

Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan



Town of Vinalhaven
Downtown Committee

October 2019

Acknowledgements

This project was possible only through the hard work and participation from over two hundred local citizens, business and property owners, members of the fishing community, Town staff, Maine state agencies, local utilities, non-profit organizations, and dedicated volunteers.

The overall planning effort was requested by the Vinalhaven Select Board, and was steered by members of the Downtown Committee (DTC) listed below, who met diligently for the past three years to identify issues, discuss approaches, help coordinate stakeholder outreach, and develop and prioritize practical solutions on a wide range of topics. We thank these volunteers for contributing so much time, energy and careful thought to this Downtown Master Plan:

Kris Davidson	Holly Sault	Past members: Amy Lear,
Elin Elisofon	Kathy Warren	Alison Thibault
Betsy Hopkins	John Wasielewski	
Margaret Qualey	David Wylie	Advisor: Hooper Brooks

The Downtown Master Plan has built upon and incorporated information and stakeholder input from many prior studies and planning efforts on Vinalhaven, such as the 2013 Vinalhaven Comprehensive Plan and public survey; the 2007 Vinalhaven Sidewalk Committee Report; the 2014 Vinalhaven Economic Development Strategy report; the 2017 Design and Resiliency Team (DART) Report; 2017 and 2018 Floodplain and Storm Surge analysis reports by Ransom Engineers; and additional strategic development plans and capital improvement plans from utilities, state agencies, and non-profit organizations.

Specific reports and plans that were used in developing this Downtown Master Plan are described in Sections 1.5 and 5, and copies of key reports are included in the Appendix.

The following businesses and organizations provided critical input through detailed stakeholder interviews with their owners, managers, and staff:

30 Downstreet, LLC	Historic Downstreet	The Sand Bar
Aerofit	Homeport	The Work Dock
American Legion Post #18	Hopkins Boatyard	Tidewater Motel
Bean Maine Lobster Inc.	Island Spirits	US Postal Service
Camden National Bank	Island's Closet	VinalEnergy
Carvers Harbor Market	Jaret & Cohn Real Estate	Vinalhaven Candy Co
Creelman Farm Store	Knight Insurance	Vinalhaven Chamber of Commerce
Davidson Realty	Maine State Ferry Service	Vinalhaven Fisherman's Coop
dot&millies	Maine Water	Vinalhaven Harbor Wharf
Engine House Press	Marston House	Vinalhaven Kelp Inc.
Fishermen's Friend	New Era Gallery	Vinalhaven Library
Fox Islands Electric Coop	Phineas Fogg, LLC	Vinalhaven Yoga, Pilates &Barre
Go Fish	Sea's Bakery	Windhorse Arts
Good Things	Sherry's Kitchen	
Greet's Eats	Star of Hope Foundation	
Harborside Apartments	The Nightingale	
Harrison Realty	The Plant Place	

In addition to those local organizations that participated in the Town's 2013 Comprehensive Plan, the following provided assistance and information to the Downtown Committee team:

Community Planning Studio	Maine Office of Historic Preservation
Danth, Inc.	Maine Department of Transportation
Design and Resiliency Team (DART)	Maine State Ferry Service
Gulf of Maine Research Institute	Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission
Island Institute	Spectrum/Time Warner
Islands Community Medical Services Inc.	Vinalhaven Eldercare Services
Knox County EMA	Vinalhaven Historical Society
Maine Coast Heritage Trust	Vinalhaven Land Trust
Maine Coastal Program	
Maine Preservation Inc.	

Members of the following Town of Vinalhaven committees and departments also provided technical input and helpful guidance to the planning effort:

Broadband Committee	Sidewalk Committee
Economic Development	Town Manager
Housing Committee	Water District Trustees
Planning Commission	Sewer District Trustees
Sea Level Rise Committee	

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Kris Davidson	Josef L'Africain	Chris Radley	

This group's thoughtful and detailed input, combined with opinions gathered from the entire community through the 2013 Comprehensive Plan's surveys and public meetings, have formed the basis for the priorities, capital projects, and ordinance modifications recommended in this Downtown Master Plan.

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Downtown Master Plan Summary – Putting People First

Overview

Vinalhaven’s Downtown Main Street corridor represents what some residents have called “the historic and economic heart of the community”, and together with its adjoining harbor and waterfront is the center for most of the commerce, transportation, tourism, entertainment, and employment for the island. The dozens of businesses along Main Street provide 110 year-round full-time jobs and 102 seasonal jobs with a \$3.3 million annual payroll, representing at least 12% of the overall island economy. Between the Ferry Terminal and the Library there are 40 apartments and 14 single-family homes, which provide housing for nearly 100 people. And this same Downtown area contains all of the community’s restaurants, retail shops, some professional services, public wharves, and many of the most historic buildings on the island.

Vinalhaven’s Downtown has seen dramatic changes over the past 150 years, and we should expect more to come. Changes will inevitably happen in the economy, technology, transportation, and climate, which will affect us in some ways that we can imagine, and many we cannot. Such change is uncomfortable and a bit scary to a lot of people. It also has the potential to affect this community in ways that we may not be able to predict.

There are different opinions on Vinalhaven regarding what is best for the town as a whole, but many of those viewpoints often represent self-interest and fear of change, rather than a comprehensive vision for the future. When the topic is about people, however, like an aging relative trying to remain on the island, an island family struggling with loss of income, your child who has moved away, or a young couple struggling to find an affordable apartment, the Vinalhaven community often speaks with a common voice.

And that is what happened during this planning effort. Through conversations with stakeholders, we heard personal stories, and heard the needs of the community as they relate to individuals rather than simply bricks and mortar.

In compiling goals and actions for this Downtown Master Plan, what has emerged from extensive research and input from across the island community is an amazingly common set of needs and objectives that cut across island demographics and livelihoods. These needs and objectives are not focused on fancy extras for the town, but on how we can anticipate future changes and retain our community values, while providing support for our aging relatives, families, and young people that represent the future of the island. We all have a responsibility and role in accomplishing that, including the Select Board, volunteer groups, businesses, and local organizations, by partnering and working collaboratively.

This Plan then, is actually about people. On the surface it discusses infrastructure, policies, and recommended capital projects. But in the end, its vision is not simply about concrete, or buildings, or wharves, or ferries. It is about trying to provide what our residents and visitors need to stay safe, make a living, and make a life.

Master Plan Organization

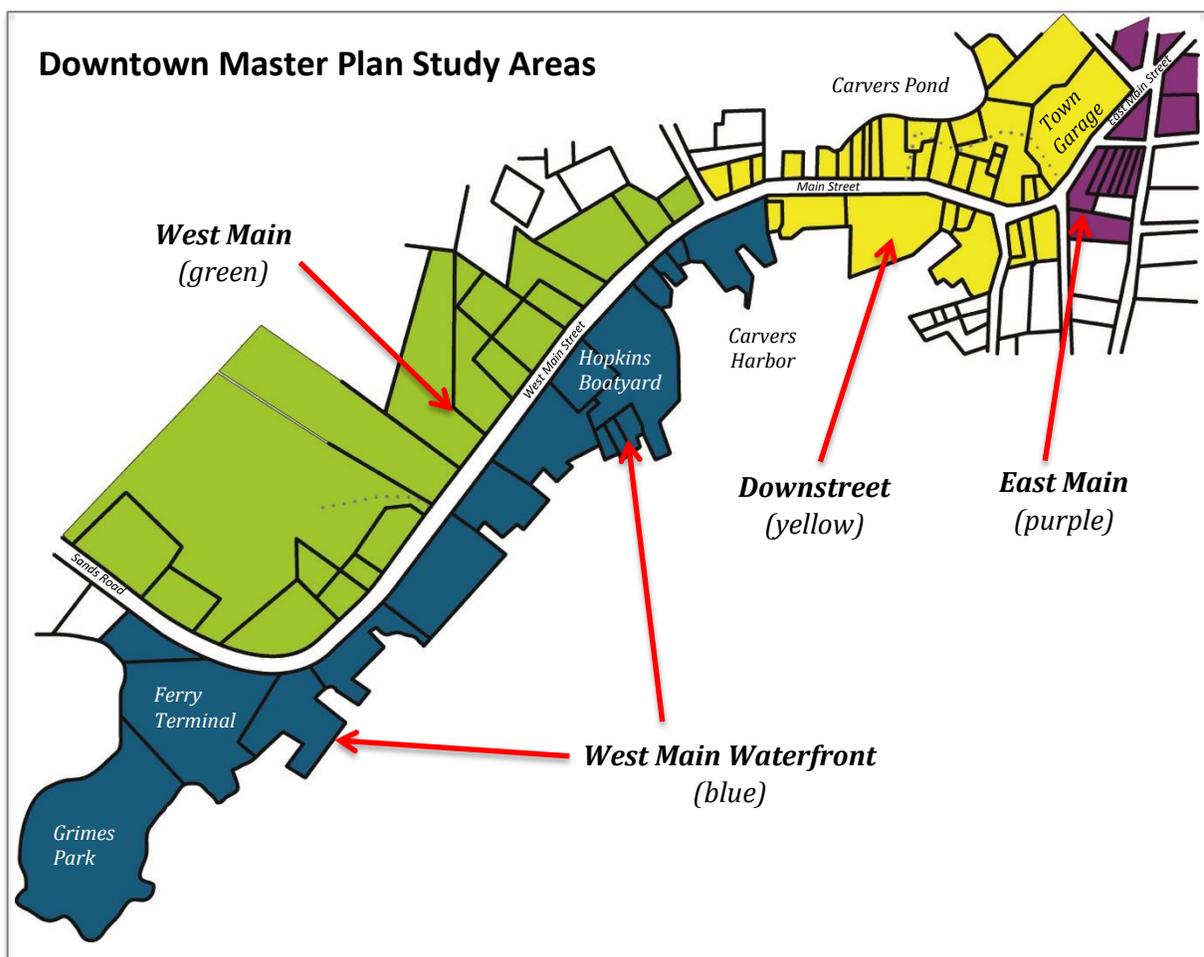
This Downtown Master Plan is organized to provide the reader with an overview as well as detailed analyses and explanations of recommended actions. This initial section offers a summary of the overall process, analysis, and results. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and detail about the process and the data used for our analysis and conclusions, including a

discussion of Vinalhaven’s primary economies, our population, and Main Street’s value to the community. Chapter 2 offers a thorough and detailed analysis of Main Street features as they exist today, with subsections that discuss land use, buildings, roads, infrastructure, housing, and current town ordinances. Chapters 3 and 4 look at some economic trends that may affect Downtown, and limits to growth for our community. Chapter 5 describes specific capital projects that are already underway or are planned by the Town, State of Maine, and utilities on the island. Chapter 6 provides detailed descriptions and justifications of specific actions recommended by this Master Plan. This document also includes a number of Appendices that provide even more detail on a wide range of topics.

Process

The Vinalhaven Select Board established a Downtown Committee (DTC) in 2016, and charged the group with researching and developing a Master Plan for revitalization of the downtown area. The Downtown Master Plan includes recommendations for policies, ordinances, and prioritized capital projects designed to meet community values and infrastructure needs, support economic development, and address impacts from climate change and sea level rise, covering the next 20 to 30 years.

For this effort, the DTC focused on a 1.4-mile section of Main Street from the Town Library to the Maine State Ferry Service terminal. The DTC further divided the study area into four segments, shown on the map below as *West Main Waterfront*, *West Main*, *Downstreet*, and *East Main*.



The entire island is affected by what happens on Main Street, and there are many other portions of the island that contribute to the vitality of the community. The *2013 Vinalhaven Comprehensive Plan* encompassed the entire island, and this Downtown Master Plan is intended to build upon the Comprehensive Plan, but with a focus on the Downtown Main Street corridor.

The Downtown Committee focused on a multi-step process to complete this planning project:

- Adopting a standardized approach to downtown planning
- Reviewing and compiling prior studies and technical reports from the past decade
- Conducting outreach and individual interviews with property owners, business owners, and other stakeholders in the Main Street corridor to identify needs and projects
- Consulting with outside organizations, federal and state agencies, and engineers
- Identifying common issues and concerns to develop groupings of priorities and solutions
- Coordinating findings and proposed actions with engineering consultants and the Town

To streamline planning discussions, the DTC held ten theme-based committee meetings (illustrated below) to identify and discuss policies, capital improvements, and ordinances related to specific topics such as transportation, housing, safety, parking, etc.

The resulting Downtown Master Plan represents the best thinking across the community of what we need today, and a vision of what the next 20-30 years may bring by *Putting People First*.



The Downtown Committee team then looked at the specific needs in each of the three economies, to see which ones were overlapping and which ones might conflict. There were surprisingly few conflicts, and a lot of shared needs:

- Our critically-important **Commercial fishing and maritime economy** needs a healthy marine environment; unobstructed access to the harbor; waterfront support infrastructure such as wharves and docks; convenient spaces for managing gear and parking vehicles; facilities for the processing and shipping of seafood products; affordable housing for workers; dockside services and support systems; and a safe and productive community to live in.
- The **Seasonal/tourism economy** provides employment for a significant number of Vinalhaven’s residents, and has been a significant part of the island economy for nearly 150 years. To continue prospering, it requires convenient transportation to and around the island; safe ways to travel from the ferry to Downstreet and other destinations; a vibrant and active downtown with retail shops and restaurants; a wide range of lodging options; and access to a seasonal workforce.
- The **Year-round economy** needs a resilient infrastructure; reliable and cost-effective transportation to the mainland; a walkable and safe village; affordable housing for workers, families, and the elderly; year-round businesses and jobs; and a safe downtown that serves as a crossroads and provides space for community gatherings.

Blending these needs with specific input from the community, including information from prior studies, resulted in a list of goals, shown below, with actions identified to help meet those goals. This template provided the guiding strategy behind the actions recommended in this Master Plan. The icons representing the priority goals are used throughout the remainder of the Master Plan to show how recommended actions are tied to specific goals.

Priority Goals for the Downtown Master Plan – Putting People First	
	Improve pedestrian safety and amenities <i>Accessible sidewalks, crosswalks, safer intersections, traffic calming, wayfinding, benches</i>
	Improve accessibility to sidewalks and buildings <i>Add wheelchair-accessible space, access ramps, elevate sidewalks nearer to building thresholds</i>
	Improve parking for residents, fishermen, and visitors <i>New parking areas, redesign curbside parking, ordinance improvements</i>
	Preserve and expand waterfront access <i>Strengthen ordinances, support marine businesses, consider acquisitions to regain access</i>
	Encourage more year-round business and activities <i>Strengthen ordinances, improve infrastructure, encourage new development</i>
	Expand year-round affordable housing <i>Revise ordinances, preserve existing housing, encourage new housing initiatives</i>
	Improve stormwater and flood resiliency <i>Fix stormwater systems, elevate road and sidewalks, revise flood maps, inform owners</i>
	Create more public gathering spaces <i>Downtown benches, multi-purpose public lot for events, pocket parks, roadside landscaping</i>
	Manage summer congestion to maximize benefits and minimize impacts <i>Sidewalks, wayfinding, parking, bicycle safety, traffic calming, lodging-related ordinances</i>
	Preserve and enhance the character of the Village and its heritage <i>Strengthen ordinances, address demolition and blight, signage, landscaping; parks</i>

Vision Statement – Putting People First

Complete Streets and Public Places

The Downtown Master Plan encourages a *Complete Streets* approach, which integrates people and places in the planning, design, construction, and operation of transportation networks. This helps to ensure that streets 1) are safe for people of all ages and abilities, 2) balance the needs of different modes of transport, and 3) support local land uses, economies, cultures, and natural environments.

At the center of the Complete Streets strategy on Vinalhaven is the goal of making Main Street accessible to all users, while accommodating all forms of transportation, and doing so in a way that makes the street both more attractive and resilient to flooding. By using space more efficiently, existing parking and service access can be maintained and improved while opening up new areas for waterfront access, public parks, and other pedestrian amenities.

A broad vision for the Downtown corridor was presented in the 2017 DART study, which included a series of Complete Streets concepts that focused on four locations along Main Street: the Ferry Terminal area; West Main Street redevelopment; Downstreet; and the Town Garage site and Carvers Pond waterfront (“Pondside”). Their guiding principles for design included many of the same goals as this Downtown Master Plan, such as maintaining the working waterfront, adapting for sea level rise, improving safety for pedestrians and drivers, removing deficiencies that inhibit business growth, protecting historic buildings, and providing sustainable development for housing and a more diverse economic base.



The 2017 DART study focused on design concepts in four sections of the Main Street corridor that would address similar objectives of this Downtown Master Plan.

Some of the DART team’s design concepts were received by the community with interest, others with skepticism, but their overall Complete Streets approach and a few of the concepts are retained in this Plan as recommended actions.

The Main Street Web

Just as the three Vinalhaven economies are intertwined, so too are the multiple priorities and goals of this Master Plan. The Main Street corridor consists of a complex web of businesses, infrastructure, policies, and people, and each has needs and wishes. Many of those needs are in common, and are easy to identify and address without conflict. They are among the top priorities of this Plan, and will be relatively straightforward to implement. Other needs may be unique to one business or location, and may be more difficult to address without negatively impacting someone else. Those are of lower priority in this Plan, or are not addressed at this time.

As a result of this web-like feature of Main Street, many of the actions in this Plan must occur in a proper sequence to be successful.

The interrelationships and recommended sequencing is described in the action plan outlined below, and referenced in the Implementation recommendations in Section 6.

The Main Street Vision

From the Ferry to the Library, Vinalhaven will provide safe passage for vehicles, pedestrians, delivery trucks, bicycles, forklifts, and the occasional boat being towed on a trailer. Main Street will be redesigned to address sea level rise and provide well-defined and adequate roadway widths; safe pathways for pedestrians, bicycles, and slow moving vehicles to use; traffic calming through better roadway design, signage, and appropriate speed enforcement; crosswalks; improved access to sidewalks, parking spaces, and building thresholds for the elderly and people with disabilities; and pedestrian amenities such as benches, wayfinding signage, and roadside landscaping in appropriate locations.

The working waterfront areas along Main Street will continue to prosper, and access to the harbor will be protected and expanded by strengthening ordinances and by encouraging the acquisition and redevelopment of waterfront properties to preserve traditional access and use of wharves for commercial fishing, while allowing mixed uses of waterfront buildings only when that will not interfere with harbor access. Increased access to the waterfront by the public will also be encouraged, primarily to provide viewpoints and short-term vessel loading and unloading facilities.

The central core of downtown will be supported as a key element of the community, through improved sidewalks and accessibility, roadway definition and traffic calming, better stormwater and flood management, creation of public gathering spaces, more off-street parking, and policies and ordinances that encourage investment, redevelopment and conversion of structures to provide more housing and jobs to the year-round community. As part of this effort, there will be improvement and more mixed-use of the existing Downstreet lot for public events and markets, as well as continued use for parking and waterfront access.

Town infrastructure Downstreet, including roads, sidewalks, and sewer, water and stormwater systems, will be redesigned, elevated, and improved to provide more resiliency to flooding and sea level rise. Property owners with buildings at risk of flooding will be encouraged to implement flood-proofing measures and to consider raising their buildings as needed in the future. The Town will also join with property owners to pursue a revision of the FEMA flood zone map to reduce flood insurance costs in the Downtown area and encourage more investment and economic development.

The demolition and loss of historic structures downtown will be monitored and influenced through a more rigorous design review and permitting process, and there will be ordinances in place to address neglected buildings that pose public health or safety risks. To reinforce the historic character of Downtown, these processes and ordinances will encourage appropriate architectural design and the use of traditional materials like granite where possible in Downtown buildings, streetscapes, and landscaping. The formal creation of a historic district is not proposed, but a process should be set up to inform property owners about their site's heritage and provide them with support in researching and posting historic signage for their buildings.

The "Pondside" (backside) of Downstreet may not be extensively developed in the near term due to requirements for delivery truck passage, ordinance constraints, and uncertainties regarding rights of way. However, providing more parking at the former Town Garage site, combined with safe pedestrian pathways connected to Main Street, will improve Downtown parking and provide an opportunity to work with private property owners to create a small waterfront park on Carvers Pond. The Town will also establish a committee to determine the best long-term use of the former Town Garage site.

The Town will encourage the expansion of year-round affordable housing and office space along the Main Street corridor through ordinance and policy changes, and capital projects. These will include supporting the conversion of second floor spaces to include year-round residential apartments and offices; easing parking requirements for properties that have limited space; creating additional offsite public parking; encouraging the creation of a community investment organization to assist in financing for economic development, capital projects, and building improvements; and encouraging the creation of a housing organization that can purchase, develop, and manage affordable housing for year-round residents. The Town will also strengthen its planning resources by creating a Town Planner position to support community improvements and development that is compliant with ordinances and community character.

All of these measures will help preserve and enhance the character of the Village and its heritage, and provide a safe and vibrant Downtown for people who work, live, and visit here.

The Role of the Town

A municipal government and its leadership often view their primary responsibilities as maintaining the town's infrastructure, collecting taxes and fees, and soundly managing the town budget. Those are critically important, but for a town to thrive, that same leadership must also work collaboratively with other groups and organizations to create policies and take actions that encourage investment and vitality.

On Vinalhaven, that has always been the case, and it will continue to be just as important in the future. Economic development for a community is not just the purview of a chamber of commerce, nor does it fall solely to individuals and their businesses working only on their own behalf. It is also not the sole responsibility of a Select Board or Town Manager, or an Economic Development committee. It takes collaboration and cooperation between multiple entities, including the Town, individual business owners, utilities, chambers, and volunteer groups, and that approach is especially important when implementing actions in a master plan. By working together, Vinalhaven can create the infrastructure, atmosphere, ordinances, and support for a sustainable and resilient community.

Project Coordination and Sequencing

One of the planning guidelines for the Downtown Committee (DTC) effort has been to recommend improvements that build upon one another, and, most importantly, will not preclude expansions or modifications in the future. That is an especially critical approach for a community that may have grand wishes but cannot afford to do everything at once, or even within a 5-year period.

For the Downtown area, there are a series of steps that must be done together, such as a capital improvement linked with an ordinance change. And there are a series of improvements that need to be done in an ordered and coordinated sequence that reflects available funding timetables and construction schedules.

For example, providing businesses with more nearby parking for their customers requires a change in policies regarding long-term parking on Main Street. But that could impact apartment residents and employees who have no other place to park and would need an alternative location. One alternative could be adding some parking areas at the Town Garage site as an interim initial use, while other future uses of that site are considered by a Town committee. But such a use could not occur until the Water District office is relocated, a new stormwater system is designed and built, and the Water Street intersection is redesigned and improved. Constructing the new stormwater system and replacing the aging water main on Main Street need to be coordinated with roadway and sidewalk improvements to save money and minimize disruptions to businesses and traffic.

For those actions that are interdependent, one should not be attempted until and unless the other(s) is also ready to be implemented.

The Downtown Master Plan's *Implementation Sequence* and *Capital Projects and Actions Timetable* address these interconnected and interdependent projects and actions, and suggest a path for making these improvements in a coordinated way. The specific recommended Actions in Section 6 provide detailed descriptions of interrelated aspects, design considerations, and constraints related to timetables and project sequencing.

Coordinating the design and construction of these interrelated projects, and meshing their implementation schedules with grant application and funding timetables, cannot be accomplished just by the Select Board or another volunteer committee. To provide this coordination, this Downtown Master Plan includes a recommendation to establish a Town Planner position working at least three days per week. This position will be charged with obtaining grant funding, and working with the Town Manager and Code Enforcement Officer, to coordinate and implement Master Plan projects and actions, and to coordinate the work of the Planning Commission and Planning Board.

Funding Mechanisms

How to pay for community improvements is a critical topic for both Select Boards and taxpayers. This Downtown Master Plan provides suggestions for funding mechanisms for individual actions, and also considers grant funding cycles in the recommended sequencing and timetables for projects. An overview of funding mechanisms is provided below.

Public and Private Grants

A number of state and federal agencies have funds that support local capital improvement and community development. Some specific examples are provided in Section 6.2.

Most grant programs have specific application and award timetables that will influence implementation schedules, or may preclude certain grant opportunities from being considered. In addition, state and federal grant programs are constantly modifying their project requirements, funding levels, and application processes. Thus, the potential grant funding mechanisms listed in each of the Section 6 recommended actions are suggestions that will need to be further reviewed for pursuit when this Plan is adopted by the Select Board.

Community Development and Investment Corporation

A community development and investment corporation is an organization, often made up of local citizens, established to improve the economy of the area by creating economic development programs, drawing new business and industry, and providing financial support for entrepreneurs, capital projects, housing projects, and business owners adapting their properties to sea level rise. These entities can seek and administer investor and grant funds, provide low-interest loans, and can purchase properties and arrange for their redevelopment. Many Maine communities have established such organizations to help revitalize their downtowns, provide support for affordable housing, and encourage additional investment in the community.

One of the actions recommended by this Plan is supporting the creation of such an organization on Vinalhaven, with an initial step being the creation of an Economic Development Committee charged with 1) identifying and fostering economic development initiatives for the island, and 2) supporting the establishment of a community development and investment entity on Vinalhaven.

Capital Improvement Planning

The capital facilities of local governments are essential to meeting the service needs of the community in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Vinalhaven does not currently have a capital budgeting system for municipal facilities and equipment called a *Capital Improvement Program (CIP)*.

A CIP is a document that includes an assessment of existing and anticipated public facilities and services required to meet the Town's planned growth and economic development, including but not limited to sewer, water, emergency services, schools, parks and open spaces, and transportation infrastructure. It is generally a five- or ten-year plan covering the maintenance, replacement and expansion of existing public facilities and equipment, or the design and construction or acquisition of new facilities and equipment. A CIP includes projections of when and where such facilities and equipment will be required, how much they are anticipated to cost, how the costs will be funded, and a schedule of when the improvements will be needed.

The plan is usually prepared by the Town Manager with assistance from a Town Planner, other Town Departments, and sometimes the Planning Board. It is typically tied to the community's comprehensive plan and any related planning efforts. It is usually reviewed by the Town Select Board, amended following a public hearing, and then sent to the Annual Town Meeting for a community vote.

Without a long-term CIP as part of the Town's annual budgeting and administrative process, the temptation is to defer needed spending on capital projects when budgets are tight, and approve whatever is proposed when funds are available. This approach usually results in scarce capital dollars being spent on small projects that do not reflect the greatest needs of the community. Even more importantly, such haphazard project-by-project budgeting can result in under-designed or poorly functioning systems, as well as unexpected future costs for major projects that are essential or are mandated by state or federal requirements.

A CIP is designed to assist the Town in planning its needed capital expenditures on a rational and systematic basis. The CIP is designed to identify a community's needed capital expenditures, to evaluate the priority of the various needs, and to structure a spending program for meeting the more important of these needs on an affordable basis. This provides the Town, and its taxpayers, with a "no surprises" approach to capital projects, and usually results in a coordinated, well-designed infrastructure where all the parts function properly together.

Implementation Strategy

To achieve this vision and create the mechanisms needed to move forward, the following strategy is recommended. This includes the establishment of a Town position responsible for securing funding, and assisting and coordinating implementation of Master Plan actions.

Recommended Steps		Timing
1	Have the Select Board officially adopt this Downtown Master Plan, described here, and incorporate the Plan as part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan	2019
2	Have the Town establish a formal Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that addresses project priorities, identifies funding sources, and establishes project schedules for the next 10-15 years.	2019-2020
3	Have the Town Planning Commission conduct reviews and draft language for ordinance changes and additions recommended in this Plan to support future needs of the community.	2019-2021
4	Establish a Town Planner position to work at least three days per week charged with obtaining grant funding for and working with the Town Manager to coordinate and implement Master Plan projects and actions, and coordinate the work of the Planning Commission, Planning Board, and associated Committees.	2019-2020
5	Establish a <i>Net Factory Site Re-Use Committee</i> charged with researching and developing a long-term plan for redeveloping the former Town Garage site.	2020-2022
6	Have the Town apply for grant funds for the purpose of: funding the engineering redesign of the Main Street Corridor; constructing roadways, sidewalks, crosswalks, and parking lot improvements; improving the performance and flood resiliency of Main Street infrastructure including drinking water, stormwater, and sewer systems; preserving waterfront access; and providing support for economic development.	2020-2022
6	Implement construction of capital projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stormwater, water, and sewer infrastructure • Roadway, sidewalks, intersection improvements • New parking lot, other parking improvements • Dock and wharf improvements • Public parks and streetscape improvements 	2022-2023 <i>(specific timing and sequencing is listed in the following Capital Projects summary)</i>
7	Establish an <i>Economic Development Committee</i> to be charged with: 1) fostering economic development island-wide, and 2) helping to create a community investment entity (as described in Section 6.2) that can provide financing for sustainable economic development, business investment, affordable housing, and sea level rise adaptation.	2020-2023

Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

A set of Actions and Capital Projects have been recommended in Section 6 of this Downtown Master Plan to improve infrastructure and meet the goals and objectives identified by the community. The Capital Projects are intended to be part of a 15-year Capital Improvement Plan for the Town.

The following *Capital Projects and Actions Timetable* provides a summary of each recommended action, along with the suggested responsible parties and team members, the sequencing and timing of the action, possible funding sources, and an estimated range of costs. More detailed descriptions of each recommended action, along with suggested design considerations, justification, constraints, potential funding sources, and implementation aspects are provided in Section 6. Each Capital Project includes a reference to specific sections providing more detail.

A parallel set of ordinance amendments are also recommended to further address these goals and objectives, and to support the implementation of capital projects. These ordinance modifications are summarized in Section 6.5, complete with references to section narratives that provide more background information and justifications.

The icons representing the Master Plan’s priority goals, shown below, are used throughout the *Capital Projects and Actions Timetable* to show how individual recommended actions are tied to specific goals.

Priority Goals for the Downtown Master Plan – Putting People First	
	Improve pedestrian safety and amenities <i>Accessible sidewalks, crosswalks, safer intersections, traffic calming, wayfinding, benches</i>
	Improve accessibility to sidewalks and buildings <i>Add wheelchair-accessible space, access ramps, elevate sidewalks nearer to building thresholds</i>
	Improve parking for residents, fishermen, and visitors <i>New parking areas, redesign curbside parking, ordinance improvements</i>
	Preserve and expand waterfront access <i>Strengthen ordinances, support marine businesses, consider acquisitions to regain access</i>
	Encourage more year-round business and activities <i>Strengthen ordinances, improve infrastructure, encourage new development</i>
	Expand year-round affordable housing <i>Revise ordinances, preserve existing housing, encourage new housing initiatives</i>
	Improve stormwater and flood resiliency <i>Fix stormwater systems, elevate road and sidewalks, revise flood maps, inform owners</i>
	Create more public gathering spaces <i>Downtown benches, multi-purpose public lot for events, pocket parks, roadside landscaping</i>
	Manage summer congestion to maximize benefits and minimize impacts <i>Sidewalks, wayfinding, parking, bicycle safety, traffic calming, lodging-related ordinances</i>
	Preserve and enhance the character of the Village and its heritage <i>Strengthen ordinances, address demolition and blight, signage, landscaping; parks</i>

Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

Goals Addressed	Capital Projects and Actions	Partners and Collaborators	Timing	Funding Sources	Est. Cost	Ref. Section
	1) Initiate a modeling effort and submit a request to modify the FEMA Flood map covering Carvers Harbor, Main Street, and Carvers Pond, in partnership with other affected private property owners.	Town Manager Sea Level Rise Committee Planning Board Property owners	2019-2020	Town of VH + Private funding	\$25,000-\$40,000	4.5, 6.9, 6.10
	2) Request that the Maine State Ferry Service clear obstructions from and improve their sidewalk from the Ferry Terminal to West Main Street.	Town Manager Ferry Advisory Board MSFS	2019	Town of VH	No cost	2.5, 4.1, 6.6
	3) Enforce the 25-mph posted speed zone on Sands Road. Install additional speed limit signage and pedestrian warning signage approaching Downstreet.	Town Manager Planning Board Select Board	2019	Town of VH	Minimal cost	2.4, 2.5, 6.7
	4) Coordinate with the Vinalhaven Water District to relocate the existing Water District office from the Town Garage site to another location.	Town Manager Water District Board Select Board Planning Board Site Re-use Committee Maine Water Inc.	2020-2021	Town of VH	\$100,000-\$150,000	6.8, 6.16
	5) Apply for state and federal grants to cover the costs of: coordinated design and construction of recommended pedestrian, roadway, and parking improvements on Main Street; stormwater and wastewater system upgrades and resiliency; and water system capital improvements. Combined total project costs are estimated to be in the range of \$3,500,000-\$4,000,000.	Town Planner Town Manager Select Board Downtown Committee Sewer District Board Water District Board Sea Level Rise Committee	2019-2021	Town of VH	\$10,000-\$12,000 to develop grant proposals	All
	6) Provide information to Main Street property owners regarding engineering and construction options that could help mitigate potential flood damage to their properties, and provide information on potential funding options for private property owners.	Town Manager Sea Level Rise Committee	2020-2021	Town of VH	Minimal cost, for handouts or website info	4.5, 6.9, 6.10

Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

Goals Addressed	Capital Projects and Actions	Partners and Collaborators	Timing	Funding Sources	Est. Cost	Ref. Section
	7) Update Downtown stormwater system study, using new engineering and SLR info, including catch basins, collection pipes, culverts, and outfall pipes, including one-way valves to prevent tidal backflow. Coordinate with design for reconstruction of Main Street roadway, intersections, and sidewalks, and design of new parking lot at former Town Garage site.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran Maine DOT Sea Level Rise Committee	2020	Town of VH	\$20,000- \$40,000	4.2, 4.5, 6.9, 6.10
	8) Design and re-engineer the 1.4-mile Main Street corridor from the Ferry Terminal to Water Street to address traffic calming, pedestrian safety, parking, ADA access, crosswalks, roadway limits, lighting, and extended and wider sidewalks. Coordinate with stormwater system and sewer system upgrades, water main replacement, and abutting property owners to ensure minimum impacts to their properties. Includes survey, geotech, engineering.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran Maine DOT Sea Level Rise Committee	2020	Community Dev. Block Grant MaineDOT Pedestrian Program Northern Borders Regional Comm. USEPA	\$400,000- \$600,000	2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 6.6, 6.7
	9) Design and re-engineer the intersections at Clamshell Alley and Water Street to provide improved pedestrian safety, while accommodating current and anticipated future traffic patterns on Windy Way.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran Maine DOT	2020	Community Dev Block Grant MaineDOT Pedestrian Program Northern Borders Regional Comm.	\$30,000- \$40,000	2.4, 6.7
	10) Encourage a mixed-use re-development of the Harborview Apartments property to retain year-round housing and increase access and use of the existing wharf and harbor access at the site.	Town Planner Planning board Select Board VH Housing Committee	2021	Town of VH	Minimal cost	2.8, 6.11

Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

Goals Addressed	Capital Projects and Actions	Partners and Collaborators	Timing	Funding Sources	Est. Cost	Ref. Section
	<p>11) Construct a 1,000-foot pedestrian sidewalk or safe multi-use pathway along the north side of Main Street from the Public Safety building to the Ferry Terminal. Improve curb cuts along West Main Street properties and parking lots.</p>	<p>Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran Maine DOT</p>	2021	<p>Northern Borders Regional Comm. Community Dev Block Grant MaineDOT Pedestrian Program</p>	\$300,000- \$400,000	2.5, 6.6
	<p>12) Construct a new crosswalk at the Ferry Terminal.</p>	<p>Town Manager Town Planner Select Board</p>	2021	Town of VH	\$15,000- \$20,000	2.5, 6.6
	<p>13) Construct, elevate, widen, and level the sidewalks between High Street and Water Street to eliminate multiple elevations, eliminate slopes, make buildings more accessible to those with mobility limitations, and accommodate sea level rise.</p>	<p>Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran Property Owners Sea Level Rise Committee</p>	2022	FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program	\$300,000- \$400,000	2.5, 4.2, 6.6, 6.7
	<p>14) Construct and install upgraded stormwater management components between Atlantic Avenue and High Street. Coordinate with reconstruction of Main Street roadway, intersections, sidewalks, sewer system improvements, water main replacement on Main Street, and abutting property owners to ensure minimum impacts to their properties.</p>	<p>Town Planner Town Manager Select Board Woodard & Curran Maine DOT Property Owners Sea Level Rise Committee</p>	2022	FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program	\$400,000- \$500,000	4.5, 6.9

Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

Goals Addressed	Capital Projects and Actions	Partners and Collaborators	Timing	Funding Sources	Est. Cost	Ref. Section
	15) Construct and install wastewater system improvements between Water Street and High Street to address CAP recommendations, including bypass infrastructure for the force main on the Millrace Bridge, and Main Street pumping station modifications to address flooding resiliency.	Sewer District Board Town Planner Town Manager Select Board Woodard & Curran Sea Level Rise Committee	2022	Federal CWSRF USDA Rural Development Program	\$120,000- \$160,000	5.5
	16) Replace 1907 water main and install millrace bridge bypass components to address Water District needs.	Water District Board Town Manager Town Planner Maine Water Inc. Sea Level Rise Committee	2022	Maine DWSRF Program USDA Rural Development Program	\$750,000	5.4
	17) Reconstruct and elevate the Main Street roadway from High Street to Water Street to accommodate elevated sidewalks and a 1-foot sea level rise. Coordinate with stormwater system and sewer system upgrades, water main replacement on Main Street, and abutting property owners to ensure minimum impacts to their properties.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran Maine DOT Property Owners Sea Level Rise Committee	2022	FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program	\$750,000- \$950,000	4.5, 6.7, 6.9, 6.10
	18) Reconstruct the intersections at Clamshell Alley and Water Street	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran Maine DOT	2022	TBD	\$150,000- \$180,000	2.4, 6.7
	19) Construct more visible and safer crosswalks at the Downstreet parking lot and the Water Street intersection.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Maine DOT	2022	Town of VH	\$30,000- \$40,000	2.4, 2.5, 6.6

Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

Goals Addressed	Capital Projects and Actions	Partners and Collaborators	Timing	Funding Sources	Est. Cost	Ref. Section
	20) Design and construct a street-level multi-purpose walking lane, on the south side of Main Street from the Downstreet parking lot to Water Street. Coordinate with potential development of a new pocket park at Clamshell Alley corner.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran Maine DOT	2022	Town of VH	\$22,000- \$25,000	2.5, 2.9, 6.6, 6.13
	21) Install Pedestrian warning signs near all crosswalks	Town Planner	2022	Town of VH	\$ 2,000	2.5, 6.6
	22) In coordination with efforts of the <i>Net Factory Site Re-Use Committee</i> , design and develop additional parking areas at the former site of the Town Garage, as an interim, initial use of the site.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran Site Re-Use Committee	2023	TBD	\$250,000- \$300,000	2.1, 2.6, 6.8
	23) Designate one or two additional wheelchair-accessible parking spaces between High Street and Water Street.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran	2023	Town of VH	Minimal cost	2.6, 6.8
	24) Designate two existing curbside parking spaces to fit wide delivery trucks better and avoid their obstruction of the roadway during deliveries. Consider designating and posting those spaces as <i>Loading Zones</i> with time limits.	Town Manager Town Planner Planning Board Select Board	2023	Town of VH	Minimal cost	2.6, 6.8
	25) Designate curbside parking between Clamshell Alley and Water Street in conjunction with reconstruction of the Clamshell Alley intersection and creation of a south side pedestrian sidewalk/walkway.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board	2023	Town of VH	Minimal cost	2.6, 6.8
	26) Determine, establish, and enforce an appropriate daytime time limit for all curbside parking spaces between High Street and Water Street.	Town Planner Planning Commission Planning Board Select Board	2023	Town of VH	Minimal cost	2.6, 6.8

Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

Goals Addressed	Capital Projects and Actions	Partners and Collaborators	Timing	Funding Sources	Est. Cost	Ref. Section
	27) Designate a separate narrow multi-purpose lane on the south side of Main Street from the Ferry Terminal to High Street, suitable for use by slow-moving vehicles and bicycles.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran	2023	Town of VH	Minimal cost	2.4, 2.7, 4.2, 6.7
	28) Modify the Downstreet parking lot to accommodate a pedestrian walkway and benches along the waterfront, and to host community events, but only after additional parking areas are established near Downtown.	Town Planner Planning Board Select Board	2023	Town of VH	Minimal cost	2.9, 6.8
	29) Evaluate the need for modifications at the Downstreet parking lot and wharf to accommodate passenger vessels and water taxis.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Planning Board Harbor Ordinance Committee	2023	Town of VH	Minimal cost	2.9, 3.4, 4.1, 6.11
	30) Elevate the Downstreet parking lot as needed to match a raised Main Street and reduce periodic nuisance flooding.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board Sea Level Rise Committee	2025	USEPA Resiliency Grants FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program	\$200,000-\$280,000	4.5, 6.10
	31) Encourage a collaborative effort between the <i>Historic Downstreet</i> group and the <i>Vinalhaven Historical Society</i> to develop and fund an outreach and support program that provides interested property owners with assistance in identifying their building's heritage and posting appropriate signs to that effect	Town Planner Planning Commission Historic Downstreet VH Historical Society	2023	Town of VH VH Historical Soc. Private Donations	Minimal cost	2.1, 6.14

Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

Goals Addressed	Capital Projects and Actions	Partners and Collaborators	Timing	Funding Sources	Est. Cost	Ref. Section
	32) Develop notification process warning of flooding and storm events	Town Planner Sea Level Rise Committee Select Board	2023	SLR grants	\$10,000	4.5, 6.10
	33) Monitor availability of waterfront properties and consider acquisitions to increase access to wharves, float space, and parking for fishermen.	Town Planner Select Board	2023	ME Land and Water Conservation Fund	TBD	4.2, 6.11
	34) Install pedestrian benches on sidewalks along Main Street	Town Planner Select Board VH Chamber of Com.	2023	Town of VH Star of Hope Fdn Private donations	\$4,000-\$8,000	2.9, 6.13
	35) Create a small park at the Clamshell Alley intersection with Main Street	Town Planner Select Board VH Parks Committee	2023	Town of VH ME Land and Water Conservation Fund ME Project Canopy Star of Hope Fdn Private donations	\$20,000-\$30,000	2.9, 6.13
	36) Create a small park on the Carvers Pond waterfront	Town Planner Select Board VH Parks Committee Main Street Landowners	2023	Town of VH ME Land and Water Conservation Fund Star of Hope Fdn Private donations	\$20,000-\$40,000	2.9, 6.13

Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

Goals Addressed	Capital Projects and Actions	Partners and Collaborators	Timing	Funding Sources	Est. Cost	Ref. Section
	37) Increase the use of Grimes Park through signage and sidewalks	Town Planner Select Board Legion Post VH Parks Committee	2023	Town of VH	Minimal cost	2.9, 6.13
	38) Encourage landscaping and plantings along Main Street without impeding movement or reducing safety	Town Planner Select Board VH Chamber of Com. Main Street Landowners	2023	Town of VH VH Chamber ME Project Canopy Property Owners	Minimal cost	2.9, 6.13
	39) Establish a graphic standard for signage in the Main Street corridor.	Town Planner Planning Commission VH Chamber of Com. VH Historical Society	2023	Town of VH	Minimal cost	2.9, 6.13
	40) Secure access to another boat ramp outside the Main Street corridor.	Town Manager Town Planner Select Board	2025	Town of VH	TBD	4.2, 6.11
	41) Consider a long term plan to raise wharf elevations	Town Planner Select Board Sea Level Rise Committee	2030?	Town of VH	TBD	4.2, 4.5, 6.10
	42) Modify millrace structure with a gate to inhibit flow to Carvers Pond	Town Planner Select Board Woodard & Curran Sea Level Rise Committee	2030?	TBD	TBD	4.5, 6.10

Ordinances, Building Codes and Design Standards

Several ordinance amendments are recommended as part of this Master Plan. The following timetable is suggested for ordinance modifications. Detailed descriptions and justifications are provided in Sections 2.10 and 6, and specific reference sections are listed under each action.

Topic Area	Ordinance Modification Description	Timing	Ref. Section
Pedestrian Safety 	1. Review current ordinances regarding compliance with regulations for curb cuts and road access points	2019-2020	2.5, 2.10
	2. Review ordinances to determine if changes are needed regarding sidewalk maintenance responsibilities	2019-2020	2.5, 2.10
Parking  	1. In the <i>Parking Ordinance</i> , establish a section addressing curbside parking time limits and loading zones	2020-2021	2.6, 2.8, 2.10, 4.2
	2. In the <i>Land Use Ordinance</i> , modify onsite parking space requirements for Downstreet apartment conversions	2020-2021	2.10, 4.3
	3. In the <i>Parking Ordinance</i> , institute a rule and process for allowing long-term permit parking in a Town lot	2020-2021	2.6, 2.10, 2.8, 2.10
Housing  	1. Revisit the topic of allowing second floor residences in the <i>Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District</i> , and consider a revision of the <i>Land Use Ordinance</i> to allow such conversions while protecting access and use of the harbor	2020-2022	2.8, 2.10, 4.3
	2. Consider <i>Land Use Ordinance</i> modifications regarding conversion of apartments to condominiums unless year-round occupancy and usage controls can be met	2019-2020	2.3, 2.10, 4.3
	3. Review and consider <i>Land Use Ordinance</i> modifications to control and limit non-owner-occupied short-term rentals in the Downtown area	2019-2020	2.3, 2.10, 3.6
Waterfront Access  	1. Review existing <i>Land Use Ordinance</i> language allowing “Other commercial activities” in the <i>Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District</i> with regard to businesses that are not directly related to the commercial fishing industry	2020-2021	2.10
	2. Determine if any ordinance language needs to be modified to set guidelines and limits for private passenger ferry services to operate in the harbor and utilize Town docking facilities	2021-2022	2.10, 3.4, 4.1
Historic Buildings 	1. Consider establishing a blight ordinance that addresses actions related to deteriorated buildings posing public health or safety risks	2019-2020	2.1, 2.3, 2.10
	2. Review and consider the viability of instituting a simple design review ordinance and process, including a demolition clause that would cover a designated portion of the historic Main Street corridor	2021-2022	2.1, 2.3, 2.10
Building Codes 	1. Review existing <i>Floodplain Ordinance</i> regarding requirements for new construction and renovation	2019-2020	2.10, 4.5
	2. Modify the <i>Floodplain Ordinance</i> to allow definition of a “locally significant property” that could qualify for a variance without a formal federal or state listing being required.	2020-2021	2.10, 4.5
	3. Review and consider the viability of instituting a simple Design Review ordinance and process	2020-2021	2.3, 2.10

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose

Vinalhaven is unique, but not unusual. Although other towns in Maine claim to have scenic harbors, productive fishing industries, a close-knit and safe community, vibrant schools, low traffic, clean air and dark skies, historic buildings and heritage, or abundant public open space, no town has all of these qualities except Vinalhaven.



