



BLIGHT TOOLKIT

A COMPENDIUM OF TOOLS, METHODS AND STAKEHOLDERS THAT CARIBOU CAN UTILIZE TO
COMBAT THE PROLIFERATION OF BLIGHTED PROPERTIES IN COMMUNITY NEIGHBORHOODS

Prepared By Members of the Caribou Blight Commission

June 25, 2020

Special thanks to members of the citizens committee and city staff who helped brainstorm and research the information in this report

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Resolution 09-01-2020

A Resolution of the Caribou City Council Accepting the Blight Toolkit

WHEREAS, the City of Caribou is experiencing significant property and neighborhood decay due to unkept and blighted properties; and

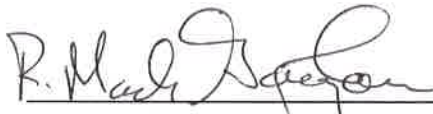
WHEREAS, The City Council asked that a Blight Commission be formed to identify tools and methods that can be used to counteract, prevent, and reduce the effects of blight in the community; and

WHEREAS, the Blight Commission has compiled the Blight Toolkit which provides a list of Bylaws, Operations, Outcomes, Stakeholders, and Tasks (BOOST) that can be beneficial to the city in fighting the blight issue; and

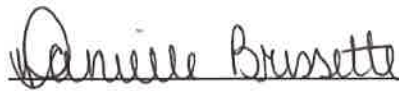
WHEREAS, The City Council desires that many of the recommendations and procedures of the Blight Toolkit be implemented by staff and become part of the city's processes for managing blighted properties and neighborhoods,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY, THE CARIBOU CITY COUNCIL, to accept the Blight Toolkit dated June 25, 2020 as a guiding policy to be referenced in land use and development regulation creation or enforcement matters here forward.

This resolution was duly passed and approved by a majority of the City Council of the City of Caribou this 21st day of September 2020.



R. Mark Goughan, Mayor



Attest: Danielle Brissette, City Clerk

[City Seal]

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INTRODUCTION

Problem properties, vacant and occupied, undermine neighborhood vitality and are a source of constant frustration to officials and residents working to stabilize and rebuild neighborhoods. Much of this frustration stems from navigating legal issues such as property rights, privacy rights, and environmental contamination. But in recent years, creative and diverse legal tools and strategies have emerged in many states and municipalities.^[1] The City Council charged the members of this committee with identifying tools that could be used to counteract, prevent, and reduce the effects of blight in the community. The working group identified five major categories of tools for wrestling with blight: Bylaws, Operations, Outcomes, Stakeholders, and Tasks (BOOST). Appendix A of this document provides a synopsis of the many tools and the relative use or limitations of each. The remainder of this document serves to provide a high-level narrative of each tool and what is needed to fully utilize them. The final element of this document includes scenarios and how the various tools might be utilized to address blight problems in the city.

Tools to combat blight range from providing incentives to enforcing remedial orders. Municipalities can use beautification awards, citations with fines and newer methods such as land banking, performance-based rental regulation, and more. The intent is to move properties back into productive use, improve living conditions for tenants, and stabilize neighborhoods at risk.

This report should serve as a resource and road map for cleaning up blighted properties within the City of Caribou. Tools referenced in this document are based on the regulatory framework established by the State of Maine, adopted building and fire safety codes and the land use, development, and property maintenance codes of the City. Research was conducted of other communities' efforts that can be attempted within the local framework and some options that may require building upon the local framework to utilize. This report is not intended to be fully comprehensive or exhaustive on the subject, but hopefully will provide a solid foundation for building programs and strategies for the future.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

The City of Caribou has a long history of agricultural industry and as a waypoint for travelers between the United States and Canada. The Loring Air Force Base was established nearby to assert geographic dominance after WWII. As Loring's stationed personnel grew, so did the City's infrastructure, housing, and economy to support it. The 1960 Census showed Caribou reached a population of 12,464. Since that time there have been shifts to service economies, reduction of forces at the airbase and its eventual closure, and the relocation of jobs to larger economic centers. The population of Caribou was estimated in 2018 to be 7,614^[2].

With the loss in population and jobs there are many single family properties falling into decay, small farms which are less efficient to work with modern techniques are sitting fallow, multi-family housing stock is not being updated, and properties are allowed to revert to the city for past due taxes. A land use survey conducted by the UMPI GIS department in 2014 indicated that nearly 6,000 acres was fallow in city limits. Some fallow lands are returning to a forested state while others are weed patches (see Map 1: Fallow Lands). Beyond fallow properties, the city wanted to better understand the condition of blight as an element to preparing this toolkit.

A blight survey was conducted by the City Code Enforcement Officer, Ken Murchison during the spring of 2020 (See appendix B and the following maps on pages 4-6). Properties surveyed included residential, commercial and industrial properties. Primarily agriculture or forested lands were excluded unless they had structures on them. The survey considered the existence of visual blight of the structures, blight evidence on the site, whether the property was vacant, if there was a lack of utilities to the property, and if the current use was consistent with the city's ordinances. Out of 3,324 parcels surveyed, 158 (5%) scored below moderate blight conditions with 131 of those being residential properties. Blight scores of 50 or lower on a scale of 0-100 were considered above moderate blight. There were significantly blighted properties scattered throughout the community (see map 2: 2020 Blight Survey - Raw Scores) with many of those at trailer parks, along the Van Buren road near Connor, and within the core area. When the blighted properties were considered in relationship to their property size, we begin to see potential associative impacts on adjacent parcels (see map 3: 2020 Blight Survey - Blight Concentration) and general blighted neighborhood conditions.

Those neighborhoods where the highest concentration of blight is indicated are around Crosby Avenue, near the intersection of Fort Road and Route 1, Washburn Road near Bradley Street, and the small neighborhood between the recreation center and High Street. Some of the similarities between these residential neighborhoods include lot sizes less than 0.2-acre, original construction date of homes prior to 1945, close proximity to major traffic corridors with their noise and pollution, and blighted industrial areas.

The downtown mall area, though occupied by some major employers and viable, long term businesses, is in need of property maintenance. Old signs, lighting, dead street trees, building materials in decay, unkept landscaping and parking lots, etc. are all contributors to blight downtown.



Fallow Lands

Around Caribou City Limits



Legend

— Roads

Land Uses

Developed

Cropland

Fallow

Forest

Trans_line

Wasteland

Water

Wetland

Map Produced: June 3, 2020
By: Dennis L. Marker
Software: ESRI ArcGIS v10.8

Data: Land use data provided
by UMPI GIS lab from 2014
survey. Roads obtained from
Census TIGER data and City
GIS database.



2020 Blight Survey

Raw Blight Scores

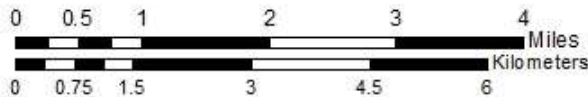
Legend

Raw Blight Scores

-  Very Low
- 
-  Moderate
- 
- 
-  Very High
-  Roads
-  Parcels

Map Produced: June 19, 2020
By: Dennis L. Marker
Software: ESRI ArcGIS v10.8

Data: Blight data gathered by
Ken Murchison, Caribou Code
Enforcement Officer. Roads
obtained from Census TIGER
data and City GIS database.





2020 Blight Survey

Blight Concentration
(Blight Score / Parcel Acres)

Legend

Blight Concentration

- Very Low
- Moderate
- Very High

- Roads
- Parcels

Map Produced: June 19, 2020
By: Dennis L. Marker
Software: ESRI ArcGIS v10.8

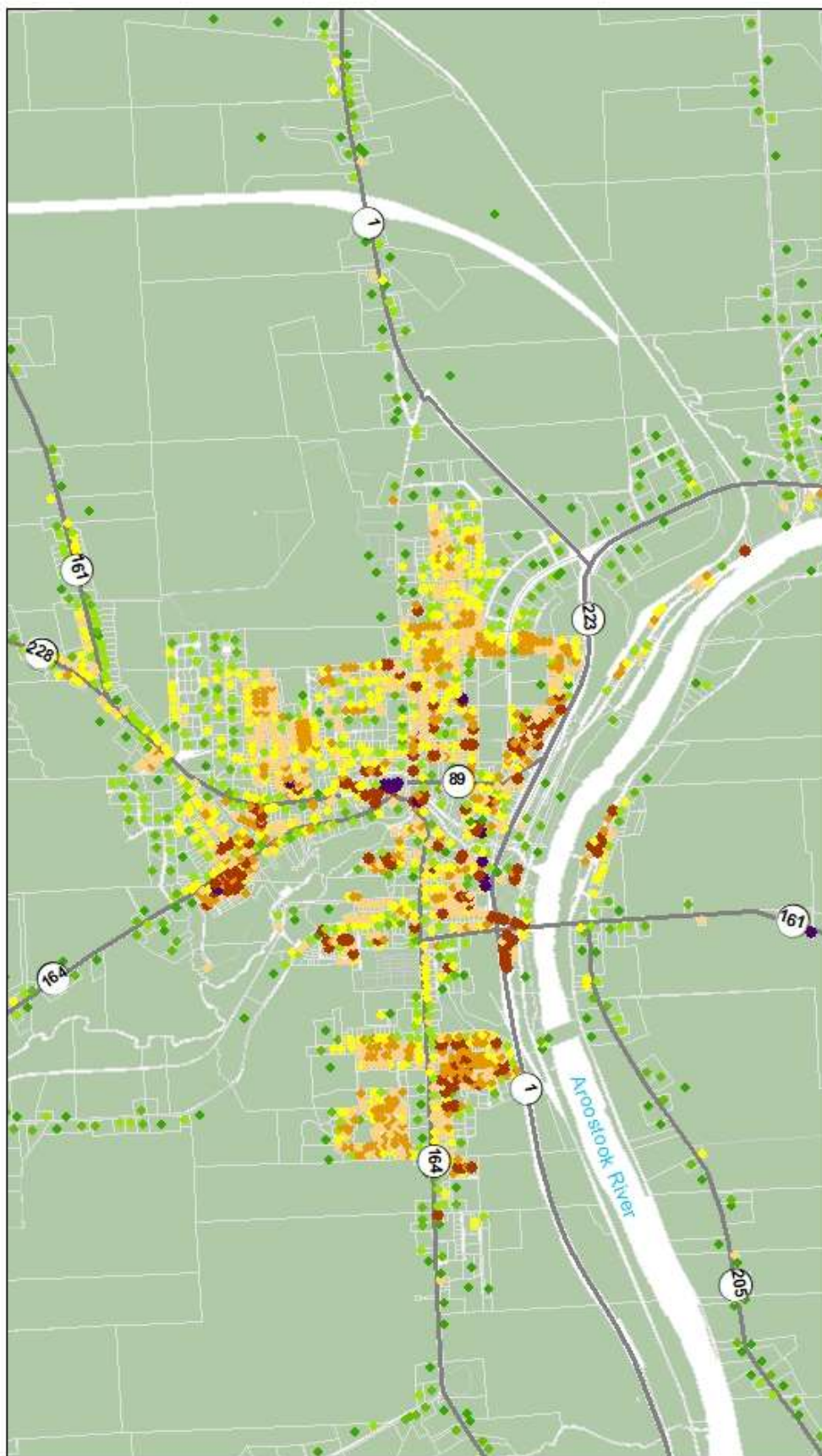
Data: Blight data gathered by
Ken Murchison, Caribou Code
Enforcement Officer. Roads
obtained from Census TIGER
data and City GIS database.





2020 Blight Survey

Core Area
Blight Concentration
(Blight Score / Parcel Acres)



Legend

Blight Concentration

- Very Low
- Moderate
- Very High

- Roads
- Parcels



Map Produced: June 19, 2020
By: Dennis L. Marker
Software: ESRI ArcGIS v10.8

Data: Blight data gathered by Ken Murchison, Caribou Code Enforcement Officer. Roads obtained from Census TIGER data and City GIS database.

BLIGHT FACTORS

Ultimately this toolkit is intended to address conditions generally considered negative because of their infringement upon the rights of tenants, adjacent property owners, neighborhoods and the community at large. Those major conditions this toolkit serves to address include the following:

Blight Condition	Explanation
Abandoned properties	Abandoned properties have a negative influence on neighboring properties as they are considered to attract trespassers by providing an unsupervised haven for criminal activities like theft of copper and appliances as well as a place to conduct drug activity, graffiti applications, etc. These properties often advertise their neglected status by other visual factors listed below.
Feral and stray animals	Animals can inflict damage on properties and therefore increase blight and decrease the value of the property. Properties should be secured to prevent animals from entering. Animal and rodent infestations can be expensive to correct.
Illegal dumping	Discarding waste in an improper or illegal manner creates unattractive areas within the community.
Litter and rubbish	Litter and rubbish located at a property that is allowed to pile up, blow into other properties, and collect in the road right-of-way can cause unsightly accumulations in a larger area.
Non-conforming use	Often as a neighborhood zoning changes, buildings that remain as others around the area are torn down to make way for properties that conform to the new vision for the neighborhood. The remaining obsolete buildings may fall into disrepair as they are no longer desirable.

Nuisance vehicles	Inoperable, uninspected, unregistered or an overabundance of vehicles. Vehicles can provide a refuge for animals and they are a drain on neighborhood vitality.
Overgrown grass	Unsightly growth of grass and noxious weeds contribute to the appearance of blight in neighborhoods and fire hazard. All exterior property areas should be maintained free from weeds or plant growth in excess of 7 inches within the Urban Compact Zone per the local ordinance.
Unkept occupied properties	Urban decay can also include properties that are occupied yet are allowed to fall into a state of disrepair. The harsh northern climate can cause building failure if a maintenance plan is not developed and followed. All structures and equipment should be maintained in good repair, structurally sound and in a sanitary condition.

