



DRAFT for review
3/1/2022

Saco's Comprehensive Plan 2022-2034



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Saco residents—for your input, time, and commitment to your city

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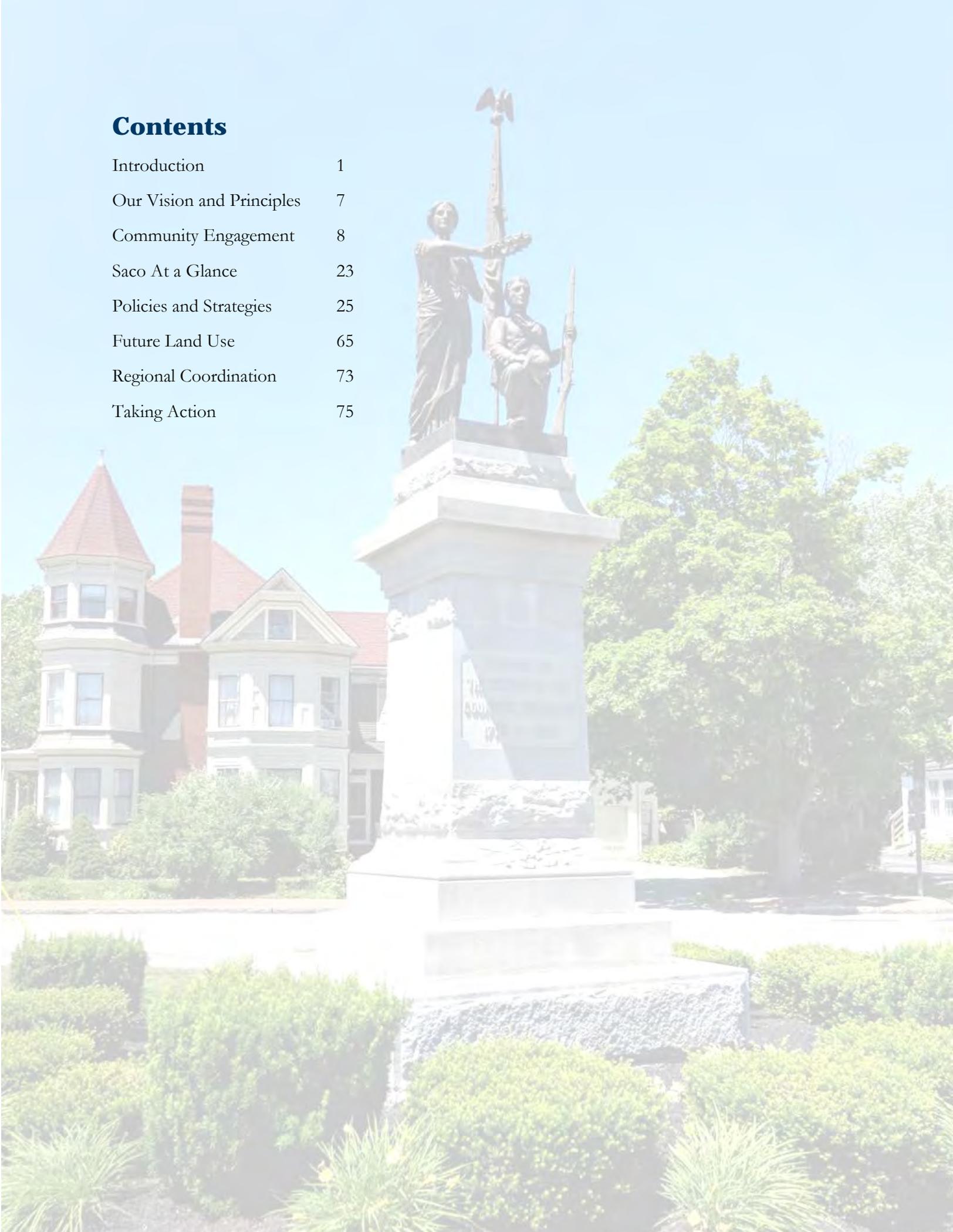
Ideas and Action, *Sub-consultant*

I certify that this comprehensive plan was prepared with the intent of complying with the Growth Management Act (30 M.R.S.A. §§ 4312 - 4350.), that it includes all of the applicable required elements of the Maine Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule (07-105 CMR 208), and that it is true and accurate.

Bryan Kaenrath, City Administrator

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Introduction

Saco is a growing city offering an attractive quality of life in York County. It offers something for everyone—a historic Downtown on the Saco River, seaside neighborhoods and sandy beaches, a variety of jobs and shopping options, parks and trails, and pastoral landscapes. Its location along the Saco Bay and Saco River is one of its defining geographic features, and its proximity to Portland makes it an increasingly attractive place for people to live.

The comprehensive plan provides guidance for future public decision-making based on a shared community vision. Saco’s most recent comprehensive plan was completed in 2011 and much has changed since then. The City finished an interim update to parts of that plan focused on Downtown in 2018, also adding sections on sea level rise and arts and culture. This plan builds on these and other past efforts to chart a new path forward over the next 12 years.

There are **important trends** that influenced the development of this plan. Saco’s growing population is also aging, and its needs and preferences are changing as that happens. Average household size has been decreasing yet most new construction continues to be single family subdivisions. Housing affordability is an increasing challenge for many, including young people looking to start on their own, families, and fixed-income seniors. Saco’s economy is growing but at a slower rate than its neighbors. The transportation system must address both regional demands and local interest in pedestrian and bicycle connections. A changing environment demands proactive responses to better address climate impacts.



The **key priorities** of this plan respond to these trends to chart a path forward for Saco. Resiliency and sustainability should be integrated throughout City policies. Attracting quality jobs, strengthening the local workforce, and encouraging small business development is key to economic development. Encouraging a wide range of housing types and in locations already served by public utilities will provide more options for living, more opportunities for affordable housing, and will conserve irreplaceable natural areas from further residential development. Strengthening Downtown, the riverfront and coastal areas supports quality of life and enhances prized features of the city. Planning for future mixed-use growth along key corridors like Portland Road will further reinforce Saco’s quality of life, contribute to the tax base, and counter development pressure on rural areas. Integrating pedestrian and bicycle access into new and existing neighborhoods will reduce traffic impacts and greenhouse gas emissions while improving physical activity levels. Growing and diversifying the tax base is critical to increase the City’s ability to pay for desired improvements.

The recommendations presented in this plan are premised on the **inter-relationship of topic areas**. Decisions in any one area often have broad impacts in other areas. For example, new housing and business location decisions influence transportation patterns, carbon emissions, land consumption or conservation, and the cost for the City to serve new development. When considering land use and policy decisions, a broad perspective that carefully weighs benefits and costs across various topics is important.



This plan was developed in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, a public health crisis with wide-ranging impacts. Many people experienced working from home for an extended period, eliminating daily commutes and causing some to rethink where they live relative to their job. Others had to continue working in-person throughout the pandemic, balancing their health and their need for continued income. People sought more time outdoors, whether walking in their neighborhood, seeking out parks and trails, or returning to outdoor dining when it was allowed. While things have slowly begun to return to normal, the future of “normal” is uncertain and this plan must be able to adapt to any new trends that persist to influence Saco’s future.

During this planning process, most community engagement happened virtually—initially because large public gatherings were prohibited by public health guidance and later because people had varying levels of comfort with being in close quarters with many others. Online engagement allowed people to participate on their own time rather than showing up at a specific time and place. The kickoff public event was an interactive online meeting followed by several weeks during which an online survey and interactive map was available for people to provide input. Even when in-person events returned, a virtual complement was maintained to continue this outreach. After the in-person open house in the fall to review draft plan recommendations, meeting material was posted online with a survey and another interactive map to encourage people to provide their comments and feedback.



Changes That Will Drive the Future of Land Use

Demographics are Destiny

In the five decades following the end of World War II, families with children dominated household growth and spurred an explosion of suburban development across Maine and North America. However, demographic growth has shifted dramatically toward one- and two-person households (without children) in recent years. These smaller households will dominate household growth, and housing markets, in Saco as well as across Maine and North America for the next two decades. Managed well, growth driven by these smaller households offers the opportunity to attract residents and new small business to Downtown, redevelop areas like aging strip retail centers and Portland Road, promote mixed-income intergenerational neighborhoods, and enhance the City's ability to achieve many of the goals voiced by the community.

This shift, of course, also presents Saco with challenges. Shrinking households are closely tied to an aging population, and suburbs are aging faster than cities. As growing numbers of homeowners shift to fixed incomes, they often become resistant to increasing property taxes. Finding alternative sources of real estate value such as new walkable, mixed-use activity centers becomes increasingly important. Similarly, preserving the value of predominantly detached single-family neighborhoods—for example by increasing access to nearby green space and newly walkable areas—may become a higher priority.

Saco's Population Age Trends			
	2010	2020	2025
Median Age	41.8	44.0	44.2
Ages 5-24	24.5%	22.5%	21.0%
Ages 65+	14.3%	18.6%	21.3%

Source: 2010 Census, ESRI estimates 2020 & 2025

Saco's median age is increasing as the share of the population age 65+ increases.

Saco's Household Types		
Total	7,953	100%
Family	5,213	65.5%
Non-Family	2,740	34.5%
1- and 2-person households	4,978	62.6%

Source: American Community Survey, 2015-2019

Over 60% of Saco households have 1 or 2 people.

The Knowledge Economy Drives Growth

Smaller households and an aging population are slowing workforce growth just as the dramatic growth in knowledge industries has increased the share of jobs in every region that require higher education. The resulting shortage of educated workers—often termed “talent”—has produced growing competition to attract and retain talent. Jobs and investment now flow to places where this talent wants to live and work. Mixed-use neighborhoods and urban districts with walkable Main Streets top their list.

Companies are competing for educated workers like those living in the Portland and Boston areas. This competition will intensify over the next two decades and with the right strategies in

39%



Saco population age 25 and older with a bachelor's degree or higher

place, Saco will be in a strong position to attract jobs and investment to Downtown, emerging walkable activity centers along Portland Road, and the next generation of business park tenants, fulfilling an often-heard aspiration for more local, well-paying jobs.

Growing local jobs will also help expand and diversify the City's tax base. While in some cases these jobs will head to office settings, increasingly they will also head to reimagined older industrial buildings or new "flex space" in which innovation mixes with new economy assembly, distribution, and a wide variety of other jobs.

Retail is Changing Rapidly

The rise of online retail, together with the decline in the share of US income earned by the core markets for mass market retailers, is taking a toll on auto-oriented retail. Malls and strip centers have emerged as the new frontiers for redevelopment. In turn, a new

era of smaller, unique, "Main Street" retail—largely supported by nearby housing—is taking root in downtowns and emerging mixed-use centers.

Food and drink from various dining options to coffee to beer have taken center stage in this Main Street revival. Roughly 50% of all new retail leases across the US in 2019 were for restaurants and related eateries. While many of these businesses are locally owned, a new generation of regional and national retailers are also capitalizing on this trend. The Main Street retail renaissance has in turn helped attract new residents and jobs to the large number of walkable, mixed-use, and mixed-income small and mid-size cities.

Online retail has impacted how people research and buy many products, including cars and trucks. Numerous websites exist that let someone buy a new or used vehicle online, some without ever needing to set foot on a



dealership lot. This trend is further impacted by mobility changes that may reduce overall car ownership in the future. What does this mean for Saco? The many auto dealerships and used car lots along the Portland Road corridor are likely in for a period of transition which will open new opportunities for redevelopment over time that adds the knowledge industry jobs and walkable mixed-use neighborhoods which will drive future economic development.

Mobility Innovations Will Change How We Move Around

Today we are on the cusp of two decades of even more transformative mobility innovations that will strongly favor downtowns and closer-in urban neighborhoods. The first waves of change have been focused on Mobility as a Service (MaaS), for example Lyft, Uber, and ever-evolving micro-mobility technologies deploying e-scooters and bike sharing. MaaS is already steadily increasing the convenience and decreasing the cost of living and working in places that offer the density to support a high level of convenience.

Next up will be the rise of connected vehicles, which may be prevalent by the early 2030's. While these vehicles won't drive themselves,

they will self-park far more efficiently than we park them today. As a result, in roughly a decade the capacity of parking facilities in Saco may rapidly increase—adding first 20% and then 30% more spaces as self-parking capabilities and MaaS options improve. This will enable new development Downtown and in emerging mixed-use centers to share parking with existing projects. This shift will reduce and then eliminate additional parking facilities as a prerequisite for infill and redevelopment projects and reduce costs.

It has been estimated that by roughly 2040 autonomous vehicles will be the norm. In Downtown and mixed-use centers that offer the concentration of people and destinations to support on-demand service, autonomous mobility planners project the paradigm will take the form of shared autonomous vehicles (SAVs). SAVs will be far less costly to operate than individually owned autonomous vehicles—the norm in low density environments without the intensity to support on-demand convenience. A typical household is projected to be able to save roughly \$5,000 for each vehicle it no longer needs to own as it relies instead on SAVs for mobility.



Our Vision and Principles

Saco's comprehensive plan is guided by a shared community vision for the future and a set of supporting principles. These two foundational elements were developed based on public input during the initial visioning phase and were revised with the Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC). They reflect the aspirations of residents as the city continues to grow and evolve. A strong sense of community, appreciation for the city's character, and recognition of the need for smart decisions about future growth are themes from the visioning phase reflected in these two plan elements.

OUR VISION FOR SACO

Saco—a community for a lifetime.

Saco is known as a welcoming small city committed to managing its growth to build a better community for all and for a lifetime. As we grow, we continue to preserve our rich historic and natural legacy while celebrating our defining assets—a vibrant downtown, cherished beaches, the Saco River, and natural open spaces.

PRINCIPLES FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Enhance our downtown as the lively core of our community—a place that invites everyone to live, work, play, shop, and gather together.



Expand economic opportunity for all by attracting and retaining a diverse mix of businesses, quality jobs and investment, and by providing the services that offer everyone a path to opportunity.



Provide a variety of housing options to retain and welcome people of all ages, incomes, lifestyles, and backgrounds as members of our community.



Design a connected mobility system with everyone in mind by expanding options to walk, bike, or use transit.



Grow our environmental stewardship by preserving and protecting our natural and built legacies and committing to green practices that reduce our environmental impact.



Promote health and well-being by shaping our growth to increase walkability, access to nature, and similar qualities that foster wellness throughout a lifetime.



Build resiliency to adapt to future changes and protect our community.



Invest in our schools and infrastructure in ways that are fiscally responsible, environmentally resilient, and support the growth our community wants.



Strengthen our City's fiscal position for long-term financial stability to support the services and investment that enable our community to offer a high quality of life.

Community Engagement

This plan was developed during the COVID-19 global pandemic, dramatically impacting how people could safely interact. The community engagement process adapted to a virtual and online format during the first phases of the process before transitioning to a hybrid in-person and online approach in the final phases. Despite these challenges, residents adapted to available options and contributed their time, ideas, and thoughtful feedback throughout the process.

Long-Range Planning Committee

Throughout the planning process, the Comprehensive Plan benefited from the involvement of the Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC). The LRPC was formed in early 2021 to both guide the planning process and oversee the plan's implementation. Members brought diverse perspectives as residents, members of boards and committees, or City staff. They helped craft the plan's vision statement and guiding principles based on community input. They discussed potential policies and strategies, reviewed draft recommendations, and helped promote community outreach events. Going forward, they will meet regularly to assess implementation progress and help the City stay on track towards its goals.

Online Presence



City communications staff established a dedicated Comprehensive Plan webpage on the City's website. This site provided information on the planning process, upcoming events, and a document library of related material. It also linked to an interactive website that provided more engaging content. A visioning survey and mapping exercise, Ideas Wall based on the topic workshops, and draft plan material were posted to allow residents to engage with the content and provide their input on their own time. From January through mid-December 2021, the website saw more than 1,500 unique visitors and more than 4,200 total visits.

Community Visioning Workshop

A kick-off public meeting for the Saco Comprehensive Plan was held online via Zoom on January 21, 2021. The presentation explained the importance of the comprehensive plan, its role in City decision-making, and introduced big-picture demographic, economic, and mobility trends that will influence the City's future. It went on to discuss major themes and key information that help describe Saco today – a snapshot of its people, neighborhoods, economy, transportation systems, natural resources, and more. Participants were then assigned to Zoom breakout rooms for facilitated small group discussions about Saco's future. Each group discussed their favorite places in Saco, the places they wanted to change or improve, and their vision for Saco's future.

Favorite Places

Each participant was asked to identify their favorite place in Saco. Many participants mentioned public parks and beaches, Camp Ellis, the Saco River, and downtown. Various trails, Thornton Academy, rural areas, and community programs were also specifically mentioned. A few people talked more about how they enjoy their friendly neighborhood and/or the sense of community they find in Saco.

Places to Change or Improve

Many people identified “improvements to downtown” or “transportation improvements” as the items they would most like to change or improve about Saco.

Suggestions for improving downtown included: adding businesses, creating nightlife to attract college students, and increasing mixed-use development such as apartments above restaurants and shops. Another suggestion was to create a gathering place for the community such as an amphitheater, brewery, or other mixed-use destination.

Recommended transportation improvements included providing more bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, reducing traffic speed through the downtown area, and potentially adding a vehicular bridge between Saco and Biddeford.

In addition to comments about downtown and transportation improvements, participants expressed a desire for more diversity and affordable housing, reduced property taxes, strategies to ensure future development is more eco-friendly, and ways to highlight and improve greenspace and the area's great natural resources. Local higher education opportunities and school consolidation were also mentioned.

Bridge 2025

Saco conducted an extensive public engagement process in 2014 and 2015 to which many residents continue to refer. Several themes from that effort are similar to what we heard during this visioning process.

“What People Love”

- Warm, friendly sense of community
- Historic small city and beautiful natural setting
- Downtown Saco

“What People Want to Improve”

- Business development
- Traffic concerns, including pedestrian circulation
- Downtown revitalization

Vision for Saco's Future

Each group discussed their vision for the future of Saco ten to fifteen years from now. Based on this discussion, each group identified shared priorities. The visions varied from group to group but there were common themes. The shared priorities identified by the groups include:

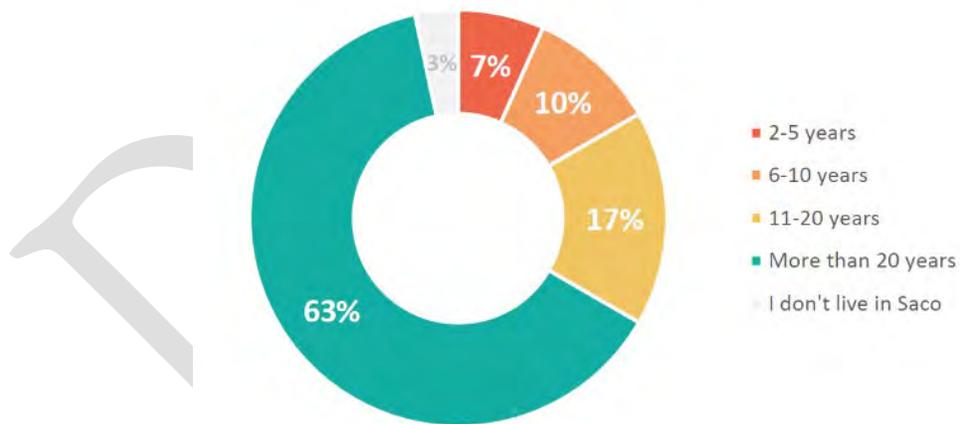
- Managing growth and controlling sprawl
- Adding more affordable housing and increasing the variety of housing choices
- Improving Downtown as a place for the community
- Improving transportation and traffic patterns
- Preserving and improving green spaces
- Attracting quality jobs and providing job training
- Creating new community gathering spaces and improving existing spaces

Meeting Participants

Approximately 45 people participated in the kick-off workshop. Participants were asked a series of polling questions during the workshop.

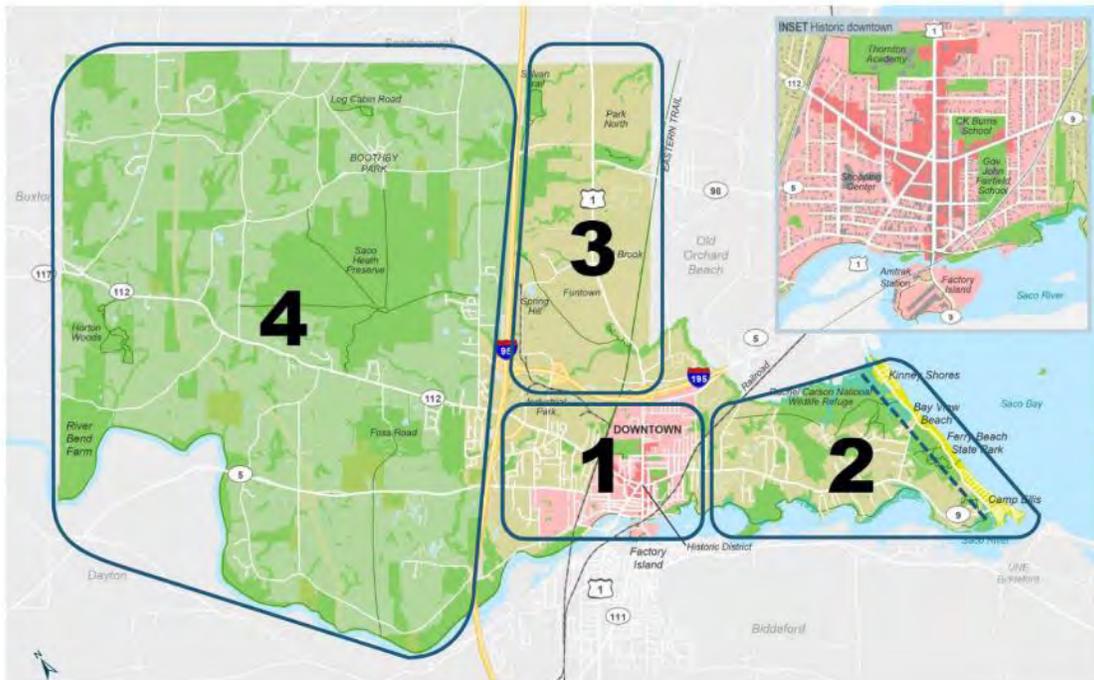
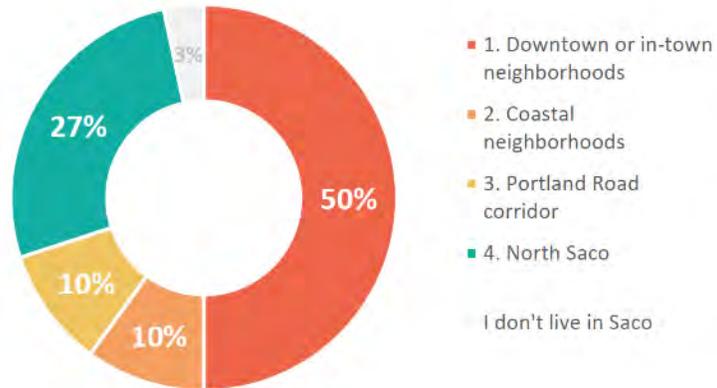
- 63% of participants had lived in Saco more than 20 years

How long have you lived in Saco?



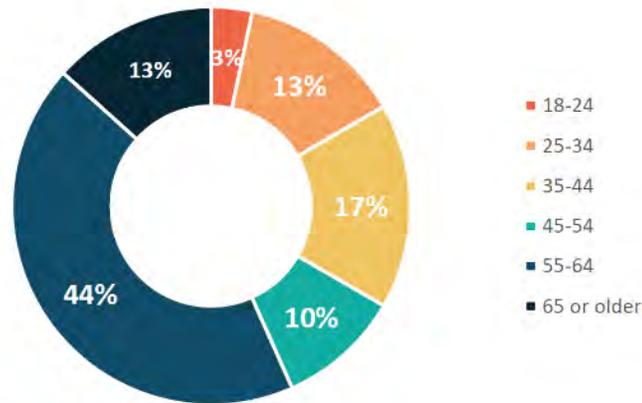
- 83% of participants own their current residence
- 50% of participants live in Downtown or in-town neighborhoods (see map)

In what part of Saco do you live?



- 30% of participants work in Saco (30%) and 14% in Portland. 13% work from home or remotely, even pre-Covid.
- 57% of participants were 55 and older.

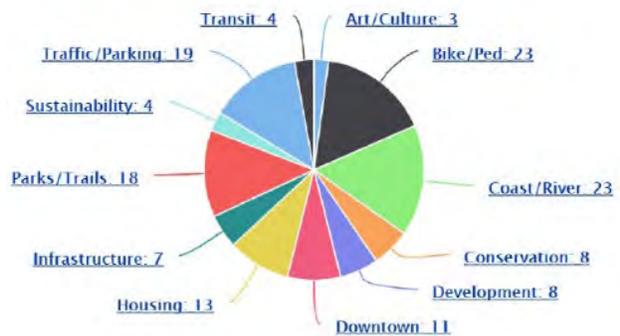
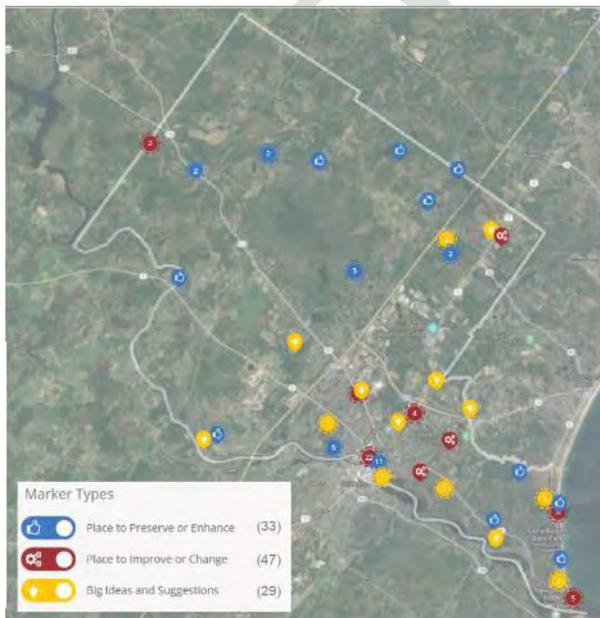
What is your age?



Online Survey

Following the kick-off public workshop, the first public engagement survey was available on the City’s engagement platform. The survey ran from January 25, 2021 to February 28, 2021. Nearly 450 people responded to the survey, which included responses in the Interactive Map and nine survey questions.

Interactive Mapping



development (17% single family; 23% multi-family) and more than a quarter of respondents felt there was too much development (26% single family; 29% multi-family). Most people also feel that there is the “about right” amount of commercial development (60% commercial; 62% industrial/manufacturing). About a third felt there was not enough commercial and industrial development (30% commercial; 29% industrial/manufacturing). It is clear from the respondents, that more retail (including shops and services) and restaurants (food and beverage) development is desired – 64% of respondents indicated there is not enough retail development and 67% indicated there is not enough restaurant development. When asked “What I think Saco Needs More...” the most common response was more restaurants & retail. Other common responses were school improvements, businesses/jobs/industrial, and green space/preservation. Respondents were more divided on what they believe Saco needs less of. Housing developments, traffic, chain stores/lack of retail variety, multi-family housing, and development all were common responses.

Respondents were also asked to rank the three comprehensive plan issues that are most important to them. Overall, land use, fiscal capacity, transportation, and economic development received the most votes (transportation and economic development were tied for third). Respondents younger than 35 ranked sustainability/resiliency as the second most important topic (it was fifth overall). Respondents 55 and older ranked natural resources/open space as the second most important topic (it was sixth overall). When asked about the best ways to improve quality of life over the next five to ten years, more than half of respondents listed improve the physical condition of schools and enhance Downtown Saco as a destination would be the most impactful improvements. Attract more businesses to the city was the third-highest response.

In-Depth Meeting Series

A series of four online events took place in April and May to explore several topics in more detail. These meetings covered Downtown, Mobility, Housing, and Sustainability and Resiliency and gave participants the chance to hear from planning team members and local panelists. Facilitated small group discussions took place at each meeting.



Downtown

The Executive Director of Saco Main Streets and a downtown property owner/developer provided local perspectives. Following the breakout sessions, each group reported their shared priorities:

- Need for a city square or gathering place, especially for larger events.
- Re-purposing vacant upper floors in Main Street buildings to add housing.
- Desire for another walking bridge to connect Twin Cities of Saco and Biddeford and help activate the river.
- Better biking connections to and through downtown; easier connections to the Eastern Trail, and making it safer to bike downtown from other parts of Saco.

- Better accessibility to and along the Saco River.
- Better lighting to make downtown more comfortable and inviting for everyone at night.

Transportation

Representatives from the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC), City of Saco Department of Public Works, and the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) discussed local and regional transportation initiatives. Following the breakout sessions, each group reported their shared priorities:

- Shifting mindsets is difficult but important to encourage people to consider walking, biking, and taking transit more instead of driving everywhere.
- Better first- and last-mile connections are needed from transit stops to destinations like medical facilities, grocery stores, and jobs, especially for seniors or those with limited mobility. Transit frequency and visibility are also important.
- Quality of life is impacted by speeding and truck traffic which detract from safety and health.
- Older residents and those with limited mobility face challenges getting around Saco, such as uneven brick sidewalks and walking to/from transit stops. Consider models from elsewhere in Maine for on-demand transportation services for these residents.
- Bike connections to the beach are desired – from downtown and the Eastern trail especially.
- Route 1 is difficult for pedestrians to cross. Brick sidewalks are challenging to navigate for those with limited mobility – like the aesthetic but pose a tripping hazard.
- Getting people out of their cars downtown was discussed. Issues with parking and better lighting to make it more inviting to walk in the evening.
- Downeaster fares are not economical for frequent trips in the region.
- Transportation strategies should consider all parts of Saco, not just downtown or specific areas.
- “Inter-connectivity to get people downtown” from recent development in North Saco – for example, creating bicycle and pedestrian connections over the Turnpike or adding a park-and-ride on west side to provide transit access.

Housing

Two representatives from The Szanton Company, a regional affordable and mixed-income housing developer, talked about how a city’s comprehensive plan can signal openness to new mixed-income housing and how they create projects that fit into their surroundings. Following the breakout sessions, each group reported their shared priorities:

- “Refurbishing existing housing stock is a win-win for everyone, especially downtown”.
- Some historic district building owners would like to renovate empty upper floors for new housing but run into challenges like sprinkler requirements, impact fees, and other issues that add costs and complexity.

- Many residents don't want to see more agricultural land be consumed by new housing subdivisions—"Fields getting paved over affects everyone in the city."
- Adding density where there is already public infrastructure can take advantage of that existing investment and give residents more choices for transportation.
- Development character and design is important. Elements like natural buffering for larger projects can help maintain Saco's character.
- Traffic concerns with new development need to be addressed. Proposals for new housing near the river in Biddeford may add commuter traffic to Saco roads.
- It can be difficult to attract young families who would work here to live in Saco. Objections about new housing bringing kids is a deterrent – how do we make people feel welcome here?
- Members of the Zoning Ordinance Committee shared that the committee discussed nodes of mixed-use along Route 1/Portland Road corridor, and that they would like to see that discussion continued.

Sustainability

Representatives from the Saco Conservation Commission, SMPDC, Saco Water Resource Department, and The Ecology School discussed recent and ongoing initiatives and projects. Following the breakout sessions, each group reported their shared priorities:

- Defining what sustainability and resiliency mean in Saco to residents is important.
- Low impact development and protection of water resources should be particularly important for Saco.
- Looking to the future when considering investments in infrastructure, walking and biking, and when managing growth can make Saco more attractive and inviting.
- Suggestions for potential comprehensive plan recommendations to consider:
 - Continue and expand regional coordination to address shared issues related to climate change and other topics
 - Develop and implement a Climate Adaptation Plan
 - Create a Sustainability Coordinator staff position to work across city departments
 - Transition the city vehicle fleet to electric vehicles (EV)
 - Encourage or require green building and/or resiliency strategies for new development
 - Look to Best Management Practices from other places

Ideas Wall

Following the four topic meetings, an online Ideas Wall invited people to leave their comments and ideas about these topics. Some of the responses include:

Downtown:

- Reduce traffic speed/flow through Downtown
- Pedestrian and bicycle improvements

Housing:

- Transform traffic by slowing speeds to encourage infill development and mixed uses
- Focus growth downtown where public transportation exists to address sustainability
- Not sure if single professionals want to deal with close neighbors – single family homes with space for garden or outdoor space still popular

Transportation:

- “If you don’t drive you can’t live here or do errands” “Walking and biking must be a top priority for the present and future”
- Provide alternatives to driving – quality bus service, bike routes for commuting, sidewalks to transit stops and destinations like beaches
- Main Street/Route 1 feels unsafe to walk along

Sustainability and Resiliency:

- Nature is part of the appeal of Saco. Prioritize the environment to help manage growth smartly. Protect wetlands and watersheds, reduce paved non-porous surfaces, add more trees.
- Incentivize cleaner transportation – public transportation, sidewalks, bike trails.
- Consider impacts of large-scale solar or wind projects on open spaces. Next-generation small-scale nuclear power will require less land and provide more reliable energy.

Other topics:

- Grow tax base to help pay for schools and infrastructure. Bring in new businesses – Biddeford and Westbrook are good models for reinvigorating Downtown and attracting businesses.
- Schools in Saco must become a priority

Community Event Outreach

City staff and members of the LRPC attended several community events throughout the year with information on the comprehensive planning process. These included two summer events and a fall event hosted by Saco Main Street in Downtown. Information on the plan was also provided outside the City Clerk’s office in City Hall and at the primary polling location on election day.

City Council and Planning Board Updates

The planning team provided an update on the process and previewed draft recommendations with each during the Fall of 2021. In addition, two representatives from each of these bodies serve as liaisons on the Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) and have provided important feedback throughout the process.

Draft Plan Review

Public Open House

City staff and the planning team were excited to host a public open house for the Comprehensive Plan on November 17, 2021, in the City Hall Auditorium. More than 40 community members participated and shared their thoughts on the draft plan recommendations. About two-thirds were attending their first comprehensive plan event which introduced significantly more residents to the planning process. Attendees included long-time residents, people who just moved to Saco within the last year and want to learn about their new home, young people passionate about addressing climate change and resiliency, and elected officials. The event was evidence of how interested and engaged Saco residents are about the future of their community.

Attendees browsed a poster gallery of draft plan recommendations, talked with planning team members to share comments and ask questions, and recorded their opinions with written comments and dot sticker voting.



Virtual Open House

Open house material was posted online after the event for continued review by residents on their own time. More than 230 unique people visited the website over three weeks. A survey asked for input on policy priorities and an interactive future land use map allowed people to identify locations for future housing, retail, and job growth or to comment on character area boundaries.

Draft Plan Feedback

Goals and policies recommendations

The nine goals of the comprehensive plan are derived from the guiding principles and are each supported by a series of policies. Open house attendees reviewed posters with information on each goal and its draft policy recommendations. Comments were generally supportive of the policies and suggested further enhancements or more specific ideas. Virtual open house survey participants identified their top priorities:

Downtown

1. Create an outdoor community gathering space suitable for both larger events and daily interactions among residents. Study opportunities for larger spaces at Pepperell Square, Pepperell Park, Saco Island, and Jubilee Park. (33%)

Economic Development

1. Focus business attraction efforts on industry sectors with local and regional strength; that provide jobs that meet the needs, skills, and aspirations of Saco's workforce. (32%)

Housing

1. Protect natural settings and rural areas without existing public water and sewer from encroaching development by encouraging new housing development at greater densities in areas with existing public infrastructure. (45%)

Transportation/Mobility

1. Upgrade walkability around key locations such as grocery stores, schools, transit nodes, health centers, senior centers, and destinations like parks and beaches. (38%)

Environmental Stewardship

1. Conserve critical natural resources such as watersheds, prime farmland, and wetlands. (43%)

Recreation/Active Living

1. Promote more housing, commercial development, and public facilities such as schools and services in walkable mixed-use neighborhoods that are served by sidewalks, transit, and bicycle facilities to support a variety of active transportation modes. (38%)

Resiliency/Sustainability

1. Develop capacity to adapt and respond to various climate change impacts. (20%)

Public Infrastructure/Services

1. Invest in Saco Schools to modernize facilities by maximizing State funding opportunities and working within local funding constraints. (43%)

Fiscal Capacity

1. Conduct fiscal cost/benefit analyses for proposed developments over a threshold value to be determined - including both housing and commercial developments - to identify the full scope of direct and indirect costs and benefits to City finances. (32%)

First Five/Next Five

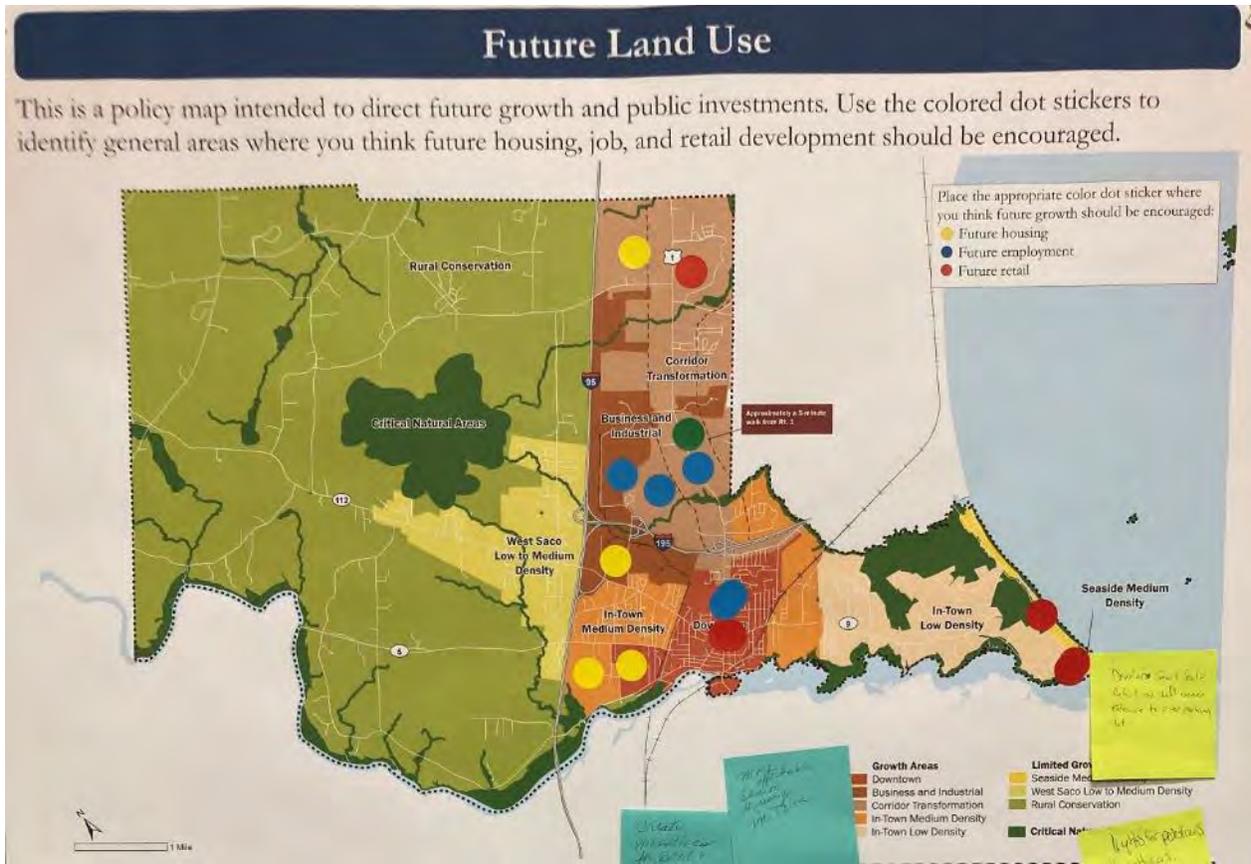
In-person and virtual open house participants identified their top three priorities for implementing the comprehensive plan. The top five were consistent across both groups of people although the relative order was different for each.

- Develop Climate Adaptation Plan + Action Strategy
- Encourage walkable mixed-use neighborhood development at higher densities where public water and sewer exist
- Attract new jobs and businesses near existing and planned transit
- Invest in new school construction and other school improvements
- Invest in public infrastructure in fiscally responsible ways to support projected growth and increase environmental sustainability.

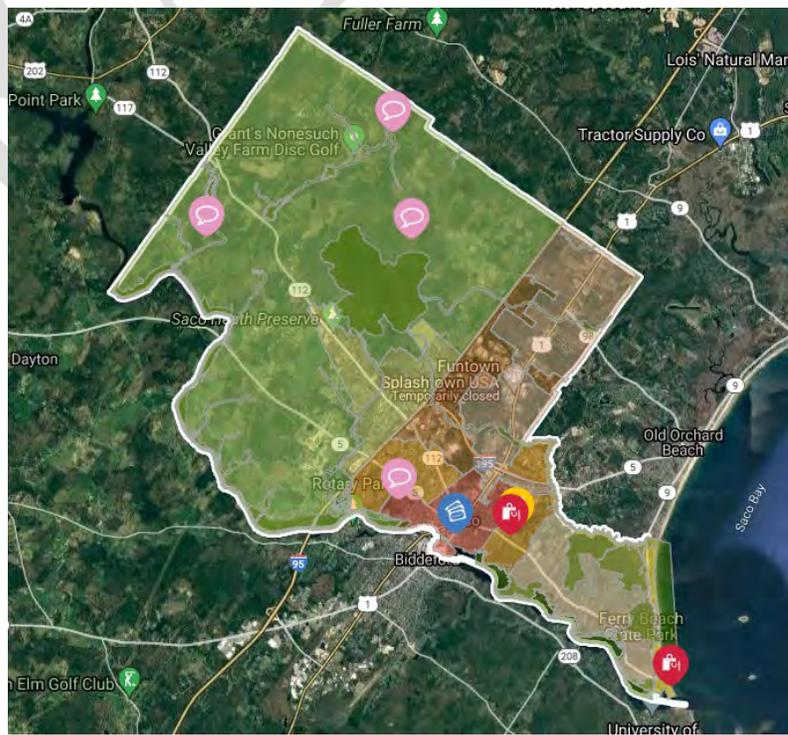
	Open House		Online		TOTAL	
Develop Climate Adaptation Plan + Action Strategy	19	25%	6	11%	25	19%
Encourage walkable mixed-use neighborhood development with higher densities where public water and sewer exist (e.g. Saco Island, Portland Road, Ocean Park Road/Route 5)	11	15%	9	16%	20	15%
Attract new jobs and businesses near existing and planned transit service.	8	11%	10	18%	18	14%
Invest in new school construction and other school improvements.	10	13%	7	12%	17	13%
Invest in public infrastructure in fiscally responsible ways to support projected growth and increase environmental sustainability.	5	7%	10	18%	15	11%
Facilitate new housing in growth areas across a range of types and affordability.	8	11%	5	9%	13	10%
Develop places and programs that support a lively Downtown.	6	8%	5	9%	11	8%
Improve network of pedestrian and bicycle connections.	5	7%	1	2%	6	5%
Conduct property tax revaluation to appraise all real property to its full and fair value.	1	1%	3	5%	4	3%
Invest in public safety facilities to improve emergency operations and keep pace with growth.	2	3%	1	2%	3	2%
	75		57		132	

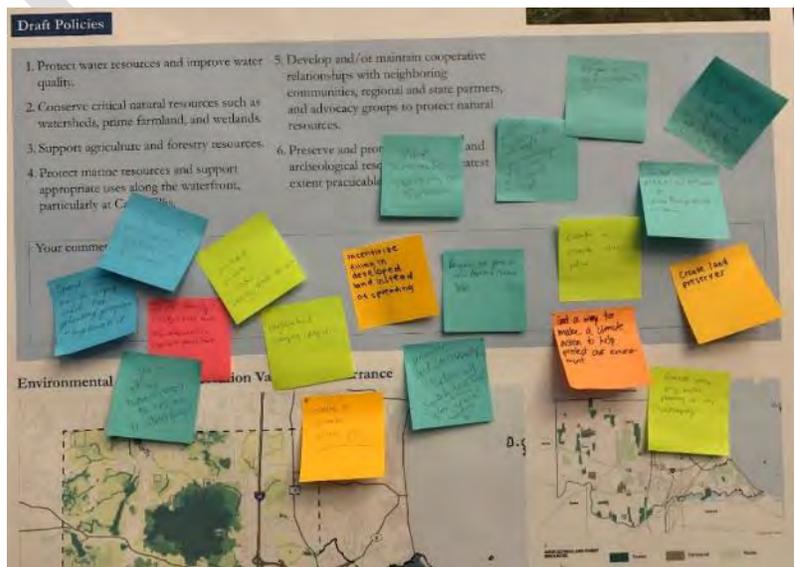
Future Land Use Character Areas

The future land use map is an important guiding policy tool to inform future decisions about places to encourage growth and places to encourage preservation. Open house attendees placed dot stickers on the future land use map to identify general areas where they would like to see future housing, employment, and retail growth located. Virtual open house participants dropped pins on an interactive map to identify these areas.



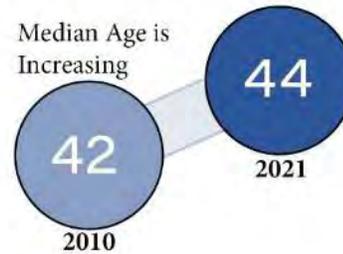
Colored dots and pins on the virtual map demonstrate that people would like to see future growth in already developed “in-town” locations instead of the more rural, less developed areas of Saco.



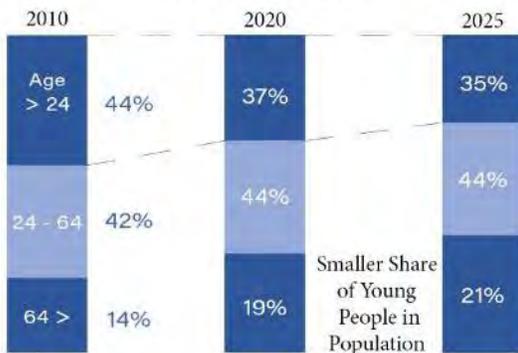


Saco At a Glance

CITY OF Saco at a Glance



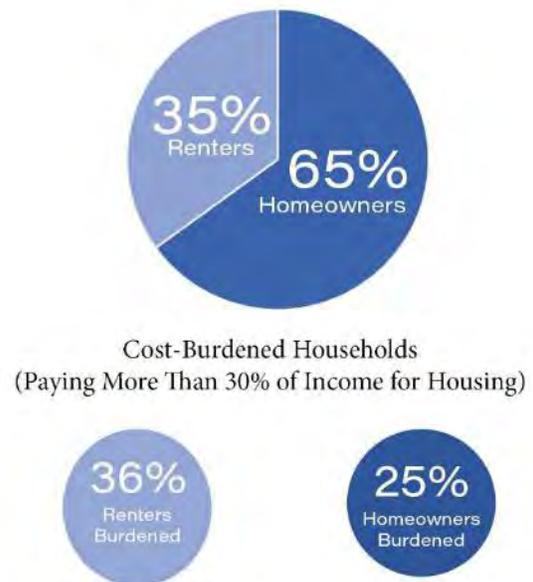
Aging Population



Household Composition



Housing Tenure



CITY OF Saco at a Glance



14%
of Saco Residents
Work in Saco

\$70,517

Median Household Income



5%
Job Growth

9,300 job in Saco



Average Wages

\$52,024

Per Job

Top 3 Gross Regional Products

Retail Trade		Government		Manufacturing	
Saco 13% (\$103,226,000)		Saco 12% (\$96,732,000)		Saco 10% (\$79,500,000)	
York & Cumberland Counties 7%	Maine 9%	York & Cumberland Counties 13%	Maine 14%	York & Cumberland Counties 11%	Maine 12%



82%
of Saco Residents Drive
Alone to Work

11%

of Residents Carpool



14 Parks

&

15 Miles

of Trail



Policies and Strategies

The following section describes the nine goals of the comprehensive plan and the policies and strategies needed to achieve them. These policies and strategies will provide the roadmap for future decision-making and implementation actions.

There are three important unifying themes:

- **Inter-related.** The topics covered in these goals are closely related and influence one another. Decisions in one domain like housing or economic development have impacts on other domains like transportation, municipal costs of service, and natural ecosystems. Thinking holistically and working collaboratively across disciplines is critical to advance the goals in this plan.
- **Sustainability and resiliency.** These over-arching lenses should be applied to all decision-making. They provide a framework for evaluating long-term benefits and costs for residents, the City, and the environment. Further integrating these considerations into daily operations and decision-making will strengthen Saco and prepare it for future unknowns.
- **Regional coordination.** Saco, like any city or town, can only do so much by itself. Complex issues like housing affordability, regional transportation patterns, climate change, and natural ecosystems do not stop at political boundaries. It is increasingly important to maintain, strengthen, and expand collaborative working relationships with neighboring communities and regional organizations.



Enhance our Downtown

Downtown was identified as a significant part of the City's identity for many residents during the visioning process. A thriving, inviting Downtown contributes to quality of life and community character. It helps attract workers looking for an interesting place to live. It supports environmental goals by encouraging people to walk or bike between nearby destinations. It embodies Saco's living history in the buildings that have been reused or repurposed for generations.

While many people think of Downtown as Main Street businesses, it's also the historic neighborhoods nearby. Their character and variety of housing types and nearby amenities like the RiverWalk appeal to a range of people. Residents within a short walk or bike ride of Main Street are more likely to support local businesses.

Downtown Saco is also a place that can continue to improve and evolve. The City's role is largely to promote opportunities and ensure regulations allow for the type of growth desired. Creating shared public spaces for gathering will build community and provide more reasons for people to visit and spend time. Integrating public art, local culture, and the city's history in creative ways across Downtown will add to its character and appeal. Facilitating shared parking and providing safe, interesting, well-lit walking routes between parking areas and businesses will support existing businesses and encourage new investment while minimizing the need for more parking. Private investment is needed to add housing and new businesses. More people living within a 5- to 10-minute walk of Main Street will help support local businesses and bring more life to Downtown streets throughout the day and week.



Enhance our Downtown as the lively core of our community—a place that invites everyone to live, work, play, shop, and gather together.

Policy 1.1 Create an outdoor community gathering space suitable for both larger events and daily interactions among residents.

Strategies

- a. Study opportunities for larger spaces at Pepperell Square, Pepperell Park, Saco Island, and Jubilee Park.
 - Test ideas using low-cost, short-term improvements to measure impacts and identify further refinements to address broad range of interests.
- b. Identify smaller locations within Downtown to enhance as comfortable, flexible use gathering spaces.

Policy 1.2 Recruit and retain local businesses to activate ground floor spaces along Main Street – especially food and beverage options, daily needs, and arts/culture.

Strategies

- a. Consider pop-up businesses to complement long-term tenants and fill vacant storefronts – these can provide seasonal amenities and activation of public spaces, test new retailing concepts, and support emerging entrepreneurs.

Policy 1.3 Enhance downtown as a lively center by focusing residential and mixed-use development toward sites within a ten-minute (half-mile) walk of downtown to support shared amenities and local businesses/jobs.

Strategies

- a. Invest in improvements to streetscapes, bicycle and transit accommodations, parks, and community gathering spaces to enhance downtown’s appeal for development.
- b. Promote Downtown TIF and leverage program for commercial and retail improvements to promote mixed-use development.
- c. Refine and clarify guidelines for future higher-density, mixed-use and walkable community development on Saco Island as part of a larger Downtown/Saco Island neighborhood planning process. Guidelines should align with and reinforce shared community goals.



- d. Pursue housing policies under 3.1 and 3.2 and walkability policies under 4.4

Policy 1.4 Facilitate historic preservation within the Downtown Saco Historic District.

Strategies

- a. Update Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines with contemporary best practices and considerations for sustainability and affordability.
- b. Provide financial resources to qualified fixed-income homeowners for necessary and historically appropriate repairs and improvements.
- c. Encourage ADUs and explore historically sensitive second and third units in large houses to provide additional sources of income for homeowners.
- d. Evaluate parking requirements and maximize shared parking opportunities to minimize new parking (and impervious pavement areas) as housing is added to existing structures or uses change.



Policy 1.5 Study Downtown parking, traffic, and access including safe walking and biking routes to and through Downtown.

Strategies

- a. Implement recommendations of the Downtown Parking Study.
 - Plan for short-and long-term parking needs
 - Optimize the use of existing parking supply
 - Coordinate parking management with a flexible (year-round) approach
 - Establish parking precedents to better align long-term development with city goals
 - Ensure parking system is accessible and navigable to residents and visitors
 - Foster a walkable downtown
- b. Make pedestrian and bicyclist improvements such as lighting, wayfinding, bike parking, and improved crosswalks.

See strategy 4.5 for more information on completing a bicycle and pedestrian master plan to guide these improvements.

Policy 1.6 Develop a robust arts and culture program to improve livability and support economic vitality.

Strategies

- a. Develop a public art master plan that includes a variety of events for all ages and identifies connections to Downtown economic development and livability.
- b. Incorporate digital and interactive public art formats that enable public

places to reflect current values and ideas, draw on the evolving energy and ideas of Saco's arts community, and promote interaction among friends and strangers alike.

- c. Work with Saco Main Street and Heart of Biddeford to coordinate community events and public art initiatives that strengthen ties between the two historic downtown areas.
- d. Explore opportunities for volunteer-led, inexpensive, short-term community art projects or demonstrations that demonstrate the impacts of public art in a visible way.
 - Use vacant storefronts to display work by local artists, craftspeople, high school students, or others.

Policy 1.7 Enhance public access to and programming along the Saco River.

Strategies

- a. Ensure that it is safe and easy to walk to locations with riverfront access. Provide adequate lighting and wayfinding to and along the River Walk.
- b. Integrate quality public access to the riverfront into future Saco Island development.
- c. Partner with Saco Main Street and other organizations to provide regular programming that activates the riverfront.

Policy 1.8 Increase sustainable mobility by investing in bicycle friendly infrastructure improvements.



Expand Economic Opportunity

Good local jobs, a mix of business types and sizes, and training programs that equip residents with in-demand knowledge and skills are key elements of a healthy and sustainable business environment. Maintaining and enhancing Saco's high quality of life plays an important role in building a community that is attractive to employers and employees.

Increasing the number of local businesses will accomplish two important goals: growing the supply of quality jobs in Saco and increasing the property tax base. Currently, less than 15% of Saco residents work in the city. Approximately 20% commute to Portland and about 10% work in Biddeford. Among people who work in Saco, about 50% travel less than ten miles from their home to work here. However, Saco tends to export professional workers in higher-wage jobs and import service occupations in lower-wage jobs, leading to an average earnings per job in Saco that is lower than other parts of the region.

Saco's two business/industrial parks are home to many companies and employees who work in a variety of industries. These areas will continue to be important for attracting and growing light industrial-type businesses. Downtown's amenities will continue to attract a variety of small businesses. The Portland Road corridor is a future growth area that will allow the City to grow its non-residential tax base while creating mixed-use activity centers.

The COVID-19 pandemic's long-term impact on the office market, remote work and hybrid schedules is still developing. Saco may see more people living in the city while working for companies based elsewhere. Monitoring this trend and identifying ways to capture its benefits will be an important part of economic development policy.



Expand economic opportunity for all by attracting and retaining a diverse mix of businesses, quality jobs and investment, and by providing the services that offer everyone a path to opportunity.

Policy 2.1 Focus business attraction efforts on industry sectors with local and regional strength; that provide jobs that meet the needs, skills, and aspirations of Saco's workforce.

Strategies

- a. Expand Economic Development Department's capacity to communicate with businesses, site locators, developers, and regional and statewide economic development organizations about available properties, emerging opportunities, and local workforce and lifestyle assets.
- b. Attract and recruit **Light Industrial, Manufacturing, and Logistics** employers to the existing business parks and suitable locations along Portland Road/Route 1.
- c. Attract and recruit **Professional and Technical Services** employers looking to locate in Southern Maine. Focus development in mixed-use, transit-accessible areas such as Downtown, Saco Island, and future mixed-use neighborhoods along Portland Road/Route 1.
- d. Attract and recruit **Health Care and Social Assistance** employers, especially those offering higher earning jobs, and focus development in mixed-use, transit-accessible locations.

Policy 2.2 Collaborate with existing business park tenants in opportunity industries to retain local jobs and continue growing in Saco.

Strategies

- a. Continue the Business Outreach and Visitation Program to better understand employer needs for workforce, physical space, supply chains, etc. Partner with major employers to develop initiatives to address biggest gaps or concerns.
- b. Continue providing assistance to retail, food services, arts, and accommodations businesses to equip them with skills and resources to survive and thrive post-Covid, especially those that contribute to the walkable, mixed-use environment in Downtown.

Policy 2.3 Communicate the value and availability of Saco's economic development incentives.

Strategies

- a. Evaluate economic development incentives on an annual basis and update as needed. Ensure that incentives help City meet its goals for high-quality jobs and address the current needs of targeted industries, employers, and investors.

Policy 2.4 Clarify and promote Saco's impact fee system.

Strategies

- a. Create a simple, clear informational handout that explains the City's impact fees (recreation facilities, open space, fire/EMS, and either sewer and combined sewer overflow or septic system), their purpose, and offers guidance to applicants. Share handout with businesses, developers, and the real estate community.
- b. Monitor results of Fall 2021 changes to wastewater impact fees. Promote positive effects and mitigate any negative effects as needed.
- c. programs addressing local labor market needs, Potential partners include UMA Saco, Biddeford+Saco Chamber, UNE Biddeford, employers, etc.
- b. Assess common barriers to employment (education/skill gaps, childcare needs, transportation, language barriers, criminal record, etc.) and develop initiatives to mitigate and overcome them.
- c. Work with employers and regional/state agencies to create 'ladders of opportunity' within growth industries for employees to build skills over time.
- d. Expand access to affordable high-speed internet for residents and businesses.

Policy 2.5 Provide workforce development opportunities tailored to identified needs in growth industries to equip residents for success.

Strategies

- a. Leverage local resources to develop evidence-based education and skills

Maine's Ten-Year Economic Strategy identifies four areas where the state's unique resources align with growing global demand. Saco should pursue opportunities in these growth areas to bolster existing businesses, attract new ones, and grow the base of quality jobs for residents.

- **Food/Marine:** aquaculture, breweries, restaurants, local food supply chains, food packaging
- **Forest Products:** niche wood products, bioenergy
- **Technical Services:** financial and insurance services, surveying and sensor technology, scientific research and development, nano cellulose engineering
- **Making/Manufacturing:** biopharma, food, paper and wood products, fabricated metal, cellulose products

<https://www.mainestrategicplan.com/>

Policy 2.6 Participate in a cooperative regional approach to economic development among neighboring communities.

Strategies

- a. Build relationships with appropriate staff in neighboring communities to discuss and coordinate economic development initiatives.
- b. Explore opportunities to promote a regional circular economy that matches waste products from one industry with inputs in another industry.

Policy 2.7 Encourage new development that supports the quality of life and amenities that attract workers and residents.

Strategies

- a. Plan for and support mixed-use development in identified nodes throughout the city.

- b. Activate Downtown riverfront with community events, regular programming, and wayfinding.
- c. Unlock riverfront and coastal access and development potential while addressing current and future flood hazard concerns.
 - Saco Island
 - Camp Ellis (explore seasonal short-term uses rather than permanent fixed investments in area prone to future climate impacts)
- d. Encourage Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs and/or infrastructure that supports walking, biking and transit through zoning or development impact review so that workers have options of how to travel to work.
 - Carpooling incentives
 - Transit information and incentives



Provide a Variety of Housing Options

Housing makes up most of Saco's building stock and has a profound influence on its visual character and how residents live. The historic Downtown neighborhood, variety of traditional neighborhoods, seaside neighborhoods, West Saco, and North Saco each have unique qualities.

Recent demographic trends are projected to continue as Saco's population grows. The percentage of people older than 60 is increasing significantly while the percentage of children is slightly decreasing. This has several implications for housing. Older adults may look to downsize or for housing with fewer maintenance requirements than a large single family house and yard. Younger singles and couples without children—as well as older adults—increasingly prefer to live near amenities like restaurants, shopping, parks, and trails. Providing more types of housing will be important to provide options that allow existing residents to age in place and to attract new residents.

Increasing housing costs are a concern for a growing number of people in Saco and throughout the region. Rising construction costs, historically low mortgage rates, and growing demand all play a role. This has led to a region-wide shortage of affordable rental and for-sale housing. Saco should do its part to increase the supply of workforce housing while working with regional and state partners to tackle this complex issue.

Future housing should be encouraged in areas with transportation options. Costs for housing and transportation are typically the two largest components of a household's budget. Lower transportation costs due to living closer to everyday needs like jobs, groceries, and medical care; and having convenient transit and/or comfortable walking and bicycling options nearby can help reduce the overall burden of housing and transportation costs. Housing in walkable neighborhoods also helps to lower carbon emissions from transportation, encourages healthy lifestyles, and builds social capital among residents.



Provide a variety of housing options to retain and welcome people of all ages, incomes, lifestyles, and backgrounds as members of our community.

Policy 3.1 Allow for and encourage a variety of housing options to meet the budgets and needs of the full spectrum of Saco residents including aging Baby Boomers, young people, low-to-moderate income residents, first-time homebuyers, and new residents.

Strategies

- a. Conduct a Housing Needs Analysis and Assessment to document local housing needs, set quantifiable goals, and identify strategies and to help Saco address the needs of its current and future residents.
- b. Increase the amount of land zoned by-right to permit attached single-family (townhouse) and small-scale multifamily (3-8 units) in areas with existing public water and sewer.
- c. Decrease minimum lot size per dwelling unit in areas with existing public water and sewer to allow for smaller lots conducive to ‘starter’ home construction.
- d. Encourage affordable senior housing in walkable, transit-accessible locations to allow aging residents to remain in Saco.
- e. Explore demand for alternate housing models such as micro-units, cottage courts, intergenerational and co-housing through an inclusive outreach program to the community, local developers, and others.
- f. Evaluate potential incentives for residential improvements that add certain types of dwelling units in growth areas such as:
 - Converting vacant upper floors in buildings on Main Street into housing
 - Adding small-scale multifamily housing on underused land
 - Creating additional units within large existing single-family houses
 - Creating accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
- g. Consider freezing and/or abating real estate taxes for residents age 65+ who meet appropriate income standards to support aging in the community.
- h. Review existing parking and mobility requirements to ensure they support additional housing types.
- i. Build local and regional leadership on housing issues to encourage the provision of a variety of housing types and adequate workforce housing.

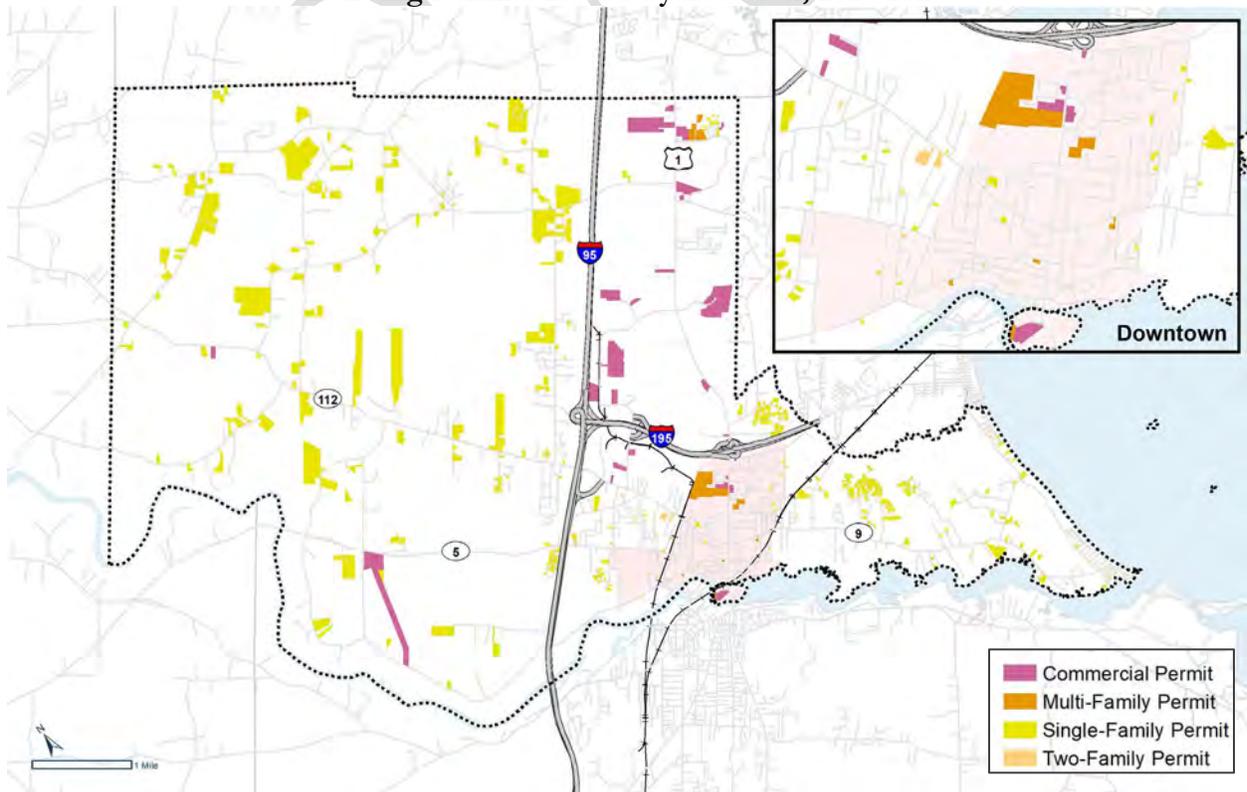
Policy 3.2 Protect rural areas and natural settings without existing public water and sewer from encroaching development by encouraging new housing development at greater densities in areas with existing public infrastructure.

