



# Sustainable Strategies for Small Cities and Rural Areas

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

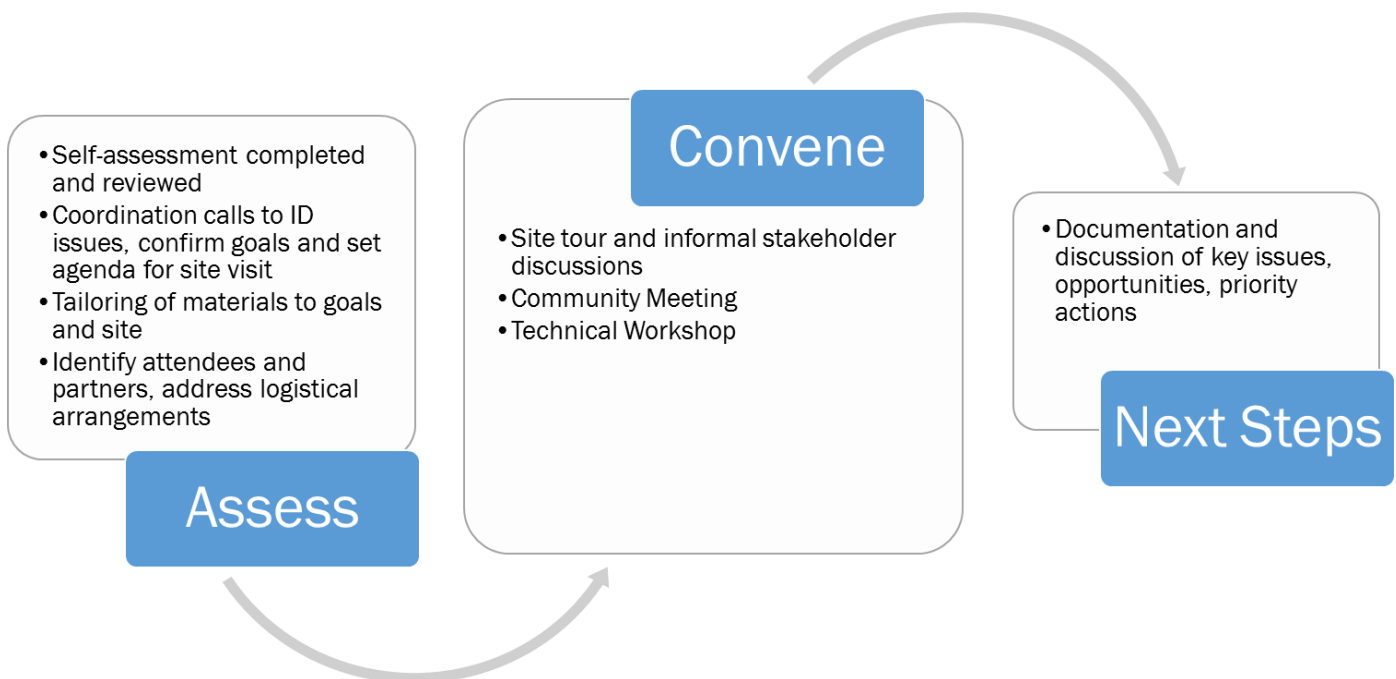
Damariscotta, Maine  
Next Steps Memorandum

November 16, 2015

## INTRODUCTION

The core mission of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to protect human health and the environment. EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities (OSC)—or the Smart Growth Office— helps to support this mission by working with communities to reach development goals that create positive impacts on air, water, public health, economic vitality and quality of life for residents. OSC created the Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities program to provide quick, targeted technical assistance on specific smart growth development topics by bringing subject matter experts to communities. Communities request this technical assistance through a competitive application process.

The Building Blocks process is designed to move a community through a process of assessment, convening, and action planning—helping learn about a given topic and create plan to move forward on implementation. The program helps a community identify potential challenges, as well as realize opportunities that already exist to make progress. It includes a series of pre-and post-workshop conference calls, a self-assessment, and an on-site convening of stakeholders to discuss issues, next steps, and actions related to advancing the communities' specific goals. These efforts help a given community gain a deeper understanding of a particular smart growth issue and identify specific steps necessary to move them closer to implementation. The diagram below outlines the typical flow of the Building Blocks technical assistance program.



### THREE STAGES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (CREDIT: RENAISSANCE PLANNING)

This memo documents the key outcomes of the technical assistance for Damariscotta, Maine with the Sustainable Strategies for Small Cities and Rural Areas tool. It identifies key community issues, prioritized goals, and specific actions that resulted from the technical assistance process aimed at



helping the community improve housing choices and transportation options, and encourage economic development.

## COMMUNITY CONTEXT

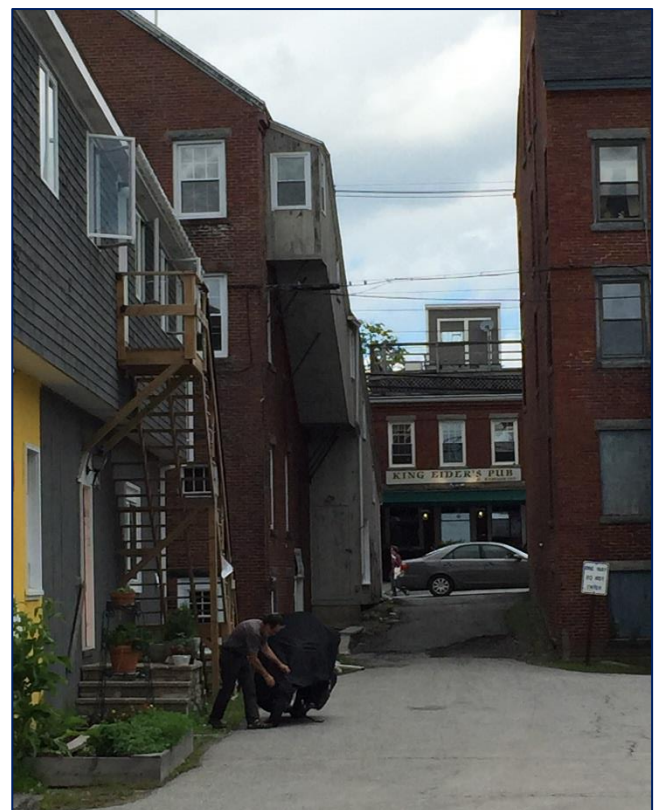
Damariscotta is a small town of about 2,200 people located in mid-coast Maine. Its downtown is located on the tidal Damariscotta River. Historically, the town served as a major port and was known for making wooden ships and bricks. Today, the economy is driven by services such as health care and tourism. The community has a very distinct sense of place with a walkable historic main street downtown and surrounding neighborhoods that feature a mix of architectural styles with several 1800s era structures still standing. A handful of the buildings in town and several natural areas containing oyster shell middens outside of the downtown are on the National Register of Historic Places. Several stores, restaurants, the pier, and boat launch line Main Street, providing views of the tidal river. The town of Damariscotta serves as the commercial hub for the area and is a major destination for locals and tourists.

Beyond the downtown area, other community assets include the development located along Upper Main Street (Alt. US 1) and the Midcoast Miles Regional Hospital complex on Bristol Road. Development along the upper Main Street area includes the primary grocery stores, restaurants, the local elementary school and other businesses located in a dispersed, lower-density pattern. Similarly, the hospital complex is somewhat isolated geographically from the other key destinations within the town. The majority of development outside of the downtown is only accessible by car.

Like many coastal communities in Maine, the town's population includes both summer-only and year-round residents, many of whom are retired. Damariscotta claims the oldest median age – 64.2



**DAMARISCOTTA MAIN STREET HISTORIC MARKER (CREDIT: RENAISSANCE PLANNING)**



**PEDESTRIAN PATHWAY FROM MAIN STREET TO WATER'S EDGE (CREDIT: RENAISSANCE PLANNING)**

years old – in the entire state<sup>1</sup>. Many aging residents locate in Damariscotta not only because of the charm and character of the area, but also because it is home to Midcoast Miles Regional Hospital and its affiliated assisted living facilities.

The town of Damariscotta recently completed a major update to its Comprehensive Plan, which identified several key priorities including: 1) preservation of the historic downtown, including long-term protection of the downtown against sea-level rise; and 2) creation of housing opportunities that enable older residents to remain in the community and age in place, while providing more options for workforce housing that caters more to families. Many of the existing buildings in the historic downtown continue to age and are expensive to maintain. While the area has a National Historic Register designation, there are no local policies or incentives in place to ensure that the historic buildings can be preserved and maintained over time. Additionally, the town is also working on plans for major infrastructure improvements along the downtown waterfront to make the area more resilient to flooding. This same area also provides the primary parking for the downtown, abuts several of the historic buildings, and also offers some of the best views of the river and its coves, which is something the community values.



**PRIVATE HOME LOCATED ON THE WATERFRONT  
(CREDIT: RENAISSANCE PLANNING)**

While the downtown is walkable and contains some residential units above shops or within walking distance of Main Street, the majority of homes in town are larger single-family homes accessible only by car. Additionally, community members cited some concerns that the existing housing stock was not affordable for many of the employees that work in retail or at the hospital, or that there are many options for existing residents who may want to downsize into smaller sized, less expensive housing. The comprehensive plan calls for additional residential density close to the center of town, but according to local community members, there just isn't enough local demand to attract private developers to provide new higher density housing. Compounding these challenges, the town currently carries a high tax burden compared to neighboring communities, with

a significant proportion going to support the local schools. Community members are therefore sometimes wary of any new development that might add new residents and increase school enrollment, or any other public efforts that would increase what is already perceived to be a high tax burden. Given these dynamics, town members are seeking assistance to help them identify a mix of creative strategies to achieve their historic preservation and housing goals.

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<sup>1</sup> US Census. American Community Survey, Damariscotta, Maine, 2013. Web. 5 Nov. 2015  
<http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

## COMMUNITY CONVENING

EPA contractors from Renaissance Planning, with support from EPA staff, facilitated an on-site workshop in Damariscotta on June 22 and 23, 2015. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together key local stakeholders to identify potential solutions to the town's housing and historic preservation challenges. Town administration staff served as key local partners who coordinated all of the events.

### Site Tour

The workshop began with a driving tour of Damariscotta that helped familiarize the project team with local conditions. The tour also provided the town staff and officials with an opportunity to highlight existing community assets such as the historic downtown area, the waterfront, the hospital complex, and key destinations around the larger Great Salt Bay and the adjacent community Newcastle. Highlights of the tour include the following:

