

# Chapter O

## Future Land Use

### 1. Purpose

This section discusses likely future land use patterns in Brooksville. An understanding of land use trends is particularly important in determining Brooksville's ability to manage future growth. Specifically, this chapter:

- a) attempts to predict growth scenarios for the town;
- b) identifies land areas suitable and unsuitable for potential growth over the next ten years;
- c) describes options for growth management; and
- d) provides a set of steps that can be taken to engage residents in the growth management process.

### 2. Key Findings and Issues

Although Brooksville has experienced minimal fluctuations in population and land use during the past few decades, there is good reason to believe that during the next decade the town will experience a growth in population. There is, therefore, a need to find ways in which the town can accommodate increased population while maintaining the rural nature of the town.

Among the factors likely to increase Brooksville's population are these recent dynamics:

- increased heat throughout the United States, which will increase the appeal of Maine because of its cooler temperatures;
- sea-level rise, which will increase the value of Maine's generally rocky coast in comparison with less protected shorelines elsewhere;
- Maine's investment in strategies to address climate change, which compare favorably with policies in other states;
- Maine's diligence in addressing the coronavirus pandemic, which compares favorably with actions in other states; and
- a recognition, in many sectors of the economy, that it is possible to work remotely ("from home") in locations where robust, affordable broadband is available.

Increased population is likely to include the following impacts:

- increase housing prices, which will reduce the availability of affordable housing;
- seasonal dwellings will be becoming "three-season" or year-round residences;
- increase the expectations for municipal services, and thus increase taxes;
- degrade the rural qualities that are preferred by a large majority of residents; and
- create tensions in situations where land uses are incompatible with surrounding abutters.

Brooksville will do well to institute a whole-community planning effort -- information-gathering, discussion and prioritization, involving all residents -- to address probable future land use issues

soon, rather than wait for population pressure to create a critical situation. The Town can draw upon the experience of community members, as well as on examples of other communities that have accommodated reasonable, slow growth while preserving their rural nature.

Because many towns in Maine will probably face similar impacts from increased population, it is likely that both the state and non-governmental organizations will increase the availability of technical assistance to help communities address increasingly complex land-use issues.

### **3. Key Findings & Issues from the 2006 Plan**

An interesting and forward-looking set of recommendations was provided in the 2006 plan and is reproduced in Table O-1.

**Table O-1  
Pertinent Land Use Recommendations from the 2006 Comprehensive Plan**

- 1) When and where permitted, require commercial and industrial uses and other non-residential land uses to blend into the adjacent landscape and neighborhood pattern to protect surrounding properties and the look, feel and character of the area. Such examples include: a) commercial, b) industrial, c) mobile home parks, d) multi-unit residential complexes, e) sub-divisions, f) others as necessary
- 2) Ensure that town wide regulations serve the needs of the public and maintain a balance between the needs and rights of the individual and the needs and rights of the greater good
- 3) Define growth areas and rural areas within the town and manage growth accordingly
- 4) Provide building standard guidelines for properties to be built in sensitive areas such as wetlands, the shoreline and critical habitat areas.
- 5) Regularly seek public input and wishes on land use issues in town to consider any additional revisions

## **4. 2018 Public Opinion Survey Results**

Eighty-two percent of respondents supported maintaining the “rural way of life” with less than 1% saying that it was not important. Sixty-seven percent supported allowing residential development anywhere in town, with 20% supporting some restrictions on where this type of development may occur. As to commercial development, 31% of respondents supported restricting it to designated areas, 35% supported development close to the “village centers.” Only 16% supported allowing commercial development anywhere in Brooksville.

## **6. Future Land Use Patterns**

### **Overview:**

Without interventions to guide its growth and development at least for the next decade, Brooksville’s land use pattern is projected to continue, with an increasing influx of seasonal and permanent residents building homes wherever opportunity permits. Although this land development pattern is easy for the town to accommodate in the short term – it arrives without the friction of developing, applying and enforcing land use regulations – it can exact long-term costs. Those costs can be both financial and aesthetic. Also, widely spaced development creates a community that becomes gradually “suburbanized”, rather than retaining the rural character currently favored by a clear majority of residents.

