



City of Belfast, ME

# COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PLAN

August 2021

This Page Intentionally Left Blank

# CONTENTS

1

Introduction

2

Existing Conditions

3

Public Engagement

4

Market Opportunities

5

Opportunities & Challenges

6

Goals & Strategies

# **Chapter 1**

## INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE

The City of Belfast sought a Community Revitalization Plan (the “Plan”) to help generate economic development and new investment in two key focus areas within the city. The plan builds off of a comprehensive Brownfields Revitalization Study that provided a detailed property inventory along with a market analysis that identified key opportunities for the City. The Plan is also intended to supplement the City of Belfast’s Comprehensive Plan, which was prepared concurrently with the Community Revitalization Plan.

This Community Revitalization Plan focuses on goals to support economic development, housing, and business growth. The Community Revitalization Plan examines the existing conditions in the city, including a look at data on people, economy, land use, built environment, infrastructure, and transportation to provide a holistic look at conditions in the two focus areas. The planning process included a public engagement process to solicit input from stakeholders and community members, which was used along with research and analysis findings to craft specific strategies to help revitalize key areas within the City of Belfast and the city as a whole.

## STUDY AREA

The specific areas within the City of Belfast that are the focus of the Community Revitalization Plan consist of two noncontiguous areas that are both located within the U.S. Route 1 bypass, one that is approximately 73 acres in size and includes the vast majority of the City’s downtown and waterfront districts (“Focus Area 1”) and another that is approximately 80 acres in size (“Focus Area 2”). The following pages provide an overview and detailed maps of the focus areas.

### FOCUS AREA 1

Focus Area 1 consists of the city’s downtown and waterfront districts which include a City-owned parcel located at 45 Front Street. The area is bound by Miller Street to the southeast, ME-3 to the northeast, the Passagassawakeag to the northeast, and High Street, Pierce Street, Front Street, Bridge Street, Anderson Street, Cedar Street, and Court Street to the southwest.

This area contains approximately 143 businesses/employers and is one of the major areas of commerce in the City.

### FOCUS AREA 2

Focus Area 2 consists of a City-owned parcel located at 115 Congress Street in Belfast along

with other privately owned properties within the Route 1 bypass.

Focus Area 2 is located in a primarily residential neighborhood that is slightly south of Belfast’s main downtown area and north of the Belfast Municipal Airport. It also has immediate access to Route 1 and Route 52, both of which can be accessed within 0.5 miles of the study area.

## REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS AND STUDIES

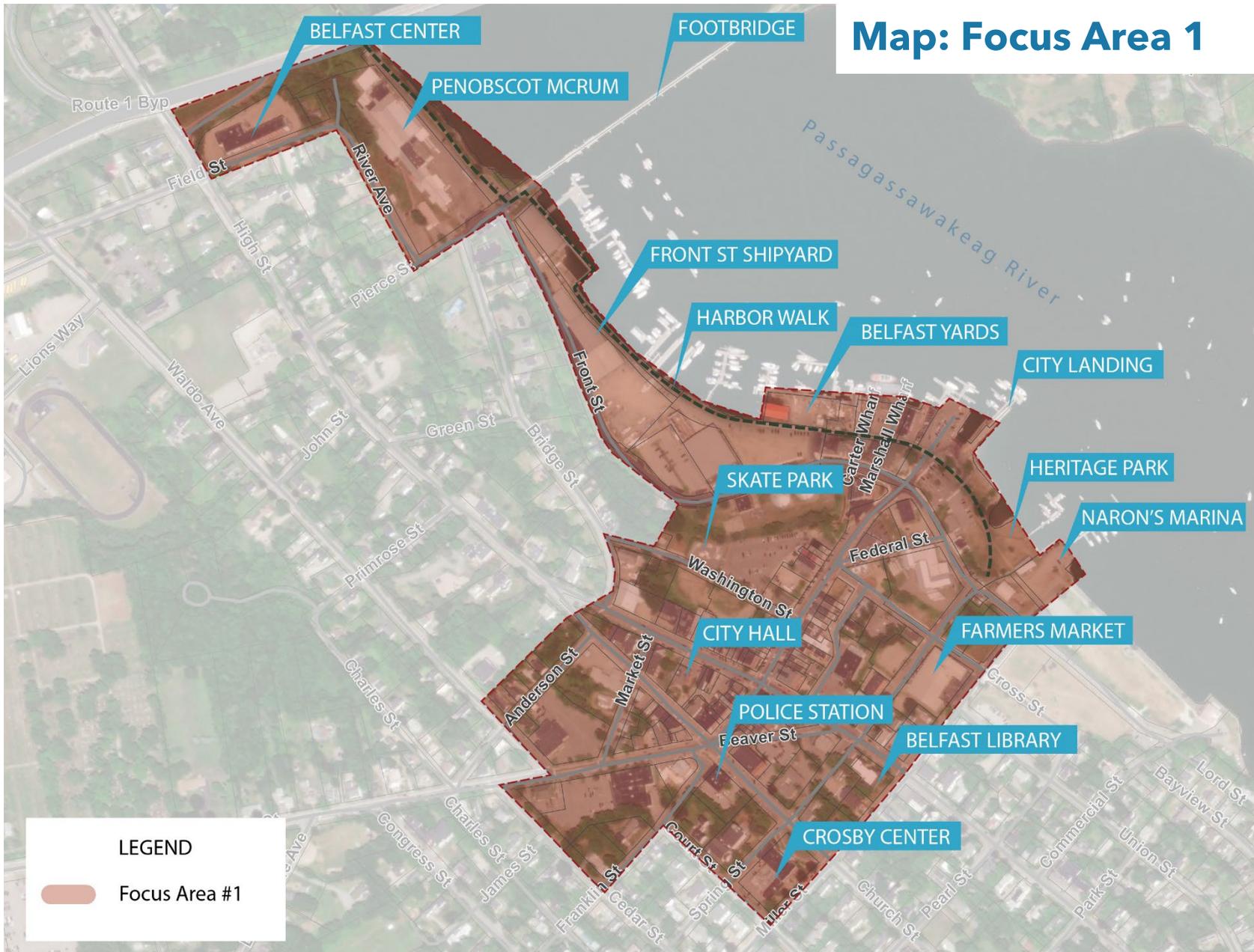
The Community Revitalization Plan builds off of previously completed and ongoing planning efforts and other studies. The following key studies were reviewed as part of the planning process:

- City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan Update (In Progress)
- Brownfields Revitalization Study (2021)
- City of Belfast Downtown & Waterfront Master Plan (2012)
- Report on the Inner Harbor Improvement Project Plan (2014)
- Downtown Waterfront Development Program (2006; 2014)
- City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan (2012)

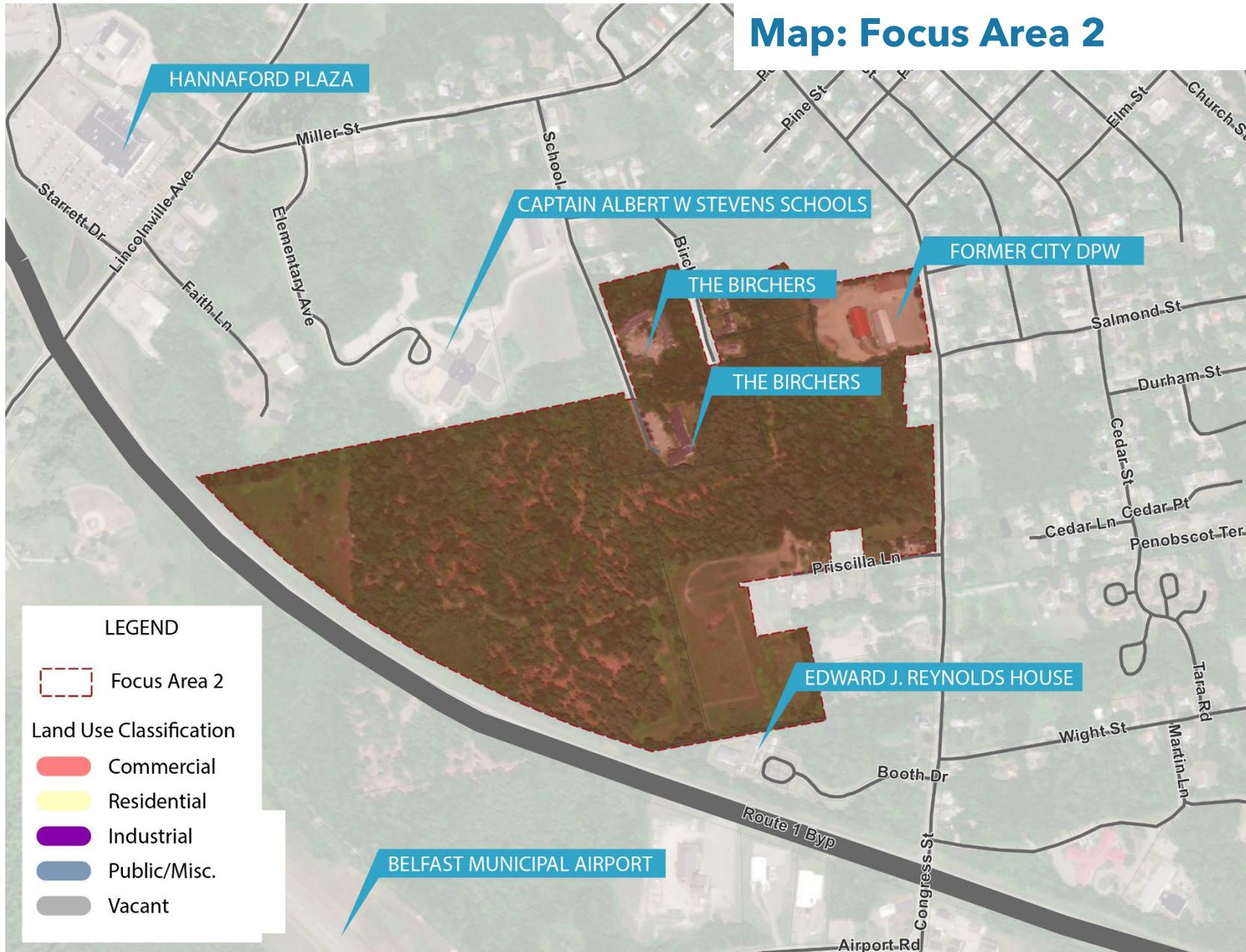
## Map: Focus Area 1 and 2 Overview



# Map: Focus Area #1



## Map: Focus Area 2



# **Chapter 2**

## Existing Conditions

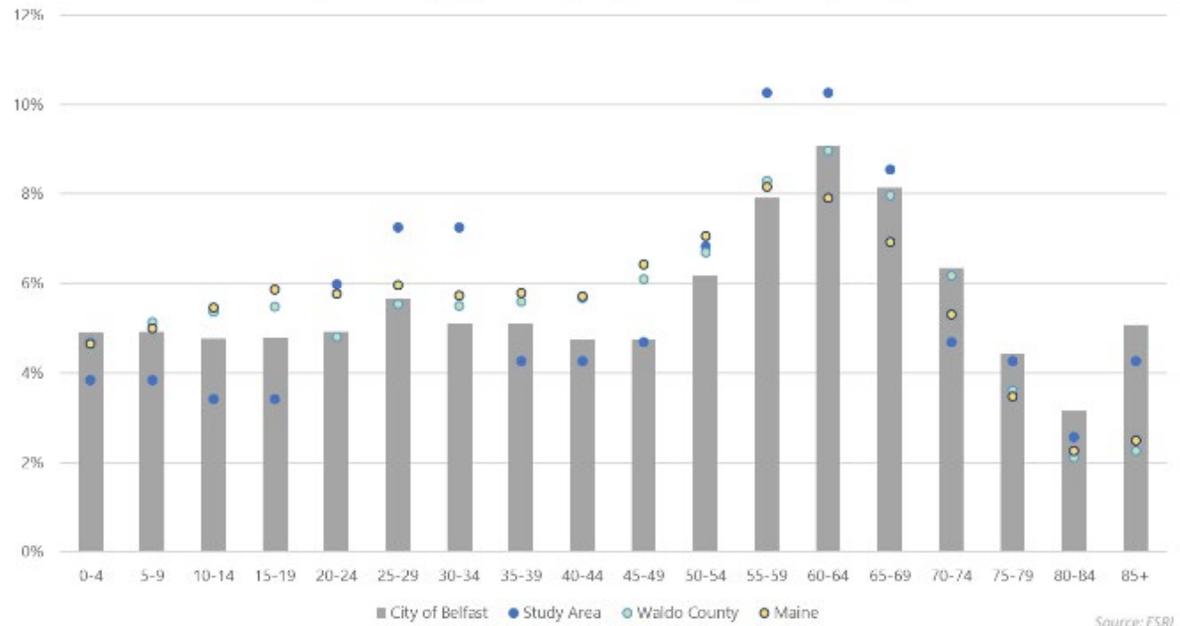
# PEOPLE

## Population and Age

**Population Growth May Affect Demand for Housing.** As of 2019, 6,679 people lived within the City of Belfast according to U.S. Census population estimates. It is estimated that approximately 236 people reside in Focus Area 1 based on Esri data. Since 2010, Belfast’s population has remained largely unchanged suggesting that if past population trends continue, population growth will not be a significant driver of housing demand. However, this does not necessarily mean that population growth is not possible and any increases in future population growth trends will increase the demand for housing.

**Millennials and Empty Nesters Are Two Clear Population Groups in Focus Area 1 (Study Area).** The median age in 2019 in the City of Belfast was 51 and there is a slightly higher proportion of the population that is over 70 compared to Waldo County and the State of Maine. While only approximately 236 people live in the Study Area, this resident population group has a relatively high concentration of millennials (aged 25-34) and “empty nesters” (aged 55-69).

Population by Age Cohort, Regional Comparison (2019)



Source: ESRI

Note that “Study Area” in charts above refers to Focus Area 1

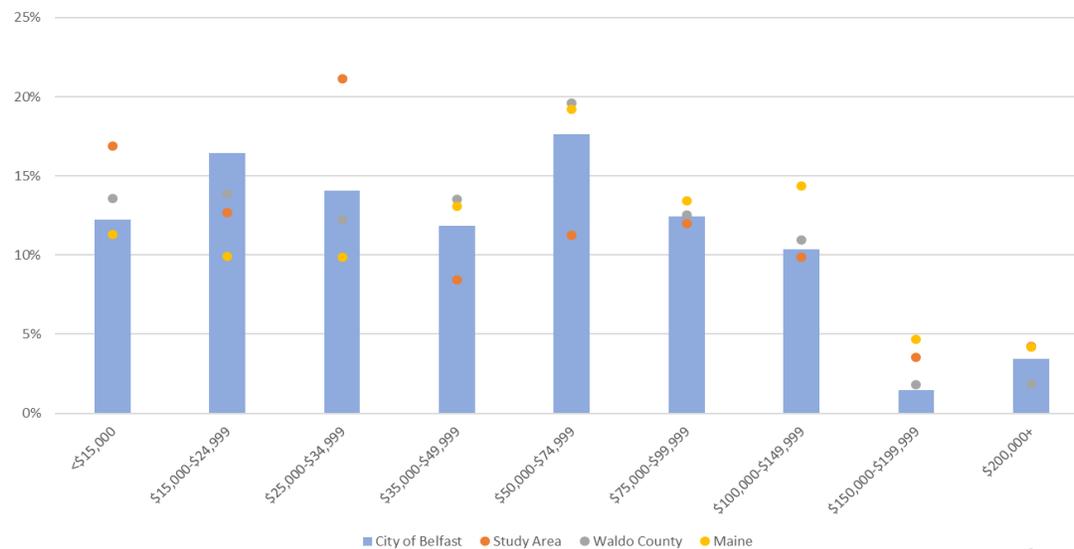
## Income

**Income Levels in Focus Area 1 Fall Below Those of the City.** As of 2019, the median household income in the City of Belfast was \$43,002, which is approximately 20% higher than the median household income in the Study Area (Focus Area 1), 5% lower than the median household income in Waldo County, and 23% lower than the State of Maine.

## Education

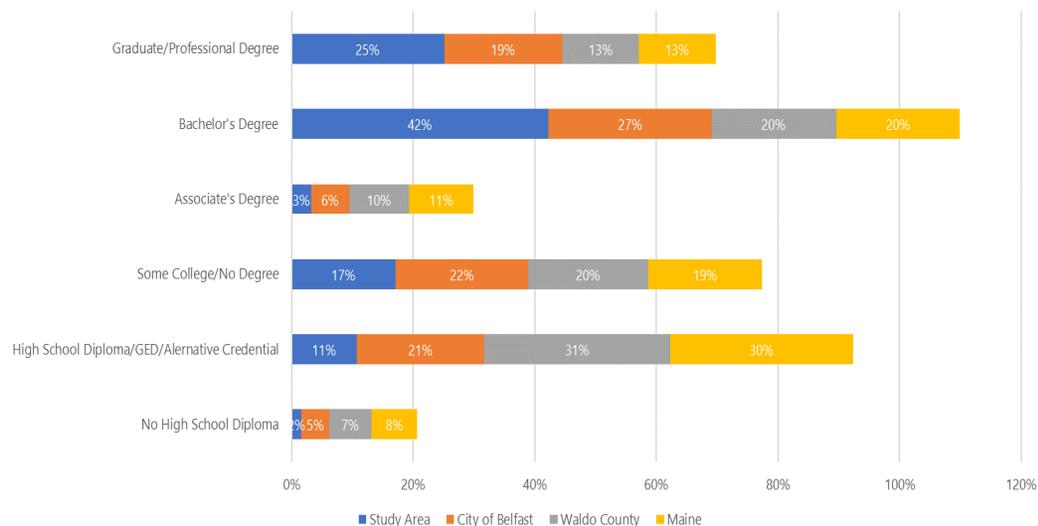
**The Study Area (Focus Area 1) Population Has Generally Higher Levels of Education - But Lower Income Levels.** Over 70% of residents in the Study Area (Focus Area 1) have an Associate Degree or higher, which is significantly above the education levels found in the City and County. Despite obtaining higher levels of educational attainment, the Study Area population has a lower median household income of approximately \$34,500 compared to \$43,000 for the City overall.