- **Downtown Waterfront Parking Area –** Damariscotta is currently investigating the potential of raising the height of the large surface parking lot downtown and thereby create a stronger sea wall along the water's edge and reducing flooding of downtown businesses. The waterfront project is also seen as an opportunity to reconfigure public parking and potentially create an expanded pier or boardwalk that would feature historic elements that tell the story of the community's shipbuilding past, while creating a place for residents and visitors to sit by the water. The waterfront project also presents opportunities for green infrastructure improvements that could help address stormwater flows.
- **Lincoln County Healthcare – Miles Memorial Hospital Campus –** The Miles Memorial Hospital Damariscotta campus includes a hospital and emergency room, long-term care facilities, retirement housing, home health and hospice services and multi-specialty physician offices. Lincoln County Health is the largest employer in the county with more than 1,200 employees spread between the Damariscotta and Boothbay campuses. The Damariscotta complex is located about three-quarters of a mile from Main Street, connected by a two-lane rural roadway that is not seen as walkable or bikeable. Several vacant or underutilized lots around the hospital hold promise for additional medical office space and residential units. Despite its relative geographic proximity, the location of the hospital site is somewhat isolated from the downtown, making it a challenge to access by any other means other than a car.
- **Round Top Farm –** The Round Top Farm site is located just over a mile outside of town off Upper Main Street (Alt. US 1). It includes a historic farmhouse, open fields, trails, and views of the river. It is managed by the non-profit Damariscotta River Association and is used for passive recreation, wildlife watching and as a venue for art and music festivals. The site also includes a



**COMMUNITY TOUR BY LOCAL TROLLEY BUS  
(CREDIT: RENAISSANCE PLANNING)**



trail that provides access to Whaleback Shell Midden State Historic Site. The trails located on this property are part of a larger network of planned trails by the non-profit Damariscotta River Association. There is a desire to create a robust trail network in the area that would provide connections between the adjacent town of Newcastle, Main Street in Damariscotta, Round Top Farm, and other natural and historic sites and community amenities around the river and the Great Salt Bay. This trail network could also provide opportunities for wildlife corridor preservation and improved pedestrian and bicycle connections between major destinations in the area.

- **Commercial Businesses on Upper Main Street (Alt. US 1)** – Just beyond the historic downtown, the Upper Main Street (Alt. US 1) corridor changes in character from a two-lane walkable main street to a 3-lane rural highway. Along this highway stretch are several commercial businesses and retail establishments located in strip-style shopping centers with more than ample parking out front. These businesses serve local residents and tourists. The development form in these areas is low density, single use and does not provide convenient access for pedestrians. However, this area has the potential for some additional infill development with some mixing of uses that could result in smaller walkable retail centers where people can park once and access multiple destinations.
- **Damariscotta Mills Fish Ladder** – This historic Damariscotta Mills Fish Ladder is home to a restored historic fish ladder and that supports the alewife fishery. This site is a local treasure and a tourist destination. The Towns of Newcastle and Nobleboro, along with volunteer efforts of nearby residents, jointly support the preservation of this fishery. This site could potentially be connected to other key destinations around the Great Salt Bay by an on-road or off-road bicycle and pedestrian trail-way to further support environmental and economic goals.
- **Maine Eastern Railroad and Newcastle Train Station** – Historically, the towns of Newcastle and Damariscotta were served by passenger train service from the late 1800's to 1959. Recently, the two villages joined efforts to re-establish train service during the summer months to provide additional transportation options for residents and tourists. The service is run by Maine Eastern Railroad and connects with the Amtrak station in Brunswick, which also connects with trains to and from Portland, Boston and other points south. The seasonal train service to this location and the complementary shuttles to and from Damariscotta's downtown presents an opportunity to provide improved car-free access to the community for visitors, which could help decrease village parking demand. The station area site can also be targeted for year round remote parking with shuttle service to help ease congestion issues in town during peak season and major events. For summer visitors who come by train, the station area could also serve as a potential trail head area that could connect with the larger bicycle and pedestrian trail network contemplated for the area.



**NEWCASTLE TRAIN STATION (CREDIT: RENAISSANCE PLANNING)**

## Community Meeting

The first workshop event was a community meeting held on the evening of June 22. The meeting featured a presentation on the benefits of smart growth development for small and rural communities and facilitated discussions about the challenges and opportunities facing Damariscotta. Approximately 25 people attended, including the project team, town staff and elected officials, key stakeholders, and interested residents. Some of the key issues and opportunities identified by local residents at the evening meeting are summarized in the next section.

## Technical Workshop

The second workshop event, on Day 2, allowed for more in-depth discussions on goals, challenges, and opportunities related to achieving affordable housing within the town, supporting the existing downtown, and continued economic development. The work sessions were attended by about 20 participants and included presentations about the top challenges and opportunities, and a discussion of strategies as identified in the EPA's Smart Growth Self-Assessment for Rural Communities. Of the 11 topics covered in the assessment, facilitators focused on the three most pertinent to Damariscotta's challenges. These were:

- Meet Housing Needs for Different Ages and Incomes
- Revitalize Village and Town Centers
- Provide Transportation Choices

By the conclusion of the morning work session, the workshop attendees agreed to prioritize four major goals and supporting strategies:

- Retain and strengthen the long-term economic vitality of the downtown.
- Provide opportunities for more mixed income, mixed types of housing.
- Provide opportunities for residents and tourists to have more transportation choices.
- Preserve the community's significant cultural and historic assets.

The afternoon work session yielded a set of next steps for action in support of each major goal area.

## KEY COMMUNITY ISSUES

Over the course of the two days, the project team facilitated a discussion about the strengths, challenges, and opportunities facing Damariscotta in light of the key goals and strategies stated above. The key points of that discussion are described in this section, starting with a summary of the town's strengths.

### Strengths

Damariscotta has a number of strengths related to its quality of life that attract people to live in and visit the town including:

- **Local Businesses** – the majority of the local businesses are truly local, with very few national retail chains in town. This contributes to the 'buy local' ethos and also to the unique character of the community in terms of one-of-a-kind shopping and dining experiences. Supporting and retaining a strong local business base that is distinct and unique to Damariscotta is a key to

supporting the town's longer term economic development goals. Additionally, these local businesses also provide some potential for engaging the private sector in helping the town advance some of its downtown infrastructure, historic preservation and other business district improvement needs.

- **Regional Transportation Access** –The town is fortunate to have strong regional car access off US Highway 1, which passes near the downtown but does not go through it, which enabled the preservation of Main Street. This highway network also connects Damariscotta by car to other key locations throughout the area. As such, the town is likely to continue to rely on car-access for tourism. This means there will continue to be opportunities to explore creative parking demand management options that seek to reduce travel demand and the total parking needs in downtown while also ensuring longer term access regionally to the community for visitors and employees.
- **Cooperative Partnerships** – the community has a very active mix of public, private, and non-profit partnerships committed to ensuring long-term quality of life, addressing health and human service issues, economic development and preservation of its unique natural and historic resources. This includes the local hospital, Spectrum Generations, Friends of Mid-coast Maine, local faith-based organizations and churches, the sanitary water district, the Damariscotta River Association, Lincoln County Financial Aid and many others. All of these local stakeholders present opportunities for creative public-private partnerships to addressing the local aging in place and historic preservation needs within the community.
- **Consensus on Community Values** – through previous visioning and planning efforts in the town, the community reached consensus on six key values to drive local action including: 1) cultural and natural assets; 2)accessibility; 3)sense of community; 4)working local/growing local; 5) living local; and 6)an involved community. These values underscored the major elements of the comprehensive plan. As the community seeks to implement strategies to address issues related to housing and historic preservation, it will be important to frame those strategies within the context of these core community values to help ensure community support.
- **Strong Philanthropic and Volunteer Networks** – as a community with many retirees, there are very active groups of people within Damariscotta willing to give time, energy, and money to support efforts to maintain and improve quality of life. Similar to the benefits associated with strong local businesses and cooperative partnerships, these volunteer networks will be critical in providing additional capacity to address many of the town's quality of life goals.
- **Existing Housing** – the existing single-family historic housing stock contributes to the unique sense of place and character of the community. Existing homes provide significant equity to homeowners. Many larger homes on larger sized lots could be renovated to create smaller units within the same building footprint, or could accommodate the addition of new accessory dwelling units on site.
- **Historic Walkable Downtown**– the downtown, and the adjacent waterfront, serve as a major draw for the area, while also serving as the day-to-day commercial hub for community members. It includes local banks, the library, a theater, churches, a bookstore and other retail, and restaurants located in historic and renovated buildings along a two-lane main street. The town center is also designated as the Service Center for Lincoln County, meaning that many residents of neighboring towns come to Damariscotta to shop and access health care and social services. Continuing to advance strategies to maintain the historic character of



downtown will be critical to longer term economic development goals. Additionally, fostering infill housing development walkable to downtown can also help accommodate senior residents, young families, and small business entrepreneurs seeking to live a more car-lite lifestyle. The additional housing located within walking distance of key retail and dining establishments can also reinforce the economic vitality of downtown.

- **Natural Setting** – the town of Damariscotta is situated along the Damariscotta River and its various coves. Many come to visit and live here because of this natural setting, which provides picturesque views and offers many opportunities for boating, fishing, and wildlife watching. Additionally, the local economy is driven in part by the aquaculture industries that rely on maintaining the long-term health and natural balance of this marine ecosystem. Fostering new development and redevelopment in the town that further helps to preserve this natural setting is another key strategy for the longer term economic viability of the community. Additionally, the area may be conducive for fostering the development of more alternative energy options in town and incentivizing economic development that creates more green energy job growth.
- **Rural Hospital** – the Miles Memorial Hospital Complex is one of the largest local employers in the area. Additionally it serves as a major draw for retirees who want to locate in a community with good access to high quality healthcare. Given its role as a major destination and employer in the region, the location of this complex in Damariscotta presents an opportunity for locating additional infill housing within walking distance. This housing could be targeted to seniors, families, and hospital employees. Additional hospital related for-profit businesses could also be recruited and targeted for vacant land around the hospital.
- **Lincoln Academy** – this non-profit private high school is located in Newcastle, less than a mile from Damariscotta's downtown main street. Its local graduates come from all over and most go on to college. Many have returned to the area seeking post-college housing and jobs. This presents an opportunity for continued focus on promoting new, small business entrepreneur programs and providing additional housing in downtown targeted to this younger demographic that is often seeking walkable, bikable communities to live in.
- **Available Farmland** – while farming across the country has declined in recent years, the state of Maine actually saw an increase in the total number and amount of land dedicated to farms compared with other states in the nation.<sup>2</sup> The town of Damariscotta has several acres of land outside its downtown that could be used for farming and potentially support the growth of the local food system and local food related businesses in support of economic diversification.

## Challenges

A large portion of the workshop explored the challenges facing Damariscotta. This was an important part of the technical assistance process, as it clarified some of the key barriers preventing the community from moving forward on its comprehensive plan goals, and it also help set the context for prioritizing specific near term strategies that the community could move forward with as described in the Potential and Prioritized Next Steps.

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<sup>2</sup> USDA. Agricultural Census, 2012. Web. 5 Nov. 2015.

[http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Preliminary\\_Report/Highlights.pdf](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Preliminary_Report/Highlights.pdf)

- **Fear of change and the unknown** – while there is local support for some new growth and development in the community and there is consensus on key community values and issues, there is a general sense of fear of the unknown when it comes to enacting policy or zoning changes aimed at promoting new or infill development. This has been a particular challenge in enacting any specific policies, code changes, or incentive programs for addressing the need for new and mixed housing options, as well as opportunities for promoting mixed use in the downtown or along the Upper Main Street US Alt 1 commercial corridor just northeast of the downtown. This general uneasiness has created some inertia that is preventing the community from advancing specific actions and strategies to achieve its longer term goals.
- **Lack of mixed income, mixed types of housing and high housing energy costs** – while the existing housing stock is seen as an asset, it currently does not meet the full range of needs in terms of affordable workforce housing for people working in service, healthcare, schools and civil service jobs; smaller sized housing for aging populations; energy efficient housing (with lower utility bills); housing for young “creative class” entrepreneurs; or adequate housing located within walking distance to daily destinations. Additionally, the current zoning code and land use policy context is also seen as a barrier because accessory units are not allowed in all districts, converting single family structures to multi-family structures is not allowed, and there is a general resistance to subdividing existing residential lots.
- **Long-term fiscal sustainability** – the community has general concerns that the current tax base and state dollars are not adequate for the community’s long-term infrastructure and public service needs. Given that Damariscotta is a service center, many people who use the town’s services and infrastructure don’t actually live in the town, and therefore don’t pay property tax. Increasing the per unit local tax rate is not desired, and doing so could exacerbate housing affordability issues. Therefore, one viable strategy would be to encourage new development (both housing and commercial) to increase the local tax base. Unfortunately, the private market is not producing this new growth on its own and the community also has mixed views on how much, what form and where that growth might happen. Therefore addressing fiscal sustainability issues is directly related to addressing the barriers to creating more housing and infill commercial development in town.
- **Lack of demand for new growth** – despite the attractiveness of the community, there is very little new construction in town. This presents a challenge for community officials and those looking to incentivize new housing construction and economic development.
- **Lack of well-paying jobs and diversified non-residential tax base** – as a retirement and service based local economy, the community lacks a diverse and well-paying job base. Many who work in the town cannot afford to live in town because of the low wages. This creates added stress on the local transportation networks and parking needs, as most employees drive in from other communities to jobs. Additionally, several of the local employers are actually non-profits exempt from commercial property taxes. Between the low non-residential tax base, and the residential tax-base relying primarily on retirees with fixed incomes, the community will continue to struggle with financial sustainability.
- **Lack of a historic preservation strategy** – while many recognize that the unique character and historic assets of the community are a big driver of its economic success, there currently exist very few financial options to help existing owners preserve, maintain, or rehabilitate their historic structures. Additionally, there is nothing legally in place to prevent a private property

owner from demolishing or redeveloping a historic structures they own. While there is some technical assistance, grants and loans available from the State of Maine's Historic Preservation Commission, this funding is limited. Therefore, the town and its local business community may need to consider additional local funding and incentive strategies to ensure the long term preservation of the structures that define its historic character.

- **Lack of transportation options** – while the downtown is walkable, and adjacent residential neighborhoods also provide some safe on-street walking and biking options, areas outside of the downtown are not easily or safely accessible to pedestrians or bicyclists. Additionally many community members, employees, and visitors typically drive into the downtown, creating constant parking challenges. Other destinations in the community, such as the commercial areas on Upper Main Street (US Alt 1), the hospital, and other nearby historic and cultural destinations are also difficult to access by means other than a car. These destinations are located off rural roads and highways without adequate shoulders or sidewalks, and the local speed limits are 35 mph and above. The lack of transportation options is also a long-term concern for aging populations, as their ability to drive diminishes over time, leaving many homebound. While there are some on-demand services targeted to lower income aging populations, those of moderate to high income means do not have many alternatives. In the wintertime this can be a contributing factor to isolation of the elderly and diminished health outcomes as a result.

## Potential Next Steps

Despite the challenges cited above, the work sessions facilitated the identification of several potential next steps the community could take to address its housing and historic preservation goals. These include the following:

- **Update land use policies and zoning to enable mixed income housing and appropriate density**
  - Allow accessory dwelling units in all districts.
  - Allow higher density (apartments, townhomes, cottages) near downtown and adjacent to the Miles Hospital Complex.
  - Explore options to enable existing homeowners to subdivide their properties or allow the conversion of single-family units to multi-family units.
  - Reach out to affordable and market rate housing developers to explore opportunities within town.
  - Provide density bonus incentives for new market rate multi-family housing
  - Collaborate with major employers (e.g., Miles Hospital) to explore employer role and resources in helping to encourage and provide affordable housing within walking distance for its employees.
- **Reduce cost of living for existing homeowners**
  - Educate and promote a program for homeowners to incorporate energy efficiency adaptations and improvements to their existing homes to reduce cost of heating and cooling.
  - Examine larger region-wide multimodal transportation options such as car sharing, ride-sharing or local transit circulators to help reduce household transportation costs



- Encourage new housing in locations where it is feasible to walk and bike to key destinations.
- Help connect existing homeowners with available programs targeted for home energy efficiency and conservation improvements and historic preservation and rehabilitation.
- **Create a more walkable, bikable community and reduce overall vehicular parking demands in downtown**
  - Advance Damariscotta River Association bicycle, trails and pedestrian plans by examining opportunities to combine public and private funding resources to finish plans and construction of regional network.
  - Ensure new trails network provides adequate connections to the downtown, seasonal rail and trolley stations and other key commercial destinations by creating a bicycle and pedestrian masterplan.
  - Examine opportunities to combine trails masterplan with wildlife corridor preservation plans.
  - Identify critical gaps in exiting bicycle and pedestrian network and prioritize efforts to fill those gaps to create contiguous safe routes between key destinations.
  - Consider disaggregate parking in downtown to provide better access to the waterfront, improve opportunities for green infrastructure and reduce vehicular and pedestrian conflicts.
  - Engage local business owners in a travel demand management program to reduce vehicular and parking demands in downtown.
- **Capitalize on strong local business support for improving conditions in downtown**
  - Move forward on waterfront improvement plans, additional trolley services and downtown parking demand management plan.
  - Examine other incentives for helping existing business owners preserve and maintain historic buildings.
  - Examine the establishment of a Business Improvement District or similar entity to establish funding and priorities for downtown improvements.
- **Engage local non-profits in addressing ongoing transportation and aging access issues**
  - Identify potential organizations that may be willing to sponsor or provide more ride-sharing services.
  - Seek opportunities to expand the service coverage of the existing summer trolley bus to meet some of the transportation needs of the town's aging population – particularly in the winter months.
  - Work with AARP's Livable Communities assessment process to further identify issues and identify additional opportunities for community members to age in place.

## PRIORITIZED NEXT STEPS

Based on the strengths, issues and opportunities discussion along with the preliminary strategies identified by town staff in the self-assessment, the following highlights the key goals and supporting actions steps the town can consider for advancing those goals. These next step goals and tables reflects the prioritized actions based upon facilitated exercises and discussions with workshop participants. The action steps are organized around four major goal areas:

- Retain and strengthen the vitality of Damariscotta's downtown.
- Provide more transportation options.
- Provide more mixed income and mixed type housing options.
- Protect and preserve the unique cultural and historic assets critical to the place-based attractiveness of the town.

### Retain and strengthen the vitality of Damariscotta's downtown.

This goal and the supporting actions build upon several of the community's key strengths including a strong local business base and community support for continuing to improve conditions downtown. Specifically this includes establishing a new mechanism for generating revenues from existing business owners to help prioritize and fund downtown improvements, strategies to reduce parking needs and travel demand in downtown, encouraging more housing within walking distance of downtown, and creating incentives for historic preservation.

<i>Supporting Implementation Steps</i>	<i>Why is this important?</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Lead/ Support Roles</i>	<i>Cost &amp; Implementation Resources</i>	<i>Next 100 Days Action</i>
<b>Establish Business Improvement District/Program</b>	Local business owners have a vested interest in the downtown and can be partners in funding necessary to maintain and improve physical/programmatic efforts in the downtown	1 year	Town Managers of Newcastle and Damariscotta  Local Business Leaders and Organizations	Cost: Town staff time and time from downtown leadership groups/business leaders	Contact TVA  Explore resources from Maine Downtown Center  Collect examples of existing BIDS as templates.

<i>Supporting Implementation Steps</i>	<i>Why is this important?</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Lead/ Support Roles</i>	<i>Cost &amp; Implementation Resources</i>	<i>Next 100 Days Action</i>
<b>Prioritize infrastructure improvements in downtown</b>	The entire town benefits when the downtown is thriving. Therefore prioritizing infrastructure improvements in this area can help support continued growth and success. The waterfront repairs may present a leveraging opportunity to address other infrastructure needs such as improving utilities, walkability, parking and overall aesthetics. Improvements also may reduce flooding and flood insurance premiums.	2 years (sidewalks) 5-10 years (waterfront)	Town Manager and Selectmen, Waterfront Committee and Business Owners	Cost: to be determined  Sources: Grants (e.g., CDBG), Business Improvement District (BID) Funding, Philanthropic and Private Fundraising	Obtain approval from Waterfront Committee  Apply for Coastal Community Awards  Request a FEMA Map Change (Conditional Letter of Map Amendment)



<b>Initiate a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program for downtown</b>	Reduce total number of parking spaces needed in downtown, implement shared parking strategies (disaggregate existing lots) and repurpose some existing spaces for other uses (e.g., waterfront boardwalk and green infrastructure)	1 year to plan; 2 years to implement	Selectmen, Town Manager and Downtown Business Leaders	Cost: Staff time; funding for professional services contract to develop TDM plan  Sources: Town of Damariscotta, Local Business Owners	Raise issue to seek approval for pursuing study at next town meeting
<b>Initiate a policy review discussion to ensure mixed type housing is encouraged in/adjacent to downtown</b>	Policies and zoning changes may be needed to promote adaptive reuse of existing residential structures, enabling density bonuses for affordable housing, and ensuring housing options are available within walking distance of town center	2 years	Land Use Committee  Planning Board , Town Planner, and Town Manager	Cost: Staff time  Sources: Town of Damariscotta	Land Use Committee convenes to discuss issues and formulate plan
<b>Explore historic preservation ordinances and incentives for preservation</b>	Current historic structures in town center are expensive to maintain; policies may be needed to protect and help fund preservation efforts	2 years	Land Use Committee  Planning Board and Town Manager  State Historic Preservation Office	Cost: Staff time; Funding to incentivize historic preservation projects  Sources: Town of Damariscotta, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	Land Use Committee convenes to discuss issues and formulate plan in concert with other actions herein

## Provide more transportation options.

This goal and the supporting actions will help the town to make the community more walkable and bikable. This includes strategies to provide more transportation options to driving so that people can access downtown and other destinations by means other than cars; increasing education and awareness of alternative transportation options; partnering with local business owners and non-profits to reduce vehicular travel demand; prioritizing sidewalk and biking connectivity improvements; and promoting new development that is bikable and walkable.

<i>Supporting Implementation Steps</i>	<i>Why is this important?</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Lead/ Support Roles</i>	<i>Cost &amp; Implementation Resources</i>	<i>Next 100 Days Action</i>
<b>Support expansion of alternative transportation options including:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding trolley service</li> <li>• Local taxi</li> <li>• Coordination with senior buses</li> <li>• Coach buses/bus tours</li> <li>• Rail options</li> </ul>	Providing more alternative transportation options can help support mobility for aging populations, reduce parking needs in downtown, reduce household transportation costs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions	1 year (expanded service by summer 2016)	Town planner  Trolley Committee  Regional Planning Commission  Coastal Transportation	Cost: To be determined  Sources: Town of Damariscotta, Private Funding, (BID could participate), State/County funding	Initiate discussion between Town and Trolley Committee to begin planning efforts and identify next steps and the potential for other transportation partners
<b>Develop advertising and educational materials and distribute to residents and visitors on alternative transportation options</b>	There is a need to educate locals and visitors about the alternative transportation options to encourage use/ridership	1 year – new communication and advertising in place before summer 2016	Town planner  Trolley Committee  Regional Planning Commission  Coastal Transportation	Cost: To be determined  Sources: Town of Damariscotta, Private Funding (BID could participate), Regional Planning Commission/Coastal Transportation	Initiate discussion between Town and Trolley Committee to begin planning efforts and identify next steps/partners

<b>Prioritize the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements to support connectivity and complete the network (revisit on-street bike lanes, providing bike racks downtown, etc.)</b>	Providing adequate and safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is key to encouraging residents and visitors to use alternative forms of transportation. Prioritizing improvements in areas with high demand (town center, commercial centers, other destinations) has the potential to yield greater returns on public investments.	1 year	Town Manager  Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT)	Cost: To be determined  Sources: Damariscotta River Association (DRA), Business Improvement District (BID), Bike Coalition Maine, MDOT, Town of Damariscotta	Town planner to reach out to MDOT and DRA to begin discussion about bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure priorities
<b>Engage downtown employers in discussions to encourage employees to carpool, park and ride, etc.</b>	Reducing overall demand for parking in the town center support several goals. Engaging the private sector in helping to support this initiative can result in more parking for patrons and less cars driving into town.	1 year	Town Manager  Downtown Merchants Association (BID)	Cost: staff time  Sources: Town of Damariscotta, BID	Town planner to initiate outreach to business owners in concert with other actions identified herein
<b>Examine land use policies and code strategies (e.g. conservation subdivisions, higher density nodes) to encourage neighborhood clustering</b>	By clustering residential development in areas outside of town, these areas can more effectively be served by transit, trolleys, or van pool.	1 year	Town Planner Land Use Committee	Cost: staff time  Sources: Town of Damariscotta	Land Use Committee convenes to discuss issues and formulate plan in concert with other actions herein; town planner to research options for relevant ordinances



## Provide more mixed income, mixed type housing options

This goal and the supporting actions targets the specific strategies to help encourage and provide more housing options for a range of income levels, housing types and locations. This includes actions to amend local codes to allow for both accessory dwelling units and adaptive reuse of existing properties; creating new incentives such as density bonuses to encourage more mixed income housing; and engaging with other regional partners to better understand and develop strategies to address housing issues.

<i>Supporting Implementation Steps</i>	<i>Why is this important?</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Lead/ Support Roles</i>	<i>Cost &amp; Implementation Resources</i>	<i>Next 100 Days Action</i>
<b>Amend local zoning code to allow accessory dwelling units</b>	Accessory dwelling units can help meet the needs for housing that enables people to age in place	1 year	Town Planner Planning Board Land Use Committee Code Enforcement Selectman Council on Aging	Staff and Volunteer Time	Land Use Committee convenes to discuss issues and formulate plan in concert with other actions herein; town planner to research options for relevant ordinances/policy language
<b>Amend local building and zoning code to allow for adaptive reuse and subdividing of single family structures</b>	Adapting the existing housing stock can provide additional supply of more affordable housing options; and enable existing homeowners to leverage some of the existing equity in their homes without having to sell or relocate	1 year	Town Planner Planning Board Land Use Committee Code Enforcement Selectman Council on Aging	Staff and Volunteer Time	Land Use Committee convenes to discuss issues and formulate plan in concert with other actions herein; town planner to research options for relevant ordinances/policy language
<b>Explore additional incentive-based strategies such as offering density bonuses for creation of workforce/affordable housing</b>	The private sector can play a role in helping to diversify the housing options in Town. Providing bonuses densities or other incentives to developers	1 year	Town Planner Planning Board Land Use Committee Code Local developers	Staff and Volunteer Time	Land Use Committee convenes to discuss issues and formulate plan in concert with other actions herein; town planner to model incentive program and options for density bonuses

	presents an non-regulatory option		Maine Municipal Association		
<b>Engage additional partners to establish a housing task force and discuss larger regional affordable/workforce housing strategy</b>	Providing mixed income, mixed style housing is a regional challenge. Therefore the town should work with partners to examine both the housing needs and future strategies to address those needs	2 years	Town Planner Land Use Committee Selectman Council on Aging Spectrum Generations	Staff and Volunteer Time	Town planner to reach out to regional partners to begin conversation about needs and opportunities

## Protect and preserve the unique cultural and historic assets critical to the place-based attractiveness of the downtown.

This goal and supporting actions helps link the cultural and historic character preservation goals with other community goals such as promoting downtown vitality and creating a larger trails network for the area. Specifically this includes targeting some of the revenues that can be generated from the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) to help business owners with historic preservation; conducting an assessment and exploring additional incentives for local historic, view-shed and cultural preservation; and incorporating historic and cultural interpretation into local improvement projects.

<i>Supporting Implementation Steps</i>	<i>Why is this important?</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Lead/ Support Roles</i>	<i>Cost &amp; Implementation Resources</i>	<i>Next 100 Days Action</i>
<b>Establish local designation of historic/cultural resources</b>	There is a need for supporting policies to identify key cultural and historic assets of value to the community formally. Policy sets the framework for additional supporting implementation actions, such as requiring demolition permits.	12-18 months	Town Planner Land Use Committee Maine Preservation Maine Historic Preservation Commission	Cost: Staff time Resources: Town of Damariscotta, State Historic Preservation Office resources	Land Use Committee convenes to discuss issues and formulate plan in concert with other actions herein; town planner to research options for relevant ordinances/policy language. Invite Maine Preservation to meet with Selectmen

<b>Explore incentive-based programs for residential and commercial historic preservation (e.g., historic tax credits, BID funding)</b>	The cost to maintain and preserve historic elements can be a burden on owners. Given the collective value of the historic character, the town can take collective responsibility to share the cost for doing so.	1 year	Town Planner Land Use Committee Business Owners State Historic Preservation Office	Cost: staff time; specific incentives to be determined  Resources: Town of Damariscotta, Private Foundations, State Historic Tax credits, CDBG	Land Use Committee convenes to discuss issues and formulate plan in concert with other actions herein; town planner to research options for incentives to historic preservation
<b>Conduct historic building and historic/cultural /scenic viewsheds inventory and assessment</b>	In order to establish policies and supporting incentives, town will need to conduct an inventory and assessment to determine key contributing features/buildings and key viewsheds that are critical to community's unique character and sense of place	2 years	Town Planner Land Use Committee Business Owners Maine Preservation, Maine Historic Preservation Commission	Cost: staff time; potential professional services contract  Resources: Town of Damariscotta, Private funding	Land Use Committee convenes to discuss issues and formulate plan in concert with other actions herein; town planner to research details on inventory/assessment efforts and explore volunteer/professional support options; consult Maine's Municipal Planning Assistance Program website for information on how to identify viewsheds and create ordinances.
<b>Establish local historic interpretive walking/trail program</b>	Incorporating historic and cultural interpretation into downtown walking tours or as part of larger DRA trails network can further strengthen opportunities for long term preservation.	2 years	Local historical society Town Planner Local Business owners	Cost: staff time; programmatic efforts and signage for interpretive efforts  Resources: Town of Damariscotta, Historical Society, private donations	Town planner to reach out to local historic champions and explore next steps.

## APPENDIX

The self-assessment completed by the community and the workshop presentations are attached.

### Additional Resources

**U.S. EPA Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities** <http://www.epa.gov/dced/buildingblocks.htm>

#### **Smart Growth Self-Assessment for Rural Communities**

The tool is a comprehensive compilation of strategies that villages, towns, and small cities can use to evaluate their existing policies to create healthy, environmentally resilient, and economically robust places. Hundreds of resources are included, organized by 11 common goal areas.

<http://www2.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-self-assessment-rural-communities>

#### **Smart Growth Self-Assessment for Rural Communities: Madison County (2015)**

This self-assessment tool for rural communities helps local governments evaluate how well their policies and regulations support the type of development they want and identify strategies for improvement. Included in the document are a case study Dryden, NY and useful resources in footnotes and citations. <http://www2.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-self-assessment-rural-communities-madison-county>

#### **Federal Resources for Sustainable Rural Communities (2012)**

This publication highlights federal resources rural communities can use to promote economic competitiveness, protect healthy environments, and enhance quality of life. It provides information on funding and technical assistance opportunities from the four agencies, as well as examples of how rural communities across the country have put these programs into action.

<http://www2.epa.gov/smartgrowth/federal-resources-sustainable-rural-communities>

#### **Defying the Odds: Sustainability in Small and Rural Places (2013)**

This briefing paper offers short case studies and lessons derived from a minority of small communities who made strides protecting the environment and promoting local economic competitiveness and community revitalization. <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4568/issue-brief-defying-the-odds-sustainability-in-small-and-rural-places/>

#### **Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Rural Planning, Zoning, and Development Codes**

This publication provides smart growth policy options that small towns and rural communities can implement to ensure that their development is fiscally sound, environmentally responsible, and socially equitable. <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/act/planning/essential-smart-growth-fixes-for-rural-planning-zoning-and-development-codes-aarp.pdf>



### **How Small Towns and Cities Can Use Local Assets to Rebuild Their Economies: Lessons from Successful Places (2015)**

This report includes case studies of small towns and cities that have successfully complemented business recruitment by emphasizing their existing assets and distinctive resources. These case studies illustrate successful tactics that other communities can use. <http://www2.epa.gov/smartgrowth/how-small-towns-and-cities-can-use-local-assets-rebuild-their-economies>

### **Planning for Prosperity in Small Towns and Rural Regions (2015)**

A clearinghouse of materials for rural regions and small towns, with publications, webinars, workshop materials and other information on a variety of topics including economic resilience, entrepreneurship, community engagement, downtown redevelopment and food systems. <http://ruralplanning.weebly.com/>

### **Cultivating a Competitive Advantage in Rural Counties (2014)**

This report highlights how rural counties are pursuing asset-based economic development initiatives that create jobs and build wealth while preserving rural landscapes, culture, and heritage. <http://www.naco.org/resources/cultivating-competitive-advantage-how-rural-counties-are-growing-economies-local-assets>

### **U.S. Department of Transportation's Rural and Small Community Planning page**

One-stop shop for resources about transportation planning in rural and small communities on the Transportation Planning Capacity Building website. It includes links to publications, legislation and guidance, recent peer events, upcoming calendar events, and related websites. [https://www.planning.dot.gov/focus\\_rural.asp](https://www.planning.dot.gov/focus_rural.asp)

### **Rural Planning Organization of America's website**

Website of the National Association of Development Organizations' Rural Planning Organizations of America network. Website includes resources, reports, and information about rural transportation events. <http://ruraltransportation.org/>

### **National Association of Counties (NACO) Economic Development Solutions**

This guide presents information on setting up TIFs, BIDs, and other economic development strategies for communities.

<http://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/documents/Economic%20Development%20Solutions%20for%20Local%20Government.pdf>

### **City of Portland, Maine Downtown Development District Summary Presentation**

This powerpoint provides a summary of the City of Portland's Downtown Development District.

<https://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/corporatepartners/Corp%20Part%20Presentation%203.25.pdf>