

HOUSING



A typical older single-family home in Kittery.

A community is like a ship: everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm.
- Henrik Ibsen¹

We live in the present, we dream of the future, but we learn eternal truths from the past.

-Madame Chiang²

¹ Henrik Ibsen was a 19th-century Norwegian playwright, poet, and theater director.

² Madame Chiang was a famous Chinese educator and reformer.

TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING

State of Maine Goal:

To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.

(Maine Growth Management Act ((30-A M.R.S.A. §§ 4312 - 4350)

GOAL STATEMENT 4: TO PROVIDE A RANGE OF HOUSING TYPES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS THROUGHOUT THEIR LIFECYCLE AND TO SUPPORT RESIDENTS WITH A RANGE OF INCOMES

Objective 4.1. Attract young families and retain residents with a variety of incomes

Objective 4.2. Support elderly residents' ability to age in place

Housing is an essential component of day-to-day life for every man, woman, and child. It can be a source of pride and happiness, but can also be a source of concern, particularly for those residents who are living in housing that is may be unaffordable to them based on their household income. As the cost of living in Maine escalates, many struggle to cut costs without detrimentally impacting their quality of life. In many cases, it is challenging for residents to make changes when it comes to housing.

Throughout the comprehensive planning process, residents of Kittery showed interest in looking for ways to expand housing choices in town. Many residents expressed their desires for

supporting additional affordable housing development, ensuring employees who are in Kittery for short-term employment have an affordable place to live, and looking for ways to support seniors who want to downsize but still remain in the community.

Topic area #4 of the comprehensive plan focuses on creating housing at different price points, in a variety of locations, and of different styles and sizes to support Kittery residents.

KITTERY VOICES:

RESIDENT THOUGHTS REGARDING HOUSING

Residents of Kittery have voiced the following opinions, concerns, and ideas about the housing in town, and in particular, the following “burning question:”

“What should the Town do to support housing that is affordable to lower and middle-income households?”

“Where are appropriate locations to encourage new housing development to support this goal?”

“Any place you have existing construction that is not being used.”

“Incentivize development through tax incentives. Outlets, Route 1 Corridor, and the Water District site.”

“We need to keep Kittery alive and young people need to be able to afford to live here.”

TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING

“Housing closer to the Foreside would be best. Lower the property taxes for landlords that offer lower rents for people of lower income.”

“Housing north of Route 1 and west of I-95.”

“Density bonuses for affordable housing is a good place to start. I think the area north of the malls may be suitable although better highway access would help.”

“Land is hard to come by, but affordable housing should be made available.”



ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Kittery’s median home value for owner-occupied housing is lower than surrounding communities³, but **the median month rent for renter-occupied units is higher**. As housing demand grows and prices increase, it will be important for the Town to consider ways of increasing access to affordable housing.

- While many new single-family homes have high price points and tax bills, **the more compact development pattern** found in locations like the Foreside actually produce more property taxes per acre than homes in places like Gerrish Island.
- There is a need to address housing challenges for **foreign students** working seasonally at Kittery businesses.
- The **increasing senior population** in Kittery will need housing appropriately designed, sized, and located to accommodate this growing population.
- Since 2005, a majority of the new housing built has located north of Spruce Creek to the east of Route 1, and in the area north of Route 101 and west of Route 1. These were areas the previous comprehensive plan **designated as limited to no growth**. The predominate development

³ Surrounding communities used for comparison include York, Eliot, Newington, and Portsmouth.

TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING

pattern in these areas has been single-family subdivisions with houses on large lots.

- It will be important to determine if the current lot area minimums in the zoning districts covering the **no/limited growth areas** are effective.
- The dimensional requirements in Kittery's zoning are designed in such a way as to discourage larger multi-family buildings in some of the key areas residents would like to see them. This is true of the **Mixed-Use Zoning along Route 1** which has very high lot size and square foot per dwelling unit requirements. Multi-family developments are dominated by buildings that have fewer than nine units, highlighting the fact that **multi-family developments of a larger size and scale** are not being built in Kittery.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. ATTRACT YOUNG FAMILIES, RETAIN RESIDENTS, AND SUPPORT EMPLOYEES WITH A VARIETY OF INCOMES

For Kittery to continue to thrive, the town must be able to attract new people to work in Kittery, live in Kittery, shop in Kittery, and support the Town's social and civic institutions. For this to happen, the Town needs to encourage and support housing at a variety of price points with different designs, styles, and sizes.

Prospective residents look at location, amenities, price, and design as critical factors when deciding where to live. Kittery has a variety of housing types, but prices continue to rise and vacancies rates are low compared to surrounding communities. The Town should look for ways to encourage new housing, particularly affordable housing, in locations that are served by public utilities and existing infrastructure.