Yet the community of Vinalhaven also shares some other, less-positive characteristics with many small towns in Maine: aging infrastructure; tight municipal budgets; loss of traditional local businesses downtown; vacant storefronts; an increasingly aging population; a net out-migration of young families; and downtown areas where high costs of historic building maintenance, flood insurance, and repairs prove financially difficult for some owners and discouraging to investors.

These patterns are found across Maine and America. They contribute to the erosion of the traditional downtown heart of a community, and can pose a threat for a town’s vitality and long-term sustainability. But it doesn’t have to be this way.

Re-establishing or preserving a healthy downtown is a key to a healthy community, and the first step in making that happen involves long-term planning for downtown development and revitalization. Such planning is often requested by a Town’s Select Board, in recognition that their leadership encompasses not just budgets and infrastructure, but also includes working in concert with other organizations and groups to foster vitality in their community. No single group or organization can accomplish that alone, but through collaboration.

The Importance of Having a Plan

The well-respected Maine Community Foundation has said, *“Perhaps the best way to state the importance of having a downtown plan is to state the risks of **not** having a plan.”* The risks of unplanned or poorly planned downtown development include:

1. No development or investment activity happening at all.
2. Development that is out of character with its surroundings or community values.
3. Development that exceeds the ability of existing infrastructure to support it.
4. Loss of tax revenue from continued loss of businesses and jobs in the downtown area.
5. Loss of a community fabric that is created by vibrant village and downtown centers.

To someone visiting or living on Vinalhaven, some of these might sound familiar.

Given the risks of **not** having a downtown plan, writing one is an important initial step when a community decides to focus on its downtown.

Whether as part of a Comprehensive Plan process or as a separate effort, there are several objectives for a downtown plan. The primary objective is often **revitalization** – bringing new life to downtown areas. Other objectives typically include the **preservation and rehabilitation** of existing infrastructure and historic buildings; **redevelopment** of sites that may be vacant, run-down, or under-utilized; and a focus on creating **walkable districts** that include a mix of commercial, civic, cultural, educational and recreational uses.

As part of the planning process, an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the downtown area can help in the development of objectives. What works, what doesn't work, what do people want to see downtown, how does the downtown fit into the surrounding village. Asking and answering these questions is key to the development of a plan.

Assigning the Task

The 2013 Vinalhaven Comprehensive Plan acknowledged the benefits to coordinating planning, capital projects, and economic development activities in the Main Street corridor. The Vinalhaven Select Board agreed with this concept, and in 2015 the Town retained a planning consultant from the Community Planning Studio in Brunswick Maine, to review the current state of downtown planning, and advise the Town on a path toward revitalizing the Downtown area.

At the same time, the Select Board established a Downtown Revitalization Committee, later renamed the Downtown Committee (DTC). The group was charged with drafting a long-term Downtown Master Plan focused on infrastructure and capital improvements (such as roads, sidewalks, drainage, lighting, utilities, etc.), and potential changes in policies and ordinances. The overarching objectives are preserving historic and cultural authenticity, enhancing resiliency, and fostering year-round economic vibrancy along Main Street, while meeting or exceeding the current and future needs of stakeholders and the community at large for at least the next twenty years.

The Vinalhaven Setting: Constant Change

Throughout its history, Vinalhaven has been a strong, independent and thriving community with a remarkable heritage and proven resiliency through several boom-and-bust economic cycles. Taking a decades-long view, “change has been the only constant”, for the overall island and Downtown in particular (Figure 1-1). Change is not easy for most of us; our first reaction might be anger or denial, or feeling threatened. But along Main Street, many buildings and industries have come and gone since the mid-1800s, and so we should not be surprised by similar change in decades to come.

While accepting that change is inevitable, we still need to ask ourselves which things are worth keeping or improving for future generations, whether a specific piece of architecture, access to the waterfront, safe pathways for our children and adults to walk on, or the village atmosphere that supports Vinalhaven's strong sense of community.

We have an opportunity to look ahead and think about what future islanders and visitors might need Downtown over the next 20-30 years to maintain the same quality of life we currently enjoy. What jobs will they have? What should Downtown look like? What kinds of businesses should we encourage? When the oceans rise a foot or more, how will that affect Main Street? What services or facilities will islanders need? How will people travel, communicate, and work in the future? And what will the “outside world” even look like?

In the distant past, these kinds of questions were rarely asked. Our grandparents, and their parents, were often focused on making ends meet, and perhaps making life a bit better for their children. They weren't necessarily focused on preserving an entire way of life, or a specific unique building, or putting in place policies to encourage new businesses or industries. And they were not worried about sea level rise or other effects of climate change.

For example, many folks now regret allowing the demolition of some of our historic Main Street buildings to make way for less-than-ideal designs and functions. But at the time, there were more pressing issues to deal with, whether it was building a water system to deliver safe drinking water for Village residents, or lobbying for the creation of the Maine State Ferry Service after losing the private steamship lifeline to the mainland, or funding and building a new school.

That way of thinking changed later in the 20th century, as threats to local jobs and the damage to or loss of resources prompted forward-thinking action by citizens and local governments. On Vinalhaven, this included actions like the creation of ordinances to preserve the working waterfront and ensure harbor access; by construction of a sewer collection and wastewater treatment system in the Village to protect the surrounding marine habitats that we rely upon; and by the creation of a series of Comprehensive Plans to help guide future development and policies on the entire island.

The Comprehensive Plan process also provided a way to ask the community questions about what is important and what should we protect. As an example, in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan survey, 81% of respondents said they were concerned about the stability of Vinalhaven's year-round economy. Based on information and community opinions gathered by the Downtown Committee (DTC) for this study, that economic concern still exists today.

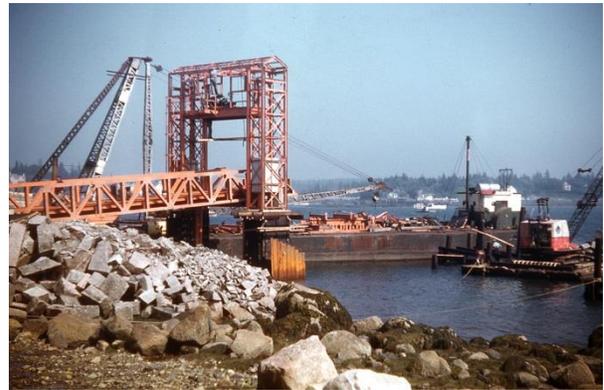


Figure 1-1: Changes through the decades. Clockwise from upper left: Installing the new Town water system in 1907; construction of the ferry pen; Peaslee's garage on Windy Way; the ferry *Vinalhaven II*, in 1953.

In recent times, Vinalhaven has been fortunate to have a robust lobster fishery at its doorstep, which has maintained a thriving working waterfront with well-paying jobs working on the water or onshore in direct support of lobstering. The Town boasts one of the largest lobster fleets in the world, and more than 250 individuals hold commercial lobster fishing licenses in the Town (Figure 1-2).

It is estimated that of the island’s 900 year-round residents who are over 18 years old, roughly 350 are directly involved in the lobster industry as boat captains, sterning, working the docks, or in direct shore-side services.

In economic terms, there are only rough estimates for the total cash flow on Vinalhaven resulting from the lobster industry. However, one indicator is the value of Vinalhaven lobster landings as reported to the State Department of Marine Resources by seafood dealers (Figure 1-3).

The value of the lobster catch on Vinalhaven has grown dramatically, and in each of the past five years has topped \$35 million, clearly making it an enormous source of revenue and income for the island today, and a critical element for the Town’s health.

Yet if you ask any lobster fisherman over the age of 50 to recall the 1970s and 1980s, they often talk of much smaller catches, low prices, and difficult times. When asked what they see in lobstering’s future, few say “endless bounty”, and most caution us all to have a Plan B in place.

So, although it is a difficult and controversial topic to raise in this community, we have to ask ourselves the hard questions “What will happen if lobstering takes a downturn in the future?” and “What can we do now to prepare for that?”

In part, the answers to those two questions relate not just to change, but also to the concepts of Social Resiliency and Sustainable Economies.

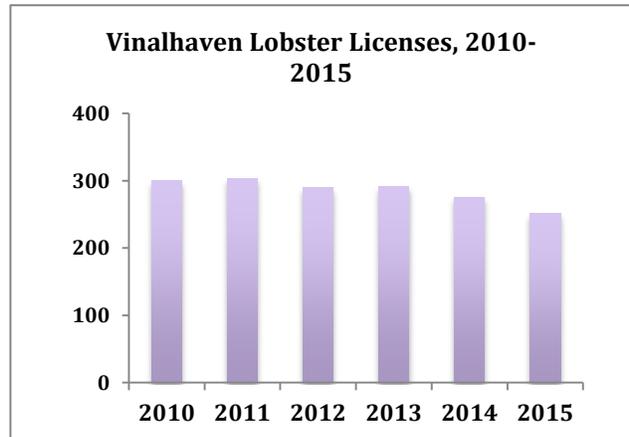


Figure 1-2: Lobster licenses on Vinalhaven. Source: Maine Dept of Marine Resources

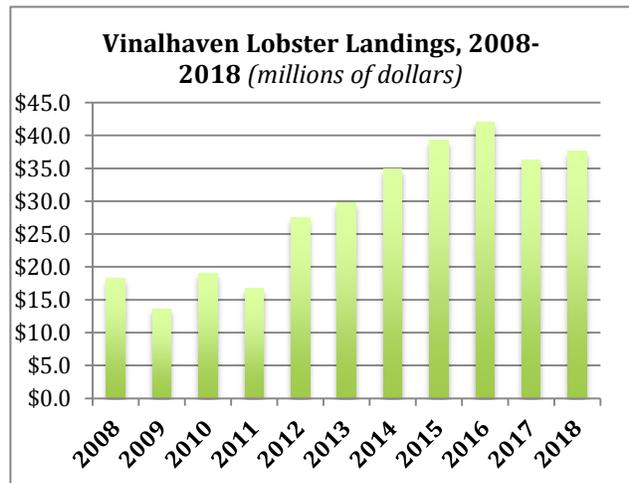


Figure 1-3: Lobster landings on Vinalhaven in the past decade. Source: Maine Dept of Marine Resources

Fostering Social Resiliency and Sustainability

What does it mean to be socially resilient? At the community level, it means **having the resources and ability to absorb or bounce back from physical or economic disruptions**, whether from a natural disaster like a Category 5 hurricane, or a global economic downturn that upsets markets and eliminates jobs.

Vinalhaven has shown social resilience through economic hard times and periods of social change. But today's world may pose even greater challenges to the island's traditional ways of life, with the advent of the internet, rise of tourism, depletion of groundfish stocks, fluctuating tariffs, increasing costs of living, and the uncertain threats of climate change and sea level rise.

From the DTC team's conversations with dozens of Main Street stakeholders and community members, all of these topics have come up as concerns. It is clear that no town, not even a remote island, is immune from the changes that come with these issues.

During group discussions and interviews for the 2014 Economic Development study, stakeholders identified five key categories that would define social resiliency for Vinalhaven:

- *Maintaining a safe, close-knit community*
- *Accessible housing choices for all residents*
- *Keeping our kids here: jobs and training to fit island needs*
- *Infrastructure support: transportation, buildings, and technology*
- *Building a diverse economy*

For Downtown revitalization and growth, these are important goals in planning. But so is the concept of **sustainability** to ensure that islanders continue to make a living here in the future.



Figure 1-4: How our Community has defined Sustainability on Vinalhaven

Although economic development is not a primary focus of this Downtown Master Plan, the concept of “sustainable development” lies at the heart of the Plan’s analysis and recommendations for capital projects and policies. To many people, sustainability is a multi-layered concept that has Environmental, Economic, Cultural, and Civic components. But for the purposes of this Plan, the DTC defined “sustainable development” in relatively simple terms: *“To meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs...”*

The DTC relied on previous Town surveys and group conversations to identify values that define what sustainability means for Vinalhaven. Hundreds of residents and stakeholders provided input in recent years on the kinds of community values we need to sustain for future generations. Collectively, our community has defined sustainability on Vinalhaven as shown in Figure 1-4.

Based on these values, it is clear that ensuring the long-term vitality of Vinalhaven requires us to think about sustainability not simply as an environmental buzzword, but as a real-world economic necessity for an island.

The Three Vinalhaven Economies

All of these sustainability aspects are intertwined with each other and with the economic health and character of the community. They also effectively describe the three primary, overlapping economies on the island, each of which is important to Vinalhaven’s future.

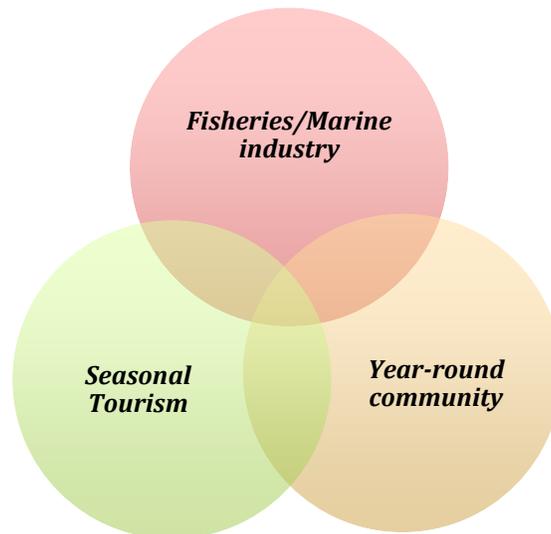


Figure 1-5: The three intertwined Vinalhaven economies

Based on everything we know about Vinalhaven’s people, their jobs, and island resources, none of these three economies by itself can fully sustain the community. Instead, **sustaining all three of these economies simultaneously, is critical to sustaining Vinalhaven.**

The scale and value of the **Fisheries/Marine Economy** to Vinalhaven has already been stated. That economy is a core aspect of this community’s heart and soul, and a top priority is preserving and protecting at least those aspects of fishing that are within our control.

In addition to fishing, Vinalhaven is fortunate to possess extraordinary natural beauty, and as a result it has been a popular summer destination for visitors since the mid-1800s. In summer today, the population of the island swells from 1,200 residents to an estimated 3,000 people. Whether that is good or bad depends on your perspective and perhaps your choice of career, but it is not a recent change caused by bigger ferries, stock markets, or baby boomers retiring.

No, there is a lengthy history of tourists and seasonal visitors on the island, and the **Seasonal Tourism Economy** has long provided a significant source of income for islanders. Looking back, the list of stately hotels, restaurants and large guesthouses that existed in the late 1800s and early 1900s to serve the hundreds of visitors is astonishing (Figure 1-6).

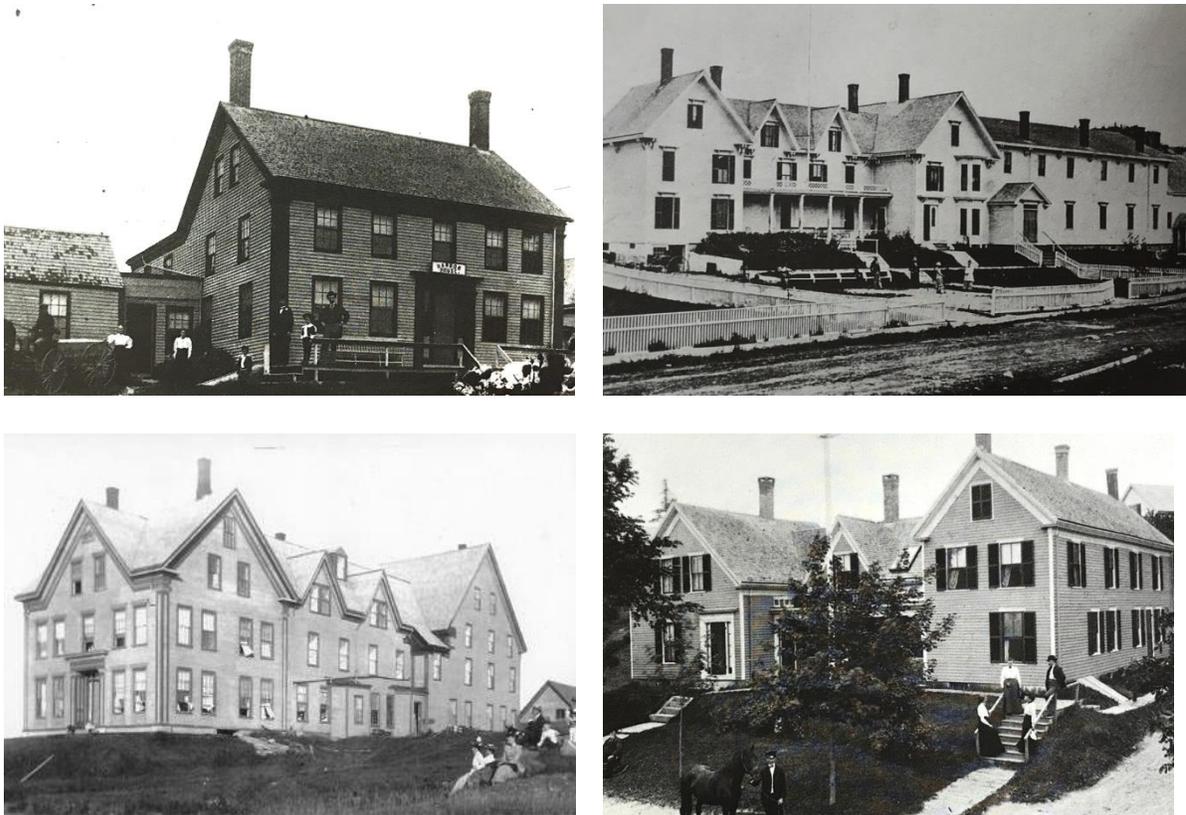


Figure 1-6: Vinalhaven tourist hotels of the past: Clockwise from upper left: the Harbor House at 58 West Main ca 1880; the vast Granite Inn complex in 1877, which burned in 1886; the Central Hotel, at 56 West Main, now the site of Vinalhaven’s Public Safety/Fire Station facility; the Rockaway Inn on Lane’s Island.

Many, if not most of those hotels are now gone, having burned down or been demolished over the decades. But the island continues to host large numbers of seasonal visitors, many in their own houses or in rented cottages. Their contribution to the island’s economy is vastly underestimated and under-appreciated by many of us who are not caretakers, business owners, restaurant staff, gardeners, contractors, tradespeople, or retail shop owners.

We do know that in terms of tax revenues, seasonal property owners who do not reside on Vinalhaven pay more than 50% of our total property taxes, supporting the school, roads, and facilities we all use year-round.

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan acknowledged the benefits and challenges of tourism, noting:

“The impact of tourism is significant, second only to lobstering. The degree to which our economic health thrives depends enormously on the profitability of tourist-related businesses. Many of us are tradespeople, caretakers, and cleaners, or work at any of the several dozen other occupations that are dependent either entirely or primarily on summer folks.”

“On the other hand, it is clear and has been clear for some time that the will of the community is to keep tourism at or about its present level and to keep expansion of this significant slice of the economic pie from overwhelming us.”

In light of these concerns, the 2013 Comprehensive Plan included ways to preserve and protect our resources, both for and from seasonal visitors. But it did not recommend specific projects or policies that would either limit, support, or encourage tourism, except by referencing ongoing efforts to maintain sidewalks and town parks, and noting how the logistical challenges to get to and travel around the island served as a limit to the growth of tourism.

An overarching guideline for this Downtown Master Plan has been to identify and prioritize projects and actions that will benefit one or more of the primary economies, but not negatively impact any of the others.

- Vinalhaven Downtown Committee

However, based on information gleaned from stakeholder conversations and, admittedly, some purely anecdotal evidence, there are indications that tourism is not only stable but may be

slowly increasing here, at least in terms of the overall number of visitors and impacts on parking and pedestrian traffic. The Ferry Service believes it has seen a decrease in passenger traffic in the past two years, especially after raising ticket prices. But that data does not jibe with a continued crush in downtown restaurants, unavailability of parking spaces in summer, and increasingly long ferry lines in Rockland even during mid-week. For those reasons, any Downtown Master Plan needs to address ways to better handle existing seasonal traffic, and consider how to accommodate possible future increases in visitors.

In simple terms, the third sector, the **Year-Round Economy**, consists of everything else. It includes those of us who provide the community all year-long with food and beverages, fuel to heat our homes, package deliveries, car repair, library books, plumbing or electrical work, construction services, snow plowing, transportation, and the many other services that make a Town function. Of course, these workers and businesses benefit from the other two economies, which underscores how all three are intertwined and cannot stand alone. In addition, there is a surprising, and slightly increasing, number of residents who quietly earn their year-round living from careers unconnected to tourism or fishing, including the arts, technology, consulting, publishing, etc. For many of these folks, access to broadband is important, and we should consider them as examples of potential future jobs on the island, and seek ways to support their needs as well.

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Given the importance of each of these three economies, an overarching guideline for this Downtown Master Plan has been to identify and prioritize projects and actions **that will benefit one or more of the primary economies, but not negatively impact any of the others.**

Challenging? Yes. Possible? Absolutely.

## 1.2 Downtown Master Plan Study Area

For the purposes of this planning effort, the DTC team focused on the 1.4-mile central section of Main Street from the Town Library on the east to the Maine State Ferry Service terminal on the west (Figure 1-7). This section of Main Street represents what some residents have called “the historic and economic heart of the community”, and together with its adjoining harbor and waterfront is the center for most of the commerce, transportation, tourism, entertainment, and employment for the island.

It is recognized that the entire island is affected by what happens on Main Street, and that there are many other portions of the island that contribute to the vitality of the community. The 2013 Vinalhaven Comprehensive Plan encompassed the entire island in its analysis, and this Downtown Master Plan is intended to build upon and support the Comprehensive Plan’s recommendations through a focus on the Main Street corridor.

The study area includes more than 70 individual properties, the Town’s public access points to the harbor, two buildings currently on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), 26 additional buildings that may have historic value, the largest facilities on the island for public parking, and 52 year-round and seasonal businesses that combined represent over 200 jobs with nearly \$3.3 million in annual payrolls. Figure 1-8 shows all of the properties in the study area identified by zoning categories, owner locations, and current uses.



**Figure 1-7: The Downtown planning area extends 1.4 miles from the Ferry Terminal (lower left) to the Town library (upper right).**

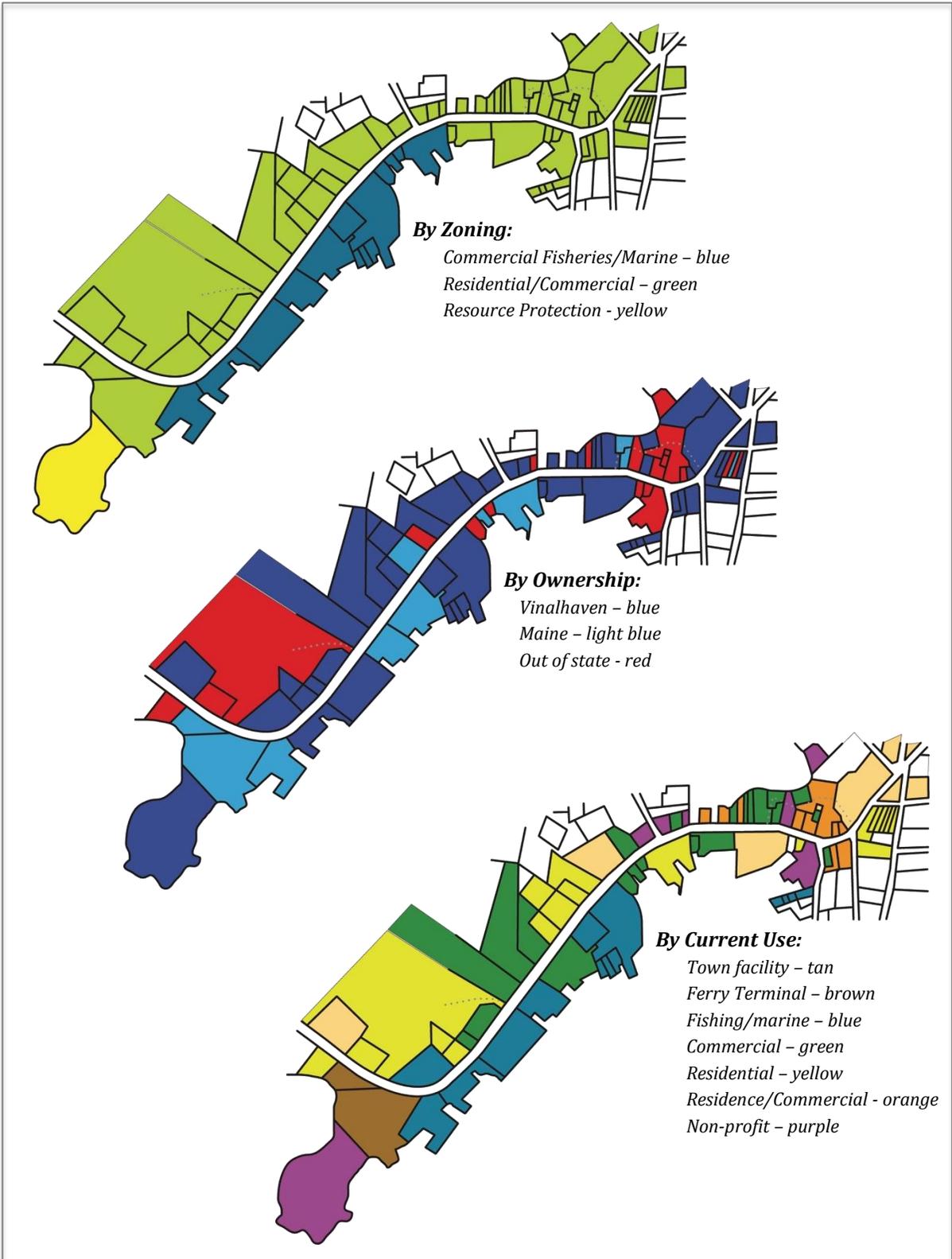


Figure 1-8: Study area properties by: Zoning category (top), Ownership (center), and Current use (bottom).

### 1.3 Planning Approach and Process

#### Technical Approach

Rather than reinvent the planning process, the Downtown Committee used information from the Maine Development Foundation's (MDF) "Maine Downtown Center" to help guide development of this Downtown Master Plan. The Maine Downtown Center has assisted towns throughout Maine including Camden, Damariscotta, Rockland, Stonington, and Waldoboro in their Main Street revitalization and planning efforts.

The Maine Downtown Center serves as a statewide resource for preservation-based downtown revitalization and also serves as the state coordinator for the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Main Street Maine" program. Since it was established in 1999, the Program's mission has been to advance economic development in Maine downtowns using the nearly 40-year-old Main Street Four-Point Approach®. The approach is considered one of the most powerful tools in the nation for making vibrant, healthy downtowns.



A primary facet of the Main Street program is to encourage development within the context of respecting historic architecture, heritage, and the character of the community (Figure 1-9). This "heart and soul" approach advocates local self-reliance and the sustainability of commercial districts based on traditional assets such as architectural features, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community.

For Vinalhaven, this kind of thinking rings particularly true.

**Figure 1-9: The Main Street Four-Point Approach encourages revitalization through community organization and engagement, building a diverse economic base, celebrating historic character and fostering public spaces, and promoting the downtown district.**

The Main Street program approach is just one of several tools that a community like Vinalhaven needs to utilize to generate economic and entrepreneurial growth. All parts of the public and private sectors of the community must join together and be committed for a local Main Street program to succeed. Each sector has an important role to play, and each must understand and respect the other's needs, strengths and limitations so that an effective partnership is created. Just as no single business or sector can sustainably support an entire community by itself, so too must all of the players work together to develop a plan that ensures long-term vitality of the community.

The Main Street approach is also intended to be incremental, and will not typically produce wholesale, rapid change. Expensive capital improvements often fail to address underlying causes of a commercial district's decline, and thus do not always produce the desired economic improvements. For a long-term revitalization effort to succeed, it requires careful attention to all aspects of a downtown – including infrastructure, ordinances and policies, financial incentives, and promotion and outreach – all of which take time, leadership, and local capacity building.

The Maine Downtown Affiliate Program (MDA), sponsored by the Maine Downtown Center, was launched in 2009 as a sister program to Main Street Maine using the same Four Points approach but

at a lighter, less rigorous pace. The MDA Program has proven ideal for smaller communities in the early stages of downtown revitalization such as Vinalhaven, as well as for those communities working toward achieving national “Main Street” designation.

Information gleaned from the MDA program and other towns that have already completed their downtown plans helped the Vinalhaven Downtown Committee plan its tasks and prioritize and organize topics for analysis and discussion, conduct outreach to stakeholders, and assemble and review data. This Plan is the product of three years of effort, and has benefited from the experience of many other organizations and similar planning efforts throughout Maine.

### Planning Process

The original Downtown Revitalization Committee held eight meetings from 2016 to June 2018 to discuss ways of approaching a downtown plan and specific planning topics. In 2017-2018 these meetings were coordinated by John Bubier, who worked for the Town as a part-time planner. An initial set of policy considerations and plan topics were identified and prioritized, and the components of a master plan were outlined. In October 2018, the Town assigned Gabe McPhail and George Kendrick to assist the renamed Downtown Committee in completing their data collection and analysis, conducting public outreach, and drafting this Downtown Master Plan. The DTC team then focused on a multi-step process to complete the planning project, which included:

- Reviewing and synthesizing relevant existing studies and reports from appropriate Town committees, Town consultants, and local, state, and regional organizations.
- Conducting confidential interviews with stakeholders to identify future plans, constraints, and potential infrastructure requirements that could influence a Master Plan.
- Compiling and discussing stakeholder issues and concerns to identify common themes and develop groupings of priorities and solutions.
- Communicating findings and priorities to the Town Manager and the Town's Engineering consultant to help inform preliminary engineering designs for Main Street projects.

To streamline the planning discussions, the DTC held ten theme-based committee meetings to identify and discuss policies, capital improvements, and ordinances related to specific topics such as transportation, housing, safety, parking, etc. Figure 1.10 illustrates the topics and approach for these meetings. Discussions encompassed prior community feedback and studies, as well as information from other Town committees, organizations, and state agencies. Minutes from these DTC meetings are provided in The Appendices.



**Figure 1-10: In 2018 and 2019 the Downtown Committee focused on identifying issues, evaluating policies, planning stakeholder interviews and outreach, and prioritizing projects and solutions for Main Street.**

Early in the planning process, the DTC confirmed that their charge from the Select Board was to determine policies, projects, and ordinances that would encourage economic development, rather than actually design an overall economic development plan. Thus, the recommended actions in this Master Plan are considered a revitalization foundation upon which economic development can be built by future efforts and groups. Recommended actions include the establishment of an Economic Development Committee, as well as the creation of a community development and investment entity that can help fund sustainable development on the island.

## Stakeholder Interviews and Analysis

Stakeholder input was sought from nearly sixty Main Street businesses, property owners, and organizations, representing ownership and operating interests from the Ferry Terminal to the Library. These stakeholders represent a broad spectrum of interests along the corridor, from long-term islanders to recent arrivals, fishermen, restaurant owners, non-profit organizations, investors, town and state employees, utility managers, dock and wharf managers, and apartment residents.

Information and opinions from previous stakeholder outreach efforts were also reviewed and considered in this Downtown Master Plan, including extensive comments and data from surveys and group meetings held for the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, the 2017 DART Study, and the 2014 Economic Development Strategy.

A total of 57 individual interviews were held between November 2018 and June 2019 with 71 people representing 95% of the businesses and properties on Main Street, to capture information about their plans, needs, observations, and concerns about the Main Street corridor, both as it exists today and could evolve in the future. The interviews consisted of asking a consistent series of questions regarding the community, business operations, employees, property characteristics, future plans, and thoughts regarding the Main Street corridor. Five absentee property owners on Main Street were also surveyed by mail and email for their input. A copy of the guiding questionnaire is provided in the Appendix.

Because of the detailed information asked about business operations and specific future plans, individual responses have been kept confidential and have been only summarized and grouped for this Plan and report. The results of these interviews provided a wealth of information about Main Street's history, infrastructure status, traffic patterns, business operations, employment, housing, maintenance issues, and the positive and negative effects of various ordinances and facilities on transportation, economics, and safety. Although these stakeholders represented a broad range of interests and opinions, there were similar top priorities that emerged regardless of a person's background or role.

The two illustrations below provide two different ways of looking at the overall stakeholder responses. Both provide a clear sense of priorities.

- First, a “word cloud” (Figure 1-11) was created to help identify the most common words (excluding the, and, is, etc.) from the respective stakeholder responses. Although not a quantitative analysis, this provides a good overview of important stakeholder priorities.
- Second, a bar chart (Figure 1-12) capturing the top 20 topic phrases provides a similar glimpse at priorities, but with more clarity and detail.

Using this information, the DTC team then proceeded to compile and integrate other technical and engineering studies, capital project plans, stakeholder surveys, and community data to develop this Downtown Master Plan outlined in following sections.



## Master Plan Priorities

The detailed input from stakeholders, combined with the results of prior studies and community outreach, was compiled to identify priority goals for this Downtown Master Plan. These goals were evaluated in terms of how they met the needs of the three island economies, whether they would help foster social resiliency and sustainability, how they meshed with recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and how well they addressed the obstacles and challenges identified during stakeholder interviews and DTC discussions.

From that analysis, the specific goals shown in the table below emerged as guiding topics for the rest of the planning process. Individual actions, including capital projects, policies, and ordinance modifications discussed in the following sections and in the Master Plan summary, were evaluated and categorized by their role in meeting one or more of these goals.

The icons shown in this table serve as visual representations of the Master Plan’s priority goals, and are used throughout the Master Plan to show how individual recommended actions are tied to specific goals.

| <b>Priority Goals for this Downtown Master Plan – Putting People First</b>          |                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | <p>Improve pedestrian safety and amenities</p> <p><i>Accessible sidewalks; crosswalks; safer intersections; traffic calming; wayfinding; benches</i></p>                            |
|    | <p>Improve parking for residents, fishermen, and visitors</p> <p><i>New parking areas; redesign curbside parking; ordinance improvements</i></p>                                    |
|  | <p>Preserve and expand waterfront access for our community</p> <p><i>Strengthen ordinances; support marine businesses; consider acquisitions to regain access</i></p>               |
|  | <p>Encourage more year-round business and activities</p> <p><i>Strengthen ordinances; improve infrastructure; encourage new development</i></p>                                     |
|  | <p>Expand year-round affordable housing</p> <p><i>Revise ordinances; preserve existing housing; encourage new housing initiatives</i></p>                                           |
|  | <p>Improve accessibility to sidewalks and buildings</p> <p><i>Add wheelchair-accessible space; access ramps; elevate sidewalks nearer to building thresholds</i></p>                |
|  | <p>Improve stormwater and flood resiliency</p> <p><i>Fix stormwater system; elevate road and sidewalks; revise flood map; assist owners</i></p>                                     |
|  | <p>Create more public gathering spaces</p> <p><i>Downtown benches; multi-purpose public lot for events; pocket parks; roadside landscaping</i></p>                                  |
|  | <p>Manage summer congestion to maximize benefits and minimize impacts</p> <p><i>Sidewalks; wayfinding; parking; bicycle safety; traffic calming; lodging-related ordinances</i></p> |
|  | <p>Preserve and enhance the character of the Village and its heritage resources</p> <p><i>Strengthen ordinances; address demolition and blight; signage; landscaping; parks</i></p> |

## 1.4 Regional Context and Demographics

The town of Vinalhaven is an island located in Penobscot Bay, 15 miles and a 1 hour 15 minute ferry ride from the mainland. With a year-round population of approximately 1,200 people, Vinalhaven is the largest un-bridged island community in Maine. The island is served by the Maine State Ferry Service with 6 round ferry trips per day. Virtually all goods, materials, vehicles and passengers come and go by ferry, which adds both logistical constraints and financial costs to the island's economy and operations. In the summer season, the island receives a significant influx of seasonal residents and tourists, resulting in an estimated total population of 3,000-4,000 during that peak summer period.



While the island's year-round population has decreased significantly from historic highs in the late 1800s, it has been relatively stable overall (+/- 200) during the last few decades (Table 1).

| US Census Category             | 2000     | 2010     | 2017     |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| <b>Total Population</b>        | 1,235    | 1,165    | 1,168    |
| <b>Pop. Over 18</b>            | 942      | 914      | 944      |
| <b>Male</b>                    | 592      | 596      | 589      |
| <b>Female</b>                  | 643      | 569      | 579      |
| <b>Median Age</b>              | 40.2     | 45.1     | 53.4     |
| <b>Median age, male</b>        | 38.8     | 45.3     | 54.4     |
| <b>Median age, female</b>      | 41.2     | 44.5     | 47.6     |
| <b>Housing units</b>           | 1,228    | 1,295    | 1,303    |
| <b>Median household income</b> | \$34,087 | \$40,526 | \$52,045 |

Table 1: Vinalhaven population figures from 2000 to 2017. Source: U.S. Census

The island's year-round population is also changing in terms of age distribution. According to the US Census (Figure 1-13), over the past two decades there has been a steady upward shift in the island resident median age, from 40 years old in 2000 to 53.4 years old in 2017.

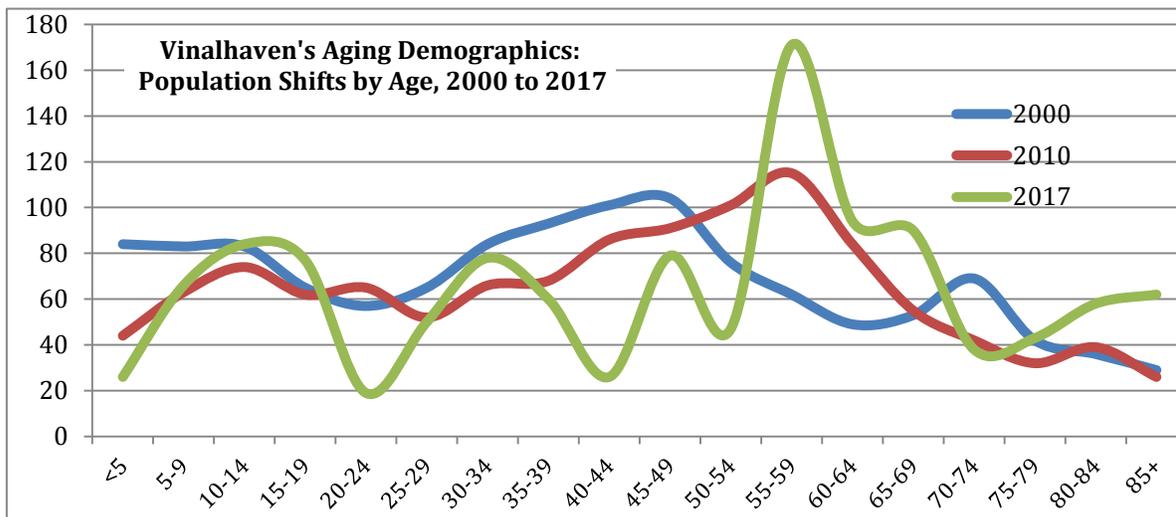


Figure 1-13: Vinalhaven's changing demographics. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In part, this shift suggests an aging-in-place population with fewer young families staying on the island. The town has seen a couple of “baby boomlet” years in the past decade, with resultant temporary increases in the school population. But there has been a detectable drop in the 20-to-24-year-old resident cohort over the past 20 years (which one can quickly confirm by talking to any local young adult about dating opportunities on the island.) A similar dip has occurred in the 40-to-44 year-old age group.

Information was not available for this report regarding reasons for people moving off island, but anecdotal evidence suggests a broad number of motivations, from changes in personal relationships to financial issues, more or different job opportunities on the mainland, better housing options, and different school experiences for their children.

The census figures also reflect an influx of baby boomer retirees and those nearing retirement, many of whom have moved to Vinalhaven because of its physical characteristics and to enjoy the values of a small, rural, tight-knit community. Most of these new older residents are not newcomers to the island; many were previously seasonal residents who spent summers on the island and decided to move full-time to the town later in life. Some are financially secure, while others continue to work at least part-time and/or rely on additional support like Social Security.

In planning, it is important to consider what this influx may mean in the future for the community. Potential benefits such as stable levels of disposable income, property investment, and increased civic volunteerism may be balanced by increased needs for medical care, transportation, and different visions of community needs and facilities.

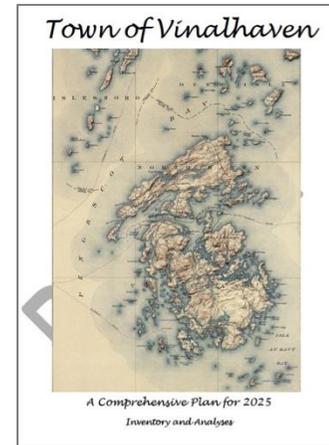
## 1.5 Previous Studies

As noted above, this Downtown Master Plan has drawn upon a many prior studies and outreach efforts on Vinalhaven, most of which are summarized below. Some of these studies focused on the island as a whole, while others looked only at certain aspects of the downtown or village areas. None attempted to consolidate all of the previous technical data and opinions into a cohesive overall plan for Downtown. The DTC team has reviewed this prior work to help identify priorities and constraints, and to identify data gaps pertinent to the downtown area.

### 2013 Vinalhaven Comprehensive Plan

The 2013 Vinalhaven Comprehensive Plan laid out strategies and recommendations for the Town to consider through 2025. Serving as an update to the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, the 2013 Plan provided an update on demographics, resources, and external influences on the community and resources, and provided suggestions on capital projects, zoning, and policies.

As part of its data collection and outreach efforts, the Planning Commission gathered opinions from the community on a wide range of topics through focus group meetings, multiple community presentations, and a major island-wide survey. The survey results provided insights into what people living on Vinalhaven liked, disliked, and saw as challenges for the future. Of the survey respondents, 65% were year-round residents, while 35% were seasonal residents and nonresident taxpayers. While the results of the survey were not considered absolute nor definitive, they helped guide the Planning Commission's recommendations and policies to complete the Comprehensive Plan.



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Planning Commission's

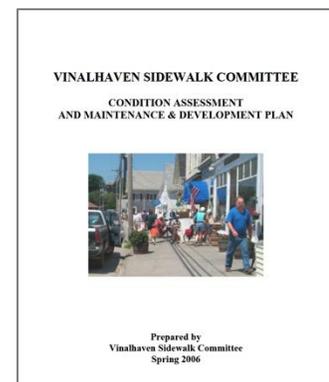
This Downtown Master Plan has utilized and is consistent with the results and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and should be considered an extension of that Plan. A copy of the Comprehensive Plan is provided in the Appendix.

### 2006 Vinalhaven Sidewalk Plan

In 2006 the Town's Sidewalk Committee evaluated the condition of the island's sidewalks and made recommendations to the Select Board for improvements and additions. That resulted in the establishment and annual funding of a sidewalk reserve account, repairs along Downstreet and East Main Street, construction of sidewalks along Water Street and Atlantic Avenue, and installation of approximately 570 feet of new sidewalk along West Main Street.

However, one of the Committee's highest priority recommendations that was neither funded nor completed was extension of the sidewalk to the Ferry Terminal. The Sidewalk Plan stated:

*"Six times a day several people walk to and from the Ferry Terminal, particularly in the summer when the several can turn to scores. This is undoubtedly the most important site that is not currently connected to the village's sidewalk network. To make matters worse, West Main Street can be busy and at times congested with walkers, bikers, semi trucks, forklifts, and regular vehicles. Clearly a priority."*



The ferry sidewalk extension initiative was ultimately unsuccessful in part because of complicated land ownership, but also due to opposition by some who were concerned about adverse impacts to the Vinalhaven Fisherman's Co-op parking area at the corner of Sands Road. Recent discussions have identified some creative solutions that could address those concerns.

Completing the ferry sidewalk segment is among the top priorities of all actions recommended by this Downtown Master Plan. A copy of the Sidewalk Committee report is provided in the Appendix.

