

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

Objectives:

1. A healthy working waterfront supported by adequate commercial access points and related infrastructure
2. Public facilities along the waterfront, interconnected via multi-use trails/paths
3. Public access for active and passive recreation available at multiple locations throughout the waterfront
4. Increased physical access opportunities in the northern half of Rockland's waterfront
5. View corridors to the water throughout the City
6. Important scenic views are identified and protected where feasible
7. Public facilities that are fully accessible, to the extent feasible
8. Funded reserve accounts for maintenance, improvements, or matching for related grants at all key facilities
9. Clean, accessible, and modern restrooms at key waterfront facilities
10. Infrastructure designed to withstand flooding associated with sea level rise and storm surge during its expected useful life
11. Community events and festivals are encouraged at waterfront facilities and managed to maintain access to the water for all

Abbreviation Key:

Harbor Master - HM

Parks & Rec Committee – P&RC

City Staff - S

Wastewater Treatment Plant – WWTP

Harbor Trail Committee – HTC

Harbor Management Commission – HMC

City Council – CC

Comprehensive Plan Commission - CCP

Recommended Actions

Public Access and Municipal Facilities – General			
Objective	Recommended Action	Responsibility	Timeline
1,2,3,4	Improve public access on the northern half of the harbor and when feasible acquire appropriate rights or land	S, HTC	Short Term (1-2 years), Ongoing
1,3,3,4	Consider appropriate uses for the City-owned lot on Samoset Road	S,P&RC	Short Term (1-2 years)
1,2,3,	Support and prioritize obtaining recorded public access rights to the Boardwalk and pedestrian access rights Rockland Breakwater	S	Short Term (1-2 years), Ongoing
1,2,3	Obtain additional rights to improve connectivity of public access along the waterfront	S,HTC	Ongoing
1,2,3,4,5, 6,7,8,9,11	Continuously improve the public's experience along the waterfront	S, HTC, P&RC	Ongoing
1,2,3,4	Continuously evaluate opportunities to enhance the City's portfolio of waterfront properties or rights of way	All	Ongoing

2,3,5,6,7,	Review City ordinances and propose appropriate standards or incentives to encourage public access as part of all waterfront development projects	S	Medium Term (3-5 years)
1,2,6	Conduct a comprehensive review of current and historic public access points	S	Short Term (1-2 years)
1,2,6	Maintain existing and historic rights of access	S	Ongoing
8,10	Consider anticipated sea level rise and storm surges during the useful life of the project in all capital investment decisions	All	Ongoing
8,9	Provide public restrooms (ideally flush toilets) at key waterfront properties	HM, P&RC	Medium Term (3-5 years)
7,8	Evaluate ADA accessibility and potential improvements as part of all major repair or improvement project	S	Ongoing
1,3,8	Explore areas within the City which would be appropriate to accommodate overnight parking for harbor boaters; investigate fees and revise parking policies as necessary	S	Short Term (1-2 years)
8	Develop a capital improvement plan for key waterfront infrastructure and associated reserve accounts	HM,S	Medium Term (3-5 years)

Breakwater and Rockland Harbor Light			
Objective	Recommended Action	Responsibility	Timeline
2,3,4	Work with the Samoset and Jameson Point residents to identify a location at or near the end of Samoset Road for a public restroom	S	Ongoing
2,3,4	Work with the Samoset to obtain an easement for the Harbor Trail	S	Short Term (1-2 years)
4,7,8,10	In coordination with relevant committees, review lease, develop a maintenance plan, and coordinate with current lease holders on improvements and operations	S	Short Term (1-2 years)
<i>Actions related to maintenance, improvement and effectiveness of the breakwater are included under the Harbor and Mooring Management section; see page 12.</i>			

Commercial Fish Pier			
Objective	Recommended Action	Responsibility	Timeline
1,8,10	Consider options to maximize flexibility and adapt to changing needs in the commercial fishing industry	HM, S	Ongoing
1,8,10	Add additional floats and ramps as necessary to support the needs of the Fish Pier users	HM	Short Term (1-2 years)
1,8,10	Explore ways to add additional cooler space and move coolers out of the flood zone	HM	Short Term (1-2 years)

1,8,10	Consider whether changes to layout would improve efficiency and add capacity and space for additional uses	HM	Ongoing
1,8,10	Investigate additional areas for adding usable space either through dredging to add berthing and docking space or through construction of new pier or float space	HM	Long Term (5+ years)
1,8,10	Consider opportunities to improve fencing by the trap area that is both functional and attractive; provide public seating and signage where the general public can view the commercial activity on the pier	HM, S	Immediate
1,8,10	Review storage area to evaluate its highest and best use for commercial fishing needs	HM	Ongoing

Public Landing/Middle Pier			
Objective	Recommended Action	Responsibility	Timeline
1,2,3,5,7,8,9,10,11	Evaluate infrastructure needs and determine scope of improvements, with consideration of past plans and concepts as well as new ideas	S	Immediate
1,3,8,10	Document riparian rights, landside rights, and other site considerations to better understand expansion possibilities	S	Short Term (1-2 years)
1,2,3,8	Purchase the property located between the Public Landing and Middle Pier, if available and feasible	S	Short Term (1-2 years)
1,2,3,8	Obtain ownership or recorded easement to access road that connects Harbor Park with Buoy Park/Middle Pier	C	Short Term (1-2 years)
1,2,3,8	Adequately fund port development account for future needs and grant matching or create reserve account for Public Landing and Middle Pier; consider combining with existing account for Harbor Park	S	Short Term (1-2 years)
1,2,3,8	Improve and possibly relocate the Harbor Master's building – consider floodplain as well as the visual and physical needs of Harbor Master in relation to the harbor and boat traffic	S	Medium Term (3-5 years)
1,2,3,8	Develop policies that provide access to the public ramp, floats and Harbor Trail during events; revise application materials for facility use accordingly	HMC	Short Term (1-2 years)
1,2,3,8	Develop a plan that considers Public Landing, Middle Pier and the adjacent parks together with consideration to the key objectives below	S	Medium Term (3-5 years)
Key Objectives Future Planning at Public Landing/Middle Pier: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodate public access (both physical and visual) • Accommodate of the functional needs of the harbor (e.g. water, bathrooms, pump out, Wi-Fi, showers, deliveries, parking, etc.) • Provide connectivity to the boardwalk and Harbor Trail 			

- Consider ideas from past master planning projects (e.g. relocation of the harbor masters building, dock and pier orientation, amphitheater, green space, restrooms, etc.)
- Explore obtaining all of the property between Middle Pier and Public Landing
- Parking should be incorporated into the design, but the pedestrian experience and waterfront green space should be prioritized
- Plan for risks associated with flooding and sea level rise
- Plan for flexibility as demands for these sites change or grow over time

Sandy Beach			
Objective	Recommended Action	Responsibility	Timeline
8	Adequately fund port development account for future needs and grant matching or create reserve account	S	Short Term (1-2 years)
7	Develop a permanent public restroom	S	Medium Term (2-5 years)

Snow Marine Park			
Objective	Recommended Action	Responsibility	Timeline
2,7,8,11	Plan for appropriate uses and activities and consider this property as an appropriate location for future public events and festivals	P&RC, HMC	Ongoing
2,11	Develop policies that ensure access to the public ramp, floats and Harbor Trail during events; revise event application materials accordingly	HMC	Ongoing
7,8	Explore options and policies for long term or overnight parking for cars and boat trailers	S, P&RC	Immediate
8	Make necessary repairs to the structure currently being leased or provide a lease term sufficient for the tenant to make repairs; preserve mural painted by Carol Sebold	S	Short Term (1-2 years)
8	Adequately fund port development account for future needs and grant matching or create reserve account	S	Ongoing
7,8,10	Add dinghy dock and maintain on-shore storage for personal watercraft	HM	Short Term (1-2 years)
2,6,8	Provide a trail along the waterfront and stairs to the water	S, HTC, P&RC	Medium Term (3-5 years)
7,8,9	Review the need for additional amenities and added restrooms; consider increasing grade for site usability; actively plan for improvements as necessary	S	Long Term (5+ years)
8	Open dialogue with Owls Head over shared interest and needs for Snow Marine Park	HM	Medium Term (3-5 years)

Schooner Wharf (Port District Property)			
Objective	Recommended Action	Responsibility	Timeline
8	Work with Port District on improvement and maintenance plan	S	Ongoing
8	Monitor filling of Lermond Cove from Lindsay Brook sedimentation and develop remediation plan as needed	S	Ongoing
10	Evaluate the risks to investments and infrastructure due to flooding associated with sea-level rise and storm surge in collaboration with the Port District	S	Ongoing