Households by Income Cohort, Regional Comparison (2019)



Source: ESRI

Educational Attainment, Regional Comparison (2019)



Source: ESRI

Note that "Study Area" in charts above refers to Focus Area 1

## Commute Patterns

Commuting pattern data is crucial in further understanding demographic trends within an economy, and the characteristics of residents and workers who live in a specific area or region. The following are highlights from commute pattern analysis focused on the City of Belfast:

- The City of Belfast is a “net importer” of labor with 1,026 residents leaving the town every day for employment and another 4,995 workers commuting into the city for employment. Only 30% of commuters live in the top 10 places where workers come from, which indicates that workers come from a wide variety of communities.
- In-commuters represent a potential source of housing demand and there may be a potential to attract these workers to live in the City.
- The City of Belfast has 1,242 residents who live and work within the city’s boundaries.
- Other than living within the City of Belfast, the highest concentration of Belfast workers reside in Bangor (2.0%) and Camden (1.6%).
- Looking at the top ten places where City of Belfast residents work, the highest percentage of resident workplaces, outside



Source: US Census 2017 OnTheMap

| Top 10 Places of Work<br>City of Belfast Residents (2017) |              |              |
|---|--------------|--------------|
| Place of Residence  | # of Workers | % of Workers |
| Belfast   | 1,242        | 54.8%        |
| Bangor  | 100          | 4.4%         |
| Rockland  | 60           | 2.6%         |
| Augusta   | 41           | 1.8%         |
| Searsport   | 36           | 1.6%         |
| Camden  | 30           | 1.3%         |
| Portland  | 23           | 1.0%         |
| Waterville  | 23           | 1.0%         |
| Ellsworth   | 22           | 1.0%         |
| Brewer  | 20           | 0.9%         |
| <b>Total (Top 10)</b>                                     | <b>1,597</b> | <b>70.4%</b> |
| <b>All Other Locations</b>                                | <b>671</b>   | <b>29.6%</b> |

Source: US Census 2017 OnTheMap

| Top 10 Places of Residence<br>City of Belfast Workers (2017) |              |              |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| Place of Residence   | # of Workers | % of Workers |
| Belfast  | 1,242        | 19.9%        |
| Bangor   | 122          | 2.0%         |
| Camden   | 99           | 1.6%         |
| Searsport  | 97           | 1.6%         |
| Rockland   | 74           | 1.2%         |
| Bucksport  | 66           | 1.1%         |
| Portland   | 47           | 0.8%         |
| Winterport   | 47           | 0.8%         |
| Augusta  | 37           | 0.6%         |
| Hampden  | 33           | 0.5%         |
| <b>Total (Top 10)</b>  | <b>1,864</b> | <b>29.9%</b> |
| <b>All Other Locations</b>                                   | <b>4,373</b> | <b>70.1%</b> |

Source: US Census 2017 OnTheMap

of the City of Belfast, are in Bangor (4.4%) and Rockland (2.6%).

- The highest percentage of workers in Belfast work in the Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation (21.9%); Health Care and Social Assistance (20.7%); and Retail Trade (13.7%) industries.

## Housing

The median home value in the Study Area (Focus Area 1) is approximately 10% higher than in the City of Belfast. The median home value in the City of Belfast is approximately 20% higher than Waldo County.

The highest percentage of homes in the City of Belfast fall in the \$100,000 to \$150,000 range, followed closely by homes in the \$200,000 to \$250,000 range.

The City of Belfast housing market is primarily composed of owner-occupied housing units, while Focus Area 1 is primarily composed of renter-occupied housing. Percentage growth in the amount of housing in the City and Focus Area 1 have generally aligned with those seen in the county and state over the last decade.

While data is not available for Focus Area 2 due to the limited number of properties in the area, there is a mix of rental and single-family housing within the Focus Area.

| Median Home Value, Regional Comparison (2019) |                   |
|---|-------------------|
|   | Median Home Value |
| Study Area                                    | \$230,769         |
| City of Belfast                               | \$209,402         |
| Waldo County                                  | \$174,092         |
| Maine   | \$198,000         |

Source: ESRI

| Study Area      |      |      |                   |                      |
|-----------------|------|------|-------------------|----------------------|
|                 | 2010 | 2019 | % of Total (2019) | % Change (2010-2019) |
| Owner-Occupied  | 51   | 54   | 30%               | 6%                   |
| Renter-Occupied | 81   | 88   | 48%               | 8%                   |
| Vacant          | 36   | 40   | 22%               | 10%                  |
| Total           | 168  | 182  | 100%              | 8%                   |

| City of Belfast |       |       |                   |                      |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------------------|----------------------|
|                 | 2010  | 2019  | % of Total (2019) | % Change (2010-2019) |
| Owner-Occupied  | 1,872 | 1,963 | 51%               | 5%                   |
| Renter-Occupied | 1,177 | 1,274 | 33%               | 8%                   |
| Vacant          | 533   | 605   | 16%               | 12%                  |
| Total           | 3,582 | 3,842 | 100%              | 7%                   |

| Waldo County    |        |        |                   |                      |
|-----------------|--------|--------|-------------------|----------------------|
|                 | 2010   | 2019   | % of Total (2019) | % Change (2010-2019) |
| Owner-Occupied  | 12,900 | 13,696 | 59%               | 6%                   |
| Renter-Occupied | 3,531  | 3,887  | 17%               | 9%                   |
| Vacant          | 5,135  | 5,812  | 25%               | 12%                  |
| Total           | 21,566 | 23,395 | 100%              | 8%                   |

| Maine           |         |         |                   |                      |
|-----------------|---------|---------|-------------------|----------------------|
|                 | 2010    | 2019    | % of Total (2019) | % Change (2010-2019) |
| Owner-Occupied  | 397,417 | 410,952 | 54%               | 3%                   |
| Renter-Occupied | 159,802 | 168,310 | 22%               | 5%                   |
| Vacant          | 164,611 | 180,656 | 24%               | 9%                   |
| Total           | 721,830 | 759,918 | 100%              | 5%                   |

Source: ESRI

Note that "Study Area" in charts above refers to Focus Area 1. Vacant units include housing units considered seasonal

# ECONOMY

## Many Local Jobs Filled by Commuters.

Approximately 80% of all jobs in the City are filled by those commuting in from outside of the City. The most commonplace that workers commute from is Bangor and Camden; however, residents are well dispersed throughout the region.

## The Health Care and Social Assistance Industry is an Economic Strength.

The sector, anchored by Waldo County General Hospital, is the largest industry in the city with 1,436 jobs (20% of the total jobs) and is particularly concentrated in the city compared to Waldo County, Maine, and the U.S. as a whole. The average annual earnings in the sector in the City of Belfast are approximately \$60,000. Over the past decade, the industry has also been one of the fastest growing with a 27% increase in jobs in the city between 2009 and 2019.

## Tourism-Related Sectors Have Been Expanding.

The City has seen growth in its Accommodation and Food Services and Retail Trade sectors, which are closely linked with the tourism industry.

## Belfast has Strength in Manufacturing.

Manufacturing accounts for the third-highest number of jobs in the City with 688. While the industry either remained stagnant or saw losses

| Total Jobs by Industry, City of Belfast (2009-2019) |  |              |              |                  |                    |
|---|--|--------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------|
| NAICS   | Description  | 2009 Jobs    | 2019 Jobs    | 2009-2019 Change | 2009-2019 % Change |
| 55  | Management of Companies and Enterprises                                  | 32           | 435          | 403              | 1259%              |
| 62  | Health Care and Social Assistance  | 1,129        | 1,436        | 307              | 27%                |
| 72  | Accommodation and Food Services  | 517          | 604          | 87               | 17%                |
| 44  | Retail Trade   | 1,052        | 1,130        | 78               | 7%                 |
| 81  | Other Services (except Public Administration)                            | 317          | 355          | 38               | 12%                |
| 48  | Transportation and Warehousing   | 61           | 97           | 36               | 59%                |
| 31  | Manufacturing  | 665          | 688          | 23               | 3%                 |
| 54  | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                         | 125          | 145          | 20               | 16%                |
| 42  | Wholesale Trade  | 47           | 64           | 17               | 36%                |
| 51  | Information  | 23           | 39           | 16               | 70%                |
| 53  | Real Estate and Rental and Leasing                                       | 61           | 70           | 9                | 15%                |
| 22  | Utilities  | 16           | 19           | 3                | 19%                |
| 71  | Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                                      | 106          | 109          | 3                | 3%                 |
| 21  | Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction                            | -            | -            | -                | 0%                 |
| 56  | Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 187          | 181          | (6)              | -3%                |
| 23  | Construction   | 419          | 409          | (10)             | -2%                |
| 61  | Educational Services   | 93           | 71           | (22)             | -24%               |
| 11  | Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                               | 127          | 63           | (64)             | -50%               |
| 90  | Government   | 617          | 551          | (66)             | -11%               |
| 52  | Finance and Insurance  | 1,297        | 631          | (666)            | -51%               |
| <b>Total</b>  |  | <b>6,891</b> | <b>7,099</b> | <b>208</b>       | <b>3%</b>          |

Source: EMSI

in the broader region in the state over the past decade, it grew in Belfast and Waldo County. Wood product manufacturing, boat building, and frozen fruit, juice, and vegetable manufacturing are all strong subsectors.

## Industry Concentration

### Location Quotient

Location quotient (LQ) is a way of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry is in a region compared to broader national trends. It can reveal what makes a particular region “unique” in comparison to the national average, and generally, an LQ of greater than 1.0 indicates an area of significant industry concentration.

The City of Belfast has the most significant LQ in the Management of Companies and Enterprises; and Finance and Insurance industries. Both LQs are higher than any of the comparison regions.

### Competitive Advantages and Opportunities

The following are key findings from the regional economic development analysis outlining key competitive advantages of industries that may present the greatest potential opportunity for the City of Belfast:

#### Health Care and Social Assistance

The Health Care and Social Assistance industry is a key industry from a total jobs standpoint, representing the largest percentage of total jobs in the city in 2019 (20% or 1,436 jobs).

| Location Quotient Summary by Industry, Regional Comparison (2019) |  |                 |              |                |       |
|---|--|-----------------|--------------|----------------|-------|
| NAICS   | Description  | City of Belfast | Waldo County | Belfast Region | Maine |
| 11  | Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting                               | 0.76            | 1.85         | 2.20           | 1.82  |
| 21  | Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction                            | 0.00            | 0.10         | 0.04           | 0.07  |
| 22  | Utilities  | 0.77            | 0.47         | 1.00           | 0.69  |
| 23  | Construction   | 1.02            | 1.62         | 1.27           | 1.10  |
| 31  | Manufacturing  | 1.23            | 1.16         | 0.71           | 0.97  |
| 42  | Wholesale Trade  | 0.25            | 0.46         | 0.72           | 0.79  |
| 44  | Retail Trade   | 1.60            | 1.20         | 1.47           | 1.20  |
| 48  | Transportation and Warehousing   | 0.37            | 0.59         | 0.77           | 0.72  |
| 51  | Information  | 0.31            | 0.52         | 0.70           | 0.64  |
| 52  | Finance and Insurance  | 2.22            | 1.14         | 0.65           | 0.92  |
| 53  | Real Estate and Rental and Leasing                                       | 0.58            | 0.49         | 0.78           | 0.76  |
| 54  | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                         | 0.31            | 0.47         | 0.51           | 0.73  |
| 55  | Management of Companies and Enterprises                                  | 4.25            | 2.23         | 0.88           | 1.12  |
| 56  | Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 0.41            | 1.31         | 0.94           | 0.80  |
| 61  | Educational Services   | 0.39            | 1.32         | 0.96           | 1.14  |
| 62  | Health Care and Social Assistance  | 1.59            | 1.03         | 1.45           | 1.23  |
| 71  | Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                                      | 0.88            | 0.86         | 0.72           | 0.99  |
| 72  | Accommodation and Food Services  | 0.99            | 0.80         | 1.03           | 0.99  |
| 81  | Other Services (except Public Administration)                            | 1.06            | 1.28         | 1.07           | 0.94  |
| 90  | Government   | 0.52            | 0.78         | 0.83           | 1.01  |

Source: EMSI

The industry realized the second-highest growth from a total jobs standpoint adding approximately 300 jobs from 2009 to 2019. From a percent growth standpoint, the industry’s growth in the city was nearly five times higher than the next region (growth of 27% compared to 6% growth in Waldo County and the Belfast Region) from 2009 to 2019.

The Health Care and Social Assistance industry had the highest LQ of any other region (LQ of 1.6) in the city, and the city was the only region that had a positive regional competitive effect in Health Care and Social Assistance from 2009 to 2019. The industry represented the second-highest amount of total sales in the city in 2018 at 17% of the total sales or \$185.3 million.

### **General Medical and Surgical Hospitals**

The General Medical and Surgical Hospitals industry (within the Health Care and Social Assistance industry) accounted for a majority of job growth over the past decade. The industry grew by 52% (221 jobs) from 2009 to 2019 and has a LQ of 3.1 which is almost double that of any of the comparison geographies.

### **Management of Companies and Enterprises**

The Management of Companies and Enterprises industry realized the largest overall job growth from 2009 to 2019 in the city growing by 403 jobs. This represents overall job growth of 1259% since 2009. The industry has the highest LQ (4.2) of any industry in the city, and of any comparison region. The industry has a positive Regional Competitiveness Effect (RCE) in the city and in all of the comparison regions in the study.

### **Corporate, Subsidiary, and Regional Managing Offices**

The Corporate, Subsidiary, and Regional Managing Offices Industry (within the Management of Companies and Enterprises industry) has been the driver of industry growth in the city from 2009 to 2019, adding 403 jobs. The industry has a LQ of 4.4 and is projected to be the highest growth industry over the next decade in the city. Note that Fjord Seafood Chile

S.A. (Ducktrap River of Maine) is classified in this category and accounts for much of the concentration identified in this sector.

### **Manufacturing**

The Manufacturing industry represented the third-highest amount of jobs in the city in 2019 (688 total jobs). The industry represented 15% of total sales in the city in 2018 (the third highest) which translated into \$159.6 million dollars.

While the industry either remained stagnant or realized overall job losses in the Belfast Region and State from 2009 to 2019, it realized overall growth in the city and county. The industry had a LQ above 1.0 in the city and county indicating significant concentration, while the Belfast Region and state had LQs of below 1.0 indicating less-than-average concentration.

### **All Other Miscellaneous Wood Product Manufacturing**

The All Other Miscellaneous Wood Product Manufacturing industry (within the Manufacturing industry) was the sixth-highest growth industry in the city from 2009 to 2019, adding 47 jobs over that time period. The industry has an LQ of 117.9 indicating an extremely concentrated industry.

### **Frozen Fruit, Juice, and Vegetable Manufacturing**

The Frozen Fruit, Juice, and Vegetable Manufacturing industry (within the Manufacturing industry) was the seventh-highest growth industry in the city from 2009 to 2019, adding 44 jobs over that time. The industry has a location quotient of 113.6, indicating a substantial industry concentration

### **Retail Trade**

The Retail Trade industry represented the second-highest amount of total jobs in the city in 2019 (16% or 1,130 jobs). The industry was the fourth-highest growth industry from 2009 to 2019 adding 78 jobs over that time period. While the Belfast Region and State saw overall job losses in the industry from 2009 to 2019, the city and county both realized 7% total job growth. The industry has the highest LQ (Lq of 1.60) of any of the comparison regions in the City and was the only region with a positive RCE in the industry.

# LAND USE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

## Land Use

### Focus Area 1

The primary land use in Focus Area 1 is commercial use with 99 parcels and 25.5 acres of land. Miscellaneous land use (including public and other unclassified land uses) accounts for 17 parcels and 13.3 acres. There are also 13 vacant and 12 residential parcels that total 4.5 and 2.4 acres, respectively. Industrial use has the smallest concentration with 3 parcels amounting to 6.0 acres in Focus Area 1.

The Brownfields Revitalization Study (2021) provided a detailed inventory of spaces in Focus Area 1. As shown in the table to the right, there is approximately 884,000 square feet of building space in Focus Area 1 (excluding public properties). Commercial space composes the majority of building space with “Other Commercial” and “Retail” representing the two largest space categories, respectively.