### **The Coastline:**

Despite projected sea level rise, the demand for buildable residential land along the coast of Maine, including Brooksville, likely will increase, although landowners who are aware of the impacts of climate change affecting their properties and who have the financial means will be seeking higher ground. They will also be mindful of projected curtailment of transportation access due to sea level rise. (See Chapter M – Climate Change.)

The Shoreland Zone is defined in State statute as the land within 250’ (measured horizontally) from the normal high water line of any great pond, river, wetland, or the coast. Towns may enact stricter standards than the State minimums for shoreland protection, and also designate which districts/areas will fall under resource protection. Brooksville’s Shoreland Environmental Protection Ordinance adheres to the State minimum standards. However, as development continues within the shoreland area, Brooksville may want to consider adopting a local ordinance that goes beyond the State minimums to protect the coastline and coastal waters from, for example, construction-related overland flow or other pollution, which could impact important marine based industries. Presumably, as the coastline recedes, the 250-foot zone will migrate inland, subjecting new areas to the state-mandated Shoreland protections.

### **The Villages:**

If unmanaged development continues primarily along the shore and the major traffic routes, there is a risk that Brooksville’s development pattern will result in more costly public services

such as longer/slower school bus routes, more public road maintenance, longer emergency response times, and other higher infrastructure costs than if new housing were more concentrated in areas where conditions are most suitable for building. Incentivizing development near the historic villages can help reduce future costs to the Town and also re-align with traditional Maine development patterns.

On the other hand, public service costs in Brooksville continue to be among the lowest in the state, consistent with a population that has the ability and desire to be self reliant and independent. Densification of development also means more concerns for water supply and sewage disposal. Adequate design that takes these concerns into account increases development costs (for example, costs of private roads and community water supply or sewage disposal). Those increased costs can be borne by the developers and ultimately the residents of the denser development areas, or by the Town, through general tax increases. The net cost effect is not immediately obvious and depends on the particular development proposals.

### **Routes 175 & 176:**

Densification of development within the historic villages would consolidate services, reducing additional potentially hazardous intersections of new private driveways with these collector roads, and also reducing vehicle miles traveled by having residential units closer to potential new services and amenities. Reliance on long commutes for gasoline and groceries, for example, is likely to become increasingly problematic, and an increasing population will result in more traffic on these collector routes.