Strategies

- a. Complete review of zoning requirements and permitting processes to create a predictable, efficient review process for projects in designated growth areas with existing public water and sewer service.
- b. Allow for more multifamily and attached single family (townhouse) development in designated growth areas:
 - Review minimum lot size per dwelling unit requirements

- Review side setback requirements
- Consider density bonuses or other incentives to encourage infill development by lowering land cost per housing unit
- c. Promote mixed-use redevelopment of aging retail sites as their market viability declines:
 - Review minimum lot size per dwelling unit requirements to promote multi-family development
 - Review zoning to require ground floor retail in multi-family redevelopments in certain locations
 - Initiate proactive conversations with property owners to understand long-term plans

Building Permits Issued by Location, 2010-2020



Almost half of residential building permits were issued in North Saco over the past decade, impacting the area’s rural character, critical natural resources, transportation patterns, and the City’s finances. Source: City of Saco Assessor

- d. Consider allowing conservation subdivision zoning or other regulatory tools in the Rural Conservation and West Residential districts to protect open spaces and natural resources.

Policy 3.3 Promote mixed-income housing development and a continuous pipeline of new affordable housing units to meet the needs of low- and moderate-income households—giving priority to sites in transit-accessible, amenity-rich locations near jobs, schools, groceries, healthcare and childcare, parks, and other daily services.

Strategies

- a. Achieve a minimum goal that at least 10% of all new housing units are provided at a variety of affordability levels (at or below 80% of area median income):
- Proactively reach out to regional affordable housing providers
 - Monitor progress annually
- b. Review zoning and permitting to expedite mixed-income and affordable housing projects and reduce costs:
- Provide a density bonus for affordable housing in transit-accessible and amenity-rich locations
 - Reduce off-street parking minimums in transit-accessible locations to lower the cost of affordable housing construction
- c. Consider MSHA Tax Increment Financing for Affordable Housing in opportunity areas.
- d. Identify surplus publicly owned sites suitable for mixed-income housing and solicit private development partners via an RFP process.
- e. Provide additional incentives for housing that meets the needs of low-income households (30 - 60% AMI) in mixed-income housing projects.
- f. Increase housing for extremely-low income households (less than 30% AMI) using federal housing programs.
- g. Invest in public infrastructure to increase accessibility to local amenities for residents:
- Streetscape improvements for walkability including sidewalks and crossings as well as design improvements to slow vehicle traffic on residential streets
 - Bicycle and transit improvements for increased accessibility and lower-cost transportation options
 - Parks, playgrounds, and other community amenities for all ages
- h. Consider adopting City Council housing goals that define the City's aspirations for workforce housing and provide metrics to measure progress.



Policy 3.4 Improve maintenance of existing housing stock to ensure that it continues to provide safe, sanitary, and energy-efficient housing.

Strategies

- a. Promote state and federal financial assistance programs for homeowners of older homes to complete maintenance/repairs.
- b. Develop educational resources and provide financial incentives to complete energy efficiency retrofits and upgrades in existing homes.
- c. Develop educational resources and provide financial assistance to complete universal design improvements and Smart Home upgrades to allow aging in place.
- d. Increase funding for Code Enforcement Office and Fire Marshal to regularly inspect multifamily buildings and connect landlords to resources.



Walkable Communities

Walkable communities* offer convenient access to a wide variety of destinations that contribute directly to quality of life:

5-minute (quarter mile)—amenities such as food/coffee/beer, neighborhood parks, friends, diversity, gym

10-minute (half mile)—services such as food market, local Main Street, daycare, daily commute transit, school

20-minute (one mile)—work and civic life such as jobs, major parks, recreation, culture, gathering places

**based on typical walking speeds and assuming safe, inviting, and useful walking routes*

BENEFITS

Economic Opportunity

Knowledge industries drive economic growth, and knowledge workers strongly prefer to live and work in lively, mixed-use, amenity-rich—and above all—walkable places (in cities and suburbs alike). Increasingly, jobs and investment are following talent to regions, and communities, that offer these live/work/play/innovate walkable places. As Brad Neumann, Michigan State University-based economic development advisor to state and local governments, notes: “In the New Economy, it is all about creating communities with amenities and high quality of life to retain and attract talent.”

Health

A widely referenced article in the Journal of the American Planning Association, (Vol. 72, No. 1, Winter 2006) reports that “each additional hour spent in a car per day was associated with a 6% increase in the odds of being obese” and that obesity and inactivity are both directly associated with increased risk of common chronic diseases. The article goes on to note that “People who live in neighborhoods with ‘traditional’ or ‘walkable’ designs [street grid, retail and other frequent destinations within a 5-10 minute walk] report about 30 minutes more walking...each week and more total physical activity compared to those who live in neighborhoods with less walkable... designs.”

Environment

The single most effective step a community can take to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions is to reduce total vehicle miles driven. While expanding transit to provide an alternative to longer-haul trips can reduce these emissions, the most intense emissions are associated with short, local trips with frequent stops—the types of trips that can be reduced in a walkable community.

Real Estate and Fiscal Value

National real estate firm JLL reports that between 2000 and 2017 commercial property values rose almost 50% faster in “Highly Walkable” versus “Car Dependent” suburban places.

Walkable neighborhoods are also seeing significant jumps in residential property values. A 2015 Urban Land Institute (ULI) study reported that 50% of Americans place a high priority on walkability in choosing a place to live. A one-point increase in Walkscore, a website that rates the walkability of U.S. neighborhoods on a 1 to 100 scale, translates into \$3,250 more in value, according to the influential real estate database Redfin.

Sense of Community

Saco residents place great value in the city's feeling of community. As Saco grows, it is increasingly important to find new ways to maintain and build upon that sense of community. Research has shown that there is an integral connection between enhanced walkability and greater sense of community. According to a recent study from the University of Western Australia, "the frequency of walking within neighborhoods was associated with more unplanned interactions with neighbors, which can in turn contribute to relationship formation and development."

STRATEGIES

Basics like well-maintained and connected sidewalks, street lighting, street trees where possible, and safe and convenient street crossings represent the foundation for making walking more inviting across every part of Saco. Building on the foundation, more specific strategies apply to promoting walkability at different scales:

5-minute walkshed—Expanding access to services ranging from supermarkets to daycare, parks, schools, transit, and similar destinations that residents frequent.

10- and 20-minute walksheds—Redeveloping parts of the Portland Road corridor together with outmoded retail centers, underused surface parking lots, and other areas ripe for redevelopment into a new generation of live/work/play/learn/innovate walkable centers, marked by a mix of uses, density sufficient to support a block of "Main Street" retail, and a public realm consisting of public streets together with lively small parks, squares, and other public spaces.

Mobility Network

Saco's existing mobility network prioritizes vehicle travel but also provides multimodal local and regional connections. Issues such as safety; limited infrastructure for people walking, biking and taking transit; and a constrained street network currently limit the city from fully realizing the goals outlined in this Plan. Shifting investments and project approval criteria to include more infrastructure for active transportation and transit is important to elevate these modes as viable options to increase affordability, safety, and access to community resources.

Strategies to calm local streets, limit vehicle traffic, and support safe vehicle flows in key locations will improve quality of life for residents. Streets make up a significant portion of public space in any city, particularly in places like Saco's downtown, so how that space is used directly impacts community character. Prioritizing safety for people over vehicle movement is vital, particularly in residential and/or retail areas such as Downtown Saco. It can also foster economic development and create places where people want to spend time instead of simply passing through. Safe vehicle movement is important as well, and as technology evolves traffic signals are becoming more efficient and coordinated to support more reliable trip times through busy areas.

Improvements to walking networks, including for those using assistive mobility devices, benefit all users. Every person who parks a car becomes a pedestrian as they move from their car to their destination. Most transit riders walk to and from their stops. And if walking is easier and safer, more people can get to community amenities such as health centers, parks, the library, schools, and grocery stores. In some cases, traffic calming will encourage people to walk more and even share the road with vehicles if the vehicles are moving at safe speeds. In others, filling sidewalk gaps and improving crossings are vital to support safe walking.



Active transportation options like walking and biking also encourage healthy lifestyles and can help reduce carbon emissions by replacing short car trips. Not everyone will walk or bike all the time, especially during Maine winters, but many people will choose to do so some of the time if the opportunity exists. Creating and improving safe, useful, and interesting walking and biking routes will provide more of these opportunities. Saco can build on its assets like the Eastern Trail and daily Amtrak service by providing a safe and complete bicycling route between these facilities and key destinations. Creating viable biking options not only benefits residents and visitors who choose to bike but also frees up roadway capacity for those who choose to drive.

Transit is part of the solution as well. It is a critical mobility option for those unable to afford a car or those unable to drive or who choose not to drive. It is also a much more space-efficient option than driving—a bus holding 25 people takes significantly less room on a street than 20 cars holding the same number of people. Transit therefore unlocks roadway capacity and the ability for each street to support more travel with less space. Transit is much more efficient in terms of carbon emissions, particularly as electric buses are put into service. The City of Saco does not directly provide transit service however, so continued support and advocacy for BSOOB bus service and regional transit planning efforts is important. To support and elevate transit as a viable option for traveling around and to Saco, the City can collaborate with neighboring communities and regional transit agencies to help improve access to bus stops and contribute to rider amenities such as connecting sidewalks and crosswalks, ensuring adequate street lighting, and providing places to sit comfortably while waiting.

Finally, Saco should prepare for a changing transportation future. Electric vehicles are becoming more prevalent and thus the need for charge points and power will rise. Zoning standards that previously mandated excessive parking construction while ignoring other multimodal needs are being revisited nationwide. Downtowns of all sizes across the country are finding that existing parking is underutilized and are looking to either reuse the space or use that parking to support increased density without investing in more parking. Employers are offering benefits other than free parking to employees. And communities are experimenting with their street space, piloting new additions such as dining in parking lanes, traffic calming roundabouts with cones, or curb extensions added in paint.



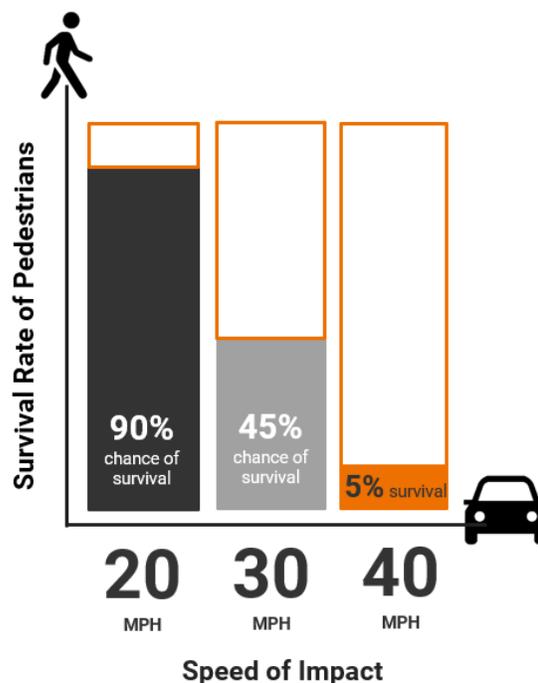
Design a connected mobility system with everyone in mind by expanding options to walk, bike, or use transit.

Policy 4.1 Enhance and support safe vehicle flows.

Strategies

- a. Continue implementing Complete Streets recommendations along Route 1.
 - Connect gaps in sidewalk network
 - Continue access management program and encourage connectivity between non-residential lots
 - Create neighborhood byway bicycle routes as alternate to Route 1 southwest of I-195
- b. Identify and evaluate traffic calming options for Main Street, particularly in the downtown business core.
 - E.g., narrowed lane widths, pedestrian crossing islands in center lane, widened sidewalks
 - Test ideas using short-term, low-cost pilot projects and monitor impacts
- c. Continue traffic calming efforts to reduce speeding on neighborhood streets.
 - E.g. pavement markings, corner curb extensions/bulb-outs, driver feedback signs

- d. Work with Maine DOT to upgrade traffic signals on Main Street to improve vehicular and pedestrian traffic flows Downtown (install adaptive/smart response technology, etc).
- e. Encourage travelers from the south to use the Maine Turnpike and the new Exit 35 interchange to access downtown.
 - E.g., signage and wayfinding on the Turnpike and local streets



Source: Pedestrian Fatality Rates Increase with Speed, So Don't! | The Car Crash Detective

Even a slight reduction in vehicle speed greatly improves chances for a pedestrian to survive a crash.

Policy 4.2 Partner with transit providers and adjacent municipalities to better leverage existing transit service and encourage new ridership by improving amenities.

Strategies

- a. Upgrade bus stops with passenger amenities such as shelters, benches, lighting, and trash cans. Ensure sidewalks and crosswalks provide pedestrian access to bus stops.
- b. Enhance the multimodal hub at the Saco Transportation Center by including high-quality bicycle parking and carshare.
- c. Work with Maine DOT to enhance existing Park and Ride lots with transit amenities and marketing for tourist access.
- d. Evaluate seasonal shuttle service to help visitors access Saco's beaches from the Saco Transportation Center and Park and Ride lots.
- e. Support regional planning and implementation of high-frequency transit corridor connecting Biddeford, Saco, and Portland.
- f. Encourage consideration of transit proximity and service when locating facilities like the new school, senior housing, affordable/workforce housing, and major employers.

Policy 4.3 Prioritize and pursue transportation options for those with limited mobility.

Strategies

- a. Improve first/last mile connections near transit stops with particular emphasis on accessibility – sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting.
- b. Expand community transportation options via BSOOB:
 - Coordinate service scheduling with major community providers such as hospitals and clinics, social service organizations (including those in Biddeford and Old Orchard Beach)
 - Provide more information/targeted marketing about route deviation service
 - Advocate for funding to increase frequency

Policy 4.4 Upgrade walkability around key locations such as grocery stores, schools, transit nodes, health centers, senior centers and destinations like parks and beaches.

Strategies

- a. Establish a framework and prioritization for filling gaps in the existing sidewalk network, maintaining existing sidewalks, and constructing new sidewalk connections, including:
 - Identify high-potential activity locations
 - Identify places where users are vulnerable (schools, senior center)

- Define criteria for prioritizing sidewalk repair and new sidewalk construction
 - Establish dedicated funding to allow regular addition to the sidewalk network
- b. Prioritize accessibility upgrades such as detectable curb ramps, audible crosswalk signals, and impediment-free sidewalks:
- Address issues posed by historic brick sidewalks Downtown that deteriorate into uneven surfaces due to settlement and freeze/thaw heaving that create accessibility issues. Consider stamped concrete or other more durable, flat-surface options.
- c. Prioritize pedestrians Downtown using tools such as:
- High-visibility crosswalks
 - Leading pedestrian intervals at crosswalks
 - Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) at unsignalized crossings
- d. Develop a Downtown wayfinding plan with considerations for pedestrians, motorists, and bicyclists.
- e. Evaluate sidewalk connection from Downtown to the beaches. Consider route options including:
- Ferry Rd/Rt 9 from Bayview Rd to Seaside Ave
 - Ferry Rd/Rt 9 to Bayview and Ferry Beach State Park Rd to Seaside Ave

- Ferry Rd/Rt 9 to Bayview and Seaside Ave

Also see 4.5d regarding pilot project approach

- f. Consider pedestrian and bicyclist access when evaluating potential elementary school sites.

Policy 4.5 Connect the bicycle network to key locations and provide adequate bicycle parking at destinations.

Strategies

- a. Create a comprehensive bicycle network plan for addressing connections among Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, Camp Ellis, coastal neighborhoods, the Saco River, and other destinations together with an implementation strategy. Include an analysis of low-stress bicycle routes and alternative strategies that address physical limitations of many streets.
- b. Map existing bicycle parking (including a summer utilization count) to identify deficiencies:
- Pursue short- and long-term bike parking options, including secure bike parking such as bike lockers, to encourage the use of e-bikes
 - Consider seasonal bicycle “corrals” or other parking options
 - Install and promote bicycle racks at Camp Ellis

- c. Evaluate options for a bicycle share system and/or electric-assist bicycles.
- d. Evaluate options for bicycle connections to the beaches, Camp Ellis, and riverfront access points:
 - Explore feasibility of constructing a bike path connecting Eastern Trail to Camp Ellis.
 - Evaluate strategies such as creating advisory shoulders or expanding sidewalk to create a shared use path (~10-12 ft)
 - Consider a summer pilot project using traffic cones/jersey barriers to test potential solutions and measure results
- e. Promote the Eastern Trail as a recreational and commuter route:
 - Use signage, roadway markings, and wayfinding to guide riders along the on-road segment from Thornton Academy across the river into Biddeford
 - Work with property owners near trail access points to share parking with users
 - Support completion of the “Over the River” off-road connection from Thornton Academy across the river into Biddeford

existing connections – pedestrian and bicycle improvements to Main Street on Saco Island, lane narrowing, medians, etc.

- b. Consider funding options for final design and construction of the proposed multimodal bridge connecting the Saco Transportation Center and the Lincoln Street parking garage in Biddeford.
- c. Apply for railroad crossing upgrades to improve walkability on Main Street.

Policy 4.7 Maximize the efficient use of vehicle parking.

Strategies

- a. Review zoning to ensure that parking requirements support community goals.
 - Convene Downtown stakeholders to evaluate strategies like parking maximums instead of minimums and unbundling parking costs from residential or office leases
- b. Create a comprehensive parking management plan for Downtown and for the beach area.

Policy 4.6 Improve multimodal connections between Downtown Saco and Downtown Biddeford.

Strategies

- a. Implement recommendations from Biddeford-Saco Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan to enhance



Develop and implement an electric mobility plan.

Strategies

- a. Convert municipal vehicle fleet to electric vehicles (EV).
 - b. Work with electric utility to identify upgrades needed to support more robust EV charging and solar power infrastructure.
 - c. Develop network of electric charging stations for vehicles, bicycles, and scooters—station density may be based on EV adoption rates and/or daily trips.
- b. Evaluate Vision Zero policies and strategies to eliminate car crashes and traffic deaths.
 - c. Evaluate Complete Streets policies to design context-sensitive safe roads for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, those with limited mobility, and drivers.

SMPDC's **Municipal Electric Vehicle Readiness Toolkit** provides technical guidance on encouraging EV adoption, fleet transition, and infrastructure development, including a model EV infrastructure ordinance.

Policy 4.8 Consider adopting mobility policies that support community goals and are tailored to local conditions.

Strategies

- a. Evaluate existing zoning requirements to ensure new development is well integrated into the multimodal network (sidewalks, transit routes, bicycle facilities).

Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. It requires an interdisciplinary approach to address the many factors that contribute to safe mobility – including roadway design, speeds, behaviors, technology, and polices. <https://visionzeronetwerk.org/>

Complete Streets are streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. Those include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are traveling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders. The concept of Complete Streets encompasses many approaches to planning, designing, and operating roadways and rights of way with all users in mind to make the transportation network safer and more efficient. It can be adapted to different types of roadways and physical constraints.

<https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/complete-streets>

Grow our Environmental Stewardship

Saco's rich environmental heritage includes the Saco River, sandy beaches along Saco Bay, Saco Heath (a focus area of statewide ecological significance), agricultural land and wooded areas. These resources constitute an important part of the City's character and perform vital ecological functions. They also improve environmental performance by absorbing stormwater and carbon dioxide, contribute to the City's economic base by supporting businesses and attracting tourists, and generally enhance the quality of life for residents. It is important to integrate these environmental assets into planning for future growth as some of these vital ecological resources are being threatened by encroaching development.

Saco's historic neighborhoods and buildings are another important part of the city's heritage to preserve and enhance. Continuing to find new uses for old buildings and improving them to meet contemporary needs is an important strategy to keep this history alive. Modernizing them to be more energy efficient is essential to helping the City achieve its environmental goals as well.

Saco cannot do this work alone. The City must continue to actively work with its neighbors and regional partners to ensure the lasting protection of these important, irreplaceable ecological resources.



Grow our environmental stewardship by preserving and protecting our natural and built legacies.

Policy 5.1 Protect water resources and improve water quality.

Strategies

- a. Maintain zoning, subdivision, and/or site plan review ordinances that incorporate stormwater runoff performance standards consistent with State law, encourage low impact development standards, protect aquifer recharge areas, and require water quality protection practices in construction. Review standards at least every three years and revise to incorporate current best management practices.
- b. Minimize pollution discharges into the Saco River to improve water quality by completing the removal of remaining Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) and upgrading the Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF).
- c. Encourage landowners to protect water quality by providing best management practice information.
- d. Provide education materials about invasive aquatic species in appropriate locations like marinas and boat launches.

Policy 5.2 Conserve critical natural resources such as watersheds, prime farmland, and wetlands.

Strategies

- a. Maintain zoning, subdivision, and/or site plan review ordinances that require subdivision and non-residential developers to identify critical natural resources on-site and take measures to protect them
- b. Encourage Planning Board to review pertinent Beginning with Habitat (BwH) natural resource maps during the subdivision and site plan review processes and provide training on interpreting the information.
- c. Integrate natural resources into the urban fabric through a street tree and urban habitat program).
- d. Protect critical and important natural resources by partnering with land trusts and other organizations to acquire easements from interested landowners.
- e. Identify property owners in or near critical natural resources and provide information about applicable local, state, and federal regulations and about the state's current use tax programs.

Policy 5.3 Support agriculture and forestry resources and encourage their economic viability.

Strategies

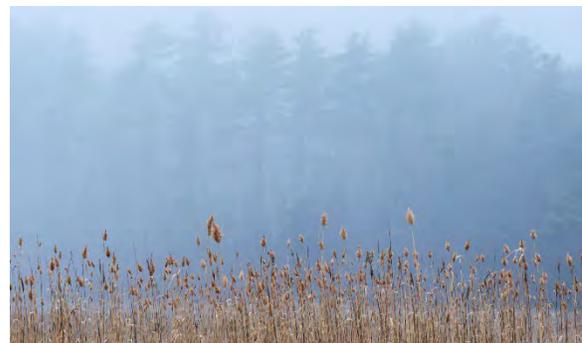
- a. Review Rural Conservation (RC) zoning standards to ensure they align with the community’s vision for future growth in North Saco and adequately protect critical natural resources.
- b. Explore ways to protect prime farmland soils that provide economically viable alternatives for landowners.
- c. Reach out to property owners enrolled in current use taxation programs to discuss their operations and future plans and to share available resources to support continued use.
- d. Encourage permitted land use activities and programs that support productive agriculture and forestry operations like farm stands, greenhouses, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Document economic impact of these activities where feasible.
 - Support and develop markets for local agriculture and forestry products by connecting producers with businesses and institutions such as schools.
- e. Consult with appropriate state agencies when developing regulations for agricultural or forest management
 - Soil and Water Conservation District
 - Maine Forest Service district forester

Policy 5.4 Protect marine resources and support appropriate uses along the waterfront, particularly at Camp Ellis.

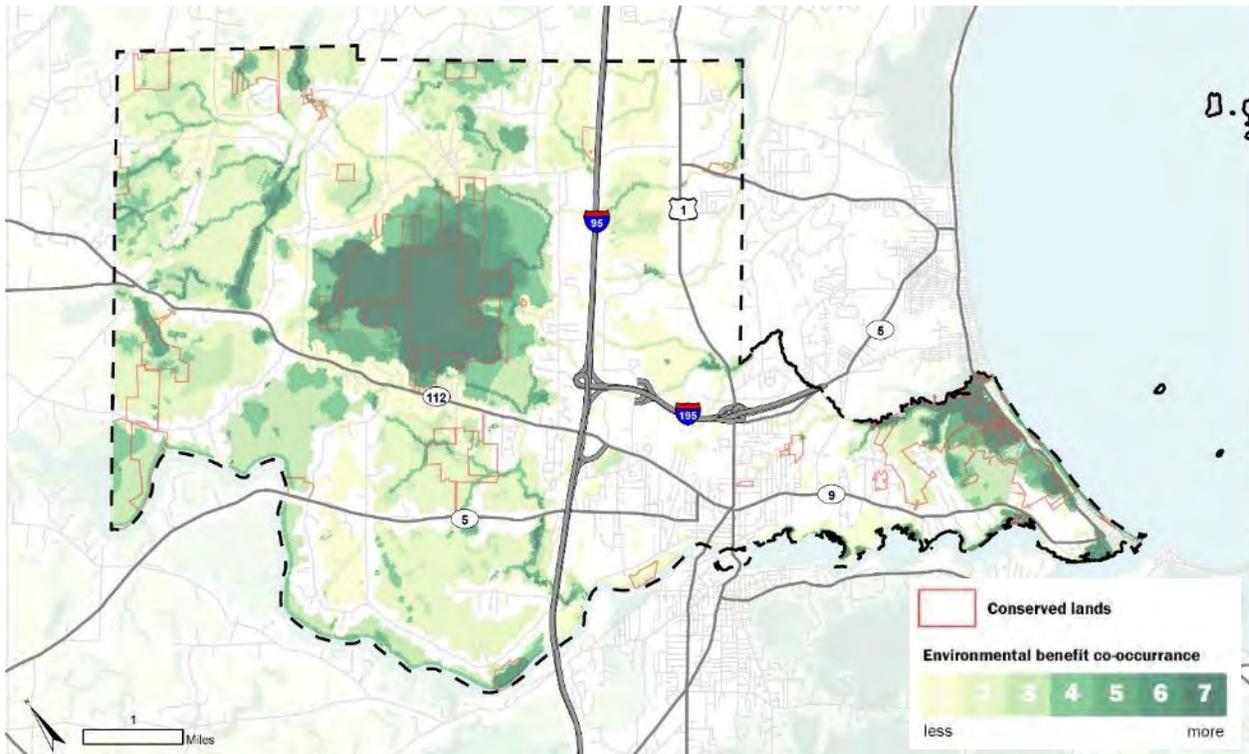
- a. Ensure Camp Ellis continues to operate as a commercial marina with appropriate access, parking, and facilities for commercial operations.
- b. Promote “clean marina” practices to protect water quality and marine habitat.
- c. Continue funding and staffing for the Harbormaster and Beach Manager positions.

Policy 5.5 Develop and/or maintain cooperative relationships with neighboring communities, regional and state partners, and advocacy groups to protect natural resources.

- a. Continue participating in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect, and improve water quality
- b. Participate in regional planning and regulatory efforts to manage and protect shared critical resources.
- c. Support regional Saco Bay management planning and implementation efforts.



Natural Resource Co-occurrence



This map represents the concentration of selected environmental asset data layers overlaid on the landscape. Its purpose is to highlight a given area's relative conservation values as an aid in planning. Saco's areas of natural resource co-occurrence are concentrated around Saco Heath and the coast, but large parts of North Saco also provide notable environmental benefits. Source: Beginning with Habitat (BwH)

Policy 5.6 Preserve and protect our historic and archeological resources to the greatest extent practicable.

Strategies

- a. Require subdivision and non-residential developers to take appropriate measures to protect known historic archeological sites and areas sensitive to prehistoric archeology.
- b. Amend land use ordinances to require the Planning Board to incorporate information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into their review process. Provide training for Board members to understand and apply standards appropriately.
- c. Assess need for intensive-level architectural survey work based on previously completed reconnaissance-level surveys citywide, especially:
 - Downtown West neighborhood
 - Camp Ellis neighborhood
 - Saco River watershed

Conservation Toolbox

Maine communities prize their diverse natural settings but development pressure can threaten local resources. Below are a few strategies for the City to consider:

- **Open Space Plan:** A tool to plan for current and future land conservation in the context of community goals and to guide public and private decision makers.
- **Conservation subdivision:** A zoning strategy for rural areas that clusters development in a smaller part of a given parcel to preserve environmentally sensitive areas, without reducing the allowed amount of development.
- **Conservation limited development:** A zoning strategy for rural areas that preserves a large portion of a given parcel for conservation and permits a reduced amount of development in a smaller area.



Promote Health and Well-Being

Health and well-being are influenced by many things—personal factors as well as external factors like the built environment and social networks. As a city that aspires to be “a community for a lifetime,” a holistic approach to health and well-being must consider recreation and open space as well as housing characteristics, transportation options, economic opportunity, and adaptability to change over time.

Parks, recreation, and open space are essential elements to Saco’s quality of life. A well-designed and maintained program of parks, recreation and open space will enrich resident’s lives and help attract new residents and businesses. Recreational facilities and programming are important to everyone’s health and wellbeing but are particularly important to children and older adults. Age-friendly cities are deliberately designed to support and accommodate residents throughout their lifetimes by responding to changing needs and preferences. As Saco’s population ages, the City must provide a variety of facilities and programming to support residents of all ages.

Spending time outdoors and in nature supports improved physical and mental health. Safe, interesting, and useful walking and biking routes are mobility policies that also promote general health and well-being. Connecting the roadway network with local trails expands opportunities for residents and visitors to access nature.



Promote health and well-being by shaping our growth to increase walkability, provide access to nature, and foster wellness throughout a lifetime and for people of all abilities.

Policy 6.1 Promote and maintain existing parks, trails, and open spaces.

Strategies

- a. Create a Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan to identify and plan for changing needs, outline future projects, and address funding for maintenance.
- b. Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails. Connect with regional trail systems where possible.
- c. Work with existing partners such as the Saco Valley Land Trust or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.
- d. Continue community outreach to promote existing parks, trails, and open spaces with residents to encourage use and caretaking.



Policy 6.2 Enhance public access to the Saco River and Saco Bay.

Strategies

- a. Expand recreational use of the Saco River by installing a non-motorized boat launch upriver from dams at Saco Island.
- b. Protect major points of physical and visual access to Saco Bay and the Saco River by working with local property owners, land trusts, and others.
- c. Expand and improve the RiverWalk to extend access along the Saco River, enhance lighting, and add directional signage.

Policy 6.3 Expand the Recreation Complex to meet the evolving needs of Saco residents.

Strategies

- a. Conduct a community-wide survey to understand needs of different demographics. Consider population trends when evaluating results.
- b. Identify programming changes that can be implemented within existing facility. Identify physical improvements needed to accommodate additional programs or needs.

Policy 6.4 Promote more housing, commercial development, and public facilities such as schools and services in walkable mixed-use neighborhoods that are served by sidewalks, transit, and bicycle facilities to support a variety of active transportation modes.

See policies 1.3, 3.3, 4.4

Policy 6.5 Continue implementing recommendations of the “Age Friendly Community Action Plan”.

Strategies

- a. Explore and prioritize recommendations for transportation, outdoor spaces and buildings, housing, community support and health services, social participation, communication and information



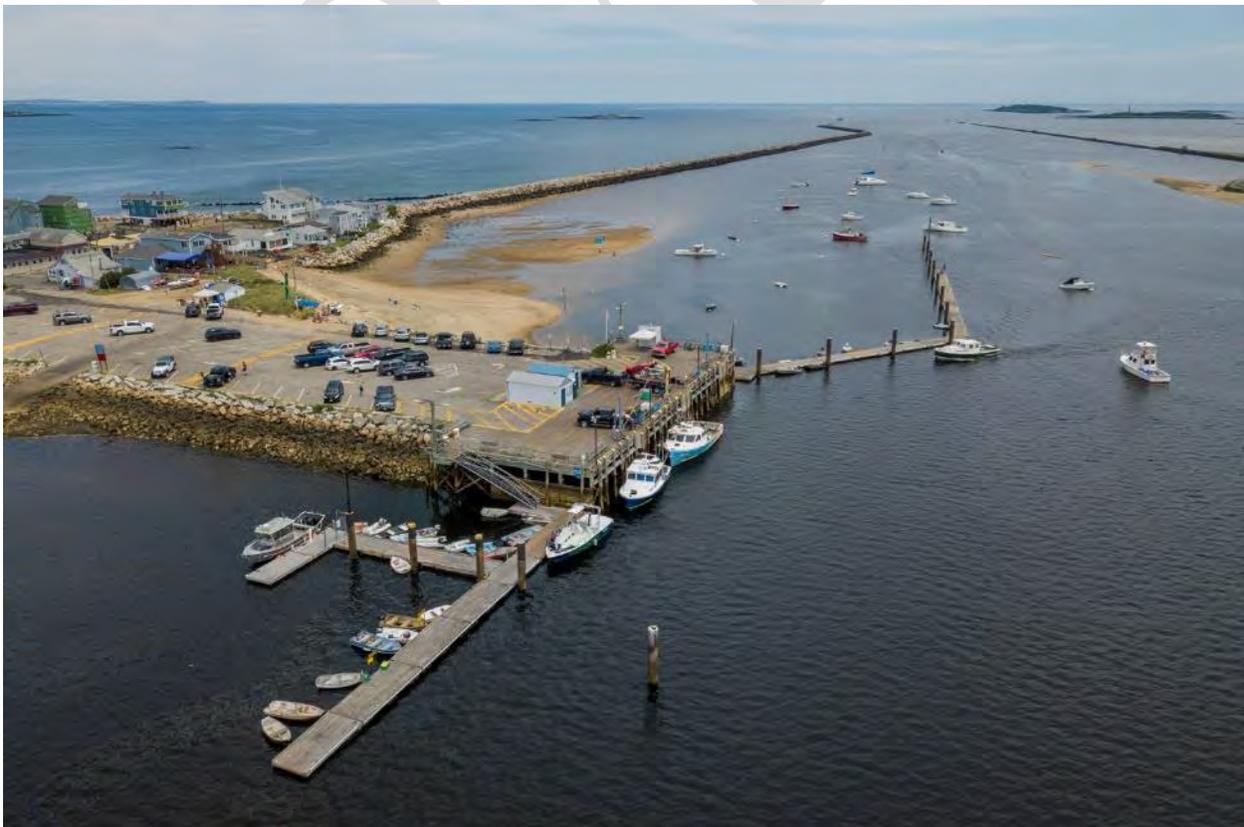
Policy 6.6 Develop and provide educational materials explaining the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property.

Build Resiliency and Implement Sustainable Practices

Resiliency and climate adaptation are increasingly becoming imperatives for communities in a changing world, and the City added a chapter on sea level rise to its 2018 comprehensive plan update in recognition of this. At the same time, efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions across sectors and implement holistic sustainability initiatives remain important to building healthy, livable communities.

This plan approaches resiliency and sustainability as overarching lenses to evaluate and recommend policy decisions with a long-term perspective. It also elevates these beyond environmental considerations to include economic resiliency, the built environment, and social capital among residents. This approach is evident in other chapters of this plan as well, with strategies to reduce emissions from transportation, encourage new housing in walkable neighborhoods, protect water resources and natural habitat, and others.

The City of Saco has an opportunity to lead the way by integrating sustainable design guidelines and programs for its own facilities and operations, and the strategies presented herein are intended to influence private sector development as well. Two critical strategies that will set the tone for the future of Saco are developing a Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and a Climate Vulnerability and Adaptation Plan to adapt to the impacts that we are already seeing.



Build resiliency to adapt to future changes and protect our community by committing to sustainable practices that reduce our environmental impact.

Policy 7.1 Develop capacity to adapt and respond to various climate change impacts.

Strategies

- a. Develop and implement a Climate Vulnerability and Adaptation Plan to guide action, including decisions to proactively protect areas from climate change-related or other environmental impacts.
 - Maximize funding opportunities such as Maine’s Community Action Grants to plan and implement climate adaptation and sustainability strategies
- b. Implement a resolution to mitigate erosion and increased storm-driven risks at Camp Ellis.
- c. Identify at-risk properties and assets for targeted adaptation and education campaigns.
- d. Incorporate historic assets and buildings into flood risk vulnerability assessments and provide educational resources to property owners.

Policy 7.2 Promote energy efficiency and carbon neutral energy generation.

Strategies

- a. Develop and implement a Climate Action Plan

- b. Adopt a science-based target municipal greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction goal.

Policy 7.3 Continue advancing a “One Water” approach to managing the urban watershed and reducing potable water use.

Strategies

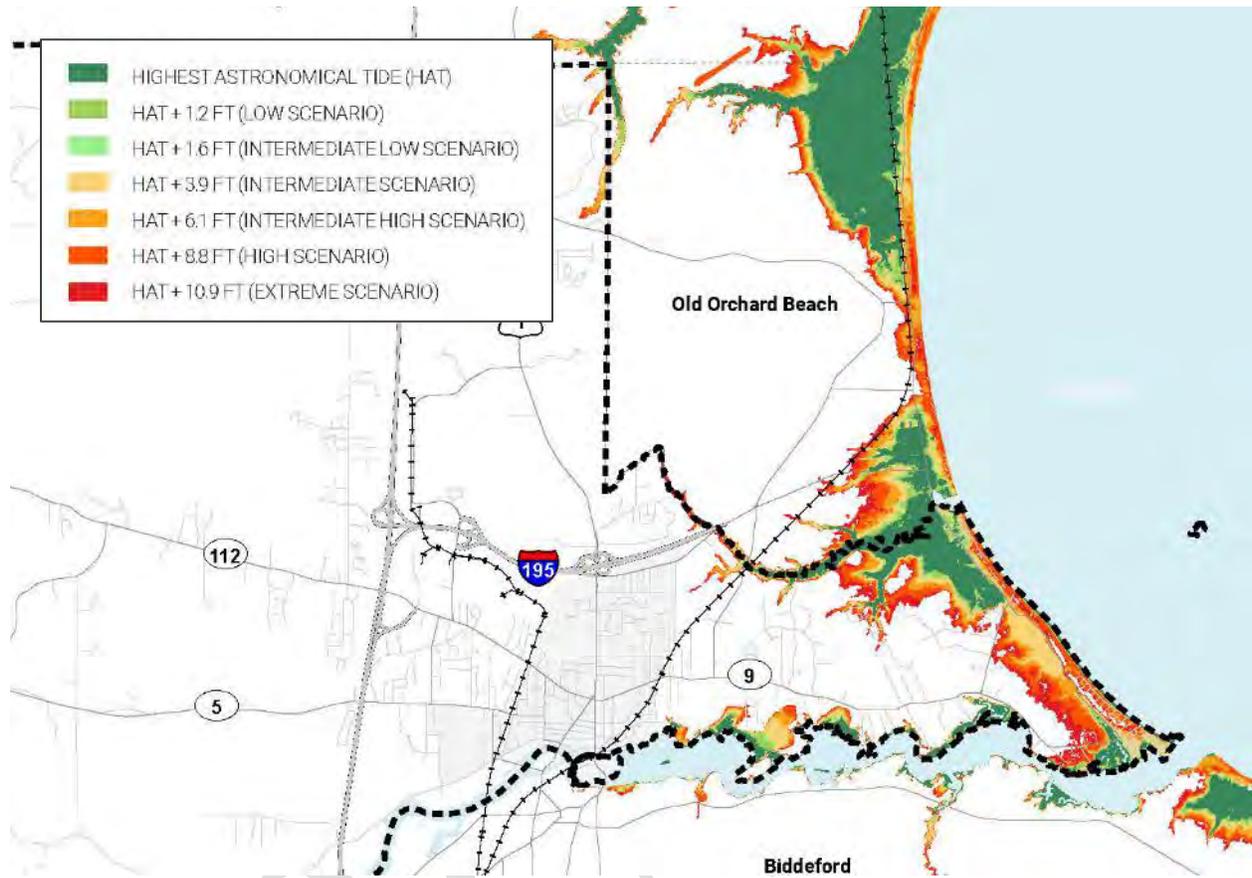
- a. Coordinate with Maine Water and Saco’s Public Works and Water Resource Recovery Department (WRRD) to promote a “One Water” approach and implement projects that help achieve goals.
- b. Promote green stormwater management strategies for new development and improvements to existing facilities.
- c. Locate and design open space to serve multiple functions (stormwater mitigation, native habitat, recreation, climate resilience, etc).
- d. Provide educational resources to building owners about benefits of reducing indoor water use by replacing inefficient fixtures.

Policy 7.4 Promote sustainable construction techniques in new development.

Strategies

- a. Provide incentives for projects designed to meet or exceed green building standards.

Sea Level Rise Scenarios



High tide plus intermediate sea level rise projections demonstrate the potential extent of flooding in coastal neighborhoods. Source: State of Maine Geolibrary

- b. Provide educational resources to building owners about energy efficiency benefits and available incentives.
 - See [Efficiency Maine | Saving energy, reducing energy costs, and improving energy conservation](#)
- c. Promote solar-ready guidelines for new construction

Policy 7.5 Reduce waste sent to landfills by increasing participation in recycling and composting programs.

The Statewide goal is to recycle or compost 50% of municipal solid waste tonnage. In 2019, Maine’s recycling rate was only 37.8%.

Policy 7.6 Establish a community resource database to track grant and funding opportunities for residents and developers to implement sustainability innovation projects in the city.

Policy 7.7 Increase awareness of climate change impacts among residents, business owners, and developers.

Strategies

- a. Work with SMPDC, Saco Schools, community organizations, and other stakeholders to provide educational material.
- b. Provide annual public updates on the City's proactive steps to enhance resiliency.

Policy 7.8 Increase economic resiliency through diversification of the local job base.

Strategies

- a. Identify partner organizations to provide skills training for residents to adapt to changing employer needs and new technologies

Policy 7.9 Build social capital among residents through community programming and events, gathering spaces, etc.

See policies 1.1, 1.7, 6.3

7.10 Work with SMPDC's Sustainability and Resilience Program to develop a city assessment and integrate into regional resilience and sustainability programs.

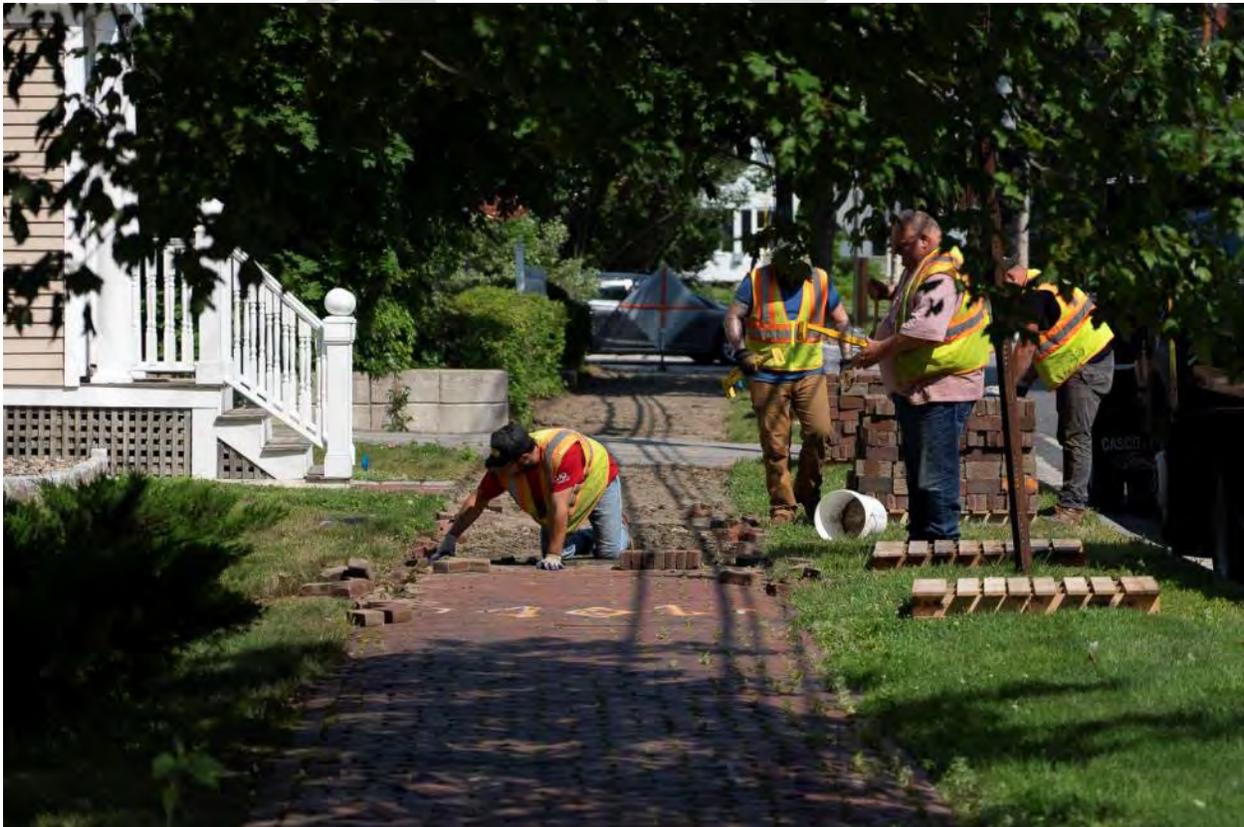
- Coastal Resilience and Adaptation
- Southern Maine Solar Collaborative
- Municipal Electric Vehicle (EV) Readiness Toolkit
- Sustainable Road Design Standards

Invest in Our Infrastructure

Public infrastructure encompasses streets, sidewalks, sewer, stormwater treatment, and public services like police and fire. Education is a public service provided through Saco Schools, a related but separate entity from the City. Water service is provided by Maine Water, a private company that supplies a public utility to several municipalities.

Some public infrastructure investments support existing development by maintaining and/or improving service. These are critical to quality of life, ensuring that existing sidewalks, roadways, and other services are maintained in good working condition. Other investments can help unlock new private investment, like a sewer line that provides capacity for a new business. These are important to facilitate future growth, but their costs must be carefully compared to the expected benefits and revenue increases so they do not burden the City with unsustainable long-term obligations.

Evaluating potential infrastructure investments should consider two components among others: the initial capital cost to build the project and the ongoing operations and maintenance costs. Once a new roadway, sidewalk extension, or other service is built, it must be maintained and the ongoing cost obligation to do so can be significant. A long-term perspective is needed to assess both short-term and ongoing costs and to weigh those against anticipated benefits like increased revenue, reduced vehicle miles travelled and carbon emissions, or improved quality of life for residents.



Invest in our infrastructure and schools in ways that are fiscally responsible, environmentally resilient, and support the growth our community wants. Ensure that public expenditure decisions are evaluated through a sustainability lens.

Policy 8.1 Align public infrastructure investment with identified growth, economic development, environmental, transportation, and other City goals.

Strategies

- a. Identify capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public services to accommodate Saco’s anticipated growth, changing demographics, and economic development priorities.
- b. Develop a transparent evaluation process for proposed capital projects to prioritize improvements based on factors such as:
 - filling in gaps in existing networks/services
 - minimizing new long-term operations/maintenance expenses for the City
 - maximizing other public and private funding resources
 - resilience criteria to ensure that municipal expenditures and investments are protected to the maximum practicable extent from flood hazards and sea level rise
 - ability to leverage previous public investment or catalyze additional private investment

- adherence to policies expressed in this Plan.
- c. Locate new public facilities comprising at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas.
- d. Coordinate any future water and sewer service extensions with the Future Land Use plan.

Policy 8.2 Implement green building practices in public projects to reduce energy costs and other long-term operations expenses.

Policy 8.3 Invest in Saco Schools to modernize facilities by maximizing State funding opportunities and working within local funding constraints.

Strategies

- a. Construct new school facilities that provide the most cost effective, efficient, and holistic systemwide solution to the community’s current and anticipated students’ needs.
 - Select school site location that advances comprehensive plan’s goals, policies, and strategies—including walkability and directing

- growth toward areas served by existing utilities
 - Incorporate green building practices to reduce ongoing operations expenses and create healthy learning environments
 - Maximize State funding assistance
- b. Complete critical repairs and modernization efforts at all school facilities

Policy 8.4 Invest in the long-term viability of the Water Resource Recovery Facility to increase resiliency to sea level rise and storm intensity threats.

Policy 8.5 Invest in City services to keep pace with growth and maintain service levels.

Strategies

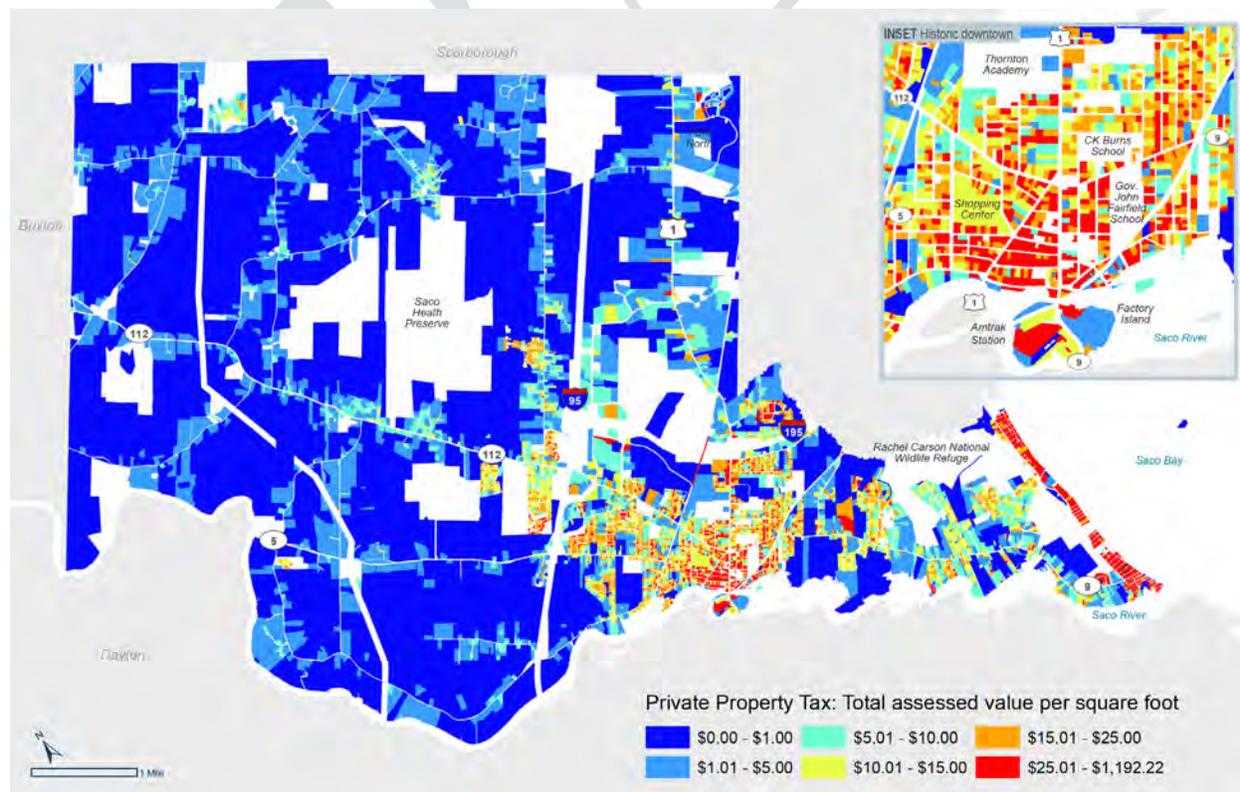
- a. Evaluate public safety staffing levels and equipment needs to maintain service quality, and fund necessary improvements.
- b. Construct satellite Public Safety Facility in Portland Road corridor to adequately serve recent growth areas.
- c. Relocate Police Headquarters to larger facility outside of flood hazard zone.
- d. Assess Dyer Library programming and physical space needs to determine sustainable support for providing high-quality services to Saco residents.

Strengthen Our City's Fiscal Position

The annual budget process is an important opportunity to align public spending with comprehensive plan goals. Maintaining a long-term view of revenue and expense trends, as well as examining the financial ramifications of proposed municipal infrastructure investments, is critical to maintaining the overall health of the City of Saco's fiscal position.

Care should also be taken to consider the fiscal implications, i.e., the costs and revenues associated with different types of new development, as these can vary significantly by land use type and project characteristics like density. While fiscal analysis should not be the only criteria applied to either proposed land use changes or new development proposals over a certain size, it is crucial that it be one of the considerations to maintain Saco's financial stability and avoid unexpected future funding shortfalls.

As part of the Comprehensive Plan analysis, the City's Fiscal Year 2020 and past five years' budgets and actual revenues and expenses were reviewed. A financial model was developed for future projections and to assess the viability of funding different capital improvement projects. The City of Saco's financial situation is currently on solid footing. Its debt margins are well below those allowed by the State of Maine. However, a property tax revaluation adjustment or identification of other revenue sources will be required to avoid future revenues falling below projected expenses at existing service provision levels. Additional revenues from a larger tax base would also allow the City to meet reasonable debt payment requirements that could be taken on to fund new infrastructure projects, if desired.



Strengthen our City's fiscal position for long-term financial stability to support the services and investment that enable our community to offer a high quality of life.

Policy 9.1 Link the annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process to Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and strategies to demonstrate alignment.

Strategies

- a. Identify Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and strategies that support investment proposals or decisions. Make these goals, policies, and strategies explicit during review and discussion of capital improvements.
- b. Prioritize investments that support Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and strategies and increase the City's resiliency.

Policy 9.2 Continue financing existing and future facilities and services in fiscally prudent, cost-effective ways.

Strategies

- a. Explore grant funding opportunities to assist with capital investments.
- b. Maximize state and federal funding sources when used.
- c. Consider lifecycle costs and ongoing operations/ maintenance requirements

Policy 9.3 Complete a citywide property tax revaluation to appraise all real property to its full and fair value to support the City's long-term financial health.

Policy 9.4 Monitor effects of impact fee changes and re-assess as needed.

Strategies

- a. Discuss impact fees with developers and property owners to understand how changes affected them and their decision-making.
- b. Ensure impact fees align with community growth goals while continuing to provide necessary funding for public infrastructure.

Policy 9.5 Conduct fiscal cost/benefit analyses for proposed developments over a threshold value to be determined—including both housing and commercial developments—to identify the full scope of direct and indirect costs and benefits to City finances.

Policy 9.6 Explore opportunities to increase cost savings and efficiencies by working with neighboring communities to plan for and finance shared services or adjacent capital investments.

DRAFT

Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Plan is a policy map that helps the City apply the comprehensive plan’s policies and strategies to specific areas of Saco. It identifies growth areas where the City seeks to encourage most of its future growth, limited growth areas where some new development is intended but at lower levels, and critical natural areas that should be preserved from negative impacts or incompatible development. The map is not zoning but should be used to evaluate current zoning regulations and other land use policies and to propose amendments or revisions that will better align these tools with the Future Land Use Plan.

The character areas depicted in the Future Land Use map also describe areas to Strengthen, Transform, Enhance, and Preserve. Most parts of Saco are areas to Enhance or Preserve. Areas to Strengthen or Transform have significant opportunity to accommodate new growth in patterns that support Saco’s vision and goals.

- **Strengthen:** Saco’s Downtown already has a variety of existing assets and can be further strengthened by reinforcing its character with tactical investment and public investments.
- **Transform:** Places that can be transformed over time such as declining strip retail centers and areas along Portland Road, for which the plan focuses on redevelopment into walkable, mixed-use, amenity-rich activity centers.
- **Enhance:** Places like Saco’s traditional neighborhoods, for which the plan focuses on improvements ranging from traffic calming to new sidewalk and bicycle connections. In some instances, there may be opportunities for carefully planned and designed infill development that provides the next increment of growth.
- **Preserve:** Places across Saco where things should be kept largely the way they are, due to environmental characteristics or other important factors.

Support the locations, types, scales, and intensities of land uses described in the comprehensive plan’s goals, policies, and strategies.

Strategies

- a. Clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development through proactive neighborhood and corridor planning initiatives.
- b. Refer to Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and strategies in staff referrals to the Planning Board to identify how

proposals support or conflict with stated objectives.

- c. Provide the code enforcement officer with the tools, training, and support necessary to enforce land use regulations, and ensure that the Code Enforcement Officer remains certified in accordance with 30-A M.R.S.A. §4451.

Potential Neighborhood Plans:

- Downtown Saco
- Portland Road Corridor
- Ocean Park Road

Support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas.

Strategies

- a. Include anticipated municipal capital investments needed to support proposed land uses in the Capital Investment Plan.
- b. Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan.
- c. Expand the Planning department's capacity to undertake long-range planning efforts to advance comprehensive plan priorities.
 - Explore grant funding for consultants or short-term staff hires to undertake specific planning initiatives.
 - Continue pursuing technical assistance from GPCOG/PACTS to complete transportation, land use, and resiliency planning projects.
 - Consider cross-training other City staff to shift some administrative planning functions and allow more planning staff time for long-range planning projects.

Ensure permitting procedures are streamlined and efficient, especially to encourage private investment in growth areas.

Strategies

- a. Maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures. Solicit feedback from applicants on potential improvements to the system.
- b. Explore streamlining permitting procedures in growth areas to further incentivize private investment in these areas.

Protect critical natural areas from the negative impacts of development.

Strategies

- a. Maintain protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources.

Coordinate Saco's land use strategies with other local and regional land use planning efforts.

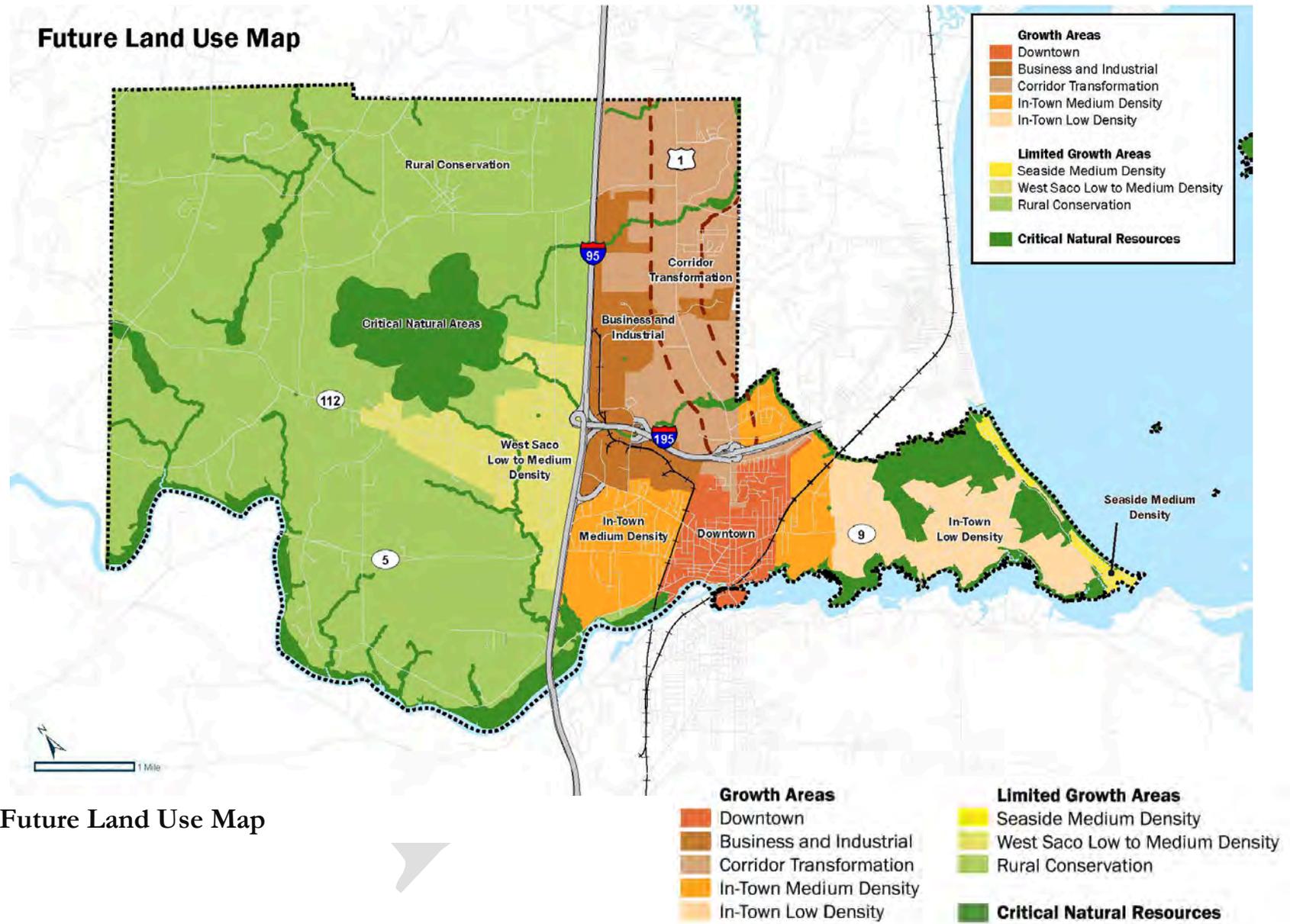
Strategies

- a. Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.

Monitor implementation progress on a regular basis

Strategies

- a. Direct the Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) to track progress on implementing the Future Land Use Plan on an annual basis and provide updates to the Planning Board.
- b. Track new development in Saco annually by type and location relative to designated growth areas.
- c. Every five years, direct the LRPC, Planning Board and City staff to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the implementation status of the comprehensive plan.
 - Identify the percent of municipal growth-related capital investments made in growth areas
 - Identify the location and amount of new development over the past five years, relative to designated growth, limited growth, and rural areas
 - Identify the amount of critical natural resources protected through easements, acquisitions, or other methods
 - Identify which strategies have been accomplished, which are in-progress, and which have not started yet
 - Identify what changes are needed to better align with the comprehensive plan's goals, policies, and strategies.



Growth Areas

These areas are the parts of Saco most suitable to accommodate a significant portion of future growth and development. They include areas to transform through redevelopment like Portland Road, areas to strengthen by building on the assets of Downtown, and areas to enhance like many existing neighborhoods. The character areas are unique, so the amount and type of growth envisioned for each is different.

	<p><i>In-Town Low Density</i></p> <p>These areas to enhance will continue to be residential neighborhoods with minimal change anticipated. Some growth may occur in small increments but these areas are not intended to accommodate any significant portion of future demand. Sensitive natural areas like wetlands should be preserved with adequate buffers and stormwater management best practices.</p>
	<p><i>In-Town Medium Density</i></p> <p>These areas to enhance will continue to be residential neighborhoods, parts of which will evolve incrementally over time to accommodate a share of Saco’s projected future growth. Encouraging new housing in these areas, including additional “Missing Middle” housing types, is intended to redirect development from limited growth areas to places with existing public infrastructure and nearby amenities. Small-scale neighborhood-serving commercial uses should be allowed on corner lots along busier streets. Improvements to sidewalk and bicycle facilities should fill gaps in the existing network and connect to nearby destinations.</p>
	<p><i>Downtown</i></p> <p>This area to strengthen is a mixed-use community activity center surrounded by medium to high density residential neighborhoods. It is intended to accommodate a portion of Saco’s projected future growth in walkable neighborhoods near amenities like schools, shops, parks, the Eastern Trail, and transit. Adaptive reuse and redevelopment will add employment uses and a variety of housing types, including “Missing Middle” types, in these walkable areas to increase the likelihood of walking and biking for short trips. The Main Street mixed-use core will be strengthened as a lively community gathering place. New housing on upper floors of Main Street buildings and in historic neighborhoods closest to Main Street will grow</p>

	<p>the customer base to support more local businesses. New housing will include adaptive reuse of existing buildings, adding units to large single-family houses, and new construction on underused parcels. Downtown neighborhoods further from Main Street will also provide a variety of housing types. A shared approach to parking will minimize the need for additional parking as Downtown grows. Improvements to sidewalk and bicycle facilities should fill gaps in the existing network and connect to nearby destinations. The Eastern Trail’s potential “Over the River” connection would greatly benefit Downtown businesses and improve an already attractive amenity.</p>
	<p><i>Business and Industrial</i> These areas to enhance are primarily single-use areas developed in industrial subdivision patterns. Change will mostly occur as businesses come and go. Limited employee-serving retail or commercial uses and improvements to walkability and transit amenities should be considered to increase the appeal for workers and employers.</p>
	<p><i>Corridor Transformation</i> These areas to transform are suburban, auto-oriented linear development areas that will evolve over time to accommodate a substantial portion of Saco’s projected future growth. One or more walkable mixed-use activity centers or neighborhoods should be developed. The exact location(s) will depend on owner/developer interest informed by a corridor planning process that develops a shared vision for these areas. A mix of employment uses to grow the commercial tax base and provide quality jobs, a variety of housing types at medium to high densities, and supporting retail as market demand allows should be encouraged. Once built out, each activity center should have a critical mass of people and uses to function as a complete neighborhood and support transit. Areas outside these walkable activity centers will likely continue to function as they do today. Safety improvements for all roadway users and beautification efforts should continue to be implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portland Road: This corridor is identified as a potential rapid transit corridor in the regional long-

	<p>range transit plan. The Eastern Trail already provides an amenity to build around and another alternative transportation route. Redevelopment of existing sites should be prioritized over new greenfield development. Future planning should allow densities which support transit use and consider that a network of secondary streets will be needed to provide a walkable block structure off Portland Road. Opportunities for future connections across parcels should be preserved. Large blocks of undeveloped natural habitat and sensitive areas like Goosefare Brook, Cascade Brook, and Mill Brook should be preserved as neighborhood amenities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ocean Park Road: This corridor is identified as a priority transit corridor in the regional long-range transit plan, linking the centers of Downtown Saco and Old Orchard Beach. Redevelopment of this area will improve a major gateway to the city and provide additional housing and employment uses. Pedestrian and bicycle connections to Downtown should accompany redevelopment.
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Limited Growth Areas

These areas are suitable to accommodate a share of future growth but are not intended to be significant growth areas. These are areas intended to be enhanced or preserved in the future. Development standards that limit strip development along roads and protect natural resources are particularly important in these character areas.

