

# TOWN OF THOMASTON



COMPREHENSIVE  
PLAN 2020

**AUGUST 21, 2024**

Annual Review of the Town of  
Thomaston 2020 Comprehensive Plan

**Kara George**  
Town Manager

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STRATEGIES & MANAGER NOTES:**

Agriculture ..... 2

Conservation ..... 3

Dragon ..... 7

Economic & Community Development ..... 8

Fiscal Capacity ..... 13

Future Land Use ..... 14

History ..... 16

Housing ..... 18

Natural Resources ..... 21

People ..... 23

Town Facilities & Services ..... 25

Trails, Greenways, & Pathways ..... 25

Transportation & Traffic ..... 31

Unattainable Strategies ..... 34

Water Resources ..... 37

**2022 TOWN MANAGER’S GOAL RECOMMENDATIONS .....40**

**2024 TOWN MANAGER’S GOAL RECOMMENDATIONS .....41**

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE POLICY DRAFT .....42**

**AGRICULTURE**

1. Permit land uses that support productive agriculture and forestry operations, such as farm stands, farmer’s markets, greenhouses, and firewood operations in appropriate land use districts.
2. Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing land use regulations pertaining to forest management practices.
3. Review the permitted and conditional uses in the R2 Rural Residential District to ensure that they are consistent with the residential and rural purpose of this land use district.
4. Allow “Small Scale Farming/Gardening” as Permitted Use in R3, R3A, TR3, R2 & R1.
5. Include agriculture, commercial forestry operations, and land conservation that supports them in local and regional economic development plans.
6. Consult with Soil and Water Conservation District staff when developing land use regulations pertaining to agricultural management practices.
7. Continue to support enrollment of productive farm and forest land and important open spaces in the current use taxation program.
8. Encourage conservation easements to preserve important agricultural, open space, and forest lands through local land trusts, paying particular attention to land in the R2 Rural Residential District bordering Route 1 at the western gateway to Town.

---

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

<u>ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21</u>	None
<u>ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22</u>	None
<u>ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24</u>	The Town does not deter productive agriculture and forestry operations. Currently there are two working farms located in Thomaston: Grace Pond Farm and Weskeag Farms.

**CONSERVATION**

1. Optimize the ecosystem value of Town-owned properties with native perennials, shrubs, and trees and expand and improve the urban tree canopy to be comparable to the Town's roads and sidewalk programs.
2. Encourage owners of existing development in the Highway Commercial district to plant trees and shrubs to improve the visual appearance of the Route 1 corridor.
3. Expand the mission and membership of the Town's Conservation Committee to oversee Town trails, parks, Town Forest, and urban trees; introduce native plantings to public spaces; initiate community gardens; assist homeowners as requested; etc.
4. Provide increased funding in the municipal budget and pursue grants for the care and replacement of street trees and trees on Town property.
5. Pursue becoming a "Tree City USA" community.
6. Offer information and assistance to homeowners wishing to optimize the habitat value of their yards with native plantings, shrubs, and trees.
7. Reduce the Town's carbon footprint. Optimize the ecosystem value of Town-owned properties. Expand and improve the urban tree canopy. Prepare for sea level rise and other climate change impacts.
8. Increase planting and maintenance in Town parks. Develop and implement a tree-planting plan for the urban canopy.
9. Pursue public/private partnerships to protect critical and important resources through mechanisms such as purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.
10. Aggressively investigate and support means for increasing the recycling rate and reducing consumer waste.
11. Work with landscape architects to make Town parks low-maintenance and user-friendly, with native plantings.
12. Develop water access for small boats at Mill River Park.
13. Encourage public stewardship.
14. Support the GRLT in its efforts to establish physical access to scenic views from Route 131 South.
15. Consider ways to implement reduced usage by Town residents of lawn chemicals (fertilizers and pesticide, herbicides).

16. Acquire the Kiln Site land from the State and seek Small Harbor Improvement Program grant funding for site design and development as a carry-in water access site with vehicle parking.
17. Partner with nonprofit organizations and private owners to place land with important natural features and/or views capes into permanent conservation status
18. Develop an inventory of scenic resources and allow the Planning Board to require a scenic impact analysis related to properties in this inventory.
19. Complete the paddle craft carry-in walkway ramp at Mill River Park.
20. Consider a future Oyster River water access site from Town-owned property, allowing paddle craft outings to and from harbor launch locations.
21. Open Space and Scenic Vistas. Work with conservation organizations to protect scenic vistas, open spaces, and recreational land.
22. Develop a program to encourage gifts for Town activities and recreation infrastructure, including bequests in citizens' wills.
23. Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners of allowing public recreational access on their properties.
24. Provide information, seeds, and assistance for creating community gardens and pollinator pathways.
25. Solid Waste Management. Support the collecting, transferring, and composting of food waste.
26. Aggressively investigate and support means for increasing the recycling rate and reducing consumer waste.
27. Expand a pleasing aesthetic throughout the Town: Increase plantings and maintenance at Town parks; Develop and implement an overall tree-planting plan based on age, condition and protection of existing stock.
28. Pursue public/private partnerships to protect important undeveloped lands along the rivers through such mechanisms as purchase of land or easements from willing sellers.

---

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

Thomaston was awarded \$7,975 as part of the Project Canopy Assistance Grant from the U.S.D.A. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program. The Project Canopy Grant is matched by 50% in labor time from the Town Public Works Department for the planting of the trees. The Town picked up 28 trees that included Princeton Elms, Sunfire Red Maples, and Dwarf Apple trees.

A recent redevelopment project of an existing structure on Route 1 was Green Alien Cannabis. The new business included the planting of trees and shrubberies as a buffer between the parking lot and Route 1. Any development projects along this corridor will require appropriate landscaping in accordance with the Town's ordinances.

The Town of Thomaston is part of the Owls Head, South Thomaston, Thomaston Co-op Transfer Station. In August of 2020, OHSTT implemented a subscription-based food waste drop-off program. Participants are allowed to drop off 5-gallon buckets of food waste and exchange for a clean bucket. Participants are eligible to receive half a yard of compost each year.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

The Conservation Commission membership has varied over the last few years. There is new membership to the Commission. The Garden Club is an active volunteer group in Thomaston promoting community education and planting throughout downtown every season.

As part of the Boundary Dispute agreement at Mill River Park, a plantings barrier of trees and shrubberies will be installed next spring to differentiate property lines.

The Town placed 62 acres of land located at the Town Forest into conservation through an easement agreement with Georges River Land Trust which was finalized on March 24, 2022. The Town also acquired the former Kiln Parcel on June 6, 2022, which preserves water access for our community. Lastly, the Town was gifted a parcel of land from the Estate of Maurice Sawyer, known as Sawyer Pond, which will be added to the Town Forest Trail for recreational uses.

The OHSTT Transfer Station provides composting services through Scrapdogs and recycles used clothing and shoes through Apparel Impact.

Architect Regina Leonard completed the Parks and Trails Masterplan in June 2022. The plan is all inclusive of the Town-owned parks, natural areas, and trails (Mayo Park, Mall Park, Mill River Park, Thomaston Green Park, Town Rec Area, Town Forest, Wadsworth Street Parcel, Oyster River Multi Use Trails, and the Thomaston Village Trail). The Town is applying for funding for a Sidewalk/Trails Extension project that would connect the local Thomaston schools with the public parks and forest trails.

The Town displays informational brochures from State and Federal agencies. Brochures and posters regarding brown tail moths are displayed. The Town plans to host a hazardous waste drop off day for residents in the summer of 2023.

ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

The Planning Board requires by ordinance that the appropriate landscaping is included in new development projects.

The Thomaston Green Park Ad-Hoc Committee are presenting recommendations for future park management and potential park uses for

the Thomaston Green Park. Future landscaping and planting designs will be addressed by a future landscape architect for the Thomaston Green Park.

The Town also partners with the Georges River Land Trust and Side Country Trails to maintain and expand town trails. (*See Trails, Greenways, & Pathways.*)

The Town annually provides a Tree Warden Budget for the planting and maintenance of trees throughout town. The Conservation Commission also has a budget that provides for plantings. The Town can apply again for the Project Canopy Assistance Grant in the future for the purchase of additional trees.

Future planning for sea level rise and climate change impacts are being researched as part of the future Working Waterfront Masterplan. (*See Water Resources.*)

OHSTT Transfer Station has an annual hazardous waste collection day. Apparel Impact has expanded locations for their used clothing dispensers in Thomaston. Now available at the public parking lot behind the Business Block and at the library parking lot.

This past June, voters approved the Select Board to negotiate a conservation easement with Georges River Land Trust for the park land at the Thomaston Green. The Ad Hoc Committee have been tasked to work with GRLT on the easement.

