

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

Through interpretative signage and wayfinding, our focus is to attract and support all individuals including those with physical and cognitive limitations as they enter the park and engage in its recreational opportunities, trail system, and social and civic events. Through statewide partnerships with the aging and disabilities communities, our vision is to become a welcoming and supportive outdoor recreational environment for people of all ages and abilities. This project will be a visible manifestation of the Town's commitment to assuring the accessibility of its public spaces. A natural by-product of this goal is the economic benefits of exposing a new population to the businesses, restaurants, and small pop-up attractions that are part of the village and waterfront experience.

“Bowdoinham, on Beautiful Merrymeeting Bay” is our motto. One of our greatest assets is our outdoor recreational opportunities. Our natural resources including the Bay and the abundant public lands and trails attract many visitors to our modest town. Our “tourists” tend to be day visitors—cyclists, boaters, hunters, fishers, snowmobilers, and hikers. The community has been deeply committed to enhancing outdoor opportunities as a cornerstone of our economic development. For instance, we have had representatives serving on the regional Merrymeeting Trail Committee which in 2023 made the recommendation to the Commissioner of MaineDOT to develop a rail/trail which passes right through the center of our village and the waterfront parks. It goes by our pub and general store and promises to bring visitors to our area. Because Bowdoinham is located on Merrymeeting Bay, duck hunters, rowing groups, canoe/kayak racing organizations, and boaters have traditionally come to use this asset. In an effort to support them a new paddle put-in facility has recently been developed at our new park which is ADA accessible.

Bowdoinham is also a community of festivals and events focused heavily on celebrating our outdoor recreation and agri-tourism. The Town annually hosts the Ice and Smelt Festival in February, Open Farm and Studio Day in the July, Tour de Bowdoinham Food Pantry charity bike ride in August, the Celebrate Bowdoinham parade and festivities and the Canoe and Kayak Racing Organization's annual race in September, and the Holiday Festival with craft fairs, community fundraisers, and tree lighting in December at our waterfront park. Moreover, the summer Farmers' Markets and the free Summer Sundays Concert Series provide a hub of activity at the waterfront from June to October. Local organizations such as the Merrymeeting Arts Center, the Bowdoinham Guild of Artisans, the Food Pantry, Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, the Historical Society, and our new used bookstore all offer attractions within the village center and benefit from the visitors to our waterfront park events.

As we move into the future, our special location and the natural beauty of our landscape will continue to provide important opportunities for economic development. Further, the

development of the new park along with the creation of the Merrymeeting Rail Trail will enhance our town's reputation as a great place to live, work, and visit for people of all ages and abilities.

Lastly, as mentioned previously, the Town's Waterfront Redevelopment Project and the Merrymeeting Trail are regional priorities included in the 2018 and 2021 multi-county Midcoast Economic Development District's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) report. This type of trail has the potential to bring in revenue from daily users, non-local day visitors, and those looking to overnight as well as potential job creation to Bowdoinham and the surrounding region. Through statewide partnerships with the aging and disabilities communities, our vision is to become a welcoming and supportive outdoor recreational environment for people of all ages and abilities.

## OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, DELIVERABLES AND METRICS

**Objective 1:** Develop interpretive signage to educate park users of all ages and abilities of the flora, fauna, and history of the area.

Strategy: The project team includes two consultants whose skills and experience will assure that the interpretive signs are clear and understandable. Community Geographics, an outdoor accessibility and mapping organization, will work with the Town to assure that sign language and layout meet standards that are accessible to people with physical and cognitive limitations. The Kennebec Estuary Land Trust, a community-based conservation organization, will develop and implement a strategy for teaching trail users about the waterfowl, fauna, and flora of the Merrymeeting Bay area and the importance of protecting these resources.

In addition, interpretive and wayfinding signage will include community input regarding location of signage, concept designs, and language on proposed signs. Input will be sought from our local environmental organizations such as Friends of Merrymeeting Bay and Merrymeeting Trail Blazers. Historical input will be sought from Bowdoinham's Historical Society and the Town's Sexton. Input from residents, local business owners, and Age Friendly will participate in two public input meetings.

The Town will put out an RFP for the fabrication of these signs.

Deliverable: Fabrication and installation of approximately (10-12) 20" x 30" high pressure laminate interpretative signs.

Metric: 10-12 interpretative signs will be fabricated and installed.

**Objective 2:** Develop accessible wayfinding signage for the park and the Cathance River Trail system.

Strategy: The Town will work with Community Geographics to determine the location, content, and design for wayfinding signage for the trails within the new park and in the Cathance River Trail system. The Town will put out an RFP for the fabrication of these signs and the Public Works Department will purchase the necessary sign posts and install the wayfinding signs.

Deliverable: Fabrication and installation of three wayfinding signs for trail heads and up to ten distance signs along the trails.

Metric: Three wayfinding signs for trail heads and up to ten distance signs along the trails will be fabricated and installed.

**Objective 3:** Increase users and sales at waterfront park events.

Strategy: By making the waterfront parks more welcoming and conducive to use by people of all ages and abilities we expect to see an increase in attendance, amenity use (kayak storage and mooring rentals), and sales at waterfront park events.

Deliverable: A reliable method to measure the change in attendance, amenity use, and sales at waterfront events.

Metric: There will be a 5 percent increase over 2024 baseline in visitor traffic into the waterfront parks and an increase in sales at waterfront park events by August 18, 2025. Data will be collected from the Saturday Farmers' Markets, beneficiaries of the Sunday Summer Concerts, Tour de Bowdoinham Food Pantry charity ride, Open Farm and Studio Day vendors. Further, the Town will also report on kayak storage and mooring rentals which occur before August 18, 2025.