

2023 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SUMMARIES



BROOKLIN, MAINE

Population

Brooklin's median age of 57 years in 2019 is higher than Hancock County's (49 years) and Maine's (45 years). This is a significant increase from 46 years as documented in 2000. This increase in age has implications for aspects such as municipal services and community character. Relative to income, Brooklin's median household income of \$51,010 is less than that of Hancock County's (\$57,178) and Maine's (\$57,918).

Age Distribution for Brooklin

Age Cohort	2000	% of Total	2010	% of Total	2019	% of Total	% Change 2010 – 2019	% Change 2000 - 2019
0 - 4	27	3.2%	25	3.0%	14	2.0%	-44.0%	-48.1%
5 -17	154	18.3%	117	14.2%	68	9.9%	-41.9%	-55.8%
18 - 44	228	27.1%	175	21.2%	159	23.2%	-9.1%	-30.3%
45 - 64	278	33.1%	292	35.4%	193	28.2%	-33.9%	-30.6%
65 - 84	138	16.4%	197	23.9%	219	32.0%	11.2%	58.7%
85+	16	1.9%	18	2.2%	31	4.5%	72.2%	93.8%
Total	841	100.0%	824	100.0%	684	100.0%		

Source: US Decennial Census 2000, 2010 (Age and Sex); ACS 5-Year Estimates 2019 (Age and Sex).

Since 2000, Brooklin's average household size decreased from 2.27 persons to an estimated 1.92, a decrease of 15.4%. Contrast this to the County's decrease of 3% and the State's decrease of 4.6%. This large decrease likely is related to the significant aging of Brooklin's population. Brooklin's seasonal population has increased significantly since 2000. Maine Housing reported that by 2017, 56% or 496 housing units of 879 total dwelling units were vacant seasonally. This contrasts with the 363 total occupied units recorded. Based on the average household size, this adds an additional 952 people in the summer months.

It's important to keep in perspective that projections of small, rural town populations are often imprecise due to many factors influencing population. At the time of writing, many factors are impacting migration patterns throughout the United States. Recent real estate turnover and prices indicate some of these people are relocating to rural Maine.

A majority of respondents to the 2022 Public Opinion Survey and attendees of the Open House stated that the small-town feel, quietness, and physical beauty of Brooklin are very important features to be maintained. They also felt it important that the Town maintain a healthy year-round community, despite the dramatic change in population size seasonally.

Major objectives of the Plan include attracting young people and families to the area in order to maintain the vitality of the year-round community and economy. Programs that look into more affordable housing options and programs that support aging-in-place for our older population are considered important for our community.

Economy

Brooklin's aging and seasonal populations have a highly significant effect on the economic picture of the Town. Brooklin's labor force is declining (420 workers in 2020 vs. 476 in 2000).

Brooklin Employment Trends

Brooklin	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Labor Force	461	454	447	449	450	452	450	420
Employment	433	435	430	435	438	439	436	400
Unemployment	28	19	17	14	12	13	14	20
Unemployment Rate	6.1%	4.2%	3.8%	3.1%	2.7%	2.9%	3.1%	4.8%
Source: Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce Research and Information								

For a rural town, Brooklin offers a diverse range of employment sectors. The asset of ocean access supports strong boat building, marine services, and fishing industries, as well as tourist and seasonal residency businesses. Improvements in the availability of high speed internet are seen as key to improving Brooklin's economy. The extent to which climate change will impact fisheries and marine-based industries remains to be seen. This segment of Brooklin's economy is very important to the Town, both economically and culturally.

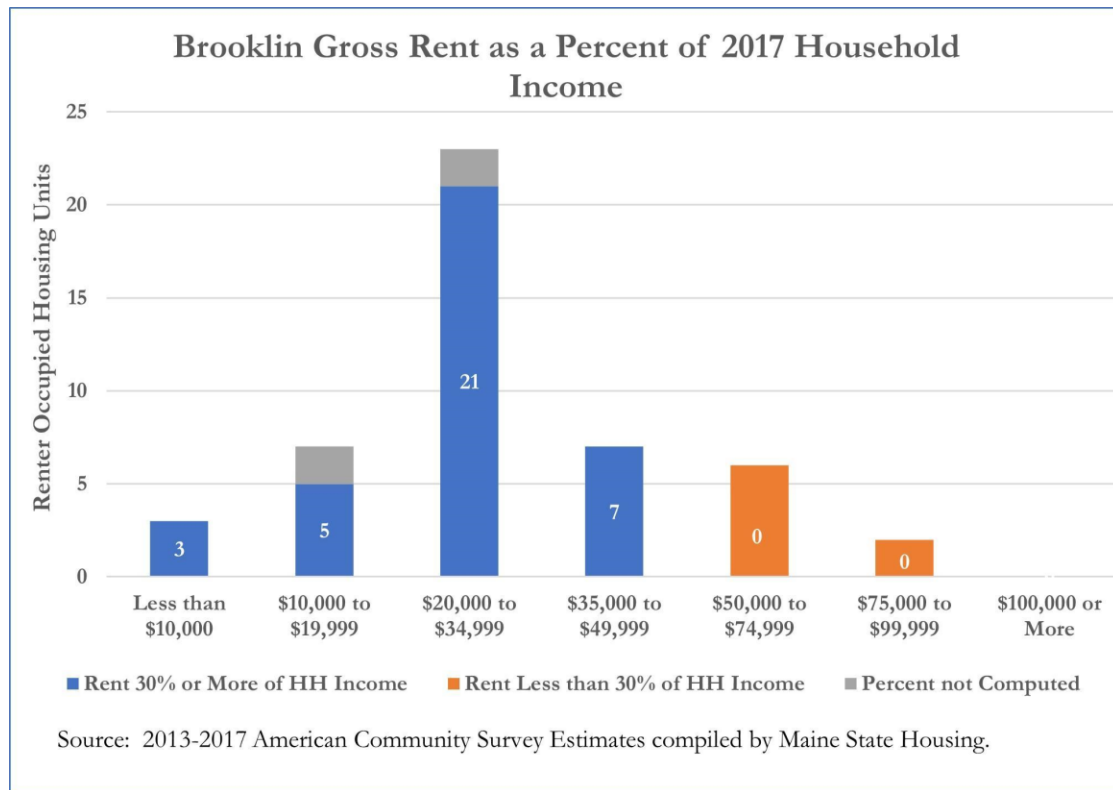
In the 2022 Public Opinion Survey, a significant number of respondents expressed a desire to discourage the following from being developed: heavy industry, chain stores and "big box" stores. Locally-owned, small businesses such as restaurants, shops and galleries, marine-related industry, nature-based tourism and food production were all indicated to be encouraged by survey respondents. It is evident that survey respondents want the general aspects of the Town to remain the same. There is some interest in procuring improved Internet service and establishing more shopping and eating options. Respondents appreciate the environment and want to enjoy and protect it. Results show a wish for some increase in tourism, but a large influx of tourists was not desired by the Town's respondents.

