



# M I D - C O A S T

REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

166 Main Street, Rockland, ME 04841 ~ [www.midcoastplanning.org](http://www.midcoastplanning.org)

# REGIONAL PLAN

Adopted April 27th, 2005



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## A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This Regional Plan recommends opportunities for development, conservation and inter-local cooperation to meet many of the challenges faced in the Midcoast. The Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission will be guided by these opportunities and by this Regional Plan's identification of *centers*, *transportation corridors* and *open spaces* in advising municipalities on comprehensive plans, land use ordinances and development proposals. This advice will be tailored to reflect the distinct character of inland, coastal and island communities. As well, the Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission will continue to be a forum for needed inter-municipal planning.

Forces from outside the region have a great impact on the Midcoast. The national and global economies drive the largest sectors of our regional economy: tourism, the markets for marine related products and back-office service industries.

The considerable influx of generally more affluent persons into the Midcoast, especially retirees who are not dependent on the local economy for their livelihood, has changed the region's demographics and has led to more development than would have been expected based just on current and prospective employment opportunities here.

Communities often seek development that can provide employment and expand the tax base to fund needed public services. At the same time, many understand the value of regulations that protect the environment by limiting some types of development in certain areas. These regulations can also support natural resource and tourist-based industries.

Midcoast municipalities have home rule authority on planning matters. They each adopt land use ordinances, and establish their own rules for subdivision and site plan review. However, what occurs in one community affects the region's economy, environment and people. Responding to this means working within this regulatory environment by promoting inter-municipal cooperation.

Within the context of these forces, changes and challenges, the Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC):

- Provides a regional perspective and offers guidance on land use and development actions being considered by local governments.
- Provides essential technical assistance to municipal officials on comprehensive plans, land use ordinances and planning actions.
- Promotes appropriate and sustainable development of land in coordination with transportation and infrastructure.

A review of the municipal comprehensive plans and ordinances adopted by Midcoast communities was conducted before drafting this Regional Plan. Those municipal plans and ordinances contain the formal goals and expectations of officials and residents

regarding a range of important issues, including the economy, development, the provision of public services, tax burdens, community character and natural resources.

The maps in this Regional Plan illustrate *centers* of population, employment, housing and public facilities; *transportation corridors* including infrastructure, traffic volumes, congestion and high crash locations; and *open spaces* comprising aquifers, wetlands, land cover, areas of conservation and critical habitats.

## B. GOALS AND POLICIES

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Goals from the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (30-A M.S.R.A. §4301 et seq.) are listed below in italics, with the regional land use policies adopted by the Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission shown for each of these goals. The Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission Policies are meant to promote balanced economic development and natural resource conservation by strengthening existing centers and corridors. Municipal officials updating comprehensive plans and land use ordinances should consider the regional effects of development and conservation occurring in their communities and address these state goals and regional policies in their decision-making. Specific opportunities, also known as implementation strategies, are recommended in Chapter D. Regional Plan Program.

*A. To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the State's rural character, making efficient use of public services and preventing development sprawl;*

### **MCRPC Regional Policies:**

1. Encourage small scale commercial and light industry in all communities.
2. Encourage larger scale commercial and industrial development in the service centers of Belfast, Rockland, and Thomaston, on or near existing public utilities.
3. Encourage continued agricultural and forestry activity for inland Knox and Waldo municipalities.
4. Assess aquaculture industry costs and benefits to communities.
5. Protect municipal land use authority under the Home Rule Powers, while encouraging meaningful cooperation among municipalities for large scale development that has regional benefits and costs, and illustrating and reducing the negative impacts that result from unplanned or poorly planned incremental development.

*B. To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development;*

### **MCRPC Regional Policies:**

1. Encourage public transport, bus service, jitney, ride share, van and trolley service to larger employers and within Rockland, Belfast and Thomaston.

2. Encourage adoption of municipal access management standards for local roads to promote shared entrances and driveways for new development, improve safety and maintain posted speeds.
3. Encourage installation of traffic control devices at heavily traveled intersections that are high crash locations with poor levels of service.

*C. To promote an economic climate which increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being;*

**MCRPC Regional Policies:**

1. Encourage businesses offering full-time, year-round employment opportunities to the region's residents in well-paid technology, marine, and tourism industries through zoning provisions and the selective use of TIF districts.
2. Encourage competitive advantage in tourist related industries (lodging, restaurants) and crafts.
3. Encourage regional economic development initiatives, like Pine Tree Zones and micro-loan grant programs.
4. Encourage the expansion of the creative economy, intellectual property and the arts.

*D. To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens;*

**MCRPC Regional Policies:**

1. Encourage workforce housing (using state and federal grants, low income tax credits, low interest loans, homeowner 'sweat equity', and reduced construction labor rates from local builders) built on a small-scale (up to 10 units per development) from modular building materials in multi-family or single family configurations to public utilities.
2. Encourage the rehabilitation of substandard single and multi-family housing to maintain and improve existing mixed-income neighborhoods.
3. Encourage larger scale private developments to include a portion of house lots for workforce housing.
4. Encourage infill residential zoning as an incentive to build on small lots that are connected to public utilities.

5. Encourage better use of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and related economic development grant opportunities in the region, especially in areas currently underserved.
6. Establish a shared regional grant seeking capacity.

*E. To protect the quality and manage the quantity of the state's water resources, including lakes, aquifers, great ponds, estuaries, rivers and coastal areas;*

**MCRPC Regional Policies:**

1. Encourage the review of shoreland zoning ordinances to ensure adequate protection of water resources, consistency across municipalities sharing water resources, and adequate enforcement of these ordinances.
2. Encourage the use of watershed management plans to protect the health of waterbodies using phosphorous control methods, especially vegetative buffering.
3. Encourage the use of Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Small Communities Program for septic system replacement.

*F. To protect the state's other critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, sand dunes, shorelands, scenic vistas and unique natural areas;*

**MCRPC Regional Policies:**

1. Encourage the use of performance standards for development and conservation easements, working with regional land trusts, for the adequate protection of natural resources and to reduce individual tax burdens while providing limited tax revenues to municipalities.
2. Give preference to proposals that augment existing conservation lands, connect wildlife habitat corridors, or constitute conservation in communities with limited or no lands already in conservation.

*G. To protect the state's marine resources industry, ports and harbors from incompatible development and to promote access to the shore for commercial fishermen and the public;*

**MCRPC Regional Policy:**

1. Encourage the maintenance or adoption of appropriate shoreland zoning to allow maritime activities, including commercial fisheries, to continue without

threat of nuisance complaints from new residential or tourist based development.

*H. To safeguard the state's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources;*

**MCRPC Regional Policy:**

1. Encourage the use of agricultural overlay districts, tree growth and farmland programs to protect natural resource based businesses. These mechanisms can reduce individual tax burdens while providing tax revenues to municipalities.

*I. To preserve the state's historic and archeological resources; and*

**MCRPC Regional Policies:**

1. Encourage the adoption of exterior performance standards and design guidelines for historic preservation in currently designated historic districts, downtown and village areas.
2. Encourage the use of CBDG funds for historic preservation, like building façade restoration.

*J. To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters.*

**MCRPC Regional Policies:**

1. Encourage the strategic purchase of land for continued shore access in areas experiencing increased private development pressures.
2. Encourage multi-municipal recreational programs to share administration and facilities costs.

**Additional MCRPC Regional Policy:**

1. Encourage regional purchasing of goods and services by municipalities through cooperative purchase programs in order to reduce the costs of commonly used goods and services, including heating and fuel oil, road maintenance materials and office supplies.

## C. PLANNING RESPONSIBILITIES

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Municipalities can adopt comprehensive plans, land use ordinances and regulations. However, these tools of home rule often do not adequately address the regional impacts of development. Accordingly, communities with a shared interest in economic prosperity and the environment must work together to face challenges and to share opportunities.

### MUNICIPAL AND PUBLIC CONTROL

Quality development often relies upon or is at the very least encouraged by the thoughtful use of municipal powers to adopt comprehensive plans and to enact appropriate land use ordinances and regulations.

The drafting of municipal comprehensive plans and land use ordinances occurs under the guidance of residents appointed by councilors or select board members. Except for Rockland and Belfast with council forms of government, communities here have town meeting forms of government in which the town electorate directly decides whether to adopt comprehensive plans and ordinances.

Many Midcoast residents share the goals of strengthening villages and cities, maintaining transportation corridors and protecting the environment. Specific concerns of municipalities as expressed in their comprehensive plans include:

- Protecting individual private property rights while also protecting the public good by promoting development in areas not burdened by environmental constraints and where public services and utilities are readily available.
- Understanding the detrimental regional impact of unplanned, uncoordinated, strip-type development sprawl, its impact on traffic and on the region's scenic assets, which are vital to the Midcoast's economy.
- Adopting land use planning tools better adapted to meet the specific and different needs and capacities of coastal, inland and island communities.

Municipal officials who make land use decisions must decide on development proposals as they arise, lot by lot, administering ordinances and responding to the sometimes conflicting concerns of their constituents.

### COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The physical impact on area-wide planning by Knox and Waldo Counties is limited to the finite services that county governments provide in Maine, including county sheriff, law enforcement, courts, jails, airports, hazard mitigation planning (emergency preparedness) and some social services.

**REGIONAL PLANNING ASSISTANCE**

The Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC) assists communities to draft, adopt and implement comprehensive plans and land use ordinances. MCRPC works with municipal officials reviewing development and conservation proposals, and advises planning boards and zoning boards of appeals. Since the enactment of the growth management programs under the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (1988-89, and as amended), MCRPC has helped communities to meet the state's enumerated smart growth goals. Likewise, MCRPC provides technical assistance to communities on the Sensible Transportation Act and Maine Department of Transportation access management regulations. MCRPC began in the mid-1950's as the Knox County Planning Commission. In the 1970's, its Planning District expanded to include half of Waldo County as well. The MCRPC Board of Directors is composed of municipal officials.

## **D. REGIONAL PLAN PROGRAM**

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This chapter summarizes *trends*, *challenges*, and specific *opportunities*, also known as implementation strategies, for Midcoast municipalities, the counties, the state, and MCRPC. As with municipal comprehensive plans, the following topic areas are covered:

**D1. Economy**

**D2. Environment**

**D3. Housing**

**D4. Transportation**

**D5. History, Culture and Recreation**

**D6. Public Investments**

**D7. Land Use**

## MCRPC REGIONAL PLAN PROGRAM

### D1. ECONOMY

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#### TRENDS

Emulating the national economy, the Midcoast lost industrial jobs as food processing and other traditional, large scale businesses downsized, closed or relocated in the 1980's and 1990's. The economy shifted from these industries to service sector and specialty occupations. The construction industry, which had built business facilities and homes for people who worked in them, changed its focus to seasonal and second home construction.

