

Brighton Plantation Community Profile

Draft – 2-20-25

This report holds a statistical profile of Brighton Plantation and its people. Because of Brighton’s population size, not as much data is available historically as larger communities. Data like this will often confirm intuitions about what is happening within the community. More importantly, it can show early signs of new patterns and trends before their impact becomes apparent.

Year	Population
1837	798
1840	803
1850	748
1860	733
1890	484
1900	368
1910	274
1970	58
1980	74
1990	94
2000	90
2010	38
2023	86

The population and demographic data presented in this chapter of the Brighton Plantation Comprehensive Plan is primarily based on the American Community Survey (ACS), a nationwide survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau to collect detailed demographic, social, economic, and housing data. The ACS provides estimates for a wide range of topics, relying on sample data rather than a complete count of the population.

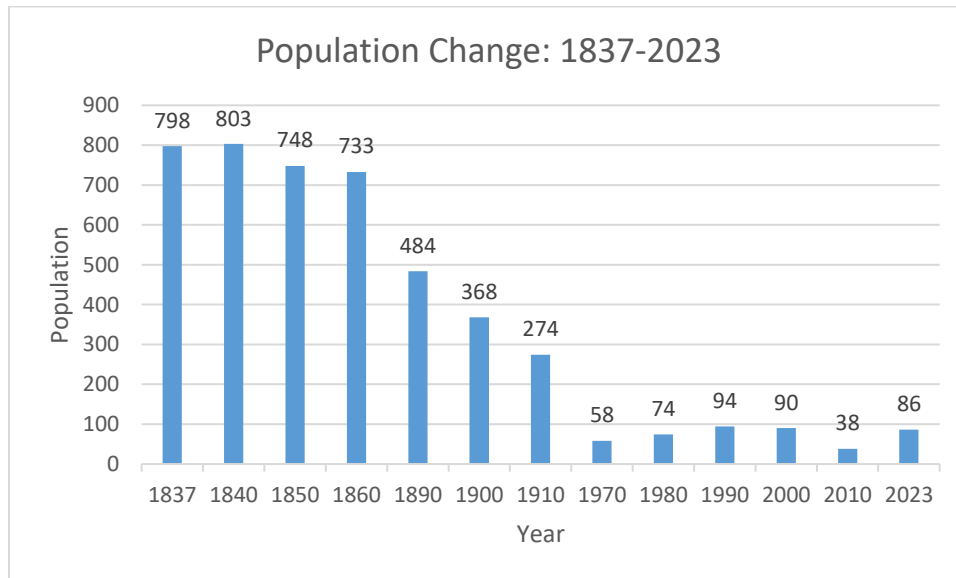
However, given the relatively small population of Brighton Plantation, which consisted of approximately 86 residents in 2023, it is important to note that the data may not fully reflect the precise characteristics of the community. The sample size used in the ACS for small populations such as ours can be limited, resulting in larger margins of error. This means that estimates for certain demographic categories may fluctuate more significantly than those derived from larger populations.

In small communities like Brighton Plantation, the number of individuals surveyed in each demographic category can be very small, which can cause more variation in the results. For example, a single person in a certain age group or income bracket can have a disproportionate effect on the estimate. As a result, while the data can provide a helpful snapshot of broad trends, it should be interpreted with caution. The data serves as a useful framework for understanding general demographic patterns but may not offer a fully accurate picture due to the potential variability inherent in small sample sizes.

Brighton Plantation is not a service center with many businesses that are in the town being small, home occupations, if any. There are no major employers and, as shown in the local economy chapter, more residents commute out of the town for work than commute into the area so there is no large daytime population to serve other than the small residential population.

As Brighton Plantation has always been a historically small and “tucked out of the way” municipality, data is not as reliable as data for larger towns. Earlier records are from published newspapers. There is a gap in data from 1910 to 1970. Brighton Plantation reached its peak population in 1840 at 803 residents and has been steadily declining ever since. Primarily an agricultural and forestry community, Brighton Plantation’s population has often depended on

income producing opportunities in the area based on natural resources. As those opportunities declined, so did the population. The information in this chapter 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 with planning for housing and public service demands that are expected in the next couple of decades. Similar information can be found in the Housing Chapter of this plan.



Over the course of its existence, Brighton Plantation has experienced a fall in population. The height of its population was in the 1800s near its incorporation as a town, but it has fallen steadily ever since. Economic and cultural factors have influenced population changes as displayed in the following table and graphed in the figure on the following page. There was a small rise in population during the 1980s-90s, followed by a decline in the 2010s, but the population has begun to rise again by the 2020s.

The median age of Brighton Plantation residents has decreased from 45.3 to 35.5 from 2010 to 2023, a decrease of 21.63%. According to the ACS, the number of residents over the age of 65 years old has risen 250% since 2010, from 8 to 28. Elderly households have unique needs, along with public service and planning requirements. Between 1990 and 2023, the town’s population decreased by 8 persons.

