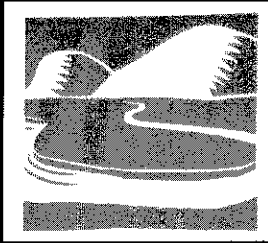


April 2003

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SOUTHERN MAINE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

# Regional Newsletter

## State of the State: Economic & Demographic Indicators

By Chuck Morgan, Economic and Community Development Director

The Maine State Planning Office posted their November economic analysis on the MaineGraph website, an internet-based pushbutton graphical database, <http://www.state.me.us/spo/economic/megraph.htm>. Recent economic data reveals the proclaimed economic recovery to be hanging by a thread. US real gross domestic product, which expanded at a 4% annual rate during the 3rd quarter, is widely expected to slow to a rate near 1% in the 4th quarter, due largely to weaker consumer spending.

Consumer spending, which accounts for about two-thirds of the US economy, has thus far kept the economy from dipping back into recession, but consumers are becoming stretched. Ample and cheap credit has been a key to sustained spending. Mortgage borrowing, through refinancing and equity loans, has been especially important, and the auto-makers' 0% financing deals have induced households to take on substantial amounts of auto debt. But, households are experiencing mounting credit problems. Personal bankruptcy filings, auto repossession rates, and foreclosure rates on conventional mortgages are all at record highs. And, delinquencies on non-mortgage consumer debt are up one-third from yearend 2001. The hope is that consumers can keep the economy afloat just a bit longer, until business investment and hiring begin to improve.

In Maine, while retail sales are doing fine, and real estate and residential construction show continued strength, employment growth has been near zero. Among the highlights in Maine:

- ◆ Payroll employment growth for the first 10 months of the year was only 0.1%, with manufacturing jobs declining by nearly 6,000.
- ◆ Taxable retail sales through September were up 4.5%, as compared to 2.1% growth in all of 2001, and 3.2% in 2000.
- ◆ Unemployment (seasonally adjusted) was only 4.1% in October, versus the 5.7% US rate. The Maine rate has hovered around 4% for the past year and a half.
- ◆ Housing permits are at their highest level since 1989.
- ◆ Existing home sales are still strong, ranging near 40,000 units per year rates over the past 2 years.
- ◆ Residential construction contract awards have been in record high territory all year.
- ◆ Bankruptcies continue to hover near record high levels.
- ◆ The TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) caseload has been rising since mid-2001, while the Food Stamp caseload has been increasing since mid- 2000.

In sum, while consumers have kept the Maine and national economies growing, they are beginning to feel the strain. Nor are they confident about the near-term future, as the Maine and national consumer confidence indexes both declined significantly in the past two quarters.

## **!!A New Web Site!!**

We have updated our web site and have a new address. We can now be found at [www.smrpc.org](http://www.smrpc.org). Please revise your Bookmarks.

## **!!New E-mail Addresses!!**

Starting on March 24<sup>th</sup>, the staff at SMRPC will be using new email addresses. We have provided a list and ask that you change your address book accordingly.

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## **Executive Director's Column**

By Paul Schumacher

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the York County Commissioners and the York County Budget Committee for their funding of memberships for York County communities to SMRPC. This funding allows us to continue to provide training, technical assistance, grant writing, ordinance and Comprehensive Plan development (among other things) to all communities. As you know we also seek a local contribution from all communities as well. This is necessary as we continue to work off the same level of funding at the county as we have for a number of years. I am particularly proud that we have been able to increase our level of service and available technology (such as in GIS) even with this level funding. We thank everyone for their support.

With this in mind we hope to engage in more regional efforts in the upcoming year. Already this year we have worked on the Eastern Trail Management District; presented to the Legislative Committee on the regional issues related to a casino in York County; presented to the Community Preservation Advisory Committee (CPAC) on Regional Open Space Planning; developed a strategic plan for the five town Three Rivers Land Trust; finished a project concerned with outleasing at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard; and of course continued to save communities money through cooperative purchasing (see enclosed article). A meeting on regionalization has been held by the York County Municipal Officials Association. Who says there is nothing going on at the regional level?