### 2007 Downtown Drainage Study

In 2007 the Town retained Woodard & Curran to conduct an engineering analysis of the existing stormwater management systems near and along Main Street. Their final report concluded that most of the stormwater collection and distribution components in the Downtown area cannot handle even 25-year storm event flows, let alone the 21<sup>st</sup> century's more common and intense 50- and 100-year storm events. The report noted that the Maine DOT now requires that all designs for its roadways and bridges meet 50- or 100-year storm requirements. The 2007 report further concluded that:

- *"The Town has never previously undergone a community-wide drainage project to address overall system deficiencies. Projects have been conducted on an individual basis over time to address specific situations or problems with little thought about combining drainage areas into common discharge points or thinking on a global basis."*
- *"Most of the existing stormwater conveyance systems in place are undersized for the drainage areas they serve. In many instances the structures and pipes were likely installed as a stop-gap to address a specific situation or issue without consideration of the upstream drainage areas."*
- *"Only 2 drainage areas within the Village have a discharge drainage pipe able to pass the peak flow runoff generated. For example, the discharge culvert adjacent to the Town Garage area off Windy way can convey only 50% of a 50-year storm event."*
- *"Many of the drainage systems in Vinalhaven are showing signs of age with visible deterioration, structural damage, and corrosion. As a result, many of these system components are either recommended for replacement or will require some level of rehabilitation in the coming years."*

The 2007 drainage study recommended a series of specific short-term and long-term projects to upgrade and improve drainage in the Downtown area. These projects included new culverts throughout the area, modified drainage ditches, new catch basins, and a redesigned collection and discharge system to handle increased flows and direct water away from Main Street businesses and structures. The full set of projects had an estimated cost of \$2.8 million in 2007. It appears that none of those recommendations were funded, constructed, or considered for future implementation.

Stormwater management improvements are recommended as a high priority item in this Master Plan. Their design, scheduling, and installation should be closely coordinated with the Town to minimize disruptions and conflicts with other capital projects in the Main Street area recommended by this Downtown Master Plan. A copy of this study is provided in the Appendix.

## 2014 Vinalhaven Economic Development Strategy

In 2014 the Town of Vinalhaven retained Planning Decisions Inc. to conduct an economic development study focused on gathering input and opinions from the community, identifying demographic and economic trends, evaluating business and industry opportunities, and providing suggestions and strategies to promote the economic health of the town. The study acknowledged the critical importance of maintaining the fishing/maritime economy on the island, as well as enhancing year-round businesses. Specific recommendations for economic development included the following:

**Recommendation #1:** Increase access to small business support for Island entrepreneurs across sectors, by creating opportunities for islanders to learn small business planning skills, gain assistance in navigating business legal requirements, and access business capital to start or grow their business.

**Recommendation #2:** Support a Buy Local Campaign to remind residents and visitors about the importance of supporting island businesses and services.

**Recommendation #3:** Grow the Island Crafts sector, including quality production, branding and new retail opportunities.

**Recommendation #4:** Attract “high-value” visitors by integrating the Penobscot Bay islands into mainland visitor experiences that fit with the island brand, such as those organized around art, history, marine, and nature; and by developing “island experience” packages that maximize the length of stay and value of visitors, particularly during the shoulder seasons.

**Recommendation #5:** Cultivate future island prospects such as oysters, cheese, and fiber, by supporting and encouraging island entrepreneurs.

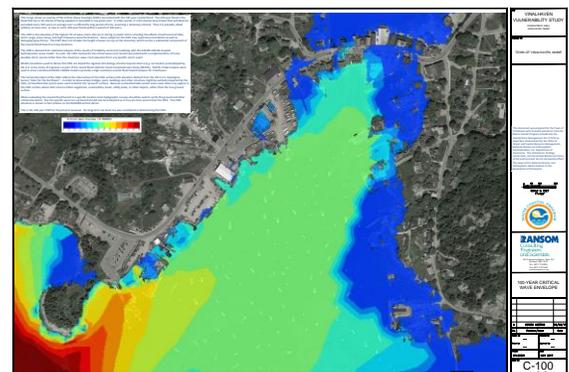
**Recommendation #6:** Attract and retain young people and families by helping island youth see a path to economic success on Vinalhaven, and by highlighting the assets and opportunities that make Vinalhaven attractive for young people and families.

A copy of this report is provided in the Appendix.

## 2016-2017 Ransom Flooding and Sea Level Rise Studies

A series of studies was commissioned by the Town from Ransom Engineers to evaluate potential risks to the downtown area and the commercial waterfront from coastal flooding and sea level rise. The 100% grant-funded studies were undertaken as part of an overall analysis of risks to Downtown infrastructure and municipal investments, and included a section of analysis related to sea level rise and climate-induced flooding and storm surges.

Ransom conducted water level modeling based on the current FEMA 100-year baseline flood elevations and multiple storm and flood scenarios, and produced a series of maps showing the inundation areas that would be expected under several scenarios, and evaluated potential actions to mitigate risks. A copy of the Ransom report and flood maps is included in the Appendix.

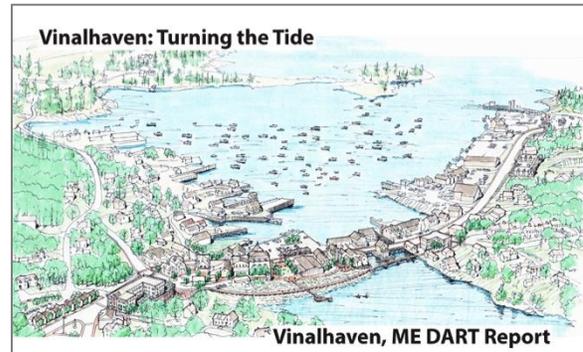


## 2016 Vinalhaven Public Works Facility Report

The Town completed a feasibility study and engineering analysis for possible relocation of the Town's Public Works Facility, currently located on a 0.9-acre lot off Windy Way near the intersection of Main Street and Water Street. Town residents in 2018 voted to approve and fund the move to a site off North Haven Road, along with construction of a new public works garage and sand storage facility. That project is currently underway, with expected completion sometime in 2020. A copy of this report is provided in the Appendix.

## 2017 DART Study

In 2017 Vinalhaven received a grant to retain the services of the Design And Resiliency Team (DART) to conduct a study of the Downtown corridor in terms of development opportunities and risks, especially in the face of coastal flooding and sea level rise. The DART team consisted of planners, engineers, and landscape architects with significant experience in municipal planning, community resiliency, and economic development. They came to the island for a rapid and intense planning exercise without bias or prior knowledge of Vinalhaven, and the team provided a fresh look and approach to some long-standing issues.



The DART team initially conducted public discussions to confirm community values and identify challenges along Main Street. Responses were not surprising, and were consistent with the 2013 Comprehensive Plan's community outreach results. The final DART report noted:

*"When residents were asked about what they loved about their community, and what they wanted to keep, they described a strong sense of place, a place where nature shaped their way of life, and a close-knit community. In order to retain existing residents and recruit new individuals and families who could live, work, and play on the island, a combination of environmental, economic, and social resiliency strategies should be implemented."*

*"Many of the physical improvements that will need to be made in order to increase Vinalhaven's resiliency and ability to thrive in the face of sea level rise will require years of planning, financing, design, and construction in order to implement. While the community works to implement these changes, it is important to also consider ways to increase the economic and social resiliency of the community."*

The DART team rapidly developed and presented a series of ideas and conceptual drawings illustrating a variety of possible projects along Main Street. Ideas ranged from new sidewalk designs to roadside pocket parks, new walking bridges and development of the Carvers Pond side of Downstreet, to creation of a multi-use "anchor building" at the Town Garage site, which could house a community center, offices, housing, and a ground-level parking area. Some of the ideas were met with applause, others with skepticism due to land use conflicts the DART team did not know about. But overall, the DART effort was considered a valuable planning and design exercise that identified creative "thinking-outside-the-box" solutions. Some elements and recommendations of the DART study have been incorporated into this Downtown Master Plan for consideration, and a copy of the DART report is provided in the Appendix.



## Chapter 2 Downtown Analysis

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## Chapter 2 Downtown Analysis

### 2.1 Historic Context of Main Street

Vinalhaven has experienced significant changes in population, industries, and lifestyles since its initial settlement in the 1700s. These early settlers focused on farming, lumber harvesting, and fishing as their primary activities, and since then the island has experienced multiple economic boom and bust cycles centered around natural resources, including cod, timber, granite, and most recently, lobster.

Fishing has been a mainstay of the island economy for nearly 200 years, and has been responsible for shaping much of the physical and social character of the island, particularly in the working waterfront areas surrounding Carver's Harbor. Vinalhaven is currently home port to one of the largest and most productive lobster fishing fleets in the world, supporting a healthy fishing economy in which a large portion of the island's year-round residents still have livelihoods connected to the sea. From the moment one disembarks from the ferry and travels along Main Street, the sights, sounds, and yes, smells of the fishing industry provide evidence of an active, productive, and unique community.

The working waterfront is a significant part of Vinalhaven's character, and is not simply evidence for a thriving town, but also presents an iconic image of Maine that appeals to both residents and visitors. For all these reasons, it is a resource and industry critical for us all to preserve and protect.

The Vinalhaven Historical Society has documented the extent to which a series of successive fishing industries have ringed the harbor and supported the community since the 1800s, from early cod fishing, to salted and dried "fish flake" operations, from early herring canneries to present-day lobstering operations (Figure 2-1). The regional collapse of groundfish stocks in the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century curtailed that industry, while lobstering expanded in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through increased market demand, technology improvements in processing and shipping, and more efficient harvesting. As noted above, the harbor supports a sizeable fleet of lobster boats and several hundred fishermen.



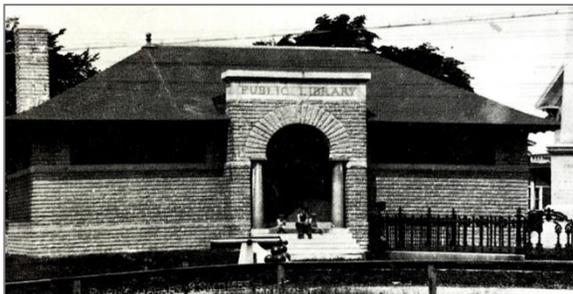
**Figure 2-1: Drying "fish flakes" was a major industry on the Vinalhaven waterfront in the 1930s, long before lobstering dominated the island.**

The long-term future of the lobster fishery is difficult to predict, of course, depending on which marine scientific studies or forecasts one believes. However, the dramatic collapse in lobstering in southern New England in recent years may represent a bellwether for what lies ahead in the Gulf of Maine.

Regardless of one's opinion about climate change and fish stocks, the uncertainties underscore the importance of fostering multiple sustainable economies for the island, that can provide good jobs and lifestyles for future generations.

In addition to its fishing heritage, Vinalhaven is fortunate to have visible treasures left from another previous economic boom (Figure 2-2). The Main Street corridor and surrounding neighborhoods contain one of the most extensive and intact clusters of 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture in Maine, much of which was constructed between 1860 and 1930 during the peak of the island's granite quarrying days.

Remnants of the productive granite industry on Vinalhaven are visible as soon as one disembarks the ferry and proceeds to walk downtown. Bare granite ledges surrounding the productive Sands Quarry loom above West Main Street, and sizeable blocks of Vinalhaven granite comprise much of the grout fill and the faces of wharfs all along the waterfront and the Town boat launch facility. Cut and polished granite is visible along West Main Street in house foundations, sidewalk curbs, at Wes Reed's granite shop, and the Veterans Memorial. And that is even before you cross High Street and see the corridor of historic buildings resting on granite foundations that comprises Downstreet.



**Figure 2-2: Vinalhaven's heritage from the granite era includes the "Galamander" (top), a device used in the 1800s for transporting granite blocks, which was restored and is on display on Main Street near the town's Carnegie Library (bottom) constructed from Vinalhaven granite. Both are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.**

During a May 2018 visit to tour the Main Street corridor with Town officials and members of the DTC, representatives from the architectural organization Maine Preservation commented that the Downtown area is "unquestionably a historic district", even though some non-historic structures are interspersed. This comment was not made in the context of recommending formal designation as a national or state-registered Historic District, but more about recognizing and honoring the heritage and unique character of this collection of buildings, and their value to the community. Figures 2-3 and 2-4 provide powerful testimony to that heritage.



**Figure 2-3: Historic Downstreet, from the west. Many historic buildings from the late 1800s along Main Street have survived intact, from the granite industry era (ca.1910, top) to today ( June 2019, bottom).**



Figure 2-4: Historic Downstreet, from the East. Many of the buildings existing more than a century ago (ca.1915, top) are still in place today (2019, bottom).

### Evolution of Downstreet

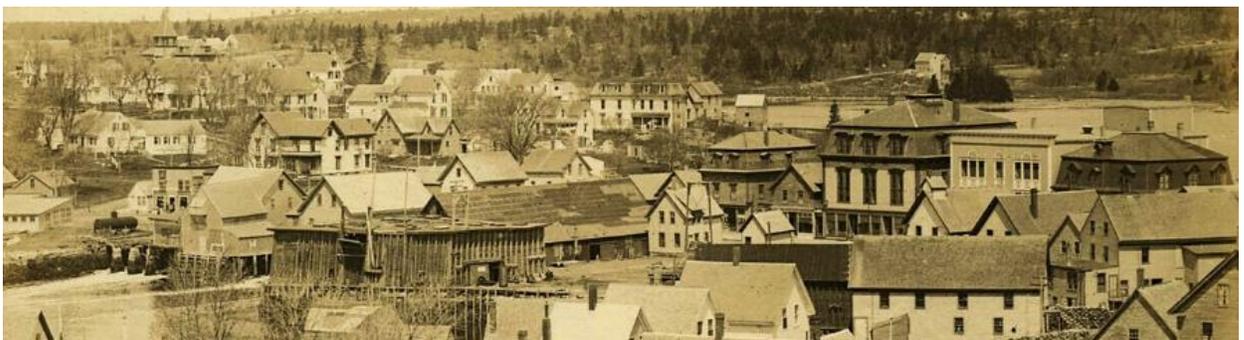
Prior to settlement of the island, Carvers Pond was a less-constricted water body with tidal channels like The Basin has today. It partially emptied at low tide to expose rocky bottom and mudflats similar to the inner portions of Roberts Harbor and Indian Creek. The “Downstreet” section of what was to become Main Street was periodically underwater. The original Carvers Pond shoreline has been obscured by the gradual creation of “made land”, which began in 1849 with construction of a causeway and bridge, and continued during the granite quarrying era when larger sections of the inner harbor were filled in with granite “grout” from nearby quarries.



**Figure 2-5: Downtown Vinalhaven viewed from Armbrust Hill, circa 1870.**

Figure 2-5 shows an early view of Downstreet, circa 1870. In this picture, Carvers Pond is still connected to the harbor by multiple tidal streams, a single grist mill stands on the south side of Main Street next to a tidal stream where the Tidewater Motel now operates, and Main Street is still a narrow causeway with at least two bridges. No buildings are visible on the north side of the street; sixteen of Downstreet’s buildings did not exist at this time.

In 1857 Reuben Carver built a block of six row houses on what is now School Street. He then began to develop the eastern end of “the street leading across Carver’s Mill Stream” in the 1860s and 1870s, eventually building and leasing several structures on the north side of the street to retail tenants, at what are now 60 through 66 Main Street. By 1872, at least 8 buildings occupied the north side of Main Street, but the central and western portions of the street remained just a causeway built over the tidal channels. By 1887, the street was nearly fully developed, with 16 buildings, and sidewalks. And by the time of the 1908 photo shown in Figure 2-6, at least 22 structures can be counted along both sides of Downstreet, marking the heyday of Vinalhaven’s downtown evolution.



**Figure 2-6: Downtown Vinalhaven viewed from Armbrust Hill, circa 1908.**

## Historic Structures

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan noted the importance of the Downstreet resource to the island, and discussed measures for protecting and honoring that legacy:

*“The ‘Downstreet’ commercial district, as well as some outlying former small stores, presents a streetscape that many take for granted because much of it has ‘always been there.’ But, looking at old photographs from 1900- 1930, it quickly becomes apparent how much is not there as well. Of the buildings presently ‘Downstreet,’ a significant number are older buildings and most are maintained. Many of them have undergone a series of adaptive uses such as the historic ‘Mill Race’ building, which had been an old bowling alley before becoming a series of restaurants, or the blacksmith shop that became a movie theatre and is now a motel.”*

Protecting and preserving these historic structures is of great interest to residents and visitors alike. In the 2013 Comprehensive Plan survey, 97% of respondents said they favored preserving historic sites and town landmarks, and 72% felt the Town should adopt a Historic Building Ordinance.

Despite resident interest, a separate Historic Building Ordinance has not been adopted, although the existing Vinalhaven Land Use Ordinance does include a requirement in Section 16.D for considering historic value in development or construction activities:

*“Any proposed land use activity involving structural development or soil disturbance on or adjacent to sites listed on, or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or having historical importance as determined by the Planning Board, shall be submitted by the applicant to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for review and comment, at least twenty (20) days prior to action being taken by the Planning Board. The Planning Board shall consider comments received from the Commission prior to rendering a decision on the application.”*

Given the demolition of several historic buildings, it is unclear whether this requirement has been consistently fulfilled by applicants or enforced by the Town.

In February of 2012, the Board of Selectmen founded the Main Street Historic Committee, which ultimately spawned a non-profit organization called Historic Downstreet. This community group brought together numerous resources and a drive to conserve the Main Street character that many people wanted to see.

As an initial project, Historic Downstreet coordinated the restoration of the historic Fire Hall at 45 Main Street (Figure 2-7), a property owned by the Town. That property, like many others in the corridor, could be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) depending on the integrity of the architecture and age. Such registration has not yet been pursued by the Town or Historic Downstreet.



Figure 2-7: The historic fire hall.

The concept of establishing a historic district in the Village was reviewed by the DTC for this study, and by other community groups in recent years. Depending on its designation as a federal- or state-certified historic district, there can be some financial or tax advantages to historic property owners, as well as opportunities to obtain funding for restoration or preservation activities. There also can be some constraints on construction, sea level rise adaptation, and exterior treatments, but usually only if federal funds are received for the work. Although the community wants to see historic buildings preserved, such potential restrictions are not popular with many islanders, and so seeking historic district designation at this time is not a recommendation of this Downtown Master Plan.

A preferred alternative approach is to simply focus on educating residents, property owners, and visitors on the historic aspects of Vinalhaven’s buildings, and to instill a sense of pride throughout the community regarding our architectural heritage. This can be done through outreach, interpretive signage, occasional architectural walks led by Vinalhaven Historical Society volunteers, and providing interested property owners with assistance in identifying their building’s heritage and in posting appropriate signs to that effect, if the owner desires. The VHS has already created a “Walking Tour of Vinalhaven” brochure highlighting some of the more historic buildings and points of interest in the Village, which can serve as a starting point for these efforts. Establishing a graphic standard for signage in the Village can also lend consistency and a sense of a unified district.

#### National Historic Register Sites

There are ten historic resources on the island that are currently listed on the NRHP. They include the features listed in Table 2 below; several of these resources lie within or adjacent to the Main Street corridor study area. Listing on the NRHP does not necessarily limit future uses or changes to a building, but it provides a measure of protection by requiring any nearby projects that have state or federal funding or involvement to evaluate impacts on NRHP properties and mitigate those impacts.

**Table 2: Vinalhaven properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.** *Source: National Park Service.*

| Resource                       | Year Listed | NRHP ID   | Location                      |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| Browns Head Light Station      | 1983        | #83000460 | Browns Head                   |
| Heron Neck Light Station       | 1988        | #87002266 | Heron Neck on Greens Island   |
| Murch Family House             | 1993        | #93000205 | Calderwood Neck               |
| Pleasant River Grange No. 492  | 1999        | #99001190 | Round the Island Rd.          |
| Saddleback Ledge Light Station | 1988        | #88000158 | Isle Au Haut Bay              |
| Star of Hope Lodge             | 1982        | #82000767 | 46 Main Street                |
| Union Church of Vinalhaven     | 1984        | #84001388 | East Main Street              |
| The Vinalhaven Galamander      | 1970        | #70000049 | Main Street Bandstand Park    |
| Vinalhaven Public Library      | 1989        | #88003014 | Carver Street and Main Street |
| Moses Webster House            | 1998        | #98000309 | Atlantic Avenue               |

One NRHP-listed property in particular, the Star of Hope Lodge (Figure 2-8), is a dramatic centerpiece of the Downstreet area. This building, formerly the residence of the late artist Robert Indiana, has fallen into disrepair in recent years, causing concern among residents and adjoining landowners regarding health and safety. The property is currently tied up in litigation surrounding the estate of Mr. Indiana. Pending settlement of that case, the property will reportedly transfer to the recently-established Star of Hope Foundation for conversion into an art museum and educational institution open to the public. A further discussion of the implications and opportunities presented by that conversion is included in Section 5.



Figure 2-8: Star of Hope building at 46 Main Street.

This master planning study included compiling a photographic inventory of all properties along the Main Street study area, which is included in the Appendix for reference. Based on preliminary observations and some stakeholder information, several of the Downtown buildings may meet eligibility criteria for historic designation based on their ages and architectural styles. Whether pursuing such designation is in a property owners best interest depends on their motivations, future plans for the property, and their financial capabilities.



Figure 2-9 Main Street at the corner of Clamshell Alley, during the filming of "Deep Waters" in 1948.

### The Town Garage/Net Factory Site

The 1-acre Net Factory property at the corner of Windy Way and East Main Street has a long history of industrial and commercial activity, from its initial use as a granite quarry in the 1850s and 1860s, through construction and operation of a horse net factory from 1897 to 1926, to its operation as Peaslee’s Garage and gas station in the 1950s, to its recent use as the Town’s Public Works facility. The imminent relocation of the Public Works facility to a site off the North Haven Road will soon make this important, centrally-located lot available for another community use.

Any re-use of the site will need to consider the historical context of the property and determine if there is any value in retaining the existing structures on the site. However, it is important to understand that, although the property is often referred to as “The Net Factory”, the existing structures on the site are not the original building that housed the production of horse nets.

According to the Vinalhaven Historical Society, the Vinalhaven “Net Factory” operation was actually in four different locations before coming to Windy Way. The first net factory was established in 1847 on West Main Street, in a structure located across the street from today’s Harbor Wharf building. The operation was then moved in the 1860s to Summer Street, operating from the Frank Thomas house, and then to the Emery Smith place on East Boston Road. In the 1880s, the LR Smith Building at 56 Main Street (where the *Go Fish* store is currently located) housed the net making operations. It was not until 1897, after granite quarrying had ended at the site, that the horse net business owner, L.C. Chase, constructed a large, three-story factory building on Windy Way to house the net-making operations (Figure 2-10).

By 1906, the L.C. Chase net factory employed scores of Vinalhaven workers, mostly women, who first made nets by hand, and later used mechanical looms powered by steam. The original building included tall windows, typical of turn-of-the-century mill buildings, to provide natural light for workers. At its peak, the factory provided significant jobs and income to the community, and the building included “club rooms” on the upper floor where the Board of Trade (similar to today’s Chamber of Commerce) and other organizations would regularly meet.



**Figure 2-10: The original Vinalhaven Net Factory, shown in this 1906 postcard, was an imposing three-story structure built in 1897 at the corner of East Main and Windy Way. The building was torn down by the 1930s.**



**Figure 2-11:** By 1915, the Net Factory added a rear wing that was primarily used for storage and machinery.

By 1915, an expansion wing had been added to the rear of the factory building to house steam power machinery and store materials (Figure 2-11). However, the advent of the automobile in the 1920s spelled the end for horse net demand, and, like the buggy whip industry, the net business was doomed. Mr. Chase sold the company in 1926, the equipment was immediately dismantled and shipped to Milwaukee, and net making on Vinalhaven faded into history.

By 1930, the original net factory structure was demolished and removed, leaving only the rear storage wing intact (Figure 2-12), which would lie vacant for the next two decades.



**Figure 2-12:** After its closing in 1926, the Net Factory building was torn down sometime before this ca. 1930 photo, leaving only the rear storage wing intact, which would remain vacant for nearly two decades.

In the 1930s and 1940s the property apparently lay abandoned and unused, although the vacant structure was used briefly in 1943-1944 by boatbuilder Leroy Ames to construct a 56-foot fish dragger, the *Lida & Dick*. It was reportedly the only structure on the island large enough to accommodate such a project, although the boat's construction was apparently hampered by frigid temperatures in the building during the winter of 1943-1944.

Around 1950, the Peaslee Garage and gas station business moved across Windy Way to occupy the vacant structure, and a small one-story addition was built to house a car showroom and offices (Figure 2-13). The Peaslee business operated at the site until the early 1960s, when the Town took over the site as the location of the Vinalhaven Public Works facility.

Since then, the larger structure on the site has served as the Town Garage and equipment storage facility, the Town has traditionally stockpiled winter salt and sand behind the building, and the Vinalhaven Water District has occupied the small one-story addition (Figure 2-14).



Figure 2-13: In the 1950s, the property was used as a gas station, garage, and Chevrolet dealership, and a new one-story addition, as shown in this 1950 photo, housed the showroom and office. That addition now houses the Vinalhaven Water District office.



Figure 2-14: The Town's Public Works Department has occupied the Net Factory site for several decades but will be relocating in 2020, freeing the property for potential re-use.

As noted above, the Town is moving forward with plans to relocate the Town Garage to another location, which presents an opportunity to consider alternative uses for the Net Factory site. Although the Vinalhaven Water District shares ownership of the property with the Town and currently uses a portion of the structure for an office and equipment storage, relocation of the Water District office should be feasible and relatively straightforward.

There are very few developable properties of this size and orientation within the Main Street corridor, making it an attractive site for re-use. The site is relatively flat, and is within easy walking distance of important downtown resources including retail stores, the post office, library, restaurants, the grocery store, and a public dock. Because of the location, the 2017 DART study considered the site to be a key anchor property within the corridor, and the DART team proposed redeveloping the property into a multi-story community center that could provide ground-floor parking, meeting spaces, and workforce housing (Figure 2-15). An informal Community Center group has subsequently formed to explore and discuss such options.

There may be technical limitations that could influence redevelopment of this site. A 2014 engineering study by Gartley & Dorsky indicated that although the existing large structure could be stabilized, it may not be suitable or feasible to renovate it into a multi-story mixed-use facility due to structural deterioration. The entire property also lies within the FEMA flood zone, and thus any development of the site will need to consider potential risks from flooding and sea level rise. For that reason, any ground-level uses of the site should probably be limited to a parking facility designed to withstand periodic flooding. Finally, it is not known whether there are environmental liabilities at the site related to its prior uses as a factory, gas station, and garage.

Considering the convenient location and size of this property, its value as a central public space, and possible technical limitations for construction, this Master Plan strongly recommends that the Town establish a *Site Re-Use Committee* charged with investigating options and developing a plan to redevelop the site. The existing Community Center group could be formally designated with that purpose. In the interim, this Plan recommends creating additional public parking areas at the site as an initial use, with the caveat that construction of those parking areas should be done in a way that will not conflict with or preclude future use of the site for other purposes.



**Figure 2-15: The 2017 DART study proposed constructing a new multi-story community center at the Net Factory site, to provide additional parking, meeting spaces, and workforce housing in a convenient location.**

## 2.2 Main Street’s Contribution to the Island Economy

Employment and wage information is valuable for downtown master planning, as it provides some hard numbers, rather than just opinions and words, into cost-benefit analyses for investing in Main Street infrastructure.

The U.S. Census Bureau’s *American Community Survey 2017* reported the average household income on Vinalhaven was \$63,613 in 2017. When multiplied by the census’ reported total of 518 households on the island, this indicates a total community income of about \$33 million. This number does not necessarily represent employment wages, since most of the fishing industry on the island consists of private, individual small businesses, many retirees receive social security income, and some households receive income from investments and sources other than wages. Still, the \$33 million figure provides a reasonable benchmark for evaluating the contribution of Main Street jobs to the overall island economy.

One of the side purposes of this study’s stakeholder interviews was to identify the sources of revenue for Main Street businesses, the number and kinds of jobs in the corridor, where employees are housed, and their average wages. Individual businesses’ cash flow and sales volume data was considered confidential and was not compiled in this study.

The following information was compiled from individual stakeholder interviews conducted from November 2018 through June 2019. It should be considered a baseline for Main Street revenues, since it is not an exhaustive compilation and does not include total business earnings and profits along the corridor.

### Main Street Jobs

Of the 57 businesses and organizations on Main Street interviewed, 32 are year-round operations employing 68 full-time and 43 part-time staff, totaling 111 year-round jobs (Figure 2-16). It is assumed that these positions are filled entirely by Vinalhaven residents, as the ferry schedule precludes people commuting from the mainland to jobs on the island. That means these Main Street jobs provide income for about 12% of the total adult population (944 residents).

In addition, 20 of the businesses on Main Street are seasonal operations employing another 102 employees working either full-time or part-time during the season. Some people work at multiple locations holding several part-time jobs, especially in the summer season, so the total number of individuals working seasonally on Main Street is likely less than 102. It was not determined what percentage of these summer jobs are filled by Vinalhaven residents versus seasonal visitors or high school students.

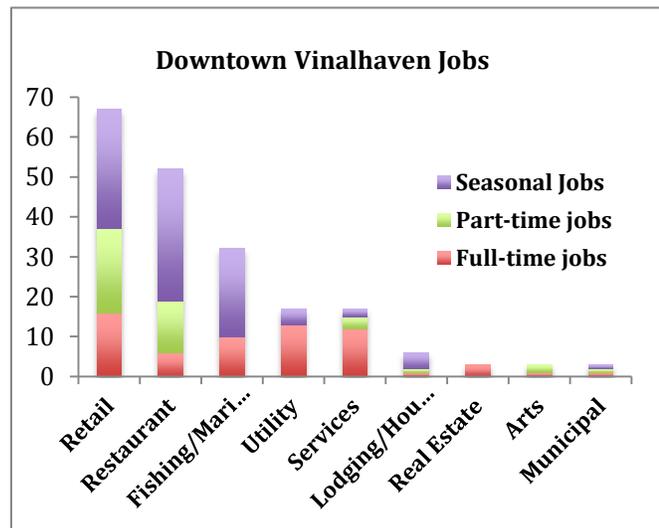


Figure 2-16: Distribution of Downtown jobs by industry and duration (Source: DTC interviews)

## Main Street Payrolls

The average reported hourly wage from all of the Main Street stakeholder interviews was \$18.00, and ranged from \$11 to over \$30 per hour depending on the job level, experience, and technical skills required. Seasonal businesses as well as retail and restaurant operations paid lower wages due to having fewer skilled positions. The highest-paying positions were in organizations and businesses requiring licenses, certifications, or special technical training. Some positions provide benefits such as medical insurance and retirement plans, but the value of those benefits was not factored into these earnings.

These wage figures do not include the net earnings of Main Street small business owners, most of whom operate their businesses either as S corporations, LLCs, or as sole proprietors. The payroll numbers also do not include the typically higher wages of the number of people who provide professional services on Main Street at least part time, such as attorneys, veterinarians, bank loan officers, licensed insurance agents, and realtors, whose net income information was not available.

Based on the number and types of jobs reported, and assuming that a seasonal position provides an average of 20 hours of work per week for a 10-week season (including seasonal dock workers, restaurant staff, retail sales, etc.), the reported average wage of \$18/hour results in an estimated total annual payroll along Main Street of \$3.0 million for year-round operations, and another \$300,000 for seasonal businesses, for a total of over \$3.3 million in payroll per year (Figure 2-17).

Based on the Census Bureau information, at a minimum these jobs represent 10% of the island's total economy. Adding in the missing wages of professional services and private business earnings would undoubtedly make that figure much higher.

Even if one excludes the fishing-oriented dockside operations that participated in the stakeholder survey, the remaining Main Street businesses provided 59 full-time and 43 part-time jobs year-round, and an additional 80 part-time seasonal jobs, for an estimated total annual payroll of about \$3.0 million and a total of 182 employment positions.

These figures suggest that the overall Main Street corridor employs a significant number of islanders year-round and contributes a major boost to the island economy. The seasonal businesses, including restaurants and retail shops, provide an additional boost to the economy by allowing some islanders to supplement their income.

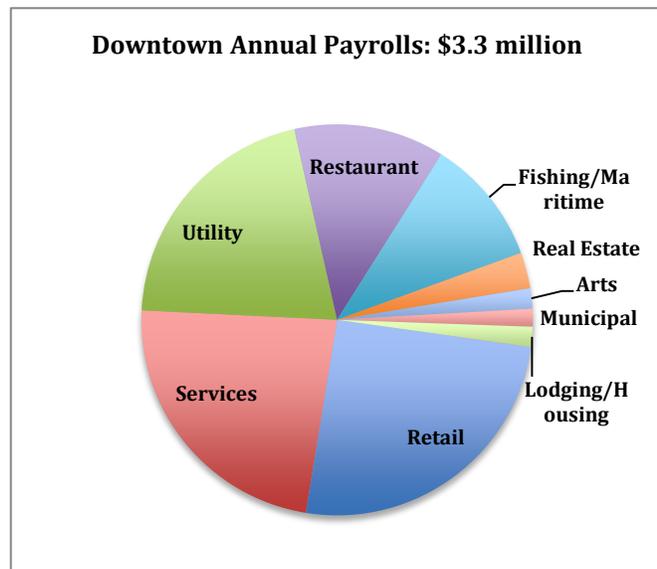


Figure 2-17. Estimated Downtown annual payrolls. (Source: DTC interviews)

## Main Street Property Values and Taxes

Another way of looking at Main Street is through a review of property values and taxes paid by Downtown property owners.

Figure 2-18 on the next page shows the distribution of 2018 property values and taxes paid within the Main Street study area by property category (top 2 charts), owner residency (middle two charts), and current use (bottom two charts).

These figures are instructive in how they show the diversity (a good thing), local ownership (another good thing), and relatively small tax contribution (not necessarily a good thing) of the Downtown properties.

The 70-odd properties and businesses along the entire Main Street study area had a total assessed value of \$17.1 million and paid \$185,000 in property taxes in 2018. These figures include several properties that are exempt from paying taxes, primarily municipal properties such as the two Town wharfs, the Town Garage on Windy way, the Town Safety Facility/Fire Station, the state Ferry Terminal, and the Legion Hall.

At the time of this writing, several Main Street properties held by the Robert Indiana Estate have been included in the “Vacant” category, and it is understood these properties will be shifting to a tax-exempt non-profit ownership pending their transfer to the newly-established Star of Hope Foundation. Rather than lose those modest tax revenues, it is possible that a Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) could be negotiated by the Town with the Foundation.

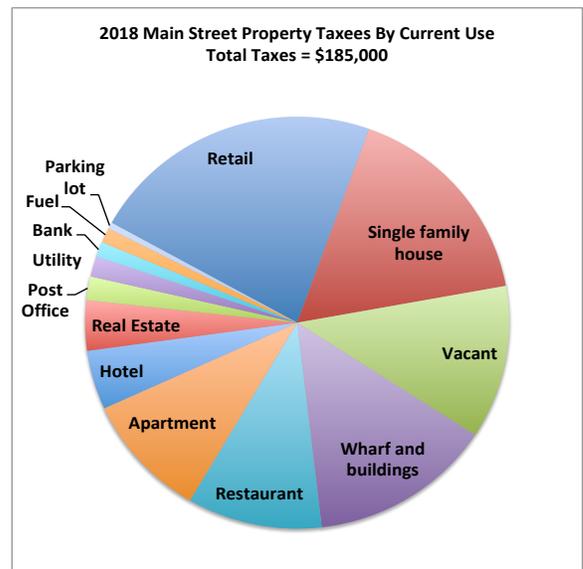
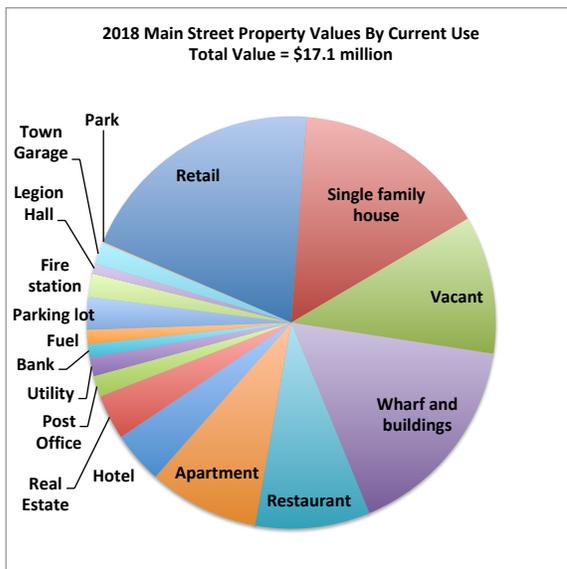
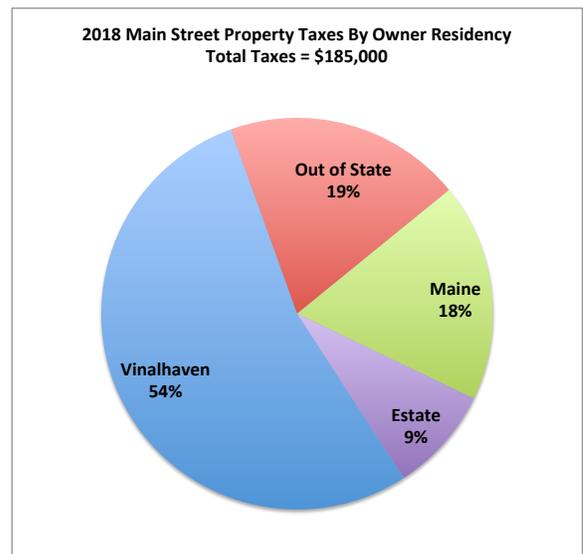
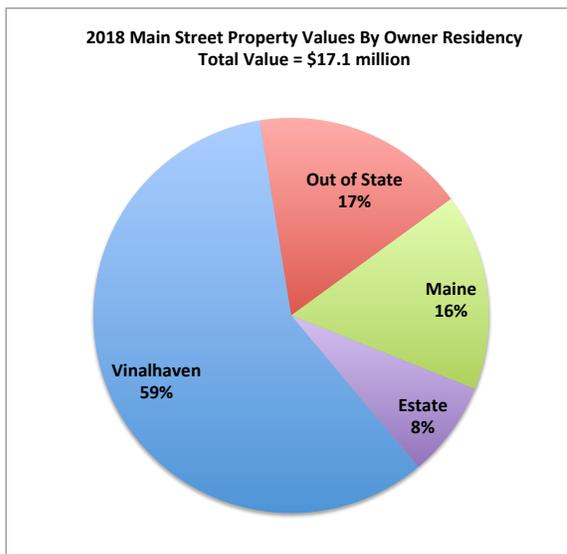
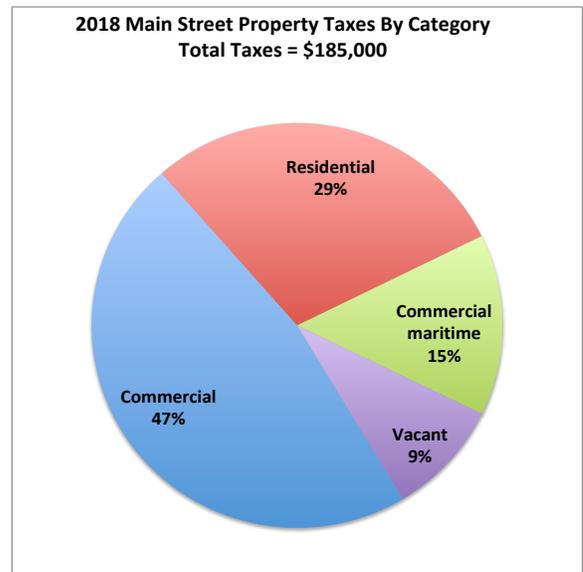
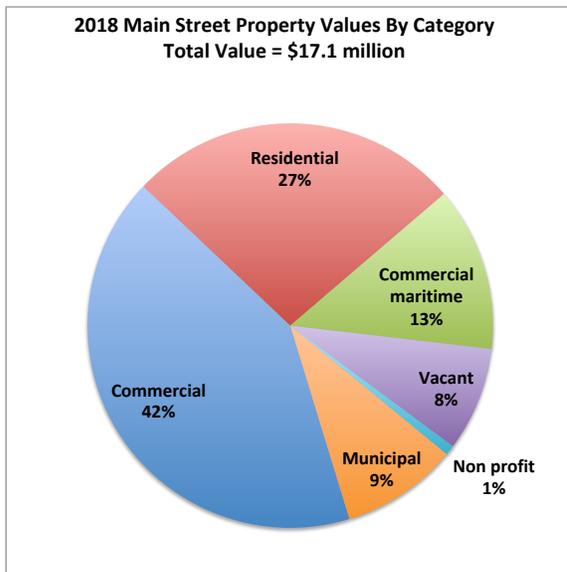
The current uses of Main street properties show a healthy diversity including residences, retail, restaurants, and maritime businesses. Commercial properties, including waterfront maritime businesses, represented just over half of the property values in the corridor. Out-of-state interests own about 17% of the total property valuation in the corridor, but nearly 60% of total property value in the corridor is held by Vinalhaven individuals or Vinalhaven-based entities.

While most residents and property owners consider the Main Street corridor to have significant value to the Town as a historic district and community resource, it is instructive to put the real estate values of Downtown properties into perspective.

- The total 2018 assessed value of Main Street study area properties represents approximately 3.4% of the Town’s total property valuation island-wide.
- In 2018 real estate taxes paid on these Main Street properties were 2.9% of Vinalhaven’s total tax revenues.
- The subset of private properties from High Street to Water Street that comprise the Downstreet area had a total assessment of \$7.7 million and paid \$94,000 in 2018 taxes, which represented about 1.5% of Vinalhaven’s tax base and 2018 tax receipts.

Although the 2018 tax assessments may not accurately represent current market values of some of these buildings, the figures are still important to consider when evaluating costs and benefits of infrastructure and flood mitigation measures for Downtown. We do not know when or if storm surges or sea level rise will seriously affect Downstreet buildings. When the time comes, these private property owners, as well as the community, will need to decide how much value individual properties have relative to the costs of raising, moving, and ultimately saving them.

Figure 2-18: Main Street property values and taxes, by type, residency, and use. *Source: Town of Vinalhaven.*



### 2.3 Current Land Use and Building Conditions

In addition to working waterfront facilities discussed further below, land uses in this corridor include commercial buildings, parking lots, sidewalks, the fire station and public safety building, the Town Garage and public works department, office space and equipment storage for the electric and water utilities, liquid fuels storage and sales, two public parks, single family homes, and residential apartments. Five road intersections lie within the study area, where Main Street intersects Sands Road, High Street, Clamshell Alley, Water Street, Carver Street and Atlantic Avenue. The following sections describe the current building and infrastructure conditions, broken out by category and corridor location. To aid in the analysis, the study area was divided into four study segments: Downstreet and Pondside; East Main Street; Waterfront; and West Main Street.

As noted above, the planning team created a building inventory matrix of the study area, to provide baseline information for property locations and current uses, with photographs. An example of the inventory is shown in Figure 2-19; the complete inventory matrix is included in the Appendix.

| Property Photo           |  |               |  |  |                                   |           |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Address                  | 2 Main Street                                                                     | 5 Main Street                                                                                  | 6 Main Street                                                                      | 10 Main Street                                                                      | 15 Main Street                                                                                                       |           |
| Tax Map                  | 018-080                                                                           | 018-062                                                                                        | 018-081                                                                            | 018-082                                                                             | 018-060 & 061                                                                                                        |           |
| Description              | Veterans Memorial Park<br>Dedicated in 2018                                       | Currently operating as<br>subsidized housing, 10-unit<br>apartment complex. Built in<br>1970s. | Camden National Bank<br>branch                                                     | Vacant storefront built on<br>pilings adjacent to bridge                            | 16-room hotel with parking. At<br>former 1800s grist mill site,<br>adjacent to mill race flowage<br>to Carvers Pond. |           |
| Current Usage, 1st floor | Park                                                                              | Residential apartments                                                                         | Bank                                                                               | Vacant                                                                              | Hotel                                                                                                                |           |
| Current Usage, 2nd floor | n/a                                                                               | Residential apartments                                                                         | n/a                                                                                | n/a                                                                                 | Commercial                                                                                                           |           |
| Operation                | n/a                                                                               | Year-round                                                                                     | Year-round                                                                         | Vacant                                                                              | Year-round                                                                                                           |           |
| Building type            | Park                                                                              | 1-story, clapboard                                                                             | 1-story, brick                                                                     | 1-story, shingled                                                                   | 2-story, clapboard                                                                                                   |           |
| Total Valuation, 2018    |                                                                                   | \$0                                                                                            | \$854,900                                                                          | \$180,400                                                                           | \$158,000                                                                                                            | \$701,600 |
| Taxes, 2018              |                                                                                   | \$0                                                                                            | \$10,490                                                                           | \$2,214                                                                             | \$1,939                                                                                                              | \$8,609   |
| Notes/Condition          | New park                                                                          | Well maintained by owner                                                                       | Well maintained by owner                                                           | Poorly maintained                                                                   | Recent interior renovations                                                                                          |           |

Figure 2-19: Sample portion of the Downtown building inventory, which is included in the Appendices.

The Main Street study area contains a mix of attractive and well-maintained residences and historic storefronts, interspersed with industrial sites, deteriorated properties, and some vacant lots. There is little to no consistency in building design, landscaping, or maintenance quality along the corridor, reflecting both a lack of form-based zoning and the relatively unplanned evolution of a commercial and industrial corridor over the past century. However, there is enormous potential for revitalizing the corridor over time with targeted redevelopment, at a relatively modest cost.

