

City of Augusta  
16 Cony St  
Augusta, ME 04330

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# AUGUSTA, MAINE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2023

## VOLUME 1: STRATEGY

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*ADOPTED BY THE AUGUSTA CITY COUNCIL  
November 2, 2023*





# COMMUNITY INPUT. VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE. A PLAN FOR OUR FUTURE.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Darek Grant, Co-Chair  
Heather Pouliot, Co-Chair  
Bill McKenna  
Bob Corey  
Bradley Sawyer  
Duane Scott  
Jon Silverman

Justin Frank  
Karen Foster  
Katie Smith  
Kevin Lind  
Kimberly Liscomb  
Lori LaRoche  
Melanie Baillargeon



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>05</b>	WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?	<b>31</b>	A CITY FOR ALL
<b>06</b>	VISION STATEMENT	<b>36</b>	DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS
<b>07</b>	LEADING IDEAS	<b>37</b>	FUTURE LAND USE
<b>08</b>	VIBRANT WATERFRONT		VOLUME 2: INVENTORY
<b>14</b>	A PLACE TO CALL HOME		
<b>21</b>	A CENTER FOR ECONOMIC ACTIVITY		
<b>23</b>	AN ACTIVE PLACE TO ENJOY		
<b>28</b>	A CONNECTED COMMUNITY		

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# WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

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A comprehensive plan is a broad document outlining the future direction of a city over the coming 5-10 years. As such, it provides:

- a **context** for local decision-makers when dealing with individual issues;
- a **legal framework** for the community's land-use regulations;
- a source of **direction** for developers who are considering projects in the City;
- a supporting **rationale** for grant applications by the City and nonprofit organizations
- a source of **guidance** for state agencies in making investment decisions.

State law requires that municipalities with zoning and related land-use controls have a comprehensive plan. Such plans must meet the standards of the Local Growth Management Program Law (contained in Title 30-A of the Maine statutes). The State Planning Office is responsible for certifying that local plans are in compliance with the law. The Office also provides grants to communities to prepare plans.

The City of Augusta first developed a comprehensive plan in 1959. It was updated in 1965 and again in 1983. In 1988, the City approved a new Growth Management Plan that superseded the prior plans. The plan was updated in 2007. This 2021 Plan is the most recent updated version and will supplant these and other prior plans.

This Plan consists of three parts:

**Volume 1** - this document - is the *Strategy*. It reflects the priority recommendations chosen from among the hundreds of ideas generated at the numerous committee meetings and the public. The recommendations in this volume have been vetted, prioritized, and refined by the Comprehensive Plan Committee, and represent the most important changes Augusta must make for the future. The report has five sections:

- (A) Vision provides a broad vision for Augusta's future.
- (B) Leading Ideas highlights the six areas around which the Plan focuses.
- (C) Future Land Use describes and maps proposed future land uses.
- (D) Implementation sets forth the implementation program.
- (E) Aspirations and Dreams provides ideas that are not ripe for immediate action.

**Volume 2** - is the *Inventory* - is contained in a companion document. The Inventory describes the existing conditions and issues in the City, and a broad range of ideas and suggestions, with regard to the economy, housing, the environment, health and public safety. It was completed with the help of over 200 citizens and the Comprehensive Planning Committee throughout 2019, with the technical help from City staff.

**Volume 3** - is the *Appendix*. This volume includes the Committee minutes and related documents. It highlights the public's contributions to this plan.

# SECTION A: VISION

Augusta is probably best known as the state capital. We are proud of this designation, but for those who travel beyond the city's gateways, Augusta is so much more.

We are a thriving riverfront community focused around our centerpiece - the beautiful Kennebec River - our coastal connection.

We are home to safe and welcoming in-town neighborhoods and rural residential living.

We are proud of our first class educational system.

We boast of our vibrant and historic downtown, which also serves as the hub and heart of our community.

All around Augusta you will find exciting outdoor recreational opportunities and a lively cultural scene for all ages.

Augusta is an economic engine by way of responsible and environmentally-friendly development, investment, and growth in the entire Kennebec Valley region.

We are connected to the rest of the world, and poised for additional growth in the future, through our multifaceted transportation system, our advanced broadband networks, and strong citywide infrastructure.

Augusta is a leader in civic-minded and community-oriented non-profit organizations and religious groups who offer countless invaluable programs and services. We are proud of the civility, diversity, and welcoming spirit of the city. Augusta cares for the health and welfare of its people. And, Augusta is fortunate to have committed local leaders and volunteers who give back so much to their community.

This is the Augusta we know, and these are just a few of the reasons why we are proud to call Augusta - "Our Home."

This comprehensive plan is built on this vision and understanding. We are proud to submit to the people of Augusta the following plan to move our community forward.



Photo By: Mark J. Ellis

# SECTION B: LEADING IDEAS

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## 1. A VIBRANT RIVERFRONT

Augusta continues to transform from the old industrial riverfront of years past into a new attractive and destination riverfront of the future - one that is the center of the community. Keeping this transformation progressing will continue to be a focus of the community.

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## 2. A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Augusta is comprised of many distinct residential areas that cross all boundaries – traditional in-town neighborhoods, modern housing developments, historical neighborhoods, rural living, lakeside homes, and first-class retirement opportunities.

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## 3. A CENTER FOR ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Augusta is a vibrant economic community where businesses of all sizes grow and prosper side by side. We pride ourselves on an open and fair process for promoting growth and leadership. We also work hard to ensure that new developments reflect the unique characteristics of Augusta's neighborhoods and districts.

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## 4. AN ACTIVE PLACE TO ENJOY

Augusta is a place of great natural beauty. Divided by the Kennebec River, Augusta is also carved out by streams, lakes, ponds, and bogs. Our land is covered with forests, conservation areas, and public parks. Augusta is home for countless eagles, deer, sturgeon, and other wildlife.

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## 5. A CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Augusta's convenient and central location is an asset to the community. Augusta is located in the heart of Central Maine - just 3 hours north of Boston, and ideally positioned between three of Maine's larger cities, Portland (one hour to the south), Lewiston (45 minutes to the west), and Bangor (one hour to the north).

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# 1. A VIBRANT RIVERFRONT

## OVERVIEW

This plan is laid out in three volumes. Volume 1 is the heart of the plan, outlining the highest interests of the city. Implementation recommendations are included with each issue discussed. Volume 2 covers the rest of the inventory and includes policies and strategies that the city and staff should be opportunistic with and address when possible. Volume 3 is the public involvement material, detailing the efforts the committee used to create the plan.

Development Services staff will report annually to the City Manager the progress being made on the recommendations within this Comprehensive Plan, including the amount of growth occurring in the growth area and the capital investments made in the growth area, compared to what has happened in the rural areas.



*The history of Augusta as it relates to the Kennebec River is worth noting.*

The City of Augusta is where it is due to the vitality of the Kennebec River. The river provided sustenance, recreation, and a means of transportation for the various indigenous communities comprising the Wabanaki Nations - possibly including, but not limited to, the Abenaki, Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Nations - who lived in this region for thousands of years prior to contact with European colonizers. The indigenous peoples of the Wabanaki are reported to have called the river “Kinai-bik”, possibly named after the water dragon monster whose movements were believed to create the turbulent waters between Bath and Sheepscot Bay, a possible referenc to the fish we recognize as the mighty sturgeon today.

As Europeans moved their exploration and colonization further inland in the 1600s, they used the river in a similr manner, establishing the Cushnoc Trading Post on its shores in 1628 on the site where the Christian Science Church now stands, next door to Fort Western. There, the newly arrived British and French traded with the tribes in order to acquire the furs they needed to finance their settlement here and elsewhere. Over the years, the new settlers forced indigenous people from their communal land, disrupting their means of procuring food through foraging, hunting, and agriculture. In 1754, after a series of wars against the French and Wabanaki Nations, the Massachusetts General Court established Fort Western for the purposes of security and defense of British soldiers.



The Industrial Age brought new roles for the Kennebec River. It became the source of power for small and large mills. It also served as a transportation route for logs, a mine for ice recovery, and a dump for waste disposal. The Kennebec River was essential to every aspect of Augusta's economy, but it was not always pleasant to be around.

The Industrial Age is now over. Edwards Mill and its dam have been removed. The former Statler Mill site has been cleaned up. A sewer plant cleans waste emissions. Striped bass and sturgeon, eagles and ospreys, have returned.

This section of the Comprehensive Plan presents recommendations on how to keep Augusta moving forward as it continues to transform from the old industrial riverfront of years past into a new attractive and destination riverfront of the future - one that is the center of the community.

## **Infrastructure near the Kennebec River:**

### **MARINA**

The city will explore the possibility of a marina. Recreational boating up and down the Kennebec River continues to grow, from Bath to Augusta. Communities along the river have embraced this usage and supported it through the construction of marinas. Augusta is the one community that does not offer such a service. Therefore, we believe we are losing out on boating visitors every year because of this. The City of Augusta would benefit greatly to support the installation of a boat slips on the westside and/or eastside riverfront to encourage boaters to shop, dine and enjoy our downtown region. (Community Services, 2024+)



### **PEDESTRIAN FOOTBRIDGE**

The City Council will explore possibilities and options for a pedestrian footbridge across the Kennebec River. This should include consideration of a new structure, converting the rail trestle, utilizing the former rail granite piers, and/or improving pedestrian access on the Calumet Bridge. We suggest coordinating with the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), Active Transportation Planning, and the University of Maine at Augusta architecture program as potential resources. (City Council/City Manager, 2023+)

### **BRIDGE LIGHTING**

The city will work with the Maine Department of Transportation to execute the lighting of all three bridges that span the Kennebec River. First, we strongly encourage the city to continue its efforts to work with MaineDOT on the installation of a "night sky friendly" lighting scheme for Memorial Bridge, which has been discussed for some time. Once successful, the city should consider expanding the lighting schemes for the Calumet Bridge, Cushnoc Crossing Bridge, and rail trestle. (City Manager/Economic Development, 2025+)

**Attractions to the river:** The city should consider revitalizing activities on the river. We suggest the following ideas.

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## **KENNEBEC ROW CLUB AND WATER ACTIVITIES**

Support the establishment of a Kennebec Row Club, in partnership with the Augusta Downtown Alliance, Capital Riverfront Improvement District, Cony High School and others. We also encourage river tubing from the kayak launch down to the newly-established marina. Partners can help run these activities. (Community Services/Partners, 2022)

## **HAMMOCKS**

The City of Hallowell has created a unique identity for its community with the installation of colorful adirondack chairs on its wharf. This popular, yet simple, addition has generated an organic interest for residents and visitors to make it a point to visit, sit, and enjoy the seats. The City of Augusta should create its own unique seating arrangement for leisure along the Kennebec River and explore the possibility of placing “Cony Red” hammock chairs along the eastside and/or westside riverfront for the public to enjoy. (Community Services, 2023)

## **RIVER CELEBRATION**

We believe it is worth focusing a festival on the Kennebec River, which has permitted numerous cultures to thrive on its banks over the centuries. A natural symbol of the river is the water dragon, or sturgeon, that entrance residents and visitors by their magnificent leaps out of the water. The city of Augusta will work with leaders in the Wabanaki Alliance to better understand the historical and cultural significance of the sturgeon. Downtown merchants and other businesses will be encouraged to showcase local designs and artwork of the water dragon monster. (Community Services/Partners, 2024)

## **Development and Enhancement Opportunities for the Eastside Riverfront:**

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### **KENNEBEC ARSENAL**

The people of Augusta have been patient for the long overdue redevelopment of the Kennebec Arsenal. Sold by the State of Maine back in 2007, the original plans highlighted a mixed-use destination with a boat wharf and the potential for townhouses, restaurants, and retail uses, opens up a new range of possibilities for other riverfront properties between the Kennebec Arsenal and City Hall.

The previous comprehensive plan called for a mixed-use residential/restaurant/small retail, pedestrian-friendly, riverfront complex, and it remains a priority of this plan. The city must continue to press the owner of the property to develop the site in a manner that is consistent with its original proposed plans (see the Appendix for a copy of the plans).

There is already a very attractive pedestrian path between City Hall and the Kennebec Arsenal, called the Eastside Greenway. Starting at City Hall, it passes Old Fort Western, an active waterfront park for children, and a boat launch site. It then proceeds past the current city snow dump and Ballard Center parking areas, ending at the Kennebec Arsenal Wharf Park. There is strong potential to expand this trail by connecting it westwardly to downtown and easterly to the Viles Arboretum.

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We also recommend working with the Kennebec Arsenal developer to maximize the use of the refurbished wharf. (City Council/Code Enforcement/Economic Development/Partners, 2022)

## **STATE CAMPUS**

State Government is the city's largest "industry". The city will continue to proactively work with the state, through the Capitol Planning Commission and other means, to ensure that redevelopment on the eastside state office complex is consistent with the city's planning. We support the preservation and redevelopment of the old AMHI Stone Building. We also support the plans for a new State Police Headquarters on the current site. State office consolidation in to "owned" facilities, rather than leased facilities, and any plans for substantial telework, must involve a city/state partnership to address major local economic impacts. (City Council/City Manager/Development Services, 2022).

## **BALLARD CENTER**

The City should work with the owners of the Ballard Center to find alternative solutions for its parking needs. We find that parking lots along the riverfront are not the best and highest valued use. We see tremendous development opportunities for vibrant residential living along the riverfront, instead of paved parking lots. (Development Services/Partners, 2023)

## **SNOW DUMP**

The City Council will consider alternative locations for the snow dump and reclaim the current site to expand the eastside trail, eastside park, and boat landing. We believe relocating the snow dump will also encourage new waterfront residential development. (Public Works, 2023)

## **HOUSING**

There are numerous opportunities for additional residential units throughout this area from increasing units in existing structures to constructing new units on city property or tax-acquired property. (City Council/Development Services/Planning Board, 2022)

## **SCRAP YARD**

The city should consider purchasing this property and develop an entrance to the Kennebec Lockes property for future development, and to divert traffic from going into the Maple Street neighborhood. (City Council/City Manager, 2022)

## **KENNEBEC LOCKES**

The city will work aggressively to market and work with developers to redevelop the property. The plan should be consistent with the plans from the Eastside Planning Committee (see the Appendix for a copy of the plan). The city should also consider gaining ownership for access on Drumbarker Road. We also recommend the city keep 1 Park Street property in its possession for possible future redevelopment at Kennebec Lockes. (Development Services, 2022)



### **Development and Enhancement Opportunities on the Westside Riverfront:**

The Comprehensive Plan Committee supports a downtown with major arts and history destinations on the riverfront, all of which are clearly linked with a vibrant entrepreneurial culture. (Community Services/ Augusta Downtown Alliance/Partners, 2024+)

## **GROWING PARTNERSHIPS**

Augusta has a strong foundation in place to really accelerate the success of its downtown. The downtown has become the center of activity, or hub, for locals. However, we know there is more we can do. The city should seek partnerships with other organizations, and expand its current relationship with the Augusta Downtown Alliance, to help better facilitate activities and programming that the city cannot achieve alone. We also have recommendations under different subjects in this plan for Old Fort Western, Colonial Theater, and a trolley option for the downtown, all of which will help grow the district. (City Council, 2023)

## **FRONT STREET**

For years, the downtown had its back turned away from the riverfront. Now, we cannot get enough of the river and its beautiful vista. However, many aspects of Front Street and the back of the riverside downtown buildings are in need of improvement starting with the parking lot. We suggest the city review its options for creating a welcoming thoroughway into Front Street, with parking spots, increased green spaces, more lighting features, and artwork that is visible from other vantage points to pique interest to come visit the downtown. We also believe the city should work with the downtown building owners to design a masterplan for color scheme and facade improvements for the river side of all buildings. Lastly, we cannot stress enough how visually aesthetic it would be to bury all utility lines on Front Street. (City Council/ Development Services/Community Services/GAUD, 2023+)

## **RIVER CELEBRATION**

We believe it might be worth focusing a celebration on the rebirth of the water dragon, or sturgeon, who visibly populate our river by their magnificent leaps out of the water. The City of Augusta should work with downtown merchants and other businesses to showcase local designs and artwork of the water dragon monster, similar to the Damariscotta Pumpkin Festival, which attracts thousands of visitors to see creative pumpkin designs. (Community Services/Partners, 2025)

## **PARKING GARAGE**

The city should immediately address the structural deficiencies in the parking garage. The City Council should begin dedicating funds through its capital improvement projects process to eventually add additional parking levels to the garage. (Council, Development Services, 2022)





## **SIGNAGE**

The lack of wayfinding signage in the downtown area makes it hard for those visiting the city to find parking. The change to two-way traffic in the summer of 2019 made it easier to travel throughout the downtown, but signage is needed to direct travelers to clearly identified parking areas. New signage would include: parking directional signage; clear parking timing signage (when parking is available, free/paid, etc.); and lot/street names on the signs. New signage needs to be part of a new downtown parking policy and ordinance after the dissolution of the Parking District. (City Council, Development Services, Police Department, Public Works, 2022)

## **MUSIC**

The city should consider creating a vibrant feel to Water Street with the addition of outdoor music through speakers along the stretch of the street. (City Council, Community Services, 2024)

## **MILL PARK**

Mill Park, at the site of the former Edwards Mill, is a major achievement of the Capital River Improvement District (CRID). The 2007 comprehensive plan goal was to make it a place people visit frequently. We believe this has been achieved, and should continue to be supported.

Mill Park is a popular destination for the downtown region. Every evening during the summer and fall, and on every weekend, there is activity happening. Mill Park has made significant progress over the years and is now home to a kayak launch, dog park, petanque courts, and a farmers market. It is also a perfect location for fishing, walking, enjoying the outdoors, concerts, beer festivals, and other large-gathering events. We applaud all of this progress and support it. Looking ahead, we believe the time has come to provide an attractive water feature, such as an interactive water pad for people to enjoy during hot summer days.


We would also like to see the plans for redeveloping the “little brick building” come to fruition. The city should continue to support the fundraising efforts of the Friends for a Franco-American Heritage Center at Mill Park.

The 2007 plan called for a restaurant on the property. We believe there is a new option and recommend that Mill Park be welcoming to food trucks.

It is important that we continue to ensure that Mill Park is linked to the downtown along a rehabilitated, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly Water Street. The comprehensive plan committee also recommends an ADA-compliant boardwalk from Sand Hill down to the park. This boardwalk could connect “the hill” to the downtown region and it could be an extension to the Kennebec River Rail Trail.

We also support the continuation of the 2007 recommendations for the rehabilitation of buildings between the park and downtown to provide a safe and enjoyable streetscape for pedestrians. The new affordable apartment housing being built is an excellent start. Other buildings could be redeveloped as student housing, as unfinished and affordable live/work space, or other cultural amenities such as museums, galleries, or theatre spaces. (City Council, Development Services, Community Services, 2025+)

## 2. A PLACE TO CALL HOME



Augusta is comprised of many distinct residential areas that cross all boundaries – traditional in-town neighborhoods, modern housing developments, historical neighborhoods, rural living, lakeside homes, and first-class retirement opportunities. The Comprehensive Plan Committee understands that a growing city needs to attract young and old alike to live in vibrant and diverse neighborhoods. We believe the city should encourage neighborhoods to better define their identity as a way to create neighborhood pride, promote a sense of community, and for marketing purposes to attract new residents.

### Enhancing our neighborhoods:

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#### NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

To further foster a sense of pride in neighborhoods, we recommend that the city, through the Public Works Department, hold a designated annual neighborhood clean-up date in the spring. Neighborhoods will be encouraged to coordinate with city services, such as: clearing brush and leaves; removing trash items that cannot be normally picked up by curbside operations; keeping sidewalks free of weeds and dirt for street sweeping; painting of crosswalks, bike lanes, and traffic-slowing striping; identifying and fix signs and lights; and volunteering to help clean the neighborhood parks and community green spaces.

Additionally, the city has tents, tables, trash cans, and safety barriers available for any neighborhood group who would like to host an annual “neighborhood street party.” City staff will deliver and pick-up these items in coordination with any neighborhood group. We encourage greater use and awareness of this wonderful opportunity.

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All of these initiatives in the neighborhood, we believe, should be used as a marketing strategy for attracting new residents and homeowners. (Public Works, Community Services, 2024)

## NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENTS

It is important to continually upgrade and fix our streets, sidewalks and other aspects of neighborhoods in Augusta, but while doing so, we should be vigilant in communicating with citizens about the process and projected outcomes of the work being completed. (Public Works, 2022)

### Supporting the continued development of housing opportunities:

Augusta has only had a few housing developments built in the past 5-10 years. The comprehensive plan committee realizes that in order to grow our tax base, we need to see smart neighborhood growth take place throughout the city. We would like to see Augusta protect our neighborhoods, while also seeking new and appropriate developments and opportunities for growing our city and new neighborhoods and ultimately our tax base, taking the pressure off our aging population of taxpayers.

The city, in coordination with Augusta Housing Authority, will take an assertive role in seeking appropriate development of single-family and condo riverfront homes on both sides of the river (current Augusta Police Department property at Union Street, Kennebec Lockes, old hospital parking lots, and Kennebec Arsenal complex). The city will then play a role in marketing these properties as a riverfront community in which to live.

Additionally, we encourage the city to create an interactive map of Augusta on its website to easily identify developable land and the zoning requirements associated with individual property.

The city will seek ways to incentivize and attract developers to Augusta to develop new single family neighborhoods, condo units, senior housing, market-rate and workforce housing, and mixed use housing projects. The new "Opportunity Zone" program has great potential to assist developers and the city in many development projects.

Some areas in Augusta have little access to utilities such as water, sewer and broadband connectivity. The city will work to improve infrastructure in these areas (i.e., the east side of the river) so that they become more desirable to those looking for a new place to call home.

The Planning Board will look into adopting a zoning ordinance to include language regarding tiny houses in certain areas of our city. (Planning Board, Development Services, 2022+)



We believe the following areas of the city hold the most potential for new neighborhoods to be developed in Augusta in the immediate future:

Eastside:

- Kennebec Lockes
- Riggs Brook Village
- Further East of Church Hill Road/Cony Road to the City Line
- Land off Riverside Drive (near Route 3 Connector)
- Land around Meadowrue Drive
- Land across from Pierce Drive

Westside:

- “Tree” Street (Brentwood/Wildwood/Westwood)
- Leighton Road (behind current housing development)
- Civic Center Drive towards Sidney
- North Augusta towards Sidney

The city will work to improve the quality of life for those who live in apartment buildings, by putting pressure on landlords to address life safety code violations.

In the Spring of 2019, Augusta invested in LED streetlights throughout the entire city. Although these new streetlights cast a wider source of light, there are still areas on our streets that are considered “dark spots”. We are suggesting that the Police Department work to identify these dark spots throughout the city, and put a plan together to address this problem. (Police, Traffic Calming Committee, 2023)

### **Promoting an age-friendly community:**

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Augusta Age-Friendly (AAF) is a committee of community members devoted to making Augusta, Maine a livable community for all ages; supporting healthy aging by advising the City Council about policy changes that will make Augusta more livable, by partnering with community organizations to enhance existing services, and by encouraging volunteerism and active citizen participation in the social, economic, and civic life of Augusta. AAF IS dedicated to making Augusta a Capital Opportunity for living, working, and playing; for all ages.

All ages share the need for affordable and safe access to community businesses and services. Seniors are contributors to the community. The local economy benefits from age-friendly business development. Seniors prefer to age-in-place. Age-friendly efforts raise awareness of community resources that benefit all ages.





The Augusta Age-Friendly Committee advocates for the eight domains of livability from the AARP Age-Friendly Network. These domains were developed by the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and provide a framework to help anticipate the needs of a livable community. The eight domains are:

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Social Participation
5. Respect and Social Inclusion
6. Civic Participation and Employment
7. Communication and Information
8. Community Support and Health Services

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings is a domain of great interest to many residents. Living in the state capital is a source of pride and many residents express the desire to participate in the public spaces and activities available locally. Several improvements appear to be important to enhancing the ability of seniors to participate in Augusta's outdoor spaces.

The sidewalks throughout the city need to accommodate walkers, wheelchairs and residents with physical limitations in order to enable these residents to participate in the outdoor spaces available to them. This is particularly challenging in winter, but these facilities should be able to accommodate residents of all abilities throughout the year.

The committee has worked with the Augusta Police Department in educating the public about the speed issue around rotaries and enhancing speed limit enforcement in priority areas. The committee is also working with resource officers from the Augusta Police Department to explain the light timing to the seniors and help them practice street crossings, so that they will be more comfortable and confident about their ability to cross.

Both teens and seniors share an interest in having a gathering place where they could meet for coffee, access the internet and have small social gatherings.

Transportation underlies several of the domains of livability by providing access to community services and social events. The goal of transportation services is to give residents the ability to reach their destination safely, affordably and independently. An important area of concern for Augusta residents, a recent survey showed that the vast majority of residents over 50 (85.8%) drive themselves as a primary mode of getting around the community. Consideration should be given to a volunteer driver program that manages logistics for senior transportation services, including ride scheduling and volunteer management.

Two-thirds of surveyed respondents said they live in a single-family home and the majority said they would like to remain in their home as they age. The prevalence of older homes in the area makes repairs and modification especially necessary and costly for residents who wish to age safely and independently in their own homes. (City Council, All City Departments, neighborhood groups, Age Friendly Committee, 2022+)

Augusta is home to many contractors and handypersons who are able to help with repairs and modifications. Seniors, in particular, may need help accessing their services, ensuring that services are affordable, and having the trust needed to invite a stranger into one's home.

The committee would like to work with the Augusta Housing Authority and the Capital Area Landlords Association to address the availability of senior housing.

Maine's capital city is well known for its leisure and cultural activities. Participating in social activities has many documented benefits including health, better longevity and lower rates of depression. Opportunities to participate socially, however, often become more challenging with aging, due to lessened physical abilities, lack of transportation or other barriers.

Augusta has several buildings and spaces that could be used for additional socialization opportunities. For example, the Buker Community Center offers a place for social gatherings and physical exercise and the Lithgow Library has space available for meetings and social groups. Organized social events and intergenerational activities are important to community residents.

The Age-Friendly Committee works to create partnership opportunities, advance intergenerational connections and encourage volunteerism, for example, partnering with Cony High School to have students help seniors understand and utilize technology and for seniors to help students with life skills.

The committee, working with the Chamber of Commerce and Augusta Downtown Alliance, has established a Certified Age-Friendly Business program that rates the accessibility of and senior friendliness of restaurants, retail stores, and services.

### **Supporting our educational system and children:**

Among the goals of this plan are better jobs, higher incomes, attracting families back into the city, and expanding culture and the arts. While there are many things that can be done to further these goals in the short term – and many are proposed throughout this plan—in the long run, there is no single thing that would do more to achieve all of these goals than to raise the educational achievement of Augusta residents.

Augusta has a culture of educational excellence and lifelong learning supported by public recognition of achievement and systematic educational improvement. Students have the resources on hand to achieve high academic performance in the classroom and in the community. Lifelong learning is a shared ethic and experience among adults of all ages in the Augusta area, and opportunities for such education grow every year. (Partners outlined in text, 2022+)

In 2016, the Augusta School Board hosted a Future Search where community and school leaders came together to set the direction of the school department. Over 100 members participated in this two day event and came away with these goals for our students.

Remembering that every decision should answer the question “How does this benefit the students?”, the Augusta School department will:

- Deliver an all encompassing, individualized curriculum that tailors instruction, challenges students, provides flexibility and maintains rigor, while expanding experiential learning and creating mindful students who are prepared to be functioning members of a global society.
- Foster creativity while developing and implementing programs that engage students for a changing world, enhance curriculum, and leverage the power of technology for learning and life.
- Create a safe and secure school community that fosters a culture of acceptance and support for all, as well as respect and empathy for our schools and community. In this environment, students, staff, and parents are simultaneously valued and held accountable for their actions.
- Value open, transparent and mutually respectful communication which includes active listening to promote positive collaboration between staff, students, parents and community. We expect strong and successful communication skills to be taught, modeled, and utilized by all.
- Increase social, physical, emotional and mental well-being, by supporting opportunities for

Each year the Augusta School Board and the school department establish specific goals to meet these overall objectives.

- A. Continue to provide a high-quality education for students.
- B. Build a new school(s). Through the comprehensive planning process, the committee heard a lot about determining what to do with Hussey Elementary School. We believe that there are a number of options available to our city in terms of configuring our school and replacing a much needed building. We establish the following tasks for our work for the next ten years:
  1. Establish a comprehensive building committee representing a broad stakeholder group (School Board, City Council, teachers, students, parents, community members, etc.);
  2. Review the possible configurations and locations for a school;
  3. Solicit community input about the possibilities;
  4. Determine a plan and location based on data and input;
  4. Garner support from the community and the Department of Education to begin the process; and
  5. Build a new school(s).

The School Board and City Council should also begin its discussion on the reuse of the current school building. As we have seen through the redevelopment of Buker School, Hodgkins School, and the Cony Flatiron, the reuse of a school building can benefit the community. It would seem that housing would be most appropriate for a future use at Hussey School.
- C. Support the school department in addressing the social-emotional needs of our students. There is an increasing demand to provide support and guidance to students not only on their academics, but on social emotional learning as well. We encourage the schools to continue their work in this area and to work with community partners for assistance.
- D. Consider the merge with Child Development Services as proposed by the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services.

- E. Expand programming in CATC, Adult Education, and electives for Cony High School.
- F. Continue to support having School Resource Officers in the schools.
- G. The City Council and management will continue to work closely with the School Board and department management to foster a collaborative environment that benefits the students and teachers of the district. It is important to meet regularly through the joint committee as identified in the City Charter.
- H. The city supports the efforts to install field-turf at Alumni Field and will work in coordination with the School Board, administration, and boosters to provide adequate resources to finish the project by 2021.
- I. The city should continue to expand the areas of recognition at its City Council and School Board meetings to include a broad range of achievements in academics, athletics, and the arts. It should also expand the settings to include all educational facilities in the city, both private and public, from pre-kindergarten through post-secondary. As was stated in the 2007 comprehensive plan, “regular and frequent recognitions of student achievement will send a message from the City Council to our students, and to the outside world, that excellence in education matters in Augusta.” Beyond recognizing excellence, the City Council and School Board need to publicly measure overall progress towards our educational goals, and lead the civic dialogue about how we can do better.

Augusta’s youth of today are its residents and leaders of tomorrow. The Comprehensive Plan Committee wanted to ensure that their voice is heard in this plan. Cony High School students were asked for their perspective on both what would make Augusta a better place for them today and those things that would encourage them to choose to live in Augusta as adults. Their ideas mirror much of what is highlighted in this plan. They desire places to gather, increased recreational opportunities, a vibrant downtown, cultural and music venues, and easier access to places around the city. In the future, the things that will keep these youth in Augusta include high paying/good opportunity jobs, affordable higher education, lower taxes, and an abundance of recreational and cultural activities. For a full list of youth desires see the appendix. (Augusta School Department, City Council, Community Services, Partner Organizations, 2022+)



# 3. A CENTER FOR ECONOMIC ACTIVITY



Augusta is a vibrant economic community where businesses of all sizes grow and prosper side by side. We welcome all shapes and sizes of economic development. We pride ourselves on an open and fair process for promoting growth and leadership. We also work hard to ensure that new developments reflect the unique characteristics of Augusta's neighborhoods and districts.

Augusta continues to take its place as one of Maine's largest and most active retail areas. Visitors come from all around to shop at our popular shopping centers - the Marketplace at Augusta; Augusta Crossing; Turnpike Mall; Shaw's Plaza; and Augusta Plaza. National trends show a challenging forecast for the future of retail, especially with the increased popularity of online shopping. To prepare for this transition in the retail industry, we would like the City of Augusta to be proactive in its support for our current shopping centers.

- The City Council should invite the property owners of the retail malls in Augusta and seek their input for challenges they face, opportunities we should consider, and how we can help them be successful. (2022+)
- Encourage more greenery, pedestrian attractions (playground, art, bike paths, entertainment, outdoor seating), and mixed use at strip mall locations. Perhaps residential as well. (Planning Board, Community Services, partners, 2022+)
- Revisit the land use ordinance for retail spaces, and expand the allowable uses for operations to help address vacant retail spaces. (Planning Board, 2023+)
- Take a look at areas in the city where light manufacturing could take place without additional impact to the neighboring business/neighborhoods, and be willing to adapt as times change to best suit the city. (Planning Board, 2024+)

Augusta takes business-friendly to the next level by walking business leaders, entrepreneurs and developers through every step of the process of opening a business here and offering incentives to those investing in our city.

As we are a service center for small business and workforce development, we are uniquely able to refer potential businesses to high quality resources located a short distance away from City Center. Augusta is home to offices of the Small Business Administration, Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), Service Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE), Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center, Career Center, Manufacturing Extension Partnership, New Ventures, Department of Economic and Community Development and UMaine Cooperative Extension.

The City of Augusta encourages coworking and incubator spaces to be developed so that small businesses and entrepreneurs can access high quality work space at an affordable rate, while also networking with like-minded business people. (Planning Board, Economic Dev, 2023)

Augusta's downtown district has greatly expanded within the last 5 years, becoming its own neighborhood and retail center. With over 100 housing units by 2022, downtown is becoming a unique urban area within the city. Council and staff should encourage and seek out retail opportunities to be located in the downtown district to supply residents with options of grocery, food and drink, coffee shops, bakeries, boutiques and more. The more the city invests time, energy and resources in the downtown area, the more growth we can expect there. (2023+)

The Roux Institute, located in Portland, is a new engine for tech talent and innovation, and it is of great benefit for the city, its residents and businesses located here, for Council and staff to create a relationship and find ways to partner with the Institute. Beyond the Institute, it is important for the city to keep up with changing technology and advances including our website, servers, broadband, communications and other systems so that we are offering the residents,



# 4. AN ACTIVE PLACE TO ENJOY



Augusta is a place of great natural beauty. Divided by the Kennebec River, Augusta is also carved out by streams, lakes, ponds, and bogs. Our land is covered with forests, conservation areas, and public parks. Augusta is home for countless eagles, deer, sturgeon, and other wildlife.

We are perfectly positioned to be a “green city” that sets standards for action on preserving open space and wildlife habitats, reducing energy usage, and promoting environmentally sustainable development and lifestyles while continuing to embrace residential and economic growth.

## TRAILS

All nature trails on the eastside and westside should be connected and visibly marked for pedestrian use. The city should name each individual trail and the entire trail system; consider sponsorship opportunities, similar to the Friends of the Kennebec River Rail Trail, for maintenance of the trails and host annual events on the trails (marathons, bikes, art walks, flower sales, farmers markets, etc.). There is so much potential for making Augusta the place to be to enjoy the outdoors. (Community Services, 2023)

## **PARKS/PLAYGROUNDS**

We commend the volunteers and city staff who maintain and operate the many recreational opportunities throughout the city. Augusta is second to none when it comes to the wide array of neighborhood parks to enjoy.

Augusta residents - children and adults - enjoy a wide array of programs offered by the city's bureau of recreation, as well as several tournaments, clinics, concerts, field trips, playground activities and senior excursions offered throughout the year.

We understand the growing need for city resources to support all the city-owned parks, playgrounds, and facilities. The City Council should review and evaluate all of its community assets to determine the sustainability for future use and operation. Discussion of discontinuing use of any parks, playgrounds, and/or facilities should involve multiple opportunities for public input. (Community Services, Partners, 2023+)

## **CAPITOL AREA RECREATION ASSOCIATION (CARA) FIELDS**

Augusta is very fortunate to be home to this vast recreational complex. Situated next to the Viles Arboretum, the CARA fields that stretch along the Piggery Road are a valued community asset in the realm of the city's inventory of recreational opportunities. The property is home to several baseball and softball fields for Augusta Little League, Capital Area Youth Softball Association, Babe Ruth, and Cony Baseball. It has soccer and multi-purpose fields for youth and school soccer and lacrosse programming. The horseshoe pits are of the only kind in the city and a basketball court provides additional activities for Augusta youths. We recognize the commitment by the CARA volunteers over the years and acknowledge the reality that the city may have to step up its support to ensure that the existence and maintenance of the complex continues into the foreseeable future for Augusta. We encourage the city to continue to collaborate with the CARA to achieve this goal. (Community Services, Partners, 2023+)

## **"ARTGUSTA"**

Augusta is revitalizing its efforts to be known as a city with a vibrant arts, culture, and history scene. The 2007 comprehensive plan suggested that "bringing Augusta's artistic, musical, and cultural worlds together with passionate audiences will stimulate Augusta's creative economy and bring people into the downtown to live and to play."

The plan also recognized that "missing are venues to bring the artists and the audiences together in a lively setting. That setting is downtown. Augusta's downtown must become a cultural district. It should have all of the elements that enable arts and culture to thrive: performance venues of different sizes, restaurants and nightlife, galleries and studios, upstairs housing, classes, and bookstores. The city can initiate this effort, but ultimate success depends upon a partnership with local businesses, the University of Maine at Augusta, nonprofit arts partners, foundations, and creative individuals." Progress has been made with restaurants, night life, and upstairs housing, but more is to be done on the other aspects. We support the city to continue its work with the Augusta Downtown Alliance, University of Maine at Augusta, downtown businesses, and other stakeholders to finally bring the vibrant arts and culture that so many would like to see in our downtown region. We support the creation of a designated arts district to reinforce the ARTgusta initiative. (Community Services, Partners, 2023+)



## COLONIAL THEATER

The City of Augusta supports the revitalization of the Colonial Theater. Once a lively cultural center, we hope to see this historic landmark return to its signature service of bringing popular arts and culture to the people and visitors of Augusta.

Critical to the visibility of arts and culture in a community is a thorough and easily accessible calendar of events. The easiest way to provide such a cultural calendar is through a website and app. We encourage the city, through its marketing efforts, to create a dedicated website and app to include local attractions, a calendar of events, tourist information, and promotional activities. (City Manager, 2023)

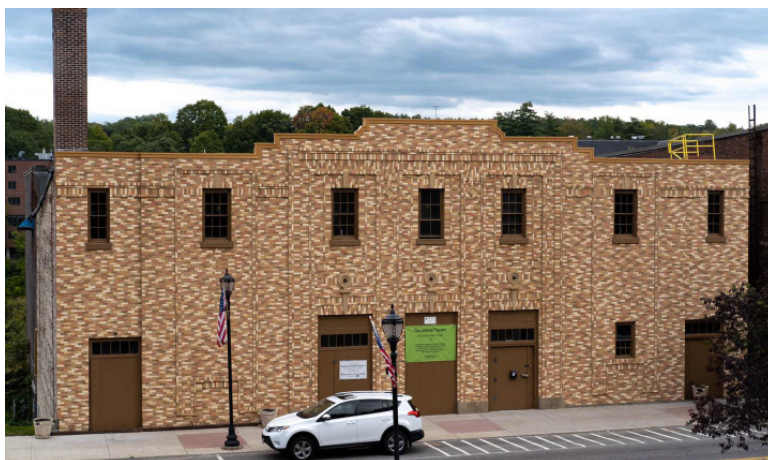
## CHIZZLE WIZZLE

In 1892 Cony High School students got together to create a fundraising effort for their football team. Since then, the Chizzle Wizzle variety show has become a staple event in Augusta, giving students an opportunity to show the community their talents while having lots of fun.

Chizzle Wizzle is the longest running high school production in the United States. The show consists of two halves, Olio and Minstrel. The production runs for 4 nights at the end of every March and culminates with the Chizzle Wizzle Ball on Saturday night. The name, “Chizzle Wizzle” comes from one of the school’s many old cheers: “Chizzle Wizzle, Chizzle Wizzle, sis boom bah! Cony High, Cony High, rah, rah, rah!” (Augusta Schools, 2022)

## HERITAGE AND CULTURE

Augusta is fortunate to be the home for many unique museums, such as: Old Fort Western; the State Museum; First Amendment Museum; Maine Military Historical Society Museum; Holocaust Museum at UMA; Kennebec Historical Society; Augusta Police Department Museum; and Augusta Fire Department Museum. We support each museum and encourage the city to work with each one to assist in marketing and promotional opportunities, and ensure they are able to keep their doors open in Augusta. (Various city departments and partners, 2025+)



## OLD FORT WESTERN

Old Fort Western, New England's oldest surviving wooden fort, was built in 1754 by the Proprietors of the Kennebec Purchase and is now designated as a National Historic Landmark. Located on the banks of the Kennebec River, Old Fort Western offers year-round programming including guided tours, demonstrations, reenactments, apprenticeships and school and group tours.

- Look at new ways to market and utilize this historic site - make it more the focus of city pride and gathering spot for community events.
- Encourage kid-friendly activities.

Augusta's own Lithgow Public Library and the Maine State Library provide valuable materials and services to help you fulfill your educational, recreational and professional needs. The Maine State Archives is the state's repository of official government archival records beginning with 1639 court records. The Archive includes a major Civil War collection. (OFW, 2022)

## CIVIC CENTER

The Augusta Civic Center is one of Maine's most popular venues for concerts and performances. Popular acts from the world of music and entertainment often make a stop at the Civic Center during national tours. We are very fortunate to have the Civic Center and we support its continuation. The city should begin planning ahead for improvements needed to the facility to keep it competitive with other state-of-the-art civic centers in Maine.

The 2007 comprehensive plan called for Augusta to be a "city surrounded by a greenbelt, filled with parks, with sports teams playing at night; a city that is a Maine leader in green development, recycling, and global warming policies." We still support that vision and encourage the city to continue its work to achieve it. (City Council, Civic Center, 2023+)

## RENEWABLE ENERGY LEADER

The city has made significant progress in renewable and alternative energy projects. They have been able to do so with limited financial risk, highly successful rewards, and sustainable cost savings. We are very proud of the efforts over the years and believe Augusta is a leader in this initiative. As a capstone for these achievements, the city should strive to be 100% reliant on renewable energy by 2024, meaning that the 100-plus city energy accounts will be powered by renewable energy alternatives.

As a statewide leader of these municipal energy initiatives, Augusta should look for ways to promote similar efforts around the community for both residential and commercial entities. We encourage Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified standards, WELL certified, net zero, and energy efficiency incentives for new commercial developments. We also encourage opportunities for collaboration in energy efficiency projects. We know that the technology and costs involved in energy efficiency projects is evolving and improving by the day, and we should always be looking to take advantage of an incentive or program when it is feasible.

Beyond energy efficiency, Augusta also has the potential to be a leader for the environment through land conservation, greenways, and being good stewards for our earth.

It is recommended that Council look at zoning in the city and identify areas that potential solar projects would work well and contribute to the neighborhood. (City Manager, Development Services, 2024)

## **RECYCLING**

We know residents would like to be proactive in making a difference. The most common request seems to be around recycling. Augusta finds itself in an interesting position because it has its own landfill, so the cost benefit analysis for recycling can swing either way depending on the global economics of recycling. At this time, it is our understanding that the market for recyclables is not cost effective. However, we do not believe this should be justification for eliminating our recycling efforts. The value in encouraging people to think about their consumption habits and ways they can recycle is very important. (Public Works, 2023+)

## **COMPOSTING**

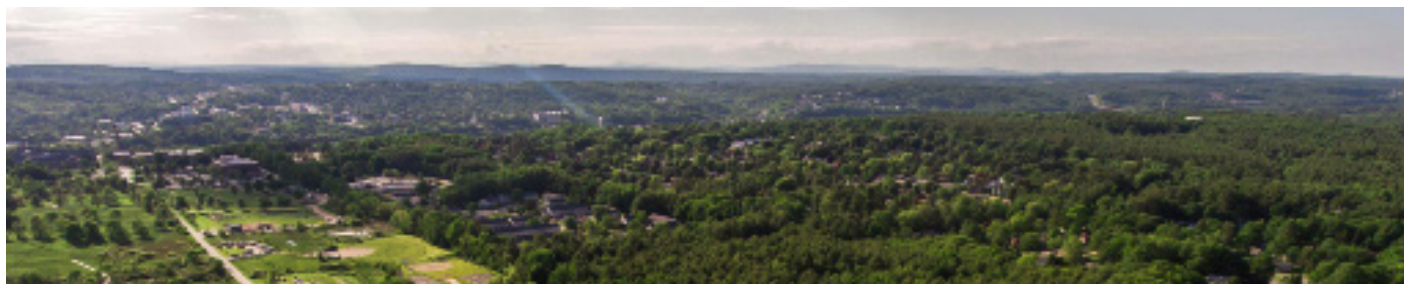
The city's Public Works Department should consider expanding composting options for residents. (Public Works, 2023+)

## **HATCH HILL**

We also believe any efforts to extend the life of Hatch Hill can only be to the benefit of the city. The city should continue to explore options for recycling, whether it is with ecomaine or by different means. Also, knowing that the life of Hatch Hill has a limited number of years remaining, we should begin considering plans for turning Hatch Hill into a resident-only landfill, especially as we see many communities around us begin to struggle with the high cost of transferring the trash of their residents. Having a landfill exclusive to the people of Augusta could be very advantageous in the future. (Public Works, 2023+)

## **“GREEN” TEAM**

The ability of city parks and recreation staff to keep up with and take care of the city's “green” infrastructure is a growing concern. Climate change, invasive species and plants, cemetery demands, workforce issues, decline of volunteers, and other factors are increasing challenges to the city operations. We recommend that the City Council create a “green” team to address this new reality. The team will identify challenges facing the community; explore the resources needed; recommend proactive actions; and implement a comprehensive plan to combat the many issues facing Augusta's “green” infrastructure. (City Council, 2023+)





# 5. A CONNECTED COMMUNITY



Augusta's convenient and central location is an asset to the community. Augusta is located in the heart of Central Maine - just 3 hours north of Boston, and ideally positioned between three of Maine's larger cities: Portland (one hour to the south), Lewiston (45 minutes to the west), and Bangor (one hour to the north). Most major state roads and highways converge in Augusta - a true center of commerce and travel. Direct access to the Maine Turnpike and Interstate 95 is ideal for north-south travel, and major state roads make Augusta a gateway to eastern and western Maine.

Not only is Augusta easy to reach by road, we have myriad multimodal transportation opportunities - by air, public transit, rail, river, and motor coach. Many parts of the city are also walkable, however, enhancements are still needed to make Augusta more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.

Towards that goal, the city has a well-established Traffic Calming Committee that is used to address traffic issues around the city. The committee consists of the Public Works Director, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Director of Development Services and the City Engineer. It is very effective in managing expectations and providing consistent recommendations when it is presented with traffic issues. We feel the community will also benefit from the recently formed pedestrian-friendly, citizen committee - CAPITAL (Cyclists and Pedestrians Invigorating Augusta Life) - aimed at proactively looking at ways to enhance cycling and pedestrian safety and access throughout the city. We believe both committees will complement each other and provide the vision necessary to improve walking, cycling, and getting around the city.



The city should implement the Council-approved MaineDOT/Bicycle Coalition of Maine Pedestrian Safety report and work to improve sidewalks, pedestrian access and safety, lighting, signage, and landscaping of all gateway roads. (Public Works, 2023+)

The City of Augusta has adopted a “Complete Streets” Policy. Communities across the country, including Maine, are considering “road diets” for heavily-traveled highways. The basic concept behind a “road diet” is to examine all the potential ways the road space might be used, rather than maximizing its capacity to carry vehicles. Commonly, this practice has been used to reduce 4-lane roads down to two travel lanes, with a middle turn lane. It also may present the opportunity to provide a bicycle lane or safer sidewalks for pedestrian use. “Road diets” also make crossing a busy highway easier and safer for pedestrians. Augusta has successfully implemented “road diets” on lower State Street (from the State House to Hallowell) and Hospital Street (from First Avenue to Sixth Avenue). The city should continue to look at this approach for improving heavily-traveled 4-lane roads throughout the city. We support a “road diet” for Bangor Street, and further encourage the city to work with the Maine Department of Transportation to study options for making Western Avenue a safer and more pedestrian-friendly thoroughway. (City Manager, 2023+)

Augusta’s off-road walking trails are excellent, but they are not connected to each other. Some of our sidewalks are in relatively poor condition, and road crossings are often intimidating. Fixing and maintaining sidewalks, developing safe crosswalks, and connecting sidewalks and trails to create a citywide walking/biking network, are all part of making Augusta a great place to live. We continue to support the recommendation that the city create a citywide trail and sidewalk plan, connecting important destinations. In particular, the city needs a strong link from the Capitol Complex to the downtown, allowing visitors to easily walk to the businesses and riverfront; from the University of Maine at Augusta to downtown, promoting student life and activities there; from schools to neighborhoods, so students can walk and ride bikes to school; and from neighborhoods to downtown and riverfront trails, so that people can safely walk to destinations. The plan should include financial mechanisms for buying land, rebuilding sidewalks, and performing ongoing maintenance. (Public Works, Community Services, 2022+)



Many of Augusta’s sidewalks are in need of repair, and road crossings are often intimidating. They must accommodate walkers of all types, including strollers, wheelchairs and residents with physical limitations. Fixing and maintaining sidewalks, developing safe crosswalks, and connecting sidewalks and trails to create a citywide walking/biking network, are all part of making Augusta a great place to live. The city will review and assess all of its sidewalks to identify deficiencies and needs for improvement. The report should include resident feedback, best

practices for improving pedestrian safety, possible funding sources, and a timeline for the work. (Public Works, 2025+)

The regional public transit provider, Kennebec Valley Community Action Program (KVCAP), provides scheduled fixed-route public bus transportation, the Kennebec Explorer, and on-demand services. These services have limitations with regard to timing of operations, e.g., evenings and weekends. Several taxi companies also serve the community. Augusta Age-Friendly is advocating for a volunteer driver program that would manage logistics for senior transportation services, including ride scheduling and volunteer management. Maine's rapidly aging population and rural nature make public transportation services imperative. (City Council and Partners, 2023+)

The Augusta State Airport is an important asset. Economic developers say that an airport is one of the four key elements a community needs to participate in the new economy (along with a University, quality of life, and quality workforce – all of which Augusta has).

Owned by the Maine Department of Transportation, the airport provides commercial air service with scheduled flights to Boston and beyond, charter, and private air services. Car rentals are also available. The destinations for most arriving pilots and passengers are only minutes away.

Although Augusta must continue making improvements to the airport, the airport should not impinge upon the quality of life of neighboring residents. Neighbors should be part of the airport master planning process to insure that their concerns are heard and addressed.

The Airport should work to ensure that transportation options are available for travelers who arrive in Augusta in the evening and on the weekend. (Airport Manager, 2022+)

Augusta has a variety of trucking firms that offer freight service to the area. Motor coach bus companies operate a major transportation hub in Augusta providing intrastate and interstate connections.

Augusta has existing railroad infrastructure, but is no longer utilized for active freight or passenger service. Historically, the Kennebec River offered transportation of freight and passengers and still offers recreational boating.

The City of Augusta is also “connected” by a network of utilities transporting energy, water, sewer, and telecommunications to power the businesses, homes, industries, offices, and services of a vital city. Looking to the future, it is imperative to maintain state-of-the-art, and continue to pursue advanced, utility integrity.

Public transportation options should be sought out to bring state workers downtown for business meetings, visiting restaurants and shopping. (City Council and partners, 2023+)

The city should be using modern cyber security measures, be up to date on cyber security training and encourage computer science and cyber security education at all ages. (City IT, 2022)

Traffic signals should have coordinated operation within 2 years. (State, Dev Services, 2022)

# 6. A CITY FOR ALL



## NON-PROFITS

Augusta is lucky to have a wide range of non-profit entities in the city and provide services to our residents and neighbors alike. The city treasures and appreciates these organizations community involvement and thanks them for their commitment to our shared community.

These organizations perform countless duties with very limited budgets and most of them rely heavily on volunteers. Similarly, the city has numerous committees that rely solely on volunteers to oversee various city offices and community hubs. The city encourages residents to explore volunteer opportunities with public and private organizations as we believe that an involved citizenry creates a strong sense of community. There are resources to learn about different opportunities and interested residents should contact the United Way of Kennebec Valley, Maine 211, the city, or any nonprofit organization they are interested in volunteering for.

We also encourage the city to create a “community ambassador program” to educate and inform residents how they can be leaders of the community and promote the city assets to visitors and other residents. This program will work with local businesses and organizations to share information, resources, programs and initiatives. “Ambassadors” will help promote local activities and attractions. It could also oversee the distribution of a “Welcome to Augusta” packet for new residents. (Community Services and Partners, 2024)

## **PUBLIC ACCESS**

Public access to municipal documents and information should be a priority for city government. We recommend that the city lead in this effort by expanding its access and creating a reasonable timeline and expectations for making its documents and information available to the public online. The city should also specify what documents and information will be made available and stored in an easily accessible archived format. The City Council should codify this policy in the City Charter. (City Council, 2023+)

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

At the beginning of every year, the City Council holds a day-long session to build its goals for the community. We support the annual goal-setting process and encourage the City Council to review the comprehensive plan as part of its deliberations to ensure that implementation of the plan's recommendations are happening. The city should also update its comprehensive plan by starting the process at least 8 years from adoption of this current plan. (City Council, Development Services, 2022+)

## **CIVIC CENTER**

The city will explore options for improved electronic notifications for city-related announcements. This feature will be available for any interested resident wishing to sign-up for email and/or text notifications from the city. We hope this service will be used to save on postage, printing, and labor costs. (City Council, City Manager, 2023+)

## **COMMITTEES**

Update city committees, their responsibilities, and reporting to the public. (City Council, 2022+)

## **FACILITIES MASTER PLAN**

A master facilities plan is recommended, and would be to provide a current and contemporary assessment of the short, medium and longer range municipal facility needs and desires to serve the residents, businesses, visitors, and general City of Augusta community. We hope for a steady influx of new development bringing a range of new residents and businesses with diverse needs, desires and expectations. What we do not want to see is the growth putting a strain on existing municipal facilities - we want Augusta to be seen as proactive in planning for, and managing, the growth and development of the community and the associated impacts on our facilities and infrastructure. (Development Services, 2022)

This plan will provide a current and future needs assessment for municipal facilities and will include an initial prioritization of these needs; general cost estimates; potential locations for new or expanded facilities; opportunities for collaborative projects, shared space, and public-private partnerships; and an overview of, and the relationship to, the city's debt service.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

The city will ensure that emergency response equipment (tourniquets, defibrillator, epipen, naloxone, etc.) is available throughout city-owned public locations that are common for crowds of people. (Fire Department, 2022+)



## DIVERSITY

Diversity, equity, and inclusion lie at the core of success in Augusta, living our values, and advancing the common good. As a community, we understand the strength and vibrance diversity, equity, and inclusion brings to every aspect of our shared experiences in our city. We acknowledge that injustices have persisted throughout history and continue to exist today. Therefore, in order to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within municipal government with intention and accountability, the Augusta City Council will form a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee as soon as possible.

The DEI committee will strive to engage community members, especially those whose voices have traditionally been marginalized, to ensure an equitable community. These community members include, but are not limited to, people of every age, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender expression, sexual identity, ability, language, veteran status, family circumstance, and cultural background. The City will promote appropriate transparency around decision-making and facilitate meaningful opportunities for feedback, especially for those directly impacted. In future iterations, of the comprehensive plan, the DEI committee will require diverse community members are represented on the comprehensive plan committee to ensure that all voices of our community will be heard. The DEI committee will review the Comprehensive Plan with the goal to best reflect the aim of the City to embrace and promote DEI, to include addressing housing issues, promote the safety and health of our residents, adopt age-friendly community standards, and provide an excellent education for every student.

The city of Augusta recognizes that having a strong record of diversity, equity, and inclusivity is critical for us to attract top talent and unequivocally denounce all forms of racism and discrimination because they undermine the well-being and vitality of our community.

Therefore, we remain committed to addressing these complex issues within the community.

Diversity leverages the benefits of each unique perspective.  
Equity gives everyone the opportunity to thrive.  
Inclusion shares the power of decision making.

(City Council and partners, 2022+)



## **STATE GOVERNMENT**

The State House, the Governor's Mansion, and Capitol Park represent the center of Augusta's Capitol District, located on the western banks of the Kennebec River. The city should continue to work closely and cooperatively with the state government and Capitol Planning Commission on all state-owned properties and development plans. (City Council, City Manager, 2022)

## **UNIVERSITY OF MAINE AT AUGUSTA (UMA)**

The city will continue to find ways to partner with UMA and to collaborate on community events, activities, and especially housing opportunities. Augusta must see the development of student housing within the city. (City Manager and UMA, 2022+)

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

As elected officials, the City Council and School Board shall take an affirmative vote on establishing a guiding Code of Conduct each year. (City Council and School Board, 2022)

## **WEBSITE**

The city will set aside funds to invest in a new website and software system that would allow public access to important information in an easy to use fashion. Our current website is out-of-date, even though only a few years old. The new site should be hosted on a platform that can also serve e-notices and alerting systems. This system would also come with an app for easy access. (City Manager, 2022+)

## **MARKETING**

A plan for integrating a marketing and communications position within city staff was hired in 2021. Marketing is needed to get our message out to the public, tourists, and potential new residents, showing them what Augusta has to offer. Communications refers to internal and external communications with city staff, the public, constituents, and the media. (City Manager 2022)

## **NEW POLICE STATION**

The City Council and city residents support the building of a new police station in Augusta. This new station will be state-of-the-art in both design and in safety. After 22 years of being housed in a "temporary" location, the Augusta Police Department will be able to have a secure, warm, and functioning facility to call home at 7 Willow Street, across Cony Street from City Hall.

## **RECOVERY READY COMMUNITY**

As overdose continues to increase in our communities, the City of Augusta is committed to increasing the recovery capital of our community by working in partnership with the state and federal agencies to become a recovery ready community. As part of this work, results from Project Recovery, a pilot program designed to connect those with substance use disorder with treatment and identify gaps in the continuum of care, will guide the city's approach. It will be important to bring in voices of various relevant state, local non-profit organizations, and people with lived or living experiences of substance use in order to identify the needs of the recovery

community within the city for long term goals, such as implementing harm reduction strategies and addressing barriers to successful community re-entry. The city will also work with the county and the state to maximize the impact of funds received through opioid settlement monies with a commitment to sustainable support for those impacted by substance use. (Council and City Manager, 2023+)

A Recovery Ready Community is well-resourced, culturally competent, and is consistently working to develop, expand and oversee comprehensive recovery supports; enhance meaningful employment opportunities and employment readiness training; promote opportunities for individuals to continue or complete their education goals; improve access to safe, affordable and suitable housing; expand public-health programs focused on criminal justice interventions for those with substance use disorders; and broaden comprehensive, accessible and compassionate harm reduction services. (Young People in Recovery)

### **BANGOR STREET FIRE STATION**

As we look to the future, we realize that the Daryl Parker Wells Fire Station on Bangor Street is an aging building, and will need to be replaced within the next 5-10 years. The City Council should look to financing options down the road to keep this an affordable build. (City Council, Fire Department, 2025+)

### **COLLABORATION WITH THE STATE**

The City Council and state delegation shall work together and maintain a relationship between the city and state in the way of the Capital Riverfront Improvement District (CRID) committee. The city should seek partial funding for the committee by the state to support activities and infrastructure in the riverfront region. A better relationship between state and city government means knowing when development is taking place, where the state plans to expand/move agencies and buildings, etc. (City Council, City Manager, 2023)



### **PUBLIC WORKS FACILITY**

Augusta is in need of a new public works facility operations center and office space. Council should work to identify a way to fund this project and the location of the new facility. (City Council and Public Works, 2023)

# DREAMS & ASPIRATIONS



## OVERVIEW

Throughout the comprehensive planning process, some of the ideas that were presented did not fit into the strategy, but the committee did not want to forget about these ideas. The committee decided to keep them front of mind by including them in this dreams and aspirations section of the plan.



## ZIP LINE

The city should put out a request for proposals for the installation of a recreational zip line that will span across or along the Kennebec River. We encourage that this only be created through a private enterprise.

## PASSENGER RAIL

The city will support passenger rail extension to Augusta, should the current financial ramifications change drastically.

## GROCERY OPTIONS

Additional grocery options such as Trader Joes and/or Whole Foods are desired by many citizens.



# SECTION C: FUTURE LAND USE

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This section lays out where and how future development should occur. It is designed to:

Make it easier to build new housing in the built-up areas of the City, especially along sewer and water lines, while respecting and preserving historic neighborhoods; encourage a higher quality of design, particularly for commercial buildings; allow for more “mixed-use” developments where houses, stores, and offices are blended together in an attractive and walkable manner; and provide flexibility to homebuilders and developers to locate their buildings in ways that best suit the site – while respecting the rights of neighbors to privacy and attractive buffers.

These goals will be accomplished through changes to municipal land-use regulation, and through public and private infrastructure investments. By and large, the land-use regulation changes proposed are incremental in nature. No dramatic changes from existing uses are proposed. However, the goal of the changes is to improve the quality of all development within the City.

This plan carries out the requirement of the State’s Growth Management Act, to encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community and region while protecting the State’s rural character, making efficient use of public services and preventing development sprawl.

(Title 30-A, Section 4312(3)(A))



In order to achieve this goal, municipalities must designate, at a minimum, growth and rural areas. Additionally, municipalities may designate transitional and critical rural areas. Augusta uses all four designations using three maps to clarify the intent.

The first map (pg 40) – “Growth Area” – shows the general growth area for Augusta –the area within which the majority of development in the coming ten years should take place. The second map (pg 41) – “Future Land Use” – breaks down the growth area into eight districts and names them according to the predominant use (note that other uses also take place in these districts, but at a smaller scale). The third map (pg 42) – “Future Land Use Detail” – provides a level of detail about uses that can inform future zoning decisions. None of these are intended to be directly translated into zoning maps, but are strong guidance for zoning.





## EXISTING GROWTH TRENDS

Augusta's growth since the 2007 Comprehensive Plan adoption has primarily been within the 2007 designated growth area. Major commercial centers, including Augusta Crossing, Journal Square, Phase 3 of the MarketPlace at Augusta, and the redevelopment of Water Street, all occurred within the growth area. A new \$350 million dollar regional hospital, Cancer Center, and Veterans Home all occurred within the growth area. Major new housing initiatives have all been within the growth area, including Fieldstone Place adjacent to Cony High School, infill duplexes on Windy and Glen Streets, over 80 age restricted low income units in the Cony Flation building and former Hodgkins School, 45 affordable units on Maple Street, and over 100 units of upper floor housing creating a new residential neighborhood in downtown. In the last two years, over 300 new residential units have been approved for construction in the growth area and another 300-400, also in the growth area, are working their way through the approval process. We eagerly await the construction of those units. Many units of community living arrangements, addiction treatment facilities, sober houses, and group homes have been created as well in existing neighborhoods. Major office development in the growth area has included the new DHHS building, the Department of Revenue Services building, as well as the reuse of the old hospital building, which was no small accomplishment and many smaller projects all within the growth area.