I hope our efforts at the regional level will become even more vigorous this year. A lot of this, of course, depends on the outcome and process involved with the casino location. If there were ever a truly regional project, a casino in York County may be it. However, the role of this organization needs to be guided by you (our membership). While we have not taken a position pro or con regarding the casino, we are a regional planning agency and thus should be analyzing regional impacts. The lack of any institutionalized regional response to a project of this size (the project could be a new BMW plant for that matter) speaks volumes about the ability of this state and region to deal with developments with a regional impact. In fact, it may take a project of this magnitude to direct our towns and state to take a new look at how we address these projects.

*Paul Schumacher*

## Is Your Community's Definition of "Subdivision" Registered Yet?

By J.T. Lockman, Planning Director

Well, you surely have heard of registering your car or your dog, but how about registering your definition? Please note that if your community has an ordinance definition of "subdivision" that is different than the one employed by the State Subdivision Statute in Title 30A, sec. 4401, it must be registered at the County Registry of Deeds by June 30, 2003.

Failure to register your local definition by the June 30 deadline will result in your definition automatically reverting to the State definition. However, properly registered municipal definitions can remain in effect until January 1, 2006. At that point in time, just under three years from now, all municipal definitions will be then preempted by the state's subdivision definition, as laid out in the statute.

Perhaps you are wondering what this is all about, and why the state wishes to restrict local definitions. Apparently the proliferation of unique, local definitions of subdivisions has been a plague to the community of attorneys, title insurers, and appraisers. These professionals are finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with the variety of Land Use Ordinances and Subdivision Regulations in the many jurisdictions they work in. They successfully argued that there is a compelling state interest in standardizing the definition of a subdivision. As a result of this bill, by the beginning of 2006, all municipalities will use the single statutory definition of a subdivision.

At this time, the land use section staff recommends that communities simply define the word "subdivision" by reference to the statute, as amended. That way, as the legislature continues to make changes each session, the ordinances or regulations of individual communities will not become outdated. For the complete text of Title 30A MRSA Sec. 4401, part 4, subpart H-1, go to the State's website at <http://janus.state.me.us/legis/statutes/30-a/title30-asec4401.html>.

## Legislative Watch: Growth Caps, Moratoria, and Impact Fees to Protect Affordable Housing

By J.T. Lockman, Planning Director

Those communities working on creating or amending "Growth Caps" during this Town Meeting cycle should monitor several bills that are being heard by legislative committees during March. LD's 395 and 531, "An Act to Clarify the Use of Municipal Rate of Growth Ordinances," proposes significant limitations on the use of this popular tool. Provisions in the proposal, put forward by Rep. Ed Suslovic of Portland, include requiring temporary use of caps (only 2 years in any 10 year period) in those municipalities without an approved, consistent Comprehensive Plan. The time during the cap must be spent on preparing to improve facilities or services needed to accommodate growth.

Those communities who wish to enact permanent caps would be required to justify such a cap in an approved, consistent Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan justification would have to identify capacity problems with municipal facilities and services, provide a strategy for increasing such services in the Capital Investment Plan, and link the level of the cap to the "allocation of existing and future capacity regarding municipal facilities and services.

LD 453, "An Act to Promote the Development of Affordable Housing," proposed by Rep. Nancy Sullivan of Biddeford, would exempt affordable housing projects from adherence to any growth caps, moratoria, or impact fees. If enacted, affordable housing projects would certainly have several significant regulatory stumbling blocks removed.

For the full text and status of these bills, visit the State Website, at <http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/>, and type in the LD number you wish to investigate.

## Continuing the Smart Growth Dialogue: The Community Preservation Advisory Committee

By Maine State Planning Office

The Community Preservation Advisory Committee is charged with advising the Governor, Legislature, State Planning Office, and other agencies and entities on matters relating to community preservation, growth management, and sprawl. To prepare for its annual Report to the Legislature, the Committee met three times this Fall.

During the first two meetings, the members of the Committee discussed short-term (1-year) and long-term (5-year) goals. The Committee's third meeting focused on finalizing proposals the Committee wishes to support during the upcoming Legislature. By the end of the meeting, the Committee had agreed on forwarding eight legislative pro-

posals and four recommendations to Executive Agencies. The legislative topics proposed focus on: integrating transportation and land use planning; providing increased options for encouraging transit or public transportation systems; encouraging local development of affordable housing; providing tax increment financing as a tool for the development of affordable housing; encouraging the adoption of local building and rehab codes; clarifying state expectations for rate of growth ordinances ("growth caps"); and addressing referenda that retroactively reverse local decisions.

