

THOMASTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2020



Thomaston Comprehensive Plan 2020

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Introduction



Thomaston Comprehensive Plan 2020 is a guide for decision-making in our community for the next 10+ years. As required by Maine’s Growth Management Program of 1988, the Town developed a Comprehensive Plan that was approved by local voters and the State Planning Office in 1991 and updated that plan in 2005. The new Plan presented here is based on those previous long-range planning efforts while identifying new trends and challenges for growth and change in the 21st century. This Plan will serve as a guide and resource in multiple ways: it articulates a vision of Thomaston’s values today and for the future; based on this vision, it establishes goals for long-range planning; it provides strategies for working toward these goals; and it forms a framework for decision-making.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee’s earliest steps included gathering information from the community about hopes and dreams for our Town’s future. The result was a statement of community values and a framework to advance those values. This Vision Statement underlies all the elements of the Plan. It defines who we are and wish to be as a community and sets the standards by which future planning and policy efforts will be conducted.

Following the Vision Statement, The Plan is presented in two parts, the first of which is ***The Planning Guide: Vision, Goals, and Strategies***. The second part sets forth the ***Background Conditions and Analyses*** that have informed the Planning Guide.

The Planning Guide section presents an overview of goals and strategies for twelve critical and interdependent areas: Our History; Our Environment (including Water Resources, Natural Resources, and Agricultural and Forest Resources), Our Rivers and Harbor; Our People; Our Economy; Our Housing; Recreation in Thomaston; Transportation; Our Public Facilities and Services; and Thomaston’s Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan. Following these, and based on the Planning Guide, are a Future Land Use Plan, a program for Regional Coordination, and an Implementation and Evaluation Plan for monitoring and ensuring progress toward meeting the goals of the Plan.

The **Background Conditions and Analyses** section of the document provides in-depth data and analysis in fourteen Chapters/Topic Areas. People who have questions or want more information about any of the goals and strategies set forth in The Planning Guide need only refer here for background information. These are followed by a summary of public participation in the development of the Plan and a matrix showing responsibilities and timelines for implementation. Additional data, maps, and links are appended.

Because the Chapters/Topic Areas are interrelated and interdependent, the reader will find a good deal of repetition. Concepts are restated and reinforced across topic areas, highlighting the inextricable interconnectedness among all facets of a community’s well-being.

The full **Thomaston Comprehensive Plan 2020** is available on the Town website, and paper copies can be obtained at the Town Office.

The members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee are Elizabeth Allen, Diana Beach, Cindy Bertocci, Jonathan Eaton, Benjamin Griffin, Daryl Hahn (co-chair), Andrew Josephs, Peter Lamert, Peggy McCrea (co-chair), Peter McCrea, and Jeanne Short. Prior members and contributors are Shirley Barlow, Davene Fahy, Patricia Hubbard, David Martucci, Terry McDevitt, Anne Perkins, Joanne Richards, Jessica Shepard, Greta Van Campen, Amy Williams-Beers, and Tiyanna Wolf-Whitehead.

This group worked through more than 80 evening meetings, numerous Saturday workshops, many conversations with individual and group stakeholders, and several large community-wide listening sessions. Throughout this process, the Committee has sought to stay true to the vision so passionately expressed by the citizens of our Town. The Committee owes Thomaston’s citizens a big debt of gratitude.

Thanks also to Frame25 Productions and Wilder by Design for the design of this document, and to Frame25 Productions for the document layout.

Vision Statement

At the Heart of Thomaston Comprehensive Plan 2020 is a Vision for Our Town's Future



In 2030 Thomaston will be known for its sense of community. It will be a place where hard-working, resourceful people of all ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds are welcomed and valued and take pride in their town and its history; a place where people know and care about their neighbors and are willing to pitch in to get a job done; a place alive with opportunities and places for people to gather and enjoy each other's company; a place where people want to raise their families; a place to call home. It will be a community that is:



- We welcome and value people of all ages, ethnicities, lifestyles, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- We encourage first-time visitors to return and repeat visitors to stay.
- We offer a range of recreation, education, leisure, and community activities.
- We offer economic, housing, and personal opportunities to residents and would-be residents.
- We welcome entrepreneurs and new businesses.



- We foster and encourage citizen participation in town decision making.
- We support and encourage all citizens—regardless of age or ability—to enjoy their lives and realize their potential.
- We facilitate walking, outdoor recreation, social interactions, and community cohesion.
- We seek to exercise compassion in all town decisions and actions.
- We support the efforts of senior citizens to age in place.



- We celebrate our past and preserve our historic New England character while looking to and preparing for the future.
- We maintain our village center and ensure that outlying growth complements and does not detract from our downtown.



- We are fiscally and environmentally resilient.
- Each change or expansion of Thomaston's infrastructure has environmental, fiscal, and community improvement among its goals.
- We encourage orderly growth and development to increase job opportunities, broaden the tax base, and improve the economic well-being of residents.
- We recognize that a more diverse community is a more sustainable community.
- We manage the Route 1 artery to relieve traffic congestion, promote easier travel, increase the appeal of downtown businesses, and keep Route 1 homes desirable.
- Harbor improvements, stormwater management, parks, trails, roads, and other infrastructure investments are designed to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- We are becoming a net-zero community by reducing fossil fuel usage, reducing waste, planting trees, and other means.
- We provide many ways to create habitat for native plant and animal species, including pollinators.



- We provide vital connections in the information superhighway to our businesses and residents and maintain efficient transportation and telecommunication networks.
- We connect midcoast Maine with the Penobscot Bay region, Route 1 travelers with peninsular towns, and our East End Economic Tract with markets to the southwest.
- We connect our waterfront with the Town. Our hiking and biking trails, water trails, parks, and public spaces form a greenway surrounding the town and connecting with other towns.

THE PLANNING GUIDE

Visions, Goals, and Strategies



Looking west on Main Street about 1920 beneath an overarching canopy of elms planted in 1876. To the left of the tracks of the Rockland, Thomaston and Camden Street Railway is a hayrack full of empty lime casks. Main Street traffic was not yet an issue.

New Introduction for the Planning Guide in Part One

The Vision Statement in the foregoing pages can be distilled into eight interrelated aspirations for Thomaston’s future. By 2030, we should be able to say that:

- 1** Our historic small-town character is preserved, enhanced, and celebrated.
- 2** Our downtown is beautiful and thriving.
- 3** Residents of all ages and incomes enjoy a good quality of life.
- 4** Our property tax burden has eased.
- 5** Our open spaces, walkability, bicycle-friendliness, streetscapes, trails, parks, urban forest, rivers, harbor, and natural resources are protected and enhanced.
- 6** We are experiencing beneficial and sustainable population and economic growth.
- 7** We have reduced our Town’s contribution to climate change while preparing for its impacts.
- 8** A strong sense of community belonging permeates our Town.

But we can’t simply sit back and wait for a desired future to happen. We have to make it happen. The pages that follow present a chapter-by-chapter summary of the action steps, or strategies, identified in this Plan. These strategies provide a roadmap to follow.

Admittedly, executing hundreds of strategies is a tall order for a town with limited human and financial capital. To help prioritize, the Plan concludes with an Implementation Matrix in which each of the strategies is rated for probable impact (low, medium, or high) and feasibility (low, medium, or high) toward the realization of the Town’s objectives. A strategy with high impact and high feasibility is likely to be a high-priority strategy.

It should be noted and remembered, however, that every one of these 250 or so strategies represents a positive action and accomplishment for the Town. They are all worthy of implementation. A strategy rated as “low-impact” may therefore become an immediate action item if human and funding resources align to make it feasible. Such actions, once completed, create positive momentum and can have far greater impact on Town pride, optimism, and community spirit than anyone could have predicted.

The Implementation Matrix is at the end of this Comprehensive Plan, immediately preceding the Appendices.



1

Our History



Incorporated on March 20, 1777, Thomaston covers roughly 11.5 square miles today. The early compact settlement depended upon the St. George River for the bulk of its industry and trade, and Thomaston streets today are lined with homes built by nineteenth-century shipbuilders, sea captains, mariners, and the tradespeople who serviced them. The village area is notable for its high concentration of early cape-style, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Victorian homes lining Thomaston's original county road, which is now Route 1. Bookended by the former Maine State Prison on the west and a large cement plant on the east, historic Thomaston was spared the disfigurement of urban renewal projects that obliterated architectural landscapes across the nation throughout the twentieth century. Little infill architecture mars its historic character.

Residents appreciate the architectural integrity of the village, consider it one of the Town's greatest assets, and desire that it be preserved for future generations. This important heritage should be protected from insensitive development, demolition by neglect, and economic demands of preservation that are beyond the average homeowner's financial capabilities. Yet there is, at present, no municipal historic zoning, even in the Historic District designated in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.



Many of the large homes built by successful Thomaston sea captains are located along Main Street, which has become heavily traveled US Route 1. Noisy and intrusive truck traffic blights this historic residential neighborhood—at the heart of the designated Historic District—and the compact downtown nestled within it. The Town should investigate ways to divert heavy traffic around the village center, enhancing Main Street’s livability and encouraging more homeowners to undertake historic restorations. A new road skirting the northern village perimeter would also provide a long-needed emergency access and escape route in the event Route 1 is compromised.

Thomaston’s historic homes are stately and appealing, but the cost to maintain them presents their owners with sizable maintenance challenges. Alternatives may include creatively repurposing single-family homes into two-family homes while complying with present-day code requirements and preserving historic exterior facades. Conditional uses must be sensitive to the protection and integrity of residential neighborhoods.

Thomaston needs to design incentives and guidelines to ensure the protection and preservation of the Town’s historic architectural integrity and the resultant positive visual impact. The sense of living history is one of the Town’s biggest economic assets. Once lost, it can never be replaced.

*** State Goal**

Preserve the State’s historic and archaeological resources.

*** Local Goals**

- 1** Preserve and protect the Town’s aging historic architecture, identify any overlooked archaeological resources, and work with homeowners to deter demolition by neglect.
- 2** Promote historic preservation as a key economic, sustainability, and community development strategy.
- 3** Stabilize and enhance historic structures by encouraging investment in existing structures and compatible infill development and by discouraging demolitions.
- 4** Ensure an appropriate balance of historic continuity and change as the town grows and evolves.
- 5** Educate and engage residents and visitors in the appreciation of historic assets.

*** Strategies**

- 1** Encourage individuals and developers to work with Town officials (Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer) and historical organizations to protect and preserve the Town’s architectural integrity.

- 2** Provide incentives and reduce disincentives for the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic properties. Offer cost-effective alternative materials sources and techniques that are compatible with preservation objectives.
- 3** Consider a tax formula that encourages homeowner improvements.
- 4** Promote and appeal to public/private partnerships to fund historic preservation.
- 5** Identify Federal and State housing assistance grants and programs designed to assist elderly and low-income homeowners.
- 6** Consider other eligible areas of Town for potential listing in the National Register.
- 7** Extend historical signage (similar to the existing Museum in the Streets signage) to the river overlook created by the reconstruction of the Wadsworth Street bridge and to the former Burgess O'Brien Kilns. Similar signage should be placed in the historic Mill Creek area, the site of the original Town center and proposed Village Trail extension (i.e., the Thomaston Village section of the Georges Highland Path).
- 8** Adopt or create a guidelines manual to encourage thoughtful rehabilitation of historic homes and compatible in-fill construction in historic neighborhoods.
- 9** Appoint an advisory group to work with the Planning Board to create design guidelines for a historic overlay district and to act in an advisory role on alterations, demolitions, and new construction within the Historic District.
- 10** Create a historic overlay district in the Town's designated Historic District as listed on the National Register, where guidelines for preserving the character, style, scale, and proportions of historic structures will be included. The intent is not to change underlying zoning but to supplement it in the overlay district.
- 11** Study the feasibility of constructing a new road to carry through traffic around the downtown. Reducing truck traffic on Main Street/Route 1 through the Town's Historic District would improve the appeal of the historic homes there.
- 12** Consider developing a preservation ordinance that could earn Certified Local Government status in order to create homeowner eligibility for grant assistance on preservation projects.
- 13** Discourage individuals and developers from acquiring significant historic buildings with the intent of demolition for new construction. When there is no alternative to demolition, infill architecture should be compatible with neighborhood character and scale.



- 14 Update the Town Architectural Survey. Identify historic buildings and sites not previously listed, some of which might be qualified for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Once completed, provide website link for public access.
- 15 Consider a survey and protective historic ordinance for the waterfront. Areas along the shores of Mill River and St. George River, the entire length of the Water Street waterfront, and the early trading post site on Wadsworth Street should be identified and added to prehistoric and historic archaeological site designations. The former lime kiln at the base of Wadsworth Street should be stabilized.
- 16 Incorporate maps of the revised federally recognized Historic District and known historic archaeological sites, along with pertinent information from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, in the Town's Land Use and Development Ordinance. Provide information to landowners of historic and archaeological sites on the importance of protecting these resources.



The north side of Main Street, with the Beechwood Street intersection at right.



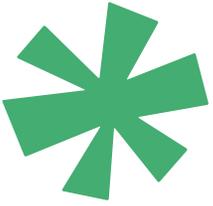
Our Environment: Water Resources



Significant water resources located at least partially within Thomaston are the St. George, Mill, and Oyster Rivers and Branch, Marsh, and Meadow Brooks. These waterbodies and their associated coastal and freshwater wetlands provide multiple economic, recreational, environmental, and public safety benefits. These include: (a) income from commercial fisheries of softshell clams and marine worms; (b) habitat to support recreational fisheries of smelt, striped bass, and other finfish; (c) significant wildlife habitat; (d) open space; (e) filtration of pollutants in stormwater runoff, and (f) protection from coastal and river flooding.

The most significant threats to the quality of our surface waters is non-point source pollution from stormwater (and associated sedimentation, nutrient enrichment, and chemical contamination). Control of non-point pollution is critical to the health of the St. George River estuary. Invasive species such as green crabs, the spread of which may be in part attributable to warming waters associated with global climate change, also pose a significant threat. Nutrient enrichment caused by non-point source pollution depletes dissolved oxygen and causes acidification of estuarine waters, posing a threat to the ability of the St. George River estuary to support a commercial shellfish fishery.

While there are no significant groundwater aquifers in Town, groundwater is an important resource for private water supplies outside the area served by Maine Water. Potential threats to groundwater quality appear to be localized and largely attributable to improper installation, poor maintenance, or accidents associated with individual septic systems and product storage tanks.



* State Goal

Protect the quality and manage the quantity of the State's water resources, including lakes, aquifers, great ponds, estuaries, rivers, and coastal areas.

* Local Goals

- 1 Protect current and potential drinking water sources.
- 2 Protect significant surface water resources from pollution and improve water quality where needed.
- 3 Protect water resources in growth areas while promoting more intensive development in those areas.
- 4 Minimize pollution discharges through the upgrade of existing public sewer systems and wastewater treatment facilities.
- 5 Cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources.
- 6 Restore and maintain the quality of fresh, marine, and estuarine waters to allow for the broadest possible diversity of public and private uses.

* Strategies

- 1 Continue efforts to eliminate the Town's seasonal discharge of treated wastewater to the St. George River.
- 2 Work with DEP, DMR, landowners, neighboring towns, and nonprofits to monitor the water quality of the St. George River and to identify and eliminate sources of non-point source pollution. Periodically monitor existing stormwater discharge points. Consider development of a watershed management plan for the St. George River.
- 3 Periodically review and update the Town's Land Use and Development Ordinance to incorporate stormwater performance standards consistent with Maine's Stormwater Management Law and Stormwater regulations.
- 4 Take steps through permit conditions and follow-up inspections to ensure that developments maintain stormwater management structures in good working order and that required vegetative buffers between developed areas and surface waters and wetlands are maintained and not eroded or encroached upon over time by site use.
- 5 For proposed developments with extensive impervious areas, explore, through Site Plan Review, options such as reduced or shared parking areas and the use of permeable

pavement in critical areas to facilitate infiltration of groundwater and minimize runoff to surface waters and wetlands.

- 6** Review the Town's existing ordinance governing clustered residential development to determine how it might be revised to encourage its use and enhance protection of critical and important natural resources.
- 7** Continue to protect minor watercourses and drainage swales from development to ensure that they continue to function as part of the Town's stormwater management system and do not contribute to sedimentation of surface waters.
- 8** Ensure that Town ordinances governing Roads and Driveways and Street Design Standards are enforced. Provide periodic training for public works personnel involved in road maintenance.
- 9** Provide information to homeowners, businesses, and other landowners on the importance of minimizing use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers; properly disposing of waste products; and protecting water supply wells from contamination.
- 10** Add an "environmental tips and resources" tab to the Town's webpage.



The view upriver from the Thomaston Green overlook.

Our Environment: Natural Resources



Thomaston's most significant natural and scenic resources are its waterbodies and their associated wetlands and the large habitat blocks that merge with other large blocks of undeveloped land in Warren and Rockland. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has identified two Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance – the Lower St. George River Focus Area and the Weskeag Creek Focus Area – that are partially located in Thomaston. These are priorities for conservation efforts because of the presence of rare plants, animals, and/or natural communities and their habitat value.

The greatest threats to these and other natural resources are similar to the threats faced by other communities throughout the State and include non-point source pollution, development resulting in loss of habitat and habitat fragmentation, spread of invasive species, disturbance of sensitive species during critical life stages, and climate change.

To ensure the preservation of wetland functions and values (such as habitat and storm-water/flood control), it is essential to restrict disruptive activities in wetlands and their immediately adjacent upland areas. The rise in sea level associated with climate change will cause

coastal habitats to migrate landward, making it important to conserve low-lying undeveloped uplands so that coastal marshes and other intertidal natural communities can migrate inland with sea level rise.

The large blocks of primarily undeveloped land, including land in agriculture, forestry, and open space, that are connected to similar blocks of land in neighboring communities will help to preserve wildlife travel corridors, maintain a diverse wildlife population, and mitigate the environmental impacts of a changing climate. Additionally, these natural resources create a greenbelt around the village center providing important scenic, aesthetic, and low-impact recreational opportunities for area residents and visitors.

*** State Goal**

Protect the State’s critical natural resources, including without limitation wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, sand dunes, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas.

*** State and Local Goals**

- 1** Conserve critical natural resources in the community.
- 2** Coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources.
- 3** Protect and manage critical habitats and natural areas of state and national significance, and maintain the scenic beauty and character of the coast, even in areas where development occurs.
- 4** Restore and maintain the quality of our fresh, marine, and estuarine waters to allow for the broadest possible diversity of public and private uses.
- 5** Restore and maintain coastal air quality, protecting the health of citizens and visitors and the enjoyment of the natural beauty and maritime character of the Maine coast.
- 6** Protect the scenic character of Thomaston and enhance physical and visual access to the shore for the general public.

*** Strategies**

- 1** Ensure that the Town’s land use ordinances are consistent with applicable State law regarding critical natural resources.
- 2** Meet with neighboring communities to review land use ordinances and develop an area-wide approach to protection of important natural resources such as the St. George River and Weskeag River.





- 3** Continue to work collaboratively with area towns, State agencies, and nonprofit organizations to locate and eliminate sources of non-point source pollution to the St. George River.
- 4** Take steps through permit conditions and follow-up inspections to ensure that developments maintain stormwater management structures in good working order and that required vegetative buffers between developed areas and surface waters, wetlands, and other critical natural resources are maintained and not eroded or encroached upon over time by site use.
- 5** Continue efforts to develop an interconnected greenway through Town and along the waterfront, linking Town parks and public spaces, with the goals of protecting critical and important natural resources, maintaining wildlife corridors, creating pollinator pathways, increasing visual and physical access to the shore, and enhancing low impact recreational opportunities.
- 6** Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important resources through mechanisms such as purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.
- 7** Continue support for current use taxation as one means of protecting critical and important natural resources.
- 8** Provide information to homeowners, businesses, and other landowners on threats posed by invasive plant species and encourage their removal and replacement over time with native plant species. Add an “environmental tips and resources” tab to the Town’s website.
- 9** Inform commercial and recreational users of the St. George River of the significance of the mudflats as a staging, feeding, and roosting area for migrating shorebirds and the importance of minimizing disturbance. Consult with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife regarding whether signage at the Town landing would be appropriate.
- 10** Review proposed development in the Industrial and Highway Commercial Districts for potential adverse impacts to the Weskeag Creek Focus Area. Identify this focus area as a critical natural resource in the Future Land Use Plan.
- 11** Require developers, through ordinance and site plan review, to determine whether critical natural resources may be on site (using resources such as the *Beginning with Habitat* maps) and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources including, but not limited to, modification of the proposed design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.

- 12** In reviewing development proposals, the Town should work with developers to ensure that proposed development is of a scale and design that is compatible with surrounding uses and is located to minimize adverse impacts to the Town's natural, scenic, and aesthetic resources. Views of protected natural resources such as waterbodies from public vantage points should be protected where possible.
- 13** Develop guidelines for the assessment of scenic impacts using concepts such as scale, contrast, and spatial dominance. Develop an inventory of scenic resources based on these guidelines and amend existing ordinances to allow the Planning Board to require a scenic impact analysis as part of site plan review.
- 14** Encourage owners of existing development in the Highway Commercial district to plant trees and shrubs to improve the visual appearance of the Route 1 corridor.
- 15** Expand the mission and membership of the Town's Conservation Committee to oversee Town trails, parks, pollinator pathways, stormwater control efforts, the Town's greenbelt, and climate change preparedness. The Conservation Committee should work with Public Works to replace invasives with native plantings; with the Town arborist to maintain and strategize urban trees; with garden clubs to maintain Town plantings, site a community garden, and assist homeowners who wish to make their yards into insectaries and songbird habitat; etc.



Our Environment: Agriculture, Forest, and Mineral Resources



Agriculture and forestry are not major land uses in Thomaston, which currently has only one active farm for purposes other than pasture and two landowners who harvest trees for commercial purposes. There has been a resurgence of interest in farming and locally produced food in recent years, and the Town has responded by amending the Land Use Ordinance to increase support for agriculture while addressing concerns of neighboring residential uses. Although not major land uses, the open spaces associated with pastures and forestlands are highly valued as they provide habitat for wildlife and serve to define and maintain the Town's compact village character and scenic beauty. Landowners are taking advantage of the State's current use taxation programs, but farmlands, forests, and open spaces remain vulnerable to development pressure. Agriculture and forestry will be impacted by changing climatic conditions and the threat of invasive species.

The Town’s urban forest, consisting of street, park, and yard trees, is a valuable resource in need of care. There are many aging trees in need of replacement, and many currently healthy trees are threatened by the spread of non-native insects such as the emerald ash borer, hemlock wooly adelgid, and red pine scale as well as non-native plants such as oriental bittersweet.

With respect to mineral resources, the limestone quarries of Dragon Products are a dominant feature in the eastern section of Town, with the cement plant visible from many locations. There is enough limestone to keep the quarries and cement plant active for decades, business conditions permitting. Truck traffic to and from Dragon, as well as the gravel pits off outer Beechwood Street, is a safety and quality-of-life concern for many residents. The eventual reuse of the Dragon property as well as the gravel pits off outer Beechwood Street in a manner compatible with existing surrounding development and natural resources is of great importance to the future of the Town.

*** State Goal**

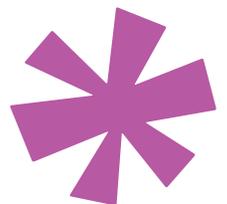
Safeguard the State’s agricultural and forest resources from development that threatens those resources.

*** Local Goals**

- 1** Support the economic opportunities associated with mineral resources while working with the owners of Dragon Products and the smaller pits and quarries to minimize potential adverse impacts to neighboring properties and the community.
- 2** Safeguard lands identified as prime farmland or capable of supporting commercial forestry.
- 3** Support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.
- 4** Enhance the attractiveness and livability of the Town through the maintenance of a healthy urban forest and the protection of open spaces that help to define the village and provide visual access to the shore.

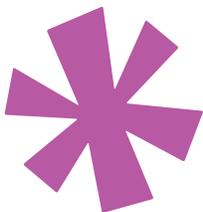
*** Strategies**

- 1** Review the permitted and conditional uses in the R-2 Rural Residential District to ensure that they are consistent with the residential and rural purpose of this land use district.
- 2** Encourage conservation easements to preserve important agricultural, open space, and forest lands through local land trusts, paying particular



attention to land in the R-2 Rural Residential District bordering Route 1 at the western gateway to Town.

- 3** Continue to support enrollment of productive farm and forest land and important open spaces in the current use taxation program.
- 4** Permit land uses that support productive agriculture and forestry operations, such as farm stands, farmer’s markets, greenhouses, and firewood operations in appropriate land use districts.
- 5** Provide increased funding in the municipal budget and pursue grants for the care and replacement of street trees and trees on Town property.
- 6** Continue to manage the Town Forest in accordance with the objectives and practices set forth in the Town Forest and Town Trails Program.
- 7** Review the Town’s existing ordinance governing clustered residential development to determine how it might be revised to encourage its use and enhance protection of critical and important natural resources. Land left in open space in clustered developments should, to the extent possible, include critical natural resources and prime agricultural soils, preserve wildlife travel corridors, and abut and augment such open spaces and large habitat blocks on adjoining parcels.
- 8** Create an interconnected greenway through Town and along the waterfront, linking Town parks and public spaces, with the goals of protecting critical and important natural resources, maintaining wildlife travel corridors, creating pollinator pathways, increasing visual and physical access to the shore, and enhancing low-impact recreational opportunities.
- 9** Consult with the Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.
- 10** Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices.
- 11** Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local and regional economic development plans.
- 12** Maintain regular communication between Town officials and Dragon Products regarding current and anticipated activities at the plant and the status of Dragon’s land use and operating permits. Work with the owners of the cement plant and the smaller pits and quarries to minimize adverse impacts from mineral extraction and processing activities and the associated truck traffic.

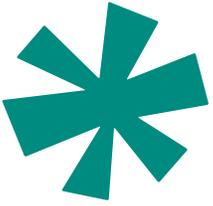




Our Rivers and Harbor



Thomaston's location on the banks of the tidal St. George River has shaped the Town's character, economy, history, and quality of life. This chapter focuses on the status of commercial fisheries, water-dependent businesses, recreational uses, and physical and visual access to the river. Factors affecting water quality and the natural resources of the river and adjoining wetlands are discussed more fully in **Chapter 2, Water Resources**, and **Chapter 3, Natural Resources**. Key recommendations in this chapter include (1) steps taken to improve estuarine water quality, benefiting both commercial and recreational interests; (2) increased emphasis on new recreational paddlecraft access, facilities, and parking capacity, thus reducing peak user congestion at the Public Landing; (3) improvements to the finite harbor capacity through maintenance dredging, sharing of centerline float capacity during idle usage time, and use of half-tide and drying moorings where possible; (4) improvements to the water-view Village Trail with Water Street safety enhancements; and (5) finding a way to bypass the Route 1 pedestrian hazard at Mill River/Route 131 South.



* State Goals

- 1** Protect the State's marine resources industry, ports, and harbors from incompatible development and to promote access to the shore for commercial fishermen and the public.
- 2** Promote the maintenance, development, and revitalization of the State's harbors for fishing, transportation, and recreation.
- 3** Manage the marine environment and its related resources to preserve and improve the ecological integrity and diversity of marine communities and habitats, to expand our understanding of the productivity of the Gulf of Maine and coastal waters, and to enhance the economic value of the State's renewable marine resources.
- 4** Support shoreline management that gives preference to water-dependent uses over other uses, that promotes public access to the shoreline, and that considers the cumulative effects of development on coastal resources.
- 5** Discourage growth and new development in coastal areas where, because of coastal storms, flooding, landslides, or sea-level rise, it is hazardous to human health and safety.
- 6** Encourage and support cooperative State and municipal management of coastal resources.
- 7** Protect and manage critical habitat and natural areas of State and national significance and maintain the scenic beauty and character of the coast even in areas where development occurs.
- 8** Expand the opportunities for outdoor recreation and encourage appropriate coastal tourist activities and development.
- 9** Restore and maintain the quality of our fresh, marine, and estuarine waters to allow for the broadest possible diversity of public and private uses.
- 10** Restore and maintain coastal air quality to protect the health of citizens and to protect enjoyment of the natural beauty and maritime characteristics of the Maine coast.

* Local Goals

- 1** Protect, maintain, and improve marine habitat and water quality.
- 2** Foster water-dependent land uses and balance them with complementary land uses.
- 3** Maintain or improve harbor management and facilities.
- 4** Protect, maintain, and, where warranted, improve physical and visual public access to the community's marine resources for all appropriate uses.

✱ Strategies

Strategies for Local Goal 1

- 1** Ensure water quality testing is underway and performed on a regular and timely basis at critical sampling locations.
- 2** Work with the Tidelands Coalition, the Maine Coastal Observing Alliance, and other groups to develop a Georges River Watershed Management Plan in which all upstream communities participate in planning recreational sites, reducing pollution from agricultural sources and failed septic systems, and seeking funding for water quality and waterway improvements from sources such as the State's November 2018 wastewater infrastructure bond.
- 3** Continue to work with the other towns in the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization to restore shellfish harvests in the St. George River, including DNA-based water quality testing to determine the sources of fecal coliform bacteria currently restricting shellfish harvesting in the Upper Bay and lobbying DMR to allow GRRSMO to manage the Upper Bay as a source of softshell clam broodstock to seed the rest of the estuary.
- 4** Consider ways to implement reduced usage by Town residents of lawn chemicals (fertilizers and pesticide, herbicides), which eventually reach the St George, Mill, and Oyster rivers, typically by numerous surface-water drainage swales.
- 5** Encourage the development of land-based alternative treated wastewater handling with the goal of eliminating any discharge to the St. George River. To this end, continue the feasibility studies for a constructed wetland on Town-owned land, allowing the cessation of winter discharges.
- 6** Investigate the feasibility of creating stormwater-stilling wetland areas along drainage swales, allowing the absorption of nutrients and toxins prior to reaching area rivers.
- 7** Assess whether and to what extent the Working Waterfront current-use taxation program can help forward the above-stated policies and strategies.

Strategies for Local Goal 2

- 1** Complete the paddlecraft carry-in walkway ramp at Mill River Park, seeking foundation funding for work beyond Town Public Works capability or capacity.
- 2** Acquire the Kiln Site land from the State and seek Small Harbor Improvement Program grant funding for site design and development as a carry-in water access site with vehicle parking.



- 3** Seek creative use of the Town Beach area, perhaps as a current-free training site for paddlecraft beginners and as a launching site for model small craft.
- 4** Consider a future Oyster River water access site from Town property, allowing paddlecraft outings to and from harbor launch locations.

Strategies for Local Goal 3

- 1** Lobby the US Army Corps of Engineers for future maintenance dredging of the Federal approach channel to Thomaston Harbor and for continued monitoring of channel siltation.
- 2** Continue to seek an equitable sharing of harbor centerline mooring accommodations between commercial, recreational, and transient maritime interests.
- 3** Continue to maintain the waterside and landside elements of the Public Landing—which is the principal point of public access to the entire St. George Estuary—seeking grant funding from the Small Harbor Improvement Program and other sources as needed.
- 4** Encourage half-tide and drying moorings for watercraft that can endure daily grounding without damage.
- 5** Revitalize the Comprehensive Harbor Management planning activity.

Strategies for Local Goal 4

- 1** Upgrade the Water Street portion of the Thomaston Village Trail to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- 2** Extend the Village Trail from Mill River Park to Route 131 South via a footbridge and pathway adjacent to pedestrian-hostile Route 1 working with Georges River Land Trust (GRLT) and applying for Foundation funding as needed.
- 3** Support the GRLT in its efforts to develop physical access to scenic views from Route 131 South.
- 4** Pursue public/private partnerships to protect important undeveloped lands along the rivers through such mechanisms as purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.



6

Our People



The vitality of a community depends on a growing and diverse population, as does its economy; population growth and economic growth go hand in hand. Thomaston’s population has been declining and aging for several decades, and data suggests that unless the Town is proactive, this trend is likely to continue into the decades ahead.

Since 1990 Thomaston’s population has declined by 16% (not including the loss of the Maine State Prison population in 2001). The age group from 20 to 44 (the child-bearing years) has experienced the greatest decline, while the over- 65 population has showed the greatest increase. Sixty-eight percent of the households in Town consist of only one or two persons, and children 19 and younger account for only 20% of the population.

Given that Thomaston is unlikely to experience a surge in births in the coming years, growth will have to come from in-migration from other towns, other states, and other countries. In-migration may be aided by the impact of global warming as other regions experience hotter summers and more extreme weather. It is important, therefore, that Thomaston be known as a vibrant community that supports its senior population while attracting new families. To this end,



the Town needs to focus on preserving its historic architecture and small-town feeling, providing ample affordable housing options, having excellent schools, and demonstrating forward thinking in the areas of environmental stewardship and sustainability.

*** Goals**

- 1** Be a diverse and vital community that is home to people of varying ages and genders from a range of economic, social, and cultural backgrounds.
- 2** Encourage population growth through in-migration as an integral component of community and economic development.
- 3** Be known as a place that celebrates and supports its senior population while at the same time attracting young families.
- 4** Improve the reputation of our schools to attract young families.
- 5** Ensure a range of affordable housing options.
- 6** Monitor population trends and use that information to plan for community needs.

*** Strategies**

- 1** Develop, promote, and market Thomaston as a place where:
 - ♦ Natural beauty abounds.
 - ♦ The Town is visually attractive and distinctive.
 - ♦ The housing stock is attractive, desirable, and affordable.
 - ♦ There is convenient access to a wide variety of outdoor activities including water-based recreation, hiking, and off-road biking.
 - ♦ There are great schools.
 - ♦ There is a commitment to being ecofriendly, bike friendly, child friendly, farmer friendly, and natural/organic food friendly.
 - ♦ There is an attractive array of services including restaurants, pubs, specialty shopping, and fast internet.
- 2** Place an emphasis on creating community by assigning the responsibility for creating and managing community-building events to the ECDC, Recreation Department, and/or other groups or individuals.

- 3** Assign responsibility for “greening” the community (everything from recycling to hiking/ biking paths to planting trees and emphasizing the use of native species) to appropriate groups and/or individuals.
- 4** Enact ways to reduce the impact of heavy truck traffic through town:
 - ♦ Commission a feasibility study for an alternate route around town as a high-priority initiative.
 - ♦ Promote the expanded use of rail for freight transport.
 - ♦ Establish “No Engine Brake” zones.
 - ♦ Install effective speed and noise awareness signs.
 - ♦ Enforce speed and noise regulations.
- 5** Develop and promote programs to welcome and support immigrant populations.
- 6** Build a stronger relationship between the Town and RSU 13, including creating a Friends of Our Schools group.
- 7** Become a member of the AARP “Age-Friendly Community Network.”
- 8** Encourage the expansion of affordable workforce housing options.
- 9** Commission a feasibility study to extend Town water and sewer services into the TR-3 Transitional Growth District to encourage the construction of new housing there. (This could be included in a multidimensional planning/feasibility study for an alternate route around the town center as mentioned above.)
- 10** Explore ways to merge the need for affordable housing with the need to preserve the Town’s historic architecture.
- 11** Develop ecofriendly housing on Thomaston Green and/or elsewhere in town for families and seniors.
- 12** Develop and promote creative, affordable child care solutions, which might pair senior citizens with the younger population.
- 13** Work with surrounding communities to create regional public transportation options.
- 14** Investigate the reasons for Thomaston’s high rates of poverty and food insecurity and develop a plan for addressing the issues.
- 15** Develop a plan for assisted living options for all income levels.
- 16** Monitor changing migration trends and prepare accordingly.





Our Economy



Thomaston is a small town with a compact village center and an enviable midcoast Maine location affording convenient access to recreation, shopping, and dining. The Town has attractive, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and strong residential appeal. Home prices are more affordable than in the nearby towns of Camden and Rockport, though residential rents are high. Downtown invigoration is consistently the top economic development goal of Thomaston residents in surveys and public meetings.

Thomaston may see increasing rates of in-migration as climate change afflicts other regions of the US with hotter summers and more extreme weather. Given the Town's population decline of recent decades, such an influx would be a welcome reversal of trend. Town policies should help existing residents age in place and should aim to attract a broad diversity of new residents of all ages, incomes, and entrepreneurial aspirations. A diverse town is a more vibrant town.

Impediments to Thomaston's economic growth include its high municipal tax rate (among the highest in Maine), its population decline of recent decades, its aging workforce, and the increasingly heavy traffic on Route 1, which bisects the Town center.

The Town should build on its New England village charm, augmenting that with a forward-looking vision for education, arts, local food, walkability, age-friendliness, and environmental sustainability. The Town’s Economic and Community Development Committee, formed in 2019, should energetically seek opportunities to promote the Town to people and businesses and should maintain the leadership and resources to help guide and propel future development. The Town should pursue development in the Highway Commercial and Industrial districts—referred to collectively as the East End Economic Tract—to increase municipal valuation and reduce the tax burden on homeowners; should form a downtown development plan (including signage, place-making, and commercial buildout north of the Union Block); should work closely with the regional school union to control education costs; should push at the State level for equitable municipal and education revenue sharing; and should conduct ongoing analyses of what level of municipal services is sustainable.

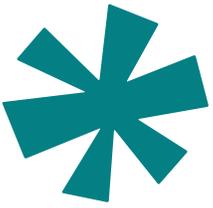
Identified as a priority more than a half-century ago, a new east-west road around the northern village perimeter would divert heavy through-traffic from the center of Town, improve the livability of village neighborhoods, and provide an emergency route when Route 1 is closed. Within a year of this Comprehensive Plan’s adoption, the Town should contract a thorough analysis of the feasibility of such a road, including its possible routes and financing, its optimal access points and zoning, and its likely impacts on downtown and East End businesses, Route 1 traffic, rural and designated growth zones, affordable housing, and future growth and municipal valuation.

The Town should leverage each municipally owned property in the highest and best manner. Strategic management plans to capitalize on these assets—the Thomaston Green, the Thomaston Academy, the Watts Block, and the former Lura Libby school (to which the Town offices, police department, recreation department, and food pantry are moving in early 2020)—should be developed, annually updated, and shared through the Town website, newsletters, and annual report. The Town should also plan how best to integrate its river frontage with the village area.

A strategic plan for the Town’s parks and trails should be developed with input from the Georges River Land Trust, the Town’s conservation committee and harbor committee, and others. With planning and development, the existing network of trails can become a prized emerald necklace surrounding the village area while offering recreation for walkers, hikers, mountain bikers, and cross-country skiers and access points for paddlecraft. An interlinked system of land and water trails can become a major component of Town habitat for native plantings, pollinators, and wildlife.

Sitting on 10 acres of land with frontage on Route 131 and views of the St. George River, the General Henry Knox mansion and museum is a unique local asset. The Town should engage and partner with the nonprofit group that runs the museum to capitalize on the museum’s tourism appeal while supporting its mission.





Thomaston has the necessary attributes to make residents happy to be here and visitors sorry to leave. Residential and downtown development should capitalize on this.

*** State Goal**

Promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.

*** Local Goal**

Foster sustainable economic growth that increases job opportunities, broadens the Town's tax base, encourages in-migration and diversity, builds downtown vitality, and improves the residents' wellbeing while preserving Thomaston's historic small-town character. The Town's economic development strategy should aim to make the Town a great place to visit, but the most productive emphasis will be on making this a great place to live.

*** Strategies**

- 1 Fund an Economic and Community Development Coordinator position to guide and assist the Economic and Community Development Committee.**
- 2 Recruit and support appropriate retail and service businesses in the Village Commercial District.** This should be the top priority of the Economic and Community Development Committee:
 - ♦ Make maximum use of available downtown space. Establish a tiered incentive scheme to attract retail businesses to street-level downtown venues and professional services to appropriate spaces surrounding the downtown retail. Consider increased incentives for complementary and Maine-based businesses.
 - ♦ Investigate the feasibility of a new local road as described below to make the downtown district more walkable and cohesive across Route 1.
 - ♦ Optimize the downtown area with placemaking strategies and best practices that have proven beneficial in small towns across America.
 - ♦ Help downtown businesses promote themselves and expand.
 - ♦ Facilitate access to the fiber-optic broadband service that runs along Route 1.
 - ♦ Establish a municipal revolving fund for low-interest loans to downtown businesses, funded in part by impact fees for East End development projects.
 - ♦ Become an AARP Age-Friendly Community

3 Pursue commercial and industrial development in the East End Economic Tract.

Development in the East End Economic Tract offers greater potential to diversify the tax base and lower property taxes than development anywhere else in Town. Among the strategies that should be considered are:

- ♦ Steer future development away from big-box retailers, Instead, prioritize manufacturers and fabricators, seafood processing and shipping facilities, and other value-added and service-oriented enterprises that are consistent with Thomaston's identity.
- ♦ Coordinate future development with regional towns for greatest regional employment and economic growth.
- ♦ Seek additional commercial/industrial acreage for future development.
- ♦ Consider rebranding the Industrial District as the Thomaston Enterprise Zone.
- ♦ Make the East End an area of focus for the Economic and Community Development Committee.

4 Seek to alleviate the property tax.

To provide property tax relief, the Town should:

- ♦ Seek greater State aid for education.
- ♦ Attract compatible industrial, commercial, and residential development to diversify the tax base.
- ♦ Share municipal service costs with surrounding communities when feasible.

5 Create a Friends of Thomaston Schools group.

The Selectboard should create a Friends of Thomaston Schools committee in order to:

- ♦ Review RSU 13 budgets and represent the Town's interests to the school union.
- ♦ Advocate for improved State aid to education and a revision of the State's school funding formula.
- ♦ Regularly analyze the need for pre-school education programs and how best to meet those needs through public, private, and community providers. Particular focus should be placed on the option of RSU 13 offering Pre-K education in Thomaston.
- ♦ Match senior citizens with students for educational enrichment.





- ♦ Work with other area communities to ensure an optimal match between Midcoast School of Technology programs and the needs of local employers.
- ♦ Work with other area communities to investigate whether University of Maine at Augusta's Rockland Center should offer programs beyond those currently available.
- ♦ Report periodically to the Selectboard.

6 Grow Thomaston's population.

Possible strategies to direct population growth into the village area, where services are less expensive to deliver, include:

- ♦ Extend the sewer and water services into the TR-3 Transitional Growth District.
- ♦ Pursue a new local road to encourage residential development southward into the TR-3 neighborhood from the new road.
- ♦ Identify opportunities for affordable housing in Town.
- ♦ Promote the Town to in-migrants through such strategies as enhanced education, lower taxes, business assistance, Age-Friendly Community status, Town website marketing, downtown enhancement, employment opportunities, and community development.
- ♦ Work with neighboring towns to promote workforce training opportunities.

7 Protect and steward the Town's waterfront and its marine jobs.

Thomaston's waterfront is small in extent but central to the Town's historic and future identity and appeal. In order to steward the Town's working-waterfront roots:

- ♦ Work with the other towns of the intermunicipal shellfish governing board to enhance and restore the St. George River clam fishery.
- ♦ Promote aquaculture and marine-related industries for the Shoreland Commercial and Industrial districts.

8 Promote the Town.

- ♦ Revamp the Town website with a primary goal of welcoming new businesses and residents.
- ♦ Build on Thomaston's 4th of July celebrations and other events.

- ♦ Promote the Town as the seaward terminus of the Georges Highland Trail and the head of navigation on the St. George River.
- ♦ Develop the Town’s reputation as an arts center.
- ♦ Develop and promote a branding for Thomaston that incorporates existing assets but is also aspirational.

9 Investigate the feasibility and desirability of a new local east-west road skirting the northern village perimeter.

The lack of a Route 1 alternative for heavy truck and commuter traffic through the downtown is a significant impediment to economic development in the village area as well as the Highway Commercial and Industrial districts. Such a road is vital for emergency services and will encourage additional residential housing in the TR-3 District north of the downtown. It will make Main Street more appealing to homeowners, helping to ensure the long-term maintenance of the gracious Main Street homes that are central to the Town’s appeal as a historic New England village. Such a road has been discussed for a half-century, and possible routes have been mapped. The Town should commission a multidimensional study of its feasibility and desirability, possibly with revenues from the Dragon TIF. The study should answer the following:

- ♦ What are the possible routes?
- ♦ How many access points are optimal?
- ♦ What will the likely impact of the road be on downtown retailers?
- ♦ How much would the road cost?
- ♦ Is State assistance possible or desirable?
- ♦ How can the road’s design contribute optimally to downtown traffic relief and to affordable housing, future population growth, and desired concentration of growth in the Town’s TR-3 growth district?
- ♦ Should the road be built in segments, perhaps beginning between Beechwood Street and Old County Road?
- ♦ How can the road be funded?

10 Consider how each Town-owned and Town-connected property can best contribute to the Town’s economic goals.

Thomaston Green, Thomaston Academy, Watts Block and the Knox Museum are all key assets. Their deployment should aim to increase the Town’s property valuations and maximize its appeal to current and potential businesses and residents.



11 Improve the Town's walkability and bicycle-friendliness.

Thomaston's walkability is already one of its strengths. To further improve the Town's appeal for walking and bicycling, the following strategies should be considered:

- ♦ Further link and enhance the Town-owned or -controlled elements of a pedestrian-and-bicycle trail system
- ♦ Tie this to our Museum in the Streets signage, which also needs maintenance and elaboration.
- ♦ Build a foot bridge across the Mill River from Fish Street to Route 131 to enable bicycle and pedestrian traffic from the village to the Knox Museum and St. George peninsula.





8

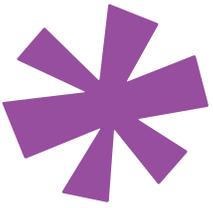
Our Housing



Two interrelated issues dominate Thomaston’s housing picture. The first is the Town’s historic architecture, which townspeople recognize as one of its greatest assets. While the Town’s stock of older, often large homes creates a distinctive, attractive, and important historic character, their ongoing maintenance expenses, increasing taxes, sheer size, and—for many of them—Route 1 locations make the preservation of this critical resource increasingly difficult.

The second issue is that housing costs are rising beyond a median-income family’s ability to pay. Thomaston’s need for more affordable housing is rendered more acute by the high proportion of its households living below the poverty line. As the Town seeks to grow its population, attract young families while allowing current residents to age in place, and maintain economic diversity while increasing ethnic and cultural diversity, an increase in the availability of smaller, low-cost, low-maintenance, senior and ecofriendly housing options is critical.

Addressing these two issues simultaneously is Thomaston’s housing challenge for the future.



* State Goal

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

* Local Goals

- 1 Protect the New England, small-town character of Thomaston and ensure the preservation of the town's historic architecture while meeting the housing needs of its residents.
- 2 Encourage a diversified community by providing affordable housing for all income groups. Ensure that land use controls encourage the development of good affordable housing, including rental units in growth areas.
- 3 Invest in or support a range of senior living options.
- 4 Encourage ecofriendly housing options in Town.
- 5 Encourage and support the efforts of State and regional housing coalitions to address affordable and workforce housing needs.

* Strategies

- 1 **Preserve the town's architectural heritage.**
 - ♦ Assess the feasibility of an alternate road around the village area to reduce through truck traffic.
 - ♦ Develop incentives and reduce disincentives for restoring and maintaining homes. Creative tax structures, low-interest loans, programs available through Maine Preservation, and other initiatives should be explored.
 - ♦ In the Federally recognized Historic District, require that renovations and new construction maintain the District's historic character and fabric.
 - ♦ Pursue means for allowing creative adaptations of historic homes in the District while maintaining historic facades and locating parking for such uses away from front yards and shielded from view.
 - ♦ Consider form/character-based coding within designated Zoning Districts.
 - ♦ Develop a municipal and/or private revolving fund for the purchase, restoration, and resale of important abandoned buildings. Consider a Community Land Trust as a means to this end.
 - ♦ Explore ways to address the issue of "Demolition by Neglect"

2 Develop Town policies that serve to increase the number and quality of affordable rental properties and other housing options.

- ♦ In the TR-3 District, encourage high-density housing—including smaller homes, duplexes, row houses, multi-unit residences, smaller lot sizes—while maintaining a traditional street grid pattern. Extend sewer and water lines into the TR-3 District.
- ♦ Explore funding sources to support affordable housing construction and/or rehabilitation, such as an affordable housing TIF district, a USDA 504 program, and/or a Maine Housing Authority Aging in Place Program. Partner with Habitat for Humanity in the development of affordable housing alternatives. Formally adopt and maintain an affordable housing plan that qualifies the Town for state and federal assistance. This plan should include an age 55+ development for Thomaston Green.
- ♦ Work with the owners of the low-income apartments to continue affordable rents once their existing federal loans are repaid.
- ♦ Pursue all legal means to encourage owners of foreclosed properties to return these properties to the housing market as quickly as possible.
- ♦ Review the Town’s Land Use Ordinance to determine how it might be modified to support accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and other approaches to affordable and/or senior housing such that at least 10% of new residential development over the next decade is affordable. Consider how Inclusionary Zoning might be applied in a small town with little growth in the housing market.
- ♦ Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the impact of short-term rentals on the housing market, and take action as indicated.
- ♦ Relocate mobile home parks to designated growth areas and reconsider appropriate locations for individual mobile homes as affordable housing.
- ♦ Work with neighboring communities to develop a regional coalition to address the need for affordable workforce housing.
- ♦ Investigate the feasibility of establishing a Community Land Trust.
- ♦ Require that multifamily developments provide adequate storage areas, landscaping and shared green space.
- ♦ Pursue development of housing on the Thomaston Green with an emphasis on energy efficiency and low maintenance.



3 Support and invest in a range of senior living options.

- ♦ Pursue the development of low- and middle-income, ecofriendly senior housing options with the goal of supporting aging in place.
- ♦ Pursue creative options that provide for intergenerational housing and cohousing.
- ♦ Develop standards for modifications to homes within the Historic District that allow for aging in place while maintaining historic facades.
- ♦ Explore ways to provide financial assistance to our aging population with home repairs and maintenance and build trust to allow this assistance to be accepted.
- ♦ Actively pursue the development of assisted living housing options.
- ♦ Pursue AARP Age Friendly Community status.

4 Explore ways to encourage energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources in new construction as well as rehabilitation of the Town's existing housing stock.

- ♦ Review the Town's Land Use Ordinance modify it if needed to support sustainable building products and practices.
- ♦ Provide information to homeowners and contractors on resources that are available through government and private programs.
- ♦ Pursue grant money for improving the energy efficiency of public and private buildings in Town.
- ♦ Develop a municipal renewable energy program, such as a solar field, to service the Town.





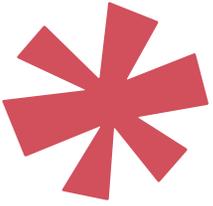
Recreation in Thomaston



Thomaston's waterfront, public parks, and open spaces provide free recreation to residents and visitors, as do the Town's pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly streets and sidewalks. The Town Forest is a major resource for hiking, trail riding, snowmobiling, and hunting, and the Village Trail connects to the Georges Highland Path. Public indoor recreational spaces include Watts Hall, Thomaston Academy, the newly renovated municipal offices building (former Lura Libby school), and two public schools. These Town resources are supplemented by substantial facilities and services in neighboring communities.

Thomaston's population is changing. A decrease in the childhood population coupled with an increase in the senior population requires adjustments to existing facilities and services. The Town has many natural recreational assets that are underutilized and, with some improvements, could be made more accessible and useful for residents and visitors alike. Creative use of these natural assets, including the St. George River and Town Forest, could also serve as a draw for young families, young adults, and visitors. The Town is collaborating with the Georges River Land Trust on initiatives that will enhance recreational opportunities in the area.

While the Town's recreational facilities and programs are largely focused on outdoor activities and sports for school-aged children, the Town is also fortunate to have a strong public library and several cultural opportunities available to residents, including performances by



choral groups and numerous offerings at the nearby Strand Theater in Rockland. The Watts Hall Community Players is a Town highlight that develops and showcases local talent while contributing to community spirit.

* State Goal

Promote and protect the availability of recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters.

* Local Goals

- 1** Maintain/upgrade existing recreational facilities as necessary to meet current and future needs.
- 2** Preserve open space for recreational use as appropriate.
- 3** Maintain/increase public access to the St. George River and improve access to the Mill and Oyster Rivers for boating, fishing, and other recreational activities.
- 4** Expand the definition of “recreation” to include a wider set of activities and opportunities for all ages and rethink the budget accordingly.
- 5** Increase Thomaston community-building events to help enhance a sense of community, utilize our public buildings and parks, and attract people to the downtown.

* Strategies

The Recreation Committee and Recreation Director, working with Town officials, should continue to be pro-active in meeting the changing recreational needs of the community as follows:

- 1 Transportation.** Make better use of existing regional programs by promoting public transportation to nearby athletic and cultural activities.
- 2 Senior Activities.** Regularly conduct surveys of anticipated needs and desires for seniors. The programs of the Town, the Town Library, and local organizations should be coordinated to present a fuller picture of offerings in a community calendar on the Town website.
- 3 Trails.** Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain the Town’s network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. The Town has worked with the Georges River Land Trust on such projects and should continue to do so. Emphasis should be placed on coordinating with GRLT and Rockland on the development of a new trail system that will connect Rockland to the Georges Highland Path through Thomaston , as well as a bike trail along the Town’s right of way through the Dragon Products property

to downtown Rockland. As discussed elsewhere in this Plan, one goal should be a green belt of trails surrounding the village area. Native species should be prioritized in plantings in these areas. The Village Trail should be more prominently highlighted and promoted, with additional sidewalks and signage. The Town should work with the GRLT for the funding, design, and construction of a bike-and-pedestrian bridge over the Mill River to connect to The Knox Museum and trails on the St George peninsula.

- 4 User-Friendly, Low-Maintenance Parks.** Consult with landscape architects to make the Town's parks lower-maintenance and more user-friendly. Develop water access for small boats at Mill River Park. Encourage local neighborhoods to adopt, plan, and maintain their parks, and encourage a Town garden club to beautify public spaces. Support and encourage gardening as a recreational activity of residents. Provide information, seeds, and assistance for creating pollinator pathways of native plantings in yards and public spaces.
- 5 River Activities.** Actively promote our rivers and their uses. Develop a small-craft landing site with storage racks at the lime kiln site. Recruit a kayak/canoe rental business offering instruction and guided tours. Recruit a scenic boat tour/dinner cruise business. Add a kayak landing on the Oyster River. Investigate the possibility of resurrecting the one-time swimming hole on the Mill River, which has long been in disuse.
- 6 Community Events.** Create a Community Events Committee to plan and present community-building events that help foster town spirit and utilize our town parks. Suggestions include an ice-skating rink, band concerts, seasonal festivals, a climbing wall, community gardens, tennis and pickleball courts, and a farmer's market.
- 7 Funding.** Develop a program to encourage gifts for town activities and recreation infrastructure, including bequests to Thomaston in citizens' wills.
- 8 Open Space and Scenic Vistas.** Work with the GRLT and other conservation organizations to protect important scenic vistas, open spaces, and recreational land.
- 9 Access to Private Property.** Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners of allowing public recreational access on their properties.



Transportation



Looking west on Main Street, 2019.

US Route 1 is Thomaston's Main Street and also serves as the primary artery to the growing tourist, commercial, and industrial areas of Rockland, the Fox Islands ferry service, the St. George peninsula, and the Cushing/Friendship peninsula. Commercial truck traffic on Main Street is dangerous to pedestrians; creates congestion, noise, and air pollution; and reduces home values and the quality of life in our Town.

A solution to this quandary should be one of the Town's highest and most immediate priorities. The Town should commission a comprehensive feasibility study to evaluate the possible placement and construction of a new road to relieve truck traffic and to serve as an emergency alternate route to US Route 1. Based on feedback from Town residents through "Thomaston Talks" and the written survey conducted by the Comprehensive Plan Committee, as well as past Comprehensive Plans that cited its necessity, an alternate route is deemed highly desirable for revitalizing the Village Commercial District, relieving downtown congestion, improving safety, decreasing noise and pollution, and serving as a catalyst to growth in the Transitional Residential District (TR-3) north of Main Street. The feasibility study should therefore be multidimensional, examining all these factors and how they interrelate.

A second priority is the lack of an affordable public transportation system connecting Thomaston residents to shopping, services, medical offices, and entertainment. With the aging of the Town’s population and the desire of townspeople to make Thomaston a welcoming community for people of all ages and economic circumstances, public transportation is essential.

Thomaston residents enjoy walking and bicycling in their Town; however, deferred maintenance of sidewalks and lack of bike lanes impede full enjoyment and increase safety risks of pedestrians and bicyclists. Improvements in these areas would make the Town more attractive to citizens and visitors alike.

*** State Goal**

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

*** Local Goals**

- 1** Create safer, less polluting, less congested vehicular traffic on Main Street (Route 1) in order to improve emergency response times; reduce noise complaints in the center of Town; improve quality of life for Route 1 home and business owners; improve convenience and decrease commuting and errand drive times for Town residents; encourage population and housing growth in the Town’s designated growth district; and help attract new businesses downtown and in the Town’s Highway Commercial District.
- 2** Ensure that our roadways are usable and safe for pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation as well as private automobiles.
- 3** Be a town that promotes less dependence on private vehicles for a greener footprint and an improved quality of life.
- 4** Preserve and enhance downtown parking.
- 5** Preserve and enhance the Town’s walkability.

*** Strategies**

- 1** Develop a Traffic Management Plan informed by future growth goals, sustainability, and quality of life.
- 2** Commission a professional planning study to assess the feasibility and desirability of a new road north of US Route 1 as part of a broader multidimensional plan of the village area, including possible funding sources.



- 3** Ban the use of engine brakes in Town.
- 4** Promote increased use of rail service freight transport.
- 5** Increase alternative transportation opportunities for Town residents.
- 6** Work with Waldo County Community Action Partners (CAP) to add Thomaston's Village Commercial to their existing route for the DASH bus. Consider a subsidy at the Town's expense for the first year to establish the route.
- 7** Investigate the feasibility of a Town contract with a private transportation service for discounted rates for eligible residents (elderly, low income, disabled and youth).
- 8** Publicize a directory of all public and private transportation options.
- 9** Improve walkways and bike lanes.
- 10** Work with the Georges River Land Trust to secure funding to build a pedestrian/cycling walkway over the Mill River.
- 11** Seek private and/or grant funding to improve the walkways/bike lanes on Water Street as part of the Village Trail system.
- 12** Anticipate and address potential parking issues in the Village Commercial and Public Landing lots.
- 13** Provide consistent, attractive, universally recognized signage of parking options to travelers on US Route 1 and Beechwood Street.
- 14** Implement and reassess annually a long-range plan for street improvements, giving immediate priority to rebuilding Knox Street.



Looking west on Main Street, 1940s.



Our Public Facilities and Services



Thomaston provides a range of services that residents recognize as benefits of living and doing business in our Town. Participants in the Community Survey, the “Thomaston Talks” sessions, and other community input settings indicated general satisfaction with current service levels. A recent municipal referendum confirmed the Town’s desire to maintain its local Police Department. Sidewalks, crosswalks, ongoing road maintenance, cultural and community building events, and recreational activities for youth and seniors are areas that were identified as needing enhancement. The benefits of capitalizing on our location on a navigable river near the sea were frequently mentioned. Respondents also supported finding ways to economize and lower tax rates. Current economic conditions—including reductions in State funding in recent years—have made it increasingly difficult to finance services. Like many small communities, Thomaston faces challenges in balancing the need to provide important services with the need to keep municipal taxes affordable.



* State and Local Goals

- 1 Plan for, finance, and develop an efficient and innovative system of public/community facilities and services that will accommodate and promote orderly growth and sustainable economic development.
- 2 Efficiently meet identified public facility and service needs.
- 3 Provide public facilities and services in a manner that promotes and supports growth and development in identified growth areas.

* Strategies

1 Maintain and improve Town facilities.

- ♦ Develop and implement a long-range plan for maintaining and improving existing municipal facilities, considering optimal uses and assessing the need for new or expanded facilities.
- ♦ Ensure that at least 75% of municipal growth-related capital investments are directed to designated growth areas.
- ♦ Encourage the Thomaston Pollution Control Department and the Maine Water Company to coordinate planned service extensions with the Future Land Use Plan and ensure that any expansion is done in such a way as to protect natural resources.
- ♦ Prioritize extension of sewer and water into the TR-3 Residential Growth District.
- ♦ Relocate powerlines and cables underground whenever possible.

2 Combat global warming while simultaneously preparing for mitigation of the impacts of climate change.

- ♦ Actively pursue reducing the Town's carbon footprint and moving it toward 100% reliance on renewable resources.
- ♦ Pursue the creation of solar arrays or other renewable energy sources to provide power for municipal, industrial/commercial, and residential users.
- ♦ Provide municipal charging stations for electric vehicles.
- ♦ Prioritize electric vehicles when replacing police, public works, and pollution-control vehicles.
- ♦ Through the Conservation Committee, local Master Gardener program, and Georges River Land Trust, offer information, seeds, and assistance

to homeowners wishing to optimize the habitat value of their yards with native plantings, shrubs, and trees.

- ♦ Optimize the ecosystem value of Town-owned properties with native perennials, shrubs, and trees.
- ♦ Expand the municipal tree planting program to be comparable to the Town’s road and sidewalk programs, with a goal of providing mature native shade trees for carbon sequestration, urban cooling, beauty, and well-being.
- ♦ Plan for the impacts of changes in sea level on buildings, transportation infrastructure, sewage treatment facilities, and other relevant municipal or privately held infrastructure or property.

3 Solid Waste Management.

- ♦ Aggressively investigate and support means for increasing the rates of solid waste reduction, re-use, and recycling in Town.
- ♦ Require commercial solid-waste haulers who use the OHSTT Transfer Station to separately haul recyclable materials to the transfer station.
- ♦ Investigate the advantages of a pay-per-bag program for non-recyclable solid waste and take action as indicated.
- ♦ Support the collecting, transferring, and composting of food waste.

4 Wastewater treatment.

- ♦ Continue to work toward the elimination of the winter discharge of treated effluent from the St. George River.
- ♦ Develop procedures for reducing untreated stormwater runoff into the St. George River, including raingardens and retention ponds around drainage swales.

5 Emergency services.

- ♦ Explore alternatives to ambulance responses for non-emergency, non-life-threatening calls, including the possibility of a Community Nurse.
- ♦ Complete a study to assess the potential advantages and disadvantages of joining with neighboring towns to provide fire and EMS services.
- ♦ Explore the feasibility of an east/west vehicle travel alternative to Route 1 for public safety. An alternative east/west road is discussed in several other chapters in this Plan. See below under “Transportation.”





6 Town governance.

- ♦ Support the effective and efficient operation of Town government, including a proactive exchange of information with Town residents.
- ♦ Regularly update and improve the quality and utilization of the Town's website.
- ♦ Conduct a comprehensive review of municipal functions, positions, and related job descriptions and modify as indicated. Include potential outsourcing of payroll management from municipal department heads to a payroll-management service
- ♦ Implement a comprehensive annual performance review process for municipal employees.
- ♦ Establish the Comprehensive Plan Committee as a standing committee responsible for helping to foster progress toward the Plan's goals and assuring that changes to the Land Use and Development Ordinance are in compliance with the Plan.
- ♦ Require the Selectboard, with the Comprehensive Plan Committee, to conduct an annual review of progress made on goals and strategies identified in this Comprehensive Plan and to identify actions for the coming year.
- ♦ Develop and maintain a community calendar.
- ♦ Create term limits for appointed boards and committees to promote citizen involvement in municipal government.
- ♦ Pursue less costly alternatives for facilities and services, including cooperative efforts with other communities. Investigate shared services in such areas as emergency services, community and economic development, and code enforcement.
- ♦ Keep abreast of cutting-edge technologies. and implement as appropriate.
- ♦ Charge the Town manager, tax assessor, budget committee, and Selectboard to include in the Town Annual Report the top strategies for reducing the municipal tax rate, and progress made over the previous year.

7 Transportation.

- ♦ Immediately conduct a comprehensive study to assess the advantages, disadvantages, and logistics of a new east/west street to connect the west end of town to Old County Road.

- ♦ If such a road is indicated, pursue land purchase options on land north of Route 1 along the road’s probable route.
- ♦ Continue to pursue creative regional approaches to public transportation. If bus service can’t be improved, consider negotiating with a local cab company to provide need-based assistance with cab fares for essential errands.
- ♦ Promote the expanded use of rail for freight transport.
- ♦ Ban engine brakes in Town.
- ♦ Install impactful speed- and noise-awareness signs on Main Street.
- ♦ Aggressively enforce speed and noise regulations.
- ♦ Establish distinctive downtown “Parking” signs that direct residents and visitors to parking areas north and south of Route 1.
- ♦ Actively pursue access to the Post Office from Beechwood Street.

8 Education initiatives.

- ♦ Lobby for a change to the State’s school-funding formula to add a third factor—median household income or equivalent measure—to the existing factors of student population and property valuation.
- ♦ Regularly analyze the need for pre-school education programs and how best to meet those needs through public, private, and community providers. Particular focus should be placed on the option of RSU 13 offering Pre-K education in Thomaston.
- ♦ Start a Friends of Thomaston Schools group to support RSU 13 initiatives while ensuring that Thomaston tax dollars are used as effectively as possible.
- ♦ Monitor the extent to which the regionalization of our schools is a benefit to the town and its students and make recommendations to the Selectboard as appropriate.

9 Community enhancement.

- ♦ Continue to place high priority on our Town’s walkability and bicycle-friendliness, paying particular attention to safe sidewalks and crosswalks.
- ♦ Continue to expand and improve walking and bike trails.
- ♦ Expand a pleasing aesthetic throughout the Town. Increase plantings and maintenance at Town parks. Develop and implement an



overall tree-planting plan based on age and condition of existing stock and prepare to battle the ash borer problem. Encourage and support the creation of a Town Garden Club to expand plantings throughout Town. Develop strategies for improving the appearance of the East End Commercial Tract.

- ◆ Pursue becoming a “Tree City USA” community.
- ◆ Take reasonable steps to attract additional retail and professional services to Town, with an emphasis on services required by senior citizens whose transportation options are limited. Attracting physician’s offices to Town is one example.
- ◆ Increase access to the fiber-optic network that presently runs along Main Street.





Thomaston's Fiscal Capacity



Aerial view over the St. George River toward Thomaston, with the Dragon Products stack, Rockland Harbor, and Penobscot Bay in the distance.

Not unlike other small Maine towns, in recent years Thomaston has experienced a confluence of factors that has gradually shifted more of the Town's funding obligations to property owners and has required a steadily rising mil rate that is increasingly burdensome to Town residents. Although the Town has adequate fiscal capacity to borrow funds for capital improvements, the existing high mil rate makes it difficult to undertake additional debt service obligations. Over the last five years there has been a steady rise in the percentage of Thomaston's budget funded by local tax revenues, due primarily to rising costs for local education and municipal services and significant decreases in State funding for education and revenue sharing. During this same period the Town's taxable property valuation has declined. The rising mil rate, now among the highest in Knox County, has increasingly burdened Thomaston's taxpayers and discourages in-migration, home ownership, and real estate revitalization.

The Town has a 20-year TIF and Revenue Enhancement arrangement with Dragon Products that expires in 2022. The Town is exploring its options to extend the TIF for an additional 10 years, which will have implications for the Town's property tax revenue as well as the amount of education support and revenue sharing it receives under State funding formulas.



The Town owns a significant amount of property that may be sold or leased in the future, and the resultant income would help fund capital needs. For example, the former site of the Maine State Prison (renamed the Thomaston Green) is owned by the Town, and the Town has made infrastructure improvements (entry road, sewer, water) at the site. Efforts are ongoing to find a suitable developer to purchase the property and develop it in accordance with the Town's Land Use and Development Ordinance and Thomaston Green Design Guidelines. The Town also is in the process of relocating the Town Office, Police Department, Recreation Department, and Food Pantry from the Town-owned Watts Block to the former Lura Libby School. Once that move is completed in early 2020, all or a portion of the Watts Block Building could be rented or sold for commercial development or use.

Because of the high mil rate currently required in Thomaston, it is important, as reflected in the Comprehensive Plan Survey responses and in the "Thomaston Talks" and other community feedback sessions conducted by the Committee, that the Town pursue efforts to lower the existing tax rate. In addition to the potential to consolidate facilities and services to reduce Town expenses, the Town should create an Economic Development function in Town Government to attract new business and development that will expand the Town's taxable valuation. Village development should be undertaken in a manner consistent with the Town's historic small-village character. The Town also should work closely with State and regional officials for increased State revenue sharing and aid to education.

*** State Goal**

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

*** Local Goals**

- 1** Finance existing and future facilities and services in a cost-effective manner.
- 2** Pursue grants to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.
- 3** Work to reduce Thomaston's property tax rate.

*** Strategies**

- 1 Continue to pursue capital- and expense-sharing opportunities.** In early 2019 the Town considered but ultimately rejected a plan to disband the Thomaston Police Department and obtain police coverage through Knox County. In an ongoing effort to provide services more efficiently, the Town should aggressively explore opportunities for service sharing

or consolidation of services with other communities and/or outsourcing of functions currently done by Town Government.

- 2 Sell or lease selected Town properties suitable for development.** The Town is and will be taking steps to sell or lease certain Town-owned real estate. Such sales would enhance the Town's financial position in three ways: (1) by generating revenue that could be used for Town capital investments, debt reduction, or other purposes; (2) by removing the property from Town upkeep and maintenance; and (3) by placing the property in the Town's taxable valuation, generating new tax revenues. The Town should periodically review the inventory and uses of the properties it owns to determine if additional sales or leases are appropriate.
- 3 Create an economic development function in Town government.** To enhance economic development and municipal tax valuations in ways that are consistent with the Town's historic small-town character, an economic development function (either a Town employee or consultant) should be created to promote the Town as a location for new and expanded business and residential development opportunities. This person also would serve as a liaison between the Town and companies and individuals interested in locating or expanding businesses and other activities in Town.
- 4 Re-examine the Thomaston Land Use Ordinance.** If and as necessary, the Town should be open to revisions of its Land Use and Development Ordinance to accommodate appropriate development, to direct major development away from rural areas and toward growth areas, and to ensure that development is in keeping with the Town's history and character.
- 5 Pursue additional State resources.** A major reason for Thomaston's rising taxpayer burden is increased education spending by RSU 13 even as State support for education has declined. Similarly, State revenue sharing payments to Thomaston have declined in recent years. Thomaston should coordinate with other neighboring Towns, especially those in RSU 13, to work with regional and State officials to increase State support for education and State revenue sharing and to add a household-income factor to the State's school funding formula.
- 6 Develop a strategy for the Dragon Products TIF.** The Dragon Products TIF expires in 2022 but can be extended for an additional ten years. To determine whether such an extension would be beneficial, the Town should begin an analysis of the effects of an extension on Town tax revenues, State revenue sharing and education support, and Town support levels for Knox County.
- 7 Supplement, then annually review and update, the Town's Capital Investment Plan.**





Future Land Use Plan Overview



Much of Thomaston's beauty derives from its history: its village center that anchors rural outlying areas and its historic structures, along with more modest reminders of the Town's maritime and farming past. While providing for population growth and associated housing and business development, Thomaston must continue to shape this growth so that the Town's traditional character remains deep-rooted and community-wide, and not reduced to remnants.

Thomaston has had reasonably successful town-wide zoning for many years, and the settlement pattern is generally one that Thomaston property owners are satisfied with and wish to see continued. This Plan supports maintaining the basic land-use pattern of the village surrounded by low-density development, allows higher density commercial and industrial development east of the cement plant, and supports efforts to preserve the character of the town's federally designated Historic District.

Future land use challenges for Thomaston continue to include: 1) prevent sprawl and maintain a viable village center with a variety of small businesses, historic buildings, and pleasant residential areas in the face of east-end commercial development and increasing traffic along US Route 1; 2) preserve the character of the federally designated historic district; 3) redevelop the former prison property in a manner that is compatible with surrounding residential uses and

that complements the commercial and public uses at the village center; 4) assure affordable housing opportunities; 5) recruit commercial and industrial development to provide jobs and increase the tax base ; 6) strengthen protections for the Town’s rural areas and critical natural resources; 7) maintain open space and public access to open space and the harbor, and; 8) limit adverse impacts of gravel pits and rock quarries on other land uses while planning for the eventual, inevitable closure of these areas.

Along with the vision statement, the guiding principles for future growth are:

- ♦ Maintain rural, small-town, historic character;
- ♦ Reinforce the Town center;
- ♦ Support the waterfront;
- ♦ Connect the chain of walkable neighborhoods, parks, trails, and open spaces;
- ♦ Provide appropriate areas for commercial and industrial development.

✱ State and Local Goal

Encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of the community while protecting the Town’s rural character, making efficient use of public services and preventing development sprawl.

✱ Strategies

General

- 1** Strengthen the Statement of Purpose for each zoning district to solidify the intent of rural vs growth areas. Reference to the importance of relative scale, character, and visual quality of each district needs to be incorporated.
- 2** Continue to develop an interconnected greenway through Town and along the waterfront linking town parks and public spaces and conserved lands with the goals of protecting critical and important natural resources, maintaining wildlife corridors, creating pollinator pathways, protecting scenic resources, increasing visual and physical access to the shore, and enhancing low-impact recreational opportunities
- 3** Conduct a comprehensive study of the advantages and disadvantages of a new east-west road through Town in the vicinity of the Transitional Residential (TR3) District to encourage residential growth in the TR3 District and alleviate traffic congestion on Route 1.





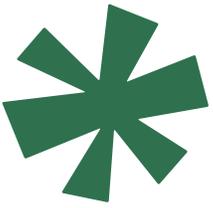
- 4** The first consideration for any Conditional Use approval must be whether or not the use conforms to the purpose of the district within which it is proposed. Additionally, a Conditional Use may be approved only if it does not promote strip development or sprawl and is of a scale, character, and visual quality that is compatible with the neighborhood in which it is proposed. Modify Section 704.1.5.c.1 of the Thomaston Land Use Ordinance to clarify and strengthen this intent.
- 5** Aggressively pursue partnering with non-profit organizations and private owners to place parcels of land with important natural features and/or viewsapes into permanent conservation status. Purchase and Transfer of Development Rights are tools that can be used for this purpose as are local Land Banks, Community Land Trusts, and Designated Reserve Accounts
- 6** Create a Community and Economic Development Corporation to provide a mechanism for purchasing land, development rights, conservation easements, abandoned properties, or other properties of importance to the Town. The priority for homes acquired through these means would be making them available as affordable housing.
- 7** Develop guidelines for the assessment of scenic impacts using concepts such as scale, contrast, and spatial dominance. Develop an inventory of scenic resources based on these guidelines and amend existing ordinances to allow the Planning Board to require a scenic impact analysis as part of the site plan review of any development that would impact any of the inventoried scenic resources.
- 8** Study changes to the LUO that would be needed to become an AARP Age Friendly Community and act accordingly.
- 9** Study the operation and impact of short-term rentals in Thomaston and take appropriate action.
- 10** Review land use ordinances pertaining to gravel pits and quarries and amend as necessary to ensure that impacts to natural resources, other land uses, and transportation systems are adequately addressed. See Chapter 3: Our Environment: Natural Resources.
- 11** Mineral exploration should be a conditional use in the Town’s Rural, Industrial, and Highway Commercial Districts but not an allowed use in the more densely populated districts of R3, R3A or TR3 except in cases where mineral rights have already been transferred.
- 12** Allow “Small Scale Farming/Gardening” as a Permitted Use in R3, R3A, TR3, R2, and R1.

- 13** Hire a town-planner consultant to help the Town design a comprehensive land use strategy to maximize the appeal of Thomaston in the areas of commerce, industry, and population growth.
- 14** Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies using *Beginning with Habitat* as a tool.
- 15** Establish the Comprehensive Plan Committee as a standing committee responsible for fostering progress toward the Plan’s goals and assuring that Land Use and Development Ordinance is aligned with the new Plan. All proposed changes to the Land Use Ordinance should be reviewed by the Comprehensive Plan Committee to determine compliance with the Plan. The Committee’s determination of compliance or noncompliance will be submitted to the Selectboard prior to its public hearing on the proposed change(s).
- 16** Maintain up-to-date maps of current land uses. Integrate land use mapping layers with maps depicting municipal infrastructure and tie to property cards. Computerize building permit information
- 17** Review permitting procedures to assure that they are fair, efficient, and streamlined as much as possible in growth areas.
- 18** Assure that new development is tracked by type and location.

Rural Areas

- 1** Examine the Land Use Ordinance for ways to strengthen the protection of rural areas.
- 2** A number of Conditional Uses in R1 and R2 appear to be incompatible with the purpose of these Rural Districts, since they seem to be neither residential nor related to “traditional use of rural lands.” Review Conditional Uses in these districts and modify as needed, with particular attention to relative scale, character, visual quality, and essential viewsapes.
- 3** The importance of preserving the western entrance to Town along Route 1 as part of the greenway described above has long been a priority. To reaffirm this commitment and to preserve the scenic vistas and rural nature of that area, thoroughly address issues of scale, character, dimensional requirements, buffering, etc. This can be done through modifications specific to this area within the existing regulation in the R2 District, by re-evaluating permitted and conditional uses and by purchasing land and/or development rights through public/private partnerships, as discussed above.
- 4** Previous and current Comprehensive Plans state, “Montpelier is a dominant landmark . . . Protection of this landmark and neighboring residential areas is vitally important to the Town . . . It is critical that





nearby commercial and industrial land uses not encroach on this residential area” This continues to be true. Additionally, this area abuts South Thomaston land that is identified as rural lands. No changes in the Rural Residential 1 and Village Commercial boundaries should be made; however, changes in use could come from protections for the Historic District and/or possible accommodations for mixed use within the Historic District.

- 5** Through educational outreach efforts, encourage placement and retention of active agricultural lands and other important open space in the Farm and Open Space Tax Program, and productive forest land in the Tree Growth Tax Program. Encourage conservation easements to preserve important agricultural, open space, and forest lands through local land trusts.
- 6** Amend the Land Use and Development Ordinance to require subdivision proposals within the R1 (Rural Residential and Farming) District to include a cluster design instead of, or in addition to, a traditional design for site plan review. Land to be left in open space should, to the extent possible, include prime agricultural soils, critical natural resources, and important wildlife habitat and corridors and should abut and augment open space on adjoining properties, including those in other municipalities.

Growth Areas

- 1** Continue to allow a range of housing densities based on the established settlement pattern and provide sufficient affordable housing, including accessory units and multifamily housing.
- 2** Allow “Conversion of Existing Residential” as a Conditional Use in R3. When considering approval of conditional uses, especially those that involve converting residential properties to business/commercial properties, it is essential that issues of scale, character, density, saturation, buffering, and parking be heavily weighed. Off-street parking in such cases must be located away from front yards and substantially shielded from view, with the intent of preserving the nature of a residential neighborhood.
- 3** Create a historic overlay district in the Town’s designated Historic District, as listed on the National Register, where guidelines for preserving the character, style, scale, and proportions of historic structures are identified.
- 4** Create and support a historic advisory board to inform and inspire homeowners to accomplish their construction and improvement goals while not severely compromising the historic aesthetic.
- 5** Pursue the extension of Town water and sewer into the TR3 District to allow for an expansion of more affordable housing options.

- 6** In the TR3 District, encourage high-density more affordable housing, including smaller homes, duplexes, row houses, multiunit residences, and smaller lot sizes, while maintaining a traditional street grid pattern.
- 7** Review the Land Use Ordinance to determine other ways to support the development of smaller, more efficient, more affordable housing, including ADUs. (An additional dwelling unit is a secondary housing unit on a single-family residential lot that remains with original property), micro-housing, minimum unit sizes, minimum lot sizes, etc. Allow Multi-Unit Residential as a conditional use in R3 and TR3 as well as R3A. Develop associated parking and buffering requirements that protect the view corridor and the historic small-town character of the neighborhoods. It is especially important that lawn areas abutting street not become parking lots.
- 8** Encourage developers, through the Land Use and Development Ordinance, to provide multifamily developments with adequate storage areas, landscaping, and shared green space.
- 9** In order to provide opportunities for affordable housing and maintain the integrity of the Town's rural areas, allow mobile/manufactured homes as a conditional use in TR3 and R1. Allow manufactured/mobile home parks as a conditional use in TR3. Rezone that portion of the R1 district along Pleasant Street that presently contains a mobile home park to TR3. Rezone portions of R1 and R3 that presently abut the southern boundary of TR3 as additions to the TR3 District, excepting the property along the western shoreline of the Mill River.
- 10** Review the standards for mobile/manufactured home parks to assure compatibility with the area in which it is to be placed. Cluster and/or traditional grid pattern for development should be considered as well as requirements for landscaping and storage areas.
- 11** To protect the compact village attraction of Thomaston, limit the Highway Commercial to the area along Route 1 east of the Dragon property.
- 12** Require developers, through Site Plan Review, to assess the potential for proposed projects in the Industrial and Highway Commercial Districts to adversely impact Marsh Brook and the Weskeag Creek Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance. Where feasible, conserve low-lying undeveloped uplands where coastal marshes and intertidal natural communities can migrate inland with sea level rise.
- 13** Consider instituting impact fees to contribute toward the cost of any infrastructure improvements required to be made by the Town to accommodate additional growth and/or development.



- 14** Modify the current Land Use Ordinance to permit “Public Open-Space Recreational Use” in R3 to allow for parks and recreational activities.
- 15** Home occupations should continue to be allowed in all residential districts. The 2005 Comprehensive Plan states that “the Town should enforce existing standards to ensure that home occupations, in both size and type, do not substantially detract from the residential neighborhoods in which they are located.”
- 16** Allow light industrial activity as a conditional use in the Village Commercial District.
- 17** Retaining the Shoreland Commercial designation for the property along Route 1 at the west end of Town that has river frontage is appropriate. However, the lot in that area of the District that has no river frontage needs to be moved into the R2 District.
- 18** The few properties in the Shoreland Commercial District that have all-tide water access are and should continue be zoned Shoreland Commercial and be dedicated to marine commercial activities. However, properties in the Shoreland Commercial District that have only mid- to high-tide water access could, in the future, be considered for commercial activities that are not strictly marine related, as the technology for transporting and launching small craft no longer requires their construction and repair occur at waterfront locations.
- 19** Maintain the current height limit for all properties in the Shoreland Commercial District and review the Land Use Ordinance to assure the protection of view corridors.
- 20** Encourage landowners in the Shoreland Commercial District to harden their properties against storm surges and, in the longer term, against rising sea level.
- 21** Mitigate runoff of lawn and garden chemicals and other non-point source pollutants by educating landowners and incorporating raingardens and retention ponds to the Town’s storm drains and swales.



Regional Coordination



By adopting a strong regional approach and encouraging partnerships and collaboration, municipalities can reduce overhead expense, increase services, and more effectively plan and manage growth. Thomaston currently cooperates with neighboring communities in several key areas:

- ♦ The Thomaston Fire Department, Police Department and EMS Department have adopted mutual aid agreements with Rockland, South Thomaston and Camden. The Police Department is aided by the Knox County Sheriff's Department and the Maine State Police, and the Regional Emergency Agency supports municipalities in response to disasters or emergency events.
- ♦ Through an interlocal agreement in effect since 1984, the Owls Head South Thomaston and Thomaston Solid Waste Cooperative handles municipal solid-waste transfer to EcoMaine in Portland.
- ♦ The Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization includes one selectman from each of the five towns fronting the St. George Estuary—Thomaston, South Thomaston, Warren, St George, and Cushing—



and enforces the interlocal shellfish ordinance to protect and improve clamming in the estuary and neighboring shores.

- ♦ Town managers throughout Knox, Lincoln, and Waldo counties meet on a monthly basis. Local chief financial officers meet irregularly, and there is some regional purchasing including road sand and salt and road stripe painting.
- ♦ Thomaston maintains its public landing and docks to provide river access for commercial and recreational users from surrounding towns.
- ♦ Thomaston residents share trails and land preserves owned and managed by the Georges River Land Trust, the Coastal Mountain Land Trust, and Camden Hills State Park, and take advantage of the activities offered by regional athletic, arts, and cultural organizations.

Additional opportunities for regionalization include affordable housing, public works, recreation, general administration, joint purchasing, infrastructure expansion, code enforcement, combating homelessness, and addressing the opioid crisis. Areas that stand out as being particularly appropriate for a regional approach in the Midcoast Region include economic development, transportation planning, land use management, natural resource protection, renewable energy development, recycling and composting, and addressing the impacts of global warming.

We recommend the establishment of a multi-town planning committee to develop policies on regional issues. Such a committee would be tasked with exploring all possible partnering opportunities, analyzing the benefits and drawbacks of areas where regional efforts would seem to have a real impact and appear manageable, and recommend or create agencies to be responsible for implementing appropriate regional programs. Many of the following recommendations for regional coordination are taken from comprehensive plans of neighboring municipalities:

✱ Strategies

Regional Economic Development and Transportation

- 1** Create regional planning initiatives that focus on growth impacts, transportation, strengthening and retaining local and regional economic sustainability and the economics of regional services.
- 2** Establish regional public transit on the shared Route 1 corridor.
- 3** Explore a regional approach for encouraging freight transport to shift from highways to railroad.
- 4** Reconstitute the Gateway 1 Corridor Action Committee that was terminated by Maine DOT in 2011. Review, modify, and institute the recommendations in the Gateway 1 Corridor Action Plan.

Regional Land use Management and Natural Resource Protection

- 5** Direct growth and minimize impacts on the Midcoast Region's community character.
- 6** Establish land use policies and development patterns across municipalities that are essential to preserving natural habitats, maintaining wildlife corridors, creating pollinator pathways, protecting watersheds, and conserving open spaces and view corridors.
- 7** Establishing incentives for regional land use planning, such as the purchase and/or transfer of development rights, which allows such rights to be acquired in one municipality and used in another municipality's receiving area.
- 8** Expand regional partnerships to address marine resource-related issues such as invasive species, climate change, pollution, and resource conservation.
- 9** Of particular importance is the development of a multi-town plan for the protection of the Weskeag Creek Focus Area

Regional Sustainability Planning

- 10** Create regional solutions for solid waste disposal, recycling, and composting.
- 11** Plan regionally for a reduction of greenhouse gases.
- 12** Explore interlocal investment in renewable energy projects.
- 13** Coordinate management and distribution strategies as energy production becomes more decentralized.
- 14** Prepare regionally for infrastructure projects required by sea-level rise.

Affordable Housing

- 15** Create regional solutions to develop affordable housing.
- 16** Establish a Regional Affordable Housing Coalition.

Municipal Services

- 17** Explore the sharing of services with neighboring communities in the areas of fire protection, emergency medical services, code enforcement, public works and other municipal services.
- 18** Expand interlocal purchasing opportunities.
- 19** Consider coordination of regional power generation and distribution.





Implementation and Evaluation

There are many strategies in The Thomaston Plan, ranging from the broad and ongoing to the specific and finite. A matrix listing each strategy, an estimated timeframe for implementation, and the group or person who is primarily responsible appears at the back of this Plan. The Implementation Matrix also prioritizes the strategies (with necessary caveats) and suggests how each one relates to the Town's eight major aspirations.

This Plan is intended to serve as a guide for the Selectboard and Town Manager as they develop annual work plans, for other Town departments as they plan and prioritize their respective work, and for the Planning Board as it considers land use and development requests. Ultimately, the success of The Thomaston Plan will be measured by its use during everyday decision-making. Monitoring the Plan's implementation should be an open and ongoing process. At the least, the Selectboard will conduct an annual review of progress toward meeting the goals of The Plan, identify strategies that have been implemented according to the time-line in the Implementation Matrix, and establish a work plan that identifies implementation priorities for the coming year.

As The Plan is implemented, the Comprehensive Plan Committee's role will evolve into one of monitoring progress and identifying areas in need of further clarification or modification. Additionally, the Committee will assist the Code Enforcement Officer in drafting amendments to the Town's Land Use and Development Ordinance to assure its compatibility with the Plan. (A joint committee of Planning Board members and Comprehensive Plan Committee members is recommended for this purpose.) The Committee should also review all future recommended Ordinance changes for compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan.

As required by the goals and guidelines of the Growth Management Act, progress on the Plan will be evaluated at least every five years to determine the following:

- 1** The degree to which the Future Land Use Plan strategies have been implemented;
- 2** Percent of municipal growth-related capital investments that have been directed to growth areas;

- 3 The location and amount of new development in relation to designated growth areas, rural areas, and transition areas;
- 4 The amount of critical natural resource, critical rural, and critical waterfront areas protected through acquisition, easements, or other measures.

Note: *This concludes the **Planning Guide** section of the Thomaston Comprehensive Plan. For more on how these recommendations were derived, see the **Background, Conditions, and Analyses** section of the Plan, which can be found in the following pages, on the Town website, or at the Town Office.*

THOMASTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2020

Background, Conditions, and Analyses



The *Reine Marie Stewart* in Thomaston Harbor. Built by Dunn & Elliot in 1919 just before the bottom fell out of the shipping business, the barkentine was laid up in 1928. In 1937 she was sold to Nova Scotian owners and rerigged as a four-masted schooner. In 1942, with tonnage again in demand due to war, she was purchased by Boston owners. Off Sierra Leone she was sunk by an Italian submarine.

Contents

Background, Conditions, and Analyses

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Our History



Introduction and Major Findings

Incorporated on March 20, 1777, Thomaston covers roughly 11.5 square miles today. The early compact settlement depended upon the St. George River for the bulk of its industry and trade, and Thomaston streets today are lined with homes built by nineteenth-century shipbuilders, sea captains, mariners, and the tradespeople who serviced them. The village area is notable for its high concentration of early cape-style, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Victorian homes lining Thomaston's original county road, which is now Route 1. Bookended by the former Maine State Prison on the west and a large cement plant on the east, historic Thomaston was spared the disfigurement of urban renewal projects that obliterated architectural landscapes across the nation

throughout the twentieth century. Little infill architecture alters the character of its original historical environment.

There are concerns, however, that much of this important architectural heritage is threatened by insensitive development, demolition by neglect, and economic demands of preservation that are beyond the average homeowner's financial capabilities.

Without a protective ordinance, the Town will lose its unique historic identity. As newcomers to the State seek less expensive real estate on which to build, not all appreciate the merits (including the economic benefits) of retaining the historic architectural character of the Town. There is no local historic zone defined to protect historic structures from degradation, especially in

the Historic District designated in the National Register of Historic Places (or National Register) in 1974.

While the historic homes are stately and architecturally appealing, the cost to maintain them presents their owners with sizable maintenance challenges. Alternatives may include creatively repurposing single-family homes into two-family homes while complying with present-day code requirements and maintaining original the exterior appearances, characters, and styles. Any suggested conditional uses must be sensitive to the protection and integrity of residential neighborhoods.

Thomaston should design incentives and guidelines to ensure the protection and preservation of the Town's historic architectural integrity and the resultant positive visual impact. This is one of the Town's biggest economic assets. Once lost, it can *never be replaced*.

A. Goals

State Goal

To preserve the State's historic and archaeological resources.

Local Goal

To preserve and protect the Town's aging historic architecture, to identify any overlooked archaeological resources, and to work with homeowners to deter demolition by neglect.

B. Analyses

1. Historic Settlement Patterns

Thomaston's early historic commercial settlement was arrayed west to east along County Road—now Route 1/Main Street—and this pattern remains evident. Nineteenth-century buildings represent nearly 30% of the Town's remaining residential and commercial structures, while twentieth-century buildings total about 44%. The eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century

business center was concentrated in the Mill River area near Route 131 South, but gradually shifted to the present downtown blocks abutting the intersection of Main and Knox Streets following the separation of South Thomaston and Rockland from Thomaston in 1848. Little remains of the early Mill River settlement, as buildings and topography were altered during an upgrade of Route 1 by the State in 1962. However, the Main Street commercial section retains original architecture ranging from 1848 to 1915 with minimal twenty-first-century influence and continues to be historically maintained and preserved as grants become available.

