

BAR HARBOR 2035



An Overview of the Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan

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- Michele Gagnon, Planning Director

What is a comprehensive plan?

- **Long range vision** that is **specific** but also allows **room to adapt to change**
- **Informs** and **sets the stage** for short term and long term actions
- Provides a **“road map”** for fostering a desirable and inclusive place to live and work

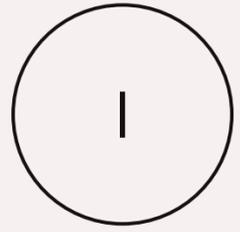
**Land Use
Changes**

**Infrastructure
Investment**

**New or Revised
Policy**

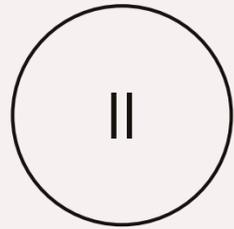
What is a comprehensive plan is NOT...

- **An ordinance.** However, a plan is the foundation for local ordinances.
- **Zoning map.** However, a plan is the legal basis for future changes to the zoning map.
- **A detailed management plan.** However, a plan sets the stage to start a management group or initiative by providing guidance and action recommendations.
- **A detailed area plan.** Although a plan is meant to be more broad than specific, its broad nature helps avoid setting a direction that can't adapt to change. A plan provides a clear direction and recommendations that will help the community flesh out land use changes during implementation.



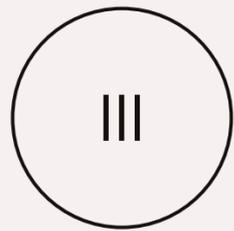
Navigation Guidance

- Broad Brush Overview
-

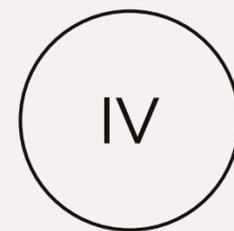


Summary

- Summary of Key Sections
-



Approval Timeline

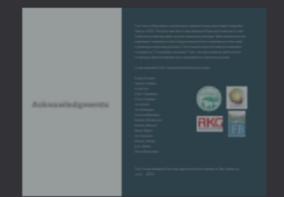


Q & A

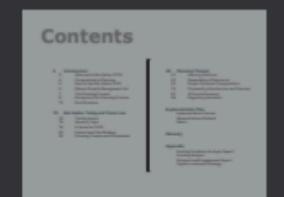




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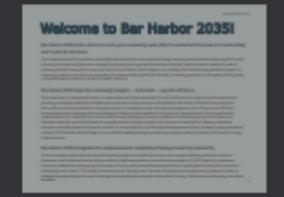
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A Comprehensive Plan for the Future

Adopted ____, 2025

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It's okay to feel overwhelmed.

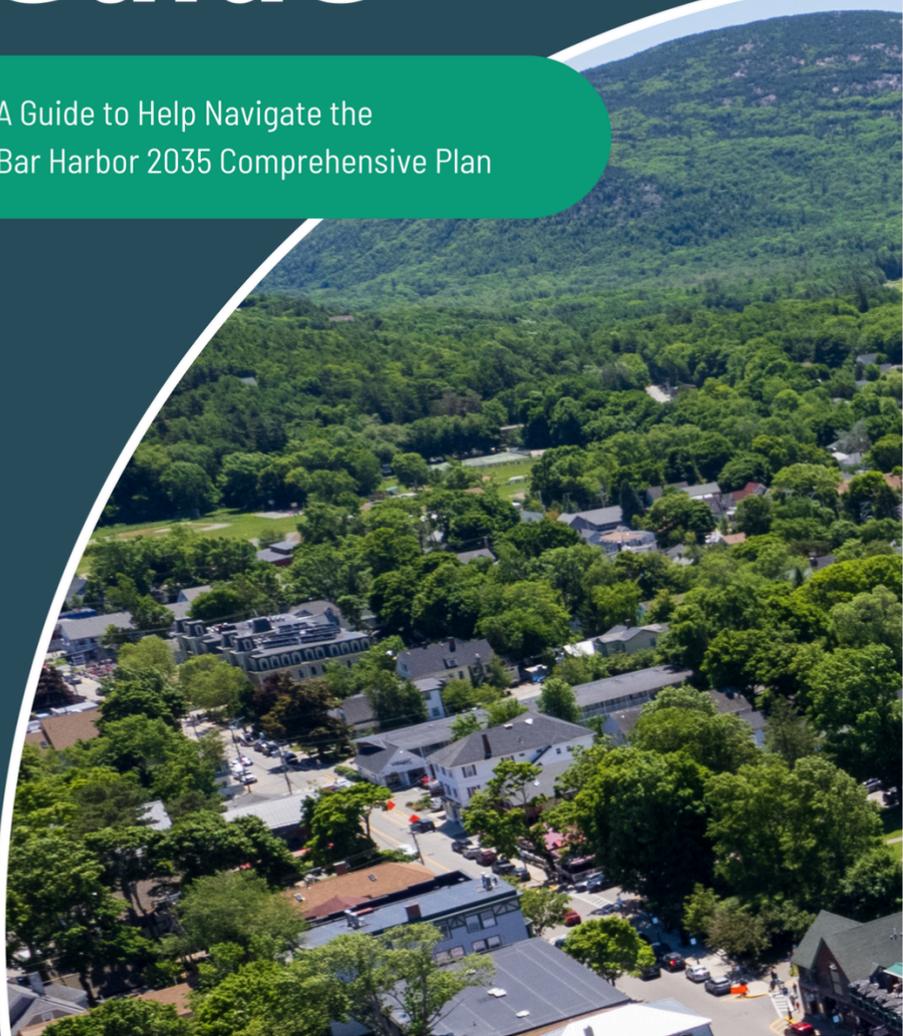


Town of Bar Harbor
Planning Department

NOVEMBER 20, 2024

BAR HARBOR 2035 Navigation Guide

A Guide to Help Navigate the
Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan



Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the Comprehensive Plan Committee members who helped shape the Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan, in addition to all the members of the consulting team.

Elissa Chesler	Michael McKernan	This document was created and edited by the Planning Department staff.
Jaquie Colburn	Kristen Murphy	
Greg Cox	Misha Mytar	The Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan has been found consistent with the Maine Growth Management Act as of October 26, 2024.
Kevin Desveaux	Val Peacock	
Chert Galyean	Allison Sasser	
John Kelly	Kyle Shank	
Jim Mahoney	David Woodside	
Calistra Martinez		



*Scan to access the Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan and all the accompanying documents, or go to <https://www.barharmoraine.gov/501/Comprehensive-Plan>.

BAR HARBOR 2035

PLANNING WITH INTENTION

Introduction — Our Goal

"We want the Bar Harbor 2035 plan to be utilized and implemented, and to ensure success in that regard we needed to do more to make this plan accessible."
— Michele Gagnon, Bar Harbor Planning Director

What is this document?

The navigation guide is meant to provide a best practice approach when reviewing the Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan. This guide is meant to help all users better understand the Plan's structure and find certain content, and overall, ensure the Plan is used and implemented in a collaborative and balanced manner.

What is a comprehensive plan?

A local comprehensive plan is a resource document that includes a long-range (10+ year) vision for the future and provides a way for a municipality (or town) to plan for and respond to change. These plans cover a wide array of topics that, when combined, provide a focused direction and approach to growth and development that meets the needs of all residents, businesses, and visitors.

Why should I use this navigation guide?

It's easy to focus on the sections of interest, get stuck in silos, and eventually lose sight of the big picture. Yet, the most important part of this plan is how all the different puzzle pieces come together. This guide is meant to help the process of understanding the big picture feel less overwhelming and more accessible.

The big picture (collective future vision) balances many different perspectives. Some of which, you, as an individual community member, may not completely agree with, but it's important to remember that Bar Harbor is home to a diverse community, and a community should aim to better understand each other.

The navigation guide, hopefully, will help the community better understand how the Plan addresses a diversity of needs, encourages collaboration, and creates a community we are all proud to be a part of.

BAR HARBOR 2035

A HOW TO GUIDE

Part 1 — Using the Plan

"Where do I begin?!" It's normal to feel overwhelmed when faced with a document full of information. And, it's important that the users know how to navigate and use the Plan without feeling like they're drowning in information. The graphic below aims to help guide users through the Plan's key sections by using a simplified approach.

STEP 1: Read the vision statement and pillars

First, review Bar Harbor's "Big Issues" described on pages 16 to 18. Then read pages 19 through 23 to become familiar with the plan's overall direction. Your understanding of the overall direction is critical considering the vision influences every other section in the Plan. Your interpretation of every other section should align with the vision's direction.



STEP 2: Review the Future Land Use Strategy & Area Descriptions

When reading pages 24 through 35, pay attention to the differences of each area description. This is important when understanding how the planning themes and implementation actions are applied to each land use area.

STEP 3: Review the Planning Themes and Frameworks

Pages 36 through 39 will provide a general understanding of the Plan's key focus areas, referred to as the "planning themes and frameworks." There is overlap in every theme, especially the "Stewardship of Resources" and the "Housing Solutions" themes. Pay close attention to the overlap and how the Plan discusses balancing perceived conflicts.



