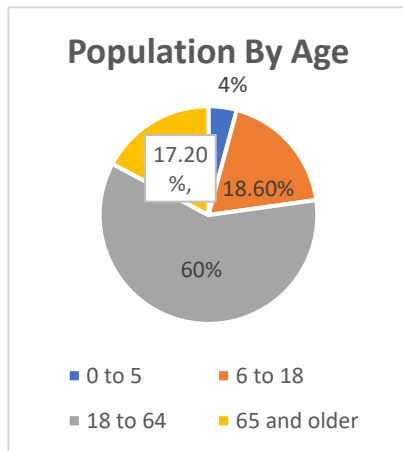


WATERVILLE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST STRATEGIC PLAN 2024

DEMOGRAPHICS

Waterville, Maine is a small city in Kennebec County located in central Maine. It is along the banks of the Kennebec River and spans over 14 miles.



State Ranking: The 2020 census lists the population at 15,985, making Waterville the 11th largest city in Maine. Maine has the highest percentage of older persons.

Growth Rate: Waterville is currently growing at a rate of 0.08% annually.

Median Age: The median age is 38.3 years with 36.8 years for male and 39.8 for females.

Racial Composition: White 93.08%, * Asian 3.12%, * Two or more races 2.41%, * Black or African American 0.76%, * Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 0.34%, * Native American 0.17%, * Other racial backgrounds 0.13%.

Income: The average median household income in Maine is \$64,767 with Waterville's median household income at \$41,245.

Poverty: Waterville has a poverty rate of 23.1% compared to a statewide average of 11.5%, with some neighborhoods having a much greater concentration of poverty than others.

Homeowners: The United States Census Bureau lists homeownership rates in Waterville at 46.2%. The statewide average is 74.8%. And the 2020 reported homeowners were living in 3,250 properties or 46% of Waterville's residential structures. The average median house in 2020 was valued at \$124,200 and at that time 606 homeowners paid more than 30% of their income for housing. Data in 2023 by the Maine Housing Authority reported a 20% decrease by owner occupied single family houses in Waterville.

Renters: Renters make up 54% of Waterville's real estate, occupying a total of 3,850 units. The median household income for renters is \$23,645. In 2020, 40.1% of Waterville renters paid more than 30% of their income for rent with 65.7% of Waterville households unable to afford a two-bedroom rental unit.

Housing Stock: A 2002 study by Charles Roundy noted that upwards of 25% of all residential units in Waterville are in moderately to severely substandard residential structures. Over 34% of the city's residential structures were built prior to 1940. Much of the oldest housing stock is located in low-income neighborhoods along the Kennebec River known as the South End, North End, and Trigger Hill. These neighborhoods historically housed factory workers who worked in local mills often associated with the lumber and garment industries.

The South End: Nearly 15% of the city's population currently live in this neighborhood that is 2.5 percent of Waterville's land mass. Many of these structures have 'good bones' but have suffered when owners have been unable to make critical repairs or homes have been sub-divided in ways that may not meet modern code requirements, or houses have been abandoned and left vacant for years. The Milliken Neighborhood is composed

of Moor, Carrean, Halde and Paris Streets. It is named for the family that built these streets and offered lots or constructed homes for sale in the 19th century, primarily to mill workers. This neighborhood has been a focus of several WCLT projects.

Waterville Today: Waterville is known as a commercial/shopping hub for central Maine, as it is easily accessible to Interstate 95; an educational hub with Colby College and Thomas College; and a cultural center with museums, a restored opera house, a film institute, and several art studios.

Sources: data.census.gov/profile, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/waterville-me-population#>, <https://www.point2homes.com/US/Average-Rent/ME/Waterville.html>

MISSION

Waterville Community Land Trust (WCLT) supports neighborhood preservation and improvement through the development of affordable housing and other community assets.

There is evidence that homeownership stabilizes neighborhoods and families and creates generational wealth. This is why WCLT seeks to expand housing opportunities for persons of limited financial means through its focus on low-income households. This is an income category that has had increasing barriers to homeownership, and now there is even a paucity of safe and affordable rental and homeownership opportunities for moderate-income households.

