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POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

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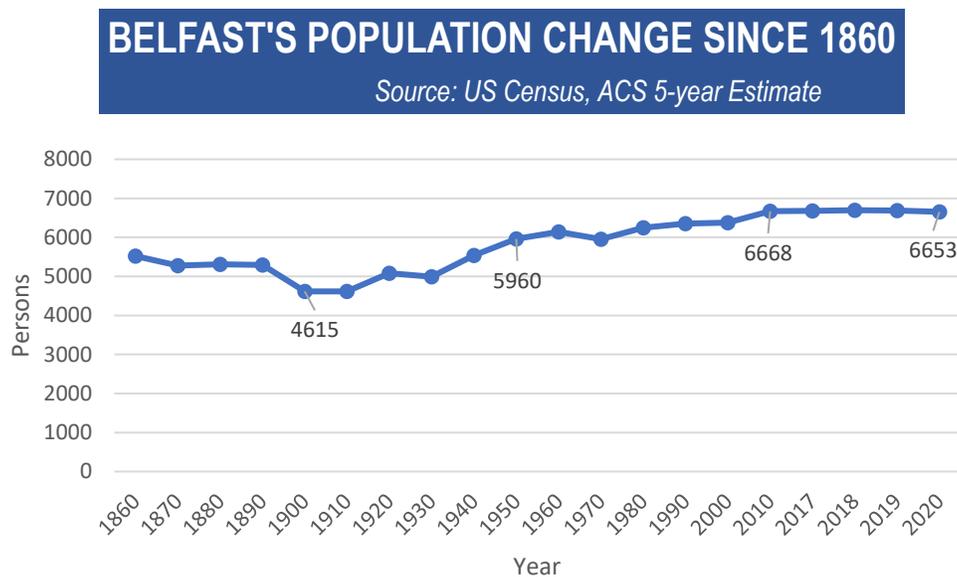
INTRODUCTION

An important goal of a municipal comprehensive plan is to relate the demographics of a community with its economy, development and environment. Most of the chapters and the recommendations of this plan are dependent upon or strongly influenced by the size and composition of the City of Belfast’s current and forecasted population, both year-round and seasonal.

POPULATION TRENDS

Belfast’s population growth has remained relatively consistent over the past 70 years (since 1950), with population ranging between 6,000 and 6,700. There have been periods of no growth and decline during the late 1800s, early 1900s, 1930s and in the 1960s. More recently, Belfast has experienced modest growth. In 2000, 6,381 people lived in Belfast, and according to the American Community Survey, by 2019 the population was estimated at 6,688 (See Table 6-1); a relatively small increase over nineteen years. Since 1960, Belfast’s growth rate has been outpaced by Waldo County, echoing trends of many regions, where outlying areas attract more new residents than do their service center communities.

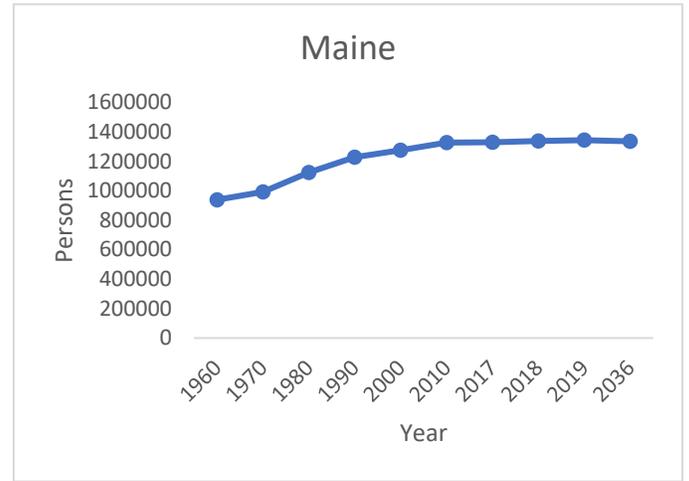
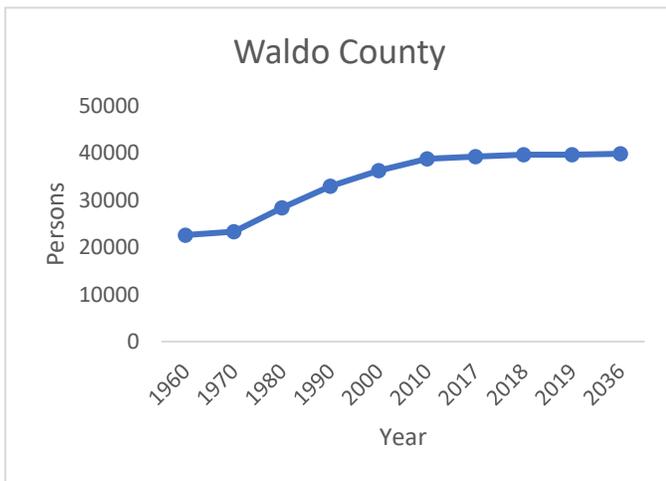
POPULATION PROJECTIONS