The Riverview Hayfields Preserve, located in South Thomaston on Route 131, is maintained by the GRLT. If Thomaston owned land abutting this preserve, I am sure we would collaborate with GRLT. I believe the property is privately owned.

The Kiln Park continues to be developed with the addition of fencing, signage, and picnic tables.

**DRAGON**

1. Promote the expanded/increased use of rail service for freight transport.
2. Develop a strategy for the Dragon Products TIF, which expires in 2022.
3. Maintain communication with Dragon Products regarding current and anticipated activities at the plant and the status of Dragon’s land use and operating permits.

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21      None

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22      The Dragon TIF extension was finalized and approved by the state this past year. The Economic Development Committee is recommending a list of major capital projects to the Select Board. This is ongoing throughout the next 10 years of the extension.

Residents and town officials alike participate in the Dragon Citizen Advisory Panel meetings which are conducted by Dragon Cement. The Town Manager, Pollution Control Superintendent, and Select Board Vice-Chair Peter Lammert are members. The Town works closely with the Environmental, Health and Safety Manager for Dragon. Additionally, all meeting notes of Dragon CAP are available on the Town's website for the public.

ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24      Dragon Cement is no longer using the rail service for freight. The Town really has no jurisdiction over the future uses of the railway as it is all regulated by the Federal Railroad Administration. Recently, the only involvement the Town had regarding the railway was to renew the quiet zones with USDOT for the railroad crossings in residential areas.

This past spring, the Town Manager reviewed the Dragon TIF program as part of the annual budget preparation with the Economic and Community Development Committee and the Select Board. The Town now develops a separate TIF budget for voter approval. Additionally, the budget process includes some long-term planning strategies.

Since the last annual review of the Comprehensive Plan, Dragon has transitioned through a business model change that transitions the company from manufacturing to distributing product.

The Town Manager continues communications with Dragon Cement executives every couple of months to discuss current operations. The Town Manager sends out press releases whenever there is an update from the company.



**ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

1. Develop a small craft landing site at the lime kiln site. Recruit business(es) offering instruction, rentals, tours, cruises. Add a kayak landing on the Oyster River. Investigate resurrecting the one-time swimming hole on the Mill River.
2. Growth Areas: Limit the Highway Commercial to the area along Route One east of the Dragon property.
3. Growth Areas: Allow light industrial activity as a conditional use in the Village Commercial District.
4. Growth Areas: Continue to allow Home Occupations in residential districts, enforcing existing standards to ensure that they do not detract from the neighborhoods in which they are located.
5. Ensure that at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments are in designated growth areas.
6. Assess whether and to what extent the Working Waterfront current-use taxation program can help forward the Town's desired policies and strategies.
7. Develop strategies for improving the appearance of the East End Commercial Tract.
8. Create a Community and Economic Development Corporation to purchase land, Development Rights, or Conservation Easements, for properties of importance to the Town.
9. Create a Community Events Committee for community-building events to foster town spirit and utilize Town parks and venues.
10. Take steps to attract additional retail and professional services to Town, with an emphasis on providing local services for senior citizens.
11. Create and manage community-building events.
12. Regularly survey the needs of seniors, and promote Town, Town Library, and local nonprofit offerings in a community calendar on the Town website.
13. Promote and market Thomaston as an attractive, desirable, affordable town for all people to live in.
14. Pursue commercial and industrial development in the East End Economic Tract.
15. Pursue all available means to alleviate the municipal tax rate, including compatible development, advocacy for greater revenue-sharing from the State, and intermunicipal cost-sharing of services.
16. Protect and steward the Town's working waterfront and marine jobs, including shellfishery and boatbuilding and repair.

17. Fund an Economic and Community Development Coordinator position to guide and assist the Economic and Community Development Committee.
18. Recruit and support appropriate retail and service businesses in the Village Commercial District, with special emphasis on those that complement one another.
19. Promote the Town with websites and marketing outreach and with community events.
20. Plan how each Town-owned and Town-connected property can best contribute to the Town's aspirations and update these plans annually.
21. Establish a municipal revolving fund for low-interest loans to downtown businesses, funded in part by impact fees for East End development projects.
22. Consider rebranding the Industrial District as the Thomaston Enterprise Zone.
23. Establish incentives to attract retailers to street-level downtown venues and professional services to appropriate nearby spaces. Consider increased incentives for complementary and Maine-based businesses.
24. Optimize the downtown with placemaking strategies and best practices that have proven beneficial in small towns across America.
25. Help downtown businesses promote themselves and expand.
26. Create an economic and community development function in Town government to promote Thomaston's goals and to liase with individuals and companies interested in Thomaston.
27. Town governance. Develop and maintain a community calendar.
28. Increase access to the fiber-optic network that runs along Main Street.

---

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

The Town staff maintains a community calendar on the Town website. Community events are also included on Facebook and in the Town newsletter.

Over the last year or more the Town and volunteers have made efforts towards placemaking strategies. Murals were painted by Nancy Baker behind the Business Block. The Town completed the Streetscape project which revitalized the parking areas behind the Business Block. Thomaston Historical Society is working on a downtown walking tour of historic properties in Town. THS also were instrumental on the shipbuilder's plaque installed at the Public Landing.

A community calendar is maintained on the Town website and a public bulletin board.

The Town has partnered with Midcoast Internet Coalition to promote broadband and connectivity in our community.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

The Land use Ordinance includes design/landscaping standards for development on the east end of Thomaston.

The Town contracted with Kendray Rodriguez to facilitate community and business activities downtown. Watts Hall Arts Group contracted with Kendray to facilitate events at Watts Hall. The Recreation Department continues to administer activities for all ages. Events in town this last year: Tree Lighting, Watts Hall Community Players events, Senior Luncheons, Senior Trips, Youth Basketball, Senior Exercise, Bottle Drives, Annual Report Cover Contest, Trunk of Treat, Karate classes, Easter Egg Hunt, T-Shirt Design Contest, 4th of July, Fill the Boot Fundraiser, Library Community activities, Adult Coed Kickball, Zerbini Family Circus, Youth Soccer Camp, Music Behind the Block, Thomaston Green Workshops, Thomaston Garden Club activities, Downtown Christmas Festival, Youth Basketball, Adult Coed Pickup Basketball, Pumpkin Decorating Contest, Youth Soccer Season, Movies on the Baseball Field, Youth T-Ball - to name a few!

Development over the last year on the east end includes Plants Unlimited, Siren Song Tattoo LLC, and Sundry Acres-Storage Facilities.

Thomaston continues to be a member of the Maine Service Centers Coalition (MSCC), and the Town Manager is a member of the MSCC Executive Board. This group actively advocates for municipalities at the legislative level.

The dredging project is currently on hold as the Army Corp of Engineers waits on federal funding sources. However, Thomaston's harbor is still on the list of projects. In May of 2022, a large portion of the Upper Bay was upgraded from Conditionally Restricted to Conditionally Approved by the DMR, restoring shellfish harvesting areas.

The town continues to support various community-building events. Everything is promoted on the Town's website, Facebook page, newsletters, newspapers, public bulletins, emails, sandwich boards, etc.

The Town Manager plans to work with the Select Board on reestablishing a CDBG revolving fund to revitalize housing downtown. The Select Board is still considering best uses of ARPA funds which may also be used for this purpose with an established program. ARPA funds do not need to be allocated until December 31, 2024.

The Town has leased out all street level spaces in the Watts Block building to business tenants. Incentives included reduced rent for the first year to encourage business growth and stability. Two new businesses will be opening in early 2023-a clothing boutique and a nail salon/spa.

The Broadband Feasibility Study was completed in 2022. We continue to have Thomaston representation on the MIDC board. MIDC is actively seeking funding opportunities.

The Town has applied for Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) funds from Senator Collins office to support renovation projects at Watts Hall-a historic landmark in downtown Thomaston.

#### ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

The Kiln Park continues to be developed. A fence was installed, as well as a kiosk, and an ADA picnic table. A new historic sign was installed at Kiln Park and new signage replaced the old historic plaques at the Thomaston Green.

Most commercial and industrial development continues in the east end of Town. Currently, the Starbucks/Jersey Mikes, Novel Solar, and the Walmart building renovation projects are still in progress. Estimated opening for Summer 2025. Other newer businesses in the east end include Atlantic Farms (Cannabis), Honey's Fried Chicken Palace, and the Keys Ford dealership. Further, the Town pursued placing land in conservation in exchange for Dragon opening land on the east end for industrial development. However, the project was never accomplished.

The Town is in the early discussions of developing a tax increment financing program at the waterfront to promote and support economic development.