The CPAC Affordable Housing Subcommittee met on December 15th. The subcommittee includes a subgroup of the Committee and several interested parties. The group discussed the use of tax increment financing (TIFs) as a tool to encourage development of affordable housing, and the administrative changes necessary to facilitate that tool (including where the program would be housed, how it would be financed, etc.). The group also discussed options for providing incentives to local communities who work with developers to bring additional housing opportunities to the parts of Maine that are most unaffordable.

For more information, or if you are interested in staying informed of the Committees meetings and activities and are not already on the email mailing list, please contact Liz Rettenmaier at [liz.retttenmaier@maine.gov](mailto:liz.retttenmaier@maine.gov) or 287-6417. More information about the Committee, including information and materials from the first meeting, is available online at the CPAC web site: <http://www.state.me.us/spo/cpip/cpac/>.

## **2001 Solid Waste & Recycling Data**

**By State Planning Office**

The State Planning Office has completed compiling and calculating the 2001 municipal and regional solid waste and recycling data. The 2001 Municipal and Regional Solid Waste and Recycling Reports have been sent to each town and region. Each regional planning commission was sent copies of the 2001 Municipal and Regional Solid Waste and Recycling Reports. In addition, Excel spreadsheets with key data from 1993 to 2001 were sent to each town and region. The 2001 Solid Waste and Recycling statewide report has been prepared and distributed. Maps showing 1) 2001 Recycling Rates, 2) Solid Waste Disposal, and 3) Regional Recycling Centers have been prepared. The 2001 Recycling Rates and some of the key summary data from 1993-2001 are available on the State Planning Office's website: [www.recyclemaine.com](http://www.recyclemaine.com). Copies of the above 2001 Solid Waste and Recycling data is available from the State Planning Office. Please contact Hank Tyler, 287-1489, or [hank.tyler@state.me.us](mailto:hank.tyler@state.me.us).

## **Turnpike Authority Donates Hybrid Vehicle**

**By Dave Carpenter, Kids and Transportation Coordinator**

On January 27, students at the Biddeford Regional Technical Center had an opportunity to poke around under the hood of a 2003 Honda Civic gasoline powered/electric assisted Hybrid vehicle. The Hybrid was donated to the Kids and Transportation Program of York County by the Maine Turnpike Authority.

"Today's transportation decision-makers are forever wrestling with the demands for greater traffic capacity and the environmental and social impacts of expanding that capacity, said Turnpike Authority Chairman, Samuel M. Zaitlin. As the operator of Maine's primary transportation artery, we believe the Turnpike Authority has a responsibility to investigate and understand emerging technologies and alternatives, including breakthroughs in fuel efficient vehicles," said Turnpike Authority Chairman, Samuel M. Zaitlin.

Zaitlin said the decision to purchase the hybrid vehicle resulted from a unique convergence of interests. The Maine Turnpike Authority wanted to become knowledgeable and prepared to deal with future transportation technologies and the York County Kids and Transportation Program wanted to provide exciting, hands-on learning opportunities to the students and teachers they serve. As the primary vehicle for the Kids and Transportation Program, the Honda Civic Hybrid will be driven on local roads and highways, in stop and go traffic and on long distance rides as it is driven from school to school throughout York County. The Hybrid will serve as an effective teaching tool for the Program.

Transportation and its impact on the environment, community development and the quality of life here in Maine is an enormously challenging issue for the coming generation especially when we consider that Maine's population is projected to increase by 100,000 people over the next 15 years. The Hybrid will allow us to bring the newest wave of transportation technology into the classroom. For more information, visit the Kids in Transportation website at [www.katyc.org](http://www.katyc.org).

## Case Notes

By Madge Baker, Esq.