Changes in land use within Belfast including new year-round residential development will determine the actual population growth or decline in the City. The implications of changing population demographics include new demands for municipal services to support the aging

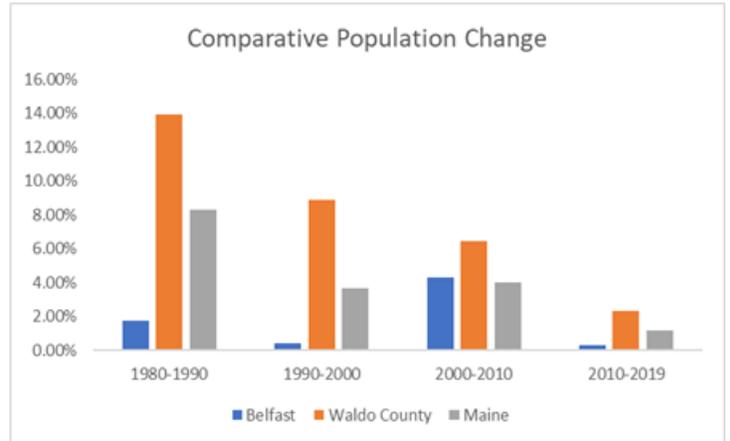
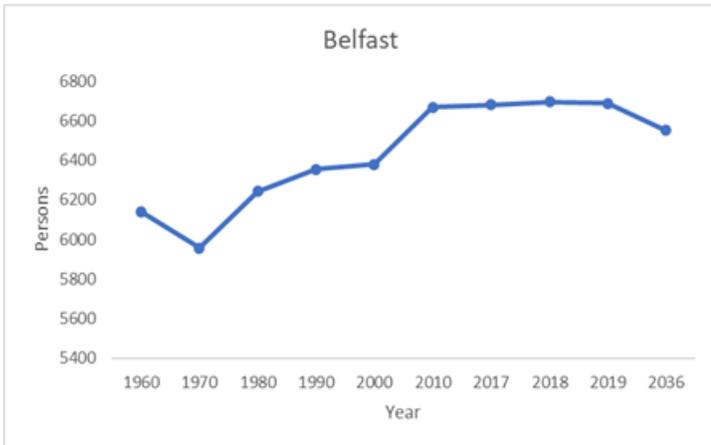
population, workforce challenges, and funding. See the Public Facilities Chapter for more discussion and recommendations.

If recent trends continue, the need for housing for the elderly, from independent living to assisted living facilities, will increase. The private sector has developed senior housing to meet the needs of more affluent retirees; the 2004 expansion of the Tall Pines facility is an example of such. A 32 unit elderly housing project was constructed in 2002 by Volunteers of America, and in 2012, the 24 unit Goose River Elderly Housing project on Swan Lake. As of 2020, 49 new affordable housing units will be constructed in Belfast on Wight St. after Governor Janet Mills released a \$15 million senior housing bond (Bangor Daily News, 2020). The City will continue to pursue subsidized housing for low and moderate-income people. See the Housing Chapter for more information on housing trends and needs.



