

Open Space Plan Bridgton, Maine 2023



*Bridgton, the land of the fragrant pine,
That glorious spot where the sun doth shine,
Where the weak grow strong, and the strong grow great,
Bridgton, the pearl of the Pine Tree State.*



Poem: Published by the Bridgton
Chamber of Commerce - 1920

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Executive Summary

The 2023 Bridgton Open Space Plan (the Plan) sets forth a vision for the Town's open space resources with a focus on resilience, connectivity, and activation.

The Plan is designed to provide a usable roadmap for Town leadership and citizens in decision-making regarding open space and related issues. The document also serves as a record of the community's opinions, aspirations, and concerns during a time of considerable change and questions about the future.

The Plan was created over a period of nine months, from late 2022 to early 2023. The scope of the plan includes documentation of Bridgton's existing open spaces, online and in-person community engagement, and the development of creative – yet feasible – recommendations to improve the quality, connectedness, and utilization of the Town's open space system.

The Plan is organized into seven chapters:

Chapter 1: Context and Community

This chapter sets up the context for the plan by outlining the goals established by the Town, summarizing the previous open space planning efforts, and detailing the overall planning process and schedule. This chapter includes the key findings gleaned from in-person and digital community feedback.



Chapter 2: Bridgton's Open Space

This chapter presents the existing conditions inventory and analysis that was conducted at the outset of the planning process. Documentation includes Bridgton's town-owned lands, trails, and parks – as well as the network of similar amenities under the purview of other public agencies (State of Maine, etc.), conservation entities (Loon Echo Land Trust, Lakes Environmental Association, etc.), and other landholders (CMP, etc.). The chapter includes an analysis of the distribution and accessibility of open spaces and amenities.

Chapter 3: Vision and Goals

This brief chapter presents the guiding vision for the plan, which resulted from community input, committee feedback, and a survey of best practices. The chapter concludes by introducing the Plan's three central goals: Protect, Connect, and Activate.

Above: Residents participate in an engagement activity to identify future recreation opportunities. Community Workshop, February 27, 2023

Chapter 4: Protect (Goal 1)

This chapter focuses on opportunities to safeguard critical natural resources, habitat areas, and wildlife movement corridors. Strategies fall into two main categories – Strengthen the System and Data-Driven Decisions – which offer physical and process recommendations, respectively. The physical Strategies aim to create a network comprised of large, protected areas (hubs) and linear connections (links) joining them together. The process-oriented Strategies seek to build skills, teams, and tools that will enable Bridgton’s residents and leaders to make wise decisions about conservation.

Chapter 5: Connect (Goal 2)

This chapter shifts focus from Bridgton’s ecological systems toward the human use of – and access to – Bridgton’s open space network. The chapter begins with a proposal to reinforce Downtown Bridgton as a recreational destination and central trailhead for numerous multi-modal trails. Next, the chapter explores a multifaceted Strategy to improve access to the Town’s many waterways through improved beaches, launch sites, and landside amenities. The final Strategy envisions extending the Stevens Brook Trail between Long Lake and Highland Lake.

Chapter 6: Activate (Goal 3)

This chapter unpacks the third and final goal, Activate, which focuses on the recreational opportunities offered by the open space network. The first Strategy creates winter recreation amenities and programs to extend Bridgton’s historically seasonal recreation into a year-round suite of activities. The second Strategy enhances recreational ‘hot spots’ in Downtown and at the HAM complex to create multi-purpose, centralized destinations for diverse recreation users. The final Strategy departs from physical improvements, emphasizing intentional partnerships to expand Bridgtonians’ access to recreation options.



Chapter 7: Implementation

The Plan’s final chapter looks to the future, creating an easy-to-use guide for the implementation of the Plan’s Goals. The chapter includes an Action Table that serves as a “cheat sheet” for accessing the many recommendations of the plan, understanding roles and responsibilities, and determining the priority of potential projects.

Left: A planning team member conducting an inventory of the Holt Pond Preserve trails in November, 2023

Chapter 1

Context & Community

“Whatever it is you seek - rest or recreation, sport or pastimes, the comradeship of worthwhile people - it awaits you under ideal conditions at Bridgton, Maine.

A fascinating rural community, rich in historical interest, nestled at the foot of the Presidential Range of the White Mountains, where mighty Mount Washington maintains her eternal vigil over this wondrous Vacation Land of America.

A beautiful land of inland lakes and wimpling streams, jewels deepset in the forest primeval, where game fish abound, luring the sportsman and challenging his skill. Camp life with its freedom and charm, amid the fragrance of balsam and pine.”

~

Passage from a promotional pamphlet entitled:

“Bridgton – Maine. Where vacation dreams come true.”

Published by the Bridgton Chamber of Commerce - 1920



Enduring Character

Over one hundred years later, this passage could still be used to describe modern-day Bridgton. Today, the Town remains a “beautiful land of inland lakes and ... streams, jewels deepset in the forest primeval” and visitors will still find “worthwhile people” living, working, and recreating “amid the fragrance of balsam and pine.” Bridgton’s enduring character is a

testament to the raw beauty of the landscape, the resilience of nature and humans, and the ongoing stewardship of the place by the local community. Thanks to these factors, Bridgton’s natural resources still attract and support residents, visitors, and industries: **life**, **livelihood**, and **landscape** remain intertwined in this unique and resilient community.

Right: Historic Painting of Bridgton - 1888



Life

Across all walks of life, residents of Bridgton are still drawn to this place to live immersed in natural beauty. Residents value the majesty of the local mountains, forests, and waterways, and the New England charm of the agricultural fields, historic main street, and vernacular architecture. However, ongoing development – especially near the water – is gradually converting this image of Bridgton from forest to rooftops, from natural shorelines to docks. When done unwisely, rural development corrodes the sense of place. By contrast, smart community planning focuses new development in key areas and requires setbacks to ensure that the overall picture remains intact.

Livelihood

Many Bridgtonians rely on the Town's rich natural resources to support their way of life, whether they draw their livelihood directly from the land through forestry or farming, depend on nature-based tourism, or simply benefit from being surrounded by scenic beauty. While the Town's economy has long been rooted in tourism and recreation, the character of the industry is evolving. There are still traditional lakeside resorts and inns, but these are ceding to more short-term rentals that offer more flexible accommodations. Additionally, the flexibility of remote workplaces has allowed people to choose where they live and work, leading many new residents to settle in Bridgton's attractive environment.

Landscape

Stewardship of Bridgton's rich natural resources has kept a remarkable amount of habitat intact, including large swaths of forests. Valuable wildlife and habitat areas abound but are facing pressure from both development and climate change. The wildness that sustains local fish and game, recreation, and the complex ecosystems that make Bridgton unique is at risk, especially along the shoreline where development is most intense. Thoughtful planning and stewardship can help mitigate habitat fractures and water pollution from runoff, while also protecting homes from increased flooding along the water.

Purpose of the Plan

This Plan will provide Bridgton with a coordinated, informed approach to its open space resources and guide decision-making around conservation and development. An inventory of existing open spaces, the condition of the Town's natural resources, and the connectivity and accessibility of open space create the foundation for the recommendations in this Plan. Based on these findings, this document identifies areas for potential conservation and offers Strategies for prioritizing open space conservation. The Goals provided by this Plan, while not legally binding, will serve as a foundation for the Town Selectboard's actions and priorities relating to open space.

Open Space Definition

Open space is the constellation of natural, undeveloped, or lightly developed areas that intertwine with developed spaces to create an environment that keeps the community healthy and humming. These spaces support networks of resilient habitat, provide ecosystem services, and create recreational opportunities that support the lifestyles, livelihoods, and landscapes that make Bridgton unique.

Open Space Planning to Date

The 2014 Comprehensive Plan

Open space emerged as a theme throughout the Town's last Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 2014. One of the most consistent sectors of Bridgton's economy is tourism, and the plan recognized the deep ties between this sector and the preservation of the Town's lakes and forests. This is evident in the goals of the plan, which include "balancing agriculture and forest resources as future development occurs" and encouraging tourism by offering more recreational opportunities. Strategies to implement these goals included creating an open space protection program, implementing cluster development to preserve prime farmland, and assessing and improving public access to lakes and ponds.

Bridgton plans to develop a new Comprehensive Plan starting in 2023. This will be an opportunity to assess progress and update open space goals, while addressing additional issues impacting this resource, such as resiliency and sustainability. Information and goals presented in this Plan may be used to create a more comprehensive approach to the open space issues in the forthcoming Comprehensive Plan update.

Other Relevant Plans

Lake Region Green Print:

In 2011, Bridgton partnered with other Lakes Region towns and the Trust for Public Land and LEIT to create a plan for preserving and enhancing their collective natural resources. The resulting framework for regional cooperation created a mechanism to protect the region's collective sense of place while generating better economic opportunities for community members. This report includes several funding sources and programs to support open space in the region.

Pondicherry Park Management Plan:

When LEIT and the Lakes Environmental Association (LEA) granted ownership of Pondicherry Park to the Town of Bridgton in 2012, a management plan was provided by the organizations and adopted by the Selectboard. This document detailed the amenities and facilities within the park, set standards of care and maintenance, and created the Pondicherry Park Stewardship Committee to carry out the plan.

Bridgton Economic and Market Analysis

Bridgton's 2019 Economic and Market Analysis recognized outdoor recreation and tourism as one of the most significant economic drivers for the Town and discussed how open space is a key part of the Town's identity and appeal, for both tourists and new residents. The analysis included several recommendations to support and expand these assets, including creating opportunities for year-round recreation, protecting natural resources while expanding access and use, and building on the Town's brand as a welcoming small town and recreational destination.

Bridgton Economic Development & Downtown Revitalization Plan

One of the key goals identified by the Economic Development and Downtown Revitalization Plan is enhancing connection to nature and creating opportunities for both residents and tourists to enjoy the natural world. Several strategies addressed this goal, such as improving amenities on streamside trails, creating more active public green space, and expanding parkland acquisition within the flood plain.

Right: Residents participate in an engagement activity to identify future recreation opportunities. Community Workshop, February 27, 2023

Open Space Planning Process

The development of this Plan was overseen by the Town's Community Development Department and funded by the GOPIF Community Resilience Partnership Program. A team including staff from the Community Development Department, the Recreation Department, and LEIT provided information and support during the planning process. Additionally, the Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) steered the direction of the plan and provided periodic feedback.

The Town worked with a team of consultants from VIEWSHED and FB Environmental to assist the Town in the development of the Open Space Plan. The two firms provided the Town with a variety of skills and services; FB Environmental is an environmental planning and assessment firm based in Portland, Maine and VIEWSHED is a landscape architectural, planning, and GIS firm based in Yarmouth, Maine.

The consultant team presented Plan contents at bi-weekly team meetings, at CDAC meetings, and to the Select Board. They established the online community survey and designed the interactive activities at a Community Workshop. The team used geospatial mapping (ESRI ArcGIS Pro) to process data and develop the mapping, conducted site visits to existing open spaces, drafted the contents of the Plan and produced all maps and graphics included in the Plan document.



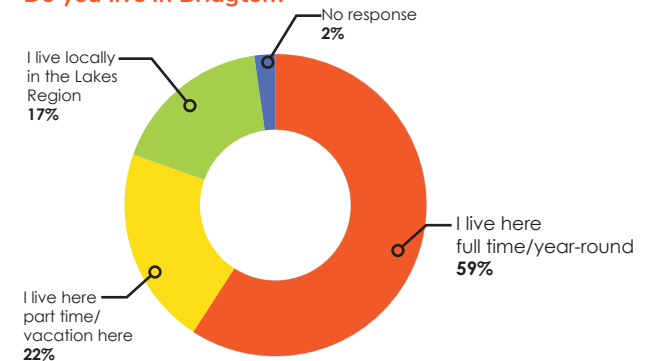
Public Engagement

Public engagement played a central role in the development of Bridgton's Open Space Plan. The planning team deployed a variety of methods to engage the community. Engagement began with a broad-reaching online community survey. Following the survey, the planning team facilitated a Community Workshop to gather additional feedback. Between these events, additional information and public updates were made available through the project website, an email listserv, and updates to the CDAC.

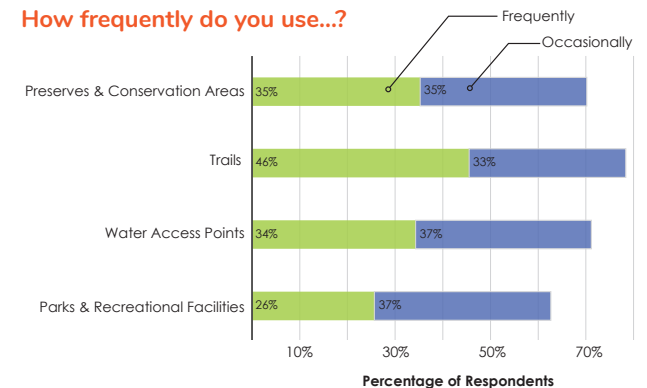
Community Survey

During the inventory phase of the planning process, a community survey was conducted to understand how community members currently use open space, assess what needs were not being met, and the goals residents had for the future of the Town's land. About 7% of the population responded. A majority of the respondents were full time residents (59%) and 42% were over the age of 60. Most people indicated that trails were the type of park space they used most frequently, followed closely by conservation areas and water access points. Some of the most significant needs identified in the survey included natural areas, tubing hills, outdoor event spaces, and community gardens. When asked about whether additional facilities were needed, many mentioned pickleball and tennis courts, as well as fishing docks and beaches. Participants ranked publicly accessible habitat spaces and barrier-free open spaces as the most important open space types, all open space types were ranked highly.

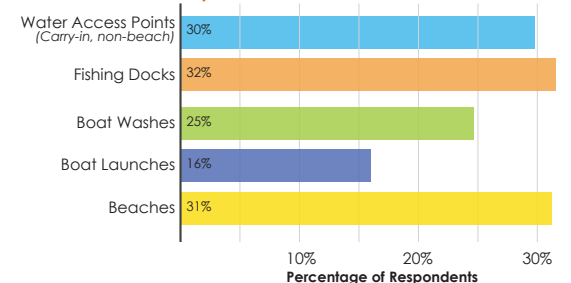
Do you live in Bridgton?



How frequently do you use...?



Bridgton needs more... (Water access facilities)



Right: Samples of Community Survey Findings presented during the Community Workshop, February 27, 2023 (See Appendix B)

Community Workshop

Following the survey, a Community Workshop was held to share findings and dig deeper into the open space goals of the community. After a brief presentation on the findings of the planning process so far, attendees participated in a mapping exercise and a ranking activity.

During the mapping exercise, participants placed flags on four themed maps to indicate where more facilities are needed. On the parks and recreational facilities map, pickleball courts, dog parks, and skate parks rose to the top as needed facilities. Trails continued to be a high priority; mountain biking trails, bike paths, hiking/snowshoeing trails, and shoreline trails were all frequently mentioned. Feedback on the water access map indicated a need for more docks, in addition to a few mentions of water access points and boat launches. Several underutilized parcels were suggested on the preserves and conservation areas map, including a couple wildlife sanctuaries, and community forests.

During the ranking activity, participants ranked the importance of several types of open space. Wildlife areas with public access received the highest ranking, followed closely by connections between existing spaces and downtown open spaces.

Right: Residents participate in an engagement activity to identify future recreation opportunities. Community Workshop, February 27, 2023



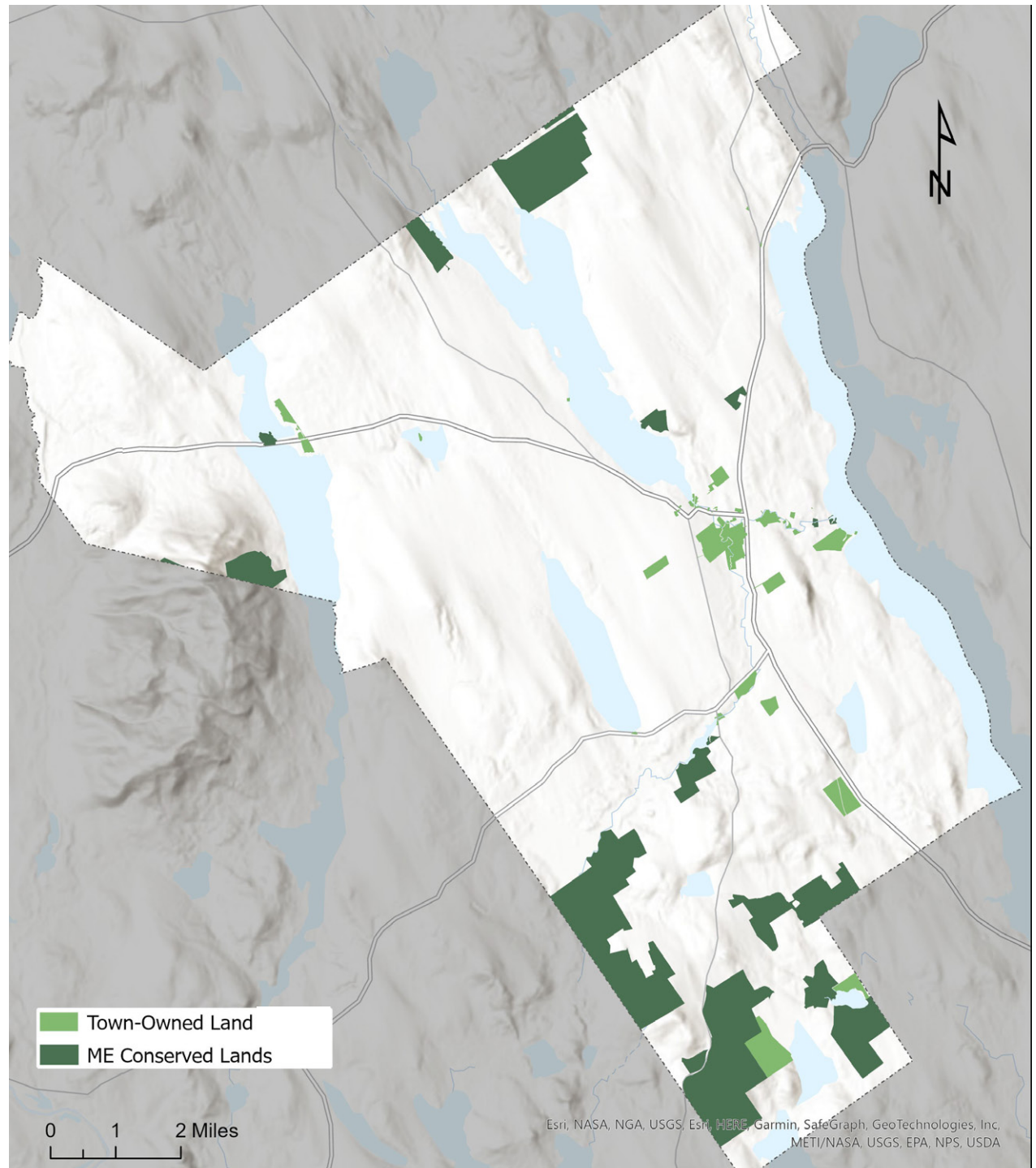
Chapter 2

Bridgton's Open Space

Bridgton's natural resources are inextricably linked to life in this community; Green and Blue are woven into the fabric of the landscape, sustain livelihoods, and are the heart of the Town's identity. The blue lakes, meandering streams, and deep green forests are not only beautiful; they also support the high quality of life here. Green spaces provide opportunities to recreate, support fishing and forestry, and stimulate economic growth, all while strengthening the resilience of the ecosystems that make these activities possible.



Right: Bridgton Municipal Space and Conservation Land



Town Land

Parks and Open Spaces

Open space is a highly valued resource in Bridgton; approximately 15% of the Town's land area is in conservation. These resources not only provide a high quality of life for those who call Bridgton home, but also strengthen the Town's economy by attracting a growing number of visitors. The Town of Bridgton owns 430 acres of land, including approximately 150 acres of parkland. Ranging from quiet nature preserves to relaxing beaches, these parks offer ecosystem services and robust opportunities for recreational activities.

Below: Sandy Creek Park

Left: The Bob Dunning Memorial Bridge in Pondicherry Park



A few noteworthy recreational opportunities supported by Bridgton's park system include:

- Pondicherry Park is the largest park, nestled in the heart of downtown, and offers opportunities to soak in nature, wander an extensive trail system, and ski or snowshoe in the winter.
- Salmon Point provides camping opportunities, swimming and boating access on Long Lake, and areas to grill and picnic.
- Highland Lake Beach is a popular spot for swimming and boating as well, especially because of its central location.
- In 2022, the Town acquired the HAM Complex, which supports a variety of active recreation, including lacrosse, youth soccer, softball, baseball, and tee ball.



Cemeteries

There are sixteen cemeteries in Bridgton, covering over 35 acres. These range from larger, modern cemeteries to smaller, sometimes hidden, historic ones. At 20 acres, Forest Hills Cemetery is the largest, and includes walking paths and shade trees. While the smaller cemeteries do not have paths, all these spaces provide natural area for reflection. Cemeteries with trees and other natural features can also create cleaner air, cool surrounding areas, and serve as green connectors between habitat areas.

Other (Schools and Municipal)

Several other town-owned properties serve municipal functions, including the Town's three fire departments, Town Hall, the courthouse, the transfer station, and two Public Works properties. While all these properties have civic uses, some have potential to double as recreational or community space, such as the land surrounding the transfer station or the West Bridgton Fire Department. Other Town-owned properties include several empty or wooded lots and parking areas, many of which could provide more value as recreational or conservation spaces. One such property is the location of the former Bridgton Memorial School, which is located adjacent to the Stevens Brook Trail and currently includes a small skate park.

Protected Lands

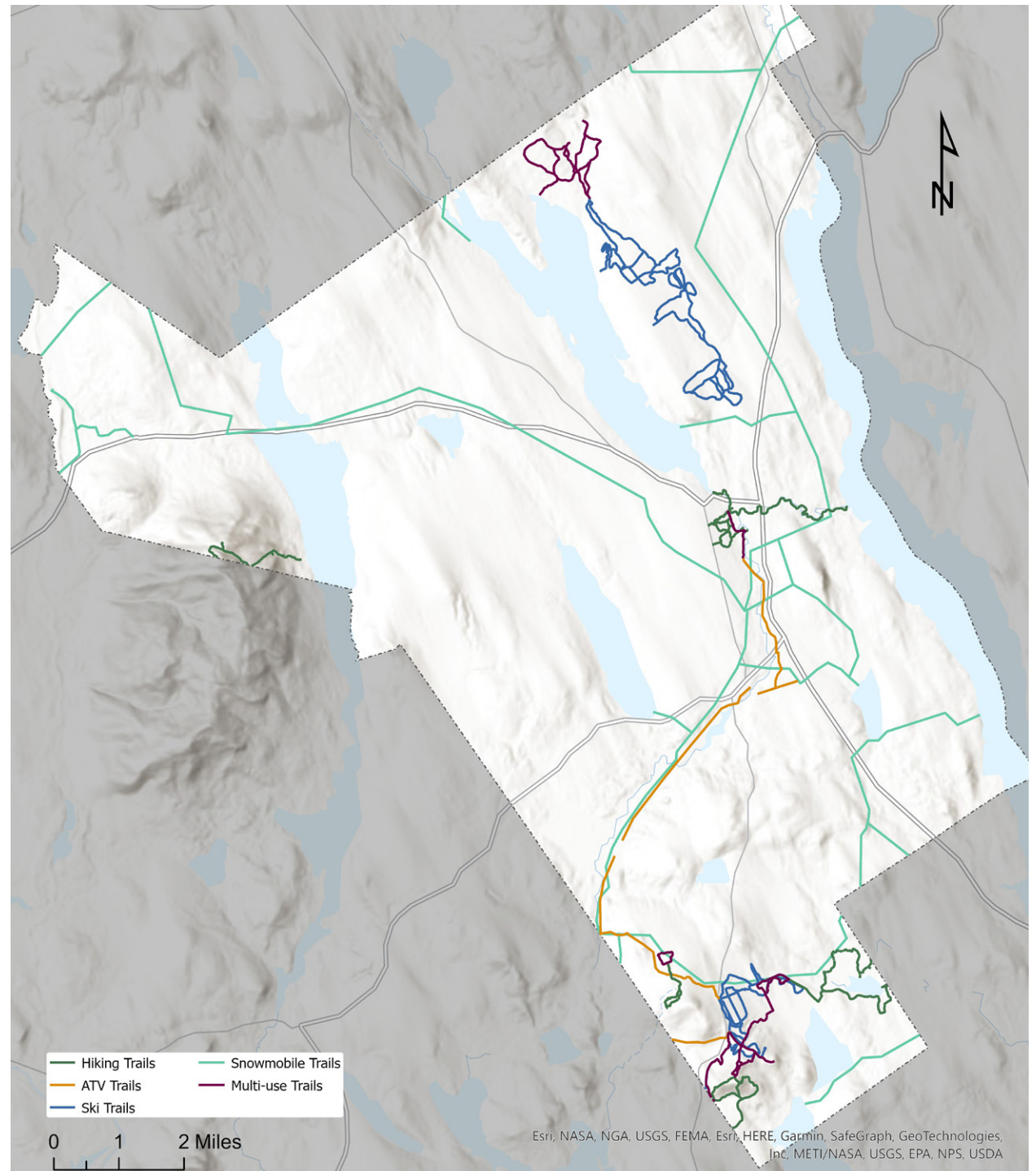
Almost 5,000 acres of land are in conservation in Bridgton, mostly through conservation easements or fee simple ownership through LETL or other local conservation organizations. Many of these areas have no or limited access for recreation, instead providing undisturbed habitat for wildlife. Some privately conserved areas, like Pleasant Mountain Preserve, Bald Pate Mountain Preserve, and Peabody Fitch Woods have extensive trail networks, popular among locals and visitors alike. In addition to these private conservation areas, the Town owns a parcel in conservation along Foster Pond and adjacent to Bald Pate Mountain Preserve, as well as a portion of the Holt Pond Preserve.



Trails

Over 90 miles of trails wind through Bridgton, supporting activities like hiking, biking, skiing, ATVing, and snowmobiling. Stevens Brook Trail runs through downtown Bridgton, connecting a necklace of parks between Highland and Long Lakes. One of these parks is Pondicherry, which boasts its own walking trail system, including a mile of barrier-free trail. Several conservation areas provide hiking with mountain views, such as Pleasant Mountain Preserve's 10-mile network. In the winter, 30 miles of cross-country ski trails and almost 40 miles of snowmobile trails run through almost every corner of town. The Interconnected Trail System links these to a regional network of snowmobile trails.

One area for expansion could be adding more trails designated for biking, of which there is only a half mile stretch in Peabody Fitch Woods. While many of these trails have conservation easements to protect them for public use, over 20 miles of skiing trails are owned privately without a formal use agreement in place. The continued public use of these trails relies on ongoing stewardship and relationship-building by the Town and the entire community.



Funding

The Town of Bridgton does not currently have a designated funding program for the support, expansion, and maintenance of open space in the community. There is no portion of the annual municipal budget, impact fee system paid for by developers to support open space efforts, and no specific municipal bank account designated for open space projects. The successful implementation of this Plan and continued open work is dependent on an organized and thoughtful funding management. A list of potential Funding Mechanisms is included in Chapter 7.

Level of Service

When planning for the future of open space, it’s important to understand the amount, distribution, accessibility, and connectivity of existing spaces. Benchmarking can give an idea of whether the amount of open space a town has is in line with its peers, while distribution and connectivity can indicate how easily residents can access and travel between parks and open space. These metrics can be used to determine the level of service provided by parks and preserves currently, which can help in identifying needs or gaps in a community’s open space network. Together with public input, these indicators can inform the goals for a Town’s open space.

Benchmarking

Comparing peer communities can be difficult, especially when they have different needs, goals, identities, and geography. However, a comparison of similarly sized towns nearby can be helpful to get a general understanding of how a town stands in relation to the regional picture of land conservation. Bridgton’s total conserved land area is larger than several surrounding communities with Open Space Plans. When measured by percent of the total land area in conservation, Bridgton is close to the average. However, the most important indicator of how well a community is using its land is by ensuring that it can meet the goals and needs of its residents.

Benchmark Table

Town	Permanently Protected** (acres)	Partially Protected* (acres)	Total Conserved (acres)	% Land Area Conserved	Conserved Acres per 1,000 people
Bridgton	5,114	429	5,543	15%	1,023
Harpswell	1,846	671	2,517	16%	500
Falmouth	1,452	2,027	3,479	19%	280
Gray	590	389	979	4%	118

* Lands with legal protections like easements or State-owned land.

** Lands with temporary easements or no formal protections (i.e. Town-owned space with no easements).

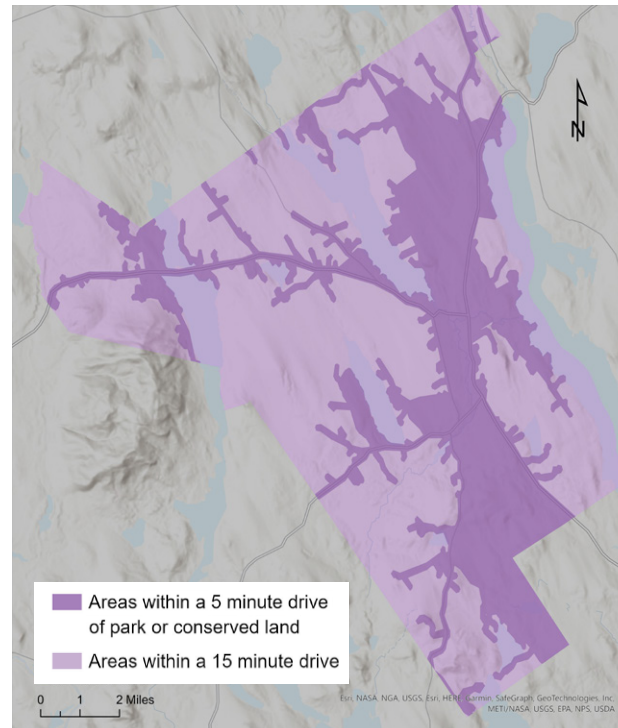
Connectivity

Bridgton's most extensive network of trails are for snowmobiles, which connect to conservation areas in almost every part of town. There are over 20 miles of trails that support hiking and walking, but most of these are contained loops within parks or preserves. Stevens Brook Trail is the exception, connecting Highland Lake Beach, Pondicherry Park, and Salmon Point Campground with Bridgton's downtown. Bridgton's network of cross-country ski trails is concentrated along Highland Lake in the northern part of town, ending right before reaching downtown. There is an opportunity to create more connectivity for skiing trails by expanding the existing ones further south to link in with downtown. Creating this network would give skiers easier access to the amenities and businesses downtown and encourage use of other nearby open spaces for hiking and snowshoeing. Another opportunity for increasing access to open space is expanding bike lanes and trails to create links between downtown parks or looping in the preserves in the southern part of town, like Holt Pond.

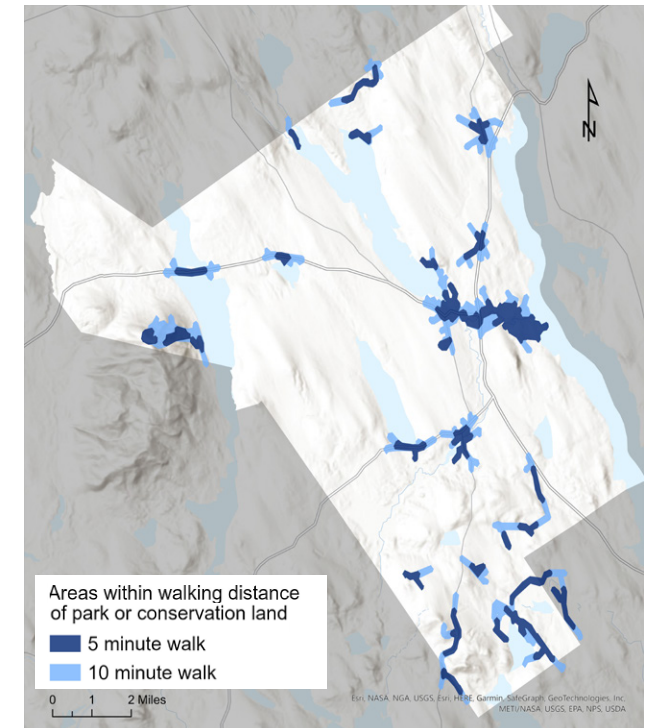
Distribution

Parks and preserves are concentrated in the downtown area, along Stevens Brook in the center of town, as well as along the southwestern edge of the town boundary. Sabatis Island and Pleasant Mountain provide swimming and hiking opportunities in the far western side of town and Highland Research Forest is the largest publicly accessible

greenspace in the north. Bridgton's population is most densely concentrated near the center of town, creating easy access to open space for most of the population. Most people living in the town are within a 5-minute drive of at least one greenspace. The rest of the town is within a 15 minute drive of greenspace, but these areas are far less densely populated.



Right: Bridgton Drivetime Analysis



Right: Bridgton Walktime Analysis

Chapter 3

Vision & Goals

An open space vision describes the long-term goals and aspirations for a town regarding open space, conservation, and development. Rather than describing current conditions or issues, a vision statement looks to the future to set a “north star” for decision-makers. An effective vision sets high-level Goals that capture the spirit of the overall Plan but leaves flexibility for communities to refine implementation of the Plan based on current issues and resources.

Vision Process

To develop the open space vision, the team analyzed feedback from the Community Survey and Community Workshop (see Public Engagement summary), identifying themes of particular importance to residents. These themes were reviewed and expanded during a vision workshop with the Town. The workshop forged the vision statement (right) and distilled the community-guided themes into three Goals: **Protect**, **Connect**, and **Activate**.

In collaboration with the planning team, the Town added detail to each Goal, Strategy, and Recommendation. These layers add important details about implementation of each goal (see diagram on the following page).

Bridgton is a **vibrant, rural community** with abundant open space resources that are protected and stewarded to sustain **residents, visitors and ecological health.**

The Goals of this Plan enable the Vision by **Protecting, Connecting, and Activating** the Open Space System of Bridgton.

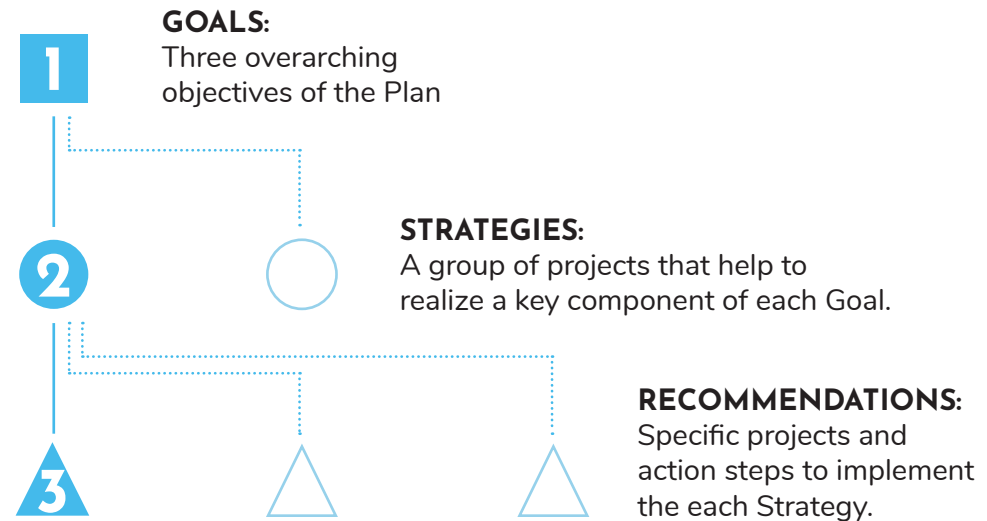
Above:

Plan Vision Statement

Hierarchy of Recommendations

Each of the following chapters (4, 5 & 6) explains one of the Plan's three Goals in greater detail. The chapters are arranged hierarchically (see diagram to the right). Within each Goal, there is a suite of Strategies targeted toward realizing a key aspect of the goal. In turn, each Strategy is further explained by a series of Recommendations, which outline projects and action steps to for implementation.

Within each recommendation, *italicized font has been used to highlight implementation action steps and priorities.*



Protect: Clarifying Conservation

This chapter focuses on opportunities to safeguard critical natural resources, habitat areas, and wildlife movement corridors. Strategies fall into two main categories – Strengthen the System and Data-Driven Decisions – which offer physical and process recommendations, respectively. The physical Strategies aim to create a network comprised of large, protected areas (hubs) and linear connections (links) joining them together. The process-oriented Strategies seek to build skills, teams, and tools that will enable Bridgton's residents and leaders to make wise decisions about conservation.

Connect: Enhance and Expand

This chapter shifts focus from Bridgton's ecological systems toward the human use of – and access to – Bridgton's open space network. The chapter begins with a proposal to reinforce Downtown Bridgton as a recreational destination and central trailhead for numerous multi-modal trails. Next, the chapter explores a multifaceted Strategy to improve access to the Town's many waterways through improved beaches, launch sites, and landside amenities. The final Strategy envisions extending the Stevens Brook Trail between Long Lake and Highland Lake.

Activate: Program and Partners

This chapter unpacks the third and final goal, Activate, which focuses on the recreational opportunities offered by the open space network. The first Strategy creates winter recreation amenities and programs to extend Bridgton's historically seasonal recreation into a year-round suite of activities. The second Strategy enhances recreational 'hot spots' in Downtown and at the HAM complex to create multi-purpose, centralized destinations for diverse recreation users. The final Strategy departs from physical improvements, emphasizing intentional partnerships to expand Bridgtonians' access to recreation options.

Chapter 4

Protect

Clarifying Conservation

This chapter focuses on opportunities to safeguard critical natural resources, habitat areas, and wildlife movement corridors. Strategies fall into two main categories – Strengthen the System and Data-Driven Decisions – which offer physical and process Strategies respectively.



Above: Holt Pond Preserve; November, 2023

Strengthen the System

This Strategy aims to create and interconnect a network comprised of large, protected areas (hubs) and linear green spaces (links). The 'Integrate the Layers' Recommendation includes ways to address unseen or underlying factors that impact the entire town.

Identify and Complete the Hubs

Hubs are discrete areas of habitat, sometimes called 'patches' that are used by wildlife for feeding, breeding, or other life cycle events. Hubs function best when they are contiguous and large. This maximizes the interior habitat of the hub, which is critical for many reclusive and threatened species. Small, fragmented, or irregular patches of habitat, by contrast, have a greater proportion of edge habitat to interior habitat. These edge areas support wildlife like raccoons, deer, and other gregarious species but are too exposed for more sensitive species.

Open space acquisitions and conservation efforts (easements, etc.) should prioritize opportunities to create and conserve large contiguous patches of habitat, including forest stands, wetlands, and surface water bodies. Many of the current forested hubs are in private ownership – and will likely remain so – thus conservations efforts should focus on code enforcement, voluntary easements, and the education of landowners about conservation and wildlife stewardship.

Create and Protect the Links

Links create corridors between hubs and across barriers. These connections serve as movement corridors for wildlife species between two isolated habitat areas and provide important sources of food and cover for many species. To function properly, links must accommodate the needs of the target species for width, cover, temperature, and location. For example, ground-dwelling species are more likely to move through a space that includes dense vegetation, rather than a more open, field-like connection where they feel vulnerable to predation.

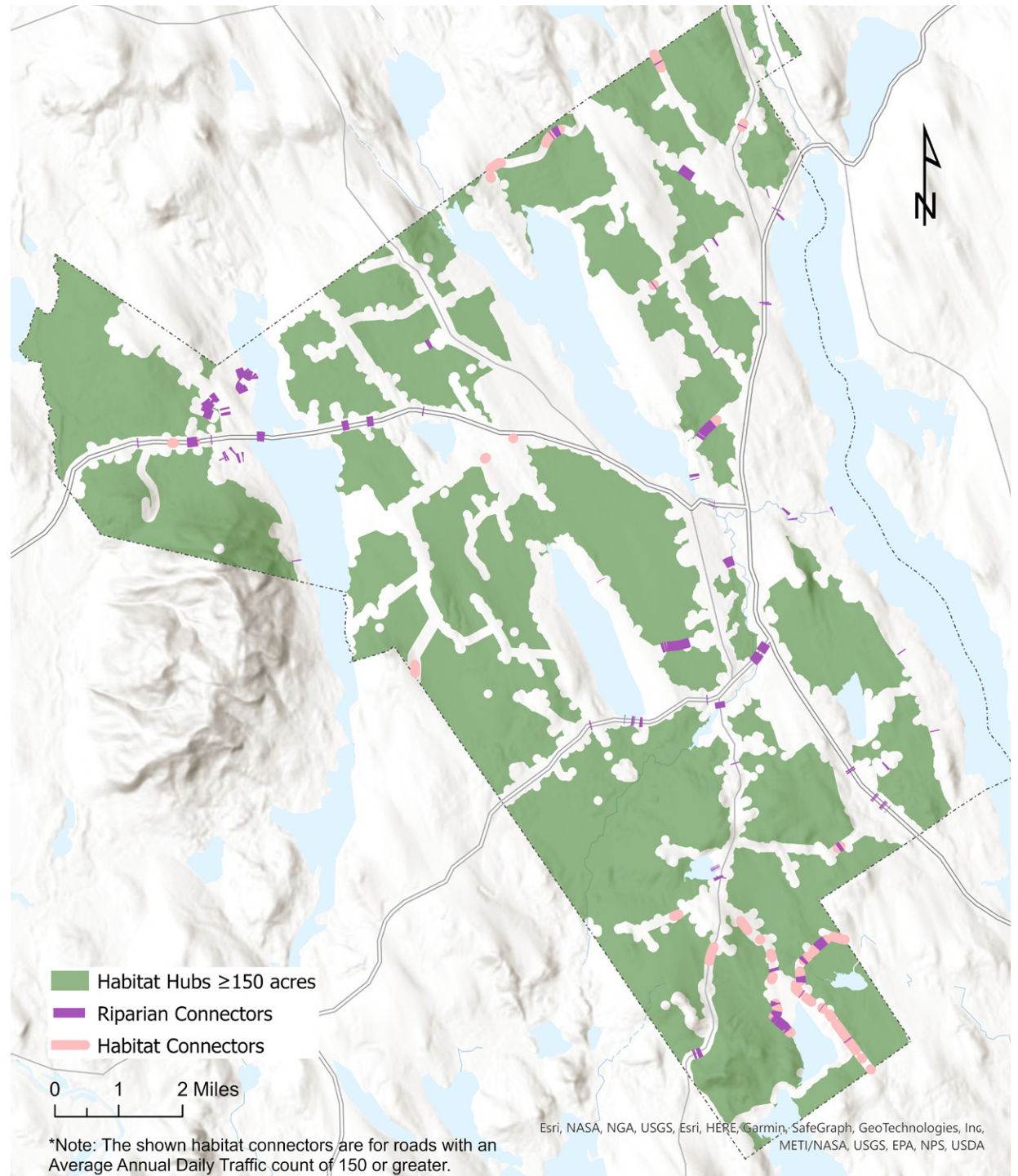
The vegetated buffers around lakes, rivers, and streams create some of the highest quality and most prevalent links in Bridgton today. Fortunately, state and local shoreland zoning exists to protect these resources. Away from the water, habitat connectivity is most often disrupted by roads and other barriers that prevent or imperil wildlife passage. Creating safe connections, while maintaining human circulation and uses, requires creative approaches such as wildlife bridges or less costly underpasses.

Implementation should prioritize acquisitions, easements, and other conservation efforts to secure links between major hubs. Since these deal with roads, state and local transportation agencies should be engaged as partners. Current regulations protect shoreline zones, so these spaces have a lower priority for additional conservation. However, acquisition or easements to create additional protection of shoreland links should be prioritized when they extend inland, connecting the water to upland forests and wetlands. These movement corridors are vital for species that traverse aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.



Right: Bridgton Habitat Hubs and Links Map

Above: Installation of a fish-friendly culvert at Sewell Pond in Arrowsic.

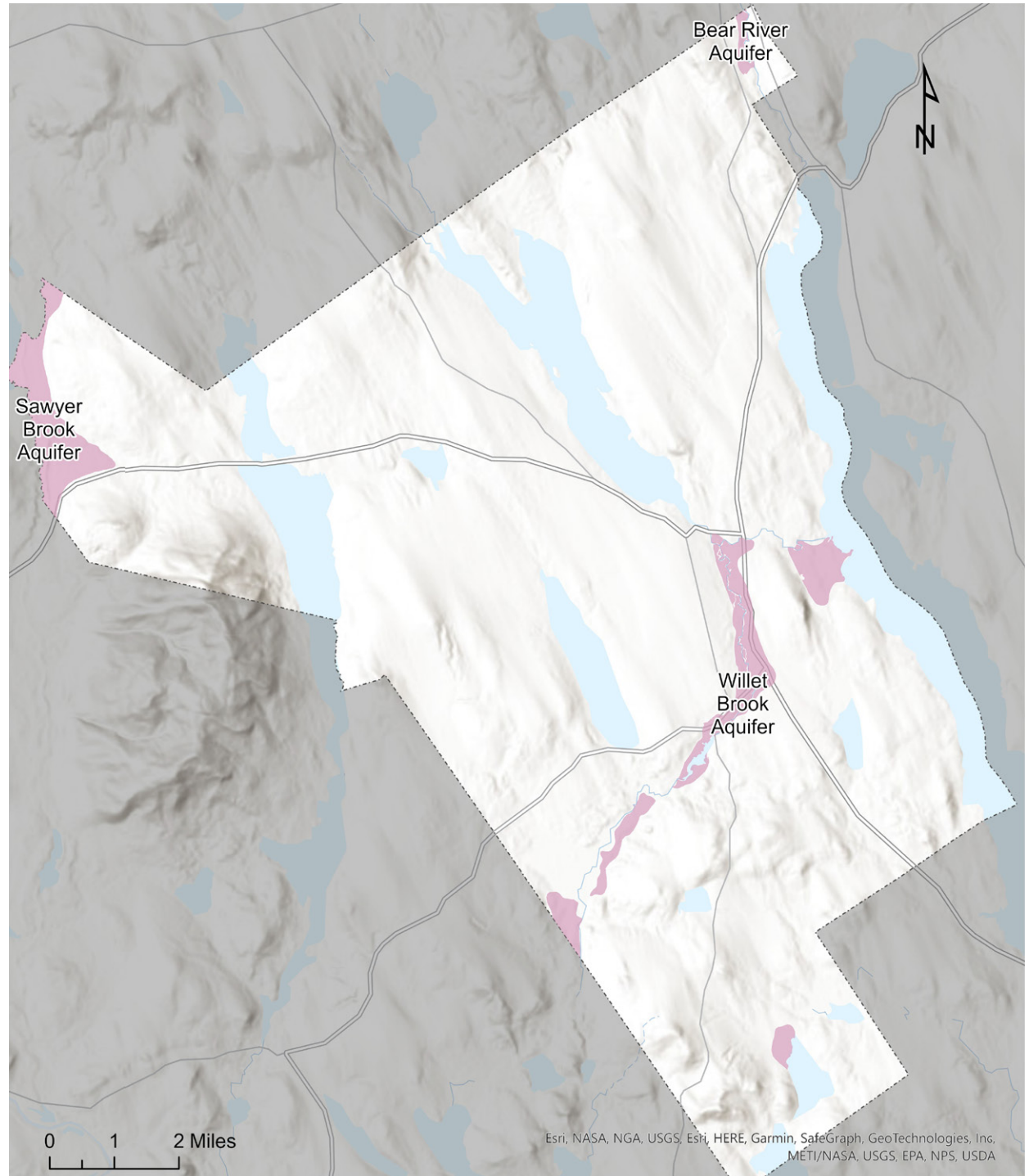


Integrate the Layers

In addition to the network of hubs and links, which addresses terrestrial and aquatic natural resources, Bridgton is home to other resources that are not explicitly open space, yet they connect to the goals of this Plan in important ways.

Sand and gravel deposits beneath the Town store massive volumes of ground water. These underground reservoirs, called aquifers, provide drinking water for the Town through private and publicly owned wells (Bridgton Water District). As water is extracted for human use, the aquifers are periodically “recharged” by rainfall and runoff that infiltrate through the surface and percolate down to the aquifer. Development creates impervious surfaces such as roofs, pavement, and compacted soils, which cause water to runoff rather than infiltrate. This hardening of the ground reduces the rate and volume of recharge to the aquifer and increases the likelihood of downstream flooding. Additionally, contamination of groundwater resources – primarily from local businesses, residential septic systems, and agricultural runoff – threatens the quality of this resource.

Drinking water protection is already codified in the Town’s Land Use Ordinance through Aquifer Protection Districts and Recharge Areas. Implementation efforts should focus on the enforcement of these existing regulations.



Secondly, the historical and cultural resources of Bridgton, including its scenic views, historical sites and architecture, village center, and agrarian countryside, are defining parts of the Town's character. In the words of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan, these resources provide the "meaning, identity and sense of orientation," that make a Bridgton a true community. They include:

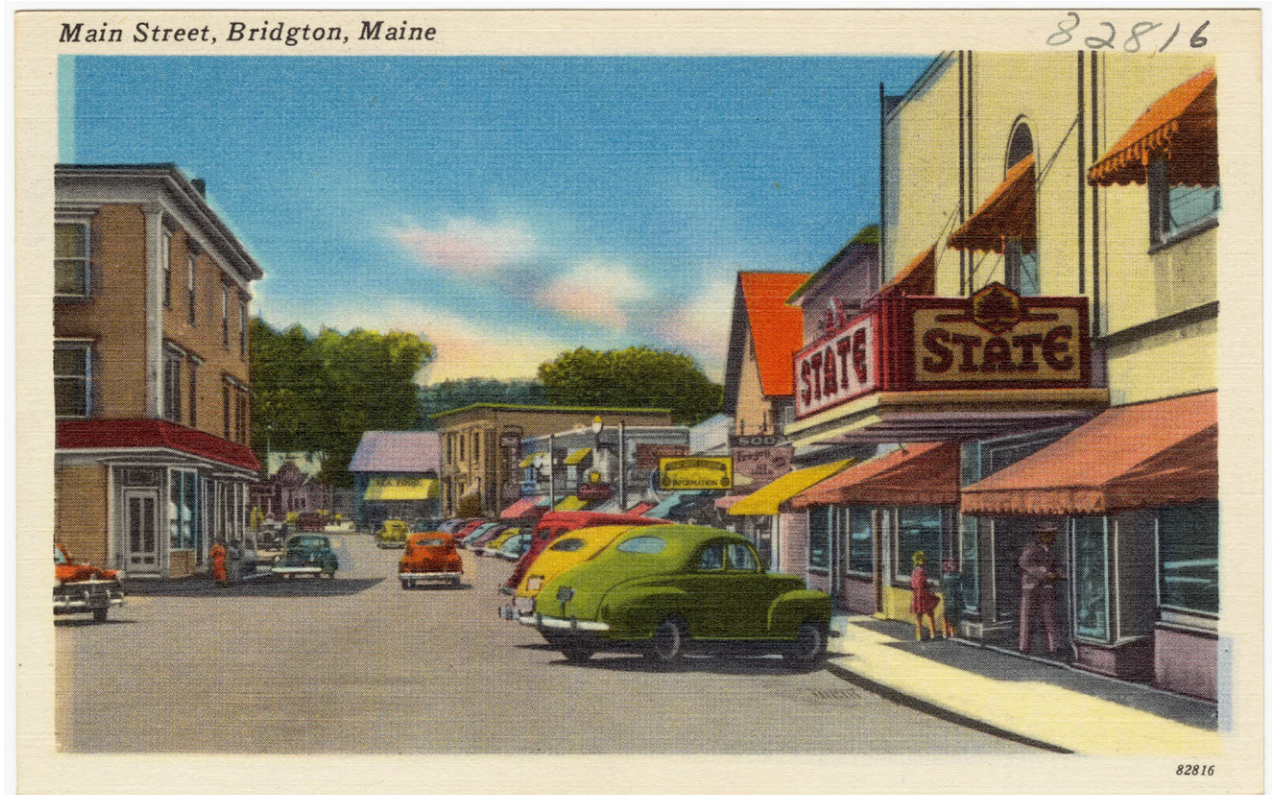
- Sites on National Register of Historic Places
- Sites with Possible National Register Eligibility
- Areas Eligible for Possible Historic District Designation
- Historic Graveyards
- Open Land with Historic Significance
- Prehistoric Archaeological Sites
- Historic Archaeological Sites

Left: Bridgton Aquifers Map

Right: Postcard featuring Bridgton's Maine Street, circa 1935.

Above: Sandy Creek Cemetery

Implementation should deploy multiple tools to preserve historical and cultural resources, such as open space conservation easements, research and academic partnerships, historical registrations, and where appropriate, acquisitions. As with groundwater protection, acquisition of historical and cultural resources should prioritize sites that meet multiple goals.



Data-Driven Decisions

These process-oriented Strategies seek to build skills, teams, and tools that will enable Bridgton's residents and leaders to make wise decisions about conservation.

Open Space Scorecard

This tool helps decision-makers gauge the value of existing or prospective open spaces. The Scorecard lists the Plan's Goals, creating an assessment rubric. In situations where open space will be assessed, including review of bequests to the Town, potential acquisitions, or sale of current open space, the scorecard will generate an Open Space Score for each parcel. This ranking will give priority to projects that enable multiple recommendations to be completed. For example, given the choice between acquiring two potential sites for conservation purposes, the scoring of each parcel would reveal which site best reflects the community's priorities as captured by the Plan's goals.

The town should develop a scorecard, similar to the example shown on the right, that reflects the needs, wants, desires, and priorities unique to the Town of Bridgton. The scoring system can be simple - assigning one point to a "yes" answer, and zero points to the "no" answer add up to a total score to compare multiple sites. The system can also be more nuanced with subtotals for each "Protect," "Connect," and "Activate" category to help steer the overall use of a particular parcel.

Implementation should begin with a comprehensive assessment of the Town's current open space system using the scorecard. If feasible, the development of a scorecard with a subsequent comprehensive assessment would be an ideal inaugural project for the open space committee to lead. The result of this assessment will give the town a real-time understanding of its alignment with the Plan. If the assessment reveals physical, programmatic, or other gaps in the open space system, these shortfalls will help prioritize next steps across all three goals: Protect, Connect, and Activate.

Open Space Scorecard (Sample)

Protect: Clarifying Conservation

YES / NO Does this site or project comprise, expand, or otherwise improve a habitat hub?

YES / NO Does this site or project create, extend, or otherwise improve the links between habitat hubs?

YES / NO Is this site a historical and/or cultural resource?

YES / NO Is the site above an aquifer and/or within a key drinking water resource area?

Connect: Enhance and Expand

YES / NO Does the site offer amenities or trails to support downtown as a destination?

YES / NO Does the site improve connectivity along the Stevens Brook Trail corridor?

YES / NO Does the site provide offer improved, accessible ways to the water?

Activate: Programs and Partners

YES / NO Does the site present opportunities for winter recreation?

YES / NO Does the site create or expand a multi-use place for the community?

YES / NO Are there strategic partnerships that would enhance the value of the site?

____ TOTAL SCORE

Open Space Committee

This recommendation proposes the formation of an Open Space Committee to advise and assist the Select Board with the implementation of the Open Space Master Plan. Advisory committees provide expertise, in defined areas, to their local Select Board. In this case, a committee dedicated to open space would offer guidance to the Select Board regarding priority projects, programs, and initiatives. In time, the committee could evolve into a regulatory review role, such as a Conservation Commission.

This recommendation should begin immediately, as the Committee has the potential to expedite numerous recommendations once in place. Committee members should be selected to reflect the Bridgton community. In addition to representation, the Committee should include local technical experts. Above all, continuity and commitment among the committee members will ensure the success of the

process.

Enforcement

As referenced several times throughout this chapter, many regulations exist to protect and conserve the natural, cultural, and historical resources in Bridgton. The enforcement of these regulations offers a straight path toward a stronger open space system. Without vigilant enforcement, Bridgton's open spaces – and the natural systems that form the lifeblood of the community – are at risk of degradation. In particular, encroachments into shoreland zones and conservation areas by private landowners, undermine the integrity and ecological function of these landscapes.

Near-term implementation should focus on tactical methods, such as drone-based reviews of shoreland encroachment and other issues of non-compliance. Long-term priorities should include expansion of the Town's code enforcement capabilities, including the

purchase of a boat or drone, providing staff training, and adding personnel.

Regional Collaborations

Open spaces, natural resources, and other systems like watersheds, regularly span beyond jurisdictional boundaries. To resolve challenges facing these resources, strategies and solutions will be required that extend outside of Bridgton. The Town must partner with regional collaborators to address these issues.

Implementation should begin with an assessment of the potential subjects for regional collaboration and a list of associated towns and agencies with which to collaborate. Whenever possible, Bridgton should seek to contribute to exiting, mission-aligned collaboratives. Where these do not exist, long term implementation should focus on coalition-building and establishing Bridgton as a regional leader in open space conservation.

Drafting a regional watershed management plan in collaboration with neighboring towns is a high priority. The Bear River Aquifer Protection agreement between Bridgton and Harrison is a prime case study for future initiatives focused on ground water protection.

Chapter 5

Connect

Enhance & Expand

This chapter focuses on improving the connectivity of Bridgton's trails and open spaces. The recommendations include extensions of current trails, creation of new trails, and improved access points and trailheads. The chapter is organized around three Strategies: Destination Downtown, Link the Lakes, and Ways to the Water.



Destination Downtown

This Strategy reinforces Bridgton's downtown core as a desirable destination for trail users. This is achieved through two efforts: extending new and existing trail systems into Downtown and providing amenities for trail users to enhance and extend their recreational use. This Strategy aligns with the 2014 Comprehensive Plan recommendation to focus future growth in downtown in a "village and countryside pattern of settlement."

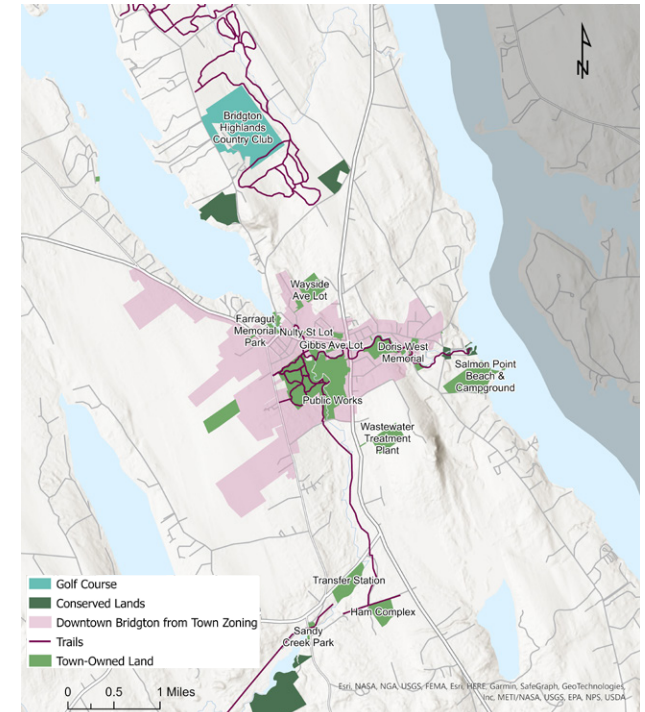
Create Trail Connections

- Add dedicated bike lanes and off-street trails throughout the downtown core.
- Add a cross-country ski trail linking Downtown to Highlands Ridge.
- Add snowmobile trails, parking, and signage.
- Extend a barrier-free pedestrian path system outward from Pondicherry Park.
- Offer outdoor exercise equipment along trails, especially on barrier-free and centrally located trails.
- Create a multi-use trail connection between downtown and the HAM Complex.

Right: Open Space in Close Proximity to Downtown Bridgton

Add Amenities

- Parking spaces for users that wish to access the trails from downtown.
- Improve signage and trailheads for all trails in the downtown core.
- Amenities for long-distance cyclists and other nomadic travelers, such as coin-operated showers and restrooms (potentially behind the bookstore).
- Develop marketing materials to draw trail users to downtown.



Ways to the Water

This Strategy increases and diversifies water access options in Bridgton. While water access may seem abundant in Bridgton, community engagement revealed that publicly accessible options are limited and crowded during warm months, leaving residents without convenient ways to cool off and recreate on the water.

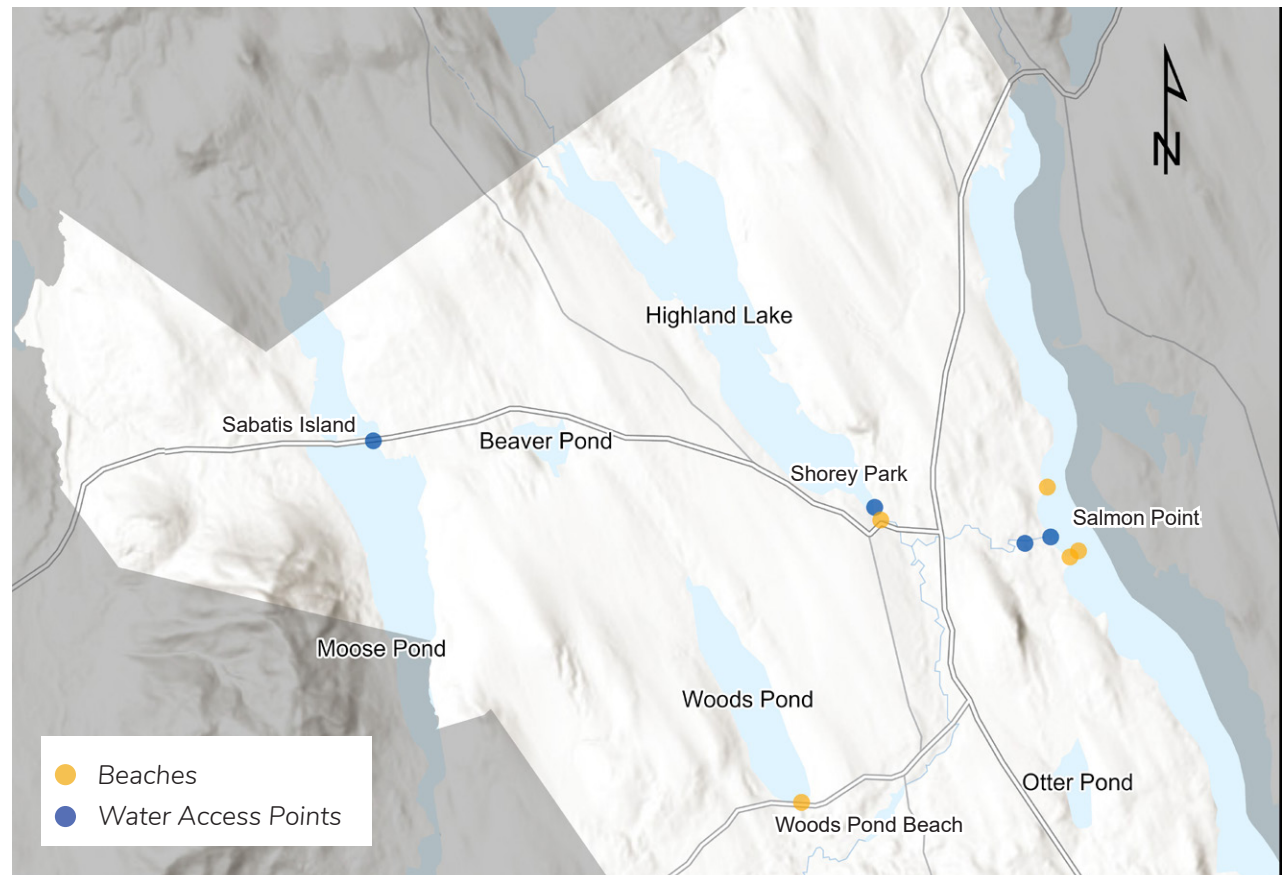
Create New Water Access Points

- Adding a public fishing dock, ideally at Salmon Point, to expand access to Long Lake for anglers and other lake-goers.
- Creating additional carry-in launches on Sabatis Island for small crafts, such as canoes, kayaks, and stand-up paddle boards. This could ease overcrowding at the existing launches, which are paired with picnic areas, and ensure access to Moose Pond.
- Small craft storage should be added at Highland Lake Beach to allow residents to store vessels near the water. Passes/permits could be issued to manage use of the site, but barriers to access should be kept to a minimum for locals.
- Boat rentals could eventually be offered at Highland Lake Beach for residents and visitors without their own small crafts.

Implementation of this recommendation is straightforward, as the improvements are low-cost and fall within the Town's current properties. Grants are also available from the state to supplement projects that improve water access facilities. Boat storage and rentals present an opportunity for collaboration with a business partner.

A long-term project could create a parking pass requirement at public beaches. Like many communities with waterfront access, these passes would be made available for free (or discounted) to residents. Income from the passes and their enforcement could be used to maintain and expand water access points.

Below: Bridgton Water Access Points



Link the Lakes

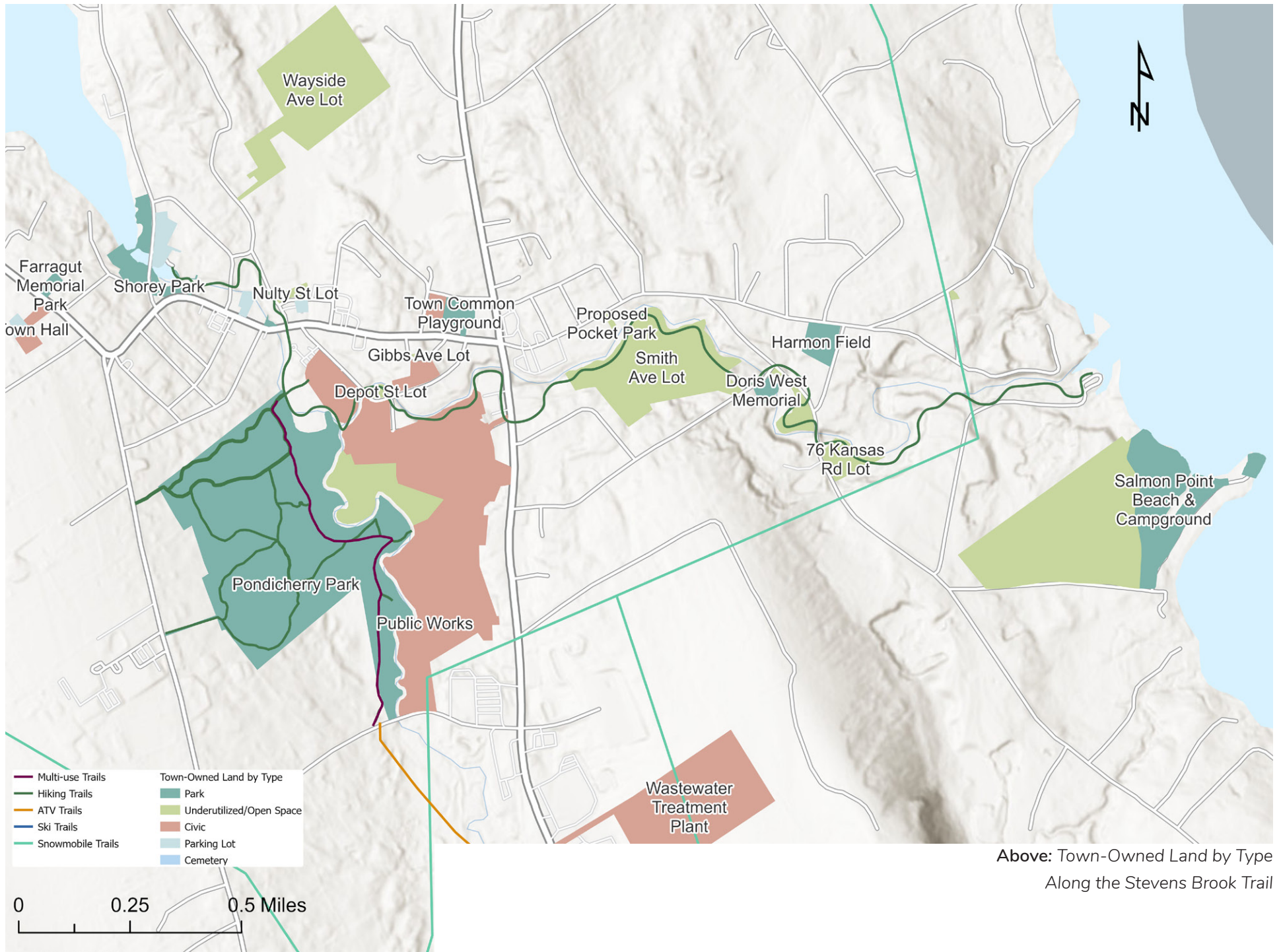
This recommendation proposes the completion of a continuous trail between Long Lake and Highland Lake, following the Stevens Brook. The Stevens Brook Trail already exists, though incomplete, along the corridor and should be extended and infilled to complete the full connection. The trail can take several possible alignments, which should be explored in a dedicated study. Since the corridor is largely privately-owned, easements will need to be established to secure enduring access to the entire trail. Property owners should be involved throughout the process to encourage their support and ensure that their concerns and aspirations are addressed. Where possible, additional pedestrian bridges could enhance access and connectivity.

The Stevens Brook Trail has the potential to create a nexus in the downtown core, linking Bridgtonians to recreational opportunities and greenspace, while strengthening the ties between the town and the natural environment. This connection is also an opportunity to enliven and activate several parks and Town-owned open space along the way.

From west to east, these include:

- Shorey Park
- Main Street Pocket Park
- Pondicherry Park
- Town Parcels along the Willett Brook (Community Center, Elementary School, Public Works)
- Town Parcels along the Stevens Brook (One-acre lot on Main near Pine St, 20-acre lot behind Shell/Black Horse Tavern, two lots on Kansas Rd)
- Dorris West Memorial Park
- Salmon Point Campground/Park

Implementation should begin with a planning study to assess the existing conditions along the corridor. The study should lead with community engagement to maximize inclusion and support among residents – especially landowners that may be approached for easements. Once a preferred alignment is identified and vetted with the community, the Town should secure all acquisitions and easements needed to complete the trail. Funding for securing and improving community-scale multi-use trails is available from state and federal programs. These opportunities should be pursued aggressively to offset the cost of the trail. Construction should proceed in phases to minimize disruption to trail users and neighbors.



Above: Town-Owned Land by Type
Along the Stevens Brook Trail

Chapter 6

Activate

Programs & Partners

This chapter includes Strategies to increase the level of use and the diversity of activities in Bridgton's open space system. Recommendations propose physical improvements, programming, and strategic partnerships aimed at increasing winter recreation, developing multi-use parks, and facilitating regional solutions to challenges.



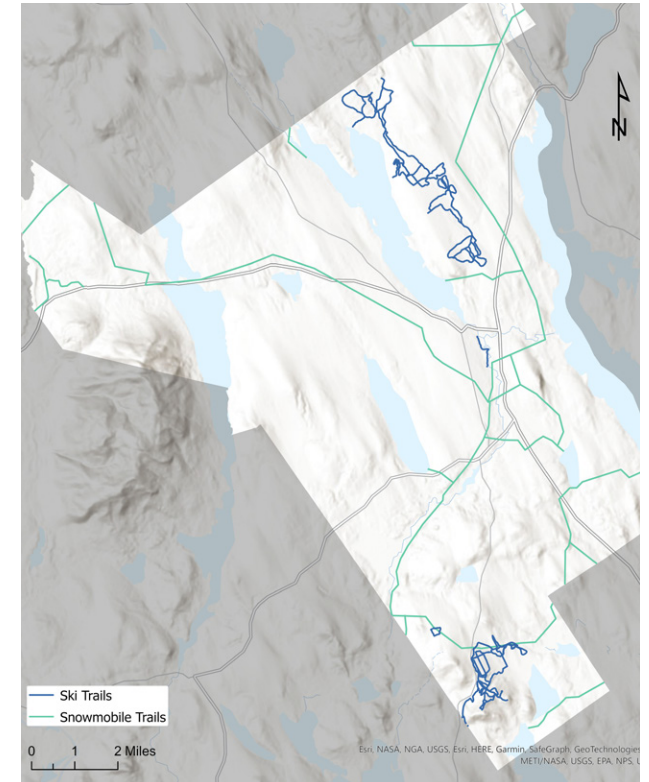
Winter Recreation

Bridgton's open spaces offer diverse warm-weather recreational opportunities, such as swimming, boating, hiking, biking, and numerous sports. During winter months, public recreation options include trails for snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling - and indoor activities offered by the Town and other organizations. Additionally, private recreation, like downhill skiing and snowboarding, abound during the winter.

However, few non-trail outdoor recreation amenities exist during the winter. Residents have expressed the need for more winter season activities, such as dedicated sledding hills, skating rinks, and places for backcountry skiing.

In the near term, the Town should identify space(s) for these activities on Town land. Longer term, the Town should seek partnerships with Pleasant Mountain and other snowboard/ski providers in the area.

Right: Snowshoers enjoying the South Face Loop Trail at Bald Pate Mountain Preserve.



Above: Bridgton Winter Recreation Trails

Multi-use Places

Through the community engagement process, residents expressed a desire for a few more recreation amenities (see public engagement summary), including a dog park, outdoor exercise equipment, community gardens, and an outdoor event space. When asked to locate these future amenities on a map during the public meeting, most respondents focused on Downtown and the HAM Complex. This clustering of amenities is wise, as it would enable users to visit a single location for access to multiple activities.

To this end, the Plan recommends continuing to develop the HAM Complex as an active recreation hub, with new court sports, a playground, and other sport facilities. If an indoor pool or other indoor recreation center is considered in the future, it should be located at the HAM Complex.

Above: Opening Day at the Gardiner Dog Park (2019). The park entail a 1/3-acre of fenced area for dogs to run and socialize. Amenities, such as seating, shade, and tables should be considered for Bridgton.

The open spaces in the downtown core, by contrast, should focus on social amenities, like gathering spaces, an event venue, and developed parkland. A dog park should be developed with an emphasis on social space for dog-owners. This means including shade, seating, and other passive recreation amenities to facilitate social interaction.

Implementation has already begun, with the issuance of an RFP for the HAM Complex in 2023. With funding from the LWCF, the Town should incrementally build-out the site as a comprehensive recreation destination for the entire town.

The dog park, event space, and other downtown social spaces should begin with feasibility studies to identify potential locations, regulatory/permitting needs, and budgets.



Partnerships

Partnering with mission-aligned agencies, non-profits, and businesses offers many benefits for the Town of Bridgton. Well-designed partnerships benefit both parties. The Town should pursue partnerships which offer benefits programming, assistance with maintenance, open space advocacy, and funding. Priorities include:

- Establish or partner with a 501c3 to help with managing funding and pursuing grants.
- Collaborate with LEIT for open space, trails, easements, and acquisitions.
- Explore opportunities with the Maine Development Foundation to fund downtown improvements

Chapter 7

Implementation

This chapter is intended to offer Town staff, committees, and volunteers an easy-to-use guide for the implementation of the Plan's many Recommendations. Since funding is the initial and most significant barrier to implementation for many Recommendations, the chapter begins with a summary of multiple potential funding mechanisms. As funding is pursued – a process that can take years – near-term priority should be given to projects, policies, and partnerships that have low cost, but enable future phases. A prime example is the creation of an Open Space Committee, which will add the human capacity needed to pursue funding and other implementation priorities.

The chapter includes an Action Table that serves as a “cheat sheet” for accessing the many recommendations of the plan, understanding roles and responsibilities, and determining the priority of potential projects.

Funding Mechanisms

The recommendations included in this plan require sufficient funding for implementation. The Town of Bridgton can explore additional funding strategies to support the improvement of the open space network. A list of strategies is provided below:

Municipal Open Space Fund

The Town should establish a fund that is designated for the acquisition and maintenance of open space, often referred to as a Land Bank. Contributions to the funds may come through annual contributions included in the municipal budget, impact fees, donations, and other designated sources. Expenditures from the fund may be used to support previously identified activities in the name of open space protection, acquisition, and management. This fund should be established through the development of a new Town ordinance with specific guidelines for contributions, management, and use of the funds. Bridgton should look to other communities in Maine with similar municipal open space funds, including Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook.

Land Donations

The Town should set up procedures to make land donations possible, including working with LEIT to receive and provide stewardship to land donations. All donated conservation lands require a management plan and funding source for anticipated maintenance.

Private Fundraising

This is a voluntary funding source dependent on financial donors. The Town should partner with LEIT to increase outreach to potential donors or host fund raising events. A clear goal and well-thought-out prioritizations are recommended prior to fundraising.

State Compensation Funds

These programs are designed to support conservation and natural resource protection projects with funds collected through environmental impact mitigation fees. These programs include the Maine In Lieu Compensation Fund (ILF), the Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program (MNRCP), and wetland mitigation funds.

Development/Impact Fees

The Town may create an open space impact fee to be applied to development proposals. The funds collected from impact fees may be used to acquire and/or maintain open space. Funds may be directed to a Municipal Open Space Fund or a separate funding source for designated projects related to open space.

Municipal Bonding

A bond question may be put to voters requesting a bond package be used to fund the acquisition of prioritized open space lands. This work requires additional community outreach and voting.

Property Tax Increase / Designation

A portion of property tax payments may be allocated for open space funding. For example, 1¢ dedication in the property tax rate may be added to fund open space protection. This serves as an alternative to municipal bonding, but would take longer to accrue funds.

Reserve Funds

A percentage of the Bridgton's General Reserve Fund may be designated for open space financing. For example, the annual incremental tax increases from new development after adjustments provides reserve funds beyond the annual budget. A percentage of the increased revenue may be used to fund open space.

Town Tax on Property Sales

A tax could be levied on all properties sold in Bridgton. The tax would be based on the sale price of the property and revenues would go directly to open space funding.

Appropriations

The Town can appropriate municipal funds for the purchase of a specific open space property. Often, the turn-around time is too short to allow for purchase of a property currently on the market. This financial strategy in coordination with a proactive acquisition process and open discussions may make this a viable funding Strategy.

Tax Acquired Property Sales

A percentage of tax acquired property sales may be used as a funding strategy for open space.

Grant Programs

There are several grant programs in the State of Maine that support open space and conservation efforts. The Town of Bridgton or LELT may be eligible for this funding. See the Lake Region Green Print for additional funding programs and sources.

The following bullets include a list of grant programs, organizations, and funding sources (click for web links):

- Bureau of Parks and Lands: Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Land for Maine's Future
- Project Canopy Assistance Grants
- Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund
- Bureau of Parks and Lands: Maine Recreational Trails Program
- Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Funding
- Coastal Community Grant Program (Municipal Planning Assistance Program)
- Open Space Institute
- National Parks Service Community Assistance in Conservation and Outdoor Recreation
- National Recreation and Park Association
- The Maine Natural Resources Conservation Program
- Davis Foundation
- Maine Trails Funding Program
- Community Forest and Open Space Conservation
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service)
- Healthy Forest Reserve (U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service)
- Land & Water Conservation Fund (U.S. Department of the Interior)
- North American Wetlands Conservation Act (U.S. Department of the Interior / U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service)
- Rivers, Trails Conservation Assistance Program Act (U.S. Department of the Interior / U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service)
- Maine Farmland Trust (Private)
- Elmina B. Sewall Foundation (Private)

Implementation Action Table

1. Protect: Clarifying Conservation

RECOMMENDATIONS		SUMMARY	WHO	PRIORITY
Strengthen the System				
Identify and Complete the Hubs (See Page 20)		Open space acquisitions and conservation efforts should prioritize opportunities to create and conserve large contiguous patches of habitat , including forest stands, wetlands, and surface water bodies. Conservations efforts should focus on code enforcement, voluntary easements, and the education of landowners about conservation and wildlife stewardship.	Town Staff / Open Space Committee	MODERATE
Create and Protect the Links (See Page 20)		Prioritize acquisitions and conservation efforts to secure links between major hubs (large patches of habitat). Since these deal with roads, state and local transportation agencies should be engaged as partners. Acquisition or easements to create additional protection of shoreland links should be prioritized when they extend inland, connecting the water to upland forests and wetlands. These movement corridors are vital for species that traverse aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.	Town Staff / Open Space Committee	HIGH
Integrate the Layers (See Page 22)		Conservation efforts should achieve with multiple benefits. Conservation efforts geared toward ground water protection should be prioritized where acute threats exist or the conservation effort aligns with multiple recommendations, such as creating habitat hubs or waterfront access. The protection of historical and cultural resources should also prioritize sites that meet multiple goals. Use multiple tools to preserve historical and cultural resources. This may include conservation easements, research and academic partnerships, historical registrations, and where appropriate, acquisitions.	Town Staff / Open Space Committee	MODERATE
Data-Driven Decisions				
Open Space Scorecard (See Page 24)		Complete a comprehensive assessment of the Town's current open space system using the scorecard. The result of this assessment will give the town a real-time understanding of its alignment with the Plan. If the assessment reveals physical, programmatic, or other gaps in the open space system, these shortfalls will help prioritize next steps across all three goals: Protect, Connect, and Activate.	Open Space Committee	HIGH
Open Space Committee (See Page 25)		Establish an Open Space Committee immediately, as the Committee has the potential to expedite numerous recommendations once in place. Committee members should be selected to reflect the Bridgton community and include local technical experts. Above all, continuity and commitment among the committee members will ensure the success of the process.	Open Space Committee	HIGH
Enforcement (See Page 25)		Near-term implementation should focus on tactical methods , such as drone-based reviews of shoreland encroachment and other issues of non-compliance. Long-term priorities should include expansion of the Town's code enforcement capabilities , including the purchase of a boat or drone, providing staff training, and adding personnel.	Town Staff	HIGH
Regional Collaborations (See Page 25)		Conduct an assessment of the potential subjects for regional collaboration and list associated towns and agencies with which to collaborate. Bridgton should seek to contribute to exiting, mission-aligned collaboratives. Where these do not exist, long term implementation should focus on coalition-building and establishing Bridgton as a regional leader in open space conservation. Drafting a regional watershed management plan in collaboration with neighboring towns is a high priority. The Bear River Aquifer Protection agreement between Bridgton and Harrison is a prime case study for future initiatives focused on ground water protection.	Town Staff & Partner Organizations	MODERATE

Implementation Action Table Continued

2. Connect: Enhance & Expand

RECOMMENDATIONS	SUMMARY	WHO	PRIORITY
Destination Downtown (See Page 26)	Reinforce Bridgton's downtown core as a desirable destination for trail users. This is achieved through two Strategies: extending new and existing trail systems into Downtown and providing amenities for trail users to enhance and extend their recreational use.	Town Staff / Open Space Committee	MODERATE
Ways to the Water (See Page 27)	Increase and diversify water access options in Bridgton. Improved water access points are recommended for the following town-owned properties: Salmon Point, Sabatis Island, and Highland Lake Beach. The improvements are low-cost and fall within the Town's current properties. Consider the establishment of a parking pass requirement at public beaches. Boat storage and rentals present an opportunity for collaboration with a business partner.	Town Staff / Open Space Committee	LOW
Link the Lakes (See Page 28)	Establish a continuous trail between Long Lake and Highland Lake, following the Stevens Brook. Implementation should begin with a planning study to assess the existing conditions along the corridor. The study should lead with community engagement to maximize inclusion and support among residents – especially landowners that may be approached for easements. Once a preferred alignment is identified and vetted with the community, the Town should secure all acquisitions and easements needed to complete the trail. Funding for securing and improving community-scale multi-use trails is available from state and federal programs. These opportunities should be pursued aggressively to offset the cost of the trail. Construction should proceed in phases to minimize disruption to trail users and neighbors.	Town Staff / Open Space Committee	HIGH

3. Activate: Program & Partners

RECOMMENDATIONS	SUMMARY	WHO	PRIORITY
Winter Recreation (See Page 30)	In the near term, identify space(s) on Town land for dedicated sledding hills, skating rinks, and places for backcountry skiing. Longer term, the Town should seek partnerships with Pleasant Mountain and other snowboard/ski providers in the area.	Town Staff / Open Space Committee	LOW
Multi-use Places (See Page 31)	Continue to develop the HAM Complex as an active recreation hub, with new court sports, a playground, and other sport facilities. With funding from the LWCF, the Town should incrementally build-out the site as a comprehensive recreation destination for the entire town. The open spaces in the downtown core should focus on social amenities, like gathering spaces, an event venue, and developed parkland. A dog park should be developed primarily as a social space for dog-owners. The dog park, event space, and other downtown social spaces should begin with feasibility studies to identify potential locations, regulatory/permitting needs, and budgets.	Town Staff / Open Space Committee	HIGH
Partnerships (See Page 32)	Pursue partnerships which offer benefits programming, assistance with maintenance, open space advocacy, and funding.	Town Staff / Open Space Committee	MODERATE