Not addressing these blight conditions can result in drastic deterioration in a short period of time. The Huffington Post highlighted how quickly properties can fall apart in an article about vacant and blighted properties in Detroit, Michigan in 2016. The following is one of the series of images they captured using google earth and Bing between 2009 and 2014. (images are viewed upper left, lower left, upper right, lower right)



TOOLS IN THE TOOLKIT

The remainder of this document provides brief explanations about the tools identified to combat blight. These tools include Bylaws, Operations, Outcomes, Stakeholders, and Tasks (BOOST). Each blight condition is unique and will require using multiple tools from the various categories that follow. No one tool can address all the blight concerns, but neither will all tools need to be utilized. There may be other tools the committee did not identify. As stated earlier, this report is not intended to be fully comprehensive or exhaustive on the subject but aims to provide a solid foundation for building programs and strategies for the future.

BYLAWS

All of the tools discussed further in this document are subject to federal, state and local laws, regulations, or policies. The following is a list of some regulatory tools which can have a direct impact on blighted properties. A brief discussion of their application and effectiveness is provided.

<i>Affordable Housing Regulations</i>	<p>The Caribou Housing Authority is mandated to inspect units receiving federal assistance. Inspections evaluate interior conditions as well as exterior building and site conditions. Strict enforcement of these standards provides a means to clean up some blighted properties. (see appendix C.vii)</p> <p>Another type of affordable housing regulation includes requirements that new housing developments provide a percentage of their new units as affordable and/or accessible based on area median income standards. These types of regulations promote home ownership, self-sustaining housing choices and improve accessibility. Some federal funding is available to developers who voluntarily meet affordability standards. As the city considers redevelopment of blighted properties, new affordable housing options may be an option.</p>
<i>Dangerous Buildings</i>	<p>To be considered a “dangerous” structure it must fit in a category of: structurally unsafe; unstable; unsanitary; constitutes a fire hazard; is unsuitable or improper for the use or occupancy to which it is put; constitutes a hazard to health or safety because of inadequate maintenance, dilapidation, obsolescence or abandonment or is otherwise dangerous to life or property. The first step would be to designate the building as “unfit for human habitation” and post a placard on the building as notice that the certificate of occupancy for the building has been revoked. If the municipal officers (in Caribou is the Caribou City Council) determine that a building structure or portion thereof is</p>

	<p>“dangerous” they may act in accordance with 17 MRS §§ 2851-2859 to issue an order for the nuisance to be abated. There is a mechanism contained in the statute for the recovery of expenses incurred by the municipality.</p>
<i>Development Regulations</i>	<p>Development regulations include those laws and regulations pertinent to use of and construction upon lands within the city jurisdiction. These typically include Zoning Ordinances, Subdivision standards for lot sizes, road and utility construction, Site Development standards for parking, drainage, landscaping, signage, lighting, and Building and Fire Safety codes. In addition to the traditional building codes, some communities will adopt architectural standards for commercial and industrial areas as a means to tailor the aesthetics and ambiance within their community. Development regulations can enable redevelopment of blighted properties and also act to reduce blight through code enforcement actions.</p>
<i>Home Occupation Regulations</i>	<p>Home occupation regulations provide for the establishment, maintenance, and well-being of home occupations in order to provide for the betterment of the community, residents, patrons, and neighboring citizens. They can provide an opportunity for home occupations as an accessory use, when they are compatible with the neighborhoods in which they are located. They guide business activities which are not compatible with neighborhoods to appropriate commercial and industrial zones, promote peace, quiet, and domestic tranquility within residential neighborhoods and protect residents from the adverse effects of business uses being conducted in residential areas, i.e., noise, nuisances, traffic, fire hazards, or other possible business impacts that are in excess of that customarily associated with the neighborhood. The city’s current home occupations need to be revisited toward prevention of blight indicators.</p>
<i>Landlord Laws</i>	<p>Under the Maine Warranty of Habitability, landlords in the State of Maine promise that all rented dwelling units are fit for human habitation - that is, they are a reasonably safe and decent place to live. Staff should use the information on Maine’s Warranty of Habitability, the Maine Consumer Law Guide, and the information from Pine Tree Legal Assistance (PTLA) that deal with the Rights of Maine Renters to achieve voluntary compliance from property owners.</p>
<i>Maine Uniform Building and</i>	<p>The Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC) is outlined in 10 MRS §§ 9721 – 9725 and applies to all municipalities within the State of Maine and must be enforced in those municipalities with a population greater than 4,000. The code itself comprises adopted codes and standards from the International Code Council (ICC) and the</p>

<i>Energy Code (MUBEC)</i>	American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). There are different ICC codes for various building types (Commercial Buildings, Residential, Existing). These building codes are enforced by the Code Enforcement Officer or Building Official. Successful enforcement requires that the individual tasked with the position be knowledgeable in construction practices, a good communicator, accurate record keeper and has a command presence when conducting inspections and issuing violation notices. 30-A MRS § 4451 prohibits any municipality from employing an individual who is not certified by the State of Maine for the job responsibilities for which the individual is appointed. Effective administration and enforcement of building codes and standards along with efficient and predictable review, permitting and inspection procedures accommodate local economic development and blight prevention programs.
<i>Mobile Home Park Regulations</i>	In a dense concentration of homes, owners must be even more vigilant about property upkeep. Mobile home parks are places where there are many residential structures together in a cluster. Section 13-408 (Manufactured Housing Ordinance) of the City's Land Use Ordinances outlines the standards for mobile home park owners. Manufactured Housing Communities must also be licensed with the State of Maine under regulation of the Manufactured Housing Board of the State of Maine. The City and the mobile home park owners can partner to keep blight from spreading from lot to lot when one mobile homeowner has allowed their property to fall into a state of disrepair. If unchecked, the pride among neighbors can diminish and blight can spread through the park until there is significant value loss among the units.
<i>NFPA</i>	Although many National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) codes have been adopted by the State of Maine, NFPA #101, Life Safety Code, 2018 edition is an occupancy-based code which addresses specific requirements that have a direct influence on safety to life in both new construction and existing structures. The NFPA #101 Life Safety Code is an effective tool in dealing with blight because it outlines prescriptive-based and performance-based options for code compliance when blighted properties require rehabilitation. This code is just one tool in a comprehensive program of regulation.

<i>Nuisance Statute</i>	The State of Maine defines a variety of activities as “public nuisances” in 17 MRS § 2802. These nuisances can be prosecuted by the municipality. 30-A MRS § 4302 states that any property or use existing in violation of a municipal land use ordinance or regulation is a nuisance. If an ordinance violation is defined as a “nuisance” by statute, a new violation arises each day the illegal activity continues <i>Card v. Nickerson</i> , 150 Me. 89, 96 (1954).
<i>Ordinances</i>	Municipal ordinances are the official, binding laws upon citizens and property owners within city limits. Ordinances are approved by the City Council after public hearings are conducted to seek public opinion and glean insights about possible unintended consequences that may result if the laws go into effect. Ordinances must be consistent with state and federal laws and may be overruled by those higher levels of government regulations. Local ordinances can incorporate by reference and be more restrictive than higher governing laws but may not provide more leniency than those laws. Ordinances typically provide an enforcement measure that includes penalties of some type. The city charter outlines the process for amending laws and which actions require ordinances.
<i>Plumbing Code</i>	If a property does not meet the minimum requirements for sanitary water and wastewater as established in the Plumbing code, it will often become a blighted property. Whenever in the municipal ordinances there is reference to the Maine State Plumbing Code, the State of Maine Internal Plumbing Rules, Chapter 238 (based on the 2015 edition of the IAPMO Uniform Plumbing Code); the State of Maine Subsurface Wastewater Disposal Rules, Chapter 241; and 30-A MRS §§ 4201 – 4223, shall be the codes to which the term “Maine State Plumbing Code” refers. This code is enforced by the Local Plumbing Inspector. 12 MRS § 4807 establishes a statewide minimum lot size for septic systems. The state requires a permit for the installation of plumbing, subsurface wastewater disposal systems and conversion of seasonal dwellings. 30-A MRS § 3428 authorizes the municipal officers (in Caribou is the Caribou City Council) to correct malfunctioning sewage disposal units after providing notice to the owner or occupant of the property as an alternative to treating a malfunction as a violation handled by the Local Plumbing Inspector.
<i>Property Maintenance Code</i>	The International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) is a model code developed by the International Code Council that regulates the minimum maintenance requirements of existing structures to provide for the regulation and safe use of all buildings in the interest of the social and economic welfare of the community. There are eight sections to the IPMC which contain a variety of requirements for exterior property areas as well as the interior and exterior elements of the structure. The City of Caribou has adopted the 2015 IPMC in Chapter 4 (Building and Housing) Article

	<p>III (Property Maintenance Code) of the municipal ordinances. Therefore, a violation of the IPMC is considered a nuisance and can be prosecuted as a violation of the municipal land use ordinance.</p>
<p><i>Registering Rental Properties</i></p>	<p>An ordinance regulating rental housing as a business would be beneficial to the City of Caribou by allowing the City to become more proactive in the inspection and enforcement of health and safety standards of the buildings, grounds and for tenants. Rental housing licensing would enable us to keep close tabs on absentee landlords and protect the financial investment of the City's property owners and improve the rental property market. Sample ordinance language from Portland and Sanford is provided in Appendix C.iv.</p> <p>A similar ordinance can be adopted pertinent to vacant buildings as businesses. This will make it easier to return these buildings to occupancy, at once revitalizing our neighborhoods and bolstering our tax base.</p>
<p><i>Vacant Lot Policy</i></p>	<p>Failure to demolish buildings imposes severe social and economic costs on urban neighborhoods. The city's cost of maintaining vacant and abandoned buildings is high, which, when coupled with the loss of revenues associated with these properties, can lead to a significant fiscal drain on local government. Vacant properties undermine the vitality and quality of life of the city's neighborhoods, acting as a barrier to their revitalization, and as a disincentive for the regeneration of the city. Therefore, as the city employs demolition to eliminate blight it must also have a policy in place to deal with the vacant lots.</p> <p>Vacant lots are much easier and less expensive to maintain than vacant buildings and pose far fewer dangers in terms of criminal activity and fire risk; moreover, they can be much more easily maintained by neighborhood residents and other volunteers. Vacant lots also lend themselves to inexpensive reuse options that do not exist for vacant buildings: They can be sold to adjacent homeowners for side lots, for example, or used for community gardens, play areas, or storm water/snow fall management. Under most conditions a vacant lot has less of a blighting influence than a vacant building, is likely to result in less cost to the city and the adjacent owner, and, most importantly, can more readily be turned into an asset—or at least a neutral factor—for a neighborhood in circumstances where resources and market conditions do not permit a structure's reuse.</p>

<i>Vehicle Registrations</i>	One common source of blight is unregistered vehicles. Junked motor vehicles are addressed in 17 MRS §2802. Additionally, section 13-204 (District Regulations) of the municipal land use ordinance prohibits an unregistered motorized vehicle from remaining parked on any residential property in a R-1 and R-2 zoning districts “except when the vehicle is within a garage or other structure that complies with the building code of the City”. In order to register a motor vehicle in Maine, the owner must present an expiring registration, proof of current insurance, odometer reading and pay the excise tax. These requirements often prevent owners with limited means from continuing to register older hobby or high sentimental value vehicles. If an owner registers a defective vehicle it does not correct the nuisance. In § 302.8 (Motor Vehicles) of the IPMC, states “no inoperative or unlicensed motor vehicle shall be parked, kept or stored on any premises”.
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OPERATIONS

Operations are the allocation and use of resources to implement the laws and regulations previously discussed. Some operations will focus on legal intent and may be conducted by volunteers or private sector businesses. Other operations are more enforcement related and heavily focused on achieving compliance with the letter of the law. These latter operations are generally handled through regulatory agencies or local government personnel.

<i>80K Certifications</i>	Under Rule 80K the District Court can order violators to pay fines and to stop or correct a violation. The system authorizes certified municipal staff to represent municipalities in the prosecution of land use violations. Staff should attend the 2-day course on legal issues and 80K certification, pass the Rule 80K certification exam and receive an official general authorization from the Caribou City Council to act as an agent of the municipality in court.
<i>Adopt-A-Park</i>	This program would promote a partnership between the City of Caribou through its Parks and Recreation department and local volunteers to maintain and enhance the park areas in Caribou. Volunteer park adopters could be individuals, families, clubs, community groups or local businesses. Ideal candidates would tend to be those with an interest in gardens and landscaping, removing invasive vegetation, combatting litter, creating work

	plans for scheduled workdays and keeping an eye on the park. All operations would need to be under the direction of city staff to ensure participant safety and to stay on task and on budget. The advantage is that as neighborhood park stewards, community members could have more appreciation for a park in which they have a personal investment and might be able to identify and report blight causing activities quicker. If the city wanted to use this tool, parks department staff could gauge community interest. If there was enough interest, there would need to be guidelines including safety orientation and training, signing of a release of liability and other details.
<i>Adopt-A-Street</i>	This program would promote a partnership between the City and local volunteers to pick up any litter on a specific section of roadway within the City. The Adopt-A-Street program has proven to be successful in improving the appearance of roadways throughout the country and has an added benefit of showcasing local groups, organizations and businesses and their involvement in the community by showing the community's appreciation on road signs in the road area adopted. All operations would need to be under the direction of city staff to ensure participant safety and to stay on task and on budget. If the city wanted to use this tool, there would need to be a decision about the responsible department and staff could gauge community interest. If there was enough interest, there will need to be guidelines such as the amount of clean-up area, minimum number of clean-up sessions per calendar year, safety orientation and training, signing of a release of liability and other details.
<i>Blight Funds</i>	For the past two years, the city allocated over \$80,000 of TIF funds toward blight cleanup projects. A portion of these funds were used as a match for an NBRC \$100,000 grant to help clean up the Birdseye site. Other funds were used to clear dilapidated, tax-acquired homes and get those properties suitable for resale. The city should continue to seek outside grant opportunities such as EPA brownfields, Department of Forestry, USDA, etc. as large projects like Birdseye or the power plant properties become available for cleanup.
<i>CDBG Home Maintenance</i>	CDBG funds may be sought to help homeowners conduct external repairs to their homes. This program falls under the state's fighting blight initiative. Caribou received CDBG funds for this purpose in 2005 and received 211 applications for support funding. Less than 20 homes were able to receive assistance. The city must apply for these funds each year.

