

Comprehensive Plan Development

Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) has developed a four-phase comprehensive plan process that complies with State of Maine mandates. Newest to the State's requirements is that comprehensive plans be periodically revised every five years to remain in good standing and eligible for State-based funding streams (notably Community Development Block Grants [CDBG]). The EMDC process consists of four distinct phases of development, with continuous communication performed with the community leadership/planning committee to ensure that planning progress is time- and effort-efficient.

Meeting with Community Members & Committees to Review Existing Reports & Plans

EMDC recommends that the municipality contact its various local committees to elicit their respective priorities. This will help identify key issues, priorities, and opportunities to be identified for the community now, and in the coming years.

Introduction & Plan Roll Out

An introductory session is scheduled once a contract is executed that will consist of a presentation with EMDC's vision and specific plan for the municipality, modified as necessary for the municipality's needs and expectations. Roles and deadlines are identified at this time. While EMDC assumes responsibility for data collection and writing of each plan section, input from the community will be critical to assure that a complete assessment is described.

With guidance provided by EMDC, the municipality shall form a Comprehensive Planning Committee consisting of individuals with diverse backgrounds (local departments, groups, residents, business owners, etc.). The Committee will routinely meet with EMDC's planner to oversee the comprehensive planning process and provide local knowledge for chapters in the plan.

Shortly after the planning process has begun, EMDC will develop a survey to be distributed to the community that will determine public perceptions of quality of life and local opportunities and challenges.

Creation of the comprehensive plan is performed in four phases, with each phase completed prior to advancing to the next. At the end of each plan chapter, the municipality may choose to identify local strategies and policies in addition to the minimum required policies and strategies set forth by the state. Once a comprehensive plan is found consistent with the Growth Management Act, it will remain active for twelve years. It is recommended that the plan is routinely revisited to evaluate the implementation of strategies and progression of other items identified in the document.



1. **PHASE ONE** – During Phase One, EMDC will focus on the following chapters:
 - a. **Population and Demographics** – EMDC will gather data on demographic changes that have occurred since the last update was prepared. This will include total population, estimated breakdown by age group, median age, income statistics, educational attainment and other demographic indicators, including population projections. The trends in the municipality will be compared to neighboring municipalities and the respective County.
 - b. **Economy** – EMDC will gather data on employment trends, breakdown of the labor force by sector, commuting data and unemployment rates. These data will be supplemented by data provided by the municipality on major employers, issues faced by local businesses, and availability of vacant land zoned for business development in terms of total vacant acres, access to utilities, and size of individual lots.
 - c. **Housing** – EMDC will compile data that identifies the total number of dwelling units, affordability, estimated breakdown of year-round and seasonal units, and changes in the local housing market since the last update was prepared. It should be noted that U.S. Census data on housing gathered in 2010 are more limited than those available in 2000. These data will be supplemented by any data available from the municipality on housing conditions.
 - d. **Transportation** – Data will be gathered on local infrastructure and transportation needs. These will include issues pertaining to state highways, bicycle and pedestrian paths/facilities, parking, public transit, access management, and road design standards. The focus will be on issues that have emerged since the last update to the plan. Municipal input will be needed on the location, adequacy, and overall condition of roads and shoulders, bridges, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and signage.

While EMDC focuses on the data gathering and formatting, the municipality will be responsible for the validation of data, along with editing the written narrative.

2. **PHASE TWO** – During Phase Two, EMDC will focus on the following chapters:
 - a. **Water Resources** – This section will identify threats to surface and groundwater quality (both point and non-point sources). The adequacy of groundwater supplies will be reviewed and any known problems with private wells noted. The status of all public water systems (including those serving transient accommodations and restaurants not connected to the municipal system) will be noted. There will also be a discussion of non-regulatory measures used to protect water quality. Local public works practices (such as culvert design, salt/sand pile storage, and street sweeping) that affect water quality will be reviewed.
 - b. **Natural Resources** – This section will present an overview of natural resources in the municipality, including Beginning with Habitat data provided by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. These data will be added to the analysis. There will also be an evaluation of the adequacy of current natural

community character in terms of economic development, natural and cultural resource conservation, transportation systems, land use patterns and its role in the region.

- b. **Additional Chapters** – EMDC will assist with crafting the following chapters required by the State of Maine: Public Participation Summary, Regional Coordination Program, and Plan Implementation/ Evaluation. These are typically “summary” chapters lasting no more than one to two pages in length.
- c. **Existing Land Use** – This section will discuss recent changes in land use patterns. A data collection form will be distributed to the municipality. Data will include the extent to which recent development has occurred lot-by-lot rather than in subdivisions and where most development has taken place. There will be an analysis of the land development challenges faced by different parts of the municipality. The effectiveness of current land use regulations will be assessed. There will be a summary of current lot dimensional standards.

With input from the municipality, estimates will be made of the acreage of land that will be needed for development in the next ten years. Data will also be collected on the estimated acreage of land with development constraints such as steep slopes, wetlands, and properties placed under conservation easements. If available, data will be presented on the acreage of impervious surface.

- d. **Future Land Use Plan** - EMDC will work with the municipality to draft a future land use plan that reflects the desired future growth pattern of the area. It will reflect land constraints, location of public facilities, roads, and location of existing development. It will build on the future land use plan prepared previously. At a minimum, it will indicate how the majority of future growth will be encouraged in certain areas while others will remain relatively rural. A further breakdown of rural areas (e.g., vulnerable natural resources, lakes, watersheds, and aquifer protection, and remote forested land) may also be considered. Similarly, the growth areas may be divided according to their density.

EMDC will help the municipality determine if any zoning changes are needed. It will also review non-regulatory techniques that shape growth, such as sewer and water line extensions, road investments, and clean-up of underutilized parcels to make them more attractive for development. Any municipal plans to acquire conservation easements will be noted. The future land use plan will also include an evaluation method. For example, the future land use plan might be evaluated by counting the number of dwelling units built in rural areas compared to growth areas. If the majority of units were built in the growth area, this would indicate that the plan is meeting its goals.

- e. **Appendix** - EMDC will update existing maps in the plan, or, at a minimum, provide the following GIS maps:
 - Base Map
 - Existing Land Use

- Water, Marine, and Natural Resources
- Transportation Facilities
- Proposed Future Land Use

Unlike Phases One through Three, in Phase Four the municipality will be responsible for a majority of the crafting of information from data. EMDC's role will be to assist in the formatting of this information. Phase Four is designed to wrap up the entire plan for public review, municipal council review, and State of Maine review. At the end of this Phase, a public hearing will be made for comments and suggestions.

- 5. Review of Completed Comprehensive Plan** – After the completion of Phase Four, EMDC and local officials will meet for a formal review of the “completed” comprehensive plan. This will allow for any necessary revisions before going forward for public consumption and municipal council approval.
- 6. Public Review & Municipal Approval** - After the plan has been reviewed for consistency with state guidelines by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry and all recommended revisions have been made, municipalities may choose to hold an informational public meeting to present the proposed plan. EMDC will be available to attend this meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to determine if any final changes are needed before notice is posted of the formal public hearing.

State law (30-A MRSA 4324) requires that the comprehensive planning committee hold at least one public hearing on its proposed comprehensive plan. Notice of a public hearing shall be posted in a municipality at least 30 days before the hearing as well as a copy of the proposed comprehensive plan. The purpose of this hearing is to present the plan that will be submitted to the local council for a vote. If changes are made following the hearing, a second public hearing must be held (EMDC will help facilitate additional public hearings as necessary).