

9. LAND USE

Wiscasset's Land and Quality Of Life

Wiscasset has a substantial amount of undeveloped land with opportunity for commercial as well as residential growth. It is also a very attractive community in which to live and work, blessed as it is with many acres of open fields and spectacular views of the Sheepscot River. It is "The Prettiest Village in Maine" due to the concentration of well-preserved, historic 18th and 19th-century buildings. The challenge is to maximize these opportunities by guiding growth and protecting the very natural and cultural assets which contribute so much to the attractive quality of life that Wiscasset has to offer.

Land Area and Parcel Sizes. There are 24.6 square miles of land in Wiscasset. As shown in Table 1, there are many large lots in Wiscasset. About 24% of Wiscasset's land area consists of parcels of 100 acres or more in size. Overall, about 64% of the total land area comprises parcels larger than 25 acres.

Parcel Size Ranges	# of Lots	# of Acres	% of Total
> 4 Acres	1,222	1,780	14%
4-10 Acres	172	1,114	9%
10-25 Acres	111	1,797	14%
25-50 Acres	70	2,587	20%
50-100 Acres	39	2,609	20%
> 100 Acres	18	3,175	24%
Total	1,632	13,062	101%

Source: Spatial Alternatives from '97 Land Use Map and Town Records

Protected Land. There are 1,240 acres of conservation land and 480 acres of Town-owned land.

Undeveloped Land. Wiscasset has a total 7,400 acres of undeveloped land, not including land protected by conservation easements.

The following paragraphs contain descriptions of Wiscasset's major neighborhoods. The locations of these neighborhoods are shown on a map at the end of this section.

The Historic Village and Harbor Neighborhood

Description and Special Assets. The Historic District Designation described in the Historic and Archaeological Resources chapter of this Plan defines the historic village. The district consists of a rectangle drawn by the Maine Historic Commission that includes Federal Street Houses just beyond the Old Jail. The southwest corner of the rectangle is at the intersection of Flood Avenue and Route 1, across from Holbrook Pond. The northwest corner is in the Sortwell Forest and includes some of

Bradford Road and Willow Lane. The northeast corner is in the Sheepscot River. The southeast Corner is also in the Sheepscot River, south of the Village.

The waterfront, the historic village, and the downtown are all part of the village. The Waterfront Advisory Committee has officially designated the waterfront as the area from Joppa Cove on the north to White’s Island on the south. The Mason Station is also considered part of the working waterfront.

This area has a wealth of assets including historical architecture, unique brick commercial buildings, and a mix of residential and business uses. There is a working waterfront with good public access as well as opportunities for recreational and commercial development. Although it cuts off the access to the waterfront, the rail line is a great tourism resource. Resources with historical significance and/or beauty include the library, courthouse, Sunken Garden, and views from the bridge.

Current Land Use Patterns and New Construction. This area contains a mixture of residential and commercial uses in a traditional village pattern. Houses abut the sidewalk. There are no minimum lot size requirements in this area. There are few, if any, vacant lots in this area.

Table 2 Summary of Village Lots			
Parcel Size Ranges	# of Lots	# of Acres	% of Total
> 4 Acres	288	124	95%
4-10 Acres	1	7	5%
10-25 Acres	0	0	0
25-50 Acres	0	0	0
50-100 Acres	0	0	0
> 100 Acres	0	0	0
Total	289	131	100%

Source: Spatial Alternatives from '97 Land Use Map and Town Records

The Northeastern Neighborhood

Description and Special Assets. The Northeastern Neighborhood includes the area north of Hooper Street in the village, extending east to include Clark’s Point to the Sheepscot River, north to the Alna line, and bordered on the West by Route 27. According to the 1989 Plan, the prime assets and opportunities in this region are its visual quality, and high value wildlife and marine habitat.