Instead of creating an additional community events committee, I recommend that the Recreation Committee continues to be strongly promoted and supported. This group of dedicated volunteers coordinate many community events, in addition to events planned by Kendray Rodriguez. Some of these events include the Spring Block Party, Fall Festival, Trunk or Treat, etc. Community-building events are nearly all the same as the last Comp Plan Review. Additions: Trunk or Treat, Spring Block Party, Battle of the Badges Softball Tournament, Senior Puffin Tour Cruise, Babysitting Services, Cribbage Socials, Pickleball, YMCA summer camp, dodgeball, Mad Science of Maine (children science programming), holiday food basket raffle, Recreation float in the Parade of Lights and 4th of July, Thomaston Fall Festival and haunted trail, Portland Seadogs Trip and many more.

Kendray Rodriguez is creating a "Visiting Thomaston" website that will be a resource for those visiting and/or living here.

The Town Manager is recommending that the town does not continue membership with the Maine Service Centers Coalition. After serving on the MSCC for the last 3 years, the group was not as active as hoped for. The Town Manager is now a member of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) which advocates for the municipalities. This past year, the LPC supported 100% reimbursement to the municipalities for the senior tax stabilization program successfully. The LPC is a strong voice for municipalities at the legislative level.

The Working Waterfront group is creating a masterplan that will address climate resiliency and sea level rise to ensure future use of the harbor. The Town received approval from the Army Corp for the dredging project. Lyman Morse looks to expand their business. (See *Water Resources*,)

The Town continues to have retail and service businesses downtown. All store fronts on Main Street are occupied. In the last couple of years, new businesses include Laurel's Dolce Vita Bakery, The Uproot Pie Company, Sweet Peace Holistic Health, Flaura Flowers and Wine.

The Town now offers Civic Plus Mass Notifications, which enables the Town to send out notifications via text, call, email, and social media within one platform, saving staff time. Citizens can sign up online.

Kendray Rodriguez developed a successful microgrant program for downtown businesses this past year. The Town plans to offer the program again this coming year, funded through TIF funds.

The project with the MIDC is at a standstill. There was little to no funding available for a municipal-based broadband utility. The Town has met with several private utility companies that have plans to expand in Thomaston. "Good things come to those that wait"- it is the Manager's recommendation that the Town does not invest in broadband or a private municipally owned utility. In the next couple of years, private companies are planning expansion.

**FISCAL CAPACITY**

1. Pursue capital- and expense-sharing opportunities with other communities and/or via outsourcing.
2. Periodically review the inventory and uses of Town properties to determine if sales or leases are appropriate.
3. Town governance: Include in the Town Annual Report the top strategies for reducing the municipal tax rate, and progress made over the previous year.
4. Supplement, then annually review and update, the Town’s Capital Investment Plan.

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

In the last couple of years, the Town has continued to work with our neighboring communities. Examples of joint initiatives are the LED Streetlight project with Camden, Rockport, Rockland, Thomaston, Union, and Warren; sand/salt bids with Knox County; and the Midcoast Internet Coalition broadband feasibility study.

This past year, the town lease agreement language was updated. All leases have been evaluated for the Academy Building and the Watts Block Building. Currently, all spaces are rented out.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

This past fall 2022, the Select Board conducted the annual review of the Watts Block building per the original recommendation made by the SMFC.

ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

Thomaston continues collaboration with neighboring communities. Our Ambulance Department is using the spare ambulance from the City of Rockland in exchange for no billing from Thomaston for mutual aid. Sharing capital equipment is the future.

All Watts Block spaces are rented to tenants. The hall is being operated by the non-profit Watts Hall Community Arts group. The Academy Building is fully rented except for one room. The Town should promote further uses of the Academy Gym.

A Capital replacement plan was included in FY25's budget proposal and will continue to be reviewed every year.

**FUTURE LAND USE**

1. Re-examine the Land Use and Development Ordinance and revise if needed to accommodate appropriate and desired development, consistent with the Town's history, character, and goals.
2. Maintain up-to-date maps depicting current land uses. Integrate with maps depicting municipal infrastructure and tie to property cards. Computerize building permit information
3. Protection of Montpelier and neighboring residential areas is vitally important to the Town. It is critical that nearby commercial and industrial land uses not encroach on this area.
4. Growth Areas: Properties in the SC District that have deep water access should continue to be dedicated to marine commercial activities. Other properties in this District could, in the future, be considered for commercial activities that are not marine related.
5. Growth Areas: Maintain the current height limit in the SC District and review the LUO to assure the protection of view corridors.
6. Rural Areas: To reaffirm the importance of preserving the western entrance to Town along Route 1, issues of scale, character, dimensional requirements, buffering, etc. must be thoroughly addressed in the LUO and the development approval process
7. Growth Areas: Allow "Conversion of Existing Residential" as a Conditional Use in R3.
8. Strengthen the Statement of Purpose for each LUO zoning district to solidify the intent of rural vs growth areas.
9. Modify Section 704.1.5.c.1 of the Thomaston Land Use Ordinance to clarify and strengthen this intent of Conditional Uses
10. Study the operation and impact of Short-Term Rentals in Thomaston and take appropriate action
11. Make mineral exploration a conditional use in the Town's Rural, Industrial and Highway Commercial Districts but not an allowed use in the residential districts of R3, R3A & TR3.
12. Rural Areas: Review Conditional Uses in the R1 and R2 districts to strengthen adherence their purpose and modify as needed.
13. Growth Areas: Move the property along Rt 1 at the west end of Town that presently is in SC and does not have water frontage to the R2 District.
14. Review the LUO pertaining to gravel pits and quarries and amend as necessary to ensure that impacts are adequately addressed

- 15. Growth Areas: Require developers to provide multi-family developments with adequate storage areas, landscaping and shared green space
- 16. Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.
- 17. Rural Areas: Examine the Land Use Ordinance for ways to strengthen the protection of rural areas.
- 18. Growth Areas: Consider impact fees to contribute toward the cost of any infrastructure improvements required to accommodate additional growth and/or development.
- 19. Growth Areas: Modify the LUO to permit “Public Open-Space Recreational Use” in R3 to allow for parks and recreational activities

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

The Town purchased code enforcement software through TRIO, which will be implemented with the new CEO this coming year. The software is designed to handle all aspects of tracking and printing forms and permits. It is convenient for inputting and maintaining permits, violations, and licenses. The CEO will be able to track violations and activity of property owners, manage lists of contractors and inspectors, record and report on abutters, map/lot and book/page changes, links to the real estate module for easy updating and associating.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

None.

ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

This is work in progress due to transition of employees. The Assessing and Code Office have implemented the software, ReTool, to track incoming permits and property valuations. The office also uses GIS Mapping and TRIO. This year's tax commitment will be processed entirely through TRIO software, as all property valuations are entered into the system. The program continues to be built out so that in the future all property cards, permits, etc. will be housed digitally for residents to access online.



**HISTORY**

1. Encourage individuals and developers to work with Town officials and historical organizations to protect and preserve the Town's architectural integrity.
2. Appoint an advisory group to work with the Planning Board to create design guidelines for a historic overlay district and to act in an advisory role on alterations, demolitions, and new construction within the Historic District.
3. Consider a preservation ordinance that could earn Certified Local Government status to create homeowner eligibility for grant assistance on preservation projects.
4. Create an overlay for the Town's Historic District (as designated on the National Register) where guidelines for preserving the character and style of historic structures will pertain.
5. Update the Town Architectural Survey. Identify historic buildings and sites not previously listed, some of which might qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
6. Consider other eligible areas of Town for potential listing in the National Register.
7. Incorporate maps of the revised federally recognized Historic District and known historic archaeological sites, along with pertinent information from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, in the Town's Land Use and Development Ordinance.
8. Extend historical signage to the site of the former Burgess O'Brien Kilns, the historic Mill Creek area (site of the original Town center), and the proposed Village Trail extension.
9. Adopt or create a guidelines manual to encourage thoughtful rehabilitation of historic homes and compatible in-fill construction in historic neighborhoods.
10. Consider a survey and protective historic ordinance for the waterfront. Identify significant prehistoric and historic archaeological sites.
11. Architectural Preservation. Explore ways to address the issue of "Demolition by Neglect."
12. In the Federally recognized Historic District, require that renovations and new construction maintain the district's historic character and fabric.
13. Discourage individuals and developers from acquiring significant historic buildings with the intent of demolition for new construction.
14. Develop standards for modifications to homes within the Historic District that allow for aging in place while maintaining historic facades.

- 15. Promote and appeal to public/private partnerships to fund historic preservation.
- 16. Pursue means for allowing creative adaptations of historic homes in the Historic District while maintaining historic facades and locating parking for such uses away from front yards and shielded from view.
- 17. Growth Areas. Create a historic overlay district in the designated Historic District, identifying guidelines for preserving the character, style, scale, and proportions of historic structures.
- 18. Growth Areas. Create a historic advisory board to inform homeowners as to how to accomplish their construction goals while not severely compromising the historic aesthetic.
- 19. Explore ways to merge the need for affordable housing with the need to preserve the Town’s historic architecture.