### **Remote Areas:**

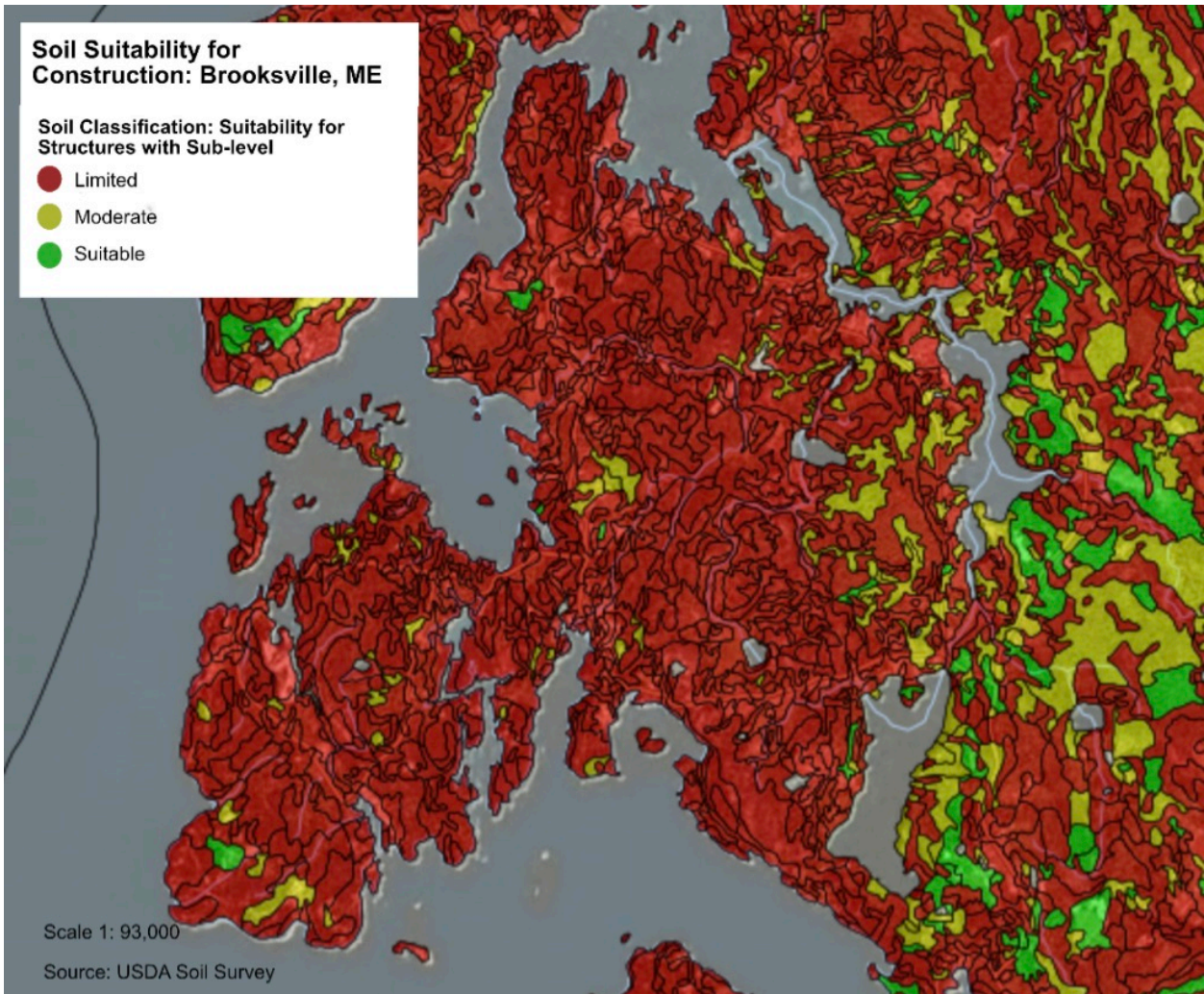
As previously noted in chapter N, the interior of town may not be particularly well suited for residential development due to topography, geology, and the presence of many ponds, streams and wetlands. The presence of wetlands, wooded areas, and other intact ecosystem components in these areas could be negatively impacted by development, thus decreasing the environmental quality of the town by reducing vital habitats and the wetlands that filter pollutants, retain water during drought periods, contribute to groundwater recharge, and prevent erosion and sedimentation. Despite these geotechnical constraints, modern building technologies can overcome many environmental factors. The increased development that these advances make possible could be a detriment to the surrounding environment – or they could be a means of allowing additional growth within the town, while at the same time preserving valued open space and rural character. Again, it depends on the particular development proposals. There are several locations in town where historic roadways could be re-opened, to create building opportunities for new, less costly housing while reducing the development pressure on the coast and major town roads.

## **7. Areas Suitable for Growth**

Table N-2 from the previous chapter shows that Brooksville has an abundance of undeveloped acreage. However, as described in Chapter N, due to soil constraints and other factors, not all of this land is suited to or available for development. Much of the soil is classified as being

suitable only for low or very low-density development. The soil ratings are based upon factors such as, soil drainage, septic system suitability, suitability for construction of basements, and suitability for road and driveway construction. These are based upon State of Maine building standards. See Map O-1

**Map O-1**  
**Soils Suitability for Structures with Sub-Levels (e.g. basements)**



Most of Brooksville is situated on poorly drained soils and/or bedrock surficial geology: these areas are only marginally suitable for development projects such as subdivisions or even modern two-story dwellings with basements and septic systems. However, geology is not the only factor that determines suitability of an area for development. Transportation access is another. Subdivisions are often situated near traffic collectors and major roads. Such transportation-oriented developments are often more appropriate than remote subdivisions due to their ease of access and less potential for traffic congestion. Another factor to consider when siting residential or commercial developments is avoiding important wetlands and watersheds. In addition, consideration must be given to protecting agricultural land, for the reasons outlined in Chapter J.

## **8. Future Development in Brooksville from 2020 – 2030**

Formulating development projections is not an exact science. Many factors are associated with making such projections, and, as in any predictive model, the unexpected can always arise.