### Land Use Summary: Focus Area 1

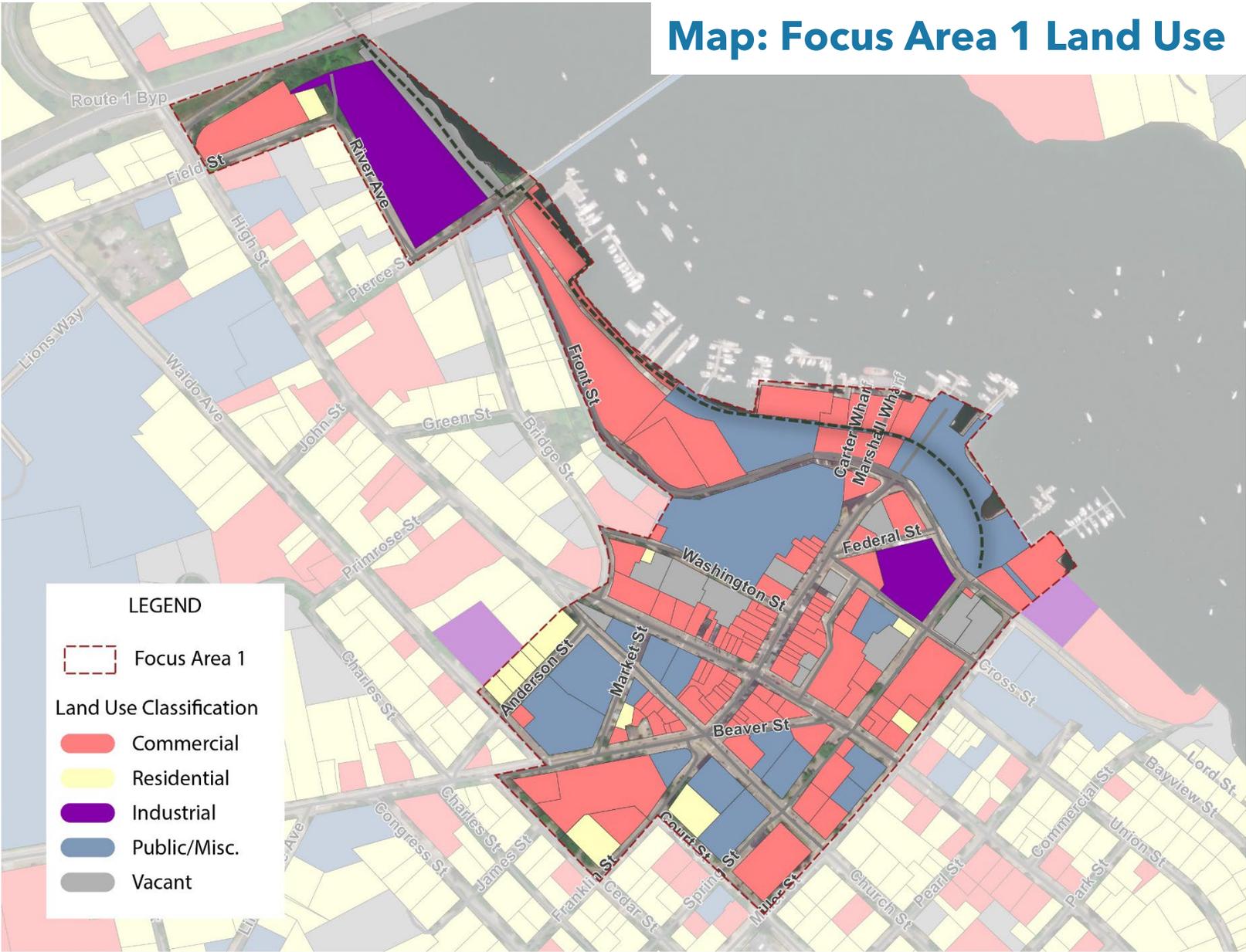
| Land Use Classification | Parcels    | Acreage     |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Commercial              | 99         | 25.5        |
| Vacant                  | 13         | 4.5         |
| Residential             | 12         | 2.4         |
| Industrial              | 3          | 6           |
| Miscellaneous           | 17         | 13.3        |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>144</b> | <b>51.6</b> |

Source: City of Belfast

| Summary of Spaces and Total Area (SF) by Location and Use Type |             |                   |               |                            |                        |                |
|--|-------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
|  | # of Spaces | % of Total Spaces | Below Ground  | First Floor / Ground Level | Second Floor and Above | Total SF       |
| Single-Family  | 17          | 4%                | N/A           | N/A                        | N/A                    | 38,054         |
| Multi-Family   | 129         | 31%               | 275           | 17,480                     | 124,526                | 142,281        |
| Office   | 130         | 32%               | 1,514         | 42,032                     | 73,924                 | 117,470        |
| Retail   | 57          | 14%               | 14,441        | 110,018                    | 6,020                  | 130,479        |
| Restaurant   | 20          | 5%                | 8,945         | 53,574                     | 6,231                  | 68,750         |
| Other Commercial   | 58          | 14%               | 22,766        | 294,682                    | 69,834                 | 387,282        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>411</b>  | <b>100%</b>       | <b>47,941</b> | <b>517,786</b>             | <b>280,535</b>         | <b>884,316</b> |

Source: Property Owner Survey; City of Belfast

# Map: Focus Area 1 Land Use



The property inventory of Focus Area 1 also revealed a significant portion of owner-occupied commercial space. Approximately 234,000 square feet of space falls into that category; however, over 60,000 square feet was indicated by property owners to be “unoccupied and not usable.” This indicates a potential opportunity to assist property owners in rehabilitating space to make it available for productive use, such as new commercial or residential space.

A parking inventory also examined the current parking supply in Focus Area 1, including the number of public and private spaces. Focus Area 1 has an estimated 1,727 total parking spaces, including public and private spaces and both on- and off-street spaces. Off-street parking represents the largest share of parking with 1,253 or 73% of the total. Private off-street parking outnumbers public off-street parking by a ratio of more than 2:1. However, when public on-street parking spaces are considered, there are slightly more public spaces (878) than private spaces (849).

Overall, there are 405 off-street parking spaces in Focus Area 1 owned by the City of Belfast. Other publicly owned parking includes parking for other governmental buildings in Focus Area 1 including the Post Office and the recently constructed Waldo Judicial Center.

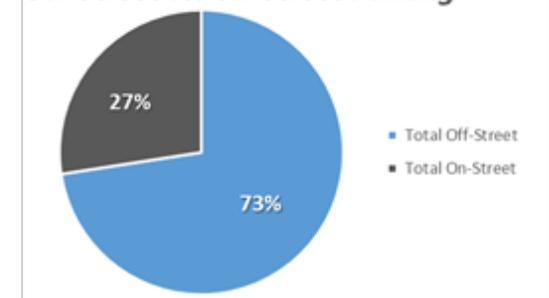
| Total Area (SF) by Use and Occupancy Type |         |         |  |                            |
|---|---------|---------|--|----------------------------|
|   | Owner   | Renter  | Unoccupied, But Available for Rent or Sale | Unoccupied, and Not Usable |
| Single-Family                             | 31,205  | 6,849   | -  | -                          |
| Multi-Family                              | 9,202   | 121,640 | 3,939                                      | 7,500                      |
| Office                                    | 11,132  | 76,333  | 30,005                                     | -                          |
| Retail                                    | 50,606  | 71,540  | 8,333                                      | -                          |
| Restaurant                                | 39,638  | 14,653  | 12,859                                     | 1,600                      |
| Other Commercial                          | 234,289 | 56,878  | 35,990                                     | 60,125                     |

Source: Property Owner Survey; City of Belfast

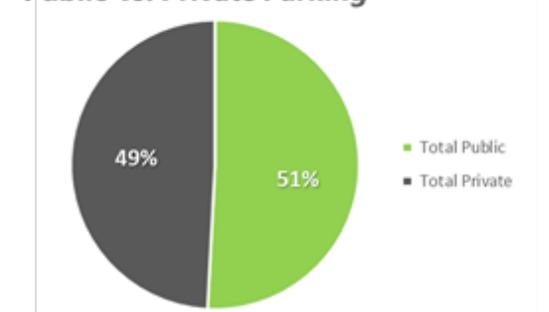
| Study Area Parking Inventory    |              |             |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Off-Street                      |              |             |
| Ownership/Type                  | Spaces       | % of Total  |
| Public Parking Lot              | 352          | 20%         |
| Public Building                 | 53           | 3%          |
| <b>Total Public Off-Street</b>  | <b>405</b>   | <b>23%</b>  |
| Private - Public Uses           | 551          | 32%         |
| Private - Private Uses          | 298          | 17%         |
| <b>Total Private Off-Street</b> | <b>849</b>   | <b>49%</b>  |
| <b>Total Off-Street</b>         | <b>1,254</b> | <b>73%</b>  |
| On-Street                       |              |             |
| <b>Total On-Street</b>          | <b>474</b>   | <b>27%</b>  |
| Total Parking                   |              |             |
| <b>Total Public</b>             | <b>879</b>   | <b>51%</b>  |
| <b>Total Private</b>            | <b>849</b>   | <b>49%</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>1,728</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Source: Google Streetview; City of Belfast Property Tax Records; Visual Inventory

Off-Street vs. On-Street Parking



Public vs. Private Parking



Note that “Study Area” refers to Focus Area 1

## Focus Area 2

Land within Focus Area 2 is primarily residential and vacant. There are five residential parcels totaling 29.5 acres, one vacant parcel of 35.1 acres, two commercial properties totaling 9.7 acres, and a miscellaneous property totaling 4.5 acres.

The two commercial properties consist of two 24-unit affordable senior rental housing facilities, located at 22 and 32 School Street.

The largest property is a vacant 35-acre parcel that is privately owned. Focus Area 2 also features another large tract of land of 25 acres that is privately owned and features a single-family home.

Focus Area 2 also includes the former City Department of Public Works property at 115 Congress Street, which has been cleared of buildings and is currently vacant. The City is currently seeking to redevelop the property.

## Land Use Summary: Focus Area 2

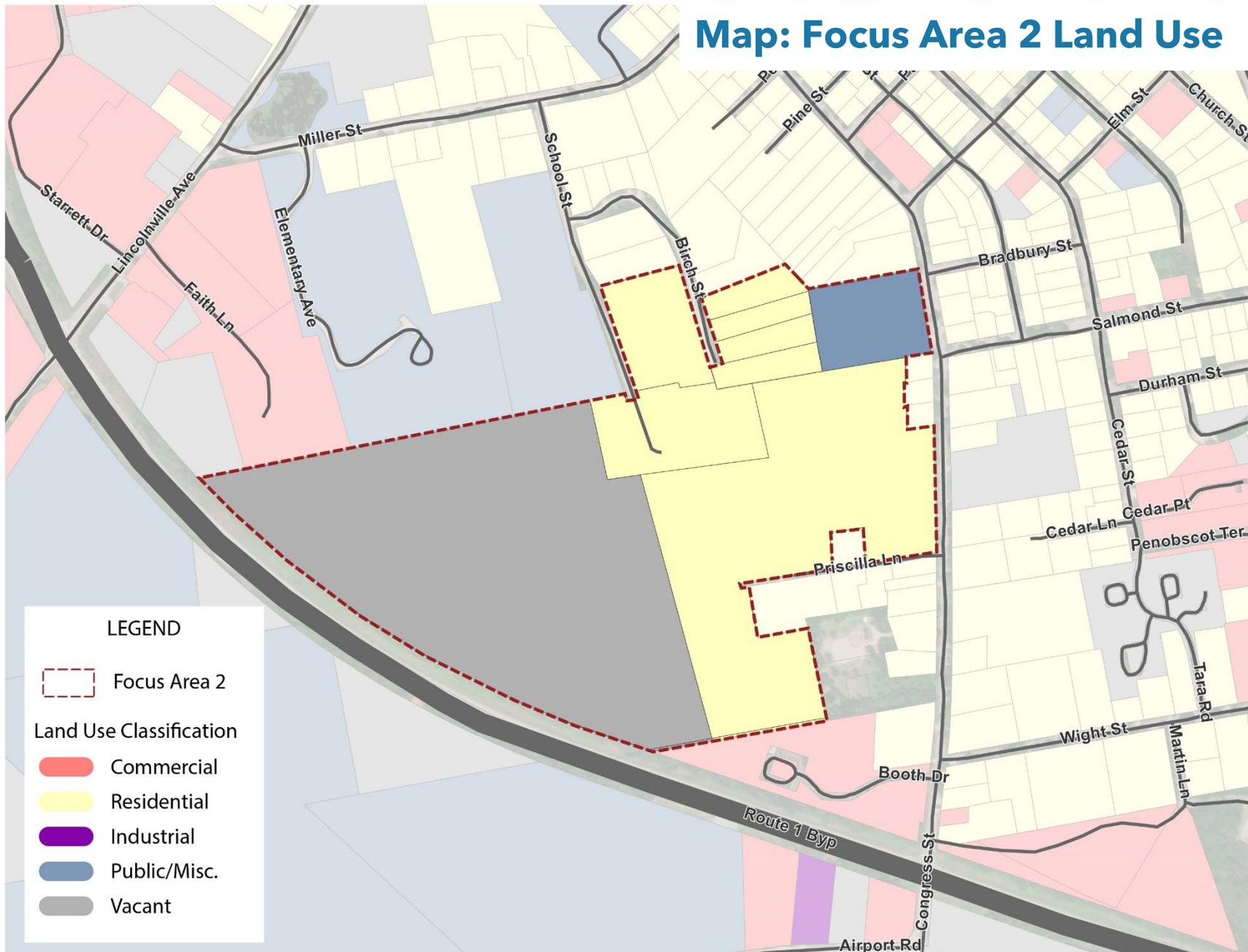
| Land Use Classification | Parcels  | Acreage     |
|-------------------------|----------|-------------|
| Commercial              | 2        | 9.7         |
| Vacant                  | 1        | 35.1        |
| Residential             | 5        | 29.5        |
| Industrial              | 0        | 0           |
| Miscellaneous           | 1        | 4.5         |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>9</b> | <b>78.8</b> |

Source: City of Belfast



The City-owned property at 115 Congress Street in Focus Area 2 has been cleared and represents a new development opportunity. Source: City of Belfast.

## Map: Focus Area 2 Land Use



## Zoning

Focus Area 1 is primarily zoned as Downtown Commercial District, which permits relatively higher building heights at 60 feet in certain circumstances compared to surrounding zones. The zone offers a high degree of flexibility with respect to allowable uses. Retail, office, and restaurant uses along with arts/cultural uses are permitted as of right. Other uses are permitted with approval by the Planning Board, including multifamily housing, health care facilities, hotels and motels, manufacturing, and others.

Focus Area 2 is zoned almost entirely as Residential 2 which permits single-family and two-family residential development as of right. Other uses may be permitted pending Planning Board review, including bed and breakfasts, certain offices, institutional uses, healthcare, and other types of housing among other uses.

The maps on the following page show the current zoning within each Focus Area that corresponds to the adjacent charts.

| Zoning Districts - Dimensional Standards                  |                             |  |  |
|---|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Zoning Name   | Height Restriction          | Density  | Minimum Lot Size/Frontage  |
| RES-1 Residential 1 Urban District                        | 38 ft.                      | 2 Dwellings per lot  | Minimum lot size: 7,500 square feet<br>minimum frontage: 60 feet   |
| RES-2 - Residential 2 District                            | 38 ft.                      | New structures<br>10,000 sq.ft. for multifamily<br>2,000 sq.ft. for each additional unit | Minimum lot size: 7,500 square feet<br>minimum frontage: 60 feet   |
| WMU-1 -Waterfront Mixed Use 1 (Waterfront I "A" Downtown) | 35 ft. or Contract rezoning | Variable depending on development  | Minimum lot size: 43,560 square feet.<br>minimum frontage: 200 feet except in certain instances                                      |
| WMU-2 -Waterfront Mixed Use 2 (Waterfront Mixed Use)      | 36 ft. or Contract rezoning | Variable depending on development  | Minimum lot size: 20,000 square feet except in certain instances<br>minimum frontage: 50 feet or 200 feet depending on circumstances |
| DC - Downtown Commercial District                         | 38 ft., 45 ft., or 60 ft.   | No standard Upper Floor Only   | Minimum lot size: 2,000 square feet<br>Minimum lot frontage: 20 feet   |

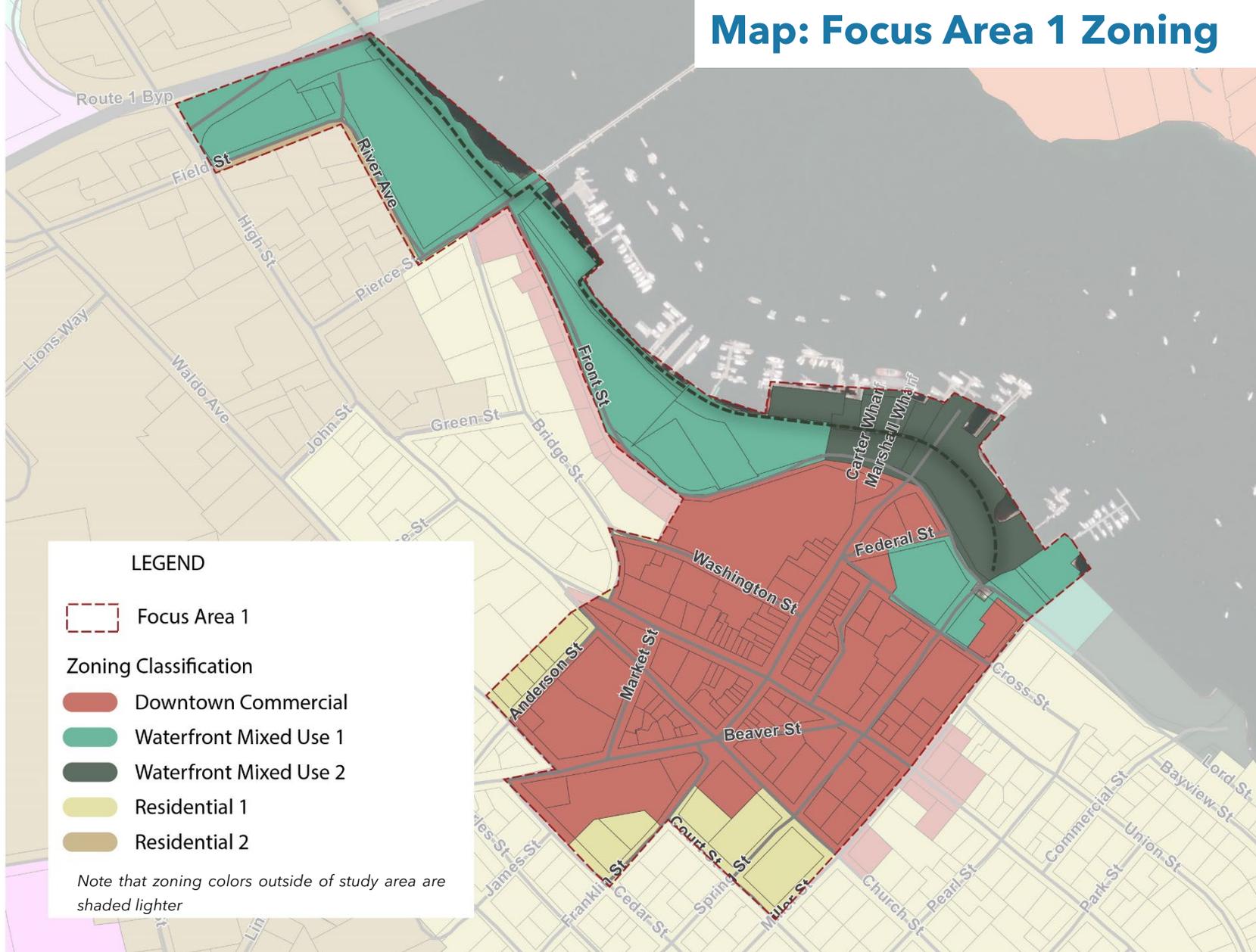
Source: City of Belfast

| Allowable Build-Out Uses by Zoning Classification |                           |                          |            |        |        |                  |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------|--------|--------|------------------|
| Zoning Classification                             | Single-Family Residential | Multi-Family Residential | Restaurant | Retail | Office | Other Commercial |
| Downtown Commercial                               | N                         | Y*                       | Y*         | Y*     | Y*     | Y**              |
| Waterfront Mixed Use 1                            | N                         | Y*                       | Y*         | Y*     | Y*     | Y**              |
| Residential 1                                     | Y                         | N                        | N          | N      | N      | N                |
| Residential 2                                     | Y                         | Y*                       | N          | N      | N      | N                |
| Waterfront Mixed Use 2                            | N                         | Y*                       | Y*         | Y*     | Y*     | Y**              |