Since 1960, the population of both Waldo County and the State of Maine have been steadily increasing. It is anticipated that by 2036, both populations should start to stabilize. By 2036, the State Planning Office forecasts that Waldo County will have 39,879 persons and the State’s population will total 1,337,568, both increases from current population levels.

Since 1990, Belfast’s population has been steadily increasing. Between 2017-2019 the population has remained fairly constant. According to the State Economist Office, by 2036, Belfast’s population is projected to decrease to 6,552 and decline by a rate of -0.2% after 2019. Births to Belfast residents between 2011 and 2018 totaled 1,377, while deaths totaled 1,286. Natural change (births minus deaths) accounted for a net increase of 91 persons. Accordingly, modest population gains from 2010-2017 are the result of people moving into Belfast, in addition to births to Belfast residents.



SEASONAL POPULATION TRENDS

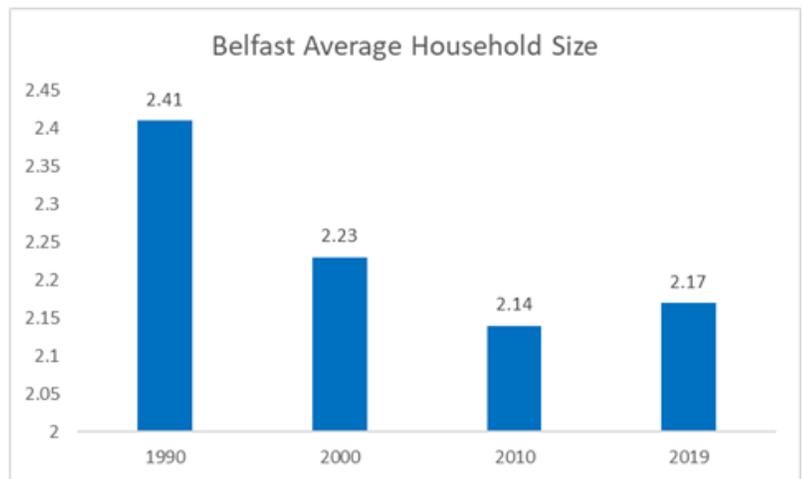
As a scenic, coastal community with a lively and historic downtown and active waterfront, Belfast experiences significant increases in seasonal populations and has hotels, motels and inns offering accommodations. Relative to some neighboring coastal communities, Belfast has a modest number of seasonal residences; about 216 in 2010. It is anticipated that this figure will increase in future years as Belfast has experienced an increase in commercial and seasonal visitor activity in the past 5 years. Also, new industrial/service developments such as the Front Street Shipyard may result in an increase in the number of seasonal residents. See the Housing Chapter for more information.

Belfast, like other communities, cannot predict how the tourist profile may change over the next ten years with any accuracy. That said, the number of seasonal events in Belfast has grown dramatically over the past several years, as has the creative economy, which is perhaps best illustrated by the growth of Waterfall Arts, the Friday Night Artwalks, and the establishment of the Belfast Creative Coalition with the assistance of a Maine Arts Commission Grant. These developments, when coupled with our waterfront location, vibrant downtown, our location on Route 1, and our proximity to significant population centers in Maine all appear to be fueling an increase in short-term (1 day) and longer-term visitation by tourists. A very important component of such is the number of visitors from other Maine communities which like to visit Belfast.

Based mostly on anecdotal comment, it appears that quite a few residents of Belfast became interested in settling here after first visiting the community as a tourist. These residents are generally older individuals and families whose children have started families of their own. Empty nesters make up the largest group of new residents and also may continue to comprise a large portion of our tourism market.

In addition to accommodations, many restaurants and retail stores see much of their sales activity occur during the expanding tourist season and these businesses comprise a large portion of our local economy. Public services and finance and health care services, however, are the City’s largest employment sectors. See the Economy Chapter for more information. Belfast is truly a destination, and the viability of this community depends upon maintaining and enhancing our offerings to seasonal visitors, while seeking at the same time to ensure that our traditional way of life and economy are not impinged or overrun; as has occurred in some of Maine’s larger resort communities. See the Economy Chapter for discussion and recommendations.

