



Town of Bar Harbor
Planning Department

BAR HARBOR 2035 Navigation Guide

A Guide to Help
Navigate the
Bar Harbor 2035
Comprehensive
Plan



Acknowledgements

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The Bar Harbor 2035 Comprehensive Plan has been found consistent with the Maine Growth Management Act as of October 25, 2024.



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

Introduction – Our Goal

PLANNING *WITH* INTENTION

“We want the Bar Harbor 2035 plan to be used 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, find content, and overall, ensure the Plan is used and implemented in a collaborative and balanced manner.

What is a comprehensive plan?

A comprehensive plan is a resource document that includes a long-range (10+ year) vision for the future and provides a way for a municipality to plan for and respond to change.

These plans cover a wide array of topics that, when combined, provide a focused approach to growth and development that meets the needs of all residents, businesses, and visitors.

Why should I use the Navigation Guide?

When reviewing a lot of information, it’s easy to focus only on sections of interest and lose sight of the big picture. However, the most important part of this plan is how all the different puzzle pieces come together. This guide highlights the Plan’s big picture to help readers better understand how all the Plan’s details connect to each other.

The big picture – collective future vision – balances many different perspectives, some of which, you, as an individual community member, may not completely agree with. It’s important to remember that Bar Harbor is home to a diverse community, and that a community should aim to understand each other.

The Navigation Guide is designed to 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.

PLAN SECTIONS

SECTION OVERVIEW

BIG PICTURE
SPECIFIC

1

Introduction

PAGE 02

The Context, Planning Process, Engagement Process, and Strategic and Collaborative Approach

- 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

2

Bar Harbor Today & Tomorrow

PAGE 15

The Big Issues & Future Vision for 2035

- Provides an overview of Bar Harbor’s big issues
- Describes and explains the community’s vision for the future
- Presents a visual representation of the vision through a land use strategy

3

Planning Themes

PAGE 40

The Plan’s Focus Areas to Address the Big Issues

- Describes six key themes:
- Housing Solutions
 - Stewardship of Resources
 - People-Centered Transportation
 - Community Infrastructure and Services
 - A Diverse Economy
 - Regulatory Revisions

4

Implementation Plan

PAGE i1

A Flexible Matrix Organized by Planning Themes

- Describes the role and organization of the action matrix
- Identifies general and specific actions to ensure progress
- Clarifies when actions overlap with several Planning Themes

5

Appendices

(AT THE END OF THE PLAN)

Data Behind the Plan

- Includes data that informed the Plan’s creation
- Summarizes the community input and includes the original comments



Overview of Bar Harbor 2035

CONTENTS

Part 1 – Step by Step Guide

USING THE PLAN



"Where do I begin?!"

It's normal to feel overwhelmed when faced with a document full of information. The graphic below offers users a simple path through the Plan's key sections to better understand what the community wants to be by 2035 and how to make its vision a reality.

STEP 1: Read the vision statement and pillars

First, review Bar Harbor's "Big Issues" described on pages 16 to 18 of the Plan. Then read pages 19 through 23 to become familiar with the overall direction. Your understanding of the overall direction is critical, because the vision influences every other section of 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 of the Plan, pay attention to the similarities and differences among the eight land use areas. The key differences are important when understanding how the planning themes and implementation actions are applied to each area.

STEP 3: Review the Planning Themes and Frameworks

Pages 36 through 39 of the Plan provide a general understanding of the key focus areas, referred to as the "planning themes and frameworks." Every theme has some overlap, especially for "Stewardship of Resources" and "Housing Solutions." 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 understand how the Vision and Future Land Use Strategy can become reality through a list of actions. First, review the general actions on page i2 to learn how the town will track implementation. Then review the remaining actions based on your interests. Remember to consider the Vision's direction and how some planning themes overlap. Perceived contradictions may indicate a balanced approach.

Part 2 – Step by Step Guide

ONE EXAMPLE



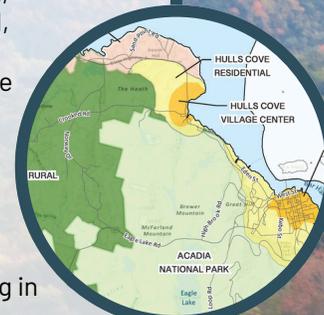
Two of the major issues facing Bar Harbor are the housing and labor shortages. That being said, many community members want to maintain a small-town character and protect the environment. This Plan aims to balance these desires. Below is one way to go through the Plan to understand its approach and recommendations.

VISION PILLAR 2:
Together, we build upon diverse economic strength through partnerships we solutions that meet year- and seasonal needs.

Our businesses contribute to economy and are sized appropriate for environmental, service

STEP 1. After reading the Big Issues and Vision, it's apparent that addressing the housing and labor shortage is one of the Plan's primary focus areas. Efforts to address these issues are further complicated by the conflicting needs of the year-round and seasonal economy.

According to Vision Pillar 4, in order to accomplish the Vision, the community needs to facilitate a collaborative, thoughtful, and balanced decision-making process. Bar Harbor has a diverse community; strong partnerships are needed to create solutions that best serve many unique groups.



STEP 2. The Future Land Use Strategy is how the Vision should physically manifest. The strategy describes the "near-term designated growth areas" which is where most of the future development would occur. The other areas would balance natural resource protection with the need for more housing by investing in infrastructure upgrades and/or minimizing sprawl and fragmentation of habitat through incentivizing gentle density.

Housing Solutions

STEP 3. The Planning Frameworks and Themes include further detail on the individual topics and interconnections mentioned within the Future Land Use Strategy. Sustainability and equity flow through every theme. Therefore, when thinking about housing, the reader should remember that solutions must ensure sustainable and efficient development patterns that benefit a diversity of people, especially the ones who struggle most to find suitable housing. The Housing Theme further explains the barriers to housing development and recommends solutions. For example, where infrastructure is available, diverse housing types should be incentivized, and areas without infrastructure should have site design regulations to incentivize gentle density within housing developments. "Gentle density" is further described on page 52.

Related Themes			
S	T	C	E
		✓	✓
		✓	✓

STEP 4. The Implementation Plan recommends developing housing targets and tracking progress. These targets can include the number of bedrooms, levels of affordability, housing types, and potential locations for different housing densities. Possible actions also include zoning changes and funding mechanisms to incentivize different housing types in certain areas of town. The housing action section also recommends working with year-round and seasonal employers to expand and develop housing programs.

Part 3 – Step by Step Guide

EFFECT CHANGE



“How can I impact change in my community?”

The Plan’s implementation process can manifest differently depending on the type of action being implemented. However, the timeline below lays out one common example of the decision making process around implementing changes. The timeline aims to clarify the decision makers and highlight opportunities for citizen involvement. The Planning Office can also provide further guidance on how to get involved.

1

Appoint an implementation committee

The Town Council will appoint an implementation committee comprised of a diverse group of people. The committee would track the implementation process and recommend action strategies aligned with the Town Council’s priorities to ensure progress towards the Vision and Future Land Use Strategy. These recommendations may also assign the implementation actions to the appropriate parties.

2

Implement recommendations

The implementation committee will present its recommendations to the Council for approval. Based on the chosen strategic direction, Town staff will start working on the details to implement the recommendations to meet the specified goals and objectives. This work could manifest as Land Use Ordinance amendments, budget updates, grant applications, policy revisions, new ordinances, new taskforces, and other efforts.

3

Collect feedback to inform revisions

Best time for public input!

The Council, boards, committees, and/or staff will review the draft changes and take public input. Depending on the proposed change, a session would be scheduled to listen to the community’s comments on the changes and answer questions to inform the revision process. All regular meetings and events are listed on the Town’s calendar and meeting agendas are posted to the Agenda Center.

4

Present changes to the community

Once a proposal is finalized and ready for a final review, a public hearing to determine if the proposed changes are ready to come to a vote will be held. This step may include adoption support from some boards and committees. Changes are not typically made in this stage.

5

Adopt changes

Depending on what type of change is proposed, the final decision maker could be the Town Council or the voters. Changes to the Land Use Ordinance need to be approved by the voters, while most other changes are approved by the Town Council.



Town of Bar Harbor Planning Department



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