The western end of the corridor, starting at the MSFS Ferry Terminal, is dominated by the busy working waterfront structures along the south side of West Main Street, while the opposite side has a mix of empty lots, single family homes, a fuel dealer, the Town fire station, a restaurant/retail building, and a 10-unit apartment complex constructed prior to the introduction of ordinances banning residences in the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District*. The corridor transitions at the intersection with High Street into the “Downstreet” portion of the corridor, which extends to the Water Street intersection before proceeding up a hill to the Town Library within the East Main Street area.

### 2.3.1 Downstreet and Pondsides: Land Use and Buildings

Section 2.1 has described the historic character of the Downstreet section of Main Street from High Street to Water Street, and its location and individual buildings are depicted in Figure 2-20 and the Building Inventory in the Appendix, respectively. For the purposes of this planning effort, and because of their proximity and interconnections, the Carvers Pond-facing “backside” extensions of several Main Street properties have been considered as the “Pondsides” portion of Downstreet.

The businesses along Downstreet have changed many times since the 1870s, but have always included a mix of retail shops, restaurants, bars, services, and entertainment. Downstreet today has a bank, four restaurants with bars, two coffee shops, two real estate offices, a law office, the island’s only grocery store, the post office, a wine shop and a specialty foods shop, motel, art gallery, artist studios, and five retail shops. The planned re-development of the Star of Hope building may add an art museum and arts educational facility to the mix. Of these twenty businesses, twelve operate on a year-round basis, and eight are seasonal.

A number of business types are “missing” from downtown according to stakeholders who listed features they would like to see, such as a bowling alley, microbrewery, movie theater, community center, and rentable office space. Some of these existed on Main Street in the past, but there has to be a market demand and economic feasibility for any of these to exist, along with an entrepreneur willing to take the risk. It is not the intent of this Downtown Master Plan to determine which kinds of businesses should occupy particular spaces, but to consider what the community wants for its downtown, and identify the infrastructure and ordinances that could help those succeed.



**Figure 2-20:** The “Downstreet” portion of Main Street, shaded in red above, contains most of the historic structures in the study area, as well as most of the potential risk from flooding and sea level rise.

The upper floors of many Downstreet buildings have been converted or remodeled to have one or more residential apartments, which are accessed either from back entrances or directly from Main Street. A total of 12 upper-floor apartments are located along this section of Main Street. Although the Town's zoning and land use ordinances require either one or two parking spaces per residential unit, variances have been granted over the years in several cases where the building lot coverage precludes any on-site parking. As a result, not all Downstreet apartments have onsite parking available to residents, who must either park on the street, in a Town lot, or find alternative places.

The Tidewater, located at 15 Main Street, serves as the only motel-style lodging facility on the island (Figure 2-121). With 19 rooms, it occupies a central portion of Downstreet adjacent to the Town boat ramp and parking lot. Built on the site of a former grist mill, and later the town's movie theater, portions of the structure extend over the millrace and harbor, offering guests harbor views and sounds. Its central location on Main Street provides accommodation within walking distance of downtown restaurants and entertainment venues. To access the motel, many guests arrive as passengers on the ferry and walk downtown, while others require taxi or shuttle transport. The Tidewater offers their guests access to bicycles, kayaks, and rental cars for touring the island. Some guests bring their cars to the island, and the property includes six off-street parking spaces; guests often double-park to accommodate more vehicles. During the summer season, the Tidewater represents a modest source of pedestrian and vehicle traffic Downstreet.

Access to some buildings along Downstreet is challenging for those making deliveries of goods or materials. Most of the buildings on the eastern half of Downstreet have rear entrances or loading docks, but some must receive their deliveries through the front door. This requires vendors and delivery vehicles to park along the street and make deliveries crossing the sidewalk. Some restaurants and food shops must take delivery of perishables at their front door, via a forklift that travels down Main Street and onto the sidewalk. And delivery of fuels including propane currently requires a fuel truck to park on Main Street and run fill hoses between buildings to fill individual tanks. Some of these logistical challenges could be partially addressed through roadway and sidewalk improvements, and improved access to the backside of these buildings.



**Figure 2-21: The Downstreet area is the central core of downtown commerce and pedestrian traffic.**

Many of the Downstreet structures have been well-maintained or recently renovated, and those present an attractive appearance to the street and add vibrancy to Downtown. Not all structures have been maintained to the same extent, however, and the lack of form-based design requirements or related façade ordinances has allowed some historic structures to be modified or demolished over time, and replaced with architectural designs that some have characterized as functional but not in keeping with the community character. Although one could argue that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”, the definition of what fits with the community may be closer to Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's famous comment on obscenity, “I know it when I see it.”

*“We need more pride of ownership and care for buildings to make an attractive downtown on the island.”*

*- Main Street property owner*

No Downstreet structures appear to be such in a condition of disrepair that they could be considered “blighted” in the legal sense of the word, although the Star of Hope building presently comes close. As noted above, that building is currently involved in litigation surrounding the estate of the late Robert Indiana, and has fallen into severe disrepair. For a property to be subject to a blight ordinance, which Vinalhaven does not yet have in place, it would have to be uninhabitable, unsafe, abandoned for a specified time period (usually at least 1 year), and present an imminent danger to other people or property. Ongoing discussions between the Star of Hope Foundation, the Town, and abutters confirm the Foundation’s intent to proceed with building repairs and renovations as soon as legally possible, starting with engineering analyses to begin in mid-2019. In the meantime, the Town is considering measures to address current safety and health concerns about the structure.

In recent years, several Downstreet buildings that previously contained year-round retail operations or other businesses have been sold and at least partially converted to residences. The Town has an ordinance in place covering the Downstreet area that requires at least the first thirty feet of the ground floor must remain commercial, yet some of these structures now contain storefront facades that are either empty or closed for most of the year, or house operations that are not open to the public. Many stakeholders and residents have expressed concern that, while some owners may be meeting the letter of the law, they appear to be circumventing the intent. Reviewing and enforcing the existing land use ordinances emerged as a priority for many stakeholders interviewed in this planning study.

*“The short “seasonality” attitude is a shortcoming here. We need more storefronts to be open beyond a short 8-week season, and spread activities and business into the shoulder seasons.”*

*- Comment from multiple stakeholders*

However, it is very important to note that due to their construction on filled land or on pilings over water, very few of the Downstreet buildings have basements or even crawlspaces under the structures (Figure 2-22). As a result, several of these buildings (10, 18, and 26 Main Street in particular) have water and sewer services that currently cannot be maintained year-round, thus restricting their use to seasonal operations only.

Some of the buildings on the north side of Downstreet also reportedly experience periodic inundation of their understructures by water, either through stormwater runoff directly from the street or from inadequate storm drain systems, or via hydraulic upwelling of seawater through open spaces in the underlying grout fill during extreme tidal surges. Further discussion of flooding-related issues is provided in Section 3.5.



**Figure 2-22: Some Downstreet buildings may be limited to seasonal use due to their construction on pilings.**

In addition, based on appearances in historic photographs, some of these historic buildings appear to have settled lower relative to the street level since their construction over 100 years ago on filled land. Adding to the burden, buildings located within the currently-mapped FEMA flood zone requires those Downstreet owners who need bank financing to purchase prohibitively expensive flood insurance.

This poses a challenge to some Downstreet property owners in terms of the cost of maintenance, not to mention the prospective costs of protecting and insuring their buildings against the risk of storm surge or sea level rise. Potential solutions will require a combination of engineering, funding, and creating thinking, and a brief overview of those aspects is provided in Section 3.6 below along with a discussion of potential capital improvements in Section 6.

\*\*\*\*\*

The “Pondside” of Main Street along the shore of Carvers Pond (Figure 2-23) has long been an underutilized and even unrecognized part of the downtown area. Buildings constructed on the north side of Main Street were designed to face Carvers Harbor and the street for visibility and commerce. Larger buildings, such as the Bodwell store and Memorial Hall which are now gone, had filled most of their lots and left little room on the



**Figure 2-23: Carvers Pond and the backside of Downstreet.**

waterside. The backside was for deliveries, storage, or goods fabrication and production, depending on the business. Because Carvers Pond was not a navigable waterway after the Main Street peninsula was created by fill and the millrace narrows prevented boat passage, no wharves or boat traffic drew attention to the Pondside.

Most of the Downstreet properties have frontage on Carvers Pond, yet only a few currently take advantage of that resource. The Nightingale restaurant’s dining room has tables facing the Pond, which are popular with customers (Figure 2-24). The New Era Gallery encourages use of its rear entrance to visit the adjoining Windy Way Barn for art exhibits and occasional music performances. And the recent (2019) opening of the Skal speakeasy on the backside of 34 Main Street represents perhaps the most thoughtful use of the Carvers Pond viewshed, by orienting that facility’s entire main entrance and rear seating area to face the Pond.

There are some complicated land positions, building aspects, and logistical limitations on the backside, especially along Windy Way and Bodwell Lane, which need to be considered for any increased use or development.

These issues are summarized below, and a brief outline of conceptual uses of the backside is provided in Section 6.

Carvers Pond itself presents an attractive but perhaps under-utilized resource, with an effectively “look but don’t touch” aspect. Public access to the Pond is generally unavailable; there are no public access points around the Pond perimeter, and most kayakers



**Figure 2-24: Carvers Pond abuts the backside of most of the Downstreet properties, but is relatively inaccessible to the public.**

or boaters observed on the Pond (aside from the annual Duck Race fundraising event) have their own access as shorefront landowners. Access and use is also influenced by tidal levels; at low tide, extensive mudflats along the shore make many areas un-navigable.

It is not clear whether public access to the Pond was common in the past, or whether landowners with frontage on the Pond would prefer not to see public access. There are scenic views of the Pond from several locations on Main Street, including the two bridges, the Nightingale Restaurant deck, the High Street sidewalk, and glimpses from gaps between Main Street buildings. But any pedestrian access to the Pond behind the Downstreet buildings is currently hampered by a narrow access road, and the fact that the backside corridor is privately owned by six different entities.

Vehicle and pedestrian access to the backside of Downstreet is accomplished via Windy Way and Bodwell Lane, two narrow unpaved roadways with limited room for maneuvering (Figures 2-25 and 2-26). The lots at the west end of this area have deeded access rights-of-way across other lots. Most vehicles making freight deliveries to Downstreet buildings, including Carvers Market and the Post Office, use this narrow corridor to reach rear entrances and loading docks of those buildings. For that reason, any redevelopment designs and activities in this area must provide continued passage and maneuvering room for large trucks, while protecting pedestrian safety by keeping walkways separated and away from access roads.

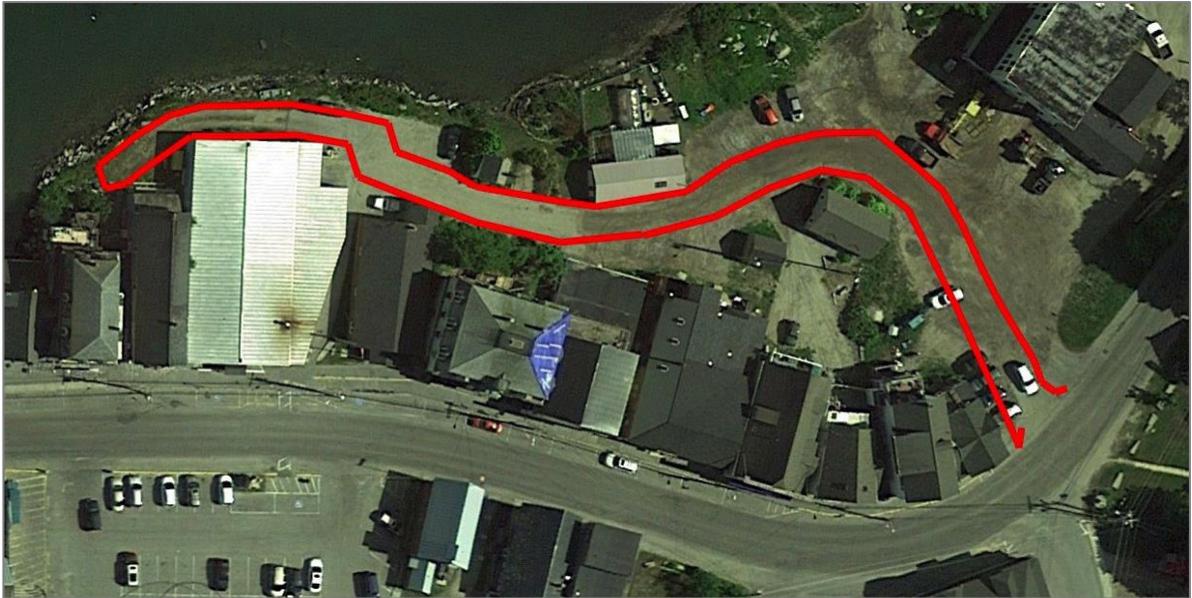


Figure 2-25: Access to the backside of Downstreet is via Windy Way and Bodwell Lane.



Figure 2-26: Vehicles accessing the backside of Downstreet must navigate past (clockwise from upper left): Windy Way past the Town Garage; a passage between the Star of Hope and Plant Place buildings; past the Post Office loading dock; and along narrow Bodwell Lane. Grocery delivery trucks must back down this corridor.

As the only major grocery store on the island, Carvers Market receives frequent deliveries from a large tractor-trailer truck, which must turn into Windy Way, pull forward and pivot next to the Town Garage, and then back all the way down the narrow roadway. Such large truck traffic, combined with twice-daily deliveries to the Post Office, make this narrow roadway unsuitable for pedestrian traffic, and so an alternative walkway would need to be developed to provide safe pedestrian access to any development on the backside. A fire lane also exists on private land between the Post Office and Carvers Market, but that passageway is rarely used by either pedestrians or vehicles, and must remain unblocked and available for emergency vehicles. Although it could possibly serve as a pedestrian walkway in the future, such a use might unsafely direct walkers close to the loading ramps for the Post Office and grocery store.

Most of the Main Street lots extend to the Carvers Pond waterfront, and all lie at least partially within the Town's *Resource Protection Zone*. As a result, new building construction directly on the waterfront may be difficult to permit due to zoning restrictions, except for two existing structures on the water that may be eligible for up to a 30% expansion. However, the installation of parking spaces, or greenspaces and parks would be permissible uses. Of course, because there are six separate landowners along the corridor, any development of the backside that would allow public use will require their agreement and cooperation.

There are several transformative actions already underway that could positively affect the backside area of Downstreet and present additional opportunities:

- *The recent renovation and opening of the backside of 34 Main Street into a successful entertainment venue demonstrates potential benefits of Pondsideside development (Figure 2-27).*
- *The planned restoration and conversion over the next several years of the historic Star of Hope building into a public art museum and educational facility has the potential to make that building, and its adjoining Pondsideside land, into a functional and attractive resource. Because the Indiana Estate also owns three other properties in the immediate vicinity, improvements and re-use of those sites could augment the Pondsideside further.*
- *As previously described, the Town of Vinalhaven is in the process of relocating its Public Works Department and Town Garage from its site on Windy Way to a location off the North Haven Road. The Vinalhaven Water District continues to use a portion of the building for office space and storage, and would need to find a suitable alternative location to allow re-use of the site. Assuming that occurs, such a move presents an opportunity for redevelopment of the site, while encouraging more attention to the Pondsideside waterfront than in the past (Figure 2-28).*

Conceptual ideas for backside improvements were presented by the DART study in 2017, a copy of which is included in the Appendix. A discussion of recommended actions for this area, which includes several concepts from the DART study with suggested additional design constraints and technical considerations, is provided in Section 6 below.

In summary, despite many challenges the overall Downstreet area offers a unique resource that, if protected and restored, has the potential to foster a vibrant downtown and highlight Vinalhaven's heritage. The community can achieve that goal by providing support and encouragement to their property owners through consistent policies, appropriate ordinance modifications and enforcement, improved infrastructure and amenities, and pathways to financial solutions.



**Figure 2-27:** The backside of 34 Main Street (left) has recently been remodeled to house the Skala speakeasy, with its main entrance and a seating area facing Carvers Pond. Other Downstreet buildings at 56, 60 and 64 Main Street (right) also back onto this corridor, with apartment balconies overlooking the Pond.



**Figure 2-28:** In the 1950s, the Carvers Pond waterfront behind Downstreet was crowded with structures, before the historic Bodwell Building (right) and Memorial Hall (center) were destroyed by fire and a private developer, respectively. Now, perhaps there is opportunity to develop the Pondsides as another productive resource.

### 2.3.2 West Main Waterfront: Land Use and Buildings

The working waterfront surrounding Carvers Harbor today represents the core of Vinalhaven's fishing industry, and is a critical part of the community's image and economy. Commercial wharfs and docks ring the harbor, and scattered buildings provide dockside infrastructure supporting the industry, providing bait, fuel, and buying and product handling facilities for fishermen. The harbor has seen significant change in the past century, just like the rest of the island, and from the earliest days of fishing and granite a long series of businesses and buildings have come and gone. But retaining the maritime industries has been and remains a high priority for the community.

The West Main Waterfront area (Figure 2-29) represents a primarily commercial marine area, with the industrial buildings, heavy equipment, and truck traffic that is to be expected with such operations. Most of the West Main Waterfront properties lie within the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District* as defined in the Town's *Land Use Ordinance*, a zone that includes specific limitations on allowed uses.

The western tip of the corridor contains Grimes Park, a 2.5-acre public park owned by the local American Legion Post and zoned in the *Resource Protection District*. Next to the Park, the state-owned Ferry Terminal provides water transportation, parking facilities, and a crew housing facility for ferry staff. The ferry property is zoned in the *Residential-Commercial District*.

Further to the east, the Town of Vinalhaven owns and maintains a small public dock and float adjacent to the ferry, as well as a Town wharf and float facility at 8 West Main Street that is primarily for use by fishermen. A public boat launch adjacent to that Town wharf also provides public access for most people launching small boats into the harbor.



**Figure 2-29: The West Main Waterfront, shaded in red above, comprises most of the Downtown commercial fishing operations, dockside support businesses, wharfs, and Town-owned waterfront access facilities. Land uses in this zone are restricted to commercial and maritime activities, with the exception of the Harborview apartment complex.**



**Figure 2-30: The core maritime industry facilities on the working waterfront along West Main Street consist of the Bean Maine Lobster and Vinalhaven Fishermen's Cooperative facilities.**

There are commercial marine fisheries operations owned by Bean Main Lobster Inc. at 5 and 31 West Main, and the Vinalhaven Fisherman's Cooperative ("the Co-op") at 7 West Main (Figure 2-30). These operations generate significant boat and vehicle traffic during the busy parts of the fishing season from April through December, and should be considered anchor properties for Vinalhaven's maritime industry. Improvements at these facilities include a mix of wooden and metal buildings housing bait, supplies, equipment, offices, and vehicles, fuel storage tanks, and private parking areas.

The Co-op also owns and maintains a 0.75-acre lot immediately across from the Ferry Terminal, which the Co-op's membership uses for parking trucks and equipment during the lobstering season. This lot is further discussed in the sections on Parking and Sidewalks below.

Rounding out the commercial marine properties is the Hopkins Boatyard, a locally-owned and operated vessel services and boat storage facility (Figure 2-31). As the only waterfront boatyard and repair facility on the island, this business provides a critical function for both the fishing and recreational boating communities. The 1.5-acre property includes 1.2 acres for boat storage and a 5,000 square foot wooden building housing a large repair shop, offices, and storage.

It should be noted that height restrictions in the Town's current *Land Use Ordinance* have prohibited raising the height of this structure to accommodate larger boats. This precludes inside repairs on some lobster boats and sailboats, which instead must go to mainland boatyards for that work.



**Figure 2-31: The Hopkins Boatyard serves a critical function in the marine commercial district.**

Two other large waterfront properties, the 10-unit Harborside Apartments complex at 65 West Main Street, and the Harbor Wharf property at 35 West Main Street, do not contain commercial marine industries, although their wharves have seen occasional use by fishermen. Depending on the future disposition of these properties, each may represent an attractive opportunity for redevelopment that could help revitalize the Downtown area as well as expand support for the maritime economy.

The 1-acre Harbor Wharf property and 12,000-square-foot building at 35 West Main Street (Figure 2-32), currently houses two limited-hours restaurants, a seasonal bakery, a gym facility, office spaces, a convenience store that caters to commercial fishermen (Fishermen’s Friend), and a 35-space parking lot. The landowners are responsible for all site maintenance including winter plowing. The site is located partially on granite fill and includes a granite wharf, dock, and floats. At one time the site also contained fuel storage tanks for the local heating oil and gasoline retailers.

The dock portion of the Harbor Wharf property is periodically used by fishermen for tying up boats, and a few dinghies are usually tied up to the float; however, it is understood that the wharf has not been continuously leased for maritime activities in recent years. The building condition and level of maintenance was not evaluated in this study, although a new roof was reportedly installed on a portion of the structure within the past decade. The location of the property and its underused waterfront infrastructure make it an important site to monitor for future disposition and possible re-use.



**Figure 2-32: The Harbor Wharf property at 35 West Main provides space for several small businesses.**

The Harborview Apartments property at 65 West Main Street (Figure 2-33) was converted from a commercial marine site to a residential property in the 1970s, prior to establishment of the *Land Use Ordinance* zoning that prohibits residences within the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District*. The 10-unit 2-story apartment complex has operated as a federally-subsidized housing facility, and it also currently provides office space for an insurance agency. The 0.5-acre



**Figure 2-33: The Harborview Apartments property at 65 West Main Street, which currently provides subsidized housing in 10 apartment units, was formerly a commercial marine site and includes a granite wharf and dock.**

waterfront site includes a granite wharf and a dock and float, which have been leased to fishermen. Immediately prior to construction of the apartments, there was a gas station located at the front of the property on Main Street, but it is not known whether there are any associated environmental constraints concerning potential redevelopment of the site.

The Harborview site should be considered an anchor property in the Downtown area and a possible opportunity for revitalization, due to its proximity to walkable resources Downstreet, its present function providing housing for members of the community, and its valuable waterfront location. For these reasons, the future use and/or redevelopment of the site should be of significant interest and concern to the community. Considering the shortage of affordable housing on the island, retaining the Harborview property's residential function may be a near-term Vinalhaven priority, assuming there are no long-term environmental issues at the site. Additional uses of the property could include office spaces and commercial storefronts.

There is nothing in the current Town ordinances or other laws that would either encourage this property's continued use for subsidized housing, or more importantly, prevent conversion of the apartments to condominiums or seasonal residences if the property was sold.

Waterfront condominiums so close to Downstreet could be quite valuable, particularly to non-residents seeking seasonal residences. Many stakeholders interviewed in this study expressed concern over seasonal conversions along Main Street, and the negative impacts empty storefronts and apartments have on the year-round vitality of Downtown. A conversion of Harborview could be similarly detrimental to the Downtown character if 10-20 year-round apartment dwellers were mostly replaced by seasonal occupants. And that scenario does not consider possible impacts from the use of units for short-term "non-owner-occupied" rentals, which is also not addressed in the current Town ordinances. The experiences of mainland towns dealing with such conversions and short-term rentals should be instructive to Vinalhaven, and this Downtown Master Plan includes a recommendation to consider ordinances to address those scenarios.

The current shortage of available rental space for businesses downtown may be a reason to consider encouraging an eventual mixed-use redevelopment of the Harborview site, perhaps having commercial space at street level, year-round apartments on the upper floors, and encouraging more use of the property's waterfront infrastructure for the marine industry and public access. Of course, as with many other buildings along Downstreet, there may be challenges in maintaining the current Harborview structure over the long term, due to the age of the building and the potential for flooding and inundation from coastal flooding, storm surges, and sea level rise.

This Downtown Master Plan recognizes the challenges faced by individual property owners in owning and operating facilities along the waterfront. It also acknowledges that waterfront owners, buildings, uses, and businesses have ebbed and flowed over the past 100 years (Figure 2-34). In looking ahead, the best we can do is accept there will be change, but minimize negative impacts, and encourage actions that will continue to support all three Vinalhaven economies.



**Figure 2-34: Change along the waterfront: In the 1950s, harbor infrastructure included a ferry dock, the town's power plant, wharfs and gas docks, and marine-related businesses. What will the future bring?**

### 2.3.3 West Main Street: Land Use and Buildings

The West Main Street area (Figure 2-35) consists of 14 properties on the north side of West Main Street from High Street to the Ferry Terminal. A photo inventory of the entire West Main Street segment is provided in the Appendix.



**Figure 2-35: The West Main Street area, shaded in red above, includes a mix of residential, commercial, municipal, and vacant properties.**

The eastern half of this area contains a mix of well-maintained residential properties and commercial buildings, as well as the Town’s Public Safety/Fire Station building. There is little room for infill development in this section of the street, except through the conversion of single family house properties to commercial buildings. This portion of the street includes 577 feet of sidewalk and curbing, which provides defined space for pedestrians. However, where the sidewalk passes by the Town’s Fire Station property and the Homeport restaurant property at 62 Main Street, it crosses nearly 200 feet of unbroken parking and ramps, with no curb cuts and no striping to safely delineate the pedestrian walkway. This uncontrolled vehicle access poses a risk for pedestrians, with drivers backing out from multiple parking spaces directly onto Main Street and vehicles exiting the Fire Station.

The Vinal Energy property at 36 West Main contains a heating oil and kerosene storage facility, a 2,000-square-foot office and storage building, and parking spaces for oil delivery trucks, a propane truck, and retail customers. The road frontage is a 100-foot-wide continuous paved area with no curb cuts limiting vehicle access, which could present risk for pedestrians from customers and delivery trucks exiting the property at unpredictable locations.

West of the Vinal Energy property, the roadside consists of one residential property, a driveway accessing a back lot, and some commercial properties and lots that are vacant or contain under-maintained buildings and scattered equipment, materials, and/or vehicles (Figure 2-36). Depending on your perspective, these latter parcels pose either an unattractive streetscape to those walking along the street, or an opportunity for redevelopment.

In particular, the adjoining properties at 20 and 22 West Main Street and 30 and 32 West Main Street are located well above flood zones, even under worst-case sea level rise scenarios, and could be excellent locations for redevelopment (Figure 2-36). In their Downtown study, the DART team identified these parcels as attractive opportunities for future redevelopment as “gateway” mixed-use facilities near the Ferry Terminal, along the primary walking corridor to

Downtown. These lots are currently zoned in the *Residential/Commercial District*, which would allow a multitude of potential uses including retail, office space, and residential units.

In a future scenario where sea level rises to the point where some Downtown structures cannot be saved, shifting some commercial and retail operations to West Main Street may be an attractive option to consider. A variety of land swaps and coordination between the Town and some Sands Road and West Main Street property owners could make such redevelopment feasible. For example, relocating FEIC's West Main Street operation closer to its facility on Sands Road, and relocating the Vinal Energy business to a site where a propane storage facility would be allowed, could position those lots for future redevelopment, and improve pedestrian safety. Such relocations are beyond the scope of this Master Plan's project recommendations, but may be worth thinking about for the future vitality of the island.



**Figure 2-36:** The adjoining under-utilized properties at 20 and 22 West Main Street (top photos), and 30 and 32 West Main Street (middle photos), all of which lie well above potential flood zones, could present attractive opportunities for redevelopment as “gateway” mixed-use facilities along a walkway to Downtown (bottom illustration, from 2017 DART Study).

### 2.3.4 East Main Street: Land Use and Buildings

This portion of the downtown study area consists of the short section of Main Street from the intersection of Water Street to the Town Library (Figure 2-37). It contains several Town parcels including the Carnegie library, the Veterans Memorial, a small park housing the Bandstand and the Galamander, and a portion of the “Flea Market field” on the corner of Atlantic Avenue. Private properties in this study area include the six historic “Row Houses” on School Street, and a vacant lot that the owner allows the Flea Market and other non-profit groups to use for community activities.



**Figure 2-37: The East Main Street portion of the study area (shown in red)**

The NRHP-listed Carnegie Library is a focal point of this area, and it is well maintained and supported by the Town, patrons, and the non-profit Friends of the Library. It includes a 5-space parking area, and is accessed by sidewalks from Downstreet and surrounding neighborhoods. Increased use of the Library is somewhat constrained by parking space availability in the immediate vicinity.

Two small parks are located across Main Street from the Library. The triangular Veterans Memorial space with its dramatic flag display is a scenic and important landmark, although it is not traditionally used as a recreational park. The nearby Bandstand/Galamander display offers a grassy lawn for pedestrians to pause and rest, and it is occasionally used by residents and visitors, but its relatively isolated location surrounded by three busy streets and a lack of sidewalk access may discourage more use during busy traffic seasons. It is also important to note that the Bandstand was previously located downhill at the corner of Water Street and Main Street, and the Galamander is, by its nature, a movable object, so both could easily be relocated to allow a different future use of this Town parcel if the community decided to do so.

In 1857, Reuben Carver constructed six “Row Houses” along School Street. These historic structures have been maintained and provide attractive housing within a short walk to Downtown. Although they are connected structures, and might meet age criteria for NRHP eligibility, the property now consists of six separate tax parcels owned by six different landowners, who have pursued differing maintenance plans and façade treatments.



**Figure 2-38: The popular Saturday morning Flea and Farmers Market is held during the summer season on vacant land at the intersection of Atlantic Avenue and East Main Street.**

Two adjoining vacant lots at the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Main Street have traditionally been the location for the popular Saturday morning “Flea and Farmers Market”, which operates every weekend during the summer season (Figure 2-38). The Town owns the southern lot, and a private landowner graciously allows community use of the northern lot. Together, they are generally referred to as “the Flea Market field”. Based on reviews of historical photos and maps, both lots have remained undeveloped from the 1870s.

In recent years, the Market has included a broad mix of vendors including home-based businesses, small farms, and non-profit organizations. A variety of non-profit organizations also use the site for community events such as Vintage Vinalhaven, auctions, and art shows, and events at the adjacent Union Church occasionally use the field for spillover parking during the summer. In the shoulder seasons, use of the site is infrequent, but in the summer the Market is a popular and busy venue, with very limited parking available nearby.

This area was identified by the 2017 DART study as a possible site for future development of new housing, to help address the community’s chronic housing shortage and provide residential options within walking distance of Downtown. That concept included relocation of the Saturday Market to a more central location, such as the Town’s downtown lot or at the former Town Garage site. A further discussion of that conceptual development is provided in Section 6.

## **2.4 Vehicles, Roadways and Traffic**

The downtown section of Main Street is the sole transportation corridor for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles traveling between the west and east portions of the village. Unless one chooses to drive the much longer (an extra 7 miles) route via the North Haven Road and Round the Island Road, the only practical way to travel from one side of town to the other is through downtown. This results in Main Street receiving the bulk of the island’s traffic, which is heaviest in summer and during daylight hours, with periodic traffic peaks occurring when ferries arrive and depart.

### **Vehicles on the Island**

In 2019 there were 1,500 vehicles registered on the island, a total number that has changed very little since 2010. The current mix of island-registered vehicles (Figure 2-39) includes SUVs and passenger cars, nearly 600 pickup trucks, commercial trades vehicles, tractor-trailers, and the Town’s various dump trucks and snow plows.

It is probably safe to assume that nearly every one of these vehicles passes through the Downtown area at least a few times per year. Some transit the corridor multiple times a day.

In the summer, the number of vehicles on Main Street swells with the combined influx of summer visitors and seasonal construction workers. By some estimates, seasonal volumes (highest in July and August) are three times greater than the annual averages for roadways on Vinalhaven. As described further in this Plan, the ferry serves as a limitation on the number of vehicles that can be brought to and from the island due to boat sizes and schedules.

It is unclear whether increased vehicle ticket prices will affect the volume of seasonal vehicle traffic; most visitors would probably just factor the increase into the cost of their vacation. In contrast, year-round island residents are directly and significantly affected by increased vehicle ticket prices. For the foreseeable future, unless there is a dramatic change in the number of daily ferry trips, and unless the island population increases, it is likely that the current number of vehicles will not increase substantially. If any aspect of the island economies experiences a major downturn, however, it is possible that the traffic volume could slightly decrease.

Private passenger vehicles comprise most of the traffic on Vinalhaven roadways; however, there are commercial trucks and equipment used to transport supplies to and from businesses. Vinalhaven businesses depend upon the state ferry service, private ferry operators, private air service (Penobscot Island Air) and the town road network to transport most of their goods into or out of the Downtown corridor.

### Freight and Package Deliveries

Freight, mail, and material deliveries for Vinalhaven businesses use Main Street, and large trucks pass through downtown periodically. Accommodating the movement patterns of these trucks is critical to supporting these businesses, and should influence the design of road widths, turning radii, crosswalks, pedestrian path locations, parking layouts, and streetscapes/landscaping.

For example, as noted above a large tractor-trailer from the mainland delivers groceries to Carvers Market at 36 Main Street several times a week, with delivery frequency increasing in the busy summer season. To make its deliveries, that truck must exit the ferry lot, travel down Main Street, and access the Market's Pondsides loading dock by: 1) turning left into Windy Way at the Water Street intersection; 2) swinging the truck cab forward into the Town Garage lot; and 3) backing down Bodwell Lane (parallel to Carvers Pond) to reach the loading dock.

A similar route must be taken by various smaller trucks and vans that make mail and parcel deliveries several times a day to the US Postal Service's Pondsides loading dock. Package shipping now provides the largest source of revenue for the Vinalhaven Post Office, and due to a steady increase in online purchases by islanders, that business grows each year. In addition, the US Postal Service is the most affordable, and thus the primary way that retail businesses on the island ship their products off-island.

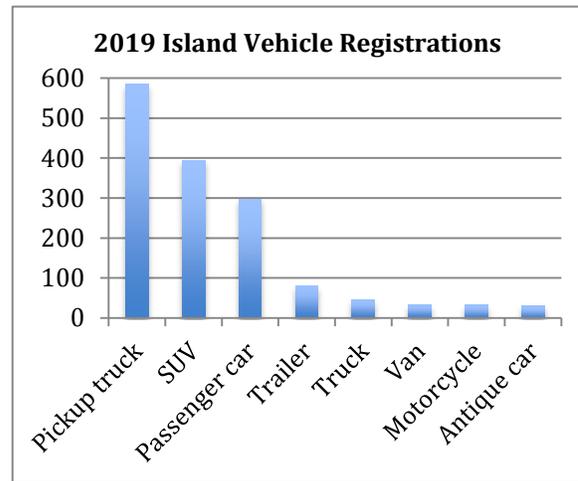


Figure 2-39: 1500 vehicles are registered on the island, with roughly 600 pickup trucks.

Due to limited access to the rear of some Downstreet buildings, propane deliveries to several downtown businesses, including restaurants, requires parking a large fuel truck on the street during delivery. Due to the width and length of the truck, it must occupy several parking spaces and jut out into the street while parked. Wider parking spaces along this section of the street would improve traffic flow and safety, especially in summer peak season for restaurants.



**Figure 2-40: Trucks making deliveries to many Downstreet buildings park at curbside and drop pallets on the sidewalk.**

In addition, a small forklift occasionally travels slowly along Main Street from the refrigerated warehouse at 31 West Main Street to Downstreet, making regular deliveries of perishables to retail stores and small food service businesses. Due to the narrow unpaved shoulder, the forklift must travel within the Main Street traffic lanes, frequently slowing traffic during busy times, and triggering vehicles to move out into oncoming lanes to pass. Providing a wider, paved, and well-marked multi-purpose shoulder could address the safety issues of this situation.

Because many of these storefronts have no rear access or backside loading docks, the same forklift must park at the curb and drop pallets on the sidewalk for the owner to transport into the building (Figure 2-40). The same is true for other package deliveries, including UPS, FedEx, and other vendors. During the busy summer season, such deliveries are complicated by pedestrian traffic and cars parked curbside for long periods of time. Empty pallets are also often stacked in parking spaces awaiting pickup. A wider sidewalk, and strategically-located wider parking spots, accompanied by designated loading zones and time-limited parking regulations, could ease traffic flow and improve safety for freight and package deliveries along Main Street.

### Road Conditions: The Wild West

With regard to road conditions and layout, in some locations Main Street shows its heritage as a horse and wagon pathway, and in others it displays Vinalhaven's tradition of patchwork solutions and fondness for independence. The roadway fluctuates in width, has several sharp curves with poor sightlines, lacks pedestrian infrastructure in many places, and does not have well-defined lane limitations in several key spots.

Some residents have characterized the Main Street roadway and patterns of vehicle traffic, without much enforcement, as "the Wild West".

*"We could use some traffic calming, an extended 25 mph zone on Sands Road, and a crosswalk at the ferry corner. Sternmen often race down Sands Road when they're late."*

*- Commercial marine stakeholder*

West Main Street is a varying-width paved roadway extending 0.31 mile from the Ferry Terminal to High Street. The pavement surface is cracked and repaired in multiple spots. As part of its maintenance program, the Maine DOT is preparing to apply a thin surface coat in Fall 2019. Near the Ferry Terminal (Figure 2-41) there is a narrow, unpaved gravel shoulder on the north roadside, and a narrow paved shoulder on the south.



**Figure 2-41: From the Ferry Terminal heading downtown, West Main Street is a broad, un-striped roadway with gravel shoulders and no sidewalks, crosswalks, speed limit signs, or pedestrian warning signs.**

At the corner of Sands Road the road edge is relatively undefined, especially where it coincides with two commercial wharf properties and the Ferry Terminal exit. In this area there are no crosswalks, sidewalks, pedestrian warning signs, or road edge safety lines, forcing ferry passengers, and MSFS staff managing ferry standby lines, to walk alongside the busy roadway. A single 25 mph speed limit sign on the corner is tilted and not highly visible. In addition, vehicles approaching from Sands Road often speed and fail to slow before the corner, putting at risk drivers exiting the ferry lot as well as fishermen walking from the Co-op parking area.

These safety concerns are echoed by commercial fishing businesses, MSFS staff, and other stakeholders interviewed in this study, and need to be addressed through roadway redesign, signage, enforcement, and other measures recommended in this Master Plan.

Where Main Street continues east toward High Street (Figure 2-42), it consists of a paved roadway with a narrow paved shoulder on the south side. A 577' concrete sidewalk was constructed on the north side from the vicinity of the Fire Station to High Street. A crosswalk



**Figure 2-42: Closer to downtown, West Main Street has a narrow paved shoulder on the south side, and a narrow sidewalk on the north, with no signs showing speed limits and no pedestrian warnings.**



**Figure 2-43: At Downstreet, Main Street varies in width and has no pedestrian walkway on the south side.**

exists at the termination of that sidewalk, but this section contains no posted speed limits or pedestrian warning signage.

Further east, the Downstreet section from High Street to Water Street consists of a paved roadway with a curbed sidewalk on the north and a narrow gravel shoulder on the south. The width of Main Street varies abruptly in several locations Downstreet. At The Tidewater, the road is constricted by the millrace bridge, and widens abruptly at the Town parking lot (Figure 2-43). It narrows again near the Star of Hope, then widens suddenly at the poorly-defined intersection with Clamshell Alley before swinging sharply around a blind corner and continuing uphill to the Library. For pedestrians and drivers, this dangerous combination of freedom and unpredictability could be a recipe for disaster. Engineering redesign of these sections of Main Street to achieve consistency, traffic calming, and safety is a high priority of this Downtown Master Plan.

#### **Dangerous Liaisons: Speeding and Intersections**

With regard to traffic, in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan survey, 65% of respondents were concerned about excessive vehicle speeds on Vinalhaven roads. That was echoed by many stakeholder interviews for this study. In particular, community members said that vehicles travel too fast in the approaches from both Sands Road and East Main Street, at two corner intersections where there are many pedestrians crossing the street and vehicles making turns.

The Sands Road corner safety issues have been discussed above, and they can successfully be addressed through a combination of road engineering, striping, crosswalks, sidewalks, signage, seasonal speed bumps, and law enforcement. The same is true for the East Main/Water Street/Clamshell Alley area. Another problem for both locations is the periodic theft of speeding and wayfinding signs, which is an expensive problem that leads to areas being essentially unposted and unmarked.

Three sidewalks and three roads meet at the Water Street intersection (Figures 2-44 and 2-45). **Water Street** traffic includes residential vehicles and commercial traffic from wharfs along that side of Carvers Harbor, as well as people making trips to the Medical Center and Lanes Island. **Windy Way** provides access to the backside of Downstreet and the current Town Garage, and as noted above it sees traffic from delivery trucks and employees using rear entrances of Downstreet businesses. **East Main Street** is the primary (and only) route to eastern residential areas, the Town transfer station, the Vinalhaven School, and Viking Lumber, all of which generate significant traffic passing through downtown.



**Figure 2-44: The approach to Water Street is at a blind corner near restaurants, bars, and retail shops.**



**Figure 2-45: The Water Street intersection poses safety challenges where three streets and sidewalks meet.**

That traffic volume, combined with the steep hill from the Town Library, results in vehicles exceeding the speed limit and hurtling around the corner, slowing only when the road narrows and they approach the central crosswalk near the Post Office.

There are two crosswalks at the Water Street intersection: one crosses Water Street, the other Main Street. The crossing is at a sharp turn of Main Street that is nearly a blind corner. A round mirror was installed on the building at 63 Main Street to help drivers see pedestrians, but its effectiveness is unclear. The situation is not improved by the adjacent, poorly-defined intersection at Clamshell Alley, where it is not clear: 1) where the Main Street roadway ends and Clamshell Alley begins, 2) where parking is allowed, or 3) where pedestrians can walk. The building at 59 Main Street has reportedly been struck by vehicles several times and damaged due to a lack of curbing and roadway definition. The lack of any sidewalk on the south side of the road further complicates things for pedestrians, as well as building owners. And we all need to pay attention to the fact that many young children, some on bicycles, frequent this area on their way to and from at least one Downstreet shop that stocks toys and penny candy. Many Downtown stakeholders have commented that this spot has been and remains a dangerous place that needs to be made safer for everyone.

*“People drive way too fast down the hill [from the Library] and around that corner. We just keep hoping no one gets hit.”*

*- Downstreet business owner*

In addition, any redevelopment of the Town Garage site must include measures to mitigate impact on pedestrian and vehicle traffic at an intersection that already has safety issues. Measures suggested by stakeholders for this location have included flashing pedestrian warning signs, making the Windy Way exit right turn only, and considering additional one-way street designations similar to School Street.

Other traffic calming measures that are often employed in northern-climate downtown areas can include: wider curbed sidewalks, which tend to make drivers drive more slowly; extra-wide crosswalks with high-visibility striping and a colored surface; rumble strips cut into pavement; seasonal speed bumps that can be removed prior to winter plowing season; flashing warning signs, similar to the one installed on East Main Street at the crosswalk to Arcola Lane.

Engineering redesign of Main Street is a recommended action in this Plan, and it must address traffic calming, sight lines, pedestrian safety, sidewalk locations, parking, and ADA access.

## 2.5 Pedestrians and Sidewalks

Nearly every stakeholder interviewed in this study commented that walking along Main Street from the Town library to the Ferry Terminal presents safety and access challenges for a wide range of pedestrians. Their top priority for Main Street is to finish building the sidewalk to the ferry, which was also the recommendation of the 2006 Sidewalk Committee report. That is also a top priority of this Master Plan, along with redesigning sidewalks downtown.

Adequate sidewalks have been an issue on Vinalhaven for a long time. In the 1880s, a flurry of editorials in the island newspapers (there were three at that time) pointed out the need for sidewalk improvements as a matter of civic pride and economic

*“There is nothing that attracts the stranger so much as the general appearance of a town. To wit, comfortable looking buildings, neat fences, good roads, and above all, decent sidewalks. Our readers will agree with us, when we say that in several parts of our town, the latter are a disgrace. The town should take this matter of sidewalks in hand, and keep them in good repair; for we must be up with the times.”*

*- The Wind, June 1885*

development. In that era, the risk to pedestrians was mostly from horses and slow-moving carts and wagons. Today's traffic is much different, and more dangerous.

Given a choice, most pedestrians would probably prefer to walk on a sidewalk rather than be hit by a dump truck or a car. But the current sidewalks along the Main Street corridor have been poorly designed, are too narrow, lack proper cuts or ramps for accessibility, are in poor physical condition, have not been periodically swept clean of gravel, or are completely missing.

When no sidewalk exists, we should not be surprised or upset that visitors are forced to walk in the road.

### No Way Out: The Ferry Beginning

The sidewalk problem starts at the very beginning, at the MSFS Ferry Terminal.

The MSFS terminal has a narrow, ADA non-compliant sidewalk overgrown with vegetation, poorly maintained, and unusable because of parked trucks extending into the sidewalk blocking pedestrian passage (Figure 2-46).

The sidewalk is substandard in width, too narrow for wheelchair use or two people to pass, and is constrained on one side by a wooden guardrail and on the other by parked vehicles. Several of the adjoining parking spaces are earmarked for ferry staff only, and so vehicles often remain in those spaces all day.

This situation unsafely forces nearly all ferry passengers and pedestrians heading Downtown to walk within the busy MSFS vehicle travel lanes, where large trucks and other vehicles exit the ferry six times per day and drive onto Main Street. It is an unacceptable design for any enterprise, but especially so for a State Department of Transportation facility.

The MSFS has space constraints in its parking lot that influence the site layout. It must also maintain adequate roadway width for large commercial trucks to pass. MSFS also has a responsibility to provide foot passengers with a safe way to walk to Main Street. The existing sidewalk should be widened to at least four feet, to meet the Federal Highway Administration and ADA minimum standards of 48" unobstructed width, and should be kept completely clear of vegetation and all obstructions including vehicles.