---

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

None

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

The Historic Thomaston Resource Group was established by the Select Board on August 27, 2018. The group has not been active this past year.

The Town has applied for Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) funds from Senator Collins office to support renovation projects at Watts Hall-a historic landmark in downtown Thomaston.

ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

The Historic Thomaston Resource Group no longer exists. The Town Manager recommends that these strategies regarding historic properties be completed through collaboration with a historic consultant or preservation organization. It is outside the capacity of current town boards, committees, and staff.

**HOUSING**

1. Work with the owners of Section 8 apartments to continue affordable rents once HUD loans are repaid.
2. Redirect mobile home park developments from rural to designated growth districts and reconsider appropriate locations for individual mobile homes as affordable housing.
3. Review the Town's Land Use Ordinance to determine possible modifications to support accessory dwelling units and other approaches to affordable and senior housing.
4. Growth Areas. Review the LUO to determine other ways to support the development of smaller, more efficient, more affordable housing.
5. Review the Land Use Ordinance to consider how Inclusionary Zoning might be applied in a small town with little housing growth.
6. Require that multifamily developments provide adequate storage areas, landscaping, and shared green space.
7. Identify Federal and State housing assistance grants and programs designed to assist elderly and low-income homeowners.
8. Pursue development of housing on the Thomaston Green with an emphasis on energy efficiency and low maintenance.
9. Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the impact of short-term rentals on the housing market, and act as indicated.
10. Review the Town's Land Use Ordinance and modify if needed to support sustainable building products and practices.
11. Provide information to homeowners and contractors on green energy resources that are available through government and private programs.
12. Review the Town's existing ordinance governing clustered residential development to determine how it might be revised to encourage its use.
13. Rural Areas. Amend LUO to require subdivision proposals within the R-1 District to include a cluster design instead of, or in addition to, a traditional design for site plan review.
14. Develop ecofriendly housing on Thomaston Green and/or elsewhere in town for families and seniors.
15. Support affordable housing construction and rehabilitation with a TIF district, USDA 504 program, Maine Housing Authority Aging in Place Program, etc.
16. Investigate the feasibility of establishing a Community Land Trust to promote affordable housing.

17. Actively pursue the development of assisted living options.
18. Consider form/character-based coding within designated Zoning Districts.
19. Pursue the development of low- and middle-income, ecofriendly senior housing options with the goal of supporting aging in place.
20. Pursue the development of a range of assisted living options for townspeople of all income levels.
21. Growth Areas: Continue to allow a range of housing densities based on the established settlement pattern and provide enough affordable housing types.
22. Encourage the expansion of affordable housing.
23. Develop ways to encourage intergenerational housing and co-housing.
24. Explore ways to provide financial assistance to qualifying seniors for home repairs and maintenance.
25. Work with neighboring communities to develop a regional coalition for affordable workforce housing.

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

A Community Land Trust was discussed at the Housing Workshop on November 22nd. There are several neighboring municipalities that are trying to establish a trust and are working to create a non-profit status. Thomaston continues to monitor this.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

The Town contracted with Midcoast Council of Governments to facilitate 3 public workshops regarding the Thomaston Green and next steps. The final report will be presented to the Select Board on December 19th.

Voters approved the George C Hall land swap project, which will enable the Town to partner with Maine Working Homes to provide workforce housing in Thomaston. The land has been surveyed and deeds are drawn up. Next steps include the transfer of land, completing an option agreement with Maine Working Homes, and Planning Board approval of the project.

Midcoast Council of Governments is reviewing regional housing needs as part of MCOG's strategic planning to assist all municipalities on a regional basis in the next couple of years.

ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

New Maine laws now allow mobile homes to be located wherever single-family dwellings are allowed.

In June 2023, the voters approved amendments to the Land Use Ordinance that included section 719.3 for Affordable Housing Developments.

The Assessing Department acts as a resource to direct residents to property tax relief programs through the State of Maine. Homeowners are directed to the Maine State Housing Authority for assistance as well. The Town administers General Assistance within state guidelines for those in need.

The Town closed on the land swap with George C Hall this past June/July 2024. New deeds have been filed. The Town is now in discussions with Habitat on developing affordable housing on the land. In the past year, the Town also investigated a potential subdivision at Stoneybrook; however, the costs of infrastructure made the project unfeasible, nor were there any interested engineers when an RFP was distributed.

The Town currently houses several assisted living/elderly housing options like Coastal Opportunities, Lucette, and Knox Hotel. It is unclear to me how we would attract more of these kinds of developments in Thomaston and where they could be located. Avesta Housing proposed a 55+ years old housing project for the Thomaston Green, which was voted down by the residents.

Growth areas will continue to adhere to state statutes regarding density and affordable housing.

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

1. Review the Town's existing ordinance governing clustered residential development to determine how it might be revised to encourage its use and enhance protection of critical and important natural resources.
2. For proposed developments with extensive impervious areas, explore options such as reduced or shared parking areas and the use of permeable pavement to minimize runoff to surface waters and wetland.
3. Provide information to landowners on the importance of minimizing use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers; properly disposing of waste products; and protecting water supply wells from contamination.
4. Provide information to landowners on threats posed by invasive plant species and encourage their removal and replacement over time with native plant species. Add an "environmental tips and resources" tab to the Town's website.
5. Require developers to determine whether critical natural resources may be on site and to take appropriate measures to protect those resources.
6. Work with developers to ensure that proposed development is of a scale and design that is compatible with surrounding uses and is located to minimize adverse impacts to the Town's natural, scenic, and aesthetic resources.
7. Ensure that the Town's land use ordinances are consistent with applicable State law regarding critical natural resources.
8. Inform commercial and recreational users of the St. George River of the significance of the mudflats for migrating shorebirds and the importance of minimizing disturbance.
9. Meet with neighboring communities to review land use ordinances and develop a regional approach to protection of important natural resources such as the St. George and Weskeag rivers.
10. Review proposed development in the Industrial and Highway Commercial Districts for potential adverse impacts to the Weskeag Creek Focus Area. Identify this focus area as a critical natural resource in the Future Land Use Plan.
11. Develop guidelines for the assessment of scenic impacts using concepts such as scale, contrast, and spatial dominance. Allow the Planning Board to request a scenic impact analysis as part of site plan review.

---

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

The Town displays informational brochures from State and Federal agencies. Brochures and posters regarding brown tail moths, invasive plants, etc. are displayed in-house and on the website.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

The Town plans to host a hazardous waste drop off day for residents in summer of 2023.

ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

The Town has successfully hosted an annual hazardous waste collection day through the OHSTT Transfer Station for the second year for our residents.

The Town continues to post informational material in the Town Office and the Conservation Commission's webpage. The Thomaston Garden Club is an active organization in town that hosts educational workshops and answers any citizen's gardening questions.

There are several private organizations that educate and provide resources to the public regarding bird migration, natural resources, and conservation like the Georges River Land Trust and the Midcoast Conservancy. Rather than taking this on as a Town, the effort should be focused on guiding the citizens to these outside organizations that are specialized in these matters.

**PEOPLE**

1. Monitor population migration trends, including the impact of climate change, and prepare accordingly.
2. Further investigate the reasons for Thomaston’s high poverty rate and develop a plan for addressing the identified issues.
3. Investigate and mitigate issues related to food insecurity for Town residents.
4. Become a member of the AARP “Age-Friendly Community Network.” Make changes to the LUO if necessary.
5. Develop and promote programs to welcome and support immigrant populations.
6. Monitor the extent to which the regionalization of our schools is a benefit to the town and its students and make recommendations to the Selectboard as appropriate.
7. Analyze the need for Pre-School education programs and how best to meet those needs through public, private, and community providers, with particular focus on RSU 13-sponsored Pre-K.
8. Develop and promote creative, affordable childcare solutions, which might pair senior citizens with the younger population.
9. Start a Friends of Thomaston Schools group to support RSU 13 initiatives while ensuring that Thomaston tax dollars are used as effectively as possible.

---

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21      The Town continues to support food programs for our community. The Municipal Building houses the Thomaston Interfaith Food Pantry. The Library hosts a successful 40 Days of Summer Program which provides breakfast and lunch to Thomaston's youth. Additionally, food programs were discussed in an ARPA Funds workshop with the Select Board. This is an ongoing topic.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22      The Town continues to work collaboratively with our Thomaston schools. Public Works has assisted the school with their garden programs. The Town is also working with both TGS and OMS on a Sidewalk Loop Project to expand Town Forest Trails to connect the schools with our Municipal Building and recreational areas.

ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24      The Working Waterfront group is creating a masterplan that will address climate resiliency and sea level rise to ensure future uses of the harbor.

In 2022, the median household income of Thomaston households was \$58,426. Thomaston households made slightly more than Greenville households (\$58,384) and Alton households (\$58,309).



However, 2.3% of Thomaston families live in poverty. In 2022, the median household income of Knox County households was \$68,904. Knox County households made slightly more than Androscoggin County households (\$64,500) and Hancock County households (\$64,149). However, 5.7% of Knox County families live in poverty. In 2022, the median household income of Maine households was \$68,251. Maine households made slightly more than York County households (\$79,743) and Sagadahoc County households (\$77,591). However, 6.4% of Maine families live in poverty. ([www.maine-demographics.com](http://www.maine-demographics.com).) The poverty rate in Thomaston is a very small percentage in comparison to the whole state of Maine and has overarching causes out of the Town's control like a diminished workforce and an extremely high housing market.

The Town continues to support the Interfaith Food Pantry and the 40 Days of Summer Program. The Garden Club provides a farmers stand at the library. The Town Office houses a collection box for food and supply donations. We also assist those in need through general assistance.

The Town has assisted a couple of individuals through the general assistance program that were transitioning citizenship. The Town does not have the staffing capacity to build immigration programming. The state does offer support and programming for new citizens. This is a major challenge that other areas like Southern Maine are facing now. It is only a matter of time before Thomaston will need to have a plan as well.

There are no "Friends of Thomaston Schools" group, but Thomaston has been fortunate to have great representation on the RSU 13 School Board. The Town has been very supportive to RSU 13 and in the last 2 years rented space out in the Municipal Building to the Oceanside Middle School. John Fancy and I attended an RSU 13 School Board meeting to obtain support for the School Loop sidewalk project. I recommend that Thomaston's RSU 13 School Board members come to our Select Board meetings on a quarterly basis to give updates to the Town. The School Board Members would be the best communication source for us.

The Town contracted with the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children in 2022-2023 to investigate having daycare programming in Thomaston. The Town also talked with the YMCA about creating a daycare program, which was not economically feasible at this time. Currently, there is a regional effort being explored for daycare for 0-4-year-olds.

This past year, the Town discussed the urgent needs for pre-K in Thomaston. RSU 13 listened, and a new pre-K program will be launched this September at the Thomaston Grammar School.

**TOWN PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES**

1. Relocate power lines and cables underground whenever possible.
2. Pursue grant money for improving the energy efficiency of private residences and public buildings in Town.
3. Develop a municipal renewable energy program, such as a solar field, to service the Town.
4. Reduce the Town's carbon footprint, moving toward 100% reliance on renewable resources.
5. Explore alternatives to ambulance responses for non-emergency calls. Study the impacts of joining with neighboring towns to provide fire and EMS services.
6. Town governance: Pursue less costly alternatives for facilities and services where feasible.
7. Town governance: Keep abreast of cutting-edge technologies and implement as appropriate.
8. Town governance. Support the effective and efficient operation of Town government with public transparency, published job descriptions, and annual goals.
9. Town governance. Implement a comprehensive annual performance review process for municipal employees.
10. Town governance. Conduct a comprehensive review of municipal functions, positions, and related job descriptions and modify as indicated. Include potential outsourcing of payroll management from municipal department heads to a payroll-management service.
11. Town governance. Conduct an annual review of progress made on Comprehensive Plan goals and strategies to identify actions for the coming year.
12. Hire a consultant in town planning to help design a comprehensive land use strategy to maximize the appeal of the Town.
13. Develop, implement, and annually review a long-range plan for maintaining and improving municipal facilities.
14. Encourage Pollution Control and Maine Water Company to coordinate planned service extensions with the Future Land Use Plan.
15. Provide the code enforcement officer with the tools, training, and support necessary to enforce land use regulations
16. Establish the Comprehensive Plan Committee as a standing committee responsible for fostering progress toward the Plan's goals and assuring that LUO is aligned with the new Plan.

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

Over the past year and a half, the Town has invested in the Solar Array which will fund nearly 80% of all Town electricity costs. The Town purchased streetlights from CMP and converted them to LED Street lights. An electric vehicle charging station was installed behind the Business Block for the public. The Police Department replaced a gas cruiser with an electric vehicle.

Knox County is currently looking at conducting a study for regional services of Fire/EMS. Our EMS Chief currently has three ambulance services working collaboratively that includes Thomaston, South Thomaston, and St. George. With this trifecta, Thomaston fills nearly all shifts and has a sharp decline in mutual aid. Other potential regionalization tools are being researched.

The Town has made great strides in being transparent to the public. The Town now uses TownHall Streams to stream all public board and committee meetings. Other resources include: Penbay Pilot, Villagesoup, Free Press, Newsletter, Email, Facebook, Website, posters around downtown, sandwich boards, public information sessions.

The Municipal Facilities group is ad hoc. They were tasked with the municipal building renovation and future uses for the Watts Block building. A recommendation for future uses was completed for Watts Block last year. There is not another directive currently. The Town started planning for future building maintenance for Watts Block by establishing a reserve account. The Town will be putting funds aside over the next few years in preparation for roof replacements.

The Town supports all the training needs of the CEO position. Many state certifications are required for this position. Additionally, that certification must be maintained. The CEO is a member of the Maine Building Officials and Inspectors Association. The new software will be a valuable tool to make processes more efficient.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee is still an active group but has recently had a decline in membership. The Comp Plan Committee continues to work with the Select Board jointly.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

The Town is currently exploring with a Community Solar Cooperative in a floating solar panel system in the lagoons at the Pollution Control Department. It is in the early conversation stages.

In 2022, the Town purchased a second EV Police Cruiser. The Town is seeking Efficiency Maine funding to convert more building lights over to LEDs.

In 2022, the Town is negotiating leases with US Cellular and T-mobile, which will bring in rent revenue to Thomaston. Additionally, it provides more connectivity to our citizens. The Town recently switched auditors, which will

bring a wealth of knowledge on best practices for using our new TRIO software. This coming year, the CEO and Assessor will be adding their services to the TRIO software.

The Select Board discussed how an electronic board on Route 1 can be allowed for town events. It currently is not allowed by ordinance. The Town also holds additional public hearings, which is not required by law, in preparation of town meetings to address any concerns or questions the public may have.

The Town Manager administers annual performance reviews. Additionally, we have monthly meetings with all Department Heads.

The Manager, Select Board, and Department Heads evaluate job functions on a continuing basis. As job openings arise, job descriptions are reviewed and updated. The Town strives to fill all positions with qualified applicants.

The Town Manager works collaboratively with the Comprehensive Plan Committee in preparation for the annual review of the goals. This is the 2nd annual review since the 2020 Comprehensive Plan was adopted.

#### ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

The Town has installed public EV chargers and a solar array that supports all town buildings. Watts Hall renovation project will include an efficient HVAC system and other needed upgrades. The Town has invested in heat pumps over the last several years in the Academy and Municipal Building.

A study was conducted by Neil Courtney as part of the Fire/EMS Building Feasibility study. Neil is also updating the report for Knox County. The Town has a close working relationship with Rockland and has borrowed their spare ambulance when needed. In Neil's summation of the study, he finds it highly unlikely that the local communities are ready to regionalize services.

The Town Manager implemented regular feedback sessions with employees throughout the year. An annual performance review is not as effective.

The Finance Director and Town Manager met with 3 different local banks to discuss outsourcing payroll. It was not economically feasible for the Town to do so. Because we are a municipal government, the payroll is more complicated than a private company. We have 2 unions, comp time, stipend positions, differential pay, etc., for example. In every bank we spoke to, it would require the town to prepare the data entry, which defeats the purpose of contracting it out. We now have a part-time position to process payroll and warrants. Job descriptions are continually updated annually and as a job opening arises.

This is the 3rd annual review of the Comprehensive Plan. The Select Board will discuss a working policy for a Comprehensive Plan Committee and steps to reconvene an active membership. The next Comprehensive Plan update is due in 2030.

Now that a full-time building technician is in place, the town will be assessing the condition of the buildings and needed projects going forward. The Town strives to keep municipal reserves for future planning of major capital expenses like roof replacements, etc. A future maintenance plan is needed.

**TRAILS, GREENWAYS, & PATHWAYS**

1. Continue efforts to develop an interconnected greenway linking Town parks and public spaces with the goals of protecting natural resources, maintaining wildlife corridors, creating pollinator pathways, and increasing visual and physical access to the shore.
2. Upgrade the Water Street portion of the Thomaston Village Trail to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.
3. Extend the Village Trail from Mill River Park to Route 131 South via a footbridge and pathway adjacent to pedestrian-hostile Route 1.
4. Improve walkways and bike lanes.
5. Seek private and/or grant funding to improve the walkways/bike lanes on Water Street as part of the Village Trail system.
6. “Green” the community via recycling; hiking/biking trails; developing greenbelt and pollinator pathways; etc.
7. Continue to improve the Town's walkability and bicycle-friendliness.
8. Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain the Town’s network of trails.
9. Continue to place high priority on our Town’s walkability and bicycle-friendliness, paying particular attention to safe sidewalks and crosswalks.
10. Continue to expand and improve walking and bike trails.
11. Continue to manage the Town Forest in accordance with the objectives and practices set forth in the Town Forest and Town Trails Program.

---

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

None.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

Architect Regina Leonard completed the Parks and Trails Masterplan in June 2022. The plan is all inclusive of the Town-owned parks, natural areas, and trails (Mayo Park, Mall Park, Mill River Park, Thomaston Green Park, Town Rec Area, Town Forest, Wadsworth Street Parcel, Oyster River Multi Use Trails, and the Thomaston Village Trail). The Town is applying for funding for a Sidewalk/Trails Extension project that would connect the local Thomaston schools with the public parks and forest trails.

The Town of Thomaston has completed the Community Resilience Partnership’s Community Resilience Self-Assessment and List of

Community Actions and held a community workshop on 9/14/2022. This Partnership increases the Town's access to funding opportunities and increases the amount of funding by up to 95%. The Town is considering potential grant funding for Knox and Water Streets. The project will provide safer streets for both vehicle operators and pedestrians, better handling of storm water, and the long-term benefit is to keep the streets usable during high tides and storm events. The Partnership also provides support to Thomaston for other climate resilience projects.

In January of 2022, MDOT approved the Mill River Multi-Use Pathway project. MDOT has programmed \$72,000 in federal transportation funding for preliminary design, survey/mapping, and initial right-of-way work. This requires a match of \$18,000. Schedule is projected for design work in 2022-2023 and construction in 2024-2025. Steps completed: funding in place, MDOT selected engineering firm Kleinschmidt Associates, and the field survey.

The Town continues to support the Town Forest and Trails collaboratively with Georges River Land Trust and SideCountry Trails to expand and maintain trails. The Town is applying for funding for a Sidewalk/Trails Extension project that would connect the local Thomaston schools with the public parks and forest trails.

The Town is on a list with MDOT for an RRFB (Rapid Repeating Flashing Beacon) for a crosswalk in town. The Town is also working on improvements for Knox Street, Water Street, and the Sidewalk/Trail Loop project.

#### ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

The Town is recipient of the MDOT grant for federal funds of \$640,733 and a local match of \$160,183 for the School Loop project. This adds sidewalks to Watts Lane and Valley Street leading up to the local schools. The sidewalks will be connected to the existing trail system.

As part of the Knox Street, Water Street and Waterfront masterplan work, the pathways/sidewalks will also be interconnected between parks and trails. The Town will be awarded \$50,000 from the Community Action Grant towards planning costs.

The Mill River Multi-Use Pathway project to extend the trail system/sidewalks from Fish Street to the Knox Museum will connect Thomaston's trail system to Rockland's.

The Thomaston Public Works installed new sidewalks this past spring behind the Thomaston Main St Mall. If funding is in place, Knox Street will also have new sidewalks installed.

**TRANSPORTATION & TRAFFIC**

1. Anticipate and address potential parking issues in the Village Commercial and Public Landing lots.
2. Actively pursue an option to access the Post Office from Beechwood Street.
3. Continue to pursue creative regional approaches to public transportation.
4. Increase alternative transportation opportunities for Town residents.
5. Work with Waldo County Community Action Partners (CAP) to add Thomaston's Village Commercial to their existing route for the DASH bus.
6. Investigate the feasibility of a Town contract with a private transportation service for discounted rates for eligible residents (elderly, low-income, disabled, and youth).
7. Work with surrounding communities to create regional public transportation options.
8. Develop a Traffic Management Plan informed by future growth goals, sustainability, and quality of life.
9. Implement and reassess annually a long-range plan for street improvements, giving immediate priority to rebuilding Knox Street.
10. Provide consistent, attractive, universally recognized signage of parking options to travelers on US Route 1 and Beechwood Street.
11. Make better use of existing regional programs by promoting public transportation to nearby athletic and cultural activities.
12. Aggressively enforce speed and noise regulations.
13. Install impactful speed- and noise-awareness signs on Main Street.
14. Establish distinctive downtown "Parking" signs that direct residents and visitors to parking areas north and south of Route 1.
15. Enforce Town ordinances governing roads, driveways, and street design standards. Provide periodic training for public works personnel.
16. Publish and promote a directory of public and private transportation options.
17. Ban the use of engine brakes in Town.



**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

The Public Works Department is trained annually in safety and traffic protocols through Maine Municipal. The Public Works Director is also the Road Commissioner. Employees attend MDOT’s Snow and Ice Control on Maine’s Local Roads.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

Over the last year, the Town met with the building manager of the Knox Hotel Apartments to figure out parking issues between the bank, Watts Block, and the tenants of the apartments. The Town implemented parking permits for the Business Block apartment tenants to reduce long-term parking in front of the downtown business customer parking.

In 2022, voters approved a total of \$27,000 from Dragon TIF funds to pay for a preliminary engineering study of Knox Street. The Town of Thomaston has completed the Community Resilience Partnership’s Community Resilience Self-Assessment and List of Community Actions and held a community workshop on 9/14/2022. This Partnership increases the Town’s access to funding opportunities and increases the amount of funding by up to 95%. The Town is considering potential grant funding for Knox and Water Streets. The project will provide safer streets for both vehicle operators and pedestrians, better handling of storm water, and the long-term benefit is to keep the street usable during high tides and storm events. The Partnership also provides support to Thomaston for other climate resilience projects.

Kendray Rodriguez is working with downtown merchants regarding signage. Additional parking signage has been requested for Route 1 when entering the downtown area.

In September 2022, the Town held a special town meeting to appropriate additional funds for the Police Department to implement a new 24/7 coverage in Thomaston. The Town is currently in the hiring process for 3 additional patrol officers, with the hope that the new rotating schedule will be in place the week of December 12th or thereafter. With a fully staffed Police Department, regulation of speed and noise will be more closely monitored. The Police Department displays 3 different electronic speed signs throughout town that are relocated on occasion.

ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

In the past year, Waldo CAP made a presentation about their services at a Select Board meeting. Select Board Member Sandy Moore is investigating the DASH bus coming to Thomaston.

The Select Board discussed the St. George Neighbor to Neighbor organization that provides free rides to their residents. A program was never implemented in Thomaston.

The Town is working with Adi Philson from Midcoast Council of Governments. Adi gave a presentation in July 2024. The Select Board is now

working on forming a Traffic Calming Steering Committee. The Town will be seeking RFP's for an engineering traffic calming study.

The Knox Street rebuild project is in progress. The Town is now considering splitting the project into 2 phases because we did not get the Northern Borders Regional Commission grant. Public Works Director Brandon Allen and Planner John Fancy built a long-term sidewalk improvement study for the Town.

In June 2024, the voters approved a new noise ordinance. The Town is also reviewing traffic calming devices and implementing a Steering Committee to draft a policy. Electronic speed radar signs are effective where they are placed, but it is not feasible to place one on every street.

**UNATTAINABLE STRATEGIES**

1. Architectural Preservation. Develop incentives and reduce disincentives for restoring and maintaining homes.
2. Develop a municipal and/or private revolving fund for the purchase, restoration, and resale of important abandoned buildings.
3. Provide incentives and reduce disincentives for the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic properties.
4. Consider a tax formula that encourages homeowner improvements.
5. Pursue additional State resources, and coordinate with RSU 13 towns to advocate for increased State aid for education, adding a household-income factor to the State's school funding formula.
6. Reduce the impact of heavy truck traffic through town via actions set forth in other chapters.
7. If the Town decides to work toward an alternative east-west road north of Route 1, pursue land purchase options along the road's probable route.
8. Grow Thomaston's population, in part by extending water and sewer services into the TR3 Residential Growth District and reducing lot sizes for sewerred housing units to encourage affordable housing.
9. Encourage high-density housing in the TR3 District with smaller lot sizes for sewerred lots and extend sewer and water lines into the TR3 District.
10. Encourage owners of foreclosed properties to return these properties to the housing market as quickly as possible.
11. Commission a feasibility study to extend Town water and sewer services into the TR3 District, perhaps as part of a multidimensional planning/feasibility study for an alternate route around the town center.
12. Growth Areas. In the TR3 District, encourage high-density more affordable housing while maintaining a traditional street grid pattern.
13. Growth Areas. Extend Town water and sewer into the TR3 District to allow for an expansion of more affordable housing options.
14. Commission a professional planning study to assess the feasibility and desirability of a new east-west road skirting the northern village perimeter as part of a broader multidimensional plan of the village area, including potential routes, access points, costs, funding mechanisms, and impacts.

- 15. Growth Areas. Allow Mobile/Manufactured homes as a conditional use in TR3 and R1. Allow manufactured/mobile home parks as a conditional use in TR3 and increase the size of this District
- 16. Growth Areas. Review the standards for Mobile/Manufactured Home Parks to assure compatibility with the area in which they are to be placed.
- 17. Seek creative use of the Town Beach area, perhaps as a current-free training site for paddle craft beginners and as a launching site for model small craft.
- 18. Town governance. Create term limits for appointed boards and committees to promote citizen involvement in municipal government.
- 19. Stabilize the former lime kiln at the base of Wadsworth Street.

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

The Town contracted with Dirigo Engineering for a preliminary feasibility study for the proposed North Road, which has been completed. A public information meeting was held. Next steps are undetermined currently.

This fall the Town expanded sewer infrastructure to a few properties on Beechwood Street to mitigate sewer problems. Additionally, the Town's Sewer Ordinance encourages sewer infrastructure expansion through incentives for property owners.

Term limits are not allowed by statute. Term limits can only be implemented by the municipal charter. Thomaston is not a charter municipality.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

The new Code Enforcement Officer is currently reviewing and compiling a list of abandoned buildings in Thomaston.

The Economic Development Committee has recommended major capital projects to the Select Board in December 2022. One of the recommendations includes providing infrastructure in the area north of the village (TR3 Zone) that has been designated for expansion of the village.

ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

It is unclear to me what incentives can be provided and what the disincentives are to those that are maintaining or renovating historic homes. All properties regardless of the year they were built are to be assessed in a fair and equitable manner across the board. The Town cannot statutorily change that. The property owner could work with other historic preservation organizations for guidance on successfully preserving and restoring their historic properties.

The school funding tax formula is mandated by the State of Maine. This is out of the jurisdiction of the Town. Citizens should reach out to State Legislative leadership to advance change.

A preliminary feasibility study with a design for a North Road that would bypass Route 1 traffic was created by Dirigo Engineering. The Town held several meetings and one public workshop to discuss the potential project, and it was met with great citizen opposition, despite the strategies inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan. The project will not proceed.

The Town investigated the TR3 District to determine whether an affordable project with Habitat could be created at this location. Unfortunately, the engineering studies proved that there was too much wetland to make the project feasible.

The foreclosure process is hardly quick. New tax foreclosure laws are effective August 9, 2024, that outlines new procedures for municipalities to return foreclosed properties to the housing market. It is already too late to encourage the foreclosed property owner to return the property to the market. If it's foreclosed, it means either the town owns it or the bank/mortgage company. Many of these larger bank corporations are nearly impossible to contact.

There are more and more mandates and new Maine laws being implemented that affect affordable housing and land use. Now mobile homes are allowed by statute to be located wherever single-family dwellings are allowed.

One strategy was to encourage use of the town beach. Is there any beach left? The reason we are doing a Working Waterfront Masterplan is to address rising sea levels.

A fence was installed around the existing kiln structure. To completely stabilize the structure or rehabilitate it is cost prohibitive.

**WATER RESOURCES**

1. Growth Areas. Require proposed projects in the Industrial and Highway Commercial Districts to assess the potential for adverse impacts on Marsh Brook and the Weskeag Creek Focus Area.
2. Investigate the feasibility of creating stormwater-stilling wetland areas along drainage swales, allowing the absorption of nutrients and toxins prior to reaching area rivers.
3. Protect minor watercourses and drainage swales from development to ensure that they continue to function as part of the Town's stormwater management system.
4. Periodically review and update the Town's Land Use and Development Ordinance to incorporate stormwater performance standards consistent with Maine's Stormwater Management Law and Stormwater regulations.
5. Continue work to restore shellfish harvests, including lobbying DMR to allow GRRSMO to manage the Upper Bay as a source of softshell clam broodstock to seed the rest of the estuary.
6. Ensure water quality testing is underway and performed on a regular and timely basis at critical sampling locations.
7. Encourage half-tide and drying moorings for watercraft that can endure daily grounding without damage.
8. Maintain the waterside and landside elements of the Public Landing, which is the principal point of public access to the entire St. George Estuary.
9. Seek an equitable sharing of harbor centerline mooring accommodations among commercial, recreational, and transient maritime interests.
10. Revitalize the Comprehensive Harbor Management planning activity.
11. Lobby the US Army Corps of Engineers for future maintenance dredging of the Federal approach channel to Thomaston Harbor and for continued monitoring of channel siltation.
12. Prepare for sea level rise and other climate change impacts.
13. Work with the Tidelands Coalition, the Maine Coastal Observing Alliance, and other groups to develop a Georges River Watershed Management Plan in which upstream communities participate.
14. Continue to work collaboratively with area towns, State agencies, and nonprofit organizations to locate and eliminate sources of non-point source pollution to the St. George River. This will help mitigate aging septic and leach fields.

15. Ensure that developments maintain stormwater management structures in good working order and maintain required vegetative buffers.
16. Continue efforts to eliminate the Town’s seasonal discharge of treated wastewater to the St. George River. Reduce untreated stormwater runoff to the St. George River by means of rain gardens and retention ponds around swales.
17. Work with DEP, DMR, landowners, neighboring towns, and nonprofits to monitor the water quality of the St. George River and eliminate non-point source pollution. Consider developing a watershed management plan.

**TOWN MANAGER NOTES:**

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/13/21

Water sampling is conducted on a regular basis of key areas by the Pollution Control Department and the Georges River Shellfish Committee.

Landside improvements to the Public Landing included the Shipbuilders Plaque donated by the Historical Society through the Maine 200 Grant. Public Works cleared tree limbs and built the framing for the plaque. Additionally, picnic tables were donated from Lowes.

Pollution Control Superintendent has collaboratively been working with the Town of South Thomaston Select Board and the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization to complete water testing of the St. George River in efforts to trace pollution points.

The Town received a \$125,000 MDOT grant towards the replacement of the Beechwood Street culvert with a new bridge. In last year's budget, the Town started a culvert reserve account to plan for future work. Further, there are federal transportation funds available that the Town needs to consider applying for.

ANNUAL REVIEW 12/12/22

In May of 2022, a large portion of the Upper Bay was upgraded from Conditionally Restricted to Conditionally Approved by the DMR, restoring shellfish harvesting areas.

The harbor dredging project is currently on hold as the Army Corp of Engineers waits on federal funding sources. However, Thomaston's harbor is still on the list of projects.

In early 2023, the Town will be updating our projects list that is included in the Knox County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

ANNUAL REVIEW 8/21/24

The Working Waterfront group are working with Landmark Engineers and Architect Landscape Regina Leonard to create a future masterplan encompassing the protection and climate resiliency of the public landing and the harbor area. The major storms from last year caused major damage to our harbor and our local waterfront businesses. Lyman Morse needs to rebuild/replace their seawall which is a multi-million-dollar project.

The Army Corp of Engineers completed material sampling of the harbor. They have approved the full dredge depth of 16 feet. The Town was informed in March 2024 that \$175,000 has been earmarked from Senator Susan Collin's CDS funds for the dredging project.

The Town Manager sent Knox County all hazard mitigation documentation for Thomaston including all related information from the Working Waterfront Masterplan group. The Knox County Hazard Mitigation plan expires on August 20th. The Plan is required for any municipalities to apply for FEMA funding. The Working Waterfront is addressing climate resiliency and sea level rise future planning.

I am not sure if the Tidelands Coalition is still in existence. However, it makes sense if the Midcoast Conservancy, GRLT, local Conservation Commissions, and other entities join forces to implement a Watershed Management Plan.

Water testing monitoring is ongoing. The Environmental Department has completed water testing at Byron's Brook in June 2024 and will be reviewing with the Select Board in August. The Town is also working with property owners on Old County Road by seeking funding sources so these properties can be added to the public wastewater system. This will help to mitigate aging septic and leach field infrastructure on these private properties.



**2022 Comprehensive Plan Annual Review  
Town Manager’s Goal Recommendations**

Below is a list of Comprehensive Plan goals for 2022 that I recommended the Town continues to work on. **How did we do?**

- IN PROGRESS** Solutions to housing shortages for affordable homes and workforce homes. Continue negotiating option agreements with George C Hall and Maine Working homes in pursuit of workforce housing in Thomaston.
- IN PROGRESS** Continue work with the Army Corp of Engineers for maintenance dredging of the Federal Approach Channel to Thomaston Harbor. This is pending Congressional Discretionary Spending funds.
- COMPLETED** Wrap up the Masterplan for parks and trails. Plan future steps for the Thomaston Green. The Trails and Parks Masterplan is completed. Facilitated workshops for the Green are completed. The findings will be presented to the Select Board on December 19th. Next steps to be determined.
- IN PROGRESS** Continue Forest/bike trail expansion through partnering with Sidecountry Trails and Georges River Land Trust. The Town is seeking funding for a sidewalk/trail loop project that will connect the Town Forest trails with our local schools and recreational parks.
- IN PROGRESS** Continue bike and pedestrian ways pending the MDOT Bicycle Pedestrian Grant application outcome. The Town was approved for funding for the Mill River Multiuse Pathways project. MDOT has selected an engineering firm to do the design, and a field survey is completed.
- IN PROGRESS** Continue work on the Knox-Water Street Resilience Project. Voters have approved up to \$27,000 for the preliminary engineering design. The Town has joined the Community Resiliency Partnership program through the State to qualify for additional funding.
- REMOVED** As part of the major capital projects list recommended by the Economic Development Committee, a priority is infrastructure expansion in the TR3 Zone. This goal supports the further development of workforce housing.
- IN PROGRESS** Fire-EMS Building development.
- IN PROGRESS** Create a long-term capital and strategic plan for the best uses of Dragon TIF and ARPA funds.
- INCOMPLETE** Consider hiring a consultant to review town ordinances and the comprehensive plan. Continue all on-going tasks throughout the coming year and review again next year!

**2024 Comprehensive Plan Annual Review  
Town Manager’s Goal Recommendations**

Below is a list of recommended Comprehensive plan goals for this coming year, including projects in progress:

- IN PROGRESS**      Continue negotiations with Habitat to create an affordable housing subdivision on Clark Street.
- IN PROGRESS**      Continue work with the Army Corp of Engineers for maintenance dredging of the Federal Approach Channel to Thomaston Harbor. The Town will receive congressional funds from Senator Susan Collin’s Office of \$175,000 for the project. The Army Corp has approved the full dredge depth of 16 feet. Soil testing came back clean. The Town needs to consider the costs of adding onto the project with a municipal dredge outside of the federal approach.
- IN PROGRESS**      Complete the School Loop Sidewalk Project for Watts Lane and Valley Street this coming year.
- IN PROGRESS**      Complete the Mill River Multiuse Pathways project. MDOT has selected an engineering firm to do the design, and a field survey is completed.
- IN PROGRESS**      Complete Phase 1 of the Knox Street Rebuild Project.
- IN PROGRESS**      Review the recommendations of the Thomaston Green Park Ad Hoc Committee for the park. Conduct a public workshop, survey the community, and start implementation.
- IN PROGRESS**      Complete the Waterfront Masterplan. Conduct community engagement sessions to survey the public. Research potential TIF programs.
- IN PROGRESS**      Fire-EMS Building project. Provide community engagement sessions and workshops to discuss the project. Gather letters of support. Seek voter approval for the funding of the project. Apply for congressional earmarks for the project.
- IN PROGRESS**      Assemble a Thomaston Traffic Steering Committee to draft a Traffic Calming Policy and engage an engineer for a feasibility study.
- IN PROGRESS**      Create a long-term capital and strategic plan for the best uses of Dragon TIF and Downtown TIF.
- INCOMPLETE**      Consider hiring a consultant to review town ordinances and the comprehensive plan.
- NEW**                      Consider engaging a historic consultant or a preservation organization to review history strategies of the Comprehensive Plan and support implementation.
- NEW**                      Approve a policy outlining job tasks and goals of a Comprehensive Plan Committee and form a new Committee in preparation of the 2030 plan.
- NEW**                      Start work on the town-wide revaluation of properties over the next 3 years.
- NEW**                      I strongly recommend we revisit these goals in 6 months before starting any more projects. We are at capacity, and we must complete some projects before taking on more. One major goal for us is to not lose focus of where we are.

**DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE POLICY**

*(As written by Patricia Hubbard-May 2024)*

**Background/History**

To prepare this job description the following sources were consulted:

1. Maine Municipal Association (MMA)
2. Comprehensive Planning: A Manual for Maine Communities, published by the Maine State Planning Office in 2005. (It has not been updated because when LePage became Governor he disbanded this department)
3. The town of Topsham, Maine Comprehensive Plan
4. The Town of Saint George, Maine Comprehensive Plan
5. The Sunrise County Economic Council
6. Maine State Statute 30-A, §4324(2)
7. Discussions with former Town Clerk, Joan Linscott, former Comprehensive Plan Committee members, Cindy Bertocci and Peggy McCrea, Town Manager, Kara George.

**According to MMA:** If a municipality decides to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan to support a zoning ordinance or other land use ordinances, it must first appoint a comprehensive planning committee pursuant to 30-A M.R.S.A. §4324(2).

The municipal officers must designate and establish this committee, or they can designate the Planning Board to act in this capacity. The law gives no specifics about the size of this committee or each member’s term of office. The duties and powers of the Comprehensive Planning Committee are discussed in §4324. This committee must conduct all of its meetings in open, public session according to §4324(4) and the Maine Freedom of Access Act (Chapter 6).

1. A comprehensive plan is an official, public document adopted by local government as a GUIDE to decisions regarding the future development of the town.
  - a. The plan looks broadly at our town’s character, existing land use pattern and natural resource opportunities and constraints to identify where different types of development would be most appropriate.
2. A comprehensive plan is...
  - a. Not an ordinance, however, it is the legal basis or foundation for local ordinances. (refer to Maine Town & City – Legal Notes/Published June 2000)
  - b. Not forever. It will be necessary to periodically review the plan to ensure that it continues to reflect the conditions and desires of the community.

**History:** Thomaston has never had a standing Comprehensive Plan Committee (at least since 1987), rather every 10 years it has had to rustle up a group of people as an Ad Hoc Committee to prepare a new plan in accordance with Maine State Law.

**Based on the Sources Cited Above the following outlines a Comprehensive Plan Standing Committee's membership, responsibilities, and implementation.**

**Background:** The Comprehensive Plan is a visionary, not regulatory committee. It provides guidance, prioritizes, organizes, and directs growth for future progress and development which best serves the interests identified by citizens and stakeholders.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee shall review the current plan every five years and prepare an updated plan for the Select Board and State's approval every 10 years

Any expenditure for planning, studying, and consulting pertaining to development of a plan shall be raised within the Town of Thomaston's annual operating budget.

**Membership:** The Comprehensive Plan Committee shall be composed of up to fifteen (15) members, each serving a three-year term. The Planning Committee should reflect the community as a whole – it's different geographic areas, demographic characteristics, and different interests and points of view. Members of the Committee, to be appointed by the municipal officers, should include:

- A member of the Select Board
- Representatives of other local boards or agencies
- Representatives of key town departments, such as fire, police, school, sewer and water district, recreation, and Planning
- Representatives of local businesses, including self-employed people like fishermen, farmers and real estate professionals.
- Representatives of a local land trust or conservation group.
- People with special interests (environment, day care, housing, historic resources, etc.)
- Long-time residents and new residents
- People with specific skills (foresters, surveyors, attorneys, architects, etc.)
- People with media and public communications experience, when available
- People who tend to support land use regulation and people who are suspicious of it.

It is important for planning committee members to understand that they are charged with preparing a plan that reflects the public interest, not self-interest.

Membership may consist of at-large community members, but preference shall be for standing committee and board representation. There shall also be two (2) alternate member positions available.

1. The committee shall hold regular meetings (to be determined) in accordance with an established schedule and post the minutes of meetings as required.
2. Staff shall post notice of meetings/workshops or hearings as required by law and maintain a presence on the Town's website to serve as a communication tool for the public.
3. Staff shall forward notice of meetings/workshops and/or hearings to Town Departments, Boards and Committees.
4. Staff shall maintain a permanent project file that, at a minimum, includes:
  - a. Meeting agenda and public notices,
  - b. Meeting minutes,
  - c. Reports to the Select Board as needed,
  - d. Project correspondence; and

- e. Other materials as deemed necessary.
- 5. Meetings are open to the public. The Committee may hold workshop meetings with members of the public and/or businesses to allow public input and discussion and as an educational forum on issues relevant to the Comprehensive Plan implementation.
- 6. The committee shall regularly review the Comprehensive Plan, recommend setting or resetting priorities to the Planning Board or Select Board, identify the most efficient strategies for implementation, and document responsible parties to complete goals for consideration by the Planning Board or Select Board.