Based upon 216 seasonal/recreational housing units, as reported in the 2010 Census, and estimating non-resident household size at 2.17 persons, about 488 persons may stay in seasonal housing in Belfast. Assuming household size stays consistent, by 2036 and around 488 persons may stay in seasonal housing in Belfast, when combined with the year-round population forecast of 6,552 people, in 2036 Belfast may total 7,040 persons in season for extended stays. Shorter-term visitors are served by hotels, motels, inns, bed and breakfasts, and the like, with approximately 280 rooms/suites/cottages available, for an estimated capacity of 700 persons. That



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figure is likely to increase with the expansion of these facilities and with new facilities, some of which involve the conversions of the larger historic single-family homes to inns.

AGE CHARACTERISTICS

The proportion of school- aged children (5-17) has declined over the past two decades, but has increased slightly as of 2019. The number of young adults (18-44) has also declined from 1990-2010, but has started to increase slightly as of 2019. The number of middle-aged persons (45-64) has increased from 1990-2010, but has declined slightly as of 2019. The number of retiree-aged persons (65+) is increasing steadily. Most of the growth seen in Belfast is the result of in-migration of new residents rather than through natural increase (births to residents).

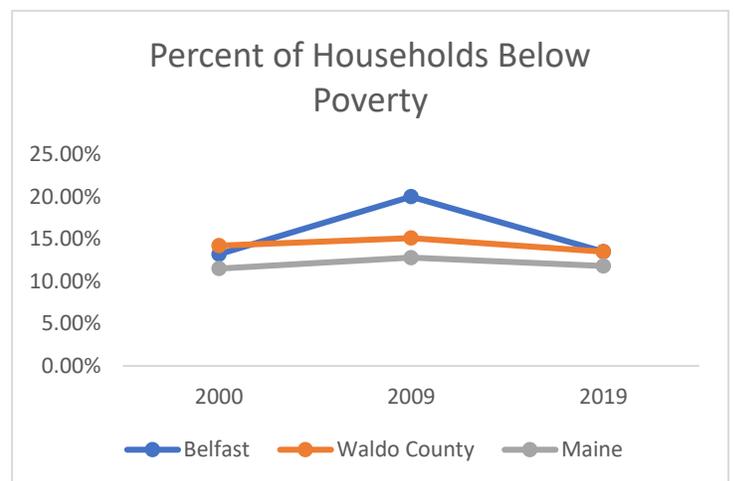
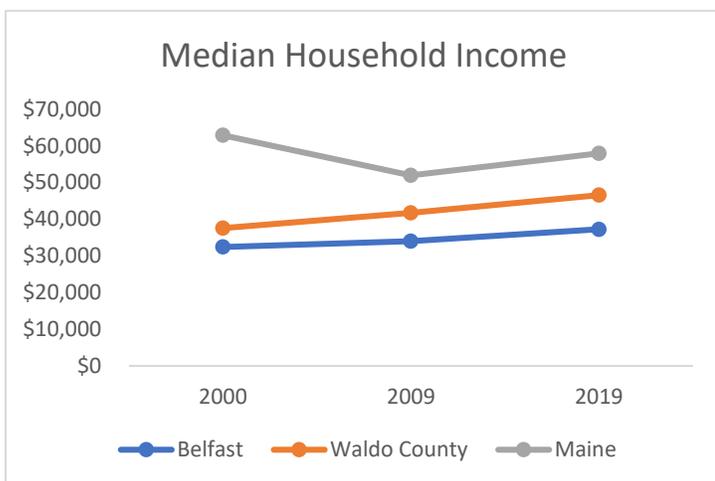
Age Cohort	1990	2000	2010	2019
0-19	1,703	1,488	1,447	1,697
20-44	2,131	1,870	1,721	1,832
45-64	1,341	1,744	2,038	1,790
65+	1,180	1,279	1,462	1,752

Source: Census, Rounded ACS 5-year Estimate.

INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

The median household income in Belfast in 2000 was \$32,400. From 2000-2019, the median household income in Belfast has steadily increased to roughly \$37,240 as of 2019. The median household income in Waldo County has also steadily increased from 2000- 2019.

In Belfast, from 2000-2009 the percent of population below the poverty line increased by about 52%, but then declined by around 50% between 2009 and 2019. There was also a slight increase



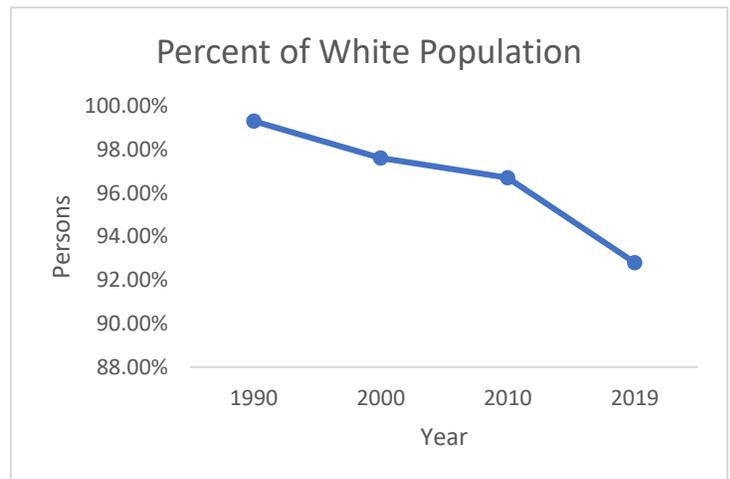
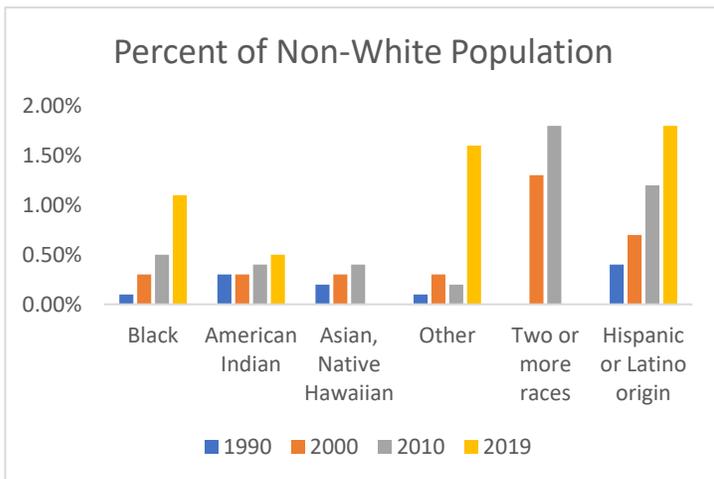
in poverty levels in both Waldo County and Maine, but after 2009, the poverty levels have been steadily declining.

Poverty Percent	2000	2009	2019
Belfast	13.20%	20%	13.50%
Waldo County	14.20%	15.10%	13.50%
Maine	11.50%	12.80%	11.80%

Source: Census, Rounded ACS 5-year Estimate.

RACE, ETHNICITY, & GENDER

Belfast’s population is diversifying. From 1990-2019 the percentage of white population has declined by over 6%. In 2019 there was also an increase in black, Hispanic, and other non-white races. In total in 1990 only 1.1% of the population of Belfast was non-white, while as of 2019 5% of the population was non-white.



[ADD GENDER BREAKDOWN]

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Although education comprises the largest single category of municipal expenditure, education is a function of the school system, and is not under the control of the municipal government. See the Public Facilities Chapter for recommendations on education. See the Fiscal Capacity Chapter for a discussion on municipal revenues and expenditures, the local tax burden, and recommendations.

Compared with the rest of the State of Maine and Waldo County, Belfast has a slightly lower percentage of college graduates, but a higher percentage of high school graduates. As of 2019, around 33% of Belfast residents have had at least some college education and over half have graduated from high school.