Specific strategies include:

4.1.1 Undertake a housing plan with strategies to better understand the housing supply and demand, and achieve affordable housing goals.

4.1.2. Create a housing committee or housing trust.

4.1.3. Adopt inclusionary zoning as a way to create more affordable housing in Kittery.

4.1.4. Update zoning regulations to encourage multi-family housing where appropriate.

4.1.5. Provide tax incentives or modified dimensional and parking standards for developers who create housing in desirable locations at a variety of price points.

4.1.6. Work with area employers to set up a volunteer or paid housing program where employees on a J-1 visa can stay with Kittery residents.

4.2. SUPPORT ELDERLY RESIDENTS' ABILITY TO AGE IN PLACE

The social fabric of a community relies on the ability to retain a rich culture and sense of history by supporting residents who have lived in town for decades. With rising housing costs and a general increase in the cost of daily living, seniors on a fixed income are finding it harder and harder to stay where they are. In Kittery, options are limited for where seniors can live and continue to stay connected to the community. As the share of Kittery's population over the age of 55 continues to grow, the Town will need to encourage the integration of senior housing options to ensure residents can age in place.

Specific strategies include:

4.2.1. Create a tax incentive program to lower property taxes for senior residents.

4.2.2. Update zoning regulations to allow for different housing types that meet the needs of today's senior residents.

4.2.3. Provide incentives for developers to take advantage of Kittery's cluster zoning ordinance, particularly if affordable housing is provided. This may include expedited permitting, reduced application fees, relaxed dimensional standards, relaxed parking standards where applicable.

4.2.4. Encourage any new developments restricted to seniors is within a safe walking distance to nearby amenities and/or supported by a local public transit option.

TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING

HOUSING AND THREE KEY PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Environmental Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Developing housing in locations that are already served by public utilities and an existing transportation network will help cut down on greenfield development in Kittery.
Health & Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Co-locating housing and employment opportunities and connecting them with a sidewalk and bike network will provide healthy transportation choices that make it easier to get around without a car.
Economic & Social Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Encouraging a mix of housing types and price points will provide options to Kittery residents who want to stay in town, and age in place. This will help preserve the social fabric of the town.A mix of housing types and price points will encourage businesses to locate and stay in Kittery because their employees can find housing that meets their needs at a price point that matches with their household income.

Implementation Table

NOTE: Please note the features on the implementation table in the pages that follow.




= Ripe Apple (low-hanging fruit)

Existing Resources are examples and are not intended to represent a complete list.

The following are the recommended policy directions for the Topic Area of Housing. See the Table that follows for specific Action Steps for achieving these.


TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING

GOAL STATEMENT: to provide a range of housing types to meet the needs of individuals throughout their lifecycles and to support residents with a range of incomes.

OBJECTIVE 4.1: ATTRACT YOUNG FAMILIES AND RETAIN RESIDENTS WITH A VARIETY OF INCOMES						
Strategy	Existing Resources*	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
4.1.1. Undertake a housing plan		Create a scope and request for proposals to undertake a comprehensive town-wide housing plan. Plan should include an in-depth analysis of housing supply, demand, and strategies to encourage a variety of housing types and price points.	Municipal Funds, or Request to Regional Planning Commission		LEAD: Planning Board, Planning Department PARTNERS: Town Manager	1
		Explore possibility of local regional planning commission undertaking the study on behalf of the Town.				
		Create and implement prioritized list of strategies for housing.				

* Existing Resources are examples and are not intended to represent a complete list

TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING

OBJECTIVE 4.1: ATTRACT YOUNG FAMILIES AND RETAIN RESIDENTS WITH A VARIETY OF INCOMES						
Strategy	Existing Resources*	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
4.1.2. Create a housing committee or housing trust.	Look to other towns in the area that have housing committees or housing trusts.	Create a Housing Committee or Housing Trust to oversee the implementation of the housing plan.	None Required		LEAD: Town Council, Town Manager, Planning Department	1
4.1.3. Adopt inclusionary zoning as a way to create more affordable housing in Kittery.	Title 16 Land Use and Development Code for Kittery.	Research existing successful inclusionary zoning policies in Maine.	None Required if Completed by Staff	See Strategy 4.1.2 on the creation of a housing committee.	LEAD: Town Council, Planning Board, Planning Department	1
		Create a working group to help shape Kittery's inclusionary zoning policy. Group should include local housing developers.				
		Create a working group to help shape the policy. Group should include input from local housing developers.				
		Adopt inclusionary zoning policy.				