STEP 4: Review the Implementation Plan as it relates to your theme of interest

Review the implementation plan to generally understand the Plan's detailed and overarching actions organized by theme. In addition to the general actions on page 11 that discuss how to track the Plan's implementation, this is a flexible document that can be implemented in any way or order to address current priorities and best achieve the vision.

BAR HARBOR 2035

A HOW TO GUIDE

Part 2 — An Example

Two of the major issues facing Bar Harbor are the lack of housing and labor shortages. That being said, many community members want to maintain a small-town character and protect the environment. This Plan aims to help balance each of these desires and here's one way to go through the plan to understand the approach and recommendations.



BAR HARBOR 2035

A HOW TO GUIDE

Part 3 — Implementation

Now you may be wondering, "How can I affect real change through this comprehensive plan?" The diagram below describes how decisions will generally be made about implementing the Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan and when to get involved in the process.



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- Existing Conditions Analysis Report
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- Capital Investment Strategy

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Existing Conditions Analysis Report
Housing Analysis
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Capital Investment Strategy

- Provides an overview of Bar Harbor 2035
- Describes the process that was used to develop and structure the Plan
- Explains how the Plan will require collaboration to create balanced solutions

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- Provides an overview of Bar Harbor's Big Issues
- Describes and explains the community's vision for the future
- Describes a visual representation of the vision through a land use strategy

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Describes six key themes:

- Housing Solutions
- Stewardship of Resources
- People-Centered Transportation
- Community Infrastructure and Services
- A Diverse Economy
- Regulatory Revisions

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- Describes the role and organization of the action matrix
- Describes some general and specific actions to ensure progress
- Clarifies if actions overlap with more than one theme
- Appendix with additional and foundational data that helped create the Plan

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THE VISION (pp. 19 - 23)

What do we want to be?



A Vision for 2035

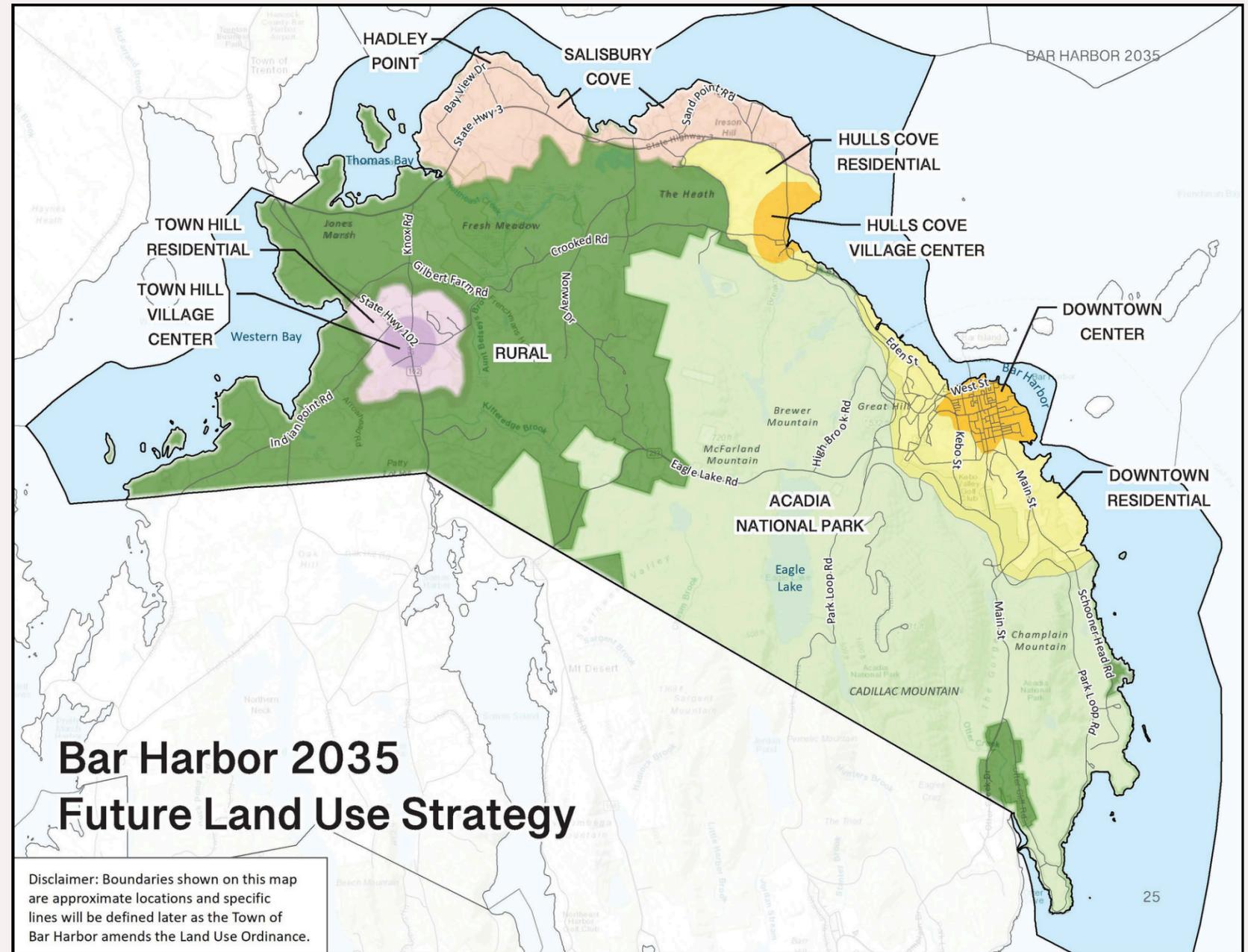
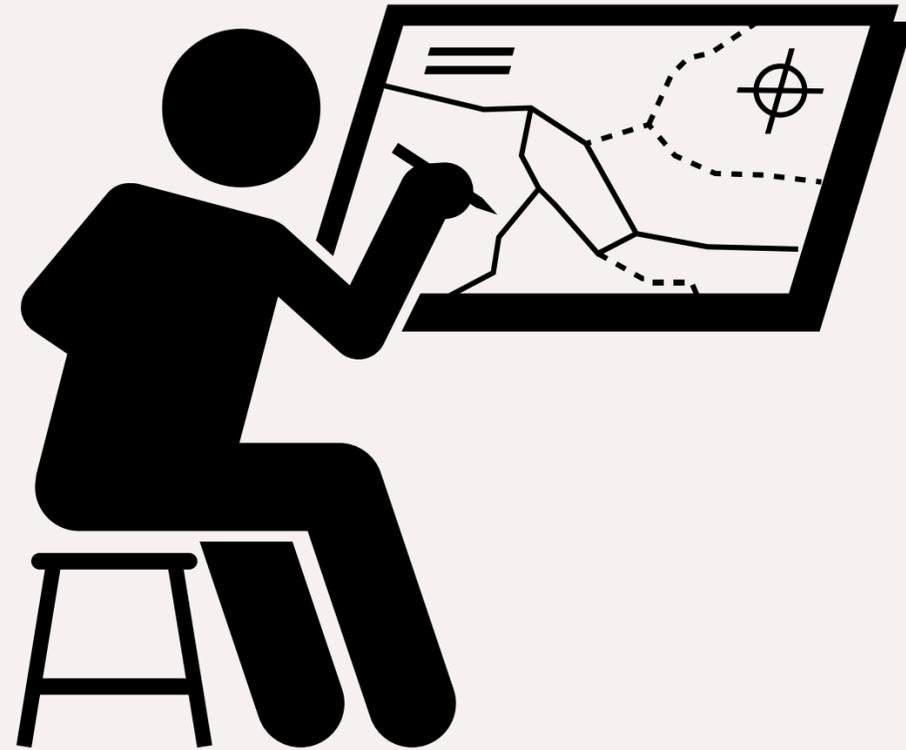
Bar Harbor's vision for the future has been informed by robust public engagement and community input.

The vision is written as a series of broad, aspirational statements in the present tense to help readers visualize what Bar Harbor will be like in 2035. The vision statement is comprised of four sentences referred to as **vision pillars**. Each of these pillars is the result of the public input provided during the outreach and engagement process. Additional public input is then summarized under each vision pillar and referred to as **vision elements**. The elements provide additional context and ideas that have informed the creation of Bar Harbor 2035 and will inform implementation efforts in Bar Harbor over the coming decade. Some of the elements may reflect what the town is now, but the focus is forward-looking toward what residents want Bar Harbor to be in 2035 and beyond.

Bar Harbor's vibrancy stems from the mix of people and the dramatic natural and cultural beauty of our place. Together, we build upon our diverse economic strengths and, through partnerships, we create solutions that meet year-round and seasonal needs. Our resilient and sustainable community includes sufficient equitable housing, robust infrastructure, and efficient transportation. We work through our differences to strengthen our collective sense of community. We take care of each other, and we take care of our place.

