHO ARE EMPLOYED IN READFIELD

Location	Count	Share
Augusta	21	4.6%
Winthrop	13	2.8%
Waterville	10	2.2%
Auburn	8	1.7%
Gardiner	6	1.3%
Hallowell	5	1.1%
Portland	5	1.1%
Chisholm	3	0.7%
Farmingdale	3	0.7%
Farmington	3	0.7%
Other Locations*	382	70%

Source: 2019 ACS
*Includes 121 Readfield residents

Readfield participates in a regional economic development initiative as a member of the Kennebec Regional Development Authority (FirstPark). After losing money for close to the full 25 years of its existence KRDA broke even in 2020 and is finally delivering returns for the member communities. FirstPark is a business park located in Oakland, Maine encompassing 285 acres of pre-permitted sites with protective covenants that incorporate

innovative technology and infrastructure into its site plans. Its proximity to Interstate 95 provides ease of travel north to Canada or south to other New England states. This development site attracts skilled workers and new generations of talented business resources to the region. FirstPark works with both state and federal grant funding programs, while revitalizing economic development for the region. This initiative provides jobs for Maine residents including several in Readfield, while simultaneously providing services and supplies to the state and other areas.

Job Types:

Table 5 lists the occupational categories of Readfield’s workers for 2010 and 2020. Nearly half of Readfield’s workforce were in management, business, science and art in 2010 and more than half were as of 2020.

TABLE 5: OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE FOR READFIELD’S 1,427 WORKERS

Occupation	2010	% Of Total	2020	% Of Total
Management, business, science, and art	550	44.4%	816	57.2%
Service	181	14.6%	82	5.7%
Sales and Office	245	19.8%	219	15.3%
Natural resource, construction, and maintenance	152	12.3%	157	10.7%
Production, transportation, and material moving	111	9%	157	11%

Source: 2010 & 2020 ACS

The ACS breaks the category of Management, business, science, and art down 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 broad occupational category is the reason for such high employment results that far surpass other categories.

Readfield’s workforce is broken down by industry of employment in Table 6 below. This is not as specific as describing a person’s actual job. For example, manufacturing may include secretaries, managers, sales staff and skilled workers all together. However, by looking at the statistical data of industry categories provides information to gauge which sectors of the economy are doing well. An additional advantage is that this is the classification that MDOL uses for annual updates.

TABLE 6: INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION FOR READFIELD'S 1,427 EMPLOYED WORKERS

Industry	2010	% Of Total	2020	% Of Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	12	1%	32	2.2%
Construction	87	7%	115	8.1%
Manufacturing	71	5.7%	134	9.4%
Wholesale trade	36	2.9%	57	4%
Retail trade	107	8.6%	103	7.2%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	74	6%	32	2.2%
Information	21	1.7%	5	0.4%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	46	3.7%	73	5.1%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	90	7.3%	73	5.1%
Educational services, health care and social assistance	441	35.6%	619	43.4%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	52	4.2%	52	3.6%
Other services, except public administration	43	3.5%	12	0.8%
Public administration	159	12.8%	120	8.4%

Source: 2010 & 2020 ACS

This data shows that the major industry for Readfield's workers in both 2010 and 2020 was the educational services, health care and social assistance by a significant percentage in both decades. For 2020, the industry with the next highest percentage was manufacturing, which had an 88 percent increase since 2010.

The town gained 178 jobs in the educational services, health care and social assistance industry, while losing a few percentage points for jobs in several industries such as public administration, other services, and transportation, warehousing, and utilities. So, while the workforce is growing, it is also changing.

These figures are fairly consistent with the Augusta Labor Market Area with a high percentage in educational services, except that LMA had a higher percentage in retail trade than Readfield.