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TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING

OBJECTIVE 4.1: ATTRACT YOUNG FAMILIES AND RETAIN RESIDENTS WITH A VARIETY OF INCOMES						
Strategy	Existing Resources*	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
4.1.4. Update zoning regulations to encourage multi-family housing where appropriate.	Title 16 Land Use and Development Code for Kittery.	Determine which zones residents would support additional multi-family housing being developed in.	None Required if Completed by Staff	See strategy 4.1.5. for financial/regulatory incentives.	LEAD: Planning Board, Planning Department	2
		Encourage development where public utilities and existing transportation infrastructure already exist.				
		Provide property owners in the area around the Route 1 Outlet Mall with options to redevelop commercial properties with housing and/or mixed use via an overlay district.				
		Draft use and dimensional requirements that encourage multi-family and mixed-use development where appropriate.				
		Change allowable uses to provide for new housing types such as tiny houses or co-housing.		See end notes for links to descriptions.		

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TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING

OBJECTIVE 4.1: ATTRACT YOUNG FAMILIES AND RETAIN RESIDENTS WITH A VARIETY OF INCOMES						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
4.1.5. Provide tax incentives or modified dimensional and parking standards for developers who create housing in desirable locations at a variety of price points.		Build in incentives to encourage the use of the cluster ordinance.	None Required if Completed by Staff		LEAD: Town Council, Planning Board, Town Manager PARTNERS: Assessor, Tax Collector, Planning Department	3
		Consider using the Water District site to catalyze a public/private partnership that achieves the Town's housing goals.				
		Ease permitting fees or time lines for developers who provide housing that meets the Town's goals.				
		Consider a tax incentive for developments that meet the Town's housing goals.				
		Use inclusionary zoning fees (if any are generated) to help subsidize affordable units in existing or new development.				
4.1.6. Work with area employers to set up a volunteer or paid housing		Develop an online program that can match housing opportunities with existing Kittery residents to the needs of short-term	Volunteer or Paid by the Employer.		LEAD: Area Employers, Town Manager	2

* Existing Resources are examples and are not intended to represent a complete list

TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING


program where employees on a J-1 visa can stay with Kittery residents.		employees. The Town should work with employers to determine level of need and timeframe.			PARTNERS: Planning Staff, Kittery Residents	
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OBJECTIVE 4.2: SUPPORT ELDERLY RESIDENTS' ABILITY TO AGE IN PLACE						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
4.2.1. Create a tax incentive program to lower property taxes for senior residents.		Create a program similar to a circuit breaker, senior work-off program, or Property Tax Fairness Credit.	None Required if Completed by Staff	Program is envisioned to help lower property taxes for seniors through an abatement or a volunteer work-off program.	LEAD: Town Council	2
4.2.2. Update zoning regulations to allow for different housing types that meet the needs of today's	Title 16 Land Use and Development Code for Kittery.	Update zoning to allow for new housing types such as co-housing or tiny houses.	None Required if Completed by Staff		LEAD: Planning Board, Planning Department	1

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TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING

senior residents.		Explicitly note under allowable uses by zoning districts where assisted living is allowed and encouraged.				
		Relax the regulatory standards for accessory dwelling units such that a new accessory structure could be constructed to provide alternative housing types in Kittery.				

OBJECTIVE 4.2: SUPPORT ELDERLY RESIDENTS' ABILITY TO AGE IN PLACE						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
4.2.3. Provide incentives for developers to take advantage of Kittery's cluster zoning ordinance, particularly if affordable housing is provided. This may include expedited permitting, reduced application fees, relaxed dimensional	Title 16 Land Use and Development Code for Kittery.	Design density bonuses for developers who utilize the cluster ordinance, particularly in locations that are served by sewers or have on-site wastewater treatment.	None Required if Completed by Staff		LEAD: Planning Board, Planning Department	1

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TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING

standards, relaxed parking standards where applicable.						
4.2.4. Ensure any new development restricted to seniors is within a safe walking distance to nearby amenities and/or supported by a local public transit option.	Title 16 Land Use and Development Code for Kittery.	Ensure site plan review process includes a review of transportation connectivity.	None Required if Completed by Staff	See Goals and Strategies from the Transportation Section of the Comprehensive Plan. 	LEAD: Planning Board, Planning Department	1
		Encourage larger-scale senior housing development to include transportation demand management solutions to increase travel options for seniors.				
		Encourage the integration of new senior housing options into mixed-use or housing developments in close proximity to daily needs amenities like retail, restaurants, town services, grocery stores, etc.				

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TOPIC AREA 4: HOUSING

ENDNOTES

Portsmouth, NH. Article highlighting a discussion regarding inclusionary zoning and affordable housing.
<http://www.seacoastonline.com/news/20160511/portsmouth-panel-seeks-affordable-housing-solutions>

Portland, ME. Link to their housing committee as an example.
<http://www.portlandmaine.gov/582/Housing-Committee>

Tiny Houses
<http://thetinylife.com/what-is-the-tiny-house-movement/>

Co-Housing
http://www.cohousing.org/what_is_cohousing