Large service sector businesses, firms and healthcare providers play a crucial role in the Midcoast economy. At the same time, the region's growing strength and economic diversity is found in the rising number of new, mostly small scale businesses specializing in the arts, tourism, information technologies and other service-oriented businesses.

The region's most important economic assets include its well educated young persons, scenic location, commercial buildings and developable land, access to transportation corridors like US Route 1, and marine resources. The region has grown in large part because it has been a magnet for generally more affluent in-migrants, both working and retired, who bring with them new resources, especially in the creative economy and arts. See the Demographics Appendix for 1980 to 2000 data and forecasts.

The **Population Density Map** (persons per square mile) shows traditional and current areas of development. Most residents continue to live in the service centers of Rockland, Belfast, Camden and Thomaston, with smaller concentrations in Rockport, Owls Head, Union and Warren. However, new housing is increasingly being located outside the service centers where land is more affordable. The population density, while still concentrated in service centers, has been increasing in the smaller inland communities.

The **Median Household Income Map** indicates the range of median incomes of year-round residents in the Mid-Coast at the Census block level. Higher incomes are found in coastal portions of Lincolnville, Rockport, Owls Head and South Thomaston, and inland portions of Camden. Lower incomes are generally found in interior portions of Waldo County. However, the lowest median incomes are found in portions of Rockland and Belfast.

The **Major Employers Map** shows that the largest employers are located in and near the service centers of Belfast and Rockland, and on major transportation corridors like US Route 1. In 2000, of Knox County residents who worked, 86.1% worked in Knox County and 3.7% worked in Waldo County. Of Waldo County residents who worked in 2000, 60.5% worked in Waldo County and 9.8% worked in Knox County. Commute times have increased over the past twenty years; as employees drive further to seek more job opportunities. In 2000, the average one-way commute time was 18.9 minutes for Knox County residents and 26.4 minutes for Waldo County residents.

**Major Employers in the MCRPC Planning District (Table 1 of 2)**

<b>Business Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Sector</b>
MBNA New England – Belfast	Belfast	2,100	Financial customer service
Consumers Maine Water Co.	Rockport	500-999	Utility
Penobscot Bay Medical Center	Rockport	500-999	Hospital
Waldo County General Hospital	Belfast	549	Healthcare
Samoset Resort	Rockport	250-499	Hotel
State Prison	Warren	250-499	Correctional facility
Camden National Bank Corp.	Camden	300	Bank
Creative Apparel Associates	Belmont	276	Mfg. protective clothing
Camden Health Care Center	Camden	100-249	Nursing home
MBNA Marketing Camden	Camden	100-249	Finance
Fisher Engineering	Rockland	100-249	Construction
FMC Corp.	Rockland	100-249	Food processing
State Human Services Dept.	Rockland	100-249	State Gov't.
Kno-Wal-Lin Home Health Care	Rockland	100-249	Medical
Mail Services	Rockland	100-249	Advertising
Maritime Energy	Rockland	100-249	Fuel
Mid Coast Mental Health Center	Rockland	100-249	Counseling
Maine Photographic Workshops	Rockland	100-249	Educational, film
Tibbetts Industrial	Camden	100-249	Electronics mfg.
Dragon Products Company	Thomaston	100-249	Cement
Wal-Mart	Rockland	100-249	Retail
Wayfarer Marine Corp.	Camden	100-249	Boat sales, service
Ducktrap River Fish Farm, LLC	Belfast	154	Smoked seafood
Robbins Lumber, Inc.	Searsmont	127	Saw mill
Mathews Brothers Co.	Belfast	100+	Building prods
Penobscot Frozen Foods, Inc.	Belfast	100+	Food processing

Source: Maine Dept. of Labor, 2003

**Major Employers in the MCRPC Planning District (Continued: Table 2 of 2)**

<b>Business Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Sector</b>
Moss, Inc.	Belfast	90	Fabric display mfg.
Belfast High School	Belfast	50+	School
Belfast Industries	Belfast	50+	Wood prods mfg.
Harbor Hill	Belfast	50+	Nursing home
Lane Construction	Belfast	50+	Gen'l. contractor
Liberty Graphics, Inc.	Liberty	50+	Screen printing
Tallpines Health Care Facility	Belfast	50+	Nursing home
Mathews Brothers Co.	Belfast	100+	Building prods
Penobscot Frozen Foods, Inc.	Belfast	100+	Food processing
Moss, Inc.	Belfast	90	Fabric display mfg.
Belfast High School	Belfast	50+	School
Belfast Industries	Belfast	50+	Wood prods mfg.
Harbor Hill	Belfast	50+	Nursing home
Lane Construction	Belfast	50+	Gen'l. contractor
Liberty Graphics, Inc.	Liberty	50+	Screen printing
Tallpines Health Care Facility	Belfast	50+	Nursing home

Source: Maine Dept. of Labor, 2003

**CHALLENGES**

1. *Derelict infrastructure*: Prospects for regional development are obstructed when roads, water and sewer lines must be repaired or replaced.
2. *Derelict properties*: Obsolete commercial and industrial properties and deteriorating housing create the blight that discourages new investment.
3. *Government mandates*: Pollution remediation must be addressed by state, county, municipal and private action, often without sufficient federal aid.
4. *Inadequate land use regulation*: Local regulations that obstruct cluster/conservation type subdivisions, affordable workforce housing, or hinder the reuse of commercial buildings or mixed uses in new developments, may frustrate investment opportunities both locally and regionally.
5. *Limited land and facilities in service centers*: A lack of vacant land and of facilities ready to occupy reduces the opportunity for commercial and industrial growth in the developed coastal service center communities. Environmental constraints and a lack of infrastructure limit growth in many inland communities as well.

6. *Regional impacts of economic growth*: Land uses that improve one community's economy and tax base may harm neighboring municipalities, including public services and infrastructure needs, as well as the supply of affordable workforce housing.
7. *Shifting business models*: The success of large, single retail stores compels small, traditional businesses to specialize and offer enhanced services in order to remain viable.
8. *Taxes*: The municipal property tax structure hinders government action to solve regional challenges. Differences in municipal assessment practices often distort land use decisions; costing taxpayers and residents more in the long term.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### **1. Identify development options**

*Municipalities should:*

- Assess infrastructure conditions to identify improvements that would support potential development while minimizing the negative impacts to transportation systems.
- Assess retail and commerce trends, specialization, business clusters, market areas, existing strengths and the competitive advantages for each service center.
- Inventory areas within service centers to: identify undeveloped lands, properties that have become obsolete and properties significantly underused; to determine the potential value of new mixed use development, in-fill construction and transportation improvements.
- Draft a list of target areas with potential for rehabilitation or more intense mixed development that can offer competitive advantages.

## 2. Seek investment and regional technical assistance

*Municipalities should:*

- Apply for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for planning and street, sidewalk, traffic, lighting, utility, façade improvements and small business investments. Public investments often spur additional private renovations to nearby properties, helping to improve the business district overall, which in turn attract more visitors, residents and customers to the area.
- Use regional economic development organizations to sponsor forums and familiarize entrepreneurs with opportunities for small business, available commercial space, loan programs and employee training opportunities at post-secondary educational institutions.
- Assess the usefulness of business improvement districts targeted to service centers.

*The state, counties and economic development groups should:*

- Direct resources to centers with the greatest need and with the greatest potential to be competitive by:
  - ~ Capital spending on infrastructure improvements
  - ~ Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
  - ~ Section 108 Small Business and CDBG loans to moderate size business
  - ~ Transportation funds from the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and its reauthorization in the pending Safe and Flexible Transportation Efficiency Act (SAFTEA)
- Encourage ongoing relationships that minimize duplication of effort among the counties, the Chambers of Commerce, real estate boards and local banks pursuing in economic development.
- Enhance community development block grant activities by promoting economic development that serves the immediate needs of the region's cities with 'downtown managers', regional business loan and grant programs, business promotion and building rehabilitation.
- Promote tourism to stimulate the economy of communities with special historic, cultural or scenic assets.

### 3. Improve planning tools

#### *Municipalities should:*

- Adopt new or update existing comprehensive plans so that they can more effectively guide economic growth. Plans should identify the best suited areas for development, list the competitive advantages of locating businesses in these areas and outline a capital investment plan to fund the needed infrastructure.
- Expand waterfront redevelopment plans to encourage appropriate reuse of vacant or underutilized waterfront areas.
- Plan with neighboring communities to bolster economic activity through emphasis on shared strengths such as the environment, tourism and the arts.
- Update land use ordinances to:
  - ~ Amend building codes to account better for multiple uses in buildings
  - ~ Clearly define permitted uses and all required application review steps
  - ~ Ease the assembly of sites large enough to support new commercial uses
  - ~ Encourage residential units in the upper floors of commercial buildings in downtowns and village areas
  - ~ Adopt incentives for parking facilities and for improved pedestrian design standards
  - ~ Simplify development application procedures and timeframes for review

#### *MCRPC should:*

- Continue to hold workshops for municipal officials to share information and technical expertise on transportation, housing, environmental or other concerns and to provide an improved forum for inter-municipal issues.
- Maintain and share databases on employment projections, population characteristics and other information useful to businesses.

## MCRPC REGIONAL PLAN PROGRAM

### D2. ENVIRONMENT

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#### TRENDS

More recently, natural resources are under greater threat from the pressures of development as shorelands, hillsides, farmlands and forestlands are increasingly sought for residential subdivisions, commercial development and tourist facilities. National, state and regional cooperation is essential to protect natural resources. Cities and towns cannot avoid contamination of their air or water from poorly planned or unplanned development in neighboring communities, or from polluters located even farther away. The region's natural resources are vital to the economy and health of all residents.

The **Land Cover Map** shows forests, grasslands, cultivated lands, developed land, bare land (including gravel pits), and wetlands and waterbodies. From this map, it is clear that development is focused in service centers and that most of the Midcoast is forested, a shift from agricultural uses that predominated in the past. However, because new development tends to be spread out, it is less likely to register as clearly on the land cover map as does the concentrated development in the cities and villages.

The **Topography Map** shows the significant changes in elevation from one part of the region to another, and the inherent opportunities of a regional benefit for conserving high elevation areas, which can be seen from a great distance, as well as the inherent constraints to development posed in such areas.