	<p><i>Seaside Medium Density</i></p> <p>This area to enhance includes low to medium density neighborhoods located between sensitive natural environments and the coast. It is an important part of the community’s character and appeal but increasingly vulnerable to climate threats. Improvements and redevelopment of existing sites must be designed to be resilient to the impacts of climate change like storm surge and high-tide flooding.</p>
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	<p><i>West Saco Low to Medium Density</i></p> <p>This area to enhance includes low to medium density subdivisions near rural areas. Development pressure will need to be mitigated and redirected toward growth areas with existing public infrastructure to avoid continued sprawl development that impacts visual character, the environment, transportation patterns, and the City’s costs of service. To take advantage of the existing water and/or sewer service in these areas, an additional unit may be added to existing lots either as an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) or as second structure. Conservation subdivisions should be considered as an alternative for future development. Appropriate buffers around critical resources like the Saco Heath and Deep Brook should be maintained to preserve their ecological integrity.</p>
	<p><i>Rural Conservation</i></p> <p>This area to preserve encompasses the least developed parts of Saco, including farmland and tree-covered areas, significant areas of natural habitats, and sensitive water bodies. However, it is also susceptible to continued sprawling single-family development that detracts from its visual character and natural resources. Development pressure will need to be mitigated and redirected toward growth areas with existing public infrastructure to avoid continued sprawl development and its negative impacts. Compatible non-residential uses that increase the economic viability of land conservation and provide a financial alternative to residential subdivision should be explored. Conservation subdivisions should be considered for future residential development. Large buffers around critical resources like Saco Heath should be maintained to preserve their ecological integrity.</p>

Critical Natural Resources

These areas to preserve include water bodies, wetlands, and sensitive natural areas that are an important part of Saco’s character. These will continue to be protected from development to maintain their important ecological and recreational functions.

Regional Coordination

There are many issues addressed in the comprehensive plan that require a collaborative approach with neighboring communities and regional organizations. Issues like regional transportation patterns, housing affordability, economic development, natural systems, and the environment cross political boundaries. The City can make some progress on its own, but combined efforts to tackle larger issues collaboratively will yield better, more durable results.

The City of Saco is already coordinating with regional partners in several important ways:

- GPCOG/PACTS – Regional Planning Organization, Metropolitan Planning Organization, and Economic Development District for Saco and the region. Saco has a seat on the PACTS policy board and the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee.
- Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission – coordinates planning, transportation, economic development, and sustainability and resiliency initiatives at the regional level. Saco is part of the SMPDC region and has a position on its Executive Committee.
- Biddeford + Saco Chamber of Commerce – promotes local business development and workforce education.
- Joint Biddeford and Saco Council Steering Committee – discusses opportunities for shared services and collaboration between the two cities.
- BSOOB Transit Committee – discusses local and regional bus service for residents.
- Saco River Corridor Commission – reviews development proposals near the Saco River to ensure appropriate watershed protection strategies are employed.



As described in the policies and strategies, there are other important areas where new or expanded coordination is needed to make greater progress on complex issues:

Economic Development

Participate in a cooperative regional approach to economic development among neighboring communities.

Housing

Participate in SMPDC’s Housing Affordability initiative and advocate for addressing affordable and workforce housing needs at local, regional, and state levels.

Transportation

Collaborate with BSOOB and neighboring communities to better leverage transit by improving rider amenities and advocating for enhanced service.

Participate in regional transportation efforts led by PACTS and GPCOG as well as state transportation initiatives.

Land Use

Collaborate with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and policies to enhance quality of life for all residents.

Natural Resources

Continue participating in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect, and improve water quality

Participate in regional planning and regulatory efforts to manage and protect shared critical resources.

Support regional Saco Bay management planning and implementation efforts.

Resiliency

Work with SMPDC’s Sustainability and Resilience Program to integrate into regional efforts and to develop a city assessment.

Fiscal Capacity

Explore opportunities to increase cost savings and efficiencies by working with neighboring communities to plan for and finance shared services or adjacent capital investments.

Taking Action

The Comprehensive Plan will be implemented in phases over the course of the next 10-12 years. A matrix listing the policies and strategies supporting each goal, an estimated timeframe for implementation, identification of the primary responsible party, and potential resources for each is provided in this section to guide the process. Taken together, these policies and strategies will help the City make progress toward its vision and goals.

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide public decision-making and influence private investment decisions. Planning Board decisions, City Council initiatives, and department work plans should refer to this plan frequently. Future zoning and policy changes will be needed to help carry out the plan. As more specific corridor or neighborhood plans are completed, appropriate sections of the plan should be reviewed and updated as needed, particularly the future land use map.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of key metrics is important to keep the City on track toward its goals and to identify course corrections needed along the way. The Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) will transition from its planning role to its ongoing implementation monitoring role. City planning staff will support the LRPC in this function. An annual review of easily accessible metrics from public records and online data sources will provide a regular check-in. At least every five years, a more in-depth evaluation will take place using additional data sources and possibly including stakeholder and community outreach to assess progress and identify areas for improvement. The

Planning Board will review these reports and determine what adjustments are needed.

Evaluation Metrics

An initial task for the LRPC will be to discuss and identify relevant and accessible metrics to evaluate progress. Several are suggested below, and others will be added based on further discussion.

Local data:

- Annual housing permit trends: by type of housing and location
- Change in commercial tax base
- “Fix It First”: amount spent on maintaining existing systems and filling gaps in service compared to amount spent on extending new systems (sidewalks, sewer, roads, etc.)
- Length of sidewalk and bicycle facility projects completed
- Affordable and workforce housing production and/or preservation - number of units at different affordability levels (i.e. 80-120% AMI, 50-80% AMI, less than 50% AMI)
- Senior housing production – number of units

Local, state, or other data sources:

- Net change in jobs
- Change in average household income
- Change in median wage per job
- Amount of land conserved

First Five / Next Five

General priorities among the plan’s many policies and strategies provide an overall direction to help guide efforts. These are generally categorized as a “First Five” list of top priorities and a “Next Five” list of secondary priorities but can be addressed simultaneously and in no particular order.

First Five

Encourage walkable mixed-use neighborhood development at higher densities where public water and sewer exist. E.g.,

- Saco Island and Downtown
- Portland Road
- Ocean Park Road/Route 5



Attract new jobs and businesses near existing and planned transit service.



Invest in new school construction and other school improvements.



Develop Climate Adaptation Plan + Action Strategy.



Invest in public infrastructure in fiscally responsible ways to support projected growth and increase environmental sustainability.



Next Five

Improve network of pedestrian and bicycle connections.



Facilitate new housing in growth areas across a range of types and affordability.



Invest in public safety facilities to keep pace with growth and improve emergency operations.



Develop places and programs that support a lively Downtown.



Conduct property tax revaluation to appraise all real property to its full and fair value.



Implementation Matrix

The matrix on the following pages summarizes the goals, policies, and strategies of Saco's Comprehensive Plan. A responsible party is identified for each policy and strategy, along with a timeframe for implementation and potential resources. This matrix should be used as the action plan for City departments and others to carry out the Comprehensive Plan. It is also an important evaluation tool to measure progress over time—Which short-term projects have been started? What are the next longer-term projects to begin and when?

Table Format

X. Goals

X.1 Policies

X.1a Strategies

WHO – identifies the lead entity or entities responsible for carrying out the policy or strategy. Typically, this is a City department supported by one or more other departments but it may also be a City board or commission. The primary lead entity is noted in bold text.

WHEN – identifies the general timeframe to begin implementation. “Ongoing” are regular, sustained efforts that should continue over the life of the plan. “Near-term” denotes 1-3 years, mid-term denotes 4-6 years, and “long-term” more than 7 years. Timelines may shift based on funding availability, staff capacity, or other impacts.

RESOURCES – evaluates needed resources such as costs, time, or materials to implement the policy or strategy on a scale of * to *** (least to most) and identifies potential partners or other supportive information.

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
1. <i>Enhance our downtown as the lively core of our community—</i> a place that invites everyone to live, work, play, shop, and gather together.			
1.1 Create an outdoor community gathering space suitable for both larger events and daily interactions among residents.			
1.1a Study opportunities for larger spaces at potential locations such as Pepperell Square, Pepperell Park, Saco Island, or Jubilee Park. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test ideas using low-cost, short-term improvements to measure impacts and identify further refinements to address broad range of interests. 	Planning , Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Public Works	Near-term	** to *** Saco Main Street
1.1b Identify smaller spaces within Downtown to enhance as comfortable, flexible use gathering spaces.	Planning , Parks and Recreation, Public Works	Near-term	**
1.2 Recruit and retain local businesses to activate ground floor spaces along Main Street – especially food and beverage options, daily needs, and arts/culture. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider pop-up businesses to complement long-term tenants and fill vacant storefronts – these can provide seasonal amenities and activation of public spaces, test new retailing concepts, and support emerging entrepreneurs 	Economic Development	Ongoing	* Saco Main Street
1.3 Enhance Downtown as a lively center by focusing residential and mixed-use development toward sites within a ten-minute (half-mile) walk of downtown to support shared amenities and local businesses/jobs.			

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
1.3a Invest in improvements to streetscapes, bicycle and transit accommodations, parks, and community gathering spaces to enhance Downtown’s appeal for development.	Planning, Economic Development, Public Works, City Council	Near-term	** to ***
1.3b Promote Downtown TIF and leverage program for commercial and retail improvements to promote mixed-use development.	Economic Development	Ongoing	*
1.3c Refine and clarify guidelines for future higher-density, mixed-use and walkable community development on Saco Island as part of a larger Downtown/Saco Island neighborhood planning process. Guidelines should align with and reinforce shared community goals.	Planning	Near-term	**
1.3d Pursue housing policies under 3.1 and 3.2 and walkability policies under 4.4	Planning , Public Works	Ongoing	**
1.4 Facilitate historic preservation within the Downtown Saco Historic District.			
1.4a Update Downtown Historic District Design Guidelines with contemporary best practices and considerations for sustainability and affordability.	Historic Preservation Commission , Planning	Near-term	**
1.4b Provide financial resources to qualified fixed-income homeowners for necessary and historically appropriate repairs and improvements.	Economic Development , General Assistance, City Council	Mid-term	**
1.4c Encourage ADUs and historically sensitive second and third units in large houses to provide additional sources of income for homeowners.	Historic Preservation Commission , Planning, Code Enforcement	Ongoing	*

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
1.4d Evaluate parking requirements and maximize shared parking opportunities to minimize new parking (and impervious pavement areas) as housing is added to existing structures or uses change.	Planning , Economic Development	Near-term	*
1.5 Study downtown parking, traffic, and access including safe walking and biking routes to and through downtown.			
1.5a Implement recommendations of Downtown Parking Study. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for short-and long-term parking needs • Optimize the use of existing parking supply • Coordinate parking management with a flexible (year-round) approach • Establish parking precedents to better align long-term development with city goals • Ensure parking system is accessible and navigable to residents and visitors • Foster a walkable downtown 	Planning , Economic Development, Public Works	Ongoing	**
1.5b Make pedestrian and bicyclist improvements such as lighting, wayfinding, bike parking, and improved crosswalks. <i>See strategy 4.5 for more information on completing a bicycle and pedestrian master plan.</i>	Public Works , Planning, Economic Development	Ongoing	** to ***
1.6 Develop a robust arts and culture program to improve livability and support economic vitality.			
1.6a Develop a public art master plan that includes a variety of events for all ages and identifies	Arts Commission	Long-term	**

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
connections to Downtown economic development and livability.			
1.6b Incorporate digital and interactive public art formats that enable public places to reflect current values and ideas, draw on the evolving energy and ideas of Saco’s arts community, and promote interaction among friends and strangers alike.	Arts Commission	Mid-term	*
1.6c Work with Saco Main Street and Heart of Biddeford to coordinate community events and public art initiatives that strengthen ties between the two historic downtown areas.	Arts Commission, Parks and Recreation	Ongoing	* Saco Main Street
1.6d Explore opportunities for volunteer-led, inexpensive, short-term community art projects or demonstrations that demonstrate the impacts of public art in a visible way. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use vacant storefronts to display work by local artists, craftspeople, high school students, or others. 	Arts Commission	Near-term	*
1.7 Enhance public access to and programming along the Saco River.			
1.7a Ensure that it is safe and easy to walk to locations with river access. Provide adequate lighting and wayfinding to and along the RiverWalk.	Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Economic Development	Near-term	**
1.7b Integrate quality public access to the riverfront into future Saco Island development.	Planning	Mid-term	*

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
1.7c Partner with Saco Main Street and other organizations to provide regular programming that activates the riverfront.	Parks and Recreation	Ongoing	* Saco Main Street, community groups
1.8 Increase sustainable mobility by investing in bicycle friendly infrastructure improvements.			
2. <i>Expand economic opportunity for all</i> by attracting and retaining a diverse mix of businesses, quality jobs and investment, and by providing the services that offer everyone a path to opportunity.			
2.1 Focus business attraction efforts on industry sectors with local and regional strength; that provide jobs that meet the needs, skills, and aspirations of Saco’s workforce.			
2.1a Expand Economic Development Department’s capacity to communicate with businesses, site locators, developers, and regional and statewide economic development organizations about available properties, emerging opportunities, and local workforce and lifestyle assets.	Economic Development, City Council	Near-term	**
2.1b Attract and recruit Light Industrial, Manufacturing, and Logistics employers to the existing business parks and suitable locations along Portland Road/Route 1.	Economic Development	Ongoing	**
2.1c Attract and recruit Professional and Technical Services employers looking to locate in Southern Maine. Focus development in mixed-use, transit-accessible areas such as Downtown, Saco Island, and future mixed-use neighborhoods along Portland Road/Route 1.	Economic Development	Ongoing	**

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
2.1d Attract and recruit Health Care and Social Assistance employers, especially those offering higher earning jobs, and focus development in mixed-use, transit-accessible locations.	Economic Development	Ongoing	**
2.2 Collaborate with existing business park tenants in opportunity industries to retain local jobs and continue growing in Saco.			
2.2a Continue the Business Outreach and Visitation Program to better understand employer needs for workforce, physical space, supply chains, etc. Partner with major employers to develop initiatives to address biggest gaps or concerns.	Economic Development	Near-term	**
2.2b Continue providing assistance to retail, food services, arts, and accommodations businesses to equip them with skills and resources to survive and thrive post-Covid, especially those that contribute to the walkable, mixed-use environment Downtown.	Economic Development	Near-term	** Saco Main Street
2.3 Communicate the value and availability of Saco’s economic development incentives.			
2.3a Evaluate economic development incentives on an annual basis and update as needed. Ensure that incentives help the City meet its goals for high-quality jobs and address the current needs of targeted industries, employers, and investors.	Economic Development Commission	Ongoing	*
2.4 Clarify and promote Saco’s impact fee system.			
2.4a Create simple, clear informational handout that explains the City’s impact fees, their purpose,	Economic Development, Water	Near-term	*

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
and offers guidance to applicants. Share handout with businesses, developers, and real estate community.	Resource Recovery, Parks and Recreation, Fire Department		
2.4b Monitor results of Fall 2021 changes to wastewater impact fees. Promote positive effects and mitigate any negative effects as needed.	Water Resource Recovery	Near-term	*
2.5 Provide workforce development opportunities tailored to identified needs in growth industries to equip residents for success.			
2.5a Leverage local resources to develop evidence-based education and skills programs addressing local labor market needs, Potential partners include UMA Saco, Biddeford+Saco Chamber, UNE Biddeford, employers, etc.	Economic Development	Near-term	**
2.5b Assess common barriers to employment (education/skill gaps, childcare needs, transportation, language barriers, criminal record, etc) and develop initiatives to mitigate and overcome them.	Economic Development	Near-term	**
2.5c Work with employers and regional/state agencies to create 'ladders of opportunity' within growth industries for employees to build skills over time.	Economic Development	Mid-term	**
2.5d Expand access to affordable high-speed internet for residents and businesses.	City Administrator, Economic Development	Near-term	** to ***
2.6 Participate in a cooperative regional approach to economic development among neighboring communities.			

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
2.6a Build relationships with appropriate staff in neighboring communities to discuss and coordinate economic development initiatives.	Economic Development	Ongoing	**
2.6b Explore opportunities to promote a regional circular economy that matches waste products from one industry with inputs in another industry.	Economic Development Commission	Long-term	**
2.7 Encourage new development that supports the quality of life and amenities that attract workers and residents.			
2.7a Plan for and support mixed-use development in identified nodes throughout the city.	Planning	Near-term	**
2.7b Activate Downtown riverfront with community events, regular programming, and wayfinding.	Parks and Recreation, Economic Development	Ongoing	* to ** Saco Main Street
2.7c Unlock riverfront and coastal access and development potential while addressing current and future flood hazard concerns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saco Island • Camp Ellis 	Planning	Mid-term	**
2.7d Encourage Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs and/or infrastructure that supports walking, biking and transit through zoning or development impact review so that workers have options of how to travel to work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carpooling incentives • Transit information and incentives 	Economic Development, Planning	Near-term	* to **

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
3. <i>Provide a variety of housing options</i> to retain and welcome people of all ages, incomes, lifestyles, and backgrounds as members of our community.			
3.1 Allow for and encourage a variety of housing options to meet the budgets and needs of the full spectrum of Saco residents including aging Baby Boomers, young people, low-to-moderate income residents, first-time homebuyers, and new residents.			
3.1a Conduct a Housing Needs Analysis and Assessment to document local housing needs, set quantifiable goals, and identify strategies and to help Saco address the needs of its current and future residents.	Planning	Near-term	** Consultant
3.1b Increase the amount of land zoned by-right to permit attached single-family (townhouse) and small-scale multifamily (3-8 units) in areas with existing public water and sewer.	Planning Board	Near-term	**
3.1c Decrease minimum lot size per dwelling unit in areas with existing public water and sewer to allow for smaller lots conducive to ‘starter’ home construction.	Planning Board	Near-term	**
3.1d Encourage affordable senior housing in walkable, transit-accessible locations to allow aging residents to remain in Saco.	Planning Board	Ongoing	*
3.1e Explore demand for alternate housing models such as micro-units, cottage courts, intergenerational and co-housing through an inclusive outreach program to the community, local developers, and others.	Planning	Mid-term	** Age Friendly Saco

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
3.1f Evaluate potential incentives for residential improvements that add certain types of dwelling units in growth areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Converting vacant upper floors in buildings on Main Street into housing • Adding small-scale multifamily housing on underused land • Creating additional units within large existing single-family houses • Creating accessory dwelling units (ADUs) 	Planning , Economic Development	Mid-term	** to ***
3.1g Consider freezing and/or abating real estate taxes for residents age 65+ who meet appropriate income standards to support aging in the community.	Assessing , Finance	Near-term	*
3.1h Review existing parking and mobility requirements to ensure they support additional housing types.	Planning	Near-term	**
3.1i Build local and regional leadership on housing issues to encourage the provision of a variety of housing types and of adequate workforce housing.	City Administrator , City Council	Ongoing	**
3.2 Protect rural areas and natural settings without existing public water and sewer from encroaching development by encouraging new housing development at greater densities in areas with existing public infrastructure.			
3.2a Complete review of zoning requirements and permitting processes to create a predictable, efficient review process for projects in designated	Plan Development Review Committee , Planning	Near-term	**

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
growth areas with existing public water and sewer service.			
3.2b Allow for more multifamily and attached single family (townhouse) development in designated growth areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review minimum lot size per dwelling unit requirements • Review side setback requirements • Consider density bonuses or other incentives to encourage infill development by lowering land cost per housing unit 	Planning Board	Near-term	**
3.2c Promote mixed-use redevelopment of aging retail sites as their market viability declines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review minimum lot size per dwelling unit requirements to promote multi-family development • Review zoning to require ground floor retail in multi-family redevelopments in certain locations • Initiate proactive conversations with property owners to understand long-term plans 	Planning, Economic Development	Mid-term	**
3.2d Consider allowing conservation subdivision zoning or other appropriate, economically viable uses in the Rural Conservation and West Residential districts to protect open spaces and natural resources.	Planning Board, Conservation Commission	Near-term	**
3.3 Promote mixed-income housing development and a continuous pipeline of new affordable housing units to			

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
meet the needs of low- and moderate-income households—giving priority to sites in transit-accessible, amenity-rich locations near jobs, schools, groceries, healthcare and childcare, parks, and other daily services.			
3.3a Achieve a minimum goal that at least 10% of all new housing units are provided at a variety of affordability levels (at or below 80% of area median income): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively reach out to regional affordable housing providers • Monitor progress annually 	Planning Board	Ongoing	* to **
3.3b Review zoning and permitting to expedite mixed-income and affordable housing projects and reduce costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a density bonus for affordable housing in transit-accessible and amenity-rich locations • Reduce off-street parking minimums in transit-accessible locations to lower the cost of affordable housing construction 	Planning Board	Near-term	**
3.3c Consider MSHA Tax Increment Financing for Affordable Housing in opportunity areas.	Economic Development	Near-term	**
3.3d Identify surplus publicly owned sites suitable for mixed-income housing and solicit private development partners via an RFP process.	Planning	Mid-term	**
3.3e Provide additional incentives for housing that meets the needs of low-income households (30-60% AMI).	City Council	Mid-term	** to ***

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
3.3f Increase housing for extremely low-income households (less than 30% AMI) using federal housing programs.	City Council	Mid-term	**
3.3g Invest in public infrastructure to increase accessibility to local amenities for residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetscape improvements for walkability including sidewalks and crossings as well as design improvements to slow vehicle traffic on residential streets • Bicycle and transit improvements for increased accessibility and lower-cost transportation options • Parks, playgrounds, and other community amenities for all ages 	Public Works, Planning, Parks and Recreation, Economic Development	Ongoing	** to ***
3.3h Consider adopting City Council housing goals that define Saco’s aspirations for workforce housing and provide metrics to measure progress.	City Council, Planning	Near-term	**
3.4 Improve maintenance of existing housing stock to ensure that it continues to provide safe, sanitary, and energy-efficient housing.			
3.4a Promote state and federal financial assistance programs for homeowners of older homes to complete maintenance/repairs.	Planning	Ongoing	*
3.4b Develop educational resources and provide financial incentives to complete energy efficiency retrofits and upgrades in existing homes.	Energy and Sustainability Committee	Near-term	*
3.4c Develop educational resources and provide financial assistance to complete universal design	Planning	Near-term	* Age Friendly Saco

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
improvements and Smart Home upgrades to allow aging in place.			
3.4d Increase funding for Code Enforcement Office and Fire Marshal to regularly inspect multifamily buildings and connect landlords to resources.	Code Enforcement	Mid-term	*
4. <i>Design a connected mobility system</i> with everyone in mind by expanding options to walk, bike, or use transit.			
4.1 Enhance and support safe vehicle flows.			
4.1a Continue implementing Complete Streets recommendations along Route 1. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect gaps in sidewalk network • Continue access management program and encourage connectivity between non-residential lots • Create neighborhood byway bicycle routes as alternate to Route 1 southwest of I-195 	Planning, Public Works, Economic Development	Ongoing	** to ***
4.1b Identify and evaluate traffic calming options for Main Street, particularly in the downtown business core. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E.g. narrowed lane widths, corner curb extensions/bulb-outs, pedestrian crossing islands in center lane, Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) pedestrian crossing signs, widened sidewalks • Test ideas using short-term, low-cost pilot projects and monitor impacts 	Public Works, Traffic Safety Committee	Near-term	** to ***
4.1c Continue traffic calming efforts to reduce speeding on neighborhood streets.	Public Works, Traffic Safety Committee	Near-term	** to ***

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g. pavement markings, corner curb extensions/bulb-outs, driver feedback signs 			
4.1d Work with Maine DOT to upgrade traffic signals on Main Street to improve vehicular and pedestrian traffic flows Downtown (provide adaptive/smart response capabilities, etc).	Public Works , Traffic Safety Committee, Economic Development	Mid-term	** to *** Maine DOT
4.1e Encourage travelers from the south to use the Maine Turnpike and the new Exit 35 interchange to access Downtown. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g. signage and wayfinding on the Turnpike and local streets 	Public Works	Long-term	** Maine Turnpike Authority
4.2 Partner with transit providers and adjacent municipalities to better leverage existing transit service and encourage new ridership by improving amenities.			
4.2a Upgrade bus stops with passenger amenities such as shelters, benches, lighting, and trash cans. Ensure sidewalks and crosswalks provide pedestrian access to bus stops.	Public Works	Near-term	** GPCOG, BSOOB
4.2b Enhance the multimodal hub at the Saco Transportation Center by including high-quality bicycle parking and carshare.	Public Works , Economic Development	Near-term	** BSOOB
4.2c Work with Maine DOT to enhance existing Park and Ride lots with transit amenities and marketing for tourist access.	Public Works	Mid-term	** Maine DOT, BSOOB, Chamber of Commerce
4.2d Evaluate seasonal shuttle service to help visitors access Saco’s beaches from the Saco Transportation Center and Park and Ride lots.	Economic Development	Mid-term	** BSOOB, Chamber of Commerce

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
4.2e Support regional planning and implementation of high-frequency transit corridor connecting Biddeford, Saco, and Portland.	Planning , Economic Development, City Council	Ongoing	** to *** PACTS, GPCOG
4.2f Encourage consideration of transit proximity and service when locating facilities like the new school, senior housing, affordable/workforce housing, and major employers.	Planning , Economic Development, Public Works	Ongoing	*
4.3 Prioritize and pursue transportation options for those with limited mobility.			
4.3a Improve first/last mile connections near transit stops with particular emphasis on accessibility – sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting.	Public Works	Near-term	** to ***
4.3b Expand community transportation options via BSOOB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate service scheduling with major community providers such as hospitals and clinics, social service organizations (including those in Biddeford and Old Orchard Beach) • Provide more information/targeted marketing about route deviation service • Advocate for funding to increase frequency 	Planning , Economic Development, Parks and Recreation	Near-term	* BSOOB, Age Friendly Saco
4.4 Upgrade walkability around key locations such as grocery stores, schools, transit nodes, health centers, senior centers and destinations like parks and beaches.			
4.4a Establish a framework and prioritization for filling gaps in the existing sidewalk network and constructing new sidewalk connections, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify high-potential activity locations 	Public Works , Planning	Near-term	**

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify places where users are vulnerable (schools, senior center) Define criteria for prioritizing new sidewalk construction Establish dedicated funding to allow regular addition to the sidewalk network 			
<p>4.4b Prioritize accessibility upgrades such as detectable curb ramps, audible crosswalk signals, and impediment-free sidewalks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address issues posed by historic brick sidewalks Downtown that deteriorate into uneven surfaces due to settlement and freeze/thaw heaving that create accessibility issues. Consider stamped concrete or other more durable, flat-surface options. 	Public Works	Near-term	**
<p>4.4c Prioritize pedestrians Downtown using tools such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-visibility crosswalks Leading pedestrian intervals at crosswalks Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) at unsignalized crossings 	Public Works , Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Public Safety Committee	Near-term	**
<p>4.4d Develop a Downtown wayfinding plan with considerations for pedestrians, motorists, and bicyclists.</p>	Planning , Economic Development	Mid-term	** Consultant
<p>4.4e Evaluate sidewalk connection from Downtown to the beaches. Consider route options including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ferry Rd/Rt 9 from Bayview Rd to Seaside Ave 	Public Works	Near-term	** to ***

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ferry Rd/Rt 9 to Bayview and Ferry Beach State Park Rd to Seaside Ave Ferry Rd/Rt 9 to Bayview and Seaside Ave <i>Also see 4.5d regarding pilot project approach</i>			
4.4f Consider pedestrian and bicyclist access when evaluating potential elementary school sites.	Saco Schools	Near-term	*
4.5 Connect the bicycle network to key locations and provide adequate bicycle parking at destinations.			
4.5a Create a comprehensive bicycle network plan addressing connections among Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, Camp Ellis, coastal neighborhoods, the Saco River, and other destinations together with an implementation strategy. Include an analysis of low-stress bicycle routes and alternative strategies that address physical limitations of many streets.	Planning, Public Works, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee	Mid-term	** Consultant, GPCOG, SMPDC
4.5b Map existing bicycle parking (including a summer utilization count) to identify deficiencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue short- and long-term bike parking options, including secure bike parking such as bike lockers to encourage the use of e-bikes Consider seasonal bicycle “corrals” or other parking options Add and promote bicycle racks at Camp Ellis 	Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee	Near-term	** GPCOG
4.5c Evaluate options for a bicycle share system and/or electric-assist bicycles.	Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee	Near-term	** GPCOG

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
<p>4.5d Evaluate options for bicycle connections to the beaches, Camp Ellis, and riverfront access points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore feasibility of constructing a bike path connecting the Eastern Trail to Camp Ellis. • Evaluate strategies such as creating advisory shoulders or expanding the sidewalk to create a shared use path (~10-12 ft) • Consider a short-term, low-cost pilot project using traffic cones or jersey barriers to test potential solutions during the summer and measure results 	<p>Public Works, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>** to ***</p>
<p>4.5e Promote the Eastern Trail as a recreational and commuter route:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use signage and wayfinding to guide riders along the on-road segment from Thornton Academy across the river into Biddeford • Support completion of the “Over the River” off-road connection from Thornton Academy across the river into Biddeford • Work with property owners near trail access points to share parking with users 	<p>Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Economic Development, City Council</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>* to ***</p>
<p>4.6 Improve multimodal connections between Downtown Saco and Downtown Biddeford.</p>			
<p>4.6a Implement recommendations from Biddeford-Saco Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Plan to enhance existing connections – pedestrian and</p>	<p>Public Works, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Economic</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>** to ***</p>

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
bicycle improvements to Main Street on Saco Island, lane narrowing, medians, etc.	Development, Traffic Safety Committee		
4.6b Consider funding options for final design and construction of the proposed multimodal bridge connecting the Saco Transportation Center and the Lincoln Street parking garage in Biddeford.	City Council , Economic Development, Finance	Long-term	***
4.6c Apply for railroad crossing upgrades to improve walkability on Main Street.	Public Works	Mid-term	** to *** Grade Crossing Safety and Trespass Prevention Grants from USDOT https://railroads.dot.gov/divisions/highway-rail-crossing-and-trespasser-programs/grade-crossing-safety-and-trespass
4.7 Maximize the efficient use of vehicle parking.			
4.7a Review zoning to ensure that parking requirements support community goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene Downtown stakeholders to evaluate strategies like parking maximums instead of minimums and unbundling parking costs from residential or office leases 	Planning	Near-term	** Saco Main Street
4.7b Create a comprehensive parking management plan for Downtown and for the beach areas.	Planning	Near-term	** Consultant
4.8 Develop and implement an electric mobility plan.			
4.8a Convert municipal vehicle fleet to electric vehicles (EV).	City Council , Public Works, Energy and Sustainability Committee	Long-term	***

	WHO	WHEN	RESOURCES
4.8b Work with electric utility to identify upgrades needed to support more robust EV charging and solar power infrastructure.	Public Works , Energy and Sustainability Committee	Mid-term	*
4.8c Develop network of electric charging stations for vehicles, bicycles, and scooters—station density may be based on EV adoption rates and/or daily trips.	Public Works , Energy and Sustainability Committee	Mid-term	**
4.9 Consider adopting mobility policies that support community goals and are tailored to local conditions.			
4.9a Evaluate existing zoning requirements to ensure new development is well integrated into the multimodal network (sidewalks, transit routes, bicycle facilities).	Planning	Near-term	*
4.9b Evaluate Vision Zero policies and strategies to eliminate car crashes and traffic deaths.	Planning , Public Works, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Traffic Safety Committee	Near-term	* GPCOG
4.9c Evaluate Complete Streets policies to design context-sensitive safe roads for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, those with limited mobility, and drivers.	Planning , Public Works, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Traffic Safety Committee	Near-term	*

5. <i>Grow our environmental stewardship</i> by preserving and protecting our natural and built legacies.			
5.1 Protect water resources and improve water quality.			
5.1a Maintain zoning, subdivision, and/or site plan review ordinances that incorporate stormwater runoff performance standards consistent with State law, encourage low impact development standards, protect aquifer recharge areas, and require water quality protection practices in construction. Review standards at least every three years and revise to incorporate current best management practices.	Planning , Public Works, Conservation Commission	Ongoing	*
5.1b Minimize pollution discharges into the Saco River to improve water quality by completing the removal of remaining Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) and upgrading the Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF).	Water Resource Recovery , Public Works	Mid-term	***
5.1c Encourage landowners to protect water quality by providing best management practice information.	Conservation Commission	Ongoing	*
5.1d Provide education materials about invasive aquatic species in appropriate locations like marinas and boat launches.	Parks and Recreation , Conservation Commission	Ongoing	*
5.2 Conserve critical natural resources such as watersheds, prime farmland, and wetlands.			
5.2a Maintain zoning, subdivision, and/or site plan review ordinances that require subdivision and non-residential developers to identify critical natural resources on-site and take measures to protect them.	Planning , Public Works	Ongoing	*

<p>5.2b Encourage Planning Board to review pertinent Beginning with Habitat (BwH) natural resource maps during the subdivision and site plan review processes and provide training on interpreting the information.</p>	<p>Conservation Commission</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>**</p>
<p>5.2c Integrate natural resources into the urban fabric through a street tree and urban habitat program.</p>	<p>Parks and Recreation</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>**</p>
<p>5.2d Protect critical and important natural resources by partnering with land trusts and other organizations to acquire easements from interested landowners,</p>	<p>Parks and Recreation, Conservation Commission</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>* to **</p>
<p>5.2e Identify property owners in or near critical natural resources and provide information about applicable local, state, and federal regulations and about the state’s current use tax programs.</p>	<p>Conservation Commission, Communications</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>*</p>
<p>5.3 Support agriculture and forestry resources and encourage their economic viability.</p>			
<p>5.3a Review Rural Conservation (RC) zoning standards to ensure they align with the community’s vision for future growth in North Saco and adequately protect critical natural resources and agricultural and forestry resources.</p>	<p>Planning Board</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>**</p>
<p>5.3b Explore ways to protect prime farmland soils that provide economically viable alternatives for land owners.</p>	<p>Planning</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>**</p>
<p>5.3c Reach out to property owners enrolled in current use taxation programs to discuss their operations and future plans and to share available resources to support continued use.</p>	<p>Assessing, Communications, Conservation Commission</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>**</p>

<p>5.3d Encourage permitted land use activities and programs that support productive agriculture and forestry operations like farm stands, greenhouses, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Document economic impact of these activities where feasible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and develop markets for local agriculture and forestry products by connecting producers with businesses and institutions such as schools. 	<p>Planning, Economic Development</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>*</p>
<p>5.3e Consult with appropriate state agencies when developing regulations for agricultural or forest management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil and Water Conservation District • Maine Forest Service district forester 	<p>Planning</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>*</p>
<p>5.4 Protect marine resources and support appropriate uses along the waterfront, particularly at Camp Ellis.</p>			
<p>5.4a Ensure Camp Ellis continues to operate as a commercial marina with appropriate access, parking, and facilities for commercial operations.</p>	<p>Coastal Waters Commission, Planning</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>**</p>
<p>5.4b Promote “clean marina” practices to protect water quality and marine habitat.</p>	<p>Coastal Waters Commission</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>*</p>
<p>5.4c Continue funding and staffing for the Harbormaster and Beach Manager positions.</p>	<p>City Council</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>*</p>
<p>5.5 Develop and/or maintain cooperative relationships with neighboring communities, regional and state partners, and advocacy groups to protect natural resources.</p>			

5.5a Continue participating in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect, and improve water quality	City Administrator	Ongoing	*
5.5b Participate in regional planning and regulatory efforts to manage and protect shared critical resources.	City Administrator	Ongoing	*
5.5c Support regional Saco Bay management planning and implementation efforts.	City Administrator	Ongoing	*
5.6 Preserve and protect our historic and archeological resources to the greatest extent practicable.			
5.6a Require subdivision and non-residential developers to take appropriate measures to protect known historic archeological sites and areas sensitive to prehistoric archeology.	Planning, Historic Preservation Commission	Near-term	*
5.6b Amend land use ordinances to require the Planning Board to incorporate information provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission into their review process. Provide training for Board members to understand and apply standards appropriately.	Planning, Historic Preservation Commission	Near-term	**
5.6c Assess need for intensive-level architectural survey work based on previously completed reconnaissance-level surveys citywide, especially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown West neighborhood • Camp Ellis neighborhood • Saco River watershed 	Historic Preservation Commission	Near-term	**
6. <i>Promote health and well-being</i> by shaping our growth to increase walkability, access to nature, and similar qualities that foster wellness throughout a lifetime and for people of all abilities.			

6.1 Promote and maintain existing parks, trails, and open spaces.			
6.1a Create a Parks, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan to identify and plan for changing needs, outline future projects, and address funding for maintenance.	Parks and Recreation, Conservation Commission	Mid-term	** Consultant
6.1b Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails. Connect with regional trail systems where possible.	Parks and Recreation, Conservation Commission	Ongoing	** Saco Bay Trails
6.1c Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.	Parks and Recreation, Conservation Commission	Ongoing	** Saco Valley Land Trust
6.1d Continue community outreach to promote existing parks, trails, and open spaces with residents to encourage use and caretaking.	Conservation Commission, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board	Ongoing	*
6.2 Enhance public access to the Saco River and Saco Bay.			
6.2a Expand recreational use of the Saco River by installing a non-motorized boat launch upriver from dams at Saco Island.	Parks and Recreation	Near-term	** to ***
6.2b Protect major points of physical and visual access to Saco Bay and the Saco River by working with local property owners, land trusts, and others.	Coastal Waters Commission	Ongoing	*
6.2c Expand and improve RiverWalk.	Parks and Recreation, Water Resource Recovery	Near-term	** to ***

6.3 Expand the Recreation Complex to meet the evolving needs of Saco residents.			
6.3a Conduct a community-wide survey to understand needs of different demographics. Consider population trends when evaluating results.	Parks and Recreation	Mid-term	**
6.3b Identify programming changes that can be implemented within existing facility. Identify physical improvements needed to accommodate additional programs or needs.	Parks and Recreation	Mid-term	** to ***
6.4 Promote more housing, commercial development, and public facilities such as schools and services in walkable mixed-use neighborhoods that are served by sidewalks, transit, and bicycle facilities to support a variety of active transportation modes.	Planning, Economic Development	Ongoing	**
6.5 Continue implementing recommendations of the “Age Friendly Community Action Plan”. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore and prioritize recommendations for transportation, outdoor spaces and buildings, housing, community support and health services, social participation, communication and information. 	Planning, Public Works, Communications	Ongoing	* to ** Age Friendly Saco
6.6 Develop and provide educational materials explaining the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property.	Parks and Recreation Advisory Board	Near-term	*
7. <i>Build resiliency</i> to adapt to future changes and protect our community by committing to sustainable practices that reduce our environmental impact.			
7.1 Develop capacity to adapt and respond to various climate change impacts.			

<p>7.1a Develop and implement a Climate Vulnerability and Adaptation Plan to guide action, including decisions to proactively protect areas from climate change-related or other environmental impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximize funding opportunities such as Maine’s Community Action Grants to plan and implement climate adaptation and sustainability strategies 	<p>Planning, Water Resource Recovery, City Administrator</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>** to *** Consultant</p>
<p>7.1b Implement a resolution to mitigate erosion and increased storm-driven risks at Camp Ellis.</p>	<p>City Administrator, Shoreline Commission</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>*** Army Corps of Engineers</p>
<p>7.1c Identify at-risk properties and assets for targeted adaptation and education campaigns.</p>	<p>Planning, Public Works</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>**</p>
<p>7.1d Incorporate historic assets and buildings into flood risk vulnerability assessments and provide educational resources to property owners.</p>	<p>Historic Preservation Commission</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>*</p>
<p>7.2 Promote energy efficiency and carbon neutral energy generation.</p>			
<p>7.2a Develop and implement a Climate Action Plan.</p>	<p>Planning, Water Resource Recovery, City Administrator</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>** to *** Consultant</p>
<p>7.2b Adopt a science-based target municipal greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction goal.</p>	<p>City Council, Energy and Sustainability Committee</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>**</p>
<p>7.3 Continue advancing a “One Water” approach to managing the urban watershed and reducing potable water use.</p>			
<p>7.3a Coordinate with Maine Water and Saco’s Public Works and Water Resource Recovery Department (WRRD) to promote a “One Water”</p>	<p>Water Resource Recovery</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>**</p>

approach and implement projects that help achieve goals.			
7.3b Promote green stormwater management strategies for new development and improvements to existing facilities.	Public Works, Planning	Ongoing	*
7.3c Locate and design open space to serve multiple functions (stormwater mitigation, native habitat, recreation, climate resilience, etc).	Parks and Recreation, Public Works, Water Resource Recovery	Ongoing	** to ***
7.3d Provide educational resources to building owners about benefits of reducing indoor water use by replacing inefficient fixtures.	Water Resource Recovery, Energy and Sustainability Committee	Near-term	*
7.4 Promote sustainable construction techniques in new development.			
7.4a Provide incentives for projects designed to meet or exceed green building standards.	Planning, Energy and Sustainability Committee	Mid-term	**
7.4b Provide educational resources to building owners about energy efficiency benefits and available incentives.	Energy and Sustainability Committee	Near-term	* Efficiency Maine Saving energy, reducing energy costs, and improving energy conservation
7.4c Promote solar-ready guidelines for new construction.	Planning, Energy and Sustainability Committee	Near-term	*
7.5 Reduce waste sent to landfills by increasing participation in recycling and composting programs.	Solid Waste Advisory Committee	Near-term	**
7.6 Establish a community resource database to track grant and funding opportunities for residents and	Energy and Sustainability Committee	Near-term	*

developers to implement sustainability innovation projects in the city.			
7.7 Increase awareness of climate change impacts among residents, business owners, and developers.			
7.7a Work with SMPDC, Saco Schools, community organizations, and other stakeholders to provide educational material.	Energy and Sustainability Committee	Near-term	*
7.7b Provide annual public updates on the City’s proactive steps to enhance resiliency.	Energy and Sustainability Committee	Ongoing	*
7.8 Increase economic resiliency through diversification of the local job base.			
7.8a Identify partner organizations to provide skills training for residents to adapt to changing employer needs and new technologies.	Economic Development	Near-term	** to ***
7.9 Build social capital among residents through community programming and events, gathering spaces, etc.	Parks and Recreation	Ongoing	* to ** Saco Main Street, Age Friendly Saco, Saco Schools,
7.10 Work with SMPDC’s Sustainability and Resilience Program to develop a city assessment and integrate into regional resilience and sustainability programs.	Planning, Water Resource Recovery, City Administrator	Near-term	* to ** SMPDC
8. <i>Invest in our schools and infrastructure</i> in ways that are fiscally responsible and sustainable, environmentally resilient and sustainable, and support the growth our community wants. Ensure that public expenditure decisions are evaluated through a sustainability lens.			
8.1 Align public infrastructure investment with identified growth, economic development, environmental, transportation, and other City goals.			

<p>8.1a Identify capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public services to accommodate Saco’s anticipated growth, changing demographics, and economic development priorities.</p>	<p>All departments, City Council</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>**</p>
<p>8.1b Develop a transparent evaluation process for proposed capital projects to prioritize improvements based on factors such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • filling in gaps in existing networks/services, • minimizing new long-term operations/maintenance expenses for the City • maximizing other public and private funding resources • resilience criteria to ensure that municipal expenditures and investments are protected to the maximum practicable extent from flood hazards and sea level rise • ability to leverage previous public investment or catalyze additional private investment • adherence to policies expressed in this Plan 	<p>Public Works, Finance, Planning</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>**</p>
<p>8.1c Locate new public facilities comprising at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas.</p>	<p>City Council</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>* to ***</p>
<p>8.1d Coordinate any future water and sewer service extensions with the Future Land Use plan.</p>	<p>Water Resource Recovery</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>* to ***</p>
<p>8.2 Implement green building practices in public projects to reduce energy costs and other long-term operations expenses.</p>	<p>City Council, Code Enforcement, Energy and Sustainability Committee</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>* to **</p>

<p>8.3 Invest in Saco Schools to modernize facilities by maximizing State funding opportunities.</p>			
<p>8.3a Construct new school facilities that provide the most cost effective, efficient, and holistic systemwide solution to the community’s current and anticipated students’ needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select school site location that advances comprehensive plan’s goals, policies, and strategies—including walkability and directing growth toward areas served by existing utilities • Incorporate green building practices to reduce ongoing operations expenses and create healthy learning environments • Maximize State funding assistance 	<p>Saco Schools, City Council</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>***</p>
<p>8.3b Complete critical repairs and modernization efforts at all school facilities.</p>	<p>Saco Schools, City Council</p>	<p>Long-term</p>	<p>***</p>
<p>8.4 Invest in the long-term viability of the Water Resource Recovery Facility to increase resiliency to sea level rise and storm intensity threats.</p>	<p>Water Resource Recovery</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>***</p>
<p>8.5 Invest in City services to keep pace with growth and maintain service levels.</p>			
<p>8.5a Evaluate public safety staffing levels and equipment needs to maintain service quality, and fund necessary improvements.</p>	<p>City Administrator, department heads</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>**</p>
<p>8.5b Construct satellite Public Safety Facility in Portland Road corridor.</p>	<p>Fire, City Council</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>***</p>
<p>8.5c Relocate Police Headquarters to larger facility outside of flood hazard zone.</p>	<p>Police, City Council</p>	<p>Long-term</p>	<p>***</p>

8.5d Support Dyer Library programming and physical space needs to continue providing high-quality services to Saco residents.	City Council , Saco Museum/Dyer Library Board of Trustees	Mid-term	** to ***
9. <i>Strengthen our City's fiscal position</i> for long-term financial stability to support the services and investment that enable our community to offer a high quality of life.			
9.1 Link the annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process to Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and strategies to demonstrate alignment.			
9.1a Identify Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and strategies that support investment proposals or decisions. Make these goals, policies, and strategies explicit during review and discussion of capital improvements.	All departments	Near-term	**
9.1b Prioritize investments that support Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and strategies.	City Council , Public Works	Near-term	* to ***
9.2 Continue financing existing and future facilities and services in fiscally prudent, cost-effective ways.			
9.2a Explore grant funding opportunities to assist with capital investments.	All departments	Ongoing	**
9.2b Maximize state and federal funding sources when used.	City Council	Ongoing	*
9.2c Consider lifecycle costs and ongoing operations/maintenance requirements.	Finance , Public Works, Water Resource Recovery, Parks and Recreation, Police, Fire	Ongoing	**
9.3 Complete a citywide property tax revaluation to appraise all real property to its full and fair value to support the City's long-term financial health.	Assessor	Near-term	**

9.4 Monitor effects of impact fee changes and re-assess as needed.			
9.4a Discuss impact fees with developers and property owners to understand how changes affected them and their decision-making.	Planning , Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Water Resource Recovery, Fire	Near-term	**
9.4b Ensure impact fees align with community growth goals while continuing to provide necessary funding for public infrastructure.	Finance , Water Resource Recovery, Parks and Recreation	Near-term	*
9.5 Conduct fiscal cost/benefit analyses for proposed developments over a threshold value to be determined—including both housing and commercial developments—to identify the full scope of direct and indirect costs and benefits to City finances.	Finance , Planning	Ongoing	**
9.6 Explore opportunities to increase cost savings and efficiencies by working with neighboring communities to plan for and finance shared services or adjacent capital investments.	City Administrator	Ongoing	* to **
10. Use the <i>Future Land Use plan</i> to guide policy decisions and advance the goals of Saco’s Comprehensive Plan.			
10.1 Support the locations, types, scales, and intensities of land uses described in the comprehensive plan’s goals, policies, and strategies.			
10.1a Clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development through proactive neighborhood and corridor planning initiatives.	Planning	Near-term	** Consultant
10.1b Refer to comprehensive plan goals, policies, and strategies in staff referrals to the Planning Board to identify how proposals support or conflict with stated objectives.	Planning	Ongoing	*

<p>10.1c Provide the code enforcement officer with the tools, training, and support necessary to enforce land use regulations, and ensure that the Code Enforcement Officer is certified in accordance with 30-A M.R.S.A. §4451.</p>	<p>City Administrator</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>* to **</p>
<p>10.2 Support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas.</p>			
<p>10.2a Include anticipated municipal capital investments in the Capital Investment Plan needed to support desired land uses in growth areas.</p>	<p>City Council</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>* to ***</p>
<p>10.2b Direct a minimum of 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments into designated growth areas identified in the Future Land Use Plan.</p>	<p>City Council, Public Works</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>***</p>
<p>10.2c Expand the Planning department’s capacity to undertake long-range planning efforts to advance comprehensive plan priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore grant funding for consultants or short-term staff hires to undertake specific planning initiatives. • Continue pursuing technical assistance from GPCOG/PACTS to complete transportation, land use, and resiliency planning projects. • Consider cross-training other City staff to shift some administrative planning functions and allow more planning staff time for long-range planning projects. 	<p>City Administrator, City Council, Planning</p>	<p>Near-term</p>	<p>** to ***</p>

10.3 Ensure permitting procedures are streamlined and efficient, especially to encourage private investment in growth areas.			
10.3a Maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures. Solicit feedback from applicants on potential improvements to the system.	Planning	Ongoing	* to **
10.3b Explore streamlining development permitting procedures in growth areas to further incentivize private investment in these areas.	Planning , Plan Development Review Committee	Near-term	* to **
10.4 Protect critical natural areas from the negative impacts of development.			
10.4a Maintain protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources.	Planning Board, City Council, Conservation Commission	Ongoing	*
10.5 Coordinate Saco’s land use strategies with other local and regional land use planning efforts.			
10.5a Meet with planning staff in neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.	Planning	Mid-term	* to **
10.6 Monitor implementation progress on a regular basis			
10.6a Direct the Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC) to track progress on implementing the Future Land Use Plan on an annual basis and provide updates to the Planning Board.	LRPC , Planning	Ongoing	* to **
10.6b Track new development in Saco annually by type and location relative to designated growth areas.	Planning , Assessor, Code Enforcement	Ongoing	* to **

<p>10.6c Every five years, direct the LRPC, Planning Board and City staff to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the implementation status of the comprehensive plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the percent of municipal growth-related capital investments made in growth areas • Identify the location and amount of new development over the past five years, relative to designated growth, limited growth, and rural areas • Identify the amount of critical natural resources protected through easements, acquisitions, or other methods • Identify which strategies have been accomplished, which are in-progress, and which have not started yet • Discuss and recommend changes needed to better align City policies and regulations with the comprehensive plan’s goals, policies, and strategies. 	<p>LRPC, Planning</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>	<p>** to ***</p>
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Capital Investment Plan

The Capital Investment Plan (CIP) is the City’s long-range plan for spending on major infrastructure projects. Saco maintains a five-year CIP that is updated annually to reflect completed projects and emerging needs. The CIP is intended to be a planning document for the departments and a coordination and scheduling document for the entire city organization. It assists in coordinating the schedule of large expenditures over a period of years for better fund management and cash management purposes. The CIP helps to reconcile the timing of projects with the availability of financial, manpower and equipment resources.

Public investment should be aligned with comprehensive plan goals and policies so that the City is intentional about its growth and maintenance expenditures and is conscious of long-term fiscal impacts.

It is critical to remember important rules of capital planning:

- Annual operating surpluses generate the cash reserves to help pay for capital projects. Is the City bringing in more revenue than it is spending annually?
- Capital projects incur ongoing maintenance and operations costs for which the City must budget by collecting more revenue, reducing expenses, and/or reallocating funding.
- Borrowing can be used to help pay for important projects without relying exclusively on cash reserves. Borrowing is a commitment to repay funds over time, meaning that the City must have future operating surpluses to pay for the debt service. It is an important tool that must be used wisely to achieve goals without creating future obligations that would limit spending on other priorities.

5 Year Capital Improvement Plan 2022-2026 (as Approved)

Actual Funding by Asset Group

Asset Group	Life Cycle Value	Life Cycle	Funding Goals	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Facility	52,298,350	75	697,311	1,339,194	1,062,046	1,046,258	1,029,532	1,015,333
Utility	54,235,740	75	723,143	246,608	1,307,010	547,010	147,010	797,010
Grounds	14,170,000	50	283,400	419,944	393,841	363,179	297,518	166,967
ROW	128,666,836	75	1,715,558	2,295,075	2,726,625	3,048,850	2,024,375	1,584,112
TOTAL	249,370,926		3,419,412	4,300,820	5,489,522	5,005,297	3,498,435	3,563,422

Actual Plan vs. Asset Treatment Goals (excludes New Assets)

TOTAL PLAN	AMP Goal	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	5 Year Plan
Update	4%	107,010	167,010	107,010	107,010	107,010	3%
Rehabilitate	15%	1,317,500	1,242,500	1,312,500	1,242,500	1,242,500	30%
Replace	77%	2,101,310	2,755,012	2,960,787	2,018,925	2,213,912	57%
Enhance/Grow	4%	400,000	750,000	625,000	0	0	10%
TOTAL		3,925,820	4,914,522	5,005,297	3,368,435	3,563,422	

Sustainable Funding

Source: Fiscal Year 2022 Approved Budget

Appendices 1-13: Existing Conditions

The following appendices present existing conditions, trends, and analyses as required by the State of Maine’s requirements for comprehensive plans. The information contained in these appendices informed the development of policies and strategies to help Saco achieve its vision.

Click on the appendix title below to jump to that section.

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1. Historic and Archaeological Resources

Analyses

(1) Are historic patterns of settlement still evident in the community?

A community's historic properties provide a tangible link to the past and help create a sense of identity and stability. The former mills on Saco Island and blocks of historic homes near downtown's Main Street are perhaps the most visible daily reminders of an important era in the city's history. Other historic patterns are still evident throughout the community, as can be witnessed through nine known prehistoric archaeological sites, twenty-three documented historic archaeological sites, nine National Register of Historic Places sites and two National Register Historic Districts.

(2) What protective measures currently exist for historic and archaeological resources and are they effective?

Saco has Certified Local Government status with both the State and Federal governments which enables grant applications for historic projects within the city. Article XIX of the City's Zoning Ordinance contains provisions for the Historic Preservation Overlay District, which was revised in 2019 as part of the citywide Zoning Ordinance Revision, The Shoreland Zoning Overlay District also refers to the protection of archaeological and historic resources.

The Historic Preservation Commission issues certificates of appropriateness for any new construction, demolition, signage, and certain exterior renovations for 225 properties within the Saco Historic District that comprises downtown. Saco's Historic District Guidelines, created in 2010, need to be updated to reflect the latest best practices for preservation and new construction.

These measures are generally effective, but some processes should be improved. The current Historic District Guidelines have some material requirements that add cost to potential repairs and improvements which may cause necessary projects to be delayed or cancelled. While intended to protect the historic character of the neighborhood, requirements that impose significant costs can prevent owners from making repairs to maintain these important historic resources.

(3) Do local site plan and/or subdivision regulations require applicants proposing development in areas that may contain historic or archaeological resources to conduct a survey for such resources?

Saco's Site Plan Review Ordinance requires that the existing conditions site plan identify historically significant structures or features and archaeological resources on the site. Proposed development activity on or adjacent to sites listed on, or eligible to be listed on, the National Register of Historic Places must be submitted to both the Maine and Saco Historic Preservation Commissions.

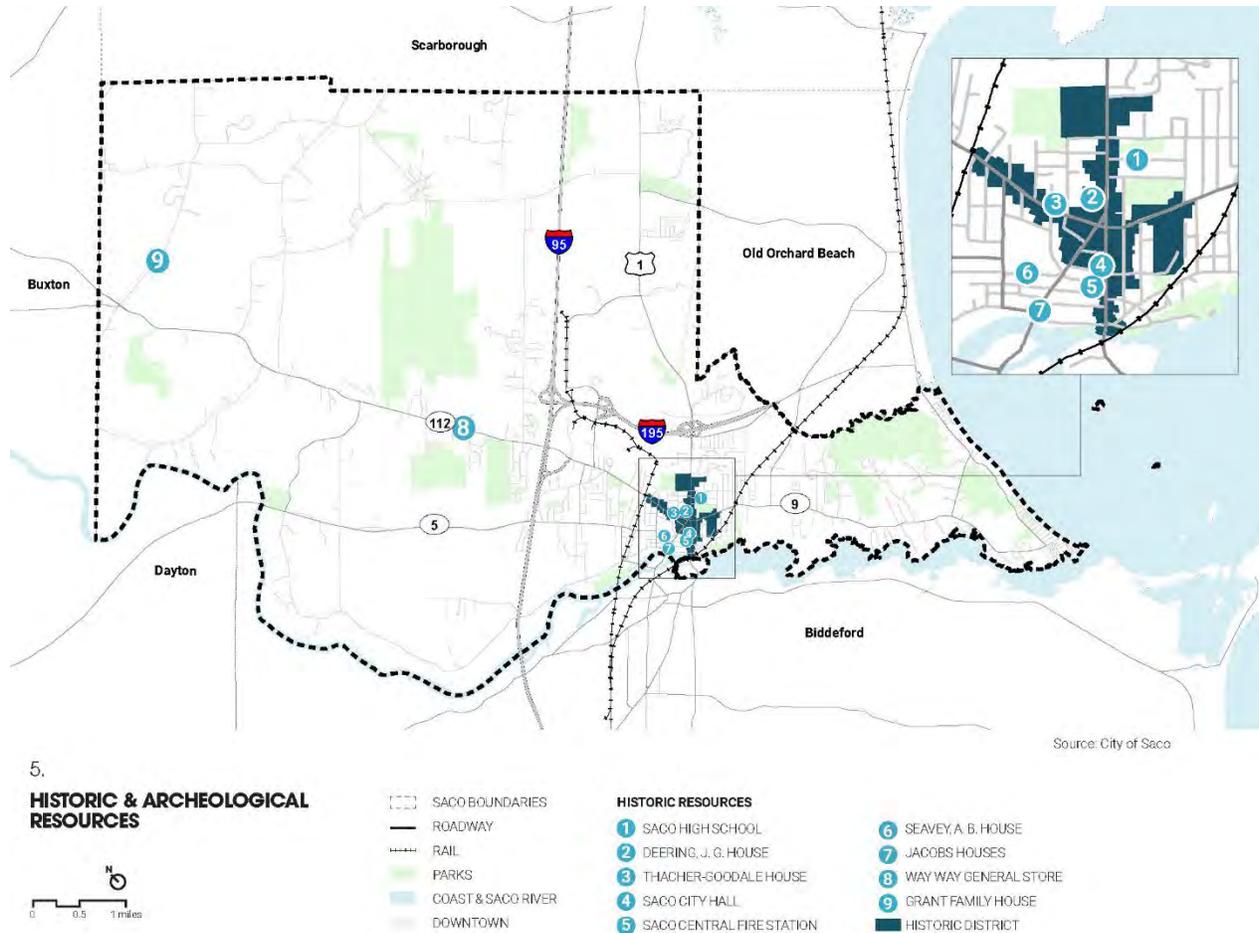
The Subdivision Ordinance requires that the preliminary plan note the location of any identified historic and/or archaeological resources and provide a description of those features. If the proposed subdivision contains any historic or archeological sites, then those areas must be protected by covenants and management plans.

(4) Have significant historic resources fallen into disrepair, and are there ways the community can provide incentives to preserve their value as an historical resource?

The A.B. Seavy House, located at 90 Temple Street and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was damaged by fire in 2012. The structure was exposed to the elements for years and deteriorating. The City acquired the building in 2016 after a tax foreclosure, and in 2020 approved a sale to the Biddeford Housing Authority to restore the building and create four new apartments.

Condition and Trends

(1) The community’s Comprehensive Planning Historic Preservation Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Historic Preservation Commission, and the Office, or their designees.



(2) An outline of the community's history, including a brief description of historic settlement patterns and events contributing to the development and character of the community and its surroundings.

Saco’s history is briefly outlined below in four epochs.

Indigenous peoples

- From documentary evidence and preliminary archaeological work, it is clear that the lower Saco River was a center of Native American activity, both in prehistoric times and during the contact period (the time of initial encounters between Europeans and indigenous people in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). From the writings of the French explorer, Samuel de Champlain, as well as other French and English observers, we know that there was a series of large native villages near the mouth of the Saco River in the first decade of the seventeenth century. A 1605 map drawn by Champlain shows a large Native American village near the present-day campus of the University of New England in Biddeford. The map also depicts native cornfields on both sides of the river. The name "Saco" itself is attributed to the Abenaki people's word for "flowing out" or "outlet" and to the word "Sawacotuck" meaning "mouth of the tidal stream."

- The Saco Museum owns a collection of Native American artifacts which were discovered at various places throughout the City. Some of these artifacts may be as much as 4-5,000 years old. There is evidence that indigenous peoples lived in several areas of what is now Saco during the 1600's and 1700's. The most notable location was Saco Island, which was known in colonial times as Indian Island. Few contact period sites have been found in Maine, so these sites along the Saco River may provide important data for understanding early Indian- European interaction.
- According to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), there are nine known prehistoric archaeological sites in Saco as of September 2020, four of which are located in the Saco River floodplain. Two are located on Goosefare Brook and wetlands near Ferry Beach, and another is located on Cascade Brook. The MHPC recommends that the valley and floodplain of the Saco River and tributary drainages need survey work. Smaller drainages (first or second order) flowing through sandy soils, and marsh or bog margins in sandy soils also need survey prior to any development.

European settlement and early economic activity

- By the early seventeenth century, the safe harbor and abundant natural resources attracted European visitors. English occupation began as early as 1618, when Captain Richard Vines and his expedition spent the winter at Winter Harbor (Biddeford Pool). Starting in 1630, just ten years after the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, the mouth of the Saco became a center of English settlement which included fisherman, traders, lumberjacks, and farmers. By 1636 at least 37 families had settled in the area. Thus Saco became one of the first English settlements in northern New England.
- The little settlement grew gradually throughout the seventeenth century, until it was abandoned in 1690 at the outbreak of King William's War. It was not until the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 that any significant effort at resettlement was made in Saco. After 1713, the Saco side of the river quickly returned to prosperity as a farming, fishing, and lumbering community.
- The fortunes of the small settlement changed in 1716, when William Pepperell, a young merchant from Kittery, purchased 5000 acres and timber rights to an additional 4500 acres on the east side of the Saco River. The Eastern settlement's principal roads, Main Street and the Portland, Buxton, and Ferry Roads, were laid out in 1718.
- The settlers on the eastern bank separated from Biddeford in 1762 and named the new village Pepperellborough in honor of the towns' benefactor. The town grew rapidly in size and wealth as farming, lumbering, and ship building bloomed and prospered. By the time of the revolution, the growth of international commerce in the town required the government to establish a customs house near the wharves. In 1805, the town dropped the weighty and difficult to spell name, Pepperellborough, in favor of the simpler ancient name, Saco.
- The 19th century brought modern industrial capital development to Saco. The first corporation, a nail factory, was established in 1811. The factory was such a paying venture that it was soon followed in 1825 by the first of many cotton milling factories
- The MHPC has documented 23 historic archaeological sites in Saco as of October 2020. These include the Stratton's Island settlement which dates to the mid 1600's, several schooner wrecks, and residential structures, farmsteads, a sawmill, cemetery, and other resources. No professional surveys for historic archaeological sites have been conducted to date in Saco. Future archaeological survey should focus on the identification of potentially significant resources associated with the city's 17th- and 18th-century maritime, agricultural, residential, and industrial heritage.

Industrialization and manufacturing

- With the establishment of the Saco Iron Works in 1811, the Industrial Revolution arrived in Saco. In 1826, a seven story cotton mill was constructed followed by additional mills in both Saco and Biddeford. In the next 25 years, Saco could boast of dozens of industries from cotton mills and machine shops, to iron foundries and cigar factories. With the development of massive cotton

mills on the western falls of the river, the sister cities of Biddeford and Saco became leaders of manufacturing in the industrial age by 1850. During this first half of the 19th century, Saco acquired much of the urban form that remains today as the hallmark of the community.

- Saco and Biddeford's role as a major textile manufacturing center continued to grow during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The second half of the 19th century saw an influx of European and French-Canadian immigrants that added cultural diversity to the community. By the turn of the century, Saco's population had grown to over 6,000 while Biddeford had over 16,000 residents.
- In the early years of the twentieth century, Saco and Biddeford continued to grow slowly while maintaining their roles as manufacturing centers. The increased mobility of the community's residents led to the spreading out of the City's residential neighborhoods. During this same period, the Camp Ellis - Kinney Shores area began to develop as a summer colony.

Post-WWII to today

- Following the Second World War, Saco underwent a second major transformation. The closing of the York Mills in 1958 brought the textile manufacturing era to a close. The increase in private automobiles brought further decentralization of the City's residential neighborhoods. Route One began to emerge as a commercial strip. And finally, in 1987, the City's role as a "mill town" disappeared with the virtual abandonment of Factory Island as an employment center.
- During the 1980s, commercial development along Route One accelerated, efforts to revitalize Factory Island as a mixed use development were begun, residential development continued both as multifamily housing in the core and, increasingly, as scattered low density housing across the City, and the City continued to develop its Industrial Park to replace the jobs lost with the collapse of the region's traditional industries. Saco's proximity to the employment and retail centers of Greater Portland began to influence the pattern of residential development as the economic relationship between Saco and the Portland Metropolitan Area grew.
- In the past decades, the area's economy has continued to grow and diversify. The City has successfully undertaken the development of multi-phase industrial and business parks. Downtown Saco is revitalizing and the former mills on Factory Island have been redeveloped as new housing and office space.
- In the first two decades of the 21st century, Saco's residential population has continued to grow at a steady pace.