VISION

Waterville's neighborhoods are inclusive, safe, stable, desirable places to live, work, and play. This is a community where families thrive with choices that provide long-term financial and emotional health.

VALUES

- All people deserve safe and affordable housing.
- Restoring blighted properties revitalizes neighborhoods.
- Community green spaces restore well-being.
- Homeownership promotes strong neighborhoods, generates economic growth, personal wealth and stability for households.

POPULATION SERVED

- Low-income households as defined by HUD, the IRS Safe Harbor regulations, and other funders for low-income housing.
- Persons with a higher risk of poverty, educational barriers, single parents, women, persons of color, minorities, elders, and/or persons with disabilities.
- People who may have fixed income from sources like Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Workmen's Compensation, retirement pensions, etc.

- Persons who may not have substantial savings for down-payments, deposits, house maintenance and/or major repairs.
- Households may be multigenerational, such as adults in the workforce with dependent children under age 18, adult children over 18, elderly parents and/or a household member with a disability.
- Households may have been impacted by social determinants of health including income, social status, education, unemployment and job insecurity, working or life conditions, food insecurity, housing, basic amenities, the environment, early childhood development, familial relationships, social inclusion and non-discrimination, structural conflict and access to affordable health services of a decent quality.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE ACTION STEPS

- Contractors
Action--Develop relationship with contractors willing to volunteer or work at reduced rates to maintain affordability.
- Habitat For Humanity (H4H)
Action--Collaborate on home repair project. Learn from H4H effective strategies to obtain community support.
- Kennebec Messalonskee Trails
Action--Seek funding together for Kennebec River trail project and development of park at confluence of Kennebec and Messalonskee Rivers. Participate in KMT community events such as National Trail Day.
- Kennebec Valley Community Action Program
Action--Support their programs and housing project for low-income households. Collaborate when feasible.
- Lumber Yards, Hardware Stores, Plant Nurseries
Action--Utilize businesses that have discounts for non-profits. Check their bulletin boards for local contractors.
- Maine State Housing Authority
Action--Monitor website frequently to learn when RFPs for housing projects targeted to low-income households are listed. Utilize their expertise regarding programs with low fixed-rate mortgages for people who have not owned homes in last three years, etc.
- Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce
Action--Reconsider joining to enhance community rapport and increase awareness of benefits of CLT model.
- Mid-Maine Technical Center
Action--Develop relationship with school's construction and electrical technology programs.
- Real estate agencies
Action--Maintain and expand rapport to learn ASAP when properties are listed to make WCLT more competitive with other buyers.
- South End Neighborhood Association
Action--Continue participating and supporting SENA events.
- Statewide Community Land Trusts Network
Action--Participate in meetings and seek funding to establish a statewide network that is staffed.
- Waterville Creates & Greene Block + Studios
Action--Develop collaborative projects.

- Waterville School District
Action--Remain informed about community volunteer requirements, annual community workday and school groups or individual students eager to participate in creative community projects using their interest in art, music, science, ecology, etc.
 Waterville Public Housing Authority
Action--Continue dialogue accessing State and Federal Funds.
- Waterville Tenants Association
Action--Support and collaborate with this association that is advocating measures to ensure safe and affordable housing.

FUNDING MECHANISMS

- City
 TIF, Non-profit yearly grants, Land Bank, Properties taken for delinquent taxes
- State
 Maine State Housing Authority programs such as Community Solutions Grants, Reduced Fixed Mortgage Rates for Low-Income Households
- Federal
 HUD grants and loan programs, Yearly Congressional Earmarks (Apply to District 1 Member of Congress and both Senators)
- Grants
 Locate yearly and semiannual competitive RFPs from organizations including the following: Federal Reserve Home Grants, LIBRA Foundation, Key Bank, Kennebec Savings Bank, Central Maine Garden Club, and other national entities
- Donations
 Newsletter requests, fundraising events, one-to-one requests
- Partnerships
 Non-profits, private developers
- Financial Institutions
 Loans, Buying back points
- Revolving Loan Fund
 Establish with Federal, State, City, Grant, or Private Donor Assistance
- Lease Option to Buy
 Measure allowing persons more time to obtain a mortgage while living in a house owned by WCLT

ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- A) Develop Affordable Housing**
- B) Revitalize Neighborhoods**
- C) Support Community Land Trust Model**

A) OBJECTIVE: DEVELOP AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A-1) STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Renovate existing homes for sale or rent:
 - As a one household unit,
 - As one household unit with additional rental space,
 - Multihousehold condominiums,
 - Multihousehold rental units.
- New Construction homes for sale or rent:
 - As a one household unit,
 - As one household unit with additional rental space,
 - Multihousehold condominiums,
 - Multihousehold rental units.
- Acquire vacant properties:
 - City-acquired properties resulting from unpaid back taxes, condemned buildings, properties in a land bank;
 - Bank foreclosures properties;
 - Auction sales.
- Explore feasibility of the COOP Model.

A-2) CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING STRATEGIES AND FINANCING TO DEVELOP AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Opportunities--Increased State and Federal dollars for affordable housing projects.

- City may create a landbank.
- New zoning laws allowing accessory dwellings may create opportunities for multifamily projects.

Obstacles--Increased competition for State and Federal dollars

- Median price of housing has increased above capacity for Waterville AMI households to purchase.
- Rising loan interest rates decrease capacity for Waterville AMI households to make monthly payments.
- Fewer financing options exist for lower priced homes.
- Higher purchase price and renovation costs of homes is a detriment to making money or breaking-even on projects.
- Fewer single and multifamily units are on the market.
- Independent contractors willing to work at lower rates may not carry insurance and thus cannot be hired.

A-3) AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT TARGETS WITH PROJECTED TIMELINES, FUNDING STREAMS

- FY 24 Initiate third housing project, consider purchasing a structure with multifamily potential that meets eligibility for current State or Federal Grants programs.
- FY 24 Continue discussions with city to develop a land bank that includes eligibility of the land trust model in their application process to acquire city-owned vacant properties.
- FY 24 Identify a host bank to be an eligible applicant for larger competitive grants through Boston Federal Reserve Housing Programs.
- FY 24 When the next housing project is established, the Board of Directors will develop and participate in fund raising for purchase, renovations, and mortgage assistance costs.

B) OBJECTIVE: REVITALIZE NEIGHBORHOODS

B-1) STRATEGIES TO REVITALIZE NEIGHBORHOODS

- Implement affordable homeownership and rental projects on formerly blighted properties:
 - Restore structures to meet current safety codes;
 - Model use of inexpensive and easy ways to maintain yards that enhance household enjoyment and beautify the neighborhood;
 - Completed projects motivate neighbors to initiate similar improvements.
- The Exterior Home Repair Program for low-income homeowners (WCLT, H4H):
 - Support and sustain home ownership with repairs that might otherwise be unaffordable or neglected due to owner's infirmity;
 - Repair projects assist households to meet safety codes;
 - Preserving older housing increases homeowner and neighborhood pride
 - Completed repair projects motivate neighbors to initiate similar improvements.
- Community green spaces bring people together in a physically and mentally restorative environment:
 - Lashus Park
 - Maintain and develop garden areas and hardscape for permanence and easy maintenance;
 - Restore wetland bordering the river to natural habitat;
 - Develop activities bringing people to the park for recreation, relaxation, and volunteer opportunities;
 - Create a destination for outdoor art;

Use park as gathering location for nature enthusiasts.

--Trail to confluence of Kennebec & Messalonskee Rivers and hilltop park:

Identify and work with allies (individuals and organizations) to promote community support of this project;

Research grants available for trail development;

Request city set aside TIF money for this project;

Continue holding bird walks to familiarize people with the potential of a South End Trail and park at the confluence;

--South End Neighborhood Association Activities:

Promote and participate in annual events including Messalonskee River clean-up, dumpster day, festivals, working in their public vegetable garden, etc.;

--Public Art Project

Collaborate and/or participate in art events with schools or community organizations e.g., Greene Studios and Waterville Creates;

Develop a community art project day at Lashus Park.