#### CHALLENGES

1. *Air quality*: Clean Air Act amendments seek to reduce toxic emissions from mobile, stationary and consumer sources. The Midcoast has limited stationary sources of pollution. Pollution from the Midwestern States, and to a lesser extent, mobile sources, that is vehicles within the region, put the Knox County portion of the MCRPC Planning District on the list of non-attainment areas, not meeting the national ambient air quality standard for ozone, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, or nitrogen dioxide. Waldo County is categorized as a maintenance area for a period of twenty years because it is in an area that has violated air standards previously but now is implementing plans to maintain healthy air.
2. *Critical habitats*: Inappropriate development in certain areas may imperil critical habitats, which can be classified into three categories:
  - Essential Wildlife Habitats are areas currently or historically providing physical or biological features essential to the conservation of an endangered or threatened species in Maine, and may require special management considerations. Examples

of these areas are nest sites or important feeding areas. For some species, protection of these kinds of habitats is vital to preventing further decline or achieving recovery goals. Activities of private landowners are not affected by Essential Wildlife Habitat designation, unless they require a state or municipal permit, or are funded or carried out by a state agency or municipality.

- Significant Wildlife Habitats (Deer Wintering Areas and Waterfowl/Wading) are areas with species appearing on the official state or federal lists of endangered or threatened animal species; high and moderate value deer wintering areas and travel corridors; high and moderate value waterfowl and wading bird habitats. These include nesting and feeding areas; critical spawning and nursery areas for Atlantic salmon; shorebird nesting, feeding and staging areas and seabird nesting islands; and significant vernal pools.
- Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance are defined by the Maine Department of Conservation as areas with habitats worth protecting but not necessarily containing endangered species.

The **Critical Habitats Map** shows essential, rare, exemplary habitats, focus areas of statewide ecological significance. Specific animal and plant habitats are labeled as well.

3. *Energy conservation:* The nation is dependent on foreign energy sources. Energy efficiencies in large scale industries and in the home have continued to this day; however, gains in automobile fuel efficiencies since the 1980's have been offset with the increasing popularity of larger vehicles. The need for energy conservation and alternative fuels is clear.
4. *Land conservation:* Fiscal constraints limit the amount of additional land that can be acquired for conservation. The state increasingly depends on cooperative efforts with municipal governments, land trusts and the private sector. The state and most all municipalities recognize that outright acquisition and zoning are far less feasible politically to conserve land than are alternatives like enhanced performance standards, conservation easements and cluster/conservation subdivisions.

The **Public Facilities and Lands Map** shows the conservation lands and parks owned by the state/federal governments, non-governmental organizations, like land trusts, and non-industrial forest land. The public also benefits from the use of school district lands. Municipal governments have acquired numerous smaller parcels of local significance. Non-governmental organizations, including land trusts own or manage significant amounts of environmentally sensitive land at different sites.

5. *Water resources:* The need to protect drinking water supplies, both surface and groundwater, and wetland systems has broad implications for land use and development decisions in the Midcoast.

The **Water Resources Map** shows aquifers of significant yield, wetlands by type, watershed boundaries, rivers and streams (with water quality classifications), and lakes and ponds. In most of the region, water resources constrain large scale development.

Groundwater, through individual or community wells, provides drinking water for many of the region's residents, primarily those living outside the downtown and village areas of Rockland, Rockport, Camden and Belfast. Such resources may be limited in their ability to provide reliable supplies of safe, clean water. They are susceptible to contamination from a variety of sources, including naturally-occurring pollutants like arsenic, and may be unable to keep pace with population growth. As well, droughts have occurred with increasing frequency in the region.

Wetlands are critical to groundwater supplies and protection of lake water quality, as well as to stormwater management and wildlife. Considerable wetland acreage has been lost or impaired through draining, filling and development. Many remaining wetlands are in jeopardy. Naturally vegetated wetlands and watercourse buffers play an important role in maintaining wetland integrity.

Estuaries are biologically threatened as a result of nutrient contributions from sewage and non-point source pollution from land uses within the tributary drainage basins. Areas of tidal wetlands have been lost to filling or development. Tidal wetlands are often closed to clamming activities due to man-made and naturally-occurring pollution thereby impacting the local economy.

The **Critical Habitats Map** shows shellfish closures along the coast, aquaculture lease locations, in addition to critical habitats region wide. Watershed protection is, of necessity, a major concern in the region.

Control over coastline in the region is in the hands of 16 municipalities with characteristics as diverse as the City of Rockland and Matinicus Isle Plantation. The ability and resources of these communities to deal with coastal zone management, alone or in concert with other government agencies, is varied.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### **1. Educate residents, businesspersons and municipal officials on environmental issues**

*Municipalities should:*

- Prepare natural resource inventories with their comprehensive plan updates in order to better inform land use decisions.
- Use Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping programs to enhance an exchange of data and to establish an integrated region-wide database.

*MCRPC should:*

- Conduct educational programs for municipal officials and the public on water conservation, water quality protection and reduction of non-point source pollution.
- Continue to use GIS to develop a comprehensive database of environmentally sensitive areas: wetlands, streams, aquifers, steep slopes and agricultural uses.
- Develop model wetland, steep slope, erosion control and flood plain regulations to assist municipalities upgrade the review process for new development.
- Encourage, and develop model regulations for, the use of clustering and overlay zoning tools to preserve significant land resources.
- Establish guidelines and performance standards for the regulation of open space, tree protection, scenic corridors and wildlife habitat for use at the municipal level in the review and approval of development.
- Use the natural resource databases to identify potential conservation areas and significant open space corridors.

**2. Implement measures to better protect natural resources***Municipalities should:*

- Adopt local waterfront revitalization programs in coastal zone communities to set guidelines for development and redevelopment and to provide coastal resource protection.
- Adopt ordinance amendments as needed to protect steep slopes, ridgelines, wetlands and forestlands.
- Adopt site planning and design techniques, such as building orientation and use of plant materials, to maximize energy conservation including the benefits of solar energy.
- Adopt tree preservation and steep slope protection ordinances.
- Designate as critical environmental areas those lands and waters with extremely sensitive environmental features so as to insure full consideration of potential environmental impacts of construction.
- Encourage cluster/conservation subdivisions, which set land aside as permanently protected, while allowing for a number of housing units on a portion on the

parcel. Amend subdivision and zoning regulations to include clustering, construction standards and other measures that protect the environment.

- Ensure road salts are stored and used in an environmentally safe manner.
- Incorporate energy conservation techniques in the design and use of public facilities.
- Manage public properties to avoid nutrient intensive uses, non-native plants, and treatments (fertilizer, pesticide and herbicide) within or adjacent to wetlands, lakes, ponds, water courses, reservoirs or identified aquifers and wellhead protection areas.
- Participate in regional planning efforts on environmental issues.
- Protect prime agricultural lands through overlay districts and land use standards.
- Protect significant areas through regular evaluations of available parcels, acquisition by the municipality or by conservancy groups, conservation easements or land use regulation.
- Use Best Management Practices for erosion and sediment control and stormwater management as part of all construction projects.

### **3. Encourage regional review on environmental issues**

*MCRPC should:*

- Assist in creating a unified response to significant regional environmental issues when they arise by fostering working relationships among municipal officials.
- Pursue and expand regional watershed management plans.

## MCRPC REGIONAL PLAN PROGRAM

### D3. HOUSING

#### TRENDS

Housing construction has accelerated over the past decade, but has been outpaced by demand, especially in the second and seasonal homebuyers market. It is within this context that housing prices are increasing faster than incomes earned in the region. Most new construction occurs outside of service centers. Service centers see more rehabilitation of older housing units. Seasonal housing, often built to year-round standards, tends to be of high quality, is mostly found in shoreland or other scenic areas, and sells for higher prices than housing built inland. Modular, manufactured and mobile homes, as well as multi-family units provide most of the affordable housing in the Midcoast. Increasingly, many who work in the region cannot afford to live here.

<b>Building Permits Issued for Single Family and Multifamily Housing Units</b>													
		1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
<b>Knox Co.</b>	<b>Single</b>	155	202	179	183	184	199	251	219	257	292	337	2,458
	<b>Multi</b>	0	9	0	0	53	4	6	17	24	20	34	167
	<b>Total</b>	155	211	179	183	237	203	257	236	281	312	371	2,625
<b>Waldo Co.</b>	<b>Single</b>	74	79	78	130	97	98	140	181	241	184	198	1,500
	<b>Multi</b>	0	0	0	4	6	8	4	38	10	46	14	130
	<b>Total</b>	74	79	78	134	103	106	144	219	251	230	212	1,630

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

The State of Maine Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act requires that every municipality "...shall seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development, based on a five-year historical average of residential development in the municipality, meeting the definition of affordable housing." This Regional Plan's housing policy is guided by the clear need to provide working families and the elderly with affordable housing opportunities in our region. See the Demographics Appendix for 1980, 1990, 2000 regional and municipal statistical data and housing 2014 forecasts.

Affordable housing means decent, safe, and sanitary living accommodations that are affordable to very low, low, and moderate-income people. The state defines an affordable owner-occupied housing unit as one for which monthly housing costs do not exceed approximately 30% of monthly income, and an affordable rental unit as one that has a rent not exceeding 30% of the monthly income (including utilities). Affordable housing often includes manufactured housing, multi-family housing and government-assisted housing for very low, low and moderate-income families, elderly, group and foster care facilities.

The **Housing Density Map** (housing units per square mile), like the Population Density Map, shows the highest concentrations in the service centers, Rockland, Belfast, Camden

and Thomaston, with smaller concentrations in village areas: inland, on the coast and islands. Medium densities are found surrounding service centers and along major road corridors like US Route 1 and State Route 17. Housing for seasonal use is located in coastal areas, as well as inland lakes and ponds, and contributes to the total housing density of coastal and island communities.

The **Ownership Cost Map** and **Renter Cost Map** show the proportion of households who spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Spending more than 30% is often considered unaffordable. In Rockland, about 19% of homeowners and about 41% of renters spend more on housing than is considered affordable. In Belfast, about 24% of homeowners and about 36% of renters spend more on housing than is considered affordable. Incomes in coastal towns have been increasing with the influx of new residents and the departure of lower and moderate income earners to inland portions of Knox and Waldo Counties, where housing costs and property taxes are generally lower.

The **Housing Affordability Map** indicates based on Maine State Housing Authority calculations (MSHA) of recent house sale prices, which communities have housing that is on average affordable to median income households. An index of 1 is considered affordable, less than 1 unaffordable, with the least affordable communities having the lowest index number. The least affordable communities for housing are Belfast, Camden, Rockport, Rockland, Owls Head and Saint George. Searsmont is listed as affordable. There was insufficient data for MSHA to calculate an affordability index for most of interior Waldo County.

As the administrator of the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) has helped municipalities fight the loss of affordable housing in their own communities. By giving priority to housing initiatives and neighborhood revitalization in awarding grants, DECD and Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) have facilitated the rehabilitation of housing units.

