



## City of Caribou, Maine

Municipal Building  
25 High Street  
Caribou, ME 04736  
Telephone (207) 493-3324  
Fax (207) 498-3954

### AGENDA Caribou Planning Board Regular Meeting Thursday, May 14, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting will be broadcast on Cable Channel 1301 and the City's YouTube Channel.

Public Comments submitted prior to the meeting no later than 4:00 pm on Thursday, May 14, 2026, will be read during the meeting. Send comments to Economic & Community Development Specialist, Eric Sanderson at [esanderson@cariboumaine.org](mailto:esanderson@cariboumaine.org).

	<b><u>PAGES</u></b>
I. Call Meeting to Order, Determine Quorum, disclosure of conflicts of interest	
II. Acceptance of Minutes	
a. April 21, 2026 Caribou Planning Board	<b>02-03</b>
III. Public Hearings	
a. Updates to Chapter 3 Animals & Fowl Article I Dog Control Ordinance	<b>04-10</b>
i. Staff Memo Regarding Updates to Ch. 3 Article I	04
ii. Proposed Updates to Ch. 3 Article I	05-10
IV. New Business	
a. Property Maintenance and Summary of Changes to International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC)	<b>11-15</b>
i. Summary of Changes from 2015 to 2024 IPMC	11-12
ii. Draft Updates to Article III, Section 4-301 Property Maintenance Code	13-15
V. City Council Liaison Report	
VI. Staff Report	<b>16-59</b>
a. Housing Action Plan	16-59
b. Riverfront Redevelopment – Riverfront Master Plan Public Engagement Schedule	
Thursday, June 4 <sup>th</sup> at 5:30PM - Caribou Riverfront Redevelopment Committee Meeting	
Thursday, June 11 <sup>th</sup> 6-9PM Present Draft Findings of Master Plan at first Thursdays on Sweden	
Tuesday, June 16 <sup>th</sup> at 6PM – Riverfront Master Plan Draft Presentation and Public Hearing	
c. Next Meeting – Thursday, June 11 <sup>th</sup> at 6PM. Possible Agenda Items:	
• Property Maintenance	
• Zoning Change considerations related to two possible housing projects on south Main Street	
VII. Adjournment	



## *City of Caribou, Maine*

*Municipal Building  
25 High Street  
Caribou, ME 04736  
Telephone (207) 493-3324  
Fax (207) 498-3954*

### **MINUTES Caribou Planning Board Regular Meeting Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.**

Members in Attendance: Frank McElwain (Chair), Steve Wentworth, Dave Corriveau, Eric Hitchcock, Miles Williams

Staff in Attendance: Tim St. Peter (Code Enforcement Officer)

I. Call Meeting to Order, Determine Quorum, disclosure of conflicts of interest

The meeting was called to order at 6:00PM by Chair, Frank McElwain.

II. Acceptance of Minutes

- a. March 12, 2025 Caribou Planning Board

Motion by Dave Corriveau to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Steve Wentworth. Motion passes unanimously 5-0-0.

III. New Business

- a. Concept Plan Review – 50 Plante Road RV Park, Phil Trombley (applicant)
- i. Staff Memos Upon Review of the Project
  - ii. Department of Health & Human Services Rules Relating to Campgrounds
  - iii. 50 Plante Road Concept Plan Application & Plan Materials

Phil Trombley gave an overview of the project. He indicated a neighboring property owner expressed interest in selling additional land to meet the 7 acre standard for RV parks in the R-3 Zoning District. The Board discussed the distinction between a “wilderness” campground (lower density, pit privies allowed) and a standard campground (full hookups). Mr. Trombley was advised to finalize the land acquisition, consult further with the Code Enforcement Officer on specific standards, and return with a professional site plan.

IV. Unfinished Business

- a. Discuss Updates to Chapter 3 Animals & Fowl Article 1  
Dog Control Ordinance
- i. Staff Memo Regarding Updates to Ch. 3 Article I
  - ii. Proposed Updates to Ch. 3 Article I

The Board reviewed the updated language. Motion made by Dave Corriveau to schedule a public hearing for the May, 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Planning Board meeting. Seconded by Eric Hitchcock. Motion passes unanimously.

V. City Council Liaison Report

VI. Staff Report

- a. Updates on Legislative Mandates (LD 1829 & LD 2173) Related to Zoning
- b. Next Meeting – Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup> at 6PM. Possible Agenda Items:
  - Animal Control
  - Property Maintenance
  - Zoning Change considerations related to two possible housing projects on south Main Street

The Board discussed potentially rezoning parts of South Main Street to allow first floor residential units. This stems from a request regarding a former laundromat. Eric Hitchcock noted a zoning inconsistency on Short Street where residential homes are currently in a Commercial 2 (C-2) zone.

On legislative updates, staff provided approved state legislation on housing and zoning updates that the City will need to incorporate into its ordinances via LD 1829 and LD 2173.

VII. Adjournment

Motion by Miles Williams to adjourn, seconded by Dave Corriveau. Motion passes unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:38PM



# MEMO

**TO: Caribou Planning Board**

**FROM: Eric Sanderson, Economic & Community Development Specialist**

**DATE: May 12, 2026**

**RE: Updates to Chapter 3, Article I – Animal Control Ordinance**

---

## Introduction

To date, staff has worked with the Police Department and volunteers from the Board to update the City Charter Chapter 3 – Animals and Fowl, Article I Dog Ordinance. As proposed, the title of the ordinance would be updated to “Article 1 Animal Control Ordinance”. The Ordinance explicitly states the existing authority of the Police Department as the Animal Control Officer for encounters and calls for animals in distress, whereas the previous ordinance spoke to the “Dog Constable” or “Police Officer”. Since the Board’s review at the February Planning Board meeting, no former Animal Control Ordinance was found per the Board’s request. The standards were then voted on at the April 21, 2026 meeting to be scheduled for a public hearing at the May 14<sup>th</sup> regularly scheduled Planning Board meeting.

## Updated Standards

The updated standards have been made after review of other communities with Animal Control Ordinances in Maine, including Presque Isle and Bangor. Included are definitions for an “owner”, “disturbance”, and “animal cruelty and abuse”. They address individuals with an unsafe number of dogs (currently limits to 3 dogs over six months old), so the Board should consider whether that limit is appropriate for personal use to maintain safe and healthful conditions in Caribou. Many of the existing standards such as dogs running at large are maintained, but expanded upon to more closely match language observed elsewhere in an effort to be as comprehensive as possible. Keeping animals outside in unsafe hot or cold conditions, animal waste, bites, and the procedure for Rabies diagnoses are also covered.

In speaking with the Police Department, Chief Saucier indicated to Economic & Community Development staff that the Police Department was supportive of these updated standards. The only concern by the Police Department was related to payment of fees to the City for an animal impounded under the Ordinance, as sometimes those are issued under varying circumstances. With this in mind, authority to waive those fees at the discretion of the Police Chief was added to Article II Section 3-201 under “Impoundment Fees”.

## Suggested Action

If the Board is comfortable with the standards, a recommendation can be made to send the updates to the City Council for a Public Hearing and potential adoption.

Second

Discussion

## Chapter 3 – Animals and Fowl

### ARTICLE I ~~DOG~~ ANIMAL CONTROL ORDINANCE

#### Section

- 3-101 ~~“Owner” and/or “Keeper” Defined~~ Purpose  
3-102 ~~Disturbance~~ Owner  
3-103 ~~Dogs Running at Large~~ Disturbance  
3-104 ~~Impounding Dogs Found Running at Large~~ Not to Create a Nuisance  
~~3-104 B~~ ~~Removal & Disposal of Fees~~  
3-105 ~~Dogs Presenting an Immediate Threat~~ Animal Cruelty and Abuse  
3-106 Violation  
3-107 Right to Enforcement

### ARTICLE II IMPOUNDMENT FEES

#### Section

- 3-201 Impoundment Fees

### ARTICLE III NUMBER OF DOGS LIMITED

#### Section

- 3-301 Number of Dogs Limited

### ARTICLE IV BARKING OR HOWLING DOGS

#### Section

- 3-401 Barking or Howling Dogs

### ARTICLE V ANIMAL WASTE AND OTHER DISTURBANCES

#### Section

- 3-501 Animal Waste and Other Disturbances

### ARTICLE VI DISPOSITION OF DOGS THAT HAVE BITTEN PERSONS

#### Section

- 3-601 Disposition of Dogs that Have Bitten Persons

### ARTICLE VII RABIES

#### Section

- 3-701 Rabies

### ARTICLE VIII WHEN DOGS MAY BE KILLED

#### Section

- 3-801 When Dogs May Be Killed

## Chapter 3 Animal and Fowl

### ARTICLE I ~~DOG~~ ANIMAL CONTROL ORDINANCE

#### Sec. 3-101 ~~“Owner” and/or “Keeper” Defined Purpose~~

~~The word “owner” when applied to the proprietorship of a dog shall include every person having a right of property in such dog, and every person who keeps or harbors such dog or has it in their care, and every person who permits such dog to remain on or about any premises occupied by them. The word “keeper” means a person in possession or control of a dog. A person becomes a “keeper” of a stray dog if the person feeds that animal for at least 10 consecutive days.~~

The purpose of this Ordinance is to control unreasonable noise disturbances created by domesticated animals or livestock living as domesticated animals and to control domesticated animals running at large. This Ordinance also assists a municipal officer of the City of Caribou to make a judgement call as to whether an animal is in distress due to cruelty or neglect as defined in Section 3-105.

#### Sec. 3-102 ~~Disturbance Owner~~

~~On complaint being made to the Dog Constable that any dog within the City has unreasonably disturbed the quiet of any persons whosoever by continued barking or howling, or in any manner, the Dog Constable shall issue notice to the “owner” and/or “keeper” of such dog ordering that such dog be kept under proper control.~~

The word “owner” when applied to the proprietorship of a domesticated pet shall include every person having a right of property in such animal, and every person who keeps or harbors such animal or has it in their care, and every person who permits such animal to remain on our about any premises they occupy.

#### Sec. 3-103 ~~Dogs Running At Large Disturbance~~

~~No person who is an “owner” and/or “keeper” of a dog, as defined by Section 3-101 of this Article, shall cause or permit any dog to run at large within the City, as herein defined. Dogs, while on any public way or public place shall be under restraint. The word “restraint” shall mean that a dog shall be controlled by a leash; or, at “heel”, beside the competent person and obedient to that person’s commands; or, on or within a vehicle being driven or parked on any public way. A leash shall not be more than eight (8) feet long. Nothing, within this Article shall be held to require the leashing of any dog while on the property of its “owner” and/or “keeper”.~~

On compliant being made to any City of Caribou Official that any domesticated animal within the City has unreasonably disturbed the quiet of any persons whosever by continued barking or howling, or in any manner, the Officer shall issue notice to the owner of such animal ordering that such animal shall be kept under proper control.

### **Sec. 3-104 Impounding Dogs Found Running At Large Not to Create a Nuisance**

A domesticated animal shall be considered a nuisance if it soils, defiles or defecates on any public or private property, other than the owner's property; and the owner shall be obligated to remove and properly dispose of such waste promptly from any such public or private property.

No person who is an "owner" and/or "keeper" of an animal, as defined by Section 3-102 of this Article, shall cause or permit any animal to run at large within the City, as herein defined. Animals, while on any public way or public place shall be under restraint. The word "restraint" shall mean that a animal shall be controlled by a leash; or, at "heel", beside the competent person and obedient to that person's commands; or, on or within a vehicle being driven or parked on any public way. A leash shall not be more than eight (8) feet long. Nothing, within this Article shall be held to require the leashing of any animal while on the property of its "owner" and/or "keeper".

Any ~~Constable or Police~~ Caribou Official or Officer is hereby authorized and empowered to go upon any premises and enter any building other than a dwelling to seize and impound any ~~dog animal~~ or ~~dogs animals~~ which have been found running at large or which are in violation of any of the provisions of this Article or of any order issued hereunder when such ~~Constable or Police~~ Official or Officer is in immediate pursuit of such ~~dog animal~~ or ~~dogs animals~~. Upon seizing and impounding such ~~an dog animal~~, the ~~Constable or Police~~ Official or Officer shall collect a fee of \$25.00 from the "owner" and/or "keeper" upon releasing the ~~dog animal~~. In the alternative the ~~Constable or Police~~ Caribou Official or Officer may prosecute the "owner" and/or "keeper" of the ~~dog animal~~.