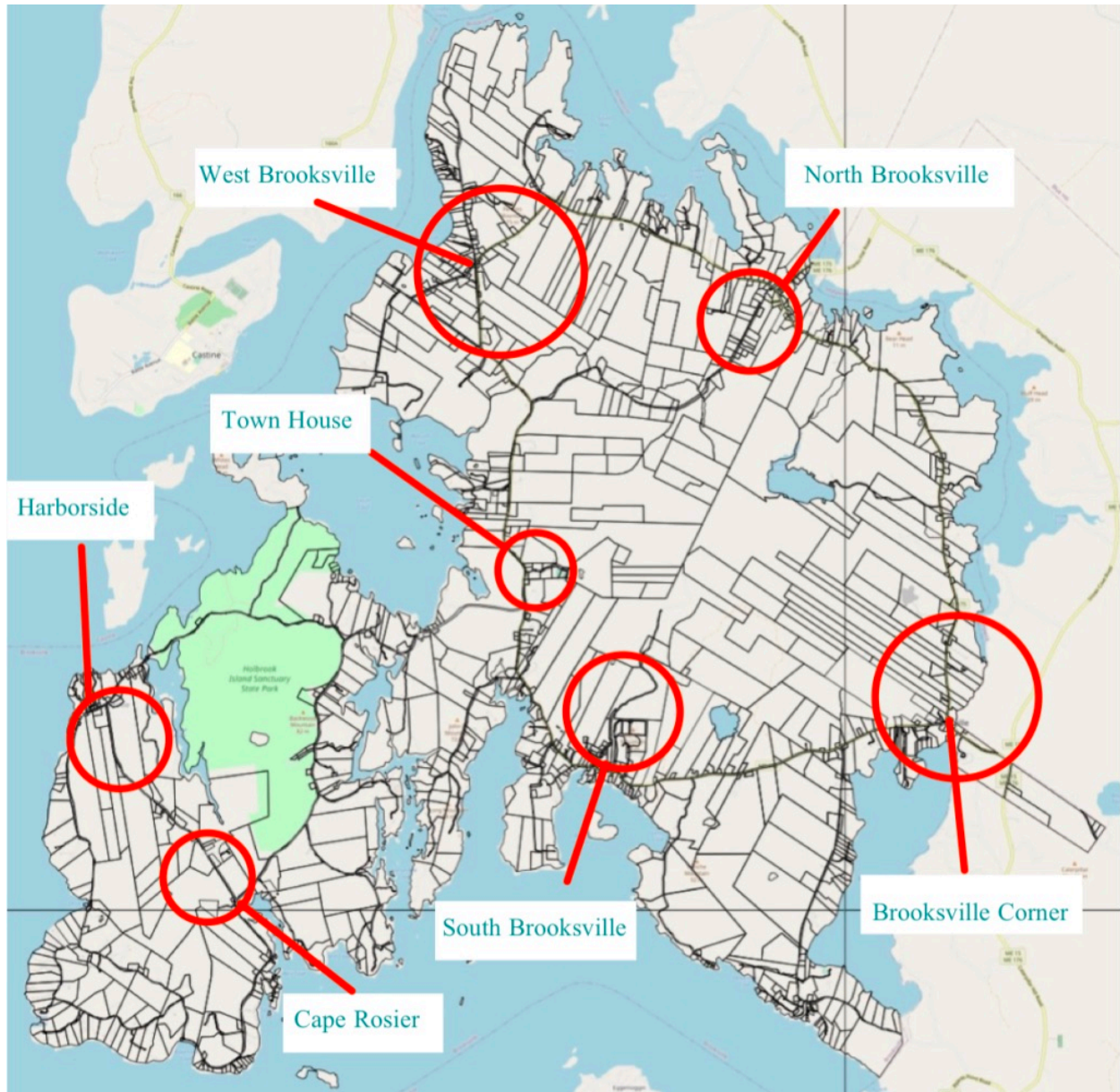
The town's geography has been a major factor in isolating Brooksville and keeping development pressure minimal, but with better internet Brooksville residents will be able to engage in previously unfeasible commercial activities and diverse employment opportunities. In addition, development pressures will likely increase due simply to national migration trends. In fact as seen in the 2020 census, Brooksville's downward population trend has probably already reversed. See Chapter A.