**Figure 2-46: The MSFS terminal has a non-compliant sidewalk that is frequently obstructed by parked vehicles.**

One relatively inexpensive solution, which was suggested to the MSFS in 2018 but not acted upon, is to install concrete parking bumpers a suitable distance from the curb to prevent vehicle overhang into the sidewalk passage, and then widen the sidewalk to the required 48" width. Such a move should still allow suitable maneuvering room for parked vehicles, while providing better sidewalk access. Adding wayfinding signage will also help direct ferry passengers to do the right thing. If pedestrians see a wide, safe, marked route to Main Street, many if not most will take it.

*"People get off the ferry and have no idea where to go - lost visitors are on the street amid commercial activity."*

*- Marine business owner*

### West Main Street Sidewalk

The 2006 Sidewalk Committee report emphasized the need for a complete and safe sidewalk from the Ferry Terminal to Downstreet. It also advocated for sidewalks that were not sloped. Lateral slopes can be a serious safety hazard when they are present on a sidewalk. If a sidewalk slopes toward the road, it can cause bikes, wheelchairs, and strollers to roll off the sidewalk and into oncoming traffic. Wheelchair users traveling on a sidewalk with a cross slope have to use more energy to travel in a straight line, to offset the force of gravity that directs them sideways. Design standards for sidewalks generally recommend cross-slopes of no more than 2% to accommodate wheelchair users. If there is gravel on this sloped surface, it becomes hazardous for walkers as well.

Such slopes are present at multiple sections of the Downstreet sidewalk, and also along West Main Street, where numerous driveway cuts, and one long section along a parking lot at 36 West Main, have a lateral slope that is very steep in places. Future sidewalks installed in those areas will need to be made level rather than fit to the existing slope.

Several sections of the West Main sidewalk are also not well maintained, with scattered gravel making it less stable for the elderly and difficult for pedestrians pushing carts or strollers. It is ironic that this sidewalk condition exists next to and in front of the Public Safety building at 56 West Main Street (Figure 2-47).



**Figure 2-47: Gravel and dirt covering portions of the sidewalk at the Town's Public Safety facility.**

In 2014 a Rural Active Living Assessment (RALA) was conducted on Vinalhaven by volunteers working under the guidance of the Knox County Community Health Coalition. The study assessed the "friendliness" of Vinalhaven for walking, biking, and recreation. Specific street segments were surveyed including Downstreet. In assessing the Downtown sidewalk from the Library to High Street, the RALA survey provided the following observations:

*"Sidewalk in poor condition, patched and uneven. Not walkable for elderly or wheelchair-[accessible]. Not well maintained, phone poles are in the way. Bikes and deliveries block walkway. [Sidewalk] narrow in places, hard for people to pass. No intentional plantings or landscaping - not attractive."*

The RALA survey also noted a lack of posted speed limit signs along Main Street from the school to downtown, and no pedestrian warning signs at any Main Street crosswalks to alert drivers.

### Downstreet Sidewalks

In the Downstreet area, many sections of sidewalk are uneven, excessively sloped, or built in multiple levels (Figure 2-48). Each of these features poses challenges for pedestrians with mobility issues, and must be addressed in a redesign of downtown sidewalks. In particular, the sloping sidewalk in front of Carvers Market and the Post Office causes some pedestrians difficulty, especially elderly patrons trying to push loaded grocery carts across the street to their parked cars. A recent (August 2019) pedestrian fall and serious injury on the Downstreet sidewalk illustrates the risk.



**Figure 2-48: Several sections of Downstreet sidewalks have excessive slopes or multiple, uneven levels.**

Downstreet building entrances are at varying levels and few are wheelchair-accessible, with most requiring several steps up from the sidewalk level except for the buildings at 50 and 54 Main Street. This Downtown Master Plan recommends designing and creating a level sidewalk all along Downstreet that can accommodate future flooding from storm events or sea level rise and improve building accessibility. Engineering design should focus on a solution that includes raising both the Main Street roadway and the adjacent sidewalk surface.

As noted above, most of the existing Downstreet buildings have their entrances above the existing sidewalk level, but at least two do not (Figure 2-49). That represents a good news/bad news situation: any plan to raise Main Street and the adjacent sidewalk to address flooding and sea level rise will also help solve access challenges for most buildings. However, a building that

is low in elevation and already at risk of flooding would need to either: 1) have its structure raised to accommodate a higher-elevation sidewalk; or 2) have the sidewalk ramp down to a lower elevation in front of their building (at least until the building is raised in the future), with an accompanying special design for stormwater management.

This Downtown Master Plan is recommending that engineering design and cost estimation for the Downstreet roadway and sidewalk evaluate both scenarios for those structures and property owners. In addition, building owners should be encouraged to incorporate standard flood-proofing measures as are now required in many communities for flood-prone areas.



**Figure 2-49: Any low-lying Downstreet properties may need to raise their structures or have design accommodations for sidewalks and stormwater management in front of their buildings.**

### **The South Side of Main Street**

A number of stakeholders have noted that the absence of sidewalks on the south side of Downstreet can be unsafe, especially for pedestrians walking from the central Town parking lot to the Water Street intersection. In addition to the 19-room Tidewater motel, the south side of Downstreet now has two restaurant/bars, a real estate office, four apartments, two art studios, a yoga studio, and one retail shop.

There can be significant pedestrian traffic to these locations, especially in the summer and during evening hours. The lack of street-side parking in that area also forces patrons to park in the central Downstreet lot and walk along the roadway on the south side.

Several property owners have commented that, by its actions, the Town apparently seems to consider “only the north side of Main Street to be important and worth support.” They cite the absence of a south sidewalk, and the fact that the Town maintains all of the sidewalks in front of north-side businesses and provides snow clearing for those storefronts in winter, whereas south side businesses must fend for themselves.

In addition, ADA access to buildings is more of a challenge on the south side compared to the north. Several of the south side property owners have constructed small raised entrances or walkways to help patrons access their highly-elevated buildings. However, their attempts to develop more conventional interconnected walkways, ramps, or sidewalks have been reportedly stymied due to the State’s involvement and control over the Main Street right of way and

maintenance. This Downtown Master Plan is recommending that the Town work with the State to clarify any right of way limitations and seek a solution to the pedestrian safety issues at this location.

The 2017 DART study also identified this area as a challenge for pedestrians, particularly with a conceptual re-use of the Net Factory/Town Garage site under discussion. The DART team suggested a streetscape redesign here that would include a sidewalk, limited street parking, improved intersections, and a “pocket park” at the corner of Clamshell Alley. The feasibility and details of these elements will need to be evaluated as part of an engineering redesign of the corridor.

Another conceptual study completed in 2017 (Figure 2-50) considered installation of a wider sidewalk with roadside parking and a redesigned Clamshell Alley intersection as part of a “Complete Streets” design approach. While specific elements such as landscape plantings and sidewalk materials are details that should be ignored for now, the overall concept of creating safe walkable areas and calming traffic are worth focusing on.



**Figure 2-50: Conceptual idea by MRLD Architects for adding a walkway, street parking, benches, and redesign of the Clamshell Alley intersection to improve pedestrian safety and traffic calming.**

As noted above, any re-development of the Town Garage site to house additional public parking or multi-use space could have impacts on both vehicle and pedestrian traffic in the Water Street area. As a result, planning and design for any projects in this spot should not be done wearing blinders, but instead should consider the interwoven nature of the entire corridor.

### **Crosswalks Need Attention**

Stakeholders in this study also expressed concerns about crosswalks in the Downtown corridor. Crosswalks along Main Street are not signed, have painted markings that can become so faded and obscure as to be essentially invisible to drivers, and are even missing in some key locations.

The lack of a crosswalk at the MSFS Ferry Terminal is perhaps not surprising, since there is also no functioning sidewalk in that area either, but its absence encourages pedestrians to remain on the south side of the road and walk downtown alongside and through the most heavily-trafficked commercial area on the island. A crosswalk at the Harbor Wharf retail building allows pedestrians to cross to an existing sidewalk on the north side of the road, although there is no signage directing them to do so.

In the Downstreet area, there are existing crosswalks at the Camden National Bank, The Tidewater, the downtown parking lot, and the Water Street intersection, all of which are heavily used by pedestrians (Figure 2-51). There is also a well-entrenched pattern of walkers crossing



**Figure 2-51: Downstreet crosswalks currently exist at four locations.**

wherever the mood strikes them all along Downstreet, especially in front of retail shops and restaurants. Fortunately, there is also a well-established norm among island drivers to slow down and stop for any and all pedestrians at the Post office crosswalk, even for those who look like they aren't sure when or where they might actually cross.

As noted earlier, the corner intersections at the opposite ends of the study area (i.e., at Sands Road and Water Street) are considered by many stakeholders to be dangerous for pedestrians, and require measures for traffic calming. The 2017 DART study offered suggestions for safer crosswalks that included using different surface materials, building elevated table crosswalks, adding warning signage, and adding more crosswalks within a redesigned streetscape that would encourage drivers to drive more slowly.

Some stakeholders interviewed in this study suggested expanding the 25 mph speed limit areas to give drivers more time to slow down, posting the speed limit more visibly, and perhaps even installing a flashing "entering Downstreet" sign at each end of the Downstreet area. Of course, more traffic enforcement of the existing speed limits would be a good idea as well.

This Downtown Master Plan is recommending that engineering redesign of the Main Street corridor consider all of these measures in addressing the safety issues for crosswalks.

### **Curb Cut Policies**

On a final note regarding pedestrian safety, there appears to be a lack of coordinated planning or ordinance-related controls for lengthy curb cuts at several Main Street property entrances and parking lots, resulting in uncontrolled (and unpredictable, from a pedestrian's perspective) vehicle access to many properties. These include most of the working waterfront properties on West Main Street, and on the north side of the road include the Co-op parking lot, the Vinal Energy property, the Town's Public Safety facility, and the Homeport business (Figure 2-52).

Some property owners have apparently sought and received variances from the State regarding their curb cuts, but it is unclear whether all have done so. One of the recommendations of this Downtown Master Plan is a Planning Commission review of the current Town ordinances regarding compliance with State regulations for curb cuts and road access points.



**Figure 2-52:** Along West Main Street there is a lack of vehicle access control or curb cuts at several locations, including (clockwise from top left): the Vinalhaven Fishermen's Co-op gas station; the Co-op parking lot; Fox Islands Electric Co-op property; Vinal Energy; Homeport Restaurant; and the Vinalhaven Public Safety facility.

## 2.6 Parking

Issues surrounding Downtown parking were raised by stakeholders in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan survey, the 2014 Economic Development study, and the 2017 DART study. The Downtown Committee's planning effort has identified a continued set of parking issues, with some new twists, and parking is one of the top priorities to address for this Downtown Master Plan.

### Parking Demand Is Increasing

Some view parking as primarily a seasonal issue, when Vinalhaven's summer population and vehicle count increases dramatically compared to mid-winter. However, parking demand is

expected to gradually increase with a growing trend toward more use during the shoulder seasons than in the past. In addition to reviewing current parking demand from Downtown businesses and activities, the Downtown Committee also evaluated future needs for parking due to possible changes in property ownerships or functions. Some of those factors include:

- the planned conversion of the Star of Hope into a public art museum
- recent enforcement of parking restrictions near the Flea and Farmers Market
- possible future expansions of island taxi or shuttle services
- an increasingly aging island population
- seasonal visitors increasingly extending their stays into the shoulder seasons
- design changes along Main Street to accommodate pedestrian infrastructure
- potential demand for multi-function outdoor community space in the Downtown area
- encouraging additional residential apartments and office spaces along Main Street

This Downtown Master Plan’s recommendations include a combination of new parking areas, reconfiguration of some existing spaces, and modification of some parking ordinances.

### Existing Lots

The Town owns and maintains two large parking lots along the corridor, at 8 West Main Street adjacent to the Vinalhaven Fisherman’s Co-op, and in the Downstreet area directly across from Carvers Market (Figure 2-53). Although it is a municipal space, the West Main Street lot is considered to be a commercial fishing support facility, and is used primarily by fishermen for vehicle parking (which requires an annual permit), short-term temporary gear storage, and water access. A boat ramp, dock and float at this location provide harbor access to the public and space for commercial fishing dinghies to tie up. Additional use of this lot for non-marine-



**Figure 2-53: In addition to parking, the two existing municipal lots on West Main Street (left) and Downstreet (right) include docking facilities, floats for commercial dinghy tie-ups, and boat ramps.**

related public parking could theoretically ease pressure on the ferry service parking areas. But that would require reconfiguration of the lot, with parking spaces and access ways defined, and would negatively impact commercial fishermen who are already running out of space. Such an action is not recommended until and unless the Town is able to purchase or secure additional wharf space at another location along West Main Street for commercial fishermen.

Commercial use of the West Main Street lot makes the Town's Downstreet lot and wharf area the primary resource for public parking in the downtown area. However, that facility is also designated as a resource for commercial fishermen, with a float available for dinghy tie-ups, a boat ramp, and a dock for temporary gear loading and unloading during the off-season. A recent change in the Town's Harbor Ordinance instituted a seasonal restriction on use of the lot for storage of commercial fishing gear, but a chronic shortage of space for dinghies at the other Town docks on West Main Street, combined with the convenient location make the Downstreet lot an attractive location for fishermen to use.

The Downstreet lot (Figure 2-54) provides 54 parking spaces including two wheelchair-accessible spaces, but it also periodically is used as a venue for community activities such as street dances and the Town's 4<sup>th</sup> of July festivities. During the summer season, the lot can become nearly full during the day. However, except for apartment residents, shop owners, and fishermen's trucks parked all day along the wharf, there is usually a high turnover rate and spaces generally become available quickly.



**Figure 2-54: The Town's Downstreet parking lot provides space for parking, a boat ramp, wharf and float for commercial and recreational dinghies, and open space for community activities.**

### Curbside Parking

There are 25 curbside parking spaces along the Downstreet section of Main Street, including two wheelchair-accessible spaces in front of the grocery store and post office. The current Town parking ordinance bans parking along the south side of Main Street from The Tidewater to Clamshell Alley. During the winter months there is usually a rapid turnover rate of curbside spaces, and drivers are generally able to find parking spaces during the 6- to 7-month non-summer period. During the prime visitor season, which has been slowly expanding in recent years to start in May and wind down by mid-October, curbside parking is not always available, and drivers must use the Town parking lot.

The two existing wheelchair-accessible parking spaces on Main Street pose challenges to users, due to a steeply sloping sidewalk and uneven pavement next to those spaces (Figure 2-55). Any redesign of Main Street infrastructure will need to provide more suitable accessible spaces with no mobility obstacles. Considering the aging-in-place desires of the community, and the increasingly older year-round population, there may also be demand for more wheelchair-

accessible spaces near to shops and services. The Downtown Master Plan recommends the Town consider increasing the number of accessible spaces along Main Street to three or four, to accommodate changing needs of our population.

As noted earlier, commercial vehicles and vendors use Main Street curbside parking spaces for making deliveries of propane, packages, perishables, supplies and materials to restaurants and shops. Deliveries to second floor apartments must do the same unless their access is on the Pondsides. If spaces are not available, delivery vehicles must double-park, potentially blocking Main Street traffic. Due to existing curbside space sizes, wider commercial trucks such as the propane delivery truck and UPS truck may stick out and obstruct traffic. Contractors performing work on Downstreet buildings also occasionally park on the street, though most of their activities are done in the off-season to minimize disruptions to their clients' businesses. However, recently-initiated repairs to the Star of Hope building required the occupation of multiple high-value curbside spaces with construction vehicles, during the busiest period of the summer.



**Figure 2-55: The accessible spaces along Main Street about sloping sidewalks and uneven pavement.**

Business owners along Main Street have expressed significant concern over a chronic lack of short-term curbside parking for customers, including restaurant patrons and those picking up take-out orders, retail shoppers, post office customers checking their mail, etc. Most business patrons apparently spend less than an hour at individual shops in the daytime, and perhaps two hours at restaurants or bars in the evening. Thus, in terms of meeting the economic needs of the downtown area, there is no need for the Town to provide all-day parking along Main Street, but there need to be more off-street alternatives for longer-term parking.

### **Long-Term Parking**

There are a number of residential apartments along Main Street that do not have adequate onsite parking for their residents. The existing Town *Land Use Ordinance Section 16.S* requires two parking spaces for each residential apartment, or, in the case of conversions of buildings to year-round rental housing (*Section 16.II*), one parking space is required per apartment. These requirements may have been waived by the Planning Board for construction of some second floor apartments along Main Street, or perhaps pre-existing residences were grandfathered. Some of these apartments are seasonal, others year-round, but those residents without onsite spaces park their vehicles on the street, in Town parking lots, or at other locations.

There is no ordinance prohibiting overnight parking in Town parking lots or in curbside spaces along Main Street.

The end result is the Town effectively providing free parking for a handful of apartment dwellers on parts of Main Street, while rental property owners in other locations of Town must provide and pay for the maintenance of onsite parking spaces for their tenants. But far more

importantly, and as noted by many stakeholders interviewed in this study, the long-term occupation of curbside parking spaces ties up parking spaces that otherwise could be used by business customers and patrons, especially those who have mobility issues but are not yet eligible for an ADA/accessible parking permit.

The same situation arises with the use of curbside parking spaces by owners and employees of businesses on Main Street, some of whom reportedly park their personal or company vehicles on Main Street for long periods of time while working. Although frowned upon by the Chamber of Commerce and many downtown business owners, this practice continues in the absence of any ordinances or time limits for downtown parking.

In some communities, such long-term occupation of valuable parking spaces in a downtown business district is addressed by setting time limits on curbside parking spaces and allowable parking periods. For example, a mix of a few loading zone spaces and a 1-hour-limit on daytime parking spots often solves the issue of availability. This has been the approach implemented by Waldoboro, Damariscotta, and Thomaston for their Main Street areas. Enforcement of time limits could pose an issue for Vinalhaven, since the Town is already challenged with enforcing other rules already on the books. But instituting and posting time limits could also serve as a visual deterrent to bad parking behavior.

Any measures that would curtail long-term curbside use by either residents or workers will need to be offset by making other parking options available that meet their needs without violating the Town's *Parking Ordinance*. Providing a limited number of "permit-only" parking spots within a town lot is a typical solution that has been successfully implemented in towns such as Rockland. This Downtown Master Plan recommends a solution that combines 1) annual permits that allow long-term and overnight parking in a Town lot, and 2) installing additional parking areas as an initial, interim use of the former site of the Town Garage off Windy Way.

### Space and Parking for Community Events

Parking for special events and community activities is sometimes a challenge in the downtown area. The Town's annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration traditionally closes the downtown parking lot and devotes the entire space to community organizations holding fundraising activities. Hundreds of residents and visitors crowd Downstreet and the surrounding areas to watch the parade, socialize, and patronize organization booths. With no alternative lots in the downtown area, they park on side streets, in front yards, and any available empty space.

The seasonal Saturday Flea and Farmers Market has also been a popular event for decades, and has been held at the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Main Street for at least the past 30 years. It faces similar challenges in parking. Due to increasingly crowded conditions and concerns over traffic and pedestrian safety, the Town recently reminded Market patrons that roadside parking is not allowed at the site during the Market. However, except for the Union Church spaces and a handful of spaces at the Library, the closest alternative parking is either at the Town Garage site or the downtown lot across from the Post Office, both of which may discourage some Market patrons with mobility issues or those who simply want to park closer.

The same holds for other community activities held at the Flea Market field; depending on the scale of the event, parking may spill over into surrounding streets, and lack of nearby parking might discourage attendance.



**Figure 2-56: The Downstreet lot is an ideal scenic location for outdoor events, such as this community contradance held in July 2019. It could also host the Saturday Market, but only if alternative parking is developed nearby.**

Section 2.3 has noted that, although the Flea and Farmers Market has been held at the Atlantic Avenue site for many years, the northern half of that open space is privately owned. If the property in that area is sold, or is otherwise developed into another use as was suggested by the 2017 DART study, the Market and other events that use that site would need to move to another spot. Similar markets in other communities such as Stonington are typically held in downtown municipal lots or other public areas with ample nearby parking. The most logical location for Vinalhaven's Market, and perhaps a more attractive solution anyway, is at the waterfront Downstreet lot. But that would only be feasible if a significant amount of additional parking can be created elsewhere downtown.

Given the appeal of the Downtown lot for its central waterfront location and scenic views of the harbor, it has become an attractive venue for some community activities. Street dances, fundraising events, and periodic use by street vendors are examples of such use (Figure 2-56). Although the lot was the site of industrial activity in the early 1900s, and has been a parking lot for decades, perhaps its highest and best use in the future is as a multi-use facility that includes parking and water access, but can also accommodate events, while patrons use another nearby lot for their vehicles. The Downtown Master Plan includes that scenario as a recommendation.

## **2.7 Bicycle Safety**

Bicycle use on Vinalhaven poses a dilemma for island residents, town planners, school children, parents, tourists, retirees, and anyone who might consider riding a bike to cut down on their fuel expenses or get some exercise. Because the island lacks appropriate bicycle infrastructure, and since Main Street is relatively narrow and busy with commercial traffic, Vinalhaven is not a particularly welcoming community for bicycle use by anyone. Yet 77% of the people responding to the 2013 Comprehensive Plan Survey said they supported making bicycle travel here more safe. And the news is already out: Vinalhaven is known as a scenic place to see on bicycle.

Supporting safe bicycle use, at least within the village, not only could provide a healthy activity for residents, but it also might reduce the number of cars used to run small errands downtown, and thus ease some of the parking problems we all complain about. But unless we are able to improve bicycle safety, introducing even more bikes to our current road system is a recipe for even more conflicts and possibly the kind of disastrous traffic accident we all fear.

## Biking Infrastructure: None

There are no dedicated bike lanes currently on Main Street, or anywhere else on the island for that matter, which places bicycles and vehicles into the same roadway. Bicyclists who try to use roadway shoulders throughout the island find them too narrow in many places and potholed in most, and so they are forced to use travel lanes.

School children living in High Street neighborhoods who could theoretically ride bikes to school face running the gauntlet of Downstreet traffic as well as trucks driving too fast along East Main Street. There is no safe pathway for them to navigate from High Street to Water Street. So when a school bus is not available, they are usually driven to school, adding even more to vehicle traffic.

Recent (July 2019) postings on Vinalhaven's social media stimulated many comments on bike conflicts downtown. Some residents complained about rider behavior on Main Street, while others pointed out that the lack of bike lanes forces bicyclists into the road. Others weighed in on the problems of bikes on sidewalks.

Maine State laws allow bicycles to be ridden on sidewalks unless a town ordinance prohibits it. Vinalhaven's *Public Conduct Ordinance* passed in 1995 prohibits bicycle riding on sidewalks in the Downtown area. Some residents feel young children should be allowed to walk their bikes on sidewalks, but there appears to be consensus that bikes should not be ridden on the narrow Downtown sidewalks due to concerns about pedestrian safety. As a middle ground, some Downstreet shop owners gently tell young children to walk their bikes on the sidewalk, to keep them safe and out of the street.

In addition to a lack of safety lanes, other bicycle infrastructure is generally invisible or absent in the corridor. Visitors with bikes upon exiting the ferry find no signage or markings letting them know where they should or should not ride. There also is no information on the Rockland side informing them of the lack of bike infrastructure on Vinalhaven. In fact, the only disincentive for bringing a bike over is the high cost of a bicycle ticket. But there is no extra charge if bicycles are carried on a vehicle bike rack, and so many seasonal visitors bring bikes with them.

There are a handful of small public bike racks in the Downtown corridor, including one at the Ferry Terminal and the Town Library. The Tidewater has a large bike rack for its guests to use, but other private businesses do not provide similar racks for their patrons. Installing public bike racks in convenient sidewalk locations is a standard amenity in many communities, but is not a feature of Vinalhaven's Downtown.



Figure 2-57: The word is already out: "Maine's scenic Vinalhaven Island by ferry and bike." *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 14 June 2014.

### Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Oh, Wait...

Despite the lack of bike-friendly roads or other infrastructure, and the negative attitude among islanders about bicyclists in general, there already is widespread promotion and information, on a national scale, for coming to Vinalhaven with your bicycle. The word is already out. Numerous newspaper and magazine articles, travel journals, tourism organizations, and websites promote bicycling on Vinalhaven on a national level, despite the lack of infrastructure and resident concerns (Figure 2-57). The Tidewater has bicycles for rent, and encourages their use on the island. And perhaps most ironically, the Vinalhaven community itself inadvertently promotes biking on the island through extensive promotion and mainland advertising of the annual *Run-Bike Benefit Challenge* (Figure 2-58).

### Solving the Problem

The Downtown Committee was not charged with addressing issues across the entire island, but instead to focus only on the Main Street corridor. The topic of bicycle use island-wide was briefly assessed in the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, but no recommendations emerged from that Plan regarding bicycle facilities or improvements. In general, the existing narrow paved roadways around the island preclude the installation of dedicated bicycle-only lanes.

However, there may be advantages to encouraging more bicycle use Downtown, with potential benefits to improve parking, health, and commerce. Given the fact that bicycles are already here, and will continue to be used, we must find a way to accommodate them in the Downtown area without impacting pedestrians and vehicles.

Instead of installing dedicated bicycle-only lanes, there are several simple, relatively inexpensive solutions that can help address bike safety Downtown.



**Figure 2-58: Can we have it both ways? Despite resident complaints about bicycles, Vinalhaven promotes bicycling around the island in summer through social media and mainland promotion of the annual *Benefit Challenge*.**

*“...What you’ll find is a bustling working harbor at Carver’s Harbor and some fabulous scenery as you bike around the island. Many of the roads are hilly and unpaved, so keep that in mind as you decide which bike to take on the trip with you.”*

- “It’s Worth the Trip: Vinalhaven offers quintessential island experience.” *Portland Press Herald*, 28 Aug 2011.

First, it will be important to retain, and enforce, the existing Town ordinance prohibiting bicycle use on sidewalks. Protecting pedestrians from collisions of all kinds remains an important goal.

Second, providing informational signage at the Ferry Terminals, perhaps on both sides, alerting bicyclists to the importance of safe bicycle riding and the scarcity of bike infrastructure on Vinalhaven will be helpful as an educational tool.

Third, adding strategically-placed bike racks in the Main Street corridor, perhaps with wayfinding signage, will help direct bicyclists to properly place and store their bikes out of the way of pedestrians, vehicles, and businesses, and avoid conflicts.



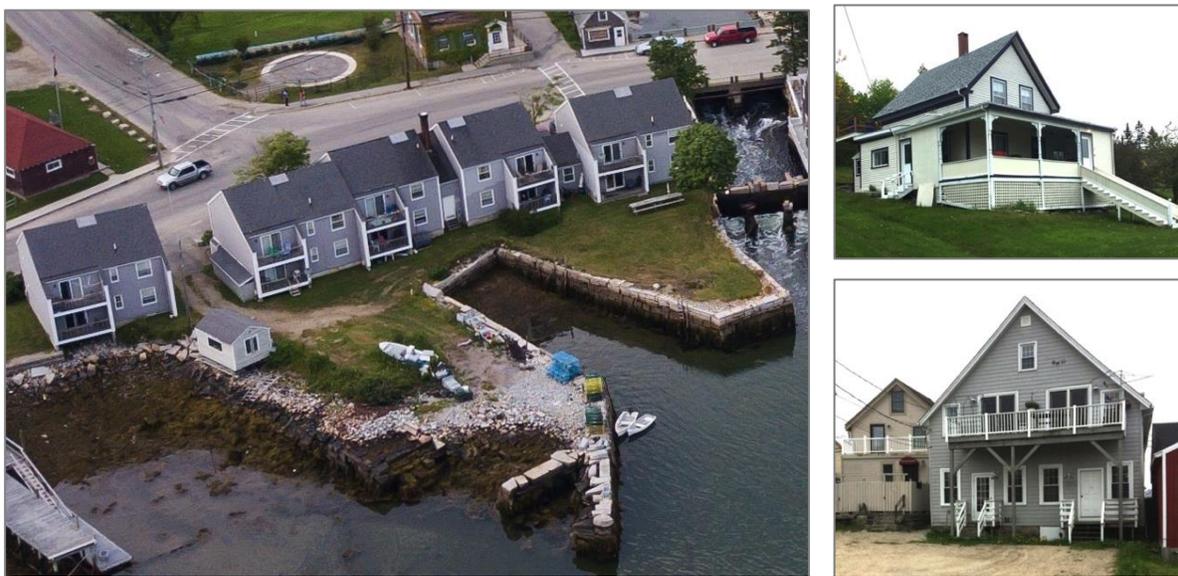
**Figure 2-59: Appropriate signage could improve bicycle safety and reduce conflicts along Main Street.**

Fourth, installing yellow bicycle alert signs on each end of Main Street (Figure 2-59) would remind drivers of the possible presence of bicycles Downtown, especially young children riding to Go Fish and Island’s Closet.

Finally, improving safety along Main Street could be enhanced through a modest redesign of the roadway that incorporates a designated separate multi-use lane on the south side of the road. This kind of design does not limit truck passage or impede vehicles, but allows other slower-moving vehicles such as forklifts, loaders, or bicycles, to safely travel along the corridor without slowing down other vehicles or forcing them to pass.

## 2.8 Housing

A vibrant downtown requires a mix of year-round commercial and residential properties, with support infrastructure for both. The Main Street study area currently has a healthy mix of single-family homes, year-round apartments, and commercial buildings (Figure 2-60). Maintaining this mix, and retaining year-round residents along the corridor will be critically important in the future to ensure continued downtown vitality and to retain village character. But equally important is ensuring that workforce housing is available and affordable.



**Figure 2-60: Main Street currently has a mix of housing options, such as the Harborview Apartments (left), single family homes (top right), and second floor apartments over commercial storefronts (lower right).**

To accomplish that, this Downtown Master Plan recommends that the Town encourage more year-round residential apartments on the upper floors of Main Street buildings; allow the conversion of existing single family homes to multi-family dwellings where appropriate; and encourage the creation of a privately-funded community investment organization that can foster the development of year-round affordable workforce housing on the island.

Section 2.3 has described current building conditions and usage on Main Street, and the Appendix includes a visual Main Street Building Inventory. This section discusses more specific challenges regarding conversion, affordability, and allowable uses.

The availability and affordability of housing on Vinalhaven depends on your perspective. If you are a current homeowner or have significant assets, you might believe there are no issues. However, if you are a struggling single parent cobbling together multiple part-time jobs, a sternman trying to support a young family on seasonal income, a teacher that must vacate their rental house each

*“While there are many decent homes, they are often not affordable, and conversely there are many affordable homes that are not decent.”*

*- 2013 Comprehensive Plan*

summer, or an elderly islander on Social Security with an aging-in-place desire, you would feel otherwise. The majority of island residents may fall somewhere in between, but most would acknowledge that the costs of housing, whether to buy a house or rent an apartment, have gone up faster than average incomes in the past decade. This, combined with the continuing popularity of Vinalhaven as a seasonal destination, make workforce housing a critically important issue for the vitality of the island and the Downtown area.

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan evaluated housing stock on the island in terms of conditions, limitations, availability, and affordability. Many observations from that study have not changed:

- *“Much of the housing stock on Vinalhaven was built prior to the 1970’s. Poor insulation and high energy costs make many of these homes undesirable and a burden for those living in them.”*
- *“Existing housing stock and buildable properties are increasingly being acquired by seasonal residents.”*
- *“The island does not specifically speak to or provide for workforce housing. Most people live and work on the island. In the case for contractors coming to work, they are usually able to travel daily via the Maine State Ferry and/or find accommodations.”*
- *“While there are many decent homes, they are often not affordable, and conversely there are many affordable homes that are not decent.”*
- *“Affordable/workforce housing is encouraged, or allowed, in all zones as evidenced from the Land Use/Zoning Ordinance. Density bonuses are given at 100% to those in the Village Overlay District. Many times this serves as a livable unit for a family member or relative, or it may serve as an additional source of income.”*

A Town Housing Committee was re-formed in 2018 to gather information and evaluate options for improving access to year-round affordable housing. Their ongoing work is focusing primarily on year-round housing rather than seasonal housing. They are conducting an inventory of island structures to identify potential use options and opportunities for

conversions, and looking at ways to educate renters on essential topics such as fire safety, financing, and proper renting behaviors.

Within the Main Street study area there are 6 single-family homes and at least 22 apartment units. The single-family homes are all located on West Main Street, and it appears that some of those could meet criteria allowing conversion to multi-family dwellings under the current Land Use Ordinance. Ten apartment units are at 65 West Main Street, the Harborview Apartments. At least 12 other residential apartments exist in the Main Street study area, all located on the upper floors of Downstreet buildings. Most have entrances on the rear of these buildings, and a few are limited to seasonal use due to exposed water and sewer connections.

There are currently three affordable/income-based housing projects on Vinalhaven, all completed at different times. Two serve as low-income housing units while the third unit serves middle-income residents. One of those facilities, the Harborview Apartments (Figure 2-60), occupies a central location along the Downtown waterfront, and it should be considered a key property for retaining year-round housing on Main Street, with some possible mixed-use features in the future.

For at least the past decade the Harborview Apartments have operated as a *HUD Multifamily Housing* facility offering subsidized rent to low income, elderly and special needs tenants, with 6 two-bedroom apartments and 4 one-bedroom units. A nearby similar property under the same ownership, at 6 High Street, operates as a *USDA Rural Housing for the Elderly* facility, and offers 15 apartments. However, the ownership and operation of the Harborview Apartments as a subsidized housing facility could change in the near future.

Its location on the waterfront, along with its allowed non-conforming use as a residence inside the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District* makes the Harborview site a unique property. As noted in Section 2.3 there are no restrictions in the current Land Use Ordinance that would prevent this property from being converted to condominiums or seasonal residences, although that is not the intent of the current owners. Given the shortage of year-round apartments in general, and affordable year-round housing in particular, the potential conversion or loss of this resource would be detrimental to Downtown Vinalhaven.

To preserve affordable housing in the study area, this Downtown Master Plan is recommending two actions that consider properties such as the Harborview Apartments in particular, and affordable housing in general.

First, the Planning Commission should review and consider *Land Use Ordinance* modifications that could influence or prevent the conversion of apartments to condominiums unless year-round occupancy and usage controls can be met. However, it may be that such requirements can only be applied in the case of a non-profit organization owning the property and instituting “affordability covenants” into the deed, similar to the North Haven Sustainable Housing (NHSH) group that is able to purchase, construct, own, and operate residential properties for residents meeting income or age guidelines.

Second, the community should explore and support the establishment of a community investment corporation as described in Section 6.2. Such entities can seek and administer investor and grant funds, provide low-interest loans, and can purchase properties and arrange for their redevelopment. Many Maine communities have established such organizations to help revitalize their downtowns, provide support for affordable housing, and encourage additional investment in the community. There are existing federal funding programs available to such

entities for large capital purchases, construction, and operational support of affordable housing facilities for the elderly, for example. This approach could ensure a continuation or even an expansion of affordable housing opportunities for year-round island residents.

One of the actions recommended by this Plan is the creation of an Economic Development Committee charged with 1) identifying and fostering economic development initiatives for the island, and 2) supporting the establishment of a community development and investment entity on Vinalhaven.

Short-term motel-style lodging is also in short supply on the island, and particularly in the Downtown area. This kind of lodging sees demand from visitors during the 7-month tourist season and mainland contractors who perform work on the island year-round. The only commercial motel on the island, The Tidewater, has 19 rooms, but that business is constrained from further expansion by its waterfront location and Town ordinances (Figure 2-61). There are two remaining bed and breakfast operations in the Village with limited room space. There are also 46 short-term AirBnB and VRBO rentals currently listed on the island, and another 44 properties offered by rental management companies, but most of those are only available during the summer season, and many are prohibitively expensive for workers, or are unavailable for short stays of less than a week.



**Figure 2-61: The Tidewater, located at 15 Main Street, is the only commercial lodging facility on the island.**

If the Seasonal/Tourism market continues shifting toward shorter-duration visitors, the demand for short-term lodging may increase. Meeting that demand by adding more commercial year-round lodging establishments in the Main Street corridor could benefit other seasonal businesses and their employees that rely on tourism.

New lodging facilities along the waterfront are not an option under the current *Land Use Ordinance*. However, it appears that a commercial lodging facility would be allowed anywhere else in the Main Street study that lies within the *Residential-Commercial District*, as long as the site meets lot size requirements.

In contrast to commercial hotels and motels, the conversion of existing year-round buildings and single-family homes to become short-term, non-owner-occupied rental properties is currently not addressed in any way in the *Land Use Ordinances*. These include AirBnB, VRBO, and similar rentals, and their expansion through building conversions could be detrimental to Vinalhaven and its Downtown. This impact is especially true for rentals catering to seasonal visitors, due to

the effect vacant buildings have on neighborhood character. Dozens of stakeholders interviewed in this study shared that concern. The negative impacts of non-owner-occupied AirBnb and similar rental operations on communities have been well documented, including the loss of year-round housing, buildings standing empty for long periods of the year, neighborhood concerns regarding safety with unknown visitors, and building degradation due to decreased maintenance. These impacts have prompted towns like Rockland to enact ordinances restricting such conversions and operations. The Downtown Master Plan recommends that the Planning Commission review and consider ordinance modifications to control and limit non-owner-occupied short-term rentals in the Downtown area.

Topics such as cluster housing and co-housing were discussed by the DTC and with some stakeholders, but did not emerge as a priority for this Downtown Master Plan due to a lack of adequate lot sizes in downtown areas that could permit such development.

Existing parking constraints related to downtown housing have been discussed in Section 2.6. To encourage more year-round housing units, this Downtown Master Plan is recommending two changes in the Town Ordinances covering the Downstreet area. In the *Land Use Ordinance*, require 1 parking space per apartment unit instead of 2 spaces. In the *Parking Ordinance*, institute a rule and process for allowing long-term permit parking in a Town lot for tenants of existing Downstreet apartments that received variances due to no room for onsite parking. No such variances should be issued for future conversions of Downstreet buildings, and the *Parking Ordinance* change should not be adopted until additional off-street parking is created Downtown.

## 2.9 Streetscapes, Parks, and Wayfinding

Vinalhaven is blessed with spectacular scenery, a large number of conserved lands and walking trails, an active local land trust, and multiple town parks within a reasonable walking distance of downtown. Within the Downtown area itself, however, there are no public areas that serve as green space, gathering places, or designated points of interest. After leaving the Ferry Terminal, the commercial marine corridor of West Main Street leads to a historic and commercial Downstreet with no benches, roadside landscaping, pocket parks, or even many trash cans along Main Street. The costs and time required for maintaining public areas are valid concerns, but some pedestrian amenities could be added at minimal cost and great benefit.

Stakeholders in this study emphasized the importance of focusing attention on Main Street in terms of pedestrian features and community gathering spaces, and many commented specifically on the need for benches and perhaps a covered pavilion with seating to accommodate the many residents who currently meet and talk near the grocery store and the Post Office. The 2013 Comprehensive Plan also noted that their community survey responses “*indicate a need for public spaces within the downtown area, like public bathrooms, better sidewalks, and more green space or benches to just step off the main walk areas.*” However, no recommendations or actions addressing that need were included in the Comprehensive Plan, and no such improvements have been made to date.

Grimes Park currently provides a very scenic resource immediately adjacent to the ferry, with attractive green space, picnic tables, mowed paths, and a fabulous viewpoint on the rocks at the end of the peninsula. The 2-acre park is owned and maintained by the Legion Post, but stakeholders in this study commented that the site is vastly underutilized by the public, and usage could be improved significantly with more wayfinding signage and easier pedestrian access from Downtown.

The Downstreet parking lot is also a highly scenic location that draws many Main Street pedestrians to walk along the wharf, pause to watch lobster boat activity in the harbor, and take in the overall Downtown viewshed. However, although there is a maintained public bathroom adjacent to the wharf inside the historic fire hall, there is no additional infrastructure for the public to use in this area. There are no benches for seating, no picnic tables to enjoy a take-out lunch from one of the restaurants, no designated areas to safely walk outside of parking lot travel lanes, and no bike racks. This parking lot is in one of the most desirable and scenic parts of downtown, and yet the Town cannot safely take more advantage of the location as a public space because it is the primary parking area downtown, and it cannot accommodate park-like features without impacting parking availability.

One solution is to add more parking areas at the nearby former Town Garage site, as an interim, initial use of the site while a longer-term re-use plan is developed, which is a recommended action in this Downtown Master Plan. By doing so, the Downstreet lot could be freed up and slightly reconfigured to include some benches along the waterfront, but only if designed in a way that does not impinge access or use of the wharf and float by fishermen. The Downstreet lot could also then host more community activities such as the Flea and Farmers Market, fundraising events, or evening entertainment events. Providing some modest pedestrian amenities could make the space more attractive and appealing for the community.

It is possible that private passenger boats may eventually emerge as a regular service, at least during the summer season, and landing them in the heart of downtown could be preferable to using the distant West Main Street dock to reduce pedestrian traffic on Main Street. If the existing wharf was capable of handling such vessels, at least during suitable tides, it could reduce the volume of pedestrians walking down West Main Street. In that case, the Downstreet lot could also become a secondary gateway to the Town, and so adding a few park-like pedestrian amenities would be an appropriate measure, as long as it does not detract from the waterfront's character and downtown heritage.

In the 2017 DART study, several Downstreet park concepts were presented to provide community spaces for walking, gatherings, and meetings (Figure 2-56). They included a central pedestrian square with seating and a walkway through to the Carvers Pond waterfront, and a reconfigured Main Street with elevated wide sidewalks, and a Downstreet parking lot with a pavilion that could accommodate vendors or host the Saturday Market.

The DART "central square" concept is not deemed feasible at this time, since it would require the Post Office to be relocated, which is not anticipated within the next decade. The Post Office, like the grocery store, also serves an important "crossroads" function for the community and is a key component to retain nearby for a vital downtown. However, the concept of reconfiguring Main Street and the Downstreet parking lot is achievable, affordable, and a logical step in revitalizing this portion of the Downtown corridor.

The Pondsides of Main Street is discussed in detail in Sections 2.3 and 6.9. The character of that waterfront area, with scenic vistas across Carvers Pond, cries out for more public visibility and access. The development of additional public parking at the current Town Garage site could serve as a catalyst for that to happen, as an interim measure while the Town considers a more permanent future use of the site.

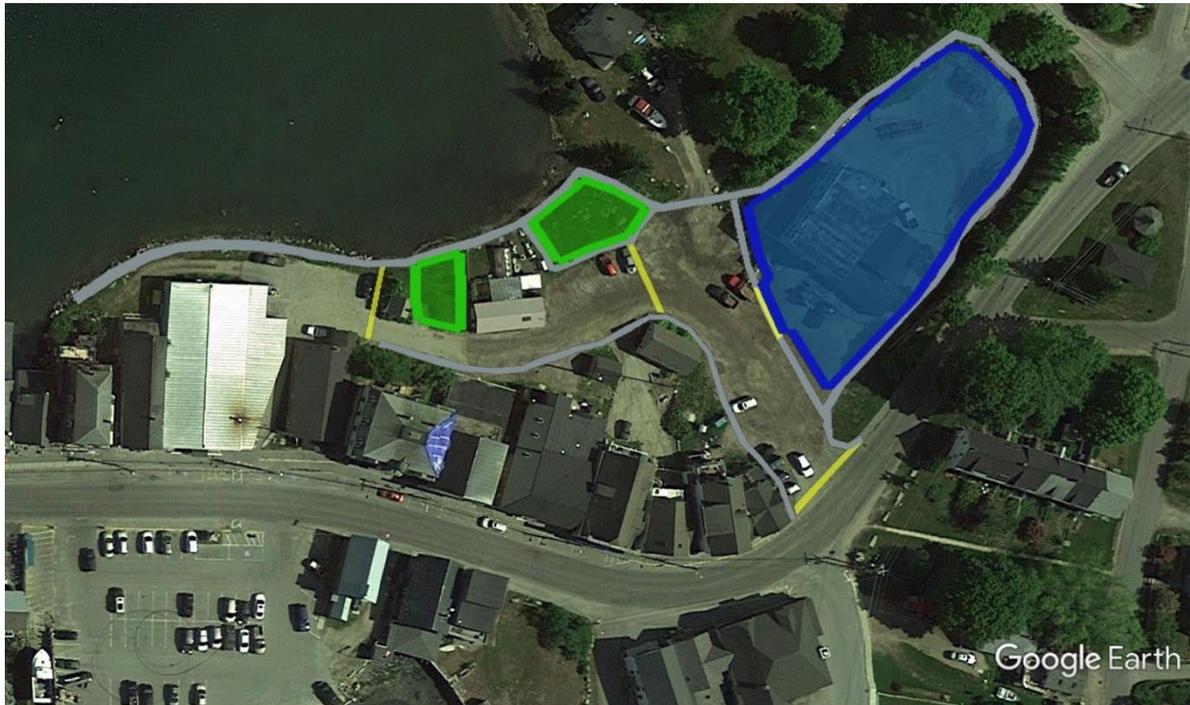
One of the 2017 DART study concepts included a series of walkways and green spaces along the Pondsides corridor, opening the Carvers Pond area to more pedestrian traffic and waterfront access. In coming up with their Main Street concepts (provided in the Appendix), the DART



**Figure 2-56: Two concepts for Downstreet public spaces in the 2017 DART study included a new park at the site of the current Post Office (top), and a reconfigured Main Street corridor with broad sidewalks and a pavilion at the edge of the multi-use parking lot. The Post Office site is not currently available for such a use, but the Main Street lot could be reconfigured to serve multiple purposes in the future.**

team did not have to address the hard realities of land ownership, environmental permitting, freight deliveries, and funding mechanisms. While some of their design elements may not be feasible in the foreseeable future, there are other aspects that can be pursued in the near term.

Still, there are opportunities to create a unique and attractive resource for pedestrians at a relatively low cost and impact in the Pondsides area. For example, additional parking areas at the Town Garage site could include a simple pedestrian path or sidewalk around the perimeter for accessing parked vehicles or just walking, as well as appropriate pedestrian crosswalks at Windy Way (Figure 2-57). There should also be safe pedestrian access from Main Street, and designs should allow access to future walkways or parks along the Carver Pond waterfront (while not impeding in any way access by large trucks making deliveries to Carvers Market.) Interpretive signage along the pathway (and in front of the exposed granite walls) could provide walkers with information about the granite industry, the evolution of Main Street, the former Net Factory, and the Carvers Pond ecosystem.



**Figure 2-57: Potential improvements in the Pondsides area could include additional parking at the Town Garage site (blue), pedestrian walkways (gray) and crosswalks (yellow), and a small waterfront "pocket park" (green).**

If the Town could also secure cooperation and permission from a few landowners, it might be possible to create a small waterfront corner park off Windy Way, with a narrow, unobtrusive walkway leading along the shore.

These kinds of improvements would come at a fairly low cost, but could provide a large benefit to the entire island community.

With regard to wayfinding, along the sidewalk at the Ferry Terminal there is a large exterior map (Figure 2-58) provided by the Chamber of Commerce showing public parks and areas of interest, and the Chamber's annual *Visitors Guide* also provides vast amounts of information. However, due to vehicle obstructions and poor maintenance, few visitors actually use the MSFS sidewalk or see the displays.



**Figure 2-58: Wayfinding challenges. Signage at the Ferry Terminal (left) is along an obstructed and unused sidewalk, and West Main Street (right) offers neither signage nor any sidewalk to pedestrians.**

Once you leave the Ferry Terminal, there are few, if any, actual signs that point the way to anything. Residents know where they are going, and usually get there. Visitors, on the other hand, often have no idea where to go, or how to get there. The lack of a visible and passable sidewalk on the MSFS property, and the absence of a sidewalk on West Main Street, simply add to the confusion.

Wayfinding through additional signage and street markings is needed to help the situation. Establishing a graphic standard for wayfinding signage, as well as for interpretive signage that might be developed over time, will help convey the sense of a planned and unified downtown area. Such signage is relatively inexpensive but can be highly effective, and is a recommendation of this Downtown Master Plan.

## 2.10 Zoning, Ordinances, and Building Codes

This study's analysis, and interviews with more than 70 landowners, business owners, and other Main Street stakeholders identified a number of Town ordinances that directly affect elements of the proposed Downtown Master Plan. In some cases the ordinance effects are positive and those ordinances should be retained and reinforced; in others, the effects are either negative or prohibitive, and the Town should consider modifications, or in a few areas, create a new ordinance.

The Town's *Land Use Ordinance* includes provisions that mirror the State of Maine's *Model Land Use Ordinance*, as well as Vinalhaven-specific rules designed to preserve and protect the island's character and resources. The Town's *Parking Ordinance* governs the use of public parking spaces and lots within the Downtown corridor. The *Sewer Use Ordinance* establishes rules, guidelines, and fee structures for access to and use of the Town's municipal wastewater collection and treatment system. The Vinalhaven *Floodplain Ordinance* stipulates the requirements for new construction and renovation of existing structures within FEMA floodplains. And the Town *Harbor Ordinance* dictates the policies and uses of waterfront and harbor facilities.

The following narrative describes topic areas of this Downtown Master Plan and the ordinances that affect them. Specific ordinance categories are those that relate to waterfront infrastructure and use, housing, parking, sidewalks, and building codes. Recommended actions regarding ordinance revisions are described in this section to provide a clear analysis and justification, and are also summarized in Section 6.

### Commercial and Residential Use of the Waterfront

To ensure preservation of the working waterfront, within the Vinalhaven *Land Use Ordinance* the Town established a *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District* that covers fifteen Main Street waterfront properties from the "Mill Stream" bridge to the MSFS Ferry Terminal property. These properties contain the commercial wharfs and working waterfront buildings located along West Main Street, and include the Vinalhaven Fisherman's Co-op, Bean Maine Lobster Inc., the Harbor Wharf property, Hopkins Boatyard, and several other small businesses operating from wharfs and structures on the waterfront.

The Town's *Land Use Ordinance* clearly states the motivations for this land use category:

*"The primary purpose of this [Maritime Activities] district is to provide marine related facilities and services, together with protection of the waterfront in support of commercial fishing and other commercial marine activities. In order to promote*

*the year-round economic viability of the district in the face of the fluctuating and seasonal needs of marine customers, a secondary purpose of the district is to provide commercial activities that serve the general public.”*

This language preserves access to the water and use by Vinalhaven’s most critical industry. The conversion and loss of working waterfront property in places like Portland in the 1980s stimulated similar protective measures in many waterfront communities, and in Vinalhaven it effectively stopped the potential conversion of working waterfront properties into residences, office buildings, or other non-maritime uses while allowing continued use by fishermen, boatyards, and the like.

According to the *Land Use Ordinance*, permitted uses in the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District* are limited to:

- a. Marine related facilities, activities, and services*
- b. Other commercial activities*

Not all of the businesses currently operating in the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District* buildings are fishing or marine-related, but all could be considered “commercial activities.” These include retail operations, food service and restaurant businesses, and some professional services that are unrelated to marine industries. A few are seasonal operations, and some others operate on limited hours year-round. The undefined “*Other commercial activities*” language suggests that the Town wishes to support a broad range of year-round commercial activities along the waterfront, including retail, services, and restaurants, as long as those activities do not preclude or displace any commercial fishing operations.

Protecting and supporting the fishing economy and commercial fishing operations around the harbor is a top priority of this Downtown Master Plan. Maintaining and increasing public access to the waterfront, including more dock and float space for fishermen who lack other access, and maintaining scenic harbor views, are also important priorities. Yet because of the “*Other commercial activities*” language, the current ordinance might not prohibit a future developer from purchasing one of the wharves on West Main Street and proposing to convert it to a restaurant or retail operation, in a scenic spot close to the Ferry Terminal. The Planning Board would have the authority to approve or reject such a proposal, of course, but the existing ordinance language would not preclude such a conversion. This Downtown Master Plan recommends that the Planning Commission review the existing ordinance language regarding commercial activities and determine whether the ordinance needs modification or clarification.

With regard to another potential land use along the waterfront, the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District* ordinance states quite clearly:

*“Lodging and other residential uses are prohibited in the district”.*

This stipulation has effectively prevented the conversion of additional waterfront properties along West Main Street to condos or apartments, avoiding the loss of wharves. But on Vinalhaven it has also resulted in some unintended economic constraints and staffing-related challenges for some of the working waterfront property owners and businesses, an impact that the DTC believes should be re-evaluated by the Planning Commission.

A serious shortage of workforce housing for Main Street employees emerged as an important concern for stakeholders interviewed in this study, and the Vinalhaven Housing Committee has identified a shortage of apartments on the island, particularly in the *Village Overlay District*. Several waterfront businesses have also expressed interest in converting at least a portion of the

upper floors of their year-round commercial buildings to have small year-round apartments, which could be used by employees, owners, or managers of these businesses.

The *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District* definition states an intent “to promote the year-round economic viability of the district” by providing “commercial activities that serve the general public”. Following that logic, there may be a valid argument for allowing the use of upper floors of waterfront buildings for workforce residential apartments, *but only if that use does not interfere with or in any way reduce access* to the harbor for the fishing and commercial marine industries.

The existing waterfront businesses along West Main Street typically utilize the ground floors of their larger buildings for heavy equipment, bait, gear, retail, and office space, and their second floors are generally used for supply storage, offices, or are vacant and unused. Allowing conversion of these second floor spaces to apartments in the waterfront district could generate additional year-round income to offset seasonal income fluctuations, and provide some of these commercial wharf owners with options for workforce housing. Both of those benefits would appear to meet the intent of the ordinance with regard to providing year-round economic viability and activities serving the general public.

Such second-floor use absolutely must not interfere with ongoing marine activities, which are concentrated on the ground floors, wharves, and docks of these businesses. Any such conversions would also need to meet ordinance requirements for apartment parking spaces without significantly impacting available commercial parking.

A recent permit application for installing small apartments on the second floor of a Main Street waterfront structure was rejected by the Vinalhaven Planning Board, who cited the *Land Use Ordinance’s* clear prohibition of residences in the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District*. Yet in interviews with Main Street stakeholders, the topic of converting waterfront building second floors to residences was supported by a majority, who noted that similar conversions are already allowed on other Main Street buildings in the *Residential-Commercial District* without impacting the commercial operations on the ground floors. Unlike the *Residential-Commercial District* ordinances, however, it will be critically important to retain the entire ground floor of commercial marine buildings for marine activities, to ensure unimpeded access to the waterfront.

The Downtown Master Plan recommends that the Planning Commission review the existing ordinance language regarding second floor residences and determine whether the ordinance needs modification or clarification.

### **Passenger Ferries and Tour Boats**

As written, neither the *Land Use Ordinance* nor the *Harbor Ordinance* appear to limit or prohibit the use of a docking facility for private commercial passenger ferries or tour boats.

As noted in the discussion on ferry services in Section 4.1, introduction of a private passenger ferry service to Vinalhaven could arise, depending on demand and the ability of the MSFS to meet island needs. In addition, there is a distinct possibility of day-trip passenger tours coming from Rockland, either as part of the proposed Star of Hope Museum’s operations, or related to cruise ship operations in Rockland.

At present, there is limited infrastructure and no ordinances specifically addressing such tour boats. The potential impacts from large numbers of cruise ship tours to Vinalhaven, in particular,

is a topic that needs to be evaluated by the Town and the Planning Commission in terms of new or expanded ordinance language and policies.

The existing Town floats have posted 2-hour time limits for tie-ups, with exceptions for permitted punts belonging to commercial fishing license holders and residents of Vinalhaven's outer islands. There are no size limitations for docking, other than practical maneuvering room limitations and water depths. Small vessels carrying passengers typically dock at the Town float adjacent to the Ferry Terminal at the end of West Main Street, and passengers from those vessels often walk down Main Street unless they have parked at the long-term ferry parking lot. Increasing the volume of passenger ferries at that dock could result in even more pedestrians on West Main Street.

The Downstreet Town dock and float currently provide harbor access and tie-up space for permitted commercial fishing dinghies, and temporary loading and unloading of fishing vessels and recreational boats. Given its proximity to Downtown businesses and the proposed Star of Hope Museum, the Downstreet dock and float facility would be a logical alternative place for small passenger ferries to come and go instead of at the end of West Main Street, but only if 1) water depths and clearances are suitable, 2) commercial activities have another alternative space provided, and 3) tour boat use of that area is properly addressed in Town ordinances.

The Planning Commission should review and determine if any ordinance language needs to be modified to ensure the Planning Board does not have to interpret between the lines if a private passenger ferry service and related use of a docking facility is proposed for the harbor, and if increased private passenger boat use of Town floats is proposed by a tour operator.

### **Marinas and Boatyards**

The *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District* ordinance allows "Government and institutional uses", and so the language does not prohibit Maine State Ferry Service ferry operations, or the installation and operation of a Town dock and float. But the rules do appear to limit the use of Town waterfront infrastructure in the district by the general and recreational public to only: 1) tying up dinghies, and 2) occasional, short-term access for boat repairs, refueling, or provisioning:

*"The use of piers, docks wharves, floats and similar marine structures in the district is limited to commercial fishing and other commercial vessels, except that their use by recreational (non-commercial) boats other than rowboats, punts and dingys is permitted only while obtaining service, supplies, or repairs."*

This language has effectively eliminated the possibility of developing a recreational marina with boat slips on the harbor, a limitation that is likely intentional and supported by the community. Unless something changes dramatically with the fishing industry, that prohibition should remain.

Given the location and nature of approaches to the Harbor, it has not traditionally been a prime destination for sailors or other recreational boaters, nor have those been made to feel welcome. The Harbor does not have features attractive to that population, such as uncrowded guest moorings, a marina, ship chandlery, or pump-out stations. In addition, the Vinalhaven Fisherman's Co-op fuel docks are primarily intended for use by the island's commercial fishing boats, with only brief time windows in mid- to late morning when the dock is easily accessed by "play boats."

Based on available information compiled for this Plan, there is no indication that recreational boating on Vinalhaven will dramatically expand in the foreseeable future to create a conflict with the current ordinances or harbor uses. The existing number of recreational boats on the island will likely remain stable and continue to require services such as repairs and fuel.

There could be an increase in demand for recreational boat maintenance and repair on the island given the logistics and increasing costs of having those services performed at mainland boatyards. However, the current boatyard operation on Carvers Harbor has limited capacity to take on additional recreational boat customers, unless there is a major downturn in the lobster industry. In addition, the current *Land Use Ordinance* height restrictions on structures would preclude modifications of the existing boatyard building to accommodate taller masts and wheelhouses of commercial boats, unless a variance was sought.

### Lodging Facilities

New lodging facilities along the Carvers Harbor waterfront are not an allowed option under current ordinances. The Town *Land Use Ordinance* states that “*lodging and residences*” are not an allowed use of waterfront properties within the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District*, and it defines that district in Section 13.I.H.1 as:

*“The area along Carver’s Harbor from Map 18/Lot 62 A (the Mill Stream), the harbor side of West Main Street, to and including Map 17/Lot 4 (Bickford Lobster Company).”*

This language clearly excluded the existing Tidewater motel from the prohibition. Despite the fact that “the Mill Stream” is actually next to Lot 62 rather than Lot 62A, it is assumed that the ordinance definition also intended to exclude Lot 62, the Harborview Apartments, from the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District* prohibition of lodging and residences. There seems to be no language in the current ordinances that would prohibit a change in that structure from rental apartments to condominiums. However, conversion of the Harborview structure to become a lodging facility would appear to be prohibited by Section 16.Q.I.8 of the *Land Use Ordinance*:

*“The new construction of hotels, motels and lodging facilities and conversion of existing structures is prohibited on the harbor side of Atlantic Avenue, Main Street, and Sand’s Cove Road, and lots abutting Sand’s Cove.”*

It appears that a commercial lodging facility would be allowed anywhere else in the Main Street study area that lies within the *Residential-Commercial District*, as long as the site provides enough room to meet the *Land Use Ordinance Section 15 Dimensional Requirements* and *Section 16.Q Lodging Facilities* standards. This would most likely only be possible along West Main Street, where several single family homes and commercial properties have larger lot sizes.

The Planning Commission should consider amending the language in Section 13.I.H.1 to clarify the exclusion of Lot 62 from the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District*, and review the existing ordinances pertaining to the potential conversion of that property to condominiums.

### Short-Term Rentals

The loss of year-round residences through conversion to short-term rental units is a well-documented and growing problem in some communities. With regard to short-term, non-

owner-occupied rentals such as AirBnB, there seems to be only a cursory mention of that kind of facility in Section 16.Q.II and III of the *Land Use Ordinance*:

*“II. Lodging facilities with six or more bedrooms or accommodating more than 10 people shall comply with Section 16.P.I and shall be located in the Residential-Commercial District.”*

*“III. Lodging facilities with five or fewer bedrooms or accommodating 10 or fewer people shall comply with Section 16.P.I and may be operated in the Residential-Commercial District or in the RM 1 District as a home occupation.”*

This language would appear to characterize non-owner-occupied short-term rental units with up to five rooms as a home occupation, and allow them to operate anywhere in the Downtown area (except possibly the waterfront) without any restrictions or requirements related to owner occupancy or year-round use. Such conversions with absentee owners could result in a loss of year-round housing, buildings standing empty for long periods of the year, neighborhood concerns regarding safety with unknown visitors, and building degradation due to decreased maintenance. Unless the Town adds definitions and performance standards for non-owner-occupied rental properties, these issues and the effects on neighborhood character will arise just as they have in many other communities.

The Planning Commission should review solutions adopted by other communities, and consider adopting an ordinance that will allow additional lodging options in the community but prevent the negative impacts of non-owner-occupied facilities on neighborhoods.

#### **Commercial Use Downstreet**

The entire Downtown study area is included within the Town’s *Village Overlay District*, an overlay district that is part of the *Residential-Commercial District*. The Town’s *Land Use Ordinance* states:

*“The purpose of the Village Overlay District (VOD) is to promote consistency in the parameters of development in the area surrounding Carver’s Harbor.”*

Requirements in the *Village Overlay District* above and beyond the rest of the *Residential-Commercial District* include a minimum lot size for converting buildings into multi-family units, a 50% maximum lot coverage constraint, and a prohibition of commercial laundromats and car washes. Variances for setbacks, expansion limitations, and other requirements must be obtained through the Planning Board and/or the Board of Appeals.

One of the provisions in the *Village Overlay District* addresses the conversion of Downstreet buildings to non-commercial uses:

*“The front thirty (30) feet of the ground floor of structures facing the south side of Main Street from Water Street to the mill stream and facing the north side of Main Street from Water Street to High Street is restricted to commercial use except to provide adequate access to second floors.”*

The ordinance further defines “commercial use” as:

*“the use of lands, buildings, or structures, other than a ‘home occupation,’ defined below, the intent and result of which activity is the production of income from the buying and selling of goods and/or services, exclusive of rental of residential buildings and/or dwelling units.”*

This language would seem to be clear in terms of preserving storefronts along Main Street. However, as noted by many stakeholders in this study, the ordinance has no refinement of “commercial use” in terms of operation type, duration, or access. Ground-floor uses that are closed to the public, or only operate for a few weeks per year, might not be what the Planning Commission had intended with the ordinance language.

There are significant community concerns about the loss of year-round businesses in the Downstreet area, and how that affects the vitality of Downtown. Storefronts that are empty or shuttered for six months or more, or are otherwise blocked from view, do not indicate a vibrant and active year-round community. But it is not clear whether the ordinance language was intended to foster year-round commercial activity, and if so, whether enforcement of the current ordinance is even feasible.

It is important to note that several Downstreet buildings that are built on pilings or lack an understory are not fully winterized, do not have water and sewer service in winter, and thus cannot currently be used year-round. These include the buildings at 10, 18, 26, and 45 Main Street, which have seasonal shops or restaurants on the first floors. However, some other Downstreet buildings that have seasonal-only storefronts also have year-round apartments on the second floors, and thus theoretically could house year-round businesses but choose not to.

It is recommended that the Planning Commission review current ordinance language and confirm the intent of this section of the Land Use Ordinance with regard to the commercial use definition, and consider a modification that would encourage longer-term commercial operations.

Encouraging more year-round activities and businesses downtown is a high priority of this Downtown Master Plan. A punitive or restrictive approach through ordinance requirements is not an effective way to achieve that goal, and it is preferable to also provide incentives that could stimulate more year-round businesses, residences, and use of the downtown area. Providing financial incentives through property tax reductions or credits is one measure used by communities, and some towns establish a TIF district or property tax reduction for a small district that rewards the development of year-round business operations and year-round residences, but not seasonal ones. However, given the comparatively low taxes paid by Vinalhaven Downtown property owners (as noted in Section 2.2), the magnitude of tax incentives may not be enough to make a difference.

The Downtown Master Plan recommends that the Town explore the practicality, costs, and benefits of an incentive approach in the future.

## Housing

Aside from the issues noted above concerning apartments along Main Street, and based on stakeholder feedback, the existing *Land Use Ordinance* appears to provide sufficient guidelines and control while still allowing the construction and development of new single-family and multi-family housing within the study area. Depending on individual site conditions, several properties along West Main Street could be converted to multi-family residences or apartment buildings in the future, particularly if multiple adjoining properties and/or vacant lots were combined. The existing ordinances could also allow the same properties to consist of two-story mixed-use structures as envisioned by the 2017 DART study, with commercial space on a ground floor and residential apartments on an upper floor. Lot space to meet onsite parking requirements may be the primary limiting factor for such conversions.

Section 16.II of the *Land Use Ordinance* also provides for a density bonus in the *Village Overlay District* for the new construction or conversion of existing buildings into year-round rental housing. For properties that qualify, this translates into additional income for property owners as well as an increase in housing options for residents, and is important to retain as an incentive for such conversions in the Downtown area. The current ordinances do not specifically address cluster housing or co-housing developments, which are feasible solutions for creating affordable housing in many communities. The establishment of cluster development options within the Main Street corridor may not be feasible, however, due to individual lot size constraints.

### Parking

Vinalhaven has a separate *Parking Ordinance* that dictates limitations or prohibitions of parking throughout the Downtown area. Parking is currently prohibited along the south side of Main Street from the Tidewater to Clamshell Alley, along West Main Street, and along Sands Road. There are no time limits for parking along Main Street or in Town lots.

Existing parking constraints related to downtown housing have been discussed in Section 2.6. To encourage more year-round housing units, this Downtown Master Plan is recommending two changes in the Town Ordinances covering Downstreet only.

- In the *Land Use Ordinance Section 16.II.8*, eliminate the requirement for 1 onsite parking space for each apartment for building conversions within Downstreet only that meet the density bonus requirements; and require 1 parking space per apartment unit instead of 2 spaces for building conversions within Downstreet only that do *not* meet the density bonus requirements.
- In the *Parking Ordinance*, institute a rule and process for allowing long-term permit parking in a Town lot for tenants of those existing Downstreet apartments that either a) received variances due to having limited or no room for onsite parking, or b) were exempted from parking space requirements due to meeting density bonus requirements. IMPORTANT: This *Parking Ordinance* change should *not* be adopted until and unless additional downtown parking areas are created.

Other changes to the *Parking Ordinance* may be required as a result of the redesign and reconfiguration of parking areas along the Main Street corridor. The Planning Commission should conduct another review and revise the ordinances after engineering designs are completed, but prior to construction completion.

### Wastewater System Use and Charges

The Town's existing wastewater collection and treatment system is a critical piece of community infrastructure that will benefit future development and revitalization of Downtown. Without access to a modern and affordable sewer service, commercial businesses and residential properties would be severely limited in the Main Street corridor. The connection, use, and fee structure for the wastewater system are defined in the Town's *Sewer Use Ordinance*.

Many stakeholders with Main Street businesses expressed concerns that the cost of sewer services is extremely high on Vinalhaven, especially when compared to the mainland, and represents a significant expense for their operations. They cite the high costs as a disincentive for business expansion. The Downtown Master Plan is not recommending a specific change in the *Sewer Use Ordinance* at this time, but recommends that the Town revisit the overall funding model for the wastewater system. The Town should consider the potential impacts to the

commercial core of the town, including deterring future growth or new businesses, that result from a static population of users bearing the full cost of the system.

### Mobile Vending

Mobile and temporary vending is growing in many communities, and encompasses a wide range of operations such as food trucks, street side vendors, farmers markets, and pop-ups. Except for the seasonal Flea and Farmers Market, on Vinalhaven there have been a limited number of mobile operations in recent memory. But it is possible they could expand in the future, especially when Downtown revitalization succeeds and includes improved downtown parking areas and more residential options within walking distance of shops, park areas, and the waterfront.

There are currently no published Town ordinances or policies specifically regarding the oversight, licensing, or permitting of mobile vending on Vinalhaven. A recently adopted ordinance entitled *Food and Merchandise Sales in Downtown Parking Lot* includes language that says the “*use of streets, parking lots, sidewalks and parks for sales and displays [is] prohibited*”, except for “*sales conducted from the back of a personal vehicle that uses one space in the downtown parking lot*”, and non-profits holding permits for a sidewalk sale. This ordinance appears to preclude any small business from selling food or merchandise on any Town properties, other than fishermen or farmers selling from the back of their vehicles.

There is currently one semi-mobile food service vendor in the Main Street corridor, which operate seasonally. That business operates on private property with appropriate state licenses for a food establishment, although its patrons use the adjoining Town lot for parking and waiting. If that vendor or another wished to locate a similar, but perhaps more mobile operation within the Downstreet parking lot or along Main Street, there is no formal permitting or licensing process addressing it, and in fact it would be prohibited by the *Food and Merchandise Sales in Downtown Parking Lot* ordinance. Other mobile vendors selling seafood or farm products periodically operate from the back of single vehicles in the Downstreet parking lot, but those are generally exempt from licensing requirements as they are considered direct-to-consumer sales, which for seafood is regulated by the seller’s commercial fishing license.

In the absence of a comprehensive mobile vending ordinance, it appears that mobile food establishments on Vinalhaven would be considered *Restaurants* in the *Land Use Ordinance* Section 16.W, which has only a few requirements related to parking, trash containers, and “fit”:

*“ 1. Restaurants*

*a. No parking shall be located within ten (10) feet of any lot line.*

*b. Refuse containers not within a building shall be placed not less than thirty (30) feet from any lot line and shall be screened from view and maintained so as to prevent access by flies and vermin.*

*c. Restaurants serving "take-out" food or providing outdoor dining on the premises shall provide suitable waste receptacles for use by customers.*

*d. The Planning Board may require other conditions to fit the restaurant harmoniously into its neighborhood.”*

Some communities divide their food establishment licensing or permitting into separate categories depending on the business location and operating schedule. For example, the City of Portland’s ordinances have the following definitions for food establishmentm:

*Permanent Food Establishments* prepare and sell food operating at a fixed location for more than 21 consecutive days.

*Temporary Food Establishments* prepare and serve food at a fixed location for less than 21 consecutive days in conjunction with a single event, or for less than 3 days per week in conjunction with a farmers market. Food must be from an approved source such as a pre-packaged source, or prepared in a licensed kitchen.

*Mobile Food Establishments* include pushcarts, food trucks, and trailers that prepare and sell food on non-specific schedules, and do not operate from a fixed location.

In all of these cases, the business usually receives town fire safety and health inspections and must show proof of the appropriate State of Maine food license from DHHS (for food trucks) or DACF (for others) before the town will issue them a license or permit.

For food trucks and other kinds of mobile vendors, it is important to consider whether and how the character of downtown would change with street or sidewalk vendors competing with year-round Downtown businesses. On Vinalhaven, the relatively small year-round population and modest seasonal influx might make such mobile enterprises unprofitable ventures. But in a free-market system, such competition is healthy and welcomed by customers, and this approach often provides small business entrepreneurs with a low-cost opportunity to start a business that can perhaps grow into a year-round, permanent location.

The topic of allowable vending locations and restrictions on operating times is critical to address in a mobile vending ordinance. In public areas, food trucks are only allowed to park in legal parking spaces for specific time periods, and in such a way that they do not obstruct access ways, crosswalks, or visibility. Municipalities also typically put limits on the number of food trucks allowed to operate in a specific area, such as 2 trucks per lot or one per street, or have setback limits such as not being allowed to operate within 50 feet of a permanent food establishment. Operating hours are often limited to daylight hours, or else with specific shut-down times for evening operations. All of these are important to consider including in a mobile vending ordinance.

Because the Town of Vinalhaven currently has no permitting process for food trucks or other mobile vending operations, and it needs to handle such proposals on a case-by-case basis. Providing a set of rules and a licensing procedure will allow the Town to consistently manage mobile vending in the Downtown area. The Downtown Master Plan includes a recommendation that the Planning Commission review and consider adopting a specific ordinance and licensing process addressing mobile food establishments operating either on private property or on Town streets or parking lots.

### **Food Sovereignty**

The concept of “food sovereignty” is a related topic as it applies to mobile vending, home-based businesses, and farmers markets operating Downtown, and is an important recent development in the State of Maine for supporting small home-based businesses and entrepreneurs. The Town may wish to consider adopting a food sovereignty ordinance to help support local businesses.

In 2017 the State passed a law referred to as the “Maine Food Sovereignty Act”, which allows direct-to-consumer sales of home-produced foods and agricultural products without a

requirement for state licensing, but only if the town has declared itself a “food sovereignty municipality” through an ordinance. This is a bit different from farmers markets, which operate under separate rules.

Neighbors selling to neighbors has been going on for generations in Maine, but for all that time growers and producers not licensed by the state were doing so illegally, sometimes forced to conduct business out of the public eye, unadvertised, and only with known customers. Prior to the new law, home-based food producers had to abide by state law. Under the new law, municipal laws in food-sovereign towns supersede state laws.

There is apparently no liability risk to the Town in taking this action. In 2016 the Maine Municipal Association (MMA) confirmed that a town would be immune from liability under the Maine Tort Claims Act, stating:

*“[...We] do not see any direct liability for the Town if the Town chose to adopt the ordinance. [...] In the event someone was injured or made a tort claim against the Town because they bought unlicensed food from a producer, the adoption of the ordinance would be a ‘legislative act’ for which the Maine Tort Claims Act provides immunity for the Town. 14MRSA §8104-B.”*

There also is no cost to the Town, as there is no requirement for licensure, inspection, or enforcement of non-compliance as there are no requirements for facilities.

As mentioned above, this does not relate to fishermen selling directly to the public. Seafood being sold whole by the harvester does not require a license from DACF. Instead, the fisherman’s commercial license allows selling directly to consumers (but only the species specifically covered in that person’s commercial fishing license). The commercial license only covers the single person listed on the license. A vendor selling fish at a farmers’ market under their commercial fishing license does *not* need to have a Mobile Vendor License from the DACF.

To encourage more local small businesses and start-ups that may wish to sell at mobile sites Downtown or at the Saturday Market, and to support the island’s long tradition of providing local foods to its residents, this Downtown Master Plan includes a recommendation that the Planning Commission consider adding a food sovereignty ordinance in Vinalhaven, as 65 other Maine towns have done in the past year including the Knox County towns of Appleton, Camden, Hope, Isle au Haut, Rockland, and Rockport.

### **Building Codes and Design Standards**

There are few specific building codes or design standards referenced in Vinalhaven ordinances. The Town’s *Land Use Ordinance* refers to “applicable health, building and fire safety codes”, such as when defining the role of the Code Enforcement Officer, or for Subdivision inspections under Section 21.VIII.8. Other towns in Maine often reference the *Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code* as the requirement for technical building standards in the community.

There are no Vinalhaven ordinances defining or dealing with building deterioration or “blighted properties”, although there can be fire, health and safety issues that arise with such conditions. For a building to be considered a “blighted property” in the legal sense of the term, it would generally have to be uninhabitable, unsafe, abandoned for a specified time period (usually at least 1 year), and present an imminent danger to other people or property. The recent discussions surrounding the deterioration of the Star of Hope building may illustrate the need

for ordinance language that at least addresses deteriorated conditions that may pose a threat to public health and safety.

The Town's *Floodplain Ordinance* stipulates permit conditions and some technical requirements for new construction and renovations within the FEMA flood zone, which constitutes all of Downstreet. For example, *Article VI.G* of the *Floodplain Ordinance* requires the lowest floor of new or renovated structures in the AE Zone to be elevated at least one foot above the base flood elevation (which is the FEMA 100-year flood elevation), and in the VE Zone to be elevated on posts or columns to that height. Other floodplain building requirements include floodproofing measures and structural reinforcement to resist hydrostatic effects of inundation. It is unclear whether these requirements have been required for construction and renovations performed within Downstreet in the past decade, or whether those requirements were waived by the Planning Board or Code Enforcement Officer.

Under *Article X.E* of the Floodplain Ordinance, designated Historic Structures located within the floodplain in the Downstreet area can seek variances for these building requirements. However, the Ordinance's definition of a "Historic Structure" requires that the structure have a formal listing or certification under a federal or state program, rather than simply be an old building. At present only the Star of Hope building meets this criteria. Assuming the Star of Hope Foundation moves forward with its proposed conversion of that building to house a museum, it may be important for the Town to clarify both its floodplain requirements and the advisability of granting variances.

With regard to architecture, facades, and exterior features, there are no specific form-based codes or design requirements in any Vinalhaven zoning district. Design standards that might include demolition controls are perceived by some as intrusive or threatening to private property rights, yet the absence of any standards often results in the demolition and loss of historic properties, as well as detrimental changes or degradation of neighborhood character and appearance. Form-based codes can be a burdensome approach for small communities with small or no planning departments, but there are other solutions available for towns with limited resources. For example, a *form-based design review* is a streamlined, alternative approach that can target smaller designated areas of a town to achieve specific preservation goals and preserve character.

As described earlier, some historic Vinalhaven buildings in the past have been demolished or renovated, and replaced with structures that do not necessarily reflect the historic architecture or character of the area, to the dismay of many residents. In the 2013 Comprehensive Plan survey, 97% of respondents said they favored preserving historic sites and town landmarks, and 72% felt the Town should adopt a Historic Building Ordinance. Despite resident interest, such an ordinance has not yet been adopted.

The existing Vinalhaven Land Use Ordinance does include a requirement in Section 16.D for considering historic value in development or construction activities:

*"Any proposed land use activity involving structural development or soil disturbance on or adjacent to sites listed on, or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or having historical importance as determined by the Planning Board, shall be submitted by the applicant to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for review and comment, at least twenty (20) days prior to action being taken by the Planning Board. The Planning Board shall consider*

*comments received from the Commission prior to rendering a decision on the application.”*

Based on past demolition and renovation changes that have affected several historic buildings in the study area, it is unclear whether this requirement has been consistently fulfilled by applicants or enforced by the Town.

Except for setback requirements and height limitations, the only current Town ordinance that restricts or influences building design or appearance is some language in Section 16.S dealing with the conversion of single family houses to multi-family dwellings:

*“A single-family dwelling or other building may be converted to a multi-family dwelling, provided: a. Exterior alterations shall be limited to those required to comply with applicable health, building and fire safety codes and shall not substantially alter the appearance of the building.”*

Some people point to the mainland communities of Camden and Freeport as examples of towns that lost control of their downtown character and “sold out” to commercial activity, tourism, and development. The Main Street of Freeport is quite different today than 40 years ago, and in the 1980s and 1990s its historic character was greatly diminished through the demolition and loss of a number of historic structures that were replaced by buildings that did not reflect the town’s heritage. In part, those changes were a result of that town having no zoning or ordinance controls over what was happening.

In an attempt to halt those losses, Freeport recently instituted a “Design Review” ordinance that is relatively simple in language, but provides a mechanism for the town to gain control over the downtown appearance. Although many of the detailed aspects of the Freeport ordinance are not necessarily applicable to Vinalhaven, such a design review approach could benefit the Main Street corridor by giving the community some influence over the fate of the Downstreet area.

The Downtown Master Plan includes three recommendations that the Planning Commission consider related to Building Codes. First, consider the inclusion of a blight ordinance that addresses actions related to deteriorated buildings. Second, consider whether the existing floodplain ordinance is providing the intended results for protecting properties from damage or destruction. Third, review and consider the viability of instituting a simple design review ordinance and process, including a demolition clause that would cover a designated portion of the Main Street corridor.

## Chapter 3 Economic Trends

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## Chapter 3 Economic Trends

### 3.1 Fishing

The future of the lobster industry on Vinalhaven is unknown. Although few fishermen expect the catch to increase substantially over the record hauls of recent years, it may still remain robust and continue as the primary economic driver for the island economy. Or, it could rapidly collapse someday, as other fish stocks have done, resulting in a serious blow to Vinalhaven. Or, and more likely, it might simply gradually decline over a long period, allowing the island to adjust and find alternatives.

Given the fishing legacy of Vinalhaven, and the creativity of islanders, none of these scenarios warrant giving up any of the waterfront resources or infrastructure today's fishermen rely upon. It is in the Town's best interest to preserve, and even expand waterfront access for the commercial marine industry. This is best done by the Town maintaining strong ordinances, supporting the development of new marine businesses, and, when necessary, by perhaps acquiring additional wharfs to make sure they remain available to fishermen.

Climate change and market conditions are beyond the control of Vinalhaven, however, and the potential loss of a high-value industry such as lobstering makes it critically important for the community to develop alternative sources of jobs and income for the island.

### 3.2 Aquaculture

Multiple initiatives are currently underway exploring the potential for aquaculture operations in and around Vinalhaven, including the growing and harvesting of kelp, oysters, mussels and scallops. For example, Vinalhaven Kelp, Inc. is a relatively new venture seeking to prove that growing kelp can be profitable and compatible with the existing lobster industry, providing an alternative way to make a living in the off-season. Because kelp is a winter crop, most of the work to grow it takes place during the lobstering off-season: seeding occurs in late fall, the kelp grows over the winter, and it is harvested in the early spring. As a result, kelp "farming" could be an alternative marine industry that would not compete with lobstering but instead work in tandem with it.

In a similar way, mussel and oyster farms are being explored in Gulf of Maine waters, and several shellfish pilot projects are underway around Vinalhaven and North Haven. These operations, if ramped up to commercial scale, could also provide a viable livelihood for some islanders. Because they are not just confined to winter operation, however, the areal extent of large-scale shellfish aquaculture leases might pose conflicts if located within traditional lobster fishing areas.

If economically feasible, all of these aquaculture industries would require at least seasonal labor both on the water and dockside, as well as the provision of support infrastructure along the Vinalhaven waterfront. Aquaculture staff will need access to the water and to their boats that would probably be moored in Carver's Harbor, so Harvested kelp and shellfish will need to be offloaded from harvest boats onto docks, probably along West Main Street, where the product would either be immediately loaded onto trucks and directly shipped to the mainland for processing, or processed at a dockside facility. If the latter, a processing facility would be needed along with parking for employees.

The total number of full-time and seasonal jobs such industries would generate is unknown, but those businesses are probably less labor-intensive than the current lobster industry due to mechanization and longer periods between harvests. Because the kelp operations would focus on the lobstering off-season, there would likely be no increase in demand for parking or dinghy space along the waterfront, and existing Town wharf and floats may provide sufficient space.

To accommodate potential future aquaculture operations, the DTC recommends that the Town continue to own and maintain the existing Town-owned waterfront facilities, including the current wharf and docks/floats. In addition, the Town should continue to enforce zoning and ordinance requirements in the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District*.

### 3.3 Broadband and Teleworking

There is a surprising, and slightly increasing, number of Vinalhaven residents who quietly earn their year-round living from careers unconnected to tourism or fishing, including the arts, technology, consulting, publishing, etc. For many of these folks, access to reliable high-speed internet, or “broadband”, is critical, and we should consider them as examples of potential future jobs on the island needing our support.

Broadband is increasingly a critical factor in fostering economic sustainability in remote, rural areas such as Vinalhaven, and it is often viewed as a necessary utility in the same vein as water, sewer, and electrical power. The lack of adequate broadband services can negatively impact everyone in a community: businesses, fishermen, schools, potential new families, municipal services, residents and visitors.

Reliable access to broadband service increasingly makes it possible to work where a person chooses to live, not live where a person happens to work. Such “teleworking” is now common across the country, particularly so among younger workers, and is revitalizing some rural communities where workers are able to choose a higher quality of life versus proximity to an urban office location. Teleworking can help residents and potential new residents find year-round, stable careers. It can bring young people and families back to the island, who often cannot do so without access to reliable high-speed internet for work. It can allow visitors and seasonal residents to work from their island locations and stay around longer, all the while supporting the local economy.

Broadband can also help improve economic stability and prosperity for island businesses. It can allow seasonal operations to expand their markets beyond the physical constraints of an island, and reduce the obstacle of travel, as a business owner can access potential customers and clients via videoconference, and receive orders and target advertising through the web. With broadband, students and adult learners have access to the same opportunities as their mainland peers. And with steadily improving telemedicine services, community members who need consistent medical attention or addiction treatment at ICMS may be able to do so without having to travel long distances as often.

Recognizing the importance of this utility, the Island Institute has established a broadband project team that assists island communities in evaluating options and developing better broadband services for its residents. Vinalhaven’s *Broadband Committee* has been working with the Island Institute, and is currently evaluating options for improving high-speed internet service throughout the island. Although no capital projects are being recommended at this time related to broadband, it will be an important project to support in the future to ensure a sustainable economic future for Vinalhaven and the downtown area.

### 3.4 The Arts

Maine has a strong tradition of encouraging artist colonies and workshops on the islands, from Monhegan to Acadia. Since the late 1800s, Vinalhaven has attracted hundreds of artists who come to capture our rugged seascapes, historical architecture, and traditional waterfront operations in their work. Most of these talented visitors stay only for a brief visit, while some spend entire seasons. Few visit during the winter months. But their works have been purchased by islanders and tourists alike.

The most significantly transformative arts initiative for Vinalhaven's Main Street (and arguably, of any other kind of initiative on the island) is the plan for an art museum and educational facility in the Main Street properties of the late Robert Indiana, centered at the Star of Hope building at 46 Main Street. Mr. Indiana's will stipulated that his entire estate (estimated to be in the vicinity of \$60-\$70 million, mostly artwork) would go to a non-profit organization (the newly-established Star of Hope Foundation), with the intent that the *"Star of Hope Real Estate be restored to museum quality for use as an art environment open to the public for visits, classes and lectures, and for the continued preservation, promotion, exhibition and use of my Collection...."*

The foundation is currently awaiting the outcome of litigation surrounding the estate and artwork ownership, but the board chair is hopeful that the foundation will be able to move forward with Indiana's wishes in the near future. Their intent is to work with the Town and community to design and develop the Star of Hope museum and operation in a way that fits with the community's goals and character, and enhances the Town rather than take away from it.

Depending on the scale and success of the effort, and how well it is coordinated with the Town, this project has the potential to change the character of a portion of Downstreet, and have ripple effects up and down the Main street corridor, with both positive and negative impacts possible.

The foundation has retained architects and engineers to assess the real estate holdings and determine what repairs and construction are needed to stabilize buildings and prepare them to house a museum and ancillary facilities. Until litigation is settled, the foundation will not know the extent of assets, intellectual property rights, and artwork that will be available to them, and so they can currently only identify broad categories of programs or activities the organization would pursue on Vinalhaven. They intend to conduct public outreach to help identify common values and wishes of the community, and to help guide their planning and development.

Based on conversations with the foundation, there are several central activities that might be included in the overall development. These are discussed below with some brief analysis of potential impacts or infrastructure requirements.

- 1) An **art museum** open to the public, providing exhibit space for artwork, offices for museum staff and docents, research space for art historians and researchers, housing space for artists-in-residence or visiting researchers, and studio space for educational workshops and artists-in-residence. Several of the Indiana properties could be utilized to provide spaces.

There are no specific plans or specifications available for the museum, but it would be centered at the Star of Hope property at 46 Main Street. That structure is on the NRHP, and is also located within the FEMA 100-year floodplain, both of which pose challenges for redevelopment. The lot is constrained for space, and would not have enough room for onsite parking suitable for a large staff or visitors. The rear of the property extends to the Carvers Pond waterfront, but due to setback requirements and vehicle rights-of-way along Bodwell Lane, construction on that portion of the lot would be limited. Pedestrian traffic to the

museum would likely follow existing sidewalk routes (assuming the recommendations of this Plan are implemented), and there could be increased demand for public open space or park areas if more museum visitors linger downtown. They also may patronize restaurants and shops while visiting. Art patrons are typically higher-value tourists who spend more in the local community than, say, cruise ship tourists. These visitor aspects will translate into a need for additional parking, which can be addressed by the Town adding parking areas at the Town Garage property as an initial use of the site, and more pedestrian walkways and amenities, which have been proposed in this Downtown Master Plan.

- 2) **Artist-in-residence programs**, which would bring small groups of artists to the island for one-week or multi-week residencies, provide them with housing, studio space, and perhaps financial support. Similar programs have been successful in several Maine communities with similar non-profit art organizations, such as in Monson and Deer Isle.

Depending on the duration of residencies, artists housed in the downtown area might patronize downtown businesses such as restaurants and retail shops during their stay. It is not known whether the foundation would seek to house artists in downtown foundation properties or other rental properties in the Village, but probably not in hotel-style accommodations. Artists might or might not bring vehicles to the island, probably depending on the time of year. Assuming this would be a small residency program, parking demand would not be very high.

- 3) **Art tours**, perhaps organized in conjunction with the Farnsworth Museum in Rockland, may bring groups of art-focused tourists to Vinalhaven for trips that include a visit to the Museum. Visitors might come by ferry, or via private passenger boats arranged as part of the tour. It is not known whether this might represent a large portion of their visitors, or a small percentage, or whether tourists might include overnight stays or simply make day trips. The primary impacts of this activity include increased pedestrian traffic downtown, and the possible need for passenger boat docking, which has been discussed in Sections 2 and 4.

### 3.5 Architectural Heritage

The neighborhoods and downtown of Vinalhaven include scores of well-preserved examples of mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century structures. The Downstreet section of Main Street and its adjoining residential village area has been characterized by Maine Preservation Inc. as a “remarkably intact historic district”. However, there are many Vinalhaven residents who do not want to see Downtown turned into a historic theme park, and the prospect of adding more day-trippers for historic walking tours does not appeal to them.

Economic development-savvy communities often focus on downtown appearance and heritage to enable private investment. They realize that attractive paint colors and cleaned up facades can highlight distinctive historic buildings, and visually appealing street fronts and roadsides can be an invitation to visitors and residents alike. The introduction of historic property signage, informational kiosks, and restoration of key historic properties augment this appeal.

Some of these towns also make assistance available in terms of tax incentives, appropriate zoning and key infrastructure investments. A “Fix-Up and Paint Program” can be used to address some of the constraints facing property owners. Such a program encourages strategically important groupings of properties to initiate multiple fix-up/paint-up projects, where individual property owner investment is augmented with grant funds providing critical support and incentives used to leverage private investment.

It is unlikely that Vinalhaven would be overrun by architectural tourists, and much more likely that heritage sites would simply appeal to visitors who are already on the island, as just another attractive feature of the town. There are multiple benefits to honoring historic structures in an understated way, by educating residents and visitors, encouraging property owners to maintain their buildings, and providing tasteful and unobtrusive heritage signage in appropriate locations.

### 3.6 Retail

In addition to having one of the most robust and successful fishing industries in the country, the island currently supports a number of restaurants, a grocery store, lumberyard, and various retail stores. But there has been a noticeable shift in resident purchasing habits and resultant changes in some businesses, especially over the past decade.

For example, the advent of internet access and online shopping has directly and significantly affected the volume of some kinds of retail sales on the island, and several retail shops from 10-20 years ago have been closed as more islanders make purchases from Amazon and other online retailers. Some have also suggested that the introduction of the larger *Capt. Frank E. Thompson* ferry allowed more vehicles to make frequent trips to the mainland for bulk purchases of food and supplies, to the detriment of local businesses. However, the existing limited retail businesses on Main Street interviewed for this study reported overall stable or increasing sales, due to continued support from year-round residents, increased sales to seasonal visitors, and in some cases shifting their merchandise mix to avoid competing directly with online retail.

In 2020, the MSFS will be replacing the island-based *Capt. Charles Philbrook* ferry with a new, larger boat comparable to the *Thompson*. Some residents cheer this replacement as a way to improve transit and commerce, while others fear it will overwhelm the island with even more visitors and traffic and harm the community. Recently proposed increases in ferry tariffs will have an unknown effect on traffic, particularly if proposed peak-season surcharges are implemented. Such major increases during the summer season might curtail the flow of resident vehicles to the mainland, but probably will not have any effects on tourists who may simply shrug and add the cost into their vacation budgets. The overall impacts of these changes on retail businesses on the island cannot be predicted.

### 3.7 Short-duration Tourism

Some evidence suggests that, as in most segments of the tourism industry, the characteristics of Vinalhaven visitors may be shifting toward shorter-duration visits, resulting in a more concentrated use of Downtown facilities and businesses. Instead of families occupying seasonal residences for an entire summer, and making infrequent trips downtown, we may be seeing more short-term renters, perhaps using one of the 46 AirBnb accommodations now available on Vinalhaven, or one of the 44 properties offered by rental management companies on the island that handle short-term rentals of houses and cottages. There have been no surveys of this visitor group yet, but anecdotal evidence suggests many of these shorter-duration vacationers may be more inclined to visit a bar or restaurant downtown than stay home and cook.

In some communities, a side effect of the expansion of short-term rentals has been the conversion of year-round single-family residential properties into multi-unit short-term rental properties with absentee owners. The negative impacts of non-owner-occupied short-term rental operations on neighborhoods have been well documented, and have prompted towns like

Rockland to enact ordinances restricting such operations. Time will tell, but the community cannot ignore industry trends and should plan accordingly.

### **3.8 Economic Development Planning**

The concept of stimulating economic development on Vinalhaven has been discussed for years, with differing opinions on who should be responsible for carrying it out. But economic development for a community is not just the purview of a chamber of commerce, nor does it fall solely to individuals and their businesses working only on their own behalf. It is also not the sole responsibility of a Select Board or Town Manager, or even an Economic Development Committee. It takes collaboration and cooperation between multiple entities, including the Town, individual business owners, utilities, chambers, and volunteer groups, and that approach is especially important when implementing actions in a master plan.

The three island economies discussed in Section 1 of this Plan are intertwined and reliant upon each other. For that reason, any economic development planning effort for the island needs to incorporate input and actions by representatives from each economy. In addition, although it is a critically important part of the overall island economy, the Downtown corridor is not the only place where economic activity takes place, or where development needs to be stimulated. Thus, an economic development plan should consider the entire island in its scope and actions.

The Downtown Committee (DTC) was not asked to develop an island-wide economic development plan, but instead was charged with focusing on infrastructure needs and ordinance modifications just within the Main Street corridor. However, the DTC recognizes the importance of economic development as a tool for ensuring vitality for the community.

As a result, this Downtown Master Plan includes a recommendation to the Select Board to create an Economic Development Committee, consisting of influential representatives from each island economy, charged with building a collaborative approach to economic development on the island, and creating a comprehensive and achievable set of actions to stimulate new businesses, investment, jobs, and vitality island-wide.

## Chapter 4 Limits to Growth

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## Chapter 4 Limits to Growth

### 4.1 Ferry Transportation

The existing Vinalhaven ferry service operated by the Maine State Ferry Service (MSFS) serves as a volume control and limiting factor for the movement of all goods, materials, people and vehicles to and from the island. Except for regular air service by Penobscot Island Air for mail, packages, and a handful of passengers, the only other way to get to Vinalhaven is by boat. The crossing from Rockland includes sections of Penobscot Bay that are exposed to inclement weather and occasional rough sea conditions, which dictates the type of vessels approved by the Coast Guard that can navigate the passage carrying passengers, cargo, and vehicles.

Because ferry service is a critical lifeline for Vinalhaven, nearly every aspect of Main Street's function and infrastructure is directly affected by the ferry. The vast majority of ferry passengers, trucks, and freight travel through the Main Street corridor, walking on sidewalks (where they exist), finding the way (or not) via signage, or moving on the roadway via truck or forklift. For those reasons, understanding how the ferry operations serve as a limit to growth is important to Downtown planning.

The MSFS operates as a division of the Maine Department of Transportation, and provides ferry service to several of Maine's unbridged island communities. A Ferry Advisory Board with representatives from each of the served islands is supposed to provide input to the MSFS manager with regard to planning, budgets, and operations. However, that system of communication and advising has not functioned smoothly in recent years, and due to some service issues and significant tariff increases in 2018, the MSFS lost credibility and support among many Vinalhaven residents. Renewed conversations with the MSFS and Maine DOT are working to remedy that situation.

*"The ferry situation cuts both ways. Some folks complain about how hard it is to get on and off the island, but adding more ferries means more connection to the mainland and decreases the sense of community."*

*- Downtown stakeholder*

Some Vinalhaven residents believe that the ferry is a good "filter" that helps insulate the island community from negative aspects of mainland society by making it a bit challenging to get here. Others believe the ferry service schedule and cost is stifling the growth and health of the community's future economy, and that the MSFS is not even meeting the current needs of the island.

The true picture probably lies somewhere between, and achieving a balance will be challenging. We need people, goods and services delivered to the island, and islanders need a reliable, safe, and affordable way to get to the mainland.

In terms of this Downtown Master Plan, supporting the three Vinalhaven economies requires appropriate ferry service to support each of their needs, but without overwhelming the island with too much mainland influx and resultant change.

Prior to creation of the MSFS in the 1950s, a succession of private steamships and small ferries had provided periodic service to Vinalhaven since the early 1900s. Their demise led islanders to lobby the State of Maine to establish the MSFS. There are no private passenger ferry services currently operating on the island on any regular basis.

## Passenger Travel

In general, passengers can easily travel to Vinalhaven or return to Rockland by ferry all year-round, although the timetable can be restrictive. Assuming one can get to the ferry on time, there usually is adequate (if uncomfortable) seating available on the boats. In summer the ferries can be crowded with visitors, but the total passenger capacity of the boats is rarely reached.

In terms of schedule, from April through December the MSFS provides six round trips per day to the island with two ferries operating simultaneously between Vinalhaven and Rockland, the *Capt. Frank Thompson* and the *Capt. Charles Philbrook*. The crossing takes approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes, although the actual boarding and disembarking times generally mean the total time investment door-to-door is closer to one hour and thirty minutes. The first boat departs at 7:00 am, and the last at 4:30 pm. This schedule theoretically would allow a commuter to get to a job in downtown Rockland or Vinalhaven by 9:00 am, and some Vinalhaven residents presently do commute at least several days a week to jobs in Rockland. However, because the latest returning boat leaves at 4:30 pm with boarding at 4:15, a commuter cannot actually work longer than 7 hours per day at their place of employment, assuming they only take a 30-minute lunch break and can walk from their workplace to the ferry.

In a highly controversial move in 2019, the ferry service curtailed operations for the winter months (December through March) by compressing the schedule and having the last boat leave at 3:15 pm instead of 4:30 pm. This service reduction made it impossible for islanders to commute to jobs in Rockland or make day trips for medical appointments in Portland or Augusta. Future winter operational schedules are unknown at this time.

Until and unless the MSFS expands the schedule to have more and later departures, people on both sides of the passage will not be able to pursue full-time jobs that require commuting, attend appointments late in the day, or patronize restaurants or cultural events in the evening. Under the current ferry schedule, and as it has been for decades, anyone attending evening events on either the island or mainland must stay there overnight. For Vinalhaven's downtown businesses, that is always an important factor to consider in operations and growth planning.

And for this Downtown Master Plan, it raises several questions.

Residents have said they want more year-round businesses and restaurants on Main Street. But is our year-round population large enough to support those in the shoulder seasons and winter? If not, would folks from the mainland come support those businesses if it was logistically possible? Would we have enough lodging available to accommodate visitors patronizing evening activities? How would those visitors arrive, and how would they get around town? Or would they confine their visit to just walking Downtown?

Some have said that re-establishment of a private, passenger-only service to and from Rockland, with a consistent extended-hours schedule, could occur in the near future if enough demand surfaces, especially if the MSFS is unable to meet island needs. Whether such a service would operate just in the summer, or year-round would depend on demand and economics. Another passenger transport service that may appear in the future are possible day-trips from Rockland associated with the proposed Star of Hope Foundation's art museum on Main Street.

From a planning perspective, such private passenger ferries would probably require a year-round docking facility, capable of perhaps accommodating 40- to 50-foot vessels, with a safe ramp for disembarking passengers, clearance to maneuver, and a small passenger waiting area

with adequate parking nearby. Locating such a facility along Main Street makes sense, especially if the service is transporting commuting workers and visitors/tourists. The most logical location for such a private ferry dock is either at or adjacent to the existing MSFS terminal, or at one of the Town wharfs. The existing wharf at the Downstreet parking lot may or may not be suitable for landing such a vessel due to shallow water conditions at low tide, unless dredging would be feasible. Another alternative would be at the town dock on the Thorofare off the North Haven Road, but that would also require a shuttle service to Downtown. This Downtown Master Plan includes recommendations for a review of ordinances and infrastructure needs that would allow smaller private passenger ferries to access Town dock facilities along the Downtown corridor.

### Transporting Vehicles and Ferry Parking

Transporting a vehicle to and from Vinalhaven is a much different story from being a passenger, and it presents a logistical challenge. Without a reservation, taking a car or truck requires lining up in Rockland and waiting for space on successive boats. Getting a vehicle off Vinalhaven requires an arcane process of calling the MSFS office at 5:30 am the day before desired departure to secure a line number. There are no guarantees that one can actually get a car or truck off the island on a given day, especially in the summer.

The planned 2020 replacement of the smaller *Curtis* by a new 140-foot ferry should slightly increase total carrying capacity for passengers and vehicles, but continued congestion is expected in the busy summer months.

Many island residents now keep a vehicle on the mainland, and pay for a seasonal or year-round parking space at the Rockland Ferry Terminal. This move allows them to travel as a passenger, avoiding the need and cost to take their vehicle across, which is especially desirable in the busy summer season when it is a challenge to get a line number. For the same reasons, an increasing number of islanders park their cars in the Vinalhaven ferry long-term parking lot when they make multi-day trips to the mainland. This results in fewer available parking spaces in that lot during peak season.

Going in the opposite direction, many contractors and utility services now park their service trucks in either the MSFS Vinalhaven long-term parking lot or in Town parking facilities, for the same reasons as residents do. This is a trend that is expanding as more mainland contractors are traveling to the island to work, and the number of island-based tradespeople shrinks. These trends will continue to put pressure on parking spaces at the Ferry Terminal and Town parking lots. It may also make the concept of a satellite parking lot and shuttle service to the ferry more feasible in the future for some residents.

Through its pricing structure, the MSFS effectively discourages bicyclists from coming to the island. Ticket prices for a bicycle are in addition to and nearly double the cost of a passenger ticket. There is no extra charge for bikes carried on vehicle racks, and many seasonal visitors bring their bicycles with them on vacation.

For freight transport, each ferry has a deck-space capacity limit that translates into a specific number and mix of cars, pickup trucks, and larger multi-axle trucks that can fit. The ferries generally can handle only one large tractor-trailer per trip, depending on the number of other vehicles trying to make the trip. The MSFS issues advance truck reservations on a priority basis for certain essential goods such as groceries and heating oil. For unwieldy loads, the *M/V Island Transporter* launched in the spring of 2000 is a privately-run, purpose-designed commercial ferry capable of carrying loads up to 100 tons. Its extra heavy steel flat bottom and 25 foot

heavy duty ramps allow for beach and private island landings. The vessel is frequently utilized for delivery of heavy construction equipment and materials to Vinalhaven.

All ferry arrivals and departures occur at the MSFS terminal at the start of West Main Street. The ferry property is owned by the State of Maine, and includes a short-term parking lot with 30 parking spaces, a long-term parking lot with 30 spaces, a terminal building containing a ticket sales booth, waiting area, and two public bathrooms, and a ferry dock and loading ramp.

All vehicles disembarking from the ferry, including large tractor-trailer trucks and heavy equipment, pass through the ferry parking lot exit lane and enter West Main Street immediately adjacent to the commercial operations of Bean Maine Lobster Inc., and directly across from the 34-space parking lot for the Vinalhaven Fishermen's Coop. Depending on the time of day, traffic on West Main Street and from the two commercial operations, can impede the flow of vehicles exiting the ferry lot.

As noted in the Sidewalks section of this analysis, for passengers exiting the ferry there is no unobstructed way to walk from the terminal building to West Main Street, let alone Downtown. Until the MSFS widens and improves their sidewalk, pedestrians will continue to walk in unsafe conditions within the ferry parking lot and existing vehicle travel lanes.

## 4.2 Infrastructure

### Roads and Sidewalks

Section 2 has discussed the current status and future needs for roads and sidewalks in the Downtown corridor. If this Plan's recommended improvement actions are undertaken to address Main Street safety and traffic issues, and assuming the volume of both car and pedestrian traffic increases at only a modest pace, a properly-redesigned Main Street roadway and Downtown sidewalk system should serve the community well for the foreseeable future without constraining Downtown growth.

However, the transportation infrastructure outside of the Main Street corridor could act as a limitation for growth, particularly for visitors without cars seeking to go to other parts of the island. This is particularly true for walkers and bicyclists attempting to visit the Town's swimming quarries or Vinalhaven Land Trust properties elsewhere on the island, as both the North Haven Road and Pequot Road have virtually no shoulders for pedestrians or bicycles. If additional private shuttle services materialize on the island, or short-term vehicle rentals such as Zip cars become available, that could help mitigate road constraints on visitors.

The concept of adding bicycle lanes to any Vinalhaven roads is usually met with skepticism, if not outright rejection. Most of that negative response is based on concern for the safety of bicyclists, and a fear that something horrible could happen on the roads. But the community needs to come to grips with the fact that many visitors as well as residents wish to use a bicycle occasionally for errands, exercise, or simply as an alternative to driving.

Until then, the existing conditions of roadways outside the Main Street corridor will limit any growth in bicycle use on the island.

### Waterfront Access

Public access to the waterfront is currently limited to three facilities along the north side of Carvers Harbor (Figure 4-1). A small public dock and float, the "Ferry Wharf", is available next

to the Ferry Terminal for permitted dinghy tie-ups and short-term loading and offloading of passengers. There is limited space on this dock due to its use by commercial fishermen and residents of outlying islands such as Greens Island. The far end and west side of the float are intended for short-term tie-up by larger boats, and it is frequently used by local boats for passenger pick-up and drop-off. As with other Town docks, all boat tie-ups other than permitted commercial fishing dinghies have a two-hour time limit.

The Town's "Fish Plant Wharf" located at 7 West Main Street provides parking and short-term temporary gear storage space for commercial fishermen, as well as a public boat ramp and float for permitted commercial dinghy tie-ups. This facility is heavily used by commercial fishermen, and although it is not posted as such, it is considered a commercial facility and is not used by recreational boaters. Parking and dinghy tie-ups are allowed by permit only.

The Downstreet parking lot also includes a wharf, dock, and float that provide another location for commercial dinghy tie-ups. There is significant public use of this dock, where many recreational boats tie up temporarily to pick up and drop off passengers or visit stores downtown. Due to the relatively constrained wharf and dock space available on the harbor for commercial fishermen who lack private access, the Downstreet facility is also frequently used for gear loading and offloading. Recent changes in the Harbor Ordinance restrict those activities to the non-summer seasons.

There are currently two public boat launches on the main harbor, both located on Main Street. One is adjacent to the Town's Fish Plant Wharf next to the Bean Maine Lobster facility, and the other next to the Tidewater Motel adjacent to the Downstreet parking lot. Neither is particularly easy to use for launching boats on trailers, especially in the busy summer season, due to increased seasonal traffic on Main Street. The Downstreet ramp has a curb extension blocking straight access from Main Street, and thus poses a slight limitation for maneuvering lengthy boat trailers.

Demand for improved or better launch sites has not been raised as a concern in any of the community studies or surveys in recent years. However, if traffic in Downstreet continues to increase, particularly in the summer, there may be advantages in having the Town explore and consider developing an alternative public boat launch site somewhere off Main Street but still in the southern portion of the island.

As noted in Section 2, it is possible that private passenger boats or water taxis may eventually emerge as a regular service, at least during the summer season, and landing them in the heart of downtown could be preferable to using the distant Ferry Wharf dock. However, the existing Downstreet Wharf may not be capable of handling such vessels without modifications, and even then, there may be tidal restrictions due to shallow water conditions.



Figure 4-1: Waterfront public access locations (clockwise from top left): Ferry Wharf; Fish Plant Wharf wharf; West Main Street boat ramp; Downstreet Wharf and boat ramp; Downstreet float.

## Parks and Green Space

Access to waterfront infrastructure is a critical element for the vitality of Downtown Vinalhaven, and is a limiting factor for both the commercial fishing industry and the recreational boating and fishing community. The current infrastructure also poses limitations for handling future passenger services as noted in Section 2. But there also is a limitation of another kind: publicly-accessible viewpoints and parks along the waterfront.

Section 2.9 describes Downtown park resources, and notes that Grimes Park is a scenic resource that could be used more effectively with wayfinding signage and easier pedestrian access. Within the rest of the Downtown corridor, there are no additional public green spaces, no benches, roadside landscaping, pocket parks, or even many trash cans. Carvers Harbor is considered a highly scenic resource, but along Main Street only glimpses of the harbor are possible between commercial buildings, at least until one reaches the Downstreet parking lot. But the Town cannot safely take more advantage of that location as a public space because it is the primary parking area downtown, and it cannot accommodate park-like features without impacting parking availability.

The Pondsides of Main Street has been discussed in Sections 2.3 and 2.9, and the character of that location, with vistas across Carvers Pond, cries out for more public access. Although further development of the Pondsides area will be challenging due to multiple property owners and the need to maintain access for large delivery trucks on Windy Way and Bowell Lane, there is great potential for creating a small waterfront park on private land, and a pathway associated with a new parking lot at the former Town Garage site.

This Downtown Master Plan includes an inter-related set of actions to address the lack of public park space. However, proper maintenance of additional parks will need to be addressed as well.

### 4.3 Housing Limitations

Section 2.8 has discussed the current status, limitations, and issues surrounding housing in the Downtown area. There is a current shortage of year-round affordable workforce housing through the island, and a particular shortage of affordable year-round apartment space in the Village. The past conversion of building space on the second floors of commercial buildings along Main Street has provided some housing relief, but more such conversion and construction is needed to accommodate potential business expansions or changes in Downtown businesses.

It is important to recognize that many Downstreet property owners already bear a large financial burden to properly maintain and build out Main Street's historic structures. Providing these owners with financial incentives tied to housing creation, helping to identify funding mechanisms, and supporting them through infrastructure improvements and sensible ordinance modifications, will be important actions for the community to consider.

In addition to a shortage of year-round housing, there is also a lack of suitable seasonal housing for summer employees, which constrains the operations and growth potential of seasonal businesses that cannot find staff to fill positions due to housing. Some business owners try to locate or provide housing for staff, but due to summer rental competition there are limited suitable facilities. The 2013 Comprehensive Plan identified this issue, but no solutions were proposed to address it. The Downtown Master Plan is recommending that the Town's Housing Committee include seasonal workforce housing options as part of its inventory, analysis and recommendations to the Town.

With regard to new construction or conversions, the town’s water, electric, and sewer utilities do not have any current limitations in capacity for supporting new housing or lodging establishments in the Downtown area. However, there are some existing buildings, especially Downstreet, that have seasonal use limitations due to the shallow location of their water and sewer lines. There are other Main Street buildings with year-round apartments on the second floors subject to periodic freezing of water lines due to inadequate insulation or heating systems. State programs and financial incentives exist to assist owners with weatherization and energy efficiency projects. Increasing property owner awareness and access to such support could improve year-round housing stock along the corridor.

Short-term motel-style lodging is in short supply on the island, and particularly in the Downtown area. The only commercial motel facility on the island, The Tidewater, is constrained from further expansion by its waterfront location and Town ordinances. There are two bed and breakfast operations in the Village with limited room space. There are multiple short-term rental properties in the Village, but most of those are only available in summer, and many are too expensive for workers, or are unavailable for short stays. New lodging facilities on the Main Street waterfront are not an option under current Town rules. However, a commercial lodging facility would be allowed anywhere else in the Main Street study area within the *Residential-Commercial District*, as long as the site provides enough room to meet ordinance dimensional requirements and standards.

#### 4.4 Labor Force and Wages

Vinalhaven has an abundance of lobster and a shortage of workers. The latter is the same problem currently faced by other Maine communities as a result of the strong Maine economy. This might be a temporary situation, however, given the typically cyclic nature of markets, and, as noted above, uncertainties surrounding the long-term viability of the current lobster boom on Vinalhaven. This not an isolated opinion: the 2013 Comprehensive Plan reported that 81% of people surveyed were concerned about the stability of Vinalhaven’s year-round economy.

Section 2.2 outlines the island’s demographics, employment, and wages. In terms of available workers, the recent drop in the number of 20-24 year old residents is a concerning trend, as is a similar drop in the 40-44 year old cohort. In terms of worker locations, the island’s geographical location deters people from commuting to or from another town due to a three-hour round-trip commute. Section 3.1 discusses limitations related to ferry transportation, but suffice to say the mainland is not considered a viable source of labor for Vinalhaven.

*“The shortage of workers on the island is an issue for everyone - fishing, retail, and the trades.”*

*- Fishing industry stakeholder*

Of the island’s 900 year-round residents who are over 18 years old, roughly 350 are directly involved in the lobster industry. Most of the island’s commercial fishermen are self-employed and/or operate as small businesses, and crew members typically work as independent contractors. The two largest fishing-related private dockside employers are Bean Maine Lobster and the Vinalhaven Fishermen’s Cooperative, who provide fuel, bait, and seafood buying, marketing, and shipping services.

Aside from fishing, the Town’s largest year-round employers are the Vinalhaven School (SAD 8), Carver’s Harbor Market, the Town of Vinalhaven, I.C.M.S., the Sand Bar, and MSFS. Several

businesses also hire a large number of seasonal employees, including the Nightingale, Bean Maine Lobster, the Vinalhaven Fishermen’s Cooperative, the Sand Bar, and Carvers Harbor Market.

A number of employers have positions that require technical or professional registrations or certifications, including the MSFS, Vinal Energy, the Fox Islands Electric Cooperative, ICMS, and SAD 8. Several other businesses and organizations have positions that require extensive training and experience, such as chefs, construction workers, heavy equipment operators, mechanics, and professional office staff. Open positions at these businesses can go unfilled for long periods as employers cannot find qualified staff on the island or willing to relocate. As a result, wages for these kinds of positions are among the highest on the island.

The DTC stakeholder interviews revealed serious concerns about the lack of a skilled or trained labor force on the island, both in the year-round economy and for seasonal employers, including the fishing industry.

A sampling of interview comments from across the stakeholder group reveals common concerns:

- *“The shortage of workers is an issue for everyone - fishing, retail, and the trades.”*
- *“How can we overcome the shortage of workers on VH? We have lots of people here who could work, but motivation isn't there because right now families have success and high incomes in fishing. But what about the future?”*
- *“Kids in high school here that might pursue trades or vocational training like electrical work, culinary arts, etc. go into lobstering instead. “*
- *“There are fewer trades people on the island these days, and no trade program at the school.”*
- *“Finding employees is hard - it's hard to compete with construction and lobstering for workers.”*

There is also a shortage of seasonal workers that impacts restaurants, retail shops, and lodging facilities, and also hampers commercial fishing employers who struggle to find staff for seasonal dock positions. That shortage, in combination with the higher wages paid for fishing jobs, has translated into overall high costs for unskilled labor on the island, with starting positions averaging \$14.00 per hour. These high labor costs, added to the already higher cost of operating a business on the island due to transportation, utilities, and maintenance, make it challenging to run a successful and profitable business here.

Another common labor-related topic among stakeholders is the lack of opportunities or incentives for young people to receive technical or vocational training, either through the school system or apprenticeships. Stakeholders commented that the current high wages of lobstering, combined with family traditions in fishing, may deter students who might otherwise pursue a trade, resulting in a relatively narrow-skilled workforce for the future. This may not be a new situation, but it still is a concern for those who wish to see a more diverse economy for the island.

Employee housing is another major limiting factor for the Vinalhaven labor force. It is the most important issue for several downtown stakeholders, especially for housing seasonal staff. The lower wages paid for unskilled, seasonal positions make them less attractive for island residents who already have housing, and there are few options on the island for affordable seasonal rentals for off-islanders. A handful of business owners resort to providing housing for their seasonal staff, but most do not. Several stakeholders with downtown businesses would like to

add residential options for their staff in the second floors of their waterfront buildings, close to the job locations. But current Town ordinances prohibit residences in the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District*.

In terms of this Downtown Master Plan, developing and training a skilled workforce cannot be accomplished through capital projects or ordinance modifications. That is a community topic that needs to be addressed through the schools, financial incentives, and perhaps even finding ways to tap into mainland labor pools with faster ferry service. However, increasing available employee housing might be supported through ordinance modifications, such as considering a change in the current prohibition of second-floor residences in the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District*.

## 4.5 Flooding, Stormwater, and Sea level Rise

### FEMA Flood Zone Limitations

Much of Vinalhaven's downtown from High Street to Water Street lies within the current mapped FEMA 100-year floodplain (Figure 4-2). This poses a challenge to redevelopment because all new construction in that area would be subject to the town's floodplain ordinance regulations, and properties in that area may be required to purchase flood insurance if they seek financing for their property. This does not prohibit development, although it may deter investors, particularly those who need financing.

There are two flood zones mapped by FEMA in the Downtown area. The "VE", or Velocity, Zone identifies areas that may be subject to flooding from wave action, and is considered the highest risk zone for severe damage and destruction of property. The "AE" Zone identifies areas at risk of flooding based on elevation. On Vinalhaven, the AE Zone encompasses the Main Street corridor from High Street to Clamshell Alley and the entire shoreline of Carvers Pond, including most of the waterfront infrastructure. The VE Zone is shown as extending from the Ferry Terminal area and all of Carvers Harbor through the Tidewater property and encompassing all of Carvers Pond and the Pondsides (backside) of Main Street, and, most importantly, covering at least a portion of nine Downstreet structures including two Town-owned buildings. Given the higher-risk associated with the VE Zone, insurance premiums may be significantly higher for those properties.

There is some question as to whether the Carvers Pond area would indeed be subject to wave action during a 100-year storm event due to the narrowing of the inner harbor and constriction from Main Street itself, and whether the mapped VE Zone that includes all of Carvers Pond should have a more limited extent. There may be some limited engineering options to address this situation for property owners, including recalculation and hydraulic modeling of flood zones using more detailed survey information and submitting a request for a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) to FEMA. Several Vinalhaven property owners in the study area have successfully pursued LOMRs in recent years. It is unlikely that significant changes to the AE Zone will be achieved through this effort, although slight reductions in specific locations could be possible.

The Town's *Floodplain Ordinance* stipulates permit conditions and technical construction requirements for new construction and substantial renovations that represent more than 50% of the structure's value within the FEMA flood zones. The ordinance requires the lowest floor of structures in the AE Zone to be elevated at least one foot above the base flood elevation (which is the FEMA 100-year flood elevation), and in the VE Zone to be elevated on posts or columns to

that height. Other requirements include floodproofing measures and structural reinforcement to resist hydrostatic effects of inundation. Under *Article X.E* of the *Floodplain Ordinance*, designated Historic Structures within the Downstreet area can seek variances for these building requirements, but the Ordinance’s definition of a Historic Structure requires formal listing or certification under a federal or state program, rather than simply being an old building.

The Town should consider modifying the *Floodplain Ordinance* to allow definition of a “locally significant property” that could qualify for a variance without a formal federal or state listing being required.

The Downtown Master Plan also recommends that the Town initiate an engineering modeling effort and LOMR request covering the entire inner harbor, Main Street, and Carvers Pond area, in partnership with other affected private property owners through a cost-sharing approach. This larger-scale effort will achieve savings for all of the parties compared individual LOMR efforts.



Figure 4-2: The current FEMA floodplain map for the Carvers Harbor area shows most of the Downstreet area lying within the 100-year floodplain.

### Stormwater Management

Stormwater management within the Downtown study area is currently inadequate, and poses a significant limitation to growth and investment in the Downstreet area. A redesign and reconstruction of the stormwater system between Atlantic Avenue and High Street is a recommended action in this Downtown Master Plan.

As noted in Section 1.5, a 2007 engineering assessment of the Downtown stormwater management system concluded that the existing system was not designed as a coordinated system and is not capable of properly handling 25-year flood events, let alone the larger events

that are now more common. Flooding from large rainfall events periodically occurs now in several Downstreet buildings and streets as a result of runoff exceeding catch basin capacities, with some stormwater backing up through storm drains especially when high tides coincide with storm events. In those conditions, water may also percolate up underneath Downstreet buildings that are built on grout fill containing voids and sinkholes. In addition, in places the Main Street roadway is pitched toward several low-lying buildings with inadequate stormwater collection at those locations. Many other storm drains lie at incorrect elevations and locations to properly intercept water before it overwhelms low-lying areas and buildings.

That 2007 study provided a redesign of catchment areas, basins, pipes, culverts, and outfalls, to properly address handling larger 50- and 100-year flood events. Recommended measures included larger collection catch basins and outfall pipes, replacing aging metal corrugated culverts with smooth plastic culverts to improve water flow, installing one-way valves on outfall pipes to eliminate backflow, and considering closed-system collection near low-lying buildings with an option to discharge to the wastewater management system. Implementation of these solutions is part of this Master Plan, and is a key element to moving forward with additional development downtown. It must be done in close coordination with and at the same time as road and sidewalk redesign and re-use of the Town Garage site.

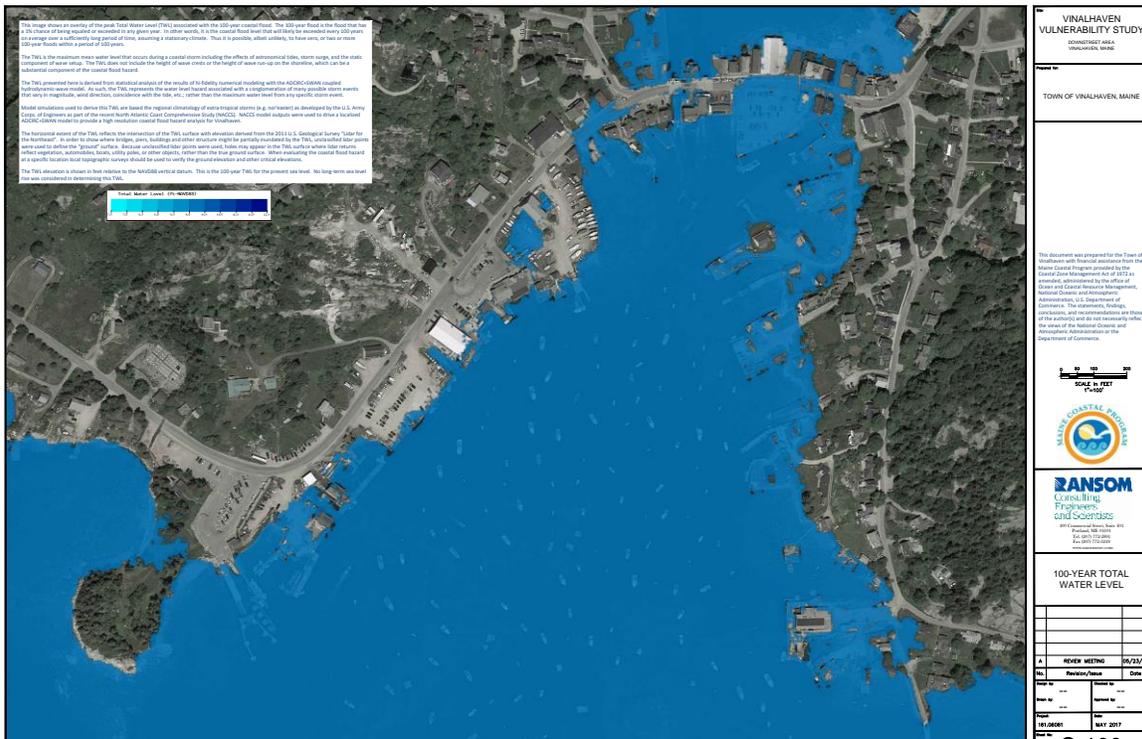
#### 4.5.1 Climate Adaptation and Sea Level Rise

The topics of climate change and sea level rise are challenging to raise in coastal towns like Vinalhaven. While there is uncertainty about the levels of ocean rise, the rate of ocean warming, and the extent of climate change effects, the Town would be irresponsible to completely ignore the possibility that they are real. Recognizing the importance, in 2016 the Town established a Sea Level Rise Committee charged with evaluating risks and developing options for the community to consider across the entire island that would support adaptation and resiliency in the face of higher flood risk.

We do know that we are experiencing more intense rainfall events, more frequently, than in the last several decades, and that our stormwater management systems are under-designed and unable to keep up. We also know that we experience so-called “nuisance flooding” of our low-lying areas during periodic king tide and storm events during the year. A present, any high tide above 11.5’ floods a portion of the Downstreet parking lot for a short period of time, generally less than 2-3 hours at peak slack tide. Inundation of other Town infrastructure, such as lower-lying sewer system pumping stations, occurs at the same time. Buildings with thresholds or facilities below the 9’ elevation are at risk from these same tides. Hydraulic pressure from such peak tides can also result in subsurface infiltration of seawater under Downstreet buildings, as water percolates up through voids in the man-made grout fill. Seawater can also force its way back up through stormwater systems and out through connected storm drains into the streets at peak tides, unless one-way valves have been installed in the stormwater discharge pipes.

Because of the cyclic nature of tides, periodic nuisance flooding due to tidal forces can be predicted months and even years in advance with tide tables and software. Alerting property owners well in advance can help them prepare for and adapt to such periodic flooding with minimal disruption. However, the added effect of a coastal storm poses a challenge for the Town and property owners in terms of advance warning and avoiding possible damage. Major storms are less predictable, yet they seem to be happening on a larger scale and more frequently than in decades past.

Ransom Engineers' *Total Water Level (TWL)* assessment shows that most of Downstreet would be inundated by a 100-year-event coastal flood (Figure 4-3). The TWL is the maximum water level that would occur during a coastal storm including an astronomical high tide, storm surge, and wave setup. Note that this flood elevation is relative to present sea level, and does not account for any sea level rise. The TWL also does not include the height of wave crests or the height of wave run-up on the shoreline, which can be a substantial component of the coastal flood hazard. If we add a 1-foot sea level rise to the model, suffice to say there is a lot more blue on this map.



**Figure 4-3: Ransom Engineers' Total Water Level (TWL) assessment shows that most of Downstreet would be inundated by a 100-year event coastal flood. This is the maximum water level that would occur during a coastal storm including an astronomical high tide, storm surge, and wave setup modeled. Note that this flood elevation is relative to present sea level, and does not account for any sea level rise.**

The Main Street corridor includes a mix of properties that are privately owned, held and managed by the State of Maine, owned by the Town, or leased by a federal agency. Each has a different approach to dealing with risk analysis and adaptation to climate change, ranging from a formal aggressive program to a “head-in-the-sand” approach. All of these properties contribute to the vitality and future of Downtown, and the community has a vested interest in how they are (or are not) addressing the potential impacts of climate change and sea level rise.

Based on information received from the MSFS, it appears the State has not completed a risk analysis or feasibility study addressing the potential impacts to Vinalhaven ferry infrastructure from climate change or sea level rise. Modeling completed by Ransom Engineers for the Town has shown that wave impacts at the Ferry pen could be significant during an extreme storm event, and these impacts would become greater in magnitude and possibly more frequent with

sea level rise. The Ferry pen infrastructure could be susceptible to damages from wave run-up and overtopping, as well as flooding from an extremely high tide.

With regard to sea level rise impacts on the ferry pen, there already can be difficulty moving vehicles on or off the ferry during extreme high tides, due to the angle the vehicle ramp makes with the car deck on the ferry. As sea levels rise, this will become more common. The problem could be addressed through structural modifications to the terminal, or by adjusting the ferry schedule as required. Structural remedies are likely to be more costly, and the need to adjust the schedule (or suffer delays) will increase in frequency with sea level rise. Because astronomical tides can be predicted, this information can be combined with the sea level rise data to estimate future times when the Ferry would most likely be inaccessible. In the near-term, these occurrences would be relatively infrequent and could be dealt with by slightly adjusting the ferry schedule or allowing for delays, but in the long-term the problem may become frequent enough to merit structural modification to the terminal.

The U.S. Postal Service's *2014 Climate Adaptation Plan* notes that major precipitation events and sea level rise driven by climate change could put many of the service's facilities and staff in risky areas. The Postal Service said in its report that it is "currently reviewing its facility locations and making decisions about future leases and construction". It is not known whether a review is currently underway of the Post Office facility on Main Street, however it is possible that they may consider relocation or other means of mitigating risk at some point in the future. For the purposes of this Master Plan, we have assumed the Post Office will remain in their current location and building for the next 10 years.

The Town of Vinalhaven has already evaluated risks to municipal infrastructure through several engineering studies mentioned in earlier sections of this report. Measures for mitigating flood impacts to that infrastructure have been included in those studies, and are referenced in this Downtown Master Plan.

The Town's Sea Level Rise Committee also recently completed a comprehensive *Flood Resiliency Checklist* project to: assess the community's preparedness for sea level rise; identify data gaps; establish timelines and priorities for additional studies, outreach, and policy changes; and identify potential mitigation measures for infrastructure and flood hazards. A number of near-term action items emerged from that exercise, including documentation of flood hazards and impacts, and educating the community about flood vulnerabilities and mitigation options. As one action item, the Town is currently working with the Island Institute on an economic analysis of the Downtown area, focusing on the potential impacts of sea level rise on structure repairs and property values, and the resultant impacts on the Town's tax base and economic strength.

The 2017 Ransom report (attached in the Appendices) identified some engineering and construction options that could help mitigate potential flood damage to individual private properties within floodplains. These include raising structures and various floodproofing measures within buildings. Property owners along Main Street may or may not be aware of these options, and the Town should help make that information available, along with information on potential funding options that private property owners might consider for such improvements. The Town's Sea Level Rise Committee is the logical vehicle for taking that action.

Adapting to these conditions will require multiple approaches, which are summarized below with information taken from the Ransom Engineers study.

## Accommodation

Accommodation means essentially living with the change. Accommodation is already happening on Vinalhaven, and any plan for sea level rise adaptation will almost certainly include some degree of accommodation in the near future, at least. Considering the timing of future hazards, accommodation might be a reasonable option for adaptation for the next 20 to 30 years or so, until the likelihood of moderate to severe flooding becomes too great.

For example, property owners could be informed in advance of the likelihood and timing of flooding on their property and be encouraged to take action to accommodate that flooding. Such actions could include moving important items to higher floors in their buildings and elevating utilities, such as heating systems, fuel tanks, and electrical components, as they upgrade their utilities and/or perform renovations.

A warning system could also be developed and used to inform residents of an impending storm, and when they should take actions such as moving important building contents to higher floors. Considering the timing of future hazards, accommodation might be a reasonable option for adaptation for the next 20 to 30 years or so, until the likelihood of moderate to severe flooding becomes too great.

## Protection

Protection involves structural measures to maintain current function in the face of rising sea levels and increasing flood hazards. This may include elevating sidewalks, roadways and buildings, filling wharves to higher elevations, constructing seawalls and barriers, installing flood gates, etc. For the Main Street study area, near-term options may include:

*Elevating Low Lying Areas of the Main Street roadway and sidewalk.* Much-needed improvements to the Main Street sidewalk have already been discussed in other sections of this Plan, and they include elevating the sidewalk to eliminate the multiple sidewalk levels and provide resiliency for flooding. At the same time, the feasibility of raising the Main Street roadway needs to be evaluated in terms of costs, reductions in flood risks, and limitations posed by curb heights, threshold elevations of existing buildings, underground utilities, subsurface fill conditions, stormwater management, and the existing millrace and bridge.

*Elevating Buildings on Main Street.* Elevating structures to levels above the floodplain is a proven measure for existing structures to minimize or avoid flood damage, and is a requirement of the Vinalhaven Floodplain Ordinance for new construction and substantial renovation. Most of the buildings located within the Downtown floodplain are privately owned, and as a result, the responsibility for building improvements such as increasing the elevation of the structure, falls on the individual property owner.

Another tangible benefit of elevating buildings can be recognized through reduced flood insurance costs. The cost of building elevation depends on the type of structure, where it is located, the type of existing foundation, etc. Property owners will need to weigh the costs and benefits of this kind of investment against the risk of loss.

## Retreat

In the long term, it is possible that sea level rise will cause some Main Street properties to be inundated daily, under normal tidal conditions. It is also likely that a structure subject to tidal flooding would be damaged by a storm event long before sea level has risen enough for this

concern to play out. If long-term plans are not implemented to raise or otherwise protect properties so that they can accommodate daily flooding, as well as flooding from more extreme events, the best approach may be to remove structures from these areas (i.e., retreat).

For the most part, due to the economic viability of the Downstreet shorefront, retreat will probably not be the preferred option for most properties. However, it should still be considered as an option, particularly for residential properties and/or older lower value properties that are located on the harbor side of Main Street, where the risk of flooding is greatest, because the costs associated with damages and/or insurance may outweigh the value of the property. For this reason, owners evaluating the feasibility of elevating their buildings should also consider retreat as a possible option.

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In the long run, the question of whether someone accepts the concept of sea level rise or not may be a moot point. The increasing frequency of nuisance tidal flooding, and the increasing frequency and magnitude of coastal storms, are already combining to put a number of Downtown buildings and facilities at risk of damage. Thinking ahead, and designing and gradually implementing improvements that include adaptation measures, is a cost-effective and sensible approach to downtown revitalization.

## 4.6 Utilities

### Public Water Supply

As a relatively small island surrounded by salt water, Vinalhaven has a limited resource of freshwater available for its inhabitants. There is no extensive aquifer here consisting of porous sand or gravel, as is found in many sections of the state of Maine, and we have no subsurface “connection” to any groundwater source in another location, including the mainland. Instead, groundwater resources are confined to narrow fault zones and cracks in the island’s granite, with recharge relying solely on local snowmelt and rainfall runoff and infiltration. Surface wetlands and a handful of ponds on the island serve as temporary storage areas, and are the primary source of the Town’s public water supply. Outside of the Village, most properties rely on drilled or dug wells for water supply, and the reliability and water volume derived from those wells are influenced by climatic conditions such as periodic droughts.

The Vinalhaven Water District provides drinking water to 420 customers in Vinalhaven including the entire Main Street corridor. Day-to-day operation and maintenance of the system is performed by Maine Water Company of Saco, under contract to the District. The Vinalhaven Water Company began construction of the public water system in 1907 and operated the system until 1979, when the Vinalhaven Water District was formed. The source for the water system is Round Pond, and a treatment system located adjacent to Folly Pond, a pond located directly adjacent to Round Pond, utilizes filter bags and ultraviolet disinfection as well as pH and alkalinity control and chlorine disinfection. The distribution system includes 3.8 miles of transmission main, 4.7 miles of distribution main, and approximately 420 services. A 10-inch cast iron water main, originally installed in 1907 and located under Main Street, is the only connection from the source and treatment system to users in the eastern portion of the village. That section of pipe is recommended for replacement as the top capital project for the Water District.

As noted above, the freshwater resource on Vinalhaven is finite and subject to natural recharge, and thus is a limit to growth in the case of water-intensive operations and businesses. According to a 2018 system study by Woodard & Curran, *“future growth of the Vinalhaven water and wastewater systems would need to be approached with careful planning. The District is currently operating close to the safe yield of Round Pond, and significant capital investment would need to be made to the treatment system to allow for Folly Pond to be used as a source.”*

In terms of an emergency management scenario, the lack of a backup treatment system also poses a potential risk to the system if using Folly Pond as an alternative source became necessary.