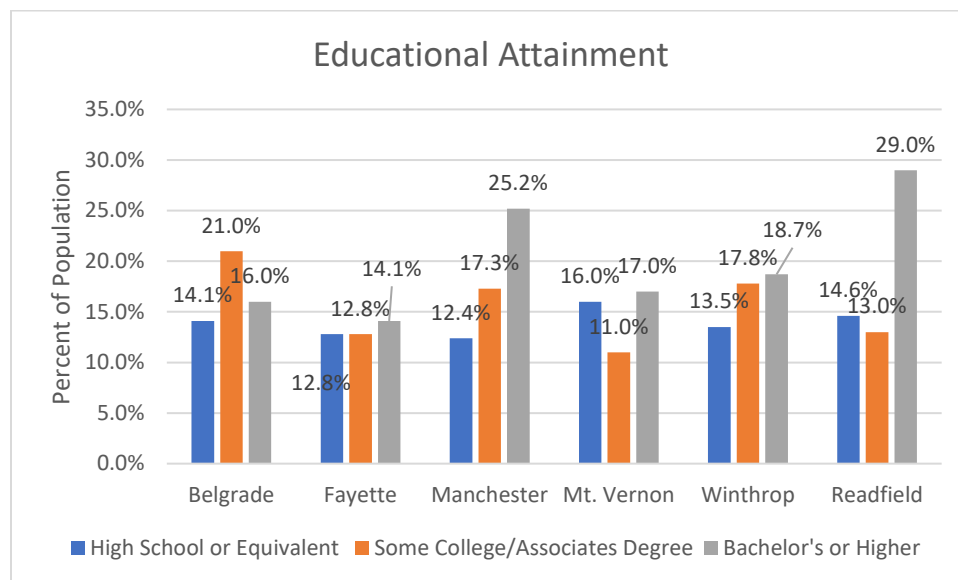
This data has implications for local and regional economic growth. Readfield's strength is in health and education jobs which, fortunately, are growing sectors both regionally and nationally. That means Readfield is in a good position to take advantage of foreseeable economic trends on a regional basis rather than locally.

Another growing trend not covered in the tables above, is that of working remotely. According to the Census, there were approximately 107 people working from home in 2000. In 2010, that number shrunk to around 32, but according to the American Community Survey, the number of people in Readfield working from home in 2020 was 278. 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 people. Unfortunately, Readfield is continuing to struggle with poor and costly broadband internet in many areas of the community, negatively affecting business development prospects.

Educational Attainment:

Another measure of how likely the 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 usually higher for jobs demanding higher educational attainment.

FIGURE 6: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT* COMPARISON WITH SURROUNDING TOWNS



Source: 2020 ACS
 *For population between ages 25 to 64 years old.

Undergraduate and graduate degree educational attainment in Readfield is exceptional with 29 percent of the population at this level. The only town with comparable success in this achievement is Manchester with 25.2 percent of the population receiving a bachelor's degree or higher. For the category of some college/associates degree, Readfield had a higher percentage (13 percent) for achievement than Fayette and Mount Vernon, but lower than Belgrade, Manchester, and Winthrop. The only town with a higher percentage for achieving high school or equivalent was Mount Vernon.

Kennebec County's has a high school or equivalency achievement rate of 17.4 percent, associates or some college of 15 percent, and bachelor's degree or higher of 17 percent. The State of Maine has a high school or equivalency achievement rate of 15.1 percent, associates or some college of 15.5 percent, and bachelor's degree or higher of 14.5 percent. Comparatively, Readfield has a higher level of educational attainment of not just surrounding towns, but also for the county and state.

Readfield's Local Business Climate:

The retail/commercial economy in Readfield is comprised of small businesses primarily in the service and retail sectors that serve the needs of Readfield residents. The major retail/ commercial centers are in the three villages of Readfield Corner, Readfield Depot and Kents Hill. These areas have historically played the role of small villages serving the needs of those people living in the outlying areas of town and nearby. The Depot, as a railroad depot, also historically served as a transportation hub into and out of the community.

Taxable consumer retail sales in Readfield were \$4.38 million in 1990, dropped to \$3.68 million in 2000, further declined to \$2.87 million in 2010, and most recently increased to \$3.4 million in 2021 (post-pandemic number used here instead of the 2020 number, which was \$2.8 million). Increases in population generate local spending activity, which in turn may support more retail and service sector activity; however, enlarged retail and service sectors in Augusta, Winthrop, and Manchester have greatly impacted Readfield's economic position and growth potential.

In response to a perceived shortage of local commercial and employment opportunities, Readfield created an Economic Development Committee in 2005 and revised the name and charge of the group in 2017. The Readfield Enterprise Committee focuses on providing business support and no interest loans of up to \$10,000 to qualifying local businesses. A more broad "economic development" role is being considered but may be a challenge given the limited availability of local business resources - this role may best be filled by established business support organizations and regional groups.

In general, Readfield's economy is diverse. The potential challenges to local businesses are the following:

- Lack of access to major routes and vehicular traffic,
- Lack of reliable, affordable, and universally accessible broadband internet,
- Planning and CEO capacity being unevenly absorbed by applicants pushing incompatible uses and repeat applications,

- Proximity to several service centers providing a full range of goods and services.

Readfield has a lot of home-grown, small businesses offering a variety of services but minimal outside employment. The business locations are scattered throughout town, as seen in Table 7. The largest non-education employer – Saunders Manufacturing – is located on Nickerson Hill Road, a mile off Route 17 outside of the village.