*City of Old Town v. Antonios Dimoulas*, Maine Supreme Judicial Court, decided August 9, 2002  
Zoning case

Facts: The Dimoulases operate a store in a residential zone. It was considered a permitted use because neighborhood groceries are permitted in the zone. In 1995 the Dimoulases added seats so people could eat deli items in the store. The Code Enforcement Officer said no. The Dimoulases appealed to the Board of Appeals and won on the grounds this was a secondary use requiring about 10% of the floor space. Then, in November 1997 they obtained a victualer's license. The license was revoked after the CEO inspected the premises and found the eating area comprised more than 10% of the floor space. When they appealed this determination they asked the Planning Board to rezone the property from Residential to Commercial. The Planning Board found that rezoning would be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and refused the rezoning. The Dimoulases submitted the request to rezone as a referendum question. The voters passed it. The Dimoulases appealed the denial of a victualer's license to the City Council. The Council did not rule on the appeal. On June 24, 1998 the City and two neighbors filed a complaint in Superior Court seeking a declaratory judgment that the amendment adopted by referendum was void because it failed to comply with the Comprehensive Plan and constituted spot zoning. The Dimoulases counterclaimed seeking damages for violations of their civil rights, and for defamation. At the same time they filed for site plan review. They received approval and were issued a victualer's license in October.

Meanwhile, Superior Court denied the defamation claim, and a jury trial was held on other issues. "The jury found that (1)the amendment to the ordinance adopted by referendum was invalid because it was inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, (2) the amendment constituted illegal spot zoning, (3) the property is located in an R1-S district and consequently is not zoned for use as a restaurant, (4) the Dimoulases were nevertheless entitled to continue operating the market Café as a restaurant because the approval of the site plan was res judicata and the City was estopped from claiming that the Dimoulases could not operate a restaurant, and (5) the City had violated the Dimoulases civil rights, and the Dimoulases were damaged in the amount of \$2,500."

Superior Court upheld the jury on items 1,2,3, and 4, but not 5. Both parties appealed.

Issues: 1. Was the referendum consistent with the Comprehensive Plan?

2. Did the referendum result in spot zoning?

3. Were the Dimoulases constitutional rights infringed?

4. Should the defamation claim have been denied?

Ruling:

1. With respect to the Comprehensive Plan the Court examined the Plan language. The Dimoulases' store is located in the Stillwater area. The Plan says, in part: "Downtown is still an important local commercial center, although Stillwater Avenue had superseded downtown as the principal commercial area. . . .The Stillwater area grew up around the ledges in Stillwater. Although Stillwater village is not a commercial center, it remains a desirable residential community." In another place the Plan says: "There is now a great deal of commercial activity along Stillwater Avenue." The Court arrived at a conclusion quite rapidly on this issue. The opinion reads, in part: "The City argues that the absence of a statement affirmatively allowing commercial development in the Stillwater area should be interpreted to mean that no commercial development is permitted. We disagree. The absence of language expressly allowing commercial development in the Stillwater area does not necessarily mean that no development is allowed, and some commercial development in that area is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan."

## Case Notes, Continued

2. The issue of spot zoning the Court dismisses for this one reason: "Because the City has failed to establish that this ordinance is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the ordinance does not constitute illegal spot zoning."
3. The Court did not find that the Dimoulases were denied due process with respect to the victualer's license, and thus their constitutional rights were not infringed.
4. The Court found that summary judgment was proper on the defamation claim.

Comment: I have included more detail than usual because I thought the case would be of special interest. Remember, you can find the entire opinion at: [www.courts.state.me.us/opinions](http://www.courts.state.me.us/opinions). I wondered a bit why the City fought this case so adamantly. I suspect one reason was the Dimoulases business was in a residential shore overlay zone. Another may well have been the desire by the City to discourage landowners from seeking to have their property rezoned by means of a referendum.

***Doggett v. Town of Gouldsboro***, Maine Supreme Judicial Court, decided December 18, 2002  
Zoning case

Facts: Jane Doggett was granted a variance to expand a cottage on her shorefront property in Gouldsboro. Within 30 days the ZBA reconsidered their decision on the variance and revoked it. Unfortunately, they never notified Doggett of the proceeding. She received a notice of the revocation, and appealed. The Superior Court vacated the revocation and remanded the case to the ZBA for a new proceeding. Doggett then appealed to the Supreme Judicial Court. Meanwhile, the reconsideration got underway.

Ruling: The appeal is dismissed. The case is remanded to the Town for a conclusion of the reconsideration of the variance appeal.

***Priestly v. Town of Hermon***, Maine Supreme Judicial Court, decided January 22, 2003  
Zoning case

Facts: Daniel Priestly applied for a permit to construct a 199-foot tall "broadcast transmission facility." The Town considered the structure to be a "communications tower," a use permitted in some zones but not in the zone Priestly wanted to build it in. Priestly argued that it was an "essential service" and therefore permitted. The permit was denied. The ZBA found that it was more of a communication tower than an essential service and upheld the CEO's decision. Priestly appealed.