The most transformative change since the last comprehensive plan adoption is the addition of natural gas as a utility in the city. The city actively courted a gas company, along with the State, by putting all of our buildings out to bid for a gas company to come to the city, leveraging the city's and state's buying power to attract a gas company to extend into Augusta and serve all of the businesses and residents of the city. Augusta's contract with our gas provider required that they extend their utility to the vast majority of businesses and residents in the city's growth area. This effort alone dramatically strengthened the ability of the growth area to attract development. And we ended up being one of the few or only city in the nation with two natural gas providers throughout the city.

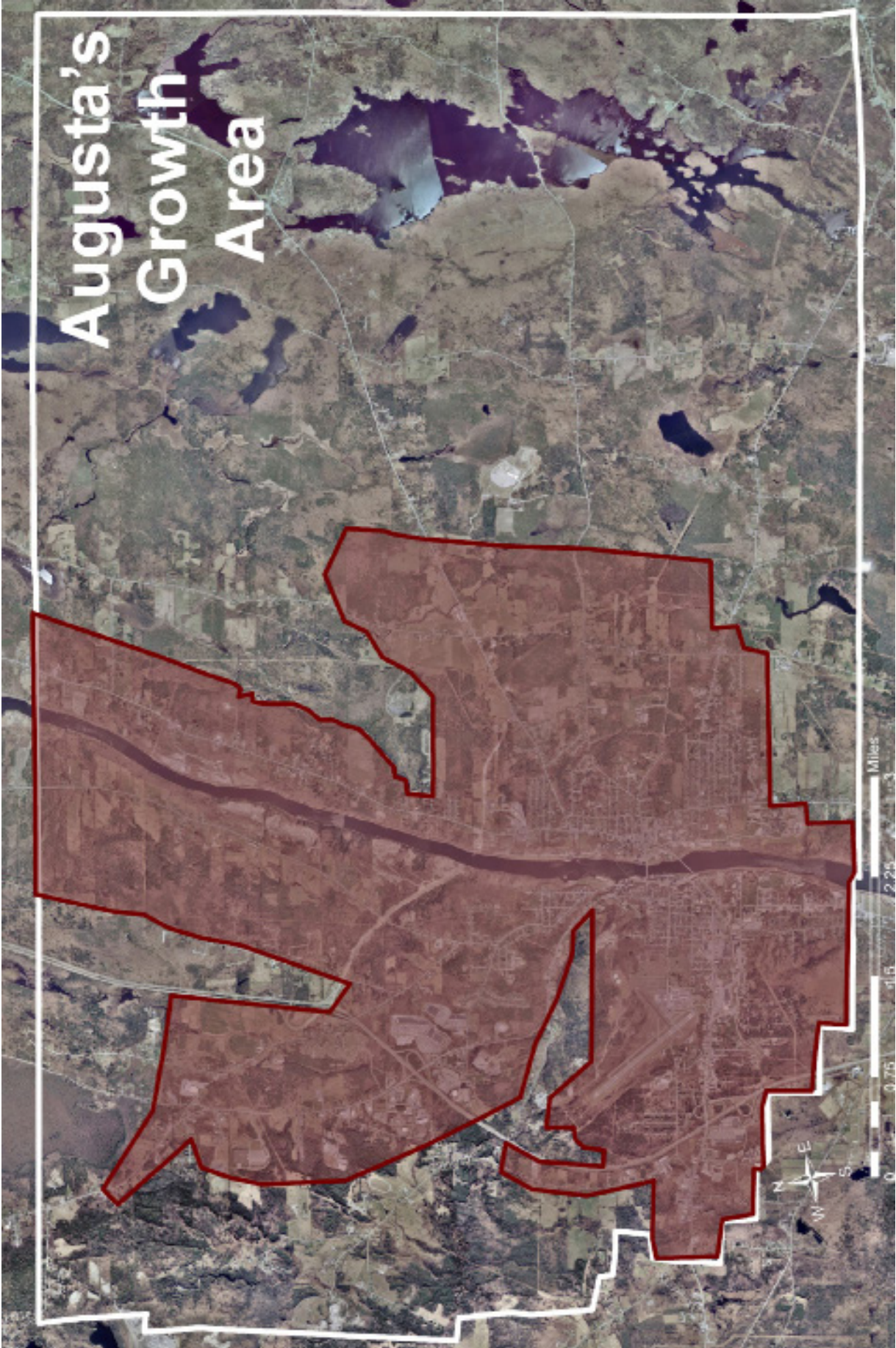
The vast majority of city investment, well over 75%, has occurred within the growth area, as have the investments by the local utility district, the state, and the Augusta school system. The city created Market Square park, Bond Brook Recreational Area (a natural jewel in the heart of the city that can easily be walked to by many residents), a skateboard park, the extension of the Kennebec River Rail Trail to Waterfront Park, and substantial improvements to Mill Park. There were countless street pavings and many street/sidewalk reconstructions and redesigns including a major improvement to Commercial Street to make it more attractive to users of downtown as well as making Water Street two-way after 75 years as a one-way couplet with Commercial Street. We have created a half dozen TIF districts all in the growth area to promote development and have one of the state's few Enterprise Zones in the growth area. The city is very focused on promoting growth in the growth area.

Augusta is a Service Center community, so its growth area is larger than is typical in a smaller, more suburban or rural municipality. The state's Growth Management Act and state agencies recognize that Service Center communities are home to the majority of regional services and therefore tend to have large growth areas.

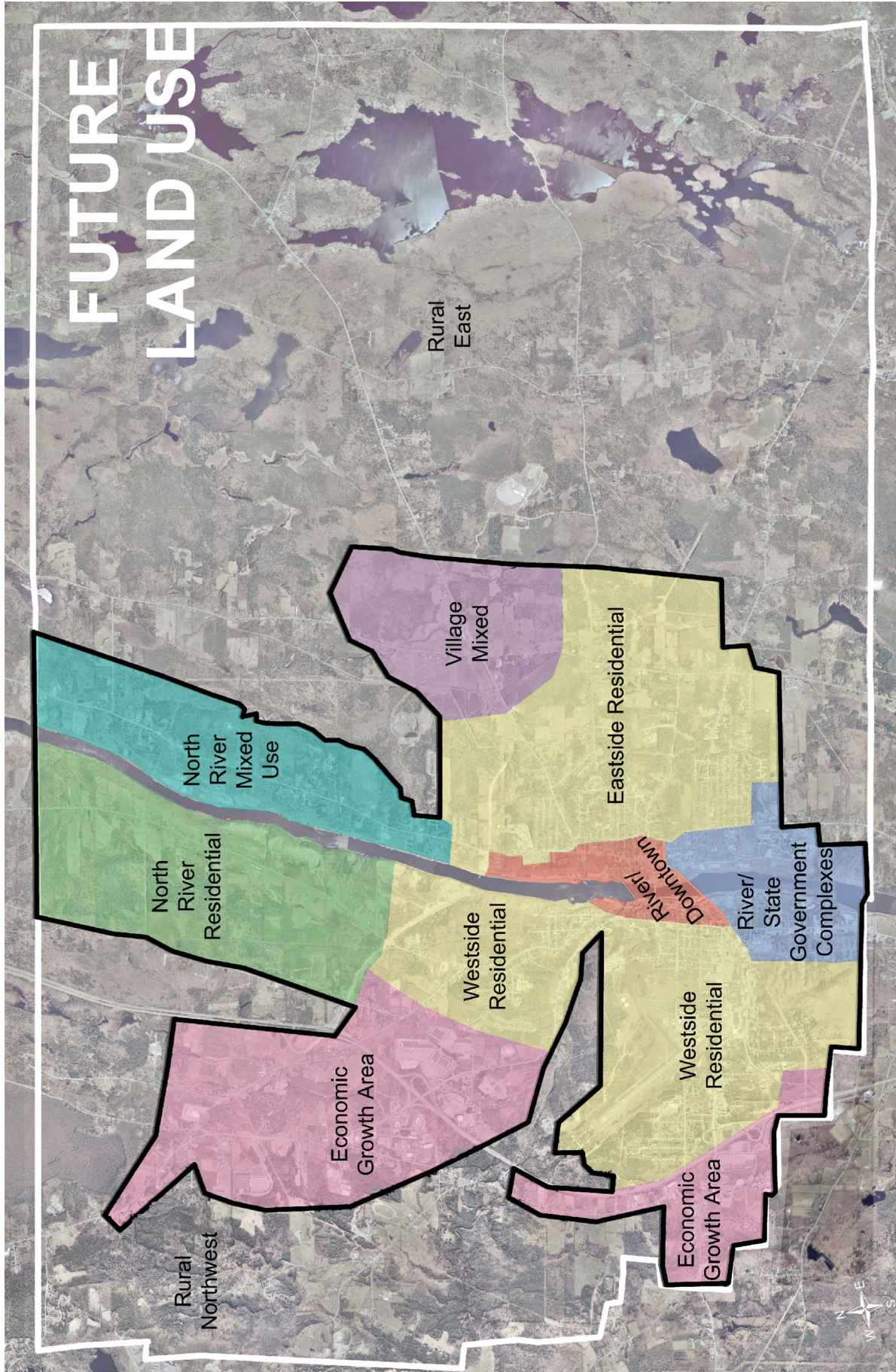
Nonetheless, Augusta is such a large city geographically, we also have an expansive, vibrant, and thriving rural area as well. The rural area is home to most of our natural resource based industries - mineral extraction, forestry, etc - as well as a place for rural activities, large conservation areas, and the lakes area in the east. The Garcelon Preserve, owned by the State, is over 1200 acres of woods, wetlands, lakes, and streams in our rural area. And the lakes areas are gems that the city has worked to preserve through the 319 grant program, watershed management programs, and careful management of development in these areas. Development throughout the rural area in the city is generally limited to some single family housing, resource-based industries, and a couple of small pockets of commercial activity. With no public water and sewer in these parts of the city, development is far more limited than in growth areas.

The city will be continuing policies as outlined in this comprehensive plan and at the City Council's annual goalsetting session that focus the majority of the city's resources to the growth area, where the vast majority of Augusta's growth exists. Protecting the rural resources, especially lake water quality, will be an ongoing process.

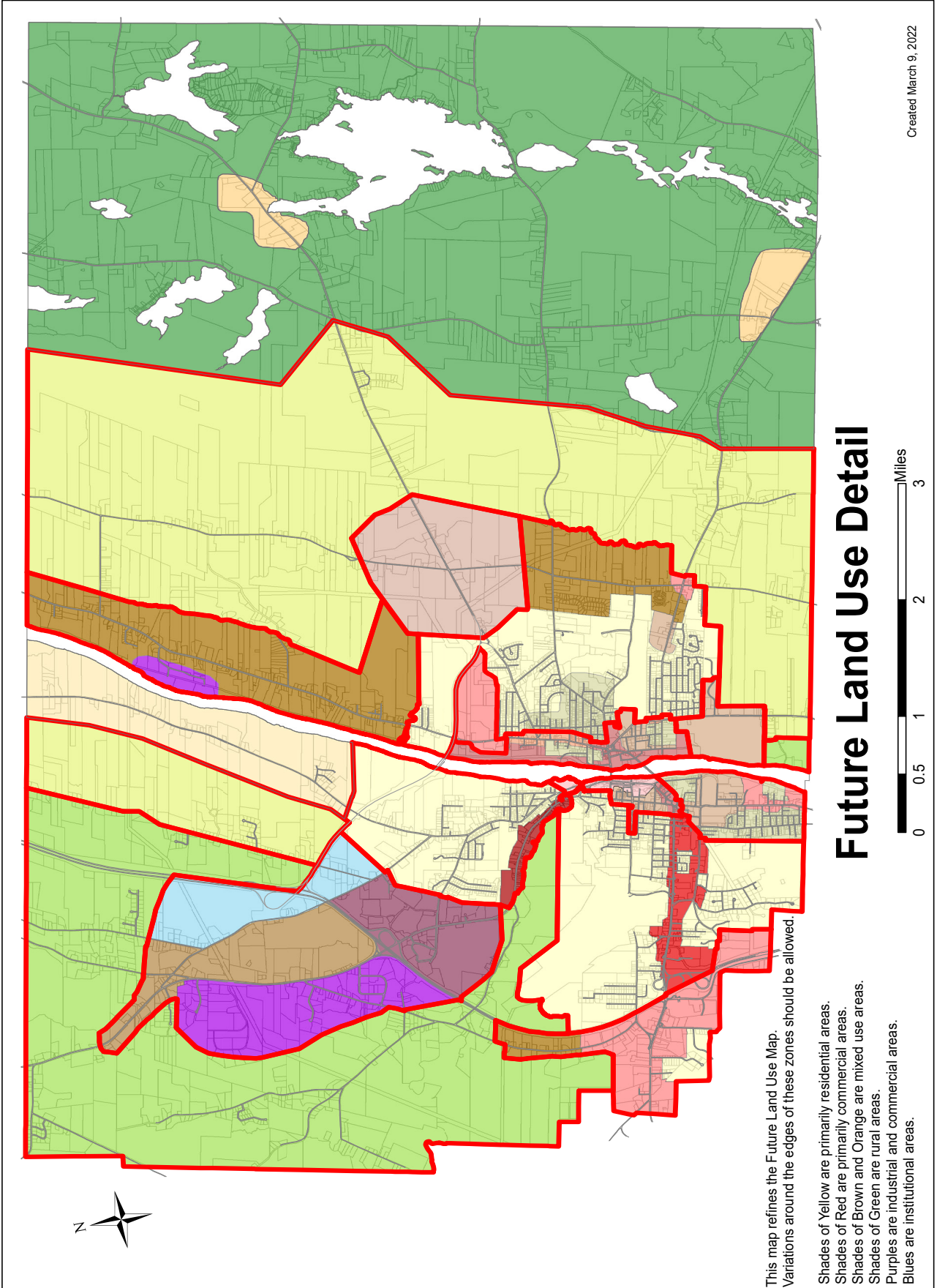












# FUTURE LAND USE

## GUIDING GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The proposed future land-use plan is based on the following general principles:

1. The majority of residential development and nearly all non-residential development should occur in the designated growth areas of the city. These are areas along the riverfront and near downtown, existing neighborhoods and the turnpike; mostly served by or next to sewer and water utilities; and with considerable development already.
2. Provision and extension of public sewerage and water should be encouraged and facilitated within the designated growth areas of the city.
3. Residential development in the growth areas should provide urban housing opportunities which are not available elsewhere in the region. This includes riverfront condominiums, urban neighborhoods with parks, apartments and senior housing in existing upper floor space on Water Street and potentially in buildings such as the Hussey School, and the like, as buildings turn to new uses. The ordinances should allow densities needed to expand existing urban neighborhoods, like Mayfair, and to develop along the riverfront. Roads, sidewalks, and trails should connect new neighborhoods to existing neighborhoods. Neighborhood design should reflect the closeness associated with a city setting, but provide private spaces that enhance livability, such as back yards, fences, hedges, and plantings. Small neighborhood parks should also be incorporated into new development.
4. Outside of the growth areas, where there is no public sewer and water, where there are significant natural resources and habitats, and where natural resource industries can thrive, the land should remain rural in character. Residential development there should total less than 20% of the new units built in Augusta, and should be done in a way which maintains rural character. Clustering should be encouraged through regulatory incentives in order to minimize the impact of new development on natural resources and habitat.
5. The City should implement a comprehensive program of land conservation. The program may include the purchase of conservation land or easements, the use of transfer of development rights programs, the payment of development transfer fees to support land conservation, and efforts to encourage voluntary land conservation.
6. Significant natural resources, agricultural land, forested land, and open space should be protected and an interconnected network of “public” open space developed wherever feasible.
7. The City will endeavor to ensure that 75% of publicly funded, growth-related capital investment will occur in the designated growth area. Examples of such investment projects are: water and sewer extensions or upgrades necessary to accommodate new growth, school expansions, transportation infrastructure expansions, airport expansions and public safety facilities.



8. The city's gateways will receive special attention in land-use ordinances and public policy. The effort will be to improve the quality of the development through better site design standards and enhanced public spaces. The gateways are Western Avenue, Civic Center Drive/Mount Vernon Avenue, State Street, Bangor Street, and Eastern Avenue. Other highly trafficked roads may receive similar attention.

9. The city should encourage green infrastructure including bridge fuels like natural gas and future energy sources like solar, wind, geothermal, and biofuels.

## PART A: FUTURE GROWTH AREAS

### RIVER/DOWNTOWN

The River/Downtown district remains the heart of Augusta. Although it is largely developed today with businesses, churches, apartments, stores, and civic organizations, the future land use plan calls for an even more intensive use of the space. Upper floors should continue their conversion to residences and office space. Water Street north of Bridge Street should get focused redevelopment attention. Kennebec Lockes and other vacant or underutilized properties need economic development assistance to reactivate them. Bangor Street and State Street, on the edges of this district, need design standards and quality enhancements to create an inviting entry to the downtown area. Good trail, pedestrian, and bicycle connections for the downtown with existing neighborhoods and the University of Maine at Augusta will contribute to bringing foot traffic and customers to Water Street.



## DESIGN CRITERIA

This is a traditionally dense development area and maintaining that density, while enhancing its function and appearance, are the goals of the design criteria for this district. The criteria should include:

- **Very limited or no requirements for on-site parking.** On-site parking should not dominate street frontages. Public parking and on-street parking should be the norm.
- **Parking areas should be landscaped** both internally and at the edges to screen and soften the effect of this “hardscape.”
- **Landscaping is important** in the district and where possible must be incorporated throughout a site. Street trees and public greenery should be required of developers that re-develop sites, and the City should enhance its commitment to public landscaping.
- **Pedestrian connections are critical.** Sidewalks, trails, and bikeways must connect to the City’s network and be handicap accessible to the greatest extent possible.
- **Setbacks should be minimal or not exist.** Maximum setbacks should be considered, rather than minimum setbacks, in order to maintain the urban core and keep buildings close to front property lines, maintaining the human scale feel and walkability of downtown. There should be no residential density limitations in the core of the district.
- **Building height, scale and bulk should be similar to what currently exists,** with allowances for increases in all of these standards up to, but not more than, that of the Key Plaza. Care should be taken to ensure some of the more unique structures, such as the Old Federal Building, are not overwhelmed in scale by neighboring structures. Enhancing the view of the river should be a consideration in public and private decision-making along Water Street.
- **Lot size and residential densities should not be regulated.**
- **Lighting should be “pedestrian scale” first and “auto scale” second.** Lighting should be designed to eliminate as much light pollution and glare as possible. Accent lighting should be directed so that it is minimal and non-intrusive.
- **Signage should be oriented to pedestrians,** and not high on buildings. The size and number of signs should be regulated to limit sign clutter. Sign material or design should be considered only to the extent that a sign should not be distracting to drivers by flashing, being overly bright, having or mimicking movement, or being otherwise obtrusive on the landscape. Signage shall not be electronic message centers.



## USES

The River/Downtown district is proposed to be a mixed-use area with the following uses:

**Retail**, except auto or the display of large goods outside, such as tractors, motorcycles, etc.

**Services**

**Light Industrial**  
(Conditional Use)

**Restaurants**

**Offices**

**Institutional**  
(Churches, etc.)

**Government**

**Medical**

**Events**

**Recreational**  
(Especially associated with the river)

**Dense Residential**

**Education**

## SUBDISTRICTS

The Augusta Future Land Use map depicts generalized districts within which subdistricts are expected to be created. The River/Downtown district will have three subdistricts.

The **east side of the Kennebec River** will encourage less intense uses, lower building heights, and a more direct connection between uses and the river than currently exists on the east side of the Kennebec River.

The second subdistrict is the west side of the Kennebec River extending **north from the Hartford Fire Station**. This is the heart of Augusta's downtown and development patterns will reflect the existing intense land use with continued emphasis on filling upper floors.

The third subdistrict is also on the west side of the river and extends **south from the Hartford Fire Station**. This area will continue to be characterized by a mix of smaller structures used for commercial, institutional, and residential uses. Many of the buildings need significant renovation and upgrades.



## WESTSIDE RESIDENTIAL

The Westside Residential District is a mix of neighborhoods and commercial corridors, with clear lines separating the two. The protection of neighborhoods from further encroachment of businesses is critical to maintaining livability, long term security for residential investment, and historic character. At the same time, commercial corridors such as Western Avenue, Capitol Street, portions of State Street, and Mount Vernon Avenue are important places of commerce. These corridors should be limited in depth generally to one or two lots back from the main corridors.

The area encompasses many of Augusta's traditional neighborhoods. This plan calls for preserving and protecting these neighborhoods, allowing for residential growth by building on vacant lots and on neighboring open spaces, creating pedestrian connections to trails and parks and the riverfront, and supporting services and small businesses that enhance the residential environment.

Within these neighborhoods there are key artery streets. These perform both commercial and through-traffic functions, and also serve as gateways to the city center. Design and landscape standards will ensure that development along these streets will be done in a way that maintains the attractiveness of the City.

Clusters of residences that form traditional neighborhoods are designated on the Future Land-Use Details map. They receive varying levels of protection dependent on the existing level of current non-residential encroachment. Over time, some of these neighborhoods may need to be re-evaluated regarding their continued existence as residential areas, particularly those very close to existing major non-residential development.

Local historic districts should continue to be regulated to retain their historic character in accordance with Dept of Interior standards.

Carefully crafted design criteria addressing both the building and the site, will ensure that non-residential uses allowed in residential areas will have little or no impact on the neighboring residences or neighborhood environment.





## DESIGN CRITERIA

This is a moderately dense development area and maintaining that density, while enhancing its functionality and appearance, are the goals of the design criteria for this district.

On-site parking should accommodate onsite uses, with exceptions for the reuse of unique buildings in neighborhoods, like churches or large old residences. In those cases on-street parking should be utilized.

- **Parking areas should be landscaped** both internally and at the edges to screen and soften this “hardscape.”
- **Landscaping is important** in the district and where possible for commercial uses must be used throughout a site.
- **Sidewalks and Pedestrian connections are critical.** Sidewalks, trails, and bikeways must connect to the City’s network and should be handicap accessible.
- **Setbacks should be minimal in the residential subdistricts** to maximize the use of the available public utilities and create a pedestrian scale environment. Setbacks and screening should be utilized on the edges of commercial and residential subdistricts, and the Planning Board should also have flexibility to require the placement of landscaping between commercial uses when it makes sense to improve the appearance of the area.
- **Lot sizes should require residential densities of 4 to 12 units per acre** where public utilities are available, and 2 to 4 residential units per acre where they are not. Accessory dwelling units should not require increased lot size.
- Building height should be limited to about 40 feet, except for steeples, clock towers, and similar architectural features that are typically associated with particular uses.
- Lighting should be pedestrian scale first and auto scale second, except along arterial and major collector roads. Lighting should be full cutoff and designed to eliminate as much light pollution and glare as possible. Accent lighting should be directed such that it is non-intrusive.
- Signage should be pedestrian-oriented and not be high on buildings. Sign size and number should be regulated to limit sign clutter. Sign material or design should be considered only to the extent that a sign should not be distracting to drivers by flashing, being overly bright, having or mimicking movement, or being otherwise obtrusive on the landscape. Electronic Message Centers should be allowed only along Western Avenue.

## DESIGN CRITERIA, CONT.

- Form-based zoning (which focuses on building design and scale, rather than immediate use) should be explored in this area. As a building typically outlasts its initial use, it is important that the building is compatible with the surrounding area and easily adapted to other uses.
- Manufactured housing on a permanent chassis (mobile homes) should not be permitted but modular homes should. Accessory dwelling units, and tiny homes on foundations where they don't interfere with a historic district, should be allowed.
- Performance zoning may be most appropriate along corridors where form-based codes are deemed unacceptable.
- Development processes should continue to be streamlined to ensure fair public input and reasonable developer expectations for getting answers. Planning Board approvals typically take a single meeting and this high quality service should continue to be the expectation.
- Landscaping standards along commercial corridors should be improved to enhance the appearance of the corridors. Landscaping to buffer adjacent neighborhoods should also be carefully considered.
- In primarily residential subdistricts, nonresidential uses will be strictly limited and or controlled by design standards. This is a complex development landscape. Great care should be taken to protect the primarily residential subdistricts from nonresidential uses, except as necessary to save historic structures like St. Mark's where the original non-residential use is no longer viable and a residential re-use is impractical.







## SUBDISTRICTS, CONT.

to push parking areas up front with development away from the road. This is a unique area that has for years included a maximum setback standard for new buildings in order to maintain a consistent, pedestrian-oriented feeling. This standard should continue to be in place. This is an important affordable housing area within the city and design standards need to improve the quality of the development here without dramatically increasing the cost of residential development, if existing buildings are demolished and replaced.

Finally, the **Sand Hill/Northern Avenue** subdistrict is a major housing area in need of revitalization. Regulatory standards here need to recognize the dense multi-family residential nature of the neighborhood and regulate things like onsite, waste disposal, green space, setbacks, etc accordingly. For standards like parking, on-street parking or remote parking on nearby lots should be considered. The intent is to enable this area to continue being a dense residential area with the intent to make it relatively easy for landlords and other owners to upgrade their buildings and improve the quality of housing in this area. Neighborhood related businesses such as small convenience stores, laundromats, and other necessities for residents in the neighborhood should be encouraged along the main streets, while side neighborhood streets remain residential.







## EASTSIDE RESIDENTIAL

This Eastside Residential District is very similar in purpose and regulation to the Westside Residential district. The gateway non-residential corridors are Bangor Street, Stone Street, Hospital Street, North Belfast Avenue, and Eastern Avenue. Building and site design should complement and enhance surrounding uses, and be respectful of nearby or adjacent residential uses.

The area encompasses many of Augusta's traditional neighborhoods. This plan calls for preserving and protecting these neighborhoods, allowing for residential growth by building on vacant lots and on neighboring open spaces, creating pedestrian connections to trails and parks and the riverfront, and supporting services and small businesses that enhance the residential environment.

Within these neighborhoods are key arterial streets. These perform both commercial and through-traffic functions, and also serve as gateways to the city center. Design and landscape standards will ensure development along these streets occurs in a way that maintains the attractiveness of the city.

Carefully crafted design criteria, addressing both the building and the site, will ensure that non-residential uses allowed in residential areas will have little or no impact on the neighboring residences or neighborhood environment.

## DESIGN CRITERIA

This is a moderately dense development area and maintaining that density, while enhancing its function and appearance, are the goals of the design criteria for this district.

- **Parking areas should be landscaped** both internally and at the edges to screen and soften the effect of this “hardscape.”
- **Landscaping is important** in the district and where possible must be used throughout a site.
- **Sidewalks and Pedestrian connections are critical.** Sidewalks, trails, and bikeways must connect to the City’s network and should be handicap accessible.
- **Setbacks should be minimal** in the residential subdistricts to maximize the use of the available public utilities and create a pedestrian scale environment. Setbacks and screening should be utilized on the edges of commercial and residential subdistricts, and the Planning Board should also have flexibility to require the placement of landscaping between commercial uses when it makes sense to improve the appearance of the area.
- **Lot sizes should require residential densities of 4 to 12 units per acre** where public utilities are available, and 2 to 4 residential units per acre where they are not.
- Building height should be limited to about 40 feet, except for steeples, clock towers, and similar architectural features that are typically associated with particular uses.
- Lighting should be pedestrian scale first and auto scale second, except along arterial and major collector roads. Lighting should be full cutoff and designed to eliminate as much light pollution and glare as possible. Accent lighting should be directed such that it is non-intrusive.
- Signage should be pedestrian-oriented and not be high on buildings. Sign size and number should be regulated to limit sign clutter. Sign material or design should be considered only to the extent that a sign should not be distracting to drivers by flashing, being overly bright, having or mimicking movement, or being otherwise obtrusive on the landscape.
- Form-based zoning (which focuses on building design and scale, rather than immediate use) should be explored in this area. As a building typically outlasts its initial use, it is important that the building is compatible with the surrounding area and easily adapted to other uses.

## USES

Subdistricts, design criteria, and possibly form or performance-based zoning in this area will play a vital role in helping to control the effects of incompatible uses. The following uses are expected in the district: in primarily residential subdistricts, non-residential uses will be strictly limited and/or controlled by design standards.

**Retail**, with very limited opportunity for auto sales and other similar retail uses dependent on outdoor storage and the display of large goods.

**Services**

**Restaurants**

**Offices**

**Government**

**Institutional**

(Churches, Schools, Arts, etc.)

**Recreational**

(Especially park and playground areas)

**Single-family, duplex and multi-family housing, Accessory dwelling units**

## SUBDISTRICTS

The Augusta Future Land-Use map depicts generalized districts within which subdistricts are expected to be created. The Eastside Residential District is broken into a number of distinct subdistricts that are either primarily non-residential or primarily residential. Both types of subdistricts need to have regulation that enhances their primary uses.

The Cony Road subdistrict is a unique situation where a mixed use area is envisioned. This mixed use area will allow both residential and non-residential uses, but will limit the size of non-residential uses to about 15,000 square feet and require significant performance standards to mitigate their impact on abutting residential uses. The reuse of the former Maine Veteran’s Home should be carefully reviewed to limit negative impacts.

Significant changes in larger older buildings, such as churches or schools, including Hussey School, must respect the surrounding uses and limit impacts on neighbors due to reuse. Potential uses might need to be contract zoned to fit into the neighborhood and the contacts should be carefully constructed to ensure neighborhood compatibility.





## NORTH RIVER RESIDENTIAL

The North River Residential district is primarily medium to low-density residential in character, with accommodation for mineral extraction that has taken place here for decades. The area has great residential potential, with its view of and access to the Kennebec River. However, to realize this potential, the gravel mining operations need to have stronger controls on noise, pollution, and landscaping.

Curb cut limits to the main roads may also be needed to make use of the backlands for residential development, and so that the rural feel is not lost by strip housing development. The district should strike a balance between these uses as best as possible. It is recognized that standards for non-residential uses will require extensive public involvement to craft. In addition to extractive uses, rural commercial uses may also occur, such as greenhouses, farming, and livestock-raising. Some additional nonintrusive commercial activity may also occur, such as small office uses, religious uses, governmental uses, limited services such as veterinarians, etc.





## DESIGN CRITERIA

This is a moderately dense development area and maintaining that density, while enhancing its function and appearance, are the goals of the design criteria for this district.

- **Parking areas should be sufficient to accommodate on-site uses.**
- **Parking areas should be landscaped** both internally and at the edges to screen and soften the effect of this “hardscape.”
- **Landscaping is important** in the district and where possible must be used throughout a site.
- **Setbacks should be about 25 feet** or greater from front lot lines and about 10 feet for side and rear lot lines.
- **Lot size should require 2 to 4 residential units per acre**, as there are no public utilities.
- **Building height should be limited to about 35 feet**, except for steeples, clock towers, and similar architectural features that are typically associated with particular uses.
- **Lighting should be pedestrian scale first** and auto scale second, and should be limited in amount to maintain the rural suburban setting.
- **Lighting should be full cutoff** and designed to eliminate as much light pollution and glare as possible. Accent lighting should be directed in a way that is non-intrusive.
- **Signage should be small** and in scale with the primarily residential nature of the district.

## USES

The following uses should be allowed in the district (the non-residential with specific design or compatibility criteria):

**Public & private recreational areas and campgrounds**

**Institutional** (Churches, Schools, Arts, etc.)

**Greenhouses**

**Small Offices**

**Single-family, duplex and multi-family housing, Accessory dwelling units**

**Silviculture**

**Agriculture**

## NORTH RIVER MIXED USE

The North River Mixed Use District straddles Riverside Drive from the intersection of North Belfast Avenue to the Vassalboro line and is a mixture of residential and non-residential uses. The non-residential uses are dominant at the southern end of the district, with the rest of the district being an about even mix of residential and non-residential. There is no particular pattern to the mixture of uses and it is anticipated that the district will continue to develop in the same manner.

This area already incorporates a wide variety of residential, commercial, and industrial developments, including single-family homes, mobile-home parks, and manufacturing plants. Because the area is served by rail lines and already has mixed uses, it retains a diverse character in the future land-use map. The key in this area is not to exclude all uses, but rather to create buffering standards and design criteria that allow residential and business uses to coexist in a practical and attractive way. This may include increasing landscape and green space requirements to provide a “natural” barrier between residential and, in particular, industrial uses, clustering development and limiting curb cuts to allow for easy vehicle and pedestrian access to sites, as well as providing design standards for new



## DESIGN CRITERIA

This is a moderately dense development area and maintaining that density, while enhancing its function and appearance, are the goals of the design criteria for this district.

- **On-site parking should be sufficient to accommodate on-site uses.**
- **Parking areas should be landscaped** both internally and at the edges to screen and soften the effect of this “hardscape.”
- **Landscaping is important** in the district and where possible must be used throughout a site.
- **Sidewalks and pedestrian connections are important** in the southern end of the district.
- **Setbacks should be minimal** in the residential subdistricts to maximize the use of the available public utilities and create a pedestrian scale environment. Setbacks and screening should be utilized on the edges of commercial and residential subdistricts, but the Planning Board should have flexibility to require the placement of landscaping between commercial uses when it makes sense to improve the appearance of the area.
- **Lot size should require 3 to 5 residential units per acre** where they are not.
- **Building height should be limited to about 35 feet**, except for steeples, clock towers, and similar architectural features that are typically associated with particular uses.
- **Lighting should be pedestrian scale first** and auto scale second, and should be limited in amount to maintain the rural suburban setting.
- **Signage should be auto-oriented** and not be high on buildings. Sign size and number should be regulated to limit sign clutter. Sign material or design should be considered only to the extent that a sign should not be distracting to drivers by flashing, being overly bright, having or mimicking movement, or being otherwise obtrusive on the landscape.





## USES

**Retail**, with opportunity for auto sales and other similar retail uses dependent on outdoor storage and the display of large goods.

**Industrial Warehousing**

**Services**

**Offices**

**Government**

**Institutional**

(Churches, Schools, Arts, etc.)

**Recreational**

(Especially park and playground areas)

**Single-family, duplex and multi-family housing, Accessory dwelling units**

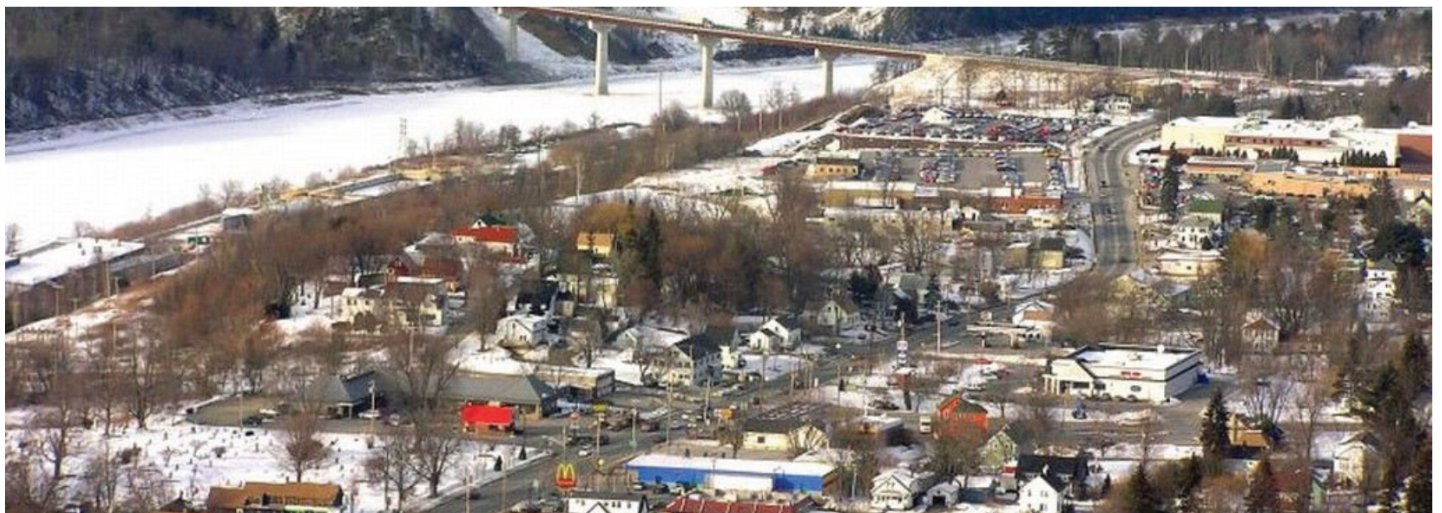
**Mobile-home parks**

(in the areas with public water and sewer)

**Ground and building mounted solar** should be considered here

## SUBDISTRICTS

Two industrial subdistricts exist in this area. They include the North Center / Blue Seal Feeds/ Cives Steel area and the Kenway property. Each of these industrial subdistricts will contain performance standards that mitigate the impact of the uses, as they expand or need review, on the surrounding residential uses.



## VILLAGE MIXED USE

The Village Mixed district was an area heavily studied about 20 years ago, prior to the construction of Cushnoc Crossing. The goal was to ensure that the area does not develop as an uncontrolled commercial strip, as is possible with the enhanced access to I-95. The area does not presently have public water or sewer, but both may be constructed during the next decade. The lack of water and sewer is the primary reason this area has not seen more development pressure.

The Village Mixed district is an area that could see new growth as a result of the re-routing of traffic from the new bridge, and the extension of public utilities. It has been re-zoned as part of the Riggs Brook Village District. The goals for this area are stated in the name – to create a mixed-use residential and retail area that feels like a “village” and not a strip suburban development. The area may have a higher than average density of homes and stores, but done to the highest design and landscaping standards, in a way which encourages walking and pedestrian movement. Housing can include single-family homes, townhouses and condominiums, “inlaw apartments,” as well as small businesses that support neighborhood life, such as convenience groceries, services, day care, and home business. The scale of development should reflect the scale found in the existing downtown neighborhoods with small lot sizes, limited setbacks, and wide sidewalks with an emphasis on green spaces and connectivity between uses and downtown.

The physical size of the village area should be significantly more limited than the very large geography of the Riggs Brook Village district created as part of the North Quadrant Study in 2001. Until water and sewer are present, regulations should reflect the general spirit of the 2001 study related to things like parking in the side and rear, increased landscaping, and quality building design. But if water and sewer do not arrive in the next decade, development standards should not be as stringent as they were at the time of the last Comprehensive Plan in 2007.

Carefully crafted design criteria simplified from existing criteria, addressing both the building and the site, will ensure that nonresidential uses allowed in residential areas will have little or no impact on the neighboring residences or neighborhood environment.

## DESIGN CRITERIA

This is a moderately dense development area and maintaining that density, while enhancing its function and appearance, are the goals of the design criteria for this district.

- **On-site parking should be sufficient to accommodate on-site uses**, but should be at the back and sides of buildings to the greatest extent possible.
- **Parking areas should be landscaped** both internally and at the edges to screen and soften the effect of this “hardscape.”
- **Curb cuts should be limited** and connections between sites should be required.
- **Landscaping is important** in the district, and where possible must be incorporated throughout a site.
- **Sidewalks and pedestrian connections are critical** to create a village feeling.
- **Setbacks along major transportation corridors should be at least 25 feet**, with internal setbacks being much lower to allow for more of a village feeling.
- **Lot size should require residential densities of 4 to 10 units per acre** where public utilities are available, and 2 to 4 residential units per acre where they are not. This will ensure that the lot sizes and configurations promote a “village” design.
- **Building height should be limited to about 45 feet**, except for steeples, clock towers, and similar architectural features that are typically associated with certain uses.
- **Lighting should be pedestrian scale first** and auto scale second, except along arterial and major collector roads.
- **Lighting should be full cutoff** and designed to eliminate as much light pollution and glare as possible. Accent lighting should be directed such that it is non-intrusive.
- **Signage should be pedestrian-oriented and not be high on buildings.** Sign size and number should be regulated to limit sign clutter. Sign material or design should be considered only to the extent that a sign should not be distracting to drivers by flashing, being overly bright, having or mimicking movement, or being otherwise obtrusive on the landscape.
- **Form-based zoning** (which focuses on building design and scale, rather than immediate use) should be explored in this area, as should performance zoning. As a building typically outlasts its initial use, it is important that the building is compatible with the surrounding area and easily adapted to other uses.



## USES

Subdistricts, design criteria, and possibly form-based zoning in this area will play a vital role in helping to control the effects of incompatible uses. The following uses are expected in the district: in primarily residential subdistricts, non-residential uses will be strictly limited and/or controlled by design standards.

**Retail**, with no opportunity for auto sales and other similar retail uses dependent on outdoor storage and the display of large goods.

**Services**

**Restaurants**

**Offices**

**Government**

**Institutional**

(Churches, Schools, Arts, etc.)

**Recreational**

(Especially park and playground areas)

**Single-family, duplex and multi-family housing, Accessory dwelling units**

**Ground and building mounted solar** should be considered here

## SUBDISTRICTS

The Augusta Future Land-Use map depicts generalized districts within which subdistricts are expected to be created as shown on the map entitled "Future Land Use Detail."

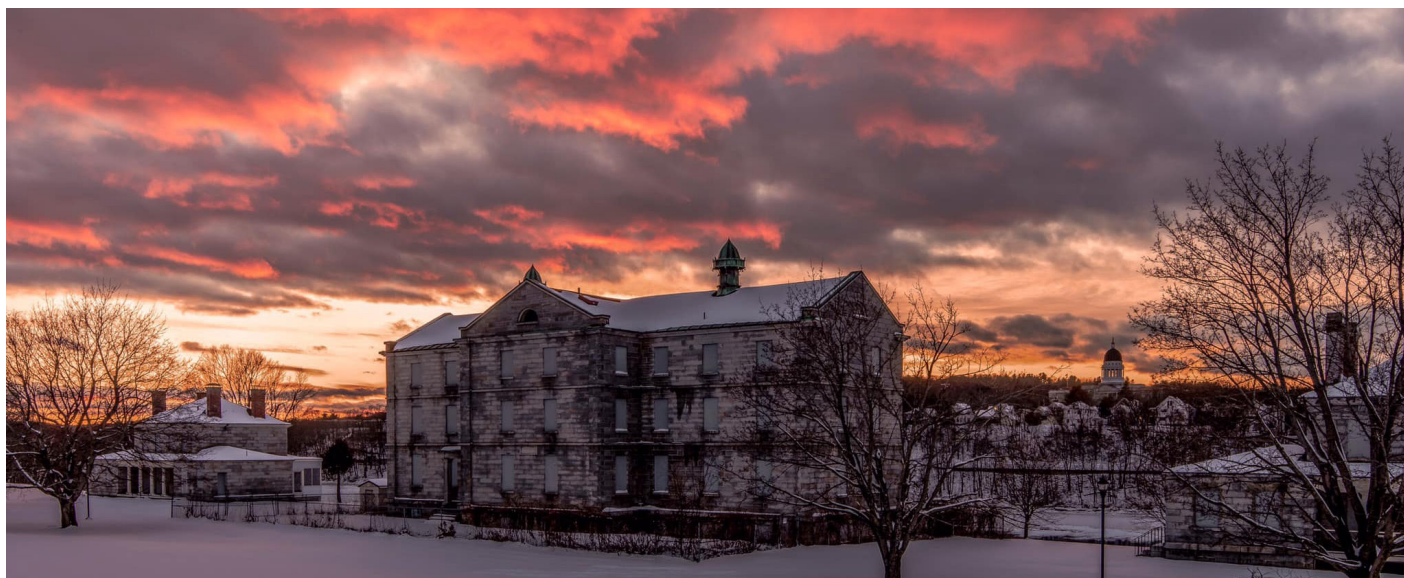


## RIVER/STATE GOVERNMENT COMPLEXES

The River/State Government Complexes District incorporates two major gateways or subdistricts – State Street to the West and Hospital Street to the East – spanning both sides of the Kennebec River. These two gateways have a mix of commercial and residential areas, but are also home to the two main State office campuses. There is no physical connection between the two sides of the river, but they share the same basic land use patterns, with the pattern being more intense on the West side of the river.

The change hoped for on the Westside subdistrict is along lower State Street. Over time, the car dealers and strip malls are anticipated to be converted to higher value uses—perhaps with offices, some multi-family residences, some retail, and other lower intensity commercial uses. Some of the larger non-residential uses may stay for quite some time, but reducing the impact of such uses on other less intense or residential uses through design criteria should be a focus. The residential and State Capitol areas should be maintained, and significant non-residential intrusion limited or prohibited.

The Eastside subdistrict is significantly different from the Westside and includes the Ballard Center, an intense residential area, an open green State campus, medium density residential uses south of the campus, and a gateway road (Hospital Street/Stone Street) that goes from the density of Cony Circle to the low intensity of the State Arboretum. This gradual shift from highly intense to less intense uses from North to South should remain. Special attention should be given to possible new commercial and residential uses that could occur along the River, and the preservation of the residential area between Arsenal Street and Stone Street (with allowances for office, Medical, and related uses with site design features that minimize the impact of traffic, lights, and noise on the neighborhood). The redevelopment of the Arsenal can provide an anchor for the area and set a high bar for quality development in the future. The gateway along Stone Street and Hospital Street can be expected to continue to convert to offices and other non-residential uses. Additional residential development south of the State offices can be anticipated.



## DESIGN CRITERIA

This is a traditionally dense development area, with less intense uses on the East side of the river south of Eastern Avenue. Maintaining that density, while enhancing its function and appearance, are the goals of the design criteria for this district. Careful coordination with the Capitol Planning District should occur regarding design standards and uses to enhance this vital tourist attraction and make the District a high quality area for residents to be proud of.

- **On-site parking should be sufficient to accommodate on-site uses**
- **Parking areas should be landscaped** both internally and at the edges to screen and soften the effect of this “hardscape.”
- **Curb cuts should be limited** and connections between sites should be required.
- **Landscaping is important** in the district, and where possible must be incorporated throughout a site. Landscaping is important in the district and where possible must be incorporated throughout a site. Street trees and public greenery should be required of developers that re-develop sites, and the City should continue and enhance its commitment to public landscaping.
- **Sidewalks and pedestrian connections are critical.** Sidewalks, trails, and bikeways must connect to the City’s network. Lower State Street in particular is in great need of pedestrian improvements, in order to encourage new residential and office development.
- **Setbacks should be minimal**
- **Building height, scale, and bulk should be similar to what exists**, with allowances for increases in all of these standards that are respectful of the prominence of the State Capitol building on the West side of the river. New structures in the area should not be permitted to overwhelm the State Capitol.
- **Lot sizes should require residential densities of 4 to 12 units per acre** where public utilities are available, and 2 to 4 residential units per acre where they are not.
- **Lighting should be pedestrian scale first** and auto scale second, except along arterial and major collector roads. Lighting should be full cutoff and designed to eliminate as much light pollution and glare as possible. Decorative lighting in the Capitol Planning District should be required. Accent lighting should be directed in a way that is minimal and non-intrusive.
- **Signage should be pedestrian-oriented and not be placed too high on buildings.** Sign size and number should be regulated to limit sign clutter and be respectful of the Capitol campus. Sign material or design should be considered in the Capitol Planning District to ensure high quality development and appearance. No flashing, motion, or appearance of motion should be allowed on signs in the Capitol Planning District.



## USES

This is expected to be a mixed-use area with the following uses:

**Retail**, except auto or the display of large goods outside, such as tractors, motorcycles, etc.

**Services**

**Restaurants**

**Offices**

**Government**

**Medical**

**Recreational**

(Especially associated with the river)

**High to Medium-Density Residential, including ADUs**

## SUBDISTRICTS

Because of the uniqueness of this area, housing the State Capitol and campuses, the subdistricts were described in the purposes section above.



## ECONOMIC GROWTH ZONE

At two of Augusta's three Interstate 95 exits, significant non-residential development has occurred since the late 1980s. These areas are expected to continue to be economic engines for the City with significant retail, industrial, civic, and medical uses continuing to expand. These uses should be encouraged, and care taken to ensure that transportation facilities and site design are enhanced over time. While these areas are anticipated to be less pedestrian friendly, pedestrian amenities and connections should still be encouraged.



## DESIGN CRITERIA

This is a low-density area with large retail, civic center, and industrial park scale uses. Care should be taken to soften the effect of these uses that attract thousands of cars at a time, while ensuring that such uses are not inhibited.

- **Parking areas should be landscaped** both internally and at the edges to screen and soften the effect of this “hardscape.” Shared parking should be encouraged to limit large parking fields. Internal traffic circulation patterns are of critical importance in such large parking and interconnected retail areas.
- **More care than in other sections of the City should be taken with regards to runoff**, ensuring quality, and to the extent possible, lower temperatures, because the water ends up in the Bond Brook watershed.
- **Landscaping is important** in the district and where possible must be incorporated throughout a site.
- **Sidewalks, bicycle, and pedestrian connections are of less importance**, but must be provided.
- **Setbacks should be approximately 50 to 75 feet.**
- **In the area of the Cancer Center and the Hospital**, special care regarding site design should be created to ensure compatibility with what is expected to become a more intense medical “campus.”
- **Lot size should require at least 10 to 25 residential units** per acre with water and sewer, or 2 residential units per acre without water and sewer.
- **Lighting should be auto scale** but generally not over 30 feet in height. Lighting should be full cutoff and designed to eliminate as much light pollution and glare as possible. Accent lighting should be directed such that it is minimal and non-intrusive.
- **Signage should be auto-oriented but not be high on buildings.** Sign size and number should be regulated to limit sign clutter. Sign material or design should be considered only to the extent that a sign should not be distracting to drivers by flashing, being overly bright, having or mimicking movement, or being otherwise obtrusive on the landscape.



## USES

This is expected to be a mixed-use area with the following uses:

**Retail**, including auto and the display of large goods outside, such as tractors, motorcycles, etc. in the Southern section of the district

**Services**

**Industrial**

**Offices**

**Restaurants**

**Medical**

**Government**

**Recreational**

**High to Medium-Density Residential**

**Mobile-Home Parks in appropriate areas**

## SUBDISTRICTS

This area is split into a Northern and Southern subdistrict. The Northern subdistrict is further broken up into additional subdistricts.

In the Southern subdistrict, the gateway road of Western Avenue is expected to remain heavily non-residential, but the residential neighborhoods that continue to exist should be carefully protected from further impacts from non-residential uses through screening and other design standards.

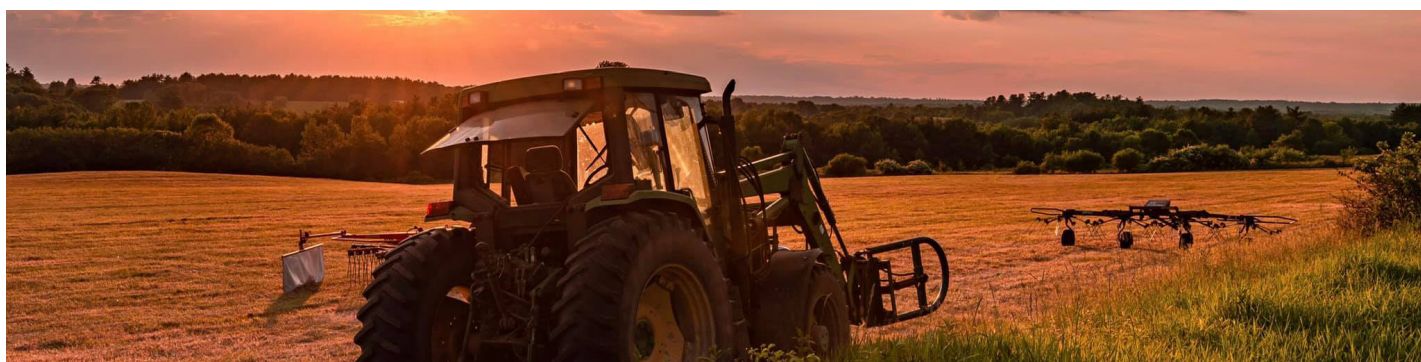
The Northern subdistrict is more complex, with the Civic Center and University of Maine at Augusta, a major retail center, two regionally significant industrial parks, several smaller industrial areas, some remaining and growing residential uses (especially on the western edges of the area) and the regional medical complex that's expected to grow over time. All of these non-residential uses should continue to be encouraged.



## PART B: RURAL AREAS

### RURAL NORTHWEST

The smaller of the two rural areas is in the northwest section of the City. It includes the Sidney Bog, Bond Brook, Sanford Road, and the border with Manchester. The natural resources in the area, and particularly Bond Brook (a documented Atlantic Salmon spawning habitat), are important assets for the community to protect. Development in the area should be rural in character, and make use of clustering, stormwater management, limited vegetative clearing, and limited impervious surface creation. Total impervious surface in this northwest section of the City should not exceed 10%, in order to maintain the health of the watershed. Great care regarding both the quantity and quality of runoff from growth areas into these rural areas is necessary to ensure a healthy ecosystem. To the extent possible, underground detention that limits the warming effect on water of above ground detention should be considered.



### DESIGN CRITERIA

Design standards in this district concentrate on maintaining the rural features and uses of the landscape in addition to protecting the Bond Brook watershed.

- Lot sizes should require a residential density of 0.33 units per acre.
- Impervious surface ratios should not exceed 10% for the district, or 50% for any particular project.
- Stormwater management techniques will manage quality and quantity, but should also attempt to maintain temperature by reducing surface detention exposure to sun and heating.
- Signage will be minimal.
- Curb cuts will be limited, particularly on Route 27.
- Mineral extraction will meet design standards that protect nearby residential uses as a conditional.



## USES

This is expected to be a mixed-use area with the following uses:

**Mineral extraction** (Conditional Use)

**Agriculture**

**Silviculture**

**Small Business Opportunities**

**Institutional** (Such as churches)

**Recreational** (Especially campgrounds & parks left in their natural state)

**Single-Family and Duplexes**





## EAST

The eastern third of Augusta, roughly starting at Cony Road/Church Hill Road, is the second rural area in the City. It is characterized by an increasingly rural development pattern as you move east. The exception to the rural pattern is around several of the lakes where waterfront development is significant, but shallow in depth, generally not extending more than one lot deep from the shoreline. Some agricultural uses remain. Small pockets of business exist on Route 17 and Route 3. There are many acres of land protected by either state or city ownership.

Development patterns in this area need to be progressively more rural as one moves east, with special attention paid to maintaining water quality in the lake watersheds. The area should continue to develop with individual lots, and be protected from significant subdivision development. When subdivision development does occur, it should be required to be on smaller lots, in order to prevent excessive land consumption. Cluster development should be encouraged in the eastern half of this district; open space requirements for such cluster development should be closer to 75% of the land area being developed than the current 50%. The intent is to maintain large open areas for wildlife, agriculture, silviculture, and water quality/quantity management.



## DESIGN CRITERIA

Design standards in this district concentrate on maintaining the rural features and uses of the landscape in addition to protecting the Bond Brook watershed.

- **Lot sizes** should require a residential density of 0.5 units per acre in the western section of the district and 0.25 units per acre in the eastern portion.
- **Cluster development should be encouraged** for all residential subdivisions; single lot divisions should be discouraged and required to be small lots, in order to preserve large lots as much as possible.
- **Impervious surface ratios should not exceed 10% for the district**, or for any particular project.
- **Stormwater management techniques will manage quality and quantity**, but should also attempt to maintain temperature by reducing surface detention exposure to sun and heating.
- **Signage will be minimal.**
- **Curb cuts will be limited, particularly on Routes 3 and 17.**
- **Mineral extraction will meet design standards** that protect nearby residential uses and water quality concerns in the lakes' watersheds as a conditional use.

### USES

**Mineral Extraction** (Conditional Use)

**Recreational** (Especially campgrounds and parks left in their natural state)

**Agriculture**

**Silviculture**

**Small Business Opportunities**

**Institutional** (Such as churches)

**Single-Family and Duplexes**

## PART C: OTHER LAND USE CONSIDERATIONS

### 1. SPECIALIZED OVERLAY DISTRICTS

#### FLOODPLAIN OVERLAY DISTRICT

The City will continue to be a part of the National Flood Insurance Program in order to ensure that residents remain eligible to obtain flood insurance and the city remains eligible to receive all forms of disaster relief, should they be necessary. City flood regulations should be based upon the Maine State Floodplain Program model floodplain regulations.

#### SHORELAND OVERLAY DISTRICT

The City shall maintain its existing, approved shoreland zoning districts and update the districts, as required by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

#### HISTORIC DISTRICT OVERLAY

The City should consider the expansion of the historic district overlay zone to the east side of the river. The existing historic districts in the Westside Neighborhood, Bond Street, and downtown should continue to be protected with regulations that comply with the U.S. Department of the Interior standards.

### 2. GENERAL STANDARDS

**The following provisions will be applicable to all uses and lots:**

- > Permits for the creation of new lots and driveways shall be required to assure adequate access for emergency vehicles, to maintain safe access to public roads, and to maintain orderly development patterns.
- > Access management standards will be enforced along gateway roads in order to continue to limit curb cuts and enhance safety.
- > The City will continue to require adequate lot sizes, sewage treatment, protection of water resources, minimization of soil erosion and sedimentation, etc.
- > The City will continue to restrict obnoxious or injurious noise, air emissions, odors, smoke, glare, dust, fumes, waste materials, etc.
- > The City will continue to regulate earth removal, including gravel pits.
- > The City will continue to require adequate off-street parking and loading, tempered with reductions in those requirements where on-site solutions are generally not possible (e.g. Water Street) or where off-site arrangements are possible.
- > The City will continue to allow home occupations as long as they are clearly incidental to residential uses. A similar approach will be considered for accessory dwelling (ADUs).



- > The City will amend the provisions governing telecommunications towers to reflect current technology. Telecommunications towers should be designed to minimize adverse visual impacts and protect health, safety and welfare. Tower developers will be encouraged to consider co-location, which is the use of a tower by more than one service provider. The City will limit the number and location of telecommunications towers, provided all equivalent carriers are treated equally; allow access to public property for the construction of telecommunications towers; and require adequate setbacks to protect neighboring properties.
- > The City will continue to allow contract zoning as a tool to deal with difficult rezoning and zone interface issues, where the allowance of a specific use may be appropriate, but a more general rezone would not. This tool should not be in common use and should be limited.

### **3. SITE PLAN REVIEW, SUBDIVISIONS, IMPACT FEES AND MOBILE HOME PARKS**

**With regard to other land-use regulations in use by the City, the Future Land Use Plan recommends that the City:**

- > Continue to provide a higher level of scrutiny for multiplexes, mobile-home parks, subdivisions, commercial and industrial uses, and institutional uses
- > Continue the two-tiered approach, with major and minor subdivisions, levels of review, and requirements.
- > Streamline the subdivision and site plan review process to ensure a transparent and timely review of all applications.
- > Utilize design and performance standards to address the following: retention of topsoil; preservation/enhancement of natural landscape and vegetation; water quality and quantity; sewage treatment and waste disposal; erosion and storm water runoff; storage and handling materials, including toxics; aesthetics and scenic resources; environmentally sensitive areas; archaeological and historic resources; screening and visual buffers; emergency access; lighting and signage; parking and loading; sidewalk and other pedestrian amenities; snow removal; traffic impacts, site access and road design; and other criteria as deemed necessary.
- > Include provisions for conservation development, or clustered residential, commercial development, and mixed-use planned developments. Encourage well-designed developments that preserve important aspects of the natural and cultural landscape.
- > Consider the creation of an impact fee ordinance to accurately and transparently assess and allocate offsite impacts of development. Such an impact fee ordinance should be designed in accordance with state law, and require the developer to pay a proportional share of the upgrades necessary to mitigate the off-site impact created on public facilities. For example, such a fee might be charged for the widening of a road or the installation of a traffic signal. The purpose of such an ordinance is to introduce additional predictability and fairness into the current fee system.

- > Continue to require performance guarantees or other similar requirements to assure that developers provide adequate facilities for their developments [e.g. roads, water and sewer extensions (if applicable), sidewalks]. Include mechanisms to assure that appropriate public officials have been consulted (Fire Chief, City Engineer, Augusta Water and Sanitary District, etc).
- > Consider having developers meet with abutters and neighbors to address concerns prior to development reviews as has been done in places like Lewiston with some success.
- > Review and update the major development (Site Plan Review) and subdivision regulations and explore requiring additional projects to be reviewed by the Planning Board.
- > Amend the Subdivision Standards, Site Plan Review Standards, and Performance Standards to assure they are consistent with this plan.



## 4. EVALUATION

### Goal Setting Sessions:

Ensuring the implementation of the comprehensive plan Future Land Use Plan and other elements of the plan will be done via the City Council annual Goal Setting session. Goal setting has always used the comprehensive plan as a basis for determining the Council's and the city departments' focus for the coming year. It is an invaluable process allowing the Council to step back from the regular week to week work at their regular and informational meetings to think about the bigger picture for the coming year. The goal setting session is traditionally in late January and should include a report to the Council of the achievements of the prior year and how they relate to the Comprehensive Plan. As new goals are set, it should be made clear how they relate to the plan and move the goals, policies, and strategies of the plan forward. If new issues of substance arise that require an amendment of the plan, that should be a goal for the coming year.

### Annual Reports:

The city staff complete annual reports each year. The Development Services Department report will include information on future land use strategy implementation, percent of growth related capital investment in the growth area, location and amount of new development relative to growth and rural areas, and the amount of critical natural resources protected.

The City Council and Planning Board will use this report to determine progress on the goals of the plan and adjust accordingly. Based on past experience, success in meeting the goals will be straightforward.



## **VOLUME II: INVENTORY**

This is the Inventory to the 2020 Update of the Augusta Comprehensive Plan. It describes recent trends, existing conditions, and issues facing the City. Each of the topical sections reflects the discussions of the Augusta Comprehensive Planning Committee process in 2006 and 2019-2022, as well as provides information sufficient to meet State of Maine standards for growth management inventories. The twelve sections include:

- Comprehensive Planning Committee;
- Transportation and Infrastructure;
- Economic Development;
- Housing, Neighborhoods, and Quality of Life;
- Community Development;
- State Government/Non-Profit;
- Environment, Conservation, and Open Space;
- Leisure and Recreation;
- Education;
- Cultural Assets;
- Health and Welfare; and
- Public Safety.

This is a companion piece to a first volume of the Comprehensive Plan.

Information on this Inventory or the Comprehensive Plan Update generally can be obtained from the Augusta Planning Bureau.