Housing coalitions have formed in towns like Camden, and at the county level with the Knox County Housing Coalition to bring attention to and propose solutions to meet the housing needs of our region's workforce. Community Action Programs, like Coastal CAP, work with low income families to provide assistance in home ownership. Camden and Rockland also directly provide workforce housing for low to moderate income persons.

MCRPC has provided planning and technical assistance to local governments and private agencies willing to develop affordable housing within their communities using unique models tailored to their needs.

## CHALLENGES

1. *Business location:* Businesses seek to locate their operations where reasonably priced housing is available for their employees. A shortage of affordable housing impacts business location decisions. Fewer businesses mean fewer employment opportunities for residents, which further exacerbates the gap between incomes and housing costs.
2. *Community impact:* When employees are unable to find suitable housing in the region, Midcoast communities lose not only new tax paying residents but new consumers as well. Likewise, municipalities are having increasing difficulty recruiting employees and volunteers who provide basic services like fire protection.
3. *Housing demand:* The growth in housing demand, and in turn housing prices, has been fueled by more than the local economy and the jobs that it provides. The explanation is found with the in-migration of generally older and more affluent individuals who, on the whole, are not dependent on the local economy for their livelihood. Their purchase of year round and seasonal homes has set market prices higher than traditionally seen in Maine, but still lower than the prices found in the places from which in-migrants come.
4. *Land use regulations:* When land use regulations become cumbersome, the ability of developers to provide lower cost housing is compromised. While much of the review process is needed to protect the environmental, some new requirements and outdated, inconsistent standards inhibit or prevent opportunities for affordable housing.
5. *Population shift:* The lack of affordable housing forces some low and moderate income persons to leave or pass over the region to seek employment and housing elsewhere. Others may find suitable housing in surrounding areas and commute long distances to jobs centered in Rockland and Belfast. This increases congestion region wide and adds significant costs for the commuters themselves.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### 1. Adopt policies that support affordable workforce housing

*Municipalities should:*

- Assess housing needs at municipal level and update regularly.
- Encourage private sector participation, including development of municipal and non-profit partnerships.

- Include affordable housing goals and location criteria in comprehensive plans.
- Use code enforcement to insure maintenance of existing housing stock and to improve housing quality.

*MCRPC should:*

- Encourage measures to provide for permanent housing which will reduce the need for transitional housing.
- Engage in regional CDBG housing grant writing.
- Provide guidance, including recommended allocations, to assist all municipalities in meeting a share of the regional need for affordable housing.

**2. Use available federal, state, county and local programs, funds and resources**

*The state should:*

- Direct capital spending into established centers that can accommodate affordable housing, including transportation improvements like sidewalks, public transportation and other public infrastructure.
- Expand training programs and information on affordable housing programs to local governments and the private sector, including technical assistance on financing, construction and related housing services to municipalities and not-for-profit housing corporations that provide low cost and special needs housing.

*Municipalities should:*

- Explore creative financing techniques for developing affordable housing including the affordable housing tax increment financing program.
- Explore opportunities for development with not-for-profit organizations, public housing authorities or public/private partnerships as developers of the housing.
- Make public land available for construction of affordable housing thereby reducing the development cost.
- Participate fully in state and federal housing assistance programs, including the federal Section 8 voucher program and CDBG programs.
- Provide funding and other incentives for affordable housing construction and rehabilitation through property tax abatement, where appropriate, and through revolving funds that can receive public and private contributions.

- Pursue programs to preserve and rehabilitate existing housing units.

### **3. Encourage affordable workforce housing through land use ordinances and regulations**

#### *Municipalities should:*

- Offer density bonuses for a percentage of affordable units in new development and/or establish affordable housing set asides in subdivision proposals.
- Permit accessory apartments.
- Permit non-traditional family group residency consistent with health and safety standards for occupancy of single family residences.
- Provide for and encourage mixed use development (housing over stores and residential components of commercial and office developments).
- Update ordinances and building codes regularly to reflect changing housing needs and opportunities.

#### *MCRPC should:*

- Expand its educational outreach on land use ordinance provisions that encourage affordable workforce housing.

## MCRPC REGIONAL PLAN PROGRAM

### D4. TRANSPORTATION

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#### TRENDS

Private vehicles continue to constitute the predominant means of transportation for most Midcoast residents. Traffic volumes on state roads in the region and statewide have increased significantly more than the growth in population. Between 1990 and 2000, vehicle miles traveled on Knox County roads increased 24.5% and on Waldo County Roads increased 28.8%. Recent construction has focused on rebuilding existing roads to increase capacity and to improve safety. No new highways are under construction or planned for the region in the foreseeable future.

The Midcoast offers very limited transportation options beyond private vehicles. Local public transportation is provided mostly on a seasonal basis to reduce congestion during the tourist season in Belfast, Camden and Rockland. Private operators, like Concord Trailways, provide long distance coach service to points north and east, Bangor and Ellsworth, points west, Augusta, and south, Brunswick and Portland. Income-eligible transportation provision is available from Coastal Trans. Private taxi service is offered by several operators, centered in Belfast and Rockland.

The **Transportation Infrastructure Map** shows roadways by their federal functional classifications, which relates to their primary use and funding, railroads ferry terminals and airports.

The **Transportation Volumes Map** shows that most traffic is found along US 1 and is concentrated between Rockland, Camden and Belfast.

The **Traffic Congestion and Level of Service Map**, in turn, shows where the actual speed traveled is below the posted speed. Level of Service is a qualitative measure that characterizes operational conditions. Portions along US 1 in Belfast, Camden, Rockport, Rockland, Thomaston and Warren have a level of service that would, from an engineering perspective, justify remediation. State Route 17 is also affected by congestion, but to a lesser extent than US Route 1. Lost time stuck in traffic costs individuals, businesses, and with increased pollution from congestion, the environment suffers as well. Residents, consumers and taxpayers, whether or not they use the roadways themselves, ultimately pay for this congestion.

The **High Crash Locations Map** indicates where eight or more crashes have occurred over a three year period. These locations are most often found at the intersections of major roadways in service centers, as traffic volumes are highest here.

Freight rail service is used by Dragon Cement in Thomaston. The State of Maine Owned/Safe Handling Rail Inc. operated line traverses Warren, Thomaston and

Rockland. Recently, passenger service has been reintroduced on a seasonal basis to serve tourists attending summer festivals in Rockland with service to Brunswick and planned connections to Portland-Boston Amtrak line. Rail lines, operated by the Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad Company/State of Maine, extending into Belfast have been used intermittently for seasonal travel. Outside the MCRPC Planning District, a freight line is operated from Searsport (Mack Point) to Bangor by the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company.

Knox County Regional Airport (RKD) serves Rockland and Knox County with scheduled commercial service to Boston, Bar Harbor, Augusta and Portland, air taxi and general aviation. Knox County owns the airport. According to the FAA, in 2004 RKD aircraft operations averaged 152 per day. About 31% of these operations were local general aviation, 48% transient, 13% commercial, and 7% air taxi. In 2004, 55 aircraft were based on the field, 49 of which were single engine airplanes and 6 were multi-engine airplanes. The longest runway extends 5,000 feet. Voluntary noise abatement is in place, limiting hours of operation. The facility is about three miles from Rockland in Owls Head. Fuel is available. Airport operations raise complex planning issues including regional accessibility, ground traffic, aircraft noise, land use compatibility, corporate location and service and interstate commerce. Based on past annual operations, the most recent Airport Master Plan estimates that such operations will continue to increase at about 1.5% per year, although fluctuations in any given year are likely.

Belfast Municipal Airport (KBST) serves local and transient general aviation and air taxi needs, no scheduled service is provided. The City owns the airport terminal building with an office and lobby, and the airport transmitter building. The City owns several hangars leased to the fixed-base operator. According to the FAA, in 2004, KBST aircraft operations averaged 36 per day. About 69% of these operations were local general aviation, 23% transient, and 8% air taxi. In 2004, 15 aircraft were based on the field, 12 of which were single-engine airplanes, 2 were multi-engine airplanes, and 1 helicopter. The runway extends 4,002 feet and is lit. Fuel is available: 100LL from fixed-base operator Maine Scenic Airways. Tie downs are available.

Maine DOT coordinates federal spending on transportation systems and seeks to improve linkages between all components of the transportation network (highway, rail and freight) and its services.

Maine DOT studies of heavily traveled corridors provide a baseline for planning infrastructure, road improvements and traffic controls. Recently such studies have emphasized multi-modal facilities, identification of travel alternatives and the relationship between private and public land use decisions and the transportation infrastructure.

Some federal and state revenues once earmarked to road building are increasingly used for public transportation and pedestrian access projects. Portions of funds formerly restricted to highway projects can now be spent on surface transportation of all kinds.

Marine transport in the Midcoast includes the Maine State Ferry Service and private operators. The Rockland terminal serves North Haven, Vinalhaven and Matinicus. The marine terminal in Lincolnville serves Islesboro. Ferry passenger volumes have increased for all Midcoast communities over the past four years. The transport of bikes has decreased for all communities. In order to predict trends, more years of data are needed. However, the table below provides a good indication of recent volumes.

**Maine State Ferry Service: Volumes for Knox and Waldo Counties**

Island	Year	Cars	Total Pay Veh.	Non-Pay Veh.	Total Veh.	Pay Pass.	Non-Pay Pass.	Total Pass.	Bikes
Islesboro	2000	56,518	94,312	2,008	96,320	202,863	14,141	217,004	3,326
	2001	60,034	94,799	2,392	97,191	204,838	14,972	219,810	2,740
	2002	59,770	98,111	1,581	99,692	215,991	15,949	231,940	2,854
	2003	58,721	96,174	1,125	97,299	204,323	13,959	218,282	2,113
Matinicus	2000	51	198	5	203	557	19	576	4
	2001	43	221	0	221	602	27	629	3
	2002	53	234	3	237	769	72	841	8
	2003	38	245	5	250	794	44	838	16
North Haven	2000	11,578	19,437	878	20,315	52,808	4,438	57,246	602
	2001	12,303	19,671	678	20,349	53,521	4,869	58,390	682
	2002	12,853	20,771	726	21,497	56,065	4,888	60,953	587
	2003	11,570	20,737	706	21,443	57,258	4,489	61,747	550
Vinalhaven	2000	19,937	38,747	695	39,442	142,774	10,672	153,446	2,399
	2001	20,137	39,695	691	40,386	144,470	11,412	155,882	2,297
	2002	20,488	40,484	642	41,126	153,998	11,051	165,049	2,506
	2003	19,212	39,262	609	39,871	160,729	11,114	171,843	2,059

Source: Maine DOT

## CHALLENGES

1. *Access to centers:* Development has traditionally occurred in service centers. These centers often lack adequately maintained access, which is necessary to promote continued investment and healthy economies. Also lacking are more transportation options and better linkages, which are crucial to meet growing demand while addressing congestion. The Midcoast's highways require careful planning to preserve their safe travel condition, capacity and scenic value.
2. *Congestion:* Increasing demands on the transportation system lead to congestion, particularly where few alternative transportation options exist and where roads

also provide access to development sites. Congestion affects the economic health of individual communities and the region as a whole.

3. *Limited public transportation:* Recent development has been moving from the more dense development of service centers to low density construction along the shore and inland. Consequently, the number of people commuting farther to work, stores and other common destinations has increased. Combined with greater tourist traffic, roads that were never designed for heavy use challenge us to find alternatives.
4. *Sustaining infrastructure:* The transportation system including roads, bridges, ferry terminals, rail lines and pathways all require regular maintenance. Funding is limited but with travel demands rising and no new planned facilities, maintenance must be the priority.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### **1. System wide planning**

*The state, counties and municipalities should:*

- Direct expenditures to infrastructure improvements that reduce travel need and make centers more attractive places for both residential and commercial investment.
- Implement land use policies and transportation investments that add transportation options, like bus and rail service, and create multi-modal linkages.

*Municipalities should:*

- Regulate entrances and driveway access points on local roads and within urban compact areas in harmony with state regulations that apply outside these areas; review and refine setbacks and landscaping requirements where development occurs along transportation corridors.
- Require identification of transportation system impacts and mitigation as part of the environmental impact review for large development proposals.
- Support bus and train use by providing municipal sheltered waiting locations, expanded parking facilities and park and ride facilities.
- Update comprehensive plans to support mixed use development in centers with the provision for design standards that improve transportation and access options.

- Update site plan regulations to require pedestrian facilities, including sidewalks and direct access from commercial buildings to streets or stations offering public transportation facilities.

*MCRPC should:*

- Advise planning boards and boards of appeals on site plans for new development along major roads, including access management, through comment or referrals.
- Participate in corridor and multi-community studies to determine the needs for public transportation and road improvements.

**MCRPC REGIONAL PLAN PROGRAM****D5. HISTORY, CULTURE AND RECREATION**

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**TRENDS**

The Midcoast's cultural and recreational resources, programs, and rich social and architectural history are playing an increasingly important role in enhancing the sense of place for residents and visitors alike.

Assets include specific institutions and programs such as theaters, museums, music, dance and art programs, historically and architecturally significant buildings, neighborhoods and more generally, community character. The variety of historic sites, including many from the colonial period are found in almost every community, from the smallest village areas to Rockland and Belfast. In almost every town local libraries and museums, small and large, are important to public life. The quality of the region's public and private schools attracts new residents. Municipalities and school districts provide public parks and recreation opportunities within their own jurisdictions. Local ball fields, swimming pools, courts, golf courses and nature preserves supplement larger resources. Open spaces encompass these areas and the preservation of ecologically sensitive lands. Taken together, all of these amenities support the regional economy, enhance tourism and help make the Midcoast a good place to live and do business.

The **Public Facilities and Lands Map** shows federal and state land, much of which has been preserved for passive recreation, and historic sites and libraries, among other resources.

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**Selected Historic, Cultural and Recreational Resources**

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Belfast Historical Society & Museum, Belfast City Park, and Belfast Maskers Theater, Community Theater.

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Birch Point State Park (Owls Head): Scenic views of Penobscot Bay while you picnic or fish. The park's crescent-shaped sand beach allows for swimming.

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Camden Hills State Park (Camden and Lincolnville): 30 miles of hiking trails with access from five major trailheads; a 112-site camping area includes flush toilets and hot showers; picnic area; rocky shoreline.

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Camden Snowbowl (Camden): On the 1,300-foot Ragged Mountain, ski slopes and ten trails served by a 3,100-foot double chairlift and two T-bars, including the longest in the state-4,088 feet. Major trails are equipped with snowmaking and lighting. Tobogganing, tube sliding and skating are popular activities.

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Cellardoor Winery & Sculpture Garden (Lincolnville): Winery specializing in grape wine. Maine's largest vineyard with 25 varieties of grapes. Wine tasting, tours and sculpture garden including flame-cut steel sculpture depicting women, animals, birds and plants.

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Farnsworth Art Museum (Rockland): Images of sea and shore by one of Maine's most beloved and prolific contemporary artists, including the Wyeths. Museum includes sculptures in wood and bronze, ink drawings and watercolors of the Maine coast and shore birds.

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Goose River Golf Club (Rockport): Nine holes, 3,049/3,096 yd., par 36/35. Season: May-November.

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Lake St. George State Park (Liberty): Open May 15 to October 1, there are 38 camping sites, flush toilets and showers. Swimming area with lifeguard in season. Fishing and hiking. Boat and canoe rentals available. Lake St. George is 1,017 acres.

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Liberty Historical Society (Liberty): Old Octagonal Post Office (1867) has all of its original equipment and houses the historical society. Open Saturdays in the summer.

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Montpelier (Thomason): Replica of original 1793 home built by General Henry Knox, U.S. Secretary of War in George Washington's cabinet. Open June through October.

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Moose Point State Park (Between Belfast and Searsport): 183 acres; hiking trails; picnic area; tidal pools; panoramic view of Penobscot Bay. Open Memorial Day - September 30, fee charged.

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Owls Head Transportation Museum (Owls Head): Landmark, operating collection of World War I era aircraft, automobiles, motorcycles, bicycles and carriages. Air shows and rallies of classic autos, foreign autos, trucks, tractors, commercial vehicles and military vehicles most summer and fall weekends. Several aerobatic shows each summer.

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Riding Center at Mount Pleasant Farm (Union): Boarding, trail riding, children's day camp, and lessons.

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Sailor's Memorial Museum and Grindle Point Lighthouse (Islesboro).

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Rockland Gateway Museum (former Courier Building) including Maine's Lighthouse Museum (Rockland): Largest collection of lighthouse artifacts on display in U.S. Marine exhibits. Open daily June through mid-October.

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Searsmont Historical Society (Searsmont) in the Community Center.

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Swan Lake State Park (Swanville): 67 acres; picnic area; playground; group shelter area for reunions and other large gatherings; swimming area with lifeguard supervision.

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Memorial Day - Labor Day, fee charged, 9 a.m.-sunset.

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Union Historical Society (Union): UHS is in a Victorian house shared with the local library, includes some artifacts, and offers programs, self-guided tours to historic sites and publications for sale.

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Warren Island State Park (Islesboro): The park is designed for the boating public, and there is no public ferry transportation to the island. 70 acres; 10 campsites, two Adirondack shelters, fresh drinking water, and docking and mooring facilities on the leeward side for protection. Open Memorial Day - September 15, fee charged.

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Windjammer Cruises – (Rockland, Rockport and Camden): Private operators including the Maine Windjammer Association, offering hourly daily and weekly cruises.

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### Selected Major Events

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*February:* U.S. Toboggan Championships (Camden)

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*March:* Saints & Spirits Weekend, Maine Maple Sugar Sunday (Camden)

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*April:* Spring by the Sea Arts & Craft Show (Rockport)

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*June:* Summer Solstice Night (Rockland), Bearfest (Belfast) through October

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*July:* Great Schooner Race, Schooner Days, North Atlantic Blues Festival, Friendship Sloop Days (Rockland), Juried Arts & Crafts Show (Camden), July 4<sup>th</sup> Parade (Thomaston)

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*August:* Maine Lobster Festival, North Atlantic Folk Festival (Rockland), Union Fair (Union)

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*September:* Windjammer Weekend (Camden), Common Ground Country Fair (Unity)

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*October:* Fall Festival Arts and Crafts Show (Camden)

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*November:* Festival of Lights Celebration (Rockland), Holiday Craft Market (Rockport)

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*December:* Christmas by the Sea (Camden), Belfast by the Bay (Belfast)

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## CHALLENGES

1. *Architectural character:* Recognition of the value of buildings to shape a community's character and a sense of place is often missing in the evaluation of new construction.
2. *Art and museums:* The region's cultural programs and facilities enhance neighborhoods and are influential elements in growth. The needs of these institutions are not always fully reflected in local planning regulations, nor are the institutions sufficiently promoted as regional assets by the business sector.
3. *Budgets:* Fiscal constraints on municipal budgets limit the range of active recreation programs.
4. *Educational facilities:* The location of public schools, as well as libraries, relates closely to residential patterns and to local planning for streets, sidewalks, public safety, and recreation programs. School buildings are often the prime community setting for civic meetings and cultural activities. Inter-municipal cooperation has

long been normal practice between school districts and local governments, resulting in routine planning for joint use of athletic fields and other facilities. The physical site planning of each of these public institutions is a major responsibility of government.

5. *Land acquisition*: Competition for capital funds combined with the high cost of scenic remaining open lands restricts the ability to pursue land acquisition program for parks.
6. *Landmark protection*: Relatively few localities have enacted local landmark ordinances or historic district regulations that are needed to protect places listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Such listing acknowledges the historic value of places, but does not by itself protect these resources.
7. *Private/public lands*: Traditional attitudes have often viewed unimproved land as a shared resource, e.g. for hunting, and though privately owned, the land can be used by area residents because everyone knows each other. This is changing, due in part to the influx of new residents, both yearround and seasonal. As more and more residents restrict the use of their land, informal public access to large amounts of private land becomes increasingly problematic. This makes the limited amount of public access provided on publicly-owned lands increasingly important to residents and tourists.
8. *Redundancy*: Potential competition and duplication among state, local and private programs is a wasteful use of recreation resources. A comprehensive system where cost efficiency and avoidance of overlap are prime motivators should be the goal of recreation providers in the region.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### **1. Provide information and technical assistance**

*Municipalities should:*

- Inventory local historic, architectural and archeological resources; determine levels of significance; and incorporate findings into comprehensive plans.
- Maintain working relationships with preservation organizations such as land trusts and historical societies.

*MCRPC should:*

- Assist municipalities in developing guidelines for alterations to historic or architecturally significant properties, in establishing preservation ordinances and councils, and by providing information about state and federal funding sources.

- Create a more extensive historic and cultural resources map using Geographic Information Systems in consultation with local preservation groups, and maintain a database of properties that are eligible for local designation and for listing on state and national registers of historic places.
- Submit local referrals of projects affecting properties of historic or architectural significance to the State Historic Preservation Office for review and comment.

## **2. Protect and enhance resources**

### *Municipalities should:*

- Consider acquisition, or preservation through other means, of properties of documented significance that are threatened by development or neglect, jointly where possible and with private agencies where appropriate.
- Continue to promote tourism based on the region's historic, scenic and cultural assets.
- Enact local landmarks or historic district ordinances and establish review boards.
- Reach out to the business community, including Chambers of Commerce, for support in sponsoring cultural programs and providing public access to places of historic or architectural significance.
- Seek available state or federal funds to aid in the acquisition or rehabilitation of sites of documented historic or architectural significance from such sources as Maine DOT Enhancement funds and the CDBG program.
- Support appropriate storage of and public accessibility to record and artifacts relating to designated local historic, architectural and archeological resources.
- Support cultural and educational programs with the participation of local governments, school districts and libraries.

## **3. Plan parks and recreation as part of a comprehensive system**

### *Municipalities should:*

- Consider acquiring first refusal rights for private properties that provide important local recreation opportunities.
- Develop partnerships with and school districts to acquire and operate recreational land, facilities and activities.

- Encourage private developments to incorporate public access and open space corridors, where appropriate, to integrate trails and to enhance linear parks.
- Include broad pathways and public open space in local waterfront revitalization plans.
- Increase the use of parks and recreational facilities for cultural programs, special events and festivals.

*MCRPC should:*

- Expand area trail plans to promote integration of existing bicycle trails, lanes and routes and establish a framework that can be used by municipalities, the state and the counties to plan new facilities.
- Periodically assess the recreational needs of the region's population.

**MCRPC REGIONAL PLAN PROGRAM****D6. PUBLIC INVESTMENTS**

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**TRENDS**

The primary funding source for municipal and county government has been property tax revenue. With reductions in federal and state funding and increasing mandates, communities rely even more heavily today on property tax revenues than they once did. To maintain a consistent property tax rate year to year, town, city and county government must operate in a fiscally responsible manner. Large fluctuations in the tax rate can cause public outcry and can discourage economic development. Although the priorities of one community may change from one election year to another, stable municipal finances are always a fundamental responsibility of government. Most budgets for municipalities contain expenditures over which the community has no control, including education and county taxes. These expenses often comprise more than two-thirds of local budgets. Likewise, county budgets largely include state and federally mandated expenditures.

The largest expenditures by far for Knox and Waldo Counties are the county jails and sheriff's department expenses. Debt service, facilities maintenance and personnel expenses make up the remainder of expenditures. In 2004, Knox County's total approved expenditures were \$6,430,949, while Waldo County's were \$6,072,652. Relative to other states with similarly-sized and populated counties, expenditures by Maine counties are low because in Maine most government activity and spending occur at the municipal and state levels. Maine counties provide few services beyond law enforcement, jails, county courts, registrar, and in the case of Knox County, a regional airport.

Recent federal requirements for Emergency Management and Hazard Mitigation Planning in order to be eligible for certain funding in emergencies, have led Knox and Waldo Counties to draft Hazard Mitigation Plans. These plans assess the risk of likely disasters, describe existing emergency facilities, protocols, and recommend improvements. Mandates and limited funding for expansion and coordination of these facilities and services are directed by the Homeland Security Department through the Maine Emergency Management Agency.

*Municipal Budget Process*

After a community's budget has been approved and all applicable state and local revenues are deducted from the approved expenditures, the town arrives at the dollar amount that will be raised through tax revenues. This amount is called the net commitment or appropriation. The local assessor arrives at a valuation for each taxable property in the town and the taxpayers are assessed their share of the tax burden through a mathematical calculation. The total appropriation is then divided by the total taxable or assessed valuation of the town to arrive at the minimum tax rate. This rate is usually expressed in dollars per thousand-dollars of valuation, or in decimal form, commonly

known as the mil rate. The difference between the amount that is actually committed to the collector and the total appropriation is called overlay. Overlay is commonly used to pay tax abatements granted during that tax year. Fluctuations in the mil rate will occur from year to year when there is a change in the total valuation or the tax commitment.

### 2002 Municipal Valuation of MCRPC Planning District Communities

Municipality	Certified Ratio	Land	Buildings	Personal Property	Total Real & Personal	Commitment	Tax Rate Reported on MVR
Appleton	85%	\$22,489,023	\$24,326,080	\$1,860,120	\$48,675,223	\$1,095,192	0.0225
Belfast	85%	\$94,455,600	\$301,518,800	\$46,171,500	\$442,145,900	\$9,727,209	0.022
Belmont	80%	\$5,964,248	\$13,402,408	\$512,900	\$19,879,556	\$437,350	0.022
Brooks	93%	\$10,594,169	\$23,280,008	\$663,144	\$34,537,321	\$569,865	0.0165
Camden	90%	\$241,480,300	\$329,958,400	\$21,611,600	\$593,050,300	\$10,710,488	0.01806
Cushing	90%	\$51,435,400	\$46,419,900	\$120,300	\$97,975,600	\$1,533,321	0.01565
Friendship	97%	\$60,314,200	\$51,551,300	\$11,900	\$111,877,400	\$1,420,842	0.0127
Hope	86%	\$30,062,445	\$48,163,480	\$696,485	\$78,922,410	\$1,262,758	0.016
Islesboro	85%	\$131,873,630	\$88,857,320	\$540,510	\$221,271,460	\$2,653,044	0.01199
Jackson	87%	\$8,417,465	\$8,629,170	\$0	\$17,046,635	\$319,624	0.01875
Knox	100%	\$10,821,103	\$13,587,395	\$1,610,455	\$26,018,953	\$452,729	0.0174
Liberty	100%	\$30,015,321	\$27,640,190	\$441,280	\$58,096,791	\$929,548	0.016
Lincolnton	100%	\$91,383,200	\$104,876,600	\$2,566,900	\$198,826,700	\$3,022,170	0.0152
Matinicus	100%	\$8,035,900	\$6,217,230	\$76,980	\$14,330,110	\$75,806	0.00529
Monroe	95%	\$14,554,800	\$20,518,320	\$0	\$35,073,120	\$683,925	0.0195
Montville	100%	\$12,802,500	\$16,972,375	\$1,014,646	\$30,789,521	\$643,500	0.0209
Morrill	85%	\$9,554,130	\$14,717,550	\$167,640	\$24,439,320	\$458,237	0.01875
North Haven	80%	\$93,069,000	\$57,104,700	\$570,900	\$150,744,600	\$1,902,397	0.01262
Northport	91%	\$75,120,300	\$64,478,100	\$7,755,900	\$147,354,300	\$2,387,139	0.0162
Owls Head	93%	\$62,351,080	\$72,387,754	\$2,557,661	\$137,296,495	\$2,327,175	0.01695
Rockland	100%	\$136,973,300	\$353,618,200	\$54,132,300	\$544,723,800	\$11,983,923	0.022
Rockport	100%	\$201,167,150	\$251,739,600	\$18,863,100	\$471,769,850	\$7,194,505	0.01525
St. George	100%	\$174,571,100	\$185,462,600	\$0	\$360,033,700	\$4,105,524	0.0114
Searsmont	100%	\$30,314,900	\$32,979,700	\$7,093,800	\$70,388,400	\$1,295,146	0.0184
S. Thomaston	90%	\$44,442,400	\$48,713,900	\$65,300	\$93,221,600	\$1,654,683	0.01775
Swanville	100%	\$23,846,630	\$28,575,702	\$198,020	\$52,620,352	\$857,708	0.0163
Thomaston	100%	\$39,188,250	\$105,895,740	\$20,131,800	\$165,215,790	\$3,766,920	0.0228
Union	100%	\$47,079,700	\$69,691,700	\$1,231,200	\$118,002,600	\$1,899,841	0.0161
Vinalhaven	78%	\$107,612,900	\$90,394,360	\$2,069,190	\$200,076,450	\$3,031,021	0.01515
Waldo	100%	\$16,117,117	\$14,118,971	\$274,610	\$30,510,698	\$404,266	0.01325
Warren	100%	\$61,397,400	\$91,943,000	\$2,634,700	\$155,975,100	\$2,786,557	0.0178
Washington	100%	\$28,664,267	\$33,305,800	\$5,893,800	\$67,863,867	\$1,068,859	0.01575
Knox Co.*	--	\$1,428,024,120	\$1,875,723,874	\$132,554,786	\$3,436,302,780	\$58,091,662	--
Waldo Co.*	--	\$815,716,450	\$1,156,453,546	\$90,328,841	\$2,062,498,837	\$37,539,902	--

\*Includes towns not in MCRPC Planning District and not listed in table above.

Source: Maine Revenue Services

### *Public Facilities*

As the population increases, the demands for existing services and for new services will increase as well. Townspeople will decide how much they can afford and are willing to pay for those services over which municipalities have control. Most communities have provided reserve accounts for many necessary items. Prudent management decisions at the local level have prevented many of the region's communities from being forced to make large capital investments within one tax year.

The **Public Facilities and Lands Map** shows the municipal, county and state public facilities and public lands throughout the region including town halls, libraries, schools, fire stations, police and hospitals.

### *Capital Improvements*

Capital improvements are investments in the repair, renewal, replacement or purchase of capital items. Capital improvements differ from operating expenses or consumables. The expense of consumables is ordinarily budgeted as operations. Capital improvements generally have the following characteristics: they are relatively expensive (usually having an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more); they usually do not recur annually; they last a long time (often having a useful life of three or more years); and they result in fixed assets. Capital items can include equipment and machinery, buildings, real property, utilities and long-term contracts and are funded through the establishment of financial reserves.

Capital improvements are often prioritized each year in the budget process of the counties and of each municipality based on the availability of funds and the political will of the community. A complete capital improvement plan (CIP) describes expected yearly investment and allows for both changes in priorities and reduction of available funds. The CIP guides budgeting and expenditures of tax revenues and identifies needs for which alternative sources of funding such as loans, grants or gifts will be sought. The annual provision for eventual replacement of capital improvements depends on the useful life of the capital improvements.

### *Financing Options*

Several financing methods are used by Midcoast communities to fund capital improvements.

*Current Revenues:* This is also known as pay-as-you-go. This method has the advantage of avoiding bonding and its associated interest cost. The disadvantage is that financing a large project in this manner creates a high tax burden during the implementation period and results in extreme fluctuations in the tax rate.

*Bonding:* Borrowing against future taxes (general obligation bonds) or future fees (revenue bonds) is widely practiced for public improvements that have a long life. This is

also known as pay-as-you-use. Bonding evens out the tax burden as opposed to using current revenues. The term of bonds issued by a municipality for a public improvement should not exceed the useful life of the equipment or facility.

*Grants:* Grants from federal and state sources are often used to partially fund infrastructure projects including sewers, storm drainage, sidewalks and other similar facilities.