Issue: Is the use permitted or prohibited?

Ruling: The Court found that the proposed use falls within the plain meaning of a clearly defined term: a communication tower. "Priestly misconstrues the definition of 'essential services' when he contends that his radio tower is an 'essential service.' Under the Land Use Ordinance, the tower is not an 'essential service,' first, because it is not a radio station, and second, because even if it were, a radio station is not an 'essential service' merely because it is required to participate in the Emergency Broadcast System."

## Coastal Resources Planning Updates

By Sue Schaller, Coastal Resources Planner

Save the date! The 2003 Maine Beaches Conference is set for July 9th! Check our website [www.smrpc.org](http://www.smrpc.org) for more information as the date gets closer!

The Wells Bay Regional Beach Management Plan has been signed and we will be working to advance the implementation of this plan in the months ahead.

Implementation of the Saco Bay Regional Beach Management Plan has largely been focusing on discussions about Camp Ellis between the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Implementation Team. During March, instrumentation was deployed to collect nearshore data on waves, currents and tides. The data will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of several options being considered for modifying the North jetty at Camp Ellis.

Bayscaping! is coming to southern Maine! This program offers homeowners, gardeners, landscapers, and property managers techniques for keeping landscapes green and coastal waters clean by reducing the use of fertilizers and pesticides. These products are increasingly found in coastal waters, carried by rainfall (and snowmelt) into surface runoff, and from there to stormwater drainage systems and coastal waters. Reducing stormwater pollution benefits residents and visitors alike, as well as our coastal fisheries and the fish and wildlife who live here with us.

**Dune Revegetation:** Over the past five years, beach grass (*Ammophila breviligulata*) and other dune plants have died off in some communities along the Atlantic coast, leaving large dead sections of brown dune. Research has shown that this has been caused by a combination of plant parasites and pathogens (fungi). While healthy plants can normally tolerate some parasites and pathogens, other conditions sometimes combine to make the vegetation much more susceptible, resulting in full vegetative die-off. These conditions include 1) drought, 2) lack of nutrients in the dune soil, and 3) the lack of beneficial root fungi, which help dune plants absorb nutrients. Dunes which are occasionally over-washed by waves during storms may be receiving beneficial nutrients in seaweed and other naturally occurring ocean "litter", as well as receiving moisture and sand. For years the sand was thought to be important because partial burial caused beach grass to put out new roots, leading to additional growth. Beginning in September, several test plots were established at Old Orchard Beach which were planted with beach grass seed and mulched with seaweed. These plots are areas that have been dead for 3-5 years, allowing time for many of the parasites to die off as well. Mulching with seaweed holds the seed in place until germination, and will protect the young plants in two ways. First, it provides organic matter to the dune soil which holds moisture and will protect the plants from drought stress. Second, as the seaweed breaks down, it slowly fertilizes the soil. Studies have shown that dune vegetation which has two of three requirements met, can thrive, even in the presence of parasites. Those three requirements are 1) adequate soil moisture, 2) adequate soil nutrients, and 3) beneficial root fungi. Much to our surprise, the portion of one test plot which was planted in September had sprouted by Thanksgiving. Hopefully, we will see all three plots green again this summer!

## Grant Program Announced

By Maine State Planning Office

The Grant Program Statement for FY03 is currently available on SPO's new web site at <http://www.state.me.us/spo/landuse/finassist/grants.php>. The grant statements for each grant type are in separate PDF files as are the grant applications, so you'll need to download each one, if you want the full program statement. Printed versions of the program statement are expected to be available and distributed next week. They are currently being printed. The deadline for all grant applications, with the exception of the Regional Challenge Grants, is Friday, April 11. The Regional Challenge Grants are non-competitive grants and have no deadline. If you have any questions, please direct them to Fred Landa at [fred.landa@maine.gov](mailto:fred.landa@maine.gov) or 287-3860.

## SMRPC Bid Savings 2001-2002

TOWN	SALT	PAPER	FUEL OIL	ROAD STRIPING	TOTAL SAVINGS
Acton	\$3,593	\$372			\$3,966
Alfred	\$3,348		\$0	0	\$3,946
Arundel	\$2,650	\$71	\$280	\$598	\$3,276
Berwick	\$11,107	\$274	\$380	\$275	\$12,035
Biddeford	\$0				\$0
Buxton	\$9,780	\$225	\$240	\$0	\$10,245
Cornish	\$2,777				\$2,777
Dayton	\$3,077	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,077
Eliot	\$0				\$0
Hollis	\$9,587			\$16	\$9,603
Kennebunk	\$10,432	\$369			\$10,801
Kennebunkport	\$2,275	\$59		\$526	\$2,861
Kittery	\$0	\$184		\$0	\$184
Lebanon	\$12,279				\$12,279
Limerick	\$3,239			\$0	\$3,239
Limington	\$0				\$0
Lyman	\$4,988				\$4,988
Newfield	\$2,514				\$2,514
N. Berwick	\$5,993				\$5,993
Ogunquit	\$763	\$0			\$763
Old Orchard	\$5,081	\$739		\$495	\$6,315
Parsonsfield	\$6,679				\$6,679
Saco	\$13,089	\$1,804		\$4,045	\$18,938
SAD #6	\$0	\$0			\$0
Sanford	\$27,311	\$1,600		\$0	\$28,911
Shapleigh	\$4,836	\$50		\$94	\$4,980
S. Berwick	\$0	\$218	\$880	\$479	\$1,577
Waterboro	\$0	\$17			\$17
Wells	\$8,810	\$249	\$600	\$1,825	\$11,484
York	\$0	\$382			\$382
YORK COUNTY					
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$154,209</b>	<b>\$6,614</b>	<b>\$2,380</b>	<b>\$8,352</b>	<b>\$171,830</b>
Baldwin	\$1,967				\$1,967
Brownfield	\$2,723	\$20			\$2,743
Denmark	\$2,775		\$68		\$2,843
Fryeburg	\$8,444		\$108		\$8,552
Hiram	\$5,399	\$141	\$240		\$5,780
Lovell	\$1,998				\$1,998
MSAD #72		\$447			
Porter	\$1,836	\$3			\$1,838
Stoneham	\$374	\$8			\$382
Stow	\$0				\$0
Sweden	\$2,306		\$48		\$2,354
OXFORD/CUMB					
COUNTY	\$27,821	\$619	\$464		\$26,490
<b>GRAND</b>					
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$182,030</b>	<b>\$7,233</b>	<b>\$2,844</b>	<b>\$8,352</b>	<b>\$198,320</b>

## **Stay Tuned for Spring Workshops!**

**Maine State Subdivision Statute – What Planners Need to Know**  
**Thursday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003, 7 p.m., Massabesic High School Cafeteria, Waterboro**  
**Presented by J.T. Lockman, Kate Albert, & Jamie Oman-Saltmarsh, SMRPC Land Use Team**

**Zoning Board of Appeals Workshop**  
**Mid-June 2003, Location to be Announced**  
**Presented by The Honorable Paul Fritzsche and Madge Baker, Esq.**

### **New Service Center Rule Finalized and Updated List Released**

By Maine State Planning Office

Even if you don't live in one of Maine's service center communities, most likely you work, do most of your shopping, and get most of your services in one. Maine's Service Center communities are job centers, retail centers, and they offer an array of social, cultural, health, and financial services to the surrounding region. Although they act like cities, they don't always look like them – Maine's Service Center communities range in population from 718 (Jackman) to 64,249 (Portland).

Service Center communities play a critical role in Maine—one recognized by a Legislative Study Committee back in 1998 and by several pieces of legislation passed over the intervening years since then. The Legislature, concerned that certain policies and programs did not give adequate recognition—and sometimes disadvantaged—service centers, has directed agencies to recognize the centers in some programs.

The Legislature also directed the State Planning Office to develop, by rule, a methodology for identifying service centers. The Service Center Methodology Rule was finalized in October 2002. Defined in the Planning and Land Use Regulation Act, "Service Center community" means a municipality or group of municipalities identified according to a methodology that includes four basic criteria, including level of retail sales, jobs-to-workers ratio, the amount of federally assisted housing and the volume of service sector jobs. Based on the Service Center Methodology, Maine's 77 regional service centers include 63 municipalities that meet basic criteria, as well as portions of 14 adjacent municipalities (Census Designated Places and MDOT Compact Urban Areas) that meet certain criteria.

Maine's Service Center communities are targeted by several state programs and policies that aim to reverse the trends of population outflow and economic decline experienced by many of the service centers. For example, Service Center downtowns are given priority in the location of state office buildings, state courts and other state civic buildings that serve public clients and customers; the recently funded Municipal Investment Trust Fund prioritizes Service Centers, communities with certified growth management programs and consistent comprehensive plans, and multi-community projects with regional benefit.

Although there has been a steadily increasing exodus of retail and commercial businesses, Maine's Service Centers retain a strong concentration of jobs: 74 percent of jobs (and 86 percent of service sector jobs) were located in the Service Centers, according to Maine Department of Labor surveys in 2000, and Service Centers accounted for 75 percent of statewide retail sales.

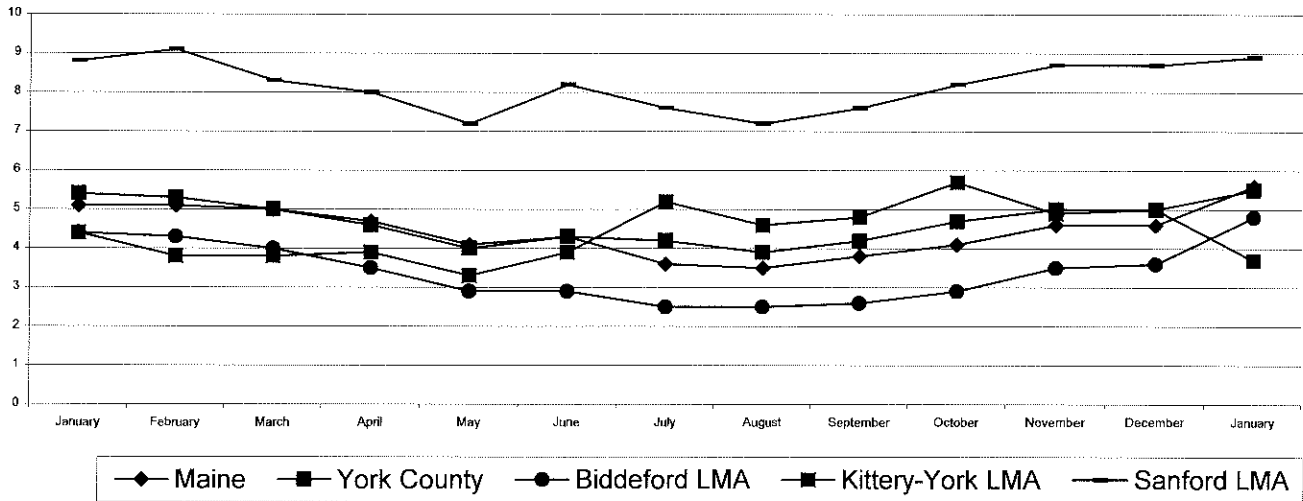
However, while jobs remain steady in Service Centers, populations are declining. According to the 2000 Census, Maine's 63 Service Center communities were home to just 43.7 percent of the state's population. And, although only 40.4 percent of the housing in the state is located in Service Center communities, these communities included over 75 percent of federally assisted multi-family housing units. These data support preliminary Census 2000 data analyses suggesting that out-migration from Maine's urbanized areas is leaving behind a disproportionate number of persons who are elderly, impoverished, and/or dependent on special social services. The average per capita income for service centers was \$18,289, six percent lower than the statewide average of \$19,533. For more information on the Methodology or the list of Service Center communities, visit the SPO website at <http://www.state.me.us/spo/cpip/new/new.htm> or contact John DelVecchio at 287-8058 or [john.delvecchio@maine.gov](mailto:john.delvecchio@maine.gov).

# Unemployment Rates in York County Continue to Rise

By Chuck Morgan, Economic and Community Development Director

Overall, unemployment rates in York County have risen over the past year. This is due to several factors. Business closures and lay-offs have occurred in significant numbers in the Sanford Labor Market Area and have totaled over 1,800 in the past 18-24 months. In January 2003 the Sanford LMA had the 9<sup>th</sup> highest unemployment rate in the State of Maine. Regional employment weakness continues to have a dragging effect on employment as York County rates have consistently met or exceeded State averages toward the end of 2002 and the beginning of 2003.

Unemployment Rate January 2002-2003 (by percentage)



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