<p><i>City Beautification</i></p>	<p>Two ideas that Caribou may consider on this point:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) City wide beautification events and a beautification contest. A beautification contest could be established to consider properties in sections of town or neighborhood districts. Categories may include most improved, best dressed, native, formal, colorful, artistic, edible, etc. A small group of appointed citizens could judge the neighborhoods and select winners each month during the summer and fall with prizes and street recognition to winners. This would be a positive way to promote yard enhancements and efforts that prevent blight from forming in the community. 2) City clean up events. The City already provides spring brush hauling services for residents and businesses. This week-long, Public Works effort could be expanded as a Caribou Cares event where residents volunteer to help dress up public spaces along arterial roads, splash some paint where needed, pull weeds, or pick up litter. The efforts could be coordinated, and participants could receive special recognition or memorabilia. Another event could take place in the fall.
<p><i>Education and Public Outreach</i></p>	<p>The public outreach and education efforts to increase community awareness would utilize all current channels of engagement: announcements during public meetings, town-hall forums, traditional media outlets – <i>including press releases, advertisements, broadcast and radio etc.</i>, social media outlets, signage and message boards, print – <i>brochures, posters, etc.</i>, testimonials, door-to-door, staff recommendations, informational event booths, etc. Exhibit E provides a sample of fliers that can be used to educate and promote blight reduction in the City.</p>
<p><i>Enforcement Activities List</i></p>	<p>Having a published enforcement activities list is the opposite of promoting desired behavior. Beyond maintaining the list for follow-up purposes, the posting of the list generates negative sentiment of those property owners who are not taking care of their property. To use the common vernacular, this is “public shaming” with the hope that people will not want to be on the list so they will take care of their property. This ideology establishes a standard of minimums, that being “don’t get so bad you get on the list” rather than promotes positive change. This is a tool available to the city, but not one highly recommended for use.</p>

<p><i>Façade Improvement</i></p>	<p>The City is authorized by the state to have a Façade Improvement Grant Program using funds from Tax Increment dollars collected each year. The program would be structured as a 50/50 matching grant for improvements to the exterior of businesses located within the City’s Urban Compact Zone. The eligible exteriors must be visible from the street. The intent of this program is to encourage property owners to make visible improvements to their businesses and Enhance the character and aesthetic appearance of structures in the City of Caribou. Grant recipients would be reimbursed for fifty percent (50%) of the cost of eligible expenses upon satisfactory completion of the work- <i>not to exceed \$5,000 for major restoration, \$2,500 for paint, or \$750 for signage.</i></p>
<p><i>Matching Funds Opportunities</i></p>	<p>There are several opportunities for matching grants from Federal and State agencies. Unfortunately, most programs have very specific requirements and often have stipulations about the continued use of the property improved by grant funds. The City of Caribou does not have a designated employee to find and apply for grant funds and instead the individual departments must identify funding sources for approved projects to maximize budgets. Some matching funds opportunities that have been used successfully for blight related projects include: Northern Border Regional Commission, a Federal-State partnership for economic and community development within the most distressed counties of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York; United States Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields Program which provides grants and technical assistance to communities, states, tribes, and others to safely clean up and sustainable reuse contaminated properties; Maine Department of Economic and Community Development grants from the Maine allocation of funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to eligible Maine communities under the Community Development Block Grant program for various community projects in areas ranging from infrastructure, housing, downtown revitalization, public facilities and economic development; Maine’s Small Community Grant Program which provides funding from a general fund bond issue to fund wastewater infrastructure projects by providing grants to municipalities to help replace malfunctioning septic systems that are polluting a waterbody or causing a public nuisance. Staff will continue to pursue available grant opportunities.</p>

<i>Rental Assistance Program</i>	<p>The City of Caribou, through its volunteer Main Street Committee, could provide rental assistance for 12 months for eligible businesses that choose to locate in the Main Street District. In every case, the Committee, as well as the City, would reserve the right to deny applicants at its sole discretion. Funding is subject to availability of resources and to the applicant business's potential to strengthen, compliment and diversify the existing business makeup, as determined solely at the discretion of the Committee and City. Non-profit businesses/organizations are not eligible for consideration. Businesses must be contributing to the economic footprint of the downtown area to be eligible.</p>
<i>Revolving Loan Funds</i>	<p>The City is authorized by the State to use up to \$1,000,000 of Tax Increment funds to develop a revolving loan fund. Currently the city has over \$800,000 in available funds. The program is administered through the Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) loan offices. The intent is that the city's funds will be paired with funds available through the Caribou Economic Growth Council (CEGC) and NMDC to support new business growth or expansion of existing businesses.</p>
<i>Seed for Land Bank</i>	<p>Financing Land Bank operations can come from a variety of sources, but one of its key features is that it is not part of the city's Expense Budget, unless the City Council chooses to dedicate a predetermined portion of tax revenues to complement funding from other sources such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Community Development Block Grants · Revenue from the sale of Tax Acquired Properties. · Code Violation fines and inspection fees. · Registration fees from Business Licensing of all rental properties. · Registration fees from vacant buildings. · Funds set aside for Economic Development. · One-time unexpected funds. · Appropriated unspent funds. · Borrowing and Bond financing from the Maine Bond Bank

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Building and Demolition Permit Fees · TIF payments. · Private Donations. <p>Land Banking is the financial vehicle that will move us forward into the future by providing a perpetual, self-funded financial foundation that will allow us to control blight, and control it quickly, without having to worry about appropriating funds through taxation in the following fiscal year. It can do as much or as little as the Council wants it to do but one thing is certain, there will always be a need for money to fight blight.</p>
<i>Taxation</i>	<p>It has been suggested that Caribou's taxes are too high and a cause for people abandoning their homes and having properties fall into blight condition. The city will face this issue more and more as the population in the region increases in age, leaves the workforce, and government income subsidies do not keep up with cost inflation of goods and materials. The city can grant poverty abatement of taxes in special circumstances to help. The city can also work with property owners to develop payments plans and seek state fairness credits. For properties which have taxes abated, the city needs to budget to have those accounts wiped from the books.</p>
<i>TIF Zones</i>	<p>Tax increment finance areas provide opportunities to leverage "new" tax dollars to offset costs of new development or redevelopment of property. The city has four designated TIF areas. Funds derived through development in these areas must be used for state approved programs and initiatives. Some of those state authorized, and blight related activities include facade improvements, blight clean up and beautification efforts. These can be effective tools for change if funds are managed properly and benefiting projects strategically align with desired end goals.</p>
<i>Winterization Programs</i>	<p>With the belief that safe, stable housing is critical to the health and wellness of a community, Maine Housing's Community Aging in Place Grant began in 2017 to support the replication of Bath Housing's aging in place initiative. The inaugural funding year provided support for five Public Housing Authorities (PHA) and expanded to six PHAs in 2018. Now in its third year the program has expanded to 10 partner agencies, eight PHAs and two Community Action Agencies. The Fort Fairfield Housing Authority is one of the participating agencies and provides some assistance to residents of Caribou. The program is modeled after Bath Housing's Comfortably Home program</p>

	<p>established in 2015 and based on the evidenced based CAPABLE program from Johns Hopkins University. The Community Aging in Place Grant Program offers no-cost home safety checks, minor maintenance repairs, and accessibility modifications to eligible low-income elderly and disabled homeowners. These services enable recipients to continue living safely and comfortably at home and is a progressive solution for aging homeowners by establishing a model to address the housing and wellness issues of a growing segment of Maine residents. (see Appendix C.iv)</p>
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OUTCOMES

Outcomes are an indication of actions and responses to those actions. The monitoring of outcomes enables an understanding of where additional work may be needed or the effectiveness of the operations relative to the problem. The following outcomes are specifically related to blight cleanup efforts.

<i>Blight Survey</i>	<p>A blight survey provides quantifiable data about property and structural conditions found on surveyed properties. Scoring of site conditions is based on evidence of rubbish, inoperable vehicles, appliances, stockpiled materials, vegetation maintenance and betterments. Structural scoring looks at the exterior condition of roofs, siding, windows, foundations, etc. Although this report included a cursory blight survey of the entire city boundaries, more detailed studies can be done for specific neighborhood plans. These reports can illustrate blight hot spots or neighborhoods at a tipping point for having pervasive blight conditions. When done regularly, a blight survey will show the migration or amelioration within the community over time. The information can then be used by the city assessor, appraisers, law enforcement, code enforcement and community development personnel to implement strategic plans to address problems.</p>
<i>Certificates of Occupancy</i>	<p>A certificate of occupancy is a required document under state law. 25 MRS § 2357-A provides that a building may not be occupied until the building official has given a certificate of occupancy for compliance with required inspections. Sections 111 & R110.1 of the I-Codes also call for a certificate of occupancy to be issued and section R110.3 details required elements. Furthermore, in section 13-204 (District Regulations) and 13-800 (Administration</p>

	<p>and Enforcement) of the City of Caribou Land Ordinance a basic requirement is that a “certificate of occupancy shall be required for all buildings, uses of land and buildings and sanitary facilities according to the provisions of this ordinance” (13-204 [1]) and “all of the requirements have been met” and “conform in all respects to the applicable provisions of these ordinances and with all applicable federal, state, and local rules, laws, regulations and ordinances” (13-800 [B]). When a building has been found to be unsafe or “unfit for human habitation” (see 22 MRS §1561 and 17 MRS § 2851) and a placard has been posted on the building, the certificate of occupancy has been revoked for the property. In order to occupy the building, a new certificate of occupancy must be issued.</p>
<p><i>Mechanic Work Liens</i></p>	<p>A “mechanic’s lien” is the common phraseology for “A statutory lien that secures payment for labor or materials supplied in improving, repairing, or maintaining real or personal property, such as a building, an automobile, or the like.” (Black’s Law Dictionary, 11th ed. 2019). The laws governing this type of lien can be found in 10 MRS §§ 3251 – 3269. An important component of this tool is that the claimant must file a sworn statement in the office of the county register of deeds (for properties in Caribou this would be the Southern Aroostook Registry of Deeds in Houlton) and provide a copy of the statement to the owner within the time frame specified in statute following the date at which the last of the labor, materials or services are provided or furnished. If the city wanted to use this tool, staff would need to contact the city attorney to determine if the municipality could provide services such as to remove or abate a nuisance and then place a lien on the property under this statute.</p>
<p><i>Notices of Violation</i></p>	<p>If the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) is made aware of a violation of the municipal land use ordinance or building code, the CEO should start with an oral notice to the person conducting the illegal activity, explaining the nature of the violation and the steps the person should take to comply. If the illegal activity involves work without a required permit, often a “Stop Work” notice might also be required per section 115 or R114 of the I-Codes. If the illegal activity continues, the next step is for the CEO to issue a written notice to the violator and landowner. Sections 114 & R113 of the I-Codes also provide details about violations of the building codes. This Notice of Violation (NOV) should be in the form of an order and should contain all essential elements as outlined in the Maine Supreme Court decision, <i>Town of Freeport v. Greenlaw</i>, 602 A.2d 1156 (Me. 1992). If the situation is not resolved and a second and third NOV is sent it should contain a statement that the CEO is recommending that the case be referred for legal action. Caribou’s Code Enforcement Officer sends many notices of violations to blight properties each year for a wide range of nuisances.</p>

<p><i>“Stop Work” Notice</i></p>	<p>The Code Enforcement Officer or Building Official will routinely conduct inspections which are an important function to ensure compliance with established ordinances and codes. Construction work that is done without the proper permits and oversight can lead to substandard building integrity, expansion of a non-conforming use, or the creation of nuisance situation. When a violation is detected, voluntary compliance should always be the goal. When oral notice is given and ignored, the next logical step is for the CEO or Building Official to post a “stop work” notice in a conspicuous place on the property on which the violation exists. Sections 115 & R114 of the I-Codes authorize the building official to take this action. When a “stop work” notice has been posted it should be followed up with a written notice that the actions undertaken are a violation and should outline the compliance pathway for the abatement of the violation.</p>
<p><i>Work Plans / Consent Agreements</i></p>	<p>Resolving a violation through voluntary compliance should be the goal in most every situation. The Code Enforcement Officer might find it helpful to remind violators of the potential costs and penalties authorized in 30-A MRS § 4452 (3). If the person responsible for a violation is willing to resolve the problem without a court order, an administrative consent agreement can be negotiated. The consent agreement will detail what the violator has agreed to do in return for the municipality’s promise not to take the violator to court. A consent agreement is a contract between the municipality and the violator and should be signed by the municipal officers (in Caribou is the Caribou City Council). Note: most shoreland zoning ordinances expressly prohibit consent agreements which allow a violation to continue. Additionally, the consent agreement must not allow illegal structures or activities to continue since it would appear that the municipality was condoning the behavior. Instead the consent agreement could provide additional time to bring the structure or activity into compliance. Criteria for consent agreements were established by the Law Court in <i>Pike Industries, Inc. v. City of Westbrook et al</i> 2012 ME 78, ¶ 24, 45 A. 3d 707, 71-717. (see Exhibit A-XX for additional explanation)</p>
<p><i>Writ of Attachment</i></p>	<p>A writ is a “written judicial order to perform a specified act or giving authority to have it done.” (Black’s Law Dictionary, 11th ed. 2019) The court can issue an order called a writ of attachment after a creditor initiates a lawsuit for breach of contract and files a motion for a writ of attachment as part of that lawsuit. This is a provisional remedy through the court system that allows for the creation of a lien recorded against a property, the purpose of which is to secure an encumbrance on the property in favor of the creditor. The laws governing attachments can be found</p>

	in 14 MRS §§ 4101 – 4613. If the city wanted to use this tool, staff would need to contact the city attorney to determine if the municipality had situations wherein this would be the proper tool to use to achieve the best results possible.
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STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders are those persons, organizations or other entities that may have an interest in the blight conditions. These may include a resident living next to a vacant, blighted lot or a federal agency concerned about cleaning environmental contamination of an abandoned industrial property. Each of these stakeholders can bring knowledge and other resources to help in alleviating blight.