(3) An inventory of the location, condition, and use of any historical or archaeological resource that is of local importance.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation. The National Park Service, a part of the Department of the Interior, administers the program. Properties listed on the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. Among other benefits, inclusion on the list makes a site eligible for federal tax benefits, consideration in the planning of federal or federally assisted projects, and qualification for federal assistance for historic preservation when funds are available.

As of October 2020, Saco had nine sites and two districts included on the National Register:

National Register of Historic Places

1. Thacher-Goodale House, 121 North St.
2. A.B. Seavy House, 90 Temple St.
3. Saco City Hall, 300 Main St.
4. J.G. Deering House, 371 Main St.
5. Jacobs Houses and Store, 9-17 Elm St.
6. Old Saco High School, 34 Spring St.
7. Grant Family House, 72 Grant Rd.

8. Way-Way General Store, 93 Buxton Rd.
9. Saco Central Fire Station, 14 Thornton Ave.

National Historic Districts

1. Saco Historic District
2. Biddeford-Saco Mills Historic District

Saco’s Historic Preservation Commission is currently developing a National Register application for a Burying Ground dating to 1631, the oldest in York County and perhaps the oldest in the state. The neighborhood immediately west of the Saco Historic District has been previously surveyed and considered for inclusion in the district but no action has been taken yet.

As of October 2020, there are 23 historic archeological sites documented in Saco:

Site Name	Site #	Site Type	Periods of Significance
Goosefare Brook #1	ME 379-001	domestic	c.1800
York Hill	ME 379-002	domestic, mansion	1782 on
Mercy and Hope	ME 379-003	wreck, schooner	1869
Albion	ME 379-004	wreck, schooner	1869
Nellie Florence	ME 379-005	wreck, schooner	December 5, 1886
Lewis Avenue fill	ME 379-006	dump, industrial	ca. 1850-1930?
Stratton’s Island Settlement	ME 379-007	settlement	c.1630 - c.1676
Washington B. Thomas	ME 379-008	wreck, schooner	1903
John Scammon House	ME 379-009	domestic	ca. 1730-1780?
Scamman Sisters Homestead	ME 379-010	domestic	1800 to 1860s
Skillly Brook Campsite	ME 379-011	campground	second half of the 20th century
Alvin McKenney Farmhouse	ME 379-012	farmstead	ca 1850 to ca 1970
Foxwell Mill	ME 379-013	mill, sawmill	Constructed ca. 1636-1675 inferred from documentary evidence
Cascade Slate Quarry	ME 379-014	quarry, slate	Operated 3 years during the 1870s
M.J. Soley	ME 379-015	wreck, schooner	December 26, 1899
Eva	ME 379-016	wreck, schooner	December 4, 1869

Site Name	Site #	Site Type	Periods of Significance
A. McKinney	ME 379-017	domestic	
unmarked burial	ME 379-018	cemetery	estimated to 1700s or early 1800s
Henry Simpson Farmstead	ME 379-019	farmstead	ca. 1840-1940
Uncharted Wreck S01	ME 379-020	wreck, unidentified	No information available as identified by sonar.
Uncharted Wreck S02	ME 379-021	wreck, unidentified	Unknown as was found by multi-beam sonar survey.
Brickyard ship wreck	ME 379-022	wreck, ship	Based on potential association with unidentified brickyard at same location.
Sea Lane Brickyard	ME 379-023	brickyard	Based on preponderance of brickyards in mid to latter 19th century. Not on county or atlas maps.

Source: Maine Historic Preservation Commission

As of September 2020, there are nine known prehistoric archaeological sites in Saco. Four are located in the Saco River floodplain, two on Goosefare Brook and wetlands near Ferry Beach, one on Cascade Brook, and one on an offshore island.

(4) A brief description of threats to local historic resource and to those of state and national significance as identified by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

Saco has made considerable progress and significant investment in preserving its heritage. More historic preservation work remains however.

- Houses in the seaside neighborhoods are subject to increasing storm intensity and frequency. The Historic Preservation Commission received a grant in 2021 to conduct an architectural survey in the Camp Ellis area to provide property-specific recommendations for improvements to enhance climate resiliency. These recommendations will provide valuable guidance to private property owners whose buildings are at risk of storm and sea level rise impacts. The findings may also be useful for houses in the Saco Historic District that are located in the flood zone. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission also offers educational resources on climate change and historic properties.
- Many property owners in the Saco Historic District are “land rich but cash poor”, meaning they have valuable properties but lack the financial resources to complete historically appropriate repairs and maintenance. As a result, some aging structures are not as well-maintained as they could be. A review of the Historic District Design Guidelines, an inventory of high-risk properties, outreach to property owners, and identification of funding assistance can help address this threat.
- The City should consider where intensive level surveys are warranted for additional historic properties worthy of preservation and/or eligibility for the National Register, based on the reconnaissance-level architectural survey work that has been completed throughout city limits.
- Sites in the flood plain of rivers and water bodies are at risk of increased flooding events due to climate change. To ensure that important archaeological resources are not lost, Saco should consider archaeological survey work.

2. Water Resources

Analyses

(1) Are there point sources (direct discharges) of pollution in the community? If so, is the community taking steps to eliminate them?

Saco has relatively clean water, and when a point source is detected, applicable departments immediately follow up with appropriate remediation or enforcement action. Only a few sections of the many miles of streams and rivers in Saco do not attain their designated water quality classification standards. In many of the areas not meeting the standards, sources of pollution have been identified. The City is continuing to work to improve the water quality of these segments.

Since passage of the Clean Water Act, control of point sources of pollution has increased dramatically. The City will continue to work with the MDEP on the NPDES permit. Saco should continue to enforce performance standards that control stormwater runoff, reduce erosion, and minimizes the migration of non-point pollution and rely on NPDES permit and Chapter 500 for areas one acre or larger.

The Saco Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Abatement Master Plan has been largely implemented. There are two remaining CSO's located Downtown that will be addressed to complete the plan. The cleaning and repainting of boats presents the potential for contaminated runoff. The City should monitor the compliance of boatyards and marinas with state requirements to control this runoff

(2) Are there non-point sources of pollution? If so, is the community taking steps to eliminate them?

Non-point sources of pollution include urban impervious surface runoff (from parking lots, rooftops, and roads), treated landscapes, and agricultural runoff. These can impact Goosefare Brook, Sawyer Brook, the Cascade Brook Watershed, and the Atlantic Watershed. Implementing low impact development strategies, employing stormwater best management practices, and educating residents and businesses about water quality issues will help reduce non-point sources and improve water quality.

The Goosefare Brook is categorized as an impaired waterbody and requires a higher level of attention with regards to development and other non-point source pollution. Current regulations impose higher standards in this watershed and the City is continuing to work to reduce contaminated runoff. The Goosefare Brook Management Plan was completed in 2016 and identifies a series of restoration projections to improve water quality. The City of Saco was the grantee responsible for implementing Phase I restoration which began in 2017 and was completed in 2020. Public Works administers this DEP-funded grant program for stormwater improvement initiatives to encourage stormwater improvements and help implement more efficient systems. The Phase II restoration workplan was developed in 2020 with Old Orchard Beach as the grantee. Two additional future phases are anticipated to complete improvements to the watershed.

Sawyer Brook is Saco's most urban watershed. Non-point pollution from Saco's streets and parking lots, and chemicals from lawns and gardens makes its way to the Saco River via Sawyer Brook.

Agricultural runoff and non-point pollution are the primary threats to water quality in the Cascade Brook watershed. In the past, septic systems from the dense residential development at the Country Village Mobile Home Park may have posed a threat to groundwater.

The Atlantic Watershed includes the coastline from Old Orchard Beach to Camp Ellis. In addition, the Goosefare and Saco River Watersheds discharge into Atlantic. Development is heavy in these watersheds and issues of point and non-point pollution from residential, commercial and industrial development exist.

(3) How are groundwater and surface water supplies and their recharge areas protected?

Surface water supplies

- The communities of Saco, Biddeford, Old Orchard Beach, and a portion of Scarborough draw their public water supplies from the Saco River, which is also used to supplement local supplies in the Kennebunk-Kennebunkport-Wells Water District. The Saco River Corridor Commission (SRCC) works to ensure compatible development in the river corridor by reviewing proposed projects within 500' of the river or to the edge of the 100-year floodplain if it extends further.
- SRCC has a robust water quality monitoring program with 37 sites along the river. This system tracks a variety of contaminants to identify concerns early. Recent results indicated periods of high phosphorus levels, which could be from agriculture or resource extraction, and elevated E.Coli levels especially in the summer.

Groundwater supplies

- Most Saco residents in North Saco and West Saco rely on groundwater and private wells for their drinking water. Groundwater recharges surface streams and wetlands. For the health of Saco residents and to maintain healthy ecosystems, it is important that groundwater quality be preserved.
- Development and land use can affect water quality in several ways. Improperly functioning septic systems may cause bacteria to contaminate surface or groundwater. Poor agricultural practices can result in nutrient loading to ponds and rivers and chemical pollutants in groundwater. Construction and development create impervious ground surface that can result in faster runoff and erosion, increased transportation of point and non-point pollution to surface waters, and the lowering of the groundwater table. Toxic or hazardous substances can make their way into Saco's water if improperly disposed of or spilled.
- Saco's zoning and subdivision ordinances contain regulations to protect groundwater:
 - Article VII of the subdivision ordinance allows the Planning Board to require a hydrogeologic assessment for proposals in which groundwater quality is a concern. No subdivision is permitted to increase contaminant concentration in groundwater to more than one-half of the Primary Drinking Water Standards or more than the Secondary Drinking Water Standards.
 - The zoning ordinance requires 80,000sf minimum lot area per dwelling unit for unsewered lots in the Rural Conservation district. This is significantly larger than the State's minimum 20,000sf lot size requirement for single family dwelling units (10-144 CMR Ch. 243).
- Most soils in Saco do not have the assimilative capacity to effectively handle the waste generated by dense residential development. The cumulative impact of multiple septic systems in any given area can also impact assimilative capacity and water quality. This further emphasizes the importance of public sewerage availability for future growth.
- When reviewing subdivision plans that will utilize subsurface waste disposal systems, the cumulative impact of multiple septic systems should be accounted for in the subdivision design. The possibility of shared community septic systems should be explored when feasible.
- Saco's mobile home parks rely upon subsurface waste disposal. Blue Haven Mobile Home Park, the more densely developed of the two parks, has a mixture of private and community septic systems. The park is adjacent to Mill Brook. Because of the parks' density of development, its close proximity to a stream, and its location above a groundwater resource, its subsurface waste disposal presents a serious threat to water quality in this area. The 2009 sewer extension has brought capacity very near each park. Plans should be developed to sewer both mobile home parks

(4) Do public works crews and contractors use best management practices to protect water resources in their daily operations (e.g. salt/sand pile maintenance, culvert replacement street sweeping, public works garage operations)?

Public Works crews and contractors employ industry best management practices to protect Saco's water resources. The Public Works Department moved into a new facility in 2020 that helps staff perform vehicle maintenance in better conditions. The salt pile is stored under cover to minimize runoff. School buses are parked on asphalt at the new facility instead of dirt, allowing better management of runoff. Public streets are swept from April through November to prevent sewer and storm drains from clogging and reduce local flooding risks. Best management practices are also required on private construction projects.

(5) Are there opportunities to partner with local or regional advocacy groups that promote water resource protection?

There are several organizations working to protect water resources, primarily focused on the Saco River. The City can strengthen its relationship with the Saco River Corridor Commission (SRCC) and explore a robust partnership with the Saco Watershed Collaborative to support their work promoting water resource protection. The SRCC is a regional planning board created by an act of the Maine Legislature. The Saco Watershed Collaborative is a recently formed organization seeking to engage local governments and citizens, protect water quality, support land conservation and stewardship, and promote low impact development strategies and stormwater best management practices. The Saco Valley Land Trust preserves open space for multiple purposes including water quality protection.

Saco River Corridor Commission

- Established in 1973, the Saco River Corridor Commission (SRCC) is committed "to protect public health, safety, and the quality of life for the State of Maine through the regulation of land and water uses, protection and conservation of the region's unique and exceptional natural resources and through the prevention of impacts caused by incompatible development."
- The SRCC is made up of twenty municipalities within the Saco River watershed. Each has a position for a regular and an alternate member. The commission provides support services to permit applicants, and to municipal officials and private citizens concerned with the Saco River Corridor Act or other environmental matters.

Saco Watershed Collaborative

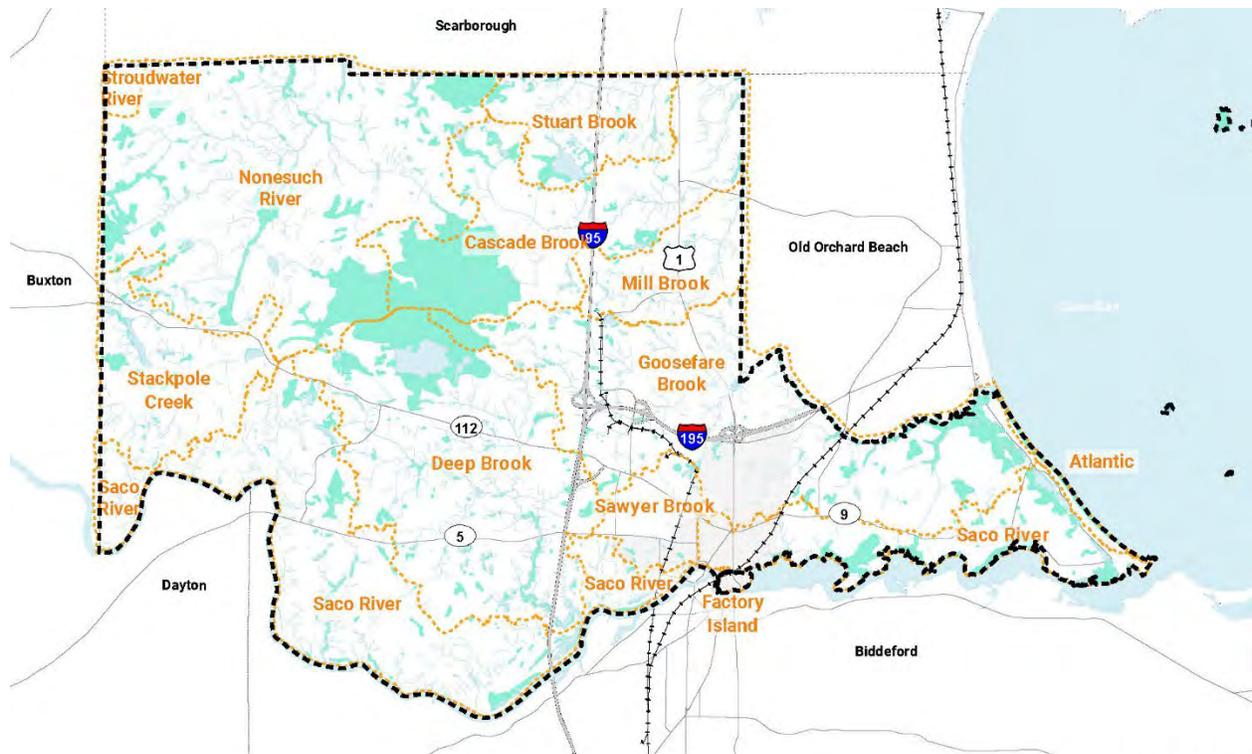
- Source water protection is a priority of the Saco Watershed Collaborative. The Collaborative is a dedicated group of professionals, community members, and scientists working to protect the irreplaceable water resources and benefits that come from the Saco Watershed.
- The University of New England used the results of a 2016 workshop to collaborate with interested groups throughout the watershed to carry the ideas of this meeting forward into the 2017 inaugural year of the Saco Watershed Collaborative. The goal of forming a Saco Watershed Collaborative was to increase the collective impact of a Stewardship Network by working strategically on shared goals.

Saco Valley Land Trust

- The Saco Valley Land Trust (SVLT) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of open space, wildlife habitat, and water quality in Saco, Biddeford, and along the southern portion of the Saco River. The trust owns over 500 acres in Biddeford, Saco, and Buxton, as well as 200 acres of conservation easements.

Conditions and Trends

(1) The community’s Comprehensive Planning Water Resources Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Department of Environmental Protection and the Office, or their designees.



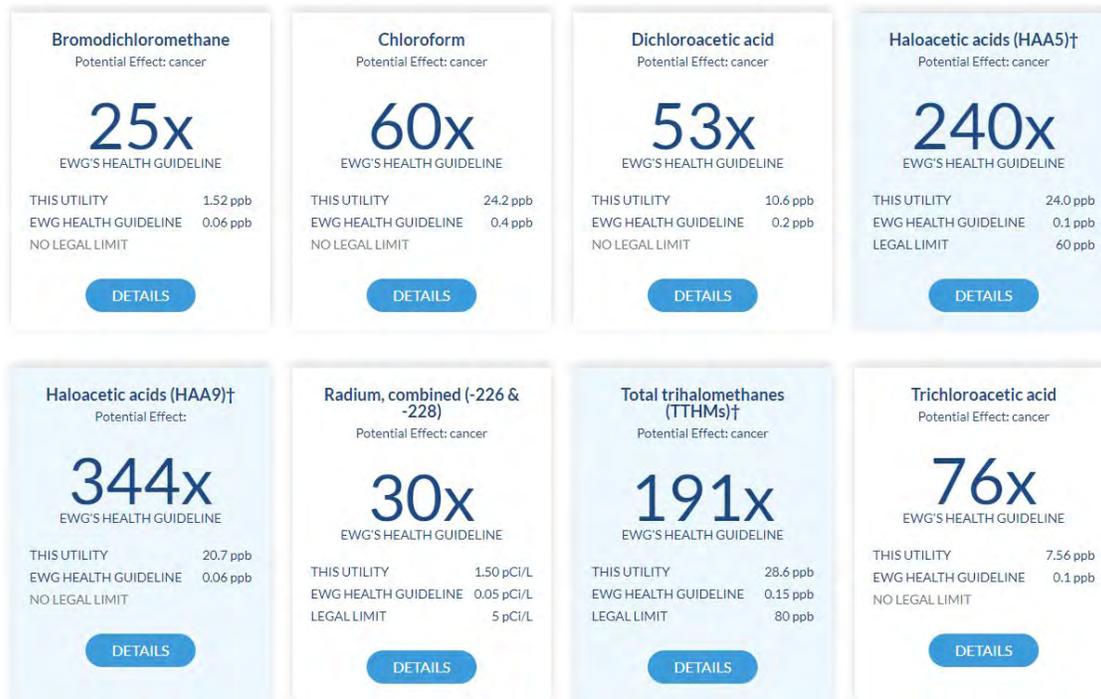
Source: City of Saco

2. WATER RESOURCES



Saco’s public drinking water service provider is Maine Water. In the Maine Water 2020 Water Quality Report for the Biddeford Saco division, drinking water was found to meet all national primary drinking water standards.

While meeting national drinking water standards (as self-reported by the provider, Maine Water), Saco’s public water supply falls short of the latest health guidelines set forth by the Environmental Working Group (EWG). As EWG points out, national drinking water standards have not been updated in two decades and as a result fail to reflect the most up-to-date research on contaminants and their effects. Of 18 total contaminants detected in Saco’s water supply by EWG, 8 exceeded EWG health guidelines, many of which have no established legal limit:

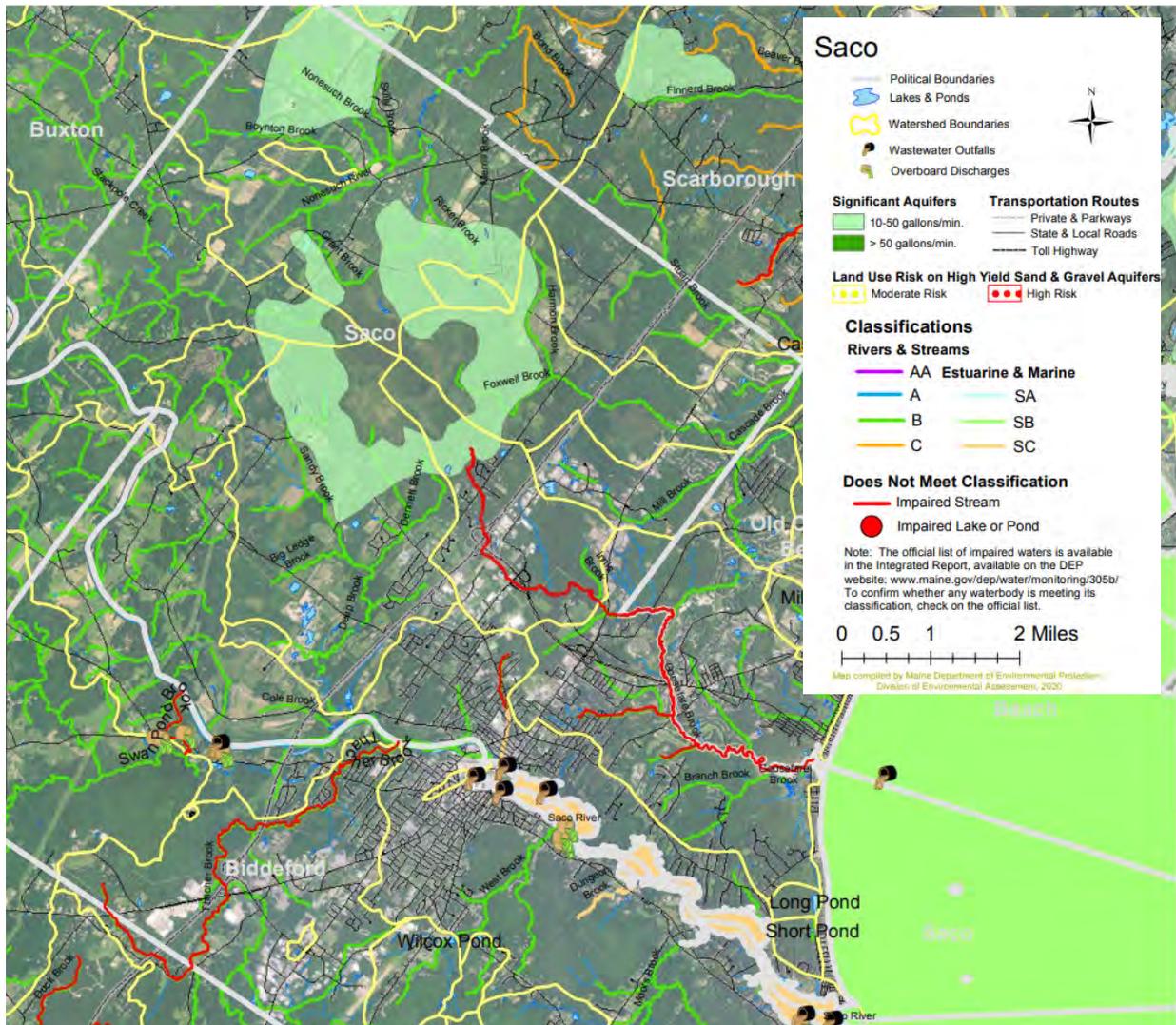


The Maine Drinking Water Program (DWP) evaluated all public water supplies as part of the Source Water Protection Program, to consider how likely contamination of water sources by human activities might be in the future. The assessment considered geology, hydrology, land uses, water testing information, and the extent of land ownership or protection by local ordinance. The most recent source water assessment was completed in 2015 for the Biddeford Saco system and indicated a low risk of significant contamination.

There is one drinking water well in Saco listed by the Maine Public Water Resources Information System: A non-community well at Deep Brook Golf Course (Source ID 25312101). It serves a population of 25, and the status of both its system and facility were most recently rated A.

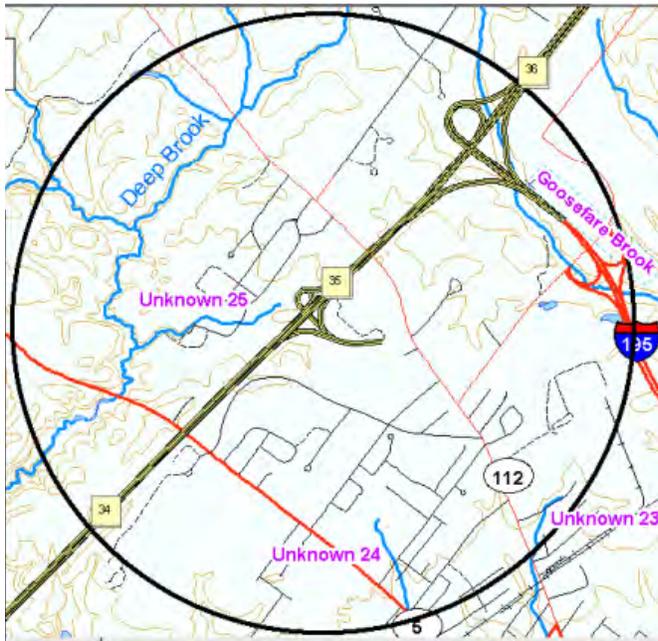
Surface Water and Aquifers

Watersheds, Significant Aquifers, and Impaired Waterbodies



As shown in the map above, Saco has two significant aquifers that are rated at 10-50 gallons per minute. One surrounds much of Saco Heath and underlies segments of Route 112 and Flag Pond Road. Another in the northern corner of the city between Burnham and McKenney Roads in the Stroudwater and Nonesuch River watershed. Saco’s only impaired stream is Goosefare Brook which has a remediation plan in place that is being implemented in phases.

Turnpike Streams, I-95 Exits 35 and 36



Goosefare Brook, Deep Brook, and Phillips Spring are primary surface water bodies located within one mile of Exits 35 and 36 on the Maine Turnpike, with Goosefare Brook being the closest. When intense development occurs near small streams, they are often greatly impacted and their water quality and habitat can become impaired. Exit-related development and surface runoff from the interstate contributes to water contamination. Future construction planned for these interchanges will include water quality protection measures.

Impaired Stream Watersheds



The Goosefare Brook watershed is Saco's only urban impaired stream watershed. The Goosefare Brook Management Plan (2016) is being implemented in four phases to improve water quality and mitigate further impairment. If a proposed development is located near the boundary of an impaired stream watershed, determination of whether or not the development lies within the watershed of an impaired stream should be based on field confirmation of the drainage at the site of the proposed development.

(2) A description of each great pond, river, surface drinking water supply, and other water bodies of local interest including: ecological value; threats to water quality or quantity; documented water quality and/or invasive species problems.

- Saco River Watershed
 - The Saco River flows out of the White Mountains of New Hampshire, draining a watershed of approximately 1,700 square miles on its journey to the Atlantic Ocean. The watershed is 75 miles long and extends 44 miles at its widest point.
 - Cole Brook, Stackpole Creek, and several short, unnamed tributaries drain into the Saco River between the Saco/Buxton municipal line and the Cole Brook/Saco River confluence. Most of the land within the Saco River Watershed lies south of the Buxton Road and west of Smutty Lane. Along this stretch of the river, most of the drainages are short, serving the hummocky topography north of the river.
 - Land upstream of Cataract Dam in Downtown was historically used primarily for agriculture and forestry. Residential development has increasingly occurred in the upper reaches of the watershed in recent years, primarily off Boom Road and Smutty Lane.
 - Below Cataract Dam, the Saco River becomes an estuary, and the tidal effects of the Atlantic extend to the base of the dam. Land use varies, with substantial commercial and residential development along the river in both Saco and Biddeford.
 - MDEP's Invasive Aquatic Plant Program documents one invasive species in the Saco River: variable leaf milfoil, a submerged aquatic plant that grows quickly and reproduces easily. It forms dense mats near the water surface and is usually found in lakes and ponds.
 - All land within 500 feet of the riverbank on either side of the Saco River is within the Saco River Corridor. Development within the corridor is subject to the requirements of the Saco River Corridor Commission.
- Deep Brook Watershed
 - The Deep Brook Watershed drains into the Saco River a short distance downstream from the Maine Turnpike crossing. Big Ledge Brook, Sandy Brook, and Dennett Brook are all tributary to Deep Brook. The watershed is roughly bounded by Buxton Road to the north, the Turnpike to the east, and Smutty Lane to the west. The southern edge of the Heath flows into the watershed.
 - Much of the land within this watershed is forested or used for agriculture. Residential use has been increasing along road frontages (see the Land Use Chapter of this inventory). Several sand and gravel quarries operate in this watershed along Route 5 and Berry Road.
- Sawyer Brook Watershed
 - Sawyer Brook begins in the Tall Oaks/Shadagee Woods area and flows to the Saco River upstream of Saco Island. Land use in the Sawyer Brook Watershed is urban in character, comprised primarily of residential uses with a few commercial uses.
 - A 0.7-mile segment of Sawyer Brook received a water quality rating of 4A in 2014 due to exceeding Class B bacteria criteria (Integrated Water Quality Report).
- Goosefare Brook Watershed
 - The Goosefare Brook watershed is located in both the City of Saco and the Town of Old Orchard Beach. The lower reach of the Goosefare forms the boundary between the two

communities. The majority of the watershed, approximately 4,000 acres, is in Saco; approximately 1,000 acres are in Old Orchard Beach. The headwaters, approximately 2,100 acres, are entirely in Saco. The brook drains directly into Saco Bay roughly midway between Old Orchard Beach and Ferry Beach State Park, two major beaches on the longest stretch of recreational sand beach in the State of Maine. Tributary to Goosefare Brook are Innis, Bear, and Branch Brooks, and several small, unnamed streams flowing northeast from Saco's urban core.

- The Goosefare Brook watershed is a valuable ecological and environmentally sensitive resource threatened by increasing industrial, commercial and residential development and declining water quality. The watershed has a very diverse land use pattern, ranging from heavy industry to undeveloped land. Goosefare Brook flows under a turnpike interchange and two turnpike connector interchanges, and through the highly developed commercial and industrial Route 1 corridor.
- Goosefare Brook discharges through a salt marsh estuary into Saco Bay in one of the state's prime seaside recreational areas. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has rated the Goosefare Estuary as a Coastal Wildlife Concentration Area of state significance.
- In Saco, the Goosefare Brook watershed represents approximately 16% of the City's total land area. It is located in the rapidly developing corridor between Portland and Saco. A majority of the City's planned industrial, commercial and residential development is in this area.
- Goosefare Brook has the lowest water quality rating of Saco's waterbodies but it is improving. The recreational use impairment was moved from Category 5 to 4A in the 2014 cycle due to an EPA-approved TMDL (Integrated Water Quality Report). Recent and ongoing projects implementing the Goosefare Brook Management Plan continue to improve its water quality.
- Mill Brook Watershed
 - Mill Brook is the smallest watershed in Saco. Its headwaters lie just west of Spring Hill Road, between the Turnpike and Route One. The two dominant land uses in the watershed are commercial development along Route One and Spring Hill Road, and a mobile home park located a short distance south of Cascade Road.
- Cascade Brook Watershed
 - The Cascade Brook watershed is roughly bounded by Boothby Park and Lincoln Road to the west, and the Blue Haven Mobile Home Park just south of Cascade Road to the south. Harmon Brook flows from Boothby Park and converges with Foxwell Brook flowing from the Saco Heath just west of Jenkins Road to form Cascade Brook. Stuart Brook, which drains much of the land along the Saco/Scarborough line, flows into Cascade Brook a short distance upstream of Cascade Brook's confluence with the Scarborough Marsh.
 - Land use in the Cascade Brook watershed varies. Forestry and agriculture dominate west of Jenkins Road, while residential development (most not served by public sewer) predominates along Jenkins, Flag Pond, and Hearn Roads. The Turnpike and Route One both cross the watershed. A considerable amount of commercial development is located along Route One.
- Nonesuch River Watershed
 - The Nonesuch River watershed encompasses the northwest portion of Saco. Grant, Boynton, Ricker, Skilly, and Nonesuch Brooks are tributary to the Nonesuch River. The headwaters of the Nonesuch River start a short distance northwest of the junction of Buxton and Rocky Hill Roads. Historically, land in the Nonesuch River watershed has been used for forestry and agriculture. Over the last two decades, residential development has increased and several large subdivisions were built in the area. There is one active gravel quarry and two former quarry sites in the watershed.

- Other Watersheds
 - The Stroudwater River watershed clips the north-northwest corner of Saco around Tapley Road and extends south from the center of that road's length into the City for nearly one half mile. There is no development in this watershed.
 - The Stackpole Creek watershed is tributary to the Saco River. It occupies the westernmost corner of the City in the space between the Nonesuch River watershed and the Saco River watershed.
 - The Stuart Brook Watershed is roughly bounded to the southeast by Route 1, to the southwest by Flag Pond Road, and to the west/northwest by Hearn and Fenderson Roads. It extends into Scarborough and is nearly bisected by I-95.

(3) A summary of past and present activities to monitor, assess, and/or improve water quality, mitigate sources of pollution, and control or prevent the spread of invasive species.

- Saco's development standards ordinance was updated in 2021 to ensure that local requirements meet new MS4 permit standards.
- Public Works administers a DEP-funded grant program for stormwater improvement initiatives within the Goosefare Brook watershed. The goal is to encourage stormwater improvements to improve system efficiency.
- The Code Enforcement Department actively monitors septic system concerns and requires remediation of failing systems.
- Private stormwater systems approved through site plan or subdivision review are required to submit inspection reporting annually.
- Ongoing inspection program provides educational opportunities for businesses about best practices
- The Saco River Corridor Commission monitors water quality at 38 sites along the Saco River corridor, in addition to less frequent testing by Maine DEP. This includes six sites along the portion of the Saco River between Saco and Biddeford.

(4) A description of the location and nature of significant threats to aquifer drinking water supplies.

A sand and gravel aquifer exists around the Saco Heath in North Saco. It is classified as a 10-50 gallon per minute aquifer. Private residential wells in the area rely on it for drinking water. The most significant threat is contamination from failing residential septic systems in nearby subdivisions. Regular monitoring and maintenance can mitigate this risk.

(5) A summary of existing lake, pond, river, stream, and drinking water protection and preservation measures, including local ordinances.

Stormwater and Erosion Control

Article XII of the zoning ordinance presents requirements for stormwater runoff management, drainage planning, and erosion and sediment control, as well as exemptions to those requirements. General provisions include:

- Surface water runoff shall be minimized. It shall be the responsibility of the person developing the land to demonstrate that the work will not have an adverse impact on abutting or downstream properties. Sites shall be designed to minimize the amount of impervious area with a focus on reducing vehicle areas including parking, drive aisles, and service areas.
- The volume of stormwater discharged from a parcel shall be minimized through the use of on-site infiltration, detention, or retention to the extent practical. When stormwater must be discharged

from a parcel, the preferred method is to discharge into the natural drainage system. Discharge of stormwater to the City's municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) shall be allowed only when on-site retention and/or discharge to the natural system is not practical.

- Infiltration, detention, or retention of stormwater shall assure that the total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) that have been established by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for various water bodies in the City will be met to the extent practical. The disposal of stormwater shall not constitute a threat to public health, safety, and welfare and shall not degrade the quality of surface water or groundwater below city, state, or federal standards.
- Projects resulting in one or more acres of disturbed area shall be subject to the requirements of the Maine Construction General Permit (MCGP); Maine State Stormwater Management Law, 38 M.R.S. §420-D, and the latest revision of the "Stormwater Management Rules," Chapters 500, 501 and 502; and the requirements of Sections 1202 Stormwater Runoff Management, 1203 Stormwater Quantity and Quality Control, and 1204 Post Construction Management. Where the standards or provisions of such stormwater rules conflict with City ordinances, the stricter (more-protective) standard shall apply.
- To the extent practical, the stormwater design shall maximize aquifer recharge.
- Vegetative buffers shall be utilized to the extent practical to manage stormwater flow.
- The use of Low Impact Development (LID) practices appropriate for the type of development as set forth in Chapter 10 of the DEP Stormwater Manual, Volume III - BMPs Technical Design Manual, is encouraged but not required.

Resource Protection Overlay District (RPOD)

The zoning ordinance establishes the RPOD to protect sensitive shoreline and other ecological systems, including water resources, aquatic habitat, and natural flood protection. It includes all lands within 75' of the normal high-water line of a stream, wetlands greater than two contiguous acres, land being used as public access to the Saco River, land near water bodies including Cascade Brook Falls, Philips Spring, Seal Rock Spring, Heath Road Spring, and Jenkins Road Spring, and other natural features

Coordination of Permitting and Reviews with the Saco River Corridor

Article III of the zoning ordinance states that both the City and the SRCC have jurisdiction with the Saco River Corridor. Activities within this area must conform to the Commission's regulations as well as City regulations. Applicants are instructed to obtain a permit from the SRCC prior to applying for City permits.

3. Natural Resources

Analyses

(1) Are any of the community's critical natural resources threatened by development, overuse, or other activities?

Saco has abundant and diverse natural resources. They range from roseate tern nesting sites on offshore islands, to the sandy shores and dune ecosystem along the coast, to the wetlands, surface waters and groundwaters of watersheds. Saco has fertile estuaries, abundant wetlands, significant wildlife areas, active agriculture, and productive timber stands.

Prime soils, agriculture and forest areas, and wetlands are threatened by development in the more rural parts of Saco. Encroaching residential subdivisions, many with private septic systems, threaten ecological systems and reduce natural habitat areas. Saco's sandy beaches are threatened by coastal erosion compounded by the negative impacts of the federal jetty at Camp Ellis. Many of Saco's parks saw increased public use during the COVID-19 pandemic which increased wear and tear during a period of constrained resources for necessary maintenance. However, increased usage is generally a positive trend since more users will build more support for maintenance and preservation of natural resources.

(2) Are local shoreland zone standards consistent with state guidelines and with the standards placed on adjacent shorelands in neighboring communities?

Saco complies with the Maine Mandatory Shoreland Zoning Act (MSZA) in that it has adopted, administered, and enforced a local ordinance to regulate land use activities in the shoreland zone. Its definition of the Shoreland Zone includes and adds to the state's minimum definition.

Saco's shoreland zone ordinance is generally consistent with the standards placed on the neighboring communities of Biddeford and Old Orchard Beach, and the three ordinances cover many of the same performance standards and have similar dimensional standards. However, Saco's ordinance does differ from adjacent ordinances in some ways, as is encouraged by Maine DEP Chapter 1000: Guidelines for Municipal Shoreland Zoning Ordinances. Saco's ordinance differs from adjacent municipalities' ordinances in that Old Orchard Beach and Biddeford have both divided their shoreland zone into subdistricts.

Old Orchard Beach divides its shoreland zone into the following subdistricts:

- Resource protection subdistrict (RP)
- Shoreland residential activity subdistrict (RA)
- Limited commercial subdistrict (LC)
- General development subdistrict (GD)
- Stream protection subdistrict (SP)
- Public beach subdistrict (PB)

Biddeford divides its shoreland zone into the following districts:

- Resource Protection (RP)
- Resource Protection-1 (RP-1)
- Limited Residential (LR)
- Limited Commercial (LC)
- General Development 1 (GD-1)

- General Development 2 (GD-2)
- Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities (CFMA)
- Stream Protection (SP)

(3) What regulatory and non-regulatory measures has the community taken or can the community take to protect critical natural resources and important natural resources?

Saco's zoning ordinance includes the Saco River Corridor Overlay to inform landowners and project applicants of required coordination with the Saco River Corridor Commission. This State body regulates development near the Saco River to protect water quality and natural resources along the river.

Article VII of the Subdivision Ordinance establishes design standards for natural resources including preservation of significant trees, maintenance of public shoreline or water body access, and evaluation of any critical habitat areas that a proposal encroaches on. Increasing attention to these areas during Planning Board review will elevate their importance and conserve more critical natural resources. Using Beginning with Habitat data during the planning and review process will further this goal.

Saco landowners also participate in three of Maine's four current use tax programs: Tree Growth, Farm Land, and Open Space. These offer the property owner a reduction in their assessed value to facilitate continued conservation of these important resources.

(4) Is there current regional cooperation or planning underway to protect shared critical natural resources? Are there opportunities to partner with local or regional groups?

Several regional organizations are actively working to protect critical natural resources. The City works with each of these at appropriate times to protect shared resources.

Saco River Corridor Commission

- Established in 1973, the Saco River Corridor Commission (SRCC) is committed "to protect public health, safety, and the quality of life for the State of Maine through the regulation of land and water uses, protection and conservation of the region's unique and exceptional natural resources and through the prevention of impacts caused by incompatible development."
- The SRCC is made up of twenty municipalities within the Saco River watershed. Each has a position for a regular and an alternate member. The commission provides support services to permit applicants, and to municipal officials and private citizens concerned with the Saco River Corridor Act or other environmental matters.

Saco Valley Land Trust

- The Saco Valley Land Trust (SVLT) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of open space, wildlife habitat, and water quality in Saco, Biddeford, and along the southern portion of the Saco River. The trust owns over 500 acres in Biddeford, Saco, and Buxton, as well as 200 acres of conservation easements.

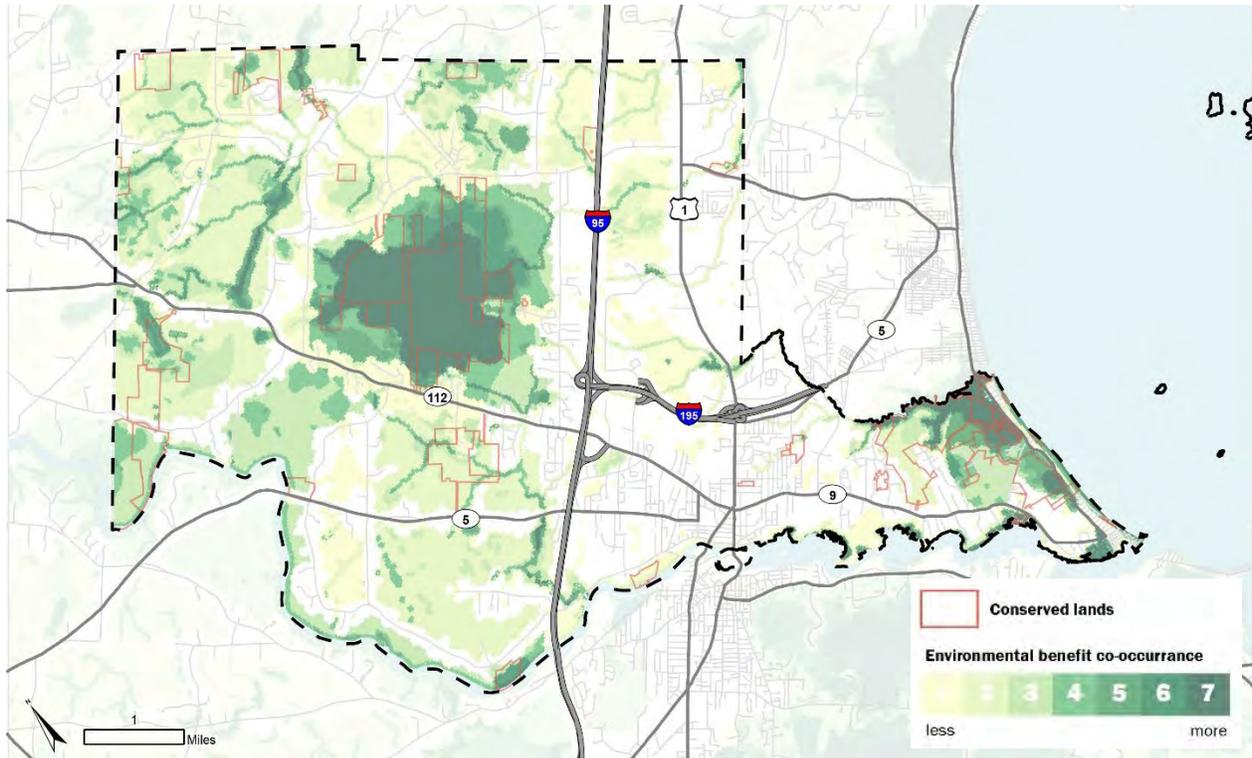
Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission

- SMPDC manages a regional sustainability and resilience pilot program working with coastal communities in York County. Focus areas include coastal resilience, stormwater management, and other related topics. While Saco is not one of the five communities in the initial pilot program ending in early 2022, future opportunities are anticipated to join this collaborative regional network.

Conditions and Trends

(1) The community’s Comprehensive Planning Natural Resources Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Department of Environmental Protection and the Office, or their designees.

Natural Resource Co-occurrence



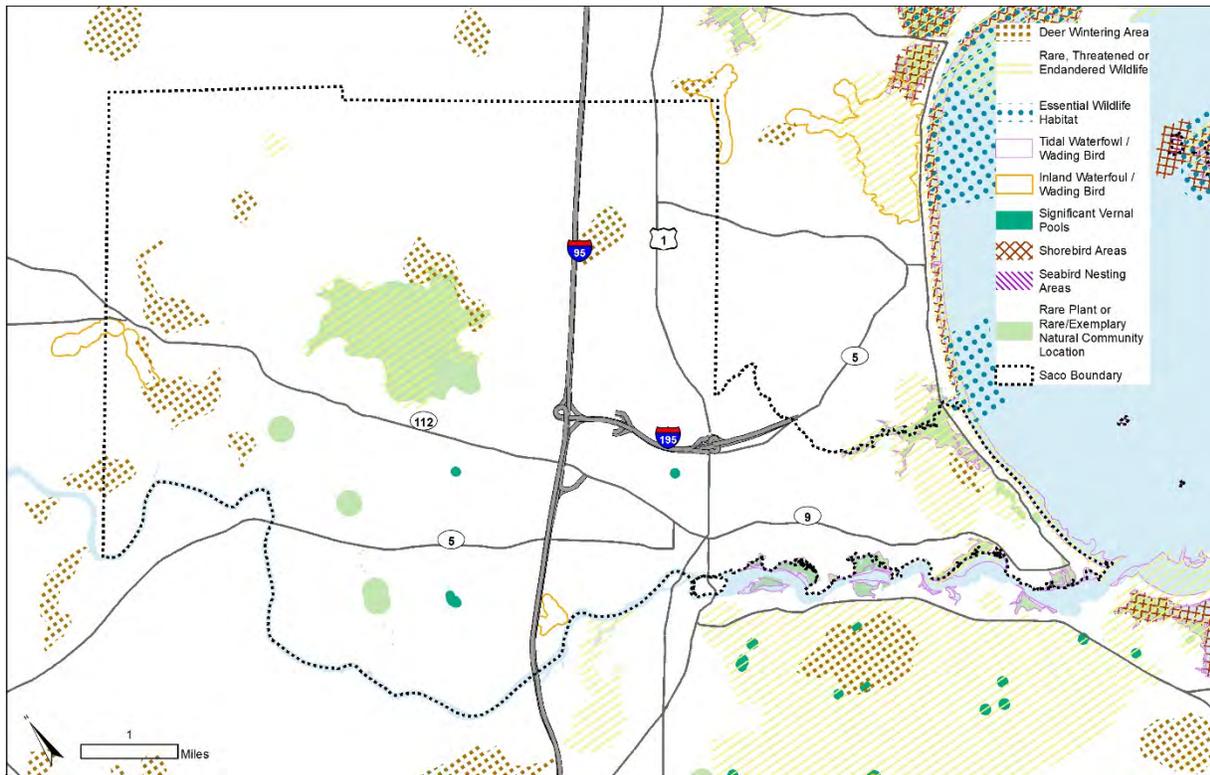
Saco’s areas of natural resource co-occurrence are concentrated around Saco Heath and the coast, but large parts of North Saco also provide notable environmental benefits. Due to existing development, much of the land between I-95 and the coast has low co-occurrence. Encouraging growth in these areas will help protect important natural resources in other parts of the city like North Saco that provide environmental benefits for the community and the region.

This map represents the concentration of selected environmental asset data layers overlaid on the landscape. Its purpose is to highlight a given area’s relative conservation values as an aid in planning. The layers on this map include buffer zones around water features, important natural communities, listed plant and animal species, areas of undeveloped land, and conserved properties. Some of these layer attributes have been weighted based on qualitative features such as rarity or size.

This map draws on data from the Beginning with Habitat map set but should be considered as work in development. It offers a generalized and subjective view and should be considered as a starting point for discussion. Cooccurrence modeling is extremely flexible, allowing for the addition, substitution, and relative weighting of data and attributes that best reflect the particularities and priorities of a given area or community.

Beginning with Habitat (BwH) is a voluntary tool intended to assist landowners, resource managers, planners, and municipalities in identifying and making informed decisions about areas of potential natural resource concern. This data includes the best available information provided through BwH’s coalition partners as of the map date, and is intended for information purposes only. It should be used as an initial screen to flag areas where agency consultation may be appropriate.

High Value Plant and Animal Species



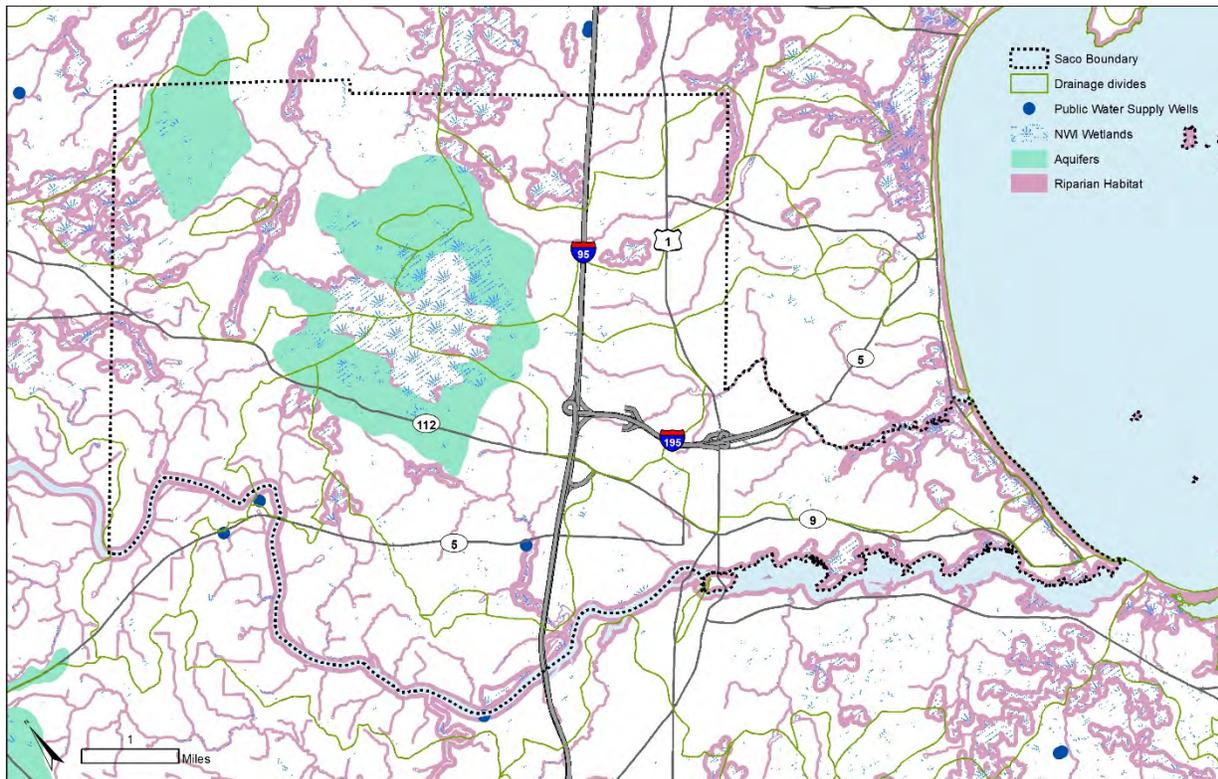
Species and natural community rarity is assessed on a relative scale across the state. Species and natural communities receiving an S1 ranking are extremely rarely throughout Maine, while species or natural communities with an S5 ranking are found to be “demonstrably secure” across Maine.

- Three species in Saco have S1 rankings: Hessel’s Hairstreak, Beach Plum, and Clothed Sedge.
- Two natural communities found in Saco also received S1 rankings: Pitch Pine Dune Woodland and Atlantic White Cedar Bog.

Species and natural communities receiving an S2 ranking are found to be “imperiled in Maine because of rarity (6-20 occurrences or few remaining individuals or acres) or because of other factors making it vulnerable to further decline.” In Saco, these include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild Ginger (S1/S2) • Long’s Bulrush • Pitch Pine Bog • Atlantic White Cedar • Freshwater Tidal Marsh • Pocket Swamp • Lilaeopsis • Sassafras | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Button Sedge • Pendulous Bulrush • Creeping Spike-moss • Hollow Joe-pye Weed • Piping Plover • Black-crowned Night Heron • Arctic Tern |
|--|--|

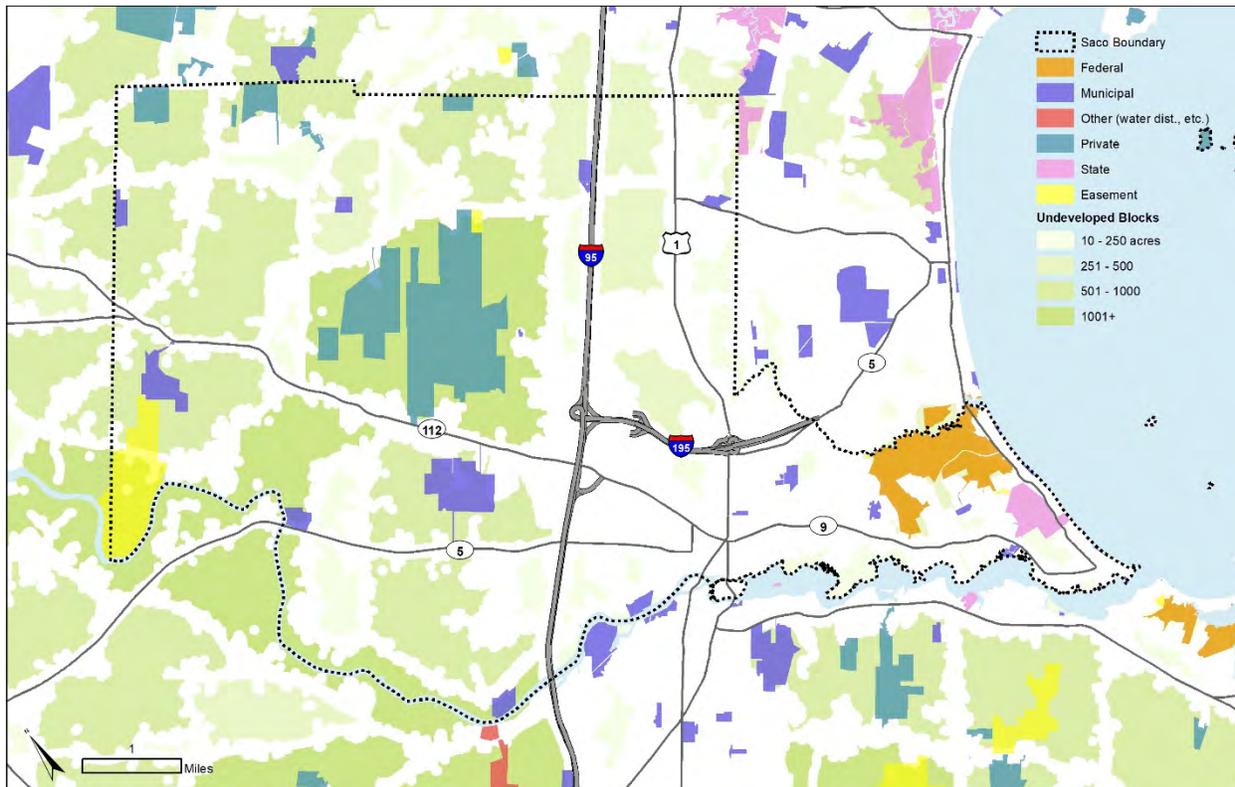
Water Resources and Riparian Habitats



This map depicts riparian areas associated with major surface water features and important public water resources. These are located throughout Saco but primarily along the coast, Saco River, and wetlands in North Saco. Protecting riparian habitats protects water quality, maintains habitat connections, and safeguards important economic resources including recreational and commercial fisheries.

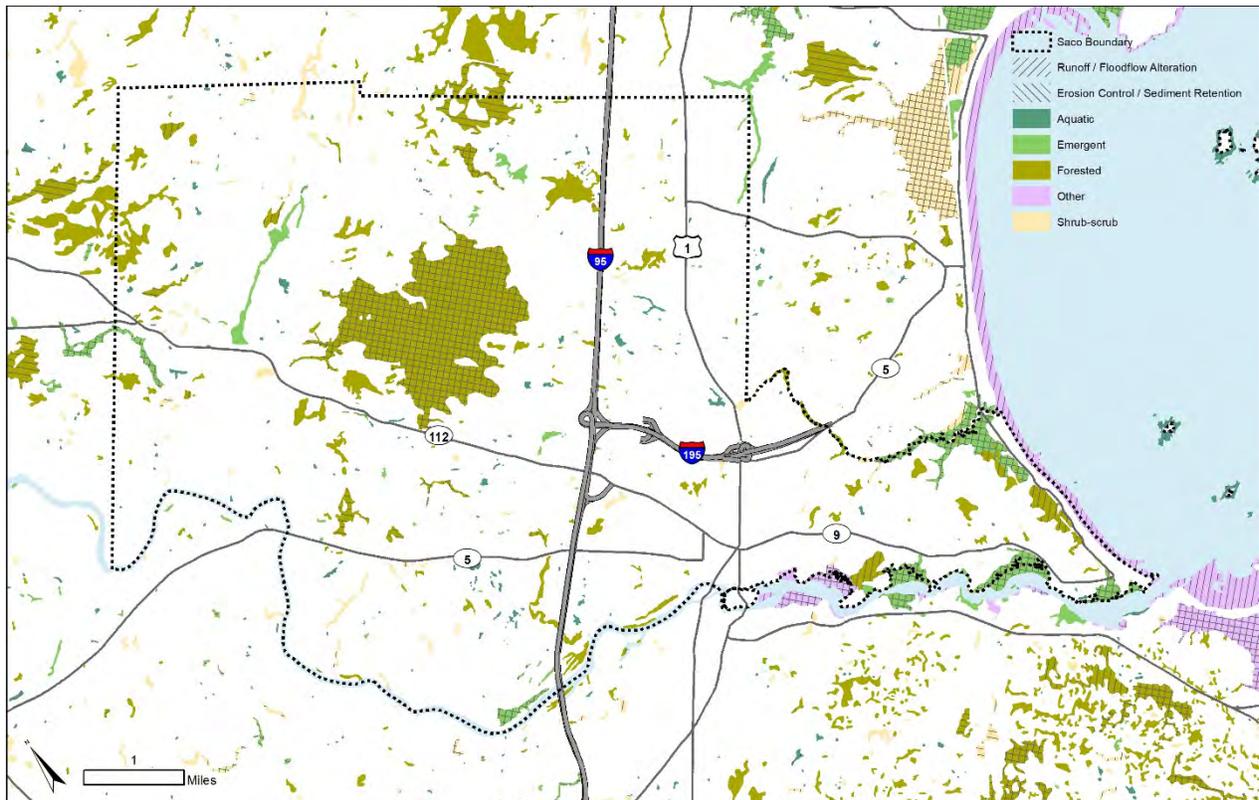
This map is intended to illustrate the natural hydrologic connections between surface water features and should be used as a planning reference only. This map does not depict all streams or wetlands known to occur and should not be used as a substitute for on-the-ground surveys.

Undeveloped Habitat Blocks and Connectors and Conserved Lands



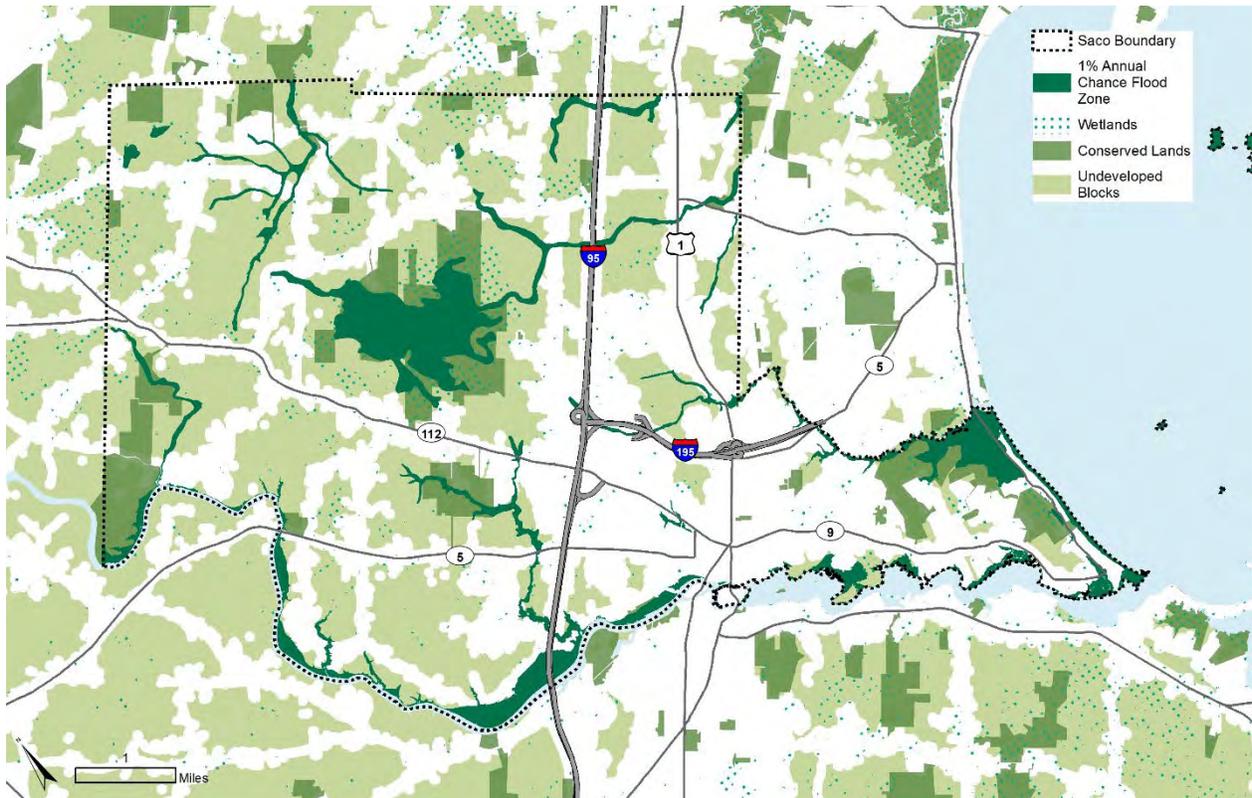
Undeveloped habitat blocks provide relatively undisturbed habitat conditions required by many of Maine’s species. Habitat connections provide necessary opportunities for wildlife to travel between preferred habitat types in search for food, water, and mates. Roads and development fragment habitat blocks and can be barriers to moving wildlife. By maintaining a network of interconnected blocks cities and land trusts can protect a wide variety of Maine’s species to help ensure rich species diversity long into the future. Maintaining a network of these large rural open spaces also protects future opportunities for forestry, agriculture, and outdoor recreation.

Wetlands Characterization



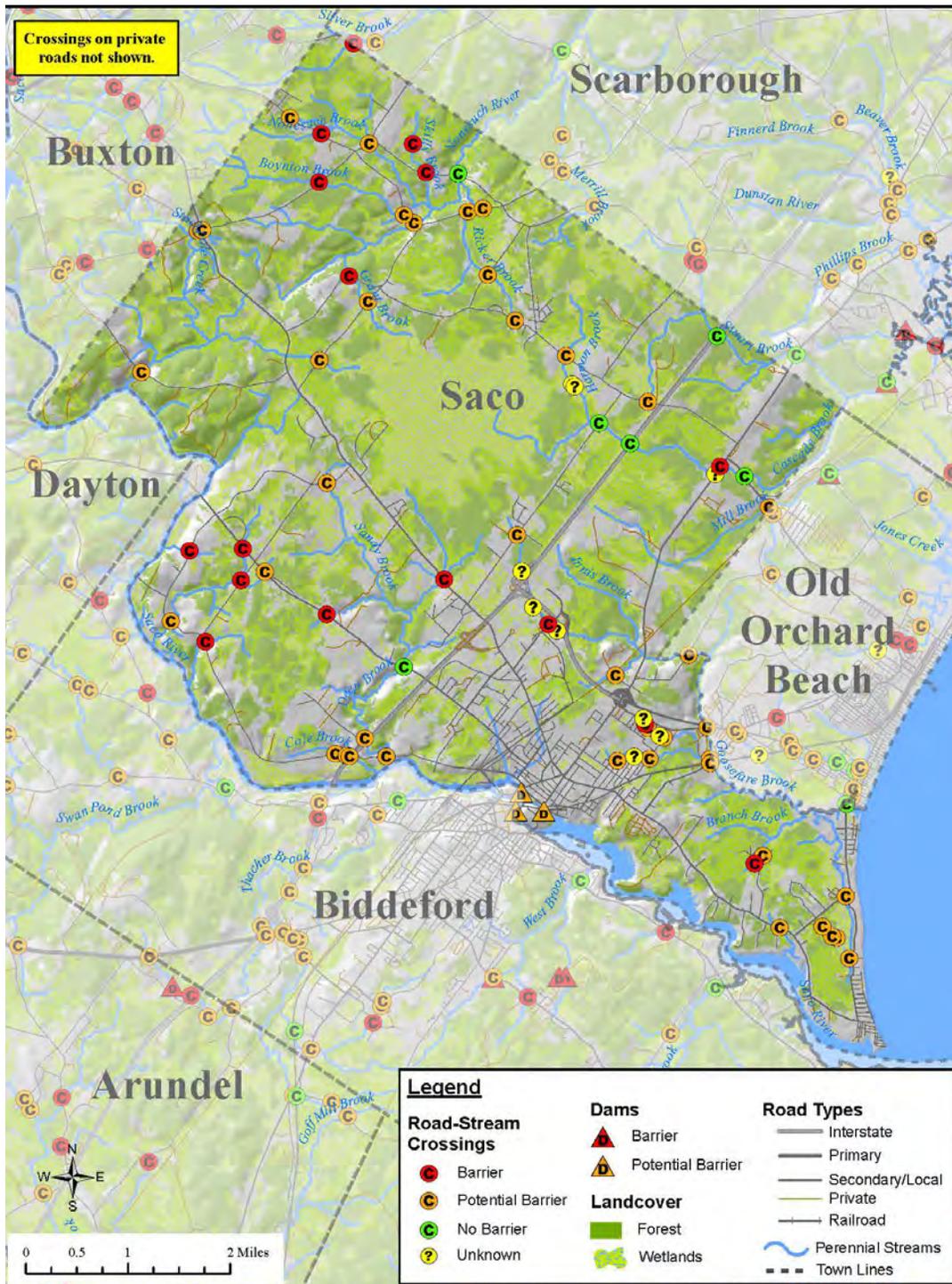
This map and its depiction of wetland features neither substitute for nor eliminate the need to perform on-the-ground wetland delineation and functional assessment. In no way shall use of this map diminish or alter the regulatory protection that all wetlands are accorded under applicable State and Federal laws. It is a planning tool intended to help identify likely wetland functions associated with significant wetland resources and adjacent uplands, providing basic information regarding what ecological services various wetlands are likely to provide. These ecological services, each of which has associated economic benefits, include: floodflow control, sediment retention, finfish habitat, and/or shellfish habitat.

Saco Development Constraints



Development constraints include surface waters and land within the 100-year flood zone (1% annual chance), wetlands, and conserved lands. Undeveloped habitat blocks are a “soft” constraint in that they are not formally protected but are important to the natural ecosystem. These areas exist primarily in North Saco and are threatened by residential development pressure. As shown above, land between I-95 and the coast has fewer constraints than land on the other side of I-95. Encouraging future growth in areas with fewer constraints will protect Saco’s natural resources for generations to come.

Barriers to Fish Passage, Public Roads and Dams



Most road-stream crossings in Saco have been assessed to pose barriers to fish passage, though there is a concentration of barrier-free road-stream crossings in northeastern Saco, near I-95 and Route 1. Some crossings require further assessment. Details on each crossing and other barriers (including photos, crossing types, and habitats concerned) can be found using the [Maine Stream Habitat Viewer](#).

Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance

The Saco Heath is identified as a focus area of statewide ecological significance through the Beginning with Habitat program. Focus areas contain unusually rich concentrations of at-risk species and habitats. They support rare plants, animals, and natural communities, high quality common natural communities; significant wildlife habitats; and their intersections with large blocks of undeveloped habitat. Beginning with Habitat Focus Area boundaries are drawn based on the species and natural communities that occur within them and the supporting landscape conditions that contribute to the long-term viability of the species, habitats, and community types.

Saco Heath

Saco Heath is the southern-most coalesced domed bog in Maine. Saco Heath and the surrounding forest cover over 1,000 acres and include a mosaic of habitat types including forested bog, wooded shrub heath and shrub heath. Several rare natural communities, rare plants, and rare animal species have been documented in the heath, including species only known in a few locations in Maine and other species at the northern edge of their range.

Opportunities for conservation include:

- Work with willing landowners to permanently protect remaining undeveloped areas
- Encourage municipal planning departments to improve approaches to development that may impact Focus Area functions
- Maintain enhanced riparian buffers to protect natural communities, rare species and wetland integrity
- Encourage best management practices for forestry, vegetation clearing, and soil disturbance activities near the heath and its associated natural communities
- Maintain the natural hydrology of the Focus Area
- Limit use of pesticides, especially aerial spraying

(2) A map or description of scenic areas and scenic views of local importance, and regional or statewide importance, if available.

Saco has many scenic areas that are not formally recognized but important locally. Examples include views of Saco Bay from the Camp Ellis jetty, views of the Saco River dams near Saco Island, the Cascade Falls, and Saco Heath boardwalk. Rural areas along Boom Road and other parts of North Saco were cited during public engagement as beautiful settings enjoyed by residents.

4. Agricultural and Forest Resources

Analyses

(1) How important is agriculture and/or forestry and are these activities growing, stable, or declining?

Agriculture and forestry are generally declining in Saco as land owner/operators age and as the economics of these small-scale operations become less favorable. Development pressures also contribute to the conversion of land from farmland and forestry to residential. Maintaining North Saco's rural character is important to many residents, however.

In 1992, there were 3,540 acres in Saco enrolled in the combined farm and open space program, of which 85% were enrolled as farmland. In 2009, the total acreage of Saco farms enrolled in the farmland tax program was 2,138 acres, with 59% classified as cropland, pasture and orchard, and 41% classified as hardwood, softwood, and mixed-wood. In recent years the acreage enrolled has increased slightly and stabilized. In 2021, there are 2,317 acres enrolled in the farmland program, of which 62% is classified as farmland.

(2) Is the community currently taking regulatory and/or non-regulatory steps to protect productive farming and forestry lands? Are there local or regional land trusts actively working to protect farms or forest lands in the community?

Saco currently has limited regulatory or non-regulatory protections for productive farming and forestry lands, primarily the zoning ordinance. Land owners are also encouraged to participate in the State's current use tax programs.

Agriculture is a permitted use in three of Saco's zoning districts: Rural Conservation, Portland Road, and Industrial. Agriculture-related business is only allowed as a conditional use in these zones, requiring additional review for these farm-supporting businesses like implement dealers or feed and grain stores to be approved. Farm stands are considered an accessory use and permitted where retail sales are otherwise not allowed. Agriculture excluding livestock is permitted in four other residential zones. Performance standards for agricultural uses are also set forth in the zoning ordinance.

The primary regional land trust working to protect forest and farmlands in Saco is the Saco Valley Land Trust. The Maine Farmland Trust operates statewide and holds at least one agricultural easement in Saco.

- Saco Valley Land Trust owns 330 acres in Saco and holds easements on another 97 acres. Most parcels are wooded. The SVLT goal is to manage this land for sustainable forest resources when possible, and to provide access for trails where it makes sense.
- Maine Farmland Trust is a member-powered non-profit that protects farmland, supports farmers, and advances the future of farming. It acquires and holds agricultural easements, donated and purchased easements to conserve farmland.

(3) Are farm and forest landowners taking advantage of the state's current use tax laws?

A number of farm and forest landowners take advantage of the State's current use tax laws. As further detailed in the Conditions and Trends section that follows, 72 parcels were enrolled in the Farmland Program in 2021 and 67 in the Tree Growth Program.

(4) Has proximity of new homes or other incompatible uses affected the normal farming and logging operations?

While significant residential development has occurred in West Saco and North Saco in the past several decades, their presence has not dramatically impacted farming and logging operations. More pressing threats to these uses are the challenging economics faced by aging owner/operators.

(5) Are there large tracts of agricultural or industrial forest land that have been or may be sold for development in the foreseeable future? If so, what impact would this have on the community?

The risk of losing more farmland to development is rising as farmers age and the economics of small operations remain very challenging. Losing large tracts would be a significant loss to the rural character of North Saco and would create additional pressure on the City's finances for road maintenance, emergency services, and other public goods.

Five parcels have been withdrawn from the Tree Growth Program since 2017, representing approximately 160 of the more than 2,400 total forestland acres enrolled (~7%). Four parcels have been withdrawn from the Farmland Program since 2017, accounting for 60 of the 1,450 total farmland acres enrolled (4%).

(6) Does the community support community forestry or agriculture (i.e. small woodlots, community forests, tree farms, community gardens, farmers' markets, or community-supported agriculture)? If so, how?

Farm stands are considered an accessory use in the zoning ordinance and permitted where retail sales are otherwise not allowed. This allows farmers to sell their produce on-site and create another income stream. Agriculture excluding livestock is a permitted use in four residential zones. Also permitted is the keeping of up to six chickens per lot after obtaining a permit from the Code Enforcement Officer.

Saco residents also support a local volunteer-run community garden and a weekly farmers' market that is one of the oldest in Maine.

(7) Does the community have town or public woodlands under management, or that would benefit from forest management?

Saco does not have city or public woodlands under management.

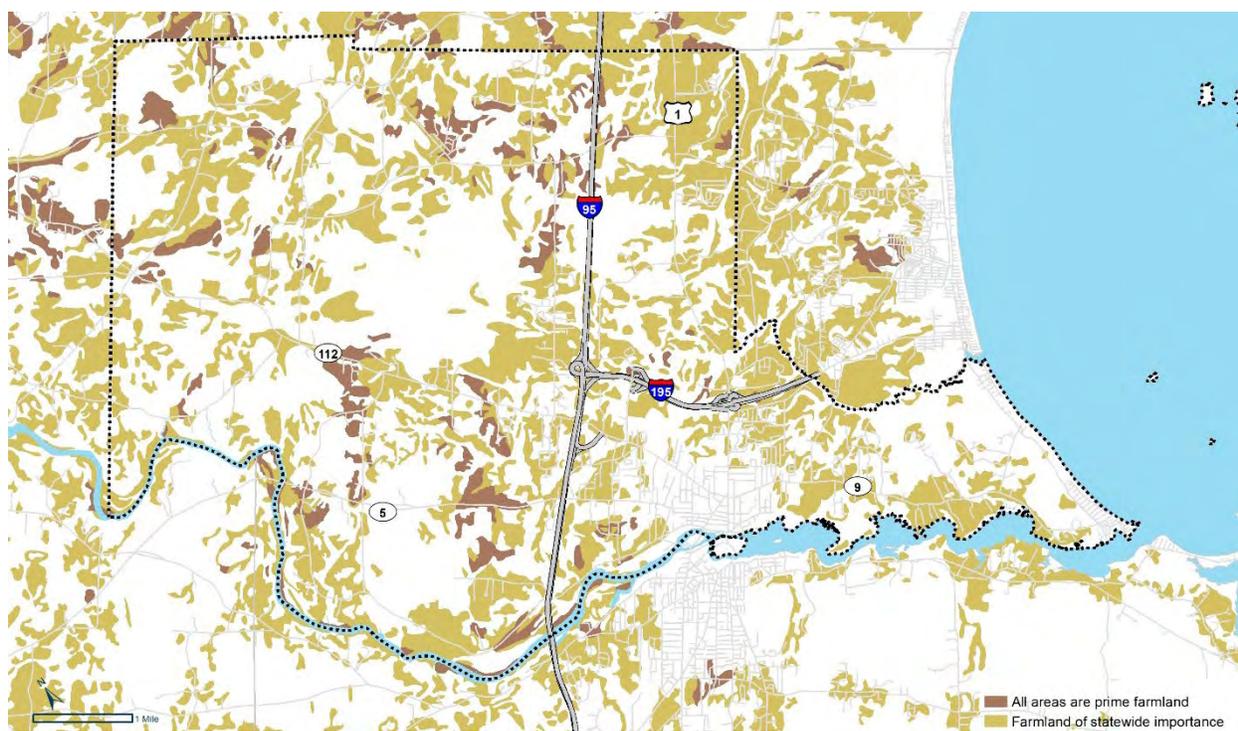
Conditions and Trends

(1) The community's Comprehensive Planning Agriculture and Forestry Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Agriculture, the Maine Forest Service, and the Office, or their designees.

USDA Agricultural Census (2017)

There were 43 farm operations in Saco in 2017. The majority (63%) are small farms, operating less than 50 acres. These 43 farm operations account for about 6% of York County's 735 total farms. Over three-quarters (77%) of farm operations in Saco reported less than \$50,000 in sales in 2017. Nineteen of those farms supported animal husbandry, while 28 supported growth of field crops.

Prime Agricultural Soils



The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines prime farmland as the land that is best suited to producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. Prime farmland has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply to produce a sustained high yield of crops while using acceptable farming methods. Prime farmland produces high yields with the least amount of external input. It is a valuable, limited commodity. Saco does not have areas with large expanses of uninterrupted prime farmland soils. Rather, they are found in intermittent pockets surrounded by other soil types.

Timber Harvest

All of the soils identified as prime farmland soils are also rated as prime forestry soils. The Soil Conservation Service defines prime forest land as land that has soils which are capable of growing wood at the economic productive growth rate for a given tree species.

The average yearly harvest for 2008-2018 in Saco was 225 acres, ranging from 64 to 470 acres. This ten-year average has been declining since at least the early 1990's. The average yearly harvest for 2001-2010 was 258 acres, ranging from 115 to 468 acres per year. The average yearly harvest for 1991-2000 was 363 acres, more than 60% higher than the 2008-2018 average, and ranged from 120 to 532 acres per year.

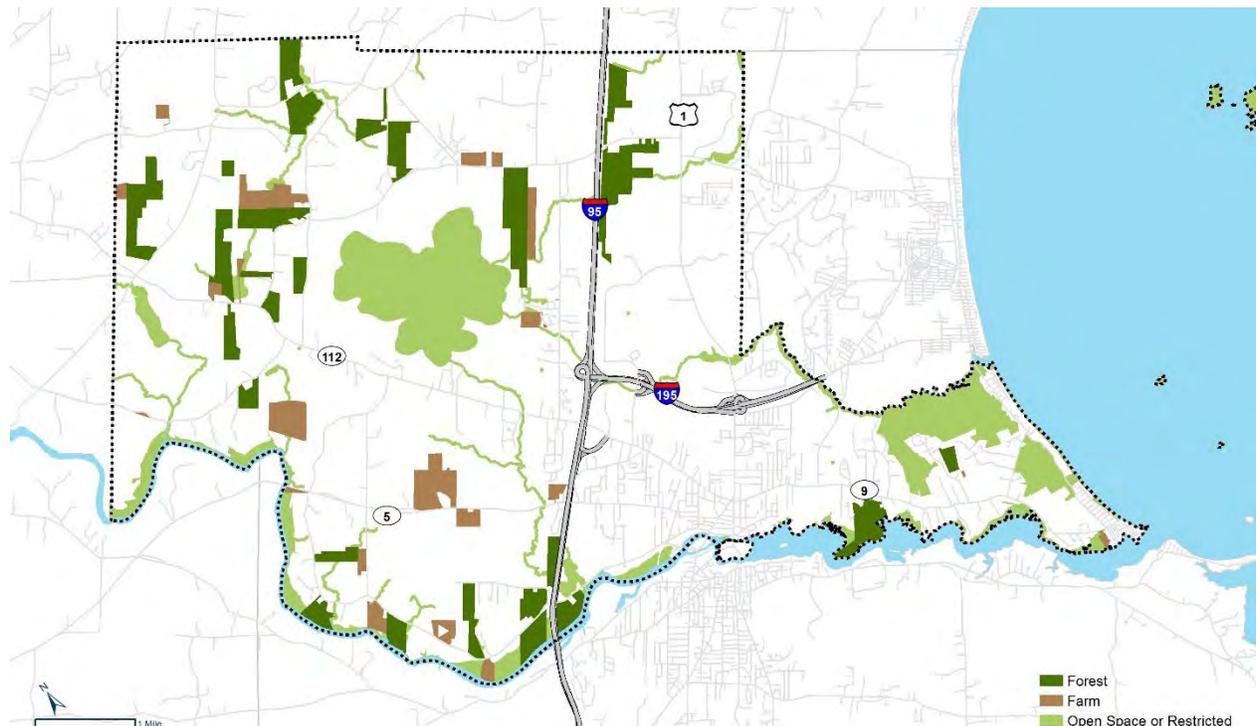
Saco Timber Harvest by Year, 2008-2018

Year	Selection harvest, acres	Shelterwood harvest, acres	Clearcut harvest, acres	Total harvest, acres	Change of land use, acres
2008	120	0	0	120	2
2009	142	0	3	145	0
2010	209	0	0	209	2
2011	129	0	0	129	2
2012	145	0	0	145	0
2013	326	63	0	389	23
2014	460	83	20	563	23
2015	470	60	6	536	0
2016	64	230	0	294	27
2017	199	53	0	252	14
2018	212	265	0	477	46
Total	2,476	754	29	3,259	139
Average	225	69	3	296	13

Source: Maine Forest Service

(2) A map and/or description of the community's farms, farmland, and managed forest lands and a brief description of any that are under threat.

Farms and Managed Forest Lands



The biggest threat to farmland and forests is development pressure in Saco. New residential subdivisions in West Saco continue to be popular as they expand further into rural areas of North Saco. Aging farmers and large landowners may see selling their land for residential development as an important part of their retirement strategy. Providing other economic alternatives to protect this land while respecting private property rights is an ongoing challenge for Saco and communities facing similar challenges across the state.

(3) Information on the number of parcels and acres of farmland, tree growth, and open space enrolled in the state’s farm, tree growth, and open space law taxation programs, including changes in enrollment over the past 10 years.

In 2021, there were 72 parcels in the farmland program, 67 in the tree growth program, and 17 in the open space. There were 2,317 total farmland acres, 2,422 total tree growth acres, and 655 total open space acres. Since 2017, four parcels accounting for 61 acres have been withdrawn from the farmland program, five parcels representing 162 acres have been withdrawn from the tree growth program, and no parcels or acres have been withdrawn from the open space program.

Parcels and Acres in Farmland Tax Law Program

The Farmland Tax Law Program serves to preserve farmland by reducing property tax burden for owners of farmland intending to keep farmland in production. Since 2017, total acres enrolled has increased by more than 80 acres.

Parcels and Acres in Farmland Program

Year	Number of Parcels	Total Acres Classified Farmland	Total Farm Woodland Acres	Total Acres in Farmland Program
2017	70	1,411	823	2,234
2018	68	1,395	891	2,271
2019	68	1,419	935	2,310
2020	68	1,375	935	2,308
2021	72	1,452	865	2,317

Parcels and Acres in Tree Growth Tax Law Program

The Tree Growth program serves to preserve productive forest lands by reducing property tax burdens for landowners. For a parcel to be eligible for current use taxation under the Tree Growth Tax Law it must include at least ten contiguous acres of forest land used primarily for growing and harvesting commercial forest products, in accordance with an acceptable Forest Management and Harvesting Plan. Since 2017, total acres enrolled has decreased by 70 acres.

Parcels and Acres in Tree Growth Program

Year	Number of Parcels in Tree Growth Program	Total Forestland Acres in Tree Growth Program
2017	69	2,492
2018	70	2,490
2019	69	2,462
2020	70	2,490
2021	67	2,422

Parcels and Acres in Open Space Tax Law Program

The Open Space program serves to preserve open, undeveloped land by reducing property tax burdens for landowners. There is no minimum acreage to qualify and the landowner can apply for classification as “ordinary” (20% reduction in value), “permanently protected” (up to 50% reduction), or “permanently protected and forever wild” (up to 70% reduction). Since 2017, total acres enrolled has increased by 232 acres.

Parcels and Acres in Open Space Program

Year	Number of Parcels Classified Open Space	Total Acres Classified Open Space
2017	19	423
2018	16	549
2019	17	655
2020	17	655
2021	17	655

(4) A description of any community farming and forestry activities (e.g. community garden, farmer’s market, or community forest).

Saco residents support a local volunteer-run community garden and a farmers’ market that is one of the oldest in Maine. There is no community forest in Saco.

Community Garden

- The Saco Community Garden at Haley Park on King Street has been operating since 2009. Its mission is to offer a garden following organic practices, provide affordable garden plots for growing healthy food and flowers, support a community of gardeners and promote a green and sustainable Saco. This volunteer-organized project offers 55 10’x10’ plots, including one accessible plot and ten year-round plots. Plots are currently available to Saco residents for \$25 and participation requires two hours of volunteer work at the garden each season.

Farmers’ Market

- The Saco Farmers’ Market has been connecting local producers and consumers since 1975. It is located in the parking lot of the Saco Valley Shopping Center and is open on Saturday mornings between May and October. All products offered for sale at the Market must be home grown in Maine or hand-made by the vendor. A farmer may purchase up to 25% of produce from another local Maine farmer to supplement their own farm’s harvest.

5. Marine Resources

Analyses

(1) Is coastal water quality being monitored on a regular basis?

Three of Saco's four beaches are regularly monitored by US EPA and Maine's Healthy Beaches program: Bay View, Kinney Shores, and Ferry Beach State Park. These account for 1.4 miles of Saco's publicly accessible sandy beaches. Bay View and Kinney Shores are monitored weekly during the swimming season while Ferry Beach is monitored twice per month, and all three are reported annually to EPA. Possible pollution sources are categorized as wildlife, marsh runoff, and publicly-owned treatment works.

The Saco River, which flows into Saco Bay at Camp Ellis and is tidal up to the dams at Saco Island, is monitored by the Maine DEP as part of the Integrated Water Quality Report.

(2) Is there a local or regional plan in place to identify and eliminate pollution sources?

The City of Saco has undertaken or has plans to complete several important projects.

- The Goosefare Brook Management Plan recommended several mitigation projects, the first two phases of which have been complete, to improve marsh water quality as it flows into Saco Bay.
- Saco's Water Resource Recovery Facility is slated for extensive resiliency improvements to mitigate flooding threats.
- Saco has remedied all but two of its Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO's) into the Saco River, and is working to complete that remediation project.

Regional efforts have been more limited although there is a desire for more coordination among communities to address these issues.

(3) Has closing of clam or worm flats threatened the shellfishing industry, and are sources of contamination known? If so, are sources point (direct discharge) or nonpoint sources?

Saco does not have a shellfish management program. The intertidal flats in the Saco River Estuary and Saco Bay are closed and the City of Saco does not issue any shellfish licenses. The flats are closed due to water quality issues caused by wastewater treatment plants in Saco, Biddeford, and Old Orchard Beach.

(4) Are traditional water-dependent uses thriving or in decline? What are the factors affecting these uses? If current trends continue, what will the waterfront look like in 10 years?

Saco has a limited base of water-dependent uses that operate out of Camp Ellis. The Department of Marine Resources issued 93 commercial licenses in Saco in 2019, including 37 Lobster/Crab Non-Commercial, 18 Lobster/Crab Classes 1-3, 16 Commercial Fishing, 7 Commercial Pelagic and Anadromous, and 7 Recreational Saltwater Fishing Operator. About one-third of 93 total vessels were more than 25' long, and ten vessels were licensed at 22' long, the most of any length.

According to data from the Maine Department of Marine Resources, commercial landings across Maine have been on the decline. Between 2016 and 2020, total live pounds statewide declined from 303 to 200 million with a corresponding decrease in total value from \$734 million to \$517 million. The number of commercial harvesters also declined in this period, although the number of York County harvesters remained fairly constant.

Given these trends, it is not surprising that a small marina like Camp Ellis has seen modest usage. However, the working waterfront at Camp Ellis is likely to remain a small but important part of the City's identity even if current trends continue. Emerging industries like aquaculture and offshore renewable energy production may present future opportunities to diversify Saco's water-based uses and economy.

(5) Is there reasonable balance between water-dependent and other uses, and between commercial and recreational uses? If there have been recent conversions of uses, have they improved or worsened the balance?

Saco has more than two miles of coastline. Saco Bay comprises the largest sand beach and salt marsh system in Maine and Saco's four beaches are used for public recreation throughout the summer. These beaches maintain a lower profile than those in neighboring communities, in part due to a lack of large-scale hotels, tourist-related businesses, or significant public beach parking. Most of Saco's coastline is small-scale residential and many houses are seasonally rented.

Camp Ellis is a public facility and home of a small fishing fleet. Private boaters and water-based businesses also use this resource, as well as nearby Norwoods Marina. Other commercial use near the waterfront is limited to a couple of seasonal businesses including restaurants and a small general store. The Ferry Beach Retreat and Conference Center is a nonprofit member organization that offers conferences, retreats, summer youth camps, and community meeting space on a 32-acre oceanfront campus.

The balance of water-dependent and other uses has been stable in Saco for many years. There have not been any significant use conversions. Development near the water is primarily renovation or repair of existing residential structures. There is some interest in additional limited commercial uses near the water to capitalize on waterfront views, primarily more dining options. Increasing climate-related impacts make long-term investment here a risky strategy but temporary uses could provide for appropriate commercial uses in the short-term.

(6) How does local zoning treat land around working harbors?

The Camp Ellis zoning district includes the marina itself and the immediately surrounding blocks. Permitted uses include commercial fisheries and wholesale fish and seafood sales, boat building and repair facilities, and marinas among other uses. Single- and two-family dwellings are permitted residential uses, and water recreation is a condition use.

The area is also part of the Saco River Corridor overlay district due to its location at the mouth of the Saco River.



(7) Is there a local or regional harbor or bay management plan? If not, is one needed?

The Saco Bay Beach Management Plan was completed in 2000. Since then, a Sea Level Adaptation Working Group has been studying issues along the coast from the perspective of climate resiliency. An

updated, comprehensive regional bay management plan is needed to incorporate the latest sea level rise projections and environmental quality concerns. A regional sediment management plan would also help Saco's beaches address beach nourishment and mitigate ongoing erosion issues.

(8) Are there local dredging needs? If so, how will they be addressed?

The Saco River's federal navigation channel was last dredged in 2018-2019. It is eligible to be dredged by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) every eight years. Sand from the 2019 dredge was used to replenish the Camp Ellis beach but quickly eroded away again due to the jetty at Camp Ellis. York County Commissioners will consider a plan in 2022 that has been proposed by the City of Saco and Save Our Shores (SOS) Saco Bay for a shared dredge for coastal communities.

Work to improve Saco River navigation and to promote commercial ship traffic dates back as early as 1866. The USACE initially thought that the beach sand was coming from an underwater glacial deposit. Thus, in 1866 when they were called in to protect the navigable channel of the Saco River, they built rock jetties on both sides of the mouth of the river to protect the channel from accumulating sand. However, the primary source of sediment for the adjacent coastal beaches is the Saco River, which annually transports roughly 17,000 cubic yards of sand into Saco Bay. The jetties have resulted in severe erosion of the beach at Camp Ellis because sand is prevented from coming ashore naturally, and is instead distributed to the north via currents within the Bay, eventually accumulating at Pine Point and the mouth of the Scarborough River.

The City of Saco and the Army Corps have worked for the past several years to identify a course of action for addressing the erosion problem and restoring the beach. Saco is a non-federal partner sponsor to a proposed erosion mitigation project with the Army Corps. A project partnership agreement was actively discussed in 2021 with hopes for a draft agreement in early 2022. The current funding and project parameters do not provide for beach replenishment after construction or periodic replenishment in the future.

(9) Is there adequate access, including parking, for commercial fishermen and members of the public? Are there opportunities for improved access?

Saco offers several water access opportunities for members of the public including beaches and riverfront parks. Access for commercial fishermen is limited to the publicly-owned Camp Ellis pier at the mouth of the Saco River. Additional recreational access to the Saco River upriver of the dams at Saco Island would improve public access for small non-motorized boats.

(10) Are important points of visual access identified and protected?

Visual access to the coast is widely available in Saco. Public beaches and the Camp Ellis jetty are the primary points of visual access to Saco Bay. Public roads also offer visual access, especially Seaside Avenue which runs the length of Saco's coastline and roads off of Seaside Avenue which run to the shore.

Along the Saco River, visual access is available from the RiverWalk and Saco Island Downtown, several public parks, the Laurel Hill Cemetery, and along public roads like Boom Road.

Conditions and Trends

(1) The community's Comprehensive Planning Marine Resources Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Marine Resources, and the Office, or their designees.

Saco Bay has been designated as "essential fish habitat" by the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service for at least fifteen types of fish, including Atlantic salmon, Atlantic cod, halibut, ocean pout, Atlantic sea herring, and Atlantic sea scallops. Saco Bay is comprised of approximately eight miles of curving shoreline and runs from Fletcher Neck and the Saco River in the south to the Scarborough River and Prout's Neck in the north. It comprises the largest sand beach and salt marsh system in Maine.

Licenses Issued in Saco, 2019

	Licenses Issued
Commercial Fishing Crew	15
Commercial Fishing Single	1
Commercial Pelagic and Anadromous Crew	4
Commercial Pelagic and Anadromous Single	3
Commercial Shellfish	1
Elver 1 Fyke Net Crew	1
Lobster/Crab Class 1	6
Lobster/Crab Class 2	8
Lobster/Crab Class 2+	1
Lobster/Crab Class 3	2
Lobster/Crab Non Commercial	37
Lobster/Crab Student	1
Pass Elver 1 Fyke PELF	1
Recreational Saltwater Fishing Operator	7
Recreational Saltwater Registry	1
Scallop Dragger	2
Seaweed	1
Surf Clam Boat	1
TOTAL	93

Source: Maine Department of Marine Resources

Non-commercial lobster/crab licenses accounted for 40% of all licenses issued in Saco in 2019. Commercial fishing crews were the second highest.

Boat owners who wish to moor their boats in the coastal waters of the city must apply to be on the wait list before being approved by the Harbor Master and issued a mooring permit by the City. Mooring permit applications must be renewed each year on or before March 15th.

Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP)

- The Maine Department of Transportation's Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP) helps protect critical commercial fishing infrastructure. The goals of the program are to promote public access, economic development, and preserve infrastructure along the coast; help municipalities make improvements to public wharves, landings and boat ramps; protect a dwindling asset through a successful state/local partnership; and preserve natural resource-based industries. Examples of projects include pier reconstruction, float installations, boat ramp rehabilitation, new hoist installation, and gangway replacement.

- Saco has received funding from SHIP four times, most recently in 2017 to expand the float system at Camp Ellis Pier and install power pedestals, hoist, and seasonal water service. Previously funded projects included Camp Ellis restroom facilities in 2010, new hoists and security cameras in 2004, and Fish Pier Improvements in 1996.

(2) A map and / or description of water-dependent uses.

Saco has a limited base of water-dependent uses that operate out of Camp Ellis. There were 93 commercial vessels licensed in Saco in 2019. Several private companies offer fishing excursions or sightseeing tours from Camp Ellis. Two private marinas and a yacht club operate on the tidal portion of the Saco River between Downtown and Camp Ellis.

(3) A brief summary of current regulations influencing land use patterns on or near the shoreline.

Two conventional Zoning Districts are specific to the Saco shoreline:

- Camp Ellis District (CE)
 - This district is intended to encourage a mix of marine-oriented uses, public access to the waterfront, residential uses, and small-scale tourist facilities near the mouth of the Saco River.
 - Permitted uses, in addition to single- and two-family dwelling units: Art studios, bed and breakfasts, commercial fisheries, wholesale fish and seafood sales, food and drink establishments, home occupations, retail, municipal uses, places of worship, public uses, nursery schools, small educational, scientific, or natural interpretation facilities, adult day-care centers, childcare centers, boat building and repair facilities, miscellaneous accessory uses, marinas, parks and playgrounds, accessory dwelling units, community living arrangements, essential utility services.
 - Conditional uses: Water recreation, high voltage transmission lines.
 - Minimum lot area per dwelling unit is 7,500sf for sewerred
- Seaside Residential District (SR)
 - This district comprises the Ferry Beach and Kinney Shores residential neighborhoods along the Atlantic coast. These are dense, low-lying areas that serve year-round and seasonal residents and provide waterfront access to the public. New development and redevelopment along these coastal areas should be designed to withstand future sea-level rise and storm surge impacts.
 - Permitted uses, in addition to single- and two-family dwelling units: Agricultural (excluding livestock) uses, municipal uses, places of worship, adult day-care centers, accessory miscellaneous uses, parks and playgrounds, accessory dwelling units, community living arrangements, essential utility services, kennels, water recreation uses, elder/disability housing, and high-voltage transmission lines.
 - Conditional uses: Commercial greenhouse, home occupations, neighborhood convenience stores, cemeteries, public uses, nursery schools, childcare centers.
 - Minimum lot area per dwelling unit is 7,500sf for sewerred lots and 20,000sf for unsewerred lots.

There are also three overlay districts that are relevant to the Saco shoreline: Resource Protection (RPOD), Coastal Development (CDOD), Shoreland (SLOD), all of which are Shoreland Zoning Overlay Districts. Additional standards for any proposed conditional use in those overlay districts are:

- Will maintain safe and healthful conditions.
- Will not result in water pollution, erosion, or sedimentation to surface waters.

- Will adequately provide for the disposal of all wastewater.
- Will not have an adverse impact on spawning grounds, fish, aquatic life, bird, or other wildlife habitats.
- Will conserve shore cover and visual, as well as actual, points of access to inland and coastal waters.
- Will protect archaeological and historic resources in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Will not adversely affect existing commercial fishing or maritime activities in the Camp Ellis District.
- Will avoid problems associated with floodplain development and use.
- Is in conformance with the provisions of §VIII3, Land Use Standards.
- If located in a structure, the structure is located in an approved subdivision and will not violate any other local ordinance or regulation or any state law.

Details about permitted and conditional uses in the Resource Protection Overlay District can be found in Table 3-4 of the Zoning Ordinance.

(4) A description of any local or regional harbor or bay management plans or planning efforts.

The Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) offers ongoing coastal resilience assistance to communities including Saco. The 2020 report “Tides, Taxes, & New Tactics” investigated municipal-level economic and social impacts of sea level rise and storm surge hazards and developed locally-relevant adaptation and resiliency planning strategies that address local and regional vulnerabilities. While the analysis was specific to Kennebunk, Wells, and York, many of the findings are relevant to Saco as well.

The Saco Bay Regional Beach Management Plan was completed in 2000. It recommended actions to address natural resource management, sand management/geological processes, regulations, and economic impacts. It determined that the most important regional beach management issue at the time was disequilibrium of sand resources throughout the Saco Bay—increasing erosion in southern areas and increased accumulation in the northern areas. The second most important issue identified was local/regional review of beach resource management. It highlighted a need for greater regional coordination to help manage these issues.

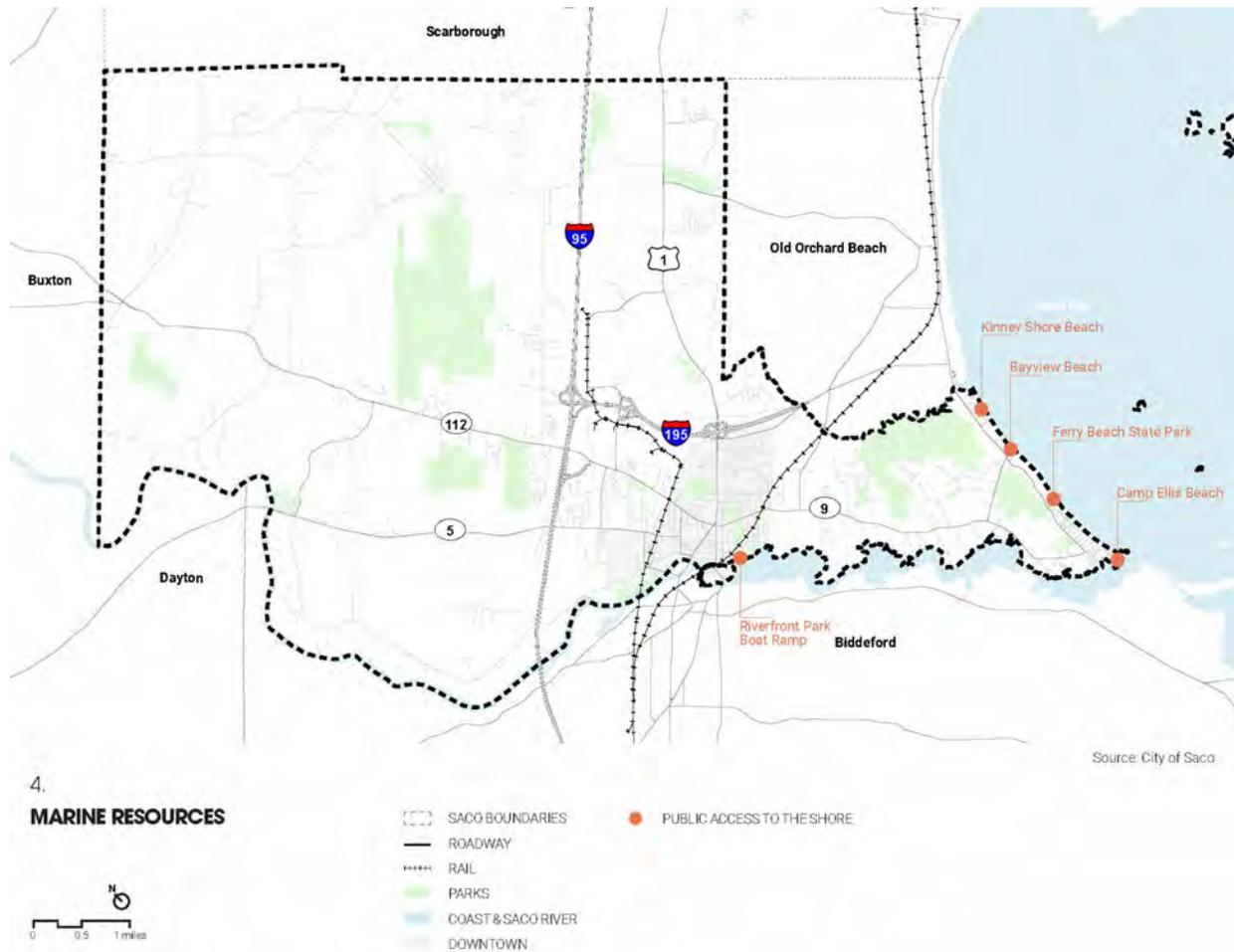
(5) The location of facilities (wharves, boat ramps, pump-out stations, etc.), with a brief description of any regional or local plans to improve facilities.

Marinas and Boat Launches

- Camp Ellis
 - Camp Ellis is owned by the City and has a multiuse pier for private and commercial use, over 500' of docks, three commercial hoists, and 80+ parking spaces. Vehicular access is limited by two narrow, low road underpasses on Route 9/Ferry Road and Old Orchard Road in Saco. Access from Old Orchard Beach along Seaside Avenue is unrestricted by such low clearances.
- Riverfront Park
 - Riverfront Park is a City-owned recreational area on Front Street in Downtown Saco. It has the only public boat ramp in the City that can be used at all tidal stages. There is parking for ten boat-trailer combinations. No other services are available.
- Saco Yacht Club

- The Saco Yacht Club is located next to the Riverfront Park on Front Street. The club is a membership organization with slips and moorings for up to 80 boats. There is a boat ramp for members to use. Water, telephone, and ice are available.
- Norwood's Marina
 - Norwood's Marina is located off West Street at the mouth of the Saco River. The marina has 35 slips and can accommodate boats up to 50 feet in length. There is no boat ramp and no services are offered.
- Marston's Marina
 - Marston's Marina is located at 41 Glenhaven Circle. The marina has 120 slips for boats in the 20 to 28 foot class and 15 moorings in the river for boats in the 30 to 35 foot class, for both seasonal and transient customers. The marina offers wide-safe docks, gas and oil, a protected harbor, shore power and water on the docks, paved parking, security lighting, restrooms and shower, soda and ice. A boat ramp is available for marina customers. The ramp is usable through all tidal stages except for large boats at low tide. Some of the slips are wheelchair accessible.
- Public boat ramps are available at Camp Ellis, Riverfront Park, and Diamond Park. Local improvements are being considered to improve access, including adding a non-motorized boat launch for recreational use at Prentiss Park upriver from the dams at Saco Island. The Camp Ellis ramp is inaccessible at low tide.

(6) A description or map showing public access points to the shore. Include a brief description of their use, capacity, physical condition, and plans to improve, expand, or acquire facilities such as parking or toilets.



Saco has four public beaches, three publicly-owned and a fourth owned by the State. These provide recreational public access to Saco’s sandy beaches. Facilities are fairly limited however, which keeps their use to a moderate level compared to tourist destinations in nearby communities. Expansion opportunities are very limited by existing residential development.

Public Beaches

- Kinney Shores
 - Kinney Shores is located off of Seaside Avenue. It is a public beach maintained by the City. Lifeguards are present during the summer season. There are no restrooms on site.
- Bay View Beach
 - Bay View beach is located off Seaside Avenue. It is a public beach maintained by the City and lifeguards are present during the summer season. There is public parking on Bayview Road at Seaside Avenue and public restrooms are available. ADA-compliant beach mats were installed through an AARP Community Challenge Grant in 2018.
- Ferry Beach
 - Ferry Beach State Park is located off Route 9 on Bay View Road. The park offers a sweeping view of the miles of white sand beaches between the Saco River and Pine Point. Beach access is provided via a pedestrian underpass beneath Seaside Avenue.

The park also has parking, restrooms and changing rooms, picnic areas, nature trails, and guided nature programs.

- Camp Ellis Beach
 - Camp Ellis Beach is located at the mouth of the Saco River, on the north side of North Ave. It is maintained by the City.

Other Public Access

- Riverfront Park
 - Riverfront Park is a small passive recreation area on Front Street near Downtown. It offers a public boat ramp maintained by the City. The park sits along the RiverWalk and offers benches, nature trails, and views of the river.

(7) A list of scenic resources along the shoreline, including current ownership (public or private) and any protections.

Saco's four beaches are publicly owned. Other scenic resources include:

- Camp Ellis
 - Camp Ellis is a scenic fishing port, breakwater area, and public beach. A walk on the federal jetty offers complete views of Saco Bay.
- Sandy Bottom
 - Sandy Bottom is a fishing area on the lower Saco River. Most of the area is privately owned but open to the public.
- Laurel Hill Cemetery
 - Laurel Hill is a 170-acre cemetery overlooking and bordering the Saco River. There are seven miles of paved roadway and the cemetery is handicapped accessible. Many people use the cemetery for walking, running, and bird and wildlife watching. It is privately owned by the Laurel Hill Cemetery Association.
- Riverfront Park
 - Riverfront Park is a public park located on Front Street near Downtown and offers a scenic view of the falls and river.

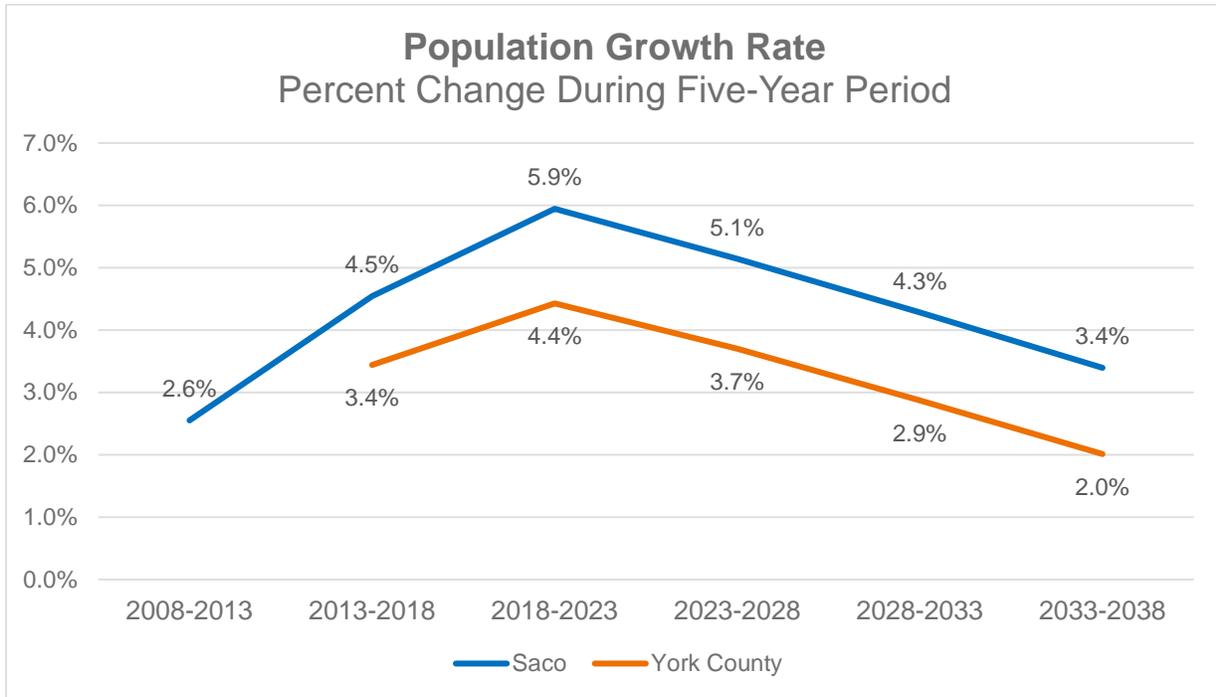
6. Population and Demographics

Analyses

(1) Is the rate of population change expected to continue as in the past, or to slow down or speed up? What are the implications of this change?

Saco’s population is expected to keep growing.

The current population (20,381, per the 2020 Decennial Census) is the largest population in Saco’s history, an increase of 21% since the 2000 Decennial Census. This growth is a result of both positive net migration and organic growth.



Source: *Maine Population Outlook, 2018 to 2038. State Economist.*

The current growth rate is projected to represent a peak over the next 15 years. The population is projected to continue growing but at slightly slower rates. Saco is projected to add approximately 200 residents per year during the 2020’s, reaching approximately 22,000 residents by 2028. In the 2030’s, Saco’s population growth is forecast to slow slightly to fewer than 200 new residents per year, reaching approximately 23,700 by 2038.

Anticipated population growth and ongoing demographic changes have implications for housing, jobs, infrastructure, public amenities, and tax base.

As the population grows, demographic trends show an increasing share of the population ages 65 or older and a slightly decreasing share of the population ages 5 to 24. This has implications for the types of housing needed, the number of employees to fill available jobs, the types of transportation and recreation options desired, school enrollment, public safety, and more. Responding to these changes in constructive ways that support the quality of life and amenities that Saco residents value will be important.

(2) What will be the likely demand for housing and municipal and school services to accommodate the change in population and demographics, both as a result of overall change and as a result of change among different age groups?

Saco will need more housing, a greater diversity of housing types, and expanded services to meet the needs of the growing 65+ population and young adult cohort.

The characteristics of Saco's growing populations – and the related overall demographic shifts in Saco – have implications for housing that, in some ways, follow national trends. Nationally, as Baby Boomers age and the average household size shrinks, the traditional market for single-family homes is also shrinking. Among the senior population and younger adults alike, there is more desire for apartments/condominiums, townhouses, and similar smaller housing types near services and amenities.

In Saco, how and needs are also shifting with demographic change. Given Saco's aging population, there will be a sustained need for senior and assisted living options as well as modifications to existing housing to allow aging in place. While average household size in Saco has slightly decreased over the last two decades (from 2.44 in 2000 to 2.32 in 2021), the ongoing and anticipated growth of both the older population and the young-professional cohort (a generation that is typically having fewer children later in life than previous generations) suggests a need for increased diversity of housing options in Saco. Smaller house sizes in walkable neighborhoods will be more suitable for many singles and couples, among both seniors and young adults, than larger houses further from everyday destinations. Rental housing is likely to see increased demand as well, as the low-maintenance lifestyle and annual lease cycle provides more flexibility than homeownership and 30-year mortgages. As housing construction costs increase, rental housing is also more attainable for households unable to save for a down payment.

Estimates for needed housing construction, as well as further analysis of housing production rates and needed housing types in Saco can be found in Appendix 8.

The continued growth of the 65+ population will influence the types of municipal services that the City of Saco provides, such as parks and recreation programming and EMS. The growth of Saco's older population should also inform Saco's revenue generation strategy: Because seniors are typically a fixed-income population, tax increases could create more of a financial burden. More information regarding needed service, capacity, and infrastructural changes, related to both population growth and demographic change, are covered in Appendix 11.

Though school enrollment fluctuates annually in Saco, the number of school-aged children is expected to slightly decrease.

Saco's schools have been near capacity recently, especially given capacity restrictions related to COVID-19. However, while the Saco school district is currently facing a short-term space crunch, projections anticipate a slight decrease in the number of school-aged children in the near future. Future trends are particularly difficult to project in Saco due to its high student mobility rate however. Enrollment fluctuates annually as families move into and out of the city, resulting in slight increases or decreases compared to the previous year. Many people cite Thornton Academy as a major factor in this mobility, as families with school-age children move here for high school.

(3) Does your community have a significant seasonal population, and is the nature of that population changing? What is the community's dependence on seasonal visitors?

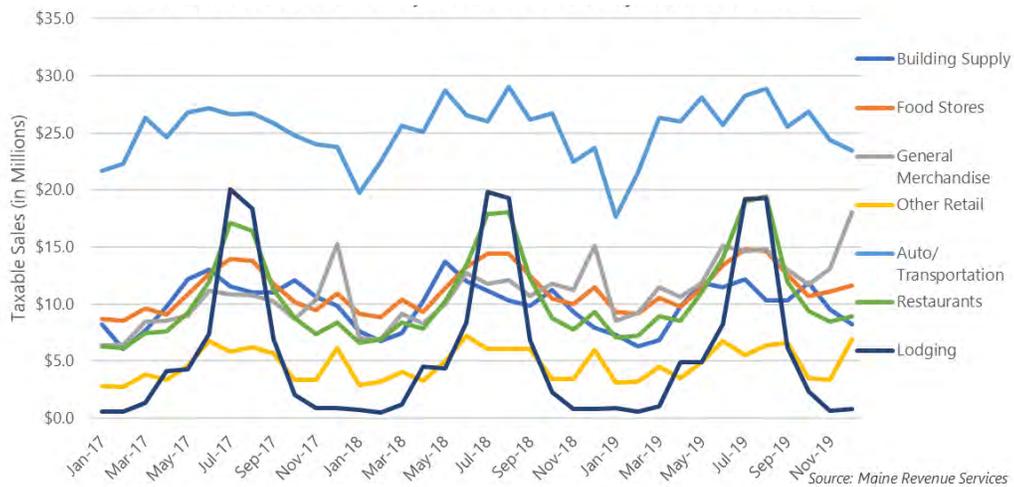
Though seasonal tourism is a boost to Saco's economy, the seasonal population is not as significant as it is in other parts of York or Cumberland Counties.

Tourists and seasonal residents are attracted to Saco's beautiful beaches, historic downtown, two waterparks, the Saco River, and nature trails. Compared to other coastal destinations, however, the seasonal population change is relatively minor. There is no indication that the nature of this seasonal population is changing significantly.

The seasonal population change is most prominent in the seaside neighborhoods. Seasonal house rentals there are required to register with the City which issues 140-150 permits in a typical year. Short-term rentals, which do not currently have registration requirements, are primarily found in the seaside neighborhoods and Downtown area.

Saco's dependence on seasonal residents is mostly limited to recreation-based businesses such as waterparks, marinas, and outdoor outfitters, as well as lodging and local restaurants. The chart below shows a large seasonal spike in regional lodging sales and an increase in restaurant sales during the summer months. Saco has two chain hotels and a number of small motels and campgrounds in addition to seasonal home rentals.

Taxable Sales by Month, 2017-2019
Biddeford Economic Summary Area (ESA)*



*The Economic Summary Area includes Saco as well as Bar Mills, Biddeford, Buxton, Dayton, Hollis, Limington, Ocean Park, and Old Orchard Beach.

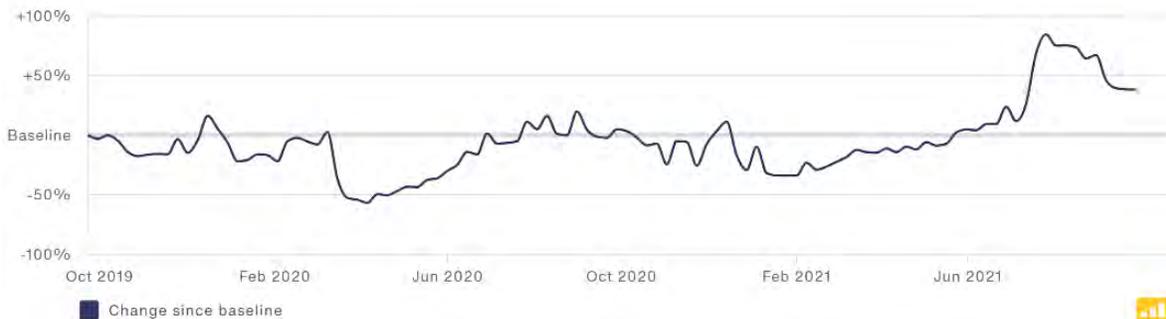
Source: Maine Revenue Services

Saco, ME

All Spend Categories

Change over time period for spend in this geography, weekly total

Week of Sep 23, 2019 to the week of Sep 27, 2021



Spending in the region follows seasonal patterns most year. While 2020 saw no spike in warmer-month spending in Saco due to the pandemic, summer and early fall 2021 spending was up 50% or more. This metric includes all transactions at points-of-sale, such as retail stores and supermarkets, as well as e-commerce transactions in those same categories, by residents and visitors. Source: Replica 2021.

(4) If your community is a service center or has a major employer, are additional efforts required to serve a daytime population that is larger than its resident population?

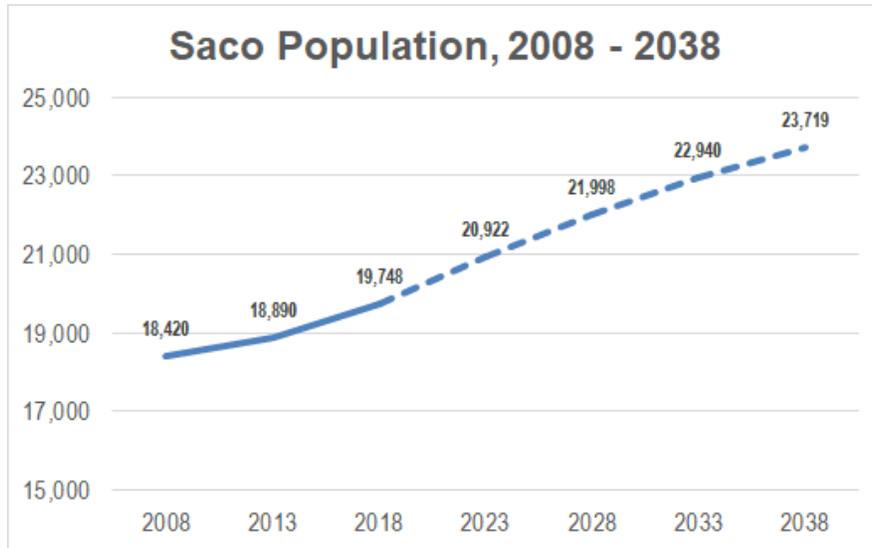
Saco's daytime population is smaller than its resident population.

Saco is listed as a coastal service center in SMPDC's 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). It is estimated to have a daytime population of approximately 17,900 (2021 estimate, ESRI), 12% less than its residential population. Jobs data from 2018 indicates that approximately 9,300 Saco residents leave the City for work and 6,000 workers commute into Saco for jobs. Another 1,500 people live and work in Saco, representing about a quarter of the total jobs.

For workers in Saco, the biggest needs are dining options and daily convenience services. Businesses in Downtown benefit from a variety of options within walking distance. The City's two industrial parks are generally single use and workers have to drive to lunch options or to run errands.

Conditions and Trends

(1) Population



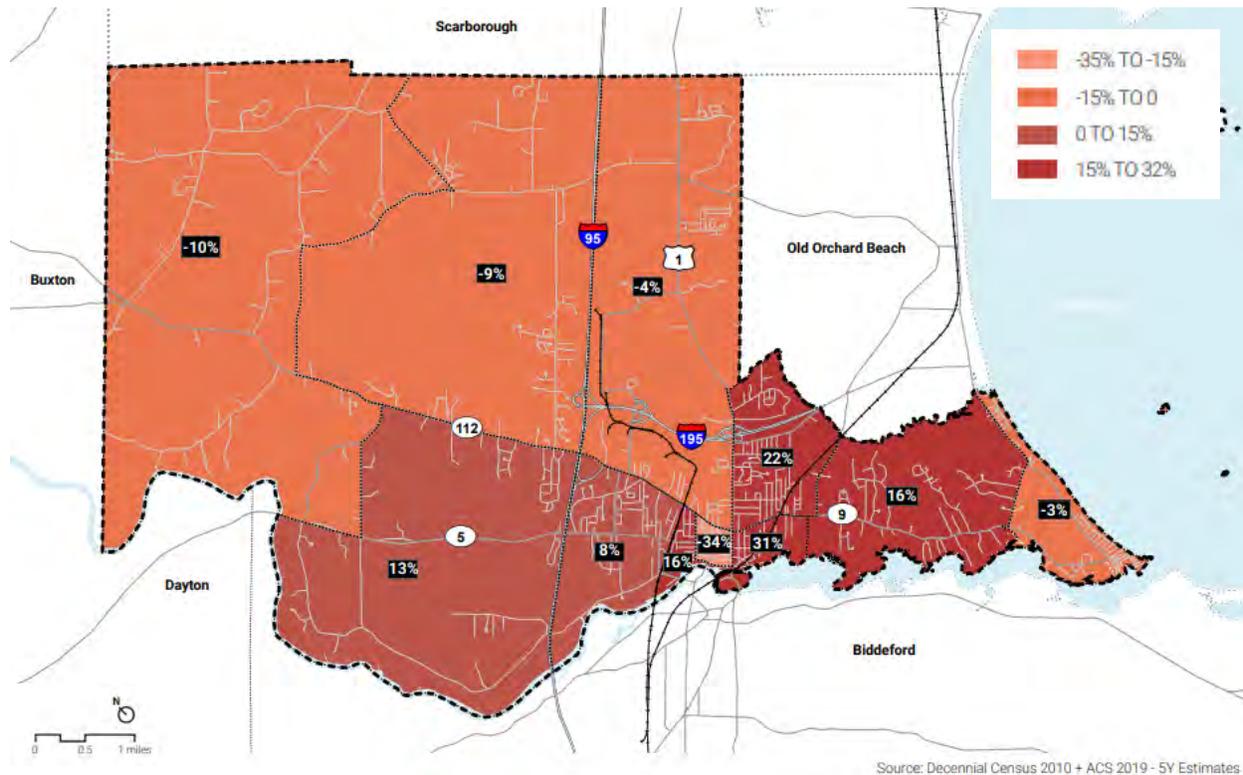
	2008	2013	2018	2023	2028	2033	2038
Population	18,420	18,890	19,748	20,922	21,998	22,940	23,719
10-year % change			7.2%	10.8%	11.4%	9.6%	7.8%

Source: Maine Population Outlook, 2018 to 2038. State Economist.
 Note: This data was published prior to the release of 2020 Census data.

Saco’s population has grown to 20,381 at the 2020 Census, a 10.3% increase over the past decade. Population projections from the State Economist released in Spring 2021 (prior to the release of 2020 Census data) anticipate a 20% increase in Saco’s population between 2018 and 2038. Saco is anticipated to have the fourth-highest growth rate of all municipalities in York County (after Hollis, Eliot, and Wells), and the largest numerical increase of any municipality in the State of Maine.

According to American Community Survey 2019 5-year estimates, Saco’s population growth since 2010 has primarily been located in Downtown and in-town neighborhoods as well as the Route 5 corridor. Parts of North Saco saw a slight decrease in population during that period.

Estimated Population Change, 2010-2019



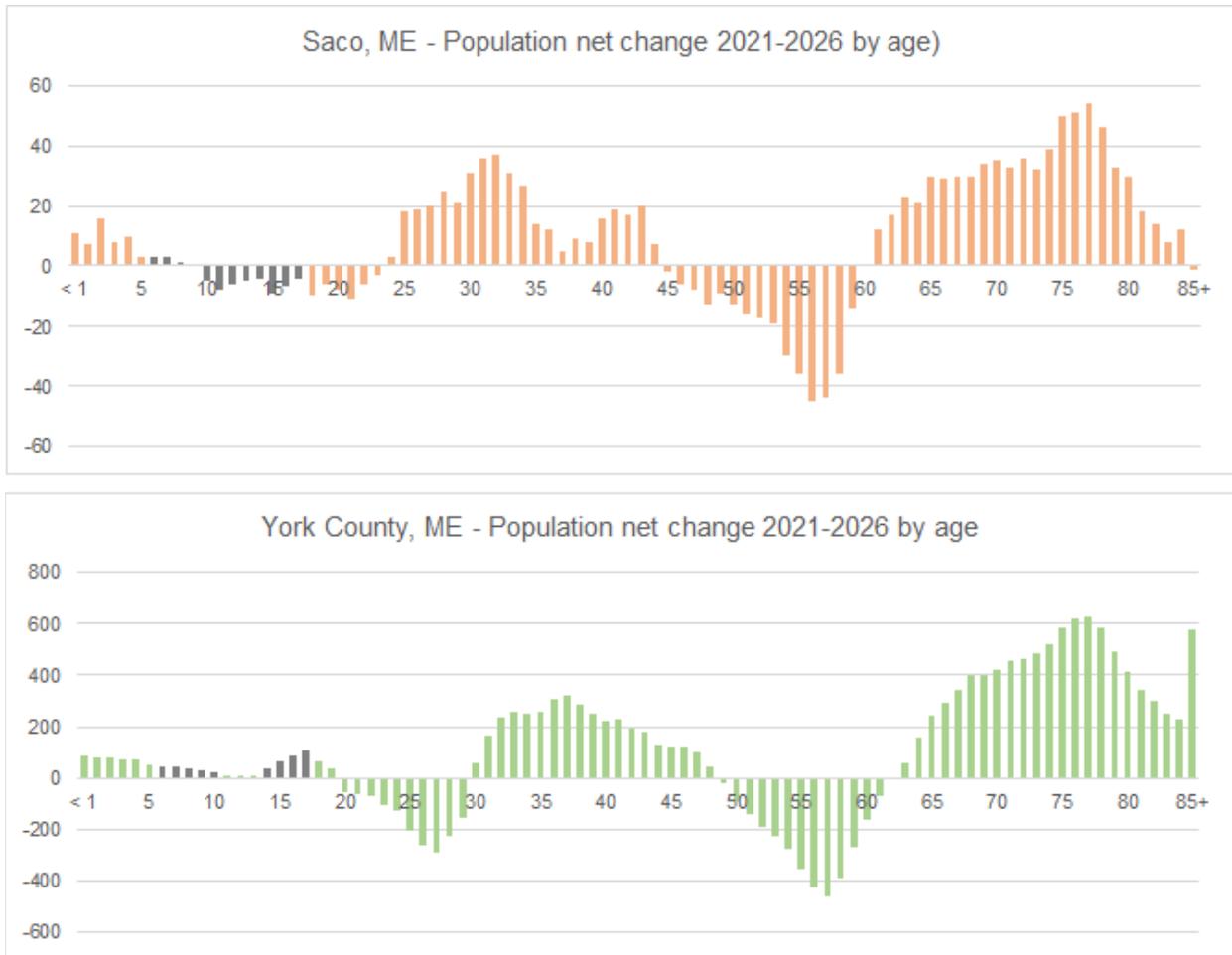
Source: 2010 Census and American Community Survey 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates

(2) Demographic change

Age

Saco’s median age is 44 (2021 estimate, ESRI), an increase of more than two years since 2010. Population growth in the next five years is projected to be driven primarily by an increase in residents older than 60 and those in their mid-20s to mid-40s. Modest growth is also expected to occur in the under 5 age range. At the same time, the number of residents in their mid-40s to late 50s is projected to decrease.

Over the next five years, the net change in school-age kids is expected to be slightly negative in Saco. This net change represents a 1.5% drop in total school age kids from 2,678 in 2021 to 2,637 in 2026. However, Saco Schools has a high student mobility rate and the actual enrollment each year can increase or decrease by tens of students. Given the schools current capacity constraints, any significant increase would create short-term issues.



Source: ESRI Business Analyst (2021)

In comparison, York County is anticipated to see lower growth in the 25-35 age range but a slight increase among school-age kids by 2026.

Race and Ethnicity

According to the 2020 Census, slightly more than 90% of Saco’s population is white. The City’s minority population has increased almost 120% since 2010, up to approximately 10% of the population from less than 5%. The Hispanic or Latino population has increased as well, from 1.3% in 2010 to 2.2% in 2020.

Population by Race, Saco, ME

	2020
White	90.6%
Black/African American	1.7%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.2%
Asian	1.8%
Pacific Islander	0.01%
Other Race	0.9%
Two or More Races	4.9%

Source: 2020 Decennial Census

Gender

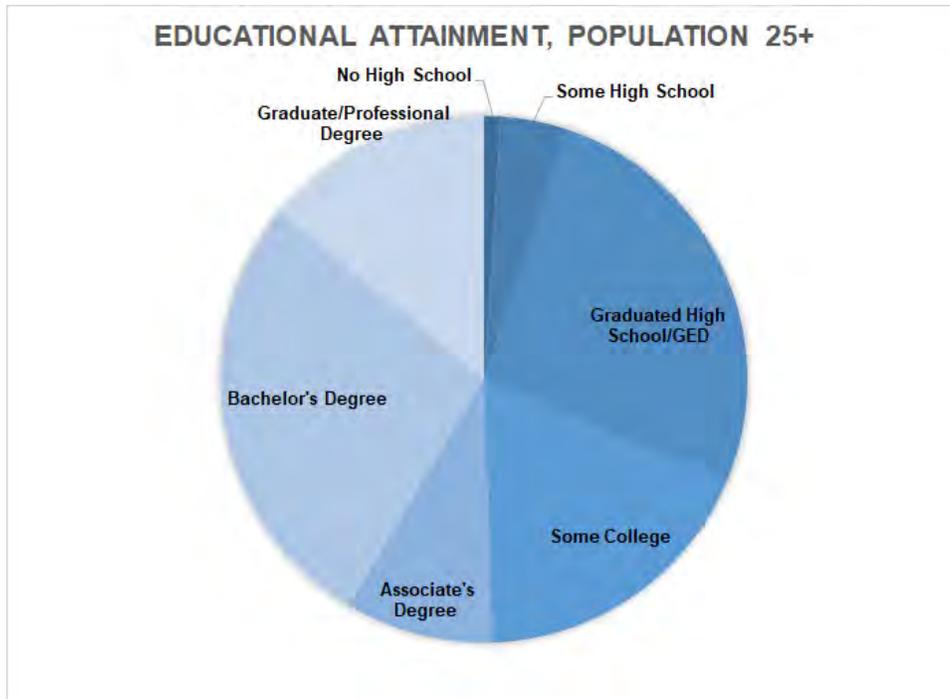
Saco's population is approximately 49% male and 51% female. The population older than age 65 has a higher percentage of females than males, typical for that age cohort. Among children age 18 and younger, there are slightly more males than females.

Source: 2021 estimates, ESRI

Educational Attainment

Saco's population is generally well-educated, with more than 40% of adults ages 25+ having a bachelor's degree or higher. However, more than a quarter have only a high school diploma or less.

Saco Population 25+ by Level of Educational Attainment, 2021



Source: ESRI Business Analyst

Veteran Status

Approximately 7.5% of the civilian population age 18 or older is a veteran. Just over one-third served during the Vietnam era, 22% in the Gulf War era only (defined as August 1990 to August 2001), approximately 8% in the post-9/11 era, and 4.5% in World War II.

Source: American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates

Households

Saco is estimated to have 7,953 households, of which approximately 66% are family households (ACS 2015-2019). Over 60% of households are 1- or 2-person households.

- Among family households with one or more children under 18 years, almost 38% are a female or male householder with no spouse present.
- Among households with people 65 years or older, approximately 36% are only one person compared to 19% of households without someone 65 years or older.
- Approximately 1,850 households, representing 23.5% of all households, have at least one person with a disability.

- Approximately 7% of households reported income in the past 12 months below poverty level. Ten percent of households use SNAP benefits (food stamps) and approximately three percent received public assistance income in the past 12 months.

Households, Saco, ME

Total	7,953	-
Family	5,213	65.5%
Non-family	2,740	34.5%
1- and 2-person households	4,978	62.6%
Households with 1+ person under 18 years	2,406	30.3%
Households with people 65 years and older	2,209	27.8%

Source: American Community Survey, 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates

7. Economy

Analyses

(1) Is the economy experiencing significant change, and how does this, or might this, affect the local population, employment, and municipal tax base?

Saco has seen modest job growth in recent years, an approximate five percent increase since 2014. Most residents work outside Saco and the municipal tax base is heavily reliant on residential property taxes. The long-term impacts of COVID-19 are varied and still evolving.

The City is maintaining and slightly growing its commercial economic base, but there is a need to further increase the commercial and industrial tax base to shift some of the community’s operating costs away from residential taxpayers, on whom the municipal tax base remains heavily dependent. Economic diversification will also build a more resilient economy.

Between 2010 and 2019, Saco experienced an estimated 4% employment growth rate compared to an 8% population growth rate. Other nearby communities like Biddeford, Scarborough, and Portland saw higher rates of employment growth than population growth.

The fastest growing and declining industries by 2019 jobs are shown in the table below.

Saco (04072) Top and Bottom 4-Digit Industries by 2019 Jobs, 2014 - 2024										
NAICS	Description	2014 Jobs	2019 Jobs	2024 Jobs	2014 - 2019 Change	2014 - 2019 % Change	2019 - 2024 Change	2019 - 2024 % Change	Location Quotient	Avg. Earnings Per Job
5413	Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	183	277	318	94	51%	41	15%	3.06	\$83,570
6232	Residential Intellectual and Developmental Disability, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Facilities	224	311	341	87	39%	30	10%	8.44	\$42,107
9011	Federal Government, Civilian	272	339	371	67	25%	32	9%	2.07	\$114,440
5613	Employment Services	267	212	195	(55)	(21%)	(17)	(8%)	1.03	\$37,649
6216	Home Health Care Services	243	177	154	(66)	(27%)	(23)	(13%)	1.99	\$44,866
4244	Grocery and Related Product Merchant Wholesalers	308	113	75	(195)	(63%)	(38)	(34%)	2.47	\$52,306

Source: EMSI

Most people who live in Saco work elsewhere, and most employees who work in Saco live elsewhere. Saco generally exports professional labor and imports service occupations, leading to an average earnings per job in Saco that is lower than earnings per job in other parts of the region.

Saco will continue to feel the effects of larger national trends related to ongoing recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. These include retail disruption and changes in office work and commute patterns. Saco may be seen as an increasingly attractive place for people to live who work remotely in jobs based in Portland, Boston, or other places. Retail trends favoring unique experiences and walkable places may support further investment in Downtown Saco or new mixed-use neighborhoods. Demand for office space may decline if remote work and flexible schedules reduce the number of people in the office on a daily basis. Long-term, changes in mobility like shared vehicles and online car shopping may impact the viability of the numerous car sales lots on Route 1/Portland Road. Small-scale manufacturing may

emerge as a growth sector, one in which locally-made products are sold online and in storefronts. An ability to be nimble and quickly adapt to changing circumstances will continue to be important for Saco's economy.

(2) Does the community have defined priorities for economic development? Are these priorities reflected in regional economic development plans?

Saco established priorities for economic development in its 2020 Economic Development Market Analysis and Action Plan.

Those priorities include:

- Increase resiliency through diversification
- Focus attraction efforts on industry sectors with local and regional strength
- Continue to fill existing business parks without expanding
- Connect economic development and land use planning
- Serve as communicator and connector instead of developer

In addition to these, other initiatives include:

- Support strategic mixed-use development in identified nodes throughout the city
- Unlock riverfront access and development potential
- Activate the riverfront with events and programming

These are generally reflected in SMPDC's 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). That plan emphasizes asset-based cluster development around industries like manufacturing, entrepreneurship and innovation, education and workforce development, improved access to capital, and quality of place initiatives that leverage the natural and cultural assets of the region.

(3) If there is a traditional downtown or village center(s) in the community? If so, are they deteriorating or thriving?

Saco has a traditional downtown near the Saco River that many people view as a central part of the City's identity.

Downtown Saco stretches for several blocks from the Saco River. It provides a mix of retail, restaurant, office, and municipal uses with some housing located on upper floors and more in the surrounding historic neighborhood. It is a small but successful area, attracting several new businesses that opened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its historic buildings and adjacent neighborhoods, walkable scale, and proximity to the river are assets to continue building from. Vacant former office space is attracting interest for residential conversion to reanimate upper floors. There is a desire for more dining options, community gathering places, and programming along the river.

The downtowns of Saco and Biddeford were historically linked by the mills. Today, both downtowns have separate Main Street organizations that promote local businesses and host events. There is opportunity to strengthen physical and economic ties between these two complementary downtowns for them to thrive together.

(4) Is tourism an important part of the local economy? If so, what steps has the community taken to support this industry?

Tourism is one component of Saco's economy but is not a major driver. Due to its natural assets and location, there is opportunity to expand tourism in modest but important ways.

Saco's beautiful beaches and open spaces, the Saco River, and historic downtown provide visitors with many recreational and cultural opportunities. Several Saco businesses supply goods and services to tourists. Visitor services include motels, campgrounds, water parks, the trail system, and other outdoor activities.

The Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission's 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy highlights the Saco River as a key asset in the overall growth of the region's tourism industry. It is lightly used in Saco today and improving public access would expand its recreational potential and support local businesses.

Bicycle tourism is another opportunity supported by the Eastern Trail through Saco. There is currently a gap between its off-road segments in Saco and Biddeford that somewhat limit this however. Completing the 3-mile Over the River trail connection would likely increase the number of through-riders and open more opportunities to attract bicycle tourists to downtown and the riverfront. An initial strategy of improving signage and on-road cycling facilities from the existing trailhead at Thorntown Academy across the Saco River could attract users to downtown businesses and restaurants. A proposed pedestrian/bicycle bridge connecting Saco Island and Biddeford would also increase access for tourists and residents and would have economic benefits for local businesses.

(5) Do/should home occupations play a role in the community?

Home occupations are a conditional use in all residential zoning districts and a permitted use in four commercial/mixed-use districts. According to 2018 American Community Survey data, there were approximately 1,000 self-employed workers in Saco.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the trend of remote work for many employers. While the long-term effects are still evolving, some amount of remote work or hybrid schedules is likely to increase the number of residents working from home at least part of the time.

(6) Are there appropriate areas within the community for industrial or commercial development? If so, are performance standards necessary to assure that industrial and commercial development is compatible with the surrounding land uses and landscape?

Mill Brook Business Park and Saco Industrial Park are two appropriate areas for further industrial and commercial development. The Route 1 corridor is an opportunity for future growth. Both of the City's business parks have been successful attracting a variety of employers to Saco. They are well-buffered from surrounding areas to minimize negative impacts. Only a few undeveloped lots are left in either.

- Mill Brook Business Park is a 10-lot, 70-acre development with public water and sewer located one mile from I-195 with access to US Route 1.
- Saco Industrial Park is a 20-lot, 120-acre development with public water and sewer located near I-95 with access to US Route 1.

The Portland Road/Route 1 corridor is currently a strip development corridor with a high concentration of auto dealership lots. Over time, this area is a prime location for additional commercial and/or industrial development as well as mixed-use village-type developments. As the business parks fill up, this corridor is an important opportunity for future development to grow the commercial tax base. Performance standards will be needed to ensure a compatible mix of uses.

(7) Are public facilities, including sewer, water, broadband access or three-phase power, needed to support the projected location, type, and amount of economic activity, and what are the issues involved in providing them?

Public facilities to support economic development are largely in place to support growth in desired areas. The City's two business parks have adequate utilities to support current and future users. The City of Saco has been expanding sewer infrastructure along Route 1 in an effort to attract more commercial development to this corridor. Natural gas also needs to be extended in this area as it does not currently extend to Cascade Road. The Water Resource Recovery Facility has capacity to accommodate increased usage from commercial or industrial users.

(8) If there are local or regional economic development incentives such as TIF districting, do they encourage development in growth areas?

Yes, Saco was an early adopter of TIF districts to encourage economic growth and has seen this strategy pay dividends. The City's ten TIF districts are entirely within growth areas. Five of the TIFs are in the two existing business parks and two other TIFs are located along Portland Road. The transit-oriented TIF was adopted in 2021 to more closely link economic development and transit. See Conditions and Trends question 5 for a summary of the TIF districts.

9) How can/does the community use its unique assets such as recreational opportunities, historic architecture, civic events, etc. for economic growth?

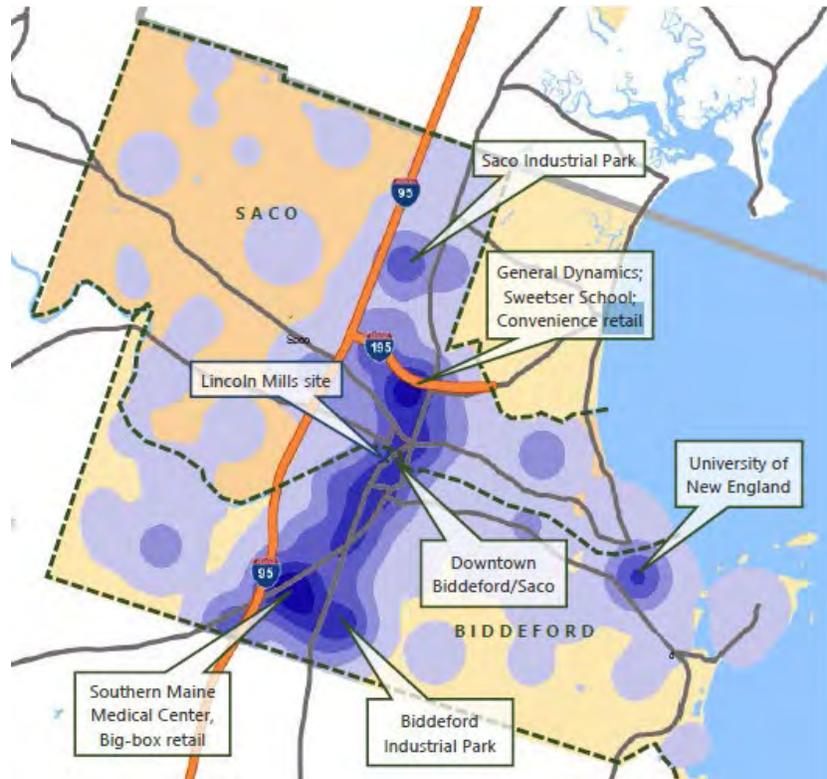
Saco benefits from an intact historic downtown, its location on the Saco River and Saco Bay, and its proximity to accessible open spaces like Ferry Beach State Park and Saco Heath Preserve. Saco's sandy beaches and two water parks attract seasonal visitors. The Saco River is an underutilized asset that could attract more recreational users and businesses. Downtown offers a variety of restaurants and small shops within a short walk of the Amtrak station. Saco Main Street, Inc. is a non-profit that organizes popular festivals and events throughout the year to draw visitors to the historic downtown.

The Eastern Trail is a multiuse bicycle and pedestrian route that traverses Saco. The northerly off-road segment currently ends at Thornton Academy near Downtown, directing trail users along City streets to pick up the southerly off-road segment in Biddeford. The Eastern Trail Alliance is working to complete the Over the River off-road connection which would increase through-riders on the trail. More could be done to encourage trail-oriented development along the Eastern Trail and to direct users from the trail to nearby destinations like local businesses, restaurants, and recreation areas.

Conditions and Trends

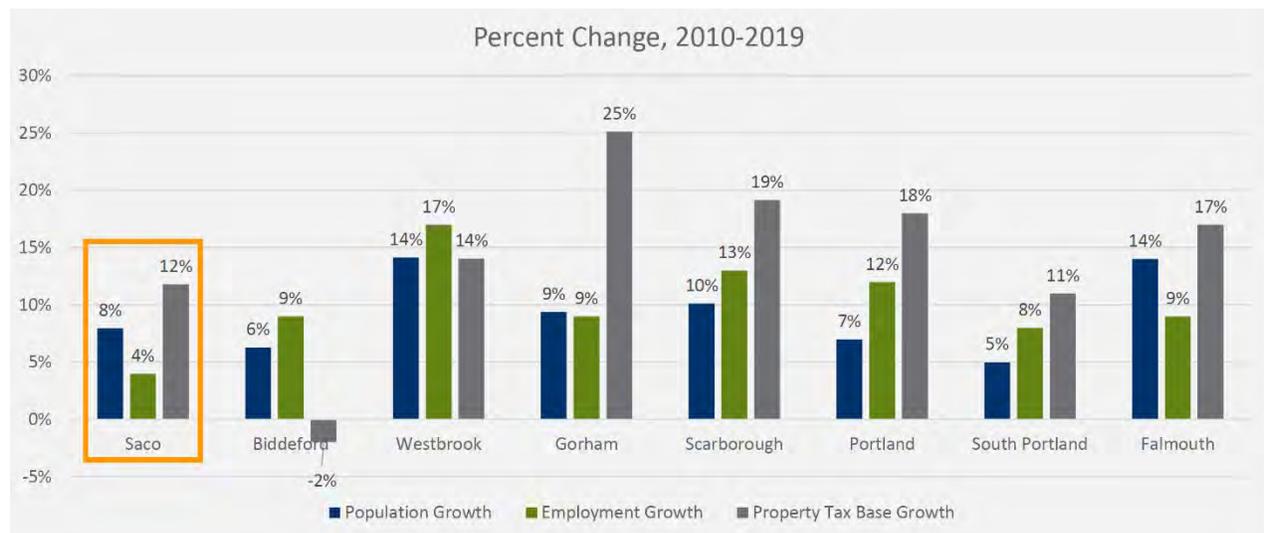
(1) The community’s Comprehensive Planning Economic Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Office or its designee.

Employment centers include Downtown Saco and the city’s two business parks near I-195.



Source: Economic Development Market Analysis (Camion Associates)

Population Growth and Employment Growth in Saco and Nearby York and Cumberland County Municipalities (2010-2019)



Source: Economic Development Market Analysis (Camion Associates)

Saco’s population grew at a faster pace than employment in the period between 2010 and 2019. Most comparative municipalities saw faster rates of employment growth than population growth, with the exceptions of Falmouth and Gorham. Saco’s property tax base growth lagged most comparative communities as well, in part due to the relative slow growth of commercial uses.

Top Employers, City of Saco, 2020

City of Saco Principal Employers Businesses by Number of Employees, 2020		
Employer	Employees	Rank
City of Saco	376	1
Saco School Department	353	2
Prime Dealerships	306	3
Sweetser Children's Services	301	4
Thornton Academy	211	5
General Dynamics	205	6
Hannaford Brothers	203	7
Saco & Biddeford Savings	131	8
Shaw's Supermarkets	130	9
Precision Manufacturing	95	10

Source: Maine Department of Labor, US Department of Labor, data compiled by City of Saco Planning & Development contacting businesses

Saco’s top employers include local government, Saco Schools, and an auto dealership. The top ten employers account for approximately one-quarter of the total jobs in Saco. General Dynamics is identified as a regional manufacturing asset in the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission's 2021 CEDS report.

Saco Jobs by Industry - 2014, 2019, 2024

Saco (04072) Jobs by Industry, 2014 - 2024										
NAICS	Description	2014 Jobs	2019 Jobs	2024 Jobs	2014 - 2019 Change	2014 - 2019 % Change	2019 - 2024 Change	2019 - 2024 % Change	Location Quotient	Avg. Earnings Per Job
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0.00	\$ -
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0.00	\$ -
22	Utilities	26	35	34	9	35%	(1)	(3%)	1.10	\$ 62,161
23	Construction	484	517	520	33	7%	3	1%	0.98	\$ 48,644
31	Manufacturing	618	696	690	78	13%	(6)	(1%)	0.94	\$ 71,020
42	Wholesale Trade	567	363	323	(204)	(36%)	(40)	(11%)	1.06	\$ 75,272
44	Retail Trade	1,068	1,154	1,197	86	8%	43	4%	1.24	\$ 50,730
48	Transportation and Warehousing	173	235	270	62	36%	35	15%	0.68	\$ 47,949
51	Information	66	87	87	21	32%	0	0%	0.51	\$ 41,173
52	Finance and Insurance	305	343	348	38	12%	5	1%	0.92	\$ 73,137
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	119	115	116	(4)	(3%)	1	1%	0.73	\$ 40,578
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	468	556	601	88	19%	45	8%	0.90	\$ 75,996
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	116	126	137	10	9%	11	9%	0.94	\$ 95,680
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	684	616	612	(68)	(10%)	(4)	(1%)	1.06	\$ 35,858
61	Educational Services	472	504	548	32	7%	44	9%	2.10	\$ 46,348
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	1,254	1,322	1,335	68	5%	13	1%	1.11	\$ 41,775
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	385	404	413	19	5%	9	2%	2.47	\$ 22,889
72	Accommodation and Food Services	862	928	959	66	8%	31	3%	1.16	\$ 26,809
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	378	397	404	19	5%	7	2%	0.90	\$ 33,620
90	Government	861	936	967	75	9%	31	3%	0.67	\$ 81,091
Total		8,904	9,333	9,560	429	5%	227	2%		\$ 52,024

Source: EMSI

Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Government are the industries with the most jobs in Saco as of 2019. Average earnings per job in Health Care and Retail are lower than the overall City average.

The Transportation and Warehousing industry saw the highest percent increase in jobs between 2014 and 2019, and is forecast to continue growing over the next five years. The Utilities and Information industries also saw significant growth rates between 2014 and 2019 but are projected to see minimal growth over the next five years. The Wholesale Trade and Administrative and Support industries saw the largest percent decline in jobs between 2014 and 2019.

Gross Regional Product for Saco, 2019

Gross Regional Product, 2019					
NAICS	Description	Saco (04072)		York and Cumberland Counties	Maine
44	Retail Trade	\$ 103,226,405	13%	7%	9%
90	Government	\$ 96,731,669	12%	13%	14%
31	Manufacturing	\$ 79,499,954	10%	11%	12%
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	\$ 67,260,960	9%	12%	13%
42	Wholesale Trade	\$ 64,463,458	8%	7%	6%
52	Finance and Insurance	\$ 60,566,156	8%	11%	8%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	\$ 60,288,223	8%	8%	6%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	\$ 42,286,844	5%	5%	4%
23	Construction	\$ 40,114,435	5%	5%	6%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	\$ 34,508,561	4%	3%	3%
61	Educational Services	\$ 25,471,526	3%	2%	2%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	\$ 23,024,101	3%	2%	2%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$ 20,809,112	3%	3%	3%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	\$ 16,671,842	2%	2%	2%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$ 15,854,649	2%	1%	1%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	\$ 14,417,022	2%	3%	2%
51	Information	\$ 13,411,058	2%	3%	2%
22	Utilities	\$5,458,862	1%	1%	1%
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	\$-	0%	1%	2%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	\$-	0%	0%	0%
Total		\$ 784,064,834	100%	100%	100%

Source: Emsi

Retail Trade, Government, and Manufacturing contribute the most to Saco's Gross Regional Product (GRP), together accounting for almost one-third of the total.

(2) A brief historical perspective on how and why the current economy of the community and region developed.

- Starting in 1630, the mouth of the Saco River became a center of English settlement which included fisherman, traders, lumberjacks, and farmers. It was abandoned in 1690 at the outbreak of King William's War but after 1713, the Saco side of the river quickly returned to prosperity as a farming, fishing, and lumbering community. In the mid- to late 1700's, the town grew rapidly in size and wealth as farming, lumbering, and ship building bloomed and prospered. By the time of

the American Revolution, the growth of international commerce in the town required the government to establish a customs house near the wharves.

- With the establishment of the Saco Iron Works in 1811, the Industrial Revolution arrived in Saco. In 1826, a seven-story cotton mill was constructed followed by additional mills in both Saco and Biddeford. In the next 25 years, Saco could boast of dozens of industries from cotton mills and machine shops, to iron foundries and cigar factories. With the development of massive cotton mills on the western falls of the river, the sister cities of Biddeford and Saco became leaders of manufacturing in the industrial age by 1850. Saco and Biddeford's role as a major textile manufacturing center continued to grow during the late 1800s and early 1900s.
- Following the Second World War, Saco underwent a second major transformation. The closing of the York Mills in 1958 brought the textile manufacturing era to a close. Route One began to emerge as a commercial strip. The City's role as a "mill town" disappeared in 1987 with the virtual abandonment of Factory Island as an employment center.
- Saco's proximity to the employment and retail centers of Greater Portland influence the economic relationship between the two. The City began to develop its Industrial Park to replace the jobs lost with the collapse of the region's traditional industries. During the 1980s and 1990's, efforts to revitalize Factory Island as a mixed-use development were begun. In the past decades, the area's economy has continued to grow and diversify. The City has successfully undertaken the development of multi-phase industrial and business parks. Downtown Saco is revitalizing and the former mills on Factory Island have been redeveloped as new housing and office space.

(3) A list of local and regional economic development plans developed over the past five years, which include the community.

- 2020 Economic Development Market Analysis and Action Plan, prepared by Camoin Associates for City of Saco
- 2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission
 - Identifies infrastructure upgrades on Saco Island and commercialization center for textiles as Saco's two high-impact projects.
 - Identifies General Dynamics as one of the regions important manufacturing assets
- 2018 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission

(4) Where does the community's population work and where do employees in your community reside? A description of the major employers in the community and labor market area and their outlook for the future.

Commuter trends



Source: OnTheMap 2018, US Census Bureau

- As of 2018, over 6,000 people commute into the City of Saco for work. Approximately 1,500 Saco residents both live and work within the city and nearly 9,400 residents commute out of Saco for work.
- The majority of Saco's workforce lives within York and Cumberland Counties, with 21% residing in Saco, 12% in Biddeford, and 6% in Portland. Approximately 48% of Saco's workers travel less than 10 miles from their home to work at Saco businesses, while 10% travel over 50 miles from areas including Boston, MA, and Bangor, ME.
- The majority of Saco residents work within the two-county region, including approximately 14% who work within the city. Approximately 20% work in Portland (about 17 miles away) and 10% work across the river in Biddeford. In terms of distance traveled, 41% of Saco residents travel less than 10 miles to work while 8% work over 50 miles from the city in places including Lewiston and Augusta, ME.
- The pandemic's long-term impact on remote work and hybrid schedules is still developing. Saco may see more people living in the city while working for companies based elsewhere.

Major employers

The top twenty-five occupations in Saco include a mix of industries spanning Health Care and Social Services, Retail and Food Related industries, Education, and Construction. The top occupation in Saco is Personal Care Aides with 325 jobs as of 2019. This occupation has grown nearly 28% since 2014 and is projected to continue adding jobs into 2024. The highest paying top occupation is General and Operations Managers with average earnings of \$48.60 per hour, compared to only \$12.21 for Personal Care Aides. Overall, most of the top occupations have experienced job gains since 2014, and those that did lose jobs, declined only marginally. Most of Saco's businesses are small businesses, similar to the region. 34% of Saco businesses have fewer than 5 employees, and 84% have fewer than 20.

- **Health Care** (NAICS 62 Health Care and Social Assistance): The Health Care and Social Assistance industry is the largest industry by jobs in the City of Saco. Saco's Health Care industry has lower than average earnings at \$42,000 per job, compared to the surrounding two county region (\$63,900 per job) and state (\$59,200 per job). Lower earnings can be attributed to Saco's high concentration of Personal Care Aides, which have hourly earnings of \$12.21, thus driving down earning figures in the city. Residential Intellectual and Developmental Disability, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Facilities are also highly concentrated in Saco with a location quotient (LQ)1 of 8.44. Jobs in this industry grew from 224 in 2014 to 311 in 2019 and are projected to continue growing. As the population is projected to age, demand for health care services will increase and contribute to industry growth. The largest Health Care establishment in Saco is Evergreen Rehabilitation & Living Center, a nursing home with 80 employees. Other establishments include Sweetser and Spurwink which focus on behavioral health and disability services.
- **Retail, Arts, and Accommodations and Food Services** (NAICS 44 Retail Trade, NAICS 71 Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and NAICS 72 Accommodation and Food Services): Retail Trade is the largest driver of Saco's economy with over \$103.2 million in Gross Regional Product (GRP) or 13% of the total GRP. Most occupations that fall within this sector have grown since 2014 and are projected to continue adding jobs into 2024. However, the majority of these occupations are lower earning including Retail Salespersons with average hourly earnings of \$14.42 and Waiters and Waitresses with average hourly earnings at \$14.67. Saco is home to Funtown Splashtown USA, Aquaboggan, and a variety of other establishments that contribute to the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industry. The concentration of these recreational assets creates a regional draw and contributes to a high location quotient of 16.38 for Amusement Parks and Arcades.
- **Manufacturing** (NAICS 31-33): Between 2014 and 2019, the Manufacturing sector expanded by 78 jobs within Saco for a growth rate of 13%. Manufacturing growth has been driven by the Small

Arms, Ordnance, and Ordnance Accessories Manufacturing sector and the Roped, Cordage, Twine, Tire Cord, and Tire Fabric Mills sector, which are both significantly concentrated with LQs of 220.0 and 328.49, respectively. Seafood Product Preparation and Packing also has a high LQ at 37.76, and growth in this industry have been driven by the recent development of Ready Seafood, the largest lobster processing plant in Maine. Manufacturing has a significant presence throughout the two-county region and, therefore, there are regional assets that Saco can draw on to drive growth. This includes food production, aerospace, medical and lifelines related manufacturing, and textiles. Manufacturing is typically tied to an economy's Wholesale Trade sector. Within Saco, the Wholesale Trade industry experienced a historic decline in Grocery and Related Product Merchant Wholesalers.

- **Professional and Technical Services** (NAICS 54 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Service and NAICS 52 Finance and Insurance): Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services has been the primary driver of growth in this sector, increasing from 183 jobs in 2014 to 277 jobs in 2019. Depository Credit Intermediation also grew from 233 jobs in 2014 to 256 jobs in 2019. Both industries are projected to continue growing into the future. York and Cumberland Counties also have strong growth in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry, expanding 16% from 2014 to 2024. Despite its small size relative to the nearby cluster in Boston, the life science research and development and related manufacturing has gained strength in Southern Maine. The research and development assets in Saco include Maine Molecular Quality Controls and New Earth Ecological Consulting with Maine Medical Center Research Institution, University of New England, Idexx, ClearH2O, and others nearby. Computer Systems Design and Related Services is strong in terms of jobs and growth at the two-county level. Average earnings in this sector rank above average at approximately \$75,000 per job.

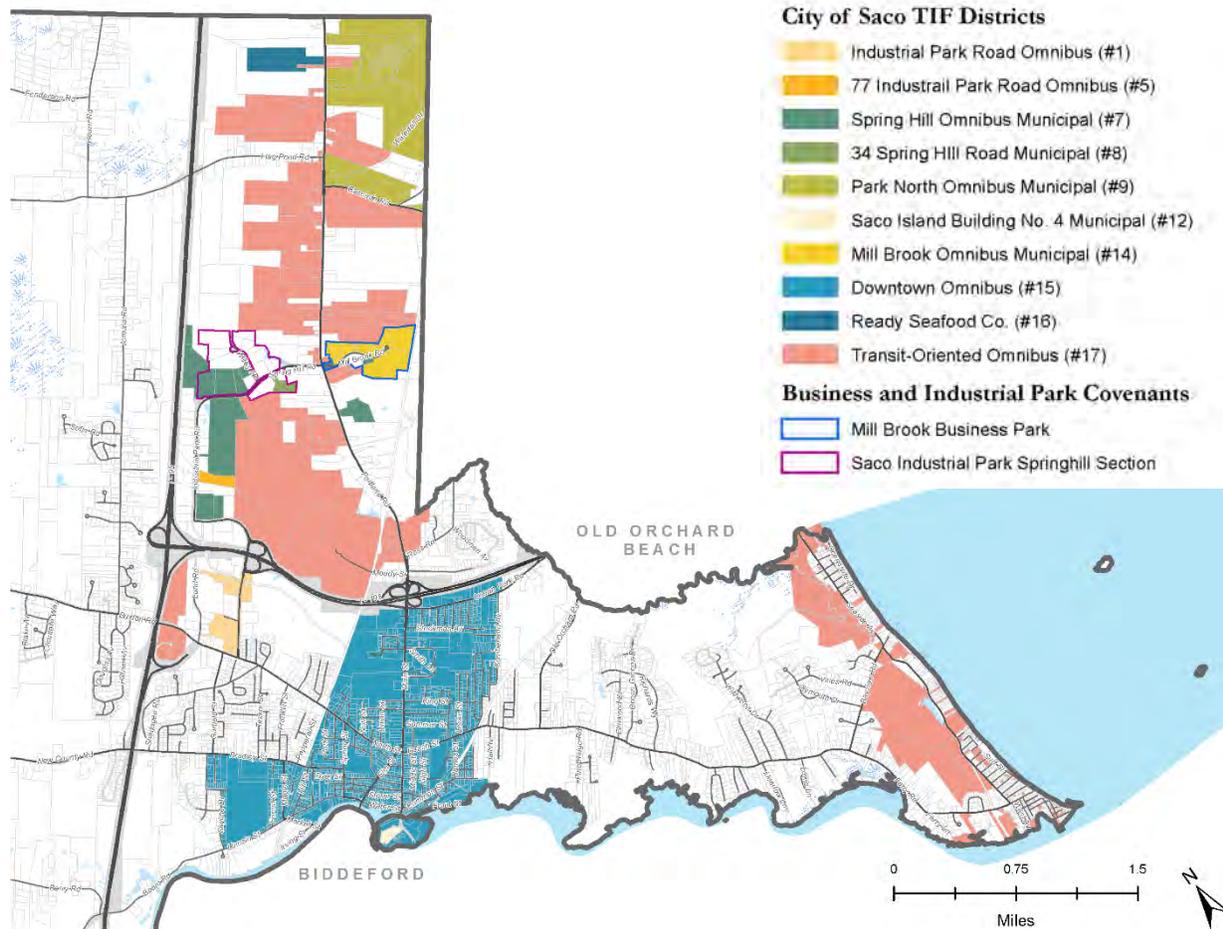
(5) A description of any economic development incentive districts, such as tax increment financing districts, in the community.

Tax Increment Financing

Saco was the first community in the State of Maine to use the tax increment financing (TIF) program. It has ten TIF districts occupying approximately 1,435 acres, most of which is in the downtown district. Excluding the Downtown Development TIF, 2.47% of Saco's municipal acreage is within a TIF district, well below the 5% cap allowed.

- Industrial Park Road Omnibus (TIF #1): 33 acres with a 20-year term expiring in 2038
- 77 Industrial Park Road Omnibus –AMD 2 (TIF #5): 10 acres with a 30-year term expiring in 2028
- Spring Hill Omnibus Municipal –AMD 2 (TIF #7): 135 acres with a 20-year term expiring in 2032
- 34 Spring Hill Road Municipal –AMD 2 (TIF #8): 6.9 acres with a 30-year term expiring in 2039, and a credit enhancement agreement capped at \$125,000.
- Park North Omnibus Municipal –AMD 2 (TIF #9): 323 acres with a 30-year term expiring in 2038. TIF incentivized mixed-use development along Route 1 and a credit enhancement agreement is capped at the direct cost of the sewer extension and debt service.
- Saco Island Building No. 4 Municipal (TIF #12): 5 acres with a 30-year term expiring in 2045. TIF incentivized redevelopment of a historic mill building into new housing and a credit enhancement agreement is capped at \$5 million.
- Mill Brook Omnibus Municipal – AMD 2 (TIF #14): 60 acres with a 30-year term expiring in 2045.

- Downtown Omnibus – AMD 1 (TIF #15): 758 acres with a 30-year term expiring in 2047.
- Ready Seafood Co. (TIF #16): 40 acres with a 30-year term expiring in 2049.
- Transit-Oriented Omnibus (TIF #17): includes parcels near bus transit routes throughout the City, including Route 1, the City’s two business parks, Downtown, and Seaside Avenue.

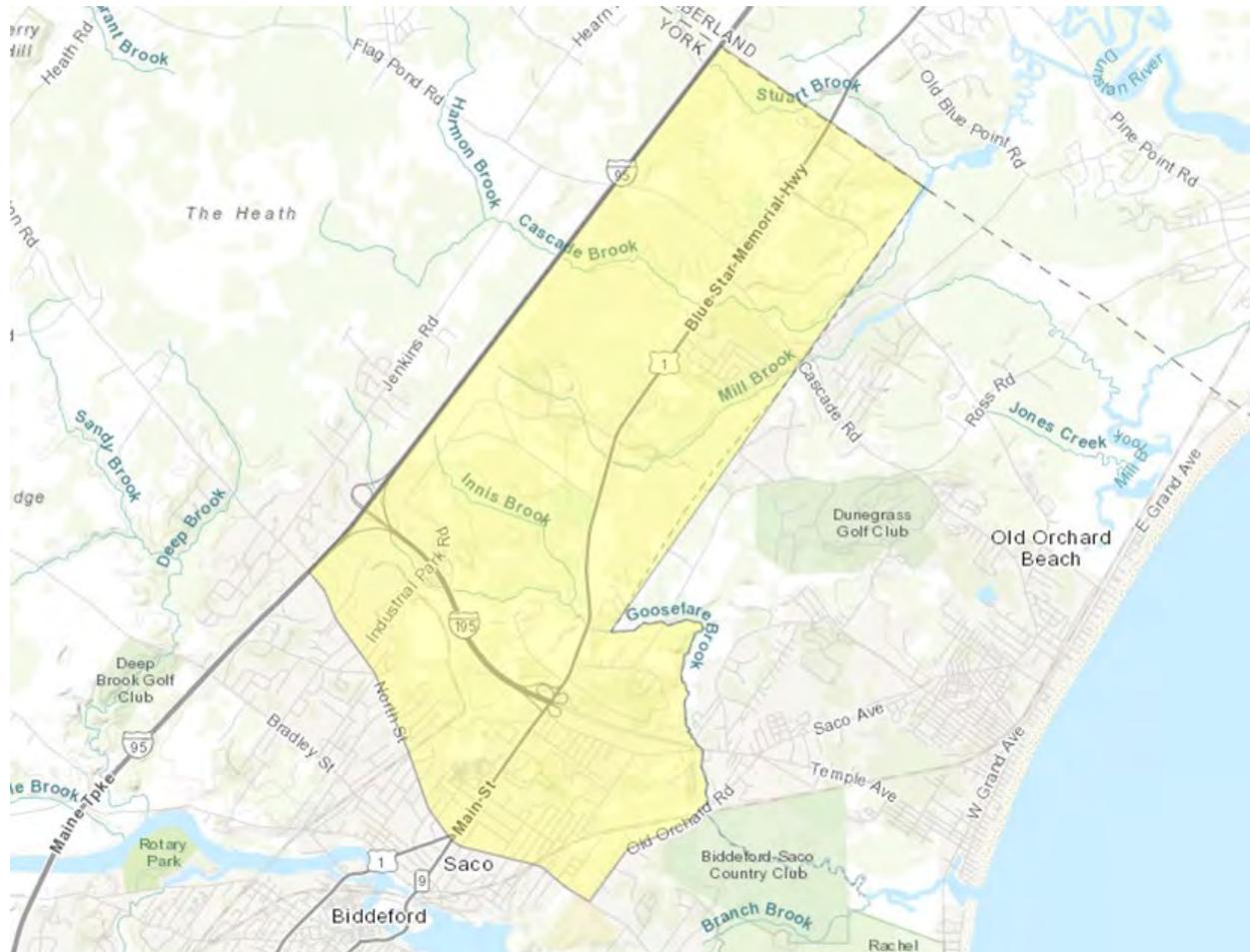


Pine Tree Zone

The Mill Brook Business Park is in one of the state’s Pine Tree Zones, offering many benefits. Qualified businesses may benefit from a refund of 80% of new employees’ income taxes, a 100% corporate income tax refund, and sales and use exemption on construction material and equipment purchases. Qualified businesses include manufacturers, financial services firms, biotechnology, and information technology, as determined eligible by the state.

Opportunity Zone

Saco has York County's only Federal and State Opportunity Zone, located along Portland Road/US Route 1 from the Scarborough town line to North Street/Beach Street just outside the core of Downtown.



Census Tract 52 in Saco is a designated Opportunity Zone

Federal Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ)

Saco is part of an FTZ granted to the Lewiston-Auburn Economic Growth Council that serves Androscoggin, Cumberland, Sagadahoc, and York Counties. Businesses can improve their competitive position compared to foreign counterparts by locating in this zone.

8. Housing

Analyses

(1) How many additional housing units (if any), including rental units, will be necessary to accommodate projected population and demographic changes during the planning period?

Saco’s population is projected to grow by 2,500 over the next 12 years, with an increasing share of people over age 65. To accommodate this projected growth, Saco is likely to need 1,200 to 1,400 or more new housing units, for an average rate of 100 to 115 new housing units per year. Approximately 400 to 950 of those new units are projected to meet rental household growth.

A conservative estimate assuming that variables like average household size, the overall housing vacancy rate, and the renter-occupied housing rate remain constant results in a projection of 1,200 new units including almost 400 new rental units. See the table below for one potential growth scenario in which Saco would need more than 1,400 new housing units, including more than 950 rental units.

Scenario for Additional Housing Units Needed, 2021-2033

Year	Population	Households	Household size	Housing Units	Vacancy rate	Rental rate	Rental units	Additional units added to 2020 supply	Additional rental units added to 2020 supply
2010	18,449	7,623	2.42	8,508	10.4%	29.1%	2,476	-	-
2020	20,381	8,596	2.37	9,486	9.4%	34.9%	3,000	-	-
2028	21,998	9,441	2.33	10,386	9.1%	39.0%	3,682	900	682
2033	22,940	9,931	2.31	10,901	8.9%	40.0%	3,972	1,415	972

Forecast assumes continued decreasing household size and vacancy rate, and increasing renter-occupied housing rate.

Sources: US Decennial Census (2010, 2020), Maine State Economist (2028 and 2033 population), ESRI (2020 rental rate)

- Average household size has been declining in Saco since 2000. If that trend continues, which is likely as the population continues to grow older and has fewer children, then the housing need could increase by several hundred additional new units compared to a conservative estimate.
- If the share of renter-occupied housing increases, then the need for rental units would increase as well. High housing sale prices may prevent people who might otherwise purchase a home from doing so, and aging homeowners may look to rental housing options for a lower-maintenance lifestyle. An increasingly mobile workforce may also prefer the flexibility of an annual lease instead of a 30-year mortgage.

Housing markets are cyclical and driven by many factors including consumer demand and preferences, household incomes, mortgage rates, and labor and raw material costs. Unanticipated changes will also influence what housing actually gets built in the future.

Regardless, Saco needs to proactively plan for new housing in locations and configurations that meet the changing needs of current and future residents as the population continues to grow. Trends and market demand indicate a need for additional rental housing, smaller starter homes available at lower prices, and age-friendly housing options for seniors. Encouraging growth in housing types other than traditional single-family houses in new subdivisions will be important to provide more options for a growing

population and changing demographics. Encouraging new housing in walkable in-town locations already served by public sewer and water will also be important to reduce sprawl in North Saco’s rural areas, limit service area expansions that increase costs to the City, and improve the City’s environmental footprint.

(2) Is housing, including rental housing, affordable to those earning the median income in the region? Is housing affordable to those earning 80% of the median income? If not, review local and regional efforts to address issue.

Both rental and owner-occupied housing in Saco is generally unaffordable to households earning the median income, similar to much of York County.

Housing costs have grown at a faster rate than increases in household income for many years, creating a growing affordability gap in Saco and the region. Construction costs are rising too, with the cost of single family home construction in Saco jumping 24% between 2015 and 2020. Other factors such as high housing costs in places like Portland are pushing more people to look at Saco as a relatively more affordable location. Low mortgage rates and the COVID-19 pandemic have also contributed to recent increased competition for fewer available units, driving up home prices.

In 2020, 71% of Saco renter households (5,882 households) were unable to afford the median two-bedroom rent of \$1,729/month.

Saco’s 2020 Rental Housing Affordability Index is 0.70 per Maine State Housing Authority estimates, which cite \$1,210 as the maximum affordable monthly rent for a household of median income in Saco. To afford median rent, a household would need a base income of \$69,117, 1.43 times the Saco median household income of \$48,395. 80% of Saco’s median income is \$38,716, just more than half the income estimated to be needed to afford median two-bedroom rent.

The **Rental Affordability Index** is the ratio of Two-Bedroom Rent Affordable at Median Renter Income to Median Two-Bedroom Rent. An index of less than 1 means the area is generally unaffordable – i.e., a renter household earning area median renter income could not cover the cost of the median two-bedroom apartment (including utilities) using no more than 30% of gross income.

York County’s Rental Affordability Index score of .61 is even lower than Saco’s, and both are lower than Maine’s (.83). Across Maine, York County has the second lowest score (after Hancock County), though the percentage of households unable to afford median household rent was highest in York County (73%), amounting to 16,577 households.

According to the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, another measure of affordability indicates that over one-third of renters in Saco (36%) are considered housing cost burdened (ACS 2015-19 5-Year Estimate). “Cost burdened” means paying 30% or more of household income on rent, a figure that has been increasing in recent decades .

In 2020, 62% of Saco households were unable to afford the median home price of \$336,000.

Saco’s Homeownership Affordability Index is 0.81 per Maine State Housing Authority estimates, which cite \$273,636 as the maximum affordable home price for a household of median income in Saco. Affording the median Saco home price in 2020 would require a household income of \$95,773, 1.2 times the median household income. In 2020, 77.7% of Saco homes sold were deemed unattainable for Saco residents of median income by Maine State Housing Authority. Of the 260 homes sold, only 58 (22%) were deemed affordable.

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.

Homeownership is less affordable for a household of median income in Saco than in York County or Maine overall. However, across York County, home prices have increased at a much higher rate over the past twenty years than have median incomes.

While the Saco household median income is anticipated to increase slightly by 2026 to \$72,053, the median home value is also anticipated to rise in that time to \$339,487. By the standards of affordability set by Maine State Housing Authority, a household would need to have an annual income of \$103,636 to afford that median home price.

According to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, another measure of affordability indicates that approximately 25% of Saco's owner-occupied households are considered housing cost burdened (ACS 2015-19 5-Year Estimate). "Cost burdened" means paying 30% or more of household income on monthly owner costs

The location of housing is an important factor to consider.

Transportation is typically the second-largest household expense behind housing. Transportation costs are greatly influenced by housing location, since housing closer to jobs, transit, and daily needs like schools and groceries can lead to lower transportation costs. For example, households in Downtown Saco spend, on average, as much as 30% less of their income on housing and transportation costs combined than their neighbors in North Saco and near the coast (source: H+T Affordability Index, Center for Neighborhood Technology).

Local and regional efforts to address affordability are limited.

There are no local or regional affordable housing coalitions or concerted efforts to address this challenging issue. Saco currently has 583 subsidized housing units, a number that has not changed since 2017. Waiting lists for Housing Choice Vouchers and affordable housing locations are years long. The Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission published a Housing Affordability Report for York County in 2021, highlighting disparities between median income and median rent and home prices. Biddeford's City Council adopted Five-Year Housing Goals in 2020 that seek more homeownership and affordable housing for residents.

The Housing Opportunities for Maine (HOME) fund is the primary source of state funding for affordable housing. In 2019 and 2020, MaineHousing invested over \$35 million of HOME funds to serve low- and moderate-income homeowners, homebuyers, and renters across the state. Types of assistance included first home mortgage loans (1,970 statewide over those two years), the creation and preservation of rental units (563 new units statewide 2019-2020), and rent relief to households affected by COVID-19 (provided to 3,500 households).

The region also depends on federal funds for affordable housing assistance. Maine's First Congressional District, from Maine's southern coast to mid-coast, received \$214 million in federal funds in 2019 to provide affordable housing assistance to 19,351 households.

(3) Are seasonal homes being converted to year-round use or vice-versa? What impact does this have on the community?

There are approximately 300 seasonal houses in Saco according to American Community Survey data. Conversion in either direction does not seem significant.

Saco has a relatively small seasonal population, primarily in the seaside neighborhoods. The Saco Code Enforcement office issued 127 Seasonal Rental permits in 2021, down slightly from the typical average of 140-150 permits per year. These permits are required for single-family, two-family and multifamily dwelling units rented or leased as a seasonal dwelling within the area east of Seaside Avenue and Camp Ellis Avenue and areas within 400 feet to the west of the center line of these streets. Data on conversions is limited but anecdotally there seems to be minimal impact from housing converting between year-round and seasonal use or vice versa.

(4) Will additional low and moderate income family, senior, or assisted living housing be necessary to meet projected needs for the community? Will these needs be met locally or regionally?

Additional low- and moderate-income family, senior, and assisted living housing will all be needed to meet current and projected needs in Saco given existing affordability issues, anticipated population growth, and demographic changes.

As described in section 2 above, housing affordability is a challenge in Saco and the region. More low- and moderate-income family housing continues to be needed to support working families. The need for senior and assisted living housing options is also increasing as Saco's population older than 60 is projected to continue growing in the future. These needs will have to be addressed both locally and regionally. Local actions include reviewing zoning requirements and permitting processes to ensure mixed-income and senior housing projects are feasible in walkable locations near existing services and amenities. Regional efforts include advocating for more funding and encouraging communities to accommodate their fair share of workforce housing.

(5) Are there other major housing issues in the community, such as substandard housing?

Substandard housing is not a primary concern in Saco.

The 2019 American Community Survey found that no units in Saco lacked complete plumbing and less than 1% of housing units lacked complete kitchen facilities.

Aging housing stock is an issue.

Maintenance and repair of aging existing housing is an issue, particularly in the Downtown historic district which includes 225 properties. One-quarter of Saco's housing stock was built before 1939 and 41% was built before 1970 (ACS 2019). A significant portion of Saco's multi-family rental housing is in these older buildings which often have higher costs of heating and maintaining. Lead paint, asbestos, and aging electrical systems are other common issues in older homes that have not been renovated recently. Homeowners on fixed incomes may not be able to afford necessary maintenance and repairs, leading to more costly fixes later on.

Sea level rise and storm intensity affects coastal housing in Saco.

Another issue for Saco's housing stock is the need to adapt to sea level rise and increasing storm intensity. Because of climate change, sea level rise, and various changes in climate dynamics, residential portions of Saco previously spared from flood events may be at risk of future flood or storm damage. Neighborhoods near Ferry and Camp Ellis Beaches will be at particular risk of regular inundation by the end of the century, per the State of Maine's adopted sea level rise estimates. Elevating housing above projected storm surge and flooding levels will help to protect these neighborhoods over time.

(6) How do existing local regulations encourage or discourage the development of affordable/workforce housing?

Local regulations are largely neutral toward affordable and workforce housing development.

- The Zoning Ordinance allows Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in all residential districts in an effort to encourage more affordable housing types and diversify the housing stock.
- City Council has the discretion to reduce or waive required impact fees for affordable housing projects or elderly/disability housing facilities. Reduced fees can improve the financial feasibility of a project but a discretionary process adds uncertainty and time for a developer.
- Spreading development costs across more housing units on the same amount of land can improve financial feasibility to construct new housing. Housing density in Saco is regulated by established minimum lot areas per dwelling unit. These range from 29 units per acre in the Downtown (D) district to 1 unit per acre in the Rural Conservation (RC) district.

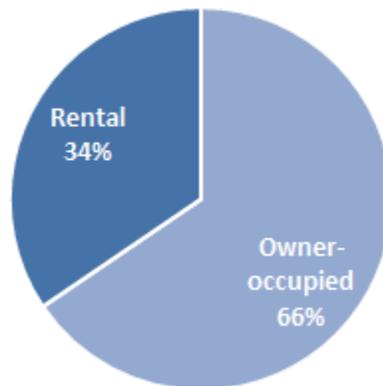
- Excessive parking adds costs to housing development. Many households qualifying for affordable housing often cannot afford more than one vehicle. Parking for housing is regulated by type of dwelling/unit in Saco. For multifamily units, parking is required at 1.5 spaces per 1-bedroom unit, 2 spaces per 2-bedroom unit, and 2.5 spaces per 3+ bedroom units plus 1 visitor space for every 6 units. Multifamily restricted to elderly requires 1 parking space per 2 units. Planning Board may grant a waiver of minimum parking requirements in certain situations or grant a reduction in off-street parking requirements for shared parking arrangements.

Conditions and Trends

(1) The community’s Comprehensive Planning Housing Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Maine State Housing Authority, and the Office, or their designees.

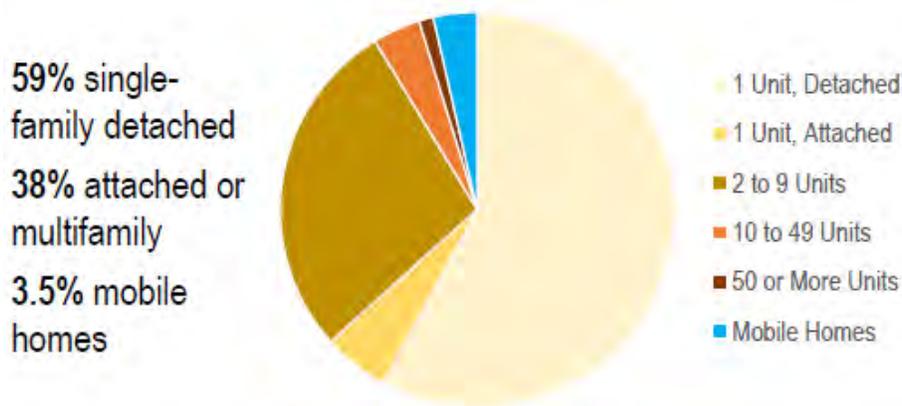
Saco has 9,486 housing units per the 2020 Census, an 11.5% increase since 2010.

Housing Tenure (percent of occupied units)



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

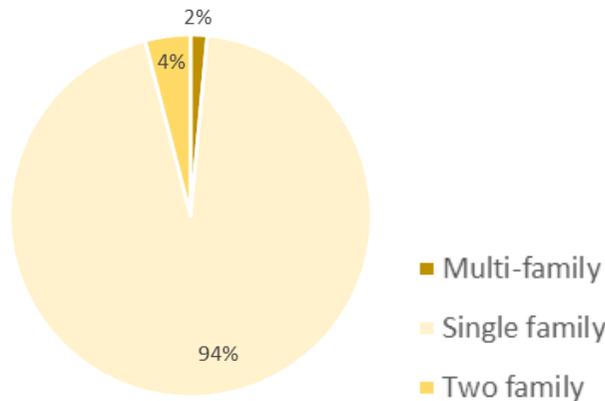
Housing Units by Type of Structure



Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

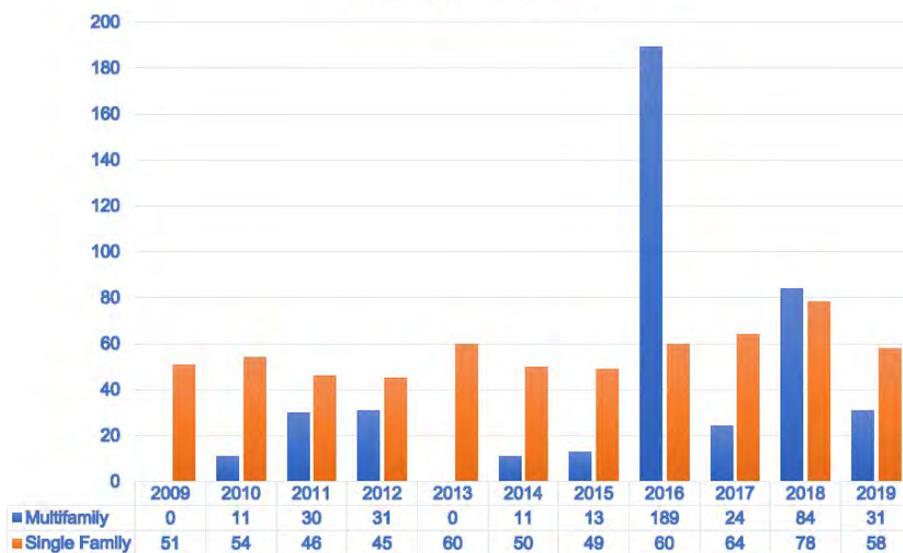
- Almost 60% of Saco’s existing housing units are detached single family. The majority of Saco’s multifamily housing stock is in buildings with 2 to 9 units. The City also has more than 300 mobile home units accounting for 3.5% of total housing units.
- The median year a housing structure was built is 1978. One-quarter of housing units are in a structure built in 1939 or earlier.
- Saco has 890 vacant housing units, or 9.4% of all units (Census 2020). According to the 2015-2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, seasonal or occasional housing units account for just over 40% of all vacant units. Almost one-quarter of vacant units are for rent and about 10% are for sale.
- Over 60% of Saco households are one- or two-person. The average household size is 2.4 people, similar to the Portland Metro Area and State of Maine but smaller than the national average of 2.5.

Housing Permits Issued by Type, 2010-2020



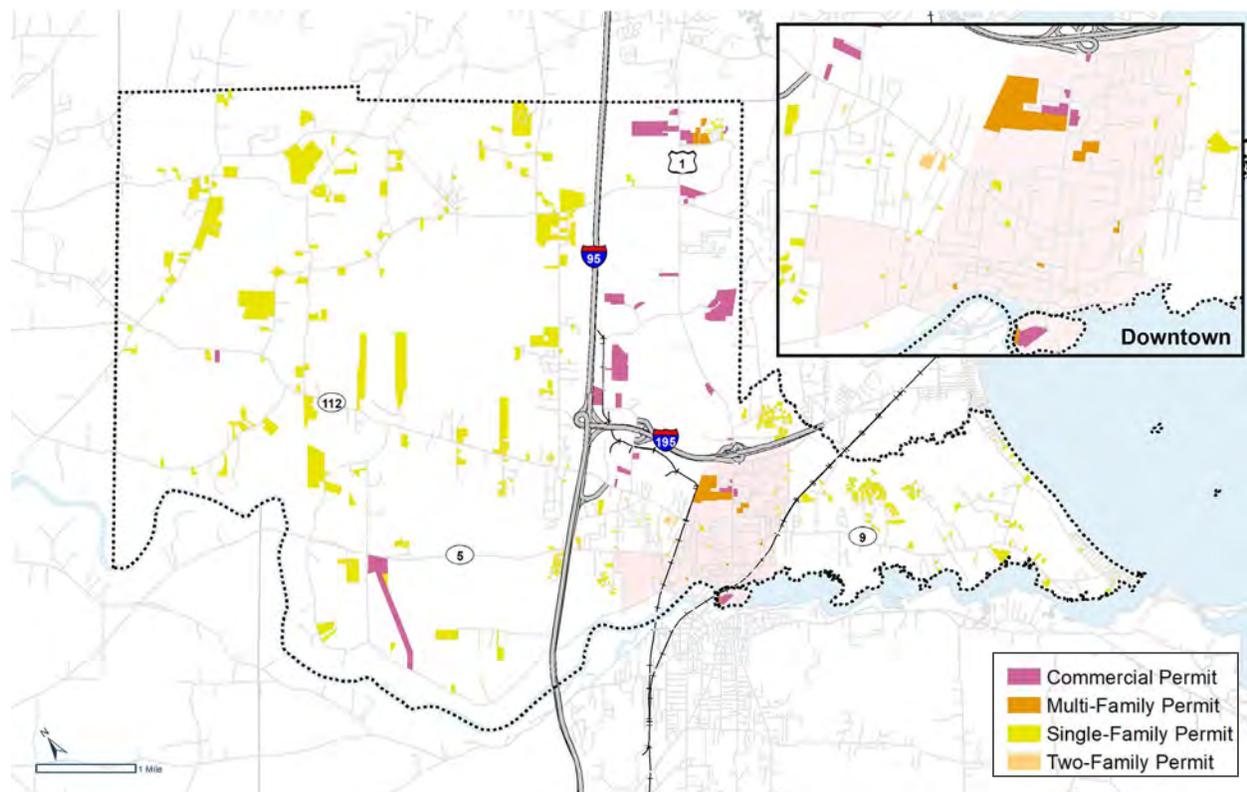
Source: City of Saco Code Enforcement

Housing Units Built, 2009-2019



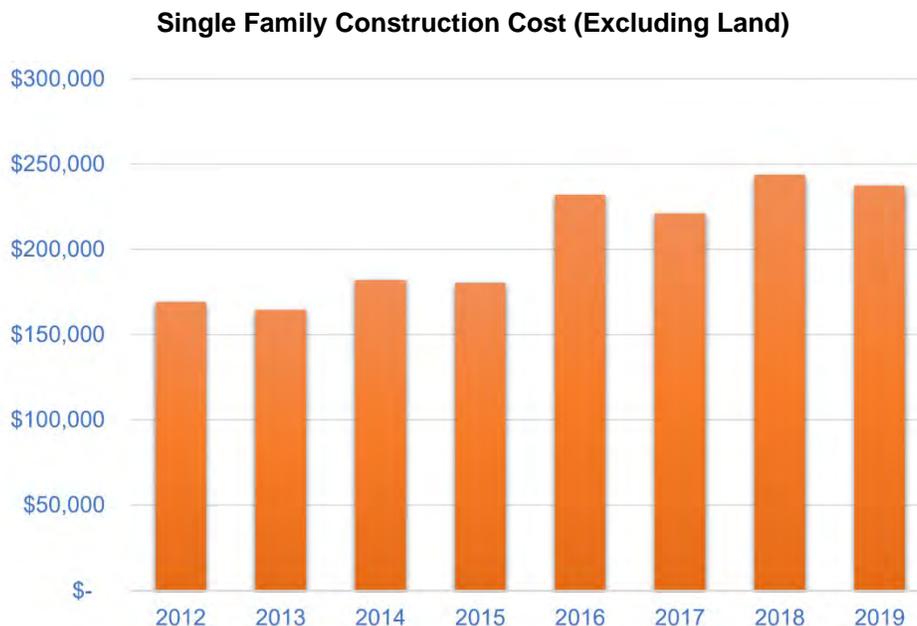
Source: City of Saco Code Enforcement

Building Permits Issued by Location, 2010-2020



Source: City of Saco Assessor

- The majority of housing permits have been for single-family houses.
- Single-family construction has been relatively steady year-to-year, typically between 40 and 60 units annually. Multi-family construction has fluctuated much more widely.
- Over the past ten years, almost half of residential building permits were issued in North Saco. This impacts the area's rural character, critical natural resources, transportation patterns, and the City's finances.



Source: City of Saco Code Enforcement

- Construction costs for single family housing have increased by 24% between 2015 and 2019.
- Saco's 2020 Homeownership Affordability Index is 0.81 per Maine State Housing Authority. An estimated 62% of Saco households were unable to afford the median home price of \$336,000.
- Saco's 2020 Rental Housing Affordability Index is 0.70 per Maine State Housing Authority. An estimated 71% of Saco renter households (5,882 households) were unable to afford the median two-bedroom rent of \$1,729/month.
- Saco currently has 583 subsidized housing units, a number that has not changed since 2017.

(2) Information on existing local and regional affordable/workforce housing coalitions or similar efforts.

Local and regional efforts to provide more affordable and workforce housing have been fairly limited. While the need is present and growing, efforts to address this housing have been largely reliant on individual projects proposed by private developers.

The Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) recently launched a “state of the region” analysis of housing affordability issues. It published a Housing Affordability Report for York County in July 2021 that documents the existing need.

The Biddeford Housing Authority serves Saco as well as Biddeford and Old Orchard Beach. It manages the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program which currently has a 4-7 year waitlist. It also owns, manages, and/or develops affordable housing in the area. Their non-profit development arm tries to provide housing that the private market will not readily build, such as affordable family apartments with 3 or more bedrooms. The Biddeford Housing Authority purchased a vacant historic house in Saco in 2020 with plans to create four affordable apartment units.

Private developers have built and manage several housing projects providing affordable rents in Saco. According to Maine Housing’s list of affordable housing options in York County, there are 15 communities in Saco managed by 6 entities. Nine provide senior and/or disabled housing and seven provide family units (one community provides both). Four of the 15 developments are rent-restricted, with income limits

for applicants and rents typically based on a percentage of the area median income. The remainder offer income-based rent, typically about one-third of the household's income.

(3) A summary of local regulations that affect the development of affordable/workforce housing.

Article XIII of the City's Zoning Ordinance permits City Council to reduce or eliminate the payment of a required impact fee for affordable housing or elder/disability housing facilities. This provides flexibility to help lower the costs of housing development but the discretionary nature adds uncertainty and time to the process.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are allowed by-right in most of the City's zoning districts, including all of its residential districts. ADUs are "intended to serve as affordable independent living quarters accessory to a single-family home". These units are limited to 800 square feet of gross floor area and newly created ADUs must be protected by a fire sprinkler system. ADUs can provide additional income to support the primary homeowner and, due to the size limitation, are designed to have lower rents than average. However, the additional cost of a fire sprinkler system may inhibit some homeowners from pursuing this option.

Article X of the City's Zoning Ordinance establishes parking requirements by use. Parking for housing is regulated by type of dwelling/unit in Saco. For multifamily units, parking is required at 1.5 spaces per 1-bedroom unit, 2 spaces per 2-bedroom unit, and 2.5 spaces per 3+ bedroom units plus 1 visitor space for every 6 units. Multifamily restricted to elderly requires 1 parking space per 2 units. These requirements impose additional costs for affordable/workforce housing, particularly family units with 3+ bedrooms or studio and 1-bedroom units for singles and couples. The Planning Board may grant a waiver of minimum parking requirements in certain situations or grant a reduction in off-street parking requirements for shared parking arrangements. This flexibility is important but also adds uncertainty and time to the project review process.

9. Recreation

Analyses

(1) Will existing recreational facilities and programs in the community and region accommodate projected growth or changes in age groups in your community?

Saco residents benefit from a variety of recreation services and facilities. The community center, recreation complex, and parks and recreation programs are generally meeting the needs of residents today. As the population grows and ages new programming and facilities may be needed.

(2) Is there a need for certain types of services or facilities or to upgrade or enlarge present facilities to either add capacity or make them more usable?

- Sports fields are in high demand. An expansion of the Foss Road Recreation Complex is planned to start in 2022 and be completed within two years. The expansion will add soccer fields, pickleball courts, trails, and bathrooms.
- Community meeting space for programs and activities is also in high demand. The Community Center is an adaptive reuse of a former armory and meets current needs but may need to be expanded or reconfigured in the future.
- Additional boat docks are needed on the Saco River. There is interest in providing a non-motorized boat launch upriver of the dams at Saco Island.
- A splash pad for children or a skate park warrant further exploration to determine whether the need is significant enough to justify investing in such facilities.
- Seasonal parking near the beaches is an ongoing concern. Convenient shuttle service and improved bicycle and pedestrian access would help mitigate this issue.
- Completing the Eastern Trail's Over the River connection is desired to connect two off-road segments of multi-use trail that are currently separated by an unmarked on-road route. This would increase through-use of the trail, provide additional neighborhood access points, and support bicycle tourism in Downtown Saco.
- Generally, ongoing maintenance and repair is a significant need for facilities, fields, and trails.

(3) Are important tracts of open space commonly used for recreation publicly-owned or otherwise permanently conserved?

Important open space tracts are either publicly-owned or permanently conserved. The Foss Road Recreation Complex is City-owned and provides playing fields, trails, and a stocked bass fishing pond for public use. Many other fields and playgrounds are associated with schools but, as a result, are inaccessible for use except on weekends or afterschool hours. Some trails are owned by the City but others are conserved via easements. Ferry Beach State Park is owned by the State.

(4) Does the community have a mechanism, such as an open space fund or partnership with a land trust, to acquire important open spaces and access sites, either outright or through conservation easements?

Saco has an open space impact fee that can be used only to pay for the acquisition of land or conservation easements for use as substantially undeveloped open space and the related development of these parcels to facilitate their use as open space. Routine maintenance and operation expenses cannot be paid for using impact fee funds.

The City has a partnership with Saco Valley Land Trust through which the organization has accepted several easements donated by the City in the past.

Saco's subdivision ordinance requires developers to include passive open space in their site plan when submitting an application for subdivision approval. Several small neighborhood-based open spaces and recreation areas have been created this way but there is no requirement to set aside high value open space for this purpose. The open space impact fee is not levied on housing units built in these subdivisions.

(5) Does the public have access to each of the community's significant water bodies?

There are four public access locations along Saco Bay: Ferry Beach State Park, Kinney Shore Beach, Bayview Beach, and Camp Ellis Beach. There are three boat ramps along the Saco River: the Camp Ellis pier, Riverfront Park downriver from the dams at Saco Island, and Diamond Park upriver from the dams. The ramp at Camp Ellis is non-functional at low tide, however, and the Diamond Park ramp needs improvements.

(6) Are recreational trails in the community adequately maintained? Are there use conflicts on these trails?

Saco's 15 trails are maintained by City staff and through agreements with Saco Bay Trails and similar organizations that provide volunteer labor. City maintenance is limited by staff and funding, so the volunteer maintenance is an important supplement but still not enough. The multi-use Eastern Trail is maintained by the Eastern Trail Alliance.

Trail usage significantly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic as people sought more outdoor recreation opportunities. This caused additional wear and tear on trails and increased trash. There are no significant use conflicts.

(7) Is traditional access to private lands being restricted?

No cases of traditional access to private lands being restricted are known. However, as property ownership and other circumstances change this can be a possibility.

Condition and Trends

(1) The community's Comprehensive Planning Recreation Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Conservation, and the Office, or their designees.

The Saco Parks and Recreation department oversees 640 acres of land and maintains over 140 acres (22%) of that. This includes six major recreational parks and athletic fields, 16 neighborhood parks, and trails throughout the city. Many of the sports fields are school-based and only open to the public outside school hours. The Foss Road Recreation Complex is the largest facility with several sports playing fields in addition to trails, a picnic area, and a stocked bass fishing pond.

Funding for municipal facilities and programs come from tax revenues. User fees are charged for most programs and the use of some facilities, but the revenue generated is paid into the general fund.

The Eastern Trail is a recreation and transportation greenway being built from Casco Bay to the Piscataqua River in Kittery, Maine. An off-road segment begins at Thornton Academy and continues northeast through Old Orchard Beach and beyond. An on-road route continues from the trailhead at Thornton Academy across the Saco River to the beginning of the next off-road segment in Biddeford.

(2) A description of important public and private active recreation programs, land and water recreation areas (including hunting and fishing areas), and facilities in the community and region, including regional recreational opportunities as appropriate, and identification of unmet needs.

Recreation programs

- Saco's Parks and Recreation department organizes various programs for seniors, teens, children, and adults. These include various sports leagues, a cheering program, dodgeball tournaments, and a summer camp. The summer camp typically has close to 600 youth participants, although in summer 2020 participation was limited to about 30% of that due to public health restrictions. The SENIORity program is available for residents to join for \$20/year and includes exercise classes and workshops.

Land and water recreation areas and facilities

- Four sandy beaches provide public access to Saco Bay
- Fishing is allowed in the Saco River and offshore. A stocked bass pond is open to the public at the Foss Road Recreation Complex.
- Hunting is only allowed in specific areas of North Saco.

Facilities

- The Foss Road Recreation Complex has soccer fields and football fields.
- The Community Center, located in a historic armory on Franklin Street, offers a gym, open field, and community meeting spaces.
- Saco Middle School has a softball diamond, practice areas and grass fields for soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse, as well as handball and tennis courts.
- The Burns School has a gym.
- Memorial Recreation Fields have a baseball diamond and practice areas.
- The North Street Recreational Facility and Fields has a baseball/softball diamond and practice area.
- Other public fields include Plymouth Field, Richards Way Field, and Bruno Field.

Private facilities include indoor/outdoor sports facilities, golf courses, disc golf, and more. Unmet needs

- The Saco Community Center meets most needs today but is heavily programmed. It will likely need physical upgrades and possibly expansion or replacement within the next 10-20 years to meet evolving needs and growing programming.

- Dedicated space for the senior program will likely be needed as this population grows. Co-locating with the Teen Center planned for 12 School Street in Downtown may provide cross-programming and community building opportunities.
- There has been sustained public interest for a community gathering space or destination park near Downtown that is not affiliated with the schools and can be used outside of school hours and on the weekends.
- Other amenities like a skate park or splash pad may be needed to provide new options for families, youth, and others.

(3) An inventory of any fresh or salt water bodies in the community determined locally to have inadequate public access.

There are no major gaps in water access in Saco. Additional boat launches and/or improvements to existing ones will enhance public access to the Saco River. In particular, a non-motorized boat launch upriver of the dams at Saco Island is desired to accommodate more water-based recreation.

(4) A description of local and regional trail systems, trail management organizations, and conservation organizations that provide trails for all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiling, skiing, mountain biking, or hiking.

Trails in Saco are primarily for walking or hiking in nature. Major trail systems include networks at Ferry Beach State Park, the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, Horton Woods, the Saco Athletic Complex, and the River Walk in Downtown and Saco Island. The Eastern Trail is a multiuse greenway that passes through Saco and is comprised of off-road and on-road segments for biking and walking.

Trails

- River Walk (located Downtown and on Saco Island along the river)
- Saco Heath Trail (woodland trail and boardwalk managed by Nature Conservancy)
- Ferry Beach State Park trails (managed by State Parks and Public Lands, parking available)
- Saco Athletic Complex (managed by City)
 - Sandy Brook Trail
 - Bass Pond Trail
 - Wood Trail Loop
- Eastern Trail (multiuse trail managed by Eastern Trail Alliance)
- Mary Merrill Trail (located on Ecology School grounds)
- Log Cabin Trail (located off Lincoln Road in North Saco)

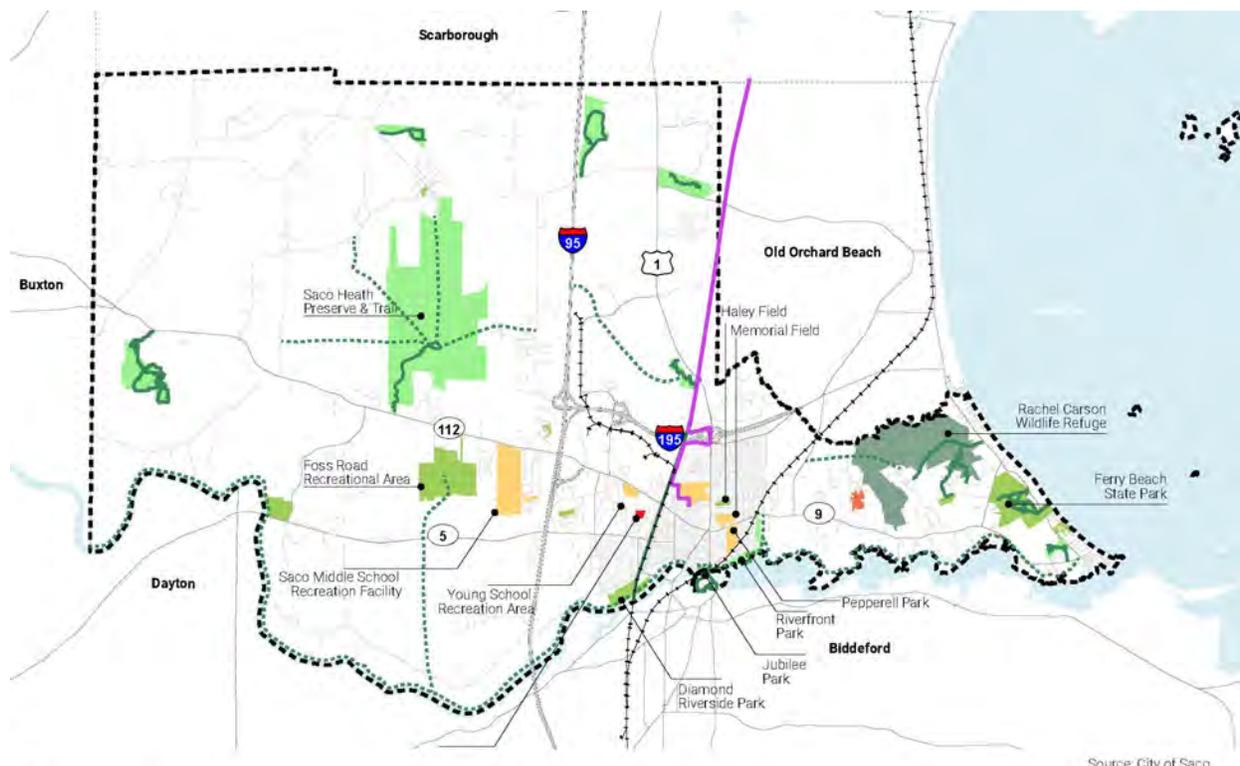
Managed by Saco Bay Trails (parking available):

- Horton Woods
 - Beaver Path
 - Big Pine Trail
 - Blue Heron Trail
 - Red Maple Trail
- Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge
 - Atlantic Way Trail
 - Plymouth Trail
 - Vines Trail
- Cascade Falls Trail
- Ferry Landing Trail
- Sylvan Trail
- Middle Goosefare Trail

Trail Management Organizations and Conservation Organizations Providing Trails

- **Saco Bay Trails:** a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that began as a subcommittee of Saco's Conservation Commission. They are responsible for maintaining the majority of Saco's existing trail network.
- **Nature Conservancy:** owns and manages Saco Heath, including the associated trails.
- **State Parks and Public Lands:** manages Ferry Beach State Park trails.
- **Eastern Trail Alliance:** 501(c)(3) with mission to build, maintain, and promote the Eastern Trail, a recreational greenway from Casco Bay through Saco to the Piscataqua River.
- **Saco Valley Land Trust:** manages trails on lands they own. The Trust owns 300+ acres in Saco and holds easement on almost 100 acres. Their goals include to open trails where access makes sense.
- **Saco Pathfinders:** snowmobile club that maintains nearly 50 miles of trails across Saco, Biddeford, Scarborough, and Dayton. The club works with public and private landowners to provide winter access and organizes volunteer work parties to make improvements.

(5) A map or list of important publicly-used open spaces and their associated facilities, such as parking and toilet facilities.



9. RECREATION

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Recreation Facilities

Saco Parks and Recreation Community Center (75 Franklin Street)

The Community Center has a regulation size basketball court, multipurpose room, meeting and activity rooms, and restrooms. Parks and Recreation runs youth, adults, and senior programs throughout the

year at the facility and hosts special events during the year. Parks and Recreation rents out space if available to outside groups. The outdoor recreational area encompasses three acres and consists of a playground with benches, raised planting beds and parking.

Foss Road Recreation Complex

This is the City's largest recreational sports field facility. It consists of 174 acres with 20 acres maintained. It contains 11 sports fields of varying sizes that can be used as soccer, lacrosse, football fields. Phoenix Fields are eight fields of varying sizes from U-8 thru U-12 soccer field. The back fields called Sandy Brook Fields contains three fields of varying sizes.

There is a bass pond located by Sandy Brook fields and walking trails throughout the property. During the winter months Parks and Recreation offers sledding, ice skating, snow shoeing, and cross-country skiing through the trail system. There is parking and a bathroom facility at this location.

Pepperell Park (75 Beach Street)

Pepperell Park is one of the oldest and most heavily used parks in Saco. It covers 12 acres and includes within its bounds the John Fairfield Elementary School. The park includes a large parking area, stone water tower, a pavilion, playground, an Edu-Course Fitness Trail, picnic tables, park benches, and basketball court, as well as a community garden. There is a gymnasium inside the school. A paved walkway within the park is in good condition. A portion of the park is handicapped accessible via a paved path from Beach Street to the Fairfield School.

The park is used heavily year-round. Families use it on evenings and weekends for picnicking and ball games. The school uses it for recess and physical education classes, while various youth recreation programs utilize it during the summer and sports seasons.

Saco Middle School Recreation Area (40 Buxton Road)

The recreation area encompasses 27 developed acres within a 110-acre site. There are two tennis courts, two softball fields and three multi-purpose fields, two sand volleyball courts, and two hand ball courts. There is a gymnasium inside the school.

The area is used for school recesses and physical education classes. The fields are used by the Middle School's soccer and field hockey teams for practices and games, as well as by the football team for practice. Various youth sports programs use the fields in season as well. During the winter months, a portion of the area is used for sledding.

Memorial Field (73 Summer Street)

Memorial Field, approximately ten acres in size, is heavily used during the spring, summer and fall. It is located behind the C.K. Burns School at the corner of Middle and Summer Streets. The site includes a baseball diamond, softball field, Little League baseball field, three pickleball courts, a playground, and picnic tables and benches. Inside the school is a regulation size gymnasium.

The C.K. Burns School uses the field for recess and physical education classes. Various school, youth, adult baseball/softball, youth soccer and football programs use the fields. During the summer, recreation programs are held at the facility daily. The facility is handicapped accessible.

Young School Recreation Area (36 Tasker Street/ North Street)

This site encompasses ten acres. The area includes a softball field with lights, multi-use field, a large playground, two tennis courts, picnic tables and benches, and a 50-space parking lot. Young School uses the field for recess and physical education classes, while various outside programs utilize the open space and softball field for practice and activities.

Diamond Riverside Park (Irving Street)

This park is six acres, four of which are undeveloped. The park is used primarily during the warmer seasons for picnicking, boat launching, and nature walks. Facilities include a boat launch ramp, playground, picnic tables, benches, and a parking area. The park is handicapped accessible.

Pocket Parks**Jubilee Park (Water Street)**

Jubilee Park is a quarter-acre island located in the Saco River. Entrance to the park is via a covered bridge off Water Street. The Park is owned by Central Maine Power and leased to the City for \$1 a year. The park is used primarily during the warmer seasons for passive recreation. There is a paved pathway, picnic tables, and park benches. The path through the park is handicapped accessible.

Haley Field/ Community Garden (King Street)

This four-acre passive recreation park is located on King Street and is partially handicapped accessible. It has a picnic table and gazebo. It is also the home of the Saco Community Gardens which offer 10' X 10' gardening plots for public use.

Riverfront Park (Front Street)

Located on Front Street, this 1.8-acre passive recreation park is primarily used by downtown residents, workers, and shoppers. The park offers benches, paths, nature trails, and a scenic view of the falls and river. A portion of the park is wheelchair accessible. The land is leased by the City of Saco from Central Maine Power. Adjacent to the park, the city owns and maintains a boat ramp.

Joe Riley Park (349 Main Street)

Located on the corner of Main Street and Beach Street, Joey Riley Park is .9 acres in size. This small park provides a bench and beautiful landscape to enjoy Downtown life.

Neighborhood Parks**Ryan Farm (Ryan Road)**

This 2.8-acre neighborhood park, located off the Jenkins Road, is associated with the Ryan Farm subdivision. The City owns and maintains the property and built the basketball court, while the subdivision developers built the playground. The park is not handicapped accessible and only has on-street parking.

Shadagee Woods/Tall Oaks

This 4.5-acre neighborhood park is located in Shadagee Woods off Bradley Street. The park was created by aligning the land set aside for subdivision open space requirements in two neighboring subdivisions and is city owned.

The park offers a wooden play structure, picnic tables, park benches, and a basketball court. A retention pond is used for skating during the winter months. The park is not handicapped accessible.

Plymouth Settlement (Plymouth Drive)

This neighborhood park is located on Plymouth Drive off Bayview Road. It consists of approximately seven acres of open space intended for active recreation. There is a walking trail system and off-street parking.

Strawberry Fields (Ocean Greens Drive)

This neighborhood park is located on Richards Way off of Ferry Road. It consists of approximately 2.5 acres of open space intended for active recreation. There is off-street parking.

Bruno Circle Open Space (Bruno Circle)

This neighborhood park is located on Bruno Circle off of Jenkins Road and Sofia Road. It consists of approximately 1.7 acres of open space intended for active recreation with a softball diamond. There is off-street parking.

Boothby Park Recreation Area (24 Lincoln Rd)

This 1.7-acre park is located on Lincoln Road. There is designed for neighborhood use with a toddler playground, picnic tables and benches. There is no parking.

Hillview Heights Tot Lot (Hillview Ave)

This tot lot is located off Hillview Avenue and is 0.3 acres. It contains a swing set and slide as well as a bench. On-street parking is available.

Ross Ridge Open Space

Ross Ridge is an open playing field that is located off of Woodman Avenue in the Ross Ridge development. It is 2.7 acres with roughly 1.5 acres of fields. There is a retention pond on site with a fountain, as well as on-street parking.

Beaches**Bayview and Kinney Shore Beaches (Bayview Road Extension and Palmer Avenue)**

The city provides lifeguards at these two local beaches located between Camp Ellis and Goosefare Brook. The lifeguard protection extends for 200 yards along the coast at each beach. There is limited parking available at both Bayview and Kinney Shores. Bayview Beach lots are pay lots and Kinney Shores beach has off-street parking. There is also a bathroom facility at Bayview Beach. Dogs are allowed on the beach if they are leashed during the month of April 1st through September 31st and allowed off leash for the rest of the year.

10. Transportation

Analyses

(1) What are the transportation system concerns in the community and region? What, if any, plans exist to address these concerns?

General community concerns include speeding, truck traffic, and perceived traffic congestion, especially leading to/from the I-195/Maine Turnpike ramps. The Maine Turnpike's "Saco Interchange Improvements" project will address some access and congestion issues by creating a new direct connection between Route 112 and the Maine Turnpike. The City is also working on Route 112 improvements at Jenkins Road to add a traffic signal. Police enforcement of speed limits is a limited strategy to address speeding. Roadway design changes like lane narrowing could help reduce speeding.

There seems to be general interest in more sidewalks and bicycle facilities in the community as well. However, there is limited public right-of-way in many locations to add dedicated facilities.

- Sections of Route 1 lack sidewalks. New segments are planned and/or being constructed to improve pedestrian access, including new sidewalks to the Park North development.
- The City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee recently installed a bike lane pilot project on a segment of Route 112/North Street. The committee is continuing to consider additional bicycle lane locations and discuss painted crosswalks Downtown.

In Downtown Saco, traffic back-ups along Main Street are caused by the at-grade railroad crossing for active Amtrak and freight service. Platform improvements at the Saco Transportation Center and crossing upgrades are needed to address this issue. Parking is also a perceived issue, and the City is conducting a Downtown parking study to develop recommendations.

Regionally, high-frequency transit corridors recommended in the long-range transit plan would pass through Saco and provide improved service for residents and commuters.

(2) Are conflicts caused by multiple road uses, such as a major state or U.S. route that passes through the community or its downtown and serves as a local service road as well?

Route 1 passes through Saco along Elm Street, Main Street, and Portland Road. It is a regional transportation corridor that also connects to I-195 which provides access to the Maine Turnpike. Many crashes occur along its route, and vehicle speed and traffic deters pedestrian and bicycle activity.

Routes 112 and 5 provide regional access to the Maine Turnpike for communities located west of Saco. This traffic creates peak-hour delays near Industrial Park Road and cut-through traffic in nearby neighborhoods.

Truck traffic on local streets also creates conflicts as truck drivers seek alternate routes.

(3) To what extent do sidewalks connect residential areas with schools, neighborhood shopping areas, and other daily destinations?

Saco has almost 100 miles of sidewalks, mostly Downtown and in older neighborhoods nearby. These sidewalks connect residents to schools, retail areas, and parks, though some gaps in the network exist. More recent subdivisions have internal sidewalk networks but connections to other destinations are limited or non-existent.

(4) How are walking and bicycling integrated into the community's transportation network (including access to schools, parks, and other community destinations)?

In-town schools, parks and community destinations generally have good sidewalk connectivity. The quality of some of these connections is degraded by having sidewalks close to fast-moving traffic with

little physical separation, a constraint often due to limited public right-of-way. Bicycling access is limited by a lack of dedicated bike facilities including convenient parking.

City officials recently formed the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee to focus on improvements to infrastructure, signage, education, and opportunities for greater accommodation throughout the city. A pilot project on North Street is testing ways to improve bicycle access.

(5) How do state and regional transportation plans relate to your community?

The Maine Turnpike's "Saco Interchange Improvements" project is underway. It will modify the existing Exit 36 interchange to add a new direct connection from the Turnpike to Route 112 (proposed Exit 35). The project is in its design phase with a preliminary design report issued in January 2021. Construction is currently slated to begin in 2022-2023 with completion in 2025, subject to available funding.

Transit Tomorrow, the long-range public transportation plan for Greater Portland (2021), identifies a high-frequency transit corridor through Saco as a potential future project. This 17.5-mile corridor connecting Biddeford, Saco, and Portland is rated as the second of four priority corridors. The plan suggests that enhanced bus service or bus rapid transit along the Route 1 corridor could complement existing Amtrak passenger rail. Next steps include conducting a formal alternatives analysis study to identify preferred transportation modes and routes. Potential improvements by the Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) to enhance rail service between Saco and Portland should be completed prior to this alternatives analysis. Funding sources are needed before any improvements would be built.

Destination 2040, the metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) for the PACTS region in which Saco is included, was re-affirmed by the PACTS board to be valid through the end of 2022 at which point a new 2045 MTP is anticipated to be completed. Downtown Saco, Route 5 East, and Flag Pond Road/Cascade Road are identified as priority centers in the current plan. The Biddeford-Saco Route 1 Signal Coordination project was listed as a priority roadway project.

(6) What is the community's current and approximate future budget for road maintenance and improvement?

The City has approximately \$750,000 budgeted annually for street paving and road striping, and \$45,000 for sidewalk improvements. Traffic signal systems and paving project matches are a \$140,000 line item in the CIP for annual maintenance and replacement.

(7) Are there parking issues in the community? If so what are they?

There are perceived parking issues both Downtown and along the coast for beach access. The City is working with a consultant on a Downtown Parking Study in late 2021 to analyze usage patterns and recommend improvements. Parking Downtown is particularly limited during snow emergency parking bans which is an issue for many residents. A beach parking survey was conducted by the City in 2021 to collect public input on current usage and perceived problems.

(8) If there are parking standards, do they discourage development in village or downtown areas?

Article X of the City's Zoning Ordinance establishes parking requirements by use. These requirements apply citywide despite Downtown benefitting from multiple transportation options that reduce reliance on vehicles. Downtown has bus transit service and proximity to the Saco Transportation Center, a connected sidewalk network, and a variety of destinations within a close distance.

The Planning Board may grant a waiver of minimum parking requirements in certain situations or grant a reduction in off-street parking requirements for shared parking arrangements. This flexibility is important for downtown development but also adds uncertainty and time to the project review process.

Minimum parking requirements for select uses:

- Multifamily residential: 1.5 spaces per 1-BR unit up to 2.5 spaces per 3+ BR unit, plus 1 visitor's space for every 6 units or fraction thereof.
- Retail: 1 space per 200sf of total floor area
- Eating and drinking establishment: 1 space per 75sf of total floor area.
- Professional office: 1 space per 250sf of total floor area

(9) Do available transit services meet the current and foreseeable needs of community residents? If transit services are not adequate, how will the community address the needs?

Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach (BSOOB) Transit provide bus service in Saco and surrounding areas. It operates five routes include Zoom express service for commuters to and from Portland. Headways between buses are long which requires advanced planning and patience for transit trips. On-demand service for seniors or disabled is limited as well.

(10) If the community hosts a transportation terminal, such as an airport, passenger rail station, or ferry terminal, how does it connect to other transportation modes (e.g. automobile, pedestrian, bicycle, transit)?

The Saco Transportation Center is served by passenger rail (Amtrak Downeaster with service between Boston and Portland) and local and regional bus (BSOOB). Short- and long-term car parking and bicycle racks are provided at the Transportation Center which is a short walk to Downtown Saco. This multimodal center is an asset for Saco residents but better coordination between services (especially rail and bus) would enhance the user experience.

(11) If the community hosts or abuts any public airports, what coordination has been undertaken to ensure that required airspace is protected now and in the future? How does the community coordinate with the owner(s) of private airports?

Saco does not host or directly abut any public or private airports. The Portland International Jetport is the nearest commercial airport, about 14 miles northeast. The Biddeford Municipal Airport, located 3.5 miles southwest of Downtown Saco, is a local, nonprimary, general aviation airport. It has a single 3,000' runway 6-24 for small aircraft. Due to its distance from Saco and the type of aircraft it serves, there is little need for coordination on airspace issues.

(12) If you are a coastal community are land-side or water-side transportation facilities needed? How will the community address these needs?

Some private water taxi options exist near the mouth of the Saco River for students or faculty to reach the University of New England on the Biddeford side of the Saco River from Camp Ellis on the Saco side of the river.

(13) Does the community have local access management or traffic permitting measures in place?

Ordinances are in place restricting curb cuts and access points on collector and arterial roadways. The Route 1 Access Management Plan encourages driveway consolidation and inter-parcel access across parking lots.

Traffic movement permits are only issued by MDOT. However, applicants for new development may be required to perform traffic impact studies during the Planning Board review and approval process. More consideration of multimodal transportation like walking, biking, and bus transit trips is needed to encourage developers to fully integrate these options into proposals.

(14) Do the local road design standards support the community's desired land use pattern?

The Technical Design and Construction Standards Manual, updated in 2021, establishes design criteria for local roads. To consolidate access and minimize curb cuts, no more than two driveways are permitted

for any commercial, industrial, or residential (with 10+ parking spaces) site and joint access driveways are encouraged.

While the road network is adequate for today, future capacity and desired shared use of the right of way will be a challenge in several areas of the City. Recent growth in West Saco and rural areas has increased pressure on local roads and desire for more pedestrian amenities in a relatively low density area.

(15) Do the local road design standards support bicycle and pedestrian transportation?

Proposed subdivisions are required to install sidewalks at least 5' wide within the development and along the frontage of any street that abuts or gives access to it. The Planning Board may require that connections to nearby existing sidewalks or destinations like transit stops or schools also be made. Sidewalk requirements may be waived on rural area side streets. There are no requirements for bicycle transportation accommodations.

Saco does not have a Complete Streets policy or similar guidance about giving equal consideration for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit riders as well as drivers. However, lane striping standards for existing streets has been reduced from 12'+ down to 11' to accommodate wider shoulder areas for traffic calming, bikes, or parking depending on the area.

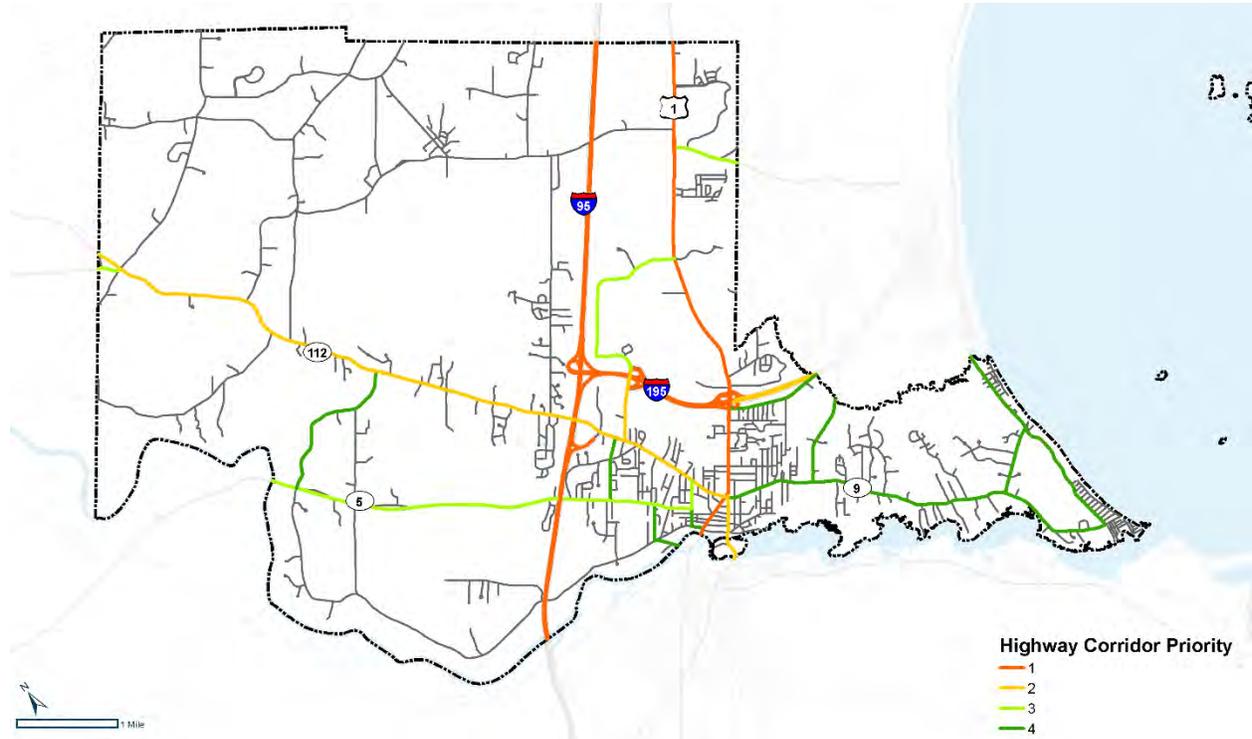
(16) Do planned or recently built subdivision roads (residential or commercial) simply dead-end or do they allow for expansion to adjacent land and encourage the creation of a network of local streets? Where dead-ends are unavoidable, are mechanisms in place to encourage shorter dead-ends resulting in compact and efficient subdivision designs?

The subdivision ordinance states that streets shall be designed as through streets or future through streets unless waived by the Planning Board. However, many recent subdivision streets dead-end in cul-de-sacs with limited opportunities for future connections or expansion. Particularly in West Saco, this is often due to physical barriers like I-95 or adjacent natural resources like Saco Heath through which streets are undesirable. Dead-end streets cannot be more than 1,000 feet long or have more than 15 dwellings on them.

Conditions and Trends

(1) The community's Comprehensive Planning Transportation Data Set prepared and provided to the community by the Department of Transportation, and the Office, or their designees.

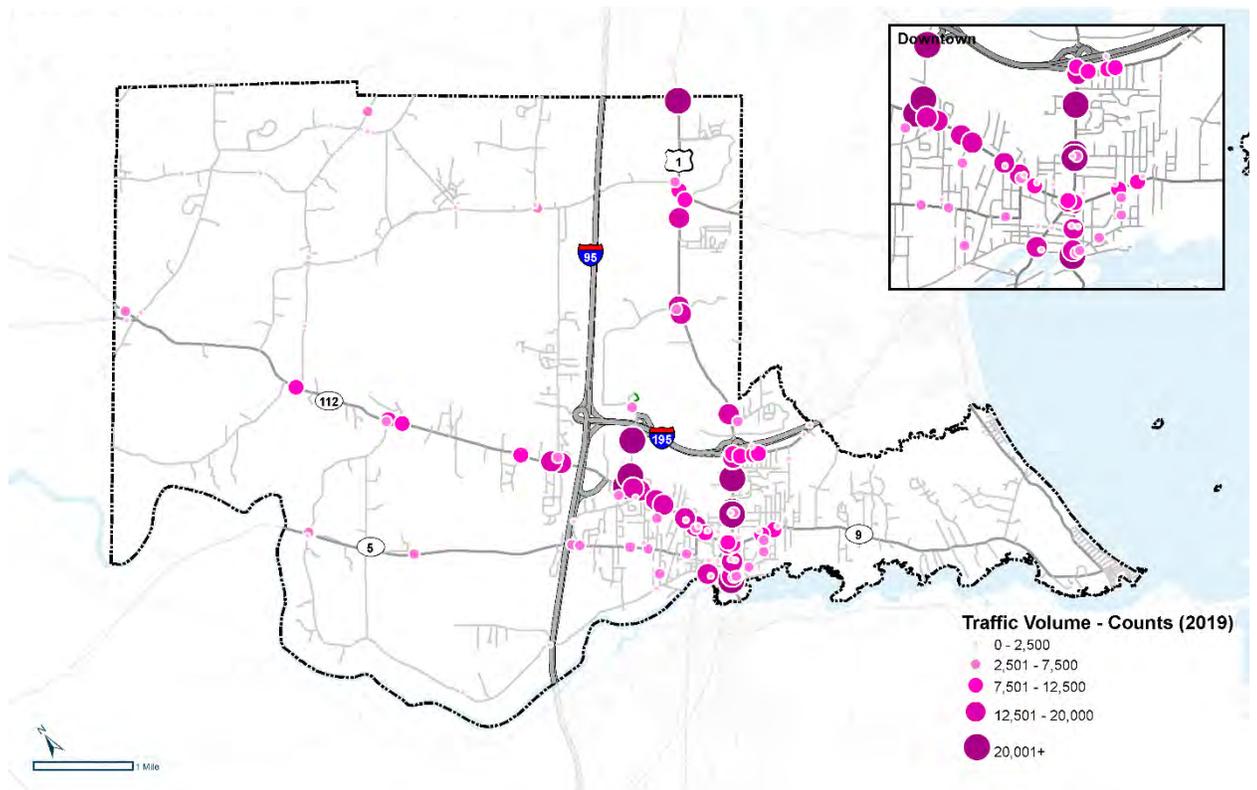
Highway Corridor Priority



Source: Maine DOT

Maine DOT categorizes its state-aid highway assets into priority levels. Levels 1-3 include the Maine Turnpike and other interstates, arterials like Route 1, and many major collectors like Route 112 and Route 5. Level 4 priority roads include other major and minor collectors like Route 9 (Beach Street and Seaside Avenue). Level 4 roads have shared responsibilities between the state and municipalities.

Factored AADT, 2019



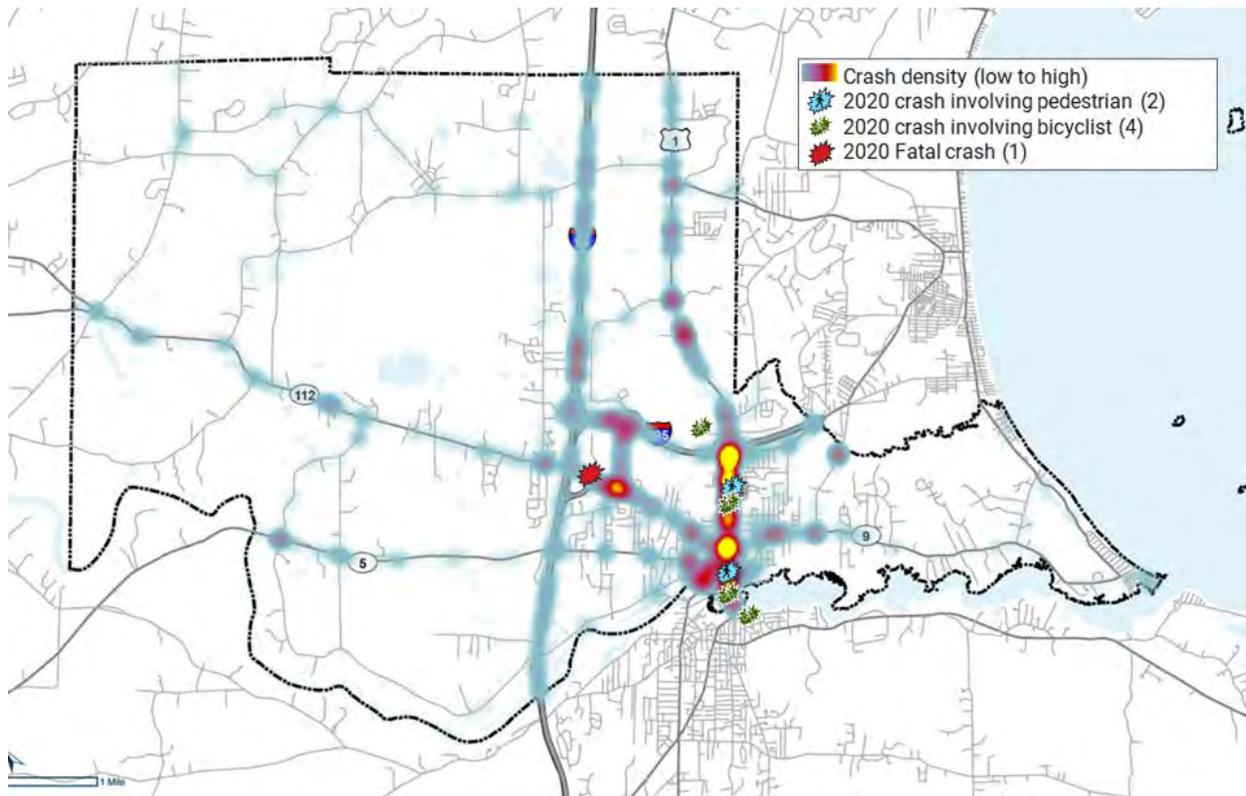
Source: Maine DOT

Maine DOT collected traffic counts from 105 locations in Saco in 2019. The highest recorded count (29,292 in July 2019) and factored Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT, 23,730) is on Main Street northeast of King Street near Thornton Academy. The highest AADT not on Main Street is on North Street/Route 112 at Industrial Park Road (19,560). This is a primary access route to I-195 and the Maine Turnpike.

AADT along major routes:

- Interstate-95: from 36,000 to 41,000
- U.S. Route 1: from 8,550 to 23,730
- Route 112 (North Street/Buxton Road): from 4,970 to 19,560
- Route 9 (Main Street/Beach Street): 8,630 to 19,500
- Route 5 (Bradley Street/Ocean Park Road): 3,620 to 7,130

Crash Density, 2015-2019



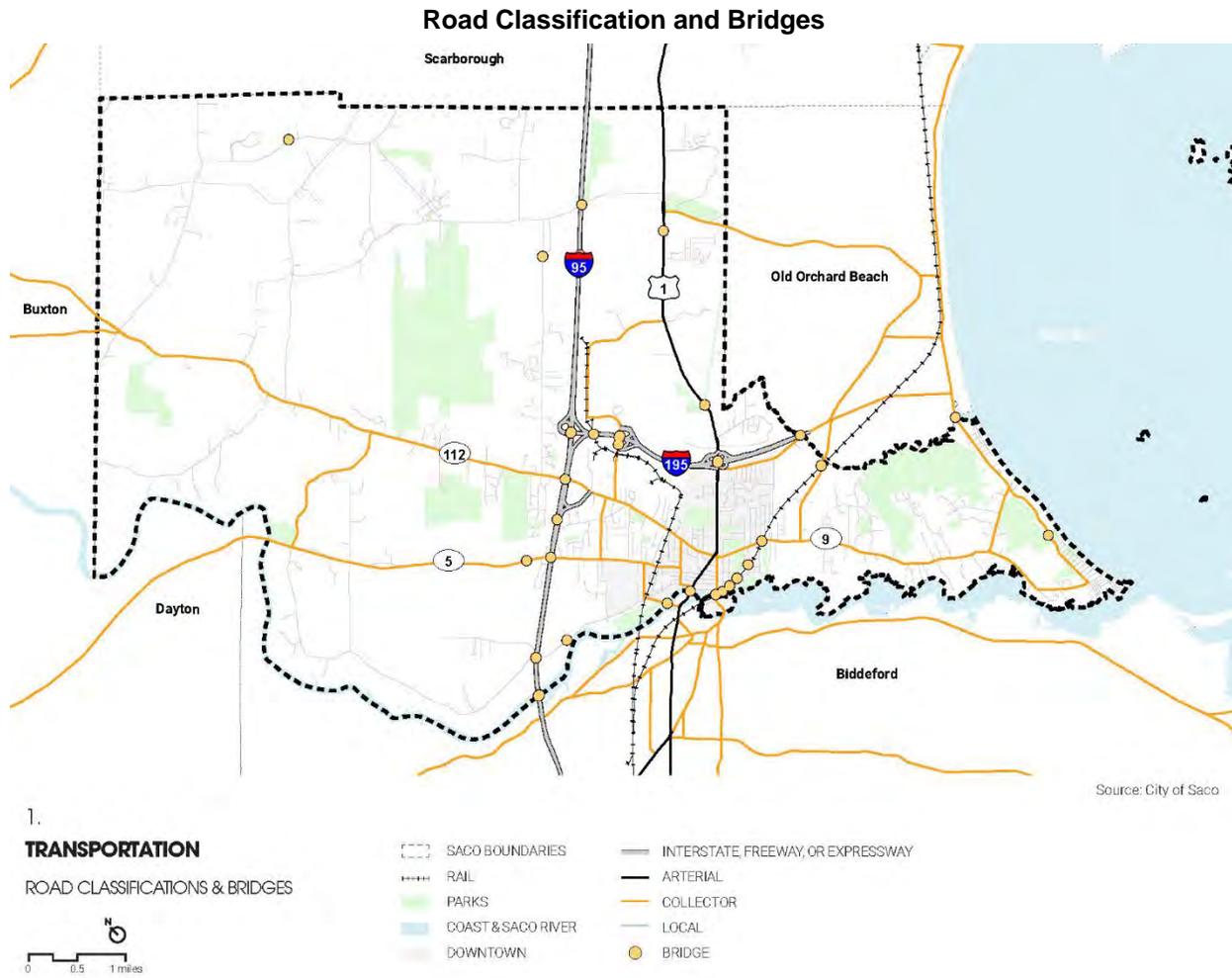
Source: Maine DOT

Maine DOT identified 12 high-crash nodes and 11 high-crash roadway segments in Saco in 2019. Route 1 and Main Street through Downtown to I-195 has a high density of crashes. This creates connectivity challenges and safety concerns for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- The 12 nodes accounted for 246 crashes, with half occurring in just three locations. The Main Street intersection with Ocean Park Road/Route 5 and the I-195 ramps saw the most crashes (60). Main Street/Hutchins Street just north of Thornton Academy and Elm Street/North Street saw 38 and 25 crashes respectively.
- The 11 segments accounted for 193 crashes, with almost half occurring in just three locations. Two of the three segments are along a quarter-mile of Main Street near I-195 and the third is a half-mile segment of I-95.

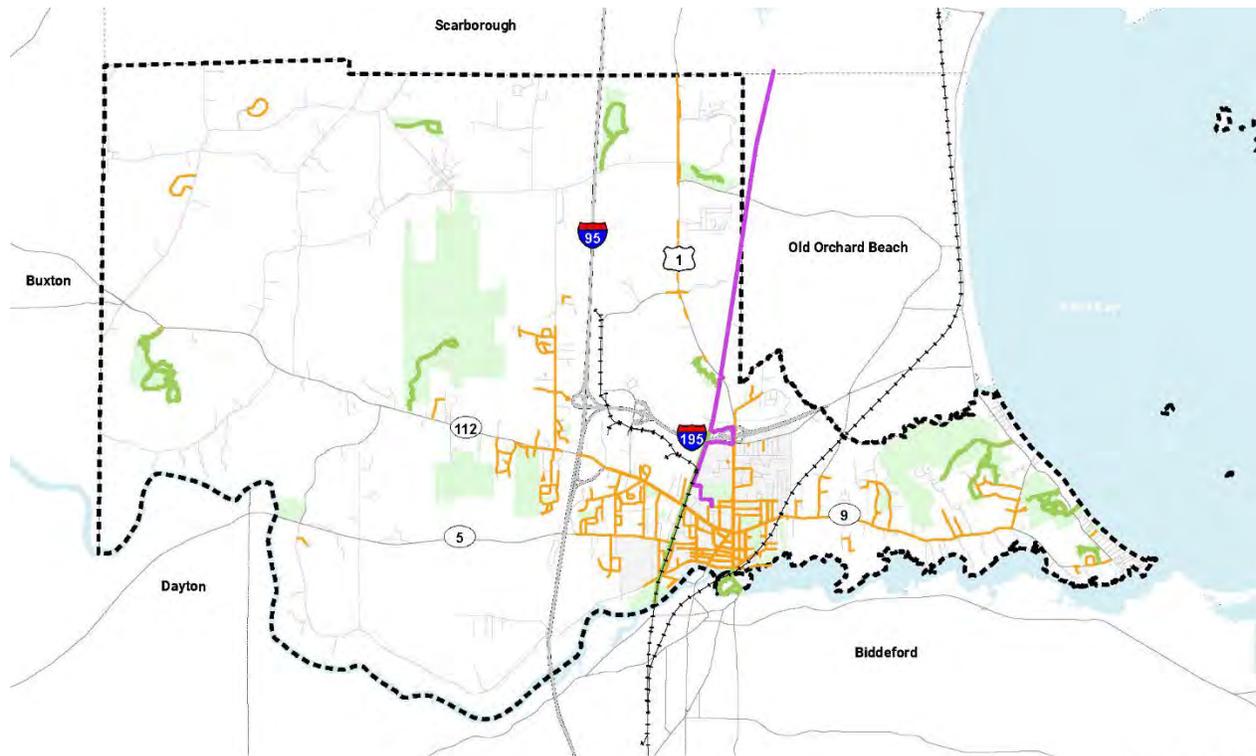
(2) Location and overall condition of roads, bridges, sidewalks, and bicycle facilities, including any identified deficiencies or concerns.

The existing infrastructure is well maintained and in good condition.



- Overall road network pavement condition has continuously improved since 2009. Public Works maintains a paving list of annual projects.
- There are 32 bridges in Saco, of which 3 are municipally-owned. MDOT maintains any bridge structure over a 10' span. The City owns two pedestrian bridges that are in good condition, both installed in the last 10 years. Railroad bridges over Beach Street/Route 9 and Old Orchard Road have low clearances (12'1" and 11' respectively) and narrow widths that limit access to coastal neighborhoods.

Sidewalk and Bicycle Facilities

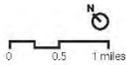


Source: City of Saco

1.

TRANSPORTATION

SIDEWALKS & BIKE FACILITIES



- [---] SACO BOUNDARIES
- ROADWAY
- ++++ RAIL
- PARKS
- COAST & SACO RIVER
- DOWNTOWN
- SIDEWALKS
- CITY TRAILS
- EASTERN TRAIL (INC. BIKE FACILITY)

- Saco has almost 100 miles of sidewalks in generally good repair. Maintaining historic brick sidewalks subject to freeze/thaw heaving is an ongoing challenge. Filling in gaps in the existing network to better connect destinations is a need.
- Saco installed a bicycle lane pilot project along a segment of North Street near Young School in 2021 by narrowing lane widths during a re-striping project. It is the only marked on-street bike facility and there is interest in growing a network of routes, although physical constraints limit opportunities to do so in many locations.

(3) Identify potential on and off-road connections that would provide bicycle and pedestrian connections to neighborhoods, schools, waterfronts and other activity centers.

The Route 1 Corridor Complete Streets Study (2019) identifies a series of recommended pedestrian and bicycle improvements for segments of Route 1 outside Downtown to the Scarborough town line. Sidewalk connections are still needed for sections of this corridor. The study recommends a neighborhood byway route to provide a low-stress alternative for cyclists in the area near Thornton Academy and I-195. This is due to the significant pedestrian and bicycle use here and the limitations of Route 1’s constrained dimensions. The byway would use existing neighborhood streets and require a few new connections to provide a complete route parallel to Route 1.

Pedestrian and bicycle connections are being explored between Downtown and the coast. Currently, a sidewalk path exists along one side of Ferry Road/Route 9 from Downtown until Bayview Road. In 2021, Public Works began considering options to complete a connection from there to the coast.

The Eastern Trail's potential "Over the River" connection would create an important link between existing trailheads at Thornton Academy in Saco and the Biddeford Medical Center across the Saco River. Currently this gap requires trail users to navigate unmarked on-road routes, a significant deterrent to through-users.

(4) Identify major traffic (including pedestrian) generators, such as schools, large businesses, public gathering areas/activities, etc. and related hours of their operations.

- Maine Turnpike interchange access including Industrial Park Road and Route 112
- Business and industrial parks
- Three elementary schools, one middle school, one high school
- Aquaboggan and Funtown Spashtown water parks (seasonal attraction)

(5) Identify policies and standards for the design, construction and maintenance of public and private roads.

The City adopted an updated Technical Design and Construction Standards Manual in 2021.

- Local streets require a minimum 50' right-of-way with a minimum 24' roadway pavement and have a minimum 25 mph design speed. Arterial streets require a minimum 70' right-of-way with a minimum 34' roadway pavement and have a minimum 35 mph design speed.
- Sidewalks must be at least 5' wide and provide 5' clearance around obstacles like utility poles.
- There are no bicycle accommodation requirements.

Private roads are also regulated by Article XI of the Zoning Ordinance. No more than four new lots are allowed on a private road and no more than two private roads are allowed in a private road network.

- Private roads are required to have a minimum right-of-way width of 50' and minimum travel width of 18'.
- Maximum dead-end length of 1,500'.

(6) List and locate municipal parking areas including capacity, and usage.

Data collected for 2021 Downtown Parking Study:

- Saco Transportation Center: 90 spaces, 62% peak utilization (weekend evening)
- Free Street: 18 spaces, 33% peak utilization (weekday midday)
- City Hall (open to public on nights and weekends): 32 spaces, 59% peak weekday utilization (midday), 25% peak weekend utilization (evening)

Other municipal lots:

- Camp Ellis: 80+ spaces
- Bayview Beach: unmarked lot
- Front Street: 10 trailer spaces for boats
- Irving Street (Diamond Park): 3 spaces + 5 trailer spaces for boats
- Foss Road (Recreation Complex)

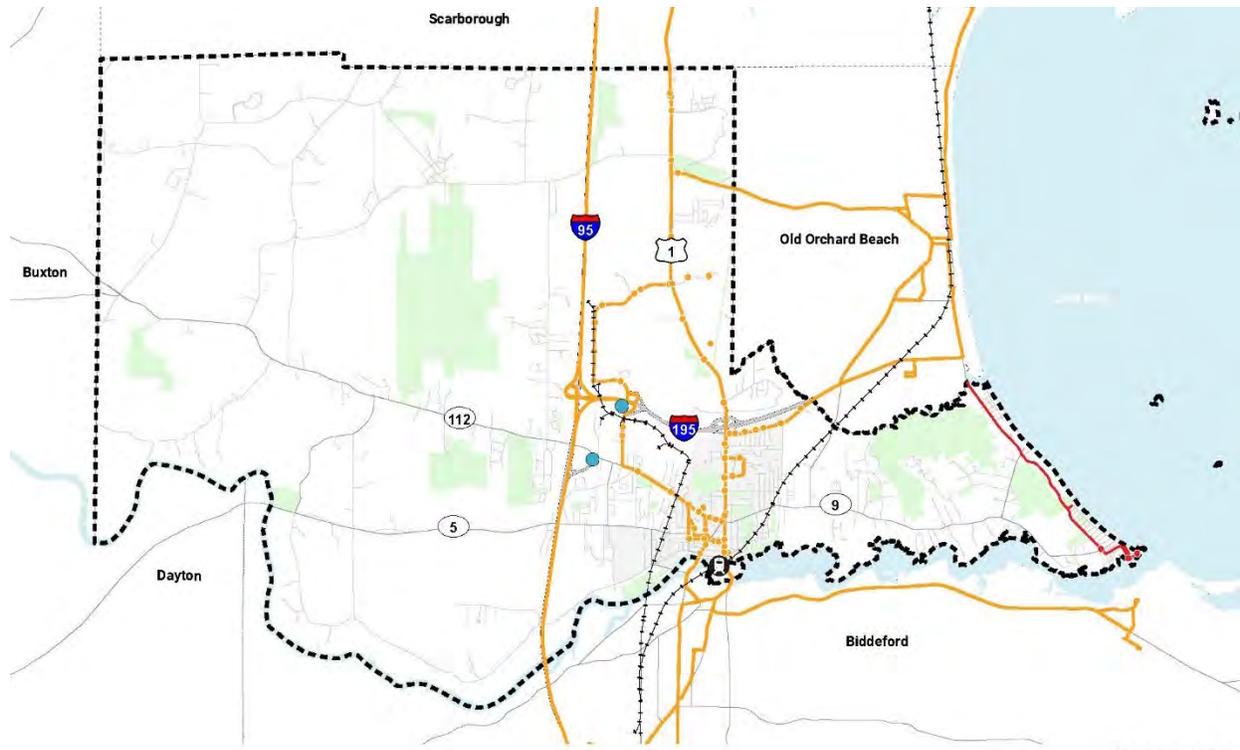
(7) Identify airports within or adjacent to the community and describe applicable airport zoning and airspace protection ordinances your community has in place.

The Biddeford Municipal Airport, located 3.5 miles southwest of Downtown Saco, is a local, nonprimary, general aviation airport. It has a single 3,000' runway 6-24 for small aircraft. Saco does not have airport zoning or airspace protection ordinances due to the distance away from the airport.

(8) Identify bus or van services.

Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach (BSOOB) Transit operates five bus routes from the Saco Transportation Center. Vehicles offer cashless fare payment via DiriGo TouchPass.

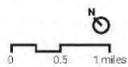
- White-Blue Line: service between Saco and Old Orchard Beach, including the Saco Industrial Park and Ocean Park Road (Route 5)
- Orange-Black Line: service between Saco and Biddeford, including Southern Maine Healthcare and the Biddeford Industrial Park
- Green Line: service between Saco and Portland, including the Maine Mall and The Downs in Scarborough
- Zoom Express (Purple Line): commuter service between Saco and Portland, from either the Saco Transportation Center or the Exit 36 Park and Ride
- Silver Line: free service between the Saco Transportation Center and the University of New England campus in Biddeford, including both the Saco and Biddeford City Halls
- Seasonal trolleys run during the summer months and provide access to Downtown Saco, water parks on Route 1, campgrounds, and other destinations.



1.

TRANSPORTATION

EXISTING BUS ROUTES & STOPS



- SACO BOUNDARIES
- ROADWAY
- ++++ RAIL
- PARKS
- COAST & SACO RIVER
- DOWNTOWN
- TRANSIT LINES
- TRANSIT STOPS
- TROLLEY LINE
- TROLLEY STOPS
- ⊙ TRANSPORTATION CENTER
- PARK & RIDE

Source: City of Saco

(9) Identify existing and proposed marine and rail terminals within your community including potential expansions.

Amtrak’s Downeaster service has a regular stop at the Saco Transportation Center on Saco Island near Downtown. The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) is planning mainline improvements and relocation of the Portland station which will make this a more appealing option for riders.

Camp Ellis has a pier for private and commercial use.

(10) If coastal communities identify public ferry service and private boat transportation support facilities (may be covered under Marine Resources with cross reference) including related water-side (docks/piers/wharves) and land-side (parking) facilities.

The City’s Camp Ellis Pier located at 5 Bay Avenue at the mouth of the Saco River. It has a multiuse pier for private and commercial use, over 500’ of docks, three commercial hoists, and 80+ parking spaces.

11. Public Facilities and Services

Analyses

(1) Are municipal services adequate to meeting changes in population and demographics?

Municipal services are generally adequate to meet the needs of the current population, future growth, and demographic changes. However, several services would benefit from investment to keep pace with growth and meet changing needs.

- Public safety has not kept up with the growing population and locations for recent development. Public safety has seen a 20% increase in call volume over the past decade and staff levels have not increased accordingly. Response times are longer, especially for new subdivisions in West Saco.
- More transit alternatives for those who cannot or choose not to drive are needed. The existing bus system is adequate but on-demand transportation for seniors would allow them to more easily reach medical appointments and groceries.
- Recreation needs are changing as well. The current Rec Center will need modifications to better serve the growing senior population and to accommodate new programming.
- The Dyer Library is a beloved public library that sees considerably more use than libraries in neighboring communities despite a much smaller operating budget. Improvements are needed to continue serving Saco's residents and meeting changing needs for digital technology, youth programming, and other issues.

(2) Has the community partnered with neighboring communities to share services, reduce costs and/or improve services? In what ways?

Saco has some partnerships with neighboring communities but has had difficulty establishing broader relationships.

- The Saco Water Resource Recovery Department (WRRD) collaborates with surrounding water resource recovery facilities by sharing equipment, such as the tri-community sewer camera work, and works with neighboring facilities on shared chemical purchases through Southern Maine Regional Water Council. The Department does billing services through Maine Water, saving the City's ratepayers administrative costs. The WRRD has evaluated sharing facilities with surrounding communities but costs were considered too high because of existing piping, elevations, and distances to facilities.
- Saco public safety has Mutual Aid Agreements with all surrounding communities, often used daily. Fire and EMS services in these communities are facing similar staffing and response time challenges so Mutual Aid cannot be the only solution.

(3) If the community has a public sewer system, what issues or concerns are there currently and/or anticipated in the future? Is the sanitary district extension policy consistent with the Future Land Use Plan as required by (38 M.R.S.A. §1163), or will it be?

Public sewer service is currently available in most areas between the Maine Turnpike and the coast. This system is susceptible to flood risk due to the treatment plant's location on the Saco River. There is a need to plan for future sewer service areas to support planned growth, in particular addressing unsewered lots within existing sewer service areas.

The Water Resource Recovery Facility on the Saco River is susceptible to flooding and is currently being considered for either major improvements or new construction. Voters approved a \$50 million bond question in 2021 to help finance these resiliency improvements. The cost of doing nothing was estimated as \$43 million by Maine's Climate Council, but the risk of service loss to residents and businesses is unacceptable.

Another concern is heavy wastewater loads from prospective businesses and industries like breweries or restaurants. This concern creates tension with economic development goals and impedes desires for increased eating and drinking options. This is especially an issue in the Downtown area which still has two Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs).

The public sewer system has abundant capacity to provide services. Filling in gaps in the existing service areas will provide more complete coverage and support growth. The sanitary district extension policy is consistent with the Future Land Use Plan.

(4) If the community has a public water system are any public water supply expansions anticipated? If so, have suitable sources been identified and protected? Is the water district extension policy consistent with the Future Land Use Plan?

Saco's water supply is provided by The Maine Water Company, a public water utility. The Maine Water Company owns or manages 13 water systems across the state including the municipalities of Saco, Biddeford, Old Orchard Beach, and Pine Point in Scarborough. The company operates independently from these municipalities. It is investing more than \$50 million in a new Saco River Drinking Water Treatment Facility being built in Biddeford and slated for completion in 2022. Its water source is the Saco River which is protected in several ways including the Saco River Corridor Commission.

The City of Saco does not fund infrastructure improvements to the system except when the City is serving in the role of a developer, as when extending service to the industrial park area. Maine Water Company replaced nearly 4,000 feet of century-old pipe along Route 1 from Cascade Road south in 2021. This section's replacement is the first of two phases, with a total of 9,500 ft expected to be replaced altogether. The replacement project is anticipated to improve hydraulics and availability of water to support economic development within its service area. It also replaced more than 3000' of pipe on North Avenue in 2020 to increase capacity and address deferred maintenance.

(5) If the town does not have a public sewer or water system, is this preventing the community from accommodating current and projected growth?

The City's public sewer service area and water service area meet existing needs and can accommodate projected growth.

As Saco contemplates where to accommodate and encourage future housing and commercial growth, strong consideration should be given to areas of the city where infrastructure and excess capacity already exist. Extensive development should be discouraged in remote areas where the length of the sewer lines increases substantially, which leads to odor issues in the system. Furthermore, as development expands to the rural areas, additional pump stations will be necessary, putting the burden of the cost of operations, maintenance, and upgrades on the City.

(6) Are existing stormwater management facilities adequately maintained? What improvements are needed? How might future development affect the existing system?

Needed public and private stormwater management facility maintenance improvements are underway or have been identified.

The City of Saco maintains public stormwater facilities and has increased the frequency of inspection and maintenance. Funding levels for this will likely need to increase in the future as the City system expands. Private facilities are maintained by private property owners. Newer developments are required to submit annual reports on inspection and maintenance efforts, though older sites do not have this requirement.

The City has identified a need to improve compliance of private property maintenance efforts for detention ponds, drainage ditches, and other structures. Completing the CSO Abatement Master Plan and remediating the final two CSO locations is a priority. More green infrastructure and low-impact

development strategies are needed to mitigate stormwater runoff and improve water quality, both in private projects and public improvements.

The impacts of future development on the stormwater system depends significantly on where the majority of growth occurs. Redevelopment of in-town sites can reduce impervious surface coverage and integrate new green infrastructure and low impact development features. These design strategies can mitigate runoff from buildings and parking lots and improve water quality. Greenfield development of undeveloped or rural sites will increase local runoff and decrease water quality, even if green infrastructure and low impact development strategies are employed.

(7) How do residents dispose of septic tank waste? Are there issues or concerns regarding septic tank waste?

The Water Resource Recovery Facility accepts domestic septic tank waste on an infrequent basis. As Saco WRRF looks to the future, PFAs, PFOs, and PFOA could be a concern for accepting and properly treating septic tank waste.

Saco's private septic system rules follow the State of Maine Subsurface Wastewater Disposal Rules and the State Plumbing Code. In addition to these rules, City rules include a provision requiring a reserve area be identified and left un-built for future replacement of systems if the limiting factor is within 24 inches of the surface or for any community system. The septic system must be designed by a licensed soils evaluator. Community systems must also show how they are financed, and provide for the accumulation and disbursement of funds. Single- and two-family homes are barred from using community systems.

(8) Is school construction or expansion anticipated during the planning period? Are there opportunities to promote new residential development around existing and proposed schools?

Saco is at the top of the State's new school construction list. Locating the facility in a walkable in-town setting will be important to encourage infill residential development rather than further sprawl into the rural area.

A building committee was formed in early 2021 to guide the process, beginning with site evaluation and selection. Saco is nearing the end of Stage 1 of a five-stage process to program, design, and construct a new school. The grade configuration of the new elementary school will be determined in the early phases of the design process. Consideration for walking and bicycle access, transit service, and proximity to existing neighborhoods will be important to encourage in-town residential growth rather than further sprawl into the rural area.

Other school maintenance and improvement projects are also needed. Saco Schools is well below the State average for facilities cost per student and debt service cost per student. Addressing deferred maintenance and providing upgrades to education technology and physical spaces for modern teaching practices are important to continue serving Saco school children.

(9) Is the community's emergency response system adequate? Are improvements needed?

The dispersed pattern of residential development over the past two decades has stretched the City's ability to provide emergency services and improvements are needed to keep pace with growth.

The Fire Department strives to be the best All-Hazards Emergency Response Agency. The Police Department is a full-service community-oriented policy agency. However, public safety is understaffed for the current call volume which has increased over the past decade as the population has grown and gotten older. Close to three-quarters of fire department service calls are for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and only 7-10% for major fires. A 2018 comparison study found Saco's fire department to be understaffed by 30% compared to recommended levels. Continued development in Saco's outlying areas may increase the need for investment particularly in the fire and police departments. Staff increases will

be needed as well as a new public safety facility in the Route 1 corridor to better serve recent growth areas along Portland Road and in West Saco.

(10) Is the solid waste management system meeting current needs? Is the community reducing the reliance on waste disposal and increasing recycling opportunities? Are improvements needed to meet future demand?

Because many of the solid waste and recycling services in Saco are provided by private contractors, growth and development will not have a significant impact on these services except on cost.

The Public Works Department maintains a transfer station on Foss Road for bulky waste, yard waste, and recyclable fiber products. The City contracts for curbside collection of residential solid waste and single-stream recyclables. Presently the City's contract is with Pine Tree Waste. All residential solid waste and recycling materials are disposed of and processed by Ecomaine, a non-profit waste management company. The City pays the tipping fee from its General Fund. The City does not subsidize the collection commercial waste.

The Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) seeks to increase recycling rates and decrease solid waste costs for the City. Saco launched a composting program in 2019 with the help of Garbage to Garden to reduce the amount of organic material being collected in the trash. Residents can drop off compostable material at a kiosk located in the parking lot of the Parks and Recreation facility on Franklin Street. The SWAC hopes that increased usage will allow for an expansion of this service for greater convenience.

(11) Are improvements needed in the telecommunications and energy infrastructure?

Ensuring affordable high-speed internet access is important for economic development goals and education. The City's energy infrastructure is generally sufficient but improvements are needed to support business development and trends toward electrification of transportation. There is a high-speed internet trunk line that runs through Downtown Saco. Expanding access to reliable, low-cost high-speed internet for Saco residents and businesses is important for economic development and education goals. However, broadband is not currently a limiting factor for businesses.

Natural gas service needs to be extended along Portland Road/Route 1 to support business growth in this corridor. It currently does not extend to Cascade Road.

Three-phase power is also a limiting factor that needs to be improved. Businesses seeking to locate outside the two business parks are responsible for bringing service to their site if needed, adding development costs to business recruitment efforts. However, grant programs using TIF funds could be used to assist larger businesses with this expense.

Upgrades to the electrical network will be needed to improve resiliency and support the expansion of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure. Such improvements will need to be completed by local power companies to support City goals.

(12) Are local and regional health care facilities and public health and social service programs adequate to meet the needs of the community?

Healthcare services in Saco are adequate to meet current needs.

The closest hospital is in Biddeford and other hospitals are located in Portland. A variety of healthcare providers in Saco offer primary care for residents. Social services are somewhat limited in Saco but resources are available nearby. The City has a General Assistance program to connect residents with these resources. As the population ages, additional healthcare and social services may be needed to meet the changing needs of seniors. Saco was designated an "age-friendly community" by AARP in 2016 and its committee continues to plan for and implement improvements according to its Action Plan.

(13) Will other public facilities, such as town offices, libraries, and cemeteries accommodate projected growth?

Certain public facilities may need improvements to maintain historic buildings and keep pace with growth.

City Hall may need to be enlarged or repurposed to accommodate administrative growth as the population increases. Funding for the Dyer Library and Saco Museum is well below Maine peer city standards. The City should consider steps to assure the sustainable future of library and museum services and facilities provided by the Dyer Library Association.

(14) To what extent are investments in facility improvements directed to growth areas?

Investments in facility improvements are generally directed to growth areas, but development in West Saco and rural areas may increase pressure for investments in non-growth areas.

The recent Public Works building is located in the Saco Industrial Park. The Water Resource Recovery Facility is located just south of Downtown and will see significant investment to improve its resiliency to flooding and storm events. The planned Public Safety Facility will be located somewhere along Portland Road, a future growth corridor.

An unresolved question at the time of this comprehensive plan is where the new school will be located. Several sites are under consideration, some in growth areas and others in limited growth areas near rural areas. Encouraging the new facility to be located in a walkable, in-town location will help prevent induced demand for more housing in rural areas if the school were to be located in a limited growth area.

(15) Does the community have a street tree program?

Saco has an Urban Forest Division within the Parks and Recreation department.

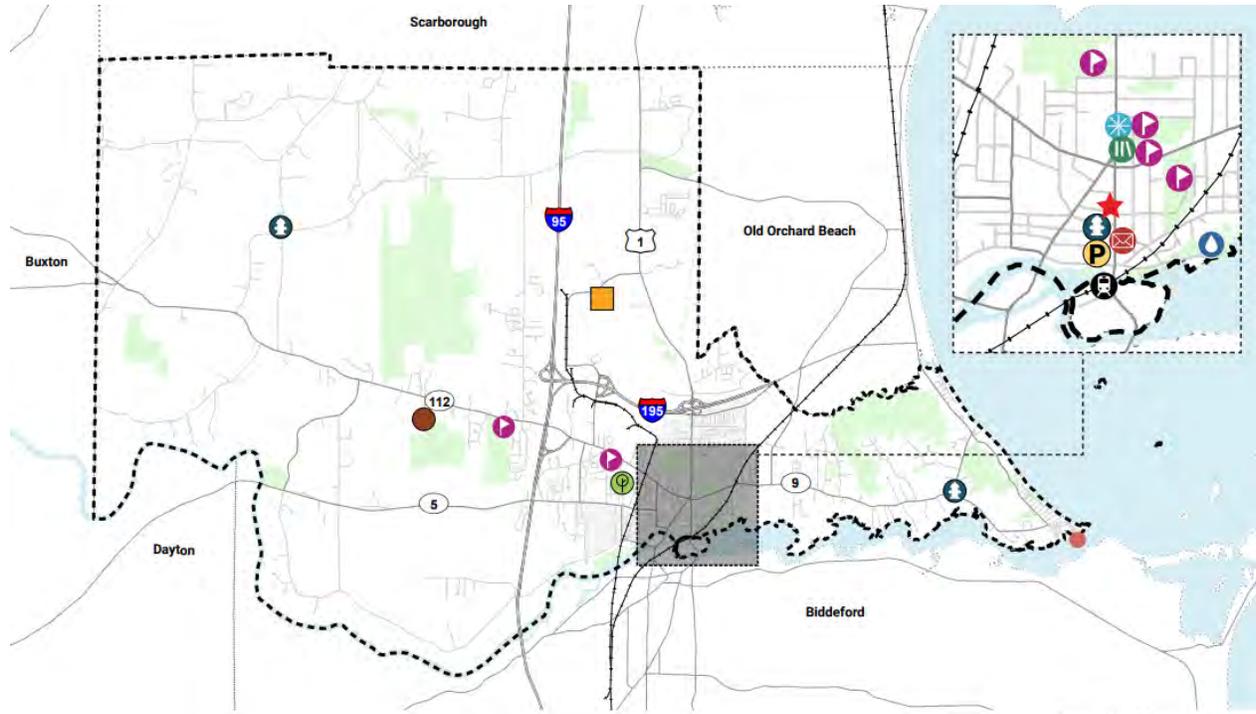
It is tasked with both the administration of contractual tree services and completion of arboricultural maintenance activities by park staff in the care of the community's street trees and urban forest. The Department's duties include hazard tree identification, assessment of the health of the urban forest, and to act as an advisor to the planning department with regards to development review. This Department is tasked by City Code to be responsible for the routine care, planting and emergency storm maintenance of all City trees. All basic tree care, planting and emergency work is covered by in house staffing. Saco has been designated a Tree City USA city for eleven years.

Conditions and Trends

GIS for all following

(1) location of facilities and service areas (mapped as appropriate);

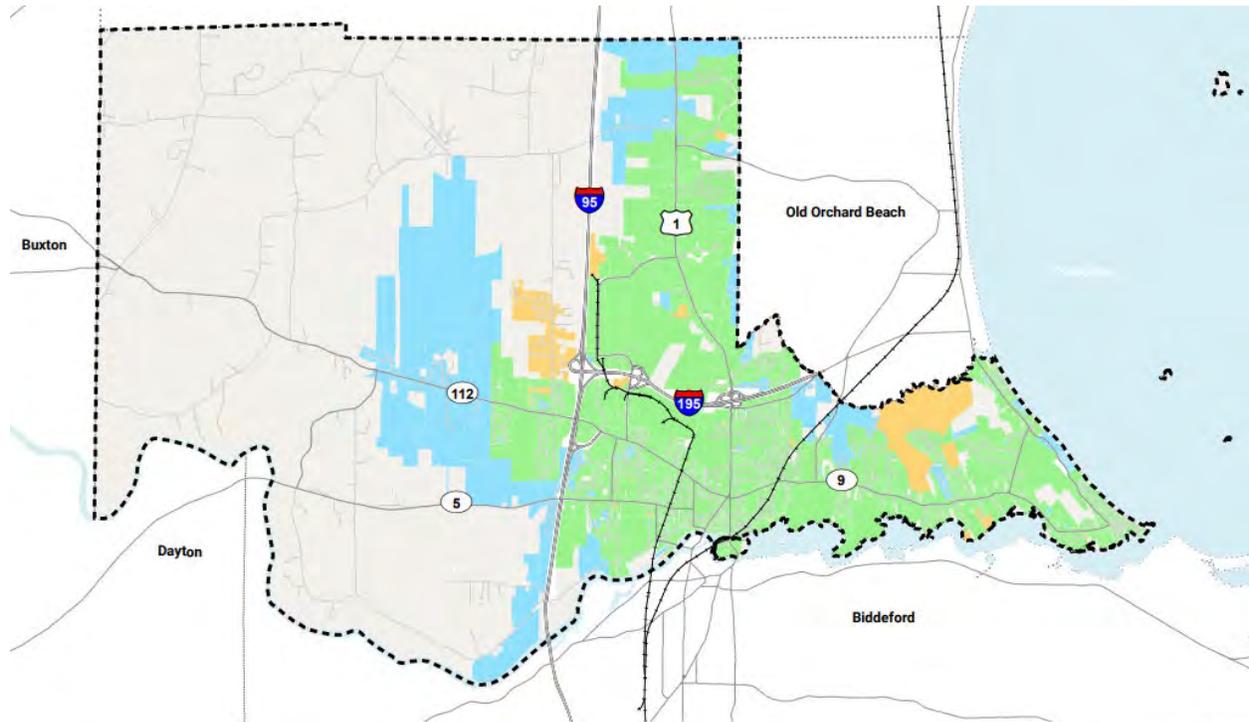
Public Facilities



Source: City of Saco

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| AMTRAK STATION | PARK & RECREATION |
| CITY HALL | POST OFFICE |
| CAMP ELLIS PIER | PUBLIC WORKS |
| DYER LIBRARY AND MUSEUM | SACO MUSEUM |
| POLICE STATION | SCHOOL |
| FIRE STATION | TRANSFER STATION |
| WATER RESOURCE RECOVERY FACILITY | |

Sewer and Water Service Areas

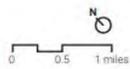


Source: City of Saco

10.

PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES

PUBLIC SERVICES



- [---] SACO BOUNDARIES
- ROADWAY
- RAIL
- COAST & SACO RIVER
- WATER & SEWER SERVICE
- ONLY WATER SERVICE
- ONLY SEWER SERVICE
- NO WATER OR SEWER SERVICE

(2) general physical condition of facilities and equipment;

- City Hall: Located in a historic brick building on Main Street in Downtown Saco, City Hall is generally well-maintained. Space constraints are increasing as services to meet the growing population expand and parking for staff and visitors is limited.
- Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF): This 50-year old treatment facility is located within two feet of the tidal Saco River and is highly susceptible to flooding. Several recent storms have caused significant flooding, emphasizing the need for improvements to maintain this critical service.
 - The system includes 30 pump stations in good condition. Historic brick sewers remain an issue in older parts of the city and the goal is to slip-line the remaining 1000’.
- Police Station: The police station is located in a flood hazard zone and has experienced basement flooding in the past. The building’s HVAC system is also aging and will be updated in 2021-2022. Record retention requirements demand an increasing amount of space unavailable in the current facility.
- Central Fire Station: The Fire Department moved into a new 21,000 square foot facility on North Street in 2011. It houses three class A pumpers, one ladder, one brush truck, two rescues, two service vehicles and a rescue boat.
 - North Saco Station and Camp Ellis Station are small facilities staffed by on-call members.
- Dyer Library and Saco Museum: These facilities are located in two adjacent historic buildings on Main Street in Downtown Saco. A shared geothermal heating system was installed in 2017 to reduce energy costs.
 - The Dyer Library is in need of additional funding for physical improvements and book purchases to continue serving residents. Despite being forced to close for several months during the COVID-19 pandemic, the library served more than 65,000 patrons in-person in 2020. It serves more people than public libraries in Biddeford and Scarborough despite operating expenses that are approximately half. Its children and young adult programming serves significantly more people than either neighboring community.
 - The Saco Museum is a regional museum of fine and decorative arts and historic artifacts. It is the third oldest museum in Maine. More than 4,000 schoolchildren visited in 2019.

(3) capacity and anticipated demand during the planning period;

- Wastewater: The WRRF is a 4.2 million gallon per day (MGD) treatment facility. Flows have decreased over the past 20+ years due to separation of combined sewer overflows (CSOs). The City anticipates 50% growth in the number of sewer user accounts by 2050 based on expected population growth.
- Water: Public water is provided by the Maine Water Company. System maintenance and expansion will be coordinated with future growth. Increased water pressure is needed in many areas to serve Fire Department needs.
- Public Safety: Calls for service will continue to increase as the population grows and the distance travelled for service will increase if residential growth continues in West Saco and rural areas.

(4) identification of who owns/manages the systems;

- Wastewater: City of Saco owns the system. Saco WRRD manages water resource recovery facility and city pump stations. Saco Public Works Department manages city's sewer collection system. Both departments work collaboratively to provide the community quality sewer services.
- Water: Public water is owned and maintained by the Maine Water Company.
- Public Safety: The City of Saco provides police, fire, and EMS service to the community.

(5) estimated costs of needed capital improvements to public facilities; and

- **Water Resource Recovery Facility:** The Water Resource Recovery Department has completed 30% design of potential improvements. Estimated costs are between \$10 million and \$50 million depending on the final selection of design alternatives. A bond issue for up to \$50 million was approved by voters in 2021 to fund this project.
- **Parks and Recreation Teen Center:** The City purchased a building in Downtown to renovate into a Teen Center. \$75,000 in capital funds is budgeted to improve one floor of the building and additional funding will be required for future repairs.
- **Public Safety Facility:** A satellite location in the Portland Road corridor is needed to improve service response times due to recent development patterns. The total project cost for a new 15,000 square foot building and equipment is estimated at \$7.7 million. A future bond issuance will be considered to help finance this facility.
- **Police Station:** Police leadership are considering the potential relocation of the police station to a more central location outside of flood hazard zones. The new facility could be an adaptive reuse of an existing structure rather than new construction. Costs have not been determined yet.
- **New School:** This facility is the responsibility of Saco Schools and will be funded largely by State appropriations. The City will be responsible for any desired features or amenities beyond what the State allows per their formulas. The estimated cost will be dependent on several factors including grade configuration.

(6) the following information related to each of these public facilities and services:**a. Sewerage and/or Water Supply – Identify number and types of users, and percent of households served**

There are 5,180 total Saco WRRD accounts, of which 4,799 are residential. This accounts for approximately 55% of all Saco households and an estimated more than 13,000 residents. There are also 381 commercial, industrial, school, or public authority WRRD accounts estimated to support over 7,000 jobs that use sewer services.

b. Septage – Identify any community policies or regulations regarding septage collection and disposal.

The Water Resource Recovery Facility only accepts domestic septage from Saco residents. Saco's private septic system rules follow the State of Maine Subsurface Wastewater Disposal Rules and the State Plumbing Code. In addition to these rules, City rules include a provision requiring a reserve area be identified and left un-built for future replacement of systems if the limiting factor is within 24 inches of the surface or for any community system.

c. Solid Waste – Describe the community's solid waste management system. Identify types and amounts of municipal solid waste and recycled materials for the past five (5) years.

The City contracts for curbside collection of residential solid waste and single-stream recyclables. Presently the City contracts with Pine Tree Waste and ecoMaine.

d. Stormwater Management – Identify combined sewer overflows. For Municipal Separate Stormwater System (MS4) communities, describe plan and status of the major goals of the MS4 requirements.

Saco is regulated under the MS4 and updated its Stormwater Management Plan in 2021. A copy of the SWMP is available on the City website. Saco's new permit took effect in July 2022. The permit requires compliance with six minimum controls. Major goals for Saco's Department of Public Works are increased frequency for the cleaning and maintenance of stormwater system, outfall inspections and sampling. The new permit requires three Best Management Practices (BMPs) within the Urban Impaired Stream (UIS).

The CSO Abatement Master Plan is ongoing and continues to meet program goals. Saco has completed most of its efforts to resolve combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and there are only two remaining ones: Front Street and Tappan Valley.

e. Power and Communications – Availability of 3-phase power, Internet (including broadband), and cable within the community.

Electricity generation, transmission, and distribution

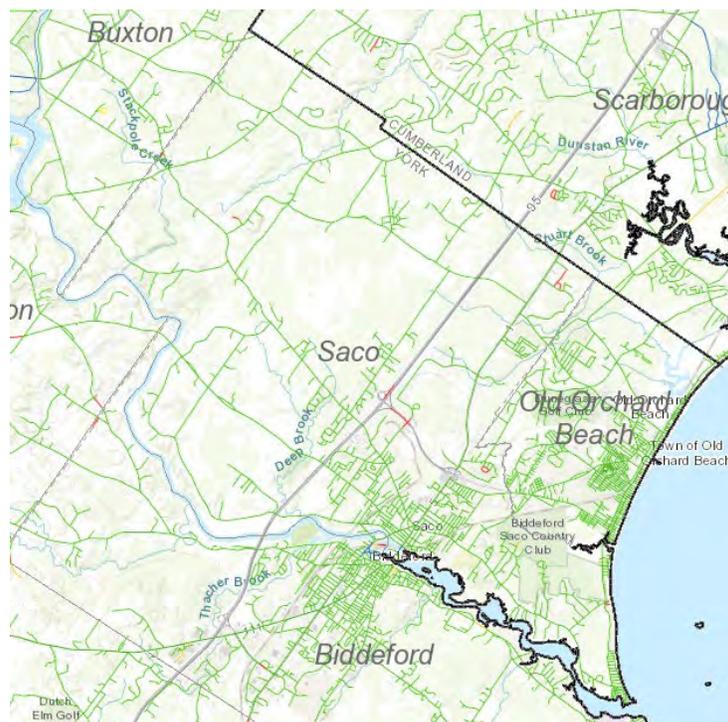
Saco is served by Central Maine Power, NextEra Energy Inc., and Until. Three-phase power is available in the industrial parks. Businesses requiring it but located outside the industrial parks are responsible for extending service to their site.

Internet and cable

Saco is served by Time Warner Cable, Inc., Fairpoint Communications, and GWI. The 2019 5-Year American Communities Survey estimates that 700 households in Saco (8.8%) do not have internet service.

Saco has fairly strong wired broadband connectivity per a 2019 study. While much of the city has fast broadband access (shown in green lines below indicating connectivity at least 50x10 MBPS but less than 100x100), wired broadband speeds in a few areas appear to be much slower.

Wired Broadband Speed, 2019

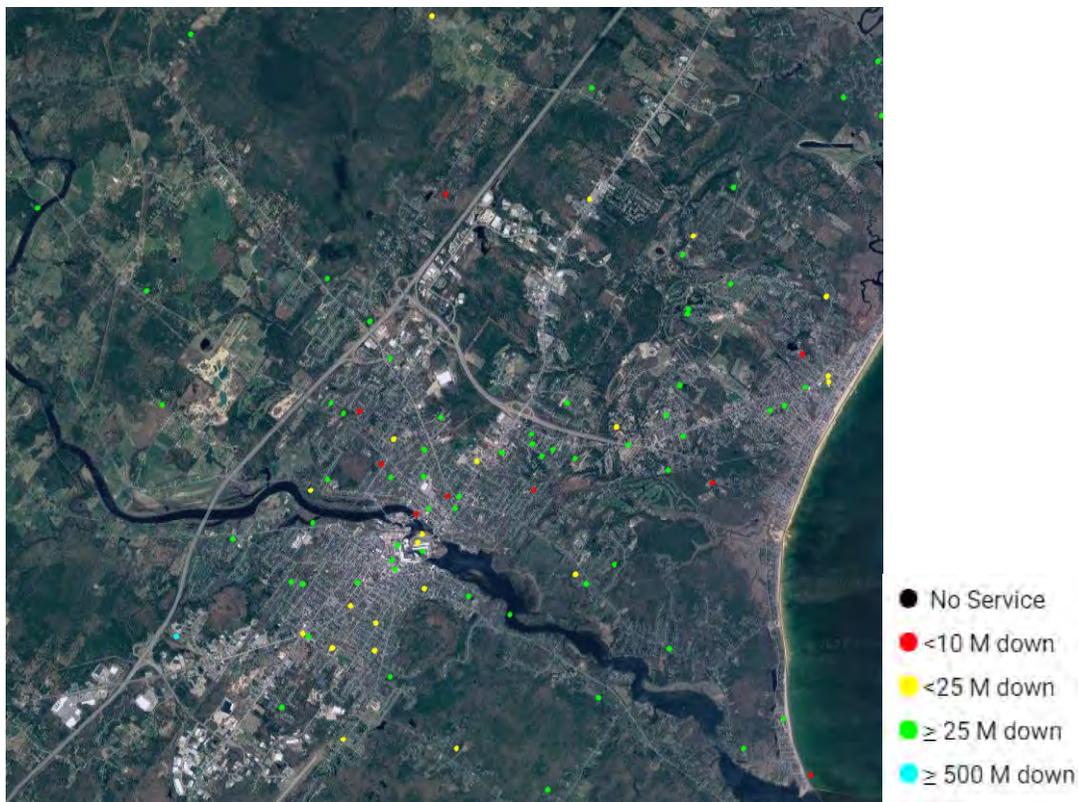


- Areas with internet connectivity reported at least 100x100 Mbps
- Areas with internet connectivity reported at less than 100x100 and at least 50x10 Mbps
- Areas with internet connectivity reported at less than 50x10 and at least 25x3 Mbps
- Areas with internet connectivity reported at less than 25x3 and at least 10x1 Mbps
- Areas with internet connectivity reported at less than 10x1 Mbps
- Areas without address ranges

Source: [ConnectME Public \(sewall.com\)](http://ConnectME Public (sewall.com))

The Maine Broadband Coalition initiated a statewide internet speed test in February 2021 to measure relative download and upload speeds. As of October 2021, data had been collected at 136 test locations within Saco. The map below illustrates the results in and near Saco, showing download speeds. 31% of tested connections in Saco were found to have slow or somewhat-slow (<25 Mbps) download speeds, while 55% were found to have slow or somewhat slow upload speeds.

Maine Broadband Coalition Speed Test Results in Saco, 2021



Source: *Maine Broadband Coalition*

f. Emergency Response System – Average call response times for fire, police, and emergency/rescue.

The Fire Department estimates that they are able to arrive within five minutes of being dispatched 55-60% of the time. This allows for a one-minute “turn-out” time at the station and four-minute response time. Longer runs are required for calls in North Saco, Camp Ellis, and Route 1 North corridor, as much as 8 to 12 minutes of driving. The Fire Records Management System and Dispatching Computer System do not currently allow for more detailed response time data.

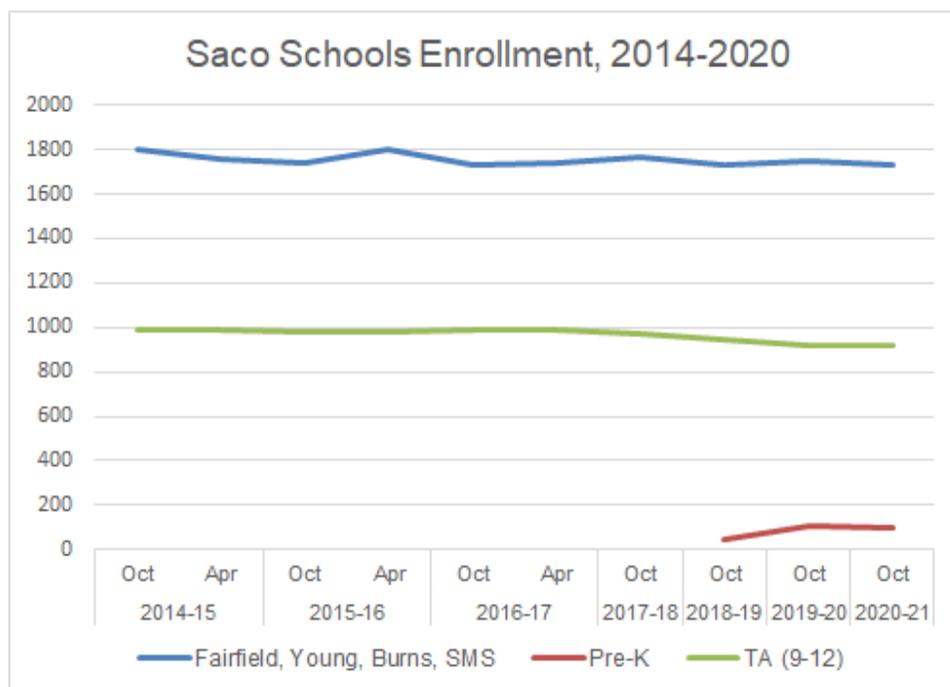
Police response times vary depending on where officers are located relative to the call location and whether it is a high-priority call (lights and siren) or not. The Police Station is not centrally located in the city so any call outside the downtown area takes more time to respond to.

g. Education – Identify school administrative unit. Include primary/secondary school system enrollment for the most recent year information is available and for the ten (10) years after the anticipated adoption of plan.

Saco Schools operates four schools: two serving grades K-2 (Fairfield and Young), one serving grades 3-5 (Burns), and one serving grades 6-8 (Saco Middle School). Pre-kindergarten has been offered since 2018. Saco does not have a public high school. However, residents can attend Thornton Academy, a prestigious private school offering grades 9-12 as well as lower grades.

Total K-8 enrollment in the four schools was **1,734 in October 2020**, a slight decrease from 1,749 in October 2019. Pre-K enrollment was 98 in 2020, a slight decrease from 110 in 2019. Thornton Academy's high school enrollment (grades 9-12) was 919 in 2020, approximately stable from 922 in 2019. The chart below shows an overall slight decline in school enrollment since the 2014-2015 school year.

Enrollment in Saco Schools, 2014-2020



Source: Saco Schools, 2021.

Saco Schools is the second most transient school district in York County—157 students moved into or out of the district in 2020-2021. While the COVID-19 pandemic may have played an outsized role in that particular period, Saco Schools do experience annual fluctuations that are hard to predict. The appeal of Thornton Academy for high school attracts many families, while others move in and out of Saco based on jobs, housing affordability, family ties, or other factors. This high migration variability makes projecting future enrollment more difficult.

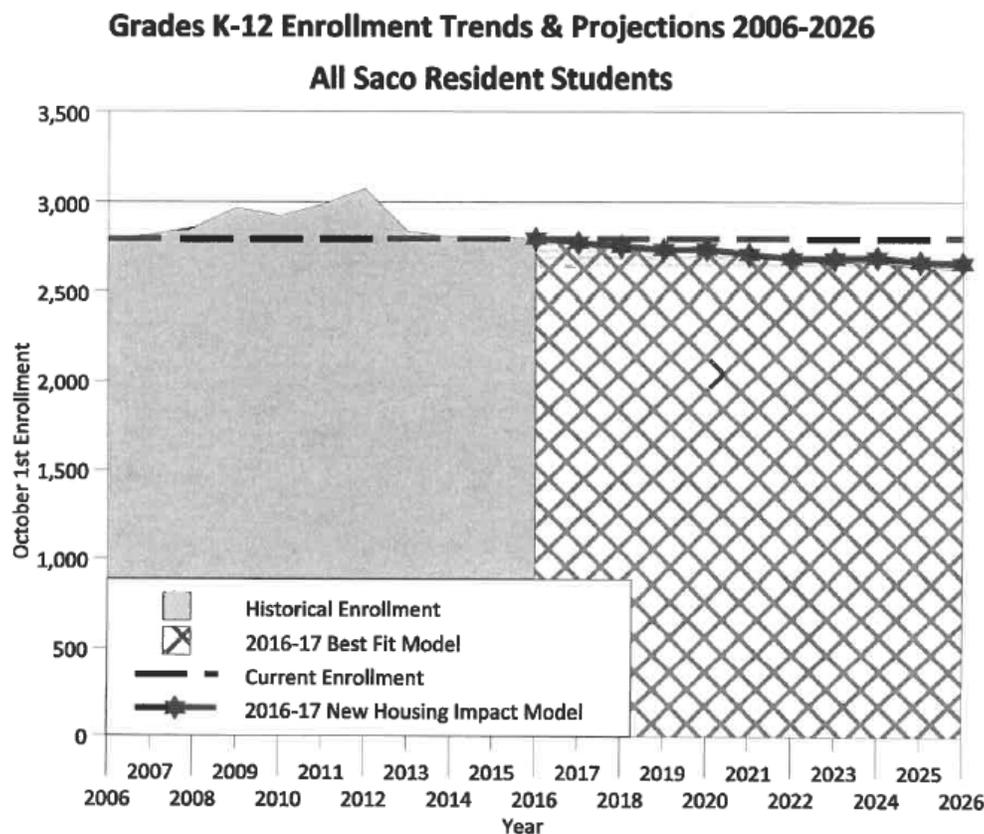
The most recent enrollment study was completed in 2017. It produced a “best fit” model using recent birth rates and a housing impact model accounting for the recent annual average number of new housing units. The latter model accounts for more preschool-age in-migration attracted by new housing and thus

has slightly higher projections than the best fit model. Both models predict a slight increase in K-2 enrollment by 2026-27 and a slight decrease in grades 3-5 and 6-8 enrollment.

Housing impact model projections:

- 2019-2020: 1,674 K-8 students (+/- 10% range between 1,507 and 1,842)
 - Actual enrollment: 1,749 students
- 2026-2027: **1,708 K-8 students** (+/- 10% range between 1,537 and 1,879)

Appendix 7-2: Saco Attending Enrollment (Resident and Non-Resident)



Source: 2016-2017 School Enrollment Projection Study

h. Health Care - Describe major health care facilities (hospitals, clinics) and other providers serving the community. Identify public health and social services supported by the community through municipal subsidy.

Healthcare

- Saco residents are chiefly served by the Southern Maine Medical Center (SMMC) in Biddeford. The acute care facility includes a 150-bed full-service medical center with emergency, inpatient care, and outpatient services. Several hospitals are also located in Portland including Maine Medical Center and Mercy Hospital.
- Southern Maine Health Care operates three locations in Saco including family medicine and pediatrics, radiology, walk-in care, and a sports performance center.

- Sweetser provides mental health services for children, families, and adults from a campus located near I-195 and Portland Road in Saco.
- The Kimball Health Center houses a variety of healthcare providers on Lincoln Street.

Public health and social services

- The City's Public Health officer is the Code Enforcement Director. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City published information on the disease, protection measures, and federal and state guidance regarding masking and vaccination.
- The City's General Assistance program is a 'safety net' program after all other available resources have been utilized. Other resources include York County Community Action, the Saco Food Pantry, and State departments including Health and Human Services (food stamps, TANF) and the Department of Labor (unemployment assistance).

Supported Entities

Saco supports several public health and social services through its General Fund. These include:

- Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc: non-profit providing free services to adoptive and kinship families
- Age Friendly Saco: non-profit serving seniors in the community through outreach programs and partnerships to address food insecurity, social isolation, and other issues
- American Red Cross of Northern New England: provides relief and support to prevent and alleviate suffering in the face of emergencies
- Caring Unlimited: York County's domestic violence program providing access to life-changing and life-saving supports, 109 Saco residents were served in 2019-2020.
- Southern Maine Agency on Aging: provides variety of services to older adults, adults with disabilities, and care partners including an Information and Resources program, health insurance counseling, nutritious meals, caregiver supports, and more. 693 Saco residents were served in 2020.
- Seeds of Hope Neighborhood Center: provides services and facilities for those experiencing homelessness, including an Overnight Warming Center and Career Center. In the first year of the pandemic, the Center served over 8,400 meals to 445 unique individuals.
- York County Community Action: provides services to elderly, disabled, and low-income individuals in Saco and across York County.

i. Municipal Government Facilities and Services – Describe facilities and staffing for municipal administrative, enforcement, and public works operations.

- City Administration has two staff positions: the City Administrator and an Executive Assistant.
 - Overall, the City of Saco budgeted for 198 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in 2021, excluding temporary and seasonal employees. This includes 55 FTE police and 41 FTE Fire/Ambulance (combined 48% of total).
- The Planning Department has three staff positions: City Planner, Assistant City Planner, and a Planning Coordinator. The Planning Department separated from Economic Development in 2021 after having been merged together in a single department in the FY2019 budget. The Assistant City Planner position was added to the department after the split in 2021.
- The Economic Development Department has two staff positions: Director and Specialist. The Economic Development Department separated from Planning in 2021 after having been merged together in a single department in the FY2019 budget.
- Code Enforcement has five staff positions including the director, two assistant code enforcement officers, an electrical inspector, and program coordinator.

- The Public Works department has 13 staff members including the Harbormaster. A new Public Works garage opened in 2021 in the Saco Industrial Park.
- Saco's Water Resource Recovery Department has ten full-time employees. Public Works staffing for sewer collections (paid through WRRD enterprise funds) is equivalent to three full-time employees.

j. Street Tree Program - Describe the community's street tree program.

The Urban Forest Division of Saco Parks and Recreation is tasked with both the administration of contractual tree services and completion of arboricultural maintenance activities by park staff in the care of the community's street trees and urban forest. This Department is tasked by City Code to be responsible for the routine care, planting and emergency storm maintenance of all City trees. All basic tree care, planting and emergency work is covered by in house staffing. The Department's duties include hazard tree identification, assessment of the health of the urban forest, and to act as an advisor to the planning department with regards to development review.

12. Existing Land Use

B. Analyses

(1) Is most of the recent development occurring: lot by lot; in subdivisions; or in planned developments? Is recent development consistent with the community's vision?

Most recent development has occurred in subdivisions or lot-by-lot. A significant portion of this growth is subdivisions in West Saco. In-town development includes infill lots, tear-downs, and adaptive reuse. One planned development, Park North on Route 1 near Flag Pond Road, is developing in phases.

Development in West Saco is not consistent with the previous comprehensive plan's vision nor this plan's. New subdivisions in these rural areas encroach on its rural character. They extend city services which increase municipal costs, consume undeveloped land, and threaten the ecology of the area due to the prevalence of private septic systems.

(2) What regulatory and non-regulatory measures would help promote development of a character, and in locations that are consistent with the community's vision?

Article VII of the Zoning Ordinance provides for Master Plan Development standards. These include streetscape, parking and design standards and transit-oriented development requirements. Master plan proposals on Saco Island are subject to additional design standards. Currently, Master Plan Development provides only basic, written standards with no graphic element. They do not provide a vision for the type of development desired, creating uncertainty for both developers and neighbors. The City is considering revisions to these standards to better promote the character of development.

Other regulatory and non-regulatory measures to encourage development in growth areas and of a character compatible with the community and expectations include:

- **Small area or neighborhood plan.** These plans are urban design studies that would allow residents and city staff to proactively plan for areas where future growth is anticipated or desired. An interactive community planning process would identify shared goals, understand constraints and opportunities, discuss benefits of new development and tradeoffs, and establish graphic design guidelines for future development.
- **Design guidelines.** Either as part of a small area plan or a standalone effort, graphic design guidelines would visually present examples of design elements and features either required or suggested for development proposals. This tool provides greater clarity for developers and neighbors about the City's expectations.
- **Conservation strategies.** Several planning tools exist to encourage conservation of important natural resources in rural areas while still allowing property owners to realize some value from their land. Examples of these include conservation subdivisions, conservation limited development, and transfer of development rights.

(3) Is the community's administrative capacity adequate to manage its land use regulation program, including Planning Board and code enforcement officer?

Saco's Planning Department spends most of its time completing technical plan review and providing support for the Planning Board. There is little staff capacity to undertake long-term planning efforts that could help the City plan for the type of growth it wants to see.

The Planning Department consists of a City Planner, Assistant Planner, and Planning Coordinator. The department supports the eight-member Planning Board and the Historic Preservation Commission. Most of staff's time is devoted to reviewing proposals and preparing memos for Planning Board consideration. As a result, staff has limited capacity to conduct proactive planning initiatives.

This is an issue particularly as Saco continues to grow. Saco has an opportunity to use this growth to reinforce its strengths and create more places for people. Without proactive planning efforts, however, it runs the risk of letting growth shape the city which may not result in the type of places people want to see.

Saco’s Code Enforcement Department has five full-time staff. They are generally able to meet regulatory needs but additional resources to help ensure compliance over time is needed.

(4) Are floodplains adequately identified and protected? Does the community participate in the National Flood Insurance Program? If not, should it? If so, is the floodplain management ordinance up to date and consistently enforced? Is the floodplain management ordinance consistent with state and federal standards?

All of Saco is accounted for on FEMA FIRM panels, identifying 1% and .2% annual chance floodplains. Saco participates in the National Flood Insurance Program.

The Saco River Corridor Commission (SRCC) regulates development within the Saco River Corridor, including all lands within 500 feet of the river’s edge or, where it extends beyond that, the 1% annual chance flood zone. Construction, development, and some other activities within the established corridor zone require approval from both the City and the SRCC.

The ground floor elevation of any new structure in a floodplain must be at least one foot above the elevation of the 100-year flood. Structures in the Shoreland Overlay District along the coast that are substantially improved must be elevated above the floodplain as well.

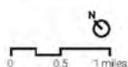


Source: FEMA

11.

RESILIENCY & SUSTAINABILITY

HIGH RISK FLOOD AREAS

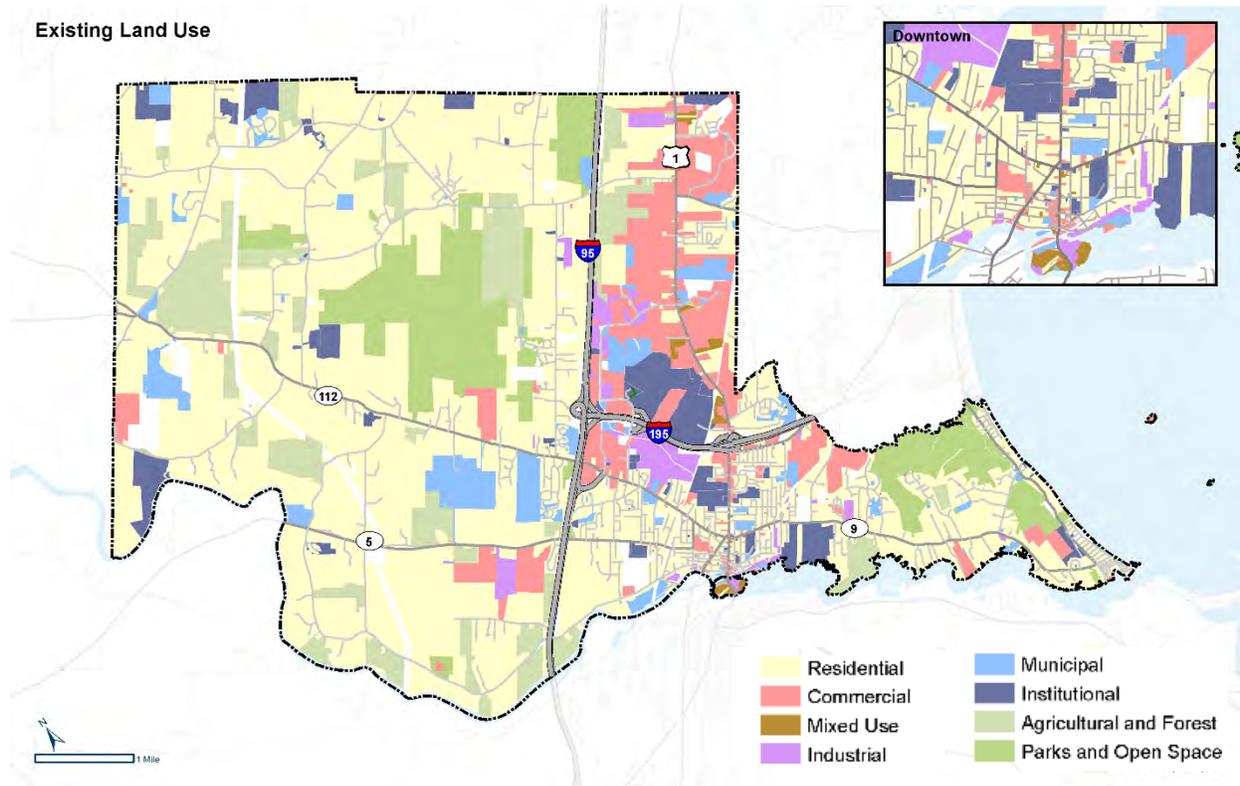


- SACO BOUNDARIES
- ROADWAY
- ++++ RAIL
- COAST & SACO RIVER
- DOWNTOWN

- 1% ANNUAL CHANCE OF FLOOD HAZARD (100-YEAR FLOOD)
- 0.2% ANNUAL CHANCE OF FLOOD HAZARD (500-YEAR FLOOD)

C. Conditions and Trends

(1) An existing land use map, by land use classification (such as mixed-use, residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, agricultural, commercial forests, marine, park/recreational, conserved, and undeveloped land).

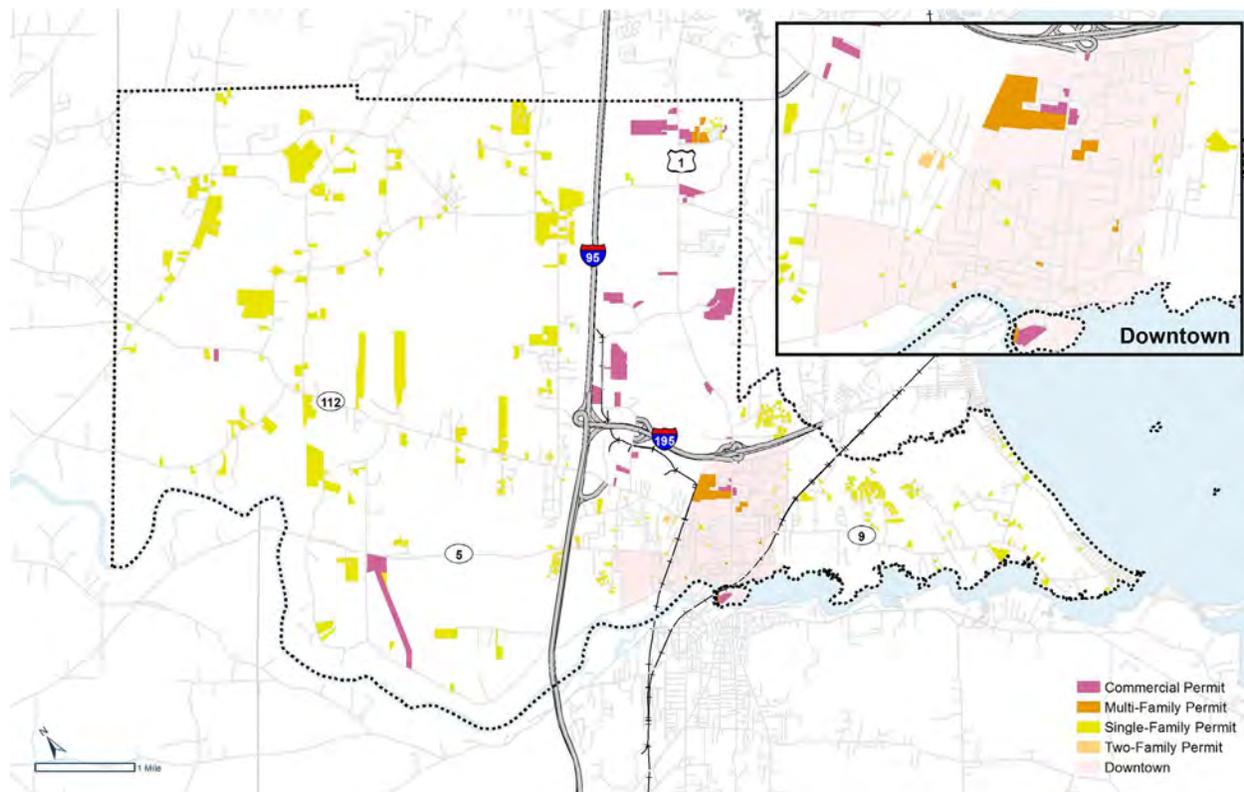


(2) A summary of current lot dimensional standards.

	Residential Districts						Business and Mixed-Use Districts						Industrial Districts		
	RC	LDR	SR	WR	MDR	HDR	D	GB	MB	HB	SI	CE	PR	BI	I
MINIMUM LOT AREA (SF)															
SEWERED	40,000	20,000	7,500	15,000	7,500	6,000	2,000	7,500	6,000	7,500	20,000	7,500	20,000	10,000	40,000
UNSEWERED	80,000	40,000	40,000	30,000	20,000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	20,000	n/a	n/a	20,000	10,000	80,000
MIN. LOT AREA PER DWELLING UNIT (SF) ^d															
SEWERED	40,000	10,000	7,500	7,500	5,000	3,000	1,500	5,000	3,000	4,000	*	7,500	7,500	n/a	n/a
UNSEWERED	80,000	20,000	20,000	15,000	17,500	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	17,500	n/a	n/a	30,000	n/a	n/a
STREET FRONTAGE, MINIMUM (FT)	200	100	75	100	75	75	30	50	75	100	50	50	200/50 ^b	50	150
FRONT SETBACK, MINIMUM (FT)	30	30	25	25	25	5	0	15	5	15	0	15	40/25 ^c	20	50
FRONT SETBACK, MAXIMUM (FT)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	15	10	30	25	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
SIDE AND REAR SETBACKS, MINIMUM (FT)	25	20	15	15	10	10	10/0 ^a	15/0 ^a	10	10	10	10	20 ^a	25	25
LOT COVERAGE, MAXIMUM (%)	20	25	30	25	35	45	100	50	40	50	60	40	60	50	40
HEIGHT, MINIMUM (FT)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	35 ^e	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
HEIGHT, MAXIMUM (FT)	35	35	35	35	35	50	60	50	35	50	60	35	60	60	60

Source: Table 4-1 of Saco's Zoning Ordinance

(3) A description or map identifying the location of lots and primary structures created within the last ten years. Include residential, institutional, commercial, and industrial development.



Over the past ten years, almost half of residential building permits were issued in North Saco. This impacts the area's rural character, critical natural resources, transportation patterns, and the City's finances. Two-family and multifamily permits were issued for in-town locations but at a much smaller volume than single-family permits. The Park North Master Planned Development on Portland Road near the Scarborough town line was the primary location for multifamily permits. Commercial development took place within the City's two industrial parks and along Portland Road.

(4) Provide a brief description of existing land use regulations and other tools utilized to manage land use, including shoreland zoning, floodplain management, subdivision, site plan review, and zoning ordinances.

The City of Saco completed a Zoning Ordinance Revision (ZOR) process with the adoption of a revised zoning ordinance, subdivision regulation, and site plan review ordinance in 2021. This extensive process improved the usability of the regulations and removed extraneous or conflicting sections that had accumulated over time. The zoning ordinance includes new zoning districts and is designed to be more easily updated in the future as additional revisions take place to better align zoning with the comprehensive plan's goals.

Zoning Ordinance

The zoning ordinance divides the city into seven residential districts, seven business and mixed-use districts, and one industrial district. In addition, there are three shoreland zoning overlay districts, a mobile home park overlay district, and a historic preservation overlay district.

Saco's Base Zoning Districts

Type	Current District Name	
Residential Districts	RC	Rural Conservation District
	LDR	Low Density Residential District
	SR	Seaside Residential District
	WR	West Residential District
	MDR	Medium Density Residential District
	HDR	High Density Residential District
	D	Downtown District
Business and Mixed-Use Districts	GB	General Business District
	MB	Main and Beach District
	HB	Highway Business District
	SI	Saco Island District
	CE	Camp Ellis District
	PR	Portland Road District
	BI	Business-Industrial District
Industrial Districts	I	Industrial District

Source: Table 3-1 of Saco's Zoning Ordinance

Saco's Zoning Overlay Districts

Type	Current District Name	
Shoreland Zoning Overlay Districts	RPOD	Resource Protection Overlay District
	SLOD	Shoreland Overlay District
	CDOD	Coastal Development Overlay District
Mobile Home Park Overlay District	MHPOD	Mobile Home Park Overlay District
Historic Preservation Overlay District	HPOD	Historic Preservation Overlay District

Source: Table 3-2 of Saco's Zoning Ordinance

See Chapter 230 § III4 of the Zoning Ordinance for a summary of each district and its purpose.

Shoreland Zoning

Saco has three Shoreland Zoning Overlay Districts:

- Resource Protection (RPOD): Designed to protect sensitive shoreline and other ecological systems. These areas protect water resources, provide and enhance wildlife and aquatic habitat, allow for natural storage of stormwater and flood protection.
- Shoreland (SLOD): Intended to ensure that activities within close proximity of water bodies subject to State-mandated shoreland zoning are carried out in a manner that protects water quality, promotes wildlife movement, and preserves the scenic quality of these shorelands.
- Coastal Development (CDOD): Identifies areas where the existing predominant pattern of development is consistent with the allowed uses for this district and other areas which are suitable for functionally water-dependent uses.

See Chapter 230 § III4 of the Zoning Ordinance for a summary of each district and its purpose.

Floodplain Management

Saco's ordinances address floodplains in several areas: RPOD zoning district requirements, Section 707 of the subdivision ordinance which prohibits projects within the 100-year floodplain, and the site plan approval criteria in Section 6.01 which requires design to conform with flood hazard protection requirements.

Subdivision Ordinance

The Subdivision Ordinance establishes the application process and required submittals for applicants, as well as review and approval criteria for the Planning Board. The ordinance provides design standards and infrastructure specifications that must be followed unless modified or waived by the Planning Board. It also establishes the applicant's responsibilities after plan approval. Multifamily proposals for 15 or more units must undergo both site plan and subdivision review.

Site Plan Review Ordinance

The Site Plan Review Ordinance establishes review procedures and required submittals for applicants, as well as criteria for site plan approval by the Planning Board. The ordinance also provides design standards, including design guidelines and urban greenspace guidelines.

Site plan review is required for:

- Construction of nonresidential structures more than 1,000sf and multifamily dwellings (those with 15 or more units must also undergo subdivision review)
- Expansion of non-residential structures by more than 1,000sf within a five-year period or multifamily dwellings by more than one unit
- Conversion of single family or two-family dwellings to multifamily use
- Other projects requiring site plan review include drive-up windows, earth removal of more than 100 cubic yards within any five-year period, buildings taller than 35' and several other types.

(5) Estimate the minimum amount of land needed to accommodate projected residential, institutional, commercial, or industrial development at least ten (10) years into the future.

The amount of land needed to accommodate future growth depends on many factors including changing market demand and preferences, economic cycles, and the location of future growth. If significant residential growth continues in rural areas where larger lot requirements exist, then more land will be needed and most of it will be previously undeveloped land. If an increasing share of growth is encouraged

to locate in walkable in-town locations where much smaller lot requirements in place, then much less land will be needed and most of it will be previously developed land.

Projected growth from 2021 to 2031

- Residential: ~1,415 new units
 - If 45% of future housing permits continue to be in North and West Saco, then up to 1,000 acres of land could be needed in this area, almost entirely land that is currently undeveloped. This assumes the existing 2-acre minimum lot area per unit in the RC district and 15-30,000sf minimum lot size in the WR district.
 - If 55% of future housing permits are issued in in-town locations, then 75-120 acres could be needed in this area, much of which would be land that is currently developed in some way. This assumes the 5,000sf minimum lot area per unit of the MDR or GB districts.
 - If the share of in-town growth increases relative to past trends and more higher-density multifamily housing is developed to meet market demands, then the amount of land needed would be less than the ~1,100 acres anticipated with current trends extended.
- Institutional: A new school on 20+ acres will be constructed in the next 5-7 years. A new public safety facility would need a several acre site.

An Economic Development Market Analysis and Action Plan was completed in 2021. The following information comes from that report.

- Commercial:
 - Retail: Existing demand in Downtown's neighborhood trade area supports ~20,000sf. The regional trade area demand supports approximately 70,000sf. More housing in walkable locations will support additional Downtown retail and in new mixed-use communities.
 - Office: Pre-pandemic projections based on anticipated five-year growth indicated demand for ~17,000SF of office space. Development of new office space is highly speculative at this point as changing workforce expectations for remote work options continue to evolve.
- Industrial: There is regional demand for smaller industrial spaces less than 10,000sf, but high construction costs and low rents don't support new construction yet. If rents increase to justify new construction, then future growth would take place in the business parks and along Route 1.

13. Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan

Analyses

(1) How will future capital investments identified in the plan be funded?

Saco has typically taken a conservative approach to funding capital investments through annual cash reserves instead of significant borrowing. This has helped the community maintain a strong fiscal position in the past. Most future capital investments will continue to be funded with cash but judicious borrowing will also be employed. Grants and TIF funds will continue to be an important component of capital funding. Federal funding sources (e.g., American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) may be used for some qualifying projects.

(2) If the community plans to borrow to pay for capital investments, does the community have sufficient borrowing capacity to obtain the necessary funds?

Saco has significant borrowing capacity in relation to Maine's statutory limits on municipal borrowing. However, the City's current general fund cash flow projections do not maintain adequate fund balances above the minimum reserve requirements in order to allow full borrowing capacity to that limit. The City may have trouble funding the annual cost of additional borrowing with general fund reserves.

(3) Have efforts been made by the community to participate in or explore sharing capital investments with neighboring communities? If so, what efforts have been made?

Saco has explored opportunities to share capital investments with neighboring communities. The Water Resource Recovery Department explored scenarios of shared wastewater and stormwater treatment but determined that physical constraints (pipe elevations in gravity systems primarily) were too significant to overcome in a cost-effective manner. A shared dredge with neighboring coastal communities is being explored in 2021-2022.

Conditions and Trends

(1) Identify community revenues and expenditures by category for the last five (5) years.

Total Revenue by Type	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Property Taxes	39,408,805	40,878,217	42,052,753	44,302,766	46,452,639
- Year-to-Year (Y-Y) Trend (4% avg)	-	+4%	+3%	+5%	+5%
Other Taxes	3,940,277	4,254,847	4,455,647	4,855,413	4,693,944
- Y-Y Trend (5% avg)	-	+8%	+5%	+9%	-3%
Licenses & Permits	1,032,286	840,148	1,102,453	1,122,211	1,168,538
- Y-Y Trend (4% avg)	-	-19%	+31%	+2%	+4%
Intergovernmental	2,206,083	2,313,077	2,627,968	3,493,221	3,638,300
- Y-Y Trend (14% avg)	-	+5%	+14%	+33%	+4%
Charges For Services	1,161,009	1,164,697	1,181,158	1,360,741	1,040,346
- Y-Y Trend (-8% avg)	-	0%	+1%	+15%	-24%
Other Revenues	502,248	308,120	392,513	1,162,157	614,937
- Y-Y Trend (34% avg)	-	-39%	+27%	+196%	-47%
Transfers In	1,361,020	1,049,085	1,024,487	1,269,274	1,048,372
- Y-Y Trend (-4% avg)	-	-23%	-2%	+24%	-17%
Total Revenues	49,611,728	50,808,191	52,836,979	57,565,783	58,657,076

Revenue Trends

Revenue trends are mostly representative of a strong economy. Property tax growth has been consistently strong due to a stable and growing housing market. Licenses and permits were increased due to strong development activity in the city. Intergovernmental revenue has grown due to increased state revenue sharing in the bi-annual state budget. Charges for services show a decline in FY 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19. It is worth noting that there has been a great deal of fluctuation in non-property-tax revenue over the past five years. One of the major factors is that the State of Maine Revenue Sharing has been a moving target each year. Another variable is sale of City assets. In 2020, non-tax revenues were down versus 2019 because 2019 non-tax revenues were inflated by the sale of "Unit 91" in the Saco Mills.

Total Expenses by Type	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
General Government	2,608,331	2,479,386	2,846,036	2,966,570	3,068,383
- Year-to-Year (Y-Y) Trend (4% avg)	-	-5%	+15%	+4%	+3%
Public Safety	6,594,027	6,799,152	6,891,441	7,013,047	7,524,245
- Y-Y Trend (3% avg)	-	+3%	+1%	+2%	+7%
Public Works	5,322,294	5,686,708	5,425,048	5,533,073	5,731,932
- Y-Y Trend (2% avg)	-	+7%	-5%	+2%	+4%
Culture & Recreation	1,611,288	1,593,396	1,616,769	1,748,130	1,756,455
- Y-Y Trend (2% avg)	-	-1%	+1%	+8%	0%
Unclassified	4,684,267	4,818,968	5,089,474	5,915,930	5,772,282
- Y-Y Trend (6% avg)	-	+3%	+6%	+16%	-2%
County Tax	1,243,927	1,276,339	1,293,389	1,197,241	1,238,045
- Y-Y Trend (0% avg)	-	+3%	+1%	-7%	+3%
Debt Service	2,379,637	2,308,708	2,614,227	1,987,937	2,372,154
- Y-Y Trend (1% avg)	-	-3%	+13%	-24%	+19%
Capital Improvements	741,817	1,248,699	702,422	706,485	17,749
- Y-Y Trend (-18% avg)	-	+68%	-44%	+1%	-97%
Transfers Out	22,993,306	23,108,735	26,223,621	28,814,518	31,956,834
- Y-Y Trend (9% avg)	-	+1%	+13%	+10%	+11%
Total Expenses	48,178,894	49,320,091	52,702,427	55,882,931	59,438,079

Expense Trends

On average, expenses have increased at a pace that slightly exceeds revenue increases. Overall, the main drivers of expense trends are salaries, fringe benefits, contractual increases, and cost inflation. The School Budget represents a large portion of the City's budgeted expenses and is contained within the Transfers Out category shown in the tables above. In recent years, the School Budget has increased at a higher rate than other city departments.

(2) Describe means of funding capital items (reserve funds, bonding, etc.) and identify any outside funding sources.

The City has funded capital items with a combination of general fund balances, bonded debt, grant matches, TIF funds, and fees. The City plans to fund most capital items in future years by continuing utilizing available reserves and relying on bonds, grants, and TIF funds. The City has proposed resiliency improvements to its Water Resource Recovery Facility funded by a bond not to exceed \$50 million that was approved by voters in 2021. It is anticipated that any repayment of the borrowed amount would be through Water Resource Recovery Department enterprise funds, tax increment financing (TIF) funds, and the lowest percentage from the general fund.

(3) Identify local and state valuations and local mil rates for the last five (5) years.

Years Ended	Total Taxable Assessed Value	Total Direct Tax Rate	State Equalized Value
June 30, 2016	2,042,312,593	18.61	2,122,650,000
June 30, 2017	2,091,446,719	18.81	2,160,300,000
June 30, 2018	2,193,494,510	18.78	2,244,050,000
June 30, 2019	2,280,980,210	18.86	2,379,700,000
June 30, 2020	2,399,899,920	18.87	2,653,400,000

(4) How does total municipal debt (including shares of county, school and utility) compare with the statutory and Maine Bond Bank recommended limits on such debt?

Legal Debt Margin Calculations for Fiscal Year 2022

	Outstanding Bonds and Leases	Percent of State Assessed Value \$2,653,400,000	Allowable Amount	Margin
For Water Resource Recovery Facility	262,795	7.50%	199,005,000	168,303,750
For Municipal	21,677,348	7.50%	199,005,000	177,327,652
Total ⁽¹⁾	21,940,143	15.00%	398,010,000	345,631,402

⁽¹⁾ Per statutory limitations, the total allowable municipal debt as a percent of assessed value is 15%.

Saco has significant borrowing capacity in relation to Maine's statutory limits on municipal borrowing. However, the City's current general fund cash flow projections do not maintain adequate fund balances above the minimum reserve requirements in order to allow full borrowing capacity to that limit. The City of Saco is rated Aa3 by Moody's and AA by S&P.

Capital Investment Plan

As used in the Capital Improvement Program, a *capital improvement project* or *capital expenditure* is a major, nonrecurring expenditure that has a useful life of five years or more and costs in excess of \$10,000. The following is a comprehensive list:

- Acquisition of land for a public purpose;
- Construction of a new facility or an addition to, or extension of, such a facility;
- Purchase of major equipment or vehicles or groups of major equipment;
- Any planning, feasibility, engineering, or design study related to an individual capital improvement project or to a program that is implemented through individual capital improvements;
- Prior year carryovers or designations of fund balance for prior year projects, which for one reason or another were not completed prior to the end of the fiscal year.

In order to prioritize capital improvements, the City has established a *capital improvements fixed asset worksheet* with corresponding standards and guidelines for its completion. The standards and guidelines establish the policy for prioritizing capital improvement expenditures and outline a fiscally responsible plan for recovering the infrastructure costs associated with new development. They also establish priorities for using infrastructure capacity wisely and as an incentive for furthering community goals. These standards include a ranking of each project by purpose and priority according to:

Treatment Type:

- Update
- Rehabilitate
- Enhance/Growth
- New Asset

Priority:

- Critical - project cannot be reasonably postponed
- Important - project that should be carried out within a few years.
- Preventative - necessary to prevent future costs
- Future Value - project to support City growth

The City defines *infrastructure* as:

- Street system including pavement, sidewalks, street lighting, traffic signals and curbing;
- Storm water and sanitary collection system;
- Water Resource Recovery Facility;
- Park and recreation lands; and
- Building site amenities such as parking and landscaped areas

Water Resource Recovery capital projects are managed separately by the Water Resource Recovery Department (WRRD), with funding sourced from user fees, impact fees, and revenue bonds.

City departments identify potential capital projects on an annual basis. A partial list is provided below, which will be added to as part of the annual budgeting and capital planning process.

Capital Project	Est. Cost	Timing
Route 112 traffic improvements* - Multi-phase intersection improvements and signalization at Jenkins Road	\$900,000	Near-term
Route 1 sidewalk* - Expansion of the sidewalk network near Park North neighborhood	\$100,000	Near-term
Teen Center renovations (12 School St) - Renovations to one floor of building, future renovations to second floor likely	\$75,000	Near-term
Downtown public parking improvements* - Implementing recommendations from the Downtown Parking Study	TBD	Mid-term
Saco Island multimodal bridge - Feasibility study identified four alternatives to better connect Downtown Biddeford and Saco. Further studies will refine costs for preferred alternative.	\$4.6 - \$8.9M	Mid-term
Public Safety Facility* - Satellite facility on Portland Road/Route 1 to better serve recent development in West Saco. 30% design complete.	\$7.7M	Mid-term
Police headquarters relocation - More central location needed to better serve residents, increase storage space, and relocate outside flood hazard zone.	TBD	Mid-/Long-term
Electric vehicles for City fleet - Evaluating options to lease/purchase electric vehicles to improve municipal fleet's environmental performance.	TBD	Mid-/Long-term
Other sidewalk and bicycle network improvements* - Developing pedestrian + bicycle master plan to guide future improvements.	TBD	Near-term

* *growth-related capital investment*

The City plans to fund most capital items in future years by continuing to utilize available reserves and relying on bonds, grants, and TIF funds. Saco has significant borrowing capacity in relation to Maine's statutory limits on municipal borrowing. However, the City's current general fund cash flow projections do not maintain adequate fund balances above the minimum reserve requirements in order to allow full borrowing capacity to that limit.

14. Future Land Use

Analyses

(1) Does the Future Land Use Plan align and/or conflict with the community’s vision statement?

The Future Land Use Plan focuses future growth to in-town locations already served by public sewer and water. It presents an active growth management strategy to encourage growth toward in-town locations like Downtown, the Portland Road corridor, and other areas and away from undeveloped natural open spaces. The designation of critical natural resources clearly identifies the most important areas to preserve from the impacts of incompatible development. These features align with Saco’s vision to “manage its growth to build a better community for all and for a lifetime”.

(2) Is the configuration of the growth area(s) shaped by natural opportunities and/or constraints (i.e. the physical suitability or unsuitability of land for development)? The location of public facilities? The transportation network?

The growth areas are located where existing utilities like sewer and water exist; where transit serves residents, employees, and visitors; and where the land is generally suitable for development since much of it has already been developed. Limited growth areas are located where the most ecological value remains due to historical agriculture and forestry use and relatively limited development. Public utilities in limited growth areas are currently restricted to West Saco and the transportation network is auto-oriented. Preserving large habitat blocks, wetlands and their upland areas, prime agricultural soils, and other critical natural resources is of prime importance in these areas.

(3) How does the Future Land Use Plan relate to recent development trends?

The Future Land Use Plan takes a proactive stance to redirect growth toward established in-town locations to take advantage of existing infrastructure and minimize further land consumption. Recent trends show that almost half of residential building permits in the past decade were issued in North or West Saco, areas where public services are limited and ecological resources are particularly valuable. Public input during the planning process indicated a shared desire to protect the rural character of these areas. Encouraging more in-town growth is also fiscally prudent for the City to avoid more calls for extending services further from the urban core and thus increase its costs.

(4) Given current regulations, development trends, and population projections, estimate how many new residential units and how much commercial, institutional, and/or industrial development will likely occur in the planning period? Where is this development likely to go?

A key goal of this plan is to influence future housing investment toward in-town locations that already have public services. Future residential development is likely to continue in West and North Saco without proactive intervention as described in the Comprehensive Plan. Strategies to address this include: proactive corridor and neighborhood planning to establish a shared vision for growth in key areas that benefits existing and new residents, reviewing zoning to encourage in-town growth at higher densities and in a greater variety of housing types, strengthening natural resource consideration in development review, and others. Commercial, institutional, and industrial growth will continue to mostly occur in in-town locations. Retail growth will continue Downtown and in new mixed-use neighborhoods. Commercial and industrial growth will be located in the business parks and along the Route 1 corridor.

Projected growth from 2021 to 2031

- Residential: ~1,415 new units
 - If the share of in-town growth increases relative to past trends and more higher-density multifamily housing is developed to meet market demands, then the amount of land needed would be less than the ~1,100 acres anticipated with current trends extended.

- If 45% of future housing permits continue to be in North and West Saco, then up to 1,000 acres of land could be needed in this area, almost entirely land that is currently undeveloped. This assumes the existing 2-acre minimum lot area per unit in the RC district and 15-30,000sf minimum lot size in the WR district.
- If 55% of future housing permits are issued in in-town locations, then 75-120 acres could be needed in this area, much of which would be land that is currently developed in some way. This assumes the 5,000sf minimum lot area per unit of the MDR or GB districts.
- Institutional: A new school on 20+ acres will be constructed in the next 5-7 years. A new public safety facility would need a several acre site in the Portland Road corridor.

An Economic Development Market Analysis and Action Plan was completed in 2021. The following information comes from that report.

- Commercial:
 - Retail: Existing demand in Downtown's neighborhood trade area supports ~20,000sf. The regional trade area demand supports approximately 70,000sf. More housing in walkable locations will support additional Downtown retail and in new mixed-use communities.
 - Office: Pre-pandemic projections based on anticipated five-year growth indicated demand for ~17,000SF of office space. Development of new office space is highly speculative at this point as changing workforce expectations for remote work options continue to evolve.
- Industrial: There is regional demand for smaller industrial spaces less than 10,000sf, but high construction costs and low rents don't support new construction yet. If rents increase to justify new construction, then future growth would take place in the business parks and along Route 1.

(5) How can critical natural resources and important natural resources be effectively protected from future development impacts?

Saco's existing development review process and ordinances provide protections for natural resources. Another important strategy to protect these valuable areas from future development is to explore economically viable alternatives for landowners. Current use tax programs are one tool but landowners also need cash flow to continue leaving land undeveloped. Lessening the appeal of selling to residential developers will require actively encouraging other economically viable uses in rural areas.