

## **SECTION III**

# **THE CASTINE FUTURE LAND USE PLAN**

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***Town Vision Statement: “A year-round thriving community that values our heritage, village character and natural beauty.”***

### **1. Introduction**

A Future Land Use Plan should present a vision of how residents want their town to grow. It will serve as the basis for revisions to the zoning ordinance and other land use regulations. Castine’s Future Land Use Plan should represent a balance between the need to preserve village character and historic and natural resources, while also allowing reasonable opportunities for future growth. Through careful planning, Castine can accommodate all anticipated growth.

Specifically, this section will:

- estimate the amount of land needed for future growth;
- propose a future development plan for Castine; and
- recommend areas for growth.

### **2. Land Needed for Future Development**

Inventory and Analysis Chapter C – Housing and Chapter L - Land Use discuss several land use issues the Town faces:

- the shortage of housing that is affordable by those of all income levels;
- the need for senior housing and services to be located near Village services;
- the inability of the present Commercial District to accommodate growth;
- the inability of the On-Neck water and sewage distribution systems to accommodate major expansions by users such as MMA; and
- the need for future MMA expansion to be coordinated with the Town.

Castine has ample vacant, developable land to accommodate residential, commercial and institutional growth. As seen in Table L.3 (Soil Suitability Ratings), there are approximately 2,250 acres of soils with a medium, high or very high potential for low-density development. Therefore, the issue is not the amount of development, but planning where and how the development will take place.

### **3. A Future Development Plan for Castine**

Castine has avoided the sprawl that characterizes many Maine communities. One of Castine's strengths as a community is the on-going relationship between the more densely populated On-Neck and rural Off-Neck. On-Neck has many historic homes and offers quiet, tree-lined streets. As described in Chapter E, public facilities and services such as the town office, municipal water and sewer systems, the volunteer fire department, the volunteer ambulance corps, the Post Office and Castine Community Health Services are found On-Neck. However, the lack of parking, particularly in the downtown area, and the limited capacity of the sewer and water distribution systems mean that On-Neck has a limited capacity to absorb new growth. This means that more growth will be attracted to Off-Neck.

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It is important that the Plan recognize the varying capabilities of different parts of the Town to accommodate growth. Specific sections of the Town are discussed below.

### **A. On-Neck**

The Plan recommends that On-Neck retain its current mixture of residential, institutional and small scale commercial uses. The Plan recommends providing senior housing that is close to Castine Community Health Services and other Town services. This would require the Town approving such type of housing at a Town Meeting pursuant to Article 2 of the zoning ordinance. Creating senior housing that is compatible with the Village character and that provides adequate on-site parking could be accomplished by requiring appropriate impact studies prior to granting site plan approval. No other changes are recommended in the On-Neck zoning districts in terms of density or the size of the districts.

### **B. Shoreland and Islands**

The most fragile areas of Castine's 15 miles of shoreland are protected by resource protection zoning. The Town's islands are also largely protected. Ram Island and Lower Negro Island are owned by The Conservation Trust of Brooksville, Castine and Penobscot and Holbrook Island is owned by the State. Upper Negro Island and Sheep Island are privately owned. Shoreland zoning offers the islands and the shoreland considerable protection. Therefore, no additional protective measures are needed for the shoreland and the islands.

### **C. Off-Neck Residential Areas**

The Plan recommends that Off-Neck remain predominately rural-residential. Most development in the Square, the area within the perimeter of Routes 166 and Route 166A, has occurred along its edges, adjacent to the roadways with very little taking place in the interior. Furthermore, there are no public roads serving the interior of the Square and the existing lots are generally large. According to Town records, there are six completely undeveloped lots greater than 40 acres in the Square. In addition, there are seven lots greater than 40 acres in the Square that have only one house on the property. The Town-owned Transfer Station lot is also greater than 40 acres.

**Affordable Housing.** As discussed in Chapter C - Housing, Castine needs housing that is affordable for those of all income levels. A variety of ways of encouraging the construction of such housing are discussed below.

**Encouraging Cluster Development.** Increased use of "cluster development" is one way to retain the rural appearance of Off-Neck while also allowing ample opportunities for growth. Castine's Subdivision Ordinance already includes the ability for a subdivision to be developed using the cluster approach. As stated in the ordinance, the purpose of cluster development is "to allow for the creation of open space, provide for affordable housing, recreational opportunities or protect important natural features from the adverse impacts of development." The ordinance encourages use of the cluster option by including standards for allowing lots within cluster subdivisions to be reduced in area and width below the minimum normally allowed in order "to

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provide for affordable housing or in return for open space . . . without increasing the net density of the subdivision.” In contrast, conventional subdivisions would continue to require the standard two acre minimum lot size.

**Strengthening Subdivision Development Standards.** In order to increase the appeal of subdivisions while still retaining a rural appearance, Castine's subdivision development standards should be strengthened. The Plan recommends that the setback from existing roads be increased from 30 feet to 100 feet if either the conventional subdivision or the cluster option is used. This setback requirement would not apply to cul-de-sacs or other roads built solely for subdivision access. In addition, the open space preserved by the use of the cluster option should be visible from existing roads. The Plan also recommends that new minor subdivisions have only one entrance onto existing roads and new major subdivisions be limited to two entrances onto existing roads.

**Strengthening Mobile Home Park Standards.** Mobile homes and mobile home parks are another form of housing that is affordable and that would continue to be allowed Off-Neck; they are not allowed On-Neck. Similar to the recommendation with respect to subdivisions, to increase the appeal of mobile home parks and ensure preservation of open space and a rural appearance, Castine's mobile home park standards should be strengthened. The Town zoning ordinance presently requires a 30 foot setback from roads in the Rural District and 200 feet of road frontage. The Plan recommends that the setback be increased to 100 feet from an existing road for new mobile home parks. This setback requirement would not apply to cul-de-sacs or other roads built solely for mobile home park access. In addition, future mobile home parks would have buffering and open space requirements to minimize their impact on surrounding properties.

The combination of stricter subdivision and mobile home park standards, should help keep Off-Neck largely rural while encouraging the creation of affordable housing. Given the relatively slow growth rates projected for Castine, no additional restrictions in this part of Town are needed.

### **D. Off-Neck Commercial Areas**

Owing to the lack of available commercial acreage On-Neck and in order to promote the economic vitality of the Town, the Plan recommends that the Square should be studied for areas of potential commercial development. This would require changes to the zoning ordinance to create commercial districts in an area that currently is zoned entirely residential. Any newly created commercial districts would include setback, buffering and open space requirements to minimize their impact on neighboring properties. Prior to receiving site plan approval, any proposed commercial development would be required to submit impact studies with respect to environmental impacts and their remediation and impacts caused by traffic, noise, lighting, dust and odors and their remediation. In addition, commercial developers would be required to submit evidence of adequate water supplies, adequate sewage disposal, adequate electric power supply, adequate fire flow water volumes, adequate fire hazard mitigation and adequate on-site parking.

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### **E. Off-Neck Conservation Areas**

Most of the environmentally sensitive area of the Square is already protected by four Resource Protection Districts (Bog Brook, the Ice Pond, Morse Cove Stream and Dunc's Meadow). Two of these areas (Bog Brook and Dunc's Meadow) are State designated freshwater wetlands. In addition, two areas (Dunc's Meadow and the Ice Pond) have further protection from development as they are owned by The Conservation Trust of Brooksville, Castine and Penobscot. Therefore, no additional conservation measures are needed.

### **F. Source Water Protection Areas**

The Plan recommends that the Town continue to protect all public source water areas, including aquifers and surface water. While the current zoning protects the recharge areas adjacent to those wells that presently serve the municipal water system, it is important that this protection be extended to any new public well areas. Since decisions on future water supplies will be made after this Plan is complete, the specific areas where protection is needed cannot be recommended here. The Source Water Protection Ordinance adopted by the Town in 2009 may need to be modified in the future to include new recharge areas for new public wells.

## **4. Future Expansion by MMA**

Post-secondary schools such as MMA currently are allowed in the institutional, commercial and rural districts, but are not allowed in the Village I, Village II and Village III districts. Although MMA officials have repeatedly stated that they have no plans for growth, growth has nonetheless occurred at a dramatic rate and likely will continue to do so. The Plan is not against growth by MMA; rather, the Plan believes growth by MMA should only occur with planning that is coordinated with the Town and that is in line with the objectives of the Plan to achieve the vision of the Town.

As discussed above, the lack of parking and the limited capacity of the sewer and water distribution systems mean that On-Neck has a limited capacity to absorb more growth by MMA. Accordingly, the Plan recommends that, in order to be a good community partner with the Town, any strategic planning by MMA and any future expansion of MMA should only occur through prior consultation and coordination with the Town. Prior to receiving site plan approval, any proposed development plans by MMA would be required to include appropriate impact studies showing the impact of proposed development on the Town including environmental impacts and their remediation and impacts caused by traffic, noise, lighting, dust and odors and their remediation. As with future commercial development, proposed MMA development plans would be required to include evidence of adequate water supplies, adequate sewage disposal, adequate electric power supply, adequate fire flow water volumes, adequate fire hazard mitigation and adequate on-site parking.

## **5. Growth Areas and Rural Areas**

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The determination of growth areas and rural areas is an important part of the comprehensive planning process. Growth areas are those parts of a town where most new growth is likely to occur.

As discussed above, the lack of parking and the limited capacity of the sewer and water distribution system mean that On-Neck has a limited capacity to absorb new growth. Accordingly, more growth will be attracted to Off-Neck. However, Castine does not need large growth areas in the next ten-year planning period. The growth that does occur would be primarily in rural-residential and newly created rural-commercial areas. It is also possible that the rural area may experience growth by MMA. The rural-conservation areas would remain rural.

### **6. Measures to Distinguish Growth Areas and Rural Areas**

The Plan makes clear distinctions between growth areas and rural areas. On-Neck would continue to retain its current density of development. Off-Neck will attract a good portion of Castine's new homes, and possibly businesses and/or expansion by MMA, over the next few years. Newly created rural-commercial areas and newly developed subdivisions and mobile home parks would include setback, buffering and open space requirements that would help retain a rural appearance and minimize their impact on neighboring properties.

The islands are presently well protected from development by a combination of shoreland zoning and ownership by the State or conservation land trusts. The shoreland is protected by a combination of shoreland zoning and resource protection zoning. Additional conservation restrictions for the islands and the shoreland are not presently needed.

As discussed above, rural-conservation areas are large in size and are adequately protected from development through a combination of resource protection zoning and ownership by conservation land trusts. Additional conservation restrictions in the rural area are not presently needed.

### **7. Summary**

The Future Land Use Plan contains sufficient measures to discourage sprawl and strip development, promote efficiency in public services and protect open space in the rural areas. These are basic requirements of Maine's Growth Management Act for a Future Land Use Plan. Since commercial development Off-Neck would only be allowed if new areas were designated as commercial districts, there is no threat of commercial sprawl. Strengthening subdivision and mobile home park standards will help preserve the rural feel of Off-Neck, reduce the risk of residential strip development and encourage the creation of affordable housing. Any future expansion of MMA must be achieved through prior consultation and coordination with the Town.

The Future Land Use Plan will help the Town achieve its vision of Castine: "A year-round thriving community that values our heritage, village character and natural beauty."