### **Sec. 3-104-B Removal & Disposal of Feces**

~~It is a violation of this Section for any person who possesses or controls a dog, except guide dogs who fails to properly remove, dispose of any feces left by his or her dog on any publicly-owned property or upon the premises of any person other than the owner without that person's permission.~~

### **Sec. 3-105 Dogs Presenting an Immediate Threat Animal Cruelty and Abuse**

~~After filing of complaint to the Dog Constable and/or Police Officer, if the dog poses an immediate threat to the public, the dog shall, at the discretion of the officer, be subject to muzzling, restraint and/or transported to the animal shelter for quarantine purposes at the "owner's" and/or "keeper's" expense for a period of ten (10) days.~~

Animals shall have the right to the five freedoms of animal welfare: freedom to turn around, get up, lie down, scratch, and stretch their limbs completely.

#### A. Definitions

- i. "Animal Cruelty" means any act of inflicting unnecessary physical or mental pain on a living creature.
- ii. "Animal Neglect" means any willful omission of lack of care for a living animal in a confined space.

### **Sec. 3-106 Violation**

Any person found to be in violation of any provision of this Ordinance or any order issued

hereunder, shall be liable to punishment by fine not less than fifty dollars (\$50.00) but not to exceed one hundred dollars (\$100.00); and each day during which such violation continues shall constitute a new offense. Said fine to be payable to the City of Caribou.

**Sec. 3-107 Right to Enforcement**

It shall be the duty of any designated official under the authority of the City of Caribou City Manager to include, but not limited to the Chief of Police, the Code Enforcement Office, the City Health Officer or any other authorized designee to enforce the provisions of this section.

**ARTICLE II IMPOUNDMENT FEES**

**Sec. 3-201 Impoundment Fees**

Any animal impounded hereunder may be reclaimed during shelter business hours, as herein provided upon payment by the owner to City’s designated shelter provider, of impoundment fees and board charges, plus the price of any shots which the animal may have received while in the care of the shelter. If the City of Caribou has incurred these costs, the owner of the animal must pay the fees outlined above to the City. The Caribou Police Department may waive fees owed to the City under this section at its discretion, with the decision designated to the Chief of Police.

**ARTICLE III NUMBER OF DOGS LIMITED**

**Sec. 3-301 Number of Dogs Limited**

It shall be unlawful for any person or persons to keep or harbor within the City more than three dogs over six months old on any premises, house, barn, or other building or in or about all buildings occupied by any one family, and the keeping or harboring of dogs as aforesaid is hereby declared a nuisance pursuant to Article I of this Ordinance.

- A. The payment of a license or licenses on dogs shall not be construed to allow the keeping of more than three dogs, as aforesaid, on any one premises.
- B. This limitation shall not apply to any person, group of persons, or corporation engaged in the commercial business of racing, breeding, buying, selling or boarding of dogs or operating a veterinary establishment.

**ARTICLE IV BARKING OR HOWLING DOGS**

**Sec. 3-401 Barking or Howling Dogs**

- A. Nighttime.
- i. It shall be unlawful for any person to confine a dog(s) in an open-air enclosure, including a fenced yard, where its barking may disturb the quiet of the neighborhood after 10:00 p.m. or before 6:00 a.m. Said dog(s) shall be confined within a reasonably soundproof building during those hours so that any barking will not annoy, disturb, injure or endanger the comfort, repose, peace or safety of any individual in the City. Said dog(s) shall be allowed outdoors, however, so long as it is accompanied by a person at all times and does not bark for longer than 30 seconds.

- ii. Notwithstanding the provisions of Subsection A(1) of this section, sled dogs covered by a valid kennel license issued by the municipality or a State authority may be confined in an open-air enclosure after 10:00 p.m. or before 6:00 a.m. so long as any barking does not annoy, disturb, injure or endanger the comfort, repose, peace or safety of any individual in the City.
- B. Daytime. It shall be unlawful for any owner or person responsible to said owner to permit the continual barking of any dog(s) between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Continued barking shall mean the barking of any dog or dogs for a period of 15 minutes or more, during which the dog or dogs do not fall silent for more than one minute.
- C. Warning. It shall be the policy of the City of Caribou to issue a written warning for a violation of this section and take no further enforcement action, provided that no complaint has been made of a previous violation of this section regarding the owner of the dog or the property in question within the 90 days prior to the violation date.
- D. This section does not apply to dogs engaged in herding livestock or to agricultural guard dogs engaged in protecting livestock or warning the owners of danger to the livestock.

## **ARTICLE V ANIMAL WASTE AND OTHER DISTURBANCES**

### **Sec. 3-501 Animal Waste and Other Disturbances**

- A. No person shall dispense, feed, or otherwise make available to any species of wildlife, including birds, either on such person's property or on the property of another or of the City, any type or amount of food in a manner that:
  - i. Creates an unclean, unsafe, or unsanitary condition;
  - ii. Results in the accumulation of droppings, feces, or feathers;
  - iii. Attracts other wildlife; vermin, or pests;
  - iv. Creates an unreasonable disturbance;
  - v. Constitutes a private or public nuisance; or
  - vi. Otherwise deleteriously affects the quiet enjoyment by others of any private or public property.

## **ARTICLE VI DISPOSITION OF DOGS THAT HAVE BITTEN PERSONS**

### **Sec. 3-601 Disposition of Dogs that Have Bitten Persons**

- A. It shall be unlawful for the owner or person keeping or harboring any dog, when notified that such dog has bitten any person or has so injured any persons as to cause abrasion of the skin, to sell or give away such dog or to permit or allow such dog to be taken beyond the limits of the City, except under the care of a licensed veterinarian. It shall be the duty of such owner or keeper, upon receiving notice of the character aforesaid, to immediately place such dog under confinement for a period of at least 10 days. The Caribou Animal Control Official or Officer shall be notified immediately by the person in charge of the death of any dog while under confinement.
- B. The City Animal Control Official or Officer shall investigate all dog bites referred to them.
- C. Any dog which shall have been bitten by another dog suspected of having rabies shall be immediately impounded for observation as provided in this section.

- D. It shall be unlawful for the owner or person keeping or harboring any dog, when notified that such dog has bitten any person or has so injured any person as to cause abrasion of the skin, to destroy such animal without permission from the City Animal Control Official or Officer.

## ARTICLE VII RABIES

### Sec. 3-701 Rabies

- A. Upon positive diagnosis of rabies in any animal within the City, the Chair of the Council shall proclaim and invoke a City-wide quarantine for a period of 30 days, and upon the invoking of such quarantine no animal shall be taken into the streets or be permitted to be in the streets during such period of quarantine.
- B. During such period of rabies quarantine as herein described, every animal bitten by an animal adjudged to be rabid shall be forthwith destroyed or, at the owner's expense and option, shall be treated for rabies infection by a licensed veterinarian or held 30 days under quarantine by the owner in the same manner as other animals are quarantined.
- C. In the event that there are additional positive cases of rabies occurring during the period of quarantine, such period of quarantine may be extended by the Chair of the Council for an additional six months.
- D. The carcass of any dead animal exposed to rabies shall, upon demand, be surrendered to the Animal Control Official or Officer.
- E. The Animal Control Official or Officer shall direct the disposition of any animal found to be infected with rabies.
- F. No person shall fail or refuse to surrender any animal for quarantine or destruction as required herein when demand is made therefor by the Animal Control Official or Officer.

## ARTICLE VIII WHEN DOGS MAY BE KILLED

### Sec. 3-801 When Dogs May Be Killed

If any dangerous, fierce or vicious dog cannot be safely taken up and impounded, such dog may be slain by any police officer of duly authorized animal control officer. In all cases where any dog which has bitten a person or caused an abrasion of the skin of any person is slain by any police officer, whether by order of the court or otherwise, and a period of less than 15 days has elapsed since the day on which such dog bit any person or caused an abrasion of the skin of any person, it shall be the duty of the police officer slaying such dog to forthwith deliver the carcass and brain to the Chief of Police.

---

**Historical Note:** Chapter 3, Section 110 of Caribou City Ordinances, as amended December 12, 1968 and June 4, 1980; Amended February 23, 1998, July 13, 1998 & May 12, 1999; Section 3-104 as amended by City Council April 8, 2013. Article I, Section 3 amended, and Articles II, III, IV, V, VI, VII and VIII added by City Council on MONTH, #, YEAR.  
State Law Reference: 7 M.R.S.A. §3913; 7 M.R.S.A. §3

## Summary of Changes: 2015 IPMC vs. 2024 IPMC

To: Municipal Planning Board / City Council From: Office of the Code Enforcement Officer

Subject: Comparative Analysis for Ordinance Update (2015 to 2024 Cycle)

The transition from the 2015 to the 2024 International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) covers nearly a decade of life-safety and administrative evolution. The 2024 edition introduces significant new requirements for modern technology and clarifies the authority of the Code Official regarding unsafe habitability.

### 1. New for 2024: Technology and Modern Hazards

- **Lithium-Ion Battery Charging (Section 604.4): New Requirement:** Explicit safety standards for the charging of "Powered Micromobility Devices" (E-bikes and E-scooters) within residential structures to address rising battery fire risks.
- **EV Charging Stations: Maintenance Requirement:** Mandates that if EV chargers are provided, they must be maintained in good working order or safely decommissioned.
- **Lead-Based Paint (Section 305.3):** Strengthens alignment with federal EPA lead-safe work practices for pre-1978 housing maintenance.

### 2. Administrative and Enforcement Enhancements (Sections 109 & 111)

The 2024 version has reorganized Chapter 1 to clarify the definition of "Unsafe" and "Unfit" structures.

- **Action Plans for Repairs (Section 111.1):** Requires owners of unsafe buildings to submit a formal Action Plan including professional assessments and timelines, preventing indefinite stalling.
- **Authority to Prohibit Occupancy (Sections 109.1.3, 109.4):** \* The 2024 code provides specific criteria under Section 109.1.3 to declare a structure "Unfit for Human Occupancy" based specifically on the lack of essential services (heat, water, electricity) or required maintenance.
  - **Section 109.4** provides the authority to post a placard and order the premises vacated, effectively prohibiting occupancy until the hazards are abated. *Note: Actual tenant relocation logistics/costs are typically handled via local ordinance or state statute rather than the model code itself.*

### 3. Life Safety and Fire Prevention

- **Carbon Monoxide (CO) Alarms (Section 705.2):** Mandatory in all units with fuel-burning appliances or attached garages, specifically in the immediate vicinity of all sleeping areas.
- **Fire-Resistance Integrity (Section 703.1):** Stricter requirements for maintaining fire-rated assemblies; all penetrations must be repaired with approved fire-stopping materials.

### 4. Mechanical, Plumbing, and Electrical

- **Minimum Hot Water (Section 505.4):** Replaces the vague "adequate" standard with a strict minimum of 110°F (43°C).
- **Heat Source Restrictions (Section 602.2):** Explicitly prohibits the use of cooking appliances or unvented space heaters to meet the minimum heat requirement (68°F).
- **Electrical System Hazards (Section 604.3):** Provides an objective list of hazards (deteriorated insulation, lack of grounding) for immediate citation.

### 5. Minor Technical Refinements

- **Address Identification (Section 304.3):** Numbers must be at least 4 inches high with a 0.5-inch stroke and contrast with the background.
- **Handrail Graspability (Section 307.1):** Aligns with Building Code to ensure handrails are graspable (not just present).
- **Infestation (Section 309):** Clarifies that the owner is responsible for pest elimination prior to a new rental occupancy.

### Comparison Matrix: 2015 vs. 2024

Feature	2015 IPMC	2024 IPMC	Municipal Benefit
Essential Services	Vague habitability	Section 109.1.3	Clearer authority to order vacancy for lack of utilities.
New Tech	None	E-Bike/EV Charging Regs	Addresses modern battery fire risks.
Enforcement	Notice only	Mandatory Action Plans	Shorter path to compliance or demolition.
Hot Water	"Adequate"	110°F Minimum	Objective testing for habitability.
CO Alarms	Basic	NFPA 720 / IFC Aligned	Reduces liability/prevents fatalities.
Blight	General	Specific Structural Checklist	Harder for owners to contest in appeals

## ARTICLE III PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE

### Sec. 4-301 Property Maintenance Code

The City of Caribou ~~hereby adopts adopted~~ the ~~2015-2024~~ edition of the International Property Maintenance Code, regulating and governing the conditions and maintenance of all property, buildings and structures; by providing the standards for supplied utilities and facilities and other physical things and conditions essential to ensure that structures are safe, sanitary and fit for occupation and use; and the condemnation of buildings and structures unfit for human occupancy and use, and the demolition of such existing structures in the City of Caribou; providing for the issuance of permits and collection of fees therefor.