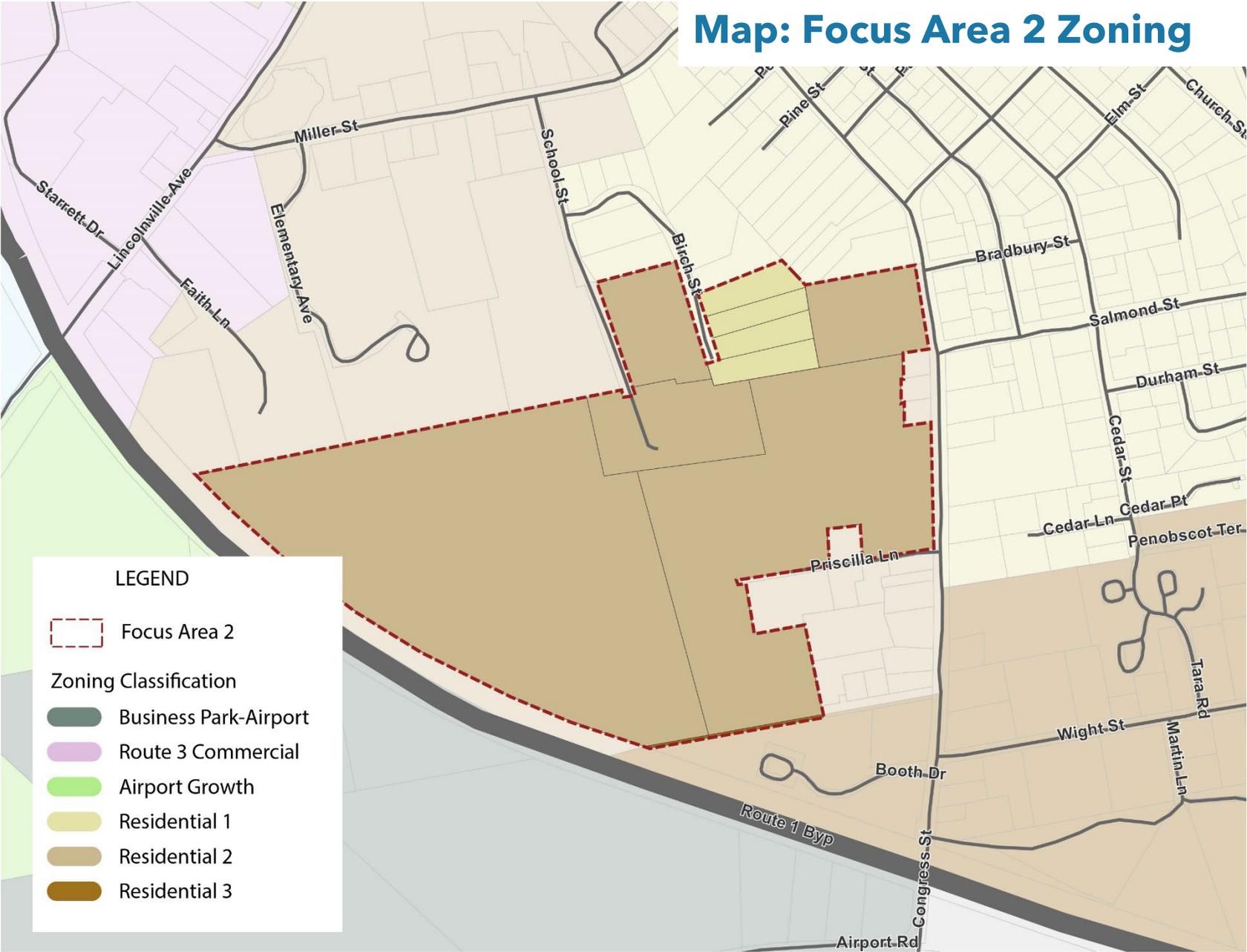
\*Permitted with Planning Board Review

\*\*Depending on type of use; most uses subject to Planning Board Review

# Map: Focus Area 1 Zoning



# Map: Focus Area 2 Zoning

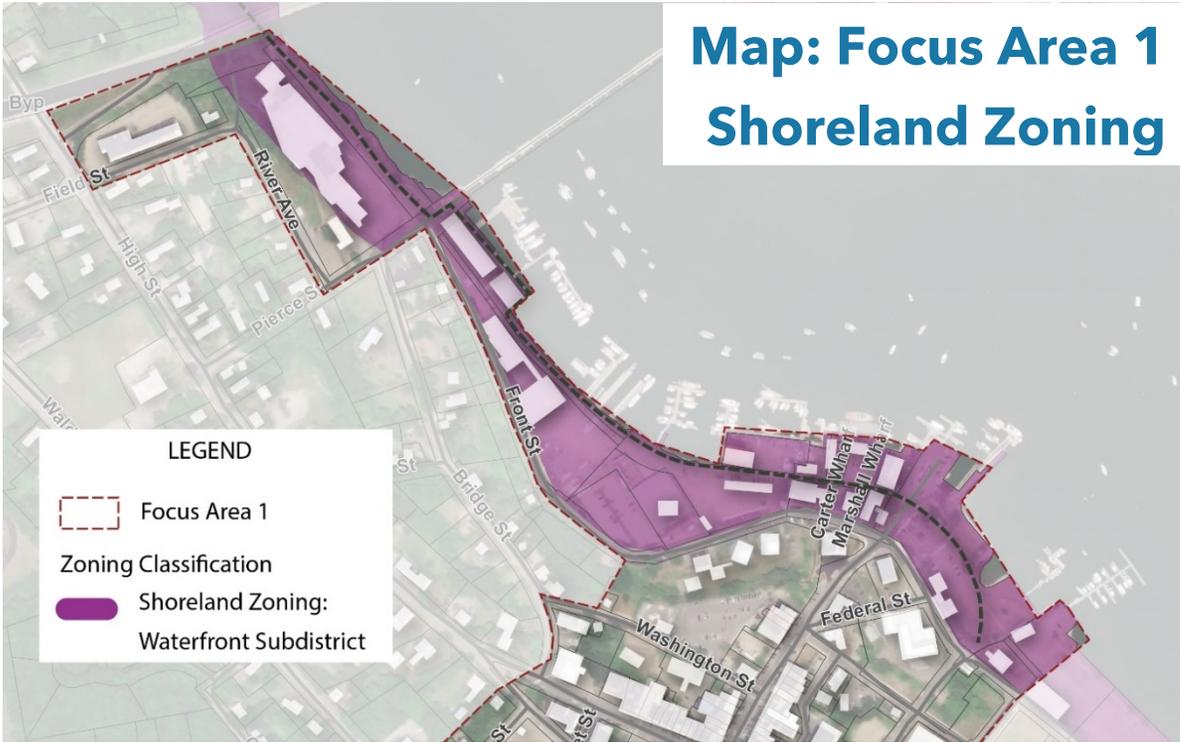


**LEGEND**

- Focus Area 2
- Zoning Classification**
- Business Park-Airport
- Route 3 Commercial
- Airport Growth
- Residential 1
- Residential 2
- Residential 3

# Map: Focus Area 1 Shoreland Zoning

Portions of the waterfront area in Focus Area 1 are also subject to Shoreland Zoning, as shown in the adjacent map.



# INFRASTRUCTURE

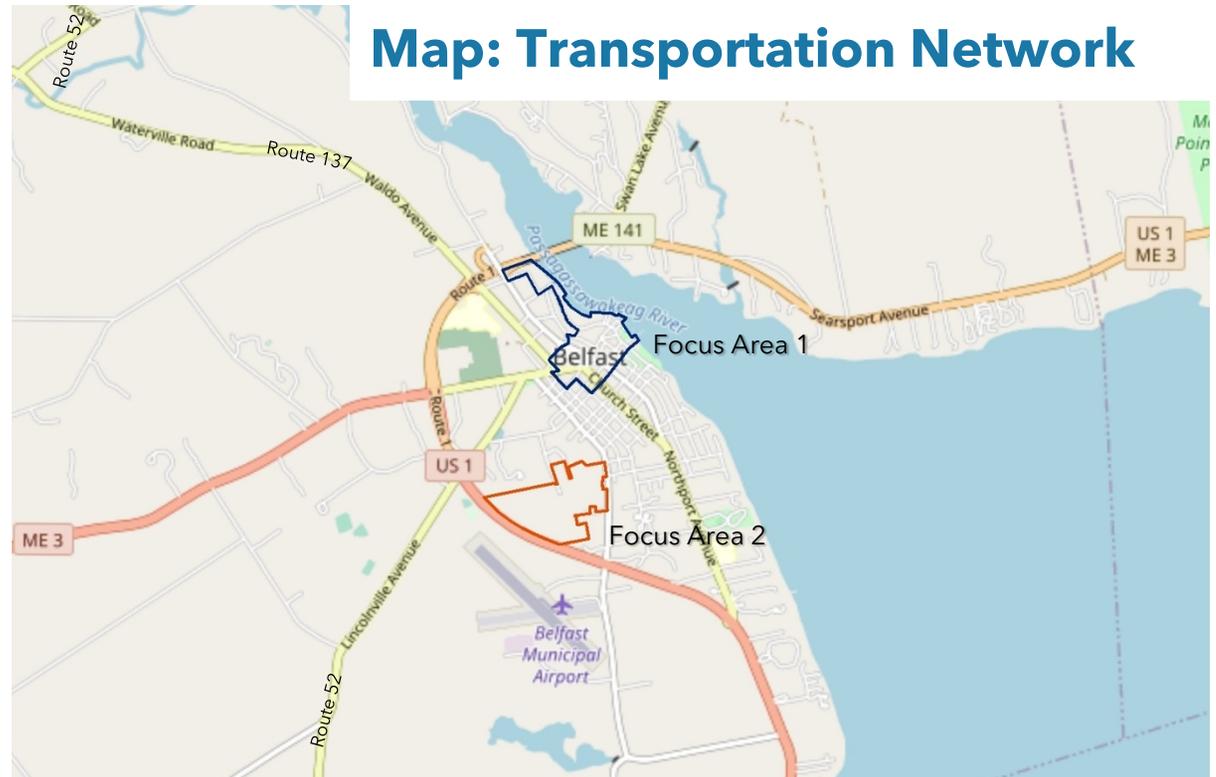
## Transportation

Transportation infrastructure is primarily composed of state and city roads. U.S. Route 1 runs through the city and is a primary artery for state and regional transportation. State roads include Waldo Avenue (Route 137), Belmont Avenue (Route 3), and Lincolnville Avenue (Route 52).

The Belfast Rail Trail is a 2.3-mile trail that runs along the Passagassawakeag River, connects to the Belfast Harbor Walk and connects to Footbridge Road, which crosses the river near Route 1. Portions of the trail run through Focus Area 1 and is an amenity for bikers and pedestrians. Streets in Focus Area 1 also include sidewalks for pedestrian traffic. Existing roads in Focus Area 2 are more rural in nature and currently lack sidewalks.

There is limited public transportation in Belfast. MidCoast Public Transportation provides Belfast DASH shuttle service, which is available free of charge within 0.75 miles in any direction of established route boundaries in the downtown area. The service is free of charge and available Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays as of the summer of 2021.

## Map: Transportation Network



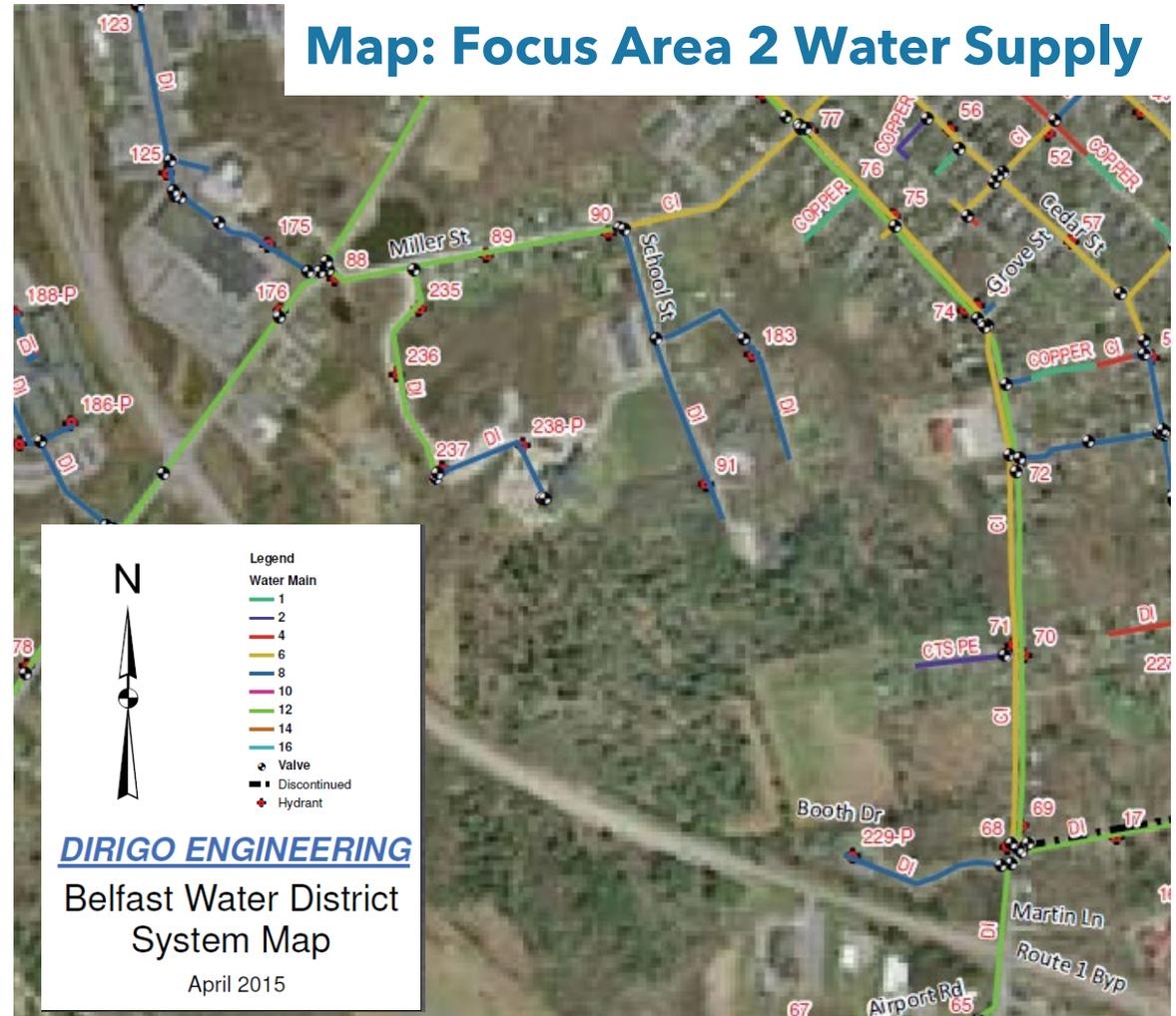
The Belfast Municipal Airport (BST) is located close to downtown and features a 4,000-foot lighted runway. As of 2015, there were approximately 10,000 aircraft operations, including 2,000 air taxi operations. There is no regular commercial passenger service at the airport.

## Water Supply

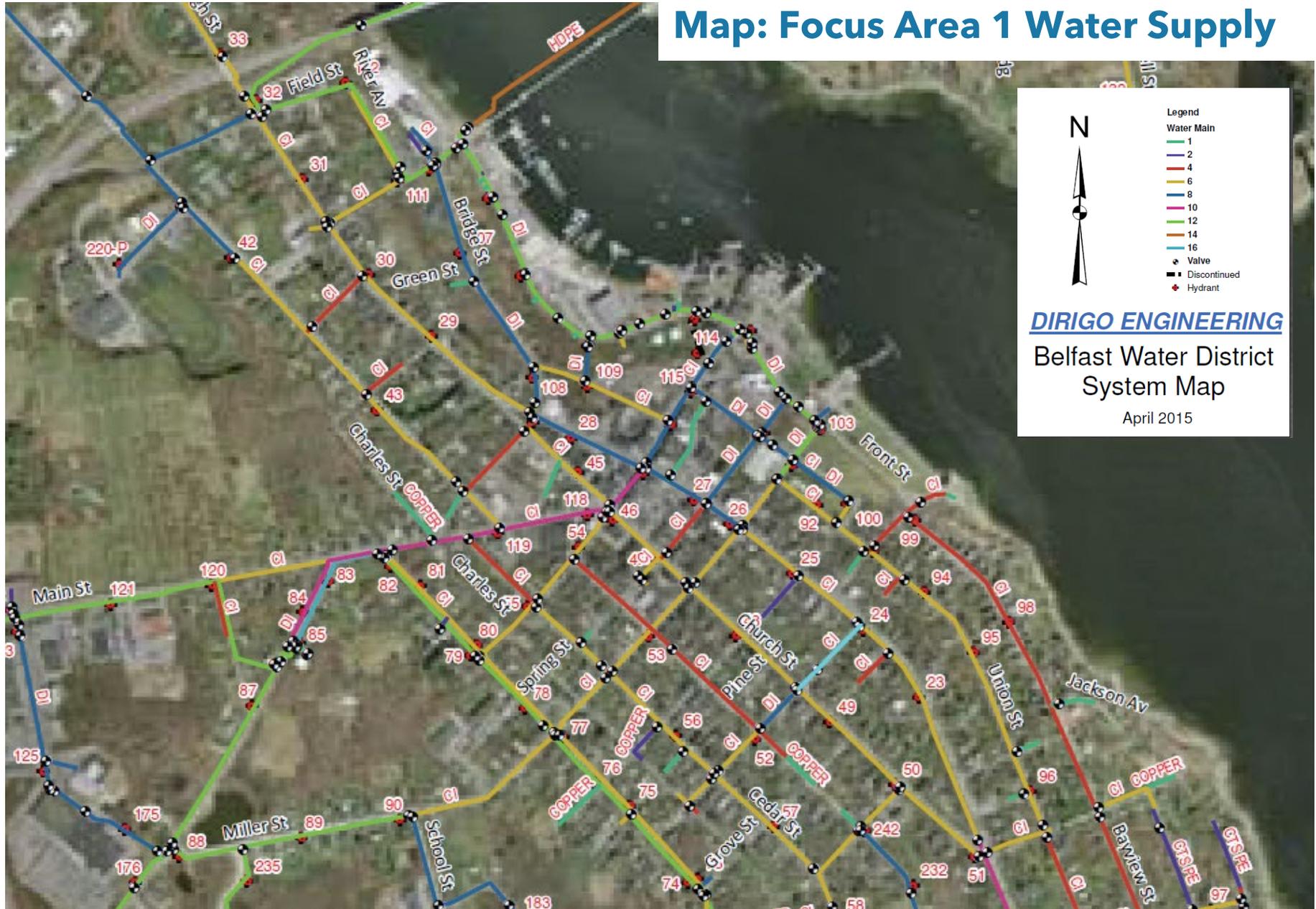
The City of Belfast, including both focus areas, is served by the Belfast Water District. The district is a public water utility that provides public drinking water and fire protection to Belfast and the community of the Northport Village Corporation.

Focus Area 1 includes a network of water mains, valves, and hydrants that provide water for the area. All properties in Focus Area 1 are served by public water.

Focus Area 2 is served by water mains, valves, and hydrants along Congress Street, Priscilla Lane, School Street, and Birch Street.



# Map: Focus Area 1 Water Supply

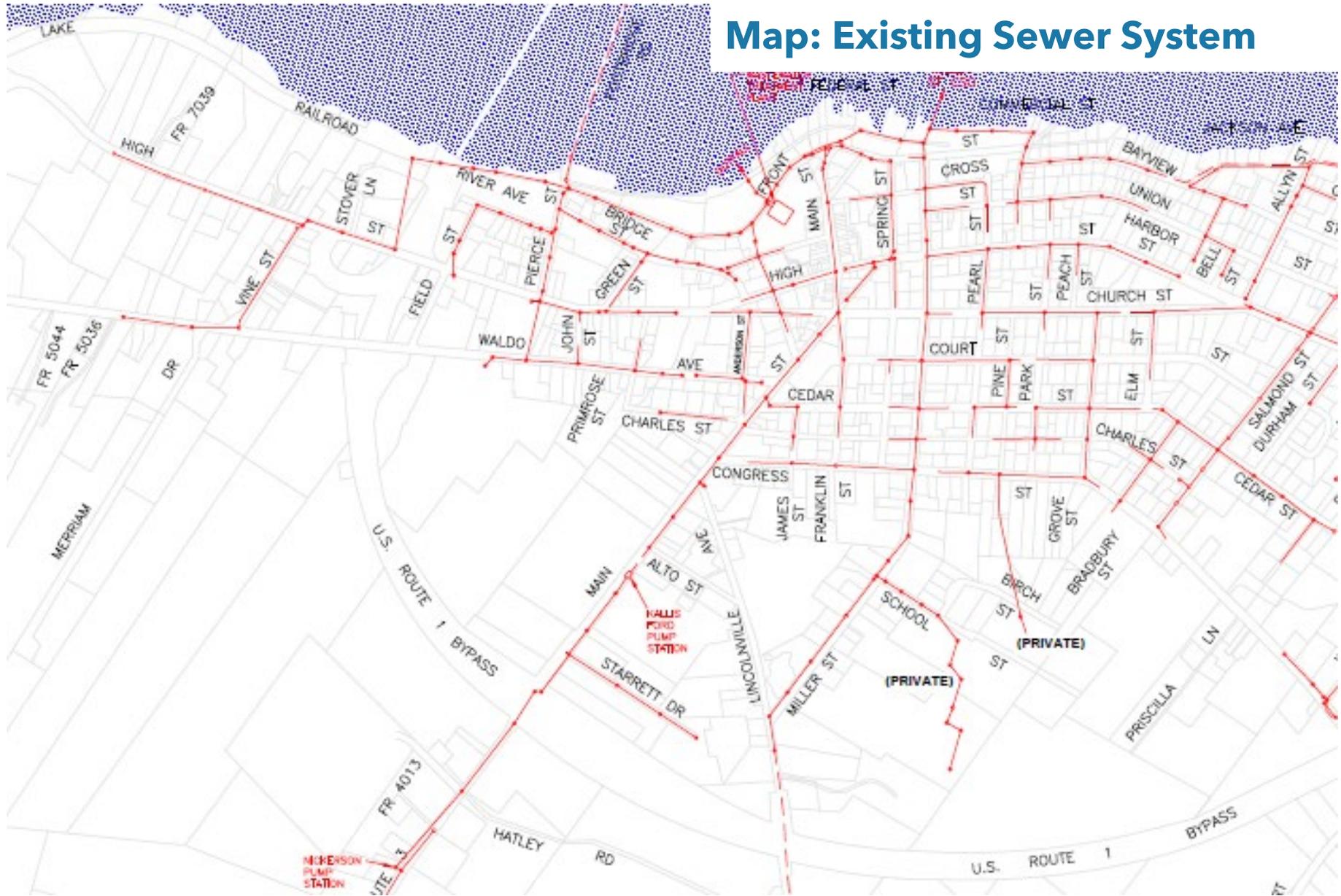


## Wastewater

Wastewater treatment is provided by the City of Belfast Wastewater Treatment System. The system consists of 31 miles of gravity sewer lines and force mains, 18 pump stations, and a 1.49 million gallons per day secondary wastewater treatment facility.

As shown on the map on the following page, there are existing sewer lines throughout Focus Area 1. Focus Area 2 does not have public sewer lines that run directly to the larger parcels, however, there may be potential to extend sewer infrastructure from the line currently servicing the Captain Albert W Stevens Schools property. This extension would likely be costly however, and would need to be further assessed by the City.

## Map: Existing Sewer System



Source: Olver Associates Inc; City of Belfast

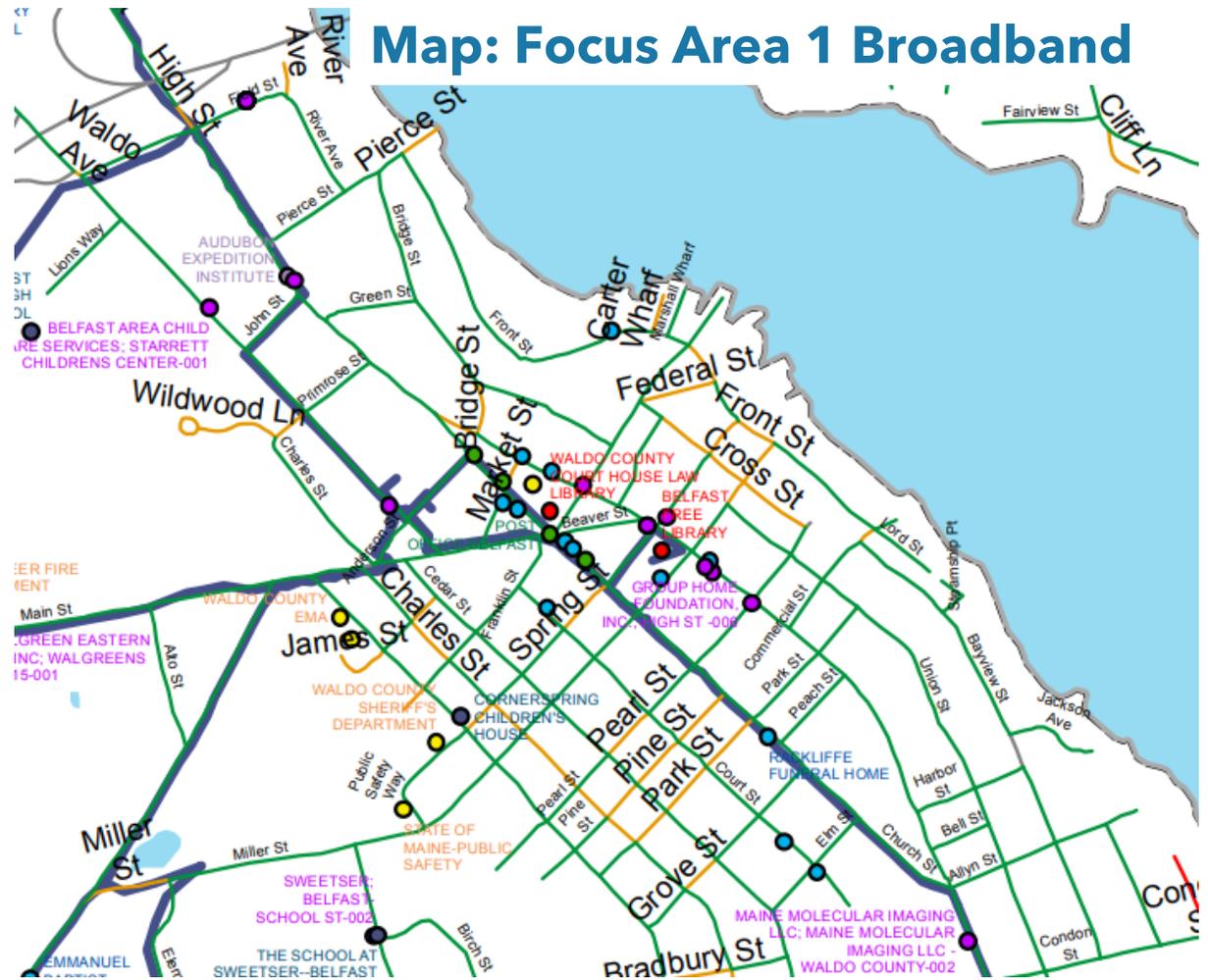
## Telecommunications

According to BroadbandNow, Belfast currently has 11 internet service providers and has efforts underway to expand broadband coverage. In December of 2020 the board of directors of the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) approved up to \$1.9 million in loan insurance and a \$1 million direct loan to help support increased access to broadband in the cities of Belfast and South Portland which will be used for post-construction capital expenditures and working capital.

The Maine Fiber Company constructed and leases a 1,100-mile, high-capacity fiber optic network in the state of Maine known as the "Three Ring Binder." More than 7 miles of the network's southern ring run through Belfast's east side through its downtown, along portions of Searsport Avenue, and other corridors as shown on the map to the right. Despite the presence of this infrastructure, not all properties within Focus Area 1 are able to access fiber optic as access via "last-mile" service providers remains an issue.

The map to the right shows the most recently available data on broadband access in the Focus Area (as of July 2017).

## Map: Focus Area 1 Broadband



Source: James W. Sewall Company

### COMMUNITY ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

- Library
- Medical/healthcare
- Other community support-government
- Other community support-nongovernmental
- Public safety
- School-K through 12
- University, college, other postsecondary

### 3 RING BINDER FIBER NETWORK

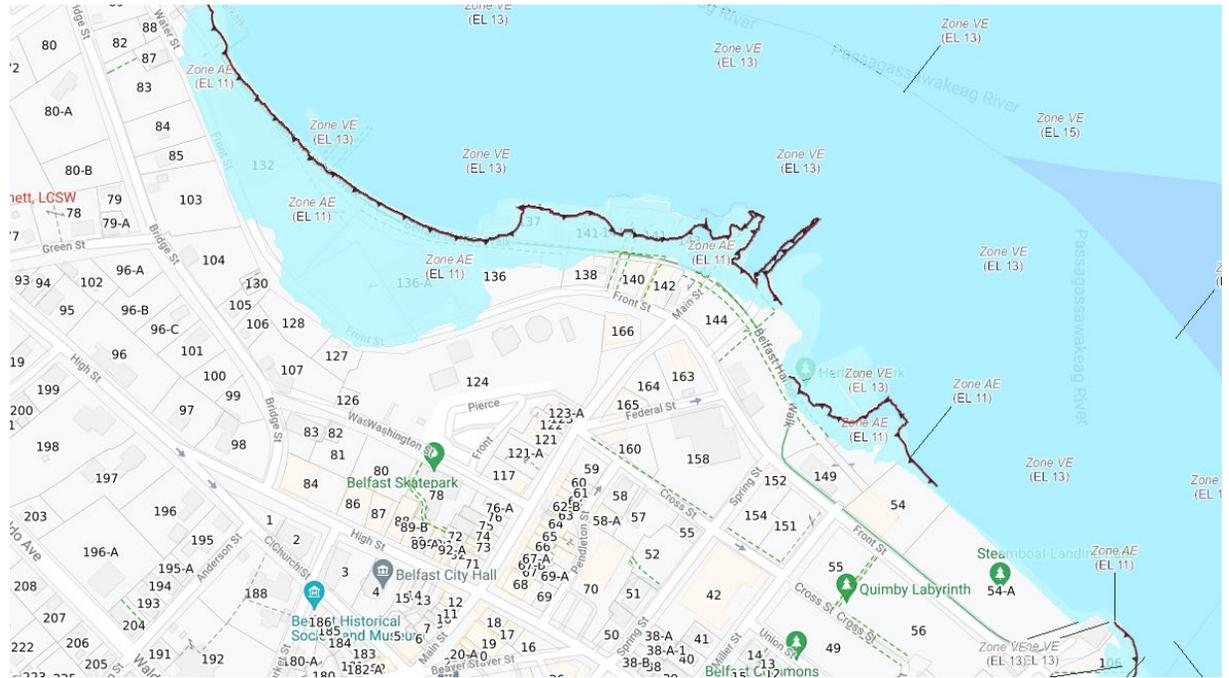
- WIRED BROADBAND SERVICE MEETING OR EXCEEDING 10 Mbps SYMMETRICAL (= TIERS 5-7)
- WIRED BROADBAND SERVICE FROM 1.5 TO 10 Mbps DOWNLOAD AND 768 Kbps TO 10 Mbps UPLOAD (= TIERS 2-4)
- NO WIRED BROADBAND SERVICE MEETING OR EXCEEDING 1.5 Mbps DOWNLOAD AND 768 Kbps UPLOAD
- LOCATIONS WITH NO REPORTED HOUSEHOLDS OR BUSINESSES
- Native Nations
- TOWN
- COUNTY

# ENVIRONMENTAL/ NATURAL CONSTRAINTS

## Focus Area 1

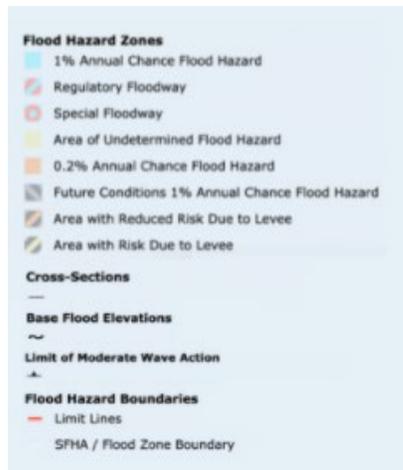
The most significant natural constraint for Focus Area 1 is the threat of sea-level rise and flooding. The adjacent map shows that the waterfront area of Focus Area 1 is largely susceptible to these risks.

## Map: Focus Area 1 Natural Constraints: Flood Hazard



Source: FEMA Map Service Center via City of Belfast

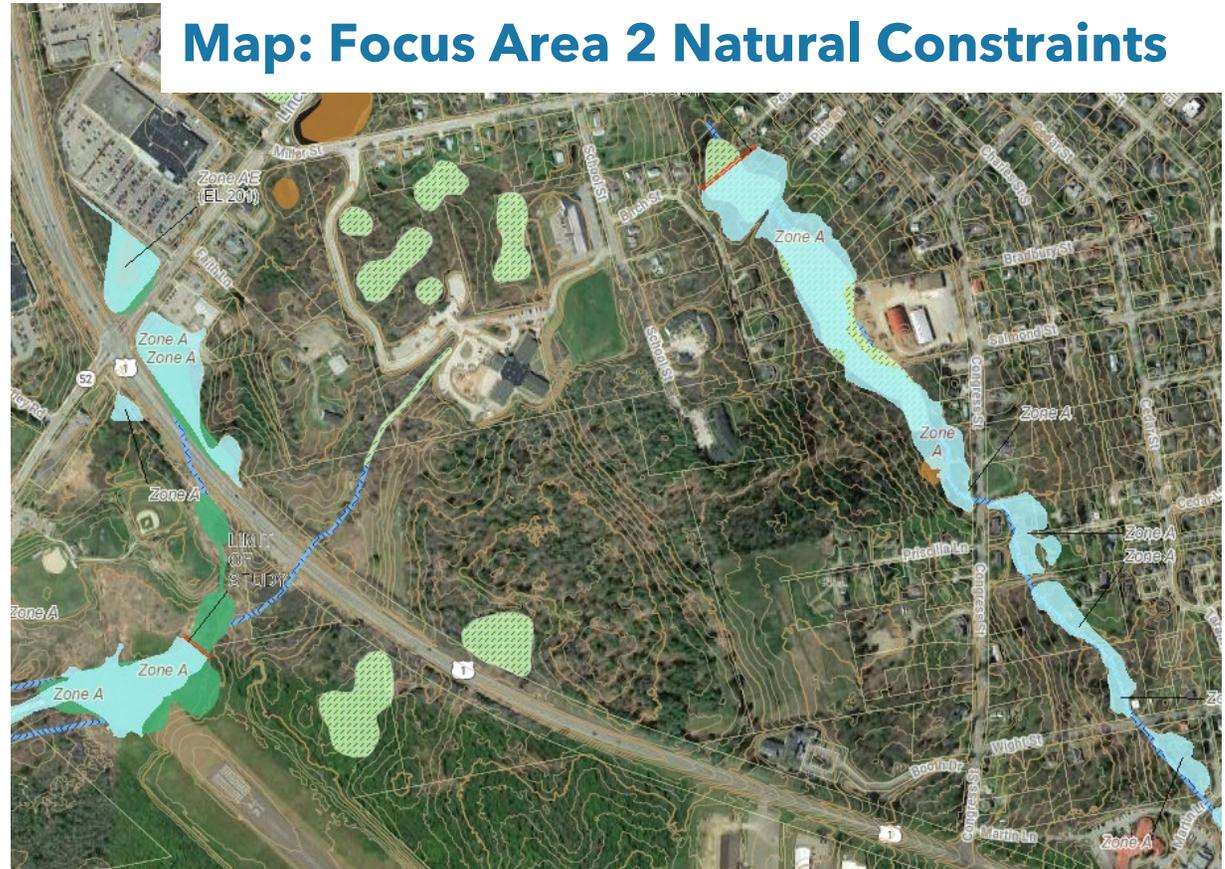
### Legend



## Focus Area 2

Natural constraints also exist that may pose constraints to future development in Focus Area 2. There are two wetland areas representing development restrictions along with some areas at risk of flooding. Despite these constraints, there are large areas suitable development areas within Focus Area 2.

## Map: Focus Area 2 Natural Constraints



### Wetland Classification

- Freshwater Emergent Wetland
- ▨ Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
- ▨ Estuarine and Marine
- ▨ Estuarine and Marine Deepwater
- ▨ Riverine
- Other

- 10' CONTOUR
- 2' CONTOUR

- ### Flood Hazard Zones
- 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
  - ▨ Regulatory Floodway
  - ▨ Special Floodway
  - ▨ Area of Undetermined Flood Hazard
  - ▨ 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
  - ▨ Future Conditions 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
  - ▨ Area with Reduced Risk Due to Levee
  - ▨ Area with Risk Due to Levee
- ### Cross-Sections
- Base Flood Elevations
  - ~ Limit of Moderate Wave Action
- ### Flood Hazard Boundaries
- Limit Lines
  - ▨ SFHA / Flood Zone Boundary

Source: City of Belfast

# **Chapter 3**

## Public Engagement

## OVERVIEW

The Community Revitalization Plan process including stakeholder and public engagement to understand the community's vision, needs, and concerns for the future of both Focus Areas. The engagement process including the following:

- Public Kickoff Meeting (in conjunction with the Brownfields Revitalization Study)
- Stakeholder Interviews (in conjunction with the Brownfields Revitalization Study)
- A public workshop (facilitated in partnership with the Comprehensive Plan team)
- Public Survey (conducted by the comprehensive plan team)

These activities are described further in this section.

## PUBLIC KICKOFF MEETING

A public kickoff meeting was held on February 24, 2020, at City Hall. Property owners and members of the public participated in the

# City of Belfast Community Workshop

COMPREHENSIVE & COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PLANS

JUNE 21, 2021 6PM

meeting to learn more about the study and ask questions of City Staff and the consulting team.

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP

In-person interviews and a focus group were conducted over two days in February 2020. Throughout the project, 15 interviews were conducted with property owners, city officials, developers, business owners, and other

stakeholders in the community. The focus group consisted of local realtors to discuss development opportunities and challenges based on local market conditions.

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

A virtual community workshop was conducted on June 21, 2021, to collect community input on the assets of the Focus Areas as well as the problems and opportunities that community

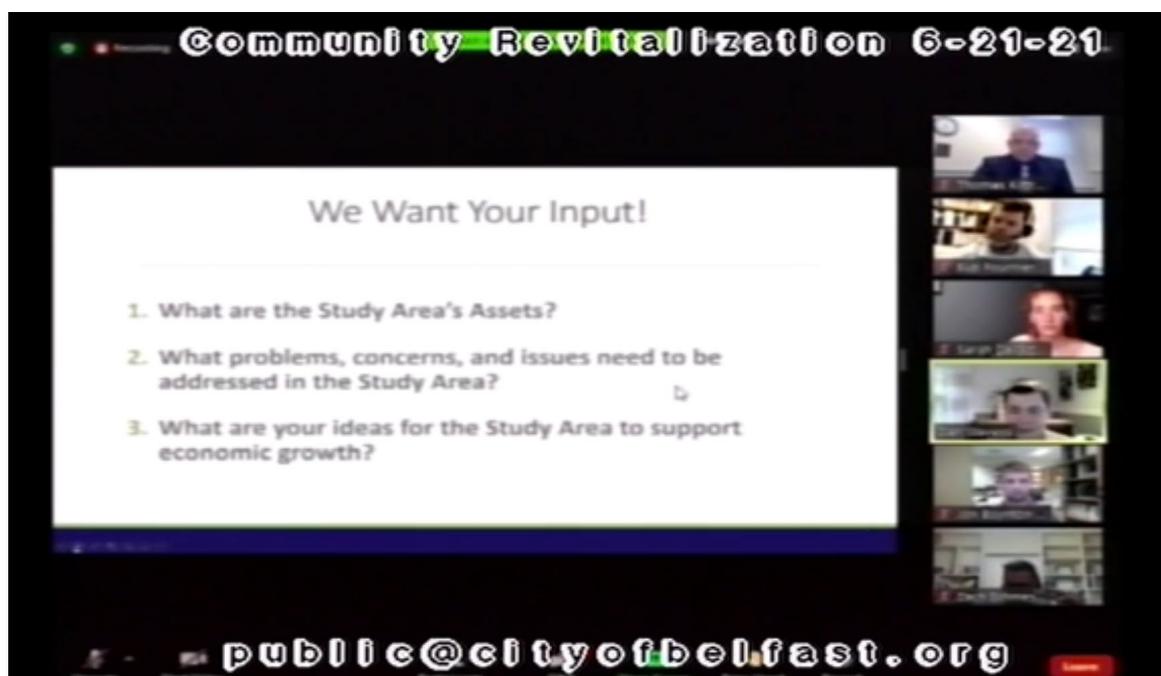
members perceive for each Focus Area. Key assets identified by community members included:

- Historic Downtown
- Existing downtown stores and businesses
- Front Street Shipyard
- The beauty of each Focus Area
- Downtown’s housing
- The Harbor Walk

Residents were also asked to share their thoughts about problems, concerns, and issues needing to be addressed. The input included the following:

- Wetland constraints (Focus Area 2)
- Limited access to Focus Area 2
- Need to support local stores more
- Underutilization of upper floors of downtown buildings
- Focus Area 2 infrastructure improvements
- Review zoning and parking regulations to support multi-unit housing
- Need better public transportation options

The third question that workshop participants were asked to respond to was their ideas to support economic growth. Community members identified the following:



*The Community Workshop was held as an interactive virtual meeting and was broadcast on local public access television.*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Challenge or matching grants for businesses</li> <li>▪ New small hotel in Focus Area 1</li> <li>▪ Parking garage in Focus Area 1</li> <li>▪ New infrastructure improvements, including bike lanes and sidewalks</li> <li>▪ New street festivals</li> <li>▪ Improved public transportation/intermodal transportation system</li> <li>▪ New housing development and a variety of housing types (both Focus Areas)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New drug store/convenience store</li> <li>▪ Engage local landlords and/or developers to support creating diverse housing options</li> <li>▪ Focus on making bike- and pedestrian-friendly</li> <li>▪ Create workforce housing units</li> <li>▪ Limit vacation rental properties</li> <li>▪ New core businesses</li> <li>▪ New fish market</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Belfast Comprehensive Plan Committee, with the assistance of The Musson Group, launched a Belfast Community survey that ran from February until May 2021. The survey results were used to inform the Community Revitalization Plan. A total of 1,029 responses were received. Several key themes emerged from the survey including the following:

**Housing:** Many residents see housing as a major community issue and would like to see a greater variety of housing options available.

- 30% indicated their housing is not affordable based on their needs.
- 42% of respondents indicated that the lack of housing options is one of the things they like least about Belfast, ranking it second behind only “high property taxes.”
- “Encourage more diverse housing options” was one of the top-ranked answers for what the City should prioritize over the next 10 years.
- Respondents also strongly supported the City investing in “resources and assistance to those experience housing insecurity” making it one of the top priorities identified.

**Infrastructure and Broadband:** Residents feel strongly about the need for enhanced infrastructure and broadband in the community.

- 34.4% indicated that “needed infrastructure improvements, such as roads broadband, etc.” was one of the things they like least about Belfast - making it the third most common thing that respondents like least.
- Among various infrastructure options for the City to prioritize, the expansion of high-speed broadband was the only one to be ranked as a “highest” priority.
- Similarly, respondents overall “strongly support” improvements to broadband connectivity in underserved areas of the city. Other infrastructure options such as extension of water and sewer received less support.
- Broadband service/availability was also one of the lowest-rated facilities and services in the community.

**Economic Development:** The survey also included other key findings related to economic development, such as:

- 54% of respondents would describe Belfast as “A regional hub offering services and employment opportunities to residents and neighboring communities” making it the second-

most popular description among five options.

- 65% indicated that Belfast is moving in the right direction and has become a better place over time (only 8.9% said it has gone the other way).
- Only 4.8% of survey respondents said “good job opportunities” are one of the things they like most about Belfast.
- 25.5% responded that the lack of job opportunities is one of the things they like least about Belfast, making it the fourth-most common choice among a number of options.
- Encouraging economic development initiatives focused on job creation was one of the highest-indicated priorities for the City to focus on over the next 10 years.
- Excessive development is not seen as a major negative with only 11.6% selecting excessive commercial development as one of the things they like least about Belfast. Encouraging new commercial development was indicated as a “moderate” priority.

# **Chapter 4**

## Market Opportunities

## OVERVIEW

A real estate market analysis was conducted as part of the 2021 Brownfields Revitalization Study and the Community Revitalization Plan. The market analysis identifies future demand potential, with a concentration on Focus Area 1, and challenges/barriers to realizing those opportunities.

The key findings of the analysis are presented in this section by type of use (housing, office, retail, tourism, and industrial/flex).

## HOUSING

**The City of Belfast and Has Existing Unmet and Future Demand for a Variety of Housing Types and Price Points.** This includes affordable housing, market-rate apartments, condominiums, and single-family homes. The Study Area has strong housing demand relative to other portions of the City given the access to amenities and the waterfront. There is little apartment vacancy downtown and rental units lease very quickly when available.

**Market Potential for the City to Absorb Approximately 150 Housing Units over 5 Years.** Based on pre-COVID conditions, the market demand analysis found that the City will see projected demand potential for up to

approximately 66 rental units and 77 owner-occupied units over five years (13 units and 15 units annually, respectively).

**COVID-19 Crisis has Added Uncertainty to the Market Demand Picture.** The unprecedented global pandemic has dramatically affected economic and market conditions in 2020. Factors that will affect housing demand include the duration of the health crisis, whether an urban exodus of residents materializes over time and to what extent, the degree to which telecommuting arrangements become permanent, and the impact that the crisis has on the cost of raw materials which may affect short-term construction of housing projects.

**Housing Demand is Being Driven by Changing Housing Needs and Preferences.** Belfast and its surrounding region are getting older, which is generating demand for new senior housing. Additionally, a substantial portion of housing demand is being driven by households that are either upsizing through growing families or downsizing through the creation of new empty-nester households.

**Empty-Nester and Nearing-Retirement Households are a Significant Driver of Housing Demand.** Belfast is a retirement destination and a significant portion of housing demand in the City is driven by households

| Belfast Regional Housing Need: Renter vs. Owner-Occupied |                 |                |
|--|-----------------|----------------|
| 2019 Households  |                 | 90,738         |
| 2024 Households  |                 | 92,179         |
| 2019-2024 Change in Households                           |                 | 1,441          |
|  |                 |                |
| % Owner-Occupied   |                 | 71%            |
| # Owner-Occupied   |                 | 1,023          |
| % Renter-Occupied  |                 | 29%            |
| # Renter-Occupied  |                 | 418            |
| Belfast Regional Housing Unit Demand (5-Year Projection) |                 |                |
|  | Renter-Occupied | Owner-Occupied |
| Projected Change   | 418             | 1,023          |
| Vacant Units (5%)  | 21              | 51             |
| Total Unit Demand  | 439             | 1,074          |
| City of Belfast Housing Demand Capture Potential         |                 |                |
|  | Renter-Occupied | Owner-Occupied |
| Housing Units (City of Belfast)                          | 1,274           | 1,963          |
| Regional Housing Units                                   | 26,226          | 64,508         |
| % of Regional Housing Units                              | 5%              | 3%             |
| Regional Demand  | 439             | 1,074          |
| Capture Potential (Low)                                  | 44              | 43             |
| Capture Potential (High)                                 | 66              | 77             |

Source: ESRI, Camoin310

nearing retirement and seeking to purchase a home in the City to use for seasonal/occasional use, and/or as a primary residence in retirement. These households are attracted by the city's quality of life, downtown amenities such as unique and independently-owned shops and restaurants, and proximity to the waterfront.

**Young Professionals and Older Millennials are also Expected to Drive Housing Demand.**

Belfast has become more attractive to this demographic for a variety of reasons, including its proximity to major urban areas of the state, adjacency to outdoor recreation amenities, and the City's downtown amenities including restaurants, bars, and boutique shops.

**Lack of Affordable, Workforce, and Senior Housing Options in Belfast.**

A majority of housing in both the City of Belfast and Focus Area 1 is unaffordable for median income households, which is a likely primary driver for why approximately 80% of the City's workforce is commuting from the surrounding region. Additionally, the need for affordable housing for seniors is particularly acute with low-income residents aged 75+ years expected to grow locally and regionally over the next five years.

**High-End Housing Potential with Waterfront Proximity and/or Views.**

There is unmet demand, and an untested market, for high-end residential housing options in Focus Area 1. While waterfront housing has been proposed in the past, there have not been any residential construction projects that capture the value and potential of Belfast's waterfront. A significant premium for units, both rentals and owner-occupied (including condominiums) could be realized for units that are located within immediate proximity to the waterfront or provide quality views of the Passagassawakeag River and Belfast Bay.

**Despite Market Demand, Critical Barriers and Constraints are Limiting Development of New Housing.**

The housing market can be characterized as having a supply-side problem with several factors making housing

development extremely challenging from a financial feasibility perspective, as indicated below. As a result of these factors, there has been little construction of new housing.

- Relatively high property tax rates: Belfast's current property tax rate is among the highest in the region, making it difficult for developers to achieve a sufficient return on investment to undertake projects.
- High cost of construction: Local and regional construction costs are well above national averages, which reduces the margin on development projects as a factor making new construction relatively cost prohibitive.
- Market rates don't support cost of construction: Market rates for apartments are generally in the \$1,200 to \$1,400 range for a quality apartment in the city, which, given the costs of construction, are generally not sufficient to make multi-family rental unit development feasible.
- Speculative land prices: Interviews indicated that local land prices are generally above market-rate, with landowners speculating on future value, which has elevated prices above their natural market value.
- Unproven housing market: The City of Belfast isn't a "proven" market for housing, as there currently exists virtually no

significant successful housing development projects that could demonstrate that the local market can support new ones. This is both a perception issue for potential private developers who must gauge market risk when considering new investments and an issue related to financing as lenders desire to see market comparables as they evaluate risk when providing financing for development projects.

**Workers Commuting Into Belfast Represent a Source of Housing Demand.**

There is a significant number of in-commuters living in the surrounding region that could potentially be attracted to live in the City of Belfast if there is housing that aligns with the preferences and income level of these workers.

**Developer Interest and Proposed Projects May Generate Momentum.**

There are several projects in the city and within Focus Area 1 and 2 in various phases of planning that include housing components. This interest is indicative of perceived market demand among the private sector. Furthermore, the completion of housing projects will demonstrate demand (and rent potential), which will likely spur additional investment after the market is "proven."

# OFFICE

**Lack of New Commercial Office Space Construction Over the Last Decade in the Region, Coupled with an Equilibrium in Net Absorption Rates Indicates That There is Little Demand for New Space.** Waldo County has had little new office space come online in the last ten years. While net absorption rates have varied in Waldo County over the last decade, 2019 and 2020 have seen rates around zero, indicating a general equilibrium in regards to supply of and demand for leased space in the county. It should be noted that the City of Belfast has seen office growth in recent years, including at the hospital and a conversion project by Athena Health.

**While Office-utilizing Industries are Projected to Remain Stagnant in Belfast in the Coming Years, Interviews with Local Stakeholders Suggest that Demand Exists for Small Office Spaces in the City.** While stagnant and/or decreasing projected job growth trends in office-utilizing industries in Belfast and the region indicate that the market may not support additional new office space (traditional or medical) in Belfast unless it is for a specific, unanticipated, and potentially highly-specialized user; interviews conducted point to demand for small office space similar to those found in Belfast Center. The COVID-19 crisis may also have an impact on further demand for

| Waldo County Office-Utilizing Industry Trends, 2019-2029 |  |              |              |                  |                    |
|--|--|--------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------|
| NAICS  | Description  | 2019 Jobs    | 2029 Jobs    | 2019-2029 Change | 2019-2029 % Change |
| 51   | Information  | 138          | 141          | 3                | 2%                 |
| 52   | Finance and Insurance  | 668          | 259          | (409)            | -158%              |
| 54   | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services                         | 456          | 554          | 99               | 18%                |
| 55   | Management of Companies and Enterprises                                  | 474          | 874          | 401              | 46%                |
| 56   | Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 1,193        | 1,088        | (105)            | -10%               |
| 81   | Other Services (except Public Administration)                            | 888          | 969          | 81               | 8%                 |
| 90   | Government   | 1,714        | 1,587        | (126)            | -8%                |
|  | <b>Total</b>   | <b>5,531</b> | <b>5,473</b> | <b>(57)</b>      | <b>-1%</b>         |

Source: EMSI

| Waldo County Medical Office-Utilizing Industry Trends, 2019-2029 |                                       |            |            |                    |                      |
|--|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| NAICS  | Description                           | 2019 Jobs  | 2029 Jobs  | 2019 - 2029 Change | 2019 - 2029 % Change |
| 6211   | Offices of Physicians                 | 142        | 137        | (5)                | (4%)                 |
| 6213   | Offices of Other Health Practitioners | 105        | 126        | 20                 | 16%                  |
| 6214   | Outpatient Care Centers               | 70         | 103        | 33                 | 32%                  |
|  | <b>Total</b>                          | <b>318</b> | <b>366</b> | <b>48</b>          | <b>13%</b>           |

Source: EMSI

these types of spaces. Demand projections indicate the potential need for only an additional 5,000 square feet (SF) of traditional office space over the next five years.

**COVID-19 Crisis has Added Uncertainty to the Commercial Office Market Demand Picture.** The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically affected economic and market conditions in 2020 and the implications on future demand for commercial office space are

difficult to forecast. The pandemic has had a significant negative impact on demand for commercial office space nationally that is likely to exacerbate existing demand trends in Belfast and the region. Factors that will affect commercial office demand include the duration of the health crises, the degree to which telecommuting arrangements become permanent, and future long-term implications to space usage requirements that promote social distancing and other recommended guidelines.

**Bank of America Office Campus is a Unique Asset that Offers the Potential for Future Redevelopment or Reuse by one or Multiple Office Users.** The campus could be utilized and marketed to one significant tenant, or potentially redeveloped to cater to multiple users who may share synergies regarding the goods and/or services that they produce. It could also be utilized as a multi-use shared workspace for companies who may need options for employees who convert to permanent telecommuters due to implications from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Medical Office Space is Expected to Drive Additional Demand in the Future Due to the Region’s Aging Populations, and Growth in the Health and Social Services Industry.** An aging local and regional population will also continue to drive demand for this space. Projections indicate that Belfast may see demand for an additional 8,800 SF of medical office space over the next five years.

## RETAIL

**Belfast is a Retail Hub in the County and Region.** In 2019, 65% of the total retail industry jobs in Waldo County were located within Belfast. This industry is also forecasted to grow by 6% in Belfast over the next ten years.

**Retail has Been Hit Hard by the COVID-19 Crisis and Will Likely be Slow to Recover.** The regional and local retail industry has been negatively impacted by the ongoing pandemic and recovery in the market will likely be slow and span several years with great uncertainty throughout the existing crisis.

| Belfast Five-Year Total Retail Demand Potential |        |
|---|--------|
| 2019-2029 Retail Job Change                     | 73     |
| Retail Space Demand per Job                     | 400    |
| Total 10-Year Demand (SF)                       | 29,000 |
| Total 5-Year Demand (SF)                        | 14,600 |
| Five-Year Leakage Recapture Potential (SF)      | 4,900  |
| Five-Year Total Retail Demand Potential (SF)    | 19,500 |

Source: EMSI

**Current and Projected Demand for Additional Retail Space in Belfast Associated With Both Resident and Visitor Spending, Based on Pre-COVID Conditions.** A retail gap analysis indicated that there is enough existing demand to potentially support 14,600 SF over five years (2,900 SF annually) of additional retail space in the city.

- Projections and demand attributable to resident retail leakage recapture indicate that there is enough demand to support approximately 4,900 SF (980 SF annually) of space for various retail over the next five years.
- When the 4,900 SF of demand potential attributed to recapturing spending leakage is removed, it is estimated that

there is demand potential for 9,700 SF of retail space attributable to visitors over five years (1,940 SF annually)

**Retail Industry Groups With the Highest Potential Based on the Retail Gap and the Retail Goods, Services, and Expenditures Analyses Include:**

- Clothing and Clothing Accessory Stores
- Book, Periodical, and Music Stores
- Jewelry, Luggage and Leather Goods Stores
- Furniture and Home Furnishing Stores
- General Merchandise Stores

**Demand for Retail on Main Street is Very Strong.** This demand is driven by the existing retail amenities within walking distance of one another, and its desirable location and notoriety as a retail destination for both residents and tourists. Additionally, there is little to no availability of spaces on Main Street resulting in an extremely low vacancy rate. Many retail spaces that become vacant are re-leased immediately and do not sit on the market. This suggests there is demand for additional retail space that is not currently being met in the market. Interviews suggest that location is a critical factor with spaces off of the Main Street corridor being considered much less desirable.

**Restaurants and Other Eating Places Will Continue to be in Demand in Belfast for the Foreseeable Future.** Demand will not only be driven by residents and other consumers in the region who may visit Belfast specifically due to the presence of a restaurant or other eating establishment, but also by tourists who are attracted to Belfast due to its mix of retail and other amenities. Additionally, the restaurant industry is projected to grow by 4% or 21 jobs in Belfast over the next five years. The brick-and-mortar retail industry has been impacted particularly hard since the COVID-19 pandemic began due to customers not being able to shop at physical store locations. Additionally, retail stores in tourist destinations have been hit particularly hard due to a lack of consumer demand experienced with previous tourist seasons. These trends may continue and are likely to hinder growth in the retail industry in Belfast for the immediate term, but some experts predict that tourism levels will return to or exceed those at the national level before the pandemic due to pent-up consumer demand.

## TOURISM

**COVID-19 Crisis has Hurt the Regional Tourism Industry and Threatens the Market Potential for Tourism-Related Investment Moving Forward.** The uncertainty of the pandemic has significant implications for the

tourism industry, which is not anticipated to rebound in a meaningful way in the near future. Current expectations are that investment in hotels and other tourism-related enterprises will be slow to recover.

**Belfast is Part of Maine’s MidCoast & Islands Region, Which is Touted as Being a Great Fit for Travelers Who Seek Relaxation or Adventure.** The region provides world-renowned coastlines, quaint downtown villages, and vibrant working waterfronts.

**Belfast is a Desirable Tourism Destination in the Region Due to its Location and Unique Mix of Various Amenities.** Located along Route 1 and adjacent to the water, Belfast offers tourists a unique mix of retail options and outdoor activities and hosts a variety of different festivals throughout the year which acts as catalysts to spur additional tourism in the city.

**A Mix of Lodging Facilities that Appeal to all Different Types of Travelers Makes Belfast Appealing to a Different Types of Tourists.** Currently, Belfast is home to lodging establishments that range from quaint bed-and-breakfast establishments to short-term rentals, to larger economy motels and hotels.

**The Hospitality Industry is a Crucial Employment and Financial Contributor to Belfast’s Economy.** Hotels and Motels

contributed \$3.7 million (the highest of any tourism-based industry) to the City of Belfast’s Gross Regional Product (GRP) in 2019, in addition to contributing 60 jobs to the City. The industry grew by 33 jobs from 2009 to 2019 (this equates to a 121% change from 2009).

**A Number of Different Factors Point to the Potential Demand for an Additional Lodging Establishment in Belfast.** Factors include a large stock of existing short-term rentals located in Belfast’s core downtown area with high historical occupancy rates, projected growth in Hotel and Motel industry jobs over the next five years, and increasing notoriety of the city as a tourist destination in the region.

## INDUSTRIAL/FLEX

**Future Market Demand for Industrial/Flex Space in Belfast will Likely be Driven by Manufacturing-Based Industries.**

Approximately 150 new jobs are projected to be added in Waldo County in industries (primarily manufacturing and construction) that would be appropriate to occupy light industrial/flex real estate in the downtown area of the City. Based on projected job growth, an additional 76,500 SF of light industrial/flex space could be supported in Waldo County by these industries, with conservative projections indicating that

10% of that total demand, or 7,650 SF of space, could be supported in the city.

**Unlikely that Large- to Mid-Sized Industrial Tenants are Going to Fulfill Projected Demand for Industrial Development in the Study Area.** This is due to a variety of reasons including smaller parcel sizes, transportation barriers related to truck access, and higher property prices compared to the broader region. Additionally, the City of Belfast may also be averse to large industrial development in Focus Area 1 due to its proximity to the downtown core and other residential areas.

**Industrial Demand in Study Area Will be Closely Associated with Front Street Shipyard, and Whether Further Development Occurs on Waterfront Properties.** While industrial development has occurred over the last decade, there is currently limited expansion plans for development over the next five years.

**Industrial Users that are Likely to Fill the Demand for Industrial Space in the Study Area are More Likely to Focus on and Benefit From the Existing Retail Environment in Belfast.** Examples of these users include small-scale boutique manufacturers that could sell their products directly to consumers in Belfast, or micro-food and/or -beverage producer industries such as microbrewery/distillery producers.

**Demand for Industrial/Flex Space May also be Driven by any Unanticipated Existing or Future Tenants Entering or Exiting the Market.** In addition to job growth, demand for industrial/flex space could also be influenced by the entry or exit of current or future unanticipated tenants. Two examples of existing tenants in Belfast that occupy relatively large industrial/flex space include Penobscot McCrum and Front Street Shipyard.

**The Boat and Ship Building Industries May be a Driver of Future Demand for Industrial/Flex Space in Belfast.** The Transportation and Equipment Manufacturing industry is projected to realize the highest projected job growth of all light manufacturing industries in Belfast over the next decade, and growth is driven primarily by the boat building industry (specifically Front Street Shipyard).

**Additional Industrial/Flex Space Could be Utilized in the Future by One Anchor User, or Multiple Users Participating in Small-Scale Manufacturing.** A diverse mix of industrial and flex space geared towards a variety of different types of tenants will help Belfast position itself for future market demand. Larger spaces could be occupied by one core anchor user who focuses on light manufacturing and is able to utilize the entire space, or space that could be built or modified to include a combination of

small and/or shared spaces that could be utilized by a variety of different occupants who participate in small-scale manufacturing.

**Industrial Sectors Have Been the Least Impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic** and have the potential to see increased operations in the future due to a national focus on supply chain mitigation and resiliency efforts, and the reshoring of manufacturing that may have previously operated overseas.

# **Chapter 5**

## Opportunities & Challenges Summary



## Key Opportunities

- Strong market demand for housing, including market-rate apartments, condominiums, senior housing, and workforce housing.
- Potential downtown/waterfront hotel or lodging for regional visitors.
- Grow fiberarts as an industry and tourism/visitation asset.
- A strong arts, culture, and entertainment scene with room to grow.
- Waterfront access and the potential to grow water-dependent businesses and attract recreational boaters to spend time downtown and in the City of Belfast.
- Demographics indicate potential economic opportunities to utilize a strong workforce, and opportunity for workforce housing.



## Critical Challenges

- Competition in attracting visitors to the region from other urban centers and destinations.
- Currently not tapped into regional fiber optic system.
- Limited retail space availability in the downtown area.
- High cost of construction and relatively high property taxes are limiting investment in new development and rehabilitation projects.
- Limited vacant development sites available within the Route 1 corridor.
- Lack of enticing gateway areas to draw visitors and others to the downtown/waterfront area.
- “Unproven” housing market may be preventing investment in new housing development.
- Lack of attainable housing in the community for residents and the local workforce.

# **Chapter 6**

## Goals & Strategies

## **GOAL 1: Create a Variety of Housing at a Variety of Price Points**

- 1.A. Explore Creating a “Convert-to-Residential” Assistance Program
- 1.B. Establish a Short-Term Rental Registry to Monitor Growth
- 1.C. Assemble a Housing Advisory Committee
- 1.D. Partner with Developers to Create New Housing
- 1.E. Review Land Use Regulations to Align with Market Investment Feasibility
- 1.F. Explore Creating a Belfast Community Land Trust

## **GOAL 2: Grow Tourism and Visitation to Support Local Businesses**

- 2.A. Explore the Feasibility of a Downtown/Waterfront Lodging Establishment
- 2.B. Draw Route 1 Visitors into the Downtown and Waterfront Area
- 2.C. Continue to Build Downtown Belfast as a Regional Arts, Culture, and Entertainment Destination
- 2.D. Target Recreational Boaters to Visit Belfast

## **GOAL 3: Attract and Generate Business Growth and New Investment**

- 3.A. Pursue Private Redevelopment of the City-owned Front Street Property
- 3.B. Explore the Creation of Facilities for Local Entrepreneurs and Business Start-Ups
- 3.C. Provide Infrastructure to Support New Development in Focus Area 2 When Cost-Feasible and Appropriate
- 3.D. Monitor and Respond to the Needs and Issues Facing Businesses
- 3.E. Continue to Market the City's Opportunity Zone

## **GOAL 4: Enhance the Capacity of the City to Support Revitalization**

- 4.A. Utilize Tax Increment Financing to Support Revitalization Efforts
- 4.B. Expand Fiber Optic Availability
- 4.C. Continue to Support and Build Capacity of Our Town Belfast
- 4.D. Evaluate City Implementation Capacity and Prioritize Strategies

## **GOAL 1 | CREATE A VARIETY OF HOUSING AT A VARIETY OF PRICE POINTS.**

The current housing supply in the City of Belfast is not aligned with current needs and market demand. A variety of new housing types is needed, including affordable housing, workforce housing, middle-income options, senior housing, market-rate apartments, and new single-family and owner-occupied options. There is a need to provide attainable housing options within reach of local households and workers, as well as an opportunity to create new higher-income housing options catering to new residents to the City, including retirees, those nearing retirement, and remote-working professionals. Both Focus Areas are appropriate for the development of new housing.

### **Strategy 1.A: Explore Creating a “Convert-to-Residential” Assistance Program**

#### **Description**

A City-run program should be explored that provides resources to help private property owners convert or rehabilitate unused and underutilized space into residential units, particularly multi-family units (apartments). The initial program should provide technical assistance to help property owners navigate regulatory and building code issues while educating property owners on funding resources available for conversion or rehabilitation projects. The program should also help property owners understand the market opportunities based on market analysis research. Over the longer term, the City should pursue new funding sources to assist local property owners with residential conversion projects.

#### **Why Needed?**

There is underutilized space in the study area according to the 2021 Brownfields Revitalization Study that found over 60,000 square feet of

unoccupied/unusable space in Focus Area 1. There is also an economic and market opportunity to bring new residents to the downtown area that will help support local businesses while enhancing the tax base through the improvement of properties. The research and analysis found that property owners are interested in making use of underutilized space.

#### **Partners**

The Program should be managed by the City's Planning and Codes Department, in partnership with the City's Economic Development Department and Our Town Belfast.

#### **Timeline**

The City should seek to institute the program by the end of 2022 in its initial version.

#### **Action Steps**

The following are steps the City can take to implement the strategy:

- Convene municipal leaders and key department heads for a workshop to identify key areas of technical assistance/education.
- Explore similar programs in other communities and connect with program administrators on successes and challenges.

- Understand the return on investment for the City in terms of staff time and other resources dedicated to the program.
- Create educational materials, including a webpage on the City website, presentations, and brochures.
- Conduct a public workshop for property owners at least once per year and establish a City contact available for one-on-one meetings with property owners.

## Strategy 1.B: Establish a Short-Term Rental (STR) Registry to Monitor Growth

### Description

Property owners who rent their residential properties by the day, week, month, or season should be required to register their rental property with the City of Belfast. Key information about each property should be provided including the number of bedrooms, tenants, length of rental terms, etc. Information should be provided to property owners on what is necessary to keep units up to code. The program should not place limits on Short Term Rentals (STRs) unless the City determines that units are causing significant adverse impacts in the future. While monitoring STRs is particularly

important in Focus Area 1, the registry should be required citywide.

### Why Needed?

Short-term rentals have become more popular and numerous in recent years and the City should be prudent in monitoring the growth of STRs to ensure the need of property owners are balanced with the needs of the community to preserve the quality of life and maintain a needed supply of long-term rental units. The program will also ensure that units are compliant with local codes to ensure the health and safety of visitors.

### Partners

The City of Belfast Planning and Codes Department should create and operate the program.

### Timeline

The registry should be created in the near term with a target requirement for all units to be registered beginning in 2023.

### Action Steps

- Review successful registry programs in other communities. Interview program administrators regarding lessons learned.

- Create a user-friendly registration form and establish a database for maintaining the registration information. Explore third-party software applications.
- Establish a nominal registration fee to assist with new costs to the City associated with the registry.
- Conduct an educational outreach campaign to inform property owners of the registry requirements well in advance of the launch of the registry.

## Strategy 1.C: Assemble a Housing Advisory Committee

### Description

A Housing Advisory Committee would be composed of local residents that advise and make recommendations to the City Council regarding all manner of housing issues in the City of Belfast. The roles would include monitoring community housing needs, and recommending specific policies and programs, as well as providing the opportunity for collaboration with community and regional organizations, and others. Efforts should be made to include representatives from a variety of key stakeholder groups from the community including seniors, minorities, real estate professionals, and architects.

## Why Needed?

There is tremendous demand for a variety of housing types in the City of Belfast; however, there is not enough new development of housing occurring to meet this demand. The importance of housing issues to the future vitality of the city warrants a dedicated committee to identify solutions to the current and future housing issues in Belfast.

## Partners

The City of Belfast Planning and Codes Department should dedicate a staff liaison to the Committee as feasible.

## Timeline

The Committee should be established in the near term with a target launch in the first quarter of 2022.

## Action Steps

- Identify appropriate stakeholders representing a wide variety of constituents and interests within the City of Belfast.
- The City Council should adopt a resolution formalizing the committee.

## Strategy 1.D: Continue to Partner with Developers to Create New Housing

### Description

The City should continue to work together in partnership with real estate developers to create a variety of new housing stock within the Focus Areas. These partnerships have been successful in helping to generate new housing in the City of Belfast. Public-private partnerships should continue to be pursued and may take a variety of forms. Partnership arrangements that the City may explore include:

- City provision of infrastructure such as water and sewer to induce development and make new development feasible for the private sector to undertake. The City has done this successfully in the past and should continue to do so in a strategic, targeted, and appropriate manner.
- Development incentives that will enhance development feasibility for projects that align with the goals and interests of the City to create new housing and housing variety within Belfast. The City has implemented incentives in the past and should

continue to explore new and refined approaches to developer incentives. This could potentially include assisting property owners put their properties on the historic registry to make them eligible for historic tax credits.

- Utilize Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for housing development projects through Credit Enhancement Agreements that encourage housing development by providing temporary/partial relief from property taxes to offset development costs. The City has utilized TIF in this way in the past and should continue to utilize TIF to help facilitate new development.
- The disposition of appropriate city-owned land below market value for the creation of new housing in alignment with the City's needs and opportunities.

## Why Needed?

While housing is a pressing need and strong market/economic opportunity, the financial feasibility of development in the city is often not economical as market rents do not typically offset high costs, particularly construction costs.

## Partners

The City's Economic Development and Planning and Codes Departments should coordinate to implement this strategy. Departments should

continue to educate City officials, council members, and members of the public about the benefits and needs of new housing as well as the importance of public-private partnerships to create this housing. Partnerships should be explored with any interested for-profit or nonprofit developers with a demonstrated history of success.

## Timeline

This strategy can be implemented immediately and on an ongoing basis.

## Action Steps

- Review the partnership arrangements available and suitable for use in each focus area.
- Be prepared to discuss what the City may (or may not) be willing to do to support new housing development with potential developers.

## Strategy 1.E: Review Land Use Regulations to Align with Market Investment Feasibility

### Description

The City should continue to regularly review its current land use regulations, including upon

completion of the ongoing Comprehensive Planning process and should include in this review and assessment of whether existing regulations are overly restrictive and serve as an obstacle to new development. As part of this review, the City should focus on allowable uses, density limitations, and parking requirements. The City has periodically reviewed its land use regulations and should continue to do so.

### Why Needed?

New private development of housing, particularly middle-income and market-rate apartments, is challenging from a financial feasibility perspective and land use regulations can further diminish or alternatively help improve the feasibility of new development. Land use regulations should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are supportive of the City's goal to encourage the new development of a variety of housing types.

### Partners

The City Planning and Codes Department should lead this effort with input from the City Economic Development Department as well as other stakeholders and municipal officials.

### Timeline

Land use regulations should be reviewed upon completion of the City's 2021 Comprehensive

Plan process. Regulations should be reviewed at a minimum of every five years.

## Action Steps

- Conduct a roundtable or workshop with property owners and developers to discuss potential updates to current regulations.
- Utilize the results of these conversations, the recommendations of the City's updated Comprehensive Plan, and the findings of the Brownfields Revitalization Study to draft updated ordinances and begin the City's formal adoption process, including appropriate community review and input.

## Strategy 1.F: Explore Creating a Belfast Community Land Trust

### Description

The City should take steps to explore how it may help create and support a new Community Land Trust (CLT). The CLT model has become more common in recent years to help facilitate the development of attainable housing. CLTs are nonprofit, community-based organizations that typically operate by acquiring land and maintain

ownership - but enters into long-term leases with homeowners. This approach prevents prices to rise significantly and therefore maintains the affordability of the housing. Other benefits include helping to ensure that residents are not displaced due to rising land prices (speculation, gentrification, etc.) and reducing foreclosure rates.

## Why Needed?

Workforce and affordable housing is a critical need in the City of Belfast and land prices are one of the barriers to the construction of new housing. The CLT model has proven successful in creating new housing options in many communities, including in Maine.

## Partners

The City Planning and Codes Department should lead this effort with input from the City Economic Development Department as well as the proposed Housing Advisory Committee and other stakeholders and municipal officials.

## Timeline

The first steps to explore this option should be undertaken upon the establishment of the recommended Housing Advisory Committee.

## Action Steps

- Charge the Housing Advisory Committee with exploring the potential for a Belfast Community Land Trust, including examining existing models in Maine such as:

Island Housing Trust

<https://www.islandhousingtrust.org/>

Freeport Housing Trust

<https://freeporthousingtrust.org/rent-an-apartment/>

Greater Portland Community Land Trust

<http://gpclt.org/>

## GOAL 2 | GROW TOURISM AND VISITATION TO SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES

The City of Belfast lies in a popular tourism and visitation region and both Focus Areas have immediate accessibility to Route 1, a popular travel corridor running along the coast of Maine. While the City does attract visitors and their spending, there is an opportunity to better attract visitors into the downtown and waterfront area (Focus Area 1) to help support existing and new businesses, particularly during “shoulder” seasons and off-peak times.

### Strategy 2.A: Explore the Feasibility of a Downtown/ Waterfront Lodging Establishment

#### Description

The City should conduct a feasibility study for a new downtown or waterfront lodging establishment. The study should explore market dynamics, particularly new post-COVID travel and lodging trends, to determine whether there is sufficient demand and a market opportunity to support a new lodging facility, such as a boutique or appropriately-scaled hotel or inn. The study should explore feasibility from both a market perspective and a financial feasibility perspective. The City may also wish to have the study examine or recommend specific appropriate and feasible sites for an establishment.

#### Why Needed?

There are limited lodging options within walking distance of downtown and the waterfront area, despite the amenities of these locations being sought after by visitors. A new lodging facility would help draw visitors into the area (Focus

Area 1) that would patronize local businesses such as shops and restaurants.

#### Partners

The City’s Economic Development Department should lead this effort and any follow-up actions items from the feasibility study.

#### Timeline

The City should immediately begin the pursuit of grant funding for the cost of the study. The City should set a goal to complete the feasibility study by the end of 2023.

#### Action Steps

- Identify and pursue grant funding, including state and regional sources.
- Upon funding commitment, issue and market a competitive request for proposals (RFP) to solicit proposals from qualified firms.

## Strategy 2.B: Draw Route 1 Visitors into Downtown/Waterfront Area Throughout Gateway Improvements

### Description

The City should make “gateway improvements” in two key areas, including the intersection of Route 1 with Lincolnville Avenue and the intersection of Route 1 with Belmont Avenue. These key areas are an opportunity to get the attention of visitors and attract them into the downtown area. Potential improvements that should be considered including attractive wayfinding and signage elements, themed public art (consistent with Belfast’s identity and assets), attractive night lighting, banners/flags, improved streetscaping (sidewalks, landscaping, etc.). The City has done work to improve these areas but there is an opportunity to further enhance the public realm in these gateway areas. Specific ideas for the two gateway areas include public real improvements such as:

- Landscaped monument signage
- Light poles with banners
- Public art elements

- Themed wayfinding signage

Gateway improvements should attempt to demonstrate that there is an authentic, unique, and attractive place to visit beyond the typical suburban-style commercial development immediately visible from the Route 1 corridor.

### Why Needed?

These key intersections currently do not entice visitors traveling on Route 1 to come into the downtown/waterfront area. Visitors are not given the impression that there is a high-quality place worth visiting a short distance away. Gateway improvements have proven to be effective in communicating an entrance to places with a quality of place and in helping to attract visitors to specific places.

### Partners

The City Planning and Codes Department should lead this initiative. Coordination with Maine Department of Transportation will likely be necessary.

### Timeline

A plan for gateway improvements should be developed by the end of 2022. Gateway improvements should then be implemented

over a two- to three-year period depending on resource availability for implementation.

### Action Steps

- Explore potential gateway improvements as part of the City’s ongoing Comprehensive Planning process.
- If necessary, commission design schematics for gateway improvements.
- Identify and pursue funding sources for implementation.

## Strategy 2.C: Continue to Build Downtown Belfast as a Regional Arts, Culture, Entertainment Destination

### Description

There is an opportunity for the downtown/waterfront area, in particular, to continue to grow into a more robust art, culture, entertainment destination with new venues, amenities, and businesses. To continue to grow Focus Area 1 along this path, the City should explore adopting a formal arts district, which may include wayfinding elements and potentially serve as a zoning overlay district to

encourage arts, culture, and entertainment uses. The City should also explore a public art program that would support local artists and implement unique public art projects on public properties. Efforts should also be made to support local artists and creative professionals that will contribute to a vibrant and authentic local arts, culture, and entertainment district.

### Why Needed?

The City has existing assets that can be further developed and complemented to help create a “critical mass” of assets that will enhance the City’s image as a regional destination. This will help draw an increased number of visitors into the downtown/waterfront area that will shop at local businesses while supporting local artists and entrepreneurs and enhancing Belfast as an attractive place to live and do business.

### Partners

The City’s Economic Development Partner should lead this initiative with a broad coalition of arts and culture, nonprofit, business, and other stakeholders. Belfast Creative Coalition and other arts and culture organizations should be key partners in this initiative.

### Timeline

This initiative can be initiated immediately and will be an ongoing process.

### Action Steps

- Convene arts and culture stakeholders for a workshop to identify key opportunities to build Focus Area 1 as an arts, culture, and entertainment destination.
- Consider pursuing an arts and culture needs assessment/plan for Focus Area 1.

## Strategy 2.D: Target Recreational Boaters to Visit Belfast

### Description

The City should continue to work to attract recreational boaters to dock and visit Belfast’s waterfront and downtown area. Potential physical improvements to the City’s Inner Harbor/Belfast Public Landing should be examined to expand capacity to accommodate transient boaters and enhance the experience of those docking at Belfast. The City should also identify marketing channels to reach boaters to highlight the services, amenities, and attractions easily accessible from the Harbor.

### Why Needed?

Recreational boaters along the coast and the Passagassawakeag River are an untapped opportunity. Rather than being a “hidden gem”, there is an opportunity, given the proximity to downtown shops and restaurants, to be one of the premier stops for boaters along the Maine coast. While the overall market size is smaller than Route 1 and land-based regional visitors, these boaters are generally high-income/high-wealth and attracting their spending to the City can provide a significant economic impact.

### Partners

The City’s Harbor Master should lead this effort with support from the City’s Economic Development and Planning and Codes Departments.

### Timeline

The plan should be developed by the end of 2023 with the timeline for implementation depending upon identified implementation items and resource availability.

### Action Steps

- Review and update the Inner Harbor Improvement Project Plan completed in 2014.
- Review successful examples of other coastal communities to identify potential areas of improvement for Belfast.

## GOAL 3 | ATTRACT AND GENERATE BUSINESS GROWTH AND NEW INVESTMENT

Continuously improving the business climate and attracting new businesses and investment is critical to sustained economic revitalization. The City should continue to explore opportunities to generate new economic growth through programs, policies, and facilities that will attract new company and professionals, but also will support local entrepreneurs and small business owners.

### Strategy 3.A: Pursue Private Redevelopment of the City- owned Front Street Property

#### Description

The City should work to facilitate redevelopment of this strategic waterfront parcel (45 Front Street) that it currently owns. It should first conduct additional research and analysis to identify a preferred redevelopment vision. As part of this, the City should engage with private developers to understand the opportunities (and challenges) from a private development perspective. It is recommended that the City pursue a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) process to formally collect this type of input. The RFEI does not commit the City to accepting a developer proposal, but it will allow the City to gauge developer interest in the property, better understand the potential opportunities, and help City decision makers plot a path forward.

In addition to this solicitation, the City may wish to conduct community visioning sessions specifically for the property. This may include community workshops or design charettes. The results of the Brownfields Revitalization Study should be used to help inform the development

of redevelopment scenarios and a preferred redevelopment outcome.

#### Why Needed?

The Front Street parcel is a tremendous development opportunity with immediate waterfront access and views as well as close proximity to the downtown area. It is one of the few vacant development sites in Focus Area 1 and has the potential to catalyze additional development and investment.

#### Partners

The City's Economic Development and Planning and Codes Departments should work closely with City leadership to further explore redevelopment options for the property.

#### Timeline

Market conditions are favorable for immediate action. It is recommended that the City should identify a preferred redevelopment outcome by mid-2022 at the latest.

#### Action Steps

- Prepare an RFEI document that includes information about the property, what the City hopes to learn, and what the next steps for the City may look like.
- Market the RFEI, including direct distribution to key partners such as

major local businesses and regional developers.

- Follow up with respondents to conduct a one-on-one interviews.
- Additionally, conduct a minimum of one community meeting related to the future of the property. Explore participatory options such as a community design charette.

## Strategy 3.B: Explore the Creation of Facilities for Local Entrepreneurs and Business Start-Ups

### Description

The City should help facilitate the creation of space to support entrepreneurs and start-up business owners to develop and grow their businesses in Belfast. While space needs will need to be evaluated further, it is recommended that the initial focus be placed on marine, food, and/or arts.

It may be appropriate to consider hybrid models that incorporate a variety of uses. This might include artist retail space, studio space, and housing.

A community “maker space” is also something that should be explored further. A maker space provides tools and resources for assembly/manufacture and can range widely from wood shops to metal shops to technology/software or fiber arts.

A food-related facility may also have potential for Belfast, which has a strong concentration of restaurants and food-related establishments. A commercial kitchen or culinary incubator could help local entrepreneurs launch new restaurants or other food-related businesses in the City.

### Why Needed?

Belfast has a number of one-person businesses, entrepreneurs, and other creative individuals. Providing the right space at affordable levels for these types of individuals will help create “home-grown” businesses in Belfast as businesses are given the opportunity to explore ideas, commercialize products, and expand operations.

### Partners

The City’s Economic Development and Planning and Codes Departments, Our Town Belfast, the Belfast Area Chamber of Commerce; United Farmer’s Market; Waterfall Arts.

### Timeline

Conduct exploratory research and identify the primary need(s) by the end of 2022. Target end of 2026 for the completion/opening of a new facility.

### Action Steps

- Conduct exploratory conversations/ interviews with local entrepreneurs and small business owners.
- Meet with representatives of local organizations to discuss potential models and space needs.
- Review case studies of various models in similar communities to Belfast.
- Identify potential buildings/sites suitable for the facility and explore public/private partnerships to develop and operate the facility.

## Strategy 3.C: Provide Infrastructure to Support New Development in Focus Area 2 When Cost-Feasible and Appropriate

### Description

The City should provide water and particularly wastewater for potential development areas within Focus Area 2 to encourage private investment in development projects. The largely vacant area is not currently served; however, water and sewer infrastructure is available in close proximity and could be extended to serve this area. It may be prudent for the City to provide this infrastructure concurrently with approved or proposed development plans.

### Why Needed?

Focus Area 2 has vacant and potentially developable land that is well situated within the Route 1 bypass (and with immediate proximity to Route 1). The provision of infrastructure will greatly enhance the attractiveness and feasibility of future development in the area.

### Partners

The City's Planning and Codes Department, the Belfast Water District, representatives of the City's Wastewater Treatment System, and City officials should coordinate regarding future infrastructure expansion.

### Timeline

Infrastructure expansion possibilities should be considered as part of the City's capital improvement planning efforts.

### Action Steps

- Examine the need and feasibility of infrastructure expansion.
- Prepare preliminary cost estimates and add project(s) to capital improvement plans as needed.
- Explore sources of funding for new infrastructure.

## Strategy 3.D: Monitor and Respond to the Needs and Issues Facing Businesses

### Description

The City should formalize a process to monitor business needs and issues in the community that ensures that regular contact is made with (most) businesses. The system should build off of

existing visitation and efforts by both the City of Belfast and Our Town Belfast. A database should be developed to organize this program, including business and contact information, emerging concerns/threats, date contacted, etc.

### Why Needed?

This system will help identify critical business issues early on that will provide an opportunity to assist before businesses close or relocate.

### Partners

The City of Belfast Economic Development Department and Our Town Belfast.

### Timeline

This initiative should be done on an on-going basis.

### Action Steps

- Prepare a detailed business database and identify priority businesses to be an initial focus.
- Prepare a plan to contact priority businesses on a regular basis and record any issues.
- Follow up regarding any questions or issues that arise from business contacts.

## Strategy 3.E: Continue to Market the City's Opportunity Zone

The City of Belfast Economic Development Department.

### Timeline

This strategy should be carried out on an ongoing basis.

### Description

Both Focus Area 1 and 2 fall within a federal Opportunity Zone, which provides tax advantages for certain types of investments, including those in most real estate projects. These advantages can be a valuable source of supplemental investment to make projects happen. The City has undertaken a process to create Opportunity Zone marketing materials and identify potentially eligible projects. The City should continue to market its Opportunity Zone to prospective investors and should continue to work to identify and help prepare eligible projects in the focus areas.

### Why Needed?

Most types of development in the City of Belfast are not feasible based on traditional approaches (debt and equity). Incentives, subsidies, and other funding is often needed to help make projects feasible. Opportunity Zones have proven to be effective in helping otherwise infeasible projects be developed successfully.

### Partners

### Action Steps

- Continue to update marketing materials as needed
- Continue to work with property owners and developers to identify potential projects to include in materials
- Continue to share the Opportunity Zone prospectus with potential investors

## GOAL 4 | ENHANCE THE CAPACITY OF THE CITY TO SUPPORT REVITALIZATION

Revitalization strategies outlined in this plan will require resources, including staff time, partner resources, and financial resources to implement recommended projects and programs. It is important for the City to continue to expand its capacity to support economic development efforts through new partnerships, pursuing new and existing funding opportunities, and potentially expanding staff capacity as needed in the future.

### Strategy 4.A: Continue to Utilize Tax Increment Financing to Support Revitalization Efforts

#### Description

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is a powerful tool that can be used to incentivize private investment by providing a portion of new property taxes generated by new development back to the developer for up to thirty years, through a Credit Enhancement Agreement. It can also provide dedicated revenues for municipal economic and community development projects. Due to what is known as “sheltering” increased valuation within a TIF district, municipalities also benefit through avoidance of impacts on state aid and county taxes. The City has successfully used TIF to support development and should continue to utilize this critical tool.

#### Why Needed?

Many development projects fail to provide sufficient market returns in the short to medium term to justify private investment. This is particularly true of downtown- and housing-related projects where costs relative to returns

include create a financing gap. Also, affordable housing projects typically requires a TIF in order to be eligible for other financing programs of MaineHousing,

#### Partners

MaineHousing for the Affordable Housing Tax Increment Financing Program - <https://www.mainehousing.org/programs-services/housing-development/developmentdetails/affordable-housing-tax-increment-financing-program> -

Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) for commercial development, Downtown TIF District, and market-rate, multifamily residential development (must be rentals, not condos or ownership) <https://www.maine.gov/decd/business-development/tax-incentives-credit/municipal-tax-increment-financing>.

#### Timeline

As private development is proposed and ongoing.

#### Action Steps

- Review existing TIF use and coverage in the Focus Areas. Consider TIF district creation and amendments as needed to support new development.

## Strategy 4.B: Expand Fiber Optic Availability

### Description

The City should continue work to expand fiber optic service to properties throughout the City, with a particular focus on the downtown area (Focus Area 1).

### Why Needed?

There is a tremendous but unrealized opportunity to tap into the State of Maine's "Three Ring Binder" that provides a fiber optic backbone through rural western, eastern and northern Maine - and which passes directly through the City of Belfast. More than seven miles of the network's southern ring run through Belfast's east side and through its downtown, along portions of Searsport Avenue, Robbins Road, High Street, Church Street, and Northport Avenue, with additional spurs extending out along Belmont Avenue and Lincolnville Avenue. Despite the infrastructure being in place, many properties in the city are not able to set up fiber optic service due to the lack of "last-mile" service providers.

GWI is planning to initiative a project to expand fiber optic availability throughout the City and the City should continue to support this effort.

### Partners

City leaders should continue to work with ConnectME Authority and regional service providers to increase the availability of fiber optic access to properties.

### Timeline

Expanding fiber optic availability is an ongoing initiative.

### Action Steps

- Continue to monitor ongoing efforts and initiatives and provide City support as needed and appropriate.

## Strategy 4.C: Continue to Support and Build Capacity of Our Town Belfast

### Description

The City should continue to provide financial and other support as needed to Our Town Belfast, which is a nonprofit Main Street organization dedicated to growing and sustaining the city's historic downtown. The

organization successfully runs several events and programs. The City should explore opportunities for enhancing staff capacity at the organization.

### Why Needed?

The organization has been successful in helping contribute to a thriving downtown and will be able to continue and expand its mission with increased City support, which may include new events, programs, business monitoring, grants, and other activities.

### Partners

The City of Belfast Economic Development Department, Our Town Belfast Board and staff, and City leadership.

### Timeline

This strategy is intended as an ongoing initiative.

### Action Steps

- Review existing capacity at Our Town Belfast and identify potential roles and responsibilities of a new position.

## Strategy 4.D: Evaluate City Implementation Capacity and Prioritize Strategies

### Description

The City should evaluate its staff capacity to implement the strategies of the Community Revitalization Plan and prioritize strategies if capacity and resource constraints are identified.

### Why Needed?

Many of the strategies within this plan would need to be lead by one or two key city departments, which may place an undue burden on staff and capacity given existing roles and responsibilities. Evaluating capacity and prioritizing strategies will help the City focus its efforts on the most impactful strategies without sacrificing existing services.

### Partners

All affected City departments.

### Timeline

This strategy should be executed first and upon completion and adoption of the plan.

### Action Steps

- Each affected Department should assess the staff time needed for each for each strategy and rank strategies to determine the highest priority activities.
- An internal action plan to address the highest priority strategies that each department can carry out should be developed.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all those that participated in the Brownfields Revitalization Study and Community Revitalization Plan. The donation of your time and expertise to these efforts is sincerely appreciated.

## Project Team

Thomas Kittredge  
*Economic Development Director, City of Belfast*

Zachary Schmesser  
*Executive Director, Our Town Belfast*

Bub Fournier  
*Director, Code and Planning, City of Belfast*

Wayne Marshall  
*Project Planner, City of Belfast*

Jon Boynton  
*Planner, City of Belfast*

Jim Damicis  
*Principal, Camoin 310*

Dan Stevens, AICP  
*Project Manager, Camoin 310*

Andy Marzo  
*Analyst, Camoin 310*

Jennifer Day  
*Analyst, Camoin 310*

## Special Thanks To

The Comprehensive Plan Committee and the Musson Group for their assistance and contribution to the Community Revitalization Plan.

## Funding

This plan was funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (E.P.A.) through its Brownfield Assessment Grant program.

