

Regional Coordination

**City of Rockland
2002 Comprehensive Plan**

Chapter 12

REGIONAL COORDINATION

Introduction

Rockland is the County Seat of Knox County as well as a regional service center. These titles clearly represent Rockland's indissoluble link to its surrounding communities. Rockland and the surrounding communities are co-dependent. We have mutual obligations, shared difficulties and common hopes and dreams. Thinking regionally, as well as locally, allows for a number of opportunities to avoid duplication of municipal services and for coordination of ordinances governing land uses and natural resources in order to maintain and enhance the character of Midcoast Maine.

The Economy

The Rockland-Thomaston Area Chamber of Commerce represents the City of Rockland, the Town of Thomaston, and businesses in the surrounding areas. Rockland and Thomaston share a commercial strip along Route 1 on the western boundary of Rockland that needs cooperative effort to improve traffic congestion, aesthetics, safety and other public needs. These same issues can be found and should be addressed with Rockport along Route 1 on the north side of Rockland.

Tourism in Rockland and the surrounding towns, one of the economic engines promoted through the Rockland-Thomaston Chamber of Commerce, depends not only on the scenic beauty of the Rockland Harbor and the peninsulas, but on the regional museums as well. Some of these museums include: The Farnsworth Museum, The Owls Head Transportation Museum, The Lighthouse Museum, Montpelier, The Marshall Point Lighthouse, and others. These museums are just beginning to communicate common problems and aspirations between the organizations.

The Rockland Industrial Park is at capacity. There is a regional need for vacant industrial land served by public infrastructure. The City of Rockland has attempted to work with the Town of Owls Head to expand the industrial park and municipal services into the Town of Owls Head. The City of Rockland would extend the necessary public infrastructure, and Owls Head would provide the necessary land and zoning. The Town of Owls Head, at the 1999 Town Meeting, voted not to change the zoning of the land adjacent to the Rockland Industrial Park. The Town of Thomaston is considering a new industrial park. This proposed industrial park might provide for a regional opportunity if developed.

Municipal Services

As a service center, Rockland has the largest population in the region of approximately 7,000 residents. According to Rockland Police Department estimates, the population often swells to 30,000 people as people come to Rockland to work, shop, visit professional offices, and do business at the courthouse. This creates traffic impacts, add demand on the wastewater system, increases emergency service needs and creates other demands on the City of Rockland infrastructure.

Rockland wastewater lines not only serve the City of Rockland, but they also currently serve portions of Owls Head, Thomaston, and Rockport. The Town of Thomaston has it's own sewer system

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that serves the town center; Thomaston's sewer system is under capacity with the closure of the State Prison. Thomaston is currently looking for opportunities to expand their system. The Glen Cove area and the Samoset Hotel, both located in Rockport are served by the City of Rockland sewer system. Rockport village is served by the Town of Camden wastewater treatment facility. Rockland provides sewer service to a limited number of homes on Ingraham's Hill in Owls Head the remaining portions of Owls Head has no wastewater treatment system. Other surrounding towns have no public sewer systems.

The Rockland Fire Department is the largest and most technically advanced Fire Department in the region. The Rockland Fire Department participates in regional Mutual Aid Program. Mutual Aid is an agreement between regional fire departments to provide aid if an emergency exceeds the capacity of a town. Rockland emergency services participate in regional dispatching, which saves money by linking repetitive services and allows coordination between towns.

Rockland continues to meet with Rockport, Lincolnville, Owls Head, Camden, South Thomaston and Hope to discuss regionalization of solid waste. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection continues to develop new rules and regulations that may make solid waste costs too high for cities and towns to manage locally. Creating larger regional landfills is an option that many communities have had to take. Solid waste costs will continue to increase and land for new landfills will continue to decrease. A regional landfill will impact the amount and patterns of truck traffic. Rockland has considered a number of quarry holes for future waste sites, but the DEP has not been agreeable.

Rockland, Belfast, Camden, and Rockport all have excellent public libraries and there are many other smaller libraries in the region that may profit from increased coordination. The Rockland public library serves many people who do not reside in the City; there is a fee for non-resident library cardholders. Some discussion of regional cooperation has begun to occur. There is grant money available that supports regional cooperation; it is a matter of raising expectations and exploring opportunities. The four larger libraries in the region (Rockland, Belfast, Rockport, and Camden) are cooperating under a grant from MBNA this year. The \$20,000 grant was given to purchase large print books, books on tape, books on CD's and DVD's. Each library receives \$5,000 of the grant to purchase the items and make them available to the other libraries.

Housing

A large portion of the affordable housing stock in the Midcoast Region is located within the City of Rockland. According to a recent Knox County Affordable Housing Coalition (KCAHC) Study, Rockland is the only coastal community in Knox County that was still considered "affordable" in 2000. The term affordable was determined by comparing the median household income with the average house price in each municipality in Knox County. See Chapter 7 for a full discussion of the term. The significant increase in the price of coastal property is forcing many people to move inland, including those with a primary source of income coming from fishing and other marine resource businesses.

Rockland has been a strong supporter of the Knox County Affordable Housing Coalition and has donated staff time and financial support to help address the affordable housing issues in the region. Providing affordable housing for the work force will in turn help the Rockland economy, but this issue needs to be addressed regionally.

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Education

Maine School Administrative District #5 (MSAD 5) provides an education for students from Rockland, Owls Head, and South Thomaston. MSAD 5 has recently approached Maine School Administrative District #50 (MSAD 50) regarding the potential to coordinate, cost share, and even potentially combine some functions to save costs. MSAD 50 serves Thomaston, Saint George, and Cushing.

MSAD 5 participates with six (6) other school districts in the Region 8 Vocational Technical School, located in the City of Rockland. The schools are: MSAD 7 (North Haven), MSAD 8 (Vinalhaven), Five Town CSD (Camden, Rockport, Hope, Appleton, and Lincolnville), MSAD 40 (Waldoboro, Warren, and Friendship), and MSAD 50 (Thomaston, Saint George, and Cushing). Many of these schools cooperate with the Opportunity School, located in Rockland, for students that have difficulty fitting into their local schools.

Other educational facilities located in Rockland include the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School, the Penobscot School, the Atlantic Challenge Foundation Apprenticeship boat building school, and the Ben Bay Christian School.

Regional Facilities and services

Rockland, as a service center and the County Seat, provides a number of regional and County services. County Services include the courthouse, jail and the Registrar of Deeds. Rockland has a number of social services located within its boundaries including churches, health care, three food pantries, two soup kitchens, Coastal Community Action Program (CCAP), Maine Department of Human Services, Knox County Child Development Services, Knox County Head Start, Mid-Coast Children's Services, Alternate Choices Counseling, the American Red Cross, Women-Infants-Children Program, First Call Knox County, ElderServ Inc., Mid-Coast RSVP, Senior Spectrum, New Hope for Women, Kno-Wal-Lin and others. These regional services not only make Rockland a better place, but support the surrounding communities as well.

Consumer's Maine Water Company is a private water company that provides water service to areas within Rockland, Rockport, Thomaston, Owls Head, Warren and Camden.

Transportation

Rockland is a regional highway hub located along U.S. Route 1. U.S. Route 1 is the backbone of transportation along the Midcoast. Highways from Rockland connect to Belfast and other points north along U.S. Route 1, to Bath and other points southwest along U.S. Route 1, to Saint George south along Route 73, and to Augusta and Interstate 95 west on Route 17.

Rockland has had preliminary discussions with the Towns of Warren, Rockport, Hope, Union, and Washington on potential corridor planning for Route 17 and Route 90.

The Maine State Ferry Service operates regularly scheduled ferry service from Rockland to the Islands of Vinalhaven, and North Haven. In addition Concord Trailways bus services provide other transportation services to the region.

Although the Knox County Airport is located in the Town of Owls Head, it is a regional air facility. The Knox County Airport provides regional passenger service and freight service.

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The Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) is working with Amtrak to provide new train service from Boston, Massachusetts and is studying the potential for a new high-speed ferry service to Bar Harbor and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. These transportation improvements will enhance the City of Rockland's regional role as a transportation hub and will establish Rockland as a multi-modal passenger transportation hub.

With the improvements to the rail and MDOT's increasing emphasis on rail and boat freight transportation, Rockland also has the potential to be a regional freight transfer center as well.

Natural and Marine Areas

Rockland shares four important natural and marine areas with its neighboring communities. The Rockland Bog is a unique natural area that provides habitat for inland waterfowl and wading birds during migration. Rockland has enacted the Woodland/Wildlife "G" Zone District to protect the Bog. Rockland should work with and encourage neighboring Rockport, Thomaston and Warren to enact similar zoning for the portion of the Bog that is located within each of their towns. Currently the Oyster River Bog Association has played a key role in preserving the Bog.

Chickawaukie Lake and its watershed are shared between the City of Rockland and Rockport. The Town of Rockport has enacted regulations to limit the phosphorous entering the lake system; Rockland does not have similar regulations.

The Jameson Point landslide watershed is located in both the City of Rockland and in the Town of Rockport. Coordination has not occurred at this time to limit development in this watershed to protect the landslide area from further deterioration by increased run-off.

Rockland Harbor is the lifeblood of Rockland, providing many economic, recreational, and aesthetic benefits to the City. Rockland shares the Harbor with the Town of Owls Head. The land adjoining the harbor in Owls Head is primarily residential. The land adjacent to the harbor in Rockland is primarily used for commercial purposes. In the past there have been discussions of developing a mutual master plan for the harbor, to date, these discussions have not come to fruition.

Zoning

All towns adjoining the City of Rockland have zoning ordinances in effect. Each of the zoning ordinances is significantly different. To date there have been no attempts to coordinate zoning and land uses between municipalities where they are adjacent to the City of Rockland.

Issues and Implications

- 1) Regional coordination of affordable housing is needed to provide for adequate affordable housing in order to allow employees the ability to be located near where they work. How can the City of Rockland work with surrounding communities to provide affordable housing on a regional basis?
- 2) The City of Rockland has the infrastructure and facilities to serve additional development. Rockland has limited land available for development. How can the City of Rockland work with adjoining towns to provide necessary regional services while protecting the interests of the City of Rockland?
- 3) Should the City of Rockland work with surrounding communities in the development of a Recreation Center? Will surrounding communities be willing to work together to provide funding for the new center?

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- 4) How can the City of Rockland work with adjoining towns to protect watershed quality and preserve open space?
- 5) How can the City of Rockland work with surrounding communities to coordinate zoning and land use along shared town lines (particularly along U.S. Route 1) to assure that the public safety health and welfare is protected?
- 6) How can the City of Rockland work with regional and adjoining communities to preserve the regional highway capacity and promote other options of travel?
- 7) The City of Rockland and The Town of Owls Head each have jurisdiction over portions of Rockland Harbor. How can Rockland work with Owls Head to preserve the quality of Rockland Harbor and provide a more useful and pleasurable harbor experience for everybody?
- 8) How can the City of Rockland work with other communities to promote regional economic development and tourism that is beneficial to all communities in the region?
- 9) The City of Rockland currently uses an abandoned quarry as a landfill, which will be full in approximately 10 more years. The City has been working to open an adjacent quarry as a landfill for future use; the Maine Department of Environmental Protection has not been supportive of this proposal. There are no parcels of land that would meet the Maine DEP requirements for a new landfill. Should the City approach surrounding Towns to prepare for future solid waste needs and create a regional or sub-regional landfill?

Goals, Policies, and Strategies

Goal: Enhance regional economic development.

Policies

1. Work with adjoining towns to develop regional industrial and business parks.
2. Work with adjoining towns to promote regional economic development.
3. Work with surrounding towns to develop regional tourism recognition.
4. Work with the Rockland-Thomaston Chamber of Commerce, Eastern Maine Development Corp. and the Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission to develop regional industrial and business parks and to promote regional economic development and tourism.

Strategies

1. Continue to approach Owl's Head to discuss a shared industrial park.
2. Work with the Town of Thomaston to help develop and enhance their proposed industrial park as a regional facility.
3. Develop a shared Rockland Harbor Master Plan with the Town of Owls Head.

Goal: Protect natural resources and areas that are shared with adjoining towns.

Policies

1. Work with adjoining towns to identify shared natural areas that may not be noted in this Comprehensive Plan.
2. Develop coordinated regulations for natural areas.

Strategies

1. In addition to the Chickawaukie Watershed Plan (which requires the preparation of Erosion and Sediment Control Plans for proposed development along this lake), the city will revise phosphorus control method language in the zoning ordinance, selecting a high level of protection for Chickawaukie Lake to ensure that development minimizes phosphorus runoff. As needed, the City will revise the Chickawaukie Watershed Plan. The City will cooperate with the Town of Rockport to ensure consistent and therefore meaningful regulation for Chickawaukie Lake.
2. Convene the Oyster River Association, The Town of Rockport, the Town of Warren, and the Town of Thomaston to develop a shared zone district for the Bog, use Rockland's Woodland/Wildlife "G" as a model.
3. Develop a regulation with the Town of Rockport that addresses storm water run-off in the Jameson Point Landslide watershed.
4. Develop a regulation with the Town of Rockport that addresses storm water run-off in the Glen Cove watershed.
5. Meet with adjoining towns to compare and evaluate the existing regulations for shared natural areas; develop a list of shared zoning changes that should occur to protect these features.
6. Work with adjoining towns to develop shared regulations for shared natural resources and natural areas developed through policy 1.
7. The City will inventory lake watersheds and develop a Watershed Management Plan based on the inventory of existing development, current phosphorous concentrations, and the potential development in watersheds over the next 50 years, in order to help maintain the health of all lakes and ponds within the City. Amendments to the zoning and other land use ordinances, the Chickawaukie Watershed Plan, as needed and based on the Watershed Management Plan will be made to further this strategy.
8. The City will apply for EPA Section 319 NPS grants as applicable.
9. Consult with Maine DOT to manage runoff from State Route 17.

Goal: Limit duplication of municipal services.

Policies

1. Work with surrounding towns to evaluate existing services.
2. Work with surrounding towns to search out opportunities for shared services.

Strategies

1. Evaluate opportunities in the development of the new Recreation Center to make it a regional facility.
2. Evaluate existing waste water lines and the capacities of each facility to develop a future 10-year service plan for the region.

Goal: Coordinate transportation systems and upcoming changes with MDOT and surrounding communities.

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Policies

1. Evaluate transportation projects for regional benefits and impacts.
2. Maintain and enhance working relationship with MDOT.

Strategies

1. Work with MDOT and surrounding communities to study the regional and local commuter pattern impacts of the proposed passenger and freight rail and port facility improvements as well as any other proposed multi-modal transportation facilities.
2. Coordinate local road and transportation improvement projects with surrounding communities where appropriate.
3. Coordinate local bicycle and pedestrian studies and improvements with surrounding communities.

Goal: Coordinate zoning and land use with adjoining towns.

Policies

1. Evaluate rezoning requests for local and regional impacts.

Strategies

1. Refer rezoning proposals to adjoining towns that may be impacted by the proposal.
2. Share the Rockland Comprehensive Plan with other communities, read, and keep copies of surrounding towns' comprehensive plans to be aware of regional cooperation opportunities.

Goal: Work with surrounding communities and organizations in support of efforts to provide housing that is affordable to local workers.

Policies

1. Support Knox County Affordable Housing Coalitions and other regional affordable housing groups.
2. Support development of affordable housing development both locally and regionally.

Strategies

1. Provide staff for the coordination and development of affordable housing coalitions.
2. Provide copies of *Chapter 7: Housing* of this plan to surrounding towns to open discussions and fresh approaches.