Goals & Recommendations

Land Use

Bowdoinham is a rural community on Merrymeeting Bay. Much of the landmass is highly forested and undeveloped, providing regionally significant habitat through its contiguous undeveloped blocks in Residential/Agricultural District and along Merrymeeting Bay and its tributaries. These areas provide much of the passive recreation, working/productive landscapes, and play a large role in climate mitigation and carbon sequestration. The Bay provides abundant fishing and hunting opportunities and supports high value agricultural soil. Village District I (VDI) is the most densely populated section of town centrally located on the banks of the Cathance River. Village District II flanks VDI to the west around the interstate and hosts some larger businesses and our two housing developments.

Goals

Be proactive in developing strategies to ensure residents can continue to afford to stay here, while protecting our ecological and agricultural resources, rural character, and making efficient use of public services.

Key Issues

How can we enhance the ability for property owners to develop their land in ways that keep taxes low, allow families to stay here, and prioritizes the conservation of natural and agricultural resources, while maintaining our rural character?

Recommendations

1. Allow for smaller lot sizes, road frontage, and setbacks to encourage higher density development in the village districts.
2. Expand Village District I to encompass all areas served by Bowdoinham Water District.
3. Create a Village District III that encompasses areas that are or could be served by the Richmond Utilities District.
4. Encourage alternative and cooperative wastewater treatment systems to support increased housing density.
5. Continue to allow for mixed use development throughout Town with buffering between different uses.
6. Explore strategies such as but limited to a Voluntary Municipal Farm Support Program, transfer of development rights, and easements which would allow for greater development densities in Village districts, while increasing preservation of high valued areas, such as agricultural soils, natural resources, and habitat in the Residential-Agricultural District.
7. Minimize non-agricultural development on Prime Agricultural Soil, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Farmland Soils of Local Importance.
8. Protect active agricultural activities from new development by requiring buffers & setbacks.
9. Minimize the impact of development in and around high valued areas, such as wetlands, waterbodies, and wildlife.
10. Continue to encourage the preservation of open space, creation of greenspace, and access to land and water resources.
11. Allow diverse housing types within the Town’s ordinances including cluster and co-housing.
12. Support efforts to develop affordable, seasonal and workforce housing.
13. Encourage the development of housing opportunities for the elderly and disabled, including supported living.
14. Implement the Walkable Village Plan.
15. Implement the Waterfront Plan.
16. Continue to coordinate and partner with other municipalities, Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, and other organizations to protect natural resources.
17. Continue to maintain and protect our critical natural resources through our Town, State and Federal regulations, including (but not limited to) Shoreland Zoning, Floodplain Management, Natural Resources Protection Act, Subdivision, Site Plan Review, Stormwater Management.
18. Maintain, enact, or amend local ordinances as appropriate to:
    1. Clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development.
    2. Establish and maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures.
    3. Explore streamlining permitting procedures in growth areas.
    4. Clearly define protective measures for critical and important natural resources.
    5. Ensure that the Town’s Land Use Ordinance is consistent with applicable State laws and rules regarding critical natural resources.
    6. Review and update Shoreland Zoning rules.
19. Assign responsibility for implementing the Future Land Use Plan to the appropriate committee(s), boards(s), or municipal official(s).
20. Establish and support a housing sub-committee to recommend ways to increase housing in accordance with the comprehensive plan.
21. To limit the splitting up of Bowdoinham’s highly valued large blocks of contiguous land in the Residential / Agricultural district, adopt strategies such as, but not limited to, increasing the Open Space requirement for large subdivisions, reducing the density of new residential developments on large contiguous lots of land, directing new residential developments towards public roads by prohibiting residential back-lots, setting a Maximum Lot Size so new developments have smaller “footprints” while not restricting land-owners the ability to develop the same number of new lots.