### Sec. 4-302 Amendments

The City Council of the City of Caribou, County of Aroostook, State of Maine, pursuant to the requirements of the City of Caribou Charter, Section 2.11(1) does ordain the following:

Section 1. The International Property Maintenance Code, 2012 edition, as adopted by the Caribou City Council in Ordinance 2013-12 is hereby repealed.

~~The International Property Maintenance Code, 2015 edition, as adopted by the Caribou City Council in Ordinance [2013-12] is hereby repealed~~

Section 2. That the International Property Maintenance Code, ~~2015-2024~~ edition, as published by the International Code Council, be and is hereby adopted as the Property Maintenance Code of the City of Caribou, in the State of Maine for regulating and governing the conditions and maintenance of all property, buildings and structures; by providing the standards for supplied utilities and facilities and other physical things and conditions essential to ensure that structures are safe, sanitary and fit for occupation and use; and the condemnation of buildings and structures unfit for human occupancy and use, and the demolition of such existing structures as herein provided; providing for the issuance of permits and collection of fees therefore; and each and all of the regulations, provisions, penalties, conditions and terms of said Property Maintenance Code on file in the office of the City Clerk City of Caribou are hereby referred to, adopted, and made a part hereof, as if fully set out in this legislation, with the additions, insertions, deletions and changes, if any, prescribed in Section ~~32~~ of this ordinance.

Section 3. The following sections are hereby revised:

Generally to all section or any reference: Replace International Fire Code (IFC) with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1 Fire Code.

Section 101.1. Insert: City of Caribou

Section 103.5. Insert: The minimum penalty for a specific violation is \$50 payable to the City. The fees for activities and services performed to correct or abate a violation shall be at a cost plus a 10% administrative fee payable to the City.

Section 112.4. Insert: \$25 and \$2,500

Section 302.4. Insert: 7 inches within the Urban Compact Zone

Section 304.14. Insert: May 1 and October 1

Section 602.2. Strike 68° F (20° C) and insert 65° F (18.4° C)

Section 602.3. Insert: October 1 and May 1

Section 602.4. Insert: October 1 and May 1

Section 4. If another ordinance, or portion of ordinance, is found to conflict with the ordinances herewith that this ordinance shall supersede any other ordinance.

Section 5. That if any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this legislation is, for any reason, held to be unconstitutional, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance. The City Council hereby declares that it would have passed this law, and each section, subsection, clause or phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses and phrases be declared unconstitutional.

Section 6. That nothing in this legislation or in the Property Maintenance Code hereby adopted shall be construed to affect any suit or proceeding impending in any court, or any rights acquired, or liability incurred, or any cause or causes of action acquired or existing, under any act or ordinance hereby repealed as cited in Section 3 of this law; nor shall any just or legal right or remedy of any character be lost, impaired or affected by this legislation.

**Commented [TS1]:** Section 103.5 has been removed. If this current language is still wanted, add to Section 107.3, inserting at the end of the paragraph or to Section 104.1.

**Commented [TS2]:** Moved to Section 108.4. No longer has amount listed in paragraph. See additional info.

**Commented [TS3]:** May consider removing dates. This currently would allow a landlord to not provide heat during cold weather in Sept. By removing Section 602.3 and 602.4, 602.2 would dictate that a landlord must maintain 65 degree as a minimum all year.

[A] 104.1 Fees.

The fees for activities and services performed by the department in carrying out its responsibilities under this code shall be as established by the applicable governing authority.

[A] 107.3 Prosecution of violation.

Any person failing to comply with a notice of violation or order served in accordance with Section 109.4 shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor or civil infraction as determined by the local municipality, and the violation shall be deemed a strict liability offense. If the notice of violation is not complied with, the code official shall institute the appropriate proceeding at law or in equity to restrain, correct or abate such violation, or to require the removal or termination of the unlawful occupancy of the structure in violation of the provisions of this code or of the order or direction made pursuant thereto. Any action taken by the authority having jurisdiction on such premises shall be charged against the real estate upon which the structure is located and shall be a lien upon such real estate.

[A] 108.4 Failure to comply.

Any person who shall continue any work after having been served with a stop work order, except such work as that person is directed to perform to remove a violation or unsafe condition, shall be subject to fines established by the authority having jurisdiction.



# Caribou Housing Action Plan

May 2026





# Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
Introduction.....	3
Key Takeaways.....	3
Financial Recommendations .....	5
Federal Funding Sources.....	5
State Funding Sources.....	7
Local Funding Sources .....	8
Financial Recommendations.....	9
Regulatory Recommendations .....	11
Modernizing Zoning .....	11
Minimum Lot Area Reduction.....	12
Minimum Setback Reduction .....	12
Maximum Lot Coverage Increase .....	12
Minimum Lot Frontage Increase.....	14
Maximum Height Limit Increase.....	14
Updating By-right Allowances .....	16
Current Contexts .....	16
Updated Allowances .....	17
Streamlining Development .....	20
Pre-approved Missing Middle Designs .....	20
Pre-approved ADU Designs .....	21
Development Incentives .....	23
Height Bonuses .....	23
Parking Reductions .....	24
Expedited Review and Permitting .....	25
Fee Waivers .....	25
Public Land Donation/Sales.....	25
Monitoring and Compliance.....	26

Programmatic Recommendations .....	27
Identifying and Marketing Developable Parcels.....	27
Annual Housing Production Reporting .....	29
Expanding Partnerships .....	29
Land Banks .....	29
Employer-assisted Housing.....	30
Administrative Updates .....	30
Implementation Plan .....	32

## Executive Summary

The City of Caribou faces a pivotal moment in its housing future. This *Housing Action Plan* (HAP) provides a comprehensive, actionable roadmap to guide Caribou's housing strategies in response to shifting demographic trends, an aging housing stock, and persistent affordability pressures, particularly for renters and lower-income households. Building upon the City's recently completed Housing Needs Assessment, the HAP connects market data, demographic analysis, and public input into a focused, community-driven housing strategy.

The HAP organizes its recommendations across three strategic areas: **financial, regulatory, and programmatic.**

Key financial recommendations include:

- Utilizing identified federal, state, and local funding sources for housing development and preservation;
- Establishing a dedicated Affordable Housing Trust Fund and a weatherization and rehabilitation assistance program;
- Expanding the current existing Landlord Incentive Program;
- Lowering construction and infrastructure costs by supporting development through coordinated public improvements, cost-sharing for utility extensions, and bulk purchasing strategies;
- Exploring property tax reduction and deferral options for seniors and income-qualified homeowners; and,
- Expanding the City's existing TIF District to include priority growth areas.

Regulatory recommendations include:

- Modernizing Caribou's zoning code and development standards in alignment with recent Maine state legislation (including LD 1829, LD 2003, LD 427, and LD 997), including:
  - Reductions to minimum lot areas, setbacks, and lot frontages;
  - Increases to maximum lot coverage and building heights; and,
  - Expanded by-right allowances for missing-middle and mixed-use housing types.
- Offering pre-approved design templates for missing middle and ADUs to enable local developers; and,
- Developing a suite of development incentives – height bonuses, parking reductions, fee waivers, expedited review, and public land donations or below-market sales – to make qualifying affordable and senior housing projects financially viable.

Programmatic and administrative recommendations include:

- Publishing and marketing a developable parcel inventory to attract developers;
- Establishing an annual housing production reporting framework;
- Formalizing a Land Bank Program in partnership with local and state partners;

- Pursuing employer-assisted housing partnerships with major local employers; and,
- Administrative updates, like expanding code enforcement capacity, developing a weatherization and home improvement program, and establishing a Housing Advisory Committee to provide ongoing oversight and coordination of housing strategy implementation.

The strategies of this plan are designed to support the **rehabilitation and preservation** of aging units and to **enable diverse and affordable housing** that meets the needs of seniors, low-income renters, small households, and future workers. By reducing regulatory barriers, lowering development costs, leveraging state and federal resources, and building institutional capacity, Caribou can offer safe, high-quality, and attainable housing for all residents today and in the decades ahead.



*Figure 1: Hilltop Heights, located at 19 Marshall Ave, is a former elementary school turned into market rate senior apartments. Maintaining innovative housing production and preservation strategies is essential to meeting the needs of Caribou's current and future residents.*

## Introduction

This *Housing Action Plan* serves as a roadmap to guide Caribou's efforts to meet current and future housing needs. It builds upon the City's recently completed Housing Needs Assessment, connecting housing market data, demographic data, and public input into one focused housing strategy. The goal of this action plan is to help the City respond to changing market conditions and evolving housing challenges by providing a series of actionable regulatory, financial, and programmatic housing strategies that support **increased housing diversity, accessibility, and affordability**.

It provides direction for how local policies, partnerships, and investments can work together to shape a balanced and resilient housing market. The goal is to guide policy decisions, prioritize investments, and ensure that Caribou can offer safe, high-quality, and attainable housing for residents today and in the decades ahead.

## Key Takeaways

The quantitative and qualitative data collected revealed several key findings that helped to guide the policy and programmatic recommendations contained in the *Housing Action Plan*:

### ***Caribou's population is shrinking and aging.***

The City's population declined 10% from 2010–2024 and is projected to fall another 10% by 2040, driven by outmigration and limited job growth. Meanwhile, Caribou's median age increased sharply from 47.6 to 52.3 since 2018, faster than the county or state, and driving demand for senior-friendly and accessible housing.

### ***Households are small and getting smaller.***

61% of renter households and 52% of owner-occupied households are single-person households, necessitating smaller, more naturally affordable units, like ADUs, cottages, and small homes. Such units would benefit young families and individuals, seniors looking to downsize, and low-income residents.

### ***Caribou's housing stock is old, and units are aging out of the housing market.***

60% of all homes were built before 1970, and almost no new housing (especially rentals) has been built in the last 20 years. Furthermore, many of the City's vacant homes are unusable, with units categorized as "other vacant" (often deteriorated or under repair) rising from 31% to 54% of all vacant units. This limits available options for residents and signals a need for increased maintenance and preservation efforts.

***Caribou's housing stock is largely undiversified, but community feedback shows broad support for more diverse housing.***

The majority (68%) of Caribou's housing units are traditional single-family detached homes. Small multi-family (2-4 units) comprises an additional 17% of Caribou's housing stock. The community survey and resident open house showed strong interest in diversified housing types, like ADUs, apartments, duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes.

***Homeownership is rising and home values remain stable, but rental options are tight.***

Homeownership rates increased from 63% to 74% since 2018, now matching Maine and Aroostook County; however, home prices remain far below Maine overall (about \$250k below state typical value). While Caribou remains comparatively affordable for homeowners, the share of high-quality and affordable rental options is stagnating or even declining, as almost no new renter housing has been built in the 2010s or 2020s, and older housing units continue to age out of the market.

***Large income disparities exist between renters and homeowners, and the rental market is inexpensive, but still strained.***

75% of renters earn under \$50,000, compared to 37% of homeowners. 45% of renters are extremely low-income ( $\leq 30\%$  AMI), compared to just 13% of homeowners. Median rent of \$696 is slightly higher than what the typical renter can afford (\$655/month), and 42% of renters remain cost burdened, spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs.



## Financial Recommendations

In a market like Caribou's, where development costs are high relative to achievable rents and sale prices, financial tools are often the deciding factor in whether a housing project gets built. Closing the gap between what it costs to develop housing and what the local market can support requires a proactive, layered approach to public financing. This section identifies federal, state, and local funding sources and mechanisms that are essential tools supporting the development and preservation of housing. These programs help lower development costs, attract private investment, and expand the supply of affordable homes for families, seniors, and vulnerable residents. Additionally, this section identifies strategies that enable the City to more effectively leverage financial resources, such as rehabilitation and maintenance assistance, landlord incentive programs, and property tax and infrastructure fee tools.

### Federal Funding Sources

A variety of federal programs can help support housing development; however, many of these funding sources have recently faced reductions, creating uncertainty nationwide. Caribou should closely monitor federal policy actions and court rulings affecting housing funds and be prepared to act quickly to allocate or secure resources when opportunities, such as the release of previously frozen funds, arise.

#### *Low-Income Housing Tax Credit*

The [Low-Income Housing Tax Credit](#) (LIHTC) incentivizes financing to rehabilitate or construct very low and low-income rental housing. A project must set aside a minimum percentage of units to be affordable to very low and low-income renters for at least 30 years in exchange for a reduction in federal tax liability over ten consecutive years. There are non-competitive credits (4 percent) meant to subsidize 30% of the low-income unit costs and competitive credits (9 percent) meant to subsidize 70% of the low-income unit costs. Competitive credits are often awarded to developments with a higher percentage of set-aside low-income units. They are also often reserved for more pressing projects that address housing for specific vulnerable groups such as homeless individuals or people with special needs.

#### *Community Development Block Grant*

The [Community Development Block Grant](#) (CDBG) program provides annual grants to states, cities, and counties to support a wide range of community development activities, including housing initiatives, particularly for low- and moderate-income individuals and households. CDBG funds are administered by the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), and can support a wide range of housing activities, such as housing rehabilitation, homeownership assistance, site acquisition and predevelopment activities, and infrastructure improvements. However, the funds cannot be used directly for the construction of new housing. This program mandates that at least 70% of CDBG funds be used for activities that support the low- and moderate-income population; the program's flexibility and emphasis on lower-income populations makes it well-suited for promoting affordable housing projects. The City should continue to coordinate with state agencies, including the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and MaineHousing, to ensure projects are competitive, compliant, and aligned with statewide housing goals.

### *Homeless Assistance Grants*

HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants (HAG) Program funds the [Continuum of Care](#) (CoC) Program and the [Emergency Solutions Grant Program](#) (ESG), providing grant funding for communities to assist people with obtaining and maintaining permanent housing, including rapid re-housing assistance, permanent supportive housing, and homelessness prevention efforts.

### *Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing*

Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing) offers grant funding to support communities that are actively taking steps to remove barriers to affordable housing production and preservation. Such funding can support actions including amending current policies and codes, education and outreach activities, and demonstration projects, among other related activities.

### *Home Investment Partnership Program*

[Home Investment Partnership Program \(HOME\)](#), administered utilizes HOME funds to provide grants for owner-occupied housing rehabilitation projects, and includes programming such as Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA), providing security and utility deposit assistance and rental subsidies, and the Eviction Protection Grant Program (EPGP), providing grants for legal assistance for tenants facing or at risk of eviction.

### *Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program*

The [Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program](#) is a HUD program that allows CDBG recipients to leverage their annual grant allocations for flexible financing for economic development, infrastructure, and housing projects. Housing-related activities that can qualify include housing rehabilitation and repair.

### *Section 504 Home Repair Program*

The [Section 504 Home Repair Program](#) is a USDA funded program provides funding to state offices to distribute in the form of loans to very-low-income homeowners to repair, improve, or modernize their homes as well as grants to elderly very-low-income homeowners to remove health and safety hazards. Loans can be awarded for up to \$40,000 and Grants can be awarded up to \$10,000 and can be combined providing homeowners with potentially \$50,000 in assistance.

### *Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program*

The [Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program](#) offers operational subsidies and interest-free capital advances to develop and subsidize rental housing with supportive services for very low- and extremely low-income adults with disabilities.

### *Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program*

The [Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program](#) (SHOP) offers grant funds to national and regional nonprofit organizations to support land acquisition costs and infrastructure enhancements related to affordable housing construction driven by sweat equity and volunteer-based homeownership programs.

## State Funding Sources

State-level funding sources are also well suited to addressing issues of housing affordability in Caribou. By strategically leveraging these resources, local jurisdictions can support development of new housing and rehabilitation of older homes across income levels and lay the groundwork for long-term community resilience and economic growth.

### *Private Activity Bonds*

Private Activity Bonds (PABs) are tax-exempt municipal bonds which enable state and local governments to leverage private capital for public benefit projects, with affordable housing comprising over 90% of PAB utilization nationwide. States receive their federal allocation and subdivide it between state agencies (50%) and local governments (50%), typically using population-based formulas. The most powerful aspect of PAB financing for affordable housing lies in its automatic qualification for 4% LIHTC when bonds finance at least 50% of project development costs, resulting in PABs being used as the primary vehicle for accessing these credits.

### *Maine Affordable Housing Hub*

The [Maine Affordable Housing Hub](#) provides a centralized waiting list for Section 8 vouchers in partnership with the Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). This centralized hub allows applicants to submit one application to apply for all participating PHAs.

### *Housing Assistance Program*

The Maine Department of Economic and Community Development's [Housing Assistance Program](#) provides funding to address housing problems of low-and-moderate-income individuals. The Housing Assistance Program can be used to rehabilitate occupied or vacant multi-family housing units and conversion of non-residential structures. The program requires a cash match of at least 20% of the total cost with a max grant amount to be rewarded of \$1,000,000.

### *Rural Affordable Rental Housing Program*

Maine State Housing Authority's [Rural Affordable Rental Housing Program](#) "MaineHousing" is making funds available under this Program to assist developers in creating affordable rental housing consisting of 5 to 18 units where 100% of the units are leased to households making no more than 80% of Area Median Income ("AMI"). Rents for these units will be the lesser of the market rents for the area, based on the required appraisal, or the 80% AMI rents. The affordability will be required for a minimum of 45 years. All residents must inhabit the units as their primary, permanent residence.



*Figure 2: 55 Weston Avenue was one of many projects funded by the Rural Affordable Rental Housing Program, the project 18 units ranging from \$950 to \$1,250 a month in rent. The units must be made rented to households earning no more than 80% AMI.*

## Local Funding Sources

Local funding sources provide the most direct and locally appropriate financial assistance to support the development and preservation of affordable, workforce, and senior housing for Caribou. These programs include direct grants, low-interest loans, tax credits, and rental assistance mechanisms.

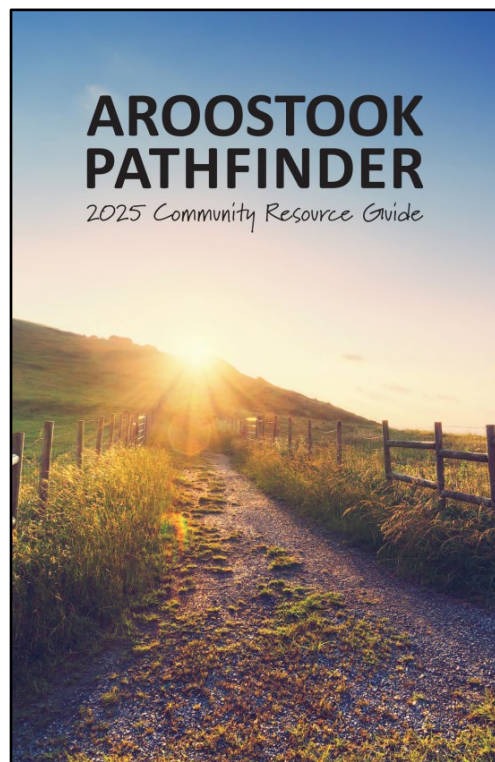
### *Caribou Housing Authority*

The [Caribou Housing Authority](#) serves as the primary public housing administrator for the region, managing 196 Housing Choice Vouchers and 40 Mainstream Vouchers. The authority offers a Landlord Incentive Program providing \$500 signing bonuses to new Section 8 landlords and property referral support.

### *Aroostook County Action Program*

The [Aroostook County Action Program](#) (ACAP) administers multiple housing and energy programs directly serving low-income households across the county. Some of these programs include the Community Aging in Place Program (CAIP) and Older Adult Home Modification Grant Program (OAHM) objectives are to increase the housing stability of low and moderate-income older adult homeowners in Aroostook by increasing safety, minimizing the maintenance burden, and lengthening the tenure in their homes.

Alpha One, a community-based organization dedicated to supporting disabled and aging residents of Maine, recently collaborated with ACAP to create [Aroostook Pathfinder](#), a community resource guide with funding sources and programming that support local residents. Such programs include weatherization and home repair grants, accessibility upgrades, and local housing services.



### *Genesis Community Loan Fund*

The [Genesis Community Loan Fund](#) operates a regional loan fund for affordable housing and community projects throughout Maine and Northern New England. Genesis staff began work in 2018 to create a way to transfer ownership of 515 properties to local nonprofits and housing authorities, in order to keep the properties in the USDA program. Key to the new transfer model is Maine's relatively new affordable housing tax credit, in a use of the credit for rural housing preservation.

### *Tax Increment Financing*

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a tool that allows a municipality to designate a certain area to fund public improvements, such as infrastructure or new development, by using the future increase in property tax revenue generated within that district. TIF works by freezing the tax revenue in the district and then

channeling any additional tax dollars generated by new investments or increased property values into a separate fund to pay for projects within the district. This approach can support affordable housing development by using TIF funds for gap financing for affordable housing projects, or by funding infrastructure improvements necessary to support new residential development.

As part of the downtown revitalization effort following the 2008 Caribou Downtown District Plan, the City created a Downtown TIF District. The current Maine Department of Transportation Village Partnership program is expanding this downtown revitalization effort with transportation and infrastructure improvements.

## **Financial Recommendations**

Expanding the community's financial toolkit is essential to making affordable housing development and preservation economically viable. The recommendations below address barriers across the full housing spectrum, from new construction feasibility to long-term affordability preservation.

### ***Affordable Housing Trust Fund***

Establishing a dedicated Affordable Housing Trust Fund would provide a flexible local funding source to support a range of housing activities, including gap financing for affordable developments, low-interest construction and permanent loans, and direct grants to income-qualified homeowners or nonprofit developers. Potential trust fund capitalization strategies may include general fund appropriations or state and federal pass-through dollars. Revolving loans can help to maintain fiscal health by ensuring previously loaned funds are repaid and reused for future housing efforts. A locally controlled fund allows Caribou to respond quickly to development opportunities and fill financing gaps that federal programs cannot address.

### ***Expand Current Funding Sources***

In order to support housing development and increase fiscal sustainability, the City should expand and diversify current funding mechanisms, including aligning federal and state sources with local tools such as TIF revenue, development-based fees (e.g., in-lieu of), and a revolving loan mechanism funded through the sale of tax-acquired property.

### ***Rehabilitation and Maintenance Assistance***

Preserving the existing affordable housing stock is often more cost-effective than producing new units. A dedicated rehabilitation program offering forgivable loans or grants to low- and moderate-income homeowners and small landlords would help address deferred maintenance, code compliance issues, and energy efficiency/weatherization improvements. Prioritizing rehabilitation funding for older housing stock can extend the useful life of naturally occurring affordable housing and prevent displacement.

### ***Landlord Incentive Program***

The existing landlord incentive program offers \$500 signing bonuses to new Section 8 landlords. As housing costs increase and affordability pressures tighten, Caribou should explore increasing funding and expanding benefit tiers to encourage greater participation. In addition to increasing signing bonuses,

security deposit coverage, vacancy loss protection, and unit repair assistance help reduce the financial risk landlords perceive when leasing to Housing Choice Voucher holders or other cost-burdened renters.

### ***Establish a Local Land Trust***

The City should establish a local community land trust (CLT), to provide a mechanism for permanent affordability by separating land ownership from building ownership, reducing acquisition costs for future buyers and renters. In doing so, the Housing Advisory Committee can work with partners including the Caribou Economic Growth Council (CEGC), the Business Investment Group (BIG), the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority, and nonprofit partners to formalize such a program. This program can be jumpstarted through land donations, below-market land sales, or direct funding partnerships with established CLT and nonprofit entities to co-produce and steward affordable units. Land trusts are discussed in further detail in the section on **Land Banks**.

### ***Reducing Construction and Infrastructure Costs***

The City recognizes that one of the primary cost burdens associated with new housing development is the cost of construction, including site work and the installation of necessary infrastructure, rather than standard utility connection fees. It is not anticipated that the Caribou Utilities District will waive established connection charges, which are modest and necessary for system operations. Accordingly, the City will, to the extent practicable, support housing development by assisting with construction-related activities and infrastructure installation. Such assistance may include, but is not limited to, coordination of public improvements, cost-sharing for utility extensions, and leveraging municipal purchasing power to reduce material and construction costs through bulk procurement or cooperative purchasing arrangements. These efforts are intended to reduce overall development costs, improve project feasibility, and support the timely construction of new housing units.

### ***Property Tax Reduction and Deferral***

Property tax burden affects both development feasibility and long-term affordability for homeowners. Caribou should explore a tiered approach: a tax rebate or reduction program targeting new residents or homebuyers to stimulate demand in targeted areas, and a property tax deferral program for income-qualified senior or low-income homeowners to prevent displacement due to rising assessed values.

### ***TIF District Expansion***

Caribou currently utilizes a TIF district for downtown revitalization efforts, primarily funding transportation and infrastructure improvements. The City can explore utilizing a portion of funds from this current district for affordable housing development and preservation, as well as establishing a new TIF district in desired growth areas, like the Hospital District and River Arts District.