Major objectives of the Plan include facilitating the development of affordable housing (a regional issue facing employers and workers), and continuing to improve the availability and quality of Broadband services. Continuing to address the changing climate and its related effects on the Town's economy is also seen as key.

Housing

Brooklin has seen a housing shift since the year 2000. Seasonal units (438) exceeded year-round units (396) as of 2020. This increase has the potential to carry serious implications with it, especially if year-round residents have different priorities than seasonal residents do. Brooklin's viability, economy, and overall well-being depend upon housing that is safe, energy efficient and affordable for a multi-occupational and multi-generational community.

While there is a thriving short-term rental market occurring in Brooklin, the few year-round rental units available in Brooklin are unaffordable for many working, year-round Brooklin renters; similarly, the sale price of most homes being sold in Brooklin is unaffordable to many of Brooklin's median income buyers. The consequences of unaffordable housing have long-term negative effects contributing to population decline, cultural homogeneity, and economic stagnation. When those in lower income brackets are unable to attain affordable housing, the effects can be far-reaching and may include: decline in educational quality, shortage of laborers, and a lack of access to essential services.

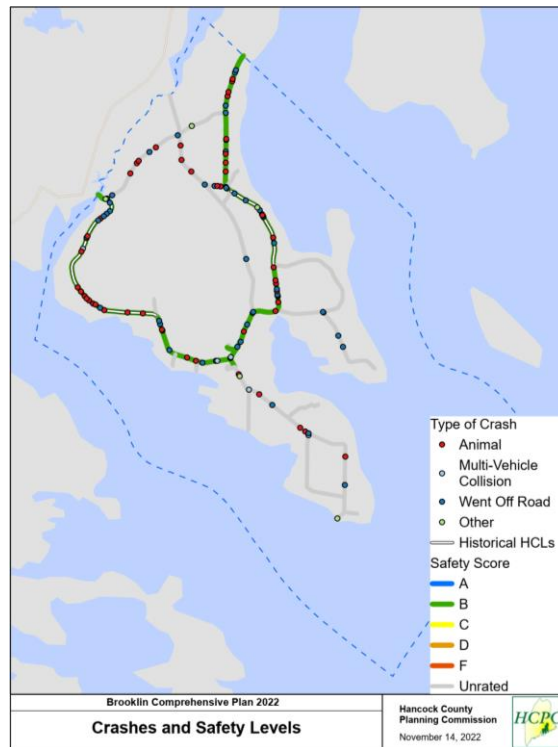


In both the 2022 Public Opinion Survey responses and the subsequent Open House, residents expressed a desire for more affordable housing in Brooklin to attract younger people to live and work in the Town. However, the survey results also indicated little support for having a multi-unit housing complex anywhere in Town.

Major objectives of the Plan include forming a Housing Committee to study the effects of increasing affordable housing options regionally, including participating in regional programs, grants, and projects to ensure sufficient, affordable housing options for residents of all ages.

Transportation

Transportation systems and mobility are some of the most important factors that influence a community's economic well-being and the health and cohesion of its population. Brooklin has approximately 30 miles of public roadways, of which about 11 miles are State or State aid roadways. Traffic volume remains low compared to the region. There are no High Crash Locations in Brooklin. Pedestrian and bicycle safety is a challenge as the Town has no dedicated pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure connecting major locations, such as the school, store, and parks. Creating such connections is a challenge because many of the areas where such structures would be desirable are narrow and have no shoulders. Brooklin does not have scheduled public transportation. As the average age of Brooklin's residents increase, many will require transportation to important medical appointments, retail, and social activities.