Readfield's village areas are deteriorating due to loss of active businesses and declining infrastructure. The Depot area stood vacant for many years but has seen recent activity and reinvestment.

As Readfield is primarily a bedroom community, there is little in the way of economic goals aside from those determined in the Comprehensive Plan. While the town participates in the regional initiative, FirstPark and has the Readfield Enterprise Committee to support local businesses, overwhelmingly the town's residents do not want more commercial or industrial businesses in town but do have interest in some retail and service businesses.

TABLE 7: READFIELD BUSINESS DIRECTORY:

Type of Business	Name of Business	Location
ANIMALS		
	Meadowview Equestrian Center	247 Chimney Road
AUTO/SMALL ENGINE		
Mechanic	L & M Enterprise	1288 Main Street
Mechanic	Great Northern Motorworks LLC	1697 Main Street
Body & Painting	Misty Auto Body	32 Ledge Hill Terrance
Towing	Parks Towing	773 Main Street
Mechanic	Readfield Truck Repair	37 Terrace Road
Junkyard	Antique Auto Recycling	42 Whitcomb Drive
Junkyard	Ken's Drag-in	473 Gorden Road
Junkyard	Lucas Auto Parts and Salvage	113 Plains Road
Windshield Repairs	207 Windshield Repair	331 Winthrop Road
	Auto Adjustments	Old County Lane
BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES		
Grant Writer	William A. Bayreuther Grant Writing	138 South Road
Financial Advisor	Modern Woodman of America	45 Mooer Road
CARPENTRY & CONSTRUCTION		
	Audette Construction	135 South Road
	Clarks Custom Cabinetry	Main St., PO Box 384
	Cushing Construction	32 Roddy Lane
Carpentry/builders	T.A. Dunham & Sons	1710 Main Street
Drywall	True's Drywall	33 Sadie Dunn Road
Cabinets	Galouch Woodworking	646 Main Street
Carpentry/builders	Harriman Builders	67 Winthrop Road
Masonry	Maranaccok Masonry	459 Main Street
Carpentry	Plante Custom Carpentry	788 Main Street
Masonry	Shamrock Stoneworks	9 Kentwood Drive
Carpentry/builders	Zikowitz Construction	119 Church Road
COMPUTER/WEB & GRAPHIC DESIGN		
Software Services	Dirigo Software	499 Sturtevant Hill Road/ PO Box 53
Web	Dupont Web Design	1 Marden Road
Technology	E-Rate New England	7 Thundercastle Road
Consulting & Software Services	TC2 Consulting Services	118 Thundercastle Road
CRAFTING		
Embroidery	K's Custom Embroidery	17 Giles Road
Carving	Wildfowl Carvings	PO Box 157/90 Old stage Road
DAYCARES/CHILD SERVICES		
Home Daycare	Kathleen Dupont Daycare	1 Marden Road

Type of Business	Name of Business	Location
Center	Building Bridges Daycare	41 Kents Hill Loop
After School	RES After School Daycare	84 South Road
EDUCATION		
Private High School	Kents Hill School	1416 Main Street
RSU #38	Readfield Elementary School	45 Millard Harrison Drive
Bus Garage	RSU #38 Bus Transportation Service	73 North Road
ELECTRICAL		
	Dave's Electric	44 Church Road
ENTERTAINMENT/SPORTS		
	Hurry Down Sunshine	1083 Main Street
	Maine Entertainment	20 Beaver Dam Road
	43 Wasabi	313 Main Street
	Capital City Improv	29 P Ridge Road
	Earresistible Travel	70 Cove Road
EXCAVATING		
	Reay Excavating and Trucking	555 Main Street
FARMS & NURSERIES		
Herbs	Mother Jess Herbals	528 Plains Road
	Barter Farms	339 Luce Road
	Elvins Farm	38 Lane Road
	Plain to Bizarre Farms	855 Main Street
	Ledge Hill Farm	34 Plains Road
FOOD SERVICES		
Bakery	Apple Shed Bakery	1625 Main Street
Store	Readfield Family Market	1142 Main Street
Restaurant	Weathervane Restaurant	1030 Main Street
Food Bank	Mount Vernon Food Bank	321 Pond Rd., Mount Vernon
Butcher	Fike's Custom Cutting	374 Church Road
Fresh Meat	Knights Family Farm	97 Old Kents Hill Road
FORESTRY		
FURNITURE		
	Mathews Furniture	10 South Road
HANDYMAN/HOUSEHOLD		
Interior Design	Tallwood Interior Design	18 Tallwood Drive
HEALTH, FITNESS & MEDICAL		
Assisted Living & Residential Care	Balsam House	256 Gorden Road
Hypnosis	Willow Tree Hypnosis	169 South Road
Massage & Yoga	Grace Studio	14 Church Road
	Mary's Affordable Hearing Aids	132 Luce Road
	Lifecycle Women's Health	169 South Road