## AUGUSTA LAND USE HISTORY

Augusta played two major roles in its early history: as an outpost on the eastern frontier of the emerging United States, and as an economic engine supported by the power of the Kennebec River and the workforce power of the Irish and French-Canadian immigrants who came to work. These roles supported the physical development of the city from a small colonial outpost to its eventual role as the state's capital.

### **Early Settlement: 1750-1850**

(Exhibit A1)

In the early 1750s, the descendants of four Boston merchants formed a company — commonly called the Kennebec Proprietors — to manage their interests on the Kennebec. They took possession of the land in 1753 and established forts at Augusta (Fort Western) and Winslow (Fort Halifax) to protect British interests in the region.

Fort Western, built in 1754, marked the beginning of permanent settlement on the east side of the Kennebec River, and by 1762, there were numerous huts and a population of around 30. Fort Western, situated at the head of navigation on the river, was the storehouse and way station for goods going to Fort Halifax further up the river. Over this time, Federal-style houses in town and the steeples of Augusta's first churches began to dot the landscape.

In April 1797, the three parishes of Hallowell divided, with the middle and north sections forming Harrington, later renamed Augusta. The first bridge across the river (located at the Fort) opened that year. A meetinghouse was finally put up on the west side in 1782. In 1786, Augusta was a “co-county seat” with Pownalborough for Lincoln County.

The dawn of the 19th century found Augusta a prosperous river port with stores of brick and wood lining Water Street. Further evidence of wealth appeared on the hillside above Water Street in the form of Federal-style houses.

Augusta's wealth was based primarily in commerce, industry, land speculation, and lumber. The city's stature was further enhanced as county seat for the new Kennebec County (established in 1798) and the state capital (voted as such in 1827).

This period saw the completion of major public buildings: the State House in 1832, the Maine Insane Hospital in 1840, and the Kennebec Arsenal in 1834. Other structures, such as the various industrial and commercial developments on Water Street and at the Kennebec Dam, also supported civic and economic activity. The first cotton mill was built from 1845 to 46. With this came housing for merchants and workers, and the construction of the dam brought Irish and French-Canadian workers down the Canada Road.

### **The Golden Age: 1850-1930** (Exhibit A2)

From 1850-1930 is considered the golden age of Augusta. Industry fueled the city's economy and took various forms, including cotton manufacturing, publishing, shoe making, granite quarrying, railroad cars, wood products, tools, gristmills, and shipbuilding, fueled the city's economy. The great fire of 1865 destroyed most of Water Street, but it was rebuilt, creating what is today's downtown. Train service came to Augusta in 1852 and the first electric trolleys began operation in 1890. More elegant churches were added in the late 1800s, including St. Mark's.



The Civil War Monument was dedicated in 1882. The Togus Veteran’s facility opened in 1866. Gas streetlights came in 1859, telephone service in 1880, the Water District and the Board of Trade in 1880.

A 1909 amendment to the State Constitution made Augusta the Capital of Maine. Fine homes and a robust economy made for a vibrant city throughout the early 20th century.

### **End of an Era: 1930-1997 (Exhibit A3)**

Between 1930 and 1997, much of the grandeur of Augusta’s earlier period was lost. The impact of urban renewal projects on Augusta was similar to that of many other old cities in America. The major part of the twentieth century was also a period of sweeping social, technological, and economic change — of which Augusta saw its share. The Great Depression, three major U.S. wars, and the technology revolution all affected Augusta and Maine.

In the 1960s and 1970s, manufacturing (cotton, shoes, paper) in the city reached its height, bringing with it a residential construction boom. Augusta grew to its largest population, 21,945 in 1970, then began to slide back to its 2000 U.S. Census level of 18,560, only starting to reverse that trend in 2010 with an increase to 19,136.

### **Change and Growth: 1997- 2006 (Exhibit A4)**

Much change has taken place since 1997, including major retail development, new public buildings, and demographic shifts in the citizenry. However, there was limited residential development. Much of the new housing took place in surrounding towns, and development in general was limited.

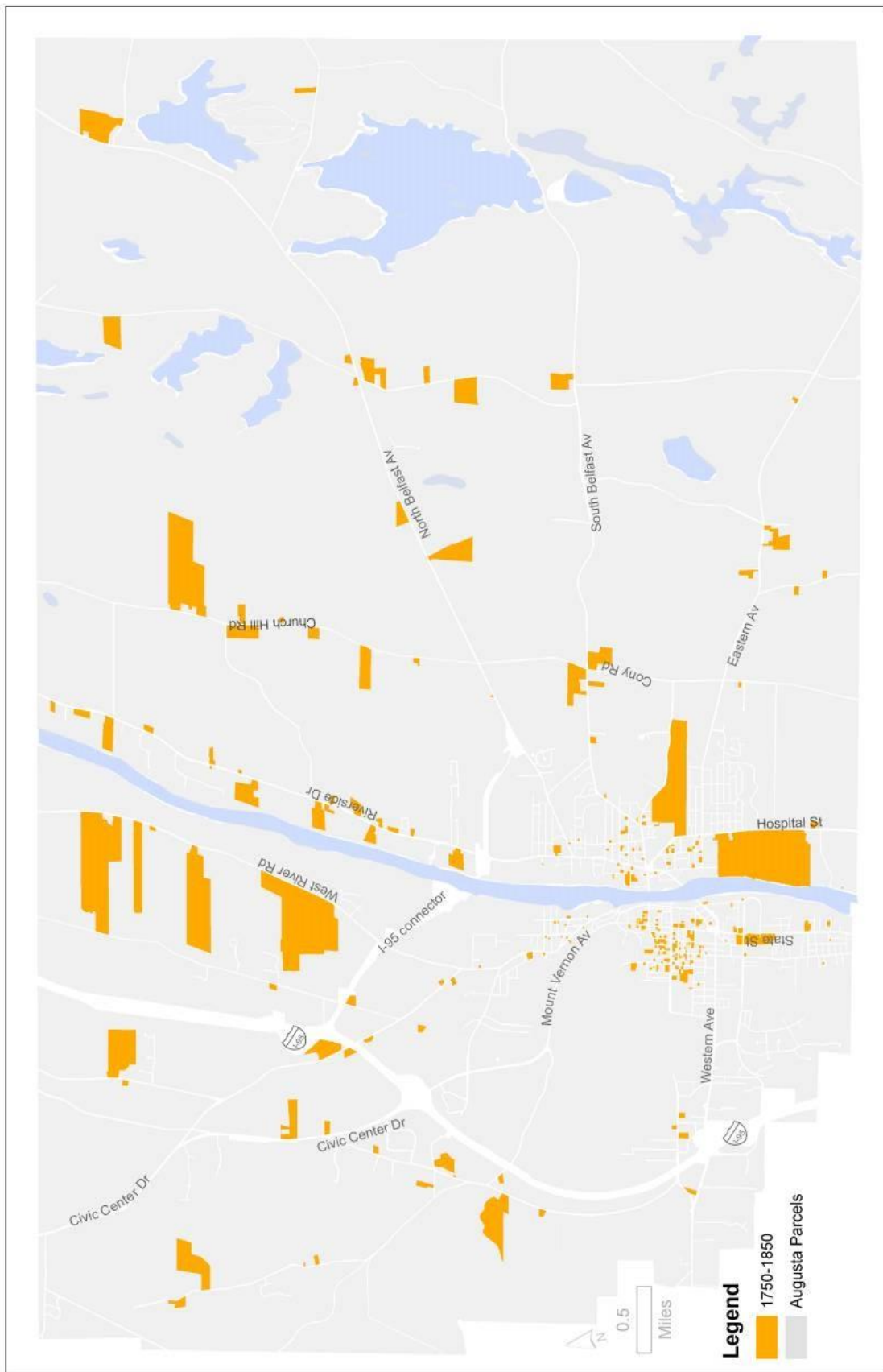
### **Bust and Boom: 2007-2020**

A parcel level development map cannot do this period of development and redevelopment justice, so it is not included here. The Great Recession put a halt to nearly all construction from 2008 to 2012, but housing projects that were underway in 2008 remained viable when the economy picked back up. And a few large developments, like the construction of the new \$350 million MaineGeneral Hospital continued unaffected by the economic downturn.

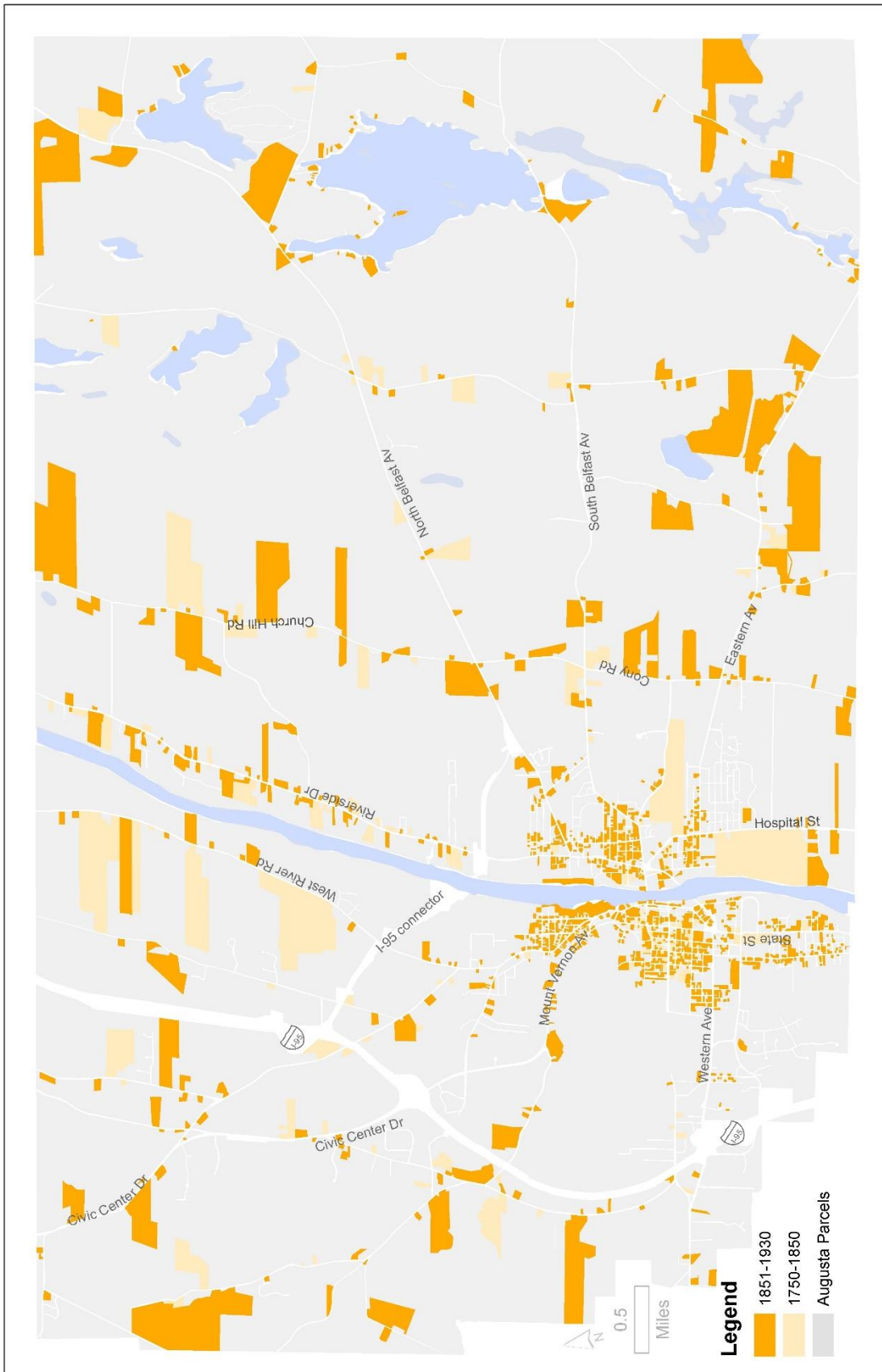
Between 2012 and 2020, both residential and commercial development picked up rapidly. Augusta saw its largest residential developments since the 1980s in Fieldstone Place, Cony Village, and Stone Ridge Drive. But redeveloped space and infill development played a major role inside Augusta’s 2007 growth area. The former Hodgkins School and Cony High School Flatiron were both redeveloped into age and income restricted housing totaling 95 new residential units. Maple Street Affordable Housing project brought more than 30 new affordable apartments into the heart of the city.

And the largest new residential neighborhood has occurred in upper floor apartments on Water Street. Prior to 2007, there were a tiny handful of residential units on Water Street south of Bridge Street. There are now over 50, with more under construction. This upper floor residential development in the downtown has been a critical revitalization component, bringing life back into the downtown area during all times of the day, making it a more comfortable place for people to be.

**Exhibit A1:** Augusta Development 1750-1850 (Note: This only includes buildings that are still standing and is a representation of building pattern NOT an accurate siting of structures.) Source: Augusta Assessor’s Database.



**Exhibit A2:** Augusta Development 1850-1930 (Note: This only includes buildings that are still standing and is a representation of building pattern NOT an accurate siting of structures.) Source: Augusta Assessor’s Database.



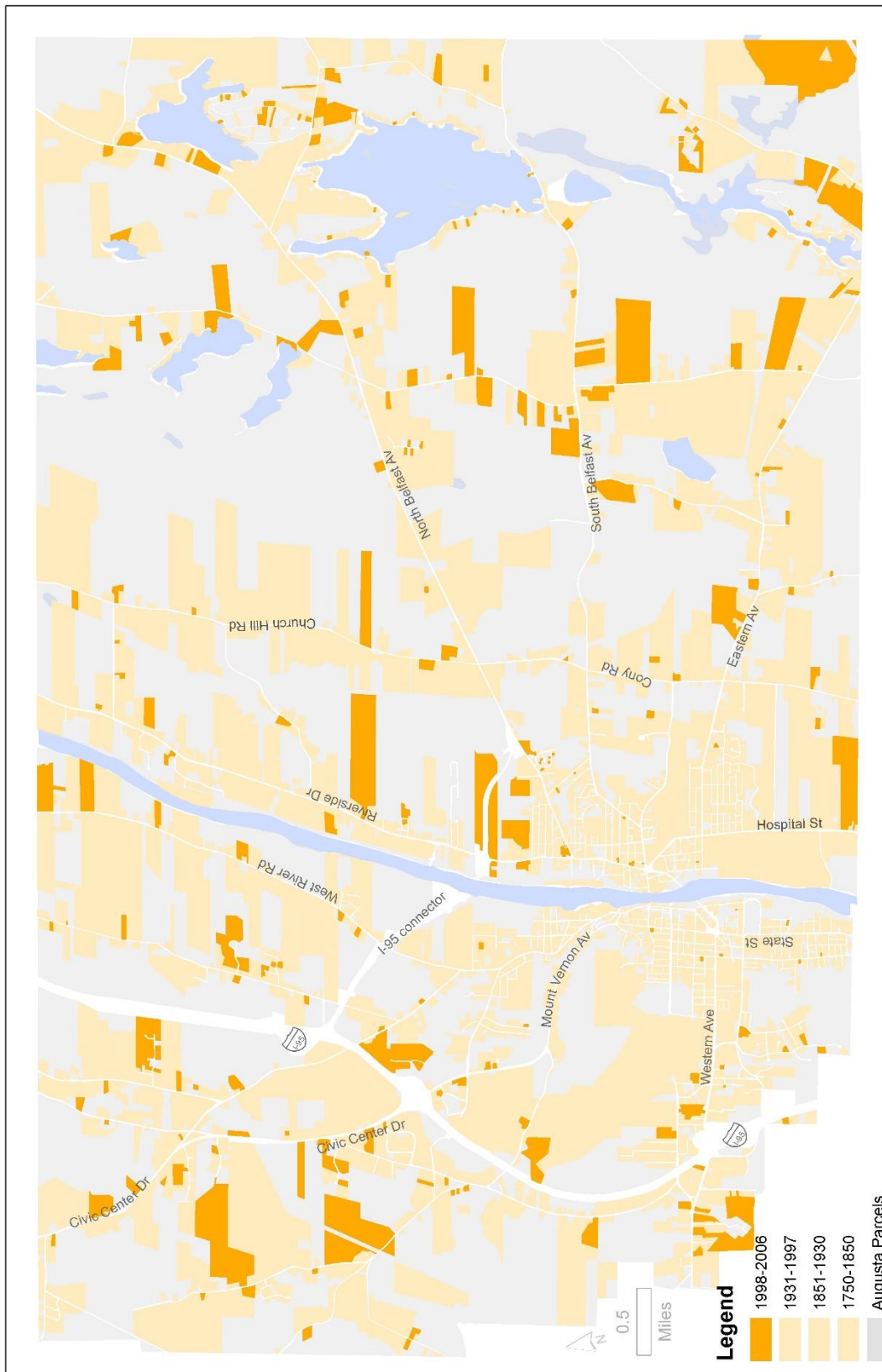
**Exhibit A3:** Augusta Development 1930-1997 (Note: This only includes buildings that are still standing and is a representation of building pattern NOT an accurate siting of structures.) Source: Augusta Assessor’s Database.





**Exhibit A4:** Augusta Development 1997-2006 (Note: This only includes buildings that are still standing and is a representation of building pattern NOT an accurate siting of structures. Additionally, density and intensity of development

are not depicted here. Development in rural areas often represents single-family homes, while in growth areas it represents large commercial, industrial and residential developments.) Source: Augusta Assessor's Database.



### Commercial, Industrial, and Other Non-Residential

Commercial and other non-residential development has continued to boom since 2012 after a general slowdown from 2007 to 2012. Nearly all of this development occurred within Augusta’s 2007 designated growth areas and included:

- Augusta Crossing mall area;
- Journal Square mall area;
- Expansions of car dealerships on Western Avenue and Riverside Drive;
- All of the buildings at the Central Maine Commerce Center besides the main building;
- Alford Center for Cancer Care and Maine General Hospital;
- A nearly fully redeveloped Ballard Center (former Maine General Hospital building);
- Redeveloped MDOT site on Capital Street—new DHHS and Maine PERS; and
- New Maine National Guard Headquarters on Civic Center Drive.

The corridors are considered, by the 2023 Plan, to be gateway areas or transition zones between the city’s rural and urban areas, providing important visual distinctions between the two. However, little has been done to date to create design standards, greenbelts, or other polices for the development of these gateway areas.

## **Residential**

Recent residential development has been growing in Augusta (see Housing Chapter for more detail). The majority of new homes have been built in compact subdivisions with several serving the affordable markets. Some older buildings in and around downtown are being renovated as affordable and market-rate apartments and condominiums. The new and renovated construction is responding well to changing market needs for smaller, high quality, in-town development, distinct from the more suburban development common in the last three decades, especially in surrounding municipalities.

There are several mobile home parks, also called land-lease developments, throughout Augusta. The majority are within the 1988 UGA on the fringes of existing water and sewer lines.

## **Land Use Regulation**

Augusta has full-time Code Enforcement and Planning Departments, as well as a nine-member Planning Board and a nine-member Historic District Review Board. Planning and Codes work closely with the City’s Engineering and Economic Development staff to review and process primarily commercial development applications. Most residential development is handled at the Codes level, with the exception of subdivisions and development within the shoreland zone. The Planning Board meets twice a month to review and decide on development applications. The Board should reconsider the need to create other review boards, including possibly splitting the Planning Board, one group of which is dedicated specifically to planning rather than project review.

Augusta’s land use performance standards establish criteria for ensuring compatibility between uses, including visibility, aesthetics, privacy, resources protection, noise, light, and traffic.

Emphasis is placed on neighborhood compatibility and buffering of residential uses from noise, light, and visibility associated with commercial and industrial uses.



Augusta utilizes a number of regulations to manage land use. These include shoreland and floodplain management ordinances; site plan review, performance zoning and flag lot ordinances; and conventional zoning ordinances for rural, residential, commercial, business/professional, industrial, government, and mixed land uses (Exhibit A5).

### **Current Standards for Development**

Residential Districts dimensional standards include minimum standards ranging from 7,500-sewered to 20,000-unsewered square feet minimum lot size; lot areas per dwelling unit ranging from 1,650 to 5,000 square feet; and frontages of 75 or 100 feet and depths of 100 feet.

Capitol Commercial Districts use Impervious Surface ratios ranging from 0.85 to 1.0, Floor Area ratios ranging from 0.4 to 5.0, and Maximum Heights from 42 to 100 feet.

The Civic Center District (CD) Impervious Surface ratio is 0.8, Floor Area is 0.45, and Maximum Height is 56 feet.

The Industrial District (IA) lot area is 60,000 sq. ft., frontage is 150 feet, and depth is 200 feet.

The Planned Development District (PD) and Planned Development 2 (PD2) minimum lot size area per dwelling unit is 20,000 sq. ft., minimum frontage is 150 feet, and minimum depth is 100 feet.

The Rural River District (RR) dimensions vary based on whether the use is a permitted or conditional use. The Rural Residential (RRES) and Rural River 2 (RR2) Districts vary based on single development, minor or major subdivision.

The Rural Ponds District dimensions are based on soils tests and associated watersheds. The Rural Village District (RV) dimensions are based on residential, retail, or professional uses.

Shoreland Overlay and Riggs Brook Village Districts (RBV) each have unique dimensional standards specifically related to the use. The Government Services District (GS) has the fewest dimensional restrictions, and is limited to setbacks of structures and bufferyards.



## **Augusta Neighborhoods**

As the Augusta Comprehensive Planning Committee looks ahead to the future development of Augusta, it takes into account the historic patterns of development, the existing development structure of neighborhoods, and the community's desires for the future. Exhibit A6 shows a neighborhood map of Augusta that will be used throughout this document to define areas of study. These 14 neighborhoods were created based on historic characteristics as well as Census tract delineation.

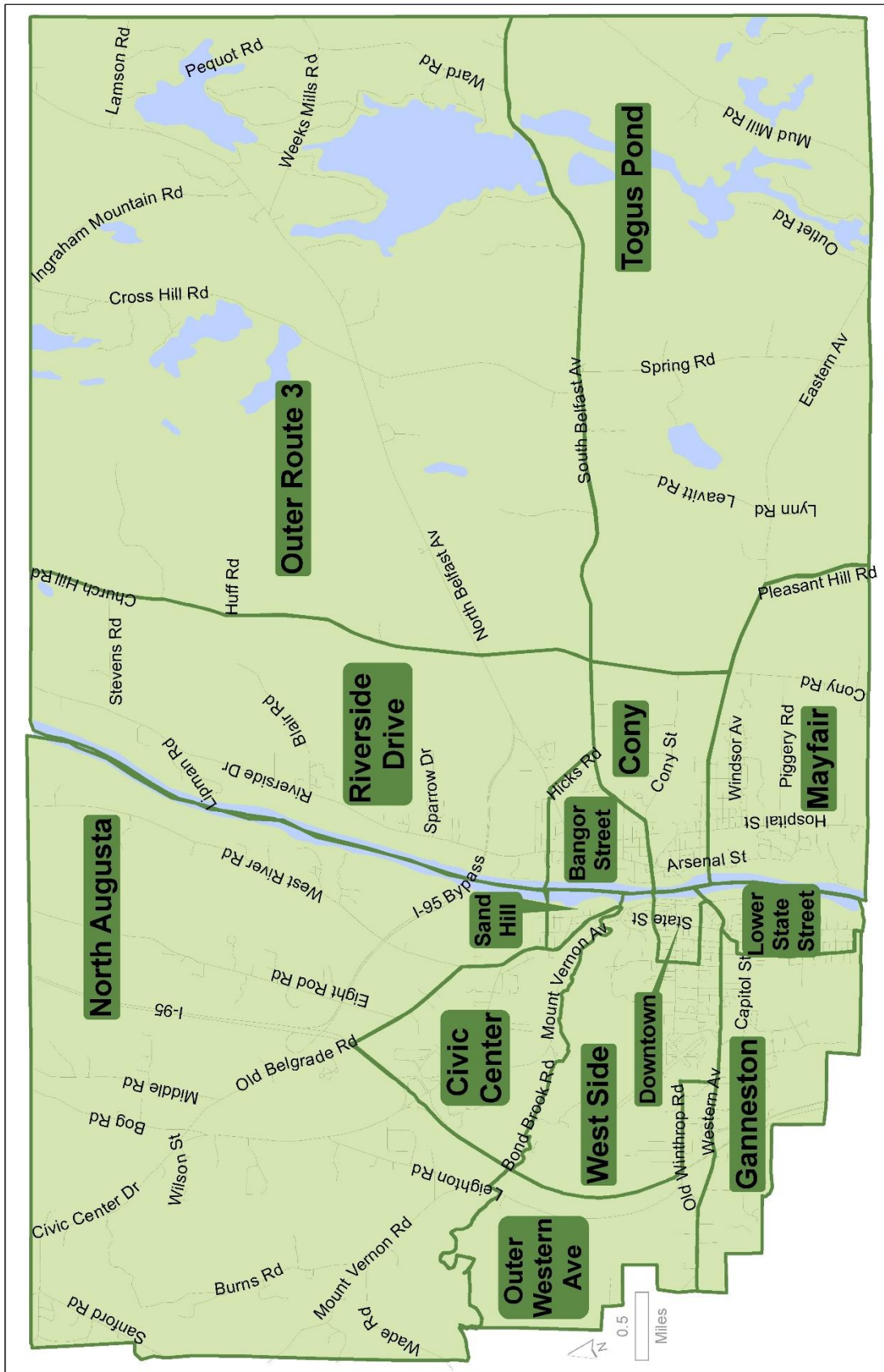
## **Key Issue and Concerns**

Several issues threaten Augusta's traditional development pattern, including:

1. Commercial development moving further from the urban core into residential and rural areas;
2. The replacement of urban residential building with commercial uses;
3. The loss of small-town aesthetics and rural character in areas outside the Urban Growth Area;
4. The need for city gateways to distinguish between urban and rural characteristics, and
5. A lack of green space, safe pedestrian paths, and a continued expansion of impervious surfaces.



Exhibit A6: Augusta Neighborhoods. Source: City of Augusta.



## **POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

Augusta began as a small farming and trading community along the Kennebec River, grew to be a manufacturing, retail, and governmental hub in the late 1800s and early 1900s, saw a decline of population in post-World War II, and is now stabilizing and poised for new growth. This chapter broadly summarizes trends in Augusta's population and demographics.

This chapter provides a statistical profile of Augusta's population and demographics and discusses the major trends that could affect future services and facilities.

### **Historic Population Growth: 1800-1970**

Augusta's population increased from 1,211 residents in 1800 to 8,225 residents in 1850. Following a modest decline after the Civil War, the expansion resumed in the late 1800s as the city became an industrial employment center. Growth slowed down in the twentieth century, and by 1970, the city's population peaked at 22,000 residents.

### **Population Decline and Levelling: 1970-2020**

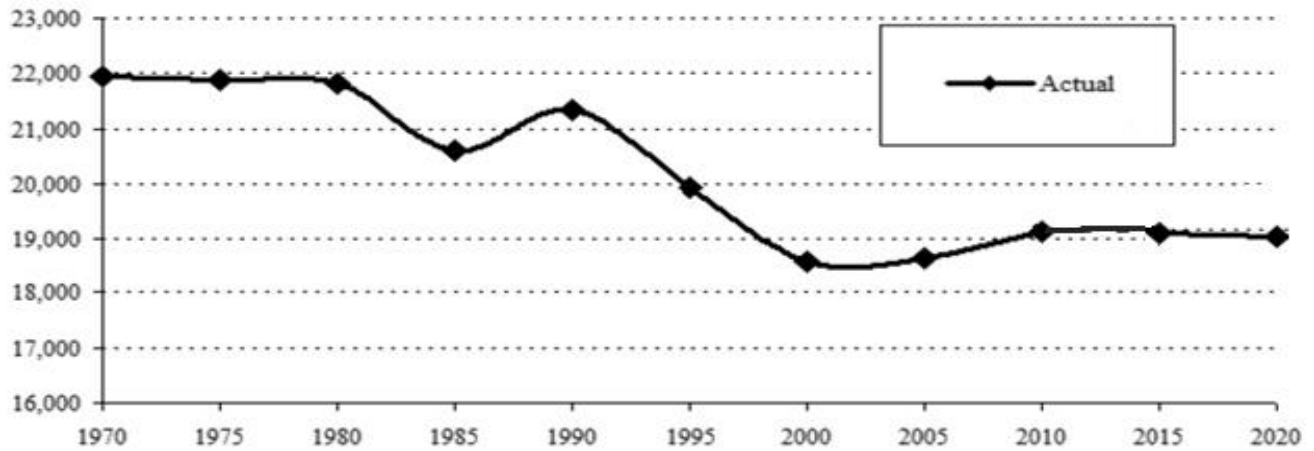
In 2000, the city's population was about 18,500 residents. This decrease was due to smaller household sizes, reduced institutional populations (due to the restructuring of the Augusta Mental Health Institute), and a negative rate of natural population change. From 2000 to 2010, the trend finally reversed as economic development in the city ramped up. The population increased to 19,136 residents, then remained relatively level from 2010 to 2020, when the population was counted on April 1, 2020, at the front end of the COVID-19 pandemic, as 18,899. The challenges of getting an accurate population count one month in to a declared pandemic have been acknowledged by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The negative rate of natural population change from 1970 to 2000 was a result of the aging of the city's population. Overall in Augusta, annual births decreased and annual deaths increased during this time. The Maine Bureau of Vital Records indicates that there was a decrease from 333 births in 1980 to 208 births in 2000, and a corresponding increase in the number of deaths from 242 to 256. Thus, there was a negative rate of natural population change during this time.

From 2000 to 2010, the natural increase rates remained effectively the same, but people began moving back in to Augusta. There was also an increase in people housed in group quarters (nursing homes, group homes, psychiatric facilities, etc) during that time. The natural increase trend again remained relatively flat or negative throughout the decade from 2010-2020, but in-migration, particularly from New Mainers (primarily an immigrant population of Iraqis in Augusta, but other immigrants as well) resulted in the population from 2010 to 2020 staying nearly the same, with a very small decrease. The hoped-for small population increase did not materialize.

The U.S. Census divides population into two categories, those living in households (homes and apartments), and those living in group quarters (nursing homes, prisons, dormitories, institutional housing).

**Exhibit B1:** Augusta Historic Population, 1970 to 2020



1970 to 2020. Source: U.S. Census, Planning Decisions, Inc.

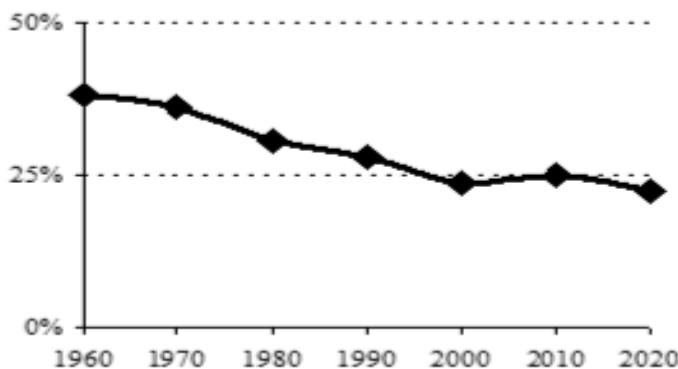
### Household Population Change: 1970-2010

An estimated 18,277 residents lived in households in 2010. This is significantly lower than the peak household population of 21,000 residents in 1980, but an increase since 1990.

The population is sprawling to surrounding communities. While Augusta’s population is slowly growing, the population in communities around Augusta is growing at a faster rate. This trend is generally because of a greater reliance on the automobile, less expensive home prices, lower taxes and a preference for a rural lifestyle. Nevertheless, Augusta remains the service center for this growing population.

In 1970, Augusta’s total population accounted for 36% of the total population in the Augusta Labor Market Area. By 2010, this had decreased to 23% and in 2020 it was 22.4%.

**Exhibit B2:** Augusta Population as a % of the Labor Market Area. Source: U.S. Census



A labor market consists of a number of geographically contiguous cities and towns that share common employment centers. It is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Maine Department of Labor. The Augusta Labor Market is the same as the Census-designated Augusta Micropolitan Area.



**Exhibit B3:** Augusta Micro SA and Labor Market Area. Source: Maine Department of Labor.



Population growth in the surrounding Augusta Labor Market Area outpaced that of the city over the past four decades (Exhibits B4 and B6). In the 2000s, Augusta grew for the first time since 1970 by 3.1%, while the surrounding labor market grew by 5.6%.

During the 1990s, Augusta’s population decreased by 13%, while the labor market as a whole more than offset this decrease (increasing by 3%). So the turnaround during the 2000s was significant. Unfortunately, that trend did not hold for 2010 to 2020, with Augusta’s population dipping by 1.2%, while the LMA population increased by 2.1%.

**Exhibit B4:** Population Change Over Time. Source: U.S. Census.

<b>Exhibit B4. Population Change Over Time</b>						
	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Augusta</b>	21,945	21,819	21,325	18,560	19,136	18,899
<b>Augusta Micro SA*</b>	60,697	71,097	76,508	78,583	82,522	84,283
<b>Kennebec County</b>	95,247	109,889	115,904	117,114	122,151	123,642
<b>Maine</b>	992,048	1,124,660	1,227,928	1,274,923	1,328,361	1,362,359
Source: US Census						
*Augusta Micropolitan Statistical Area has the same boundaries as the Labor Market Area see Exhibit A6						

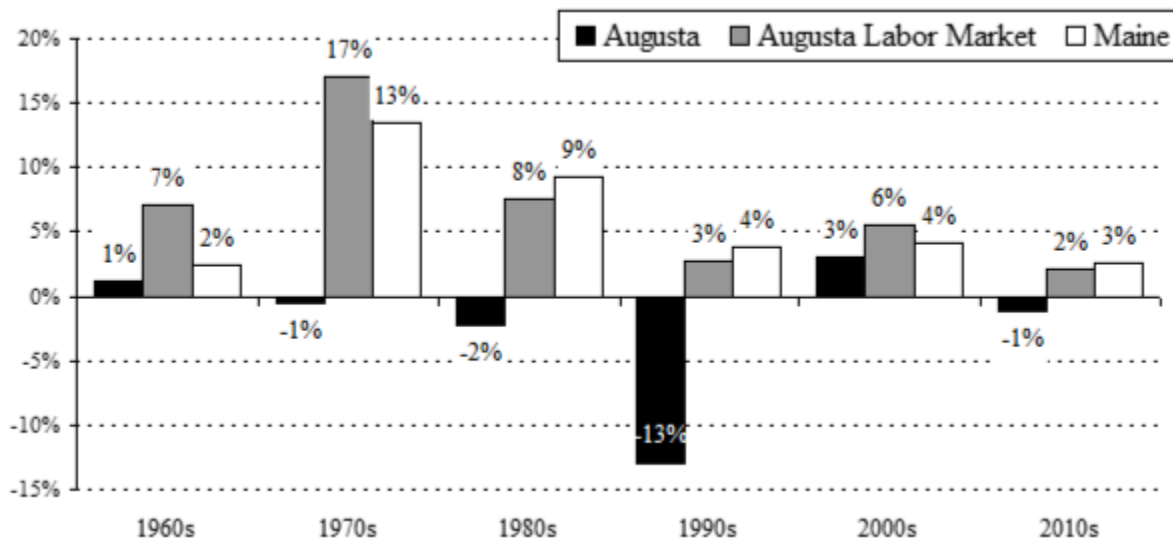
Augusta showed significantly more growth during the first decade of the century than its peer cities, but during the second decade it lagged. The two cities with the biggest growth between 2000 and 2010 were the only two to lose population between 2010 and 2020 (Exhibit B5).

**Exhibit B5:** Population Changes in Service Centers 2010-2020. Source: U.S. Census.

	2010	2020	% Change
<b>Augusta</b>	19,136	18,899	-1.2%
<b>Auburn</b>	23,055	24,061	4.4%
<b>Bangor</b>	33,039	32,753	-0.9%
<b>Lewiston</b>	36,592	37,121	1.4%
<b>Sanford</b>	20,791	21,982	5.7%
<b>Waterville</b>	15,722	15,828	0.7%

The attraction to lakes outside of Augusta has also contributed to the sprawl effect, as many seasonal homes on lakes have been converted to year-round use. In 2010, the Census counted approximately 4,900 seasonal housing units in the Augusta Labor Market Area, of which only 175 (or 3.2%) were within the City of Augusta. Seasonal residents also contribute to the demand for services in the City of Augusta during the summer months. Augusta’s seasonal population grew slightly in the 2000s, and is projected to grow to 200 housing units by 2020 and 225 by 2030.

**Exhibit B6:** Population Changes, 1960’s through 2000’s. Source: U.S. Census.



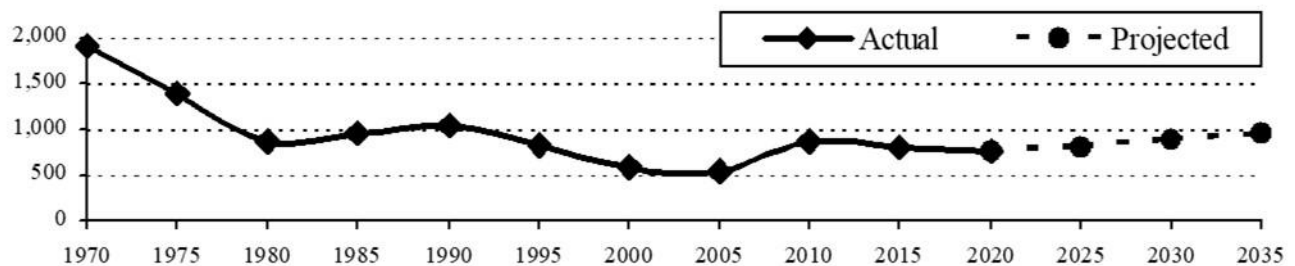
## Group Quarters Population Change: 1970 to 2030

The group quarters population in Augusta has decreased dramatically (Exhibit B7). In 1970, 1,906 residents lived in group quarters. This fell to 1,051 in 1990, about 600 in 2000, to 859 in 2010, and to 755 in 2020. The major cause of the reduction has been the policy of “de-institutionalizing” the state mental hospital, and the 2020 count was clearly affected by the pandemic, reducing the people in group quarters. In 2004, there were 92 patients with mental illness at the Riverview Psychiatric Facility, where once there were thousands at its predecessor, Augusta Mental Health Institute. In addition, in 2020, people were institutionalized in other settings in Augusta:

- 347 in nursing homes;
- 180 in correctional facilities;
- 168 in group homes; and
- 60 in other group quarters.

Unexpectedly, the number of people in nursing care facilities decreased from 2010 to 2020. These trends are anticipated to reverse through 2035. An increase is projected primarily because the number of “very old” elderly (those over 85) are increasing in the region, and people in this age group are more likely to require institutional care (Exhibit B7).

**Exhibit B7:** Recent Group Quarters Population Change, 1970-2035. Source: U.S. Census, City of Augusta.



## Daily Population Fluctuation

Augusta is a regional service center. Like the cities of Waterville, Bangor, Lewiston, Auburn, Biddeford, Brunswick, and Sanford, Augusta serves more people than just those living within its boundaries. In addition to the resident population, a significant number of people travel to Augusta to work, shop, and play, and to use services such as hospitals and state government facilities. The daytime population is composed of three principal segments:

1. Daytime residents are residents who live in the city and either work within or outside the city. The Census estimates that in 2020, there were 16,623 daytime residents in Augusta.
2. Daytime commuters are those who live outside Augusta and commute into the city to work. In 2020, there were 19,156 commuters that came to Augusta for work.
3. Service seekers includes a wide assortment of individuals that travel to Augusta to shop, visit doctors, see a movie, go to the post office, go to the gym, etc. The Census does not estimate this segment, but in Augusta’s case it is significant.



Taken all together, the Census estimates a daytime population of over 35,000 in Augusta, or twice the resident population (not including service seekers).

This large population places significant demand on city services. The high volume of cars places a burden on the City's public works and public safety departments for road maintenance and traffic control. This burden falls primarily upon local property taxpayers.

### **Population Projections: 2016-2036**

In late 2020, Frank O'Hara projected Augusta's population to increase to about 19,507 residents by 2036 (an increase of 608 residents over the actual 2020 US Census population of 18,899). This growth was to be driven by a slight increase in group quarters population and additional housing construction. O'Hara's projection for 2020 was 18,832. The State Economist projects 18,037 for 2021 and just 16,602 for 2036.

The state has projected a precipitous decline in Augusta's population since the 2000 U.S. Census, despite the 3.1% increase in 2010 and modest 1.2% decrease in 2020. The State previously projected a 2031 population of 16,100 for Augusta, then adjusted several years later to a 16,602 population for 2036. The State's projections have been consistently wrong. The City's Planning Bureau continues to have confidence in the O'Hara's projections of about 19,507 in the year 2036, with a continued modest 1.2% growth after that.

This projection is based on the following assumptions:

- Augusta Moderate housing unit growth will continue through 2036. Augusta's Planning Bureau projects a continued growth of about 50 units per year in the City of Augusta (which is consistent with the residential development pattern of the past 20 years);
- The vacancy rate of housing will decline from 5.4% in 2019 to 3.0% in 2024 and beyond. A 6% figure is closer to the historic norm, however, the current housing shortage has created unusually low vacancy rates that are expected to persist through the mid-2020s; and,
- The average number of persons per household will continue to decrease, but at a slower rate. The 2.08 persons per household in 2010 became 1.92 persons per household by 2020 and will roughly remain there through 2036.

Augusta's group quarters population will increase from 755 residents in 2020 to 900 in 2036. This projection is based on an expansion of health care facilities driven by demand from the aging population as well as some addition of other group living facilities including sober homes and addiction treatment facilities.

**Exhibit B9:** Augusta Population Projection. Source: Augusta Code Enforcement Bureau, U.S. Census.

<b>2020 Population</b>	
<b>2020 population (US census)</b>	<b>18,899</b>
- less group quarters	755
= 2005 population in households	18,144
2020 yr. housing units (American Community Survey)	10,334
- Annual increase in yr. units, 2005-20	44
Rental Vacancy rate (2020)	4.9%
Homeowner Vacancy rate (2020)	1.8%
2020 occupied housing units	9,267
2020 household size	1.92
<b>2036 Population Projection</b>	
2020-2036 yr. housing unit additions per year	50
2036 total year-round housing units	10,350
Estimated vacancy rate	5.0%
2036 occupied housing units	11,034
2036 household size	1.70
2036 household population	18,757
2036 group quarters pop	750
<b>2036 total population</b>	<b>19,507</b>

### Household Characteristics

In 2010, there were 8,802 households in Augusta. The U.S. Census records show a dramatic increase in households in the 1970s, a modest growth in the 1980s, and a modest decline in the 1990s. Based on a review of City assessment records, we estimated the household growth was more gradual over the period, and held steady rather than declined in the 1990s. Since 2000, the number of households in Augusta has increased again. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of households was projected to increase by 448, to reach 9,250. Between 2020 and 2036 the number of projected households is anticipated to continue to increase by 506, to reach 9,756.

The apparent discrepancy between the relatively stable, increasing households and the decrease in household population is explained by a significant decrease in the number of people living in each housing unit. Household sizes have decreased nationwide for the last 50 years for several reasons: (1) a trend towards single-person households, (2) the increased longevity of seniors living on their own, (3) an increase in divorce rates, and (4) the trend for younger couples to wait longer before starting families.

This increase in households and modest increase in population is anticipated to continue to place substantial pressure on the housing supply and increase the need for new construction.

Following this trend, the average Augusta household size has decreased from 2.90 persons to 2.08 persons between 1970 and 2010, then further dropped to 1.92 in 2020. Augusta household sizes are generally smaller than those in the state as a whole, but the change in average household size in Augusta mirrors that of the state. Augusta's household size is smaller because of its higher shares of older empty-nesters and young single people age 25 to 34.

The principal factor driving down average household sizes in Augusta is the dramatic increase in the number of one-person households. In 2020, 46.1% of the households in Augusta were occupied by one person. This was significantly higher than the Augusta Labor Market (28%), Kennebec County (28%) or the State of Maine as a whole (27%). The percentage of single person households is growing faster in the labor market as a whole (20% from 1980 to 2010) and the state (23%) than the City of Augusta itself (13%).

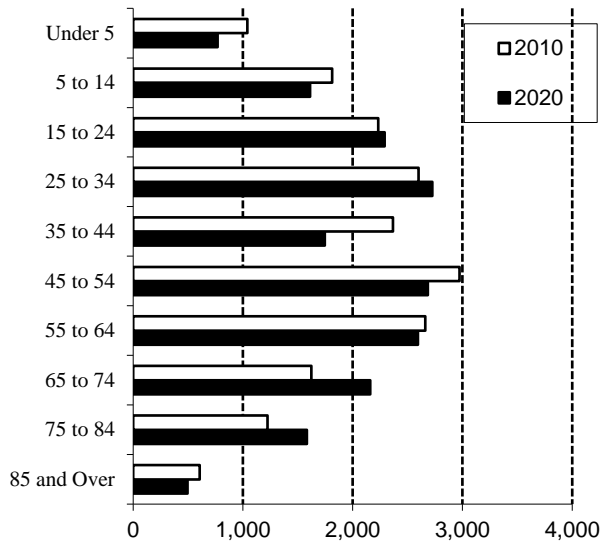
Note: These seemingly small changes in the average household size can have large impacts on the overall population size. For example, assume no new housing units are built in a community for ten years and the average number of persons per household decreases by 0.2 (the same decrease as recorded in Augusta between 1990 and 2000). In a city the size of Augusta, this would translate into a decline of roughly 1,700 residents. Put differently, if the City had set a goal of keeping population stable during this period, it would have needed to add 815 occupied housing units.

### **Age Demographics**

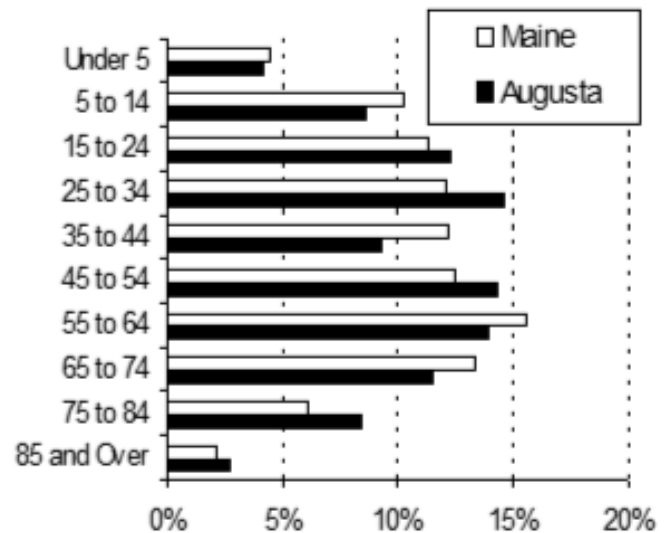
Augusta's population is getting older. Between 1990 and 2000, Augusta's residents under 25 years decreased from 32% to 29% of the population (a reduction of 1,400 residents in absolute terms). Conversely, its working-age population (25 to 64 years) increased from 50% to 53% of the population. This includes the large Baby Boom generation. The population of seniors remained a constant percentage of the city's population (Exhibits B11 and B12).

The median age in Augusta was 40.3 in 2000 and 43.2 in 2010. This was higher than the state median (42.7) and most of the other service centers like Waterville, Brunswick, Lewiston, Auburn, Bangor, Biddeford, and Sanford (whose median ages range from 35 to 38).

**Exhibit B11:** Augusta Age Cohorts, 2010 and 2020. Source: U.S. Census.



**Exhibit B12:** Augusta and Maine Age Cohorts, 2020. Source: U.S. Census.



Augusta differs from the state in a number of ways. Augusta has considerably more individuals over 75 than the state average and considerably more in the 15-34 age cohort than the state average. And the age cohorts that shrank between 2010 and 2020 were the 5-14 year olds and the 35-64 year olds. Families with children did not come to Augusta or stay in Augusta as people in other age cohorts

Augusta does have a higher percentage of young people ages 25 to 34 than Kennebec County or the State. These are young single people attracted to the apartments of Augusta. As they connect with other people and start families, they have tended to move away—a trend Augusta continues to work to reverse.

The departure of young parents in the 35 to 44 age group led to a reduction in the number of students enrolled in the public school system during the 1990s and early 2000s. But between 2013 and 2022 school populations stabilized across all age cohorts with an average of 2,244 students each year attending Augusta schools. However, the city continued to see a substantial loss of people in the 35-44 age cohort between 2010 and 2020.

Future enrollments are projected to continue to be stable through 2030. This is the result of an expected stabilized rate of resident births, as well as a continued in migration of younger people, especially new Mainers.

Future population growth is projected to be greatest in the 65 and over age group, reflecting the aging of the baby boom generation. The tail end of the Baby Boom generation is approaching age 60.

### Education Attainment

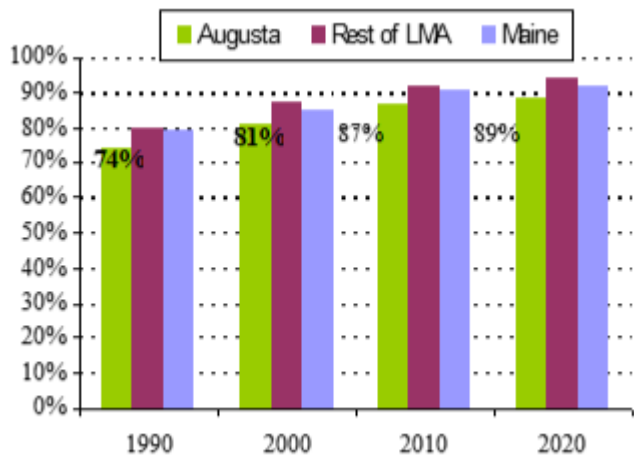
Augusta residents showed some unusual changes between 2010 and 2020 regarding educational attainment. In 2020, 88.6% of residents over 18 had at least a high school diploma (or equivalent), up



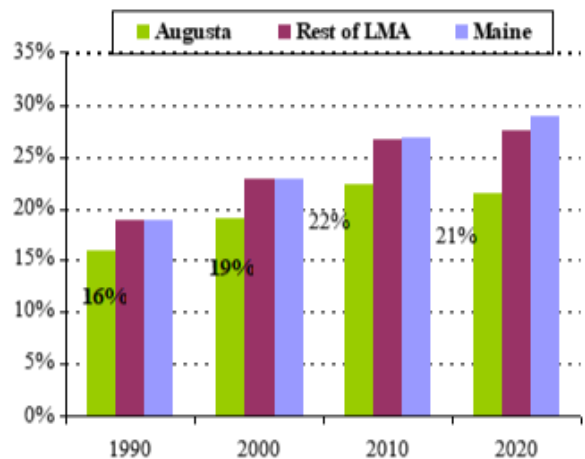
from 50% in 1970. This is slightly lower than the average for Maine (92.0%) and the surrounding communities in the Labor Market Area 93.7% but is about average for other service centers.

Augusta has a lower percentage of residents with at least a Bachelor’s degree than the state but is in the middle of the pack for other service centers. There was a 3% decrease of adults in Augusta with Bachelor’s degrees between 2000 and 2010 but a 1% decrease between 2010 and 2020 (Exhibit B14). This may be related to the significant loss of 35 to 44 year olds from Augusta’s population. More parents with higher education degrees will provide a boost to student achievement in public schools, as the level of parental education is an important factor in students continued education.

**Exhibit B13:** Residents 18 or over with at Least a High School Diploma. Source: U.S. Census.



**Exhibit B14:** Residents 18 or over with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher. Source: U.S. Census.



**Exhibit B15:** Educational Attainment in Maine Service Center Cities, 2020. Source: U.S. Census.

	High School Diploma/GED	Bachelor’s Degree or Higher		High School Diploma/GED	Bachelor’s Degree or Higher
Augusta	88.6%	21.4%	Lewiston	88.0%	17.4%
Auburn	90.7%	25.8%	Saco	93.4%	36.4%
Bangor	92.0%	29.1%	Waterville	92.3%	23.1%
Biddeford	88.9%	19.5%			
Brunswick	93.6%	38.9%	Maine	92.0%	28.9%

### Occupational Profile

About 33.1% of Augusta’s employed residents work in managerial or professional occupations and another 25.1% work in the service sector. Traditional blue-collar jobs – natural resources, construction, and manufacturing – account for another 18.6%. The remaining 23.2% of residents work in sales professions.

Comparisons with historic occupational profiles are difficult because the U.S. Census changed the categories of occupations in the 1990s. But in general, Augusta residents are becoming more white-collar and working more in service fields. This follows national and state trends, as traditional

manufacturing jobs have gone overseas and been replaced by service jobs. Post-pandemic shifts in the economy will need to be watched carefully to respond to the changing needs that result from the fairly dramatic restructuring of the world economy that will ripple down to the local level over time.

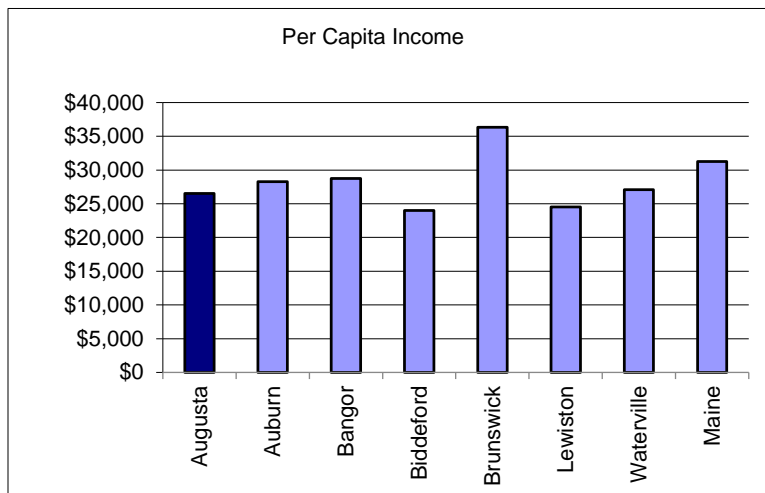
**Exhibit B16:** Occupational Profile (employed residents 16+ years). Source: 2018 ACS, U.S. Census.

	Augusta		Maine	
	#	%	#	%
<b>Managerial</b>	1,078	12.1%	94,709	14.2%
<b>Professional</b>	1,869	21.0%	152,758	23.0%
<b>Service Sector**</b>	2,234	25.1%	120,974	18.2%
<b>Sales*</b>	2,066	23.2%	146,416	22.0%
<b>Natural Resources</b>	32	0.4%	10,313	1.6%
<b>Construction</b>	604	6.8%	59,944	9.0%
<b>Manufacturing and Production</b>	1,010	11.4%	80,074	12.0%
<b>Total Occupations</b>	8,893	100%	665,188	100%

\* Sales includes retail and wholesale sectors  
 \*\* Services Sector includes some healthcare

Due to the presence of state government offices, Augusta workers are heavily concentrated in white-collar occupations. More than three-quarters of all employed residents work in white-collar occupations (79% of all occupations in Augusta versus 75% for the state as a whole). Pandemic changes to work requirements and remote work will have a long term impact on occupations in Augusta.

**Exhibit B17:** Per Capita Income 2018. Source: U.S. Census.



Augusta had a per capita income of 26,526 — lower than Auburn, Bangor, Waterville and Brunswick but higher than Lewiston and Biddeford (Exhibit B17).

### Household Income

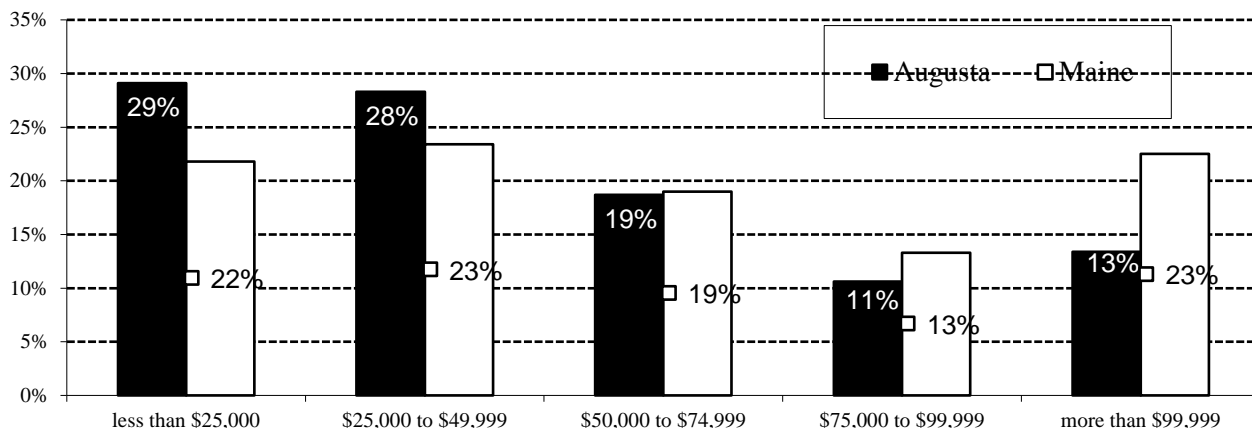
In 2018, Augusta’s median household income was \$40,340. This was \$15,085 lower than the state’s median income of \$55,425. The gap widened between 1989 and 1999, Augusta’s median income fell from 93% of the state’s median to 80% of the state’s median. And between 1999 and 2009 it was only 71% of the state’s median. But between 2009 and 2018, it took a small tick up to 72.8%.

Augusta’s income is roughly in line with other state service centers. In 2018,

In 2018, approximately 19.4% of Augusta’s population was below the poverty level (the poverty level is defined by the federal government and varies by household size – in 2018, a 1-person household was under poverty with an income under \$12,140; a 4-person household was under poverty if its income was under \$25,100).

29% of Augusta households earned less than \$25,000 in 2018; nearly 28% earned between \$25,000 and \$49,999; and 43% of the households earned more than \$50,000.

**Exhibit B18:** Income Profile, 2018. Source: U.S. Census.



Compared with the state as a whole, Augusta’s residents were more likely to be below the poverty level. Augusta has more working-age residents below the poverty level than the state (12.4% Maine versus 17.1% Augusta), more seniors (8.8% in Maine versus 16.3% in Augusta), as well as more school-aged children (15.3% in Maine versus 32.8% in Augusta) below the poverty level.

**New Mainers**

Between 2010 and 2020, Augusta welcomed an influx of Middle-Eastern immigrants looking for a friendly U.S. city to settle in after escaping unrest and war in their countries of origin. Augusta was a secondary move for most of them, having first settled in the southern U.S.

The population of several hundred individuals of all ages have been a cultural and economic addition to the city and as the city continues to grow, weaving these new additions into Augusta’s historic fabric will be important.

**Seasonal**

Augusta does not have a substantial seasonal population that impacts services or infrastructure. The lakes in the east part of the city host a mix of seasonal and year-round residents. The most significant concern created by seasonal residents is the potential impact on water quality in the lakes, which is discussed elsewhere in this plan.

## **Issues and Implications**

Augusta is a service center. Even though the city's population has decreased, the population living in surrounding communities that rely on Augusta's services and facilities has continued to grow. This regional development pattern will have significant impacts on the transportation network and public safety services, especially during peak business hours.

As the population grows older, the types of services demanded by residents will change. For example, there will be less demand for elementary schools and more for in-home health services. This is an obvious example, but no service will escape experiencing changes in the kinds of things people need and ask for in the coming years as the population profile of the city changes.

New Mainers will bring diversity, vitality, and economic energy to Augusta. Many economic reports for Maine are clear that without immigration to Maine—either from other U.S. states or other parts of the world, Maine will have trouble growing economically because of our low birth rate and aging population.

The resident population has a significant need for housing at all income levels. With household sizes shrinking and quality units limited. The single biggest issue in the next 5-7 years will be addressing the housing needs of all income levels and age groups.

Augusta's daytime population will continue to be more than double its resident population, due in no small part to its largest employer and industry—state and county government. The city will need to continue to work with its partners at those government levels in order to provide adequate services to them and their visitors as well as ensure existing infrastructure is properly maintained.

The fairly substantial loss of residents in the 35-44 age group should be further investigated. Understanding why this population is leaving Augusta will be very important to stabilizing and reversing the population loss in Augusta. Addressing the reasons for them leaving should be a focus of the next five years.



## **TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Augusta's transportation network consists of streets, sidewalks and trails, bus and taxi systems, an airport, and the riverway. The primary component is roadway. Responsibility for building and maintaining the components is shared by the City and the State of Maine. This section describes the existing transportation infrastructure in the city and key issues related to future use.

### **Transportation Inventory: Roadways, Bridges, Parking and Gateways**

Augusta's road system is built upon routes traveled by foot and horseback years ago. When bridges have been built over the Kennebec, roads have been routed to serve the pass-through traveler.

Since the arrival of the automobile in the early 20th century, there has been a continuous intensification in the number of vehicles owned by each household, and the number of miles driven per person.

Augusta's road and street system is adequate for the needs of city residents and businesses alone, but these are not its only users. The daily influx of drivers and shoppers and tourists who commute into and through the city are straining the transportation network. This is particularly felt in the historic city core.