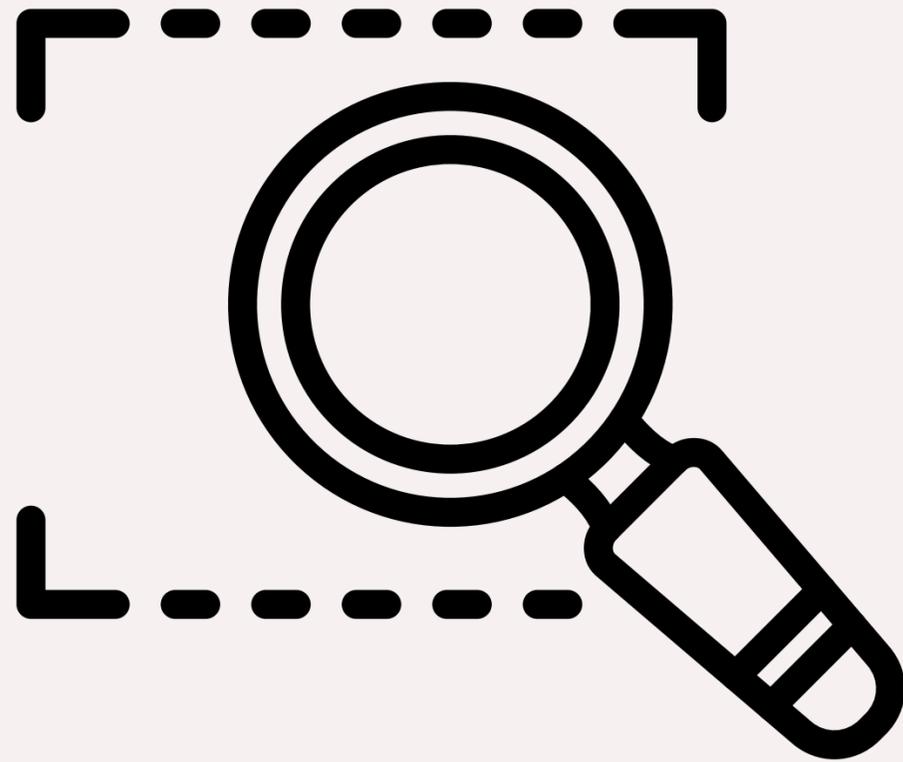
FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY (pp. 24 - 35)

What is our plan to get there?



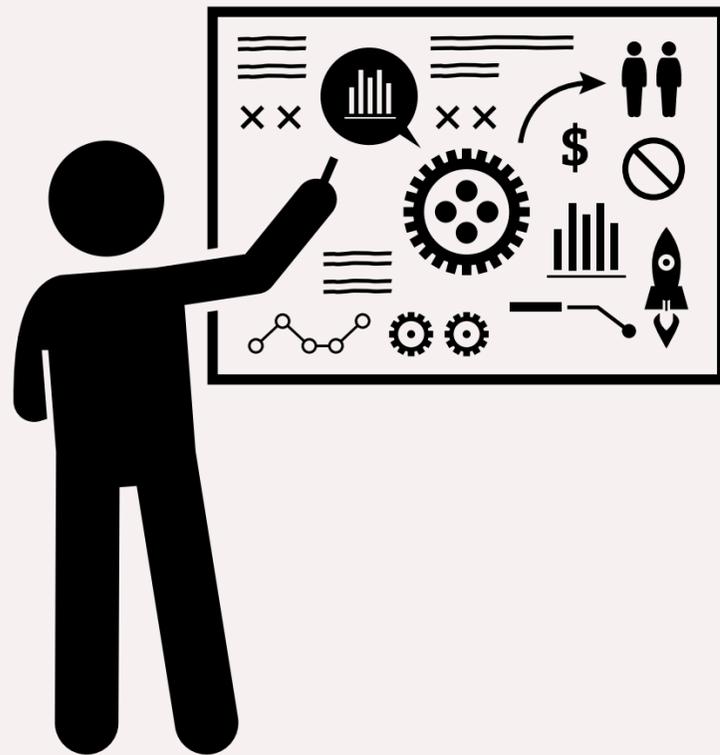
PLANNING THEMES & FRAMEWORKS (pp. 36-39)

What do we need to focus on?



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

What actions do we need to take to make our vision and land use strategy reality?



ARBOR 2035 IMPLEMENTATION										
#	Action	Related Themes						Level of Priority	Responsible Party(ies)	Potential Partners
		H	S	T	C	E	R			
Housing Solutions										
1	Develop housing targets and track progress. This could include:				✓	✓	✓			
1a	Create a housing working group or committee in Bar Harbor comprised of town staff, elected and appointed leaders, businesses and anchor institutions, developers, homeowners, renters, and others who have an interest in housing outcomes in the town. Meet quarterly throughout the year to discuss housing policies and programs, zoning changes, incentives, and how to increase the availability of housing in Bar Harbor through creative partnerships.				✓	✓	✓			
1b	Create a Municipal Data Dashboard that is regularly updated to provide information on Bar Harbor's housing supply, housing demand, resident population, workforce population, visitation, and other metrics. The purpose of this initiative is to ensure that efforts, actions, and initiatives are producing the intended and needed results.				✓	✓	✓			
1c	Document approved housing projects, track them, and ensure the affordability of designated units over time.				✓		✓			
1d	Create definitions for the many types of long-term rentals that are permitted so they can be documented and incentivized.						✓			
	Identify price points, income targets, numbers of bedrooms, mortgage and rent affordability gaps, etc. for the number of rental units and homes needed to meet projected demands.					✓				
	Identify other desired targets such as the annual increase in housing stock, % of employees who live where they work, % of deed restricted housing for year-round residents, % of employer-owned dwelling units, and % of year-round-occupied housing units.					✓				
	Track progress on the Housing Policy Framework and update it as needed.									
	Create a housing webpage so the public can easily access information on the town's housing efforts along with other housing related information.				✓					
	Investigate potential housing policies, programs, and incentives that help to maintain the existing year-round housing stock. This may include the following types of strategies:									
	Investigate potential property tax abatement programs for existing residents to encourage them to remain year-round residents by making it more affordable for them to live here.				✓	✓				
	Consider removing inspection fees and permit fees for certain types of housing. This could be reserved for developments with certain percentage of affordable housing or specific types of housing that are most needed.				✓		✓			
	Consider a town program that offers incentives to owners of existing seasonally occupied dwelling units if they transition the use of their dwelling unit into a year-round rental unit.				✓					
	Consider a new local program to acquire deed restrictions to convert existing market-rate homes to affordable homes. This is a method to preserve the existing housing stock as year-round affordable rental and ownership housing.				✓	✓				
	Promote and expand existing programs and uses to encourage businesses to build new units for their seasonal workforce rather than buying year-round dwelling units.				✓	✓	✓			
	Monitor short term rental trends in residential neighborhoods to inform future policy decisions, and take appropriate policy actions as necessary to achieve goals.				✓	✓	✓			
	Investigate potential housing policies, programs, and incentives that increase available housing in Bar Harbor. This may include the following types of strategies:									
	Encourage the creation of year-round rental units through regulatory and non-regulatory approaches.				✓		✓			

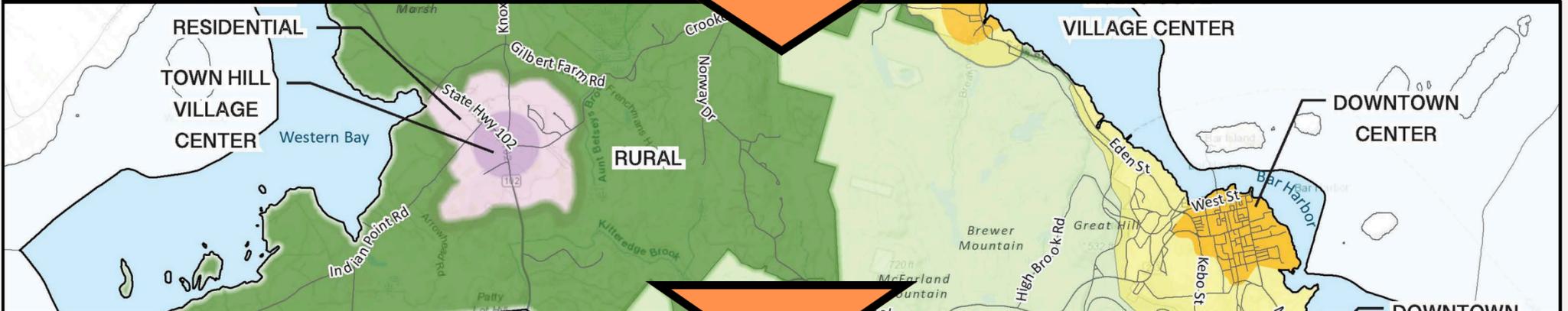
BROAD

VISION

A Vision for 2035

Bar Harbor's vision for the future has been informed by robust public engagement and community input. The vision is written as a series of broad, aspirational statements in the present tense to help readers visualize what Bar Harbor will be like in 2035. The vision statements are organized into four sentences referred to as **vision pillars**. Each

LAND USE STRATEGY



PLANNING THEMES & FRAMEWORKS



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

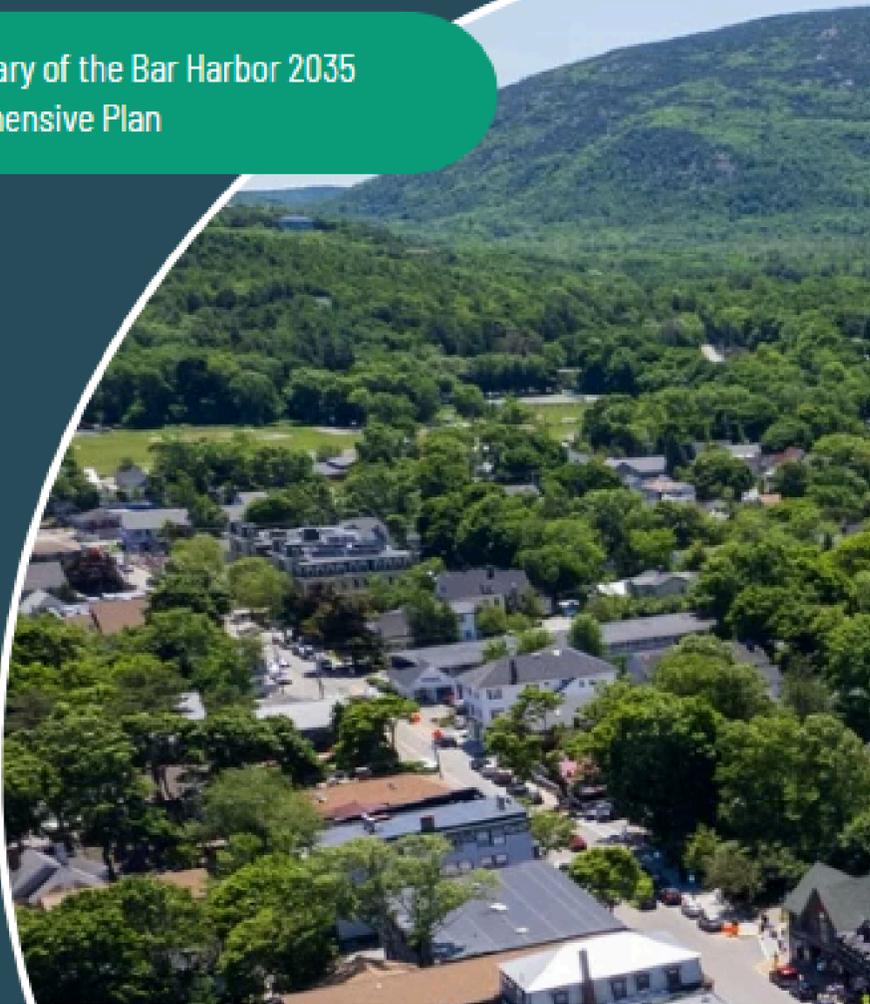
			✓	✓	✓

SPECIFIC



BAR HARBOR 2035 Executive Summary

A Summary of the Bar Harbor 2035
Comprehensive Plan



BAR HARBOR'S VISION FOR 2035

Bar Harbor's vibrancy stems from the mix of people and the dramatic natural and cultural beauty of our place. Together, we build upon our diverse economic strengths and, through partnerships, we create solutions that meet year-round and seasonal needs. Our resilient and sustainable community includes sufficient equitable housing, robust infrastructure, and efficient transportation. We work through our differences to strengthen our collective sense of community. We take care of each other, and we take care of our place.

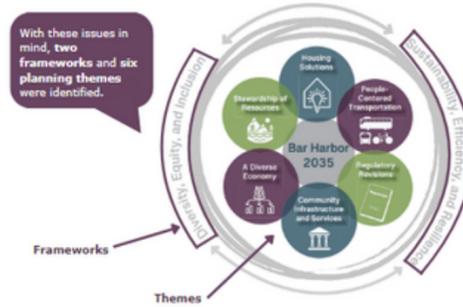
Please see pages 19-23 of the 2035 Comprehensive Plan for more information about Bar Harbor's Vision Statement.



HOW DOES THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADDRESS BAR HARBOR'S MOST PRESSING ISSUES?

Based on public input, data collection, and research, the community identified the following primary issues:

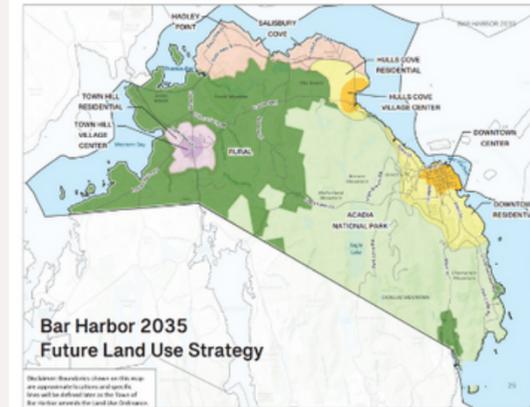
- The impacts of both **housing and labor shortages** across Mount Desert Island.
- The **limited land available for future development**, which influences how Bar Harbor meets its future housing, economic, and infrastructure needs.
- The **cost implications of sprawling development**, which is prevalent in portions of town.
- **Infrastructure investments** that are needed to support future development activity.
- The impacts of **over-tourism and over-crowding** throughout the community.
- The **lack of revenue**, as a small community, to meet the expectations and needs of residents and visitors alike.



FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY

The Future Land Use Strategy focuses on minimizing sprawl and the fragmentation of the remaining undeveloped rural areas. It aims to balance the resource protection needs of the community with the housing, economic, climate action, and other needs identified by residents. The Future Land Use Strategy will take much more than a decade to actualize. To accomplish this vision, Bar Harbor 2035 recommends using less land for new development, and encouraging gentle density outside of the downtown and village centers.

The Strategy can be found in pages 24-36 of the Plan.



PLANNING THEMES

The themed approach to Bar Harbor 2035 has provided an opportunity to focus on the biggest issues that Bar Harbor must come to terms with and address over the coming decade and beyond. Each of the themes are presented as a major section of the Plan to provide a summary of the known issues and opportunities related to the topics included, and to identify how they can be addressed.

Housing Solutions (pp. 41-52)

Housing is a significant challenge in Bar Harbor, affecting access to affordable, year-round options for residents. Limited developable land and zoning laws restrict housing production, while competition from secondary homebuyers and short-term rentals complicates the situation for local businesses seeking employees. Community support for increasing workforce housing is strong, particularly for young families and low-to-middle-income residents. The Town's strategy emphasizes maintaining existing units and developing diverse housing options, including missing middle housing. Collaboration with regional partners and local employers is essential to address housing needs effectively. Tracking progress with clear targets will help ensure that initiatives align with community needs.

Stewardship of Resources (pp. 53-64)

Bar Harbor's natural and cultural resources are central to its identity and economy, attracting both residents and tourists while enhancing quality of life. However, these resources face threats from development, climate change, and high visitation rates, risking the community's unique charm. The area is rich in diverse ecosystems and historic sites, including significant archaeological locations and working landscapes, which contribute to its appeal and ecological health. Climate change presents significant challenges. Future actions focus on collaborative conservation, adaptive reuse of historic structures, and achieving sustainability goals, including a commitment to renewable energy.

FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY FOCUS AREAS



DOWNTOWN CENTER AND DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL

Bar Harbor's Downtown area will continue to function as the community's primary commercial and residential center. This area of Town presents the greatest opportunities for increasing density through new and infill development and redevelopment activity while keeping the character of the community in mind. This strategy will likely involve a variety of housing options and the protection and restoration of existing parks and natural areas.



HULLS COVE VILLAGE CENTER AND VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL

Bar Harbor's Halls Cove area will continue to be a mix of residential and small-scale commercial uses at a density that is less than the downtown. Improving the walkability and bikeability of this area through improvements and connection to downtown is important.



TOWN HILL VILLAGE CENTER AND VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL

Bar Harbor's Town Hill area is envisioned to have a lower density than the downtown and Halls Cove because it is not connected to town water and sewer. Efforts will be made to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to other areas in Town while encouraging mixed use development and local connectivity across Town Hill.



HADLEY POINT AND SALISBURY COVE

Hadley Point and Salisbury Cove are envisioned to accommodate much-needed residential development in Bar Harbor. Similar to Town Hill, these areas will focus on gentle density and improvements to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.



RURAL

Rural areas currently account for 65% of Bar Harbor's land area outside of Acadia National Park. A large portion of the Northeast Creek watershed is within this rural area and preserving water quality for this watershed has been identified as a top priority. The rural area is envisioned to remain rural with development focused in other areas.

HOW DOES THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VARY FROM THE 2007 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

DIFFERENCES

BAR HARBOR 2007 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2007 Comprehensive Plan was very detailed in many areas and acted as specific areas plans. This approach leaves little room for adjustments when implementing the Plan in specific planning initiatives.

The 2007 Comprehensive Plan is very village/neighborhood-focused.

The 2007 Plan resulted in micro-zoning and fragmentation, shown in the large number of districts.

The 2007 Plan recommended changes such as large minimum lot sizes and minimum area per family requirements which resulted in fragmentation of habitat by encouraging sprawl and lower density.

The 2007 Plan had little to no discussion of transportation.

BAR HARBOR 2035 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 2035 Plan is specific enough to include the Town's vision for future growth and reflect the needs of the community but not overly specific, leaving details to be decided during implementation.

The 2035 Plan is organized in 6 primary themes, recognizing that many areas overlap and cannot be looked at in a silo.

The 2035 Plan aims to move away from micro-zoning and focus on general character.

The 2035 Plan aims to decrease sprawl by encouraging gentle density in key locations and by clustering development to protect natural resources.

The 2035 Plan focuses on people-centered transportation policies and infrastructure improvements.

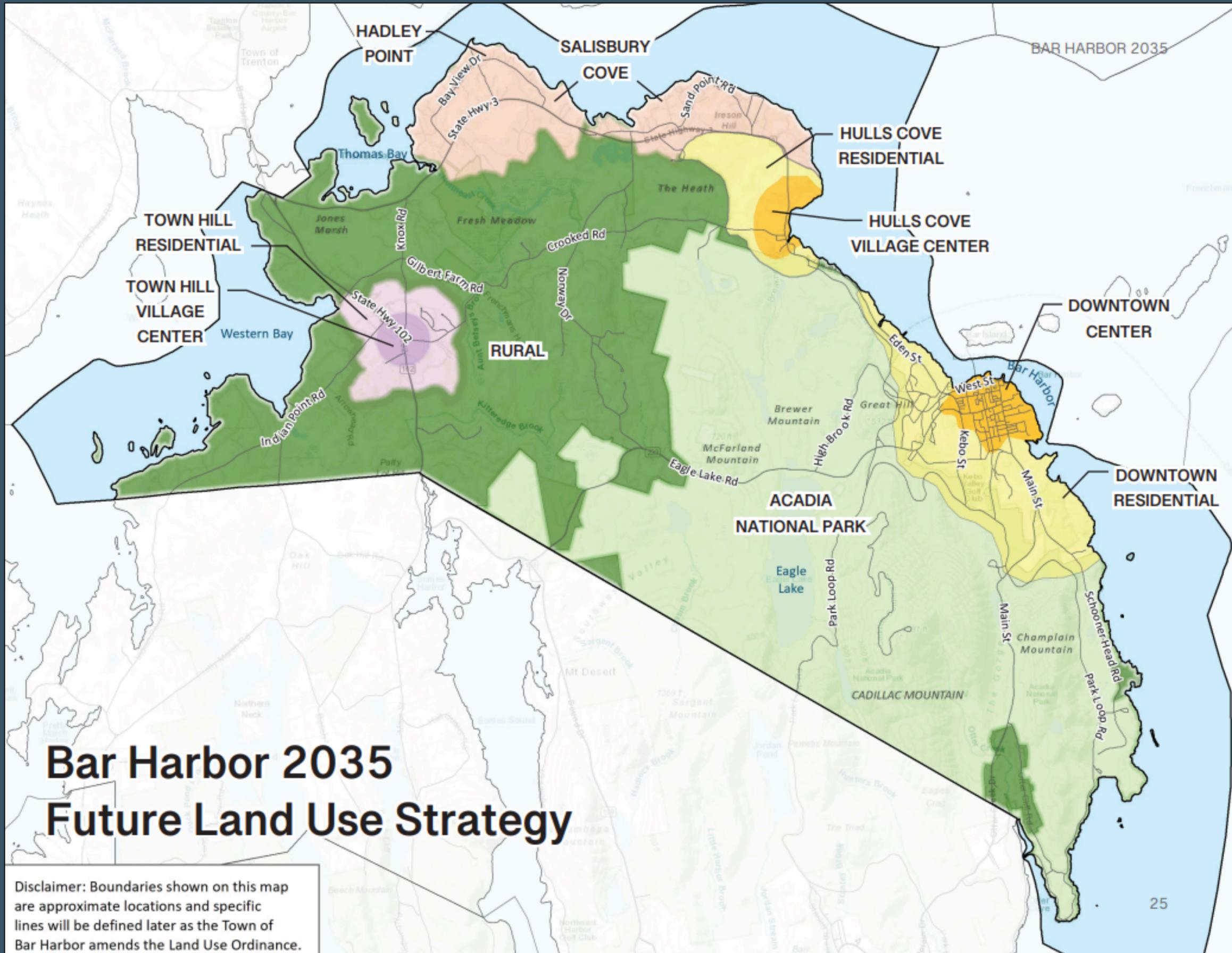
SIMILARITIES

- The Future Land Use maps in both plans are very similar
- Both were found consistent with the Maine Growth Management Act
- Both Plans recognize the need to expand water and sewer infrastructure

BAR HARBOR'S VISION FOR 2035

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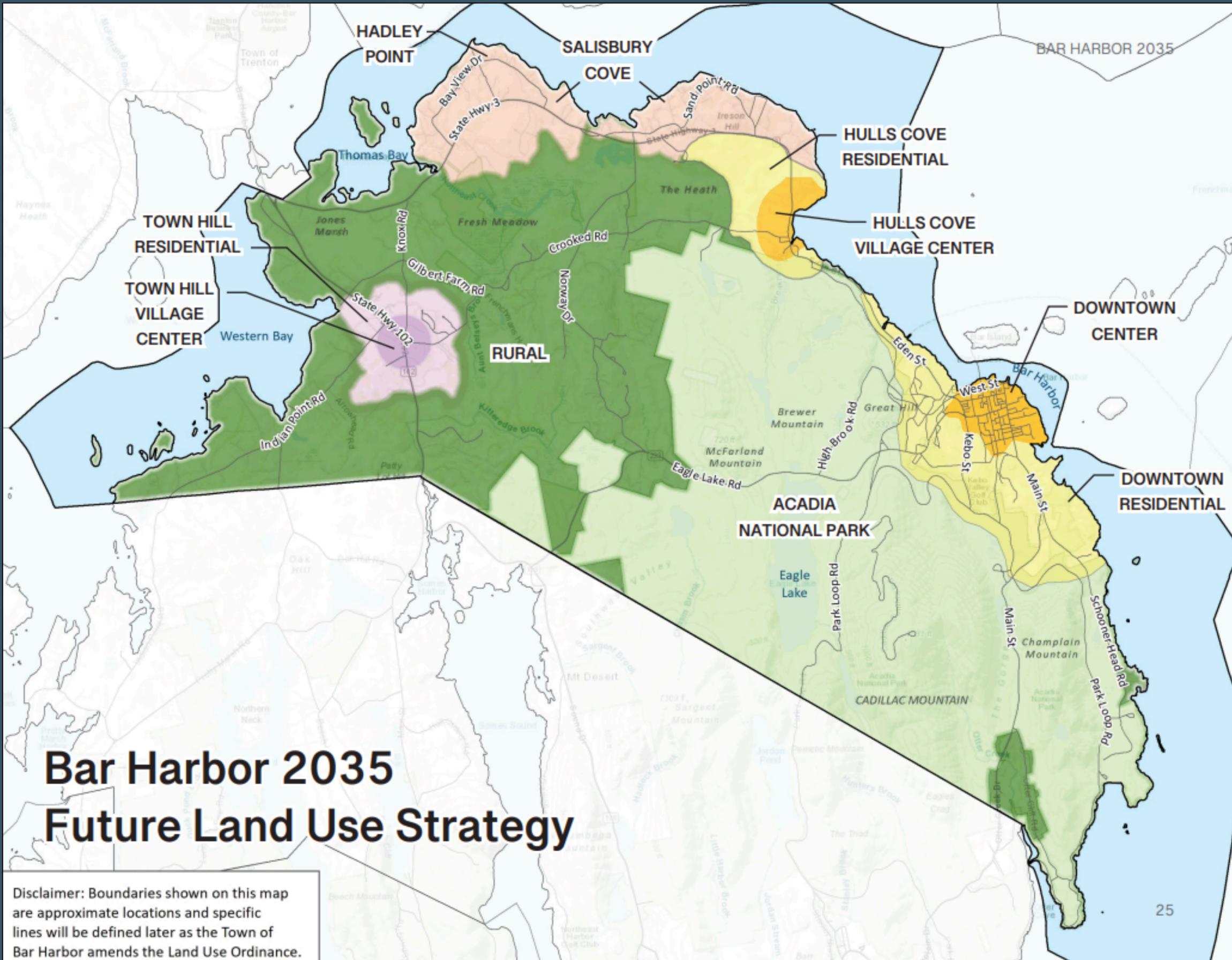
Please see pages 19-23 of the 2035 Comprehensive Plan for more information about Bar Harbor's Vision Statement.



Bar Harbor 2035 Future Land Use Strategy

Disclaimer: Boundaries shown on this map are approximate locations and specific lines will be defined later as the Town of Bar Harbor amends the Land Use Ordinance.

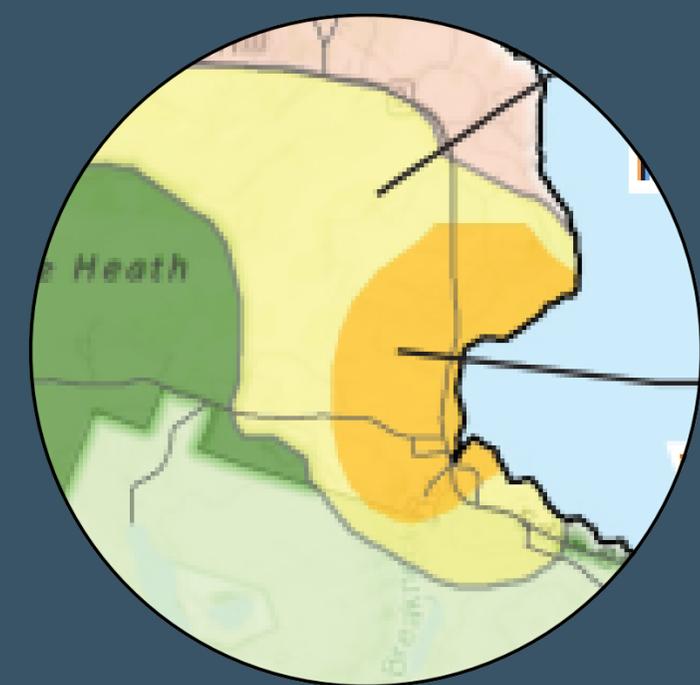
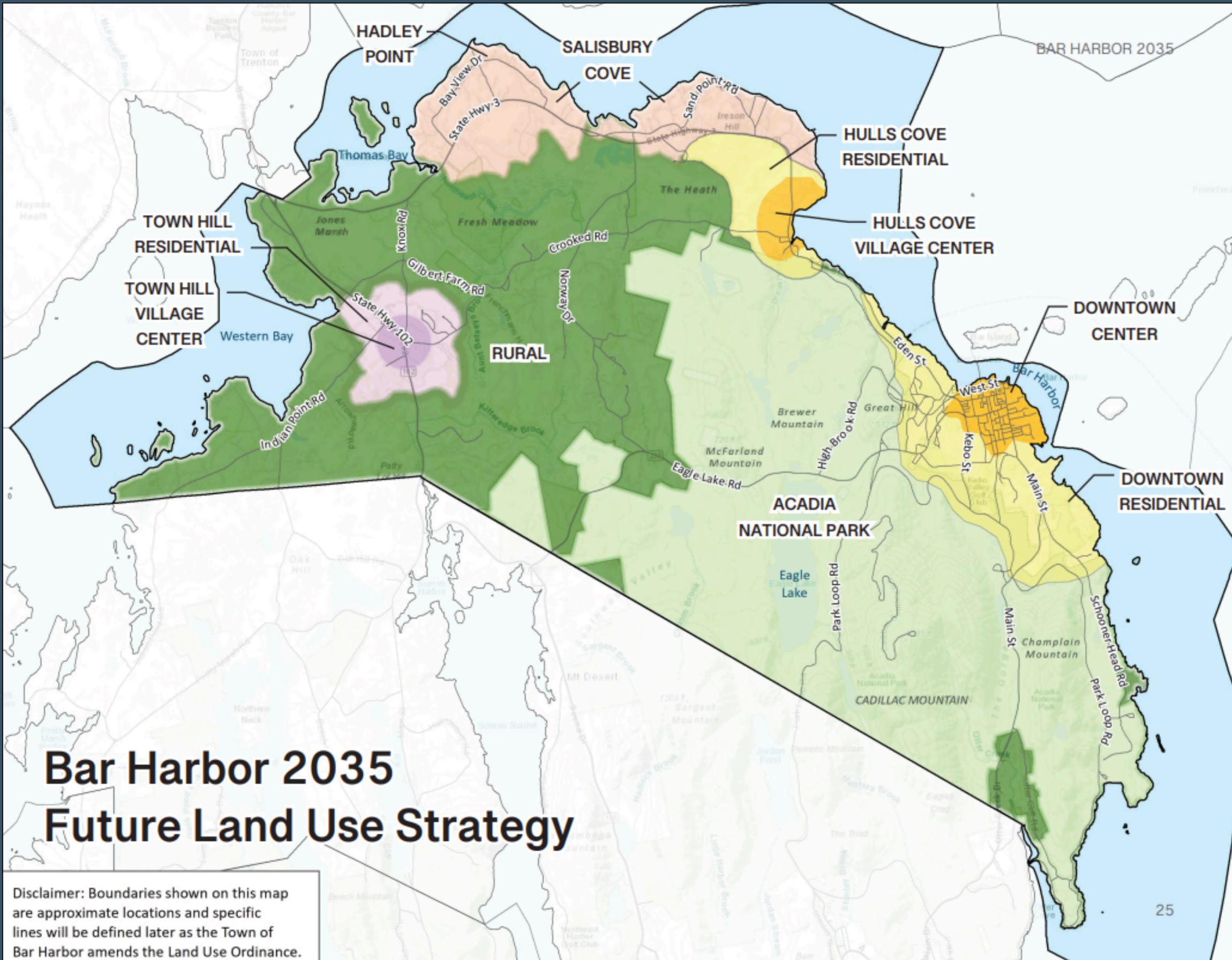
DOWNTOWN CENTER & DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL



Bar Harbor 2035 Future Land Use Strategy

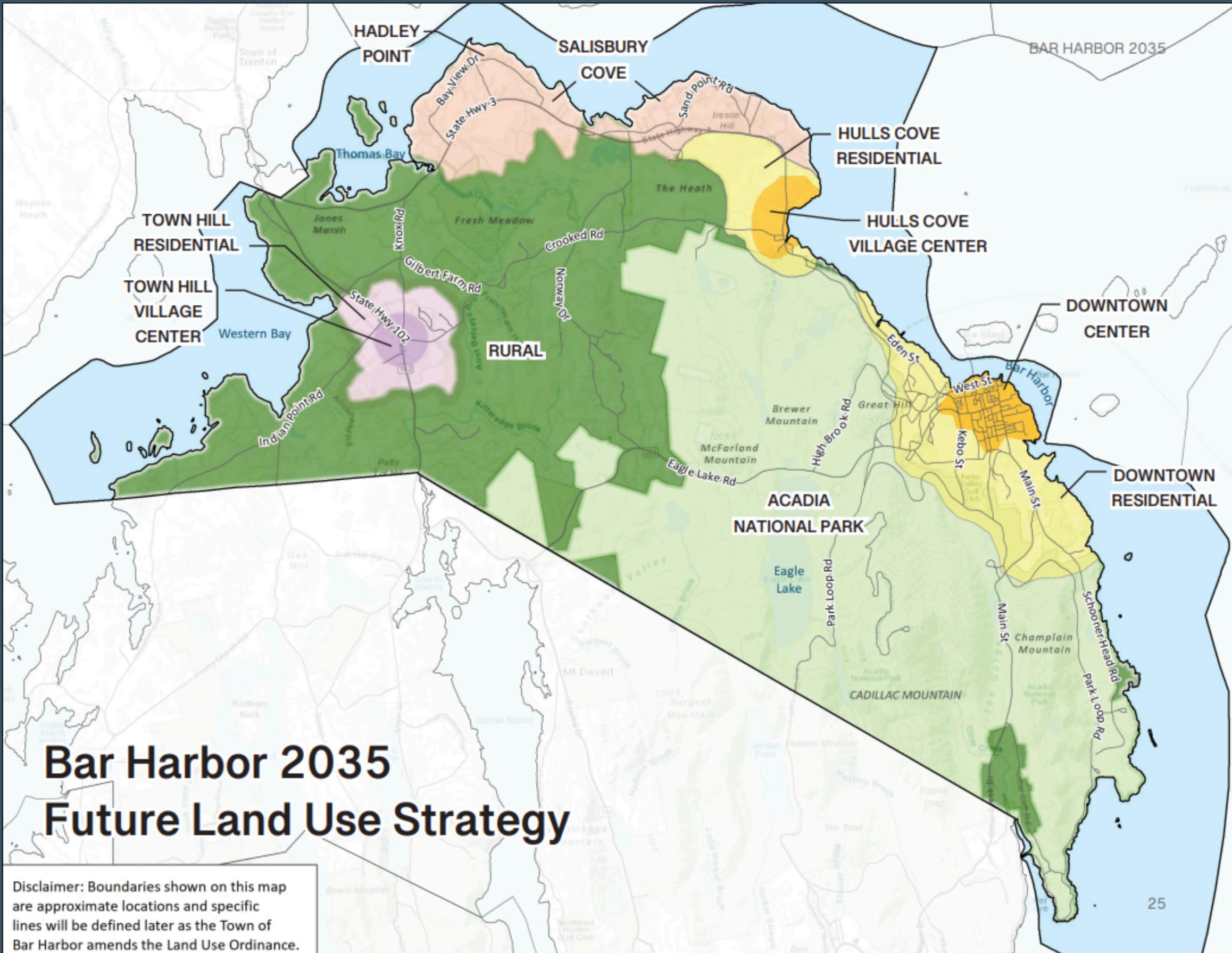
Disclaimer: Boundaries shown on this map are approximate locations and specific lines will be defined later as the Town of Bar Harbor amends the Land Use Ordinance.

HULLS COVE VILLAGE CENTER & VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL



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TOWN HILL VILLAGE CENTER & VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL

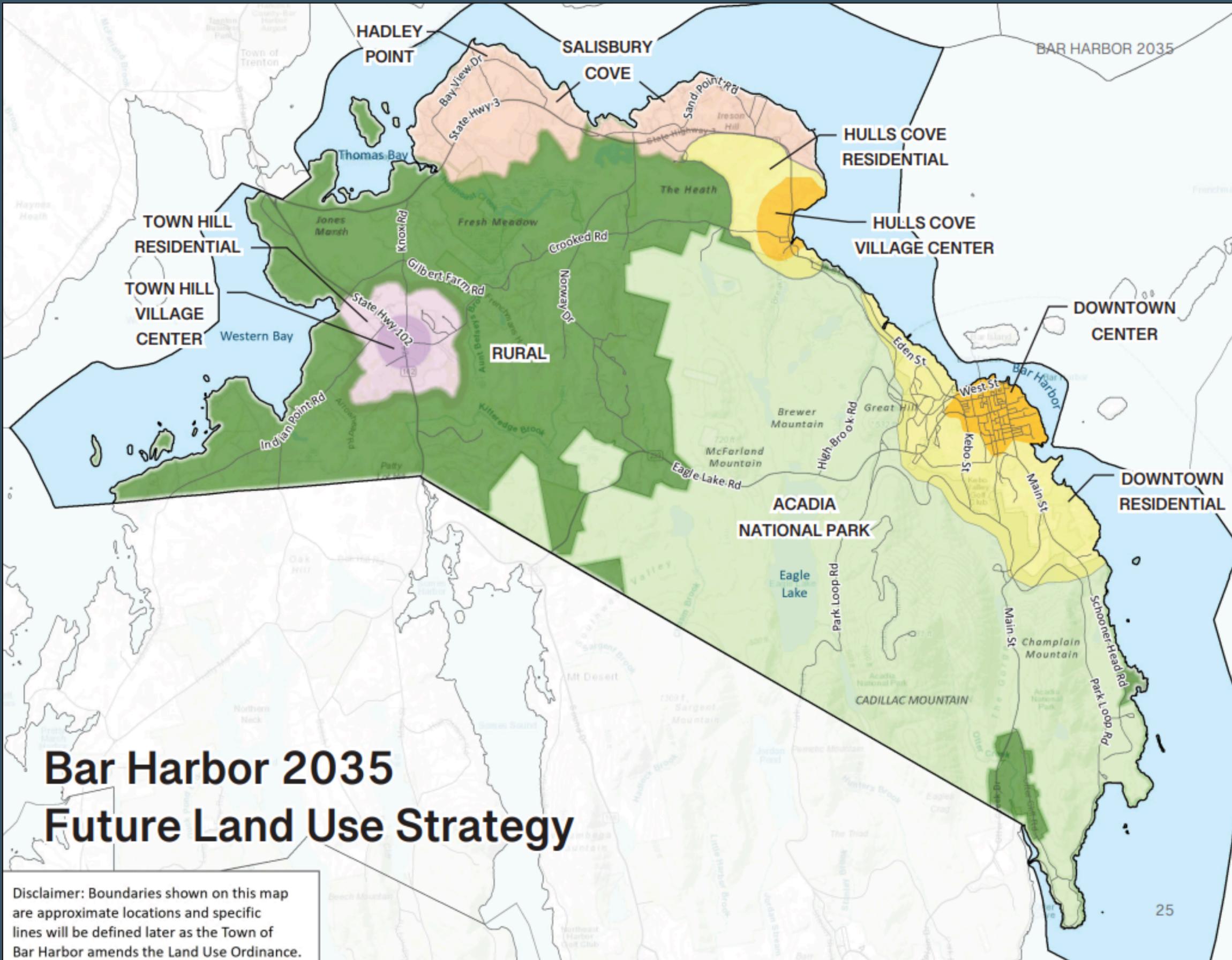


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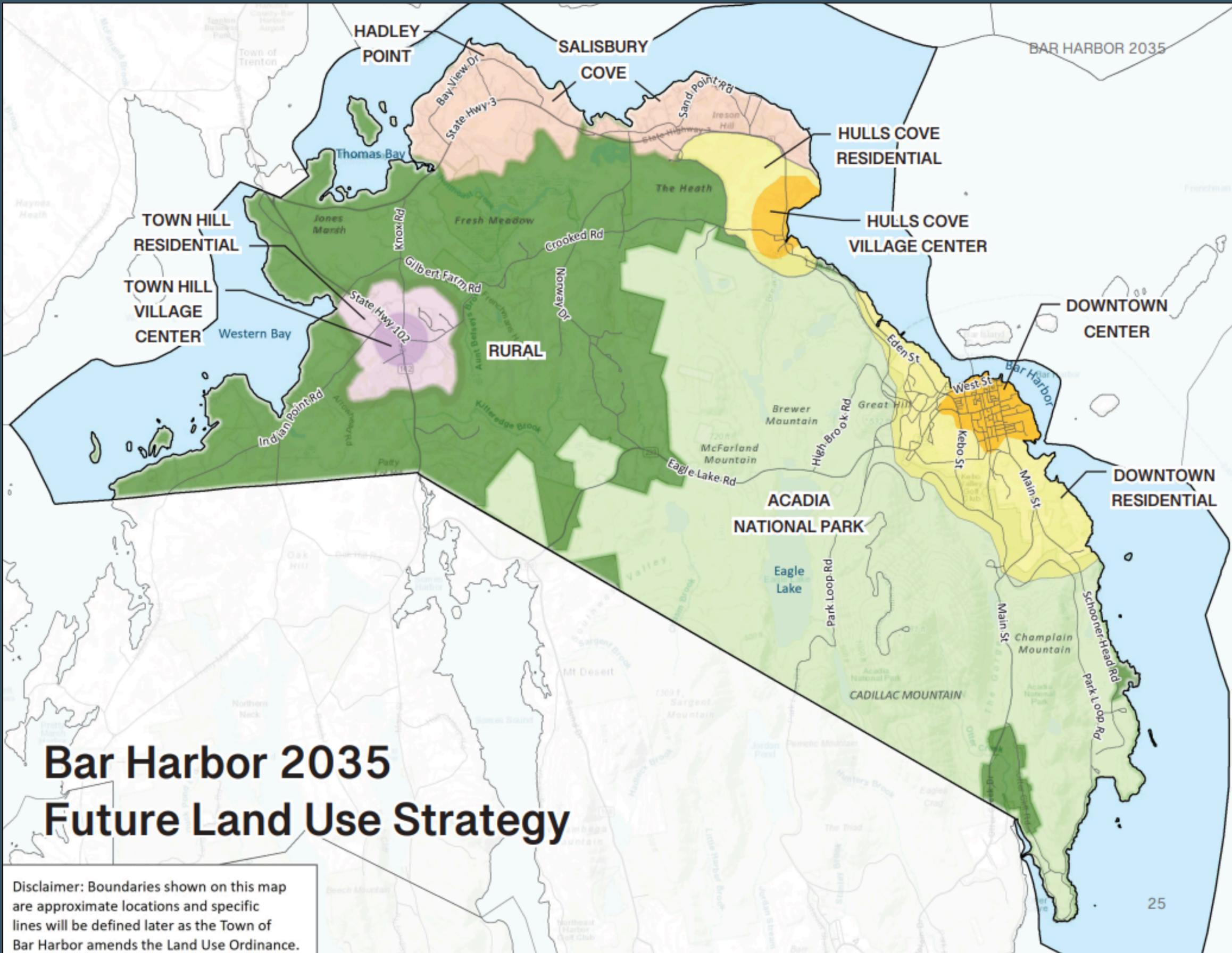


HADLEY POINT & SALISBURY COVE



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RURAL



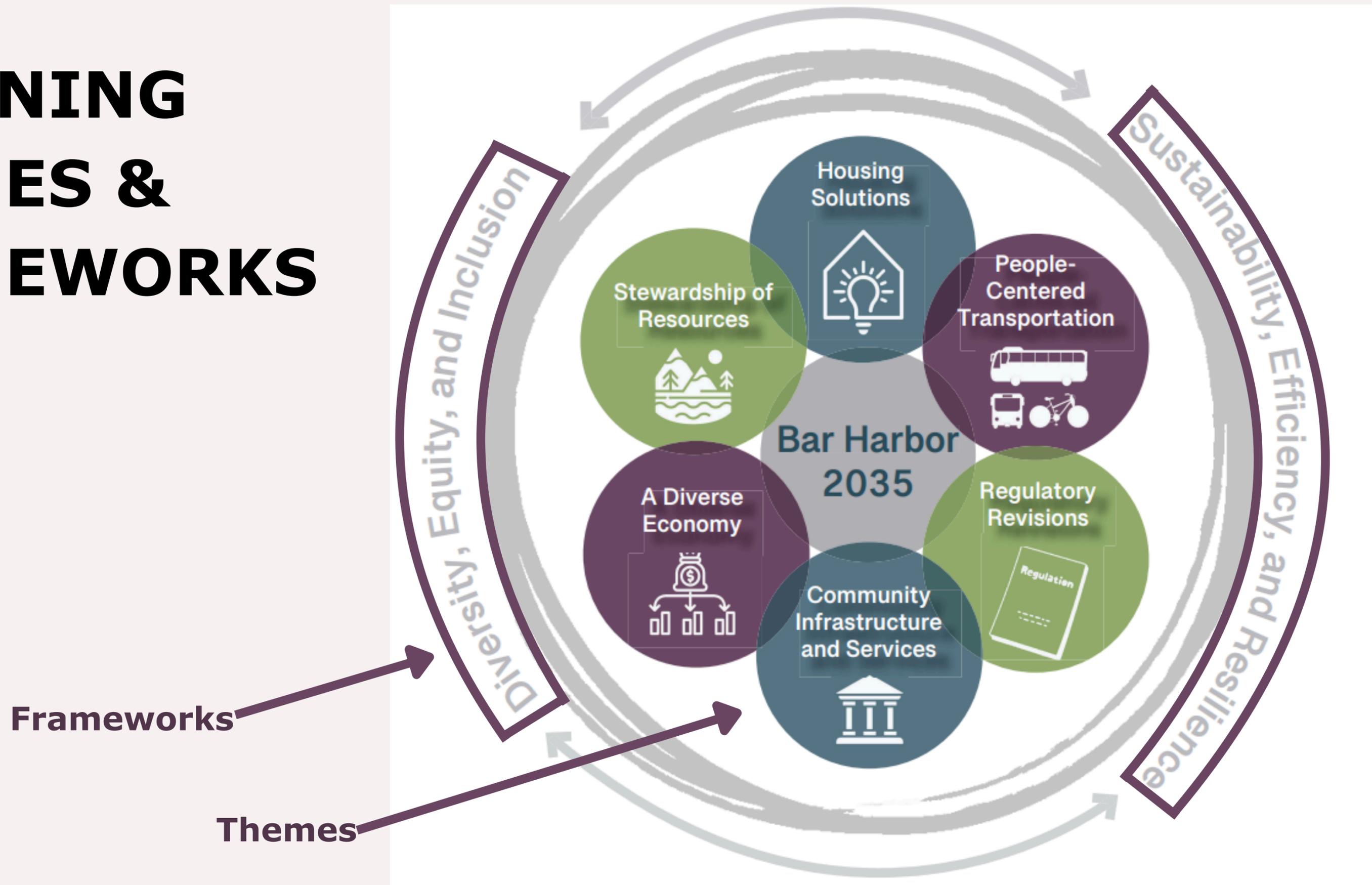
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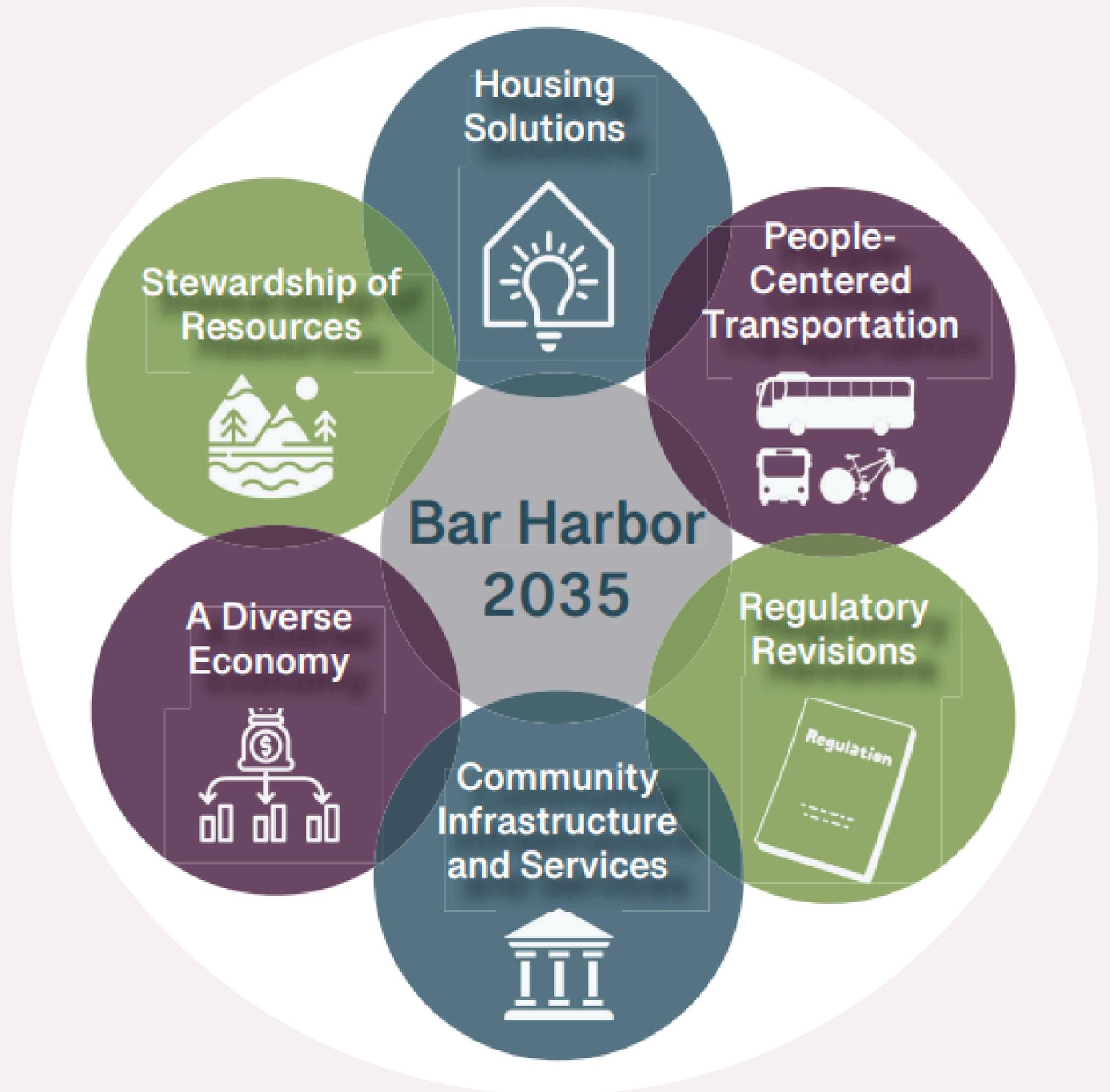
BAR HARBOR'S IDENTIFIED ISSUES

- The impacts of both **housing and labor shortages** across Mount Desert Island.
- The **limited land available for future development**, which influences how Bar Harbor meets its future housing, economic, and infrastructure needs.
- The **cost implications of sprawling development**, which is prevalent in portions of town.
- **Infrastructure investments** that are needed to support future development activity.
- The impacts of **over-tourism and over-crowding** throughout the community.
- The **lack of revenue**, as a small community, to meet the expectations and needs of residents and visitors alike

PLANNING THEMES & FRAMEWORKS



PLANNING THEMES



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

HARBOR 2035 IMPLEMENTATION										
#	Action	Related Themes						Level of Priority	Responsible Party(ies)	Potential Partners
		H	S	T	C	E	R			
Housing Solutions										
1	Develop housing targets and track progress. This could include:				✓	✓	✓			
1a	Create a housing working group or committee in Bar Harbor comprised of town staff, elected and appointed leaders, businesses and anchor institutions, developers, homeowners, renters, and others who have an interest in housing outcomes in the town. Meet quarterly throughout the year to discuss housing policies and programs, zoning changes, incentives, and how to increase the availability of housing in Bar Harbor through creative partnerships.				✓	✓	✓			
1b	Create a Municipal Data Dashboard that is regularly updated to provide information on Bar Harbor's housing supply, housing demand, resident population, workforce population, visitation, and other metrics. The purpose of this initiative is to ensure that efforts, actions, and initiatives are producing the intended and needed results.				✓	✓	✓			
1c	Document approved housing projects, track them, and ensure the affordability of designated units over time.				✓		✓			
1d	Create definitions for the many types of long-term rentals that are permitted so they can be documented and incentivized.						✓			
	Identify price points, income targets, numbers of bedrooms, mortgage and rent affordability gaps, etc. for the number of rental units and homes needed to meet projected demands.					✓				
	Identify other desired targets such as the annual increase in housing stock, % of employees who live where they work, % of deed restricted housing for year-round residents, % of employer-owned dwelling units, and % of year-round-occupied housing units.					✓				
	Track progress on the Housing Policy Framework and update it as needed.									
	Create a housing webpage so the public can easily access information on the town's housing efforts along with other housing related information.				✓					
	Investigate potential housing policies, programs, and incentives that help to maintain the existing year-round housing stock. This may include the following types of strategies:									
	Investigate potential property tax abatement programs for existing residents to encourage them to remain year-round residents by making it more affordable for them to live here.				✓	✓				
	Consider removing inspection fees and permit fees for certain types of housing. This could be reserved for developments with certain percentage of affordable housing or specific types of housing that are most needed.				✓		✓			
	Consider a town program that offers incentives to owners of existing seasonally occupied dwelling units if they transition the use of their dwelling unit into a year-round rental unit.				✓					
	Consider a new local program to acquire deed restrictions to convert existing market-rate homes to affordable homes. This is a method to preserve the existing housing stock as year-round affordable rental and ownership housing.				✓	✓				
	Promote and expand existing programs and uses to encourage businesses to build new units for their seasonal workforce rather than buying year-round dwelling units.				✓	✓	✓			
	Monitor short term rental trends in residential neighborhoods to inform future policy decisions, and take appropriate policy actions as necessary to achieve goals.				✓	✓	✓			
	Investigate potential housing policies, programs, and incentives that increase available housing in Bar Harbor. This may include the following types of strategies:									
	Encourage the creation of year-round rental units through regulatory and non-regulatory approaches.				✓		✓			

APPROVAL TIMELINE

- State Approval
- Informational Session
- Final Comments by Tuesday, December 31, 2024
- Final Edits by end of January 2025
- Town Council discussion of Public Hearing
- Town Council holds a public hearing to place the Plan on the June 2025 ballot
- The community votes whether to adopt the Plan

Planning Department

207-288-3329

planner@barharmoraine.gov



Meeting
recording
& slides



Individual
Comprehensive
Plan Documents



[https://www.barharmoraine.gov/
517/Comprehensive-Planning-Committee](https://www.barharmoraine.gov/517/Comprehensive-Planning-Committee)

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Questions?