*Reserve Fund:* Reserve funds are often established by communities to purchase equipment, build facilities or make repairs, etc. This method works well when a town knows several years in advance that an expenditure will be needed, as well as the approximate value of the expenditure. Reserve funds earn interest in the intervening years and, like bonding, they even out the flow of revenue needed for a project.

*Impact Fees:* Impact fees are charged to new development for its proportional share of the cost of a specific capital improvement made necessary because of the development, as set in ordinance. These fees are deposited into a fund to be used for construction of the project for which they were collected. Examples include new classrooms required due to development of a large subdivision, or a new water supply capacity. One disadvantage of impact fees is the complexity of managing the funds.

*Time-phased Projects:* Large projects or those with individual elements can sometimes be broken down into several smaller projects. It may then be feasible to accomplish the smaller projects through current revenues or smaller bonding efforts.

Most communities in the Midcoast use a combination of these financing options; however, bonding tends to be limited to the larger, service center communities and the counties.

### *Hazard Mitigation*

The Knox County and Waldo County Emergency Management Agencies (EMA) coordinates county emergency response when a disaster extends beyond the normal mutual aid boundaries of the affected community, or several communities. The EMA County Director provides guidance, planning models, home study courses, and workshops on emergency management to the local communities and their own EMA staff. The Director also hosts periodic Local EMA Director Meetings to keep the local directors provided with current information. They are responsible for the maintenance and updates of the County's All-Hazard Contingency Plan. The County Director is one of the few officials authorized to access the Emergency Alerting System and receives direction from the State Emergency Management Agency and Homeland Security Department.

## CHALLENGES

1. *Non-discretionary spending:* The bulk of municipal budgets are for federal, state and regional items over which the municipality has no control, including, for example, education on a sub-regional level, and county tax. Accordingly, sound fiscal management of items over which a municipality does have control is often insufficient to reduce or control the property tax burden.
2. *Limited county role:* In comparison with other states, Maine counties have fewer functions, responsibilities and funding, focusing on jails, law enforcement, and the courts. This limited county role is an impediment to regionalization that could produce in cost savings for municipal and county taxpayers.
3. *County jails:* Increasing costs of jail facilities, inmate services, including increasing healthcare and drug rehabilitation costs, strain county governments as the primary county expenditure.
4. *Law enforcement:* Mandates, many inadequately funded, further strain county sheriffs' offices. The increase in population of towns without municipal police services outside service center communities increases the travel demands faced by county sheriffs.
5. *Knox County Airport:* Providing a regional benefit to businesses, people, tourists, and providing basic services to island communities (mail, freight, and medical evaluations), Knox County depends on federal funding to maintain adequate services, while responding to the concerns on residents and communities in the flight paths serving the airport.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### 1. Develop and regularly update capital improvement plans

*The County and municipalities should:*

- Form standing capital improvement committees to meet with department heads to determine needed capital improvements on a quarterly basis and report to the municipal select board, councilors or county commissioners annually to recommend items for inclusion on a capital improvement plan. Smaller towns can start with more limited capital improvement plans as their needs warrant.

*MCRPC should:*

- Survey municipal and county capital improvement plans for opportunities to suggest cost savings and regional coordination.
- Educate municipal officials on funding options beyond property revenues.

## **2. Encourage cooperative purchase agreements**

*The County and municipalities should:*

- Expand participation in cooperative purchase programs for such items as heating oil, fuel, salt, culverts, office supplies, etc. so that lower prices are obtained when more communities participate.

*MCRPC should:*

- Offer a cooperative purchasing program to municipalities for items that are not being offered through existing programs.

## **3. County services information**

*The Counties and MCRPC should:*

- Work together to host regional forums for the education of residents on county services, and the costs of those services, as well as opportunities for cost savings; primary services would include jail facilities, law enforcement, Knox County Airport, and hazard mitigation.

**MCRPC REGIONAL PLAN PROGRAM****D7. LAND USE**

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**TRENDS**

The development of the Midcoast has been linked to the sea. Early travel and settlement north from Boston and Portland were shaped by the region's topography, following two paths: along the coastline and along river valleys.

Centers of activity grew within these paths concentrating at first around ports and stage stops on the early post roads. Rail lines were built and new centers developed around their stations. Transportation corridors took shape to connect the region west toward Augusta, south toward Brunswick and Portland, and north toward Bangor. Through the years, open spaces and farms continued to separate the centers.

By the mid-nineteenth century, a pattern of concentrated centers, linked by corridors and separated by open spaces was firmly established in the Midcoast. That pattern is still apparent.

***Centers Defined***

Centers have been the focal points that have created and sustained a sense of place and community. Although homes and work places have increasingly spread far beyond the concentrated centers, even these dispersed residents and workers relate back to a center that remains a focal point for community life.

Centers, consisting of a commercial or mixed-use core and the surrounding residential neighborhoods and industrial areas, have had the principal commercial services on which most people depend. They are the places where schools, libraries, seats of government and train and bus stations have been usually found. Centers have provided a range of housing opportunities that outlying areas may lack. The activity and the density and mix of uses in centers distinguish these places sharply in form and appearance from surrounding areas.

***Coastal Cities***

Cities are characterized by urban activity and in the Midcoast include Belfast and Rockland. Both have well developed infrastructure systems, remnants of rail and provide essential services to a wide surrounding area. In addition to the services and facilities found in local centers, intermediate centers are likely to have more apartments, large-scale retail stores, office buildings and manufacturing. Each has high density development and extensive infrastructure, though portions may be old and in need of repair. As employment and commercial centers, they provide all of the services and facilities found in local and intermediate centers. Major centers contain little vacant land

but have many residential and commercial redevelopment opportunities. Downtown improvement and revitalization are essential to their economic viability, as is the professional and efficient delivery of municipal services.

#### *Coastal Town Village Areas*

These centers are located on major roads, served by the north-south US Route 1, and include communities like Camden, Rockport and Thomaston. They typically have a well defined downtown business district and include, in addition to the uses found in inland villages, small scale offices, more extensive retail stores, supermarkets, libraries, other public buildings and residential uses “over the store” and in multi-family units.

#### *Inland Town Village Areas*

Inland communities, often the smallest centers, are found in interior portions of the region, some far from the major corridors, including the village areas of towns like Brooks, Swanville, Searsmont, Liberty, Appleton, Union, Warren and Washington. Often located at the crossroads of historic travel routes, they offer such basic facilities as a post office, municipal buildings, churches and local retail stores. Few have in place the infrastructure necessary to support substantial additional development.

With the exception of Bayside, no Midcoast villages are incorporated. Village areas are part of the municipality in which they are located, and so local government decision-making occurs at the town wide level. Impacts on village areas, suburban areas and rural areas, and on the residents in each of these areas, are considered at the town level.

#### *Island Communities*

Island Communities, including Isleboro, Matinicus, North Haven and Vinalhaven support year round populations by providing basic services and access to mainland communities. Traditionally marine based industries are increasing supplemented by tourist related activities, including seasonal home caretaking in the off season, seasonal home construction and providing various services to summer residents and other visitors.

#### ***Transportation Corridors Defined***

All corridors have a transportation function that have served varying combinations of private automobiles, buses, trucks, bicycles, pedestrians, ferries and other marine vessels. The rail lines served a mix of freight, and passenger seasonal service. Corridors, such as US Route 1, US Route 1A, State Route 3 and State Route 17 have provided critical links to the surrounding region and within the region. Municipal roads have been used most often by residents rather than by through traffic. Although increasing congestion has led to the use of local roads for through traffic.

Many of the region’s roads and coastlines provide a view of the open spaces and waterways that separate developed areas. Some roads have become scenic routes

because of the open space character of the lands they traverse. Scenic routes are assets because they showcase the region's regard for the environment and contribute indirectly to higher property values.

### ***Open Spaces Defined***

Open space for some is undeveloped land or shorelines. For some it is parkland for active recreation. For others it is rare or ecologically valuable lands that need permanent protection. This Regional Plan recognizes all of these types of open spaces. The Midcoast's open spaces, public and private, vastly enhance the quality of life here.

From the perspective of this Regional Plan, the open space system is a prevailing force in shaping development. Open space elements have provided contrast in city, village and suburban settings, defined and buffered communities and served as linkages between major open spaces and concentrated centers. Open spaces also have served as community focal points for activities and assembly, especially in higher density areas. Open spaces include:

#### *Secured Open Space*

Secured open space is primarily publicly and privately owned properties intended to be permanently protected from development such as parks, nature preserves, cemeteries and school district lands.

#### *Other Open Space*

Some lands make important contributions to open space character but are not permanently protected. These parcels include golf courses, campuses and lands that municipal comprehensive plans identify as significant for their open space, ecological or recreational value. Privately owned lands, although subject to development, can retain their open space function through zoning and design techniques.

## **CHALLENGES**

1. *Business and service dispersal:* Many of the region's cities and villages have experienced some dispersal of business and retail uses from their centers. The loss of a convenient retail and entertainment presence at the center of a community changes its social fabric and imposes difficulties on residents of village and downtown areas, especially the elderly, children and working people without automobiles.
2. *Roadway capacity and development:* Conflicting concerns for mobility and business opportunities require thoughtful planning along transportation corridors. Scattered roadside development can weaken the vitality of centers and overwhelm the region's villages. The scattering of development strains the delivery of municipal services, such as fire and police, and imposes burdens on water supply

and sewer systems. Commercial activity outside of the centers has promoted auto use as a necessity, decreased the practicality of public transportation service and increased traffic congestion, as seen especially on US Route 1.

Land available for development along the region's transportation corridors has provided an opportunity for the Midcoast economy but the resulting strip developments have also had some less welcome impacts. Without adequate planning, this type of scattered development could weaken centers, diminish or eliminate the scenic value of the landscape, strain infrastructure and create conflicts between local and through traffic.

3. *Coastal development:* Coastal areas will continue to face development pressures. Sustaining traditional development patterns in coastal village areas will depend on infrastructure capacity and on each municipality's ability to direct development so as to be consistent with existing character and with natural resource protection requirements.
4. *Inland development:* Inland communities have relatively more affordable land than Coastal Areas and so have become increasingly attractive for new housing. However, these areas lack the infrastructure found in coastal cities and villages, and so development will tend to spread out on larger lots, which in turn may cost inland municipalities more to provide services on a per capita basis than in Coastal Areas.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

It will take the combined effort of private developers, municipal, county and state government to enhance the pace of economic growth while understanding the developmental limitations of some areas. Existing centers, if nurtured by necessary infrastructure, can support commercial and residential growth. Existing strip development along corridors can be improved.

### **1. Tailored Approach**

A single approach to land use planning is unfeasible in an area as large and diverse as the Midcoast. The Midcoast has four different types of developed places:

- Coastal Cities
- Coastal Towns and their Village Areas
- Inland Communities and their Village Areas
- Island Communities

Each sub-region needs strategies adapted to its own economic and environmental experiences. Cities also have strong ties to adjacent sub-regions. For example, Rockland and Belfast share major interests in development and transportation with neighboring municipalities.

## **2. Regional Cooperation**

Meetings among the cities and towns within each sub-region on issues of mutual concern are a growing occurrence. Housing, economic development, transportation planning, watershed management, tourism initiatives and waterfront development are all topics and issues best addressed on the sub-regional level. More and more, when common interests can be identified, municipalities appreciate the opportunity to work together. The key to effective planning lies in voluntary inter-municipal cooperation. MCRPC intends to use the sub-region format as a routine forum for information exchange, updates on activities and regular meetings.

## **3. Access Management of Major Roadways**

The Midcoast transportation corridors present opportunities for improved functioning and additional development in select areas, but they require thoughtful planning and inter-municipal coordination. Most include state roads whose maintenance and access points to varying degrees are regulated by municipal or state government. However, control of land uses alongside these roads is the responsibility of the municipalities through which they pass. Major roads that cross many town lines are prime candidates for inter-municipal approaches to management of traffic and development. The healthy functioning of corridors is a shared responsibility and it, as well as the potential location of new development are addressed in the policies and strategies of this Regional Plan.

Forward-looking land use regulations can incorporate site design elements that ease traffic problems, promote pedestrian activity and minimize adverse impacts on adjacent areas. Similarly, the planning for improvements to the transportation function of such roads must take into account potential impacts on the road's scenic function.

## **4. Downtown and Village Mixed Use, Restoration and Reuse**

The efficient use or reuse of commercial space in downtowns may contribute more to the region's economic health and to the convenience of residents than new office buildings or retail outlets on land where additional infrastructure would be required. Or, adding a residential component to a corridor already developed for office or commercial use may do more for that corridor's appearance and economic vitality than scattered housing introduced in rural areas.

Centers, with their infrastructure, population concentrations and transportation hubs, provide the very resources on which the economy depends. When concentrated centers can accommodate development, the diffusion of commercial uses across the region's decreasing supply of open land becomes less likely. The same benefits accrue when developed sections of corridors can support housing or other uses that help them function as smaller centers.

New non-residential construction should be directed toward existing and designated centers, accompanied by multi-family, affordable housing. Concentration of residential development will be required to maintain an open space character along corridors outside of centers.

## **5. Open Space Preservation**

Clustering of residential development can maintain an open space character outside of centers. In the face of increased housing demand, this type of development will be necessary to protect and maintain the critical mass of available area for forestry and agricultural activities, whether for traditional, or, as is more often the case of successful farming today, niche uses like specialized livestock and organic produce.

A broad inter-municipal view of planning will be required to maintain and enhance the open space character that marks much of the land along Penobscot Bay, and sections of relatively undeveloped corridors that connect centers.

Extensive privately-owned lands contribute to the open space character of many parts of the Midcoast. These parcels will often need special land use designation and design techniques to retain their open space function.

State and federal regulations require government at all levels to take measures to reduce or restrict development in environmentally sensitive areas. As a result, the most practical locations for growth appear to be areas where infrastructure is in place in existing centers and developed corridors.

## **6. Regional Plan Proposed Land Use Map**

The Regional Plan **Proposed Land Use Map** is the view of the Midcoast as seen by the Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC). It shows how land has been developed and preserved. It offers parameters for regional and municipal planning decisions by providing a unified picture of the density that surrounds existing centers, of the extent of developed transportation corridors and of open spaces.

This map was prepared after review of adopted municipal comprehensive plans and ordinances, community insights, and with land cover, public land and natural resource data. The mapping process utilized Geographic Information System (GIS) software, state, federal and local datasets, including:

- Municipal boundaries
- Existing generalized land use
- Transportation systems
- Environmental features and constraints
- Density of development
- Land cover

*Centers*

The centers classified on the Proposed Land Use Map include Coastal Cities, Coastal Town Village Areas, Island Communities, and Interior Town Village Areas.

<b>Proposed Land Use Map Centers</b>	
<b>Coastal Cities</b>	
Belfast	Rockland
<b>Coastal Towns (Village Areas)</b>	
Camden (Camden Village)	
Cushing	
Friendship (Friendship Village)	
Northport (Bayside, Temple Heights)	
Owls Head (Owls Head Village)	
Saint George (Port Clyde, Spruce Head, Tenants Harbor)	
Rockport (Rockport Village, West Rockport)	
South Thomaston	
Thomaston	
Lincolnvile (Lincolnvile Beach)	
<b>Interior Communities (Village Areas)</b>	
Appleton (Appleton Village, Burketville)	
Belmont	
Brooks (Brooks Village)	
Jackson (Jackson Village)	
Knox	
Monroe (Monroe Village)	
Montville	
Morrill	
Searsmont (Searsmont Village)	
Swanville (Swanville Village)	
Union (Union Village)	
Waldo	
Warren (Warren Village)	
Washington (Washington Village)	
<b>Island Communities</b>	
Islesboro	North Haven
Matinicus	Vinalhaven

*Transportation Corridors*

The principal transportation and development routes appear on the Proposed Land Use Map. The major roads and rail lines follow the region’s prevailing topographical features within the historic paths of development. The functions of each corridor, as described in this Regional Plan, are not conveyed by the map. However, the pattern of development in the region is clearly shown with these routes.

*Secured Open Space*

- State and municipally-owned parks and reserves.
- Other protected open space lands including land maintained for watershed or reservoir protection, and lands in private hands that are permanently protected.

*Other Open Space*

- Focus areas of statewide ecological significance and rare animal habitat areas.
- Lands that municipal comprehensive plans identify as significant for their open space, ecological or recreational value.
- Undeveloped land and low density areas that preserve a visual quality associated with open space character.

**7. Recommended Density Ranges**

The recommended density ranges shown on the Regional Plan Proposed Land Use Map are intended to overlap and to be much broader than municipal zoning densities for any particular zoning district. The three density ranges include:

A. Traditional Density City and Village Areas encompass the concentrated centers and transportation corridors that have significant development. Land uses in concentrated centers tend to be mixed. Open spaces and community parks are an important component of the mix of land uses in Traditional Density City and Village Areas.

B. Medium Density Areas blend physical development with the natural environment. The primary character of these areas is residential although office campuses and institutional uses are common. Central water supply and sewers are sometimes available or have potential for expansion.

C. Low Density Rural Areas have the fewest buildings and structures. This category encompasses a wide belt of land that extends inland. Although these areas may include the smallest villages, the primary use is agricultural, forestry, and conservation, with interspersed single family residences. These areas include the majority of the region's undeveloped land and its remaining farms. There are limited opportunities for public services; individual water and septic systems are typical.

**8. Relationship to Surrounding Development**

The impact that a particular use has on its surroundings can be of area-wide significance. Although a use may have a density compatible with the recommendations of this Regional Plan, it could generate traffic, produce sewage or consume water that would overburden the area infrastructure and markedly alter an established community character. The use also may have adverse economic impacts on existing centers.

Conversely, new development or redevelopment of facilities in aging downtowns or village areas may add to their vitality and spark other investment. The addition of multi-family housing to areas developed primarily with commercial or office use could capitalize on some existing infrastructure without adding significant demands and help create mini-centers. Such development can enhance opportunities for public transportation services, bicycling and pedestrian movement.

State, county and municipal governments affect the land use equation through their capital decisions on infrastructure, including major roads, facilities, and through their provision of public services. These decisions can help facilitate development within centers over single use development along transportation corridors and at isolated locations.

### **9. Large Scale Development**

The state reviews large scale development proposals using the Site Location of Development Law. Municipalities should also consider the impacts of such developments in their own review process, including an assessment of the issues raised in this Regional Plan regarding potential impacts on centers, transportation corridors and open spaces. Depending on inter-municipal relationships and the size of the community in which the project is located, some smaller scale projects may warrant analysis and, conversely, some larger ones may not.

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection permitting process, in accordance with the Site Location of Development Law (Title 38, M.S.R.A. § 481 et seq.), includes:

1. Large area projects (exceeding 20 acres)
2. Mining/exploration (exceeding 60,000 square feet)
3. Large subdivisions (15 lots or more than 30 acres, with exceptions)
4. Large structures (over 3 or 7 acres depending on municipality)
5. Stormwater management (1 acre or more impervious, 5 acres or more disturbed area)
6. Traffic (with peak hour traffic volumes of 100 or more vehicles)

### **10. Contextual Design**

All development proposals regardless of scale can be evaluated for their likely impact on the streetscape or on the landscape. Good design for new public or private buildings and respect for the architectural character of the old reinforce the quality of urban, village, or rural settings. A new building with landscaping may not change the viewer's positive

perception of the area's existing open space character. The Midcoast's attractiveness supports the tourist-based economy upon which so many businesses depend. Resistance to the adoption of design standards may be of concern; however, the alternative of prohibiting development is almost always untenable. Accordingly, good design often facilitates the compromise needed to protect scenic resources while allowing development to occur.

## E. CONCLUSION

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In the Midcoast, most new development has taken place outside of service centers, downtowns and villages. Our population is growing through the in-migration of new residents, is seeking more services from municipal governments, and is facing a lack of affordable housing and increased tax burdens. The regional economy has seen a considerable shift from industrial to service sector employment and significantly relies upon tourism, healthcare and natural resource based businesses.

As expressed in the region's adopted comprehensive plans and ordinances, many Midcoast residents share goals of strengthening villages and cities, maintaining transportation corridors and protecting the environment.

Municipalities are dependent on property tax revenue generation, and so often seek to approve development that expands their tax base, regardless of potential costs to the region as a whole. Public investments on infrastructure and services, especially on transportation and sewers, will continue to substantially shape both large scale and small, piecemeal development decisions. State and municipal budgets, however, are limited, as residents and businesses are already burdened through taxation.

This Regional Plan recommends opportunities for development, conservation and inter-local cooperation to meet many of the challenges faced in the Midcoast. The Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission will be guided by these opportunities and by this Regional Plan's identification of *centers*, *transportation corridors* and *open spaces* in advising municipalities on comprehensive plans, land use ordinances and development proposals. This advice will be tailored to reflect the distinct character of inland, coastal and island communities. As well, the Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission will continue to be a forum for needed inter-municipal and regional planning.

### **Adoption**

The MCRPC Board of Directors adopted this Regional Plan on April 27th, 2005. Amendments to this Regional Plan may be adopted by Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission Board of Directors consistent with MCRPC Bylaws.