### **Roads**

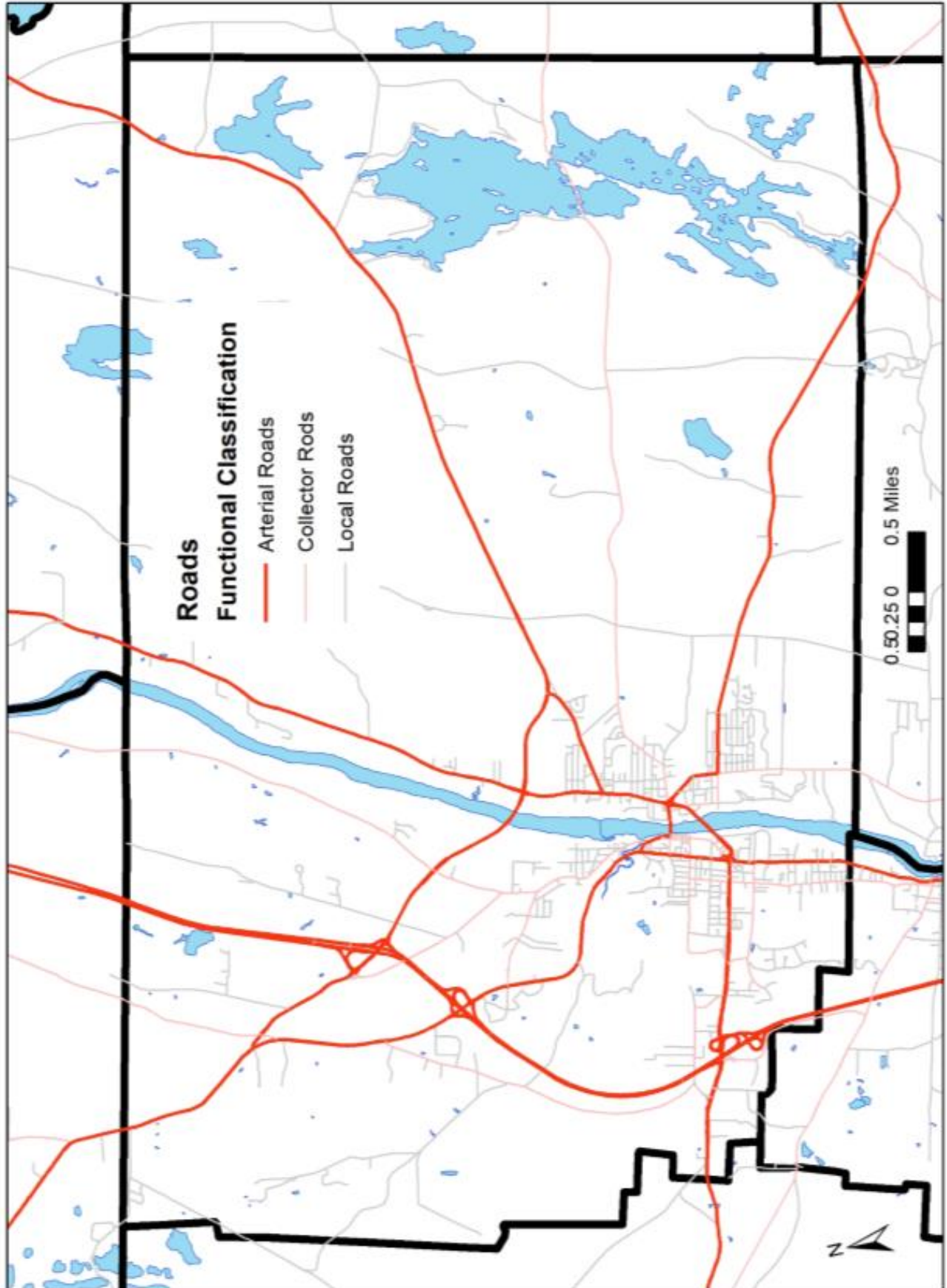
Augusta has 159 miles of publicly-maintained roads. These roads vary in classification and character, from the high-speed through streets to low-speed residential streets. The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) defines roads according to three types: arterial, collector, and local (Exhibit C1).

Arterials provide connections between major destinations, from one city to another. These streets account for 38 miles of Augusta roadway. The routes have Interstate or U.S. Route numbers and are often listed as state highways. Arterial roadways in Augusta include State Routes: 3, 8, 9, 11, 17, 27, 104, 105, 201, and 202. This includes North Belfast Avenue, Eastern Avenue, Western Avenue, Riverside Drive, and Civic Center Drive.

Collector roads connect traffic from local roads to and from arterials. Approximately 24 miles of road in Augusta are collectors. They serve places of lower population densities. The following are some of Augusta's collectors: South Belfast Road, Hospital Street, Sewall Street, and Northern Avenue.

Local streets primarily provide access to private property or low-volume public facilities. They comprise 97 miles, or the majority of length, of Augusta's roads. This includes all neighborhood, rural, and seasonal roads.

Exhibit C1: Augusta Road Classification. Source: Maine Office of Geographic Information Systems.



## Issues Along Augusta's Major Roads

Route 17 (Western Avenue) is a major route to the coast and is traveled by a number of large trucks. It serves the area from I-95 across the Memorial Bridge to Eastern Avenue. Issues include:

- The intersection of Western Avenue/ Orchard Street/Meadow Road has alignment problems.
- The I-95 southbound off-ramp that currently serves vehicles west along Western Avenue forces vehicles to drive up Western Avenue to Edison Drive in order to turn around. Alternatives should be examined, such as a 4-way stop, to see if vehicles could have direct access to Whitten Road.

Route 27 (Civic Center Drive/Mt. Vernon Avenue/State Street) runs along the western edge of the Kennebec River and serves traffic from Hallowell to the Belgrade Lakes Region. Issues include:

- The road north from the playground to the I-95 overpass is in good shape and can accommodate the traffic in the foreseeable future.
- The portion of Civic Center Drive north of the Business Park to the intersection of the Bog Road needs some minor modification at Leighton Road as the Commerce Center and other traffic increases and if a 250-unit residential development is built at the intersection.
- The sidewalks along Lower State Street are in poor condition.
- Gas House Hill is extremely narrow, with homes in close proximity to the road.
- If traffic increases on Bond Brook Road, it will create pressure for modifications at its intersection with Mt. Vernon Avenue.
- The portion in the vicinity of the I-95 overpass is a bottleneck, with only one through lane for the northbound traffic and the second lane serving as a left turn lane southbound onto the Interstate. Traffic pressure in this area was alleviated some by the expansion of Exit 113, but additional work is necessary to improve this congested area.
- The portion of Civic Center Drive from the overpass to the entrance to the Augusta Business Park is poorly designed and very congested. A thorough study of this area is needed.
- The area along Civic Center Drive has developed intensively in recent years and has seen an increase in pedestrian traffic. A sidewalk would be helpful, starting just south of the Civic Center Drive/Bond Brook Road intersection and going north to Darin Drive. A portion of this is slated for construction in 2021, but from Bond Brook Road to Townsend Drive will remain a challenging area.

Route 104 (West River Road./Northern Avenue/Water Street) was recently reconstructed, and easily handles current volumes and potential increases. If the population continues to increase in the Town of Sidney, an I-95 interchange in the vicinity of the Densmore Road could be studied as a way to alleviate some of the volume on Route 104 and the Bog/Middle Roads.

- The intersection of Townsend and Rt.104 is a difficult intersection for nearby residents. Safety improvements should be investigated.
- The intersection of Old Belgrade Road and Rt. 104 could see considerable traffic increases and safety concerns if new residential development happens at Calumet Club land and on Eight Rod Road.

Route 105 (South Belfast Avenue) from the Cony Roundabout to its intersection with Bolton Hill Road, can easily handle current volumes and potential increases. There will be an impact on this route from any potential circumferential road/connector road from Route 3 to Route 17.

Route 201 (State Street/Bangor Street) is a major north-south connector for the city and the region. Because the existing interstate exit at Route 126 in West Gardiner is too far to the south for the residents of Gardiner, Farmingdale, and Hallowell to utilize to commute to Augusta, these commuters use Route 201 as an alternative. As such it is a highly visible, high-volume route that needs special consideration in both design and function. Issues include:

- From the Hallowell line to the Memorial Circle Route 201 is a major gateway to the Capitol. Its appearance could be improved through the widening of sidewalks and landscaping.
- Because many commuters use Route 201 who might be better served by using I-95, strategies to make it easier to shift traffic to the Interstate should be considered (such as a new interchange in Hallowell or Farmingdale, or the removal of the toll barrier).
- The actual speeds on Bangor Street and State Street are above the posted speed limit. Traffic-calming alternatives might be considered, including the conversion to a 3-lane section (2 through lanes and a combination center turn lane) for Bangor Street, as was done for State Street. Studies have shown that reducing a roadway from 4 to 3 lanes reduces the speed of traffic, improves safety by reducing rear-end and side-swipe collisions, enhances pedestrian access through wider sidewalks, and creates opportunities for beautification (such as landscaped esplanades).
- The last portion of Route 201 from North Belfast Avenue to the Vassalboro line can handle the current amount of traffic. If more development occurs in this area, it may become necessary to consider increasing the capacity of the roadway from North Belfast Avenue to the new Route 3.
- The segment of Rt. 201 from Memorial Circle to North Belfast Ave has serious pedestrian safety concerns. The City and the state should take the proposed changes to the corridor recommended in the 2020 Road Safety Audit completed by MDOT in cooperation with the city under consideration. A plan to implement the recommendations of the audit should be outlined with priority given to high pedestrian crossing locations.
- The City should consider constructing new roadways to access undeveloped back land with residential potential along outer Riverside Drive. Such roads could include shared driveways, reducing the number of curb cuts along the major roadways.

## **Road Maintenance**

In general, the maintenance of roadways is divided between state and local maintenance facilities. The state is primarily responsible for the upkeep and repair of state routes (arterials and collectors), while local government pays for the upkeep and repair of collector and local roads.

The Augusta Public Works Department maintains 150 miles of city streets performing repairs, snow removal, street cleaning, and weekly curbside trash collection. This includes pothole patching, road resurfacing, street striping, sign installation, emergency response to floods and washouts, as well as pit operations.

All streets are swept twice in the spring to help with the removal of accumulated winter sand. There is also year-round weekly sweeping of major arterial roads to control dust and remove debris. Snow removal is a large part of Public Works, with twenty-two full time employees dedicated to snow operations. The department takes care of sanding, plowing of streets/sidewalks/public and school parking lots, snow hauling, and ice removal.



## **Traffic Volume**

As the state capital, Augusta serves individuals from all across Maine, almost all of whom arrive by car. As a result, the city has a number of high volume arterial roads that service residents, commuters, and visitors. The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) provides Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) counts for all major roadways in Augusta.

Traffic is most congested around the Cony Circle, where all major routes through the city converge (Exhibit C2). Routes such as Western Avenue and Mt. Vernon Avenue, which lead to and from the interstate, see over 20,000 vehicle trips per day. Traffic studies conducted prior to the construction of the Cushnoc Bridge projected an increase in traffic volumes of 27% along Western Avenue between 1995 and 2025. Similar levels of increases were projected for other streets.

The construction of the Cushnoc Bridge in November of 2004 alleviated a great deal of traffic within the city, with very significant volume decreases along some major corridors (Exhibits C2 and C3).

## **Traffic Mobility**

Good traffic mobility depends upon a steady flow of automobiles through intersections. MDOT categorizes each intersection based on its perceived level of service, providing each with a letter grade from A (free-flowing) down to F (heavily congested). Intersections with a D or lower rating are considered in need of rehabilitation. The intersection of State and Capitol Streets is an example of an E-rated area.

Congestion in Augusta occurs in the downtown, at the rotaries, and at the arteries coming into and leaving Augusta, but was greatly relieved by the Cushnoc Crossing Bridge.

## **High Accident Location**

The Maine Department of Transportation tracks accidents and measures potential safety problems by looking at the total number of accidents in a location and comparing this to the number that may be expected given the type of roadway involved and its traffic volumes.

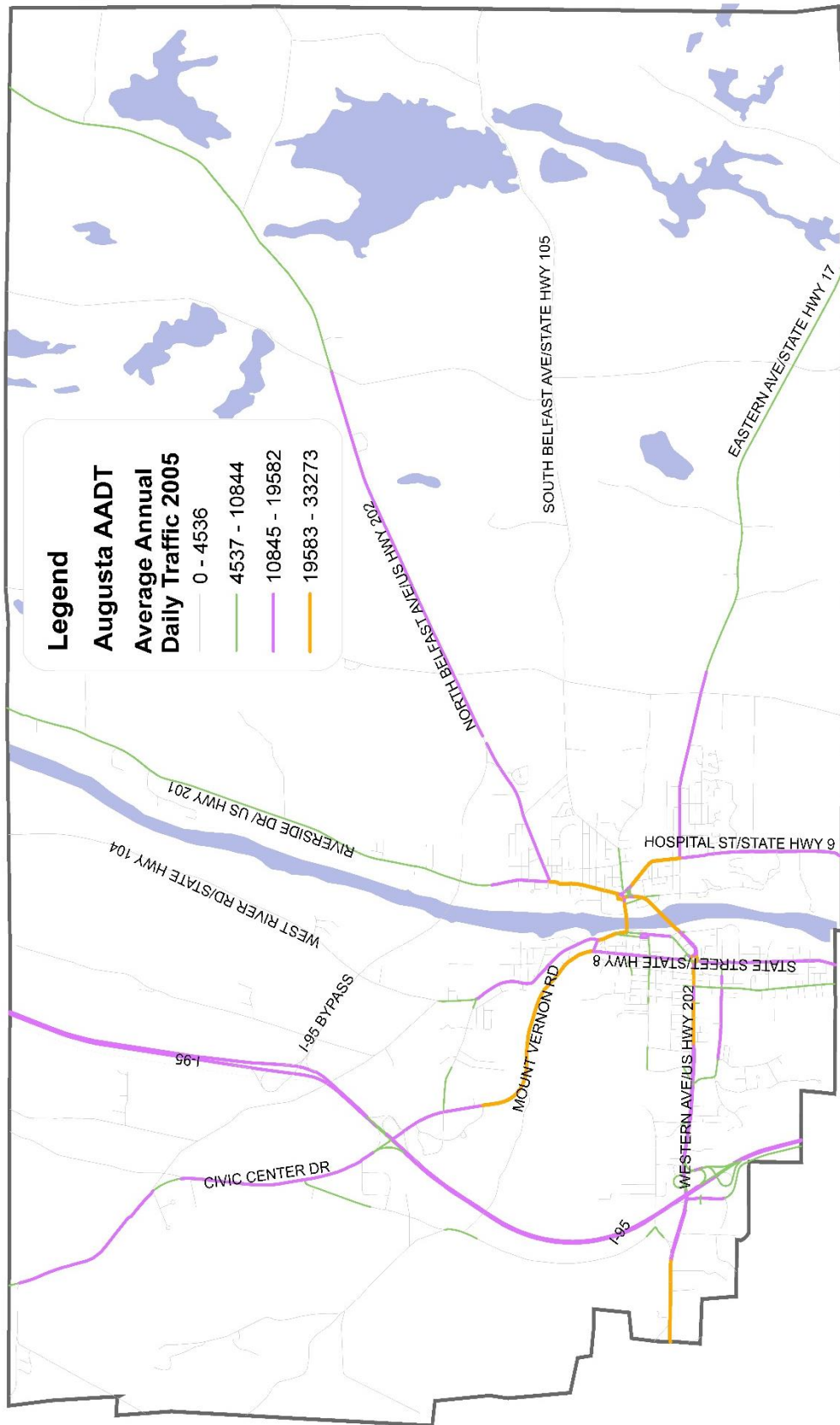
From this information, MDOT calculates a “critical risk factor” (CRF). Any location that has a CRF greater than 1.00 and that has eight or more accidents over a three-year period is considered a high accident location (HAL).

Using MDOT and MGIS data, 29 high accident locations were identified in Augusta in 2004. The most dangerous is the Cony Circle, with over 150 crashes annually (Exhibit C4). The heavy use of this circle and its alignment are part of the reason for its high accident rating.

## **Traffic Speed**

The perception of many in Augusta is that drivers routinely drive above the speed limit on Augusta streets. Increased speed leads to more accidents, intimidates pedestrians and bicycle riders, and takes away from the quality of neighborhood life. Reduced traffic volumes in the densely developed part of the city during the past decade have likely allowed people to comfortably increase speeds.

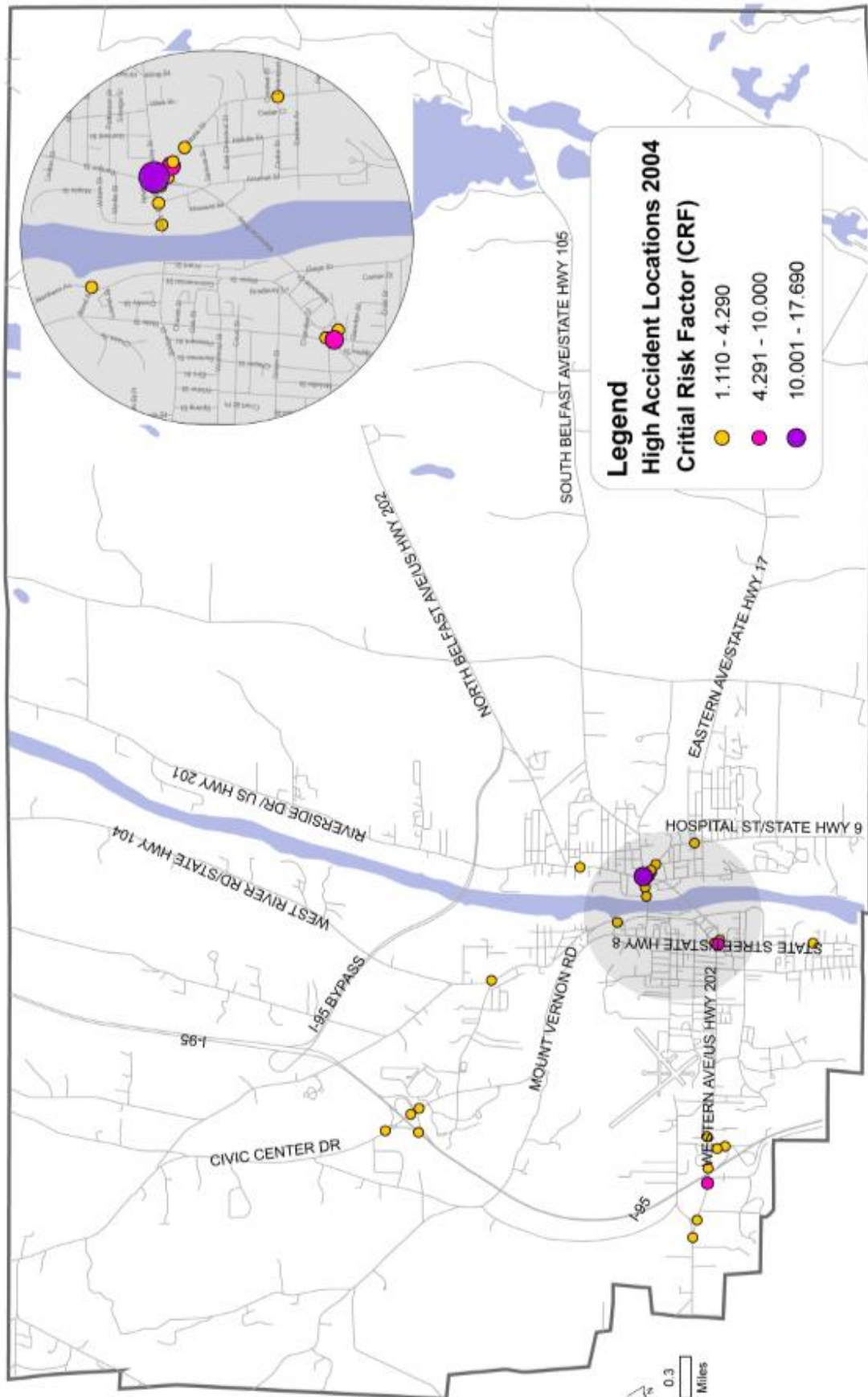
**Exhibit C2:** Augusta Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts, 2006. (This map remains substantively the same in 2020). Bangor Street and northern Water Street have seen minor volume reductions due to the third bridge. Source: Maine Office of Geographic Information Systems.



**Exhibit C3: Augusta Projected Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT).**

ANNUAL AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC	2003	2006	2013-2014	2017	Change (post-bridge) 03-06	Change (post-hosp) 06-14	Change (post-hosp) 14-17
LOCATION							
<b>WEST SIDE</b>							
State St., south of Circle	16,520	16,010	12,880	12,650	-3.1%	-19.6%	-1.8%
Sewall St., south of Capitol St.	8,250	6,950	6,340	5,810	-15.8%	-8.8%	-8.4%
Capitol St., west of Sewall St.	11,660	11,570	11,440	————	-0.8%	-1.1%	
Western Ave., west of Memorial Circle	28,750	20,040	18,890	18,360	-30.3%	-5.7%	-2.8%
Western Ave., west of Armory	29,860	26,320	25,760	25,640	-11.9%	-2.1%	-0.5%
Western Avenue, west of I-95	26,290	25,350	25,830	25,380	-3.6%	1.9%	-1.7%
State St., north of Memorial Circle	9,990	10,010	8,170	6,970	0.2%	-18.4%	-14.7%
Mt. Vernon Ave., north of Bond St.	18,970	16,820	12,700	11,300	-11.3%	-24.5%	-11.0%
Northern Ave., north of Bond St.	12,220	7,410	8,320	10,340	-39.4%	12.3%	24.3%
<b>EAST SIDE</b>							
Bangor St., north of Cony Circle	25,850	18,720	17,620	18,760	-27.6%	-5.9%	6.5%
Riverside Dr., north of N. Belfast Ave.	11,890	12,000	12,310	12,340	0.9%	2.6%	0.2%
North Belfast Ave., east of Bangor St.	12,900	6,200	5,300	————	-51.9%	-14.5%	
Cony St., east of Cony Circle	7,340	6,010	5,510	5,170	-18.1%	8.3%	-6.2%
Stone St., south of Cony Circle	26,350	22,000	24,880	25,150	-16.5%	13.1%	1.1%
Eastern Ave., east of Stone St.	13,700	12,890	10,480	10,800	-5.9%	-18.7%	3.1%
Hospital St., south of Eastern Ave.	16,190	14,320	13,110	14,660	-11.6%	-8.4%	11.8%

Exhibit C4: High Accident Locations in Augusta. Source: Maine Office of Geographic Information Systems.





## Parking Facilities

Parking facilities and needs are overseen by the City. They preview plans for new parking development, approve fees, and provide guidance for installation.

In addition to its own municipal parking facilities, the city has a number of state-owned lots. These are clustered around the state government campuses on the east and west sides of the river. There is a large demand for parking in and around these areas both due to the large number of employees as well as the number of daily visitors. In particular, there is a parking “squeeze” when the legislature is in session.

A downtown parking study was conducted in 2019 that found significant parking supply for quite some time, even with the renewed activity on Water Street. However, better management of the highest demand spaces on Water Street and the lower demand spaces away from Water Street will better serve the businesses on the street. A pay system may be necessary for high demand areas.

Parking standards in neighborhoods and built up areas (Growth Areas) need to take on-street parking in to consideration and count its availability toward some or all of the on-site parking requirements. Parking should not be a major obstacle to infill development and density.

## Bridges

The City of Augusta is served by roughly 30 public bridges, including three major bridges (Memorial, Calumet Bridge at Old Fort Western and Cushnoc Crossing) crossing the Kennebec River. The Cushnoc Crossing Bridge was completed in 2004. It is designed to alleviate traffic at the two rotaries by diverting through traffic to the north. Traffic patterns on the bridges have significantly changed as a result. There has been a 33% reduction in Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) on Memorial Bridge and a 50.6% reduction on the Calumet Bridge between 2001 and 2014 (Exhibit C5). The relocation of the hospital undoubtedly also played a significant role in those reductions.

**Exhibit C5:** AADT for the Major Bridges. Source: MaineDOT.

Bridge	2001	2006	2014
Memorial Bridge	31,900	22,370	21,360
Calumet Bridge	23,210	14,900	11,470
Cushnoc Bridge*	-	17,410	17,320

\*Traffic data for cars crossing the Cushnoc Bridge is not yet available but counts for the intersection of Riverside Dr. and the bridge (SR3 SE/O SR 100.US 201) have been used here to estimate bridge crossings for 2006 and 2017.

## Gateways

Many of Augusta’s major roadways can be considered gateways. Gateways are the arterial streets through which travelers come into Augusta, and which by nature of this function provide lasting impressions and images of the city. Gateways announce the entrance to the city (separating rural from urban areas); mark the entrances into defined districts, such as commercial, governmental, or neighborhoods; and announce entry into the historic sections of the city.

The goals of gateways are to provide:

- A sense of arrival to a specific place;
- A character-sensitive impression of a community;
- Entry points to neighborhoods or specific districts; and
- A definition between rural and urban space, while facilitating access to and from the city itself.

Gateway areas can be categorized into three basic types:

City Gateways (such as the interstate, major corridors, and collector streets) which provide “enhanced” entry points to the city and lead clearly to core areas (downtown, historic areas, government districts, marketplace)

Special District Gateways (business, residential, and historic, or in combination) which support neighborhood identity.

Rural Gateways which separate rural towns from the city.

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan identified several key gateways into Augusta. They included State Street from the south, Bangor Street on the eastside, Civic Center Drive/Mt. Vernon Avenue, and Western Avenue. The 1988 Plan observed that access to the city via Civic Center Drive was “enhanced by topography and road alignment” (i.e., attractive) but since that date, significant commercial development has taken away much of that visual appeal.

Of particular note from the 1988 Plan was a proposed policy on visual integrity for the city calling for “a high degree of naturalism... especially on hillsides...that can be seen from, among other places, the Maine Turnpike.” Commercial developments at exits 109 and 112 off I-95 have dramatically reduced the naturalism called for in that Plan.

Other city/major corridor gateways currently facing pressure for development include North Belfast Avenue (Route 3), Eastern Avenue (Route 17), South Belfast Avenue (Route 105), Hospital Street (Route 9), West River Road (Route 104), and Riverside Drive (Route 201).

Areas closer to the city core that fall in to the category of “special district” gateways are Mt. Vernon Avenue, Bond Street, southern Water Street (including Memorial Circle), State Street (the full length, but particularly from Western Avenue to Mt. Vernon Avenue), and Cony Street (including Cony Circle). These need careful consideration and protection (although some clearly need rehabilitation) as they are part of the city’s historic core.

A dramatic entrance to Augusta that presents the natural and rugged beauty of Maine and is particularly vulnerable to development is the area surrounding the new Cushnoc Bridge. The natural landscape, the rock and granite exposed to build the roadways, and the vistas of the river present the dramatic beauty of Maine in an area close to an urban area.

The dramatic descent into the City from Winthrop Street (from the airport), which has a panoramic view of the historic core, is also threatened. This street's transition from a residential area to a business area has left it with much of its nineteenth century presentation. It includes a long section of historic cemeteries lining both sides of the street at the crest of Winthrop Hill. The recent 2020 rezoning of this area limiting further changes and the creation of the Historic District should continue and be strengthened. Stone Street, Grove Street, and Northern Avenue also offer dramatic points of entry to the core city. These areas need careful consideration to ensure the continued protection of their viewsheds.

In addition, Augusta, being Maine's Capital City, has a responsibility to protect views of the Capitol Building and Dome from all perspectives. The recent protection of Howard Hill as a natural area was a critical part of that effort.

Growth and development are inevitable, but careful planning and the appropriate tools can shape a community into an area that is attractive, economically and culturally vibrant, and a desirable place to live. Developing, designing, and protecting the city's gateways and viewsheds is one way to accomplish this.

### **Other Modes of Transportation**

Public Transportation in Augusta is run through the Kennebec Explorer (run by KVCAP), a private non-profit agency. They offer a semi-fixed bus and van transit route with operations in the greater Waterville and Augusta areas.

Route structures offer a convenient, low-cost means of transportation to commuters, the elderly, passengers with disabilities, and the general public. In some cases, the buses pick individuals up directly from their homes.

Primary destinations include shopping centers, medical and educational facilities, business parks, elderly and low-income housing projects and community service organizations. There are four fixed routes. Buses run on all loops with the same schedule between 8:30am and 3:30pm. Current schedules are as follows:

- The Augusta East provides service from the Maine IFW Lot (on RR tracks under Rines Hill Bridge) to Augusta's East side. Service is hourly (except for 11:30) from 8:30AM to 3:30PM. The last stop ends at 4:08PM.
- The Augusta West serves an area from the Maine IFW Lot to the Western Avenue corridor. Service is hourly (except for 11:30) from 8:30AM to 3:30 PM. The last stop ends at 4:20PM.
- The Augusta North serves an area from the Maine IFW Lot to the MarketPlace, Civic Center, and UMA. Service is hourly (except for 11:30) from 8:30AM to 3:30 PM. The last stop ends at 4:20PM..
- The Health Loop North serves and area from the Maine IFW Lot to MaineGeneral, the Commerce Center, and Concord Coach area. This route runs four times a day, twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon.

The Kennebec Explorer also has limited daily routes to Togus and Gardiner and a frequent route between Augusta and Waterville with stops at medical facilities, social services, shopping, and transit connections.

A consistent message during the comprehensive planning process was that the need for public transit is great. Enhancing the existing service and making it more convenient and friendly to all users was a high priority of members of the public and committee members.

In addition to having local transportation buses, Augusta participates in MDOT's Go Augusta program which provides commuter service to and from the City to major Maine communities.

Augusta has a fixed-route Greyhound Line terminal at 9 Industrial Drive, sharing space in Concord Coach's terminal, which provides service to outlying communities including Boston. Concord Coach has a terminal at 9 Industrial Drive and offer service to Portland, Bangor, and Boston. This service provides links to Portland and Boston Amtrak Stations as well as Logan Airport.

There are a myriad of Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities in Augusta, including over 200 miles of sidewalks and trails. The sidewalks are maintained by the City's Department of Public Works which insures that walkways are in good repair and clean of debris, snow and ice. Trails are maintained by the City in conjunction with non-profit organization such as the Bicycle Coalition of Maine (BCOM). More information on trails is available in the Leisure and Recreation chapter.

Possible ideas for encouraging bicycle use in Augusta include:

- Enhancing the existing City bicycle and pedestrian advisory committee;
- Requiring bicycle racks for all commercial developments as part of the approval process; and
- Constructing "complete streets" which include accommodations not only for vehicles, but for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other users. These could include an 11-foot-wide vehicular lane along with a 4-foot-wide bicycle lane (5 feet wide if adjacent to a curb or guardrail).

The Augusta State Airport has evolved from a military airfield to a scheduled airline stop, and today it is a general aviation airport with limited airline service. Non-scheduled service (charter) has been available continuously since 1946 through Maine Instrument Flight. This company was among the first in the nation to provide flight instruction for the military and airlines operating in all-weather conditions. They continue to graduate a large number of Airline Transport Pilots. The Augusta State Airport is owned by the State of Maine and managed and operated by the City of Augusta. It provides regular scheduled passenger service to and from Boston and 15 other cities in the mid-Atlantic and Northeast United States. The airport has two runways and averages 91 flights per day.

The airport manager hopes to expand the marketing of the airport facilities with incentives including low-cost parking, more connecting flights to major carriers, and increasing the number of enplanements (individuals who departed from the airport to other destinations). Cape Air is updating their fleet and will provide new planes for a more comfortable flight to Boston.

An airport master planning process is beginning again to plan for the future needs of the airport. One issue that may be addressed is the need for additional hangar space.



Railroad activity in Augusta is limited to one active line which is jointly owned by Pan Am and the State of Maine. At this time the line is used solely for freight transportation. However, the line's close proximity to the city and its connection to major points both north and south create the potential for passenger service. With the removal of the trestle in Richmond, though, this seems like something that would be difficult to achieve.

Portions of the former Maine Central Rail Line are now part of the Kennebec Rail Trail. Other sections, such as those through downtown and the railroad bridge itself are not currently in use. The tracks through downtown have been temporarily covered to allow for parking but MDOT has reserved the right to open them at any time.

The Kennebec River was historically a fully functioning transportation corridor known as the Kennebec-Chaudière International Corridor from Bath, Maine to Quebec, Canada. The draft of the river varies in depths from 13 feet in South Gardiner to 5-8 feet in the vicinity of Britt Shoals (Augusta/Hallowell line). Under normal conditions, there is a 3-knot current. The Army Corps of Engineers states that the River is not at authorized depths, and a lack of funding and the low demand for larger ships to travel up the river to Augusta, make it unlikely the Army Corps will perform dredging in the Augusta area.

However, flat-bottom boats have traveled from Bath to Augusta in the past and there is the possibility of renewing these activities. The new wharf at the Arsenal, the east-side boat launch, and Mill Park are all popular recreational boating sites that could be expanded.

## **Transportation Projects**

The City accomplishes at least one or two significant road reconstruction projects per year and heavily invests in paving existing roads as needed. City departments collaborate to prioritize each year for the Capital Improvements Plan based on road condition, traffic volume, and infrastructure condition. Road improvements are coordinated with sewer and water improvements whenever possible. MDOT Urban-Rural Initiative Program funds are used to offset a portion of municipal road improvement costs and Capital Improvement costs.

The Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG), in conjunction with MDOT's Strategic Investment Plan, are looking to implement a series of new projects to aid long-term regional transportation development. KVCOG's list of Augusta-oriented projects includes:

- Alleviating commuter-related congestion issues on city "entry routes";
- Mobility improvements to Route 201 from Gardiner to Hallowell;
- Expand KV Transit;
- Upgrade Rail service, including possible passenger service;
- I-95/Route 3 interchange park and ride with bicycle connections;
- East side connector between Route 3 and 17;
- Bicycle - East Coast Greenway connection (Augusta to Waterville), intercity network;

- I-95: new interchange in Hallowell and Farmingdale;
- Route 202, Augusta to Manchester capacity expansion;
- Route 202, corridor widening; and
- Route 11, capacity improvement within urban area.

In the process of planning and funding transit projects, MDOT has three plans known as the 20, 6, and 2-year plans. The 20-year plan is for long term and sizeable projects. The two-year plan (also known as the Work Plan) is for relatively small projects that are typically maintenance projects such as road re-constructions, overlays, and smaller projects (typically Capital Improvement Projects). The 6-year plan is essentially an expansion of the two-year plan and is stretched out for planning and funding purposes. MDOT plans in Augusta include the replacement of the I-95 overpass on Western Ave (2024), Rines Hill Bridge replacement on Water Street (2023), Bangor Street road diet and pedestrian safety improvements at Cony Roundabout and Memorial Circle (2025). Additionally, a full traffic signal upgrade by MDOT is occurring in 2022 and 2023.

MDOT reviews a municipality's requests and prioritizes them based upon safety, need, and funding. It is recommended that in future requests, projects are identified as recommendations made through the Comprehensive Plan of the city. This would give the project requested a higher rating during the MDOT's prioritizing process.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

The infrastructure of Augusta includes water, sewer, and solid waste facilities. This section provides an overview of these facilities available in Augusta.

Public water and sewer services are provided by the Greater Augusta Utility District, a quasi-municipal chartered corporation. Solid waste disposal is run by the Bureau of Solid Waste in conjunction with the Department of Public Works.

The Greater Augusta Utility District manages the distribution of drinking water and sewer services for the city and surrounding towns including Manchester, Winthrop, Monmouth, and Hallowell.

Within the more densely populated core of Augusta, public water and sewer services are generally available. For the rest of the city water supply and sewer disposal are an individual responsibility typically provided by individual well and septic systems.

### **Public Water Service**

The Greater Augusta Utility District maintains over 100 miles of water pipes, 470+ hydrants, 6 pump stations, 10 storage tanks, as well as three gravel-packed covered wells along Bond Brook, 2 gravel packed wells adjacent to the Kennebec River off Riverside Drive and two surface water basins.

**Exhibit C6:** Covered Water Sources. Source: GAUD.

Covered Wells	Depth	Diameter	Estimated Daily Yield (in thousand gallons)	Treatments
Brookside	85	18"	1,000,000	Lead/Copper; Calcium Sequestration; Fluoridation; Chlorination
Triangle	89	18"	1,300,000	
South	89	18"	1,100,000	
Riverside Station			2,000,000 (in 2 wells)	

**Exhibit C7:** Surface Water Sources. Source: GAUD.

Surface Water	Area (in square miles)	Storage Capacity (in thousand gallons)	Estimated Daily Yield (in thousand gallons)	Treatments
Carlton Pond*	2.5	1,717,000	2,000	Lead/Copper; Filtration; Sedimentation; Flocculation; Fluoridation; Chlorination
Cobbossee Lake*	131.7	25,178,000	90,200	
* Not utilized in 2019				

The covered wells are capable of delivering approximately one million gallons per day. The 10 water storage facilities have capacities between 150,000 and 5,700,000 gallons and maximum supplies ranging between 1.5 and 2.5 days of service.

Though groundwater supplies may be finite, there are many sources of surface water available around Augusta, including 90 million gallons per day from Cobbossee Lake. This supply, if needed, would cost tens of millions of dollars in treatment.

No increase of the current public water supply is anticipated. The usage of water has declined steadily since registering 3.34 MGD in 1974; to 2.44 MGD in 1990; to 1.755 MGD in 2002; to the all-time historic low of 1.586 MGD in 2004. Some of this loss is due to loss of water sales revenue from the many manufacturing and industrial operations that are no longer in business, as well as overall customer conservation.

As a result of concerns after a 2011 chemical spill on I-95 near the Bond Brook wells, the Greater Augusta Utility District drilled two new wells in Augusta, adjacent to the Kennebec River, on Riverside Drive in 2014.

Water quality protection and conservation actions are promoted through various state and non-profit agencies throughout Augusta. More on this is available in the Environment chapter.

The Greater Augusta Utility District is in the process made the following improvements in the last 12 years and is planning more:

- Expanded the water main along Riverside Drive;

- New wells off Riverside Drive;
- New water tank behind Hodgkins School;
- New water main on Commercial Street;
- Improved the water main located on the lower portions of State Street toward Hallowell; and
- Expanded the storage tanks located on Civic Center Drive.

In the development and expansion of water facilities, the District tries to “piggyback” on development projects in order to streamline costs.

### **Public Sewer and Storm Water Collection System Services**

The Greater Augusta Utility District collects and transports wastewater, maintains the city’s storm water system, operates the secondary wastewater treatment plant, and treats wastewater for Manchester, Winthrop, Monmouth, and Hallowell. Current needs are met through a sanitation system, which includes 115 miles of sewer mains, 15 wastewater pump stations, 38 miles of storm water mains, and 3,281 catch basins.

An issue in older parts of the city are the catch basins that collect surface water from the streets during rain events and flow directly into the sewer system. During heavy rains these sewer lines cannot handle the large amount of water in conjunction with the sewage, and the system overflows into natural drainage ways such as streams and rivers.

The District in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Protection is charged with eliminating these combined sewer overflows over the next ten years. In newer parts of the city, there is a system of pipes separate from the sewer lines which handle ground and surface water, limiting these possible overflows.

The District has several completed several major projects and has some under construction:

- Upgraded the Riggs Brook pump station;
- Upgraded Whitney Brook trunk line;
- Installation of separate storm drain system on Pearl Street; and
- Extended sewer and water to the new Cancer Treatment Center and Hospital.

The District constructed a large underground storage tank for the sewer and stormwater system under Mill Park and is constructing a similar stormwater management tank adjacent to the offices.

The District will not pay for expansions to their system. Expansions to the system must be paid for by individuals other than the ratepayers of the systems. Impact fees have been discussed as a means to pay for expansions and upgrades.



Also under the jurisdiction of the District is the Kennebec River. The District is responsible for maintaining the river's water quality and keeping it clean. The costs for maintaining a recreational-grade river far exceed what the city can pay.

A new funding mechanism is needed to ensure that the river remains a safe and viable recreational area for residents and visitors alike.

## **Solid Waste Service**

The Bureau of Solid Waste is responsible for the operation of the Hatch Hill Waste Disposal Facility located on Route 105 (So. Belfast Ave). The facility provides waste recycling and disposal services for Augusta, Chelsea, Farmingdale, Gardiner, Hallowell, Manchester, Pittston, Randolph, and Whitefield. The contracting communities pay an annual fee for use of the facility. In 2017, approximately 36,000 tons of waste was landfilled. Expansion III of Hatch Hill was begun in 2001 and it is anticipated that the new facility will be able to provide capacity for waste disposal through 2030, based on the existing volumes. Dealing with this impending deadline and the future of waste disposal in Augusta is important in the next 5 years.

Trash collection is provided on a weekly basis to all single-family and multi-family homes of four units or less by the city's Public Works department. Also provided are recycling at drop-off locations at the Public Works facility and Hatch Hill, two three-week "For-A-Fee" spring services including bulk trash pick-up and leaf collection, a free fall leaf-collection program, and a wood stove ash collection program (November through April).

The market for recyclable material has been particularly difficult in the past 2-3 years and does not look as though it will improve. While Augusta will continue efforts to find viable markets for recyclable materials and partners to get products to the market, a bigger emphasis on "reduce and reuse" must occur.

One way to encourage an increase in the recycling rate and reduce recycling needs for the residents of the City of Augusta is to charge a fee for each bag of rubbish that is placed curbside. The cost of the rubbish collection is currently included in the property taxes.

If the cost is removed from the property tax and individuals must pay for each bag, it is felt that people would recycle more items to reduce that amount of disposal they would need to pay for. This "pay per bag" system is currently in use in the cities like Portland and Falmouth.

Since the landfill has approximately 10 years of remaining life, a study of the facility and options of what should be done for the long term (after 2030) should begin relatively soon. These options include another expansion, creating a transfer station to send the rubbish to another approved facility, or build an incinerator to burn the rubbish. One recommendation that should be looked at is the possibility of transferring the city's rubbish to an existing incinerator in exchange for accepting ash at the current landfill. An incinerator can reduce the volume of rubbish to ash by 50-70%. This would extend the life of the landfill by many years.

## **Public Facilities**

The Augusta Civic Center is primarily a convention, exhibition, and special-events facility owned and operated by the City of Augusta. The Center serves as the primary public assembly facility in the area. The Center promotes and facilitates various events and group functions, generating hotel and motel room nights and related revenues for city business and increasing economic stimuli for the local infrastructure. The Augusta Civic Center, built in 1973, includes a main auditorium (24,576 sq. ft.), 2 ballrooms, and 24 flexible-capacity/meeting rooms, for a total of 48,000 square feet.

The need for major upgrades to this facility including a new roof and interior renovations over the next decade will be important to continuing its ability to serve Augusta and central Maine.

## **Broadband Internet**

Broadband internet has become a basic infrastructure need for residents in the 21st century. In general, Augusta is extremely well covered by broadband for residents and businesses. We are the state Capital, have the National Guard Headquarters, UMA, and a major regional hospital. All of those users require high-speed internet and will continue to demand the best service available, to the benefit of Augusta residents.

The U.S. Census estimated that between 2015 and 2019, 77.7% of residents had a subscription to broadband internet in Augusta. So most of our residents are getting high-speed service, but there are some gaps, most notably in the eastern part of the city where Spectrum cable does not reach. These residents should be served.

## **Issues and Implications**

Augusta's existing public facilities are not anticipated to need expansion due to growth and development. Public buildings, parks, recreational facilities are all adequate to accommodate the current population and the modest increase in population expected over the next decade. Many facilities will need typical maintenance and some will receive major renovations, and these items are necessary to maintain the quality of life in the city. But they are not expected to be necessary to serve new population growth.

There are a number of areas within the designated growth area that do not have public water or public sewer. Extension of these services to these areas is being considered as a method to stimulate both commercial and residential growth in these areas. These services are not necessary to serve growth, but would allow a much more efficient use of the land and other services, benefiting the municipality by reducing the long-term cost to serve development, increasing the tax base in the short-term, allowing space for future development, and making efficient use of municipal infrastructure.

## **Policies and Strategies**

1. Mobility corridors and arterials that act as local roads should be retrofitted when possible to better and more safely serve local vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic. (Western Avenue, Water Street, Bangor Street, Mt. Vernon Avenue, State Street, Stone Street, etc.)
  - a. Where possible create esplanades and bicycle lanes to separate vulnerable users from vehicle traffic.

- b. Improve connectivity across these vehicle corridors to connect neighborhoods and increase pedestrian safety with bump-outs, landscaping, rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs), and pedestrian refuge islands.
  - c. Coordinate and cooperate with MDOT on local and state projects using a Complete Streets model.
- 2. Make pedestrian safety and pedestrian connections a priority. A sense of community is enhanced by seeing people moving around the city on foot. Active, vibrant places have pedestrians.
  - a. Gaps in the pedestrian network on Civic Center Drive, between Bond Brook Road and Townsend Road, should be filled. This is a heavily used pedestrian corridor that has no sidewalks.
  - b. Gaps in the pedestrian network on Western Avenue, west of Senator Way, need to be filled and crossings should be created at Whitten Road to enable pedestrians to safely get to Hannaford and the Turnpike Mall. Without the safe crossing people are using the south side of Western Avenue and walking where there is no sidewalk to avoid having to cross Western Avenue in an unsafe location at the intersection of Whitten Road.
  - c. Safe Routes to School and safe routes to parks and playgrounds must continue to be a priority to ensure that the pedestrian sidewalk network is well maintained and fully connected. Any existing gaps, as on Cony Road to the Piggery Road complex, need to be prioritized over most other projects.
- 3. Enhance the use of a road assessment and management system for prioritizing system upgrades. Focus more effort on the transportation network within the designated Growth Area.
- 4. Capitalize on water and sewer upgrade needs in the growth area to enhance other aspects of the public space.
  - a. Front Street, Water Street, and other older parts of the utility network that need upgrading to ensure continued service should be used as opportunities to do other public projects.
- 5. Continue to ensure high-speed broadband sufficient to meet the needs of local industries, thereby enhancing resident access as well.
  - a. As necessary, partner with State government, the University of Maine System, the National Guard, and Maine General Hospital to continue to ensure the highest quality internet connections are available to serve these critical needs as well as the needs of residents.
  - b. Identify gaps in the existing broadband system before the next franchise agreement is due and work during that agreement update to fill the gaps where possible.
  - c. Work with partner agencies to harden and expand the broadband network connections around the city and especially crossing the Kennebec River where redundant connections are sparse.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The first trading post was established in Augusta in the early 1600s, and the community has served as a retail and wholesale trade center ever since. State government and county government located their seats here in the early 1800s, adding government and services to the city’s core economic mix. Later in that same century, the Industrial Revolution brought manufacturing to the city; it boomed in the last century, and remains today, but at a reduced level. In recent years, health care has become an important job generator for the area, as it has elsewhere in the state.

These four legs of Augusta’s economy – trade, government, manufacturing, and health services – are discussed in detail in this section.

**Augusta Labor Force**

In 2015, there were an estimated 9,447 Augusta residents in the labor force (residents over 16 years that were working or actively seeking work). This is greater than in 2000 (9,229) but less than 1990, when an estimated 10,399 residents participated in the workforce.

The education and health care sector employs approximately 25% of Augusta’s residents (three out of four of these workers are in health and social services). Public administration and retail trade employ about 13.5% apiece, manufacturing employs 4.2%, and arts/entertainment employs 9.6% of the city’s residents. Natural resource businesses – farming, forestry, fishing – employ less than 1% of the city’s workforce (Exhibit D1). The big changes are a 5% drop in manufacturing and a 3% gain in arts and entertainment since 2000.

Within these industries, nearly one-third of Augusta residents are managers or professionals.

**Exhibit D1:** Industry Profile of Augusta Residents, 2015. Source: U.S. Census.

	Augusta	Kennebec County	State of Maine
Natural Resource	0.9%	1.7%	2.5%
Construction	4.7%	7.1%	6.9%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	7.7%	9.3%
Wholesale	3.5%	2.9%	2.3%
<b>Retail</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	13.4%	13.4%
Transportation	4.8%	3.8%	3.8%
Information	1.6%	1.4%	1.8%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	5.1%	4.4%	6.2%
Professional and Managerial	9.3%	7.8%	8.6%
<b>Education and Health Care</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	27.9%	27.5%
Arts and Entertainment	9.6%	7.8%	8.9%
Other	4.3%	4.6%	4.4%
<b>Public Service</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	9.3%	4.4%

Another 30% work in sales-related positions, and 16% work in service-related positions (Exhibit D2). Augusta residents are more likely to work in sales and service positions than residents of Kennebec County as a whole.

**Exhibit D2:** Occupation Profile of Augusta Residents, 2015. Source: U.S. Census.

	Augusta	Kennebec County	State of Maine
Managerial and Professional	31.4%	35.7%	35.4%
Service	24.6%	17.6%	18.5%



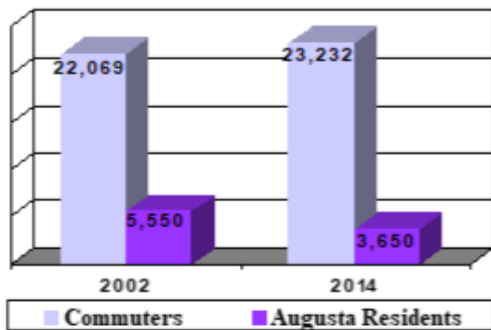
Sales	28.5%	25.8%	23.9%
Natural Resource, Construction	7.5%	10.3%	10.7%
Production and Transportation	7.9%	10.5%	11.4%

About 7.5% of Augusta workers are self-employed or in a family business – 664 out of the total workforce in 2000. This is not a high figure – rural Maine communities often have 10% to 20% in the self-employed category. Self-employed people do not show up, however, in much of the Maine Department of Labor data, which only covers jobs that receive unemployment insurance. The success of small business owners is important to Augusta’s ability to grow and diversify its economy.

Approximately 70% of Augusta’s residents work in the city itself. The remaining workers have jobs throughout the region – 4% in Waterville, and around 2% apiece in Hallowell, Windsor, Winthrop, Gardiner, and Bath.

Augusta residents, however, are a minority of the total number of people working in Augusta. In 2014, there were 23,000 commuters coming into the city to work, joining 3,600 Augusta residents who also worked in the city. During the early 2000s, the number of in-coming commuters grew a little, and the number of Augusta residents working in the city declined fairly dramatically. The majority of Augusta residents used to work in Augusta, however, by 2010 more residents commuted out of the city than stayed in the city for work (Exhibit D3).

**Exhibit D3:** Commuters and Augusta Residents Working in Augusta. Source: U.S. Census.



were just under 27,000 jobs in the City of Augusta in 2014. Of these jobs, almost a third are in public administration (state, county, and local government), a fifth are in education and health, and a sixth are in retail and wholesale trade.

This pattern is largely consistent with the industry profile of Augusta’s labor force. The one major exception is government jobs.

**Exhibit D4:** Augusta Labor Market Area and Micropolitan Area. Source: Maine Department of Labor.

Approximately one in seven Augusta residents work for the government, yet one in three of the jobs in Augusta are government-related. This

### Augusta as an Employment Center

The Maine Department of Labor estimates there

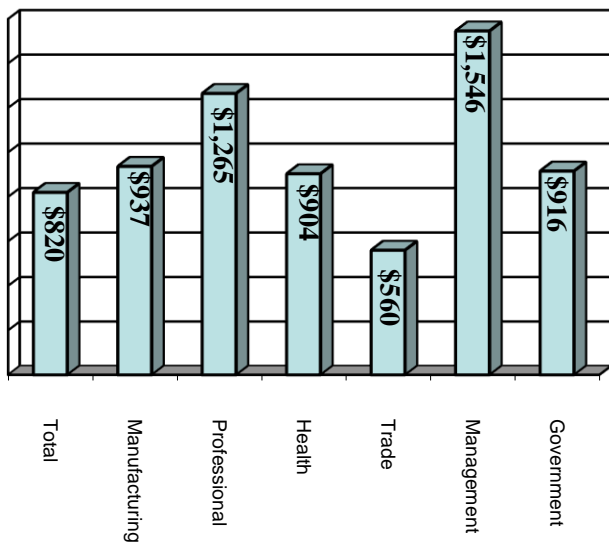


suggests that a relatively large share of government employees commute to Augusta from surrounding communities.

Augusta is the job center for the region -- nearly 70% of the jobs in the Augusta Labor Market Area (Exhibit D4) are located in the city. Augusta tends to have a larger share of jobs in public administration (93%), information (85%), professional and business services (75%), and other services (79%), than the rest of the Labor Market Area. Conversely, Augusta tends to have fewer manufacturing (48%), construction (43%), and natural resource-based jobs (6%).

Augusta has lost about 750 jobs in the last four years, largely due to losses in the manufacturing sector. During the same period, social service jobs increased by 300.

**Exhibit D5:** Average Weekly Wage in Augusta, 2015. Source: Maine Department of Labor.

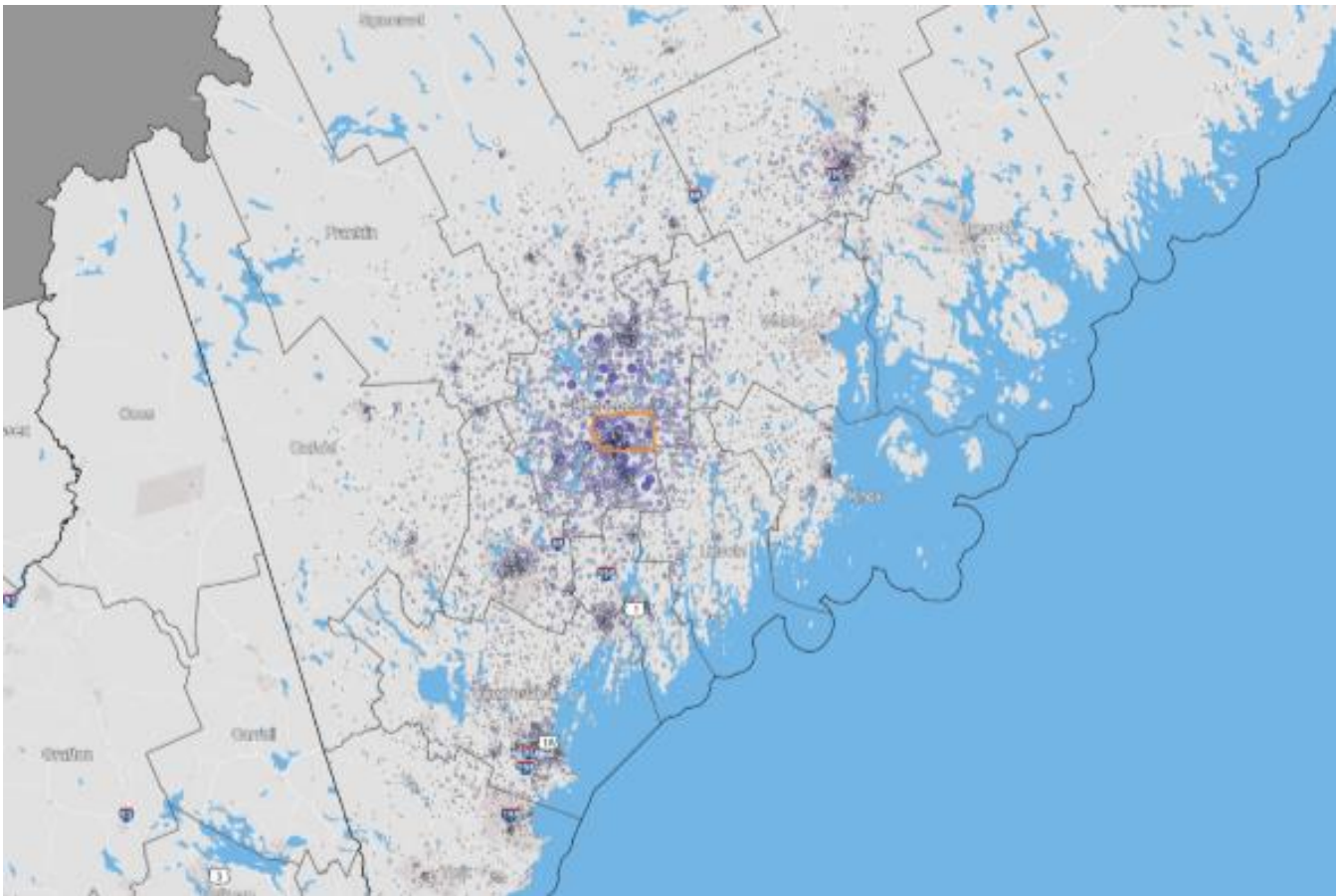


Wage data indicates that private sector management pay the highest in the area (Exhibit D5). Professional service jobs also pay well. Health-related jobs pay slightly under the city average, and retail jobs pay the lowest amount.

Augusta residents are commuting farther to their jobs. Seventy percent of the employed city residents worked in Augusta in 2000. But, in 2017, only forty-six percent of Augusta resident worked in Augusta.

Whereas 4,400 Augusta residents left the city to go to work, approximately 23,210 workers commute into Augusta for their job. These employees travel from York, Houlton, and most communities in between (Exhibit D6).

**Exhibit D6:** Where Augusta Workers Come From as % of Total Augusta Workforce, 2017. Source: U.S. Census.



Proximity to Augusta increases the number of workers commuting from Winthrop and Gardiner, each housing more than 1,000 Augusta workers in 2017. Waterville, Sidney, and China had more than 600 workers. These commuter trends are likely to continue in the future (Exhibit D6).

The future is generally positive for overall employment in the city, even while some major employers have cut their workforce (State government, Central Maine Power, Maine General Medical Center).

### **Augusta as a Retail Center**

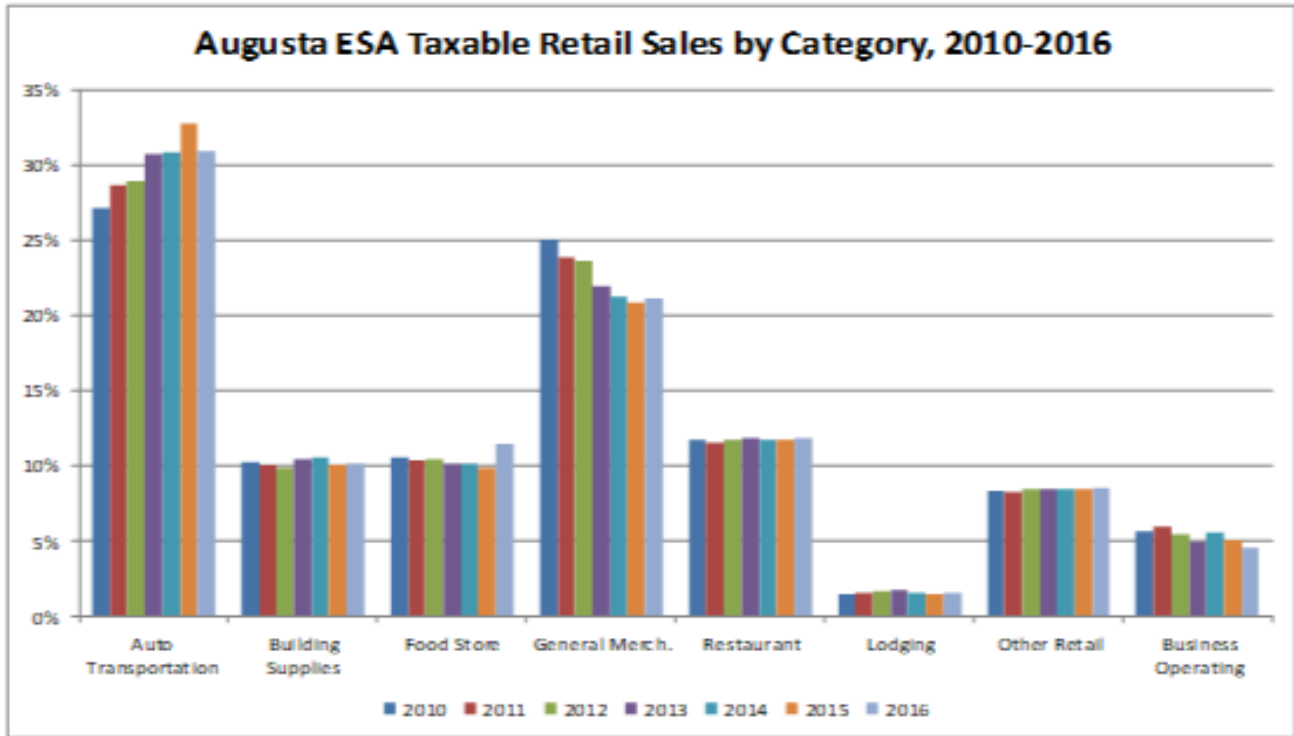
Augusta is a regional retail center. One-fifth of its jobs are in retail or wholesale trade. Nearly 30% of Augusta’s residents work in sales positions.

Augusta boomed as a retail hub during the 1990s and 2000s, peaking around 2010 regarding new construction and expansion. As online retail grows—online sales surpassed in-person sales for the first time last year—the existing retail space may have to be repurposed. Flexible zoning will be necessary.

The City of Augusta captures approximately 74% of the retail sales in the Augusta Economic Summary Area. The retail sales figures for this region as a whole have increased at the same rate as the City of Augusta, in large part because the city dominates the retail activity in the region. The Marketplace at Augusta area has become the second-largest retail concentration in Maine, next to the Maine Mall in South Portland.

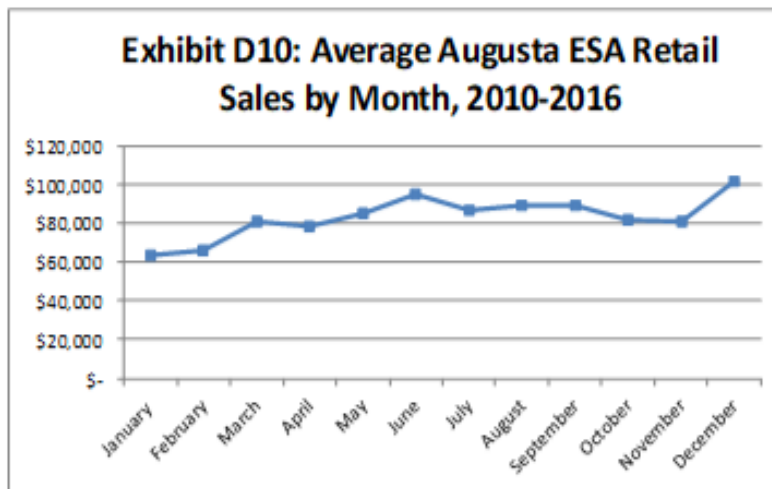
General Merchandise, Other Retail, and Restaurant retail sales are the fastest growing retail sectors (Exhibit D7).

**Exhibit D7:** Augusta Region Retail Sales by Category, 2010-2016. Source: Maine State Planning Office.



Retail sales spike in December around the holiday season, decline through the early winter, increases in the spring and peak again in the summer months (Exhibit D8).

**Exhibit D8:** Average Augusta ESA Retail Sales by Month, 2010-2016.



**Major Retail Sections of Augusta**

Commercial areas can be found downtown and along the corridors of major arterial and connector streets.



The Downtown is the oldest retail center in Augusta. Along Water Street is an assortment of smaller, targeted retail stores, service businesses, and restaurants. Reinvestment in the Downtown area is increasing. Upstairs housing and enough foot traffic is now supporting a thriving retail and restaurant atmosphere. It is hoped that the owners of the remaining vacant buildings will reactivate them or sell them.

Western Avenue is a retail corridor that connects the waterfront with Interstate 95. This corridor turned from residential to commercial when the Memorial Bridge and Maine Turnpike opened in the 1950s, and this road became a major access to the coast. In keeping with its automobile-oriented roots, the corridor has many convenience and fast food stores, both chains and locally owned. A fast-growing automotive retail and service center is developing on outer Western Avenue.

Augusta Crossing and Journal Square were major additions to the Western Avenue corridor. Redevelopment, perhaps away from retail of the Kmart Plaza and Turnpike Mall will likely be the focus of the next decade.

The Civic Center area is one of the fastest-growing retail centers in Maine. It is located at the intersection of Route 27 and Interstate 95, and is largely occupied by national retail businesses and restaurants (the Marketplace). The amount of space available for new development east of the Interstate is limited, although pressure to expand this center west of the Interstate is growing.

The Civic Center itself, as a driver of economic development in the city is critical. Its continued operation must be ensured.

## **Tourism**

As the state capital, Augusta receives many visitors annually. Most go to the State Capitol and the Maine State Museum. But more and more of these visitors get in their car and drive to see Old Fort Western and Augusta's downtown.

Augusta has a great potential for historic and arts tourism. This potential is discussed in detail in the History and Culture Chapter.

Augusta is also a "pass-through" community for tourists heading from the south to Midcoast, eastern, and northern Maine. Its strategic location is why the retail power centers have been a success. This stream of visitors is another potential source of tourism for downtown.

## **Available Land for Economic Development**

There is ample land in Augusta zoned for industrial and commercial development (Exhibit D9). Industrial areas encompass existing or traditional industrial uses along the river and in outlying areas to the northwest of the urban core.

Commercial areas encompass the heart of the city and spread along the river (except to the northwest, which is rural), between the rural and industrial areas to the northwest of the city, and in pockets along major arteries and connectors, including the Interstate.

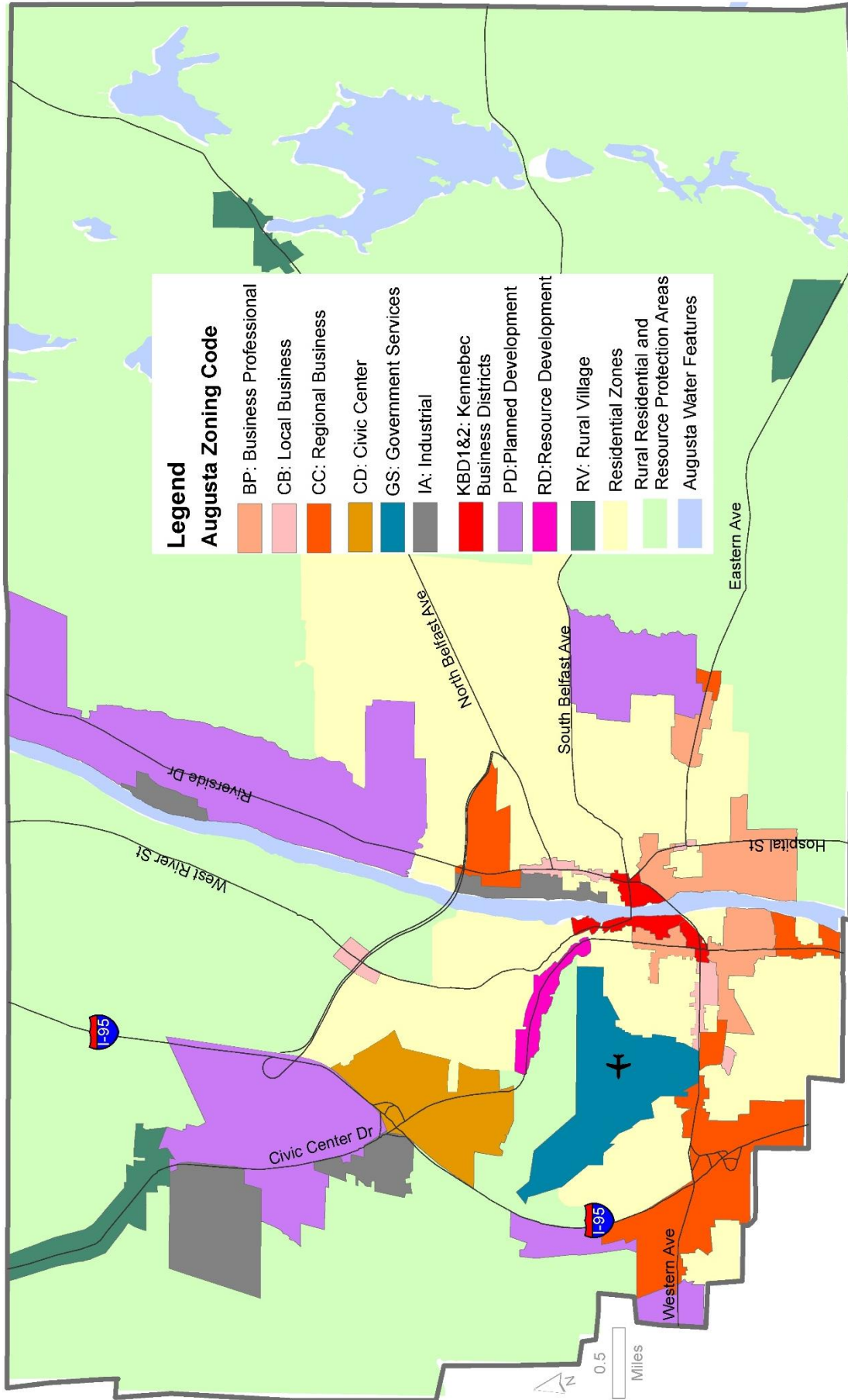
Augusta has several commercial areas of focus: Lower State Street, Downtown/ Riverfront, Riggs Brook Village, Civic Center Drive area, Western Avenue, Bangor Street/Riverside Drive, Leighton Road. The

Riggs Brook Village area has the largest amount of land available for growth in the next 25 years, however, without sewer and water service development is likely to continue to be focused elsewhere.

With respect to economic development, there are several zoning issues that the City must address. While existing commercial/industrial zoning districts appear to be in the appropriate location, there are several places where land use changes may require zoning reconsideration:

- The large retail centers—MarketPlace at Augusta, Augusta Crossing, Turnpike Mall, Kmart Plaza, Shaw’s Plaza—may experience a shift away from retail in the next decade due to pressure from online shopping. Zoning needs to be flexible enough to allow things like warehousing, light manufacturing, office, and possibly even residential in these locations.
- The south end of State Street may redevelop into less auto intensive uses and flexibility should be allowed.

**Exhibit D9:** Augusta’s Commercial Zoning Generalized. Variation on these zones and the exact boundaries can and should shift over time. Source: Augusta GIS.



## **Organizational Capacity and Tools**

The City has an Office of Economic Development that engages in a variety of activities to promote the city's growth. Its mission is to provide services and programs that attract investment, enhancing the city as a place to live and conduct business. These include financial/incentive/project packaging, direct business assistance, site search assistance, research, grant applications, administering housing programs, and acting as a liaison to neighborhood organizations.

The Office coordinates with other partners in economic development in the region, including the Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Augusta Board of Trade.

The City of Augusta established a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Policy back on July 19, 1999, and updated it in early 2021. As a rule, the City will entertain any TIF proposals that propose to create at least \$500,000 of new taxable value. An updated TIF policy is needed.

Applicants can propose up to 100% of the additional tax value generated by the proposed project for up to 20 years. The funds can be applied to construction, improvements, and site work; demolition, repair, and remodeling; acquisition of machinery and equipment; financing costs; professional and administrative services; relocation and organizational costs; and training costs up to 20% of the total project. However, the City prefers shorter terms and reserves the right to negotiate with the applicant as to the percentage of revenues to be paid back to the applicant. The amount of revenues to be provided to the applicant are also subject to the City Council's ranking of such factors as the number of jobs created, the quality of the jobs, and public benefit. The City also insists on a contractual agreement that benefits will be recaptured by the City should the project be moved to another municipality prior to the conclusion of the TIF program.

All Tax Increment Financing deals must be approved by the State to ensure the project is eligible under state law and that the City is not "overusing" the tool by putting too much of its land and property value under sheltered status. State law limits a municipality to having no more than 5% of its entire total valuation, and 2% of its total land area, within TIF districts. This is not a problem for Augusta, which currently has only .004% of its total valuation, and .01% of its total land area, within TIF districts.

As of January of 2020, the City of Augusta had nineteen (19) established Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts. Several of these TIF districts fall under the Affordable Housing TIF program. This program differs slightly from the traditional 'commercial' TIF program.

Another, the Downtown TIF District, falls under a special section of the TIF statute that is exempt from the acreage and valuation calculations discussed above.

TIF revenues can be used to provide benefits to the city beyond the individual project. For example, sheltered tax revenues from the Marketplace TIF program are being directed to pay for the debt of the downtown parking garage. Sheltered tax revenues for the Marketplace are also covering the expenditures of the City's Office of Economic and Community Development, which otherwise would have to be paid from the City's general fund.

TIF arrangements also preserve state school aid and revenue sharing that would otherwise be lost. City staff estimates this advantage to be approximately 40%, which means that the seven TIF districts will save Augusta property tax payers approximately \$13,000,000 million over their collective lives.



## **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**

The City of Augusta participates in the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments' Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) program sponsored by the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA). The planning done under this program creates the priorities that the federal EDA uses to distribute loans and grants.

Augusta had no direct priorities in the 2017-2022 CEDS plan. However, many of the CEDS generalized goals and therefore available EDA funding priorities were available for Augusta focused projects. Augusta will participate in the CEDS efforts that occur during the next 10 years and advocate for projects that target Augusta's growth area and existing, robust infrastructure. Projects may include the expansion of the Central Maine Commerce Center as well as the Quimby Lot.

### **Pine Tree Zones**

A key economic tool in the Baldacci Administration is called Pine Tree Development Zones (PTDZ). Businesses locating in PTDZ can receive many benefits depending on the level of new qualified business activity conducted. The tax burden of qualified businesses in these zones may be reduced through the following exemptions, reimbursements, and credits:

- Corporate Income and Insurance Premium Tax Credits (100%, Years 1-5; 50%, Years 6-10): tax credit benefit derives from net new PTDZ payroll and property as a percentage of all Maine payroll and property;
- Income Tax Reimbursement (80%, Years 1-10): tax reimbursement benefit derives from income taxes withheld for net new jobs created, i.e. those qualified employees hired above the "old" employment baseline that existed in Maine prior to the expansion may be eligible for Employment TIF.

### **Opportunity Zones**

A key economic tool under the Trump Administration, Augusta got Census Tract 103 designated as an Opportunity Zone. To date, the city is aware of one project that used the federal tax deferral program. The program was added to the tax code as part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act on December 22, 2017, and expires on December 31, 2026. With diminishing returns on the program as the expiration gets closer and few projects in Augusta that would be attractive to institutional capital, it is possible this program will not see further use in Augusta. Local government has no direct role in this program that is geared toward large investment capital and large project financing.

Sales and Use Tax (100% Personal Property Exemption, Years 1-10): tax exemption benefit derives from the qualified business paying no tax on all new tangible personal property purchases for its qualified business activity;

Sales and Use Tax (100% Real Property Reimbursement, Years 1-10): tax reimbursement benefit derives from paying no tax on all new tangible property purchases that are to be physically incorporated in, and become a permanent part of, real property of a qualified business and used in its qualified business activity;

Property Tax Reimbursement (up to 100% and 30 years): tax reimbursement benefit derives from local incremental taxes on new real and personal property investments that may be returned to a business as Municipal Tax Increment Financing if approved by the host municipality; and,

Access to reduced electricity rates as requested by Central Maine Power, Bangor Hydro Company and Maine Public Service and approved by the Public Utilities Commission.

The following lots within the City of Augusta are designated as Pine Tree Zones:

- Ludger Dr. (#6, 7, 8, 9A)
- Gabriel Dr. and #10A
- 500 Civic Center Dr.
- North Belfast Ave.
- Churchill Development, LLC Map 7 Lot 6 (3.66 acres)
- Map 7 Lot 5 (.28 acres)
- Map 7 Lot 3B (2.6 acres)
- Johnson, Charles and Ruth Map 7 Lot 7 (4.75 acres)
- East Side Development, LLC Map 7 Lot 3 (16.24 acres)
- Oakland Rd.
- Jolicoeur Map 1 Lot 209A (1.93 acres)
- Priest and Priest, LLC Map 2 Lot 31 (44.70 acres)
- Priest and Priest, LLC Map 2 Lot 32 (8.0 acres)
- Civic Center Dr.
- 9 Industrial Dr.
- 55 Industrial Dr.
- Industrial Dr.
- 15 Darin Dr.
- 60 Darin Dr.

## Key Issues

1. Along with Central Maine, Augusta has experienced above state average percentage loss of people from the ages of 25 to 34.
  - This has a direct bearing on the City’s ability to attract and grow employment in industry sectors where this age category is critically important: higher technology related ventures, information technology, financial services, etc. These coincidentally are the ‘new economy’ companies.
2. Augusta needs to focus primarily on expanding and enhancing existing businesses and opportunistically draw outside businesses in to the city.
3. With approximately 25-30% of the Augusta state workforce turning over in the next 5-8 years, the City must ensure that every potential new state employee has at least considered relocating to the city, regardless of their ultimate decision.
4. From 1990 to 2000, the city lost a significant amount of population. And in 2020 Augusta is still feeling the effects.
  - The loss accounted for a 13.0% loss of the population (from 21,350 to 18,560 and the 2020 Census shows us effectively at the same place with 18,899 residents.). Spurred in part by lower taxes in the outlying communities, this exodus was ‘fueled’ by state funding policies for new school development and road construction, both of which penalized hub communities.

- Augusta’s population has fluctuated since 2000, with an increase to 2010 and then a decrease to 2020.
5. Central Maine, Augusta’s labor area, has the second-lowest educational attainment level of all regions in the state.
    - Although the number of individuals holding bachelor’s degrees in Kennebec County is higher than other counties (at 22.7 percent), combining Somerset County in the calculation lowers the ‘region’ to 19.7 percent.
  6. Augusta does not have many industries in ‘key traditional clusters’, the part of the state’s economy that has grown significantly.
    - Industries and businesses in tourism, healthcare, non-store retailing, and finance and insurance have experienced very strong growth in Maine. Augusta doesn’t have many companies in these ‘innovative industry clusters’.
    - Much of this appears to be a function of the city being formed from dominant and ‘old industry’ clusters: state government, CMP, poultry, paper, etc.
    - The city does continue to be a traditional service center providing regional services such as retail sales, medical services, government services, and employment opportunities in industries unique in the state—state government.
  7. There has been a very tenuous relationship between commercial projects and residential neighborhoods in close proximity to one another.
  8. Augusta’s economy has changed and continues to change. Major employers of the past that are still in Augusta (State Government, CMP, Maine General Medical Center, Pine State Tobacco and Candy Company, etc.) continue to shrink, while other employers are growing and new employers enter the market. Augusta’s Office of Economic Development continues to work on this issue and anticipates the trend will continue. However, the long term outlook employment in Augusta is good.

## **Policies and Strategies**

1. The city needs to focus on workforce enhancement.
  - The Economic Development Bureau should create a business survey, possibly in coordination with the Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce, to determine what skills are needed in the city. The survey should be updated at least once every 2-3 years to allow a refocusing of efforts.
  - Work should be done with local schools, secondary education and colleges, to provide programs that create a skilled workforce to meet the needs of local employers.
2. The city needs to focus on existing businesses and the elements that would enable them to continue to be successful and hopefully be more successful.
  - Healthy, growing existing businesses are far more important to the local economy than the “Hail Mary” opportunity to bring in the next big industry.

- As pandemic money continues to roll out, staff need to focus on where it might best be targeted and work with businesses to access funds.
- Having a single staff member in the Economic Development Bureau leaves little room for both big picture projects as well as the detailed mechanics of the projects. The city should consider increasing staff by another person to better be able to focus on economic development issues closer to “ground level”.

## **HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

The City of Augusta is a small, human-scale city within which one can see and feel the influences of surrounding rural areas as well as Augusta’s roles as a regional commercial hub and the legislative seat of Maine. The neighborhoods are compact, each with an individual flavor. Views of wooded hillsides and the Kennebec River provide a green, open atmosphere. The wooded hillsides, the river, the compact neighborhoods and the recreational pockets close to the center of town all contribute to the small-town feeling of Augusta, despite its standing as a commercial and governmental center.

The heart of any community is its residents. They create the character of neighborhoods and bring vitality and life to the city. Key to a successful urban environment is a diverse and engaged residential population. For people to thrive in the city, they need to feel safe, be able to reach basic services, and have a variety of well-maintained housing options available to them. These options must include everything from affordable rental/owner units to market rate condos and houses to high-end luxury developments. Such diversity in housing is what makes Augusta unique.

This chapter examines both Augusta’s current housing stock and its affordability. The housing stock inventory has an impact on many aspects of comprehensive planning. Availability of housing affects the community’s ability to retain and attract businesses, and the ability of those who work in the community to live there. Housing has an impact on the degree of diversity of a community’s population, and strongly affects quality of life.

### **Housing Inventory**

This section contains an analysis of data from the 2010 U.S. Census, highlights of housing characteristics in 2010, and changes between 1990 and 2010 in Augusta, Kennebec County, and the State of Maine. Recent data on new housing units added in Augusta since 1996 is also included.

### **Current Housing Location by Census Tract**

Augusta’s housing is spread out from a dense urban core to sparse rural residences along its many traffic corridors. The map on the following page delineates the 2010 U.S. Census tracts and shows the housing development pattern as it stands today (Exhibit E1).

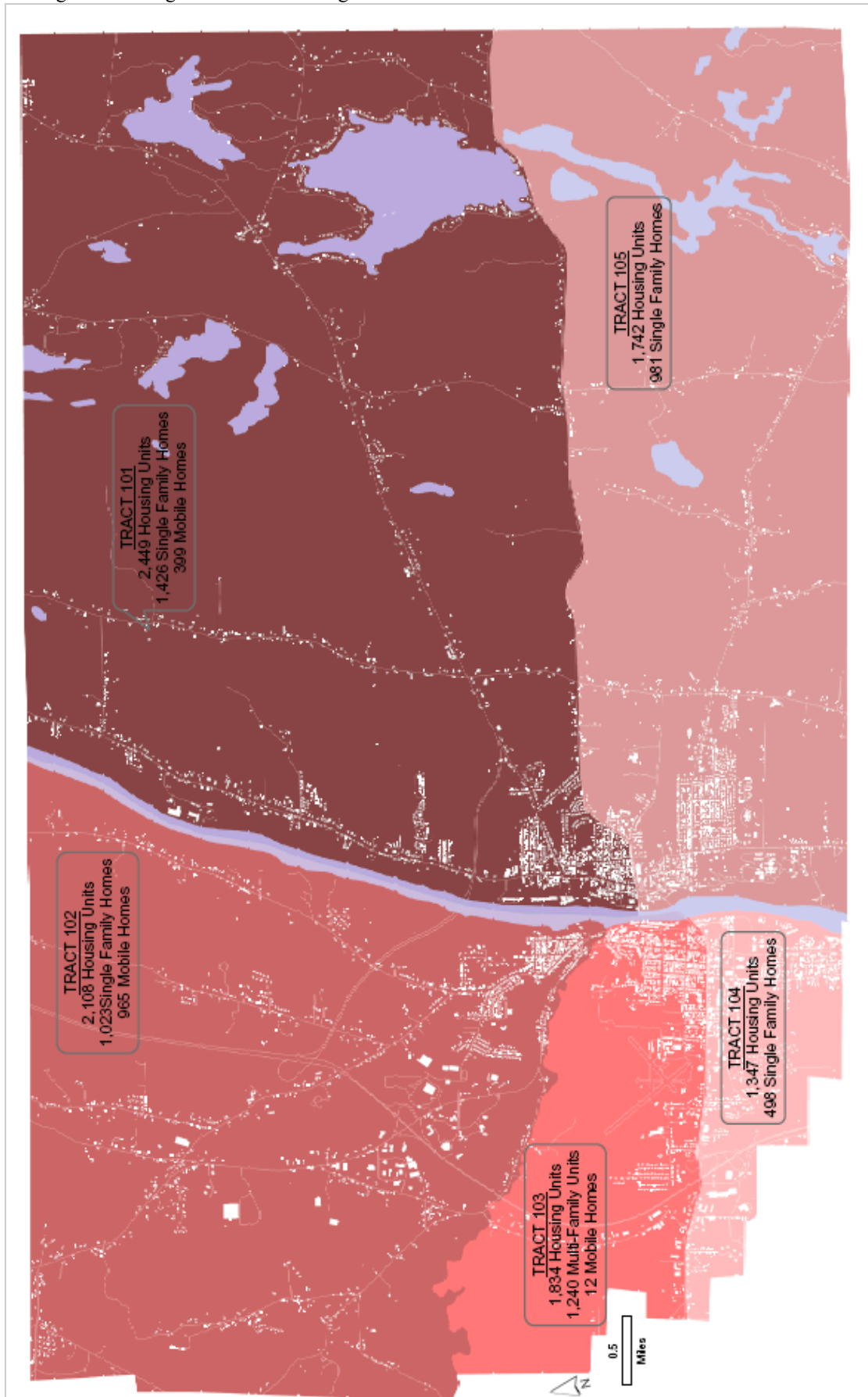
- Tract 101, on the east side north of South Belfast Avenue, has 2,520 housing units, making it the largest of Augusta’s tracts. It is also the least dense area, with only 1.75 housing units per acre. Tract 101 has the highest number of single-family homes (1,592) and mobile homes (275).
- Tract 102, with 2,219 housing units, is on the west side of the Kennebec River north of Bond Brook. Tract 102 is the second largest tract, and has just slightly less multi-family units (1,041)



than single-family (1,054). Though higher in density (3.6 units per acre) than Tract 101, it still has a relatively suburban-rural feel.

- Tract 103, between Western Avenue and Bond Brook, contains 2,096 housing units, of which 1,406 are multi-family – the highest number of any tract. This is the second most densely populated area in Augusta, with 7.5 units per acre.
- Tract 104, south of Western Avenue, is the smallest geographic neighborhood and has the fewest housing units – 1,465 – as well as the fewest single-family homes – 660. Tract 104 is, however, the most densely populated tract in Augusta, with just under 11 units per acre.
- Tract 105, on the east side of the river below North Belfast Avenue, has 1,840 housing units. It is similar in character to Tract 101, with 2.5 units per acre.

Exhibit E1: Augusta Housing Tracts. Source: Augusta Assessor's Database.



## Housing Occupancy

The proportion of occupied housing units has gradually declined in Augusta over the last twenty years (Exhibit E2). Augusta has a higher overall occupancy than the surrounding county and the state, however, because there are fewer seasonal units in Augusta than in rural areas.

**Exhibit E2:** Housing Occupancy in Augusta, Kennebec County, and Maine, 1990-2010. Source: U.S. Census; ACS.

	Occupancy Status	2000		2010		2020 estimates (Pandemic #s)		% Change 2010-2020
		Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	
<b>Augusta:</b>								
	Total	9,480		9,756		9,885		1.3%
	Occupied	8,565	90%	9,234	95%	8,924	95%	-3.2%
	Vacant*	915	10%	522	5%	961	5%	84.1%
<b>Kennebec County:</b>								
	Total	56,364		60,972				
	Occupied	47,683	85%	51,128	84%			
	Vacant*	8,681	15%	9,844	16%			
<b>Maine:</b>								
	Total	651,901		721,830				
	Occupied	518,200	79%	557,219	77%			
	Vacant*	133,701	21%	164,611	23%			
*includes seasonal Housing								

It is important to note that vacant units are not necessarily available for potential owners or renters to occupy. Some are in seasonal use or are off the market for repairs, while others are held in family trusts. The proportion of vacant available units in Augusta in 2010, right after the financial crisis, was 3.5% for owner housing and 8.1% for rental housing. These were up from 2.2% and 10.3%, respectively, in 2000. By 2017 they were back down to 3.0% and 7.4% respectively. This indicates that demand for housing in Augusta has increased over the past decade.

## Housing Tenure and Vacancy

Tenure identifies a basic feature of the housing inventory – whether a unit is owner or renter occupied. Owner-occupied housing in Augusta is declining while renter-occupied housing is increasing slightly (Exhibit E3).

In 2000, the number of units occupied by owners in Augusta was 4,665, 7% less than in 1990, when there were 5,016. During the same period, the number of renter-occupied housing units in Augusta rose by 1.6% from 3,840 to 3,900.

The tenure housing picture for Kennebec County and the state as a whole looks different than for Augusta. Owner and renter-occupied units have increased during the past decade for the county and for the state. Further, the proportion of owners is much higher in both areas – about 71% in 2000 – compared to only 54.5% in Augusta.

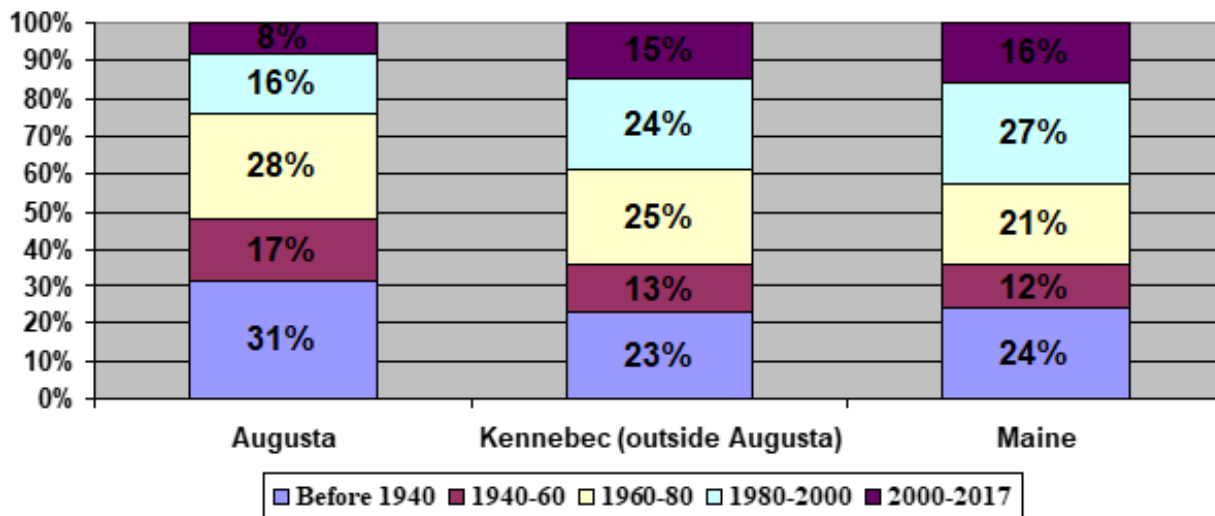
**Exhibit E3:** Housing Tenure, Augusta, Kennebec County, and Maine, 2000-2017. Source: U.S. Census.

		2000		2010		2017		% Change
		Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	2000 - 2017
<b>Augusta:</b>								
	Total	8,565		9,234		8,544		0.0%
	Owner-occupied	4,665	54%	5,247	57%	4,513	53%	-3.1%
	Renter-occupied	3,900	46%	3,987	43%	4,031	47%	3.4%
<b>Kennebec County:</b>								
	Total	47,683		50,869		51,055		7.1%
	Owner-occupied	33,933	71%	36,844	72%	35,827	70%	5.6%
	Renter-occupied	13,750	29%	14,025	28%	15,228	30%	10.7%
<b>Maine:</b>								
	Total	518,200		551,125		554,061		7.0%
	Owner-occupied	370,905	72%	402,907	73%	399,142	72%	7.6%
	Renter-occupied	147,295	28%	148,218	27%	154,919	28%	5.2%

### Age and Condition of the Housing Stock

Augusta has a comparably older housing stock (Exhibit E4). As of 2000, only 5% of its housing stock was built in the 1990s. Almost 85% of Augusta’s housing is 30 or more years old and, of that, about 32% was built prior to 1940. The housing stock in Kennebec County and statewide, in comparison, is relatively new.

**Exhibit E4:** Age of Housing Stock, 2017. Source: U.S. Census, American Factfinder.



The fact that Augusta’s housing stock is old, including an older rental stock with low rent revenues, suggests deterioration and safety concerns. There are a variety of grants available to help the City work with low-income property owners to clean up their properties and improve the quality of their structures.



## Housing Stock: Share of Market Area Growth

There were 680 more total housing units in Augusta in 2010 than in 2000. This increase from 9,480 to 10,162 was an increase of 7%, which is a very significant growth after decades of declining housing numbers. Augusta’s housing single family and multi-family units grew, while mobile homes continued a sharp decrease. The trend and composition of housing stock in Augusta differ sharply from Kennebec County and the state, however, this is typical of service center communities with a more balanced mix of single family and multi-family housing units (Exhibit E5).

**Exhibit E5:** Housing Unit Availability, Augusta, Kennebec County, and Maine, 2000-2015. Source: U.S. Census.

Type of Unit		2000		2010		2015		% Change
		Units	%	Units	%	Units	%	2000-2015
<b>Augusta:</b>								
	Total	9,480		10,162		9,609		1%
	Single-family	4,452	47%	5,008	49%	4,928	51%	11%
	Multi-family	4,375	46%	4,610	45%	4,171	43%	-5%
	Mobile homes	653	7%	544	5%	510	5%	-22%
<b>Kennebec County</b>								
	Total	56,364	100%	60,403		61,383		9%
	Single family	37,036	66%	41,068	68%	42,507	69%	15%
	Multi-family	13,007	23%	13,458	22%	12,949	21%	0%
	Mobile homes	6,321	11%	5,877	10%	5,927	10%	-6%
<b>Maine:</b>								
	Total	651,901	100%	714,270		726,227		11%
	Single-family	453,846	70%	511,306	72%	522,594	72%	15%
	Multi-family	132,342	20%	138,580	19%	139,623	19%	6%
	Mobile homes	65,713	10%	64,384	9%	64,010	9%	3%

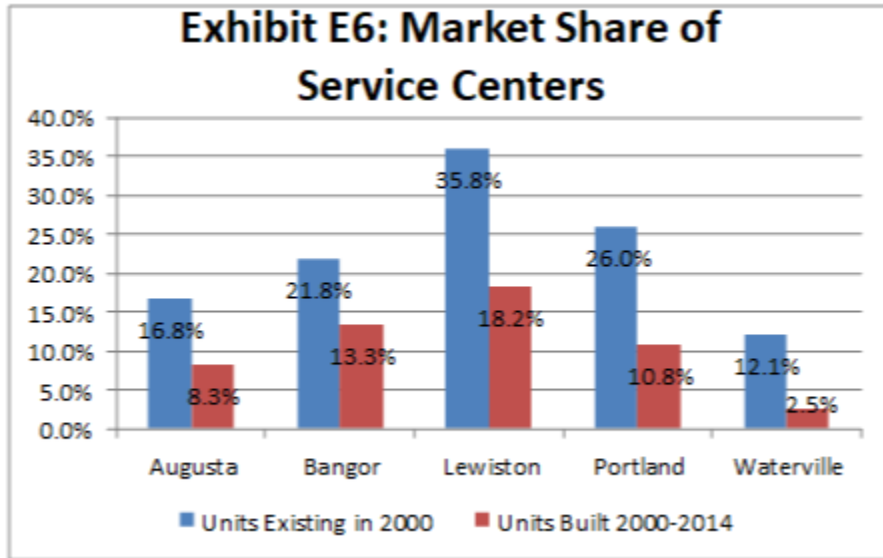
Augusta’s housing stock grew at a much slower rate than Kennebec County or the state between 2000 and 2015. After the 2008 economic crisis, foreclosures and abandonment led to disrepair and ultimately demolition for some housing units. Since 2015, the economic upturn has reversed that trend, particularly in multifamily units in the downtown and elsewhere. The 2020 U.S. Census will show growth and a likely move back toward an even split between single and multi-family units.

Augusta has consistently had less than 2% of its housing units be seasonal and that is expected to remain unchanged in 2020.

Another way to look at the data is to look at Augusta’s “market share.” What proportion of the housing stock in the region was in Augusta in 2000? What percent of the new construction in the 2000s did Augusta capture? And how does this compare to other service centers?

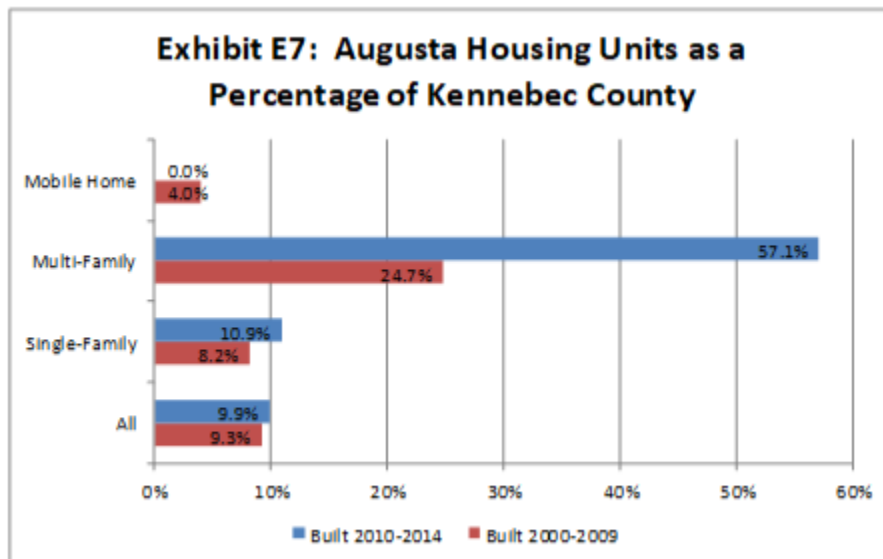
Augusta had 18.5% of Kennebec County’s housing units in 1990, and captured 6.1% of the county’s new housing construction during the 1990s (about a third of its initial share). Lewiston had a higher proportion to start with, and captured 17.3% of Androscoggin County’s new housing in the 1990s (about 45% of its initial share). Portland started from a higher base than Augusta, but ended up capturing about a third as many new housing units as its initial proportion, the same as Augusta (Exhibit E6).

**Exhibit E6:** Market Share of Service Centers.



Looking at the type of housing construction can also be helpful. Exhibit E7 shows that Augusta captured a similar proportion of single-family, multi-family, and mobile homes as were added in its market area (Belgrade, Chelsea, China, Gardiner, Hallowell, Manchester, Readfield, Sidney, Vassalboro, West Gardiner, Windsor, and Winthrop).

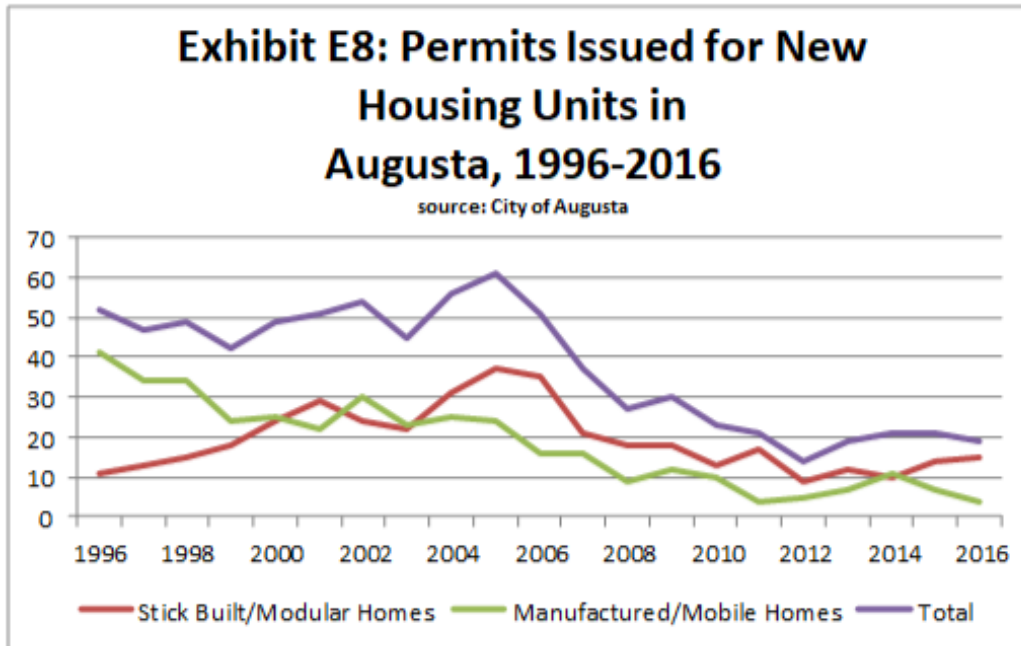
**Exhibit E7:** Augusta Housing Units as a Percentage of Kennebec County.



**Recent New Construction**

Data on annual new housing units added since 1996 can be used to analyze residential development trends. Data on new housing was obtained directly from the City of Augusta’s Code Enforcement Office and is listed below (Exhibit E8). This local data differs from the Census data because it does not take into account those homes lost to fire and demolition or replacement homes.

**Exhibit E8:** Permits Issued for New Housing Units in Augusta, 1996-2016.



The Census data shows a loss of housing units in Augusta between 1990 and 2000, while the local data shows a relatively steady addition of housing units annually. Between 1996 and 2005, Augusta added 506 new housing units, of which 224 were stick-built and 282 were manufactured homes.

The housing development market has been steady for the past decade, split between single family units and multi-family units. These are some of the larger developments that have occurred in recent years:

- Cony Village - a 43-unit affordable new-urbanist style, single and multi-family unit neighborhood on Cony Road – 18 units constructed – 2006.
- Fieldstone Place (aka Kieltyca) - 54 single-family residential lots off South Belfast Ave next to Cony High School – 28 units completed – 2006.
- Paradis - 20 apartment units in 2 buildings (8 units + 12 units) off North Belfast Ave – 8 unit building completed – 2007.
- Cloutier - 24 affordable rental units in 1 building on the north end of Water Street, right next to the railroad trestle - all units completed – 2007.
- Capital Village - 30 affordable rental units on Leighton Road - all units under construction or done – 2005.
- Blais Apartments - 20 upscale market rate apartments off Old Winthrop Road, across from the old CMP offices - all units done – 2004.
- Windy Acres on Windy Street - 10 market rate duplexes - 5 duplexes completed – 2010.

- Marvin Towers - 32 affordable elderly rental units off Townsend Street next to Chateau Cushnoc - all units done – 2004.
- Roncalli Apartments - 30 age restricted units - all units done – 2009.
- Downtown, LLC - 12 market rate apartments in upper floors of 283 Water Street - all units done – 2017.
- Cony Flatiron - 44 age restricted units - all units done – 2014.
- Hodgkins School - 47 age restricted units - all units done – 2017.
- The Vickery - 23 market rate apartments in downtown - 19 units done – 2020.
- Maine Veteran’s Home - 45 units under construction – 2020.
- Maple Street Apartments - 29 affordable housing apartments - all completed, 2020.
- Stone Street Suites - 27 affordable units, 14 apartments and 13 boarding house units - all units completed – 2019.

The following large housing developments have been discussed by the developer with the City and are publicly known:

- Saxon Partners LLC on Civic Center Drive - 250 market rate apartments in two buildings, primarily 1 bedroom - project approved but construction has not started.
- Senior Living at the MarketPlace - 42 units of age restricted housing on Civic Center Drive, project approved but only limited site work has begun, awaiting MSHA funding.
- Alliance Properties, LLC at 343-347 Water Street - 8 upper story apartments, project approved but construction has not started.
- Pepin Heights at 99 Western Ave - 50 age restricted apartments - project still in the planning phase and currently requesting a rezoning.

There have been numerous other smaller projects of 2-6 units in upper stories of downtown buildings. The number of group living arrangements in the city has also increased to address the need in for both individuals with disabilities, individuals struggling with homelessness, and individuals struggling with addiction.

There are other developers with whom staff have had discussions about potential projects, as well several who have not yet formally submitted proposals. If submitted, these developments would add on the order of 100 to 150 new lower to moderate income rate units.

### **The Cost of New Construction in Augusta**

Residential development in Augusta is expensive. The city is a geographically challenging place with hills, wetlands, and ledges, all of which reduce the available locations for development and drive up its costs. High costs may also be due to the city’s infrastructure requirements, particularly in the urban areas, including paved roads, sidewalks, street lighting, and other municipal services such as sewer and water.

One factor that is repeatedly mentioned as possibly making development in Augusta more expensive than surrounding towns was road standards (Exhibit E9). In 2007, the Housing Subcommittee of the Comprehensive Plan considered four neighboring communities: Manchester, Sidney, Readfield, and West Gardiner. One of the four, West Gardiner, had no local road standards beyond the minimum required by the state (with which all communities must comply). The other three comparison communities had standards that were roughly comparable to Augusta’s with regard to paving, widths, and sidewalks. The one difference is that the other communities do not have an urban core where sidewalks are absolutely required. This exercise demonstrated that “conventional wisdom” is not always true with regard to development costs.

**Exhibit E9:** Road Standards Compared. Source: Augusta Planning Office.

	<b>Augusta</b>	<b>Manchester</b>	<b>Sidney</b>	<b>Readfield</b>
<b>Private roads?</b>	Anywhere	Anywhere	Anywhere	Anywhere
<b>Paving required?</b>	Yes - if public or in urban compact area	Yes - if serves more than 5 homes	Yes - for subdivision No - if private	Yes - if public No - if private
<b>Minimum width (private)</b>	18’ 2’ shoulders	20’ 4’ shoulders	18’	14’ 2’ shoulders
<b>Minimum width (public)</b>	20’ 2’ shoulders	20’ 4’ shoulders	20’ 4’ shoulders	20’ 2’ shoulders
<b>Sidewalks</b>	Yes - on public streets in urban area, varies in other cases	Discretion of planning board	Not required	Discretion of planning board

Increasing the density of new development can be one way to reduce infrastructure cost and could work in Augusta’s more urban areas. Within the regional housing market there is clearly room for tighter, more upscale development that ranges from high quality market rate apartments in downtown to slightly more compact than usual upscale single family detached like the 1/4 acre lots of Fieldstone Place. In previous decades, 1/4 acre would have been considered too small.

### **Housing Affordability**

The incomes of Augusta residents are rising more slowly than those of residents in surrounding towns (Exhibits E10 and E11). For this reason, problems of affordability rise to the surface more quickly in Augusta. Also, Augusta, as a regional service center, tends to attract more housing development at the lower end of the price scale, while the surrounding towns often attract more development at the upper end of the scale.



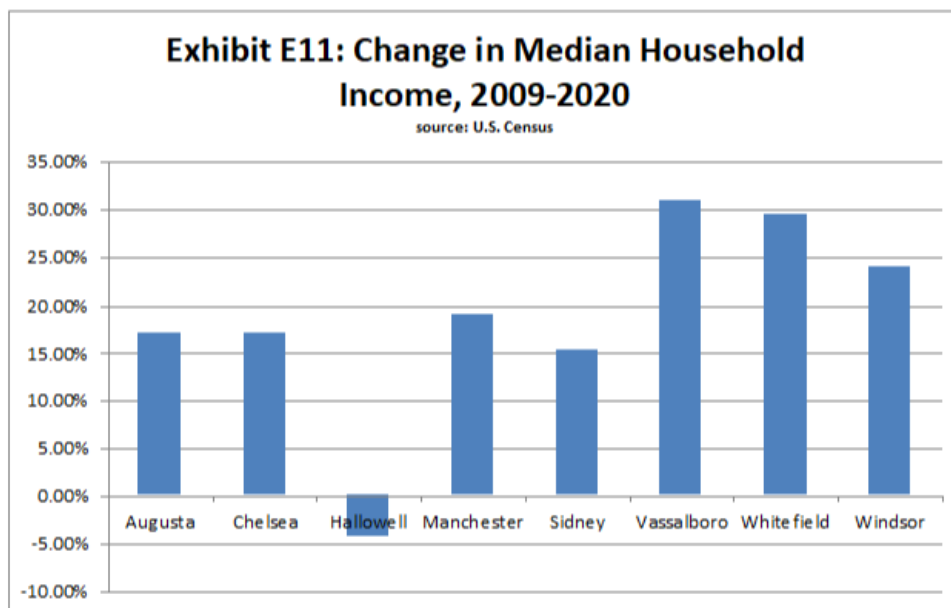
**Exhibit E10:** Income Changes in Augusta Market Area. Source: U.S. Census.

		1999	2009	2020
<b>Augusta</b>	<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>\$29,921</b>	<b>\$33,174</b>	<b>\$38,842</b>
	<b>% Increase</b>		<b>11%</b>	<b>17.1%</b>
Chelsea	Median Household Income	\$40,905	\$53,494	\$62,591
	% Increase		31%	17.0%
Hallowell	Median Household Income	\$36,058	\$59,500	\$56,989
	% Increase		65%	-4.0%
Manchester	Median Household Income	\$52,500	\$61,486	\$73,188
	% Increase		17%	19.0%
Sidney	Median Household Income	\$42,500	\$56,675	\$65,321
	% Increase		33%	15.3%
Vassalboro	Median Household Income	\$37,923	\$50,389	\$65,949
	% Increase		33%	30.9%
Whitefield	Median Household Income	\$38,477	\$46,639	\$60,362
	% Increase		21%	29.4%
Windsor	Median Household Income	\$40,039	\$44,747	\$55,417
	% Increase		12%	23.9%

Maine law defines “affordable housing” as a decent, safe, and sanitary dwelling, apartment or other living accommodation for a household whose income does not exceed 80% of the median income for the area.

For Augusta, the “area” is defined as Kennebec County. In 2018, the median household income was \$52,929 in Kennebec County, as reported by the U.S. Census.

**Exhibit E11:** Change in Median Household Income, 2009-2020, U.S. Census.



The City should assure a supply of housing that is affordable in three income groups:

1. “Very low income” households, with incomes that do not exceed 50% of the median income in the county (under \$26,465 in 2018);
2. “Lower income” households who have incomes of between 51% and 80% of the county median income (between \$26,994 and \$42,343 in 2018); and
3. “Moderate income” households who have incomes of between 81% and 150% of the county median income (between \$42,872 and \$79,394 in 2018).

This section presents data on the affordability index and examines the pricing levels and availability of affordable housing.

### Affordability Index

Affordability is a question of household income versus the cost of housing. Maine law stipulates that, to be affordable, housing costs should not exceed 30% of the inhabitant’s income. Using this criterion to compare median incomes to median housing costs, the Maine State Housing Authority has developed an affordability index.

An index value of 1.00 means that the household with a median-income can afford the median-priced home in the community. An index value of less than one means that the median priced home is too expensive for the median-income household. The 2019 index for homes in Augusta is 1.04. Roughly 50% of households cannot afford median-priced homes in the city.

This is slightly less affordable than the rest of the Augusta Market Area (index of 1.12), but more affordable than the state as a whole, as well as other service centers (Exhibit E12).

**Exhibit E12:** 2019 Housing Affordability Index for Augusta, Augusta’s Market Area, Maine and Other Service Centers. Source: Maine State Housing Authority.

	Affordability Index	Median Home Price	Median Income	% of Households unable to afford Median Home Price
Augusta	1.04	\$147,000	\$47,800	48.2%
Augusta Market Area	1.12	\$182,400	\$60,004	45.4%
Brunswick	0.80	\$289,000	\$69,779	60.4%
Lewiston	0.83	\$155,950	\$42,879	59.3%
Auburn	1.01	\$165,000	\$53,069	49.8%
Waterville	0.77	\$133,500	\$33,853	58.0%
Maine	0.73	\$225,000	\$59,575	62.2%

Over the last five years, the affordability index for Augusta has gone from 1.03 in 2001 to 0.79 in 2006. Housing has become increasingly unaffordable in Augusta. The increase in median home prices (73.7%) between 2000 and 2006 considerably outpaced the increase in median incomes (only 15.8%).

**Rental Costs**

According to estimates developed by the Maine State Housing Authority, in 2020 the average monthly rent (including utilities) for a two-bedroom unit in Augusta was \$956. This is below the \$1,036 average for the Augusta Market Area, and the \$1,062 cost statewide.

Four-year trends in two-bedroom rental costs indicate that these apartments have become slightly more affordable in Augusta, but the rental affordability index was still well below 1.00 at just 0.84. Median incomes rose slightly faster than median rents, but a majority of renters cannot afford the median rent.

**Pricing Levels and Availability of Affordable Housing**

At what prices should housing be considered affordable in Augusta? As of 2019, affordable monthly rents ranged from \$597 to \$1,792 depending upon income; affordable housing prices ranged from \$76,620 to \$229,864 depending upon income. Are there housing units available within these price ranges?

A review of the Maine Multiple Listing Service, Inc. data revealed that there were up to 48 housing units available for sale that met the affordability price levels for some income levels in Augusta as of January 2020.

**Exhibit E13:** Housing Units Available by Sale Price, Augusta. Source: Maine Multiple Listing Service, Inc.

Sale Price	Single-Family	Condo/Townhouse	Multi-Family	Mobile/Manufactured	Total
<b><u>Under \$77,000</u></b> (\$76,620 for very low income)	1	0	1	0	2
<b><u>\$77,000-\$125,000</u></b> (\$76,620- \$122,500 for low income)	4	0	3	1	8
<b><u>\$125,001 - \$230,000</u></b> (\$122,500 - \$229,864 for moderate income)	15	1	4	0	20
<b>Total</b>	20	1	8	1	30

Of the 48, only two were considered affordable for households with very low incomes, and only 10 were considered affordable for households with low incomes. Available housing inventory remains very low, which is expected to continue to drive prices up and reduce affordability.

Housing availability at all income levels is an ongoing critical concern for Augusta and surrounding communities that we expect to be contending with for at least the next 5 years. A concerted focus on addressing the housing supply shortage must occur.

For renters, estimates for 2020 developed by the Maine State Housing Authority reveal that almost 57% of all households cannot afford the average two-bedroom rent of \$956 in Augusta.

Some renters, particularly those with very low or low incomes can take advantage of subsidized housing. In 2022 in Augusta, there were approximately 1,400 housing units available that include both publicly funded project and non-project housing (Section 8 vouchers). The Maine State Housing Authority's First-Time Homeowners program First Home Loan Program, Salute ME & Salute Home Again, and Indian Housing Mortgage Insurance Program assist buyers, while Housing Choice Vouchers, RESTART, and Stability Through Engagement assist renters.

## **Housing Summary**

While Augusta's housing stock minimally increased from 2000 to 2015, projections indicate that Augusta can anticipate about 500 new households between 2015 and 2030. This translates into a need for more housing – with a goal of about 50 units per year for the next 10 years.

Very low income households face difficulties in affording adequate housing – and very few non-elderly multi-units have been added to the Augusta market. This impacts the ability of these families and individuals to stay in the city.

Augusta has an older housing stock compared to other areas. This and the growing proportion of elderly create a need for various types of housing.

Most Augusta dwellings use oil for fuel, although in recent years, conversions to natural gas and heat pumps has expanded. Spikes in oil costs in recent years have made housing less affordable for many – impossible for others.

Augusta's economic history is one of industry along the Kennebec. The cost associated with dealing with environmental issues may affect the ability to rehab industrial buildings into housing.

The ability to develop housing is further limited in the downtown area by space, flooding issues, and steep hillsides.

## **Neighborhood Quality of Life**

Neighborhood quality of life is a key factor in making Augusta attractive to new residents. It is important to remember that neighborhoods and expectations evolve. Mayfair was an upscale neighborhood 50 years ago; today it is solidly middle class. Ganneston is moving in the same direction, and Fieldstone is the new upscale area. The City needs to recognize that there are evolving expectations by homebuyers and help create a financial and regulatory climate in sections of Augusta that will allow today's desired neighborhoods to be built.

Neighborhood Definition: A residential community within a geographic area that shares common interests or elements.

Quality of Life Definition: Living a peaceful life where there are friendly, common bonds within a diverse and vibrant culture with feelings of pride and fulfillment and where opportunities for personal growth and prosperity are bountiful.

Here are some words that come to mind to describe quality of life:

Safe / Secure	Peaceful	Opportunity
Bond / Attachment	Tranquil	Personal growth
Friendly	Healthy	Diversity
Fulfillment	Mobility	Vibrancy
Pride	Self-worth	Balance
Belonging	Social Network	Hope
Common Bond	Harmony	Support
Sense of Community	Cultural	Compassion
Accomplishment	Prosperity	Unity

Quality of life was viewed as the key to reversing the trend of population loss in Augusta. Ways to improve the quality of life in the city discussed by the subcommittee included:

- Augusta should take advantage of its urban feel and maintain walkable and attractive neighborhoods. Its zoning regulations should consider the way an area looks, feels, and functions rather than strictly “uses.”
- Develop mixed uses of a scale that make sense (for example, through housing in the upper floors of downtown buildings) and buffer uses where they may conflict (such as housing adjacent to active quarries, industrial parks, or big box stores).
- Encourage new development that fits into its surroundings and a mix of housing types that reflect the character of the neighborhoods in which they are built.
- Embark on a city-wide sidewalk building / re-building effort - a good-quality pedestrian transit system that moves people through the urban core and to surrounding amenities.
- Protect neighborhood and city core streets from increased traffic. Mid-block street closures and other traffic calming measures should be considered for this purpose.
- Connect neighborhoods with walking trails and encourage connected streets designed to discourage cut-through traffic.
- Protect existing neighborhoods from commercial encroachment. Ensure that commercial development fits in with a neighborhood’s size and character.
- Reduce crime.
- Increase cultural and social activities. Increasing social and cultural interaction will improve the city’s ability to grow (see History and Culture chapter for more detail).
- Create public markets in the downtown to draw people back to the city.
- Create more public gathering places. Particularly in dense urban environments, residents need common green space to enjoy nature and to interact with their neighbors. Parks and trails are critical parts of a vibrant urban fabric (see Leisure and Recreation chapter for more information).



- Develop a clear identity unrelated to Augusta’s status as the State Capital. The city will always be the capital, but it needs to be more in order to attract people to live here.

## **Issues and Implications**

1. The need for new housing in Augusta.
  - Augusta’s new development projects have been more robust in the last 10 years than in the prior 25 years. But surrounding towns have seen a boom in residential development and Augusta has not had its necessary share of this development. New development should be carefully considered and should seek to broaden the range of Augusta’s housing stock to better serve all income levels.
2. The need for Augusta to be prepared for the aging baby boomer population.
  - Augusta should anticipate an influx of baby boomers as they age in the next 10 years and move to be closer to services such as hospitals, grocery stores, etc.
  - Housing should be developed to accommodate this sector’s needs, including single-story homes, condos with elevators, etc.
3. The need to take advantage of the Kennebec River.
  - For decades, Augusta had its back to the river; going forward, the City needs to face and embrace the river, promote development near the river and encourage its recreational use.
4. The importance of the walkability of neighborhoods.
  - Augusta needs to focus on pedestrians, adding sidewalks and trails that connect to neighborhoods and services and focusing on the walkability of new developments.
5. The importance of beautification such as trees, etc. to enhance green space and improve quality of life in Augusta neighborhoods.
6. The importance of ensuring the safety and privacy of residents.
7. The importance of obtaining the intangible sense of community to neighborhoods and the city as a whole.
  - Helping to foster a sense of pride for where you live.
8. The need for a much better PR campaign “selling” Augusta to the general public
  - Example - the “LA: It’s happening here” campaign.
9. The need to identify specific locations in the city for new housing developments.

- The city could be a financial participant in housing projects through Affordable Housing TIFs, sewer and water line extensions, road construction assistance, etc.
  - The development review process should continue to be streamlined and creative development standards should be designed to entice developers to build housing.
10. The city expects to need approximately 500 new homes over the next decade and is committed to ensuring that at least 20% of those homes are affordable.
- The city will continue to work with developers such as Bread of Life, KVCAP, Augusta Housing Authority, and private developers to develop projects like the Maple Street Apartments, Cony Village, LLC, the Leighton Road affordable rental units, or the 65-unit expansion of the Riverside Land Lease Community on Riverside Drive. Each of these projects is affordable housing for a variety of income categories. These projects alone will account for 112 new affordable units constructed within the last decade and another 45 affordable units approved and expected to be constructed within the next five years. We predict Augusta will need only 500 new units this decade. With 290 of those already approved and slated some to be in the “affordable” category, Augusta expects that it will be able to ensure that nearly 25% of the new homes constructed in the planning period are affordable.

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Community development can mean many things, but in the context of city planning, it often refers to revitalization of old neighborhoods and commercial districts. This involves the activities of rehabilitating and reusing old buildings, updating streets and sidewalks, assisting small locally-owned businesses, building housing and parks and stores on vacant lots, improving public safety, and expanding educational opportunities for youth and adults.

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is an important tool in helping cities fund community development efforts. This program provides grants for building rehabilitation, business assistance, and infrastructure assistance in neighborhoods where the majority of residents are defined as “low and moderate income” (i.e., below 80% of the median area income).

Section A below discusses critical community development issues in Augusta. Section B provides neighborhood information that will be helpful to grant writers in establishing Augusta’s eligibility for state and federal community development dollars.

### **Part A: Community Development Issues in Augusta**

#### **Revitalizing Existing Neighborhoods**

Some neighborhoods in Augusta are in decline. The reasons for decline vary from place to place, but include:

- Old multi-story housing stock, without elevators, that is no longer very attractive or marketable;
- Lack of repairs and maintenance - a problem exacerbated in some cases by absentee landlords and the 2008 recession;

- Encroachment on the neighborhood by busy streets and/or commercial development;
- Poor street layout, making walking and sometimes driving difficult;
- Social changes that make a given neighborhood predominantly low-income, rather than mixed income.

The City needs to work with neighborhoods to create buffers, improve lighting, maximize public transportation use, clean up the streets, and so forth.

### **Developing Downtown and the Riverfront**

Critical to the success of this effort will be:

- The expansion of upstairs housing in commercial buildings on Water Street. Downtown housing creates customers for local shops and stores and restaurants, and contributes to making the downtown safe at night;
- Work to get Water Street north of Bridge Street activated in the same way as south of Water Street. Colonial Theater will play a major role here.
- Continuing to market the Kennebec Lockes site to potential developers if the current IFW project falls through and look for connections to downtown if that project moves forward;
- Finding ways, such as historic ordinances, mini-grants, creative permit fee structures, etc., to preserve the best of Augusta’s old buildings and neighborhoods.

### **Creating a Sense of Place and Marketing the Augusta Story**

Communities that are successful have a strong “sense of place.” When you visit, you know where you are, and you know that no other place is quite like it. This requires:

- Marketing that highlights in the public mind what a community is about – for example, establish an identifying theme for the city such as “Augusta on the Kennebec,” and then build pride in the community by marketing the slogan;
- Creating visual cues throughout the city, such as gateways, signs, light fixtures, and sidewalks;
- Beautifying the city through landscaping, high quality architecture, and sign standards;
- Creating public spaces that provide tourist information and create sight lines to key buildings such as Fort Western, the Capitol, etc.;
- Attracting businesses that reinforce and build upon the city’s brand.

### **Building a Sensible Transportation Network**

Augusta’s main east-west arteries and both traffic circles are busy. Speeding and traffic flow are a concern throughout the city and the reduction in traffic volume in the city has made speeding easier. It is not always easy or safe to walk or ride a bicycle within the city because of poor condition sidewalks and no separation from traffic – thus more people drive for these short trips, aggravating the traffic conditions. Public transportation is spotty and unavailable on weekends. Meanwhile, new development is increasing traffic demands.

Solutions need to be found, in cooperation with neighboring communities and the Maine Department of Transportation, that:

- Encourage walking and biking through connected, safe pathways. Pedestrian safety as well as convenience need to be a priority;
- Control traffic in the city’s core; and
- Expand public transportation.

### **Planning a Sensible Government Structure for the Future**

Augusta is the state capital, the county seat, and the service center for surrounding towns. In all of these roles, it provides government services. Demands for these services are changing. Augusta needs to plan, along with neighboring communities, for:

- The continued expansion of government services, and therefore the need for new government buildings (such as a county jail) – to be paid for in ways which share the burden among the region’s taxpayers;
- The possible consolidation of the school district with neighboring districts;
- The potential for collaboration with neighboring communities in providing municipal services; and
- The potential to have a payment in lieu of taxes scheme to help pay for the municipal services demanded by nonprofit and government providers.

### **Attracting, Serving, and Retaining a Diverse Citizenry**

Augusta’s population should reflect the diversity of the region. In recent years, many middle class families have left Augusta. Augusta needs attractive housing alternatives for all population segments, including:

- New middle class housing in Augusta;
- Housing that addresses the needs of retirees and older citizens; and
- Housing that attracts young single people and families to live in Augusta.

### **Preserving Open Space**

Augusta has considerable open and undeveloped land, particularly on the east side. On the west side, the maintenance of quality parks within built-up areas is crucial. The City needs to work with neighboring communities to address issues involving open space, gateways, and scenic vistas.

## **Part B: Neighborhood Data**

The previous section identifies community development issues present in Augusta. This section provides data that can be used by grant writers who are seeking funds to address these issues.

### **Household Characteristics**

#### **Household Income**

Eligibility for programs administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), is often determined by the proportion of households in a neighborhood with incomes below 80% of the median. HUD’s map for Augusta’s

neighborhoods indicates that much of Augusta’s urban west side has over 50% of its households in this category (Exhibit F2). About 40% of households in Augusta overall have incomes below 80% of the median. Exhibit F1 from the Maine Housing Authority showing this data for the city as a whole:

**Exhibit F1:** Households by % of Median Income in Augusta. Source: Maine State Housing Authority, 2005.

	2005 Households	Income	% of Households
<u>&lt;30% (Extremely Low)</u>	1,222	\$10,087	13.90%
<u>&lt;50% (Very Low)</u>	2,192	\$16,812	24.90%
<u>&lt;80% (Low)</u>	3,544	\$26,898	40.20%
<u>&lt;150% (Moderate)</u>	6,014	\$50,435	68.30%
<u>Total/ Median</u>	8,809	\$33,623	

At the end of this section (Exhibit F8), there is detailed information on the age of head of households by neighborhood and by income from the 2000 U.S. Census.

## Housing Characteristics

### 1. Age of Housing Unit

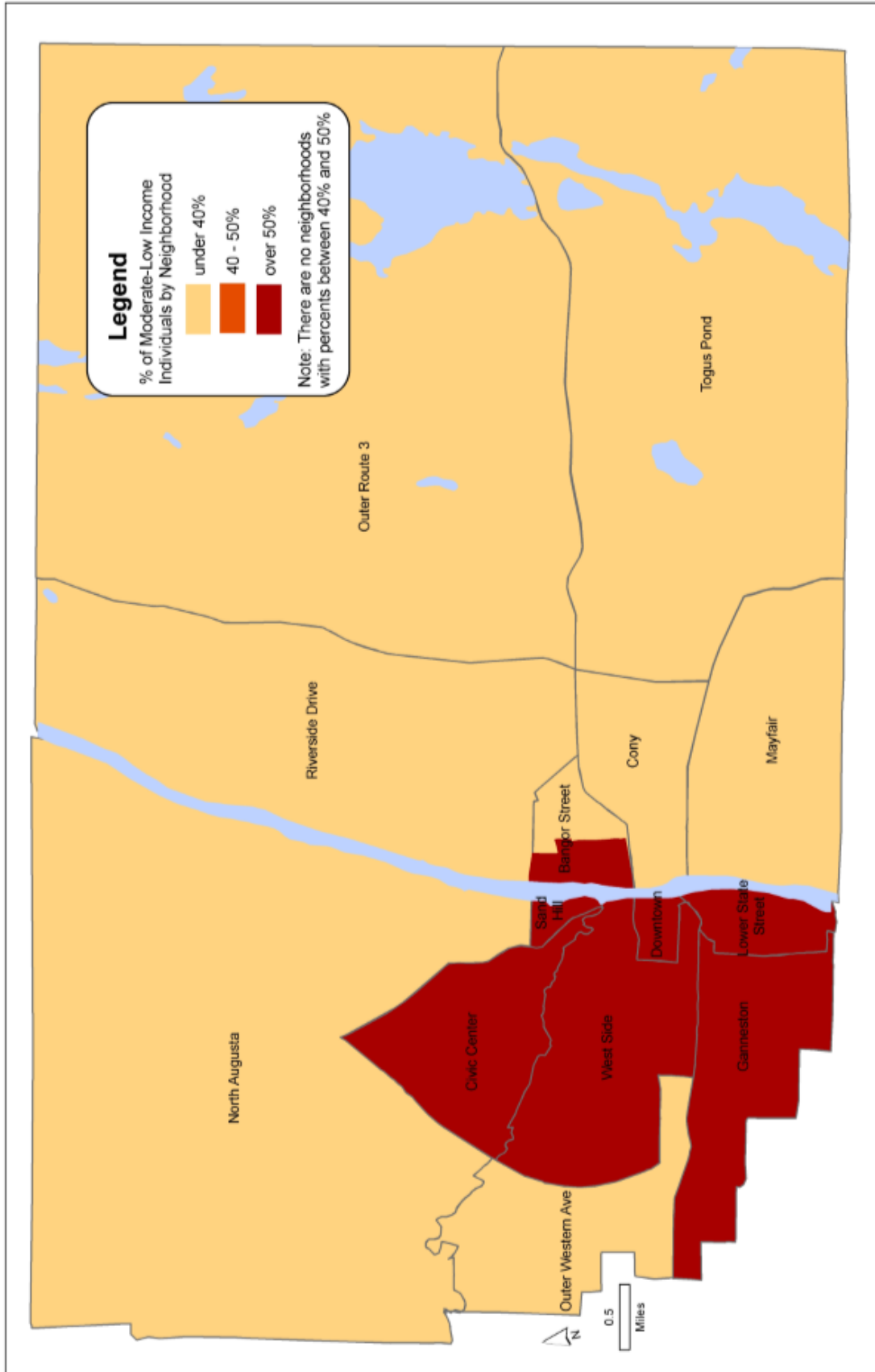
The older a house is, the more likely it is to need work. There is anecdotal evidence supporting the notion that many older homes generate a low rent or low sales price and have an increased chance of being in substandard condition. Below are charts which show the age of housing in different neighborhoods in Augusta. In some neighborhoods, such as Lower State Street and Sand Hill, no new owner-occupied development has occurred since the 1970s. The housing stock in Northern Augusta (including North Augusta, Outer Route 3, and Riverside) saw a marked increase in owner-occupied housing development in throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Exhibit F2). In terms of rental housing, the majority were built either in the 1960s and 1970s or prior to 1940 (Exhibit F3). As was seen in the land use history chapter, little development has occurred anywhere in Augusta since 2000.

### 2. Issues of Overcrowding

As rents rise and people cannot afford separate apartments, overcrowding becomes an issue. A household with more than 1 occupant per room is considered overcrowded. In the last decade, overcrowding has dramatically reduced, but in some areas of the city it has remained a problem.



**Exhibit F2:** Augusta Neighborhoods Low to Moderate Income Concentrations. Source: U.S. Census.



**Exhibit F3:** Year Structure Built, Owner Occupancy, Augusta. Source: U.S. Census and City of Augusta.

<b>Owner Occupied</b>	<b>1980 - 2020</b>	<b>1960 - 1980</b>	<b>1940 - 1960</b>	<b>Before 1940</b>
Bangor St	17	63	190	182
Civic Center	78	86	95	55
Cony	75	32	105	142
Downtown	63	13	12	86
Ganneston	95	66	70	61
Lower State St	0	11	68	111
Mayfair	28	219	166	21
North Augusta	195	294	62	130
Outer Route 3	123	133	90	62
Outer Western Ave	6	23	42	7
Riverside	225	169	194	103
Sand Hill	0	0	21	50
Togus	98	70	62	41
Westside	32	38	88	227
<b>TOTAL # of UNITS</b>		1,217	1,265	1,278

**Exhibit F4:** Year Structure Built, Renter Occupancy, Augusta. Source: U.S. Census.

<b>Renter Occupied</b>	<b>2000-2015</b>	<b>1980-2000</b>	<b>1960-1980</b>	<b>1940-1960</b>	<b>Before 1940</b>
Bangor St	29	60	76	129	126
Civic Center	15	77	64	112	100
Cony	0	6	40	60	100
Downtown	26	14	42	20	255
Ganneston	19	127	296	73	60
Lower State Street	0	12	12	38	90
Mayfair	33	41	229	76	26
North Augusta	30	24	95	57	37
Outer Route 3	0	24	40	7	15
Outer Western Ave	39	17	62	30	7
Riverside	0	25	59	65	16
Sand Hill	0	29	50	69	155
Togus	0	6	7	40	13
West Side	40	26	28	137	405
<b>TOTAL # of UNITS</b>	232	488	1,100	913	1,405

**Exhibit F5:** Persons Per Room in Renter Occupied Housing. Source: U.S. Census American Factfinder.

<b>Occupants per Room</b>	<b>0.5 or less</b>	<b>0.51 to 1</b>	<b>1.01 to 1.5</b>	<b>1.5 to 2</b>	<b>2.01+</b>
Bangor St	294	67	0	0	0
Civic Center	195	111	0	0	0
Cony	178	88	0	0	0
Downtown	221	54	0	0	30
Ganneston	575	54	0	11	0
Lower State Street	101	40	8	0	0
Mayfair	252	154	0	0	0
North Augusta	120	29	0	0	0
Outer Route 3	101	30	0	0	0
Outer Western Ave	128	8	0	0	0
Riverside	118	227	0	0	0
Sand Hill	177	68	0	0	0
Togus	39	0	0	0	0
West Side	361	206	0	0	0

**Exhibit F6:** Head of Household Income by Age Cohort and by Neighborhood, 2015. Source: U.S. Census.

Head of Household (HH) Income	Less than \$15,000	\$15,000 to \$24,999	\$25,000 to \$34,999	\$35,000 to \$44,999	\$45,000 to \$59,999	\$60,000 to \$124,999	\$125,000 and above	Total HH in age cohort
<b>Bangor St</b>								
Under 25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25-44	60	12	66	21	17	63	0	239
45-64	57	20	60	52	45	70	0	304
65+	36	22	38	33	22	41	0	192
Total HH in income bracket	153	54	164	106	84	174	0	735
<b>Civic Center</b>								
Under 25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25-44	0	8	21	0	36	84	22	171
45-64	124	21	43	13	13	35	0	249
65+	46	30	21	59	0	0	0	156
Total HH in income bracket	170	59	85	72	49	119	22	576

Head of Household (HH) Income	Less than \$15,000	\$15,000 to \$24,999	\$25,000 to \$34,999	\$35,000 to \$44,999	\$45,000 to \$59,999	\$60,000 to \$124,999	\$125,000 and above	Total HH in age cohort
<b>Cony</b>								
Under 25	0	0	0	0	34	0	0	34
25-44	23	0	21	28	7	23	0	102
45-64	29	9	80	11	19	66	17	231
65+	8	22	7	24	44	30	0	135
Total HH in income bracket	60	31	108	63	104	119	17	502
<b>Downtown</b>								
Under 25	30	0	10	0	0	0	0	40
25-44	44	23	7	18	13	16	0	121
45-64	62	37	18	20	0	1	45	183
65+	8	0	9	7	0	32	7	63
Total HH in income bracket	144	60	44	45	13	49	52	407

<b>Ganneston</b>								
Under 25	45	0	0	0	0	0	0	45
25-44	29	10	0	24	42	18	0	123
45-64	70	78	6	29	29	97	14	323
65+	121	113	17	38	24	16	14	666
Total HH in income bracket	265	201	23	91	95	131	28	1157
<b>Lower State Street</b>								
Under 25	21	0	0	8	0	0	0	21
25-44	31	38	0	6	16	58	0	149
45-64	9	0	14	6	15	39	15	98
65+	17	11	18	17	0	19	15	97
Total HH in income bracket	78	49	32	42	31	116	30	321

Head of Household (HH) Income	Less than \$15,000	\$15,000 to \$24,999	\$25,000 to \$34,999	\$35,000 to \$44,999	\$45,000 to \$59,999	\$60,000 to \$124,999	\$125,000 and above	Total HH in age cohort
<b>Mayfair</b>								
Under 25	10	0	52	9	0	19	0	90
25-44	49	17	67	36	37	37	9	252
45-64	42	25	23	36	63	133	47	322
65+	39	0	171	15	23	31	0	279
Total HH in income bracket	140	42	266	96	135	220	56	943

<b>North Augusta</b>								
Under 25	0	0	0	18	0	19	0	37
25-44	0	0	24	24	19	165	16	248
45-64	17	0	59	49	58	120	20	323
65+	22	13	67	79	61	40	11	293
Total HH in income bracket	39	13	150	196	138	344	47	901

<b>Outer Route 3</b>								
Under 25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25-44	0	0	25	19	0	41	0	85
45-64	28	33	11	54	8	54	17	205
65+	0	12	38	10	33	22	0	115
Total HH in income bracket	28	45	74	83	41	117	26	405

<b>Outer Western Ave</b>								
Under 25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25-44	6	0	0	0	0	37	0	37
45-64	15	17	7	6	6	45	47	143
65+	16	16	42	15	30	16	7	142
Total HH in income bracket	37	33	49	21	36	98	54	322



Head of Household (HH) Income	Less than \$15,000	\$15,000 to \$24,999	\$25,000 to \$34,999	\$35,000 to \$44,999	\$45,000 to \$59,999	\$60,000 to \$124,999	\$125,000 and above	Total HH in age cohort
<b>Riverside</b>								
Under 25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25-44	81	108	0	69	185	92	0	535
45-64	12	11	104	52	74	106	12	359
65+	23	37	41	29	54	70	0	254
Total HH in income bracket	126	156	145	150	313	268	36	1148

<b>Sand Hill</b>								
Under 25	0	18	55	0	0	0	0	73
25-44	53	0	0	0	59	16	0	128
45-64	41	13	15	22	15	64	0	170
65+	39	31	0	11	0	0	0	81
Total HH in income bracket	132	62	70	33	74	80	0	452

<b>Togus</b>								
Under 25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25-44	23	11	36	8	9	37	9	133
45-64	8	13	8	8	5	52	9	103
65+	8	15	0	0	20	44	8	95
Total HH in income bracket	39	39	44	16	34	133	26	331

<b>West Side</b>								
Under 25	0	32	0	0	9	0	0	41
25-44	49	15	25	21	37	100	7	254
45-64	124	62	60	6	63	98	23	436
65+	15	30	13	9	15	28	0	110
Total HH in income bracket	392	139	98	36	115	226	30	841

## **STATE GOVERNMENT AND NON-PROFITS**

Some towns have their mills. Augusta has state government. State government and its many related nonprofit advocacy and service organizations are the principal employers in Augusta. In addition, Augusta has a strong health services sector that is comprised in large part by nonprofit hospitals and clinics.

Augusta's role as the state capital and the region's service center is both good and bad. On the positive side, these sectors provide good-paying jobs that have relative security (compared to the private sector). On the negative side, state government and nonprofit organizations are often exempt from paying property taxes. As these organizations require the same fire and police and road maintenance services as private businesses, their lack of a contribution towards the property tax makes it necessary for other taxpayers to make up the difference.

State government, by virtue of its office locations, also has a major influence on traffic and land use patterns in the city. Therefore, it is key that state government and the city of Augusta coordinate their plans.

This chapter will examine:

- The types of state government and non-profit jobs in Augusta
- The issue of tax-exemption
- The impact of the government and non-profit employment on the local economy

### **State Government and Non-Profit Facilities**

State, federal, municipal, and nonprofit entities own 4% of all of the parcels in the Augusta (Exhibit G1). These parcels total approximately 6,307 acres, or roughly 16% of total parcel acreage in the City. Among them are key sites on the Kennebec River which help shape the City's overall image. Most parcels are owned by the City (185) and State (85), but local nonprofits (61 parcels) are increasingly important.

These facilities have great impact on Augusta. They provide important regional services, well-paying jobs, and shoppers for local stores. They also create commuter traffic on the area roadways and are a property tax burden since they require municipal services but in many cases may not pay for them.

### **State Facilities**

There are 89 parcels listed in the City Assessor's office as being owned by state or federal entities. Of these, almost all (86 parcels totaling 4,051 acres) are the property of the State of Maine. Eighteen of the state parcels are listed as resource protection lots, including the Alonzo Garcelon Wildlife Preserve, Capitol Park, and area cemeteries. Most of the state property is in the center of the city's developed area, on either side of the Kennebec River.

The East Campus is comprised of the historic Augusta Mental Health Institute (AMHI) buildings, today converted into state offices, as well as the new Riverview Psychiatric Center. The site has a spectacular setting on the Kennebec River, with large areas of green space and excellent views of the State House. The East Campus employed roughly 1,400 individuals in the year 2000, making it one of the largest employment hubs in the city.

The West Campus incorporates the State House, the Maine State Museum and Maine State Library, Capitol Park, adjacent state offices, and state-owned property along Capitol and State Streets. Among them are many historic buildings of architectural significance, including Bullfinch’s State House, the Blaine House, and other converted residences. In 2000, the West Campus included over 3,600 employees.

### **Non-profit Institutions and Organizations**

Augusta is the state capital, the county seat, and a service center. In all of these roles, it houses a variety of government and nonprofit organizations. They include federal, state, university, county, municipal, and school units; lobbying and professional organizations; hospitals and medical institutions; and social service agencies.

A number of the latter are inventoried in the Health and Welfare section of this report.

### **Economic benefit of state and nonprofit employees**

Collectively, state and nonprofit organizations employ over a third of workers within Augusta, a far higher proportion than for Kennebec County or the state as a whole (Exhibit G2).

These employers provide income that is spent in local stores and restaurants, employees whose families populate Augusta’s neighborhoods and schools, and volunteers that support local arts and sports and religious organizations.

### **Tax-exempt property**

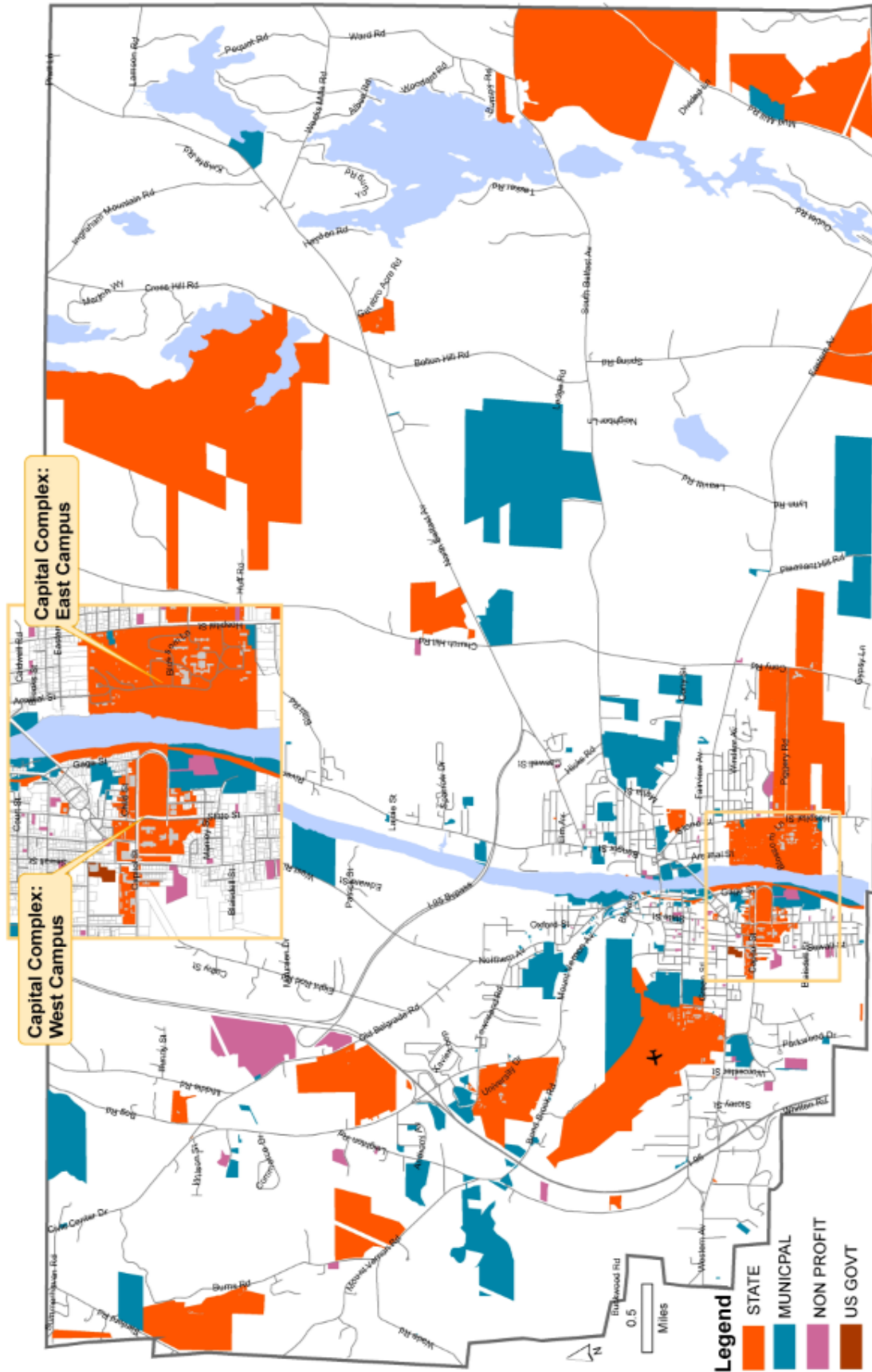
Many state and nonprofit entities are not required to pay property taxes to the municipal government. However, a number of nonprofit organizations and state agencies make voluntary “payments in lieu of taxes” to the municipality. Others rent space from private landlords who do pay property taxes. Thus, there is much more of a contribution to the local property tax by state and nonprofit agencies than it would first appear.

Data from the State of Maine Municipal Valuation Return provides a snapshot of the value of tax exempt properties in the city in 2003 (Exhibit G3). The State is the largest exempt property holder, holding roughly 12% of the City’s total valuation. Nonprofits and other tax-exempt institutions make up 8% of the total valuation of property in Augusta, double the state average of 4 %.

In comparison to other state service centers, such as Lewiston, Waterville and Bangor, Augusta has a much higher proportion of state-owned property but a smaller proportion of nonprofit-owned property.

The State of Maine leases many properties in Augusta. The annual cost of the state’s leased space in Augusta is \$7 million, which is 40% of the total lease bill for all of the state government’s leased space in Maine. If the state follows through on its long-range plan to consolidate offices onto state property, such lease payments would be reduced; at the same time, traffic demands on the city would also decrease.

**Exhibit G1:** Location of Federal, State, Municipal and Non-Profit Property in Augusta. Source: Augusta Assessor's Database.



**Exhibit G2:** Class of Workers in Augusta, Kennebec County and Maine. Source: U.S. Census.

	Augusta		Kennebec County		Maine	
<b>Total Civilians Employed 16 and over</b>	8,777		57,050		624,011	
<b>Private Non-profit wage &amp; salary workers</b>	826	9%	6,220	11%	63,603	10%
<b>Local Government</b>	701	8%	4,560	8%	47,389	8%
<b>State Government</b>	1,316	15%	5,965	10%	26,534	4%
<b>Federal Government</b>	364	4%	1,692	3%	16,465	3%

**Exhibit G3:** 2015 Municipal Valuation Returns for Augusta. Source: Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary, 2015.

	Augusta	% of TMV	Lewiston	% of TMV	Waterville	% of TMV	Kennebec Cty	% of TMV	Maine	% of TMV
Total Municipal Valuation	\$1,703,496,600		\$1,896,392,760		\$635,071,109		\$10,188,572,407		\$155,508,583,620	
Total Land & Building Valuation	\$1,609,474,900	94.48%	\$1,732,759,660	91.37%	\$575,794,509	90.67%	\$9,888,211,293	97.05%	\$149,316,709,439	96.02%
Total Personal Property Valuation	\$94,021,700	5.52%	\$163,633,100	8.63%	\$59,276,600	9.33%	\$300,361,114	2.95%	\$6,191,874,181	3.98%
<b>EXEMPT INSTITUTIONS/ORGS</b>										
Benevolent & charitable	\$191,626,500	11.25%	\$212,984,780	11.23%	\$43,990,300	6.93%	\$274,513,825	2.69%	\$2,770,898,877	1.78%
Literary & scientific	\$18,010,600	1.06%	\$142,995,500	7.54%	\$54,873,500	8.64%	\$112,320,344	1.10%	\$1,939,145,498	1.25%
Veterans organizations	\$953,300	0.06%	\$2,000	0.00%	\$550,500	0.09%	\$4,603,048	0.05%	\$43,390,064	0.03%
Churches & parsonages	\$23,650,500	1.39%	\$25,213,410	1.33%	\$13,528,660	2.13%	\$81,516,471	0.80%	\$1,003,449,778	0.65%
Chamber of commerce, boards of trade	\$612,000	0.04%	\$426,850	0.02%	\$317,600	0.05%	\$929,600	0.01%	\$4,725,599	0.00%
Fraternal organizations	\$3,044,000	0.18%	\$2,223,410	0.12%	\$835,000	0.13%	\$10,314,322	0.10%	\$92,347,440	0.06%
Property leased by hospitals	\$0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%	\$542,900	0.01%	\$135,042,562	0.09%
Total all exemptions (not just those listed above)	\$559,384,400	32.84%	\$624,166,720	32.91%	\$165,369,345	26.04%	\$2,102,604,328	20.64%	\$18,036,662,791	11.60%



## Coordination with Area Governments

The presence of so many government agencies in Augusta provides an important asset for the City in communicating and coordinating key issues. For example, there are regular meetings among local legislators, City Councilors, and County Commissioners to discuss riverfront development strategies. Augusta has been fortunate to have legislators serving in leadership posts in municipal government, which has made possible innovative projects such as the Capital Riverfront Improvement District and the conversion of the old City Hall into elderly housing.

City officials work with state, county, and other municipal organizations through bodies such as the Capital Riverfront Improvement District (CRID), the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG), and the Maine Municipal Association (MMA).

The Capital Riverfront Improvement District (CRID) was established by Private & Special Law 1999, chapter 58, to encourage increased access to and public use of the Kennebec River and revitalization of downtown Augusta and to foster a local-state partnership that coordinates and shares these resources.

The Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG) is a regional member-owned municipal services corporation. KVCOG works on issues such as river development and smart growth, and provides economic development and planning services.

KVCOG covers all of Kennebec and Somerset, and part of Waldo Counties. It is also a federally designated Economic Development District and a state designated Regional Planning and Development District. KVCOG works closely with:

- Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry: Municipal Planning and Assistance Program;
- Department of Transportation;
- Department of Economic and Community Development (CDBG);
- The Finance Authority of Maine;
- The U.S. Department of Commerce (EDA);
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development; and
- The U.S. Small Business Administration.

The Maine Municipal Association (MMA) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization with the voluntary membership of all but one of the State's 493 cities, towns, plantations and organized townships. The goals of the organization are “to provide a unified voice of Maine's municipalities and to promote and strengthen local government”. Its staff frequently appears before state agencies and legislative committees to testify on rules, regulations, and proposed legislation affecting municipalities.

## Key Issues

1. Figuring out ways to lessen the property tax burden of state and non-profit agencies through increased use of Payments in Lieu of Taxes or other property tax-paying arrangements.
2. Creating a better public understanding of the true costs and benefits of non-profit and state government agencies in the community.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Understanding the natural resources of Augusta and the forces that created them serves two purposes in this comprehensive plan. Natural resources have inherent values for the community. They perform essential functions such as storage of water, filtering of pollutants, providing habitat for plants and animals, and enhancing the city's viewshed. Secondly, they help to shape the existing and future patterns of development, limiting growth in some areas while accommodating it in others. This chapter examines the existing environmental and natural resources in Augusta and provides some ideas for their future use and protection.

### **Natural Features**

Augusta's geologic history is complex and includes rock formations which predate the dinosaurs by hundreds of millions of years. Its current topography is tied to glacial actions, which shaped the landforms and unconsolidated, surficial deposits seen today. These landforms, in combination with surficial deposits and bedrock formations, determine groundwater characteristics and aquifer sites. The melting glacier provided deposits of sands and gravel that created prime aquifer recharge areas.

Surficial deposits are the parent materials for the city's soils. Augusta's surficial deposits include:

- Shallow deposits of till, an unstratified sediment that contains clay, sand, gravel, rock and boulders located in the higher elevations of Augusta's hills;
- Large deposits of silt and sand along the Kennebec River and in its ravines made up of stream alluvium that accumulated as part of post-glacial flooding and the Presumscot Formation, composed of marine-glacial silt and clay; and
- Accumulations of organic matter in the form of swamp deposits located in the interior areas of the city.

### **Soils**

Soil types influence the development of a parcel of land. They often determine the feasibility of installing on-site sewage disposal systems and septic systems. For example, Maine State Plumbing Code does not allow new septic systems on slopes steeper than 20% and requires a minimum of 12 inches between the bottom of each leech field and the seasonal high water table or bedrock.

The dominant soil types in Augusta include:

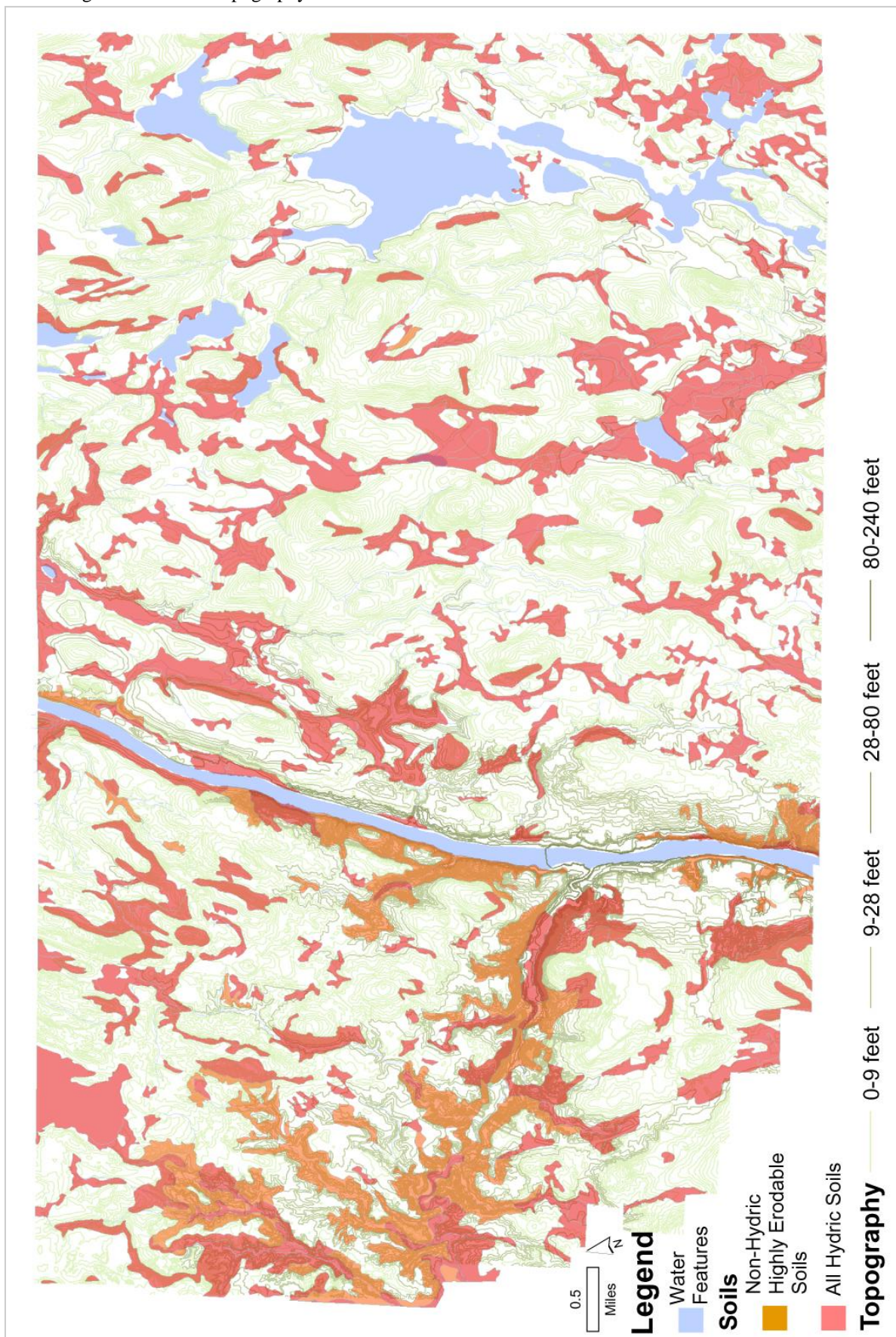
Buxton, Hartland, Hinkley, and Paxton soils. Much of the city has poorly drained soils, making development challenging.

In addition, there are a series of mucky peat soils such as Biddeford, Rifle, Scarborough, as well as Togus and Vassalboro fibrous peat.

Each type of soil is made up of a series of characteristics that make it more or less suitable for different land uses. These characteristics include: texture, or mixture of clay, silt and sand; depth to bedrock; height of the water table; the percolation rate of water through the soil; and its load bearing capacity. Some soils in Augusta that are considered inappropriate for development by the Maine Department of

Environmental Protection (MDEP) are shown on Exhibit H1. These areas are located predominately along waterways and in areas of very steep slopes.

**Exhibit H1:** Augusta Soils and Topography. Source: MEGIS.



## Topography

Topography is the general lay of the surface of the land. Augusta's elevation ranges from 10 to 450 feet above sea level, with steep banks bordering both sides of the Kennebec River and Bond and Whitney Brooks. These slopes create scenic hilltop vistas throughout the city core. In the eastern portion of Augusta, the land rises more gently and is home to a myriad of ponds and wetlands.

Slope is the amount of rise or fall in elevation for a given horizontal distance. For example, a 10% slope means that for a 100-foot horizontal distance, the rise or fall in height is 10 feet. Slopes are considered steep if they have a grade of 15% or higher.

Steep slopes in Augusta are located predominantly along the Kennebec River and are highly susceptible to erosion (Exhibit H1). Due to the nature of the soil and the grade of the slopes, development in these areas can be costly. Additional costs of initial construction include site preparation, building roads, and erosion control. Long-term costs include storm water and runoff management, road maintenance and snow and ice removal.

## Watersheds

All surface water in Augusta eventually flows into the Kennebec River, primarily through a series of tributaries, ponds, and watersheds. A watershed, or drainage basin, is an area through which precipitation drains into a particular watercourse or body of water. Watersheds are separated by naturally occurring divides created by high points of land. The interconnected system of surface water begins as tiny brooks in the upper reaches of the watersheds and flows through the system of streams, ponds and wetlands, ultimately reaching the Kennebec River. As a result, action taken in and around upstream tributaries affects water quality throughout the watershed.

The City of Augusta is served by eleven watersheds (Exhibit H2).

The Bond Brook Watershed serves roughly two-thirds of the City's west side and is characterized by steep slopes and erodible soils. The area provides a myriad of wildlife habitats including spawning for Atlantic Salmon and trout and deer wintering areas. Underlying this area is the Bond Brook aquifer used by the Augusta Water District. Because of steep slopes, the floodplain is confined and there are few wetlands.

The Riggs Brook Watershed is located east of the city core along the Church Hill road. There are a number of small wetlands located throughout this area as well as several deer wintering areas.

The Sevenmile Brook Watershed includes drainage from the Tolman, Dam and Spectacle ponds and outflows from Webber pond in Vassalboro. The State's Alonzo H. Garcelon Wildlife Management Area manages one thousand acres of this watershed. Much of the soil is erodible and shallow.

The other watersheds include:

- Kennebec River at Edwards Dam
- Kennebec River at Merrymeeting Bay
- Togus Pond
- Togus Stream

- Three-Cornered Pond
- Goff Brook
- Cobbosseecontee Stream
- Messalonskee Lake

## Surface Water

The brooks, ponds, lakes and river that serve these watersheds are key features of Augusta’s natural resources. They serve as recreational locations, as back-up drinking water sources, and as habitat for countless fish and wildlife.

The Kennebec River spans 140 miles from Moosehead Lake to Merrymeeting Bay where it joins the Androscoggin River and moves out to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Kennebec is a significant location for fish such as Atlantic salmon, alewives, shad, sturgeon and striped bass<sup>2</sup>. North of Augusta the river passes through a series of dams and industrial areas which restrict the flow of water. With the removal of the Edwards Dam in Augusta, the Kennebec head of tide now occurs between Augusta and Sidney. Though affected by the tide, the Kennebec River remains fresh water.

The Kennebec River has access points along Augusta’s waterfront including from both sides of the river in the heart of downtown; at the Mill Park; and from the Arsenal.

Augusta has eight major brooks that flow throughout its fifty-five square miles and into its eight major ponds or the Kennebec River.

The majority of the ponds are located in the eastern portion of the city and many are under the protection of the Alonzo-Garcelon Wildlife Management Area. Wetlands abound in areas around the ponds and they are home to numerous inland waterfowl and wading bird and waterfowl habitats. These areas are protected under state and local shoreland protection guidelines.

### Lakes/Ponds

- Little Togus Pond
- Anderson Pond
- Lily Pond
- Three-Cornered Pond
- Togus Pond
- Dam Pond
- Greeley Pond
- Lower Togus Pond

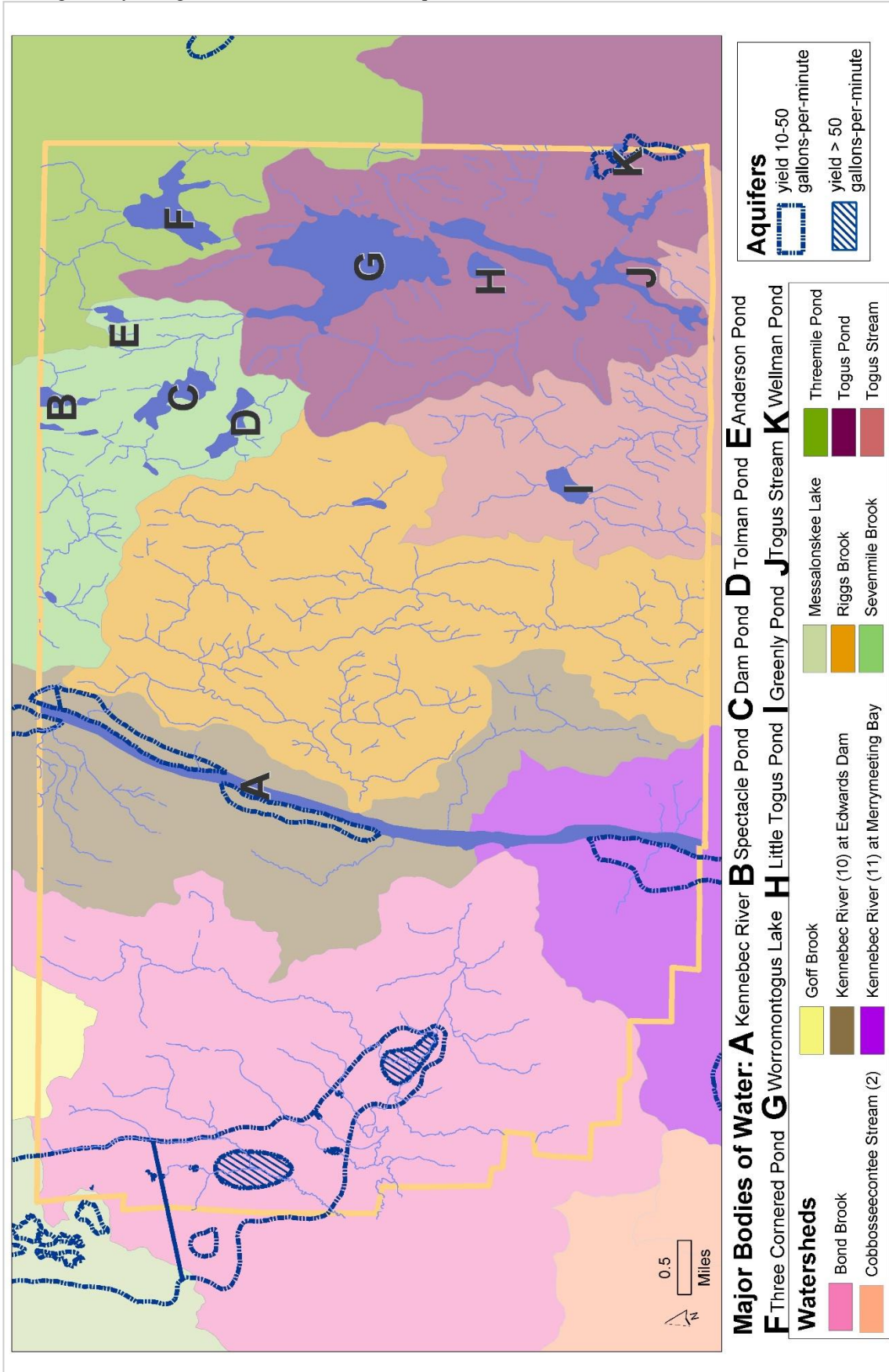
### River/Brooks

- Whitney Brook
- Brann Brook
- Bond Brook
- Riggs Branch
- Rockwood Brook
- Stickney Brook
- Stone Brook
- Stony Brook

Dam and Tolman ponds are predominantly home to warm water fish such as bass, pickerel and perch. Spectacle pond supports brown trout.



**Exhibit H2: Augusta Hydrological Features: Watersheds, Aquifers, Rivers, Ponds, and Brooks.** Source Maine OGIS.



## Groundwater and Aquifers

Groundwater, also known as subsurface water, is water that is stored below the water table typically in cracks in bedrock or within pores between individual grains of unconsolidated sediments (e.g., sand and gravel aquifers). Precipitation, such as rain and snow melt, percolates into the ground and flows downhill at very slow rates.

Both urban and rural residents in Augusta rely on groundwater for use as potable water. In rural areas the water is pumped directly from wells on the property. Urban areas are dependent on high-yield aquifers (areas where the ground water can be pumped to the surface fast enough to make it economical to harvest large quantities) that are pumped by the Greater Augusta Utility District. More information on aquifers and the Greater Augusta Utility District is available in the Infrastructure Chapter.

Typically, small individual wells are supplied by bedrock aquifers which pump on average 10 gallons per minute and are often interconnected. High yield aquifers tend to be made of sand and gravel deposited thousands of years ago by meltwater from glaciers. The sand and gravel act as natural filters and store water in pores between their grains. These aquifers can transport water at a rate of up to 50 gallons per minute. The major aquifers in Augusta are located under the Bond Brook watershed and alongside the Kennebec River (Exhibit H2). They serve the majority of Augusta's urban residents.

## Wetlands

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) define wetlands as “those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas”.

Wetlands have both ecological and economic benefits, which can be grouped into three broad categories:

1. Biological benefits include fish and wildlife habitat (feeding, nesting, breeding, and cover) and travel corridors.
2. Water quality benefits include ground-water recharge and discharge, stream flow maintenance, flood prevention, water quality maintenance, and shoreline protection from erosion.
3. Human benefits include recreational uses such as hunting, birding, fishing, boating, and hiking. The aesthetics and open space values of wetlands are important to communities.

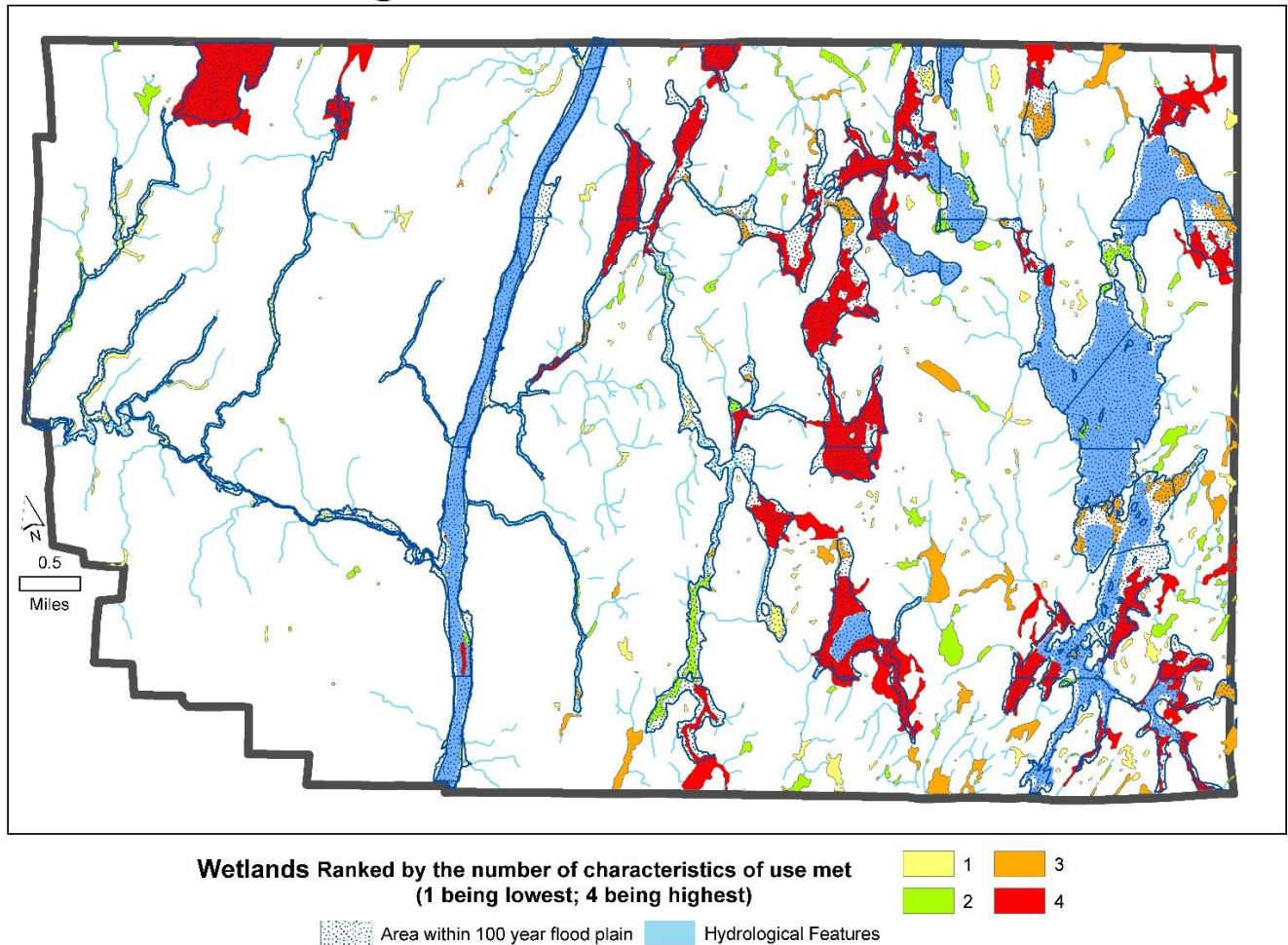
In order for a wetland to qualify for protection, one of more indicators of wetland vegetation, hydric soil, and wetland hydrology must be present. There are several standardized approaches to assessing the functions and values of wetlands and although there is overlap, they do vary by agency (i.e. ACOE, EDP and Federal Highway Administration, individual state Department of Protections). The ACOE's assessment is dependent on the following criteria:

- Sediment retention;
- Floodflow alteration;
- Finfish habitat;
- Plant and animal habitat; and
- Educational/cultural value.

For each function a wetland provides, it is given one (1) point. If a wetland provides all five functions, it is given five points. Wetlands with more points are considered to provide more benefit for a community than those with lower points. In Augusta, the highest ranking areas provide four out of the five functions and include the Sidney Bog and the majority of large wetlands throughout the eastern portion of the city.

**Exhibit H3:** Augusta Wetlands and Flood Plains. Source: Maine OGIS.

## Augusta Wetlands and Flood Plains



A vernal pool, also referred to as a seasonal wetland or spring pool, is a wetland that usually only contains water for part of the year. In Maine, vernal pools can provide important habitat for wood frogs and salamanders as well as valuable habitat for other plants and wildlife, including several rare, threatened and endangered species. Significant vernal pools are regulated as significant wildlife habitat by Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) and are protected under federal and state law.

Federal and state laws and regulations that apply to wetlands in Maine include:

- Executive Order 11990—“Protection of Wetlands”
- Section 404 of the U.S. Clean Water Act
- Section 10 of the U.S. Rivers and Harbors Act
- Natural Resource Protection Act of Maine
- Chapter 310 Wetlands Protection rules of Maine

## **Floodplains**

Floodplains are categorized as low-lying flat land areas adjacent to rivers, streams, and ponds that are periodically flooded. Along major rivers, such as the Kennebec, the floodplain is separated into three areas: the stream channel, the floodway and the floodway fringe. Stream channels carry the average high water flow; the floodway includes the area necessary to carry the floodwaters; and the fringe stores rather than distributes the floodwaters.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maintains detailed maps of all 100-year flood plains throughout the country. A 100-year floodplain is a designated area that has a 1% chance of being flooded in any given year.

The floodplains within Augusta are well-defined and exist along the Kennebec River, its major tributaries and ponds (Exhibit H3). The city has a floodplain ordinance based on state standards which regulates development in these areas. Development is typically restricted in floodplains due to cost and dangers associated with flooding and flood-proofing. In general, these areas contain sensitive vegetation and soils that are susceptible to pollution problems if developed. Filling or improper or high volume uses within floodplains increase the potential for property damage, downstream contamination, and flooding.

## **Farmland and Forests**

Farmlands and forests provide large expanses of undeveloped space and may contain critical wildlife habitats in urban communities like Augusta. Forest land provides some jobs through commercial forestry but mainly offers rural recreational opportunities for the city's residents. Both agricultural and forest land are important pieces of Augusta's history, culture, character, and quality of life and are declining in Augusta. Forest management is difficult and economically infeasible, leading landowners to develop or sell the land.

Farms are being subdivided and sold for residential and commercial development. Forested land is being parceled into smaller lots, making forest management difficult and economically infeasible. Some landowners may then choose to develop or sell the land.

Only a few large areas of soils classified as prime farmland soils still exist in Augusta. Of these, the largest, located off of Bolton Hill Road, remains mostly undeveloped and is currently utilized as active farmland with some residential development. The second largest area of prime farm soil is located on Augusta's west side and is already largely developed.

Other areas with concentrated amounts of prime farmland soils include open/active farmland on Spectacle Pond and off the Cross Hill Road. Undeveloped forest areas are found off Church Hill Road, between Townsend Road and Old Belgrade Road, and along the eastern portion of Bond Brook. Many of the underlying zones in these areas however limit or actively prohibit agricultural uses.

Clear-cutting of forest land in preparation for land development is occurring throughout Augusta, in particular along Civic Center Drive and Western Avenue. The issues raised by clear-cutting include: increased impervious area and stormwater runoff; a loss of undeveloped land in the central areas of the city; a loss of buffering between commercial and residential areas; and a loss of rural gateways in high-profile areas.

Farmland in Augusta is protected through the city's soils ordinance provision which requires the clustering of development and prohibits soil removal in areas of ten acres or more of prime farm soils.

State farm and open space law taxation and Tree Growth tax law programs also help to preserve farmland and forests by offering tax incentives to land owners and farmers. A total of three Augusta farmland owners (6 parcels and 120 acres) take part in the farm law taxation program. 2,517 acres and 147 parcels of forest are currently enrolled in the Tree Growth program. That's a slight reduction in the acreage in farmland. It's also a substantial reduction of over 2,000 acres from 2007 but an increase in the number of parcels in tree growth. Given that there has clearly not been 2,000 acres of land that was in tree growth developed, further analysis should be completed to determine how much of the land in tree growth in 2007 was converted to conservation land.

## **Wildlife Habitats**

Augusta's many wetlands, ponds, and waterways are home to significant wildlife habitats. (Exhibit H4)

Deer wintering areas are critical to maintaining deer populations. The deep snow and frigid temperatures of Maine's harsh winters put extreme stress on deer populations. During these conditions, deer move to wintering areas or "yards" that provide winter forage and thermal protection. A typical deer yard is sheltered from snow and wind.

There are 10 significant deer wintering areas within Augusta. The majority are located on the east side of the City in the Outer Route 3 and Togus Pond neighborhoods and range in size from 40 to 400 acres.

Inland wading bird waterfowl and habitats include areas used for breeding, migration and wintering. In Augusta, these habitats are found throughout the eastern part of city, in particular around Togus, Greeley, and Dam ponds. The Sydney bog is also a significant bird habitat.

Atlantic Salmon spawning and rearing areas are important for maintaining healthy salmon populations. Bond Brook's riffles and pools have historically been significant locations for salmon spawning and rearing. The removal of the Edwards Mill Dam has possibly led to a change in the fish migration as few salmon have returned to Bond Brook since its demolition.

Augusta provides critical habitats for state and/or federally defined rare and endangered animals: the bald eagle, the grasshopper sparrow, the ribbon snake, and the upland sandpiper.

Bald Eagle habitats are found along shorelands in areas that include large trees (in particular white pine) within one mile of a water source. The birds often mate for life and return to the same nesting area year after year. Typically, their territory is a 1- to 2- mile radius from their nest.

Grasshopper Sparrows live in grassland habitats and are found in a variety of tall- and mixed-grass habitats including native prairies, hayfields, pastures and grassy fallow fields. The bird forages on the ground and its primary diet is grasshoppers. The nests are located on the ground and typically are a cave-like structure made up of tall grasses.

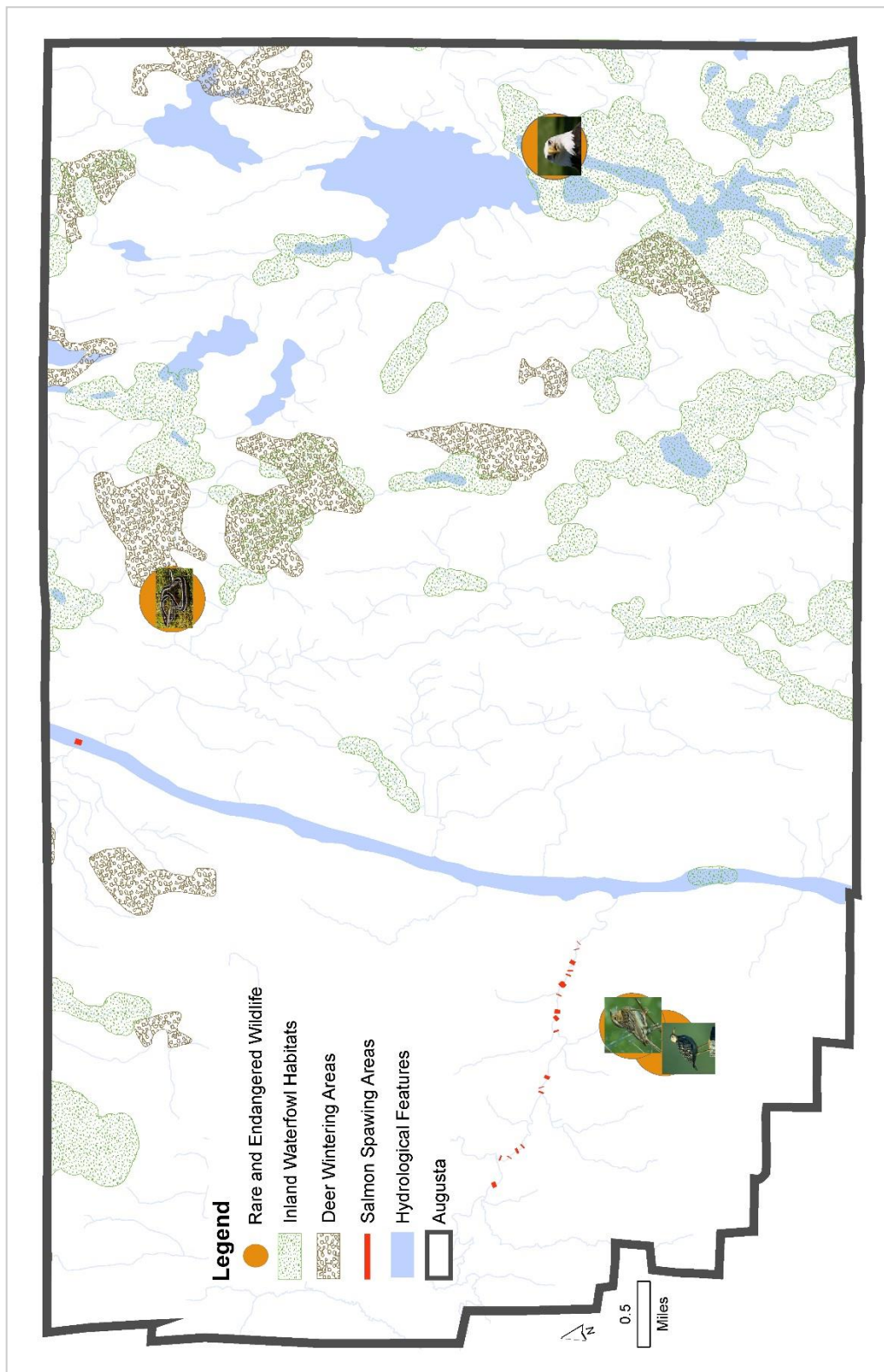
Ribbon Snakes are in the same family as garter snakes. These reptiles are under special consideration in Maine because their habitat is threatened by development. The snakes live in boggy, bushy habitats and typically feed on tadpoles, salamanders, small fish, and a variety of frogs.



Upland Sandpipers are a shorebird of grasslands and inhabit native prairie and other open grassy areas. These birds feed on the ground and can often be found around airports. The birds nest is a scrape in the ground which may be lined with grasses.

Other rare wildlife species have also been sighted in Augusta's habitats, including Common Musk Turtles, also known as Stinkpots. These turtles prefer permanent bodies of water such as lakes, ditches, ponds and quiet streams, where they tend to dwell on the bottom, and consume a carnivorous diet dominated by crayfish, freshwater clams, snails and various insects.

**Exhibit H4:** Unique and Critical Natural Resources. Source: Maine OGIS.



### Unique and Critical Natural Resources

The Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) maintains information on the status and location of rare plant and animal species as well as exemplary natural communities in Maine (Exhibit H5).

**Exhibit H5:** Unique and Critical Natural Resources. Source: Beginning with Habitat.

Species, Natural Community	Rarity	Status	Location
Beech - Birch - Maple Forest	S4		Spectacle Tolman
White Oak - Red Oak Forest	S3		Spectacle Tolman
Red Oak-Northern Hardwoods-White Pine-Mixed Forest	S3/S4		Spectacle Tolman
Stinkpot	S3		Spectacle Tolman
Raised Level Bog Ecosystem	S4		Sydney Bog
Ribbon Snake	S3	Special Concern	Spectacle Tolman
Bald Eagle	S4	Threatened	See Exhibit H4
Grasshopper Sparrow	S3	Endangered	See Exhibit H4
Upland Sandpiper	S1	Threatened	See Exhibit H4
Rarity:	S1- imperiled in Maine because of rarity or other factors that make it vulnerable to decline S3 - rare in Maine S4 - apparently secure in Maine		
Status:	<u>Endangered</u> : rare, in danger of being lost in Maine in the future, or federally listed <u>Threatened</u> : rare and, with further decline, could become endangered or federally listed <u>Special Concern</u> : rare in Maine, but not sufficiently rare to be considered endangered or threatened		

The Great Sidney Bog is a 605-acre Raised Level Bog. Much of the bog is covered by abundant rhodora and sheep laurel. Spruce Larch Wooded Bog, Red Maple Wooded Fen, and Bog Moss Lawn communities make up the remainder of the peatland. Small streams drain into the bog from the north and west, and exit the bog on the northeast and south sides.

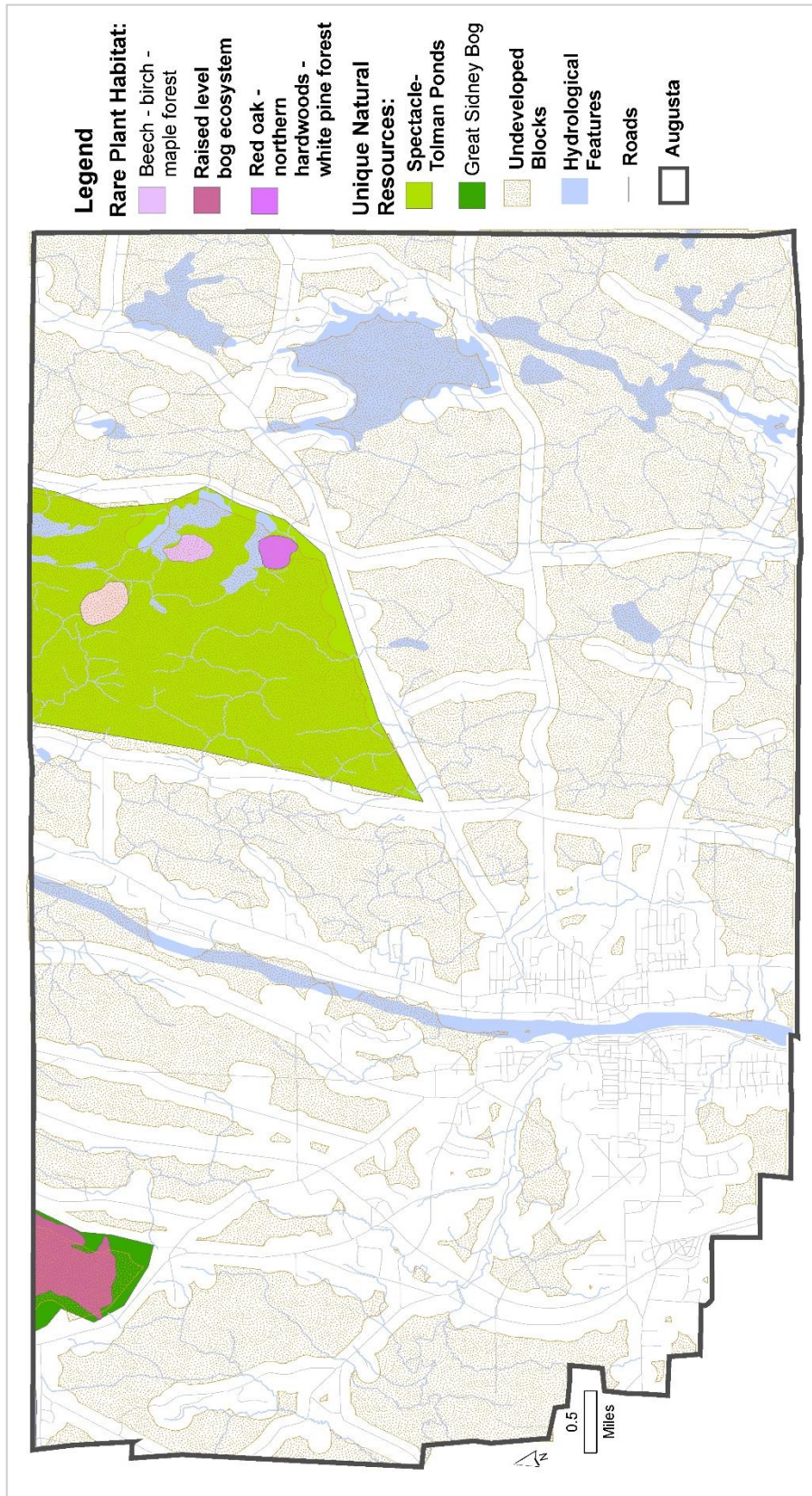
The bog encompasses 14 lots in the towns of Sidney and Augusta. As of 1990, Augusta held one lot, and Sidney another; the remainder were in private ownership. Peat mining rights are held on several of the lots by General Peat Resources.

The Spectacle Tolman Pond Area encompasses Spectacle, Dam and Tolman Ponds and their upland wetlands, wildlife habitats, and forests. The three ponds are considered one wetland complex. There are vast stretches of cattail marsh and mixed shrub marsh along the streams west of Tolman Pond and north of Dam Pond. Acidic fen communities occur along pond shores, especially near outlets and inlets, and some stream sides. The forest types include Appalachian oak, boreal, red oak – northern hardwood, white oak – red oak, and hemlock forests. Many of these forests have not been cut in over 50 years, and some of the red oak are more than 20” in diameter and over 60’ tall.

### **Large Undeveloped Blocks**

Large undeveloped blocks of land are found in undeveloped portions of the city. These provide continues habitat for wide-ranging animals with large home areas such as deer, bear and moose (Exhibit H6). Land areas greater than 2,500 acres have the potential to provide for these large species while small blocks (less than 250 acres) support typical suburban species such as raccoons, skunks, squirrels and songbirds. The MNAP identifies large undeveloped blocks in Maine. The location of these tracts and their significance as wildlife corridors can help define patterns of future development.

**Exhibit H6:** Unique and Critical Natural Resources. Source: Maine OGIS.



**Conservation and Municipal Lands in Augusta**

The Alonzo H. Garcelon Wildlife Management Area (WMA) incorporates 1,900 acres of open space and is located in the northeastern side of the city and is also part of the towns of Windsor and

Vassalboro. The WMA offers a variety of outdoor activities including canoeing on all three ponds, freshwater and ice fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching. Garcelon WMA is managed by the State Department of Wildlife and Inland Fisheries, which intends to expand the park by 93 acres through a Land for Maine's Future grant.

Pleasant Hill Road Conservation Area is a 200-acre conservation area located on the southeast side of Augusta at the intersection of Route 17 and Route 9. It is all forestland with interconnecting trails.

The Mall Mitigation Wetland is roughly nine acres of wetlands owned by the City of Augusta. It is located to the west of I-95 and is a conservation exchange for the development of the mall area.

The Governor Hill Fish Hatchery is located on the western border of Augusta. The hatchery rears brook trout, lake trout, and splake.

The Pine Tree State Arboretum encompasses 244 acres in southeastern Augusta at 153 Hospital Street. The five-mile trail system is open year-round to hiking, jogging, bird watching, non-motorized biking, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. A number of trails have surfaces suitable for wheelchair access. The Arboretum is a non-profit corporation that works to provide outdoor education and scientific research as well as recreational activities. The land is leased from the State of Maine.

Tyler Pond Wildlife Management Area is located across the town lines of Augusta and Manchester (with the majority of the area in Manchester). It is approximately 128 acres of upland forests and inland wetlands surrounding Messalonskee Lake. Recreational activities in the area include boating, canoeing, ice fishing, hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching.

Howard Hill Conservation Area - Per the Kennebec Land Trust web site (KLT purchased the land and donated it to the city, keeping a conservation easement on it). Its 164 acres includes a cascading stream, steep ravines, large boulders, an expansive ridgeline with sheer cliffs, and diverse wildlife habitat. The property is crisscrossed by an informal network of old carriage roads and woods roads that provide expansive views over the State House and the Kennebec River valley.

## **Environmental Protection and Advocacy**

### **Water Quality**

Water quality is ranked by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) into three classes - A, B, and C, with Class A representing the most pristine. The section of the Kennebec River that runs through Augusta is divided into Class B and Class C. The City's other major streams and ponds are listed predominantly as Class B.

Class B waters are general purpose waters that have good water quality and allow for well-treated discharges of amply diluted pollutants. Class C waters are managed at a minimum allowable rate to attain the fishing/swimming goals of the Clean Water Act and maintain the structure and function of the biological community allowing for well-treated discharged pollutants.

There are two major types of pollutants that affect water quality: point and non-point.



Point Source Pollutants can be traced to one location, or point, such as a factory or treatment plant. Since these pollutants come from a direct source, they are easy to identify and manage. Some point source pollutants in the Kennebec River come from areas upstream of Augusta including six paper mills; one tannery; two now closed textile mills; and eighteen municipal waste treatment facilities.

Non-Point Source Pollutants cannot be traced to one source and are often known as stormwater runoff. Stormwater can come from anywhere within the a watershed and includes any water that does not soak into the ground during a storm but rather “runs off” to a given water body such as a river, lake or stream. Often this water runs over a myriad of local pollutants such as fertilizers, pesticides, manure, and petroleum products, which originated from places such as farm fields, driveways, roads, golf courses, and lawns.

## **Water Quality Protection**

The Greater Augusta Utility District maintains the quality of all commercially and residentially utilized water in the City. They also provide detailed yearly reports on the quality of aquifers and surface reservoirs used to meet the City’s needs (for more information see the Transportation and Infrastructure Chapter). In addition to this quasi-municipal corporation, there are a myriad of non-profit and state agencies working in Augusta to protect local and regional water quality. Organizations such as the Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed, the Kennebec County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission provide education, outreach, and restoration programs throughout the region. The Youth Conservation Corps and Hussey School incorporate outdoor classes and restoration activities which highlight water conservation and preservation.

Local shoreland protection ordinances also help to preserve area water quality by providing restrictions and guidelines for development in and around critically sensitive waterbodies.

## **Air Quality**

Air quality is a critical issue for both the health of the citizens of Augusta as well as the natural environment. The protection of this resource is chartered under the Federal Clean Air Act and monitored in Maine by the Bureau of Air Quality (DEP), which examines state air quality for specific pollutants.

The City of Augusta falls under the Western Interior range and air is monitored from the Gardiner Pray Street School. Higher pollutants in the air are typical in the winter and summer due to increase in traffic and engine idling.

## **Natural Resources Protection**

Augusta uses State Shoreland Zone regulations to protect rivers, streams, and wetlands and a Rural Ponds Zone (RPZ) to protect water quality and wildlife habitat in areas of highly erodible soils and steep slopes. All new development and conversions in the RPZ are expected to (1) prevent additional phosphorous loading of Togus and Three Cornered Ponds, (2) protect the water quality of all ponds, and (3) protect areas of wildlife, fish, scenic, and forest value. Clustering and retention of open space is favored but not required. Minimum lot sizes are determined on a watershed basis using soil type and number of lots to determine the minimum lot sizes required to control expected phosphorous loading from each development.

Augusta has a wealth of private non-profit organizations focused on various aspects of natural resource protection including land trusts and grass-roots citizen organizations. Several State environmental regulatory and resource agencies are located in Augusta, including the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW), the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Department of Conservation (DOC). Each of these agencies has programs specifically related to the promotion of natural resource protection.

As natural resource protection is broader than city boundaries, Augusta has partnered with many regional organizations to promote and protect the environment throughout the Kennebec Valley. One such effort is the Kennebec River Initiative.

Specific organizations working on protecting natural resources in and around Augusta include:

The Kennebec Land Trust (KLT), a non-profit organization formed in 1988, works with landowners and communities to protect the Kennebec Valley's natural features, working landscapes and fragile ecosystems. Many of the properties protected by the KLT are open to the public.

The KLT preserves natural resources through:

- Land Protection
- Stewardship
- Education
- Advocacy
- Cooperation

The Kennebec Coalition is made up of Trout Unlimited, American Rivers, the Atlantic Salmon Federation, and the Natural Resources Council of Maine. The coalition was formed in 1989 to secure the Edwards Dam removal and restore the Kennebec River. With the dam's removal, Atlantic sturgeon, salmon and eight other species of migratory fish are able to reach historic spawning areas on the river that have been unavailable since the dam was built in 1837. In addition to a restored aquatic community, communities along the Kennebec anticipate increased opportunities for sport fishing, boating and other forms of recreation.

## **Key Issues**

1. Suggested land use regulation changes that would promote natural resource protection.
  - Expand the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance to include wetlands under 10 acres in size with high function and value rankings and significant vernal pools.
  - Increase zoning protection for certain undeveloped areas, including limiting removal of trees/disruption of soil around ponds to reduce runoff.
  - Encourage the use of Best Management Practices with respect to erosion control, water quality and stormwater run-off within the vicinity of sensitive resources, such as along the steep slopes of the river or within aquifer recharge areas.
  - Promote on-site mitigation of wetlands rather than off-site mitigation.
  - Create an incentive for the protection of natural corridors to connect wildlife habitats through buffering.
  - Draft scenic vista protection provisions to preserve the views of rural and natural areas along major corridors.

- Create clear-cutting limits in designated areas to protect forest and habitats.
  - Give additional deference to large undeveloped blocks and deer wintering areas to protect wildlife habitats and natural resources.
  - Increase natural buffers between residential/commercial and rural/urban areas to help reduce noise, light, and air pollution.
  - Continue to keep land use ordinances consistent with applicable state stormwater regulations by requiring that developments get appropriate DEP stormwater permits. Additionally, continue to regulate stormwater quantities locally, so that both quantity and quality are regulated.
  - Explore adopting low-impact stormwater management practices for developments.
  - Continue to require developers to work with the Greater Augusta Utility District during development reviews to eliminate combined sewer systems as much as possible.
  - If Augusta is required to comply with MS4 stormwater regulations, work cooperatively with the Greater Augusta Utility District on regulatory compliance.
  - Continue to keep local ordinances consistent with state laws regarding critical natural resources; require developers to identify and mitigate or eliminate impacts on critical natural resources; and use Beginning with Habitat maps as a tool to manage development.
2. Incentives to promote development that is sensitive to resource protection.
- Efforts should be made to promote low-impact development, smart growth development and cluster development, to allow for economical use of the land while protecting watersheds, streams, significant wetlands, and significant vernal pools.
  - A City-wide natural resources baseline map should be created to aid in planning and development efforts, and to delineate the most environmentally sensitive areas within Augusta.
  - Implement tax or other incentives to encourage landowners to preserve environmentally-sensitive areas.
  - Implement a transfer of development program (TDR), open space (OS) fund and/or impact fee schedule. Impact fees could be structured to discourage shoreline disturbance while encouraging landowners to preserve land around significant water bodies and wetlands without creating economic hardship.
3. Promote continued regional cooperation for protecting natural resources.
- Connect Augusta’s open and undeveloped spaces with those of neighboring towns through habitat corridors.
  - Work with the towns of Hallowell, Readfield and Winthrop to protect potential water supplies such as Cobbossee Lake.
  - Work with neighboring towns to protect Sidney Bog.
4. Protect water sources from invasive plant species and non-point source pollution.
- Increase landscape buffer requirements for seasonal conversions/new developments around large wetlands, streams, or great ponds so as to help reduce soil and phosphorus run-off into the water. Excessive phosphorus is known to cause algal blooms and promotes growth of invasive plants.

- Limit boat access on ponds or provide courtesy boat inspections to reduce the likelihood of invasion by non-native aquatic plants.

## **LEISURE AND RECREATION**

Augusta is more than a place to live and work; it is also a place to play and relax. Leisure and recreation opportunities are important for the community's health, economy, and sense of place.

Augusta has a wide variety of recreational resources. These resources are provided by municipal, state, and federal governments, local and regional non-profit organizations, and private businesses. Facilities include: ball fields, gymnasiums, courts, tracks, trails, biking, cross-country skiing, snowmobile trails, skate parks, and swimming pools. Other resources include forest, campground, and numerous wildlife areas as well as private clubs and associations (Exhibit II). This chapter inventories the various leisure and recreation facilities available in Augusta and discusses some trends affecting their use.

### **City of Augusta Recreation**

Augusta has long given priority to recreation and open space. This priority is reflected in the City's decision in the summer of 2007 to purchase 168 acres in the Bond Brook area for a park. Trail links, open space, and access to water have repeatedly been highlighted in previous plans, most recently the City's 2000 Public Recreation and Property Facilities Inventory - currently being updated in 2022. That plan assessed all City sites and identified high-use areas that need a variety of improvements, including resurfacing basketball courts; connecting trails; installing fences; improving drainage; and replacing lighting, wiring, and sprinklers.

The City of Augusta has three departments that provide leisure and recreation services and care.

The Bureau of Parks and Cemeteries maintains the land - 160 acres of neighborhood parks, public grounds, city trees, green spaces, flower beds, and athletic fields at the city's seven schools.

The Bureau of Recreation provides the programs and manages the facilities. The City offers more than 50 programs, with 5,000 participants, including:

- Tournaments,
- Sports clinics,
- Concerts,
- Field trips, and
- Playground activities.

Recreation programs are offered during the school year and during the summer months; a brochure is published several times a year advertising the offerings. Most programs are conducted at the Buker Community Center. This Bureau also manages municipal facilities including:

- Community gardens,
- Tennis and basketball courts,
- Swimming pools,
- Softball fields,
- Winter skating rinks, and
- Boat facilities on the Kennebec River.



The City Arborist regulates the planting, maintenance, and removal of public trees. The Program includes Integrated Pest Management, monitoring, care, and maintenance of trees on City-owned property.

## **Public Parks and Recreation Facilities**

Augusta is home to a significant number of municipal parks and recreation facilities maintained by the Bureau of Parks and Cemeteries.

Capitol Park is a twenty (20) acre park on the east side of the State Capitol building. The park was originally designed by famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead. The park has two (2) multi-purpose sports fields and is connected to the Kennebec River via the new Kennebec River Rail Trail (KRRT). It is the official beginning of the Capitol bike trail which offers 21, 33, 42, and 59-mile loops through the city and surrounding areas. The park is jointly funded by the State and the City.

Bicentennial Park is comprised of twenty-seven (27) acres of woodland adjacent to Three-Cornered Pond. It includes nature trails, a picnic area, and limited boat (maximum 8 non-motorized boats) and swimming access to the pond. Overnight use is limited to educational purposes and takes place in the park's Learning Center.

Savage Park is located in northeast Augusta along the Kennebec River. The wooded seven (7) acre park includes a .25-mile recreation trail to the river. There are picnic tables, a log amphitheater, and one and a half (1.5) acres of open lawn.

The Youth Memorial Park is located in southwest Augusta, in the Westside neighborhood. The park includes twenty four (24) acres with picnic tables, six (6) tennis courts, a playground, amphitheater, basketball court, and two (2) field hockey fields.

Macomber Park is a two (2) acre park located on Gage Street. It includes a picnic area, a basketball court, and green space.

McCall's Park encompasses three (3) acres in the Mayfair neighborhood. It includes a basketball court, a softball/baseball field, a 40' by 60' swimming pool, playground, and a picnic area.

Williams Park is located in the Bangor Street neighborhood. It is a four (4) acre park including a skatepark, playground, two (2) basketball courts (one with lights), a 40' by 60' swimming pool, an ice skating rink, a multi-purpose field, a sledding hill, and a picnic area.

Calumet Park is a twenty-seven (27) acre park located on Northern Avenue in the Sand Hill neighborhood. It includes a playground, basketball court, pickleball and tennis court, wooded area, multi-purpose field, ice skating rink, 40' by 60' swimming pool, and a picnic area. The ice skating rink is has been lighted and open in the evenings in past years.

Mt. Vernon Park is located on Mount Vernon Avenue in the Civic Center neighborhood. This eight (8) acre park includes a lighted ball field.

Cunningham Park is a two (2) acre park located in the West Side neighborhood and includes the North Street playground, a half size basketball court, a "sprinkler pool", and a picnic area.

Bond Brook Recreational Area is a 270-acre urban wilderness recreational area within walking distance of many city neighborhoods. There are about six miles of single track for mountain biking, walking, and snowshoeing. There are also approximately five miles of groomed Nordic ski trails.

Pocket Parks – In addition to the facilities listed above, there are a range of pocket parks in the city, located predominantly in the Sand Hill and West Side neighborhoods. These parks are all less than one acre and have limited amenities, such as benches and play areas.

- Front Street Park
- Gingras Park
- Northern Avenue Mini Park
- Bond Street Mini Park
- Rhines Hill Park
- Southwest Corner of Water & Bridge Street owned by MDOT
- Peachey Lot
- Waldo Park

School grounds maintained by the Bureau of Parks and Cemeteries include:

Lincoln Elementary School is located in the West Side neighborhood and has a playground on the campus.

Gilbert Elementary School is located in the Sand Hill neighborhood and has a playground, a softball/baseball field, and one (1) full and three (3) half-size basketball courts.

Hussey Elementary School is located in the Bangor Street neighborhood and has a playground on campus.

Farrington Elementary School is located in the Cony neighborhood and includes a playground and a trail connection to the Augusta Nature Education Center.

Hodgkins Fields are located in the Cony neighborhood includes two (2) softball/baseball fields, a basketball court, a soccer field and a trail connection to the Augusta Nature Education Center.

The Cony High School and Capital Area Technical Center Campus is located in the Cony neighborhood and is home to Fuller Field; the complex includes a 400-meter track, an artificial turf football field, a softball field, a lacrosse field, multiple trailheads, and a new multipurpose field.



## **Public Recreation Services & Programs**

The City of Augusta Recreation Bureau is part of the Community Services Department. It provides year-round activities for residents of Augusta and the surrounding areas. The quarterly list of activities for youth includes workshops, field trips, sports groups and day camps. The cost of these programs varies depending on the location, length and activity, with waivers and reductions available to those who qualify. For adults, the bureau provides field trips to local and statewide arts and culture events (such as museums and plays), as well as musical events. The Bureau also supports events such as the Concert Series at Waterfront Park. In addition, they provide adult sports activities including basketball, football, softball, and open gym times.

Activities are held at local schools and parks, with many youth activities at the Buker Center.

## **State of Maine Recreation Facilities**

The State of Maine owns and operates several parks, museums, and historical landmarks in Augusta.

Memorial Park is a one (1) acre park adjacent to the Westside rotary. It was once a gathering ground for young men heading off to the Civil War. Today the park has monuments commemorating veterans of the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam.

The Blaine House Gardens are located on the grounds of the Blaine House Mansion, at the corner of State and Capitol Streets. The Olmstead Brothers landscape architectural firm designed the original gardens in 1920.

The Blaine Memorial Park is located at Blaine Avenue and Green Street. The three (3) acre park designed by the Olmstead Brothers in 1920 features a horseshoe-shaped drive edged by an allée of trees, views to the State Capitol, the Kennebec River, and the grave site of Gov. & Mrs. James G. Blaine.

## **Nonprofit Recreational Facilities**

The Kennebec Valley YMCA (KVYMCA) serves roughly 16,000 people yearly through a variety of programs and services. KVYMCA's Augusta campus is adjacent to Capitol Park. The 42,000 square foot YMCA features:

- An 8-lane lap pool,
- Therapy/family pool,
- Childcare,
- Aerobics/dance/gymnastics space,
- Gymnasium,
- Childcare play area,
- A computer lab,
- Fitness center, and
- Racquetball space.

The KVYMCA serves kids, ranging from infants to pre-teens, with a focus on swim lessons, dance classes, martial arts and a variety of sports teams.

In addition to childcare and youth camps, the Augusta Y provides a variety of adult and senior activities including swimming, weight training, exercise classes, racquetball, indoor track, and sauna.

Augusta Boys and Girls Club offers activities for area kids and teens. The Boys and Girls Club provides both drop-in hours offering billiards, movies, computer activities, and structured programs such as summer arts camps. The Club hosts roughly 100 kids per month in both structured and unstructured activities. The Club is in the process of rehabbing a new facility in downtown Augusta where they will be able to expand their programs and offerings.

Capital Area Recreation Association (CARA) is a non-profit association located near the Mayfair neighborhood. It manages two (2) little league fields, two (2) softball fields, a horseshoe pit, two (2) Babe Ruth fields, and three (3) soccer fields.

The Augusta Nature Education Center is located immediately adjacent to the Cony High School complex. The Center is comprised of 175 acres, with 5 miles of undeveloped natural habitat trails including a meadow, a forest, historic granite quarries, small waterfalls, lily ponds, and beaver ponds.

The trails are accessible from Cony High School, Cony Street extension, Haskell Street, former Hodgkins Middle School, Hicks Street, South Belfast Avenue, and Murray Street. The park is managed by The Augusta Nature Club.

The Viles Arboretum encompasses 224 acres near the Mayfair neighborhood. The five (5) mile, year-round trail system is open to hiking, jogging, bird watching, non-motorized biking, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing on groomed winter trails. A number of trails have hard-packed surfaces suitable for wheelchair access. The Arboretum provides outdoor education and scientific research as well. The grounds include The Johnson Outdoor Education Center and the Viles Visitors Center.

Lithgow Library offers arts and literary programming, access to electronic resources, and reference services to all Augusta residents. The library has almost 60,000 books, periodicals, and audiovisual items, along with access to Maine Info Net. Lithgow hosts community events throughout the year, including computer and reading groups.

### **For-Profit Recreational Entities**

For-profit recreational activities in or directly adjacent to Augusta include:

- An ice arena
- Movie theater
- Batting cages
- Golf
- Mini golf

### **Access to Natural Areas and Resources**

In addition to parks and fields, Augusta is home to a wide variety of natural areas and resources. This includes the parks and boat launches along the Kennebec River as well as trails, wetlands, and resource-protected areas. More information on these areas is provided in the environmental chapter.



## Water Features

Augusta has a range of water-based recreation opportunities, the most visible being the Kennebec River. It can be accessed by several parks along its banks. Besides the river, there are eight (8) brooks and seven (7) ponds (listed below), many of which provide areas for swimming, boating, fishing, and other outdoor water-based recreation.

### Lakes/Ponds

- Little Togus Pond
- Anderson Pond
- Lily Pond
- Three-Cornered Pond
- Togus Pond
- Dam Pond
- Greenly Pond
- Worumontogus Lake

### River/Brooks

- Kennebec River
- Whitney Brook
- Brann Brook
- Bond Brook
- Riggs Branch
- Rockwood Brook
- Stickney Brook
- Stone Brook
- Stony Brook

Augusta Waterfront Park lies on the west side of the Kennebec River and is accessible from Water Street. It is a part of a green corridor which includes the East Side Boat Landing, Kennebec Greenway, and Fort Western. The park stretches for two (2) acres behind the downtown, has a sitting area, and provides dock access to the river.

The East Side Boat Landing is located in downtown Augusta on the east side of the Kennebec River. It provides direct access to the river, with docks and fishing areas. The park covers eight (8) acres and includes a boat launch, playground, benches, and a picnic area.

Mill Park is a seventeen (17) acre site located along the northwest side of the Kennebec River at the base of the Sand Hill neighborhood. The park includes fishing areas, picnic tables, petanque courts, a dog park, and open space along the river's edge. In addition, the park hosts an open-air/seasonal farmers market from June through September.

## Trails

Kennebec River Rail Trail (KRRT) is a 6.5-mile path linking Gardiner, Hallowell, Farmingdale and Augusta. The first section of the Trail goes 1.6 miles from the Waterfront Park in Augusta to the Hallowell's downtown. There are two trail heads in Augusta: one at the IFW parking lot (beneath Memorial Bridge), the other behind Capitol Park, adjacent to the YMCA.

Bike Trail Capitol is a Bicycle Coalition of Maine-identified trail that runs along existing roadways for 59 miles from the State Capitol to the scenic lakes region west of Augusta. It goes through the communities of Augusta, Hallowell, Manchester, Litchfield, Winthrop and Monmouth.

Nature Trail at the University of Maine at Augusta includes eighty (80) acres of designated open space and a four (4) mile fitness trail with exercise stations.

Bond Brook Recreation Area includes eighty (270) acres with miles of trails discussed earlier in this chapter.

The Kennebec Greenway is a one (1) mile riverside walking/bike trail which runs from Old Fort Western to the Arsenal and eastside state complex.

Augusta is home to a myriad of snowmobile clubs that maintain 39 miles of ATV - Snowmobile - mountain bike trails that run through Augusta and Vassalboro.

### **Wildlife Habitats and Preserves**

The Great Sidney Bog covers one hundred and fifty (150) acres - of which Augusta owns 100 acres- and is located along the northern edge of the city border with Sidney.

The Alonzo H. Garcelon Wildlife Management Area incorporates nineteen hundred (1900) acres of State-owned open space. It is located in the northeastern corner of the city, and also covers parts of the towns of Windsor and Vassalboro.

The WMA offers a variety of outdoor activities including canoeing on Tolman and Dam Ponds, freshwater and ice fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching.

Pleasant Hill Road Conservation Area is a two hundred (200) acre forested wilderness area located on the southeast side of Augusta on Route 17. It contains hiking and cross-country skiing trails that connect to Viles Arboretum.

### **Recreation and Leisure Issues**

Because city neighborhoods have houses close together, neighborhood parks and trails and open space are particularly important to the quality of life.

While Augusta has abundant open space, it still lacks sufficient urban parks. Current residents, many of whom are low income and/or do not have large yards of their own, depend on public recreation and park facilities such as pools, playgrounds, and ball fields. They need safe environments close to their homes for their children to play as well as areas for outdoor recreation. Studies on attracting future residents to urban areas indicate that families are willing to move in-town (rather than to rural areas) provided they have access to a sense of space, greenery and privacy. In addition, Augusta's population is aging (see Population Chapter) and, as such, there is an increased need for passive recreational opportunities — parks (with adequate benches and lighting), accessible trails, access to water — to meet their needs.

The city should focus energy on improving the existing urban green spaces and expanding or creating new urban green spaces that are critical for attracting residents to urban locations and greatly improve the sense of place for the urban environment, softening it and connecting urban resident to nature.

### **Other issues include:**

- The City Open Space Plan is currently being updated by TJD Associates and will be a blueprint for future needs. The content of that plan should supplement this plan and be the primary guiding document for recreation and open space in Augusta. The update should include a review of completed projects and an assessment of funding and timing for completion of the remainder of the plans recommendations.

- There is insufficient marketing for Augusta’s recreational and cultural assets.
- There is a need for additional lighting at outdoor recreation facilities in the city.
- Fairs, festivals, and community celebrations offer a great way for people to experience Augusta – they should be expanded.

## **EDUCATION**

The quality of education in any city or town is one of its greatest assets for attracting families and businesses which help to keep that city or town vibrant and fiscally sound. Augusta is no exception. One way to build the city’s tax base and stabilize, if not reverse, the flight of residents to surrounding communities is to strengthen educational services.

The goal of public school education is to prepare students to be fully functional and contributing members of society, to be good citizens and neighbors, and to develop the skills, knowledge, and critical thinking capabilities to secure their place within the community. The students, in turn, are an asset to the city, helping to advance its economic and cultural potential.

This section addresses education in Augusta in three parts:

1. An inventory of the Augusta educational system
2. The workforce education needs of the area
3. Key educational issues facing Augusta
  - a. Attraction and retention of teachers
  - b. Pre-kindergarten education
  - c. Academic rigor

### **Inventory**

#### **Public Schools**

Augusta has one middle/high school and four elementary schools. Augusta also has a regional technical high school (Capital Area Technical Center) serving a number of surrounding school districts.

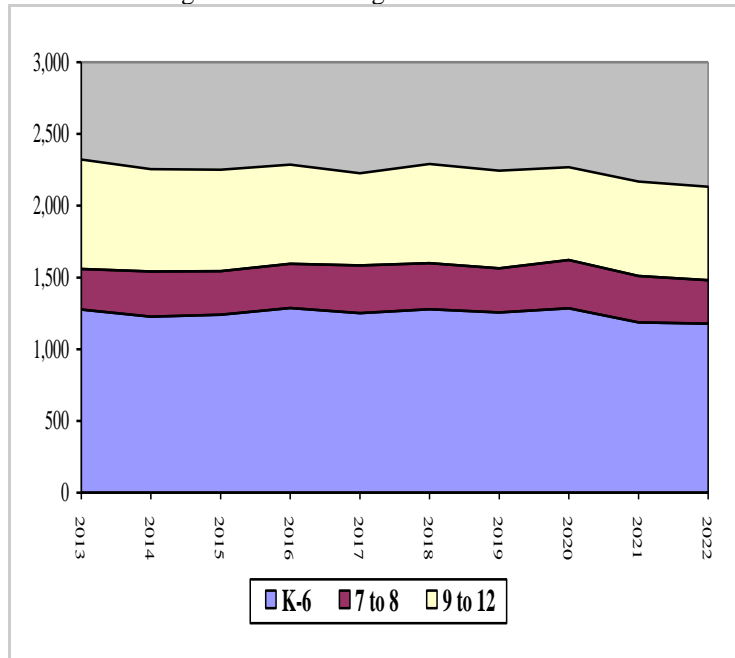
The Cony/CATC complex serves grades 7-12. Farrington, Gilbert, Hussey, and Lincoln Elementary Schools serve grades K-6; Gilbert and Hussey Schools also have pre-kindergarten programs.

Enrollment in Augusta public schools has remained relatively stable between 2013 and 2022 with a slight drop in the pandemic years (Exhibit J1).

The 2006 opening of the new Cony High School led to increased interest and excitement within the city. However, enrollment in the Augusta school system has dropped from about 2,500 district-wide when the school opened to just below 2,300 students per year and has stayed at that level for the last decade.

Of the remaining five public schools, one is a half-century old and in poor condition: Hussey Elementary (Exhibit J2). PDT Architects, the consultant to the School Department, recommended in 2006 that both Hodgkins Middle School and Hussey Elementary School be replaced with new facilities.

**Exhibit J1:** Public School Enrollment in Augusta. Source: Augusta School District.



During the last ten years, Hodgkins was closed and middle school operations were moved to the Cony/CATC complex, while the Hussey Elementary School situation will be the pressing issue in the coming decade and will require significant thought about how and where educational services are provided in the city.

There exists an attractive and effective set of special education programs, a nurse and counselor in every school in Augusta, and the district employs a highly qualified and dedicated workforce including teachers, professionals, and administrators. At the elementary level, the all-day kindergarten program, the beginning of a Pre-K program operated in collaboration with Head Start, and the offering of foreign languages were highlighted. In addition, the new high school, and the team approach used to build a stronger sense of belonging for students were also identified.

**Exhibit J2:** School Building Capacity and Quality. Source: Maine DOE; Facility Study by Augusta School Department and PDT Architects, 2005.

	<b>Lincoln</b>	<b>Gilbert</b>	<b>Farrington</b>	<b>Hussey</b>
Grades	K-6	Pre K-6	K-6	Pre K-6
Year built	1988	1971	1988	1953
2020 enrollment	305	373	325	282
Optimum capacity	260	320	440	200
Square footage	38,000	53,000	48,000	29,000
<b><i>Optimum replacement date</i></b>	<b><i>2038</i></b>	<b><i>2021</i></b>	<b><i>2038</i></b>	<b><i>2003</i></b>
<i>Condition (90 pts)</i>	80	67	78	18
<i>Capacity (40 pts)</i>	33	37	31	22
<i>Learning Environment (60 pts)</i>	45	40	45	21
<i>Flexibility (10 pts)</i>	5	5	5	2
<b><i>Building rating (200 pts)</i></b>	<b><i>163</i></b>	<b><i>149</i></b>	<b><i>159</i></b>	<b><i>63</i></b>

## **The New Cony High School**

A 2003 study by Planning Decisions for the Augusta School Department found that the new Cony High School had the potential to:

Increase educational opportunities. The new high school is next-door to the Capital Area Technical Center. The only other district in the state with a combined high school/technical school is the Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School. Officials from Oxford Hills indicate that the arrangement has increased the number of “traditional” students taking technical courses, and vice versa;

Substantially improve the image and marketability of Augusta. Two of three homebuyers are influenced in their judgment by the perceived quality of local schools; as such the new high school could be a major attraction for new residents;

Provide overall improvement in community image. The new high school offers a safer and a better learning environment for its almost 1,000 students.

Since Cony’s opening in 2006, these findings have held true. Continuing and improving on those positive outcomes is critical to Augusta’s continued growth.

## **Private Schools**

St. Mary’s School and St. Augustine School combined into St. Michael’s School in 2007. Enrollment in the combined School was 176 students in grades Pre-K to 8 in 2019, slightly less than 1/2 of the student population 15 years ago. But it is a stable population and expected to remain so.

Augusta parents also send their children to Stepping Stones Montessori School in Chelsea (serving 50 Pre-K to grade 8 students); and the Kennebec Montessori School in Fairfield (serving 70 Pre-K to grade 3, students).

## **Homeschooling**

Homeschooling is a growing practice in Maine. Over 2% of students nationally and in Maine are taught at home. There is no data readily available on home schooling in Augusta.

Local groups involved in homeschooling include:

- Homeschool Associates (Lewiston, ME)
- Central Maine Self-Learners
- Capital Homeschooling Cooperative (meets at Buker Center)

Buker Center has welcomed the homeschooling community by hosting an "Open Gym" twice a week.

## **Higher Education**

The University of Maine at Augusta (UMA) was established in 1965. In 2018-2019 UMA’s enrollment was approximately 6,200 spread across its Augusta and other campuses statewide. UMA has 5 post-baccalaureate, 19 baccalaureate, and 14 associate degree programs with 39 minors and 29 certificate



programs. There are also aviation courses taught at the airport through the Maine Instrument Flight Inc. and a number of technical and community colleges serving the greater Augusta area, including Purdue University located in the MarketPlace at Augusta.

**Workforce Education Needs**

Maine’s Learning Results provide the standard for all Maine schools, defines student needs as “the knowledge and skills essential to prepare students for work, for higher education, for citizenship, and for personal fulfillment” Nationally, No Child Left Behind states that the goal of public education is to ensure that every high school student graduates and is ready for the workplace or college.

How are the needs of Cony High School students being met? The following examines student performance data and the workforce readiness of new employees, as well as anticipated future educational requirements and opportunities in the workplace.

**Student Performance at Cony**

High school completion rate. Student performance is often measured by the percentage of students graduating from their high school with a regular diploma. Individuals who drop out or receive a high school equivalency certificate (GED) are not included in this count. Completion rates for Cony are at about the state average, but below neighboring schools (Exhibit J3).

Continuing education. Many high school students continue their education in college, university, or other institutions of higher education. An annual survey of Maine high school seniors indicates many graduates intend to continue their education primarily at the college, university, and vocational school levels (Exhibit J4).

Maine Educational Assessment (MEA). The MEAs are designed to measure student and school progress in achieving the academic standards set forth in Maine’s Learning Results. The grade 11 MEA has been used to measure achievement from 1999 to 2005 (Exhibit J5). Beginning in 2006, the MEA was replaced by the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) for grade 11, testing in critical reading, writing, and mathematics. However, results for this exam are not yet available.

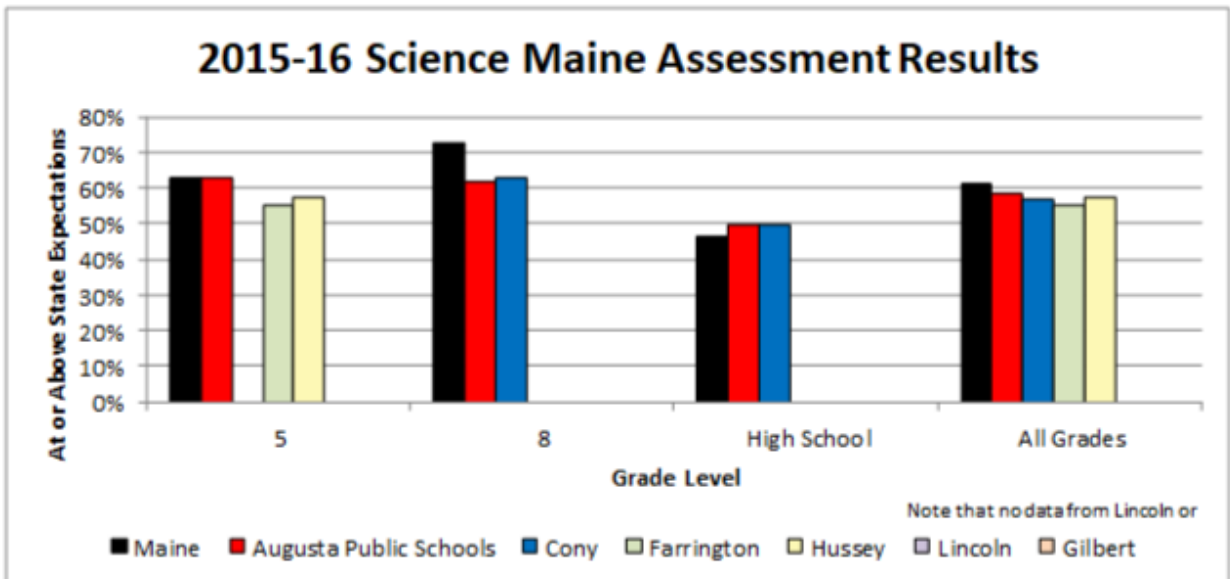
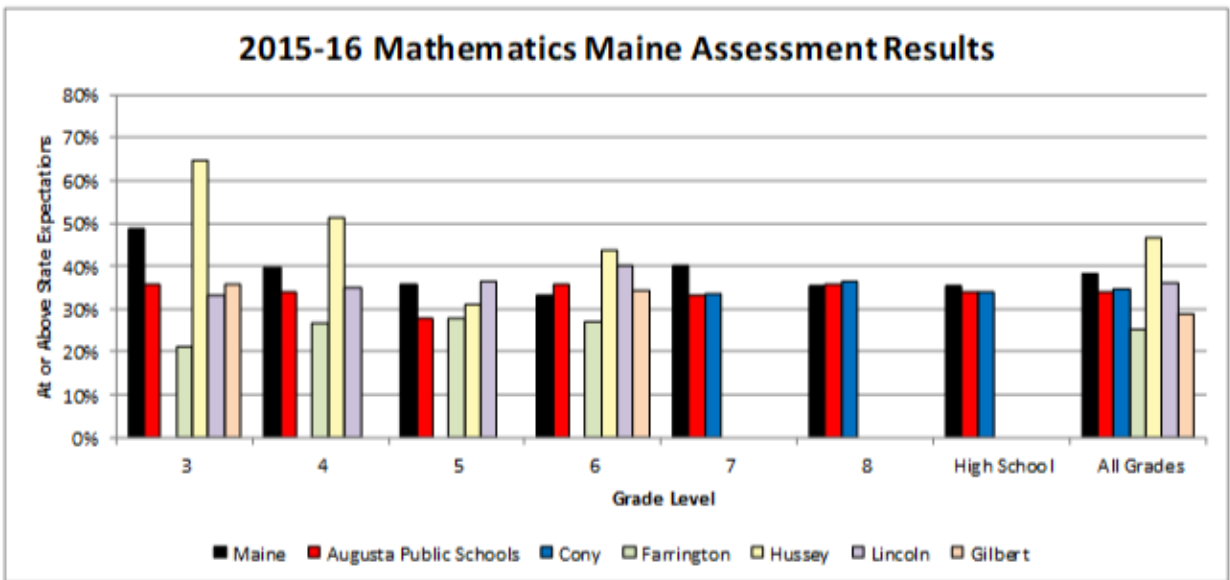
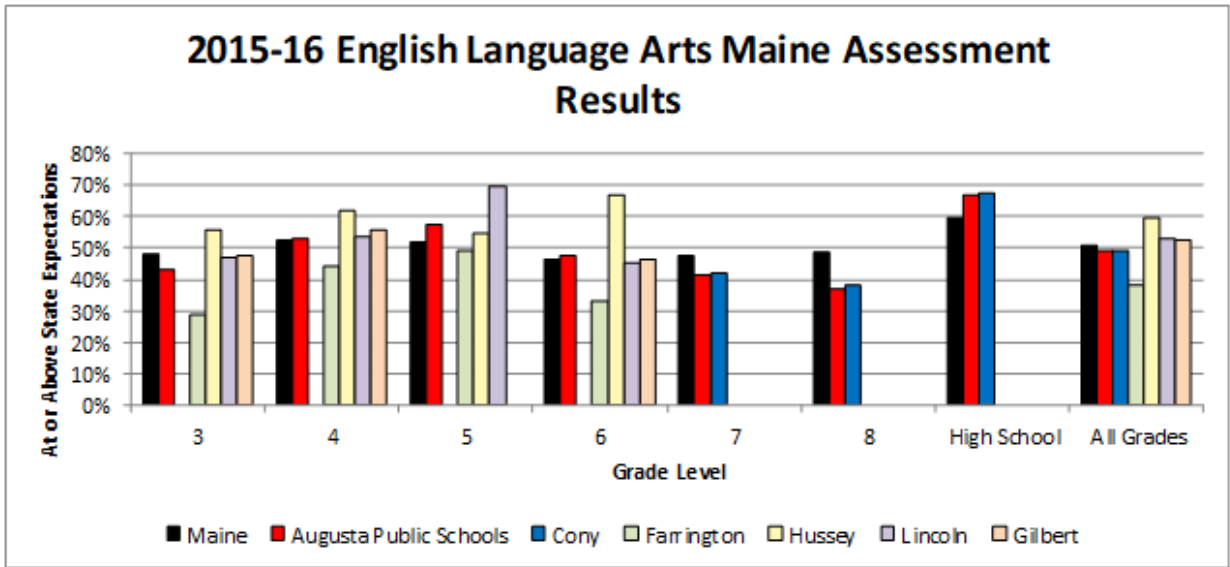
MEA performance in reading, writing, mathematics, and science is measured at four levels: (1) exceeds standards, (2) meets standards, (3) partially meets standards, and (4) does not meet standards. MEA test results for Cony High School and the State as a whole are presented in Exhibit J6.

**Exhibit J3:** High School Completion Rates at Cony and Maine Public Schools. Source: Maine DOE.

School Year	Number of Cony Students Receiving a Diploma	High School Completion Rates:	
		Cony	All Maine Public Schools
2017-18	148	87.5%	87.5%
2017-18	147	86.7%	87.5%



Exhibit J4: MEA Results.



## The Workplace: Employer Ratings Now and Their Jobs in the Future

Education/training requirements for future jobs. The evolving nature of Maine’s economy means that workers must be able to learn and adapt quickly to be successful. The Augusta region’s economy is diverse and its fundamental needs are for an educated workforce that can meet rapidly changing requirements.

While the majority of future jobs in Central Maine will require some form of on-the-job training, most of the growth in jobs is projected to be in positions that require at least some degree of post-secondary education (Exhibit J5). The fastest growing jobs will be those that require an Associate’s degree (+0.5%), followed by Bachelor’s degree (+0.2%) and Master’s degree (+0.2%). The same pattern is projected for job growth statewide.

Future occupational shifts. Occupational shifts are projected to continue to occur as mature industries are replaced by the emerging service-producing sector. Managerial, professional, and technical jobs are increasing rapidly while blue-collar jobs stagnate (see Economic Development Chapter for more information). Central Maine is also expected to experience these occupational changes.

The occupations projected to experience the fastest growth in Central Maine are in service, professional, sales, and office occupations, all of which will see double-digit increases in job openings.

**Exhibit J5:** Education/Training Requirements for Jobs in Central Maine and Maine, 2002-2012. Source: Maine DOL, Labor Market Information Services.

Education/Training Requirement	Percent of Projected Jobs					
	Central Maine			Maine		
	2002	2012	Change ('02-'12)	2002	2012	Change ('02-'12)
First professional degree	1.6%	1.7%	0.1%	1.6%	1.7%	0.1%
Doctoral degree	0.5%	0.6%	0.1%	0.5%	0.6%	0.1%
Master’s degree	2.0%	2.2%	0.2%	1.8%	2.0%	0.2%
Bachelor’s degree + work experience	4.7%	4.8%	0.1%	4.7%	4.9%	0.2%
Bachelor’s degree	9.9%	10.1%	0.2%	10.6%	10.8%	0.2%
Associate degree	4.2%	4.7%	0.5%	3.9%	4.4%	0.5%
Post-secondary vocational award	4.2%	4.3%	0.1%	4.2%	4.3%	0.1%
Work experience in related occup.	7.4%	7.4%	0.0%	7.4%	7.5%	0.1%
Long-term on-the-job training	8.0%	7.7%	-0.3%	8.0%	7.6%	-0.4%
Moderate-term on-the-job training	21.8%	20.4%	-1.4%	20.6%	19.4%	-1.2%
Short-term on-the-job training	35.9%	36.0%	0.1%	36.6%	36.7%	0.1%

### Key Education Issues

The following key issues were identified by the education subcommittee.

1. Attracting and retaining quality teachers.

At the heart of education is the teaching/learning experience. Across the country there is a disturbing trend of new teachers opting out of the profession within the first five years. Augusta is no exception. The school system averages about a 10% annual turnover in teachers. As the baby boomers approach

retirement, the problem will become even more pronounced. There have been efforts to use volunteer mentors to assist new faculty in making the adjustment from college to the classroom. Unfortunately, these endeavors have not had the desired effect upon the faculty retention rates.

## 2. Expanding Pre-Kindergarten education programs.

Many of the issues schools face arise before children arrive at the school door. This is why there has been more interest in early intervention through an expanded pre-kindergarten program in Augusta, in Maine, and throughout the country.

An increasing number of Augusta’s public school students are from families of lower incomes (see Community Development Chapter). Studies show that these students are more likely to have educational deficits when they begin kindergarten. To help these children learn and adapt to school life, Augusta provides pre-Kindergarten program.

Maine is one of only eight states that includes support for Pre-K education as part of the school funding formulas (as of FY 2007). This means the State will pay for a Pre-K student at the same proportion as other students in the public school system. A Maine Department of Education publication entitled *Achieving Prosperity for all Maine Citizens*, states:

*“The first years of life are critical for later outcomes. Young children have an innate desire to learn. That desire can be supported or undermined by early experiences. High quality early childhood education can promote intellectual, language, physical, social, and emotional development, creating school readiness and building a foundation for later academic and social competence.*

*Too many children enter kindergarten with physical, social, emotional, and cognitive limitations that could have been minimized or eliminated through early attention to child and family needs.*

*Ongoing research confirms that children’s readiness for school is multifaceted, encompassing the whole range of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills that children need to thrive. Recent brain and other child development research indicates that access to early and continuous prenatal care, well child care, mental health services, comprehensive family support programs, early intervention programs, high quality early education and economic security have a great impact on the likelihood that children will enter school ready to learn. A foundation of universal access to pre-kindergarten is critical for our young children.”*

For these reasons the state goal is to have all children covered by Pre-K education. National research assembled by “Pre-K Now” supports this thinking. It indicates that a community’s participation in Pre-K education leads to the following benefits:

- higher high school graduation rates
- better performance on standardized tests
- reduced grade repetition
- reduced children placed in special education
- reduced crime and delinquency
- lowered rates of teen pregnancy
- greater employment and higher wages as adults



- more stable families

(www.preknow.org)

The organization estimates that for every \$1 invested in high-quality Pre-K education, taxpayers gain \$7 over the long term.

A quality early education program in Augusta, available to all its young, is central to the long-term success of Augusta's schools and citizens.

### 3. Promoting "Academic Rigor" throughout Augusta's schools

Initiating conversations among and between Augusta school faculties. Students in Augusta's school system make at least two significant transitions as they move from kindergarten to their senior year at Cony High School.

The first transition is from elementary to the middle school, and the second from the middle school to the high school. Seemingly, the move from elementary to the middle school is smooth. Faculty comments indicate that there may be a problem coordinating curricula between the middle and high schools.

In the past two years, conversations have been underway between the schools of the University of Maine System, the Community College System, and the state's high schools about the issue of college readiness. The discussion highlighted that there has been little to no effort to align high school graduation requirements with post-secondary admissions criteria.

As a result, high school graduates who do very well in high school often need developmental coursework when they reach college. The same kind of pattern can happen within the K-12 school system when outcomes, say, for eighth grade mathematics are not be aligned with the starting point for their ninth grade math classes.

Though the Maine Learning Results program outlines year-by-year curriculum outcomes, conversation needs to take place at the school level to address such issues.

Lengthening the school day and school year. Historically, the lengths of the school year and school day have shrunk. This is an important issue. If students are not in class, they cannot be taught by their teachers. To improve the educational experience one factor that can be controlled is the time spent in the teaching/learning environment. Exhibit J6 provides information on current school times.

A related topic is the starting time of the high school. Science has established that the sleep patterns of teenagers is different than when they are pre-teens or post-teens, and that a later start in their day would be more conducive to their ability to pay attention and learn in the morning. This is a subject that deserves further consideration.

**Exhibit J6:** Time in the Classroom. Source: Augusta School Department.

1	<b>Length of the school day</b> (in hours & minutes) for:			
	Elementary School students	6 hours	25 minutes	
	Middle School students	6 hours	40 minutes	
	High School students	6 hours	5 minutes	
2	<b>Beginning and ending times for:</b>	Begin	End	
	Elementary School students	8:20	2:45	
	Middle School students	7:20	2:00	
	High School students	7:10	2:15	
3	<b>Length of school year for:</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Begin</b>	<b>End</b>
	Elementary School students	175	Aug 25th	June 12
	Middle School students	175	Aug 25th	June 12
	High School students	175	Aug 25th	June 12
4	<b>Average time student spends in class (see note below)</b>			
	Elementary School students	5 hours	15 minutes	
	Middle School students	5 hours	0 minutes	
	High School grade 9 & 10	4 hours	40 minutes	
	High School grade 11	4 hours	0 minutes	
	High School grade 12	3 hours	20 minutes	
<i>Note: Excludes time spent in homeroom, lunch, study halls etc,</i>				
5	<b>Percentage of teaching load handled by substitute teachers for:</b>			
	Elementary School students	10%		
	Middle School students	12%		
	High School students	6%		
6	<b>Percentage of teaching load handled by provisionally or non-certified teachers:</b>			
	Elementary School students	7%		
	Middle School students	9%		
	High School students	11%		

Revamping school curriculum. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the curricula of the nation’s high schools need to be amended. Maine and Augusta are not exceptions.

The Gates Foundation Early College programs that place “at risk” students during their junior and senior years into university and college courses found that a high percentage of students who are “struggling” in high school are doing so because they are not engaged or challenged by their learning experience. When placed in a college setting, they often excel. This indicates a lack of rigorous curricula in high schools.

Another signal that the curriculum needs to be amended is visible in the numbers of high school graduates who go on to college and need developmental/remedial course work to prepare for their regular college instruction. Unfortunately, many of the students needing remediation graduated from high school with relatively high grades. Though this is the opposite of what was indicated above, it shows that the overall levels of education are not meeting students’ needs.

Two dated but still relevant publications that speak strongly to this concern are the Maine Commission on Secondary Education’s 1998 report entitled PROMISING FUTURES: A Call to Improve Learning, and the previously cited Achieving Prosperity for all Maine Citizens. In the Achieving Prosperity for all Maine Citizens report special attention should be paid to Strategy III as it directly relates to a “college-ready curriculum.”

## **HISTORIC AND CULTURAL ASSETS**

Augusta is rich in historic and cultural assets. Native Americans have inhabited the shores of the Kennebec for thousands of years. The first European trading post was established here in the early 1600s. During the 1800s, the city became a county seat and state capital. Augusta itself is a national historic and cultural asset.

This chapter surveys Augusta's historical, archaeological, and cultural resources and discusses major trends that could affect future services and development.

### **Historical and Archaeological Resources**

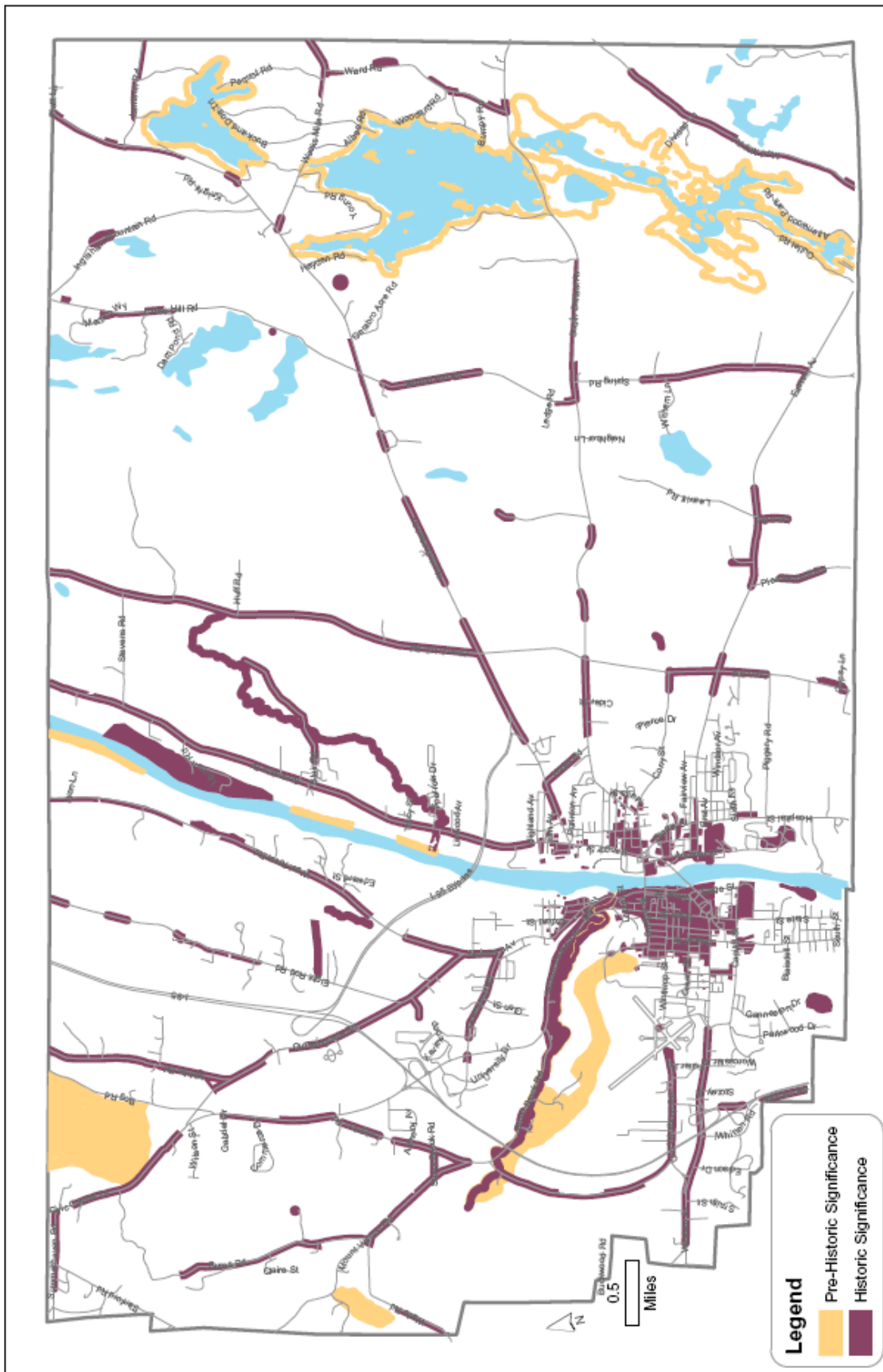
#### **Prehistoric Archaeological Resources**

Prehistoric archaeological resources are those sites relating to Native American settlement. According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), there are 30 known prehistoric archaeological sites Augusta. The vast majority of these sites – 28 of the 30 – are along the banks of the Kennebec River above the former Edwards Dam. The other sites are Fort Western, and significant findings located around Togus and Three Corner Pond, Spring and Bond Brooks, and the Great Sydney Bog area (Exhibit K1).

The exact location and nature of archaeological resources are held by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to protect landowner privacy and the sensitivity of the archaeological sites.

An archaeological survey has been completed along the shores of the Kennebec River above the old Edwards Dam Site. Other areas that warrant additional survey, including the shores of Togus Pond, Three-Cornered Pond, Great Sidney Bog, and some areas of sandy soil in North Augusta.

**Exhibit K1:** Areas Sensitive for Pre-Historic and Historic Features. Source: Augusta GIS and Maine Historic Preservation Commission.



## Historic Archaeological Resources

Historic archaeological sites relate to the earliest period of European settlement. According to the records of the MHPC, there are 18 known historic archaeological sites in Augusta (Exhibit K2). To date, no city-wide archaeological survey of Augusta has ever been conducted – all previous surveys were site-specific.

**Exhibit K2:** Historic Archaeological Sites. Source: Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

Site	Description
Fort Western	English Fort
Cushnoc	English Trading Post
The “Great House”	English Domestic
Mill	American Mill
Kennebec Arsenal Dump	American Dump
Abenaki Catholic Burial Ground	Native American Cemetery
Canadian Settlement #1	French & Irish Settlement
Canadian Settlement #2	French & Irish Settlement
Canadian Settlement #3	French & Irish Settlement
J. Packard Farmstead	American Farmstead
Pierce Blacksmith Shop	American Workshop, Blacksmith
Central Park House	American Hotel
Unidentified Shed/Barn	American Unidentified Structure
H. Pierce Farmstead	American Farmstead
Dreuillette’s Jesuit Mission	Multi-ethnic Mission
Riggs Brook Dam	Anglo-American Dam
J. Robie	American Domestic
J.L. Dutton	American Quarry
Great Sidney Bog	*Added by Historic Subcommittee

## National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation’s official list of significant cultural resources. The Register is run by the Department of the Interior which works with and supports public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect significant historical and archaeological resources.

Augusta has 35 historic places on the National Register (Exhibit K3). These include public and privately owned churches, parks, trails, houses, and government facilities, and even a locomotive. The majority of these historic places are clustered in urban neighborhoods in southwest Augusta.

An intensive survey conducted between 1991 and 1998 by the MHPC and stored at the Kennebec Historical Society identifies all Augusta properties by property type, architectural data, age, location and any significant historic data. While only some were eligible for inclusion in the National Register, the vast majority retain local historic importance unique to Augusta.



**Exhibit K3:** Historic Sites Registered on the National Register of Historic Places. Source: Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

<b>Site</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>Year Listed</b>
James Blaine House	Capitol Street	Government	1966
Fort Western	Cony Street	Military, Commerce	1969
Arnold Trail to Quebec	Kennebec River to Quebec	Transportation, Military	1969
Maine State House	Capitol Street	Government, Architecture	1973
Old Post Office	Water Street	Architecture	1974
Lot Morrill House	113 Winthrop Street	Architecture, Government	1974
Lithgow Library	Winthrop Street	Architecture	1974
Kennebec County Courthouse	95 State Street	Architecture	1974
“Lion” the Locomotive	Maine State Museum	N/A	N/A
Gov. John Hill Mansion	136 State Street	Architecture, Government	1977
All Souls Church	70 State Street	Architecture	1978
Dr J Ellis House	62 State Street	Architecture	1979
South Parish Church, Parish	Church Street	Architecture	1980
Tappan-Viles House	154 State Street	Architecture	1982
Algernon Bangs house	16 East Chestnut Street	Architecture, Industry	1982
Guy Gannett House	184 State Street	Communications, Arch.	1983
Fuller-Weston House	11 Summer Street	Law	1984
Vickery Building	261 Water Street	Architecture, Commerce	1984
St Mark’s Episcopal Church	9 Summer Street	Architecture	1984
Gov. Samuel Cony House	71 Stone Street	Architecture, Government	1985
D.V. Adams Company Block	190 Water Street	Architecture	1986
Doughty Block	265 Water Street	Architecture	1986
Journal Building	325-331 Water Street	Architecture	1986
Kresge Building	241–249 Water Street	Architecture	1986
Libby-Hill Block	227-233 Water Street	Architecture	1986
Masonic Hall	313-321 Water Street	Architecture	1986
Noble Block	186 Water Street	Architecture	1986
Sturgis and Haskell Block	180–182 Water Street	Architecture	1986
Whitehouse Block	188 Water Street	Architecture	1986
Williams Block	183-187 Water Street	Architecture	1986
St. Mary’s Church	39 Western Avenue	Architecture	1987
Cony High School	Cony Circle	Architecture, Education	1988
Capitol Park	Capitol Street	Landscape Architecture	1989
Cushnoc	Address Restricted	Historic, Commerce	1989
Augusta City Hall (former)	1 Cony Street	Architecture, Government	1997

## Historic Districts

Augusta currently has five historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Exhibit K4). These districts include:

Kennebec Arsenal Historic District includes the 12 buildings and outbuildings on the east side of the Kennebec River. The Arsenal was established in the early 1800s to protect the city and the nation's northeast frontier. The Arsenal's buildings have served a variety of uses through the years, and are now undergoing a concerted redevelopment effort. A historic restoration of the waterfront improved the aesthetics of the site and added a wharf and access to the river. The Arsenal was listed on the National Register in 1970.

Bond Street Historic District is traditional 19th century mill housing that includes a number of identical side-by-side apartment buildings that maintain their original architecture and give the street a unique sense of place.

Crosby Street Historic District includes eight structures along Crosby Street and Crosby Lane between State Street and Northern Avenue. These early settlement structures are significant for their Federal and Greek Revival architecture.

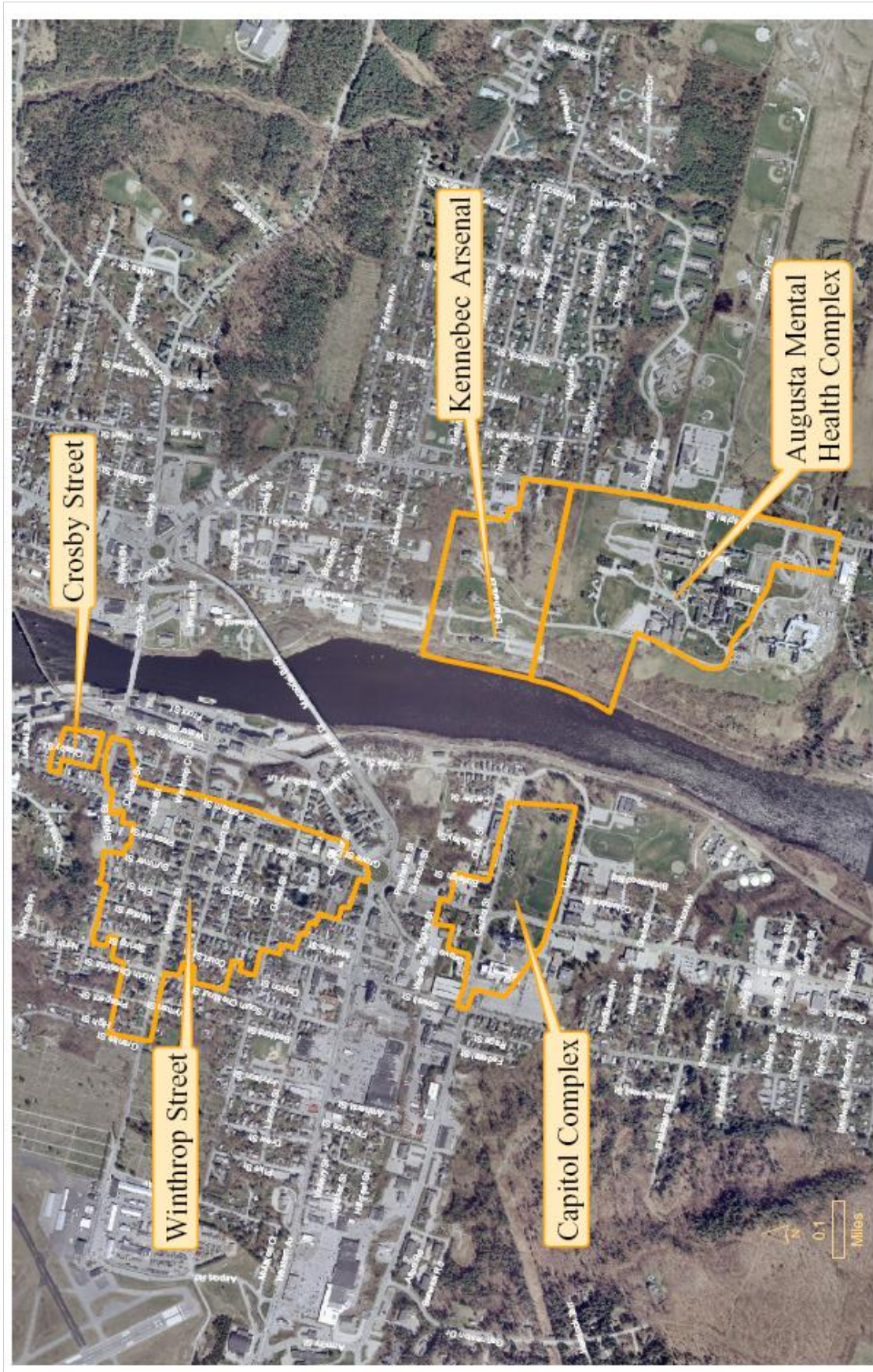
AMHI Historic District includes approximately two dozen buildings surrounding the site of the former Augusta Mental Health Institute (AMHI) facility. This district is bounded by Hospital Street, the Kennebec River, and the Kennebec Arsenal Historic District. Several buildings have been recently renovated or are undergoing renovation. These buildings are largely state-owned and the site was listed on the National Register in 1982 and expanded in 2001.

Capitol Complex Historic District includes the buildings and grounds within and around the Capitol Complex and Capitol Park. John Calvin Stevens, Charles Bulfinch, and the Olmstead Brothers all had a hand in the design of the facilities in this area.

Winthrop Street Historic District is a mixed residential and commercial neighborhood roughly bounded by State, Bridge, North and South Chestnut, and Green Streets. There is a wide variety of architectural styles in this district, including buildings by John Calvin Stevens and Thomas Little.

Water Street Historic District is a classic downtown New England historic district with first floor commercial uses and upper story residential uses.

Exhibit K4: Historic Districts. Source: Maine GIS.



## Protection of Historic and Archaeological Sites

Augusta's archaeological sites are not only important in telling the history of Augusta, but are also significant to the history of the Kennebec Valley and the State of Maine. The artifacts collected from these sites should be made available to educators and researchers.

Currently, the major protection of archaeological sites falls under Section 106 of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act. This section calls for archaeological mitigation on sites that are being developed by federal funds, owned by the federal government or require an Army Corps of Engineers permit. Private properties being developed using private funds that do not require Army Corps of Engineer permits do not require archaeological mitigation.

The only other source of national protection for archaeological sites is for sites connected to standing structures listed on the National Historic Landmarks Register.

Neglect and inappropriate development are the principal threats to historic and archaeological resources. Tools, other than the National Registers, to protect these resources in Augusta include:

- The Augusta Zoning Ordinance's Performance Standards which requires that a developer seek comments from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission before the Planning Board issues a building permit on any land that might have a structure or site eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- The Augusta Zoning Ordinance's Site Plan Review process which requires that a proposed development "not have an undue adverse effect on historic sites."
- The Augusta Historic District Ordinance was passed in 2016 and regulates development in the Winthrop Street Historic District and the Water Street Historic District. The regulations are modeled on the U.S. Department of the interior requirements for the city to be a Certified Local Government and the city has achieved that designation as a result.

## Organization Capacity

The following organizations deal with historic preservation in the City of Augusta.

The Augusta Historic Preservation Commission is a five-member commission appointed by the City Council whose task is to preserve and enhance districts, sites, and landmarks in our city. Duties of the commission include working with private landowners, creating educational campaigns, supporting the Planning Board, and reviewing demolition permits in designated historic districts. The Commission works in an advisory capacity only and lacks implementation authority. The Commission receives approximately \$5,000 in annual funding from the City of Augusta with expenditures approved by the City Manager.

The Old Fort Western Board of Trustees is a fifteen-member board appointed by the City Manager with the consent of the City Council. Its task is to "protect, preserve, and interpret the historic site and structures of Old Fort Western." Old Fort Western receives funding from a variety of sources, including approximately \$110,000 in annual funding from the City of Augusta.



The Augusta Historic District Review Board is a quasi-judicial board operating much like a Planning Board for the local historic overlay districts. Currently, the local districts match the boundaries of the Water Street Historic District and the Winthrop Street Historic District.

The Commission works in an advisory capacity only and lacks implementation authority. The Commission receives approximately \$5,000 in annual funding from the City of Augusta with expenditures approved by the City Manager.

The Old Fort Western Board of Trustees is a fifteen-member board appointed by the City Manager with the consent of the City Council. Its task is to “protect, preserve, and interpret the historic site and structures of Old Fort Western.” Old Fort Western receives funding from a variety of sources, including approximately \$110,000 in annual funding from the City of Augusta.

## **Historic Resources**

### **City of Augusta Owned**

Old Fort Western is a living history museum along the east bank of the Kennebec River, adjacent to the City Center. Built in 1754, the 100 by 32-foot National Historic Landmark is America's oldest surviving wooden fort. The fort hosts exhibits, lectures, and interpretive events year-round. In addition, the fort is open to the general public through the summer months and hosts historical outings, apprenticeships, and summer camps for area youth.

The Lithgow Public Library provides a full suite of library services to the residents of Augusta and surrounding communities. The library has children, teen, and adult collections and programs. Annually approximately 110,000 patrons visit and 160,000 books circulate through the library. An evolving component of the library’s services includes providing access to a range of digital media, including databases and services (about 11,000 hours of computer time are used by patrons each year). The library receives funding from several sources, including an appropriation of roughly \$850,000 in FY2021 from the City.

### **State of Maine Owned**

The collections at the Maine State Museum preserve and present the state's rich natural and human histories. It includes a geological collection, biological holdings and Maine-related archaeological and ethnographic collections such as materials dating from the first Native Americans in the area (circa 12,000 B.P.). The museum is located adjacent to the Capitol Complex and shares the building with the Maine State Library and the Maine State Archives.

The Maine State Archives is the repository for official state records deemed to be permanently valuable. Currently the archives include more than 95 million pages.

The Maine State Library was founded in 1836 and has two parallel roles. It serves as the official library of the State of Maine and houses collections, books, archives, and databases, while also assisting with the development of libraries around the state, running the Maine Regional Library Service and other services.

### **Private Non-profit Owned**



The Kennebec Historical Society was founded in 1891. Its collections include genealogy, manuscripts, newspapers, photographs, and scrapbooks pertaining to the City of Augusta's history as well as the histories of surrounding communities. The society, located at 107 Winthrop Street, sponsors a year-round free public lecture series.

The Children's Discovery Museum offers a myriad of hands on learning experience for children of all ages.

Holocaust Human Rights Center at UMA maintains an education center at the UMA Bennett Katz Library. It includes a permanent exhibit depicting the history of the Holocaust, including photographs of survivors, classroom space for seminars, workshops and lectures, a research room, and office space.

The First Amendment Museum is an effort of the Gannett family to highlight the Constitutional Rights of all Americans with special emphasis on the First Amendment and the importance it plays in ensuring an informed and educated public and functioning democracy. The museum is located at 184 State Street, the former home of part of the Gannett family, a prominent newspaper publishing family in the U.S.

### **Historic Preservation Issues**

1. The 2007 Comprehensive Plan recommended addressing Augusta's lack of viable preservation tools necessary for the protection of its historic and archaeological sites. Between 2007 and 2016, Augusta adopted a demolition delay ordinance to slow the process of historic building loss and adopted a Historic District Ordinance regulating development in two of Augusta's National Historic Districts. The city should build on and consider expanding these ordinances to other historic districts to protect Augusta's unique history.
2. The City can do more to protect and preserve known historic and prehistoric sites and artifacts.
  - It can work with representatives of the Kennebec Historical Society and the Historic Preservation Committee to establish standards and procedures for inventorying known artifacts and documents to ensure their preservation.
  - It can work with the Kennebec Historic Society and Maine Historic Preservation Commission to identify funding sources for the research and preservation of historic sites, including funds available because the city is a Certified Local Government via the National Park Service due to its historic district ordinance
  - Continue to require developers to get information from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for developments occurring in areas designated by this plan as potential historic or archeological areas.
3. The City could insure that the mandate of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act is complied with during the building permit process.
4. The City establish archaeological zones – i.e., areas of high probability for archaeological sites. In these areas the City should offer incentives for developers to conduct archaeological surveys.

5. The City should survey of all of its City-owned property to determine archaeological potential and degree of archaeological mitigation needed.
  - Possible funding sources are State and Federal Grants, Utilization of State Resources, and working with local universities and/or high schools to offer field schools.
  - Based upon the outcome of this survey, the City should conduct detailed surveys in threatened areas.
6. The City of Augusta could either create a new cultural center or expand Old Fort Western’s mandate to include archaeological materials from all archaeological sites within Augusta.
  - The City could hire a curator to catalog, inventory, house and properly maintain all archaeological materials and to generate and post online inventories for educational and research purposes.
  - The City could apply to take ownership or custody (permanent loan) of all Augusta-based archaeological materials currently housed at the MEHPC or State Museum to be housed in the City of Augusta’s official repository.

## **Cultural Assets**

This section reviews the current state of arts and cultural resources in the City of Augusta through the lens of the “Creative Economy”. The term “The Creative Economy” means those sectors of economic activity that “...specialize in creating or designing new ideas, products, services, artistic works, applications, relationships, or systems”. Included among these sectors are museums, historic sites, performance centers, art and music studios, and the like.

The “Creative Economy” concept envisions the arts and culture and their associated occupations and services as part of an economic engine whose contributions have until now been little recognized. Central to this economy are creative workers who create new ideas and products.

With these things in mind, this section assesses the current state of the arts and the “Creative Economy” in Augusta and recommends steps that would strengthen the creative sector and the community as a whole.

The analysis of current cultural conditions draws heavily upon reports and projects of importance to the development of arts and culture in Augusta such as:

The Discovery Research Project, conducted in Gardiner, Farmingdale, Hallowell and Augusta, and funded in part by a grant from the Maine Arts Commission. The project included interviews with arts-related individuals to determine the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the arts community.

Its major product was the Kennebec Corridor Arts & Culture Directory, available on the Maine Arts Commission’s website, which lists of hundreds of area artists, historic and cultural entities, and their allies.

Maine’s Creative Economy Community Handbook, a 2006 product of the Creative Economy Steering Committee developed under the direction of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and staffed by the Maine Office of Tourism. The handbook identifies 10 building blocks essential to the creation and support of a community’s creative economy:

- Strategies
- Creative People
- Centers of Education
- Cultural and Natural Amenities
- Business Engagement
- Infrastructure
- Networks
- Leadership
- Money
- Time

An eleventh building block unique to Augusta is the relationship with state government. As the state capital, Augusta could be a showcase of Creative Economy development in Maine.

Charting Maine’s Future: An Action Plan for Promoting Sustainable Prosperity and Quality Places – A report by Brookings Institute sponsored by GrowSmart Maine, released October 2006.

Maine’s Creative Economy Council Report – lays out the State-wide agenda for the strengthening of Maine’s creative economy. It was produced by Maine’s Creative Economy Council and the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center in 2006.

People, Places, and Prosperity was published in 2007 as the first report of the Governor’s Council on Maine’s Quality of Place by the Brookings Institute. The report offered a broader view of Maine’s resources and showed how Maine’s cultural sector fits into a larger picture.

### **Present Cultural Conditions in Augusta**

Augusta has created the conditions that are ripe for the expansion of cultural opportunities in the city. This is a stark contrast to the situation in 2007 described by the last Comprehensive Plan. The downtown has been transformed into a commercial and residential hub and the former Colonial Theater is in the midst of a fundraising campaign focused on the renovation and expansion of the facility as a cultural anchor for the city.

The city is growing and people are moving to the area in increasing numbers, attracted by Maine’s “sense of place” and Augusta’s convenient location. Many of these newcomers are retirees and many choose central Maine over coastal and southern Maine because of the affordability of housing and rural lifestyle. A vibrant downtown Augusta will serve to attract newcomers accustomed to urban amenities.

To this end, Augusta stands to benefit from the examples set by successful urban revitalization efforts throughout the state and elsewhere in the nation.

The Creative Economy can be a real economic force. Not just because the presence of artists, cultural institutions, and creative businesses generates jobs and money, but also because the Creative Economy

enhances a region’s quality of life and sense of place. A region with a vibrant cultural life is attractive not only to potential residents, but to businesses considering relocation. Augusta has the potential to be a destination for more than just retail mall shoppers and service seekers. The city’s unique artistic, cultural, and historical assets are the key to making Augusta a destination for cultural tourism as well.

With the proper public policy leadership, Augusta has all the "ingredients" necessary to benefit from the Creative Economy already in place.

**Arts and Culture issues**

1. Augusta's core identity, its sense of place, is defined by the Kennebec River and the city's historic structures, neighborhoods and gathering places. The integrity and value of those assets needs to be protected from unchecked development.
2. Augusta's economy needs to move towards greater diversification, including but not limited to heritage tourism and the creative economy.
3. The continued expansion of downtown revitalization should be the adaptive reuse of our historic structures for arts, cultural, gathering, and creative economy purposes.

**HEALTH AND WELFARE**

The City of Augusta is a center for health and social services for people from a large region in central Maine. It also has a significant population of people who are aging or who have low incomes, and who look to city and state for health and social service assistance. This chapter highlights the issues of health and welfare development within the City of Augusta looking at:

- Social Services Facilities
- Social Service Issues and Priorities
- Health Care
- Public Health Needs

**Social Service Facilities**

Augusta’s population is poorer and older than the state as a whole (Exhibit L1). The City addresses its needs through the programs of its Community Services Department and the advice of its Community and Social Services Advisory Committee.

**Exhibit L1:** General Indicators of Need 2015. Source: American Community Survey estimates (2011-2015).

Census Tract	101	102	103	104	105	Augusta	Maine
<i>General neighborhood</i>	<i>Eastern Ave</i>	<i>Sand Hill</i>	<i>West End</i>	<i>Capitol Area</i>	<i>Riverside Drive</i>		
<b>Families under poverty in last 12 months</b>	14%	6%	24%	24%	19%	19%	14%
<b>Individuals with physical Disability</b>	21%	18%	25%	27%	15%	21%	16%

<b>Individuals over 65</b>	20%	16%	16%	27%	19%	19%	18%
<b>Receive Supplemental Security Income</b>	6%	7%	15%	14%	7%	7%	4%
<b>Receive SNAP in last 12 months</b>	23%	9%	34%	42%	22%	27%	17%

The City’s Community Services Department includes a Health and Welfare Bureau that administers the Municipal General Assistance Program. This program provides immediate aid to persons who are unable to provide the vital necessities of life for themselves or their families. The Bureau serves all residents under the terms of the Augusta General Assistance Ordinance. The Bureau also tracks and monitors the need for and availability of health care, housing, jobs, and other social services. Bureau staff collaborates with area service providers and the community to address needs and problems as they arise. In addition, the Bureau represents the City in initiating and supporting state and federal legislation to improve social, health, and economic services.

The Augusta City Council is advised on social service issues by its Community and Social Services Advisory Committee (COSSAC). This is a standing advisory committee that the Council is required to consult regarding critical and emerging social issues.

### **Social Service Issues and Priorities**

In the spring of 2012, the Kennebec Valley United Way conducted a social services needs assessment for the region, including the City of Augusta. The study consisted of three parts: data collection, opinion-leader interviews, and focus groups with provider agencies. The study’s goal was to provide communities with a snapshot of need from which to build policies and strategies for providing critical services.

The priority of needs, as reported in the 2012 Kennebec Valley United Way Community Needs Assessment, were:

- Access to livable wage jobs – This relates to the region’s loss of good-paying manufacturing jobs and a growth of lower wage retail jobs and jobs significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the number one concern of respondents to the United Way’s survey.
- Children in Poverty – Both Kennebec County and Augusta have significant childhood poverty challenges. In September of 2020 the problem remains as much a concern as it was in 2012 with 53% of Augusta students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. This was the second greatest concern of survey respondents.
- Seniors in Poverty – Seniors in Maine and Kennebec County live in poverty at higher rates than elsewhere in the US and this is a major concern among survey respondents.
- Basic Needs Unmet - Low-income people were identified as having an increasingly difficult time meeting their basic needs and the pandemic has undoubtedly exacerbated that since the ending of unemployment and other benefits under the CARES Act.
  - Heat and Energy
  - Affordable housing



- Food insecurity
- Access to health care
- Early Education/child care - Augusta’s region is significantly underserved for Head Start, Early Head Start and child care services. Lacking these services puts low-income children at risk of entering kindergarten unprepared and places families in the difficult situation of not being able to work because of the lack of childcare.
- Transportation - Lack of adequate transportation continues to be a barrier to many low income families. Without adequate transportation, children cannot get to medical appointments, adults cannot get to jobs, and seniors cannot access assistance programs.
- Prescription Drug Abuse - in 2012 this was identified as a pressing concern and while it remains so in 2020, heroin and opioids has become a much bigger problem. Regardless of the drug, treatment and rehabilitation needs to continue to be a focus to help people of all economic statuses with this debilitating concern.
- Family Stressors - The combination of factors above, when taken together, continue to be factors that weigh down a family’s ability to succeed.

Throughout this Comprehensive Plan, there are opportunities to address all of these issues and help to make Augusta a healthy, vibrant community where the quality of life of all residents is valued and protected.

## **Health Care**

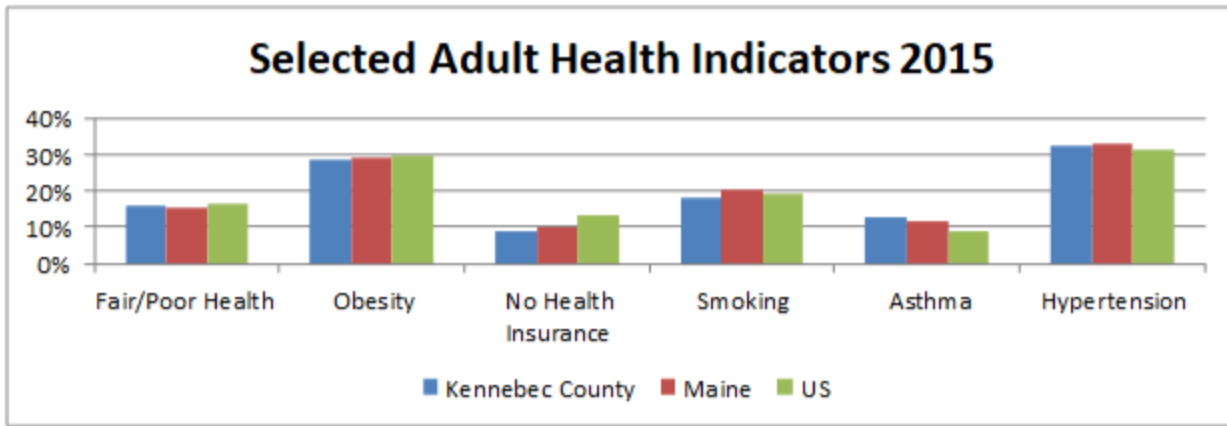
In September 2019, MaineHealth published a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) Report for Kennebec County. Part of that needs assessment included a Kennebec County Health Profile 2018.

According to the study, “The following six topics have been priorities in Maine since 2016. They were addressed in one or more of the following planning documents based on the 2016 Maine Shared CHNA: the State Health Improvement Plan, District Public Health Improvement Plans, and/or Hospital Implementation Strategies.

1. Cancer
2. Chronic disease
3. Mental health
4. Obesity and physical activity
5. Nutrition
6. Substance use, including tobacco”

Of these, Mental Health, Obesity and Physical Activity, as well and Substance Use (including tobacco) where the areas where Kennebec County has the most significant needs.

**Exhibit L2:** Health Indicators. Source: 2016 Maine Community Shared Needs Assessment.



## Hospitals

Maine General Medical Center is a \$312 million acute care hospital with 192 beds that opened in 2013. The hospital has two campuses: one in Augusta, the other in Waterville. Both campuses provide emergency care, medical/surgical care, maternal and child health, inpatient and outpatient diagnostic services. This state of the art facility is the third largest hospital in Maine after hospitals in Portland and Bangor.

Togus VA Medical Center, a 67 in-patient bed facility with general medical, surgical, intermediate and mental health beds. Togus VA Medical Center includes five (5) Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC), two (2) Mental Health Outpatient Clinics, and five (5) Vet Outreach Centers provide health care services to veterans who live throughout the state.

As a local section of Veteran Benefits Administration (VBA), Togus Veterans Service Center provides a wide range of benefits, information, and services to veterans and their families. These comprehensive services include compensation, pension and education application processing, vocational rehabilitation and counseling, and information about home loans, life insurance, education, and death/survivor benefits.

Riverview Psychiatric Center (formerly Augusta Mental Health Institute), a civil and forensic psychiatric treatment facility, offers a wide range of inpatient and outpatient medical rehabilitation services to individuals with serious, persistent mental illness.

The only treatment facility fully operated by the State of Maine, it is mandated and equipped to provide care, treatment, and involuntary hospitalization. Key services include pharmacy, therapeutic recreation, dietetic services and chaplaincy.

The Harold Alfond Center for Cancer Care, opened in Northwest Augusta in the summer of 2007 and is a state-of-the-art 55,000 square-foot facility on 110 acres. It consolidates the cancer treatment centers of Maine General’s Augusta and Waterville campuses. The project has significantly impacted the development of the city’s northwest side as by acting as a focal point for a new regional hospital and many medically-based satellite businesses and services to the area. This area will continue to flourish as a regional medical hub.

## Nursing Homes

Maine Veterans' Home - Augusta (MVHA) is a teaching facility, maintaining affiliations with hospitals, schools of medicine, universities, community colleges, and vocational schools. The facility includes 24-hour RN coverage in three separate nursing units: a 40-bed rehabilitation and skilled nursing care unit, a 40-bed long-term care unit, and a 40-bed secured long-term care unit for residents with Alzheimer's Disease and other dementias. The Cony Road facility is in the process of being replaced with a new Maine Veterans Home just off Old Belgrade Road and directly across from the MaineGeneral medical facility. The new 138 bed, \$91 million facility will be state of the art, include a “town center with a barber shop, movie theater, outdoor space and will close the existing facility.

Maine General Medical Center has two (2) rehabilitation and nursing facilities in Augusta, Glenridge and Gray Birch. Both have large activity and dining rooms and individual day rooms with private and semi-private rooms. Gray Birch offers long-term nursing care, transitional care for patients recovering from surgery or other disabling conditions, and a residential or assisted care unit. Glenridge provides long-term nursing, and includes a special unit for residents suffering from dementia.

Maine General Health also owns Augusta’s first retirement community, Granite Hill Estates. The 135-acre community began in 1997 and offers residents a full spectrum of retirement living options including cottages, apartments and assisted living choices that provide daily care. Facilities include a restaurant-style dining room, recreational areas, exercise facilities, a heated pool, transportation services, on-site banking, housekeeping, and physician services on site.

Augusta Rehabilitation Center offers a full range of medical services, including short-term rehabilitation and long-term skilled care. The staff includes medical specialists, nurses, nutritionists, dietitians, and social workers. The facility provides long-term, post-acute, and rehabilitation services.

## **Public Health Needs**

The City of Augusta, unlike other major cities, does not have a public health division. If it were to have such a division, the office would be responsible for a number of functions now performed directly by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services for Augusta. Such functions could include:

### Epidemiology and Emergency Preparedness:

- Investigates reportable diseases
- Coordinates public health emergency preparedness
- Works with private medical resources to assure prevention and treatment of reportable diseases (food borne illnesses, Lyme disease, whooping cough, hepatitis B, rabies).

### Family Health:

- Student health centers
- Maternal and child health (prenatal screening, new admission home visits, lead poisoning screening of children, CPR and first aid training).

### Health Promotion:

- Various programs to encourage and assist citizens to achieve a healthy lifestyle
- Children’s oral health
- Substance abuse prevention
- Overdose prevention

- Early detection and referral programs for chronic disease such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and lung diseases

Health Services for the Indigent:

- Free clinics operated in cooperation with private providers

Infectious Disease:

- Testing, treatment, management, and investigation of infectious diseases
- Comprehensive care for persons with HIV/AIDS
- Low cost immunization clinics
- TB testing

The City of Portland, with 64,000 residents, supports a public health division with a FY 2006 budget of \$4.3 million. However, by FY21 that spending had dropped to \$2.1 million due in large part to reduced grant funding for public health under the former LePage administration.

If Augusta supported a local public health division at the same relative level of effort, it would provide about \$300,000 in municipal funds, and could expect to generate a roughly equal amount in outside support. These funds would both stimulate the Augusta economy and help Augusta citizens live healthier lives.

Currently a number of non-profit organizations, including Maine General Medical Center and the regional Healthy Maine Partnership (Healthy Communities of the Capital Area), carry out important local public health functions.

No one in city government is currently charged with identifying health problems and working with private non-profit providers to assure that health, mental health, and dental services are available to meet the needs of the people who reside in Augusta.

While this analysis concentrates on Augusta by itself, no other community in the region is addressing public health either. There is a potential for a regionalized approach to this issue.

**Key Issues**

1. Augusta should have resources and policies that protect and promote good health for all of its citizens – adults, school children, and especially the poor, disabled, or elderly.

Augusta should consider a department of public health to assure clean water and air and to provide public health services. The 2020 issues that have arisen with social unrest and public health crises provide concrete examples of how a public health department could be utilized.

Augusta should have housing, food, transportation, and health care programs for its most vulnerable residents, while assisting them to become self-reliant.

2. The City should stimulate growth of the health care industry, recognizing it is one of the largest industries in Augusta and brings many people from surrounding towns into the city.

Incentives could include financial incentives for both practitioners and for health service organizations.

The City could work with existing organizations to expand medical and dental care, provide supported housing and social service programs for vulnerable residents, and build affordable housing for lower paid health care workers.

The City should review its existing “medical zone” around the hospital and cancer center to determine how to enhance the growth of the health care industry in Augusta.

3. The city should adopt policies that encourage healthy behaviors, including safe driving, walking, good nutrition, and avoidance of tobacco use.

All parks and other city properties should remain smoke-free.

Citizens should be able to walk safely to work, school, shopping, health services, and civic and cultural events.

Augusta schools should have policies and programs to support health and healthy behaviors for students, teachers, and administrators.

Students should be encouraged to walk to school, have daily physical activity at school, be encouraged to eat healthy food, and avoid tobacco, drugs, and alcohol.

The schools should seek to partner with parents and community agencies in the effort to help students to be healthy.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

As Maine’s capital city, Augusta has a wider range of public safety concerns than the average Maine community. There are issues related to homeland security because of the presence of state government, to the influx of workers and shoppers every day that roughly doubles Augusta’s population, and to being a service center and a provider of health and mental health services.

This chapter addresses issues of public safety in the community and provides information on current safety levels, as well as future needs. Exhibit M1 on the following page provides a map of Augusta public safety facilities.

### **Part I: Crime and the Police Department**

Crime statistics are collected in two ways. The first is from Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), a summary of monthly activity submitted to the state government. The second is through a system that records each incident in an Incident-Based Report (IBR). The IBR is newer and provides greater detail than the UCR but only a few police departments in Maine are using the system (Augusta is one), and the data is not collected in any one place for comparison purposes. Therefore, the UCR data will be used for this analysis to allow for comparisons (Exhibit M1).

**Exhibit M1:** Crime rates per 1,000 residents, 2015. Source: Crime in Maine, 2015. Maine Department of Public Safety.

<b>2015 Uniform Crime Reports</b>	<b>Crime Rate</b>	<b>Clearance Rate</b>
US	29.75	19.5
New England	21.90	22.8
Maine	19.56	35.3
Kennebec County	24.76	38.9
<b>Augusta</b>	<b>55.57</b>	<b>47.4</b>
Waterville	46.81	38.5
Brunswick	17.62	34.6
Lewiston	22.19	21.27
Auburn	32.87	52.39
Portland	33.51	25.1

Compared to other Maine communities, and even to the United States overall, Augusta has a relatively high crime rate. A crime rate is calculated by comparing all of the “index crimes” committed in a community to its total population (in ten thousands). Index crimes are serious crimes: murder, rape, robbery (theft involving violence), aggravated assault, burglary (breaking and entering), larceny (nonviolent theft), motor vehicle theft, and arson. For Augusta in 2015, there were 1,536 index crimes, divided by a population estimated by the Public Safety Department to be 18,608.

What is deceptive about this crime rate is that the U.S. Census estimates that Augusta’s population more than doubles to more than 40,000 people during the day – a much higher increase than is true for the comparison communities in Exhibit M2. When this is taken into account, the crime rates for Augusta, Waterville, Lewiston, and Auburn would all be in the 30 to 40 range, comparable with each other.

When it comes to individual crimes, Augusta has extremely high rates for property crimes such as burglary and larceny – no matter how the numbers are calculated (Exhibit M3).

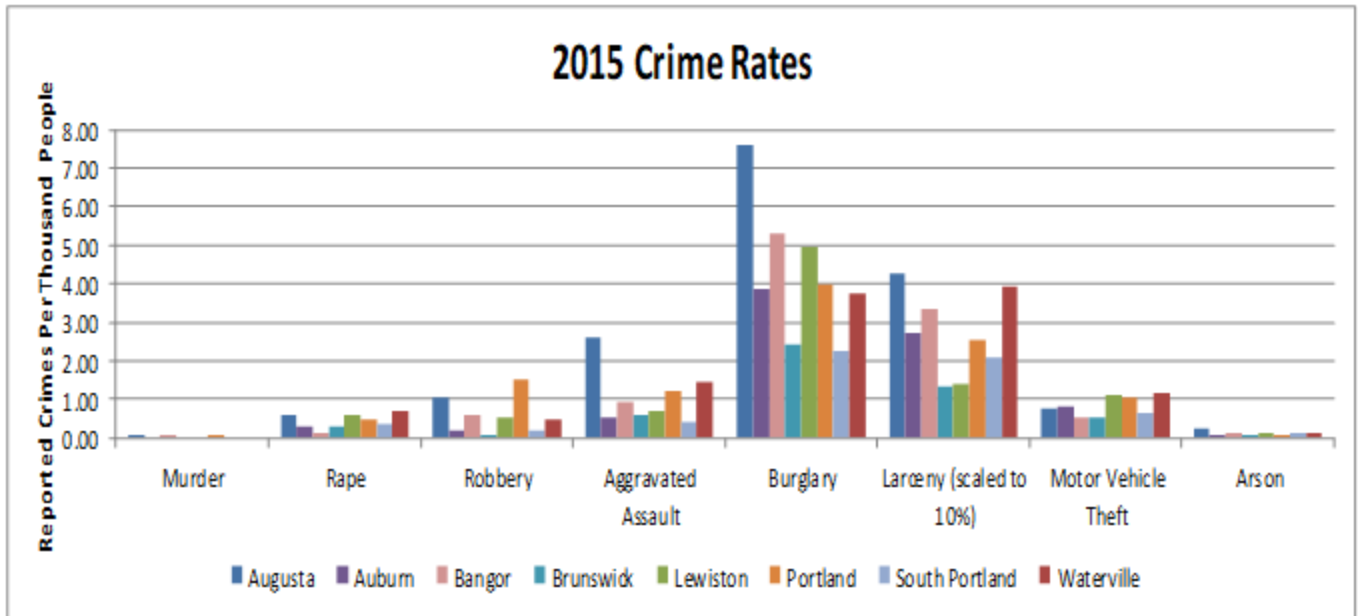
Augusta also has relatively high rates for more violent crimes. Nearly half of the reported rapes in Kennebec County were in Augusta (16 of 37), and nearly half of robberies (7 of 16), even though Augusta is only one-sixth of the county’s population.

Augusta also recorded the second-highest number of hate crimes of any community in Maine in 2005. Of the 56 hate crimes reported in Maine that year, seven were in Augusta (South Portland reported the highest number, with 10). Of Augusta’s hate crimes, three were anti-Jewish, and four were anti-gay. Three involved assaults, three involved intimidation, and one involved vandalism.

Finally, by virtue of its location and its role as a mental health and social service center, Augusta has a number of sex offenders living in the community, many of whom need to be monitored. A check of the National Sex Offender Public Registry in October, 2020, indicated that 117 sex offenders were living in Augusta at that time. That is effectively the same number as 2006. Many of the offenders reside close to schools and parks that children frequent, however, Augusta passed an ordinance in 2014 limiting the ability of offenders to move into these areas in the future. One of the Police Department’s duties is to inform the public when a sex offender moves into an area, and to monitor the person’s activities to the extent that is feasible.

**Exhibit M2:** Crime rates by crimes, 2015. Source: Augusta Police Department.





## Police Department

The City of Augusta’s police department is located at 33 Union Street. This station is also home of the City Emergency Operation Center (EOC), which acts as the information center in the case of a city-wide disaster. The location has emergency power, central communication equipment, and necessary documents such as maps, charts, and files. However, the building is in poor repair and replacement is necessary to continue to serve the city and meet federal Risk Category 4 construction standards for emergency facilities.

The Department is comprised of four (4) organizational segments: Administration, Patrol Division, Criminal Investigative Division, and Records and Communications Division. The department is made up of a Chief, a Deputy Chief, two Lieutenants, six Sergeants, two Staff Sergeants and thirty-two Patrol Officers. The patrol officers are broken down into: Patrol Division (22), Bureau of Criminal Investigation Division (BCI) (6), and Records (1). Additional staff includes ten dispatchers, Administrative Assistant (1), Secretary (1), Clerk (1.5), and Animal Control Officer (1), and one Mental Health Worker who is paid by another body.

The Patrol Division is responsible for protecting the public. The division is comprised of uniformed personnel who provide around-the-clock patrol of the city, conduct criminal investigations, and prepare reports. The division includes:

A Traffic Safety Officer who is responsible for the planning and development of traffic activities within the city and who serves as a liaison with the State Department of Transportation for the coordination of traffic rules and regulations.

Until 2019 the Parking District Officers responsible for managing parking, issuing tickets, providing parking permits, collecting and recording parking fines, and applying the “Denver Boot;”. The future of these duties will be changing in 2021 with a possible dissolution of the Parking District.

An Animal Control Officer whose duties include being a liaison between the area veterinarians and the Humane Society Shelter, handling dog licensing, and enforcing ordinances and regulations related to animals and reptiles.

The Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) is responsible for the investigation and apprehension of persons involved in major criminal activity. It assists the Patrol Division in conducting follow-up investigations as well as the recovery of stolen property. BCI works in cooperation with area businesses, municipalities, courts, and other law enforcement agencies for the efficient clearance of crime in the community. All undercover and VIP protection assignments are normally coordinated by this division.

CBCI includes a Juvenile/Crime Prevention Officer who provides for the proper handling of juvenile offenders. This officer also provides youth educational programs as well as traditional crime prevention programs such as Neighborhood Watch, Citizen Police Academy, Shoplifting and Robbery seminars, and crimes against the Elderly.

The Communication and Records Division is a support activity for all other divisions.

The communications aspect of the division is responsible for the recording, processing, and dispatching of all requests for assistance from throughout the city and Hallowell (on a contract basis) in the form of Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services.

The records aspect of the division is responsible for the maintenance of the computer system, department records, and property system, as well as the operational readiness of all officer and support equipment.

A uniformed officer is assigned to this division as the Court/Property Officer, who also processes bad check complaints.

### **Issues with the Police Department**

The dedication and professionalism of the men and women in the Augusta Police Department is second to none. However, the working conditions of the existing Police Department are a real problem.

The current Police Station was built in 1949 as a Naval Reserve Office and donated to the city in the late 1990s by the Navy as surplus property. It does not meet modern standards for withstanding a natural disaster and is not ideal for force protection in the case of an attack. The existing roof needs to be replaced, the water has been undrinkable due to lead since occupancy, the layout does not adequately separate people within the building and any changes to the building to meet these requirements or address these deficiencies would trigger the building code requirements to meet Risk Category 4 for the entire structure, which would mean essentially full reconstruction.

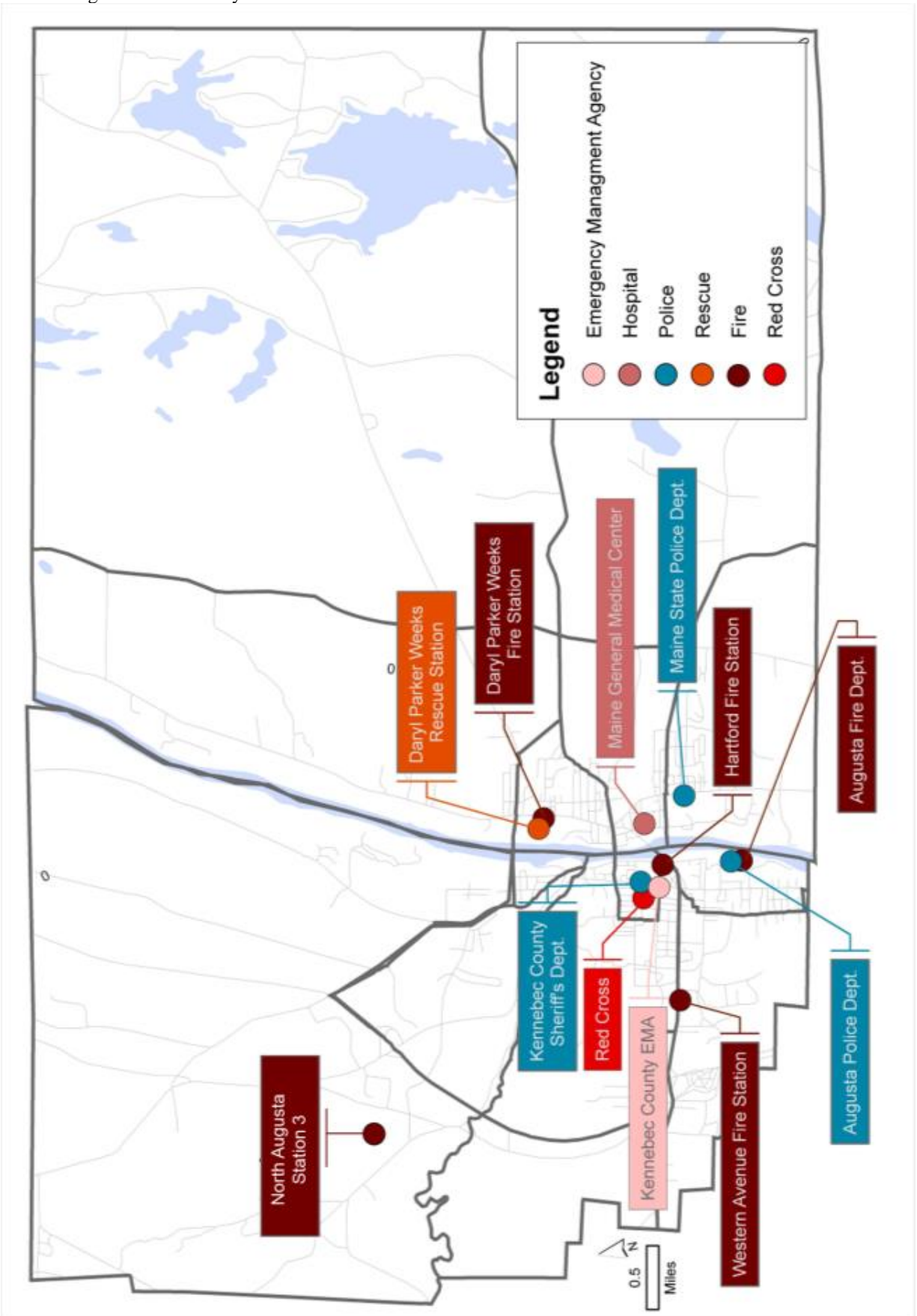
The process of identifying a new location for the police station began in 2018, but the pandemic of early 2020 put the process on hold. The City picked the issue back up in 2021 and had a new perspective on the challenges of locating a police department after witnessing the civil and social unrest of 2020 in cities around the nation. The new police station site was chosen at 7 Willow Street, a former Hannaford Supermarket site directly across from City Hall as a central location.

### **Part II: Fire and Emergency Medical Protection**

## **Background**

Over the last twenty-five years, municipal fire departments have been responding to fewer fires, but have been providing more services in the areas of emergency medicine, hazardous materials management, and search and rescue. A major reason for the reduction in fire incidence is the effectiveness of fire codes in reducing the vulnerability of new buildings. However, vehicles and equipment are becoming more specialized and expensive each year to meet the new service demands.

**Exhibit M4:** Augusta Public Safety Facilities.



## **Fire Department**

The Augusta Fire Department is comprised of forty-eight uniformed full-time firefighters and paramedics, one mechanic, and one administrative staff, who are located in three stations. It is a full-service department that provides not only the obvious function of fire suppression, but also emergency medical services (EMS) with inter-facility transfer; public information; fire safety inspections; public education; fire training; disaster management; water, extrication and rope rescue service; fire alarm; communications; and facility, apparatus and equipment maintenance. The Fire Department responds to approximately 6,800 calls each year, of which more than 5,300 are EMS related.

The budget of the fire department has been increasing steadily over the last three years. However, these increases are not due to new activities, but rather increased costs to maintain the department. Ambulance services generate fees from other municipalities and from insurers, which in most years is enough to cover expenses.

The Fire Department is part of the Central Maine Emergency Response Team (CMERT) and provides Hazardous Material response to the counties of Kennebec and Somerset. The Decon Strike Team 5 as they are called is partially funded through Federal and State support.

Rescue Services such as ice & water rescue are handled by the fire department. Confined space rescue is handled by a joint agreement between the fire department and the Augusta Sanitary District. The city's fire department handles all vehicle extrications, high-angle rescue, construction accidents. The entire 48-member department is certified in Airport Crash Rescue as part of an FAA requirement with the State Airport.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are provided by contract to the surrounding communities of Manchester, Hallowell, and Chelsea. In addition to providing emergency medical care, the paramedics also provide community education programs (CPR, first aid, etc) and runs a Risk Watch program.

Risk Watch is a school-based injury prevention program developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The program provides children and families with skills and knowledge to create safer homes and communities. The curriculum is divided into five teaching modules (Pre-K/Kindergarten, Grades 1-2, Grades 3-4, Grades 5-6, and Grades 7-8), each of which addresses the following topics: motor vehicle safety, fire prevention, CPR/first aid, poison prevention, fall prevention, firearms safety, bike/pedestrian safety, and water safety.

The Civil Emergency Preparedness Division (CEPD) is part of the fire and department. Its goal is to provide the highest level of preparedness and coordination of state, local, and federal resources to safely mitigate natural or weapons of mass destruction events. The division is currently updating its disaster management plan, to be released in 2008. The plan includes the location of emergency shelters, studies on response time and access routes, consolidation of dispatch and regional communication, coordination with healthcare officials on "Bird-Flu" issues, as well as securing funding and training for response teams.

## **Issues with the Fire Department**

1. North Augusta is a new station in 2017 designed to modern specifications. Hartford Fire Station was fully renovated and an addition constructed in 2018 to fit modern equipment and meet the needs of the department for the foreseeable future. DP Wells on Bangor Street is in a challenging

location and poor condition. The relocation and replacement of this station to better serve the eastern parts of Augusta should be considered.

The Western Avenue Station and Hospital Street Station were thought of as potential surplus property until the COVID-19 pandemic hit. They became critical facilities used to separate staff and reduce the chance of spreading infection. Long term planning for similar incidents should take into consideration the need for physical staff separation.

2. A mandatory sprinkler ordinance for all new building construction should be implemented. Numerous studies have proven that the most effective way to prevent fire-related deaths is the installation of fire sprinklers. On a national average, the cost of a residential sprinkler system equals only 1% to 1.5% of the total building cost. The City should consider tax incentives to defer any cost increase in construction. This will eventually pay for itself as future costs for fire suppression decrease.

Property damage caused by fires would be dramatically reduced which, over the long term, will lower Augusta's fire protection rating (currently the city has a fire protection rating of 4, where 1 is the best and 10 the worst).

The City's annual fire protection expenses would decrease as the demand for fire suppression forces is lowered with automatic sprinkler systems.

3. Over the past 10 years, the Fire Department has worked closely with the Code Enforcement Office to address Life Safety problems in Augusta's multi-family housing. This was a major effort and has made Augusta's housing much safer, however, the current economic downturn could set off a new round of neglect for many buildings and both the Fire Department and Code Enforcement Office will continue to work together to ensure safe housing in Augusta for residents of all incomes.

### **Part III: Other Public Safety Activities**

#### **Kennebec County Emergency Management Agency**

The Kennebec County Emergency Management Agency (KEMA) is part of a series of county-wide agencies focused on community mitigation (risk reduction) preparedness, response and recovery from emergencies and disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes or hazardous materials spills. It works under the umbrella of the Maine Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Defense, Veterans, and Emergency Management.

#### **Homeland Security**

State and local emergency management agencies are responsible for coordinating homeland security efforts throughout Maine. This includes the development of local and regional task forces focused on disaster response. A 2005 Homeland Security Grant was provided to the City of Augusta in the amount of \$459,062 for the purchase of communications and security equipment. The following groups working in conjunction with the KEMA provide community-based response and training for Homeland Security issues.



## Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

The team is comprised of civilian volunteers who have been trained to respond to community needs in the event of a major emergency. The team is trained in various aspects of emergency assistance and response, from first aid to incident command training. The goal is to assist the local emergency departments in the case of a city-wide disaster. Augusta is part of the Kennebec County CERT, which has been activated in several drills, as well as actual events.

## Local Emergency Planning Committee

The Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) is made up of 14 members from local government, law, emergency, medical, transportation, media, and community groups as well as concerned citizens. LEPC's main goal is to help oversee the movement and use of hazardous materials in Kennebec County, and assist businesses and governmental agencies in the establishment of policies and procedures for handling these materials. In addition, the committee works to provide disaster response plans and to attain the local infrastructure and training necessary to deal with a hazardous material disaster.

## FISCAL CAPACITY

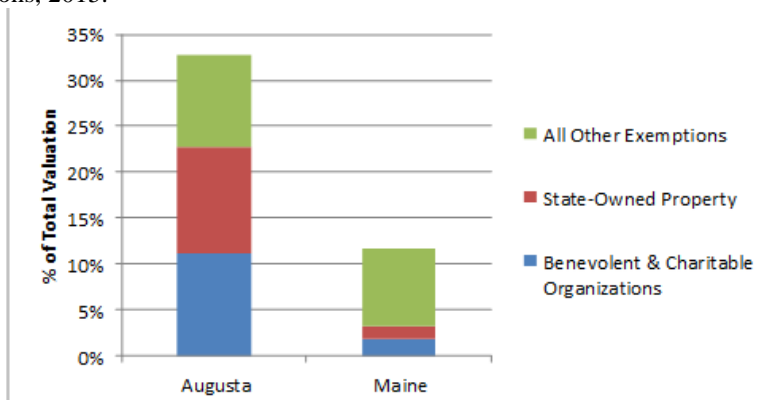
When the numbers are adjusted for inflation, the City of Augusta's fiscal record in the last ten years is impressive. Non-school expenditures have remained constant, property tax rates are down, and property tax collections have been reduced. On the other hand, bonded indebtedness has risen. Going forward, the City faces the need to make major investments in Fire Stations, a Police Station, and Public Works Facilities. To afford these improvements, continued economic growth will be needed.

## Assessed Valuation, Commitment, and Tax Rate

The 2008 recession had a severe effect on Augusta and the current pandemic-induced recession is still playing out. After inflation is taken out of the numbers, the assessed valuation of the city actually went down in real terms from 1995 to 2001. In the last ten years, the assessed value has steadily increased. Overall, residential and commercial uses have increased the most in value, while industrial uses have declined.

There was a revaluation in 2007 which illustrated this trend. After the revaluation, the share of property value attributed to industrial uses declined from 3.7% of total taxable value to 2.8%. Meanwhile, residential properties increased from 47% to 51%, and commercial properties from 39% to 40%.

**Exhibit N1:** Tax Exemptions, 2015.



According to state records, in 2005 over a quarter (28%) of Augusta’s property tax valuation was exempt from tax payments. This was over twice the state proportion of 12%. Most of the difference is accounted for by state government property (Exhibit N1).

Augusta has only insignificant amounts of assessed land in cropland (\$65,800), woodland (\$15,700), and open space (\$35,700) preservation.

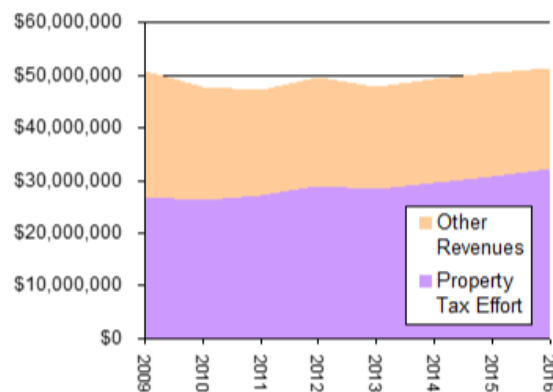
**Exhibit N2:** Augusta Assessed Valuation, Tax Rate and Commitment.

Fiscal Yr End June 30	Local assessed taxable valuation	Equalized state valuation	Annual change in value (state)	Tax rate	Property Tax Commitment	Annual Tax Rate Increase
2016	\$1,703,496,600	\$1,540,250,000	2.4%	19.40	\$33,047,834	3.9%
2015	\$1,677,742,000	\$1,503,750,000	0.9%	18.67	\$31,323,443	2.9%
2014	\$1,626,342,700	\$1,490,850,000	0.1%	18.15	\$29,518,120	3.4%
2013	\$1,604,345,700	\$1,490,000,000	-1.9%	17.55	\$28,156,267	1.4%
2012	\$1,594,105,400	\$1,518,850,000	-0.5%	17.30	\$27,578,023	1.5%
2011	\$1,585,823,000	\$1,526,350,000	-1.7%	17.05	\$27,038,282	2.1%
2010	\$1,569,894,000	\$1,552,200,000	0.1%	16.70	\$26,217,230	0.0%
2009	\$1,556,585,600	\$1,550,100,000	4.8%	16.70	\$25,994,980	0.0%

Through this period of mostly slow growth in the property tax base, the City has managed to keep its tax commitment flat (Exhibit N2). Total property tax collections increased from \$24 million to \$32 million between 2012 and 2021.

When inflation is taken out, this is actually a decline in real property tax collections of 6%. In the meantime, revenues from other sources – principally state and federal aid -- increased from \$12 million to \$18 million. This outside revenue has helped to reduce the pressure on the property tax (Exhibit N3).

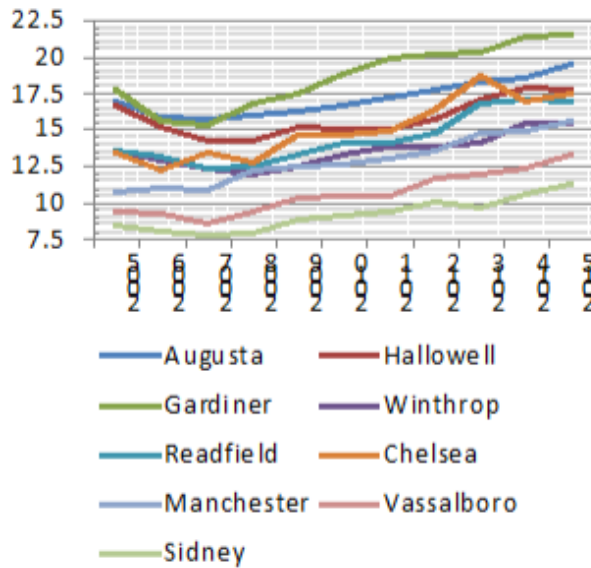
**Exhibit N3:** Augusta Local Tax Commitment.



During this period the property tax rate has risen in nominal terms from 21.7 in 1995 to 26.0 in 2006, then fell again to 16.5 as a result of the revaluation. An easier way to see the property tax impacts of the budget is to calculate the average tax paid by household. The City of Augusta has made this calculation. From 1996 to 2007 the average home property tax bill has gone from just under \$1,700 to just over \$1,700 – a remarkable record during a period of rising fuel and maintenance costs.

Because of this fiscal conservatism, Augusta’s property tax rates, once much higher than surrounding communities in Kennebec County, have come closer together (Exhibit N4).

**Exhibit N4:** Full Value Tax Rates.



When inflation is factored out, municipal and education expenditures in Augusta have both remained essentially flat over this period (Exhibit N6).

The City also has four “enterprise funds” that support local services. Enterprise funds are supported by user fees, as opposed to general fund taxes. Such funds support the Augusta Civic Center, Hatch Hill Landfill, the Airport, and the ambulance service. In all, these funds brought \$7.2 million in revenue in the fiscal year ending on June 30, 2019, and expended \$6.8 million (Exhibit N5).

**Exhibit N5:** Enterprise Funds, Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2019.

	Revenues	Operating	Income (loss)
Augusta Civic Center	\$3,196,327	\$2,900,203	\$296,124
Hatch Hill Landfill	\$2,960,000	\$2,850,000	\$11,000
Airport	\$584,733	\$601,021	(\$16,288)
Ambulance	\$1,164,557	\$1,222,558	(\$58,001)
Total	\$7,208,772	\$6,884,762	\$324,010

When it is considered that homes are less expensive in Augusta than in many surrounding towns, that Augusta residents receive more services than residents in rural towns, and that Augusta residents have shorter commutes to work – then the property tax difference becomes even less important.

**Exhibit N6:** City Expenditures. Source: Augusta Finance Director.

Fiscal Yr end June 30	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total	\$45,808,240	\$49,280,373	\$51,118,056	\$48,749,541	\$48,092,943	\$49,466,668	\$49,644,038	\$50,339,782	\$50,027,152	\$52,195,814
Education	\$25,334,169	\$27,571,927	\$27,332,285	\$26,145,023	\$24,921,342	\$26,520,191	\$25,391,160	\$25,245,751	\$25,206,685	\$26,376,189
Total less education	\$20,474,071	\$21,708,446	\$23,785,771	\$22,604,518	\$23,171,601	\$22,946,477	\$24,252,878	\$25,094,031	\$24,820,467	\$25,819,625
Council, admin, finance,	\$2,069,802	\$2,108,358	\$2,269,324	\$2,090,354	\$1,932,403	\$2,066,470	\$2,057,249	\$2,206,021	\$2,198,872	\$2,241,506
Dev serv + public wks	\$4,455,145	\$5,180,697	\$5,264,080	\$4,636,937	\$4,821,949	\$4,544,805	\$4,718,043	\$4,848,663	\$5,415,171	\$5,007,266
Comm services	\$2,115,058	\$2,099,892	\$2,063,501	\$1,892,153	\$1,959,452	\$2,097,974	\$2,179,071	\$2,285,625	\$2,277,315	\$2,247,263
Public safety	\$5,462,470	\$5,728,125	\$7,478,538	\$7,263,830	\$7,671,112	\$7,870,019	\$7,864,817	\$8,156,722	\$8,453,214	\$8,802,013
County	\$1,349,609	\$1,395,237	\$1,406,380	\$1,358,766	\$1,396,619	\$1,350,807	\$1,398,648	\$1,404,986	\$1,429,518	\$1,475,821
Insur, utilities, other	\$3,797,557	\$4,077,653	\$4,280,361	\$4,359,631	\$4,624,732	\$4,321,562	\$5,182,980	\$5,294,000	\$4,103,076	\$4,631,019
Debt	\$1,224,430	\$1,118,484	\$1,023,587	\$1,002,847	\$765,334	\$694,840	\$852,070	\$898,014	\$943,301	\$1,414,737

The outlook is for continued stability in the coming years. Redevelopment of existing in-town sites and buildings is occurring as is residential development around the city. Housing values are increasing significantly, and demand is projected to grow in coming years from retirees, new state employees, and young people.

There are also fiscal challenges that the city will face, including:

- Paying for a new police station;
- Paying for a new fire station on the east side;
- Paying for improved streets and sidewalks;
- Helping to pay for replacement schools (or rehabilitation) because of the age and condition of Hussey Elementary School; and,
- Continuing to support affordable housing development.

These challenges are described in more detail in other sections of this inventory.

### **Tax Increment Financing**

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a tool that enables the City to reduce the tax burden to new developments that promote City goals of job development or affordable housing, while at the same time sheltering the City from potential losses in state education funding and revenue sharing as a result of the

development. In some cases, a TIF can be used entirely for the benefit of the municipality to offset the costs associated with a development.

Augusta has been aggressive in its use of this instrument. Since 1994, the City has used TIF to shift property tax benefits of the Marketplace at Augusta to the downtown area, by using the accumulated funds to support the downtown parking garage, for example. The City has also used this tool to promote expansions at McCarthy Printing, NRF Company, and PFG. Most recently the City provided TIF benefits for an affordable housing development at the old Cony Flatiron, Hodgkins School, and Maple Street that repurposed historic buildings and provided much needed new affordable housing.

TIFs have been a tool used to assist in the redevelopment of several downtown buildings and were critical to saving one downtown building that was rapidly deteriorating. And the TIFing of the natural gas company infrastructure allowed the use of that revenue to repair streets and sidewalks damaged as a result the installation of that infrastructure.

The total commitment of tax increment financing (TIF) funds in the current fiscal year (2021) is \$2,892,803.

### **Long-Term Debt**

The City funds capital investments through a combination of sources:

- state and federal grants
- local bonds approved by referenda (larger issues)
- local bonds approved by the Council only (smaller issues)
- cash from the Undesignated Fund Balance

Some of the bonds are repaid by the City General Fund, some are repaid largely by the state (i.e., Cony High), and some are repaid through enterprise funds.

The City Council approves an annual capital improvements plan outlining commitments through the coming five years. It is put together by City staff, incorporated into the Manager's proposed budget, and then refined through the Council process.

The City also has a five-year equipment replacement schedule which is updated every year as part of the same budget process (Exhibit N7).

Augusta currently has \$45 million in General Fund debt. Of this, \$6 million is for municipal purposes, \$29 million is for schools (mainly the new Cony High), and \$13 million is for a refinancing of pension obligations. The Cony bond (\$24,475,506) is supported by the state. The pension bond is a refinancing of a Maine State Retirement System obligation which will save Augusta taxpayers \$2.4 million over its term.

Payments on the debt extend through to 2037. Major projects currently having bonds in repayment include Lithgow Library, Hartford Fire Station expansion and renovation, and North Augusta Fire Station. (Exhibit N8).

**Exhibit N7: CIP and Equipment Replacement Budgets.**

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
<b>CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT</b>						
Cash (General Fund)	\$527,000	\$2,365,000	\$3,962,000	\$3,882,000	\$2,365,000	\$2,935,000
Council bond	\$750,000					
Referendum bond	\$0					
Enterprise fund bond	\$140,000	\$430,000	\$2,490,000	\$1,600,000	\$435,000	\$8,410,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,050,000</b>	<b>\$2,795,000</b>	<b>\$6,452,000</b>	<b>\$5,482,000</b>	<b>\$2,800,000</b>	<b>\$11,345,000</b>
<b>EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT</b>						
Cash (General Fund)	\$493,000	\$456,000	\$446,000	\$351,000	\$454,000	\$505,000

**Exhibit N8: Debt Repayment Schedule for General Fund Debt.**

FY	Principal and Interest
2021	\$5,989,277
2022	\$5,538,356
2023	\$5,200,454
2024	\$4,810,891
2025	\$4,584,034
2026	\$4,244,074

Major projects requiring General Fund bonding support in the future include:

- Augusta Police Station Construction
- Hussey School replacement
- Public Works Facility Upgrades/Renovations
- Augusta Civic Center Upgrades/Renovations

Augusta does not have development impact fees that could help to finance capital improvements.

**Capital Investment Plan (CIP)**

The State rules require that municipalities include a Capital Investment Plan in a comprehensive plan. The State’s rule specifically states:

“The capital investment plan must establish the framework for programming and financing. Those new or expanding public service facilities that are needed to accommodate projected growth and development and that constitute major capital improvements for which the municipality has fiscal responsibility.”

Augusta’s population decreased during the 1990s and is not expected to reach 1990 levels until sometime after 2040. There are no new public service facilities that are necessary to accommodate projected growth and development and therefore the city has not included a traditional capital investment plan in the comprehensive plan.



There are many existing public facilities discussed in this plan, such as the Civic Center, the replacement Police Station, and the upgraded Public Works facility, that the city will evaluate and may choose to improve or expand in order to better serve existing population and development. The annual Capital Improvement Plan process is used for those purposes and has a five year look-ahead on upcoming projects. Those project shift annually depending on priorities and funding sources

The City of Augusta will work closely with other governmental entities that control and maintain some capital facilities within the city to ensure a coordination of efforts regarding capacity and quality improvements for those entities’ capital facilities. Water and sewer infrastructure are owned and maintained by the Greater Augusta Utility District. State offices are often owned and managed by the State of Maine. The County courthouse, jail, and other County offices are owned and managed by Kennebec County. The responsibility for capacity expansion on many major roads in Augusta falls to developers necessitating the development and the State of Maine.

Continued communication with all of these groups is critical to ensuring that city maintenance projects and improvements to the quality of city services are complimented by the work being done by others.

**Conclusion**

Augusta has capacity for additional borrowing (Exhibit N11). Its debt to valuation ratio is favorable, it has a healthy fund balance (though that balance will decline in the coming year) and it has double-digit growth in assessed value. The one area of concern is the ratio of per capita debt to per capita income. Augusta has a lower-than-average per capita income compared to the state, and as a service center, faces higher-than-average service demands. Still, half of all property tax collections are from non-residential uses, so the burden of new debt on the individual households is less than it would be in a community that is primarily residential.

**Exhibit N9:** Fiscal Tests for City Budget.

	Augusta actual	Suggested level
Municipal debt to valuation (2021)	2.18%	less than 5%
Undesignated fund balance to operating budget (2021)	13.0%	more than 8.3%
Per capita debt to per capita income (2021)	7.3%	less than 5%
Assessed value (2021)	single digit growth	should be growing

The City has led efforts in the region to seek efficiencies through service consolidation. Augusta participates in the regional 911 emergency response effort. As opportunities arise in the future, Augusta will continue to explore regional cost-sharing on operational and capital items.

City Councilors and administration officials have been careful stewards of local tax dollars for decades. Continued care to keep debt within acceptable limits and the undesignated fund balance above Charter requirements should not be difficult.