

Public Access

Key Findings – General

- Providing public access to the harbor – physical and visual, commercial and recreational – are important aspects of the municipal function
- The City of Rockland has an amazing portfolio of public properties along the waterfront; some of these are not used to their full potential
- Public access is largely concentrated in the southern half of Rockland’s waterfront
- While the Harbor Trail extends along part of Rockland’s waterfront, much work remains – including obtaining formal easements for existing sections of trail and trail expansion, and extending the trail along waterfront properties owned by the City
- A comprehensive list of the existing properties and easements that provide public access to the harbor is not readily available - it is unknown whether additional rights of way exist over private properties or roads
- There is no comprehensive City-wide inventory of key visual corridors to the water
- Restrooms are not available at all municipal facilities and, where they are available, they are sometimes seasonal, temporary, or inadequate for demand
- ADA accessibility at older public facilities may be incomplete
- Parts of Rockland’s waterfront properties are in the flood zone, meaning there are risks of flooding today and increased risk due to anticipated sea level rise and storm surge within the expected life of the related infrastructure
- Proactive maintenance of public access infrastructure is inconsistent
- Rockland’s waterfront and harbor infrastructure are important to people and businesses from throughout the region
- While the City’s Port Development fund is available for all public facilities, there aren’t savings for necessary maintenance and improvements

Key Findings – Property Specific

Breakwater and Lighthouse:

- The breakwater is one of the most popular walks in Rockland for residents and visitors alike
 - The breakwater is owned by the US Government and managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers
 - The lighthouse building is owned by the City and managed by the Maine Lighthouse Foundation; public tours are sometimes provided in the summer
 - The working light is owned and maintained by US Coast Guard and is important to navigation
 - There is public boat access available at the breakwater via a small float

- Pedestrian access to the breakwater and lighthouse is via a small park at the end of Samoset Road with roadside parking
 - There are no public restrooms
 - There is no recorded easement for pedestrian access from the park to the breakwater
- The Breakwater Lighthouse does not have a reserve account for repair and maintenance

Commercial Fish Pier:

- This facility is important to the working waterfront and provides long term dockage, transient tie-up, catch buying/selling, hydraulic lifts, gear storage, refrigeration, fuel sales, and bait sales
- The facility supports a variety of fisheries and harvesting, including lobster, herring, scallops, and aquaculture
- While in its current condition the Fish Pier may be at capacity; there may be opportunities to increase capacity by modifying layout/configuration
- A grant-funded improvement project is underway that will address age-related deterioration to piles and dolphins, resurfacing, stabilizing the storage areas, upgrading the electrical system and maintenance dredging (estimated completion 2021)
- Refrigeration units are within the floodplain
- The property is deed restricted to protect commercial fishing uses
- The fence around the storage area is in need of repair or replacement
- A maintenance plan exists for this facility, including a reserve account funded by user fees and associated revenues
- There isn't currently a safe place for the general public to sit and watch the boats come in

Public Landing/Middle Pier:

- These key properties have potential that is not yet realized (e.g. extension of the Boardwalk, potential amphitheater, greenspace)
- The properties are connected by an accessway used by the public; though there is no recorded City easement for the road or the public infrastructure running beneath it
- The Harbor Master building is in need of repair and located within the flood zone
- The Public Landing is used for mooring field access, transient and long term slip space, dinghy space, small cruise ship landings, and cruise ship tenders
- Middle pier is used for commercial boat dockage, passenger vessel space, and at times cruise ship tenders
- Both the Public Landing and the Middle Pier are aging and in need of repair
- Both the Public Landing and Middle Pier can be rocky during an East or Northeast blow
- Harbor Park has a reserve account; Public Landing and Middle Pier do not
- The waterfront supports festivals and events, which are important to the economy and local culture

- Festivals and events can impact other public access uses (e.g. access to the docks)

Sandy Beach:

- Sandy Beach is the only public facility that offers sitting on a beach and swimming
- There are no year-round public restrooms
- There is no reserve account for Sandy Beach

Snow Marine Park:

- Snow Marine Park is the only publicly owned boat launch on the harbor
- The boat launch is important for both commercial and recreational vessels
- Long term parking for boaters can conflict with other park uses (e.g. parking is often on the grass)
- Snow Marine Park is at the end of the current Harbor Trail, but the trail doesn't follow the water within the park
- Residents of Owls Head use Snow Marine Park to access the nearby mooring area which is in the Town of Owls Head
 - The small leased building is in need of significant work; it also includes a mural by Carol Sebold that should be preserved
- There is no reserve account for Snow Marine Park

Schooner Wharf (Port District Property)

- Rockland hosts the largest fleet of windjammers and schooners in the Northeast, and has had a continuous presence of commercial sailing vessels since the State's founding
- Schooner Wharf is important to maintain this historic asset and part of Rockland's maritime heritage
- Schooner Wharf is owned by the Port District, the City owns the parking lot and upland property
- Schooner Wharf is on the Harbor Trail
- The Port District maintains a reserve account
- Sedimentation from Lindsay Brook fills Lermond Cove and increases the need for maintenance dredging; anecdotally sedimentation is said to be occurring faster today than in the past

Goals and Objectives

Goal:

- Ample opportunities for residents, businesses, and visitors to connect with Rockland's harbor and maritime heritage