With the exception of the Mill River area (intersection of Route 131 South and Route 1), historic patterns of settlement remain from the original street grid developed throughout the Town in the early nineteenth century. It is important that the character, style, and proportions of the original settlement be retained and protected to preserve the historic integrity of the village. Subdivision developments have been built upon former pasturelands that bordered early Town roads, examples being Gleason, Thatcher, and Fluker Streets south of Route 1 and Booker and Beechwood Street areas north of Route 1. The flats between Thomaston and Rockland, site of numerous nineteenth-century lime quarries, now comprise the Town's commercial and industrial districts.

2. Protective Measures for Historic and Archaeological Resources

Limited protective preservation measures are outlined in the Village Commercial District zoning established for the business center. A portion of Knox and Main Streets, along with a few randomly selected structures, were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, which implies that they warrant protection. **See Map 1-1, Thomaston Historic District National Historic Register.** This Landmark

Map 1-1: Thomaston Historic District National Historic Register



distinction can easily be revoked, however, if changes are made to existing architecture. See **Appendix A** for information on relevant land use ordinances.

3. Site Plan/Subdivision Regulations

With regard to archaeological sites, *Thomaston Land Use and Development Ordinance, Chapter 7, Section 716.3 Archeological Sites* requires that “any proposed land use activity involving structural development or soil disturbance on or adjacent to sites listed on, or eligible to be listed on, the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by the permitting authority” be submitted by the applicant to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for review and comment

at least twenty (20) days prior to action being taken by the permitting authority. The permitting authority is required to consider comments received from the Commission prior to rendering a decision on the application.

The Resource Protection District of Thomaston’s Land Use Ordinance contains provisions pertaining to a change of use that is intended to ensure that archaeological and historic resources are protected (Section 703.4.4). The Ordinance also contains a number of additional provisions designed to protect historic and archaeological resources and maintain design, scale, and historic character, but does not mandate compliance. Subdivision proposals require the applicant to submit a landscape plan that identifies sensitive areas

including historic and archeological resources. Where archaeological resources exist, a professional archaeological review is required. See **Appendix A** for additional information on the Town's existing land use ordinance provisions pertaining to the protection of historic and archaeological resources.

A history survey group should be established to research the shorelines of the St. George River and Mill River (from Route 1 south to the St. George River), and archeological sites west of the upper Wadsworth Street area (the location of a 1630 trading post) to determine if more prehistoric and/or historic archeological sites should be identified. The entire area of Thomaston would have been appealing to early Native American populations and for colonial development. Although most land within the village has been developed, there are large vacant parcels north of Thatcher Street, west of Green Street, and west of Route 131 South to the Mill River that remain untouched. Individuals have reported finding arrowheads, cannonballs, buttons, and other early artifacts throughout Town. Certain areas should be protected from new development until surveys can be made.

4. Preservation of Historic Resources

The Wadsworth Street lime kilns have fallen into disrepair and are probably beyond restoration but may be worthy of preservation in their present state. Requests have been made to the State for State-owned land adjacent to the new Wadsworth Street bridge to be turned over to the Town for a park and small-craft river access site. In this event, the Kiln Site should be cleaned up and fenced off with historic signage.

Other resources worthy of notice and protection/preservation include the following:

- At low tide, early pilings and wooden drainpipes can be seen along Mill River, and remnants of early lime wharves are visible along the Water Street waterfront. Signage with history could be placed in the area marking the site of the Mill River dam and Mill Pond, along with photos of the early road pattern prior to construction of the present Route 1 overpass and highway intersection constructed by the State in 1962.
- There are some early nineteenth-century houses throughout Town that are falling into disrepair, mainly due to an inability of current homeowners to maintain them.
- A nineteenth-century black marble quarry site on Old County Road could be designated for protection.
- The locations of Native American middens could be identified and further protected by signage and/or the Town Code Enforcement Officer.
- Surviving hitching posts and early survey markers should be identified, and provisions made for their preservation.
- A corner portion of the former Maine State Prison wall remains on the site with an historic marker of its 1820 placement. This should be protected by ordinance. A park has been established on the former prison property with an overlook of the river offering environmental signage. A gazebo in an adjacent green area owned by the Town will be used for community gatherings.
- Thomaston's early cemeteries (Thomaston Village Cemetery and Elm Grove Cemetery) should receive more preservation attention with grave identifications, maps, and stone cleaning and resetting where necessary.
- The historic Academy Building (1848) and Watts Hall (1915) should continue to be preserved by the Town.

- Early reservoir locations should be identified and listed.
- The Town should assist the Thomaston Historical Society in the preservation of the Knox Farmhouse, one of the Town's earliest and only remaining buildings on the original General Henry Knox Estate.
- The Town should work with General Henry Knox Museum where possible to ensure its longevity.
- The Daniel Morse Homestead and possible site of an early Indian barn c. 1720 should be identified on Town maps.
- The site of Fort St. George, c. 1719, should be identified on Town maps.

C. Conditions and Trends

1. Sites Identified by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

The Comprehensive Planning Historic Preservation Data Set prepared by the Historic Preservation Commission currently lists maps of known historic and prehistoric archaeological sites in five areas within Town limits. These include archaeological sites from the first wave of European settlement and are likely to be significant (National Register – eligible). Growth management should focus on the protection of these archaeological and historic resources. **Map 1-2, Known Historic Archaeological Sites and National Register Property in Thomaston**, depicts the general locations of these resources, which include:

- Three sites along East Main Street/Route 1 to Mill River and continuing down Route 131 South;
- One site along Thatcher Street/Water Street almost to the intersection of Elliot and Water Streets (should be expanded to include both sides of the

Mill River and the entire waterfront along Water Street up to the prehistoric site on the St. George River); and

- One prehistoric site at the Narrows.

Map 1-2 has been updated by the Tax Assessor's Office to conform with the latitude/longitude coordinates listed on the National Register.

2. Community History and Historic Settlement Patterns

Thomaston has a rich history, with portions of three of its earliest streets and selected buildings on Main, Knox, and part of Water Street listed on the National Register. Present-day Thomaston is situated on the St. George River, the dividing line between seventeenth-century French and English claims to land in North America. An English trading post was built in 1630 in the vicinity of Wadsworth Street. In 1719 an unsuccessful settlement by the name of Lincoln on the eastern side of lower Knox Street lasted but a few years due to the French and Indian Wars. An established fort existed until the 1760s on what is now lower Knox Street.

In 1735 Samuel Waldo, then holder of most of the Waldo Patent, made arrangements to settle the St. George area, which included a western portion of Thomaston. At the time, a blockhouse in the Wadsworth Street area, along with a truck house/fort and an Indian house/barn in the vicinity of Thatcher and Gleason Streets, were the only structures in existence. Waldo's settlement was called "Upper Town on the St. George's" and was composed of 50 lots laid out and divided, five located in the western portion of Thomaston and the others in present-day Warren. The entire area was heavily used by Native Americans prior to and during European presence in 1630 and subsequent European settlement in the early eighteenth century.

The first lime quarry and lime kilns were erected along the Narrows on the St. George

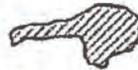
Map 1-2: Known Historic Archaeological Sites and National Register Property in Thomaston

Known Historic Archaeological Sites and
National Register Property in

Thomaston

Information provided by
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
April 2005

 historic district on the
National Register of Historic Places

 area sensitive for historic
archaeological sites

 14k square intersecting a known
historic archaeological site

 a reported historic archaeological site,
exact location unknown



River in 1734 (bordering the site of the 1824 State Prison), and an early export trade developed in lime and cement. The Town was incorporated in 1777 as Thomaston at a time when it was becoming a shipbuilding center, attracting increased trade and settlers to the area. Major General Henry Knox, the country's first Secretary of War and Revolutionary War patriot, retired to the area and built his estate, Montpelier, on lower Knox Street. Several families followed, seeking employment associated with General Knox's numerous endeavors.

The entire settlement depended upon the river for the bulk of its industry and trade, and Thomaston streets today are lined with homes built by shipbuilders, sea captains, mariners and the tradespeople who serviced them, in addition to those who worked in the local limestone quarries or farmed the land. Shipbuilding was a major industry that fueled Thomaston's economy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and continued into the twenty-first century. See **Map 1-3, Thomaston Shipyards c. 1855**. Although building traditional large sailing ships for worldwide trade was greatly curtailed by the advent of steam-powered vessels, Thomaston builders continued the industry by appealing to both deep-water fishing and pleasure-seeking yachting fleets, the latter up to the present day.

In 1848 the Town was divided into three independent towns (Thomaston, Rockland, and South Thomaston), with present-day Thomaston retaining roughly 11.5 square miles. Today Thomaston is a closely connected village with a mix of distinct business districts and residential areas. The Town retains a highly visible connection to its history through its impressive variety of architectural styles (Federal, Greek Revival, and Victorian), its early nineteenth-century business blocks lining the historic Route 1 corridor, and various remnants of its shipbuilding legacy on the waterfront. Thomaston must continue to shape its growth in a way that protects and

preserves its heritage and ensures that the Town's unique character and style remain.

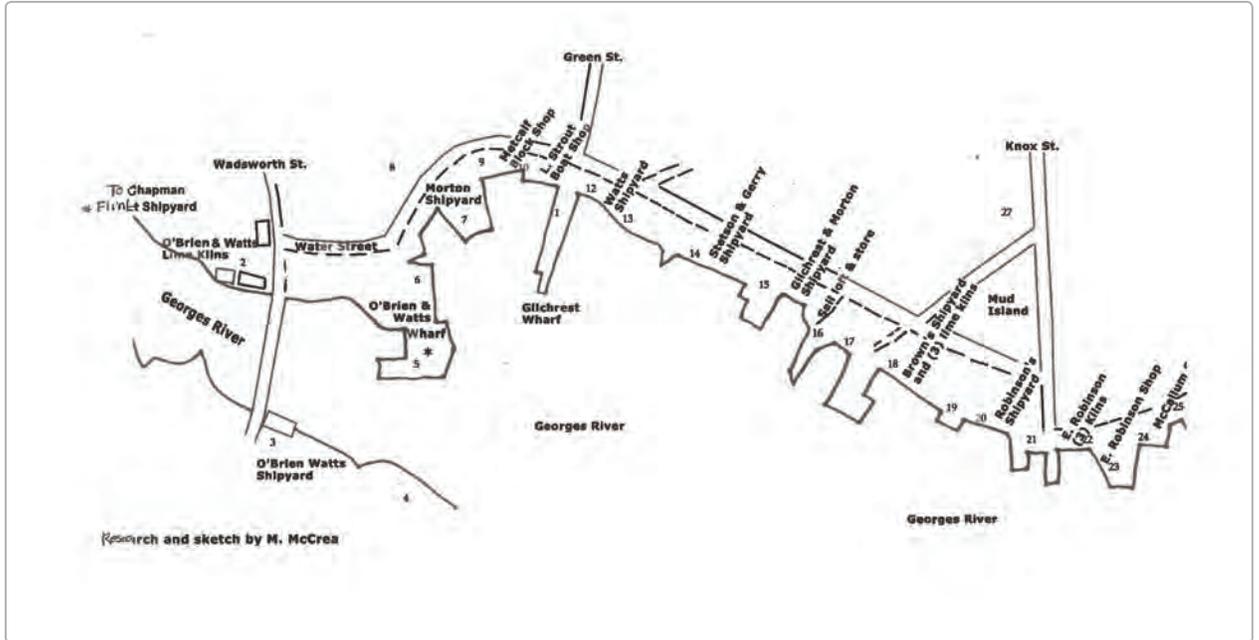
3. Inventory of Historical and Archaeological Resources

Table 1-1 provides information on the location, condition and use of historical and archaeological resources of local importance. The State lists the village area of Thomaston as well as specific areas, primarily along the harbor and Mill River waterfronts, as historic and archaeological resources. The village and harborfront contain many buildings from the nineteenth century that are still in use, as well as ruins of early limestone kilns and shipyards. The St. George River has sites of Native American habitation and sites where ballast was discharged from sailing vessels. The shores of the Mill River show extensive remains of wharves and some traces of a brickyard. Both the St. George and Mill Rivers show foundations of long-vanished bridges, wharves, and wooden drainpipes visible at low tide.

In addition to the resources listed in **Table 1-1**, other important resources include the following Town reservoir locations that were used as a source of water for fires until 1887:

- Corner of Knox and Main Streets, near the flagpole (1833, filled in during 2017 Route 1 reconstruction).
- Main Street near intersection of Georges Street.
- Morse's Corner vicinity.
- In 1885, five reservoirs located between a site below the Congregational Church next to the Academy Building and the site of the Hon. A. Gould's house (231 Main) were drained during a fire at the lower corner.
- Foot of Green Street.
- Brooklyn Heights (vicinity of 14 Brooklyn Heights).

Map 1-3: Map 1-3, Thomaston Shipyards c. 1855



- Water Street near Singer's lumber yard (70 Water Street).
- Near George W. Robinson House (338 Main).
- Beechwood near Willis Corner.
- Starr Street, reservoir under Engine house (1875).

The following hitching posts and granite post markers have been identified:

- 4 Pine Street (corner of Route 1 and Pine St.), Tax map 104-025.
- 60 Main Street, Thomaston Academy, 104-051 (granite post).
- 113 Main Street, Captain James Creighton House, 105-379.
- 213 Main Street, Dr. James E. Walker House, 105-265.
- 239 Main Street, Captain James Henderson House, 105-259.

- 277 Main Street, C. Sidney Smith House, 105-247.
- Between 35 and 39 Knox Street, Captain Samuel Watts.
- 48 Gleason Street, hitching post or boundary marker.
- 18 Gleason Street, Sylvester House (removed).

Kiln sites include:

- Burgess O'Brien Kilns, Lower Wadsworth Street.
- Along Mill River Banks.
- Lower Knox Street/Lyman Morse Boatyard.

These nineteenth-century wharf remains have been identified:

- Lower Knox Street/Lyman Morse boatyard, pilings.
- #38 and #54 Water Street, pilings.

Table 1-1: Historical and Archaeological Resources of Local importance

ID	Date	Description
General Henry Knox Museum (Montpelier)	1929-1930	Reconstruction of the home of General Henry Knox on a site overlooking Mill River. The original home was built from plans supplied by Ebenezer Dunton of Boston (who oversaw the construction of the building and is called the builder in the document) at a cost of \$50,000 in 1794-95. In reality, he was the architectural designer of the estate. Following Knox's death, Montpelier fell into disrepair and was eventually razed in 1871 to make way for the railroad.
Knox Farmhouse	1797	The only remaining structure built by General Henry Knox as part of his estate, "Montpelier." Used as workers quarters, it was later converted for use as Thomaston's railroad station. Rehabilitated in the early 1970s, it is currently owned by the Thomaston Historical Society and used as a meeting place and museum.
Dragon Products	1926	The company is the last Thomaston operation to quarry limestone and the only remaining large cement production facility in New England, quarrying about 700,000 tons of limestone per year.
Museum in the Streets	2003	An outdoor museum comprised of a series of twenty-five plaques with historic photographs and history in both English and French. The plaques are placed throughout the Town and positioned as closely as possible to the location where the pictures were taken nearly 150 years ago.
Timeline in Granite Wall in Main Street Business Section	2005	A chronological timeline of Thomaston History.
National Register of Historic Places and Historic District	1974	Denoting a partial inventory of the many eligible nineteenth-century homes and buildings of Thomaston within an established Historic District.
Native American Sites		These lie on the east side of the St. George River about a mile downstream of the Route 1 Bridge. The exact location is withheld to protect it from disturbance.
Shipbuilding Sites		Bordering Mill River and Water Street along the river. See Map 1-3, Thomaston Shipyards, c. 1855.
Wooden Cross	1977	Erected above the Public Landing as a Bicentennial Project to commemorate the landing and cross planting by Captain George Weymouth in 1605.
Time Capsule	1977	Marked by a ground-level granite monument, the capsule was buried in The Mall during the Bicentennial.
Thomaston Academy Building	1847	Building erected at a cost of \$3,000 for instruction in the elementary grades as well as to advanced pupils. Selected by the State for holding two terms a year as a State Normal School. Maintained until 1860 as an academy. Eventually a high school. On National Register.
2 nd Watts Block	1915	Built for the townspeople in 1890 on land purchased by Captain Sam Watts for an original Town Hall, performance stage on 2 nd floor and retail stores below. The 1 st Watts Block was destroyed by fire in 1915 and immediately rebuilt for the same purpose. On National Register.
Historic Thomaston Village Cemetery	1802	In 1797 a committee was appointed to find a suitable place for a burying ground. In 1802 General Henry Knox donated one acre of land as a convenient place to bury the dead. This has been enlarged many times over and now constitutes the Historic Thomaston Village Cemetery. First burial was in 1800.

- #70 Water Street, Marine Railway from former Morse Boatbuilding Co.

In addition, there are hollow wood drain-pipes along the eastern Mill River shoreline; dam remnants in the Mill River; nineteenth-century granite walls at 50 Knox Street, the Elm Grove Cemetery, and the Village Cemetery; and more than four hundred buildings in Town dating from the nineteenth century and earlier.

Finally, the sites of Fort St. George's, the early blockhouses, and the Daniel Morse/Indian barn are integral to the Town's heritage.

4. Threats to Local Historic Resources

At least a dozen nineteenth-century Thomaston buildings have been lost since 2010, the majority to demolition. These include:

- 113 Main Street, Capt. J. A. Creighton Homestead, c. 1855; barn demolished.
- 54 Hyler Street, Edward Seavey House, c. 1893; burned 2010.
- 75 Knox Street, Washburn Sail Loft, built 1902; burned 2011; new house.
- 4 Water Street, J. O. Cushing Store, built before 1855; demolished 2013 for new house.
- 76 Wadsworth Street, Vose Homestead, built c. 1833; demolished 2013 by developer; awaiting new construction.
- 12 Green Street, remaining building of Masters/Bunker Bldgs, c. 1870; demolished 2013 for new house.
- 77 Main Street, Fuller Homestead, c. 1823; barn demolished 2013.
- 52 Wadsworth Street, Thomas Ryder Homestead, c. 1836; demolished 2014 due to deteriorating condition.
- 70 Wadsworth Street, Town Pump House, early nineteenth century; demolished 2014.
- 8 Main Street, Rufus Counce Homestead, c. 1827; demolished 2016.
- 277 Main Street, C. Sidney Smith Gazebo, c. 1880; demolished 2016.
- 224 Beechwood, Willis Homestead, c. 1828; deteriorated beyond preservation.
- 61 Wadsworth Street, John Wight's Bakehouse, c. 1842; demolished 2017.
- Historic Wadsworth Street Bridge (1927). While not deemed worthy of preservation, the bridge had a high level of historic significance, being one of only two examples in the country of a Belidor-type of bascule bridge. Although no longer operating, its original unaltered superstructure had a fixed Pratt through-truss span, a small single-leaf pony truss bascule span, and unusually shaped counterweight tower/track, which doubled as a through-truss approach span. Demolished 2017.
- Frankowski Barn, c. 1857, on West Meadow Road; slated for demolition.

Thomaston's early-nineteenth-century architecture is under constant threat from teardowns for rebuilds as costs for maintenance and preservation continue to increase and fewer owners are willing to commit time and money toward preservation. In many cases, it is deemed more profitable to demolish and rebuild more energy-efficient buildings. Thomaston has no historic ordinance for its federally recognized Historic District, which includes Main and Knox Streets. There is no review of any alterations, demolition, or new construction of properties within the District that would address style or suitable historic character of existing surrounding neighborhoods.

Prior to the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) Route 1 reconstruction in 2016, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission updated the survey of buildings in the Main Street portion of the Town's federally recognized Historic District. Data for a comprehensive community survey of historic and archaeological resources is currently being collected and organized for an updated historic building inventory.

D. Policies

State Policy

Protect to the greatest extent practicable the significant historic and archaeological resources in the community.

Town Policies

- 1 Preserve and protect the Town's aging historic architecture, identify any overlooked archaeological resources, and work with homeowners to deter demolition by neglect.
 - 2 Promote historic preservation as a key economic, sustainability, and community development strategy.
 - 3 Stabilize and enhance historic structures by encouraging investment in existing structures and compatible infill development and by discouraging demolitions.
 - 4 Ensure an appropriate balance of historic continuity and change as the town grows and evolves.
 - 5 Educate and engage residents and visitors in the appreciation of historic assets.
- 2 Provide incentives and reduce disincentives for the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic properties. Offer cost-effective alternative materials sources and techniques that are compatible with preservation objectives.
 - 3 Consider a tax formula that encourages homeowner improvements.
 - 4 Promote and appeal to public/private partnerships to fund historic preservation.
 - 5 Identify Federal and State housing assistance grants and programs designed to assist elderly and low-income homeowners.
 - 6 Consider other eligible areas of Town for potential listing in the National Register.
 - 7 Extend historical signage (similar to the existing Museum in the Streets signage) to the river overlook created by the reconstruction of the Wadsworth Street bridge and to the former Burgess O'Brien Kilns. Similar signage should be placed in the historic Mill Creek area, the site of the original Town center and proposed Village Trail extension (i.e., the Thomaston Village section of the Georges Highland Path).
 - 8 Adopt or create a guidelines manual to encourage thoughtful rehabilitation of historic homes and compatible in-fill construction in historic neighborhoods.
 - 9 Appoint an advisory group to work with the Planning Board to create design guidelines for a historic overlay district and to act in an advisory role on alterations, demolitions, and new construction within the Historic District.
 - 10 Create a historic overlay district in the Town's designated Historic District as listed on the National Register, where guidelines for preserving the character, style, scale, and proportions of historic structures will

E. Implementation Strategies

- 1 Encourage individuals and developers to work with Town officials (Planning Board, Code Enforcement Officer) and historical organizations to protect and preserve the Town's architectural integrity.

be included. The intent is not to change underlying zoning but to supplement it in the overlay district.

- 11** Study the feasibility of constructing a new road to carry through traffic around the downtown. Reducing truck traffic on Main Street/Route 1 through the Town's Historic District would improve the appeal of the historic homes there.
- 12** Consider developing a preservation ordinance that could earn Certified Local Government status in order to create homeowner eligibility for grant assistance on preservation projects.
- 13** Discourage individuals and developers from acquiring significant historic buildings with the intent of demolition for new construction. When there is no alternative to demolition, infill architecture should be compatible with neighborhood character and scale.
- 14** Update the Town Architectural Survey. Identify historic buildings and sites not previously listed, some of which might be qualified for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Once completed, provide website link for public access.
- 15** Consider a survey and protective historic ordinance for the waterfront. Areas along the shores of Mill River and St. George River, the entire length of the Water Street waterfront, and the early trading post site on Wadsworth Street should be identified and added to prehistoric and historic archaeological site designations. The former lime kiln at the base of Wadsworth Street should be stabilized.
- 16** Incorporate maps of the revised federally recognized Historic District and known historic archaeological sites, along with pertinent information from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, in the Town's Land Use and Development Ordinance. Provide information to landowners of historic and archaeological sites on the importance of protecting these resources.



Our Environment: Water Resources



Introduction

Significant water resources located at least partially within Thomaston are the St. George, Mill, and Oyster Rivers and Branch, Marsh, and Meadow Brooks. These waterbodies and the associated coastal and freshwater wetlands provide multiple economic, recreational, environmental and public safety benefits. These include: (a) income from commercial fisheries of softshell clams and marine worms; (b) habitat to support recreational fisheries of smelt, striped bass and other finfish; (c) significant wildlife habitat; (d) open space; (e) filtration of pollutants in stormwater runoff, and (f) protection from coastal and river flooding. While there are no significant groundwater aquifers in Town, groundwater is an important resource for private water

supplies outside the area served by *Maine Water*. This chapter discusses threats to the quality of these water resources. Discussion of the marine resources and natural resources dependent upon the quality of these waters are discussed in the Marine Resources and Natural Resources chapters, respectively.

Major Findings

The most significant threats to the quality of our surface waters is non-point source pollution from stormwater (and associated sedimentation, nutrient enrichment, and chemical contamination). Control of non-point pollution is critical to the health of the St. George River estuary. Invasive species such as green crab, the spread of which may be in part attributable to warming waters

associated with global climate change, also pose a significant threat. Potential threats to ground-water quality appear to be localized and largely attributable to improper installation, poor maintenance, or accidents associated with individual septic systems and product storage tanks such as aboveground fuel (heating oil) tanks.

A. State Goal

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

B. Analysis

1. Point Sources of Pollution

Thomaston has largely eliminated point sources of pollution. Known point sources of pollution are limited to the seasonal discharge to the St. George River from the municipal wastewater treatment plant and one remaining residential overboard discharge.

Thomaston Municipal Wastewater Treatment Facility

The wastewater treatment facility, relocated from Thomaston harbor, went on-line in December 1997. The facility is a spray irrigation system which discharges effluent to the St. George River only during the winter months of January – March. This seasonal outfall is located at the harbor off Mayo Park at the former location of the wastewater treatment plant. The facility is licensed by the Maine DEP and is in substantial compliance with the terms of its license. See the discussion in Section C below. The Town is exploring ways to eliminate the seasonal discharge to the St. George River through the creation of ice piles during winter months between December 1 and March 31. The Town is also exploring the potential for discharge to a created wetland in the vicinity of the wastewater treatment lagoons.

Overboard Discharges

There is one remaining overboard discharge (OBD) in Thomaston that discharges to the Oyster River. A second OBD located in Warren also discharges to the Oyster River. Both are licensed by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), with the wastewater treated by a sand filter prior to discharge.

2. Non-Point Source Pollution

Non-point source pollution is defined as pollution that cannot be traced back to a specific source such as a discharge pipe. Rather, it comes from diffuse sources within a watershed such as runoff from roads, parking areas, and other developed areas where rainwater and snowmelt can pick up soil, fertilizers, pesticides, manure, petroleum products, trash, and other contaminants.

Stormwater

According to the Maine Geological Survey, Maine's average annual rainfall is 42 inches. Of this, approximately 50% becomes runoff to streams and rivers, 30 to 40% evaporates or is transpired by vegetation, and 10 to 20% infiltrates to recharge groundwater. Runoff of storm and snowmelt water is the primary source of non-point source pollution to surface waterbodies.

As discussed in Section C(3) of this chapter, Thomaston has separated its stormwater collection infrastructure from the sanitary waste collection system, thereby eliminating the direct discharge of sanitary wastes during high stormwater flows. The Town's stormwater system consists of catch basins and underdrains that collect rainwater and snowmelt and transport it to brooks and other surface waters that eventually discharge to the St. George River. There are more than 40 of these systems in the village area ranging from a single catch basin that is piped to an outlet to systems with dozens of catch basins and hundreds of feet of pipe. Most of the catch basins have a grate which stops large items from

entering, but there is no water quality monitoring of the storm drains.

3. Protection of Recharge Areas

The Maine Geological Survey has not mapped any significant sand and gravel aquifers¹ or bed-rock aquifers in Thomaston. Much of the developed area of Thomaston is served by *Maine Water*, whose surface supplies are located in Rockport.

While there are no significant aquifers in Thomaston from a yield perspective, residences and other entities located outside the area served by *Maine Water* have individual private wells that draw water from sand and gravel deposits or bed-rock fractures. These wells are afforded some protection by public health and environmental laws which set design and installation standards for various types of facilities. For example, state laws set the minimum distance which must be maintained between a drinking water well and potential sources of contamination such as subsurface wastewater disposal systems (i.e. septic tanks and leachfields) and aboveground and underground petroleum storage tanks. Improper installation or maintenance of these facilities is a significant cause statewide of contamination of individual wells.

Fresh surface water resources in Thomaston are very limited and are not utilized as domestic water supplies. The quality of these waters for wildlife and aquatic life, and marine resources is afforded some protection through municipal shoreland zoning and land use ordinances and State environmental laws such as the Natural Resources Protection Act, Site Location of Development Law, and the Stormwater Management Law which regulate certain types of development.

¹A significant sand and gravel aquifer means a porous formation of ice-contact and glacial outwash sand and gravel that contains significant recoverable quantities of water likely to provide drinking water supplies. Moderate to good are expected to yield 10 or more gallons per minute but less than 50 gallons per minute. High yield greater than 50 gallons per minute.

4. Best Management Practices

Thomaston has a comprehensive Land Use and Development Ordinance that regulates, among other things, activities in shoreland areas and resource protection districts, requiring best management practices in both. The Town's public works personnel and contractors are required to use best management practices to protect water resources. The Town should provide periodic training for public works personnel in construction and maintenance of roads and associated ditches, culverts, water turnouts, and other stormwater management and runoff control structures.

5. Efforts to Promote Water Resource Protection

Thomaston has worked cooperatively with neighboring communities, State agencies, and non-profit organizations to protect water resources with a focus on the St. George River. See **Chapter 3: Our Environment: Natural Resources** for a discussion of the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Committee, which manages the shellfish resources of the St. George River through an interlocal agreement. The Town is also a member of the Tidelands Coalition, whose mission focuses on protection of the intertidal area, and partners with the Georges River Land Trust on projects to protect water quality and habitat of the St. George River. Additionally, there may be opportunities to work with the Maine Coastal Observing Alliance (which includes citizen groups from Casco Bay to Rockport) on monitoring of the water quality in the St. George River estuary.

C. Conditions and Trends/Inventory

1. Surface Water Resources

Drinking Water Supplies

The built-up section of town is served by *Maine Water* from surface water sources (Mirror Lake, Grassy Pond, and Thorndike Brook) located in Rockport. Private groundwater wells set in sand

and gravel deposits or bedrock provide potable water for the portions of town not served by *Maine Water*. See Ground Water Resources below for a discussion of potential threats to private water supplies.

Surface Waters

Surface water resources in Thomaston include portions of six named watercourses and their associated wetlands: the St. George, Oyster, and Mill Rivers and Marsh, Meadow, and Branch Brooks. See **Map 2-1: Thomaston Rivers and Streams**. Significant characteristics of these surface water resources are summarized in **Table 2-1**.² Threats to the quality of these surface water resources are discussed in Section C(3).

St. George River

The St. George River is the most significant waterbody in Thomaston. After leaving its headwaters at Lake St. George in Liberty, the St. George River flows through portions of the following towns: Liberty, Montville, Searsmont, Appleton, Union, Warren, Thomaston, Cushing, South Thomaston, and St. George. Along its course, it flows through seven ponds and receives waters from several tributaries before reaching Thomaston. Above Route 90 in Warren, the river is Class B. (Head of tide is located in Warren near the Main St. bridge.)

Throughout Thomaston, the river is tidal and is generally bounded by steep shorelines. Coastal bluff mapping south of Route 1 by the Maine Geological Survey (Open-File No. 00-94, 2000) indicates a 0.1 mile segment of “highly unstable” salt marsh shoreline along the St. George River approximately 2200 feet downstream of Route 1. There are also seven locations with “unstable” bluff totaling 0.7 miles of shoreline along the St. George River. These unstable areas may be natural

sources of sediment (and potentially nutrients) to the river.

After passing under the Wadsworth Street bridge, the river widens into a protected harbor. After receiving the waters of the Mill River, the St. George turns southwest and flows nearly twelve miles as a navigable and deepening estuary before opening into Muscongus Bay. The St. George River estuary contains over 2000 acres of clam flats.³ The tidal portions of the river are Class SB.

The St. George River Estuary from the Route 1 crossing in Thomaston to head of tide in Warren is one of 16 watersheds on DEP’s 2017 Non-Point Source Impaired Marine Waters Priority List. The Weskeag River in South Thomaston is also on the list.⁴

Both the St. George River and the Weskeag River and their associated wetlands have high ecological value. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has designated three areas as Focus Areas of Statewide Ecologic Significance: the St. George River and Associated Ponds Focus Area (north and west of Thomaston) and the Lower St. George River Focus Area and Weskeag Creek Focus Area (portions of which are located in Thomaston). The natural resource values of these areas are discussed in **Chapter 3: Our Environment: Natural Resources**.

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection’s 2016 Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report states that the St. George River, which was last sampled by the DEP in 2012, is impaired for marine life due to low dissolved oxygen levels that persist throughout the estuary and that more data and source determinations are required. The report also notes that the St. George River and its tributaries in Cushing, Warren, Thomaston, South Thomaston, and St. George show elevated levels

³ MCOA Estuarine Monitoring Program, Summary Report 2014.

⁴ The purpose of the Non-Point Source (NPS) Priority Watersheds List is to encourage NPS abatement work in watersheds most vulnerable to NPS pollution. The list is used to help prioritize DEP’s water pollution control efforts and encourage local communities to act to restore and protect waters.

² See **Chapter 3: Our Environment: Natural Resources** for discussion of coastal and freshwater wetland resources.

Table 2-1: Surface Waters and Associated Wetland Resources

Waterbody	Significant Characteristics
St. George River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headwaters: St. George Lake, Liberty • Class B* above Route 90 in Warren • Tidal throughout Thomaston, Class SB** • Bank slopes in Thomaston range from 10-35% • Maine Geological Survey has mapped one area of highly unstable coastal bluff on the east side of the river south of Route One, Open File No. 02-218 (2002) • The St. George River from the Route One crossing to head of tide is listed on DEP's 2017 Non-Point Source Impaired Marine Waters Priority List. • Lower St. George River Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance, (State of Maine Beginning with Habitat Program) • Shellfish growing area: economically important shellfish (clam) and marine worm resource • Significant wildlife habitat: tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitat, shorebird habitat, salt-hay salt-marsh natural community • Invasive species: green crab
Oyster River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headwaters: Mirror Lake • Class B to tidewater • Primarily tidal in Thomaston, Class SB • Generally steep banks • Significant wildlife habitat: tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitat, salt-hay salt marsh natural community
Mill River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formed at confluence of Branch Brook and Meadow Brook • Class B to tidewater • Tidal south of Route One, Class SB • Bank slopes range from 10 – 30% • Segment south of Route One included in Lower St. George River Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance • Significant wildlife habitat: tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitat
Branch Brook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drains land west of Benner Hill in Rockland, including Rockland Bog. • Tributary to Mill River • Class B • Significant wildlife habitat: inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat
Meadow Brook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headwaters: Chickawaukie Lake • Class B • Significant wildlife habitat: inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat • Presence of rare botanical feature: <i>Carex atherodes</i> (awned sedge)
Marsh Brook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drains large wetland area including portions of Rockland, Thomaston, So Thomaston and Owls Head; flows into Weskeag River (a Non-Point Source Priority Coastal Watershed and Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance). • Class B to confluence with the Weskeag • Significant wildlife habitat: Inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat • R. Waldo Tyler Wildlife Management Area borders (and partially located within) Thomaston in vicinity of Marsh Brook and Weskeag Creek.

Table continued next page

Waterbody	Significant Characteristics
Weskeag Creek / Weskeag River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portions of Thomaston are located within the watershed of the Weskeag River. • Weskeag River: Class SB • DEP's 2017 Non-Point Source Impaired Marine Waters Priority List. • Weskeag Creek, designated Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance, (State of Maine Beginning with Habitat Program). • Significant wildlife habitat: inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat; shorebird nesting, feeding, and staging area; tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitat; deer wintering areas • Rare and exemplary natural communities: brackish tidal marsh natural community, mixed salt marsh natural community, salt-hay salt-marsh natural community, tidal marsh estuary ecosystem • Rare animal: Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow • R. Waldo Tyler Wildlife Management Area (682 acres) borders Thomaston in vicinity of Marsh Brook and Weskeag Creek.

***Class "B"** waters "must be of such quality that they are suitable for the designated uses of drinking water supply after treatment; fishing; agriculture; recreation in and on the water; industrial process and cooling water supply; hydroelectric power generation...; and navigation; and as habitat for fish and other aquatic life. The habitat shall be characterized as unimpaired." Discharges "may not cause adverse impact to aquatic life in that the receiving waters must be of sufficient quality to support all aquatic species indigenous to the receiving water without detrimental changes in the resident biological community." The classification also sets standards for dissolved oxygen content and Escherichia coli bacteria. [38 M.R.S. section 465]

****Class "SB"** waters "must be of such quality that they are suitable for the designated uses of recreation in and on the water, fishing, aquaculture, propagation and harvesting of shellfish, industrial process and cooling water supply, hydroelectric power generation, navigation and as a habitat for fish and other estuarine and marine life. The habitat must be characterized as unimpaired... The dissolved oxygen content of SB waters may not be less than 85% saturation." The classification also sets standards for enterococcus bacteria. "Discharges to these waters must be of sufficient quality to support all estuarine and marine species indigenous to the receiving water without detrimental changes in the resident biological community. "There may be no new discharge to Class SB waters that would cause closure of open shellfish areas by the Department of Marine Resources..." [38 M.R.S. section 465-B]

of fecal coliform bacteria leading to restrictions on shellfish harvesting.

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) works with the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) to monitor compliance with water quality standards and shellfish harvesting limitations. Efforts to locate the source(s) of the high fecal coliform counts are costly; however, analyses conducted to date indicate that they may be attributable in part to wildlife such as beaver rather than to human activity, complicating efforts to improve water quality and open additional areas to harvesting.

In addition to state agencies, the Georges River Tidewater Association (GRTA) previously conducted water quality monitoring of the St. George River, but has since disbanded. In 2014, GRTA conducted water quality monitoring in conjunction with the Maine Coastal Observing

Alliance (MCOA) for the following parameters: water transparency, total nitrogen, dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, and salinity. Although data was limited, the results of the 2014 monitoring found that dissolved oxygen levels in the St. George River estuary were below DEP's 85% saturation standard for Class SB waters on multiple occasions.

2. Summary of Past and Present Activities to Assess, Monitor, and Improve Water Quality

According to Maine DEP, the main causes of water quality impairment in estuaries and coastal waters are: elevated bacterial counts (fecal coliform is an indicator), low dissolved oxygen, elevated nutrients, tidal flow alteration, and elevated toxics (e.g. PCBs, dioxins, and mercury) concentrations. Nutrient sources in developed areas along the coast include freshwater inflows

carrying treated and untreated wastewater and stormwater runoff.⁵

Mudflats, such as those associated with the St. George River, are particularly susceptible to pollution from coastal development, agricultural runoff, and industrial activity because they are depositional environments where organic pollutants and metals can accumulate. Past and present activities to monitor, assess, and improve water quality and mitigate sources of pollution include the following:

Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs)

Thomaston has eliminated all combined sewer overflows. CSOs occur during storm events when mixtures of wastewater and stormwater runoff overflow a combined sewer collection system before receiving treatment at a licensed facility. In 1991 Thomaston began a sewer replacement program to reduce the amount of stormwater and groundwater flow to the sanitary sewer system in an effort to eliminate untreated discharges of wastewater to the St. George River during high flows associated with storm events. By 1997 the town had separated its stormwater and sanitary wastewater collection systems thereby eliminating all CSO's.

Stormwater and Non-Point Source Pollution

While Thomaston has eliminated all combined sewer overflows, leading to significant improvements in the water quality of the St. George River, stormwater continues to be discharged to surface waters throughout Town. Stormwater drains consist of catch basins and underdrains that collect rainwater and snowmelt and transport it to brooks and other surface waters. There are more than 40 of these systems in the village area, ranging from a single catch basin that is piped to an outlet to systems with dozens of catch basins and

hundreds of feet of pipe. There is no water quality monitoring of the storm drains.⁶

Significant stormwater drainage areas or swales are located in the following areas: one west of Route 131 draining to the Oyster River; two west of Ridgeview Drive draining to the St. George River; one draining the area east of Booker Street, crossing Route One near the Mall, and discharging to the St. George between Wadsworth and Green Streets; three between Green, Fluker, and Thatcher Streets discharging to the Mill River; and three in Brooklyn Heights draining to the St. George River.

In addition to stormwater discharges, there are numerous so-called clean water drains that outlet to surface waters throughout Town. When the new wastewater lines were installed, the old sewer lines were left in place and continued to receive clean water from sump pumps, cellar drains, roof drains and other similar sources of clean water. These lines run to the nearest brook or river. There are 11 of these systems in the village area serving more than 500 houses. The larger systems are monitored by the Town's Pollution Control Department several times each summer for bacteria. If evidence of contamination is detected, the Town investigates and problems are corrected.

Municipal Wastewater Treatment

Thomaston's municipal wastewater treatment plant, located north of Route 1, is a lagoon/spray irrigation system that discharges treated wastewater to the St. George River only during the winter months of January, February, and March. The move to a lagoon/spray irrigation treatment method is responsible, in part, for the opening of the area's clam flats to depuration harvesting. Thomaston is currently exploring options for land disposal of treated wastewater effluent during the winter months through the creation of ice

⁵Information from "State of Maine DEP 2016 Integrated Water Quality Monitoring an Assessment Report.

⁶Communication from John Fancy March 4, 2019.

piles that gradually melt in the spring discharging effluent to area soils. The Town is also exploring the option of discharging treated wastewater to a created wetland. If licensed by the Maine DEP, it has the potential to eliminate the current seasonal discharge to the St. George River.⁷

In addition to improvements within Thomaston, a wastewater treatment plant was constructed in South Warren in 1991. It serves the village area of Warren, the Bolduc Correctional Facility, and the Maine State Prison. This facility discharges treated wastewater to the St. George River approximately one-half mile downriver of the railroad trestle adjacent to Route 1.

Discharges from these licensed facilities are monitored for multiple water quality parameters to ensure compliance with license requirements. The surface water discharge to the St. George River from the Thomaston facility is monitored for the following parameters: biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), total suspended solids (TSS), settleable solids, fecal coliform bacteria, total residual chlorine (TRC), pH, mercury, and whole effluent toxicity (WET). The discharge of effluent to the spray irrigation system is monitored for the following parameters: BOD, TSS, nitrate nitrogen, specific conductance, pH, and the following metals: arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, nickel, and zinc. Effluent discharged to the St. George River from the Warren facility is monitored for the following parameters: carbonaceous biochemical oxygen demand, dissolved oxygen, TSS, settleable solids, fecal coliform bacteria, pH, mercury, and total nitrogen. See **Table 2-2** for information on the capacity and compliance status of these facilities as of 2018.

The Warren facility is on DEP's 2016 list of Wastewater Facilities Projected Upgrade Needs,

with an estimated need of \$296,287 for sewer replacement or rehabilitation.⁸

Overboard Discharges

Overboard Discharges (OBDs) are small non-municipal discharges of sanitary wastewater to the waters of the state. In 1987, the state passed a law to prohibit new OBDs or expansions of existing OBDs, and provided incentives for removal of such discharges. One goal of the program was to reclaim closed shellfish areas. As of January 2018, Maine DEP lists only one (1) remaining approved overboard discharge of sanitary wastewater to surface waters in Thomaston. It is a 300 gallon per day discharge that is treated with a sand filter prior to discharge to the Oyster River. It is licensed through 2022.⁹ Other approved OBD's in the area: Warren 1 (also treated with a sand filter prior to discharge to the Oyster River), South Thomaston 4 (discharge to Westkeag River), Cushing 0, St. George 19 (only one of which discharges treated wastewater to the St. George River).

3. Additional Threats to Surface Waters

In addition to potential sources of contamination, water resources are threatened by changes in temperature and acidity associated with global climate change as well as invasive species, whose distribution may be associated in part with warming waters.

Climate Change

Gulf of Maine waters are warming. The Gulf of Maine Research Institute has reported that between 2004 and 2016 the Gulf of Maine has warmed more rapidly than 99% of the global ocean with implications for commercial fisheries and changes in species composition. Additionally, ocean waters

⁷Communication from John Fancy, November 27, 2018.

⁸Information from "State of Maine DEP 2016 Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report"

⁹Maine DEP, Status of Licensed Discharges, Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, 128th Legislature, First Session, June 2017.

Table 2-2: Municipal Wastewater Treatment Facilities

Facility	DEP License #	Licensed Capacity	Type of Discharge	Status
Town of Thomaston	W-002643 ME0100668	0.900 MGD	Spray irrigation, seasonal surface water discharge to St. George River	Substantial compliance*
Warren Sanitary District	W-007023 ME0102253	0.244 MGD	Surface water discharge to St. George River	Substantial compliance

*Substantial compliance. A facility is deemed to be in substantial compliance if any excursions from the license requirements are deemed to be minor and not reflective of facility design or operational deficiencies.

are becoming more acidic as they absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. More acidic waters have the potential to adversely impact shellfish, such as softshell clams and mussels.

Invasive Species

In addition to pollutants and warming waters, the shellfish resource of the St. George River is threatened by an invasive species, the green crab. See **Chapter 5: Our Rivers and Harbor** for a discussion of this issue. Invasive plant species such as purple loosestrife and the common reed (Phragmites) are potential threats to the rare plant species and natural communities associated with wetland areas of Marsh, Meadow, and Branch Brooks as well as the Weskeag Creek Focus Area. See **Chapter 3: Our Environment: Natural Resources** for a discussion of this issue.

4. GroundWater Resources

The Maine Geological Survey has not mapped any significant sand and gravel aquifers or bedrock aquifers in Thomaston. However, groundwater is a critical source of potable water for properties located beyond the area served by *Maine Water*. Groundwater should be protected from contamination so that it can continue to serve existing development and provide a source of potable water for future small-scale development in areas not served by the public water supply.

Private Wells

Properties outside the area served by *Maine Water* rely upon private wells. In 1990, 144 households (12.2%) were served by individual wells. Based on Town 2018 property assessment records, there are 1030 residential structures in Thomaston of which 238 (23.1%) have a private water supply, presumably drilled or dug wells reflective of increased development outside the Town center.

There is very limited data on groundwater quality in Thomaston. The Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Environmental Health Tracking Program maintains a database of analyses performed on individual wells that were voluntarily tested by homeowners. The limited data from individual homeowner wells in Thomaston has shown the presence in some of those wells of arsenic and/or uranium at levels above the maximum exposure guidelines for these elements. Arsenic is found in well water throughout the State and can be naturally occurring. Uranium is also naturally occurring in areas with granitic bedrock. Residential well water is commonly tested for nitrate and nitrites, which may indicate contamination from septic systems. Samples taken from wells in Thomaston have not shown levels of these nutrients above health based standards.

Potential Threats to Groundwater Quality

Many of the potential threats to groundwater quality have been significantly reduced by the

adoption and implementation of environmental programs at the State level designed to protect water quality. Potential sources of groundwater contamination in Maine attributable to human activity generally include the following: disposal activities such as landfills and septic systems; leaking product storage facilities; nutrient runoff from agricultural activity; and sites contaminated by hazardous materials spills, winter salt applications, and previously unregulated activities.¹⁰ The status of potential sources of groundwater contamination in Thomaston that may pose a risk to private wells is summarized below.

City of Rockland Solid Waste Disposal Area/Quarry Landfill

The landfill is located in a 7.5 acre abandoned limestone quarry off Old County Road. It has been used for the disposal of solid waste since at least the 1930's. The landfill is being closed. Rockland is required to submit a landfill closure plan to the DEP by December 31, 2021, and complete final cover by December 31, 2024.¹¹ Groundwater contamination from leachate is present at the landfill and in the immediate vicinity, and the site is being monitored for any migration of contaminants from the site.

Aboveground Storage Tanks (ASTs)

Individual aboveground tanks for the storage of home heating oil, gasoline, or kerosene (if improperly installed or maintained) are potential sources of residential well contamination in areas not served by public water. Maine averages over one heating oil spill per day from ASTs at single family residences.¹² Many of these spills occur during the winter months as a result of falling snow and ice.

¹⁰State of Maine DEP 2016 Integrated Water Quality Monitoring an Assessment Report."

¹¹City of Rockland, Solid Waste Landfill (Quarry 2) Compliance Schedule, DEP license #S-006206-WD-C-R, June 2017.

¹²"State of Maine DEP 2016 Integrated Water Quality Monitoring an Assessment Report."

Underground Storage Tanks (USTs)

In 1985 the Legislature enacted a law regulating the handling and storage of oil in underground facilities. This law required registration of all underground oil storage tanks and established a schedule for the removal of tanks that did not meet standards. The DEP's database indicates that 97 USTs have been removed in Thomaston and 5 have been properly abandoned in place since enactment of the law. As of August 1, 2017, the DEP's underground storage tank database lists only 9 locations with active tanks.¹³ These tanks have been installed in recent years and should be in compliance with current standards. However, there may be additional tanks located throughout town that were installed prior to the law, either abandoned or in use, which have not been documented.

Shallow Injection Wells, Including Floor Drains

The DEP administers an underground injection control program to eliminate direct discharges of contaminants to ground water such as floor drains. The Department's database includes information on 23 locations in Thomaston that were checked by DEP for possible floor drains. As of February 2018, 8 of the 23 locations were found to have no floor drains, 10 locations have floor drains which discharge to the sanitary sewer system, 3 locations have sealed their floor drains, 1 location has a floor drain connected to a holding tank, and one location has a wastewater discharge license. At this time, there are no known direct discharges of contaminants to groundwater in Thomaston via underground injection wells.¹⁴

Septic Systems

Improperly sized, located, installed and/or maintained septic systems as well as malfunctioning systems are a potential source of bacterial,

¹³Maine DEP's Active and Out of Service Registered Underground Storage Tanks Database, August 1, 2017.

¹⁴UIC (Underground Injection Control) Site Report, Town of Thomaston, from Maine DEP, February 6, 2018.

nutrient, and chemical contamination of groundwater¹⁵ and may pose a risk to homeowner wells outside the area served by *Maine Water*.

Municipal Wastewater Treatment Facility

As discussed above, Thomaston's municipal wastewater treatment facility is a spray-irrigation system. Following treatment in the lagoons, wastewater effluent is discharged to five 10.2-acre spray irrigation fields which are located on soils suitable for accepting the effluent. The lagoons have an underdrain system designed to detect any problems with facility treatment or the lagoons, and the area contains wells to monitor groundwater quality.

Dragon Cement: High pH Waters and Wastewaters

Limestone and products of cement manufacture such as cement kiln dust have a high pH and cement kiln dust can contain elevated levels of certain heavy metals. The Department of Environmental Protection issued a solid waste license to Dragon in 2007 requiring the installation of storage pile cover systems and eventual reclamation of the cement kiln dust and waste clinker piles. The license requires surface water and ground water monitoring. High pH leachate from these limestone storage piles is collected and stored at the facility in tanks and lined leachate ponds. Some of the leachate is used in kiln operations at the plant and some is periodically sent to Thomaston's municipal wastewater treatment facility.

Remediation Sites

As of February 2018, the Maine DEP Bureau of Remediation and Waste Management, Remediation Site List includes seven sites in Thomaston¹⁶,

¹⁵“State of Maine DEP 2016 Integrated Water Quality Monitoring an Assessment Report.”

¹⁶Creek Hill on Route 1 (remediated in 1996), former Lyman-Morse building at 29 Water Street (remediated in 2000), former site of the Maine State Prison (remediated in 2005), Yattaw property at 195 New County Road (Route 1) (remediated in 2012), Thomaston wood demolition debris landfill at Anna Belle Lane (closed in 1977, closure procedure unknown), and Mill River Park off Roxbury Street.

six of which have been closed, five of the 6 have on-going post closure obligations. Mill River Park is currently listed as under investigation. The town conducted sampling at the site and submitted an application to DEP for a No Further Action Assurance Letter under the Voluntary Response Action Program (VRAP). A decision on this request is on-hold pending resolution of property ownership questions.¹⁷

Sand-Salt Piles

The town maintains an uncovered sand-salt pile at the Public Works Garage off Erin Street. Given that the surrounding area is served by public water and there are no significant sand and gravel aquifers in the town, the sand-salt pile is ranked by Maine DEP as a low or Priority 5 site.¹⁸ A storage shed is not required.

5. Protection and Preservation Measures

Thomaston has a comprehensive Land Use and Development Ordinance that specifies permitted and conditional uses and dimensional standards for each of the land use districts. The ordinance also specifies General Standards of Performance including Shoreland Standards (Section 715), Environmental (Section 716), and General Performance Standards for Land Subdivisions (Section 728).

Regulation at the local level includes:

Thomaston Land Use and Development Ordinance

Resource Protection District (RP), Section 711 of the Thomaston Land Use and Development Ordinance. The purpose of the Town's RP land use district is to maintain safe and healthful conditions of shoreland areas and other unique geologic and natural feature (wetlands, wildlife, steep slopes, unstable soils) and protect them

¹⁷Communication from John Fancy, November 27, 2018.

¹⁸Sand/Salt Storage Area Site Evaluation Worksheet, Thomaston, from Maine DEP

from development that would disrupt productive habitat systems, degrade water quality, or destroy scenic values. The Ordinance includes Section 715 Shoreland Standards which regulates development of land areas within 250 feet horizontal distance of the normal high water line (NHWL) of any river or saltwater body and the upland edge of coastal and freshwater wetlands; within 75 feet of the NHWL of a stream; and within 15 feet of the center line of stormwater drainage channels.

Municipal Shoreland Zoning

The Town administers the State Municipal Shoreland Zoning Law (38 M.R.S. §435 to §446). The law requires shoreland areas to be subject to zoning and land use controls. Its purpose, as set forth in statute, is to prevent and control water pollution; protect fish spawning grounds, aquatic life, bird and other wildlife habitat; protect buildings and land from flooding and accelerated erosion; protect archeological and historic resources; protect commercial fishing and other maritime industries; protect freshwater and coastal wetlands; control building sites, placement of structures, and other land uses; conserve shore cover and visual as well as actual points of access to inland and coastal waters; conserve natural beauty and open space; and to anticipate and respond to impacts of development in shoreland areas.

Additionally, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection administers a number of State laws, and associated rules, that serve to protect and preserve water resources. Chief among these are the following laws and their associated rules:

Natural Resources Protection Act

(38 M.R.S. §480-A to §480-JJ) regulates activities in, on, or over protected natural resources or adjacent to a coastal wetland, great pond, river, stream, or brook, or significant wildlife habitat contained within a freshwater wetland, and the alteration of freshwater wetlands.

Site Location of Development Act

(38 M.R.S. §484 to §489-E) regulates developments such as subdivisions, that may substantially affect the environment.

Stormwater Management Law

(38 M.R.S. §420-D) requires a permit from the DEP for projects which disturb one acre or more of land.

Water Pollution Control Laws

(38 M.R.S. §411 to §424-B) require, among other things, a license for the direct or indirect discharge of pollutants to the waters of the state.

Oil Storage Facilities and Ground Water Protection Law

(38 M.R.S. §561 to §570-M) regulates the storage of oil in aboveground and underground storage facilities.

Maine Hazardous Waste, Septage and Solid Waste Management Act

(38 M.R.S. §1302 to §1319-Y) regulates, among other things, the collection, recycling, processing, beneficial use, and disposal of solid, special, and hazardous wastes.

Maine Uncontrolled Hazardous Substance Site Law

(38 M.R.S. §1361 to §1371) provides for the remediation of sites contaminated by hazardous substances.

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Environmental Health regulates subsurface waste water disposal systems including residential septic systems pursuant to 42 M.R.S. §42 et seq.. The agency also administers the drinking water program, which monitors public water supplies. The agency's Environmental Health testing laboratory provides water quality testing services for a fee.

D. Policies

- 1 Protect current and potential drinking water sources.
- 2 Protect significant surface water resources from pollution and improve water quality where needed.
- 3 Protect water resources in growth areas while promoting more intensive development in those areas.
- 4 Minimize pollution discharges through the upgrade of existing public sewer systems and wastewater treatment facilities.
- 5 Cooperate with neighboring communities and regional/local advocacy groups to protect water resources.
- 6 Restore and maintain the quality of fresh, marine, and estuarine waters to allow for the broadest possible diversity of public and private uses.

E. Implementation Strategies

- 1 Continue efforts to eliminate the Town's seasonal discharge of wastewater to the St. George River.
- 2 Work with DEP, DMR, landowners, neighboring towns, and non-profits to monitor the water quality of the St. George River, and to identify and eliminate sources of non-point source pollution. Periodically monitor existing stormwater discharge points. Consider development of a watershed management plan for the St. George River.
- 3 Periodically review and update the Town's Land Use and Development Ordinance to incorporate stormwater performance standards consistent with Maine's Stormwater Management Law and Stormwater regulations.

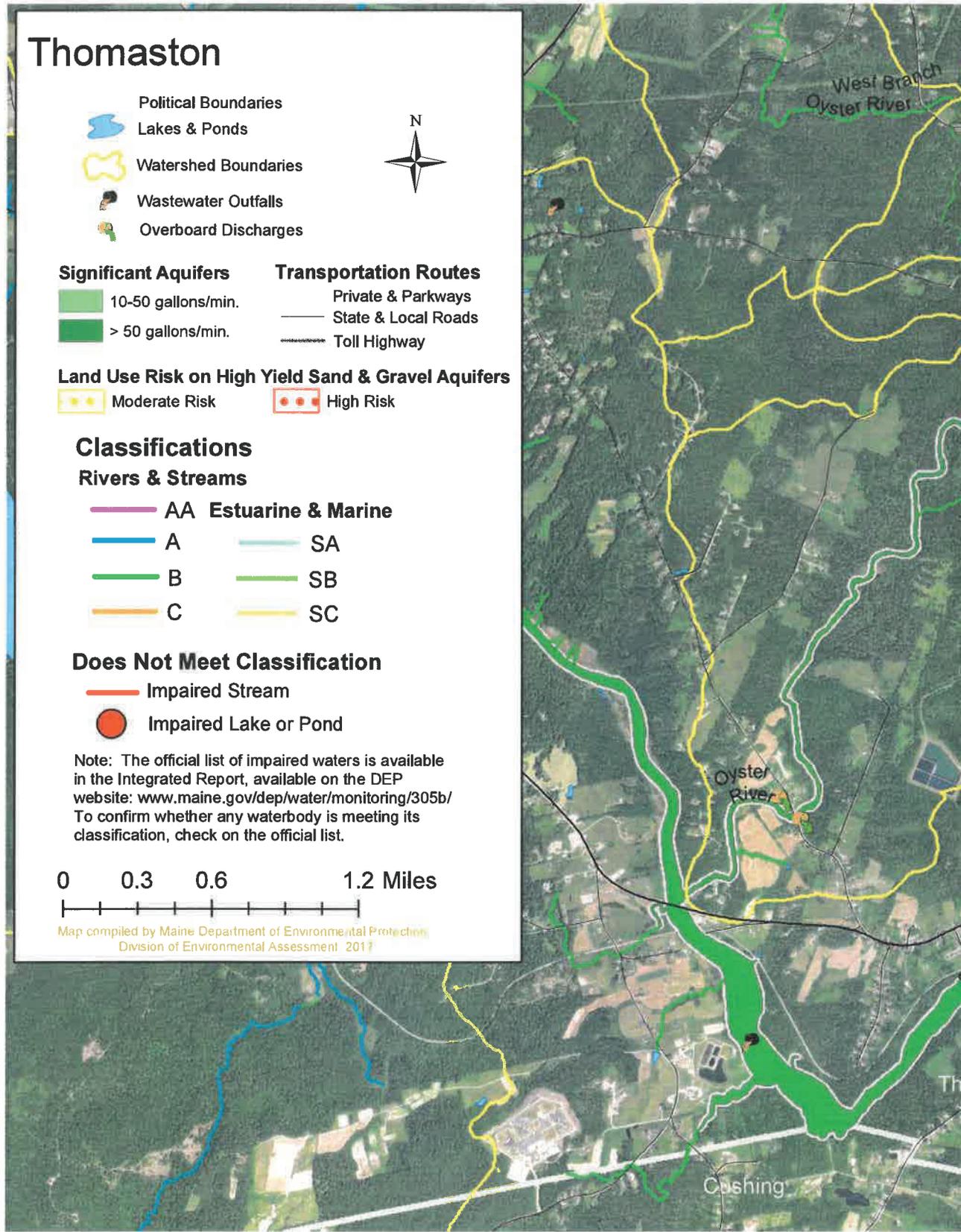
- 4 Take steps through permit conditions and follow-up inspections to ensure that developments maintain stormwater management structures in good working order and that required vegetative buffers between developed areas and surface waters and wetlands are maintained and not eroded or encroached upon over time by site use.
- 5 For proposed developments with extensive impervious areas, explore, through Site Plan Review, options such as reduced or shared parking areas and the use of permeable pavement in critical areas to facilitate infiltration of groundwater and minimize runoff to surface waters and wetlands.
- 6 Review the Town's existing ordinance governing clustered residential development to determine how it might be revised to encourage its use and enhance protection of critical and important natural resources.
- 7 Continue to protect minor watercourses and drainage swales from development to ensure that they continue to function as part of the Town's stormwater management system and do not contribute to sedimentation of surface waters.
- 8 Ensure that Town ordinances governing Roads and Driveways and Street Design Standards are enforced. Provide periodic training for public works personnel involved in road maintenance.
- 9 Provide information to homeowners, businesses, and other landowners on the importance of minimizing use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers; properly disposing of waste products; and protecting water supply wells from contamination.
- 10 Add an "environmental tips and resources" tab to the Town's webpage.

Note: State strategies pertaining to phosphorus loading in lake/pond watersheds, urban impaired streams, and protection of public wellhead and

aquifer recharge areas are not applicable, as Thomaston does not have these resources.



Map 2-1: Thomaston Rivers and Streams





Our Environment: Natural Resources



Introduction

This chapter provides background information on Thomaston's physical location and climate, and examines the natural resources associated with upland areas, wetlands, and waterbodies. Water quality issues are addressed in **Chapter 2: Our Environment: Water Resources**. Fisheries associated with the St. George River are discussed in **Chapter 5: Our Rivers and Harbor**. See **Chapter 4: Our Environment: Agricultural, Forest, and Mineral Resources** for a discussion of the natural resource values associated with these land uses.

Major Findings

Thomaston's most significant natural and scenic resources are its waterbodies and their associated wetlands and the large habitat blocks that merge

with other large blocks of undeveloped land in Warren and Rockland. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has identified two areas that are partially located in Thomaston as Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance – the Lower St. George River Focus Area and the Weskeag Creek Focus Area – as priorities for conservation efforts because of the presence of rare plants, animals, and/or natural communities and their habitat value. The greatest threats to natural resources are non-point source pollution, development resulting in loss of habitat, habitat fragmentation, invasive species, and climate change.

A. State Goal

To protect the State's critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife

and fisheries habitat, sand dunes, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas.

B. Analysis

1. Threats to Critical Natural Resources

State guidance for municipal comprehensive plans (Chapter 208) defines critical natural resources as those resources which, under federal and/or state law, warrant protection from the negative impacts of development. These include, but are not limited to, wetlands of special significance; significant wildlife habitat such as deer wintering areas and waterfowl and wading bird habitat; habitat of threatened, endangered, and special-concern animal species; critically imperiled, imperiled, or rare natural communities; and areas containing threatened or endangered plant species.

Threats to critical natural resources in Thomaston are similar to those faced by other communities throughout the State and include non-point source pollution, loss of habitat due to development, habitat fragmentation, spread of invasive species, disturbance of sensitive species during critical life stages, and climate change. These factors, with specific reference to Thomaston, are discussed below.

Non-Point Source Pollution

Stormwater and associated sedimentation, nutrient enrichment, and chemical contamination from herbicides, pesticides and other products pose a risk to surface water quality and aquatic life. The St. George River is on Maine DEP's 2017 Non-Point Source Impaired Marine Waters Priority List. See the discussion of this issue in **Chapter 2: Our Environment: Water Resources**.

Loss of Habitat Due to Development

Development in the highway commercial and industrial districts east of the cement plant could pose a threat to Marsh Brook and Weskeag Creek Focus Area if not done carefully and in strict compliance with State standards and municipal

ordinances. In addition to erosion and sedimentation, soil disturbance can increase opportunity for colonization by invasive species, such as purple loosestrife and the common reed (*Phragmites*). *Phragmites* has begun to invade disturbed soils in the vicinity of the solid waste transfer station on Buttermilk Drive.

Habitat Fragmentation / Road-Stream Crossings

Thomaston contains a number of large tracts of land, particularly north of Route 1, that are not transected by roads or other development. These large habitat blocks contain a variety of microhabitats and support a diversity of wildlife. Habitat connectivity can be threatened by road crossings, which impede wildlife movement and increase mortality. Improperly sized culverts and other stream crossing structures can impede movement of fish and aquatic invertebrates. Effective water crossings include bridges and open bottom arches and culverts that span and are sunk into the streambed.

The Maine Department of Transportation replaced culverts on Buttermilk Lane in 2003 to increase tidal flow in the Weskeag Creek area. The USFWS Gulf of Maine Coastal Program (maps dated October 2016) identified additional road-stream crossings that may have been impeding wildlife movement including:

- Two barriers at the Thomaston – Rockland town line which separate wetland areas north and south of Route 1;
- Two barriers on Buttermilk Lane (now Buttermilk Drive) in the vicinity of the transfer station which separate wetland areas west and east of the road;
- A potential barrier at outer Beechwood St. at the crossing of the East Branch of the Oyster River;
- A possible/unknown barrier on Route 131 at the town line with South Thomaston; and

- A possible/unknown barrier on Thomaston Street at the municipal line with Rockland (Marsh Brook).

With respect to the last of these, any problems with the Thomaston Street crossing of Marsh Brook appear to have been resolved. This crossing consists of an open bottom arch that allows unrestricted movement of water and wildlife. A cursory inspection of the wetland areas bordering Route 1 at the Thomaston-Rockland town line and the wetland areas bordering Buttermilk Drive in the vicinity of the transfer station indicate potential problems with connectivity, sedimentation, and spread of invasive species. The crossings of the East Branch of the Oyster River and the culvert on Route 131 at the Thomaston-South Thomaston town line consist of perched culverts, which should be replaced as resources allow.

The Town has also identified a culvert on West Meadow Road at Branch Brook in need of replacement. In addition to addressing structural deficiency and safety concerns, the Town intends to replace the culvert with one that will increase habitat quality by matching the stream grade. It would also be sized to accommodate a 100-year flood to increase climate resiliency.¹

Invasive Species

The softshell clam fishery in the St. George River estuary is being adversely affected by the invasive green crab. See **Chapter 5: Our Rivers and Harbor** for a discussion of this issue.

In an effort to control the spread of invasive plants, the State has prohibited the sale of 33 terrestrial plant species effective January 1, 2018. These non-native plants often crowd out native vegetation and simplify habitats. Many of the plants on this list are commonly found throughout Thomaston including, but not limited to, Norway maple, Bishop's weed (goutweed),

Japanese barberry, burning bush, Japanese knotweed, common privet, several species of honeysuckle, multiflora rose, purple loosestrife, and black locust. Ornamental jewelweed has begun to invade many wet-soil areas in town. In addition to invasive plants that were historically sold for gardens and landscaping, other inadvertently introduced species such as Phragmites can invade sensitive areas, outcompete native vegetation, and adversely impact wildlife habitat.

Disturbance of Sensitive Species

The mudflats on the east side of the St. George River below Brooklyn Heights and extending to and including Hyler Cove in Cushing as well as the Weskeag River Focus Area have high value as staging, feeding, and roosting area for migrating shorebirds. Shorebird feeding areas must have high concentrations of invertebrates, low disturbance, and be free of contaminants. Clam and baitworm harvesting decrease the population of invertebrates available for shorebirds, and disturbance of the substrate makes it more difficult for shorebirds to locate invertebrates.² Migrating shorebirds must double their body weight in a short period of time to acquire the fat reserves needed to sustain their migration. Because shorebirds exhibit a high fidelity to site and do not readily locate to new areas if disturbed, disturbance by small watercraft users poses a potential threat to shorebirds. Clam and baitworm harvesters as well as recreational boaters should be encouraged to avoid disturbing migrating shorebirds.

Climate Change

Tidal marshes and cold water fisheries are among the habitats in Maine most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.³ Climate change will affect the distribution of biota, including

²Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, information on migratory shorebird use of the Maine coast.

³Maine's Wildlife Action Plan, September 2015, Element 2: Key Habitats and Natural Communities

¹2017-2018 Annual Report, Town of Thomaston.

terrestrial and aquatic plant and animal species as well as marine life and commercial fisheries. Additionally, the associated rise in sea level will cause coastal habitats to migrate landward, making it important to conserve low-lying undeveloped adjacent lands where coastal marshes and other intertidal natural communities can migrate inland with sea level rise.

2. Protection Measures – Shoreland Zoning

Thomaston’s Land Use and Development Ordinance, Resource Protection (RP) District (Section 711 of Ordinance) is intended to protect “shoreland areas and other lands of unique geologic and natural features, especially those that include wetlands, wildlife habitats, steep slopes and unstable soils. The purpose of the district is to maintain the safe and healthful conditions of these lands and protect them from development that would disrupt productive habitat systems, degrade water quality, or destroy scenic value.”

Consistent with Maine Shoreland Zoning Guidelines (06-096 C.M.R., Chapter 1000), lands in Thomaston zoned RP include:

- Areas within 250 feet horizontal distance of the normal high-water line of tidal waters, of the upland edge of salt marshes and salt meadows, and of freshwater wetlands associated with rivers; and wetlands that are rated “moderate” or “high” value waterfowl and wading bird habitat, including nesting and feeding areas, by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.
- Floodplains along rivers defined by the 100-year floodplain as designated on the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map effective July 7, 2016, except for areas within the Shoreland Commercial District.
- Areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres with sustained slopes of 20% or

greater, except for human excavated slopes.

- Areas of two (2) or more contiguous acres supporting wetland vegetation and hydric soils.
- Land areas along rivers subject to severe bank erosion, undercutting, or riverbed movement and lands adjacent to tidal waters that are subject to severe erosion or mass movement, such as steep coastal bluffs.
- The area within all wetlands greater than 2 acres in size shown on the Official Zoning Map, Identified from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife National Wetlands Inventory Maps.
- Area within 75 feet horizontal distance of the NHWL of streams and within 15 feet of the center line of stormwater drainage ditches.

Permitted uses in the RP District are limited to essential services, mineral exploration, outdoor conservation and recreational uses not for profit, and soil and water conservation practices and structures designed to stabilize natural or man-made conditions as part of a Wildlife Management Plan approved by state or county soil/water district. Conditional uses are limited and subject to Planning Board approval.⁴ The Ordinance also includes General Standards of Performance for the Shoreland (Section 715 of the Ordinance) including, but not limited to, provisions

⁴Conditional uses include: Accessory structure and accessory use subordinate to principal structure; Home occupation; keeping and raising horses including horse boarding facility; non-residential structure less than 100 square feet for educational, scientific or nature interpretation purpose; public facility; public open space and recreational uses; raising small animals; road and driveway construction, except to provide access to permitting uses or where no reasonable alternative route or location exists outside the RP district; single family dwelling (excluding manufactured/mobile home; allowed only under the Special Exception provisions of 711.4); and wharfs, piers, launching facility, and bulkheads.

governing setback of structures, elevation of the lowest floor, percentage of non-vegetated surfaces, lot coverage, soils, and effects on fisheries.

The neighboring communities of Rockland, South Thomaston, and Warren specify resource protection areas consistent with Maine Shoreland Zoning Guidelines. Additionally, Rockland has zoned the area south of Thomaston Street adjacent to Marsh Brook and the headwaters of the Weskeag River as a Woodland and Wildlife Zone offering substantial protection to this Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance. Authorized activities are limited to “(1) Planting, pruning and harvesting forest trees” and “(2) Enjoyment of outdoor recreational activities such as authorized hunting, fishing, birdwatching, snowmobiling, skating, skiing, snowshoeing, and the like.”

3. Other Measures to Protect Natural Resources

Additional measures that may be employed to enhance protection of natural resources include creation of a greenway, educational outreach, collaboration with non-profit organizations, and land preservation.

Creation of a Greenway

The creation of an interconnected greenway through Town linking public parks and other public spaces has the potential to protect critical and important natural resources, maintain wildlife travel corridors, and enhance visual and physical access to the shore. It would also have the benefit of helping to preserve the rural and scenic entrances to Town and would create additional low-impact recreational opportunities. The addition of informational signage at appropriate locations (perhaps similar to that at Thomaston Green, but of a scale appropriate to each location) could increase public knowledge of, and appreciation for, the importance of protecting these natural resources.

Educational Outreach

The Town can play a role in educating homeowners and developers regarding the environmental benefits of various land use practices such as maintaining vegetative buffers and stormwater structures in riparian and other shoreland areas; minimizing the use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers; landscaping with native plant species; and maintaining shade trees. This information could be made readily available in an engaging format on the Town’s webpage.

Collaboration with Non-Profit Organizations

Georges River Land Trust, with offices in Rockland, works with communities along the St. George River to preserve habitat, create recreational opportunities, and educate people of all ages on the value of our natural resources.⁵ Significant initiatives in the Thomaston area include: *Connecting Community to Town Forests* – a collaborative effort with the Thomaston Conservation Commission to create a bike trail in the Town Forest; acquisition of the Jack Baker Woods Preserve on outer Beechwood Street in Thomaston; acquisition of the Riverside Hayfield Preserve off Route 131 in South Thomaston protecting land between the Weskeag and St. George Rivers; and development of the Georges River Highland Path, portions of which traverse Thomaston.

Land Preservation

The Weskeag Creek Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance is protected in part by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife’s 682-acre R. Waldo Tyler Wildlife Management Area. However, potential threats to this area exist in the commercial and industrial areas in the east end of town along Route 1 and adjacent areas in Rockland. Some wetland impacts

⁵Georges River Land Trust. The stated goal of the organization is ...”to conserve land, protect resources and habitat, provide recreational opportunities and promote health, and educate about the intersection of art and nature and how to be good stewards of both.” Source: Georges River Land Trust webpage.

from permitting of commercial and industrial development in this area have been compensated for through protection of off-site wetlands.

Additionally, Thomaston, South Thomaston, Rockland, and Owls Head could encourage use of the DEP's In Lieu Fee Compensation Program⁶ to focus wetland compensation measures in this area as well as wetland habitat adjacent to the St. George River to further protect these Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance. In instances where new development requires town and/or Maine DEP approval, permits should ensure that landscaping is limited to use of native and non-invasive species.⁷ Consideration should be given to making this a standard condition of permit approval. Care should be taken with disturbed areas; roadside ditches are often readily colonized by invasive species.

4. Regional Coordination

In addition to the collaborative initiatives discussed above, the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization (with members from Cushing, South Thomaston, St. George, Thomaston, and Warren) manages the available shellfish resources in the St. George River through an interlocal agreement. GRRSMO participates in monitoring of the St. George River for sources of contamination that limit harvesting. The Maine Department of Marine Resources and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection work cooperatively with GRRSMO to monitor

⁶The In Lieu Fee Program is a regulatory program administered by the Maine DEP for mitigating adverse environmental impacts to NRPA protected natural resources. Mitigation is a sequential process of avoiding adverse impacts, minimizing impacts that cannot be practicably avoided, and then compensating for impacts that cannot be further minimized. If on-site or off-site appropriate mitigation is not available, an applicant may opt to pay a fee in lieu of compensation. The fees are placed in the Maine Natural Resources Conservation Fund (MNRCF) and made available for grant awards to qualified natural resource conservation projects.

⁷The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry has adopted rules prohibiting the sale of 33 terrestrial plant species, beginning January 1, 2018 that have been determined to be invasive. See Appendix.

water quality and the health of the commercial fisheries. Additionally, Thomaston has joined the Tidelands Coalition advocacy group, which is dedicated to stewardship of the intertidal zone.

With respect to development in the vicinity of protected natural resources, Thomaston should work cooperatively with Rockland to ensure that development in the vicinity of Marsh Brook and Weskeag Creek does not adversely affect this Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance.

C. Conditions and Trends / Inventory

1. Physical Setting, Topography, Climate, and Air Quality

Physical Setting and Topography

Thomaston is located in midcoast Maine on the St. George River estuary. It is characterized by gently sloping terrain associated with the Presumpscot Formation. Notable exceptions include the steep banks along the St. George, Oyster, and Mill Rivers; the steep hills above Meadow and Branch Brooks; and the manmade quarry excavations in the eastern section of Town. The banks of the St. George River have steep slopes ranging from 10% to 35%, with particularly steep slopes from the Wadsworth Street Bridge upstream to the Narrows. The Maine Geological Survey has mapped one area of highly unstable coastal bluff on the east side of the river south of Route 1. The Mill River has slopes ranging from 10% to 30%. The Mill River divides the Town into two distinct areas, with land west of the Mill River generally higher than to the east. Dominant features east of the river, including the cement plant and quarries, are easily visible from the higher land along Beechwood Street.

Given the steep slopes adjacent to much of the Mill and St. George Rivers, the 100-year floodplain is relatively narrow throughout much of the developed portion of the village. Most of the village area is at or above 100-foot elevation, and most residential and commercial

development has occurred on this higher ground. However, much of the commercial development along Water Street is located within the 100-year floodplain and is vulnerable to flooding and sea level rise. A somewhat broader floodplain is found along the St. George River north of the Narrows and south of Route 1. Other areas where the 100-year floodplain is more extensive are the northern areas of the Oyster River near its confluence with East Branch Brook and along Meadow and Branch Brooks and their associated wetlands. There are additional pockets of land within a 100-year floodplain associated with wetlands in the quarry areas north of Route 1 and between Route 1 and Thomaston Street. See **Map 3-1: Thomaston Flood Zone**.

Climate

The National Weather Service separates Maine into three distinct climatological divisions – coastal, southern interior, and northern interior.⁸ The coastal division runs the length of the entire coast from Kittery to Eastport and extends approximately 20 miles inland. Here the ocean moderates the climate, making winters warmer and summers cooler than the interior.

Maine's current climate and potential changes to that climate associated with increased carbon emissions and global climate change have implications for natural terrestrial and marine resources, infrastructure, and the broader economy of Thomaston and the region.

A 2018 report by the University of Maine Climate Change Institute (Coastal Maine Climate Futures)⁹ reports that the mean annual warming across the Arctic has increased by approximately 5 degrees F since 1980. The eastern arctic mean annual temperature has warmed as much as 8 degrees F in less than 5 years. While sea ice in

the arctic has been declining since the 1980's, the decrease has been most significant since 2000 and particularly after 2005, with a greater than 50% decrease in the area of ocean covered by sea ice at the end of the summer melt season. This decline is thought to underlie the observed rise in extreme weather events across the Northern Hemisphere due to changes in atmospheric patterns attributable to smaller differences in temperature between the equator and pole.

In Maine, there has been rapid warming since approximately 2000, especially in the overnight temperature in summer and fall. The Coastal Maine Climate Futures report also cites a nearly 30% increase in summer precipitation for the period 2005-2014 compared to the 20th century mean as well as an increase in extreme rainfall events (greater than 2 inches of rainfall per day). Local sea level as measured at Portland has risen approximately 7 inches since 1912.

Planning Considerations

Land use planners should be mindful of the anticipated rise in sea level along the Maine coast, which makes development in low-lying areas increasingly vulnerable to flooding. Additionally, the associated rise in sea level will cause coastal habitats to migrate landward, making it important to conserve low-lying undeveloped uplands where coastal marshes and other intertidal natural communities can migrate inland with sea level rise.

Air Quality

Local air quality concerns include: a) ground level ozone, b) auto and truck emissions, and c) particulate matter (dust) including dust from the quarries and rock crushing operations. Odors associated with the Rockland quarry landfill especially along Old County Road should subside with the closing of this waste disposal area.

On a regional scale, the southwesterly winds during the summer months transport ground level ozone (commonly referred to as smog), as

⁸Maine's Wildlife Action Plan, September 2015.

⁹Birkel, S.D. and Mayewski, P.A., 2018 Coastal Maine Climate Futures. Orono, ME: Climate Change Institute, University of Maine. 24pp.

well as the pollutants that contribute to ozone formation, from locations in the Midwest and along the eastern seaboard to coastal Maine. Mobile sources, typically cars and trucks, and large stationary industrial sources that burn fossil fuels (such as oil, gas, and coal) are significant contributors to the air emissions that react with sunlight to form ground level ozone. Ground level ozone poses a health risk to all persons but especially the elderly, children, and persons with respiratory diseases. Ground level ozone can also harm plants by decreasing growth rates, increasing susceptibility to disease, and reducing crop yields. Particulate emissions contribute to regional haze, which diminishes visibility and impairs scenic views. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection maintains an air monitoring station for ozone in nearby Port Clyde and issues air quality alerts when air quality is anticipated to reach unhealthful levels.

Planning Considerations

Mobile sources, such as cars and trucks, are significant sources of the pollutants contributing to poor air quality in Maine. Impacts to local and regional air quality should be considered when evaluating transportation options and initiatives.

2. Critical Natural Resources

Maine is located in an ecological transition zone between boreal forests to the north and temperate forests to the south, leading to a diversity of wildlife, with a number of species found at the northern end of their range and others at the southern end of their range. These populations will shift with changing climate. The Town's forestlands, surface waters, and wetlands provide important habitat for wildlife. Large blocks of land that are not transected by public roads, as well as riparian areas, are particularly valuable for maintaining biodiversity. Maine is also located along a major flyway for birds migrating between the arctic and tropical areas. Critical natural resources and

important natural resources found within and/or bordering Thomaston are listed in **Table 3-1** and discussed further below.

Wildlife

Birds are found in great variety in Thomaston where habitats include coniferous and deciduous forests, woodland borders, cleared areas and fields, freshwater wetlands, salt marshes, tidal flats, and open salt water. Ospreys and bald eagles, wading birds, and varieties of ducks are present along the rivers. There are no known bald eagle nesting sites in Thomaston; however, bald eagle nesting sites have been identified along the St. George River upriver in Warren and downriver in Cushing.

Although there are no mapped deer wintering areas, large habitat blocks north of Route 1 and east of the Oyster River and west of outer Beechwood Street have been identified as candidate deer wintering areas by the State's *Beginning with Habitat* program. See **Map 3-2: High-Value Plant and Animal Habitats**. Additionally, deer are found throughout the town including within the built-up area south of Route 1. Several areas in, or bordering, Thomaston have value as habitat for wildlife and/or certain rare and endangered plants and natural communities.

Tidal Waters and Salt Marshes

The rivers and streams in town provide habitat for species such as alewives, striped bass, sturgeon, and eels. The tidal flats along the St. George River support an economically important shellfish and marine worm fishery. Tidal areas along the east side of the river below Brooklyn Heights and extending into South Thomaston serve as a staging and roosting area for migrating shorebirds. Salt marshes are found along 80% of the riverbank terrain in Thomaston. The width of the marsh on the St. George River varies between 5 and 60 feet except for two spots on the east shore, where the marsh runs inland along smaller creeks. The marshes associated with the St.

Table 3-1: Critical Natural Resources and Important Natural Resources

Critical Natural Resources		
Significant Wildlife Habitats	Type	General Location (as identified by <i>Beginning with Habitat</i>)
	Deer Wintering Areas (candidate areas identified by BwH)	East of Oyster River including Town Forest associated with Thomaston's wastewater treatment plant and the Oyster River Conservation Area
		Large block of habitat north and east of Beechwood St.
		Areas associated with Branch Brook
		Weskeag Creek Focus Area (within South Thomaston)
	Inland Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat	Freshwater shrub-scrub wetland associated with Meadow Brook north of Old County Road.
		Freshwater shrub-scrub wetland area between Route 1 and Thomaston St. associated with Marsh Brook, and the emergent/shrub-scrub wetland area south of Thomaston St. and east of Buttermilk Lane near South Thomaston line and adjacent to the Weskeag Creek Focus Area
		Freshwater forested wetland area north of Route 1 and east of Georges St.
		Freshwater forested wetland area associated with Branch Brook, south of, and in close proximity to, Rockland Bog
		Smaller freshwater shrub-scrub wetland areas associated with the quarry areas adjacent to Route 1 and the quarry areas adjacent to Old County Road
		Lower St. George River Focus Area
		Weskeag Creek Focus Area
	Shorebird Areas	Lower St. George River Focus Area: The mudflats on the east side of the river below Brooklyn Heights to and including Hyler Cove in Cushing are high value as a staging, feeding, and roosting area for migrating shorebirds
		Weskeag Creek Focus Area
	Tidal Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat	St. George River from confluence with Oyster River south to the sharp northward bend in the river (the Narrows)
		Along the Oyster River
		Lower St. George River Focus Area: Thomaston Harbor and Mill River south of Route 1

Table continued next page

Critical Natural Resources		
		Weskeag Creek Focus Area
	Vernal Pools	No significant vernal pools have been mapped in Thomaston, but may exist especially in the forested areas of Town north of Route 1
Rare or Exemplary Plants and Natural Communities	Type	General Location
	Awnead Sedge (<i>Carex atherodes</i>): S1 – critically imperiled in Maine due to extreme rarity or vulnerability to extirpation	Meadow Brook wetland area
	Tidal Marsh Estuary Ecosystem	Weskeag Creek Focus Area
	Brackish Tidal Marsh Natural Community	Weskeag Creek Focus Area
	Mixed Salt Marsh Natural Community	Weskeag Creek Focus Area
	Salt-hay Saltmarsh Natural Community	St. George River near confluence with the Oyster River, Weskeag Creek Focus Area
Important Natural Resources		
Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance		Lower St. George River Focus Area Weskeag Creek Focus Area
Focus Areas not within, but proximate to, Thomaston		St. George River and Associated Ponds Focus Area Rockland Bog Focus Area
Large Habitat Blocks and Habitat Connections (See BwH Primary Map 3 Undeveloped Habitat Blocks & Connectors and Conserved Lands)		Area north of Route 1 and east of the Oyster River that includes the approximately 500-acre Thomaston Town Forest/Oyster River Conservation Area which merges with large habitat blocks in Warren. Two important habitat connectors are located on Studley Lane. Large habitat block east of Beechwood St. merges with large habitat blocks to the north in Warren and Rockland. Important habitat connector on outer Beechwood St. linking large habitat blocks on either side of Beechwood St.

George, Oyster, and Mill rivers include significant tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitat. The more extensive marshes associated with the Weskeag Creek include tidal wading bird and waterfowl habitat, shorebird habitat, as well as rare and exemplary natural communities. See **Map 3-3: Water Resources and Riparian Habitats**.

Planning Considerations

The rise in sea level associated with climate change will cause coastal habitats to migrate landward, making it important to conserve low-lying undeveloped uplands where coastal marshes and other intertidal natural communities can migrate inland with sea level rise.

Shorebirds and Shorebird Habitat

Shorebirds are worthy of particular note due to their declining numbers. The mudflats on the east side of the St. George River below Brooklyn Heights and extending to and including Hyler Cove in Cushing as well as the Weskeag Creek Focus Area have high value as staging, feeding, and roosting area for migrating shorebirds.

Shorebirds are a diverse group of birds that include sandpipers, plovers, turnstones, knots, curlews, dowitchers, and phalaropes. The group does not include herons, gulls, or cormorants. Many species of shorebirds migrate from their breeding ground in the high arctic of Canada to the tip of South America. During migration, large numbers of these birds concentrate in discrete areas of coastal habitat where they are susceptible to disturbance, development, and environmental contaminants. The greatest numbers of these birds feed and roost along the Maine coast during their southward migration, which begins in July and continues through November, with most species arriving between July 15 and September 15. Shorebirds feed on intertidal invertebrates found on mudflats and saltmarsh pannes and generally stay only 10-20 days at coastal staging areas. Coastal staging areas in the Gulf of Maine

are recognized as the most important staging area in eastern North America for the southward migration of shorebirds. Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife studies indicate that shorebirds exhibit extreme fidelity to traditional staging areas. If these areas are degraded by development, pollution, or disturbance, birds do not readily relocate to new areas.¹⁰

Freshwater Wetlands

At least 16 freshwater wetland areas of 10 acres or more exist in Thomaston. Freshwater wetlands in the village area north of Route 1 and east of Beechwood Street are primarily forested or forested/shrub-scrub, and due to size and location have limited habitat value, but may have educational/cultural value due to their proximity to schools. Forested freshwater wetlands further out Beechwood Street have value as plant and animal habitat. The forested wetlands adjacent to Branch Brook provide plant and animal habitat, as well as natural stormwater control/erosion control/sediment retention functions. See **Map 3-4: Wetland Characterization**.

The largest freshwater wetland area in Thomaston is the shrub-scrub wetland associated with Meadow Brook. This wetland area provides plant and animal habitat, and stormwater control/erosion control/sediment retention functions. Additional freshwater wetlands located east of the cement plant in the area drained by Marsh Brook are discussed below in the context of the Weskeag Creek Focus Area. All freshwater wetlands greater than 2 acres in size are zoned Resource Protection.

Planning Considerations

To ensure that wetland functions, values, and benefits are preserved, it is essential to restrict activities in wetlands and the upland areas immediately adjacent to them. Restrictions on

¹⁰Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, *Migratory Shorebird Use of the Maine Coast*.

activities that impair the functioning of smaller wetlands (< 10 acres) are necessary to avoid the cost and maintenance associated with stormwater drainage systems and to prevent flooding of adjacent and downstream properties. The stormwater control function of wetlands is particularly important in the developed areas of Thomaston. Freshwater wetlands between Beechwood and Erin Streets, Gleason and Fluker Streets, Fluker and Thatcher Streets, and Valley and Main Streets serve as major segments of the Town's stormwater drainage system.

Vernal Pools

A vernal pool (also known as a seasonal forest pool) is a natural, temporary to semi-permanent body of water occurring in a shallow depression that typically fills during the spring or fall and may dry during the summer. Vernal pools have no permanent inlet or outlet and no viable populations of predatory fish. A vernal pool may provide the primary breeding habitat for tree frogs, spotted salamanders, blue-spotted salamanders, and fairy shrimp as well as habitat for other wildlife, including rare, threatened and endangered species. Whether a vernal pool is significant for State regulatory purposes depends upon the number and type of pool breeding amphibian masses in a pool and the use of the pool by certain indicator species.

There are no mapped significant vernal pools in Thomaston, but they may exist nevertheless especially in forested areas. Most vernal pools are not identified until there is a proposal to fill a wetland, at which time an assessment may be required. Spring peepers are heard throughout many areas of Town, including the relatively dense residential areas south of Route 1, indicating the presence of habitat suitable for the life cycle needs of these amphibians.

3. Important Natural Resources

Important natural resources are those areas in the community not classified as Critical Natural Resources but which are nevertheless important for strategic conservation planning purposes. Important natural resources include:

- Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance as identified in the Maine's Wildlife Action Plan, prepared by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW);
- Exemplary Natural Area Community locations as defined by the MNAP;
- Large habitat blocks¹¹ as identified by the *Beginning with Habitat* (BwH) program; and
- Habitat connections¹² as identified by the BwH.

Large Habitat Blocks

Thomaston contains large areas of open space north of Route 1. As indicated in **Table 3-1**, large habitat blocks located north of the village area on both sides of Beechwood Street have been identified as candidate deer wintering areas by the State's *Beginning with Habitat* program. The area east of Oyster River and west of Beechwood Street contains the approximately 500 acres of Town-owned land (Thomaston Town Forest and Oyster River Conservation Area) which is associated with the wastewater treatment plant and its spray irrigation fields. This area will continue to serve as wildlife habitat for the foreseeable future. To the west, the Town Forest abuts large habitat blocks in Warren. At its northern end, the Town Forest abuts the Jack Baker Woods conservation area owned by the Georges River Land Trust.

¹¹Large habitat blocks are defined as contiguous, undeveloped areas of 500 acres or more as identified and mapped by BwH.

¹²Habitat connections are those areas that link large habitat blocks based on a prioritized habitat analysis prepared by BwH.