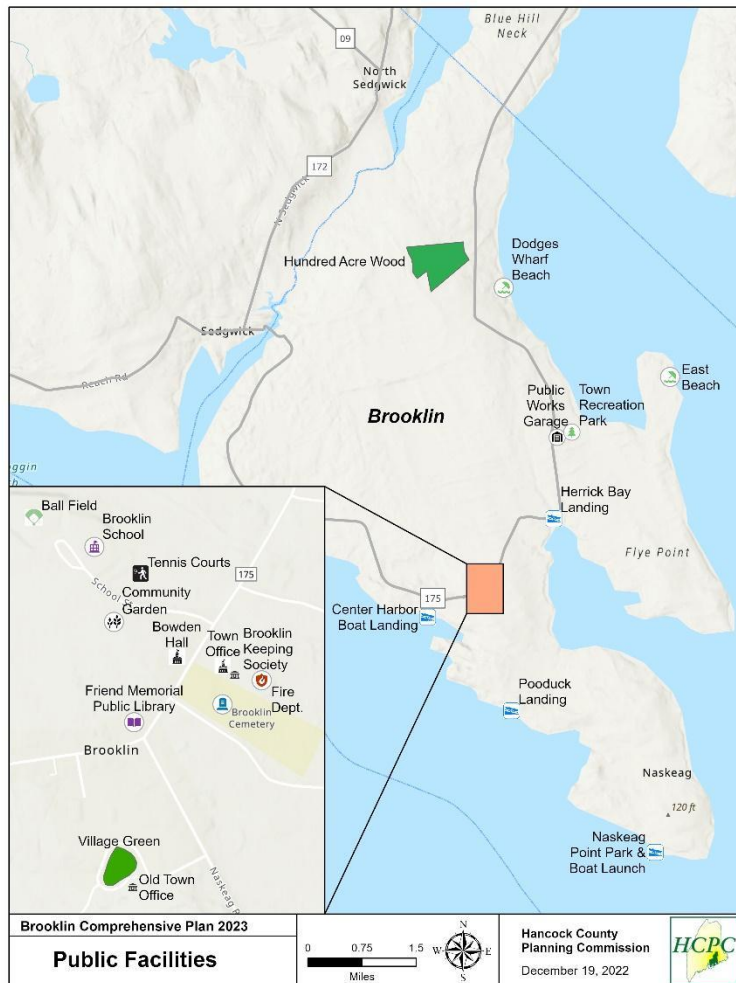


Results from the 2022 Public Opinion Survey showed overall general satisfaction with the Town's maintenance of roads and snow removal. A majority of respondents did indicate that the Town should pay more attention to road and road shoulder conditions. Over one third of respondents said that pedestrian safety and traffic speed control in the Town was inadequate, and nearly half of respondents said bicycle rider safety was inadequate. Concerns were raised over the safety of downtown Brooklin pedestrian crossings, the need for more parking in the center of Town and at public landings, as well as the need for traffic speed control. Respondents expressed the greatest concern over public transportation, with nearly 60% saying the current facilities are inadequate.

Major objectives of the Plan include improving pedestrian and bicycle access, increasing public transportation options for all residents and preparing for the increased effects of climate change on our roads, bridges, culverts and the need for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure.

Public Facilities

Brooklin will need to increase its use of inter-municipal agreements and regional solutions to meet the public facilities service and infrastructure needs of its residents. The perception of what the Town should be providing its citizens likely will increase over time due in part to a gradual influx of people moving to Maine from other parts of the country. Coordination with the Brooklin Fire Department will be needed to help maintain a strong primarily volunteer company, which meets the needs of both the increasing and aging population.

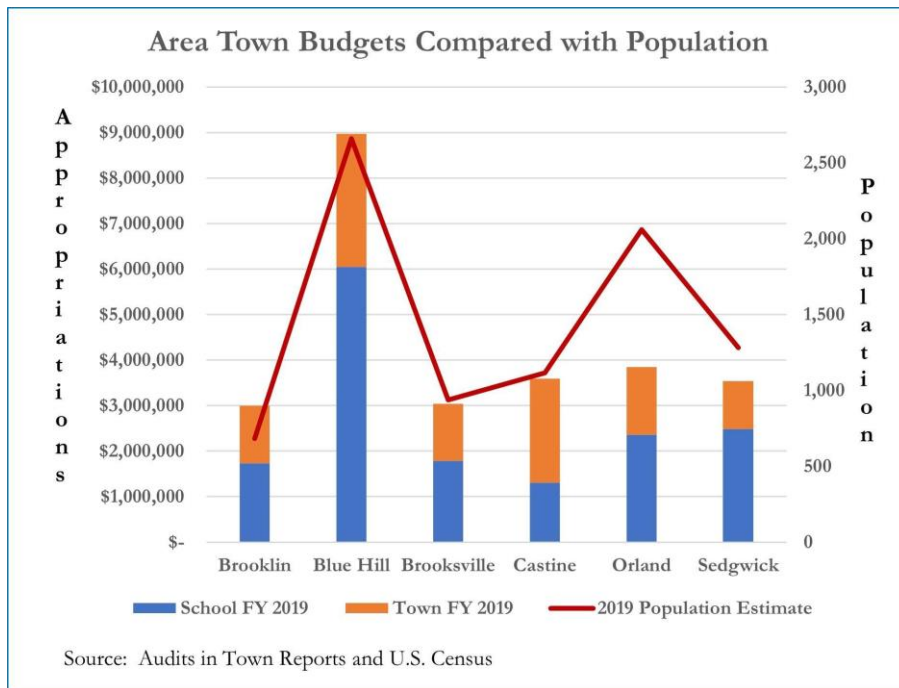


Key issues identified by respondents in the 2022 Public Opinion Survey as needing improvement are doctor/medical care (26%), eldercare (27%), traffic speed control (34%), pedestrian safety (37%), public transportation (58%), road maintenance (24%), affordable housing (48%), public access to salt water (11%), and public access to boat moorings (15%).

Major objectives of the Plan include maintaining public facilities and services with appropriate access for all. These include concerns about speed and pedestrian safety, the need to provide for future replacement and maintenance of public equipment and buildings with energy-efficiency and climate change in mind, increasing access to and maintenance of Town landings and public land, and participating in regional efforts to increase the availability of affordable housing options.

Fiscal Capacity

Brooklin has kept the size of its municipal budget less than that of most of its neighbors when compared with the available tax base. This was markedly true during the 2008 recession but has continued in recent years as well. When adjusting for inflation, the Town's expenditures increased over the last two decades in the areas of Education, Administration, Winter Roads, and the Fire Department. Other categories, such as Town Roads, remained relatively flat over this period. Brooklin has sufficient annual surplus to fund most of its anticipated capital expenditures other than, perhaps, going out to bond for improvements to Brooklin School.



In the 2022 Public Opinion Survey, 99% percent of respondents indicated that they pay Brooklin property taxes. 44% of respondents replied that Property Taxes were fair and should not be increased to improve Town responsibilities, while 32% replied that the taxes should be increased to perform additional responsibilities needed. Only 10% of respondents thought taxes were too high.

Major objectives of the Plan include continuing to maintain fiscal responsibility through continued use of zero-based budgeting while seeking grants and other awards for major funding projects. The Town will continue to differentiate capital projects from general operating needs by being disciplined as to when tax dollars or surplus funds are used to pay for needed expenditures, and to develop an annual municipal budget without a dramatic increase in property taxes. Adequate funding of capital replacement needs will be supported by funding appropriate reserve funds including large replacement projects such as roads, buildings and fire equipment. The Town should develop a list of large capital projects eligible for grants, including State and Federal money.

Recreation and Health

There is a wide range of recreation and fitness facilities and programs available regionally, but more facilities are needed for the aging population. There also exists an opportunity for more coordination of youth-related programming among the schools and the community centers. These opportunities include the gym space and recreation programs provided by area schools, the many nature preserves and hiking trails provided by the Blue Hill Heritage Trust and other land trusts, and community centers such as the Blue Hill YMCA.



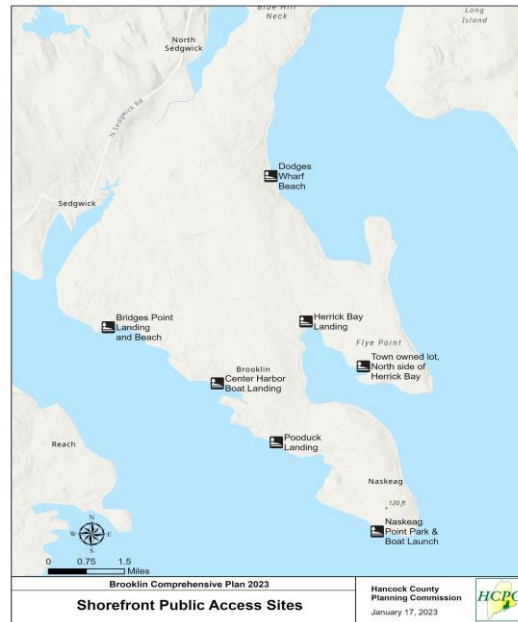
While a variety of medical clinics and hospitals are available in the peninsula area, the hospitals are located a considerable distance away from the Town; this makes ambulance service extremely important. The regional ambulance system should be improved to reduce response times and increase the availability of certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs).

The 2022 Public Opinion Survey and the Open House reflected respondents' desire for the ability to safely walk and bike in Town. More public access trails were also requested. Boating and water access were also noted.

Major objectives of the Plan include forming a Parks and Recreation committee to help make recreational sites and programming a priority, to expand access to open land and salt water and to help increase pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Marine Resources

Commercial fishing by Brooklin residents has remained steady over the last two decades. Commercial fishing is a vital source of income for twenty or more captains and their crews. Lobstering continues to be the main fishing activity in and around the Town. Lobstering is currently going through regulation changes, which is a regular occurrence, and changing market/catch conditions will likely cause a decrease in harvesting activity. Brooklin has several coastal areas with the potential for shellfish harvesting that are limited or restricted due to high bacteria counts. Recreational boaters are very active in Brooklin waters and range from large motor and sail yachts to kayaks and paddle boards.

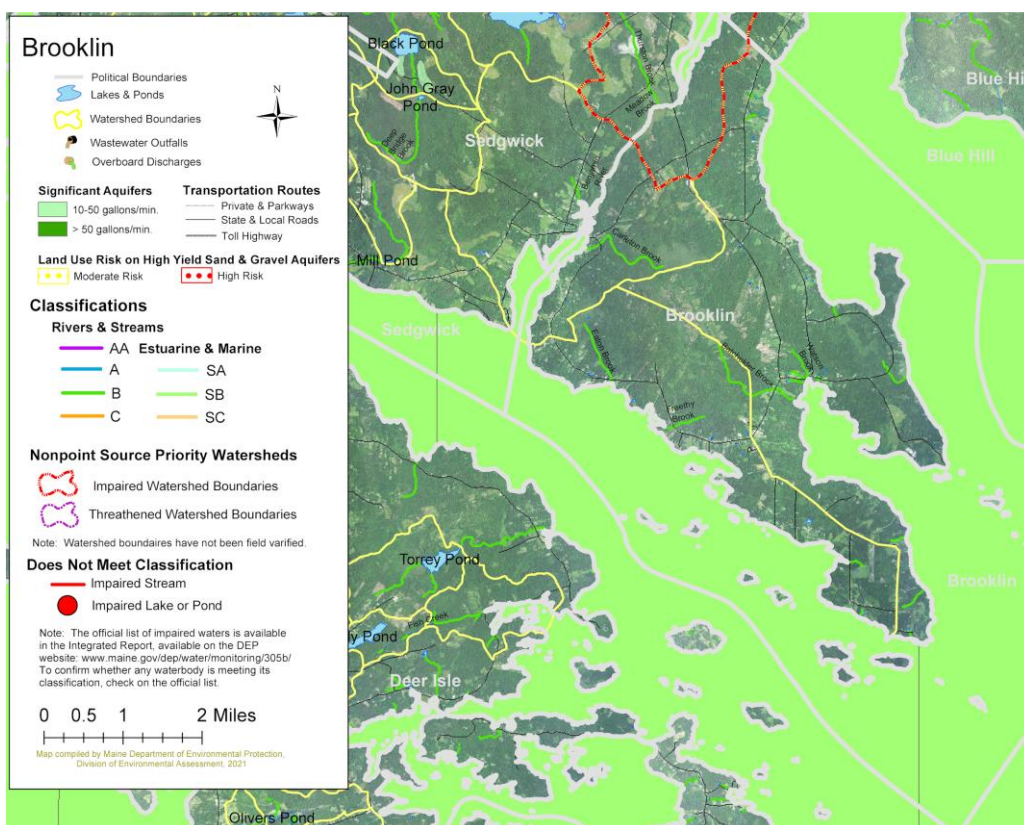


The 2022 Public Opinion Survey revealed that respondents believed there could be better access to salt water, public landings and moorings. 63% percent of respondents thought that boat building should be able to take place anywhere in Town, while 37% percent wanted it only in designated areas. 55% percent thought that boat maintenance should take place anywhere in the Town, and 45% percent wanted it only in designated areas. 88% percent indicated that coastal land, working waterfront areas and public waterfront areas should be protected, while seventy-eight percent felt scenic views should be protected. About two thirds of respondents indicated that tidal water level, tidal water quality, shellfish quality, and shellfish numbers should be considered as Town responsibilities.

A major objective of the Plan recognizes the varied use of our marine resources by encouraging the Town to continue its work improving salt water access for both commercial and recreational uses. There is a recommendation to create a five-person Marine Advisory Committee, made up of one select board member, one commercial fisherman, one mooring owner, one water-dependent business owner, and one at-large community member. That committee would develop plans to manage and improve water and mooring access and serve as contact for any local aquaculture lease proposals. The proposed Plan directs the Shellfish Committee to continue addressing water quality issues that have resulted in shellfish harvesting area closures.

Water Resources

The majority of Brooklin residents depend on individual wells for their water supply. Brooklin's wetlands play an important role in protecting and supplying drinking water to the Town's residents. They also play a significant role in filtering runoff to other surface waters and coastal areas. Brooklin has extensive coastal wetlands. Coastal wetlands serve as nurseries and food sources for fish and provide wintering areas for waterfowl and staging areas for migratory shorebirds. They protect coastlines from erosion and provide open space for recreation and fishing. The water quality of the waters around Brooklin is such that some areas are approved for shellfish harvesting or other designated uses, some are conditionally approved, some are restricted, and some are prohibited. The mitigation of the excessive PFAS levels at the elementary school is necessary, and is underway. It is evident from the following Department of Environmental Protection map that Brooklin does not have any impaired streams or ponds.



Data from both the 2022 Public Opinion Survey and the Open House indicate that fresh water bodies are not a major source of recreation for residents, as there are few in the area. Most indicated their water recreation needs were satisfied with their access to salt water.

Major objectives for the Plan are to review current land use regulations to determine their effectiveness for protecting Brooklin's wetlands (inland and coastal) and groundwater and public water supplies. Other objectives also include education of residents on how to protect and conserve Brooklin's water resources and plans to collaborate with neighboring towns on implementing regional protection measures of our area's water resources.

Natural Resources

Brooklin is a coastal town with about 30 miles of shorefront and approximately 5,000 acres of undeveloped forest and meadows, creating large habitat blocks. The shoreline of Brooklin provides habitat for numerous shellfish, finfish, waterfowl and wading birds. Brooklin's wetlands are an ecologically significant natural resource, and home to many plant and animal species. Forty five percent of the Brooklin total acreage is described as having hydric (wet) soils that are significant for groundwater recharge, storm water abatement and wildlife habitat. In addition, the human use of natural areas for forestry, blueberry and haying activities needs to be considered as a component of our natural resources. As the Town is predicted to have moderate growth in the next decade, it is important to create effective means by which these natural resources are managed and protected.

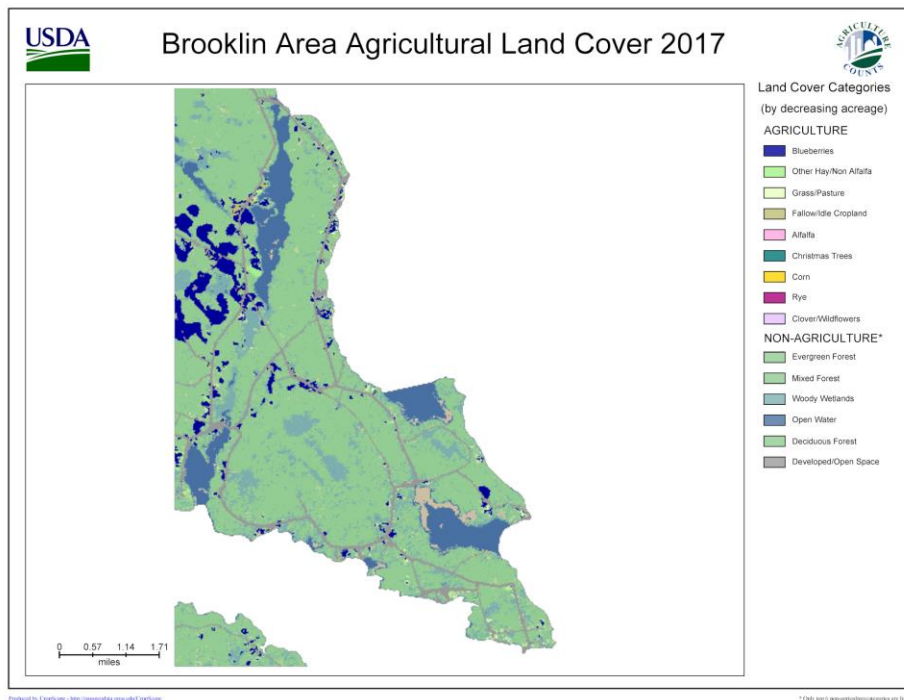


The 2022 Public Opinion Survey showed the following categories were selected by at least seventy-five per cent of the 236 respondents as needing protection: coastal lands; inland, open public space; forested land; ponds; wetlands; streams and rivers; drinking water, and scenic views.

Major objectives in the Plan include curtailing the cumulative effects of development and the resulting habitat loss that occurs overtime. This includes working with landowners, conservation organizations, regional planning organizations, and others to find non-regulatory means for preservation as well as developing creative new growth-management tools that achieve multiple objectives. Also, the formation of an Environmental Protection Committee to identify our Town's natural resources, to identify present and future threats to these natural resources and to work with state agencies and neighboring communities to communicate to townspeople the significance of a natural resource protection is proposed.

Agriculture and Forestry

Agriculture and forestry in Brooklin are conducted on a limited basis. Blueberries, hay, and small amounts of other crops are grown, and an average of 89 acres of trees are harvested each year. Approximately 10% of land in Brooklin is enrolled in one of the Farmland, Open Space, or Tree Growth preferential tax programs. Given increased State emphasis on increasing local food production, Brooklin has an opportunity to work with regional and State organizations to protect its prime agricultural soils and support its farmers. While there are no direct measures in the Town's land use ordinances to safeguard farm and forest land, there are several measures contributing to the protection of these lands. Town ordinances include shoreland zoning standards for timber harvesting and standards for the retention of natural beauty and the preservation of open space.



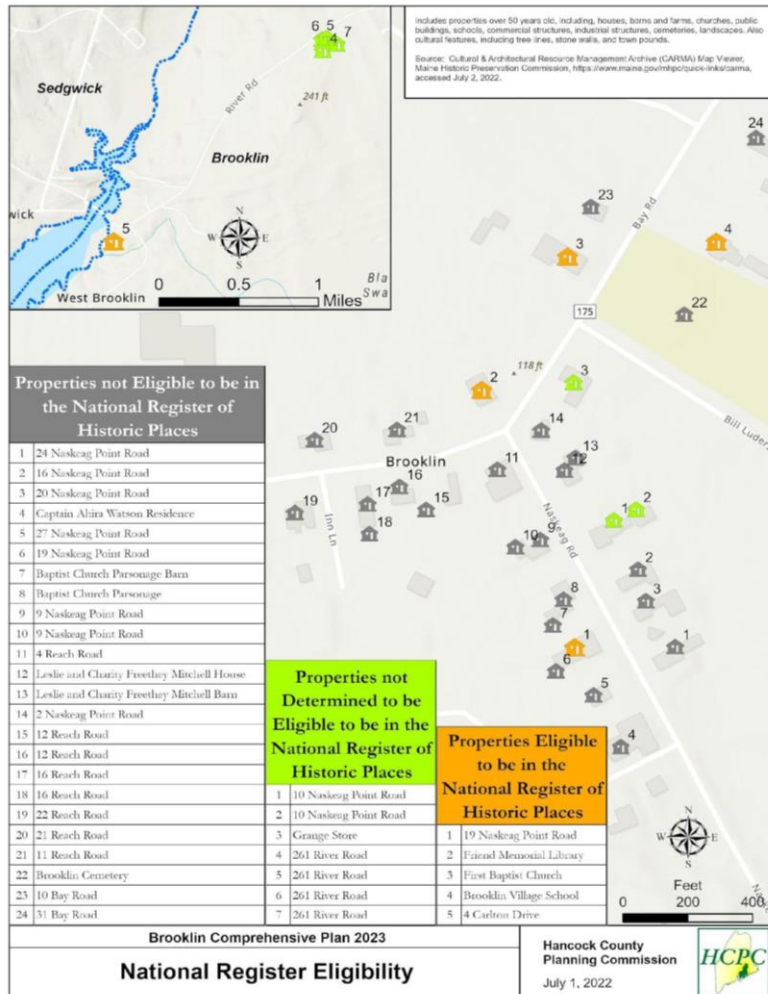
Home gardens and small commercial farms carry on the tradition of growing local food. Brooklin has a farmers' market in the summer with a wide selection of Brooklin-made products. Additionally, Brooklin was one of the first towns in Maine to pass a Local Food and Self-Governance Ordinance in 2014.

The 2022 Public Opinion Survey points to solid Town support for agricultural resources and activities. When asked if Brooklin should consider protecting forested land, 79% agreed; 70% agreed Brooklin should consider protecting agricultural land. When asked in an open-ended question what other jobs or businesses Brooklin should encourage, there were a number of responses that included farming and fishing, small farming, and saltwater food farming.

Major objectives in the Plan include identifying and documenting prime farmland and making that information readily available. It also proposed examining current land ordinances and how they affect prime farm and forest lands, including working with the newly proposed Housing Committee on examining the role cluster housing can play in land preservation.

Historical and Archaeological Resources

Brooklin has many archaeological and historical resources that its citizens value and have taken measures to preserve. There are three properties in the National Register of Historic Places, five additional ones that have been deemed eligible to be in the list, and seven more the statuses of which are undetermined. There are standards to protect archaeological and historical resources in the Town's land use ordinances, and there is a volunteer organization—the Brooklin Keeping Society—that is committed to preserving Brooklin's history.

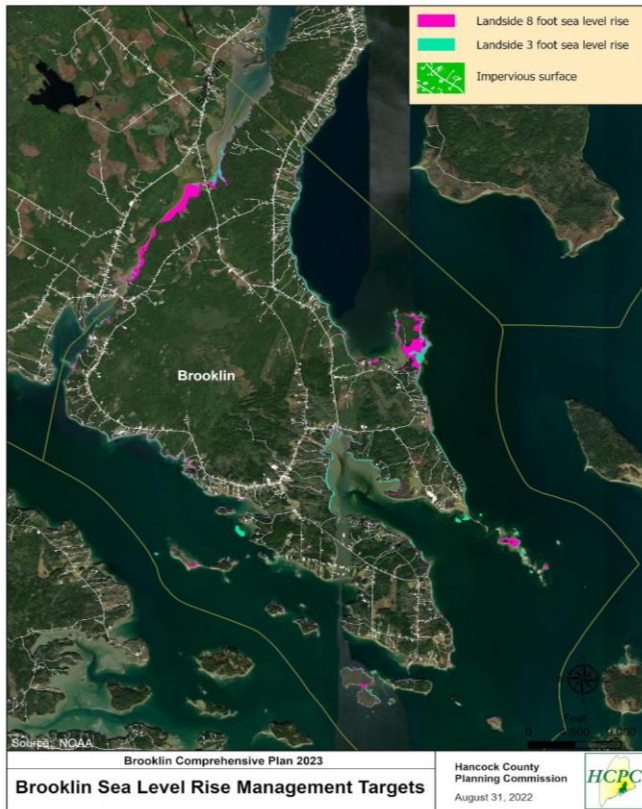


The 2022 Public Opinion Survey demonstrated that 71% of respondents believe the Town should support and/or expand the work of the Brooklin Keeping Society; 82% replied that it should be the function of the Town to encourage the protection of archaeologically important records, items and sites; and 86% replied that it should be the function of the Town to encourage the preservation of and accessibility of historically important records, items, and sites.

Major objectives of the Plan include continuing to enforce and strengthen (as needed) Brooklin's standards for preserving historical and archaeological resources in its Site Plan, Subdivision and Shoreland Zoning Ordinances. This also includes working with County and State historic organizations to assess the need for, and if necessary, plan for a comprehensive community survey of the community's historic sites and artifacts.

Climate Change

The impacts of climate change are already occurring and are expected to further create issues for Brooklin related to sea level rise, flooding, increased extreme precipitation events, periods of severe drought, increased temperatures, increased danger from wildfires, and changes in water temperature and ocean chemistry. Municipalities have begun to examine both what role they can play in slowing the increase in greenhouse gasses (mitigation) and in investing in infrastructure and other improvements necessary to cope with the effects of increased temperatures, increased rainfall, and other climate change related phenomena (adaptation).



The majority of 2022 Public Opinion Survey respondents indicated that the Town should take into account factors such as Tidal Water Level, Aquifer Recharge Areas, and the effects of Rainstorms, Flooding and High Winds in its responsibilities. Results from the Open House indicated residents were interested in seeing the Town set an example while also providing know-how on how to convert to renewable, innovative and shared sources of energy.

Major mitigation objectives proposed in the Plan include reducing carbon emissions from the Brooklin School and Town facilities, assessing the local electrical grid's capacity to handle more electrification from renewable resources, and education of Brooklin's residents on how to reduce their carbon emissions. Major adaptation objectives include assessing Brooklin's resiliency to major flood events, reviewing if current ordinances dealing with wetlands and the shoreline are robust enough for current and predicted changes, and to plan for and improve public infrastructure to deal with the effects of climate change.

Current Land Use

According to the latest data, Brooklin has approximately 11,152 acres of land area and 812 year-round residents. Of Brooklin's land area, 36.5% contains no buildings and another estimated 41.5% is potentially developable "surplus" land on improved lots greater than two acres. However, due to a number of variables, it is likely that the actual amount of land in Brooklin that is realistically available for development is considerably less. A reported high estimate for residential development is that there will be 90 new dwelling units built in Brooklin within the next 10 years.

Much of Brooklin's recent development has occurred along the coast and around the perimeter of Town Center, which straddles Route 175. The villages (Town Center, North Brooklin, West Brooklin, Flye and Naskeag Points) once were the major areas of year-round homes in Brooklin. In recent years, more development has taken place elsewhere, along both Route 175 and secondary roads. The interior portions of the Town's land area are relatively undeveloped and have experienced timber harvesting and light agricultural uses. The shorefront areas have attracted considerable development. Such shoreland areas likely will remain popular as places for year-round and seasonal homes.



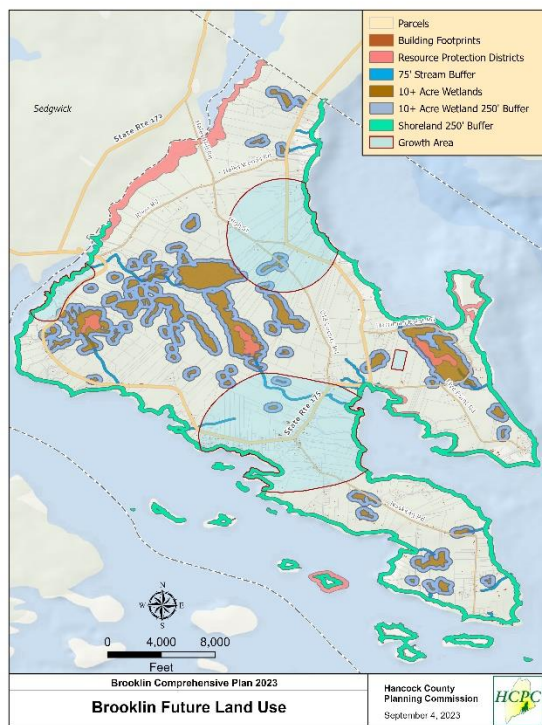
When asked to list aspects of Brooklin's quality-of-life that respondents appreciated, 2022 Public Opinion Survey and Open House typical responses were "Quiet, not a lot of traffic, access to water" and "Small town character, neighbors, scenic beauty." Regarding what should be changed, many respondents indicated that nothing should change while others stated that a broad range of things should change, including increasing the availability of affordable housing and restaurants.

Major objectives of the Plan include examining and strengthening (if needed) current land use enforcement codes and ensuring that the Town's compliance with LD 2003 and other State laws and regulations regarding minimal housing lot sizes maximizes benefits to the Town.

Future Land Use

Land use in Brooklin has been mostly stable for decades. However, there are signs that the Town may soon face unusual pressures to develop its land faster. Migration patterns in the United States are changing and there are also increasing numbers of people working from home. These factors raise the possibility of unexpected, random developmental sprawls. One of Brooklin's most valuable land assets is its coastline. How to protect that asset from new and increasing threats such as climate change and improper development, is becoming an increasingly important challenge.

The majority of residents who responded to the 2022 Public Opinion Survey expressed a desire to maintain Brooklin's rural character and quality of life as much as possible. With this in mind and considering feedback from the Future Land Use Survey distributed in December of 2022, the most suitable areas for future growth in Brooklin would be adjacent to three locations: the Town Center, North Brooklin, and the developed areas in West Brooklin. There is also one targeted area of Town-owned land in the Harriman Point area that could be considered for building affordable/ "workplace" housing to help the Town achieve a goal of 10% affordable housing over the next decade.



The Town Center has diverse residential, commercial, and public properties. Designating this area as a future growth area would be consistent with historic development and likely would minimize the need for new traffic patterns. North and West Brooklin are historic village areas that could be revived with appropriate development. Potential road improvements to Old County Road in North Brooklin and pedestrian/bicycle safety improvements near tourist venues in West Brooklin and Town Center would be examples of development that the Town could encourage.

Major objectives of the Plan include reviewing existing ordinances, in particular the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance and the Minimum Lot Ordinance (with the passing of LD 2003), and to strengthen as necessary to help protect the rural character and historic land use patterns of Brooklin.