With the island’s finite water supply in mind, the Town effectively instituted a limit on water consumption through the Town’s Land Use Ordinance, by prohibiting commercial laundromats and car wash facilities anywhere in the *Village Overlay District*. Those kinds of operations typically consume large volumes of water and can put strains on both water supplies and wastewater collection and treatment systems. There have been no similar limitations placed on restaurants, bars, or private residences in the Village because of their relatively low water consumption, although they must meet zoning and land use requirements and receive approval from the Planning Board or Code Enforcement Officer.

To the best of our knowledge, no permit applications have been submitted or reviewed to date for microbrewery operations within the Village, although that is one of the desired Main Street business types that mentioned by multiple stakeholders in recent surveys and interviews. Based on the growing success of the microbrewery on North Haven, a similar small business on Vinalhaven could fill a niche and possibly be successful with both residents and visitors. Depending on the scale of the operation and business plan, such an operation might be a small water consumer and pose no strain on the water supply, or a small-batch microbrewery might choose to import their water from the mainland for quality and taste reasons. It is assumed that any such proposed business would need to come before the Planning Board for approval.

Based on the available information and projections, this Downtown Master Plan does not suggest modifying any existing Town ordinances with regard to water supplies at this time.

### **Wastewater Management**

The Town’s wastewater collection and treatment system is currently operating at roughly 50% of capacity during peak periods, and thus should be able to accommodate nearly any kind of residence, business or commercial function that would be allowed to operate in the Main Street corridor. The Town *Land Use Ordinance* prohibits commercial laundromats or car wash facilities in the *Village Overlay District* as a way to limit consumption of the island’s finite freshwater resources, but places no similar prohibitions on other kinds of operations.

The wastewater collection infrastructure along Main Street was installed within the past decade and is in good shape. However, in the same period there have been some instances of sewer line freeze-ups at a handful of Main Street locations during long sub-zero spells. These have occurred primarily at waterfront locations where pipes may have been subject to cold air infiltration in grout wharfs with abundant voids.

The Vinalhaven Sewer District has evaluated other wastewater system risks due to flooding and potential sea level rise, and has identified mitigation measures that include elevating pump stations, elevating electrical equipment, flood proofing manholes, and improving back up power

options. Assuming those measures are implemented, the system should be able to accommodate any additional private or public facilities within the Main Street study area.

The costs of the sewer service are an item of concern for many stakeholders, and may serve as a financial constraint on Downtown growth. The Town of Vinalhaven is the owner and operator of the wastewater treatment system. But unlike many other Town facilities and services, the costs of the sewer system, including debt service and annual operating costs, are borne solely by users connected to the sewer rather than the entire island taxpayer base. Sewer fees are determined on an “Equivalent User” basis, which is determined annually for each property based on its use and prior year’s water consumption. There is a provision in the Town’s Sewer Ordinance for appealing and recalculating the Equivalent User data annually.

The topic of who should be paying for the sewer system in the future is a thorny one, with logical arguments on all sides. On the one hand, property owners outside the Village without access to the sewer already have to pay for their own septic systems including maintenance, and they feel they should not pay for something they do not use. Yet the whole community, including non-resident property owners who represent 50% of the Town’s tax base, benefits from the continued vitality of the downtown restaurants, stores, and businesses that rely on the sewer. And with such a large portion of the island economy reliant on the fishing industry, the entire island benefits from the way the wastewater system helps maintain a healthy marine environment.

### Electrical Power

The island’s electrical power is provided by the Fox Islands Electric Cooperative (FIEC), which is a member-owned regulated electric cooperative that generates power from three wind turbines on Vinalhaven, and distributes power to both North Haven and Vinalhaven. A submarine cable to the mainland connects the FEIC system to the ISO New England grid, supplying power when wind power generation is unable to meet demand, primarily in summer, and allowing FEIC to sell excess power in winter.

Based on conversations with FEIC management, there are no limits to business development in the Downtown area with regard to power availability. FEIC recently upgraded its distribution system to include more individual pole-mounted transformers, and they do not anticipate any issues with power delivery along the Main Street corridor to any commercial user. FEIC has advised that all electrical infrastructure should remain elevated, and should not be relocated underground within the Downstreet corridor, due to concerns about potential flooding and sea level rise impacts. An important aspect of this Downtown Master Plan is to ensure that existing electrical service infrastructure, including poles and wire, remain in place and intact during and following any roadway or sidewalk construction activities along Main Street.

However, the cost of electricity on Vinalhaven, even for larger commercial consumers, is very high compared to prices on the mainland, at nearly double the mainland price. This is primarily due to the FEIC’s relatively small customer base bearing the costs of the wind farm construction, litigation arising from that project, and maintaining an extensive distribution system to sparsely-populated remote peninsulas. Stakeholders interviewed in this study cited the high cost of electricity as detrimental to their future business profitability and expansion opportunities. This is particularly true for power-intensive businesses such as fisheries processing or storage facilities that include refrigeration, ice-making, and freezing operations.

## Broadband Services

A 2015 Broadband study conducted by Tilson (included in The Appendices) provided an overview of existing telecom and internet infrastructure on Vinalhaven. Current internet service providers (ISPs) on Vinalhaven include Spectrum (formerly Time Warner) and Consolidated Communications (formerly Fairpoint) with wired infrastructure, and wireless providers RedZone, HughesNet and Viasat. At present, all telecom and internet cabling is suspended on existing FEIC utility poles throughout the Main Street corridor, with the possible exception of short underground cabling connections to control boxes and service buildings. Overall system performance and capacity information was not available for this study, but there is apparently a maximum speed limitation of approximately 108 Mbps for Spectrum ISP service on the island. This speed is adequate for most residential users, and can accommodate streaming entertainment services as well as voice-over-internet services such as Skype.

However, some types of businesses require higher-capacity broadband services for their websites, video streaming, online commerce, or remote conferencing. Several stakeholders in this study cited the lack of high-speed internet and high cost of ISP access as hampering their business operations and potential growth, particularly for online information delivery and video conferencing. As previously noted in the economic discussion, there also are a number of less-visible professional service and software-related businesses operating on the island that rely on broadband. Encouraging more of those businesses to locate on Vinalhaven will depend on a variety of factors including affordable office space and a suitable labor force, but broadband availability is one of the critical factors for that industry.

The Vinalhaven Broadband Committee is in the process of evaluating options for improving and reducing the cost of broadband service on Vinalhaven, to include more geographic coverage for high-speed internet, and higher-speed service. At present time, the lack of gigabit-speed service Downtown may limit opportunities for broadband-intensive businesses, at least until higher-speed services become available.

There are no current initiatives to provide free public wifi access in the Downtown area. Stakeholders in this study had mixed opinions on that topic, with some feeling it could be a benefit that could give the Downtown an aura of “keeping up” with technology, whereas others cited operating costs, equipment maintenance issues, and “added distractions” as reasons not to provide free access everywhere. Many residents and visitors already have plenty of access via cell phones, and individual business owners have the ability to provide free wifi within their establishments if they so choose.

Because of concerns about potential flooding and sea level rise impacts, broadband infrastructure should remain elevated, and should not be relocated underground within the Downstreet corridor. At this time, no capital projects or ordinance changes related to broadband services are being recommended as part of this Downtown Master Plan. However, the Town should remain alert to possible changes in the next couple of years as a result of the Fox Islands Broadband Task Force’s work.

## Fuels

The Island institute has estimated that 80% of Vinalhaven residents use heating oil to heat their homes. Other fuels used on the island for heat include wood, propane, and kerosene. Propane demand is increasing as more property owners switch from oil-fired boilers and furnaces to more efficient propane condenser systems. There has also been a marked increase in the

number of modern heat pump systems installed on the island, although some of those installations, particularly in older homes lacking suitable insulation, require supplemental heating sources to help meet peak demand in the coldest periods.

All fuel is delivered to the island by boat, either by ferry carrying heating fuel and propane trucks, or by tanker delivering diesel and gasoline to dockside storage facilities. Due to the costs of transportation, fuel prices on Vinalhaven are significantly higher than on the mainland, adding up to \$1.00 per gallon over mainland prices.

Fuel storage, sales, and delivery on Vinalhaven are provided by two Main Street businesses, the Vinalhaven Fishermen’s Cooperative (“Coop”) and Vinal Energy, and by two additional independent fuel dealers. Vinal Energy operates from its fuel storage and business facility at 36 West Main Street, selling and delivering liquid fuels (heating oil, kerosene) and propane to homes and businesses throughout the island. The two other independent fuel dealers do not have physical office or storage locations on Main Street, but instead operate on a “sell from the truck” approach. At present, they take their delivery trucks to the mainland via ferry to purchase fuel, and make deliveries across the island. The Coop sells retail diesel and gasoline during normal business hours to boats at its wharf, and at its roadside facility at 7 West Main Street, which is the only gas station on the island.

## 4.7 Financial Constraints

### Property Tax Burden

Property taxes were not cited by any Downtown stakeholder as a significant issue or concern. Given the many stakeholder comments on the high costs of transportation, electricity, water, sewer, and labor, it was surprising that taxes were not an expressed concern. This suggests that the current valuations and tax rates are considered fair, or at least somewhat acceptable. The current mill rate for Vinalhaven is \$11.32, and property taxes are assessed on a 100% valuation basis.

Section 2.2 discusses the valuations and proportion of island taxes paid by Main Street property owners. The Downtown corridor represents at least 10% of the Town’s economy, and probably much more, in terms of jobs and earnings. Yet the same area’s property assessments and tax payments represent less than 1.5% of the island’s total property value and tax receipts. This imbalance suggests two observations:

- 1) The Downtown area is very efficient in terms of economic benefit versus investment return
- 2) Downtown area properties have seen far less investment recently than the rest of the island

The first observation is not surprising, since downtown areas throughout the country are proven economic engines, offering economy of scale and close proximity of services and infrastructure. That is the reason investing in downtown infrastructure and economic development is recommended for revitalization, and why towns provide tax incentives and rebates to stimulate downtown businesses and activity.

The second is equally unsurprising, especially if one looks at the current state of many properties along the corridor. Although some property owners have made significant investments in the past few years, particularly with interior renovations and ongoing

maintenance of some of the Downstreet buildings, there remain many structures along Main Street that have not been maintained or are under-developed. As a result, the tax contributions of Main Street are minor compared to the rest of the island.

Combined, they suggest that the Town may have an opportunity to reduce taxes in the corridor via a targeted stimulus for year-round activity, without significantly impacting the overall tax base.

### **FEMA Flood Insurance**

Section 3.5 notes that the existing FEMA Flood Zone maps covering the Main Street study area show the entire Downstreet area as lying within a flood zone, including VE (wave action) and AE (flood elevation) Zone designations. Properties that lie with these zones must obtain FEMA flood insurance if they require bank financing or have any other interests in the property that are tied or related to federal government programs. The premium costs for flood insurance vary, and individual policy premiums were not provided by owners for this study. However, it is known that some premiums for the Downstreet area exceed \$20,000 annually for properties in the VE Zone due to the perceived high risk of damage or destruction.

This very high cost of flood insurance serves as a deterrent to business owners and island residents looking to purchase downtown properties, especially for anyone that needs bank financing to make the purchase and thus needs to purchase flood insurance. In contrast, cash buyers have no such requirement. As a result, there is a growing trend where Downstreet buildings are being purchased by non-residents who do not need bank financing, many of whom are not interested in starting and operating year-round businesses in those locations. To help mitigate the financial burdens on property owners and stimulate local investment, it is recommended that the Town pursue modifications to the FEMA floodplain map to potentially reduce the VE Zone area, and perhaps slightly reduce the AE Zone, to reduce the number of properties that require flood insurance.

### **Utility Costs**

As noted earlier, the costs of water, sewer, and power on Vinalhaven are nearly double those on the mainland. This contributes to the high cost of living on the island, and may serve as a disincentive for businesses to locate here and operate profitably. Modifications to the way the sewer system is funded could alleviate the costs for downtown businesses, but the electric and water services are separate entities from the Town and may be unable to change their fee structures without impacting their viability.

### **Ferry Costs**

The ferry serves as both a physical and a financial limitation to downtown revitalization. Many stakeholders noted how the cost of ferry transportation is a significant factor to their businesses and influences the overall cost of living on the island. The MSFS tariff structure is also currently in flux, with a new fee structure implemented on October 1, 2019 that includes high-season surcharges. The new fee structure will dramatically increase the cost of passenger and vehicle transportation for island residents and visitors due to a 50% increase in passenger ticket prices during the high summer season. The net impacts of these increases on the Vinalhaven economy is unknown, but it could result in a reduction in ferry traffic, reductions in ferry schedules, increased demand for year-round parking spaces at the Rockland terminal, or increased demand for an affordable private passenger-only ferry service.

## Chapter 5 Existing Capital Improvement Plans

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## Chapter 5 Existing Capital Improvement Plans

### 5.1 Town of Vinalhaven CIP status

The Town of Vinalhaven is currently working on instituting a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) process to formalize the long-term prioritization, scheduling, and funding of capital projects. With several notable exceptions, such as the Town's wastewater management system, the Water District service expansion, and the Vinalhaven School construction project, most capital projects on the island have been approved and funded on an as-needed, often annual, basis, rather than as part of a long-range planning effort. This approach has been taken mostly out of necessity, due to limited budgets and a lack of internal technical resources. However, more than one engineering consulting firm retained by the Town has observed that this approach has resulted in a hodge-podge of solutions that do not always function well together. The under-performing downtown stormwater management system is an excellent example of such a solution. It is hoped that a formal CIP process will allow more comprehensive planning and engineering design to address large, complex issues facing the Town in the future.

### 5.2 Town of Vinalhaven Capital Projects

For the 2019 fiscal year, the Town voters approved \$446,500 in capital projects and additions to capital reserve accounts, as listed below. No projects associated with this Downtown Master Plan have been proposed or approved by the Town at this time, although the approved list includes \$109,000 for town road paving projects to be performed in conjunction with the Maine DOT paving projects in Fall 2019.

| Department                   | Line Description      | FY 16 Actual        | FY 17 Actual        | FY 18 YTD           | FY18 Budget         | FY19 Proposed       | Department | BC                  | BOS           |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Capital<br>Projects/Reserves | Fire Truck Reserve    |                     | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |            | \$0.00              | \$0.00        |
|                              | Fire Dept Reserve     | \$25,000.00         | \$25,000.00         | \$25,000.00         | \$25,000.00         | \$25,000.00         |            | \$25,000.00         |               |
|                              | Road Repair           | \$39,290.75         | \$51,063.54         | \$58,264.20         | \$150,000.00        | \$125,000.00        |            | \$125,000.00        |               |
|                              | Public Works Garage   | \$25,000.00         | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |            | \$0.00              |               |
|                              | PW Vehicle Resv       | \$0.00              | \$25,000.00         | \$25,000.00         | \$25,000.00         | \$25,000.00         |            | \$25,000.00         |               |
|                              | Amulance Resv         | \$10,000.00         | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |            | \$0.00              |               |
|                              | Ambulance Purchase    | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |            | \$0.00              |               |
|                              | Police Cruiser Resv   | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$10,000.00         |            | \$10,000.00         |               |
|                              | Lane's Island Bridge  | \$20,000.00         | \$30,000.00         | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$25,000.00         |            | \$25,000.00         |               |
|                              | Carrying Place Bridge | \$20,000.00         | \$15,000.00         | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |            | \$0.00              |               |
|                              | Equipment Resv        | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$2,500.00          |            | \$2,500.00          |               |
|                              | Roads Capital Resv    | \$34,260.00         | \$35,396.00         | \$0.00              | \$33,000.00         | \$109,000.00        |            | \$109,000.00        |               |
|                              | Gravel Roads Recon    | \$96,002.58         | \$132,208.20        | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |            | \$0.00              |               |
|                              | Paved Roads Recon     | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$73,756.00         | \$100,000.00        | \$0.00              |            | \$0.00              |               |
|                              | Washington School     | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |            | \$0.00              |               |
|                              | Historic Sites        | \$5,000.00          | \$5,000.00          | \$10,000.00         | \$10,000.00         | \$10,000.00         |            | \$10,000.00         |               |
|                              | Compactor Resv        | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |            | \$0.00              |               |
|                              | Landfill Equip Resv   | \$10,000.00         | \$10,000.00         | \$30,000.00         | \$30,000.00         | \$15,000.00         |            | \$15,000.00         |               |
|                              | Old Fire Hall         | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |            | \$0.00              |               |
|                              | Sidewalk Resv         | \$155,000.00        | \$75,000.00         | \$50,000.00         | \$50,000.00         | \$50,000.00         |            | \$50,000.00         |               |
|                              | Harbor Reserve        | \$25,659.10         | \$50,000.00         | \$50,000.00         | \$50,000.00         | \$50,000.00         |            | \$50,000.00         |               |
|                              | PW Garage Design      | \$5,440.00          | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              | \$0.00              |            | \$0.00              |               |
|                              | <b>Total</b>          | <b>\$470,652.43</b> | <b>\$453,667.74</b> | <b>\$322,020.20</b> | <b>\$473,000.00</b> | <b>\$446,500.00</b> |            | <b>\$446,500.00</b> | <b>\$0.00</b> |

Table 3: Town of Vinalhaven Capital Projects, 2019

In 2018 voters approved issuance of a bond to cover the cost of relocating the Town Garage and Public Works department from Windy Way to a new location off the North Haven Road. That project is underway and is expected to be completed in 2020.

Funds in capital reserve accounts are intended to accumulate over a period of years to allow periodic major renovations or infrastructure replacements. For example, with the additions

from the recently-approved 2019 budget, the Sidewalk Reserve account will stand at approximately \$375,000. However, it should be noted that the Sidewalk Reserve account is intended to fund sidewalk repairs and improvements throughout the Town, not just along the Downtown sections of Main Street.

### 5.3 Maine DOT Capital Projects

The Maine DOT provides support for a limited number of transportation-related capital projects on Vinalhaven, including certain road segments, bridges, and all MSFS ferry-related infrastructure.

The State owns and maintains four bridges on the island (two on Main Street, the Lane’s Island bridge, and the ferry service transfer bridge). The Maine DOT is also fully responsible for maintenance and capital improvements for all ferry service infrastructure located on State-owned land, including the ferry docking facility, dolphins, ramps, bridge, terminal building, staff housing building, parking areas, and sidewalks within their property.

For roads, the State is responsible for funding and providing capital improvements, such as periodic paving, to provide safe conditions for travel. “State-Aid” roads on Vinalhaven total nearly 6 miles, and include the North Haven Road, Main Street, and Pequot Road. The State conducts periodic inspections of road conditions to determine priorities and repair needs, and maintains an ongoing schedule of repaving, generally on a 5-year or 10-year funding cycle, which is relatively inflexible.

The State’s three-year work plan for Vinalhaven for 2019 through 2021 (shown in Table 4 below) lists over \$2.7 million in total capital expenditures for 2019, dominated by nearly \$1.7 million in MSFS capital projects at the Ferry pen and terminal.

| Year | Asset                | Description                                                              | Scope of Work                | Estimated Funding |
|------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| 2019 | Lanes Island Bridge  | Lane Island Bridge (#5270) over Tidal Flow                               | Bridge Rehabilitation        | \$669,000         |
| 2019 | North Haven Road     | Beginning at Calderwood Neck Road and extending southeast 5.24 miles     | Light Capital Paving         | \$385,413         |
| 2019 | West Main Street     | Beginning at Sands Road and extending NE 0.31 mile to High Street        | Light Capital Paving         | \$22,801          |
| 2019 | MSFS Crew Quarters   | Vinalhaven Crew Quarters expansion                                       | Construction of New Building | \$250,000         |
| 2019 | Vinalhaven Ferry Pen | Add dolphin on south side, fender rehabilitation, walkway and wave fence | New Construction             | \$1,410,000       |

**Table 4: Maine DOT Capital Projects, 2019-2021.** *Source: Maine DOT*

It should be noted that the State is planning to put a thin skim coat of pavement on Main Street in the fall of 2019, with full knowledge of the Town’s planning efforts underway. The Downtown Master Plan emphasizes the value and importance of coordinating construction of sidewalks, roads, stormwater systems, parking lots, water mains, and sewer system modifications, to minimize disruption to the Town’s residents and businesses. However, Maine DOT maintenance paving occurs on a strict periodic funding cycle, and generally cannot be deferred for extended

time to accommodate a planning effort, unless a specific construction timetable has been determined. Due to the early stages of this Master Plan, it was decided that the state paving project should proceed in 2019. The Main Street skim coat is a relatively minor maintenance task that should only take two days to complete and should not interrupt traffic to any significant degree.

Because Main Street is a “state-aid” road, the Maine DOT is responsible for maintenance work on Main Street, but does not necessarily provide 100% of the funds for improvements to sidewalks, drainage, or other corridor infrastructure. However, the MDOT has three initiatives that assist municipalities in these types of projects. These include the *Planning Partnership Initiative*, the *Municipal Partnership Initiative*, and the *Business Partnership Initiative*. The final designs and cost estimates for proposed Main Street improvements will determine which funding initiative(s) will be the most viable for each project component.

#### 5.4 Vinalhaven Water District/Maine Water Capital Projects

The Vinalhaven Water District updated its water system capital improvement plan and budget in July 2018. Their top priority project is replacement of the 10-inch cast iron water main between High Street and Water Street, and was installed in 1907-1908. This is the only water system connection to the entire east side of Town, and it includes a 140-foot bridge crossing and approximately 15 service connections. The bridge crossing consists of a main attached via brackets to the south side of the bridge abutments.

The Water District engineers have recommended replacing this section of water main with 12-inch ductile iron, straightening the alignment to allow for ten feet of separation between the water and sewer mains, as well as installing a hydrant at the midpoint of Main Street aligned with possible future green space near the public parking area. Main line valves would also be installed on either side of the 140-foot, dual bridge, stream crossing. This would provide a temporary connection point to the west side of the system (High Street hydrant) if the bridge crossing was damaged during storm or flood events. The estimated cost of this project is approximately \$710,000.

| <b>Project</b>                 | <b>Anticipated Cost</b> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Main Street Pipe Replacement   | \$710,000               |
| Round Pond Pumping Arrangement |                         |
| Pump Improvements              | \$15,000                |
| Round Pond Intake Improvements | \$60,000                |
| Transfer Line Pressure Testing | \$5,000 - \$10,000      |
| Transfer Line Replacement      | \$160,000               |
| Transmission Line Replacement  | \$1,800,000             |
| Galvanized Main Replacement    | \$95,000                |
| Improving Isolation of Mains   | \$5,000                 |
| Starr Street Main Replacement  | \$350,000               |

Table 5: Vinalhaven Water District Capital Improvement Projects, as of July 2018. Source: Maine Water

To minimize Main Street disruption and achieve cost savings, the Water District has been in discussions with the Town regarding coordination of this project with the Town's potential Main Street improvements, which could include roadway, stormwater, and sidewalk infrastructure projects. Funding for the water main project would likely be secured through the Maine CDC Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). The DWSRF provides funding to public water systems throughout Maine to improve or replace water system pipes, treatment plants, storage tanks and sources of water to ensure safe drinking water and provide essential public health protection. Funding for drinking water infrastructure improvement projects are available as low interest loans.

## **5.5 Vinalhaven Sewer District Capital Projects**

The Vinalhaven Sewer District recently developed a Climate Adaptation Plan (CAP) to identify capital improvements needed to address ongoing and potential flood inundation of the wastewater collection and treatment system components. The engineering study identified several locations where high-intensity storm events and periodic coastal flooding have put wastewater collection and pumping facilities at risk. Adaptation strategies include capital upgrades (such as elevating pump stations, elevating electrical equipment, flood proofing manholes, improving back up power) and softer strategies such as developing protocols for specific situations.

## **5.6 Fox Islands Electric Cooperative Capital Projects**

FEIC recently completed a system conversion to individual pole-mounted transformers along the Main Street corridor, and has replaced most of the utility poles along the street in recent years. A recently-completed growth study and 10-year forecast indicated there would not be any capacity issues to handle the introduction of new businesses or residences along Main Street. The risk from sea level rise was evaluated and will not pose any issues for FEIC infrastructure in the foreseeable future.

Aside from routine maintenance and ongoing equipment replacements, the only major capital project proposed for the next few years is a 2019-2020 renovation and expansion of their storage building on West Main Street to provide additional office space on the second floor and additional parking for FEIC vehicles. The anticipated cost of that project is in the range of \$100,000.

## **5.7 Other Utilities and Services Projects**

### **Telecom and Internet**

Information on planned and proposed capital projects from the island's telephone, cable, and internet providers AT&T, Consolidated, HughesNet, Spectrum, Verizon, and US Cellular was not available for this study. A 2015 Broadband study conducted by Tilson (included in the Appendices) provided an overview of existing telecom and internet infrastructure on Vinalhaven, and provided a conceptual overview of capital projects and costs for converting and/or establishing a community-owned broadband system, but did not include data on capital improvements planned by the companies, since that information is generally considered confidential and proprietary by the service providers.

At present, all telcom and internet cabling is suspended on existing FEIC utility poles throughout the Main Street corridor, with the possible exception of short underground cabling connections to control boxes and service buildings. Based on the Tilson report and discussions with the Broadband Committee, it is understood and assumed that there are no current plans to replace or relocate telecom or internet cabling in the Main Street study area.

### Fuels

Due to an increase in residential and commercial propane demand on the island, there may be a need to locate a small-scale propane storage facility somewhere on the island in the future. Such a move could possibly reduce the number of propane truck ferry trips, particularly in the winter months. Due to MSFS rules on ferry capacity limits when propane is transported, this could benefit island travelers.

There are no known plans to expand or modify the Coop retail gas station at this time.

## Chapter 6 Implementation Strategy, Actions, and Schedule

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## Chapter 6 Implementation Strategy, Actions, and Schedule

### 6.1 Overview

One of the planning guidelines for the DTC effort is to recommend or design improvements that build upon one another, and most importantly, will not preclude an expansion or modification in the future. That is an especially critical approach for a community that may have grand wishes but cannot afford to do everything at once, or even within a 5-year period.

For the Downtown area, there are a series of steps that must be done together, such as a capital improvement linked with an ordinance change. And there are a series of improvements that need to be done in an ordered and coordinated sequence that reflects available funding timetables and construction schedules.

For example, constructing new stormwater management systems and replacing the aging water main on Main Street need to be coordinated with roadway and sidewalk improvements to minimize traffic disruption and save money. In a similar way, instituting new parking ordinances that eliminate long-term parking on the street cannot be implemented until additional parking is made available elsewhere. For those actions that are interdependent, one should not be attempted until and unless the other(s) is also ready to be implemented.

Coordinating the design and construction of these interrelated projects, and meshing their implementation schedules with grant application and funding timetables, cannot be accomplished just by the Select Board or another volunteer committee. To provide this coordination, this Downtown Master Plan includes a recommendation to establish a Town Planner position working at least three days per week. This position will be charged with obtaining grant funding, and working with the Town Manager and Code Enforcement Officer, to coordinate and implement Master Plan projects and actions, and to coordinate the work of the Planning Commission and Planning Board.

The Downtown Master Plan's *Implementation Sequence* and *Capital Projects Timetable* address these interconnected and interdependent projects and actions, and suggest a path for making these improvements in a coordinated way. The specific recommended Actions in Section 6 include detailed descriptions of interrelated aspects, design considerations, and constraints related to timetables and project sequencing.

### 6.2 Funding Mechanisms

#### Public and Private Grants

A number of state and federal agencies have funds that support local capital improvement and community development. For example:

- The Maine Department of Economic and Community Development manages federal *Community Development Block Grant Funds* (CDBG), which are competitively awarded for infrastructure, public facilities, affordable housing, and community services.
- The *Maine DOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Program* assists with funding sidewalks, pedestrian crossing improvements, downtown transportation improvements, projects that address safety and/or ADA compliance concerns, etc. Each project has a 20% local match requirement with a maximum federal allocation of \$400,000 per project.

- The Maine *Working Waterfront Access Protection Program*, administered by the *Land for Maine's Future* program, awards grants for projects that sustain access to the waterfront for commercial fishing and aquaculture. Funds from this program were recently awarded for projects in Stonington, Boothbay, New Harbor, and South Thomaston.
- The Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA) has funds that support the development of affordable housing.
- The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has a variety of programs that support affordable housing in rural areas and housing for the elderly.
- The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently announced the availability of grants that support smart growth and/or sustainable community initiatives.
- The USDA's *Rural Business Development Grants Program* and *Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program* provide funding for small communities to improve infrastructure related to revitalization and economic development, including transportation, parking, and stormwater management systems.
- The Norther Border Regional Commission's *State Economic & Infrastructure Development Investment Program* provides funding for infrastructure improvements that are related to economic development in downtown areas.
- The USEPA Federal and State *Clean Water Revolving Funds Program* (CWSRF) provides financial assistance to publicly-owned wastewater collection and treatment systems, stormwater systems and nonpoint source pollution control and estuary management projects.
- The *Maine Coastal Communities Grant Program* funds projects that are designed to improve water quality, increase adaptation to erosion and flooding, restore coastal habitat, promote sustainable development, and enhance the coastal-dependent economy while preserving coastal natural resources.
- The *Maine Municipal Construction Grant Program* and *Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund* provide grants and low-interest financing to support drinking water and wastewater treatment projects, including the replacement and relocation of water and sewer lines, pumping stations, and other components.

Most grant programs have specific application and award timetables that will influence implementation schedules, or may preclude certain grant opportunities from being considered. In addition, state and federal grant programs are constantly modifying their project requirements, funding levels, and application processes. The potential grant funding mechanisms listed in each of the Section 6 recommended actions are only suggestions, and will need to be further reviewed for pursuit when this Plan is adopted by the Select Board.

### Community Development and Investment Corporation

A community development and investment corporation is an organization, often made up of local citizens, established to improve the economy of the area by creating economic development programs, drawing new business and industry, and providing financial support for entrepreneurs, capital projects, housing projects, and business owners adapting their properties to sea level rise. These entities can seek and administer investor and grant funds, provide low-interest loans, and can purchase properties and arrange for their redevelopment. Many Maine

communities have established such organizations to help revitalize their downtowns, provide support for affordable housing, and encourage additional investment in the community.

One of the actions recommended by this Plan is supporting the creation of such an organization on Vinalhaven, with an initial step being the creation of an Economic Development Committee charged with 1) identifying and fostering economic development initiatives for the island, and 2) supporting the establishment of a community development and investment entity on Vinalhaven.

### Capital Improvement Planning

The capital facilities of local governments are essential to meeting the service needs of the community in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Vinalhaven does not currently have a capital budgeting system for municipal facilities and equipment called a *Capital Improvement Program (CIP)*.

A CIP is a document that includes an assessment of existing and anticipated public facilities and services required to meet the Town's planned growth and economic development, including but not limited to sewer, water, emergency services, schools, parks and open spaces, and transportation infrastructure. It is generally a five- or ten-year plan covering the maintenance, replacement and expansion of existing public facilities and equipment, or the design and construction or acquisition of new facilities and equipment. A CIP includes projections of when and where such facilities and equipment will be required, how much they are anticipated to cost, how the costs will be funded, and a schedule of when the improvements will be needed.

The plan is usually prepared by the Town Manager with assistance from a Town Planner, other Town Departments, and sometimes the Planning Board. It is typically tied to the community's comprehensive plan and any related planning efforts. It is usually reviewed by the Town Select Board, amended following a public hearing, and then sent to the Annual Town Meeting for a community vote.

Without a long-term CIP as part of the Town's annual budgeting and administrative process, the temptation is to defer needed spending on capital projects when budgets are tight, and approve whatever is proposed when funds are available. This approach usually results in scarce capital dollars being spent on small projects that do not reflect the greatest needs of the community. Even more importantly, such haphazard project-by-project budgeting can result in under-designed or poorly functioning systems, as well as unexpected future costs for major projects that are essential or are mandated by state or federal requirements.

A CIP is designed to assist the Town in planning its needed capital expenditures on a rational and systematic basis. The CIP is designed to identify a community's needed capital expenditures, to evaluate the priority of the various needs, and to structure a spending program for meeting the more important of these needs on an affordable basis. This provides the Town, and its taxpayers, with a "no surprises" approach to capital projects, and usually results in coordinated, well-designed infrastructure where all the parts function properly together.

### 6.3 Implementation Strategy

To achieve this vision and create the mechanisms needed to move forward, the following strategy is recommended. This includes the establishment of a Town position responsible for securing funding, and assisting and coordinating implementation of Master Plan actions.

| Recommended Steps |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Timing                                                                                                   |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1                 | Have the Select Board officially adopt this Downtown Master Plan, described here, and incorporate the Plan as part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 2019                                                                                                     |
| 2                 | Have the Town establish a formal Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that addresses project priorities, identifies funding sources, and establishes project schedules for the next 10-15 years.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 2019-2020                                                                                                |
| 3                 | Have the Town Planning Commission conduct reviews and draft language for ordinance changes and additions recommended in this Plan to support future needs and objectives of the community.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 2019-2021                                                                                                |
| 4                 | Establish a Town Planner position to work at least three days per week charged with obtaining grant funding for and working with the Town Manager to coordinate and implement Master Plan projects and actions, and coordinate the work of the Planning Commission and Planning Board.                                                                                                                                | 2019-2020                                                                                                |
| 5                 | Have the Town apply for grant funds for the purpose of: funding the engineering redesign of the Main Street Corridor; constructing roadways, sidewalks, crosswalks, and parking lot improvements; improving the performance and flood resiliency of Main Street infrastructure including drinking water, stormwater, and sewer systems; preserving waterfront access; and providing support for economic development. | 2020-2021                                                                                                |
| 6                 | Implement construction of capital projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stormwater, water, and sewer infrastructure</li> <li>• Roadway, sidewalks, intersection improvements</li> <li>• New parking lot, other parking improvements</li> <li>• Dock and wharf improvements</li> <li>• Public parks and streetscape improvements</li> </ul>                                                                | 2022-2023<br><i>(specific timing and sequencing is listed in the following Capital Projects summary)</i> |
| 7                 | Support the creation of a non-profit housing organization, similar to the North Haven Sustainable Housing group, to seek grants and obtain funds to purchase, own, and operate affordable housing on Vinalhaven for year-round residents.                                                                                                                                                                             | 2020-2022                                                                                                |
| 8                 | Establish an economic development staff position responsible for supporting an Economic Development Committee, and facilitating the creation of development funding for sustainable development and sea level rise adaptation.                                                                                                                                                                                        | 2021-2022                                                                                                |

## 6.4 Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

A set of Actions and Capital Projects is recommended to improve infrastructure and meet the goals and objectives identified by the community. These projects are intended to be part of a 15-year Capital Improvement Plan for the Town.

The following Capital Projects and Actions Timetable summarizes the recommended actions. Each action in the table also includes a reference to the section narratives that provide a more detailed description of the recommended action, justification, design considerations, constraints, potential funding sources, and implementation aspects, along with suggested sequencing and timing of the action, and an estimated range of costs.

A parallel set of ordinance amendments are also recommended to further address these goals and objectives, and to support the implementation of capital projects. These ordinance modifications are summarized in Section 6.5, complete with references to section narratives that provide more background information and justifications.

Icons representing the Master Plan’s priority goals shown below are used throughout the *Capital Projects and Actions Timetable* to show how the recommended actions are tied to specific goals. This template has provided the guiding strategy behind the actions recommended in this Master Plan.

| <b>Priority Goals for the Downtown Master Plan – Putting People First</b>           |                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | <b>Improve pedestrian safety and amenities</b><br><i>Accessible sidewalks, crosswalks, safer intersections, traffic calming, wayfinding, benches</i>                            |
|   | <b>Improve accessibility to sidewalks and buildings</b><br><i>Add wheelchair-accessible space, access ramps, elevate sidewalks nearer to building thresholds</i>                |
|  | <b>Improve parking for residents, fishermen, and visitors</b><br><i>New parking areas, redesign curbside parking, ordinance improvements</i>                                    |
|  | <b>Preserve and expand waterfront access</b><br><i>Strengthen ordinances, support marine businesses, consider acquisitions to regain access</i>                                 |
|  | <b>Encourage more year-round business and activities</b><br><i>Strengthen ordinances, improve infrastructure, encourage new development</i>                                     |
|  | <b>Expand year-round affordable housing</b><br><i>Revise ordinances, preserve existing housing, encourage new housing initiatives</i>                                           |
|  | <b>Improve stormwater and flood resiliency</b><br><i>Fix stormwater systems, elevate road and sidewalks, revise flood maps, inform owners</i>                                   |
|  | <b>Create more public gathering spaces</b><br><i>Downtown benches, multi-purpose public lot for events, pocket parks, roadside landscaping</i>                                  |
|  | <b>Manage summer congestion to maximize benefits and minimize impacts</b><br><i>Sidewalks, wayfinding, parking, bicycle safety, traffic calming, lodging-related ordinances</i> |
|  | <b>Preserve and enhance the character of the Village and its heritage</b><br><i>Strengthen ordinances, address demolition and blight, signage, landscaping; parks</i>           |

## Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

| Goals Addressed                                                                     | Capital Projects and Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Partners and Collaborators                                                                                                                     | Timing    | Funding Sources              | Est. Cost                                    | Ref. Section   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------|
|    | 1) Initiate a modeling effort and submit a request to modify the FEMA Flood map covering Carvers Harbor, Main Street, and Carvers Pond, in partnership with other affected private property owners.                                                                                                                                                                      | Town Manager<br>Sea Level Rise Committee<br>Planning Board<br>Property owners                                                                  | 2019-2020 | Town of VH + Private funding | \$25,000-\$40,000                            | 4.5, 6.9, 6.10 |
|    | 2) Request that the Maine State Ferry Service clear obstructions from and improve their sidewalk from the Ferry Terminal to West Main Street.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Town Manager<br>Ferry Advisory Board<br>MSFS                                                                                                   | 2019      | Town of VH                   | No cost                                      | 2.5, 4.1, 6.6  |
|    | 3) Enforce the 25-mph posted speed zone on Sands Road. Install additional speed limit signage and pedestrian warning signage approaching Downstreet.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Town Manager<br>Planning Board<br>Select Board                                                                                                 | 2019      | Town of VH                   | Minimal cost                                 | 2.4, 2.5, 6.7  |
|    | 4) Coordinate with the Vinalhaven Water District to relocate the existing Water District office from the Town Garage site to another location.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Town Manager<br>Water District Board<br>Select Board<br>Planning Board<br>Site Re-use Committee<br>Maine Water Inc.                            | 2020-2021 | Town of VH                   | \$100,000-\$150,000                          | 6.8, 6.16      |
|   | 5) Apply for state and federal grants to cover the costs of: coordinated design and construction of recommended pedestrian, roadway, and parking improvements on Main Street; stormwater and wastewater system upgrades and resiliency; and water system capital improvements. Combined total project costs are estimated to be in the range of \$3,500,000-\$4,000,000. | Town Planner<br>Town Manager<br>Select Board<br>Downtown Committee<br>Sewer District Board<br>Water District Board<br>Sea Level Rise Committee | 2019-2021 | Town of VH                   | \$10,000-\$12,000 to develop grant proposals | All            |
|  | 6) Provide information to Main Street property owners regarding engineering and construction options that could help mitigate potential flood damage to their properties, and provide information on potential funding options for private property owners.                                                                                                              | Town Manager<br>Sea Level Rise Committee                                                                                                       | 2020-2021 | Town of VH                   | Minimal cost, for handouts or website info   | 4.5, 6.9, 6.10 |

## Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

| Goals Addressed                                                                     | Capital Projects and Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Partners and Collaborators                                                                                | Timing | Funding Sources                                                                                                   | Est. Cost               | Ref. Section                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
|    | 7) Update Downtown stormwater system study, using new engineering and SLR info, including catch basins, collection pipes, culverts, and outfall pipes, including one-way valves to prevent tidal backflow. Coordinate with design for reconstruction of Main Street roadway, intersections, and sidewalks, and design of new parking lot at former Town Garage site.                                                                                    | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Maine DOT<br>Sea Level Rise Committee | 2020   | Town of VH                                                                                                        | \$20,000-<br>\$40,000   | 4.2, 4.5,<br>6.9, 6.10             |
|    | 8) Design and re-engineer the 1.4-mile Main Street corridor from the Ferry Terminal to Water Street to address traffic calming, pedestrian safety, parking, ADA access, crosswalks, roadway limits, lighting, and extended and wider sidewalks. Coordinate with stormwater system and sewer system upgrades, water main replacement, and abutting property owners to ensure minimum impacts to their properties. Includes survey, geotech, engineering. | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Maine DOT<br>Sea Level Rise Committee | 2020   | Community Dev. Block Grant<br><br>MaineDOT Pedestrian Program<br><br>Northern Borders Regional Comm.<br><br>USEPA | \$400,000-<br>\$600,000 | 2.4, 2.5,<br>2.6, 2.7,<br>6.6, 6.7 |
|   | 9) Design and re-engineer the intersections at Clamshell Alley and Water Street to provide improved pedestrian safety, while accommodating current and anticipated future traffic patterns on Windy Way.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Maine DOT                             | 2020   | Community Dev Block Grant<br><br>MaineDOT Pedestrian Program<br><br>Northern Borders Regional Comm.               | \$30,000-<br>\$40,000   | 2.4, 6.7                           |
|  | 10) Encourage a mixed-use re-development of the Harborview Apartments property to retain year-round housing and increase access and use of the existing wharf and harbor access at the site.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Town Planner<br>Planning board<br>Select Board<br>VH Housing Committee                                    | 2021   | Town of VH                                                                                                        | Minimal cost            | 2.8, 6.11                          |

## Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

| Goals Addressed                                                                     | Capital Projects and Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Partners and Collaborators                                                                                                   | Timing | Funding Sources                                                                                     | Est. Cost               | Ref. Section       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
|    | 11) Construct a 1,000-foot pedestrian sidewalk or safe multi-use pathway along the north side of Main Street from the Public Safety building to the Ferry Terminal. Improve curb cuts along West Main Street properties and parking lots.                                                                                                   | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Maine DOT                                                | 2021   | Northern Borders Regional Comm.<br><br>Community Dev Block Grant<br><br>MaineDOT Pedestrian Program | \$300,000-<br>\$400,000 | 2.5, 6.6           |
|    | 12) Construct a new crosswalk at the Ferry Terminal.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board                                                                                 | 2021   | Town of VH                                                                                          | \$15,000-<br>\$20,000   | 2.5, 6.6           |
|    | 13) Construct, elevate, widen, and level the sidewalks between High Street and Water Street to eliminate multiple elevations, eliminate slopes, make buildings more accessible, and accommodate sea level rise.                                                                                                                             | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Property Owners<br>Sea Level Rise Committee              | 2022   | FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program                                                           | \$300,000-<br>\$400,000 | 2.5, 4.2, 6.6, 6.7 |
|  | 14) Construct and install upgraded stormwater management components between Atlantic Avenue and High Street. Coordinate with reconstruction of Main Street roadway, intersections, sidewalks, sewer system improvements, water main replacement on Main Street, and abutting property owners to ensure minimum impacts to their properties. | Town Planner<br>Town Manager<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Maine DOT<br>Property Owners<br>Sea Level Rise Committee | 2022   | FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program                                                           | \$400,000-<br>\$500,000 | 4.5, 6.9           |
|  | 15) Construct and install wastewater system improvements between Water Street and High Street to address CAP recommendations, including bypass infrastructure for the force main on the Millrace Bridge, and Main Street pumping station modifications to address flooding resiliency.                                                      | Sewer District Board<br>Town Planner<br>Town Manager<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Sea Level Rise Committee         | 2022   | Federal CWSRF<br>USDA Rural Development Program                                                     | \$120,000-<br>\$160,000 | 5.5                |

## Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

| Goals Addressed                                                                     | Capital Projects and Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Partners and Collaborators                                                                                                   | Timing | Funding Sources                                           | Est. Cost               | Ref. Section           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
|    | 16) Replace 1907 water main and install millrace bridge bypass components to address Water District needs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Water District Board<br>Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Maine Water Inc.<br>Sea Level Rise Committee                         | 2022   | Maine DWSRF Program<br><br>USDA Rural Development Program | \$750,000               | 5.4                    |
|    | 17) Reconstruct and elevate the Main Street roadway from High Street to Water Street to accommodate elevated sidewalks and a 1-foot sea level rise. Coordinate with stormwater system and sewer system upgrades, water main replacement on Main Street, and abutting property owners to ensure minimum impacts to their properties. | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Maine DOT<br>Property Owners<br>Sea Level Rise Committee | 2022   | FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program                 | \$750,000-<br>\$950,000 | 4.5, 6.7,<br>6.9, 6.10 |
|    | 18) Reconstruct the intersections at Clamshell Alley and Water Street                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Maine DOT                                                | 2022   | TBD                                                       | \$150,000-<br>\$180,000 | 2.4, 6.7               |
|   | 19) Construct more visible and safer crosswalks at the Downstreet parking lot and the Water Street intersection.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Maine DOT                                                                    | 2022   | Town of VH                                                | \$30,000-<br>\$40,000   | 2.4, 2.5,<br>6.6       |
|  | 20) Design and construct a street-level multi-purpose walking lane, on the south side of Main Street from the Downstreet parking lot to Water Street. Coordinate with development of a new pocket park at Clamshell Alley corner.                                                                                                   | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Maine DOT                                                | 2022   | Town of VH                                                | \$22,000-<br>\$25,000   | 2.5, 2.9,<br>6.6, 6.13 |
|  | 21) Install Pedestrian warning signs near all crosswalks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Town Planner                                                                                                                 | 2022   | