



Town of St. George

Comprehensive Plan

June 15, 2018

Approved by the Town of St. George

Adopted

1 Summary and Community Vision

The last officially adopted Comprehensive Plan was approved by the voters of the Town at town meeting in March 2013. While that plan was accepted by the voters it was not accredited by the State. As a result, the 2013 plan has been slightly amended to include missing elements for consistency with the State's Growth Management Act. Substantively, this plan is very similar to the 2013 version but has been updated with available data and reformatted for readability/

A summary of each topic areas is presented below.

Historic and Archeological Resources

The Town of St. George has a rich history rooted in its connection to natural resources and marine heritage. Fishing, quarrying, and shipbuilding helped to drive demand for settlements and growth in the Town. Today there are several archeological sites and historic buildings throughout town. Some, like Fort St. George, are open to the public.

Population

The year-round population of St. George seems to be holding steady with a less than 1% growth rate over the last 10-year census period. However, there has been an increase in the overall age of the population (from 44.5 in 2000 to 51.2 in 2010). Further, the percentage of adults in the pre-retirement/early retirement age bracket (55-74) increased by 41% between 1990 and 2010 while adults between the ages of 25 and 54 (those adults in the prime parenting and household building years) decreased by 6%. The Growth in this age group, as well as those in the 75+ age bracket, may signal turnover in housing stock (will younger buyers be available to buy it), need for medical and public safety services, and, with the older population remaining healthy longer, a potential for significant contributions to the civic life. The loss of households with individuals under 18 has implications for schools, availability of a local labor force, home buying, and the overall benefits of a diverse population.

St. George's seasonal population now includes a new large category of non-resident/seasonal renters. This category has increased significantly in the last few years as many St. George property owners seek additional income by renting their properties. According to Census numbers, in 2000 there were 604 housing units classified as being occupied for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. By 2010 that number had increased to 762 or about 21%. This trend increases the demand for local services and recreational activities during peak seasons and has implications on overall population and housing availability. The demographics of this trend and the cost/benefit ratio to the Town are not known at this time.

Economy

The economy in St. George appears to be on strong footing. Unemployment is down to just over 3% which is the lowest of the surrounding and nearby midcoast communities. Median Household Income has increased since 2010 and taxable retail sales increased 195% between 2000 and 2010. There have

been some shifts in employment as a result in changes away from the traditional resource-based economy (i.e. commercial fishing) to a service-based economy. While the commercial fishing sector remains imports (over 11% of the employed workers), more of the citizens (20% of the employed residents) are in the education, health and social service sectors.

Housing

The pace of new housing development has slowed significantly since 2010 and there have been no new subdivisions approved since 2009. In addition, St. George has an affordability issue where over 70% of the households cannot afford the median priced home. The Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) estimated the 2017 affordability index (the ratio between median income and median home price) for St. George was .85 which indicates that the is generally unaffordable. This is compounded by the lack of year-round rental housing and conversion of year-round homes into seasonal homes.

Natural Resources

The Town is almost 85% forested with most of the undeveloped blocks in the interior areas. Soils throughout Town vary, but the Soil Survey for Knox County shows that the soils rated highest for development are less frequent. The Town relies on groundwater for its source of drinking water. Protection for this resource is critical and especially important near the source wells for the Tenants Harbor and Port Clyde Water Districts. There are five Registered Critical Areas in St. George including the Point Marine Invertebrate Area (tide pools) and three seabird critical areas.

Marine Resources

The Town of St. George has over 125 miles of coastline which creates a diverse physical and cultural waterfront landscape. Within the past decade, these waterfront areas have witnessed significant residential growth and development, as well as increased demand for access to, and recreation within, harbor areas. The impacts associated with these activities are especially evident in the areas of Tenants Harbor and Port Clyde. Based on past surveys, the residents of St. George wish to maintain the traditional character of the town by protecting marine resource, particularly working waterfront properties and supporting the commercial fishing industry in town. More than a dozen Commercial Fishing Marine Activities (CFMA) zones are delineated for waterfront areas in Port Clyde, Tenants Harbor, and Wheeler Bay. Working Waterfront classifications are also increasing. The 10 Cold Storage Road property in Port Clyde is being planned as a way to support the working waterfront and public access for the future.

Islands

There are over 50 Islands within the municipal boundaries of St. George which are a mixture of private ownership and public availability. Additional development on the islands over the past 10 years provides increase tax revenue and jobs as well as the need for mainland access.

Recreational and Open Space

Recreation has been an important part of the Town's culture for generations. This has evolved

into a robust Town recreation department that supports youth and adult programming. In addition, the town benefits from several public recreational facilities and open spaces such as Marshall Point Light and Drift Inn Beach. There are several trails throughout town as well.

Transportation

The transportation network in town plays an important role in current patterns of development and economics. There are over 31 miles of road in St. George including two state roads – Route 73 and 131. Road maintenance is an ongoing effort which is budgeted yearly between the Town and the State. Outside the village areas, pedestrian/bicycle activity would need to use narrow road shoulders as there are few sidewalks and no dedicated bike paths. Alternative modes of transportation are limited although the Town is starting to be more connected to regional transportation for non-emergency medical purposes.

Public Facilities

The Town is well served by a fully functional Municipal Office and emergency services. The community has a local school and several other local educational opportunities. New properties have been added to the Town owned property list including the Juniper Street property, Fort St. George and 10 Cold Storage Road. The Port Clyde and Tenants Harbor Water Districts provide drinking water to the villages.

Land Use

While there has been a general slowdown of subdivision applications over the past several years, the town continues to see growth in the form of residential development, repairs and additions. There are two growth areas, both situated around the existing villages of Port Clyde and Tenants Harbor. In these areas regulatory policy and investment will be targeted toward supporting new and infill development.

Municipal Finance & Capital Investment

Information from the comprehensive plan indicates that the Town is in a healthy financial position. The town has established a Capital Investment Plan which provides a framework for planning and financing projects that are necessary to meet existing and future needs and constitute major capital improvements for which the Town has responsibility. The Plan not only addresses new and expanded public facilities, but also extends into the scope of maintenance and repairs of the Town's assets.

Regional Coordination

St. George tends to be isolated from regional activities. However, it does participate in mutual aid agreements for fire and EMS, regional shellfish management, and coordination with neighboring towns for joint purchases and equipment sharing.

Public Participation Summary

The process of developing this comprehensive Plan has taken several years (2010-2018) to complete. In 2010 a Comprehensive Plan Committee was convened to begin working on an update to the previous. The committee spent the first three years drafting the Inventory Section for each topic area and held a series of meetings to develop policies and strategies. Between 2012 and 2013 several meetings were held with the public hearings, town boards and committees. This process included a town wide survey to collect opinions on preferences and developmental issues. By 2013 the Committee had developed a draft plan which was presented to the voters for acceptance.

Since that time the Comprehensive Plan has been working on adding elements to the plan to be more consistent with State rules, updating Inventory data using more current information where available, and refining the policies and strategies developed as part of draft plan. Throughout that time, there have been additional public meetings and check in's with relevant town committees.

Following is a summary of the Action Plan and what actually took place:

July 2010 - January 2011	Comprehensive Plan Committee review of the 2007 Plan, its inventory, goals, policies and strategies
Feb 2011 - March 2012	Update the inventory
April 2012 - March 2013	Prepare for revision by conducting public hearings, meetings with town boards and committees. This process included a town wide survey to collect opinions on preferences and developmental issues.
March 2013 - June 2013	Work on updating the Plan based upon all input.
July 2013 - October 2013	Present Draft Plan for review by town officials, town committees and the public.
October 2013	Public Forum
November 5, 2013	Town Voted to accept Comprehensive Plan Draft
November 2013 – May 2018	Comprehensive Plan Committee work on updating Inventory Data, reviewing goals, policies and strategies, review of consistency items, discussions at Town meetings and various public forums.

Other meetings?

May 2018	Final Public Forum
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Community Vision

The residents of the Town of St. George have expressed their vision for the community in following terms:

The Town of St. George shall be a desirable place to live, work, raise a family, retire and visit. To accomplish this vision:

- The Town shall protect its scenic, recreational and natural resources that give St. George its distinctive character.
- Traditional fisheries and emerging marine based industries will continue to be an integral part of our culture and working waterfront.
- Tourism and non-marine related industry and businesses will provide additional employment opportunities and attract young people.
- The Town will have a variety of quality housing, including affordable options for low and middle-income families and senior citizens.
- Quality, local educational opportunities will continue to be valued and supported.
- The spirit of community is reflected through the efforts of our citizens and volunteers.

This vision shall be realized by you.