



# CITY OF BELFAST, MAINE

Comprehensive Plan Update  
Fall 2023

Prepared by The Musson Group



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan was a complex effort to bring together a large cross-section of individuals to reflect on the future of Belfast. This group included, but was not limited to: residents, city staff; local, regional, state, and national non-profits; institutional leaders; business owners; county and state agencies; and Belfast boards and committees. A portion of this plan process took place as the COVID-19 pandemic raged. Thank you to all who attended meetings virtually or carefully in-person, participated in interviews and provided feedback. The vision, goals, objectives, and strategies in this plan reflect the thoughtful input of all those who participated in this project.

This plan product would not exist without the commitment and dedication of the Belfast Comprehensive Planning Committee members to gather and articulate the values and history of Belfast, and to celebrate the unique quality of the Belfast community. This planning process greatly benefited from collaboration with the City Manager and City of Belfast staff, consultation with city boards and committees. We greatly appreciate everyone who participated in the process and shared their ideas for the future of Belfast.

Cover image: Front Street Shipyard and Belfast Harbor. Google Maps drone imagery.

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# **PART 1: BACKGROUND & FUTURE LAND USE**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
VISION STATEMENT  
GUIDING PRINCIPLES  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION  
REGIONAL COORDINATION  
FUTURE LAND USE**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan presents a strong vision and robust set of goals, objectives, and strategies for the future based on analysis, strategic thinking, and community input. This plan is intended to provide flexible and informative guidance for land use and municipal decision-making over the next decade. The City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan was an ambitious undertaking, shepherded by the Comprehensive Planning Committee in collaboration with city staff, other city committees, area non-profits, institutions, businesses, and community members. While the COVID-19 pandemic created major obstacles to community outreach and in-person meetings, the city successfully adjusted to keep the project moving forward.

The ideas put forth in this plan celebrate Belfast’s strengths and unique qualities. The plan calls for a future Belfast that offers additional housing opportunities – both in quantity and variety of types; climate action, more equitable access to broadband, mobility, and open space planning; and natural resource protection. In addition, the plan looks at ways to support the diverse year-round economy in Belfast; to enhance protection of critical natural resources and historic and cultural resources; strategies for improving public facilities; and sound fiscal planning.

Comprehensive plans are required by Maine law. A community’s land use ordinances and zoning, for example, need to be consistent with the comprehensive plan. There are also benefits when applying for state grants – grant applications with projects supported by the comprehensive plan are viewed favorably. The state specifies minimum content for comprehensive planning and reviews plan for compliance with the Maine Growth Management Act. The City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan conforms to the requirements of the Maine Growth Management Act for comprehensive plans. As required by the Act, the City of Belfast’s Comprehensive Plan will serve as the basis for the city’s zoning and land use regulations.

The City of Belfast last approved a comprehensive plan in 2012, and brought that plan into compliance with the state requirements in 2021. This effort draws on thinking from that earlier planning process, while identifying new opportunities based on current data, trends, and community input. This new plan offers more high-level thinking around future land use, housing, mobility, and planning for climate solutions.



Image courtesy of Neal Parent.



Image from [www.creativeground.org/profile/belfast-creative-coalition#](http://www.creativeground.org/profile/belfast-creative-coalition#)



Image courtesy of Belfast Summer Nights.

# VISION STATEMENT & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## VISION STATEMENT

Effective land use planning and decision-making relies on a strong vision for the future. The vision for the City of Belfast recognizes the importance of honoring history and tradition while also embracing change with proactive, thoughtful planning. The vision statement for the City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan states:

*The City of Belfast is an historic coastal community that supports the needs of its community members. We honor the voices of our community and encourage citizen engagement and participation. We value our vibrant downtown core and will continue to support local eateries, shops, offices, and businesses that service the local and surrounding communities. We value our artistic and creative community. We value our role as a county seat and service center for Waldo County.*

*Belfast's waterfront is home to an active marine economy which has shaped and supported the city over generations and increased recreational opportunities, which contribute to the attractiveness of Belfast as a destination.*

*The City of Belfast will continue to be a vibrant place to live, work, and play by supporting diverse housing choices, preserving and protecting parks, open space and agricultural lands, implementing innovative climate policy, and connecting our community through enhanced bicycle, pedestrian, and transportation networks.*

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In addition to the vision statement, The City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan is guided by three guiding principles. The purpose of these guiding principles is to create a cohesive framework for the comprehensive plan and spotlight key themes. The goals, objectives and strategies in the Policy Guides Chapter of this plan are shaped by these three “Guiding Principles”: Community Health, Social Equity, and Sustainability and Resilience:



**Community Health:** Community health encompasses aspects of individual physical health, mental health, collective public health, and the health of the economy and the environment.



**Social Equity:** Social equity is the idea that all community members can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. (Source: PolicyLink / American Planning Association)



**Sustainability and Resilience:** Sustainability and resilience are interrelated but distinct ideas about planning for the future. Sustainability looks at the ability for future generations to meet their needs and thrive without depleting their resources. Resilience is the ability for a community to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to low-probability but high-impact events, such as natural disasters, infrastructure failures, or human-caused threats, as well as to impending changes due to climate change.

## PLAN STRUCTURE

The plan is structured into three main sections: Part 1: Background and Future Land Use (Vision, Guiding Principles, Community Engagement, Regional Coordination, Implementation, and Future Land Use); Part 2: Policy Guides (for each topic area- key findings, along with policy statements and strategic recommendations); and Part 3: Inventory Chapters.

### PART 1: BACKGROUND AND FUTURE LAND USE

Part 1 includes the Vision Statement, Guiding Principles, Community Engagement, Regional Coordination, Implementation, and Future Land Use sections of the plan. The Vision Statement and Guiding Principles provide a framework for the plan as described above. The Community Engagement section outlines outreach efforts to engage community members, city staff, committees, businesses, and other Belfast organizations. The Implementation section highlights the highest priority action items that will support initial implementation of the plan and provides guidance on evaluation. In the Regional Coordination section, the plan identifies numerous city, county, and regional partners for various issue areas. The Future Land Use section presents the growth area map identified by the comprehensive plan, the critical natural resources area map, and policy guidance for land use in Belfast. This section also identifies focus areas, which are sub-areas in the city with distinct qualities and unique planning considerations that merit further study.

### PART 2: POLICY GUIDES

The Policy Guides of the City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan present the analysis and strategic recommendations for the topic areas included in the plan. Each topic area section provides a brief background overview, a list of key findings that are derived from the inventory chapters, and then the goals, objectives, and strategies for that topic. The strategies in the Policy Guides chapter are listed in a table format with unique strategy numbers, the recommended strategy, the suggested party responsible for implementation, the recommended timeframe, and a column that notes if the strategy is required by the state.

### PART 3: INVENTORY CHAPTERS

The Inventory Chapters of the comprehensive plan contain the data and analysis that inform the key findings in the Policy Guides chapter. The data in this chapter comes from a variety of federal, state, regional and local sources including:

- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Maine Department of Conservation (MDC)
- Maine Department of Marine Resources (MDMR)
- Maine Dept Agriculture, Conservation, Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands
- Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
- Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
- MaineHousing
- Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT)
- Maine State Economist
- Maine Bureau of Labor
- Maine Bureau of Vital Statistics
- Maine Office of GIS
- RSU 71
- City of Belfast



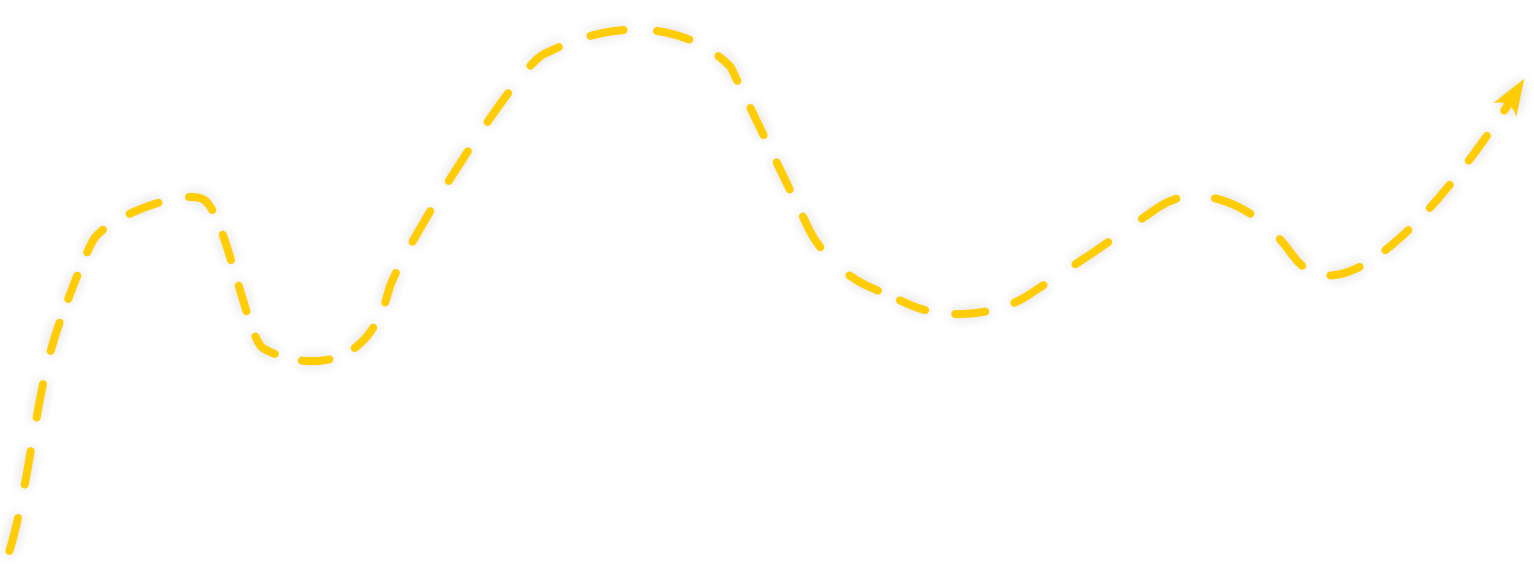


Image courtesy of Neal Parent.

## IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

As required by the state, the City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan casts a wide net – offering goals, objectives, and strategies for many topic areas. While each topic area offers important strategies for Belfast's future, it became clear through the planning process that the city and community have urgent concerns about housing, transportation, and climate solutions. The high-level goals for those issue areas are listed in the following pages. Many of these goals are closely tied to state goals for those topic areas.

# HOUSING MOBILITY CLIMATE



# HOUSING

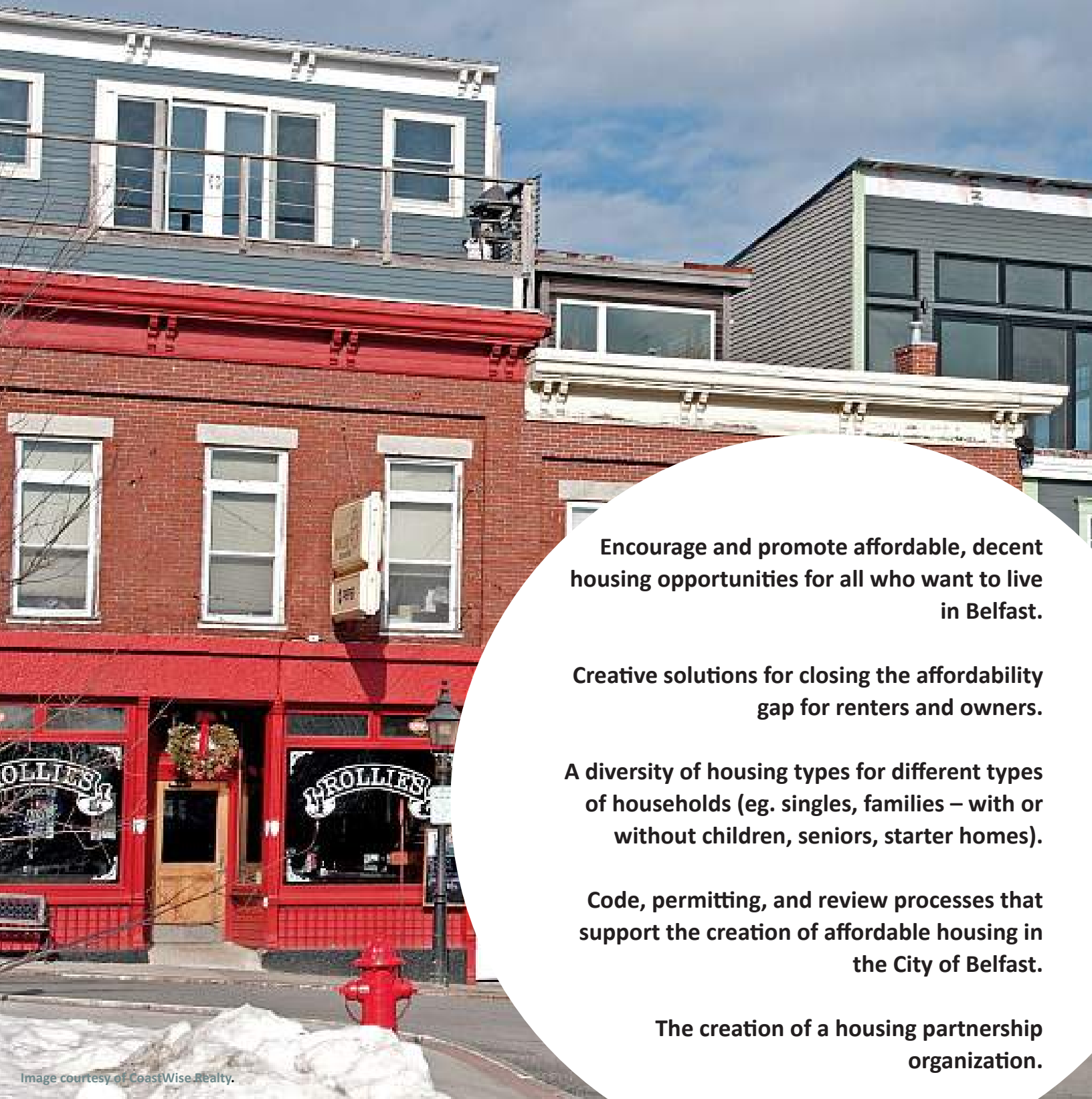


Image courtesy of CoastWise Realty.

**Encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all who want to live in Belfast.**

**Creative solutions for closing the affordability gap for renters and owners.**

**A diversity of housing types for different types of households (eg. singles, families – with or without children, seniors, starter homes).**

**Code, permitting, and review processes that support the creation of affordable housing in the City of Belfast.**

**The creation of a housing partnership organization.**

# MOBILITY

**A safe, accessible, and efficient multi-modal transportation system that meets residential, commuter, commercial, and visitor needs.**

**Mobility options for varying ages, abilities, and income-levels.**

**A walkable, bikeable community.**

**A transportation system that promotes public health, supports economic health and vitality, protects natural and cultural resources, addresses the climate crisis, and improves overall livability while minimizing increases in vehicle miles traveled.**

**A fiscally responsible capital improvement strategy that maintains streets, sidewalks, and other transportation infrastructure in good condition.**

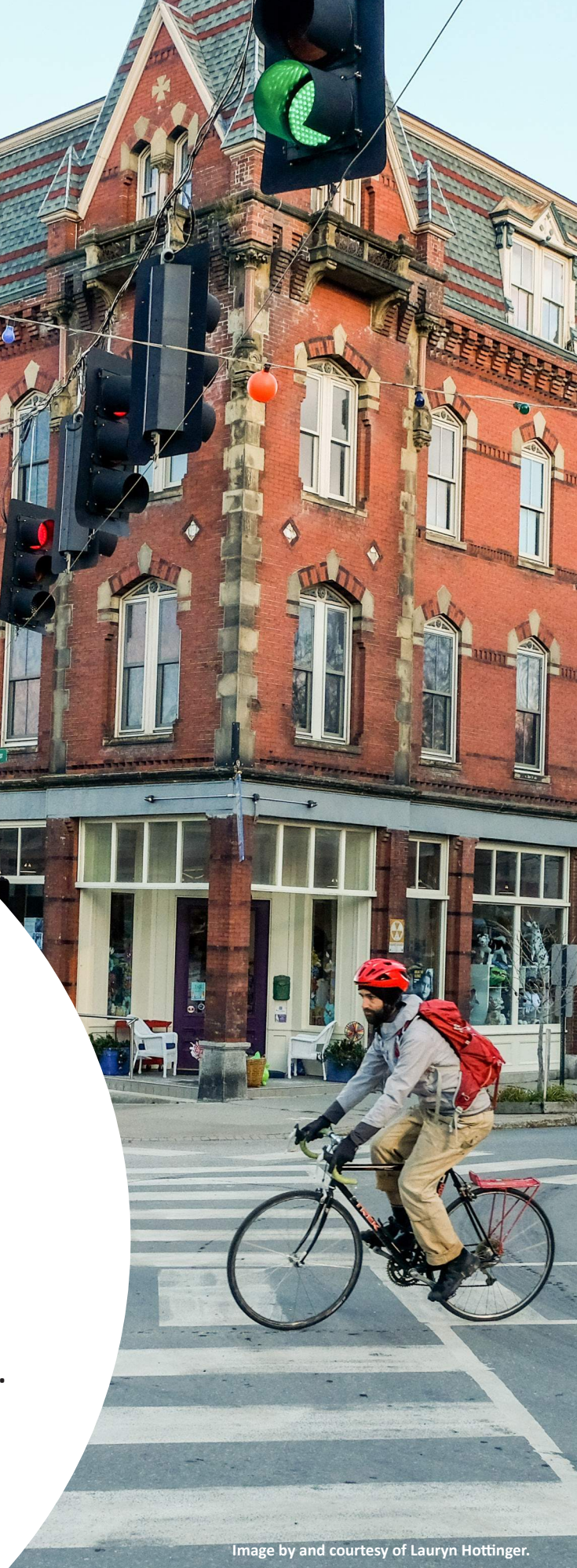


Image by and courtesy of Lauryn Hottinger.

# CLIMATE



**A meaningful reduction  
in greenhouse gas emissions.**

**Land use planning and policies that factor in food  
security, climate change, and resilience thinking.**

**Resilient and sustainable city infrastructure that  
provides a foundation for economic and community  
vitality.**

**A transportation system that promotes public health,  
supports economic health and vitality, protects  
natural and cultural resources, addresses the climate  
crisis, and improves overall livability while minimizing  
increases in vehicle miles traveled.**

**Proactive steps to address climate crisis through  
integration of state, regional, and local climate  
priorities into municipal decision-making.**

# A VISION FOR BELFAST

*The City of Belfast is an historic coastal community that supports the needs of its community members. We honor the voices of our community and encourage citizen engagement and participation. We value our vibrant downtown core and will continue to support local eateries, shops, offices, and businesses that service the local and surrounding communities. We value our artistic and creative community. We value our role as a county seat and service center for Waldo County.*

*Belfast's waterfront is home to an active marine economy which has shaped and supported the city over generations, as well as increased recreational opportunities which contribute to the attractiveness of Belfast as a destination.*

*The City of Belfast will continue to be a vibrant place to live, work, and play by supporting diverse housing choices, preserving and protecting parks, open space and agricultural lands, implementing innovative climate policy, and connecting our community through enhanced bicycle, pedestrian, and transportation networks.*



*Above: View of Belfast Main Street, waterfront, and Harbor. (Photo courtesy Belfast Chamber of Commerce)*

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## PURPOSE

A comprehensive plan is an enormous undertaking to examine numerous topics and data points, and to create goals, objectives, and strategies with the intention of weaving it all together into a cohesive and integrated plan. The goals, objectives and strategies of this plan are guided by three “Guiding Principles”: Community Health, Social Equity, and Sustainability and Resilience. The purpose of these guiding principles is to create a cohesive framework for the comprehensive plan and spotlight key themes. The following guiding principles are integrated throughout the various topic areas covered in the plan and help illustrate how many of the goals, objectives and strategies in the plan are interrelated. Many of the issues listed under these guiding principles fit into multiple categories.



### COMMUNITY HEALTH

*Community health encompasses aspects of individual physical health, mental health, collective public health, the health of the economy and the environment.*



### SOCIAL EQUITY

*Social equity is the idea that all community members can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. (Source: PolicyLink / American Planning Association)*



### SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

*Sustainability and resilience are interrelated but distinct ideas about planning for the future. Sustainability looks at the ability for future generations to meet their needs and thrive without depleting their resources. Resilience is the ability for a community to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to low-probability but high-impact events, such as natural disasters, infrastructure failures, or human-caused threats, as well as impending changes due to climate change.*



## COMMUNITY HEALTH

Community health encompasses aspects of individual physical health, mental health, collective public health, and the health of the economy and the environment.

Issues of Community Health include but are not limited to:

- Existence of and access to recreational opportunities
- Public open spaces, gathering places, trail networks
- Access to public facilities like a YMCA, recreational centers, hospital
- Places for leisure and to connect with others
- Walkability
- Existence of and access to medical services
- Existence of and access to needed mental health services
- A sense of purpose within the community
- A sense of belonging to community
- Inclusiveness, being welcomed, and feeling safe
- Adequate supply of different housing types and price-points
- Reliable public information and communication about emergencies and non-emergencies
- Planning for public health emergencies (eg. Brown-tail Moth outbreak)
- Availability of good-quality necessities like clean water, clear air, and nutritious food
- Protected water, marine, forest, and agricultural resources
- Reliable waste management and sanitation infrastructure





## **SOCIAL EQUITY**

Social equity is the idea that all community members can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. (Source: PolicyLink / American Planning Association)

Issues of Social Equity include but are not limited to:

- Access to food and addressing food insecurity
- Access to a range of housing types at a range of price points and addressing housing insecurity
- Access to services regardless of race, ethnicity, income, ability, age, gender, and sexual orientation
- Access to parks, trails, and open space for physical/mental health and community gathering
- Transportation and mobility options (walking, cycling, livery services, transit, automobiles)
- A range of educational opportunities (including art afterschool programs, adult ed, and other non-traditional education programs)
- Broadband access and the implications on remote work and learning
- A sense of belonging to community
- Inclusiveness, being welcomed, and feeling safe



## SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Sustainability and resilience are interrelated but distinct ideas about planning for the future. Sustainability looks at the ability for future generations to meet their needs and thrive without depleting their resources. Resilience is the ability for a community to prepare for, recover from, and adapt to low-probability but high-impact events, such as natural disasters, infrastructure failures, or human-caused threats as well to as impending changes due to climate change.

Sustainability is typically looked at through three lenses: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and social sustainability (“people, planet, profit”).

Issues of Sustainability include, but are not limited to:

- Fossil fuels and energy use in homes, workplaces, transportation (e.g., gas vs electric vehicles)
- Land preservation
- Attracting and keeping employers
- Housing diversity, affordability, and workforce retention
- Diverse economy that offers quality jobs year round
- Fiscal responsibility
- Historic and cultural preservation
- Working waterfront sustainability in the face of pressures from other non-commercial fishing activities
- Ensuring opportunities for younger members of the community (jobs, housing, etc.)
- Sustainability of shoreline and waterfront land use as it pertains to sea-level rise and flooding

Issues of Resilience include, but are not limited to:

- Planning for the most vulnerable community members (including younger community members who do not have the same agency in their lives and can be vulnerable to unexpected events)
- Infrastructure resilience: bike paths, sidewalks, roadways, energy networks, public facilities, and services
- Public health emergencies
- Natural or human-instigated disasters and / or extreme weather, particularly current and impending changes due to climate change, such as large-scale fires, flooding from storms combined with sea level rise – especially ones that overlap with king tides – heat, drought, winter storms

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## OVERVIEW

The Belfast Comprehensive Plan Committee, with the assistance of The Musson Group, began a community visioning public process in February 2021. This public process was conducted through various means including, city staff and committee engagement, subject matter experts focus groups and interviews, and a community-wide survey.

The Community Survey was the first form of public engagement and was launched February 1st, 2021. This survey stayed open through May 1st, 2021. The survey was publicized on the city's website and social media accounts and was promoted by Comprehensive Plan Committee members, City Council, and City Staff. Paper copies of the survey were made available at the City Hall and various other local locations including the Chamber of Commerce, library, and the Waldo County General Hospital's Covid-19 vaccine clinics. The Community Survey received 1,029 responses. In addition to the Community Survey, the Comprehensive Planning Committee began subject matter expert engagement in March 2021. Subject matter expert engagement consisted of multiple points of outreach including round-table discussion focus group meetings, one-on-one interviews, and City Staff and Committee communication. Focus group meetings were conducted over Zoom with two groups. The first focus group was centered on community health and wellness and the second was centered on economic development and housing. The community health and wellness discussion had nine participants in attendance, representing six local organizations. The economic development and housing discussion had six participants in attendance representing four local organizations.

In addition to the focus group discussions, the committee conducted an additional 14 one-on-one targeted interviews. While the Community Survey and focused discussions were on-going, the Comprehensive Planning Committee took time to meet with various City Staff and City Committees during their regularly scheduled committee meetings. This included a session with the Economic Development Director, Harbor Master, Climate Crisis Committee, to name a few. A brief description of the public participation efforts is included below. A more complex overview, including input received, follows in the appendix of this plan.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Community Survey served as a starting point for the Comprehensive Plan Committee to begin understanding the community's vision and values. The following key findings were identified from the 1,029 survey responses.

### **Survey Respondent Background:**

1,029 survey responses

- 72% respondents are year-round residents
- Of the year-round residents who responded – 62% own their home; 10% rent their home
- While 91% of respondents stated their housing is adequate to for their needs, only 70% stated their housing is affordable based on their needs.
- Of year-round Belfast residents who responded, 92% stated their housing is adequate, and 68% stated their housing is affordable
- Over 50% (53.8%) of respondents are between the ages of 55 and 74.

According to survey respondents, Belfast is best described as “An historic, coastal community that serves the day-to-day needs of residents.”

### **Priority goals over the next 10 years:**

- Expansion of high-speed broadband
- Protect marine resources
- Take measures to address the impacts of climate change
- Protect undeveloped open space, fields, and forested land

### **Policy Updates:**

When asked if survey respondents agree or disagree with specific policy updates, respondents strongly agree that the City should consider zoning amendments that address the impacts of climate change. There was somewhat strong agreement for zoning amendments that would encourage creative housing development opportunities and allowing and encouraging both residential and commercial development outside the bypass.

### **City Investments:**

While respondents strongest support is for improvements to broadband connectivity in under-served areas, there is also somewhat strong support for the following:

- Purchase of open space land for conservation and recreational use
- Resources and assistance to help seniors continue to live within the community
- Construction and improvements of bicycle and pedestrian access and facilities
- Increasing police and public safety capacity, including additional police training in areas of nonviolent intervention and mental health awareness
- Resources and assistance to help low-income residents continue to live within the community
- Resources and assistance to those experiencing housing insecurity

### **City Facilities:**

Respondents rated the following facilities and services as exceptional/adequate:

- Winter road maintenance
- Transfer station
- City Hall services
- Library programs and resources

The area rated as needing improvement is broadband service availability. Two other areas that are adequate/needs improvement are activities for youth and activities/programs for at-risk residents.

## TARGETED OUTREACH

The committee engaged key individuals and organizations who provided valuable input on challenges and opportunities facing business and specific population groups. Their input contributed to the recommendations and goals of this comprehensive plan and policy guides. By integrating input and forming

relationships with key groups and individuals, the city will be able to better implement recommended action items in the future and create champions for the future projects and initiatives recommended in the plan.

According to those interviewed, Belfast is best described as “a regional hub offering services and employment opportunities to residents and neighboring community members” and “an historic, coastal community that serves the day-to-day needs of residents.”

When participants were asked if there were specific things that they love about working, living, or doing business in Belfast, many mentioned they love that the community is strong, diverse and supportive.

Participants, both in the interviews and focus groups, discussed the following as opportunities and challenges facing Belfast in the coming years:

- Affordable housing
- Climate change
- Remaining business positive

Hurdles facing subject matter experts and their organizations included:

- Funding
- Attracting younger membership and employees
- Staffing
- Housing

### ***Community Health & Wellness***

Those participating in the round-table discussion on community health and wellness brought a consensus that there are a lot of organizations doing important and good work but that there is an overall community need for collaboration. The organizations doing work that centers around housing, homelessness, food security, childcare, workforce development, transportation, recovery support and other social services need support to align the work and connect various services with guests of various organizations.

There is an opportunity to work together to provide collaborative added value to the community by bringing organizations with goals that align to the community in a cohesive and organized way.

The discussion centered on the following challenges facing the Belfast community:

- Housing
- Food services
- Family and child services
- Transportation
- Access to medical & dental care
- Need for affordable commercial spaces
- Community stigma
- Collaboration among community organizations including for grant applications
- Not enough case management and social work in Waldo County

Belfast is a welcoming community that values its diverse population. It will be important for the comprehensive plan to use inclusive language that reflects this value.

### ***Economic Development & Housing***

Those who participated in the second round-table discussion focused on similar challenges as the community health and wellness discussion but from an economic perspective. With participants from the real estate industry in attendance, there was discussion around what is prohibiting people from buying homes in Belfast. This included, to name a few, challenges stemming from the need to align zoning with the needs of home-buyers, access to financing, and access to construction workers for small-scale residential projects. Infrastructure, including public transportation is also a factor limiting growth in the city.

The discussion centered on the following challenges facing the Belfast community:

- Housing
- Workforce (trades in particular)
- Office Space
- Public Transportation
- Childcare

## LOCAL SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS AND PUBLIC REVIEW

Drafts of each policy guide chapter were sent to subject matter experts for various topic areas (city staff, boards, committees, relevant organizations) for feedback. A final draft of the plan was then presented to the Belfast City Council for feedback. Next, the full comprehensive plan product was shared publicly on the city's website, during an open house forum, and sent to all local subject matter experts for review.

A list of local subject matter experts for this review period is listed below.

### *Recreation and Open Space*

Norm Poirier, Parks and Rec Department  
Larry Theye, Parks and Rec Chair  
Chole Chun, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition  
Jack Shaida, Coastal Mountains Land Trust  
Kathy Given, Harbor Master  
Carol Good, Friends of Belfast Parks

### *Mobility and Transportation*

Belfast Ped Bike Hike Committee  
Kathy Given, Harbor Master  
Bob Richards, Belfast Public Works Director  
Kenn Ortmann, Belfast Municipal Airport  
Waldo Community Action Partners

### *Natural Resources*

Kathy Given, Harbor Master  
Belfast Water District  
Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition

### *Housing*

Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP)  
Waldo Co Homeless Coalition  
Habitat for Humanity  
Midcoast Realtors Association

### *Public Facilities*

Bob Richards, Belfast Public Works Director  
Belfast Ped Bike Hike Committee

### *Climate Crisis*

Belfast Climate Crisis Committee  
Public Works  
City Engineer  
Wastewater Treatment Plan  
Thomas Kittredge, Economic Development Director

### *Historic and Cultural Resources*

Megan Pinette, Belfast Historical Society  
Phil Carthage, Belfast Historical Society

### *Economy, Fiscal Capacity and CIP*

Thomas Kittredge, Economic Development Director  
City of Belfast Finance Director  
Erin Herbig, City Manager

### *All City Committees*

Airport Advisory Committee  
Belfast Water District Trustees  
Board of Assessment Review  
Broadband Committee  
Cemetery Trustees  
Climate Crisis Committee  
Energy Committee  
Harbor Advisory Committee  
In Town Design Review  
Library Board of Trustees  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
Pedestrian, Biking and Hiking Committee  
Planning Board  
Zoning Board of Appeals

# IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION

Implementation and evaluation are critical components of any comprehensive plan. This comprehensive plan outlines a vision, goals, and objectives for City of Belfast planning and land use policies. To help achieve these goals and objectives, the plan also identifies an ambitious list of recommended strategies and actions, ranging from the broad to the specific. Successful implementation of these strategies in the long term will require prioritization of strategies and timelines, continued review of roles and responsibilities, sufficient budgets, consideration of staff time and capacity, synergies with other projects and opportunities, and regular review of progress.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The policy guide chapters of this plan list the goals and objectives for each topic area and then highlight strategies with identified implementation timelines and the potential responsibility for implementation. In addition, strategies that are required by the State of Maine are noted. This implementation chapter provides 1) guidance on the highest priority action items that will support the initial implementation of the plan, and 2) guidance on evaluation. The highest priority strategies for Short-Term (1-3 years) Implementation by topic area are following:

### ***Future Land Use***

- Continue to refine zoning and land use policies to: 1) clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development; 2) maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures, and explore streamlining permitting procedures in growth areas; 3) Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources; and 4) clearly define protective measures for any proposed critical rural areas and/or critical waterfront areas.
- Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas as identified below in this Future Land Use Plan.
- Collaborate with state, regional, and local land conservation organizations to establish goals for future land conservation and protection of existing open space.
- Encourage construction of new housing within the growth area, and where sewers and other infrastructure already exists, to decrease disturbance of forest and open space, incentivize walking and cycling, and support compact growth goals.

### ***Housing***

- Explore the extent to which city ordinances, codes, and permitting processes are causing unintentional constraints on affordable housing development, such as the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family homes that could be used as rentals or parking regulations that prohibit some single-family homes from becoming multi-family rentals.
- Encourage partnerships between Belfast employers and developers for the development of workforce housing.
- Create a housing coalition, taskforce or committee to 1) convene stakeholders and develop creative recommendations on how the city can identify partnerships for workforce housing opportunities; 2) monitor and study the need for short-term housing regulation; 3) identify new housing types and locations that would complement existing neighborhoods; and 4) understand the extent to which statewide building codes, insurance, permitting, and lending practices impact which housing types get built.

### ***Economic and Fiscal Capacity***

- Continue efforts to support, retain, and attract businesses that offer quality jobs and above average pay, through tools such as credit enhancement agreements, discounted land prices, and grant funding.
- Work with local technical and vocational training centers to identify ways to expand vocational education and training programs in order to increase the supply of skilled labor. This includes pursuing grant funding or other funding mechanisms to ensure a sustainable vocational training program in Belfast; continuing to promote the CareerCenter On-The-Job-Program and other CareerCenter programs that assist with workforce development; and supporting the Maine Quality Centers grant programs that provide customized workforce training grants for Maine employers seeking to locate or expand their operations in Maine.
- Aggressively pursue strategies that support the development of year-round housing that is affordable to the workforce population (those earning approximately 60% to 120% of the Area Median Income), such as changes to land use ordinance policies, funding programs for construction of housing that is affordable to the workforce, and the creation of a housing land trust to increase the supply of housing for residents that will live in Belfast year-round, seasonal workers, and short-term contract workers.
- Continue to provide financial support for the Belfast Economic Development Department.

### ***Mobility and Transportation***

- Coordinate with the Planning and Public Works Department to create a Belfast pedestrian and cycling plan that inventories existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructures and identify locations for improved and new sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, bike parking in order to improve safe and convenient walking and cycling, as well as access to parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational areas.
- Assess where wayfinding improvements are

needed. Develop and implement a signage and wayfinding system for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians, including: consistent design; universal symbols; consistent language; and standards for the future.

- Identify locations for additional electric vehicle charging stations and create incentives for developers to install stations in new developments where appropriate.
- Collaborate with relevant city committees and departments on development and planning projects, particularly in areas identified as priorities for bike, pedestrian or trail facilities, recreation, accessibility improvements or affordable housing opportunities.
- Maintain, enact or amend ordinance standards for subdivisions and for public and private roads as appropriate to foster transportation-efficient growth patterns and provide for future street and transit connections.

### ***Public Facilities***

- Identify capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public services to accommodate any growth and changing demographics.
- Survey and inventory the current Belfast stormwater management system; determine MEDOT/City jurisdictions; develop a comprehensive design for upgrade.
- Continue to invest in solar and other renewable energy sources for the City of Belfast.
- Inventory and categorize public facilities according to which age groups and ability ranges they serve and identify any gaps in service that may be present. Consider additional programming and new facilities as appropriate.
- Identify areas in the city where public wi-fi access is currently provided and identify areas where it could be provided in the future.
- Explore the feasibility of digital public infrastructure and what other municipalities are considering about how to provide digital infrastructure as a public utility.
- Explore options for regional delivery of local



services, and work cooperatively with adjacent communities to consider opportunities for regional service delivery.

### ***Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Open Space***

- Create a Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Open Space strategic plan that inventories and analyzes the existing public parks, trail systems, recreation and open space system, including range ways and public rights-of-way water access points. This plan should look at the distribution of land and facilities, facility conditions, current and future needs, and strategies for management responsibilities, land acquisition goals and opportunities, funding, maintenance, and operations.
- Coordinate with the Planning and Public Works Department to create a Belfast Mobility Plan for pedestrian and cycling that inventories existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructures and identify locations for improved and new sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, bike parking in order to improve safe and convenient walking and cycling, as well as access to parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational areas.
- Explore potential opportunities for new parkland, trails, and open space on the east side of Belfast harbor.
- Assess and improve accessibility standards in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to public parks and open spaces.
- Work collaboratively with stakeholder groups to pursue opportunities to protect significant open spaces and recreational land.
- Identify locations in the city for new recreational infrastructure such as short-term shelters along trails, kayak racks, bike racks, benches, and consistent signage and wayfinding.

### ***Historic Preservation***

- Identify city-owned buildings of historic value and explore strategies for funding and maintaining those structures.
- Seek State and Federal grants to rehabilitate and maintain historic buildings and streetscapes,

including but not limited to funding from Maine DECD, Maine DOT and non-governmental organizations.

- Research grant programs and / or existing tax credit programs through organizations such as Efficiency Maine or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission that specifically help with weatherization of historic structures.
- Encourage the use of historic preservation tax credits by area residents, businesses, and property developers.
- Create an action plan for climate impacts on historic and cultural resources, such as resources in high flood-risk areas. Refer to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission’s Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

### ***Natural Resources***

- Identify needs for additional recreational and commercial access (which includes parking, boat launches, docking space, fish piers, and swimming access).
- Work with the Belfast Water District to examine the need to enact revised public wellhead and aquifer recharge areas protection mechanisms, as necessary. Continue to implement the land acquisition strategy for the Water District and priority list of parcels to acquire for continued water quality protection.
- Consider a variety of tools to protect the working landscape economy (working farmland, forested areas, and other natural resources), such as a working landscape protection plan, tax abatement programs, agricultural zoning and buffers, transfer-of-development rights programs, easements, and protection of prime soils. Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs. Provide information about the current use taxation program to owners of waterfront land used to provide access to or support the conduct of commercial fishing activities.
- Develop a strategic design plan that addresses sea-level rise in the inner harbor.

- Encourage agricultural practices and tree plantings that provide maximum habitat for songbirds and pollinators; encourage permaculture practices and maximize biodiversity in order to adapt to climate-induced invasives.

***Climate (this section presents a compilation of climate solution strategies from other topic areas)***

- Develop a “Climate Action Plan” to establish guidance for reducing emissions, including: goals and targets for managing sea-level rise; reducing dependence on fossil fuels; resilience planning strategies, such as exploring best practices for shoreline protection measures; improving city capacity for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping in order to identify areas of Belfast and public infrastructure that are at risk due to issues associated with changing climate.
- Continue to invest in solar and renewable energy sources for the City of Belfast.
- Continue to partner with the Waldo County Emergency Management Agency to provide emergency shelters in times of extreme heat or cold.
- Develop incentives that increase stewardship and reduce loss of farmland, woodlands and wetlands.
- Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas as identified below in this Future Land Use Plan.

## EVALUATION

The comprehensive plan is intended to serve as a road map for City Council policy making and a resource for the City Manager, department heads, and committees as they plan and prioritize their respective work. Ultimately, the success of the plan will be measured by its implementation over time.

Monitoring the plan’s implementation should be an open and ongoing process. As the plan is implemented, the Comprehensive Planning Committee will evaluate progress and annually identify areas in need of clarification or modification. The committee also is responsible for reviewing proposed land use related ordinance changes for compatibility with the comprehensive plan.

Overall, progress on the plan will be evaluated by the Comprehensive Planning Committee, in collaboration with the City Manager, at least every five years to determine the following:

- The degree to which the Future Land Use Plan and other chapter strategies have been implemented;
- Percent of municipal growth-related capital investments that have been directed to growth areas;
- The location and amount of new development in relation to designated growth areas and rural areas;
- The status of future planning efforts for the focus areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan;
- The amount of critical natural resource, critical rural, and critical waterfront areas protected through acquisition, easements, or other measures.

# REGIONAL COORDINATION

As a regional service center, employment center, and county seat, Belfast’s needs are linked with those of its surrounding communities. Belfast has a year-round population of 6,938 and the daytime population increases by approximately 1,500 due to daily commuters from the surrounding area. Daily visitors, particularly in summertime, number over 4,000 according to the Chamber of Commerce – whether from nearby communities, or from further afield.

## KEY ISSUES FOR REGIONAL COORDINATION

There are several significant topics in Belfast and surrounding communities that could benefit from regional coordination. For each of these issues below, the issue is briefly described and potential regional partners are listed. This list is not exhaustive and as these issues evolve over time and organizations grow and change, new partners emerge.

### HOUSING

Housing insecurity is one of the most pervasive ongoing issues in the MidCoast region and the State of Maine. Nationwide, Maine has the ninth largest gap between the income of an average renter and the income needed to afford a two-bedroom rental, according to a recent study from the National Low Income Housing Coalition. MaineHousing data for 2020 shows that 56.9% of Belfast households, and 59.1% of Waldo County households are unable to afford a median two-bedroom rent. Much of the housing stock in Belfast and the surrounding towns is older, with much of it built before World War II. This suggests a significant need for home repair, and in some cases lead remediation and accessibility improvements – particularly in lower income homes.

Belfast has a need for new housing units, particularly “missing middle” housing, a term that refers to housing types in between detached single-family homes and larger apartment buildings - such as duplexes, fourplexes, cottage courts, and courtyard buildings - that provide more diverse housing options and price points. Belfast had the second highest percentage of renter occupied units in the Belfast Labor Market Area, when compared to surrounding communities. According to the American Community Survey, in 2021 Belfast had a relatively high percent of residents below the poverty level when compared the surrounding towns. There is ongoing homelessness and housing insecurity in the MidCoast region, particularly families with young children. Construction of additional housing and conversion of existing housing into more units, and in particular year-round rental housing affordable to various middle-income residents, would help to address housing supply and affordability issues and provide more options for the variety of household compositions in the region.

In May of 2023 the City of Belfast created a new Housing and Property Development committee, which will begin work on a number of strategies recommended in this plan. There are several state and regional partners that currently work on housing issues in Waldo County and the City of Belfast.

#### *Housing Regional Partners*

- **MaineHousing and Waldo Community Action Partners.** Waldo County Community Action Partners runs a variety of programs in Waldo County and the City of Belfast, including housing programs funded by MaineHousing related to weatherization and heating, home repair, and powerline extension.
- **Maine Habitat for Humanity.** Habitat for Humanity is active in Waldo County. They previously built houses in the

county and are working to complete a ReStore project at 92 Belmont Ave that will serve the surrounding area. ReStores accept donations and sell a constantly changing inventory of diverse, high-quality merchandise to the public at a fraction of the retail price, while diverting reusable household items and building materials from area landfills. There is also another house construction project in the works for 2023. Once the ReStore is up and running the goal is to use the profits to build one house per year.

- **Greater Bay Area Ministerium.** The Greater Bay Area Ministerium (GBAM) is primarily a food cupboard whose mission is to collect, store, and distribute food and promote nutrition for those in need, in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. In addition to food support, GBAM is also developing homeless support services.
- **Waldo County Homeless Coalition.** The Waldo County Homeless Coalition promotes county-wide planning and strategic use of resources.
- **The Genesis Fund.** The Genesis Fund is a certified Community Development Financial Institution that brings together resources to create housing and other economic and social opportunities for people and places being left out of the mainstream economy. The Genesis Fund makes regular presentations to Waldo County organizations who may be seeking their technical assistance program support and should be considered for future collaborative housing initiatives.
- **Local Institutions.** RSU71 and other owners of institutional buildings can be considered important partners in making buildings available for redevelopment as affordable workforce or senior housing should conditions allow.
- **Neighboring Communities.** Belfast is exploring the idea of creating a housing committee and municipal land trust that could coordinate their efforts within the City of Belfast with state, regional, and neighboring community housing initiatives.

## ECONOMY

Belfast's diverse economy is an economic driver for the city and the surrounding area. With a mix of strong year-round employers, in sectors including manufacturing, government and professional services, social services, retail, and arts and culture, Belfast is an important employment center as well as a draw for visitors. The walkable, historic downtown, mix of restaurants and shops, variety of arts programming, annual festivals and beautiful natural environment make Belfast an attractive location for a business, and also draws thousands of visitors to the region. MidCoast communities share many of the same economic challenges – helping new businesses to get off the ground, attracting a workforce that allows businesses to grow, providing housing affordable to that workforce, and identifying and capitalizing on emerging trends and opportunities.

### *Economy Regional Partners*

- **MidCoast Economic Development District.** In effect a Council of Governments, MCEDD brings communities together from Brunswick to Stockton Springs, and develops a regional economic development plan that identifies emerging trends and opportunities, as well as projects particularly important to the region. Other opportunities include supporting MidCoast Economic Development Authority planning and grant programming review, regional loan and assistance programs, efforts to identify and obtain resources for member communities, shared access to technical assistance, loan support for small businesses, and sustainability and resilience planning efforts through the state resilience planning grants from the Office of Policy, Innovation, and Future.
- **Northern Border Regional Commission.** The Northern Border Regional Commission can invest in economic and infrastructure projects in a number of Maine counties, including Waldo County. Recent project awards include \$350,000 for technical assistance for climate resiliency planning, growth strategies for second stage businesses, and access to capital/investments for the Eastern Maine Development Corporation to support Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Waldo County.

- **Maine and Company.** Maine & Co. is a private, non-profit corporation with members and a board comprised of senior executives from Maine’s top businesses, the president of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and the commissioner of Maine’s Department of Economic & Community Development. Their services include real estate site searches, data collection and analysis, incentives identification and valuation, site visit coordination, workforce analysis, and financing coordination. Recent efforts in Belfast include support for OnProcess Technology, athenahealth, and a proposed Nordic Aquafarms project.
- **Eastern Maine Development Corporation.** Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) provides integrated services that boost businesses, communities and individuals. EMDC’s comprehensive programs and hands-on approach accelerates economic development and strengthens the economy.
- **Maine Governor’s Office of Policy, Innovation, and Future.** The Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) serves as a key coordinator, working collaboratively with other State agencies and stakeholders to address critical long-term issues facing the State of Maine. Their program work around economic development includes workforce development, climate and energy, and economy and innovation.
- **Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce.** The mission of the Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce is to champion a thriving business environment for its members through promotion, networking, advocacy, community partnerships and access to relevant information. The Chamber works with businesses throughout Waldo County, promoting area business development opportunities, new ventures trainings, and connecting Belfast businesses or new entrepreneurs with other regional and state-wide training programs and resources. They produce a member directory, run annual events, and coordinate with Belfast area communities for networking and support.
- **State and regional economic development organizations.** A diverse mix of government agencies, nonprofits, and professional organizations provide opportunities to leverage state and regional programs and services for local and regional benefit.
- **Maine Office of Community Development.** The Office of Community Development (OCD) is a division within the Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) and the primary focus of OCD is the administration of the HUD funded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program which includes regional technical assistance and training.
- **Maine Office of Business Development.** The Office of Business Development provides targeted business development designed to attract particular types of businesses that have potential for Maine and businesses that are considered to be compatible with Maine's environment and interests. This office seeks and encourages firms to expand or locate in Maine. The office is responsible for the implementation of programs designed to promote Maine products in national and international markets and to develop markets for industry located in Maine.
- **Coastal Counties Workforce.** Coastal Counties Workforce, Inc. (CCWI), is a non-profit 501(c)(3) entity founded to administer and oversee the delivery of the workforce system’s services for the 6 Coastal Counties in Maine. CCWI is the entity (mechanism) working on behalf of the Region’s Local Board and CEO to ensure their responsibilities under federal workforce development law and federal funding are met. CCWI’s jurisdiction includes Maine’s six coastal counties (York, Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Waldo and Knox).

## TRANSPORTATION

Belfast is a county seat and service center located right on the US Route 1 corridor. Transportation in Belfast is predominantly focused around automobiles, and the Route 1 by-pass road alleviates congestion in Downtown Belfast while providing easier and more efficient passage for those passing through to points north, south, and west. Additional mobility and transportation infrastructure includes the Belfast Municipal Airport, which has potential for additional use, a trail system, and an on and off-road network of cycling routes. In addition, there is great potential for passenger

ferry service between Belfast and Islesboro and for mobility connections between the waterfront, downtown, and other destinations in the city, such as the grocery store, hospital, airport, banks, and other services.

### ***Transportation Regional Partners***

- Maine Department of Transportation (DOT). MaineDOT is an important partner for planning regional transportation – from highway improvements, to marine infrastructure, continued rail service and regional bicycle trails. In particular, MaineDOT programs and funding for multi-modal transportation improvements are important for many of the mobility goals and objectives identified in this plan.
- Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP) – Waldo County Transportation provides the Downtown Area Shuttle (DASH), a limited scheduled shuttle-style bus route service around Belfast. The DASH operates Monday through Friday from 8AM to 12PM and 1PM-5PM. Fares range from \$2.00 one-way to \$50.00 for a monthly pass.
- Maine State Ferry Service. There is currently no service to Belfast but there is potential and interest in a passenger ferry connection between Islesboro and Belfast.
- Belfast Municipal Airport. The Belfast Municipal Airport is an important partner in discussions of future economic development and transportation connections for airport users to other parts of the city and beyond.
- Federal agencies. The US Coast Guard and US Army Corps of Engineers are important partners in ensuring safe marine transportation, clear channels and a protected harbor.
- Land Trusts and non-profits. Land trusts such as the Coastal Mountain Land Trust and non-profits like Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition are important partners in advancing trail networks and related infrastructure.

## **MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

There are regional opportunities for sharing services and infrastructure:

- **Police, Fire, and Rescue.** Belfast Fire and EMS has contracted services to provide fire and EMS response to the Town of Swanville and contracted EMS only to the towns of Northport, Belmont, Morrill and Waldo. Mutual Aid agreements are held for Fire and EMS with all towns throughout Waldo County.
- **Libraries.** The Belfast Free Public Library serves many people who do not reside in the city, and through collaboration with other libraries, provides access to a wider range of books and materials than it could on its own. Library cards are free to residents and taxpayers of Belfast, the children of Waldo County 18 years of age and younger. Others may purchase a card for an annual fee.
- **Broadband.** Belfast is not a member of the MidCoast Internet Development Corporation – a new organization working to advance fast and reliable broadband to the region, but neighboring Northport is a member and the Belfast Broadband committee is actively working on addressing broadband access concerns in Belfast.

## **EDUCATION**

Belfast areas schools fall under Regional School Unit #71, which includes the Ames School (Town of Searsmont), Captain Albert Stevens (City of Belfast), East Belfast (City of Belfast), Gladys Weymouth (Town of Morrill), Kermit Nickerson (Town of Swanville), Troy Howard (City of Belfast), Belfast Area High School (City of Belfast), Belfast Community Outreach Program in Education (BCOPE) (City of Belfast), and Belfast Adult Education (City of Belfast). Belfast also coordinates with the University of Maine Hutchinson Center, as well as the Waldo County Technical center, both located in the City of Belfast.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES AND MARINE AREAS**

Belfast shares important natural and marine areas with its neighboring communities – each of which provides an opportunity for collaboration. There are a number of organizations that steward and manage open space and natural resources in the Belfast region.

**Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition.** The Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition supports conservation and stewardship of natural and public resources in the Belfast Bay watershed through research, community-building, and education.

**Coastal Mountains Land Trust.** Coastal Mountains Land Trust (CMLT) is a nonprofit land conservation organization, founded in 1986, that seeks to permanently conserve land to benefit the human and natural communities of Western Penobscot Bay. There are a number of CMLT preserves in the City of Belfast and Waldo County. CMLT currently has a Waldo County Initiative to increase the acres of conserved lands in Waldo County. There are opportunities to create trail connections between these spaces within Belfast and surrounding communities.

**Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF).** Maine DACF is an important partner in providing support for land-based and natural resource interests. The Department balances and develops the state's various land-based, natural-resources including Maine agriculture, forests, outdoor recreation and public-access.

**National organizations.** National nonprofits such as the Nature Conservancy, the Trust of Public Land, and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy can provide technical assistance, grant information, and other support for land and water conservation efforts and trail management.

# FUTURE LAND USE

The City of Belfast is a desirable place to live, work, and visit. It is known for its diverse year-round economy, lively arts scene, strong local businesses, dynamic waterfront, active community participation, beautiful rural areas, and historic walkable downtown. As a county seat, a services center, an employment center, and a destination for arts and recreation, Belfast will continue to be a desirable place; and while rapid growth or change is not guaranteed for Belfast in the near future, any change can often be viewed as both positive and negative. The role of planning – particularly future land use planning – is to provide a framework for managing change. This comprehensive plan lays the framework for managing potential robust growth in Belfast in the next ten years.

The Future Land Use Plan is the chapter of the comprehensive plan that reflects the analysis, goals, objectives and recommendations from each section of the plan. The policy statements in this chapter are intended to serve as the foundation for zoning and other land use regulations. The state Growth Management Act instructs that future land use plans should clearly designate growth areas, rural areas, and critical natural resources areas. Growth areas are those places where future growth is appropriate and desired, where a variety of housing types can occur, that allow for efficient use of public facilities and services, and that encourage compact – rather than sprawling – development. Rural areas include important agricultural and forest lands, and large undeveloped areas that provide space for habitat, resource production, outdoor recreation, natural resources and scenic views. Rural areas are typically low density and are not intended for significant additional growth on par with the density envisioned in a growth area. Critical natural resources areas are those areas that contain a critical mass of vulnerable natural resources should have maximum protection from development.

The following section outlines Belfast’s future land use goals, objectives, and strategies.

## FUTURE LAND USE KEY FINDINGS

- Both the historic walkable downtown and the outer rural areas are key to Belfast’s identity and character as a city.
- Housing availability and affordability is a major problem and many people who work in Belfast cannot afford to live in Belfast, and this impacts economic development.
- The city has undertaken several recent zoning code revisions, in particular changes to the outside rural zone to allow more flexibility for the type and amount of allowed housing
- Despite recent updates to the code, there are still many zones and the code could be further simplified and streamlined.
- The City of Belfast recognizes the importance of compact development and multi-modal mobility, like walking and cycling.
- The effects of climate change and sea level rise may impact land use and the cost of doing business on the waterfront over time. According to projections from NOAA and the State of Maine, there are several parcels along the waterfront that are vulnerable to sea level rise in the next 50 years and future planning must account for these potential impacts.



## **FUTURE LAND USE GOALS**

- Encourage and accommodate a diverse year-round population that will contribute to the strength and resilience of Belfast
- Growth and development are focused in appropriate areas
- Zoning and development standards are clear and easy to apply
- Land use policy enhances and strengthens Belfast’s neighborhoods and community, encourages a range of housing options, and prioritizes those who live and work in Belfast
- Land use policy supports connectivity through multi-modal transportation options and connections to services, retail, employment, residential and parks and recreational areas
- Land use policy that supports adequate number of parks and distribution of parks in proximity to residential areas
- Growth and development policies that protect critical natural resources and public health, and provide for the designation and future creation of new park land, particularly in the designated growth area of the city
- Land use planning and policy decisions factor in food security, climate change, and resilience thinking

## **FUTURE LAND USE OBJECTIVES**

- Use zoning tools to create appropriate transitions between rural areas and growth areas and preserve the distinction between the two areas.
- Make zoning and new development consistent with the city’s land use goals, compatible with historic patterns of development, and consistent with community health and living standards.
- Support the location, type, scales, and intensities of land uses the community desires as stated in the comprehensive plan vision.
- Encourage new development to help increase safe and accessible pedestrian infrastructure throughout the designated growth areas, where appropriate.
- Support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas.
- Sustain a thriving waterfront that supports a diverse set of uses, honors Belfast’s cultural and maritime roots, and connects to other parts of Belfast and nearby islands.
- Improve connections, particularly multi-modal, between residential, commercial, employment, and recreational areas.
- Ensure that zoning and land use policies support the development of jobs available year-round.
- Ensure that land use policies support expansion of health services such as hospitals and medical offices.
- Increase the supply of affordable housing through flexible land use and permitting policies.

- Create neighborhoods that include varied housing options and accommodate a mixture of incomes.
- Ensure that permitting processes are timely, efficient and transparent.
- Provide an adequate distribution of parks and open spaces throughout the city.
- Identify and protect important historic and cultural resources.
- Identify and protect important natural resources.
- Protect and enhance access to the water (physical and visual).
- Protect critical rural and waterfront areas from the impacts of development.
- Coordinate Belfast’s land use strategies with other local and regional land use planning efforts.
- Create land use policy that supports the other goals and objectives in the comprehensive plan.

**FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGIES**

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
FLU-1	Continue to review and simplify the zoning code to: 1) improve clarity of the language and review process, 2) achieve consistency with existing and desired land uses, 3) support the city in accomplishing land use goals, and 4) ensure that allowed uses and standards are aligned with current community needs and 5) use incentives where appropriate.	Planning Staff, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	
FLU-2	Continue to refine zoning and land use policies to: 1) clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development; 2) maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures, and explore streamlining permitting procedures in growth areas; 3) Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources; and 4) clearly define protective measures for any proposed critical rural areas and/or critical waterfront areas.	Planning Staff, Planning Board, City Council	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
FLU-3	Communicate with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.	Planning Staff, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	
FLU-4	Provide Planning and Codes Department with the tools, training, and support necessary to enforce land use regulations, and ensure that the Code Enforcement Officer is certified in accordance with 3-0A M.R.S.A. §4451.	City Council	Ongoing	Yes
FLU-5	Track new development in the community by type and location.	Planning Staff	Ongoing	Yes
FLU-6	Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas as identified below in this Future Land Use Plan.	City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
FLU-7	Periodically (at least every five years) evaluate implementation of this plan in accordance with Section 2.7 of the Growth Management Act.	Planning Staff	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
FLU-8	Consider policies on short-term rentals to balance the demand for vacation rentals with the need for year-round housing and the desire to maintain neighborhood character.	Planning Staff, Planning Board, City Council	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
FLU-9	Collaborate with state, regional, and local land conservation organizations to establish goals for future land conservation and protection of existing open space, including an inventory of prime farmland soils and areas with best potential for agricultural uses.	Coalition of city committees, planning, regional open space protection organizations, statewide organizations and other municipalities	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
FLU-10	Explore amending the Airport Overlay zoning district based on actual airport operations in order to increase potential for development in the Airport Growth zone.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
FLU-11	Encourage construction of new housing within the growth area, and where sewers and other infrastructure already exists, to decrease disturbance of forest and open space, incentivize walking and cycling, and support compact growth goals.	Planning staff, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	
FLU-12	Continue collaboration between the city and neighboring community members to support and protect public rights-of-way and range way access points to the water.	Planning Staff, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	
FLU-13	Explore potential opportunities for new parkland, trails, and open space on the east side of Belfast harbor and outside of the by-pass road, as well as multi-use trails outside of the by-pass areas that create more multi-modal connections between the outer areas of Belfast and downtown.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works, Parks and Recreation Department)	Long-Term (5+ years)	
FLU-14	Consider requirements for Low-Impact Design (LID) on-site or “sponge” retention concepts in development projects to support climate, public infrastructure, and overall stormwater management goals and objectives.	Planning Staff, Planning Board, City Council	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
FLU-15	Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works, City Manager), City Council	Ongoing	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
FLU-16	Assign responsibility for implementing to the Future Land Use Plan to the appropriate committee, board, or municipal official.	Planning Staff	Ongoing	Yes
FLU-17	Include in the Capital Investments Plan anticipated municipal capital investments needed to support proposed land uses.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works, Financial Manager, City Manager), City Council	Ongoing	Yes
FLU-18	Establish goals for future land conservation and protection of existing open space.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works, City Manager), City Council	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
FLU-19	Explore emerging land conservation tools that may ensure long-term sustainability of marine based "working waterfront" land uses such as commercial fishing and boat building.	Planning staff, Harbor Master, Economic Development Department	Short-Term	

## FUTURE LAND USE AND CRITICAL NATURAL RESOURCES AREAS MAPPING

Belfast's future land use planning anticipates that residential, industrial, institutional, mixed-use, and open space areas will remain largely consistent with existing patterns. The plan also anticipates that the regulations governing development will not be static, but will adjust and adapt to changing needs and policy direction at the local and state level. Zoning boundaries and specific use, dimensional, and performance standards will be modified over time as ordinances are revised and updated. Future land use modifications will be informed by a combination of the vision, goals, objectives, and strategies of this plan.

The Future Land Use Map provides the high-level framework for making future zoning, policy, and investment decisions and provides a reference point for regulatory standards, which will help preserve Belfast's quality of life, community character, and cherished small-city lifestyle. The following maps show "Growth Areas", "Rural Areas", and "Critical Natural Resources Areas".

**Growth Areas.** The anticipation is that most residential and non-residential development over the next ten years will occur in the growth area. Public sewer and water are available in much of the growth area. Strong, connected neighborhoods are fundamental to the city's overall health. Establishing a growth area does not guarantee that growth will occur; it simply indicates where growth is most appropriate.

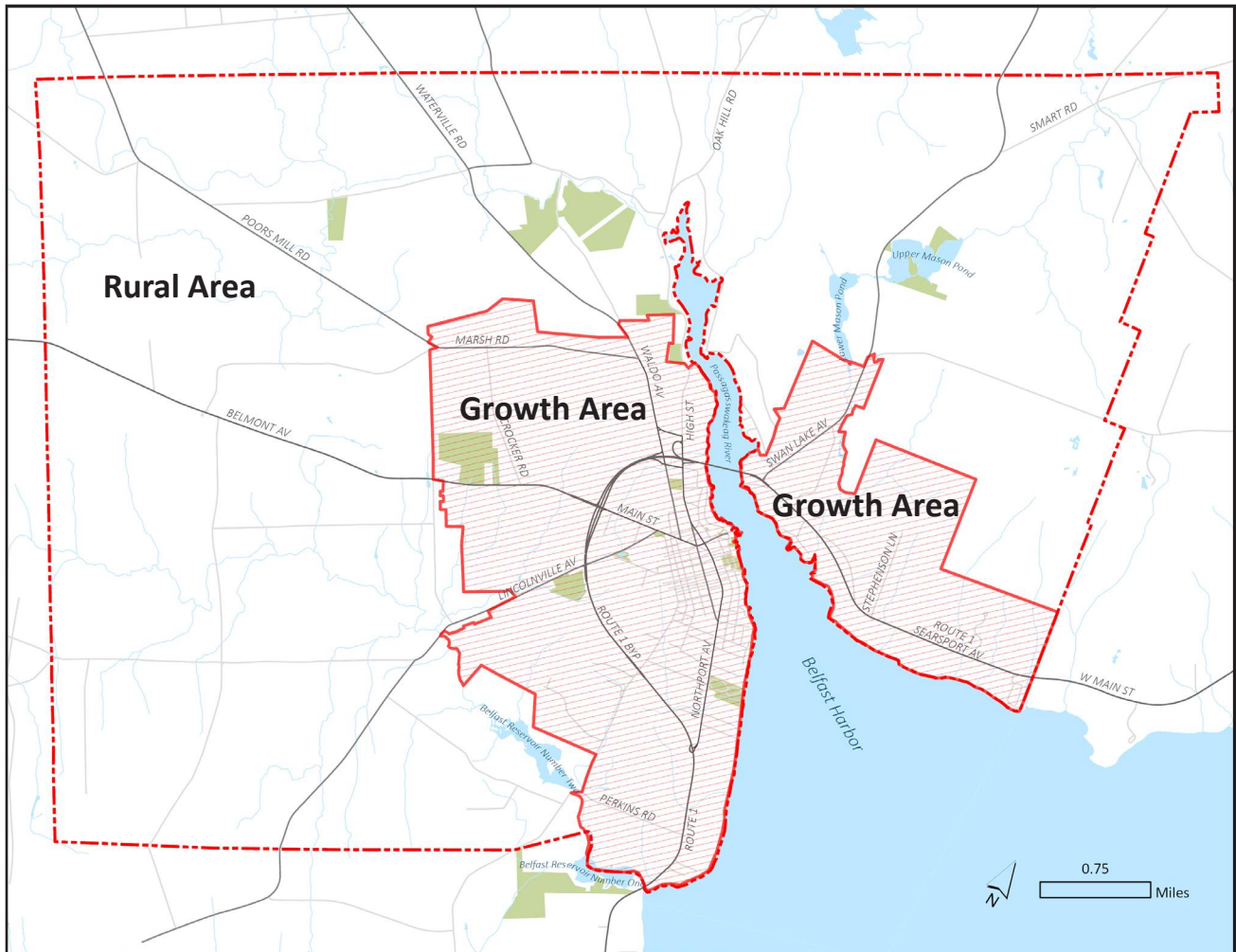
**Rural Areas.** These are areas that are predominantly undeveloped, have large contiguous areas of open land and are not serviced, or likely to be serviced, by public water and/or sewer in the foreseeable future. New development may be appropriate in the rural area, provided it is in line with the newly revised Outside Rural 1 and 2 zones that seek to provide more flexibility for new housing but also keep development compatible with the rural landscape.

**Critical Natural Resources Areas.** Future Land Use within the Growth Areas and Rural Areas will need to consider appropriate protective measures for the city's critical natural resources. Critical Natural Resources can include (but are not limited to) wetlands of special significance; significant wildlife habitat; threatened, endangered and special concern animal species habitat; scenic vistas; natural communities that are critically imperiled or rare; areas containing plant species declared to be threatened or endangered; prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance; or coastal bluff areas vulnerable to erosion. The Critical Natural Resources Map indicates where these areas are currently identified.


Overall, Future Land Use throughout the city should be thought of in a nuanced way which recognizes that all land, excluding that which is permanently conserved, has potential for some change as enabled under current zoning designations and regulations.

## Future Land Use Map

The map below illustrates the growth area for the City of Belfast.