TABLE 2: POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS: 2010-2023

General Population Characteristics	2010	2017	2023
Total Population	38	57	86
Male Population	16	36	56

Female Population	22	21	30
Median Age	45.3	49.6	35.5
Total Households	15	26	28
Family Households	13	20	12
Married Couple Family Households	13	16	11
Nonfamily Households	2	6	16
Nonfamily Households Living Alone	13.3%	23.1%	10.7%
Households with children (under 18)	0%	0%	3.6%
Single-Person Household 65 years +	13.3%	7.7%	10.7%
Average Household Size	2.53	2.19	3.07

Source: 2010, 2017, and 2023 Census

Only one group saw a decline in the past thirteen years (the 25-44 years category went from 10 to 6 persons from 2010 to 2023). With the dramatic rise in the “young family” age group (20 to 24 year olds went from 0 to 28 from 2010 to 2023), that could lead to a rise in school age children in the coming years. The average household size in Brighton went from 2.53 to 2.19 from 2010 to 2017, but it went back up to 3.07 in 2023, which is higher than neighboring communities.

This data is imperative when considering the population and housing demands for the future. Considering the trends of increased median age, single-family households, and the increase in the age category of 18-24, the most likely demand will be for smaller houses and starter homes. Young adults and retirement age seniors are the groups that saw the largest increase in the last few decades (Table 3). The trends show that though the school aged population fluctuates, it is not expected that the number of students will increase at any level.

Brighton Plantation does not have any dependence on seasonal visitors at this time. Previously, a local business called Poppa Joe’s relied on 4-wheeler traffic and through traffic toward the Forks and Greenville, but that business has since closed. As of now, Brighton Plantation is not dependent on seasonal visitors economically, but there is opportunity for new businesses to take advantage of those traveling through the area or locals.

There are few good measures of seasonal population. To quantify the seasonal population, data from the 2022 Municipal Return Statistical Summary Report was used. Based on this report there

are currently 34 homestead exemptions. From this information, of the 90 housing units reported in the 2022 ACS, it can be ascertained that the majority of housing units in Brighton are seasonal or aren't claimed as primary residences. It should be noted that using the Homestead Exemption claim for determining seasonal population is less than idea because state law mandates that residents cannot file a Homestead Exemption unless they've lived at that residence for one year, and not everyone takes advantage of this tax incentive.

TABLE 3: AGE TRENDS 2000 TO 2020

	2010 % Of Total	2017 % Of Total	2023 % Of Total	13-Year Change
Population	38	57	86	48 (126.31%)
Median Age	45.3	49.6	35.5	-9.8 (-21.63%)
Under 5 years old	0	0	0	0 (0%)
5 - 19 years old	8 (21.1%)	3 (5.3%)	9 (10.5%)	1 (12.5%)
18 years and older	38 (100%)	57 (100%)	77 (89.5%)	39 (102.63%)
20 - 24 years old	0	0	28 (32.6%)	28 (2800%)
25 - 44 years old	10	23	6 (7%)	-4 (-40%)
45 - 54 years old	6 (15.8%)	4 (7%)	6 (7%)	0 (0%)
55 - 59 years old	3 (7.9%)	4 (7%)	3 (3.5%)	0 (0%)
60 - 64 years old	3 (7.9%)	8 (14%)	6 (7%)	3 (100%)

65 years and older	8 (21.1%)	15 (26.3%)	28 (32.6%)	20 (250%)
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Source: 2010, 2017 & 2023 Census

TABLE 4: STUDENT ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Town	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Brighton Plt	9	8	9	11	14	12	9	10	7	6
Caratunk	2	2	2	4	4	5	8	5	3	3
Athens	168	170	151	152	155	166	153	139	140	145
Highland Plt	8	6	7	9	7	8	7	2	2	
Wellington	26	23	21	16	17	21	21	23	20	26

Source: Maine Department of Education, Student Enrollment Data

Brighton Plantation has a School Administrative Unit (SAU) so that students whose family reside in Brighton Plantation are tuitioned to other local school districts at a cost of \$13,300 per student. Brighton Plantation students have the option to attend Carrabec, Bingham, Madison, Skowhegan, or Maine Central Institute. Historically, the great majority of kids attend Athens Elementary School and Madison Area High School. .. Brighton Plantation contracts with the neighboring town of Athens to provide transportation to students at a cost of \$15,015 per year. With the rising rate of young family age adults, the potential of children below the age of 18 could also rise in the coming years which could increase, or at least keep steady, enrollment rates in school.

How much will Brighton Plantation change in the future? Population projections provide 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 2040 (they prepared it in 2021, based on Census data). They estimate Brighton Plantation's population will be 54, a loss of 32 people from the current population or -37.2% loss. This is based partially on the advancing age of the residents and the overall observable trend, not necessarily a reflection of the popularity of Brighton Plantation as a place to live.

As the population of Brighton Plantation continues to decrease and age, the municipality is already beginning to have concerns about the ability to function as a municipality. With a small population, there are concerns not only about having enough voting population but also having enough qualified individuals to fill necessary positions such as the local planning board, assessors,

etc. The role of code enforcement officer has been chronically vacant, which is a problem not just for Brighton Plantation, but many small municipalities across the region and throughout Maine.