Type of Business	Name of Business	Location
INVESTIGATIONS & SECURITY		
	Merrill's Investigations & Security	13 Winthrop Road
	North Point Security Consulting	307 Church Road
LANDSCAPING		
	Shamrock Stoneworks	9 Kentwood Drive
LUMBER		
	By the Board Lumber Co.	7 Farnham Drive, RT 17
MANUFACTURING		
Clipboards	Saunders Mfg. Co., Inc.	65 Nickerson Hill Road
Whirley gigs	Little Bucket LLC	Main Street
PAINTING		
	Kevin Boucher Painting	208 Gorden Road
PHOTOGRAPHY		
	Matt Nazar Photography	62 Old Kent Hill Road
PLUMBING/HEATING		
Plumbing	Potter Plumbing	269 Old Kents Hill Road
	Joe's Heating	313 Plains Road
POST OFFICES		
	Kents Hill Post Office	1613 Main Street
	Readfield Post Office	1138 Main Street
REAL ESTATE/PROPERTY MANAGEMENT		
Property Management	Webb & Sons, Inc.	PO Box 401
	Creative Conservation, LLC	27 Giles Road
	Lakeside Property Management	36 Morrill Road
REDEMPTION CENTERS		
	Depot Bottle Redemption	773 Main Street
SALONS		
	Nicole's Hair Salon	264 Luce Road
TRASH PICK-UP/TRUCKING		
	Simmons Trucking	PO Box 462
	Galouch's Waste	976 Wings Mills Road, Belgrade
	Tim's Trucking	17 Lucasville Lane

Source: Town officials and Comprehensive Plan Committee

Regulation of Economic Development:

Readfield's current land use ordinances allow small-scale commercial or industrial development in two districts within the town: the *Village Districts* (Readfield Corner and Readfield Depot) and the *Rural District*, which is the town's largest district, and is principally located in the northeast and southwest quadrants of the community. Any commercial or industrial building exceeding 5,000 square feet in either of these districts

must be in a special “floating” zone described in the Land Use Ordinance. Provisions require that the zone be approved by Town Meeting. The floating zone is a regulatory tool that allows the town the utmost oversight of the application, including setting appropriate performance standards.

While home occupations were a growing trend in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, very few permits of this type have been requested or issued in recent years. No permits were issued for home occupations in 2019, 2020 or 2021; only one was issued in 2018. This down-turn could be related to the pandemic or many other reasons. The Land Use Ordinance sets review and permitting criteria for all home occupation applications. These criteria are intended to ensure that home occupations do not disrupt the residential nature of the neighborhoods in which they are located.

Economic Growth Projections:

Historically, Readfield’s economic growth has happened in incremental changes. Readfield is not overly dependent upon tourism, which means minimal seasonal variations as seen with other areas of the state. Readfield’s abundant outdoor activities and recreational opportunities draw in-state visitors, a virtue the town would like to continue to promote.

Readfield, 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, as stated earlier.

Population projections for Readfield forecast a growth rate of approximately 40 people a year until the next decade for a population increase of roughly 350 people. Population growth will affect many aspects from jobs to housing and these aspects will, in turn, be affected by population growth.

Because Readfield is a small part of a regional economy, it is likely few new jobs will be created within town. As most Readfield residents commute to work, this will cause an impact on public services, especially the transportation system. Route 17 is the major commuter route to the Augusta-Gardiner-Manchester area. As the population in Readfield grows, traffic and wear and tear on main corridors will increase.

The results of the 2022 Community Survey suggests that most residents do not want to see large scale economic development in town but do support the development of smaller retail and service facilities. The survey results indicate that residents do not favor the development of heavy industry or commercial centers. They do, however, favor encouraging or allowing light industry, retail shops like drug stores and hardware stores, legal/accounting services, coffee shops/restaurants and bed and breakfast establishments. In fact, the rural nature and natural resources are a contributing factor that influences those who prefer the peaceful, small-town atmosphere to settle in Readfield: because it’s quiet, rural, and not overly commercial.

Recently, there has been development of a 25-acre solar farm on Rt. 17 across from the Jesse Lee Church. This type of infrastructure development is more in keeping with the preferences of the town as it does not generate traffic and noise but also conflicts with their distaste for industrial growth.

Many of the businesses in Readfield are smaller businesses or home occupations, though few applications for new home occupations have been submitted recently. Home occupations are more in sync with the character of the town than large retail chains. They are essentially the backbone of the community and embody the types of businesses people want in town. Since preserving the town's rural and agricultural character are a priority, home occupations are most in line with that priority as they are unobtrusive and do not generate excessive traffic, garish development, or unnecessary noise. And since they are out of an existing residence, they typically do not require development of previously undeveloped areas. A few examples of home occupations include farming, home baked goods, health and beauty, automobile repair, professional services, daycare, and other low-intensity services.

Readfield's Unique Assets:

Readfield has cultural, geographical, natural, and historical assets that contribute to the economy of the town. Possibly the biggest asset is that Readfield has become a recreational hub, which attracts visitors for numerous outdoor and sporting activities. This asset could potentially be expanded to attract more economic activity.

The town has numerous hiking/walking trails managed by a variety of entities including Kennebec Land Trust, a Trails Committee, and a Conservation Commission. The town provides a walking trail through historic Readfield Corner, Macdonald Woods Conservation Area/Readfield Town Forest, and trails through several other preserves and conservation areas.

Readfield leverages its unique assets of recreational opportunities by providing residents with a great place to live. The abundant recreational resources are not utilized for the town's financial gain.

The town also has a rich historic past with well-preserved historic sites that can be taken in during the Heritage Day's Festival, held annually over the second weekend in August. This event, hosted by the Readfield Historical Society, includes games, food, prizes, agriculture, and, of course, historical information about Readfield. This event serves to promote the downtown area and celebrate the town's rich history.

Summary of Analysis:

Readfield's labor force grew by 149 individuals since 2010, and unemployment dropped from 6.3 percent to 3.3 percent between 2010 and 2021 (Maine Department of Labor statistics). This indicates a healthy local economy. The largest local employers are the public schools, the private Kents Hill School and Saunders Manufacturing Company. By

far, however, most residents work in a community other than Readfield, typically in the Augusta area. Readfield has a small manufacturing base, independent workers and service providers, as well as more than 100 small commercial establishments. Home occupations are not currently as significant of a trend in Readfield as they have been in the past, but they are still a part of the essential character of the town.

For local and regional economic development plans, the town participates in the economic development initiative FirstPark, detailed previously, and has established the Readfield Enterprise Committee to support local, small businesses. The purpose of the Readfield Enterprise Committee is to manage the Enterprise Fund using uniform program-appropriate lending practices, as well as providing guidance to the Select Board on matters of economic development. The Committee is also charged with reviewing and revising current lending guidelines and programs, managing current and future lending programs, soliciting community input on economic development matters, involve relevant committees, organizations, institutions, and interested parties in developing economic development strategies, and making recommendations to pertinent committees regarding revenues and expenditures related to economic development activities as part of the regular budget process.

Readfield is also a member community to the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG). 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.

Readfield does not participate in TIF districting and without any provisions such as public water and sewer connections, there is no non-regulatory mechanism to encourage commercial development in the growth areas. Readfield has been able to locate economic activities in certain areas of town due to their Land Use Ordinance. Having effective zoning tools in place, via the Land Use Ordinance, has helped to keep the negative impact of economic development to a minimal while still allowing them in appropriate locations.

Municipal water and sewer are not the only public service not available nor desired in Readfield; the town also has no plans or demonstrated need for three-phase power required for large-scale industrial or commercial buildings. The town is currently investigating expanding broadband coverage to accommodate its residents and those who work from home.

Most residents do not feel large-scale economic development is right for the town and do not want it. Nevertheless, the growth in demand for jobs, concern over increasing commuting pressures and the lack of opportunities and developable areas in town suggest the need for local measures including investment in economic development infrastructure for small business and clean, light industry. Other types of businesses whose services are needed and would fit with the character of the town include childcare facilities and a small restaurant or café.

Examples of clean, light industry are manufacturing, packaging, processing or assembly of finished products from previously processed materials. It can also include growing cannabis in greenhouses. It does not include the processing of raw materials, the generation or use of hazardous materials or salvaging operations. Any facility used for light industry, including storage of material and equipment, must be consistent with existing community character. Its activity should be conducted substantially within buildings and must limit the potential nuisances of noise, odor, air and water pollution beyond the property's boundaries.

The town's open space, outdoor recreational opportunities, and numerous trails make it an attractive place in which to live. The town's transportation infrastructure and proximity to larger service centers for employment make it an ideal bedroom community. This is in keeping with the ideals of the town's residents who do not want abundant or excessive economic growth.

Issues for Further Study and Discussion:

- ❖ What steps can be taken to help the local economy recover post-COVID 19?
- ❖ 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 that its small businesses remain vibrant and continue to contribute to the quality of community in Readfield?
- ❖ 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?