*Figure 3: The area surrounding the Cary Medical Center offers potential for a new TIF district and future housing development.*

# Regulatory Recommendations

The regulatory recommendations in this section identify targeted, practical updates to the City's zoning and development standards that can meaningfully lower barriers to housing production. These changes are designed to **increase the feasibility of infill development, enable missing-middle housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, ADUs, and townhomes, and bring Caribou's zoning code into alignment with recent Maine state legislation**, including LD 997, LD 427, LD 1829, and LD 2003. Taken together, these reforms do not seek to alter the character of Caribou's neighborhoods – rather, they seek to ensure that Caribou's regulations are an asset to housing production rather than an obstacle to it.

Recommendations are organized across four areas: updating development standards, expanding by-right zoning allowances, streamlining development review and permitting, and creating development incentives for affordable and senior housing.

## Modernizing Zoning

Currently, the City has several development standards in place across its three residential districts, including minimum lot areas, minimum front, side, and rear setbacks, maximum lot coverage ratios, maximum lot frontages, and maximum height limits. LD 1829 requires that municipal ordinances cannot establish dimensional requirements for 2-4 unit buildings that are more restrictive than for single-family homes; as the recommended updates to such standards apply consistently for all unit types, this framework is in compliance with the state mandate. The following table illustrates current lot area, setback, and lot coverage requirements in Caribou by zoning district:

**Table 1-1 Current Lot Area, Setback, and Lot Coverage Requirements by Zoning District**

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Area (Sq. Ft.)	Front Setback	Side Setback	Rear Setback	Max Lot Coverage
R-1 (Residential)	9,000 (Single Family) 10,500 (Two Family)	20 ft	5 ft	10 ft	30%
R-2 (Residential)	9,000 (Single Family) 10,500 (Two Family) 12,000 (Multi-Family)*	20 ft	5 ft	10 ft	30%
R-3 (Rural Residential)	43,560 (1 Acre)	30 ft	15 ft	15 ft	30%

\*For R-2 Multi-Family, add 1,500 sq. ft. for each additional unit beyond the base.

## Minimum Lot Area Reduction

Lot area minimums regulate the minimum size a lot must be to be developable and often disable the development of affordable single-family housing that caters to lower-income households. Local developers have noted that current lot area requirements are overly restrictive and are one of the greatest barriers to housing development of all forms. Lot area reductions allow developers to utilize smaller parcels of land for housing. Since parcels of land are smaller, land costs per property are lower, resulting in more affordable housing options. Developers are also able to create more units since the land is being used more efficiently and flexibly. This enables developers to create a wider range of affordable housing types.

LD 1829 prohibits a municipality from establishing or enforcing a minimum lot size requirement greater than 5,000 square feet (1,250 square feet per dwelling unit) for the first four units in designated growth areas with public water and sewer, and prohibits minimum lot sizes greater than 5,000 square feet per unit for the first two units in a single structure outside of a growth area with public water and sewer. To address the changing housing demands in Caribou as well as comply with this recent state legislation, revisiting minimum lot size standards for affordable housing offers a practical way to increase housing variety and affordability. Allowing smaller lot areas can facilitate the development of “missing middle” housing types and smaller, more attainable single-family homes. This flexibility supports efficient land use and encourages infill development that aligns with Caribou’s goals for housing sustainable and manageable growth.

### *Case Study: East Providence, Rhode Island*

[East Providence](#) unanimously approved zoning modifications in September 2025 to allow Accessory Dwelling Units. The city reduced minimum lot size requirements from 7,500 to 5,000 square feet for detached ADUs, creating more opportunities for homeowners to build secondary units.

## Minimum Setback Reduction

Setbacks are the distance from the property line that buildings or accessory units can be built. Minimum setback requirements vary per local jurisdiction and zoning district, but their intent is to provide space between structures and property lines, other structures, and roadways. Setbacks that are too large can create challenges for development of affordable housing as they require larger lots for residential development making financing difficult. By reducing setbacks, Caribou can encourage affordable housing development by enabling developers to fit more units like ADUs on a parcel of land. Reduced setbacks also have the benefit of having better land use efficiency, improving the pedestrian experience, creating more attractive streetscapes, and supporting mixed-use development.

## Maximum Lot Coverage Increase

Lot coverage increases allow developers or property owners to increase the percentage of a lot that can be covered by buildings, beyond what is typically permitted under existing zoning regulations. Lot coverage focuses solely on the area of the lot occupied by buildings and is different than floor area ratio (FAR), which regulates the total building density across all floors relative to lot size, and impervious surface ratio (ISR), which accounts for not just buildings but also other impervious surfaces like driveways, sidewalks, and patios. To help Caribou enable new development, and comply with state legislation like LD 2003, Caribou should increase maximum allowable lot coverages across all residential

zoning districts. This allows developers to receive the benefit of being able to construct more units, larger buildings, or ADUs, making projects more financially viable. In addition to increasing density and helping to address housing shortages, such lot coverage increases promote a more efficient use of land in Caribou, especially in areas where space is limited.

Together, updating these standards greatly increases the feasibility of constructing smaller, more affordable single-family homes, as well as diverse missing middle housing options, while bringing the City into alignment with recent state legislation including LD 1829 and LD 2003. Updates to these standards should occur alongside reviews to the City’s subdivision ordinance to ensure definitions align with updated State definitions, particularly regarding Planning Board review thresholds for units within a structure (raising the threshold from 3 to 5 units). The following table contains recommended lot area, setback, and lot coverage requirements by zoning district:

**Table 1-2 Recommended Lot Area, Setback, and Lot Coverage Requirements by Zoning District**

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Area (Sq. Ft.)	Front Setback	Side Setback	Rear Setback	Max Lot Coverage
R-1 (Residential)	5,000 (up to 4 units)	15 ft	5 ft	10 ft	60%
R-2 (Residential)	5,000 (up to 4 units) 6,250 (5+ unit Multi-Family)*	15 ft	5 ft (combined**)	5 ft	70%
R-3 (Rural Residential)	5,000 (Single Family)	20 ft	15 ft	10 ft	30%

\* The previous standard required that for R-2 Multi-Family, add 1,500 sq. ft. for each additional unit beyond the base. It is recommended to remove this stipulation to allow for maximum development flexibility.

\*\* Combined side setbacks would increase development flexibility by allowing units to be built all the way to the lot line on one side (i.e., zero lot lines on one side), provided there is at least a 5 foot setback on the other side of the parcel.

Figure 4: Smaller setback and lot area requirements increase development flexibility and enable the construction of housing on lots that might currently preclude housing.



## Minimum Lot Frontage Increase

Additionally, the City imposes minimum lot frontages, which dictate the smallest allowable width of a lot where it abuts a public or private street. Reducing this requirement can allow the City to subdivide parcels, creating multiple lots from the same parcel. Furthermore, they enable more narrow lots, which supports smaller single-family homes and missing middle housing like duplexes and townhouses, and they can make infill development easier as developers can utilize leftover land, or split oversized lots. Local developers have noted that current frontage requirements impose a significant barrier to development, particularly in R2 and R3 districts, as they make infill lots less useable, restrict flexible development, and limit how many units can legally access a street, excluding many housing types that aren't large traditional single-family. The following table illustrates current and recommended lot frontage requirements for Caribou's residential zoning districts.

**Table 1-3 Current and Recommended Lot Frontage Requirements By Zoning District**

Zoning District	Minimum Lot Frontage (current)	Minimum Lot Frontage (recommended)
R-1 (Residential)	85' (Single Family)	45' (Single Family)
	95' (Two Family)	55' (Two Family)
	100' (Other Allowed Use)	50' (Other Allowed Use)
R-2 (Residential)	75' (Single Family)	40' (Single Family)
	85' (Two Family)	45' (Two Family)
	95' (Multi Family)	50' (Multi Family)
	Plus 10' for Each Additional Dwelling Unit	45' (Other Allowed Use)
R-3 (Rural Residential)	85' (Other Allowed Use)	
	150' (Single Family)	90' (Single Family)
	160' (Two Family)	100' (Two Family)
	175' (Multi Family)	110' (Multi Family)
	Plus 10' for Each Additional Dwelling Unit	100' (Other Allowed Use)
	160' (Other Allowed Use)	

## Maximum Height Limit Increase

Maximum height standards balance housing supply goals with Caribou's small-town character, regulating how tall a residential building can be. Increases in height in R-2 can support housing production and efficient uses of land and infrastructure, while enabling small-scale missing middle and still respecting current neighborhood contexts. Such height increases are also in line with LD 2003 and LD 1829 goals, which allows for additional density for "affordable housing developments" in certain areas. Notably, adjustments to height limits that enable vertical expansion should be made in coordination with the City's Fire Department to confirm service capacity for taller structures and to verify additional requirements, such as the need for sprinkler systems. The following table illustrates Caribou's current and recommended maximum heights by residential zoning district:

**Table 1-4 Current and Recommended Maximum Heights By Zoning District**

Zoning District	Maximum Height (current)	Maximum Height (recommended)
R-1 (Residential)	35'	No change
R-2 (Residential)	35'	48'
R-3 (Rural Residential)	35'	No change



*Figure 5: Updating development standards such as required setbacks, lot areas, and lot coverages ultimately increases development flexibility and lowers the cost of construction, enabling new housing.*

## Updating By-right Allowances

### *Case Study: Oak Cottage Courts*

Oak Cottage Court a project located in Decatur, Georgia serves as a great example of how these allowing smaller denser units in the right context can create a project to meet the needs of otherwise underserved areas of the housing market, like seniors looking to downsize while maintain a sense of community.

The Oak Cottage Court project offered residents choices of one-to-three-bedroom homes ranging from \$210,000 to \$305,000, The project provides a living example for how strategic partnerships can help create below-market housing for middle income earners, with the Decatur Development Authority working in collaboration with non-profit developer [Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership](#), general contractor [Fortas Homes](#) and, ultimately, the Decatur Land Trust, to deliver housing affordable in perpetuity.

## Current Contexts

Caribou's current residential and commercial zones are as follows:

### **R-1 Residential District**

The R-1 District encompasses most of the older residential neighborhoods and is located within convenient reach of business facilities. The district is expected to contain most of the higher-density single-family dwellings likely to be needed by the community. Certain additional uses that meet the requirements of this Ordinance may be permitted, contributing to balanced neighborhoods and enhancing the overall attractiveness of the community.

### **R-2 Residential District**

The R-2 District encompasses many of the older residential neighborhoods and is located within convenient reach of business facilities. It is expected to contain most of the multi-family or apartment-type dwellings likely to be needed by the community. However, in harmony with established neighborhoods, the predominant land use will likely remain single-family residences. As in the R-1 District, certain additional uses that meet the requirements of this Ordinance may be permitted, contributing to balanced neighborhoods and enhancing community appeal.

### **R-3 Residential District**

The R-3 District encompasses most of the area outside the urban center and is intended for uses that have traditionally predominated in rural New England: forestry and farming, farm residences, and a variety of other uses consistent with a generally open, low-intensity pattern of land use. The minimum lot size requirement is high in order to prevent overdevelopment in areas where public sewers are not feasible and where a full range of urban services cannot be provided economically.

### **RC-2 Commercial District**

The RC-2 District is intended for commercial uses to which the public requires free and easy access. The lot size requirements are larger than other commercial Districts, since the area may not be serviced by public sewer, and the setback requirements are greater, since most RC-2 Districts are expected to be along major traveled roads.

### **C-1 Commercial District**

The C-1 District is intended primarily for commercial uses that require easy and frequent public access.

Centrally located within the existing downtown business district, it is designed to encourage concentrated commercial development to the mutual advantage of both customers and merchants.

**C-2 Commercial District**

The C-2 District is intended primarily for commercial uses requiring free and easy access. It is designed to accommodate a broader range of business and associated activities than those permitted in the C-1 District.

Notably, the City has discussed adopting mixed-use zones (complementary residential and commercial uses) to better promote the type of development desired by the community. New mixed use zones would replace Commercial and RC-2 zones, and are targeted for the City’s urban core, downtown areas, riverfront district, along Route 1 from the Caribou Inn north to Fort St., and surrounding the Cary Medical Center.

The following table illustrates what land uses are permitted by-right (with a code enforcement officer permit), and with planning board review in Caribou’s various residential and commercial zones:

**Table 1-5 Current Land Use Allowances by Zoning District**

Principal Land Use Activity	R-1	R-2	R-3	RC-2	C-1	C-2
Dwelling, Single-Family	CEO/YES	CEO/YES	CEO/YES	CEO/YES	NO	NO
Dwelling, Two Family Housing	PB	PB	CEO/YES	CEO/YES	NO	PB
Dwelling, Multi-Family	NO	CEO/YES	YES	CEO/YES	PB	PB
Dwelling, Third Story Apartment	NO	PB	PB	PB	PB	PB

\*CEO = Code Enforcement Officer. Means use is permitted but requires code enforcement approval.

\*\*PB = Planning Board. Use is allowed with Planning Board review.

**Updated Allowances**

Updating allowable uses supports local goals for increasing housing supply, while increasing the diversity of Caribou’s housing stock and enabling housing that supports young individuals and families, low-income residents, and seniors. Furthermore, allowing residential units within commercial zones can increase resident’s access to goods and services, while aligning with state requirements; LD 997 states that residential units must be allowed in buildings located within commercially zoned districts, with very strict limitations, such as flooding or other natural hazards. However, the City can still limit the number of residential units allowed, limit to a defined number of units, limit to a defined total square footage, define a proportional ratio of commercial to residential development, and prohibit residential development on the first floor.

Furthermore, LD 1829 requires municipalities to allow at minimum three dwelling units per lot anywhere residential uses are permitted statewide, and four dwelling units per lot in designated growth areas or on lots served by both public water and sewer. The anticipated update to the City’s Comprehensive Plan provides a great time to revisit designated growth and rural areas, as well as zoning districts.

Furthermore, as updates to development standards and zoning allowances increase allowable residential density, the City should evaluate how such changes may impact public utilities, public safety, and potential fiscal constraints associated with increased density.

The following table contains recommended updates to allowable land uses by zoning district:

**Table 1-6 Recommended Land Use Allowances by Zoning District**

Principal Land Use Activity	R-1	R-2	R-3	RC-2	C-1	C-2
Dwelling, Single-Family	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
Dwelling, Two-Unit	YES	YES	YES	YES	PB	PB
Dwelling, Three-Unit	YES	YES	YES	YES	PB	PB
Dwelling, Four-Unit	YES	YES	YES	YES	PB	PB
Dwelling, Multi-Family (5+ units)	PB	YES	PB	PB	PB	PB
Dwelling, Third Story Apartment	PB	YES	PB	YES	YES	YES
Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)	YES	YES	YES	YES	PB	PB

Such changes support increased housing production and diversity, as well as enabling infill development, helping to combat blight, and making efficient use of existing infrastructure. They can allow for sustainable growth to support Caribou’s current and future residents, while limiting sprawl and preserving the rural character of the community. These updates also align with recent state legislation, including LD 997, enabling residential units within commercial zones, LD 1829, which requires that municipalities allow up to four housing units per lot where housing is permitted, and LD 2003, which requires that municipalities allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to be located on the same lot as a single-family home, without additional density or parking requirements. LD 1829 further mandates that: (a) owner-occupancy cannot be required as a condition of ADU construction or occupancy; (b) fire suppression sprinklers cannot be required for an ADU unless the structure contains more than 2 dwelling units including the ADU; and (c) ADUs must be allowed on nonconforming lots if the ADU does not further increase the nonconformity.

Key changes include updating allowances to enable two-unit (i.e., duplexes), three-unit (i.e., triplexes, three-unit cottage courts), and four-unit (i.e., quadplexes, four-unit cottage courts) by right in all residential districts and in RC-2, and in C-1 and C-2 with Planning Board approval. Notably, Caribou should allow both side-by-side configurations, as well as stacked configurations, as long as the development still abides by all dimensional and design standards. In addition, it is recommended to allow multifamily (4+ units, including quadplexes, townhomes, cottage courts, and apartments) throughout R-2, and in R-1, R-3, RC-2, C-1, and C-2 with Planning Board approval. Finally, explicitly allowing ADUs by right in all residential zones aligns with state mandates under LD 2003 and LD 1829. Notably, as the City updates its zoning code, it should make clear that ADUs are exempt from density calculations.



*Figure 6: Duplexes, triplexes, and multiplexes allow multiple units to be on the same property and can be designed to blend in seamlessly with the existing neighborhood.*

Third-story apartments refer specifically to residential units located on the second floor or above within otherwise commercial or mixed-use buildings. Currently, the City permits residential dwelling space on floors other than the first floor (street level) with Site Design Review and Planning Board approval in all residential and commercial zones except for R-1. It is recommended to modify this to allow such small-scale mixed-uses in R-2 and all commercial zones by right, and in R-1 and R-3 with Planning Board approval. This also aligns with goals of shifting current Commercial and RC-2 zones to new mixed use zones. In addition to increasing housing supply and choice, shifting many uses from requiring Planning Board approval to administrative/by right approval will save developers and the City time, bringing units to market quicker.

*Figure 7: Enabling small-scale residential in commercial zones can promote housing near jobs, goods, and services. Pictured is an example of a small mixed-use development in Grand Falls, New Brunswick.*



## Streamlining Development

### Pre-approved Missing Middle Designs

To encourage missing middle housing development, the City should explore offering a portfolio of ready-to-build, pre-approved design plans for various common middle housing types, like duplexes, triplexes, cottages, and townhomes. These standardized designs reduce barriers such as design costs and bypass review and permitting, thus accelerating construction timelines, lowering overall costs, and accelerating the delivery of attainable housing. Providing builders and homeowners with vetted architectural templates promotes housing diversity while ensuring safety, quality, and compatibility with existing neighborhoods.

#### *Case Study: Norfolk, Virginia*

Norfolk, Virginia developed a [Missing Middle Pattern Book](#) with vetted designs for duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and courtyard homes. Builders select from the book's preapproved plans, which include site layouts, elevations, and parking guidance calibrated to local standards and zoning overlays. Conforming projects bypass lengthy reviews, cutting timelines and costs while ensuring compatibility with existing neighborhoods. Initial focus is on targeted areas with underutilized lots, promoting small-scale infill over large developments.



## Pre-approved ADU Designs

To streamline the process for residents who want to add accessory dwelling units to their properties Caribou should consider creating a pre-approved ADU program. By investing City resources upfront to create a library of standardized, fully reviewed ADU designs, Caribou can ensure these plans meet all building, safety, and utility requirements before they are made available to the public, while saving developers time and money. This would particularly benefit small-scale developers, such as residents looking to add a backyard cottage. Offering a range of unit sizes and layouts would help address diverse housing needs in the community.

Importantly, future ADU regulations should be in line with state regulations. LD 1829 dictates that owner occupancy cannot be required in an ADU, and sprinklers cannot be required for buildings of 1 or 2 dwelling units, including ADUs. Lastly, ADUs can be either attached or detached from a multi-unit structure.



*Figure 8: ADUs can support multigenerational households while preserving neighborhood character.*

### Case Study: Tempe, Arizona

Tempe, Arizona in response to statewide legislation that allowed ADU's to be built on all single family zoned lots in many Arizona cities partnered with AARP through their [Community Challenge](#) grant program with an awarded amount of \$20,000. This partnership helped Tempe create the ADU Design Challenge where qualified architects, designers and students were all able to submit construction documents and designs for ADU's to be voted on by the public. [The winners](#) are now being reviewed to be adopted as standard plans by the city, a process that can save [thousands](#) of dollars on permitting and design work, and will soon be available for the public to use.





<p><b>Best Overall ADU Design</b></p>  <p><b>Breeze House</b> 1 Bed / 1 Bath (600 Square Feet) Designer: Qiao and Shen <a href="#">View the design here</a></p>	<p><b>Community Choice ADU Winner</b></p>  <p><b>Desert Mass</b> 1 Bed / 1.5 Bath (860 Square Feet) 2 Bed / 1 Bath (860 Square Feet) Designer: Studio Zhan <a href="#">View the design here</a></p>
<p><b>Small Footprint ADU Winner</b></p>  <p><b>The Retreat</b> Studio / 1 Bath (600 Square Feet) Designer: Vinson Studios PLLC <a href="#">View the design here</a></p>	<p><b>Small Footprint ADU Runner-Up</b></p>  <p><b>Casita SAMA</b> Studio / 1 Bath (400 Square Feet) 1 Bed / 1 Bath (543 Square Feet) 2 Bed / 1 Bath (662 Square Feet)</p>

Figure 9: Offering a range of neighborhood-compatible, pre-approved plans allows residents to choose what fits best.

## Development Incentives

Development incentives can be a very impactful tool to attract specific types of development to a community and are often used to promote the development of affordable housing. By increasing development opportunity, in the case of density bonuses, speeding up timelines, with expedited permitting and review, and by lowering development costs, in the case of parking reductions, fee waivers/deferrals, and land donations/sub-market rate sales, development with units set aside as affordable are more financially viable. Furthermore, such incentives can be further structured to promote other types of housing that benefit the community, such as senior/accessible housing.



Figure 10: Caribou Gardens offers affordable living opportunities for seniors in Caribou.

## Height Bonuses

Density/height bonuses allow a developer to construct more housing units on a site than the base zoning would normally allow if the project provides specific public benefits, most commonly on-site affordable housing. By increasing the number of units that can be built on the same piece of land, a height bonus increases revenue potential, which can offset the lower rents collected from income restricted units and encourage higher density, mixed income housing in appropriate locations. Though the City of Caribou does not regulate developments based on an explicit "units per acre" density metric, offering a height bonus of an additional 12 feet would provide developments with an affordable housing set-aside additional development capacity, while aligning with recent state legislation.

LD 1829 requires municipalities to allow affordable housing developments in designated growth areas or on lots with public water and sewer to achieve a dwelling unit density of at least 2.5 times the base density, and to allow at least one additional story (or 14 feet) above the municipal height limit for such

developments. As this bonus would permit an additional story for qualifying affordable developments, and the City does not have an explicit base density, this framework is in alignment with state mandates. The following table illustrates suggested minimum required percentages of affordable housing, by level of affordability, in order to qualify for an affordable housing density bonus:

**Table 1-7 Required Percentage of Affordable Units by Level of Affordability**

Level of Affordability	Minimum Required Percentage
120% or less of AMI	20%
At least half at 80% or less of AMI, the remainder at 120% or less of AMI	10%
80% or less of AMI	7.5%
50% or less of AMI	5 %

It is currently recommended to raise the base height maximum to 48 feet in R-2; if a development offers a qualifying affordable housing contribution, they should be granted an increase in maximum height up to 60 feet. Similarly, the current and recommended base height maximum in R-1 and R-3 is 35 feet, which should be increased to 47 feet with a qualifying affordable housing contribution.

### Parking Reductions

LD 427 mandates that municipalities require no more than one off-street parking space per residential unit within growth areas. Outside of growth areas, cities must a developer to satisfy municipal parking requirements through an off-site parking agreement with existing facilities located within 0.25 miles of the development site. Though the City is already meeting this standard as required by the state, offering a parking reduction lets a qualifying project build fewer parking spaces than the standard minimum parking requirements when the project includes affordable units and/or age-restricted senior housing.

Because parking, especially structured parking, is expensive and land intensive, reducing required parking can significantly lower per unit development costs and free up land and budget for more units or deeper affordability instead of car storage. Notably, if updated zoning and development standards and an affordable housing density bonus are applied, the amount of parking the development is required to provide may increase to correspond with potential additional units unless a parking reduction is available. This approach supports more efficient land use, aligns with local and regional sustainability goals, and would be tailored for those who are shown to drive less, such as low-income residents and seniors.



Current parking requirements often require much more parking than is needed, especially for senior and low-income housing developments.

The following table illustrates current minimum parking requirements by residential use type, as well as suggested parking reductions for qualifying developments:

**Table 1-8 Current and Recommended Parking by Residential Use**

Residential Use Type	Current Minimum Parking Requirement	Suggested Minimum Parking Requirement
Affordable Residential Dwelling (Single-Family, Two-Family)	1 space per dwelling unit	0.75 space per dwelling unit
Elderly Housing	1 space per dwelling unit	0.75 space per dwelling unit (0.5 space per dwelling unit if the development also qualifies as affordable)
Affordable Multi-Family Dwellings	1 space per dwelling unit (subject to Site Design Review)	0.75 space per dwelling unit

## Expedited Review and Permitting

Expedited review and permitting can provide housing projects with an affordable housing and/or senior housing set-aside with faster and more predictable development review and building permit timelines. By shortening approval time and reducing uncertainty, streamlined processing lowers holding, financing, and soft costs, making it easier for affordable and mixed income projects to compete for capital and reach construction. Furthermore, by bringing such developments to market quicker, residents benefit from increased access to affordable housing options. Such projects should receive priority in review and permitting over market-rate and non-residential development, with increased priority for projects with deeper or greater affordability commitments.