<i>City Departments</i>	The city's law and code enforcement officials are key to addressing the worst blight properties or offenders. Unfortunately, there will be those property owners who will need to be forced to make changes through penal processes. At the same time, the city staff can work in a more coordinated fashion to identify regulatory strategies to get properties cleaned up. An inter-department blight task-force could meet monthly to coordinate efforts.
<i>Faith Based and Service Organizations</i>	The city has many faith based and service oriented organizations. Although their focuses are different, each plays a role in strengthening individuals, households, neighborhoods and the community. The Aroostook Agency on Aging and Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP) provide resources to the elderly, disabled, or impoverished populations, which are a demographic more associated with property disrepair. Other groups such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Caribou Garden Club or Arts Council will provide more visible services in the community. Each of these organizations include members with a heightened sense of civic duty and motivation for positive change. These groups occasionally provide service hours to clean up city grounds, educate or help lift individuals from their impoverished circumstances. In addition to labor resources, some organizations provide monetary contributions to help clean up and beautify the city. As the city builds upon clean up events or promotional periods, a list of these organizations and their resources should be maintained to build opportunities for civic improvement and engagement. (see appendix D)

<p>Government Agencies</p>	<p>U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The EDA is partnering with HUD to facilitate the ability of communities, regions and states to successfully access and co-invest agency resources in support of comprehensive, high-impact economic and community development projects. In order to ease the process for communities and other applicants to coordinate plans for, and to eventually invest resources available from multiple federal programs, EDA and HUD are jointly developing optional, flexible guidance products. https://www.eda.gov/edi/planning/</p> <p>Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - One of the more commonly used HUD programs is CDBG. These funds are distributed to the state where they are administered through the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development. Awards are made on a competitive basis each year. https://www.maine.gov/decd/community-development/cdbg-program</p> <p>Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) - The NBRC can invest in economic and infrastructure projects in the following Maine counties: Androscoggin, Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Oxford, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington. Depending on the level of economic and demographic distress in each county, NBRC funded projects can be eligible for up to an 80% matching grant. http://www.nbrc.gov/</p> <p>Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) - NMDC is a regional planning agency that provides business assistance, works with CDBG projects, services loans, brownfield cleanup funding, provides planning assistance and economic development expertise. Their staff is also familiar with landbank options. NMDC's offices are located in Caribou.</p> <p>Housing Authorities - The Caribou Housing Agency, other others in the immediate vicinity each keep an eye on affordable housing, rental properties, and funding options to improve the quality of life for those needing housing assistance. Some of their procedures and resources can be mimicked or tapped to improve monitoring of blighted properties in the community.</p> <p>Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) - DHHS receives information about clients who may be living in substandard housing. Although most of their information is confidential, additional communication of addresses and structural condition concerns will enable coordinated aid to improve living conditions for their clients.</p> <p>Office of the State Fire Marshal - When employees of the Fire Marshal's office find non-compliant systems and</p>
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	<p>construction, city staff is notified. The Department of Public Safety, Office of the State Fire Marshal also oversees the training and certification of Code Enforcement Officers in the State of Maine.</p> <p>Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) - The DEP is an enforcing agency but also holds the purse strings for brownfield funds to help clean up vacant industrial areas or blighted and contaminated sites. They can provide consulting services for areas like the former Birdseye plant, power plants on the river, and railroad yards, etc.</p>
Landlords	<p>Landlord-tenant issues are covered in the Maine statutes in 14 MRS §§ 6001 – 6039 and in Chapters 14 and 16 of the Attorney General’s Consumer Law Guide. The responsibilities of the landlord are often referred to as Maine’s Warranty of Habitability in 14 MRS §6921. A recent project in the tax assessment department identified over 180 properties in Caribou with at least two dwelling units and although some properties contain units that are owner occupied, the study uncovered over 1,000 rentable units in multi-family dwellings (single family homes for rent have not been quantified as of this report). Some interesting trends that were uncovered. Several landlords own multiple apartment properties and the property management operations located in the 04736 zip code (Caribou, Woodland and Connor Township) not only represented the highest number of owners but also the highest percentage of owners who provided complete reports to the department. Apartment rentals are a business and a primary asset of the enterprise is the sustained value of the building. Staff can make use of data gathered from these recent projects to partner with landlords to maintain the value of their buildings by combating neighborhood blight.</p>
Private Economic Groups	<p>Caribou Economic Growth Council (CEGC) - The mission of the CEGC is to provide economic development assistance to businesses specifically interested in growing in Caribou by providing a point of contact for resources, information, business counseling services, gap financing, business planning, and business support. The CEGC has available loan funds for gap financing through the CEGC Reserve Fund, Rural Development Intermediary Relending Program, and Regional Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund.</p> <p>Business Investment Group (BIG) - BIG is a local non-profit with a board made of business representatives and entrepreneurs who work to reduce hurdles to job growth in Caribou and provide capital for new industries. They currently hold strategic properties which can be used to clean up and incentivize growth in Caribou.</p>

<i>Property Ombudsman</i>	An Ombudsman would be a liaison between the City and all persons who have a complaint or inquiry into the operations of a City department or conduct of a City employee. An Ombudsman would take all inquiries and complaints seriously. Once received, inquiries and complaints will be promptly reviewed and processed. The Office of the Ombudsman works as an independent oversight agency to provide individuals with a confidential avenue to address complaints. The Office proposes policy and procedural changes when systemic issues are identified and is designed to provide protection for the individual citizen, businessperson or developer, where there is a lack of follow up or city services rendered. City proceedings to reduce blight can be controversial and property owners may utilize ombudsman services to resolve matters or procure additional time or options when working with the city. Currently, Caribou does not have an Ombudsman. See Appendix C.iii.
<i>Public Boards</i>	Each city board plays a role in blight cleanup. The City Council establishes budgets, ordinances, and policy direction. The Planning Board reviews laws, future plans, enforcement practices and makes recommendations for law changes, approves developments and land uses. A Blight Commission can focus efforts, monitor progress and develop projects, events, or public outreach efforts to reduce and prevent blight. The Board of Assessors considers requests to abate taxes, which may be a reasonable action to enable owners to retain their homes and prevent vacant properties.

TASKS

These are specific actions items or types of actions that can be taken to address blight concerns.

<i>Adverse Possession</i>	Adverse Possession requires 20 years of visibly occupying and claiming exclusive ownership of a property. For managing blight, this is one of the least effective tools that can be used due to the length of application needed, the litigious nature and cumbersome proofs necessary to utilize it.
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<i>Demolition</i>	The City has the power to remediate public health and safety risks up to and including demolition or removal of a structure. Costs associated with such action can, in some states, be applied against the property as liens. The Maine legislature is considering laws to allow such actions by municipalities. Generally, such actions are taken only after notice is given of non-compliance and property owners are afforded time to remedy the situation on their own.
<i>Development Ordinance Revisions</i>	While zoning prescribes uses, the development standards associated with those uses can be proscriptive. For example, requirements for large amounts of parking or separation standards could drastically limit potential locations for certain uses. They might also effectively prohibit a use in the community. Similarly, the administrative processes outlined in the ordinances can be costly to development if they require long review times or unnecessary materials. The city's development regulations are amended from time to time depending on policy shifts or goals of the community. The Planning Board should be sensitive to these elements as they revise Title 13 language in 2020. (See Regulatory Tools below)
<i>Eminent Domain</i>	Eminent Domain can only be used in city designated community development areas (e.g. TIF Areas) and only to remediate blight issues within that area. State law outlines the use of this tool and provides a short process to ownership of property, but there are typically lingering litigation issues to address damages or compensation matters. This is one of the least publicly acceptable tools available to the city.
<i>Imposition of Fines</i>	Imposing fines is one of the most commonly recognized methods of forcing compliance with adopted codes and ordinances. Development or property maintenance codes and nuisance regulations will outline the standards to be met in order to avoid having fines levied against a parcel. The amount of a fine is one item for consideration, other elements include the recurring nature of fines, escalation provisions, and waiver provisions. Progression compliance monitoring is more generally used by the City in lieu of fines.
<i>Land Banking</i>	Land Banks are governmental entities that specialize in the conversion of vacant, abandoned and foreclosed properties into productive use. The primary thrust of all land banks and land banking initiatives is to acquire and maintain properties that have been rejected by the open market and left as growing liabilities for neighborhoods

	<p>and communities. The first task is the acquisition of title to such properties; the second task is the elimination of the liabilities; the third task is the transfer of the properties to new owners in a manner most supportive of local needs and priorities.”</p> <p>The City Council, in accordance with the City Charter at Article I (POWERS OF THE CITY) and Article II (CITY COUNCIL) Sec. 2.11 (7) and Sec. 2.12 of, could easily by Ordinance create a Land Bank, as a stand-alone enterprise fund with a structure similar to that of the Cary Medical Center; having its own Board of Directors appointed by the City Council who will oversee its governance and budget.</p> <p>Additional information about this tool can be found in “Land Banks and Land Banking” prepared by Frank S. Alexander.</p>
<i>Rezoning for Development</i>	<p>Zoning boundaries typify existing land uses and generally homogenous characteristics of properties. The city may reconsider zone applications as incentive tools for potential redevelopment or reinvestment. Rezoning for potential rather than current use can remove roadblocks for development. Such actions should take place in conjunction with revisions to the city’s development regulations.</p>
<i>Tax Acquired Properties</i>	<p>Generally considered an undesirable tool as a means to collect taxes, this tool can also be used to gain control of properties strategically needed for mass clean up or redevelopment purposes. This is a tool which has small litigation exposure. If used in conjunction with a land bank or other public/private cooperative effort, this tool facilitates exchange from public hands and readiness for reinvestment. The city should be careful to understand ramifications and potential liabilities for acquiring ownership of properties. Some tax liens may be waived but may require additional costs for tax forgiveness.</p>
<i>Unfit Building Designations</i>	<p>The city has the ability to post a structure as unfit for occupation building due to health and safety reasons outlined in the state adopted building and energy code (MUBEC). Condemnation in this respect does not transfer ownership it just prevents use of the structure. This tool is infrequently used and has had little effect due to absentee landowners’ lack of investment to fix properties.</p>

SCENARIOS

Using the available tools, there may be multiple ways to address a blight concern. The following scenarios illustrate one way the BOOST tools can be utilized.

SCENARIO #1 - Single family property with unmaintained yard and collapsing out buildings. The home has visible need of repairs to the roof, siding, and windows. There are a couple inoperable vehicles in the yard. The owner is a year behind on taxes.



	Tools	Application of the tool
Bylaws	Property Maintenance Code	The primary regulatory tool will be property maintenance.
Operations	CDBG Home Maintenance Education & Public Outreach Winterization Programs Enforcement List	If the city receives CDBG funds, the property owner could be contacted about a possible award to fix the home. Any enforcement activity will include educational elements. The owner may qualify for winterization assistance through the local housing agencies or service organizations. Enforcement activities will need to take place, which will produce outcomes listed below.
Outcomes	Notices of Violation	A Notice of Violation will outline repairs and timeframes

	<p>Work Plans</p> <p>Certificates of Occupancy</p> <p>Matching Fund Awards</p>	<p>A work plan provides cleanup milestones and timeframes to resolve a Notice of Violation.</p> <p>The Certificate of Occupancy can be revoked until a notice of violation is resolved.</p> <p>Owners can be informed of matching fund opportunities and processes. Often these will require time frames to complete indicated work.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>City Staff</p> <p>Caribou Housing & FSS</p> <p>Property Ombudsman</p> <p>Service Organizations</p>	<p>Code Enforcement officers will approach the homeowner and discuss problems before issuing a notice of violation. The Fire Chief may get involved if there is a fire hazard. Staff members can refer the homeowner to outside agency programs and service organizations that can help with repairs or funding.</p> <p>Housing agency staff may be aware of grant funds that can help offset expenses and enable the homeowner to make necessary repairs.</p> <p>A property ombudsman could help the homeowner prepare work plans or navigate city processes until the problem is addressed.</p> <p>Service organization lists can be provided for the homeowner to contact. They may be able to provide labor and other resources to help.</p>
Tasks	<p>Homeowner Education</p> <p>Issue Notices of Violation</p> <p>Imposition of Fines</p>	<p>The first step is to meet with the homeowner and inform them of compliance requirements. A reasonable warning can be issued to start the cleanup process.</p> <p>If warning terms are not followed, then a notice of violation must be issued. A reasonable time frame must be included and follow up done. The time frames may include provision for stakeholder engagement and the homeowners' situation.</p> <p>If notice of violations are not resolved, then fines need to be imposed.</p>



SCENARIO #2 - A property was tax acquired and happens to be in an area the city has planned for redevelopment. The property has a home in severe disrepair and is uninhabitable.

