

Readfield Community Profile

This report holds a statistical profile of the town of Readfield and its people. It has a great deal of numerical information about the community. Data like this will often confirm our own intuitions about what is happening within the community. More importantly, it can show early signs of new patterns and trends before we can see the impacts.

Demographical statistical data of a particular place, like Readfield, are incredibly valuable and greatly affect future decisions. Demographic data can affect and impact nearly every decision made on the municipal level. For example, the amount of money from taxes the town needs to generate is affected by things like services the town offers for its senior citizens, the size of the school system, waste management services, and how many recreational amenities are provided. The level of services the town needs to have for its senior citizens can be assumed using demographic data, just as the total school system size will be affected by total family households in the area.

Readfield is evolving and in the last decade, there has been more Readfield residents than ever before. Innovative ideas and strategies will be needed to accommodate the increasing and changing population. The information supplied here will be used throughout the plan and will help inform us about how the community has changed. Future changes are also discussed. Growth projections will help in planning for the increased housing and public service demands that are expected over the next couple of decades. Similar, additional information will also be in the Housing Data Chapter of this plan.

Historical Population Trends:

Over the course of its existence, Readfield's population has fluctuated with a steady rise since 1950. Both economic and cultural factors have contributed to the changes observed in Readfield's population changes displayed in the following table and graphed in the figure on the following page. The information used to populate this graph was obtained through the U.S. Census and American Community Survey.

****Note: You may notice that the population number varies between 2,597 and 2,571. This is because the 2,571 is from the American Community Survey. I continued to use it in certain charts because the data I used was based on this number and from the ACS itself. To change the population and recalculate the data would be inaccurate. However, I felt it was important to explain this because it could be construed as a mistake, and it is not. I've annotated it in several places.

TABLE 1: POPULATION CHANGE: 1830 TO 2020

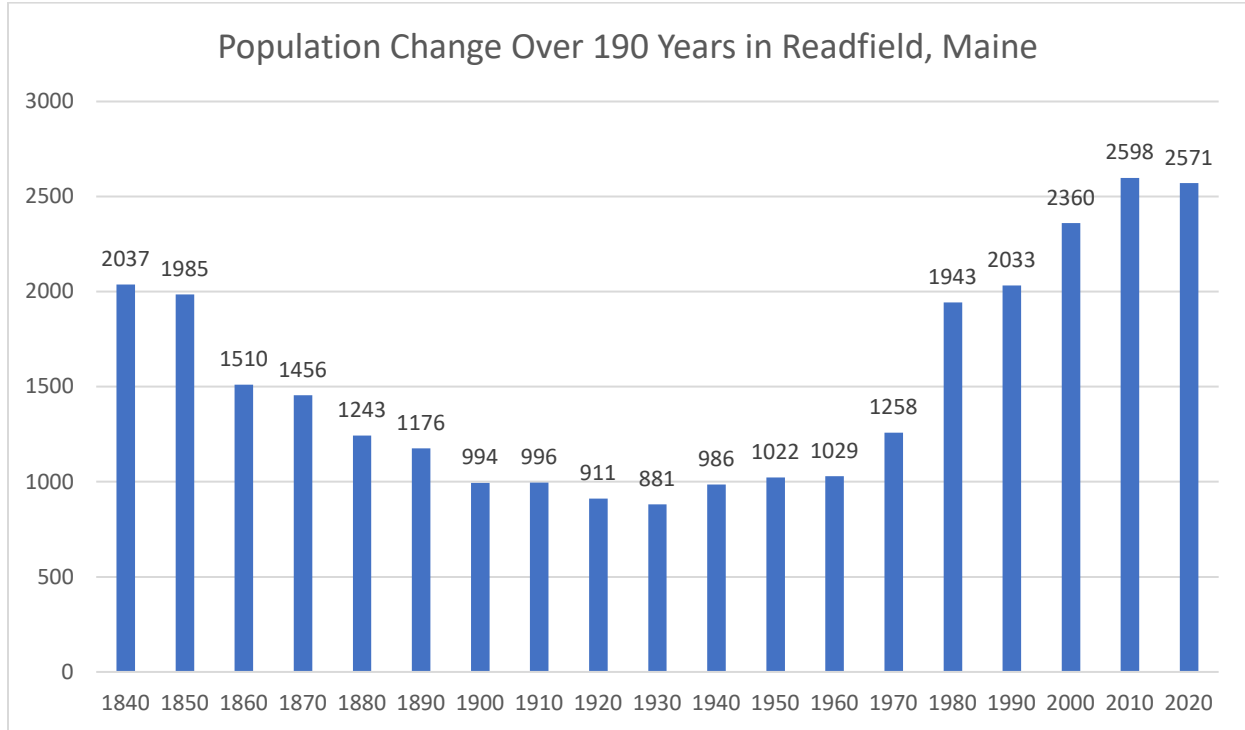
Year	Population		Year	Population
1830	1,884		1930	881
1840	2,037		1940	986
1850	1,985		1950	1,022
1860	1,510		1960	1,029
1870	1,456		1970	1,258
1880	1,243		1980	1,943
1890	1,176		1990	2,033
1900	994		2000	2,360
1910	996		2010	2,598
1920	911		2020	2,597

Source: U.S. Census

Readfield experienced a significant population increase in the early 1800s, but the population dropped 50 percent between 1840 and 1920, likely due to the Civil War and westward expansion. After reaching a low point in 1920, the population began to trend upward and steadily rose until today. The biggest population jump was seen between 1970 and 1980 where the total population increased by nearly 700.

Since the 1970s, Readfield’s population has steadily grown and since 1980 the population has averaged nearly 20 new residents per year. Between 2010 and 2018, the population has declined (based on a 2018 estimate) which reflects regional trends in population decline. However, the increasing population trend recovered two years later in 2020, reaching the second highest population since 2010. In the ten-year span between 2010 and 2020, Readfield only lost one resident, when looking at the overall picture.

FIGURE 1: 190 YEARS OF POPULATION CHANGE IN READFIELD



Source: U.S. Census

The data presented in Figure 1 reflects the increasing population trends which requires community planning to accommodate the growing and evolving population.

Additional census or American Community Survey information can paint a broader picture to help with long-term planning for Readfield. One such example is that the average age of Readfield residents is increasing and although the number of households are still increasing, the number of single person households is increasing faster. Except in college towns (like Waterville), single person households tend to be elderly households. Elderly households have unique needs, along with public service and planning requirements.

Just as significant is the overall decrease in household size. In just 20 years, Readfield went from nearly three persons per household to 2.58 in the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS defines household size as the number of people living in one place, who may or may not be related. This contrasts with average family size, which was 2.98 in the ACS; average family size is defined as people living in one location who are related to one another.

Decreasing household size is a trend seen nationally, reflecting social changes like smaller families, lower birth rates, and elderly independent living. What this equates to is that fewer people per household necessitates more houses just to sustain the current population. For every 1,000 homes in 1980, there were 2,738 occupants. In 2000, that same number of homes only have 2,374 occupants. In fact, an additional 157 homes

were needed in 2000 to accommodate the same number of residents as in 1980. In 2010, Readfield's total number of households reached almost 1000 – an increase of nearly 300 households over 20 years. The data from the United States Census Bureau (from here forward the United States Census Bureau will be called the Census) reflects that Readfield currently has 1,320 housing units for 977 households. This is an increase of 320 housing units in just a ten-year period.

This data is imperative when considering the population and housing demands for the future. If the number of people in each household continues to decrease as projected, the community will require not only more house, but a housing stock made up of smaller houses.

TABLE 2: POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS: 1990-2020

General Population Characteristics	1990	2000	2010	2020*
Total Population	2,033	2,360	2,598	2,571
Male Population	1,010	1,197	1,240	1,418
Female Population	1,023	1,163	1,308	1,153
Median Age	35.7	38.4	43.4	44.7
Total Households	722	867	998	977
Family Households	577	674	738	699
Married Couple Family Households	512	576	618	581
Nonfamily Households	145	193	260	278
Nonfamily Households Living Alone	120	158	196	168
Households with children (under 18)	302	345	295	295
Single-Person Household 65 years +	40	49	67	56
Average Household Size	2.81	2.31	2.55	2.58

Source: 1990, 2000, 2010 Census- unless otherwise noted

**Data from American Community Survey*

Components of Population Change:

There are many factors that contribute to population changes besides birth rate, migration, and death rate. Some of these factors include economic development, education, quality of life, urbanism, changes in job availability, and many more. Some of these, although not relevant to Readfield may be factors for why people moved from their original locations to Readfield.

From 1990 to 2020, Readfield's population increased by 564 people. This change is never solely just a case of emigration, as mentioned above, there are various contributing factors for people to move to a new home. Population change in a community is a result of both natural change and migration. Natural change is the difference between deaths and births in the community over a period. Migration accounts for people moving in and moving out. Net migration is population change not explained by births and deaths.

Will the ratio of natural change and net migration continue? Considering the aging population, a trend toward smaller families and increasing housing values, it seems that deaths will continue to outpace births, resulting in a continuing decline in natural change.

However, population decline could be combated in several ways. Readfield has plenty of available land and is a short drive to Augusta for either employment or entertainment. Access to water and other outdoor recreational activities are abundant both in Readfield and in neighboring towns. While the rate of natural change cannot be impacted with town policy, the rate of migration can be affected by managing land use controls, promoting economic sectors that fit the character of the town, and offering public services that town residents want and need.

TABLE 3: AGE TRENDS 1990 THROUGH 2020

	1990 % Of Total	2000 % Of Total	2010 % Of Total	2020* % Of Total	20-year Change
Population	2,033	2,360	2,598	2,571	211 (8.9%)
Median Age	35.7	38.4	43.4	44.7	6.3 (16.4%)
Under 5 years old	142 (6.9%)	150 (6.3%)	117 (4.5%)	90 (3.5%)	-60 (-40%)
5 - 17 years old	362 (17.8%)	527 (22.3%)	496 (19.1%)	N/A	134 (37.0 %) ** from 1990-2010
18 - 24 years old	209 (10.2%)	135 (5.7%)	142 (5.4%)	N/A	-67 (-47.1 %) ** from 1990-2010
25 – 34 years old	271 (13.3%)	233 (9.8%)	250 (9.6%)	380 (14.8%)	147 (63.1%)
35 - 44 years old	426 (20.9%)	401 (16.9%)	368 (14.1%)	291 (11.3%)	-110 (-27.4%)
45 - 54 years old	255 (12.5%)	442 (18.7%)	475 (18.2%)	470 (18.3%)	28 (6.3%)
55 - 64 years old	186 (9.1%)	444 (18.8%)	217 (16.4%)	404 (15.7%)	-40 (-9.0%)
65 years and older	182 (8.9%)	255 (10.8%)	323 (12.4%)	392 (15.2%)	137 (53.7%)

Source: 1990, 2000 & 2010 Census unless otherwise specified.

**ACS Data- may differ from data obtained from 2020 census*

***More current data not available*

Some important population changes and trend takeaways from the data analysis in this chapter:

- The median age increase by 6.3 years in a 20-year period is dramatic. This aging trend is statewide, and Maine is one of the oldest states in the nation.
- The number of children (five and under) decreased from 150 in 2000 to 90 in 2020.
- The number of children between the ages of 5-17 and 18-24 was not available at time of writing for 2022.
- The number of children (under 18 years old) increased between 1990 and 2000 but decreased between 2000 and 2010. Based on the data trends, it can be assumed that the population in this age bracket decreased further in the 2020 census.
- Adults that fall roughly into “family-age” category were broken into two separate categories by the ACS:
 - Age category 25-34 increased by 63.1%
 - Age category 35-44 decreased by 27.4%
- This drastic difference in so close age categories is unusual. The 25-34 age bracket saw a significant increase from 233 in 2000 to 380 in 2020. This age category is more likely to be starting families than the 35-44 age category, so there is a possibility that school enrollment will increase based on this data. These young families are the primary market for the kind of suburban-style new housing that has been popular in Readfield.
- The age category 35-44 dropped by 110 individuals (decrease of 27.4%) since 2000.
- The “mature adult” age bracket (45 to 54 & 55 to 64) was split.
 - Age category 45-54 increased by 6.3%
 - Age category 55-64 decreased by 9.0%
- In 2010, the 65 and older age category was beginning to show the outliers in the baby boom generation (persons born generally between 1945 and 1965). This age category has been steadily increasing and the real impact will begin in this decade. Since 2000, this age category increased 53.7%, the second highest increase noted in the data, only slightly behind the 25-34 age category. The number of individuals in this category rose from 323 in 2010 to 392 in 2020, which is an increase of 137 individuals. These are the older individuals from the baby boom generation and as younger baby boomers continues to age, this number will rise. The increase of the 65+ age category population will have short-term implications for housing, health care, transportation, recreation, and other services. The children produced by the post-war glut are now in their 60’s.
- This was the group that put enormous strain on the school systems in the 1960’s and 1970’s, and on the housing market in the 1980’s and 1990’s; now they are about to put the same strain on senior housing and health care services.

Seasonal Population:

All population data cited above refers to year-round residents. Readfield also has a sizeable seasonal population that includes camp owners/renters, visitors, day-trippers, and people staying at the summer camps.

There are few good measures of seasonal population. To quantify the seasonal population, data from the 2020 Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary report was used. Based on this report there are currently 770 homestead exemptions. From this information, out of the 977 households reported in the 2020 ACS, it can be ascertained that 207 of the households are seasonal or don't claim their property in Readfield as their primary residence.

At 2.07 percent of the total households, the fluctuation caused by the seasonal population should not have any significant negative effects nor should it be a major phenomenon, unlike many other central Maine communities that are more "lake towns" and host many camps. But as the town grows and evolves, the impact of the seasonal population will weaken.

Possibly the biggest contribution of the seasonal population to Readfield is in the tax base collected from their properties or their purchases in town when they visit. Since they are only in Readfield seasonally, their children do not attend Readfield school, furthering their tax contribution to Readfield. However, aside from tax contributions, Readfield has minimal dependence on the seasonal population.

School Enrollment Data:

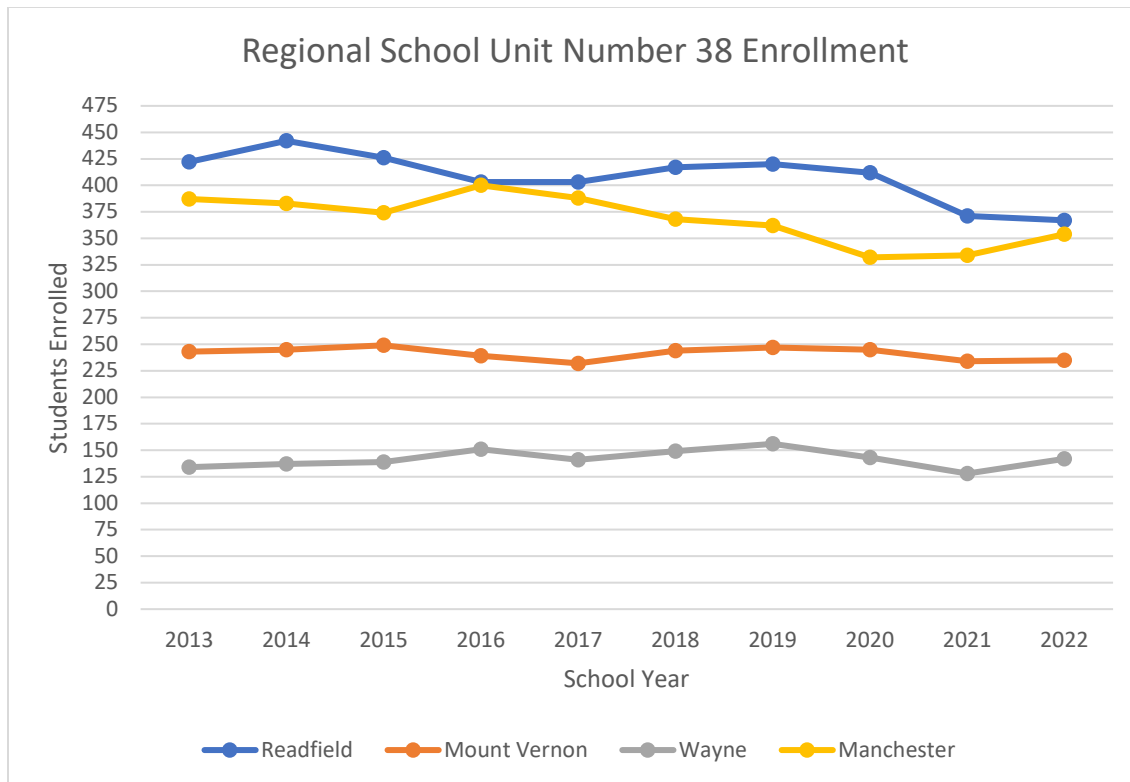
School enrollment is negatively correlated with the increasing population age and the reduced number of younger generations in Readfield: as the number of school-aged children drops, so does annual school enrollment.

In Figure 2, the towns of Readfield, Wayne, Mount Vernon and Manchester are included because they are all part of Regional School Unit (RSU) Number 38. Figure 2 shows that, historically, Readfield has a higher number of children enrolled annually than the other towns with which it shares a school district. However, like the other towns, Readfield is experiencing a drop in enrollment and has been since 2014, aside from a slight increase in 2019. This same approximate trend can be seen in the other towns' school enrollment numbers.

Table 4 includes data from Figure 2; however, Augusta and Kennebec County are included as well. While their enrollment numbers are higher, of course, the trend in decreasing school enrollment is clear in their data as well. As stated previously, Maine's overall median age is increasing, and the population of younger generations is decreasing. This trend has been progressing for nearly ten years, depending on datasets, and is not likely to change trajectory on its own accord. Each town will undoubtedly be affected by this trend; planning strategies should be discussed to prevent negative impacts.

The combination of increasing housing prices, the median age range in Maine, and the decreasing family sizes all contribute to the reduced school enrollment. As a state, Maine should consider the implications behind this trend. As a town, Readfield should prepare for future years of decreased school enrollment. Decreased school enrollment will affect everything from school bus routes, teaching jobs, school buildings, teaching styles, and the quality of education provided.

FIGURE 2- SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS FOR TOWNS IN REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT NUMBER 38



Source: Maine Department of Education, Student Enrollment Data

The data presented in Figure 2 and Table 4 reflect the reduced school enrollment over the past several years. The reduction in school enrollment effects many towns in the region and Kennebec County, as seen in Table 4.

TABLE 4: TEN-YEAR, SCHOOL ENROLLMENT DATA FOR REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT NO. 38, KENNEBEC COUNTY AND AUGUSTA

County/Town	School Year										10 yr Average
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Readfield	422	442	426	403	403	417	420	412	371	367	408.30
Mount Vernon	243	245	249	239	232	244	247	245	234	235	241.30
Wayne	134	137	139	151	141	149	156	143	128	142	142.00
Manchester	387	383	374	400	388	368	362	332	334	354	368.20
Augusta	2224	2167	2160	2209	2202	2268	2232	2277	2196	2170	2210.50
Kennebec	17327	17221	16965	16957	16798	16891	16790	16621	15843	16140	

Source: Maine Department of Education, Student Enrollment Data

The New England School Development Council (NESDEC) puts together school population projections each year. In the Enrollment Summary for these projections, NESDEC acknowledges that the global pandemic continues to influence the nation in unpredictable ways and there are many factors that could impact school enrollment. NESDEC also notes that projections are generally more reliable when they are closest in time to the current year. Projections four to ten years out may serve as a guide to future enrollments; however, they're data is less reliable due to unforeseen circumstances.

TABLE 5: RSU #38 ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

Enrollment Projections By Grade*																				
Birth Year	Births*	School Year	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	UNGR	K-12	PK-12	
2016	59	2021-22	39	65	76	84	77	92	79	101	103	98	91	91	88	94	0	1139	1178	
2017	72	2022-23	50	99	65	74	86	78	89	88	106	108	97	93	92	89	0	1164	1214	
2018	64	2023-24	51	88	99	64	76	87	76	99	92	111	107	99	94	93	0	1185	1236	
2019	67	2024-25	52	92	88	97	65	77	84	84	104	97	110	109	100	95	0	1202	1254	
2020	62	0	2025-26	53	86	92	86	99	66	75	93	88	109	96	112	110	102	0	1214	1267
2021	65	(est.)	2026-27	54	89	86	90	88	100	64	83	98	92	108	98	113	112	0	1221	1275
2022	66	(est.)	2027-28	55	91	89	84	92	89	97	71	87	103	91	110	99	115	0	1218	1273
2023	65	(est.)	2028-29	56	89	91	87	86	93	86	108	75	91	102	93	111	100	0	1212	1268
2024	65	(est.)	2029-30	57	90	89	89	89	87	90	95	113	79	90	104	94	113	0	1222	1279
2025	64	(est.)	2030-31	58	89	90	87	91	90	84	100	100	119	78	92	105	95	0	1220	1278
2026	65	(est.)	2031-32	59	90	89	88	89	92	87	93	105	105	118	79	93	107	0	1235	1294

Note: Ungraded students (UNGR) often are high school students whose anticipated years of graduation are unknown, or students with special needs - UNGR not included in Grade Combinations for 7-12, 9-12, etc.

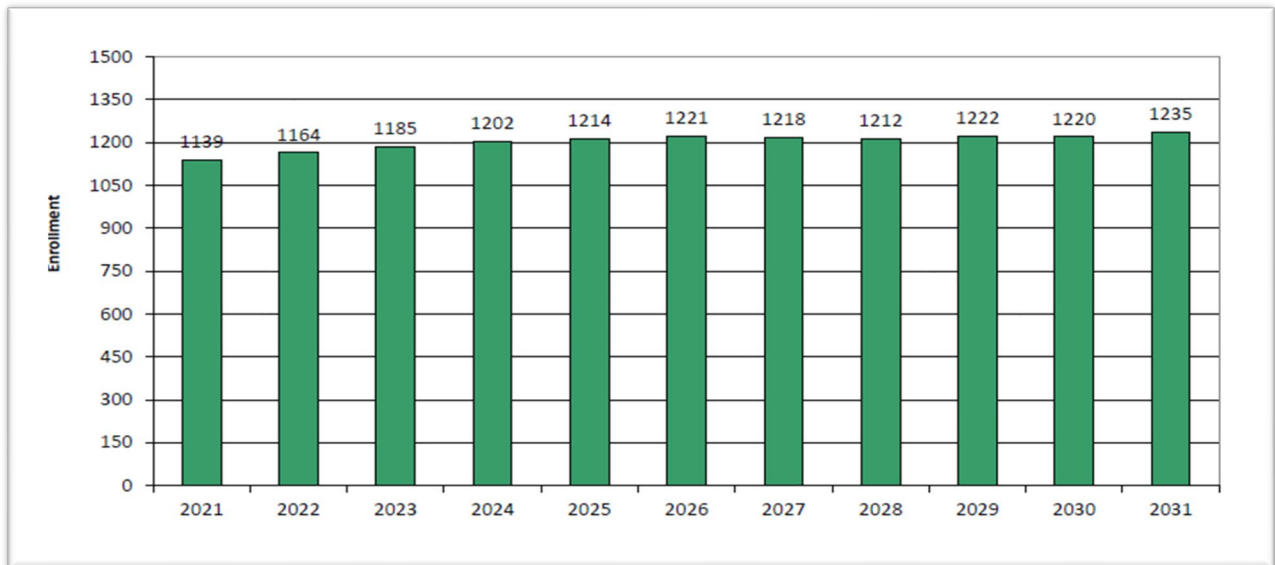
Based on an estimate of births
Based on children already born
Based on students already enrolled

*Birth data provided by Public Health Vital Records Departments in each state.

Source: New England School Development Council, 2021

The data presented in Table 5 above and Figure 3 below shows that over the next three years, K-5 enrollments are projected to increase by 30+ students, grades 6-8 are projected to decrease by 17 students, and grades 9-12 are projected to increase by 50 students, as students progress through the grades.

FIGURE 3: K-12 TO 2031 BASED ON DATA THROUGH SCHOOL YEAR 2021-22



Source: New England School Development Council, 2021

Figure 3 shows the slight increase in enrollment reflected in Table 5 above. Based on the bar graph in Figure 3, the projected increase in student enrollment in the K-5 and 9-12 range will outweigh the decline in student enrollment in the grades 6-8.

Overall, it is projected that school enrollment will become stable and maintain enrollment in the low 1200s range through the next few years.

Regional Perspective:

Readfield's development pattern is not unusual for Kennebec County. All the towns in this area prospered as farm towns during the 1800's, then went into decline after the Civil War and during westward expansion. This was followed by the urbanization period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when these towns began to grow again as suburbs and green spaces. The region's largest growth period was in the 1970's and 1980's but has slowed since.

Similarly, between 1960 to 1980, Fayette to the northwest, Mount Vernon and Vienna to the north, and Chesterville to the northwest, saw significant growth during this time period. No regional town saw population loss during this twenty-year period.

Likewise, Fayette also saw this population boom slow drastically in the time approximately between 1990 to 2010. Most towns in the region saw growth rates during

this period in the 20 to 30 percent range. Unexpectedly, both Augusta and Livermore Falls experienced significant population loss during this time. Augusta’s population decreased by 10.3% and Livermore Falls decreased by 7.8%.

Contrary to historical population trends in the region, there has been a movement on the national level, of urban renewal as younger Americans move and settle in cities. It can be assumed that Readfield, as a suburb of Augusta, will not see the level of population increases that it has for the past 50-year period.

Overall, the population changes and other data presented here reflect not only Kennebec County, but also Maine in some ways. For example, the median age in Readfield, Kennebec County, and Maine are all 44 years old, while the median age for the United States is 38 years old. The same trend can be seen in the average family size of the town, state, and county versus the United States. The population change in the county and state were also not as significant as the United States, either.

TABLE 6: STATE, COUNTY, TOWN STATISTICS

Town/ County/ State/ Country	Population Change		% Change	Average Family Size*	Median Age
	2010	2020		2020	2020
Readfield	2,598	2,597	-0.04%	2.89	44.7
Kennebec County	122,151	123,642	1.2%	2.9	44.1
Maine	1,328,361	1,362,359	2.6%	2.9	44.8
United States	234.6 million	331.4 million	7.4%	3.15	38.2

Source: 2010 U.S. Census & 2020 ACS

*This differs from the Average Household Size, which is 2.58 for Readfield. Household refers to those living together, related or not. Family refers to those who are living together and are related.

Population Projections and Impacts:

How much will Readfield change in the future? Population projections supply the short and easy answer. These are mathematical extrapolations of past population growth and factors such as age distribution and household size.

The Office of the State Economist publishes a projection to the year 2038 (they prepared it in 2018, based on Census data). They estimate Readfield’s population will be 2,611 (in 2038), a 0.5 percent increase from the current population of 2,597 in over 16 years. This is based partially on the advancing age of the residents and the overall observable trend, not necessarily a reflection of the popularity of the town. The Kennebec Valley Council of Governments also does population projections. It estimates a 2030

population between 2,842 and 3,100. This estimate is based solely on the overall slowing trend of population growth. It should be noted that both sources estimated a 2020 population of around 8,200 – 8,600 as of the last Comprehensive Plan (2010) and the current population at 2,597 is quite short of that.

Notice that both projections call for a decline from the originally proposed 2020 population projections, but at significantly different levels. Then, what good are projections? Projections are not a crystal ball; they are based on assumptions of trends from the recent past. However, trends can be managed. For example, if the local economy or housing market changes, that in turn, affects how the community grows and changes as well.

What does the future hold for us if we follow the path of the projections described above? Or what may happen to create a new future?

Growth in population and households increases the demand for public services and commercial development. Unless specifically designed for senior citizens, each new household must have one or more jobs to support it. Younger, larger households will generate school children. Nearly all households require added waste management and road maintenance costs. All these factors must be considered when projecting population growth.

Local policies and ordinances can also influence the style of housing and with it, the character of the population. Neighborhoods with large lots tend to add to building costs and require expensive homes to be built. Many times, these homes are 3-, 4-, or 5-bedroom and suitable for large families with young children. At the other extreme, housing units can be designed exclusively for senior populations with 1- and 2-person households. This type of development would more closely match the demand for housing but would not add as much to the growth potential of the town.

Another emerging trend is multigenerational housing. This living situation was born out of necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic and became the new normal. Multigenerational homes are those that include parents living with their adult children and grandchildren, for example. This is beneficial for the parents of the young children, as the grandparents can supply childcare, and it is beneficial for the grandparents as they also have access to care. This situation has proven financially beneficial for all involved. As of the 2020 Census, there were 34 individuals living with their grandchildren who were under the age of 18.