## Fee Waivers

Developers have repeatedly emphasized that new single and multi-family residential growth, especially in subdivisions, has been limited as construction and infrastructure costs (including public roads, sidewalks, water, and sewer) are prohibitive to local developers. To support affordable and senior housing development, the City should waive, to the greatest extent possible, all applicable infrastructure fees for qualifying developments. Additionally, the City can further reduce construction costs by helping to coordinate public improvements, share costs related to utility extensions, and utilize bulk or cooperative purchasing to lower material costs. These strategies can greatly lower development costs and increase the feasibility of construction that benefits the community.

## Public Land Donation/Sales

Affordable and available land, especially near key locations with access to essential goods and services and infrastructure/utility connections, is in short supply in Caribou. The City has the opportunity to bridge this gap by providing developers with publicly owned land at low or no cost in return for the provision of affordable housing, senior/accessible housing, and other housing that meets identified community

needs. Not only does this encourage affordable housing by lowering or mitigating land costs for developers, but it also allows the City to guide affordable housing development according to their vision for the community.

Such land might include vacant parcels, as well as underutilized parcels fit for redevelopment (such as underused parking lots or aging industrial or commercial properties). As part of this process, the City should regularly conduct a review of publicly owned land to identify parcels suitable for residential development. This information should be published a public database, with relevant information including location, gross area, assessed land value, and existing infrastructure connections. The City can then issue request for proposals (RFPs) for development and set up a pathway for accepting unsolicited proposals from potential developers.

Preference should be given to projects that provide greater affordability (e.g., units affordable to households earning below 50% of AMI will receive preference over units affordable to households earning between 50% and 80% AMI). Proposals can then be evaluated based on criteria such as project feasibility, community impact, and alignment with local housing goals. Upon approval, a land donation or sale agreement should be executed, stipulating the terms and conditions of the land transfer and the developer's obligations, including required terms and levels of affordability. A number of potential parcels have already been identified in the later section on **Identifying and Marketing Developable Parcels**.

## Monitoring and Compliance

It should be the responsibility of the City to monitor developments that have been granted development incentives in return for providing affordable units, to ensure compliance with the agreed upon terms and conditions of affordability, construction, and maintenance.

Importantly, designated affordable units should be of the same construction and design quality as other units within a project, and should have design standards that ensure compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood. Such units should be kept in good condition, with penalties or a revocation of development incentives imposed on developers that fail to meet maintenance standards.

Furthermore, the City should monitor how affordable units are rented or sold, to ensure affordability is preserved through tenant transitions or ownership changes. The City should establish a monitoring and compliance framework to ensure adherence to agreed-upon terms and conditions of affordability, construction, and maintenance. Such a process could include developers providing government staff with letters of compliance, which outline the number, type, and quality of affordable units, along with copies of the leases for the affordable units. In addition, the City can employ on-site monitoring after the first Certificate of Occupancy, and every few years thereafter, in which units are inspected to ensure continued maintenance.

In cases of non-compliance, the City may consider a range of enforcement measures, such as requiring a development to pay a fee-in-lieu to a dedicated fund until the unit(s) are compliant, or temporarily withholding certain approvals or permits until compliance is achieved. By ensuring affordable housing developments remain in accordance with the agreed upon rules and standards through monitoring for compliance, and levying punishment in cases of non-compliance, the City can ensure that designated units remain well-maintained and affordable throughout the entire term of affordability.

# Programmatic Recommendations

Zoning reforms and financial tools lay the groundwork for housing progress, but sustained, long-term impact requires institutional capacity, active partnerships, and ongoing coordination. The recommendations in this section build on Caribou's existing assets, including the Caribou Housing Authority, the Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP), and the City's downtown TIF District, while identifying new opportunities to expand the City's reach through land banking, employer partnerships, nonprofit collaborations, and targeted outreach to property owners with underutilized or vacant parcels.

Recommendations are organized across five areas: identifying and marketing developable parcels, annual housing production reporting, expanding partnerships (including land banking and employer-assisted housing), and administrative updates.

## Identifying and Marketing Developable Parcels

The map on the following page shows several parcels identified by the City as opportunities for potential residential redevelopment, as well as city-owned parcels generally.

The analysis revealed 1,173 acres of city-owned land, including 201 acres of city-owned land determined to have high potential for residential redevelopment. This represents around 2.7% and 0.4% of the city's total residential land area (44,139 acres), demonstrating significant developable City land. By publishing these identified parcels and marketing them to developers, along with key information such as total average, utility and infrastructure connections, and zoning, the city can save developers time and money and direct development toward desired growth areas. The following table summarizes the total acres of identified land owned by the city, including land owned by the city for redevelopment, as well as the total acres of residential land and total acres of land in the City, as calculated by GIS.

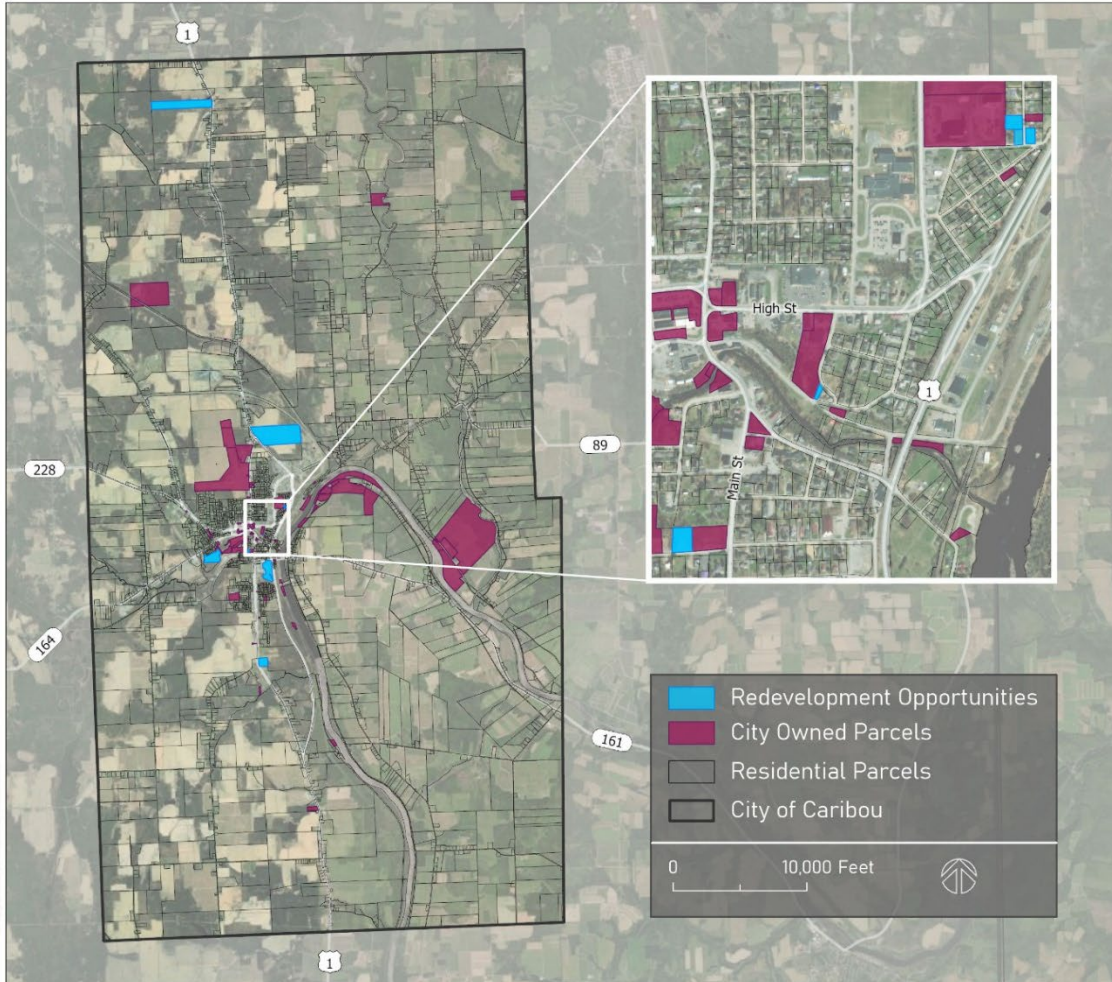
**Table 1-9 Redevelopment Land Area**

City Owned Redevelopment Land	All City Owned Land	Residential Land Area	Total Land Area
201.01 acres	1172.77 acres	44138.64 acres	51260.00 acres

This inventory can be further expanded to include any future city-owned parcels, as well as privately-owned parcels suitable for development. As noted earlier, donating these parcels or providing them at below market-rate prices for developers who provide housing that benefits the community (such as senior and/or affordable housing), directly lowers the cost of development and can enable such housing that may be otherwise not feasible. A map of potential redevelopment opportunities in Caribou is shown on the next page.

# Redevelopment Opportunities in Caribou, Maine

The parcels highlighted in blue are city owned parcels that have been identified as potential redevelopment opportunities in Caribou. The inset zooms in on five of the smaller redevelopment opportunity parcels that aren't distinguishable on the main map. The remaining city owned parcels are shown in pink, and residential parcel boundaries are symbolized by a dark grey outline.



Disclaimer: This map is for informational purposes only and does not constitute guidance for development. All data are approximate estimates and are subject to change. Users must conduct independent, site-specific evaluation to determine actual suitability, constraints, and permitting requirements prior to any development activity.



**City of Caribou**

Data: City of Caribou, 2025.

## Annual Housing Production Reporting

LD 1184 requires municipalities with 4,000 or more residents to submit an annual report by January 31 each year on: residential building permit applications (categorized by type), number of units permitted and demolished, and certificates of occupancy issued (including units affordable to ≤80% AMI and 81–120% AMI households). The City should establish an annual housing production reporting program, aligning with the monitoring and compliance framework focused on affordability covenant compliance, and the tracking system in place for developable parcels. Notably, the state reimburses 90% of expenses incurred; the City should designate a staff lead for LD 1184 reporting and apply for such reimbursement yearly.

## Expanding Partnerships

Caribou's housing conditions are shaped by slowed regional job growth and housing supply dynamics that extend beyond municipal boundaries. Partnerships with nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations and land banks, and employers can expand the city's capacity to implement housing strategies while aligning efforts with workforce development, transportation planning, and broader economic initiatives across Aroostook County and Northern Maine. These collaborations are well-suited for predevelopment activities, new housing production, preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing, shared equity and workforce housing approaches, and targeted homeownership and rehabilitation programs — improving competitiveness for state and federal resources, expanding homeownership access, and contributing to neighborhood stability for residents with limited financial capacity.

## Land Banks

The City has been exploring the use of land banking for affordable housing efforts, in which the City (with a potential partner) could acquire, hold, and manage land with the goal of utilizing it to support affordable housing. Such a strategy typically involves using vacant, tax-delinquent, or underutilized parcels, and developing them with deed restrictions or long-term ground leases to ensure continued affordability. though a formal land bank program has not yet been created, the City has authority to do so under Chapter 19, Section 6.0 “Disposal of Tax Acquired Properties”, which allows conveyance to a “landbank entity” as one option for disposal.

Current proposed concepts include partnering with the Caribou Economic Growth Council (CEGC) and Business Investment Group (BIG) to execute such a program, as well as partnering with the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority, which was established in 2022 to assist regional and local land banks. The program could be funded through initial seed money from the City's general fund, TIF funds, or other available revenue sources, and can be continuously funded by permitting and license fees. Future fees on uses such as vacant buildings and rental housing licenses can supplement this, and once operational, the proposed land bank would be self-sustaining using a revolving fund model, in which proceeds from completed projects are reinvested. Notably, the City would need to form an LLC to transfer tax-acquired properties with a clean title from former owners through a consent agreement.

### **Case Study: Sanford, Maine, and Rumford, Maine Land Banks**

The City of Sanford, Maine has been operating a [land bank program](#) successfully for over 5 years, initially capitalized with \$500,000 (\$250,000 TIF + \$250,000 loan). The program is a partnership between the City government and the private real estate sector and aims to transform vacant and abandoned properties into safe and affordable housing. Similarly, the City of Rumford recently instituted land bank practices and funds the program at \$75,000 per year, mostly to cover demolition costs of abandoned and blighted properties.

## **Employer-assisted Housing**

Employers can play a pivotal role in addressing local housing needs by investing in or facilitating housing opportunities for their workforce. Employer-assisted housing initiatives leverage the resources and interests of major local or regional employers to reduce housing cost burdens, improve employee attraction and retention, and strengthen the local labor market. These programs can take various forms, including direct financial assistance to employees, partnerships with developers to create workforce housing, or contributions of land and resources toward housing development.

Common strategies include:

- Down payment or rental assistance programs that help employees live closer to their workplaces.
- Master leasing or bulk unit agreements that guarantee affordable homes for employees in new developments.
- Development partnerships, where employers contribute land, financing, or infrastructure improvements to support mixed-income or workforce housing.
- Location-based incentives, aligning housing opportunities near job centers to reduce commute times and transportation costs.

Employer-assisted housing can be especially effective in markets like Caribou, where declining regional job growth and increasing housing affordability pressures intersect. By improving access to attainable housing for workers in key industries such as education, health care, manufacturing, and logistics, employers can enhance workforce stability and retain local talent.

## **Administrative Updates**

Strengthening Caribou's administrative capacity to manage housing quality, coordinate programs, and leverage its active volunteer governance culture is foundational to implementing any housing strategy. The recommendations below build on existing assets while addressing recognized gaps.

### **Code Enforcement Capacity**

The City should examine if existing code enforcement capacities are adequate, particularly as a land banking program is formalized. Ensuring that the City has a full time dedicated officer is essential to support both housing quality and neighborhood stability.

### ***Weatherization and Home Improvement Program***

The City can also explore dedicating funds from TIF, permitting and licensing fees, or other revenue sources to establish a local weatherization and home improvement program that complements – and helps residents navigate – existing state and federal resources. This program can help maintain existing housing, preventing blight and vacancies, and can also support accessibility upgrades and aging in place, supporting Caribou’s seniors. Currently, the City of Presque Isle offers low-interest loans (up to \$20,000 at as low as 1% interest) to landlords who rent within city limits, covering window/door upgrades, energy-efficient heating/cooling systems, insulation improvements, and life-safety code violations. The City can explore a similar program, offering funding to local homeowners for home improvements. This program can be developed in coordination with the Caribou Housing Authority and the Aroostook County Action Program, which currently acts as the main local service provider for such weatherization and home upgrade services.

### ***Formalizing Volunteer Committees***

Caribou has a strong tradition of volunteer-led planning committees such as the Downtown Revitalization Committee, Caribou Riverfront Redevelopment Committee, Library Board, Airport Committee, Recreation Commission, Historical Society, and Development Committee to address ongoing challenges and opportunities within the City. To translate this civic energy into more durable and impactful outcomes, the city should consider formalizing the structure and mandates of key committees through ordinance or resolution. This could include establishing clear charges, reporting relationships to the City Council, defined meeting schedules, and staff liaison assignments for each active committee.

For housing-related work specifically, the city should consider creating a Housing Advisory Committee to provide a dedicated forum for reviewing housing policy, tracking progress on action plan recommendations, and coordinating with nonprofit partners and developers.



*Figure 11: Developing a housing strategy supported by the community helps ensure Caribou remains welcoming to all.*

## Implementation Plan

This implementation table offers the City of Caribou with a clear, actionable framework for moving its housing strategies forward. It translates the goals and strategies into specific steps with assigned responsibilities, timelines, and intended outcomes. With this structure in place, City staff, leaders, and partners can better coordinate efforts, allocate resources, and track progress on key initiatives.

Regular review is encouraged to assess progress, identify what's working, and adjust as the City's needs evolve. These strategies represent important steps toward meeting Caribou's community vision of being a family-friendly, safe place to live, work and play for all ages.






**(0–2 years)** – Actions that can be initiated or completed quickly, often requiring only local ordinance/resolution or administrative action









**(2–5 years)** – Actions requiring interagency coordination, new programs, or capital formation









**Ongoing** – Continuous or annual responsibilities




Strategy	Timeline	Intended Impacts	Responsible Department(s)	Anticipated Costs	Staff Capacity
Establish an Affordable Housing Trust Fund	 Short-term	Creates a locally controlled, flexible funding source for gap financing, low-interest loans, and grants; enables rapid response to development opportunities	City Administration; Economic Development; Caribou Housing Authority	<b>Medium-High</b> (\$100k–\$300k initial capitalization; likely phased and grant-supported due to limited municipal budget capacity)	<b>Medium</b> – Requires ongoing administrative oversight, grant management, and financial tracking
Launch Weatherization, Rehabilitation & Renovation Assistance Program (forgivable loans/grants to low- and moderate-income homeowners and small landlords)	 Short-term	Preserves naturally occurring affordable housing stock; reduces deferred maintenance, blight, and vacancy; prevents displacement; supports accessibility upgrades and aging in place for seniors	Housing; Code Enforcement; Tax Assessment	<b>Medium</b> (\$50k–\$250k annually; should rely heavily on MaineHousing, ACAP, and federal/state funding partnerships)	<b>Medium</b> – May require part-time coordination responsibilities added to existing staff roles
Expand Landlord Incentive Program (increase signing bonuses; add security deposit coverage, vacancy loss protection, and unit repair assistance)	 Short-term	Expand Landlord Incentive Program (increase signing bonuses; add security deposit coverage, vacancy loss protection, and unit repair assistance)	Housing; Caribou Housing Authority	<b>Low-Medium</b> (\$10k–\$100k annually depending on participation levels)	<b>Low</b> – Can largely be administered through existing housing staff and CHA coordination

Strategy	Timeline	Intended Impacts	Responsible Department(s)	Anticipated Costs	Staff Capacity
Adopt Property Tax Reduction/Deferral Program (rebate for new residents; deferral for income-qualified seniors and low-income homeowners)	 Short-term	Prevents displacement of seniors and low-income homeowners due to rising assessed values; stimulates homebuyer demand in targeted areas	Tax Assessment; City Administration	<b>Medium</b> (temporary reduction in tax revenue; administrative setup costs)	<b>Low</b> – Primarily administrative review and annual eligibility verification
Update development standards (lot areas, setbacks, lot coverages, lot frontages, maximum heights) to promote diverse housing types	 Short-term	Increases development feasibility of diverse, attainable housing; enables gentle increases in density in residential zones	Code Enforcement; Planning Board	<b>Low</b> (ordinance drafting, legal review, public engagement)	<b>Medium</b> – Requires staff time for ordinance updates, hearings, and implementation
Update By-Right Land Use Allowances: allow two-, three-, and four-family by-right in R-1, R-2, and R-3; multi-family (5+) by-right in R-2 and in other zones with PB approval; mixed-use by-right in R-2/C-1/C-2/RC-2 and in other zones with PB approval	 Short-term	Removes discretionary barriers to missing middle housing; reduces approval costs and time; enables diverse housing types that meet community demand	Code Enforcement; Planning Board; City Administration	<b>Low</b> (zoning ordinance amendments, legal review, outreach)	<b>Medium</b> – Requires staff and Planning Board coordination during code update process

Strategy	Timeline	Intended Impacts	Responsible Department(s)	Anticipated Costs	Staff Capacity
Establish incentives for affordable/senior housing: density bonuses, parking reductions, waived/deferred fees, expedited review and permitting; land donations/sales	 Short-term	Directly lowers and enables development costs for projects benefiting community; drives desired development	Code Enforcement; Planning Board; Public Works	<b>Low</b> (potential foregone fee revenue and land value)	<b>Medium</b> – Requires ongoing review, monitoring, and incentive administration
Establish Affordable Housing Monitoring and Compliance Framework (letters of compliance, on-site inspections, enforcement for non-compliance)	 Short-term	Ensures designated affordable units remain maintained and affordable for full affordability term; protects public investment in incentive programs	Code Enforcement; Housing; City Administration	<b>Low</b> (inspection, reporting, and enforcement activities)	<b>Medium</b> – Requires recurring inspections, recordkeeping, and compliance monitoring
Publish and Market Developable Parcel Inventory and Establish a Pathway for Development Proposals	 Short-term	Saves developers time and money; directs development to desired growth areas; increases transparency; facilitates public land donation/sale process	Economic Development; City Administration; Tax Assessment	<b>Low</b> (GIS analysis, website/database development, marketing materials)	<b>Low</b> – Requires periodic updates and coordination between departments

Strategy	Timeline	Intended Impacts	Responsible Department(s)	Anticipated Costs	Staff Capacity
Pursue Employer-Assisted Housing Partnerships (down payment/rental assistance, master leasing agreements, development partnerships with major employers)	 Short-term	Reduces housing cost burden for workforce; improves employee attraction and retention; aligns housing production with workforce needs	Economic Development; Housing; City Administration	<b>Low</b> (primarily public cost; substantial private-sector leverage potential)	<b>Medium</b> – Requires ongoing outreach, partnership cultivation, and coordination
Expand Code Enforcement Capacity (evaluate need for full-time dedicated officer) to support housing quality, land banking, and neighborhood stability	 Short-term	Strengthens housing quality oversight; enables effective enforcement of affordability conditions and land bank operations; addresses blight proactively	Code Enforcement; City Administration	<b>Medium</b> (annual salary, benefits, equipment, and training if a dedicated position is added)	<b>Medium</b> – May require phased implementation or shared responsibilities
Formalize Volunteer Committees through ordinance/resolution (clear charges, reporting relationships, meeting schedules, staff liaisons) including a Housing Advisory Committee	 Short-term	Converts civic energy into durable outcomes; improves oversight and tracking of HAP recommendations; strengthens coordination with nonprofit partners and developers	City Administration; General Government; Housing	<b>Low</b> (staff support, meeting administration, legal drafting)	<b>Low-Medium</b> – Primarily staff liaison and meeting coordination responsibilities

Strategy	Timeline	Intended Impacts	Responsible Department(s)	Anticipated Costs	Staff Capacity
Support housing development through coordinated public improvements, infrastructure cost-sharing, and bulk or cooperative purchasing programs to reduce construction-related expenses	 Mid-term	Lower overall development costs, improve housing project feasibility, accelerate housing production, and encourage new residential investment	Public Works; Economic Development; City Administration	<b>Medium</b> (\$25k–\$250k depending on infrastructure participation and purchasing agreements; opportunities to leverage regional/state partnerships)	<b>Medium</b> – Requires coordination across departments, utilities, contractors, and regional partners, but can largely build on existing public works and procurement functions
Formalize Land Bank Program (in partnership with CEGC/BIG and Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority) to acquire, hold, and develop tax-delinquent and vacant parcels	 Mid-term	Transforms blighted and vacant properties into affordable housing; provides long-term affordability through deed restrictions and ground leases; builds self-sustaining revolving fund	Economic Development; City Administration; Code Enforcement	<b>Medium</b> (\$50k–\$250k startup funding; likely phased and dependent on grants, partnerships, and tax-acquired property transfers)	<b>High</b> – Would require substantial coordination and likely outside legal/technical assistance
Expand TIF District(s) to include Hospital District, River Arts District, and other growth areas; direct portion of TIF funds toward affordable housing	 Mid-term	Funds affordable housing gap financing and infrastructure improvements in priority growth areas; leverages tax increment for community benefit	Economic Development; City Administration; Public Works	<b>Low</b> (unless hiring outside support for setting up new TIF Districts)	<b>Medium</b> – Administrative burden manageable if coordinated through existing economic development and finance staff

Strategy	Timeline	Intended Impacts	Responsible Department(s)	Anticipated Costs	Staff Capacity
Create Pre-Approved missing middle and ADU Design Library (standardized, fully reviewed plans available to homeowners and small developers)	 <b>Mid-term</b>	Reduces time and cost for missing middle and ADU construction; increases housing production; supports local developers; aligns with LD 1829	Code Enforcement; Housing; City Administration	<b>Low-Medium</b> (\$15k-\$75k for design development and code review)	<b>Low</b> – Primarily upfront coordination and periodic updates
Maintain Continued Community Engagement on housing policy through surveys, open houses, and Housing Advisory Committee meetings	 <b>Ongoing</b>	Ensures housing strategies remain aligned with community needs and values; builds trust and broadens support for housing investments	City Administration; General Government; Housing	<b>Low</b> (meeting facilitation, outreach materials, surveys, communications)	<b>Medium</b> – Requires recurring outreach and staff facilitation
Establish Annual Housing Production Reporting Program in compliance with LD 1184	 <b>Ongoing</b>	Improves tracking of housing production, demolitions, affordability levels, and occupancy trends; supports data-driven housing policy and compliance with state reporting requirements; strengthens coordination with affordability monitoring and parcel tracking systems	Code Enforcement; City Administration; Tax Assessment	<b>Low</b> (90% of eligible reporting expenses reimbursable by the State of Maine)	<b>Low-Medium</b> – Can likely be administered by an existing staff lead with support from permitting and assessment staff