On the shore of the Sheepscot River, partially in Alna, are a bald eagle nest site, high value tidal wading bird/waterfront habitat areas and high value wetlands. There are three deer wintering areas including one east of Old Sheepscot Road in a forested area of Clark’s Point, another between West Alna Road and Alna Road, and a third north of Fowle Hill Road that extends to the Sheepscot Cross Road (in Alna.) The town owns 38 acres of land in this area. Polly Clark Brook runs through this area between Alna and West Alna Road. An unnamed intermittent stream appears to flow out of Polly Clark Brook south to Willow Lane, as well as a large wetland that lies partially in Alna.

Favorite places mentioned by the public in the visioning session in 2004 include the entire shoreline and views of the Sheepscot River. Polly Clark Brook was often mentioned as a favorite fishing spot. Views from Clark’s Point and Huntoon Hill provide vistas of Wiscasset and the river. There are also

views of the shore and land between Federal Street and the Sheepscot River.

Current Land Use Patterns and New Construction. This area includes at least four different types of land development patterns, each deserving different considerations and designations.

1. The area immediately north of the Historic Village to West Alna Road, and west of Federal Street, ending at the Central Maine Power easement. The lots are mostly 4 - 10 acres in size. Sewer and water services stop just about at the edge of the Historic Village.
2. Federal Street/Alna Road (Route 218) and Old Sheepscot Road all the way to the Alna boundary. This area is settled with fairly small lots of 1 to 5 acres. It is similar to # 1, above, but is not immediately adjacent to the village.
3. Clark’s Point area east of the Old Sheepscot Road to Alna. This area is significant ecologically and a significant visual feature. The shore includes valuable wildlife habitat. All the lots are large, ranging from 24 to 99 acres. Homes here are stately, on large lots, often with beautiful vistas.
4. The rest of the Northeast – from Alna Road to Gardiner Road, to the Alna border. The lots are larger than 10 acres in this area and add up to about 2,160 acres.

The land use pattern is rural residential, with 1 - 3 acre lots along all the roads, with a few high density “clusters.” Most of the large lots are backlands that would need access roads if they were to be developed. The race track and transfer station are located on Huntoon Hill.

The following is a summary of parcels exclusive of Town-owned or conservation lands.

Table 3			
Summary of Northeastern Neighborhood Lots			
Parcel Size Ranges	# of Lots	# of Acres	% of Total
> 4 Acres	172	240	7%
4-10 Acres	44	301	9%
10-25 Acres	30	534	16%
25-50 Acres	20	743	22%
50-100 Acres	12	714	21%
> 100 Acres	6	873	26%
Total	284	3,405	101%

Source: Spatial Alternatives from '97 Land Use Map and Town Records

Undeveloped Land. There are 56 parcels at least 10 acres in size, totaling 2,078 acres that are currently undeveloped.

Construction between 1997 and 2003. Between 1997 and 2003, 24 new homes and 37 mobile homes were located in the Northeastern Neighborhood

The Northwestern Neighborhood

Description and Special Assets. The Northwest Neighborhood is bounded on the east by Gardiner Road, on the north and west by Dresden, and on the south by Old Bath Road. It includes Gardiner Pond, Wiscasset's only great pond; the headwaters of two major streams, Ward and Montsweag brooks; and the Nequasset Watershed District, including a tributary of Nequasset Brook. There are extensive wetlands associated with the headwaters of Montsweag Brook. There is also a large area of wetlands south of Indian Road.

Based on public comments, residents value the rural character, scenic views, farming and forestry, Gardiner Pond, Montsweag Brook and Ward Brook. Many preserved conservation areas including Morris Farm, Sortwell Forest, the Rafter Oak Grove and others were mentioned as favorite places at the public visioning session. These areas often coincide with mapped deeryards.

Current Land Use Patterns and New Construction. Other than directly along the roadways, development is sparse and rural.