	Tools	Application of the tool
Bylaws	Development Regulations	The city development regulations will outline how the property may be redeveloped. More intense development may be permitted.
Operations	Blight Funds	Removal of the existing structure may be financed with blight funds.
	Matching Funds	Some grants may be sought for clean up of the site. Others may be applicable for development of new affordable housing options
	Revolving Loan Funds	If the property is developed commercially, revolving loan funds could be used to offset initial project development costs
	Taxation	The city will need to follow procedures for disposing of tax acquired properties.
	TIF Zones	If the property is in a TIF zone, the city could enter into a credit enhancement agreement or reimbursement agreement if infrastructure needs to be extended to make the development work.

Outcomes	Certificates of Occupancy (CofO)	Ultimately, the city will need to issue a certificate of occupancy before any new structure can be utilized on the property. Revoking any current CofO will put future property owners on notice if they want to salvage the home.
Stakeholders	City Boards	The City Council will need to decide how and when to dispose of the property and manage related taxes. The Planning Board will monitor the city's general plan and provide recommendations for redevelopment.
	CDBG	The CDBG program can provide some of the clean up funds or redevelopment funds if the project will serve at risk demographic groups.
	CEGC	CEGC may be a lending partner for redevelopment of this property.
	NMDC	NMDC may be a lending partner for redevelopment of this property.
	Planning Board	The Planning Board will need to review any application for redevelopment.
	Caribou Land Bank	The city may opt to have the property managed by the Caribou Land Bank, which can then utilize proceeds from development to spur redevelopment projects in the community.
Tasks	Demolition	The demolition process requires asbestos inspections, bids for the work and coordination of timing. Depending on the season, Public Works can use their haulers to reduce project costs for disposal.
	Land Banking	As mentioned above, the property would need to be turned over to the land bank and have all legal hoops jumped through for the land bank to use the property.
	Rezoning for Development	Depending on the type of redevelopment planned, it may be necessary to consider rezoning the property or revising the development standards. These two processes will require Planning Board public hearings and recommendations to the City Council.

	Tax Acquired Properties	As a tax acquired property, the city will need to follow its adopted disposal protocols and may need to amend those if the land bank will be utilized.
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SCENARIO #3 A neighborhood historically very tidy with carefully maintained yards is starting to see lawns and flower gardens not being maintained. Neighbors have expressed concerns about a vacant lot and publicly owned properties that need to be maintained. A resident, who owns a construction company, has started parking large vehicles in the neighborhood and conducting repairs which creates visual and audible disturbances.

	Tools	Application of the tool
Bylaws	Home Occupation Regulations	Use of a resident's home for commercial purposes will require compliance with the city's Home Occupation regulations. Some activities may not be permitted, which will then require code enforcement intervention.
	Property Maintenance Codes	The property maintenance code pertains more to structural issues but does include some elements of landscape maintenance.
	Vacant Lot Policy	Vacant properties would be required to comply with the city's vacant property codes. This would include maintaining weeds and vegetation.
	Vehicle Registrations	The requirement that all vehicles be registered and functional may limit the number of vehicles repairs that can be done on a residential property.
Operations	80k Certifications	Having a staff member certified under 80K can help expedite enforcement through the courts and keep costs down so that more enforcement work can be accomplished
	Adopt-A-Park	Residents may consider creating a neighborhood association for maintaining the public property and possibly converting it to a neighborhood park.

	Beautification Contest	Properties in the neighborhood that are well maintained may be nominated for special recognition from the city beautification contest. Perhaps a “most improved” category would incentivize some changes.
Outcomes	Notices of Violation	Code Enforcement may provide notices of violation to those properties on the verge of becoming blighted based on the property maintenance codes. The Home Occupation may be served as well and efforts made to better hide the business operations and reduce its impacts.
	Work Plans	Some properties may need specific work plans and time frames for clean up.
Stakeholders	Neighborhood Residents	Neighborhood residents are the biggest stakeholders in this scenario. Their willingness to allow blight creep or impacts from other property owners onto their own property will indicate how the neighborhood condition will remain, degenerate, or improve. They will need to report abuses, promote improvements, and take an active role to manage their physical surroundings.
	Garden Club	The Garden Club can identify and support homeowners' efforts through a beautification contest, learning modules, classes and business promotions for property improvement.
	Code Enforcement	Code Enforcement will need to work with neighbors and the offending property owners to assure compliance with city codes.
	Service Organizations	Residents’ faith groups may be asked to help with neighbor properties if they are in need.
Tasks	Development Code Revisions	The current home occupation regulations do not prohibit working on vehicles from home. Having this prohibition could reduce major feuds and complaints within neighborhoods. The timeframe to amend the city’s ordinances is 3 months with required public hearings and actions.

	Imposition of Fines	After Notices of Violation are issued, the city will need to quickly follow up and impose fines where necessary.
	Land Banking	The land bank may be able to take control of a vacant city property and work to redevelop or connect the property to adjacent lands.



Example of blighted and vacant home centered in between a maintained property and one that is showing evidence of reduced maintenance.

SCENARIO #4 - A property with four dwelling units in the primary structure is falling into disrepair. Some tenants are using Section 8 assistance. Police respond to the property on a regular basis. Garbage is scattered around the yard which is not being maintained. The porch to the front entrance is sagging and the porch cover is separating from the main building. The owner is an investment company located out of state.

	Tools	Application of the tool
Bylaws	Affordable Housing Regulations	As a participant in the Section 8 program, the landlord is required to maintain the building and premises according to affordable housing regulations established by the federal government and state. The local housing authority conducts regular inspections to verify those requirements are being met.
	Landlord Laws	For tenants who are not part of the Section 8 program, they can rely upon the state of Maine Landlord laws to apply pressure to maintain the grounds.
	License Absentee Owners	The city's licensing requirements and landlord laws could impose additional regulations and fines on the absentee owner.
	Property Maintenance Code	The building and code enforcement departments would rely upon the property maintenance codes for legal proceedings and notices to the owner.
Operations	80K Certifications	80K certification process provides guidance on documentation and evidence to be obtained and packaged in order to enter pleas to the court system. Unless the absent owner lives in Caribou, court cases are needed to get their attention and seek remedies.
	Education & Public Outreach	Part of the education and public outreach in this scenario is helping tenants know what their rights are and what a landlord is required to provide/do with the property.
Outcomes	Certificates of Occupancy	Building officials and code enforcement officers can revoke a certificate of occupancy on the residences thus causing the need for tenants to be evicted. Since this can directly

	Notices of Violation	<p>impact a landlord's bottom line, this can be an effective way to get their attention and make changes.</p> <p>Code Enforcement will likely work through the notice of violation proceedings before revoking a certificate of occupancy. Homes with multiple law enforcement actions in addition to building and housing law infractions/violations can be resource drains. Actions against the owner should be coordinated more closely with all interested agencies to limit expenditures.</p>
Stakeholders	<p>Tenants</p> <p>Caribou Housing</p> <p>Code Enforcement</p> <p>Landlords</p> <p>Police</p>	<p>Tenants are the biggest stakeholders in this scenario. Their knowledge of rights and obligations coupled with their willingness to settle for degenerative conditions will indicate how the property will transform. They will need to report abuses and take an active role to manage their physical surroundings.</p> <p>As mentioned above, the Caribou Housing authority will enforce applicable federal standards.</p> <p>Code Enforcement will need to be diligent and work all possible options with an absentee landlord. These cases can be very time consuming with little response due to communication and distances.</p> <p>Landlords have the primary responsibility to provide habitable dwellings and facilities that maintain a positive quality for the occupants.</p> <p>The police can provide additional investigation expertise, enforcement authority, and regulatory presence at the site.</p>
Tasks	Notices of Violation	<p>Unlike a land use violation, certain housing programs have minimum mandatory conditions for recipients of their funds. Housing authorities could revoke housing funds if landlords and tenants do not comply with regulations for dwelling units and the site.</p>

APPENDICES

- A Tool Matrix
- B Blight Survey Attachments
- C Committee Research Reports
 - I. 80K CertificationsAffordable Housing
 - II. Affordable Housing Regulations
 - III. City Clean up Events
 - IV. Home Modifications for Seniors
 - V. Land Banks
 - VI. Landlord Laws
 - VII. Property Ombudsman
 - VIII. Rental Registrations
 - IX. Work Plans
- D. Faith Based or Service Organizations in the Community
- E. Community Outreach Fliers

[1] [Effective Legal Tools for Problem Properties, www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org), March 30, 2020

[2] Census.gov

Appendix A: Blight Toolkit Matrix

The following is a brief explanation of the matrix columns

Tools -	The identified rule, training, procedure, stakeholder, action, etc.
Type -	Identifies whether the tool is a Bylaw, an operational element, a specific outcome to be achieved or object to be created, a stakeholder or blight related task to be performed.
Counteract -	Indicates the tool can be used to counteract blight such as creating enhancements in the area, new development, etc. not necessarily alleviate or reduce the blight.
Prevent -	Indicates that the tool can be used to prevent blight from occurring.
Reduce -	Indicates that use of the tool can lead to reduction of blight.
City Tool Box –	Indicates if the tool has already been adopted by the city or is in state statutes for use by the city. It also indicates how frequently the tool may be used with current processes.
Use Perception -	Indicates the general public perception of using the tool. Some tools are seen as an incentive for positive change (5), just part of doing business with government (3), or government negatively impacting property owners (1).
Awareness -	Indicates who generally needs to be aware of the tool and its potential application.
Resources -	Indicates the type of resource the tool provides. Some tools help provide funding, labor or can be more educational resources.
Property Effects -	Indicates what type of impacts the tool can have upon a person's use of their property. Financial impacts may include fees, fines, or funding. Use impacts will affect how a property may be used. Structure impacts relate to occupation or construction of structures on the property. Title impacts relate to property ownership such as liens, easements, control, or ownership.
Associated Cost -	Indicates in a relative manner if large amounts of funding would be needed from the City, private citizens, investors or stake holder groups. Some tools require no or little cost (\$) while others require significant funding from multiple areas either to use, manage or administer the tool (\$\$\$\$). Some of these costs would include purchase of materials, staffing, legal or professional services, etc.
Time -	Similar to tool costs, this indicates how much time would be involved in using the indicated tool. Some programs require little time on the part of the city (\$) and others are time intensive due to processing, investigations, follow-up, complexity or coordination requirements (\$\$\$\$)

Appendix A: Blight Toolkit Matrix

Tools	Type	Counteract	Prevent	Reduce	City Tool Box		Use Perception 1 - Very Bad 3 - Accepted 5 - Very Good	Awareness Needs			Resources			Property Affects				Associated Costs				Time			
						Use		City	Public	Investors	Financial	Labor	Education	Financial	Use	Structures	Title	City	Private	Investor	Stk Hldr	City	Private	Investor	Stk Hldr
Affordable Housing Regulations	Bylaw	x	x		IN/OUT		3	x		x			x		x			\$				\$	\$		
Dangerous Buildings	Bylaw			x	IN		3	x	x	x			x		x	x	x	\$	\$			\$	\$		
Development Regulations	Bylaw	x	x	x	IN	Needs Sharpening	3	x	x	x			x		x	x		\$				\$	\$		
Home Occupation Regulations	Bylaw		x	x	IN	Regularly	3	x	x				x		x			\$	\$			\$	\$		
Landlord Laws	Bylaw		x		OUT		2	x	x	x			x	x	x			\$	\$	\$		\$	\$	\$	
License Absentee Owners	Bylaw		x		OUT		2	x	x	x			x		x			\$	\$	\$		\$	\$	\$	
NFPC	Bylaw		x	x	IN	Frequently	3	x	x	x			x		x	x		\$	\$	\$		\$	\$	\$	
Ordinances	Bylaw	x	x	x	IN	Frequently	3	x	x	x			x		x	x		\$				\$	\$		
Property Maintenance Code	Bylaw		x	x	IN	Regularly	2	x	x				x		x	x		\$	\$			\$	\$		
Register Rentals	Bylaw		x		OUT		2	x	x	x			x	x	x			\$		\$		\$		\$	
Vacant Lot Policy	Bylaw		x	x	OUT		4	x		x			x		x			\$	\$			\$	\$		
Vehicle Registrations	Bylaw		x	x	IN	Regularly	3		x		x		x	x	x			\$	\$			\$	\$		
80K Certifications	Operations			x	IN	Rarely	3	x					x	x	x			\$				\$			
Adopt-A-Park	Operations	x	x	x	OUT		5	x	x			x		x	x			\$	\$			\$	\$		
Adopt-A-Street	Operations	x	x	x	OUT		5	x	x			x		x	x			\$	\$			\$	\$		
Beautification Contest	Operations	x	x	x	OUT		5		x				x	x	x			\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Blight Funds	Operations	x	x	x	IN	Frequently	4	x	x	x	x			x				\$				\$			
CDBG Home Maintenance	Operations		x	x	OUT		4	x	x	x	x	x		x		x		\$	\$		\$	\$	\$		
Education & Public Outreach	Operations	x	x		IN	Needs Sharpening	5		x				x		x			\$				\$			
Enforcement Activities List	Operations		x		OUT		3		x				x		x			\$				\$			
Façade Improvement	Operations	x	x	x	IN	Needs Sharpening	5	x	x	x	x	x		x		x		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Matching Funds Opportunities	Operations	x	x	x	IN	Rarely	5	x	x	x	x			x				\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Rental Assistance Program	Operations	x	x		OUT		4	x	x	x	x			x	x			\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Revolving Loan Funds	Operations	x		x	IN	Infrequently	4	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	\$	\$	\$		\$	\$	\$	\$
Seed for Land Bank	Operations	x	x	x	OUT		3	x		x	x			x			x	\$		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Taxation	Operations			x	IN	Frequently	3	x	x	x	x			x			x	\$	\$	\$		\$	\$	\$	\$
TIF Zones	Operations	x		x	IN	Frequently	4	x		x	x			x	x			\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Winterization Programs	Operations		x		OUT		4		x		x	x			x	x		\$			\$	\$		\$	\$
Blight Survey	Outcomes	x			IN	Rarely	4	x	x	x			x					\$				\$			
Certificates of Occupancy	Outcomes		x		IN	Needs Sharpening	3	x	x						x	x		\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Liens	Outcomes		x	x	IN	Frequently	2	x	x	x	x			x			x	\$	\$	\$		\$	\$	\$	\$
Mechanic Work Liens	Outcomes	x		x	Unknown		2	x	x	x		x		x			x	\$	\$	\$		\$			
Notices of Violation	Outcomes		x	x	IN	Needs Sharpening	2	x	x				x	x	x			\$	\$			\$			
Work Plans	Outcomes			x	OUT		4		x	x		x			x			\$	\$	\$		\$			
Writ of Attachment	Outcomes		x	x	Unknown		2	x	x	x	x			x			x	\$	\$			\$			

Appendix A: Blight Toolkit Matrix

Tools	Type	Counteract	Prevent	Reduce	City Tool Box		Use Perception 1 - Very Bad 3 - Accepted 5 - Very Good	Awareness Needs			Resources			Property Affects				Associated Costs				Time			
						Use		City	Public	Investors	Financial	Labor	Education	Financial	Use	Structures	Title	City	Private	Investor	Stk Hldr	City	Private	Investor	Stk Hldr
ACAP	Stakeholder		x		IN	Infrequently		x	x		x		x	x	x			\$	\$		\$\$	\$	\$		\$\$\$
Aroostook Agency on Aging	Stakeholder		x		IN	Regularly		x	x				x		x						\$\$\$				\$\$\$
Blight Commission	Stakeholder		x	x	IN	Infrequently		x					x		x	x		\$				\$\$			
Caribou Arts Council	Stakeholder	x			OUT			x	x			x		x	x			\$	\$				\$\$		\$\$
Caribou Garden ClubContest	Stakeholder	x			OUT			x	x			x		x	x			\$	\$				\$\$		\$
Caribou Housing & FSS	Stakeholder		x		IN	Frequently		x	x		x		x	x	x			\$\$\$	\$			\$\$\$	\$		
CDBG	Stakeholder	x		x	IN	Regularly		x	x	x	x			x				\$\$	\$\$			\$\$	\$\$		
CEGC	Stakeholder	x			IN	Regularly		x		x	x			x	x			\$		\$		\$	\$	\$	
Code Enforcement	Stakeholder	x	x	x	IN	Frequently		x	x				x		x			\$\$\$\$				\$\$\$\$			
Fatih Based Help	Stakeholder		x	x	IN	Infrequently		x	x			x			x				\$\$			\$	\$\$		
Fort Fairfield Housing Authority	Stakeholder		x		IN	Infrequently		x	x		x	x	x	x	x						\$\$				\$\$\$
Landlords	Stakeholder		x	x	IN	Rarely		x	x		x	x		x	x			\$			\$\$\$	\$			\$\$\$
NMDC	Stakeholder	x		x	IN	Regularly		x	x	x	x		x	x				\$\$	\$		\$\$\$	\$	\$\$	\$\$	\$\$
Planning Board	Stakeholder	x	x	x	IN	Frequently		x		x			x		x	x		\$				\$\$			
Police	Stakeholder		x	x	IN	Frequently		x	x	x			x		x			\$\$\$\$				\$\$\$\$			
Property Ombudsman	Stakeholder		x	x	OUT			x	x	x			x		x			\$\$				\$\$\$			
Rotary	Stakeholder		x	x	IN	Infrequently		x			x			x					\$\$				\$\$	\$	\$\$
RSVP	Stakeholder		x	x	IN	Infrequently		x	x			x	x		x						\$\$		\$		\$\$\$
USDA	Stakeholder	x	x	x	IN	Infrequently		x		x	x			x				\$\$	\$\$	\$		\$\$	\$\$	\$\$	
Adverse Possession	Tasks				Unknown	Never	2	x	x	x	x		x				x	\$\$	\$			\$\$	\$		
Building Condemnation	Tasks		x	x	IN	Rarely	1	x	x					x	x	x		\$\$\$\$	\$			\$\$\$	\$		
Demolition	Tasks			x	IN	Frequently	2	x	x	x	x	x		x		x		\$\$\$\$				\$\$\$			
Development Code Revisions	Tasks	x	x		IN	Frequently	4	x	x	x			x	x	x	x		\$\$				\$\$			
Eminant Domain	Tasks		x	x	IN	Rarely	1	x	x	x	x			x	x		x	\$\$\$\$	\$\$\$			\$\$\$	\$\$		
Imposition of Fines	Tasks		x	x	IN	Infrequently	2	x	x		x			x				\$\$\$	\$			\$\$			
Land Banking	Tasks	x		x	OUT		4	x		x	x			x			x	\$\$\$		\$	\$	\$\$		\$	\$\$
Rezoning for Development	Tasks	x			IN	Infrequently	4	x	x	x	x		x	x	x			\$\$				\$\$\$			
Tax Acquired Properties	Tasks		x	x	IN	Frequently	2	x	x	x	x			x			x	\$\$				\$			

Blight Score Range		City Zone Designations									Totals
		C-1	C-2	R-C2	I-1	I-2	H-1	R-1	R-2	R-3	
0	40	0	3	0	1	3	0	10	9	30	56
41	50	1	11	2	0	6	0	22	13	47	102
51	60	5	31	3	4	9	0	39	42	99	232
61	70	15	109	11	2	24	0	210	162	364	897
71	80	35	86	19	0	19	1	656	258	778	1852
81	90	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	13	15
91	100	0	5	0	0	0	0	62	9	94	170
Count		56	245	35	7	62	1	999	494	1425	3324
% of Total		2%	7%	1%	0%	2%	0%	30%	15%	43%	100%
Average Score		72.77	70.04	72.43	57.14	65.40	80.00	76.43	72.51	74.20	74.07
Standard Deviation		7.97	9.96	8.86	13.50	15.37		10.94	11.67	13.14	12.22
Blight Score Range		General Land Use								Totals	
		Commercial		Industrial		Hospital		Residential			
		Count	% of Com	Count	% of ID	Count	% of H	Count	% of Res		
0	40	3	0.9%	4	5.8%	0	0.0%	49	1.7%	56	1.7%
41	50	14	4.2%	6	8.7%	0	0.0%	82	2.8%	102	3.1%
51	60	39	11.6%	13	18.8%	0	0.0%	180	6.2%	232	7.0%
61	70	135	40.2%	26	37.7%	0	0.0%	736	25.2%	897	27.0%
71	80	140	41.7%	19	27.5%	1	100.0%	1692	58.0%	1852	55.7%
81	90	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	14	0.5%	15	0.5%
91	100	5	1.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	165	5.7%	170	5.1%
Count		336		69		1		2918		3324	1
% of Total		10.1%		2.1%		0.0%		87.8%		100%	0%
Average Score		70.7		64.6		80.0		74.7		75.68	74.10
Standard Deviation		9.6		15.3		0.0		12.3		43.08	37.09

Sample of scoring sheet used during 2020 blight survey.

Map/Lot	Dwell	Other	Occ Code	CAT	Visual	VisualExt	Occupancy	Utilities	Intended Use	Blight Issues
015-026-F ➤	1	0	0	RES	20	20	15R	P15	R-310	No
015-027-D ➤	1	0	0	RES	20	20	15R	15P	10R-3	No
015-026-B ➤	1	0	0	RES	20	20	15R	15P	10R-3	No
015-026-C ➤	0	0	0	RES	20	20	15R	15P	10R-3	
015-026-K ➤	0	0	0	RES	20	20	15R	15P	10R-3	
015-027 ➤	1	0	0	RES	15	15	15R	15P	10R-3	Risk exterior
015-026-H ➤	0	0	0	RES	15	15	15R	15P	10R-3	later multiple tracks
015-056-C ➤	0	0	0	COM	20	20	15R	15Power	10R-3	Stables
015-029 ➤	1	0	0	RES	15	15	15R	15P	R-310	Risk Vacant
030-125 ➤	1	1	0	RES	15	15	15R	15R	C0	
030-123 ➤	1	0	0	RES	20	20	15R	C15	R0	
034-095	0	0	0	LAND						
030-124 ➤	1	0	0	RES	20	15	15R	15C	R0	steps
034-096 ➤	1	0	0	RES	10	10	15R	15C	0R	General condition
034-097 ➤	1	0	0	RES	15	10	15R	15C	0R	Risk out bldg
034-092 ➤	1	0	0	RES	20	20	15R	15C	0R	Unit
034-098	0	0	0	LAND						
034-091 ➤	1	0	0	RES	15	15	15R	15C	C0	
034-099	0	0	0	EXEMPT						
034-090 ➤	3	0	0	RES	15	15	15R	15C	C0	

Appendix C: Committee Research Reports

- I. 80K
- II. Affordable Housing
- III. City Clean Up Events
- IV. Home Modifications for Seniors
- V. Land Banks
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- VII. Property Ombudsman
- VIII. Rental Registrations
- IX. Work Plans



CITY OF CARIBOU, MAINE

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Office of Tax Assessment & Code Enforcement

Municipal Building
25 High Street
Caribou, Me 04736

MEMO TO THE BLIGHT TASK FORCE REGARDING: COURT RULE 80K

The best way to truly learn about this proposed tool, "Rule 80K" of the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, is to read the 204-page Municipal Code Enforcement Officers Training and Certification Manual for Court Rule 80K that was published by the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development. The most recent version of the manual is June 2017. Here are my thoughts about why this tool should be in the toolbox for fighting blight in Caribou.

To quote from the *Introduction* on page 1, "Rule 80K provides a simpler, speedier and less costly procedure for the prosecution of land use violations. It applies in the District Court, while prosecuting cases through a lawyer in the Superior Court remains available as an alternative. Under Rule 80K the District Court can order violators to pay fines and to stop or correct a violation. The system authorizes certified non-lawyer employees (as well as lawyers to represent municipalities ... in the prosecution of land use violations."

Steps to get this tool into the toolbox:

- (1) staff should review the manual as well as Maine Rules of Court (specifically the Rules of Civil Procedure and Maine Rules of Evidence);
- (2) staff should attend the 2-day course on legal issues and 80K certification offered annually in the Augusta area (I have checked and not date has been set for 2020) and pass the Rule 80K certification exam;
- (3) staff should receive an official general authorization from the Caribou City Council to act as an agent of the municipality in court;
- (4) before considering legal action, always discuss individual enforcement actions with the Caribou City Council before proceeding as the Council might determine that some cases might be better handled by the city attorney;
- (5) the manual outlines the specific steps to be followed in the Rule 80K process.

In conclusion, to quote again from the *Introduction* on page 1, "Keep in mind, however, that while Rule 80K is a very valuable tool for achieving compliance with land use and environmental laws, never should code enforcement officials aim straight for court without first attempting to resolve problems on the administrative level. Save Rule 80K process for the truly difficult enforcement issues and the truly uncooperative violators."

"THE MOST NORTHEASTERN CITY IN THE U.S."

Penny Thompson, RES, CMA-IV Tax Assessor / Building Official

E-Mail: taxassessor@cariboumaine.org

Housing Development Program Details

Program Summary:

The federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) provides subsidy in the form of a federal tax credit to developers of affordable rental housing. Developers using funding must reserve a portion of the rental units for lower income renters and the tax credits provide approximately \$20 million annually in subsidy.

MaineHousing allocates the LIHTC to developers who sell (syndicate) the tax credit to corporate investors. The money this raises is used as equity in the rental housing project. The LIHTC can be linked with other financing through MaineHousing's Rental Loan Program (RLP).

MaineHousing's allocation of the LIHTC is a competitive process scored through the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP).

Eligibility

Developers of qualified low-income housing, as defined by the Internal Revenue Code (Section 42) may apply for LIHTC:

In allocating the tax credit, MaineHousing considers the following priorities:

- Projects for larger families that offer the lowest total monthly housing costs and are rent-restricted to the lowest income households.
- Projects involving acquisition and/or rehabilitation that significantly rehabilitate existing rental housing stock and offer units that are rent-restricted to the lowest income households.
- Projects where the tax credit is needed for project feasibility.
- Projects that meet the housing and service needs of a distinct population of a community, including housing for persons who are homeless.
- Projects that provide housing for persons with very low income.
- Projects located in rural areas of the State.

Multifamily Developers:

MaineHousing offers several programs to encourage private development of affordable rental housing for families, seniors and persons with special needs. Low income housing tax credits, development loans, direct development subsidies, affordable housing tax increment financing, and options to restructure debt are available. Developers are required to ensure that housing developed with MaineHousing financing remains affordable.

Programs:

- **Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program**

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credits are a federal resource that MaineHousing allocates in Maine. The credits are allocated to developers, who sell (syndicate) them to

forgivable loans to address repairs that will ensure properties are able to continue to provide decent, safe, sanitary housing to Maine's most vulnerable citizens.

- **Affordable Housing Subdivision Program**

In an ongoing effort to increase the supply of moderately-priced homes available to Mainers, MaineHousing providing funding to facilitate the development of subdivisions with affordable single family homes. The program is intended to help lower the costs to developers building homes in a subdivision by providing zero percent interest, forgivable loans.

Classes & Benefits:

HoMEworks homebuyer education classes provide an opportunity to learn about the home buying process in a neutral environment. Buyers who have taken home buying classes are more confident when asking questions and making decisions about homeownership and loan products. Education gives buyers the tools they need to avoid predatory lending and possible foreclosure.

If you are thinking of buying a home, plan to attend a hoMEworks class in person at one of several convenient locations statewide, or complete your homebuyer education on line. We believe face-to-face homebuyer education is the best opportunity for an interactive learning experience and attending a local class should always be your first choice.

- **Homebuyer Education - 8 Hour Local Class**

hoMEworks offers an 8-hour homebuyer education class taught by industry professionals (lenders, home inspectors, real estate agents) in an educational, non-sales oriented environment statewide.

- **Homebuyer Education - eHome America Online Course**

hoMEworks also has partnered with eHomeAmerica to offer a fee-based online certification course. The course takes 6 to 10 hours, and you may stop and start at any time. Short quizzes will verify your understanding of key information.

- **Landlord Education**

The Landlord Education seminar, designed for those owning and managing residential

USDA

Guaranteed Loan Program:

This program assists approved lenders in providing low- and moderate-income households the opportunity to own adequate, modest, decent, safe and sanitary dwellings as their primary residence in eligible rural areas. Eligible applicants may build, rehabilitate, improve or relocate a dwelling in an eligible rural area. The program provides a 90% loan note guarantee to approved lenders in order to reduce the risk of extending 100% loans to eligible rural homebuyers.

Single Family Housing Repair Loans & Grants:

Also known as the Section 504 Home Repair program, this provides loans to very-low-income homeowners to repair, improve or modernize their homes or grants to elderly very-low-income homeowners to remove health and safety hazards.

Who may apply for this program?

To qualify, you must:

- Be the homeowner and occupy the house
- Be unable to obtain affordable credit elsewhere
- Have a family income below 50 percent of the area median income
- For grants, be age 62 or older and not be able to repay a repair loan

What governs these programs?

- The Housing Act of 1949 as amended, 7 CFR Part 3550
- HB-1-3550 - Direct Single Family Housing Loans and Grants Field Office Handbook

Why does USDA Rural Development do this?

Helping people stay in their own home and keep it in good repair helps families and their communities. Homeownership helps families and individuals build savings over time. It strengthens communities and helps many kinds of businesses that support the local economy.

Project Based Vouchers

While most Housing development programs feature tax credits or low interest loans there is a technique that could allow the City to, at once, place tax acquired propertied back in taxation and to reduce the occurrence of blight in our older neighborhoods whether in multi-family housing projects or in the smaller one and two unit applications, the Project-Based Voucher program may provide us the tools to take advantage of these opportunities.

Project Based Vouchers (PBV) is a component of a Public Housing Authority's (PHAs) Housing Choice Voucher Program. The PHA may project-base up to 20% of its authorized units and may

Hi Phil,

Charlie forwarded me your message about Beautification Awards. We have two programs to help encourage the citizens to participate in enhancing the beauty of the city. The first program is a volunteer based program that has citizen sign up to participate in projects to improve Sandy's green spaces and right of ways call Beautification of Sandy (formally known as Sandy Pride). These projects usually consist of spreading mulch in tree/flower beds, painting/staining fences that are located on main artillery roads and that are dedicated to the City, picking up trash etc. along our trails systems, and planting trees, shrubs, and annuals. We have many church groups, boy scouts, and local business participate every year.

The other program, which I believe is closer to the info you're after, is run by a committee of citizens and two city-appointed co-chair. This group gives out the Landscape awards. There are 2 monthly awards given out between May and October; one is for general landscaping and the other is for water wise landscaping. We chose to divide the City into 6 quadrants, with the first 3 quadrants in areas that are more likely to have the snow melted off and be workable by April. We place a sign out front of both monthly winners' homes and move those signs around to the new monthly winner during the first week of the next month. Monthly winners are chosen by the committee, but we also take nominations for Grand Prize winners. In September the committee tours all the monthly and self-nominated homes, during the tour the members score each landscape on use of plants/color, maintenance, water efficiency, use of landforms, and overall design and use the totals to help us choose the landscape and water wise grand prize winners. The grand prize and monthly winners are presented in October to City Council. At the council meeting we give all the winners decorative yard signs and there prizes. The prizes are gift cards donated from local businesses (the committee members are allowed to ask for donations from business, but the City employees that are co-chairs are not allowed to be involved in this process). We also post the winners in the City newsletter and online. The link below has additional information on the Beautification Committee and pictures of previous year's winners. I know that there is info that I have probably missed so please let me know if you have any additional questions.

<https://www.sandy.utah.gov/residents/beautification-landscape-awards>

Best,

Kenda Abraria

Home Improvement Program Details

Program Summary

With the belief that safe, stable housing is critical to the health and wellness of a community, Maine Housing's Community Aging in Place Grant began in 2017 to support the replication of Bath Housing's aging in place initiative. The inaugural funding year provided support for five Public Housing Authorities (PHA) and expanded to six PHAs in 2018. Now in its third year the program has expanded to 10 partner agencies, eight PHAs and two Community Action Agencies.

The program concept modeled after Bath Housing's Comfortably Home program was originally established in 2015 and based on the evidenced based CAPABLE program from Johns Hopkins University. The Community Aging in Place Grant Program offers no-cost home safety checks, minor maintenance repairs, and accessibility modifications to eligible low-income elderly and disabled homeowners. These services enable recipients to continue living safely and comfortably at home and is a progressive solution for aging homeowners by establishing a model to address the housing and wellness issues of a growing segment of Maine residents.

Examples of scope of work:

Accessibility Modifications

- Grab bars and handrails
- Shower wand
- Shower seat
- Raised toilet seat
- Drawer pulls
- Doorbell
- Lighting
- Kitchen faucet

Minor Repairs

- Winterizing
- Flooring repairs
- Storm door installation
- Gutter work
- Steps/existing ramps
- Minor plumbing and electrical
- Adjust cabinet height
- Build shelf

Safety Checks

- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide detectors
- Dryer vents
- Refrigerator coils
- Light bulbs
- Furnace filters

Eligibility, you may be eligible for services from the Community Aging in Place Grant if:

- Are age 55+ or have a disability
- Own your home or live in a home owned by a family member
- Annual household income limits are 80% of area median income (AMI)
- Live within the service area of our partners

Our area Housing Improvement Program, Fort Fairfield Housing Authority's (FFHA's) Housing Modification Program operates within a 60-mile radius of Fort Fairfield and staff can install safety features or make modifications up to \$1500.00 for eligible homeowners.

People interested in applying to use the program can contact the Fort Fairfield Housing Authority at 207-476-5771 or ffhousing@maine.

LAND BANKING

For decades, older cities have struggled with the problems posed by unoccupied, dilapidated houses, vacant buildings and open, empty lots. Those abandoned properties depress tax revenues, strain public services and demand constant and expensive attention from local governments. They are targets for arson and breeding grounds for crime, and they present a dangerous and sometimes deadly playground for neighborhood children.

The City of Caribou is no different. Settled in 1824 and incorporated in 1859, many of the structures within the city are showing their age and for various reasons, becoming a source of blight. Some neighborhoods, once safe and welcoming, are now in need of stabilization and intervention by the city. Remediation can be very expensive and is directly dependent upon the extent of blight or disrepair found in each individual property. Oftentimes, the best course of action is demolition. Regardless, every program designed to fight blight must have a **Land Bank** at its core to prevent the constant upward pressure on the city's mill rate.

Simply defined by Frank Alexander in his 2011 publication entitled ***Land Banks and Land Banking***, "Land Banks are governmental entities that specialize in the conversion of vacant, abandoned and foreclosed properties into productive use. The primary thrust of all land banks and land banking initiatives is to acquire and maintain properties that have been rejected by the open market and left as growing liabilities for neighborhoods and communities. The first task is the acquisition of title to such properties; the second task is the elimination of the liabilities; the third task is the transfer of the properties to new owners in a manner most supportive of local needs and priorities."

The City Council, in accordance with the City Charter at Article I (POWERS OF THE CITY) and Article II (CITY COUNCIL) Sec. 2.11 (7) and Sec. 2.12 of, could easily by Ordinance create a Land Bank, as a stand-alone enterprise fund with a structure similar to that of the Cary Medical Center; having its own Board of Directors appointed by the City Council who will oversee its governance and budget.

Financing Land Bank operations can come from a variety of sources, but one of its key features is that it is not part of the city's Expense Budget, unless the City Council chooses to dedicate a predetermined portion of tax revenues to complement funding from other sources such as:

- Community Development Block Grants
- Revenue from the sale of Tax Acquired Properties.
- Code Violation fines and inspection fees.
- Registration fees from Business Licensing of all rental properties.
- Registration fees from vacant buildings.
- Funds set aside for Economic Development.
- One-time unexpected funds.

Property Ombudsman

Ombudsmen are independent, impartial advocates for property owners and provide a free service. The typical duties of an ombudsman are to investigate complaints and attempt to resolve them, usually through recommendations (binding or not) or mediation.

Ombudsmen investigate complaints and work to ensure that the issue is handled correctly and resolved fairly.

Unofficial ombudsmen may be appointed by, or even work for, a corporation such as a utility supplier, newspaper, NGO, or professional regulatory body.

Duties and powers. The municipal ombudsman is authorized to investigate and assess complaints about local authorities. When issuing an opinion, he or she may also make a recommendation to the municipal authorities aimed at preventing a recurrence of complaints.

An Ombudsman would be a liaison between the City and all persons who have a complaint or inquiry into the operations of a City department or conduct of a City employee. An Ombudsman would take all inquiries and complaints seriously. Once received, inquiries and complaints will be promptly reviewed and processed.

The Office of the Ombudsman works as an independent oversight agency to provide individuals with a confidential avenue to address complaints. The Office proposes policy and procedural changes when systemic issues are identified and is designed to provide protection for the individual citizen, businessperson or developer, where there is a lack of follow up or city services rendered.

Office of the Ombudsman responsibilities:

- The services provided by the Office of the Ombudsman are free of charge.
- Independently reviews and analyzes complaints or inquiries involving City services or employee with the purpose of identifying a resolution to the matter.
- Provides prompt and meaningful response to each complaint or inquiry.
- Upon a thorough review and analysis of complaints or inquiries, makes recommendation to the appropriate City department or person to resolve the matter.
- When appropriate, identifies barriers interfering with or preventing an efficient resolution of a complaint or inquiry.
- Makes appropriate written responses and maintains records related to the action taken in response to the complaint or inquiry.

An Ombudsman could help with the City of Caribou's Blight Initiative by helping property owners understand communications from City staff, options available to them to resolve violations and or to ensure that these violations are fairly applied.

An ordinance regulating rental housing as a business and an ordinance similarly regulating vacant buildings as businesses through licensing would be beneficial to the City of Caribou by allowing the City to become more proactive in the inspection and enforcement of health and safety standards and aid the City in our constant battle against blight.

Rental housing business licensing would protect the financial investment of the City's property owners and improve the rental property market while at the same time registering vacant buildings will make it easier to return these buildings to occupancy, at once revitalizing our neighborhoods and bolstering our tax base.

Licensing protects the value in our neighborhoods, lessens the occurrence of fires and break-ins and will provide better information to emergency services providers.

State Law and local property maintenance codes already establish the owner's legal responsibilities for health and safety standards for all properties and better ordinances will provide the mechanism to enforce these minimum codes.

Portland Rental Registration

All property owners are required to annually register residential rental units with the City's Licensing and Registration Office by December 31st or within thirty (30) days of renting a property. This includes rooms, apartments, condominiums and houses. The annual registration fee may be reduced with eligible discounts. Eligible discounts include: Fee discounts; failure to register may result in a fine of at least \$100 per day.

Registering your residential property is important for tenant safety and the contact information is used to communicate with you to resolve code violations, connect during an emergency and to schedule a rental inspection.

