

3. HOUSING

Introduction

This section of the Comprehensive Plan profiles the housing stock in Wiscasset and assesses the overall affordability of housing in the community. Most of the data used for this Plan is derived from the 1990 and 2000 census.

Changes in Total Housing Stock

Table 1 includes a summary of the changes in total housing stock since 1980 in Wiscasset, a number of nearby communities, Lincoln County and the State of Maine. According to census figures, Wiscasset's housing stock increased by 29% between 1980 and 1990. This increase was the highest of all jurisdictions shown in Table 1 except Woolwich (also 29%). Between 1990 and 2000, the number of housing units in Wiscasset increased by 16%. This 16% growth rate was smaller than that of all jurisdictions shown in the table except Edgecomb (10%) Woolwich (also 16%), and the State of Maine (11%). Wiscasset's slower pace may be due to a number of factors including affordability of housing and increases in the local tax rate.

Table 1							
Changes in Total Housing Stock							
	<u>Total Number of Units</u>			<u>Increases, 1980-90</u>		<u>Increases, 1990-2000</u>	
	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
Wiscasset	1,074	1,386	1,612	312	29%	226	16%
Alna	214	263	315	49	23%	52	20%
Damariscotta	848	986	1,151	116	14%	165	17%
Dresden	436	552	739	116	27%	187	34%
Edgecomb	431	518	572	87	20%	54	10%
Newcastle	617	745	880	128	21%	135	18%
Westport	330	399	510	69	21%	111	28%
Woolwich	781	1,011	1,210	230	29%	199	16%
Lincoln County	14,977	17,538	20,849	2,561	17%	3,311	19%
State of Maine	501,093	587,045	651,901	85,952	17%	64,856	11%

Source: U.S. Census, 1980, 1990, 2000

Selected Characteristics of Housing Units

Table 2 contains 2000 Census information on selected housing characteristics including total housing units, the number and percentage of year-round dwelling units, the number and percentage of seasonal dwellings, the percentage of owner occupied units, and the percentage of renter occupied units. In 2000, Wiscasset had a higher percentage of year-round dwelling units (97%) than any jurisdiction shown in Table 2, but the third lowest percentage of owner-occupied units (77%). The relatively high

percentage of rental units (23%) may indicate that Wiscasset is an important rental housing market for the region.

**Table 2
Selected Characteristics of Housing Units – 2000**

	Total Dwelling Units	Year Round Dwelling Units		Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Seasonal Dwelling Units	
		#	%	%	%	#	%
Wiscasset	1,612	1,557	97%	77%	23%	55	3%
Alna	315	278	88%	91%	9%	37	12%
Damariscotta	1,151	993	86%	72%	28%	158	14%
Dresden	739	670	91%	86%	15%	69	9%
Edgecomb	572	483	84%	87%	13%	89	16%
Newcastle	880	759	86%	83%	17%	121	14%
Westport	510	336	66%	89%	11%	174	34%
Woolwich	1,210	1,146	95%	86%	14%	64	5%
Lincoln County	20,849	14,989	72%	83%	17%	5,860	28%
State of Maine	651,901	550,431	84%	72%	28%	101,470	16%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Housing Types

The predominant housing type in Wiscasset is the single-family dwelling. Table 3 contains a breakdown of housing units by housing type, as reported in the 2000 Census. In 2000, 67% of the housing units in Wiscasset were detached single family dwellings, the same percentage as Maine, but a smaller percentage than any community shown in the table except Damariscotta (64%). Wiscasset had 325 mobile homes, which was 20% of the total housing stock. The percentage of mobile homes in Wiscasset is about double the percent in both Lincoln County and the State.

**Table 3
Housing Unit by Type of Structure**

	Single Family Detached		Single Family Attached	Mobile Home	Duplex	Multi - Family	Boat, RV, Van, Etc.	Total
	#	%						
Wiscasset	1,085	67%	13	325	64	125	-	1,612
Alna	283	89%	5	25	4	2	-	319
Damariscotta	735	64%	11	130	34	237	4	1,151
Dresden	548	74%	5	180	-	4	3	739
Edgecomb	506	89%	3	48	10	5	-	572
Newcastle	751	86%	10	60	10	24	2	876
Westport	440	86%	6	53	3	0	8	510
Woolwich	964	80%	25	199	18	4	-	1,210
Lincoln County	16,868	81%	240	2,251	475	974	41	20,849
State of Maine	439,459	67%	14,387	63,902	36,565	95,777	1,811	651,901

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Growth by Type of Structure, 1990- 2000

As shown in Table 4, between 1990 and 2000, a majority of the housing growth in Wiscasset was in the form of detached, single-family dwellings (178 out of 226 units, or about 79% of all new units). The number of attached single-family dwellings increased by 5, and the number of mobile homes grew from 308 in 1990 to 325 in 2000. The number of duplexes/multi-family dwellings increased by 26 (in 1990, duplexes were statistically lumped with multi-family dwellings).

	1990	2000	# Increase 1990-2000	% Increase 1990-2000
Single-Family, detached	907	1,085	178	20%
Single-Family, attached	8	13	5	63%
Mobile Home	308	325	17	6%
Multi-Family/duplex	163	189	26	16%
Total	1,386	1,612	226	16%

Source: U.S. Census

Housing Values and Costs

Based on 2000 Census data as shown in Table 5, the median value of an owner-occupied home in Wiscasset (\$125,200) was higher than the median value for Lincoln County (\$119,900) and Maine (\$98,700). The median monthly owner (total) cost with a mortgage (\$959) was higher than the County median (\$880) and State median (\$923). Median owner costs without a mortgage (\$293) were about the same as the median figures for the County (\$295) and State (\$299). The median gross rent in Wiscasset (\$552) was higher than the figures for Lincoln County (\$541) and Maine (\$497).

	Median Value Owner Occupied Unit	Median Monthly Owner Costs			Median Monthly Rental Costs	
		With Mortgage	Without Mortgage	30% or more of Income	Gross Rent	30% or more of Income
Wiscasset	\$125,200	\$959	\$293	22%	\$552	37%
Alna	\$110,900	\$914	\$366	29%	\$575	33%
Damariscotta	\$153,700	\$973	\$344	23%	\$493	45%
Dresden	\$97,900	\$855	\$279	19%	\$571	34%
Edgecomb	\$134,700	\$953	\$327	32%	\$570	25%
Newcastle	\$132,100	\$981	\$345	26%	\$527	27%
Westport	\$144,600	\$928	\$330	16%	\$757	23%
Woolwich	\$114,400	\$956	\$309	24%	\$622	32%

Lincoln County	\$119,900	\$880	\$295	22%	\$541	34%
State of Maine	\$98,700	\$923	\$299	20%	\$497	27%

Source: 2000 Census

The 2000 Census contains a summary of housing values, as reported by a sample of homeowners as shown in Table 6. These estimates of value are based on the perceptions of homeowners and may not reflect actual values or selling prices. Note that 21.8% of respondents in Wiscasset and 32.1% in Lincoln County reported a value between \$50,000 and \$99,000, a range generally considered affordable for very low, low and moderate income households in both Wiscasset and Lincoln County.

Table 6 Housing Values in 2000				
	Wiscasset		Lincoln County	
	#	%	#	%
Less than \$50,000	17	2.5%	204	2.8%
\$50,000-\$99,999	150	21.8%	2,358	32.1%
\$100,000-\$149,999	340	49.5%	2,310	31.5%
\$150,000-\$199,999	90	13.1%	1,000	13.6%
\$200,000-\$299,999	90	13.1%	879	12.0%
\$300,000 or more	0	0	587	8.0%
Total	687	100%	7,338	100

Source: 2000 Census

As of 2005, the Maine State Housing Authority reports that 67% of Wiscasset renters and 61% of Lincoln County renter households can't afford the average two-bedroom rent. Rental affordability remains a serious problem in all jurisdictions.

The median value of a home in Wiscasset reported in the Census (\$125,200), is very close to the median sales price of a home in Wiscasset reported by the Maine State Housing Authority in 2001 (\$127,500). In Lincoln County, the median value of a home reported in the 2000 Census was \$119,900, which is not too far off the County-wide median selling price of \$125,000.

The Maine State Housing Authority also reports that the median sales price of a home in Wiscasset has increased substantially from 2001, rising from \$127,500 in 2001 to \$143,000 in 2002, \$169,000 in 2003, \$195,000 in 2004 and \$209,000 in 2005.

Affordable Housing Needs Analysis

This section evaluates Wiscasset's current and future needs for affordable housing. The basic premise of this section is that the Town of Wiscasset must evaluate its efforts to provide its fair share of the region's affordable housing supply.

Definitions of Affordability. The starting point for this analysis is to define affordability and examine how affordable or unaffordable Wiscasset's housing stock currently is. Affordability will be defined by a combination of HUD's definitions of very low, low and moderate incomes and Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) data for Wiscasset and Lincoln County.

HUD's affordability definitions are tied to regional median household income levels:

- Very Low Income is defined as below 50% of the regional median;
- Low Income is defined as 50%-80% of the regional median; and
- Moderate Income is defined as 80%-120% of the regional median.

As of 2005, Lincoln County's median household income level was \$43,559, so the HUD affordability definitions would be applied to that figure (see below):

The next step is to define the relationship between household income and housing affordability. MSHA calculates this information for each municipality in Maine each year by using a formula that includes all of the costs of housing – mortgage amount, interest rates, property taxes, utilities, etc. For 2005, the income to price ratio for Lincoln County was 32.67%, with a household earning the median income (\$43,559) able to afford a home priced at \$133,329.

Using the combination of HUD and MSHA data, the income and price levels for households in Wiscasset are assumed to be as follows (figures are rounded to the nearest thousand):

- Very Low: Income below \$22,000, home price below \$64,000
- Low Income: Income from \$22,000 to \$35,000, home prices from \$64,000 to \$106,000
- Moderate: Income from \$35,000 to \$52,000; home prices from \$106,000 to \$160,000

Housing Affordability and Availability. MSHA data shows that, on the whole, Lincoln County has one of the least affordable housing markets in the State in terms of relationships between income and housing prices. At the end of 2005, MSHA's affordability index for the County was 0.64, meaning that a household earning the County's median household income (\$43,559) could only afford 64% of the purchase price of a home selling for the County's median home sales price (\$209,000). The County's housing market is getting much less affordable; its affordability index was 0.93 as recently as 2001.

According to MSHA, at the end of 2005, the median household income in Wiscasset was \$40,483, and a household earning this much could afford a home costing \$120,547. The median home sale price for this period was \$207,000, resulting in an affordability gap of \$86,000. The affordability gap in Lincoln County was somewhat less. Countywide, the median income household (\$43,559) could afford a home costing \$133,329, but the median selling price was \$209,000, resulting in an affordability gap of \$76,000.

Another measure of affordability tracked by MSHA is the percentage of homes sold above the median affordable level in each town and county. In 2005, 81% of the homes in Lincoln County were sold above the median affordable level of \$133,329. The share of homes in Wiscasset sold above the median affordable level of \$120,547 was 91%.

Current Affordable Housing Need – Gap Analysis. The current affordable housing gap is measured by comparing Wiscasset's current income profile with that of Lincoln County. The central assumption in this analysis is that each community in the County should have an equal share of low to moderate income residents and thus bear its fair share of the region's affordable housing supply. The following table compares 2000 Census data on very low, low, and moderate-income households for Wiscasset and Lincoln County to illustrate where the gaps exist.

Table 7
Very Low, Low and Moderate Income Households, 2000

Household Incomes	Wiscasset		Lincoln County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very Low (<\$22k)	387	26.2	3,654	25.8
Low (\$22K-\$35K)	312	21.1	2,756	19.4
Moderate (\$35K - \$52K)	282	19.1	3,107	21.9
Market (>52K)	495	33.5	4,653	32.8
Total	1,476	99.9	14,170	99.9

The gap analysis to determine Wiscasset’s present affordable housing surplus or shortage is based on a calculation of how many more very low, low and moderate income households would need to be housed in Town in order for its income profile to match that of Lincoln County. The calculations are contained in the following table.

Table 8
Affordable House Gap Analysis

Household Incomes (Affordable Housing Pricews)	Current Affordable Units	Units Needed to Match County Ratios	Affordable Housing Gap (Units)
Very Low (<\$22k)	387	381	-6
Low (\$22K-\$35K)	312	286	-26
Moderate (\$35K - \$52K)	282	323	41
Total	981	990	9

Based on the gap analysis, there is an affordable housing gap of 9 units indicating the town is providing more than its fair share of housing for both very low and low income households, but doesn’t meet the need for moderate income households.

Future Affordable Housing Needs. Maine’s comprehensive planning laws mandate that each municipality seek to achieve a level of at least 10% of new residential development that meets the definition of affordable housing. Between 2005 and 2015, Wiscasset’s population is expected to grow by 202 people according to the Maine State Planning Office whose projections may not reflect recently-approved developments. Using the average household size reported in the 2000 Census (2.43 persons per household), this will result in 83 new housing units, of which 8 would need to be affordable housing units in order to meet the 10% goal.

If the average household size continues to decline at historical rates, a more realistic household size may be about 2.25 persons per household, in which case a population growth of 202 people would result in 90 new housing units, of which 9 units would need to be affordable housing units.

Adding together the current gap of affordable housing units to the expected future need, Wiscasset would need to add between 17 and 18 affordable housing units by the year 2015. This translates into an

average of a little less than two affordable housing units per year over the 10 year period. Affordable housing may include many different types of housing including single family dwellings, accessory dwellings, assisted living apartments and mobile homes.