Table 4			
Summary of Northwestern Neighborhood Lots			
Parcel Size Ranges	# of Lots	# of Acres	% of Total
> 4 Acres	190	324	6%
4-10 Acres	53	352	7%
10-25 Acres	44	673	13%
25-50 Acres	29	1,100	21%
50-100 Acres	21	1,501	28%
> 100 Acres	8	1,361	26%
Total	345	5,311	101%

Source: Spatial Alternatives from '97 Land Use Map and Town Records

The table above substantiates that the area is sparsely settled. While there are 195 lots less than 4 acres, the highest percent of land, 54%, consists of parcels in excess of 50 acres. While large parcels may contain a high proportion of natural resources that might constrain dense development, these parcels are probably also the most likely to be developed as subdivisions.

Undeveloped Land. There are many undeveloped parcels of land larger than 10 acres. Many of these are located on either side of Lowelltown Road and north of Foye Road. In fact this area has the most undeveloped acres in town: There are 81 parcels consisting of 3,110 acres of undeveloped land (not counting conservation land).

Construction between 1997 and 2003. There were 25 houses and 29 mobile homes added to the Northwestern Neighborhood during this six-year period.

The Southern Neighborhood

Description and Special Assets. This is a large area with diverse uses ranging from industrial to residential with U.S. Route 1 in the middle (that corridor is discussed separately). It encompasses the area south of Old Bath Road, bordered on the south and west by Woolwich and by the Sheepscot River on the east. This area is rich in spectacular views and natural areas. It is surrounded by and laced with water including the Sheepscot, Montsweag Brook, and Back River. It contains two large, preserved natural areas, Chewonki Neck and Eaton Farm. All along the Sheepscot and Back River are high value wildlife habitats including wetlands. According to the Beginning with Habitat data and maps, there are three large deer yards: north of Ferry Road, parallel to Route 1, and East of Birch Point Road.

The Southern area also has the potential for substantial economic development at Mason Station, the Airport and the Maine Yankee Site, which is also the site of low radiation level waste products from the closed nuclear power plant. It contains the airport, railroad line, CMP transmission line and 1,700 acres of undeveloped land.

Current Land Use Patterns and New Construction. The 801-acre Maine Yankee site is located on prime, scenic coastal land. There is also considerable undeveloped land around the airport. There is some small lot residential development just northeast of the airport, off Ferry Road. There is residential development on 1-4 acre parcels all the way along Birch Point Road. There is a high-end residential development on Young's Point that features a water view for every lot.

The area west of Route 1 is now in residential use. There are a number of subdivisions on small lots. Public sewer and water are available in the vicinity of Old Bath Road.

Parcel Size Ranges	# of Lots	# of Acres	% of Total
> 4 Acres	275	403	23%
4-10 Acres	37	214	12%
10-25 Acres	18	306	17%
25-50 Acres	9	358	20%
50-100 Acres	4	260	15%
> 100 Acres	4	236	13%
Total	347	1,777	100%

Source: Spatial Alternatives from '97 Land Use Map and Town Records

This area has the largest number of parcels less than 4 acres in size. Some of the small lots are located west of Route 1 and along Birch Point Road.

Undeveloped Land. There are 28 parcels totaling 1,715 acres of undeveloped land in this area.

Construction between 1997 and 2003. There were 42 houses and 31 mobile homes placed or constructed in this area during the period 1997 through 2003.

Route 1 Corridor

Description and Special Assets. This area includes 500 feet on either side of Route 1, for a total of 1000 feet, from the village to the Woolwich line. Based on public input, people like the accessibility and variety of businesses. They like the open space breaks. Attractive features include the Montsweag Brook dam, the view from the vicinity of Birch Point Road, Grover’s Field and Holbrook Pond. People do not like the hodge-podge of visual styles and sign pollution on Route 1 south of Birch Point Road.

Current Land Use Patterns and New Construction. Commercial development starts with the service station on the corner of Lee and Main Streets. It is residential until about Holbrook Pond, and then the intense commercial “strip” begins south of Birch Point Road. There is an oasis of about 100 linear feet of non-commercial land on the east side of Route 1 near the CMP transmission line.

Parcel Size Ranges	# of Lots	# of Acres	% of Total
> 4 Acres	165	202	46%
4-10 Acres	21	132	30%
10-25 Acres	10	11	3%
25-50 Acres	3	95	22%
50-100 Acres	0	0	0
> 100 Acres	0	0	0
Total	199	440	101%

Source: Spatial Alternatives from '97 Land Use Map and Town Records

Undeveloped Land. There are 12 parcels, all larger than 10 acres, for a total of 242 acres of undeveloped land in the Route 1 Corridor.

Route 27/ Gardiner Road Corridor

Note: This corridor is incorporated within discussion of the Northwestern and Northeastern neighbors in the Future Land Use Plan, see Section 11.

Description and Special Assets. This corridor includes 500 feet either side of Gardiner Road, for a total of 1,000 feet, from the intersection with Route 1 to the Dresden border. People like its rural character, Morris Farm and the school/community center campus. They like the present scale of businesses.

Current Land Use Patterns and New Construction. Small scale commercial development exists for the first 3,000 feet of Gardiner Road north of its intersection with Route 1. The education and community center campus adjacent to the Morris Farm, including large holdings of Town property, create an open space/rural aspect to the first third of Gardiner Road between Langdon Road and Huntoon Hill Road. There is light commercial development on Route 27 roughly between Huntoon Hill Road and Fowle Hill Road. The remainder of Route 27 to the Dresden border is residential with

lots having about 200 feet of frontage. It is less densely settled than Birch Point Road. There are some mobile home parks on the northern end, close to the Dresden line.

Table 7 Summary of Route 27 Lots			
Parcel Size Ranges	# of Lots	# of Acres	% of Total
> 4 Acres	132	187	22%
4-10 Acres	16	108	13%
10-25 Acres	9	124	15%
25-50 Acres	9	290	34%
50-100 Acres	2	134	16%
> 100 Acres	0	0	0
Total	168	843	100%

Source: Spatial Alternatives from '97 Land Use Map and Town Records

A total of 548 acres, or roughly 2/3 of the land area, consists of parcels of land 10 acres or more in size.

Undeveloped Land. There are 13 parcels, or 330 acres, of undeveloped land along this corridor.

Public Opinion

The following is a summary of some of the major opinions about future land use compiled from interviews of 15 town officials or members of the Wiscasset Comprehensive Plan Committee conducted in the summer of 2003, or in the Public Opinion Survey administered in the summer of 2004. Opinions expressed during the public visioning session are incorporated into the future land use plan and other sections of the goals, policies and strategies chapter.

Opinions expressed in the interviews:

1. The following opinions were rated 4 or above (very important on a scale of 1 to 5) by the interviewees:
 - Preserving Maine's prettiest village
 - Protecting/preserving the outside appearance of historic homes or buildings
 - Preserving scenic vistas
 - Avoiding haphazard development along US Route 1
2. Interviewees would like to see the following types of new developments: single family homes for retirees, elderly housing, congregate care, new family neighborhoods, light manufacturing, professional service office complex, and industry at Maine Yankee, retail shops, small manufacturing firms, and bed and breakfasts.
3. Interviewees were asked about the acceptability of certain regulations: acceptable rated 5 and not acceptable rated 1. Those that rated 4 or more were access management, specified landscaping along US Route 1, and design standards for businesses (for

- aesthetic reasons).
4. Interviewees were asked to rate the importance of protecting natural resources. Those that rated 4 or above were:
 - mapped significant wildlife areas
 - the quality of water in Nequasset Lake
 - quality and quantity of ground water for private wells
 - access to the Sheepscot for boaters, wormers, shellfish harvesters, and lobstermen

Public Opinion Survey

One hundred seven people filled out the surveys that were distributed via the Wiscasset Newspaper and left in public places or given out by members of the Committee. Since the sample was so small, only those responses which showed strong (66% or more) agreement are listed here.

- 82% want to encourage diverse business with design and landscape standards
- 86% favor encouraging new small retail and restaurants businesses on Route 1 and 27
- 82% favor protecting natural resources
- 69% favor development conforming to landscape and architectural standards throughout the town

There was strong support for preserving/protecting:

- 79% Historic Village streetscape
- 91% Houses on the National Register of Historic Places
- 75% View of village from bridge
- 75% View of Sheepscot River
- 79% Waterfront
- 77% Well water through ordinance standards
- 76% Special scenic views by guiding new construction
- 71% 20 foot landscape/buffer requirement on Route 1 and Route 27

Zoning Ordinance

Table 8 contains a summary of uses allowed in Wiscasset's existing Zoning Ordinance, exclusive of the shoreland zoning districts. Permitted uses are summarized in tabular format, even though they are not listed that way in the Zoning Ordinance. The letter "P" indicates the uses that are permitted in the various districts. Some of the uses are governed by restrictions that are not shown in the table.

The following is a brief summary of some of the more serious shortcomings of the Zoning Ordinance:

1. The ordinance is poorly organized.
2. Some districts refer to other districts for a list of permitted uses, which in turn requires a great deal of cross-referencing to determine what is and is not permitted.
3. Many common uses do not appear in the ordinance. For example, municipal uses are allowed in some districts, but other types of public uses are not (e.g. Federal, State, County).
4. Some common uses, such as public utility installation, are allowed in one district, but not in others. The logical inference is that non-listed uses are prohibited uses.

5. The Nequasset Watershed District doesn't really protect the watershed since all uses are allowed by the listed use "Any other building or use, unrestricted."
6. The Rural District isn't really a rural district in the traditional sense, because it too allows "Any other building or use, unrestricted."
7. In some business districts, specific uses are listed such as "Antique shop," but so are the broad commercial categories "Retail shops," "Retail and wholesale outlet" and "Service Establishment," which leads to confusion about the intent of listing some specific commercial uses but not others.

Table 8
Wiscasset Zoning Ordinance
Summary of District Uses - Exclusive of Shoreland Zone

	Residential District	Business District	Village Waterfront District	Commercial District	Nequasset Watershed District	Rural District
Open Space Uses						
Garden, greenhouse, nursery or similar agricultural use	P	P		P	P	P
Park, playground	P	P		P	P	P
Parking lot		P		P	P	P
Public park			P			
Uses permitted in Resource Protection District	P	P	P	P	P	P
Residential Uses						
Single-family	P	P	P	P	P	P
Two-Family	P	P		P	P	P
Multi-family	P	P		P	P	P
Renting Rooms in Private Dwelling	P	P	P	P	P	P
Institutional Uses						
Charitable, educational	P	P		P	P	P
Church, Parish House	P	P		P	P	P
Clinic, medical/dental		P		P	P	P
Convalescent home, rest home	P	P		P	P	P
Day nursery	P	P		P	P	P
Elderly congregate Housing	P	P		P	P	P
Municipal use	P	P		P	P	P
Nursing home	P	P		P	P	P
Public utility installation			P			
Commercial Uses						
Antique shop		P		P	P	P
Convenience store						P
Eating place		P		P	P	P
Funeral home		P		P	P	P
Hotel, motel				P		
Marina, boatyard			P			
Marine research facility			P			
Office building		P		P	P	P
Professional building	P	P		P	P	P
Recreational use		P		P	P	P

	Residential District	Business District	Village Waterfront District	Commercial District	Nequasset Watershed District	Rural District
Retail Shops			P	P		
Retail and Wholesale outlet		P		P	P	P
Service establishment		P		P	P	P
Industrial Uses						
Gravel pit						P
On-site manufacturing		P		P	P	P
Other						
Any other building or use, unrestricted					P	P