Using the past decade of population increase for the County as a whole (8.5%) as an estimated forecast for Brooksville from 2020 to 2030, approximately 80 new residents will be added to town. At 2.3 people per household, approximately 35 new dwelling units will be needed over the next ten years for year-round housing, not counting turnover of existing buildings whose owners will have died or moved away. Of course as said earlier, population projection is not an exact science, and the future scenario could be very different. It is prudent for the Town to be prepared for more development and institute reasonable controls if it truly wishes to preserve its rural character.

Conservation land (protected by easements and Land Trusts) provides a method for the town to ensure that residents can maintain access to natural areas, open spaces for hiking, hunting, fishing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, ATV-ing, and other recreational activities popular in Maine. Although protecting open spaces can reduce property tax revenues, Brooksville and other nearby towns have found the benefits of open space to outweigh the cost of reduced tax revenues, particularly if public access is granted. Perhaps by informing landowners of the provisions of Maine law that limit landowner liability for public access, more landowners who have conservation easements on their properties will enroll them in the program of open space with public access provisions. It is also possible that there may be a new statewide initiative to boost participation in conservation programs for the purpose of assisting in the mitigation of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Such an initiative should include rebates to the towns for lost tax revenue.

Rural towns, including Brooksville, need to find a balance among four important factors: promoting development, conserving natural resources, controlling municipal taxes, and preserving local culture. While there remains ample developable land throughout Brooksville, the question is, will there be enough land to hold an increased population while at the same time preserving the rural character which the majority favors? The answer depends on how Brooksville chooses to develop. Map O-2 shows one possible scenario.

## Map O-2 Future Land Use Scenario



This map shows the locations of Brooksville’s traditional village centers, and a new growth area in the vicinity of the Town House, where there are already several important public services. Modest growth in the areas encompassed by circles should be encouraged. Development, both within and outside of these areas, must take into account preservation of farmland, important views, conserved lands, wetlands, soil suitability and transportation requirements, as well as the desires of the current residents. These factors are discussed throughout this plan.

## 9. Goals & Objectives

<b>GOAL: Brooksville will encourage appropriate new development while maintaining its rural small-town character and pristine environment, without placing an undue burden on taxpayers.</b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Responsible Party(ies)</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Promote development in best-suited areas of town such as the historic villages.	Devise a rural subdivision design guideline and strategy document to inform the public, developers and designers, and policymakers on alternative methods of development.	Select Board, their designees, Planning Board, HCPC	Immediate – within 2 years.
	Consider whether changes to the existing Subdivision Ordinance are warranted.		
	Approve non-residential development only in existing vacant or underused properties of matching or similar use. (e.g., a gas station /convenience store at vacant store)		
Identify targets of opportunity for development projects that are of clear benefit to the community and conform to the desired outcome of maintaining its rural character in the face of future change	Explore the “brownfields” redevelopment opportunity offered by the Callahan Mine site, specifically the possibility of locating a solar field there to generate electricity	Planning Board; landowner	Immediate – within 2 years
	Consider areas of town most suitable to achieve the housing goals expressed in Chapter C	Housing committee, Planning Board	
Protect the rural character and historic land use patterns of Brooksville, such as scenic views, working farms and intact natural areas.	Encourage coordination between conservation groups, conservation easement properties and various landowners on outreach and educational materials.	Planning Board, MCHT, etc.	Immediate – ongoing
Preserve current working farmland and facilitate new opportunities for future production and agricultural development.	Work with Maine Farmland Trust and local partners to support local farmers and property owners. (See Chapter J)	ACEC, Maine Farmland Trust, Hancock County Soil and Water District	Immediate – ongoing

*Table continues on next page*



Objective	Strategy	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeline
Promote greater community wide understanding of land use challenges and opportunities.	Provide educational materials to property owners and developers on best practices in construction and land use.	Select Board, or their designees, (for example a special land use committee)	Immediate - ongoing
	Create a process for community involvement in development review based upon set of guidelines for future development proposals. These guidelines will consider the impact of development on the natural environment, “the look, feel, and character” of the town, economic, social wellbeing and physical safety of town residents.		
Foster engagement and dialogue to keep the public well informed and develop community consensus on future development and land use directions in Brooksville.	Organize public open houses and community dialogue sessions to gather public input on development concerns and methods.	Select Board, or their designees, (for example a special land use committee)	Immediate - ongoing

: