

# **Midcoast Council of Governments**



## **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

**2025**

**5-Year Update**

**DRAFT**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ..... 1

    Acknowledgements .....2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..... 3

    CEDS Goal and Planning Process .....3

    Data Highlights.....5

    Key Themes of the MCOG Region .....6

CHAPTER 1: SUMMARY BACKGROUND ..... 8

    Data Background.....8

    Data Summary .....8

        Measures of Community Sustainability Part 1: Demographics .....8

        Measures of Community Sustainability Part 2: Housing.....12

        Measures of Business and Workforce Sustainability.....19

        Measures of Public Infrastructure and Natural Resources Sustainability .....24

CHAPTER 2: SWOT ANALYSIS .....30

    SWOT Analysis Procedure and Major Themes .....30

    SWOT Analysis Priorities .....30

    Emerging Theme by Measure of Sustainability .....31

CHAPTER 3: ACTIONS .....33

    Goal: Community Sustainability.....34

    Goal: Business and Workforce Sustainability.....41

    Goal: Public Infrastructure and Natural Resource Sustainability .....48

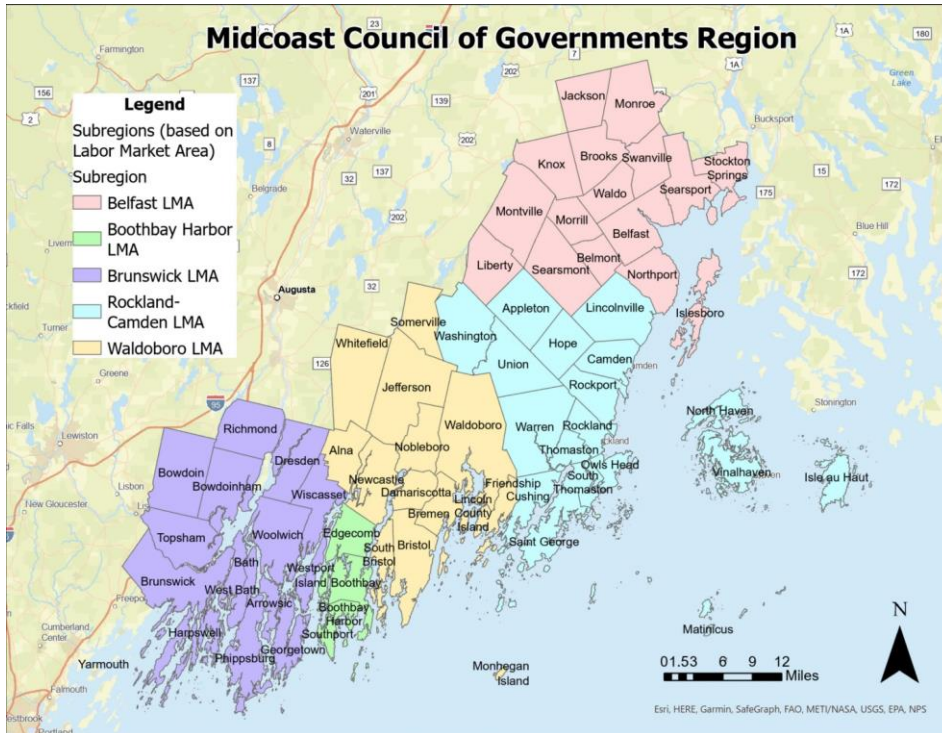
    Goal: Measures of Midcoast Sustainability for Tracking and Communicating Results.....52

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF MCOG PLANS .....46

APPENDIX 2: PROJECT LIST .....48

APPENDIX 3: SWOT ANALYSIS THEMES AND PRIORITIES.....54

## INTRODUCTION



The Midcoast Council of Governments (MCOG) Economic Development District spans the Maine coast from Brunswick to southern Waldo County, and encompassing inland communities from Richmond to Jackson. There are five labor market areas (LMA's): Belfast, Boothbay Harbor, Brunswick, Rockland-Camden, and Waldoboro. The region is known for its maritime history, fishing and tourist industry, farmlands, and access to nature and outdoor recreation. This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy suggests how the region and MCOG can engage with our strengths and mitigate our challenges.

## Acknowledgements

This Comprehensive Economic Strategy was developed through the collaborative work of a Steering Committee comprised of 5 member communities or counties, an Advisory Committee comprised of business and economic development interests in the region, and MCOG staff. We also are grateful for the comments and suggestions from the wider MCOG community who have helped this CEDS speak for the region.

### Steering Committee

	Affiliation
Julie Hashem (Co Chair)	Rockland Community Development Director
Sally Costello (Co Chair)	Brunswick Director of Economic and Community Development
Jay McCreight	Former Maine State Representative for Harpswell
Misty Parker	Bath Director of Economic and Community Development
Jennifer Merritt	Waldoboro Business Association and Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission Representative for Waldoboro

### Advisory Committee

Dana Morse	University of Maine Senior Extension Program in aquaculture Director of Community Programs for Maine Coast Fishermen's Association
Monique Coombs	Retired Labor Economist
John Dorrer	Senior Director for Coastal Enterprises Inc. (CEI)
Amy Winston	Founder of Developers Collaborative
Kevin Bunker	Owner of Wild Oats Bakery
Marshall Sheppard	Executive Director of Bath-Brunswick Regional Chamber
Cory King	Chair of Bath Redevelopment Corporation
Mandy Reynolds	Maine Aquaculture Co-Op
Merrit Carey	Bath Iron Works Facilities Manager
Jake Harriman	

This CEDS is funded in part by the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) and is prepared in fulfillment of the requirements of award #ED22PHI3020062. The funding from the EDA allowed MCOG staff members Mathew Eddy, Charlotte Nutt, and Maxwell Johnstone to work with the Steering and Advisory Committees to make this CEDS possible.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

*The economic resilience of the Midcoast region depends on the sustainability of our businesses and workforce, communities, and public infrastructure & natural resources.*

### CEDS Goal and Planning Process

The 2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS):

- Is organized around the overarching theme above;
- Outlines shared goals and objectives for the MCOG Region Economic Development District;
- Identifies priority projects, goals, strategies, and actions;
- Provides a means for the region to coordinate efforts and attract grant funding – in particular from the U.S. Economic Development Agency, who establishes the requirements for a CEDS process.

The CEDS is developed every five years, with annual updates to projects, actions, and progress on the measures of sustainability.

The first step in the planning process was data-gathering. The data is organized under three distinct themes under the umbrella category of sustainability, and there are full online interactive datasets called Story Maps for each theme, with links available below. The themes are:

- Measures of Community Sustainability
  - [Part 1: Demographics](#)
  - [Part 2: Housing](#)
- [Measures of Business and Workforce Sustainability](#)
- [Measures of Public Infrastructure and Natural Resources Sustainability](#)

Each dataset is presented as a story map on the MCOG website and is linked above. Each story map was produced by MCOG staff with guidance from the Steering Committee, and once completed, discussed with the Advisory Committee.

### Steps in the CEDS Process

Once the themes were established, the Steering Committee, Advisory Committee, and MCOG staff took the following steps:

**DRAFT**

- **Data and Trends.** Comprehensive story maps were developed for each measure of sustainability and the full library are available at [www.midcoastcog.com/story-maps](http://www.midcoastcog.com/story-maps). The team then identified data highlights by goal to inform a SWOT analysis.
- **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT).** The Advisory Committee, MCOG staff, and the Steering Committee identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within the region. The team considered where there are opportunities to build on regional strengths, and which challenges should be areas of focus. A SWOT summary is provided in Chapter 2.

The process continued with identification of measurable objectives and specific steps for achieving them:

- **Measurable Objectives.** The Steering Committee, in collaboration with Staff, identified Measurable Objectives that will help achieve each of the 3 themes. In identifying objectives, the team considered the data highlights and SWOT analysis, as well as MCOG's Strategic Plan, the State's Economic Development Plan and opportunities for alignment. A summary of MCOG's Strategic Plan can be found on the website [here](#).
- **Strategies & Actions.** For each Measurable Objective, the team identified Strategies and Actions for realizing it. The objectives, strategies & actions are summarized in an action plan, which was reviewed by, and improved with input from the Advisory Committee. The Action Plan is provided in Chapter 5.
- **Project List.** In 2025, the CEDS includes a project list developed by Staff, consistent with the format used by MCOG in recent years and is included as Appendix 2. The projects list selection and prioritization procedure will be updated annually by the Advisory Committee.
- **Annual Updates.** Beginning in Fall 2025, the Advisory Committee will meet with MCOG staff to review the measurable objectives, available data sets, and items from the Project List outlined in this Plan. The Advisory Committee will make suggestions regarding the strategies that should take a higher priority for MCOG staff going into the upcoming year, new projects from municipalities, and potential amendments to the CEDS plan.

## Data Highlights

### Measures of Community Sustainability Part 1: Demographics

- The Midcoast region has an older-than-average population when compared to both Maine and the United States
- There is a growing population of New Mainers arriving in the Midcoast region. This change is *mostly* occurring in the southern parts of the region, but it should not be overlooked in the rest of the region
- The foreign-born population amounts to less than 2-4%
- In terms of overall population, the Belfast LMA is the fastest-growing area in the Midcoast region at 6.5%. Other areas are growing at a slower rate (between 0% and 3%), but the Boothbay Harbor LMA is shrinking substantially (-6.6%)
- 15% of households in the MCOG region are occupied by adults living alone over the age of 65
- There has been an influx of people moving to the MCOG region from the Boston area
- Most of the in-migrants have been adults aged 18-35 (36%) and all other age groups range from 15-18%
- School enrollment has declined across the entire MCOG region, except for the Nobleboro and Waldoboro school districts. Likely, working families are moving away from the coast due to the lack of affordability
- There are very few daycare centers with available slots

### Measures of Community Sustainability Part 2: Housing

- Short-term rentals occupy varying portions of the housing stock, with greater percentages in coastal and amenity communities
- During the pandemic, people sold or moved into their second homes which increased the population and occupied housing units by about 3% from 2016 to 2021
- 70-80% of occupied homes are owned in the Midcoast region, compared to 73% in Maine and 65% nationwide
- The Belfast LMA has the greatest concentration of owner-occupied mobile homes (12%) followed by the Brunswick and Waldoboro LMA's (9%)
- The plurality of homes were built before 1940 (20-35%), followed by homes built between 2000 and 2009 (10-20%)
- Renters typically live in houses of worse physical condition and affordability than homeowners
- Homeowners' incomes cluster around \$75K-\$100K, whereas renter incomes tend to fall between at lower levels of income up to \$100K
- The median rent for a two-bedroom was roughly \$1300 in 2022, but southern areas in the Midcoast region tended to have higher rents
- In 2023, sale prices continued to trend above list prices showing that the market was still hot

### Measures of Business and Workforce Sustainability

- In terms of wages, the dominant industry in the region is healthcare, followed by retail trade, hospitality, and manufacturing. In terms of numbers of employees, the dominant industry is retail, followed by healthcare, accommodation and food services, and arts, entertainment, and recreation
- The Boothbay Harbor LMA has the highest seasonal employment in the Midcoast region, and economies in all LMA's aside from the Brunswick LMA have higher dependence on seasonal workers than Maine as a whole
- The number of remote workers in the Midcoast region has nearly doubled from 2019 to 2022
- Labor force statistics show that older adults make up a significant portion of the workforce
- More people commute to a job within their own town than a job outside of their town
- Municipal future growth/nongrowth maps show there is little regional coordination in their land use planning

### Measures of Public Infrastructure and Natural Resources Sustainability

- Route 1 has very high yearly traffic counts that amount to more than Interstate 295 in some areas
- There are major holes in our public transit and alternative transportation system that leave many isolated and the communities disconnected.
- Most towns (coastal and inland) have significant flooding risks to important municipal infrastructure such as busy roads, marine infrastructure, and sewage treatment plants
- There is a need to collect data on the non-fisheries economic and cultural significance of working waterfronts
- The number of fishermen and harvesters is declining for most species, with oyster-farming being the most notable exception
- Pleasure craft vessels are an important cultural and economic driver on the coast and islands, and their impact and significance should be better understood
- The Midcoast region has significant lake assets with public access that are at risk of invasive species

## Key Themes of the MCOG Region

The Advisory Committee, Steering Committee, and MCOG staff identified the following themes in the Midcoast region. The list is expanded upon further in Chapter 2.

### Community Sustainability

- Lack of housing affordability impacts everything
- There is an opportunity for coordinated communication around regional needs
- Midcoast has a high quality of place and cultural heritage

- In some ways, communities are very diverse, and in other ways they are not
- Affordable daycare is needed

#### **Business & Workforce Sustainability**

- The MCOG region has a diverse economy with a strong base to build from
- Aging workforce, and loss of knowledge and skills through workforce and population changes
- Workforce gaps and shortages across industries
- Changing culture and expectations around the workplace (e.g. remote, hybrid)
- High level of human capital within accomplished retirees, part timers, entrepreneurs
- How to welcome New Mainers
- Training the workforce we need through technical schools and other options
- Flexible work might attract retirees and parents as workers
- Strong volunteer base
- Childcare, older person care, and health care are hard to come by locally, but it may be a business opportunity
- Social service gaps impact available workforce (mental health, addiction)

#### **Public Infrastructure & Natural Resources**

- Natural amenities are abundant
- Working waterfront and public access preservation
- Limited state attention to broader waterfront infrastructure needs (non-fishing commercial piers, launches, public landings, access points)
- Sea level and storm surge changes and related threats to infrastructure
- Investments key to economic growth

## CHAPTER 1: SUMMARY BACKGROUND

---

### Data Background

As part of our CEDS process, MCOG staff members conducted a deep data dive. All data analysis was a “Measure of Sustainability,” and there are three distinct categories for each measure. These categories are:

- Measures of Community Sustainability
  - Part 1: Demographics
  - Part 2: Housing
- Measures of Business/Workforce Sustainability
- Measures of Public Infrastructure/Natural Resources Sustainability

These datasets were presented as Story Maps, an ESRI program that enables users to interact with maps and tables. Both the Steering and Advisory Committees engaged heavily with this data to prepare for the SWOT analysis.

Summaries and highlights of each section are below, but the complete datasets can be found on the [MCOG website](#). All data on the MCOG website may be used by municipalities in the MCOG region for planning or other purposes. Most of the data is sourced from the US Census Bureau’s 2022 5-Year American Community Survey (ACS), but several other state and federal resources are used, including, but not limited to, the Department of Labor, Department of Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Internal Revenue Services.

Most datasets refer to the Midcoast or MCOG region, which is mapped below. The MCOG region is based on five Labor Market Areas (LMA’s), which are areas that are economically cohesive where people tend to live and work. Some datasets are only available at the county level, which includes 4 counties in the MCOG region: Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, parts of Waldo, and Brunswick and Harpswell in Cumberland County. In these county-level datasets, Brunswick and Harpswell are excluded since they would be influenced by data from Portland.

### Data Summary

#### Measures of Community Sustainability Part 1: Demographics

##### Age

- *The Midcoast region has an older-than-average population when compared to both Maine and the United States*

- 15% of households in the MCOG region are occupied by adults living alone over the age of 65

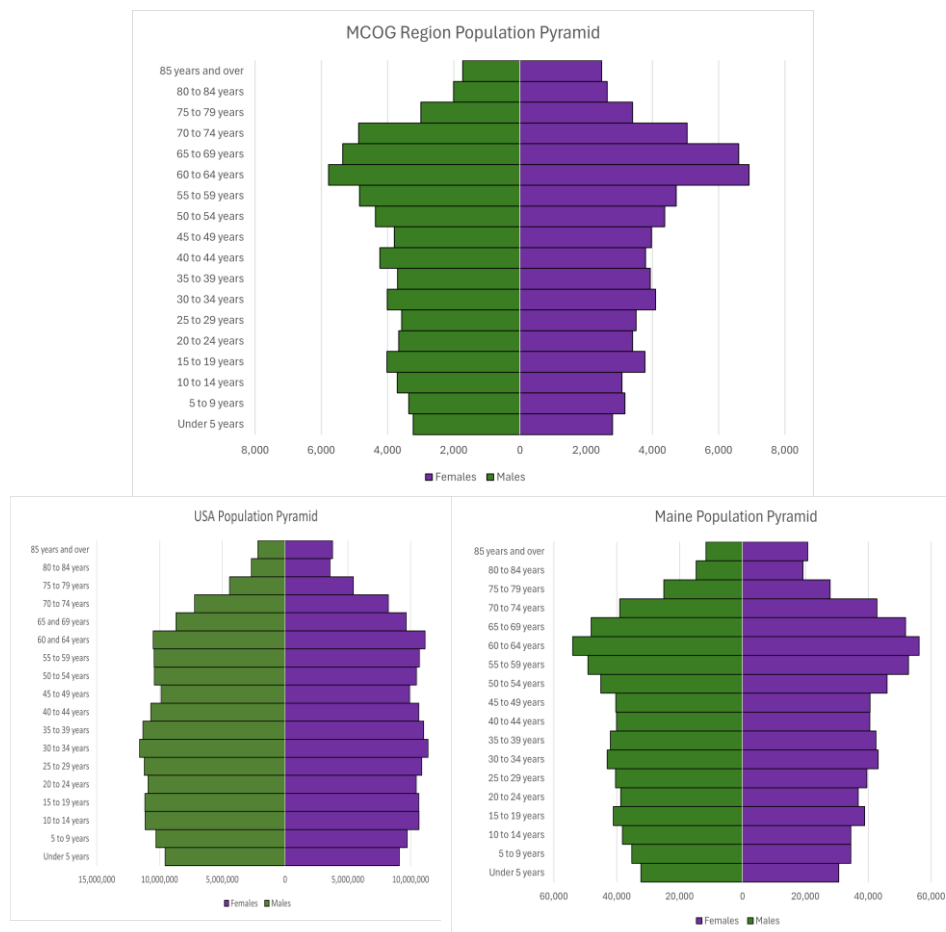


Figure 1

The Midcoast region has a significantly higher population of people over the age of 60 than Maine as a whole (Figure 1). Maine has an even older population than the United States. An aging population poses challenges to the workforce, housing, healthcare, and transportation. However, the Midcoast region is a vibrant place that offers great retirement opportunities and thus recruits talent to the region that may be utilized through volunteer or part-time opportunities.

Given the older adult population, it is important to understand how many adults are living alone at age 65 or older. In the Midcoast region, around 15% of households are occupied by adults over the age of 65 living alone, compared to just over 10% in the United States. Some of these adults may have greater needs for rural public transportation and at-home healthcare. Furthermore, it is likely that these older adults living alone are living in houses that raised their families, which points to the need to provide an option for older adults while freeing the home for younger families.

### Race

The Midcoast region has a predominantly white population, but there is a growing population of New Mainers and BIPOC people. This change is *mostly* occurring in the southern parts of the region, but it should not be overlooked in the rest of the region. 60 New Mainer families moved into an apartment complex in Brunswick in 2023, and MCOG is supporting them in entrepreneurial efforts with the Hub grant.

### Growth

- In terms of overall population, the Belfast LMA is the fastest-growing area in the Midcoast region at 6.5%. Other areas are growing at a slower rate (between 0% and 3%), but the Boothbay Harbor LMA is shrinking substantially (-6.6%)

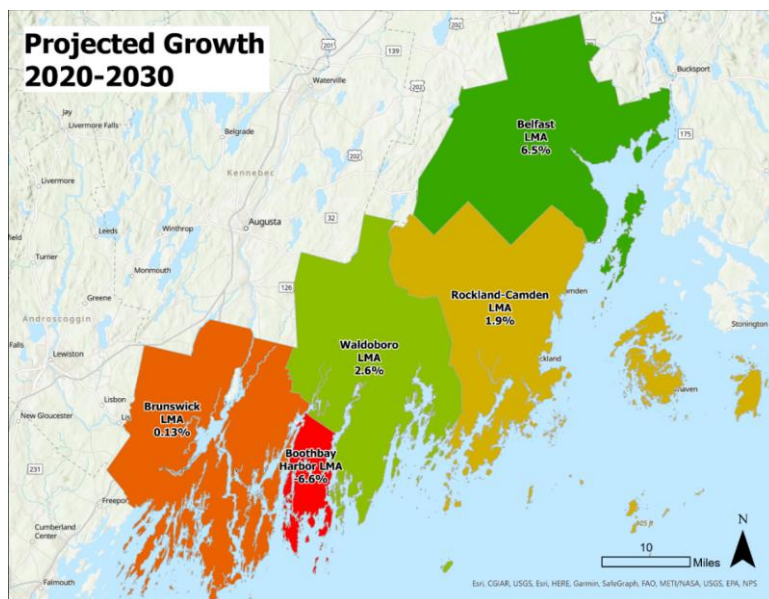


Figure 2

The Maine State Economist releases population projection data at the town level. This data was aggregated to the LMA level and shows projections for each of the five LMA's (Figure 2). Waldo County (Belfast LMA) is expected to grow the most, whereas Boothbay Harbor LMA is projected to decline substantially. Waldoboro and Rockland-Camden LMA's growth is projected to be roughly 2-3%, while the Brunswick LMA is predicted to be relatively stagnant. It is important to note that the Brunswick LMA has the largest population overall, which means that a small percentage growth is numerically large compared to other LMA growths of a similar percentage.

#### *Migration*

- *There has been an influx of people moving to the MCOG region from the Boston area*
- *Most of the in-migrants have been adults aged 18-35 (36%) and all other age groups range from 15-18%*

IRS data publishes tax-filing data that shows where people file from in previous years. Between 2020 and 2021, the largest source of in-migration for the MCOG region was the greater Boston area. Similarly, ACS data shows migration into the region by age. Waldo County has had the most in-migration, likely because it is generally the most affordable. Furthermore, 36% of people moving into the MCOG region were between the ages of 18 and 35, which was the largest of any age group.

#### *School Enrollment*

- *School enrollment has declined across the entire MCOG region, except for the Nobleboro and Waldoboro school districts. Likely, working families are moving away from the coast due to the lack of affordability*

Waldoboro and Nobleboro school districts are the only districts that experienced an increase in enrollment from 2014 to 2023. RSU 20, covering Stockton Springs, has seen the greatest decline at 64%, followed by RSU 12 that covers inland communities of Somerville, Alna, Whitefield, and others outside of the MCOG region. Other notable declines in public school enrollments are in the Boothbay Harbor peninsula, the Belfast area, and the Phippsburg peninsula. Likely, as the peninsulas have become unaffordable, families have moved inland to the center of the region.

The data is from the Maine Department of Education (MDE). The MDE collects data on the number of students enrolled in public schools on October 1st of each school year.

## Childcare

- *There are very few daycare centers with available slots in the MCOG region*

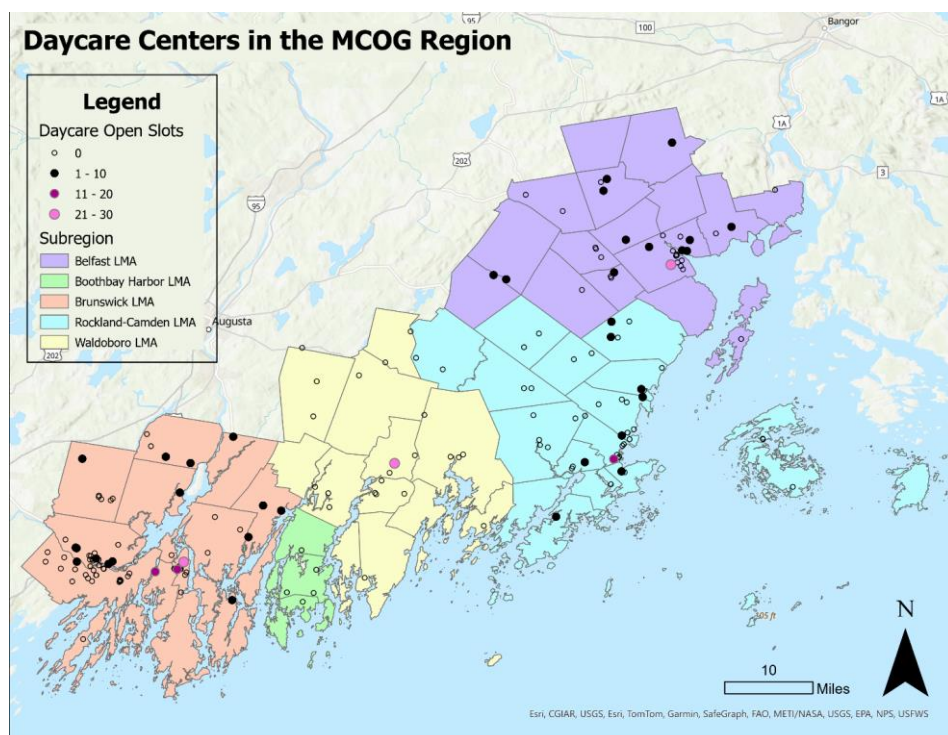


Figure 3

One struggle of the MCOG region is daycare availability. As of August 2023, there were no daycare slots available in the Boothbay Harbor LMA, and very few slots available elsewhere (Figure 3). Without affordable and accessible daycare, parents struggle to balance work and childcare. This issue in particular has been expressed as a concern to MCOG from multiple sources.

## Measures of Community Sustainability Part 2: Housing

### General Pandemic Trends

- *During the pandemic, people sold or moved into their second homes which increased the population and occupied housing units by about 3% from 2016 to 2021*

To evaluate housing trends in the region, data was aggregated and compared from 2016 to 2021. Population and year-round occupied households increased by roughly 3%, while seasonal homes decreased by roughly 3%. Thus, during the pandemic, people were either moving into their homes or selling their homes to a full-time residence household. It is unclear whether people moving into these otherwise seasonal homes are remote workers or working in brick-and-mortar stores, which is a need of the MCOG region.

#### Affordability

- The majority of towns are unaffordable, and the trend is that affordability is continuing to decline

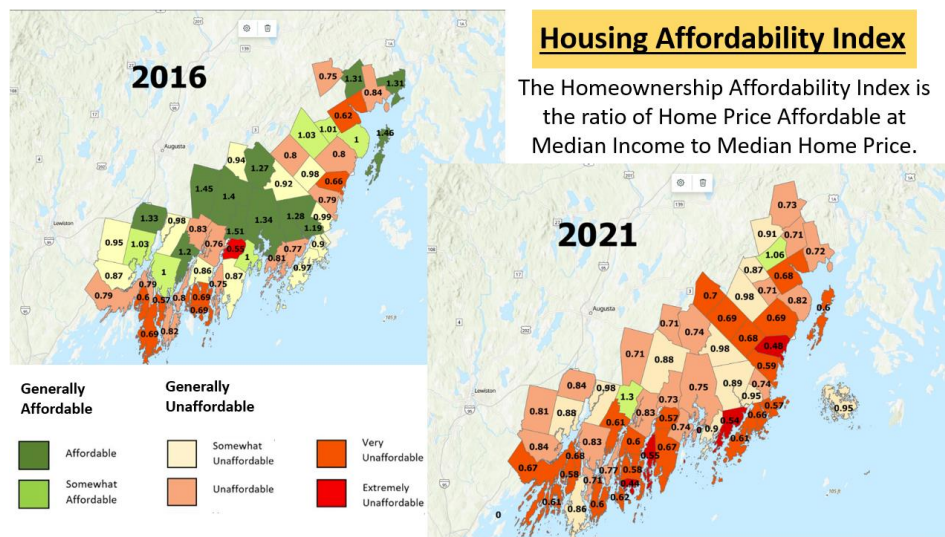


Figure 4

Prior to the pandemic, the MCOG region's struggles with housing affordability were mostly restricted to the coastal, peninsula, and island communities, while the inland communities remained relatively affordable. However, by 2021 most communities had become unaffordable, and the coastal, peninsula, and island communities had become even less affordable. Housing Affordability data will be updated in 2025.

#### Seasonal and Occupied Homes

- Peninsula and island communities see extremely high rates of seasonal homes compared to Maine (15.9%)
- There are very few unoccupied homes that are not seasonally used, indicating an overall housing shortage

The MCOG region has a significant number of seasonal homes, especially in the coastal, peninsula, and island communities, which decreases occupancy rates in those areas. Some inland communities have occupancy rates of 95% or higher, which indicate a very tight housing market with little room for mobility.

#### Long-Term Rentals

- Long-term rentals have been declining since the pandemic
- There are very few long-term rentals in some rural and peninsula communities, but there are greater percentages at the LMA and economic centers

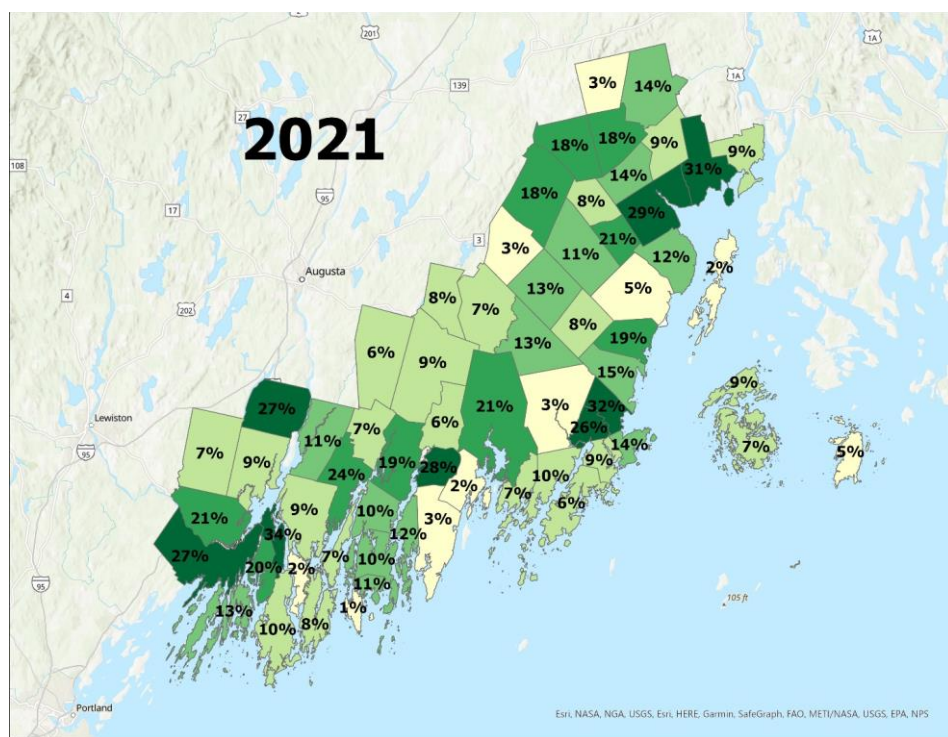


Figure 5

The highest concentration of long-term rentals are in the LMA centers and service-provider communities: Brunswick, Bath, Damariscotta, Waldoboro, Rockland, Rockport, and Belfast. Peninsula and island communities tend to have fewer long-term rentals (Figure 5). The data is a percentage of all housing units.

## Short-Term Rentals

- Short-term rentals occupy varying portions of the housing stock, with greater percentages in coastal and amenity communities

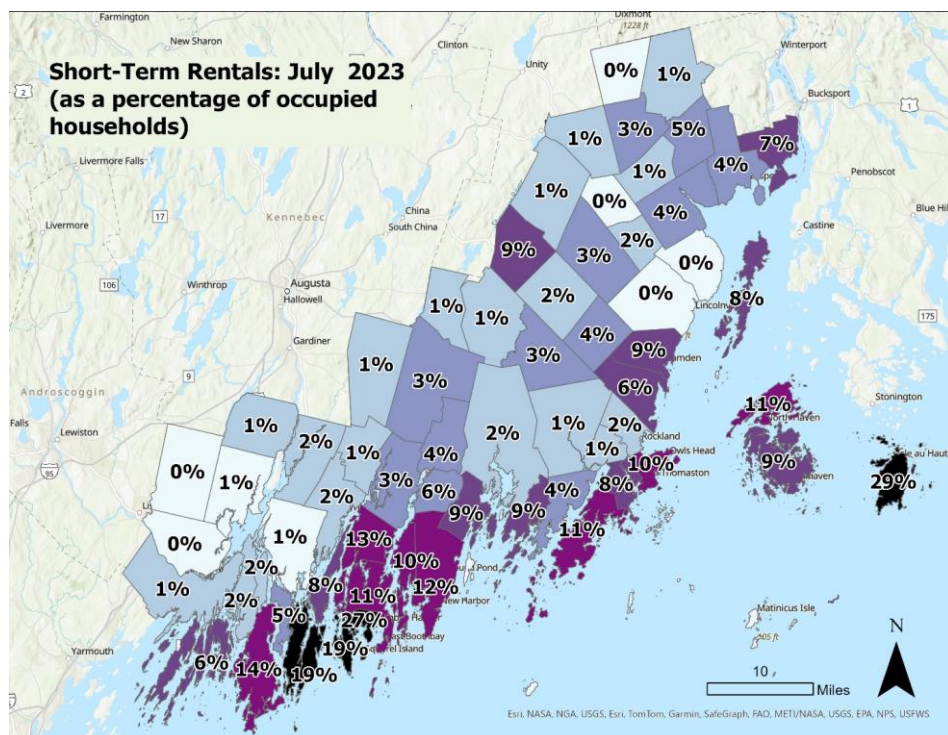


Figure 6

Coastal, peninsula, and island communities all tend to have higher rates of short-term rentals than inland communities. Boothbay Harbor has the highest mainland short-term rental percentage, followed by Southport and Georgetown. The island communities also have high rates of short-term rentals, but that data should be ground-truthed due to small sample sizes. All other communities range from 0 to 6% as a percentage of occupied households. The data is a percentage of occupied households, which differs from the long-term rental map (Figure 5).

### Units by Building Type and Size

- The Belfast LMA has the greatest concentration of owner-occupied mobile homes (12%) followed by the Brunswick and Waldoboro LMA's (9%)

LMA	1, Detached	1, Attached	2 to 9	10 or more	Mobile home	Total
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>						
Brunswick LMA	60.7%	3.6%	1.3%	0.3%	8.7%	74.6%
Boothbay Harbor LMA	73.4%	0.8%	1.0%	0.0%	4.8%	79.9%
Waldoboro LMA	69.4%	0.4%	0.1%	0.4%	8.9%	79.3%
Rockland-Camden LMA	69.5%	1.8%	1.7%	0.3%	5.6%	78.8%
Belfast LMA	60.5%	1.9%	2.7%	0.0%	12.4%	77.5%
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>						
Brunswick LMA	7.7%	1.6%	10.9%	2.5%	2.6%	25.3%
Boothbay Harbor LMA	11.1%	0.1%	3.2%	2.9%	2.7%	20.1%
Waldoboro LMA	6.9%	0.2%	8.4%	2.5%	2.6%	20.6%
Rockland-Camden LMA	6.4%	0.5%	9.5%	2.9%	1.6%	20.9%
Belfast LMA	7.1%	0.8%	10.2%	1.5%	3.0%	22.5%

Table 1. Tenure by Type of Home

The percentages of owner-occupied homes are clustered tightly between 75% and 80% for all LMA's. The majority of the owner-occupied units consist of detached single-unit structures, followed by mobile home structures (Table 1). The Belfast LMA has the greatest percentage of mobile homes at 12%, and the Boothbay Harbor LMA has the lowest percentage at 4.8%.

Renter-occupied homes, however, are split between two distinct categories: detached single-unit structures and structures of 2-9 units. All LMA's lean towards more units in 2- to 9-unit compounds except for the Boothbay Harbor LMA which has more detached single-unit structures. The overall share of renters is clustered together between 20% and 25%.

Overall, Table 1 provides some insight into the types of homes people occupy in Midcoast Maine. As the Midcoast region makes a plan for housing development, having knowledge of the current situation is important to either intentionally maintain these types of homes or to focus planning efforts on filling the gaps.

### Age of Housing Stock

- The plurality of homes were built before 1940 (20-35%), followed by homes built between 2000 and 2009 (10-20%)

Towns that are historical hubs—Rockland, Camden, Boothbay Harbor, Southport, and Bath—have the highest rates of old homes. This is likely because of early residential development to support historical communities, which have led to more recent building efforts being focused elsewhere. Island communities also have high rates of old homes, likely because new construction is especially costly in remote island towns.

In each LMA, the largest age category of housing units was built in 1939 or before (24%-33%). There are very few houses built in 1940-1969, but there is an uptick in homes built in 1970 or later. All LMA's decline in new units from the 2010's and after, with 3-7% of homes making up these new units.

#### *Income Distribution*

- *Homeowners' incomes cluster around \$75K-\$100K, whereas renter incomes tend to fall between at lower levels of income up to \$100K*

Homeowners' incomes peak in a left-tailed bell curve around \$75K to \$100K. Specifically, the Brunswick and Rockland-Camden LMA's have the highest percentage of that income bracket as well as the next one up.

Boothbay Harbor has the lowest percentages of any LMA in the middle-income brackets (\$75K to \$150K), but the Boothbay Harbor and Brunswick LMA's are leading the group in the highest income bracket of households with greater than a \$150K income. The Boothbay Harbor LMA also has among the highest percentages of lower-income households in the region, making it the LMA with the highest income inequality in the MCOG region.

For rental households in the MCOG region, there is a similar spike at \$75K to \$100K. However, the rest of the distribution is pushed much lower, and there is an even larger spike at the category under \$20K, especially for the Boothbay Harbor and Waldoboro LMA's. Rental households clearly earn less money overall than owner-occupied households, and the bimodal nature of this distribution is stark. CEDS strategies must address and account for renters having lower incomes by considering supportive and affordable housing, transportation, and childcare measures.

#### *Median Rent*

- *The median rent for a two-bedroom was roughly \$1300 in 2022, but southern areas in the Midcoast region tended to have higher rents. The median rent in Maine in 2022 was \$1,009*

County	Median Rent
Cumberland	\$1,574
Sagadahoc	\$1,301
Lincoln	\$1,198
Knox	\$1,161
Waldo	\$1,174

Table 2. Median Rent by County

The data is at the county level, so the two towns in the MCOG region in Cumberland County (Brunswick and Harpswell) are affected by the Portland Metro area rates and are thus shown to be higher than the other counties in the MCOG region. Brunswick also has the largest population in the Midcoast as well as a large employment center.

Sagadahoc median rent is quite a bit higher than the three northern counties entirely within the MCOG region (Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo) . There are two potential factors pushing the rates up in Sagadahoc County. The first is the proximity to the Maine metropolitan areas, as the county towns are within commuting distance to Portland, Lewiston, and Augusta. The second is that the biggest employers in Midcoast, Bath Iron Works, is located in the heart of Sagadahoc County which could increase demand and prices for rental units.

Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo Counties all have similar rent ranges for two-bedroom units. This is unsurprising as the areas are all similar in terms of employment opportunities, infrastructure, and rural/urban mix.

The median rent for a two-bedroom unit in the US is \$1255 per month, and Maine's median rent per month is \$1009. All LMA's are higher than the state and national median rent, and both Sagadahoc and Cumberland Counties median rents are greater than the US median. With high rental rates and low rental incomes, the MCOG CEDS strategy must support long-term renters in economic stability and sustainability through housing and transportation measures.

#### *Building Permits*

- *Building permits increased steadily until 2018. More recent data is needed*

Overall, building permits in the MCOG region have been increasing until 2018. More recent data is not available, so there is a need for ground-level data collection from towns. Building permits data will help MCOG understand progress to new housing unit goals and data collection of building permits is underway. MCOG intends to institute a building permit collection system, in conjunction with other Regional Councils, to obtain in-time building activity and add it into our Housing Gaps analysis.

## Market Trends

- In 2023, sale prices continued to trend above list prices showing that the market was still hot

In 2023, both the sale and list price of houses have been increasing steadily. The list price has been consistently above the sale price in all counties except for Sagadahoc in 2023. In 2023, fewer homes sold within 2 weeks of being listed than in 2022. The housing market is slowing slightly, but housing remains unaffordable, which needs to be addressed through various programs.

## Measures of Business and Workforce Sustainability

### Wages, Employment, and Number of Establishments by Industry

In terms of wages, the dominant industry in the region is healthcare, followed by retail trade, hospitality, and manufacturing. In terms of numbers of employees, the dominant industry is retail, followed by healthcare, accommodation and food services, and arts, entertainment, and recreation. In terms of the number of establishments, the dominant industry is construction, followed by professional, scientific, and technical services, retail trade, and accommodation and food services. The LMA's are each distinct in their specialties, and the CEDS plan must account for the strengths of the LMA's within the MCOG region to both optimize those strengths and find areas for potential industries.

For a detailed breakdown of the shifting trends of workers in the predominant industries of the Midcoast region, please refer the story maps found on our website: [2025 Update: Industry and Workforce Sustainability](#). The data from these story maps comes from the Maine Center for Workforce Research and Information's Quarterly and Annual Industry Employment and Wages from 2018 to 2023.

### Employment Variability

- The Boothbay Harbor LMA has the highest seasonal employment in the Midcoast region, and economies in all LMA's aside from the Brunswick LMA have higher dependence on seasonal workers than Maine as a whole

LMA	Average Employment Q1	Average Employment Q3	Q3 - Q1	Seasonal Variability Metric
Brunswick LMA	26781	27890	1109	4%
Boothbay Harbor LMA	2020	3404	1384	69%
Waldoboro LMA	5106	5900	795	16%
Rockland-Camden LMA	13844	15761	1918	14%
Belfast LMA	8525	9147	622	7%
Maine	502859	535752	32893	7%

Table 3. Employment Variability from Peak to Off Season

Table 3 shows the average employment of the peak season (Q3) and off season (Q1) for the years 2018 through 2023. The third column shows the difference in number of employees between the peak season and off season. The last column shows the difference between peak- and off-season as a percentage of the off-season employment counts. In other words, the variability metric is the percent change in employment from the off season to the peak season. It is important to note that this data is for businesses within each LMA, and it might not include all self-employed workers. This data is from the Maine Department of Labor.

The Brunswick LMA has the largest employment base followed by the Rockland-Camden LMA. The Rockland-Camden LMA has the highest variability in number of employees but ranks towards the middle for percent change from peak season to off season. The Boothbay Harbor LMA has the highest percent change between the two seasons but ranks middle in absolute differences. The Belfast and Brunswick regions notably have both low absolute and percentage changes. The Waldoboro LMA falls in the middle range in both. Maine has a variability of 7% on average from off season to peak season, which is less than most of the MCOG region. Only the Brunswick LMA has less variability than Maine.

#### *Remote Workers*

- *The number of remote workers in the Midcoast region has nearly doubled from 2019 to 2022*

Before 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic reached Maine, all LMA's had higher rates of remote workers than Maine. Roughly 5-12% of the workforce in the MCOG region worked from home between 2016 and 2019. The rates of remote workers rose steadily after 2020 to 9-14% in 2022. Maine's remote worker rate in 2022 was around 12.5%. This has also resulted in an increased demand for accessible broadband and internet services throughout the region. There have been significant investments made at the local and county levels to address these gaps since the pandemic showed the benefits of remote work and interactions. Some communities, such as Washington and Somerville, have taken the initiative to establish municipal-owned internet utilities for their residents; meanwhile, there are private-public partnerships, such as Lincoln County with Fidium, that brought high speed fiber to all homes throughout the county. While there are several success stories to complete broadband connectivity in the region, there are unserved and underserved pockets in the region that still do not meet the State definition of broadband (100 Mbps for both upload and download speeds).

### Labor Force Statistics

- Labor force statistics show that older adults make up a significant portion of the workforce

Age	Brunswick LMA	Boothbay Harbor LMA	Waldoboro LMA	Rockland-Camden LMA	Belfast LMA
Employed					
16-24	4861	313	723	2305	1133
25-34	6339	387	2228	3004	1838
35-44	6233	610	1948	3537	2268
45-54	7201	534	2185	4170	2239
55-64	7328	706	2388	5076	2001
65-74	2977	382	1135	2261	883
75+	591	119	224	482	252
Unemployed					
16-24	474	0	109	240	66
25-34	174	0	41	132	141
35-44	202	5	79	89	159
45-54	170	10	36	111	64
55-64	465	11	113	174	80
65-74	28	4	44	105	107
75+	9	0	14	5	0
Not in Labor Force					
16-24	2206	117	629	1279	668
25-34	1039	151	365	937	458
35-44	1213	105	239	1098	490
45-54	1014	70	551	1178	417
55-64	3377	446	1184	2107	1907
65-74	4544	781	1931	2970	2523
75+	6397	1112	2349	3852	2098
Total Labor Force*	59244	6147	19252	35761	20638

Table 4. Age by Labor Force Status in MCOG LMA's

Table 4 shows the number of workers by age in each labor force category, and each column is color-coded, with darker hues representing a higher number of workers. The total number of the population above 16 years of age is on the bottom row. The LMA with the oldest employed workforce is the Rockland-Camden LMA, with the darkest cell in the employment category falling within the 55-64 age range. The Brunswick and Boothbay Harbor LMA's also fall into this category with higher numbers of workers falling in the older age brackets. The Waldoboro LMA on the other hand has a more even distribution of workers across the age categories from age 25 to 64. The Belfast LMA similarly has an even distribution across these age categories but peaks at the earliest of any LMA with the greatest number of workers falling in the 35-44 age bracket.

The unemployment table is consistent across all LMA's with very low unemployment in each.

Workers who are out of the labor force concentrate in the oldest age category across all LMA's except the Belfast LMA. The highest concentration of those out of the labor force in the Belfast LMA fall into the 65-74 age bracket, showing that LMA has a younger workforce altogether.

#### *Commute Patterns*

- *More people commute to a job within their own town than a job outside of their town*

MCOG conducted a traffic movement study to assess the cohesion of the labor market areas in 2021. This data comes from Streetlight, which utilizes GPS navigational devices and location-based services to obtain accurate transportation data. The information, which can be found in our online story map [here](#). The Brunswick LMA showed commuter traffic patterns within the LMA, and strong traffic patterns between Brunswick, Bath, and Topsham. The Boothbay Harbor LMA showed less cohesion, with many commuters coming from inland communities. The Boothbay Harbor LMA is one of the least affordable areas to live in the MCOG region, so families may have moved inland to keep their jobs at the expense of a longer commute. Correspondingly, schools in those inland communities have increased in enrollment. The Waldoboro LMA is cohesive but there are many commuters into the Waldoboro region from Knox County. The Rockland-Camden and Belfast LMA's are the most contained of any LMA's, meaning there are the most people who live and work in their respective LMA's.

The study also assessed movement to major cities and towns outside of the MCOG region. Portland, South Portland, and Freeport have strong commuter contingents from Brunswick and western parts of Sagadahoc County. Most of Sagadahoc County sends some commuters to Lewiston and Auburn. Augusta pulls workers from all counties and LMA's in the MCOG region, but especially northern Lincoln County. Parts of Waldo County commute to Waterville and Brewer. These commute patterns are important for transportation planning as MCOG builds out its Thriving Communities plan.

## Growth and Nongrowth Areas

- Municipal future growth/nongrowth maps show there is little regional coordination in their land use planning

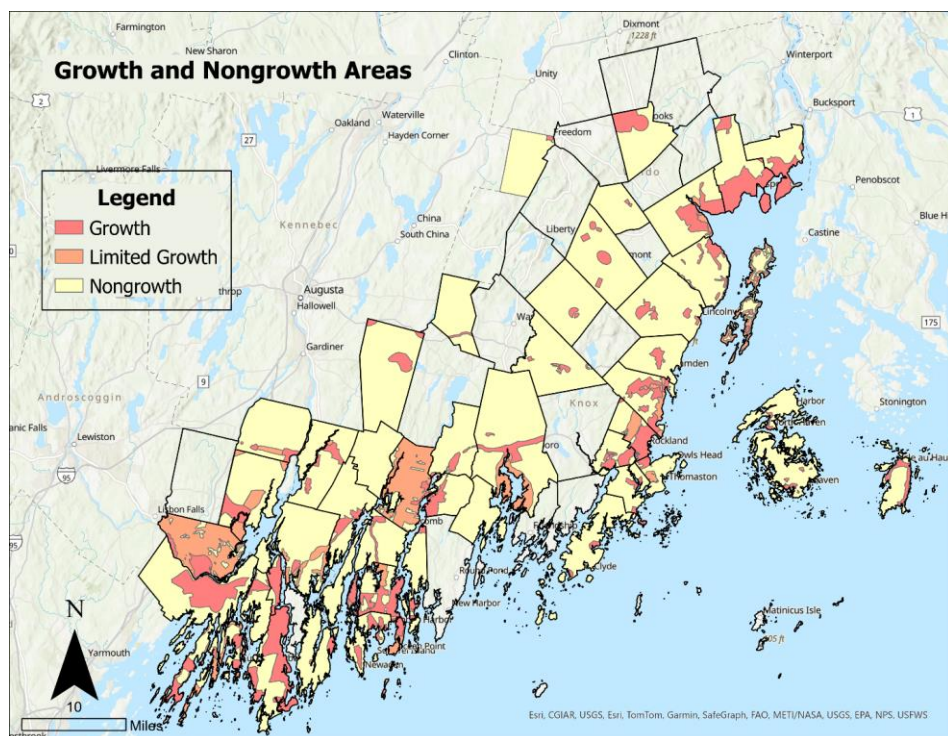


Figure 7, based on Comprehensive Plans approved in Fall 2022

The MCOG region mostly consists of nongrowth and unlabeled areas. Growth areas generally are restricted to major roadways, town centers, and waterfronts. The southern region has slightly more contiguity of growth, limited growth, and nongrowth areas. For example, there is a mostly continuous line of growth around the Route 1 corridor from Brunswick through Waldoboro. In the more rural towns, there is less coordination because towns either have growth areas dotted across towns or towns are less likely to have a future land use plan. This relates to the third observation of which areas do not have future land use plans and maps. These areas are important to note because, while they are mostly rural in nature, they are susceptible to spontaneous growth (rural Waldo County, for example).

The CEDS plan must take into account this rural nature and where development is likely to be concentrated.

## Measures of Public Infrastructure and Natural Resources Sustainability

### Average Annual Daily Traffic

- Route 1 has very high yearly traffic counts that amount to more than Interstate 295 in some areas

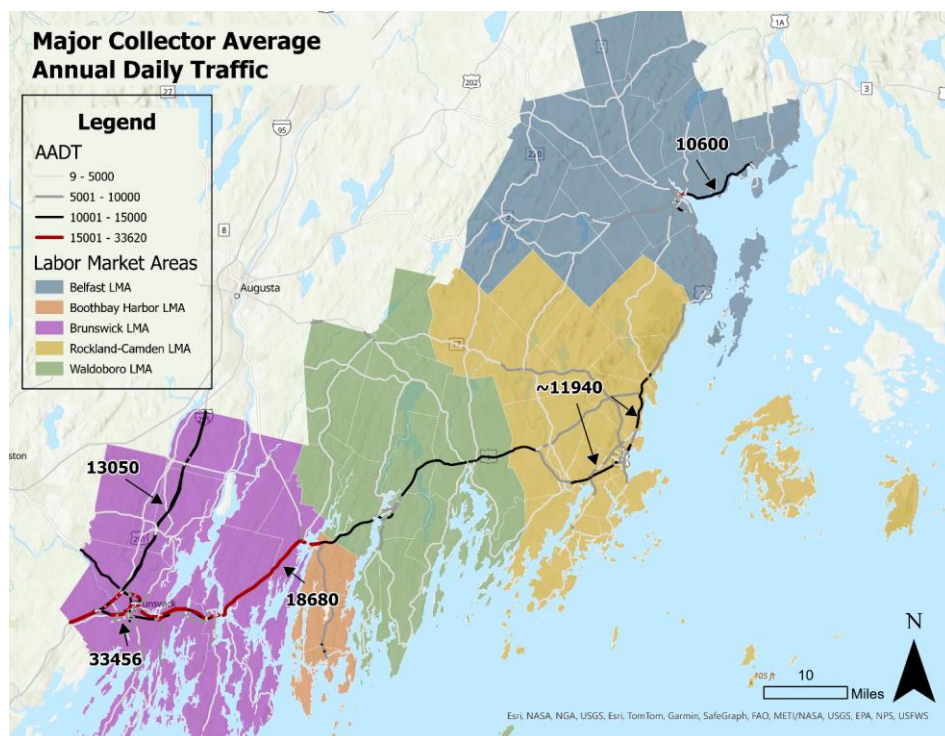


Figure 8

The most frequently trafficked roads in the MCOG region span from 295 south of Brunswick to Boothbay Harbor on Route 1, followed by interstate 295 from Brunswick to Bowdoin and other parts of Route 1. Route 1 traffic likely comes from the summer peak tourism season, which speaks to the volume that the road handles. Annually averaging more than the nearby interstate indicates a disproportionately high use of the road and provides opportunities for transportation planning and mitigation. This is demonstrated by the recent move by MDOT to apply for new funding to address traffic congestion at the Route 1 entry to Brunswick, and the rest of the region.

Congestion and “pinch points” are a concern among Route 1 communities and noting the specific areas of high traffic are key to mitigating backups in the CEDS and Thriving Communities Plans.

#### *Public Transit*

- *There are major holes in our public transit and alternative transportation system that leave many isolated and the communities disconnected.*

The MCOG region lacks adequate mass and alternative transit to reliably transport commuters. There is one private bus that runs daily along Route 1 that stops at major towns. Bath, Brunswick, Belfast, and Rockland all have buses within their municipalities but there is little connection across towns and cities. Bike lanes are limited to several municipalities and often connect to busy roads or roads with limited capacity and space for bicyclists. To develop the Midcoast region in a way that optimizes land use, there must be a cohesive mass and alternative transit plan. Adding pedestrian and alternative transit would add character and livability to towns, which are part of MCOG’s Strategic and CEDS plans.

In 2012, the Downeaster extended passenger rail service to Brunswick. This extension provided a significant economic benefit to connect the Midcoast Region to Portland. Since 2017, there have been studies to extend the rail service to Rockland with stops in Bath, Wiscasset, and Newcastle/Damariscotta. This extension will serve as a major boost to public transit and tourism, and serves as a jumping off point for supplemental transit services that would connect the rail service to the rest of the region. The new rail system also opens the opportunity for more alternative modes of transportation to reduce traffic congestion and creating new land use opportunities for the new train stations.

#### *Water Districts*

As MCOG considers growth in the CEDS plan, it is important to note the growth maps and public infrastructure that allow for growth to see where they agree or are mismatched. Towns with water districts cluster around Route 1. While these are some of the most densely populated areas, much of the growth in the MCOG region is occurring outside the Route 1 corridor and outside of water districts, especially in Waldo County.

### *Flood and Storm Impacts*

- *Most towns (coastal and inland) have significant flooding risks to important municipal infrastructure such as busy roads, marine infrastructure, and sewage treatment plants*

Several important areas, roads, and infrastructure are at risk of flooding. Communities along peninsulas or on islands are at high risk of being cutoff for prolonged periods of time due to their remoteness to most state resources. Storm events from flooding to high winds can create long-term impacts to the Midcoast Region simply by cutting off key linking infrastructure points at ferry terminals and roads that extend the entire peninsula. For example, the Lincolnville Ferry landing, main roads on Islesboro and Montville, the Damariscotta downtown parking lot, and downtown Bath are all susceptible to flooding from storms. Wastewater treatment sites are prone to this same flooding. Wiscasset and Rockland wastewater treatment plants are especially vulnerable. Bath and Camden plants are near the floodplains but not within. The Brunswick, Great Salt Bay, Waldoboro, and Warren treatment plants are comparatively lower risk plants, but still may be susceptible in the long term. There is a detailed map on flooding within the entire MCOG region on the MCOG Story Map. Flood mapping is especially important as storm events are happening more frequently and more severely and communities need to prepare for these events, as economic consequences of flooding can be disastrous.

In the last five years, there have been five separate FEMA declarations (DR-4647, DR-4696, DR-4719, DR-4754, and DR-4764) due to the high cost in public and private damages from separate storm events. The State of Maine has received over \$17 million in public assistance from these storms, which includes communities affected in the Midcoast Region. Most of the damage from these storms impacted the historic Maine coastal businesses and infrastructure, including public water access points and highly traversed roads that were in designated flood plain areas. Privately owned restaurants, fishing piers, and other water-dependent businesses also received a high amount of storm damage, which caused some businesses to be closed for extensive periods of time and affecting their time-sensitive work schedules. The Midcoast Council of Governments has already begun work in conducting regional crossing studies to find culverts that not only have a high value to the regional economies. The purpose of the study is to create a centralized inventory list of the significant culverts in the region and providing information to communities and counties on the importance of formulating a capital strategy to address the culverts that are heavily used for the regional economy.

### *Working Waterfronts*

- *There is a need to collect data on the non-fisheries economic and cultural significance of working waterfronts*
- *The number of fishermen and harvesters is declining for most species, with oyster-farming being the most notable exception*

Maine is known for its fishing and lobstering industry. According to the State of Maine Blue Economy Task Force (BETF), over 25.5% of the GDP for the Midcoast region is directly tied to the water-dependent activities, or the “Blue Economy”. The Blue Economy, as defined by the State of Maine, means the business sectors that rely on the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic health, improved livelihoods, jobs or ecosystem health. The industries and activities involved in this field include, but are not limited to, research, recreation, food production/harvesting, and harbor maintenance. The BETF released a report to the State Legislature providing a description of this industry and the opportunities to encourage growth. The January 2025 report can be found online through the Maine Department of Economic and Community (<https://www.maine.gov/decd/business-development/sites/maine.gov.decd.business-development/files/inline-files/FINAL%20BETF%20report%20to%20DECD%20JAN%2031.pdf>)

The MCOG region has many working waterfronts that support Maine’s cultural heritage and tourism economy. The major ports that support the highest number of harvesters are Brunswick, Harpswell, Waldoboro, Friendship, Cushing, Spruce Head, Bristol, Boothbay Harbor, and Vinalhaven. The ports that bring in the largest value of catch are Harpswell, Friendship, Spruce Head, and Vinalhaven.

Lobstering is the most profitable species. The Rockland-Camden LMA has by far the biggest lobster catch and most number of harvesters compared to other LMA's, followed by the Waldoboro and Brunswick LMA's. It is important to note that the Brunswick LMA includes Harpswell which hosts the lobstering ports in the area. Lobstermen who live in Brunswick and moor/dock boats in Brunswick therefore use the ports in Portland or Harpswell, specifically Cundy's Harbor and Quahog Bay.

Overall, the number of harvesters across all species has declined, except for oyster-farmers. This trend is true of all LMA's and of Maine. Working waterfronts are a cultural and economic driver in the MCOG region, and understanding their individual strengths, weaknesses, and needs are key to maintaining the industries that rely on them, and the villages that support them.

### Vessel Transit Counts

- *Pleasure craft vessels are an important cultural and economic driver on the coast and islands, and their impact and significance should be better understood*

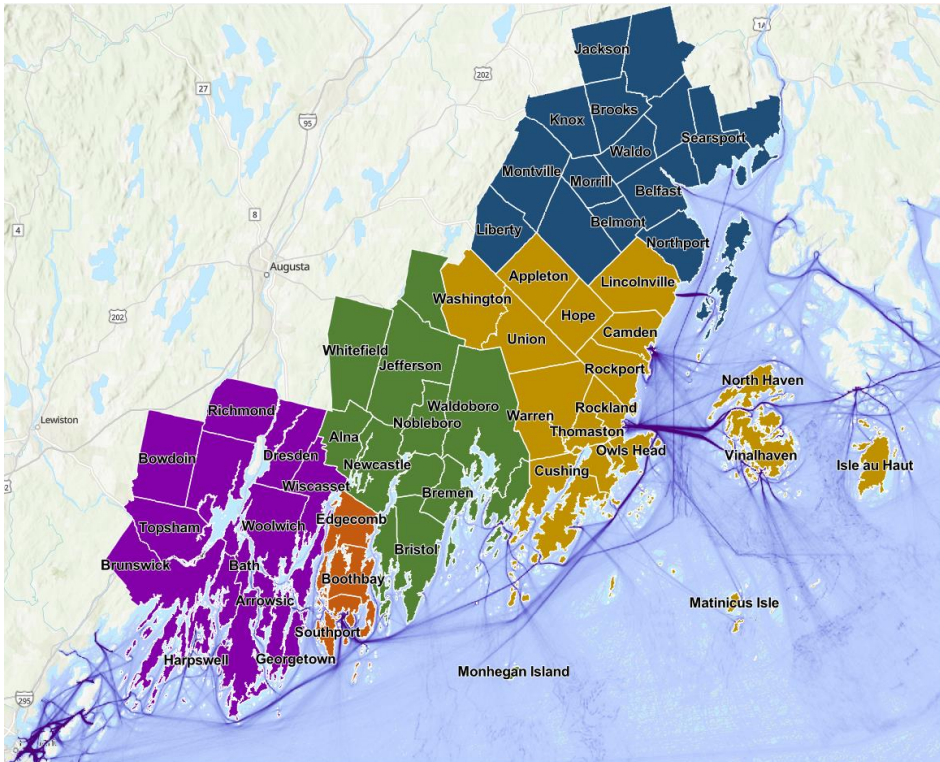


Figure 9

The MCOG region supports all types of vessels, and Automatic Identification System (AIS) data shows that tens of thousands of boats visit the region every year for a variety of purposes. Overall, the greatest amount of ocean vessel traffic occurs between Rockland and the southern Penobscot Bay Islands. Other significant ports include Camden, Lincolnville, and Boothbay Harbor. Harpswell, Friendship, Cushing, Belfast, and Searsport also include smaller but noticeable ports. The City of Bath's port is home to Bath Iron Works, which is a full service shipyard that designs, builds, and supports naval ships for the U.S. Navy. It is important to note that Searsport is one of Maine's three major international ports along with Portland and Eastport due to their ability to their onsite railyard that allows shipments to easily leave and enter Maine.

Fishing occurs out of the major ports discussed earlier and AIS tracks span the entire region with concentrated tracks in outer Penobscot Bay. The MCOG region also supports tanker/cargo transit between the mainland and islands and to southern states and Canada. Ferries, passenger vessels, and pleasure craft sailing vessels also are common in the MCOG region and provide significant economic benefits to the communities the boats visit. More data is needed to fully understand these benefits, but it is important to note the strong culture and economy the coast provides beyond commercial fishing.

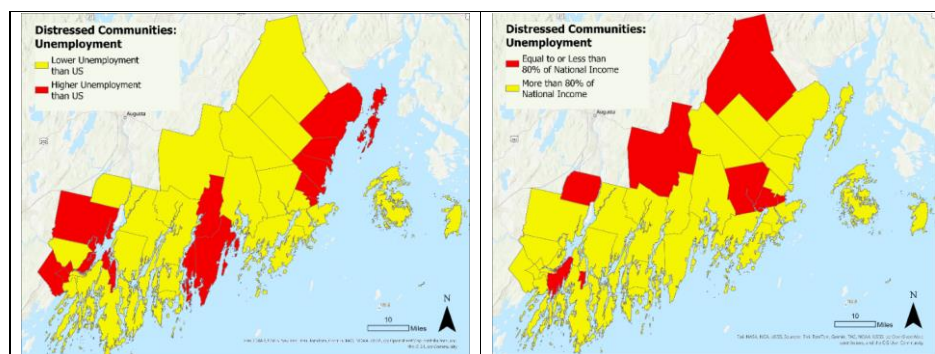
#### Lake Assets

- *The Midcoast region has significant lake assets with public access that are at risk of invasive species*

The MCOG region has many lakes with public boat launches. St. George Lake and Damariscotta Lake are some of the notable lakes in Maine and provide recreation for tourists and community members. Damariscotta Lake, as of 2024, has been tested positive for an algae bloom, and more than 10 lakes and streams are at risk of algal blooms in the Midcoast region. As blooms spread, property values are at risk of declining and recreational opportunities become limited. Freshwater bodies are an important pastime and economic component, especially for inland communities and protection measures must not be overlooked.

#### Economically Distressed Communities

According to the National Economic Resilience Data Explorer (<https://nerde.anl.gov/opportunity/distress/tract>), there are over 20 communities in the Midcoast Region that fall under the category of “economically distressed”. These are communities that were identified to either have an unemployment rate that exceeded the national unemployment rate (5.2%) or has a Per-Capita Income that is at, or below, 80% of the national Per Capita Income (\$43,289).



## CHAPTER 2: SWOT ANALYSIS

---

### SWOT Analysis Procedure and Major Themes

The Advisory and Steering Committees met in May 2024 to conduct a strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis for the region. The SWOT analysis was preceded by a detailed review of datasets prepared by MCOG staff during the winter and spring. The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that emerged after information sharing can be found in Appendix 3. Each member was asked to select priorities from the SWOT list, which can be found below.

Staff organized that priority list into emerging themes and presented them to the Steering Committee for their review and comment. From that review, the following general themes of concern emerged:

- aging workforce and population,
- a lack of high-quality affordable housing,
- a strong seasonal presence that poses challenges to a year-round economy, and
- and a lack of access to public transit given the rural nature of MCOG towns.

At the same time, the strengths and opportunities identified some key positive themes:

- access to nature and cultural opportunities,
- high-quality local produce,
- the strong blue economy, and
- a high level of human capital.

### SWOT Analysis Priorities

#### Strengths

- No strengths were identified as priorities.

#### Weaknesses

- Lack of urgency to correct challenges
- Behind in healthy real estate options
- Lack of coordinated efforts/ways to share good quality information
- Inability for people to live and work in the same community
- Worsening condition of all transportation and public infrastructure
- Lack of skilled trades workers
- Preservation of high-quality affordable housing
- Wealthy relocators pricing out market to locals

### Opportunities

- Nature, farmland, and opportunity for responsible land use
- Local production of high-quality goods
- Outdoor recreation system/market
- Farm and fish to table
- Expansion of tech place and other incubators
- Blue Economy as an evolving industry

### Threats

- Affordability of median income housing
- Lack of workforce
- Effects of present limitations of housing and transportation have compounding effects
- Older population has a short-term investment strategy
- Need for communication plan for general public, not just for municipal leaders
- Inflation/cost of living
- Local incomes not keeping up with costs

### Emerging Theme by Measure of Sustainability

The Steering Committee analyzed the results of the SWOT analysis conducted by the Advisory Committee and organized the major themes into categories based on the Measures of Sustainability: community, business and workforce, and public infrastructure and natural resources. This reorganization and further analysis were intermediate steps between the SWOT analysis and the creation of goals, strategies, objectives, and actions in the following chapter. The major themes are listed below by Measure of Sustainability:

#### SWOT Themes – Community Sustainability

- Housing impacts everything
  - Affordability and attainability issues/incomes not keeping up with prices
  - Newcomers pricing out locals
- There is an opportunity for coordinated communication around regional needs
- Quality of place and cultural heritage/existing brand
  - Historic downtowns
  - Arts with an “s” (e.g. fine, craft, culinary, literary, performing)
  - Working waterfronts
  - Public access and recreation; natural beauty
- Community diversity (or lack thereof)
  - Median age higher than ME and ME higher than nation; need for greater age diversity
  - Immigration is increasing in Maine; Midcoast is not yet positioned to benefit from this influx of people
  - Housing sizes are getting smaller
- Affordable **daycare** is needed

## **SWOT Themes – Business & Workforce Sustainability**

Diverse economy – strong base to build from

- Manufacturing and makers/produce local goods
- Creative economy
- Tourism
- Farm & fish to table
- Marine (blue) economy
- Success of Tech Place
- Outdoor economy and active transportation
- Opportunities to align with state-identified clusters

Workforce & human capital

- Aging workforce, and loss of knowledge and skills through workforce and population changes
- Workforce gaps and shortages across industries, e.g. lack of tradespeople and healthcare workers
- Changing work expectations (e.g. flex, remote, balance)
- Highly accomplished retirees, part timers, entrepreneurs – mentor/ecosystem development opportunity?
- New Mainers – how to attract them?
- Training the workforce we need through technical schools and other options
- Flexible work might attract retirees and parents as workers
- Strong volunteer base
- Childcare, older person care, and health care are hard to come by locally, and also business opportunities
- Social service gaps impact available workforce (mental health, addiction)

## **SWOT Themes – Public Infrastructure & Natural Resources**

- Natural amenities to build on
  - Eco-tourism, outdoor recreation
  - Blue economy
  - Parks & natural areas, preserved lands and trails
  - World class cruising waters
  - Largest concentration of schooners
  - Rural Renaissance and farm to table movement
- Working waterfront and public access preservation
- Limited state attention to broader waterfront infrastructure needs (non-fishing commercial piers, launches, public landings, access points)
- Sea level and storm surge changes and related threats to infrastructure
- Investments key to economic growth
  - Public infrastructure conditions are poor/need improvement
  - At-risk infrastructure
  - Federal infrastructure funding opportunities today

**DRAFT**

## CHAPTER 3: ACTIONS

The economic resilience of the MCOG region depends on the collective sustainability of our communities. Thus, the CEDS action plan is built around **3 interrelated themes**:

- Community Sustainability
- Business & Workforce Sustainability
- Public Infrastructure and Natural Resources Sustainability

For each goal, the Action Plan identifies measurable objectives for making meaningful progress toward that goal. Objectives are organized into categories that align generally with the data and SWOT analyses that informed the CEDS action planning process.

The Action Plan also identifies strategies and actions for each objective, as well as MCEDC's role and timeline for taking action. The Action Plan also outlines the annual cost estimate for each objective and sources of funding known to MCOG at this time to help support these efforts that can serve as a match to EDA funding.

The timeline describes actions as:

- Short term (1 year)
- Medium term (2-3 years)
- Long term (4-5 years)
- Ongoing

Please note that this is the *timeline for taking action*, which may or may not line up with the timeline for achieving results.

To pull it all together, the Action Plan proposes to develop *Measures of Midcoast Sustainability* -- an annual publication to monitor the region's progress in addressing challenges and realizing opportunities. The name of the annual publication is also the vision for the Midcoast: Creating a sustainable future for the Midcoast Region of Maine.

### Table Heading Definitions

**Goal:** A big picture we are working toward (in this case, a measure of sustainability)

**Objective:** Measurable outcome that will help achieve the goal

**Strategy/Action:** An approach/step to achieving an objective; sometimes a group of actions

## Goal: Community Sustainability

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
<b>Affordable and attainable housing</b>					
<p>Ensure a 10% increase in housing starts</p> <p>Maintain a 5% vacancy rate in rental housing (excluding short-term rentals)</p> <p>Ensure a measurable increase in affordability according to MaineHousing indices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help build the capacity of regional housing trusts and local developers</li> <li>Promoting housing types for all ages and abilities.</li> <li>Promoting the importance of workforce housing to support economic development.</li> </ul>	<p>Connect nonprofits with strategic planning assistance through the US Small Business Administration, or Maine Association of Nonprofits.</p> <p>Work with US Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Housing and Urban Development, and Maine Real Estate Development Association.</p>	Ongoing	Hourly rate for MCOG staff to continue working with current housing groups and outreach to new partners.	<p>Maine Housing Opportunity Program</p> <p>MCOG due</p> <p>Maine Technical Assistance</p> <p>Maine Housing Authority</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify properties potentially appropriate for workforce or affordable housing, in collaboration with municipalities</li> <li>Supporting housing across all socio-economic levels.</li> <li>Develop an outreach and education program for property owners about housing needs and opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitate community outreach to property owners on their interest in marketing their properties to developers or developing on their own</p>	Ongoing	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 20 hours per municipality to conduct outreach and review potential sites.</p> <p>Hourly rate for at least 50 hours to create initial workshop sessions.</p>	<p>Maine Housing Opportunity Program</p> <p>Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority</p> <p>Maine Housing Authority</p>

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a program for incentivizing or financing accessory dwelling units (ADUs)</li> </ul>	Identify grant or other funding, and/or partner with MaineHousing  Implement ADU design grant with 3 pilot communities	Short term  Immediate	MCOG hourly rate for at least 75 hours to create incentive toolkit for towns and outreach to pilot sites.	Maine Technical Assistance Program  Maine Housing Opportunity Program
Ensure an increase in housing units available to workers at 80-120% area median income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and market a tax increment financing (TIF) and affordable housing tax increment financing (AHTIF) toolkit for municipalities, including a spreadsheet tool for calculating cost shifts</li> <li>Partner with Genesis Fund to ensure communities are aware of MaineHousing Programs to assist developers</li> </ul>	Develop TIF toolkit  Develop workshops and other educational awareness  Share case studies of Midcoast TIFs being used to advance workforce housing	Short to medium term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 50 hours to create TIF toolkit and implement in a pilot community.  At least 25 hours to conduct workshop and educational outreach of TIF and programs.	Municipal Contracts  Maine Technical Assistance Program  Maine Housing Authority
Ensure every MCOG Community makes measurable progress toward one or more of the housing objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct strategies/actions outlined above</li> </ul>	Engage staff and committee to work towards each strategy	Ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 8 hours per community to create baseline data,	MCOG dues  Maine Technical Assistance
Quality of place					

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
Increase historic preservation or funding for facades and adaptive reuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote new State funding opportunity</li> </ul>	<p>Step into a navigator role for state and federal funding opportunities</p> <p>Share information with communities through the MCOG newsletter and website</p>	Short term and ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 30 hours to work with partners.	<p>National Park Service</p> <p>Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants</p> <p>Maine State Office of Historic Preservation</p>
Attract and retain 5% more residents of workforce age because of opportunities and quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage State programs such as Live and Work in Maine to promote the Midcoast Region</li> <li>Establish a program matching regional employers with graduates of Maine educational institutions</li> </ul>	<p>Provide appropriate content to Live and Work in Maine to promote the region</p> <p>Prioritize the housing objectives in this table</p> <p>Prioritize actions related to childcare</p> <p>Prioritize actions related to workforce flexibility</p>	Short term actions; long term goal	MCOG hourly rate for at least 10 hours to create initial prioritization lists.	MCOG Dues

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
Utilize the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support development of underutilized properties in communities</li> </ul>	<p>Promote land bank program to redevelop underutilize properties</p> <p>Monitor progress and share with membership through the MCOG newsletter and website</p> <p>Assist State with inventory development</p> <p>Create an inventory of town-owned land suitable for residential and commercial development.</p>	Short to medium term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 40 hours for promotion and maintaing updates to town-owned land lists.	<p>EPA Brownfield funding</p> <p>MCOG dues</p> <p>Maine Technical Assistance</p> <p>US Rural Development</p>
Make the Midcoast Region known for its quality of life, including natural amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a region-wide shared understanding of what contributes to Midcoast quality of life and ways to communicate and market it to potential workforce</li> </ul>	Acquire grant funds to hire a communications firm to develop materials for regional use	Short to medium term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 30 hours to apply for grant funding.	US Rural Development

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
Make the Midcoast Region known as a welcoming, livable, and diverse place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop marketing and outreach program</li> <li>Track progress and create benchmarks of perception with a survey or other means</li> </ul>	<p>Identify and pursue grant opportunities to hire contractors to undertake this work; incorporate realistic information to attract people who will love Midcoast as it is</p> <p>Share information with realtors and other potential partners</p>	Medium term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 50 hours for applying for grants and working with potential partners.	MCOG dues  Maine Technical Assistance
Ensure that 100% of MCOG towns have a current Comprehensive Plan or are actively working on it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate local Comprehensive Plans</li> <li>Summarize changes in state requirements for municipalities</li> <li>Develop a Comprehensive Plan template for community use, including relevant spreadsheets and graphics</li> </ul>	<p>Direct assistance</p> <p>State advocacy for a simplified process where State data is prepackaged in a way communities can use directly</p> <p>Support the idea of a standardized update that communities could adapt if desired</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Medium term for accomplishment</p>	MCOG hourly rate for at least 50 hours per community without a Plan. This includes time to create a template to reflect changes made at the State level.	Community Contracts  Maine Technical Assistance  MCOG dues
Increase greenspace/preserved lands/street trees planted/park development/redevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify projects of regional significance and work with host communities and land trusts to accomplish</li> </ul>	<p>Navigator role for state and federal funding opportunities</p> <p>Prioritize and facilitate projects and plans</p>	Long term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 10 hours per community to create strategies for projects.	Natural Resources Conservation Service
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate with municipalities to support their mitigation and resilience plans.</li> </ul>	Develop staff capacity to provide this assistance	Ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 50 hours to start partnerships	Maine Community Action Grants

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
<b>Community vitality</b>					
Increase shared services across municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify more opportunities for shared emergency services, wastewater, water, shared staff, or shared purchasing</li> <li>Explore shared staff in new areas such as marketing and communications</li> <li>Explore regional positions to improve municipal capacity, such as Code Enforcement Officers and Planners.</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitate conversations about new shared services</p> <p>Continue to leverage GPCOG's shared purchasing</p> <p>Continue to coordinate with other Councils to leverage their strengths and opportunities</p> <p>Compile an inventory of shared and/or regional services between municipalities.</p>	Ongoing	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 50 hours to continue cooperative purchase and conducting outreach to improve current shared service programs.</p> <p>At least 75 hours for starting new regional shared services, including time to start a pilot program.</p>	<p>Maine Technical Assistance</p> <p>Northern Borders Regional Commission</p> <p>Maine Technical Assistance</p> <p>MCOG dues</p>
Increase use of alternative transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage State funds such as the State Workforce Transportation program</li> <li>Increase bike and pedestrian transportation options</li> <li>Develop and enhance transit options that connect to job centers</li> </ul>	<p>Leverage Transportation Planning TA</p> <p>Monitor progress of State programs and share information with communities</p> <p>Advocate for funding support of regional and community efforts (i.e. A to K in Brunswick)</p>	Ongoing	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 150 hours for this goal.</p>	<p>Thriving Communities</p> <p>US Department of Transportation</p> <p>Maine Village Partnership Initiative</p>

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
Ensure every MCOG community is enrolled in Community Resilience Partnership and is pursuing opportunities that will save money and improve economic resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer assistance to communities</li> <li>Develop easy to use templates and analyses for use across communities</li> </ul>	<p>Establish a position using State grant funds</p> <p>Share information on State funding opportunities</p>	Short term /ongoing	MCOG hourly rate of at least 40 hours to conduct outreach to remaining towns.	<p>Maine Community Resilience Partnership</p> <p>Maine Technical Assistance</p>
Substantially save on regional energy costs through electrification initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify opportunities for marine electrification</li> <li>Partner with Efficiency Maine to increase regional uptake of financial incentives for electrification</li> <li>Partner with Efficiency Maine to get information on Efficiency Maine programs in every municipal tax bill in the region</li> <li>Promoting weatherization and energy efficient housing retrofits to preserve and improve existing housing stock.</li> </ul>	<p>Coordinating with Efficiency Maine to offer materials in tax bills to MCOG communities</p> <p>Designate regional representatives to help consumers understand options</p>	Short term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 50 hours to begin partnership with Efficiency Maine and other stakeholders to achieve this goal.	<p>Maine Community Action Grants</p> <p>Efficiency Maine</p> <p>Maine Coastal Communities Grant</p>
<p>Increase population age demographics</p> <p>Increase population by in-migration and New Mainers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage State programs such as Live and Work in Maine to promote the Midcoast Region</li> <li>Investigate whether there are other programs or efforts to leverage</li> </ul>	Prioritize marketing actions outlined in this table	Short to medium term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 50 hours to initiate partnerships	<p>MCOG dues</p> <p>Maine Technical Assistance</p>

Commented [MJ1]: Split Increase Population Diversity into two separate categories. One focused on age demographics and one on in-migration and New Mainers.

## Goal: Business and Workforce Sustainability

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
<b>A diverse economy</b>					
<p>Grow key areas of opportunity by 10% in 5 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufacturing</li> <li>• Aviation &amp; space</li> <li>• Blue economy</li> <li>• Energy economy</li> <li>• Natural Resource economy</li> <li>• Outdoor economy</li> <li>• Creative economy</li> <li>• Farm and fish to table</li> <li>• Health care and direct care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and support regional hubs of excellence</li> </ul>	<p>Identify and promote opportunities available through economic development partners such as Maine Technology Institute, Department of Economic and Community Development, Coastal Enterprises Inc, Finance Authority of Maine, Tech Place, and like organizations</p> <p>Facilitate coordination within a sector, where appropriate</p>	Ongoing	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 75 hours to initiate partnerships and establish new programs</p>	<p>Northern Borders Regional Commission</p> <p>MCOG Loan program</p> <p>Maine Department of Economic and Community Development</p> <p>US Rural Development</p> <p>Finance Authority of Maine</p> <p>MCOG Loan Program</p>

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hospitality and ecotourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify grant opportunities related to areas of opportunity and distribute to relevant communities and businesses</li> <li>Establish a group of grant writers available for hire to help businesses access grant resources, with a goal of covering costs through fees and soft money</li> <li>Increase resources and grant funding of Midcoast businesses</li> <li>Research and secure capital to support grants for working capital, equipment and leasehold improvements</li> </ul>	<p>Establish a business assistance navigator role for grants and other assistance programs</p> <p>Partner with organizations such as Small Business Association, New Ventures, and Small Business Development Center to help connect startups with established resources.</p>	Short term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 200 hours to initiate partnerships, conduct grant research, and creating process to assist businesses.	<p>Small Business Administration</p> <p>MCOG Loan Program</p> <p>MCOG Dues</p> <p>Maine Technical Assistance</p>

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop regional "trails"; options include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aquaculture tasting rooms (e.g. oyster)</li> <li>Art and culture trails</li> <li>Marine trails by boat or land (e.g. lighthouses, wildlife areas, harbor amenities)</li> <li>Microbreweries, wineries and spirits</li> <li>Museums</li> </ul> </li> <li>Farm to table restaurants and markets</li> <li>Promote the importance of community space as a public area that intersects small businesses, recreation, and conservation/green space to preserve Maine's quality of life.</li> <li>Work with communities to create growth in the emerging Energy economy, Natural Resource economy, Outdoor economy, and Creative economy.</li> </ul>	<p>Write and administer grants to hire marketing firm to develop related materials and campaign</p> <p>Leverage and promote statewide efforts that feature Midcoast attractions</p> <p>Building a network of private and public sector partners that meet quarterly for growing industries in the Midcoast.</p>	Medium to long term	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 40 hours for grant writing.</p> <p>At least 50 hours to promote statewide efforts of Midcoast attractions.</p> <p>At least 75 hours to establish the network.</p>	<p>Maine Office of Tourism</p> <p>MCOG Loan program</p> <p>MCOG dues</p>

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support related strategies and actions in this Action Plan</li> <li>Promote and support recommendations set by the Blue Economy Task Force from the January 31, 2025 report to further grow the Blue Economy.</li> <li>Develop materials for the municipal toolkit about the importance of stable and predictable business rules and processes. Examples include model ordinances and best practices.</li> </ul>	Share information with MCOG membership via the newsletter and website	Ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 50 hours to promote and share information	Maine Technical Assistance MCOG dues Maine Coastal Communities Grant Maine Department of Marine Resources
Ensure strategies in the State's economic development plan are advanced in the Midcoast: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grow Local Talent</li> <li>Attract New Talent</li> <li>Promote Innovation</li> <li>Build Connections (Broadband)</li> <li>Provide Supporting Infrastructure</li> <li>Maintain Stable &amp; Predictable Business Rules</li> <li>Promote Hubs of Excellence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand Tech Place in a way that benefits the whole region; identify a second location</li> <li>Support additional incubators and accelerator efforts</li> </ul>	Facilitate a conversation with Tech Place to identify opportunities and create a plan to benefit the larger region	Short term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 30 hours to create a master strategy with Tech Place	Northern Borders Regional Commission Maine Department of Economic and Community Development

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
Support business at all stages (start up, growth, succession planning, workforce attraction, navigator) through an integrated ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish navigator roles that can support businesses at all stages by connecting them with programs, resources, mentors</li> </ul>	Develop soft funding streams for contracted navigators	Short term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 75 hours to initiate navigator and soft funding streams.	Maine Department of Economic and Community Development  MCOG Loan Program
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and promote resources for business-to-business networking, and trainings and technical assistance on issues of interest to small businesses</li> </ul>	Collaborate with chambers and other organizations to develop and promote program and related communications plan with a goal of an event at least once each quarter	Ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 100 hours for quarterly events and general promotion of resources.	Small Business Administration  MCOG Loan program  Maine Department of Economic and Community Development
Increase the number and capacity of daycare businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide navigator assistance to daycare businesses</li> </ul>	Through navigator role, identify and share capital opportunities	Short term and ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 250 hours to conduct initial outreach, potential expansions, and connecting resources.	US Rural Development  Community Development Block Grants

Workforce & human capital					
Increase workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor workforce demographics and progress</li> <li>• Recruit more workers to the region</li> <li>• Amplify State, regional and local efforts</li> <li>• Refer employers to resources to support a more robust workforce, such as training opportunities</li> <li>• Attract older adults back into the workforce</li> </ul>	<p>Identify ways to leverage state efforts such as Live and Work in Maine</p> <p>Share information on Chamber and other workforce efforts</p> <p>Pilot entrepreneurial training opportunity for new Mainers in Brunswick area and share results</p> <p>Support efforts of Maine Council on aging</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Short term</p>	MCOG hourly rate for at least 150 hours to cover promotional materials and creating pilot program	<p>Maine Technical Assistance</p> <p>MCOG dues</p>
Increase available workforce by 5% in 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand trades education and access in trades with worker shortages.</li> <li>• Increase training opportunities to address workforce shortages and growth areas, such as HVAC, plumbing, energy, , health care</li> </ul>	<p>Cheerleader and advocate</p> <p>Promote education for <i>all</i> industries to reduce negative stigma, and recognize that <i>all</i> jobs are crucial to the Midcoast.</p> <p>Apply for grant funding, and promoting self-sustaining accounts at the regional level, to help regional needs.</p>	Ongoing	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 50 hours for promotion and applying for grant funding.</p> <p>At least 50 hours to coordinate with educational stakeholders to establish working group.</p>	<p>Maine Technology Institute</p> <p>Northern Borders Regional Commission</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen the educational pipeline to keep Maine competitive in all industries.</li> </ul>	<p>Work with educational stakeholders and employers to create partnerships that promote useful skills to students</p> <p>Promote working groups of parents, school boards, municipal leaders, and businesses.</p>	Medium term		<p>Northern Borders Regional Commission</p> <p>Maine Technology Institute</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage State reciprocity of professional licensure</li> </ul>	Monitoring and information sharing	As needed/ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 20 hours to monitor.	Maine Technical Assistance MCOG dues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase job flexibility to attract and retrain workforce (e.g. job sharing, schedule, remote work)</li> </ul>	Work with municipalities to develop templates for model programs as a resource for employers	Short to medium term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 10 hours per municipality	MCOG dues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include in <i>Measures of Midcoast Sustainability</i></li> </ul>	Staff to assess if "5%" is the appropriate objective and the baseline to measure from	Short term	MCOG hourly rate for at least 15 hours to evaluate baseline.	MCOG dues

## Goal: Public Infrastructure and Natural Resource Sustainability

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
<b>Public infrastructure – transportation</b>					
Create a used and useful regional transportation strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a regional transportation strategy with the help of federal technical assistance (TA) that addresses active transportation, public transit, marine transportation, and more</li> </ul>	Manage TA program  Secure annual transportation funding from MaineDOT  Advocate for inter-community bike-ped on State roads	Ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 160 hours.	Thriving Communities  Maine Department of Transportation  Village Partnership Initiative
Establish a daily passenger rail from Brunswick to Rockland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) and State efforts</li> <li>Include passenger rail as a priority in transportation planning</li> </ul>	Support NNEPRA and State	Ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 20 hours to encourage development of railway.	MCOG dues  Maine Technical Assistance
<b>Public infrastructure – public access</b>					
Double the amount of State & Federal funds brought to the region for municipal infrastructure projects within 5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify needs and value in actions outlined above</li> </ul>	Direct assistance with grants, and sharing information on grants  Regional applications	Ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 200 hours to assist with regional grant writing.	MCOG dues

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
Preserve and improve working waterfront access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist municipalities with grants for working waterfront redevelopment and preservation</li> <li>Land use requirements/zoning that encourage working waterfront</li> <li>Preservation of working waterfront through public or protected ownership or access rights</li> </ul>	<p>Technical assistance to communities on ways to acquire or protect working waterfront</p> <p>Identification and communication of funding opportunities (e.g. Land for Maine's Future)</p>	Ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 50 hours per coastal town to improve zoning.	<p>Community Action Grants</p> <p>Northern Borders Regional Commission</p> <p>Coastal Communities Grant</p> <p>Land for Maine's Future</p>
Ensure all coastal communities have looked at projected sea level rise and identified infrastructure vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate resilience planning into comprehensive planning</li> <li>Undertake regional inventories (such as the current EDA culvert grant in Knox and Waldo Counties) and vulnerability analyses</li> </ul>	<p>Direct assistance</p> <p>Grant writing for regional vulnerability analysis and economic impact studies</p>	Ongoing	MCOG hourly rate for at least 75 hours for regional vulnerability analysis grant.	<p>Maine Technical Assistance</p> <p>Northern Borders Regional Commission</p>

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
Preserve and improve marine access for uses other than commercial fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop better understanding of role public access and non-fishing marine access plays in our regional and local economies</li> <li>Identify marine infrastructure vulnerabilities and infrastructure needs (beyond those of commercial fishing )</li> </ul>	<p>Economic modelling</p> <p>Outreach to Augusta on the importance of the broader marine economy for regional economic stability</p> <p>Technical assistance to communities on ways to acquire or protect working waterfront</p> <p>Identification and communication of funding opportunities (e.g. Land for Maine's Future)</p>	Short to medium term	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 65 hours for technical assistance and outreach to Augusta.</p> <p>At least 30 hours for grant and funding research.</p> <p>At least 30 hours to start economic modeling.</p>	<p>Northern Borders Regional Commission</p> <p>Land for Maine's Future</p> <p>MCOG dues</p>
Create plans to improve condition of at-risk infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Condition assessments</li> <li>Vulnerability assessments</li> <li>Regional grants</li> </ul>	<p>Grants to fund consultants to undertake regional assessments</p> <p>Grants for improvements across communities</p>	Medium term	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 25 for grant funding to get consultant. At least 15 hours per community to assist with grants.</p>	Community Action Grants
Natural resources					

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
Ensure there is sufficient agricultural land for serving local markets and for food security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition from greenfield solar development to rooftops, parking areas and lands unsuitable for agriculture</li> <li>Zoning that preserves agricultural land</li> <li>Develop community gardens</li> </ul>	<p>Monitor and coordinate with MCOG membership</p> <p>Sample zoning language</p>	Ongoing	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 25 hours to coordinate with towns.</p> <p>At least 40 hours to create zoning language.</p>	<p>US Rural Development</p> <p>Maine Technical Assistance</p>
Ensure aquaculture sites meet current and future needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education about the importance of aquaculture for meeting food security needs</li> <li>Thoughtful siting to balance needs and uses</li> <li>Establish a working waterfront commission to focus on regional issues unique to the Midcoast area.</li> </ul>	<p>Monitoring, community technical assistance and facilitation</p> <p>Coordinate efforts to encourage forums and other methods to distribute information in the region</p>	Ongoing	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 75 hours to monitor and establish new forums.</p>	<p>Maine Department of Marine Resources</p> <p>Northern Borders Regional Commission</p> <p>Coastal Communities Grant</p>
Fund the regional brownfield program assessments and cleanups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-establish Brownfield program and keep it ongoing</li> </ul>	<p>Apply for and manage ongoing brownfield grants using services of an outside firm</p>	Short term	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 200 hours to re-establish Brownfield services.</p>	<p>US EPA Brownfield Program</p>
Substantially reduce invasives and algal blooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage State and other programs to benefit the region</li> <li>Incorporate in comprehensive planning</li> </ul>	<p>Connect communities with available resources</p> <p>Leverage work of organizations focused on this</p> <p>Encourage incorporation in comprehensive planning</p>	Short to medium term	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 10 hours per community to connect with communities about resources.</p>	<p>Land for Maine's Future</p> <p>Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry</p> <p>Maine Community Action Grants</p>

Measurable Objective	Strategy and Actions	MCEDC Role	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding
Increase physically interconnected natural areas across communities for trails, wildlife corridors, and pollinator corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map regional green spaces and natural areas</li> <li>Identify online tools for property owners to report/add natural landscapes</li> </ul>	Regional analysis and planning, including mapping and promotion of citizen science	Medium term	<p>MCOG hourly rate for at least 30 hours to create central map of region.</p> <p>At least 50 hours on research and creating online tool to report.</p>	<p>Maine Trail Program</p> <p>Recreational Trail Program</p>

### Goal: Measures of Midcoast Sustainability for Tracking and Communicating Results

*Measure of Midcoast Sustainability* would track data appropriate for measuring progress toward CEDS goals and objectives. Similar in concept to the Maine Development Foundation’s “Measures of Growth”, it would be a user friendly, easy-to-glance-at publication with a straightforward graphic and measure for each objective or group of objectives tracked. MCOG staff and the Advisory Committee would develop the framework for the publication and prepare the annual publication for the presentation to the Board, along with a plan for communicating results more broadly.

We anticipate that the *Measures of Midcoast Sustainability* would include between perhaps 10 to 12 measures relevant to:

- Economic variety and growth in identified key areas of opportunity
- Workforce availability and development
- Commercial and residential vacancy rates
- Housing affordability and housing starts
- Daycare availability
- Quality of place and/or measure of healthy downtowns
- Natural resource preservation and public access
- Federal and State infrastructure money brought to the region

All strategies will be overseen by MCOG Senior Planner, Maxwell Johnstone, who will be responsible for delegating additional staff members and conducting outreach to complete the goals and strategies listed in the CEDS, and providing updates to the Advisory Committee. MCOG intends to provide annual updates to the CEDS plan that will include at least three measurable task for the categories listed above.

## APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF MCOG PLANS

### MCOG Strategic Plan

The MCOG Strategic Plan (2022-2027) was created to provide a blueprint for Staff and Board members over the course of five years. The Plan was developed at a time when the organization had completed staffing changes, an expansion into the Waldo County for technical assistance, and opportunity for new State and Federal programs. One of the recognized action items in this plan was to begin the thorough process of a new regional CEDS plan, including outlining the procedure for annual updates.

The Strategic Plan involved dedicated work sessions in four different parts of the region, a workshop with the MCOG Board of Directors, and sessions with the professional planners in the region. The results outlined MCOG's role of providing knowledge to communities and planners on different funding opportunities to help with development, while expanding on MCOG's capacity to establish and strengthen new regional-focused initiatives that can tackle common issues facing the Midcoast.

### 2021 CEDS Plan

The most recent version of MCOG's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy was amended in 2021, during the COVID-pandemic. At the time, the region was experiencing new challenges with keeping businesses open and noticing trends that are more present in 2025. The 2021 CEDS plan set out the following vision for the region:

- To be widely known for our "authentic Maine" quality of life – with historic town centers, working waterfronts, scenic islands and rolling hills and farms.
- To be a place where residents and newcomers can find jobs, start businesses, buy homes, raise families, and engage in lifelong learning.
- To be a place where producers, processors, transporters, and marketers prosper together by turning the region's food and fish into high-value Maine products.
- To be a place where the distinction and talent of its people draw visitors and new residents from around the world.

This version of the CEDS also highlighted challenges that the region is still facing today, such as affordable housing shortages, public infrastructure that was not built to account for natural disasters and sea level rise, an aging workforce with less opportunities for younger residents to enter, and threats to working waterfronts. The 2025 CEDS recognizes these goals and challenges that are still present in the region, and aims to position MCOG to partner with private, public, and non-profit organizations in the region to help grow the Midcoast in the next five years.

## APPENDIX 2: PROJECT LIST

The projects in this list were suggested by communities in the region, who believe that successfully completing these projects will help the economic and resilience potential for the region. While some projects may be connected to multiple criteria and priorities, each project is important for their own merits and community growth. The MCEDC Advisory Committee will be responsible for annual updates to the CEDS project list; however, MCOG will encourage and assist communities with projects that satisfy the criteria and objectives regardless of the placement on this list.

Location	Project Type	Brief Description	CEDS Objective(s)
Alna	Road Improvements	Improve highways 194 and 218 to be more flood resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
Bath	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	Sewer and stormwater separation, wastewater treatment plant upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Bike/ped Improvements	Riverwalk construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
Boothbay Harbor	Bike/ped Improvements	Increase downtown parking availability to "park-once" model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
Bowdoinham	Bike/ped Improvements	Merrymeeting trail development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of Place</li> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Waterfront Redevelopment/Shoreland Stabilization	8 River Rd (town boat launch site)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	Town hall upgrades	

Location	Project Type	Brief Description	CEDS Objective(s)
Brunswick	Road Improvements	Culvert replacements at Bath, Range, Bunganuc, and River Roads, Cooks Corner road improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Road Improvements	Transportation infrastructure improvements in and around Downtown Brunswick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Bike/ped Improvements	Bike/ped planning for infrastructure network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of Place</li> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Recreational Area Improvements	MARC (public recreation facility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of Place</li> <li>Community Vitality</li> </ul>
Camden	Waterfront Redevelopment/Shoreland Stabilization	Public landing and harbor redevelopment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Recreational Area Improvement	Ragged Mountain Recreational Area Redevelopment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of Place</li> <li>Natural Resources</li> </ul>
	Road Improvements	John Street Sewer Extension and Road Redevelopment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
Damariscotta	Bike/ped Improvements	Construction of sidewalks/bike lanes that connect the community to areas beyond downtown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	Water/Sewer Build-out to encourage planned growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Broadband	Provide internet access to every household.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diverse Economy</li> </ul>
Edgecomb	Road Improvements	Spring Hill Farm Road Culvert Replacement.	

Location	Project Type	Brief Description	CEDS Objective(s)
Harpwell	Public Safety	Centralized fire/safety facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of Place</li> </ul>
	Road Improvements	Flood resilience planning of roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Waterfront Redevelopment/Shoreland Stabilization	Mitchell Field boat ramp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of Place</li> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> <li>Natural Resources</li> </ul>
Isle au Haut	Road Improvements	Paving	
Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority	Road Improvements	Resurface roads and repair/replace stormwater pipes	
	Waterfront Redevelopment/Shoreland Stabilization	Commercial subdivision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workforce and human capital</li> </ul>
Newcastle	Bike/Ped Improvements	Redesign of US Route 1B (Main Street)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Other	Train station improvement: Lighting, shelter, bathrooms, ticketing both/kiosk, and a platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of Place</li> </ul>
Northport	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	New town office/community center/fire station upgrade	
	Waterfront Redevelopment/Shoreland Stabilization	shoreland stabilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	Stormwater management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Diverse Economy</li> </ul>
Richmond	Road Improvements	Improve roads, sidewalks, and streetscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Waterfront Redevelopment/Shoreland Stabilization	Connection to Swan Island and development of adjacent closed boat marina and campground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>

Location	Project Type	Brief Description	CEDS Objective(s)
Rockland	Waterfront redevelopment/shoreland stabilization	Downtown waterfront rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Road improvement	Oak Street rebuild	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	Stormwater management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Bike/ped Improvements	Rockland Downtown to Waterfront Streetscape Connection/Wayfinding Project/Complete Streets/Harbor Trail Expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Other	Breakwater Lighthouse repair	
Rockport	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	New wastewater treatment center that extends to RT90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Waterfront Redevelopment/Shoreland Stabilization	Harbor Park sea level rise resiliency projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Road Improvement	Install new, larger culverts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
Somerville	Public Safety	Upgrade public safety facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of Place</li> </ul>
	Road Improvements	Town road improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Other	Town office ramp	
Thomaston	Road Improvements	Knox Street rebuild	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Waterfront Redevelopment/Shoreland Stabilization	Harbor dredging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Broadband	Improve internet access to residents on outlying areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Diverse Economy</li> </ul>

Location	Project Type	Brief Description	CEDS Objective(s)
Topsham	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	Extending water and sewer across Rt. 295	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
Union	Road Improvements	Roads and bridges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Other	Senior/workforce housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affordable and Attainable Housing</li> </ul>
Vinalhaven	Waterfront Redevelopment/Shoreland Stabilization	Replace cribbing at ferry terminal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Road Improvements	Fix North Haven Road flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
Waldoboro	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	Increasing water pressure with booster stations and/or higher water tower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Diverse Economy</li> </ul>
	Road Improvements	Improving roads/crossing to account for flooding and erosion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> </ul>
	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	Sewer Expansion to Industrial Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Diverse Economy</li> </ul>
Warren	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	New town office and public safety building.	
Westport Island	Road Improvements	Address major emergency management risks from sea level rise affecting sections of roads with large culverts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Transportation</li> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
Wiscasset	Municipal Utilities Upgrades	Wastewater treatment plant relocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Waterfront Redevelopment/Shoreland Stabilization	Seawall and floats replacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Infrastructure-Public Access</li> </ul>
	Other	Improvements to the airport FBO Building, paved apron, and taxiway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Diverse Economy</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 3: SWOT ANALYSIS THEMES AND PRIORITIES

In May 2024, the Advisory Committee, Steering Committee, and MCOG staff met to conduct a SWOT analysis, and the results are shown below. The SWOT analysis used the following question to prompt discussion:

*Based on what you've learned/experienced, what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of/to our region?*

Bolded items are emerging themes; the numbers are the number of people who identified this item as an emerging theme. Highlighted items are points that were listed as priorities by at least one person. They are color-coded based on the priority key below.

Priority Key:

1 listed as priority	2 listed as priority	3 or more listed as priority

Strengths:

- **Quality of place (4)**
  - **Historic charm, natural resources, etc**
  - **Our quality of historic areas means we could be a heritage site**
- **Human capital leads to innovation and growth (2)**
- **Lots of creativity and arts/performance media (1)**
- **Concentration of leadership (1)**
  - **There are many state officials who live in the region and are active in the local processes**
- **Active energy to create change (1)**
  - **E.g. local food movement, asset mapping, housing groups, working communities challenge**
- **Balanced view of economic growth and community development (1)**
  - **“sensible development”**
- **Broadband (1)**
- **Efforts to maintain the cultural heritage**
- **Tourism**
  - **Large variety**
  - **Brings a lot of outside dollars to Maine**
  - **Clear destinations (anchors) and events**
- **Good place to raise family**
- **Diversity of industries**
- **Established historic culture**
  - **The tagline for Midcoast tourism is “Middle of Amazing”**
- **Strong base of accomplished retirees**

- Education
- Innovation and merger of land base, education, and innovation
- Access to decision-makers:
  - economies of intimacy: People tend to connect in our region
- Low crime rate
- Year-round communities
- Tendency to work across town lines
- Boomerangs are returning
- Low unemployment
- Capital reserves/access to capital
- Proximity to service centers
- Affordability to people from away
- Three small definable urban centers
  - Brunswick, Rockland, Belfast

#### Weaknesses

- **Lack of childcare (5)**
- **Condition of all transportation and public infrastructure (4)**
- **Lack of trades people (2)**
- **Lack of access to working waterfronts (2)**
- **Preservation of good affordable housing (1)**
- **Wealthy relocators pricing out market to locals (1)**
- **Rise in misinformation (1)**
- **Barriers to technical school evolution (1)**
- **Aging housing stock without much preservation (1)**
- **Lack of urgency to correct challenges**
- Behind in healthy real estate options
- Coordinated efforts/ways to share good quality information
- **Inability for people to live and work in the same community**
- Aging population/isolation
- Focus on Midcoast housing supply vs. Portland
- Resistance to innovating fishing
  - More competition between aquaculture and other fisheries, driven by misinformation
  - Key to resilience is collaboration
- Resistance to change
- Peninsulas are terrible for fragmentation
- Transportation generally
  - Not ped/bike friendly
- Traffic flow and volume
- Policy by referendum
- Vulnerabilities of K-12 education system
  - Unable to hire teachers that we need
- Parochialism/narrow views
- Encouragement/support for trades talented students

- Climate change in combination with infrastructure
  - Still dealing with deniers
- Loss of local lenders

#### Opportunities

- **How much product can we create locally and market as a hub (3)**
- **Build the outdoor recreation system/market (2)**
- **Farm and fish to table (2)**
- **Tech place expansion and other incubators (2)**
- **Opportunity to have lenders lead, implement, and commitment (2)**
  - Including but not limited to capital to improve housing stock
- **Nature, farmland, and opportunity for responsible land use (1)**
- **How do we keep older workers working (1)**
- **Create an information system, embedded trust (1)**
- **Succession planning for businesses (1)**
- **Business cluster supports (1)**
- **Workforce attraction to come for career options (1)**
- **Engage and encourage students to enter the trades (1)**
- **Opportunity to diversity educational opportunities (1)**
- **Support economic and cultural transitions for marine businesses (1)**
- **Blue Economy/Blue Tech- evolving industry**
  - **How to diversify heritage marine related industries with new markets**
- Take advantage of immigration
- Marine recreation/transient boaters
- Have lots of land to build housing
- Political system open to change
- Energy options/expansion
  - Maine Yankee and some other substations
- Access to entrepreneur assets for new businesses
- Access by multiple nodes to the region
- Is there a maker economy to be linked with arts and tech place?
- Tourism
  - Located between Acadia National Park and Portland
- Medical hub to provide more health services
- How do we develop older workers back to the workforce
- Develop climate ready infrastructure and communities to build resilience

#### Threats

- **Affordability of median income housing (3)**
- **Lack of exit and entry housing (3)**
- **Crisis with youth mental health (3)**
- **Lack of workforce (2)**
  - **Opportunity costs of workforce challenges**

- **Downstream effects of present limitations (1)**
  - **lack of housing, transportation**
- **Silent majority are overwhelming (1)**
  - **Loud minority is older, not changing**
- **Perpetual growth expectation (1)**
- **Ability to take action (1)**
- **Sea level Rise/Coastal Flooding/Storm Intensity (1)**
  - **Impacts to local infrastructure**
  - **Impacts to vulnerable residents**
- **Interest rates (1)**
- **Loss of access to the working waterfront/working waterfronts transition out of supporting fishing and aquaculture businesses (1)**
- **Climate related threats to community infrastructure and the overwhelming of local capacity to respond/adapt (1)**
- **Older population has a short-term investment strategy**
- **Need for communication plan**
  - **For general public, not just thought leaders**
- **Inflation/cost of living**
  - **Local incomes not keeping up with costs**
- **Artificial Intelligence**
- **Great place to retire**
  - **Causes housing strain**
- **Mobile home parks**
- **Attraction of second home industry**
- **Lack of smaller homes/empty large bedroom houses**
- **Isolationism by individual communities**
- **Statewide direction on workforce issues**
- **Issues to support workforce commitment to long term, consistent action**

