

Executive Summary

It has been over 20 years since the City of Rockland updated its Harbor Management Plan. While Rockland harbor remains known for its balance of diverse uses that are characteristic of the City, new and competing demands have created challenges that are not addressed in the Harbor Use Plan developed in 1995. The City recognizes the need for an updated plan that considers the needs and perspectives of current stakeholders, and on March 12, 2018 passed a resolve to develop such a plan.

The Resolve sets up a steering committee that will include members of Rockland's Harbor Management Commission, Comprehensive Planning Commission, and Economic Development Advisory Committee, as well as other members of the interested public. It also notes pressures from increased use of the harbor, including cruise ships and proposed marina expansions, as well as expected challenges from sea level rise. We expect that the new Harbor Management Plan will address these issues and more.

Funding from the Shore and Harbor Management Grant Program will be used to help the City hire professional assistance to develop a common understanding of facts, facilitate a stakeholder process, and develop a modern Harbor Management Plan for City Council approval.

The project also involves:

- *A third-party survey* to gather facts related to the economic impacts of cruise ship visits as well as how those visits impact the experience of other downtown visitors.
- *Conceptual designs* for potential improvements to City-owned infrastructure on the harbor.
- *Coordination with the Comprehensive Plan update* currently underway to ensure consistency with its high-level goals and strategies related to the waterfront.

When the project is complete, the City will have established a vision for its harbor with concrete action items to help guide future decision making related to harbor use, infrastructure, and access.

Project Description

Despite the importance of Rockland Harbor to the local, regional and state economies, it has been well over 20 years since the last time the City went through a comprehensive harbor planning process. Since that time the face of the harbor has changed. Marine related industries have shifted, fish processing has faded, recreational boating has increased, annual festivals on the waterfront have expanded, foot traffic along the waterfront has increased, and cruise ships and large yachts have been introduced. Projects consistent with the goals of the old Harbor Use Plan face community opposition, with the goals themselves forgotten.

The various changes in the harbor and along the waterfront have created new challenges for the City to address. On the water side there are development opportunities that would impact traditional uses, new competition for limited space within the harbor, and opportunity to improve the efficiency of harbor use. On the land side are desires for improved public access for residents and visitors, maintenance of the working waterfront and marine industrial heritage, preservation of view corridors, redevelopment of aging infrastructure, understanding the implications of sea level rise and related funding – and allocation of limited resources to invest in the future. One thing that hasn't changed, however, is that the harbor remains at the heart of the City of Rockland.

Recent controversies related to the harbor have included cruise ships, marina expansion to accommodate larger yachts, the possibility of public/private partnerships for harbor improvements and wave attenuation – all things that were identified as desirable in the last harbor plan. The Rockland City Council recognized the need for a new plan that addresses the issues being faced by the harbor and its uses today. A coordinated approach is needed to balance diverse harbor interests, consider current conditions and trends, and develop a compelling vision for the harbor as a whole, rather than addressing individual issues in isolation.

With that in mind, the City Council passed a resolution this spring to develop a new Harbor Management Plan. It has established a Steering Committee that will include representatives from key Commissions and Committees with interests in harbor issues, as well as interested members of the public. The City anticipates hiring consulting assistance to provide technical support for the Committee's work, facilitate a larger stakeholder process, and draft the Plan.

The project will:

- Identify harbor stakeholders and establish a process for stakeholder input.
- Develop a common understanding of harbor uses, infrastructure, and data, including the implications of sea level rise and flooding.
- Develop visual aids for facilitating public input of potential improvements to certain City-owned properties and infrastructure.
- Work collaboratively with stakeholders to identify goals and objectives for harbor use and management, including both the harbor itself and publicly-owned infrastructure and property on the waterfront.
- Coordinate with the Comprehensive Plan update currently underway.
- Identify concrete actions to move goals and objectives forward.
- Present a Harbor Management Plan for Council approval.

Overall, the Harbor Management Plan should provide a roadmap for the harbor and the publicly-owned waterfront that will help the City Council, appointed commissions and committees, and others make coordinated decisions. It will help the City manage increase user pressures, guide policy actions, and help to maintain the unique balance of users that

characterize Rockland. We expect that the Harbor Management Plan will be added as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan.

Project Strengths

- **Cost effectiveness.** Shore and Harbor Planning funds will be matched nearly dollar for dollar when both cash and in-kind match are considered – allowing the project to be completed cost-effectively from both State and Municipal perspectives. This doesn't include the additional value of community participation, which likely will total several thousand more. Cash match is already in hand. A harbor management plan will encourage harbor issues to be addressed in a coordinated fashion, improving the efficiency of municipal processes. There also are efficiencies in developing the Harbor Plan in close coordination with the waterfront section of the Comprehensive plan, because of the opportunity to leverage the same consultant as lead technical support for both projects, both stakeholder processes for input and outreach, and both sets of volunteers.
- **A qualified team with capacity to get the job done.** The City of Rockland's Harbormaster will be project manager of this effort. A former Coast Guard Officer, he is an experienced manager of people and projects and is responsible for the City's various harbor facilities. He will work in close coordination with the City's Community Development Director, whose background includes planning, public access and recreation development, and consensus building. There is a qualified steering committee with representation from the City's Harbor Management Commission, Comprehensive Planning Commission and Economic Development Committee, as well as members of the public. Councilor Glaser, who also is a former Harbormaster will serve as a liaison with the City Council. The lead consultant on the project is anticipated to be Noel Musson of the Musson Group, who is known for his ability to bring diverse perspectives together around common goals. He has developed numerous harbor plans for other communities and is the technical consultant on the City's Comprehensive Plan update, currently underway.
- **Feasibility and Readiness.** There is support for this project at all levels, including support from the Rockland City Council, who passed an associated resolve establishing the steering committee and a target timeline of one year. The Chairs of the Harbor Management Commission, Comprehensive Planning Commission, and Economic Advisory Commission have all expressed their support for the process, as have a wide range of other stakeholders with interests in the harbor. Recent controversies and debates about proposals related to the harbor and a lack of clarity around community goals have underscored the need for an updated vision and management plan for Rockland Harbor.

- Measurable improvements in harbor planning and management and public access to the shore.** Rockland is on the move, and its resurgence is drawing new attention to the Harbor and its opportunities – for industry, jobs, tourism, recreation, and quality of life. The City’s current harbor plan was penned more than 20 years ago, before Rockland’s resurgence, downtown revitalization and increased demand for limited harbor resources and public access to them. The City has developed plans for specific facilities or amenities over the years, but there is nothing current that considers the harbor as a whole, and that outlines both a compelling vision for the future and tangible actions for achieving it. This plan will make measurable improvements in harbor planning and management by identifying current needs and opportunities, pulling disparate plans and ideas together into a cohesive whole, considering the implications of sea level rise and flooding, and developing buy-in from policymakers and the community.
- Measurable economic impact, private investment, and leveraged funding.** Rockland Harbor is important to the local, regional and state economies in many ways. From its outsized role in the State’s lobster industry, because nearly 30% of the herring (lobster bait) caught in Maine passes through Rockland Harbor, to its role in the viability of year round island communities, to tourism and the fleet of windjammers and excursion vessels and the waterfront festivals, to the marine based businesses that depend on the harbor (marinas and boat yards, boat builders, commercial fishing, seafood sales, and more), to the residents and businesses who choose Rockland because of its Harbor – the economic impacts of Rockland Harbor are many and substantial. It important to have a modern plan that guides City policy so that the city process is predicable for new and expanding businesses, resulting in economic benefits. A modern Plan also will serve as a foundation for future harbor investments – whether from federal, state or charitable sources, private investments, or public-private partnerships.
- Consistency with and contribution to local and regional efforts and priorities.** The Plan will be closely coordinated with the City of Rockland’s Comprehensive Planning effort, currently underway. It will consider priorities identified in the MidCoast Economic Development District’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, including the need to redevelop Rockland’s commercial Fish Pier and its importance to the local, regional, and state economies. It will consider the needs of island communities, who depend on Rockland’s working waterfront for transportation and supplies. And it will consider relevant plans and priorities of the US Coast Guard and Maine Department of Transportation, both of whom manage facilities on Rockland Harbor.

Project Tasks and Deliverables

Task 1 - Analysis of the harbor and related City infrastructure. The primary goal for the first stage of the planning process is to establish a common baseline of understanding that can be used as a foundation for discussion of goals, strategies and actions.

Data collection and analysis will include:

- An inventory of *existing harbor uses and needs*.
- Available *data on harbor usage* by type and associated economic impacts.
- An inventory of publicly-owned *harbor infrastructure and condition*.
- A summary and status of *existing plans and Master Plans* related to the harbor and publicly-owned facilities, including facilities owned by the City, State Department of Transportation, and Coast Guard.
- A third-party survey to understand the *impacts of cruise ships* on the local economy and downtown experience.
- A summary of existing local, state, and federal *regulatory issues and constraints*.
- An overview of the *natural resource* and any critical habitat.
- *Sea level rise scenarios*, including current flood plain maps and projected sea level rise using, at a minimum, information from the Maine Geological Survey website, and consideration of NOAA COOPS.

Through the planning process the consultant to the City will develop base maps, using readily available existing data to show important features such as moorings, access points, roads, habitat, and implications of sea level rise, flooding, and more.

The majority of the work effort will be to evaluate and interpret relevant data and to develop clear infographics and summary text that effectively communicates harbor context and trends and assists with critical thinking (i.e., what does the data mean?).

Expected deliverables include:

- Infographics summarizing data and trends with bulleted summaries -- appropriate for use in various media.
- Maps showing harbor features, access points, uses, implications of sea level rise, and more.
- Overview of relevant studies and Master Plans.
- Raw data for City records/future use.

Task 2 – Facilitation of the Harbor Planning Steering Committee Meetings. The Harbor Planning process will include regular, focused meetings with the Steering Committee with summaries of accomplishments and action items that participants can use to brief the standing commissions and committees represented and solicit input.

Meetings will be used to:

- Develop a common understanding of facts.
- Plan for/consider input from a larger stakeholder engagement process.
- Discuss potential goals and strategies.
- Identify concrete actions for consideration.

Expected deliverables include:

- Meeting agendas.
- Presentation materials.
- Summaries of areas of agreement and action items.
- A working Summary Document summarizing the current state of the plan and associated data.

Task 3 – Stakeholder outreach. Soliciting input from the diverse stakeholders who have an interest in the harbor including both the general public and City Council is a critical aspect of the project. It is an important step in generating support and creating legitimacy for the plan itself.

Stakeholder outreach will include:

- *A communications plan* outlining goals, identifying stakeholders and the specific means of engaging with them, draft communications and event plans, as appropriate, and an action plan with responsible parties and schedule.
- *A series of public meetings* focusing on harbor issues. These public meetings will be organized to develop a shared understanding of facts, and facilitate discussion to identify issues, opportunities and solutions.
- *Consistent communication and collaboration between the Steering Committee and those they represent* – including the Harbor Management Commission, Comprehensive Planning Commission, and Economic Advisory Committee – and assistance from those groups where appropriate. Close coordination with the Comprehensive Planning Commission will be important to ensure that the Harbor Management Plan is consistent with and builds on the high-level goals and strategies in the Comprehensive Plan.
- *Consistent communication and collaboration with City Council.* Regular time with City Council will provide opportunity to develop a shared understanding of facts, solicit guidance and develop buy-in on critical elements of the plan.

Expected deliverables include:

- A detailed Communications Plan for stakeholder outreach and communication.
- Power Point presentation materials for use in outreach, and to provide website access to updates and information for those unable to attend meetings.
- Meeting reports including who participated, input received, areas of agreement and next steps.
- Consistent communications that publicize opportunities for input, explain project status and decisions made, and move the project forward.

Task 4 – Initial concept for selected city assets. The City of Rockland has the good fortune to own key properties on the waterfront, including Harbor Park, Buoy Park, Middle Pier, the Public Landing, Snow Marine Park and the Fish Pier. Looked at together, these properties offer opportunity for enhanced public access and use and improvements to the Harbor Trail. Past studies and plans have developed concepts for portions of these spaces. The City will, as part of the harbor planning process, facilitate discussion with stakeholders about these spaces and desired improvements.

Expected deliverables include:

- A high-level vision for these public spaces as a whole.
- Initial concept drawings for Middle Pier, the Public Landing, and adjoining areas for discussion purposes. (A future project would develop more detailed site plans.)

Task 5 – Harbor Management Plan development. Once there is a solid understanding of the facts and critical thinking about what the data is telling us, we can develop potential goals, policies and strategies that will be the central part of the Harbor Management Plan.

Questions to consider might include, but are not limited to the following:

- What is the role of the working waterfront in the economy and the community?
- What should the goals be related to cruise ships?
- Would changes to the mooring field design be beneficial?
- What is the role of the informal channel, and is it in the best location?
- How could City waterfront properties and infrastructure be improved and prioritized?
- Does the use of City properties and facilities provide sufficient revenue to maintain and recapitalize them? Should it?
- What are the best opportunities for public/private partnerships for development of harbor infrastructure or facilities?
- What should the City's goals be for the Harbor Trail, and should the boardwalk be extended?
- Is water calming/wave attenuation desirable, and if so, in what form?
- What is the role of concessions and where should they be allowed or encouraged?
- Should the City have a policy on houseboats? Houseboats as short-term rentals?
- What are the implications of sea level rise, flooding, and other environmental factors?

The Harbor Management Plan will include:

- A vision for the harbor and a related implementation plan with short, medium and long-term goals, actions, and implementation responsibilities.
- Initial concept plans for City infrastructure, such as the Public Landing and Middle Pier.
- An overview of the data, trends and stakeholder input that informed these goals, actions, and concepts.
- Necessary background information on harbor uses, access points, habitat, and conditions.
- A high-level summary of issues, needs and opportunities.
- Maps delineating key harbor features and uses, and implications of sea level rise.

Expected deliverables include:

- Draft Harbor Management Plan and associated maps and concept designs.
- A summary of input received, and how it was addressed.
- Final Harbor Management Plan.

(Detailed plans for mooring field redesign and or changes to the channel, if desirable, would be part of a future project.)

Project Schedule

We anticipate finishing the overall project by December of 2019. Ideally, initial work with the Steering Committee and the first public meeting would be held in summer of 2018 to provide opportunity to capture input from seasonal users and residents. Because this plan will also help with budget and policy decisions related to the harbor and related City infrastructure, we hope to have some preliminary recommendations for consideration during the first quarter of 2019.

Milestones	Projected Completion Date
Grant Funding Awarded	June 2018
Engage Consultant	June 2018
Kick-off meetings	June 2018
Analysis of the Harbor	June 2018 – December 2018
3 rd Party Survey	June 2018-October 2018
Concept Designs	November 2018-February 2019
Stakeholder Process	July/Aug 2018 – June 2019
Goals, Strategies and Plan Development	January 2019 – June 2019
Final Plan	No later than December 2019