

## **Caribou Goals, Policies, and Strategies**

The Inventory section of this Plan serves to identify community problems, needs, assets, and the characteristics of local importance or value. It also serves as a substantial reference on the City and serves as a tool for anyone interested in moving into Caribou for residential or business purposes. In addition, the section also serves to place the City in a regional perspective in that it contains a considerable amount of comparative information.

If the Inventory Section could be referred to as the backbone of the Plan, then the policies and strategies which follow are the connective tissue, the heart, and the soul. They represent an approach to moving the community forward over a five-year time frame in specific areas covered by the inventories.

The goals, policies, and strategies provide a comprehensive and wide look at what the people of Caribou want the City to be. The policies build upon the goals and refine the vision into a more detailed set of proposals for how the City should guide its growth and change during the 2000's to assure that the future growth is continually assimilated into the community and does not overburden the ability of the City to provide services.

### **Introduction**

Environmental groups and developers expressed anxiety and frustration with existing local planning and the land use regulation process throughout the 1980's and during the early stages of the dialogue on Growth Management. At that time there was little regard for the preservation of wetlands, wildlife habitat, and for watershed protection. Many towns did not have zoning; commercial and industrial development was permitted to interfere with traditional neighborhoods and new residential development. Furthermore, residential development was able to infringe into the commercial, industrial, and agricultural areas. Along with this new development came residents who were not especially tolerant of established traditional uses. They requested controls be placed on industrial activities and various agricultural operations, such as manure spreading, sludge spreading, and pesticide application.

Environmental groups felt the conditions were permitting development to spread throughout the countryside, thereby degrading valuable natural resources. The groups noted that development was destroying the farmlands and filling in the wetlands. Development groups, on the other hand, were equally disenchanted with the land use regulation process which often posed costly delays. Industrial and commercial developers were concerned with restrictions placed upon them (in some cases they were exclusionary). Towns simply did not want that type of development. The towns passed local legislation banning any form of development they did not find suitable or that made it impossible to develop their sites. Residential developers also felt that the ordinances were often exclusionary to multi-family units or manufactured housing and thereby forced the cost of single-family housing to rise without increasing the quality of the development.

In response to pressure from both groups, the state legislature developed the Growth Management Law to address these issues, and to head off future problems. The planning

program established by the law is guided by 10 state goals and suggests that all communities who accept state funds to complete their planning program address these goals in their local comprehensive plans.

The following represents the Policies and Strategies section of the Caribou Comprehensive Plan (Plan). Comprehensive planning is an on-going process, with the City reviewing all sections of the Plan every five years to make any changes. The Policies and Strategies section is one of those sections. These statements are meant to serve as a guide in the City's decision making and at the same time provide a framework for major investments and land management decisions so that future development in the City may be in the best interest of everyone. A comprehensive plan does not have the force of law behind it; it is however the foundation from which the specific ordinances are drawn.

It is hoped that the various state agencies will recognize these policies in their decision making. These policies should also be used by the various City authorities and boards in evaluating their own actions in such things as subdivision reviews, CDBG applications, and the City's long-range plans.

### **Strategic Planning**

Caribou has a great deal of pride and community spirit, yet limited resources. Northern Maine Development Commission and the City have given the method of implementing the planning strategies contained in this document a great deal of thought. We have agreed that the Plan and the implementation program are separate entities, yet part of a broad overall program, with the end products of the entire planning process justifying the means. There are two aspects to this overall program: the preparation of the land use regulations and the completion of the strategies.

Caribou will be making important updates and changes to the current zoning ordinance and map, as well as updating its subdivision ordinance, expanding its criteria for site design review, and making other necessary changes. The City is aware of the importance of these documents and has identified the need to adopt these as part of the implementation program, only after extensive public participation.

As noted, there are numerous "other" items in the strategies the City will be acting upon. Over the next several years, the City (City Council, Planning Board, and the various other City Departments, boards, and committees) will be taking a good, long, clear look at what direction and where they want the City to be in the next century. Maine is changing and the impacts of that change cannot all be measured at this one point in time. Many issues could not be addressed during the planning portion of the program because they are dependent upon situations that are not within their control. They include: the value of the Canadian dollar and state and federal budget readjustments.

## **State Goals for Growth Management**

The ten state goals are reprinted here for a reference followed by the local goals, policies, and strategies. The policies of this Plan should promote the following state goals:

1. To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the State's rural character, making efficient use of public services and preventing development sprawl.
2. To plan, finance, and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.
3. To promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.
4. To encourage and promote affordable, decent housing opportunities for all Maine citizens.
5. To protect the quality and manage the quantity of the state's water resources, including lakes, aquifers, great ponds, estuaries, rivers and coastal areas.
6. To protect the state's other critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, sand dunes, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas.
7. To protect the state's marine resources industry, ports and harbors, from incompatible development and to promote access to the shore for commercial fishermen and the public.
8. To safeguard the state's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.
9. To preserve the state's historic and archaeological resources.
10. To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters.

## **Caribou General Development Goals**

The following are general goals which outline a basic pattern of what Caribou is today and what the vision of the future should be. Taken as a whole, these goals are derived from the various committee meetings and personal communications. These goals are intended to provide a general policy framework on which to base the recommendations of this Plan.

1. Maintain the City's urban and rural character, including its desirability as a place to live and work.
2. Assure that new residential and non-residential development is in keeping with the established character of the City, including the historic buildings, quality of life, scale of buildings, and neighborliness.
3. Guide the growth of the City so that it preserves the important values of the community, including its heritage, historical values, diversity of population, and natural resources.
4. Assure that the policies and regulations of the City recognize the private property rights of landowners while at the same time promoting the public good.
5. Recognize that there are different values and lifestyles among the residents and that this diversity of opinion is worthwhile, so long as it does not polarize the community.
6. Assure that the policies and regulations of the City recognize that new development creates impacts on the community, and that the City and potential developers should work together to explore options for paying the costs of improvements to public facilities and services needed to serve the project.
7. Promote a broad-based sense of community pride which seeks to unite the various elements of the City.
8. Ensure City policies and procedures accommodate development and growth.
9. Address the City's tax-exempt property and how it affects state school payments and the City's operating budget.
10. Create a public forum to examine: a.) changes in the City's character, b.) recent shifts in the location of commercial and residential development, c.) potential conflicts between individual property rights and the public need to manage growth, d.) the growing shift in population demographics, and e.) the public's ability to serve the needs of an aging population.