B-2) CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING STRATEGIES AND FINANCING TO REVITALIZE NEIGHBORHOOD

Opportunities--Trails are eligible for TIF financing.

--Trail expansion in Central Maine is simultaneously going on in many communities who would be allies.

--There are schools, places of employment, and organizations with volunteer missions compatible with WCLT.

--There are grants targeted at developing green space and revitalizing natural habitats.

--Birders, walkers, bike riders, families with children would be allies to support trail and park to confluence segment.

--City may have other property for public works to use instead of hilltop at confluence.

Obstacles--City public works department currently using hilltop at confluence as a staging, storage and dumping grounds.

B-3) REVITALIZE NEIGHBORHOOD PROJECT TARGETS WITH PROJECTED TIMELINES, FUNDING STREAMS,

FY 24 Organize annual bird walk to confluence early May 2024 with local *pro bono* guide and donated refreshments at gazebo.

FY 24 Organize at an annual volunteer day for garden and hardscape maintenance, contact local businesses and organizations for donations, such as refreshments and tools, to further community involvement and knowledge of WCLT mission.

FY 24 Organize annual community art and/or music festival at Lashus Park, seeking grant, foundation and/or local organization funding.

FY 24 Participate in SENA festival and other community events such as those supported by Waterville Creates which promote social, emotional, and physical well-being.

FY 24 Continue restoration of wetland and riverfront to natural habitat by engaging experts and seeking new funding sources.

FY 24 Collaborate with Kennebec Messalonskee Trails to apply for grants to develop South End trail and Confluence Project.

FY 24 Identify alternative entities with the financial and liability capacity to sustain the exterior repair project.

C) OBJECTIVE: SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAINE SHARED HOUSING EQUITY NETWORK (MSHEN)

C-1) STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE MAINE SHARED HOUSING EQUITY NETWORK

- Participate in statewide MSHEN meetings.
- Consult with experts familiar with Federal and State entities that MSHEN may be an eligible applicant for projects and operations.
- Explore network leadership strategies such as paid administrator and unpaid lead agency or community governmental structure.
- Meet with potential advocates/allies in communities: organizations, housing development, delegates in governmental entities.
- Develop educational materials to expand knowledge about limited equity community trusts' capacity to develop affordable housing.
- Disseminate information on how revolving loan funds have been effective with comparable entities initiating and completing projects.

C-2) CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING STRATEGIES AND FINANCING TO SUPPORT THE MAINE SHARED EQUITY HOUSING NETWORK (MSEHN)

Network Administrator

Opportunities--Membership fees could provide predictable and timely funds for a network administrator and other operational costs.

--A network administrator would have expanded time to research and complete foundations and grants applications.

--State may consider it advantageous to find a funding source for a statewide network administrator whose objective is to bring additional resources to the state for affordable housing projects.

Obstacles--Fewer foundations and grants are willing to fund organization operations such as a program administrator.

Revolving Loan Funds (RLF)

Opportunities--RLFs have lower interest rates, better terms, and more flexibility than traditional lending institutions.

--RLFs allow network members to be in a queue with a predictable timeline for release of funds to implement projects.

Obstacles--Revolving Loan Funds are unlikely to appeal to foundations and grants seeking shovel-ready projects.

--Should Network find an RLF financing mechanism, funds cannot be distributed until application and usage guidelines established.

--With a network RLF, WCLT projects may not meet RLF guidelines or rank high enough for timely funding.

C-3) WCLT RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MAINE SHARED EQUITY HOUSING NETWORK FOR PROJECT TARGETS WITH PROJECTED TIMELINES, FUNDING STREAMS

Statewide network will:

FY 24 Complete all paperwork necessary for incorporation and 501(c)(3) status.

FY 24 Set up multiple meetings with decision makers at Federal, State and Local entities seeking development of affordable housing projects.

FY 24 Identify and apply to foundations or grant programs that would consider funding operations of a statewide network.

FY 24 Identify and apply to foundations or grant programs that would consider funding a revolving loan fund restricted to network members.

FY 24 Create list of shovel-ready projects among network members that would be priorities for grants and foundations.