- \$10 for a fully sprinkled building (verification documents required: testing/maintenance report of the sprinkler system and/or maintenance contract from the preceding year)
 - \$7.50 for an off-site monitored fire alarm system (verification documents required: fire alarm monitoring contract from the preceding year)
 - \$5 for a HUD Housing Quality Standard (HQS) Inspection for housing subsidy units such as Section 8, Maine Housing or Shalom House, not including General Assistance (verification documents required: inspection report within last year)
 - \$10 for a HUD Uniform Physical Condition Standard (UPCS) Inspection typically limited to Public Housing (verification: inspection report within last year)
 - \$2.50 for a smoke-free policy for the dwelling unit (verification: copy of no smoking lease or no smoking lease language and copies of signature pages to show lease is current (tenant signatures may be redacted; however, date is required, or smoking disclosure form)
- The fee for the property cannot drop below \$15 per unit.

Sanford Rental Housing License Registration

Pursuant to City Code: Rental Housing, owners are required to obtain a license for each of their rental housing properties with the City of Sanford Code Enforcement Office before December 31

apply to rental of single-family dwellings, dwelling units in owner-occupied dwellings, condominiums, townhouses, and to leasehold cooperative dwelling units.

- B. The provisions of this article do not apply to owner-occupied single dwelling units where no portion of the dwelling is rented; owner-occupied dwelling units in cooperative, condominium, or townhouse buildings where no portion of the dwelling is rented; dwelling units occupied by a family as defined in Chapter 280, Zoning; hotels, motels, or bed and breakfasts; hospitals; convalescent, rest, or nursing homes; residential care or congregate care facilities; or other institutional beds or rooms used for medical or mental health treatment services; or mobile homes regulated by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Construction Code.

§ 149-5.4 License required.

A valid rental housing license under the terms of this article is required, and no person, including without limitation a property owner, owner's associate, real estate broker, associate real estate broker, real estate agent, or property manager, shall allow any rental housing unit to be occupied, or let or offer to another any rental housing unit for occupancy, or charge, accept or retain rent for any rental housing unless the owner has a valid license under the terms of this article. Any person carrying on such a business activity without a license is in violation of these provisions.

§ 149-5.5 Issuance of license; transferability.

A license pursuant to this article may be issued to the property owner for the property named on the approved license application. One license may be issued for each property with rental housing units and shall be deemed to cover only such dwelling units under single ownership. No transfer of a license is allowed between property owners or between properties.

§ 149-5.6 Renewal; license term.

Before December 31 the owner shall apply for or renew his or her annual rental housing license for the successive year. Within 60 days of purchasing, transferring, or converting a property into a rental housing unit or units the owner shall apply for a rental housing license. All licenses expire on December 31.

§ 149-5.7 Fees; credits and exemptions.

- A. A. A license may be issued for a property owner after the annual fee required has been paid through the Code Enforcement Office. The fee for a rental housing license is according to the following schedule:
Single family property: \$100.
Two-family property: \$200.
Three-family property: \$300.
Four-to-seven-unit property: \$400.
Eight-plus-unit property: \$500.
A mixed-use property: \$100, plus \$100 for each dwelling unit at that property up to a maximum of \$500.
- B. Property owners that apply for and are issued a license by December 31, have corrected any violations upon a second inspection, maintain good standing, and meet all licensing standards are eligible for a credit of 50% per rental housing property per year commencing in the second year through the so-called "Good Neighbor Program."

To safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of the public, Code Enforcement Officers are authorized to enter any licensed rental housing at any reasonable time for the purpose of inspecting.

§ 149-5.12 Inspections.

- 1) Regular inspections are required for all rental housing.
- 2) After a license has been issued, the Code Enforcement Office will schedule an initial inspection of a licensed property with the owner or responsible party for a mutually agreed upon time.
- 3) Inspections of properties will be conducted as follows:
 - a. Properties categorized as single-family, two-family, and three-family will have all units and common areas inspected.
 - b. Properties categorized as four-through-seven-unit and mixed use with four to seven units will have a sampling of four units and the common areas inspected, unless life safety and more than two code violations are found, then all units will be inspected.
 - c. Properties categorized as eight-plus units and mixed use with eight plus units will have a sampling of five units and the common areas inspected, unless life safety and more than two code violations are found, then all units will be inspected.
 - d. Owner-occupied dwelling units need not necessarily be inspected.
- 4) The standards to be used for inspections pursuant to Chapter 90 and Chapter 128 shall include the inspection of the premises, building exterior, common areas, all dwelling units, accessory buildings, and the basement.
- 5) If a violation of applicable law, ordinance or regulation is discovered, the owner shall be notified of the nature of the violation and time within which such correction shall be completed. In the event violations have not been corrected upon a second reinspection, or no authorized person was present to accompany the Code Enforcement Officer upon reinspection, violations and penalties will apply unless an extension is granted. The penalty for the third and each successive reinspection is \$50.
- 6) Following an inspection, if no violations are found, the property owner will be issued a certificate showing compliance with the license and code.
- 7) Rental housing receiving the so-called "Good Neighbor Credit" will be inspected once every three to four years, unless a tenant complaint cannot be resolved without an inspection; otherwise inspections will be conducted once per year or more frequently as justified due to tenant complaints, calls for police or fire service, age of structure, maintained appearance of the structure, or nonpayment of taxes and other utilities.

§ 149-5.13 Violations and penalties.

Any person who violates any provision of this article or the terms of the license may be penalized in the following manner:

- A. Temporary suspension. The Code Enforcement Officer, with prior approval of the City Manager or his/her designee, is authorized to immediately and temporarily suspend any license to an entire property or portion thereof. The City Manager or his/her designee shall determine if the continued operation of the licensed premises or activity presents a danger to the health, safety, and general welfare of the public; the Code Enforcement Officer has been refused entry to inspect the premises; the licensed premises has not met the requirements of the City property, building, fire, or applicable State laws; the

Caribou, Maine Blight Initiative

Tool: Work Plans

One tool that can be utilized by the City of Caribou, ME to reverse blighted property situations is the implementation of a “Work Plan” resolution for properties that are in violation of city codes. In the City of Caribou, processes are in place to deal with code violations contributing to blight, however, a more formal plan of action holding all parties accountable to correction of property defects is needed. This will require new policies & procedures and ordinances to be developed with the involvement and contributions of the city’s Code Enforcement office, Tax Assessing office, City Attorney, City Council, and Planning Board.

A property “Work Plan” will create an objective, formalized process through which code violations/hazardous conditions are handled by the Code Enforcement office. Code violations will enter a resolution process and enforcement schedule that steps out an agreement between the city and a property owner to achieve compliance of city codes/ordinances. The CEO and other officers will then have an impartial process for dealing with blighted property conditions.

A clear process for resolutions and expected communication between parties becomes part of the formal plan, with consequences for lack of communication on the matter. Therefore, communication and resolution would be encouraged within set time limits, (e.g. 7, 14, 30-day notices). Notices of violation would require a property owner to contact CEO office in a short time frame to discuss goals and a work plan. Once this communication has been made, the CEO office draws up a list of corrections, timeframes, and consequences of inaction in an agreement (in writing) to be signed by both parties.

Inaction by property owners would then result in a stepping up of the enforcement action, aimed to be consequences that can be legally upheld by the city and in a court of law, e.g. fines, civil violations, property liens. Elevated enforcement, especially in hazardous buildings/situations, might include a form of public announcement where the work plan and property owner go before the Planning Board to discuss the matter. Emergency plans for life-safety code and welfare situations, and funds for imminent dangers and hazardous situations would step up the schedule for correcting issues. Further actions on the enforcement schedule could involve use of collections agency for fines and/or special assessments, notices from the City Attorney, Civil Court proceedings, recording property Notices at the Registry of Deeds, and property liens.

Other ideas that could work alongside the work plan are: community/faith-based “property liaisons”, assistance with estimates/hiring contractors to complete work, funding or loans (CDBG, Assistance Agencies, or Economic Development groups),

The City Code Enforcement Officer, Ken Murchison, has already started to announce and integrate the formation of a process, though not a “Legal Notice”, informing property owners of blighted conditions. A letter sent states options they might take to eliminate the blighted condition, suggesting that the property still has value and could be sold, repaired, rented, or demolished in order to improve value neighborhoods and community as a whole. Ultimately, a “Work Plan” would become the legal instrument in the city’s initiative to correct violations and remove blight.



CITY OF CARIBOU, MAINE

Phone: (207) 493-5961
Fax: (207) 498-3954

Office of Tax Assessment & Code Enforcement

Municipal Building
25 High Street
Caribou, Me 04736

MEMO TO THE BLIGHT TASK FORCE REGARDING: LANDLORD LAWS

The "landlord laws" tool is about knowing about what laws currently exist for property owners in Caribou who rent residential properties to tenants. To quote from the *Maine Consumer Law Guide* in §14.5, "By law, all landlords in the State of Maine promise that all rented dwelling units are fit for human habitation – that is, they are reasonably safe and decent places to live. This is the Maine Warranty of Habitability." City staff should know about the legal responsibilities of landlords so they can better communicate with those owners about required actions to: promote curb appeal and reduce blight; conform to land use, building and property maintenance codes; and maintain residences in accordance with the Maine Warranty of Habitability Act (14 MRSA §6021).

Steps to get this tool into the toolbox:

- (1) staff should review Chapters 14 – 16 of the Maine Consumer Law Guide because these chapters deal with the complex landlord and tenant relationship;
- (2) staff should review the information on the Pine Tree Legal Assistance (PTLA) website that deals with the Rights of Maine Renters;
- (3) in reviewing information, especially the information on the PTLA website, the municipality is given as a resource for tenants when dealing with landlords who do not correct unsafe conditions (like undrinkable water, inadequate sewage disposal, indoor air complaints, no heat or too little heat in the winter, combination of issues) and therefore city staff should come up with a consistent message and action plan to provide when contacted;
- (4) it would be a good idea to investigate the claim on the PTLA website that the municipality can assist tenants with heat in the winter and the state will reimburse and perhaps the General Assistance Administrator would have more information about this program;
- (5) some laws do not apply to an apartment building with five or fewer apartments, one of which is occupied by the landlord, so city staff needs to find out which properties in Caribou fit this description;
- (6) use the information on Maine's Warranty of Habitability to achieve voluntary compliance from property owners.

The "landlord laws" tool is a good first step to unlocking the potential of other existing and prospective tools in the fight against blight in Caribou. Those listed on the spreadsheet include affordable housing regulations, rental property registration and licensing of absentee landlords.

"THE MOST NORTHEASTERN CITY IN THE U.S."

Penny Thompson, RES, CMA-IV Tax Assessor / Building Official

E-Mail: taxassessor@cariboumaine.org

ACAP
Aroostook Area Agency on Aging
Calvary Baptist Church
Caribou 7th Day Adventist Fellowship
Caribou Assembly of God
Caribou Church of Christ
Caribou HS Clubs (e.g. NHS, FAA, JMG)
Caribou United Baptist Church
Catholic Charities
Gray Memorial Methodist Church
Holy Rosary Catholic Church
Intervention Church
Kingdom Hall of Jehovah Witnesses
Kiwanis International
Lions Club
Living Water Apostolic Church of Caribou
Rotary International
Retired Senior Volunteers Program (RSVP)
St Spyridon Russian Orthodox Mission
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
The Parish of the Precious Blood
United Way of Aroostook
Woodland First Baptist Church

Appendix E: Community Outreach Fliers



JOIN THE BLIGHT FIGHT

& BOOST CARIBOU'S NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE

BLIGHT BUSTERS & RUBBISH HAULERS



AROOSTOOK WASTE SOLUTIONS

Tri-Community Landfill

303 Murphy Road
Fort Fairfield, 04742
(207) 473 – 7840

Annual Permits
Residents: \$20 | Business: \$50

Hours of Operation
M-F 8:00 am to 3:45 pm
Saturday 8:00 am to 2:45 pm
Sunday: Closed

AROOSTOOKWASTE.COM/TRICOMMUNITY/

*Check the website for
additional disposal fees and
holiday closures.

CITY OF CARIBOU, MAINE

25 High Street, 04736
207.493.3324
cariboumaine.org

CALDWELL'S SANITATION

325-8802
PO Box 316, Limestone, 04750

CITY SANITATION

498-3973
78 River Road, Caribou 04736

CROWN OF MAINE SANITATION

498-2586
172 Haney Road
Connor TWP, 04736

GIL'S SANITATION, INC

769-0711
PO Box 1057
Presque Isle, 04769

MCNEAL'S TRUCKING

493-4433
73 Soloman St.
Caribou, 04736

PINE TREE WASTE

532-6804
PO Box 528, Houlton 04730



JOIN THE BLIGHT FIGHT

& BOOST CARIBOU'S NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE

MAINTAIN

Maintain your
home or business:
(including paint,
roof, siding and
gutters.)

PETS

Make sure pets are
spayed/neutered,
vaccinated &
licensed. Keep pets
fenced, leashed, or
in your home.

YARD

Maintain your yard:
free of weeds, trash,
indoor furniture
and overgrown
grass and gardens.

RUBBISH

The City can provide
you with a list of
rubbish haulers that
are licensed to do
business in Caribou.




MORE INFO AT: bit.ly/CaribouHousingAgency
and facebook.com/CaribouHousingAgency/



BYLAWS: FRAMEWORK FOR THE BLIGHT FIGHT
OPERATIONS: POSITIVE ACTIONS TO FIGHT BLIGHT
OUTCOMES: SUCCESS IN THE BLIGHT FIGHT
STAKEHOLDERS: PARTNERS READY TO FIGHT BLIGHT
TASKS: CITY'S PLAN TO WIN THE BLIGHT FIGHT

CITY OF CARIBOU, MAINE

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