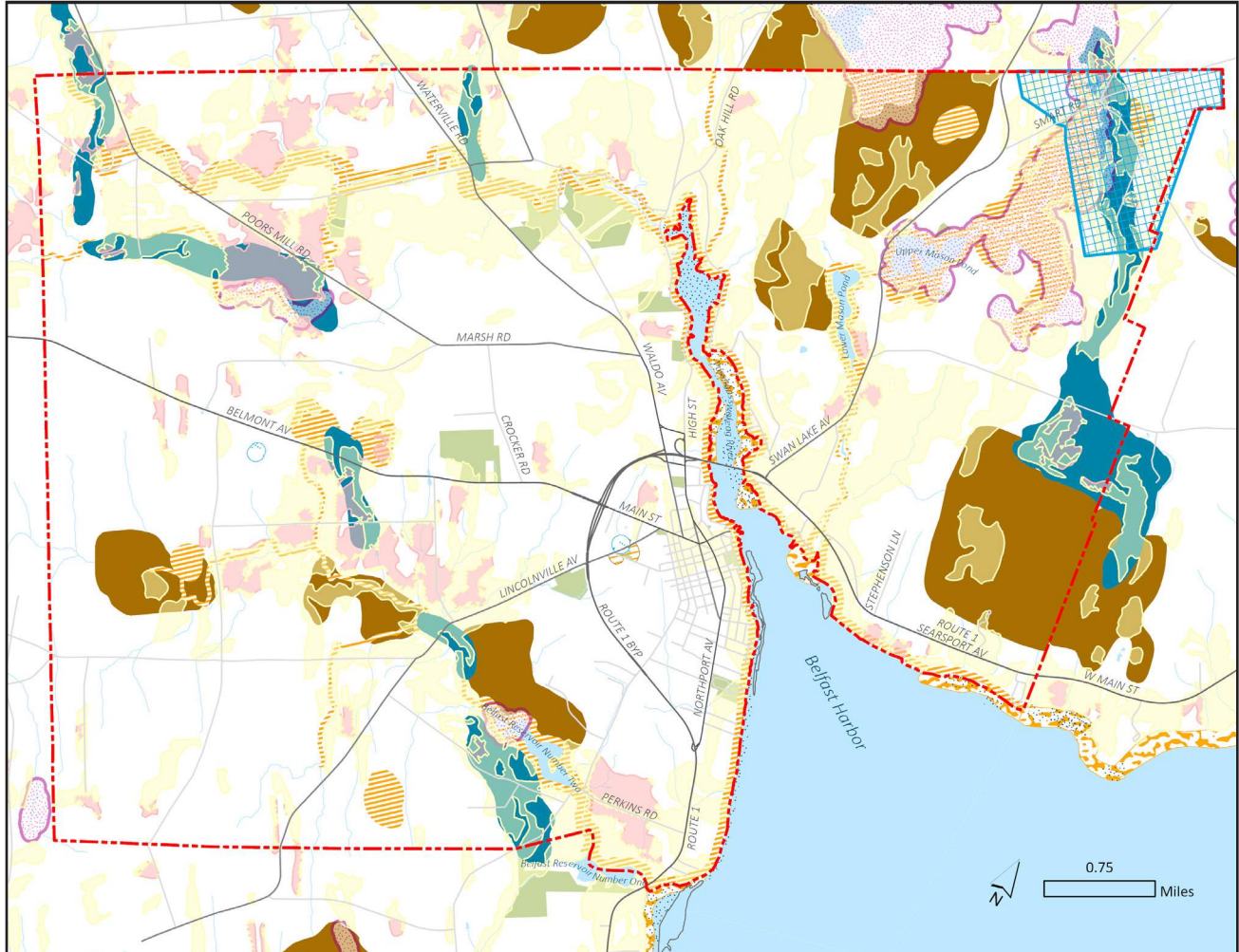


## City of Belfast, Maine Future Land Use Focus Areas

-  Belfast City Boundary
-  Parks and Public Open Spaces
-  Belfast Future Land Use Growth Area

## Critical Natural Resources Map

The map below shows the location of critical natural resources in the City of Belfast.

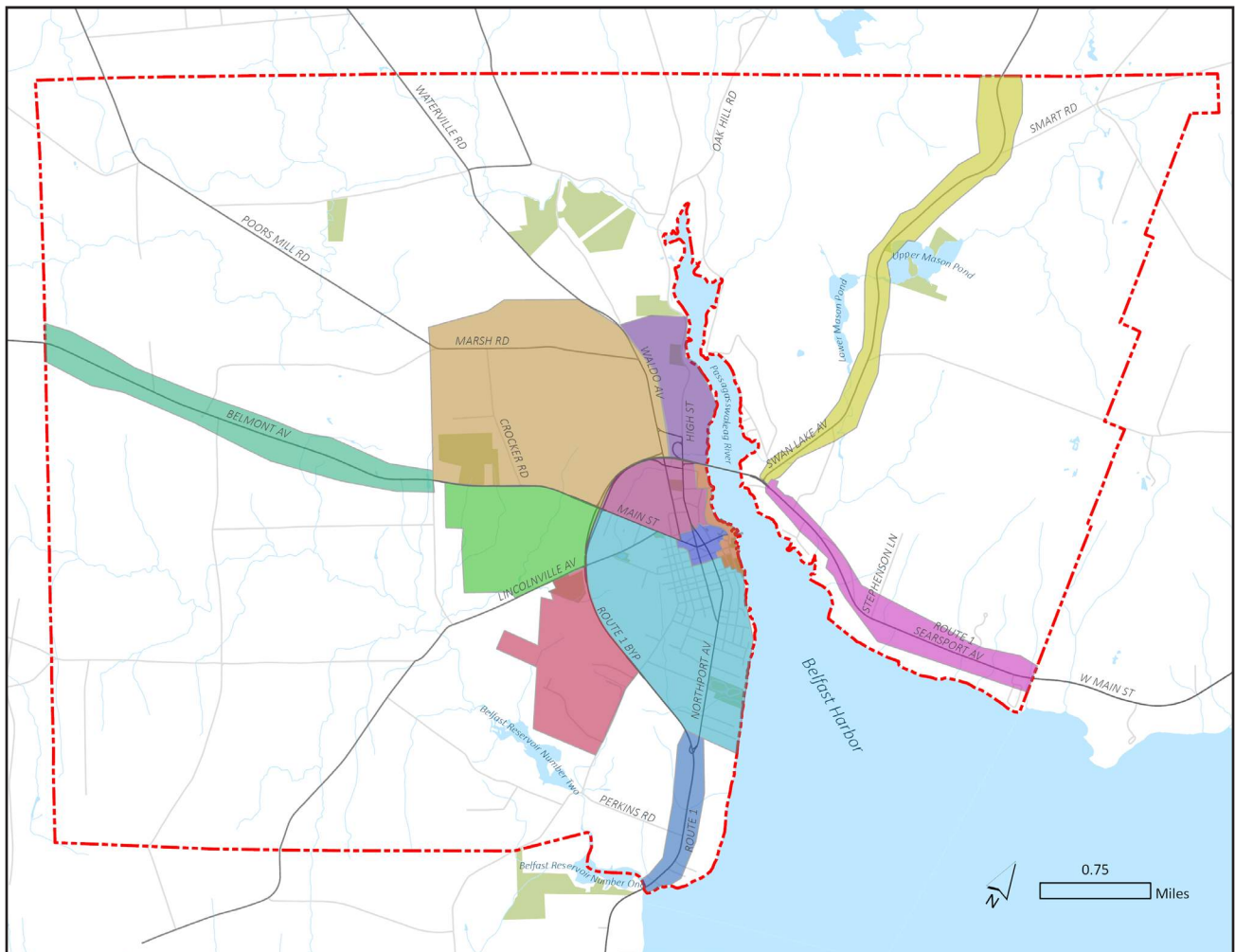


### City of Belfast, Maine Critical Natural Resources Areas

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Belfast City Boundary                                     | Maine Deer Wintering Areas                                      |
| Parks and Public Open Spaces                              | Farmland of statewide importance                                |
| Eelgrass Gain in Density 1997-2010                        | Farmland of statewide importance within large agricultural area |
| Eelgrass Gain in Extent 1997-2010                         | Maine Aquifers  |
| Eelgrass Loss in Density 1997-2010                        | Maine Piping Plover and Least Tern Essential Habitat            |
| Eelgrass Loss in Extent 1997-2010                         | Maine Roseate Tern Essential Habitat                            |
| Eelgrass No Change  | Maine DMR Molluscan Shellfish 2010                              |
| Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat                  | Maine DMR Public Health-Seed Mussel Conservation Areas          |
| Maine Shorebird Areas                                     | Belfast Watershed District                                      |
| Endangered, Threatened & Special Concern Wildlife Habitat | Shoreland Zone  |
| Tidal Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat                   |   |
| Significant Vernal Pools                                  |   |

## FUTURE LAND USE – FOCUS AREAS

The following Focus Areas are sub-areas of Belfast that present unique challenges and opportunities as the city grows and land use pressures increase in the future. The Focus Areas are not meant to represent official or administrative boundaries and instead are used in this plan to draw attention to unique neighborhoods, their varying characteristics, and special planning needs. In these areas the city will need to address a combination of special planning, zoning, or infrastructure considerations. Each Focus Area has its own attributes and qualities that necessitate closer examination in the land use planning process. This Focus Areas section of the Future Land Use chapter provides additional insight and guidance on each of these areas.



### City of Belfast, Maine Future Land Use Focus Areas

- |                              |                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Belfast City Boundary        | Route 1 East              |
| Parks and Public Open Spaces | Route 1 South             |
| Airport and Industrial Park  | Route 3 Rural             |
| Belfast Office Park          | Swan Lake Avenue Corridor |
| Downtown                     | The Waterfront            |
| Inside the Bypass            | Upper High Street         |
| Marsh and Crocker            | Waldo Ave                 |



## **Waterfront**

The Belfast waterfront area runs approximately from Route 1 at the north end to the Belfast Boathouse at the south end. The waterfront is an active part of downtown Belfast that supports numerous uses including boat building, commercial fishing, recreational boating, the Harbor Walk multi-use trail, outdoor events and festivals, restaurants, and galleries. Belfast's waterfront acts as a gateway to the city for those arriving by boat and a link between the commercial downtown and the city's maritime activities. Many coastal Maine towns face increasing development pressure on waterfront property. Future planning should determine an appropriate balance for Belfast between the traditional marine-based and dependent "working waterfront" uses – such as commercial fishing and boat building – and redevelopment for other uses. In addition, sea-level rise, storm surges, and flooding from climate change will pose challenges for waterfront uses. At the north end of this zone, the demolition of Penobscot McCrum created a large vacant lot, at the junction of the Harborwalk, rail-trail, Armistice Bridge, Front Street, and adjacent to new city parking and an electric vehicle charging facility.

*Unique Attributes:* Several large open spaces; marinas; restaurants; Front Street Shipyard; scenic views; access and connection to the Harbor Walk trail, the Armistice Bridge, and the rail-trail

*Special Planning Considerations:*

- Consider creating a vision for the Belfast waterfront and determine the appropriate balance of marine and non-marine uses along the waterfront
- Explore emerging land conservation tools that may ensure the long-term sustainability of "working waterfront" uses
- Continue to provide services for marine users
- Pursue opportunities to improve connections between the waterfront and other parts of Belfast and even Searsport via livery or shuttle services, and to Islesboro via a direct year-round ferry
- Study parking, particularly during events and festivals
- Ensure sufficient open space for events and gatherings
- Consider impacts of climate change / sea-level rise / storm surge in waterfront planning
- Review strategies identified in the City of Belfast Community Revitalization Plan (2021)

## **Downtown**

Main Street, from the waterfront to Market Street and several blocks in either direction, is the heart of downtown Belfast, with mixed-use commercial/residential buildings, government services, restaurants, galleries, shops, and the Belfast Community co-op. The Main Street corridor connects the waterfront to downtown neighborhoods and the retail area west of Congress Street, just inside the Belfast by-pass. Main Street and the downtown area play a major role in the character and image of the City of Belfast. The historic, small-town walkable Main Street and downtown area are not just a draw for tourists seeking a coastal small-town experience, but for year-round residents who enjoy walkable urbanism.

*Unique Attributes:* Historic architecture, traditional Main Street with small storefronts, walkable, mixture of retail, restaurants, government offices and services.

*Special Planning Considerations:*

- Balance the demand for event parking, parking for customers, and parking for employees
- Continue using zoning and planning tools to support mixed use development
- Consider expanding uses in this area to include lodging establishments
- Support multi-modal mobility through continued investments in pedestrian and cycling infrastructure
- Review priority goals and strategies identified in the City of Belfast Community Revitalization Plan (2021) for Focus Area 1.

**Inside the By-Pass**

The Belfast by-pass creates a physical edge and transition point between Downtown Belfast and the outer areas of the city, which range from commercial, to industrial, lower-density residential and rural. “Inside the by-pass” is generally synonymous with older homes, walkable neighborhoods, close proximity between commercial, residential, downtown, city services, parks and open spaces, and the waterfront.

*Unique Attributes:* Neighborhood character; access to sewer and water infrastructure; older homes; walkable and bikeable streets; neighborhoods are well-connected to downtown, city services, and the waterfront areas.

*Special Planning Considerations:*

- Actively identify and pursue opportunities for in-fill housing where appropriate, to focus growth where city water and sewer exist or can be easily extended as appropriate
- Assess flexibility of parking standards to allow conversion of single-family houses to multi-family as appropriate
- Make use of local and state programs, policies, and tools to support preservation and rehabilitation of historic architecture
- Identify opportunities for additional pedestrian and cycling connections and infrastructure improvements
- Review priority goals and strategies identified in the City of Belfast Community Revitalization Plan (2021) for Focus Area 2.

**Marsh and Crocker**

The Marsh and Crocker area is a mixture of residential and commercial uses stretching from where Route 3 intersects the Route 1 by-pass to the intersection of Marsh and Crocker roads, including the areas fronting Marsh Road on the north and Crocker Road on the west. This area was identified in the previous future land use plan as an area to encourage additional housing. In this comprehensive plan update, the Marsh and Crocker area is part of the growth area, with both Residential 4 zoning and Route 3 Retail zoning along Route 3.

*Unique Attributes:* Quiet residential area in close proximity to downtown and Route 3 commercial area; some existing sewer and water infrastructure allow for growth potential; potential for improved bicycle and pedestrian connections to Waldo Avenue and existing Route 3 commercial areas.

*Special Planning Considerations:*

- Explore the feasibility of extending city water and sewer along Crocker Road north toward Marsh Road in order to accommodate additional residential growth on city water and sewer infrastructure.
- Identify opportunities to create safe and accessible cycling and pedestrian connections to Downtown Belfast via Waldo Avenue and the Route 3 commercial area.
- Pursue future growth that is compatible with existing character and connects with existing development.

### **Upper High Street**

The Upper High Street area is unique in that it is close to downtown but feels more rural in character. There are generally larger lots and it is predominantly residential, with a few small, in-home businesses as well as the Belfast Variety Store.

*Unique Attributes:* City sewer and water does extend to the edge of this area which could make it appropriate for additional growth. There are several different zones in this area including RES-2, OR-1, and RES-4. High Street connects downtown Belfast to several open spaces, the Passy Rail-Trail trailhead, and the Hills-to-Sea trailhead.

*Special Planning Considerations:*

- Consider extension of safe and accessible cycling and pedestrian infrastructure along High Street for connection to trails and open spaces.
- Determine the appropriate balance of residential and commercial along Upper High Street and ensure an appropriate transition along High Street inside and outside the by-pass.

### **Waldo Avenue**

The Waldo Avenue area is located north of Main Street / Belmont Avenue and west of the waterfront, just inside the by-pass. This area is primarily residential with small-scale commercial uses, and several institutional uses, including Waterfall Arts, the Grove Cemetery, Belfast Area High School, the Belfast Adult Education Campus.

*Unique Attributes:* Close proximity to downtown amenities and services; mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial uses;

*Special Planning Considerations:*

- Consider additional sidewalks connections
- Determine the appropriate balance of residential and commercial along Waldo Avenue and ensure an appropriate transition between Waldo Avenue inside and outside the by-pass

### **Belfast Office Park**

The Belfast Office Park is located in between Route 3 / Belmont Avenue east of the Route 1 by-pass road and Route 52 / Lincolnville Avenue. This area includes several campuses for mid-to large businesses and institutions. The Route 3 entrance provides access to athenahealth, the University of Maine- Hutchinson Center, and the former MBNA campus. This property was purchased by Bangor-based Penobscot Community Health Care (PCHC) and is slated for redevelopment in order to expand operations in that area. The Troy Howard Middle School campus and Waldo County YMCA are accessed along Route 52.

*Unique Attributes:* Predominantly commercial properties, with a few institutional uses; undeveloped forested areas; Little River trail access to the North Forest Preserve and Walsh Field Recreational Area.

*Special Planning Considerations:*

- There is room for future office growth in this area and the current zoning supports many uses. This area has public water and limited private sewer on the PCHC property. PCHC has indicated they will pursue a variety of uses in the future
- Maintain trail access and connections; improve pedestrian safety crossing Route 3 and Route 52 to access parkland

### **Airport and Industrial Park**

The Belfast Municipal Airport, built in the 1940's, is a general aviation airport located between Lincolnville Avenue, U.S. Route 1, Congress Street, and Little River Drive. It has an area of approximately 218 acres and a paved runway 4,000 feet long. The airport is used by typical privately owned airplanes, and there is some use by small to medium charter and corporate jets and turbine aircraft. There is no regular commercial passenger service. Local businesses such as athenahealth use the Belfast Municipal Airport as do charter companies bringing in corporate executives, Front Street Shipyard customers, and tourists.

*Unique Attributes:* Located just outside of the by-pass, near downtown and Route 3 commercial areas; potential for additional growth.

*Special Planning Considerations:*

- Continue efforts to create an Airport Overlay zone that encourages appropriate uses and dimensional requirements so that the airport continues to thrive without unnecessary limits on adjacent properties

### **Swan Lake Avenue Corridor**

The Swan Lake Avenue corridor (Route 141) runs from Route 1, on the east side of Belfast to the city border with the Town of Swanville to the north. The corridor is predominantly lower-density rural residential with some small businesses and light industrial uses along either side and forested sections. There are properties owned by the Belfast Water District that are protected for aquifer water quality. A portion of this corridor is within the Maine DOT Urban Compact Area, which creates more opportunity for municipal direction to access management.

*Unique Attributes:* Rural character; mixture of housing types; provides access to several open spaces and recreational areas including Goose Pond Canoe Launch Area and the Littlefield Preserve.

*Special Planning Considerations:*

- Improve pedestrian access and safety issues
- Seek opportunities for new parks and open spaces to serve Swan Lake Avenue Corridor residents
- Consider an access management study for the portion of the Swan Lake Avenue Corridor in the State Urban Compact Area to ensure safe and efficient traffic flow along a rural route.
- Ensure an appropriate transition in development character and intensity along Swan Lake Avenue in between Route 1 and areas to the north.

### **Route 3 Corridor**

The Route 3 corridor stretches from the Route 1 by-pass to the Belfast city border with the Town of Belmont to the west. Route 3 has two distinct sections: one is the commercial and retail strip section in and around the by-pass intersection, which is zoned Route 3 Commercial, and the other is the rural residential section from the Belmont border to Edgecomb Road, which is zoned Route 3 Rural. The Route 3 corridor has several zones along commercial and retail are

*Unique Attributes:* Route 3 is a gateway into Belfast from the west, with the rural portion offering scenic sections of wooded areas and open space; Route 3 commercial area is walkable from downtown / inside the by-pass area.

*Special Planning Considerations:*

- Maintain an intentional transition on Route 3 from rural to commercial in order to limit sprawl
- Limit curb-cuts and access points along the section of Route 3 that is outside of the State Urban Compact Area.
- Consider extension of safe and accessible pedestrian and cycling infrastructure out towards the University of Maine Hutchinson Center.

### **Route 1 South Corridor**

The Route 1 South Corridor is the southern gateway into the City of Belfast, running from the Northport border to the intersection of Route 1 and Northport Avenue. Major features of this area are The Battery, a historic Civil War battery that later became a summer cottage community, and the Penobscot Shores retirement community. This area is characterized by a mixture of lower-density residential with some small-scale commercial, light-industrial uses on adjacent roads, and a large, planned land-based salmon farm.

*Unique Attributes:* Access to the Little River Trail off of the adjacent Perkins Road

*Special Planning Considerations:*

- Consider zoning changes in the area of Route 1 South where it meets Perkins Road to allow for additional commercial uses and high density.
- Explore the feasibility of extending safe, accessible, and appropriate pedestrian and cycling infrastructure to connect downtown Belfast to the Little River Trail and Belfast Reservoir, considering the mixture of uses in this area and that Route 1 is a major thoroughfare.

### **Route 1 (Searsport Avenue) Corridor**

The Route 1 / Searsport Avenue corridor is a major thoroughfare on the east side of Belfast, connecting Belfast to Searsport and coastal points north. This corridor is a mixture of lower-density residential and commercial, with a number of hotels, a campground, and small-scale anchor businesses. The south side of Route 1 is home to waterfront properties, along with the Belfast Inn and Young's Lobster Pound. In some locations along this corridor there are views of Belfast Bay. The section of Route 1 that is in between the Passagassawakeag River and the Goose River are part of the Maine State Urban Compact Area, a zone established by the Maine Department of Transportation that regulates highway access points.

*Unique Attributes:* A mixture of residential and commercial properties; public access points to the water via historic rangeways (see Mitchell Street Rangeway in public access points to water map); sewer and water infrastructure; narrow, linear lot lines that extend north from Belfast Bay.

#### *Special Planning Considerations:*

- Continue to recognize and protect public access points to the water at the historic rangeway locations
- Consider additional compact village-scale residential and commercial growth in the area where Searsport Avenue and Swan Lake Avenue intersect, along with safe and accessible pedestrian and cycling infrastructure that safely connects this area to the East Belfast School, the Armistice Bridge, and Downtown Belfast

# **PART 2: POLICY GUIDES**

**HOUSING**

**ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY VITALITY**

**MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION**

**PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES**

**PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE**

**HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES**

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

*(CRITICAL, WATER, AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST, MARINE)*

**CLIMATE SOLUTIONS**

# HOW TO USE THE POLICY GUIDES CHAPTER

Part 2: Policy Guides of the City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan presents the analysis and strategic recommendations for each of the state-mandated plan topic areas, including a section on Climate Solutions. Each topic area section provides a brief background overview, a list of key findings, and then the goals, objectives, and strategies for that topic. The "Key Findings" in each topic area section are summaries from the data gathering and analysis presented in Part 2: Inventory Chapters of the City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan, which is found in the next part of this document. Key Finding set the stage for the goals, objectives, and strategies that follow.

All strategies are listed in a table format with unique strategy numbers, the recommended strategy, the suggested department or organization responsible for implementation, the recommended time frame, and a column that notes if the strategy is required by the state. All strategies are also listed in table format in Part 4: Strategies Appendix of the plan.



# HOUSING

The City of Belfast continually attracts new residents and businesses because of its high quality of life, sense of community, access to the coast and recreation, strong school system, and perception of safety. Over the years, the City’s housing supply has not provided enough variety in housing types and at varying price points, and the development of more “Missing Middle Housing” types and affordable housing is needed. Missing Middle Housing is defined as a range of house-scale buildings with multiple units—compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes—located in a walkable neighborhood. Missing Middle Housing types include those that are often less common, but offer more affordable options, such as: duplexes (side-by-side and stacked); bungalow courts, carriage houses and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), courtyard apartments, town homes, and small to medium-sized multi-family buildings.

Housing that is affordable to those who live, or would like to live, in Belfast is limited and much of the housing stock consists of older, single-family homes. Public health studies consider safe, secure housing a social determinant of health. There are housing insecure community members in Belfast who are routinely moving between temporary living arrangements because they cannot afford housing. The topic of a stable workforce housing supply is a significant topic of conversation amongst major institutions and employers in the City of Belfast. In addition, given the recent combined forces of the COVID-19 pandemic, the increase in remote work opportunities, and the increase of the retiree population, the city is faced with added pressure on the housing market and the need for more housing at a variety of price points.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Although the Belfast housing market offers some variety of housing price-points, more middle-income housing is needed.** The City of Belfast housing stock includes high-priced seasonal homes, historic and waterfront homes, manufactured housing, senior housing, moderately-priced and lower-income homes, an eco-village, and some age-restricted communities. There is generally no clustering of housing by price-point, though houses in the Historic District and along the water tend to be more expensive.
- **There is a shortage of affordable housing for those who work in Belfast.** From 2007 to 2018, those earning the median income in the region could not afford to buy the median priced home in Belfast. Over the last several decades, the City of Belfast has partnered with organizations to build more affordable housing, but there is still not enough affordable housing available, particularly homes that are considered “starter homes.” There is increasing interest in pre-fab, modular, and tiny house construction and the city ordinance should allow for a wider range of housing options and types. For a service center community to thrive, it must be an affordable place for a large portion of its workforce to reside within its borders.
- **There is a significant rental affordability gap in Belfast.** More than half (56.9%) of renters in 2020 in Belfast could not afford the median rent charged for a 2-bedroom apartment. Rental units account for more than a third of occupied housing and that percentage is expected to rise. According to MaineHousing 2020 data, the median 2-bedroom rent was approximately \$1,228. The annual median income of a renter in 2020 was \$38,528 and the income needed to afford the annual median 2-bedroom rent is \$49,117.
- **There is no specific organization that focuses just on affordable housing.** While there is no specific affordable housing organization in the City of Belfast at this time, many organizations and institutions in discussion with each

other about the issue. These include Waldo Community Action Partners, Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, and many of the major employers such as Waldo County General Hospital, Bank of America, and athenahealth

- **Short-term rentals are popular in Belfast, particularly during the summer months.** The city does not currently track the number of short-term rentals nor do they require permits for owners that are participating in the short-term rental market. There is some concern and uncertainty about the impact of short-term rentals on the year-round housing market supply and housing affordability, particularly when short-term rentals are purchased and managed by people with higher incomes who live outside of town. There is also concern about the impact of short-term rentals on neighborhood dynamics and community life. While no consensus exists about the impacts of short-term rentals, it is important to monitor this phenomenon and give consideration to the role those short-term rentals play in the local economy and community experience.
- **Belfast must anticipate and plan for an influx of new residents.** Belfast, like many other Maine cities and towns, experienced an influx of people in recent years due to a combination of factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, an increase in remote work technology and opportunities, climate change refugees, and retirees. According to recent data from the Maine Department of Labor, this reversed previous cyclical migration patterns. Belfast should consider what impact this trend has on housing in the immediate future and beyond.

## HOUSING GOALS

1. Encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.
2. Affordable housing options for all who want to live in Belfast.
3. Creative solutions for closing the affordability gap for renters and owners.
4. A diversity of housing types for different types of households (eg. singles, families – with or without children, seniors, starter homes)
5. Code, permitting, and review processes that support the creation of affordable housing in the City of Belfast.
6. The creation of a housing partnership organization.

## HOUSING OBJECTIVES

1. Increase the total number of occupied units in Belfast.
2. Increase the supply of market rate homes for purchase and for rent.
3. Expand options for safe and decent housing types affordable to various price points and that meet residents' varying stages in life and household composition.
4. Decrease regulatory hurdles that prevent the creation of additional affordable housing.
5. Increase collaboration between city institutions and organizations to address workforce housing needs in Belfast.
6. Decrease direct fossil fuel use (e.g., propane, heating oil, gasoline) in new residential construction and increase use of sustainable electricity in ways that reduce overall emissions and energy costs

## HOUSING STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
HOU-1	Pursue policies that support development of a variety of housing types at different price points throughout the city. Consider adjusting the minimum lot sizes in areas where appropriate to facilitate the development of more housing types and affordable housing.	Housing and Property Development Committee, Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	
HOU-2	Create an inventory in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) of potential future housing development sites, current regulations on those sites, and potential new units yielded.	Housing and Property Development Committee, Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Long-Term (5+ years)	
HOU-3	Explore the extent to which city ordinances, codes, and permitting processes are causing unintentional constraints on affordable housing development, such as the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family homes that could be used as rentals or parking regulations that prohibit some single-family homes from becoming multi-family rentals.	Housing and Property Development Committee, Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
HOU-4	Encourage partnerships between Belfast employers and developers for the development of workforce housing.	Housing and Property Development Committee, Economic Development Department, Private Sector	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
HOU-5	Convene stakeholders and develop creative recommendations on how the city can identify partnerships for workforce housing opportunities; 2) monitor and study the need for short-term housing regulation; 3) identify new housing types and locations that would complement existing neighborhoods; and 4) understand the extent to which statewide building codes, insurance, permitting, and lending practices impact which housing types get built.	Housing and Property Development Committee, City Council, City Staff (City Manager, Planning and Codes, Economic Development Department), Non-Profit Community, Private Sector	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
HOU-6	Explore the feasibility of a registration or tracking mechanism for short-term rentals.	City Council, Planning and Codes	Medium Term (3-5 years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
HOU-7	Review zoning ordinances on the location and type of manufactured housing allowed and where this type of housing may exist in the city. Ensure manufactured housing shall be permitted to be placed or erected on individual house lots where single-family dwellings are allowed, subject to the same requirements as single-family dwellings.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
HOU-8	Develop local programs to encourage weatherization and insulation of existing buildings and new construction, and to encourage installation of heat pumps or other green heating /cooling methods that maximize energy efficiency. Cooperate with the City Energy Committee in weatherizing city buildings and continuing to increase use of green energy for city operations. Educate residents about Efficiency Maine programs that support insulation improvements.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development, City Energy Committee	Medium Term (3-5 years)	
HOU-9	Maintain, enact or amend growth area land use regulations to increase density, decrease lot size, setbacks and road widths, or provide incentives such as density bonuses, to encourage the development of affordable / workforce housing.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
HOU-10	Maintain, enact or amend ordinances to allow the addition of at least one accessory apartment per dwelling unit in growth areas, subject to site suitability.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
HOU-11	Seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development built or placed during the next decade to be affordable.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
HOU-12	Support the efforts of regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
HOU-13	Review zoning ordinances on the location of new mobile home parks to ensure they are allowed in a manner and location that statute allows.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes

# ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY VITALITY

As the county seat of Waldo County, the City of Belfast is an important service center for the upper mid-coast region, offering a diverse set of employment opportunities through various economic sectors including the working waterfront, creative economy, education, public services, and healthcare. Belfast is also home to a dynamic creative and cultural sector, an extensive park and trail network, natural beauty, and a desirable small-town atmosphere anchored by an attractive and walkable downtown. Maintaining a robust and diverse Belfast economy is a key element to the long-term success of Belfast as both a county seat and a cultural center. The city must continue to foster this vibrant economy by balancing the needs of existing industry and local business while setting the stage for additional growth and new commercial development. It will be crucial that the city supports the existing economic base while maintaining an economic climate that promotes innovative industry, including green energy and climate resilience. It is also paramount to recognize how the topic of economic and community vitality of Belfast is interconnected to issues of affordable housing, mobility and transportation, parks and recreation, education, public services and facilities, and natural and cultural resources. This section identifies key findings, goals, objectives, and strategies for economic and community vitality, Fiscal Capacity and Capital Improvements programming.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **People are struggling to make a living on one job. Belfast needs more employers that can expand the tax base, offer above average wages, and provide good quality jobs.** The city is working to support these businesses and attract new ones with tools such as credit enhancement agreements, offering land at a discount, and pursuing grant funding where applicable.
- **Belfast offers diverse employment opportunities in a range of industries and wants to avoid developing an economy overly-dependent on seasonal tourism.** Belfast experienced many of the economic shifts most cities did during the mid-20th century but has made a remarkable recovery in the last few decades. The City of Belfast once again includes healthcare, government and public services, technology, fishing, boat building, manufacturing, education, arts, restaurant and retail, tourism, agriculture and forestry, and natural resources management. A diverse economy is critical to the continued success of Belfast as a regional hub, county seat, and desirable place to live, work, and visit.
- **Employment opportunities increasingly require more specialized skills and workforce development programs bolster economic development by ensuring Belfast current and future businesses can find skilled and qualified employees.**
- **The city is a cultural center with a vibrant and expanding creative economy.** The influx of artists and the creative economy played a role in the revival of Belfast. Belfast has a concentration of arts and cultural events, organizations and opportunities that serve the local community and visitors alike. People come to Belfast from various locations throughout mid-coast Maine to Belfast for lectures, plays, musical events, movies, and more. The Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 study completed in 2017 noted that the nonprofit arts and culture sector is a significant industry in the Greater Belfast Area, accounting for \$7.8 million in total economic activity in 2015, supported 155 full-time equivalent jobs, and generated \$729,000 in local and state government revenue.

- **Tourism, namely accommodations, is an integral component of the local and regional economy.** The tourism economy in Belfast has always been strong due to the city’s beautiful location at the head of the Belfast Bay, the concentration of arts and cultural offerings, events and programming, biking, hiking, and watersport opportunities, and the character of walkable downtown. The town is popular with visitors from out of state but also Mainers who enjoy visiting the coast. In order to keep Belfast a desirable and thriving community for year-round residents, it is critical to determine and establish a sustainable balance between the tourism economy and other sectors.
- **The Belfast economy has experienced decreasing levels of unemployment.** Since 2011 there are 60 more establishments in the City of Belfast and there has been a steady gain in multiple industries. Many businesses have grown; and while businesses have come and gone over the last decade Belfast has always been a net job importer, with people living outside of the city and coming in to the city for work.
- **The city land use ordinance supports home-based businesses in all residential districts.** By supporting home-based businesses in all residential districts, the City Belfast allows for greater flexibility for some residents to make their living without having to lease additional office space while also retaining the residential character of their neighborhood. This is particularly important for small business owners that are just getting started and for whom the cost of a separate office may be prohibitive or a barrier to establishing their business. It is important for the city to examine how access to broadband in different parts of Belfast impacts home-based business opportunities. In addition, the city should consider that some home-based businesses may eventually outgrow their space at home and look at what options are available in Belfast in order to retain those businesses.
- **Belfast’s harbor, marine resources, and numerous parks, trails, and recreational opportunities are critical assets that contribute to the overall economic vitality of the city.** The city’s park and trail system, many beautiful views of the harbor, easy access to fishing and opportunities for outdoor recreation in clean water, and an active waterfront for sailing and paddling, all make Belfast a desirable place to live, work, and visit. The City of Belfast should continue to recognize the importance of these open space and marine resources for the city economy.
- **Protected natural resources are critical to the Belfast economy.** Less than 2% of Belfast’s residents are currently working in farming, fishing, and forestry operations but protection of Belfast’s environment and natural resources must continue in order to allow for continued fishing and marine-based activities; to sustain the tourism industry; and to support ongoing interest in local agricultural operations.
- **Public infrastructure is critical to the advancement of Belfast’s economy.** Given that much of the city infrastructure was built before 1950, the city recognizes that many infrastructure improvements, including the city water mains and sewer system, are in need of upgrades. In addition, public or quasi-public transportation services such as coach bus are important to consider from an economic development standpoint.
- **Stable municipal finances play an important role in economic and community vitality and sustainability.** There are inevitable fluctuations in state revenue sharing that make it hard for the city to plan ahead and this can have an impact on hiring and benefits, for example.
- **Belfast has several Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts that generate revenue for general improvements and infrastructure enhancements to those districts.** Given that there are very few local funding options in the state, the use of TIF districts in Belfast is a successful way to invest in viable projects that provide substantial benefit to the city while also stimulating future development and investment. Belfast TIF districts such as the downtown waterfront TIF district and the Northport Avenue TIF district support vital city revitalization and physical infrastructure work. In addition, there are three affordable housing TIF districts that enable the construction of badly needed below market rate housing.

- **The community has sufficient borrowing capacity and has a successful track record of using municipal bonds to pay for major projects.** The city has successfully used bonding capacity to pay for major projects like upgrades to the sewer system and wastewater treatment plan, the reconstruction of the Armistice Bridge, and the construction of the Harborwalk trail.
- **According to the last several approved city budgets, the top revenue sources were property taxes, ambulance fees, and state municipal revenue sharing.** Education, public works, and central government are typically the top annual expenditures. As noted above, state revenue sharing projections can be unpredictable and the city budget relies heavily on property tax revenue. The 2021 mil rate was 22.0 and recent property tax reassessments particularly impacted those residents inside the by-pass. The most recent budget for public works and education was almost \$11 million, which primarily covers employee salaries and benefits.
- **Belfast's outstanding long-term debt is well within the statutory limit.** As of June 2021, the city's outstanding debt was approximately \$12.2 million, which is well under the state limit of 15% or nearly \$139 million.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY VITALITY GOALS

1. Plan for, finance, and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate any anticipated growth and economic development.
2. Foster a nimble and creative economic climate and culture that encourages new employers, increases job opportunities, sustains the unique and diverse mix of sectors in Belfast, and ensures long-term sustainability as a year-round community.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY VITALITY OBJECTIVES

1. Finance existing and future facilities and services in a cost-effective manner.
2. Make a financial commitment to support desired economic development, including needed public improvements.
3. Reduce Maine's tax burden by staying within the statutory spending limitations.
4. Promote and strengthen Belfast's position as a commercial center for local residents and surrounding communities.
5. Pursue economic development for Belfast that both reflects the community's goals and vision while also supporting the role that Belfast plays in the region.
6. Coordinate with surrounding towns, regional economic development organizations, and other initiatives as necessary to support Belfast's economic development goals.
7. Ensure that Belfast land use and development codes and regulations support future growth and development, where deemed appropriate, and that these ordinances reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development.
8. Pursue land use regulations that ensure commercial development is compatible with the character of Belfast.

9. Ensure that high quality technology services are available throughout Belfast to serve the needs of residents, businesses, and government.
10. Support and strengthen Downtown as an important and economically viable center of cultural, government, and retail activity.
11. Encourage year-round job growth through the expansion of existing industrial and office uses while also attracting new, year-round job-creating industrial and office uses.
12. Support existing local vocational and technical training, and higher-educational opportunities such as the UMaine Hutchinson Center and Waldo County Technical Center.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY VITALITY STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
ECON-1	Explore grants available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.	City Manager, Finance Department, Economic Development Department	Ongoing	
ECON-2	Continue efforts to support, retain, and attract businesses that offer quality jobs and above average pay, through tools such as credit enhancement agreements, discounted land prices, and grant funding.	Economic Development Department	Short-Term (1-3 years), Ongoing	
ECON-3	Work with local technical and vocational training centers to identify ways to expand vocational education and training programs in order to increase the supply of skilled labor. This includes pursuing grant funding or other funding mechanisms to ensure a sustainable vocational training program in Belfast; continuing to promote the CareerCenter On-The-Job-Program and other CareerCenter programs that assist with workforce development; and supporting the Maine Quality Centers grant programs that provide customized workforce training grants for Maine employers seeking to locate or expand their operations in Maine.	RSU 71, Economic Development Department, Hutchinson Center, GameLoft	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
ECON-4	Explore opportunities to bring a Maine Community College to Belfast.	City Manager, Economic Development Department	Medium Term (3-5 years)	
ECON-5	Continue to promote and partner with the University of Maine's Hutchinson Center to support their variety of educational and cultural programs.	Economic Development Department	Ongoing	



ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
ECON-6	Continue support for arts and cultural organizations, such as Waterfall Arts and the Belfast Creative Coalition, the local theaters, etc, through marketing, identifying grant opportunities, and identifying locations for new and emerging arts organizations.	Economic Development Department	Ongoing	
ECON-7	Ensure that local land use regulations allow opportunities for individuals to participate in the creative economy in appropriate zoning districts.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development Department	Ongoing	
ECON-8	Aggressively pursue strategies that support the development of year-round housing that is affordable to the workforce population (those earning approximately 60% to 120% of the Area Median Income), such as changes to land use ordinance policies, funding programs for construction of housing that is affordable to the workforce, and the creation of a housing land trust to increase the supply of housing for residents that will live in Belfast year-round, seasonal workers, and short-term contract workers.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council, Economic Development, Belfast Housing Coalition (to-be-established)	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
ECON-9	Ensure that public facilities for year-round residents are funded and maintained as well as those primarily serving tourists.	City Manager, Finance Dept, Public Works Dept, Parks and Recreation Dept	Ongoing	
ECON-10	Recruit businesses that provide quality year-round jobs.	Economic Development Department	Ongoing	
ECON-11	Explore strategies to monitor or regulate short-term vacation rentals to understand how many exist, where, what kind, and determine the appropriate balance between year-round and seasonal housing for Belfast in order to support a strong year-round economy.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council, Economic Development, Belfast Housing Coalition (to-be-established)	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
ECON-12	Promote coordination between the City Chamber of Commerce, the Main Street program (Our Town Belfast), the Belfast Economic Development Department, and the Belfast Planning Department to ensure that home-based businesses continue to receive support as needed (help finding new locations, broadband access, and the impact of parking and ADA requirements).	City Manager, Economic Development Department, Planning and Codes	Ongoing	
ECON-13	Ensure that local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
ECON-14	Continue to protect critical viewsheds and marine access points such as the rangeways.	Planning and Codes, Public Works, Parks and Recreation Department	Ongoing	
ECON-15	Continue efforts to reduce point and non-point source water pollution to keep Belfast Harbor and our rivers and streams clean.	Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Planning and Codes	Ongoing	
ECON-16	Include land conservation for agriculture and commercial forestry operations in local or regional economic development plans.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development Director	Ongoing	
ECON-17	Enhance and promote the “Emerald Necklace” and recreational trails network in Belfast as a means of encouraging outdoor oriented tourism.	Parks and Recreation Dept, Public Works, Non-Profit Community, other relevant committees	Medium Term (3-5 years)	
ECON-18	Limit non-residential development in areas identified by the State of Maine as critical rural and natural resources areas to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism / outdoor recreation businesses, farmers’ markets, and home occupations. See Future Land Use Plan.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
ECON-19	Consider a variety of tools to protect the working landscape economy (working farmland, forested areas, and other natural resources), such as a working landscape protection plan, tax abatement programs, agricultural zoning and buffers, transfer-of-development rights programs, easements, and protection of prime soils. Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs. Provide information about the current use taxation program to owners of waterfront land used to provide access to or support the conduct of commercial fishing activities.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Medium Term (3-5 years)	Yes
ECON-20	Continue to provide financial support for the Belfast Economic Development Department.	City Council, City Manager	Ongoing	Yes
ECON-21	Continue to enact or amend local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
ECON-22	If public investments are foreseen to support economic development, identify the mechanisms to be considered to finance them (local tax dollars, creating a tax increment financing district, a Community Development Block Grant or other grants, bonding, impact fees, etc).	City Manager, Finance Department, Economic Development Department	Ongoing	Yes
ECON-23	Participate in any regional economic development planning efforts.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development Department	Ongoing	Yes

# MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION

Transportation and mobility are interconnected with the guiding principles of community health, social equity, sustainability, economic health and vitality, and climate resilience. By ensuring a range of safe, accessible, and convenient mobility options, the City of Belfast can offer a transportation network that serves those who cannot afford to own a car or two cars; provide physical and environmental health benefits from walking and cycling; and reduce carbon emissions and reliance on fossil fuels. In addition, a diverse transportation network improves connectivity between various sections of the city. Belfast is a regional hub for northern MidCoast Maine, where many residents from surrounding communities frequently come to work, shop, recreate, receive health care, and use public services. The transportation network consists of local, regional, and nationwide connections, including roadways, bicycle networks, pedestrian trails and paths, a community-based shuttle bus service, and a general aviation airport. There is a Concord Trailways coach bus stop on Route 3 in Belfast, connecting Belfast to Boston, Portland, and Bangor. This service plays an important role connecting to several major airports and cities. The city has made major improvements to the pedestrian network in recent years such as construction of the Harbor Walk and investments in the Armistice Bridge. There are multiple quasi-public transit options which offer limited rides and access for seniors and other residents in need of regional transportation or specific needs such as rides to health care appointments or to pick up prescriptions or groceries. Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP) administers a free bus system and their strategic plan aims to have regular routes running in the immediate future.

## MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION KEY FINDINGS

- **Automobiles are the main mode of transportation in Belfast.** While many residents in downtown Belfast walk and bike for errands, most people who live in Belfast are automobile dependent. Historically, most of the retail shopping and services were located in the downtown area; however, the development of shopping centers adjacent to the by-pass, for example, increased automobile dependency for those living downtown. Residents living outside of the downtown area have no other options than driving or calling the MidCoast Public Transportation service “Downtown Area Shuttle” (DASH), which has a limited service area.
- **Sustainable transportation trends may become more prominent in the city.** According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the transportation sector is one of the largest contributors to anthropogenic U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In 2019, the EPA estimated that the transportation sector accounted for one third of U.S. GHG emissions and 82% of the emissions in the transportation sector are caused by automobiles. The growth in the number of hybrid and electric vehicles will continue into the foreseeable future and this will in turn increase demand for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. The City of Belfast currently has several EV charging stations: two that are on public land and an additional station is in development at the Hannaford parking lot. The city should plan for additional stations in the future and/or create incentives for private development of charging stations.
- **Belfast has a sufficient supply of parking, though during the summer months some areas of the city, such as the Belfast Harbor and Main Street, experience parking conflicts.** Due to the density of businesses along Main Street, finding convenient parking is often a challenge compared to other parts of downtown. It is important to strike a balance between providing adequate parking and maintaining the experience of an historic, walkable, human-

scaled downtown. Belfast parking standards currently support small-scale development and an appealing pedestrian downtown experience. A small portion of downtown Belfast is exempt from on-site parking requirements. The city may benefit from a parking assessment that inventories existing parking and gathers information on perceptions of parking adequacy.

- **Several transit options exist in Belfast, but are limited and do not support regular commuting.** Nonprofit organization Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP) offers the MidCoast Public Transportation service called the “Downtown Area Shuttle” (DASH). This service is free within 0.75 miles of the established route boundary but this boundary is limited and the service is not regular enough to support commuting. Concord Trailways stops in Belfast and provides service to Portland, Boston, and Bangor, which is particularly important for those needing access to major airports. There is a seasonal water taxi that takes people from the public landing to Young’s Lobster Pound on the east side of the river but does not serve any additional commuting or transportation purpose.
- **As a service center for surrounding communities within the region, Belfast experiences a steady volume of traffic in and out of the city.** As the City of Belfast is not near an interstate, State Routes 1 and 3 are priority routes that serve a large volume of through traffic at certain times of day. State Routes 7, 52, 137, and 141 are also key corridors for connecting Belfast to neighboring towns. Belfast experiences a morning and evening commuter rush hour associated with work times and school schedules. Occasionally, neighbors and friends informally share rides together for errands, longer trips or commuting, but there is very little formal ride sharing and a significant percentage of the traffic at any given time is one person per car.
- **The State of Maine limits curb cuts outside of the State Urban Compact Areas.** The City of Belfast and the State of Maine encourage density to occur in areas with water and sewer and seek to limit curb cuts outside of the State Urban Compact Areas. This approach is designed to provide safer access for travelers passing through Belfast. In some areas of the city, namely Route 1 / Searsport Avenue, sewer and water does exist but outside of the State Urban Compact Area. While additional growth may be appropriate in this area, any new development must balance the need for safe through-travel with the need for curb cuts and access.
- **Numerous safety improvements are needed in various locations throughout the city.** In the last five years, a number of intersections and one road section were identified by Maine DOT as high crash locations. The city has invested in pedestrian and cyclist safety enhancements over the last 20 years but there are still a number of areas that need addressing to improve accessibility and mobility options. It is important to look at the regional transportation plan and how those priorities impact intersections in Belfast. Interchanges connecting Rte. 1 and other major arteries are clunky at times and improvements could prevent cross-town speeding on smaller roads such as City Point, Back Belmont, Marsh, Pitcher and others.
- **More mobility links are needed.** The major roadway routes leading into Belfast create a semi hub and spoke pattern of development, with primarily residential land uses and some commercial uses located along those roadway corridor spokes. Closer to the by-pass, there are several large employers and institutional campuses located in the wedges in between these corridors. Mobility links can include new roads but also new and improved sidewalks, crosswalks, trailheads, connector trails, bike routes and off-road bikeways. These links can increase options and opportunities for people to move more easily in and around Belfast. More links are needed, particularly links that connect those areas outside of the by-pass to areas inside of the by-pass, as well those areas in between major roadways leading to and from downtown Belfast. Creating new linkages between these wedges and corridors improves mobility and circulation. In addition, the new Outside Rural rezoning concept supports this development pattern via development corridors along main roads, with the City’s downtown hub as a connection point.

- **The City of Belfast has a popular trail network and a walkable downtown area, which encourages walking and cycling for transportation and not just recreation.** The Belfast area trails and cycling network is also discussed in the Parks and Recreation section. These trails are valuable not just as recreational amenities but also as an important part of the transportation network, expanding multi-modal opportunities for residents. Despite the higher levels of walkability in the downtown area, there are still gaps to address and pedestrian safety issues along Route 1 and outside the by-pass area. Increased connectivity between existing and proposed recreational areas is important, as well as additional cycling routes to safely connect cyclists from areas outside of the by-pass to downtown.
- **Traffic, pedestrian improvements, accessibility, and parking are all currently part of the city's development review criteria.** City committees and departments, such as the Pedestrian, Biking, and Hiking Committee, the Harbor Advisory Committee, the Public Works Department, and the Parks and Recreation Commission provide important additional support to the City Council on multi-modal transportation planning and safety matters. It is important to work closely with these groups to ensure that multi-modal transportation planning principles, pedestrian safety, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, infrastructure realities, and connectivity goals are considered in planning and development review processes.
- **The Belfast Municipal Airport plays an important role in the city economy and has additional potential.** For many visitors, the airport is their first impression of the City of Belfast. Virtually all of these visitors economically support Belfast businesses by spending their tourism dollars here or by bringing their business and jobs to Belfast. A major challenge is providing ground transportation to connect these visitors to their final destination. With limited public transportation options, a distance of 1.8 miles, and an elevation change of approximately 200 feet, a walking or biking connection between the airport and downtown is challenging or impossible for those with children, luggage, or disabilities. The challenges are even greater for most other business, entertainment, dining, food and lodging destinations. An airport "courtesy car", adequate taxi/on-demand transportation options, and a fully staffed and equipped rental car business are needed to fully realize the economic benefits of the aviation component of the transportation network. There is a proposal to update the zones around the Airport and to adopt an Aviation Overlay District that better reflects actual airport operations. The Overlay District will identify properties unduly burdened by the current zoning, releasing them to be considered for development, recreation, and transportation connectivity, as well as identifying areas where additional restrictions are necessary and appropriate.
- **The waterfront has more potential as a transportation hub and needs more transportation connections.** The Belfast waterfront has limited float and docking facilities that can support larger private and commercial vessel operations. Up until World War II, the Belfast waterfront served as a transportation hub. Now the majority of the waterfront is either commercial fishing or recreational uses, such as kayaking and smaller sail and motor boats. There are currently few options for visitors by boat to find transportation connections to other parts of the city, such as livery services, ride hailing, or bus routes to services like the hospital, doctors' offices, grocery stores, the laundromat, the Concord Trailways stop, Walgreens or Reny's. There is strong interest in having the Belfast waterfront serve a year-round water taxi between Belfast and Islesboro, as many Islesboro islanders shop, do their banking, and dine and attend events in Belfast. A water taxi would further support the idea of additional transportation connections such as livery service or bus routes.
- **Future land use planning in the city has encouraged higher-density housing and non-residential development to occur in areas close to existing public and private services so that residents can choose to walk rather than drive or drive shorter distances.** The City of Belfast values all levels of mobility and continues to promote planning efforts that increase walkability, cycling, and shorter automobile trips in the city. There are numerous opportunities to create a safer, more accessible built environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

## **MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION GOALS**

1. A safe, accessible, and efficient multi-modal transportation system that meets residential, commuter, commercial, and visitor needs.
2. Mobility options for varying ages, abilities, and income-levels.
3. A walkable, bikeable community.
4. A transportation system that promotes public health, supports economic health and vitality, protects natural and cultural resources, addresses the climate crisis, and improves overall livability while minimizing increases in vehicle miles traveled.
5. A fiscally responsible capital improvement strategy that maintains streets, sidewalks, and other transportation infrastructure in good condition.

## **MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION OBJECTIVES**

1. Increase pedestrian and trail connections to community resources.
2. Reduce vehicle miles traveled for Belfast residents.
3. Patterns of development that do not degrade the capacity of the overall road network.
4. Improve safety and ADA-accessibility of the local transportation network, inclusive of pedestrians, cyclists, and automobiles.
5. Increase number of electric vehicles charging stations.
6. Improve wayfinding signage for both vehicles and pedestrians.
7. Increase public transit options.

## MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
MOB-1	Coordinate with the Planning and Public Works Department to create a Belfast pedestrian and cycling plan that inventories existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructures and identify locations for improved and new sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, bike parking in order to improve safe and convenient walking and cycling, as well as access to parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational areas.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
MOB-2	Pursue the idea of a year-round water taxi between Islesboro and Belfast.	Planning Staff, Economic Development Department, Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-3	Work with major employers to create ride sharing incentives. Explore options for a “Park and Ride” service that may help alleviate commuter traffic and provide more options for people commuting in and out of Belfast.	Planning Staff, Economic Development Department, Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-4	Create options for additional transportation links from the waterfront to other key locations in the city. This could include livery services, ride hailing, or bus routes.	Planning Staff, Economic Development Department, Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-5	Explore the idea of an airport “courtesy car”, adequate taxi/on-demand transportation options, and a fully staffed and equipped rental car business to fully realize the economic benefits of the aviation component of the transportation network.	City staff (Airport Managers, Planning, Economic Development, Public Works)	Long-term (5+ years)	
MOB-6	Continue use of policies that require all new development of a certain size to assess road capacity and identify needed road improvements resulting from additional density.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	
MOB-7	Assess where wayfinding improvements are needed. Develop and implement a signage and wayfinding system for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians, including: consistent design; universal symbols; consistent language; and standards for the future.	Economic Development Department, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast	Short-Term (1-3)	



ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
MOB-8	Identify locations where inclusive and traffic calming design approaches, such as those promoted by Complete Streets principles, are appropriate.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-9	Identify locations for additional electric vehicle charging stations and create incentives for developers to install stations in new developments where appropriate.	Economic Development Department, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast, Corporate Sponsors	Short-Term (1-3 years), Ongoing	
MOB-10	Work with city committees and advocates to perform a pedestrian audit and use that audit to inform a priority list of areas identified as needing safety and accessibility improvements.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-11	Collaborate with relevant city committees and departments on development and planning projects, particularly in areas identified as priorities for bike, pedestrian or trail facilities, recreation, accessibility improvements or affordable housing opportunities.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works, Parks Department)	Ongoing	
MOB-12	Coordinate with state, regional and neighboring towns' multi-modal transportation planning projects and initiatives, as appropriate.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
MOB-13	Coordinate closely with Maine DOT to improve pedestrian safety in areas on the fringe of town where there are safety or design issues created by the varying rules and authority between city and state roads.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Long-term (5+ years)	
MOB-14	Identify additional funding for pedestrian and cycling improvement projects, such as the Federal Transportation Alternatives (TA) funding program and the MaineDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Funding.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works	Ongoing	
MOB-15	Continue requiring sidewalks for new developments and redevelopment projects to improve pedestrian mobility and safety, and to create existing and future sidewalk connections. Utilize waivers for these improvements only in extreme situations.	Planning Staff, Planning Board, Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee	Ongoing	
MOB-16	Investigate opportunities to create pedestrian links that are not the road rights-of-way, such as easements for connector footpaths or hard-surface trail segments.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works	Long-term (5+ years)	
MOB-17	Develop and implement a priority list of intersection improvements, particularly those identified by Maine DOT as high crash locations.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-18	Develop creative strategies that provide additional temporary parking during larger events.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works, Parks Department)	Ongoing	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
MOB-19	Create a parking survey to better understand public perception of parking in Belfast.	Planning Staff, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-20	Perform periodic counts and assessments of parking that both takes into account future planned development, especially in downtown, and also encourages walking, biking, and alternative transportation modes.	Planning Staff, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-21	Work collaboratively with the Chamber of Commerce, major employers, airport neighbors, and the city's Airport Manager to identify barriers and new opportunities for the Belfast Municipal Airport.	City staff (Airport Managers, Planning, Economic Development, Public Works)	Ongoing	
MOB-22	Use creative access management design and circulation strategies to allow development but limit curb cuts for new development in areas within the growth area but outside of the State Urban Compact Area.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	
MOB-23	Continue to meet the State of Maine policy objectives in the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (23 M.R.S.A. § 73); state access management regulations pursuant to (23 M.R.S.A. § 704); and state traffic permitting regulations for large developments pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A § 704-A).	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
MOB-24	Maintain, enact or amend ordinance standards for subdivisions and for public and private roads as appropriate to foster transportation-efficient growth patterns and provide for future street and transit connections.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Short-Term (1-3 years), Ongoing	Yes
MOB-25	Collaborate with Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP), local large employers, and private bus companies to expand local and inter-city transit to the extent feasible.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works), City committees, non-profits.	Ongoing	
MOB-26	Utilize building and zoning codes to encourage electric vehicles and human-powered transport.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	
MOB-27	Support the use of electric vehicles by increasing public charging facilities, including one or more multi-charger fields, and considering buildings codes that incentivize private EV charging facilities where multi-unit buildings and commercial structures are built.	Economic Development	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-28	Work with city committees, Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP) and other advocates to perform a survey and audit for public transit usage and demand. Use that survey and audit to inform decisions about additional public transit services within Belfast, and between Belfast and surrounding communities, to increase access to non-automobile transportation options, maximizing equity considerations and leveraging current and future State and federal financial resources.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works), City committees, non-profits.	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	

# PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICES & FISCAL CAPACITY

One of the city's central functions is to provide the essential infrastructure and services that people depend on to live, work, and recreate in Belfast. The City of Belfast offers a range of facilities and services for its citizens and those surrounding towns, including public education, water and sewer infrastructure, emergency medical services, parks and recreation facilities, and a solar field that generates electricity for the city. Equitably provided public facilities and services can improve quality of life, enhance neighborhoods, and support a strong business environment throughout the city. Investments in public infrastructure can stimulate investment in private properties and businesses, further contributing to the economic vitality of the community. Public facilities and services are also key to the city's long-term sustainability and resilience. Support for public safety, public works, and emergency preparedness help address environmental change, protect public health, and plan for resiliency.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **The largest expenditure in the public facilities and services category is education.** Regional School Unit (RSU) 71 consists of nine schools, six of which are located in the City of Belfast. The high school, Belfast Area High School, recently received substantial renovations.
- **Most public facilities (parks, the waterfront, police, fire, schools, City Hall, sewage treatment) are located within designated growth areas, many in or near downtown, so funding for their improvement benefits those growth areas.** Locating most public facilities in designated growth areas reinforces the successful functioning and desirability of those areas, encourages future investment and growth in those areas, and can create unanticipated positive synergies and economies of scale for the City of Belfast. More discussion on growth areas is found in the Future Land Use chapter.
- **The City of Belfast gets about 70% of their electricity from various city-owned solar installations, including a large one on Crocker Road.** Belfast recently invested in the replacement of the city maintenance yard and constructed a large solar field as part of the project. This major project, funded by a bond initiative, is an investment in sustainable energy and community resilience.
- **Public facilities should serve all ages and abilities.** The aging population of Belfast indicates that the city must continue to invest in facilities and services that serve a senior population, while also ensuring that there are sufficient number and type of facilities and services to serve youth, teens, and young families so that the City of Belfast can continue to attract and retain a younger population.
- **Fast and reliable internet service is not available in all areas of the city.** Access to fast, reliable affordable internet service is increasingly critical if not required to participate in essential aspects of our day-to-day lives. Schools shifting to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, directly illuminated the digital divide between those with reliable internet service and those without.

- **In recent years, the City of Belfast heavily prioritized investments in wastewater system upgrades.** These upgrades included replacing old, leaking, undersized sewers; upgrading several wastewater pumping stations; upgrades to the existing treatment facility; and efforts to eliminate combined sewer overflow points. Property owners in areas that are not on public water and sewer are responsible for maintenance and disposal of septic waste; and while they generally manage their waste responsibly, some individual property owners do not regularly maintain their systems and this leads to system failure. In the past the city has assisted those who cannot pay for the cost of upgrades by using small system grant funds available through Maine Department of Environmental Protection and city revenues.
- **Belfast has provided public water and sewer services to areas where there is sufficient land area to support anticipated growth for at least the next 10-20 years.** Most areas for which growth is targeted have access to public sewer and most city work and expenditures have focused on upgrading existing sewer lines to address infiltration and inflow concerns.
- **An increase in the frequency and intensity of storms may cause strong storm surges and flooding along Belfast coastal areas, and overwhelm stormwater management infrastructure.** City stormwater management facilities are in good condition, though changes in the number, duration, and intensity of major rainfall events in the past 10 years has or is expected to cause problems with the capacity of current city facilities.
- **Emergency Medical Services are provided by the City of Belfast to Belfast and neighboring communities.** Belfast provides ambulance services to Belmont, Morrill, Northport, Swanville, and Waldo residents and fire service to Swanville residents.

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICES & FISCAL CAPACITY GOALS**

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

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICES & FISCAL CAPACITY OBJECTIVES**

1. Well-maintained and adequately funded public infrastructure and services.
2. Public facilities and services that promote and support growth and development in identified growth areas.

## PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICES & FISCAL CAPACITY STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
PUB-1	Identify capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public services to accommodate any growth and changing demographics.	City Manager, Public Works, Parks and Recreation Dept	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
PUB-2	Continue to prioritize wastewater investments in areas designated for future growth and support on-site septic upgrades where needed and feasible. Coordinate planned service extensions with the Future Land Use plan.	City Engineer, Public Works, Planning and Codes, City Council	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
PUB-3	Survey and inventory the current Belfast stormwater management system; determine MEDOT/City jurisdictions; develop a comprehensive design for upgrade.	City Engineer, City Council	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-4	Explore the use of user or impact fees for different city services and facilities depending on residency status of the user.	City Manager, Public Works, Planning and Codes	Long-Term (5+ years)	
PUB-5	Encourage coordination between the Belfast Water District and the towns of Swanville and Searsport for the mutual protection of the aquifer and for the monitoring of potential impacts from the Swanville dump / transfer station on groundwater quality.	City Manager, City Council, Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
PUB-6	Continue to require building permit applicants to obtain approval from the Belfast Water District in the building permit process in order to ensure there is enough capacity to serve new projects. Request that Water District officials notify the city of similar proposals in adjacent communities that might substantially affect the annual sustainable yield. If public water supply expansion is anticipated, identify and protect suitable sources.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Ongoing	Yes
PUB-7	Continue efforts to expand the capacity of the wastewater treatment plant, and to separate storm and sanitary sewers.	Wastewater Treatment, Public Works	Ongoing	
PUB-8	Periodically review school age population numbers, population projections and school facility capacity needs.	RSU 71, Planning and Codes, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
PUB-9	Provide for adequate maintenance of cemeteries. Determine need for additional land. Purchase or transfer existing, city-owned land for cemetery use as needed.	Cemetery Department, Planning and Codes, City Council	Ongoing	
PUB-10	Continue to invest in infrastructure in designated growth areas. Locate new public facilities comprising at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas.	City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
PUB-11	Continue to invest in solar and renewable energy sources for the City of Belfast.	City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	
PUB-12	Inventory and categorize public facilities according to which age groups and ability ranges they serve and identify any gaps in service that may be present. Consider additional programming and new facilities as appropriate.	Public Works	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-13	Work with the Broadband Committee to identify gaps in broadband service and prioritize construction of broadband infrastructure to those areas.	City Manager, Planning and Codes, Broadband Committee	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
PUB-14	Identify areas in the city where public wi-fi access is currently provided and identify areas where it could be provided in the future, such as public parks and/or the public landing.	Combine with strategy (15)	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-15	Explore the feasibility of digital public infrastructure and what other municipalities are considering about how to provide digital infrastructure as a public utility.	Broadband Committee	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-16	Consider amending current ordinance provisions to better address stormwater management concerns, including greater use of low impact development standards wherever possible and appropriate. Continue the past and current practice of addressing stormwater improvements when sewer improvements are constructed.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
PUB-17	Explore options for regional delivery of local services, and work cooperatively with adjacent communities to consider opportunities for regional service delivery.	City staff, County staff	Ongoing	Yes
PUB-18	Annually evaluate city public facilities and services needs in order to adequately maintain municipally owned properties and plan for their long-term maintenance and upgrade.	City Manager, Public Works, Parks and Recreation Department	Ongoing	
PUB-19	Continue using capital reserve funds to assist in the replacement and purchase of equipment for the Police, Fire, and Public Works departments.	City Manager, Public Works	Ongoing	
PUB-20	Continue to judiciously implement Tax Increment Financing (TIF) strategies to assist in the construction of desired public facilities in targeted areas.	City Manager, Finance Manager, Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	
PUB-21	Explore what a “working waterfront” means in Belfast, and continue to invest in projects that support this vision of a Belfast working waterfront.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
PUB-22	Continue to partner with the Waldo County Emergency Management Agency to provide emergency shelters in times of extreme heat or cold.	City staff, County Emergency Management	Ongoing	

# PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

Public parks, open spaces, trails, and recreational areas are critical infrastructure for towns and cities, playing important roles as social gathering places, spaces for physical activity, and areas to access and experience nature. The 2020- 2024 Maine Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan (Maine SCORP) outlines "Key Themes and Implementation Strategies" as noted in the Parks, Trails, Recreation and Open Space inventory chapter. These include supporting active communities; attracting on the outdoor recreation economy and workforce; sustaining and growing tourism; promoting ecological and environmental resilience; and investing in maintenance and stewardship. The goals, objectives, and strategies identified in this plan align with the state SCORP priorities and reflect this plan's stated guiding principles of community health, social equity, sustainability, economic health and vitality, and climate resilience.

The number of parks, trails, public open spaces and recreational opportunities in Belfast has increased substantially over the last several decades. There are now a wide variety of recreational spaces and public parks in Belfast for a city of its size. Unlike many Maine communities, Belfast has few significant fresh water bodies like lakes and ponds, and thus the Passagassawakeag River, Belfast Harbor, the Goose River with Upper and Lower Mason Pond, and the Little River provide water-based recreational opportunities. The city will benefit in the future from further strategic planning and coordination for the parks, trails, recreation, and open space system. Included in this system are lands conserved through easements or trust ownership, an extensive trail network, and city-owned public parks and recreational spaces. This plan aims to go farther than previous comprehensive plans in recognizing the important role that public parks and trails play in knitting the city together and making Belfast a desirable and livable place to call home. The following goals, objectives and strategies seek to elevate parks, recreation, open space and trails in city planning efforts and are shaped by the guiding principles of community health, social equity, sustainability and resilience.

## PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE KEY FINDINGS

- **Belfast is a regional destination for recreational opportunities, including trails and marine recreation.** Within the Belfast city limits, there are ten city-owned parks and open space areas, four preserves managed by the Coastal Mountains Land Trust, a rail-trail, several hard-surface and natural surface trail systems, a water trail on Mason Pond, recreational programs at the YMCA, and water-based recreation on Mason Pond, the Passagassawakeag River, and Belfast Bay. These amenities serve residents and visitors alike, as social gathering places, areas for active recreation, and open spaces for connecting with nature. Many tourists plan their trips to Belfast because of how well these open space amenities, such as the Belfast Rail Trail, the Harborwalk trail, paddling opportunities from the harbor, and the waterfront parks, are integrated into the city.
- **While Belfast has a strong system of public open spaces and recreation opportunities for a city of its size, the city must plan strategically for sufficient and equitable funding, maintenance, operation of programming in existing parks, trails, recreational and open space facilities.** In addition, strategic planning for future additions to this open space system is key. Parks, trails, open space and recreational areas are a major element of Belfast livability infrastructure. Strategic planning for these facilities is critical to understanding the system as a whole and to the short- and long-term sustainability of these amenities.

- **The Belfast waterfront parks are major placemaking features.** Placemaking is the idea that public spaces are integral to the heart and soul of a community. Heritage Park, Steamboat Landing Park, and the Belfast Common collectively provide approximately eight acres of public open space along the Belfast waterfront. These parks play a critical role in the social life of the city as public gathering spaces for signature events and festivals and as memorable places to spend time downtown and enjoy scenic views of the Harbor. City Park, further south from the waterfront, is another beloved park in Belfast, offers a variety of amenities and has a long history as a destination park, providing open space, recreation, water access, and community gathering space.
- **The city-owned public rights-of-way and historic range-ways are unique public open space features in Belfast that should be protected and maintained for future public use.** Currently there are 17 public access ways to water in Belfast, with the majority along Belfast Bay. These rights-of-way allow for equitable access to the waterfront and require ongoing close coordination with neighboring residents and landowners.
- **The east side of the Belfast harbor has great potential for additional public open spaces and trail use.** The Armistice Footbridge is a highly-popular trail in Belfast and additional trail and open space extensions on the east side of the Belfast harbor should be explored.
- **Belfast has potential to be a highly walkable and bikeable community.** Inside the by-pass, many residents walk and cycle for fitness and also for transportation. Additional sidewalks are needed for safety and ADA-accessibility. An increase in formally established bikeways and bike lanes would improve safe and efficient cycling.
- **Safe, convenient, walkable and bikeable access to parks, trails, and open space is not equitably distributed throughout the city.** There are more opportunities to safely walk and cycle inside the by-pass road than outside the by-pass road. Even though some of that discrepancy is due to the obvious differences in density and land use patterns, the city should look for creative ways to create safe and accessible walking and cycling opportunities and connections outside the by-pass road.
- **Opportunities exist for new open spaces and additional trail connections.** Belfast has a number of parks, trails, and open spaces but there are longer-term visions for additional public open space, new trails, and trail loop connections to create more access for residents and improve connections between existing trails and open spaces. As new development occurs, it is important to consider opportunities to connect and expand the open space and trail network.
- **The three major trails in Belfast, the Little River Trail, the Harborwalk, and the Belfast Rail Trail, are currently maintained by separate entities.** Trails in the City of Belfast are managed by a mix of city staff, volunteers, and non-profits. The Belfast trail network could benefit from strategic planning that clarifies relationships, responsibilities, and ensure adequate funding for operations and management.
- **The outdoor economy is an important factor to consider when investing in recreational infrastructure and outdoor space.** City parks, hiking trails, playing fields, water access sites and other spaces – both land and water – make up the backbone of the outdoor economy. The City of Belfast has a wealth of outdoor recreational opportunities that make it highly desirable for locals and visitors.
- **Safe and convenient multi-modal access for all ages and abilities to parks, trails, open spaces and recreational areas is critical to parks and recreation service delivery.** To ensure equitable access to Belfast parks, trails, recreation and open spaces, Belfast should have a connected network of sidewalks, multi-use paths, and bicycle infrastructure in close proximity to the majority of residents that accommodates all ages and abilities.



- **Recreation facilities are valuable community assets.** The Waldo County YMCA provides indoor recreational programming and services such as fitness classes, swimming instruction and lap swimming, adult and youth sports teams, and senior programming. In addition, the high school track and pool are used by residents. Other recreational programming includes programs offered by All Play, Kids Unplugged, The Game Loft, and CG Bikes.

## **PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE GOALS**

1. Promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters.
2. An integrated system of parks, trails, open spaces and recreational opportunities that improve community health, social equity, and make Belfast a livable, sustainable, and desirable place to visit and call home.

## **PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE OBJECTIVES**

1. A well-maintained and adequately funded network of accessible and inclusive public open spaces and recreational opportunities
2. A sufficient number and variety of public parks, open spaces, trails, and recreational amenities that are logically distributed throughout the City of Belfast.
3. Safe and convenient multi-modal access to existing parks, open spaces, trailheads, and recreational amenities.
4. Increased connections to publicly-accessible trails for motorized and non-motorized uses, with safe and convenient multi-modal access to trailheads.
5. Preserved and protected existing public access points to the water and scenic views of Belfast Bay, i.e. rangeways.
6. Each major water body has at least one major point of public access for boating, fishing, and swimming.

## PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
REC-1	Create a Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Open Space strategic plan that inventories and analyzes the existing public parks, trail systems, recreation and open space system, including range ways and public rights-of-way water access points. This plan should consider Maine SCORP priorities, as well as look at the distribution of land and facilities, facility conditions, current and future needs, and strategies for management responsibilities, land acquisition goals and opportunities, funding, maintenance, and operations.	Parks and Recreation Dept, Planning and Codes, Public Works, Non-Profit Organizations (e.g. Friends of Belfast Parks)	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
REC-2	Coordinate with the Planning and Public Works Department to create a Belfast pedestrian and cycling plan that inventories existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructures and identify locations for improved and new sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, bike parking in order to improve safe and convenient walking and cycling, as well as access to parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational areas.	Belfast Parks and Recreation Dept, Ped Bike Hike Committee, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Coastal Mountains Land Trust, Friends of Belfast Parks.	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
REC-3	Extend, maintain, and where possible connect the network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses by acquiring new trail corridors where and when feasible. Explore strategies to manage and minimize conflicts between motorized and non-motorized trail uses and clarify where motorized uses are appropriate.	Parks and Recreation Staff	Ongoing	Yes
REC-4	Create a priority list of future desired trail connections and work with landowners to create connections when opportunities arise.	Parks and Recreation Staff	Med-Term (3-5 years)	
REC-5	Explore potential opportunities for new parkland, trails, and open space on the east side of Belfast harbor.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works, Parks and Recreation Dept, Friends of Belfast Parks	Mid-Term (3-5 years)	
REC-6	Explore potential opportunities for new parks outside the by-pass road, as well as multi-use trails outside the by-pass area that create more multi-modal connections between the outer areas of Belfast and downtown.	Parks and Recreation Staff	Long Term (5+ years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
REC-7	Assess and improve accessibility standards in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to public parks and open spaces.	Public Works, Planning Staff, Parks and Recreation Dept, Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee	Ongoing	
REC-8	Work collaboratively with stakeholder groups to pursue opportunities to protect significant open spaces and recreational land.	Belfast Parks and Recreation Dept, Friends of Belfast Parks, Ped Bike Hike Committee, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Coastal Mountains Land Trust	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
REC-9	Create public education materials on the benefits and protections for landowners when they allow public access. At a minimum this will include information on Maine’s landowner liability law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A §159-A.	Parks and Recreation Dept, City Attorney, Friends of Belfast Parks, Ped Bike Hike Committee, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Coastal Mountains Land Trust	Long Term (5+ years)	Yes
REC-10	Continue collaboration between the city and adjacent neighbors to support and protect the public rights-of-way and range ways access points to water.	Parks and Recreation Dept.	Ongoing	
REC-11	Identify locations in the city for new recreational infrastructure such as short-term shelters along trails, kayak racks, bike racks, benches, and consistent signage and wayfinding.	Parks and Recreation Dept, Planning and Codes, Public Works, Non-Profit Organizations	Med-Term (3-5 years)	
REC-12	Explore and seek federal, state, and non-profit funding to add, upgrade, and rehabilitate park facilities and amenities; make park improvements, expand the municipal park system to meet future needs of residents.	Parks and Recreation Dept, Non-Profit Organizations	Ongoing	
REC-13	Collaborate with other city departments and committees to assess how climate change effects and sea-level rise will impact the municipal parks system and to create a long-term action plan for addressing the impacts.	Parks and Recreation Dept, City Committees, Non-Profit Organizations	Ongoing	

# HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Belfast has a rich history, shaped by the natural resources that supported the local and regional economy, including farming, fishing, forestry, commerce, and shipbuilding. Downtown Belfast and its adjacent residential neighborhoods are noted for historical architecture. In 1865, a large fire nearly destroyed the entire downtown and an ordinance was passed prohibiting the construction of wooden buildings in the area. The newly built downtown, with predominantly brick buildings, has survived with little change and is now regarded as a major aspect of the historic character and charm of downtown Belfast. The downtown area is an historic district, as are several residential areas with gracious homes of former ship owners and prosperous merchants. Historic resources are not just downtown; sites such as old homes, graveyards, mill sites, and old stone walls are located throughout Belfast and are a valuable part of the City's heritage. Belfast is a sum of its past parts: these resources create an identity, provide perspective on the evolution of the city, and make Belfast unique. Stewardship of historic and cultural resources helps to create a feeling of place-based connection to the past and present, community pride, and encourages us to reflect on the past. Protection and promotion of these resources can reinforce Belfast's identity, encourage neighborhood reinvestment, and support continued economic development.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **The City of Belfast has a rich history that shaped its physical landscape and character, and this character is a large part of the Belfast identity.** Belfast's significant historic character is highly valued and still evident today, particularly in the downtown area which includes a designated Historic District and individual historic buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. An architectural survey of this district is currently underway and will help update the inventory of contributing resources and document the current appearance of the district. The street pattern and intersection of Main Street, Church Street and Beaver Street, for example, create a unique place-based experience within downtown Belfast, where the Post Office was once the Customs House, sitting at the top of the hill and looking down Main Street to the waterfront. The brick buildings along Main Street and High Street provide a character that is distinctly Belfast and this cluster of smaller-sized retail storefronts creates a desirable human-scaled, walkable downtown. The historic range ways and public water access points are another example of how the history of Belfast is still evident in the landscape today. The working-class character of Belfast is integral to the history and current atmosphere of the city and as the city evolves, it will be critical to ensure that working-class people can continue to live in Belfast.
- **There is no historic preservation review board or committee in the City of Belfast, nor is there state or federal oversight of privately-owned and privately-funded renovations of historic buildings.** Belfast protects historic and cultural resources less through city ordinances and land use policies and instead through the promotion of state and federal tax abatement and grant funding programs. The City of Belfast land use ordinance currently mentions identifying and avoiding interference with historic resources in several sections. It is important to strike a productive balance between respecting private property rights and creating regulation that helps educate residents and protect significant historical resources. In the years following the formation of the Belfast Historic District (1990s), the City of Belfast discussed the idea of creating a historic preservation review board for residential properties in that district and a Belfast Historic Preservation Ordinance, but those ideas never came into fruition. At this time there are varying opinions about the degree to which historic preservation should be regulated in the City of Belfast.

- **Though most historic and cultural resources are in good to fair condition, many are in need of repair and/or renovation.** The Waterfall Arts building in Belfast is an excellent example of an adaptive reuse project that helps preserve and protect an historic structure while also providing needed space for a community organization. Creative thinking coupled with funding either through grants or incentive programs can provide opportunities to protect historic resources while also meeting the goal of increasing affordable housing, particularly multi-family, or space for community organizations like Waterfall Arts.
- **To date, no property owners have used Federal or State historic preservation tax credits.** At this time, the Belfast Historical Society and Museum refers homeowners to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. Maine HPC is responsible for the identification, evaluation, and protection of Maine’s significant cultural resources as directed by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. They maintain the National Register of Historic Places, conduct survey activities, and review projects that use federal funds or require a federal or state permit or federal license. There are numerous tax credit and grant programs available for use by local communities.
- **There are historic structures and properties in Belfast that are vulnerable to threats posed by climate change and this must be factored into resilience planning efforts.** Climate change along with unpredictable and extreme weather events can significantly damage historic structures and cultural resources. In Belfast there are older homes and sites that are at risk from sea level rise coupled with flooding from extreme storms, from extreme wind, and other extreme weather events. The city should take advantage of federal and state resources that assist with planning for the protection and repair of historic structures and cultural resources that are damaged by climate change.
- **Belfast has an active historical society that provides educational programming, stewardship, and technical assistance on city projects.**

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS

1. Preserve Maine’s historic and archaeological resources.
2. Identify, protect, promote, and restore the City of Belfast's historic and cultural resources.

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES OBJECTIVES

1. All City of Belfast historic and cultural resources are inventoried, and appropriate planning strategies are identified to protect and retain these resources
2. Historic and cultural resource protection and promotion is recognized an economic development tool
3. Historic and cultural resources are identified and assessed on a site level as part of the development review process
4. City residents and visitors recognize the value of Belfast's historic character and cultural resources

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
HIS-1	Create a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) inventory of sites with high potential for archaeological and/or historic resources.	Historical Society, Planning and Codes	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
HIS-2	Work with the local or county historical society and/or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to assess the need for, and if necessary, plan for a comprehensive community survey of the community's historic and archaeological resources. Belfast will pursue the following MHPC recommendations: Prehistoric Archaeological Sites- Survey needed along Belfast Harbor shoreline and Passagassawakeag River, and around lakes and ponds/ marshes near sandy soils; Historic Archaeological Sites- A professional survey for historic archaeological sites to focus on agricultural, residential, and industrial sites relating to the earliest Euro-American settlement of the town in the second half of the 1700s; Historic Buildings/Structures/ Objects- A comprehensive survey of Belfast's above-ground historic resources needs to be conducted in order to identify other properties that may be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.	Historical Society, Maine Historic Preservation Commission	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes / Combined with City language
HIS-3	Identify city-owned buildings of historic value and explore strategies for funding and maintaining those structures.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
HIS-4	Seek State and Federal grants and/or existing tax credit programs through organizations to rehabilitate, weatherize, and maintain historic buildings and streetscapes, including but not limited to funding from Efficiency Maine, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Maine DECD, Maine DOT and non-governmental organizations. Encourage the use of historic preservation tax credits by area residents, businesses, and property developers.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Economic Development Department	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
HIS-5	Create a wish list of future adaptive reuse projects, like the Waterfall Arts example, for historic buildings and explore funding sources and/or partnership that could support these projects.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Economic Department	Long-Term (5+ years)	
HIS-6	For sites with identified potential for historical and archaeological resources, require subdivision or non-residential developers to look for and identify any historical and archaeological resources and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation; memorialization as appropriate; coordination with the State of Maine Historic Preservation Commission.	Planning and Codes, Historical Society	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
HIS-7	Require the use of maps and information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into the planning and development review process, where applicable.	Planning and Codes, Historical Society	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
HIS-8	Expand the interpretive signage program for cultural sites around the City of Belfast.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Economic Development	Long-Term (5+ years)	
HIS-9	In collaboration with Our Town Belfast, create educational and promotional materials to inform property owners of historic preservation tax credits to reduce the costs to redevelop older buildings for new uses while maintaining their historical appeal.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Planning and Codes	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
HIS-10	Create an action plan for climate impacts on historic and cultural resources, such as resources in high flood-risk areas. Refer to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission’s Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Economic Development Department, Climate Crisis Committee	Short-Term (1-3 years)	

# NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources are critical to the health, economy, natural beauty and long-term sustainability of the City of Belfast. The key findings and strategies outlined in this chapter are interrelated with key findings and strategies in other sections throughout this plan, including parks, recreation and open space; transportation and mobility; economic and community vitality; and historic and cultural resources. Natural resources in Belfast provide key ecosystem services, such as wetland absorption of stormwater runoff, they play a role in the recreation-based tourism economy, they provide drinking water, habitat and scenic views. Agricultural and forest resources are integral to the livelihoods of numerous Belfast residents and provide the rural setting that is an important part of Belfast’s character. The following section provides goals, policies, and strategies for Critical Natural Resources, Water Resources, Marine Resources, and Agricultural and Forest Resources plan topics in the City of Belfast.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **The City of Belfast shoreland zoning ordinance provisions are consistent with state law and approved by Maine DEP.** The city has worked cooperatively with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to adopt shoreland regulations that vary from the state model regulations in order to better reflect existing development patterns in Belfast and better integrate future development.
- **Many opportunities for new conservation partnerships exist which will aid in the additional protection of critical natural resources.** Numerous organizations exist in the State of Maine to support current and future conservation planning work. These include, but are not limited to the Audubon Society, Land for Maine’s Future Program, the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, the Natural Resources Council of Maine, Coastal Mountains Land Trust, Friends of the Belfast Bay Watershed, and The Nature Conservancy’s Maine office.
- **Belfast is home to several rare or significant species, two of which are rated as being of “Special Concern”.** The Rambur’s Forktail dragonfly habitat consists of boreal upland forest, lakes and ponds, emergent marsh, wet meadow / shrub marsh, and intertidal tidal marsh, all of which occur in Belfast. Though population numbers are rebounding, the Bald Eagle continues to be rated as a species of Special Concern.
- **The City of Belfast has numerous areas with scenic views which are critical to the tourism economy and make Belfast a desirable place to live.** The city’s many beautiful views of the harbor, easy access to fishing and opportunities for outdoor recreation in clean water, and an active waterfront all make Belfast a desirable place to live, work, and visit. The City of Belfast should continue to recognize the importance of these marine resources for the city economy.
- **Belfast’s harbor and harbor facilities are facing the impacts of climate change.** Both sea-level rise and flooding from extreme storm events are an increasing concern for the Belfast harbor and harbor facilities.
- **Belfast must address climate change impacts on stormwater infrastructure.** Belfast’s relatively shallow soils over bedrock limit rainwater storage, leading quickly to surface runoff, while the generally steep contours of land surrounding Belfast Bay increase the potential for erosion at the coastal edges. For these reasons, the current rainfall trend will overwhelm the capacity of the present stormwater drainage system. Although the city has implemented many upgrades, climate change and increased intensity of storm events indicate that further actions are needed to address stormwater runoff.



- **While the Maine Department of Marine Resources has recorded overall water quality in Belfast is within healthful limits, there are point-source and nonpoint-source pollution causing harm to marine habitats.** Winter road salts are a major contribution to nonpoint-source pollution. The high chloride levels in road salts threatens drinking water, is toxic to wildlife and reduces dissolved oxygen, can increase soil erosion, and damage private and public property and corrode water infrastructure. Although Belfast has taken major steps to address point sources of pollution, sources from industrial sites and home pesticide and herbicide use, for example, still exist in Belfast.
- **Belfast does not currently have groundwater pollution issues but ongoing monitoring is important.** Establishing best practices for avoiding groundwater pollution and continuing to monitor sources of groundwater pollution is critical, particularly in areas where residents rely on well water.
- **The City of Belfast is actively addressing brownfields pollution issues.** Several brownfield sites, including one on Congress Street from the city barns that include sand storage and other materials, and another along Front Street are now remediated. Front Street is built on top of a dump and the cleanup of this site was part of the Harbor Walk project.
- **The Watershed and Aquifer Protection District is successfully protecting public water supplies and their recharge areas.** The majority of drinking water sources are on the east side of the city near Swanville. The Watershed and Aquifer Protection District is an overlay district that protects public groundwater and surface water supplies and their recharge areas. No significant development has occurred within these overlay districts.
- **Over the last twenty years the city invested \$10 million to upgrade the wastewater treatment plant and decrease infiltration and inflow into the city sewer system.** This work is successfully decreasing the frequency and volume of pollutant discharges into Belfast Bay. The wastewater treatment plant is located in a low-lying area of the city along Front Street that is vulnerable to climate change impacts such as increased flooding and sea level rise.
- **While the Watershed and Aquifer Protection District is successful, potential future development poses a water quality threat to major water bodies in Belfast, including drinking water sources.** Maine DEP assessed public water supplies and rated the Belfast Public Water District future risk of chronic contamination as moderate, the Piper Stream Mobile Home Park risk as high, and the Belfast Curling Club as moderate. The Water District is working on buying up land to continue and improve protection of water bodies in the protection district area.
- **The market for local agricultural products is increasing and agriculture and forestry are an important part of the Belfast community.** Larger-scale, traditional agricultural activities have declined, while specialized, small-scale and niche-farming activities have increased, like the raising of alpacas, organic and heirloom crops, and sustainable forestry. There is increasing interest, particularly in the 25-45 age group, in replanting yards with vegetable gardens for community use and creating cooperative gardening worksites.
- **The rising value of land for residential uses and the increased valuation of land that could be converted to residential use have reduced the amount of land farmed and forested.** In 2019, there were 1,034.45 acres in the Farmland Protection Program, down from 1,601.68 in 2009. Farming and forestry activities consume fewer municipal services than residential activities. The city should consider programs and policies that allow for a more integrated and multi-purpose approach to land use.
- **Many of The City of Belfast zoning districts support agricultural and forestry uses, including farmers markets and access to local food for school lunch programs.** Programs such as the middle school agricultural program and the Re-Entry Center produce and/or sell their own vegetables.

- **Marine resources and ocean access are critical to the Belfast economy.** Belfast citizens who participated in a community planning process called “The Vibrancy Project” ranked the maintenance and protection of a clean, real, and friendly working waterfront as the highest priority measure to improve quality of life and commerce in the city.
- **Fisheries are currently well-managed in Belfast.** The city has few concerns regarding how fishery resources are being managed at the local and regional level, and recreational fisherman have not expressed any significant concern regarding the condition of fishery resources that are subject to recreational fishing.
- **Belfast Harbor has seen a dramatic increase in growth and activity.** Since the 1980s, the harbor has undergone a renaissance of sorts – transforming from primarily industrial and commercial fishing uses into a beautiful, active waterfront with recreational uses as well. There are numerous businesses along the waterfront. One of those businesses, the Front Street Shipyard, is highly regarded for their craftsmanship. The Harbor Walk, along with several large city parks and the rail-trail, draw residents and visitors from town down to enjoy the waterfront space, to dine at restaurants, buy souvenirs, and attend events. Boaters come to the waterfront to get boats serviced, use the showers and restrooms, get gas, and spend time in downtown Belfast. There is great potential for improved connections between Belfast Harbor and Isleboro as well as the waterfront and other points in the city.
- **There is increasing pressure on mooring availability in the harbor but there is adequate capacity of city-owned waterfront facilities for commercial fisherman and recreational uses.** Fishing is on the decline, which puts less pressure on the waterfront facilities to serve the commercial fishing community. Due to the city’s location along the Belfast Bay and being slightly removed from the heart of the Penobscot Bay, recreational boaters have a number of facility and supplier options. It is important to continually assess the role of the waterfront and ensure that needs are met.

## NATURAL RESOURCES GOALS

1. Protect the state and city's critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, sand dunes, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas.
2. Safeguard the state’s agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.
3. Protect the quality and manage the quantity of the state’s water resources, including lakes, aquifers, great ponds, estuaries, rivers, and coastal areas.
4. Land use planning and policies that factor in climate change and resilience thinking.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES OBJECTIVES**

1. Increase acres of conserved critical natural resources in Belfast.
2. Coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources.
3. Use appropriate regulatory tools for the protection of natural resources.
4. Increase resilience by managing flood-prone low-lying areas using the latest inundation modeling tools.
5. Identify and safeguard areas of prime farmland or land capable of supporting commercial forestry.
6. Protect, maintain, and improve marine habitat and water quality, particularly through the upgrade of existing public sewer and wastewater systems.
7. Recognize the importance of water-dependent land uses and determine the appropriate balance with other complementary land uses.
8. Maintain and improve harbor management facilities.
9. Decrease ecosystem vulnerabilities through sustainable forestry, farmland, and open space management.
10. Protect, maintain, and where warranted, improve physical and visual public access to the community's marine resources for all appropriate uses including fishing, recreation, and tourism.
11. Protect current and potential drinking water sources.
12. Protect significant surface water resources from pollution.
13. Protect water resources in growth areas while promoting future growth and development in those areas.
14. Improve the capacity of existing infrastructure to capture stormwater on site in order to protect natural resources, particularly Belfast Harbor.

## NATURAL RESOURCES STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-1	Continue existing conservation partnerships and build new partnerships as opportunities arise.	City Staff, Committees, State Agencies, Non-profits	Ongoing	
NAT-2	Support efforts to identify and prioritize land for protection and participate in public private partnership efforts as appropriate.	Planning and Codes, Coastal Mountains Land Trust, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-3	Re-examine existing stormwater regulations to ensure new and replacement stormwater systems have the capacity to manage increased stormwater flows in an environmentally sensitive manner.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-4	Continue to ensure local ordinances include stormwater runoff performance standards consistent with Maine Stormwater Management Law and Maine Stormwater regulations (Title 38 MRS §420-D and 06-096 CMR 500 and 502); Maine Department of Environmental Protection's allocations for allowable levels of phosphorus in lake/pond watersheds; Maine Pollution Discharge Elimination System Stormwater Program (MPDES).	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-5	Adopt water quality protection practices and standards for construction and maintenance of public and private roads and public properties, and require their implementation by contractors, owners, and community officials and employees.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-6	Implement recommendations from the Belfast Harbor Management Plan.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Harbor Master, Public Works, City Manager, City Council	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-7	Identify needs for additional recreational and commercial access (which includes parking, boat launches, docking space, fish piers, and swimming access).	Parks and Recreation Department, Harbor Committee, Harbor Master	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
NAT-8	Assess and refine pier and dock regulations to minimize the potential negative impacts of a proliferation of these structures in ecologically sensitive areas, or in areas where navigation might be impeded.	Planning and Codes, Harbor Master, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-9	Ensure Best Management Practices during construction, including earthmoving, to reduce non-point source runoff pollution.	Planning and Codes	Ongoing	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-10	Consider requirements for on-site capture of stormwater runoff such as Low Impact Development (LID) standards, which are practices that use or mimic natural processes that result in the infiltration, evapotranspiration or use of stormwater in order to protect water quality and associated aquatic habitat.	Planning and Codes	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
NAT-11	Continue to monitor for possible groundwater pollution, particularly at sites where there are oil storage tanks located near public and private water supplies.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Ongoing	
NAT-12	Identify faulty septic systems and any local, regional, or state incentive programs that may help cover the costs of replacements.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Ongoing	
NAT-13	Support the Watershed and Aquifer Protection District by discouraging new development in the district and continuing close monitoring of water quality.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Ongoing	
NAT-14	Work with the Belfast Water District to examine the need to enact revised public wellhead and aquifer recharge areas protection mechanisms, as necessary. Continue to implement the land acquisition strategy for the Water District and priority list of parcels to acquire for continued water quality protection.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
NAT-15	Educate business owners and homeowners on the proper storage and disposal of subsurface waste, solid waste, fertilizers, herbicides, and related chemicals, including recycling at the redemption center/transfer station. Continue using signage along watershed boundaries and pavement markings at storm drains for passive education about how surface runoff impacts Belfast Bay water quality.	Belfast Water District	Ongoing	
NAT-16	Collaborate with local residents and businesses, neighboring communities, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Marine Resources to develop an action plan that protects fishery habitats and creates strategies to further identify and eliminate point and non-point sources of water pollution. This includes working with marine businesses and industries to participate in clean marina / boatyard programs.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District, Harbor Master, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
NAT-17	Consider state funding programs such as the Working Waterfront Access Protection Program, which assists commercial fisheries, co-ops, the municipal governments, and other interested parties in securing strategically significant working waterfront properties to protect vital resources that support commercial fishing at working waterfronts.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development Department, Harbor Master, City Manager	Short-Term (1-3 years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-18	Support policies that promote community gardening, cooperative small-scale agricultural and edible landscapes.	City Staff and Committees / Boards	Ongoing	
NAT-19	Work with partners to identify locations suitable for community gardens, small-scale agriculture, or local forestry uses.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, Parks and Rec Dept, Belfast Garden Club	Ongoing	
NAT-20	Encourage land use policies that support an integrated and multi-purpose approach to land use, where appropriate, such as allowing grazing around solar arrays.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-21	Collaborate with Maine Farmland Trust to support efforts to keep land in agricultural production.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service	Ongoing	
NAT-22	Explore what a “working waterfront” means in Belfast, and continue to invest in projects that support this vision of a Belfast working waterfront.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council, Harbor Master	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-23	Consider a variety of tools to protect the working landscape economy (working farmland, forested areas, and other natural resources), such as a working landscape protection plan, tax abatement programs, agricultural zoning and buffers, transfer-of-development rights programs, easements, and protection of prime soils. Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs. Provide information about the current use taxation program to owners of waterfront land used to provide access to or support the conduct of commercial fishing activities.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-24	Promote agricultural practices that retain and increase moisture and organic content in soils.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service	Ongoing	
NAT-25	Encourage the use of carbon sequestration techniques, crediting programs, and access to voluntary carbon markets for farm and woodland property owners.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Dept of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service	Ongoing	
NAT-26	Improve Belfast’s “urban forest” by monitoring the condition of street trees, maintaining them properly, and replanting when necessary. Explore creation of a Belfast urban forest management strategy.	Public Works, Planning and Codes	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-27	Include land conservation for agriculture and commercial forestry operations in local or regional economic development plans.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development Dept, Cooperative Extension	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-28	Continue to enhance and promote the “Emerald Necklace” and recreational trails network in Belfast as a means of encouraging outdoor oriented tourism.	Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Parks and Recreation Dept, Ped/Bike/Hike Committee, Our Town Belfast, Chamber of Commerce	Ongoing	
NAT-29	Limit non-residential development in areas identified by the State of Maine as critical rural and natural resources areas to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism / outdoor recreation businesses, farmers’ markets, and home occupations. See Future Land Use Plan.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-30	Develop a strategic design plan that addresses sea-level rise in the inner harbor.	Harbor Committee, Climate Crisis Committee, Harbor Master	Short-Term (1-3 years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-31	Periodically review and assess state regulations regarding development in areas vulnerable to sea-level rise and how they compare to Belfast land use and development regulations.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Harbor Master, Harbor Committee, Climate Crisis Committee	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-32	Where applicable, develop an urban impaired stream watershed management or mitigation plan that will promote continued development or redevelopment without further stream degradation.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Long-Term (5+ years)	Yes
NAT-33	Encourage landowners to protect water quality. Provide local contact information at the municipal office for water quality best management practices from resources such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, Maine Forest Service, and/or Small Woodlot Association of Maine.	Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-34	Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect and, where warranted, improve water quality.	Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-35	Provide educational materials at appropriate locations regarding aquatic invasive species.	Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-36	Ensure that land use ordinances are consistent with applicable state law regarding critical natural resources.	Planning and Codes	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-37	Designate critical natural resources at Critical Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.	Comprehensive Planning Committee, Planning and Codes	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-38	Through local land use ordinances, required subdivision or non-residential property developers to look for and identify critical natural resources that may be on site and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
NAT-39	Through local land use ordinances, require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to include as part of the review process, consideration of pertinent State "Beginning with Habitat" (BwH) program maps and information regarding critical natural resources.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
NAT-40	Initiate and/or participate in inter-local and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-41	Provide information about the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program and current use taxation program to owners of waterfront land use to provide access to or support the conduct of commercial fishing activities.	Planning and Codes, Harbor Committee, Harbor Master	Ongoing	Yes



ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-42	Continue to provide sufficient fundings and staffing of the Harbor Master position and staff a Harbor Committee	City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-43	Continue to work with local property owners, land trusts, and others to protect major points of physical and visual access to coastal waters, especially along public ways and in public parks.	Planning and Codes, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Harbor Committee	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-44	Encourage agricultural practices and tree plantings that provide maximum habitat for songbirds and pollinators; encourage permaculture practices and maximize biodiversity in order to adapt to climate-induced invasives.	Planning and Codes, Parks Dept, Non-Profit Community, Belfast Garden Club	Ongoing	
NAT-45	Use selected trees and shrubs to strategically provide shade/cooling and protect against high winds, especially inside the by-pass.	Public Works, Planning and Codes	Ongoing	
NAT-46	Develop incentives that increase stewardship and reduce loss of farmland, woodlands and wetlands.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-47	Encourage the use of carbon sequestration techniques, crediting programs, and access to voluntary carbon markets for farm and woodland property owners.	Climate Crisis Committee	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-48	Work with state, regional, and local partners to identify habitat areas for species of special concern and develop tools and partnerships for protection of those areas.	Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Coastal Mountains Land Trust	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	

# CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Belfast is a healthy, safe, and beautiful coastal city with a strong sense of community created by many diverse small businesses in the retail, light industrial, service and hospitality sectors, along with many recreational, arts and cultural attractions. Sustaining these qualities is critical to the future of Belfast and requires anticipating and adapting to changes posed by the climate crisis, such as long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns, and the ensuing effects of these shifts. In June 2019, Governor Janet Mills signed LD 1679 into law, with strong support from the Maine Legislature, to create the Maine Climate Council. In December 2020, the Maine Climate Council published *Maine Won't Wait*, a four-year Climate Action Plan that outlines goals and strategies to combat climate change in Maine.

*Maine Won't Wait* identifies four major goals:

- Reduce Maine's Greenhouse Gas Emissions,
- Avoid the Impacts and Costs of Inaction,
- Foster Economic Opportunity and Prosperity, and
- Advance Equity through Maine's Climate Response.

While *Maine Won't Wait* is not regulatory, the Belfast Comprehensive Plan recognizes the importance of this topic. This Climate Solutions chapter pulls together the key findings related to climate solutions from the Inventory chapters in the plan and compiles the related goals, objectives, and strategies from the Policy Guide chapters of the Belfast Comprehensive Plan.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **As a coastal community, Belfast is vulnerable to risks posed by sea level rise.**
- **An increase in the frequency and intensity of storms may cause strong storm surges and flooding along Belfast coastal areas, and overwhelm stormwater management infrastructure.** City stormwater management facilities are in good condition, though changes in the number, duration, and intensity of major rainfall events in the past 10 years has or is expected to cause problems with the capacity of current city facilities.
- **Rising temperatures and increased severe weather may impact public health, disrupt ecosystems dynamics, and increase pest populations, such as ticks and brown-tailed moths.**
- **Sustainable transportation and energy trends may become more prominent in the city, from electric vehicle charging stations to the use of sustainable electricity sources.** According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the transportation sector is one of the largest contributors to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, and the Belfast GHG Inventory indicates that Belfast's three largest emitters are transportation and residential and commercial energy use.

- **Future land use planning in the city has encouraged higher-density housing and non-residential development to occur in areas close to existing public and private services so that residents can choose to walk rather than drive or drive shorter distances.** The City of Belfast values all levels of mobility and continues to promote planning efforts that increase walkability, cycling, and shorter automobile trips in the city. There are numerous opportunities to create a safer, more accessible built environment for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **There are historic structures and properties in Belfast that are vulnerable to threats posed by climate change and this must be factored into resilience planning efforts.** Climate change along with unpredictable and extreme weather events can significantly damage historic structures and cultural resources. In Belfast there are older homes and sites that are at risk from sea level rise coupled with flooding from extreme storms, from extreme wind, and other extreme weather events. The city should take advantage of federal and state resources that assist with planning for the protection and repair of historic structures and cultural resources that are damaged by climate change.
- **Belfast’s harbor and harbor facilities are facing the impacts of climate change.** Both sea-level rise and flooding from extreme storm events are an increasing concern for the Belfast harbor and harbor facilities.

## CLIMATE SOLUTIONS GOALS

1. A meaningful reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Land use planning and policies that factor in food security, climate change, and resilience thinking.
3. Resilient and sustainable city infrastructure that provides a foundation for economic and community vitality.
4. A transportation system that promotes public health, supports economic health and vitality, protects natural and cultural resources, addresses the climate crisis, and improves overall livability while minimizing increases in vehicle miles traveled.
5. Proactive steps to address climate crisis through integration of state, regional, and local climate priorities into municipal decision-making.

## CLIMATE SOLUTIONS OBJECTIVES

1. Infrastructure that can withstand flooding associated with sea-level rise, storm surge, and an increase in precipitation.
2. Increase number of electric vehicles charging stations.
3. Decrease direct fossil fuel use (e.g., propane, heating oil, gasoline) and increase use of sustainable electricity in ways that reduce overall emissions and energy costs.
4. Reduce vehicle miles traveled for Belfast residents.
5. Increase resilience by managing flood-prone low-lying areas using the latest inundation modeling tools.
6. Decrease ecosystem vulnerabilities through sustainable forestry, farmland, and open space management.
7. Increase bike and pedestrian connections to publicly-accessible trails, open spaces, and trailheads.

## CLIMATE SOLUTIONS STRATEGIES

The Climate Solutions strategies in the table below are the strategies already outlined in the other policy guide topic areas above, with the exception of the first strategy, which is unique to the Climate Solutions topic.

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
CLIM-1	Develop a “Climate Action Plan” to establish guidance for reducing emissions, including: goals and targets for managing sea-level rise; reducing dependence on fossil fuels; resilience planning strategies, such as exploring best practices for shoreline protection measures; improving city capacity for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping in order to identify areas of Belfast and public infrastructure that are at risk due to issues associated with changing climate.	Climate Crisis Committee, City Staff, City Council	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
REC-8	Work collaboratively with stakeholder groups to pursue opportunities to protect significant open spaces and recreational land.	Parks and Recreation Dept, Friends of Belfast Parks, Ped Bike Hike Committee, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Coastal Mountains Land Trust	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
REC-12	Explore and seek federal, state, and non-profit funding to add, upgrade, and rehabilitate park facilities and amenities; make park improvements, expand the municipal park system to meet future needs of residents.	Parks and Recreation Staff, Non-Profit Organizations	Ongoing	
Rec-13	Collaborate with other city departments and committees to assess how climate change effects and sea-level rise will impact the municipal parks system and to create a long-term action plan for addressing the impacts.	Parks and Recreation Staff, City Committees, Non-Profit Organizations	Ongoing	
MOB-25	Collaborate with Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP), local large employers, and private bus companies to expand local and inter-city transit to the extent feasible.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works), City committees, non-profits.	Ongoing	
MOB-26	Utilize building and zoning codes to encourage electric vehicles and human-powered transport.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	
MOB-27	Support the use of electric vehicles by increasing public charging facilities, including one or more multi-charger fields, and considering buildings codes that incentivize private EV charging facilities where multi-unit buildings and commercial structures are built.	Economic Development	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
MOB-1	Coordinate with the Planning and Public Works Department to create a Belfast pedestrian and cycling plan that inventories existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructures and identify locations for improved and new sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, bike parking in order to improve safe and convenient walking and cycling, as well as access to parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational areas.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
MOB-3	Work with major employers to create ride sharing incentives. Explore options for a “Park and Ride” service that may help alleviate commuter traffic and provide more options for people commuting in and out of Belfast.	Planning Staff, Economic Development Department, Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
HOU-8	Develop local programs to encourage weatherization and insulation of existing buildings and new construction, and to encourage installation of heat pumps or other green heating/cooling methods that maximize energy efficiency. Cooperate with the City Energy Committee in weatherizing city buildings and continuing to increase use of green energy for city operations. Educate residents about Efficiency Maine programs that support insulation improvements.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development, City Energy Committee	Medium Term (3-5 years)	
HIS-10	Create an action plan for climate impacts on historic and cultural resources, such as resources in high flood-risk areas. Refer to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission’s Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Economic Development Department, Climate Crisis Committee	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-11	Continue to invest in solar and renewable energy sources for the City of Belfast.	City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	
PUB-3	Survey and inventory the current Belfast stormwater management system; determine MEDOT/City jurisdictions; develop a comprehensive design for upgrade.	City Engineer, City Council	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-22	Continue to partner with the Waldo County Emergency Management Agency to provide emergency shelters in times of extreme heat or cold.	City staff, County Emergency Management	Ongoing	
NAT-30	Develop a strategic design plan that addresses sea-level rise in the inner harbor.	Harbor Committee, Climate Crisis Committee, Harbor Master	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-31	Periodically review and assess state regulations regarding development in areas vulnerable to sea-level rise and how they compare to Belfast land use and development regulations.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Harbor Master, Harbor Committee, Climate Crisis Committee	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-44	Encourage agricultural practices and tree plantings that provide maximum habitat for songbirds and pollinators; encourage permaculture practices and maximize biodiversity in order to adapt to climate-induced invasives.	Planning and Codes, Parks and Rec Dept, Non-Profit Community, Belfast Garden Club	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-45	Use selected trees and shrubs to strategically provide shade/cooling and protect against high winds, especially inside the by-pass.	Public Works, Planning and Codes	Ongoing	
NAT-46	Develop incentives that increase stewardship and reduce loss of farmland, woodlands and wetlands.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-24	Promote agricultural practices that retain and increase moisture and organic content in soils.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service	Ongoing	
NAT-47	Encourage the use of carbon sequestration techniques, crediting programs, and access to voluntary carbon markets for farm and woodland property owners.	Climate Crisis Committee	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
FLU-18	Establish goals for future land conservation and protection of existing open space.	Planning and Codes, Parks and Recreation Dept, Economic Development Dept, Public Works Dept, City Manager, City Council	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
FLU-6	Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas as identified below in this Future Land Use Plan.	City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
FLU-14	Consider requirements for Low-Impact Design (LID) on-site or “sponge” retention concepts in development projects to support climate, public infrastructure, and overall stormwater management goals and objectives.	Planning Staff, Planning Board, City Council	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	

# **PART 3: INVENTORY CHAPTERS**

**EXISTING LAND USE**

**POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS**

**ECONOMY**

**HOUSING**

**CRITICAL NATURAL RESOURCES**

**WATER RESOURCES**

**AGRICULTURAL & FOREST RESOURCES**

**MARINE RESOURCES**

**HISTORIC & ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

**RECREATION & OPEN SPACE**

**MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION**

**PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES**

**FISCAL CAPACITY**

**CLIMATE SOLUTIONS**

# EXISTING LAND USE

Originally home to Penobscot Native Americans, Belfast became an established post for trading between English settlers and Native Americans in the late 1700s. Scotch-Irish families began settling the area in the late 1700s and early 1800s and a shipbuilding and maritime economy developed and thrived through the 1800s. As those industries declined, factories and food-processing plants sprung up along the waterfront. Route 1 was later rerouted around downtown Belfast; and instead of draining the downtown area of economic activity and life, it allowed downtown Belfast to flourish and retain its historic character.

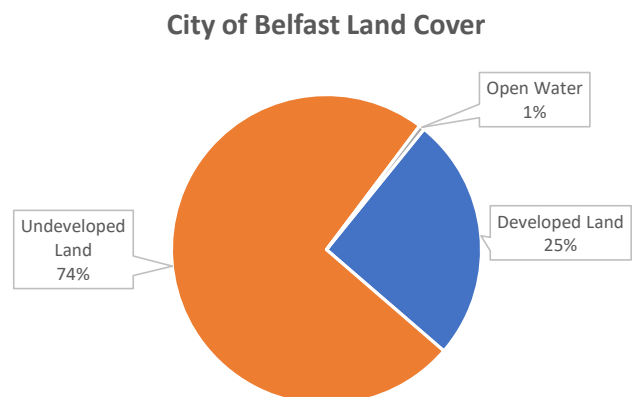
Today, Belfast is small but dynamic waterfront city with a strong sense of character. Belfast employs a number of land use regulations that govern the form, pattern, and use of land in the city. This chapter outlines the existing land use cover, notes the character and pattern of recent development, describes existing key neighborhoods and corridors, and provides an overview of city land use regulations.

## LAND USE PATTERNS

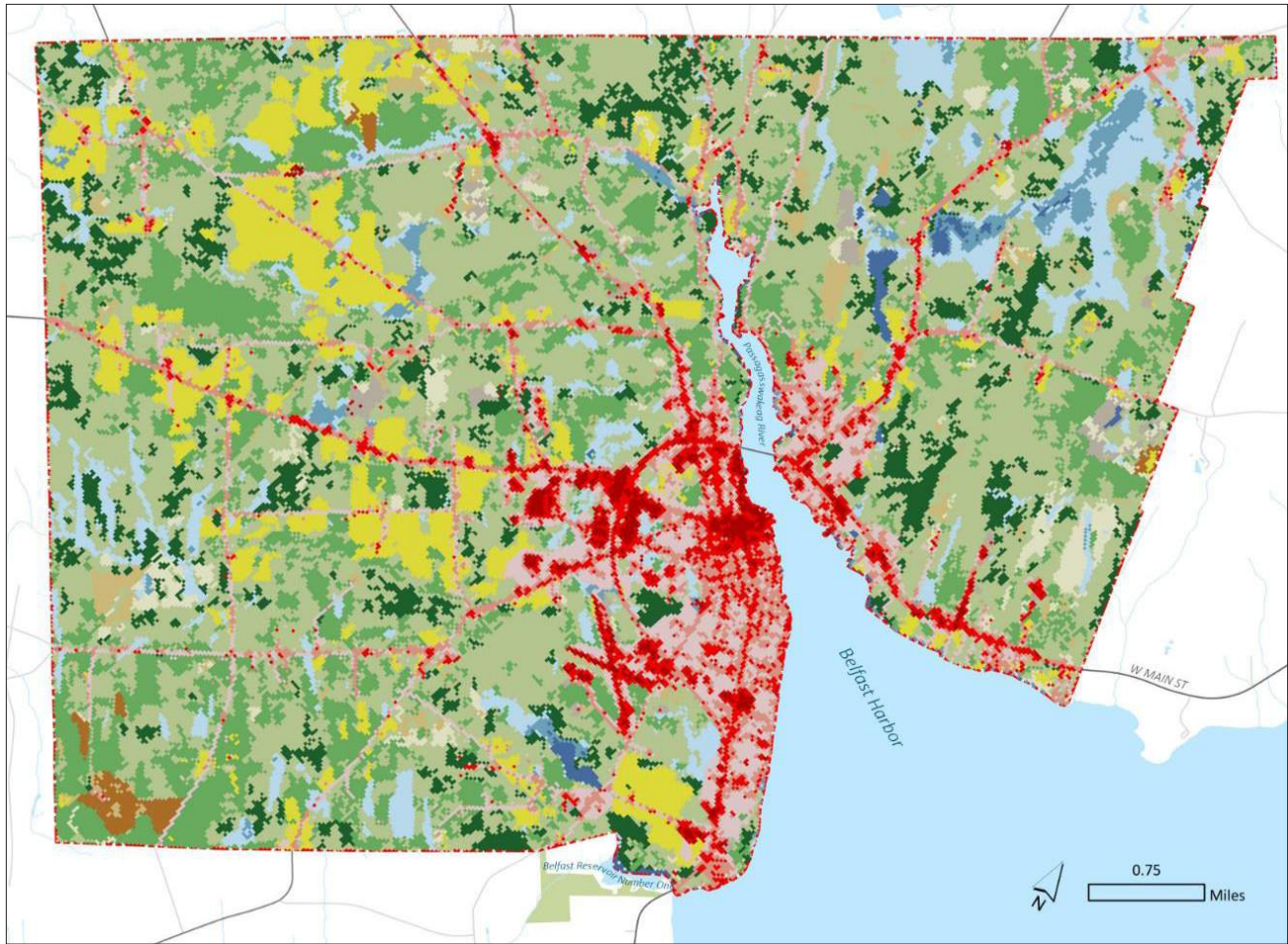
Belfast is the County seat of Waldo County and plays an important role as a retail and service center in the northern end of MidCoast Maine. The city is situated at the mouth of the Passagassawakeag River, where the river meets the Belfast Bay, and has a thriving and active waterfront. The waterfront is surrounded by a walkable downtown core, with residential neighborhoods fanning out from the downtown area. The Maine Route 1 by-pass road is both colloquially and physically a defining physical feature for Belfast, creating a transition between the historic downtown waterfront section of the city and the lower-density and auto-dependent retail, residential, and eventually rural areas of Belfast. The outer rural areas of Belfast are a mixture of working farms, rural homesteads, and significant areas of natural habitat and open space. Belfast has several highly scenic agricultural and forested areas along the routes leading into town.

According to land cover classifications by the National Land Cover Database:















- **Approximately 25% of the city is categorized as developed land.** Developed land in Belfast includes the downtown areas around the harbor, residential neighborhoods, commercial, industrial, institutional land uses, and some land developed for agricultural purposes.
- **Approximately 74% of the city is categorized as undeveloped land.** Undeveloped land includes undeveloped areas within developed neighborhoods, natural areas such as wetlands and riparian habitats, deer wintering areas, shrub and scrub zones, forested areas, and various forest types. The majority of the undeveloped land is outside the by-pass area and away from the downtown core.
- **The remaining 1% is categorized as open water.** Open water in the city of Belfast includes Lower Mason Pond and Upper Mason Pond, the Belfast Reservoirs, and several smaller unnamed ponds.







### City of Belfast, Maine Land Cover Map, National Land Cover Dataset

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Open Water                  |  Evergreen Forest             |
|  Developed, Open Space       |  Mixed Forest                 |
|  Developed, Low Intensity    |  Shrub / Scrub                |
|  Developed, Medium Intensity |  Herbaceous                   |
|  Developed, High Intensity   |  Hay / Pasture                |
|  Barren Land                 |  Woody Wetlands               |
|  Deciduous Forest            |  Emergent Herbaceous Wetlands |

## RECENT DEVELOPMENT

There have been a few subdivisions over the past 10 years, but, by and large, development in Belfast is occurring lot by lot through exempt divisions of land, on existing undeveloped lots, and via redevelopment. The recent development is generally consistent with the community’s vision. Given recent updates to the zoning ordinance undertaken in the last several years, the city has spent a large amount of time and energy reflecting on existing and future land use and ensuring that new development is in line with these regulations.

## PRIMARY DISTRICTS, CORRIDORS, AND NEIGHBORHOODS

- **Waterfront.** The Belfast waterfront is a busy hub of marine related and non-marine related uses, including several marinas, waterfront restaurants, boat dealers, the Front Street Shipyard, and the Harbor Walk multi-use path that connects to the Armistice Bridge. There are several significant areas of parkland along the waterfront that serve as community gathering spaces for events.
- **Downtown.** Downtown Belfast is anchored by Main Street and the cross streets of Church Street and High Street. Downtown Belfast is a walkable mixed-use commercial residential area with a number of historic buildings, restaurants, shops, county and city office buildings, and other services such as the post office, banks, the Belfast Co-op and the laundromat.
- **“Inside the By-Pass”.** The Route 1 by-pass creates a physical edge between the outer commercial and rural parts of Belfast and the historic commercial and residential downtown. The area referred to as “inside the by-pass” has the greatest mix of residential and commercial land use. Inside the by-pass has a walkable village character, with older homes and historic residential streets. Captain Albert W Stevens Elementary School, Belfast Area High School, the Waldo County General Hospital, Belfast City Park are all located inside the by-pass.
- **Waldo Avenue / North of Main Street.** The Waldo Avenue neighborhood is located just north of Main Street / Belmont Avenue on either side of Waldo Ave and in between the river and Route 1. This area of Belfast is a mixture of institutional and community uses like Belfast Area High School, Waldo Community Action Partners, Waterfall Arts, and Grove Cemetery, as well as in-town medium density residential uses. This neighborhood is generally walkable to downtown, with many opportunities for sidewalk expansions.
- **Route 3 Corridor.** The Route 3 Corridor stretches from the by-pass road out past the southwest edge the Belfast city limits and serves as one gateway for the west side of town. Closer in to the by-pass, Route 3 is primarily auto-dependent commercial development. Major retailers include Hannaford, Walgreens, and Reny’s. Further out from the by-pass, Route 3 is a low-density rural residential and agricultural corridor, with several small businesses mixed in.
- **Route 1 South Corridor.** The Route 1 South Corridor of Belfast is located just outside the junction of the Route 1 by-pass and Northport Avenue and acts as the southern gateway into Belfast. This area is characterized by a mixture of lower-density residential and commercial development with residential roads extending off to the waterfront and Perkins Road extending west towards the airport and Belfast reservoirs. This area includes and a large, planned land-based salmon farm.

- **Swan Lake Avenue Corridor.** The Swan Lake Avenue Corridor is a primarily lower-density residential corridor connecting Swanville and the northeast side of Belfast. This corridor has limited commercial and pockets of medium-density residential where they are several mobile home parks. The Belfast Water District owns several properties for aquifer protection.
- **Searsport Avenue Corridor.** The Searsport Avenue Corridor is the eastern gateway into the City of Belfast. This area is primarily lower-density commercial on the north side of Searsport Avenue and a mixture of lower-density residential and commercial on the south side of Searsport Avenue. Given the many views of the Bay from Searsport Avenue, there a mixture hotels, inns, and motels along Searsport Avenue, and a campground. This east side of Belfast also includes several historic public access points to the water or rangeways.

# REGULATIONS AND OVERSIGHT

The City of Belfast includes a Planning and Codes department that employs four staff overseeing a variety of tasks pertaining to municipal planning and code enforcement. In addition, the city maintains a number of other committees that participate in planning and land use-related activities and provide guidance to the City Council:

- **Planning Board:** Seven-member board oversees planning and development cases.
- **Comprehensive Planning and Review Committee:** Manages the development and implementation of state-mandated long-range comprehensive plans for land use and growth management.
- **In-Town Design Review Board:** Reviews applications for certain types of permits in particular districts to determine if proposed construction activity is compatible with the character and form in those districts.
- **Pedestrian, Transportation, and Accessibility Committee:** Advocates for multi-modal transportation improvements; collaborates with city government and other committees.
- **Broadband Committee:** Researches broadband availability to identify deficiencies in coverage and/or speeds; informs residents; provides guidance to the Belfast City Council regarding investment in broadband infrastructure.
- **Climate, Energy, and Utilities Committee:** Advocates for increased education, engagement, data collection, and solutions to address current and future impacts of climate change in Belfast.
- **Harbor Advisory Committee:** Reviews projects and issues related to management and development of the Belfast Harbor and provides guidance to City Council and other committees on harbor-related issues.
- **Belfast Water District:** Owns and manages land for the protection of drinking water sources for the City of Belfast.
- **Parks and Recreation Commission:** Works closely with the Director of Parks and Recreation and other recreation organizations to establish, maintain, and improve city parks and green spaces, and provide recommendations for budgeting and policy to the City Council.
- **Airport Advisory Committee:** Advises the Belfast City Council, the City Manager, and the Airport Manager with respect to Belfast Municipal Airport-related management and development matters.
- **Cemetery Trustees Committee:** Determines and implements strategies that protect, promote and preserve the beauty, dignity, historical and cultural values of seven cemeteries and Grove Chapel to serve users now and into the future.
- **Housing and Property Development Committee:** Formed in May of 2023; will focus on addressing housing needs in the City of Belfast.
- **Zoning Board of Appeals:** Reviews deciding administrative appeals, granting or denying variances, or interpreting ordinance provisions.
- **Rail-Trail and Harbor Walk Committee:** Coordinates management and operations of Passy Rail-Trail.
- **Brownfields Selection Committee:** Assists City of Belfast personnel in the management and implementation of two City of Belfast Brownfields Programs: the City of Belfast Brownfields Assessment Program and the City of Belfast Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Program.

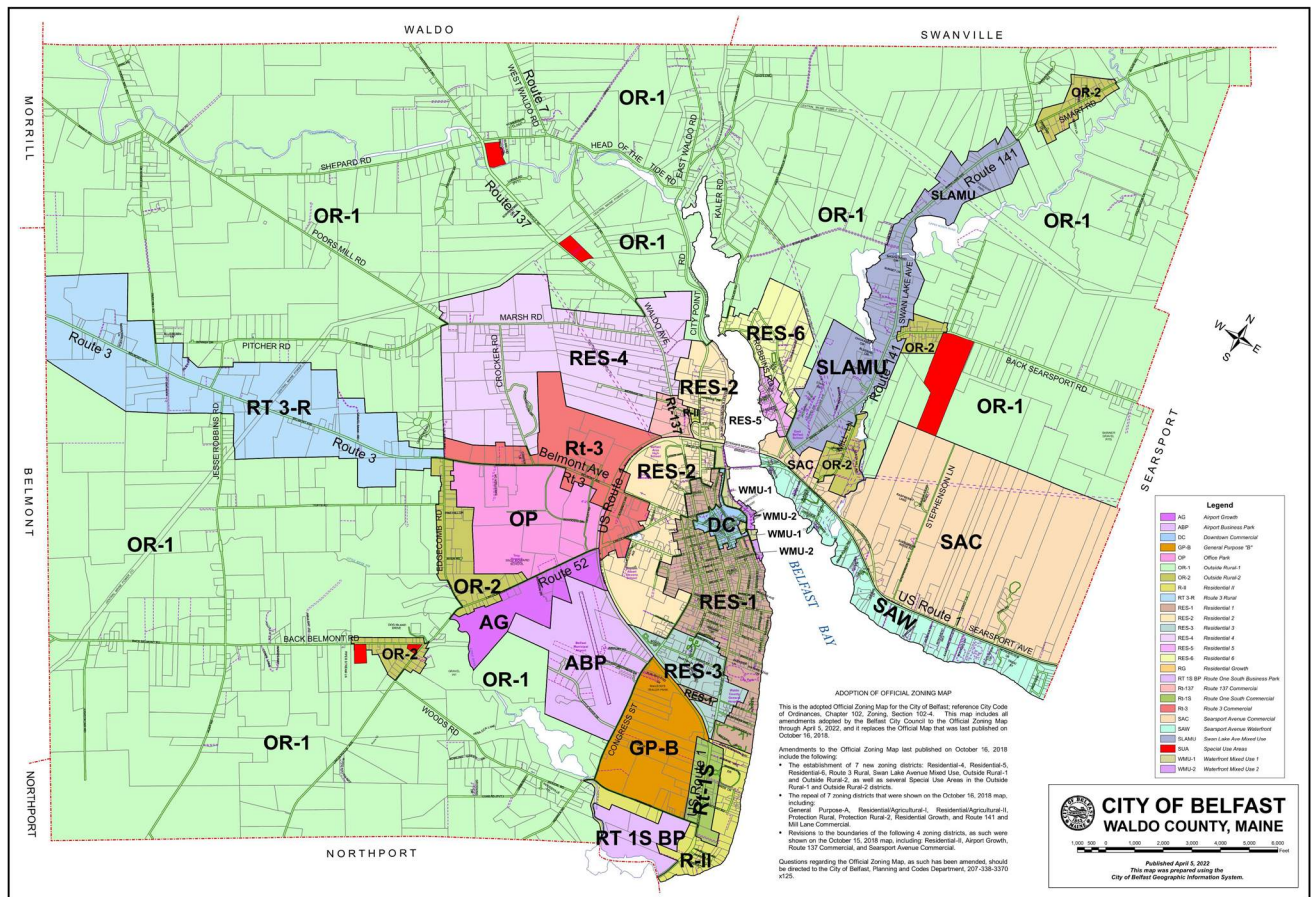
## CITY OF BELFAST ORDINANCES

The city has recently undergone a number of zoning and land use regulation revisions and updates in order to create a zoning ordinance that reflects the community vision stated in previous comprehensive planning efforts. In addition, these changes are part of an overall effort to improve the efficiency and clarity of the land use regulation and development process. The city has a number of land use regulations that govern the form, pattern, and use of land. The following table lists ordinances regulating land use in the City of Belfast.

REGULATION	CHAPTER AND SECTION
Buildings and Building Regulations	§74-1 – §74-133
Comprehensive Plan	§76-1
Floods	§78-1-- §78-95
In-Town Design Review	§80-1 – §80-52
Shoreland Zoning (see below)	§82-1 – §82-451
Signs	§86-1 – §86-190
Site Plans	§90-1 – §90-132
Subdivisions	§94-1
Technical Standards	§98-1 – §98-252
Zoning (see below)	§102-1 – §102-1457

# CITY OF BELFAST ZONING CODE

The City of Belfast currently has 25 zones in the land use and zoning ordinance. The zoning code has undergone a number of revisions and updates in the past several years in order to simplify the code, bring certain areas of the zoning code in line with existing land uses, and create more flexibility. The map below shows the latest zoning in the City of Belfast and the individual zones are listed in the table on the next page.



<b>Belfast Zones in the Zoning Code. Source: Chapter 102, City of Belfast Zoning Code</b>	
<b>Zone</b>	<b>Description</b>
Airport Growth (AG)	The purpose of the Airport Growth District is to accommodate a potential future need for appropriate commercial growth adjacent to the airport.
Airport Business Park (ABP)	The purpose of the Airport Business Park District is to accommodate airport use along with manufacturing, industrial, and professional service uses.
Downtown Commercial (DC)	The purpose of the Downtown Commercial District is to accommodate a mixture of businesses and higher-density housing in the downtown areas.
General Purpose "B" (GP-B)	The purpose of the General Purpose B District is to accommodate a variety of general uses such as residential, agriculture, recreation, governmental, some commercial, and essential services.
Office Park (OP)	The purpose of the Office Park District is to allow a mixture of office, commercial, light industrial, and residential use mixed uses.
Outside Rural-1 (OR-1)	The purpose of the Outside Rural-1 is to accommodate a variety of lower-density uses including residential, commercial agricultural, recreational, storage, and some manufacturing uses in the city's outer rural areas with larger parcels.
Outside Rural-2 (OR-2)	The purpose of Outside Rural-2 is to act as a transition from higher-density districts to the Outside Rural District 1 and to accommodate a mix of uses including residential, commercial agricultural along with other uses that have smaller parcels and medium-density.
Residential II (R-II)	The purpose of the Residential II District is to accommodate primarily residential uses along with supporting uses and services with a possibility for increased density if on public sewer and water.
Route 3 Rural (RT 3-R)	The purpose of the Route 3-Rural District is to maintain a lower-density commercial and residential corridor along Route 3 as a transition between rural areas and more developed sections of Belfast, allowing for storage, agricultural, and some manufacturing uses.
Residential 1 (Res-1)	The purpose of the Residential 1 District is to accommodate primarily residential uses with higher-density allowances inside the bypass.
Residential 2 (Res-2)	The purpose of the Residential 2 District is to accommodate primarily residential and institutional uses with higher-density allowances inside the bypass than outside the bypass.
Residential 3 (Res-3)	The purpose of the Residential 3 District is to accommodate mixed uses that includes primarily residential uses along with some light-industrial and institutional uses, with higher-density allowances inside the bypass than outside the bypass.
Residential 4 (Res-4)	The purpose of the Residential 4 District is to accommodate low to medium-density residential and limited commercial uses outside of the bypass in an area that is appropriate for additional growth.
Residential 5 (Res-5)	The purpose of the Residential 5 District is to allow for lower-density residential uses.
Residential 6 (Res-6)	The purpose of the Residential 6 District is to allow limited types of residential uses, such as single family and two-family residential dwellings, small-scale institutional or commercial uses, and maintain the existing low-density character.
Route One South Business Park (RT 1S BP)	The purpose of the Route One South Business Park District is to allow for commercial and light industrial uses along the southern portion of Route 1.

<b>Belfast Zones in the Zoning Code. Source: Chapter 102, City of Belfast Zoning Code</b>	
<b>Zone</b>	<b>Description</b>
Route 137 Commercial	The purpose of the Residential/Agricultural I District is to accommodate a mix of residential, agricultural, a limited number of commercial uses while operating in a way that allows more density and smaller lots.
Route One South Business Park (Rt-1S)	The purpose of the Route One South Commercial District is to accommodate commercial and light industrial land uses along the southern portion of Route One.
Route 3 Commercial (RT-3)	The purpose of the Route 3 Commercial District is to accommodate larger commercial and retail uses, and some residential, along Route 3, close to the Route 1 bypass.
Searsport Avenue Commercial (SAC)	The purpose of the Searsport Avenue Commercial District is to accommodate primarily commercial and some residential uses along the north side of Searsport Avenue.
Searsport Avenue Waterfront (SAW)	The purpose of the Searsport Avenue Waterfront District is to accommodate a mix of smaller-scale commercial and residential uses and to maintain a lower-density character while also protecting that waterfront.
Swan Lake Ave Mixed Use (SLAMU)	The purpose of the Swan Lake Ave Mixed Use District is to accommodate a mix of commercial, residential, and small-retail uses along Route 141 while allowing more density and smaller lots than the surrounding rural districts.
Special Use Areas	The purpose of the Special Use Areas District is to accommodate existing land uses that were previously non-conforming.
Waterfront Mixed Use 1	The purpose of the Waterfront Mixed Use 1 District is to accommodate a mix of uses along the waterfront within the downtown area.
Waterfront Mixed Use 2	The purpose of the Waterfront Mixed Use 2 District is to accommodate a mix of uses along the waterfront while allowing more residential development and density than WMU-1.

## SHORELAND PROTECTION

Shoreland/Waterfront Zoning: Belfast has adopted Shoreland Zoning provisions (Chapter 82 of the Belfast Code), which are intended to provide protection to shorefront areas, within a 250-foot area from the normal high-water line of all tidal waters, identified freshwater wetlands that are 10 acres or more, the upland edge of freshwater wetlands, salt marshes, salt meadows, wetlands associated with great ponds, rivers and specified flood hazard areas. An area of 75 feet from the normal high-water line is set for other water bodies including tributary streams. These shoreland zones include Resource Protection, Limited Residential, Urban Residential, General Development, Stream Protection, Stream Development, Manufactured Housing Community, and Waterfront Development. Beyond shoreland zoning, an Aquifer-Watershed Overlay District has been established to protect areas with aquifers that are used for public drinking water supplies by limiting development. See the ordinance provisions for more information on these standards and permitted uses.



# POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

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

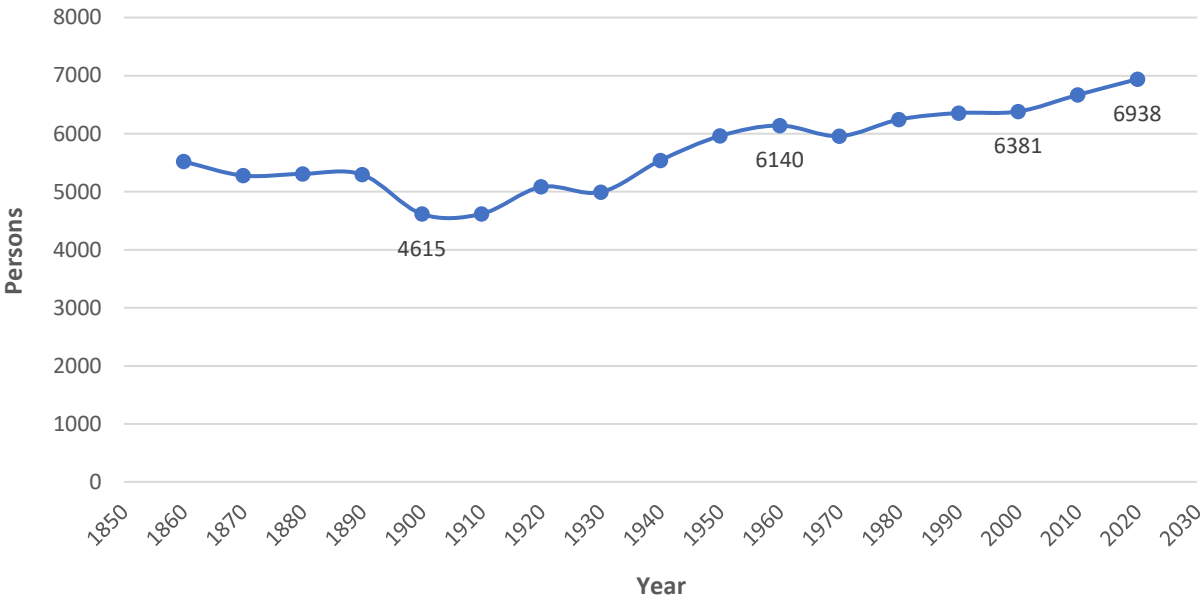
## POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

Belfast’s population growth has remained relatively consistent over the past 70 years (since 1950), with population ranging between 6,000 and 7,000. There have been periods of no growth and decline during the late 1800s, early 1900s, 1930s and 1960s. More recently, Belfast has experienced modest growth. In 2000, 6,381 people lived in Belfast, and according to the Decennial Census, by 2020 the population was reported at 6,938; a modest increase over twenty years. Since 1960, Belfast’s growth rate has been outpaced by Waldo County, echoing trends of many regions, where outlying areas attract more new residents than do their service center communities.

Since 1960, the population of Waldo County and the State of Maine has been steadily increasing. It is anticipated that by 2038, both populations should start to stabilize. By 2038, the State Economist Office forecasts that Waldo County will have 44,120 persons and the State’s population will total 1,371,607, both increases from current population levels.

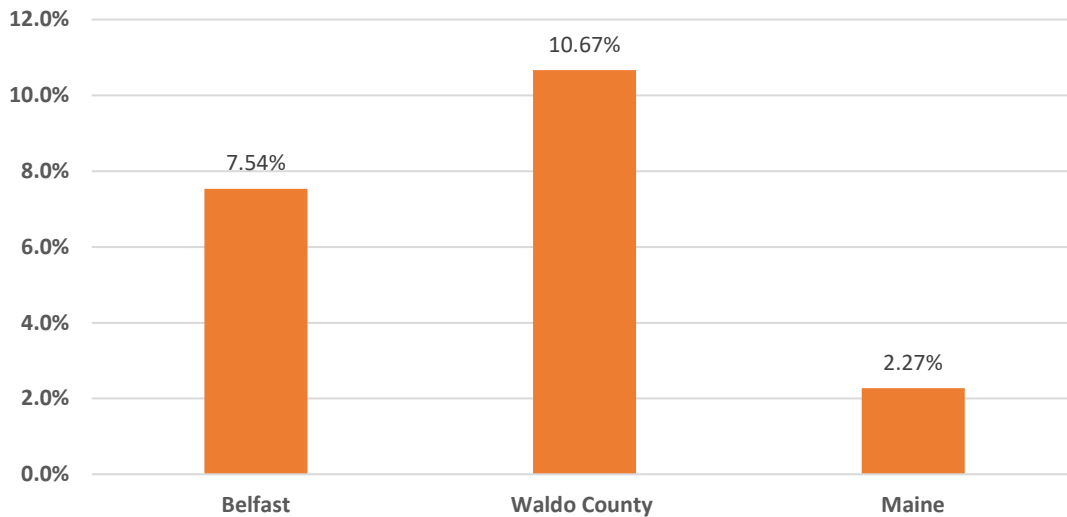
### Belfast Population Change 1860-2020

Source: Maine State Economist and U.S. Census



## Percent Change in Population (2018-2038)

Source: Maine State Economist



Since 1990, Belfast’s population has been gradually increasing. According to the State Economist Office, by 2038 Belfast’s population is projected to increase to 7,220. The total amount of births between 2011 and 2020 totaled 552, while deaths totaled 997. Natural change (births minus deaths) accounted for a net decrease of 445 persons. Population gains from 2011-2020 are the result of people moving into Belfast.

Changes in land use within Belfast, including new year-round residential development, will determine the actual population growth or decline in the city. The implications of changing population demographics include new demands for municipal services to support the aging population, workforce challenges, and funding. See the Public Facilities Chapter for more discussion and recommendations.

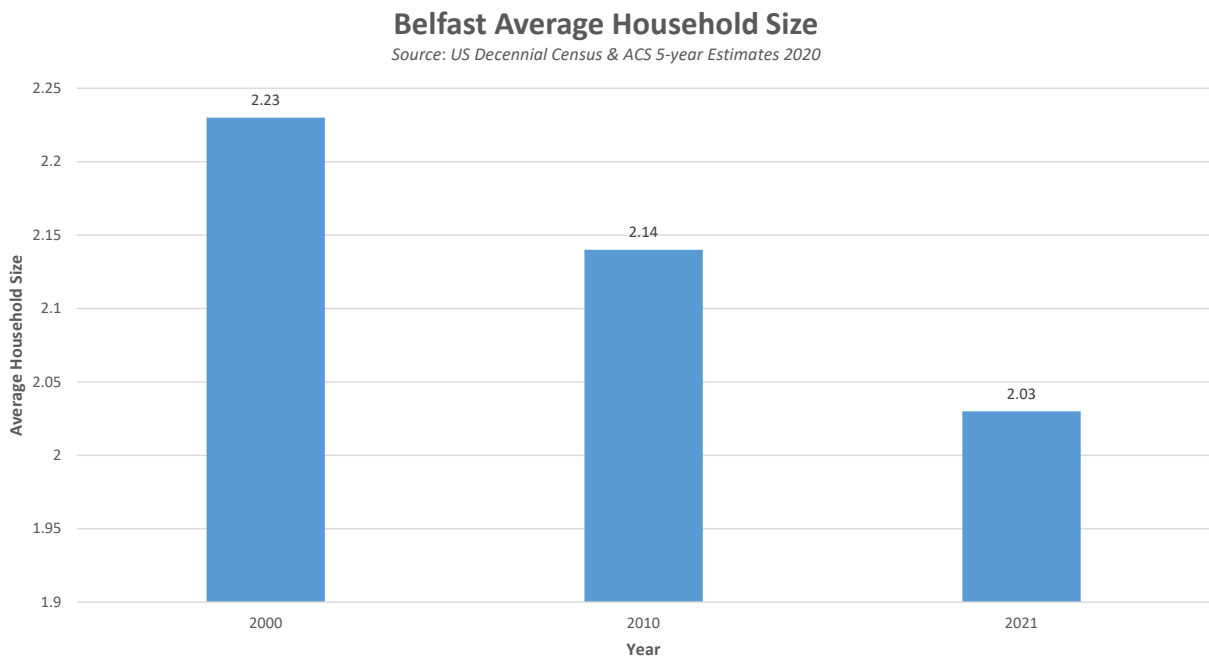
If recent trends continue, the need for housing for the elderly, from independent living to assisted living facilities, will increase. The private sector has developed senior housing to meet the needs of more affluent retirees; the 2004 expansion of the Tall Pines facility is an example of such. A 32-unit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

## SEASONAL POPULATION TRENDS

As a scenic, coastal community with a lively and historic downtown and an active waterfront, Belfast experiences significant increases in seasonal populations and has hotels, motels and inns offering accommodations. Relative to some neighboring coastal communities, Belfast has a modest number of seasonal residences. According to the American Community Survey, in 2021 Belfast had 298 housing units used seasonally, recreationally, or occasionally. It is anticipated that this figure will increase in future years as Belfast has experienced an increase in commercial and seasonal visitor activity in the past several years. Also, new industrial/service developments such as the Front Street Shipyard may result in an increase in the number of seasonal residents. See the Housing Chapter for more information.

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

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



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

Based upon 298 seasonal/recreational housing units reported by the American Community Survey for 2021, and estimating non-resident household size at 2.03 persons, about 438 persons may stay in seasonal housing in Belfast. Assuming household size stays consistent, combined with the year-round population forecast of 7,220 people, in 2038 Belfast may total 7,658 persons in season for extended stays. That figure is likely to increase with the expansion of these facilities and with new facilities, some of which involve the conversions of the larger historic single-family homes to inns.

## AGE CHARACTERISTICS

The proportion of school-aged children (5-17) has declined over the past two decades. The number of young adults (18-44) has also declined from 1990-2010. The number of middle-aged persons (45-64) has increased from 1990-2010, but has declined as of 2021. The number of retiree-aged persons (65+) has significantly increased since 2010. Most of the growth seen in Belfast is the result of in-migration of new residents rather than through natural increase (births to residents).

Age Cohort	1990	2000	2010	2021
0-19	1,703	1,488	1,447	1,143
20-44	2,131	1,870	1,721	1,512
45-64	1,341	1,744	2,038	1,780
65+	1,180	1,279	1,462	2,455

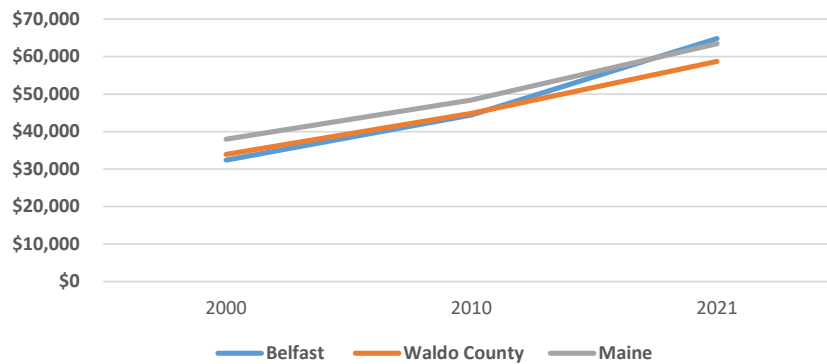
Source: Decennial Census, ACS 5-year Estimate 2021

# INCOME CHARACTERISTICS

The median household income in Belfast in 2000 was \$32,400. From 2000 to 2021, the median household income in Belfast steadily increased to roughly \$64,784. The median household income in Waldo County also steadily increased from 2000 to 2021.

## Median Household Income

Source: MaineHousing



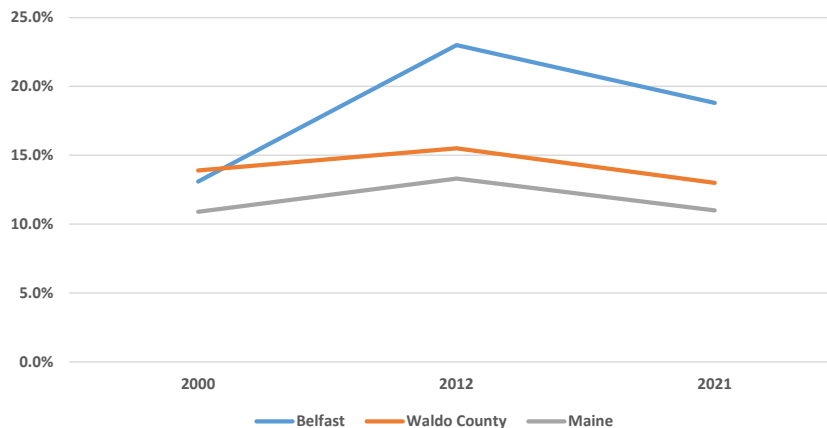
In Belfast, from 2000 to 2012 the percent of population below the poverty line increased by about 76%, but then declined by around 18% between 2012 and 2021. There was also a slight increase in poverty levels in both Waldo County and Maine, but after 2012, the poverty levels have been steadily declining.

Poverty Percent	2000	2012	2021
Belfast	13.1%	23.0%	18.8%
Waldo County	13.9%	15.5%	13.0%
Maine	10.9%	13.3%	11.0%

Source: Decennial Census, ACS 5-year Estimate 2021

## Percent of Individuals Below Poverty Level

Source: US Decennial Census 2000, ACS 5-year Estimates 2012 & 2021

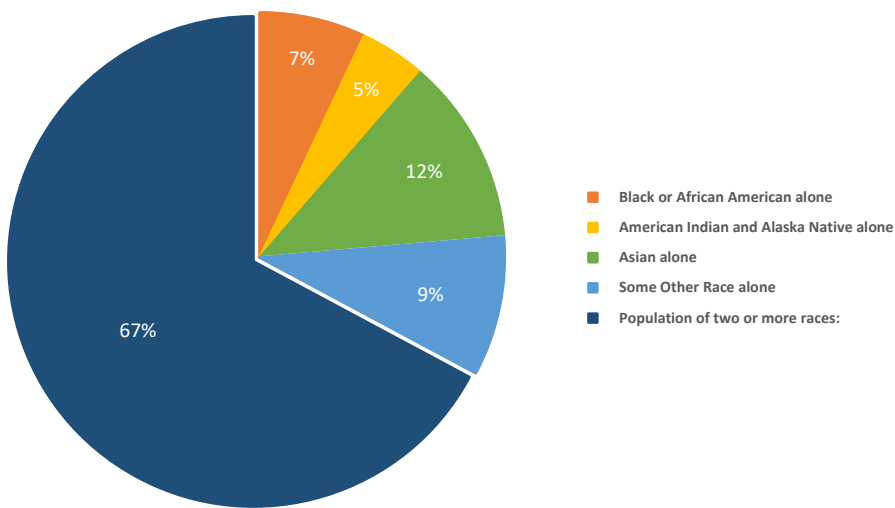


# RACE, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER

Belfast’s population is diversifying. From 2000-2020 the percentage of white population has declined by over 4%. In 2020 there was also an increase in people who identify as Hispanic and other non-white races. In 1990 only 1.1% of the population of Belfast was non-white, while in 2020, 6% of the population was non-white. According to the 2020 Decennial Census, 1.3% of Belfast’s population identifies as Hispanic or Latino.

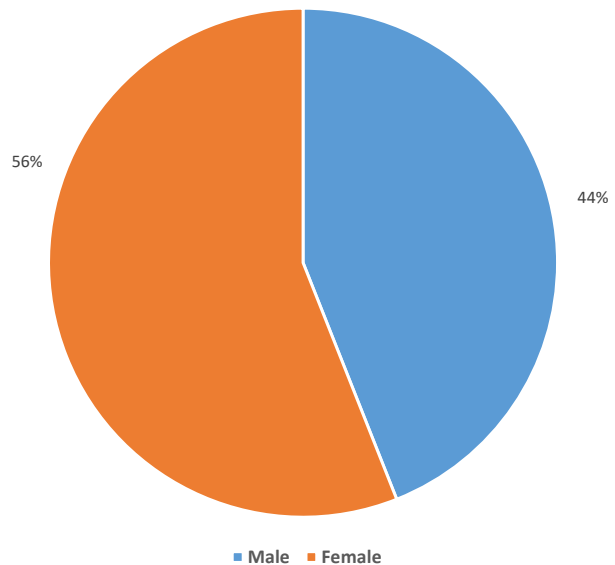
## Percentage Breakdown of Non-White Population

Source: Decennial Census 2020



## Percentage of Males and Females

Source: ACS 5-year Estimates 2021



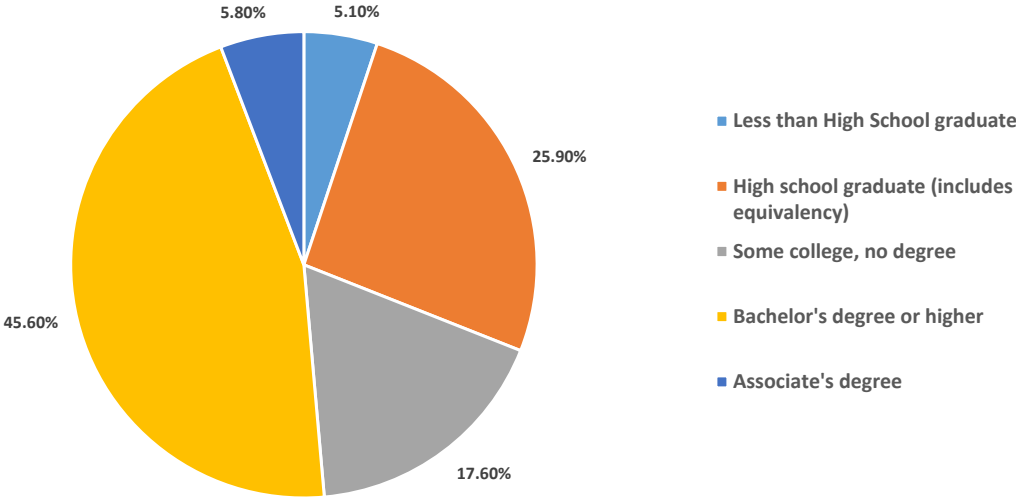
# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Compared with the rest of the State of Maine and Waldo County, Belfast has a slightly lower percentage of high school graduates, but a higher percentage of college graduates. As of 2021, around 17.6% of Belfast residents have had at least some college education and over half graduated from high school.

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

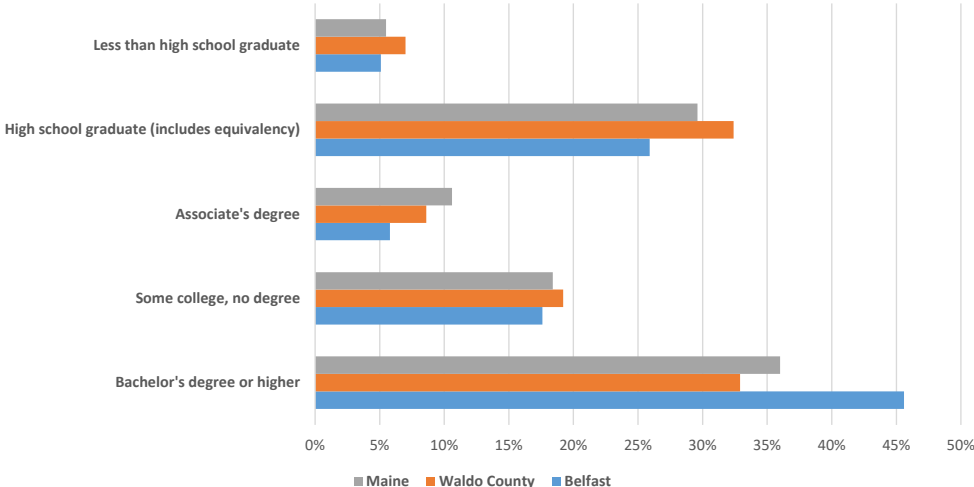
## Belfast Educational Attainment 2021

Source: ACS 5-year Estimates 2021



## Educational Attainment Comparison

Source: American Community Survey 5-year Estimates 2021





# HOUSING

Housing represents the major investment of most individuals. Property taxes provide the basis for funding Belfast municipal services and schools. With rising property values and assessments, affordable housing is an ongoing concern for many residents. The Belfast housing market is multi-layered with various housing price-points found in different areas within the city. The city of Belfast housing stock includes high-priced seasonal homes, historic and waterfront homes, senior housing, moderately-priced and lower-income homes, an eco-village, and some age-restricted communities. There is generally no clustering of housing by price-point, though houses in the Historic District and along the water tend to be more expensive. The moderately priced housing tends to be occupied by those who depend on the local and regional economy for their livelihood.

## OVERVIEW

Belfast's population is projected to increase from 6,938 in 2020 to 7,220 by the year 2038, as forecasted by the State Economist office. In 2021, the median household size was 2.03. According to the Decennial Census, in 2020 Belfast had 3,750 housing units, and 86% (3,241) were considered occupied. Belfast had about 509 vacant units (unoccupied housing units) in 2020. Between 2000 and 2020, the City of Belfast recorded 629 new housing units, and 168 of those housing units were added between 2010 and 2020. The percent of housing unit growth slowed by about 10% between 2010 and 2020 compared to the growth between 2000 and 2010. Assuming the median household size (2.03) and the housing unit growth rate stays consistent in 2038, Belfast may not have enough housing to accommodate the projected population.

In 2021, rental units accounted for 35% of the occupied housing stock. It is likely that the share of rental units will increase after 2020. This is due to several factors, including but not necessarily limited to:

- The construction of government assisted affordable rental housing (over 100 units of such housing were constructed between 2000-2010)
- Homeowners constructing a rental unit along with their residence to assist them in paying mortgage costs
- New housing projects such as the Belfast Cohousing (Eco-Village) project (36- 40 units) on Tufts Road which consists entirely of duplex and multi-family units, partly because of energy costs
- The establishment of rental housing in the upper floors of downtown buildings
- The need for more rental housing in Belfast

However, the 'gap' between income levels and the cost to construct new multi-family housing adversely affects a developer's ability to obtain sufficient rental income to support the cost of new construction. For planning purposes, it is forecasted that up to 45% of the new units in the next 10 to 20 years could be multi-family rental or ownership housing.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

By State and federal definitions, housing is considered affordable if a household does not spend more than 30% of its monthly income on housing. In deciding whether to make mortgage loans, banks use similar definitions of affordability. According to MaineHousing, over 50% of households from 2000-2022 could not afford a median home. Between 2013 and 2021, the affordability index for homeownership mostly stayed between 0.50 and 0.70. MaineHousing's affordability indexes are a measurement of housing affordability in a defined area which is based on a ratio of area median home prices to the area median household income. A ratio of one or higher indicates affordability.

According to MaineHousing, in 2020 over half (56.9%) of renters in Belfast could not afford the median rent charged for a 2-bedroom apartment. This has resulted in the higher occupancy of some units (families sharing apartments) and the occupancy of substandard units for which lower rents are charged.

It is important to note the limitations of the Census and MaineHousing data. The housing sale data consists of sales through the real estate multiple listing service. Homes and property sold without a broker are not included, and tend to be lower priced than those sold through the multiple listing service. Sales of property to family members, along with the use of mobile homes, are ways residents have reduced their housing costs. In 2021, 10.7% of the Belfast housing stock included mobile homes. Census and State data does not account for illegally occupied apartments or units for which the rent collected is not reported.

It is widely understood that Belfast has a significant need for more affordable housing. In 2017 MaineHousing estimated an additional 183 units of subsidized rental housing was needed at that time. Further, the city's housing needs extend beyond low-income households eligible for subsidized housing. Those earning median and moderate (150% of median) incomes are in large part often unable to afford housing in Belfast, and choose to live in one of the communities in which property taxes are often lower. For a service center community to thrive, it must be an affordable place for a large portion of its workforce to reside within its borders.

The city has worked cooperatively with project developers and pursued Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to support the creation of affordable housing units for working families (workforce housing), the elderly, and those with special needs. Through these efforts over 100 affordable housing units were built between 2000 and 2013, including the following:

- **Realty Resources**, 38-unit project (workforce housing) on Ryan Road which opened in late 2007 (CDBG Public Infrastructure Grant funding).
- **Volunteers of America**, 32 units, elderly housing, on Congress Street, which opened in 2001 (CDBG Public Infrastructure Grant funding).
- **Community Housing of Maine/CEI**, a 6-unit housing project for persons with special needs located on MidCoast Drive that opened in 2002.
- **PenquisCAP**, 24 units of workforce housing located on Patterson Hill which opened in 2002.
- **Group Home Foundation**, 5-unit independent living project for persons with special needs that opened in 2009 (CDBG Housing Assistance funding).
- **Goose River Partners**, elderly housing project located on Swan Lake Avenue was completed in 2013, which added 24 units of affordable housing in the city.
- **Penobscot Landing at 75 Wight Street**, age 55 and older, managed by C&C Realty. 25 apartments, of which 21 are 1 bedrooms and 4 are studios. Waldo County income limits apply.

- **Belfast Acres Estates at 80 Wight Street**, owned and managed by Realty Resources. 25 units, Waldo County income limits apply.
- **115 Congress Street**, 36 units of affordable housing with income restrictions at 60% or below area median income plus 12 units of rural rental housing at 80% or below area median income.

In 2011 and 2014 the city obtained a CDBG Housing Assistance Grant which provided funding to assist property owners with renovation of rental units. The renovation efforts focused on code compliance and energy concerns.

As the regional service center for Waldo County, Belfast is often expected to provide more affordable housing opportunities for the elderly, low/moderate income persons and persons with special needs, because other communities in the County lack the medical and support services and jobs that are available in Belfast. Despite all past and current efforts, it is generally acknowledged that regional affordable housing efforts have not kept pace with demand. Strategies to improve this are presented at the end of this chapter.

The city created a Housing and Property Development Committee in 2023 to help address housing issues. In the 1990s there was an informal group that met at the WaldoCAP offices to consider housing affordability concerns, and the city, in 2002 conducted a housing assessment using CDBG funds and established an affordable housing task force several years later. While there is ongoing interest and concern regarding the affordability of housing in Belfast, no specific advocacy group has been founded. Several regional organizations do address housing concerns, including WaldoCAP and Penquis CAP, as has the city, through its pursuit of CDBG grants to aid affordable housing projects.

## SEASONAL HOMES

Most housing units in Belfast have been constructed to a standard to qualify as a year-round home and have needed utility services. Unlike other Waldo County communities, Belfast has no significant lake or coastal 'communities' that serve mostly seasonal residents. While Belfast clearly experiences an increase in its summer population by seasonal visitors, most reside in houses that satisfy year-round standards and in traditional neighborhoods. The conversion of year-round units to seasonal round units is an increasing concern in Belfast, as in many coastal communities in Maine, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic saw an increase in purchases of second homes and an influx of new residents escaping the city to live in a lower-density area. The city is open to exploring how to address this issue and several strategies in the Housing Policy Guide chapter of this plan speak to this issue.

## ASSISTED LIVING HOUSING

With the aging population of Belfast, the region, and the state, it is anticipated that additional senior and assisted units will be needed, both at market rate and subsidized. MaineHousing estimated, in 2017, 103 subsidized senior housing units were needed to meet need. Given Belfast's service center function and proximity to health care facilities and the availability of municipal infrastructure like public water and sewer, it is likely that most of the region's needs for senior and assisted living facilities will be met within Belfast. Some elder care housing facilities are also found in smaller Waldo

County service centers, like Searsport and Winterport. As noted above, the 24-unit Goose River Partners elderly housing project, which received both Maine State Housing Authority and Rural Development Authority funding, completed construction in July 2013.

## ALTERNATIVE MODELS

In 2011, a group of residents broke ground on the Belfast Co-Housing and Eco-Village project, a 38-unit residential subdivision that features net zero energy housing, community gardens, and sustainable development. The housing development is clustered on 3 acres with over 40 acres of surrounding open space and fields. The Co-Housing and Eco-Village project is a significant accomplishment for its founders, particularly at a time when the housing market was very depressed. In 2018, the last unit offered for sale in the Belfast Co-Housing and Eco-Village project was sold. The city role in this project was to use local zoning standards that allowed this type of development.

## ADDITIONAL HOUSING ISSUES

Since December 2010, Belfast has been required to enforce the statewide building code (MUBEC Code.) With this requirement, Belfast began conducting building inspections of single-family and two-family dwellings as well as many accessory buildings. Before that, Belfast enforced the BOCA code on multi-family and nonresidential development only. The need to inspect most construction resulted in a greater workload for the Code and Planning Department, however, it also created the opportunity to ensure that new construction better satisfies building and energy code requirements. The most frequent complaints that are brought to the attention of the Code Enforcement Officer involve rentals at multi-family rental units, such as inadequate heat and water, faulty electric and poor building standards. The second most frequent complaint involves nuisance concerns regarding how an abutter may maintain their property; uncontrolled trash and litter, too many abandoned vehicles, and stormwater problems. The Code Enforcement Officer routinely works with the aggrieved parties and often has been able to obtain voluntary compliance in addressing the issues. In limited cases the city had to pursue legal action to resolve the complaint.

Several other concerns involve the use of older mobile homes (predating HUD 1976 standards), with concentrations of substandard housing in these areas, both mobile homes located on individual lots and in mobile home parks. Strategies to replace these homes are presented at the end of this chapter.

MaineHousing estimated that in January 2019 there were 1,215 homeless individuals in Maine. 10 of those individuals identified their last residences as located in Waldo County. It is believed this figure underestimates the homeless population in Belfast, which is difficult to measure due to the community's small size, fluctuations, and the transient nature of homelessness. The local soup kitchen regularly serves approximately 60 persons per day. While most of these persons are not homeless, it is indicative of the economic edges on which many live.

## LOCAL REGULATIONS

Overall, Belfast’s land use regulations support the creation of affordable housing. Smaller minimum lots sizes (7,500 square feet in certain residential growth areas) are allowed in locations served by water and sewer, as are multi-unit, multi-family structures. In 2010, the city also adopted flexible zoning standards to allow the development of small scale (less than 7 units) housing developments in rural areas (small subdivisions) provided the houses constructed satisfy affordability standards. These new regulations resulted in construction of three Habitat for Humanity house in Waldo County. The adopted Future Land Use plan recommends adopting similar provisions to encourage affordable housing in several of the city’s urban zoning districts.

The city has established areas where manufactured housing is currently allowed and this type of housing is proposed to be allowed in many of the city zoning districts pursuant to the adopted Future Land Use Plan. The current Zoning Ordinance also permits congregate care units for the elderly, with no density limitations, in several zoning districts (growth areas with sewer and water services) and the adopted Future Land Use Plan recommends that this policy continue for many of the city’s growth areas.

## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY INDEX

MaineHousing produces the Homeownership Housing Facts and Housing Affordability Index for Maine. The Homeownership Affordability Index is the ratio of Home Price Affordable at Median Income to Median Home Price. An index of less than 1 means the area is generally unaffordable- i.e., a household earning area median income could not cover the payment on a median priced home (30 year mortgage, taxes and insurance) using no more than 28% of gross income. The tables below show the Belfast Housing Affordability Index from 2014-2021, the Belfast Labor Market Area (LMA) Housing Affordability Index from 2017-2021, and the Housing Affordability Index in 2021 for all of the individual towns in the Belfast LMA.

As shown in the tables below, Belfast is generally unaffordable to a household earning the median income, it is less affordable than the Belfast LMA’s housing market, less affordable than Congressional District 2, Waldo County, and Maine.

Year	Index	Median Home Price	Median Income	Income Needed to Afford Median Home Price	Home Price Affordable to Median Income
2014	0.65	\$191,000	\$38,815	\$56,710	\$124,578
2015	0.66	\$165,000	\$33,132	\$49,996	\$109,409
2016	0.67	\$184,600	\$37,700	\$56,481	\$123,445
2017	0.58	\$232,500	\$41,708	\$71,943	\$134,750
2018	0.56	\$237,000	\$42,927	\$76,880	\$132,332
2019	0.67	\$231,750	\$48,867	\$73,467	\$154,149
2020	0.86	\$249,000	\$62,676	\$73,249	\$213,059
2021	0.68	\$325,000	\$64,784	\$94,742	\$222,232

Source: MaineHousing.

Belfast, ME LMA Housing Market	Year	Index	Median Home Price	Median Income	Income Needed to Afford Median Home Price	Home Price Affordable to Median Income
Belfast LMA	2017	0.84	\$176,000	\$43,961	\$52,503	\$147,365
Belfast LMA	2018	0.81	\$180,500	\$45,831	\$56,809	\$145,621
Belfast LMA	2019	0.86	\$188,500	\$49,453	\$57,501	\$162,116
Belfast LMA	2020	0.87	\$226,000	\$55,930	\$64,164	\$196,998
Belfast LMA	2021	0.76	\$272,750	\$57,778	\$75,948	\$207,497
<b>Individual Towns in Belfast LMA, 2021</b>						
Belfast	2021	0.68	\$325,000	\$64,784	\$94,742	\$222,232
Belmont	2021	0.71	\$267,500	\$52,057	\$73,060	\$190,601
Brooks	2021	0.91	\$169,500	\$43,605	\$47,959	\$154,112
Freedom	2021	0.85	\$249,950	\$60,750	\$71,609	\$212,046
Islesboro	2021	0.6	\$470,000	\$75,658	\$126,521	\$281,054
Liberty	2021	0.7	\$290,000	\$52,404	\$75,100	\$202,359
Maine	2021	0.8	\$295,000	\$63,421	\$79,202	\$236,223
Monroe	2021	0.73	\$225,000	\$45,345	\$62,471	\$163,317
Montville	2021	0.8	\$264,950	\$59,821	\$74,571	\$212,542
Morrill	2021	0.87	\$249,000	\$61,893	\$70,745	\$217,843
Northport	2021	0.82	\$335,000	\$72,332	\$88,141	\$274,914
Searsmont	2021	0.98	\$235,000	\$64,907	\$66,320	\$229,994
Searsport	2021	0.72	\$227,000	\$46,059	\$63,677	\$164,195
Stockton Springs	2021	0.91	\$235,250	\$60,616	\$66,531	\$214,335
Swanville	2021	0.71	\$300,000	\$58,611	\$81,977	\$214,491
Thorndike	2021	0.87	\$161,000	\$44,403	\$51,212	\$139,594
Unity	2021	0.67	\$240,000	\$44,569	\$66,562	\$160,702
Waldo	2021	1.06	\$198,250	\$54,844	\$51,596	\$210,730

Source: MaineHousing.

## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY INDEX COMPARISONS

Location	Index	Median Home Price	Median Income	Income Needed to Afford Median Home Price	Home Price Affordable to Median Income
Belfast	0.68	\$325,000	\$64,784	\$94,742	\$222,232
Belfast, ME LMA Housing Market	0.76	\$272,750	\$57,778	\$75,948	\$207,497
Congressional District 2	0.88	\$220,000	\$52,685	\$59,980	\$193,243
Waldo County	0.80	\$270,000	\$58,732	\$73,831	\$214,784
Maine	0.80	\$295,000	\$63,421	\$79,202	\$236,223

Source: *MaineHousing*

## UNATTAINABLE HOMES AS A PERCENTAGE OF HOMES SOLD

Location	Percentage of Unattainable Homes Sold	Affordable Homes Sold	Unattainable Homes Sold
Belfast	72.2%	30	78
Belfast, ME LMA Housing Market	70.8%	135	327
Maine	64.8%	7,254	13,331
Waldo County	67.7%	215	451
Congressional District 2	58.2%	4,331	6,035

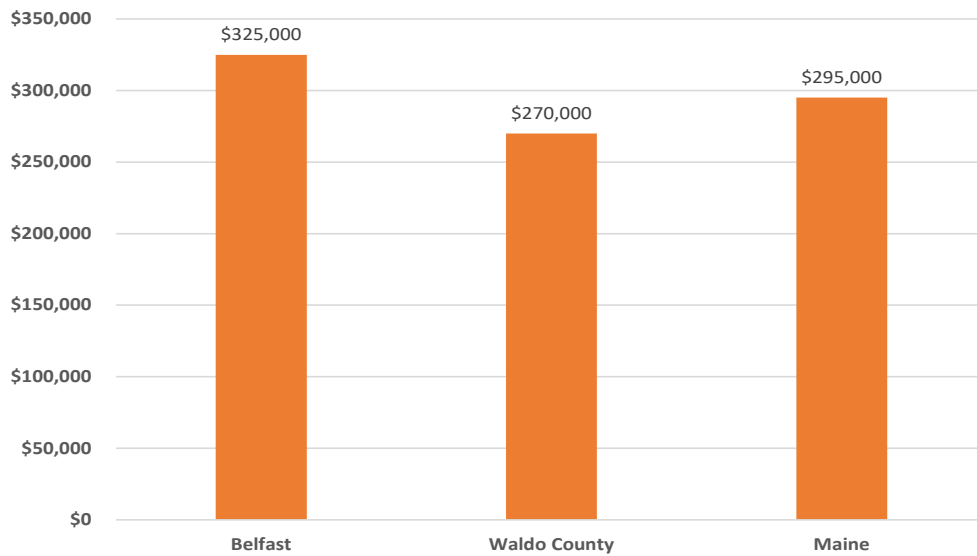
Source: *MaineHousing*

# MEDIAN HOME PRICE

The median home price in 2021 in Belfast was higher than the County and the State. Roughly 50% or greater of households across all locations were unable to afford the median home price in 2021.

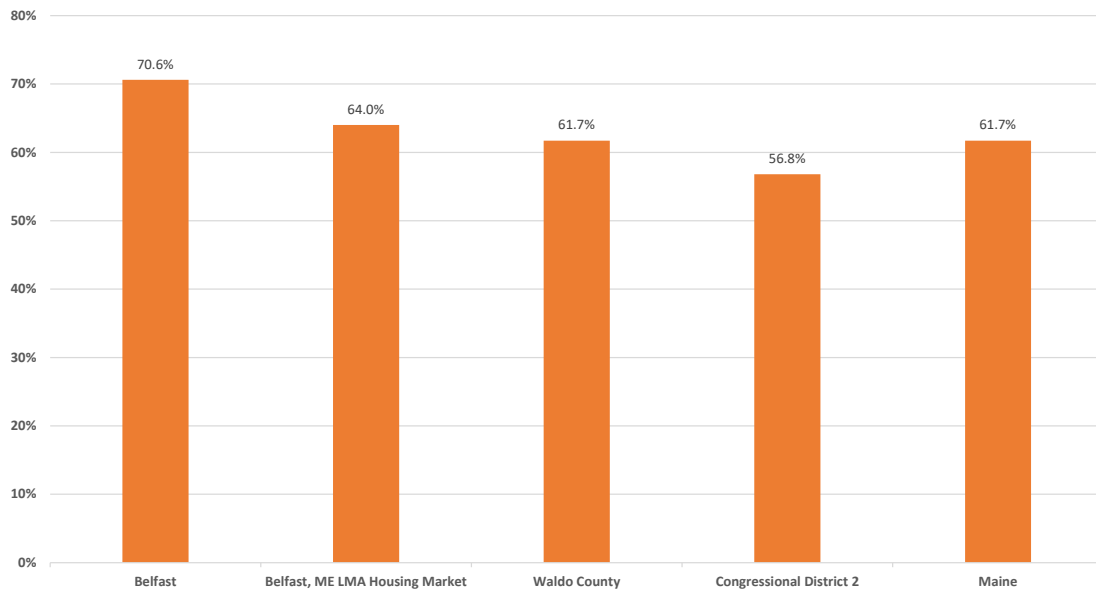
## Median Home Price in 2021

Source: MaineHousing



## Percentage of Households Unable to Afford Median Home in 2021

Source: MaineHousing





# ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY VITALITY

This chapter identifies and analyzes the local and regional economy, including employment sectors, businesses, employment rates, and retail sales. The goal of this chapter is to develop policies that expand the city's tax base, improve job opportunities for residents needing employment, and encourage overall economic well-being.

Belfast is the principal service center community for the labor market area and for Waldo County. Most of the region's jobs are located in Belfast. Accordingly, commute times for Belfast residents are noticeably lower than for the county as a whole. The American Community Survey estimated in 2021 over 50% of the city's labor force worked in management, professional, and related occupations. Together, the sales and office occupations and the service occupations make up over fourth of the labor market. The third largest category, service occupations, employed 18.2% of the population.

## MAJOR EMPLOYERS

In 2021, athenahealth remained the largest employer in Belfast with between 800-900 employees. Bank of America and Waldo County Healthcare, Inc. are the second largest employers in the city, with between 700-800 employees each. Waldo County Healthcare, Inc., which operates Waldo County General Hospital, has remained a larger employer over the years and has invested in new office buildings and renovations. Medical and related occupations have remained strong, and are likely to increase with the aging of the city's population.

Several major new employers have decided to locate to Belfast in the last decade. These include: OnProcess Technology, a technology optimization business which now employees around 150-250 persons and the Front Street Shipyard, a boat repair, boat retrofit, boat storage and boat building business which purchased and redeveloped the former Stinson Seafoods site in 2011. Front Street Shipyard now employees between 50-150 persons. These new enterprises and several long-standing significant employers; Ducktrap River of Maine (100-249 employees), Mathews Brothers Company (100-249 employees), and government services such as RSU 71, the city, and the County of Waldo; provide a strong, year-round major employer base for the community and region.

Belfast has been and remains the largest service center community in Waldo County. Historically, residents of surrounding communities have chosen to work and shop in Belfast. That trend continues. The market for goods and services offered in Belfast extends well beyond the city's borders and its population. Belfast's economy has weathered the rise and fall of several once significant sectors, from maritime activities, fishing, shipbuilding, to food processing, and most recently financial services. Tourism including most prominently accommodations, retail stores, and to a lesser but growing extent, artisan crafts and fine arts, has had a steadily increasing importance to the local and regional economy. With the aging of Belfast's long-time and new residents, the provision of medical and social services continues to grow as well.

Overall, there are more jobs available in Belfast than there are persons over 18 years of age who are in the workforce; Belfast is a net importer of jobs. Most employers located outside of Belfast but within the Belfast labor market area operate businesses that employ less than 100 persons.

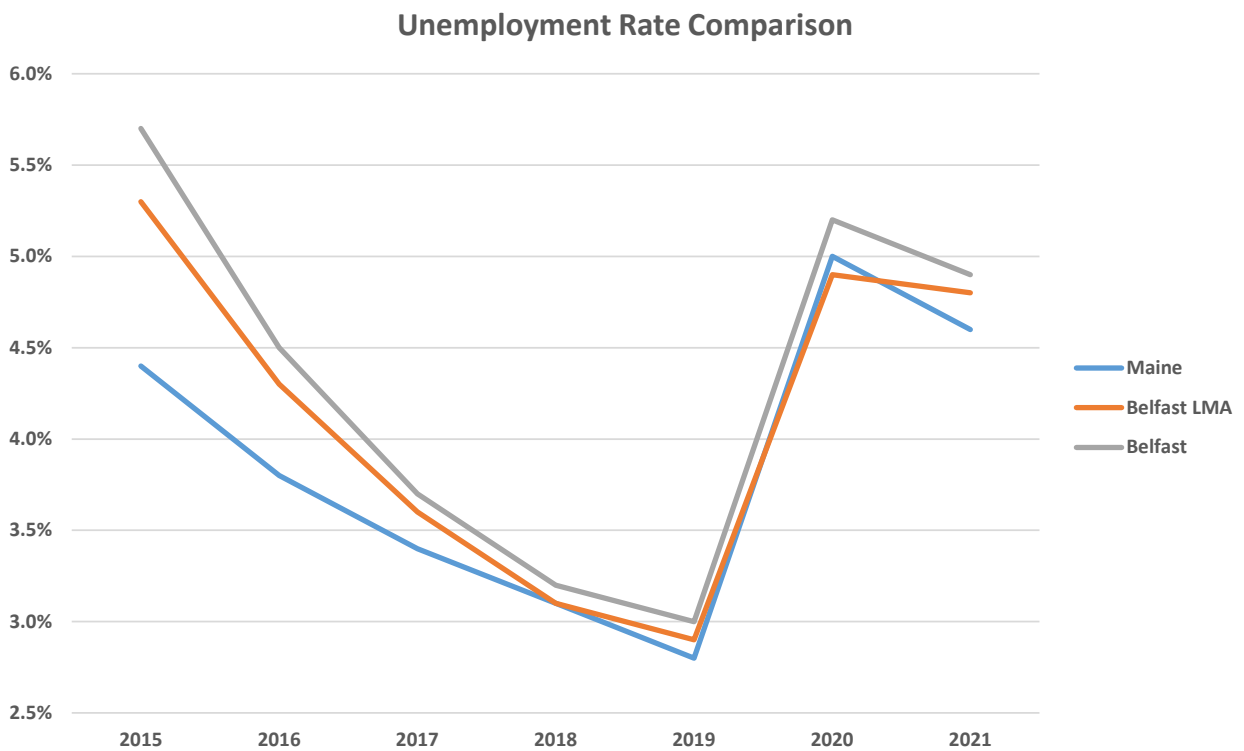
## Belfast Labor Market Area Major Employers with 50+ Employees Each

(Sorted by Size, then by Name)

Company/Organization Name	Partial Address	Municipality	Sector	Employees
athenahealth	Hatley Rd	Belfast	Health Services	800-900
Bank of America	Schoodic Dr	Belfast	Finance	700-800
Waldo County Healthcare, Inc.	Northport Ave	Belfast	Hospital	700-800
Pride Manufacturing Co LLC	10 N Main St	Burnham	Furniture-Manufacturers	250-499
RSU #71	173 Lincolnville Ave	Belfast	Schools	200-300
OnProcess Technology	Schoodic Dr	Belfast	Technology	150-250
City of Belfast	Church Street	Belfast	Municipal	150-250
Hannaford Supermarket & Pharmacy	Lincolnville Ave	Belfast	Grocery	100-249
Mathews Brothers Co.	Footbridge Rd	Belfast	Millwork	100-249
Ducktrap River of Maine	Little River Dr	Belfast	Seafood-wholesale	100-249
Genesis Health Care, LLC	2 Footbridge Rd	Belfast	Health Services	100-249
Hamilton Marine	US 1	Searsport	Marine equipment-supplies	100-249
Hidden Valley Camp	161 Hidden Valley Rd	Montville	Camps	100-249
Harbor Hill Ctr	Footbridge Road	Belfast	Nursing care	100-249
Robbins Lumber, Inc.	NA	Searsmont	Lumber	100-249
Unity College	Ghent Rd	Unity	Education	100-249
Belfast Co-op	High St	Belfast	Grocery	50-150
Front Street Shipyard	Front Street	Belfast	Boat Repair & Bldg	50-150
Tall Pines	Martin Ln	Belfast	Assisted Living	50-99
Fair Haven Camps	81 W Fairhaven Ln	Brooks	Campgrounds	50-99
GAC Chemical Corp	Mack Point	Searsport	Chemicals-industrial	50-99
Irving Oil	Station Ave	Searsport	Oils-petroleum	50-99
Lane Construction Corp	190 Swan Lake Rd	Belfast	General Contractors	50-99
Renys Department Store	Belfast Plz	Belfast	Retail	50-99
Sweetser	Sweetser Dr	Swanville	Social services	50-99
Viking Lumber, Inc.	Searsport Ave	Belfast	Construction	50-99
Sequel Care of Maine	321 W Main St	Searsport	Counseling Services	50-99
Tarratine Golf Club	241 Golf Club Rd	Islesboro	Golf Courses	50-99
Xact Telesolutions	4 Clifford Cmns	Unity	Telephone Companies	50-99

# UNEMPLOYMENT

Belfast experienced decreasing levels of unemployment between 2010 and 2019. Overall, the size of the labor force in the Belfast Labor Market Area (LMA) has declined by 416 workers in the past 6 years from 2015 – 2021 though the number of people employed in 2021 increased by 168 from the previous year. Between 2016 and 2021, the unemployment rate in the Belfast LMA averages slightly higher than the State. Increases in unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic are seen throughout the state and country during 2020 and 2021.



Source: Maine Department of Labor

Note: Belfast LMA includes the municipalities of Belfast, Belmont, Brooks, Freedom, Islesboro, Jackson, Knox, Liberty, Monroe, Montville, Morrill, Northport, Searsport, Searsport, Stockton Springs, Swanville, Thorndike, Unity, and Waldo.

The Belfast economy experienced a tremendous loss in 2005 when MBNA sold its operations to Bank of America. MBNA, more than any other employer, helped pull Belfast out of the economic malaise it suffered in the late 1980's when several major processing plants closed in Belfast. From 1995 to 2005 MBNA quickly grew into employing nearly 2400 persons in Belfast, the largest of MBNA's operations in Maine. Fortunately, Bank of America remains a strong employer (about 700-800 employees). In late 2007 athenahealth purchased the former phase I MBNA campus and now employs about 800-900 people with similar skills to the former MBNA employees. This provided employment opportunities for some who lost positions when MBNA left. MBNA, Bank of America, and athenahealth have resulted in a significant increase in the amount of professional office and service employment sectors in Belfast.

Belfast has a diverse economy and its many employers offer employment opportunities for persons who are highly skilled to positions which require lesser skills. On the whole, employment opportunities in Belfast, like most areas of the State and country are requiring more specialized skills and greater educational training. See the Housing Chapter for more information, including a discussion on business, industrial and residential property values.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

The city seeks to maintain and enhance a diversified economic base, with expanding job opportunities in various sectors, with emphasis on employing local residents, graduates of local schools, and attracting new working-aged residents to the city and region. Diversity in employment opportunities could protect the city from downturns in specific sectors, as seen in the past with food processing and more recently with finance. Likewise, the city believes that residents should have access to a wide range of retail stores and services. Accordingly, the city has and will continue to seek to attract new businesses that can serve resident needs.

Despite setbacks associated with the recession that began in 2007 – 2008, the city is greatly encouraged by the development of several new significant employers in the past 10+ years; OnProcess Technology, athenahealth, and Front Street Shipyard. In addition, since 2014, 53 new businesses have opened in the downtown area; including restaurants, retail establishments, and several offices and service businesses. While most of these businesses have only several employees, collectively, they represent a major addition to the workforce. Continuing, Belfast's Creative Economy, the importance of which was highlighted in the 2006 Creating Vibrancy Report, is growing, which is consistent with the city's goal to encourage entrepreneurial development and the health of the downtown area.

## **DOWNTOWN BELFAST**

Belfast's traditional downtown, which is located adjacent to its working waterfront, has experienced significant additional business development in recent years. Few buildings, the upper floors as well as the lower floors, remain unoccupied. Upper floor development includes both residential apartments and professional office and service businesses. The amount of pedestrian and vehicular traffic has increased, and many believe that Belfast is experiencing a parking problem in the downtown--- too much demand for too few spaces.

Growth in the downtown and the community's perception of the downtown and waterfront area has been spurred by the Front Street Shipyard's redevelopment of the former Stinson Seafoods property; a development which has had a transformative impact on the working waterfront and which has attracted additional business to the downtown. In addition, the community's decision to establish Our Town Belfast (Main Street program) has provided an invaluable resource to help organize downtown merchants and encourage additional events in Belfast. Further, the Belfast Creative Coalition, Waterfall Arts and the Friday Night Art Walks have provided support to the art community, encouraged more visitor traffic and generated excitement. Several of the larger new employers in the city, such as athenahealth and Front Street Shipyard, have cited the services and character of the downtown as one of the key reasons they chose to come to Belfast.

Belfast's downtown features many historic structures that are 100+ years old; most of which contribute greatly to the downtown's character. Downtown property owners and business owners have frequently had to adapt to shifting economic realities, such as in the 1960's when the Route 1 by-pass was constructed, and again in the 1980's when many of the manufacturing plants in the downtown permanently closed. At present, the downtown features a mix of traditional stores, such as a hardware store and a shoe store, as well as specialty shops, service businesses, a growing number and variety of eating establishments, and residential units (upper floors) for persons who want to live in the downtown. Downtown Belfast is a vibrant center for the city and the region.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE INDUSTRIES**

Less than 2% of Belfast's residents currently work in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations. It remains important, nevertheless, that the city and region's environment be protected in order to allow a continuation of fishing and other marine based activities. Likewise, opportunities for forestry activities, as a way to augment the income of residents, must be done in a manner that sustains the forestry resources for future generations. Improper timber harvesting can negatively impact existing and prospective residents, through increased pollution runoff, degradation of groundwater drinking supplies and soil erosion. The city and area also appear to be experiencing a growing interest in agricultural operations, mostly small and/or specialized farms. Chase's Daily, a former downtown restaurant, was an example of a business which used its agricultural fields in Freedom, Maine for the menu and goods that they sold in downtown Belfast. See the Natural Resources Chapter for more information. Crucially, the tourism-based economy could be threatened by degradation of our environment.

## **TOURISM**

Tourism is an important part of our economy. Although less prominent than seen in communities to our south like Camden, tourism is a sector with promise for growth. Most believe that the amount of tourism in the community has grown significantly in the past decade, and that the community is poised to experience additional growth in the next 5 years and beyond. The city has worked with and funded the Chamber of Commerce and Our Town Belfast to enhance tourist-based businesses. Annual events and festivals are held to attract tourists and promote the creative economy, and the number of local events is growing. The development of the Front Street Shipyard, the collective efforts to focus on the Arts, and city's efforts to improve its downtown infrastructure, such as the reconstruction of the Armistice Bridge in 2006 and construction of the Belfast Harbor Walk in 2013, all contribute to the health of the tourism market. Continuing, Belfast is one of the top 10 ports in Maine for the number of cruise ship visitors per year, and we are experiencing an

increasing amount of bicycle related tourism. Belfast has worked hard to establish a good environment for both residents and tourists and the community's efforts appear to be yielding results. Several tourism enhancing strategies are included in this plan.

## HOME OCCUPATIONS

Home occupations are allowed in all residential districts; in recognition of the value such businesses have in our local and regional economy. The adopted Future Land Use Plan proposes revisions to current standards governing home occupations in rural areas, with the intent of creating more opportunities for home-based businesses. Working from home for one's self or telecommuting to save transportation costs, is becoming increasingly popular. In 2021, about 9.7% of Belfast's resident labor force worked at home. Residents are more likely to remain in our community if the city affords them the opportunity to earn a better living through their own ingenuity. At the same time, city land use code provisions seek to protect the residential character of neighborhoods, by limiting those activities that could cause a nuisance or threaten the environment, and so would be better located in industrial and commercial districts.

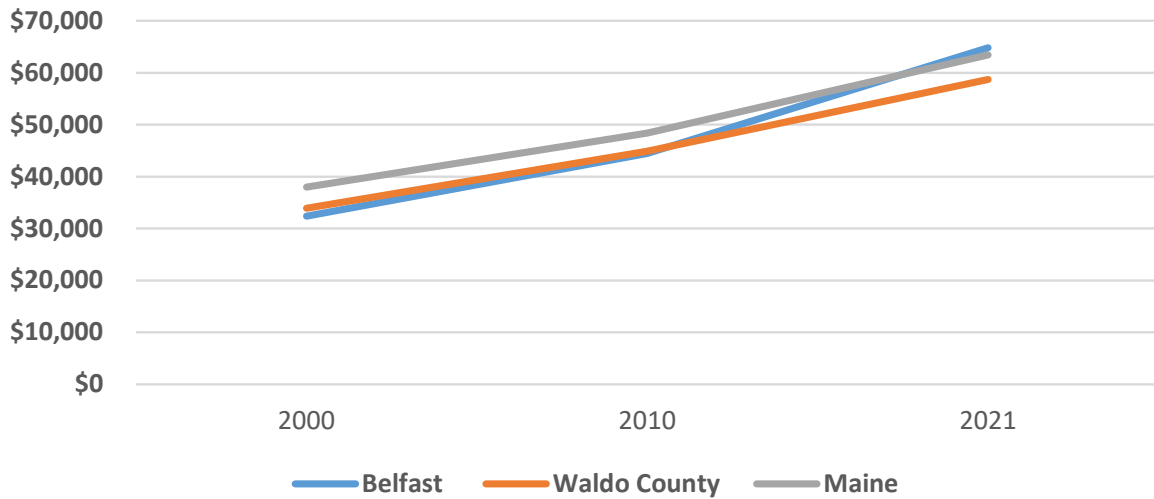
## PUBLIC FACILITIES

Public and private provision of sewer and water are described in the Public Facilities Chapter and are mapped. Opportunities for businesses to connect to these and other infrastructure like broadband (DSL, T1, wireless, and cable) and three-phase power are available in the commercial and industrial districts accessing Routes 1 and 3. Outside of these areas, broadband service is limited and can affect opportunities for business activity and home occupations that require internet connectivity. The city's intent is to use existing areas which feature public sewer and water as its prime growth areas to support non-residential development. To date, most larger employers have located in areas with existing services and public infrastructure. The city believes that modern facilities are available for new and expanding businesses, and are estimated to meet the need of the planning period (10 years) of this comprehensive plan as well as for future years. Belfast far surpasses its neighbors in the provision of public facilities.

## CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

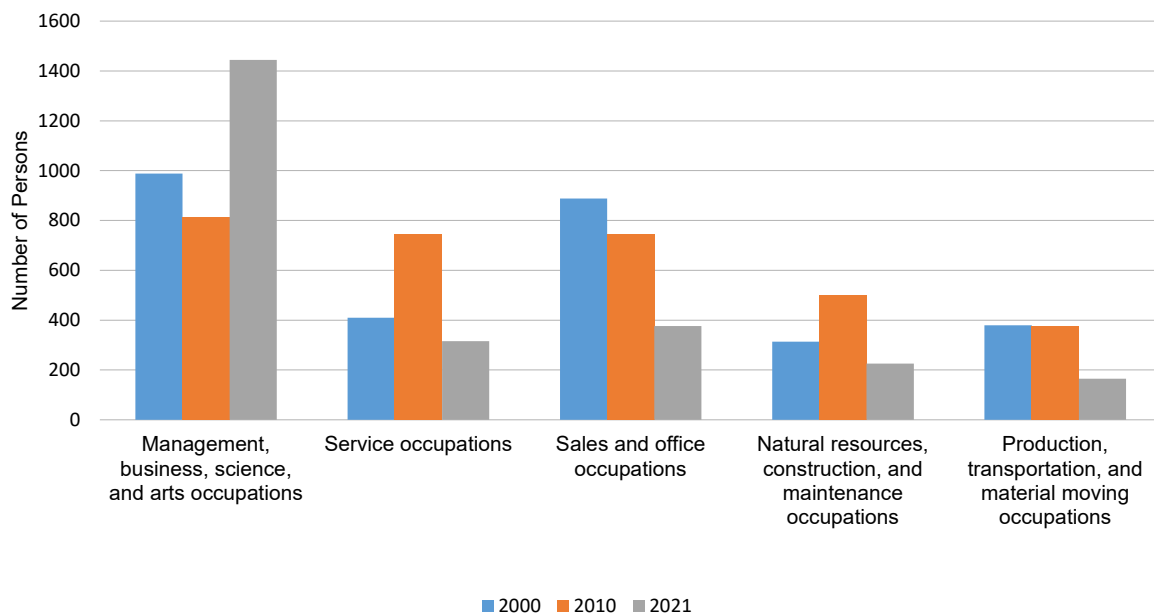
### Median Household Income

Source: *MaineHousing*

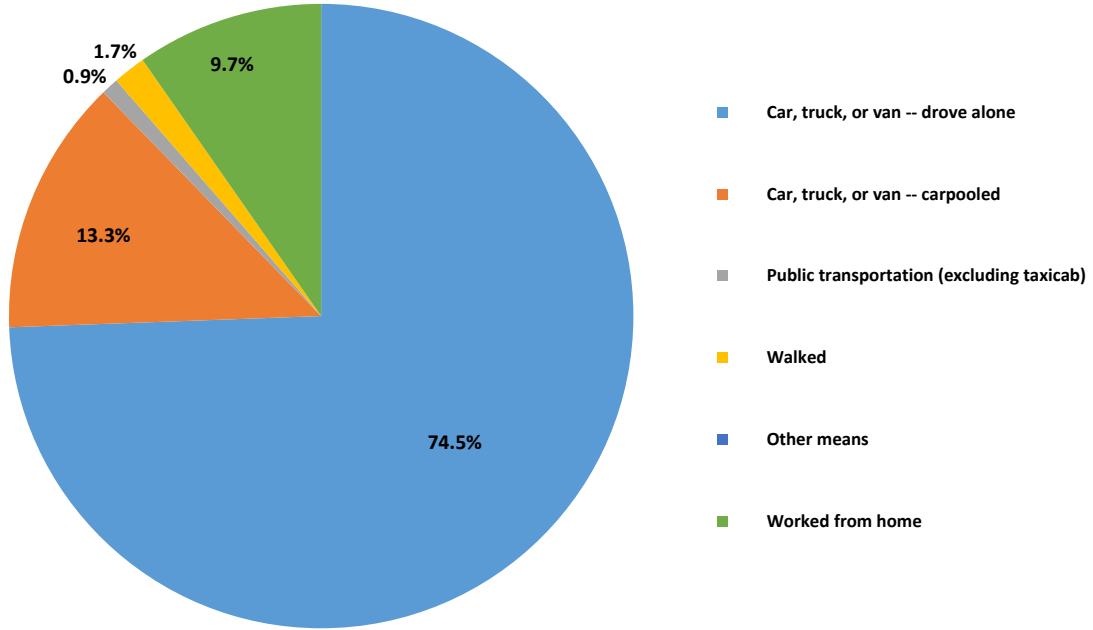


### Belfast Occupation Type

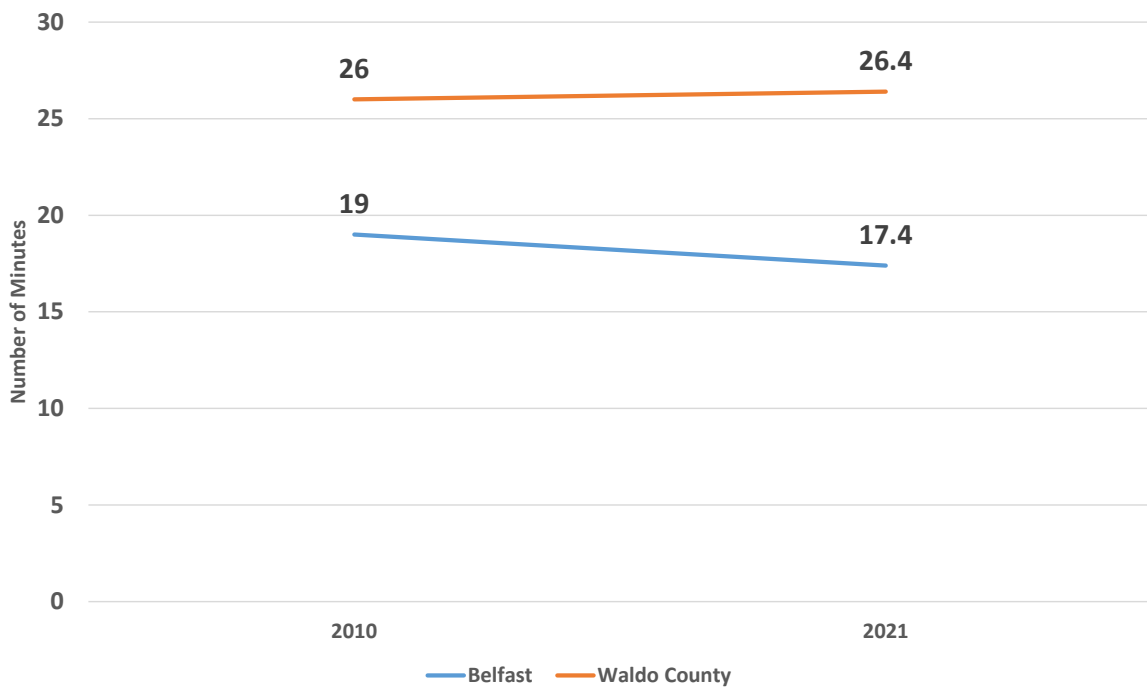
Source: *U.S. Census ACS 5-year Estimates*



**Belfast Transportation to Work**  
 Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-year Estimates 2021



**Commute Times to Work**  
 Source: US Census ACS 5-year Estimates





Between 2000 – 2021, over 70% of Belfast residents drove alone to work. Commute times to work in Belfast have increased from 1980 – 2000 and declined slightly from 2010 – 2021. Compared to the City of Belfast, commute times to work in Waldo County have remained relatively steady since 2010. According to the American Communities survey, over 50% of Belfast residents work in the City of Belfast.

## **TAX INCREMENT FINANCING**

Belfast, in 2006, designated a Downtown/Waterfront TIF (Tax Increment Financing) District. Taxes assessed above the figure set on the date that the TIF was established can be used for improvements in this District, including infrastructure enhancements that will make the area more attractive for existing and new development, and will bring more consumers to the downtown. When the TIF was first established the city anticipated that the Belfast Bridge, LLC redevelopment project proposed for the former Stinson Seafoods site would generate considerable annual revenues to the TIF. Unfortunately, this project was unsuccessful and few dollars flowed into the TIF for its first 5 years. However, Front Street Shipyard's development of the same former Stinson Seafood's' site began generating revenues to the TIF in 2011. The city has used some of these new revenues to construct the Harbor Walk and other downtown improvements. The city also established the Northport Avenue TIF district in 2005, mostly so the city could obtain revenues to pay the cost of a sewer extension to the Mathew Brothers manufacturing plant on Perkins Road; an approach which helped the company expand.

# RETAIL SALES

Taxable sales are one of the few available indicators of the actual size, growth, and retail economic character of a region. The table below shows total taxable retail sales for the Belfast Economic Summary Area (ESA) from 2017 – 2021. All figures are in real dollars, not adjusted for inflation. From 2017 – 2021, total taxable sales in Belfast increased by 29.6%. The largest sector apart from Personal or Consumer Retail sales was Building Supply. This sector saw an increase of 38.3% during this five-year period. Business Operating had the largest increase in sales, while Lodging declined, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Belfast ESA Taxable Retail Sales in Thousands of Dollars (2017 - 2021)						
Source: Maine State Economist						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% Change
Auto Trans	\$36,294	\$36,507	\$37,526	\$38,406	\$44,935	23.8%
Building	\$39,926	\$48,193	\$50,096	\$53,408	\$55,205	38.3%
Business Op	\$9,004	\$10,289	\$10,339	\$11,799	\$17,599	95.5%
Food Store	\$38,800	\$39,679	\$40,639	\$41,164	\$42,062	8.4%
General	\$24,039	\$24,563	\$24,781	\$25,233	\$32,256	34.2%
Lodging	\$9,747	\$9,900	\$6,515	\$3,702	\$7,383	-24.3%
Other	\$20,008	\$19,866	\$21,549	\$24,978	\$33,310	66.5%
Personal	\$194,685	\$206,229	\$210,138	\$208,878	\$246,474	26.6%
Restaurant and Lodging	\$35,618	\$37,421	\$35,548	\$25,689	\$38,706	8.7%
Restaurant	\$25,871	\$27,521	\$29,033	\$21,986	\$31,323	21.1%
Total	\$203,689	\$216,518	\$220,477	\$220,677	\$264,073	29.6%

Source: Maine State Economist 2021. See Category descriptions below.

**Note:** In Maine’s sales tax system, codings are by store type, not product. Thus, each store is coded into one of the store-type groups below depending on its predominant product; i.e., furniture sold by a furniture store will be included in General Merchandise sales while furniture sold by a hardware store will be included in Building Supply sales.

**Consumer Retail Sales:** Total taxable retail sales to consumers

**Total Retail Sales:** Includes Consumer Retail Sales plus special types of sales and rentals to businesses where the tax is paid directly by the buyer (such as commercial or industrial heating oil purchases)

**Building Supply:** Durable Equipment Sales, Contractors’ Sales, Hardware Stores and Lumber Yards.

**Food Stores:** All food stores from large supermarkets to small corner food stores. The values here are snacks and non-food items only, since food intended for home consumption is not taxed.

**General Merchandise:** In this sales group are stores carrying product lines generally carried in large department stores. It includes clothing, furniture, shoes, radio-TV, household durable goods, home furnishings, etc.

**Other Retail:** This group includes a wide selection of taxable sales not covered elsewhere. Examples are dry goods stores, drug stores, jewelry stores, sporting goods stores, antique dealers, morticians, book stores, photo supply stores, gift shops, etc.

**Auto:** This sales group includes all transportation related retail outlets. Included are auto dealers, auto parts, aircraft dealers, motorboat dealers, automobile rental, etc.

**Restaurant/Lodging:** All stores selling prepared food for immediate consumption. The lodging group includes only rentals tax.

# MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION

A safe and dependable transportation system is the lifeline of every community. This chapter details the current condition and usage of Belfast’s transportation system. The city’s main goal is to plan for the efficient maintenance and improvement of the transportation system so it can accommodate and well serve existing and anticipated development.

## KEY ISSUES

### SAFETY:

Between 2016-2021, Maine DOT reported three intersections and two road sections as high crash locations in Belfast . These were the section of Belmont Avenue between Jesse Robbins Road and Edgcomb Street, Main Street between Washington Street and High Street, the intersection of Congress Street coming off Route 1 bypass, Belmont Ave/Route 3 ramp coming off Route 1 South, and High Street ramp coming off Route 1 North . In 2006, the city, in coordination with Maine DOT, HNTB (traffic consulting firm) and the Federal Highway Administration, conducted a transportation safety audit of Route 1 as a supplement to the Gateway 1 strategic planning process. The Safety Audit report has a full list of observations and specific recommendations. Many of the observations from the 2006 Safety Audit are still relevant today including:

#### *1. Intersection improvements should receive the highest priority. More specifically:*

- Congress Street and Route 1 – MDOT constructed improvements to this intersection in 2007. It appears that the improvements have addressed some key safety issues; however, the city believes that additional improvements are warranted. For example, for northbound traffic, there is no lane for through traffic if a vehicle is turning left onto Congress Street by the Business Park and another vehicle is turning right onto Congress Street by the Tall Pines facility. Further, there is no signal light at the intersection.
- Lincolnville Avenue/Rte 52 and Route 1 – In 2009, long awaited pedestrian improvements were constructed. However, the city believes the intersection requires additional improvements, particularly for traffic on the west side of the intersection.
- Belmont Avenue/Rte 3 and Route 1– Significant improvements were constructed to this road in 2005; however, the city believes that additional improvements are needed to the current on and off ramp system for the intersection.
- Swan Lake Avenue/Rte 141 and Route 1 – The city and MDOT constructed initial pedestrian-oriented improvements to this intersection in 2010 through a \$120,000 traffic calming grant. In 2012, the city worked directly with MDOT to conduct a follow-up Safety Audit that focused specifically on the Route 1/Route 141 (Swan Lake Avenue) intersection. In 2013 the city used a \$100,000 traffic calming grant to make additional pedestrian-oriented improvements to the intersection, including a pedestrian signal. However, the city believes that the long-term approach is to reconstruct the intersection and that a roundabout could be a productive way to address current and future traffic volumes.

*2. Enhance navigation signs, guide signs, and warning signs.*

*3. Adjust street name signs and/or replace with larger signs for better visibility for drivers and for emergency response.*

*4. Access management strategies:*

- Limit curb cuts by consolidating separate entrances that are close together, and regulating requests for new entrances.

*5. Install Maine Uniform Traffic Control Device compliant crosswalk warning signs.*

*6. Coordinate impact fees charged by State and City for needed transportation improvements resulting from proposed development.*

*7. Add dedicated bike lanes, marked on roadway, shoulder or paths off of Route 1 that provide linkages to East Coast Greenway project and which encourage and support bicycle use in Belfast.*

*8. Examine if it is appropriate to establish greater consistency in traffic speeds along the Route 1 corridor in Belfast, including the bypass area.*

Beyond Route 1, longstanding safety concerns exist for other state and municipal roads. The volume and traffic along Route 52 present ongoing concerns. Other key concerns regarding state routes include speed of traffic on Route 141/Swan Lake Avenue and the lack of a viable emergency vehicle route if the Memorial Bridge is congested.

## **TRAFFIC SPEED:**

A concern often voiced by residents regarding numerous city roads, particularly rural roads, is the speed of traffic, which people have stated lessens their quality of life. In addition, the poor quality of initial construction (particularly a poor road base) of many local roads results in chronic problems for the city in trying to maintain a substandard road. The city faces high maintenance costs for such roads, but city lacks the funds to reconstruct most roads.

See the Transportation Posted Speeds and Compact Area Map for the speed limits of state and city roads. Speeding is a concern, especially on Routes 1, 3 and 141 and ongoing enforcement is costly. In 2009 and 2013, the city constructed traffic calming improvements at the Rte 141/Rte 1 intersection. Further, the city has received numerous requests from local residents to consider the reduction of traffic speeds on the roads where they live. Examples of such requests in past years include but are not necessarily limited to: Doak Road, Stephenson Lane, Woods Road, Miller Street, High Street and Swan Lake Avenue. An additional concern is City interest in MDOT examining the desirability of establishing more consistent speed limits for Route 1.

## **CONGESTION AND TRAVEL DELAY:**

The Belfast Comprehensive Plan map titled Transportation Network shows the customer service level (CSL) of State and

local roads in Belfast. CSL is a measure of safety, condition and service. The lowest CSL found in Belfast is on Route 52 extending southwest from Route 1 into Northport. This road is rated as a Level D on an A-F scale, indicating the level of safety, condition, and service of the road. The CSL takes into account crash history, paved roadway width, pavement rutting, bridge reliability, pavement condition, roadway strength, bridge condition, ride quality, posted road or bridge, and congestion. Congestion at the following locations has been noted by residents and municipal officials: Route 1 and Route 52, Route 1 and Route 141, Route 1 and Route 3, and Route 1 and Congress Street.

## **TRAVEL VOLUME AND TYPE:**

The Transportation Network Traffic Volumes data from MaineDOT records factored annual average daily traffic volumes at key points on state, state aid and municipal roadways in Belfast from 2020. The Route 1 bypass, serving the purpose for which it was built, has a higher volume than local downtown streets.

## **TRAFFIC PROBLEMS CAUSED BY SUCH THINGS AS ROAD AND DRIVEWAY LOCATIONS AND DESIGN, ROAD MAINTENANCE NEEDS, TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES, GROWTH PATTERNS, AND LACK OF TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS:**

Road maintenance is an ongoing effort and municipal budgets are stretched as the cost of such maintenance increases much faster than the costs of other goods and services, due principally to the costs of petroleum and petroleum-based products like asphalt. The state and federal match for such work has always been important and has become even more crucial to maintain safe roadways. The city has worked with property owners to maintain the safety and mobility (traffic flow at the posted speed) of roadways by addressing access management within the urban compact boundary. New entrances and driveways are approved in accordance with access management goals while balancing private property rights to allow for the use of properties abutting roadways.

The city understands that encouraging growth within and near the in-town area will reduce transportation costs and auto-dependency. The city's minimum lot size of 7,500 square feet for most of the area located within the Route 1 bypass underscores its efforts to encourage dense growth in areas near services. This area also features an existing system of interconnected streets that create multiple ways for a person to travel to their destination. In addition, the city has encouraged most larger scale employers and retail development to occur in the area immediately adjacent to the Route 1 bypass. At the same time, there is concern about the amount of congestion that might develop in these areas from new development.

Current state access management rules apply to all state roads located outside of the urban compact area, and to the Pitcher Road. The city has cooperatively worked with MDOT in the implementation of these rules, and recognizes that good quality access management rules are warranted to improve public safety and manage traffic. That said, the city is concerned that current MDOT rules, and the implementation of those rules, may conflict with the city's intent to allow greater development in some areas, such as along Searsport Avenue.

The city's current access management standards are less strict than the state standards. That said, the city believes it has often been effective in managing the number of curb cuts on state roads located within the urban compact area, including efforts to reduce the number of curb-cuts at existing businesses when they apply for new permits. The city also recognizes that it should review its current access management standards to ensure its standards well address public safety needs, while also allowing appropriate types of development.

Belfast and the surrounding communities lack effective alternative transportation options in comparison with more densely developed communities in other areas of the State. There is no daily, city-wide bus service for all residents, and public transportation options are very limited. Thus, residents are largely dependent on their privately-owned vehicles for daily trips to work, stores and elsewhere. See Alternative Transportation Modes later in this chapter for existing public transportation services.

### **LACK OF TRANSPORTATION LINKS BETWEEN NEIGHBORHOODS, SCHOOLS, RECREATION, SHOPPING, AND PUBLIC GATHERING AREAS:**

Much of the densely developed area located within or near the Route One bypass has a well-established system of neighborhood blocks connected by sidewalks and streets. The area features most of the city's parks, two of its schools, and the downtown retail and service area. Outside of the bypass, Belfast is accessible primarily by roadways. Much of the development in these areas occurs linearly along the adjacent road. There are few neighborhoods and even fewer connecting roads/streets and sidewalks. That said, the city has worked to use both city and MDOT monies to install pedestrian-oriented improvements on Route 1 to foster greater connectivity and to provide safer routes to the city schools located outside of the bypass.

The city believes that parking is generally adequate for current and projected future use at most schools, recreation, shopping and public gathering areas. Some downtown parking lots require improvements, and there likely always will be a need for more parking near the harbor in the summer, but on the whole, the city does not feel that Belfast has a significant shortage of parking. See the table under Parking below for municipal parking lot locations and capacities. This public parking augments the onsite parking provided at shopping and other locations. Concern for improving the safety of pedestrian and bicycle routes helped shape the recommendations in this chapter. Residents in general, especially children and the elderly, should be able to get around portions of the city without depending exclusively on motor vehicles.

### **CLOSED OR POSTED BRIDGES OR ROADS:**

There are no closed bridges or roads. The city, however, routinely posts seasonal weight limits on many of its roads in the early spring when such roads are most susceptible to damage because of 'break-up' and a poor road base.

### **PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLING SAFETY:**

Belfast has devoted increasing attention and resources to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety over the past 20 years. Two of the premier projects are the reconstruction of the Armistice Bridge (Footbridge) across the Passagassawakeag River and the Harbor Walk, which created connectivity along the Belfast waterfront between the Armistice Bridge and the Boathouse at Steamboat Landing. The reconstruction of the Armistice Bridge was completed in 2006 at a cost of \$3.6 million (\$2.6 million in City funds.) The Harbor Walk was completed in 2013 at a cost of \$1.6 million (\$800,000 in City funds.)

In 2010, the city also purchased the former right-of-way owned by the Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad. In 2016 the city completed construction of the Rail Trail, a 2.2-mile multi-use path within the rail corridor, which runs along the upper stretches of the Passagassawakeag River. In addition to the Harbor Walk and Rail Trail projects, the city has made improvements to key intersections, extended and reconstructed sidewalks, and explored avenues to foster greater pedestrian and bicycle use to increase connectivity.

In 2008, at the request of the Belfast Vibrancy Committee, the Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition and Belfast Trails produced a report titled “The Vision for Pedestrian, Biking, and Hiking Mobility in Belfast,” which identified pedestrian and bicycling safety concerns. Key concerns included Route 1 crossings at Route 52, Belmont Ave/Route 3, and Route 141- all heavily used pedestrian and bicycle routes that connect downtown Belfast with key destinations outside the bypass. As noted in the report, “We view them as critical because they are the most lacking in infrastructure and planning in terms of safety relative to their high rate of pedestrian use (or potential use) and because they involve routes and intersections with heavy auto traffic.” This report helped spur action on several of the most critical projects and prompted the City Council to appoint and designate a Pedestrian, Biking and Hiking Committee to regularly advise the Council.

## **ROAD USE CONFLICTS**

Routes 1 and 3 are major State routes that serve a large volume of through traffic. See the Transportation Map for these figures. These roads also serve local commerce in Belfast. These different uses can create conflicts, especially regarding speed. The installation of traffic signals at key intersections on Route 3 (Belmont Ave & Main Street) helped regulate traffic. Enforcement of posted speeds is crucial. The limited use of traffic calming measures in some areas of Route 1, particularly along Searsport Avenue, have been or are being implemented. A sizable portion of Belfast’s business activity is located downtown, not on Routes 1 or 3.

Conflicts in Belfast also occur between how the city and State view use of a road. The main area of conflict appears to be Searsport Avenue (Route 1). Belfast extended public sewer service to this area in the mid-1990s and views Searsport Avenue as an area that can support significant development. In contrast, it appears that MDOT would prefer the city limit the amount of development along much of Searsport Avenue. At present, few use conflicts occur west of Crocker Road on Route 3, and the main concerns on state roads, such as Routes 52, 137, and 141, appear to be the speed of traffic in areas that often support residential development.

## **STATE & REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANS**

MDOT's Long Range Transportation Improvement Plan provides general goals for the maintenance and improvement of the state transportation system to meet the need of residents and businesses. These goals are in agreement generally with the Belfast Comprehensive Plan. There are no Belfast specific projects or impacts included in this plan; however, a lack of adequate funding to preserve and enhance the state transportation network will impact Belfast along with many other Maine communities over the next twenty years. The community will need to lobby Maine DOT directly for adequate transportation investments in Belfast and the region.

The 2019-2021 Maine DOT Work Plan includes these projects in Belfast:

- Municipal Airport, safety and infrastructure improvements that may include obstruction removal – Phase 2, runway 33. \$221,450.
- Poor Mills Road, Sheldon Bridge replacement over Goose River, located 0.89 miles east of Shepard Road. \$715,000.
- Goose River Bridge replacement over Goose River, located 0.15 miles east of Mitchell Street. \$2,355,000.
- Waldo Avenue, painting bearings and beam ends on the Waldo Avenue Bridge over Route 1. Located 0.05 miles northwest of Field Street.

## ROAD DESIGN STANDARDS

The proposed major land uses (see the Land Use Chapter of this plan), including the mixed use/growth along Route 1 in East Belfast and along portions of the Route 1 bypass, and the area labeled ‘encourage new residential’ along the bypass, will incorporate access management controls along state roadways, shared entrances/ driveways, and new internal street networks that avoid dead-end subdivision roads wherever possible. In following these strategies, the city seeks to maintain the mobility, capacity and posted speeds of Routes 1 and 3. That said, potential conflicts may arise, particularly with respect for Searsport Avenue (Rte 1,) because the city believes this area is well-suited for additional development. Overall, the City seeks to encourage patterns of development that do not degrade the capacity of the overall road network. For example, the city hopes to concentrate future larger retail development into the area near the Route 1 and 3 intersection that is presently used for intense retail and office development, but in doing such, the city also recognizes that road improvements will be needed.

## ROAD MAINTENANCE

The Department of Public Works performs a wide variety of tasks associated with maintaining, and in some cases, upgrading its extensive network of city roads. For example, the city regularly resurfaces city roads on a 10 – 12-year schedule, and typically replaces culverts every other scheduled road resurfacing, about every 20 – 25 years. The city regularly maintains open drainage swales adjacent to the road, repairs and extends sidewalks, installs warning signage, sweeps many of the streets, and grades several remaining roads which have a gravel surface.

The city is concerned that all roadways and bridges that are constructed be well engineered and built to last so that potential damage from flooding and adverse weather and use can be minimized. Substandard design or construction will result in higher costs to taxpayers and/or subdivision associations for repair and remediation. Road damage from flooding, adverse weather conditions and from use, especially heavy trucking activity, requires that roads be built to appropriate standards, including sufficient sub-bases, drainage systems and grading. While this may cost more in development costs upfront, it will reduce long-term costs for the taxpayers, residents, and business owners, all of whom depend on the road network. To that end, the city has adopted and enforced good quality road construction standards through implementation of its subdivision and site plan regulations, and the City Council will only accept a road for public ownership if it is engineered and construction of the road is inspected by the city engineer to determine compliance with city requirements.



# PARKING

Parking is generally sufficient in most parts of the city. The city owns and maintains 2 large public parking areas (60 – 100 vehicles each), 4 smaller public parking lots, and a significant amount of designated on-street public parking in its downtown and waterfront areas. While this is a significant amount of parking, there are concerns that the increased amount of growth that has occurred in the downtown in the past several years, and an increase in the number of major events, may lead to temporary shortages in the amount of parking. At present, there is no cost (no meters) to use any city parking space or facility.

Municipal Parking Lots	# of Spaces	Condition	Use
Washington Street	95 paved	Fair	Heavy
Cross Street	28 paved	Fair	Moderate
Beaver Street	60 paved	Good	Heavy
Steamboat Landing (2 areas)	45 paved	Good	Moderate
Belfast Commons	16 paved	Excellent	Moderate
Belfast Harbor	40 paved	Good	Heavy/Seasonal

Most issues associated with the use of existing public parking areas fall into the category of a nuisance rather than a crisis. Examples of these conflicts are as follows:

- Employees of downtown businesses and offices use on-street parking spaces rather than the off-street parking lots, which limits the amount of parking readily available to customers. In 2012 the city revised its parking ordinance, increased enforcement and worked cooperatively with Our Town Belfast (local Main Street organization) and local business owners to address this concern. It appears that these efforts have helped lessen the problems.
- There often is a conflict between short-term and longer-term users at the limited amount of parking near the city harbor.
- There is more public parking along lower Main Street than upper Main Street.
- Periodic events which involve a significant number of customers can overburden the amount of public parking available in a select area.
- Similar to many communities, there is not enough parking to support a major event, which results in the need for off-site satellite parking lots and transporting people to the event.

Belfast believes it has adopted progressive parking standards which support attracting small scale development to its downtown and working waterfront area. For example, Belfast does not require any on-site parking in much of the downtown area, and the Planning Board has the authority to grant reductions in the amount of on-site parking required in other areas in the downtown and along the working waterfront. Also, through the contract zoning provisions the city has adopted for some uses, larger-scale proposals could have some flexibility regarding the amount of parking provided to complement existing, traditional downtown development patterns.

Clearly, there also is market demand to locate retail, office and job creation activities outside of the downtown area. Certain retail facilities want to locate directly on Routes 1 or 3 to take advantage of the large volume of through-traffic, some of which make brief stops at these facilities on their way to destinations beyond Belfast. Belfast believes the amount of parking it requires is consistent with industry norms. Further, the city restricts the maximum amount of parking which can be provided on a site and its standards encourage the use of shared parking. The city updated its parking standards in 2010, which can be found in its Code of Ordinances (Chapter 98, Technical Standards Article VIII. Parking and Loading Facilities).

Safety of vehicles and pedestrians is one of the stated purposes of the parking and loading facilities section of the Belfast Code; reference Chapter 98, Technical Standards, Article VIII, Parking and Loading Facilities. To that end, specific standards to ensure clearly defined entrances and adequate parking and space for circulation patterns are included in this ordinance provision.

In 2010, the city commissioned the development of a master plan for its downtown and waterfront area which examined realistic approaches the city could implement to increase the amount of on-street and off-street parking in this area. A recommendation of this study, which has now been completed, was the construction of improvements to the Cross Street/Miller Street/Spring Street area creating an additional 35 on-street parking spaces. This project was funded by a \$500,000 CDBG Grant matched by city funds.

## ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES

Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP) – Waldo County Transportation provides the Downtown Area Shuttle (DASH), a limited scheduled shuttle-style bus route service around Belfast. The DASH operates Monday through Friday from 8AM to 12PM and 1PM-5PM. Fares range from \$2.00 one-way to \$50.00 for a monthly pass.

WCAP also operates a bus route service between Belfast and shopping venues in other towns. Twice monthly trips are made from Belfast to Waterville with stops in Waldo, Brooks, Knox, Thorndike, Unity and Burnham. Twice monthly trips are made from Belfast to Augusta with stops in Belmont, Morrill, Searsport, Montville, Liberty and Palermo. Twice monthly trips are made from Belfast to Rockland with stops in Northport and Lincolnville. Weekly trips are made from Belfast to Bangor, with stops in Searsport, Stockton Springs, Prospect, Frankfort, and Winterport. Weekday trips are made between Belfast and Searsport. Once weekly trips are made from Belfast to Troy, Unity, Thorndike, Freedom, Knox, Jackson, Belmont, Brooks, Waldo, Swanville, Liberty, Morrill, Monroe, Montville, Winterport, Frankfort, Palermo, Prospect, Stockton Springs, and Searsport. Trips three times a week are made from Belfast to Lincolnville Center, Lincolnville Beach and Northport. Fares for all these trips are \$3.50 or less. WCAP also offers door-to-door transportation to Belfast from all towns in Waldo County and is available for grocery shopping, personal business and medical appointments for low-income families. This service requires an application process. WCAP provides transportation by bus, van or automobile for MaineCare members to medical appointments for clients that cannot arrange their own medical transportation. Medical transportation is provided by agency and or volunteer drivers.

Concord Coach (Trailways) offers daily service on their Maine Coastal Route between Orono and Logan Airport. In addition to Belfast, other key stops include Bangor, Rockland, Portland and Boston.

The frequency of scheduled bus service is not sufficient for most individuals to be able to partake on a regular basis,

as would be required for commuting to work daily. The community's relatively small total population and its dispersed location of residents and workplaces inhibit public transportation to some extent. However, with an aging population and rising fuel costs, public transportation may become a more feasible future option. Service between the in-town area and local stores, such as Hannaford and Reny's, may prove feasible. Strategies to address this need are presented at the end of this chapter.

## **BELFAST MUNICIPAL AIRPORT**

The Belfast Municipal Airport, built in the 1940's, is a general aviation Airport located between Lincolnville Avenue, U.S. Route 1, Congress Street, and Little River Drive. It has an area of approximately 218 acres and a paved runway 4,000 feet long. The airport is used by small to medium charter and corporate jets and turbine aircraft, along with typical privately owned airplanes. There are no private airports in Belfast. Local businesses such as athenahealth use the airport as do charter companies bringing in corporate executives, Front Street Shipyard customers, and tourists. There is no regular commercial passenger service and no scheduled carriers that offer flights between Belfast and other locales. As such, the airport is a significant facility, but it is not a critical part of the transportation system for most residents.

The airport is adjacent to the Belfast Airport Business Park, is lighted, and is open 24 hours a day. Both Jet-A and 100LL aviation fuel services are available as well as tie-downs. There are 26 free-standing box hangars and one T-hangar on Airport property. The City of Belfast runs the airport. There are 26 aircraft based on the field and an estimated 2,200 operations annually, of which an estimated 75% are local and 25% transient. The current Airport Layout Plan was published in 2016 and is scheduled to be updated in the next two years to recognize recent airport improvements and the changing aviation environment.

Belfast has zoned the Belfast Municipal Airport and land around it as either Business Park-Airport District or Airport Growth District. Within both of these districts, aviation uses are permitted, there are structure height limitations, and residential uses are prohibited. Also, the previous Future Land Use Plan adopted as part of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan approvals recommends that the current Airport Growth zoning district be replaced by an Airport Overlay District, which can be used to better manage uses and activities that could conflict with the airport. The land use regulations the City has established for the areas surrounding its airport are consistent with FAA guidelines.

## **LAND-SIDE & WATER-SIDE TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES**

The City of Belfast has an authentic working waterfront. The waterfront supports two boat building operations (Front Street Shipyard established in 2011 and French & Webb established in the 1990s), a tugboat operation (serves Mack Point), three private marinas, two public marinas, a cadre of small restaurant and retail operations, and three public parks (Steamboat Landing, Heritage Park, and land near the Armistice Bridge). The establishment of the Front Street Shipyard in 2011 at the former Stinson Seafoods property had a transformative impact on the waterfront, including use of the Inner Harbor area. The Shipyard has the largest marine travel-lifts (165 and 400 tons) located north of Newport, Rhode Island.

Unfortunately, the amount of area which can be used for the working waterfront is very limited. There is only about 2,500 lineal feet of shore land which has the water depth to support significant marine development, and the deeper waters only occur on the westerly side of the River. This area is framed by the Armistice Bridge to the north, and the Steamboat Landing area to the south. The lack of additional land underscores the need for the city to obtain maximum beneficial use of on-shore public and private lands in this area, and to wisely use its inner harbor to support commercial fishing and working waterfront uses.

Belfast, like many smaller coastal harbors, needs float and docking facilities that can support larger private and commercial vessel operations. For example, while Belfast is now among the top 10 ports in Maine regarding the number of cruise ship passengers per year, the size of a cruise ship that may call on Belfast is limited by our current docking facilities. Further, more dock space is needed for transient vessels, and the Harbor Committee would like to install better quality fuel facilities. The 2013 construction of an expanded commercial fisherman's wharf has helped address the needs of a small but active commercial fishing fleet (mostly lobsters), however, more area is needed land-side to support operations of the public harbor.

The city enforces its state-approved shoreland zoning and floodplain management ordinance provisions. In 2004 the city worked with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to overhaul its shoreland and zoning regulations for its working waterfront. The city's regulations allow intense use of the working waterfront area; for example, 100 percent lot coverage, no setback from the high-water mark and flexibility on structure height. The city regularly advises applicants to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal regulations relating to development of marine transportation facilities. Further, the city routinely works with Maine DOT, Maine Department of Conservation, and Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) regarding the construction of marine facilities, and had the ACOE conduct a maintenance dredge of the Belfast Harbor channel.

There are no current or potential seaport terminals in Belfast. There are no current public ferry services in Belfast. Two small cruise ship lines, however, now call on Belfast during the summer months, and there is some interest from larger cruise ship lines. In addition, there are boat charter rentals in Belfast, including sailing and motorized tour boats that regularly provide excursion tours during the summer months.

## **TRANSPORTATION & LAND USE**

The city has encouraged housing development in areas close to existing public and private services, so residents can choose to walk rather than drive and public transportation with fixed routes becomes more practical at sufficient development densities to provide adequate ridership levels. In rural portions of the city, the use of conservation subdivisions/cluster can help to preserve habitats by setting aside ecologically sensitive but developable land into permanent conservation. See the Land Use Chapter of this plan.

Aside from the WCAP bus service, there are no major transportation facilities in Belfast, nor are any proposed. Improvements to bike and pedestrian pathways have been a priority of the city in recent years. Existing facilities would be enhanced with development as proposed in the Land Use Chapter of this plan.

The city's adopted future land use plan recommends encouraging denser residential development and more intense non-residential development in the following areas: areas located within the Route 1 bypass, such as the downtown area; in areas immediately adjacent to the Route 1 bypass, such as the Belfast Business Park and the area that supports Bank of America, athenahealth and most of the city's larger retail establishments; and adjacent to Searsport Avenue (Rte 1 on eastside). These areas have existing services and are more likely to attract development.

The Belfast Planning Board, through its existing land use ordinances, particularly its site plan, subdivision plan and technical standards ordinances, must consider factors such as safety, congestion and mobility in its review and approval of a development permit. The city's ordinance includes access management standards and the Board often uses the services of a professional traffic consultant to analyze traffic impacts.

Densities within many areas located inside the Route 1 bypass are quite high, often 7,500 square feet for single-family and two-family residential units, and there are no density limits in the downtown commercial zoning district. These are sufficient densities to foster public transportation and, through the allowance of mixed uses within downtown, promote walking from home to stores and such. Unfortunately, Belfast's relatively small population, about 6,714 persons, impedes development of a good quality public transportation system. Also, there are no freight rail lines in Belfast, and there does not appear to be any demand for rail freight. See the Land Use Chapter of this plan.

## CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

The Transportation Data Set has been incorporated and updated in the Belfast Comprehensive Plan maps titled: Transportation Network, Transportation Network (Downtown), and Transportation Posted Speeds and Compact Urban Area.

The e-911 Road Network map and Bridge and Culverts map shows the locations of roads and bridges. Similar to roads owned by the State of Maine, nearly all city streets are paved. However, the sub-base for many of these paved roads is inadequate, which leads to frequent and long-term maintenance problems. Such roads are usually in reasonable condition during the warmer months, but suffer frost heaves and similar problems in the winter. The city has reconstructed several of its major streets located within the Route 1 bypass, such as Front Street from Main Street to Pierce Street, Miller Street and Northport Avenue; however, the total number of streets and rural roads that warrant reconstruction dwarf the available funds. As such, the city commits to regular maintenance of its streets.

The city also has committed significant local monies to maintaining its bridges. In 2006, the city completed reconstruction of the Belfast Footbridge, which was the original MDOT Route 1 bridge, at a cost of nearly \$3.6 million. In 2009, the city reconstructed the culvert bridge on Oak Hill Road, and it also regularly replaces culverts.

See Pedestrian and Bicycling Safety above for recommended pedestrian improvements to address safety concerns. Sidewalks are located along many of the roads within the downtown and area within the Route 1 bypass.

## CONNECTIVITY

The city has undertaken several projects in the last 5+ years to examine how to achieve better connectivity throughout the city. In 2006, the city completed reconstruction of the Belfast Footbridge across the Passagassawakeag River. In 2013 the city constructed the Belfast Harbor Walk along .75 mile of its working waterfront. with a total cost of \$1.8 million. In 2009–2010, the city used MDOT monies to construct pedestrian crossing improvements at the Rte 1/Rte 52 and Rte 1/Rte 141 intersections. In 2016 the city completed construction of the Rail Trail, a 2.2 mile multi-use path within the rail corridor that runs along the upper stretches of the Passagassawakeag River.

The City Council established a Pedestrian, Biking and Hiking Committee in 2009. The committee’s recommendations are included in this Chapter. The Council also charged the City Parks and Recreation Committee with identifying options for preservation and development of the City’s rangeways, most of which provide public access to the coast. The City has begun implementing a rangeway management plan which included public art installations and pedestrian-way identifiers to preserve the use of these coastal access points.

Further, the city has focused on connectivity both in-town and regionally, connecting pedestrians to recreation, cultural, and scenic routes within the city, in addition to connecting the local trails to neighboring trail systems and communities. Museum in the Streets is an example of a local program developed and implemented by the Belfast Historical Preservation Society that connects recreation with cultural and educational programs.

## REGIONAL TRAILS:

This section describes trails (either existing or envisioned) that connect the City of Belfast with other trail systems, other communities, or other destinations outside the immediate city. We envision initiative, funding and maintenance for these trails to come from other organizations, such as the Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition and Coastal Mountains Land Trust. Support from the city would be cooperation in planning, letters of support for funding, and acknowledgment of the value trails bring to the community.

1. Rail Trail to City Point Bridge
2. Little River Trail (Belfast Reservoirs / Nordic Aquafarms property to North Forest Preserve, Troy Howard, and the Hutchinson Center). This trail almost forms a partial ring around Belfast; a connection from the North Forest Preserve to the Stover Preserve on to the Passy River through the Head of Tide Preserve would complete the ring.
3. East Coast Greenway, an interurban pedestrian and bicycle route connecting the entire East Coast, from Florida to Maine and the Maritimes
4. Maine Birding Trail: Belfast is part of the Maine Birding Trail (see [Mainebirdingtrail.com](http://Mainebirdingtrail.com))
5. Inter-town trail connectors for hiking and skiing
  - a) Moose Point State Park and Searsport
  - b) Frye Mountain
  - c) Durham State Forest & Northport
  - d) Hurds Pond
6. Passagassawakeag Canoe Trail and Goose River Canoe Trail

## TRAFFIC

Major Traffic Generators	Hours of Operation
Waldo County General Hospital	24 hours per day
Bank of America/athenahealth Care	7AM-6PM
High School	7AM-2PM
Middle School	7AM-3PM
Elementary Schools	7AM-3PM

In addition to traffic associated with the above schools and employers, there are a number of public events that occur mostly in the summer that result in additional congestion. Overall, summer traffic is much heavier than winter traffic.

## ROAD STANDARDS

The city uses its adopted standard to determine if a newly constructed street can become a city owned road. This standard is consistent with good quality road construction standards and includes standards such as but not limited to: 18 inches of road base, 4 inches of asphalt, and 20 feet of travel width with 3 feet gravel shoulders. Unfortunately, most current city roads were constructed prior to the adoption of the above standards and most do not satisfy current requirements. The city regularly maintains all city streets, including any accompanying stormwater and sidewalk improvements.

There are about 150 privately owned roads in Belfast. Many of the roads are unpaved, less than 500 feet in length and serve only 3–6 houses. Other private roads, however, are paved and serve a significant number of residences. For example, the streets in the Crosby Manor Estates project will ultimately serve about 60 units, the Tara Mews Subdivision about 26 units, and the Oceans East Housing Project about 38 units. Some of these roads are associated with major condominium or affordable housing projects, while others, such as Bowling Green Lane and Birch Street serve single-family residential subdivisions. In most larger and recent developments, the city required establishment of a homeowner’s association to maintain the private road. For a sizable number of the private roads that serve smaller projects, which often were initially developed through the exempt division of property provision, there is no homeowner’s association, which can lead to poor road maintenance and problems for emergency vehicles to reach all residences.

In the case of most private roads, there is little likelihood that the adjacent homeowners could successfully request that the city accept the road unless they made significant and costly improvements at their expense to satisfy city road acceptance standards. In recent years, several neighborhood associations have proposed that the city accept their street in its current condition; however, the Council refused to do such because the road was substandard.

## EVACUATION ROUTES

Route 3 is identified as an evacuation route in the FEMA-approved Waldo County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Route 3 would serve as the principal evacuation route inland, while Route 1 would serve as the south or northeast evacuation route.

## **LIGHTING**

The Route 1 Safety Audit that MDOT conducted with city representatives in 2006 identified inadequate lighting at the Route 1/Route 137 exchange. Concern also has been raised regarding inadequate lighting for both pedestrians and motorists on Starrett Drive. A lack of lighting on Front Street was addressed during its reconstruction. Belfast has a policy of not installing street lights on most rural roads, except at intersections where streets connect. Belfast has gained control of street lighting throughout the city. LED lights have been installed to increase energy efficiency and cost savings.

## **TRANSPORTATION NOISE**

State law sets noise level limits for motor vehicle operation, motor vehicle engines and exhaust, and vehicle sound systems. Enforcement is the responsibility of the police. Violations are traffic infractions. Two nuisance issues that warrant additional attention are noise generated by motorcycles with no mufflers or illegal mufflers, and jake brakes associated with truck traffic.

## **PRESERVATION OR PROTECTION OF SCENIC, HISTORIC, OR CULTURAL RESOURCES ADJACENT TO TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES**

Transportation projects in historically sensitive areas should be designed in a context sensitive manner that preserves the historic qualities of the areas whenever possible. Most of the city's downtown is designated as an Historic District and a portion is designated as a Commercial Historic District. These districts are on the National Register of Historic Places. The city, through its In-town Design Review Ordinance, has established a permitting process that applies to new construction, renovation of the exterior of an existing structure, or the demolition of an existing structure to ensure such development is compatible with the existing character of buildings in the surrounding area. The Belfast Planning Board, through its Subdivision and Site Plan Ordinances, has the authority to consider "aesthetic, cultural and natural values" in its review of an application.

Belfast's downtown has significant historic resources, as reflected in the designations on the National Register of Historic Places (see the map titled Belfast Historic District/Belfast Commercial Historic District.) Accordingly, transportation infrastructure improvements in this area, such as sidewalk treatments and street lighting, should align with the historic character of the downtown.

## **PRESERVATION OR PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES ADJACENT TO TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES**

The city is unaware of any city road with major impact on disrupting significant wildlife habitat areas as identified on the IF&W habitat maps. Most identified habitat areas in Belfast are located where there are no publicly owned roads. One potential area is near the intersection of Smart Road and Achorn Road, which is identified as waterfowl habitat. However,



this is a minor road crossing. The city's main approach will be to ensure that new road construction, both public and private, considers habitat related concerns.

## **ACCESS MANAGEMENT**

Belfast has adopted access management standards (Chapter 98, Technical Standards.) The Belfast Planning Board applies these standards in its review of applications for a subdivision, site plan, and use permit. At present, city standards are not as strict as MDOT access management standards; however, most streets to which these standards apply support different volumes and speeds of traffic than are typical of most state roads. That said, Belfast intends to review and refine its current access management standards when it pursues implementation of its future land use plan.

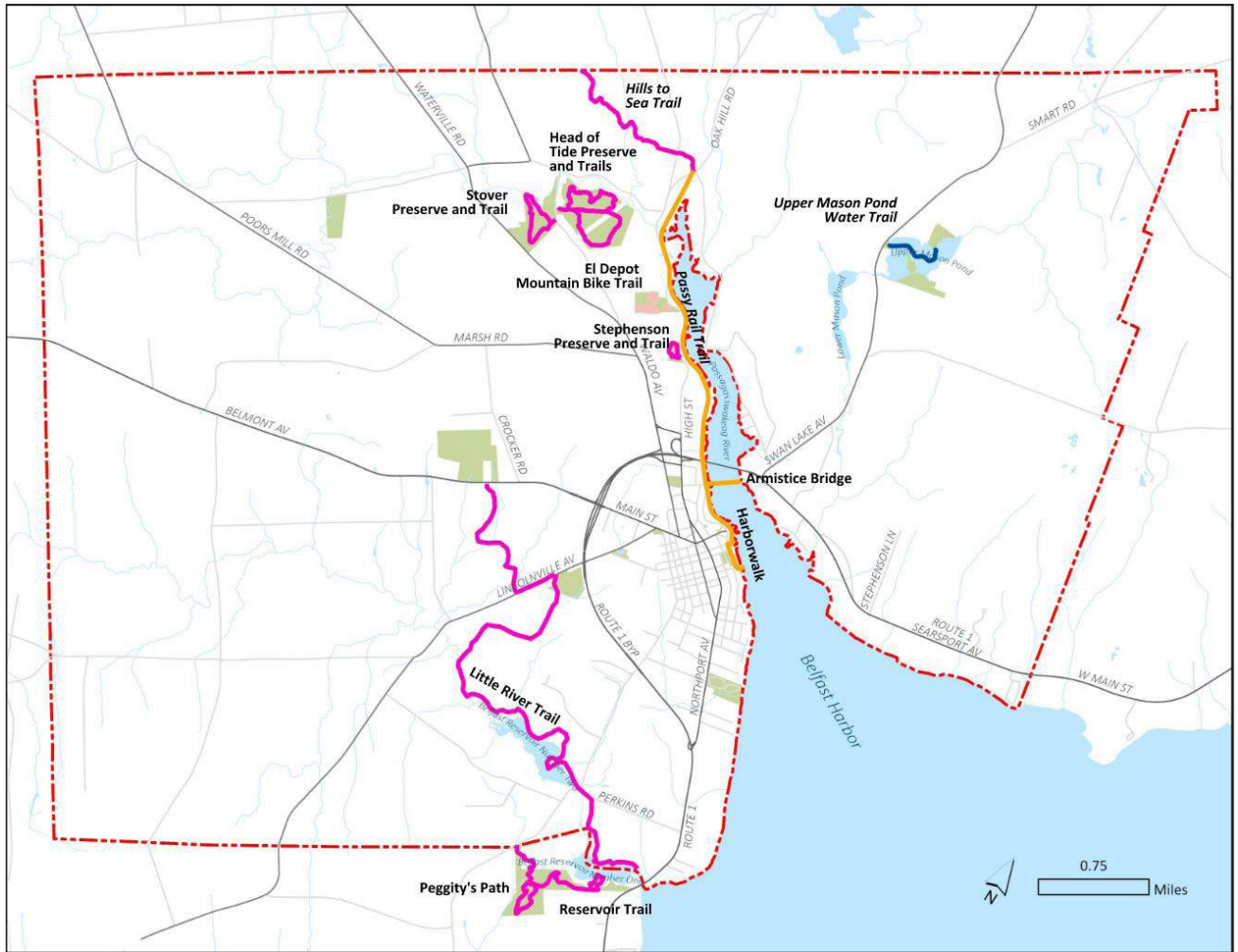
## **FUTURE LAND USE AND MOBILITY**

The City of Belfast Future Land Use Plan encourages denser residential development and more intense non-residential development in areas where public services are located. The Future Land Use Plan also encourages mixed-use development in many of these areas in order to increase options for multi-modal transportation such as walking and cycling.







The Future Land Use Plan, particularly in areas located within the Route 1 bypass, typically allows minimum lot size requirements of 7,500 square feet with 60 feet of street frontage for single-family and two-family houses. In addition, in areas where multi-family housing is allowed, density can approach 15 or so units per acre. The city does not apply density standards to elderly housing and congregate care facilities.

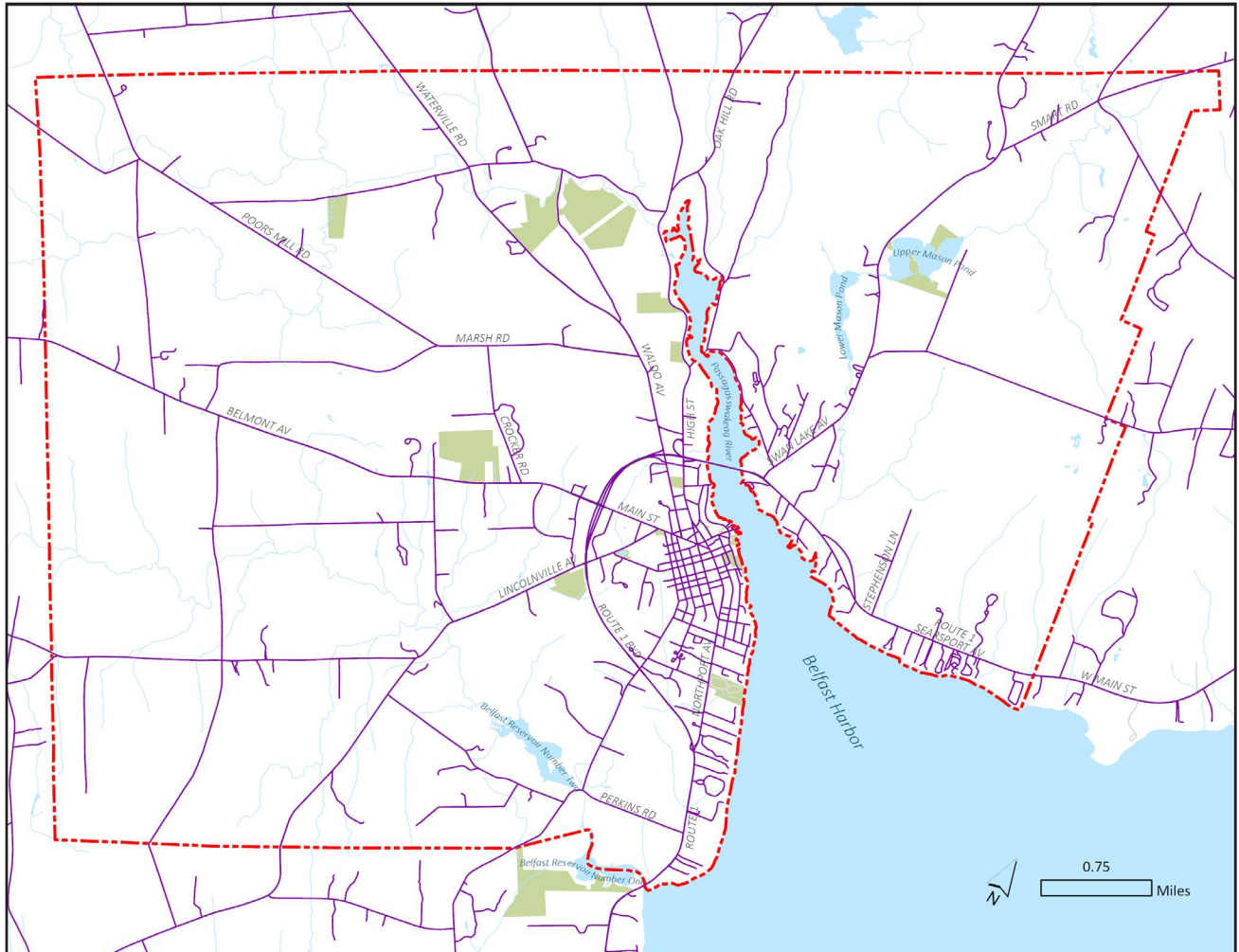
The city adopted Subdivision, Site Plan, Zoning, Shoreland, Floodplain, Technical Standard and Building Regulation ordinances to assist in managing impacts associated with new development or the redevelopment of existing sites. The city also employs professional staff to assist the Planning Board in the administration of these ordinances. Belfast notes that it adopted its first Zoning Ordinance in 1934, and it is accustomed to performing reviews of minor and major development projects. The city's standards clearly address transportation and traffic concerns, as well as requiring sidewalks and bicycle facilities when appropriate.

The City Future Land Use Plan lays out how the city intends to address future development in Belfast and recommendations in the Mobility and Transportation Policy Guide and Future Land Use Plan address the relationship between future land use and mobility.



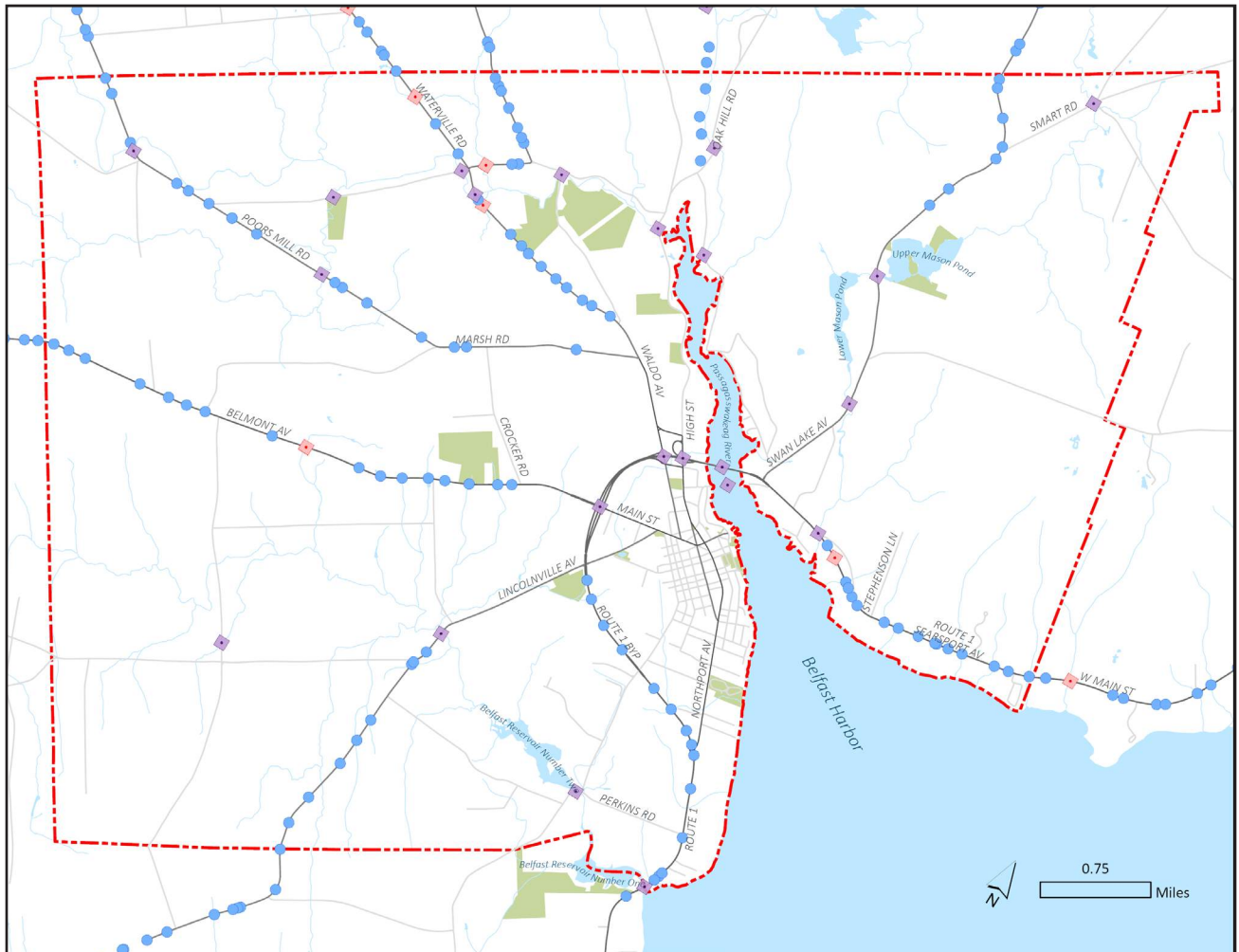
## City of Belfast, Maine Trail Network

-  Belfast City Boundary
-  Parks and Public Open Spaces
-  Hiker Trail
-  Mountain Bike Trail
-  Multi-use Trail
-  Water Trail



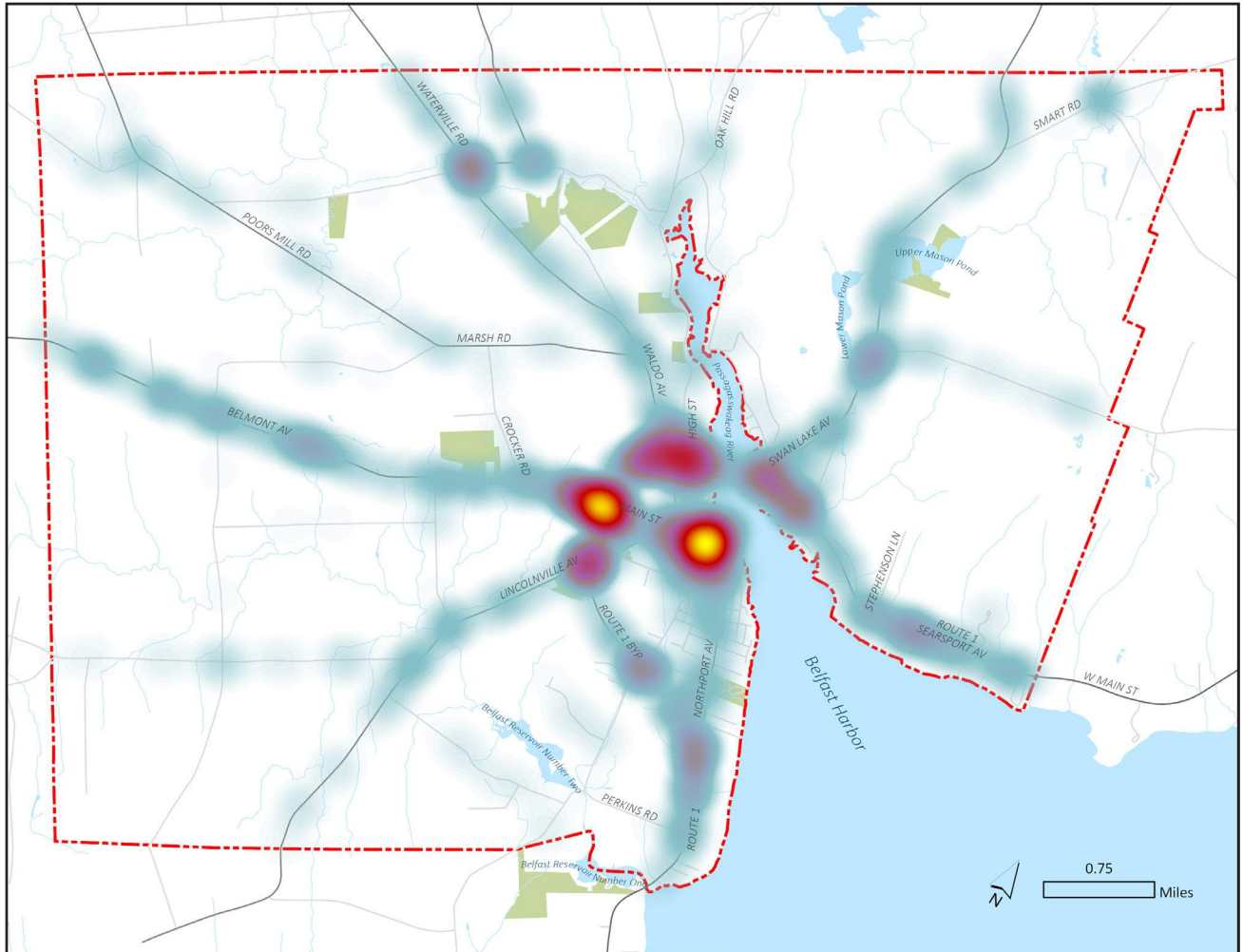
## City of Belfast, Maine E911 Road Network

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Maine E911 ROADS






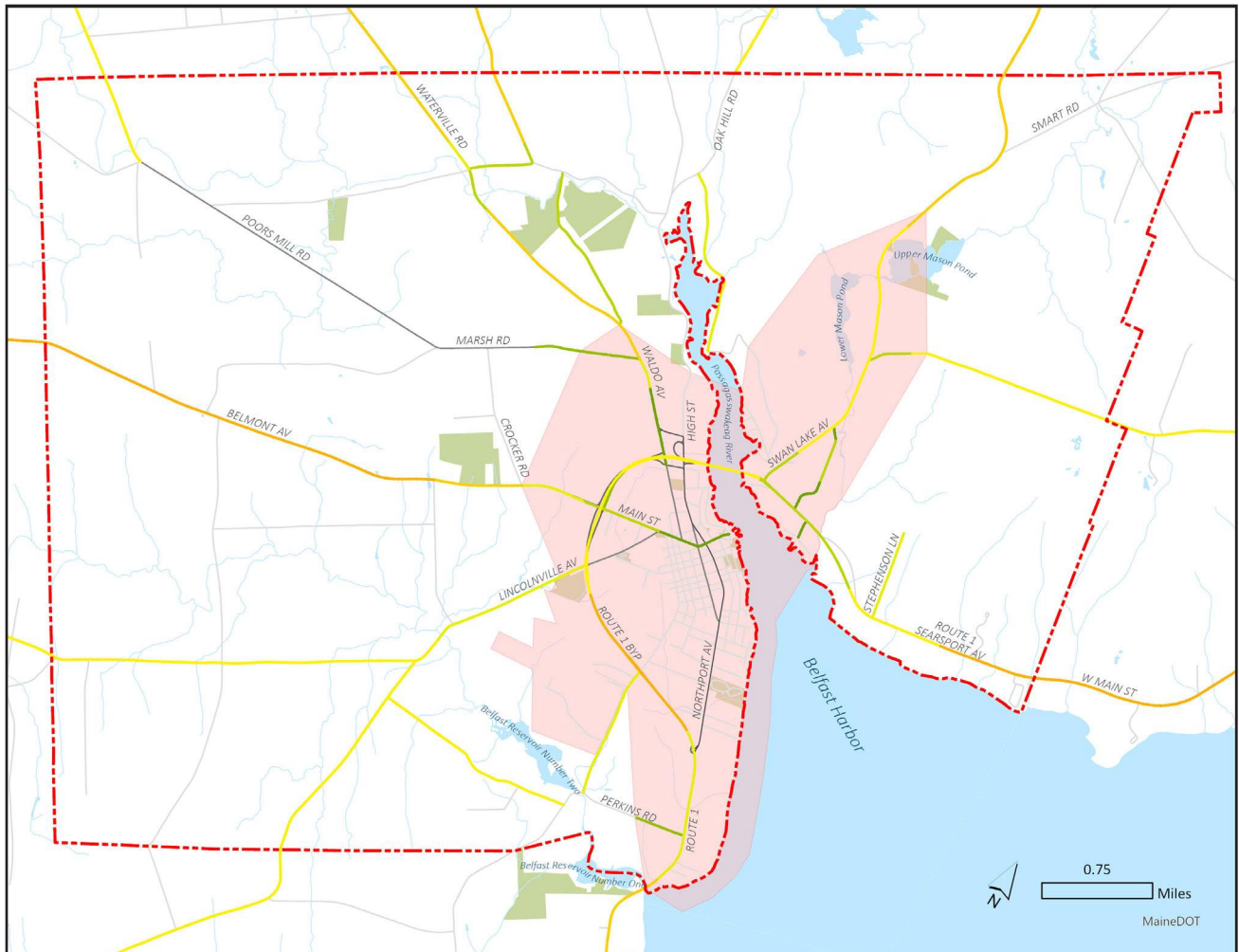
## City of Belfast, Maine Bridges and Culverts

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Bridges
- Cross Culverts
- Large Culverts

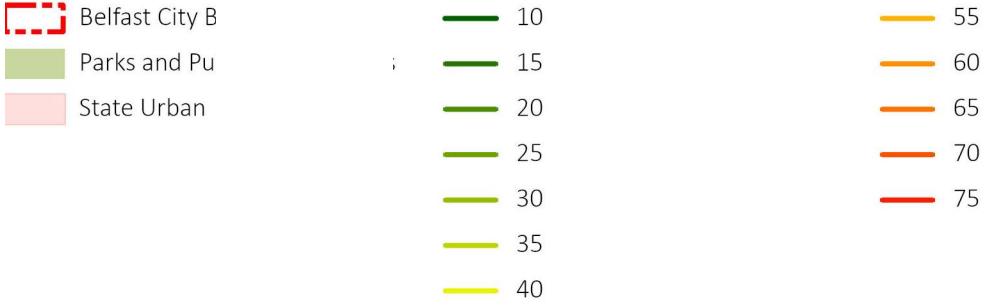


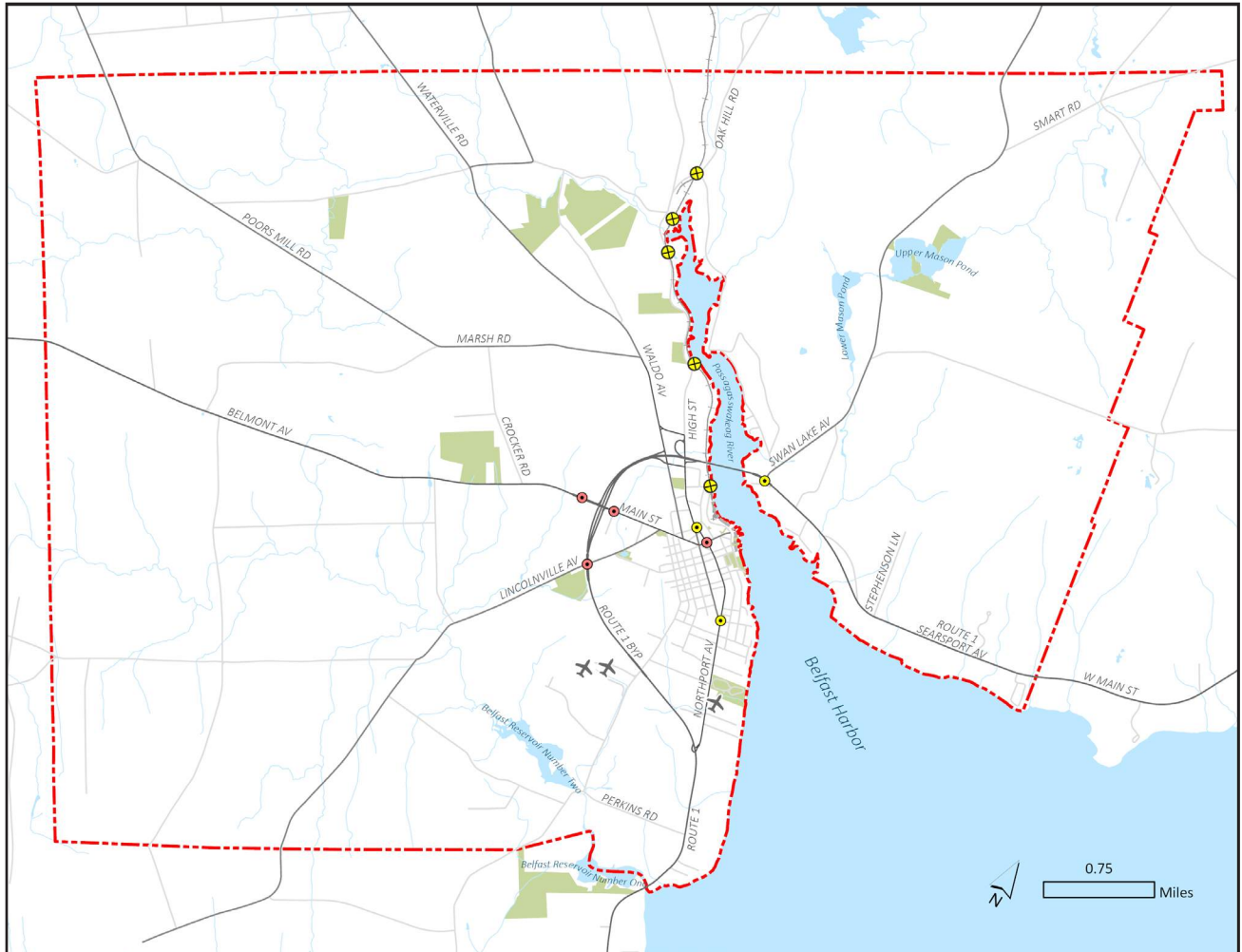
## City of Belfast, Maine Crash Density (2013 - 2023)

-  Belfast City Boundary
-  Parks and Public Open Spaces
-  Sparse  
Dense



# City of Belfast, Maine Posted Speed Limits and State Urban Compact Area Zone





## City of Belfast, Maine Rail, Airports, Traffic Signals

-  Belfast City Boundary
-  Parks and Public Open Spaces
-  Airports
-  Signal
-  Beacon
-  Railroad Crossings
-  Active
-  Inactive, with track
-  Abandoned, possibly no track.
-  Track removed, Right of way repurposed.

# PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES

The City of Belfast provides a range of facilities and services for its citizens. The Water District owns and operates the water supply system and the School District operates the school system. The single largest expenditure is education. This chapter describes existing public facilities and services, and the extent to which they adequately meet the City's needs today and have the available capacity to serve Belfast for the next ten years. The goal of this chapter is to plan, finance, and maintain an efficient system of public facilities and services that will accommodate the City's future needs. See the Public Facilities Map for the location of these facilities within Belfast.

## OVERVIEW

Municipal services include emergency services (fire, police and EMT), city administration, public works (road, storm sewer, public sewer), parks and recreation, public library, and others. The Belfast Water District provides public water services. Municipal services also include management and operations of actual facilities such as buildings and recreation areas. The modest increase in population projections for Belfast during the planning period of ten years suggests that the city must continue to handle the needs of residents and businesses and may need to plan for an increase service provision. In addition, the aging of the population and expectations for improved services like ambulance and road maintenance might encourage the city to invest more in these areas.

General municipal administration employs 17 full-time year-round persons, and 2 part-time persons. Public works employs 13 full-time year-round persons, and uses part time and seasonal employees to help maintain the roads in winter and the parks in summer. General municipal administration staff and facilities are housed in City Hall, located on Church Street. Public Works staff, equipment, and facilities are located on Crocker Road. The City Hall provides adequate space for current and anticipated staffing needs for the ten-year planning period of this plan. A potential need is for off-site storage of records.

Anticipated needs are noted in the strategies section of this chapter and in the Capital Improvement Plan. Both large and small-scale businesses require basic public services, roadway access, water/sewer connections, etc. In the current economy, access to markets far beyond Belfast is essential for many businesses as well. Internet and telecommunications infrastructure in Belfast was significantly improved with the arrival of MBNA. Although MBNA downsized and was acquired by Bank of America, much of that infrastructure (i.e., telecommunications and three-phase power) remains in place for new tenants of the commercial and office park facilities in Belfast. While reasonable quality cell phone service is now available in most areas of Belfast, an ongoing concern in many rural areas is the quality and availability of internet service. As of 2019, there were approximately 40 households in Belfast considered underserved for broadband (meaning they do not meet the 25/3 mbps ratings considered the minimum standard for broadband speed).



## WASTEWATER TREATMENT

The City of Belfast Wastewater Treatment System consists of 31 miles of gravity sewer lines and force mains, 18 pump stations, and a 1,490,000 gallon per day secondary wastewater treatment facility. The city has been aggressively replacing old leaking undersized sewers with new watertight sewers that are sized to carry flows for the next century. Several wastewater-pumping stations have been upgraded, with the most recent (2012) project occurring along Front Street. The city has also been removing excess groundwater and precipitation flows from the sewer system with the goal of eliminating the two combined sewer overflow (CSO) points.

The city has been able to extend the life of its present treatment facility instead of building a new plant. In the long run, this will save millions of dollars compared to the cost of a new plant. Water quality in Belfast Harbor continues to improve and the treatment plant consistently produces a fully compliant effluent. While the city’s unseen wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure improvements are not the most visible sign of the community’s recent growth, the city’s aggressive focus on these capital improvements are the foundation upon which much of the new growth has been built.

Excess Groundwater			
Infiltration / Snowmelt storm water inflow			
Location	GPD	GPD/Inch of Rain	Work Performed
Vine/High/Waldo Ave	180,000	95,000	Future Upgrade
Miller Street	170,000	95,000	Future Upgrade
Maine Street	80,000	50,000	System Upgraded
Glenview Lane	110,000	50,000	System Upgraded
North Ocean Street	50,000	35,000	System Upgraded
Washington/Green Street	50,000	25,000	Future Upgrade
Penobscot Terrace	90,000	10,000	System Upgraded
Mayo Street	60,000	40,000	Future Upgrade
Totals	790,000	400,000	

CSO abatement efforts over the past 20 years have reduced CSO flows from a historical average of 382,000 gallons/year to an average of 159,000 gallons/year over the past four years. The treatment plant’s design capacity is 1,000,000 GPD (Peak Hourly 3.8 MGD). There are approximately 1,475 users of the sewer system (1,200 residential and 275 commercial).

Recent sewer extensions have been few and limited in size, partly because most areas for which ‘growth’ is targeted have access to public sewer, and at present, there is limited need to extend existing lines to facilitate additional growth. As noted above, most city work and expenditures have focused on upgrading existing sewer lines to address infiltration and inflow concerns.

The city operates a public sewer system and the Belfast Water District operates the water system. Overall, both services are available to areas that need them: areas that support dense residential development and intense nonresidential development; larger retail stores (e.g. Downtown, Hannaford and Reny’s), large public facilities (e.g. Troy Howard Middle School and Belfast High School), large office complexes (e.g. BOA and athenahealth), industrial development (e.g.

Mathews Brothers and Ducktrap River) and denser residential development such as occurs inside the Route 1 bypass and in some areas on the eastside. Public water is available to all of the above areas. Also, water service is available to some areas where sewer is not available, such as along sections of Swan Lake Avenue located west of the Back Searsport Road (end of line terminates at the intersection of Swan Lake Ave and the Back of Searsport Road), mostly because this is the route that public water is provided from the district's groundwater wells.

Most areas where public water and sewer is not available rely upon on-site septic and water. In most cases, the density of existing development and desired future development is quite low, a 1.5-to-2-acre lot size, and most intense nonresidential uses are prohibited. On-site services can be used to support such development. That said, there are some isolated problems, including several mobile home parks located in rural areas. The cost of providing sewer and water to these isolated areas does not warrant the service extensions, and the provision of public services to these areas would cause growth to occur in areas that the city considers rural. Overall, Belfast has provided public services to areas where there is sufficient land area to support anticipated growth for at least the next 10–20 years.

Property owners are responsible for the maintenance and disposal of septic waste. Several private services which pump private septic wastes contract with the city sewer treatment plant for processing this waste. Also, Moore's Septic operates a DEP and city permitted privately owned facility on the Back Searsport Road to dry and spread solids pumped from subsurface systems. The current system generally works well; however, some individual property owners do not regularly maintain their system, which may lead to a system failure. Most current system failures are isolated events and typically occur when a system reaches its anticipated life expectancy. When a failure occurs, the city requires the property owner to replace the system. For cases in which the property owner cannot pay the cost, the city has used small system grant funds that may be available through the DEP and city revenues to help pay replacement costs.

## **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**

Overall stormwater management facilities are in adequate condition, and the Public Works Department regularly maintains the existing system. Facilities include stormwater management basins and filtration or other treatment systems such as detention ponds, culverts, and/or vegetated swales. When the city has upgraded an existing public sewer line or extended public sewer to an area, it has also improved existing stormwater facilities. Public Works systematically replaces culverts during road overlay projects. Changes in the number, duration and intensity of major rainfall events in the past 10 years has or is expected to cause problems with the capacity of current city facilities. During Planning Board review of proposed developments, the most frequent concern abutting property owners raise involves managing stormwater. In the Future Land Use Plan it is recommended that the city consider amending current ordinance provisions to better address stormwater management concerns, including greater use of low impact development standards.

## **BELFAST WATER DISTRICT**

The Belfast Water District is governed by a quasi-municipal Board of Trustees, which is directly responsible to the State of Maine Public Utilities Commission. The Water District is a self-supporting utility. The city's water supply is provided by two underground wells on the east side of the Passagassawakeag River. One of the wells, dug in 1950, is located near

the juncture of Smart Road and Achorn Road. The other well, dug in 1965, is located near Jackson Pitt, just off Route 141 in Swanville. The water quality of these wells is excellent and requires only fluoridation and some chlorination. The city's aquifer overlay district, established in the early 1990s at the request of the Water District, protects the aquifer in Belfast, which is the source for these wells. In 2018, about 628,521 gallons per day were pumped on average. In 2021 that figure was about 555,867 gallons per day, which is below the estimated capacity of the system. Replacement of aging waterlines has significantly reduced the loss of water within the distribution system itself. The extension of the water system based on need has been in keeping with the policies of the comprehensive plan. Like sewer extensions, water extensions have been few and limited in size. Also, public water service typically is available to areas the city has targeted as growth areas.

## REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT

In the fall of 2019 Regional School Unit (RSU) 71 opened the newly renovated Belfast Area High School. The renovations cost \$7.6 million and consisted of multiple new facilities including classrooms, bathrooms, locker rooms, cafeteria, a math and special education wing, and a renovation of the pool. RSU 71 consists of the following schools:

1. Belfast Area High School
2. BCOPE (Belfast Community Outreach Program in Education)
3. Captain Albert W. Stevens School
4. Gladys Weymouth School
5. East Belfast School
6. Ames Elementary
7. Kermit Nickerson
8. Troy A. Howard Middle School
9. Belfast Adult Education

Six of the RSU 71 schools are located in Belfast (Belfast Area High School, BCOPE, Captain Albert W. Stevens School, East Belfast School, Belfast Adult Education and Troy A. Howard Middle School). Belfast is also home to the University of Maine Hutchinson Center, River School Belfast, Waterfall Arts, and Cornerspring Montessori School.

Under current regulations, and with some vacant parcels nearby, new residential development is possible around most of the schools located in the city. The Belfast Area High School and Captain Albert W. Stevens School are located within the Route 1 bypass and are within walking distance of existing residential neighborhoods. Sidewalks and pathways serve these schools. In 2010, the city worked with MDOT Safe Route to School funds to construct improvements to pedestrian crosswalks at the Route 1/Route 52 intersection, which enhanced walkability. While very few students walk to the Eastside Elementary School, the city also constructed pedestrian improvements to the Route 1/Swan Lake Avenue intersection.

## SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

In 1992, the city established a new recycling center and transfer station at the Business Park. The city operates the transfer facility and has a contract with a private vendor to haul some of the waste to the Penobscot Energy Recovery Company incinerator in Orrington. In recent years the city worked to increase its recycling rate. Private companies also contract with some residents to collect their waste curbside, and most businesses contract with private companies to collect and dispose of their solid waste. It is anticipated that the system’s current capacity will be able to handle projected growth during the ten-year planning period.

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM

Belfast’s emergency response system is the method by which the city responds to police, fire, medical and other emergencies. Police, fire, and ambulance services are adequate. The city uses capital reserve funds, to which it makes annual contributions, to upgrade and replace equipment for the above services. The city uses paid staff to provide EMT services to Belfast and many surrounding communities. A detailed list of recommended improvements is included in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) within the Fiscal Capacity Inventory chapter of this plan.

## HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Waldo County General Hospital (WCGH) is a non-profit Critical Access (25 bed) Hospital, part of the Coastal Healthcare Alliance (CHA) along with Pen Bay Medical Center (99 beds, Rockport) and the MaineHealth System. WCGH offers a range of medical services, including Emergency Room, renal dialysis, an inpatient hospice unit, state of the art radiological services and oncology services. Additionally, Mental Health Services are provided through MaineHealth. The local and regional facilities are currently adequate to meet the needs of the community. Services include:

<i>Anesthesiology</i>	<i>Home Health &amp; Hospice</i>	<i>Physical Therapy</i>
<i>Audiology</i>	<i>Intensive Care Unit</i>	<i>Radiology</i>
<i>Bone and Joint Healthcare</i>	<i>Laboratory Services</i>	<i>Rheumatology</i>
<i>Cardiac Rehabilitation</i>	<i>Neurology</i>	<i>Sleep Disorders Laboratory</i>
<i>Cardiopulmonary</i>	<i>Nuclear Medicine</i>	<i>Speech Therapy</i>
<i>Cardiovascular Medicine</i>	<i>Obstetrics/Gynecology</i>	<i>Sports Medicine</i>
<i>Dental Care</i>	<i>Oncology/Hematology</i>	<i>Surgery</i>
<i>Diabetes Care</i>	<i>Occupational Healthcare</i>	<i>Urology</i>
<i>Dialysis</i>	<i>Orthopedics</i>	<i>Voice And Swallowing</i>
<i>Ear, Nose and Throat</i>	<i>Palliative Care</i>	
<i>General Surgery</i>	<i>Pediatrics</i>	
<i>Geriatric Care</i>	<i>Physical Medicine</i>	

Additional patient services are available from Maine Medical Center in Portland (WCGH Tertiary referral center) and Northern Light Medical Center in Bangor. Penobscot Shores, a subsidiary of WCGH, provides assisted living.

## CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Most current public facilities have the capacity to satisfy anticipated growth. In 2001 the city purchased a former bank building on Church Street and relocated the police station from City Hall to this facility, subsequently renovating City Hall to provide better customer services. A major expansion of the Belfast Free Library also occurred in 1999–2000. The city completed construction in 2019 of a new public works facility located at 54 Crocker Road. This 35-acre property was purchased by the city in 2017. Total construction cost of the new facility was about \$6.5 million. The project included a new garage, a sand/salt shed, and accompanying laydown areas. The site also includes a 5-acre solar field owned by the city. The solar field, combined with the solar installation at the former landfill on Pitcher Road and panels located on the Fire Station, result in the city off-setting about 85% of its electronic generation needs.

Most public facilities (police, fire, schools, city hall, sewage treatment) are located within designated growth areas, many in or near Downtown Belfast, and so funding for their improvement benefits those growth areas. The only current public facilities not located in a growth area are several city parks, such as Sportsman Park.

The following schools are located within the City of Belfast limits (shown on the public facilities maps):

- Belfast Area High School
- BCOPE
- Captain Albert W. Stevens School
- Cornerspring Montessori School (private school)
- East Belfast School
- Montessori School (private school)
- The School at Sweetser (Not part of RSU 71)
- Troy A. Howard Middle School
- University of Maine Hutchison Center

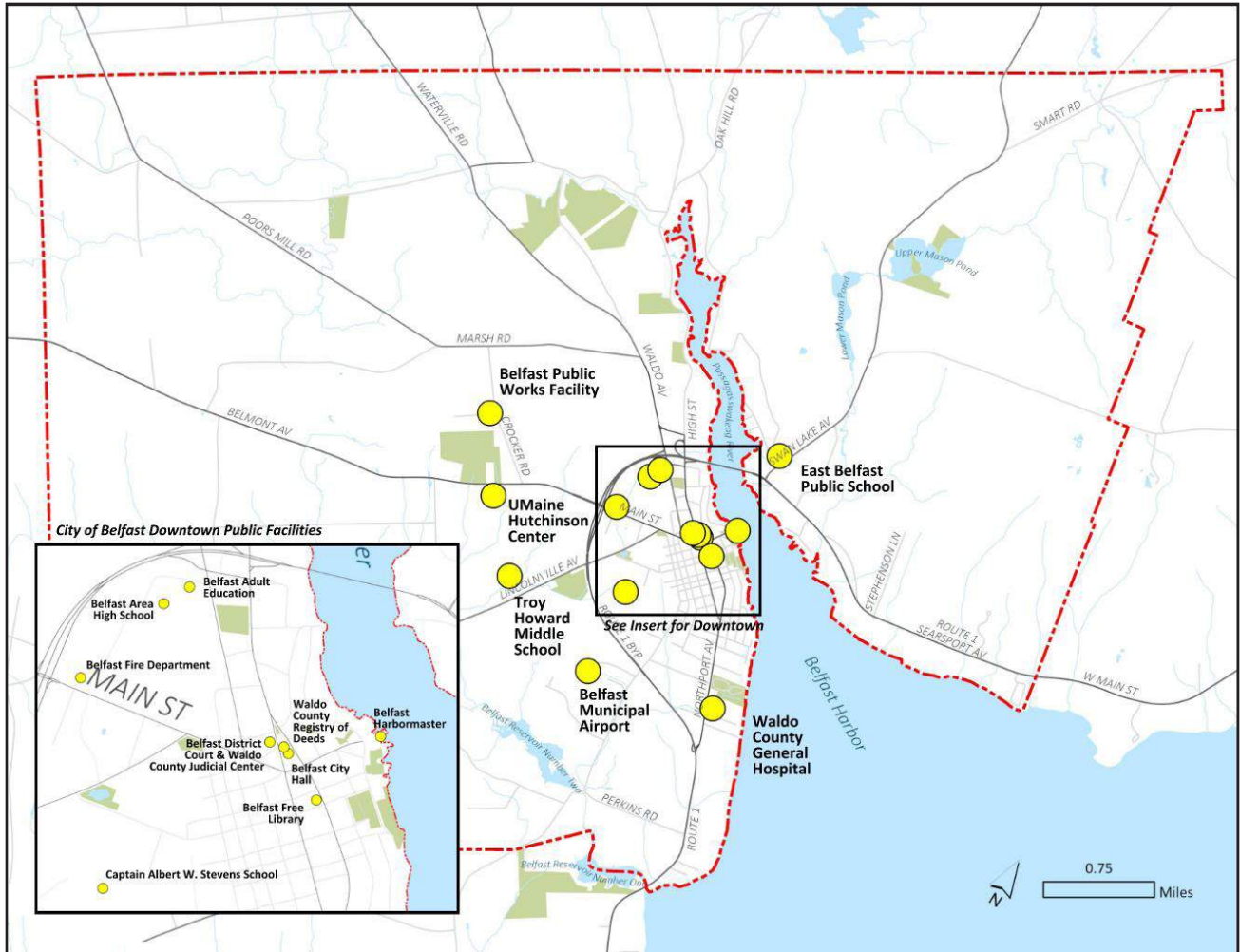
Grades / Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Elementary (PK-8)	1,655	1,584	1,503	1,445	1,105	1,027	985	1,083	1,073	957	937
Secondary (HS 9-12)	772	748	698	727	514	487	509	492	488	482	446
Total	2,427	2,332	2,201	2,172	1,529	1,514	1,494	1,575	1,561	1,439	1,383

*\*Note: 2011-2014 enrollment numbers based off RSU 20 which includes Edna Drinkwater School, Frankfort Elementary School, Searsport District High School, Searsport District Middle School, Searsport Elementary, and Stockton Springs Elementary School in addition to RSU 71 schools listed below.*

## MUNICIPAL PROPERTIES

Municipal Property	Address	Municipal Property	Address
City Hall	131 Church Street	City Park	Northport Ave
Fire Department	Belmont Avenue	Transfer Station	Business Park
Airport	Congress Street	Police Station	Church Street
City Dump (closed)	Pitcher Road	Belfast Common	Miller Street
Pollution Abatement Plant	Front Street	Belfast Skate Park	Washington Street
Public Works	54 Crocker Road	Eleanor Crawford Park	High Street
Parking Lot	Cross Street	Four-Season Recreation Area	High Street
Hayford Block Parking Lot	Church Street	Heritage Park	Maine Street
Belfast Free Library	High Street	High Street Ice Rink	High Street
Parking Lot	Washington Street	Kirby Lake	Miller Street
Wales Park	Congress Street	Sportman's Park	Sheppard Road
Legion Park	High Street	Steamboat Landing	Front Street
Parking Lot	Front Street	Walsh Field Recreation Area	Route 52
Boathouse at Steamboat	Front Street		

The Belfast Airport Business Park is owned by the city of Belfast, and the City Council negotiates all sales. The Park is located on Congress Street, adjacent to the Belfast Municipal Airport, south of Route 1. The Park is made up of two sections separated by the airstrip. The North Phase of the Park was completed in 1984 and is comprised of 18 acres of industrially zoned land. This section is serviced by municipal water and sewer, as well as three-phase power. The South Phase of the Park was constructed several years after the North Phase and has similar services. A redemption center and the City Transfer Station are also located in this phase. The city owns 5 lots in this area, each about 1.5 acres in size. The city's goal is to attract job creation enterprises to the park. Current tenants include Coastal Helicopters, Ducktrap River of Maine, Easterly Wine, GEO, Kids Unplugged, Maine Maritime Products, Dead River Oil, and the United States Department of Natural Resource Conservation Service.



## City of Belfast, Maine Public Facilities

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Belfast Public Facilities

# PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

The natural resources and protected lands of Belfast and the region provide numerous outdoor recreational opportunities like walking, running, hiking, cycling, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, ATV, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing. Open space includes Belfast Bay and associated coastal areas, rivers and streams, athletic fields, parks, farms, forestlands, wetlands, and ponds. One of the city's goals is to preserve, strengthen and advance public recreation opportunities. The city should seek to provide a comprehensive range of recreational uses including open space, water access and recreation facilities and programs to meet the needs of the community's diverse population.

## OVERVIEW

Belfast has an extensive park and trail network. While existing facilities, in general, can meet the projected needs of the community over the next ten years, the city has the opportunity to not just maintain existing facilities and services but strategically create new parks, facilities, and programs, particularly in the growth area identified in this plan. Allocating sufficient resources for the ongoing maintenance of all facilities is crucial. The city should be bold in this effort, and should not limit its approaches to methods used in other towns and cities. Should the city undertake the recommended Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Open Space strategic plan, the National Recreation and Park Association provides excellent guidance on park type classification, needs analyses for park types and facilities, and geographic parity.

*Upgrades or enhancements are recommended at the following facilities, and many are planned or underway:*

- **Belfast City Park:** Lighting; buried electrical service; road paving; grading of baseball field; pool bathhouse rehab; walkway repaired continued and enhanced; rehab restrooms; re-line and re-surface the pool (20 acres).
- **Kirby Lake (the Muck):** Ongoing trail maintenance (3 acres).
- **Skate Park (skateboards):** Re-design and upgrade.
- **Sportsman Park:** Entrance sign/marker; trail development (21 acres).
- **Steamboat Landing:** Water service for event vendors; drinking fountain (2.4 acres).
- **Wales Park:** Ramp and/or steps for entrance off Congress Street (1.5 acres).
- **Walsh Field Recreation Area (Ballfields, Dog Park, Little River Trailhead):** Sidewalk and parking lot repair or replacement.
- **Park on Main.** Construction of a performance area, a light hand rail up the hill, and a small garden. This work was in collaboration with Our Town Belfast.



## PARTNERSHIPS

The city has worked with area land trusts, particularly the Coastal Mountain Land Trust, regarding the preservation of open spaces and access. The city also has aggressively pursued retaining public ownership of long established rangeways that provide public access to coastal areas. Continuing, the city has worked cooperatively with Friends of Belfast Parks to maintain and fund improvements to many of the city's parks.

While the City has not established a specific open space fund to date, the city has in the past committed taxpayer revenues to benefit public access and recreation. For example:

- In the mid-1980s, the city purchased property from the Belfast & Moosehead Railroad and created Heritage Park through an agreement with Maine Coast Heritage Trust;
- In 1999 the city worked with MBNA to establish Belfast Common and Steamboat Landing Park;
- In 2008 the city purchased additional land to expand the size of Belfast Common;
- In 2010 the city purchased the former Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad right-of-way to create the Belfast Rail Trail;
- In 2014 the city established Park on Main in cooperation with Our Town Belfast, with support from the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation, Rollie's Bar and Grill, and local volunteer groups

The city has adopted policies and ordinances to help guide its activities, and recognizes that future amendments to such may be needed.

Since 1996 the city has worked cooperatively with the Friends of Belfast Parks, a local 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that strongly advocates for our local park system and supports the on-going efforts of the Parks and Recreation Department. Over the years FOBP has funded various special projects, park improvements, and additional amenities in the parks. In addition, the organization has sponsored several recreation-related community conferences and educational events and has produced a number of publications for public distribution including, but not limited to "Belfast Parks and Greenways"; "Phineas Quimby Labyrinth Walk" guide; "Belfast Dog Park User's Guide"; "Picking Up Where Your Dog Left Off." FOBP continues to support the local department as requested by the Director.

The following publications are available: "Belfast City Rangeways: Public Shore Access (City of Belfast); "The Green Emeralds of Belfast" (Friends of Belfast Parks); "Belfast, In-town Nature Trail" (Hartdale Maps) and "Walk & Bike Belfast" (Hartdale Maps); "Trails" (Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition); "Belfast City Park Arboretum"; "Hills to Sea Trail" (Waldo County Trails Coalition); "Labyrinth Walk" (Phineas P. Quimby Labyrinth). These describe public recreational areas in the community. Programs designed to bring in visitors, families and friends are identified each year in annual reports and publications. The Coastal Mountains Land Trust also has trail maps and publications describing natural area and activities. Belfast has an extensive system of city owned and maintained rangeways and public parks that support public access to Belfast Bay. The city notes that unlike many Maine communities there are few significant fresh water bodies (large ponds) in Belfast.

## ACCESS TO WATER BODIES

There is public access to the major water bodies in Belfast. Drinking water is supplied through groundwater wells, not surface waters. Accordingly, recreational access to surface waters does not threaten public drinking water sources. The city owns or controls multiple access points to the water. These are either rangeways or Rights-of-Way. The city routinely maintains most of these access points and is systematically working to make desired improvements. The city has recently made significant improvements to the preservation of rangeways for pedestrian use and access to the water.

## TRAIL MAINTENANCE

The city maintains walking paths located within its parks, including waterfront walkways. The city also maintains the Armistice Bridge (the original Route 1 Memorial Bridge), which provides pedestrian access over the Passagassawakeag River to connect the east and west sides of Belfast. In general, recreational trails outside parks are maintained by other entities.

## PARKS, PUBLIC OPEN SPACE & FACILITIES INVENTORY

There are a number of parks and recreational facilities in Belfast, which are available to the public and listed below. See the map titled Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Open Space for locations.

### CITY-OWNED PARKS AND FACILITIES

- **Belfast City Park:** The city’s first park is considered by many to be the “crown jewel” of our municipal park system. It was founded in 1904 by the Belfast Improvement Society, a group of local women activists. This popular 17.5-acre park offers diverse active recreational opportunities – including a 10,479 square foot outdoor pool with dressing rooms, baseball field, full basketball court, two tennis courts, four pickleball courts, horseshoe pits, some fitness stations, a playground, concession stand, covered pavilion, picnic tables and grills, restrooms, and an arboretum.
- **Walsh Field Recreation Area:** This 22.8-acre park was added to the park system in 2007 when the Bank of America donated two established ballfields, a restroom facility, and surrounding property to the city. A kiosk near the end of the parking area marks the trailhead of the 4.25-mile Little River Community Trail, an out-and-back nature trail through quiet, forested habitats, mossy wetlands, a riverine flood plain, and a wooded lakeshore. Park amenities include paved walkways, spacious parking areas, restrooms, Little League baseball field, softball field, fenced dog park.
- **Belfast Common:** While City Park may be the “crown jewel” of the park system, the 3.3-acre Belfast Common can be described as the “Emerald overlooking Belfast Bay.” In 1996, MBNA purchased the site, on which a former chicken-processing plant was located. The abandoned buildings were demolished, graded the land, and donated the site to the city. Belfast Common was dedicated as a park in 1999. The beautiful setting draws visitors year around. On a clear day, Blue Hill, a prominent landmark across the bay, and Acadia National Park’s Cadillac Mountain, some 40 miles away, are visible. Park amenities include the Phineas P. Quimby Labyrinth, a terraced amphitheater, drinking water fountain, picnic tables and benches.
- **Wales Park:** In 1942 Helen Wales Skinner, the wife of US Ambassador Robert P. Skinner, donated a 1.35-acre vacant

green space across the street from their Congress Street home to the city, with the stipulation that the land be used as a park. Today Wales Park offers a welcoming green space for visitors entering Belfast from the west and is within easy walking distance of downtown. Park amenities include a children’s playground, small picnic shelter, tables and grills. It also includes a community garden project which provides gardening opportunities for people to rent plots through a lottery system.

- **Steamboat Landing:** In 1999 MBNA donated a 2.41-acre parcel of its waterfront property (with 800 feet of prime shore frontage) to the city, including an area where steamboats docked in bygone days. The park area was named in recognition of the site’s historical significance. The lush green lawn and covered gazebo offer a picturesque site for outdoor musical events, theatrical performances, community festivals and weddings. The adjacent Boathouse provides indoor space for meetings, receptions, and other events year around. Amenities include a flat grassy lawn area on waterfront, covered gazebo, benches, and a dingy/kayak storage rack and launching area.
- **Heritage Park:** Prior to becoming a park, this 3.5-acre property was an industrial site for generations and included a railroad siding. In 1987 the city purchased the site from the Belfast & Moosehead Railroad and created Heritage Park through an arrangement with the Maine Coast Heritage Trust. Come Boating!- a local organization that provides on-the-water recreational opportunities on Penobscot Bay – launches its six-oared gigs from the park for community rows. In 2019, the historic Presidential yacht “USS Sequoia” arrived in Belfast to be restored on-site by Belfast-based boat building/restoration experts. The vessel is currently dry-docked in the park, where visitors will be able to watch the multi-year restoration project in progress.
- **Belfast Dog Park:** This 1.3-acre fenced dog park is located within the Walsh Fields Recreation Area. It was funded and developed by Friends of Belfast Parks in 2008 on an unused area within the park. This off-leash exercise/play area for dogs and their owners draws visitors from near and far. The dog park is open daily from sunrise to dusk throughout the year. Park amenities include separate play areas for large dogs and small dogs, drinking water stations for dogs, covered shelters, benches.
- **Pendleton Park:** This 19.0-acre park, formerly known as the Four Seasons Recreation Area, is located on the site that was once used as a small ski slope by locals. A forested hiking trail traverses a portion of the upper slope. In 2021 a group of local mountain biking enthusiasts obtained the approval of the city and the Coastal Mountains Land Trust to create a mountain biking trail system on the area. Amenities include an off-road parking area, mountain biking trails, and a hiking trail.
- **Eric Overlock Memorial Skatepark:** In the late 1990s, a group of young skateboard enthusiasts and their parents began to lobby for the creation of a public skatepark. Credit card company MBNA contributed \$150,000 to the project and in 2000 a fenced skatepark was built and named the Eric Overlock Memorial Park in honor of one of the talented young skateboarders who tragically died before the park opened. The original skatepark fell into disrepair over the years. A committee is currently working to secure the funding needed to build a new facility.
- **Eleanor Crawford Park:** This small 0.13-acre triangular-shaped shady pocket park is situated on a lot that was donated to the city in 1935 by the Field family, who owned a large home across High Street on Primrose Hill. Eleanor Crawford was a member of the Field family. At the north end of the park is “Margaret’s Point,” a small memorial flower garden established to honor Margaret Mills, a Belfast Garden Club member who tended the park for a number of years. This shady park is the perfect spot for a respite from the walking tour of downtown or for watching the bustling activity in Belfast on a warm summer day.
- **Park on Main:** This pocket park was established in 2014 in cooperation with Our Town Belfast, with support from the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation and Rollie’s Bar and Grill, and local volunteer groups. It is a walking connector between Front Street and lower Main Street. The shady setting offers views of Belfast’s two bridges, the bustling working waterfront, and the historic downtown.
- **Kirby Lake:** Locally known as “the Muck,” this 3.0-acre site was purchased by the city in 1875 for use as a fire-

protection water supply. The Belfast Improvement Society assumed responsibility early in the 20th century, after which it was designated as a park. Since that time, the pond has become a favorite spot for seasonal birdwatching and winter ice skating. Park amenities include benches, picnic tables, lights along the perimeter of the shoreline for night ice skating.

- **Walter Ash Jr. Recreational Area:** Dedicated in 2020 to honor former mayor and state legislator Walter Ash, this small 0.75-acre site overlooks Upper Mason Pond on Swan Lake Avenue. It is currently the only park area in East Belfast. It is a popular spot for canoeing, kayaking, and duck hunting. Paddlers can access the nearby 25-acre Coastal Mountains Land Trust Littlefield Preserve by water from the Walter Ash Recreational Area boat launch.
- **Sportsman Park:** This 21-acre tract of land on the outskirts of town was donated to the City of Belfast in 1991. While no significant development has occurred on the land, its wooded setting provides an opportunity for future development of walking trails, cross country ski trails, and other outdoor recreation activities.

### **TRAILS AND GREENWAYS**

- **Belfast Harbor Walk:** This wheelchair-accessible 0.6-mile paved walking path along Belfast Harbor provides a unique, on-site view of an active harbor and a working shipyard. The Armistice Bridge is the northern terminus and the Belfast Boathouse is the southern terminus.
- **Belfast Rail Trail on the Passagassawaukeag:** This 2.3-mile long scenic trail follows an old railroad bed through woods along the western shore of the Passagassawaukeag River estuary. The compacted granite dust surface provides an easy, comfortable walk across flat terrain. Along the trail, hikers and bikers will notice the ever-changing flow of the tidal river estuary as they catch glimpses of eagles, osprey, waterbirds, foxes, deer, and other wildlife. It is an accessible, safe and beautiful place to introduce children to the wonders of nature that abound in our community. Parking areas are located at each end of the trail, with a third near the midpoint of the trail.
- **Armistice Bridge:** This pedestrian footbridge was initially known as the Veterans Memorial Bridge. After the construction of a new bridge on the Route 1 bypass, the older bridge fell into disrepair. In 2006 the 800-foot long bridge was reconstructed for use for pedestrian use. The footbridge spans the Passagassawaukeag River and provides connectivity between the east and west sides of Belfast.
- **Belfast Rangeways and Rights-of-Way:** The city owns seventeen (17) public access ways to Penobscot Bay along its shoreline, ensuring unfettered public access to Penobscot Bay throughout the city. They are located at designated access points along shoreline throughout the city.

### **RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

- **Belfast Boathouse:** This city-owned and maintained indoor recreational facility is located on the waterfront adjacent to Steamboat Landing at the foot of Commercial Street. It marks the southern terminus of the Belfast Harbor Walk. The facility contains a large meeting space that overlooks the harbor; a large kitchen area, and two indoor restrooms.
- **High Street Ice Skating Rink:** The city-owned portable 104' x 52' outdoor municipal ice skating rink is installed each winter on property owned by RSU #71, in an area adjacent to Waterfall Arts Center. The Belfast Parks and Recreation Department maintains the rink throughout the winter skating season.
- **Public Landing Ramp:** This 1.5-acre area includes the Harbormaster's office, a paved boat launch, temporary docking space for boaters using the ramp, a parking area, restrooms and shower facilities. Fuel and water area available at the adjacent public landing.

## SCHOOL-OWNED (RSU #71) FACILITIES

- **Belfast Area High School:** This recently renovated high school facility has a gymnasium and an indoor swimming pool with spectator seating. The 20-acre campus includes a football field surrounded by a running track, as well as sports fields for baseball, softball and field hockey.
- **Troy Howard Middle School:** This middle-school campus includes a gymnasium as well as rectangular and diamond sports fields.
- **Captain Albert W. Stevens Elementary School:** This elementary school includes a gymnasium, playground, and large flexible open space for field sports.
- **East Belfast School:** This elementary school facility has a gymnasium, and the 3-acre campus includes a playground and soccer field.
- **Waldo Avenue / High Street Sportsfield:** This 5-acre site is located on the campus of the former Governor Anderson School. The RSU 71-owned property includes a softball field with backstop, practice area for field hockey, and swings. During winter months, the City of Belfast erects and maintains an outdoor ice rink at the High Street end of the property.

## OTHER RECREATIONAL TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

**Little River Community Trail:** This trail was constructed and is maintained by the Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition. The moderately difficult trail travels through woods, along the shore of the picturesque Little River and two reservoirs. It is 7.6 miles long (one-way) and can be hiked in sections or the entire length. Many species of waterfowl live and feed around its margins. As the lower reservoir narrows into the river, the trail ascends and descends hilly terrain. The upper reservoir gradually narrows to the Little River's original stream, and continues through mixed forest, with some huge hemlocks and a large glacial erratic boulder beside the river. The last section passes behind the YMCA and Troy Howard Middle School, past the Garden Project and Greenhouse. From there it enters hemlock woods along a brook, crosses the brook, and follows blazes through woods to its end.

**Belfast In-Town Nature Trail:** This 4.7-mile long loop trail consists of four segments that wind through tree-lined streets, city parks, birding hot spots, wildlife habitats, urban gardens, public shoreline access, and the Harbor Walk. The segments can be enjoyed separately or threaded together to form a 4.7-mile loop. Six parking areas provide easy access to the trail at various points.

- Segment 1 – Armistice Bridge to Belfast Boathouse (0.7 mi)
- Segment 2 – Belfast Boathouse to Belfast City Park (1.0 mi)
- Segment 3 – Belfast City Park to Kirby Lake (1.5 mi)
- Segment 4 – Kirby Lake to the Armistice Bridge (1.5 mi)

There are also private health and recreational establishments that are available to Belfast residents. They include the Bay-Area Fitness, Belfast Dance Studio, the Game Loft, Waterfall Arts, Come Boating, Curling Club, and the YMCA. The YMCA opened its new facility in 2001 (including a walking track, gymnasium, and weight room) and its indoor pool in 2009. The city provides an annual subsidy to the YMCA, which allows income eligible residents to become YMCA members at no cost or at a reduced rate.

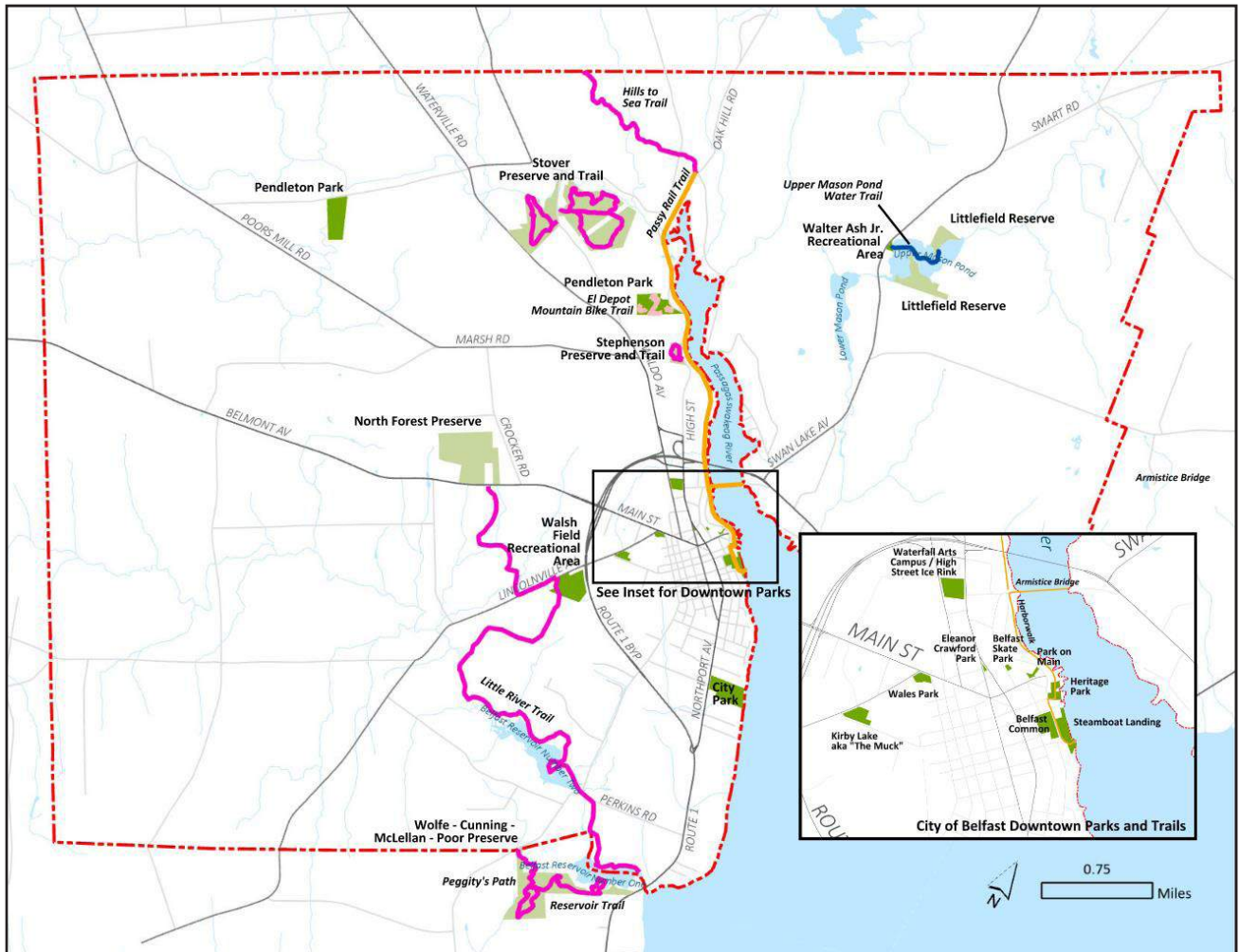
## CONSERVATION EASEMENTS AND LAND TRUST LAND

**Knowlton-Swanson-Stephenson Preserve (8 acres):** Located on Oak Hill Road, near Belfast Rail Trail parking area, this preserve offers a short 0.3-mile hike through a forested hillside overlooking the Passagassawaukeag River, close to downtown Belfast; small waterfall flows during spring melt and heavy rain.

**Stover Preserve (53 acres):** Located on Doak Road, the Stover Preserve has a 0.9-mile loop trail which winds through old-field pines, mixed conifer-hardwood stands, bogs and along a wild section of the river.

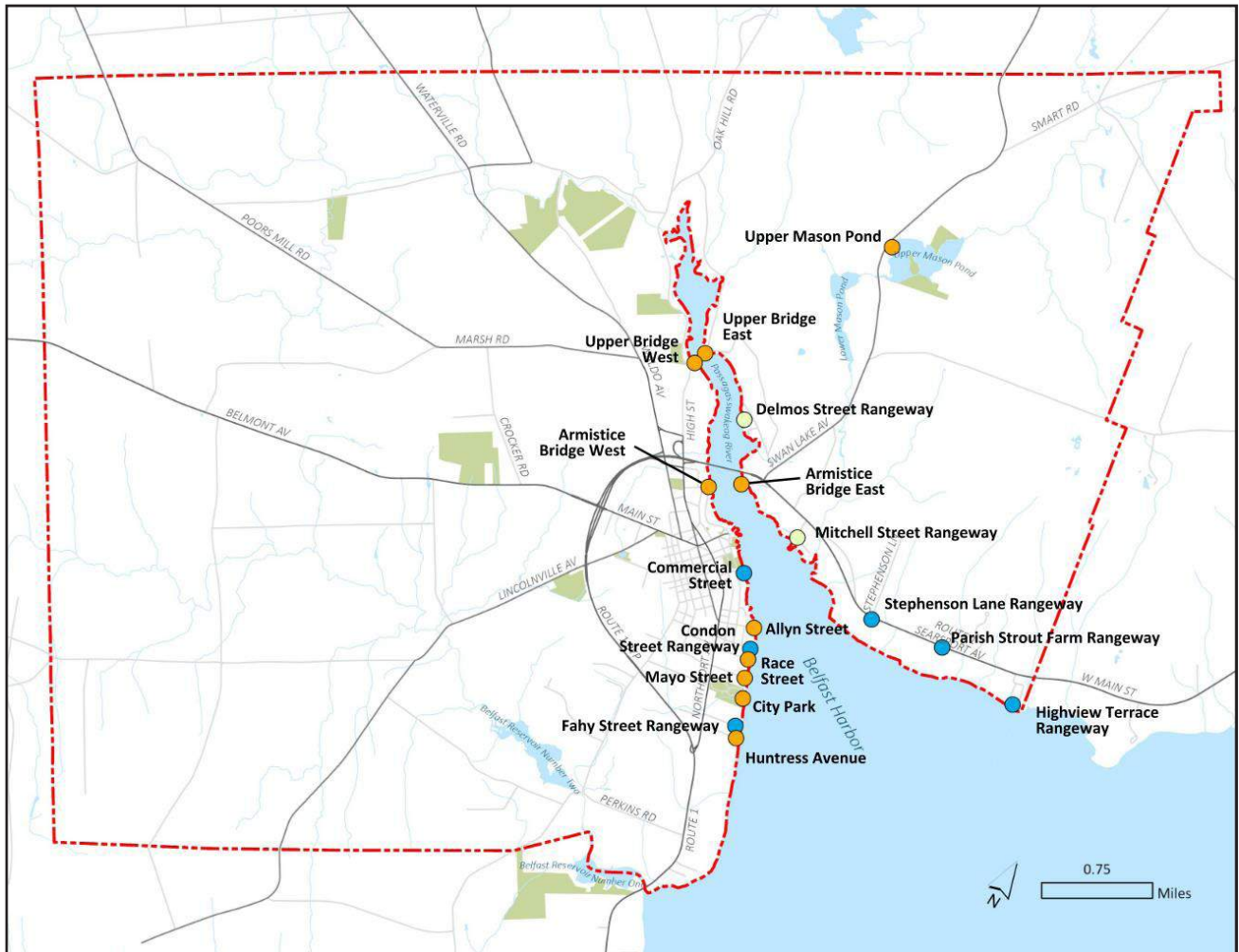
**Head of Tide Preserve (92 acres):** Also located on Doak Road, the Head of Tide Preserve abuts the Stover Preserve and a privately-owned easement. The preserve has two 1.0-mile loop trails and an interactive and educational permaculture garden managed by Belfast Transitions group.

**Littlefield Preserve (25 acres, in 2 parcels):** This preserve on Swan Lake Avenue is; comprised of two separate waterfront parcels, and is accessible by water only. Boaters can launch their canoes or kayaks at the Walter Ash Jr. Recreation Area on Swan Lake Avenue and paddle upstream on the Goose River from Upper Mason Pond to Swanville. The preserve protects important wetland habitat and offers scenic views surrounding Upper Mason Pond.



## City of Belfast, Maine Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Open Space

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- City of Belfast
- Coastal Mountains Land Trust
- Hiker Trail
- Mountain Bike Trail
- Multi-use Trail
- Water Trail



## City of Belfast, Maine Public Access Points to Water

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Public Way
- Public Way, Historic Rangeway
- Public Way, Unclear Status



# HISTORIC, CULTURAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The history of Belfast has been shaped by the natural resources that supported the local and regional economy, including farming, fishing, forestry, commerce, and shipbuilding. The City of Belfast, which celebrates its 250th anniversary in 2023, is noted for its historic architecture, particularly in the downtown area. As a result of the fire in 1865, when nearly the entire downtown was destroyed, an ordinance was passed prohibiting the construction of wooden buildings in the area. The resulting brick downtown has survived with little change. Downtown is an historic district, as are several residential areas with gracious homes of former ship owners and prosperous merchants. Historic resources, such as old homes, graveyards, mill sites, and old stone walls, are a valuable part of the city's heritage. These resources establish community character and make Belfast unique. They also help to create a feeling of community pride, encouraging us to preserve the best of our past. This chapter outlines the city's history, identifies the known prehistoric and historic resources, and recommends steps for their protection.

## KEY ISSUES

Belfast has a designated Historic District and individual historic buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Much of the area inside the Route 1 bypass includes many historic homes, and the street grid pattern reflects early traditional city development and planning. The In-Town Design Review Ordinance provisions (Chapter 80) that were enacted in 2001 and updated in 2018 require, or strongly encourage, proposed new development and renovations of existing buildings to be compatible with existing [historic] development, and to positively contribute to the character of the community. Design standards are identified in the Ordinance. These provisions also prohibit or strongly discourage the demolition or removal of existing "noteworthy" structures that have helped to shape and create the present character of the city.

Land use standards in shoreland zones (Chapter 82 Article V) require that for approval a project must be deemed to not adversely impact archaeological and historic resources as designated in the Belfast Comprehensive Plan. To help in this evaluation is the requirement that proposed development on or adjacent to sites listed on, or eligible to be listed on, the National Register of Historic Places also be submitted to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for review and comment; and the City must consider that review before deciding on the application.

In site plan review (Chapter 90, Article II), the code enforcement office must consider the following criteria during project review, "Aesthetic, cultural and natural values. The proposed development will not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic or natural beauty of the area, aesthetics, historic sites, archaeological sites, significant wildlife habitat identified by the state department of inland fisheries and wildlife or the city as rare and irreplaceable natural areas or any public rights for physical or visual access to the shoreline." A similar provision is also found in the state-mandated subdivision review criteria (Title 30-A MRSA 4404) and is enforced through subdivision ordinance provisions.

## CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Most significant historic resources are in good to fair condition. Several residences that are located in the Historic District are in disrepair and warrant renovation. In 2011, the city worked with Our Town Belfast (Belfast Main Street program) to make property owners aware of historic preservation tax credits (Federal and State) to reduce the costs to redevelop old buildings for new uses and maintain their historical appeal. To date, no property owner has chosen to use these tax credits.

The Belfast Historical Society and Museum is an active historical society in Belfast and receives revenue from grants and member dues. The city also contributes to the operation. The Society's public outreach includes informational presentations, walking tours of the downtown and the adjacent historic neighborhoods, the Museum in the Streets program, and collections available for research. The Society also has assisted city government on the range-way project and several of its members serve on the In-town Design Review Committee.

See the map titled Archaeological Resources for the general location of areas sensitive for prehistoric archaeology and for the one-kilometer areas within which a prehistoric or historic archaeological site is located. See the map titled Historic District (Downtown) for the Belfast National Register Historic District. Cemeteries are a cultural resource providing insight into the history of the community. Belfast's principal cemeteries are shown on the Public Facilities Map.

This summary is from the Belfast Historical Society and Museum and has been edited:

*In the spring of 1770 Scots-Irish families from Londonderry, New Hampshire settled Belfast. Legend has it that the name Belfast, after the Northern Ireland city, was chosen by a coin toss. Fear of British attack led these original proprietors to abandon the settlement during the American Revolution, but they returned in the 1780s to build a vibrant, prosperous outpost that would become the market center for the outlying area.*



*The view from the Post Office looking down Main Street in the 1880s. (Photo courtesy Belfast Historical Society and Museum)*

*Abundant timber, a gently sloping waterfront, and proximity to varied agriculture gave rise to shipbuilding and maritime commerce, with fortunes made in both. Hundreds of wooden sailing ships were built by local shipyards and, during the 19th century, as much as 30% of the male population was employed in the maritime trades.*

*In 1868, construction began on the Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad, which connected Belfast to the Maine Central Railroad at Burnham Junction. Belfast merchants sold a variety of goods and steamship operators, who provided transportation between coastal towns, advertised “shopping excursions” to Belfast. Prosperous shipbuilders and merchants constructed the architecturally significant houses that dominate our residential neighborhoods today. Two disastrous fires consumed much of the downtown area in 1865 and 1873, but merchants rebuilt with brick, creating a pleasing and long-lasting commercial district. The Belfast Historic Districts, residential and commercial, are included on the National Register of Historic Places.*

*The city’s prosperity, built on shipbuilding and commerce in such unglamorous cargoes as hay, ice, apples, and fertilizer, began to fade as the 20th century unfolded. A four-story shoe factory dominated the industrial area, and Belfast became a blue-collar town. By the 1950s poultry, sardine and potato companies had set up processing plants along the waterfront. Belfast called itself the “Broiler Capital of the World” and each July, thousands came to eat barbecued chicken on Broiler Day.*

*In 1962 Route 1, which had come straight through downtown via High Street, was rerouted around the city and across a new bridge. Some saw the rerouting as the death knell for a once-vibrant shire town, but in hindsight, the bypass preserved the city’s heart and soul and in the 1980s a rebirth began. Public and private investment restored some of the past luster. The arts flourished, the railroad was briefly revived for tourist excursions, and the stately houses and commercial buildings were restored. In the early 1990s, USA Today named Belfast as one of America’s*



*Broiler Festival Broiler Queen Candidates circa 1960. (Photo courtesy Belfast Historical Society and Museum)*

*“culturally cool” communities. Today, Belfast is that rare combination of quiet small town with an active social and cultural life that is attractive to residents and visitors alike.*

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has identified the following properties and districts as being listed on the National Register of Historic Places:

Reference Number	Property Name	Street and Number
80000257	Belfast Commercial Historic District	Main St. between Church and Cross Sts.
86002733	Belfast Historic District	Roughly bounded by High, Grove and Elm, Congress, Main and Market and Imrose
93000195	Belfast Historic District (Boundary Increase)	59--63 Anderson St.
95001476	Belfast Historic District (Boundary Increase)	121 High St.
73000148	Belfast National Bank	Main and Beaver Sts.
82000783	Black Horse Tavern	Searsport Ave.
78000331	Church Street Historic District	Irregular pattern along Church St. from High to Franklin Sts.
76000115	First Church of Belfast	Church St.
77000087	Hayford Block	47 Church St.
73000246	Masonic Temple	High St. (U.S. 1)
73000150	Primrose Hill Historic District	High and Anderson Sts.
73000245	White, James P., House	1 Church St.

A number of other buildings and sites have been identified as having historic value, including: Tide Water Grist Mill on Route 1, Little River Inn (1796) on Route 1, Wales Miller (1800) on Marsh Road, Otis (1800) on City Point Road, First Sawmill (1770) on Kaler Road, Pattershall (1800) on West Swanville Road, Harvey Way (1800) on Waldo Avenue Extension, R.R. Thompson House on Miller Street, Quimby House on Miller Street, Brewster House on Northport Avenue, M.L. Slugg House on Condon Street, Parsonage “Hearthside” on Old Searsport Avenue, and Stephenson Tavern.

According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), three prehistoric sites (numbers 40.2, 41.52, and 41.53) are located along the northeast shore of Passagassawakeag Estuary/Bay.

ID	Name	Cause, Boat Type	Date
ME 034-001	“S.T. Co. No. 5”	Wreck, Barge	1924

ID	Name	Cause, Boat Type	Date
ME 034-002	Minister’s Point Battery	Military, Battery	1863
ME 034-003	Little River Battery	Military, Battery	c. 1863
ME 034-004	“E.S. Wilson”	Wreck, Schooner	1900
ME 034-005	“Mary Elizabeth	Wreck, Schooner	1869
ME 034-006	“Maine”	Wreck, Schooner	1869
ME 034-007	C.P. Carter Shipyard	Shipyard	1841-c. 1899
ME 034-008	“Ida L. Small”	Wreck, Schooner	Jan 2, 1870
ME 034-009	Joseph Kaler Brickyard	Brickyard	1859
ME 034-010	C.P. Carter Shipyard Shipwreck	Wreck, Ship	Potentially associated with Carter Shipyard

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND PRESERVATION

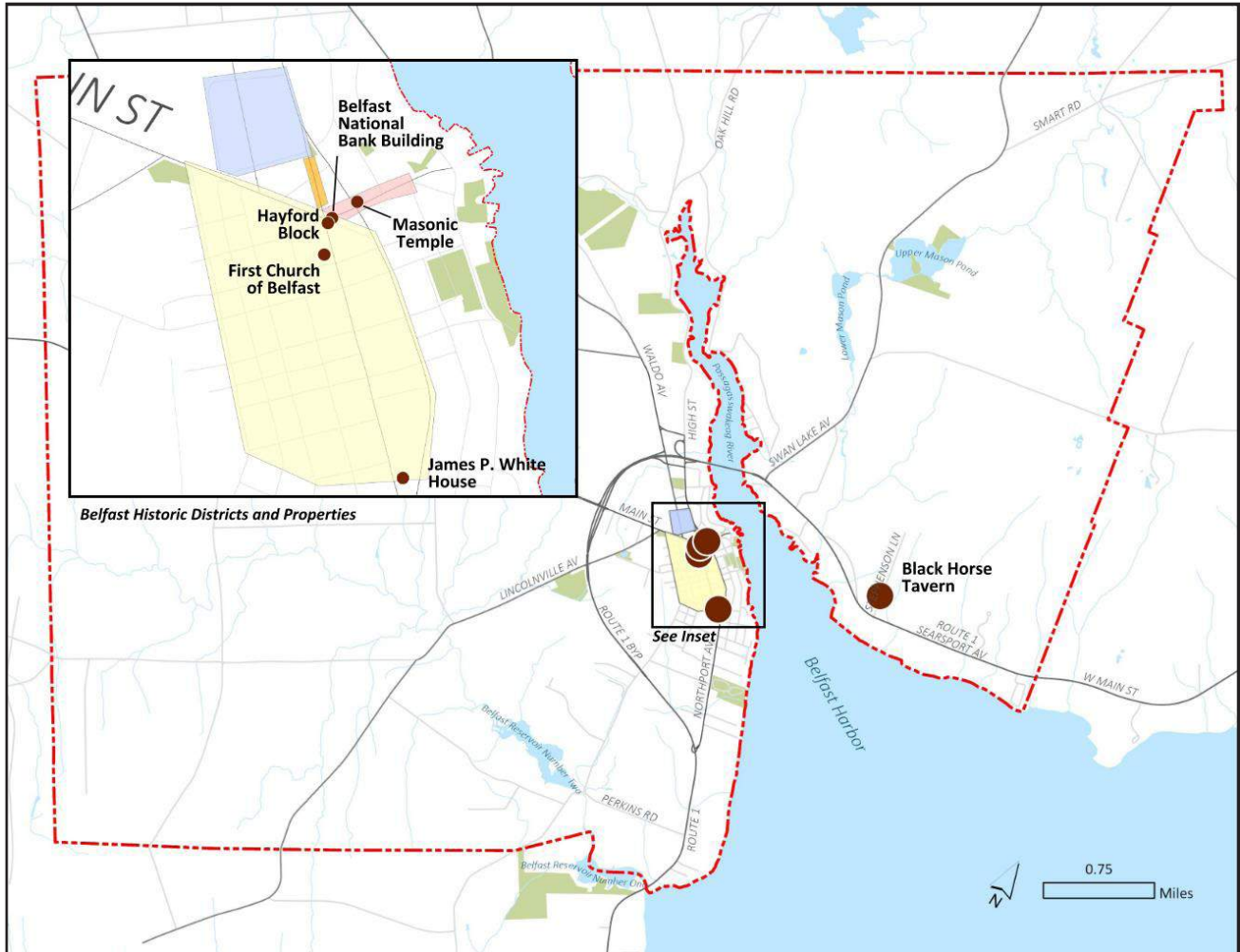
The Belfast Historical Society and Museum (10 Market Street) is dedicated to the collection, conservation, preservation, and interpretation of artifacts relevant to Belfast history. The collections include vintage photographs, maps, postcards, interpretive displays and an extensive research archives and library. Monthly informative programs are held April through October and include guest speakers, slideshows, and discussions, and the Society regularly conducts informative walking tours of the downtown and adjacent residential areas. The Belfast Historical Society and Museum is a member of The New England Museum Association, Maine Archives and Museums and a contributing member to the Maine Memory Network.

## THREATS TO HISTORIC RESOURCES

The renovations of historic buildings may or may not be done in a historically sensitive manner. This threat is more likely for buildings that are privately owned and when those renovations are funded privately without guidance or oversight from state or federal agencies. City codes, particularly Chapter 80, In-town Design Review, encourage but do not mandate historically sensitive renovations. With the goal of encouraging the renovation and reuse of historic structures, demolition permits are required before historic structures can be razed (Chapter 80). Prehistoric sites along shorelines are subject to coastal erosion and with sea rise, may become submerged.

## **HISTORIC PROPERTIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

Historic properties will be vulnerable now and in the near future to the impacts of climate change, including increased storms, erosion, and high winds. Community members, municipal officials, planners, preservationists, scientists, and visionaries need to prioritize protection of historic properties and districts. Historic buildings in Belfast that could be vulnerable to climate change impacts in the form of sea level rise include Masonic Temple and First Church of Belfast. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) has established a webpage to assist entities throughout the state with planning for the effects of climate change on historic properties and cultural resources through the process of identification, adaptation, resiliency, and mitigation. MHPC has developed this web application so that as communities, regions, officials, and citizens create plans to deal with changing climate, museums or archives within the subject areas can be identified, evaluated, and their futures contemplated.



## City of Belfast, Maine Historic Districts and Properties

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Belfast Commercial Historic District
- Belfast Historic District
- Church Street Historic District
- Primrose Hill Historic District
- Belfast Historic Properties

# CRITICAL NATURAL RESOURCES

Critical natural resources are integral to the environment. The purpose of this chapter is to help the city identify, manage and adequately protect its critical natural resources, and safeguard the local economy dependent on these resources. Note: for marine resources, see the Marine Resources Chapter; for water resources, see the Water Resources Chapter. Critical Natural Resources are defined by the State as those areas in the community comprised of one or more of the following:

- **Shoreland zone**
- **Multi-function wetlands:** Wetlands found to provide three or more wetland functions as depicted on the Wetlands Characterization Maps developed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife
- **Essential Wildlife Habitats and Threatened, Endangered, and Special Concern Species:** Occurrences as depicted on maps prepared by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife pursuant to the Maine Endangered Species Act
- **Significant wildlife habitat:** As defined in 38 MRSA §480-B(10)
- **Significant freshwater fisheries habitat**
- **Rare and exemplary natural communities, and rare plants:** Occurrences as determined by the State’s Natural Areas Program database
- **Coastal sand dune systems:** As defined in the Natural Resources Protection Act 38 MRSA §480-B(1)
- **Beginning with Habitat Focus Areas of Ecological Significance:** As identified by the Beginning with Habitat Program of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
- **Fragile mountain areas:** As defined in 38 MRSA §480-B(3)
- **Coastal bluffs and coastal landslide hazards:** As depicted on maps prepared by the Maine Geological Survey
- **Flood plains:** As depicted on Federal Emergency Management Agency flood hazard identification maps
- **Areas designated as a National Natural Landmark:** Pursuant to the National Park Service’s National Natural Landmark Program (36 Code of Federal Regulation, Section 62)

## KEY ISSUES

Federal, State, and municipal regulations offer protection for most critical natural resources in Belfast, excluding large habitat blocks. Crucial to this protection, however, is ongoing monitoring to detect illegal activities and remediate where environmental damage has occurred. Funding at the Federal, State and municipal level is insufficient to ensure complete protection. Further regulatory protection at the municipal level may be warranted. Specifically, these areas within Belfast should be considered for additional protection through municipal regulation: areas with steep slopes (see the map titled Topography), forested wetlands, and select wetlands under 10 acres in size that have limited regulation by the Maine DEP. However, the use of conservation easements or purchases may be more tenable to residents and voters than regulations. Easements and conservation purchases almost always result in permanent protection while municipal regulations are subject to future amendments or repeal.



The city's shoreland zoning ordinance provisions, including waterfront districts, are consistent with current State law and have been approved by the Maine DEP. The city specifically notes that it has worked cooperatively with the DEP to adopt shoreland regulations that vary from the state model regulations, including but not limited to the establishment of the Urban Residential Shoreland subdistrict, the Waterfront Development Shoreland subdistrict, the Stream Development Shoreland subdistrict and the Manufactured Housing Community Shoreland subdistrict. The above subdistricts better reflect existing development patterns in Belfast and are modeled on the premise that future development should be consistent with existing development. Also, shoreland zoning districts of adjacent shorelands in the neighboring communities of Belmont, Morrill, Northport, Swanville and Waldo are consistent with Belfast's provisions for these border area shorelands.

## MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

The city can work with non-profit, local, state, and national advocacy groups to acquire property in critical areas for conservation outright or with easements. Specifically, the following areas should be considered for conservation:

- Areas along the Passagassawakeag River
- Areas within the Water District's watershed
- Areas along the bay
- Additional areas along the Little River

Partners could include Audubon Society, Land for Maine's Future Program (Augusta), Maine Coast Heritage Trust (Topsham, Rockport), Natural Resources Council of Maine (Augusta), and Coastal Mountains Land Trust (Camden).

The city can educate residents on the value of critical natural resources through outreach programs, conservation committee efforts, and in cooperation with local schools. Programs could describe the existing resources found locally, threats from pollution, and ways in which residents can reduce their own household waste through reuse, recycling and proper disposal.

The Maine Farmland Trust and the Coastal Mountains Land Trust have sought the preservation of critical natural areas in and around Belfast, especially along ecologically sensitive water bodies and valuable wetland habitats. The city has worked with the Coastal Mountains Land Trust in the past on preservation projects.

## IMPORTANCE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

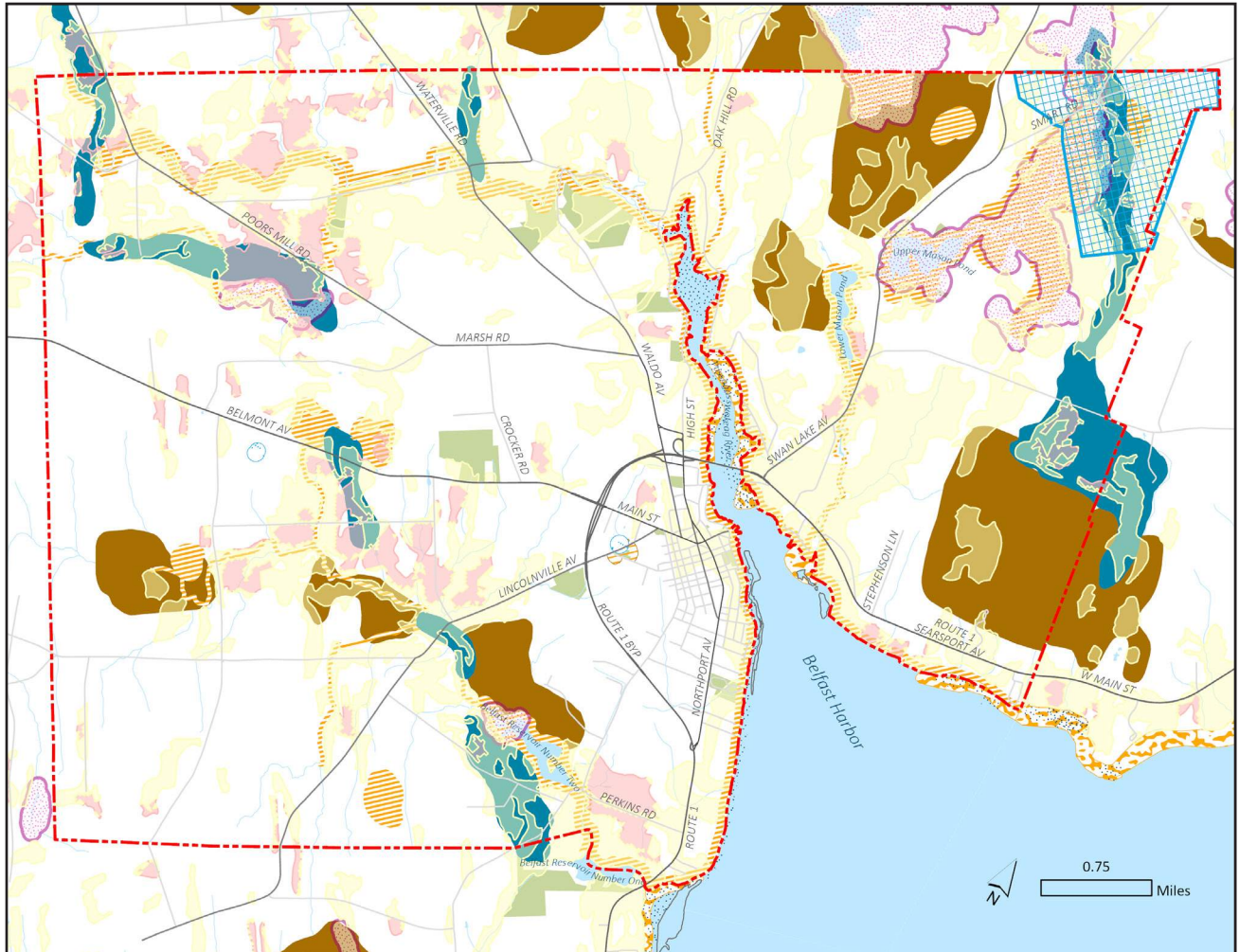
Protecting critical natural resources goes hand in hand with several of the key policies of the following chapters of this plan: Agriculture and Forestry, Economy, Land Use, Marine Resources, Recreation, and Water Resources. See those chapters for their specific policies and strategies. More generally, the protection of one resource, like water quality, often involves the protection of other resources that occupy the same geography, like natural habitats. Similarly, conserving wetlands, which absorb water runoff and attenuate flood flows, reduces the risk of flooding in already developed areas nearby.

In Belfast, the Rambur's Forktail (a dragonfly) and the Bald Eagle are the only identified Rare Animals, with a rating of Special Concern. The American Chestnut is the only identified Rare Plant, with a rating of Special Concern. The state identifies one American Chestnut on Route 1. Two more are found on Kaler Rd. Atlantic Salmon Spawning and Rearing Habitat are identified on the Passagassawakeag River near and between the Route 7/137 and the Doak Rd crossings. Belfast has no state-defined Focus Area of Ecological Significance, no state-identified significant freshwater fisheries habitat, no fragile mountain area, and no National Natural Landmark.

## SCENIC VIEWS

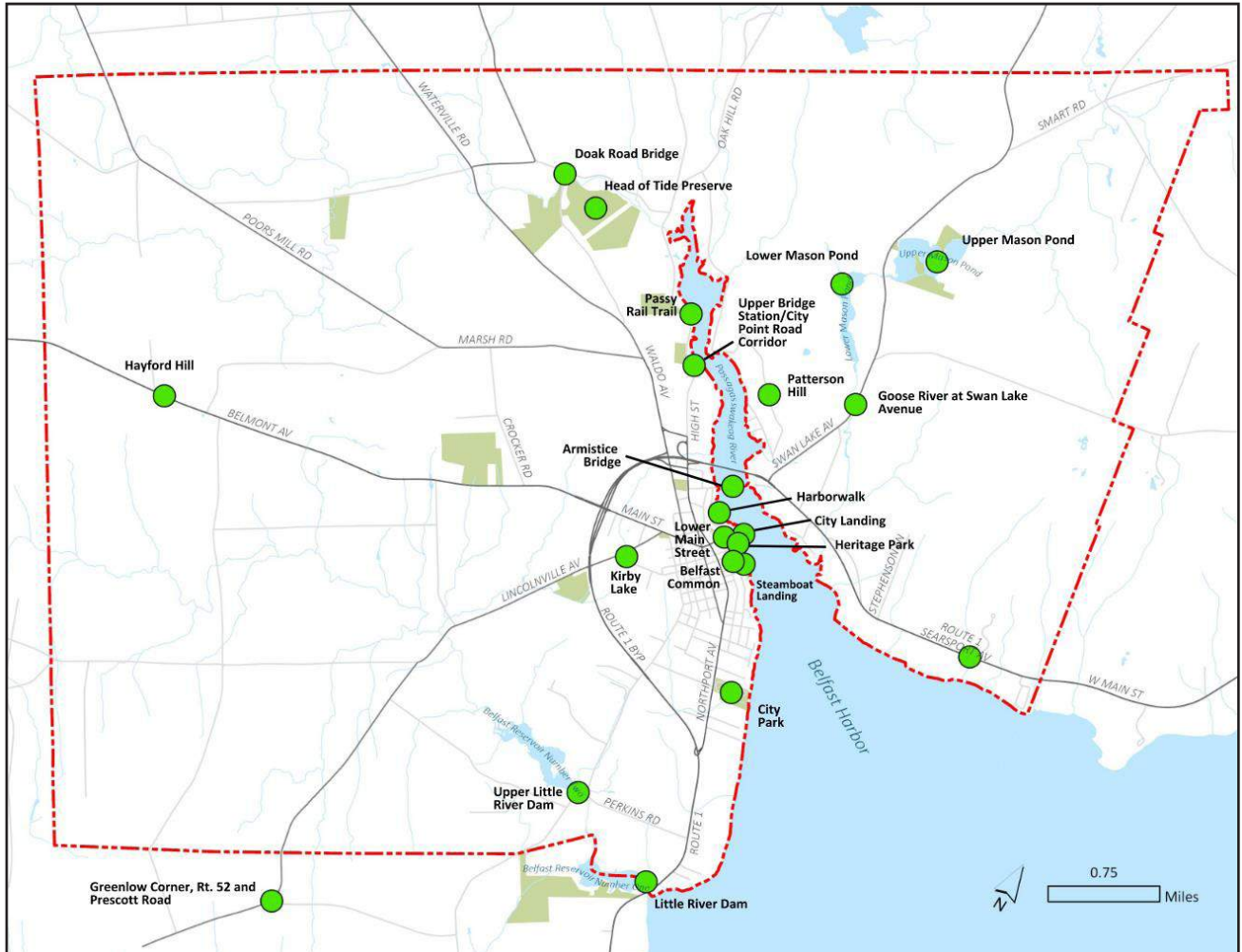
Scenic views in Belfast focus principally on Belfast Harbor and Bay, as seen from public streets and public parks and landings. Other scenic areas include the upper reaches of the Passagassawakeag River, the Goose River and Upper and Lower Mason Pond, the Little River, particularly the area near Route 1 and the area near Outer Congress Street, and the numerous open fields and wooded areas that border many of the rural roads in Belfast. See the map titled Scenic Resources. Scenic resources of Belfast Harbor and Bay are noted in the Marine Resources chapter of this plan as well. The Gateway 1 plan includes a scenic resources map of views from Route 1; see the map titled Belfast Detail of Gateway 1 Scenic Quality Assessment Section Four (Upper Bay and River). In the 1997 Comprehensive Plan, these areas were rated for scenic value [1-9, the higher the number the more scenic]:

- City Park [9]
  - Little River Dam and Little River, looking toward the Bay [6]
  - Upper Little River Dam and Brook [7]
  - Route 52, at junction with Prescott Road (Greenlow Corner), looking toward Belfast [7]
  - Doak Road Bridge [5]
  - Head of Tide [6]
  - City Point to Upper High Street [7]
  - Goose River, adjacent to Swan Lake Avenue [7]
  - Goose River, adjacent to Route 1 [7]
  - Armistice Bridge [7]
  - City Landing [8]
  - Lower Main Street toward the Bay [7]
  - Hayford Hill Area [8]
  - Kirby Lake [5]
  - Patterson Hill [6]
  - Upper and Lower Mason Ponds [N/A]
- Additional sites of high scenic value include:*
- Steamboat Landing
  - Belfast Common
  - Harbor Walk
  - Belfast Rail Trail
  - Heritage Park
  - Bridge to the boathouse



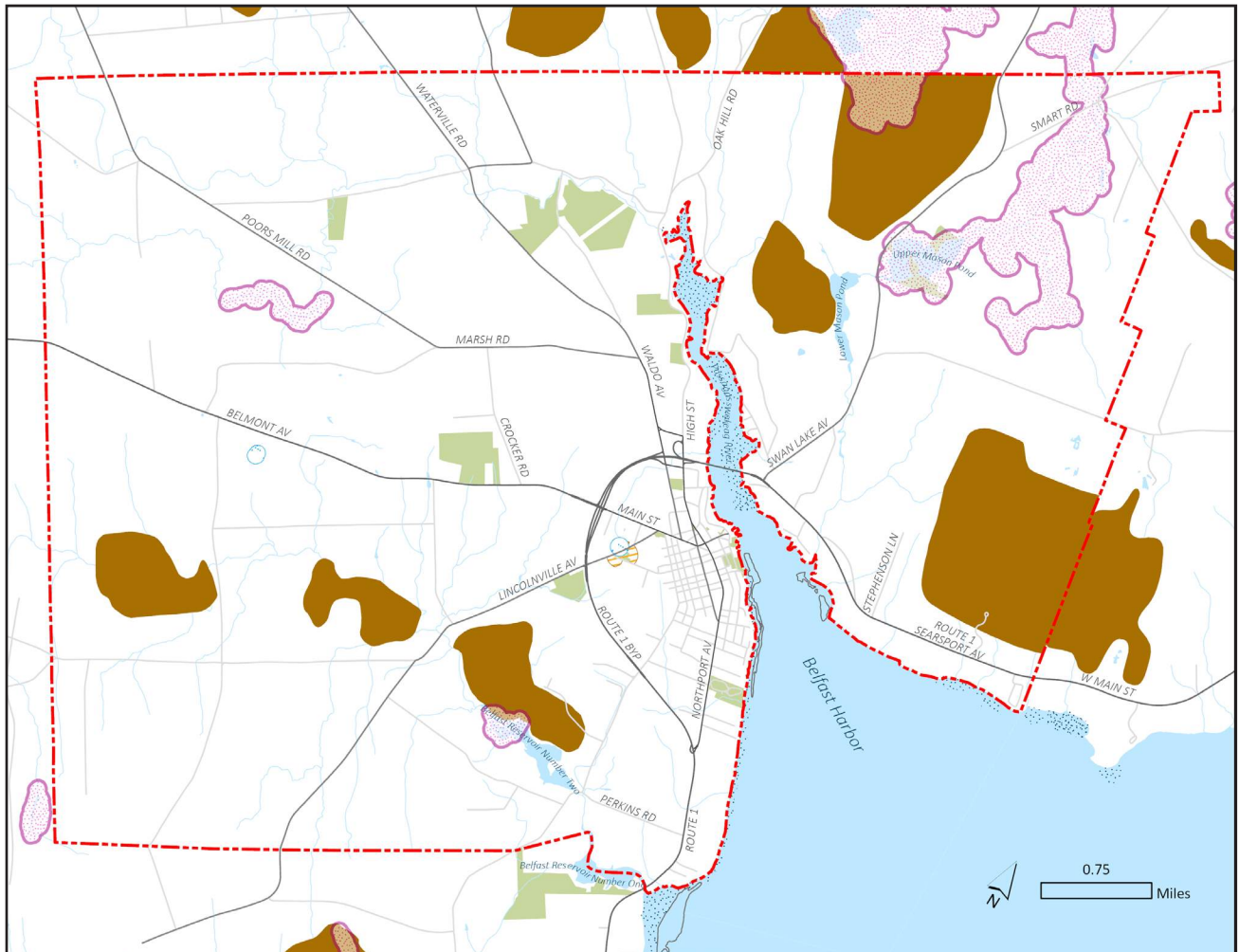
### City of Belfast, Maine Critical Natural Resources Areas

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Eelgrass Gain in Density 1997-2010
- Eelgrass Gain in Extent 1997-2010
- Eelgrass Loss in Density 1997-2010
- Eelgrass Loss in Extent 1997-2010
- Eelgrass No Change
- Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat
- Maine Shorebird Areas
- Endangered, Threatened & Special Concern Wildlife Habitat
- Tidal Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat
- Significant Vernal Pools
- Maine Deer Wintering Areas
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Farmland of statewide importance within large agricultural area
- Maine Aquifers
- Maine Piping Plover and Least Tern Essential Habitat
- Maine Roseate Tern Essential Habitat
- Maine DMR Molluscan Shellfish 2010
- Maine DMR Public Health-Seed Mussel Conservation Areas
- Belfast Watershed District
- Shoreland Zone
















## City of Belfast, Maine Scenic Areas

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Belfast Scenic Areas



## City of Belfast, Maine Significant Habitat Areas

-  Belfast City Boundary
-  Parks and Public Open Spaces
-  Eelgrass Gain in Density 1997-2010
-  Eelgrass Gain in Extent 1997-2010
-  Eelgrass Loss in Density 1997-2010
-  Eelgrass Loss in Extent 1997-2010
-  Eelgrass No Change
-  Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat
-  Maine Shorebird Areas
-  Endangered, Threatened & Special Concern Wildlife Habitat
-  Tidal Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat
-  Significant Vernal Pools
-  Maine Deer Wintering Areas

# WATER RESOURCES

Water resources are vital to Belfast residents, the environment, and the economy. The sensible use of water resources will help ensure the physical health of residents, as well as the usefulness and value of properties. The purpose of this chapter is to help the city identify, manage and adequately protect its water resources, protect the health of residents and safeguard the local economy dependent on water resources. Note: for marine resources, see the Marine Resources Chapter.

## KEY ISSUES

There are several state-identified point sources of pollution from licensed discharges (five wastewater outfalls, four overboard discharges). See the map titled Water Resources for their locations. One of the state-identified wastewater outfalls has ceased operation; it once served Stinson’s Cannery. Two wastewater outfalls are part of the Wastewater Treatment Plant. See the Public Facilities Chapter for information on pollution reduction from the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The city has successfully pursued the elimination of two privately owned overboard discharges within the past twenty years. Also, the city has expended over \$10 million in public funds in the past twenty years to decrease the amount of infiltration and inflow into the city sewer collection system, which has had a direct impact on water quality issues associated with the two city outfalls for the wastewater treatment plant. Belfast believes it has taken significant steps to address point system discharges, and it is pursuing additional steps to further reduce existing infiltration and inflow into the sewer system, which the city feels is the most effective way it can further affect point sources of discharge.



*General View of Swan Lake, Belfast, Maine. Circa 1930-1945. Source: Boston Public Library Tichnor Brothers Collection.*

Runoff from rain falling on impervious surfaces, like buildings and pavement, can be expected from new development. In such runoff, pollutants occurring naturally like phosphorous and synthetic like petroleum products can be transported into wetlands and water bodies. However, impervious surface percentage maximums, as set in shoreland zoning ordinance provisions, can limit the amount of runoff into water bodies. In especially sensitive areas, resource protection designations prohibit development. Best Management Practices during construction, including earthmoving, are referenced in the city’s code. It is believed that shoreland zoning and related provisions are effective overall. However, with Maine coast experiencing increasing amounts of rainfall from more frequent storms, and storms which produce greater volumes of rainfall and for longer durations, Belfast, like many Maine municipalities, will need to re-examine existing stormwater regulations to ensure new and replacement stormwater systems have the capacity to manage stormwater flows in an environmentally sensitive manner.

The city is unaware of pollution threats to groundwater supplies overall. There are limited locations where pollution from underground oil storage tanks have been reported, and remediation/cleanup has occurred when a spill was reported. Maine DEP records 66 facilities with oil storage tanks in Belfast, of which three facilities are near public water supplies and two are near private water supplies. See the next table for these facilities. No tanks are located on aquifers.

## BELFAST UNDERGROUND TANKS NEAR DRINKING WATER SOURCES

Master Tank ID	Reg #	Tanks	Facility	Vo (gal)	Installed	Status	Status Date	Leak Detection
1513004	1513	4	Stanley Chev	1,000	1/1/1968	Abandoned	6/1/1990	Unknown
1824001	1824	1	Waldo County Jail	4,000	1/1/1974	Active	1/1/1974	Manual groundwater sampling
4282001	4282	1	Tallpines Rehab	5,000	3/1/1986	Active	3/1/1986	Secondary containment with continuous electrical monitoring
15262004	15262	4	Big Apple	20,000	5/5/1997	Active	5/5/1997	Secondary containment with continuous electrical monitoring
20346001	20346	4	Belfast Variety Rt. 52	13,000	8/17/2000	Active	10/25/2000	Secondary containment with continuous electrical monitoring

Source: Maine DEP Note: None of these tanks was approved under State Site Law after September 2001.

The City of Belfast was awarded a \$300,000 Brownfields grant in 2019 from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The City of Belfast utilized this Brownfields Assessment funding to continue to implement and improve its existing comprehensive community-wide Brownfields Assessment Program which has been proactively identifying properties on which pollution threats may exist and helping property owners to abate any identified problems. In 2022, the city received another Brownfields Assessment Grant in 2022 for \$500,000. In addition, in 2022 the city received a \$1,000,000 Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Grant, to be used to provide loans to for-profit entities and subgrants to nonprofits and units of government, for actual cleanup costs at sites in Belfast. The city has also previously secured site-specific cleanup grants from EPA, both for city-owned sites (45 Front Street), and also for nonprofits (Waterfall Arts), and units of government (the former Waldo County Jail and Sheriff's House). They secured cleanup grants from Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MEDEP), which have been used at 45 Front Street, and at the site of the current Belfast Soup Kitchen, and previously secured a cleanup loan from MEDEP and the Department of Economic and Community Development to cleanup parcels formerly owned by Home Supply Center located along Washington Street (where Central Maine Power also conducted an approximately \$1.5 million cleanup).

## WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

The city believes that public water supplies and their recharge areas are adequately protected overall through the Watershed and Aquifer Protection District- zoning standards advocated by the Belfast Water District and enacted in the early 1990s. To date, no significant development has occurred within these overlay district areas, and the Water District has not identified any problems within its watershed. At present, no changes are proposed to the current regulatory standards. The city will rely upon the Water District to identify the potential need for other standards. No expansions of public water supply are anticipated.

Non-regulatory measures to protect water quality include the education of business owners and homeowners on the proper storage and disposal of subsurface waste, solid waste, fertilizers, herbicides, and related chemicals, including recycling at the redemption center/transfer station. For example, signage has been installed to inform residents of watersheds boundaries and pavement markings have been installed near storm drains to remind us that stormwater, along with any pollutants it carries, ends up in Belfast Bay. The city can encourage local and regional land trusts to pursue the protection of habitats abutting watercourses through conservation easements or through purchase.

The most significant measure the city has taken is to spend over \$10 million in public funds over the last twenty years to upgrade the wastewater treatment plant and to decrease infiltration and inflow into the city sewer collection system. Prior to this work many of Belfast's sewer mains were over 100 years old and in serious disrepair. The work has been very costly, but the city was very successful in decreasing the frequency and volume of pollutant discharges into the Bay. The city also has often used municipal and/or state funds to replace malfunctioning septic systems for those who cannot afford the cost of replacement.

There are various opportunities to partner with local and regional advocacy groups that promote water resource protection. This could include working with these groups to provide educational materials to landowners and developers as well as using data collected through regional efforts to contribute to the identification of key areas of water resource protection. These groups include the Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition (based in Belfast), a group of organizations and individuals working to support conservation and stewardship of natural, scenic, historic, and public access resources of the Belfast Bay Watershed through research, community-building and education. It is affiliated with the Lower Penobscot



Watershed Coalition. Regional and state natural resource organizations that can serve Belfast include the State of Maine Drinking Water Program (Augusta), Maine Rural Water Association (Brunswick), Natural Resources Council of Maine (Augusta), and Coastal Mountains Land Trust (Camden).

## CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

See the map titled Water Resources for the locations in Belfast of national inventory wetlands by type, water bodies, stream classification, wetland boundaries (drainage divides), overboard discharges, wastewater outfalls, and aquifers of significant yield. See the next table for water body descriptions. See also the map titled Land Cover and map titled Zoning for current and permitted land uses adjacent to water bodies.

## WATER BODY DESCRIPTIONS

Water Body	Ecological, Economic, Recreational Values	Current Watershed Land Uses	Threats to Water Quality	Documented Water Quality
Belfast Bay and Harbor	See Marine Resource Chapter			
Belfast Reservoir #1	Recreational	Forested	Development	None known
Belfast Reservoir #2	Recreational	Forested	Development	None known
Belfast Reservoir Outlet	Water Supply	Forested	Development	None known
Goose River	Hydropower, Water Recharge	Residential, Nonresidential	Run-off, development	None known
Little River	Water Supply Recreation	Residential Forested Agriculture	Run-off, development	None known
Lower Mason Pond	Recreation	Residential	Development	See Water Resource Appendix
Marsh Fork Stream	Water Quality	Forested & Residential	Residential development	None known
Passagassawakeag River	Ecological (Atlantic Salmon Habitat), Economic	Forested, Residential, Mixed Use/Developed	Wastewater outfalls, overboard discharges	None known
Upper Mason Pond	Recreation	Forested, Wetlands, Clear-cut, Residential	Residential development, hydropower levels	See Water Resources Appendix
Warren Brook	Water Quality	Forested & Residential	Minimal threats	None known
Webster Brook	Water Quality	Forested & Residential	Minimal threats	None known
Wescot Stream	Recreation	Forested & Residential	Residential development	None known

Notes: The reservoirs no longer supply drinking water. All rivers and streams are Class B. All estuaries and marine waters are Class SB.

**Statutory Definition of Class B waters:**

*Class B shall be the 3rd highest classification.*

Class B waters shall be of such quality that they are suitable for the designated uses of drinking water supply after treatment; fishing; agriculture; recreation in and on the water; industrial process and cooling water supply; hydroelectric power generation, except as prohibited under Title 12, section 403; and navigation; and as habitat for fish and other aquatic life. The habitat shall be characterized as unimpaired. [1985, c. 698, § 15 (new).]

**Statutory Definition of Class SB waters:**

*Class SB waters shall be the 2nd highest classification.*

Class SB waters must be of such quality that they are suitable for the designated uses of recreation in and on the water, fishing, aquaculture, propagation and harvesting of shellfish, industrial process and cooling water supply, hydroelectric power generation, navigation and as habitat for fish and other estuarine and marine life. The habitat must be characterized as unimpaired. [2003, c. 227, §7 (amd).]

# PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIES IN BELFAST

Public Water System (PWS) Name	PWS Type	Source Name	Source Type	PWS ID#
Belfast Water District	C	Jackson Pit Well GP 51'	WL	ME0090140
Piper Stream Mobile Home Park	C	125' Bedrock Well 11/1990 50 GPM	WL	ME0095560
Belfast Water District	C	Gp Wells-Smart Rd Well 47'	WL	ME0090140
Belfast Curling Club	NC	Dr Well	WL	ME0008779
County Rose Webbas Roadhouse	NC	Bedrock Well	WL	ME0021568
Belfast Cohousing & Ecovillage Condos	C	*No Source Water Assessment	WL	ME0092433
Belfast United Methodist Church	NC	*No Source Water Assessment	WL	ME0092356

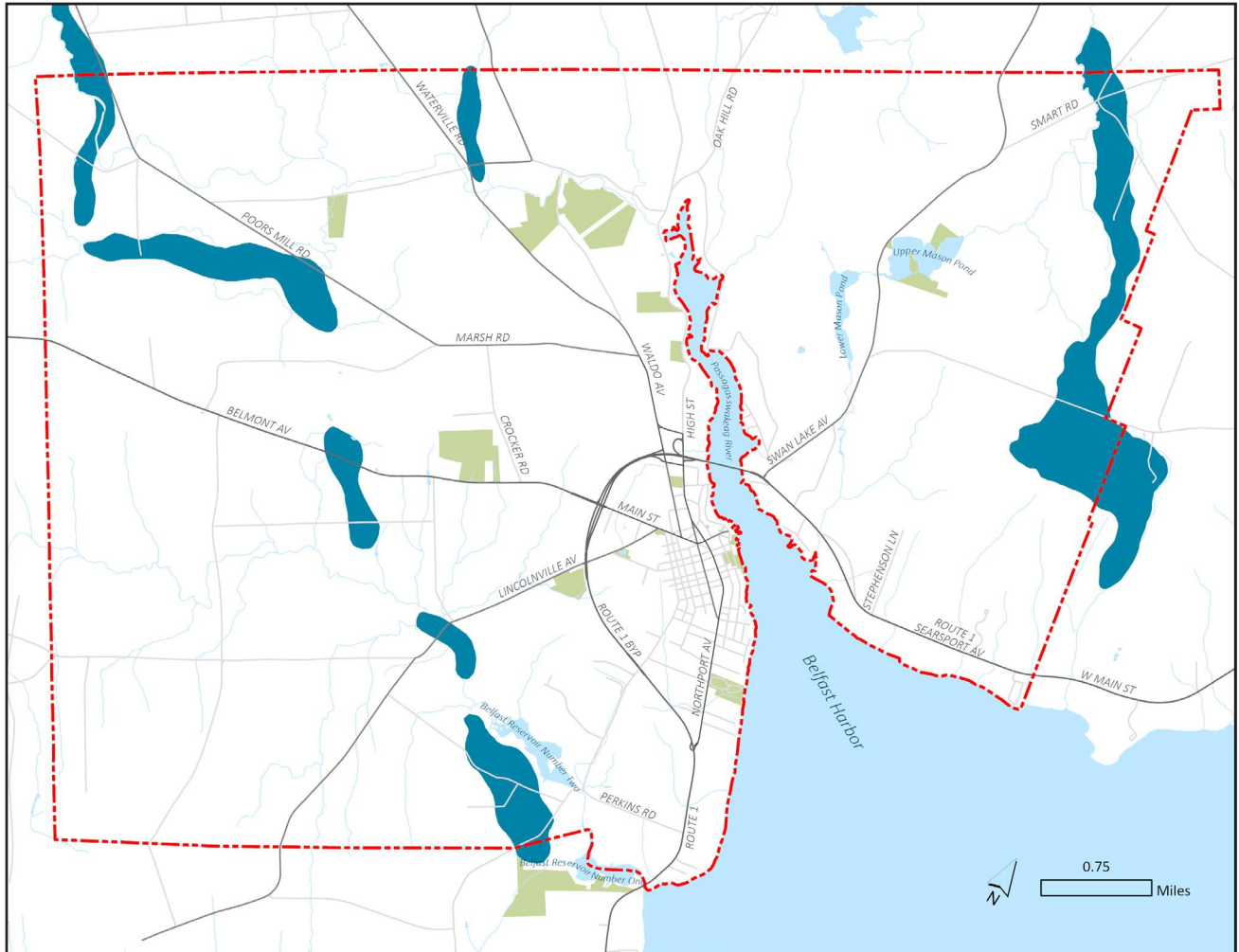
Notes: C = Community Water System: A public water system which serves at least 15 service connections used by year-round residents or regularly serves at least 25 year-round residents.

NC = Non-Community Water System: A public water system that is not a community water system.

Maine DEP has assessed public water supplies in Belfast. They rate the Belfast Public Water District future risk of chronic contamination as moderate; for Piper Stream Mobile Home Park the risk is high; and for the Belfast Curling Club the risk is moderate. The placement of land around these supplies into resource conservation through conservation easements or through resource protection zoning would improve these ratings and reduce the future threats to drinking water. At some point the city may need to work with the owners of the Piper Stream Mobile Home Park to install updated subsurface wastewater management improvements to reduce the risk of contamination, and/or to require the owner to purchase abutting land to create a buffer zone around the park.

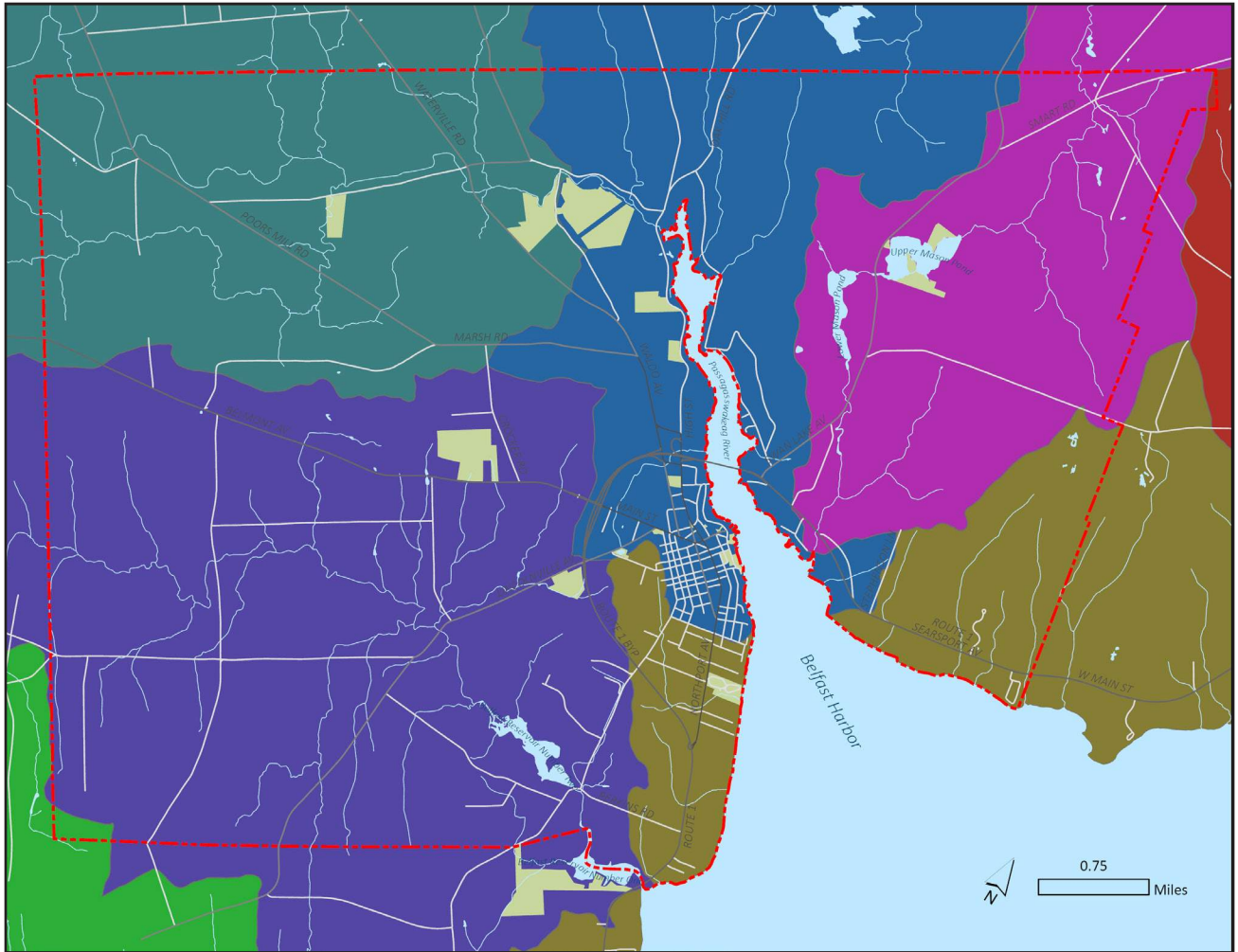
# SHORELAND PROTECTION

Shoreland/Waterfront Zoning: Belfast has adopted Shoreland Zoning provisions (Chapter 82 of the Belfast Code), which are intended to provide protection to shorefront areas, within a 250-foot area from the normal high water line of all tidal waters, identified freshwater wetlands that are 10 acres or more, the upland edge of freshwater wetlands, salt marshes, salt meadows, wetlands associated with great ponds, rivers and specified flood hazard areas. An area of 75 feet from the normal high water line is set for other water bodies including tributary streams. These shoreland zones include Resource Protection, Limited Residential, Urban Residential, General Development, Stream Protection, Stream Development, Manufactured Housing Community, and Waterfront Development. Beyond shoreland zoning, an Aquifer-Watershed Overlay District has been established to protect areas with aquifers that are used for public drinking water supplies by limiting development. See the ordinance provisions for more information on these standards and permitted uses.



## City of Belfast, Maine Aquifers

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Maine Aquifers



## City of Belfast, Maine Watersheds

-  Belfast City Boundary
-  Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Belfast, Maine Watersheds WMD HU12
-  Belfast Reservoir Number One-Little River
-  Ducktrap River
-  Mill Brook
-  Passagassawakeag River
-  Penobscot Bay Frontal Drainages
-  Penobscot Bay-Atlantic Ocean
-  Swan Lake-Goose River
-  Wescot Stream

# AGRICULTURAL & FOREST RESOURCES

Farming and forestry are significant land use activities that are important to the economic well-being of numerous Belfast residents. These open space resources are integral to Belfast's rural character and are important to Belfast's residents, who have over the years, indicated a strong preference for preserving the city's rural character. This chapter describes agricultural and forestry resources in Belfast and recommends steps for their protection.

## KEY ISSUES

Agriculture and forestry are more important to the community than the small number of those employed in these sectors might suggest. The market for local agricultural products is increasing and Belfast residents could likely support more activity in this sector. Sustainable forestry provides a small but useful supplemental income to large landowners, and helps reduce property tax valuations, allowing residents who work in the local economy or are on fixed incomes to remain in Belfast. Larger scale, traditional agricultural activities have declined, while specialized, small-scale and niche-farming activities have increased, like the raising of alpacas, organic and heirloom crops.

In early 2023, there were a total of 3,797.41 acres enrolled in the Current Use Taxation Program. Of those acres, 2,210.42 were in the Farmland Protection, which was up from 1,034.45 acres in 2019; 1,260.54 were enrolled in Tree Growth, slightly down from 1,524.33 acres in 2019; and 326.45 in the Open Space program, which is slightly down from the 361.67 acres in 2019. Those property owners participating in the farmland and tree growth tax programs are benefiting from reduced tax assessments based on the current (non-residential) use of their property or portions thereof. It is estimated that additional farmland and woodlots might be eligible to participate in these voluntary programs.

The rising value of land for residential uses and the increased valuation of land that could be converted to residential use have reduced the amount of land farmed and forested. Property tax is the primary source of revenue for municipal government services. Residential uses are often sought because of the increased property tax revenue that they will generate. Importantly, however, residential uses consume significantly more municipal services than do farming and forestry activities. Scattered residential development in formerly rural areas breaks up contiguous parcels and facilitates increased residential development. Farming has typically been small-scale; however, niche operations catering to specialized markets can still flourish. No industrialized forest operations (encompassing 500 acres or more per site) are found in Belfast. Voluntary tree growth designation is likely to continue. Although, limited amounts of forestry conservation easements in the city mean that the existing forestry activities may decline as scattered development in formerly rural areas increase.

## LAND USE AND ZONING

Many of the current zoning districts support agricultural and forestry uses. In addition, many of the city's commercial zoning districts allow low scale agricultural activities and the city zoning regulations allow domestic chickens in urban residential neighborhoods.

The City's Future Land Use Plan, adopted as part of this Comprehensive Plan, supports the Outside Rural – 1 (OR-1) zoning district. This district clearly allows and encourages agricultural and forestry uses, and allows home occupations at a scale that can support small agricultural, husbandry, forestry and similar uses. There are many large undeveloped rural parcels in Belfast, and at present, there is minimal pressure to redevelop these parcels for residential use. Most remain open field and forestry lands.

The Future Land Use Plan also recognizes that many areas in Belfast support a wide range of uses. As such, it is recommended that agricultural activities be allowed in mixed use/commercial zoning districts. The city also will consider policies similar to its domesticated chicken policy for urban areas.

## THE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

The city is very supportive of non-regulatory steps to support farming and forestry including farmers' markets, working with the local Chamber of Commerce to help market agriculture products, and working with school lunch programs to incorporate local goods. The city actively supports outreach and education on the importance of local farms and forestlands to local schools and the public. Troy Howard Middle School has an award-winning garden project on site in which the student plan, grow and market a large variety of crops for use both in the school cafeteria and to sell to the public.



Image from [belfastfarmersmarket.com](http://belfastfarmersmarket.com).

Belfast has a long-established food co-operative, The Belfast Co-Op, that serves as an anchor to the downtown business district and has over 3,000 members. It actively partners with local growers and producers to highlight the regional agricultural bounty. Additionally, the Co-op provides advocacy and education regarding healthy living and foods, often partnering with other area organizations with similar interests. The city is also host to the Belfast Farmers' Market, a 43-yr-old cooperatively managed membership of farmers and food producers that set-up market on Friday mornings year-round with a range of 15-25 members depending on the season. Additionally, a popular year-round public market called the United Farmers Market has opened in the former Mathews Brothers factory between Miller and Spring Streets. This venue hosts a wide variety of artisans as well as food producers, local farms and ready-to-eat foods on Saturday mornings.

Spring through Fall, there are many pop-up vendors selling local goods from produce to honey and maple to seafood all over the city and a number of permanent farm stands along the major routes leading into the city designed to take advantage of its population density. The Maine Farmland Trust (located in Belfast) and the Coastal Mountains Land Trust work with landowners who wish to conserve their properties for the continuation of sustainable agricultural and forestry operations.

## **AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY PROGRAMS**

The open space provided by farming and forestry activities is important to the rural character that surrounds the Downtown and is found in backland areas away from the highway commercial development that is spreading along Route 1 and Route 3. According to the American Community Survey, only 1.5% of Belfast's residents worked in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining occupations in 2021. However, the public's attention on the value of locally raised healthy food has boosted the market for these commodities. Accordingly, grocery stores and supermarket chains are offering more local produce and related goods for sale in Belfast. Belfast's population could become a larger market for dairy and crops raised within Waldo County and nearby.

In 1997, there were eight active farms in Belfast: one dairy farm, one dairy and sheep farm, and six general agriculture farms. There were 434.59 acres registered in Belfast under the States Farm and Open Space Law: 57.5 acres in crops, 365.09 acres in pasture, 4 acres in orchard and 8 acres in horticulture. All of this land is located in the rural area. In 2022, there were 38 properties enrolled as farmland in Belfast. There were 2,210.42 acres in the Farmland Protection Program and 326.45 acres in the Open Space Program. The increased acreage in crops, pasture, and horticulture from 1997 to 2021 is due to increased participation in the program, rather than an increase in farming activity.

The Tree Growth Tax Law Program allows for the assessment of forestland based on current use rather than market value as long as the land is managed for timber production and remains as forest. In 1997, there were 2,130.6 acres registered in Belfast under the Tree Growth Tax Law Program. All but 23.75 acres of this acreage are in rural locations. Most of this acreage is located on the west side of the city. In 2021, there were 1,260.54 acres registered in Belfast under the Tree Growth Tax Law Program. Most of this acreage is in rural locations.



## WALDO COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SALES

Year/Item	1978	1982	1992	1997	2007	2017
All crops	\$1,257,000	\$1,850,000	\$2,796,000	\$2,796,000	\$5,002,000	\$8,479,000
Livestock / Poultry	\$46,202,000	\$34,681,000	\$14,336,000	\$12,229,000	\$17,818,000	\$14,476,000
Nursery & Greenhouse Products	\$130,000	\$185,000	\$541,000	\$1,211,000	\$1,613,000	\$2,539,000
Fruits, Nuts, & Berries	\$393,000	\$723,000	\$1,511,000	\$650,000	\$1,284,000	\$1,005,000

Source: USDA/Dept. of Commerce, Agriculture Census 1978-2017. 2017 was the most recent Agricultural Census.

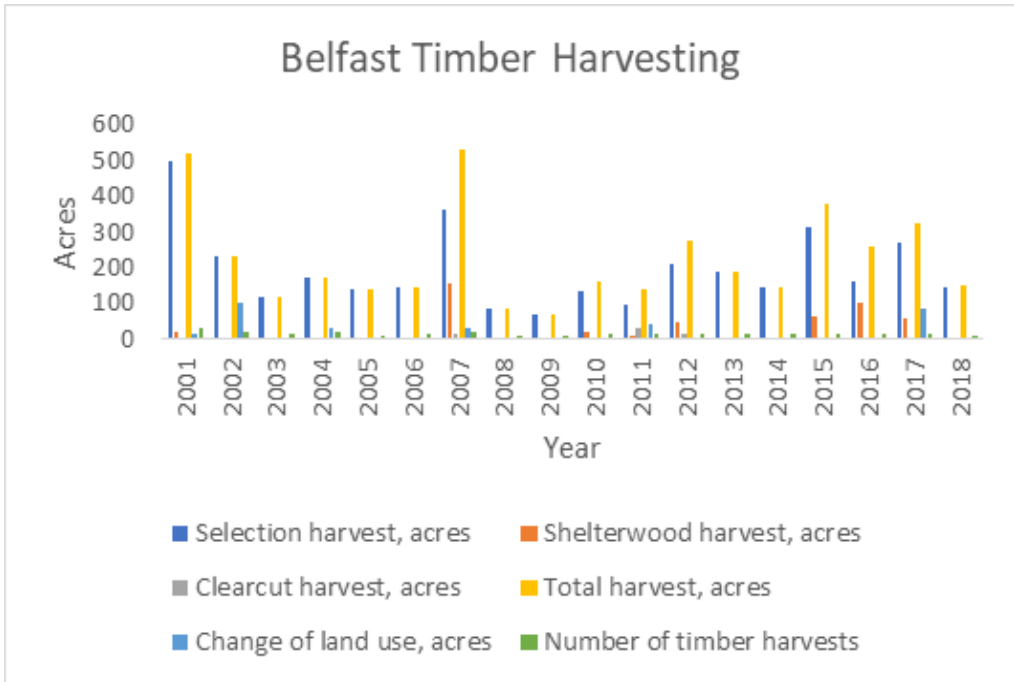
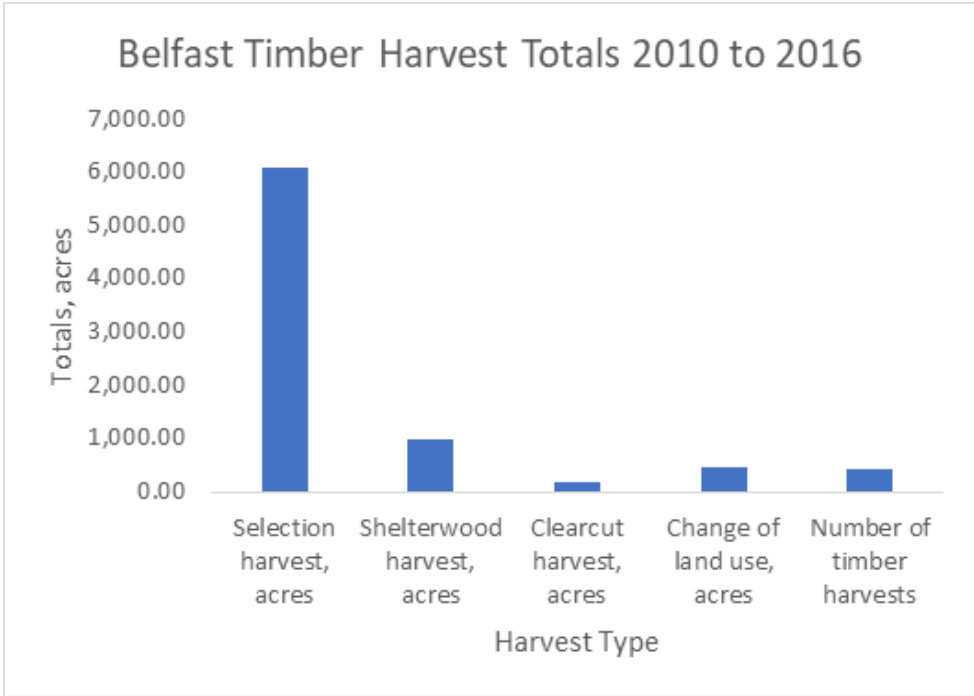
Notes: Most agricultural activity in the county occurs outside Belfast. All crops category includes nursery and greenhouse products.

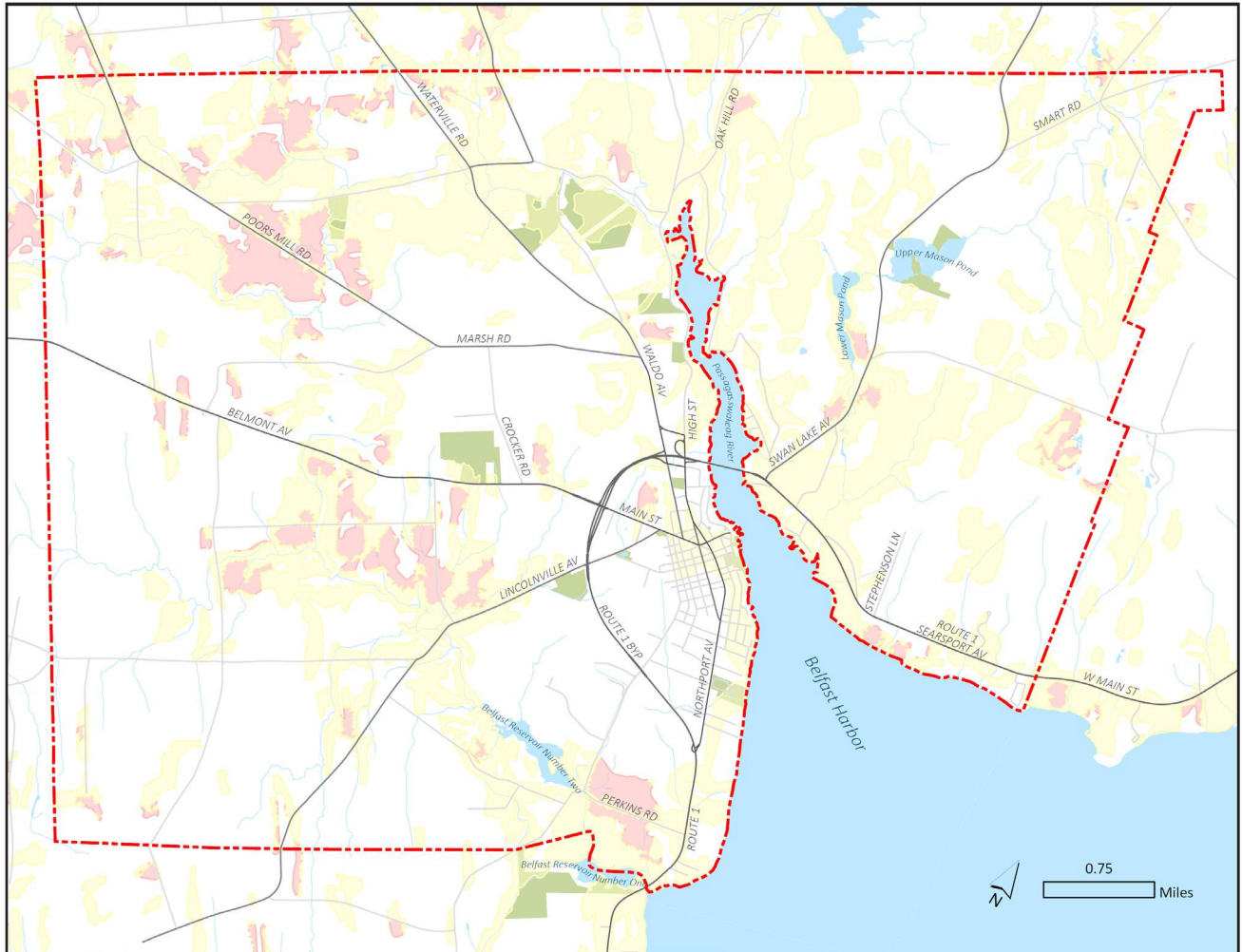
## FORESTRY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Clear-cutting has only arisen as an issue in Belfast twice in the past 15 years. Off the Route 1 bypass, about 30 acres were cleared on property adjacent to and under the same ownership as a mobile home park. Maine DEP fined the owner and they have paid restoration fees, which were likely in excess of the revenue made from the timber sold. The cleared lot has yet to be developed. Another 15 acres were cleared in 2012. Selective cutting has occurred as part of regulated woodlands management throughout the rural portions of the city. To date, clear cutting has not been a major concern. The city can advise farmers and woodlot owners on best management practices and put these persons in contact with state officials for further guidance.

## TIMBER HARVESTING

Selection harvesting was the most prominent type of timber harvesting in Belfast, while clearcut harvesting has been the least prominent. Total harvest acres were greatest in 2001 and 2007. Total harvested acres declined significantly after 2007. Since 2012, timber harvesting has been consistent on a yearly basis.





## City of Belfast, Maine Farmland of Statewide Importance

- - - Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Farmland of statewide importance within large agricultural area

# MARINE RESOURCES

Access to the ocean and its abundant marine resources has been a staple of the coastal economy in the State of Maine for centuries. This ocean access has been described at the state level as the working waterfront. Past and present uses of the working waterfront in Belfast include, but are not limited to, commercial fishing, aquaculture, rail transportation, marine transportation, boat building and repair, and recreational opportunities.

Citizens who participated in a community planning process called ‘The Vibrancy Project’ ranked the maintenance and protection of a real and friendly working waterfront as the highest priority measure to improve quality of life and commerce in the city. The purpose of this chapter is to help the city identify, manage, and protect its marine resources and working waterfront features in order to safeguard the local economy that is dependent on these uses.

## KEY ISSUES

Belfast, like many Maine communities, experienced problems with operation of its public sewer system, including occasional overflows of sewage into the coastal waters of Belfast Bay. Belfast’s sewer system consists of 31 miles of sewer pipe, much of which are over 100 years old and in extremely poor condition. The city has taken very aggressive measures to address this pollution issue.

In 2000, the city contracted with its engineering firm, Olver Associates, to prepare a Sewer System Master Plan to abate problems associated with Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs). Since 2001, the city has completed many of the identified projects at a public cost of over \$10 million dollars to eliminate CSOs, upgrade the wastewater treatment plant, and significantly decrease the amount of infiltration into the city sewer system. Since then, Belfast, like most Maine communities, has experienced a significant increase in the annual amount of rainfall; however, the sewer improvements constructed have significantly reduced the number and intensity of overflows into the Bay. See the Public Facilities chapter and Capital Improvement Plan in the Fiscal Capacity chapter of this plan for more information.

## WATER QUALITY AND FISHERIES RESOURCES

Water quality can be degraded by many factors, resulting from natural occurrences, and human activity. Pollution can be classified by its origin. Point source pollution originates from a single point, such as an outflow pipe overboard discharge with untreated wastes from a residence, business, or factory. The Maine DEP’s Bureau of Land and Water Quality lists three overboard discharges and five wastewater outfalls approved within Belfast. See the Water Resources Map for their locations.

The city has few current concerns regarding how fishery resources are being managed at the local and regional level. Maine’s Department of Marine Resources (DMR) has instituted seasonal restrictions that affect when construction can occur in near-shore waters; however, the agency has exercised reasonable and locally desired flexibility in applying these standards to construction projects. Further, recreational fishermen have not expressed any significant concern regarding the condition of fishery resources that are subject to recreational fishing. Unfortunately, despite being less common in the area, few salmon now enter Belfast Bay or the Passagassawakeag River and it appears that salmon will not become a significant local recreational fishery.

## COASTAL LAND USE

Belfast Harbor, starting in the mid-1990s, has seen a dramatic increase in growth and activity. The amount of growth is similar to that experienced along much of the Maine coast. While activity began to level off in 2008-2009 due to the large impact the economy plays in both the boating industry and shorefront real estate markets, the amount of activity in the harbor increased significantly in 2011-2012 with the development of the Front Street Shipyard, a major boat repair, refitting, storage and building operation. The arrival of the Shipyard, combined with ongoing pressures on the harbor, prompted the city in 2011-2012 to prepare a new inner harbor management plan. The City Council adopted the plan and accompanying ordinance amendments recommended by the Harbor Committee. The city and the Harbor Master implement this plan. The harbor is a critical vibrant part of the community, and the management of the harbor has been effective overall.

According to the Harbormaster, for the past nine years, there have been approximately 300 total moorings in Belfast Harbor. Recently, the establishment of moorings for riparian or shorefront owners, along with an increase in transient cruisers renting overnight moorings and dock space, has put additional pressure on the number of moorings available. There is also a large number of boaters from Islesboro, Castine, Northport and surrounding areas who come for lunch or stay for the day to enjoy the downtown or one of the many activities held on the waterfront. A cruise line brings small passenger ships into Belfast and the harbor is now among the top 10 in Maine for the number of cruise ship passenger visits per year.

There remains room for further development in the harbor, including setting additional moorings and expanding slip space and developing the inner harbor. However, any increase of substantial slip space in the outer harbor may largely depend on creating additional protection that would need to be provided by a breakwater or wave attenuator. The alluring assets of Belfast Harbor may be attributed to its wide diversity in users, including strong support in maintaining a working waterfront, fisheries and aquaculture.

## MANAGEMENT

Belfast adopted an official management plan for the harbor in 1991 and an inner harbor management plan in 2011-2012. The city has been implementing provisions of the plans including approaches such as involving the Belfast Harbor Committee in the review of Shoreland Permits for marine facilities, establishing five respective management districts for the harbor and associated wharf line limits for marine facilities, and periodically amending the Harbor Operations Ordinance. In 2010, the City Council authorized the city to secure professional consulting services to prepare a downtown waterfront plan. A key component of this planning effort involved examining use and development of the working waterfront area, including both public and privately owned lands, and the use of the Inner Harbor area. This effort led to preparation and adoption of ordinances for the Inner Harbor area, as well as the construction of an expanded commercial fisherman's wharf that was completed in 2013.

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report from January 2021, the Belfast city manager requested a study under Section 107 of the River and Harbor Act of 1960 to determine the feasibility of implementing a navigation improvement project for Belfast Harbor. The town requested a study for construction of breakwaters across the outer harbor to further protect the harbor from wave action and storms. This improvement would potentially provide further protection of harbor anchorages and allow for expansion of commercial and recreational activities.

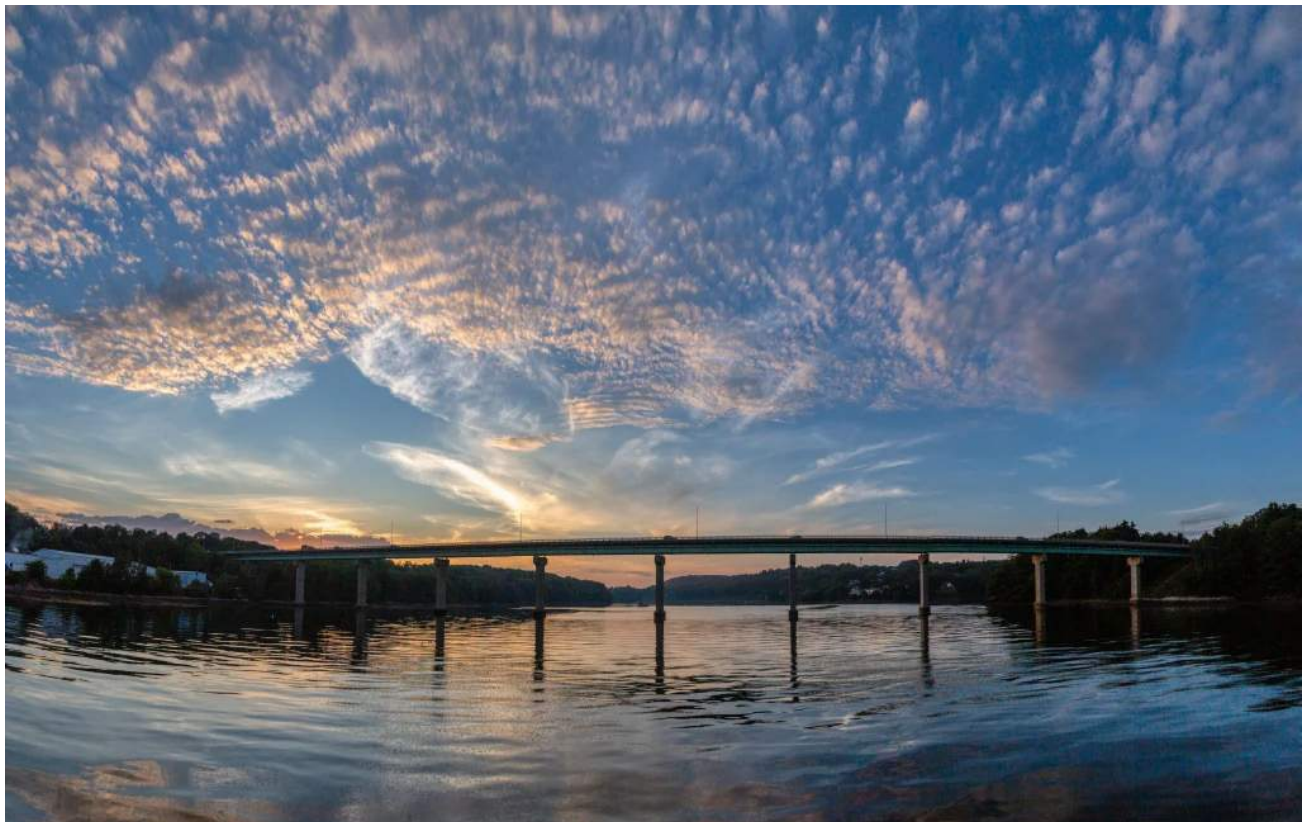
## COASTAL ACCESS

Current capacity of city-owned facilities will be adequate to meet the anticipated demand of commercial fishermen and recreational users. Proposed improvements over the next 10 years to these facilities are aimed at enhancing public access, ensuring there are adequate support facilities for harbor operations, and providing needed maintenance to existing facilities. Belfast has numerous rangeways (rights-of-way) to the shore that were inventoried and surveyed in 2010. Many rangeways have been improved to increase pedestrian access to the waterfront. Recently, art installations have been added along the rangeways to draw attention and increase use.

A key improvement to the waterfront was the 2013 expansion of the commercial fisherman's wharf at the City Landing. The commercial fisherman's wharf supports most of the local fishing fleet, primarily lobstermen.

## SCENIC RESOURCES

The Public Landing, Heritage Park, Thompsons Wharf, Steamboat Landing, and Belfast City Park, have protected visual and physical access to coastal waters. An inventory of additional visual access points is recommended in this plan, including water views from the footbridge, Hayford Hill (Route 3), and Little River/Goose River (Searsport Avenue/Route 1). Beyond publicly owned land and land in conservation, such as that owned by the Coastal Mountain Land Trust along the Passagassawakeag River, other scenic views are not protected. A map of scenic views is found in the Critical Natural Resources inventory chapter.



*Passagassawakeag River at sunset. Source: <https://jazzerstenhdr.wordpress.com>.*

# CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

## MARINE RESOURCES LICENSES HELD BY BELFAST RESIDENTS

Type/Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2018	2019
Dealers	19	17	14	13	13	11	11	15
Harvesters	58	67	52	52	49	42	19	20



## FISHES AND DECAPODS FOUND IN THE VICINITY OF BELFAST BAY

Genus and Species	Common Name
Crangon septemspinosa	Sand Shrimp
Carcinus maenas	Green Crab
Gasterosteus aculeatus	Threespine Stickleback
Apeltes quadracus	Fourspine Stickleback
Pungitius pungitius	Ninespine Stickleback
Tautoglabrus adspersus	Cunner
Cyclopterus lumpus	Lumpfish
Myoxocephalus aeneus	Grubby
Pholis gunnellus	Rock Gunnel
Syngnathus fuscus	Northern Pinefish
Microgadus tomcod	Atlantic Tomcod
Urophycis tenuis	White Hake
Pseudopleuronectes americanus	Winter Flounder

Source: Maine DMR.

The city notes that mackerel and stripers are in the river, and both attract recreational fishing interest (Maine Department of Marine Resources).

See the map titled Land Cover for the locations of developed, forested, cultivated, and open areas along and near the coast. See the map titled Current Land Use for the existing zoning along and near the coast, including waterfront zones. Most development along the coast is residential, not water dependent. Commercial uses and water dependent commercial uses are primarily located adjacent to downtown and along a stretch of shoreline that is about 3,500 lineal feet in length. Water dependent uses are found at and near landings, piers and wharfs, which are adjacent to downtown. It also is noted that little of the coastline in Belfast is well suited for significant water dependent commercial activities, and that all commercial fishermen operate out of the city’s harbor facilities and that fishermen do not have their own dock.

## FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

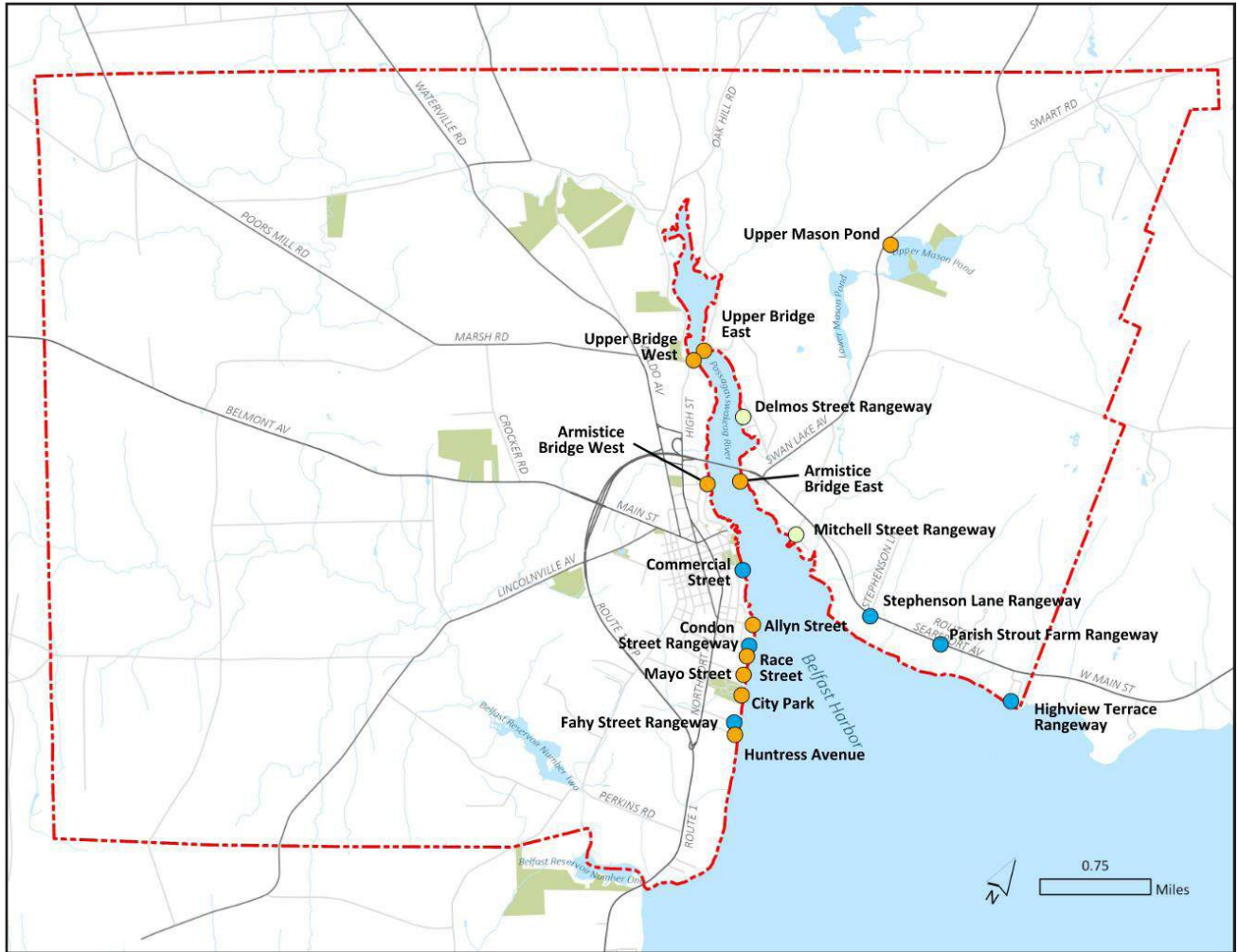
Belfast participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, and the city has adopted Floodplain Management Ordinance provisions (Chapter 78 of the Belfast Code). See the maps titled Flood Zones and Flood Zones (Downtown) for the location and types of flood zones . Special flood hazard areas are inundated by 100-year floods, i.e., less than a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in a given year. Ordinance provisions limit development in flood prone areas and require that the development allowed in these areas is suitably designed to withstand flooding. The city updated its Floodplain Management Ordinance and associated FEMA floodplain maps in 2015.



## SHORELAND / WATERFRONT ZONING

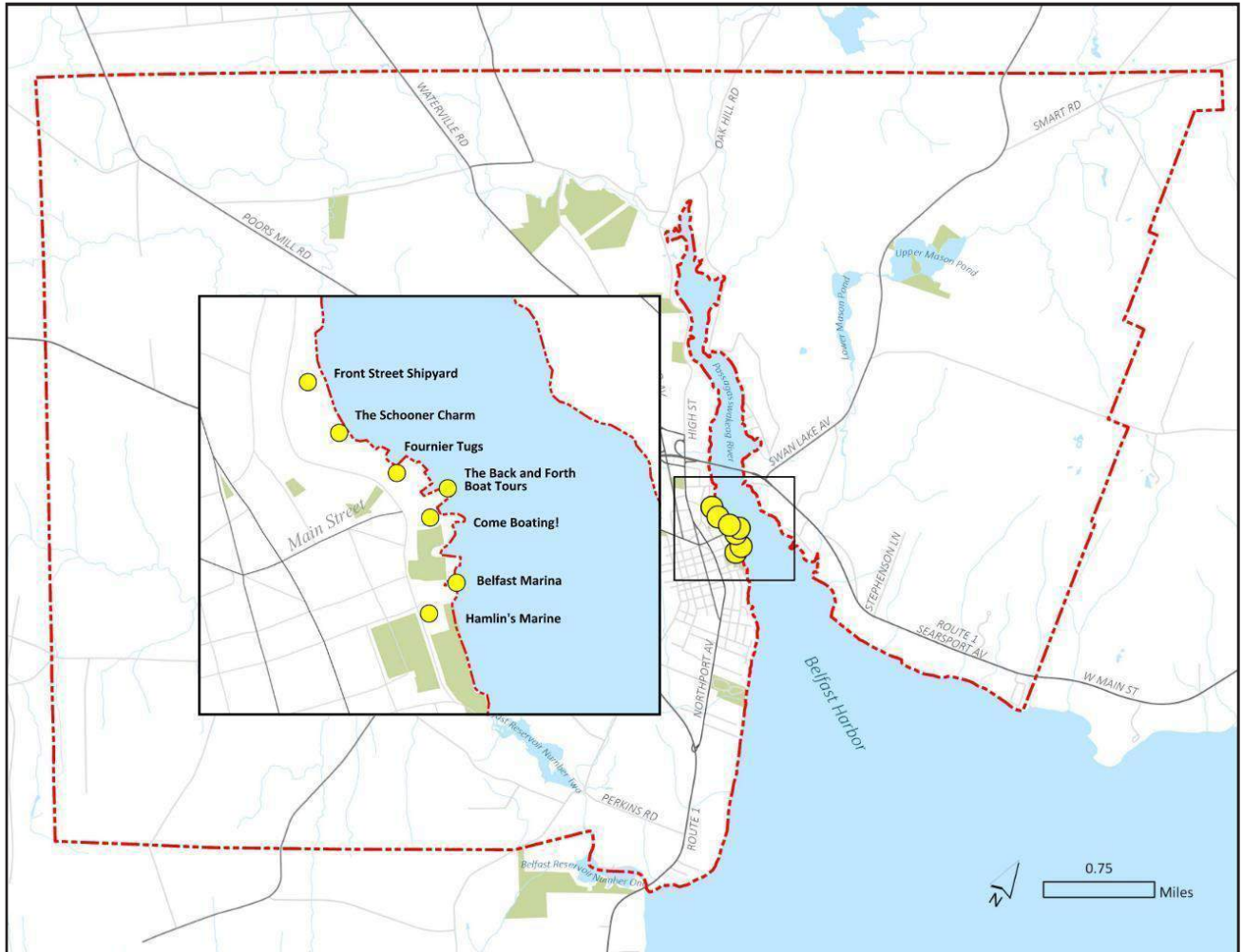
Belfast has adopted Shoreland Zoning provisions (Chapter 82 of the Belfast Code), which are intended to provide protection to shorefront areas within 250 feet of the normal high water line of all tidal waters; identified freshwater wetlands that are 10 acres or more; the upland edge of freshwater wetlands, salt marshes, salt meadows, and wetlands associated with great ponds and rivers; and specified flood hazard areas. An area of 75 feet from the normal high water line is set for other water bodies including tributary streams. These shoreland zones include Resource Protection, Limited Residential, Urban Residential, General Development, Stream Protection, Stream Development, Manufactured Housing Community, and Waterfront Development. Waterfront Development districts include Waterfront I "A" Downtown, Waterfront Mixed Use, and Searsport Avenue Waterfront. Land use standards are defined for each zone. Waterfront districts allow marine and water dependent uses, in addition to a range of other mixed uses. The city notes that its Shoreland Ordinance provisions often vary from those identified in the State Shoreland Model Ordinance, and that the State Department of Environmental Protection has reviewed and approved all City Ordinance provisions. See the ordinance provisions for more information on these standards and permitted uses.

Belfast has adopted harbor management ordinance provisions (Chapter 30 of the Belfast Code) to regulate marine activities within Belfast waters (harbor and bay). A City Council-appointed Harbor Advisory Committee provides recommendations to the City Council through the City Manager and Harbormaster. This Committee also provides recommendations to the Planning Board in its review of proposed docks and piers that require permits in the shoreland zone. The City Council and City Manager appoint a Harbormaster who oversees the city's moorings, floats, docks, ramps, breakwater, channels, and adjacent municipal property and ensures that the public grounds maintenance division provides for their proper maintenance. As previously noted, in 2012 the City Council adopted new provisions to regulate use of the inner harbor area. All Harbor Ordinances can be found in the City Code of Ordinances.



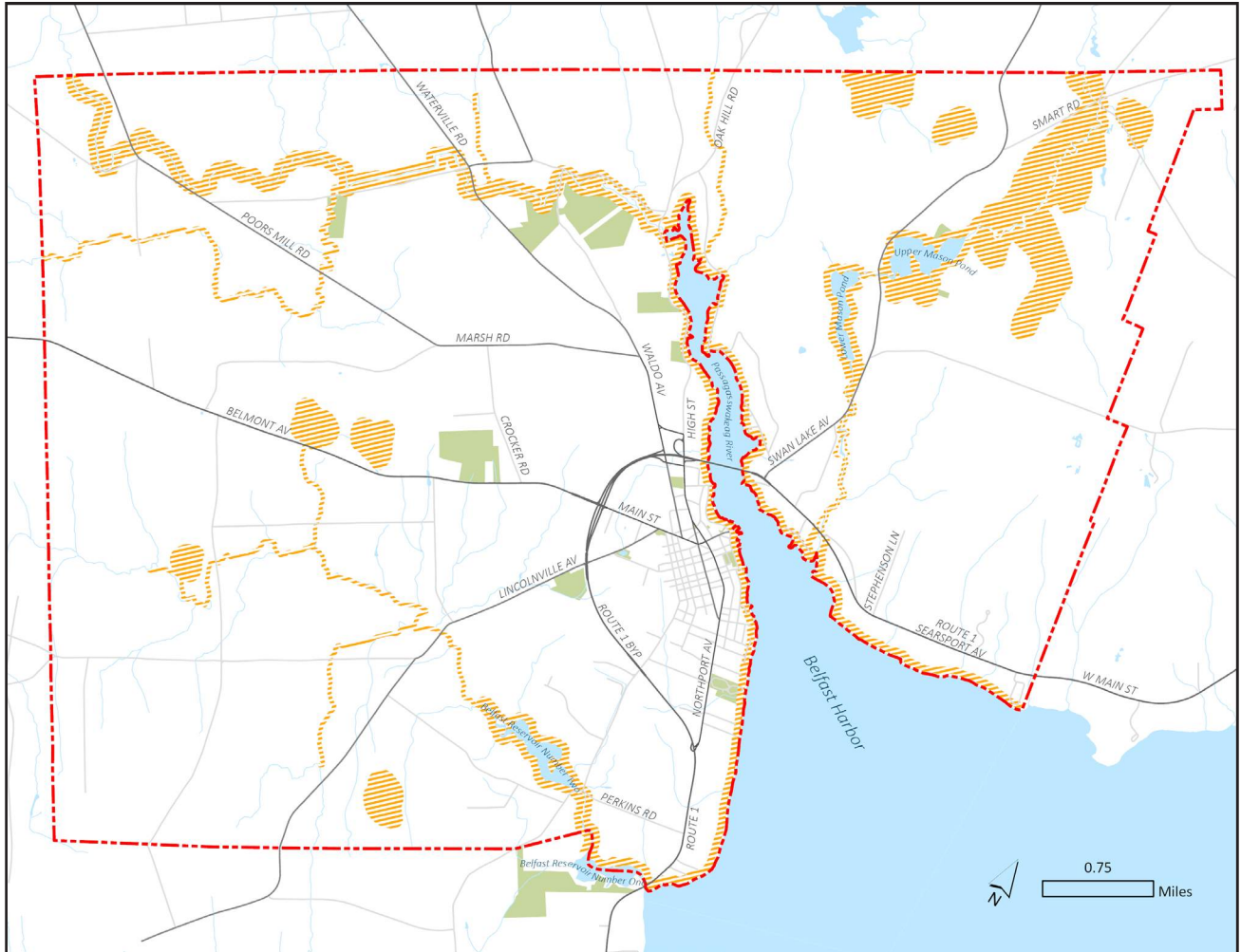
## City of Belfast, Maine Public Access Points to Water

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Public Way
- Public Way, Historic Rangeway
- Public Way, Unclear Status






## City of Belfast, Maine Water Dependent Uses

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Belfast Water Dependent Uses



## City of Belfast, Maine Shoreland Zoning

-  Belfast City Boundary
-  Parks and Public Open Spaces
-  Shoreland Zone

# FISCAL CAPACITY

Strong municipal fiscal capacity and long-term financial planning require that planning and policy decisions consider a municipality's ability to make necessary expenditures and the impact this spending will have on taxpayers. The city must get agreement on what needs to be maintained, what needs reserves, and how physical infrastructure will be maintained with those reserves over time. By making sound capital investments from the outset and preventing deferred maintenance of city assets, the city can avoid emergency tax assessments.

The primary funding source for municipal government is property tax revenue. In order to maintain a consistent mill rate year to year, city government must operate in a fiscally responsible manner. Large fluctuations in the tax rate can discourage economic development and spark public outcry. Although the priorities of the city may change from one election year to another, stable municipal finances are always a fundamental responsibility of local government. It is important for Belfast to diligently handle all yearly expenditures, while at the same time planning for the city's long-term objectives. As with any business, the physical assets of Belfast must be properly maintained through capital reserve accounts to protect the city's continued economic health. The format of this chapter follows the State Comprehensive Plan Criteria Rule as amended in August 2011.

## OVERVIEW

The City of Belfast remains in a solid financial position. According to the last several audits, the assets of the city continue to exceed the liabilities and deferred inflows, and the net position is increasing. Title 30-A MRSA Section 5702 contains a limitation on the amount of debt that municipalities may incur. A municipality cannot issue debt (for purposes other than school, storm or sanitary sewer, energy facility or for municipal airports) that would exceed 7.5% of the municipality's last full state valuation. The statute contains additional limits for school, storm or sanitary sewer, energy facility and for municipal airports. There is an overall debt limit of 15% of the municipality's last full State valuation. The City Charter references the State law regarding the amount of debt the City may borrow. The city has not exceeded the statutory limit and the municipal and state valuation of Belfast continues to increase. As of June 30, 2021, the statutory limit for the city was \$138,877,500. The city's outstanding long-term debt of \$13,002,409 as of June 30, 2021 was within the statutory limit.

## CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

From 2017 through 2021, the top two revenue sources were services/fees and property taxes. During this period, overall total revenues increased by 7.0% and total expenses decreased by 0.7%. Property taxes collected increased by 8.9%, while excise tax increased by 16.5%. Services/fees revenues increased 9.0% and capital grants/contributions increased by 60.0%. General government expenses increased by 33.9%. Protection expenses increased by 6.5% and social services expenses decreased by 9.8%. Education, general government, protection, and public works were consistently the four top expense sources between 2017 and 2021.

<b>Belfast Revenues (from Annual Audits)</b>						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% Change 2017 - 2021
Services / Fees	\$3,061,366	\$3,205,362	\$2,976,295	\$2,821,566	\$3,337,910	9.0%
Operating Grants / Contributions	\$310,193	\$285,070	\$293,542	\$226,224	\$207,647	-33.1%
Capital Grants / Contributions	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	60.0%
Property Tax	\$16,025,483	\$16,272,586	\$16,375,325	\$16,824,500	\$17,456,390	8.9%
Excise Tax	\$1,114,213	\$1,149,122	\$1,166,289	\$1,154,957	\$1,298,236	16.5%
Intergovernmental Other	\$848,912	\$956,379	\$1,134,003	\$1,583,733	\$2,078,542	144.8%
Other	\$3,056,500	\$1,007,901	\$6,483,655	\$2,669,830	\$1,702,670	-44.3%
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$24,491,667</b>	<b>\$22,951,420</b>	<b>\$28,504,109</b>	<b>\$25,400,810</b>	<b>\$26,201,395</b>	<b>7.0%</b>

<b>Belfast Expenses (from Annual Audits)</b>						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% Change 2017 - 2021
General Government	\$2,612,375	\$2,910,928	\$4,102,422	\$1,744,667	\$3,496,812	33.9%
Protection	\$2,839,093	\$2,898,365	\$2,904,544	\$3,098,208	\$3,024,604	6.5%
Public Works	\$5,376,198	\$3,057,858	\$5,557,581	\$2,171,748	\$2,945,159	-45.2%
Social Services	\$306,597	\$245,124	\$275,265	\$279,262	\$276,593	-9.8%
Parks & Recreation	\$287,900	\$292,931	\$264,423	\$300,269	\$276,146	-4.1%
Library	\$523,952	\$517,637	\$517,309	\$515,989	\$486,447	-7.2%
Cemeteries	\$143,497	\$145,365	\$158,217	\$127,057	\$155,727	8.5%
Education	\$10,015,476	\$9,924,620	\$10,302,066	\$10,427,480	\$10,318,570	3.0%
County Tax	\$1,400,761	\$1,451,862	\$1,541,219	\$1,537,147	\$1,545,085	10.3%
Interest on Debt	\$38,577	(\$68,591)	(\$26,148)	\$120,925	\$219,651	469.4%
Pension & OPEB Expense	--	--	--	\$430,308	\$409,410	--
Unclassified	\$712,723	\$467,660	\$438,459	\$443,003	\$933,146	30.9%
Sewer Department	\$907,429	\$960,529	\$950,204	\$871,130	\$895,908	-1.3%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$25,164,578</b>	<b>\$22,804,288</b>	<b>\$26,985,561</b>	<b>\$22,067,193</b>	<b>\$24,983,258</b>	<b>-0.7%</b>

Capital improvements will continue to be funded through capital reserve funds supported by property tax revenues citywide, the use of targeted tax increment financing districts (such as the existing Downtown-Waterfront TIF), intergovernmental revenues (State aid), grants and loans from Federal, State and private sources, and from municipal bonds.

The community has sufficient borrowing capacity. In fiscal year 2021, total municipal debt was below the statutory limits set forth in Title 30-A MRSA Section 5702. The city has often used its bonding capacity to pay for major projects, such as but not limited to: upgrades to the public sewer system and wastewater treatment plant, reconstruction of the Armistice Bridge, and construction of the Harbor Walk.

As noted in the Public Facilities and Services Chapter, the city cooperates with neighboring communities, multi-community quasi-municipal organizations and Waldo County in the provision of services (public education, fire department mutual aid, and municipal solid waste management). The most significant regional service is education, with RSU 71 servicing Belfast, Belmont, Morrill, Searsmont, and Swanville. The city also contracts with a facility in Camden (Knox County) to provide animal shelter services.

The City has two tax increment financing districts: the Downtown-Waterfront and Northport Avenue, both of which target the construction of public improvements in the respective catchment areas. Non-governmental (outside) funding sources have recently included gifts (e.g., rangeway improvements), donations (e.g., Dog Park and Friends of Belfast Park), and capital funds from donors (e.g., Enk fund).

The following major projects have been funded through bonding since 2010:

- Waterfront Walkway (2013): \$800,000
- Front Street/Maskers (2016): \$2,150,000
- Public Works/Solar (2019): \$8,600,000

Belfast received Federal and State grants for the following major capital projects since June of 2010:

- Brownfields Assessment Grants in 2011, 2013, 2016, and 2019 totaling \$1.3 million used for the assessment of hazardous substance and petroleum of contaminated sites.
- Brownfields Cleanup Grants in 2014 and 2019 totaling \$600,000 and a Brownfields Revolving Loan Grant of \$50,000 used for remediation and cleanup of the following sites:
  - o 45 Front Street
  - o 45 Congress Street
  - o 26 High Street
- CDBG Housing Assistance Grant (2011)- \$300,000 for the renovation of multi-family housing.
- CDBG Downtown Revitalization Grant (2012)- \$500,000 for streetscape and infrastructure improvements and on-street parking.

- CDBG Economic Development Grant- \$200,000 for Front Street Shipyard improvements to former Belfast Boatyard waterfront facility and the purchase of custom paint booth.
- CDBG Micro-Enterprise Assistance- \$150,000 for micro-enterprise and business façade grants.
- EDA Public Works Grant (2013)- \$1,900,000 for the reconstruction and enhancement of Front Street.
- CDBG Housing Assistance Grant (2014)- \$500,000 for the renovation of multi-family housing.
- Maine Department of Conservation Recreational Trail Grant (2015)- \$35,000 for the Passy Rail Trail development.
- CDBG Economic Development Program (2015)- \$800,000 used to assist in the location of OnProcess Technology in Belfast.
- ConnectME Authority Community Broadband Planning Grant (2017)- \$15,000 used to assist in the planning process for community broadband.
- MEDEP Forgivable Loan – to pay for climate adaptation plan for the wastewater system.
- Efficiency Maine Trust (2012)- \$10,000 used for electric vehicle charging stations.
- FAA (2018) – Grant of \$3,395,344 for airport improvement.
- Additional funding from FAA and MaineDOT over the last 10 years in the amount of \$5,263,500.44 used for the expansion of Aircraft parking apron, Airport master plan updates, preparation of Obstruction Removal Analysis and Environmental Assessment, tree clearing, and the construction of the parallel taxiway.



Capital Reserves	Balance July 1, 2017	Balance June 30, 2018	Balance June 30, 2019	Balance June 30, 2020	Balance June 30, 2021
Airport	\$115,475	\$4,663	\$13,738	\$20,160	\$24,947
Airport Maintenance	\$13,085	\$6,275	\$12,415	\$15,621	\$15,844
Ambulance	\$45,869	\$46,194	\$96,356	\$190,088	\$192,601
Ambulance Training and Development	\$2,318	\$2,525	\$5,112	\$5,709	\$5,852
Assessing Office Equipment	\$3,560	\$8,585	\$4,649	\$4,727	\$3,399
Assessment	\$894	\$901	\$915	\$931	\$944
Boathouse Maintenance	\$9,860	\$3,928	\$5,200	\$5,286	\$5,362
Cable TV Equipment	\$15,420	\$15,528	\$15,238	\$13,515	\$13,708
Cemeteries-Equipment	\$18,285	\$18,412	\$30,788	\$36,300	\$40,600
Cemeteries-Land Development	\$7,964	\$8,022	\$8,150	\$8,287	\$8,403
Cemeteries-Maintenance	\$7,748	\$7,802	\$7,928	\$8,061	\$8,175
City Clerk Office Equipment	\$4,458	\$3,808	\$5,375	\$555	\$1,775
City Manager Equipment	\$513	\$517	\$1,532	\$722	\$1,832
Communication Equipment	\$3,624	\$3,650	\$3,708	\$3,770	\$3,824
Downtown Development	\$76	\$77	\$78	\$79	\$80
Energy Savings Cap		\$24,268	\$48,924	\$40,871	\$85,569
Finance Office Equipment	\$6,993	\$8,864	\$6,160	\$1,354	\$2,586
Fire Equipment	\$52,996	\$53,363	\$165,487	\$158,275	\$230,533
Footbridge Capital	\$55,100	\$55,483	\$66,442	\$67,552	\$58,604
Fuel Price	\$10,230	\$10,301	\$10,467	\$10,642	\$10,795
Future Land Purchase	\$21,069	\$21,216	\$21,556	\$384	\$389
Harbor Improvement	\$5,256	\$5,263	\$5,278	\$5,294	\$5,308
Highway-Culvert	\$28,557	\$28,757	\$39,286	\$39,941	\$40,511
Highway-Highway Equipment	\$39,977	\$40,268	\$40,878	\$50,915	\$40,999
Highway-Road Construction	\$6,802	\$6,852	\$6,962	\$7,079	\$7,178
Park Equipment	\$1	\$1	\$5,528	\$4,489	\$4,553
Personnel Reserve	\$93	\$96	\$42,083	\$688	\$34,325
Planning Equipment	\$10,408	\$10,481	\$10,284	\$6,613	\$2,082
Police Equipment	\$9,694	\$9,763	\$17,974	\$18,272	\$39,132
Recreation-City Park	\$92,220	\$78,479	\$81,772	\$21,726	\$10,146
City Park Pool Resurfacing				\$38,052	\$15,239
Recreation-George Black	\$4,133	\$4,163	\$4,229	\$4,300	\$4,361
Ruth Greenlaw	\$375	\$378	\$384	\$390	\$396
Sidewalk Capital	\$14,252	\$21,414	\$3,880	\$3,945	\$4,000
Transfer Station Equipment	\$11,456	\$11,538	\$11,723	\$11,920	\$12,088
Waterfront/Thompson Warf	\$3,595	\$3,617	\$3,675	\$3,737	\$3,793
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$632,356</b>	<b>\$517,151</b>	<b>\$804,154</b>	<b>\$810,250</b>	<b>\$939,933</b>

# CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

## PURPOSE AND DEFINITION OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Planned growth and a diverse mix of land uses within the city are important aspects of fiscal planning. The purpose of a capital Improvement plan (CIP) is to establish a framework for financing needed capital improvements. A CIP guides budgeting and expenditures of tax revenues and identifies needs for which alternative sources of funding such as loans, grants or gifts will be sought.

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

Capital improvements are prioritized each year in the budget process based on the availability of funds and the political will of the community. A complete CIP describes expected yearly investment and allows for both changes in priorities and reduction of available funds. The CIP is intended to prevent a large capital improvement from occurring in a single fiscal year. The unexpected purchase of a sizable improvement can overburden the tax rate and cause large fluctuations in tax bills from year to year. The annual provision for eventual replacement of capital items depends on the useful life of those items. It is important that capital improvements be financially accounted for each fiscal year, minimizing later expenses.

## BELFAST CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN SUMMARY

Each year the City of Belfast purchases equipment to either replace or enhance the operations of the city. This consists of equipment for the Public Works Department, Police Department, Fire and Ambulance Department, and any other department that may need equipment to help perform their duties. This is budgeted annually. Major expenditures anticipated typically require the establishment of a reserve account where funds for the expenditures are built up over a several year period.

Capital improvement planning in the city has historically been very limited for budget purposes and does not always reflect the full list of capital improvement needs. For example, in FY23/24 there was \$1,357,872 in requests for capital investment for consideration. The City of Belfast FY 23/24 approved budget includes \$232,833 in approved capital improvements. The City of Belfast is currently in the process of establishing a more formal capital improvement process and plan.

# CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Belfast is a healthy, safe, and beautiful coastal city with a strong sense of community created by many diverse small businesses in the retail, light industry, service and hospitality sectors, along with many recreational and cultural attractions. Sustaining these qualities, however, requires understanding and adapting to the forces of nature, including human nature, that can create unexpected changes to the best of plans. The climate crisis is the most powerful force of nature the modern world has ever encountered. Affecting the whole planet, the crisis has different impacts in different communities, yet the fundamental situation is the same here in our community as it is everywhere: without planning for climate change, Belfast cannot sustain itself as a community. Indeed, a survey conducted last spring by the Comprehensive Planning Committee found respondents chose “[taking] measures to address the impacts of climate change” as a top priority.

## POLICY FRAMEWORK

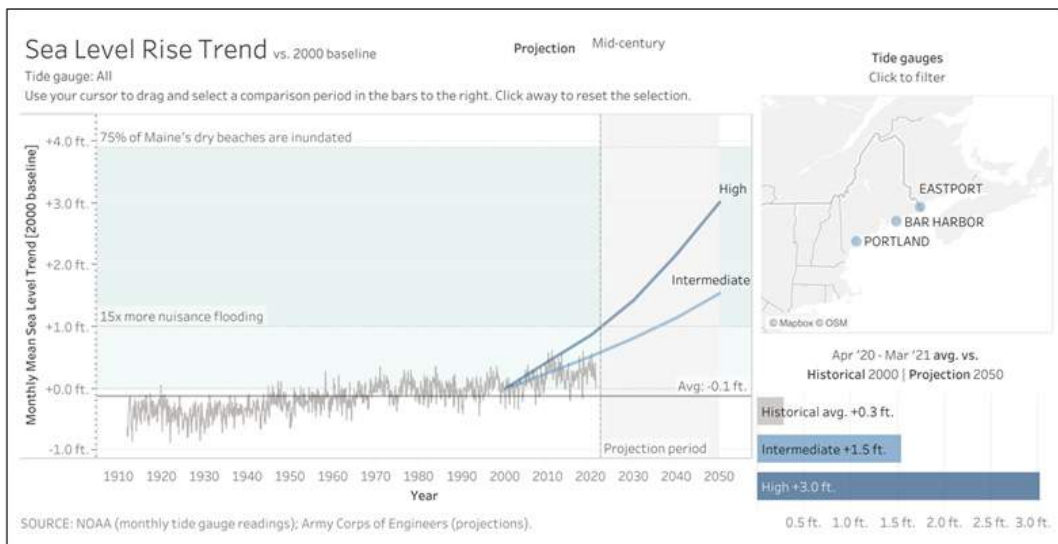
Policy framework for climate and resiliency planning exists at numerous scales. In 2020 the State of Maine’s Climate Council completed a climate action plan entitled *Maine Won’t Wait: Maine’s Climate Action Plan*. The plan identifies four goals and eight strategies for climate action. These goals and strategies provide the framework for ambitious plans to decrease greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030 and 80% by 2050, and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. The four goals are 1) Reduce Maine’s Greenhouse Gas Emissions; 2) Avoid the Impacts and Costs of Inaction; 3) Foster Economic Opportunity and Prosperity; and 4) Advance Equity through Maine’s Climate Response. Recognizing the need to do more proactive planning around climate change and resiliency, the Climate Action Plan states, “The tools communities currently use — including comprehensive planning, zoning, site location of development, and stormwater and floodplain management practices — were not designed with climate change in mind. They need be updated to [do so] ....” (p. 87)

The State of Maine Growth Management Act also requires communities, through the comprehensive planning process, to inventory, identify, and outline strategies for key issues around land use and development. Required topic areas include population change, housing, transportation, the economy, natural resources, historic and cultural resources, open space and recreation, public facilities, and municipal finances. The climate crisis touches each of these subject areas and therefore planning for climate change and resiliency is a critical element of the Belfast Comprehensive Plan. Given that the state Growth Management Act does not explicitly outline a required set of deliverables for a climate change chapter, this chapter.

## SEA-LEVEL RISE

Belfast is situated on the coast of the Gulf of Maine, within the Atlantic Ocean. Because of the Gulf’s location, shape and size, climate change is heating this part of the Atlantic at a rate higher than in 99 percent of the world’s oceans. Over the last decade, the summer sea surface temperatures have risen 2.3 degrees above an increasing temperature trend to the point that the Gulf is now the hottest it has ever been since temperatures have been recorded. This solar heating creates hydrological vulnerabilities with potentially severe local impacts. As temperatures in the Gulf of Maine increase, the water-level rises due to two main forces: the thermal expansion of water, and the spread of water from melting ice around the globe. The increase can’t be seen at once because it’s happening very slowly, first of all, and also because it’s masked by the normal flux of high and low tides.

The earliest indication of sea-level rise in Belfast is flooding along our lowest shoreline areas during high tide, most notably during a “king tide.” A king tide is the highest tide each year when the gravitational effects of the sun and moon align at the same time as the northern hemisphere is tilted closest to the sun, typically during fall. Over time, the water level reached at any given king tide will be the sea-level reached at high tide on an average day. The recent king tides in Belfast Harbor are about 13’, and come near or at the top of the existing breakwater and crib at the City Landing. A sea-level rise of 1 foot would ensure periodic flooding at these locations. The graph below gives a general indication of the impact.



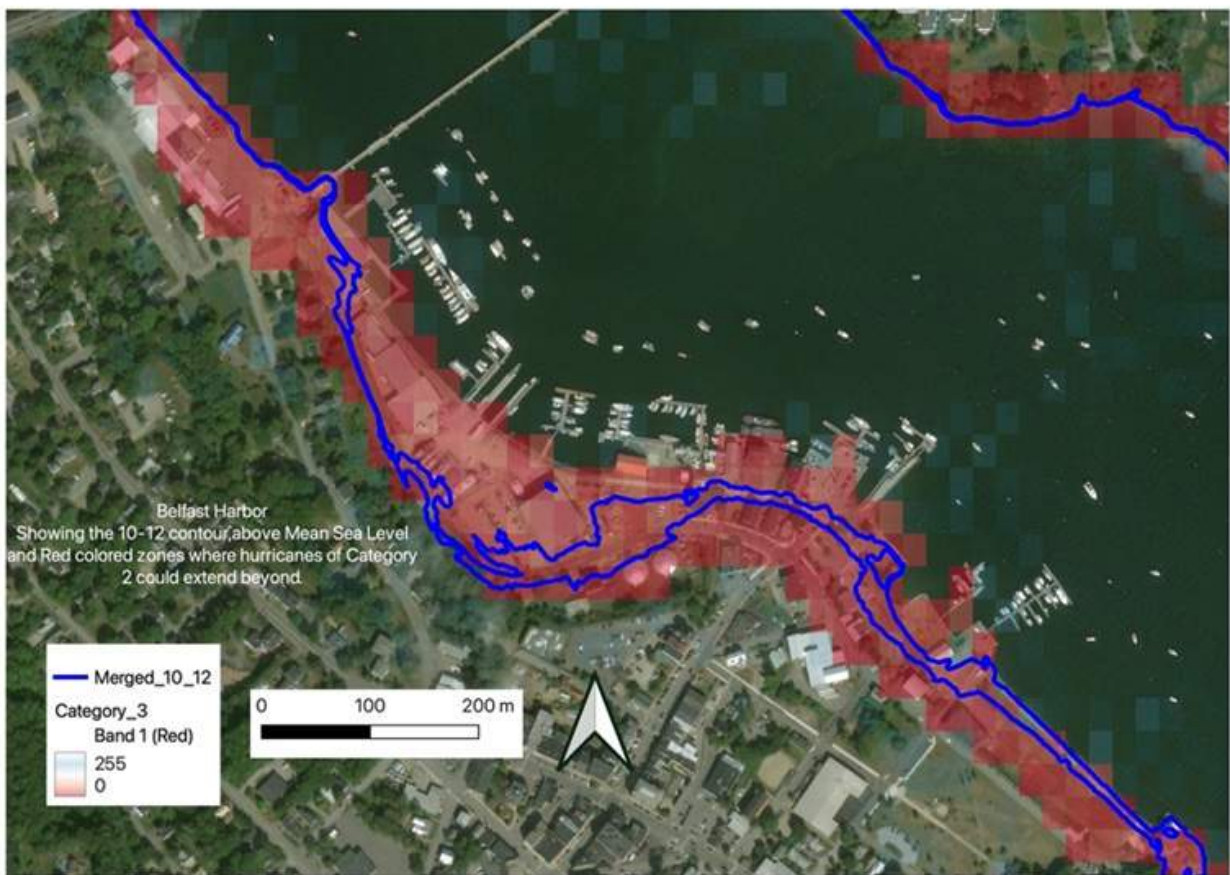
## STORMS AND EXTREME PRECIPITATION

In the past, the relatively cool waters in the Gulf of Maine ensured that hurricanes and local cyclonic storms were a relatively low threat. The predominant storms were, and are, the Nor’easters that commonly occur in the fall and early winter when surface water temperatures are the warmest, and atmospheric conditions are appropriate. The rapid warming of surface waters and the deepening layer of warm water have greatly increased the probability of both types of storms. One-hundred-year storms, meaning storms with a 1% probability of occurrence at any given time during 100 years (this is the probability used to plot the FEMA flood maps), are currently occurring at least as often as every 10 years.

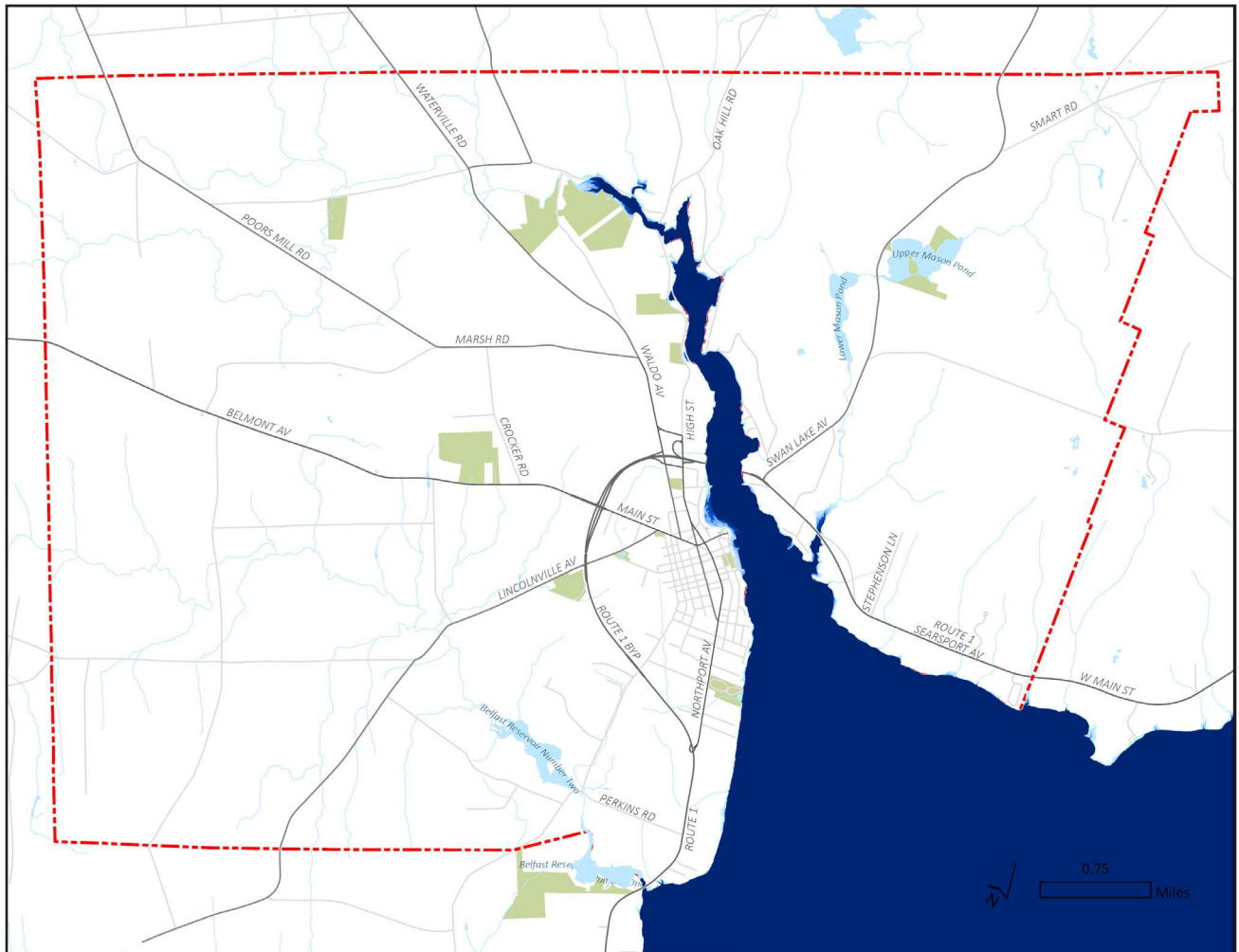
Belfast Bay and Harbor present a funnel-shaped topography oriented to the southeast. The harbor shallows rapidly towards the neck of the “funnel”, so that wave energy from persistent south/southeast winds will build steep choppy waves. Even though the area of open water to the southeast of Belfast Bay is limited by Islesboro and other landmasses, intense storms can also cause large waves to develop, estimated at up to 10 feet. Accompanying large waves in a sustained storm is a temporary build-up of the water level called a “surge.” A surge’s height depends on storm direction and dwell time: for instance, a slow-moving intense storm will generate a larger surge. Belfast has experienced surges in excess of 4.5 feet.

Emergency response planning is based on developing worst case scenarios and understanding the statistical probability of their occurrence. In the case of shoreline threats to Belfast, a worst-case event would be a slow-moving cyclonic storm coming from the south/southeast, occurring around a highest tide, with torrential rain, and on top of significant sea-level rise. The recent bomb cyclone on October 31, 2018 met most of these conditions, offering a caution.

NOAA developed a tool called SLOSH (Sea, Lake, and Overland Surges from Hurricanes) to predict the height of storm surge in any given location for a given storm intensity. SLOSH simulations are the best way to evaluate local coastal hazards from surge. For example, see the figure below, showing predicted inundation in Belfast (shaded red) from a Category 2 hurricane. No allowance has been made for sea-level rise or waves, meaning this is a threshold prediction, not the highest possible.



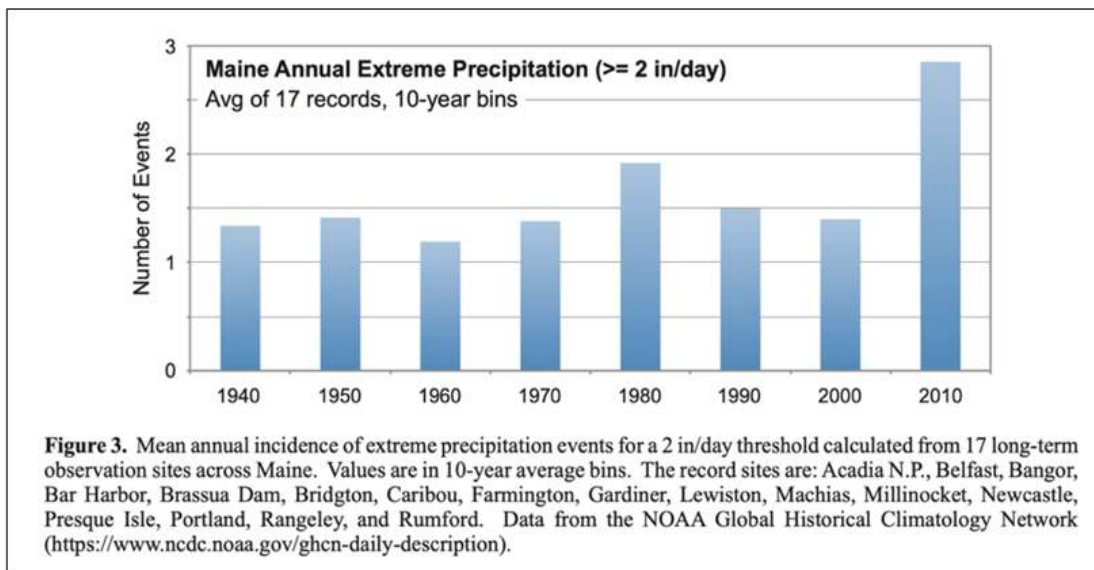
*SLOSH output for a Category 2 hurricane. It is clear that the 10' to 12' vertical contours from GIS topographical maps are a reasonable indication for a particular property's exposure to the threats posed by climate change that have been outlined.*



## City of Belfast, Maine Sea Level Rise Scenarios

- Belfast City Boundary
- Parks and Public Open Spaces
- Highest Astronomical Tide
- Highest Astronomical Tide Plus 1.2 Feet
- Highest Astronomical Tide Plus 1.6 Feet
- Highest Astronomical Tide Plus 3.9 Feet
- Highest Astronomical Tide Plus 6.1 Feet
- Highest Astronomical Tide Plus 8.8 Feet
- Highest Astronomical Tide Plus 10.9 Feet

In October, 2021 Belfast experienced intense rainfall, over 5 inches in approximately 6 hours, that caused significant flooding. Occurring only three years after the 2018 Halloween storm, this drenching approximated a 100-year storm condition, another piece of evidence that damaging storms in Belfast are no longer rare. The figure below from the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration Global Historical Climatology Network shows the frequency of extreme rainfall events over a 50-year interval. The decadal increases aren't even, but the trend is clear.



Belfast’s relatively shallow soils over bedrock limit rainwater storage, leading quickly to runoff, while the generally steep contours of land surrounding Belfast Bay increase the potential for erosion at the coastal edges. For these reasons, the current rainfall trend will overcome the capacity of the present stormwater drainage system. Much of the infrastructure that was built in Belfast to deal with runoff and erosion is old, and maps do not identify the infrastructure characteristics, such as pipe diameters, culvert locations, and condition.

## ECOSYSTEM CHANGES

Since record-keeping began, Maine’s temperature has risen by 3.2 degrees F, with increases along the coast greater than inland. Models predict two to four more degrees by mid-century and up to ten degrees by 2100, depending on global carbon emissions. This increase has induced phenological changes in farms and forests such as an increase in the growing season. At the same time, however, climate change has made growing conditions less predictable due to increased weather variability and extremes. A warming climate evaporates moisture from soils and foliage that cannot be replenished by rainfall alone, especially not when bursts occur that run off quickly. In forests, 75% of carbon sequestration occurs in the soil (below ground biomass), and 25% in the tree biomass above ground.

The summer of 2021 was particularly hot in Belfast and all of Maine. While scientists see no evidence that Maine’s climate is headed toward prolonged years of drought, they do have evidence that plants need to be protected quickly from high heat stress — on a scale of hours, not days. Similarly, while Maine’s forests are not at risk of burning extensively, they are prone to fires in patches where local conditions become extremely dry, fragmenting the forest and leading to declines in overall forest health.

Warmer environments attract invasive species that interfere with the balance of ecosystems developed over centuries, contribute to a loss of natural productivity, and spread new vector-borne diseases (see discussion of public health). Insect pests, whether invasive (e.g. Emerald ash borer) or endemic but supported by warmer conditions (e.g. ticks, brown-tailed moths), have become increasing problems for Belfast. Short-term chemical or mechanical control methods against particular invasive plants or insects at any given time are expensive and ultimately unsustainable.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH**

Since 2000, heat-related mortality among people over 65 has increased by more than 50%. According to the National Weather Service, conditions with a heat index higher than 90 degrees F can put people working or exercising outside at greater risk of illnesses such as heat stroke, heat cramps, or heat exhaustion. (The heat index measures not temperature alone, but a ratio of temperature to humidity.)

Historically speaking, Mainers are not used to prolonged heatwaves such as in the summers of 2021 and 2022. Many residents and some institutional buildings do not have air-conditioning. In August of 2021, the City of Belfast Climate Crisis Committee collaborated with the Belfast Free Library's program "All of Belfast: Climate Dialogue" to conduct a questionnaire about the summer's heat waves. This questionnaire found that 37% of respondents answered "Yes" to the question "Are you concerned about a neighbor or friend during heat events?"

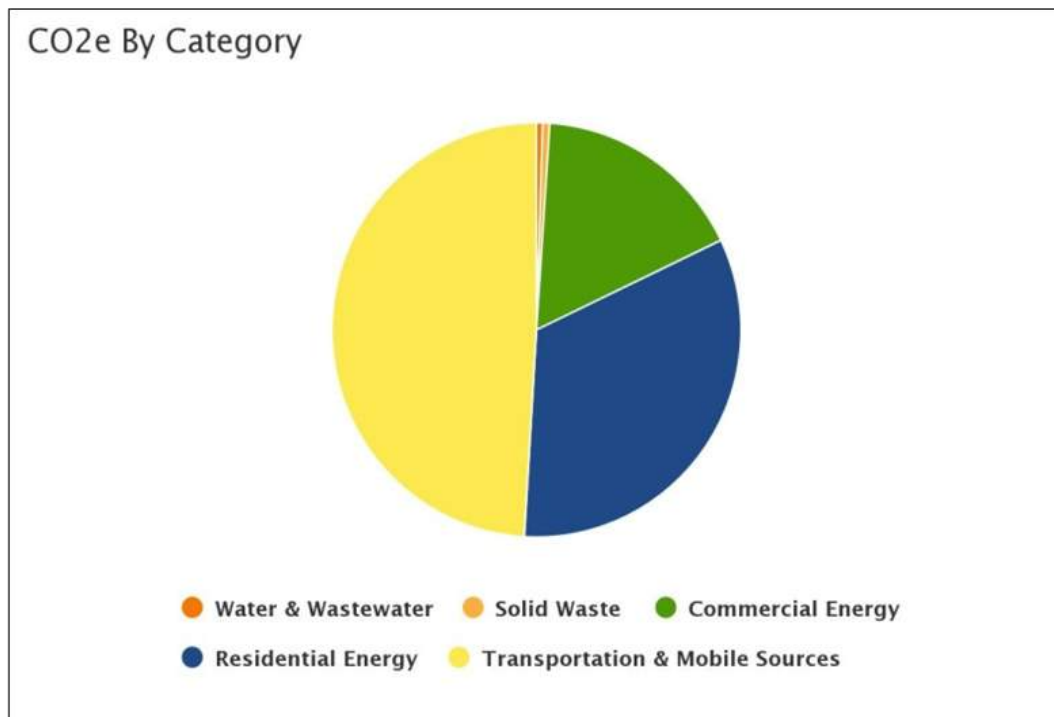
Currently, Maine averages one day/year with a heat index of at least 90 degrees. By 2050, if nothing is done to curb the climate crisis, the number of such days could average two weeks/year. The indirect effects of heat on public health include, most importantly, respiratory problems and heart disease from increased air pollution, and an increased incidence of vector-borne diseases, either due to local insect species exploiting warmer conditions here or an enlarging range for non-native species moving in.



## COMMUNITY GREENHOUSE GAS INVENTORY (GHGI)

As part of the City's commitment to mitigate the climate crisis, the Belfast Climate Crisis Committee has recently completed a (limited) GHGI. Belfast's emissions for the five categories measured total 64,385 Metric Tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e ("e" meaning that other greenhouse gases emitted have been converted into CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents). Below is a chart showing the relative emissions for these categories.

The two largest types of emitters in Belfast are the cars and trucks driven (49%), and the fuel used to heat homes and commercial buildings (50%). Both of these are higher percentages than EPA's national figures.



# CITY OF BELFAST COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## ALL STRATEGIES

Part 2: Policy Guides of the City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan presents the analysis and strategic recommendations for each of the state-mandated plan topic areas, including a section on Climate Solutions. Each topic area section provides a brief background overview, a list of key findings, and then the goals, objectives, and strategies for that topic. The "Key Findings" in each topic area section are summaries from the data gathering and analysis presented in Part 2: Inventory Chapters of the City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan. In the Policy Guides all strategies are listed in a table format with unique strategy numbers, the recommended strategy, the suggested department or organization responsible for implementation, the recommended time frame, and a column that notes if the strategy is required by the state.

The following pages are a list of all strategies from the Policy Guides, listed together in a table format.

# HOUSING

## HOUSING STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
HOU-1	Pursue policies that support development of a variety of housing types at different price points throughout the city. Consider adjusting the minimum lot sizes in areas where appropriate to facilitate the development of more housing types and affordable housing.	Housing and Property Development Committee, Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	
HOU-2	Create an inventory in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) of potential future housing development sites, current regulations on those sites, and potential new units yielded.	Housing and Property Development Committee, Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Long-Term (5+ years)	
HOU-3	Explore the extent to which city ordinances, codes, and permitting processes are causing unintentional constraints on affordable housing development, such as the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family homes that could be used as rentals or parking regulations that prohibit some single-family homes from becoming multi-family rentals.	Housing and Property Development Committee, Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
HOU-4	Encourage partnerships between Belfast employers and developers for the development of workforce housing.	Housing and Property Development Committee, Economic Development Department, Private Sector	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
HOU-5	Convene stakeholders and develop creative recommendations on how the city can identify partnerships for workforce housing opportunities; 2) monitor and study the need for short-term housing regulation; 3) identify new housing types and locations that would complement existing neighborhoods; and 4) understand the extent to which statewide building codes, insurance, permitting, and lending practices impact which housing types get built.	Housing and Property Development Committee, City Council, City Staff (City Manager, Planning and Codes, Economic Development Department), Non-Profit Community, Private Sector	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
HOU-6	Explore the feasibility of a registration or tracking mechanism for short-term rentals.	City Council, Planning and Codes	Medium Term (3-5 years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
HOU-7	Review zoning ordinances on the location and type of manufactured housing allowed and where this type of housing may exist in the city. Ensure manufactured housing shall be permitted to be placed or erected on individual house lots where single-family dwellings are allowed, subject to the same requirements as single-family dwellings.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
HOU-8	Develop local programs to encourage weatherization and insulation of existing buildings and new construction, and to encourage installation of heat pumps or other green heating /cooling methods that maximize energy efficiency. Cooperate with the City Energy Committee in weatherizing city buildings and continuing to increase use of green energy for city operations. Educate residents about Efficiency Maine programs that support insulation improvements.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development, City Energy Committee	Medium Term (3-5 years)	
HOU-9	Maintain, enact or amend growth area land use regulations to increase density, decrease lot size, setbacks and road widths, or provide incentives such as density bonuses, to encourage the development of affordable / workforce housing.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
HOU-10	Maintain, enact or amend ordinances to allow the addition of at least one accessory apartment per dwelling unit in growth areas, subject to site suitability.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
HOU-11	Seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development built or placed during the next decade to be affordable.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
HOU-12	Support the efforts of regional housing coalitions in addressing affordable and workforce housing needs.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
HOU-13	Review zoning ordinances on the location of new mobile home parks to ensure they are allowed in a manner and location that statute allows.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes

# ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY VITALITY

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY VITALITY STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
ECON-1	Explore grants available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.	City Manager, Finance Department, Economic Development Department	Ongoing	
ECON-2	Continue efforts to support, retain, and attract businesses that offer quality jobs and above average pay, through tools such as credit enhancement agreements, discounted land prices, and grant funding.	Economic Development Department	Short-Term (1-3 years), Ongoing	
ECON-3	Work with local technical and vocational training centers to identify ways to expand vocational education and training programs in order to increase the supply of skilled labor. This includes pursuing grant funding or other funding mechanisms to ensure a sustainable vocational training program in Belfast; continuing to promote the CareerCenter On-The-Job-Program and other CareerCenter programs that assist with workforce development; and supporting the Maine Quality Centers grant programs that provide customized workforce training grants for Maine employers seeking to locate or expand their operations in Maine.	RSU 71, Economic Development Department, Hutchinson Center, GameLoft	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
ECON-4	Explore opportunities to bring a Maine Community College to Belfast.	City Manager, Economic Development Department	Medium Term (3-5 years)	
ECON-5	Continue to promote and partner with the University of Maine’s Hutchinson Center to support their variety of educational and cultural programs.	Economic Development Department	Ongoing	
ECON-6	Continue support for arts and cultural organizations, such as Waterfall Arts and the Belfast Creative Coalition, the local theaters, etc, through marketing, identifying grant opportunities, and identifying locations for new and emerging arts organizations.	Economic Development Department	Ongoing	
ECON-7	Ensure that local land use regulations allow opportunities for individuals to participate in the creative economy in appropriate zoning districts.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development Department	Ongoing	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
ECON-8	Aggressively pursue strategies that support the development of year-round housing that is affordable to the workforce population (those earning approximately 60% to 120% of the Area Median Income), such as changes to land use ordinance policies, funding programs for construction of housing that is affordable to the workforce, and the creation of a housing land trust to increase the supply of housing for residents that will live in Belfast year-round, seasonal workers, and short-term contract workers.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council, Economic Development, Belfast Housing Coalition (to-be-established)	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
ECON-9	Ensure that public facilities for year-round residents are funded and maintained as well as those primarily serving tourists.	City Manager, Finance Dept, Public Works Dept, Parks and Recreation Dept	Ongoing	
ECON-10	Recruit businesses that provide quality year-round jobs.	Economic Development Department	Ongoing	
ECON-11	Explore strategies to monitor or regulate short-term vacation rentals to understand how many exist, where, what kind, and determine the appropriate balance between year-round and seasonal housing for Belfast in order to support a strong year-round economy.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council, Economic Development, Belfast Housing Coalition (to-be-established)	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
ECON-12	Promote coordination between the City Chamber of Commerce, the Main Street program (Our Town Belfast), the Belfast Economic Development Department, and the Belfast Planning Department to ensure that home-based businesses continue to receive support as needed (help finding new locations, broadband access, and the impact of parking and ADA requirements).	City Manager, Economic Development Department, Planning and Codes	Ongoing	
ECON-13	Ensure that local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
ECON-14	Continue to protect critical viewsheds and marine access points such as the rangeways.	Planning and Codes, Public Works, Parks and Recreation Department	Ongoing	
ECON-15	Continue efforts to reduce point and non-point source water pollution to keep Belfast Harbor and our rivers and streams clean.	Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Planning and Codes	Ongoing	
ECON-16	Include land conservation for agriculture and commercial forestry operations in local or regional economic development plans.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development Director	Ongoing	
ECON-17	Enhance and promote the “Emerald Necklace” and recreational trails network in Belfast as a means of encouraging outdoor oriented tourism.	Parks and Recreation Dept, Public Works, Non-Profit Community, other relevant committees	Medium Term (3-5 years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
ECON-18	Limit non-residential development in areas identified by the State of Maine as critical rural and natural resources areas to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism / outdoor recreation businesses, farmers' markets, and home occupations. See Future Land Use Plan.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
ECON-19	Consider a variety of tools to protect the working landscape economy (working farmland, forested areas, and other natural resources), such as a working landscape protection plan, tax abatement programs, agricultural zoning and buffers, transfer-of-development rights programs, easements, and protection of prime soils. Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs. Provide information about the current use taxation program to owners of waterfront land used to provide access to or support the conduct of commercial fishing activities.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Medium Term (3-5 years)	Yes
ECON-20	Continue to provide financial support for the Belfast Economic Development Department.	City Council, City Manager	Ongoing	Yes
ECON-21	Continue to enact or amend local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
ECON-22	If public investments are foreseen to support economic development, identify the mechanisms to be considered to finance them (local tax dollars, creating a tax increment financing district, a Community Development Block Grant or other grants, bonding, impact fees, etc).	City Manager, Finance Department, Economic Development Department	Ongoing	Yes
ECON-23	Participate in any regional economic development planning efforts.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development Department	Ongoing	Yes

# MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION

## MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
MOB-1	Coordinate with the Planning and Public Works Department to create a Belfast pedestrian and cycling plan that inventories existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructures and identify locations for improved and new sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, bike parking in order to improve safe and convenient walking and cycling, as well as access to parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational areas.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
MOB-2	Pursue the idea of a year-round water taxi between Islesboro and Belfast.	Planning Staff, Economic Development Department, Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-3	Work with major employers to create ride sharing incentives. Explore options for a “Park and Ride” service that may help alleviate commuter traffic and provide more options for people commuting in and out of Belfast.	Planning Staff, Economic Development Department, Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-4	Create options for additional transportation links from the waterfront to other key locations in the city. This could include livery services, ride hailing, or bus routes.	Planning Staff, Economic Development Department, Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-5	Explore the idea of an airport “courtesy car”, adequate taxi/on-demand transportation options, and a fully staffed and equipped rental car business to fully realize the economic benefits of the aviation component of the transportation network.	City staff (Airport Managers, Planning, Economic Development, Public Works)	Long-term (5+ years)	
MOB-6	Continue use of policies that require all new development of a certain size to assess road capacity and identify needed road improvements resulting from additional density.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	



ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
MOB-7	Assess where wayfinding improvements are needed. Develop and implement a signage and wayfinding system for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians, including: consistent design; universal symbols; consistent language; and standards for the future.	Economic Development Department, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast	Short-Term (1-3)	
MOB-8	Identify locations where inclusive and traffic calming design approaches, such as those promoted by Complete Streets principles, are appropriate.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-9	Identify locations for additional electric vehicle charging stations and create incentives for developers to install stations in new developments where appropriate.	Economic Development Department, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast, Corporate Sponsors	Short-Term (1-3 years), Ongoing	
MOB-10	Work with city committees and advocates to perform a pedestrian audit and use that audit to inform a priority list of areas identified as needing safety and accessibility improvements.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-11	Collaborate with relevant city committees and departments on development and planning projects, particularly in areas identified as priorities for bike, pedestrian or trail facilities, recreation, accessibility improvements or affordable housing opportunities.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works, Parks Department)	Ongoing	
MOB-12	Coordinate with state, regional and neighboring towns' multi-modal transportation planning projects and initiatives, as appropriate.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
MOB-13	Coordinate closely with Maine DOT to improve pedestrian safety in areas on the fringe of town where there are safety or design issues created by the varying rules and authority between city and state roads.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Long-term (5+ years)	
MOB-14	Identify additional funding for pedestrian and cycling improvement projects, such as the Federal Transportation Alternatives (TA) funding program and the MaineDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Funding.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works	Ongoing	
MOB-15	Continue requiring sidewalks for new developments and redevelopment projects to improve pedestrian mobility and safety, and to create existing and future sidewalk connections. Utilize waivers for these improvements only in extreme situations.	Planning Staff, Planning Board, Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee	Ongoing	
MOB-16	Investigate opportunities to create pedestrian links that are not the road rights-of-way, such as easements for connector footpaths or hard-surface trail segments.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works	Long-term (5+ years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
MOB-17	Develop and implement a priority list of intersection improvements, particularly those identified by Maine DOT as high crash locations.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-18	Develop creative strategies that provide additional temporary parking during larger events.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works, Parks Department)	Ongoing	
MOB-19	Create a parking survey to better understand public perception of parking in Belfast.	Planning Staff, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-20	Perform periodic counts and assessments of parking that both takes into account future planned development, especially in downtown, and also encourages walking, biking, and alternative transportation modes.	Planning Staff, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-21	Work collaboratively with the Chamber of Commerce, major employers, airport neighbors, and the city's Airport Manager to identify barriers and new opportunities for the Belfast Municipal Airport.	City staff (Airport Managers, Planning, Economic Development, Public Works)	Ongoing	
MOB-22	Use creative access management design and circulation strategies to allow development but limit curb cuts for new development in areas within the growth area but outside of the State Urban Compact Area.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	
MOB-23	Continue to meet the State of Maine policy objectives in the Sensible Transportation Policy Act (23 M.R.S.A. § 73); state access management regulations pursuant to (23 M.R.S.A. § 704); and state traffic permitting regulations for large developments pursuant to 23 M.R.S.A § 704-A).	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
MOB-24	Maintain, enact or amend ordinance standards for subdivisions and for public and private roads as appropriate to foster transportation-efficient growth patterns and provide for future street and transit connections.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Short-Term (1-3 years), Ongoing	Yes
MOB-25	Collaborate with Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP), local large employers, and private bus companies to expand local and inter-city transit to the extent feasible.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works), City committees, non-profits.	Ongoing	
MOB-26	Utilize building and zoning codes to encourage electric vehicles and human-powered transport.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
MOB-27	Support the use of electric vehicles by increasing public charging facilities, including one or more multi-charger fields, and considering buildings codes that incentivize private EV charging facilities where multi-unit buildings and commercial structures are built.	Economic Development	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-28	Work with city committees, Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP) and other advocates to perform a survey and audit for public transit usage and demand. Use that survey and audit to inform decisions about additional public transit services within Belfast, and between Belfast and surrounding communities, to increase access to non-automobile transportation options, maximizing equity considerations and leveraging current and future State and federal financial resources.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works), City committees, non-profits.	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	

# PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICES & FISCAL CAPACITY

## PUBLIC FACILITIES, SERVICES & FISCAL CAPACITY STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
PUB-1	Identify capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public services to accommodate any growth and changing demographics.	City Manager, Public Works, Parks and Recreation Dept	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
PUB-2	Continue to prioritize wastewater investments in areas designated for future growth and support on-site septic upgrades where needed and feasible. Coordinate planned service extensions with the Future Land Use plan.	City Engineer, Public Works, Planning and Codes, City Council	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
PUB-3	Survey and inventory the current Belfast stormwater management system; determine MEDOT/City jurisdictions; develop a comprehensive design for upgrade.	City Engineer, City Council	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-4	Explore the use of user or impact fees for different city services and facilities depending on residency status of the user.	City Manager, Public Works, Planning and Codes	Long-Term (5+ years)	
PUB-5	Encourage coordination between the Belfast Water District and the towns of Swanville and Searsport for the mutual protection of the aquifer and for the monitoring of potential impacts from the Swanville dump / transfer station on groundwater quality.	City Manager, City Council, Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
PUB-6	Continue to require building permit applicants to obtain approval from the Belfast Water District in the building permit process in order to ensure there is enough capacity to serve new projects. Request that Water District officials notify the city of similar proposals in adjacent communities that might substantially affect the annual sustainable yield. If public water supply expansion is anticipated, identify and protect suitable sources.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Ongoing	Yes
PUB-7	Continue efforts to expand the capacity of the wastewater treatment plant, and to separate storm and sanitary sewers.	Wastewater Treatment, Public Works	Ongoing	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
PUB-8	Periodically review school age population numbers, population projections and school facility capacity needs.	RSU 71, Planning and Codes, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
PUB-9	Provide for adequate maintenance of cemeteries. Determine need for additional land. Purchase or transfer existing, city-owned land for cemetery use as needed.	Cemetery Department, Planning and Codes, City Council	Ongoing	
PUB-10	Continue to invest in infrastructure in designated growth areas. Locate new public facilities comprising at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas.	City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
PUB-11	Continue to invest in solar and renewable energy sources for the City of Belfast.	City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	
PUB-12	Inventory and categorize public facilities according to which age groups and ability ranges they serve and identify any gaps in service that may be present. Consider additional programming and new facilities as appropriate.	Public Works	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-13	Work with the Broadband Committee to identify gaps in broadband service and prioritize construction of broadband infrastructure to those areas.	City Manager, Planning and Codes, Broadband Committee	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
PUB-14	Identify areas in the city where public wi-fi access is currently provided and identify areas where it could be provided in the future, such as public parks and/or the public landing.	Combine with strategy (15)	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-15	Explore the feasibility of digital public infrastructure and what other municipalities are considering about how to provide digital infrastructure as a public utility.	Broadband Committee	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-16	Consider amending current ordinance provisions to better address stormwater management concerns, including greater use of low impact development standards wherever possible and appropriate. Continue the past and current practice of addressing stormwater improvements when sewer improvements are constructed.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
PUB-17	Explore options for regional delivery of local services, and work cooperatively with adjacent communities to consider opportunities for regional service delivery.	City staff, County staff	Ongoing	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
PUB-18	Annually evaluate city public facilities and services needs in order to adequately maintain municipally owned properties and plan for their long-term maintenance and upgrade.	City Manager, Public Works, Parks and Recreation Department	Ongoing	
PUB-19	Continue using capital reserve funds to assist in the replacement and purchase of equipment for the Police, Fire, and Public Works departments.	City Manager, Public Works	Ongoing	
PUB-20	Continue to judiciously implement Tax Increment Financing (TIF) strategies to assist in the construction of desired public facilities in targeted areas.	City Manager, Finance Manager, Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	
PUB-21	Explore what a “working waterfront” means in Belfast, and continue to invest in projects that support this vision of a Belfast working waterfront.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
PUB-22	Continue to partner with the Waldo County Emergency Management Agency to provide emergency shelters in times of extreme heat or cold.	City staff, County Emergency Management	Ongoing	

# PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

## PARKS, TRAILS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
REC-1	Create a Parks, Trails, Recreation, and Open Space strategic plan that inventories and analyzes the existing public parks, trail systems, recreation and open space system, including range ways and public rights-of-way water access points. This plan should consider Maine SCORP priorities, as well as look at the distribution of land and facilities, facility conditions, current and future needs, and strategies for management responsibilities, land acquisition goals and opportunities, funding, maintenance, and operations.	Parks and Recreation Dept, Planning and Codes, Public Works, Non-Profit Organizations (e.g. Friends of Belfast Parks)	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
REC-2	Coordinate with the Planning and Public Works Department to create a Belfast pedestrian and cycling plan that inventories existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructures and identify locations for improved and new sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, bike parking in order to improve safe and convenient walking and cycling, as well as access to parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational areas.	Belfast Parks and Recreation Dept, Ped Bike Hike Committee, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Coastal Mountains Land Trust, Friends of Belfast Parks.	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
REC-3	Extend, maintain, and where possible connect the network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses by acquiring new trail corridors where and when feasible. Explore strategies to manage and minimize conflicts between motorized and non-motorized trail uses and clarify where motorized uses are appropriate.	Parks and Recreation Staff	Ongoing	Yes
REC-4	Create a priority list of future desired trail connections and work with landowners to create connections when opportunities arise.	Parks and Recreation Staff	Med-Term (3-5 years)	
REC-5	Explore potential opportunities for new parkland, trails, and open space on the east side of Belfast harbor.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works, Parks and Recreation Dept, Friends of Belfast Parks	Mid-Term (3-5 years)	
REC-6	Explore potential opportunities for new parks outside the by-pass road, as well as multi-use trails outside the by-pass area that create more multi-modal connections between the outer areas of Belfast and downtown.	Parks and Recreation Staff	Long Term (5+ years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
REC-7	Assess and improve accessibility standards in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to public parks and open spaces.	Public Works, Planning Staff, Parks and Recreation Dept, Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee	Ongoing	
REC-8	Work collaboratively with stakeholder groups to pursue opportunities to protect significant open spaces and recreational land.	Belfast Parks and Recreation Dept, Friends of Belfast Parks, Ped Bike Hike Committee, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Coastal Mountains Land Trust	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
REC-9	Create public education materials on the benefits and protections for landowners when they allow public access. At a minimum this will include information on Maine's landowner liability law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A §159-A.	Parks and Recreation Dept, City Attorney, Friends of Belfast Parks, Ped Bike Hike Committee, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Coastal Mountains Land Trust	Long Term (5+ years)	Yes
REC-10	Continue collaboration between the city and adjacent neighbors to support and protect the public rights-of-way and range ways access points to water.	Parks and Recreation Dept.	Ongoing	
REC-11	Identify locations in the city for new recreational infrastructure such as short-term shelters along trails, kayak racks, bike racks, benches, and consistent signage and wayfinding.	Parks and Recreation Dept, Planning and Codes, Public Works, Non-Profit Organizations	Med-Term (3-5 years)	
REC-12	Explore and seek federal, state, and non-profit funding to add, upgrade, and rehabilitate park facilities and amenities; make park improvements, expand the municipal park system to meet future needs of residents.	Parks and Recreation Dept, Non-Profit Organizations	Ongoing	
REC-13	Collaborate with other city departments and committees to assess how climate change effects and sea-level rise will impact the municipal parks system and to create a long-term action plan for addressing the impacts.	Parks and Recreation Dept, City Committees, Non-Profit Organizations	Ongoing	



# HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
HIS-1	Create a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) inventory of sites with high potential for archaeological and/or historic resources.	Historical Society, Planning and Codes	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
HIS-2	Work with the local or county historical society and/or the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to assess the need for, and if necessary, plan for a comprehensive community survey of the community's historic and archaeological resources. Belfast will pursue the following MHPC recommendations: Prehistoric Archaeological Sites- Survey needed along Belfast Harbor shoreline and Passagassawakeag River, and around lakes and ponds/marshes near sandy soils; Historic Archaeological Sites- A professional survey for historic archaeological sites to focus on agricultural, residential, and industrial sites relating to the earliest Euro-American settlement of the town in the second half of the 1700s; Historic Buildings/Structures/Objects- A comprehensive survey of Belfast's above-ground historic resources needs to be conducted in order to identify other properties that may be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.	Historical Society, Maine Historic Preservation Commission	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes / Combined with City language
HIS-3	Identify city-owned buildings of historic value and explore strategies for funding and maintaining those structures.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
HIS-4	Seek State and Federal grants and/or existing tax credit programs through organizations to rehabilitate, weatherize, and maintain historic buildings and streetscapes, including but not limited to funding from Efficiency Maine, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Maine DECD, Maine DOT and non-governmental organizations. Encourage the use of historic preservation tax credits by area residents, businesses, and property developers.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Economic Development Department	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
HIS-5	Create a wish list of future adaptive reuse projects, like the Waterfall Arts example, for historic buildings and explore funding sources and/or partnership that could support these projects.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Economic Department	Long-Term (5+ years)	
HIS-6	For sites with identified potential for historical and archaeological resources, require subdivision or non-residential developers to look for and identify any historical and archaeological resources and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation; memorialization as appropriate; coordination with the State of Maine Historic Preservation Commission.	Planning and Codes, Historical Society	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
HIS-7	Require the use of maps and information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into the planning and development review process, where applicable.	Planning and Codes, Historical Society	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
HIS-8	Expand the interpretive signage program for cultural sites around the City of Belfast.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Economic Development	Long-Term (5+ years)	
HIS-9	In collaboration with Our Town Belfast, create educational and promotional materials to inform property owners of historic preservation tax credits to reduce the costs to redevelop older buildings for new uses while maintaining their historical appeal.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Planning and Codes	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
HIS-10	Create an action plan for climate impacts on historic and cultural resources, such as resources in high flood-risk areas. Refer to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission’s Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Economic Development Department, Climate Crisis Committee	Short-Term (1-3 years)	

# NATURAL RESOURCES

## NATURAL RESOURCES STRATEGIES

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-1	Continue existing conservation partnerships and build new partnerships as opportunities arise.	City Staff, Committees, State Agencies, Non-profits	Ongoing	
NAT-2	Support efforts to identify and prioritize land for protection and participate in public private partnership efforts as appropriate.	Planning and Codes, Coastal Mountains Land Trust, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-3	Re-examine existing stormwater regulations to ensure new and replacement stormwater systems have the capacity to manage increased stormwater flows in an environmentally sensitive manner.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-4	Continue to ensure local ordinances include stormwater runoff performance standards consistent with Maine Stormwater Management Law and Maine Stormwater regulations (Title 38 MRSA §420-D and 06-096 CMR 500 and 502); Maine Department of Environmental Protection’s allocations for allowable levels of phosphorus in lake/pond watersheds; Maine Pollution Discharge Elimination System Stormwater Program (MPDES).	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-5	Adopt water quality protection practices and standards for construction and maintenance of public and private roads and public properties, and require their implementation by contractors, owners, and community officials and employees.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-6	Implement recommendations from the Belfast Harbor Management Plan.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Harbor Master, Public Works, City Manager, City Council	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-7	Identify needs for additional recreational and commercial access (which includes parking, boat launches, docking space, fish piers, and swimming access).	Parks and Recreation Department, Harbor Committee, Harbor Master	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
NAT-8	Assess and refine pier and dock regulations to minimize the potential negative impacts of a proliferation of these structures in ecologically sensitive areas, or in areas where navigation might be impeded.	Planning and Codes, Harbor Master, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-9	Ensure Best Management Practices during construction, including earthmoving, to reduce non-point source runoff pollution.	Planning and Codes	Ongoing	
NAT-10	Consider requirements for on-site capture of stormwater runoff such as Low Impact Development (LID) standards, which are practices that use or mimic natural processes that result in the infiltration, evapotranspiration or use of stormwater in order to protect water quality and associated aquatic habitat.	Planning and Codes	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
NAT-11	Continue to monitor for possible groundwater pollution, particularly at sites where there are oil storage tanks located near public and private water supplies.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Ongoing	
NAT-12	Identify faulty septic systems and any local, regional, or state incentive programs that may help cover the costs of replacements.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Ongoing	
NAT-13	Support the Watershed and Aquifer Protection District by discouraging new development in the district and continuing close monitoring of water quality.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Ongoing	
NAT-14	Work with the Belfast Water District to examine the need to enact revised public wellhead and aquifer recharge areas protection mechanisms, as necessary. Continue to implement the land acquisition strategy for the Water District and priority list of parcels to acquire for continued water quality protection.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
NAT-15	Educate business owners and homeowners on the proper storage and disposal of subsurface waste, solid waste, fertilizers, herbicides, and related chemicals, including recycling at the redemption center/transfer station. Continue using signage along watershed boundaries and pavement markings at storm drains for passive education about how surface runoff impacts Belfast Bay water quality.	Belfast Water District	Ongoing	
NAT-16	Collaborate with local residents and businesses, neighboring communities, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Marine Resources to develop an action plan that protects fishery habitats and creates strategies to further identify and eliminate point and non-point sources of water pollution. This includes working with marine businesses and industries to participate in clean marina / boatyard programs.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Water District, Harbor Master, Public Works	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-17	Consider state funding programs such as the Working Waterfront Access Protection Program, which assists commercial fisheries, co-ops, the municipal governments, and other interested parties in securing strategically significant working waterfront properties to protect vital resources that support commercial fishing at working waterfronts.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development Department, Harbor Master, City Manager	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-18	Support policies that promote community gardening, cooperative small-scale agricultural and edible landscapes.	City Staff and Committees / Boards	Ongoing	
NAT-19	Work with partners to identify locations suitable for community gardens, small-scale agriculture, or local forestry uses.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Depart of Ag, Cooperative Extension Service, Parks and Rec Dept, Belfast Garden Club	Ongoing	
NAT-20	Encourage land use policies that support an integrated and multi-purpose approach to land use, where appropriate, such as allowing grazing around solar arrays.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-21	Collaborate with Maine Farmland Trust to support efforts to keep land in agricultural production.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service	Ongoing	
NAT-22	Explore what a “working waterfront” means in Belfast, and continue to invest in projects that support this vision of a Belfast working waterfront.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council, Harbor Master	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-23	Consider a variety of tools to protect the working landscape economy (working farmland, forested areas, and other natural resources), such as a working landscape protection plan, tax abatement programs, agricultural zoning and buffers, transfer-of-development rights programs, easements, and protection of prime soils. Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs. Provide information about the current use taxation program to owners of waterfront land used to provide access to or support the conduct of commercial fishing activities.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-24	Promote agricultural practices that retain and increase moisture and organic content in soils.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service	Ongoing	
NAT-25	Encourage the use of carbon sequestration techniques, crediting programs, and access to voluntary carbon markets for farm and woodland property owners.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Dept of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service	Ongoing	
NAT-26	Improve Belfast’s “urban forest” by monitoring the condition of street trees, maintaining them properly, and replanting when necessary. Explore creation of a Belfast urban forest management strategy.	Public Works, Planning and Codes	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-27	Include land conservation for agriculture and commercial forestry operations in local or regional economic development plans.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development Dept, Cooperative Extension	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-28	Continue to enhance and promote the “Emerald Necklace” and recreational trails network in Belfast as a means of encouraging outdoor oriented tourism.	Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Parks and Recreation Dept, Ped/Bike/Hike Committee, Our Town Belfast, Chamber of Commerce	Ongoing	
NAT-29	Limit non-residential development in areas identified by the State of Maine as critical rural and natural resources areas to natural resource-based businesses and services, nature tourism / outdoor recreation businesses, farmers’ markets, and home occupations. See Future Land Use Plan.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-30	Develop a strategic design plan that addresses sea-level rise in the inner harbor.	Harbor Committee, Climate Crisis Committee, Harbor Master	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-31	Periodically review and assess state regulations regarding development in areas vulnerable to sea-level rise and how they compare to Belfast land use and development regulations.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Harbor Master, Harbor Committee, Climate Crisis Committee	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-32	Where applicable, develop an urban impaired stream watershed management or mitigation plan that will promote continued development or redevelopment without further stream degradation.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Long-Term (5+ years)	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-33	Encourage landowners to protect water quality. Provide local contact information at the municipal office for water quality best management practices from resources such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, Maine Forest Service, and/or Small Woodlot Association of Maine.	Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-34	Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect and, where warranted, improve water quality.	Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-35	Provide educational materials at appropriate locations regarding aquatic invasive species.	Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-36	Ensure that land use ordinances are consistent with applicable state law regarding critical natural resources.	Planning and Codes	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-37	Designate critical natural resources at Critical Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.	Comprehensive Planning Committee, Planning and Codes	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-38	Through local land use ordinances, required subdivision or non-residential property developers to look for and identify critical natural resources that may be on site and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources, including but not limited to, modification of the proposed site design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
NAT-39	Through local land use ordinances, require the planning board (or other designated review authority) to include as part of the review process, consideration of pertinent State "Beginning with Habitat" (BWH) program maps and information regarding critical natural resources.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	Yes
NAT-40	Initiate and/or participate in inter-local and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-41	Provide information about the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program and current use taxation program to owners of waterfront land use to provide access to or support the conduct of commercial fishing activities.	Planning and Codes, Harbor Committee, Harbor Master	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-42	Continue to provide sufficient fundings and staffing of the Harbor Master position and staff a Harbor Committee	City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
NAT-43	Continue to work with local property owners, land trusts, and others to protect major points of physical and visual access to coastal waters, especially along public ways and in public parks.	Planning and Codes, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Harbor Committee	Ongoing	Yes

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-44	Encourage agricultural practices and tree plantings that provide maximum habitat for songbirds and pollinators; encourage permaculture practices and maximize biodiversity in order to adapt to climate-induced invasives.	Planning and Codes, Parks Dept, Non-Profit Community, Belfast Garden Club	Ongoing	
NAT-45	Use selected trees and shrubs to strategically provide shade/cooling and protect against high winds, especially inside the by-pass.	Public Works, Planning and Codes	Ongoing	
NAT-46	Develop incentives that increase stewardship and reduce loss of farmland, woodlands and wetlands.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-47	Encourage the use of carbon sequestration techniques, crediting programs, and access to voluntary carbon markets for farm and woodland property owners.	Climate Crisis Committee	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
NAT-48	Work with state, regional, and local partners to identify habitat areas for species of special concern and develop tools and partnerships for protection of those areas.	Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Coastal Mountains Land Trust	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	



# CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

## CLIMATE SOLUTIONS STRATEGIES

The Climate Solutions strategies in the table below are the strategies already outlined in the other policy guide topic areas above, with the exception of the first strategy, which is unique to the Climate Solutions topic.

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
CLIM-1	Develop a “Climate Action Plan” to establish guidance for reducing emissions, including: goals and targets for managing sea-level rise; reducing dependence on fossil fuels; resilience planning strategies, such as exploring best practices for shoreline protection measures; improving city capacity for Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping in order to identify areas of Belfast and public infrastructure that are at risk due to issues associated with changing climate.	Climate Crisis Committee, City Staff, City Council	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
REC-8	Work collaboratively with stakeholder groups to pursue opportunities to protect significant open spaces and recreational land.	Parks and Recreation Dept, Friends of Belfast Parks, Ped Bike Hike Committee, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition, Coastal Mountains Land Trust	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
REC-12	Explore and seek federal, state, and non-profit funding to add, upgrade, and rehabilitate park facilities and amenities; make park improvements, expand the municipal park system to meet future needs of residents.	Parks and Recreation Staff, Non-Profit Organizations	Ongoing	
Rec-13	Collaborate with other city departments and committees to assess how climate change effects and sea-level rise will impact the municipal parks system and to create a long-term action plan for addressing the impacts.	Parks and Recreation Staff, City Committees, Non-Profit Organizations	Ongoing	
MOB-25	Collaborate with Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP), local large employers, and private bus companies to expand local and inter-city transit to the extent feasible.	City staff (Planning, Economic Development, Public Works), City committees, non-profits.	Ongoing	
MOB-26	Utilize building and zoning codes to encourage electric vehicles and human-powered transport.	Planning Staff, Planning Board	Ongoing	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
MOB-27	Support the use of electric vehicles by increasing public charging facilities, including one or more multi-charger fields, and considering buildings codes that incentivize private EV charging facilities where multi-unit buildings and commercial structures are built.	Economic Development	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
MOB-1	Coordinate with the Planning and Public Works Department to create a Belfast pedestrian and cycling plan that inventories existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructures and identify locations for improved and new sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, bike parking in order to improve safe and convenient walking and cycling, as well as access to parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational areas.	Pedestrian, Biking, Hiking Committee, Planning Staff, Public Works	Short-Term (1-3 years)	Yes
MOB-3	Work with major employers to create ride sharing incentives. Explore options for a “Park and Ride” service that may help alleviate commuter traffic and provide more options for people commuting in and out of Belfast.	Planning Staff, Economic Development Department, Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, Our Town Belfast	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
HOU-8	Develop local programs to encourage weatherization and insulation of existing buildings and new construction, and to encourage installation of heat pumps or other green heating/cooling methods that maximize energy efficiency. Cooperate with the City Energy Committee in weatherizing city buildings and continuing to increase use of green energy for city operations. Educate residents about Efficiency Maine programs that support insulation improvements.	Planning and Codes, Economic Development, City Energy Committee	Medium Term (3-5 years)	
HIS-10	Create an action plan for climate impacts on historic and cultural resources, such as resources in high flood-risk areas. Refer to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission’s Guidelines on Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.	Historical Society, Our Town Belfast, Economic Development Department, Climate Crisis Committee	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-11	Continue to invest in solar and renewable energy sources for the City of Belfast.	City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	
PUB-3	Survey and inventory the current Belfast stormwater management system; determine MEDOT/City jurisdictions; develop a comprehensive design for upgrade.	City Engineer, City Council	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
PUB-22	Continue to partner with the Waldo County Emergency Management Agency to provide emergency shelters in times of extreme heat or cold.	City staff, County Emergency Management	Ongoing	
NAT-30	Develop a strategic design plan that addresses sea-level rise in the inner harbor.	Harbor Committee, Climate Crisis Committee, Harbor Master	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-31	Periodically review and assess state regulations regarding development in areas vulnerable to sea-level rise and how they compare to Belfast land use and development regulations.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Harbor Master, Harbor Committee, Climate Crisis Committee	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	

ID	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Time Frame	State Required?
NAT-44	Encourage agricultural practices and tree plantings that provide maximum habitat for songbirds and pollinators; encourage permaculture practices and maximize biodiversity in order to adapt to climate-induced invasives.	Planning and Codes, Parks and Rec Dept, Non-Profit Community, Belfast Garden Club	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-45	Use selected trees and shrubs to strategically provide shade/cooling and protect against high winds, especially inside the by-pass.	Public Works, Planning and Codes	Ongoing	
NAT-46	Develop incentives that increase stewardship and reduce loss of farmland, woodlands and wetlands.	Planning and Codes, Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	Short-Term (1-3 years)	
NAT-24	Promote agricultural practices that retain and increase moisture and organic content in soils.	Planning and Codes, Planning Board, Economic Development, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service	Ongoing	
NAT-47	Encourage the use of carbon sequestration techniques, crediting programs, and access to voluntary carbon markets for farm and woodland property owners.	Climate Crisis Committee	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
FLU-18	Establish goals for future land conservation and protection of existing open space.	Planning and Codes, Parks and Recreation Dept, Economic Development Dept, Public Works Dept, City Manager, City Council	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	
FLU-6	Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas as identified below in this Future Land Use Plan.	City Manager, City Council	Ongoing	Yes
FLU-14	Consider requirements for Low-Impact Design (LID) on-site or “sponge” retention concepts in development projects to support climate, public infrastructure, and overall stormwater management goals and objectives.	Planning Staff, Planning Board, City Council	Medium-Term (3-5 years)	