

**DRAFT**

**LEEDS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**September, 2012**

**LEEDS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
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## **A VISION FOR LEEDS-** **Based upon the Town visioning session of September 14, 2010.**

### **Character and Special Places**

Rural character, open space recreation opportunities, access to water bodies, people that work together and historical character are some of the important characteristics liked by those that live in Leeds. There is a good mix of town's people that include natives and recent transplants. People generally feel safe from crime and traffic in Leeds, unlike those in many other communities. Leeds Central School, churches, the historical society and caring neighbors help define Leeds' sense of community. Land owners allow others who do no harm to walk, ski, snowmobile, snowshoe, horseback ride and hunt on their lands.

People value clean air and water, access to surface waters, wildlife and places to hunt and snowmobile. All of these lead to a beautiful area known as Leeds.

Municipal facilities and government are working well with knowledge that changes will be needed in the future. The volunteer fire department is recognized for its outstanding service and community support. The DFD Russell Medical Center and RCAM are valuable community assets not commonly found in towns the size of Leeds. There is overall community pride and involvement. Leeds is still a small Maine town. People work hard, support their neighbors, maintain their homes and take pride in their small share of Maine's natural beauty.

### **Current Trends**

Leeds has seen steady growth in population over the last 30 years. It has a current population of around 2,140. While population is less than surrounding communities Leeds has seen the largest percent increase in population of those towns. New residents and their families have come to Leeds for a number of reasons. Natural beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities, small town atmosphere and spirit, land availability and its affordability are some of the reasons. Over the next 10 years population is expected to grow but at a slower rate than over the past 20 years. Along with the population growth has been growth in new single family homes. Since 2000 more than 220 new homes have been built or placed in Leeds indicating the town is a desirable place in which to live.

Leeds is a bedroom community meaning that most workers, 85%, leave town and travel elsewhere for their jobs. Auburn and Lewiston are the most common destinations. Workers are traveling further to places such as Augusta and Bath adding more traffic on roads. No longer do most people work in manufacturing jobs but jobs in education, health and social services.

The physical character of Leeds appears to many as unchanged. There are open fields used to grow corn and hay and large wooded areas. But there are forces at work that may alter these characteristics in the future. The agricultural community is facing tough times and traditional use of their lands and buildings may change.

## **Leeds' Vision for the Future**

In the future Leeds will still be a small town that people live in because of its natural and social environments. These will be the primary reasons for being here rather than for local employment. People that work will travel to Auburn and Lewiston and beyond for their jobs. There will be a stable tax base supported in part by business appropriate to Leeds. The town will not be known for being anti-business. Farm buildings that no longer shelter animals or feed will have found new uses that support the local economy. The opportunities that come with the rail line will be maximized. Access to communication and internet technology will be available to all that desire it.

There will be a strong sense of community, people will help their neighbors in times of need and residents in all areas of Leeds will feel that they are part of the community. There will be social networks for both the young and old and those in between. These networks will attract and retain families and bring the community closer together. These will include good schools, library services, outdoor recreation, an active historical society and perhaps a community gathering spot for social interaction. The history of the town will be maintained through efforts of the historical society.

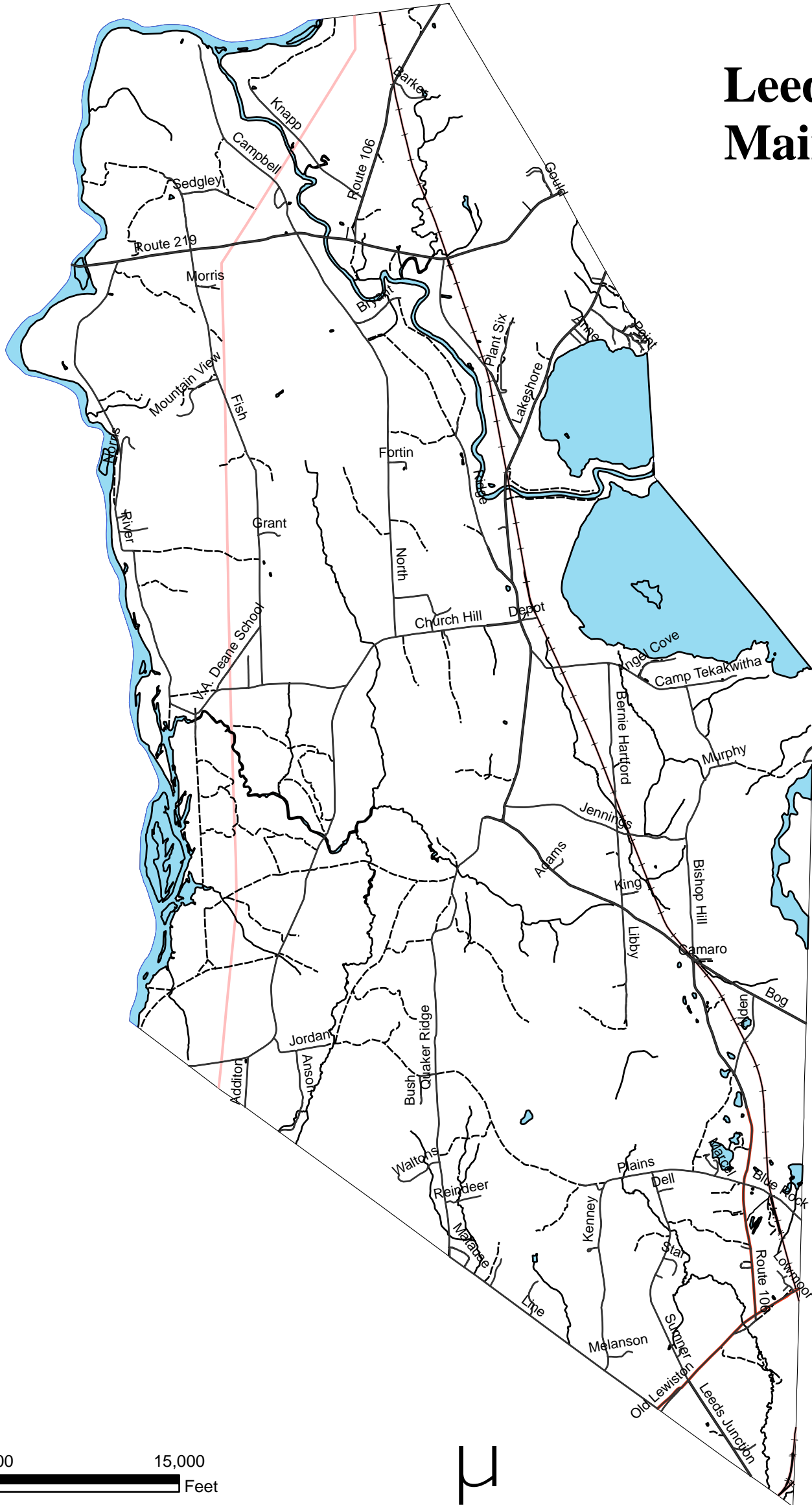
There will be undeveloped areas consisting of large tracts of open space that maintain water quality, scenic views, wildlife habitats and other related assets that residents enjoy. These areas will not be the result of overly restrictive land use regulation but rather the result of non-regulatory methods. Trails for bicycling, hiking and snowmobiling will be available. There will be an active ATV club that self-polices and works with land owners to maintain trail use.

Public facilities and services will meet the needs of all age groups without excessive tax rates. Community buildings and facilities will have been maintained to retain their serviceability and function. The volunteer fire department will be a strong component of the community and the Leeds Central School a social focal point. There will be public access to Androscoggin Lake and River and other water bodies for recreational use. Stinchfield Beach will be well managed and enjoyed by townspeople. Neighborhoods will be safe from crime and safe for outdoor activities. Their residents will accept traditional rural land uses.

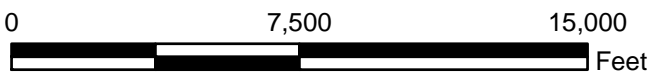
Land use regulation will protect valued characteristics including green spaces between homes. They will provide for low impact businesses in numerous locations while minimizing impacts on neighborhoods and important highways. Building development will be set back to retain a rural roadside. Larger lot areas will provide for private wells, septic, snow removal and runoff to avoid adding costly municipal services and burdening neighbors.

Most of all Leeds will continue to be the "ideal town" with caring people that are safe and proud to live here.

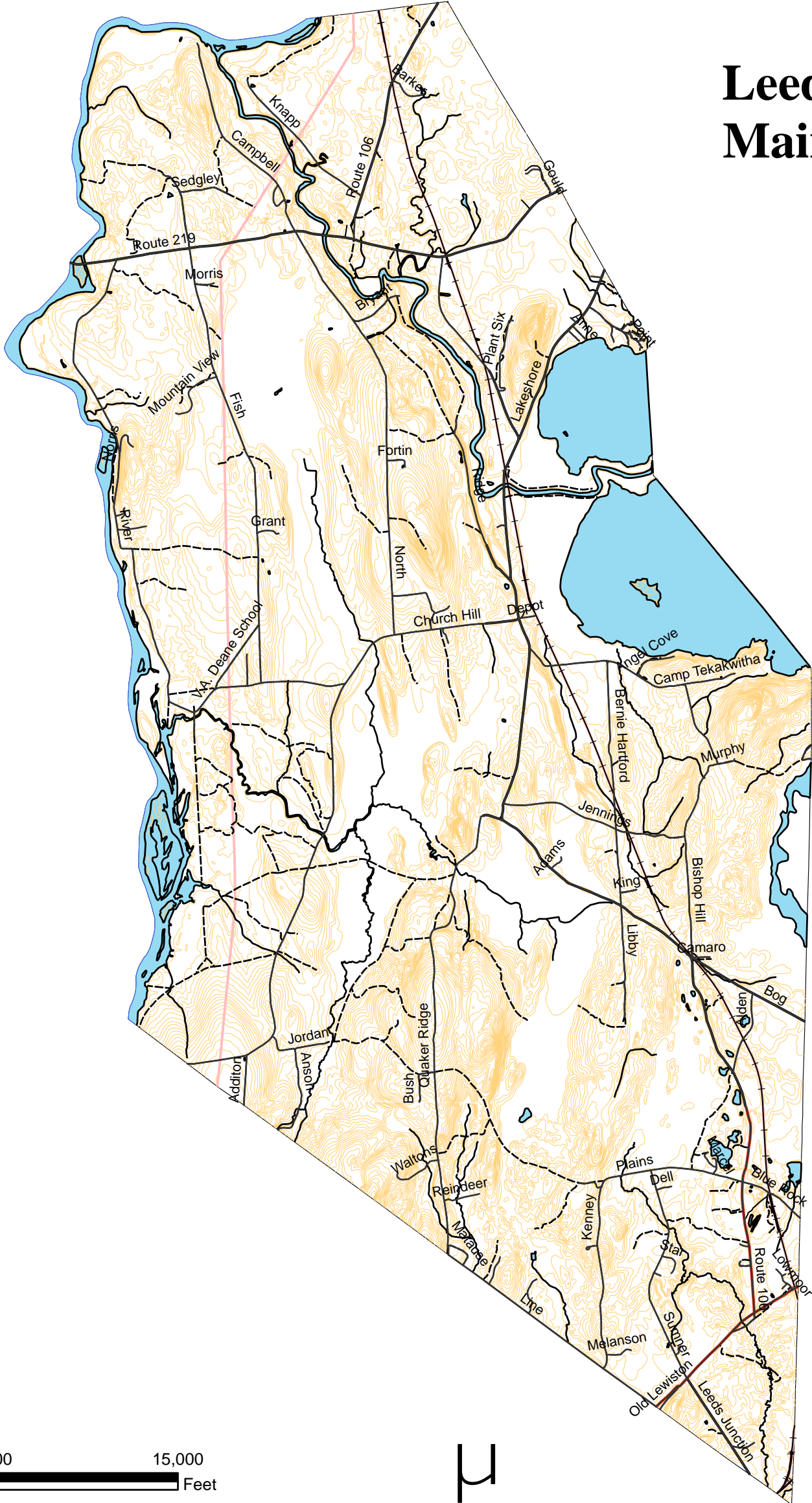
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