See **Map 3-5: Undeveloped Habitat Blocks and Connectors and Conserved Lands**. *Beginning with Habitat* has identified an undeveloped block connector on outer Beechwood Street that links this area to the large habitat block east of Beechwood Street. Daily traffic volume at this location is less than 2000 vehicles per day; this relatively low vehicle count should help to minimize the threat of habitat fragmentation and wildlife mortality.

The large habitat block east of Beechwood Street and west of West Meadow Road merges with a large habitat block in Rockland associated with the Rockland Bog and several parcels which are owned and managed by private conservation organizations.

Planning Considerations

Continuously connected habitat is critically important to wildlife. Large blocks of largely undeveloped land, including land in agriculture, forestry, and open space, that is connected to similar blocks of open space in neighboring communities will help to preserve wildlife travel corridors, maintain a diverse wildlife population in the midcoast area, and mitigate the environmental impacts of a changing climate.

Riparian Habitat and Riparian Area Connectors

Riparian and streamside areas are important for wildlife habitat, protection of water quality, and flood control. It is important that road and water crossing structures such as culverts be properly designed and placed so that they do not impede water flow or the upstream/downstream movement of organisms and materials. *Beginning with Habitat* maps identify two riparian habitat connectors with high traffic counts. These are located on Old County Road near its intersection with the Dexter Street and at the Route 1 crossing of Mill River. The Mill River is culverted under Route 1 so traffic counts in this area are not of concern.

Planning Considerations

Purchase of land or easements on land adjacent to waterways provides multiple benefits. Such purchases protect important habitat from large-scale development, allow undisrupted function of riparian and aquatic habitats, and provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

4. Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance

Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance have been identified by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife in consultation with other state agencies and conservation organizations to help prioritize conservation efforts for species of greatest conservation needed (SGCN) and other habitat values. Criteria used to delineate Focus Areas include multiple locations of rare plants, animals, and natural communities; locations of the best examples of common natural communities; locations of significant wildlife habitats; and locations where these features overlap with larger undeveloped blocks of land. Most Focus Areas meet multiple criteria.

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has identified two Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance that are located partially within Thomaston. Any proposed alteration of these areas as well as proposed development that would be located adjacent to them should be carefully reviewed to avoid potential adverse impacts to these resources and the plant and animal communities they support. Particular attention should be paid to stormwater management, maintenance of vegetative buffers, lighting, and protection from invasive species.

Lower St. George River Focus Area

Portions of this focus area are located in Thomaston, South Thomaston, Cushing, and St. George. See **Map 3-6: Lower St. George River**. The focus area runs from Thomaston harbor east of the Wadsworth St. Bridge and from the Mill

River south of Route 1 seaward to and including Maple Juice Cove in Cushing and Turkey Cove in St. George. This area is of statewide significance because of its concentration of coastal wildlife including wading birds and waterfowl, migrating shorebirds, commercially significant resources including diadromous fish, marine worms, and shellfish (clams). There are no rare or endangered plants or animals in this area. Significant wildlife habitats include: inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat, tidal waterfowl and wading bird habitat; shorebird staging, feeding, and roosting areas; and deer wintering areas. Public access to this area is primarily from the Thomaston town landing. Fort St. George managed by the Maine Bureau of Public Lands also provides public access from Route 131 in St. George.

Weskeag Creek Focus Area

Portions of this focus area are located in Thomaston, Rockland, Owls Head, and primarily South Thomaston. The area runs from the Thomaston/Rockland town line at Route 1 south to the outlet of the Weskeag River at Route 73 in South Thomaston. See **Map 3-7: Weskeag Creek**. According to the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, this focus area “supports some of the highest diversity of species of any marsh in Midcoast and Penobscot Bay Regions. The mudflats and emergent wetlands provide important habitat for tidal wading birds and waterfowl as well as shorebirds. The marsh also supports both Nelson’s and saltmarsh sharp-tail sparrows, two species recognized by Partners in Flight as the highest priority birds for conservation in northeastern coastal habitats.” The following species and habitats are found here:

- Rare Animals: Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow
- Rare and Exemplary Natural Communities: Brackish Tidal Marsh, Tidal Marsh Estuary Ecosystem

- Significant Wildlife Habitats: Inland Wading Bird and Waterfowl, Tidal Wading Bird and Waterfowl, Shorebird feeding and roosting habitat, and Deer Wintering Area

Much of the Weskeag Creek Focus Area is afforded some protection by the 682-acre R. Waldo Tyler Wildlife Management Area, managed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Additionally, the Dragon Products Conservation Area, consisting of approximately 120 acres, abuts the R. Tyler Wildlife Management Area to the north and west. Further south, private conservation lands and landowner easements in South Thomaston serve to connect this area to lands adjacent to the St. George River. The habitat connector crossing of Route 131 in this area has a traffic volume of greater than 2000 vehicles per day, which presents a mortality risk to terrestrial animal crossings.

Other focus areas of statewide ecological significance in the area include:

- The Rockland Bog Focus Area, and
- St. George River and Associated Ponds Focus Area: Includes Round Pond, Seven Tree Pond, and Crawford Pond in Union and Sidenparker Pond, North Pond and South Pond in Warren. It extends south along the river to approximately 1.5 miles south of the Route 90 crossing in Warren.

5. Scenic and Aesthetic Resources

Thomaston’s location along the St. George River combined with its long history of settlement and associated historic structures are distinguishing features of the town that contribute to its scenic and aesthetic qualities. The Town’s rivers are of great economic and aesthetic importance to the town since they convey a feeling of being “by the shore” from many vantage points. Conservation of, and access to, these waterways and associated

viewsheds has import ecological, economic, recreational and aesthetic value.

In the 2017 Thomaston Comprehensive Plan Survey, Midcoast location (96%) and open space and scenic vistas (95%) were identified as attributes that respondents like about living in Thomaston.

In 1986, the State Planning Office commissioned an analysis of Maine's coastal scenic resources. Criteria used in rating scenic quality included:

- Topography: elevation, slope, variety of landforms, etc.;
- Open space: agricultural land and views of water;
- Shoreline configuration;
- Special scenic and cultural features; and
- Water views from major roads.

Thomaston has many views that include one or more aspects seen as desirable in this study. Although a formal scenic inventory has not been conducted, there are some notable views worthy of consideration as the Town evaluates various land use options.

One of these is the bridge over the St. George River on Route 1, at the confluence of the Oyster and St. George Rivers. Upstream, the banks of the river on the Thomaston side are relatively undeveloped, and recent development is well screened by the existing vegetation. Downstream on both the Thomaston and Warren sides of the river, where existing vegetation is lower, structural development has begun to erode the scenic quality of the area.

The approach to the town from the Route 1 bridge to the intersection with Route 131 North is characterized by woodland, open fields, and limited structural development. It has a rural quality which is visually appealing and complements and serves to distinguish the town's compact village center, contributing to the small-town

atmosphere mentioned repeatedly in the survey as valued by town residents.

Within the village area, the St. George River and harbor are visible from several public vantage points including Thomaston Green, public land at the Wadsworth Street bridge, Town Beach, Mayo Park, and Mill River Park. The western end of Town, once dominated by the Maine State Prison (and now Thomaston Green), has scenic views of the St. George River. The Mill River can be seen from the Route 1 crossing and along portions of Fish and Water Streets. Mill River Park near the railroad trestle, Mayo Park at the Town Landing, the Town Beach near the intersection of Water and Wadsworth Streets, and the open space adjacent to the Wadsworth Street Bridge provide important points of public access to the Mill and St. George Rivers.

Outside the village center, there is a particularly scenic view of Thomaston from Route 131 South. Additionally, distant views down the St. George River can be seen from Route 131 South, High Street, and near the South Thomaston town line. The Camden Hills are visible from portions of Studley Lane and outer Beechwood Street, about three miles from Main Street, as well as from West Meadow Road and Old County Road. West Meadow Road offers views over Rockland out to the islands of Penobscot Bay. High ground within the Thomaston Town Forest affords a view of the hills to the north in Warren and Rockport.

In addition to our natural resources, many important and interesting structures contribute to the scenic and aesthetic qualities of the Town (see **Table 3-2**). There are fine views of the town and harbor from Brooklyn Heights and from Route 131 South as one travels north toward the village. The Mall, business block, historic homes, churches, and the Academy Building along Main Street, and the view of Montpelier as one travels east along Main Street are distinctive and contribute greatly to the scenic and aesthetic qualities of the town. While topography

Table 3-2: Scenic Resources

Location	Comments
Route 1 crossing of St. George River	At confluence with Oyster River. Highly scenic entrance to town. Upstream banks relatively undeveloped and screened by vegetation. Downstream – structural development in shoreland commercial zone.
Agricultural fields along Route 1 to Route 131 North	Contributes to small-town atmosphere; limits development sprawl and helps maintain compact village center
Thomaston Green – views of St. George River to Thomaston Harbor	View of the St. George River to the west – high topographic relief, undeveloped shoreline. View to the east – high topographic relief, limited structural development, view to harbor
Wadsworth Street Bridge and north bridge abutment	View of St. George River upstream to the Narrows; high topographic relief, undeveloped shoreline View downriver to Thomaston harbor
Town Beach	View of, and access to, harbor – especially scenic at mid to high tide
Public Landing – Overlook, Mayo Park, St. Georges Cross	Access to, and view of, Thomaston harbor at all tides; view of Brooklyn Heights and downriver to South Thomaston. High topographic relief. Views of water at all tides, views of water dependent uses including boat yards and seafood harvesting, significant wildlife habitat. St. Georges Cross places Thomaston in time.
Mill River Park	Views of the Mill River and St. George River. High topographic relief, significant wildlife habitat, historically used for ice fishing. Mill River and Route 131 South physically separate the village center from the highway commercial and industrial development at the eastern end of Town.
Route 131 South	View of Thomaston Harbor. Accessible viewpoint needed, perhaps at Riverview Hayfields Preserve owned by Georges River Land Trust
Route 1 village center development	Mall, business block, historic homes, Academy Building, churches, timeline, Museum of the Streets – compact village center with distinctive architecture and long history of settlement
Montpelier – Knox Mansion	Prominent structure bookending the village center, underscores Thomaston’s role in American history.

and the Mill River physically separate the village center from the industrial section where the cement plant and quarries are located, the waste rock piles and towers associated with the cement plant are clearly visible from many locations.

Planning Considerations

In reviewing development proposals, the Town should work with developers to ensure that proposed development is of a scale and design that is compatible with surrounding uses and is located so as to minimize adverse impact to the Town’s

scenic and aesthetic resources. Views of protected natural resources, such as waterbodies, from public vantage points should be protected.

D. Policies

- 1 Conserve critical natural resources in the community.
- 2 Coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state resource agencies to protect shared critical natural resources.
- 3 Protect and manage critical habitats and natural areas of state and national significance, and maintain the scenic beauty and character of the coast, even in areas where development occurs.
- 4 Restore and maintain the quality of our fresh, marine, and estuarine waters to allow for the broadest possible diversity of public and private uses.
- 5 Restore and maintain coastal air quality, protecting the health of citizens and visitors and the enjoyment of the natural beauty and maritime character of the Maine coast.
- 6 Protect the scenic character of Thomaston and enhance physical and visual access to the shore for the general public.

E. Implementation Strategies

- 1 Ensure that the Town's land use ordinances are consistent with applicable State law regarding critical natural resources.
- 2 Meet with neighboring communities to review land use ordinances and develop an area-wide approach to protection of important natural resources such as the St. George River and Weskeag Creek.
- 3 Continue to work collaboratively with area towns, State agencies, and nonprofit organizations to locate and eliminate sources

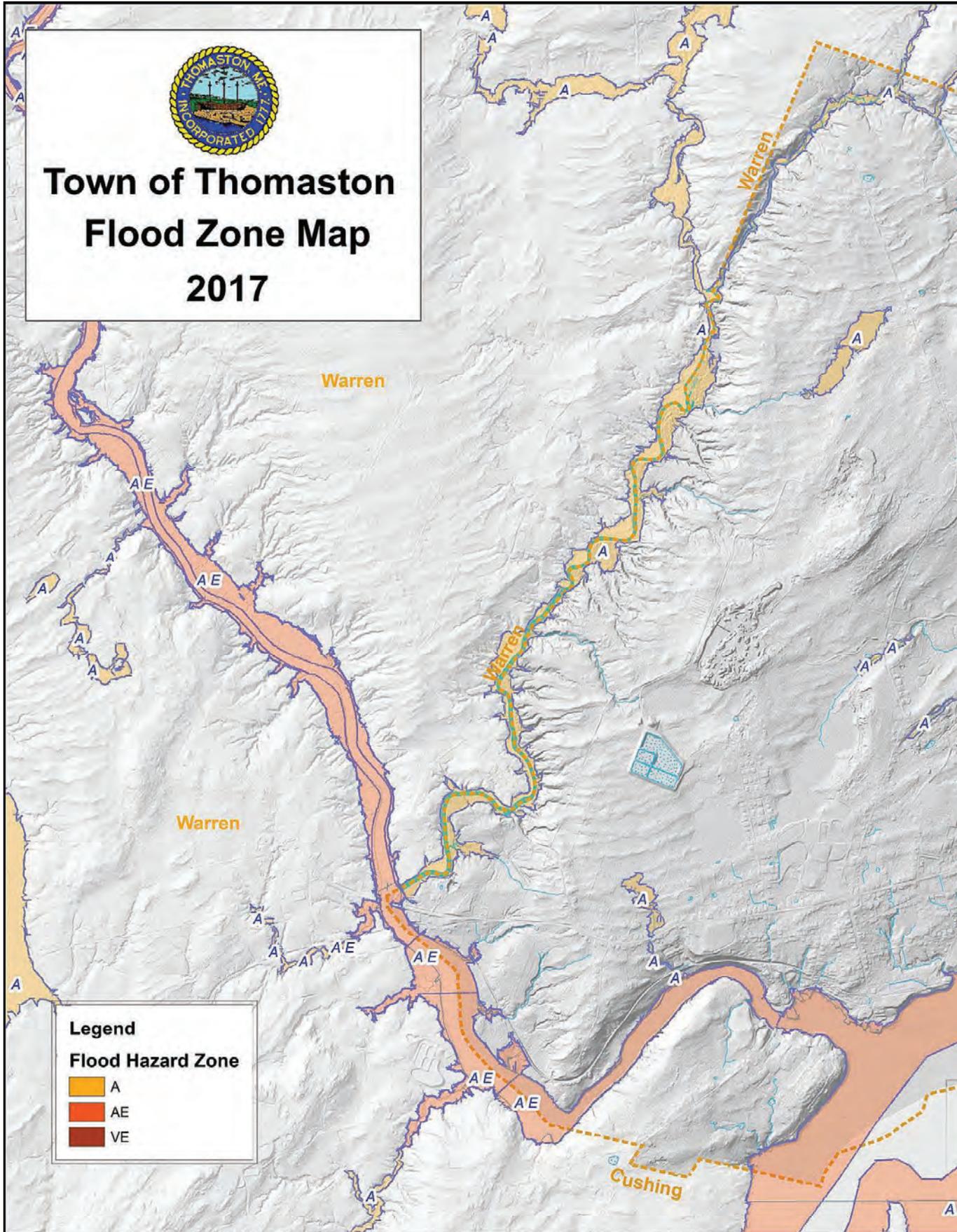
of non-point source pollution to the St. George River.

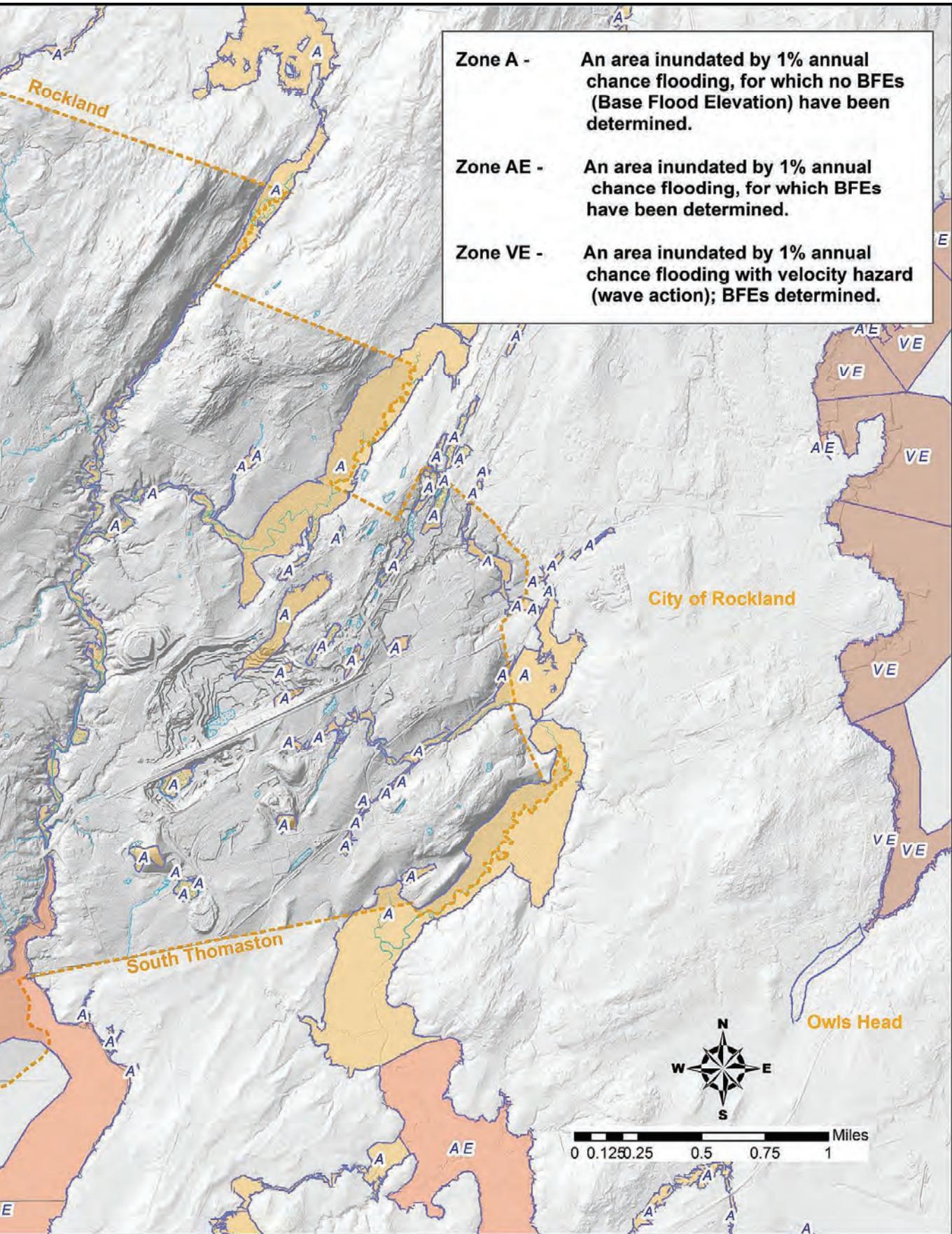
- 4 Take steps through permit conditions and follow-up inspections to ensure that developments maintain stormwater management structures in good working order and that required vegetative buffers between developed areas and surface waters, wetlands, and other critical natural resources are maintained and not eroded or encroached upon over time by site use.
- 5 Continue efforts to develop an interconnected greenway through Town and along the waterfront, linking Town parks and public spaces, with the goals of protecting critical and important natural resources, maintaining wildlife corridors, creating pollinator pathways, increasing visual and physical access to the shore, and enhancing low-impact recreational opportunities.
- 6 Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important resources through mechanisms such as purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.
- 7 Continue support for current use taxation as one means of protecting critical and important natural resources.
- 8 Provide information to homeowners, businesses, and other landowners on threats posed by invasive plant species, and encourage their removal and replacement over time with native plant species. Add an "environmental tips and resources" tab to the Town's website.
- 9 Inform commercial and recreational users of the St. George River of the significance of the mudflats as a staging, feeding, and roosting area for migrating shorebirds and the importance of minimizing disturbance. Consult with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife regarding

whether signage at the Town landing would be appropriate.

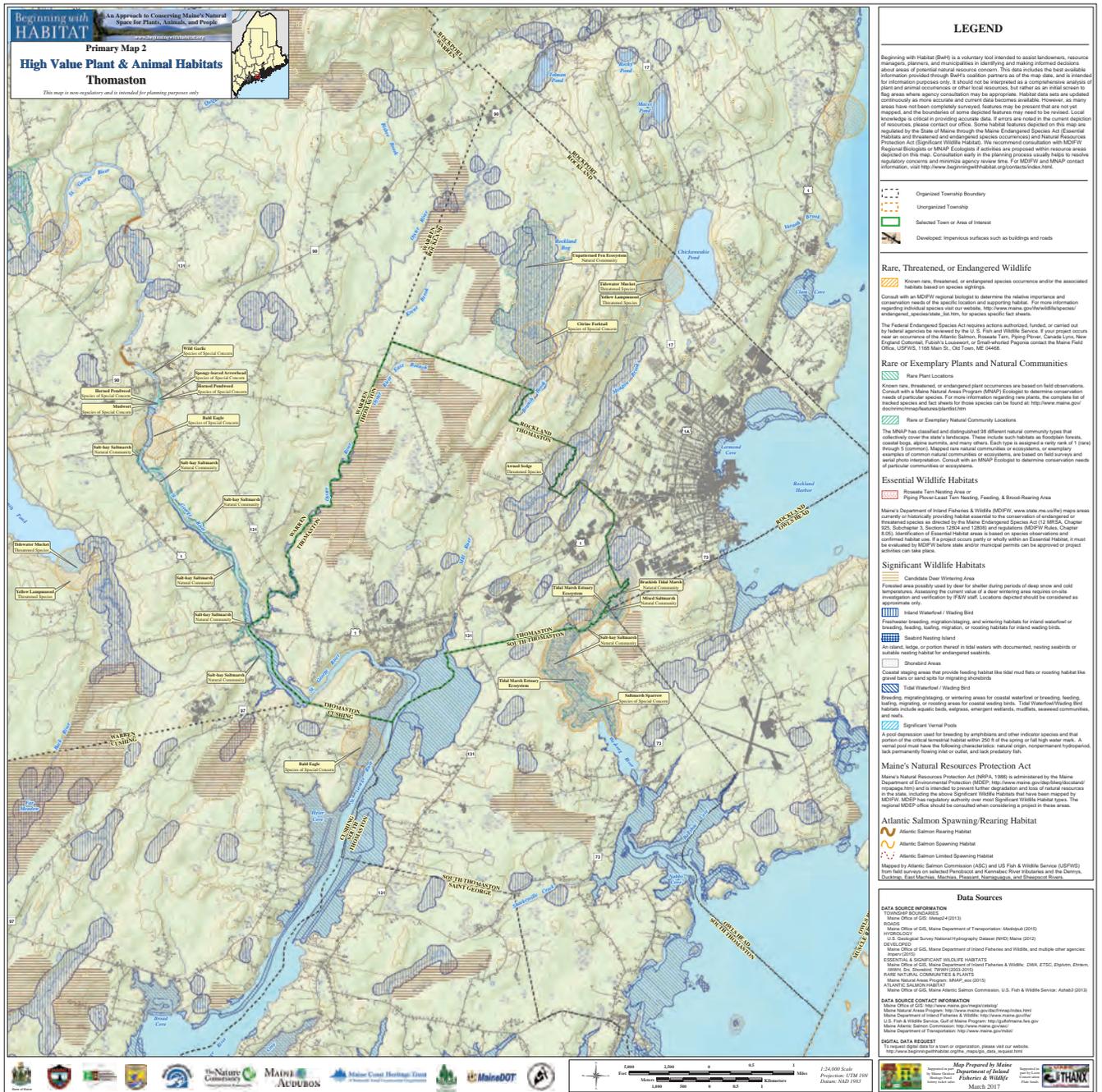
- 10** Review proposed development in the Industrial and Highway Commercial Districts for potential adverse impacts to the Weskeag Creek Focus Area. Identify this focus area as a critical natural resource in the Future Land Use Plan.
- 11** Require developers, through ordinance and site plan review, to determine whether critical natural resources may be on site (using resources such as the *Beginning with Habitat* maps), and take appropriate measures to protect those resources including, but not limited to, modification of the proposed design, construction timing, and/or extent of excavation.
- 12** In reviewing development proposals, the Town should work with developers to ensure that proposed development is of a scale and design that is compatible with surrounding uses and is located to minimize adverse impacts to the Town's natural, scenic, and aesthetic resources. Views of protected natural resources such as waterbodies from public vantage points should be protected where possible.
- 13** Develop guidelines for the assessment of scenic impacts using concepts such as scale, contrast, and spatial dominance. Develop an inventory of scenic resources based on these guidelines and amend existing ordinances to allow the Planning Board to require a scenic impact analysis as part of site plan review.
- 14** Encourage owners of existing development in the Highway Commercial district to plant trees and shrubs to improve the visual appearance of the Route 1 corridor.
- 15** Expand the mission and membership of the Town's Conservation Committee to oversee Town trails, parks, pollinator pathways, stormwater control efforts, the Town's greenbelt, and climate change preparedness. The Conservation Committee should work with Public Works to replace invasives with native plantings; with the Town arborist to maintain and strategize urban trees; with garden clubs to maintain Town plantings, site a community garden, and assist homeowners who wish to make their yards into insectaries and songbird habitat; and more.

Map 3-1: Thomaston Flood Zone





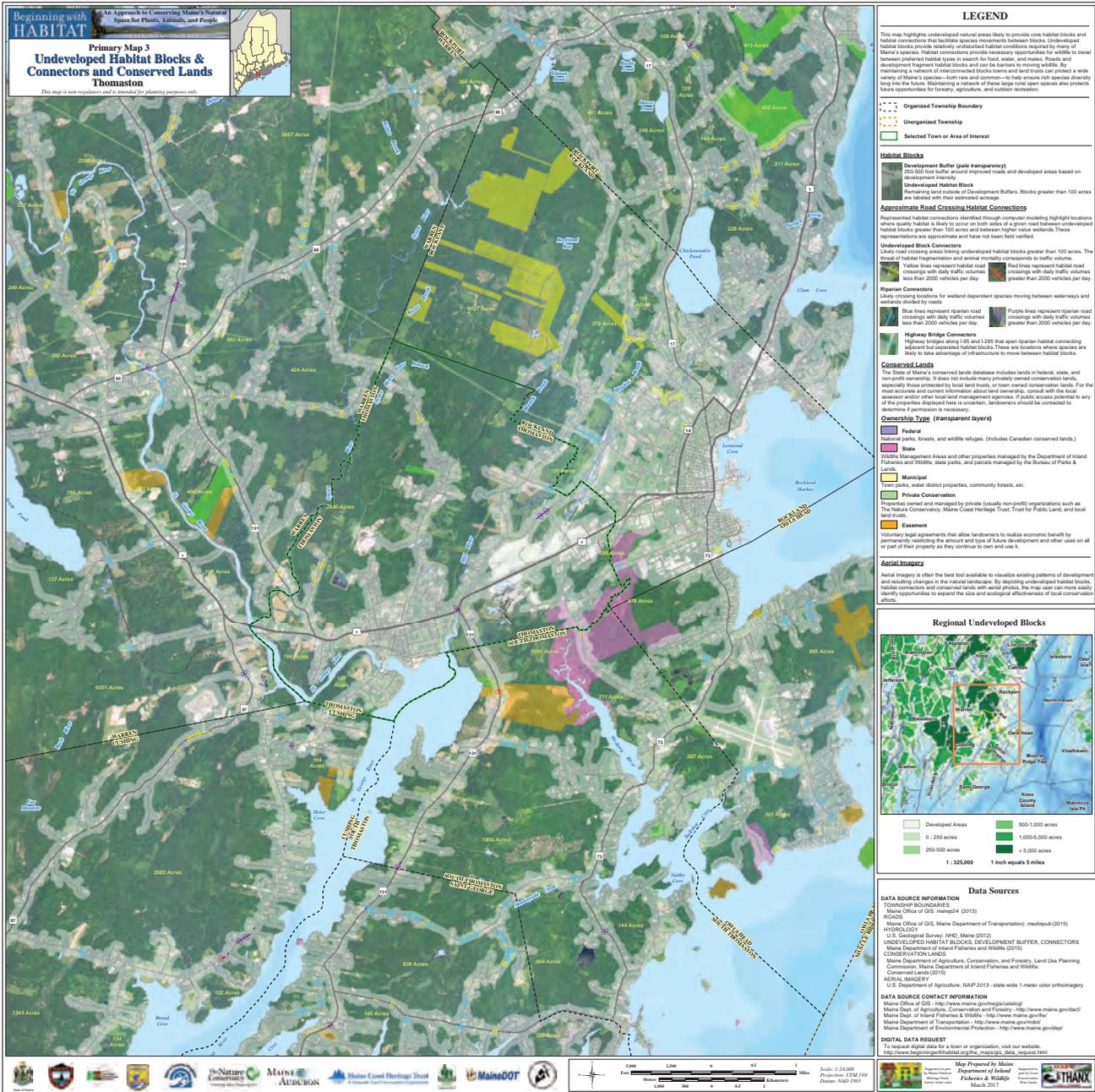
Map 3-2: High-Value Plant and Animal Habitats



Map 3-4: Wetland Characterization



Map 3-5: Undeveloped Habitat Blocks and Connectors and Conserved Lands



Map 3-6: Lower St. George River

Beginning with
HABITAT

Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance

Lower St. George River



WHY IS THIS AREA SIGNIFICANT?

The Lower St. George River is of statewide significance for its concentration of coastal wildlife. The numerous coves and mudflats found here are influenced by freshwater discharged from the river, high-speed currents and tidal fluctuations and provide habitat for wading birds and waterfowl and migrating shorebirds as well as commercially significant resources including diadromous fish, marine worms and, most notably, shellfish.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSERVATION

- » Work with willing landowners to permanently protect undeveloped areas and significant features.
- » Educate recreational users about the ecological and economic benefits provided by the focus area.
- » Encourage landowners to maintain enhanced riparian buffers.
- » Identify and restore tidal restrictions and undersized culverts.
- » Protect sensitive natural features through careful management planning on conserved lands.

For more conservation opportunities, visit the Beginning with Habitat Online Toolbox: www.beginningwithhabitat.org/toolbox/about_toolbox.html.

Public Access Opportunities

- Fort St. George, MBPL



Rare Animals
None documented

Rare Plants
None documented

Significant Wildlife Habitats
Inland Wading Bird and Waterfowl
Tidal Wading Bird and Waterfowl
Shorebird Areas
Deer Wintering Areas

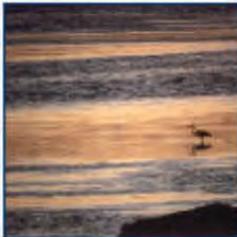
Photo credits, top to bottom: Steve Walker, Jim Connolly, Jim Connolly, Georges River Land Trust (bottom 2 photos)

Map 3-7: Weskeag Creek

Beginning with
HABITAT

Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance

Weskeag Creek



WHY IS THIS AREA SIGNIFICANT?

The Weskeag Creek tidal wetland complex provides valuable habitat for a variety of coastal birds. This focus area supports some of the highest diversity of species of any marsh in Midcoast and Penobscot Bay Regions. The mudflats and emergent wetlands provide important habitat for tidal wading birds and waterfowl as well as shorebirds. The marsh also supports both Nelson's and saltmarsh sharp-tail sparrows, two species recognized by Partners in Flight as the highest priority birds for conservation in northeastern coastal habitats.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSERVATION

- » Educate recreational users about the ecological and economic benefits provided by the focus area.
- » Encourage best management practices for forestry, vegetation clearing, and soil disturbance activities near significant features.
- » Maintain intact forested buffers along water bodies and wetlands.
- » Identify and restore tidal restrictions and undersized culverts.
- » Monitor and remove invasive plant populations.
- » Work with willing landowners to permanently protect undeveloped areas and significant features.

For more conservation opportunities, visit the Beginning with Habitat Online Toolbox: www.beginningwithhabitat.org/toolbox/about_toolbox.html.

Photo credits, top to bottom: Janet McMahon, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Unknown, Paul Cyr, Janet McMahon

Rare Animals

Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow

Rare and Exemplary Natural Communities

Brackish Tidal Marsh
Tidal Marsh Estuary Ecosystem

Significant Wildlife Habitats

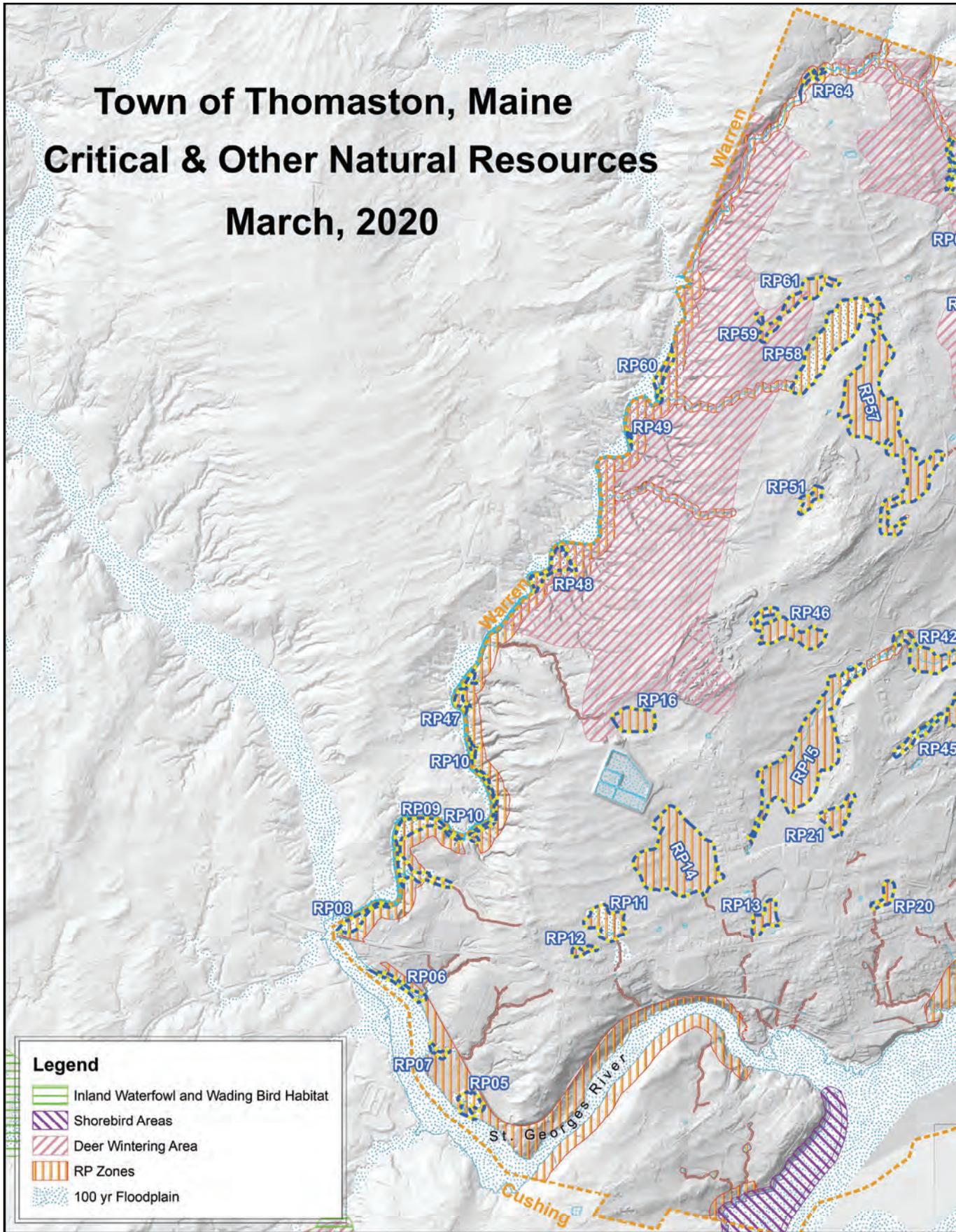
Inland Wading Bird and Waterfowl
Tidal Wading Bird and Waterfowl
Shorebird Area
Deer Wintering Area

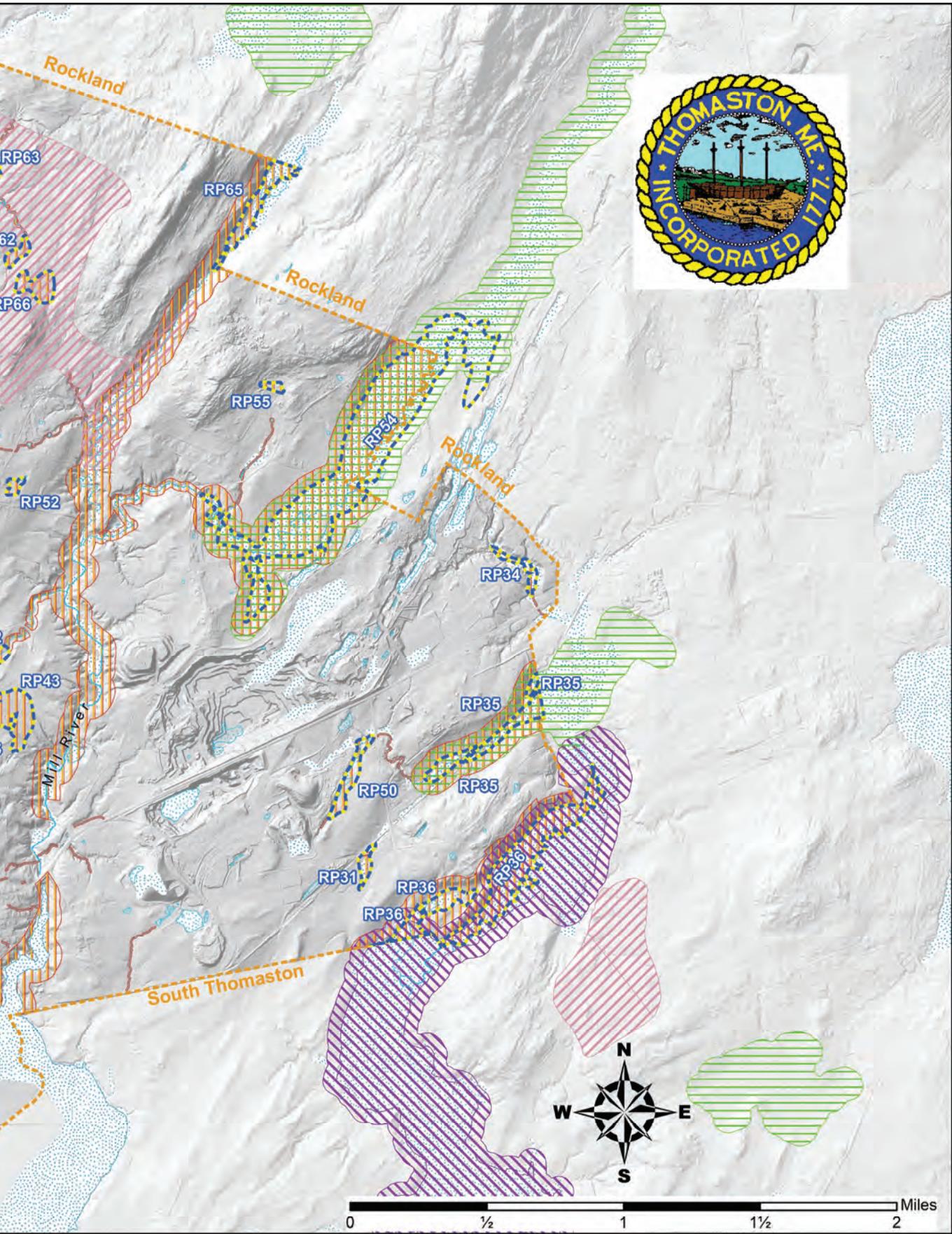
Public Access Opportunities

• R. Waldo Tyler Wildlife Management Area, MDIFW

Map 3-8: Natural Resources

Town of Thomaston, Maine Critical & Other Natural Resources March, 2020







Our Environment: Agricultural, Forest, and Mineral Resources



Introduction

This chapter discusses the importance of agriculture, forestry, and mineral resources to the Town's character and economy.

Major Findings

Agriculture and forestry are not major land uses in Thomaston; however, there has been a resurgence of interest in farming in recent years and the Town has responded by amending the Land Use Ordinance to increase support for agriculture while addressing concerns of neighboring residential uses. Although not major land uses, the open spaces associated with pastures and forestlands are highly valued as they provide habitat for wildlife and serve to define and maintain the Town's compact village character and scenic beauty.

Landowners are taking advantage of the State's current use taxation programs, but farmlands, forests, and open spaces remain vulnerable to development pressure. Agriculture and forestry will also be impacted by changing climatic conditions and the threat of invasive species.

With respect to mineral resources, the limestone quarries are a dominant feature in the eastern section of Town, with the Dragon Products cement plant stacks visible from many locations. It is anticipated that the quarries and plant will remain active for decades.

A. Goals

State Goal

To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.

Local Goal – Mineral Resources

To support the economic opportunities associated with mineral resources while working with the owners of Dragon Products and the smaller pits and quarries to minimize potential adverse impacts to neighboring properties and the community.

B. Analysis

1. Significance of Agriculture and Forestry

Despite large areas of open space north of Route 1, agriculture and forestry are not major land uses in Thomaston, which currently has only one active farm for purposes other than pasture, and two landowners who harvest trees for commercial purposes. However, there has been a resurgence of interest in farming in recent years with persons who have purchased homes in the R-2 Rural Residential District bordering the R-3 Urban Residential District wanting to raise farm animals on their properties. The increased interest and support for locally grown or produced food is also reflected in the recent purchase of 82 acres in the R-2 District at the west end of Town for an organic beef farm.

2. Protection Efforts

Given the limited role of agriculture and forestry in Thomaston, there has been little public attention to the protection of active farm and forestry operations. Rather, public interest has been in the open spaces associated with existing farm and forest lands. These open spaces are highly valued by Town residents for their natural resource benefits, scenic quality, and contribution to the compact nature of the village center. However, as discussed above, there is a growing public interest in, and support for, small farms and locally grown food as reflected in a recent Town survey. In response to this interest and requests from landowners in the R-2 District who want to farm their land and/or raise animals, the Town has amended its Land Use and Development Ordinance to better

define the agricultural activities permitted or allowed as conditional uses in the various land use districts. See **Appendix 4: Agricultural Uses Allowed in Thomaston Land Use Districts**.

With respect to forest resources, the Town is fortunate to own a large tract of forested land north of Route 1 that is associated with the municipal wastewater treatment plant. This 350-acre parcel, which abuts the 150-acre Oyster River Conservation Area, is managed for wildlife, recreation, aesthetics, and timber in accordance with a Forest Management Plan. Consistent with this plan, the Town has partnered with the Georges River Land Trust to develop the Town Forest Trail, a 4.4-mile section of the Georges Highland Path (a 50-mile trail network stretching from Montville southward to the sea at Thomaston and St. George).

Forested lands that are in private ownership represent a potentially valuable but largely unmanaged natural resource.

3. Current Use Taxation

Current use taxation is one mechanism for protecting farmland, forests, and open space and is used by a number of landowners in Thomaston. In FY 2017-2018, there were 730 acres in farmland, up from 406 acres in 2004; however, of the 730 acres in farmland, only 289 acres are classified as farm agriculture, and only 40 of the 289 acres are cropland as opposed to pasture. During the same time period, 101 acres were in tree growth, down from 177 acres in 2004. In contrast, acreage in open space has grown from 28 acres in 2004 to 354 acres in FY 2017-2018. See **Tables 4-2** and **4-3** for data by year.

4. Conflicting Land Uses

As discussed above, there is a growing interest in small-scale farming. Recent requests to raise farm animals on relatively small lots in the R-2 District in close proximity to existing residential uses in the R-3 Urban Residential District have raised concerns. To address potential conflicts,

the Town has amended its land use ordinance to define varying levels of agriculture and agricultural sales permitted or allowed as conditional uses in the different land use districts. The ability to add site-specific conditions to permits has enabled the town to allow agricultural activities in more areas while addressing concerns of neighboring landowners.

5. Development Pressure

Development pressure is the primary threat to agricultural fields, forested lands, and open space. This is particularly true for land in the R-2 Rural Residential District at the west entrance to Town, which is periodically eyed for commercial development due to its location in the Route 1 corridor and its proximity to the St. George River. These open spaces, and most notably the open hayfields, are of great importance to the Town. They provide a scenic entrance to Thomaston that contributes to maintenance of a compact village center and the small-town feel valued by residents. While highly valued, continued existence of this pastoral landscape has been largely taken for granted. The Town should work with landowners and nonprofit organizations to protect the rural and scenic quality of this area and to ensure that development that does occur is done in strict compliance with standards. Even if not actively farmed, farmland retained in open space protects the land and agricultural soils from development, maintaining the possibility that the land may be farmed in the future.

Similar development pressure exists in the R-1 Rural Residential and Farming District near the intersection of Route 1 with 131 South and Old County Road. This R-1 District abuts the Industrial Zone associated with Dragon Products and the Village Commercial Zone at this intersection. Conflicts in land use at this location need to be examined.

6. Community Support

A recent survey of Thomaston residents showed substantial support for agriculture. When asked what types of businesses they would like to see added to Town, approximately 80% of Town survey respondents selected “farms, other agriculture related businesses” from a list of 14 and approximately 94% selected “farmer’s markets and other events.” Participants in the first Thomaston Talks identified encouragement of farms, agriculture related business and farmer’s markets as a way to attract young families to town.

In accordance with the Town’s Land Use Ordinance, Section 704.5A Farmer’s Markets, a regularly scheduled farmer’s market may be permitted by the Code Enforcement Officer in any subdistrict for up to one year at a time provided the market is to be located at a suitable site with adequate parking and space for the proposed number of vendors.

A farmer’s market existed for two summers in the parking lot behind Thomaston Academy, but moved to Rockland in the summer of 2017, likely in search of greater visibility and pedestrian traffic. With the potential for an organic beef farm at the west entrance to Town, there may be an opportunity for an additional farm stand to support and attract customers to an in-Town farmer’s market.

7. Public Lands

Thomaston is fortunate to own a large tract of land north of Route 1 that will remain largely undeveloped. See **Map 4-1: Open Space Parcels**. The approximately 350 acres of forested land owned by the Town and associated with the wastewater treatment facility has a forest management plan (Jones Associates, Inc., June 1996) with the following management objects: wildlife management (high priority), recreation management (high), aesthetics (medium), and timber income (low).

In addition, the health of the Town’s urban forest is of great importance to the Town. Urban

tree plantings can provide important visual buffers along highways and between differing land uses, provide wildlife habitat, control runoff, provide cooling in summer, and contribute greatly to the scenic quality of the Town. This resource, which is threatened by climate change and the spread of invasive insects, would benefit from a comprehensive management plan. It is essential that the Town provide funding for such management and pursue grants for the care and replacement as necessary of street trees and plantings on Town property.

8. Mineral Resources

The limestone quarries and cement plant owned by Dragon Products are prominent land uses in Thomaston. While the Town values Dragon's significant contribution to the economy, noise, particulate emissions (dust), and primarily truck traffic associated with the facility are a concern to many. The desire to minimize truck traffic through the village center is reflected in a growing interest in development of a truck route that would connect Old County Road to US Route 1 in the vicinity of the intersection of Route 1 with Route 131 North. It is critical that emissions from the rock quarry and cement plant operations comply with State environmental laws to protect public health, the environment, the quality of life of area residents, and the continued viability of other land uses in the vicinity of the quarries and cement plant. Eventual reuse of pits and quarries in a manner compatible with existing surrounding development and in compliance with environmental standards is in the long-term best interest of the Town.

C. Conditions and Trends

1. Agricultural Resources

Agricultural Soils

Agricultural soils identified by United States Department of Agriculture and Maine Depart-

ment of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (April 2017) are shown on **Map 4-2: Agricultural Resources**. "Prime Farmland" is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as the best land, nationwide, for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. The criteria are tied directly to soil properties and not land use, except that if the land is urban or built-up, it cannot be prime farmland. Prime farmlands generally have a slope of less than 8% and can be land in cultivation, forest, pasture or idle land and can be remote or inaccessible. **Map 4-2** indicates that areas of "prime farmland" in Thomaston are generally located at the west end of town along Ridgeway Drive and north of Route 1 in the vicinity of Route 131 North, in the village area south of Route 1, in Brooklyn Heights, along Beechwood Street, along Old County Road, and along Thomaston Street.

In addition to prime farmland, USDA and Maine DACF identify "Farmlands of Statewide Importance". These soils are found in areas with slopes of 8-15% and are generally located adjacent to the rivers: along the East Branch of the Oyster River, the Oyster River, Mill River, Meadow Brook just upstream of its confluence with Mill River, either side of Thomaston Street and Route 1, along outer Beechwood Street, and in Brooklyn Heights. A large percentage of the settled portion of Thomaston south of Route 1 between Wadsworth Street and Route 131 South is located on land that, if undeveloped, would be classified as farmland soils.

Active Farms

In 1991, there were three moderate-sized active farms in Thomaston, located on West Meadow Road, Brooklyn Heights, and Thomaston Street. Of these, only the farm on Thomaston Street (Weskeag Farms) remains active for purposes other than haying. Weskeag Farms is a diverse farm producing and selling vegetables, eggs, a variety of organic meats, and Christmas trees

Table 4-1: Current Use Taxation

Information on Land in Thomaston in Farmland, Open Space, and Tree Growth is shown in Tables 4-2 and 4-3. There is no land in working waterfront in Thomaston.

<p>Maine law provides for land taxation based upon current use. The Farm and Open Space Tax law (36 M.R.S. section 1101-1121) was enacted in 1971, the Tree Growth Tax Law (38 M.R.S. section 571-584-A) in 1972, and the Working Waterfront Tax Law in 2006.</p>
<p>Farmland: In order to qualify for the Farmland Tax Law, one must own at least 5 contiguous acres and produce a gross income of at least \$2000 from farming activities. Farmland can include farm woodland. If the tract no longer qualifies as a farmland tract, it must be removed and a penalty is assessed. The penalty is equal to the amount of tax that would have been paid during the past five (5) years if not classified as farmland, less the tax actually paid, plus any interest for each year. Land transferred from Tree Growth or Open Space must be classified as farmland for at least 10 years in order to be withdrawn at the reduced penalty.</p>
<p>Open Space: There is no minimum acreage requirement; the tract must be restricted in use to provide a public benefit such as recreation, scenic resources, game management, or wildlife habitat. Tax discount rates in FY2017-2018 were: 20% (ordinary), 25% (public access), 50% (permanently protected), and 70% (forever wild). Total possible cumulative reduction is 95%. There is a penalty for withdrawal of land classified as open space. The penalty is the greater of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Amount equal to taxes that would have been assessed for the previous 5 years had the real estate been assessed at its just value, less taxes paid for those years, plus interest at the prevailing rate for those years; or<input type="checkbox"/> Amount computed by multiplying amount by which the fair market exceeds the current use value under open space by the following rates:<ul style="list-style-type: none">o 30% for land classified for less than 10 years;o For land classified for more than 10 years, subtract 1% from 30% for each full year until a rate of 20% is reached;o 20% for land classified for 20 years or more.
<p>Tree Growth: In order to be eligible for Tree Growth program, the landowner must own at least 10 forested acres that are used for commercial harvesting and obtain a forest management and harvest plan certified by a licensed professional forester. The landowner must recertify to the local assessor every ten years that a forest management and harvest plan still exists and is being followed. Each year the State Tax Assessor establishes the valuation per acre for each forest type by economic region. The penalty for withdrawal is the same as for Open Space.</p>
<p>Working Waterfront: Working waterfront land (36 M.R.S. section 1132(11)) is defined as a parcel, or portion of a parcel, of land abutting tidal waters or located in the intertidal zone that is used primarily (more than 50%) to “provide access to or support the conduct of commercial fishing activities.”</p>

Table 4-2: Thomaston Current Land Use Taxation

Year	Total Farmland Acres	# of Farm Lots	Total Tree Growth Acres	# of Tree Lots	Total Open Space Acres	# of Open Space Lots	Total Acres in Current Use
1990	-	-	423	-	-	-	-
2003	406	11	177	6	-	-	583
2004	406	11	177	6	28	3	611
2005	430	13	177	6	31	3	638
2008	568	14	177	6	61	6	806
2009	584	16	177	6	62	7	823
2010	584	18	243	7	63	8	890
2011	524	18	243	7	63	8	830
2012	749	20	243	7	186	10	1178
2013	749	20	243	7	183	10	1178
2014-2015	747	20	100	2	326	11	1173
2015-2016	747	20	100	2	344	12	1191
2016-2017	747	20	101	2	344	12	1192
2017-2018	730	19	101	2	354	13	1185

The average tax benefit in FY 2017/18 was a discount of 67.1% from fair market value for farmland; a discount of 87.2% from fair market value for tree growth; and a discount of 38.1% from fair market value for open space.

and wreaths. Weskeag Farms participates in CSA (consumer supported agriculture) whereby individuals can purchase in advance products that will be produced by the farm during the year. Weskeag Farms maintains a farm stand on its property fronting on Buttermilk Lane. As of the date of this plan, land at the west entrance to Town (Adams Farm) has recently been purchased for the purpose of developing an organic beef farm. Some additional acreage in town is devoted to small part-time farming.

Current Use Taxation

Current use taxation provides a financial incentive for maintaining large tracts of land in farmland, forestry, or open space. In 2017-2018, 19 lots in Thomaston totaling 730 acres were taxed as farmland. These farmland parcels are clustered north and south of Route 1 at the west end of town; in the Oyster River, Mill River, Branch Brook, and Meadow Brook areas; and adjacent to the Weskeag Stream abutting the Waldo Tyler Management Area. All are located in either the R-1 or the R-2 District and associated Resource

Protection (RP) areas. While farming is limited, these farmlands contribute to the scenic quality, small-town atmosphere, and ecological integrity of natural resources of Thomaston.

A review of the Current Use Taxation for the Town of Thomaston (**Tables 4-2 and 4-3**) shows a growth in farmland area from 406 acres in 2004 to 730 acres in 2017/18, an increase of 80%.

However, within the farm agriculture category, the acreage in cropland remained relatively constant with the majority of growth occurring in pasture land. The distribution of farmland acreage by type (see **Table 4-3**) shows that agricultural land is primarily in pasture as opposed to crop and orchard:

- 45 acres in cropland in 2004 to 40 acres in FY 2017-2018, with a high of 54 acres during the period of 2012-2015; compared with
- 110 acres in pasture in 2004 and 249 acres in FY 2017-2018.

Table 4-3: Distribution of Farmland Acreage by Type

Year	Total Farmland Acres	Farm Agriculture	Farm Agriculture Crop / Orchard	Farm Agriculture Pasture	Farm Agriculture Horticultural, etc.	Farm Wood	Farm Other *
1990							
2003	406	188	45	111	32	160	59
2004	406	187	45	110	32	160	59
2005	430	206	45	128	33	175	49
2008	568	228	49	171	8	284	56
2009	584	236	53	175	8	288	60
2010	584	236	53	175	8	288	60
2011	584	236	53	175	8	288	60
2012	749	304	54	242	7.5	340	105
2013	749	304	54	242	7.5	340	105
2014-2015	747	301	54	240	7.5	340	106
2015-2016	747	298	44	253	0.5	347	102
2016-2017	747	298	44	253	0.5	347	102
2017-2018	730	289	40	249	0.5	343	98

* Farm other: water, wetland, barren, etc.

This increase in pastureland as opposed to cropland is consistent with the findings of the 2012 census by Knox-Lincoln SWCD of agricultural land throughout Knox County.

Other Factors Impacting Agriculture

The survey conducted by Knox-Lincoln Soil & Water Conservation District (Knox-Lincoln Natural Resource Assessment 2016) identified, among other factors, the following critical current and future issues:

For Non-Irrigated crops: Erosion, nutrient loss from farm fields, soil quality/testing.

For Irrigated Crops: Increasing fluctuation in rainfall during the growing season may require more irrigation for crop success.

For Hay and Pasture: Manure management, soil health, increase in pasture weeds and invasive plants, and affordability of maintaining land.

In addition to issues associated with the management of farmlands identified in the Knox-Lincoln

Natural Resources Assessment, potential threats to the future of agriculture in Thomaston include development pressure, economics, and environmental factors such as climate change, health of pollinators, invasive species, and air quality.

Development Pressure on Farmland

Although population data indicates downward trends, there continues to be development pressure as new homes are built in the R-1 and R-2 Districts despite their designation in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan as rural areas as opposed to growth areas. There is also periodic pressure to develop the west entrance to Town along Route 1 for commercial uses. This area has particular value, not only as open space and farmland, but also for its scenic quality and its contribution to preservation of the compact village center and associated small town atmosphere valued by Thomaston residents.

Economics of Farmland Ownership

Financial challenges cited by farmers include, among other things, small profit margins,

competition from roadside vendors who do not reside in the community, and the difficulty of passing land from one generation to the next. A partial list of resources available to assist farmers and small woodlot owners is found in Appendix 4.

Environmental Factors

Climate Change: The University of Maine’s Coastal Maine Climate Futures report¹ finds that since approximately 2000, the growing season in coastal Maine has increased by about 2 weeks in comparison to the 20th century average. August and September have warmed by 2 to 3 degrees F. The longer growing season can be a benefit to agricultural production. However, the longer growing season has been accompanied by the northward migration of invasive insects and plants, an increase in extreme weather events (> 2 inches of rainfall/day), and more frequent atmospheric blocking patterns that increase the likelihood of heat waves and seasonal drought. The increased temperature variability in late winter and early spring can lead to early crop development before the last freeze as occurred in 2012 and 2016, adversely impacting apple and other crop production.

Health of Insect Pollinators: Bee colony collapse² has been a concern for many years. With the global decline in insect populations, estimated at between 40 and 70%,³ there is a growing concern about the health of pollinators which are essential to many food crops. In addition to bees, other insect pollinators include: moths, butterflies, flies, beetles, ants and wasps. Hummingbirds also serve to pollinate some plants.

¹University of Maine Climate Change Institute, 2018

²Bee colony collapse occurs with a majority of the worker bees disappear from the colony leaving behind the queen and a few nurse bees to care for the remaining immature bees and the queen. There are many theories on the cause including the parasite infestation (Varroa mite), emerging viral diseases, pesticide poisoning, stress from transportation, changes in habitat where bees forage, and immune suppression. Source: US EPA, March 2019.

³ Source: UN Environment Programme, March 2019.

Invasive Species: Information on invasive insects that adversely impact various agricultural and forest resources can be found on the website of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

Air Quality: As noted in the discussion of air quality in Chapter 3, Natural Resources, ground level ozone can harm plants by decreasing growth rates, increasing susceptibility to disease, and reducing crop yields.

2. Forest Resources

Thomaston’s forest resources can be categorized as either woodland or urban forest.

Woodland

About 66% of Thomaston’s land area is estimated to be wooded. Stands include soft, hard and mixed wood. Most currently forested land is located north of the built up “village” area of Thomaston, with some additional woodland along the rivers. There has been little active management of woodland in Thomaston.

Table 4-4 summarizes timber harvest information for the Town of Thomaston. The data was compiled from confidential year end landowner reports to the Maine Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. To protect confidential landowner information, data is reported only where three or more landowners reported harvesting in the town. There have only been two parcels in Tree Growth since 2014, so there is no data available on timber harvesting in Thomaston in recent years. As of 2019, there are two landowners who harvest wood to meet their individual business needs.

Woodland Trends: Current Use Taxation and Tree Growth

Overall trends in forestry are reflected in Current Use Taxation. In 2004, 177 acres (58 acres of softwood, 9 acres of hardwood, and 110 acres

Table 4-4: Summary of Timber Harvest Information for the Town of Thomaston

YEAR	Selection harvest, acres	Shelterwood harvest, acres	Clearcut harvest, acres	Total Harvest, acres	Change of land use, acres	Number of active Notifications
1992-1994	125	0	40	165	0	5
1996-1997	76	0	0	76	6	5
1999	150	0	0	150	0	4
2000	40	0	0	40	3	6
2001	70	0	0	70	0	4
2002	10	0	0	10	0	3
2003	64	0	0	64	0	4
2004	161	0	0	161	0	3
2005	160	0	0	160	0	3
2006	17	0	5	22	10	4
2007	6	0	0	6	0	3
2009-2010	68	0	15	83	0	3
2011	93	0	6	99	0	5
2012	91.7	31	19	141.7	12	5
2013	30	0	8	38	0	3
2014	28	0	0	28	0	4
2015	126	0	0	126	0	6
Total	1315.7	31	93	1439.7	31	70
Average	77	2	5	85	2	4

Data compiled from Confidential Year End Landowner Reports to Maine Forest Service.

Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry - Maine Forest Service
We help you make informed decisions about Maine's forests

*** To protect confidential landowner information, data is reported only where three or more landowner reports reported harvesting in the town.**

of mixed wood) were classified under the Tree Growth Tax Law, down from 423 acres in 1990. A review of the Current Use Taxation for the Town of Thomaston from 2003 to 2018 (**Table 4-1**) shows the following changes:

- An increase from 177 acres in 2003 to 243 acres during the period of 2010-2013, followed by a decrease to 100 acres in the tax year FY 2014/15.
- Acreage in Tree Growth in FY 2017/18 was 101 acres.

Thomaston Town Forest

In 1996, the Town acquired 350 acres of land (now known as the Thomaston Town Forest) to accommodate the proposed wastewater treatment plant and its associated lagoon/spray irrigation system. The Town subsequently acquired an additional abutting 150 acres (Oyster River Conservation Area) in 2015. The Oyster River Conservation Area and Town Forest are located northwest of the village center roughly parallel to the Oyster River. The Forest Management Plan (Jones Associates, Inc., June 1996) developed for

the Town Forest sets the following management objects for the land: wildlife management (high priority), recreation management (high), aesthetics (medium), and timber income (low). A portion of the Town Forest is located within a deer wintering area (DWA) adjacent to the Oyster River and East Branch Brook. A second DWA is located north of Wiley's Corner and east of Beechwood Street.⁴

With the acquisition of the Thomaston Town Forest, a significant amount of forested land has been preserved, thereby protecting wildlife habitat and providing open space for recreational and other purposes. The Thomaston Town Forest Trail, a collaborative project of the Town Conservation Commission and Georges River Land Trust, is a 4.4-mile section of Georges Highland Path that traverses mixed and coniferous woods. The Town Forest provides habitat for deer, wild turkey, moose, and other wildlife and serves to protect a portion of the Oyster River watershed within Thomaston from future structural development.

Urban Forest

Thomaston's urban forest consists of the trees planted by the town along the streets, on school property, and in parks and cemeteries, and the trees maintained as yard plantings by homeowners.

The Town embarked upon a significant and largely successful urban tree planting effort after the dieback of the elms in the mid 1970s. However, a majority of the old sugar maples are now in decline. While the trees planted in the 1970s have grown sufficiently large to improve the urban landscape, continued removal of dead and dying trees followed by new plantings is critical to maintain and enhance the character and livability of the village center. In 2001 the town planted approximately 20 elms thought to be disease resistant,

primarily along Main Street, partially in anticipation of the loss of many old maples. Unfortunately, these elms are susceptible to Dutch Elm disease and several have died and been removed. Additional plantings occurred along Main Street in 2017 in association with the reconstruction of Route 1; however, the rate of new plantings is not keeping pace with removal.

Threats to Forest Resources

The survey conducted by Knox-Lincoln Soil & Water Conservation District (Knox-Lincoln Natural Resource Assessment 2016) identified the following critical current and future issues: management practices; invasive plants and forest pests; permanent protection (conversion to cropland and/or development); and education/outreach.

Non-native Insects: The Maine Forest Service has identified the following non-native insects as posing a significant threat to Maine's forest resources:⁵

- *Emerald ash borer.* Origin - Asia. Found in Aroostook and York Counties. All species of ash trees that grow in Maine are susceptible to injury and death.
- *Hemlock woolly adelgid.* Origin – Japan. Feeding leads to needle loss, crown thinning, dieback, and eventual mortality. Known to be established in southern coastal Maine east to Lincoln County.
- *Asian long horned beetle.* Attacks hardwoods especially maples. Detected in Worcester and Boston, can be spread with firewood. Tunneling by larvae girdles tree stems and branches leading to dieback and eventual mortality.
- *Winter moth.* Origin - Europe. Primarily infests hardwoods – maples, ash, oaks, cherries, apples, and blueberries.

⁴(Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat Map for Thomaston, June 1994.)

⁵Maine Forest Service website, 2018

Established in several towns in coastal Maine. Feeding by caterpillars before buds open in the spring. Trees can become completely stripped of foliage. Defoliation leads to loss of capacity to produce energy. Severe defoliation over many years leads to tree mortality.

- *Red pine scale*. Origin – Japan. Found throughout southern New England. Detected on Mount Desert Island in September 2014. Larvae feed under the bark leading to whole tree mortality.

Invasive Plants: The State has prohibited the sale or import of 33 terrestrial plant species effective January 1, 2018. These non-native plants often crowd out native vegetation and simplify forests habitats. Many of the plants on this list are commonly found throughout Thomaston including, but not limited to, Norway maple, Bishop’s weed (goutweed), Japanese barberry, burning bush, Asiatic bittersweet, Japanese knotweed, common privet, several species of honeysuckle, multiflora rose, purple loosestrife, and black locust. Ornamental jewelweed has begun to invade many wet-soil areas in town. Information on possible control strategies is available on the website of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

Of the above listed plants, the Knox-Lincoln Natural Resources Assessment identified Japanese barberry, Japanese knotweed, multiflora rose, and purple loosestrife, in addition to shrubby honeysuckles and oriental bittersweet as invasive terrestrial plant species of greatest concern for forestlands.

Climate Change: As discussed above, warming temperatures stress more northern species adapted to cooler climates making them more vulnerable to disease and the spread of invasive insect species.

3. Land in Open Space

Thomaston is fortunate to have land in open space and/or farmland—along Route 1 at the west end of town, along Route 131 north and south, and along Old County Road—that forms a greenbelt around the village center.

In the Community Survey, respondents were asked to indicate from a list of 20 which characteristics they liked best about living in Thomaston. Over 90% of those responding to the question identified “open space and scenic vistas” as a characteristic that they liked best. This characteristic was surpassed in importance only by small town atmosphere, mid-coast location, a safe place to live, historic character, and convenience. In a later question, approximately 54% of respondents felt that the Town should do more to protect open space.

Trends in Current Use Taxation for Open Space

As noted above, land in Open Space increased from 28 acres in 2004 to 354 acres in FY 2017/18. The significant increase in Open Space acreage in recent years is attributable largely to the addition of two parcels by Dragon Products in 2012 totaling 123 acres, and the addition of a 143-acre parcel by the Town in 2014 associated with land abutting the Oyster River and the wastewater treatment plant spray irrigation fields.

Open space parcels located in the following areas provide significant environmental benefits and enhance the scenic quality of the Town:

- Dragon parcels – located in vicinity of Weskeag Farm and R. Waldo Tyler Wildlife Management Area associated with the Weskeag Creek Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance.
- Oyster River Conservation Area and Town Forest – create a large habitat block
- Parcels abutting the Mill River and St. George River (a Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance)

- Parcel abutting Route 1 and farmland areas at the western entrance to Town has significant scenic value.

4. Area Geology and Mineral Resources

Bedrock Geology

Thomaston's bedrock geology has long been economically important. Of particular significance is a geologic trough of limestone and siltstone/sandstone, which runs northeasterly from High Street. While small amounts of impure limestone were quarried in many parts of the state, only the Rockland-Thomaston area has historically produced and continues to produce a significant amount of lime from comparatively pure deposits.⁶ These deposits supply the cement plant, which is licensed to produce up to 770,000 tons of cement per year. The plant is currently operating at approximately 60% capacity. Dragon also has an aggregate operation, which utilizes a significant amount of waste rock per year.

The approximately 130-acre limestone quarry associated with the cement plant is bordered by Route 1, Dexter Street, and Old County Road. The quarry is actively mined; and there are sufficient quantities of rock to supply the cement plant for an estimated 50 to 70 years.

Environmental concerns associated with Dragon's operations include: air emissions from operations, truck traffic associated with importation of fuel and delivery of product, and the eventual closure of the quarries. The facility has an air emissions license from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to use a variety of fuels including #2 and #4 fuel oil, tires, tire chips, waste oil, carpet fiber, and petroleum coke. The facility has applied to beneficially reuse the carpet fiber material utilized in the construction of the former rifle range off Route 90 in Warren. While the cement plant may be economically viable for decades to come given the demand for cement,

the manner in which the plant and the quarries are eventually closed will have a significant impact on the town. Regulations governing closure of the quarries are largely limited to safety measures such as creation of rock wall benches. The quarry, the bottom of which is below sea level, will gradually fill with water.

Surficial Geology

Surface deposits are the unconsolidated materials that overlie bedrock. These unconsolidated surficial deposits are often mined for materials such as sand, gravel and clay. Thomaston's sand and gravel deposits historically provided a commercially viable source of material for various construction purposes. This is evidenced by the pits set back from the town's rural roads, notably west of Beechwood Street. These deposits have been largely depleted, and there are no active excavations. The Pease Pit on outer Beechwood Street serves primarily as an area for crushing and screening rock trucked to the site.

D. Policies

State Policies

- 1 Safeguard lands identified as prime farmland or capable of supporting commercial forestry.
- 2 Support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.

Additional Local Policies

- 1 Support the economic opportunities associated with mineral resources while working with the owners of Dragon Products and the smaller pits and quarries to minimize potential adverse impacts to neighboring properties and the community.
- 2 Enhance the attractiveness and livability of the Town through the maintenance of a healthy urban forest and the protection of

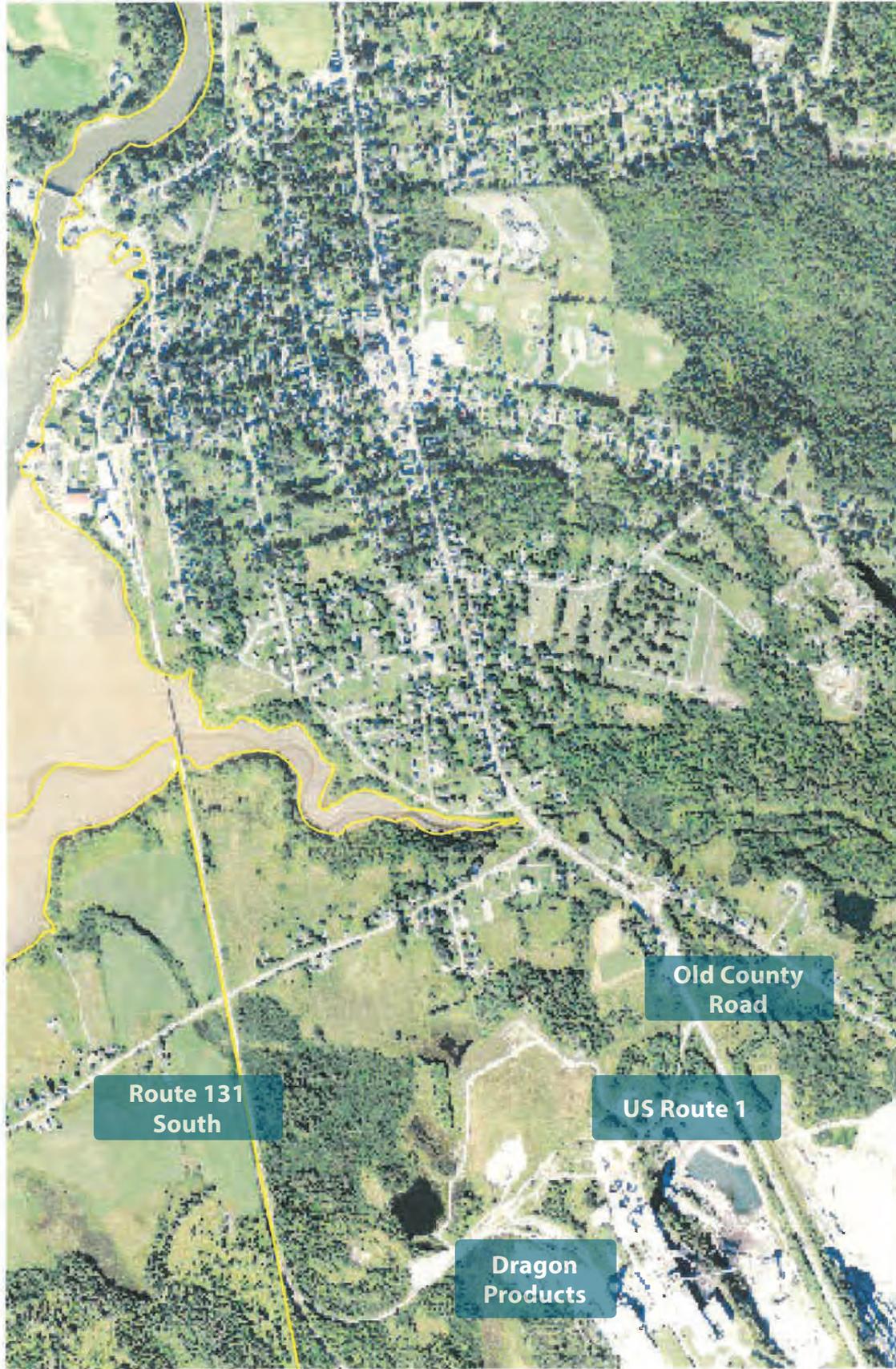
⁶Maine Geological Survey, "History of Maine Quarrying".

open spaces that help to define the village and provide visual access to the shore.

E. Implementation Strategies

- 1 Review the permitted and conditional uses in the R-2 Rural Residential District to ensure that they are consistent with the residential and rural purpose of this land use district.
- 2 Encourage conservation easements to preserve important agricultural, open space, and forest lands through local land trusts, paying particular attention to land in the R-2 Rural Residential District bordering Route 1 at the western gateway to Town.
- 3 Continue to support enrollment of productive farm and forest land and important open spaces in the current use taxation program.
- 4 Permit land uses that support productive agriculture and forestry operations, such as farm stands, farmer's markets, greenhouses, and firewood operations in appropriate land use districts.
- 5 Provide increased funding in the municipal budget and pursue grants for the care and replacement of street trees and trees on Town property.
- 6 Continue to manage the Town Forest in accordance with the objectives and practices set forth in the Town Forest and Town Trails Program.
- 7 Review the Town's existing ordinance governing clustered residential development to determine how it might be revised to encourage its use and enhance protection of critical and important natural resources. Land left in open space in clustered developments should, to the extent possible, include critical natural resources and prime agricultural soils, preserve wildlife travel corridors, and abut and augment such open spaces and large habitat blocks on adjoining parcels.
- 8 Create an interconnected greenway through Town and along the waterfront, linking Town parks and public spaces, with the goals of protecting critical and important natural resources, maintaining wildlife travel corridors, creating pollinator pathways, increasing visual and physical access to the shore, and enhancing low-impact recreational opportunities.
- 9 Consult with the Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.
- 10 Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices.
- 11 Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local and regional economic development plans.
- 12 Maintain regular communication between Town officials and Dragon Products regarding current and anticipated activities at the plant and the status of Dragon's land use and operating permits. Work with the owners of the cement plant and the smaller pits and quarries to minimize adverse impacts from mineral extraction and processing activities and the associated truck traffic.

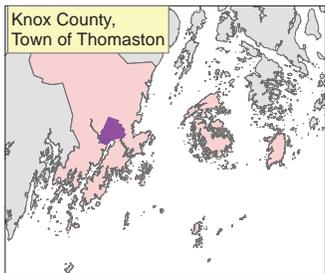
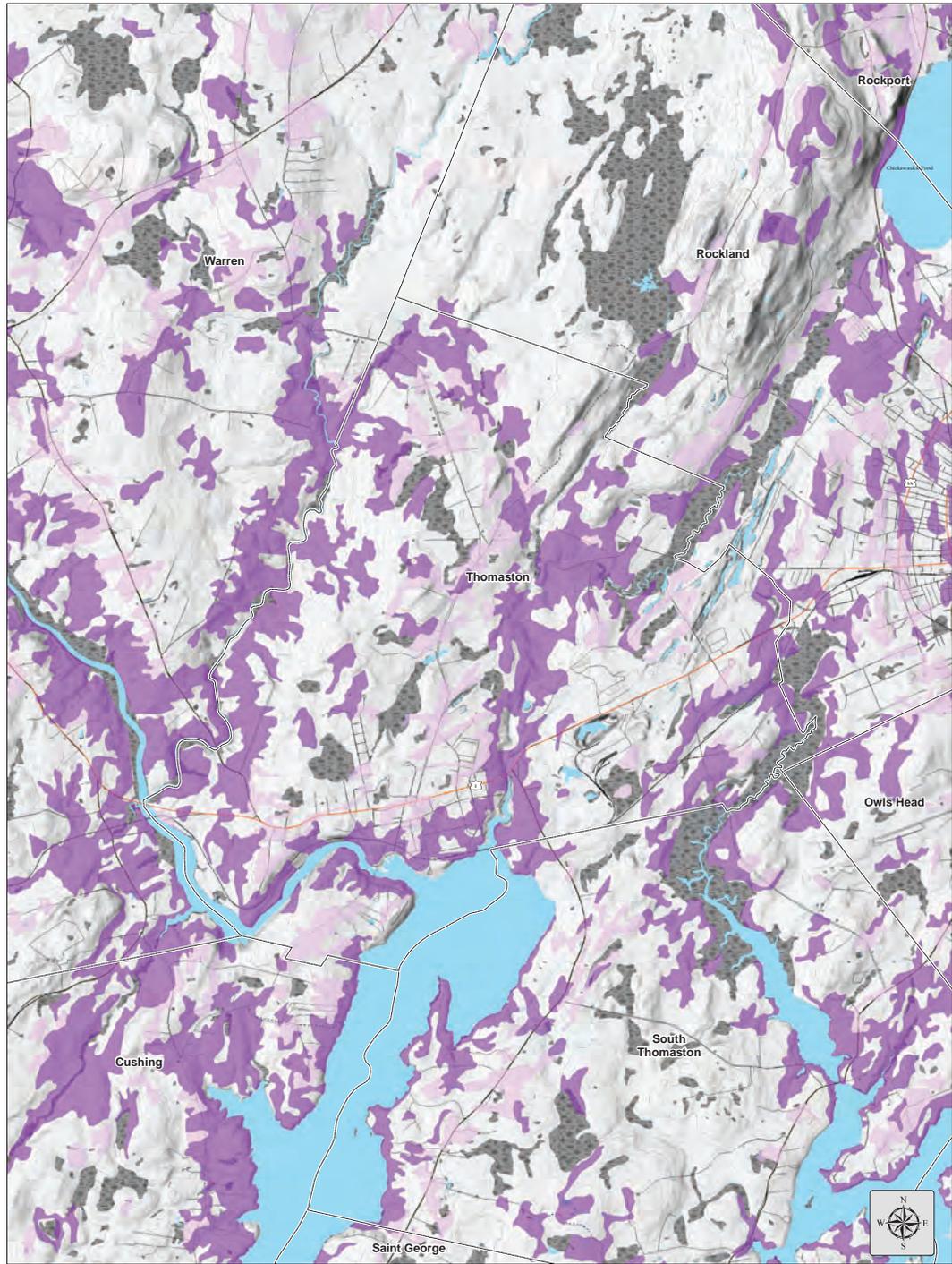
Aerial View of Thomaston







Map 4-2: Agricultural Resources



Thomaston Agricultural Resources

Source Data: USDA, MEGIS, Maine DACF
 Projection: UTM, NAD83, Zone 19, Meters
 Produced by: Municipal Planning Assistance Program, DACF
 April 2017



Legend

- Municipal border
- Farmland of statewide importance
- Prime farmland
- Rivers/Streams
- Waterbody
- Wetlands





Our Rivers and Harbor



Introduction

Thomaston's location on the banks of the tidal St. George River has shaped the Town's character, economy, history, and quality of life. This chapter focuses on the status of commercial fisheries, water-dependent businesses, recreational uses, and physical and visual access to the river. Factors affecting water quality and the natural resources of the river and adjoining wetlands are discussed more fully in Chapter 2, Water Resources, and Chapter 3, Natural Resources.

A. State Goal and State Coastal Policies

State Goal

To protect the State's marine resources industry, ports, and harbors from incompatible development

and to promote access to the shore for commercial fishermen and the public.

State Coastal Policies

1. Promote the maintenance, development, and revitalization of the State's harbors for fishing, transportation, and recreation.
2. Manage the marine environment and its related resources to preserve and improve the ecological integrity and diversity of marine communities and habitats, to expand our understanding of the productivity of the Gulf of Maine and coastal waters, and to enhance the economic value of the State's renewable marine resources.

3. Support shoreline management that gives preference to water-dependent uses over other uses, that promotes public access to the shoreline, and that considers the cumulative effects of development on coastal resources.
4. Discourage growth and new development in coastal areas where, because of coastal storms, flooding, landslides, or sea-level rise, it is hazardous to human health and safety.
5. Encourage and support cooperative State and municipal management of coastal resources.
6. Protect and manage critical habitat and natural areas of State and national significance and maintain the scenic beauty and character of the coast even in areas where development occurs.
7. Expand the opportunities for outdoor recreation and encourage appropriate coastal tourist activities and development.
8. Restore and maintain the quality of our fresh, marine, and estuarine waters to allow for the broadest possible diversity of public and private uses.
9. Restore and maintain coastal air quality to protect the health of citizens and to protect enjoyment of the natural beauty and maritime characteristics of the Maine coast.

B. Analyses

1. Coastal Water Quality

The St. George River, Oyster River, and Mill River below Route 1 are tidal throughout Thomaston and are classified by the State as Class SB waters. Class SB waters “must be of such quality that they are suitable for the designated purposes of recreation in and on the water, fishing,

aquaculture, propagation and harvesting of shellfish, industrial process and cooling water supply, hydroelectric power generation, navigation, and as habitat for fish and other estuarine and marine life. The habitat must be characterized as unimpaired” (38 MRS § 465-B). Water-quality challenges in the St. George River have been dissolved oxygen depletion in the upper estuary and fecal coliform contamination.

Water quality is monitored by State agencies and area municipalities and organizations. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) works with the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and local organizations to monitor compliance with water-quality standards and shellfish harvesting limitations. DEP regularly monitors discharges from licensed facilities such as the wastewater treatment facilities (Thomaston and Warren) for multiple water-quality parameters to ensure compliance with license requirements. DMR assays water quality and shellfish meats in shellfish growing areas to ensure that harvested shellfish are suitable for consumption according to National Shellfish Sanitation Program guidelines maintained by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Water samples are collected from established sites at least six times per year and tested for fecal coliform bacteria, and shellfish meats are assayed after rainfall closures to determine when shellfish are again safe to eat.

At the local level, the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization (with members from the Cushing, South Thomaston, St. George, Thomaston, and Warren selectboards), through an interlocal agreement, manages the available shellfish resources in the St. George River. The Georges River Shellfish Committee, comprised of licensed shellfish harvesters and volunteers, advises GRRSMO, proposes conservation initiatives, and conducts periodic testing of water quality. For example, the Shellfish Committee sponsored DNA-based fecal bacterial

testing of Broad Cove (Cushing) waters in June 2018 that found fecal contamination from birds and mammals (possibly beaver), but none from humans, dogs, ruminants, or horses. Grant-funded DNA testing is scheduled for 2019 to try to identify sources of the contamination.

Thomaston has joined the Tidelands Coalition advocacy group, an organization dedicated to the stewardship of the intertidal zone of Maine's midcoast shoreline. The Town may be able to partner with this organization to conduct additional water quality testing.

2. Local Efforts to Eliminate Pollution Sources

The Town of Thomaston has worked to eliminate sources of pollution in the St. George River and its tributaries, including Mill River and Oyster River.

Notably, the Town's original municipal wastewater treatment plant at the foot of Knox Street was discontinued in 1997, and a new facility was constructed inland at a site north of Route 1. The newer facility is a lagoon system with spray irrigation, which discharges to the St. George River only during the winter months, when the ground is frozen in the spray fields. The Pollution Control Department has been investigating and evaluating several land-based alternative methods of handling treated wastewater in the winter, with the goal of eliminating all discharges to the St. George River. In addition to spray-field use in temperate weather, the Town has experimented with ice mound creation, and is investigating the possibility of creating a constructed wetland, for winter and early spring wastewater discharge, thereby eliminating any discharge to the river.

The Town has also separated its stormwater system from the sanitary system, eliminating all combined sewer overflows.

As of 2017, there was only one remaining overboard discharge (OBD) in Thomaston. It has a flow of approximately 300 gallons per day, and wastewater is treated by a sand filter prior to

discharge to the Oyster River. Additional OBDs discharge to the St. George River in the communities of Warren, Cushing, and St. George.

In November 2018, Maine voters approved a \$30,000,000 bond issue to improve water quality, support the planning and construction of wastewater treatment facilities, and assist homeowners whose homes are served by substandard or malfunctioning wastewater treatment systems. It is hoped that some of these funds can be used to correct OBDs that discharge into the St. George River. See Chapter 3, Water Resources, for further information on efforts to eliminate sources of pollution to coastal waters.

3. Status of Commercial Fisheries

As discussed above, the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization works through an interlocal agreement to manage the shellfish resources in the St. George River. Working with the Shellfish Committee, GRRSMO evaluates DMR's ongoing water-quality monitoring, supervises the seeding of clam flats, and participates in other conservation efforts. **Map 5-1** shows Maine Department of Marine Resources' restrictions on shellfish harvesting in the upper St. George River and Tributaries (Warren to St. George).

The softshell clam fishery has been an important source of income for the region.

Table 5-1 shows softshell clam landings by port for the five towns in the interlocal agreement. **Table 5-2** shows the live pounds and dollar value of the fishery by year. The data by port likely includes harvesting activity in the Weskeag and Medomak in addition to the St. George River estuary.

While there is no information on level of fishing effort or fishing conditions in any given year, there has clearly been a decline in the harvest. Point and/or non-point source contamination does not appear to be the main cause of the observed decline. Dr. Brian Beal, of the University of Maine at Machias, conducted research in



Looking over the lower St. George River (with Thomaston's Brooklyn Heights neighborhood at bottom) toward the St. George peninsula. Muscongus Bay can be glimpsed at top right. Outer Penobscot Bay is at top center and left.

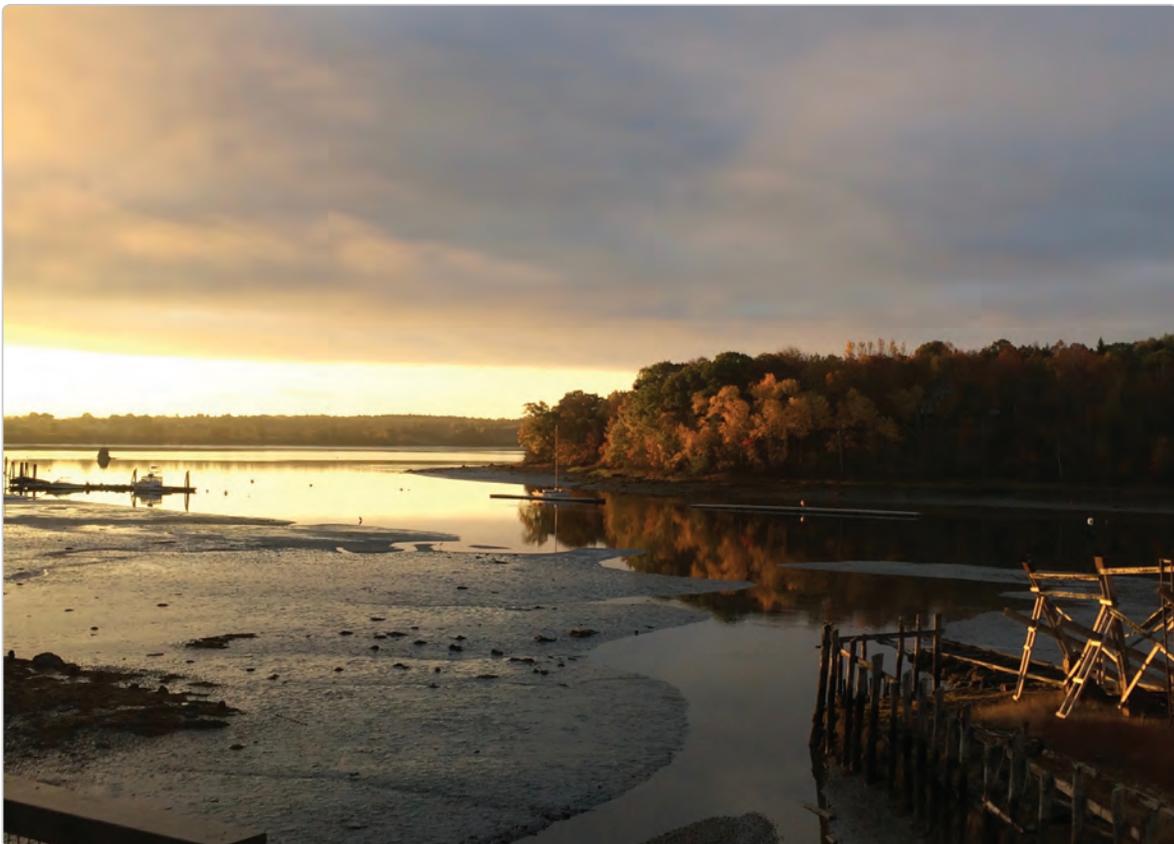


Table 5-1: Softshell Clam Landings by Port*Source: DMR 2007-2018 Maine Soft Clam Landings by Port, data pull of 3-7-2019.*

Year	Thomas ton lbs	\$ value	Cushing lbs	\$ value	So. Thom lbs	\$ value	St. George lbs	\$ value	War- ren lbs	\$ val- ue
2007	43,909	56,312	357,396	481,161			323,073	447,024		
2008	83,478	127,358	276,548	338,346	49,433	61,260	477,694	657,770		
2009	70,795	87,325	300,295	341,928	12,405	18,170	334,152	360,581		
2010	103,901	123,751	219,299	261,695			369,179	414,400		
2011	293,936	491,206	237,707	334,861	47,278	64,726	585,396	814,964		
2012	145,535	213,442	125,963	167,151	44,284	64,429	709,036	983,517		
2013	300,358	442,197	106,235	150,408			849,857	1,440,079	3,577	5,906
2014	223,414	386,705	121,070	245,469			521,344	1,015,623		
2015	125,605	260,182	87,494	218,276	54,897	138,239	176,736	432,913		
2016	81,100	171,422	77,265	151,387			273,041	605,820		
2017	158,845	280,925	68,966	119,879	21,439	39,368	277,418	474,818		
2018 *	70,812	131,271	58,717	101,314			143,778	231,827		
Total	1,701,688	2,772,096	2,036,955	2,911,875	229,736	386,192	5,040,704	7,879,336	3,577	5,906

* 2018 data is preliminary and subject to change.

Table 5-2: Total Live Pounds and Dollar Value by Year*(Thomaston, Cushing, South Thomaston, St. George, and Warren)*

Year	Pounds	\$ Value
2007	724,378	984,497
2008	887,153	1,184,734
2009	717,647	808,004
2010	692,379	799,846
2011	1,164,317	1,705,757
2012	1,024,818	1,428,539
2013	1,256,450	2,038,590
2014	865,828	1,647,797
2015	444,732	1,049,610
2016	431,406	928,629
2017	526,668	914,990
2018	273,307	464,412

the Weskeag, Mill, and St. George Rivers in 2017 on the decline of softshell clams. His research suggests that predation by green crabs and milky ribbon worm is causing the decline. There appears

to be no obvious defense against these invasive species. See the discussion of commercial fisheries in Section C of this chapter.

4. Status of Traditional Water-Dependent Uses

With respect to boatbuilding, technology has had considerable impact on the small boatbuilder in that he/she no longer has to be sited with direct water access. Most traditional waterside boat shops on Thomaston's waterfront have been converted over the years to other marine and related uses. Examples include the Slipway Restaurant, Custom Coatings, The/Zon Boathouse (formerly Rowable Classics), the Priest sail loft building, Tidal Works, Epifanes, Marine Exhaust, the Renaissance Building (now Tischman property and in private use), all of which were once producers of small craft, both recreational and commercial fishing, or of components, materials, or subsystems of marine watercraft.

It would appear that the conversion of most waterfront structures to include uses other than boatbuilding has already taken place, the obvious exceptions being Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding (LM) and Jeff's Marine, where additional growth in their sector could occur.

5. Balance between Water-Dependent and Other Uses

No incompatible new development has occurred that interferes with the working waterfront. Since 2014, parking restrictions at the Public Landing for commercial users have been changed to "open to all." Although the total number of spaces is limited, improved access to water has occurred, benefiting both commercial fishermen and the public. However, patrons of a successful seasonal restaurant adjacent to the Public Landing often utilize parking spaces sought by maritime users of the landing.

Structures that have undergone major needed maintenance in recent years include the Tischman Building (protective riprap and shore-side service floats and bulkhead) and the historic Dunn & Elliot sail loft building (a significant structural rehabilitation and foundation rebuild).

Elements of most Shoreland Commercial District businesses remain water-dependent—i.e., Jeff's Marine, Lyman Morse's Travel-lift launch facility and service floats, and the Slipway Restaurant's landing—but Custom Coatings and Epifanes products, services, and customers are largely, if not totally, road-served and water-independent. An aged marine railway remains on the Epifanes property but is not in use. A boat ramp on the Customs Coatings property accommodates depuration shellfish harvesters as a courtesy but is not used in the Customs Coatings business. The marine railway at the old Renaissance Building was removed in favor of launching new construction via Travel-lift, a technology advance. Boat storage, maintenance, and a computer systems service remain at the site, which functioned for a time as Lyman-Morse's new-vessel construction site before becoming the Tischman Building, in noncommercial use.

All shoreside structures that have residential units on upper floors have marine and/or conditional and grandfathered uses on ground floors. There has been negative growth in this category over the past 20 years, as Tischman's captain's quarters was eliminated in a 2017 rehab of the building.

6. Waterfront Zoning

Land bordering the harbor, together with a 4.38-acre area bordering the St. George River at the western end of Town at Route 1, is zoned Shoreland Commercial District (SC) with conditional uses focused on marine-related businesses and services except where a grandfathered prior use is allowed. See Section C for a description of the Shoreland Commercial District.

The Town maintains Resource Protection District (RP) status along the St George River upstream of the new (2017) Wadsworth Street Bridge, as well as RP status of the Oyster River and Mill River shorelines. The Town also restricts jet-ski usage to river areas downstream

of the Public Landing through Harbor Ordinance and signage.

7. Harbor Management

The Thomaston Harbor Committee actively serves as the steward for the recreational and commercial uses of the Town's tidal waters and associated shoreland areas.

Elements of a Comprehensive Harbor Plan were put in place during the drive for deauthorization from Federal Project status from 2007 until 2014, but never finalized. Planning is presently focused on the development of water access sites for additional recreational uses as well as maintenance dredging for that portion of the Federal approach channel near the harbor bend. The five-town Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization and its associated Shellfish Management Committee serve as a regional group concerned with water quality as it impacts the shellfish industry within the St. George River estuary.

8. Dredging Needs

Examination of recent (1997 and 2012) surveys of harbor depths by the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) following the most recent maintenance dredging (1977), and prior to Federal Project Deauthorization of Thomaston Harbor in 2014, shows that the riverbed to the east and northeast of the granite monument is the principal area requiring maintenance dredging. This area lies in the approach channel and remains in the Federal Project controlled by USACE. It is likely that extreme-deep-draft sailing vessels that frequent the Lyman Morse yard will be most affected, and LM believes that it is not too soon to ask for maintenance dredging of the approach channel. The Harbor Committee and the Board of Selectmen requested that USACE put Thomaston's approach channel on the list for maintenance dredging in a letter sent by the Town Manager on October 24, 2018. While awaiting

dredging, the Town should request that USACE monitor the area in question with surveys every 5-10 years.

9. Water Access for Commercial Harvesters and the General Public

Thomaston has the only public boat launch in the upper St. George River estuary. This facility provides access to the river not only for Thomaston residents, but also for the neighboring communities of Warren, Cushing, Friendship, and South Thomaston. It is the primary launch site for clam harvesters in the upper estuary. The ramp is located a short distance from US Route 1 and is freely accessible to the general public. The only other public launch site on the lower St. George River is at Port Clyde, approximately 12 miles downriver from Thomaston. The Town maintains the Public Landing as a resource for commercial transportation and commercial harvesters as well as for recreational watercraft users.

The 2005 Comprehensive Plan identified a need to address parking conditions and options at the Public Landing. A two-year experiment to make all Public Landing parking available to all on a first-come, first-serve basis concluded in 2014 with all restrictions on commercial parking removed from both the Harbor Ordinance and area signage. The opening of a successful restaurant adjacent to the Public Landing often decreases the number of available parking spaces for maritime landing users, but, to date, there appears to be space for all.

While it is unlikely that the parking area at the Public Landing can be expanded, it is hoped that Mill River Park and a future carry-in launch site at the Kiln Site location adjacent to the new Wadsworth Street bridge will take up some of the demand for user parking at the Public Landing, especially for paddlecraft users. The Town Beach water access site has no parking but is close to the Kiln Site, which has adequate space for vehicles.

10. Visual Access to the Shore

Visual access to the shore is highly valued by Town residents and visitors.

Sites of visual beauty include the western and eastern river views from Thomaston Green, the bends in the river from the Wadsworth Street bridge, the river vista from the old Wadsworth Street north bridge abutment, the high-water harbor view from the “Town Beach,” the hilltop overlook area at the Public Landing, and the Mill River overlook from Mill River Park, all of which are protected by Town ownership. The newest viewscape site is at the Riverview Hayfields Preserve on Route 131 South in South Thomaston, owned by the Georges River Land Trust (GRLT).

C. Conditions and Trends

1. Commercial Fisheries

The softshell clam fishery is significant in the St. George River estuary. The number of available commercial shellfish licenses authorized by the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization has remained relatively stable (as of 2019) at 140, of which 22 are designated “student licenses” and reserved for harvesters under 18 years old. However, estimates of commercial yields of shellfish from the St. George River estuary indicate a decrease of 50% or more from the 2017 harvest. Increasing predation of softshell clams by green crabs and milky ribbon worms threatens the local resource, with no cost-effective defense yet developed. It is not clear if netting will provide protection against green crabs and, if so, whether the harvesters will adopt the required farming activity as opposed to seeking the remaining wild clams. As a result of the declining harvest, only 89 licenses were issued for the 2019/20 license year.

A number of organizations are experimenting with commercial uses of green crabs. Manomet, a Massachusetts-based natural-resource and environmental-science nonprofit organization, is partnering with the University of Southern Maine and others to determine whether there

are commercial markets for green crab, especially culinary applications. Early taste testing using Brunswick-area chefs indicates a flavor superior to the Chesapeake Bay blue crab.¹ The Quahog Bay Conservancy of Harpswell, in collaboration with Wolfe’s Neck Center for Agriculture & Environment in Freeport, is evaluating the use of green crabs as compost. Another evaluation is underway at the University of Maine School of Food and Agriculture to determine the value of green crabs as a food additive in dog biscuits.

Only one lobsterman presently works traps downriver using Thomaston Harbor as a base. Several other lobstermen store traps ashore and use the Public Landing for seasonal set and retrieve operations but land their catches downriver. Larger groups of lobster harvesters are based in St George and South Cushing, where co-ops supplying fuel and bait and receiving catch are available.

The viability of the commercial fisheries is also threatened by climate change. The Gulf of Maine Research Institute has reported that between 2004 and 2016, the Gulf of Maine has warmed more rapidly than 99% of the global ocean with implications for commercial fisheries and changes in species composition. This accelerated ocean warming is thought to be attributable to changes in circulation patterns in the North Atlantic and the Gulf of Maine’s position at a boundary between cold and warm ocean currents. In particular, there has been a shift in the relative strengths of the cold Labrador Current, which normally feeds the Gulf of Maine, and the warm waters of the Gulf Stream. The weakening of the Labrador Current is thought to be due, at least in part, to melting of the Greenland Ice Sheet. The Coastal Maine Climate Futures Report² states that predictions on warming are complicated by

¹www.manomet.org/project/green-crabs/

²Birkel, S.D. and Mayewski, P.A., 2018 Coastal Maine Climate Futures. Orono, ME: Climate Change Institute, University of Maine, 24pp.

multiple interactions between the warm, salty water of the Gulf Stream, the cold waters of the Labrador Current, and the atmosphere.

The Coastal Maine Climate Futures Report finds that fisheries including lobster and cod have undergone dramatic changes associated with climate and other factors since the 1980s. While the report finds that the cod fishery collapsed primarily due to overfishing, management efforts to rebuild it have failed because waters have warmed above the temperature range to which cod are adapted. In contrast, the abundance of lobster has increased fourfold since the late 1980s due (at least in part) to the decrease in cod (which is a predator of juvenile lobster) and to warming waters, which are favorable to a point. However, lobster mortality increases significantly if sea surface temperature is greater than approximately 68 degrees F, which has occurred during summer months in southern New England with an associated collapse in that fishery. Additionally, warming waters appear to cause Gulf of Maine lobsters to shed earlier in the season.

There is a need to observe the trends and potential impacts on Maine estuaries of increasing seawater temperature, declining pH, and nutrient run-off. Declining pH (i.e., ocean acidification) has been observed worldwide and is occurring more rapidly in near-shore environments such as the Chesapeake Bay, the Gulf Coast, and Puget Sound due to nutrient run-off and the consequent overproduction and decay of organic matter. Correlated declines of pH and dissolved oxygen with depth—possibly indicative of decaying organic matter that is consuming oxygen and producing carbon dioxide as it sinks—have been documented in Casco Bay and other near-shore waters. Of particular concern for the Maine coast, a 2012 study found that the Gulf of Maine has less buffering capacity than the Gulf of Mexico or the southeast coast of the U.S. and is thus more vulnerable to acidification. And Maine's estuaries, being less saline, are

more vulnerable to acidification than the open Gulf of Maine.

The Georges River Tidewater Association, a local environmental nonprofit, monitored the St. George estuary for dissolved oxygen, nutrients, temperature, and pH for several years before becoming inactive in 2013. Since then this work has been carried forward by the Maine Coastal Observing Alliance, a coalition of environmental groups (which GRTA helped found) throughout the midcoast region from Casco Bay to Rockport. MCOA benefits from its broad midcoast regional perspective, its grant-winning acumen, and from professional scientific services provided by the University of Maine's Ira C. Darling Center for Marine Science.

The fear is that human activity, both local and global, might push conditions past the evolved limits of tolerance of estuarine organisms. Studies have shown that juvenile shellfish are particularly vulnerable to pH declines because less calcium carbonate is available for shell building. Anecdotal evidence from St. George estuary shellfish harvesters suggest declines of starfish and mussel populations, both of which, like clams, grow by deposition of calcium carbonate and are thus vulnerable to acidification. The mussel bars that once lined the estuary's channel downriver from Thomaston have disappeared.

2. Water-Dependent Uses

Map 5-2: Thomaston Water-Dependent Sites, shows water-dependent shoreside facilities at the following locations:

- Jeff's Marine;
- shoreside floats at the former Lyman Morse/Renaissance Building (now Tischman);
- proposed carry-in paddlecraft access at the Kiln Site;
- the Town Beach, a potential area for paddle-craft beginner lessons, although tidal;

- the marine railway (in need of rebuilding) at the Epifanes building;
- the tidal launch ramp at the Priest sail loft building;
- the original integral ramp in The/Zon Boathouse;
- Customs Coatings' ramp serving depuration harvester catch transfers;
- ramp and floats at the Slipway Restaurant;
- floats and launch ramp at the Public Landing;
- shoreside service floats and Travel-lift bay at Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding;
- proposed carry-in paddle-craft beach launch site at Mill River Park (an ongoing development).

A proposed extension of a portion of the Village Trail³ along the waterfront would connect Mill River Park to Route 131 South (High Street) via a footpath/bridge parallel to Route 1, presently a dangerous obstacle for pedestrians and cyclists.

In addition to the shoreside sites described above, harbor centerline moored floats are being used to expand harbor mooring capacity in the center of the harbor for deep-draft watercraft, exclusively by Lyman Morse. Without wave protection, the eastern end of the harbor is unsuited for float mooring, and only private single-point swinging moorings and the single Town rental mooring are deployed there.

3. Current Land Use Regulations

In 1987, Thomaston adopted a Shoreland Commercial District in an effort to preserve the waterfront for marine-related uses. The District is 33.45 acres in size in three sections. The largest

section, comprising 26.49 acres, includes the north side of the harbor between Ferry Street and the Mill River; all parcels east of Wadsworth Street and south of Water Street and the railroad tracks, except for a law office; and the Epifanes parcel previously known as Marine Exhaust on the north side of Water Street. A 2.58-acre parcel on the south side of the harbor includes Jeff's Marine. At the western end of Town, just south of Atlantic Highway (US Route 1) at the Warren Bridge, Art Tibbett's Marine and the C.H. Rich parcel total 4.38 acres.

Within this district, permitted land uses are limited to accessory uses to existing uses; emergency operations; essential services; non-residential structures less than 100 square feet in floor area for educational, scientific, or nature-interpretation purposes; and soil and water conservation practices and structures designed to stabilize natural or man-made conditions as a part of a Wildlife Management Plan approved by the State or the County Soil and Water District.

Conditional uses, which must be reviewed and approved by the Planning Board, are largely limited to marine-related activities such as aquaculture; fish and shellfish loading, processing, depuration and storage; marine, boatyard or shipyard; public open space and recreational use; restaurant or neighborhood store; marine-related professional or service businesses; and wharf, pier, floats, and boat launching facilities plus other similar uses.

Since 2000, five structures within the SC District have had occupied living spaces on the second or higher floor with marine-related or other conditional or grandfathered uses on the ground floor, a compromise which seems not to have had a negative impact on the working waterfront. Recently, one living unit was eliminated (Tischman).

The revised (2013) FEMA 100-year storm flood plain maps continue to place many of the structures in the Shoreland Commercial

³The Thomaston Village section of GRLT's Georges Highland Path

District in a high-risk category. Property owners are advised to consider mitigation measures and insurance to protect their structures and capital equipment. Recently both the Tischman and Priest properties have received significant foundation and/or riprap to harden them against storm-driven wave action.

4. Harbor Management Efforts

Thomaston has a Harbor Master and a Harbor Committee comprised of citizens and stakeholders. The Town provides an annual operating budget for maintenance and expenses of the Committee and the Harbor Master's stipend. The Committee works to ensure that the harbor remains a viable public resource that will continue to serve both recreational and commercial marine-related interests.

In 2010 the Harbor Committee created a User Survey, which was distributed by email and in hard copy. From the responses received (24), a document titled Issues and Concerns was created to serve as a guide for ongoing Harbor Committee activities. After the harbor was deauthorized from its Federal Project status by an Act of Congress in 2014, the focus of the Harbor Committee turned toward updating the Harbor Ordinance and promoting paddlecraft activity as a usage growth segment not requiring either mooring or trailer launch facilities.

5. Shoreside Facilities

Shoreside facilities in the Shoreland Commercial District include, from east to west:

- the Mill River Park, which needs a ramped path allowing carry-in water access;
- Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding, which needs maintenance dredging at the approach channel bend (to be scheduled by USACE);
- Thomaston Public Landing, which requires ongoing maintenance;
- Slipway Restaurant and its associated dock;
- Custom Coatings;
- The/Zon Boathouse;
- the former Priest Sail Loft (undergoing extensive rehabilitation in 2018-19);
- Tidal Works (art studio and small-boat repair activity);
- Epifanes (marine coatings warehousing and shipping, marine railway);
- an Epifanes-owned property (ex-Marine Exhaust) on the north side of Water Street, directly across the street from the main Epifanes facility;
- the Town Beach;
- the Tischman Building (private boat fleet maintenance and storage);
- Blue Maple Computer Systems; and
- Jeff's Marine (marina, boat and outboard motor sales and service) on the opposite riverbank from the Tischman Building.

There exists a potential to add a paddlecraft water access site adjacent to the Wadsworth Street bridge, in an area referred to as the Kiln Site. Planning will include site land acquisition and facility design and development.

The Town Beach water access site is small and remains a challenge to utilize effectively. Paddlecraft beginner training in this current-free area is a possibility, although tidally restricted. Model sailcraft could be launched at mid and higher tides.

Lyman Morse is considering ways to improve and expand waterside and landside operating conditions at its facility. One possibility is the

creation of a wave-attenuation structure to shelter their shorefront service floats from afternoon sea-breeze wave activity as well as long-fetch storm wave action.

6. Public Water Access Sites

Thomaston has several areas where the public can access the water, including, among others, the Public Landing, Mill River Park, the Town Beach, and the Kiln Site. These public water access sites are depicted on **Map 5-3, Thomaston Public Water Access Sites**.

7. Scenic Shoreline Resources: Ownership and Protections

Significant scenic resources with views of the river and its shores include:

- Thomaston Green, western river overlook, Town owned;
- St. George River Narrows, view upriver from the Wadsworth Street bridge;
- Thomaston Harbor, the view from the old State-owned north bridge abutment;
- Town Beach, view of harbor at mid to high tide, Town owned;
- Public Landing and Overlook, view of harbor and down the river, Town owned;
- Mill River views from Town-owned Mill River Park hillside; and
- Route 131 South view to the west of the river and Thomaston waterfront, especially at sunset. There are scenic views from the road and a publicly accessible viewpoint at the Riverview Hayfields Preserve owned by the Georges River Land Trust. (This land is in South Thomaston.)

D. Policies

State Policies

- 1 Protect, maintain, and improve marine habitat and water quality.
- 2 Foster water-dependent land uses and balance them with complementary land uses.
- 3 Maintain or improve harbor management and facilities.
- 4 Protect, maintain, and, where warranted, improve physical and visual public access to the community's marine resources for all appropriate uses.

E. Implementation Strategies

Strategies for Policy 1

- 1 Ensure water quality testing is underway and performed on a regular and timely basis at critical sampling locations.
- 2 Work with the Tidelands Coalition, the Maine Coastal Observing Alliance, and other groups to develop a Georges River Watershed Management Plan in which all upstream communities participate in planning recreational sites, reducing pollution from agricultural sources and failed septic systems, and seeking funding for water quality and waterway improvements from sources such as the State's November 2018 wastewater infrastructure bond.
- 3 Continue to work with the other towns in the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization to restore shellfish harvests in the St. George River, including DNA-based water-quality testing to determine the sources of fecal coliform bacteria currently restricting shellfish harvesting in the Upper Bay and lobbying DMR to allow GRRSMO to manage the Upper Bay as a source of softshell clam broodstock to seed the rest of the estuary.

- 4** Consider ways to implement reduced usage by Town residents of lawn chemicals (fertilizers and pesticide, herbicides), which eventually reach the St George, Mill, and Oyster rivers, typically by numerous surface-water drainage swales.
- 5** Encourage the development of land-based alternative treated wastewater handling with the goal of eliminating any discharge to the St. George River. To this end, continue the feasibility studies for a constructed wetland on Town-owned land, allowing the cessation of winter discharges.
- 6** Investigate the feasibility of creating storm-water-stilling wetland areas along drainage swales, allowing the absorption of nutrients and toxins prior to reaching area rivers.
- 7** Assess whether and to what extent the Working Waterfront current-use taxation program can help forward the above-stated policies and strategies.

Strategies for Policy 2

- 1** Complete the paddlecraft carry-in walkway ramp at Mill River Park, seeking foundation funding for work beyond Town Public Works capability or capacity.
- 2** Acquire the Kiln Site land from the State and seek Small Harbor Improvement Program grant funding for site design and development as a carry-in water access site with vehicle parking.
- 3** Seek creative use of the Town Beach area, perhaps as a current-free training site for paddlecraft beginners and as a launching site for model small craft.
- 4** Consider a future Oyster River water access site from Town property, allowing paddlecraft outings to and from harbor launch locations.

Strategies for Policy 3

- 1** Lobby the US Army Corps of Engineers for future maintenance dredging of the Federal approach channel to Thomaston Harbor and for continued monitoring of channel siltation.
- 2** Continue to seek an equitable sharing of harbor centerline mooring accommodations between commercial, recreational, and transient maritime interests.
- 3** Continue to maintain the waterside and land-side elements of the Public Landing—which is the principal point of public access to the entire St. George Estuary—seeking grant funding from the Small Harbor Improvement Program and other sources as needed.
- 4** Encourage half-tide and drying moorings for watercraft that can endure daily grounding without damage.
- 5** Revitalize the Comprehensive Harbor Management planning activity.

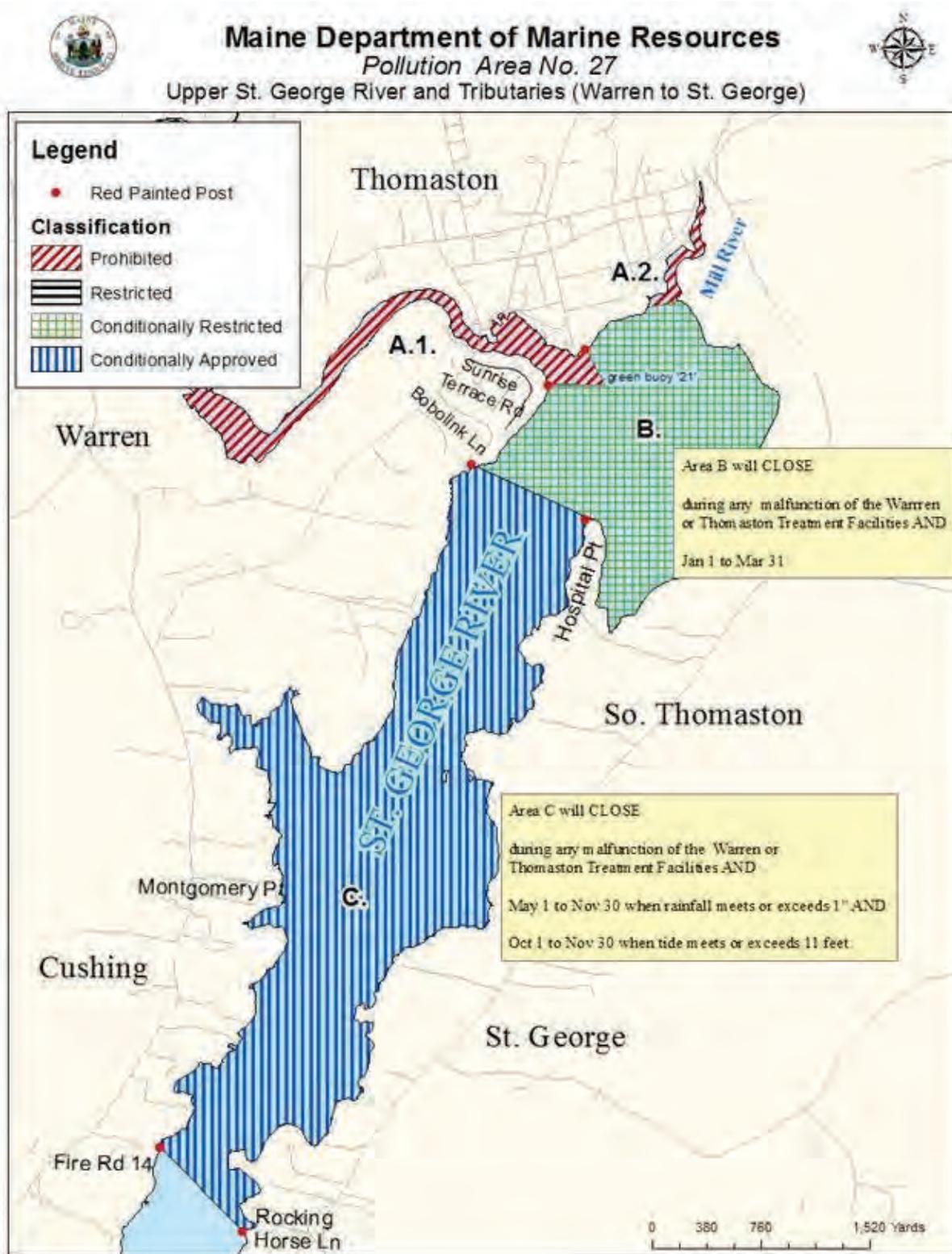
Strategies for Policy 4

- 1** Upgrade the Water Street portion of the Thomaston Village Trail to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- 2** Extend the Village Trail from Mill River Park to Route 131 South via a footbridge and pathway adjacent to pedestrian-hostile Route 1 working with Georges River Land Trust (GRLT) and applying for Foundation funding as needed.
- 3** Support the GRLT in its efforts to establish physical access to scenic views from Route 131 South.
- 4** Pursue public/private partnerships to develop important undeveloped lands along the rivers through such mechanisms as purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.





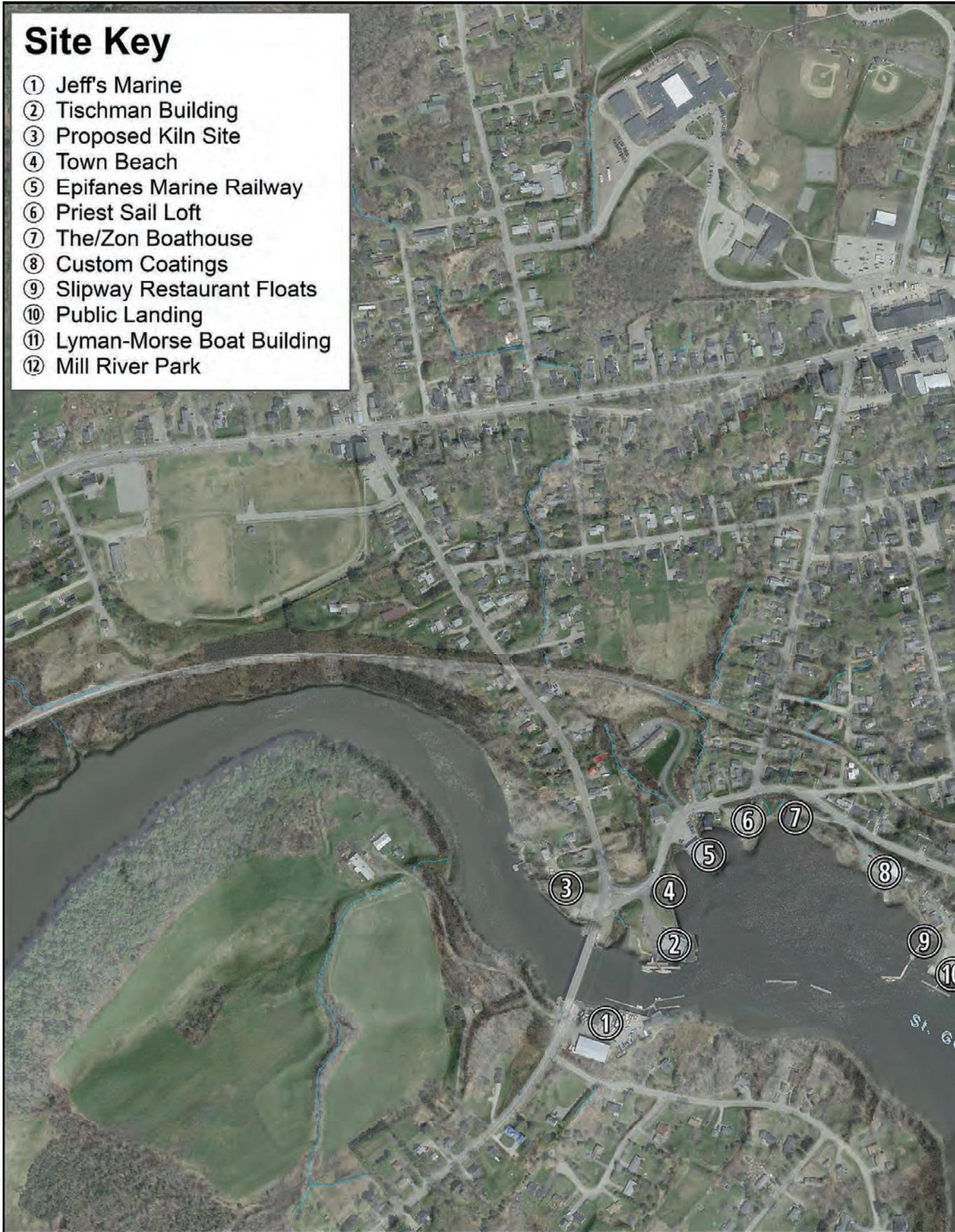
Map 5-1: Maine Department of Resources' Restrictions on Shellfish Harvesting in the Upper St. George River and Tributaries

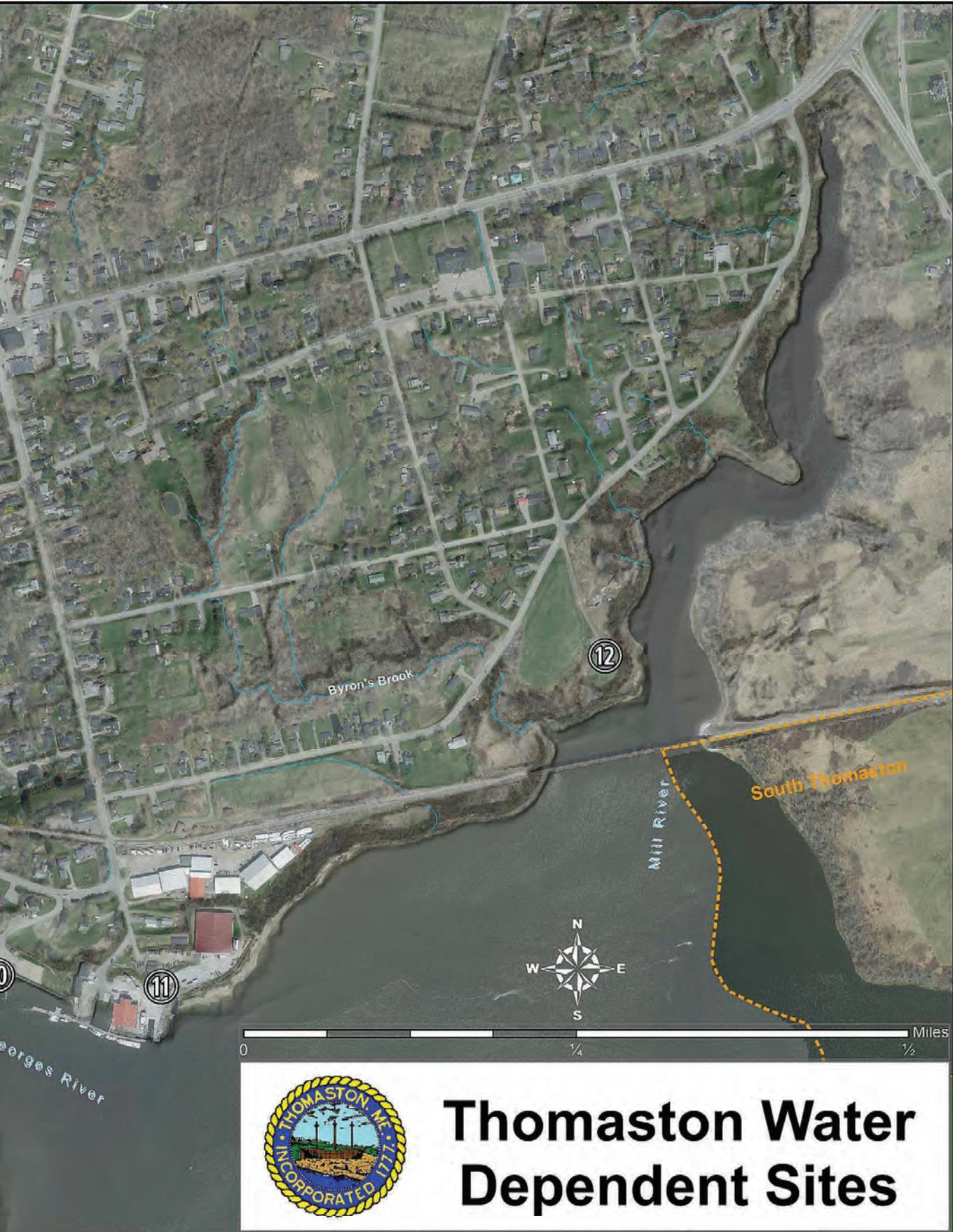


Map 5-2: Thomaston Water-Dependent Sites

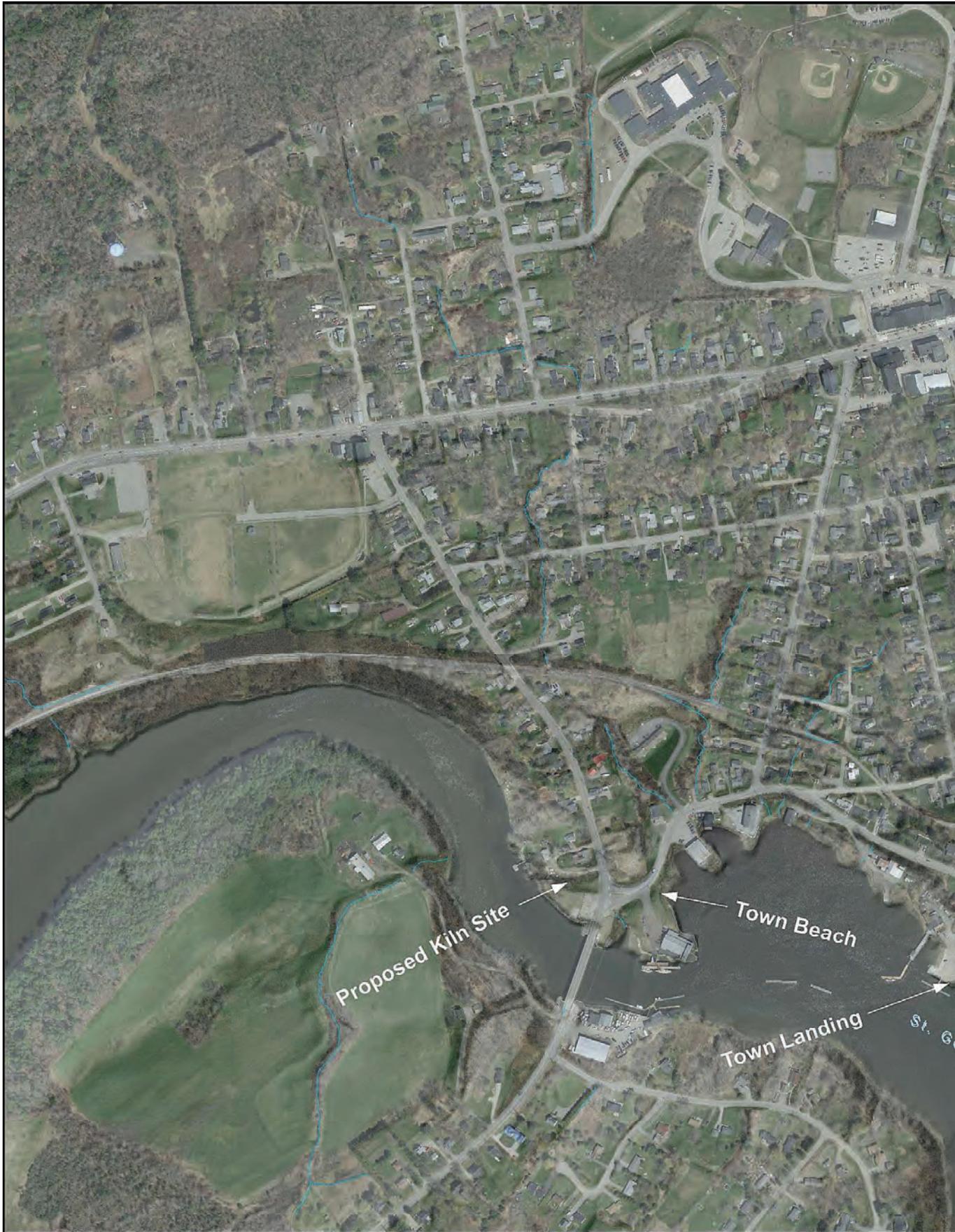
Site Key

- ① Jeff's Marine
- ② Tischman Building
- ③ Proposed Kiln Site
- ④ Town Beach
- ⑤ Epifanes Marine Railway
- ⑥ Priest Sail Loft
- ⑦ The/Zon Boathouse
- ⑧ Custom Coatings
- ⑨ Slipway Restaurant Floats
- ⑩ Public Landing
- ⑪ Lyman-Morse Boat Building
- ⑫ Mill River Park





Map 5-3: Thomaston Public Water Access Sites





Thomaston Public Water Access Sites

Our People



Introduction

Not only does the vitality of a community depend on a growing and diverse population, but its economy depends on it as well; population growth and economic growth go hand in hand. Thomaston's population has been declining and aging for several decades, and data suggests that unless the Town is proactive, this trend is likely to continue into the decades ahead.

Since 1990 Thomaston's population has declined by 16% when adjusting for the loss of the prison population with the State Prison move from Thomaston to Warren in 2001. The age group from 20 to 44 (the child-bearing years) experienced the greatest decline, and the group of 65 and over showed the greatest increase.

Sixty-eight percent of the households in Town consist of only one or two persons, and children 19 and younger account for only 20% of the population.

Given that Thomaston is unlikely to experience a surge in births in the coming years, growth will have to come from in-migration from other towns, other states, and other countries. It is important, therefore, that Thomaston become known as a vibrant community that supports its senior population while attracting new families. To this end, the Town needs to focus on preserving its historic architecture and small-town feeling, providing ample affordable housing options, having excellent schools, and demonstrating forward thinking in the areas of environmental stewardship and sustainability.

A. Goals

State Goal

None required.

Local Goals

1. To be a diverse and vital community that is home to people of varying ages and genders from a range of economic, social, and cultural backgrounds.
2. To grow our Town's population as an integral component of both community and economic development.

B. Analyses

1. Thomaston's population is likely to continue to decline and age in the ten-year period of this plan.

The 2010 Census data shows Thomaston's population as 2,781, a decrease of 16.3% from 3,324 residents in 2001, the year after the prison population moved to Warren. The Census Bureau's American Community Survey estimates a 2017 population of 2,767 or a total decline of 16.7% from 2001. This rate of decline is significantly higher than other towns in Knox County. The Maine Office of Policy and Management's data projects a continued slow but steady decline through 2034. An analysis of birth and death rates in town shows that out-migration is a significant factor in the decline.

Census data also shows that the population has aged, with the median age rising from 35.6 years in 1990 to an estimated 44.7 years in 2017. Thomaston has the lowest median age of neighboring towns in Knox County except for Warren, which is impacted by the prison population. ACS estimates indicate that the age group in Thomaston that shows the greatest decline is 20 – 44, referred to as the "child-bearing years," while the age group with the largest increase is 65 and older. The 2010 census shows that only 30.9% of households in town include children

under 18. In recent years there has been a slight increase in the number of middle-aged people moving into some of the town's larger historic homes. Few, if any, of these new residents have children living at home.

Among other critical data:

- According to the 2010 census, 68% of Thomaston's households are one- or two-person households.
- Thomaston continues to lack ethnic diversity of its population, with 97% of citizens identifying themselves as being white.
- Approximately 90% of Thomaston residents over 25 have completed high school or higher, which is only slightly lower than the Knox County and State averages.
- While recent population projections suggest a slight increase in State population through in-migration, this trend is not evident in Knox County nor in Thomaston. It is also relevant to note that data provided in the 2005 Plan, supplied by the office of the State Economist, supported a prediction that Thomaston's population would continue to *grow* at a slow but steady rate, with the total number of persons reaching as high as 4,424 by 2013. In reality, the reported population of Thomaston in 2013 was 2,768.
- While all current data suggest a continuing decline in population, predictions related to the impact of climate change over the next 30 years suggest that as temperatures and extreme weather events continue to increase in southern parts of country, northern New England will become increasingly attractive. The Town needs to pay close attention to this emerging trend and plan accordingly.

- Thomaston has not historically had a significant seasonal population. However, there is a growing trend toward large historic homes being purchased by retirees who are in residence seasonally.

Given that Thomaston is unlikely to experience a surge in natural population increase in the coming years, any growth will have to come from in-migration from other towns, other states, and other countries.

2. A further population decline has implications for the workforce, the tax base, the housing stock, municipal services, and schools.

Shrinking Workforce

Not only does the vitality of the community depend on a growing and diverse population, the Town's economy depends on it as well. When a local workforce shrinks, small companies that can't find employees are forced to move or go out of business. Companies looking to relocate or expand want to do so in places where the population is growing. In an aging town and region, more people retire each year, making it harder for employers to find workers to fill jobs as well as reducing the size of the consumer market. A growing elderly population will depend on a shrinking working population.¹

Shrinking Tax Base

Continued population decline and aging will result in a shrinking tax base. The village commercial area will likely decline from lack of market base; large, old houses may fall into greater disrepair, possibly being converted into multi-unit living options or non-residential uses. The town could lose its small-town identity and its historic character, which are among its greatest assets.

Shifting Housing Demand

Housing needs will focus on smaller, low-maintenance dwellings rather than large historic homes. Congregate housing, assisted living facilities, and nursing home options will need to be developed, or the population will further decline as people move elsewhere to find these accommodations.

Both to accommodate aging residents and to attract new residents, the Town needs affordable housing options for fixed-income seniors, workforce recruits, and a diverse community.

Municipal and school services

An older population requires more health care services, increasing the demand for nurses and physicians. As the number of children declines, school enrollment shrinks and per-student costs increase. The need for police and fire protection, youth programs, and library services decreases, while demands for nursing care, emergency and other medical services, public transportation, senior recreational activities, assisted living services, and home care services increase. A continued reduction in school-age population will most likely result in the closure of more schools.

3. If Thomaston's population continues to decline and age, there will continue to be a significant portion of the population living in poverty.

According to census data, the median household income in Thomaston decreased about 4% between 2010 and 2017, while at the same time the Knox County median income rose 17%. The data also shows that the percentage of individuals living below the poverty level in Thomaston is significantly and consistently higher than any other community in Knox County and is significantly higher than the State average as well. Approximately 24% of Thomaston residents live in poverty; particularly alarming, 84.4% of Thomaston families headed by women live below

¹<https://www.maine.gov/economist/projections/pub/Population%20Outlook%20to%202034.pdf>

the poverty level. The reasons for these findings demand in-depth investigation.

C. Conditions and Trends

1. Population Over Time

Unless otherwise noted, the source of the following data is the US Census Bureau, either from the Decennial Census, which relies on an actual total count of the population, or the annual American Community Survey (ACS) which is an estimate based on a random sampling of approximately 3.5 million addresses each year. ACS data tends to have large margins of error.

The Town population trends since 1960 are shown in **Table 6-1**. The 2010 Census data showed the population of Thomaston as 2,781, which represented a 25.8% decline from the 3,748 reported in the 2000 Census. However, the 2000 Census data included the Maine State Prison population, which was relocated to Warren in 2001. Without the 424 prison residents, the Town population in 2001 was 3,324, making the 2010 decline a somewhat less dramatic but still significant 16.3%. The American Community Survey, as reported by the US Census Bureau, showed little change between 2010 and 2017. The reasons for the ten-year decline and subsequent stabilization are unclear.

Table 6-2 shows the population trends in Thomaston versus other Knox County towns. Thomaston's population decline between 1990 and 2017 was the largest in Knox County even after adjusting for the loss of the prison population in 2001.

Table 6-3 shows the Maine Office of Policy and Management's population projections for Thomaston. These projections (which are updated every two years) indicate that Thomaston's population will continue to decline, but at a slower rate. The overall change from 2019 to 2034 is projected to be a decline of 5.1%.

A town's population changes as a result of births, deaths, and migration. **Table 6-4** shows the impacts of these factors on Thomaston's population between 2001 and 2015. There were 39 more births than deaths during this period, suggesting an out-migration of 595 people. In the period between the 1990 and the 2000 Census, Thomaston had experienced an in-migration of 464.

2. Population Distribution

Census data indicates that the Town's population is continuing to get older, with the age group from 20 to 44 declining by 8.5% between 2000 and 2010. During this same period the age group 45 – 64 increased by 5.1%. Between the years 2000 and 2017, the age group 55 to 64 is estimated to have increased by 9.6% and the age group 65 and older increased by 5.5%. The age groups 0-19 have remained stable. The median age increased from 39.4 to 44.7. **Table 6-5** shows these trends.²

As shown in **Table 6-6**, between 2000 and 2017 the portion of the town's population that is 55 and older increased by 14.7%.

Tables 6-7 and **6-8** show that the median ages and the percentages of population that are 65 or older are relatively consistent throughout Knox County. According to the 2017 ACS, Camden has the oldest median age at 53.9 years, and Thomaston has the youngest at 44.7. The percentage of the Camden population that is 65 or over is estimated to be 27.7%, which is the highest of neighboring communities; Union's is the lowest at 17.6%. Thomaston's is the second lowest at 20.6%, and the average for all of Knox County's is 22.9%. Warren was not included in

²The 2000 census data includes the prison population and cannot be disaggregated. It is difficult to be specific about how this affects the age distribution percentages but it is fair to assume that there would be little impact on the age groups from 0 to 19 since the prison does not serve that age group. The age group 19 to 54 would be most impacted and the percentage of people 55 and up would be impacted, but probably not significantly.

TABLE 6-1: Thomaston's Population Changes Since 1960*

Year	Number	% Change
2017	2767	-0.4%
2010	2781	-16.3%
2001	3324	+0.5%
1990	3306	+14.0%
1980	2900	+9.6%
1970	2646	-4.8%
1960	2780	-1.1%

*Data prior to 2001 include the prison population; the 2001 population is adjusted to reflect the move of the prison population to Warren

TABLE 6-2: Knox County Population Changes Since 1990

Community	1990	2000	2010	2017 estimate	% change 1990-2010	% change 1990-2017
Thomaston	3306	3324	2781	2767	-15.8%	-16.3%
Camden	5057	5254	4850	4837	-4%	-4.4%
Owls Head	1574	1601	1580	1559	3%	-1%
Rockland	7972	7609	7297	7204	-8.5%	-9.7%
Rockport	2854	3209	3330	3356	16.7%	+17.6%
Warren	3138	3794	4751*	4706	51.4%	+50%
Union	1989	2209	2259	2507	13.6%	+26%
Knox County	36,310	39,618	39,736	39,700	9.4%	+9.3%

*Reflects the move of the prison population to Warren

TABLE 6-3: Thomaston Projected Population

Year	Thomaston Observed Population	Percent Change
2004	3137	
2009	2833	-9.7%
2014	2773	-2.1%
	Projected Population	
2019	2752	-0.8%
2024	2724	-1.0%
2029	2682	-1.5%
2034	2631	-1.9%

**TABLE 6-4: Thomaston Population Change
Due to Births, Deaths, and Migration**

	Population Change	Births	Deaths	Migration
2001 - 2015	-556	492	453	-595

TABLE 6-5: Age Distribution of Thomaston's Population

Age Group	2000	2010	2017 Estimate	% Change 2000 - 2010	% Change 2000 - Est 2017
Pre-School - Under 5	5%	6%	4.4%	+1%	-0.6%
School Age 5 - 19	17.6%	17.2%	15.3%	-0.4%	+2.3%
Childbearing Age 20 - 44	36.5%	28%	31%	-8.5%	-5.5%
Working Adults 45 - 64	25.7	30.8%	28.6%	+5.1%	+2.9%
Retired & Elderly 65 and older	15%	18.1%	20.5%	+3.1%	+5.5%
Median Age	39.4	44.8	44.7	+5.4%	+5.3%

TABLE 6-6: Thomaston Population Under and Over Age 55

Age Group	2000	2010	2017 Estimate	% Change from 2000
0 - 54	74.5%	66.8%	59.9%	- 14.6%
55 and older	25.4%	33.2%	40.1%	+13.9%

**TABLE 6-7: Median Ages of Knox County Communities
in 2000, 2010, and Estimated for 2017**

	Thomaston	Camden	Owls Head	Rockland	Rockport	Union	Knox County
2000	39.4	47	53.8	40.9	42.9	40.2	41.4
2010	44	53.2	52.1	43.5	48.8	46.5	46.2
2017	44.7	53.9	52.5	46.4	49.3	43.5	47.8

TABLE 6-8: Percentage of Population 65 and Older in Knox County Towns

Community	2000	2010	2017 Est.	change from 2000
Thomaston	15%	18.1%	20.6%	+5.6%
Camden	23.4%	27.7%	27.7%	+4.3%
Owls Head	24.1%	25.1%	22.9%	-1.2%
Rockland	19.5%	19.6%	25%	+5.5%
Rockport	17.3%	19.9%	25.5%	+8.2%
Union	13.4%	16.5%	17.6%	+4.2%
Knox County	17.2%	19.2%	22.9%	+5.7%

this analysis because of the effect of the prison population.

The 2010 Census showed Thomaston's population to be 53.1% female and 46.9% male (**Table 6-9**). By the time of the 2017 ACS estimates, these numbers had changed to 48.9% female and 51.1% male. Currently, the older the age grouping, the higher the percentage of females in that group

In the 2010 Census, 98.6% of Thomaston respondents identified themselves as being a member of only one race. Of those, 97.0% identified themselves as white. Further breakdown is shown in **Table 6-10**.

Tables 6-11 and **6-12** show populations by household in Thomaston and Knox County. According to the US Census Bureau, a household "consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit. A household includes the related family members and all the unrelated people, if any, such as lodgers, foster children, wards, or employees who share the housing unit. A person living alone in a housing unit, or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit such as partners or roomers, is also counted as a household." The 2010 census showed that of Thomaston's 1,219 households, 68% were 1- or 2-person. The average household size was 2.25, and the average family size was 2.75.

The 2010 census showed the median household income in Knox County as \$45,264 (see

Table 6-13). Knox County towns ranged from \$29,592 in Rockland to \$69,554 in Rockport. Thomaston showed a household income in the middle of the range, at \$48,965. The 2017 ACS showed Knox County median income at \$53,117 with towns ranging from \$40,486 (Rockland) to \$62,625 (Rockport). Thomaston's median household income fell to \$46,993, the second lowest in the County after Rockland. **Table 6-14** shows that the number and percentage of upper-income households (\$75,000 and above) in Thomaston increased from 15.5% in 2000 to 33.5% in 2017.

The percentage of Thomaston residents living below the poverty level in 2017 was estimated to be 23.4%. As **Table 6-15** shows, this was the highest in Knox County. The percent of individuals living below the poverty level in other Knox County towns ranged from 1.5% in St. George to 17% in Rockland and Warren. The County average was 11.6%, and the State average was 12.9%. Particular note should be taken of the percentage of families living below the poverty line that are headed by females in Thomaston, as shown in **Table 16-16**. Further investigation is needed to determine the causes of Thomaston's very high poverty rate.

Tables 6-17 and **6-18** show the education attainment of Thomaston residents. In 2017, approximately 92% of Thomaston residents 25 or older had earned a high school diploma. This was a 7.1% increase since 2000 and—within the

TABLE 6-9: Thomaston Population By Gender*

Year	Female	Male
2000	46.5%	53.5%
2010	53.1%	46.9%
2017 Estimate	48.9%	51.1%

*Again, the 2000 census data includes the prison population which was entirely male.

TABLE 6-10: Thomaston Population by Race

Race	% of Total Population
One Race	98.6%
	% of One Race
White	97.0%
Black	0.3%
American Indian	0.5%
Asian	0.8%
Hispanic	0.4%
Other	0.1%
Two or More Races	1.4%

TABLE 6-11: Households in Thomaston, Rockland, and Knox County

		1990	2000	2010
Thomaston	number	1,130	1,436	1,219
	% growth		+30.19%	-15.1%
Rockland	number		3,434	3,423
	% growth	NA		-0.3%
Knox County	number	14,344	16,608	17,258
	% growth		+15.78%	-3.9%

TABLE 6-12: One- and Two-Person Households in Thomaston in 2010

Number of Households	1,219
1-Person Households (% total)	30.4%
2-Person Households (% total)	37.6%
Total 1- and 2-Person Households	68%
Average Household Size	2.25
Average Family Size	2.75

TABLE 6-13: Median Household Income in Knox County

	2000 Census	2010 ACS	2017 ACS
State	\$37,240	\$46,933	\$53,024
Knox County	\$36,774	\$45,264	\$53,117
Thomaston	\$33,303	\$48,965	\$46,993
Appleton	\$36,615	\$46,823	\$52,102
Camden	\$39,877	\$44,250	\$52,500
Cushing	\$40,598	\$47,000	\$54,028
Hope	\$42,273	\$57,519	\$56,563
Owls Head	\$49,231	\$48,958	\$57,407
Rockland	\$30,209	\$29,592	\$40,486
Rockport	\$47,155	\$69,554	\$62,625
St George	\$41,211	\$39,777	\$57,188
Union	\$37,679	\$53,412	\$56,271
Warren	\$35,662	\$53,438	\$57,000
Washington	\$35,492	\$41,167	\$48,553

TABLE 6-14: Household Income Levels in Thomaston, 2000 to 2016

	2000 Census	Percent	Estimate 2010 ACS	Percent	Estimate 2016 ACS	Percent
Total Households	1,428	100.0	1,287	100.0	1,200	100.0
Less than \$10,000	202	14.1%	130	10.1%	77	6.4%
\$10,000 to \$14,000	99	6.9%	80	6.2%	124	10.3%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	220	15.4%	148	11.5%	102	8.5%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	214	15.0%	80	6.2%	129	10.8%
\$35,000 to \$49,000	313	21.9%	225	17.5%	194	16.2%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	226	15.8%	383	29.8%	322	26.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	65	4.6%	122	9.5%	93	7.8%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	62	4.3%	107	8.3%	125	10.4%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	19	1.3%	12	0.9%	16	1.3%
\$200,000 or more	8	0.6%	0	0.0%	18	1.5%
Median household income	\$33,303	-	\$48,963	-	\$47,969	-

TABLE 6-15: Percentage of *Individuals* Living Below the Poverty Line per ACS Estimates

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
State	12.9	13.5	13.9	13.9	13.6
Knox County	11.6	11.0	11.2	11.3	10.8
Thomaston	23.4	23.7	20.1	17.6	15.7
Appleton	8.5	10.1	13.9	13.2	12.1
Camden	12.6	11.9	10.2	9.0	6.4
Cushing	5.3	10.0	10.0	12.2	16.8
Hope	12.1	13.8	11.1	9.9	7.9
Owls Head	10.2	11.7	11.9	12.8	7.3
Rockland	17	13.7	14.2	13.5	15.1
Rockport	7.2	6.0	9.2	9.1	8.4
St. George	1.5	2.4	2.8	5.3	6.8
Union	3.9	4.6	4.2	6.2	4.5
Warren	17	17.2	12.6	12.4	10.3
Washington	12.9	17.8	16.6	18.6	17.5

TABLE 6-16: Percentage of *Families* Living Below the Poverty Line in Thomaston and Two Other Knox County Towns, per ACS Estimates

	Thomaston	Margin of Error for Thomaston	Washington	Rockport
All Families				
2017	23.4		10.3	4.2
2016	23.7	+/-11.1%	12.9	4.3
2015	16.6	+/-9.6%	8.9	6.4
2014	9.8	+/-6.0%	9.2	6.6
2013	8.4	+/-6.1%	7.7	6.9
Married Couple Families				
2017	2.8		24.3	2.9
2016	6.7	+/-8.3%	10.4	3.5
2015	5.1	+/-6.2%	7.1	3.5
2015	1.2	+/-2.3%	7.1	.9
2013	1.9	+/-3.3%	6.9	.5
Female householder Families, "No husband present"				
2017	84.4		24.3	0
2016	83.9	+/-20.3%	25.4	0
2015	48.8	+/-30.6%	24	20.3
2014	27.6	+/-19.8%	29.2	28.2
2013	19.5	+/-23.9%	11.3	29.7

TABLE 6-17: Education Attainment of Thomaston Residents 25 and Older

	2000 Census	2017 Estimated (ACS)
HS Diploma or Higher		
Thomaston	84.9%	92%
Knox County	87.5%	93.7%
State	85.4%	92.1%
BA/BS or Higher		
Thomaston	20.9%	26.6%
Knox County	26.2%	30.5%
State	22.9%	30.3%

TABLE 6-18: Education Attainment of Thomaston Residents 25 and Older, with Post-Secondary Detail

	2000	2010	2017
No HS Diploma			
Thomaston	15.1%	NA	5.8%
Knox County	12.5%	10.4%	5%
State	14.6%	10.2%	5.1%
HS Graduate			
Thomaston	39.8%	NA	33.6%
Knox County	36.4%	37.2%	35.2%
State	36.2%	35.2%	33.3%
Some College			
Thomaston	19.4%	NA	26%
Knox County	18.9%	16.7%	18.5%
State	19.0%	19.2%	19.5%
Associate Degree			
Thomaston	4.7%	NA	5.7%
Knox County	5.9%	8.8%	9.5%
State	7.3%	8.9%	10%
BA/BS Degree			
Thomaston	12.6%	NA	18.8%
Knox County	17.1%	18.1%	19.7
State	14.9%	17.2%	19.3%
Graduate Degree			
Thomaston	8.2%	NA	7.8%
Knox County	9.2%	8.1%	10.8%
State	7.9%	9.4%	10.9%

+/-4.8% margin of error in the ACS data—was consistent with Knox County and State graduation rates. Approximately 26.6% of Thomaston residents had a bachelor’s degree or higher, slightly below the Knox County and State figures.

D. Policies

- 1 Encourage population growth through immigration.
- 2 Create opportunities to maintain and enhance diversity.
- 3 Become known as a place that celebrates and supports its senior population while at the same time attracting young families.
- 4 Improve the reputation of our schools as an important factor in attracting young families to choose Thomaston as their new home.
- 5 Ensure a range of affordable housing options.
- 6 Monitor population trends and use that information to plan for community needs.

E. Strategies

- 1 Develop, promote, and market Thomaston as a place where:
 - Natural beauty abounds.
 - The Town is visually attractive and distinctive.
 - The housing stock is attractive, desirable, and affordable.
 - There is convenient access to a wide variety of outdoor activities including water-based recreation and off-road biking.
 - There are great schools.

- There is a commitment to being eco-friendly, bike friendly, child friendly, farmer friendly, and natural/organic food friendly.
 - There is an attractive array of services including restaurants, pubs, specialty shopping, and fast internet.
- 2 Place an emphasis on creating community by assigning the responsibility for creating and managing community-building events to the ECDC, Recreation Department, and/or other groups or individuals.
 - 3 Assign responsibility for “greening” the community (everything from recycling to hiking/biking paths to planting trees and emphasizing the use of native species) to appropriate groups or individuals.
 - 4 Enact ways to reduce the impact of heavy truck traffic through town:
 - Commission a feasibility study for an alternate route around town as a high-priority initiative; see **Chapter 7: Economy**.
 - Promote the expanded use of rail for freight transport.
 - Establish “No Engine Brake” zones.
 - Install effective speed and noise awareness signs.
 - Enforce speed and noise regulations.
 - 5 Develop and promote programs to welcome and support immigrant populations.
 - 6 Build a stronger relationship between the Town and RSU 13, including creating a Friends of Our Schools group.
 - 7 Become a member of the AARP “Age-Friendly Community Network.”
 - 8 Encourage the expansion of affordable workforce housing options.

- 9 Commission a feasibility study to extend Town water and sewer services into the TR3 Transitional Growth Zone to encourage the construction of new housing there. (This could be included in a multidimensional planning/feasibility study for an alternate route around the town center as mentioned above and in **Chapter 7: Economy**.)
- 10 Explore ways to merge the need for affordable housing with the need to preserve the Town's historic architecture.
- 11 Develop ecofriendly housing on Thomaston Green and/or elsewhere in town for families and seniors.
- 12 Develop and promote creative, affordable child care solutions, which might include encouraging retired residents to serve as volunteers.
- 13 Work with surrounding communities to create regional public transportation options.
- 14 Further investigate the reasons for Thomaston's high poverty rate and develop a plan for addressing the identified issues.
- 15 Investigate and mitigate issues related to food insecurity for Town residents.
- 16 Pursue the development of a range of assisted living options for townspeople of all income levels.
- 17 Monitor migration trends, including the impact of climate change, and prepare accordingly.





Our Economy



Introduction

Thomaston is a small town with a compact village center and an enviable midcoast Maine location affording convenient access to recreation, shopping, and dining. The Town has attractive, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and strong residential appeal. Home prices are more affordable than in the nearby towns of Camden and Rockport, though residential rents are high. Downtown invigoration is consistently the top economic development goal of Thomaston residents in surveys and public meetings.

Thomaston has experienced a population decline over the past two decades (see **Chapter 6: Our People**) but may see a stabilization or reversal of that trend as climate change afflicts other regions of the US with hotter summers and

more extreme weather and the Town's rates of in-migration increase. Town policies should help existing residents age in place and should aim to attract new residents of all ages, incomes, and entrepreneurial aspirations. A diverse town is a more vibrant town.

Impediments to Thomaston's economic growth include its high municipal tax rate (among the highest in Maine), its population decline of recent decades, its aging workforce, and the increasingly heavy traffic on Route 1, which bisects the town center.

The Town should build on its New England village charm, augmenting that with a forward-looking vision for education, arts, local food, walkability, age-friendliness, and environmental sustainability. The Town's economic development committee, formed in 2019, should seek

opportunities to promote the Town to people and businesses and should maintain the leadership and resources to help guide and propel future development. The Town should pursue commercial and industrial development in the East End Economic Tract to increase town valuation and reduce the tax burden on homeowners; should form a downtown development plan (including signage, placemaking, and commercial buildout north of the Union Block); should work closely with the regional school union to control education costs; should push at the State level for equitable municipal and education revenue sharing; and should conduct ongoing analyses of what level of municipal services is sustainable.

Identified as a priority more than a half-century ago, a new east-west road around the northern village perimeter would divert heavy through-traffic from the center of town, improve the livability of village neighborhoods, and provide an emergency route when Route 1 is closed. The Town should commission a thorough analysis of the feasibility of such a road, including its possible routes and financing, its optimal access points and zoning, and its likely impacts on downtown and East End businesses, Route 1 traffic, rural and designated growth districts, affordable housing, and future growth and municipal valuation.

The Town should leverage each municipally owned property in the highest and best manner. Strategic management plans to capitalize on these assets—the Thomaston Green, the Thomaston Academy, the Watts Block, and the former Lura Libby school (to which the Town offices, police department, recreation department, and food pantry are moving in early 2020)—should be developed, annually updated, and shared through the Town website, newsletters, and annual report. The Town should also plan how best to integrate its river frontage with the village area.

A strategic plan for the Town's parks and trails should be developed with input from the Georges River Land Trust, the Town's Conservation

Commission and Harbor Committee, and others. With planning and development, the existing network of trails can become a prized greenway surrounding the village area while offering recreation for walkers, hikers, mountain bikers, and cross-country skiers and access points for paddlecraft. An interlinked system of land and water trails can become a major component of Town habitat for native plantings, pollinators, and wildlife.

Sitting on 10 acres of land with frontage on Route 131 and views of the St. George River, the General Henry Knox mansion and museum is a unique local asset that no other midcoast community can replicate. The Town should engage and partner with the nonprofit group that runs the museum to capitalize on the museum's tourism appeal while supporting its mission.

Thomaston has the necessary attributes to make residents happy to be here and visitors sorry to leave. Residential and downtown development should capitalize on this.

A. Economic Goals

State Goal

Promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.

Local Goal

Foster sustainable economic growth that increases job opportunities, broadens the Town's tax base, encourages in-migration and diversity, builds downtown vitality, and improves the residents' well-being while preserving Thomaston's historic small-town character. The Town's economic development strategy should aim to make the Town a great place to visit, but the most productive emphasis will be on making this a great place to live.

B. Analysis

1. Background

Since adopting its 2005 Comprehensive Plan, Thomaston has experienced significant changes

in its downtown and highway commercial districts, municipal tax base, and demographics. For the most part these changes are continuations of statewide and national trends that predate 2005.

Thomaston's East End Economic Tract

Extension of municipal sewer service into the highway commercial and industrial districts served by Route 1 at the east end of town—collectively the East End Economic District—was enabled by the Dragon Products Tax Increment Financing district (TIF) instituted in 2002/03. The TIF and a related Credit Enhancement Agreement (see **Chapter 12: Fiscal Capacity**) encouraged Dragon Products, the Town's largest taxpayer, to make \$44 million of upgrades and improvements to its systems and facilities, and the sewer line extension encouraged commercial development in the East End. Whatever negative impacts this highway development has had on Thomaston's downtown, it diversified the municipal tax base. East End development was the major factor increasing the Town valuation (real estate and personal property) from \$218 million in 2004/05 to \$367 million in 2008/09, during which years the town's mil rate dropped from 20.55 to 14.95, providing significant tax relief to homeowners.

Since the Walmart superstore opened in the East End in the 2014/15 tax year, the Town's top three taxpayers have been (in descending order) Dragon Products, Wal-Mart, and Lowe's, with Dragon Products alone providing approximately 22% of the town's tax revenues. The Town valuation reached a high-water mark of \$398.5 million in 2014/15 before declining to \$389.5 million in 2017/18.

There remains about 60 acres of vacant or temporary-use land¹ in the highway commercial district, which, if fully developed, could add as much as \$65 million of valuation to the town. If

¹ "Temporary use" refers to businesses in temporary or mobile structures that are not on owner-occupied lots.

municipal expenses held constant, that added valuation would drop the tax rate by about 3 mils.²

East End development places additional demand on police, fire, and emergency services, and it increases truck and commuter traffic through the center of town on Route 1, which provides the most direct access to the East End from the south. For this and other reasons discussed elsewhere in this and other chapters, a new local road to divert heavy through-traffic around the northern edge of the village should be investigated as a high priority.

Lowe's requested a tax abatement from Thomaston in 2016, forcing the Board of Assessors in 2017 to reduce its valuation from \$15.6 to \$14.35 million. As of November 2019, Walmart has appealed to the State of Maine for a reduction of its Thomaston store assessment from \$15.64 to \$7.4 million, reducing its annual tax bill by half, retroactive to 2018/19. Both actions are in keeping with a nationwide tax-abatement strategy of big-box retailers to use nearby vacant stores for valuation purposes.³ Not coincidentally, big-box retailers—having diverted consumer spending from mom-and-pop stores across America since the 1970s—are themselves under growing pressure from online retailers.⁴ Thomaston should be deliberate and strategic in its efforts to guide future East End development, prioritizing sustainable, wealth-creating industry and commerce over big-box retailing.

As of late 2019, the Town's economic development committee is exploring the possibility of a land swap with Dragon Products. The Town would acquire approximately 40 acres of

²For comparison, a hypothetical residential buildout development on the Thomaston Green consisting of twenty houses, each valued at \$350,000, would add \$7 million to the town valuation, reducing the tax rate by about one-third of a mil.

³David Leonhardt, *New York Times*, 12/9/18.

⁴U.S. retailers announced the closing of 6,000 stores in the first quarter of 2019, more than in all of 2018. Online sales made up around 16% of retail sales in 2018 but are predicted to rise to 25% by 2026, forcing the closure of 75,000 stores (Nathaniel Meyersohn, *CNN Business*, 4/16/19).

conservation land in the industrial zone with frontage on Route 1, Buttermilk Drive, and Butler Road in exchange for a similar acreage of town-owned high-value wetland bordering the Oyster River. If Maine DEP approves the swap, it will provide a significant increase to the industrial zone acreage available for development.

The Dragon TIF and associated Credit Enhancement Agreement will expire in 2022 unless extended. Town should consider extending the Dragon TIF to 2033/34 and should consider how best and most appropriately to deploy the increased TIF income that will begin with the expiration of the Credit Enhancement Agreement in 2022.

Thomaston's Downtown

As in other small towns in Maine and across America, Thomaston's downtown—the village commercial district—struggled for decades to maintain full occupancy. America's downtowns may never again be the one-stop shopping destinations they once were, but Thomaston's downtown can nevertheless be the community's heart, a vibrant place to shop, dine, pass time, run errands, walk, and meet neighbors. In an age of outlying superstores and online shopping, town centers must transition to providing experiences rather than simply selling goods—and that means off-season and after business hours, not just during the summer or between 9 and 5. In surveys and public meetings, Thomaston residents overwhelmingly support this.

Whereas development in the highway commercial district can diversify the tax base, a thriving downtown is the glue that holds the community together, enhances quality of life, attracts in-migration, and helps to secure the Town's future prosperity. Thomaston's downtown is anchored by a grocery store, several other stores, a bank, restaurants, service providers, and the Town offices. The goals should be full occupancy and best use to make the downtown an

increasingly attractive destination while maintaining the Town's unique character.

Thomaston's Taxes, Part 1

As of the 2018/19 tax year, the majority of the Town's top 20 real-estate tax payers are in the East End Economic District (see **Table 7-8**), and 42.5% of the town's real-estate tax revenues derive from the East End. Without the East End economic development of the past ten to fifteen years, the 2018/19 mil rate would have been as high as 28.40 rather than 20.93, as **Table 7-1** suggests.⁵

Largely as a result of East End development, the town's total valuation increased from \$218,803,435 in 2004/05 to \$367,261,261 in 2008/09, the last year of Maine School Administrative District #50. The Town's revenue commitment to MSAD #50 that year was \$2,891,520, or 43.0% of total spending.

The following year, 2009/10, was the first year of Thomaston's participation in the newly formed Regional School Union 13, and the Town's revenue commitment to RSU 13 that year was \$3,004,355, or 43.8% of overall spending of \$6,853,835. Thomaston's valuation that year was \$370,820,241, and its mil rate rose to 15.48 from 14.95 the previous year.

Eight years later, in the 2017/2018 tax year, Thomaston's valuation was \$389,467,476, and the Town's revenue commitment to RSU 13 was \$4,095,417, representing 47.5% of the Town's total expenditures of \$8,605,434. The Town valuation increased 6% in those years while spending on municipal services increased 21.5%, RSU 13 spending increased 41.6%, and the Town's contribution to Knox County increased 38.1%.

In 2018/19, the Town's RSU 13 spending was an estimated \$4,445,063, representing 48.2% of municipal revenues and 59% of property tax revenues. A \$2.1 million increase

⁵This ignores the impact of East End development on municipal services and expenses, which dilutes the tax benefit slightly but does not alter the conclusion.

TABLE 7-1: Thomaston East End Economic District Value and Tax Rate Calculations

Thomaston real estate and personal property valuation 2017/18	\$ 386,285,497	
Total taxable valuation East End Economic District	\$ 164,165,207	42.5% of Total
Taxable Valuation East End Economic District 2004/05	\$ 69,527,217	
	Difference	
	\$ 94,637,990	
Total taxable valuation minus East End Economic District difference	\$ 291,647,507	
2018/19 Tax Rate	\$ 20.93/M	
Estimated tax rate without difference of East End Economic District	\$ 28.40/M	
Estimated tax rate increase without East End Economic District Growth	\$ 7.47/M	

for 2019/20 was narrowly approved by RSU 13 voters in June 2019. This more than offset the benefits of increased municipal revenue sharing from the State. Thomaston's mil rate increased to 22.33 for 2019/20, with 61% of property tax revenues going to RSU 13.⁶

Thomaston's Taxes, Part 2: The Cost of Education

In the 2016/17 school year,⁷ the state pegged RSU 13's Essential Programs and Services (EPS)—the cost of the “programs and resources that are essential for students to have an equitable opportunity to achieve Maine's Learning Results”—at \$18,745,749. The state contributed \$3,440,479, or an 18.3% share, leaving RSU 13's member towns to raise the remaining \$14,925,101.⁸ RSU 13 spent an Additional Local Share of \$6,480,235 beyond the state's calculated EPS and incurred an overall local education cost of \$26,150,000. The school union educated 1,670 students that year, making the per-pupil cost \$15,658.

⁶According to the Maine Municipal Association, the average Maine town uses 68% of its property taxes for education. Thomaston's lower-than-average 61% allocation is due in significant part to the valuation sheltered in the Dragon TIF and to the large amount of recently added valuation in the East End Economic Tract, which did not add RSU 13 students and thereby increase Thomaston's allocation in the school funding formula.

⁷This was the most recent year for which final data were available from Maine Department of Education and RSU 13 websites when this was written.

⁸This 18.3% EPS share was a far cry from the statewide average of 47% and the State's statutory commitment (since 2004) to provide 55% of essential education costs.

Of the total number of students in RSU 13 that year, 368 or 22% lived in Thomaston. Thomaston's 2016/17 education costs relative to other RSU 13 towns can be seen in **Table 7-2**.

In one report, the average per-student cost in southern Maine in 2016/17 was \$15,151, and the State average was \$13,473.⁹ On this basis, RSU 13's total per-pupil cost (\$15,658) was higher than the State average. In State-reported figures that don't include costs of transportation, debt service, capital outlay, or federal expenses, the State average was \$11,860, RSU 13 was \$13,616, RSU 40 (Waldoboro) was \$11,782, and the Five Town Consolidated School District (MSAD 28, Camden's district) was \$15,657.¹⁰

Paltry though the State's 18.3% of RSU 13 EPS appears, the real story is worse because the State deducts its school district subsidies from special-education refunds. Thus, although the State refunds 40% of each school district's special education costs (versus the 100% it really should refund for a federal/state mandate), RSU 13 does not see that amount. In fact, the Five Town Consolidated School District, which has a much higher median household income than RSU 13,

⁹Megan Gray, *Portland Press Herald*, June 9, 2018.

¹⁰Maine Department of Education, https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov/doe/files/inline-files/FY17_PPOC_bySAU.pdf.

TABLE 7-2: Thomaston's 2016/17 Education Costs Relative to Other RSU 13 Towns

	Thomaston	Rockland	Owls Head	So. Thomaston	Cushing	Total
Students per Town	368	764	157	184	196	1,670
Town Share of EPS	\$4,095,403	\$8,357,631	\$1,722,676	\$2,013,138	\$2,179,491	\$18,745,749
Town Valuation per State	\$328,400,000	\$757,450,000	\$343,383,333	\$249,016,667	\$278,783,393	
State Contribution to Town Share of EPS	\$1,369,683	\$2,070,796	0	0	0	\$3,434,664
Town Contribution to EPS	\$2,725,720	\$6,286,835	\$1,722,676	\$2,013,138	\$2,179,491	\$14,925,101
Town Contribution to Add'l Local Share	\$1,171,626	\$2,610,239	\$1,009,621	\$794,477	\$894,272	\$6,480,235
Total Town Contribution in 2016/17	\$3,897,347	\$8,897,074	\$2,731,489	\$2,806,670	\$3,072,757	\$21,405,336

has received more education aid from the State in some recent years (in the form of special ed refunds) than RSU 13 has received for its state subsidies and special-ed refunds combined.

The Maine Department of Education estimates that RSU 13—which has 1,642 students—will receive slightly less than \$3.8 million in State aid for 2019/20. This amounts to 12 percent of the overall budget. In contrast, RSU 40 (Waldoboro, Warren, Union, Washington and Friendship), with 1,898 students, is estimated by the State to receive \$9.9 million in State aid for the same year. RSU 71, based in Belfast with 1,540 students, is projected to receive \$8.8 million in State aid. The reason for this disparity is that the State's funding formula is based entirely on property values and number of students, and does not consider median household income or some equivalent measure of ability to pay. According to the RSU 13 business manager, if the State factored income into the subsidy formula, fully funded education at 55% of EPS, and funded special ed at 100%, Thomaston would receive \$1

million/year more in State aid than it does as of 2019, and RSU 13 as a whole would receive an additional \$3 million.¹¹

At the same time, cuts in the State's Municipal Revenue Sharing program decreased Thomaston's revenue from that source from about \$450,000 in 2008/09 to \$172,000 in 2018/19, the equivalent of three-quarters of a mil in the Town's present tax rate. In 2019/20, that amount increased to \$480,000.

Thomaston's limited area and population—about 7,200 acres (11 square miles)¹² and 2,700 inhabitants—limit its valuation and place pressure on its tax rate, as **Table 7-3** indicates.¹³

Thomaston's mil rate is among the highest in Knox County and in Maine. The tax on a

¹¹Interview with Peter Orne, RSU 13 business manager, May 2019, and "Rockland sets tax rate, up 7.3 percent," *Courier Gazette*, August 14, 2019.

¹²Dragon Products occupies 1,100 acres, or about 15% of Thomaston's land area.

¹³Among neighboring midcoast towns, Rockland has 12 square miles and 7,000 inhabitants; Belfast has 34 square miles and 7,000 inhabitants. In response to rental-unit shortages and high rents, both towns have recently proposed to reduce lot sizes and loosen rental restrictions in residential neighborhoods.

TABLE 7-3: Knox County Town Valuations and Education Spending

MUNICIPALITY	2018 STATE VALUATION	EDUCATION \$ / MIL RATE 2018/19	OVERALL MIL RATE 2016/17, 2018/19
Appleton	\$ 126,500,000		19.73
Camden	\$ 1,258,600,000	\$11,612,430 / 9.23	13.53, 14.88
Cushing	\$ 298,400,000	\$3,387,546 / 11.35	12.02
Friendship	\$ 240,500,000		10.11
Hope	\$ 190,200,000		14.05
Isle au Haut	\$ 83,600,000		6.71
Matinicus	\$ 31,550,000		10.19
North Haven	\$ 319,300,000		10.29
Owls Head	\$ 346,400,000	\$2,850,124 / 8.23	10.90
Rockland	\$ 778,250,000	\$9,353,101 / 12.02	21.72, 23.08
Rockport	\$ 946,950,000		14.31, 16.08
St. George	\$ 818,200,000		8.95
South Thomaston	\$ 254,650,000	\$2,862,603 / 11.24	13.69
Thomaston	\$ 359,450,000	\$4,417,340 / 12.29	17.80, 20.93
Union	\$ 232,050,000		15.79
Vinalhaven	\$ 472,000,000		10.73
Warren	\$ 315,650,000		15.96
Washington	\$ 148,900,000		14.20
TOTAL	\$ 7,221,150,000		

Thomaston home assessed at \$150,000 rose from \$2,242 in 2008/09 to \$3,140 in 2018/19—a substantial burden for Thomaston’s low median household income (\$47,969 in 2016, versus \$52,239 for Knox County and \$50,239 for all of Maine).

According to local realtors, the Town’s property taxes prompt some potential home buyers to prefer nearby towns with lower tax rates. Local news reports and anecdotal evidence suggest that the initial tumultuous years of RSU 13 between 2009 and 2014, coupled with the good reputation of MSAD 28, encouraged some parents of school-aged children to move into the Five Town CSD (Camden, Rockport, Lincolnville, Hope, Appleton).

Reducing the tax on a \$150,000 home by \$150 (1 mil of tax rate) would require either increasing the Town’s valuation by \$19 million at the present spending level or reducing town spending by \$378,000 at the present valuation level. Tax relief (or at least stabilization) can come from a combination of cost reductions (including from increased State aid and shared municipal services)

and enhanced valuation. The Town should advocate through any means possible that household income be factored into the State’s school funding formula, because coastal towns like Rockland and Thomaston whose incomes lag property values are disadvantaged by the current formula’s overreliance on property valuation. As a regional service center town, Thomaston should also advocate for a local-option sales tax that could provide property tax relief.

Thomaston’s property have been close to 100% of state valuations since 2007.

Thomaston’s Workforce Demographics

As discussed in **Chapter 6: Our People**, the Town has an aging population. The median age as of 2016 is 44.4 years, and 20.39% of town residents are 65 or more years old. This tracks with Knox County, State, and national trends.¹⁴

¹⁴For example, the median age of rural and small-town America is 43, seven years older than urban America. Since 1990, U.S. population has increased by 75 million, but the rural population has dropped by 3 million (Edouardo Porter, *New York Times*, 12/16/18).

Many residents are on fixed and limited incomes. As noted in the “Town of Thomaston Housing Assessment Plan 2005,”¹⁵ approximately 13% of Thomaston residents were in poverty in 1999, and over 69% fell in the Maine State Housing Authority’s moderate-income bracket or lower as of 2004. Those characterizations remain accurate, as **Chapter 6: Our People**, makes clear.

Notably, of the more than 100 people (including 85 permanent and 15+ seasonally temporary) employed by Dragon Products, one of the town’s largest employers, only four or five live in Thomaston; the rest commute from surrounding towns. Another leading employer, Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding, has told this committee of the difficulty of finding skilled employees, especially with advanced skill sets in marine electrics/electronics. Two Thomaston restaurants (The Slipway and Chrome) failed to open at all in 2018, citing the difficulty of hiring staff.

The Maine Department of Labor’s Center for Workforce Research and Information issued a report in 2018 citing the tight statewide labor market and predicting that fewer than 100 net additional jobs will be added to the State economy through 2026, even though large numbers of job openings are expected. More than 728,000 job openings are expected in the decade, which is more than the number of people employed in Maine today. Many openings will be to replace retiring baby boomers. The report projects that by 2026, Maine will lose more than 30,000 workers in the 45-to-54 age range and add more than 30,000 in the 65-plus range. With the State’s unemployment rate at or near a historic low as of late 2018, more Mainers will be working well into what used to be retirement years. The report has been cited as evidence that Maine is on a path to long-term economic stagnation.

¹⁵“Town of Thomaston Housing Assessment Plan 2005,” Kevin Bunker, Rockland Community Development Department, and the Town of Thomaston

In a 2016 report titled “Maine Population Outlook to 2034,” the Governor’s Office of Policy and Management predicted that an expanding elderly population will depend on a shrinking working population through those years unless in-migration brings more workers to the State. Baby boomers (51 to 69 years old, born between 1946 and 1964) made up 28.6% of Maine’s population in 2015. This is a higher percentage than any other state; Vermont was second at 27.8%, and New Hampshire was third at 27.7%. Nationally, around 23% of the population is part of the baby-boom generation. The 2016 report predicts that Knox County’s population will decrease slightly from 39,798 in 2014 to 38,352 in 2034. Thomaston’s population was predicted to decrease from 2,773 to 2,631. The report concluded that, in order for Maine’s population to grow and companies to find the employees they need, in-migration to Maine must increase.¹⁶

Thomaston’s Jobs

There are approximately 222 businesses in Thomaston and a similar number located within 5 miles of town. Of these 440 to 460 or so businesses, some 348 have fewer than 10 employees, and 92 have 1-4 employees. Many of the latter can be presumed to be home occupations, which are compatible with Thomaston’s demographic trends; its housing stock; its compact village area; its growing population of artists, writers, graphic designers, and other participants in the creative economy; and its desire to encourage future growth in the creative economy. The Town should

¹⁶“Maine cannot grow economically unless there are affordable places for people to live. Clean, affordable rental units and homes are needed to give the younger generation a chance to live and work in Maine and reverse the trend toward an aging population. Affordable and comfortable housing needs to be maintained for our elderly. The zoning ordinances should be amended allowing smaller minimum lot sizes and permitting the use of accessory apartments in more areas of the town.” (“Town of Thomaston Housing Assessment Plan 2005,” Kevin Bunker, Rockland Community Development Department, and the Town of Thomaston)

be sure its Land Use Ordinance supports home occupations to the greatest compatible extent.

Seasonal employment in the fisheries and tourism is an important but hard-to-quantify component of Thomaston's jobs. Most Town residents have neighbors, friends, or children who fish, lobster, or clam for at least part of their income. The fishery for soft-shelled clams (primarily in the St. George estuary) has supported up to 140 commercial harvesters in the past (the majority part-time), up to 60 of whom lived in Thomaston, and these jobs, unlike many others, are not vulnerable to being replaced by technology. This fishery is managed by an intermunicipal ordinance and a joint board comprising one selectboard member each from the towns of Thomaston, Warren, South Thomaston, Cushing, and St. George. However, the demand for commercial licenses has declined along with the harvest for the past few years (from approximately \$2 million to \$1 million landed annual value. Only 89 commercial licenses were issued for the 2019/20 license year, including 21 to Thomaston residents. This represents a significant employment loss for the Town. The decline in harvest is attributed to green crab predation (due to warming of the Gulf of Maine) and to local closures by the Maine Department of Marine Resources due to elevated coliform bacteria counts.¹⁷ Increased acidification of the ocean and Maine's coastal waters may also be a factor. See **Chapter 5: Our Rivers and Harbor**, for a discussion.

Brooks Trap Mill, building and selling approximately 50,000 lobster traps each year, employs about 50 people in its Beechwood Street facility and another 15 to 20 at satellite locations in Jonesboro, West Bath, and Portland.

¹⁷One hopeful indication is that the Department of Marine Resources announced in March 2019 its intent to reopen several previously closed clam flats in the St. George estuary for harvesting.

Thomaston's Possible Futures

Building on its physical and geographic advantages, Thomaston has been taking steps in recent years to make itself more attractive to residents, potential residents, and businesses. The Town's future appeal may be further boosted by national demographic trends and by the Town's geographic buffering from the worst impacts of climate change. Thomaston has access to adequate freshwater supplies and enjoys the moderating influence of the Gulf of Maine, upper-estuary buffering from storm surges, and safe elevation of the town center above sea level.¹⁸ Extreme heat, extreme storms, and extreme drought are rare. The winter cold is less extreme than interior Maine and less extreme than it used to be—a detriment to native flora and fauna but an advantage to home heaters and in-migrants.

Climate modeling suggests that the climate in nearby Brunswick will resemble today's climate in Chester, Pennsylvania by 2080 at the present level of carbon dioxide emissions—with winters 10°F warmer and 16% drier and summers 8°F warmer and 22% wetter than today. (Chester's climate, meanwhile, will resemble today's climate in Memphis.¹⁹) Such scenarios suggest that Thomaston may look more and more like a relatively habitable oasis in coming years to people elsewhere in America and the world.

Fisheries-related jobs face an uncertain future. The Gulf of Maine is warming faster than 99 percent of the world's saltwater bodies, and that warming may have major consequences for Maine fisheries. It is already blamed, at least in part, for the collapse of cod, herring, and shrimp harvests. The lobster fishery, which has been booming in recent years, could collapse if the temperatures in the gulf rise by an expected 5 degrees.²⁰

¹⁸New FEMA flood zone maps place much of Thomaston's waterfront south of Water Street in the 100-year flood zone.

¹⁹<https://fitzlab.shinyapps.io/cityapp/>

²⁰Christopher Burns, *Bangor Daily News*, 2/15/19, reporting on studies at the University of Maine Darling Marine Center and the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences.

Thomaston has for some years been attracting retirees with its charm and affordable housing stock. This welcome trend should be encouraged and embraced. Active, curious, caring retirees bring time, energy, and experience to renovate Thomaston's historic houses and to enhance local government, education, and community development. Encouraging ways for retirees to contribute to the community should be a high priority for economic development. Already an age-friendly, age-welcoming community, Thomaston can become even more so through targeted policies such as those that accompany an AARP Age-Friendly designation.

The Town should be seeking growth in other demographic categories as well, welcoming and encouraging age, socioeconomic, and ethnic diversity. If Thomaston were to settle for being a retirement community, local businesses would lack workers and customers; the vibrant downtown desired by residents would continue to struggle; support for local schools would be uncertain; streets would be sprinkled with empty houses in the winter, when seasonal occupants are away; and property taxes would continue their upward trend, making it difficult or impossible for low- to moderate-income residents to age in place. Neighboring Rockland, which has been called "The Arts Capital of Maine," is experiencing a housing shortage, and resident artists must commute to their studio space in Rockland from as much as two hours away.²¹ Thomaston should actively attract creative-economy workers with housing and studio space.

Greatest prosperity and vibrancy will come with a diverse population, bustling downtown, and sustainable economic development. This will require competing successfully at the municipal

level while cooperating successfully at the regional and state levels.

2. Existing Economic Development Guidance for Thomaston

Prior to this Comprehensive Plan, Thomaston's economic development priorities were set forth in the Town government's annual goals and in the economic strategies identified in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. Those that remain most relevant are:

Town Government 2015-2016 Goals

- Support economic development in the East End Economic Tract.
- Complete the Thomaston Green infrastructure to position it for development according to the traditional New England village concept approved by town meeting in 2006.
- Develop a potential project list for the voter-approved Downtown TIF District.
- Continue the effort for an east-west town road north of and parallel with Route 1, as initiated more than ten years ago.

2005 Approved Comprehensive Plan Economic Strategies

- Continue to seek aid, whenever possible, from higher levels of government (county, state, and federal) to provide support for roads, parks, public transportation or other activities that materially aid the Town's economy.
- Retain the existing Shoreland Commercial District designation along Thomaston harbor to protect and support marine-related businesses and commercial fisheries.
- Encourage business investment in the village center through infrastruc-

²¹Donna McNeil, executive director of the Ellis-Beauregard Foundation, as quoted in the *Bangor Daily News*, 2/21/19, "Rockland Considers Dorm-Style Housing for Artists," by Lauren Abbate.

ture improvements such as improved sidewalks, lighting, and appropriate landscaping.

- Development in the village commercial area should protect and enhance the small town and historic character of Thomaston, which contributes to the attractiveness of the Town in a tourist economy. Require appropriate parking and landscaping to create a pleasant environment in both the village and highway commercial areas.

The economic priorities identified in this 2018 Comprehensive Plan have also been informed by survey responses and public meeting input in 2017 as follows:

Top Priorities from Survey and Public Discussion Inputs for 2018 Comprehensive Plan

- Respondents think the Town should devote more effort to develop the downtown (village commercial) area (77% of survey responses).
- Respondents deem it “very important” to revitalize the Main Street business area (86% of survey responses).
- The Town should provide incentives for historic properties (74% of survey responses).
- The Town should encourage more single-family housing (86% of responses) and assisted living (74% of responses).
- The Town should encourage restaurants (94% of responses), farmers’ markets and other events (94%), professional services (89%), repair services (82%), farms and related businesses (80%), marine businesses (78%), home-based businesses (76%), retail stores (75%), lodging including inns and B&Bs (75%), performing arts (69%), ecology-based tourism (69%), art galleries and craft shops (62%), light industry (60%).
- Respondents value the Town’s small-town atmosphere (99% of responses), historic character (97%), midcoast location (96%), convenience (95%), open space and scenic vistas (95%), safety (95%), and walkability (83%). Economic development should preserve and enhance these attributes.
- Respondents’ top dislike (80% of responses) is the heavy truck traffic on Route 1 and Beechwood Street. Economic development should mitigate this impact as much as possible.

These survey responses were confirmed in four public meetings in the fall of 2017 (average attendance 90 – 100 Thomaston residents). Most or all participants wanted indoor (restaurants, tavern, coffee shops, stores) and outdoor (benches, sidewalks) gathering places to meet friends and neighbors; more in-town services; a community/recreation facility; less truck traffic through town; a stronger civic culture (suggestions included events; website; community flyer; downtown bulletin board/kiosk; community involvement); and the expansion and beautification (suggestions included mature trees along streets; underground utilities whenever possible; enhanced sidewalks) of the downtown district.

Suggestions to help accomplish these included tax breaks and rent subsidies for startup businesses; a small-business ombudsman in the town office to help new businesses clear hurdles; hiring a downtown revitalization director/coordinator; building on Thomaston’s historic housing and identity; rezoning as necessary to permit light industry downtown; rezoning as necessary to encourage professional services and B&Bs in Main Street historic homes; connecting the Georges Highland Trail, the Town Forest,

Thomaston Green, the lime kiln site, the town beach, the town landing, and Mill River Park into an “emerald necklace” or greenbelt around the village area; and facilitating connections to the fiber-optic network that runs through town.

The consensus emerging from the survey and public meetings was that Thomaston need not try to compete with Rockland or Camden as a retail center or tourist destination. The goals of economic development instead are to provide local convenience for shopping and services; community cohesion; sustainable job growth and tax base diversification; and enhanced appeal for in-migration.

3. Regional Economic Development Guidance

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is put forward by the Midcoast Economic Development District (MCEDD). MCEDD is a municipally led economic and community development organization serving all of Sagadahoc and Knox counties, the towns of Brunswick and Harpswell in Cumberland County, the towns of Lincolnville, Searsmont, Belmont, and Northport in Waldo County, and the city of Wiscasset in Lincoln County. As of 2014, the MCEDD region’s 140,522 residents account for 11% of Maine’s population, and its 42,946 jobs account for 9% of Maine’s employment and 8% of the state’s GDP. MCEDD is one of six economic development districts in Maine, each of which is tasked with coordinating with local, state, and federal agencies to deliver effective economic and community development services to its communities. The federal Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) is the supporting agency of the EDDs.

The CEDS is a five-year planning and development document that tracks the activities, projects and goals and objectives of the region and, by virtue of their being included in the document,

makes them eligible for EDA funding. The 2014 CEDS (the most recent available online when this was written) identified the following guidance goals for midcoast communities:

- To be widely known for our “authentic Maine” quality of life—with historic town centers, working waterfronts, scenic islands, and rolling hills and farms.
- To be a place where residents and newcomers can find jobs, start businesses, buy homes, raise families, and engage in lifelong learning.
- To be a place where producers, processors, transporters, and marketers prosper together by turning the region’s food and fish into high-value Maine products.
- To be a place where the distinction and talent of its people draw visitors and new residents from around the world.

Thomaston should work with MCEDD for economic development downtown and in the East End Economic Tract.

4. Thomaston’s Village Center

Thomaston’s downtown struggles of recent decades are shared by many small towns across Maine and America and have multiple causes including population stagnation, the migration of capital to high-tech enterprises in urban centers,²² and a siphoning of sales from downtown retailers to outlying big-box stores and, in the past two decades, to online retailers. Community development directors frequently advise towns to counter these trends by elevating downtown shopping to a downtown community experience that can’t be replicated in a chain store or online. Thomaston

²²In the first four years after the 2008 recession, U.S. counties with fewer than 100,000 people lost 17,500 businesses, while counties with more than one million people added 99,000 businesses. (Economic Innovation Group)

residents asked for this very thing in survey responses and public meetings for the preparation of this plan. They wish to retain the downtown's village charm while enhancing its community amenities, and development in the village commercial zone should adhere to this preference.

Thomaston faces a further—though by no means unique—challenge in that its Main Street is a heavily traveled regional highway (Route 1) bearing major truck and commuter traffic as well as local traffic through the center of town. A busy highway is an obstacle to community place-making unless or until it's tamed. Like Wiscasset and Searsport—two other downtowns strung along Route 1—Thomaston has yet to tame it. Hampden, which is strung along Route 1A and is a bedroom community for Bangor (as Thomaston is to some extent for Rockland), is another town that is struggling to build its core.²³ More thriving downtowns can be seen in towns like Damariscotta and Belfast that are bypassed by Route 1 and in towns like Camden that have subordinated Route 1 to local traffic and pedestrian patterns. (Route 1 makes right-angle turns in the Camden and Rockland downtowns; an urban planner could describe how this encourages neighborhood development, calms highway traffic, and prevents the highway from bisecting the downtown.)

Nevertheless, Thomaston's village center has important advantages. It is surrounded on three sides by handsome and historic ship captains' homes. The village area is compact and has room to expand north (modestly) and south (slightly) from its east-west axis. It is separated from the Highway Commercial District by the 1,100-acre holdings of Dragon Products. And it occupies a great location at the head of the Cushing and St. George peninsulas; at the gateway of Penobscot

Bay; and within a few miles of diverse outdoor, recreational, cultural, dining, and shopping opportunities. These are advantages to build on.

The Town implemented a Downtown TIF in 2009, as described in the Fiscal Capacity chapter. In 2016/17, voters approved \$100,000 in TIF funds to achieve a cooperative agreement with MDOT to install sidewalks on the south side of Route 1 during a Route 1 redevelopment project in 2016/17, improving downtown walkability. The Town received Safe Routes to School funding for a sidewalk on the north side of Starr Street, and this work was done in 2018. One key recommendation of a Downtown Core and Village Area District Revitalization Plan drafted in 2015 was the completion of the Union Block Streetscape Improvements Project downtown, a project that has been underway (mostly with CDBG funding) since 2009. In November 2018, town voters approved a \$280,000 bond to match a \$250,000 Northern Borders grant to complete the Union Block streetscape improvements. These initiatives support the downtown enhancements envisioned in this chapter.

As of November 2018, downtown retailers and services are anchored by a grocery store and include two cafés, a pizzeria, two convenience stores with fuel pumps, two salons, an upscale bar, and four specialty shops. A handful of additional businesses would encourage more community use and vibrancy. Downtown merchants have formed Main Street Matters, a 501(c)(3) organization, to promote and support the downtown.

Voters approved a \$1.1 million bond issue in November 2018 to move the Town offices from the downtown Watts Block to the former Lura Libby Elementary School, 100 yards northwest of the Union Block parking lot. This will free additional space for retail goods and services in the small downtown area; will free up a modest number of much-needed visitor parking spaces on the south side of Route 1; and will contribute to an expansion of the village center north of the

²³"Hampden doesn't have a definable town center": Town planner Karen Cullen, quoted in the *Bangor Daily News*, 2/22/19, "Hampden Fighting Decades of Development to Find Its Center," by Charles Eichacker.

Union Block, transforming the downtown strip into a downtown district.

Attracting professional services and village-compatible retailers to the Village Commercial District and attracting new housing in the R3A and TR3 residential districts will enhance the Town's community core and support existing and future downtown retailers. As emphasized in several places in this chapter and plan, constructing a new local road around the northern village rim from the Oyster River Road in the west to the Old County Road in the east could be a substantial boon to future development patterns, community placemaking, and prosperity, and the feasibility of such a road should be studied as an immediate priority.

5. Thomaston and Midcoast Tourism

Thomaston does not have a deep-water harbor like the nearby towns of Rockland, Camden, or Belfast, nor does it have a commercial district of the scale and diversity of those towns. Nevertheless, Thomaston occupies an enviable location as the gateway to the Penobscot Bay region for travelers from the south and as the Route 1 departure point for vacationers to the Cushing and St. George peninsulas.

Thomaston should develop its historic New England character to attract visitors and in-migrants. The Town can build on existing assets, including the Henry Knox Museum, the long-established and well-regarded Fourth of July celebration, the Town's walkability, its underutilized waterfront with strategically located parcels of Town-owned land, and its New England village appeal.

6. The Role of Home Occupations in Thomaston's Economy

As mentioned above, some 348 of the approximately 450 businesses located in and within 5 miles of Thomaston (per <https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/employers.html>) have fewer than 10 employees, and 92 businesses have 1-4

employees. Many of these are home businesses, though the exact number is unknown. (Of the businesses with 10 or more employees, 28 are restaurants, 22 are schools, 12 are grocers/convenience stores, 11 are contractors, 8 are auto and auto part dealers/servicers, 5 are health/assisted living providers, and 5 are nonprofits.) Home occupations are compatible with Thomaston's demographic trends; its housing stock; its compact village area; its growing population of artists, writers, graphic designers, and other participants in the creative economy; and its desire to encourage further such growth in the future. Home occupations should be encouraged with land-use standards, broadband availability, and municipal support. The current Land Use Ordinance permits home occupations in all residential districts; professional offices are conditional uses subject to Planning Board approval.

7. Opportunities for Industrial and Commercial Development

The East End Economic Tract (the Highway Commercial and Industrial districts) is the most promising target area for the Town's efforts to broaden its tax base. Development there is buffered from the village by the intervening Dragon Products quarries and plant, which occupy a total of 1,100 acres or 15% of the Town's land area. Given that the Rockland Industrial Park, just across the line from Thomaston, has run out of expansion capacity, Thomaston should take all feasible steps to position itself for new commercial and industrial enterprises.

There is village commercial development capacity in underutilized downtown buildings, and there is potential for commercial redevelopment and/or new development north of the Union Block and the municipal parking lot. There is also room for village-compatible commercial development along the Route 1 frontage of the Thomaston Green. Home occupations and

professional offices can be encouraged in the large houses fronting Route 1 in the village district.

Thomaston's R3 and R3A Districts (the village residential areas) should be reviewed to ensure that they appropriately encourage such uses while assuring compatibility with the Village Commercial District. Form-based coding could be considered for the houses in the Historic District along Route 1 in order to encourage professional services and light industry in this district, as discussed in **Chapter 8: Our Housing**. This would diversify the tax base, improve employment opportunities, and support downtown businesses.

8. Sewer, Water, Broadband Access, and Three-phase Power for Economic Development in Thomaston

Thomaston is well positioned in most forms of public infrastructure for growth that is in scale and character with the community. Sewer lines were separated from storm drains in the 1990s and have been expanded eastward to serve the industrial and highway commercial zones. Sewer and water services have been provided into the Thomaston Green to serve future development there. The lagoon-based sewage treatment system built in the 1990s has ample reserve capacity to support future development. A large majority of the Town's residents are concentrated in the village area served by Town sewer and water.

Three-phase power and fiber-optic broadband run through town along Route 1 but need to be built out to support businesses and residences. The Town should play an active role to accomplish this.

The most significant impediment to economic development—in the Village Commercial as well as the Highway Commercial and Industrial districts—is the lack of a road paralleling Route 1 to divert heavy truck and commuter through-traffic around the northern fringe of the village area. The Gateway 1 intermunicipal planning process

initiated in 2005 by the Maine Department of Transportation identified Thomaston's downtown as one of the principal Route 1 chokepoints in the midcoast region. The Gateway 1 draft plan²⁴ (issued before the effort was terminated by Maine's incoming governor in 2011) recommended the construction of an alternate route skirting the northern edge of the village area, enabling truck traffic to and from Rockland and Thomaston's highway commercial and industrial zones to avoid the Thomaston downtown. Downtown traffic has increased further since 2011 due to development in Rockland, the Walmart supercenter in Thomaston's Highway Commercial District, and other development. Through-town truck traffic was identified as the primary "dislike" by 80% of the respondents to the community survey underlying this comprehensive plan, making it the #1 complaint of Thomaston residents.

This route is also vital for emergency services. Given the current lack of such a route, an accident closing Route 1 at the Mill River bridge requires a 17-mile detour over Old County Road, Route 17, Route 90, and Beechwood Street to travel between Thomaston and Rockland. The absence of this route makes it more difficult to share emergency services with Rockland for cost savings.

A new road skirting the village would also encourage residential development south toward Route 1 in the TR3 district already zoned for such development and prioritized for public sewer and water services. This would accommodate affordable housing and encourage immigration to the village area while expanding the property tax base.

This perimeter road would also make the downtown safer for pedestrians and would significantly enhance Thomaston's charm as a historic New England village, which is one of the Town's top selling points.

²⁴Gateway 1 Corridor Action Plan: Brunswick to Stockton Springs, Maine Dept. of Transportation, Maine State Planning Office, and U.S. Dept. of Transportation, July 2009

For all these reasons, the Town should explore the feasibility of such a road as a high priority, immediately allocating funds for a multidimensional study.

Expansion of public sewer and water services into the TR3 Residential Growth District would support and encourage residential development there. The northward extension of the sewer line into the Booker Street housing development was accomplished at least in part with impact fees, and a similar approach could help fund sewer extension north along Beechwood Street.

9. Incentives to Encourage Development in Growth Areas of Town

The Town has two current tax increment financing districts, the Dragon Cement TIF and the Downtown TIF. These are mentioned above and are discussed in **Chapter 12: Thomaston's Fiscal Capacity**. The Dragon Cement TIF enabled Dragon Products to make \$44 million of upgrades and improvements to its systems and facilities. This TIF district enabled Thomaston to extend its sewer lines into the highway commercial district, encouraging development there. This 20-year TIF ends in 2022.

The Downtown TIF stretches along Main Street from the Thomaston Academy through downtown to the Thomaston Green. This TIF has not to date had the impact of the Dragon TIF. However, revenue from this TIF has helped to pay for the Town's purchase of the Thomaston Green property from the State and financed additional sidewalks in the Route 1 reconstruction project undertaken by MDOT in 2016/17. In the future, the Downtown TIF could support the construction of a new road around the village core; expansion of sewer and water services into the TR3 district; and/or local buildout of the fiber-optic network.

10. Thomaston's Unique Assets

The town brings significant assets to its search for beneficial, sustainable, opportunity-enhancing economic development that maintains the Town's character. These assets include:

- Ample unused sewer and water capacity in the village residential, Highway Commercial, and Industrial districts.
- A compact, appealing, walkable New England village core.
- In the Town-owned Watts Block, an imposing 100-year-old, three-story brick building given to the Town by one of its most prominent sea captains. As of February 2019, the first floor houses the Town Office, police department, and one retail space. A planned move of municipal services to the former Lura Libby School will make available at least two more street-level retail/commercial spaces. The second floor houses a meeting/event space, a public kitchen, and an auditorium that has functioned as the Town's community center for the past century and is home to the Town's community theater group.
- In the Thomaston Green (the location of the Maine State Prison until 2002), 11 acres (seven buildable acres) of prime Town-owned land with utilities, ideally sited in the village area on a river overlook and available for village-compatible development and/or civic enhancement. Thomaston's economic-development plans include a Thomaston Green housing development for seniors (age 55+) seeking a village lifestyle in a nearly maintenance-free living space in a park-like setting with an abundance of green space. The Green is a vital piece of Thomaston's economic-development plans. The target move-in date for the Thomaston Green is fourth quarter 2022.

- In the Town-owned Thomaston Academy, a large, three-floor historic wood-frame building with 1847 Greek Revival core. The Academy houses the Town's good, attractive public library as well as a Christian school, a church, and two artist studios. The space and surrounding parking would support additional utilization for business incubation, co-work offices, professional services, fine-arts education, or other professional uses.
- In the Knox Museum, a replica of the mansion built on Thomaston's waterfront in the 1790s by General Henry Knox of Revolutionary War fame. The museum is operated by an independent nonprofit group, General Henry Knox Museum. Mutually beneficial programs and initiatives for town-museum cooperation should be explored.
- Fiber-optic service through the center of Town (though not yet available to town residents and businesses through local connections).
- Underutilized (though space-limited) frontage on the tidal, navigable St. George River.
- Land available for village-core commercial and residential development north of the Union Block.
- Convenient municipal parking north of the Union Block on the north side of Route 1. There is insufficient parking available on the south side of Route 1, though this will improve somewhat when the Town offices move from their present location to the former Lura Libby School.
- Land with utility services available for additional development in the Highway Commercial and Industrial districts.
- A developing arts scene to be nourished and encouraged for future galleries, studios, residents.
- A highly advantageous gateway location for the Cushing and St. George peninsulas to the south and Rockland and Penobscot Bay to the east.

The Town has wisely preserved and enhanced principal Town-owned assets to position them for future contributions to community life. The Thomaston Academy and the Watts Block—both of which exemplify the Town's identity—have been maintained and preserved and will be central to village growth. The same is true of the Thomaston Green, acquired from the State of Maine in 2002 after demolition of the state prison that previously stood on the site. This 10+ acres of prime land within the village has been zoned, improved, and prepared for its ultimate repurposing as determined by Town voters.

Ideas for deploying these assets for economic growth will be discussed in the Policies section below.

C. Conditions and Trends

1. Economic Data for Thomaston

Household Income

Maine's economy has been stagnant, underperforming the New England and U.S. economy since the 2008-2010 recession. According to "Measures of Growth 2017"—the annual report from the Maine Economic Growth Council—Maine's GDP was flat (0.3% growth) from 2010 to 2015, while the New England economy grew by 4.1% and the U.S. economy grew by 10%.

Table 7-4, which is taken from the "Measures of Growth 2017" report, shows personal-income growth from 2015 to 2016. "EPSCoR" stands for Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) averages. The EPSCoR program includes Maine and a number

of other large rural states and provides an informative comparison in assessing Maine's performance. Maine's personal-income growth from 2011 to 2016 (not shown in the table) was equal to the EPSCoR average at 14% but trailed the U.S. average of 17% and the New England average of 16%. Additionally, a comparatively large percentage of Maine's total personal income has historically come from transfer payments (such as Social Security, unemployment, welfare, and veteran's benefits) for which no current services are performed and which therefore do not contribute to Maine's GDP.

The table does not show the impacts of the 2017 hike in state minimum wage from \$7.50 to \$9.00 per hour, the result of a statewide referendum. With a significant rise at the bottom of the wage scale, the average personal income of Mainers rose 3.7% from 2016 to 2017 to \$46,455, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Nationally, the average income rose 3.6% to \$51,640 from 2016 to 2017. The largest gain in Maine was in the bottom quartile of wages, with those workers seeing the largest increase in earnings—about 10% after adjusting for inflation—in the more than 15 years that this state-level data has been tracked. That growth outpaced the nation and New England, according to analysis from the Maine Center for Economic Policy.

The data also show shrinkage of the percentage of Maine households at the lowest income levels as households advanced up the income ladder. For example, in 2016, nearly 23% of Maine households earned less than the poverty level, whereas in 2017, 21% of households were in this bracket. (The 2017 federal poverty level was \$24,600 for a family of four.) In 2017, 33,000 Maine children—or 13%—were living in a household that earned less than the poverty level, down from 44,300 kids, or about 17%, the year before. Poverty rates dropped for Maine adults as well, though the decrease was not as large.

The minimum wage increased to \$10 an hour in 2018 and to \$11 an hour in 2019, and it will rise to \$12 in 2020. After that, it will be adjusted for regional cost-of-living increases.

As measured by the Moody's Analytics Cost of Doing Business index (a weighted scale of labor costs, industrial and commercial electricity costs, and state and local tax burden), Maine's overall cost of doing business declined from being the second highest in the nation in 2000 to the tenth highest in 2014. (The effect of the minimum wage increase on business cost had not yet been reported when this was written.) The New England region as a whole is an expensive place to do business. While Maine compares favorably within the region and in the recent past has had a lower cost of doing business than Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, the cost of doing business in Maine remains high in national rankings.

According to the state economist (October 2018), the Portland-South Portland metropolitan service area accounts for 52% of Maine's overall gross domestic product, and the Bangor and Lewiston-Auburn MSAs account for another 17%. The rest of Maine shares the remaining 31%.

Multiple data sets provide information on conditions and trends in Thomaston. All are characterized by significant error margins, but taken together—and in conjunction with statistics reported in the Population and Housing chapters—they provide a reliable composite picture. **Table 7-5** shows condensed data from the 2012–16 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, which are derived from Census Bureau surveys. The complete data set can be seen in **Appendix 7** of the Comprehensive Plan.

According to the American Community Survey, Thomaston had a population of 2,781 people in 2016, of whom 404 were age 14 or younger. According to the Census Bureau, the population of Thomaston was 2,892 (including 403 of age

TABLE 7-4: 2016 Personal Income Comparisons*Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis*

	Income	Rank	Change 2015-16	% Change 2015-16
United States	\$49,571	N/A	\$1,381	2.9%
New England	\$62,469	N/A	\$2,198	3.6%
EPSCoR	\$45,506	N/A	\$896	2.0%
Connecticut	\$71,033	2	\$2,211	3.2%
Massachusetts	\$65,137	3	\$2,440	3.9%
New Hampshire	\$58,322	6	\$2,396	4.3%
Rhode Island	\$51,576	17	\$1,526	3.0%
Vermont	\$50,321	20	\$1,737	3.6%
Maine	\$44,316	33	\$1,521	3.6%

TABLE 7-5: Income and Employment in Thomaston, Knox County, and Maine

Income - Median Household, 2016	Thomaston	Knox County	Maine
Median Household Income	47,969	52,239	50,826
Margin of Error	8,217	1,757	425
Income - Families below poverty level, 2016	Thomaston	Knox County	Maine
All families - Total	1,200	16,813	551,109
All families - Total; Margin of Error	159	393	1,988
All families - Percent below poverty level	23.7	9.2	8.9
All families - Percent below poverty level; Margin of Error	11.1	1.8	0.3
Employment - Occupation, 2016	Thomaston	Knox County	Maine
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1,280	19,328	652,638
Margin of Error; Civilian employed population 16 years and over	195	494	3,365
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	450	6,403	234,520
Margin of Error; Management, business, science, and arts occupations	124	370	3,127
Service occupations	245	3,277	120,381
Margin of Error; Service occupations	118	336	2,331
Sales and office occupations	282	4,797	153,816
Margin of Error; Sales and office occupations	103	353	2,316
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	175	2,908	69,796
Margin of Error; Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	81	294	1,704
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	128	1,943	74,125
Margin of Error; Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	69	271	1,801

14 and younger) in 2010 and 3,748 (including 600 of age 14 and younger) in 2000, suggesting a stagnant or shrinking population. See **Chapter 6: Our People**, for more detail.

Of the population for whom poverty status was determined in Thomaston (453 out of 1,890 people), 24% were living below the poverty line, a number that was higher than the national average of 14%. The largest demographic living in

poverty was Female 35-44, followed by Male 6-11 and then Male < 5. The Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who classifies as impoverished. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, the family and every individual in it is considered to be living in poverty.

The ACS website warns that "Due to sampling constraints, there is often a high margin of

error when looking at data for smaller geographies” such as towns. Note the high margins of error in the median household income estimates for Thomaston.

Table 7-6 shows a comparison from https://datausa.io/profile/geo/thomaston-me/#category_wages of median household income in Thomaston versus Knox County, the state of Maine, and the US.

Note that Thomaston’s median household income lags the Knox County median according to US Census figures, and Maine lags the US median by a little and the New England median by approximately \$22,000 (not shown in the table above).

ACS 5-year estimates give median household incomes for Thomaston relative to other Knox County towns, as shown in **Table 7-7**.

Only Rockland trails Thomaston, and only Thomaston showed a decrease in median household income for the five-year period. Again, the margins of error are high, making definitive conclusions difficult. Nevertheless, these income figures suggest that property taxes in Thomaston are straining the ability of some residents to pay.

According to the website Feeding America, 18.5% of children in Knox County have food insecurity at home. Sixty-four percent of the students at Thomaston Grammar School qualify for free or reduced lunches. (For comparison, 17% of students at Camden-Rockport Middle School qualify.) Some 24% of Thomaston’s children require special education services from RSU 13, versus an average for the RSU of 22% and a statewide average of 17%.

Additional demographic statistics for House District 92 (Thomaston, South Thomaston, Cushing, St. George, and Matinicus) include:

- A large discrepancy between the statewide average of nonelderly adults without healthcare coverage (13.4%) and the district average (20.2%).

- A large discrepancy between the statewide average of children without healthcare coverage (5.6%) and the district average (17.4%).

Employers in Thomaston

<https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/employers2.html>

Maine Department of Labor data lists approximately 170 employers in Thomaston, and according to ACS data, they employed 895 people in 2016. The Department of Labor list includes several departed employers but does not include several recently arrived employers. More than half of the 170 employ fewer than five people, and these include home-based businesses. Municipal records list approximately 222 businesses in Thomaston; the most likely reason for the higher municipal count is that it includes more home occupations that the State overlooks, and many of these are ephemeral.

The largest employers in Thomaston, according to State of Maine records include:

- Schools, 250+
- Walmart Supercenter, 100-249
- Dragon Products Co., 100-249
- Applebee’s, 50-99
- Lowes Home Improvement, 100-249
- Lyman Morse Boat Building Co., 50-99
- Port Clyde Seafood Co, 50-99

Note that Port Clyde Seafood Co., doing business in Thomaston as The Slipway Restaurant, did not open for business in 2018, citing a lack of available staff. Note also that Brooks Trap Mill employs about 50 people in Thomaston and should probably be substituted for Port Clyde Seafood in the list above.

There are 92 employers listed as having 1-4 employees. Many of these are in the areas

TABLE 7-6: A Comparison of Median Household Income in Thomaston Versus Knox County, the State of Maine, and the U.S.

Year	Location	Median Household Income	Margin of Error
2016	United States	\$55,322	± \$120
2016	Maine	\$50,826	± \$425
2016	Knox County, ME	\$52,239	± \$1,757
2016	Thomaston, ME	\$49,583	± \$14,448
2016	Hancock, Knox, Waldo & Lincoln Counties PUMA, ME	\$50,128	± \$955
2015	United States	\$53,889	± \$110
2015	Maine	\$49,331	± \$512
2015	Knox County, ME	\$50,693	± \$1,972
2015	Thomaston, ME	\$47,250	± \$14,656
2015	Hancock, Knox, Waldo & Lincoln Counties PUMA, ME	\$47,858	± \$1,090
2014	United States	\$53,482	± \$95
2014	Maine	\$48,804	± \$481
2014	Knox County, ME	\$50,515	± \$2,243
2014	Thomaston, ME	\$48,326	± \$13,894
2014	Hancock, Knox, Waldo & Lincoln Counties PUMA, ME	\$47,229	± \$948
2013	United States	\$53,046	± \$89
2013	Maine	\$48,453	± \$521
2013	Knox County, ME	\$49,755	± \$1,812
2013	Thomaston, ME	\$47,540	± \$18,268
2013	Hancock, Knox, Waldo & Lincoln Counties PUMA, ME	\$47,376	± \$1,173

TABLE 7-7: Median Household Incomes for Thomaston Relative to Other Knox County Towns

	2011	2016
Camden	\$51,375	\$54,682
Cushing	\$46,944	\$50,050
Rockland	\$33,038	\$40,987
St. George	\$47,697	\$53,750
Thomaston	\$49,219	\$47,969
Warren	\$51,290	\$58,617

of public or social services, small business, and home business. Of the approximately 450 businesses located in and within 5 miles of Thomaston per <https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/employers.html>, 348 have fewer than 10 employees. Of those with 10 or more employees, 28 are restaurants, 22 are schools, 12 are grocers/convenience stores, 11 are contractors, 8 are auto and auto part dealers/servicers, 5 are health/assisted living providers, and 5 are nonprofits.

According to the ACS, Thomaston's economy is specialized in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting; Real Estate, Rental & Leasing; and Public Administration, which employ respectively 3.99; 2.73; and 2.31 times more people than would be expected in a town of this size. The largest industries in Thomaston are Educational Services (139), Healthcare & Social Assistance (134), and Retail trade (122), and the highest paying industries are Healthcare & Social Assistance (\$37,039), Educational Services (\$33,750), and Transportation & Warehousing (\$30,521).

Thomaston's Revenues

The town's top 20 taxpayers as of 2017/18 are shown in **Table 7-8**.

The town raised \$1,049,764 in non-property tax revenues as seen in **Table 7-9**.

That left \$7,555,281 (with overlay for unanticipated adjustments) to be raised from property taxes.

Knox County Mil Rates

Table 7-10, from the Maine Revenue Services website, shows mil rates of Knox County towns since 2010. The State's weighted average for 2016 was 16.35, and the Knox County average was 14.24.

As of the 2017/18 tax year, Thomaston's mil rate of 19.40 trailed only Rockland's (pegged by the state at \$21.72 per \$1,000 of assessed properties in 2017) and Appleton (\$19.93) in Knox County. The Lincoln County town of Waldoboro had a full-value tax rate of \$15.29 in 2017. In

Waldo County, Lincolnville had a rate of \$14.30, and Islesboro \$13.20.

Thomaston's mil rate was 20.93 for 2018/19 and 22.33 for 2019/20, versus 23.08 and 24.76, respectively, in Rockland.

Retail Sales

According to the Office of Tax Policy at Maine Revenue services, total retail sales in the Midcoast region (Belfast to Brunswick) increased 28.33% between 2011 and 2016, exceeding the state average by 3.5%.

2. Historical Perspective on Thomaston's Economy

Thomaston's downtown historically served the Cushing and St. George regions, and Thomaston still retains its regional service center designation. The impacts on the downtown are discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

Historically the region's economy was dominated by fisheries and tourism. Tourism continues to thrive and develop, and Thomaston does and should participate in that development. The town is constrained by the lack of a deep-water harbor and by the limited extent of its village commercial district but can capitalize on its proximity to harbors, retail, and recreation opportunities to become a favored home for new residents, second home for seasonal residents, and "home away from home" for vacation visitors.

A century ago, Thomaston was one of the principal boatbuilding centers on the Maine coast, and Lyman Morse is still building high-end yachts in town and is one of the town's principal employers. Lyman Morse also does custom fabrication for land-based industrial clients in a facility in Thomaston's industrial zone. The town should encourage more such businesses to locate here.

The burgeoning arts scene in Rockland has spread into Thomaston and should be encouraged. This creative-economy activity is a promising development area for the town.

TABLE 7-8: Thomaston's Top 20 Taxpayers in 2017/18

Owner	\$3,426,109 TAX	% of Total Tax	Accum % of Tot Tax
1. Dragon Products Co. LLC	1,646,080	21.8%	21.8%
2. Wal-Mart Stores East LP/Wal-Mart Real Estate Business Trust	388,507	5.1%	26.9%
3. Lowe's Home Centers Inc.	305,583	4.0%	30.9%
4. Lyman Morse Boatbuilding Co. Inc./Cabot Lyman/Lyman & Sons, LLC/Adz Partnership	154,785	2.0%	32.9%
5. Hampton Inn & Suites/Thomaston Hotel LLC	115,450	1.5%	34.4%
6. Tractor Supply Co./Greeley Associates, LLC	101,233	1.3%	35.7%
7. Central Maine Power Co.	90,908	1.2%	36.9%
8. Maine Water Company	84,056	1.1%	38.0%
9. Shepard Bros Partnership/Shepard Motors Inc./Shepard Sales Inc./Shepard Bros Storage	83,949	1.1%	39.1%
10. Flagship Cinema/Steamship Associates LLC	70,822	0.9%	40.0%
11. McDonald's/Nouria Energy/Thomaston Property Holding, LLC	65,561	0.9%	40.9%
12. B.F.E. LLC /Greenfield Apts/Midcoast Marine/Fastenal/China Fortune/Subdivision	52,689	0.7%	41.6%
13. Knox Hotel Assoc., LP	45,433	0.6%	42.2%
14. George C. Hall & Sons, Inc.	39,709	0.5%	42.7%
15. Midcoast Federal Credit Union	38,784	0.5%	43.2%
16. Applebee's/Rootie Kazootie LLC	33,042	0.4%	43.6%
17. Brooks Trap Mill/KMB, LLC/Sawmill Lane LLC	31,874	0.4%	44.0%
18. Nightingale, Richard & Mary	30,252	0.4%	44.4%
19. Goodnow, Justin E.	28,796	0.4%	44.8%
20. Chemrock Corp. of DE/RRP Judaica Asset Holdings, LLC	18,596	0.2%	45.0%

Thomaston should also encourage professional offices and light industry in town. A strategic plan for attracting and developing these businesses is needed.

The town's economic development strategy should certainly aim to make the town a great place to visit, but the most productive emphasis will be on making this a great place to live.

3. Where Thomaston's Residents Work

The average commute time for Thomaston residents is 14.7 minutes, suggesting that most work outside town but not far away. About 29% of the population have a daily commute of 10 minutes or less, many of whom likely work at home or in Thomaston.

D. State Policies

- 1 To support the type of economic development activity the community desires, reflecting the community's role in the region.

- 2 To make a financial commitment, if necessary, to support desired economic development, including needed public improvements.

- 3 To coordinate with regional development corporations and surrounding towns as necessary to support desired economic development.

E. Implementation Strategies

1. Fund an Economic and Community Development Coordinator position to guide and assist the Economic and Community Development Committee.
2. Recruit and support appropriate retail and service businesses in the Village Commercial District.

This should be the top priority of the Economic and Community Development Committee:

TABLE 7-9: Thomaston's Non-Property Tax Revenues Raised

<u>Revenue from the State of Maine</u>	<u>2017/2018</u>	<u>2016/2017</u>
Municipal Revenue Sharing	\$ 156,402	\$ 138,972
Homestead Reimbursement	140,393	101,107
BETE Reimbursement	89,170	75,212
Local Road Assistance	24,572	24,684
Veteran's Reimbursement	3,510	3,355
General Assistance Reimbursement	2,955	6,557
Gas Tax Refund	1,724	3,354
Tree Growth Reimbursement	992	1,332
Snowmobile Reimbursement	285	424
<u>Revenue raised in the Town</u>		
Interest on Taxes and Lien Costs	31,094	38,981
Permit Fees	19,529	36,306
Thomaston Academy Rent and Utilities Reimbursement	30,523	32,911
Verizon Tower Lease	17,457	15,180
Excise Taxes	474,974	445,401
Cable TV Franchise Fee	20,736	19,290
Other Income	35,448	21,959
TOTAL REVENUE USED TO OFFSET TAXES	\$1,049,764	\$965,025

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TABLE 7-10: Mil Rates of Knox County Towns Since 2010

Maine Revenue Services (for comparison purposes only)		ESTIMATED MUNICIPAL FULL VALUE TAX RATES						
2016 Equalized Tax Rate derived by dividing 2016 Municipal Commitment by 2018 State Valuation with adjustments for Homestead and BETE Exemptions and TIFs								
Full Value Tax Rates Represent Tax per \$1,000 of Value								
	2016 (Homestead, BETE and TIF adjusted)	2015 (Homestead, BETE and TIF adjusted)	2014 (Homestead, BETE and TIF adjusted)	2013 (Homestead, BETE and TIF adjusted)	2012 (Homestead, BETE and TIF adjusted)	2011 (Homestead, BETE and TIF adjusted)	2010 (Homestead, and TIF	
State Weighted Average Mill Rate	15.06	15.03	14.72	14.49	13.99	13.40	12.78	
COUNTY AVERAGE	16.35	16.21	15.73	15.26	14.63	14.07	13.54	
KNOX								
APPLETON	19.93	19.37	16.68	16.44	16.44	15.09	13.22	
CAMDEN	13.88	13.53	13.32	13.35	13.01	12.50	12.19	
CUSHING	12.75	12.02	11.24	11.16	11.11	12.03	12.24	
FRIENDSHIP	10.26	10.11	9.64	9.83	8.94	8.61	8.52	
HOPE	14.44	14.05	14.12	13.88	13.93	12.91	12.45	
ISLE AU HAUT	7.31	6.71	6.11	5.55	4.99	5.40	6.09	
MATINICUS ISLE	10.56	10.19	7.31	7.98	7.24	7.05	6.70	
NORTH HAVEN	12.50	10.29	9.09	8.12	7.67	7.15	7.11	
OWLS HEAD	10.92	10.90	9.43	9.66	9.30	9.46	9.53	
ROCKLAND	22.03	21.72	20.66	20.41	20.11	18.96	17.94	
ROCKPORT	14.45	14.31	13.27	13.15	12.99	12.60	11.63	
SAINT GEORGE	8.93	8.95	8.66	7.93	8.16	11.28	7.63	
SOUTH THOMASTON	14.02	13.69	13.48	13.38	12.97	12.63	10.33	
THOMASTON	18.62	17.80	16.67	16.92	16.93	16.17	15.81	
UNION	15.80	15.79	15.22	14.28	14.14	13.38	12.65	
VINALHAVEN	12.10	10.73	10.18	10.18	8.55	8.31	7.91	
WARREN	15.77	15.96	16.20	15.79	14.65	13.48	12.77	
WASHINGTON	13.95	14.20	13.03	12.95	12.06	11.67	11.06	
COUNTY AVERAGE	14.24	13.81	13.05	12.78	12.41	12.29	11.37	
LINCOLN								
ALNA	17.82	18.70	19.30	19.70	18.16	15.97	15.77	
BOOTHBAY	8.94	9.05	8.74	8.63	7.91	7.80	7.54	
BOOTHBAY HARBOR	8.90	9.12	8.95	8.99	8.30	8.22	8.76	
BREMEN	11.28	11.02	9.06	9.41	9.63	9.46	9.44	
BRISTOL	6.44	6.97	6.68	6.70	6.37	5.80	5.43	
DAMARISCOTTA	16.93	17.34	16.02	15.05	14.62	13.97	13.46	
DRESDEN	16.22	16.38	15.90	14.20	13.54	12.02	11.67	

- Make maximum use of available downtown space. Establish a tiered incentive scheme, specifically to attract retail businesses to street-level downtown venues, with increased incentives for complementary and Maine-based businesses.
- Investigate the feasibility of a new local road as described below to make the downtown district more walkable and cohesive across Route 1.
- Optimize the downtown area with placemaking strategies and best practices that have proven beneficial in small towns across America.
- Help downtown businesses promote themselves and expand.
- Facilitate access to the fiber-optic broadband service that runs along Route 1.
- Establish a municipal revolving fund for low-interest loans to downtown businesses, funded in part by impact fees for East End development projects.
- Become an AARP Age-Friendly Community

3. Pursue commercial and industrial development in the East End Economic Tract.

Development in the East End Economic Tract offers greater potential to diversify the tax base and lower property taxes than development anywhere else in Town. Among the strategies that should be considered are:

- Steer future development away from big-box retailers. Instead, prioritize manufacturers and fabricators, seafood processing and shipping facilities, and other value-added and service-oriented enterprises that are consistent with Thomaston's identity.
- Coordinate future development with regional towns for greatest regional employment and economic growth.
- Seek additional commercial/industrial acreage for future development.
- Consider rebranding the Industrial District as the Thomaston Enterprise Zone.
- Make the East End an area of focus for the Economic and Community Development Committee.

4. Seek to alleviate the property tax.

To provide property tax relief, the Town should:

- Seek greater State aid for education.
- Attract compatible industrial, commercial, and residential development to diversify the tax base.
- Share municipal service costs with surrounding communities when feasible.

5. Create a Friends of Thomaston Schools group.

The Selectboard should create a Friends of Thomaston Schools committee in order to:

- Review RSU 13 budgets and represent the Town's interests to the school union.
- Advocate for improved State aid to education and a revision of the State's school funding formula.
- Regularly analyze the need for pre-school education programs and how best to meet those needs through public, private, and community providers. Particular focus should be placed on the option of RSU 13 offering Pre-K education in Thomaston.
- Match senior citizens with students for educational enrichment.

- Work with other area communities to ensure an optimal match between Mid-coast School of Technology programs and the needs of local employers.
- Work with other area communities to investigate whether University of Maine at Augusta's Rockland Center should offer programs beyond those currently available.
- Report periodically to the Selectboard.

6. Grow Thomaston's population.

Possible strategies to direct population growth into the village area, where services are less expensive to deliver, include:

- Extend the sewer and water services into the TR-3 Transitional Growth District.
- Pursue a new local road to encourage residential development southward into the TR-3 neighborhood from the new road.
- Identify opportunities for affordable housing in Town.
- Promote the Town to in-migrants through such strategies as enhanced education, lower taxes, business assistance, Age-Friendly Community status, Town website marketing, downtown enhancement, employment opportunities, and community development.
- Work with neighboring towns to promote workforce training opportunities.

7. Protect and steward the Town's waterfront and its marine jobs.

Thomaston's waterfront is small in extent but central to the Town's historic and future identity and appeal. In order to steward the Town's working-waterfront roots:

- Work with the other towns of the inter-municipal shellfish governing board to enhance and restore the St. George River clam fishery.
- Promote aquaculture and marine-related industries for the Shoreland Commercial and Industrial districts.

8. Promote the Town.

- Revamp the Town website with a primary goal of welcoming new businesses and residents.
- Build on Thomaston's 4th of July celebrations and other events.
- Promote the Town as the seaward terminus of the Georges Highland Trail and the head of navigation on the St. George River.
- Develop the Town's reputation as an arts center.
- Develop and promote a branding for Thomaston that incorporates existing assets but is also aspirational.

9. Investigate the feasibility and desirability of a new local east-west road skirting the northern village perimeter.

The lack of a Route 1 alternative for heavy truck and commuter traffic through the downtown is a significant impediment to economic development in the village area as well as the Highway Commercial and Industrial districts. Such a road is vital for emergency services and will encourage additional residential housing in the TR-3 District north of the downtown. It will make Main Street more appealing to homeowners, helping to ensure the long-term maintenance of the gracious Main Street homes that are central to the Town's appeal as a historic New England village. Such a road has been discussed for a half-century, and possible routes have been mapped. The Town should commission a multidimensional study of

its feasibility and desirability, possibly with revenues from the Dragon TIF. The study should answer the following:

- What are the possible routes?
- How many access points are optimal?
- What will the likely impact of the road be on downtown retailers?
- How much would the road cost?
- Is State assistance possible or desirable?
- How can the road's design contribute optimally to downtown traffic relief and to affordable housing, future population growth, and desired concentration of growth in the Town's TR-3 growth district?
- Should the road be built in segments, perhaps beginning between Beechwood Street and Old County Road?
- How can the road be funded?

10. Consider how each Town-owned and Town-connected property can best contribute to the Town's economic goals.

Thomaston Green, Thomaston Academy, Watts Block and the Knox Museum are all key assets. Their deployment should aim to increase the Town's property valuations and maximize its appeal to current and potential businesses and residents.

11. Improve the Town's walkability and bicycle-friendliness

Thomaston's walkability is already one of its strengths. To further improve the Town's appeal for walking and bicycling, the following strategies should be considered:

- Further link and enhance the Town-owned or -controlled elements of a pedestrian-and-bicycle trail system
- Tie this to our Museum in the Streets signage, which also needs maintenance and elaboration.
- Build a foot bridge across the Mill River from Fish Street to Route 131 to enable bicycle and pedestrian traffic from the village to the Knox Museum and St. George peninsula.



Our Housing



Introduction

Two interrelated issues dominate Thomaston's housing picture. The first is the Town's historic architecture, which townspeople recognize as one of its greatest assets. While the Town's stock of older, often large homes creates a distinctive, attractive, and important historic character, the ongoing maintenance expenses and increasing taxes for these homes make their preservation increasingly difficult.

The second issue is that housing costs are rising beyond a median-income family's ability to pay. Thomaston's need for more affordable housing is rendered more acute by the high proportion of its households living below the poverty line. As the Town seeks to grow its population, maintain a healthy diversity of household income, and

allow current residents to age in place, encouraging an increase in the availability of smaller, low-cost, low-maintenance, senior and ecofriendly housing options is critical.

Addressing these two issues simultaneously is Thomaston's top housing challenge for the future.

A. Goals

State Goal

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

Local Goals

- To protect the New England, small-town character of Thomaston while meeting the housing needs of its residents.

- To encourage a diversified community by providing affordable housing for all income groups.

B. Analyses

1. Recent Trends in Housing Units

Census Bureau data indicates that Thomaston's population has been steadily declining and aging over the last two decades. Following a 16.7% decline between 2001 and 2015,¹ 2017 estimates placed the Town's population at 2,767, and the Maine Office of Policy and Management projects an additional 5% decline by 2034. (See, however, suggestions for reversing this trend in **Chapter 6: Our People.**) Despite having the second lowest median age in Knox County (44.7 years in 2017), Thomaston experienced an increase in the 65-and-older share of its population from 15% in 2000 to 20.5% in 2017, the largest proportional increase of any age group. During this same period, the Town's "childbearing" population (age 20 - 44) share dropped by 5.5% of the total population.

This population decline has been accompanied by a 10.8% decrease in total housing units between 2000 and 2017, to an estimated 1,369 units in 2017. Of those, 95% were owner-occupied, leaving only 4.7% as rental units, and the tight rental market contributed to higher rents. According to the 2010 Census, 55% of all homes in Thomaston were owned by residents of age 55 or older, and 36% of rental units were occupied by that age group. An estimated 79.7% of owner-occupied units and 83.9% of renter-occupied units were one- or two-person households. There were an estimated 99 vacant units in 2017 (a slight decrease of 4.7% since 2000).

Housing data aligns with the demographic shifts in the town's population and suggests that the current total number of housing units will be adequate for the next ten years unless there

is a change in projected population and demographics of Thomaston. However, the nature/type of housing may need to change. Specifically, increases in low-income and senior housing may be needed to accommodate the town's aging population and address affordability issues. The development of more low-maintenance, affordable housing units could also serve to attract young people to Town and help reverse the population decline of recent decades.

2. Housing Affordability

The Maine Housing Authority (MHA) considers housing "affordable" when a household spends no more than 30% of its income on housing-related costs. Based on this criterion, home ownership in Thomaston was affordable in 2017 for those residents earning the median income in 2017 of \$49,863. Households earning 80% of the median income, or \$39,890, however, would not have been able to purchase a home at that year's median price of \$144,500. By 2018, according to MHA's analysis, the median income in Thomaston dropped to \$47,305 and the median cost of a home jumped to \$175,000, making home ownership unaffordable to median-income households.

In the years between 2015 and 2018, the number of home sales remained stable at about 24 per year, and in 2018/19 that number doubled to 48. Living in coastal communities in the Rockland/Camden area has become more and more attractive in recent years, and Thomaston's relatively affordable real estate (compared with neighboring coastal towns) has put upward pressure on home prices.

According to MHA, the average monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Thomaston in 2017 was \$958, exceeding average rents in surrounding communities and statewide. MHA estimated the median annual income for Thomaston renters to be \$32,499, making any rent above \$812 unaffordable. Fifty-seven percent of

¹Adjustments made for the prison population move to Warren.

Thomaston's renters were unable to afford the average two-bedroom apartment. One possible explanation for Thomaston's high rental costs may be that several high-end rental units, including larger historic single units, are skewing the average in the Town's relatively small market. Additionally, the Town has recently experienced a small decrease in the total number of rental units and a relatively low vacancy rate, both of which may also contribute to rising prices.

Thomaston's housing affordability gap may widen as residents continue to age and move into retirement, limiting their household income. The impact of apartments being converted to short-term rentals is also beginning to be felt.

There are no known efforts to address the affordable housing issue regionally. Rockland has a newly formed Housing Task Force, whose work Thomaston will follow closely. The Town will look for opportunities for collaboration in Rockland and other neighboring towns.

3. The Impact of seasonal homes and short-term rentals

Between 2000 and 2010, Thomaston experienced an increase of approximately 4% in seasonal housing and short-term rentals. The Town Assessor's Office estimates that 8% of the Town's current housing stock is devoted to seasonal occupancy. Given the marginal increase in regional tourism over the past few years, as well as the shifts in local housing and population, it is plausible to project that this trend will continue, bringing both positive and negative implications for Thomaston.

Retirees who purchase large historic houses for seasonal occupancy tend to have the resources to maintain the properties and often become active in community life. Short-term rentals provide supplemental income and introduce new people to Thomaston. Both housing uses add consumer spending and property tax revenues to the local economy.

On the other hand, conversions of year-round homes into seasonal homes and short-term rentals has the effect of decreasing long-term housing and rental units, and this may be a factor in Thomaston's strained rental market. Furthermore, a growing seasonal population may lead to cyclical spikes in community engagement, reduced investment in schools and other municipal services, and a shift in neighborhood character due to the frequent turnover of short-term rentals.

4. Additional Housing Needs

Thomaston currently has 76 apartments designated as low-income senior housing, and the Town has no assisted living units nor any housing specifically designed for middle- to high-income seniors. The most recent Census Bureau data indicates that 20% of Thomaston's population is 65 years old or older, and nearly 24% of all homes in town are owned by residents within this age group. Given this aging of the population, which is projected to continue through 2034, the Town will likely experience an increased demand for smaller, low-cost housing units as senior residents transition out of large historic homes.

Thomaston's dearth of affordable housing may also continue to worsen as its aging population moves into retirement on limited fixed incomes. Without deliberate investment in affordable senior housing—including nursing homes, assisted-living facilities, and congregate communities—Thomaston is likely to experience an out-migration of older residents seeking alternative housing. Additionally, more low-cost, attractive, low-maintenance housing can help attract young people to town.

Thus, while population projections may suggest that Thomaston is unlikely to require an increase in overall housing units, an alternative conclusion is equally or perhaps more plausible—namely, that Thomaston needs more good

affordable housing units for its aging seniors and the in-migrants it hopes to attract.

5. Other Major Housing Issues

More than 80% of Thomaston's housing units were built prior to 1900, compared with just 5% built since 2000. This prevalence of historic architecture gives the town a classic New England village atmosphere, particularly downtown and along Main Street and the riverfront. A defining characteristic of the community, Thomaston's historic housing stock is a point of pride for its residents and a draw for tourists. However, these buildings often require high maintenance and preservation expenses, and these, combined with increasing energy and heating costs and rising taxes, can make the conservation of the town's historic homes a financial burden. Some houses have slid into disrepair in consequence, and more may do so in the future as Thomaston's population continues to move into retirement and out of large historic homes. This demographic trend may also lead to historic homes being converted into multi-unit housing or nonresidential uses.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mortgages on two Section 8 affordable housing complexes in Town will be paid off in the near future, at which time rent restrictions will be lifted. This will result in much higher rents in close to thirty affordable units, a major loss of affordable housing rentals in Thomaston.

6. Regulations affecting the development of affordable/workforce housing

Town regulations neither encourage nor discourage (except in the case of mobile homes) the development of affordable/workforce housing:

- Mobile homes and mobile home parks are presently not allowed except within the R-1 District, where they are considered a conditional use. This is contrary to the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, which stated that mobile home parks

should not be allowed in R-1, our most rural district, but should be allowed in TR-3, which is the Town's designated growth area.

- Apartment buildings are a conditional use in the R-3, TR-3, R-2, R-1, HC (Highway Commercial), and VC (Village Commercial) districts. Multi-unit residential housing is a permitted use in the R-3A District created for the Thomaston Green.
- Conversion of existing residential structures into apartment buildings is a conditional use in all residential districts.
- Section 8 housing is not defined or restricted in any way. Individual landlords can choose to participate in the program.
- Town ordinances contain no provision to discourage multifamily housing, but all ICC Building Codes and pertinent State laws must be met in the construction of an apartment building or multi-unit building. These regulations add considerable cost to a project and may be a hardship for some developers.
- Three of the five residential districts have a minimum lot size of 0.25 acre when served by Town sewer and 0.5 acre without sewer. The R-1 District, which is meant to remain rural, requires a minimum lot size of 0.5 acre when served by sewer and 1 acre if not on sewer. R-3A, the Thomaston Green (the former prison property) has a minimum lot area per dwelling of 2,000 square feet and a minimum lot size of 7,200 square feet.

C. Conditions and Trends

Unless otherwise noted, the source of data in this section is the US Census Bureau, either from the Decennial Census, which relies on a total count

of the population, or the annual American Community Survey (ACS), which is an estimate based on a random sampling. ACS data tends to have a larger margin of error (MOE).

1. Housing Inventory

As shown in **Table 8-1**, the total number of housing units in Thomaston declined between 2000 and 2017, and there was a slight increase in the number of vacant units. Approximately 70% of Thomaston's housing units are owner-occupied, and 30% are rental units.

There has been a drop in the number of vacant rental properties, and approximately 30% of vacancies can be attributed to seasonal or occasional use. There has been a significant increase in vacancies for "Other" reasons. Some of this increase can be explained by an increase in abandoned properties. The increase in short-term rentals may also be a factor. There has been very little recent single-family home construction in Town, an average of just five units per year over the past five years. There has been no new multi-family housing construction since 2004.

Approximately 74% of Thomaston's owner-occupied housing units are one- or two-person households, and 81.5% of rental units are one- or two-person households.

Based on the 2010 census, 55% of householders in owner-occupied units are 55 or older, and 28.3% are over 65. Only 36.1% of householders in rental units are over 55, and 26.1% are 65 and older. The age group 55–64 has seen an increase in owner-occupied units, while the age groups 45–54 and 65 and older have seen increases in renter-occupied units.

Thomaston's housing stock reflects the town's history and is one of the characteristics that defines the Town and makes its residents proud. As **Table 8-2** shows, about 80% of the houses were built before 1900, while only 12.6% have been built since 2000. While the older, often large homes confer important historic character

to the Town, ongoing maintenance expenses, increasing taxes, and size make the preservation of this crucial resource increasingly difficult.

Table 8-3 shows that the number of owner-occupied versus renter-occupied units in Thomaston was stable between 2000 and 2017, approximately 68% versus 32%. The average percentage of owner- versus renter-occupied units in Knox County was 72% vs 28%. Rockland has a significantly higher percentage of rental units than surrounding communities at 45%.

2. Housing Affordability

According to the Maine Housing Authority (MHA), housing is considered "affordable" when a household spends no more than 30% of its income on housing-related costs (mortgage or rent, utilities, taxes, insurance, and maintenance). The Home Ownership Affordability Index is based on the ratio of the home price affordable at the median household income to the median home price. The corresponding index for tenants is the ratio of the rent affordable at the median household income to the average two-bedroom rent. An index of 1 or more indicates that home ownership or renting is "generally affordable."

Table 8-4 provides information about the Home Ownership Affordability Index for the years 2017 and 2018 in Thomaston, Warren, Rockland, Knox County, and Maine. It is noteworthy that there is considerable variation between the two years, especially in Thomaston, where the Affordability Index fell from 1.15 in 2017 to 0.86 in 2018, leaving an affordability gap of 14%. It is assumed that the growing desire to locate in midcoastal communities and the significantly higher real estate prices in nearby waterfront towns is driving up prices in Thomaston. It is clear that, with the exception of Warren, home ownership in the midcoast region (and in the state as a whole) is becoming less and less affordable for median-income families, and this is even more

TABLE 8-1: Thomaston Housing Statistics

	2000*	2010	2017**	17- or 10-yr change
Total Housing Units	1,535	1,385	1,369	-10.8%
Occupied	93.6%	88%	95.3%	+1.7%
Vacant	6.4%	12%	4.7%	-1.7%
Occupied Units	1,436	1,219	1,304	-9.2%
Owner-Occupied	67.5%	69.6%	66.6%	-0.9%
Renter-Occupied	32.5%	30.4%	33.4%	+0.9%
Vacant Units	99	166	65	-34.3%
For Rent	35.4%	19.9%	NA	-15.5%
For Sale	12.1%	12.7%	NA	+6%
Seasonal/Occasional Use	25.3%	29.5%	NA	+4.2%
Other	27.3%	37.9%	NA	+10.6%
Household Size				
Owner-Occupied				
1 person	24.2%	23.9%	38.1%	+13.9%
2 persons	38.1%	43.8%	41.6%	+3.5%
3 persons	16.0%	17.5%	7.8%	-8.2%
4 or more persons	21.5%	14.8%	12.4%	-9.1%
Renter-Occupied				
1 person	47.2%	45.3%	43.3%	-3.9%
2 persons	27.7%	23.5%	40.6%	+12.9%
3 persons	12.0%	15.4%	0%	-12.0%
4 or more persons	13.1%	15.8%	16.1%	+3.0%
Age of Householder				
Owner-Occupied				
15 - 44	29.8%	23.7%	NA	
45 - 54	24.4%	21.3%	NA	
55 - 64	15.9%	26.7%	NA	
65 or over	29.9%	28.3%	NA	
Renter-Occupied				
15 - 44	51.9%	48.0%	NA	
45 - 54	11.6%	15.9%	NA	
55 - 64	11.8%	10.0%	NA	
65 and over	24.7%	26.1%	NA	

*It is unknown how the presence of the Maine State Prison until 2001 impacted these numbers.

**2016 ACS data have a large margin of error.

true for households at 80% or less of median income. **Figure 8-1** shows this graphically.

The 2017² Rent Affordability Index shows an index of 0.85 for Thomaston (see **Table**

8-5), the lowest in the Rockland Micropolitan Housing Market. Thomaston's average rent for a 2-bedroom unit was \$958, which was \$146 above the RMHM average and \$146 above the affordable rent for Thomaston's median-income

²2018 data unavailable at time of writing.

TABLE 8-2: Age of Housing Units in Thomaston as of 2017

Units built before 1800	30.1%
Units built 1800 – 1899	50.3%
Units built 1900 – 1999	12.6%
Units built 2000 or later	5.1%
Unknown	1.9%

TABLE 8-3: Proportions of Owner- and Renter-Occupied Units in Thomaston, Nearby Towns, and Maine

	Owner - Occupied			Renter - Occupied		
	2000	2010	2017	2000	2010	2017
Thomaston	67.5%	69.6%	66.6%	32.5%	30.4%	33.4%
Rockland	54.2%	54%	56%	45.8%	46%	44%
Warren	85.3%	82.6%	79.8%	14.7%	17.4%	20.2%
Knox County	74%	74.1%	70.3%	26%	25.9%	29.7%
Waldoboro	82%	76.5%	80.3%	18%	23.5%	19.7%
Belfast	67.7%	61.4%	87.9%	32.3%	38.6%	12.1%
Maine	71.6%	71.3%	75.3%	28.4%	28.7%	24.7%

households. It is suggested by the Town Assessors’ Office that while Thomaston does have a number of workforce housing units, the median price is impacted by a significant number of high-end units, many of which are single units within large historic homes.

Table 8-6 shows the distribution of “Gross Rents” (rent plus utilities) in Thomaston in 2016 as compared with Rockland, Warren, Knox County, and Maine. The source of this data is American Community Survey estimates, which can be subject to high margins of error.³ **Table 8-7** shows the upper limit of rental rates to which “Housing Choice Vouchers” (formerly referred to as Section 8 certification) can be applied in Knox

³A further breakdown of monthly housing costs (including mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, etc.) can be found at <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>.

County. **Figure 8-2** graphs ACS estimates of household incomes in Thomaston in 2010, 2016, and 2017, indicating a decline of median household income from \$48,963 in 2010 to \$46,993 in 2017. The graph appears to be highlighting the shrinking of the middle class in Town. If this trend is real and ongoing, there will be an accompanying impact on housing affordability.

3. Initiatives and Regulations Affecting Affordable Housing

There are no local or regional dedicated affordable housing coalitions. Thomaston does not have a public welfare department but does administer general assistance funds. Rockland has a newly formed Housing Task Force, and Thomaston should follow its work closely and look for collaboration opportunities. The Town should also stay informed on the work of the Maine

TABLE 8-4: Home Ownership Affordability Index for Thomaston, Nearby Towns, and Maine

	Index	Median Home Price	Median Household Income	Household Income Needed to Afford Median Home Price	Home Price Affordable to Median Household Income	Affordability Gap
Maine 2017	0.93	\$197,000	\$53,190	\$57,089	\$183,546	-6.8%
Maine 2018	0.89	\$212,500	\$56,987	\$64,367	\$188,138	-11%
Knox Cnty 2017	0.96	\$203,000	\$54,763	\$57,280	\$194,078	-4.3%
Knox Cnty 2018	0.77	\$245,000	\$56,173	\$72,689	\$189,332	-22%
Thomaston 2017	1.15	\$144,500	\$49,863	\$43,250	\$166,595	+15%
Thomaston 2018	0.86	\$175,000	\$47,305	\$55,293	\$149,719	-14%
Rockland 2017	.96	\$160,000	\$48,001	\$49,873	\$154,272	-3.5%
Rockland 2018	.82	\$168,500	\$45,397	\$55,175	\$138,638	-18%
Warren 2017	1.14	\$177,500	\$59,157	\$51,692	\$203,134	+14%
Warren 2018	1.22	\$161,000	\$59,690	\$49,032	\$195,998	+22%
RMHM* 2017	.99	\$192,950	\$53,686	\$54,231	\$191,011	1.0%
RMHM* 2018	.87	\$210,000	\$54,165	\$62,246	\$182,736	-13%

*A breakdown of affordability factors for each of the towns in the Rockland Maine Housing Market (RMHM) can be found at www.mainehousing.org/docs/default-source/policy-research/housing-facts/2017/rocklandmicropolitanlma2017.pdf?sfvrsn=62ffa015_5.

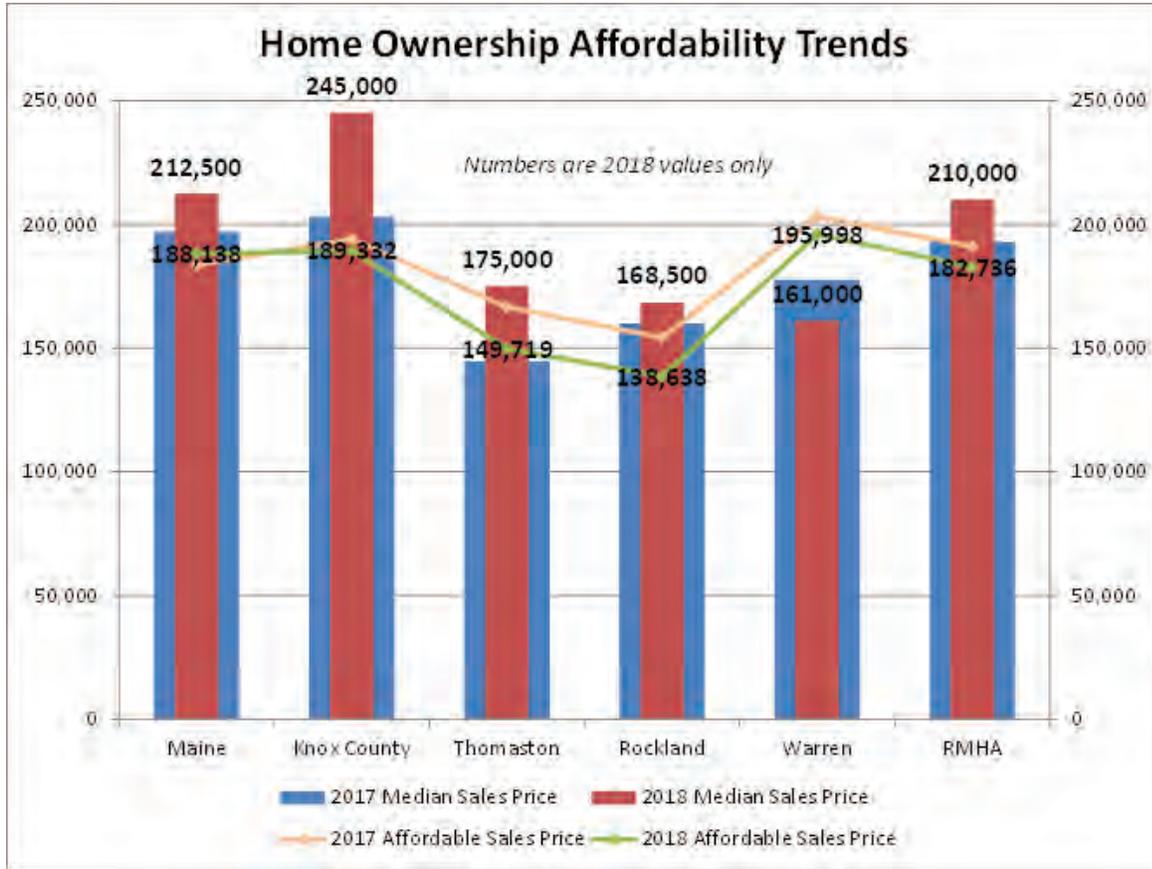
Affordable Housing Coalition, the Maine State Housing Authority, and HUD's Rural Development program, capitalizing on any opportunities from these programs to create more affordable housing in Town.

Other organizations that address affordable housing issues include Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army, and Penquis.

There are few local regulations that inhibit the construction of affordable/workforce housing, but there are no incentives either. The following observations pertain:

- Apartments and/or conversions of existing single-family residences into apartments are permitted or conditional uses in all of the Town's residential districts.

FIGURE 8-1



- Manufactured/mobile homes are only allowed in the most rural district farthest from the center of town.
- In three of the four residential districts, the minimum lot size is 0.25 acre with sewer and 0.5 acre without. In the most rural residential district, the minimum lot size is 0.5 acre with sewer and 1 acre without.

D. Policies

- 1 Protect the New England, small-town character of Thomaston and ensure the preservation of the Town’s historic architecture while meeting the housing needs of its residents.
- 2 Encourage a diverse community by providing affordable housing for all income groups. Ensure that land use controls encourage the development of good affordable housing, including rental units in growth areas.
- 3 Invest in or support a range of senior living options, including a Thomaston Green housing development for seniors (age 55+) seeking a village lifestyle in a nearly maintenance-free living space in a park-like setting with an abundance of green space. (Thomaston Green is a voter-approved area of 11 acres (of which seven acres are buildable) with Town water and sewer in place. The Green--a 5-minute walk from Thomaston Village--is a vital piece of Thomaston’s economic-development plans. The target move-in date for the Thomaston Green is fourth quarter 2022.)
- 4 Encourage ecofriendly housing options in Town.

TABLE 8-5: The 2017 Rental Affordability Index

Rental rates include utilities.

	Index	Avg 2-BR Rent	Median Renter Income	Income Needed to Afford Avg 2-BR Rent	2-BR Rent Affordable to Median Income	Households Unable to Afford Avg 2-BR Rent
Maine	0.88	\$880	\$30,804	\$35,181	\$770	55.9%
Knox Cnty	1.01	\$856	\$34,754	\$34,248	\$869	49.2%
Thomaston	0.85	\$958	\$32,499	\$38,315	\$812	57.2%
Rockland	1.11	\$796	\$35,374	\$31,846	\$884	44.9%
Warren	1.48	\$603	\$35,768	\$24,120	\$894	32.5%
RMHM	1.08	\$812	\$34,943	\$32,472	\$874	46.4%

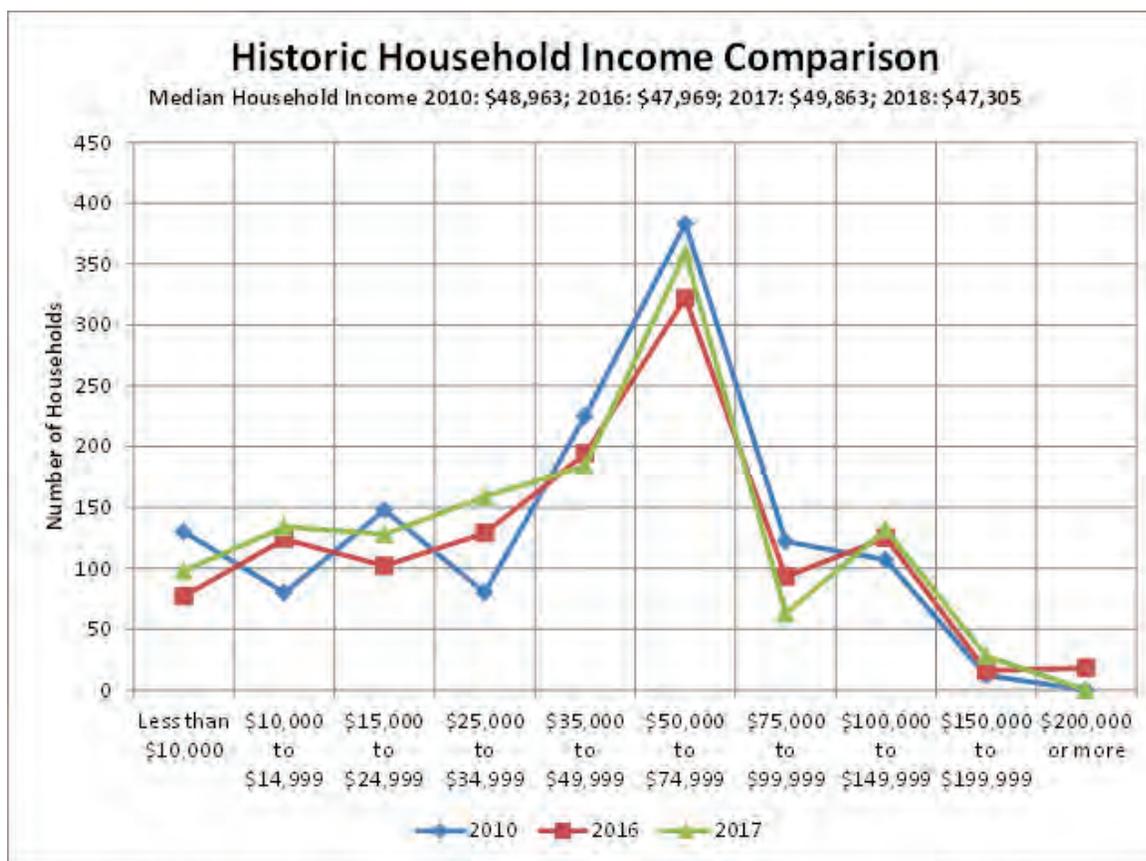
TABLE 8-6: Distribution of Gross Rents (including Utilities) by Cost

2016	Thomaston	Rockland	Warren	Knox Cnty	Waldoboro	Maine
Less than \$500	19.2%	22.4%	14.4%	17%	53.6%	18.9%
\$500 - \$999	38.4%	54.3%	81.1%	54.3%	34.6%	51%
\$1000 - \$1499	32.7%	20.2%	4.6%	22.6%	8.4%	23.4%
\$1500 - \$1999	9.7%	1.5%	0	3%	0	4.6%
\$2000 - \$2499	0	1.6%	0	.8%	3.4%	1.3%
\$2500 - \$2999	0	0	0	2.2%	0	0%
\$3000 & above	0	0	0	0	0	0%

TABLE 8-7: Upper Limit of Rents Eligible for Housing Choice Vouchers in Knox County

Studio	1-Bedroom	2-Bedroom	3-bedroom	4-bedroom
\$765	\$770	\$975	\$1,315	\$1,452

FIGURE 8-2: Distribution of Household Incomes in Thomaston in 2010, 2016, and 2017



- 5 Encourage and support the efforts of State and regional housing coalitions to address affordable and workforce housing needs.

E. Implementation Strategies

1. Preserve the town’s architectural heritage.

- Assess the feasibility of an alternate road around the village area to reduce through truck traffic.
- Develop incentives and reduce disincentives for restoring and maintaining homes. Creative tax structures, low-interest loans, programs available through Maine Preservation, and other initiatives should be explored.
- In the Federally recognized Historic District, require that renovations and

new construction maintain the District’s historic character and fabric.

- Pursue means for allowing creative adaptations of historic homes in the District while maintaining historic facades and locating parking for such uses away from front yards and shielded from view.
- Consider form/character-based coding within designated Zoning Districts.
- Develop a municipal and/or private revolving fund for the purchase, restoration, and resale of important abandoned buildings. Consider a Community Land Trust as a means to this end.
- Explore ways to address the issue of “Demolition by Neglect”

2. Develop Town policies that serve to increase the number and quality of affordable rental properties and other housing options.

- Pursue means for allowing creative adaptations of large, historic homes while maintaining historic facades.
- In the TR3 District, encourage high-density housing—including smaller homes, duplexes, row houses, multi-unit residences, smaller lot sizes—while maintaining a traditional street grid pattern. Extend sewer and water lines into the TR-3 District.
- Explore funding sources to support affordable housing construction and/or rehabilitation, such as an affordable housing TIF district, a USDA 504 program, and/or a Maine Housing Authority Aging in Place Program. Partner with Habitat for Humanity in the development of affordable housing alternatives. Formally adopt and maintain an affordable housing plan that qualifies the Town for state and federal assistance. This plan should include an age 55+ development for Thomaston Green.
- Work with the owners of the Water and Pine Street apartments to continue affordable rents once their existing HUD loan is repaid.
- Pursue all legal means to encourage owners of foreclosed properties to return these properties to the housing market as quickly as possible.
- Review the Town's Land Use Ordinance to determine how it might be modified to support accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and other approaches to affordable and/or senior housing such that at least 10% of new residential develop-

ment over the next decade is affordable. Consider how Inclusionary Zoning might be applied in a small town with little growth in the housing market.

- Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the impact of short-term rentals on the housing market, and take action as indicated.
- Relocate mobile home parks to designated growth areas and reconsider appropriate locations for individual mobile homes as affordable housing.
- Work with neighboring communities to develop a regional coalition to address the need for affordable workforce housing.
- Investigate the feasibility of establishing a Community Land Trust.
- Require that multi-family developments provide adequate storage areas, landscaping and shared green space.
- Pursue development of housing on the Thomaston Green with an emphasis on energy efficiency and low maintenance.

3. Support and invest in a range of senior living options.

- Pursue the development of low- and middle-income, ecofriendly senior housing options with the goal of supporting aging in place.
- Pursue creative options that provide for intergenerational housing and cohousing.
- Develop standards for modifications to homes within the Historic District that allow for aging in place while maintaining historic facades.
- Explore ways to provide financial assistance to our aging population with home repairs and maintenance.

- Actively pursue the development of assisted living housing options.
- Pursue AARP Age Friendly Community status.

4. Explore ways to encourage energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources in new construction as well as rehabilitation of the Town's existing housing stock.

- Review the Town's Land Use Ordinance modify it if needed to support sustainable building products and practices.

- Provide information to homeowners and contractors on resources that are available through government and private programs.
- Pursue grant money for improving the energy efficiency of public and private buildings in Town.
- Develop a municipal renewable energy program, such as a solar field, to service the Town.



Recreation in Thomaston



Introduction

Thomaston has significant natural recreational assets associated with the waterfront, public parks, and open space. Public indoor recreational spaces are largely limited to Watts Hall, Thomaston Academy, and the public schools. However, the planned move of the municipal offices to the former Laura Libby School building will provide some additional space for indoor recreational activities, especially for older residents. These Town resources are supplemented by substantial facilities and services in neighboring communities. This chapter identifies needed improvements to existing recreational facilities and services as well as recommendations for additional programs and activities to meet community recreational needs and interests.

Major Findings

Thomaston's population is changing. The decrease in the childhood population coupled with an increase in the senior population will require adjustments to existing facilities and services. The Town has many natural recreational assets that are underutilized and, with some improvements, could be made more accessible and useful for residents and visitors alike. Creative use of these natural assets, including the St. George River and Town Forest, could also serve as a draw for young families, young adults, and visitors. The Town has a natural partner in the Georges River Land Trust and is collaborating with it on initiatives that will enhance recreational opportunities in the area.

While the Town's recreational facilities and programs are largely focused on outdoor activities and

sports for school-aged children, the Town is fortunate to have a strong library and several cultural opportunities available to residents including performances by choral groups and numerous offerings at the Strand Theater in Rockland. The Watts Hall Community Players is a Town highlight that provides opportunities to develop and showcase local talent while contributing to community spirit.

A. Goals

Promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and visitors to Thomaston, including access to surface waters. Cooperate in regional and state efforts to do the same.

B. Analyses

For the purposes of this section of the Thomaston Comprehensive Plan “recreation” is defined as a combination of indoor and outdoor leisure activities that take place away from the home.

1. Existing Recreational Facilities and Programs.

Thomaston, like many small towns, has a shrinking and aging population, which suggests that more activities for older residents will be needed in the future, while youth programs and schools will require an influx of young people and families to sustain them at current levels. At present, schools offer as many sport teams as in the past but with fewer participants, and children’s interests are changing. Actively encouraging in-migration and welcoming more recent immigrants to our Town as discussed in the Population chapter may partially offset the decline in the childhood population.

However, with the projected decline in the number of school-age children, there will likely be fewer recreational opportunities in Town, especially for team sports. Transportation to area recreational facilities may be one means of addressing these recreational needs. While there continues to

be an interest in a community recreational facility, it would take a major change in numbers to support the idea of Thomaston’s own recreational facility, even if heavily funded by grants.

With respect to Thomaston’s existing recreational assets, a number of improvements should be made to better meet current and projected demand. Our waterfront at the harbor and the Mill, St. George, and Oyster Rivers needs more attention and planning to provide programs and recreational opportunities for youth and adults alike.

Our five Town parks require more extensive maintenance and improvements to be more useful to residents and visitors. See the 2014 report on Improvement and Operations Program for the Public Parks.

The Village Trail has seen recent improvements but needs more signage and maintenance. In addition to the connection to the Town Forest trails and the George’s Highland Path, the segments winding through Town need better sidewalks, curbs, and signage. A pedestrian bridge over the Mill River from Fish Street to Route 131 South and Montpelier would be advantageous, especially as the Georges River Land Trust (GRLT) is developing a new trail along the waterfront on the South Thomaston side, called the Hayfields Trail.

Our Town Forest is an excellent resource and our cooperation with the GRLT will encourage trail maintenance going forward. In 2019, GRLT, in collaboration with Thomaston Middle School, secured a grant to introduce young people to this resource by providing fat-tire bikes for use on the trails, thereby introducing a new generation to the great outdoors to the benefit of all.

2. Facility and Program Needs

The Thomaston Talks meetings in 2018, as well as a survey conducted in 2013, indicated a strong interest in developing additional recreational activities, amenities, and facilities for active adults and families, as a draw for young adults

and visitors and as a means of building community. Recommendations included fitness programs, bike paths, walking trails, better access to the river for fishing and small watercraft, a skating rink, soccer fields, playgrounds, picnic tables, and benches. Many of these activities will require upgrades to and added maintenance of our public parks and other spaces as discussed above. Transportation to area facilities also needs to be considered. The Director of Recreation believes that “a new Recreation facility is the most pressing need for the Department,” but present trends suggest fewer young people and more seniors. Additional options need to be considered, such as outdoor and indoor space within the Town properties, including our parks.

As the 2014 document on Improvement and Operations Program for Public Parks states [see **Appendix 9**]: “The Public Works Department does a good job of mowing [the four town parks] but that is the limit of maintenance.” The descriptions of these parks as well as the Thomaston Dog Park are found in Section C, Conditions and Trends. There are no long-term plans for improvements or uses of the parks.

The Recreation Director is presently working on a plan to create a coordinated Parks and Recreation Dept.

3. Open Space

In addition to the five public parks, the Town owns 500 acres of largely forested land, which is open to the public except for the half-acre site of the wastewater treatment plant. This includes access to the Oyster River that is reached by a two-mile hike. One hundred acres are legally deeded to the Conservation Commission and are permanently preserved.

There is no formal mechanism to acquire additional important open spaces and access sites, but the Town’s Conservation Commission has a good working relationship with the Georges River Land Trust. They have cooperated on a

failed attempt to acquire riverfront land at the end of Toll Bridge Road and have other projects in mind for adding to the Town Forest and access to the Oyster River. The GRLT has recently taken over trail maintenance in the Town Forest and has also approached the Comprehensive Plan Committee, wanting to be helpful in our deliberations on the future of the town. Access points to the harbor and rivers for small watercraft particularly need to be added in the next ten years for the benefit of townspeople and visitors alike.

4. Public Access to Water

Increased public access to the St. George and Mill Rivers was frequently mentioned in the Thomaston Talks series. In particular, citizens cited a need for improved water access for small watercraft like canoes and kayaks and facilities such as storage racks to support their use. Several possible sites for such access have been identified, with a focus on Mill River Park and other options at the Town Landing and Town Beach. Additionally, the Town hopes to acquire from the State the historic lime kiln property adjacent to the new Wadsworth Street bridge, which could provide another access point, although the current is strong in this location. Existing Town-owned access points on the St. George and Mill Rivers require signage for these areas to be readily identified and used by the public.

In addition to current access points, longtime residents commented that a swimming beach once existed on the Mill River near the present location of the Dog Park. However, the river has changed considerably over time. The water level is much lower now and not suitable for swimming, and it is no longer possible to bring a boat very far upriver. An improved swimming hole might be explored.

One idea for increasing public access to and recreational use of the St. George and Oyster Rivers is a kayak/hike day. Watercraft would go up the St George river and rendezvous with those

who have hiked through the town forest to Oyster River. A picnic would ensue and the hikers would take the kayaks back down the river with the turn of the tide as the kayakers hiked out.

5. Recreational Trails

It is very unusual for a town to have such close proximity to a forest of this size (550 acres) and Thomaston is fortunate to have a large tract of publicly owned forestland. The trails in the Town Forest are used by hikers, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, horseback riders, hunters, and the occasional ATV. It is a traditional local hunting ground in season, with plentiful deer, waterfowl, and wild turkeys.

The Trail maintenance has been a problem in the recent past as those doing it are aging out, but a recent agreement with the GRLT has breathed new life into this project. The Conservation Commission donates \$500 a year to this effort. See also the bike project mentioned above.

One issue that needs to be addressed is that the spray fields from the wastewater treatment plant presently impacts one hiking trail.

No snowmobiles are allowed on the winter trails, and the ATV community seems intent on policing their own concerning noise and safety so that they can continue to share the trails with the larger community. Thus very little conflict has been experienced.

6. Access to Private Lands

There are traditional hunting areas on private land off northern Beechwood Street but no conflict seems to have arisen in recent memory.

C. Condition and Trends

The following lists of activities are not meant to be all-inclusive but rather a sample of the recreational opportunities most often utilized by townspeople.

1. Recreation Programs & Facilities

Outdoor Activity Programs

Thomaston Recreation Department

Thomaston has a full-time Recreation Director and a volunteer Recreation Committee. The Recreation Committee, whose members are appointed by the Selectboard, is made up of seven Thomaston residents and a student representative. The committee meets monthly.

The activities of the Department focus primarily on after-school and summer team sports programs for youth in grades kindergarten through grade 6. Summer sports camps are also offered and well attended. In addition, the Department coordinates and funds three or four senior trips a year, offers a senior exercise class, and sponsors a monthly community potluck luncheon that is attended almost exclusively by senior citizens in town.

Local Schools

The local schools offer participation on athletic teams as follows:

- *Grades 9–12:* Football, Basketball, Tennis, Cross Country, Wrestling, Softball, Golf, Cheering, Baseball, Field Hockey, Indoor Track, Track, Soccer, Club Hockey, Girls' Lacrosse, Independent Swimming, Unified Basketball
- *Grades 6–8:* Football, Basketball, Track, Cross Country, Wrestling, Softball, Golf, Cheering, Baseball, Field Hockey, Soccer
- Little League and Babe Ruth baseball are available.

Nonprofit Organization

Additional recreational opportunities for youth are available through nonprofit organizations such as scouting and Trekkers. Trekkers is a nonprofit, outdoor-based mentoring program that connects young people with caring adults

through expeditionary learning, community service and adventure-based education.

4th of July Celebration

Thomaston's extensive 4th of July parade and festivities are a highlight of the year and offer races for all ages and numerous activities throughout the day.

Indoor Activity Programs

Thomaston Public Library

The library offers many activities including: 40 Days of Summer, an activity program for elementary students; book clubs; weekly family movies; monthly communi-Teas; Poetry Readings, Story Hours, Reading Challenges and others. Other indoor activities are offered by:

- Thomaston Historical Society
- Community Churches
- Boy and Girl Scouts of America
- Knitting and Book Club Groups
- Area dance studios
- Local museums including the Knox Museum, the Farnsworth Art Museum, The Center for Maine Contemporary Art, The Owls Head Transportation Museum, all of which offer activities and classes.

Live performance opportunities are available through such organizations as Watts Hall Community Players in Thomaston, Bay Chamber Concerts, Midcoast Community Chorus, Downeast Singers, and the numerous offerings of the Strand Theater in Rockland.

2. Land and Water Recreation Areas

Thomaston's public parks and Town Forest have the potential to provide a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities, but they are

underutilized. These resources and recommended improvements are described below.

Thomaston Town Parks

The Thomaston Mall

The mall presently sees little use except for Christmas light displays, but is an attractive entrée to downtown. It is narrow and bounded by streets so is of limited use especially to families. Remediation to save the mature trees, such as a curb to prevent parking on root systems, needs to be done, as does replacement or removal of plantings and deteriorating brickwork around the monuments. The New England village common feel needs to be preserved and enhanced.

Mayo Park

This park adjacent to the public boat landing offers beautiful views of the harbor but is little utilized. The upper park could use better defined parking and more benches and picnic tables. The Museum of the Streets signs about Weymouth's landing in 1605 are a draw but could be better placed to avoid blocking the view. More could be done to stress the historical character. Shrubs are overgrown and steps leading to the lower park have recently been removed, although there is a sidewalk next to the roadway. Better management for utilization for people beyond the working waterfront vehicles would also help. It is a beautiful view, but more picnic tables and perhaps grilles would improve utilization. Flower beds are presently being beautifully maintained by a volunteer and the bathrooms are also better maintained, and these need to be continued. A food truck might make a great addition.

Thomaston Green

The Green remains in a state of flux. A voter-approved plan for mixed-use development has yet to materialize more than ten years after its approval. The gazebo recently added can become a gathering place for public concerts and holiday

gatherings but requires electricity to make it more useful. The open fields have provided space for soccer, but the site is underutilized except by dog walkers, and a scenic overlook with spectacular views up- and downriver deserves more use than it is receiving.

Better publicity is needed for the Museum in the Streets information panel there and for the Town's other Museum in the Streets panels and Village Trail segments. The Thomaston Green is a good place for a temporary skating rink, and benches would be more welcoming summer and winter.

Mill River Park

This park is a recent addition to the Town's inventory of improved public lands. Proposed in 2013, recent improvements include an access road, tree plantings, and a parking area. The intent, as yet unrealized, is to provide access to the Mill River and the harbor for canoes and kayaks. (Existing access is by a narrow, steep path.) The park boundaries should be indicated with plantings. Picnic benches and a children's playground would provide a destination for the local community to enjoy the beautiful views, but at present dog walkers appear to be the primary users. A better connection to the Village Trail would be helpful.

Thomaston Dog Park

The dog park is a well-utilized recent success story. It now has a large fenced and double-gated grassy area for large dogs and a smaller one for small dogs. Benches, chairs, water, trash bins, and supplies for picking up poop are provided. A hut provides shelter from the rain. An enthusiastic committee of dog lovers provides leadership, upkeep, and fund-raising.

In addition to its five public parks, the Town owns approximately 350 acres of land known as the Thomaston Town Forest. This land, located northwest of the village center, abuts the 150-acre Oyster River Conservation Area. The Town Forest is readily accessible from the wastewater treatment

facility and includes trails that are used for hiking, biking, cross country skiing, and hunting.

Other Town and Nearby Outdoor Recreation Areas

- Thomaston Village Trail System: The signs for the Museum in the Streets enhance the Town's walkability on and beyond the trail.
- Thomaston Public Landing on the St George River harbor
- Thomaston Town Beach, a harbor access point of very small size
- Playing fields and playground attached to the schools and the municipal facility located at the former Lura Libby school
- Recreational fishing and clamming are available for anyone with a license on the Georges's River, the Oyster River, and the Mill River
- Birch Point State Park
- Owls Head State Park
- Chickawaukie Lake in Rockland
- Rockland Breakwater and Lighthouse
- Camden Snow Bowl
- Camden Hills State Park
- Damariscotta Lake State Park
- Georges River Land Trust
- Coastal Mountain Land Trust
- Hidden Valley Nature Center, Jefferson

Recreational Facilities in the Community and Region

- Watts Hall in the Town's Watts Block
- Samoset Health Club and Golf Club
- Rockland Golf Club
- Thomaston Yoga Studio

- Hybrid Fitness Studio
- Midcoast Recreation Center
- The Pitch
- Penobscot Bay and Rockland Harbor YMCAs
- Planet Fitness, Rockland

Unmet Needs

Through the Comprehensive Plan Committee's Community Survey and community meetings, residents voiced their desire for increased community-building activities, especially those that capitalize on our river and town parks. Some specific suggestions that were heard repeatedly were:

- Ice-skating rink
- Band concerts
- Seasonal festivals
- Community gardens and farmers' markets
- Tennis and pickleball courts – a former tennis court fell into disuse and has been removed
- Water-based learning opportunities such as paddling and sailing programs
- Launch sites and racks for paddle craft, with a special interest in accessing the river north of the Wadsworth Street bridge
- Bicycle paths, lanes and racks both for recreational purposes and for transportation purposes
- Boat rental options.

It should be noted that lack of public transportation is a problem for accessing area recreational opportunities, particularly for young people.

3. Local and Regional Trail Systems

Thomaston Town Forest Trail System

The Town Forest Trail is a section of the Georges Highland Path long-distance system that provides travel paths over thirty miles through the river's watershed. The Town owns 350 acres of land near the Oyster River where the wastewater treatment facility is located. Approximately 100 acres is used for the lagoon and land sprinkling system while the balance of the land is a protected area along the Oyster River. The Town Forest has served the local population for generations for hunting; it is also the home of a variety of wildlife. The Thomaston Conservation Commission and the Pollution Control Department have jointly developed a system of trails for public use. Hikers, cross-country skiers, and dog walkers use these trails. Parking and trail maps are available at designated access points off Beechwood Street, Booker Street. See **Map 9-1: Thomaston Trails** and **Map 9-2: Recreational Biking Trails**.

Thomaston Village Trail System

The Village Trail system extends from the Town Forest trails through the south end of Town to Mill River. It is hoped to extend this with a pedestrian bridge over the Mill River up to Montpelier on Route 131 South. The other streets south of Route 1 also provide particularly lovely walking opportunities, as does the Town cemetery. Other streets lacking sidewalks and/or with more traffic are less conducive to walking. See **Map 9-2: Village Trails**.

Georges River Land Trust

The mission of the Georges River Land Trust (GRLT) is to conserve the ecosystems and traditional heritage of the Georges River watershed region through permanent land protection, stewardship, education, and outdoor experiences. GRLT maintains hiking trails within its 11 preserves and the 11 sections of the Georges Highland Path as well as the River Canoe Trail. Additionally it offers a myriad of four-season activities for all ages. Neither hunting nor snowmobiles are

generally allowed in the preserves but several are open for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

Coastal Mountain Land Trust

Coastal Mountains Land Trust owns over 5,000 acres of the hilly region west of Penobscot Bay as permanent conservation land. These preserves include many of the natural highlights of this area, and are managed to protect wildlife habitat and biodiversity, while providing a natural laboratory for environmental education and opportunities for low-impact outdoor recreation. Hiking trails are maintained on 6 preserves in the Camden/Rockport/Hope area and 11 closer to the Belfast area. Most areas are open to hunting but not snowmobiling.

Camden Hills State Park

The park features 30 miles of hiking trails, shore access, picnic areas, seasonal and winter camping, and a 5-mile multi-use trail for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and snowmobiling.

D. Policies

- 1** Maintain/upgrade existing recreational facilities as necessary to meet current and future needs.
- 2** Preserve open space for recreational use as appropriate.
- 3** Maintain public access to the St. George River and improve access to the Mill and Oyster Rivers for boating, fishing, and other recreational activities.
- 4** Expand the definition of “recreation” to include a wider set of activities and opportunities for all ages and rethink the budget accordingly.
- 5** Increase Thomaston community-building events to help enhance a sense of community, utilize our public buildings and parks, and attract people to the downtown.

E. Implementation Strategies

The Recreation Committee and Recreation Director, working with Town officials, should continue to be pro-active in meeting the changing recreational needs of the community as follows:

- 1 Transportation.** Make better use of existing regional programs by promoting public transportation to nearby athletic and cultural activities.
- 2 Senior Activities.** Regularly conduct surveys of anticipated needs and desires for seniors. The programs of the Town, the Town Library, and local organizations should be coordinated to present a fuller picture of offerings in a community calendar on the Town website.
- 3 Trails.** Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain the Town’s network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. The Town has worked with the Georges River Land Trust on such projects and should continue to do so. Emphasis should be placed on coordinating with GRLT and Rockland on the development of a new trail system that will connect Rockland to the Georges Highland Path through Thomaston. As discussed elsewhere in this Plan, one goal should be a green belt of trails surrounding the village area. Native species should be prioritized in plantings in these areas. The Village Trail should be more prominently highlighted and promoted, with additional sidewalks and signage. The Town should work with the GRLT for the funding, design, and construction of a bike-and-pedestrian bridge over the Mill River to connect to The Knox Museum and trails on the St George peninsula.
- 4 User-Friendly, Low-Maintenance Parks.** Consult with landscape architects to make the Town’s parks lower-maintenance and more user-friendly. Develop water access for small boats at Mill River Park. Encour-

age local neighborhoods to adopt, plan, and maintain their parks, and encourage a Town garden club to beautify public spaces. Support and encourage gardening as a recreational activity of residents. Provide information, seeds, and assistance for creating pollinator pathways of native plantings in yards and public spaces.

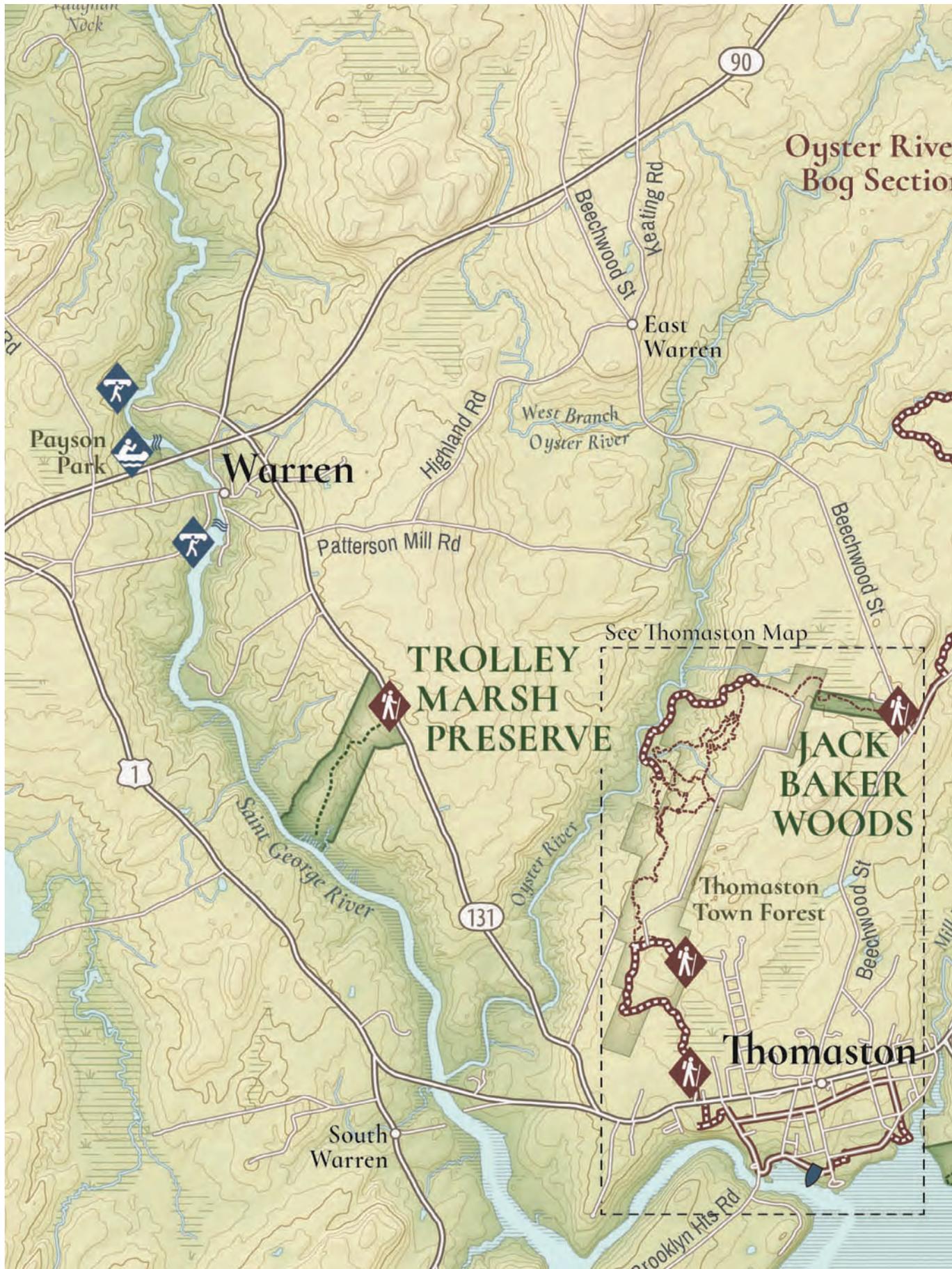
- 5 River Activities.** Actively promote our rivers and their uses. Develop a small-craft landing site with storage racks at the lime kiln site. Recruit a kayak/canoe rental business offering instruction and guided tours. Recruit a scenic boat tour/dinner cruise business. Add a kayak landing on the Oyster River. Investigate the possibility of resurrecting the one-time swimming hole on the Mill River, which has long been in disuse.
- 6 Community Events.** Create a Community Events Committee to generate ideas for community building events that help foster

town spirit and utilize our town parks. Suggestions include an ice-skating rink, band concerts, seasonal festivals, a climbing wall, community gardens, tennis and pickleball courts, and a farmer's market.

- 7 Funding.** Develop a program to encourage gifts for town activities and recreation infrastructure, including bequests to Thomaston in citizens' wills.
- 8 Open Space and Scenic Vistas.** Work with the GRLT and other conservation organizations to protect important scenic vistas, open spaces, and recreational land.
- 9 Access to Private Property.** Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners of allowing public recreational access on their properties.

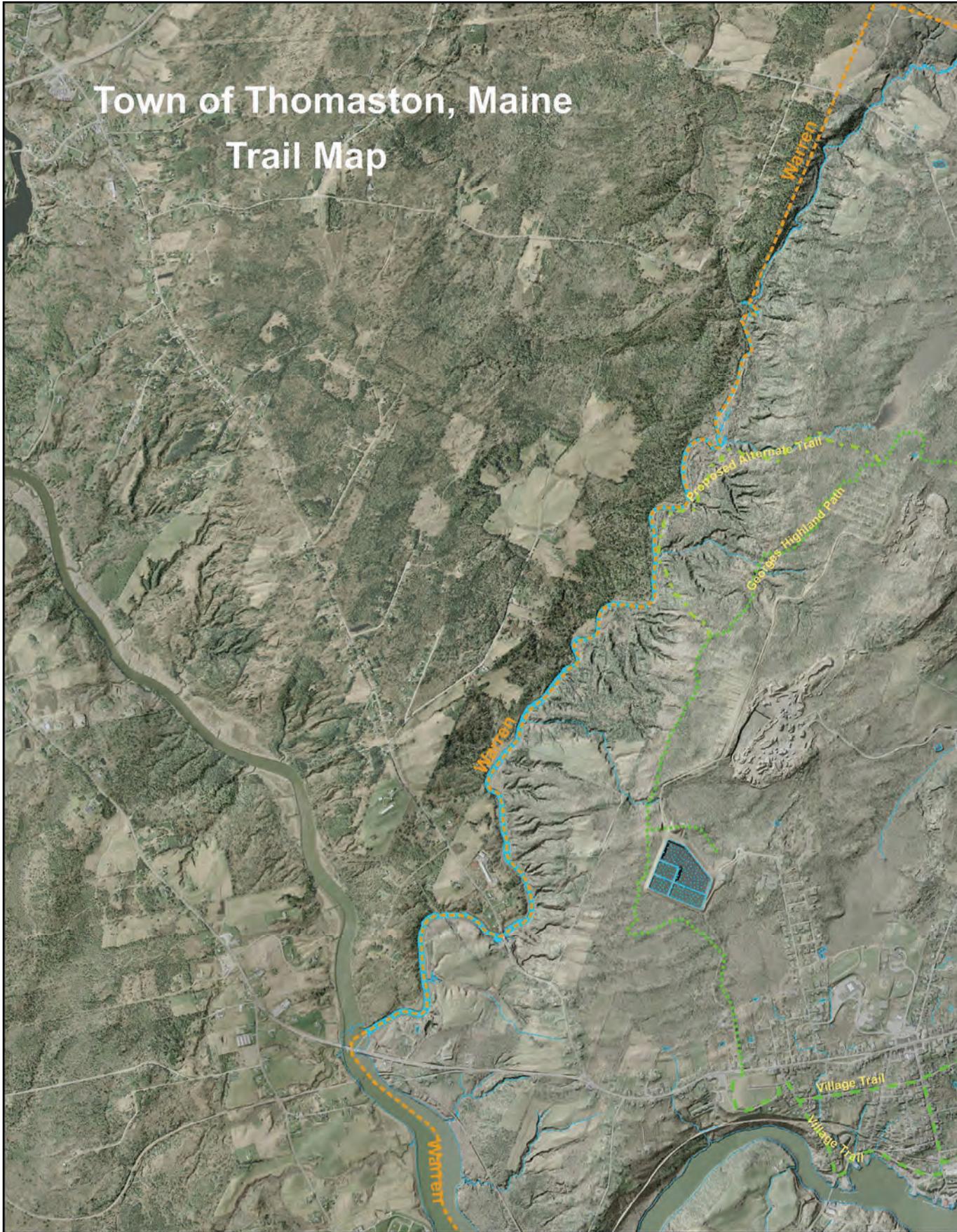


Map 9-1: Thomaston Trails



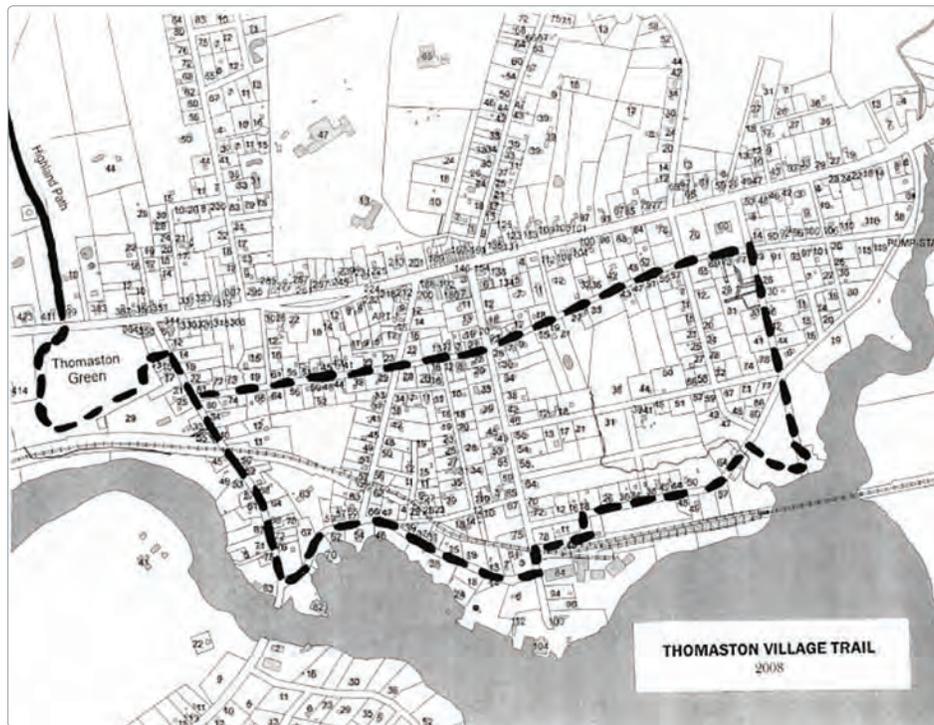


Map 9-2: Recreational Biking Trails in Thomaston





Map 9-3: Village Trails



Transportation



Introduction

US Route 1 is Thomaston's Main Street and also serves as the primary artery to the growing tourist, commercial, and industrial areas of Rockland, the Fox Islands ferry service, the St. George peninsula, and the Cushing/Friendship peninsula. Commercial truck traffic on Main Street is dangerous to pedestrians; creates congestion, noise, and air pollution; and reduces home values and the quality of life in our Town.

A solution to this quandary should be one of the Town's highest and most immediate priorities. The Town should commission a comprehensive feasibility study to evaluate the possible placement and construction of a new road to relieve truck traffic and to serve as an emergency alternate route to US Route 1. Based on feedback from Town residents through "Thomaston Talks"

and the written survey conducted by the Comprehensive Plan Committee, as well as past Comprehensive Plans that cited its necessity, an alternate route is deemed highly desirable for revitalizing the Village Commercial District, relieving Village Commercial congestion, improving safety, decreasing noise and pollution, and serving as a catalyst to growth in the Transitional Residential District (TR-3) north of Main Street. The feasibility study should therefore be multidimensional, examining all these factors and how they interrelate. We need a crystallized vision for the Town's future growth and quality of life.

Among other findings:

- Thomaston lacks an affordable public transportation system connecting

residents to shopping, services, medical offices, and entertainment.

- Thomaston residents enjoy walking and bicycling in their Town. However, deferred maintenance of sidewalks and lack of bike lanes impede the enjoyment of the Town by pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Limited parking at the Public Landing discourages use of the St. George River by recreational motor and paddle craft users. This can be alleviated by adding auxiliary paddlecraft access sites as discussed in Chapter 5, Marine Resources.

A. Goals

State Goal

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

Local Goals

- 1 Create safer, less polluting, less congested vehicular traffic on Main Street (Route 1) in order to improve emergency response times; reduce noise complaints in the center of town; improve quality of life for Route 1 home and business owners; improve convenience and decrease commuting and errand drive times for Town residents; encourage population and housing growth in the Town's designated growth district; and help attract new businesses downtown and in the Town's Highway Commercial District.
- 2 Ensure that our roadways are usable and safe for pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation as well as private automobiles.
- 3 Be a town that promotes less dependence on private vehicles for a greener footprint and an improved quality of life.

- 4 Preserve and enhance downtown parking.
- 5 Preserve and enhance the Town's sidewalks and walkability.

B. Analyses

1. Transportation System Concerns

Vehicular Safety

Due to the high traffic volume, particularly truck traffic, and the number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit, travel on US Route 1 poses unnecessary risks to residents and travelers alike. Based on police reports and local feedback, the following are areas of highest concern: US Route 1 from the Thomaston Commons Way intersection (Walmart Supercenter entrance) to the Rockland city line; US Route 1 at the Oyster River Road (Route 131 N) near the Warren town line; US Route 1 at High Street (Route 131 S); US Route 1 at Buttermilk Lane; and US Route 1 at Old County Road. Additionally, speeding on Knox, Gleason, Wadsworth, Water, and Thatcher streets and in Brooklyn Heights are cited as problems. Although the State has completed reconstruction of US Route 1 through Thomaston, a consequence of the vastly improved roadway and fewer on-street parking spaces appears to have been increased speeding through the Town during off-peak hours. Significant policing hours are necessary to ensure the safety of pedestrians and motorists as well as to respond to accidents as a result of heavy traffic loads on Route 1 through Thomaston.

Pedestrian Safety

Speeding and the lack of well-defined sidewalks for pedestrians on some streets is of concern to residents. The Water Street pedestrian walkway is an example of this problem, with the added concern that there are several areas of restricted sight lines. The use of traffic-calming strategies such as movable speed awareness signs and speed tables in road design may decrease the enforcement time required to reduce speeding.

Emergency Services and Evacuation Safety

The Town currently does not have an alternate emergency route(s) in the event that Route 1 is closed by a major accident or other emergency. This is a serious concern and is one of several reasons to explore the feasibility of creating an alternate road north of Main Street / Route 1.

Congestion, Noise, and Pollution

The major roads accessing Thomaston are US Route 1, Route 131, Old County Road, Beechwood Street, Buttermilk Lane, and Wadsworth Street. (See **Map 10-1: Thomaston Roads and Land Use Districts**.) These roads also carry the highest traffic volumes. Seasonal traffic volumes, which are highest in July and August, are approximately 1.5 times greater than the annual averages for State roadways in the midcoast region. Although private passenger vehicles comprise most of the volume on Thomaston's roadways, nearly all consumer goods for sale in Thomaston and neighboring towns are trucked through the Town. Local producers also depend upon US Route 1 to transport most of their goods out of the area. The mix of large tractor trailer trucks, construction vehicles, and passenger cars idling on the village roadways creates an unhealthy mix of burning fossil fuels, road dust and debris, and acceleration and braking noises throughout the day and night. These factors impact the quality of life and home values throughout Thomaston and particularly along Route 1.

In addition to the commercial activity in the eastern section of Town, truck traffic to and from Dragon Products is significant and will increase as Dragon Products begins to accept carpet/fabric wastes from the site of the former Warren rifle range. This material will be shredded at the Warren site and trucked to Dragon Products along Route 1. Dragon Products is also investigating other alternative fuel sources, such as plastics and pellets, which will likely be transported to Dragon Products by truck.

As regional economic development progresses, additional truck traffic is expected, further exacerbating existing problems.

Although the recently completed improvements to US Route 1 have alleviated some of the congestion, cars are consistently backed-up during rush hours and in the peak summertime months. (See **Appendix Table 10-1, Traffic Volumes**, for factored annual average daily traffic (FAADT) volumes at key points on roadways in Thomaston in 2015.)

Road and Bridge Design and Maintenance

The Town places a priority on the safety of all roadways and bridges. They must be well engineered and built to last. Substandard design or construction results in higher costs to taxpayers and/or subdivision associations for repair. Road damage from flooding and adverse weather conditions—which have increased in recent years—and from use, especially heavy trucking activity, requires that roads be built to appropriate standards, including sufficient sub-bases, drainage systems, and grading. Road maintenance is an ongoing effort. State and federal matching funds for such work have always been important and have become even more crucial to maintain safe roadways. (See **Appendix Table 10-2 Work Plan** and **Appendix Table 10-3 Bridge Inventory**.)

In addition to the reconstruction of US Route 1 through Town, MDOT reconstructed the bridge spanning the Oyster River on Route 131 North, a priority identified in the Town's 2005 Comprehensive Plan. More recently, MDOT replaced the Wadsworth Street crossing of the St. George River. Declared functionally obsolete in 2012, the 280-foot long, 20-foot wide, four-span Wadsworth Street Bridge over the St. George River was replaced by a new 33-foot-wide bridge. The new bridge opened in late 2017 and has a 100-year life expectancy. Innovative features to extend the life of the new bridge include the use of hybrid composite beams with fiber-reinforced

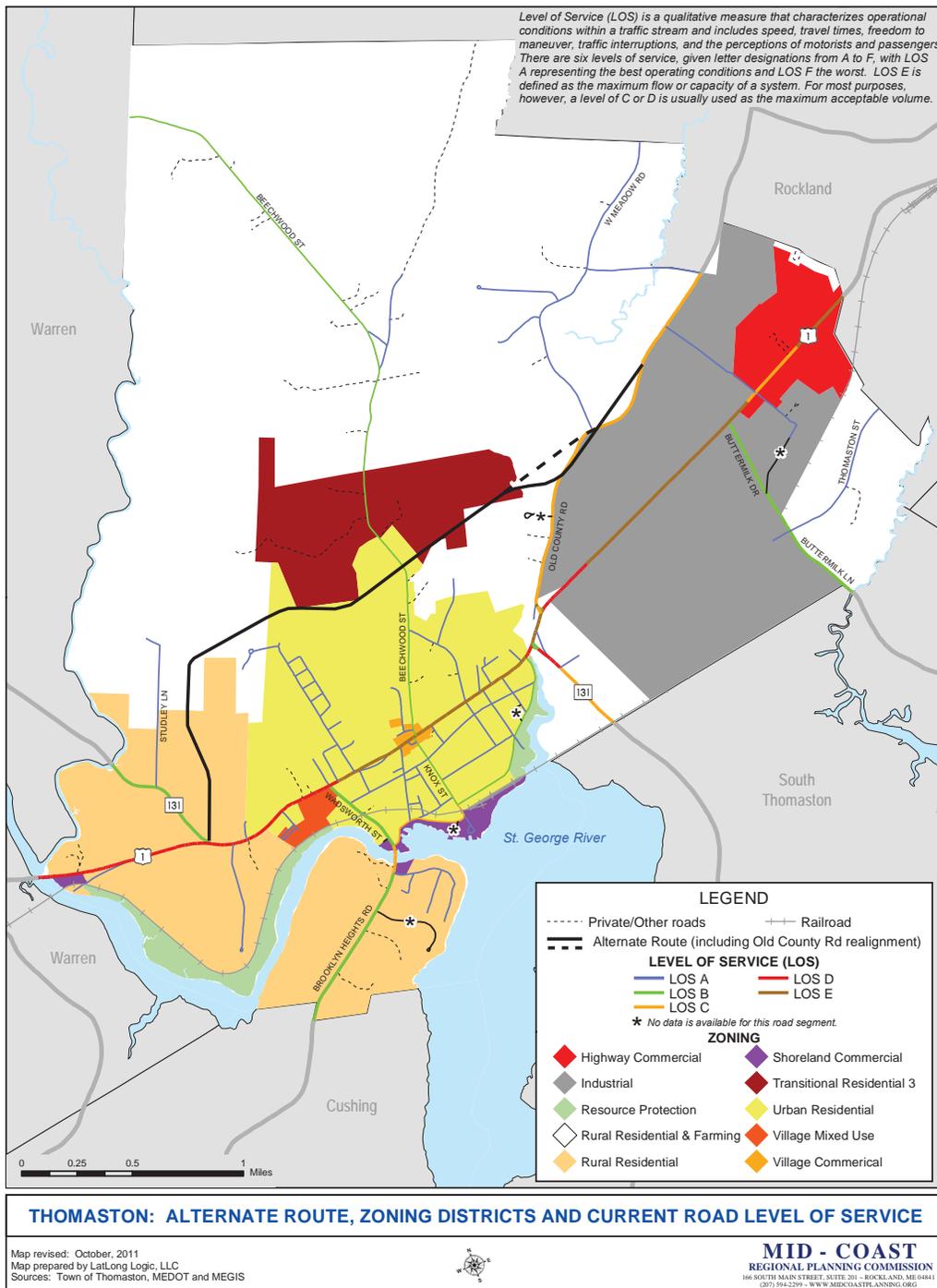


Main Street in the 1930s, looking west with Watts Block at left.



Main Street in 2012, looking east with Watts Block at right.

Map 10-1: Thomaston roads and land-use districts.



Note the “D” and “E” designations for the Levels of Service on Route 1 as it passes through the R1 Urban Residential District, indicating saturation traffic volumes. This is incompatible with a residential neighborhood. A possible route for an alternate road is shown in black; such a road would divert heavy truck and through traffic from Main Street while improving access to the TR3 District that has long been designated for future residential growth.

polymer exteriors. The bridge deck was built with glass-reinforced polymer bars, which will not rust. The saltwater-exposed steel pipe pile foundations are coated with a special polyurea coating proven to be very durable, providing exceptional corrosion protection.

Accessibility and Parking

Thomaston is accessible primarily by motor vehicles. Parking is adequate in the Highway Commercial District but is considered inadequate for Village Center merchants and services—in particular, on the south side of Main Street—and at the Public Landing during peak usage. When the Town offices move from the Watts Block to the former Lura Libby School building, the Village Center parking problem may lessen. Adequate signage to direct the traveling public to parking areas north of the business block is also needed. These parking areas were substantially improved in 2019 with curbing, lighting, space demarcation, and landscaping.

Thomaston residents cite walkability as one of the attractions of life in the Town. Improving walkway safety and expanding bicycle routes will add to community appeal, safety, and quality of life for residents and visitors alike. (See **Appendix Table 10-4, Municipal Parking Lots Locations and Capacity**, and **Appendix Table 10-5, Current and Recommended Bicycle Routes**.)

Thomaston and its region have few alternative transportation options in comparison with more densely developed areas. Residents are largely dependent on privately owned vehicles for daily trips to work, shopping and services. School district buses bring children to and from Oceanside Middle School and Thomaston Grammar School. A Park-and-Ride area to facilitate carpooling is located in the newly improved parking area north of the business block.

Conflicts Caused by Multiple Road Uses

Alleviating through traffic, especially truck traffic on US Route 1 / Main Street, is a priority issue of

Thomaston residents. US Route 1, which bisects Thomaston's village area, is the major thoroughfare connecting the State's coastal communities. State Route 131, which cuts diagonally across Thomaston, connects the Town to the neighboring communities of Warren and St. George. These roads serve local commerce and neighborhoods as well, and, given their high traffic volume, can be a barrier to pedestrians. These roads carry 1.5 times the volume of traffic on comparable roads in the region. Additionally, many of Thomaston's finest architecturally significant homes are located along Route 1. As one of the primary goals of residents is to preserve the architectural heritage of the Town, serious consideration should be given to how Route 1 traffic negatively impacts this goal.

In addition to US Route 1, conflicting uses are evident along Water and Thatcher Streets. These streets constitute an important section of the Village Trail (part of the Georges Highland Path) for water views and, as such, are a favored walking area. However, these streets are also used as a local "thoroughfare" for traffic to and from Cushing seeking to avoid traffic delays along Route 1. Inadequate sidewalks, especially along Water Street, are a major concern.

2. Human-Powered Transportation

Sidewalks

The 2016-18 MDOT Route 1 – Maine Street Highway Reconstruction Project (ID 017890.00), beginning 0.29 mile east of the Warren town line and extending easterly 2.21 miles to Route 131 South, reconstructed the existing sidewalks on the north side of Main Street to a width of 5 feet and constructed new 5-foot wide sidewalks with curbing on the south side of Route 1. Other recent sidewalk improvements include the construction in 2013 of a 130-foot long, 7-foot wide, raised, concrete sidewalk with curbing and lighting along the alleyway access road westerly

of the north business block, and new sidewalks behind the business block constructed in 2019.

Along with the improved crosswalks on Main Street /Route 1, these sidewalk improvements enable residents of the neighborhoods north and south of Main Street to more easily and safely connect with one another and Town resources including businesses, schools, waterfront, public library, and to the Town Office when it is relocated to the former Laura Libby School building.

Sidewalks also serve as part of the Thomaston Village Trail to connect Town parks and scenic turnouts. As noted above, Thatcher Street and Water Street serve as the backbone of the Village Trail system along the St. George River connecting Mill River Park to the Public Landing and Mayo Park, and to the scenic turnout at the foot of Wadsworth Street overlooking the river. While the sidewalks on Thatcher Street are generally adequate, the “sidewalk” along Water Street is insufficient, consisting only of a marked lane, varying in width from 3 to 5 feet, along the southern shoulder of the street.

In both the Comprehensive Plan surveys and during the “Thomaston Talks” sessions, walkability was one of the Town’s attributes that residents like most. However, sidewalk repairs as well as more and safer crosswalks and bicycle lanes are needed throughout the Town. The Town has a sidewalk improvement plan to address these needs, but progress lags behind citizen expectations.

Bicycling

In the Comprehensive Plan survey and during the “Thomaston Talks” sessions, support for bicycle lanes was overwhelming. They are viewed as contributing to the quality of life in Town. Except for travel along Route 1, bicyclists currently use roadway shoulders, which are narrow in many places, or use the travel lanes where there are no shoulders. The above-referenced 2016-18 MDOT Route 1 – Main Street Highway Reconstruction Project incorporated new roadway

shoulders. Bicycle lanes of approximately 4 to 5 feet on the north and south sides of Route 1 should be designated with painted lines and bicycle symbols. Additionally, improving and extending sidewalks and bike lanes for ease and safety will encourage walking and biking and encourage younger families to move to the Town.

3. State and Regional Transportation Plans

The 2010-2011 Connecting Maine plan, a state-wide, long-range transportation plan, provides overall goals for the maintenance and improvement of the State transportation system to meet the needs of residents and commerce. These goals generally align with the Comprehensive Plan. There are no projects specific to Thomaston included in the current MDOT Long Range Plan. Thomaston has received significant State-funded improvements in recent years, including the reconstruction of US Route 1, the replacement of the Wadsworth Street bridge, and replacement of the Oyster River bridge on Route 131 North. However, statewide shortfalls in funding to preserve and enhance the State transportation network will also impact Thomaston.

This Plan recommends that Thomaston seek funds to explore the feasibility of a new road north of Route 1 to relieve congestion on Route 1 and provide an alternate route over the Mill River.

4. Current and Approximate Future Budget for Road Maintenance and Improvement

The State of Maine Urban-Rural Initiative Winter Road Program/Local Road Assistance Program payments have remained fairly constant between \$24,000 - \$26,000 for FYs 2010 – 2019. These funds provide winter maintenance which includes plowing and sanding. Future municipal funding for road improvement and maintenance and State aid for highways is estimated to be \$131,800 per year through 2021.

Road maintenance is an ongoing effort and municipal budgets are often stretched as the

cost of maintenance increases. State and federal matching funds for roadwork have always been important and have become even more critical to maintain safe roadways.

5. Efforts to Address Parking Issues

In the Comprehensive Plan survey and the “Thomaston Talks” sessions, participants agreed that adequate parking in the Village Commercial District is important for a vibrant village center. To that end, in June 2018 the Town made a significant investment in its downtown when voters approved two initiatives to complete and fund what is referred to as Phase IV of the Union Block, which is located on the north side of Route 1. Work was completed in 2019. Improvements include delineation of vehicular access aisles and entrance-exit points, thereby facilitating a more efficient layout of the parking stalls. The reconfigured lot allows for 46+ lined parking spaces, an addition of 6-10 spaces. The project also enhanced the pedestrian and visual appeal of the area with the addition of sidewalks, benches, ADA-compliant entrances to shops and businesses, plantings, and attractive lighting and signage.

The 2005 Comprehensive Plan identified a need to address parking conditions and options at the Public Landing. A two-year experiment to make all Public Landing parking available to all on a first-come, first-serve basis concluded in 2014 with all restrictions on commercial parking removed from both the Harbor Ordinance and area signage. The opening of a successful restaurant adjacent to the Public Landing often decreases the number of available parking spaces for maritime landing users, although, to date, there appears to be space for all.

As stated in **5: Our Rivers and Harbor**, while it is unlikely that the parking area at the Public Landing can be expanded, it is hoped that Mill River Park and a future carry-in launch site at the Kiln Site location adjacent to the new

Wadsworth Street bridge will take up some of the demand for user parking at the Public Landing, especially for paddlecraft users. The Town Beach water access site has no parking but is close to the Kiln Site, which has adequate space for vehicles.

Parking standards in the Land Use and Development Ordinance are not specific to the village area and generally do not encourage development. Section 716.16.6 *Parking Lot Design and Landscaping* states, “All development shall provide permanent off-street parking space.” However, there is a provision for shared parking facilities, which allows neighboring businesses to reduce the amount of parking spaces/lots they each provide. Section 717.1 *Off-Street Parking Standards* includes specific requirements, which have been shown to be adequate overall.

6. Public Transit Services

A MDOT funded study, *Midcoast Maine Transit Study*, including the towns of Camden, Rockport, Rockland, and Thomaston, was completed in 2014. The study proposed several bus service route options along US Route 1, including an On-Demand Service Approach route option that would be similar to the service previously provided by Coastal Trans, but with a narrower focus on the four study-area communities. One bus would provide on-demand service to Camden and Rockport, while another would serve Rockland and Thomaston. A second option, the Fixed-Route service option, featured buses traveling along a set route with a set schedule. The route would connect as many major destinations in the four communities as possible. Neither of these options were enacted.

In May 2018, Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP), located in Belfast, initiated the Mid-Coast Public Transportation or Downtown Area Shuttle (DASH) bus service. These buses run hourly Monday through Friday, departing at 7:00 a.m. from the Pen Bay Medical Center in Rockport with a second bus departing

from Walmart in Thomaston at 7:00 a.m. The last buses arrive at each location at 5:00 p.m. The buses are open to the public, and a fare is charged for ridership. The buses only run along Route 1, stopping at major destinations such as local supermarkets. Currently there is no bus service to Thomaston Village, making this an underserved area. Residents of Thomaston must travel to the Walmart Store by private vehicle or taxi to take advantage of the bus services. Transportation to and from medical appointments for Medicaid recipients can be arranged through WCAP.

Currently several taxi companies as well as Uber provide limited services in Thomaston; and there is a private airport limousine service available to South Portland.

In response to the Comprehensive Plan surveys and during the “Thomaston Talks” sessions, citizens stated their view that public transportation options should be expanded with local buses to serve the midcoast region. Town officials should actively engage with the DASH provider, WCAP, to extend the route to the Thomaston’s Village Commercial area. This is particularly important for the growing senior community. Additionally, the Town should publicize a directory of all public and private transportation options available.

7. Connections to Rail, Air, and Ferry Services

Thomaston does not host a transportation terminal. A rail line crosses the southern portion of the Town. (See **Map 10-1** for its location.) The line terminates in Rockland and serves some of the freight needs of area businesses, including Dragon Products. Limited seasonal tourist passenger train service from Rockland to Brunswick has occurred in the recent past, and regional efforts have been underway to reactivate it. Thomaston is committed to participate, support, and promote regional efforts to improve and better utilize rail services.

Thomaston is served by the Knox County Regional Airport located in Owls Head which

provides air service to Boston and beyond. The MEDOT Ferry Terminal in Rockland provides service to Vinalhaven and North Haven.

8. Protection of Airspace

The Knox County Regional Airport is approximately seven miles from Thomaston; development within Thomaston would not interfere with that airport’s operations or airspace.

9. Waterside Transportation Facilities and Needs

Thomaston is a coastal river community, and parking is a concern at the Public Landing with only 24 lined spaces and 6 open spaces. (See **Chapter 2: Our Environment: Water Resources**; **Chapter 5: Our Rivers and Harbor**; and **Chapter 9: Recreation in Thomaston**, for more information on the Public Landing.)

With the goal of increased water access for recreational use, consideration should be given to providing alternative recreational water access elsewhere to relieve pressure on the Public Landing; providing additional parking and a safe space for buses to unload and load passengers at the Public Landing; or both.

10. Ordinance Standards

Local Access Management

Thomaston’s Land Use and Development Ordinance includes access management standards. In accordance with Section 717.3 *Access and Parking Layout*, “To limit the proliferation of access points from parking areas to public highways and the resultant strip development, traffic hazards, congestion and other manifestations or commercial or industrial sprawl, each developer in a Commercial or Industrial District shall be required to prepare and implement plans to ameliorate visual and safety concerns associated with highway development. The Ordinance includes a requirement for entrances to take into account minimum sight distances based upon

posted speeds, among other standards, as based on “Access Management - Improving the Efficiency of Maine Arterials, a Handbook for Local Officials” Maine Department of Transportation, 1994, which is incorporated by reference in the Ordinance. State access management rules apply to State and State aid roads. Those wanting a new curb-cut (driveway or entrance access) on a State road must obtain a permit from MDOT.

Local Road Design Standards and Land Use Patterns

The Thomaston Land Use and Development Ordinance has street design standards which vary based upon street classification in Section 720 *Street Design Standards* (Local Residential Streets, Collector Streets, Arterial Streets, Private Streets and Ways). Section 729.2 *Road Design Standards* for subdivisions (Public Rights-of-Way and Private Rights-of-Way) contains provisions to allow subdivision design to fit more appropriately into the surrounding land use patterns and scale of development. Additionally, cluster subdivision standards allow for the use of shorter road lengths. These standards do not appear particularly onerous, and the Planning Board Chair reports that applicants generally have not contested them.

Local Road Design Standards / Provisions for Bicycles and Pedestrians

Opportunities for safe biking and walking along roads are limited. Section 728.10 of the Land Use Ordinance requires the installation of sidewalks in subdivisions. The Planning Board has consistently applied this provision unless sufficient pedestrian infrastructure exists. In cases where the Board finds new sidewalk construction is unfeasible (see 728.10.2), the Planning Board has required equivalent contribution to the Town’s sidewalk reserves.

The Site Plan Review provisions in the Land Use and Development Ordinance in Section 739.4 *Vehicular Access, Parking and Circulation*

includes as an approval criterion that “Pedestrian ways shall be safely separated from vehicular traffic.” Sidewalks are required for all subdivision approvals in accordance with Ordinance Sections 702.2 and 728.10. The Village Mixed Use District (R3A) purpose includes, “Have a human scale; be sensitive to pedestrian needs...” Local residential streets require a “3-foot esplanade; and a 5-foot sidewalk, unless adequate pedestrian walkways are provided elsewhere; and a 2-foot buffer zone shall be provided.” (Section 720.2). Furthermore, “The Thomaston Planning Board may require the reservation of a twenty (20) foot easement in line with the dead-end road to provide continuation of pedestrian traffic or utilities to the next road.” (Section 729.2.7).

Generally, outside of subdivisions there are no sidewalk requirements to protect pedestrians although the Planning Board has a regular practice of requiring sidewalks as a condition of approval.

The recently completed reconstruction of Route 1 includes safe and attractive sidewalks and bike paths, but the bike paths are not yet marked.

Improved maintenance of existing sidewalks and bikeways throughout Town for the pleasure and safety of residents is necessary to fully realize the goals of this Plan to encourage greater use.

Subdivision Roads

Thomaston’s subdivision ordinance provisions allow the Planning Board to “require the reservation of a 50-foot easement in line with the dead-end road to provide continuation of the road where future subdivision or development is possible” (Section 729.2.7). Additionally, the General Performance Standards in Section 720.1 *Street Design Standards* states that “the design of streets shall provide for the proper continuation of streets from adjacent development and for proper projection of streets into adjacent un-subdivided and open land.” Ordinance provisions

also allow for cluster developments with shorter subdivision roads and a more compact design.

C. Conditions and Trends

1. Location and Overall Condition of Roads, Bridges, Sidewalks, and Bicycle Facilities

See **Map 10-1** for the locations of roadways and bridges. Updated conditions to 2018 can be found **Appendix Table 10-3, Thomaston Bridge Inventory** and **Appendix Table 10-6, Thomaston Road Inventory**.

According to MDOT, Thomaston has 30.6 miles of public roads, of which 20.59 miles are Town roads, 4.58 miles are State Aid Highways, 5.26 miles are State Highways, and 0.17 mile is unclassified. Most of the Town roads are paved. Named private subdivision roads and lanes, which are often shared driveways, are listed as E-911. (See **Appendix Table 10-6, Thomaston Road Inventory**.) The State and local roads are vitally important, as they allow residents to commute to work, schools, stores, and around Town. Overall, State roads and local streets are in good condition, as the Town places a high priority on safety.

There are no closed or year-round weight limits on State or local roads or bridges except for the Greenhouse Hill Road, which is closed in the winter because it is not completely plowed. The following State roads are seasonally posted from late winter to early spring with weight restrictions (23,000-pound limit): Oyster River Road (Route 131 N), Wadsworth Street/River Road, and Old County Road. Seasonally posted local roads from late winter to early spring (with weight limits of 23,000 pounds) include: Buttermilk Drive, Thomaston Street, West Meadow Road, Fish Street, Thatcher Street, Sunrise Terrace, Bobolink Lane, Ridgeview Drive, Erin Street, and Beechwood Street from the Dunbar Road to the Warren / Thomaston Town Line.

MDOT has prioritized highway corridors for improvements and maintenance based upon usage and importance in the State roadway

network. Thomaston's highest priority road, as ranked by MDOT, is US Route 1. It is ranked as a Priority 1 Road. In Thomaston, Route 131 North and South and Old County Road are Priority 4 Roads. Buttermilk Lane and Wadsworth Street are Priority 5 Roads. All other roads in Thomaston are Priority 6 Roads (town roads). Statewide, MDOT has focused funding on Priority 1 and 2 roads for improvements.

2. Potential On- and Off-road Connections to Neighborhoods, Schools, Waterfronts, and Other Activity Centers

In the community survey and public "Thomaston Talks" sessions, participants identified expanding and improving hiking/walking/biking trails as important means of building a sense of community, improving health, and preserving Thomaston's small-town character.

The Thomaston Village Trail is a pleasant pedestrian excursion through the Town. The 3-mile trail begins at the Mill River Park in the east and runs westerly to Thomaston Green, site of the former Maine State Prison, where it provides sweeping views of the St. George River from high above the shoreline, and then turns northerly, crossing Route 1 and connecting to the path leading to the Thomaston Town Forest section of the Georges Highland Path.

In 2010 the Town proposed the construction of a 4,000-foot long, 5-foot wide reclaimed bituminous Mill River Trail around Mill River in conjunction with the Village Trail. The trail would overlook the Mill River and the St. George River. It would begin at the Mill River Park, proceed along Fish Street, cross the Mill River at Route 1, and terminate on High Street at the Major General Knox Mansion at Montpelier. This would provide a link to the MDOT 13-mile Route 131 bike/hike path to the St. George Peninsula. This Plan requires constructing a walkway over the Mill River and is still in the planning stage.

3. Major Traffic Generators and Related Hours of their Operations

The residents who responded to the Comprehensive Plan survey and/ or attended the “Thomaston Talks” sessions cited traffic, especially heavy truck traffic, as the characteristic of Thomaston they most disliked. Major traffic generators and associated hours of operation can be seen in **Table 10-1**.

Scheduled events in Rockland, which is adjacent to Thomaston, include the Lobster Festival, Blues Festival, and Harbor Boats and Home Show in the summer months. These events greatly impact Thomaston traffic.

4. Policies and Standards for the Design, Construction, and Maintenance of Public and Private Roads

As described above, the Thomaston Land Use and Development Ordinance includes street design standards that vary based upon street classification in Section 720 *Street Design Standards* (*Local Residential Streets, Collector Streets, Arterial Streets, Private Streets and Ways*). Additionally, Section 729.2 *Road Design Standards* for subdivisions (public rights-of-way and private rights-of-way) allows subdivision design to fit more appropriately into the surrounding land use patterns and

scale of development. Cluster subdivision standards allow for the use of shorter road lengths.

The policies for subdivision roads and for the maintenance of private ways are contained in Section 728.1 of the Ordinance, which states, “Any proposed subdivision shall be in conformity with the Comprehensive Plan of Thomaston...” Additionally, Section 720.7 requires that all plans for Private Ways shall contain the following statement: “The Town of Thomaston shall not be responsible for the maintenance, repair, snow removal or similar services for the Private Way shown on this plan.”

5. Location and Capacity of Municipal Parking Areas

An organized plan for parking and signage needs to be developed. The two areas that require attention are the harbor and the Village Commercial District.

The desire to improve and to promote access to the river and harbor was expressed by residents in the Comprehensive Plan survey and during “Thomaston Talks” sessions. One way to do this is to expand and improve parking at the Public Landing as discussed earlier in this chapter;

Table 10-1: Major Traffic Generators and Hours of Operation

Facility or Activity	Hours of Operation
Dragon Products	Daily
Properties in Highway Commercial District (Lowe’s, Walmart, Tractor Supply, Flagship Multiplex, etc.)	Daily
Thomaston Transfer Station	Tues, Wed, Thurs, Sat
Thomaston Grammar School	School Year: 5 days/week
Oceanside Middle School	School Year: 5 days/week
Major Events, Activities	
Independence Day Celebration	July 4th

another is to provide alternative water-access sites for recreational paddlecraft as discussed in **Chapter 5: Our Rivers and Harbor**.

MDOT has indicated that the Town may be able to purchase a small parcel of land at the foot of Wadsworth Street, which had previously provided access to the old bridge. If this is released for sale by the State, it will provide access to the river for hand-carried paddlecraft as well as some parking.

For the Village Commercial District, there is some street parking, but most of the public parking is located behind the business block on the north side of Route 1. The new crosswalks on Main Street and the newly lighted and hand-capped-accessible alleyway connector on the westerly end of the north business blocks makes the rear parking areas more accessible and safer for pedestrians, especially students from the middle school and grammar school. (See **Appendix Table 10-4, Municipal Parking Lots locations and capacity**.) Improved signage directing visitors to the lots would encourage usage. Relocation of the Town offices from the Watts Block to the former Lura Libby School in January 2020 may add several public parking spaces on the south side of Route 1.

6. Mass Transit Facilities and Services

Knox County Regional Airport

There are no airports within Thomaston. The Knox County Regional Airport is located in Owls Head, approximately seven miles from Thomaston. Development within Thomaston would not interfere with the airport's operations or airspace. The Wireless Telecommunication Facility provisions in the Land Use and Development Ordinance regulate the height of cell towers to a maximum of 199 feet (Section 757.4.4).

Bus and Van Services

Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP) is a State of Maine designated Regional Transportation

Provider. It provides non-emergency, demand-response medical transportation for MaineCare eligible riders, as well as services for riders who are elderly or have disabilities. WCAP also has public transportation options. WCAP operates DASH (Downtown Area Shuttle) in Belfast, Rockland, and portions of Thomaston. WCAP currently works with a number of agencies to provide connections to services for mental health, medical care, and adult rehabilitation services. They operate a fleet of agency vehicles that include ADA-accessible buses, as well as sedans and vans to provide transportation services.

Concord Coach offers daily service on their Maine Coastal Route between Orono and Boston's Logan Airport. The Maine State Ferry Terminal at Rockland is the nearest bus terminal to Thomaston.

In addition to public bus service, private taxi service is provided by Schooner Bay Taxi Service and Joe's Taxi Service, both based in Rockland, as well as Uber.

Marine and Rail Terminals

The Town has no marine or rail terminals. None are proposed.

Public Ferry Service and Private Boat Transportation Support Facilities

There is no public ferry service in Thomaston. The Public Landing meets the needs of marine-related businesses, commercial fishermen, and recreational boaters. Alongside the Public Landing pier is a 90-foot float for small craft to tie-up. In addition, there is a paved launch ramp for boats under 65 feet as well as seasonal public restrooms. In-water storage and dry outside and inside storage are available at a marina on the south shore of the river at the bridge, along with limited marine supplies and hull and engine repairs. There is a pump-out station at Lyman-Morse. See **Chapter 5: Our Rivers and Harbor** for a discussion of marine-related businesses and services.

The Public Landing occasionally serves a private excursion line taking passengers on river trips. If the parking area could be reconfigured to allow additional parking, this type of activity would be encouraged.

D. Policies/E. Strategies

- 1** Develop a Traffic Management Plan informed by future growth goals, sustainability, and quality of life.
- 2** Commission a professional planning study to assess the feasibility and desirability of a new road north of US Route 1 as part of a broader multidimensional plan of the village area, including possible funding sources.
- 3** Ban the use of engine brakes in Town.
- 4** Promote increased use of rail service freight transport.
- 5** Increase alternative transportation opportunities for Town residents.
- 6** Work with Waldo County Community Action Partners (CAP) to add Thomaston's Village Commercial to their existing route for the DASH bus. Consider a subsidy at the Town's expense for the first year to establish the route.
- 7** Investigate the feasibility of a Town contract with a private transportation service for discounted rates for eligible residents (elderly, low income, disabled and youth).
- 8** Publicize a directory of all public and private transportation options.
- 9** Improve walkways and bike lanes.
- 10** Work with the Georges River Land Trust to secure funding to build a pedestrian/cycling walkway over the Mill River.
- 11** Seek private and/or grant funding to improve the walkways/bike lanes on Water Street as part of the Village Trail system.
- 12** Anticipate and address potential parking issues in the Village Commercial and Public Landing lots.
- 13** Provide consistent, attractive, universally recognized signage of parking options to travelers on US Route 1 and Beechwood Street.

Our Public Facilities and Services



Introduction

Thomaston provides a range of services that residents recognize as benefits of living and doing business in Thomaston. Participants in the Community Survey, the “Thomaston Talks” sessions, and other community input settings indicated general satisfaction with current service levels. A recent municipal referendum confirmed the Town’s desire to maintain its local Police Department. Sidewalks, crosswalks, ongoing road maintenance, cultural and community building events, and recreational activities for youth and seniors are areas that were identified as needing enhancement. Capitalizing on our location on a navigable river near the sea was frequently mentioned. Respondents also indicated that finding

ways to economize and lower tax rates is needed. Current economic conditions—including reductions in State funding in recent years—have made it increasingly difficult to finance services. Like many small communities, Thomaston faces challenges in balancing the need to provide important services with the need to keep municipal taxes affordable.

A. State and Local Goal

To plan for, finance, and develop an efficient and innovative system of public/community facilities and services that will accommodate and promote orderly growth and sustainable economic development.

B. Analyses

1. Municipal Service Buildings

As of early 2020, the Town Office, Police Department, Recreation Department, and Food Pantry are relocating to the former Lura Libby school behind (to the northwest of) the business block group of buildings commonly called the Union Block. This move follows a constructive repurposing of the building that was completed with a voter-approved bond issue. The repurposed building is ADA-compliant and meets all requirements for a public facility. This move is designed to enhance Town services, make them more conveniently accessible, and ensure that they continue to meet residents' needs.

Thomaston struggles to keep its Police Department fully staffed, and, when necessary, depends on assistance from the Knox County Sheriff's Department in nearby Rockland. The Town recently instituted family health insurance coverage for its officers to encourage them to remain with the Town after completing their training. The new Police Department offices in the Lura Libby facility will provide a more efficient, more professional, and safer workspace with a secure interview room and other needed upgrades.

The Ambulance Service shares space in the Fire Department/EMS facility on Knox Street, where the ambulance is housed, and the administration and day-to-day activities of the two departments are coordinated under joint oversight of the fire and ambulance chiefs. The Town budgets the Ambulance Service for seven-days-per-week per diem coverage at an annual budget of \$138,000 to \$157,000. EMS training is ongoing, with certification and licensing mandated by State law.

The Fire Department and the Ambulance Service—especially the latter—struggle with a lack of trained personnel. Night calls requiring a paramedic create a higher dependency on Rockland's aid at increased expense. There are five medics, four of whom have advanced

EMT certification; eight EMTs; and four drivers on staff. EMS calls are increasing due to the Town's aging population. Many senior citizens lack transportation and have difficulty getting medical assistance, so they often seek emergency medical service for non-emergency difficulties. There were 459 calls in 2018, and 140 calls were registered in the first 19 weeks of 2019. Keeping pace with future demand will require 24/7 coverage, putting further pressure on staffing needs and space for sleeping quarters.

The Town's EMS and fire equipment meet all State standards. Maintenance is extraordinarily good and is key to monitoring the quality of the equipment and tracking the number of years' use for each piece in the Town's ongoing capital replacement plans for the ambulance, fire trucks, public works equipment, and police cruisers. The Fire Department/EMS facility is adequate but crowded. Future trucks with added equipment will create a need for additional space.

2. Shared Community Services

Thomaston currently partners with the neighboring communities of Owls Head and South Thomaston in a municipal solid waste facility (MSWF). A transfer and recycling station built in 1996 is located in Thomaston on Butter-milk Drive. An upgraded drive-through facility opened in 2014.

Mutual-aid fire department service was established between Camden, Rockland, and Thomaston in the 1950s and continues today. The Public Works Director coordinates bids for winter sand and street paint striping with his Rockland counterpart. Currently, Rockland EMS covers calls when the local service is understaffed, though a 2018 increase in charges for this service has created a daunting tax burden on Town residents.

As mentioned above, the Knox County Sheriff Department provides back-up services when necessary.

Regional administration of the local shellfish ordinance is discussed in **Chapter 5: Our Rivers and Harbor**.

3. Public Sewer and Water Systems

With help from the State, the Town separated stormwater from sewers in the 1990s and built a replacement wastewater treatment facility that began operation in December 1997. Treatment is by lagoon aging and spray irrigation of the treated effluent in May through November. The effluent remains in storage lagoons in December and April but is disinfected and discharged to the St. George River in the months of January, February, and March as discussed in **Chapter 2: Our Environment: Water Resources**. On an annual basis, 70% of the treated effluent is land-applied and 30% is discharged to the river. The St George River is a major shellfish estuary and a source of livelihood for many area clam diggers. Eliminating the winter discharge might enable the Maine DMR to reclassify approximately 1,000 acres of productive flats in the Upper Bay (between the Thomaston and South Thomaston shorelines) from restricted (depuration harvesting only) to conditionally approved (harvestable except when closed due to rain, etc.), a boon to local shellfish harvesters. As discussed in **Chapters 2 and 5**, the Town is seeking MDEP approval for additional land application and storage methods (including a constructed wetland and ice-mounding of effluent) in order to eliminate the winter discharge.

Sewer extensions are covered by Section 903 of the Thomaston Sewer Ordinance. Future extensions will be targeted to designated growth areas, especially the TR-3 Residential Growth District.

The Pollution Control Department has an Asset Management Plan that details upgrades and improvements to pump stations and the treatment facility and provides for reserve accounts to cover these future costs.

The Pollution Control Department keeps records of maintenance on all pump stations and

facility pumps and the piping that goes out to the spray fields, and there have been no service interruptions or failures. A SCADA system monitors all pump stations. Having been designed to accommodate the Maine State Prison (which moved to South Warren not long after the new plant became operational), the Town's present lagoon system has ample excess capacity to handle future growth in demand.

Maine Water, a private entity contracted by the Town, works on upgrades, replacements, and water pipe extensions. Long-term plans continue to improve delivery and reliability, and Maine Water's extension policy is consistent with the Town's future land use plan. The privately owned public water source is in another town (Rockport), and Maine Water has taken steps to protect it.

Properties outside the area served by Maine Water rely upon private wells. In 1990, 144 households (12.2% of the Town's households at the time) were served by individual wells. By 2018, based on property-assessment records, 238 (23.1%) of Thomaston's 1,030 residential structures had private water supplies, presumably drilled or dug wells. This apparent increase in private-water residences suggests that more new homes were built outside the area served by Town water than within it.

The relevant data are approximate and sparse, however, and the exact proportion of Town residents who are on Town water is unknown, according to the superintendent of the Thomaston Pollution Control Department. Since most multifamily housing is in the built-up village area and most of the rural houses are single-family, it is estimated that 85% - 95% of the Town's residents are served by public water and sewer systems. This is a testament to the compact nature of the Town's historic residential development pattern.

Both systems have unused capacity to serve the Town's future growth. Extending Town water and sewer into the TR-3 District, Thomaston's designated district for residential growth, is a priority.

Water lines in some cases extend farther than sewer lines; heading north on Beechwood Street into the TR-3 District, for example, the sewer line stops short of the hydrant at the water line terminus (at the last house before the intersection of Beechwood Street and Ice House Road).

4. Stormwater Management

Stormwater drainage was separated from the sewer lines in the 1990s. The Thomaston Public Works Department maintains the Town's stormwater system, and Maine DOT maintains the storm drains on State roads. The Town system is adequately maintained. Drainage ditches are dug out and cleared annually. Thanks to ongoing storm-drain upgrades and replacements, future development is not expected to adversely impact the system. Priority should be given to containing run-off pollutants that drain into small creeks emptying into the St. George River.

5. Septic Tank Waste

Thomaston contracts with Interstate Septic Service, of Rockland, to receive, treat, and dispose of septic tank waste regardless of who pumps it. The town does not pay pumping fees. Five to ten percent of Town residents are estimated to have septic tanks, as mentioned above. The Town Code Enforcement Officer deals with two or three failing septic tanks each year.

6. Education

Expansions of the regional middle school in Thomaston and the regional high school in Rockland have recently been completed, and no further expansion of RSU 13 schools in Thomaston is expected in the immediate future. In 2018, the town used TIF revenues to match a grant from MDOT's Safe Routes to School program to improve the safety for student and pedestrian traffic on Starr Street, the principal access route to Thomaston's school campus. There is land zoned for housing development north of the Middle

and Grammar Schools, adjacent to Beechwood Street, but no new construction has been proposed there as of late 2019.

7. Emergency Response

Although the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) did not fund Emergency Management Performance grants in 2017/18, the Town funded health safety and traffic emergency items in excess of \$30,857 in 2017. The Town contracted with Lovering Associates to assist with communications and safety for the traveling public while the MDOT Route 1 Project was in progress, at a cost of \$7,923. The Town also allocated \$8,825 to access Geographic Information System (GIS) improved mapping software capability through the State of Maine Ortho-imagery, which will allow for enhanced reviews and clarity on the Town's landmass types and improved wetlands, flood plains, emergency preparedness, and other mapping.

The Town has reserved \$22,922 to assist in purchasing an emergency generator for the new Town Office complex in the Lura Libby Facility. This facility will serve as an emergency shelter and public meeting room.

The town regularly approves use of the Thomaston Green by the American Radio Relay League for a field-day exercise to demonstrate ham radio service to the public.

Traffic concerns are an issue in Thomaston. In response, the Police Department has employed reserve officers to work traffic shifts. Excessive speed on neighborhood streets is frequent during summer months, when drivers seek faster routes around the Town center by driving the side streets. Speeding, truck noise, and traffic congestion were cited repeatedly as resident concerns in the survey underlying this Comprehensive Plan. Potential accidents on heavily trafficked Route 1/Main Street through the center of Town, and the potential of traffic interruption/blockage, continue to be serious concerns. That Route 1 is

the only route through Thomaston poses a serious safety risk for emergency egress. This issue should be addressed, as discussed in several other chapters of this Plan.

8. Solid Waste

Thomaston is served by the Owls Head-South Thomaston-Thomaston Solid Waste Cooperative, which currently contracts with Ecomaine, of Portland, for solid waste management services. The solid waste management system meets current needs. The Town has made numerous attempts to encourage recycling, including signage, and will continue to do so. A pay-per-bag program would drastically improve the recycling rate. As of 2019, each load of recyclables is graded and is accepted by Ecomaine at the recycle price unless contamination exceeds 5%, in which case the charges increase. Recyclables with greater than 7% contamination are less expensive to burn than to recycle; such loads are transferred from Ecomaine's recycling facility to its waste-to-energy facility. Commercial haulers are not required to recycle.

9. Telecommunications

Fiber optic broadband is available to 23% of Knox County residents. Trunk lines presently run along Route 1 through Thomaston, with a branch strung north of the Main Street business blocks as part of the Phase IV development plan for the area. At least one Main Street business, a book publisher, has connected to this branch via GWI, and this same branch will also serve the Town offices in the former Lura Libby school.

A cell tower is located near the Maine Water tower on West Main Street for placement of telecommunications company equipment.

10. Health Care Facilities

The Knox Clinic in Rockland offers low-cost medical, dental, and mental-health care and prescription assistance to the uninsured and under-insured

in Knox County. Care is provided by volunteer physicians, dentists, nurses, social workers, and other personnel. There are no physicians' offices in Town, and there is a need for a local health clinic for those unable to drive to Rockland. The Maine Health System at Pen Bay Medical Center in Rockland offers routine healthcare services to area residents, but the use of referrals to hospitals outside the geographic area is on the increase for specialized care, and this is a hardship for people without transportation.

11. Social and Cultural Services

The Thomaston Inter-Church Fellowship is a volunteer organization that operates a food pantry two days a week in Watts Hall, serving about 300 Knox County residents. In addition to hosting the food pantry, the Town annually appropriates nominal contributions for a number of local service agencies such as Mid-Coast Children's Services, Home Counselors, Knox County Homeless Coalition, Rockland District Nursing, Life Flight, etc. Funds appropriated in 2019/20 totaled \$16,075.

The Watts Hall Community Center holds regularly scheduled talent shows, theater productions, musicals, historical essays, dances, and other cultural activities on the second floor of the historic Watts Block. The Hall is also available for corporate and public or private meeting rentals as it continues to be used by and for the benefit of the citizens of Thomaston, fulfilling the wishes of its benefactor and namesake, Captain Samuel Watts.

The Thomaston Public Library has been located in the Town-owned Thomaston Academy since 1986. It is open six days a week (Monday through Saturday) and is governed by a nine-member board of trustees. Current staffing includes a part-time Head Librarian, a nearly full-time Assistant Head Librarian, an Assistant Librarian, a Library Assistant, and a Cataloging Librarian. A number of tutors use the space, and

more such activity is anticipated as the library has recently leased a conference/class/meeting room that was formerly part of a school.

No significant shift in demographics is anticipated. Shelf space is sufficient at the moment but may need creative planning in the future. Public computers are available for visitors, and a broadband wireless connection is available for visitors with their own devices. A small kitchen was added to meet the needs of increased social gatherings.

The Village Cemetery has sufficient space to meet foreseeable needs. The Town recently received a request to build a crematorium on leased land within the Village Cemetery limits. Revenue from such a lease would help provide upkeep and maintenance within the cemetery. Discussions have also been held regarding the construction of a columbarium for the storage of cremains.

12. Facility Improvements in Growth Areas

Ongoing investments in updated technology and equipment are directed to the Town's designated growth areas. Roads and a water line have been extended into the Thomaston Green (the former State Prison property) to anticipate and encourage future development there. Three-phase power runs along the abutting Route 1 through Thomaston, and sewer lines have been extended along the eastern portion of Route 1 in the commercial zone.

13. Tree Program

Thomaston has a tree replacement program. Old sugar maples are removed as their life cycles terminate and they need replacing. Several old-growth trees were lost during the MDOT 2016 Route 1 construction, and others are being lost to windstorms due to their age. Some replacement trees were planted by MDOT along the north side of Main Street, but this effort did not run the entire length of Main Street. Trees on the south side are potentially threatened due to root

damage from construction. The Town is losing an alarming number of trees.

C. Conditions and Trends

1. Town Government

The Town of Thomaston, incorporated in 1777, operates under a Town Meeting-Selectboard-Manager form of government. A Town Moderator, elected by the voters, oversees Town Meetings. An Annual Town Meeting is held in June, with Special Town Meetings called as needed. The fiscal year is July 1 to June 30.

As of December 2019, the Town Office is located in the first floor of the Watts Block, a Town-owned building on the corner of Main and Knox Streets that was rebuilt after a fire in 1915. Plans are underway to relocate Town services to the repurposed former Lura Libby School in early 2020. The school property was deeded to the Town from RSU 13 in January 2017, and voters authorized the relocation of the Town Office, Police Department, Recreation Department, and the Thomaston Inter-Church Fellowship Food Pantry there at a special Town meeting in November 2018, also approving a bond issue to repurpose the facility and make it ADA-compliant.

The town is a member of the Maine Municipal Association; the Coalition of Maine Service Centers; the Mid Coast Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC, unfortunately moribund as of 2019); the Mid Coast Economic Development District (MCEDD, with membership through Knox County as of 2019); the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization; and the Owls Head-South Thomaston-Thomaston Cooperative Transfer Station, which utilizes Ecomaine, a waste-to-energy and recycling facility operating from Portland.

The Town Office is open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. and on Friday from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. The Town Office maintains a website providing Town government and administration information, distributes email

announcements and newsletters to keep residents informed of meetings and other items of interest, and produces an annual report for distribution prior to the annual meeting. The Selectboard meets twice monthly. The Town maintains a comprehensive risk management plan to ensure that employees and volunteers are appropriately trained and equipped to perform assigned duties.

2. Town Administration

At the annual Town Meeting, voters appoint a Town Moderator by a vote on the floor of each meeting. The voters elect a five-member Selectboard with staggered terms, a three-member Board of Assessors, and two Town positions on the Board of Directors for Regional School Union 13 (RSU 13).

The Selectboard elects a chairperson and vice-chairperson and is responsible for hiring a Town Manager (with assistance from a Personnel Committee) and for overseeing the Town Manager. The Town Manager hires a Code Enforcement Officer, Office Coordinator, Town Clerk, Accounting Clerk, Pollution Control Clerk, Harbor Master, EMA Director, Animal Control Officer, and Custodian – all of whom must be approved and confirmed by the Selectboard. Also appointed by the Selectboard, with recommendation from the Town Manager, are the Police Chief, Fire Chief, Ambulance Director, Recreation Director, Public Works Director, Tree Warden, and Pollution Control Superintendent. (See the **Town Administration Organizational Chart**, next page, for more detailed information on boards and committees.)

3. Town-Owned Properties

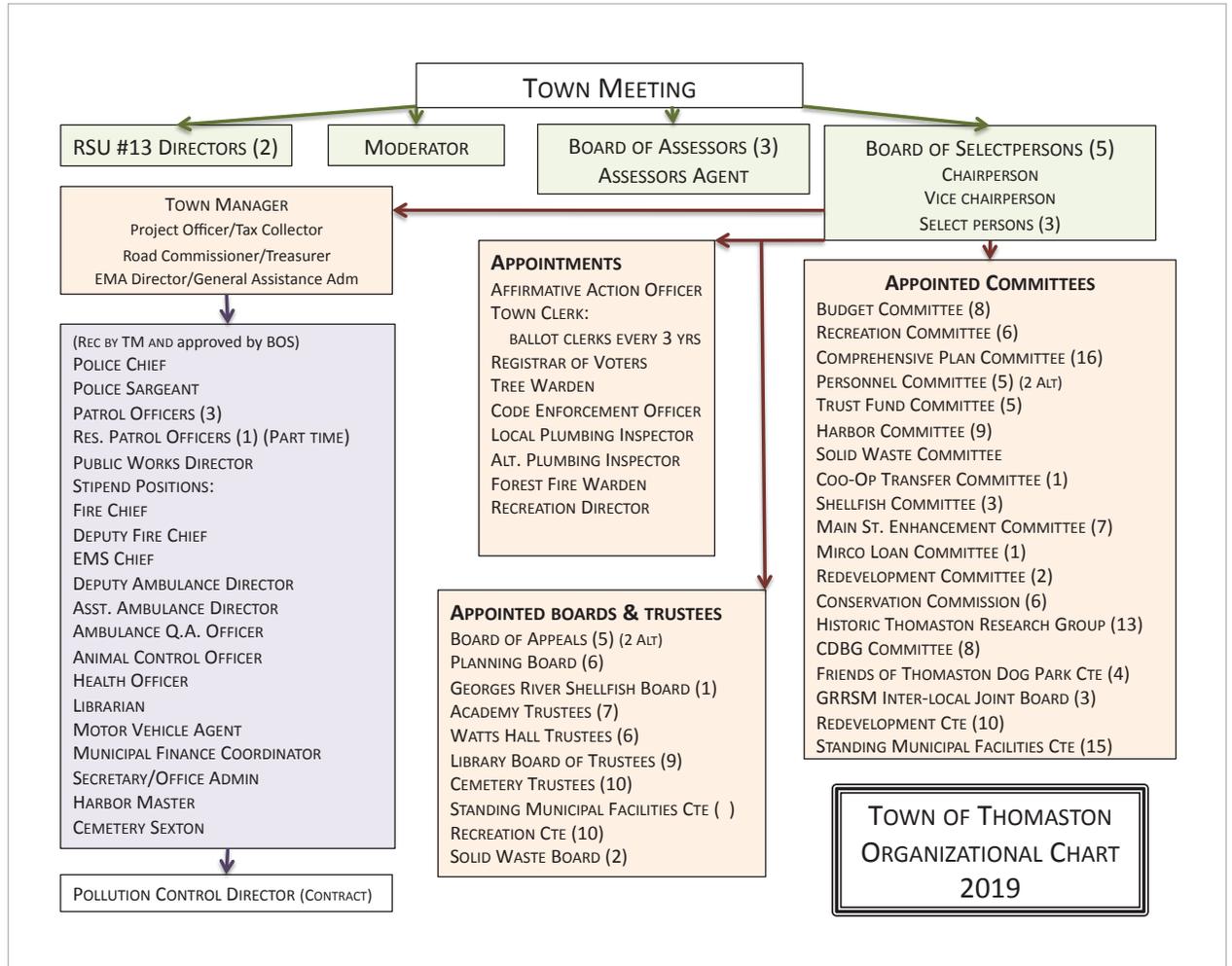
The Town owns the following properties (see **Map 11-1: Principal Town-Owned Properties**):

- The Watts Block, at the corner of Main and Knox Streets. This brick building (rebuilt in 1915 after a fire) houses (as of December 2019) the Town Office,

Police Department, Recreation Department, and a leased commercial storefront on the first floor; an auditorium/meeting hall, meeting room, kitchen, restrooms, and the Thomaston Inter-Church Fellowship Food Pantry store-room and distribution center on the second floor; and community theater costume storage on the third floor.

- Fire Department/EMS Building, 6 Knox Street.
- Pollution Control buildings, lagoons, spray fields, and associated Town Forest with trails, 33 Clark Street.
- Village Cemetery and garage, 57 Erin Street.
- Public Works Facility, 68 AnnaBelle Lane, east of Beechwood Street and north of the Village Cemetery.
- The “stump dump” for disposal of household brush, leaves, and construction debris (the latter for hauling to a licensed disposal facility), adjacent to the Public Works Facility on AnnaBelle Lane.
- Thomaston Academy, 60 Main Street. The second-oldest academy building east of the Mississippi, it houses the Thomaston Town Library and several long-term tenants.
- Town Beach, Water Street. This tiny parcel offers a picnic bench, unimproved high-tide paddlecraft access to the St. George River, and interesting views of the waterfront.
- Mayo Park, Town Landing and public water access, Water Street. This launch ramp, public dock, and picnic area is the principal public access to the St. George River for Thomaston, Cushing, and St. George. See **Chapter 5: Our Rivers and Harbor**.

Town Administration Organizational Chart



- Mill River Park, off Fish and Roxbury Streets. This is the one-time site of the Town landfill, capped with dredge spoils from the St. George River. Improvements for public enjoyment are underway. The park offers superb views downriver and a potential paddlecraft access site to relieve traffic at the Public Landing. See **Chapter 5**.
- Pump Station properties on Fish, Ship, Water, and Thatcher streets; on Route 1 at the Rockland/Thomaston town line; and on Butler Road.
- Portions of the Little League ballfield associated with the Thomaston school campus.
- The Lura Libby Facility property, formerly the Lura Libby Elementary School and repurposed house the Town Offices and other Town services as described above.
- Transfer Station Property, Buttermilk Lane (as part of the cooperative with Owls Head and South Thomaston).
- Main Street Mall, a public park on Main Street.
- Thomaston Green (former site of the Maine State Prison), on West Main Street.
- Various wooded conservation parcels comprising portions of the Town Forest.

4. Public Safety

Police Department

Due to the expense of a municipal police force and the fact that the Thomaston Police Department has struggled to retain officers in recent years, Town voters were presented in June 2019 with a referendum to disband the department and instead contract with the Knox County Sheriff's Department to provide police protection. A 72% majority of voters rejected the measure and directed the Town to fund an adequately staffed department. Following the referendum, health-insurance coverage for officers' families was instituted to help with staff retention.

The police chief provides leadership, guidance, and supervision for the department and assigns duty schedules and shifts, makes out payroll, and keeps attendance and sick leave records. The chief supervises all police investigations and is on-call in emergencies 24 hours a day. He or she ensures the attendance of one or more officers at every fire.

The Thomaston Police Department is moving into the former Lura Libby school building (along with the Town Office, Recreation Department, and Interfaith Food Pantry) in early 2020.

The department maintains 20 hours-per-day road coverage and four hours of on-call coverage. There are currently three police vehicles. The department uses a local source for K-9 dogs and bloodhounds for improved tracking capabilities when needed. Cooperation with neighboring police departments is ongoing. A fully computerized office system is tied into the Knox County Sheriff's Department, the District Attorney's office, and the Rockland, Rockport, and Camden police departments.

Fire Department

The Fire and EMS Department provides town-wide service from a shared facility across Knox Street from the Watts Block. Many firefighting personnel work during the days and have limited

availability to undertake routine standards and safety tasks, so there is a continual need for additional firefighters. All fire apparatus in the fleet has been replaced since 1992. See **Table 11-1** for an inventory.

The department is currently staffed by a part-time Fire Chief (who also works full-time for the Rockland Fire Department), a Deputy Chief, an Assistant Chief, two captains, a lieutenant, and twelve firefighters. Firefighters must have six months of training before they can enter a burning building, and currently only one of the firefighters is qualified. Drivers must complete a 16-hour course and road time before they can operate a truck. It is increasingly difficult to retain experienced volunteers, and the current number is an all-time low. The Chief feels this is because of the amount of time required to train for the job. The State Department of Labor requires 8- to 10-hour annual refresher courses, and classes are held every two years. Salary is commensurate with rank and certification and compares favorably with other Knox County fire departments.

Thomaston is on the second alarm due to its volunteer status. The Fire Department enhanced its mutual aid profile in 2018 by adding automatic responses to fires from the mutual aid towns of Rockland, South Thomaston, Warren, and Cushing. The Rockland Fire Department has four full-time staff and a full-time assistant chief, and for this reason is the first department called for mutual aid.

The Fire Department, when possible, responds to EMS ambulance calls for accidents, cardiac arrest calls, and carbon monoxide and smoke detector alarm calls.

Quarters within the fire station for the Fire and EMS Departments are cramped. There are six vehicles stored within the existing building. The location near the intersection of Knox and Main Streets, which is traffic signaled, allows easy access to Route 1 in all directions. Most fire department staff live in the west end of town and

TABLE 11- 1: Fire Apparatus Equipment

Description	Chief’s Recommended Replacement Schedule
Engine 1 1995 E One 1000 gpm Pumper	2020: Date has been postponed as there are not enough people to staff it.
Ladder 2 2002 Central States 75’ Aerial; 1250 gpm	2022: Combined with Engine 4 replacement.*
Engine 3 R.H. Counce	N/A
Engine 4 2002 Central States 1250 Gpm Pumper A/B foam system, Cascade Air	Replacement could be combined with early replacement of Ladder 2 saving \$200-300k, or approx. 1/3 of the cost.
Utility pick-up 5, back pumps, grass fire equipment	2028: 2013 Chevy 4x4 utility body
System 6kw hydraulic power generator	2027
In-house Cascade System 1992	Needs upgrade
In-house generator Katolight 1974	Needs switch gear replacement
Thermal Imager Camera Kit On each of the major pieces	
Pontoon boat on trailer	

*Suggest replacing Ladder 2 aerial before replacement date with a combination ¾ mid-ladder truck and Engine 4 Pumper, which needs replacement.

have easy access to the station. The vehicle storage location is adjacent to three small offices, a shower, and a kitchen/day room. The day room could be divided into a sleeping area.

The enumeration of calls/responses by the Fire Department appears in Annual Town Reports up through 2001 but ceased in the 2002 Annual Report. This should be resumed, along with an annual record of building fires for historical records.

If the Fire Department is to grow over the next ten years, a new building will be necessary. There are some noncritical wall cracks in the building, but nothing that would endanger life or equipment. A new roof was installed in 2014.

EMS/Ambulance

One hundred forty emergency response runs were made by the Ambulance Service in the past year at a cost of \$1,000 per call to the taxpayer. The runs should be reviewed promptly by the responders and reported in a timely manner to

the Belfast company who does the billing. The Town then receives monthly reports on how much the billing company has collected.

Non-life-threatening calls—including falls and transport for hospital care—are on the rise due to the Town’s aging population. Many of these calls are received after 6 p.m., when the Thomaston per-diem day staff leaves, and the nighttime per-diem shift is sometimes short-staffed. When no Thomaston staff respond to a nighttime call, or when the daytime staff is over-extended by a second call, mutual aid comes from Rockland at a greater cost. Rockland is currently charging Thomaston \$800 per run to Thomaston. Also, there are avoidable expenses for calls using specialized paramedics to seniors requiring non-emergency attention.

Emergency Management

An Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Director position is filled by the Town Manager

and appointed by the Selectboard. The director works closely with Knox County and the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). In the event of a major emergency disaster or catastrophic event, the director reports to the Knox County Emergency Management Agency's office (in the Knox County courthouse in Rockland) to participate in a public aid – related network. If necessary, the director should work with state and federal agencies in the procurement of disaster relief funding. The town conducts periodic employee meetings to review the risk management safety program. The new municipal facility in the Lura Libby building will provide emergency shelter.

5. Public Works

The five-member Public Works Department is responsible for road and sewer system maintenance and repair and the operation of the stump dump. The Public Works garage, located off Erin Street, has four-bay double-deep capacity and includes an ancillary boxcar used to store construction materials and salt.

The department is sufficiently staffed, and its equipment is well maintained. See **Table 11-2** for an inventory of major equipment.

A Public Works Director is appointed annually by the Town Manager and confirmed by the Selectboard. The director reports to the Town Manager. He or she provides leadership, guidance, and supervision to the department—assigning duties, schedules, and shifts—and acts as a crew leader. He makes out payroll and keeps attendance and sick-leave records.

Specific department responsibilities include the following:

- Maintenance of Mayo Park and annual seasonal installation and removal of the town floats at the public landing;
- Maintenance of town streets and sidewalks;

- Mowing of town properties, including the Town Mall, park, and other properties;
- Annual painting of crosswalks and curbing;
- Seasonal clean-up of roads, sidewalks, storm drains, and culverts;
- Installation of new catch basins when necessary;
- Winter plowing, sanding, and salting of sidewalks and road maintenance;
- Overseeing paving of parking lots, streets, sidewalks, and roadside ditches;
- Tree work and branch removal as required;
- Stump Dump container compacting and general maintenance;
- Emergency clean-up of fish spills, sewer back-ups, tree parts in roadways, and help in overhauling fire and accident scenes.

6. Wastewater Treatment

The Pollution Control Department (PCD) was established in 1990 to maintain and operate all the wastewater facilities located within Town limits, including portions covered by an interlocal agreement with Rockland. The Pollution Control buildings, lagoons, and spray fields are located at 33 Clark Street. The Selectboard appoints the staff and establishes the PCD rules and regulations. The superintendent is responsible for the administration, operation, and maintenance of the Town wastewater collection and treatment system, except for the collection sewers, which are maintained by Public Works. The PCD is under the ultimate direction of the Town Manager and the direct supervision of the PCD Superintendent.

TABLE 11- 2: Public Works Equipment

Year of Equipment	Make of Equipment	Age of Equipment
1980	John Deere Grader 570-A	40 Years
1988	Interstate Trailer 20 Ton	32 Years
1999	Line Lazer-2 Paint Sprayer	21 Years
2000	C-6500 GMC Dump Truck	20 Years
2002	C-8500 GMC Dump Truck	18 Years
2002	On the Road Trailer 6,000#	18 Years
2002	On the Road Trailer 7,000#	18 Years
2005	John Deere Backhoe 310-SG	15 Years
2007	LT-7500 Sterling Dump Truck	13 Years
2007	Husqvarna Riding Lawnmower	13 Years
2007	CS-20396M Sweepster (for John Deere)	13 Years
2009	B-3030HSDC Kubota Tractor with season attachments	11 Years
2012	T-7500 International Dump Truck	8 Years
2012	Husqvarna Riding Lawnmower	8 Years
2013	50 Yd. Demolition Container	7 Years
2015	Dodge 3500 Pickup	5 Years
2017	Dodge 3500 Dump Truck	3 Years
2018	LT-7500 International Dump Truck	2 Years
2019	John Deere Backhoe 310-SL HL	1 Year
2019	Portable Welder	
2019	Portable Cutting Torches	
2019	Homemade Sidewalk Paver	
2019	Leaf vacuum	

7. Solid Waste

Trash and Recyclables

Thomaston is served by the Owls Head—South Thomaston—Thomaston Solid Waste Corporation, which operates a transfer station on Butter-milk Drive in Thomaston through an interlocal agreement with the three communities, each of which is represented by a selectperson and a civilian representative to the board. Five commercial haulers convey municipal solid waste from households and businesses in the three towns. The transfer station is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Each town pays a proportional share of the operating costs based on population, Thomaston's assessment share being approximately 47% of the total budget.

The Co-Op shipped 3,777 tons of solid waste to the Penobscot Energy Recovery Corporation (in Eddington, Maine) in 2017, versus 4,210 tons in 2009. The 2017 tonnage was the lowest of the 2010s decade, while single-stream recyclables

(including mixed paper, glass, metal, and plastic containers of numbers 1 through 7) held roughly constant at around 150 tons and recycled cardboard doubled from 140 to 280 tons. Solid waste is currently transported by private contractors to Ecomaine in Portland, which operates a recycling facility and waste-to-energy incinerator. To improve the quality of recyclable material, transfer facility staff monitor the placement of wastes in the single-stream bin to ensure that plastic bags and other non-recyclable materials do not contaminate the load. (Favorable disposal rates require no more than 5% load contamination by volume.) The facility is working with commercial waste haulers to reduce the volume of cardboard being combined with MSW from dumpsters.

The transfer station accepts compact florescent light bulbs, CPUs, laptops, monitors, printers, televisions, and miscellaneous electronic devices for transfer to licensed waste management facilities. Additionally, E-Waste Recycling

Solutions has held electronic waste collection events at a nearby site on Route 1 in recent years. In 2012, the Co-Op spent \$43,000 to eliminate an accumulated metal pile and remove 156 tons of possibly contaminated soils. A drive-through facility opened in 2014. The transfer station also accepts returnable bottles and cans for donation to charitable organizations.

Yard Waste and Construction Debris

The Town of Thomaston operates a “stump dump” next to the Public Works Garage off AnnaBelle Lane, with a staff of one. The free service, open on Wednesdays and Saturdays, accepts leaves, brush, round wood, and garden waste for composting. It also accepts cold wood ash.

The facility also serves as a collection point for construction demolition debris (CDD), which is transported off-site for processing and/or disposal. Individuals are charged a fee based on the amount of CDD brought to the facility. Amounts of CDD accepted in past years: 2009/10, 149 tons; 2016/17, 129 tons; 2017/18, 260 tons.

8. Health Care

The Town designates a Local Health Officer who attends training for LHOs, handles cases on an as-needed basis, and monitors Centers for Disease Control notifications and updates. The Maine Health Association, a provider and health-care organization, serves the coastal area. Thomaston has no local health care facilities or social services system, but the following facilities are within eight miles of Thomaston’s center:

- Pen Bay Medical Center hospital facility and supporting physicians’ office building, Rockport;
- Knox Clinic, Rockland
- Maine Center for Integrated Rehabilitation, Rockport;

- Knox Center for Assisted Living and Long Term Nursing Care, Rockland;
- Hospice Services, Rockport and Rockland;
- Lucette Boarding Home, 61 Main Street, Thomaston, assisted living;
- Woodlands Memory Care, Rockland, Alzheimer’s care;
- Health & Human Services Department, Rockland;
- Midcoast Children’s Services, Rockland;
- Meals on Wheels, Rockland;
- Thomaston Inter-Church Fellowship Food Pantry, Thomaston;
- Rockland Welfare Department;
- Child Development Services of Knox County, Rockport;
- Cushing Homestead Nursing Home, 32 Lovers Lane, Cushing.

Pen Bay Medical Center (PBMC) includes a hospital and supporting medical staff services. In addition to several physician offices, the PBMC campus includes a Cancer Care Center, Mobile MRI, Child Care Center, X-ray Department, Lab, and Emergency Room care with outpatient emergency service. Thomaston has three dental offices, a vision center, and a pharmacy. There is a shortage of primary care physicians, and the turnover rate is high. A two-story, 41,000-square-foot office building on the PBMC campus with parking is in the planning stages to concentrate about 30 health care providers on a hospital-owned campus.

9. Humane Society

Pope Memorial Humane Society of Knox County, located at 17 Buttermilk Lane in Thomaston, is devoted to caring for unwanted and abandoned animals and placing them in loving homes; promoting responsible pet ownership and humane

treatment of all animals; demonstrating and enhancing the benefits of the human-animal bond; and ending pet overpopulation through aggressive spay/neuter and Trap Neuter Return programs.

10. Education and Culture

In 2008 Maine consolidated school systems into larger districts to save on administrative costs. Thomaston is currently a member of Regional School Unit 13 (RSU 13), which has a regional office at 28 Lincoln Street, Rockland. RSU 13 is comprised of five elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school (see **Table 11-3**) and serves 1,634 students from Cushing, Owls Head, Rockland, South Thomaston, and Thomaston in grades 1 – 12.

Currently, 353 students, or 22% of the student population, receive special education and related services. This is a large percentage as compared with the statewide average of 17% of all students. These services include consultations, resource rooms, behavior programs, New England Center for Children programs, functional life skills programs, and tutoring. The demand for these state-required programs is increasing at an unsustainable rate. The current state funding formula is based on the number of pupils and property values but does not factor in median household income or some other measure of local ability to pay. As **Chapter 6: Our People**, makes clear, Thomaston's household income is low.

The District uses an Academy Model: Freshman, STEM, Liberal Arts, and Experiential (formerly Fisherman). The Mid-Coast School of Technology has a relationship with the Kennebec Valley Community College and offers a two-year degree in Rockland. The HS has a relationship with the College of Engineering at U Maine and STEM students will be able to earn college credit while in HS.

Refer to **Chapter 1: Our History**, for more about the following:

- Thomaston Public Library;
- **Theater:** Watts Hall Community Players;
- **Museums:** General Henry Knox Museum; Thomaston Historical Society Museum; Museum in the Streets;
- **Churches:** Apostolic Christian Life Center; Episcopal Church of St. John Baptist; Finnish-American Congregational Church; Penobscot Bay Family Church; The Federated Church of Thomaston; Thomaston Assemblies of God; Thomaston Baptist Church; Trinity Baptist Mission Church;
- Thomaston Inter-Church Fellowship Food Pantry.

D. State Policies

- 1 To efficiently meet identified public facility and service needs.
- 2 To provide public facilities and services in a manner that promotes and supports growth and development in identified growth areas.

E. Strategies

1. Maintain and improve Town facilities.

- Develop and implement a long-range plan for maintaining and improving existing municipal facilities, considering optimal uses and assessing the need for new or expanded facilities.
- Ensure that at least 75% of municipal growth-related capital investments are directed to designated growth areas.
- Encourage the Thomaston Sanitary District and Maine Water Company to coordinate planned service extensions with the Future Land Use Plan and ensure that any expansion is done in such a way as to protect natural resources.

TABLE 11- 3: RSU 13 Schools

<u>School</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Levels</u>	<u>Students</u>
Ash Point	54 Ash Point Dr	Owls Head	Daycare/Pre K	16
South School	30 Broadway	Rockland	Daycare/Pre K	44
Thomaston Grammar	65 Watts Lane	Thomaston	Kindergarten	31
Cushing Community	54 Cross Rd	Cushing	Kindergarten	12
South School	30 Broadway	Rockland	Kindergarten	42
Ash Point	54 Ash Point Dr	Owls Head	Kindergarten	27
Thomaston Grammar	65 Watts Lane	Thomaston	Grades 1-5	184
Cushing Community	54 Cross Rd	Cushing	Grades 1-5	81
South School	30 Broadway	Rockland	Grades 1-5	344
Ash Point	54 Ash Point Dr	Owls Head	Grades 1-5	166
Oceanside Middle Sch	47 Valley St	Rockland	Grades 6-8	375
Oceanside High Sch	400 Broadway	Rockland	Grades 9-12	484

- Prioritize extension of sewer and water into the TR-3 Residential Growth District.
- Relocate powerlines and cables underground whenever possible.

2. Combat global warming while simultaneously preparing for mitigation of the impacts of climate change.

- Actively pursue reducing the Town’s carbon footprint and moving it toward 100% reliance on renewable resources.
- Pursue the creation of solar arrays or other renewable energy sources to provide power for municipal, industrial/commercial, and residential users.
- Provide municipal charging stations for electric vehicles.
- Prioritize electric vehicles when replacing police, public works, and pollution-control vehicles.
- Through the Conservation Commission, local Master Gardener program, and Georges River Land Trust, offer information, seeds, and assistance to homeowners wishing to optimize the

habitat value of their yards with native plantings, shrubs, and trees.

- Optimize the ecosystem value of Town-owned properties with native perennials, shrubs, and trees.
- Expand the municipal tree planting program to be comparable to the Town’s road and sidewalk programs, with a goal of providing mature native shade trees for carbon sequestration, urban cooling, beauty, and well-being.
- Plan for the impacts of changes in sea level on buildings, transportation infrastructure, sewage treatment facilities, and other relevant municipal or privately held infrastructure or property.

3. Solid Waste Management.

- Aggressively investigate and support means for increasing the recycling rate in Town.
- Require commercial solid-waste haulers who use the OHSTT Transfer Station to separately haul recyclable materials to the transfer station.

- Investigate the advantages of a pay-per-bag program for non-recyclable solid waste and take action as indicated.
- Support the collecting, transferring, and composting of food waste.

4. Wastewater treatment.

- Continue to work toward the elimination of the winter discharge of treated effluent from the St. George River.
- Develop procedures for reducing untreated stormwater runoff into the St. George River, including raingardens around drainage swales.

5. Emergency services.

- Explore alternatives to ambulance responses for non-emergency, non-life-threatening calls, including the possibility of a Community Nurse.
- Complete a study to assess the potential advantages and disadvantages of joining with neighboring towns to provide fire and EMS services.
- Provide an emergency east/west vehicle travel alternative to Route 1 for public safety. An alternative east/west road is discussed in several other chapters in this Plan. See below under “Transportation.”

6. Town governance.

- Support the effective and efficient operation of Town government, including a proactive exchange of information with Town residents.
- Regularly update and improve the quality and utilization of the Town’s website.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of municipal functions, positions, and related job descriptions and modify as indicated. Include potential out-

sourcing of payroll management from municipal department heads to a payroll-management service

- Implement a comprehensive annual performance review process for municipal employees.
- Establish the Comprehensive Plan Committee as a standing committee responsible for helping to foster progress toward the Plan’s goals and assuring that changes to the Land Use and Development Ordinance are in compliance with the Plan.
- Require the Selectboard, with the Comprehensive Plan Committee, to conduct an annual review of progress made on goals and strategies identified in this Comprehensive Plan and to identify actions for the coming year.
- Develop and maintain a community calendar.
- Create term limits for appointed boards and committees to promote citizen involvement in municipal government.
- Pursue less costly alternatives for facilities and services, including cooperative efforts with other communities. Investigate shared services in such areas as emergency services, community and economic development, and code enforcement.
- Keep abreast of cutting-edge technologies. and implement as appropriate.
- Charge the Town manager, tax assessor, budget committee, and Selectboard to include in the Town Annual Report the top strategies for reducing the municipal tax rate, and progress made over the previous year.

7. Transportation.

- Immediately conduct a comprehensive study to assess the advantages, disadvantages, and logistics of a new east/west street to connect the west end of town to Old County Road.
- If such a road is indicated, pursue land purchase options on land north of Route 1 along the road's probable route.
- Continue to pursue creative regional approaches to public transportation. If bus service can't be improved, consider negotiating with a local cab company to provide need-based assistance with cab fares for essential errands.
- Promote the expanded use of rail for freight transport.
- Ban engine brakes in Town.
- Install impactful speed- and noise-awareness signs on Main Street.
- Aggressively enforce speed and noise regulations.
- Establish distinctive downtown "Parking" signs that direct residents and visitors to parking areas north and south of Route 1.
- Actively pursue access to the Post Office from Beechwood Street.

8. Education initiatives.

- Lobby for a change to the State's school-funding formula to add a third factor—median household income or equivalent measure—to the existing factors of student population and property valuation.
- Regularly analyze the need for pre-school education programs and how best to meet those needs through public, private, and community providers.

Particular focus should be placed on the option of RSU 13 offering Pre-K education in Thomaston.

- Start a Friends of Thomaston Schools group to support RSU 13 initiatives while ensuring that Thomaston tax dollars are used as effectively as possible.
- Monitor the extent to which the regionalization of our schools is a benefit to the town and its students and make recommendations to the Select-board as appropriate.

9. Community enhancement.

- Continue to place high priority on our Town's walkability, paying particular attention to safe sidewalks and crosswalks.
- Continue to expand and improve walking and bike trails.
- Expand a pleasing aesthetic throughout the Town. Increase plantings and maintenance at Town parks. Develop and implement an overall tree-planting plan based on age and condition of existing stock and prepare to battle the ash borer problem. Encourage and support the creation of a Town Garden Club to expand plantings throughout Town. Develop strategies for improving the appearance of the East End Commercial Tract.
- Pursue becoming a "Tree City USA" community.
- Take reasonable steps to attract additional retail and professional services to Town, with an emphasis on services required by senior citizens whose transportation options are limited. Attracting physician's offices to Town is one example.
- Increase access to the fiber-optic network that presently runs along Main Street.



MAP 11- 1: Principal Town-Owned Properties



Thomaston's Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan



Introduction

Not unlike other small Maine towns, in recent years Thomaston has experienced a confluence of factors that has gradually shifted more of the Town's funding obligations to property owners and has required a steadily rising mil rate that is increasingly burdensome to Town residents. Although the Town has adequate fiscal capacity to borrow funds for capital improvements, the existing high mil rate makes it difficult to undertake additional debt service obligations. This Chapter will describe the trends in Thomaston's revenues, expenses, property valuations and mil rates and discuss strategies to improve the Town's revenues, moderate expenses and fund capital

improvements deemed necessary or desirable by this Comprehensive Plan and Town residents.

Major Findings

Over the last five years, there has been a steady rise in the percentage of Thomaston's budget funded by local tax revenues, due primarily to rising costs for local education and municipal services and significant decreases in state funding for education and revenue sharing. During this same period, the Town's taxable property valuation has declined. Given the decline in the tax valuation and decreased State funding support, the Town has been forced to raise its mil rate steadily to offset the growing costs of

education and other services. The rising mill rate, which is now among the highest in Knox County, has increasingly burdened Thomaston's taxpayers, and effectively discourages migration, home ownership, and real estate revitalization. Although the Town has little outstanding debt and has the capacity under State guidelines to incur additional debt to fund needed and desired capital improvements, the elevated mill rate creates a significant obstacle to adding debt service obligations that would be funded by Town residents. The Town has a 20 year TIF and Revenue Enhancement arrangement with Dragon Products that expires in 2022. The Town is exploring its options to extend the TIF for an additional 10 years, which will have implications for the Town's property tax revenue as well as the amount of education support and revenue sharing it receives under State funding formulas.

A. State Goal

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

B. Analyses

1. Funding future capital investments

Future capital investments will be funded by a combination of capital reserve funds set aside from tax revenues, revenues from State/Federal grants and similar aid, revenues from Tax Increment Financing (TIF) arrangements currently in place and proceeds from municipal bond issues.

2. Borrowing Capacity

As discussed in Section C (4) below, the Town of Thomaston has ample borrowing capacity under Maine statutes to permit additional indebtedness. The Town currently has outstanding direct debt of approximately \$4.2 million (compared to a statutory limitation of approximately \$25.2 million) and total direct debt plus overlapping County and RSU 13 debt of approximately \$8.5

million (compared to a statutory limitation of approximately \$54 million).

3. Shared Capital Investments with Neighboring Communities

The Town of Thomaston is party to an intergovernmental agreement with the adjacent Towns of Owl's Head and South Thomaston to jointly operate a waste and recycling transfer station. The three Towns have recently agreed on a plan to enlarge and improve the facility with the costs shared among the Towns. Thomaston shares the expenses of a Shellfish Warden with the Towns of Warren, St. George, South Thomaston and Cushing. Thomaston also participates with other towns in cooperative buying arrangements when possible to secure favorable pricing on equipment, sand, salt and other items. Thomaston is a member of the Midcoast Economic Development District and has used the resources of that organization to assist in obtaining grants for Town development projects.

C. Conditions and Trends

1. Town Revenues and Expenditures

The Town of Thomaston's revenues and expenditures for the past five fiscal years (as of June 30 of each year indicated) are set forth in **Tables 12-1 and 12-2**.

Over the five year period highlighted by **Tables 12-1 and 12-2**, total Town revenues increased by 13.5% (from \$8,191,941 to \$9,292,687). The two largest components of Town revenues are local taxes and intergovernmental payments. During the five year period, the local tax component increased from \$6,769,141 to \$8,077,510. In 2014, local taxes accounted for 82.6% of Town revenues. By 2018, the local tax component had risen to 86.9%. The intergovernmental payments portion of Town revenues declined significantly for four years (from \$477,881 in 2014 to \$373,377 in 2017), before recovering to \$474,054 in 2018. Nevertheless, in 2014,

TABLE 12-1: Revenues

Category:	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Taxes	8,077,510	7,852,838	7,727,395	7,130,134	6,769,141
Licenses, permits, fees	39,081	26,002	42,265	23,881	28,690
Intergovernmental ¹	474,054	373,691	381,083	387,102	477,881
Charges for services	336,607	352,377	366,664	348,920	357,518
Investment Income ²	163,092	189,221	36,698	57,766	64,927
Net Invest. Gains ³	--	--	--	--	152,570
Other Revenues ⁴	202,343	176,163	559,351	233,224	341,214
TOTAL REVENUES	9,292,687	8,970,292	9,113,456	8,181,027	8,191,941

¹Intergovernmental Revenues include State Revenue Sharing, Homestead/BETE exemption reimbursements from the State, refunds of State Gasoline Tax revenues and local road maintenance assistance from the State

²Investment Income is income earned on the Town's General Fund and other Town funds such as the Library Operating Fund, the TIF Fund and the Economic Development Fund.

³Net Investment Gains are recorded from time to time if Securities held in Town Funds are sold.

⁴Other Revenues include rental income from the lease of Town properties, cable television franchise fees, cell tower lease income and insurance reimbursements.

intergovernmental payments made up 5.8% of total revenues, but by 2018, the intergovernmental payments component had fallen to 5.1%.

Total Town expenditures increased over the five year period from \$7,592,750 to \$9,023,811, or 18.8%. The largest expense item (education) increased 25.9%, from \$3,221,566 to \$4,057,171. A major contributor to increased education funding has been the reductions of State support to the RSU 13 school district. As State support declines, local tax support must increase to fund the RSU 13 budget. Other major expense categories showed the following increases over the five year period: General Government (21.1%); Public Safety (12%); Public Works (3.7%); Health and Welfare (21.3%) and Intergovernmental (Knox County) (22.5%).

2. Means of Funding Capital Items

The Town of Thomaston maintains capital reserve accounts (funded by tax revenues) that are designated for certain identified purposes (e.g., police vehicles, ambulances, fire trucks, computer system upgrades, building and park improvements, etc.). As of June 30, 2019, the town maintained designated capital reserve accounts totaling \$510,222. In addition, the Town receives intergovernmental revenues and grants from time to time to fund capital improvements and it has bonds outstanding, the proceeds of which have been used to fund sewer and clean water drain system projects and other capital improvements. The Town has two TIFs used to generate funds for capital improvements: 1) the Dragon Products TIF and 2) a much smaller Downtown TIF District, both of which are discussed below in more detail.

TABLE 12-2: Expenditures

Category:	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
General Gov't ¹	477,635	491,644	458,453	431,172	394,221
Municipal Bldgs	118,114	98,371	78,390	93,250	102,599
Public Safety ²	718,743	660,795	596,215	622,632	641,779
Public Works	472,138	466,825	441,270	487,461	455,434
Health and Welfare ³	511,459	566,190	464,141	442,724	421,746
Education	4,057,171	3,870,086	3,756,886	3,389,803	3,221,566
Intergov (county tax)	450,349	430,945	395,311	373,969	367,738
Rec. and Leisure	78,086	78,001	71,707	83,060	64,816
Local Agencies	18,914	18,735	16,256	17,665	16,573
Employee Benefits	475,926	486,817	487,769	453,714	434,929
Library ⁴	143,667	129,527	119,706	121,594	106,388
Cemetery	54,344	69,173	51,806	54,337	37,097
Credit Enhance (TIF) ⁵	613,665	631,577	618,076	588,137	631,809
Unclassified ⁶	79,309	87,987	73,274	113,031	113,456
Debt Service	75,890	75,459	53,693	52,830	51,983
Capital Outlays ⁷	678,401	392,390	242,842	490,163	530,616
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	9,023,811	8,554,522	7,925,795	7,815,542	7,592,750

¹General Government expenditures are for overall government expenses such as the Select Board, the Town Manager, the Town Clerk, the Code Enforcement Officer, the Assessor's Agent, and the Planning Board.

²Public Safety Expenditures are for the Police and Fire Departments.

³Health and Welfare Expenses cover the expenses of the EMS/Ambulance service, the waste and recycling Transfer Station and general assistance.

⁴Town Library expenditures are funded partially by Town tax revenues with the remainder coming from funds generated directly by the Library through contributions, endowment income, grants and other fundraising activities. For example, in 2018, Town tax revenues made up \$65,410 of the Library budget, and \$78,257 came from Library-sourced funds.

⁵TIF expenditures reflect the portion of the tax revenues received from Dragon Products that is returned to Dragon to be used by Dragon for funding capital improvements to its plant in accordance with the Revenue Enhancement Agreement between the Town and Dragon Products. (See discussion in Section (C)(2) below for a detailed explanation of the Dragon Products TIF and Revenue Enhancement Agreement).

⁶Unclassified expenditures are for items such as insurance, membership fees for various municipal and other associations, the annual 4th of July celebration, and the overlay (budget cushion).

⁷Capital Outlays are devoted to street paving, sidewalks, equipment and computers, and contributions to reserve funds for such items as dump trucks, ambulances, police cruisers and fire apparatus.

Dragon Products TIF

Since 2002, the Town has been party to the Dragon Products Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) and related Credit Enhancement Agreement, which has dedicated tax revenue for numerous Town improvements, including wastewater system expansions, and the purchase of fire-fighting equipment. Under the terms of the Dragon TIF, a TIF District was created comprising approximately 34 acres on which the Dragon plant is located (see **Map 12-1: Thomaston TIF Districts**). The Original Assessed Value (OAV) of that property was established in 2001 at \$25,359,600 and that value continues to be taxed at the current mil rate.

Commencing in 2002, Dragon Products began construction of new facilities and installation of new equipment. The increased value of those improvements (which total approximately \$44 million currently) also is taxed by the Town at the current mil rate. However, under the terms of the TIF and the Credit Enhancement Agreement, the tax revenues on the increased valuation are allocated as follows: (A) 10% goes directly into the Town's General Fund; (B) the remaining 90% is allocated (i) 20% to a Dragon TIF Account used by the Town to fund improvements in the Dragon TIF District (wastewater system, fire apparatus, cascade system) and (ii) the balance returned to Dragon to fund the capital costs of the improvements it made. In addition, Dragon Products makes annual "Community Payments" to the Town of \$201,250, which have been used primarily to fund recapitalization of the loan for expansion of the wastewater system at the eastern edge of Town between Buttermilk Drive and the Rockland Town line.

By way of example, in the 2018/2019 fiscal year, the taxable valuation of the Dragon Improvements was \$44,046,755. At the prevailing mil rate, that valuation yielded a tax of \$921,899. Ten percent of that tax amount (\$92,190) went to the Town's General Fund. Twenty percent

of the remaining 90% (\$165,942) went to the Dragon TIF Account. The balance of the 90% (\$663,767) went to Dragon Products, and the Company made a Community Payment to the Town of \$201,250.

A portion of the increased local valuation from the investments made by Dragon Products has been sheltered at the State level, thereby preventing reductions in State education support and revenue sharing to the Town that would have been sustained under State funding formulae without the shelter. The shelter also reduces the percentage of the Knox County budget allocated to Thomaston under the Knox County funding formula. The TIF will expire in budget year 2021/22 unless it is extended. If the TIF is not extended, the full amount of the tax on the valuation of the Dragon improvements (estimated to be around \$1,000,000) will be available to the Town's General Fund rather than distributed in accordance with the allocation described in the preceding two paragraphs. At the same time, the local valuation that had been sheltered at the State level would no longer be sheltered, resulting in a decrease in State education funding and revenue sharing and an increase in Thomaston's contribution to the Knox County budget. Thus, during the period covered by this Comprehensive Plan, the Town will need to manage the financial impact associated with the expiration or extension of the Dragon Products TIF as the case may be.

Downtown TIF

Thomaston has a smaller Downtown TIF that has been in existence since 2009 (See **Map 12-1** for definition of Downtown TIF District). Under the terms of this TIF, the OAV of all property located within the boundaries of the TIF District was determined and set in 2009. That value continues to be taxed at the current mil rate and the tax revenue generated on the OAV goes into the Town's General Fund. Increases in valuations above the OAV (the NAV) also are taxed

at the current mil rate. Thirty percent of the tax revenue on the NAV goes to the Town's General Fund and the remaining 70 percent goes into a TIF Account to fund capital improvements within the TIF District. Currently, the TIF account receives approximately \$22,000 annually, almost all of which goes for payments on the general obligation bond taken out by the Town to fund infrastructure improvements at the Thomaston Green property. As in the Dragon Products TIF, a portion of the Downtown TIF NAV is sheltered so that reductions in State revenue sharing and education support, and increases to Thomaston's share of the Knox County budget, are not required.

3. Local and State Valuations and Local Mil Rates

Local and State property valuations and local mil rates for the Town of Thomaston for the past five years are set forth in **Tables 12-3, 12-4 and 12-5**.

The Thomaston mil rate increased 25.8 percent between 2014 and 2018 as budgetary requirements increased, particularly the education budget; local taxable valuations decreased from a high in FY 2014-2015 even though the total tax base increased; and the amount of State support for education and other revenue sharing decreased. It should be noted that Saint George withdrew from RSU 13 in 2014 and set up an independent school district in 2015. On the positive side, beginning in 2019, it appears that the Legislature is increasing revenue sharing to municipalities after eight straight years of reductions.

4. Municipal Debt versus Statutory and Maine Bond Bank Recommended Limits

As of June 30, 2019, the Town of Thomaston had total bonded debt outstanding of \$4,238,595. Of that total, \$3,799,259 is for sewer and a clean water drain system that are funded by sewer user fees and approximately \$108,000 annually from the Dragon Products TIF. The

balance of Thomaston's indebtedness consists of the Thomaston Green General Obligation Bond (\$159,336) and a Multi-Purpose Bond for improvements to the area behind the downtown Union Block (\$280,000). In addition, in August 2019, the Town took out a temporary bank loan of \$1 million to cover renovations to the former Lura Libby School which will become the new location of the Town Office, the Police Department, the Recreation Department and the Food Pantry. The Town plans to retire that loan in the Spring of 2020 by issuing new bonds totaling approximately \$1 million. Thomaston's share of the Knox County indebtedness is approximately \$175,000 and its share of the RSU 13 indebtedness is approximately \$4.25 million. Under State statutes, municipalities are restricted to general obligation direct debt of no more than 7% of the municipality's total State valuation and combined direct debt/overlapping (school/county) debt of no more than 15% of the municipality's total State assessed valuation. In the case of Thomaston, which has a State valuation of approximately \$360 million, the 7% limitation amounts to approximately \$25 million and the 15% limitation amounts to approximately \$54 million. Thus, Thomaston's total direct debt, plus its shares of Knox County and RSU 13 debt, are well within the requirements.

The Maine Municipal Bond Bank has no published set of guidelines for evaluating municipal debt levels, but considers a number of factors when a municipality files an application for bond funding through the Bank. Among those factors are the level of a town's undesignated fund balances, total debt as a percentage of State assessed valuation, amount of annual debt service and the percentage of the total operating budget devoted to debt service. Given its modest amount of debt currently, should Thomaston submit an application for Maine Municipal Bond Bank assistance in the future, the Town in all probability would fare well under the Bank's guidelines.

TABLE 12-3: Thomaston Local Valuations

Assessment Year:	4/1/2018	4/1/2017	4/1/2016	4/1/2015	4/1/2014
Total Val.	386,285,497	389,447,476	392,120,482	396,446,345	398,497,742
Total Exempt ¹	76,670,157	73,959,693	70,878,900	57,653,025	52,832,348
Total Tax Val. Base	462,955,654	463,407,169	462,999,382	454,099,370	451,330,090

¹Exempt values include the value of properties not subject to taxation such as school and municipal property, federal government property, and property owned by charitable, religious and fraternal organizations. Exemptions also include the value of environmental control equipment at Dragon Products and State exemptions for homesteads, veterans and business equipment (BETE). The most recent (FY 2018-19) figure for Total Exempt Property in the above table (\$ 76,670,157) is considerably higher than the previous years. This is due to an increase in the Homestead Exemption (from \$10,000 in 2015 to \$15,000 in 2016 and to \$20,000 in 2017) and a significant increase in BETE applications. The State of Maine reimburses the Town for a portion of the lost revenue; that due to the Homestead Exemption, 50% prior to 2018 and 62.5% since then; for the BETE it was 56.23% in 2018, with 50% being the minimum and the balance calculated on how much personal property is in the program in Thomaston. The Homestead Exemption (and possibly the reimbursement) is expected to be increased in the near future, with numerous proposals reviewed in the first session of the 2019-2020 Legislature. Although none of those bills was passed, a number of them advanced to be considered in the second session.

TABLE 12-4: Thomaston State Valuations*

2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
360,300,000	359,450,000	365,100,000	358,300,000	334,050,000

*State valuations are computed utilizing a State equalization formula by the State Tax Assessor that uses data from two years prior, adjusting figures based on sales to assessment ratios, thus rendering a value based on 100% sales ratios regardless if each municipality is assessing at full value, and then subtracts the sheltered value of TIF property. For example, the 2019 Equalized State Value for Thomaston is based on the actual numbers for 2017, less the TIF Shelter values, which reduced the State Valuation by about 11%, thereby increasing the basis for both State Revenue Sharing and the Maine Education Subsidy and slightly reducing the basis for the County Tax.

TABLE 12-5: Thomaston Mil Rates

Per Thousand Dollars of Valuation

2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
20.93	19.40	18.68	18.03	16.64

D. State Policies

- 1 To finance existing and future facilities and services in a cost effective manner.
- 2 To explore grants available to assist in the funding of capital investments within the community.
- 3 To reduce Maine's tax burden by staying within LD 1 spending limits.

Thomaston relies on a number of methods to finance its existing and planned future facilities and services. For the day to day functioning of Town government and related services, the Town relies primarily on tax revenues and other revenue sources discussed above. For certain identified long term capital projects (such as police vehicles, fire and ambulance apparatus, major public works equipment, public building maintenance, etc.), the Town maintains and annually increases reserve accounts designed to accumulate funds on or before the projected dates when replacement equipment or major building maintenance will be needed.

The Town also actively seeks grants for both major and minor funding requirements. For example, in 2019, the Town received a \$250,000 matching grant from the Northern Borders Regional Commission for significant infrastructure work (raised walkways, lighting, parking lot pavement and beautification) in the area behind the Town's Union Block. Smaller grants from various sources currently are being sought for public safety and public works projects. The Town is a member of the Midcoast Economic Development District which assists the Town in preparing grant applications.

Because the Town's mil rate is relatively high as compared to other neighboring jurisdictions, the Town has been conservative in its borrowing in an effort to ease the burden on property owners. The Town recently borrowed a total of approximately

\$1.28 million to fund renovations to the former Lura Libby School building pending relocation of certain Town operations and for matching funds for improvements behind the Union Block. Nevertheless, the Town's debut burden remains quite modest under State guidelines.

The Town owns a significant amount of property that may be sold in the future, and the income generated from those sales could be used to fund capital needs. For example, the former site of the Maine State Prison (renamed the Thomaston Green) is owned by the Town and the Town has invested previously in infrastructure improvements (entry road, sewer, water) at the site. Efforts have been underway and are continuing to find a suitable developer to purchase the property and develop it in accordance with the Town's Land Use and Development Ordinance and Thomaston Green Design Guidelines. The Town also is in the process of relocating the Town Office, Police Department, Recreation Department and Food Pantry from the Town-owned Watts Block to the former Lura Libby School. Once that is completed, all or a portion of the Watts Block Building could be rented or sold for commercial development or use.

Because of the high mil rate currently required in Thomaston, it is important, as reflected in the Comprehensive Plan Survey responses and in the "Thomaston Talks" and other community feedback sessions conducted by the Committee, that the Town pursue efforts to lower the existing tax rate. In addition to the potential to consolidate facilities and services described in Section E below to reduce Town expenses, the Town should create an Economic Development function in Town Government to pursue the monetization of Town-owned properties and to attract new business and development to the Town in order to expand the Town's taxable valuation. The additional development should be undertaken in a manner consistent with the Town's historic and small village character. The

Town also should work closely with State and regional officials to pursue increased State revenue sharing and aid to education.

E. Strategies

State Strategies—Share Capital Investment with Neighboring Communities

Thomaston shares the capital and operating costs of a solid waste transfer station with the neighboring Towns of Owl's Head and South Thomaston. The Town shares the expenses of a Shellfish Warden with the Towns of Warren, St. George, South Thomaston, and Cushing. The Town also enters into cooperative buying arrangements from time to time with neighboring Towns to secure favorable pricing on equipment, sand, salt, and other items.

Local Strategies

In addition to the capital/operating costs sharing arrangements noted above, the Town should pursue the following local strategies to lower expenses and increase Town revenues:

- 1 Continue to pursue capital- and expense-sharing opportunities.** In early 2019 the Town considered but ultimately rejected a plan to disband the Thomaston Police Department and obtain police coverage through Knox County. In an ongoing effort to provide services more efficiently, the Town should aggressively explore opportunities for service sharing or consolidation of services with other communities and/or outsourcing of functions currently done by Town Government.
- 2 Sell or lease selected Town properties suitable for development.** The Town is and will be taking steps to sell or lease certain Town-owned real estate. Such sales would enhance the Town's financial position in three ways: (1) by generating revenue that could be used for Town capital investments,

debt reduction, or other purposes; (2) by removing the property from Town upkeep and maintenance; and (3) by placing the property in the Town's taxable valuation, generating new tax revenues. The Town should periodically review the inventory and uses of the properties it owns to determine if additional sales or leases are appropriate.

- 3 Create an economic development function in Town government.** To enhance economic development and municipal tax valuations in ways that are consistent with the Town's historic small-town character, an economic development function (either a Town employee or consultant) should be created to promote the Town as a location for new and expanded business and residential development opportunities. This person also would serve as a liaison between the Town and companies and individuals interested in locating or expanding businesses and other activities in Town.
- 4 Re-examine the Thomaston Land Use Ordinance.** If and as necessary, the Town should be open to revisions of its Land Use and Development Ordinance to accommodate appropriate development, to direct major development away from rural areas and toward growth areas, and to ensure that development is in keeping with the Town's history and character.
- 5 Pursue additional State resources.** A major reason for Thomaston's rising taxpayer burden is increased education spending by RSU 13 even as State support for education has declined. Similarly, State revenue sharing payments to Thomaston have declined in recent years. Thomaston should coordinate with other neighboring Towns, especially those in RSU 13, to work with regional and State officials to increase State support for education and State revenue sharing and to

add a household-income factor to the State's school funding formula.

- 6 Develop a strategy for the Dragon Products TIF.** The Dragon Products TIF expires in 2022 but can be extended for an additional ten years. To determine whether such an extension would be beneficial, the Town should begin an analysis of the effects of an extension on Town tax revenues, State revenue sharing and education support, and Town support levels for Knox County.
- 7 Supplement, then annually review and update, the Town's Capital Investment Plan.**

F. Capital Investment Plan

Set forth in **Table 12-6** is a Capital Investment Plan for Thomaston for the next ten years looking at estimated costs and timing, funding priorities, and potential funding sources with respect to the various capital projects identified in this Comprehensive Plan. Not included in **Table 12-6** are capital investment projects that have been identified previously and have been included in the numerous reserve accounts that the Town maintains and funds annually for the purpose of procuring the relevant items, such as police cruisers, ambulances, fire apparatus, computer systems, certain paving and sidewalk projects, and building and park improvements. As noted above, the Town currently has reserve accounts totaling approximately \$510,000 for these items.

The Capital Investment Plan should be reviewed and updated annually.

With respect to new capital projects identified in the Comprehensive Plan, the funding priorities are rated A through D, and those priorities are defined as follows:

- 1 Priority A, Immediate Need:** A capital improvement in this category typically remedies a danger to public health and safety, including the replacement of capital equipment that might have been damaged in service, or repair of damage to existing public facilities that is more extensive than what would be covered in the normal operating budget.
- 2 Priority B, Necessary within Three Years:** A capital improvement in this category typically corrects or reduces a deficiency in an existing facility or service.
- 3 Priority C, Desirable within Four to Six Years:** A capital improvement in this category is desirable, but funding and scheduling are flexible. There is no immediate problem associated with a capital improvement in this category.
- 4 Priority D, Desirable in Six or More Years:** A capital improvement in this category is desirable, but its timing is subject to postponement due to more urgent needs.

TABLE 12-6: Capital Investment Plan, 2020–2030*

Project	Priority	Estimated Cost	Funding Sources	Oversight/Management
North Road Feasibility and Impact Study	B	\$300,000-350,000	Grant/Town/TIF Funds	Select Board/Town Manager/Public Works Dept.
Procurement of North Road Land Options if Road Deemed Feasible	B	Unknown	Grant/Town/TIF Funds	Select Board/Town Manager
North Road Construction if Feasible	C or D	Unknown	Grant/State Aid/TIF Funds/Bond	Select Board/Town Manager/Public Works Dept.
Extension of Sewer North on Beechwood Street	C or D	\$1.5 Million	User Fees/TIF Funds/Bond	Pollution Control Dept./Town Manager/Select Board
Develop Land Based Water Treatment Facility for Winter Use	D	\$200,000-300,000	User Fees/Grant	Pollution Control Dept./Town Manager/Select Board
Improvements to Mill River Park and Creation of Watercraft Park at Kiln Site	C	\$50,000 each	Grant/Town	Recreation Dept./Public Works Dept./Town Manager/Select Board
Bike/Walking Trail to Knox Museum and GRLT Trails	D	\$75,000	Grant/Town	Recreation Dept./Town Manager/Select Board
Reconfigure Parking Lot/Greenbelt at Public Landing	D	\$50,000	Grant/Town	Recreation Dept./Public Works Dept./Harbor Committee/Town Manager/Select Board

*Preliminary, pending further study, cost analyses, and Town votes. Nevertheless, these projects, many of which would improve quality of life, were identified by numerous constituencies as worthy of pursuit. The North Road project and extensions of sewer and water north on Beechwood Street into the designated TR-3 Growth District would support traffic movement and development from the north edge of the village center to the north Town line. Aside from development in the Highway Commercial and Industrial Districts, where adequate infrastructure already is in place, these are the potential growth areas of the Town in keeping with its historic and small village character.

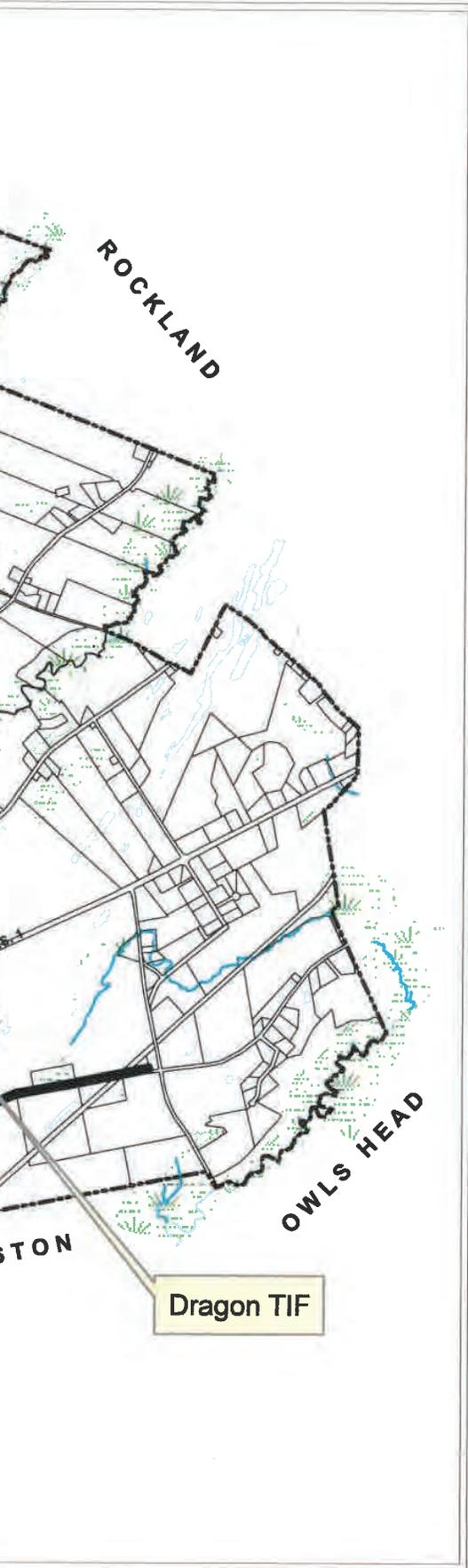


Map 12-1: Thomaston TIF Districts



TIF DISTRICTS

THOMASTON MAINE



Produced by the Town of Thomaston, Maine



February 17, 2009

Existing Land Use



Town geography and historical patterns of development have bequeathed important land-use advantages to Thomaston. These include:

- The village area served by Town water and sewer contains 85% to 95% of the Town's households, contributing to the Town's lack of sprawl and neighborhood appeal while helping to contain the cost of municipal services.
- The village area is surrounded by rural-zoned districts, including an R2 District sloping to the St. George and Oyster rivers in the west that offers broad, appealing vistas to motorists driving north on Route 1. This natural gateway into Town has been prioritized for preservation since the Town's first comprehensive plan (1991) and in the R2 District description and definitions of the Land-Use Ordinance.
- Fifteen percent of the Town's land area is owned by Dragon Products, creating a geographic barrier between the village area and the industrial and commercial businesses at the east end of Town. Big-box and highway-dependent commerce is directed to the east-end Highway Commercial District (as recommended in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan) and away from the Village Commercial District, thus preserving the village area's character and appeal.
- The Town is ringed on the south, west, and east by the St. George, Oyster, and Mill rivers respectively, further contributing to its compact village outline.

- The Town separated its stormwater drains from sewer lines in the 1990s and built a lagoon-storage/spray-irrigation wastewater treatment system away from the waterfront, northwest of the village area. This system has adequate unused capacity to support growth in coming decades. Extension of the sewer system north along Beechwood Street into the TR3 Residential Growth District is a high priority.
- The Town acquired 350 acres of forested land for wastewater irrigation, and this contributes to a 500-acre Town Forest that is a major link in a network of trails ringing the Town. Other Town-owned properties—including the Thomaston Green (former site of the Maine State Prison), the Town’s harbor landing and docks (former site of the Town’s activated-sludge wastewater treatment plant), and the Mill River Park (former site of the Town’s dump)—define the nodes of a greenway perimeter around the Town; this Plan calls for the development of that greenway.
- The railroad line running parallel with the St. George River has prevented shorefront development east of the Lyman-Morse Boatyard property on Water Street and between the Wadsworth Street bridge and Route 1 to the west. The Town placed this strip of shorefront land in a Resource Protection District in the 1990s, and the undeveloped shoreline provides valuable wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities for boaters and paddlecraft. The Land-Use Plan and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance prioritize the preservation of these Resource Protection Districts and should continue to do so.
- The village area is transected by several drainage swales that carry rain and wet-

land runoff to the river. These are zoned Resource Protection and further contribute to a natural network of wildlife habitat, pollinator pathways, stormwater buffering, and visual appeal.

- The Georges Highland Trail, maintained by the Georges River Land Trust, joins Thomaston’s Village Trail at the southern end of a 50-mile overland transit from Searsmont. The GRLT and the Town should work together to extend the trail across the Mill River to the Henry Knox Museum and the St. George peninsula, and across Beechwood Street to Dunbar Road and the Oyster River Bog.

Preserving these land-use features and advantages is a priority for the Town’s land use because it preserves and enhances the Town’s character and appeal. The Town’s small land area (just 11.5 square miles) leaves little margin for zone-blurring in its land use.

A. State Goal

None required.

B. Analyses

1. Recent development types—lot by lot; in subdivisions; or in planned developments—in designated land use districts

In the Highway Commercial District of Thomaston, development continues to occur on a lot-by-lot basis and in subdivisions along Route 1. Development in the Industrial District is lot by lot, as there has been no large tract for subdivisions in that district. Residential development continues primarily in subdivisions.

2. Development patterns and the community’s vision

The designated growth districts in Thomaston’s 2005 Comprehensive Plan were Urban Residential

(R-3), Transitional Residential (TR-3), Shoreland Commercial (SC), Commercial (C), and Industrial (I). Following a recommendation of the 2005 Plan, the Commercial District was subsequently divided into the Highway Commercial and Village Commercial Districts in recognition of their very different characters. The Highway Commercial District (at the east end of Town abutting Rockland) and adjacent Industrial District together comprise the East End Economic Tract, where development between 2004 and 2009 increased the Town's valuation from \$218 million to \$367 million. Most new development was in the Highway Commercial district; the biggest development in the Industrial District was a major construction upgrade at Dragon Products.

New residential subdivisions have been built in the R-3 Urban Residential and TR-3 Transitional Residential districts, both of which are designated growth areas in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

One approved subdivision in the R-1 Rural Residential and Farming District is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, since the R-1 District is not a designated growth area.

3. Regulatory and non-regulatory measures to promote development consistent with the community's vision in character and location

All development in the Town is guided by the Thomaston Land Use and Development Ordinance, adopted 3/25/1995 and most recently amended 6/12/2019. Said ordinance is designed for all the purposes of zoning found in the Maine Revised Statutes and has been drafted as an integral part of a Comprehensive Planning process for the Town, to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of its residents. Among other things, it is designed to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the Town; to promote traffic safety; to provide safety from fire and other elements; to provide adequate light and air; to prevent overcrowding of real estate;

to promote a wholesome home environment; to prevent housing development in unsanitary areas; to provide an adequate street system; to encourage the formation of community units; to provide an allotment of land area in new developments sufficient for all the requirements of community life; to conserve natural resources; and to provide for adequate public services.

In addition to the Thomaston Land Use and Development Ordinance, the R-3A Guidelines help to ensure development in the R-3A Village Mixed Use District is consistent with the character of the surrounding historic neighborhood.

The Town's rural areas (R-1, Rural Residential and Farming District, and R-2, Rural Residential District) could benefit from greater clarity and enforcement of development restrictions.

Included in the Thomaston Land Use and Development Ordinance is Chapter 3, ICC Building Code and the IRC Residential Building Code, regulating and governing the construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, location, removal and demolition of detached one- and two-family dwellings and multiple single-family dwellings (townhouses) not more than three stories in height with separate means of egress in the *Town of Thomaston*; and including the 2009 edition of the *International Building Code* (IBC) regulating and governing the conditions and maintenance of all property, buildings and structures; by providing the standards for supplied utilities and facilities and other physical things and conditions essential to ensure that structures are safe, sanitary and fit for occupation and use; and the condemnation of buildings and structures unfit for human occupancy and use, and the demolition of such existing structures in the *Town of Thomaston*; providing for the issuance of permits and collection of fees therefore; repealing the BOCA BASIC BUILDING CODE, 1999 edition of the *Town of Thomaston* and all other ordinances and parts of the ordinance in conflict therewith.

4. Administrative capacity for land use regulation

The Thomaston Planning Board consists of five members and two alternate members appointed by the Selectboard. The Town employs a Code Enforcement Officer who is assisted by the Town Assessor's Agent. This combined administrative capacity is sufficient to manage the land use regulation program.

5. Floodplain management

Maps indicating floodplain areas were updated and adopted June 15, 2016. Thomaston participates in the National Flood Insurance Program and the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for Knox County, Maine, Map Number 23013CIND1A, Effective Date July 6, 2016 is available on the Town of Thomaston website. The current Thomaston Ordinances, Chapter 8, Flood Plain Management was adopted June 15, 2016 and is enforced. This Ordinance, consistent with state and federal standards, establishes a Flood Hazard Development Permit system and review procedure for development activities in the designated flood hazard areas of the Town, updated as of June 15, 2016.

C. Conditions and Trends

1. Land Use Maps

The current zoning maps were adopted February 21, 2017. See **Map 13-1: Thomaston Land Use Districts** for an overview see also the Town website for the complete Land Use and Development Ordinance. (As of 3/16/20, the link was www.thomastonmaine.us/public/index.php/downloads-archive/downloads-code-office?folder=Ordinances.)

2. Lot dimensional standards

Dimensional standards for each district are found in the Thomaston Land Use Ordinance on the following pages:

- Urban Residential District (R-3), page 31;

- Village Mixed Use District (R-3A), page 35;
- Transitional Residential District (TR-3), page 38;
- Rural Residential District (R-2), page 42;
- Rural Residential and Farming District (R-1), page 47;
- Resource Protection District (RP), page 54;
- Highway Commercial District (HC), page 57;
- Village Commercial District (VC), page 60;
- Industrial District (IN), page 63;
- Shoreland Commercial District (SC), page 67.

The dimension standards are reproduced in Appendix 13 of this Plan.

3. Recent residential, institutional, commercial, and industrial development

The following development has occurred in Thomaston since 2004:

2005

- Hampton Inn Suites, HC Highway Commercial, Map 207 Lot 061
- Mid Coast Federal Credit Union, HC Highway Commercial, Map 208 Lot 061

2006

- 2-Lot Residential Subdivision Ship Street, R3 Residential, Map 101 Lot 014 (approved, not built)
- Lyman Morse Shipbuilding new building, SC Shoreland Commercial, Map 102 Lot 025

- Verizon Wireless, Telecommunication Tower, R3 Residential, Map 106 Lot 086

2007

- 6-Lot Residential Subdivision off Maurice Avenue, R3 Residential, Map 107 Lot
- Completion of extension of sewer lines along Rt 1, East end of town, and realignment of Buttermilk Lane
- Lowe's Building Supply, HC Highway Commercial, Map 207 Lot 052
- Applebee's Restaurant, HC Highway Commercial, Map 207 Lot 062
- Shepard Brothers Storage Units, HC Highway Commercial, Map 207 Lot 053
- 3 Apartment units added to existing building, Booker St, R3 Residential, Map 106 Lot 116
- 19-Lot Residential Subdivision, Beechwood St, TR3 Transitional Residential, Map 204 Lot 037
- Commercial Building, Dunkin Donuts et al, HC Highway Commercial, Map 207 Lot 068
- 6-lot Residential Subdivision, R3 Residential, Map 106 Lot 027 (approved, not built)

2008

- 7-lot Subdivision off Old County Rd, R1 Residential, Map 204 Lot 089 (approved, not built)
- Richmond Corp. Retail Subdivision, HC Highway Commercial Map 208 Lot 059 (approved, not built)

2009

- Town of Thomaston, Park and Trail project, R3A Old Prison Property, Map 101 Lot 015

- Maintenance Building, IN Industrial, Map 401 Lot 029
- 4-Lot Subdivision, IN Industrial, Map 401 Lot 032 (creating lot 034 & 035)

2010

- Mainly Lobster & Seafood shellfish loading and processing facility, IN Industrial, Map 401 Lot 037

2011

- 2-Lot Subdivision 446 Main R3 Residential, Map 101 Lot 016 (approved, not built)
- Convenience store/gas station/car wash/fast food restaurant, HC Highway Comm., Map 207 Lot 049
- Knox County Humane Society small animal building, IN Industrial, Map 208 Lot 005
- Greeley LLC Thomaston Common Development, HC Highway Commercial Map 208 Lot 059

2012

- Town of Thomaston, 8 Lot Thomaston Green Subdivision R3A Old Prison Property, Map 101 Lot 015
- Commercial building Old County Rd, R1 Residential, Map 204 Lot 088
- Fabian Oil Transportation Facility, IN Industrial, Map 401 Lot 035
- Rockland Downtown Commercial Development Map 207 Lots 065 & 067 (approved, not built)

2013

- 4-Lot Residential Subdivision, Bobolink Lane, R2 Residential, Map 201 Lot 203

- Northeast Wireless Networks, add to existing tower, R3 Residential, Map 106 Lot 086
- Greeley LLC Tractor Supply building Thomaston Common Development, HC Highway Commercial
- Map 207 Lot 060

2014

- Alloy Restaurant, Main Street, VC Village Commercial, Map 105 Lot 171
- Shepard Brothers Storage Units, HC Highway Commercial, Map 207 Lot 053
- Mainly Lobster & Seafood 2nd shellfish loading and processing facility, IN Industrial, Map 401 Lot 037

2015

- Pope Memorial Humane Society building, IN Industrial, Map 208 Lot 033 & 006
- Greely LLC Aspen Dental et al in Thomaston Common Development, HC Highway Commercial, Map 208 Lot 058
- 7-lot Residential Subdivision Ross Ave, R1 Rural Residential, Map 205 Lot 037

2016

- Shepard Brothers Climate Control Storage Building, IN Industrial, Map 208 Lot 004
- Faustini, Retail Business, 180 Main St, VC Village Commercial, Map 105 Lot 121

2017

- Freezer Storage Building, SC Shoreland Commercial, Map 203 Lot 007 (approved, not built)
- RSU 13 Additions to Oceanside Middle School, R3 Residential Map 105 Lot 293

- 2nd Freezer Storage Building, Mainly Lobster & Seafood, IN Industrial, Map 401 Lot 037

2018

- Ford Dealership building, HC Highway Commercial, Map 207 Lot 059
- Large Vehicle Washing Facility, IN Industrial, Map 208 Lot 031 (approved, not built)

2019

- Sawmill/log yard, 45 Atlantic Hwy, R2 Rural Residential, Map 203 Lot 017
- Restaurant R3A Old Prison Property Map 101 Lot 010

Thomaston Tax Maps showing the above-referenced developments can be found in Appendix 13.

4. Existing Land Use Regulation Tools

The Thomaston Land Use and Development Ordinance, adopted 3/25/1995 and most recently amended 6/12/2019, regulates town-wide zoning, shoreland zoning, site plan review, subdivisions, street construction, and excavations. Zoning maps as well as tax maps indicating each building in Thomaston are current and utilized to manage land use decisions. The entire Ordinance is included in Appendix 13.

5. Minimum amount of land needed to accommodate projected residential, institutional, commercial, or industrial development at least ten (10) years into the future

*I will work with CEO and Assessors Agent to do this.

D. Policies

None Required.

E. Strategies

None required.

Map 13-1: Thomaston Land Use Districts

CERTIFICATION of ADOPTION

We hereby attest that this is a true copy of the Town of Thomaston, Maine Zoning Map, pursuant to the adoption of the Zoning District Boundaries duly adopted at a Town Meeting held on June 15, 2016.

Feb. 22, 2017
Date

[Signature]
Town Clerk

Thomaston Planning Board:

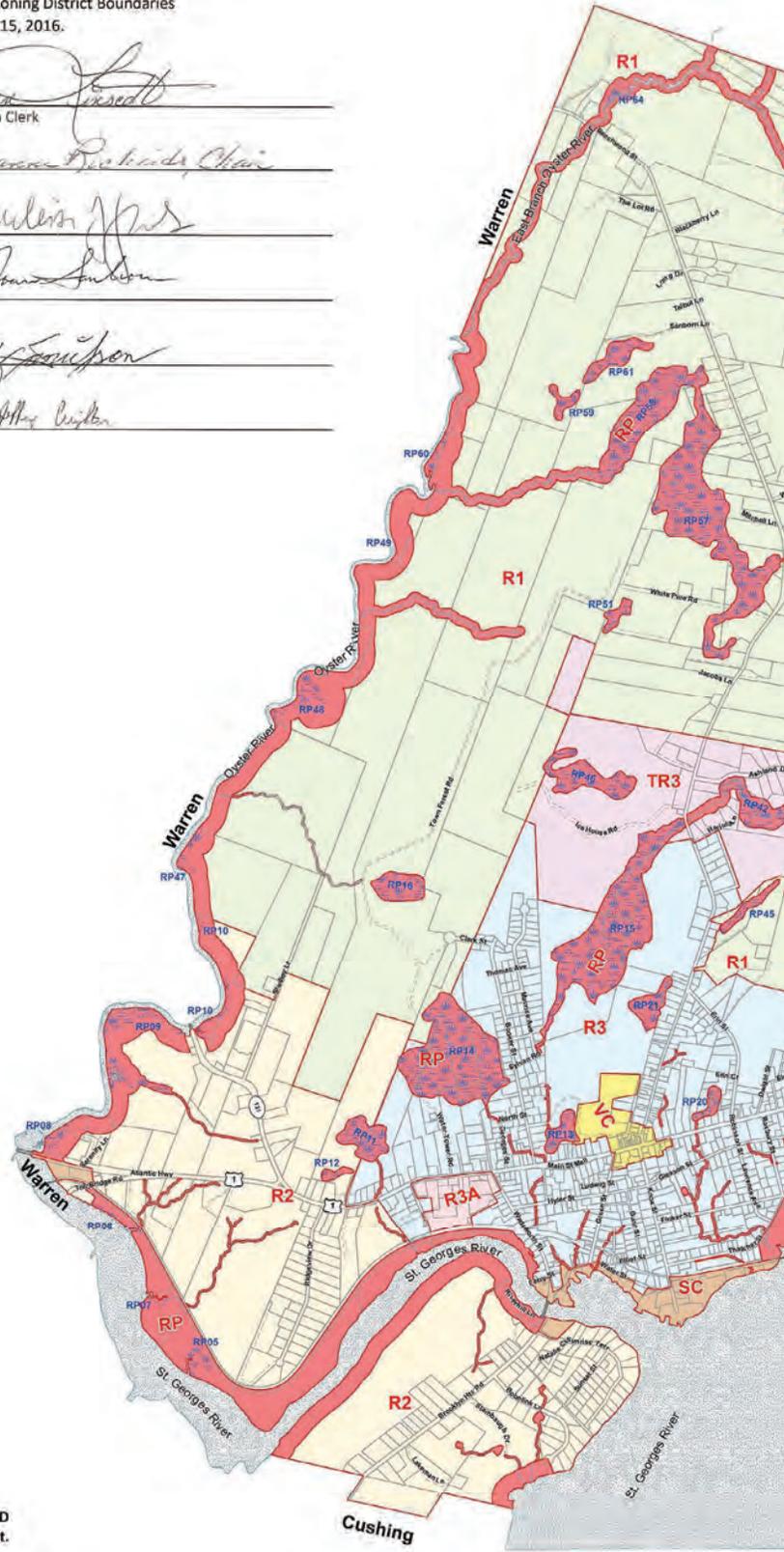
[Signature]
Chair

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]



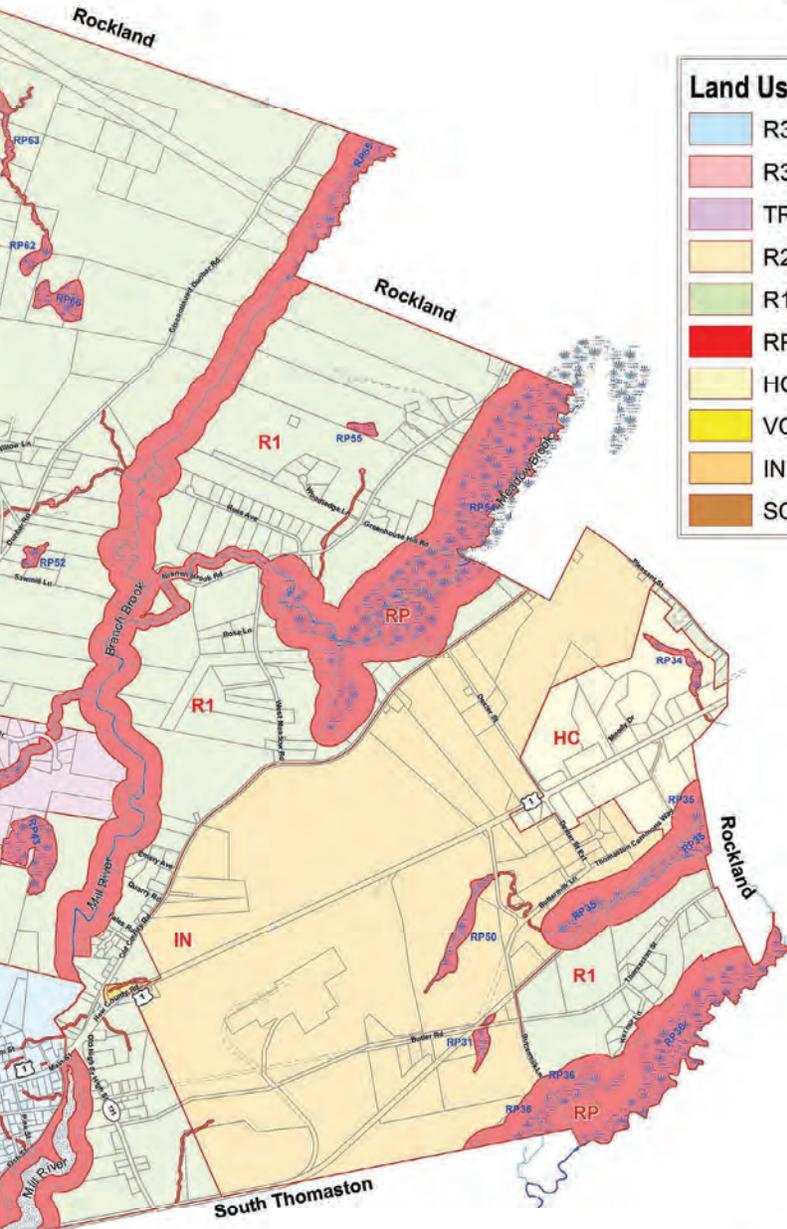
Prepared for the THOMASTON PLANNING BOARD
by the Thomaston Information Management Dept.

3 Knox Street - PO Box 299
Thomaston ME 04861-0299

Zoning Map
Town of THOMASTON
 Knox County, Maine
 6/15/2016

Land Use Ordinance - 702.1 - Districts

	R3 707 - Urban Residential
	R3A 707A - Village Mixed Use
	TR3 708 - Transitional Residential
	R2 709 - Rural Residential
	R1 710 - Rural Residential & Farming
	RP 711 - Resource Protection
	HC 712 - Highway Commercial
	VC 712A - Village Commercial
	IN 713 - Industrial
	SC 714 - Shoreland Commercial



Revised 2/2/2017

Future Land Use Plan



Much of Thomaston's beauty derives from its history: its village center that anchors rural outlying areas and its historic structures, along with more modest reminders of the Town's maritime and farming past. While providing for population growth and associated housing and business development, Thomaston must continue to shape this growth so that the Town's traditional character remains deep-rooted and community-wide, and not reduced to remnants.

Thomaston has had reasonably successful town-wide zoning for many years, and the settlement pattern is generally one that Thomaston property owners are satisfied with and wish to see continued. This Plan supports maintaining the basic land-use pattern of the village surrounded by low-density development, allows higher-density commercial and industrial development

east of the Dragon Products land holdings and cement plant, and supports efforts to preserve the character of the town's federally designated Historic District.

Future land use challenges for Thomaston continue to include: (1) prevent sprawl and maintain a viable village center with a variety of small businesses, historic buildings, and pleasant residential areas; (2) preserve the character of the federally designated Historic District; (3) redevelop the former prison property in a manner that is compatible with surrounding residential uses and that complements the commercial and public uses at the village center; (4) assure affordable housing opportunities; (5) recruit commercial and industrial development to provide jobs and increase the tax base ; (6) maintain open space and public access to open space and the

harbor; and (7) limit adverse impacts of gravel pits and rock quarries on other land uses, and planning (long term) for the eventual closure of these areas.

Along with the principles summarized in the Vision Statement of this Plan, the guiding principles for future growth are:

- Maintain rural, historic, small-town character;
- Reinforce the Town's center;
- Support the waterfront;
- Connect the chain of walkable neighborhoods, parks, trails, and open spaces;
- Provide appropriate area for highway commercial and industrial development.

A. State and Local Goal

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

B. Analyses

The Future Land Use Plan aligns with the community's Vision Statement in that it seeks to preserve our historic small-town character; encourages walkability; provides opportunities for recreation and leisure activities; supports housing opportunities for all; protects our natural resources including open space; preserves access to our Harbor for commercial and recreational uses; and provides opportunities for economic development.

Growth areas in Thomaston have been shaped by natural constraints, the location of public facilities, and the Town and region's transportation network. (Refer to **Map 13-1: Thomaston Land Use Districts** for a visual overview.)

Recent development trends have focused on national and regional chain enterprises locating in the newly created Highway Commercial District east of the Dragon Products cement plant and quarries. Preserving and revitalizing the village center continues to be critical. Increased heavy truck traffic on Route 1, Thomaston's Main Street, reinforces the need to pursue strategies for the preservation of the Town's historic architecture. The Future Land Use Plan seeks to address these issues.

Given the Town's current declining population, most new residential development will occur as adaptive reuse of existing buildings; limited new construction of smaller, affordable, energy-efficient homes; or graduated senior living options. As the Town seeks to attract new families, the Transitional Residential District (TR3) will need to be made more attractive for development by extending sewer and water to that area and modifying the Land Use Ordinance to allow for greater density. Continued development in the Highway Commercial and Industrial Districts should be encouraged for jobs and a diversified tax base, but particular attention must be paid to mitigating the impacts of increased truck traffic.

Critical natural resource areas are already protected with strict subdivision and zoning ordinances, but review and subsequent modification of the ordinances is required to strengthen these safeguards.

C. Land Use Districts

Maps to accompany the following discussion are included in Appendix 14. For an overview, refer to Map 13-1: Thomaston Land Use Districts.

Growth Areas

Districts associated with growth areas include: Urban Residential (R3), Village Mixed-Use District (R3A) Transitional Residential (TR3), Shoreland Commercial (SC), Village Commercial

(VC), Highway Commercial (HC), and Industrial (I). Thomaston's current growth areas are believed to be sufficient to meet anticipated need, except that an increase in the size of the Transitional Residential District (TR3) is needed, and there is a potential need for additional developable land in the Industrial District.

Urban Residential District

The Urban Residential District is the area of the Town that is best able to support increased residential development. The purpose of this district is to provide a range of housing opportunities. The intent is to do so in a way that emulates the character of the village area, continuing the traditional grid pattern and extending the Town's compact, walkable neighborhoods.

The land area within the R3 District has remained generally the same since 1995, and no changes are proposed in this Plan. The R3 District is served by public water and sewer systems. This district includes the federally designated Historic District along US Route 1 and Knox Street.

There is limited open land within this district to accommodate new development. The Thomaston Land Use Ordinance allows apartments in single-family homes as a conditional use; however, consideration of other approaches to accessory dwelling units (ADUs) is needed with accompanying consideration of parking and buffering needs to lessen the impact on residential neighborhoods.

Village Mixed Use District (R3A)

The R3A District is intended to encourage a high-quality, moderate-density neighborhood that complements the physical, aesthetic, and social quality of Thomaston's village area. This neighborhood is designed to have a human scale; be sensitive to pedestrian needs; accommodate and manage vehicular traffic by linking the existing local and state road network; and protect historic features.

A Master Plan for the Village Mixed Use District identifies acceptable uses and shows the general locations of public open space and road linkages. The Village Mixed Use District contains a mix of uses (both residential and non-residential) with buildings that convey a similar character, regulated by the Thomaston Green Design Guidelines, which are incorporated into the Land Use Ordinance.

Transitional Residential District (TR3)

The TR3 District lies north of the Town center along both sides of Beechwood Street. The Comprehensive Plan identifies this section of Thomaston as a growth area and as the next district after R3 where public sewer and water should be provided and future residential development should be concentrated. Its purpose is to direct future residential development closer to the compact village area, reducing residential sprawl into rural areas. It is intended that development in this area continue to emulate the character of the village, with an interconnected road grid and compact, walkable neighborhoods. Development standards in this transitional area must limit strip development along roads through access management, minimum frontage requirements, and other techniques.

Little development has occurred in this district to date. It should be given high priority for extension of water or sewer lines. This Plan also recommends consideration of a new road north of (and roughly parallel with) US Route 1 between Route 131 North (the Oyster River Road) in the west and Old County Road in the east. Such a road would encourage residential development in this area, relieve traffic congestion on US Route 1, and provide an alternate route through Town in the event of an accident or other emergency blocking US Route 1 at the Mill River crossing.

Shoreland Commercial District (SC)

The Shoreland Commercial District includes the lands fronting the St. George River from the railroad trestle crossing Mill River in the east to just beyond Wadsworth Street in the west, plus a small piece along the river near Route 1, at the western entrance to the Town. The purpose of the district is to ensure that these limited areas are retained for water-dependent and marine-related businesses. It is the intent that public access to the harbor for commercial and recreational purposes be encouraged. It is also the intent that any new structures be located and configured so as to preserve visual access to the water from public vantage points.

Water-dependent and marine-oriented uses have always predominated here, and the Shoreland Commercial District was established to help ensure that these uses will continue. Respondents to the community survey overwhelmingly favored expanding recreational uses of the harbor while continuing to support commercial marine-related activity.

It is important that the Town work with property owners on the placement of any new structures so as to help preserve visual access to the water from public vantage points. The Land Use and Development Ordinance Article II, General Standards of Performance, requires proposed commercial and industrial development to be located and configured “in a visually harmonious manner with the terrain and vegetation of the parcel and surrounding parcels,” and proposed structures to impede “as little as reasonably practical, scenic views from the main road or from existing structures and the natural environment” [716.16.5.2]. This provision needs to be carefully considered when evaluating proposed developments, especially in the Shoreland Commercial district.

Additionally, the Town needs to continue to expand the waterfront walking trail, enhance

shorefront parks, and expand access points for recreational uses.

Village Commercial District (VC)

The Village Commercial District includes the business area centered around the intersection of Main Street with Knox and Beechwood Streets in the village center, plus a separate area at the intersection of U.S. Route 1 and Old County Road. The purpose of the district is to provide for small-scale retail sales, professional services, and municipal, social, and government activities. The intent is that the small-town atmosphere of Thomaston be maintained. Both new and renovated buildings in this district should be compatible in design and scale with the surrounding commercial and residential uses and the historic character of the area.

In addition to maintaining Thomaston’s small-town character, the revitalization of our downtown is clearly the top priority for the people of Town. The present allowable uses of small businesses, municipal buildings, social organizations, churches, Post Office, and apartments should be retained in the village commercial district, but both new and renovated buildings in this area should be compatible in design and scale with the surrounding residential uses and historic character of the area. Space is limited in this district, but the early 2020 move of the municipal offices has freed some space in the Watts Block, and there is room for new construction north of the business block. Additional space could be created or optimized by renovating existing buildings.

Highway Commercial District (HC)

The Highway Commercial District includes the lands along US Route 1 east of the Dragon Products cement plant and quarries. The purpose of the district is to provide an area suitable for highway-oriented sales, services, and businesses. The scale of future development in this area should be

in keeping with the needs of the region and the maintenance of a viable commercial district in Thomaston's village center. To protect the compact village attraction of Thomaston, the Highway Commercial District needs to remain east of the Dragon Products property.

The Land Use Ordinance for the Highway Commercial District accommodates the existing automotive, storage, theater, retail, and hospitality uses of this area. Dimensional requirements ensure that the scale of future development is in keeping with the needs of the region.

Landscaping requirements are necessary to improve the appearance of this district to attract the public and encourage business investment. There should be more green space and tree planting for new construction, and creative ways should be sought to improve the appearance of existing properties.

Industrial District (IN)

The Industrial District includes those lands owned by Dragon Products and an area between Buttermilk Lane and the Highway Commercial District. Its purpose is to provide an area in town for manufacturing, processing, treatment, research, warehousing, storage, and distribution where there is no danger of hazards to public health and safety. The intent is to locate and capitalize on the proximity of the railroad line and spurs.

Rural Areas

Rural areas in Thomaston include the Rural Residential District (R2), the Rural Residential and Farming District (R1), and the Resource Protection District (RP). The purpose of these districts is to provide for residential development while retaining the rural quality of these areas. Areas within these districts provide a "greenbelt" around most of the town. Many open fields are found here, with one farm in the R1 District and one in the R2 District in Brooklyn Heights. Although these farmlands are not a major factor in the local

economy, they do contribute greatly to the environment and to the human need for open space. Their continued existence is strongly encouraged. Open space is also provided by other parcels registered under the Farm and Open Space Tax Law and the Tree Growth Tax Law. Additionally, the Thomaston Town Forest is located in the R1 district, as are portions of the deer wintering areas and critical natural resources not zoned Resource Protection.

Commercial uses and other incompatible uses must continue to be prohibited in these districts.

Rural Residential District (R2)

The Rural Residential District is an area for limited residential growth. The purpose of this district is to protect its rural quality from development sprawl. The intent is to allow limited residential development that is compatible with the character and traditional use of rural lands, preserving as much open space and forestland as possible, minimizing visual impact and protecting scenic views. Cluster or conservation subdivisions are encouraged but not required in this area.

Land zoned Rural Residential (R2) is located in Brooklyn Heights and at the western entrance to Town along US Route 1. The Town's largest residential subdivisions are located in these areas along Sunrise Terrace and Ridgeview Drive. There is room for additional residential development in each area, but density is limited by soil conditions and the lack of public sewer.

To enhance rural atmosphere while allowing for some needed housing growth, clustered residential subdivisions with components of open space continue to be strongly recommended in the R1 and R2 districts.

Additionally, the current Comprehensive Plan highlights the importance of preserving the US Route 1 western entrance to Thomaston over the St. George River as an important scenic resource. This area is zoned R2, with a small

Shoreland Commercial (SC) district south of the US Route 1 bridge. US Route 1 through Warren is becoming more developed, and distinct green borders are important if we are to preserve Thomaston's identity. If Thomaston were to allow strip commercial development or dense residential development in this area, the visual separation of Thomaston from Warren would become as blurred as that of Thomaston from Rockland. Additionally, such development would increase traffic congestion along US Route 1.

For these reasons, no land use changes are recommended in this area; however, conditional uses and dimensional requirements should be reviewed to ensure that they are compatible with rural residential areas and provisions in the Land Use and Development Ordinance pertaining to "visually harmonious" development. Protection of scenic views [section 716.16.5.2] should be carefully evaluated as part of project review.

Rural Residential & Farming District (R1)

This district includes most of the Town's rural lands. It also includes lands with multiple natural resource constraints or that are especially important for their recreational, scenic, or other resource-based opportunities. Its purpose is to allow a level of development and activity, including farming and wood harvesting, consistent with the protection of the natural features of these lands. Any residential development in this district must be compatible with the character and traditional use of rural lands, preserving as much open space and forestland as possible, minimizing visual impact and protecting scenic views. Cluster development is preferred for any residential subdivision in this district.

Nearly all vacant residential land in Thomaston is located in areas zoned R1. Areas within the R1 District are not served by public sewer and have little potential for public sewer due to cost, unless developed in a large conservation subdivision with a community sewer. The goal of land

use planning in the rural density areas should be the preservation of as much green space as possible to maintain Thomaston's traditional rural character, whether through wetland and steep slopes protection and/or dedicated open space.

It is critical that commercial and industrial uses not encroach upon the R1 District on High Street (Route 131 South) and that proposed development be carefully evaluated to ensure compliance with existing ordinances. Montpelier is a dominant landmark in this area. Protection of this landmark and neighboring residential areas is important to the Town.

Resource Protection District (RP)

The Resource Protection District includes shoreland areas and other lands of unique geologic and natural features, especially those that include wetlands, wildlife habitats, steep slopes, and unstable soils. Also included in this district is a 15-foot-wide margin on either side of all stormwater swales. The purpose of the district is to maintain the safe and healthful conditions of these lands and protect them from development that would disrupt productive habitat systems, degrade water quality, or destroy scenic value.

The Resource Protection District is designed to prevent and control water pollution; protect spawning grounds for fish; protect aquatic, bird, and wildlife habitat; control building sites, placement of structures, and land uses; and conserve shore cover and visual as well as physical points of access to inland and coastal wetlands and natural beauty.

This district and its related Ordinance requirements are consistent with State Shoreland Zoning Guidelines [06-096 CMR Chapter 1000] and other State and Federal laws and regulations governing protection of natural resources. The Town should conduct an annual review to ensure ongoing compliance and should review ordinances pertaining to vegetative buffers in areas abutting critical natural resources, amending if

necessary to ensure adequate protection of these resources.

D. Policies

- 1 To support the locations, types, scales, and intensities of land uses the community desires.
- 2 To protect critical rural and critical waterfront areas from the impacts of development.
- 3 To review and support efficient permitting procedures, especially in growth areas.
- 4 To support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas.
- 5 To coordinate the community's land use strategies with other local and regional land use planning efforts.

E. Strategies

General

- 1 Strengthen the definition of purpose for each zoning district to solidify the intent of rural versus growth areas. Reference to the importance of relative scale, character, and visual quality of each district needs to be incorporated.
- 2 Continue to develop an interconnected greenway through Town and along the waterfront linking Town parks and public spaces and conserved lands, with the goals of protecting critical and important natural resources, maintaining wildlife corridors, creating pollinator pathways, protecting scenic resources, increasing visual and physical access to the shore, and enhancing low-impact recreational opportunities
- 3 Conduct a comprehensive study of the advantages and disadvantages of a new east-west road through Town in the vicinity of the Transitional Residential (TR3) District to encourage residential growth in the TR3 District and alleviate traffic congestion on Route 1.
- 4 The first consideration for any Conditional Use approval must be whether or not the use conforms to the purpose of the district within which it is proposed. Additionally, a Conditional Use may be approved only if it does not promote strip development or sprawl and is of a scale, character, and visual quality that is compatible with the neighborhood in which it is proposed. Modify Section 704.1.5.c.1 of the Thomaston Land Use Ordinance to clarify and strengthen this intent.
- 5 Partner with nonprofit organizations and private owners to place parcels of land with important natural features and/or viewshades into permanent conservation status. Purchase and transfer of development rights are tools that can be used for this purpose as are local land banks, community land trusts, and designated reserve accounts.
- 6 Create a Community and Economic Development Corporation to provide a mechanism for purchasing land or development rights, conservation easements, abandoned properties, or other properties of importance to the Town. The priority for homes acquired through these means would be making them available as affordable housing.
- 7 Develop guidelines for the assessment of scenic impacts using concepts such as scale, contrast, and spatial dominance. Develop an inventory of scenic resources based on these guidelines and amend existing ordinances to allow the Planning Board to require a scenic impact analysis as part of site plan review of any development that would impact any of the inventoried scenic resources.

- 8 Study changes to the Land Use Ordinance that would be needed to become an AARP Age-Friendly Community, and act accordingly.
- 9 Study the operation and impact of short-term rentals in Thomaston, and take appropriate action.
- 10 Review land use ordinances pertaining to gravel pits and quarries, and amend as necessary to ensure that impacts to natural resources, other land uses, and transportation systems are adequately addressed. (See **Chapter 3: Our Environment: Natural Resources.**)
- 11 Mineral exploration should be a conditional use in the Town's Rural, Industrial, and Highway Commercial Districts, but not an allowed use in the more densely populated districts of R3, R3A, or TR3 except in cases where mineral rights have already been transferred.
- 12 Allow "Small Scale Farming/Gardening" as a Permitted Use in R3, R3A, TR3, R2, and R1.
- 13 Hire a consultant in Town planning to help the Town design a comprehensive land use strategy to maximize the appeal of Thomaston in the areas of commerce, industry, and population growth.
- 14 Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies. using *Beginning with Habitat* as a tool.
- 15 Establish the Comprehensive Plan Committee as a standing committee responsible for fostering progress toward the Plan's goals and helping to assure that the Land Use and Development Ordinance is aligned with the new Comprehensive Plan. All proposed changes to the Land Use Ordinance should be reviewed by the Comprehensive Plan Committee to determine compliance with

the Plan. The Committee's determination of compliance or non-compliance will be submitted to the Selectboard prior to its public hearing on the proposed change(s).

- 16 Maintain up-to-date maps depicting current land uses. Integrate land use mapping layers with maps depicting municipal infrastructure, and tie to property cards. Computerize building permit information.
- 17 Review permitting procedures to assure that they are fair and efficient and explore streamlining permitting procedures in growth areas.
- 18 Assure that new development in Town is tracked by type and location.

Rural Areas

- 1 Examine the Land Use Ordinance for ways to strengthen the protection of rural areas.
- 2 A number of Conditional Uses in R1 and R2 appear to be incompatible with the purpose of these rural districts since they seem to be neither residential nor related to "traditional use of rural lands." Review Conditional Uses in these districts and modify as needed, giving particular attention to scale, character, visual quality, and essential viewsapes.
- 3 The importance of preserving the western entrance to Town along Route 1 as part of the greenway described above has long been a priority. To reaffirm this commitment and to preserve the scenic vistas and rural nature of that area, issues of scale, character, dimensional requirements, buffering, etc. must be thoroughly addressed. This can be done through modifications specific to this area within the existing regulation in the R2 District, by re-evaluating permitted and conditional uses, and by purchasing land and/or development rights through public/private partnerships, as discussed above.

- 4 Previous and current Comprehensive Plans state, “Montpelier is a dominant landmark Protection of this landmark and neighboring residential areas is vitally important to the Town.... It is critical that nearby commercial and industrial land uses not encroach on this residential area.” This continues to be true. Additionally, this area abuts a district of South Thomaston that is identified as rural lands. No changes in the Rural Residential (R1) and Village Commercial (VC) boundaries should be made, but changes in use could come from protections for the Historic District and/or possible accommodations for mixed use within the Historic District.
 - 5 Encourage, through educational outreach efforts, placement and retention of active agricultural lands and other important open space in the Farm and Open Space Tax Program, and productive forestland in the Tree Growth Tax Program. Encourage conservation easements to preserve important agricultural, open space, and forestlands through local land trusts.
 - 6 Amend the Thomaston Land Use and Development Ordinance to require subdivision proposals within the R1 (Rural Residential and Farming) District to include a cluster design instead of, or in addition to, a traditional design for site plan review. Land to be left in open space should, to the extent possible, include prime agricultural soils, critical natural resources, and important wildlife habitat and corridors and should abut and augment such open spaces on adjoining properties, including those in neighboring municipalities.
- accessory dwelling units and multifamily housing.
- 2 Allow “Conversion of Existing Residential” as a Conditional Use in R3. When considering approval of conditional uses, especially those that involve converting residential properties to business/commercial properties, it is essential that issues of scale, character, density, saturation, buffering and parking be heavily weighed. Off-street parking in such cases must be located away from front yards and substantially shielded from view with the intent of preserving the nature of a residential neighborhood.
 - 3 Create a historic overlay in the Town’s designated Historic District, as listed on the National Register, where guidelines for preserving the character, style, scale, and proportions of historic structures are identified.
 - 4 Create and support a historic advisory board to inform and assist homeowners as to how to accomplish their construction and improvement goals while not severely compromising the historic aesthetic.
 - 5 Pursue the extension of Town water and Sewer into the TR3 District to allow for an expansion of more affordable housing options.
 - 6 In the TR3 District, encourage high-density more affordable housing, including smaller homes, duplexes, row houses, multiunit residences, and smaller lot sizes, while maintaining a traditional street grid pattern.
 - 7 Review the Land Use Ordinance to determine other ways to support the development of smaller, more efficient, more affordable housing including accessory dwelling units (a secondary housing unit on a single-family residential lot that remains with the original property), micro-housing, minimum unit sizes, minimum lot sizes,

Growth Areas

- 1 Continue to allow a range of housing densities based on the established settlement pattern and provide a sufficient amount of affordable housing types, including

- etc. Allow multi-unit residential as a conditional use in R3 and TR3 as well as R3A. Develop associated parking and buffering requirements that protect view corridors and the historic small-town character of the neighborhoods. It is especially important that lawn areas abutting streets not become parking lots.
- 8** Encourage developers, through the Land Use and Development Ordinance, to provide multifamily developments with adequate storage areas, landscaping, and shared green space.
 - 9** In order to provide opportunities for affordable housing and maintain the integrity of the Town's rural areas, allow mobile/manufactured homes as a conditional use in TR3 and R1. Allow manufactured/mobile home parks as a conditional use in TR3. Rezone that portion of the R1 district along Pleasant Street that presently contains a mobile home park to TR3. Rezone portions of R1 and R3 that presently about the southern boundary of TR3 as additions to the TR3 District, excepting the property along the western shoreline of the Mill River.
 - 10** Review the standards for mobile/manufactured home parks to ensure compatibility with the area in which such a development is to be placed. Cluster and/or traditional grid pattern for such a development should be considered, along with requirements for landscaping and storage areas.
 - 11** To protect the compact village attraction of Thomaston, limit the Highway Commercial to the area along Route 1 east of the Dragon Products property.
 - 12** Require developers, through site plan reviews, to assess the potential for proposed projects in the Industrial and Highway Commercial Districts to adversely impact Marsh Brook and the Weskeag Creek Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance. Where feasible, conserve low-lying undeveloped uplands where coastal marshes and intertidal natural communities can migrate inland with sea level rise.
 - 13** Consider instituting impact fees to contribute toward the cost of any infrastructure improvements required to be made by the Town to accommodate additional growth and/or development.
 - 14** Modify the current Land Use Ordinance to permit "Public Open-Space Recreational Use" in R3 to allow for parks and recreational activities.
 - 15** Home occupations should continue to be allowed in all residential districts. The 2005 Comprehensive Plan also states that "...the Town should enforce existing standards to ensure that home occupations, in both size and type, do not substantially detract from the residential neighborhoods in which they are located."
 - 16** Allow light industrial activity as a conditional use in the Village Commercial District.
 - 17** Retain the Shoreland Commercial designation for the property along Route 1 at the west end of Town that has deep-water frontage. However, the adjoining lot that has no river frontage should be moved into the R2 District.
 - 18** The few properties in the Shoreland Commercial District that have all-tide water access are and should continue be zoned Shoreland Commercial and be dedicated to marine commercial activities. However, properties in the Shoreland Commercial District that have only mid- to high-tide water access could, in the future, be considered for commercial activities that are not strictly marine-related, as the technology for transporting and launching small craft no

longer requires their construction and repair to occur at waterfront locations.

- 19** Maintain the current height limit for all properties in the Shoreland Commercial District and review the Land Use Ordinance to assure the protection of view corridors.

- 20** Encourage landowners in the Shoreland Commercial District to harden their properties against storm surges and, in the longer term, against rising sea level.

- 21** Mitigate runoff of lawn and garden chemicals and other non-point source pollutants by educating landowners and incorporating raingardens and retention ponds to the Town's storm drains and swales.

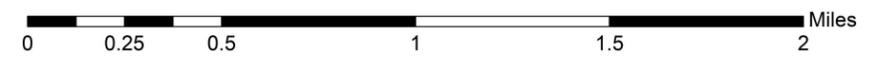
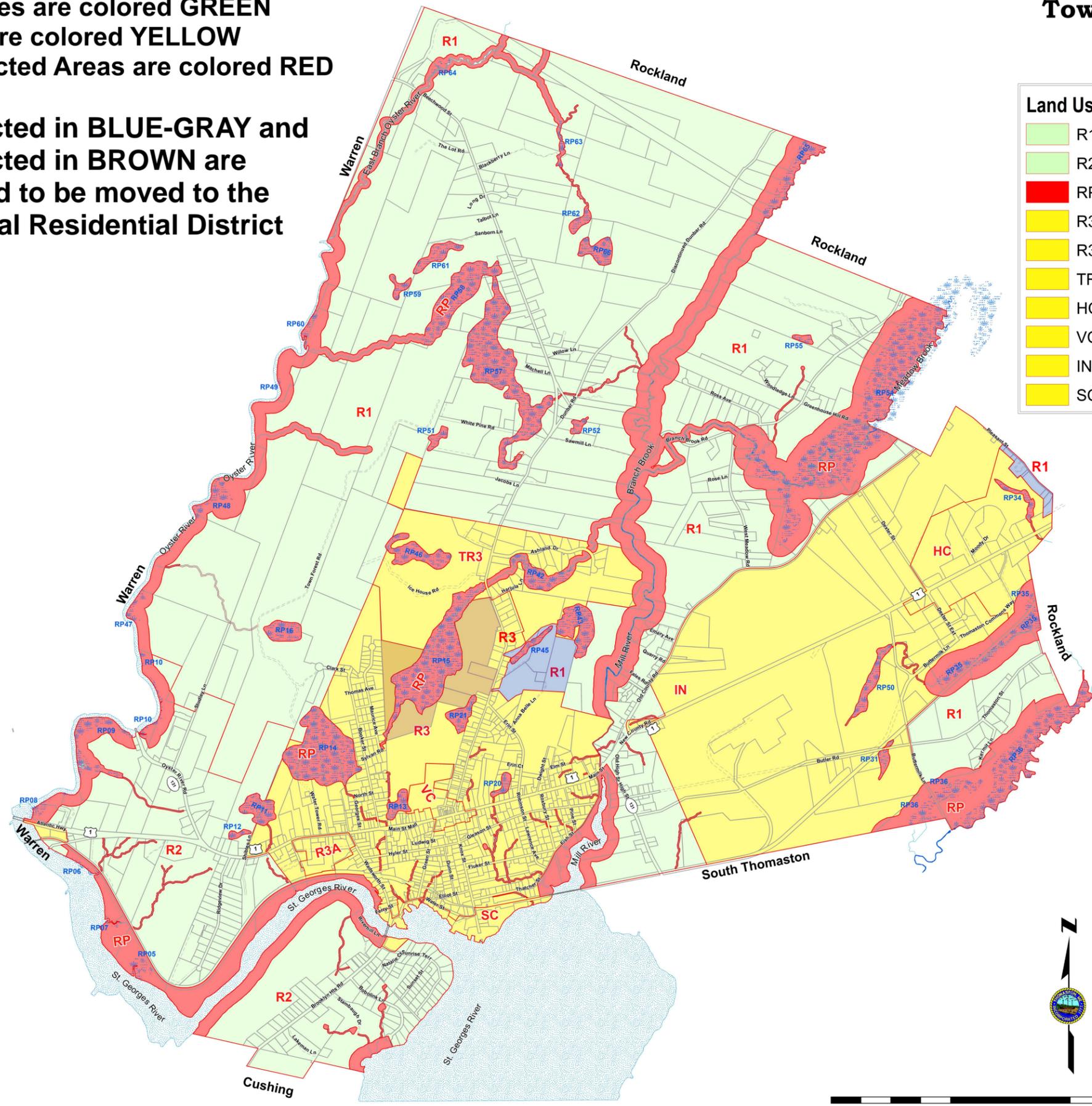
Note: Rural Zones are colored GREEN
 Growth Zones are colored YELLOW
 Resource Protected Areas are colored RED

R1 Areas depicted in BLUE-GRAY and
 R3 Areas depicted in BROWN are
 areas proposed to be moved to the
 TR3 Transitional Residential District

Town of THOMASTON Knox County, Maine

Land Use Ordinance - 702.1 - Districts

	R1	710 - Rural Residential & Farming
	R2	709 - Rural Residential
	RP	711 - Resource Protection
	R3	707 - Urban Residential
	R3A	707A - Village Mixed Use
	TR3	708 - Transitional Residential
	HC	712 - Highway Commercial
	VC	712A - Village Commercial
	IN	713 - Industrial
	SC	714 - Shoreland Commercial



Public Participation



One of the hallmarks of Thomaston’s Plan was the solicitation of public input. The Committee engaged in numerous outreach initiatives to give Town residents multiple opportunities to provide their thoughts and guidance and offer feedback on what was being said and heard. Through surveys, small stakeholder meetings, larger “Thomaston Talks” and “Community Conversations” feedback sessions, open meetings of the Committee and the Selectboard, news articles, and the Town website, Town residents were encouraged to have a say in the future of the Town and were kept up to date on the work of the Committee and the content of the Plan. The views expressed by Thomaston residents were recorded and used as a basis for the Plan throughout its development.

Public Survey

The Committee began its work by developing a public survey to elicit opinions on Thomaston’s strengths and weaknesses and the public’s vision

of our future. The surveys were widely distributed via the Town website and in printed format via the Town Office, the Town Library, local retailers, and at meetings and functions including the polling place on election day and at the annual Town Meeting. Cards were mailed to the Town mailing list (approximately 1,600 names representing the great majority of households) to advise residents of the survey and how to complete it. Local news media published articles and press releases reporting on the Plan update and the public survey process. A total of 197 surveys were completed, and the results were compiled and presented to Town residents through subsequent meetings, publications, and the Town website.

Stakeholder Meetings

Over a period of several months during the preparation of the Plan, one or more members of the Committee met with individuals or small groups representing various community constituencies

to discuss the process and receive face-to-face input on the future direction of the Town. Meetings were held with local school administrators, teachers and parents, the superintendent of Regional School Unit 13, Thomaston elected officials, Town management and staff, local artists and merchants, major industrial businesses, conservation groups, shellfish interests, and senior citizens. Input from each meeting was relayed back to the Committee as part of the fact-gathering process.

Topical Community Talking Sessions

Following release of the survey results, four public “Thomaston Talks” meetings were held on topics of particular interest to residents as revealed by the survey results. Notices of these meetings were posted on the Thomaston website, on social media websites, at the Town Office, the Library, and businesses throughout Town. Notices were also distributed via Thomaston schools and were sent via the Town’s email list. Also, flyers were distributed door-to-door, and a postcard announcing the meetings was mailed to every household in Town. Signs announcing the meetings were posted in various high-traffic areas in Town. The meetings were facilitated by the director of the Mid Coast Regional Planning Commission and covered the following topics: (1) “Main Street Matters” (future development of the Main Street business district and residential areas); (2) “What do we want our Town to be?” (future character of the Thomaston and its place in Mid-Coast Maine); (3) “The Harbor and Thomaston Green” (Thomaston’s working harbor and development of the site formerly occupied by the Maine State Prison); and (4) “Economic Development” (what types of business and industry to promote to maintain Thomaston’s character and to improve the tax base).

The Thomaston Talks meetings were well attended and provided an opportunity for all residents to hear what had been said by their

neighbors in the survey and to voice their opinions on these major issues. The Committee then summarized the feedback from the surveys and Thomaston Talks in a “What We’ve Heard So Far” document that is reproduced below.

Reports to Selectboard

To keep the Thomaston Selectboard apprised of the Committee’s work and to receive feedback, a member of the Committee appeared periodically at monthly meetings of the Board and provided a brief update of the Committee’s work. The agendas for all Board meetings are published in advance on the Town website and at the Town Office, and the meetings are open to the public.

Community Conversations on Future Strategies

As the Committee concluded its work on the data and analyses sections of the Plan, a fresh public outreach was initiated to help in the finalization of certain recommended policies and strategies. Toward that end, in the Spring of 2019, two “Community Conversations” were held to discuss policies and strategies for (1) Preserving and Promoting Our Town’s Character and (2) Economic and Community Development. These well-attended sessions were presented by a professional facilitator and elicited immediate audience input on the feasibility and likely impacts of strategies to address the selected topics.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee also hosted two joint workshops with the Town’s Planning Board to discuss appropriate strategies to be included in the Future Land Use Plan.

Presentation of Final Plan

Upon completion of the Committee’s final draft, the Plan was presented at a workshop with the Selectboard and Town Manager, distributed to municipal department heads and committee chairs, and posted on the Town website. Additionally, a link to the Plan was sent to citizens

via the Town's email list and newsletter, and a sign and handouts announcing the availability of the Plan were posted at the polls on election day and at high-traffic areas throughout Town. Feedback was encouraged. Committee members held several informal, open discussion sessions at the local coffee shop, and these were advertised on the Town's website. Based on the feedback

gathered through these means, final adjustments were made. Once a determination of consistency with the Growth Management Act has been made by the State's Municipal Planning Assistance Program, and following another community-wide meeting to respond to questions and comments from citizens, Thomaston's Comprehensive Plan will go to the voters for approval.



Thomaston Comprehensive Plan Committee

What We've Heard So Far



Thank you for your input...

In 2017 Thomaston's Comprehensive Plan Committee conducted both a lengthy Community Survey and a brief Three-Question Survey. It also hosted four well-attended "Thomaston Talks" sessions to gather information about what people think are our Town's greatest strengths, its biggest challenges and what they would like to see for our Town's future. A summary of what we heard most often follows. Each comment or suggestion includes the forum in which it was heard. Next steps involve developing drafts of municipal policies and strategies that address the issues raised, along with continued discussion and on-going input from the community.

Forum Key:

- CS = Community Survey
- 3Q = Three Question Survey
- TT1 = Thomaston Talks 1 - Main Street Matters,
- TT2 = Thomaston Talks 2 - Community Identity
- TT3 = Thomaston Talks 3 - Our Harbor & Green
- TT4 = Thomaston Talks 4 - Our Economy

Contact us at assessor@midcoast.com
put "Comp Plan" in the Subject Line

Comprehensive Plan Committee



Thank you for your input...

I. LIKES & DISLIKES

- A. The characteristics of Thomaston that residents like the most: [CS](#), [3Q](#), [TT2](#)
- small town atmosphere & friendly people
 - historic character
 - mid-coast location
 - open space and vistas
 - safe place to live
 - convenience
 - walkability
- B. The characteristics of Thomaston that residents dislike the most: [CS](#), [3Q](#),
- decline of downtown
 - traffic, especially heavy truck traffic
 - property Taxes

II. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A. Revitalize Downtown

- 1 Turn the downtown strip into a downtown center: [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
 - make it attractive and easy for people to stop in town [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
 - complete the Union Block project to improve rear parking lot, facades and beautification projects [CS](#), [TT1](#)
 - add retail and services north of the Union Block and south of the Watts Block; [CS](#), [TT1](#) [TT4](#)
 - improve parking on Main St as well as behind the block and on the south side of the street [CS](#), [TT1](#)
 - reduce traffic – especially heavy truck traffic [CS](#), [3Q](#), [TT1](#)
 - Build a Route 1 alternate road north of town to reroute truck traffic from downtown [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
- 2 Provide easy access to high speed internet. [TT1](#), [TT2](#), [TT4](#)

- 3 Create a diverse array of small businesses that are locally owned. [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT2](#), [TT4](#)
- 4 Attract specialty stores that provide “experiential” shopping. [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
- 5 Attract an anchor business – something that brings people into downtown to work, have lunch, pick up some groceries at the market, etc. Could re-purpose a building for: [TT4](#)
 - call center
 - small scale business service provider that does accounting or data management etc.
 - company that promotes renewable energy, energy efficiency, etc. such as solar.
- 6 Create shared retail space as in a “Marketplace” with several small retail “stalls” selling farm goods, arts & crafts & artisanal products, etc. [TT1](#) [TT2](#), [TT4](#)
- 7 Attract maker spaces with an emphasis on supporting craft people and artisans. [CS](#), [TT2](#), [TT4](#)
- 8 Promote professional services such as medical, dental, pharmacy, salon, repair. [CS](#), [TT1](#)
- 9 Attract specialty schools and/or education centers. [TT1](#)
- 10 Encourage mixed use opportunities with retail and services on the first floors with offices and residential spaces on the upper floors. [TT1](#)
- 11 Keep large scale commercial development separate from the down town commercial and residential areas. [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT2](#)
- 12 Spend money to make the town more attractive. [TT4](#)
13. Enhance amenities (benches, garbage/recycling containers) and aesthetics. [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
14. Have creative incentives for restoring and maintaining historic homes. [CS](#), [TT2](#), [TT4](#)

Comprehensive Plan Committee



Main Street Matters...

B. Further Develop Highway Commercial District

- 1 Attract businesses that provide necessary services primarily for citizens of Thomaston as well as residents of the region but do not compete with more unique experiential shops proposed for the downtown area. [TT4](#)
- 2 Provide a shuttle bus from Green to Downtown to Highway Commercial. [TT4](#)
- 3 Improve appearance of unsightly businesses and take care that we do not grow to look like any other big box and strip retail development in the country. [TT4](#)
- 4 Create a strong local business group and take greater advantage of what is offered by the Penobscot Chamber membership. [TT4](#)
- 5 Have an employee within town office to seek out businesses for this district rather than allowing them to come in without citizen input. [TT4](#), [TT1](#)

C. Connect Visitors to the Town's History, Natural Resources and Other Attractions

- 1 Create a bustling downtown. [TT1](#) [TT2](#), [TT4](#)
- 2 Sponsor community events and cultural activities to draw people to town. [CS](#)
- 3 Promote the town as a destination, not just a pass-thru town: [TT1](#), [TT2](#), [TT4](#)
 - o Develop Town brochures for visitors and place in the Prison Store, Knox museum, lighthouse museum, chamber of commerce etc
 - o supply promotional literature to realtor and summer rental agencies
 - o Only in Your State website – local stories
 - o Link town website to local tours and regional bus tours
- 4 Create a really good Town website. [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT2](#), [TT4](#)

- 5 Create a community calendar. [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
- 6 Become a draw for history buffs; [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT2](#), [TT4](#)
 - o develop brochures and mobile apps for self-guided tours
 - o grow the community's awareness of the town's early and modern history especially promoting Thomaston as the home of the sea captains and millionaires
 - o integrate The Knox Museum and Thomaston Historical Society into community activities and promotions
 - o develop more historic walking tours, refurbish and enhance our Museum in the Streets and historic house plaques
 - o emphasize shops featuring antiques, old books, supplies & equipment for house restoration, an historic tavern
 - o river tours with history of Georges River
 - o Thomaston re-enactments: re-enactors in period clothing doing daily routines around town including prison site. Trolley rides around town to the various sites
- 7 Improve and promote access to the river and harbor. [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT2](#), [TT3](#), [TT4](#)
 - o improve parking along the harbor
 - o offer boat rental options available along with river tours;
 - o develop restaurants, shops etc. along the shore
 - o expand recreational use of the river by adding paddle craft access points as well as kayak racks at key locations
 - o hold community events on the waterfront such as river festivals, Community Picnics, Fall Festival, Fishing Rodeo, Celebration of the River Festival, Thomaston Ironman: Kayak, Hike, Swim

Comprehensive Plan Committee



A Harbor for both commercial and recreational uses...

- develop a footbridge across Mill River to Knox Museum and biking path to the St George peninsula
- continue to embrace a working waterfront
- investigate possibility / need of dredging

D. Attract Young Families to Town

- 1 Have a school system that has a reputation for excellence. [TT1](#), [TT2](#)
- 2 Offer easy access to high speed internet. [TT1](#), [TT2](#), [TT4](#)
- 3 Attract businesses that draw younger people and families especially taverns/ brew pub and coffee shop. [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
- 4 Promote Thomaston as “Clean and Green.” [TT4](#)
- 5 Encourage and promote farms, agriculture-related business and farmer’s markets. [CS](#), [TT1](#)
- 6 Install charging stations for electric cars and prepare for autonomous vehicles. [TT1](#), [TT4](#)

E. Allow light industry downtown if it: [CS](#), [TT4](#)

- 1 Does not have negative effects on the environment
- 2 Has the potential for adding quality jobs
- 3 Is one of the following: marine-sector, home-made items, custom fabrication, artisanal specialized home/lifestyle products

F. Develop Thomaston Green

Three development options for The Green are supported

- 1 Entirely open space to be used as a park and community / recreational activities [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT3](#)
 - band concerts
 - seasonal festivals
 - community gardens
 - fairs and social events, picnics
 - farmer’s market

- skating rink
 - soccer fields
 - tennis/pickle ball courts
- 2 Limited Development along with open space [CS](#), [TT3](#)
 - senior Housing
 - medical/Professional offices
 - natural food market
 - brew Pub
 - bakery with coffee and sandwiches
 - restaurant with atrium
 - 3 Original Master Plan - open space, residential and limited commercial. Less support was shown for residential uses other than senior housing. [TT3](#)

G. Create Town Policies and Procedures that Proactively Manage Development and Growth

- 1 Manage growth in a way that revitalizes the downtown and maintains the historic, small town character of Thomaston is the most important issue facing the town in the next 10 years. [CS](#), [TT1](#)
- 2 Hire a community/downtown economic development coordinator. [CS](#) [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
- 3 Actively recruit, market and promote town businesses. [CS](#), [TT1](#)
- 4 Develop incentives to attract and keep small businesses. [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
- 5 Create a downtown business association. [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
- 6 Develop an “awesome” town website. [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
- 7 Promote town assets. [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT2](#), [TT4](#)
 - location, especially as gateway to the midcoast
 - natural resources/outdoor activity
 - library

Comprehensive Plan Committee



We're a Real Community...

- o dog park
- o churches and their gatherings
- o create a bulletin board/kiosk
- 8 Structure property taxes to not penalize home improvements. [TT1](#), [TT4](#)
- 9 Create better coordination and cooperation among town groups/committees/initiatives. [TT1](#)
- 10 Improve regional cooperation/coordination. [TT1](#), [TT4](#)

III. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A. Build on A Sense of Community and Promote and Preserve Our Small-town Character

- 1 Create more places for people to gather. Top on the list is a coffee shop/breakfast place, but others include combination book store/coffee shop, a tavern or brew-pub, more year-round restaurants, etc. [CS](#), [TT1](#)
- 2 Organize more year-round community gatherings, celebrations and recreational activities such as regular music at the gazebo on the Green. [CS](#), [3Q](#), [TT1](#), [TT2](#), [TT3](#), [TT4](#)
- 3 Organize more recreational activities for our youth and our senior citizens. [CS](#), [TT2](#), [TT3](#)
- 4 Expand and improve hiking/walking trails. [CS](#), [TT2](#),
- 5 Build a Recreation/Community Center. [TT1](#)
- 6 Develop a Senior Center. [TT1](#)
- 7 Produce a community publication with news, calendar of events, ads, etc. [TT1](#)
- 8 Create an awesome town website. [TT1](#), [TT4](#)

B. Enhance Walkability

- 1 Support for bicycle traffic could be enhanced with more bike lanes and trails and the installation of bike racks. [CS](#), [TT1](#), [TT2](#), [TT4](#)
- 2 Sidewalk repairs and more and safer crosswalks are needed especially on Main and Water

Streets. [CS](#), [3Q](#), [TT1](#), [TT2](#), [TT4](#)

- 3 Reduce speeding through town. [CS](#), [TT1](#)
- 4 Public transportation options could be expanded with local buses to serve the mid-coast region, an area trolley, better means of connecting to major transportation hubs. [TT1](#), [TT2](#)

Other Suggestions:

Relocate the post office. [TT1](#), [TT4](#)

Investigate how Belfast and Damariscotta "came back." [TT1](#), [TT4](#)

Create Dragon art project. [TT1](#), [TT4](#)

Investigate possibility of tidal power. [TT3](#), [TT4](#)

Research fisheries in the river. [TT3](#), [TT4](#)

Did we get it right? Is there something you want to add? Contact us at assesor@midcoast.com with "comp plan" in the subject line

Implentation Matrix



IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

STRATEGY	1. Historic small-town character	2. Thriving, beautiful downtown	3. Quality of life	4. Property tax relief	5. Open spaces, natural resources, outdoor life	6. Population and economic growth and diversity	7. Reducing and preparing for climate change	8. Strength of community	BEGINNING YEAR	LEADERSHIP
OUR HISTORY										
Encourage individuals and developers to work with Town officials and historical organizations to protect and preserve the Town's architectural integrity.	X	X							2021	CEO; Planning Board; historic preservation advisory board
Provide incentives and reduce disincentives for the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic properties.	X	X							2023	Selectboard; Tax Assessor
Consider a tax formula that encourages homeowner improvements.	X	X							2024	Selectboard; Tax Assessor
Promote and appeal to public/private partnerships to fund historic preservation.	X	X							2025	ECDC; historic preservation advisory board
Identify Federal and State housing assistance grants and programs designed to assist elderly and low-income homeowners.			X			X		X	2021	ECDC; historic preservation advisory board
Consider other eligible areas of Town for potential listing in the National Register.	X								2026	Selectboard; historic preservation advisory board
Extend historical signage to the site of the former Burgess O'Brien Kilns, the historic Mill Creek area (site of the original Town center), and the proposed Village Trail extension.	X				X				2028	Conservation Committee
Adopt or create a guidelines manual to encourage thoughtful rehabilitation of historic homes and compatible in-fill construction in historic neighborhoods.	X	X							2028	historic preservation advisory board
Appoint an advisory group to work with the Planning Board to create design guidelines for a historic overlay district and to act in an advisory role on alterations, demolitions, and new construction within the Historic District.	X	X						X	2021	Selectboard; Planning Board
Create an overlay for the Town's Historic District (as designated on the National Register) where guidelines for preserving the character and style of historic structures will pertain.	X	X							2025	Selectboard; Planning Board; historic preservation advisory board
Study the feasibility of constructing a new road to carry through traffic around the downtown, reducing the impacts of heavy traffic (especially truck traffic) on Main Street/Route 1.	X	X	X		X	X		X	2020	Selectboard
Consider a preservation ordinance that could earn Certified Local Government status to create homeowner eligibility for grant assistance on preservation projects.	X	X						X	2022	Planning Board; historic preservation advisory board

Discourage individuals and developers from acquiring significant historic buildings with the intent of demolition for new construction.	X							X	2021	CEO; Planning Board
Update the Town Architectural Survey. Identify historic buildings and sites not previously listed, some of which might qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.	X								2025	Conservation Committee; historic preservation advisory board
Consider a survey and protective historic ordinance for the waterfront. Identify significant prehistoric and historic archaeological sites.	X				X		X		2029	Conservation Committee; Harbor Committee
Stabilize the former lime kiln at the base of Wadsworth Street.	X				X				2024	Selectboard
Incorporate maps of the revised federally recognized Historic District and known historic archaeological sites, along with pertinent information from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, in the Town's Land Use and Development Ordinance.	X	X			X				2026	Conservation Committee; historic preservation advisory board
OUR ENVIRONMENT: WATER RESOURCES										
Continue efforts to eliminate the Town's seasonal discharge of treated wastewater to the St. George River.					X	X			Ongoing	Selectboard; Pollution Control
Work with DEP, DMR, landowners, neighboring towns, and nonprofits to monitor the water quality of the St. George River and eliminate non-point source pollution. Consider developing a watershed management plan.					X		X		2021	Selectboard; Pollution Control; Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization
Periodically review and update the Town's Land Use and Development Ordinance to incorporate stormwater performance standards consistent with Maine's Stormwater Management Law and Stormwater regulations.					X		X		2021	CEO; Planning Board
Ensure that developments maintain stormwater management structures in good working order and maintain required vegetative buffers.					X		X	X	Ongoing	CEO; Pollution Control
For proposed developments with extensive impervious areas, explore options such as reduced or shared parking areas and the use of permeable pavement to minimize runoff to surface waters and wetland.					X		X	X	2021	CEO; Planning Board
Review the Town's existing ordinance governing clustered residential development to determine how it might be revised to encourage its use.					X				2022	CEO; Planning Board
Protect minor watercourses and drainage swales from development to ensure that they continue to function as part of the Town's stormwater management system.					X		X		Ongoing	CEO; Planning Board
Enforce Town ordinances governing roads, driveways, and street design standards. Provide periodic training for public works personnel.	X				X				Ongoing	CEO; Planning Board; Public Works Director
Provide information to landowners on the importance of minimizing use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers; properly disposing of waste products; and protecting water supply wells from contamination.					X		X		2020	Town Office; Pollution Control

Add an “environmental tips and resources” tab to the Town’s webpage.					X		X	X	2021	Town Office
OUR ENVIRONMENT: NATURAL RESOURCES										
Ensure that the Town’s land use ordinances are consistent with applicable State law regarding critical natural resources.					X		X		Ongoing	CEO; Planning Board
Meet with neighboring communities to review land use ordinances and develop an area-wide approach to protection of important natural resources such as the St. George River and Weskeag River.					X		X		2022	Selectboards; Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization
Continue to work collaboratively with area towns, State agencies, and nonprofit organizations to locate and eliminate sources of non-point source pollution to the St. George River.					X				Ongoing	Selectboards; Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization
Ensure that developments maintain stormwater management structures in good working order and that required vegetative buffers between developed areas and surface waters, wetlands, and other critical natural resources are maintained.					X		X		Ongoing	CEO; Planning Board
Continue efforts to develop an interconnected greenway linking Town parks and public spaces with the goals of protecting natural resources, maintaining wildlife corridors, creating pollinator pathways, and increasing visual and physical access to the shore.					X		X		Ongoing	Conservation Committee; Selectboard; Public Works; nonprofits
Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important resources through mechanisms such as purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.					X		X		Ongoing	Selectboard; tax assessor; nonprofits
Continue support for current use taxation as one means of protecting critical and important natural resources.					X				Ongoing	Selectboard; tax assessor
Provide information to landowners on threats posed by invasive plant species and encourage their removal and replacement over time with native plant species. Add an “environmental tips and resources” tab to the Town’s website.					X		X		2022	Conservation Committee; Selectboard; Town Office
Inform commercial and recreational users of the St. George River of the significance of the mudflats for migrating shorebirds and the importance of minimizing disturbance.					X		X		2021	Harbor Committee; Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization
Review proposed development in the Industrial and Highway Commercial Districts for potential adverse impacts to the Weskeag Creek Focus Area. Identify this focus area as a critical natural resource in the Future Land Use Plan.					X				2022	CEO; Planning Board
Require developers to determine whether critical natural resources may be on site and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources.					X				Ongoing	CEO; Planning Board
Work with developers to ensure that proposed development is of a scale and design that is compatible with surrounding uses and is located to minimize adverse impacts to the Town’s natural, scenic, and aesthetic resources.					X				Ongoing	CEO; Planning Board
Develop guidelines for the assessment of scenic impacts using concepts such as scale, contrast, and spatial dominance. Allow the Planning Board to require a scenic impact analysis as part of site plan review.					X				2022	CEO; Planning Board

Encourage owners of existing development in the Highway Commercial district to plant trees and shrubs to improve the visual appearance of the Route 1 corridor.					X					2023	CEO; Planning Board
Expand the mission and membership of the Town's Conservation Committee to oversee Town trails, parks, Town Forest, and urban trees; introduce native plantings to public spaces; initiate community gardens; assist homeowners as requested; etc.	X	X			X			X	X	2020	Selectboard; Pollution Control
OUR ENVIRONMENT: AGRICULTURE, FOREST, AND MINERAL RESOURCES											
Review the permitted and conditional uses in the R-2 Rural Residential District to ensure that they are consistent with the residential and rural purpose of this land use district.	X				X					Ongoing	Planning Board
Encourage conservation easements to preserve important agricultural, open space, and forest lands through local land trusts, paying particular attention to land in the R-2 Rural Residential District bordering Route 1 at the western gateway to Town.	X				X					Ongoing	Selectboard; tax assessor; nonprofits
Continue to support enrollment of productive farm and forest land and important open spaces in the current use taxation program.					X					Ongoing	Selectboard; tax assessor
Permit land uses that support productive agriculture and forestry operations, such as farm stands, farmer's markets, greenhouses, and firewood operations in appropriate land use districts.					X					2020	CEO; Planning Board
Provide increased funding in the municipal budget and pursue grants for the care and replacement of street trees and trees on Town property.	X	X	X					X	X	2021	Town manager; town arborist; Selectboard; Conservation Committee
Continue to manage the Town Forest in accordance with the objectives and practices set forth in the Town Forest and Town Trails Program.					X					Ongoing	Conservation Committee; Selectboard
Review the Town's existing ordinance governing clustered residential development to determine how it might be revised to encourage its use and enhance protection of critical and important natural resources.					X					2023	CEO; Planning Board
Continue efforts to develop an interconnected greenway linking Town parks and public spaces with the goals of protecting natural resources, maintaining wildlife corridors, creating pollinator pathways, and increasing visual and physical access to the shore.					X			X		Ongoing	Conservation Committee; Selectboard; Public Works; nonprofits
Consult with Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.					X			X		2021	CEO; Planning Board
Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices.					X					2021	CEO; Planning Board
Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local and regional economic development plans.					X					2021	Selectboard; ECDC
Maintain communication with Dragon Products regarding current and anticipated activities at the plant and the status of Dragon's land use and operating permits.					X					Ongoing	Town manager; Selectboard
OUR RIVERS AND HARBOR											

Ensure water quality testing is underway and performed on a regular and timely basis at critical sampling locations.						X		X		Ongoing	MDMR; Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization; nonprofits
Work with the Tidelands Coalition, the Maine Coastal Observing Alliance, and other groups to develop a Georges River Watershed Management Plan in which upstream communities participate.						X		X		2025	Selectboard; Pollution Control; Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization
Continue work to restore shellfish harvests, including lobbying DMR to allow GRRSMO to manage the Upper Bay as a source of softshell clam broodstock to seed the rest of the estuary.						X		X		Ongoing	Selectboard; Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization
Consider ways to implement reduced usage by Town residents of lawn chemicals (fertilizers and pesticide, herbicides).						X		X		2021	Conservation Committee; Selectboard; Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization
Encourage land-based disposal of treated wastewater with the goal of eliminating any discharge to the St. George River.						X		X		Ongoing	Pollution Control
Investigate the feasibility of creating stormwater-stilling wetland areas along drainage swales, allowing the absorption of nutrients and toxins prior to reaching area rivers.						X		X		2022	Conservation Committee; Selectboard
Assess whether and to what extent the Working Waterfront current-use taxation program can help forward the above-stated policies and strategies.						X		X		2024	Selectboard; tax assessor
Complete the paddlecraft carry-in walkway ramp at Mill River Park.						X				2024	Harbor Committee; Selectboard
Acquire the Kiln Site land from the State and seek Small Harbor Improvement Program grant funding for site design and development as a carry-in water access site with vehicle parking.	X					X				2021	Harbor Committee; Selectboard
Seek creative use of the Town Beach area, perhaps as a current-free training site for paddlecraft beginners and as a launching site for model small craft.						X				2026	Harbor Committee
Consider a future Oyster River water access site from Town property, allowing paddlecraft outings to and from harbor launch locations.						X				2025	Harbor Committee; Conservation Committee
Lobby the US Army Corps of Engineers for future maintenance dredging of the Federal approach channel to Thomaston Harbor and for continued monitoring of channel siltation.	X					X		X		Ongoing	Harbor Committee
Seek an equitable sharing of harbor centerline mooring accommodations among commercial, recreational, and transient maritime interests.	X					X				Ongoing	Harbor Committee
Maintain the waterside and landside elements of the Public Landing, which is the principal point of public access to the entire St. George Estuary.						X		X		Ongoing	Harbor Committee
Encourage half-tide and drying moorings for watercraft that can endure daily grounding without damage.	X					X				Ongoing	Harbor Committee

Revitalize the Comprehensive Harbor Management planning activity.	X					X	X			2023	Harbor Committee
Upgrade the Water Street portion of the Thomaston Village Trail to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.	X					X				2024	Town Manager; Selectboard; Conservation Committee; Public Works
Extend the Village Trail from Mill River Park to Route 131 South via a footbridge and pathway adjacent to pedestrian-hostile Route 1.						X				2026 or sooner	Selectboard; Town Manager; Conservation Committee; nonprofits
Support the GRLT in its efforts to establish physical access to scenic views from Route 131 South.						X				Ongoing	Selectboard
Pursue public/private partnerships to protect important undeveloped lands along the rivers through such mechanisms as purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.	X					X		X		2026	Conservation Committee; Town Manager; Selectboard
OUR PEOPLE											
Promote and market Thomaston as an attractive, desirable, affordable town for all people to live in.							X		X	2022	ECDC; Town Office; nonprofits
Create and manage community-building events.		X							X	Ongoing	Selectboard; Town Manager; Recreation Department; ECDC; nonprofits
"Green" the community via recycling; hiking/biking trails; developing greenbelt and pollinator pathways; etc.						X		X		2021	Conservation Committee, and as assigned by activity in other chapters
Reduce the impact of heavy truck traffic through town via actions set forth in other chapters.	X	X					X			2021	Selectboard; Town Manager; ECDC; nonprofits
Develop and promote programs to welcome and support immigrant populations.		X					X			2022	Selectboard; Town Office; ECDC; nonprofits
Build a stronger relationship between the Town and RSU 13, including creating a Friends of Our Schools group.			X	X						2021	Selectboard; nonprofits (especially the Georges River Education Foundation)
Become a member of the AARP "Age-Friendly Community Network."		X	X				X		X	2022	Selectboard; Town Manager; ECDC; Main Street Matters
Encourage the expansion of affordable housing.		X	X	X			X		X	Ongoing	Selectboard; ECDC; Planning Board; tax assessor
Commission a feasibility study to extend Town water and sewer services into the TR-3 District, perhaps as part of a multidimensional planning/feasibility study for an alternate route around the town center.		X	X	X			X			2021	Selectboard; ECDC; Pollution Control

Explore ways to merge the need for affordable housing with the need to preserve the Town's historic architecture.	X									Historic preservation advisory board; planning board; ECDC
Develop ecofriendly housing on Thomaston Green and/or elsewhere in town for families and seniors.	X	X	X	X		X		X	2021	Selectboard; ECDC
Develop and promote creative, affordable child care solutions, which might pair senior citizens with the younger population.	X									Recreation Department; Thomaston Public Library; nonprofits
Work with surrounding communities to create regional public transportation options.		X	X			X		X	2023	Selectboard; ECDC
Further investigate the reasons for Thomaston's high poverty rate and develop a plan for addressing the identified issues.	X									Comprehensive Plan Committee
Investigate and mitigate issues related to food insecurity for Town residents.			X			X		X	Ongoing	Comprehensive Plan Committee; Interfaith Food Pantry; nonprofits
Pursue the development of a range of assisted living options for townspeople of all income levels.	X									Selectboard; ECDC; Comprehensive Plan Committee; nonprofits
Monitor migration trends, including the impact of climate change, and prepare accordingly.						X	X		2021	Conservation Committee; Comprehensive Plan Committee
OUR ECONOMY										
Fund an Economic and Community Development Coordinator position to guide and assist the Economic and Community Development Committee.		X		X		X			2020	ECDC; Selectboard
Recruit and support appropriate retail and service businesses in the Village Commercial District, with special emphasis on those that complement one another.	X	X		X		X		X	Ongoing	ECDC; Main Street Matters
Establish incentives to attract retailers to street-level downtown venues and professional services to appropriate nearby spaces. Consider increased incentives for complementary and Maine-based businesses.		X		X		X		X	2022	ECDC; Town Manager
Optimize the downtown with placemaking strategies and best practices that have proven beneficial in small towns across America.	X	X				X		X	2023	ECDC; Main Street Matters; nonprofits
Help downtown businesses promote themselves and expand.		X		X		X			2023	ECDC; Main Street Matters; Selectboard
Facilitate access to the fiber-optic broadband service that runs along Route 1.		X	X			X			2020	Selectboard

Establish a municipal revolving fund for low-interest loans to downtown businesses, funded in part by impact fees for East End development projects.		X		X			X		X	2021	ECDC; Selectboard
Become an AARP Age-Friendly Community.		X	X				X		X	2022	Selectboard; Town Manager; ECDC; Main Street Matters
Pursue commercial and industrial development in the East End Economic Tract.				X			X			Ongoing	ECDC; Selectboard
Consider rebranding the Industrial District as the Thomaston Enterprise Zone.				X			X			2021	ECDC; Selectboard
Pursue all available means to alleviate the municipal tax rate, including compatible development, advocacy for greater revenue-sharing from the State, and intermunicipal cost-sharing of services.			X	X			X			Ongoing	Selectboard; Town Manager; ECDC; Friends of Thomaston Schools Committee
Create a Friends of Thomaston Schools Committee to advocate for Thomaston's educational opportunities and for equitable cost-sharing with the State and with other RSU 13 towns.			X	X			X		X	2021	Selectboard; Friends of Thomaston Schools Committee; Thomaston members of RSU 13 Board; Georges River Education
Grow Thomaston's population, in part by extending water and sewer services into the TR3 Residential Growth District and reducing lot sizes for sewer housing units to encourage affordable housing.		X		X			X			2026	Selectboard; Planning Board; Pollution Control; tax assessor
Protect and steward the Town's working waterfront and marine jobs, including the shellfisheries and boatbuilding and repair.	X						X			Ongoing	Harbor Committee; ECDC; Selectboard; Planning Board; Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization
Promote the Town with website and marketing outreach and with community events.		X		X			X		X	Ongoing	Selectboard; Town Office; Main Street Matters
Commission a multidimensional study to investigate the feasibility and desirability of a new east-west road skirting the northern village perimeter, including potential routes, access points, costs, funding mechanisms, and impacts.	X	X		X			X	X	X	2021	Selectboard; ECDC
Plan how each Town-owned and Town-connected property can best contribute to the Town's aspirations, and update these plans annually.	X	X		X			X		X	Ongoing	Municipal Facilities Committee; ECDC; Selectboard
Continue to improve the Town's walkability and bicycle-friendliness.	X	X				X		X	X	Ongoing	Conservation Committee; Selectboard; Public Works
OUR HOUSING											
Architectural Preservation. Assess the feasibility of an alternate road around the village area to reduce through truck traffic.	X	X	X						X	2020	Selectboard; ECDC
Architectural Preservation. Develop incentives and reduce disincentives for restoring and maintaining homes.	X			X						By 2023	Selectboard; Town Manager; ECDC

Architectural Preservation. In the Federally recognized Historic District, require that renovations and new construction maintain the District's historic character and fabric.	X	X							By 2023	Historic Preservation Advisory Board; Code Enforcement; Planning Board
Architectural Preservation. Pursue means for allowing creative adaptations of historic homes in the District while maintaining historic facades and locating parking for such uses away from front yards and shielded from view.	X					X			By 2022	Historic Preservation Advisory Board; Planning Board
Architectural Preservation. Consider form/character-based coding within designated Zoning Districts.	X	X							By 2023	Code Enforcement; Planning Board
Architectural Preservation. Develop a municipal and/or private revolving fund for the purchase, restoration, and resale of important abandoned buildings.	X	X				X			By 2022	Selectboard
Architectural Preservation. Explore ways to address the issue of "Demolition by Neglect."	X								By 2021	Code Enforcement
Affordable Housing Options. Encourage high-density housing in the TR3 District with smaller lot sizes for sewer lots, and extend sewer and water lines into the TR3 District.			X			X			2021	SelectBoard; Town Manager; Code Enforcement
Affordable Housing Options. Support affordable housing construction and rehabilitation with a TIF district, USDA 504 program, Maine Housing Authority Aging in Place Program, etc.			X			X		X	2022	Selectboard
Affordable Housing Options. Work with the owners of Section 8 apartments to continue affordable rents once HUD loans are repaid.			X			X		X	2020-ongoing	Town Manager
Affordable Housing Options. Encourage owners of foreclosed properties to return these properties to the housing market as quickly as possible.						X		X	2021	Town Manager
Affordable Housing Options. Review the Town's Land Use Ordinance to determine possible modifications to support accessory dwelling units and other approaches to affordable and senior housing.						X		X	Ongoing	Code Enforcement
Affordable Housing Options. Review the Land Use Ordinance to consider how Inclusionary Zoning might be applied in a small town with little housing growth.						X		X	Ongoing	Code Enforcement
Affordable Housing Options. Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the impact of short-term rentals on the housing market, and take action as indicated.						X		X	2021-ongoing	Code Enforcement
Affordable Housing Options. Relocate mobile home parks to designated growth districts and reconsider appropriate locations for individual mobile homes as affordable housing.						X		X	2020-ongoing	Code Enforcement
Affordable Housing Options. Work with neighboring communities to develop a regional coalition for affordable workforce housing.						X		X	2020	Town Manager
Affordable Housing Options. Investigate the feasibility of establishing a Community Land Trust.						X		X	2022	ECDC

Affordable Housing Options. Require that multifamily developments provide adequate storage areas, landscaping, and shared green space.						X			2021	Code Enforcement
Affordable Housing Options. Pursue development of housing on the Thomaston Green with an emphasis on energy efficiency and low maintenance.		X				X		X	2021	ECDC; Selectboard
Senior Housing Options. Pursue the development of low- and middle-income, ecofriendly senior housing options with the goal of supporting aging in place.						X		X	By 2023	Selectboard
Senior Housing Options. Develop ways to encourage intergenerational housing and co-housing.			X			X		X	By 2023	Code Enforcement; ECDC
Senior Housing Options. Develop standards for modifications to homes within the Historic District that allow for aging in place while maintaining historic facades.	X					X		X	By 2022	Code Enforcement; ECDC
Senior Housing Options. Explore ways to provide financial assistance to qualifying seniors for home repairs and maintenance.						X		X	By 2023	Selectboard; ECDC
Senior Housing Options. Actively pursue the development of assisted living options.						X		X	By 2022	Selectboard; ECDC
Senior Housing Options. Pursue AARP Age Friendly Community status.			X			X		X	By 2021	Selectboard; ECDC
Energy Efficiency/Renewable Energy. Review the Town's Land Use Ordinance and modify if needed to support sustainable building products and practices.							X		Ongoing	Code Enforcement
Energy Efficiency/Renewable Energy. Provide information to homeowners and contractors on resources that are available through government and private programs.							X		Ongoing	Code Enforcement
Energy Efficiency/Renewable Energy. Pursue grant money for improving the energy efficiency of private residences and public buildings in Town.							X		Ongoing	Selectboard
Energy Efficiency/Renewable Energy. Develop a municipal renewable energy program, such as a solar field, to service the Town.							X		BY 2025	ECDC; Selectboard
RECREATION IN THOMASTON										
Transportation. Make better use of existing regional programs by promoting public transportation to nearby athletic and cultural activities.		X	X		X			X	2022	Recreation Committee
Senior Activities. Regularly survey needs of seniors, and promote Town, Town Library, and local nonprofit offerings in a community calendar on the Town website.			X					X	Ongoing	Recreation Committee

Trails. Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain the Town's network of trails.			X		X			X	2021	Conservation Committee; nonprofits	
Public Parks. Work with landscape architects to make Town parks low-maintenance and user-friendly, with native plantings. Develop water access for small boats at Mill River Park. Encourage public stewardship.			X		X			X	2021	Conservation Committee; nonprofits	
Community Gardening. Provide information, seeds, and assistance for creating pollinator pathways.		X			X		X		2023	Conservation Committee	
River Activities. Develop a small-craft landing site at the lime kiln site. Recruit business(es) offering instruction, rentals, tours, cruises. Add a kayak landing on the Oyster River. Investigate resurrecting the one-time swimming hole on the Mill River.			X		X			X	2022	Harbor Committee; Conservation Committee; nonprofits	
Community Events. Create a Community Events Committee for community-building events to foster town spirit and utilize Town parks and venues.	X		X		X			X	2020-ongoing	ECDC; Selectboard; Town Manager	
Funding. Develop a program to encourage gifts for Town activities and recreation infrastructure, including bequests in citizens' wills.			X					X	2021	ECDC; Selectboard	
Open Space and Scenic Vistas. Work with conservation organizations to protect scenic vistas, open spaces, and recreational land.			X		X			X	Ongoing	Conservation Committee; public and private partnerships	
Access to Private Property. Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners of allowing public recreational access on their properties.			X					X	Ongoing	Town Manager; Conservation Committee	
TRANSPORTATION											
Develop a Traffic Management Plan informed by future growth goals, sustainability, and quality of life.		X	X				X	X	X	2021-ongoing	ECDC; Selectboard
Commission a professional planning study to assess the feasibility and desirability of a new road north of US Route 1 as part of a broader multidimensional plan of the village area, including possible funding sources.	X	X	X				X		X	2020-ongoing	ECDC; Selectboard; Town Manager
Ban the use of engine brakes in Town.	X	X	X							2020	Selectboard
Promote increased use of rail service freight transport.			X							2022	Selectboard
Increase alternative transportation opportunities for Town residents.			X				X	X		2021	ECDC; Selectboard
Work with Waldo County Community Action Partners (CAP) to add Thomaston's Village Commercial to their existing route for the DASH bus.		X	X				X	X	X	2021	ECDC; Selectboard

Investigate the feasibility of a Town contract with a private transportation service for discounted rates for eligible residents (elderly, low-income, disabled, and youth).		X	X			X		X	2021	ECDC; Selectboard
Publish and promote a directory of public and private transportation options.			X			X		X	2020	Town Manager
Improve walkways and bike lanes.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	2022	Conservation Committee; public and private partnerships
Work with conservation groups to secure funding to build a pedestrian/cycling walkway over the Mill River.			X		X		X	X	2021	Conservation Committee; public and private partnerships
Seek private and/or grant funding to improve the walkways/bike lanes on Water Street as part of the Village Trail system.			X		X		X	X	2022	Conservation Committee; Selectboard
Anticipate and address potential parking issues in the Village Commercial and Public Landing lots.	X	X	X			X		X	Ongoing	ECDC; Harbor Committee; Selectboard
Provide consistent, attractive, universally recognized signage of parking options to travelers on US Route 1 and Beechwood Street.		X						X	2020	Selectboard
Implement and reassess annually a long-range plan for street improvements, giving immediate priority to rebuilding Knox Street.	X	X							2023	Selectboard
OUR PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES										
Town-owned facilities. Develop, implement, and annually review a long-range plan for maintaining and improving municipal facilities.			X					X	2021	Standing Municipal Facilities Committee; Selectboard; Facility trustees
Climate change measures. Reduce the Town's carbon footprint. Optimize the ecosystem value of Town-owned properties. Expand and improve the urban tree canopy. Prepare for sea level rise and other climate change impacts.		X			X		X			Conservation Committee; Town Arborist; Harbor Committee
Solid Waste Management. Aggressively investigate and support means for increasing the recycling rate and reducing consumer waste.			X				X		Ongoing	Selectboard; Owl's Head-South Thomaston-Thomaston Solid Waste Corporation
Wastewater treatment. Continue working to eliminate the winter discharge of treated effluent to the St. George River. Reduce untreated stormwater runoff to the St. George River by means of rain gardens and retention ponds around swales.			X				X		Ongoing	Pollution Control; Public Works
Emergency services. Explore alternatives to ambulance responses for non-emergency calls. Study the impacts of joining with neighboring towns to provide fire and EMS services.			X			X		X	Ongoing	Town Manager; Selectboard
Town governance. Support the effective and efficient operation of Town government with public transparency, published job descriptions, and annual goals.			X					X	Ongoing	Town Manager; Selectboard

Town governance. Implement a comprehensive annual performance review process for municipal employees.								X	Ongoing	Town Manager; Selectboard
Town governance. Make the Comprehensive Plan Committee a standing committee for encouraging progress toward the Plan's goals and assuring that changes to the Land Use Ordinance comply with the Plan.								X	Ongoing	Town Manager, Selectboard, Comp Plan Committee
Town governance. Conduct an annual review of progress made on Comprehensive Plan goals and strategies to identify actions for the coming year.								X	Ongoing	Town Manager, Selectboard, Comp Plan Committee
Town governance. Develop and maintain a community calendar.			X					X	Ongoing	Town Manager; Community Events Committee
Town governance. Create term limits for appointed boards and committees to promote citizen involvement in municipal government.								X	2021	Selectboard
Town governance. Pursue less costly alternatives for facilities and services where feasible.			X	X		X		X	Ongoing	Town manager; Selectboard; Budget Committee
Town governance. Keep abreast of cutting-edge technologies and implement as appropriate.			X						Ongoing	Town manager
Town governance. Include in the Town Annual Report the top strategies for reducing the municipal tax rate, and progress made over the previous year.			X	X					2021	Town Manager; Tax Assessor; Budget Committee; Selectboard
Transportation. Immediately initiate a comprehensive study to assess the advantages, disadvantages, and logistics of a new east/west road to connect the west end of town to Old County Road.	X	X	X			X		X	2020	ECDC; Selectboard
Transportation. If such a road is indicated, pursue land purchase options on land north of Route 1 along the road's probable route.	X	X	X			X		X	2020-ongoing	ECDC; Selectboard
Transportation. Continue to pursue creative regional approaches to public transportation.	X	X	X			X		X	2021	ECDC; Town Manager
Transportation. Promote the expanded use of rail for freight transport.	X	X	X				X		2022	Selectboard; ECDC
Transportation. Ban engine brakes in Town.	X	X	X						2020	Selectboard
Transportation. Install impactful speed- and noise-awareness signs on Main Street.	X	X	X						2020	Selectboard; Police Department
Transportation. Aggressively enforce speed and noise regulations.	X	X	X					X	2020-ongoing	Police Department

Transportation. Establish distinctive downtown “Parking” signs that direct residents and visitors to parking areas north and south of Route 1.	X	X	X						2020	Selectboard; Police Department; Public Works
Transportation. Actively pursue an option to access the Post Office from Beechwood Street.		X	X						2022	Selectboard
Education. Lobby for a change of the State’s school-funding formula to add a third factor—median household income or equivalent—to the existing factors of student population and property valuation.			X	X		X		X	2020-ongoing	Selectboard; Friends of Thomaston Schools group; Thomaston members of the RSU 13 Board
Education. Analyze the need for Pre-School education programs and how best to meet those needs through public, private, and community providers, with particular focus on RSU 13-sponsored Pre-K.						X		X	2021	Selectboard; Friends of Thomaston Schools group; Thomaston members of the RSU 13 Board
Education. Start a Friends of Thomaston Schools group to support RSU 13 initiatives while ensuring that Thomaston tax dollars are used as effectively as possible.			X			X		X	2020-ongoing	Selectboard; Friends of Thomaston Schools group; Thomaston members of the RSU 13 Board
Education. Monitor the extent to which the regionalization of our schools is a benefit to the town and its students and make recommendations to the Selectboard as appropriate.			X	X		X		X	2020-ongoing	Selectboard; Friends of Thomaston Schools group; Thomaston members of the RSU 13 Board
Community enhancement. Continue to place high priority on our Town’s walkability and bicycle-friendliness, paying particular attention to safe sidewalks and crosswalks.	X	X	X					X	Ongoing	Conservation Committee; Town Manager; Selectboard
Community enhancement. Continue to expand and improve walking and bike trails.			X					X	Ongoing	Conservation Committee; Selectboard
Community enhancement. Increase plantings and maintenance in Town parks. Develop and implement a tree-planting plan for the urban canopy.	X	X	X						Ongoing	Conservation Committee; Town Arborist; volunteer, public and private organizations
Community enhancement. Develop strategies for improving the appearance of the East End Commercial Tract.			X						2022	Planning Board; Selectboard
Community enhancement. Pursue becoming a "Tree City USA" community.	X	X	X		X			X	2021	Conservation Committee; Town Arborist
Community enhancement. Take steps to attract additional retail and professional services to Town, with an emphasis on providing local services for senior citizens.	X	X	X			X		X	2020-ongoing	ECDC; Town Manager
Community enhancement. Increase access to the fiber-optic network that runs along Main Street.		X	X					X	2020	ECDC; Selectboard; Town Manager
THOMASTON'S FISCAL CAPACITY AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN										
Pursue capital- and expense-sharing opportunities with other communities and/or via outsourcing.				X					Ongoing	Selectboard; Town Manager

Periodically review the inventory and uses of Town properties to determine if sales or leases are appropriate.		X							Ongoing	Standing Municipal Facilities Committee; Selectboard; ECDC; Facility trustees
Create an economic and community development function in Town government to promote Thomaston's goals and to liaise with individuals and companies interested in Thomaston.		X	X	X		X		X	2020-ongoing	ECDC; Selectboard
Re-examine the Land Use and Development Ordinance and revise if needed to accommodate appropriate and desired development, consistent with the Town's history, character, and goals.	X	X	X		X	X		X	Ongoing	Planning Board; Historic Preservation Advisory Board; Selectboard; Comp Plan Committee
Pursue additional State resources, and coordinate with RSU 13 towns to advocate for increased State aid for education, adding a household-income factor to the State's school funding formula.				X	X		X		2020-ongoing	Town Manager; Selectboard; Friends of Thomaston Schools group; Thomaston members of RSU 13 board
Develop a strategy for the Dragon Products TIF, which expires in 2022.				X	X				2020-2021	Selectboard; ECDC
Supplement, then annually review and update, the Town's Capital Investment Plan.						X		X	2021	Town Manager; Selectboard; Budget Committee
Future Land Use Plan										
General. Strengthen the Statement of Purpose for each zoning district to solidify the intent of rural vs growth areas.	X	X			X	X			2021	Planning Board; Comprehensive Plan Committee; CEO
General. Continue to develop an interconnected Greenway through Town and along the waterfront linking town parks, public spaces and conserved lands.	X		X		X	X			On-going	Selectboard, Conservation Committee
General. Conduct a comprehensive study of the advantages, disadvantages of an alternate east-west road through	X	X	X			X		X	2020	Selectboard, ECDC
General. Modify Section 704.1.5.c.1 of the Thomaston Land Use Ordinance to clarify and strengthen this intent of Conditional Uses	X		X		X	X			2021	Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee, CEO
General. Partner with non-profit organizations and private owners to place land with important natural features and/or views into permanent conservation status			X		X	X			2022	Selectboard, Town Manager, Conservation Committee
General. Create a Community and Economic Development Corporation to purchase land, Development Rights, or Conservation Easements, for properties of importance to the Town.			X		X	X			2013	Selectboard, CEDC, Conservation Committee
General. Develop an inventory of scenic resources and allow the Planning Board to require a scenic impact analysis related to properties in this inventory.			X		X	X			2022	Planning Board, Conservation Committee, CEO
General. Study changes to the LUO that would be needed to become an AARP Age Friendly Community and act accordingly			X			X		X	2022	CEO, Planning Board, Selectboard

General. Study the operation and impact of Short Term Rentals in Thomaston and take appropriate action	X							X		2021	Code Enforcement
General. Review the LUO pertaining to gravel pits and quarries and amend as necessary to ensure that impacts are adequately addressed		X	X		X	X				2022	Code Enforcement
General. Make mineral exploration a conditional use in the Town's Rural, Industrial and Highway Commercial Districts but not an allowed use in the residential districts of R3, R3A & TR3.	X	X	X							2021	Code Enforcement
General. Allow "Small Scale Farming/Gardening" as a Permitted Use in R3, R3A, TR3, R2 & R1.	X		X							2021	Code Enforcement
General. Hire a consultant in town planning to help design a comprehensive land use strategy to maximize the appeal of the Town.										2024	Selectboard
General. Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.						X				2023	Selectboard
General. Establish the Comprehensive Plan Committee as a standing committee responsible for fostering progress toward the Plan's goals and assuring that LUO is aligned with the new Plan.										2020	Selectboard
General. Maintain up-to-date maps depicting current land uses. Integrate with maps depicting municipal infrastructure and tie to property cards. Computerize building permit information										Ongoing	Code Enforcement
General. Provide the code enforcement officer with the tools, training, and support necessary to enforce land use regulations										Ongoing	Town Manager
Rural Areas. Examine the Land Use Ordinance for ways to strengthen the protection of rural areas.	X		X		X	X				2023	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Rural Areas. Review Conditional Uses in the R1 and R2 districts to strengthen adherence their purpose and modify as needed.	X		X		X	X				2021	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Rural Areas. To reaffirm the importance of preserving the western entrance to Town along Route 1, issues of scale, character, dimensional requirements, buffering, etc. must be thoroughly addressed in the LUO and the development approval process	X					X				Ongoing	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Rural Areas. Protection of Montpelier and neighboring residential areas is vitally important to the Town. It is critical that nearby commercial and industrial land uses not encroach on this area.	X		X			X		X		Ongoing	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Rural Areas. Encourage placement and retention of active agricultural lands and other important open space in Current Use Tax Programs and encourage permanent conservation easements.	X		X		x	X				Ongoing	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee , Assessor
Rural Areas. Amend LUO to require subdivision proposals within the R-1 District to include a cluster design instead of, or in addition to, a traditional design for site plan review.	X				X	X				2021	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee

Growth Areas. Continue to allow a range of housing densities based on the established settlement pattern and provide a sufficient amount of affordable housing types.	X		X					X	Ongoing	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Allow "Conversion of Existing Residential" as a Conditional Use in R3.	X						X		2020	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Create an historic overlay district in the designated Historic District, identifying guidelines for preserving the character, style, scale, and proportions of historic structures.	X	X	X				X		2022	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee, HTRG
Growth Areas. Create an historic advisory board to inform homeowners as to how to accomplish their construction goals while not severely compromising the historic aesthetic.	X						X		2022	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee, HTRG
Growth Areas. Extension Town water and sewer to the TR3 District to allow for an expansion of more affordable housing options.		X					X	X	2025	Selectboard
Growth Areas. In the TR-3 District, encourage high-density more affordable housing while maintaining a traditional street grid pattern.		X					X	X	2022	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Review the LUO to determine other ways to support the development of smaller, more efficient, more affordable housing.		X					X	X	2023	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Require developers to provide multi-family developments with adequate storage areas, landscaping and shared green space			X						2022	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Allow Mobile/Manufactured homes as a conditional use in TR3 and R1. Allow manufactured/mobile home parks as a conditional use in TR3 and increase the size of this District							X		2021	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Review the standards for Mobile/Manufactured Home Parks to assure compatibility with the area in which it is to be placed.	X		X				X		2022	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Limit the Highway Commercial to the area along Route One east of the Dragon property.	X	X	X				X	X	Ongoing	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Require proposed projects in the Industrial and Highway Commercial Districts to assess the potential for adverse impacts on Marsh Brook and the Weskeag Creek Focus Area.						X			2022	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Consider impact fees to contribute toward the cost of any infrastructure improvements required to accommodate additional growth and/or development.				X					2023	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee, Selectboard
Growth Areas. Modify the LUO to permit "Public Open-Space Recreational Use" in R3 to allow for parks and recreational activities	X			X	X			X	2023	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Continue to allow Home Occupations in residential districts, enforcing existing standards to ensure that they do not detract from the neighborhoods in which they are located.	X							X	Ongoing	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee

Growth Areas. Allow light industrial activity as a conditional use in the Village Commercial District.		X			X					2023	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Move the property along Rt 1 at the west end of Town that presently is in SC and does not have water frontage to the R2 District.	X								X	2020	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Properties in the SC District that have deep water access should continue to be dedicated to marine commercial activities. Other properties in this District could, in the future, be considered for commercial activities that are not marine related.	X		X				X			Ongoing	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee
Growth Areas. Maintain the current height limit in the SC District and review the LUO to assure the protection of view corridors.			X		X					Ongoing	CEO, Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee

Appendices



Appendix 1: Our History

Appendix 1-1. Thomaston Land Use Ordinance Regulations That Recognize and Protect Prehistoric, Historic, and Archaeological Resources

The following sections are included in Chapter 7, Article I, Zoning Regulations:

Section 703.4.4 – Change of Use of a Non-conforming Structure in the Resource Protection District or the Shoreland District

The use of a non-conforming structure may not be changed to another use unless the Board of Appeals, after receiving a written application, determines that the new use will have no greater adverse impact on the water body, tributary stream or wetland or on the subject or adjacent properties and resources than the existing use.

In determining that no greater adverse impact will occur, the Board of Appeals shall require written documentation from the applicant, regarding *the probable effects on* public health and safety,

erosion and sedimentation, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, vegetative cover, visual and actual points of public access to waters, natural beauty, flood-plain management, *archaeological and historic resources*, and commercial fishing and maritime activities, and other functionally water-dependent uses.

Section 707A.1 – Village Mixed Use District (R3A)

To encourage a high quality, moderate density neighborhood that complements physical, aesthetic, and neighborhood will: Have a human scale; be sensitive to pedestrian needs; accommodate and manage vehicular traffic by linking the existing local and state road network; and protect historic features. The Village Mixed Use District regulates the implementation of the voter-approved Land Use Master Plan, which shows the general locations of public open space and road linkages. The Village Mixed Use District will contain a mix of uses (both residential

and non-residential) with buildings *that convey a similar character.*

Section 707A.6 – Design Standards Guideline for R3A

Historical features including the cemetery and Maine State Prison Memorial Wall shall be preserved as historic sites and public access to these sites shall be maintained.

Section 712A – Village Commercial District (VC)

712A.1 Purpose: The Village Commercial District includes the business area located around the intersection of Main Street and Knox and Beechwood Streets in the village center and the intersection of U.S. Route One and Old County Road. The purpose of the district is to provide for small-scale general sales and services and businesses and for municipal activities. *The intent is that the small-town atmosphere of Thomaston be maintained. Both new and renovated buildings in this district will be compatible in design and scale with the surrounding commercial and residential uses and historic character of the area.*

The following sections are included in Chapter 7, Article II, General Standards of Performance:

Section 715 – Shoreland Standards

The purpose of such standards is to further the maintenance of safe and healthful conditions; prevent and control water pollution; protect wildlife spawning grounds, fish, aquatic life, bird and wildlife habitat; protect freshwater and coastal wetlands; control building sites, placement of structures and land uses; to protect commercial fishing and maritime industries; *protect archaeological and historic resources*; conserve shore cover, visual as well as actual points of access to inland and coastal waters; conserve natural beauty and open space; and to anticipate and respond to the impacts of development in Shoreland areas.

Section 715.23 – Archaeological Sites

Any proposed land use activity involving structural development or soil disturbance on or

adjacent to sites listed on, or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by the permitting authority, shall be submitted by the applicant to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for review and comment, at least twenty (20) days prior to action being taken by the permitting authority. The permitting authority shall consider comments received from the Commission prior to rendering a decision on the application.

Section 716 – Environmental Section

716.3 Archaeological Sites: Any proposed land-use activity involving structural development or soil disturbance on or adjacent to sites listed on, or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by the permitting authority, shall be submitted by the applicant to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for review and comment, at least twenty (20) days prior to action being taken by the permitting authority. The permitting authority shall consider comments received from the Commission prior to rendering a decision on the application. A permit is not required for an archaeological excavation as long as the excavation is conducted by an archaeologist listed on the State Historic Preservation Officer's Level 1 or Level 2 approved list, and unreasonable erosion and sedimentation is prevented by means of adequate and timely temporary and permanent stabilization measures.

Section 716.16 – Standards for Commercial/Industrial Use

Section 716.16.5.3: *The architectural design of structures and their materials and colors shall be visually harmonious with the overall appearance, history and cultural heritage of the Town of Thomaston, with natural land forms and existing vegetation and with other development plans already approved by the town. Architectural design of all non-residential structures must be designed to be unobtrusive and set into the natural environment in accordance with the following section:*

Section 718 – Signs

718.3.7 – Other Signs: Historic Markers shall not exceed six (6) square feet in sign area.

The following sections are included in Chapter 7, Article III, Land Subdivisions:

Section 723.8

Subdivisions will not have an undue adverse effect on the scenic or natural beauty of the area, aesthetics, historic sites or rare and irreplaceable natural areas or any public rights for physical or visual access to the shoreline, and;

Section 728 – General Performance Standards

Section 728.2 – Preservation of Natural

and Historic Features and Section 728.2.1: The Thomaston Planning Board shall require that the proposed subdivision include a landscape plan that will show the preservation of scenic, historic, or environmentally desirable areas. Areas in which archaeological resources exist shall require professional archaeological review. The developer shall make adequate provision for fitting the development harmoniously into the existing natural environment and that the development will not adversely affect existing uses, scenic character, air quality, water quality or other natural resources in the municipality or in neighboring municipalities.

The following definitions are included in Chapter 10, Definitions:

Historic Structure: Means any structure that is:

1. Listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places (a listing maintained by the Department of

Interior) or preliminarily determined by the Secretary of the Interior as meeting the requirements for individual listing on the National Register;

2. Certified or preliminarily determined by the Secretary of the Interior as contributing to the historical significance of a registered historic district or a district preliminarily determined by the Secretary of the Interior to qualify as a registered historic district;
3. Individually listed on a state inventory of historic places in states with historic-preservation programs that have been approved by the Secretary of the Interior; or
4. Individually listed on a local inventory of historic places in communities with historic-preservation programs that have been certified either:
 - a) By an approved state program as determined by the Secretary of the Interior, or
 - b) Directly by the Secretary of the Interior in states without approved programs.

Appendixes 2 and 3

There are no appendixes for Chapters 2 and 3.

Appendix 4: Our Environment: Agriculture, Forest, and Mineral Resources

See **Tables 4-1** and **4-2**.

Table 4-1: Agricultural Uses Allowed in Thomaston Land Use Districts

Activity	Permitted Use	Conditional Use
Raising of small animals as pets	R-3	
Raising small animals	R-1	R-2, RP, TR-3
Small scale farming and gardening including on premise farm stands for products produced on-site only		TR-3
Agriculture building or use including keeping and raising of large animals or poultry	R-1	R-2
Commercial agriculture and horticultural sales of farm produce on premises		R-1, R-2
Commercial agriculture uses and practices	R-1, HC	R-2
Keeping and raising horses including horse boarding facility	R-1	R-2, RP, TR-3
Kennel		R-1, IN
Retail Marijuana Dispensary		IN
Retail Marijuana Cultivation Facility		IN
Retail Marijuana Manufacturing Facility		IN
Retail Marijuana Testing Facility		IN

HC: Highway commercial • IN: Industrial • R-1: Rural Residential and Farming
 R-2: Rural Residential • R-3: Urban Residential • TR-3: Transitional Residential

Definitions from Town Ordinance

Agriculture: The production, keeping or maintenance for sale or lease, of plants and/or animals, including but not limited to: forages and sod crops; grains and seed crops; dairy animals and dairy products; poultry and poultry products; livestock; fruits and vegetables; and ornamental and greenhouse products. Agriculture does not include forest management and timber harvesting activities. SD See also Small Scale Farming/Gardening.

Agriculture Building: A structure designed and constructed to house farm implements, hay, grain, poultry, livestock or other horticultural products.

Animals, Small: Small-animal specialties such as, but not limited to, chickens and other fowl, rabbits and other fur-bearing animals; aviaries; worm farms; rats, mice, ferrets; guinea pigs; excepting personal household pets, such as cats and dogs, not otherwise regulated by ordinance. For the purposes of the Town's ordinances, also includes miniature species such as, but not limited to panda cows, miniature horses, micro-pigs, or pygmy goats.

Animals, Large: Farm or game animals such as, but not limited to, cattle, horses, goats, sheep, pigs, bison, llamas, or alpacas.

Farmer's Market: A physical retail market featuring foods sold directly by farmers to consumers that operates multiple times per year during daylight hours typically consisting of booths, tables or stands, outdoors or indoors, where farmers sell fruits, vegetables, meats, or other raw or minimally processed food stuffs. Crafts, prepared foods and beverages made by the farmers may also be sold as an accessory to the sale of raw or minimally processed food stuffs. A farm stand offering products produced on and located on a farmer's own property is not a Farmer's Market unless other non-resident farmers are also selling items at that same location.

Small Scale Farming/Gardening: The production of agricultural products (see Agriculture) solely on a small parcel of land (ten acres or less) by a single family plus no more than one hired hand using sustainable farm practices including, but not limited to, organic farming, permaculture, arable and non-arable land uses.

Table 4-2: Partial List of Resources in Support of Agriculture and Forestry

1. Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Augusta.

Various programs including (expand list)

- The District Forester for Thomaston is located in Jefferson.
- Project Canopy. Administered by Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, funded by USDA Forest Service Community Forest Assistance Program. Grants are available to state, county, and municipal governments, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations for developing and implementing community forestry projects and programs. Funds are available for planning and education and planting and maintenance.

2. Time and Tide Resource Conservation and Development Office in Augusta

Time & Tide RC&D offers coaching, guidance, and networking opportunities to individuals and organizations who are tackling grassroots projects or starting new businesses in one of the following focus areas: Sustainable Agriculture, Aquaculture, and Forestry; Water and Soil Conservation; Community and Economic Development; Natural Resource Conservation; and Alternative Energy Development Projects. Time and Tide also provides technical assistance with business planning, grant writing and procurement, and public outreach; and small micro-grants that can help bridge funding gaps or pay for the planning phase of new projects.

3. Knox-Lincoln County Soil and Water Conservation District, Rockport

4. University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service for Knox and Lincoln Counties

Located in Waldoboro.

5. Maine Woodlot Owners Association of Maine

Located in Augusta. Maine Woodland Owners offers information on a variety of issues including tax issues, forestland management, and succession planning.

6. Maine Farmland Trust, Belfast

Maine Farmland Trust is a statewide non-profit organization that protects farmland, supports farmers, and advances the future of farming. Its goal is to protect Maine farmland and revitalize Maine’s rural landscape by keeping agricultural lands working and helping farmers.

7. United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency (FSA)

8. Natural Resource Conservation Service, Belfast.

9. Maine Small Business Development Centers, Wiscasset

10. U.S. Small Business Administration and SCORE

Appendixes 5 and 6

There are no appendixes for Chapters 5 and 6.

Appendix 7: Our Economy

7-1: Creative Strategies for Economic Development in Thomaston

(from Emily Zider, consultant to the Comprehensive Planning Committee)

Introduction

Thomaston's future development plans must evolve from considerations supported by economic, environmental, and social sustainability. While there are countless ways to move a city forward, if we apply proven methods of economic development to the town's feedback from the 'Thomaston Talks' community engagement series, the following areas of development surface as potential priorities: revitalizing the downtown area, developing public spaces through alley activation concepts, leveraging the town's waterfront and history to develop local and regional tourism, and pursuing tech sector development.

Revitalizing the downtown area

A city's downtown center serves as its heartbeat. It establishes local identity and should aim to serve as a primary economic driver. The key to revitalization is developing a Main Street filled with diverse local businesses that offer experiences that a wide variety of residents and visitors would actively engage with such as: restaurants, pubs, breweries, specialty shops, and cafes. With improved pedestrian infrastructure from the Route 1 construction project, the creation of Main Street Matters, and the potential relocation of the city offices to the Lura Libby School, opening up valuable space on Main Street – now is the time for the city to think strategically regarding how to recruit and incentivize the development of businesses that will contribute to a healthy and thriving downtown.

As potential businesses owners consider locating in Thomaston, the support of the city to

assist in the licensing process and help navigate through the startup process is key. Also critical is establishing a culture of collaboration among businesses to build momentum.

Main Street America is a national non-profit that has “proven itself to be one of the most impactful, cost-effective community revitalization models in the country” with over 1,000 programs specifically designed to revitalize cities through community building and economic development (Main Street America). They have a wide variety of resources available to help towns with revitalization efforts. When a town is able to prove their commitment to economic development, they might be eligible for designation as a Main Street America community. This designation opens towns up to significant grant opportunities to continue revitalization efforts. Additionally, each Main Street America community has a paid director which is powerful in many ways: establishing personal connections with the local businesses, developing inventory knowledge of available space, and continuing professional development through the Main Street America resources and conferences. Having a designated individual to serve as a liaison between the city and businesses is a huge asset in attracting and maintaining business development (Cioffi, 2018). In Maine, these communities have collaborated to develop a Main Street Maine tourism website, designed to highlight the attractions in these distinctive cities that might go unnoticed against the more well-known tourist spots in Maine.

Even if Thomaston does not directly connect with the Main Street America organization, its framework can and should be considered in developing the town. The four major components of its transformation strategy include: economic vitality, design, promotion and organization (Main Street America).

Public spaces and alley activation

Alley activation is the idea of transforming alleys and public areas into productive community spaces to stimulate public life and commerce (Fialko & Hampton). Many cities across the US, including Seattle, WA and Nashville, TN, (Nashville Civic Design Center, 2014) have used alley activation techniques to attract business and foster economic development by revamping dreary public spaces with: outdoor lighting, art installations, adding plants and greenery, outdoor seating areas, canopies for spatial reconfiguration (to gain protection from weather and highlight business entrances) and using the space at different times of the day in different ways to encourage a steady flow of people (Fialko & Hampton). By integrating multiple functions into an alley project, it can attract many users throughout the day, for example: a breakfast spot in the morning, lunch and work meetings in the afternoon, happy hours or sports in the evenings, and music or performances in the evenings (Fialko & Hampton).

There are multiple opportunities for Thomaston to incorporate alley activation concepts into the town, with wide sidewalks and alleys surrounding the businesses on Main Street, potential waterfront spaces, and the undeveloped Thomaston Green area. All of these locations contain untapped potential to serve as community gathering and events space, bringing business as it attracts more and more residents and visitors to spend time there.

Leveraging the waterfront and history

The presence of the St. George River in Thomaston presents an interesting opportunity for economic development and re-establishing local identity. Recreational tourism (boat cruises, kayaking, fishing trips), waterfront dining (imagine a riverside brewery), and the development of existing walking trails could all contribute to a thriving waterfront area.

Similarly, there is potential to promote Thomaston's unique history and architecture through

tours and business development (further develop the historical walking tour, transform the Knox Museum, etc.) The more attractive the downtown area is, the more likely people would want to “make a day” out of a visit to Thomaston to explore its waterfront, history and local dining scene.

Increasing business in the tech sectors

The nature of technology is ever evolving and ever expanding, so it only makes sense that the location of tech sector businesses is evolving and expanding as well. Tech is no longer found solely in places like Silicon Valley, and as Thomaston continues its pursuit of strengthening its economy, growth of the tech sector should be part of the strategic plan. While Thomaston is a much smaller city than the traditional tech cities, it does offer some opportunities for attracting tech business, because of its overall livability.

As the tech sector continues to attract millennials and younger professionals, livability plays a major role in attracting the tech sector to a city. Washington Time's Business and Economy writer Julian Gregorio suggests “smaller cities and suburbs can compete for STEM workers by advertising their family-friendly environs, more affordable homes, easier commutes and proximity to nature” (Gregorio, 2018). Thomaston serves as a fairly solid canvas here. Constance Aguilar, a digital content producer specializing in technology supports this idea explaining that to attract tech start-ups, “cities have to cultivate a climate for livability that people will talk about,” including “districts of culturally diverse and locally owned restaurants, bars, specialty stores and community centers” (Aguilar). Essentially, by developing local establishments, Thomaston would position itself to be more appealing to potential tech employees, thus tech business. The addition of shared co-working spaces to the business scene would be a great place to start in the development of this sector, perhaps in Thomaston Academy.

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7-2: Supplemental Ideas to Promote the Town

- Consider an additional annual event like, for example, a candle-boat regatta, in which model boats (which could range from simple cedar shingles to more elaborate) with lit candles are released at the Narrows on the St. George River on an ebb tide to float past the Thomaston Green to the town landing. Perhaps the boats are built in conjunction with the Thomaston Library (with help from the Midcoast School of Technology) and named for great books. There could be an outdoor-movie night on the Thomaston Green that same evening, and a dinner cruise on the river.
- Create latitude/longitude signs to augment street signs at a few principal intersections, such as Knox Street/Main Street, in honor of Thomaston's seagoing heritage.

Appendix 8

There is no appendix for Chapter 8.

Appendix 9: Recreation in Thomaston

See **Improvement and Operations Program for the Public Parks** on the following pages.

TOWN OF THOMASTON

IMPROVEMENT & OPERATIONS PROGRAM

for the

PUBLIC PARKS

Thomaston Conservation Commission
Thomaston Harbor Committee
Thomaston Recreation Department

2014

INTRODUCTION

For many years Thomaston had only the Mall that could be called a park. In the last 15-years three new parks have been built or are about to be built. The Public Works Department does a good job of mowing the grass but this is about the limit of maintenance. There are no long term plans for improvements or uses of the parks. At the 15-year-old Mayo Park the shrubs are overgrown and the path and stairway have deteriorated to the point that they are becoming dangerous. The empty looking Thomaston Green Park appears to have few uses and little, except the river view, to attract people to it. The vegetation on the Mall could best be described as very mature and the elements around the monuments could use some sprucing up.

To plan a long-term program, this study was authorized by the Selectboard on September 23, 2013 to undertake a review of the parks looking at three areas:

- What long term upgrades and improvements should be made and how would they be maintained?
- What could be done to improve and encourage usage?
- How would any changes be financed?

This study was a collaboration between the Thomaston Conservation Commission, the Harbor Master and the Harbor Committee and the Recreation Director and the Recreation Committee. Regina Leonard, the Landscape Architect who designed Mill River Park, provided professional guidance.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

To help judge the needs of the community; what the users expected the parks to provide to them, a survey was sent out in the December Town Newsletter and was posted on the Town website. The survey asked 18 questions about facilities or programs and allowed 4 categories of response – would use frequently, would use occasionally, would never use and should have for others. In the list below all responses that exceeded 30% of the total are shown.

Would use frequently

1. Fitness and wellness programs
2. Special events such as concerts, art fairs, etc.
3. Activities that promote neighborhood interaction

Would use occasionally

1. Walking or hiking trails
2. Picnic tables (for individuals or small groups)
3. Covered picnic pavilions (some with cooking grills)
4. Bike paths
5. Self-guided nature study trails with signs

Would never use

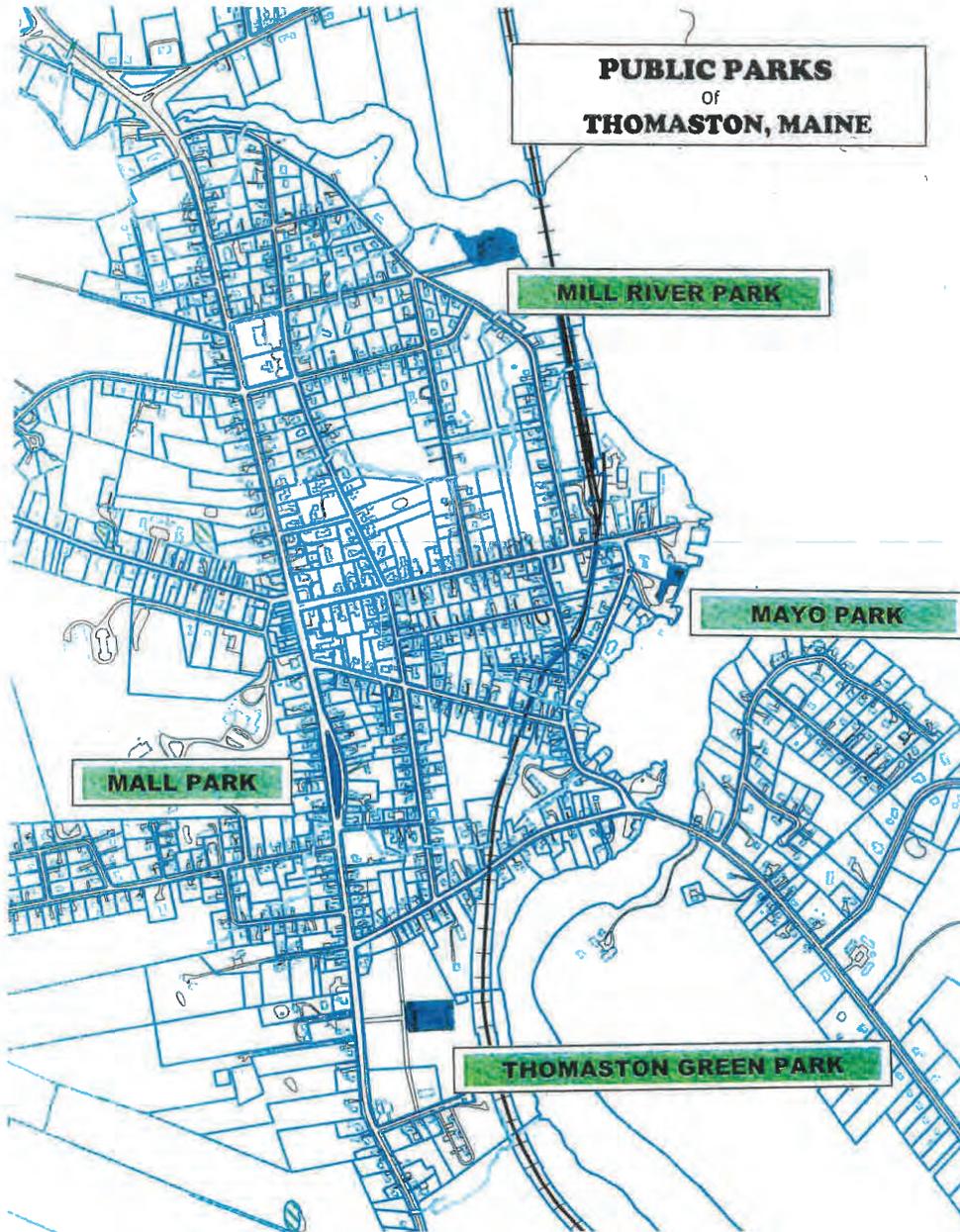
1. Skateboard parks

Should have for others

1. Access to rivers for fishing
2. Playgrounds for school-aged children
3. River access for kayaking and canoeing
4. Outdoor ice-skating areas
5. Soccer fields

The majority of respondents were older people but there were several young families with children and this seems to pretty much match the demographics of the community. The majority also indicated that they would be willing to support these programs with tax dollars.

The Recreation Department is currently moving ahead with plans to address the request for fitness and wellness programs. In February, 54 Thomaston citizens made use of a special, month long arrangement that allowed people from Thomaston to use the programs and facilities of the Camden-Rockport YMCA at no cost. In the works are fitness programs that the YMCA will conduct in Thomaston and other special events to reach out to both young and old. The need for soccer fields has already been identified by the Recreation Department and they are working on that also.



4.

MALL PARK

Location: On Main Street between Main Street and the Main Street Mall Road.

Year Built: This parcel of land was created in 1828 when the County Road was straightened. It was given to the Town in 1878 by William Keith.

Size: The park is approximately 600 feet long by 70 feet at the widest. Both ends taper to a point. This is about 0.5 acres.

Current Condition: A grassed area with mature trees and shrubs, Mall Park serves as an important visual gateway into the southern end of the downtown. The park has a number of picnic tables and benches, a large Civil War monument, a monument to war veterans, another monument dedicated to George Waymouth's discovery of the St. George River and a buried time capsule. Used by tourists for lunch area and a place to stop. Mall Park also hosts a major town Christmas display.

Site Limitations: Small, narrow area completely surrounded by streets with no room to expand.

Truck noise & dirt



View from the west end of the park. Main Street on the left and Mall Road on the right.



View looking east from the center of the park with picnic tables and benches.



Looking west from the east end of park showing Civil War monument.

6.

Future Use: This park serves two uses now that should be encouraged to continue. First, it is a gathering point in the center of the village for important community events and holiday traditions, such as Memorial Day and the 4th of July celebrations and the annual Christmas display.

Second, Mall Park marks the arrival into the Town's historic village area for the many visitors coming in Main Street. The Mall Road provides easy parking and the park and picnic tables offer a comfortable place to stretch your legs and have a bite to eat.

Mall Park provides the classic "village common" feeling that so many people associate with old New England. It should be kept in that context and should continue to serve the uses it currently has.

Proposed Improvements: As noted earlier the vegetation is quite mature and many of the fine trees have a limited life left. There is evidence of significant decline in a number of very mature trees. The trees should be thoroughly assessed by a licensed arborist. It appears that vehicular parking may be contributing to compaction within the tree root zones. If so, the Town may want to consider installing a curb along the interior boundary of the park. Young trees should be added and the older ones removed or pruned as necessary to address any latent safety hazards and to allow the new trees to grow. Many of the shrubs are overgrown and need to be replaced. New plantings selected for mature form and size and placed in mulched and edged plantings should reduce maintenance demands. This rehabilitative work on the vegetation should be done slowly over many years to ensure that Mall Park retains its appearance as an established and historic "village common".

Monument areas within the park are currently bordered by brickwork and timber edging. These elements show signs of their age and need to be removed and replaced. Overall, park details should be simplified and reflective of the period in which the Mall was established. These changes could be done at the same time as the overgrown shrubbery is replaced with new smaller plants. Again, it would be better to do this in small increments (one monument at a time) to avoid the "brand new" look.

To keep with the historic character of the Mall, the benches, trash containers and other items should fit into the time period that the park conveys. Benches made from cast iron ends and plank seats and backs are available with coordinated waste receptacles. Electrical receptacles and other utility provisions can be screened, where necessary, with plantings. Signs can be better placed to minimize detractions in the appearance of the Mall.

In summary, this classic park needs to be slowly upgraded over several years to maintain its wonderful, old appearance and to make it easier to maintain.

MAYO PARK

Location: At the Public Landing. This park is on the site of the Town's first wastewater treatment facility that was closed down in 1998 and demolished the next year. The main part of the park is just east of the parking lot.

Year Built: 1999

Size: This park is divided into two sections; the higher area between the Public Landing Road and the steep slope and the lower level flat land near the water. It has a total of about 0.5 acres of usable land. The upper area includes a gravel parking area that also provides "park and View" opportunities.

Current Condition: Both areas feature lawns which are separated with overgrown plantings along the steep slope that divides them. The steps between the two sections are in a poor and hazardous condition. The lower lawn area features several picnic tables and pedestal grills.

Attributes: Mayo Park is notable for its good views of the harbor and down the St. George River. The Park is within close proximity to boats in the harbor.

Site Limitations: Parking is sometimes difficult because of commercial uses. Activities associated with the working waterfront can conflict with recreational uses of the park.



View of the lower portion looking east from the parking lot.



Looking from lower level toward upper area. Note stairs at extreme right.



View from the upper area showing picnic tables and harbor in background.

Future Use: This park combines the historical location of Captain George Waymouth's 1605 landing with splendid views of the fascinating happenings in Thomaston harbor and also provides a place to enjoy your lunch or have a picnic. The harbor is the focal point of the park and it will continue to be. The strong current from the tidal action prevents swimming and it's not really an ideal location for fishing, however, the two levels provide unparalleled viewing of the harbor activities. The improvements outlined below are aimed at encouraging these activities and the connectivity between the areas.

Proposed Improvements: Mayo Park shows years of neglect in that the stairway has deteriorated to the point of being dangerous and the shrubs are overgrown to where they are no longer attractive. It also has a walkway to nowhere (goes behind the restrooms) that appears to have little to no use.

The first thing that should be done is to rebuild the stairway from the upper level to the water side area. This was originally built with railroad ties and crushed rock. It would be better to use a material that would require less maintenance and hold up better against the elements such as a sloping walkway made with reclaim. The walkway behind the restrooms should be removed and a new walkway built in front of the restrooms and along the edge of the parking area. This new walk could be extended across the park to the southeast corner where there is a manhole used in the winter by Pollution Control for sampling. This path would be plowed in the winter to provide access to the manhole and avoid damage to the park grass. The manhole top should be rebuilt to make it safer and more attractive.

The existing vegetation should be trimmed and/or replaced as needed. Consideration should be given to using plants that are suited to this location. Where possible, signs should be relocated to enhance the views of the water.

To encourage use of the park for relaxing and picnicking the existing tables could be moved to the inland side of the lower level, this way they will not block the view of the water especially from the upper level, and one or two could be covered with a roof. The upper level could have better defined parking and pedestrian circulation. More benches here would probably be helpful.

THOMASTON GREEN PARK

Location: In the center of Thomaston Green. Thomaston Green is bounded on the north by Main Street, on the east by Wadsworth Street and on the west by Ship Street. The park is bounded on the north by William King Street.

Year Built: 2009

Size: The park is approximately 200 feet by 350 feet or about 1.6 acres.

Current condition: Thomaston Green is a level, open, grassed area with a double row of Elm trees and a walking path on either side. On the north the park ends at the William King Street sidewalk and on the south by the river overlook.

Attributes: The Green offers good views, from the overlooks, up and down the St. George River. Hiking trails connect this park with the Village Trail and the Georges Highland Path.

Site Limitations: The long-term development plan calls for Thomaston Green to be at the center of village housing and commercial activity. Devoid of that context, Thomaston Green lacks purpose and feels out-of-place. While the expansive lawn offers opportunities for gathering, there is no central unifying element on which these activities can be centered.



Looking across William King Street toward the flagpole on the south end of the park



Looking toward river overlook from path on east side of park.



View from south end by flagpole looking north.

12.

Future Use: While the Green is underutilized at this time, it has the potential to become the center of the community and fulfill one of the major needs expressed in the needs assessment survey – the place for special events including band concerts, weddings, art fairs, children’s events and town celebrations. In time, as the trees lining the Green mature and the planned development advances, the Green will grow into itself

Proposed Improvements: As shown in the sketch on the next page, a small bandstand or gazebo on the north end of the park could be a valuable improvement as a visual and programmatic element. The new structure would be on axis with the flag pole and far overlook, would help define the edge of the green at the street and arrival zone. Because the north end is marked by a 3 foot rise from the park to the sidewalk the bandstand could be built with its floor at sidewalk level (thus it would be ADA compliant) and be above the park level. A ramp on either side of the bandstand would curve around the structure (outside of a flower bed next to the bandstand) and connect the sidewalk to the park. The structure would have lighting and electricity.

The internal park circulation should be re-evaluated as use of the Green increases. Benches should be added along the edge of the Green to provide opportunities for sitting during an event at the park or just to enjoy the area.

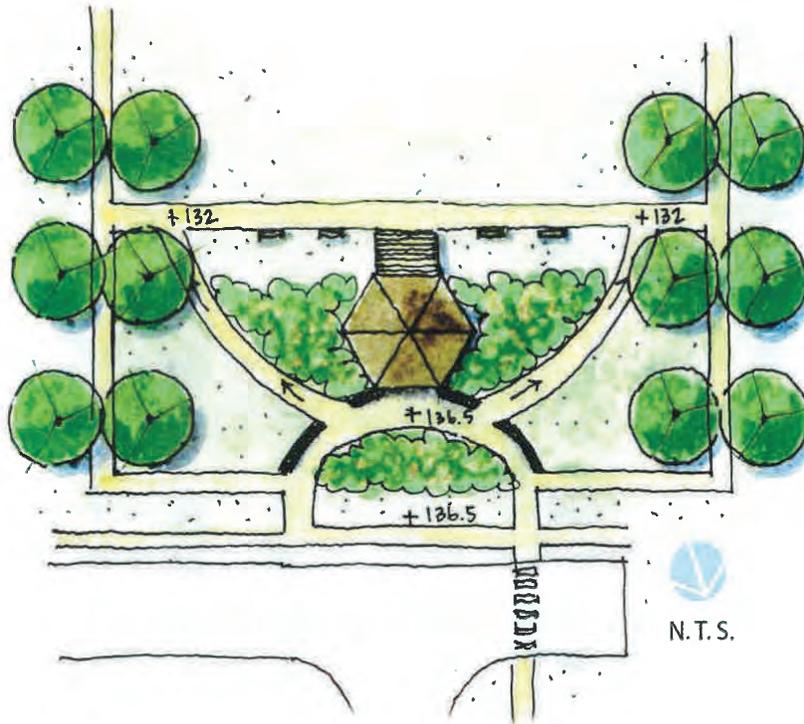
To make the park more of a draw during the cold weather it would be possible to set up a temporary ice skating rink next to the bandstand. This would require some work to set up and to dismantle but it could also provide a place for ice skating parties that would get young people (and old) out and using the park in the winter. There is a hydrant on the road by the northeast corner of the park so water to flood the rink is not a problem.



Example of gazebo or bandstand. The actual one would be larger.



Another bandstand, note raised level of floor.



MILL RIVER PARK

Location: At the end of Roxbury Street between Thatcher Street and the water the property is bounded on the east by Mill River, on the south by St. George River, on the west and north by private property. This was the location of the Town's dump for many years.

Year Built: The park has been designed and partially funded as of fall 2013 but no construction has started.

Size: The park is approximately 200 feet by 250 feet or about 1.2 acres.

Current condition: Mill River Park is a rolling, open area with trees and brush on the water sides and a steep drop to the rivers. The park is contiguous with an adjacent hayfield and accesses via a gravel road. The area offers good views of water up Mill River and down river into South Thomaston.

Attributes: This park offers lots of shoreline and good views of the water.

Site Limitations: Mill River Park is yet to be developed and currently lacks distinction as a park, its boundaries are not well-defined and there is no demarcation at the roadway or village edge. The park also currently lacks the features that will attract people: improved access to the water, trails, picnic and seating areas and parking. New vegetation will help define the edge of the park and offer comfort and shade to park users.



View of park site looking down Roxbury Street with railroad trestle in background.



Looking from north edge of park site toward the south. End of Roxbury Street on right.



Looking north from end of Roxbury Street with Mill River in background to right.

Appendix 10: Transportation

See Tables 10-1 through 10-5.

Table 10-1: Traffic Volumes and Speed Limits

Thomaston, Maine Public Roads Posted Speed Limits								
ROAD NAME	HIGHWAY	Speed Limit(s)	ROAD NAME	HIGHWAY	Speed Limit(s)	ROAD NAME	HIGHWAY	Speed Limit(s)
Ashland Dr		25	Ferry St		25	Pine St		25
Atlantic Hwy	US Route 1	55/40/30	Fish St		25	Pleasant St		25
		E to W	Fluker St		25	Public Landing		25
Beechwood St		25/35/40	Gay St		25	Ridgeview Dr		25
		S to N	Georges St		25	Riverside St		25
Bobolink Ln		25	Gilchrest St		25	Robinson St		25
Booker St		25	Gleason St		25	Ross Ave		25
Branch Brook Rd		25	Green St		25	Roxbury St		25
Broadway		25	Greenhouse Hill Rd		25	Sawyer St		25
Brooklyn Hts Rd		25/35	Hannan Rd		25	School St		25
		N to S	Harjula Ln		25	Shibles Ln		25
Butler Rd		25	High St	St Rte 131	35/50 N to S	Ship St		25
Buttermilk Dr		40	Hylar St		25	Starr St		25
Buttermilk Ln		40	Knox Ridge Ave		25	Stoney Brook Ln		25
Charles St		25	Knox St		25	Studley Ln		25
Clark St		25	Kossuth St		25	Sunrise Terr		25
Cross St		25	Lawrence Ave		25	Sunset St		25
Deer Run Rd		25	Ludwig St		25	Sylvan Rd		25
Dennis Dr		25	Main St	US Route 1	25/30/40/55	Thatcher St		25
Dexter St		35		St Rte 131	E to W	The Alley		25
Dexter St Ext		35	Main St Mall		25	Thomas Ave		25
Duane Ave		25	Marsh Rd		25	Thomaston St		25
Dunbar Rd		25	Maurice Ave		25	Toll Bridge Rd		25
Dunn St		25	Mechanic St		25	Valley St		25
Dwight St		25	Natalie Ct		25	Wadsworth St		25
Elliot St		25	New County Rd	US Route 1	35/45 W to E	Water St		25
Elm Ct		25	North St		25	Water Tower Rd		25
Elm St		25	Old County Rd		25	Watts Ln		25
Emery Ave		25	Old High St		25	West Meadow Rd		25
Erin St		25	Oyster River Rd	St Rte 131	35/45 S to N			

Table 10-2: Work Plan Capital and Maintenance, 2018-2019-2020

ID/Year	Municipality	Scope	Name	Description	Funding
023619.00 2019/20 HCP 1	Thomaston, Warren	Bridge Substructure Rehabilitation	Rte 1	James Andrews Griffith Bridge (#2786) over St. George River, Located on the Warren - Thomaston town line.	\$200,000
WR 35112 2018 HCP 4	Thomaston, Union	Drainage Maintenance	Rte 131	Ditching on Rte 131 Beginning at the Rte 1 intersection in Thomaston, extending north 8.09 miles to the Warren-Union town line.	\$28,000

Table 10-3: MDOT Thomaston Bridge Inventory

Name	MeDOT #	Road	Owned	Built	Length (feet)	Condition
Buttermilk Lane*	6401	Buttermilk Lane	State	2003	14	Fair
Meadow Brook	5876	W. Meadow Road over Branch Brook	Town	1962	15	Poor
Oyster River**	2912	Route 131-Oyster River Road	State	2008	110	Good
Mill Creek	2562	US Route 1	State	1924	22	Fair
Wadsworth Overpass	0606	Wadsworth Street (Railroad)	State	2017	34	Good
Greenhouse -POSTED	0593	Meadow Brook	Town	1950	22	Fair
James Andrew Griffith**	2786	US Route 1	State	1991	256	Fair

Source: Maine DOT Bridge Maintenance Division
 Note: *Shared with the Town of South Thomaston, **Shared with the Town of Warren

Table 10-4: Municipal Parking Lots

	Spaces	Condition	Usage
Municipal Parking			
Watts Building	20	Asphalt Fair	Government
Behind the Main St. Business Block Buildings	47	Asphalt Excellent	Commercial/ Residential
Main St between Congo and Green Streets	23-26	Asphalt Excellent	Commercial/ Residential
Starr Street Next to Threshers' Tavern	17	Asphalt Excellent	Public
Starr St. next to American Legion	89	Asphalt Good	Public
Public Landing	50	Asphalt and Unpaved Good and Fair	Public/ Recreational
Town Office (Lura Libby)	24-39	Asphalt Fair to Good	Government
Total	270-288		

Table 10-5: Thomaston Road Inventory

List of Roads	Mileage	Owned By	Maintained By	Surface	Last Paved	Condition	Amount Paved
Anna Belle Lane	0.30	Town	Town	Paved	2001-2015	Excellent	All Done
Ashland Drive	0.56	Town	Town	Paved	2011	Excellent	All Done
Beechwood Street	3.45	Town	Town	Paved	2016-2017	Excellent	2.30 Miles
					2005-2006	Excellent	1.30 Miles
					2017		
					2018		
					2010	Excellent	1.31 Miles
					2015		
					2017		
					2018		
Bobolink Lane	0.41	Town	Town	Paved	2003-2004	Excellent	All Done
					2018		
Booker Street	0.69	Town	Town	Paved	2003-2015	Excellent	.40 Miles
Branch Brook Road	0.20	Town	Town	Paved	2004-2017	Excellent	All Done
Broadway Street	0.12	Town	Town	Paved	2018	Excellent	
					2019		
Brooklyn Heights Road	0.81	Town	State	Paved	2005-2012	Excellent	All Done
Butler Road, Buttermilk Lane	0.36	Town	Town	Paved	2013-2016	Excellent	All Done
Buttermilk Drive	0.30	Town	Town	Paved	2009-2014	Excellent	.16 Miles
Buttermilk Lane Road	0.81	Town	State	Paved	2008-2013	Excellent	.40 Miles
					2009-2010	Excellent	.41 Miles
Charles Street	0.07	Town	Town	Paved	2004	Excellent	All Done
Clark Street and Cul De Sac	0.18	Town	Town	Paved	2004-2014	Excellent	All Done
Cross Street	0.05	Town	Town	Paved	1996-2010	Excellent	All Done
Deer Run Road	0.14	Town	Town	Paved	2008	Excellent	All Done
Dennis Drive	0.06	Town	Town	Paved	2004	Excellent	All Done
Dexter Street	0.59	Town	Town	Paved	2008-2016	Excellent	.42 Miles
Dexter Street Extension	0.24	Town	Town	Paved	2004-2008	Excellent	All Done
Duane Avenue	0.06	Town	Town	Paved	2004	Excellent	All Done
Dunbar Road	0.33	Town	Town	Paved	1992-2007	Excellent	All Done
Dunn Street	0.20	Town	Town	Paved	1996-2011	Excellent	All Done
Dwight Street	0.15	Town	Town	Paved	1995	Excellent	

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Elliot Street	0.18	Town	Town	Paved	2018 2008- 2009	Excellent	All Done
Elm Street	0.17	Town	Town	Paved	1996 2018	Excellent	
Elm Street Court	0.03	Town	Town	Paved	1995 2018	Excellent	
Emery Avenue	0.18	Town	Town	Paved	2004	Excellent	All Done
Erin Street	0.44	Town	Town	Paved	1995- 2008	Excellent	All Done
Ferry Street	0.03	Town	Town	Paved	1998- 2012	Excellent	All Done
Fish Street	0.38	Town	Town	Paved	2003- 2017	Excellent	All Done
Fluker Street	0.38	Town	Town	Paved	1995- 2012	Excellent	All Done
Gay Street	0.07	Town	Town	Paved	1996 2019	Good	
Georges Street	0.14	Town	Town	Paved	2001- 2007	Excellent	All Done
Gilchrest Street	0.09	Town	Town	Paved	1995- 2008	Excellent	All Done
Gleason Street	0.60	Town	Town	Paved	1995- 2003 2019	Excellent	.19 Miles
Green Street	0.34	Town	Town	Paved	2010 1995- 2011	Excellent Excellent	.41 Miles All Done
Greenhouse Hill Road	0.52	Town	Town	Gravel	2017 2018 2019	Excellent	All Done
Hannan Road	0.10	Town	Town	Paved	2005	Excellent	All Done
High Street, Old High Street	0.11	Town	Town	Paved	1995- 2016	Excellent	All Done
Hylar Street	0.41	Town	Town	Paved	1996- 2009 2019	Good to Excellent	.18 Miles
Knox Ridge Avenue	0.09	Town	Town	Paved	2011 2002 2019	Excellent Excellent	.10 Miles
Knox Street	0.51	Town	Town	Paved	1995	Fair	
Knox Street Extension	0.06	Town	Town	Paved	2018	Excellent	
Kossuth Street	0.07	Town	Town	Paved	2004- 2009	Excellent	All Done
Lawrence Avenue	0.17	Town	Town	Paved	1995- 2013	Excellent	All Done

Total Miles	15.15	Page 1
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List of Roads	Mileage	Owned By	Maintained By	Surface	Last Paved	Condition	Amount Paved
Ludwig Street	0.05	Town	Town	Paved	1996 2019	Excellent	
Main Street Mall Road	0.14	Town	Town	Paved	1995	Fair	
Marsh Road, Route # 131	0.10	Town	Town	Paved	1996- 2013	Excellent	All Done
Maurice Avenue	0.51	Town	Town	Paved	2004- 2008	Excellent	All Done
Mechanic Street	0.08	Town	Town	Paved	1996- 2010	Excellent	.03 Miles
Natalie Court	0.12	Town	Town	Paved	1996- 2008	Excellent	All Done
North Street	0.06	Town	Town	Paved	2001 2018	Excellent	
Old County Road	1.77	Town	State	Paved	2013- 2017	Excellent	All Done
Old Tollbridge Road	0.26	Town	Town	Paved	1992- 2007	Excellent	All Done
Oyster River Road, Route # 131	0.61	Town	State	Paved	2010- 2015	Excellent	All Done
Pine Street	0.18	Town	Town	Paved	1995- 2011	Excellent	All Done
Pleasant Street, Rockland	0.39	Town	Town	Paved	2011- 2014	Excellent	All Done
Public Landing	0.07	Town	Town	Paved	2019	Excellent	
Ridgeview Drive	0.50	Town	Town	Paved	2003- 2004 2019	Excellent	All Done
Robinson Street	0.07	Town	Town	Paved	1995 2019	Excellent	
Ross Avenue	0.41	Town	Town	Paved	1992- 2009	Excellent	All Done
Route # 1, Warren to Rockland	4.74	State	State	Paved	2006- 2008	Excellent	4.60 Miles
		State	State	Paved	2016- 2017	Excellent	2.16 Miles
Route # 131 to St. George	0.52	State	State	Paved		Good	
Roxbury Street	0.32	Town	Town	Paved	2003	Excellent	All Done
Sawyer Street	0.07	Town	Town	Paved	2003	Excellent	All Done
School Street	0.11	Town	Town	Paved	1995- 2009	Excellent	.07 Miles
Shibles Lane	0.08	Town	Town	Paved	2009- 2014	Excellent	.06 Miles
Ship Street	0.12	Town	Town	Paved	1997- 2009 2011	Excellent	.09 Miles
						Excellent	.09 Miles
Starr Street	0.08	Town	Town	Paved	2002	Good	
Stoney Brook Lane	0.05	Town	Town	Paved	1995- 2014	Excellent	All Done
Studley Lane	0.73	Town	Town	Paved	1999- 2017	Excellent	All Done
Sunrise Terrace	0.50	Town	Town	Paved	2004- 2013	Excellent	.22 Miles
Sunset Street	0.20	Town	Town	Paved	1996-	Excellent	All Done

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Sylvan Road	0.07	Town	Town	Paved	2013	Excellent	All Done
Thatcher Street	0.43	Town	Town	Paved	2004	Excellent	All Done
Thomas Avenue	0.06	Town	Town	Paved	1995-2009	Excellent	All Done
Thomaston Green Project	0.14	Town	Town	Paved	2004	Excellent	All Done
Thomaston Street	0.85	Town	Town	Paved	2012-2013	Excellent	All Done
Town Forest Road	0.10	Town	Town	Paved	2001-2016	Excellent	All Done
Town Office, Main St. to Knox St.	0.03	Town	Town	Paved	1997-2014	Fair	
Valley Street	0.26	Town	Town	Paved	2002	Excellent	
Wadsworth Street	0.49	Town	State	Paved	2018	Excellent	All Done
Water Street	0.43	Town	Town	Paved	2002-2012	Good	
Watts Lane	0.27	Town	Town	Paved	1996	Good	
West Meadow Road	1.55	Town	Town	Paved	2018	Excellent	.31 Miles
					2002	Excellent	1.24 Miles
					1992-2011	Excellent	
					2012	Excellent	
Total Miles		17.52	Page 2				

Total Mileage on the Roads	32.67 Miles Including Rt.# 1 and Rt.# 131
State Highway Mileage	5.26 Miles
State Aid Highway Mileage	4.49 Miles
Town Road Mileage	22.40 Miles
Gravel Road Mileage	0.52 Miles
Source: Public Works	

Appendixes 11 – 12

There are no appendixes for Chapters 11 and 12.

Appendix 13: Existing Land Use

Thomaston’s complete, current Land Use and Development Ordinance is available for viewing and download at the Town’s website. As of March 8, 2020, the link is as follows:

<https://www.thomastonmaine.us/public/index.php/downloads-archive/downloads-code-office?folder=Ordinances>

Appendix 14: List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AADT: Annual Average Daily Traffic

AARP: American Association of Retired Persons

ACS: American Community Survey

ADA: American Disabilities Act

ADU: Accessory Dwelling Unit

AST: Above Ground Storage Tank

BwH: Beginning with Habitat

CAP: Community Action Program

CDBG: Community Development Block Grant

CDD: Construction Demolition Debris

CEDS: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

CEO: Code Enforcement Officer

CFR: Critical Rate Factor (safety rating of roadways)

CSO: Combined Sewer Overflow

DACF: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

DASH: Downtown Area Shuttle

DEP: Maine Department of Environmental Protection

DOT: Maine Department of Transportation (also MDOT or MEDOT))

DMR: Maine Department of Marine Resources

DWA: Deer Wintering Area

ECDC: Economic Community Development Committee

EDA: U.S. Dept. of Commerce Economic Development Administration

EMS: Emergency Medical System

FAADT: Factored Annual Average Daily Traffic

FAME: Finance Authority of Maine

FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency

FIRM: Flood Insurance Rate Map

FY: Fiscal Year

GIS: Geographic Information System

GRLT: Georges River Land Trust

GRRSMO: Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization

HUD: US Department of Housing and Urban Development

LHO: Local Health Officer

LUO: Thomaston Land Use and Development Ordinance

MCEDD: Midcoast Economic Development District

MCOA: Maine Coastal Observing Alliance

MCRPC: Midcoast Regional Planning Commission

MDEP: Maine Department of Environmental Protection

MDIFW: Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

MDMR: Maine Department of Marine Resources

MDOT: Maine Department of Transportation

MEMA: Maine Emergency Management Agency

MGD: Million Gallons per Day

MHA: Maine Housing Authority

MOE: Margin of Error

MRC: Midcoast Recreation Center

MSWF: Municipal Solid Waste Facility

NAV: Increase in Value above the OAV (original assessed value)

NRPA: Natural Resources Protection Act

NHWL: Normal High Water Line

OAV: Original Assessed Value

OBD: Overboard Discharge

PBMC: Penobscot Bay Medical Center

PCD: Thomaston Pollution Control Department

RSU: Regional School Union

SGCN: Species of Greatest Conservation Need

SR: State Route

TIF: Tax Increment Finance District

USDA: US Department of Agriculture

USACE: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

UST: Underground Storage Tank

VRAP: Voluntary Response Action Program of DEP

WCAP: Waldo Community Action Partners

WWH: Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat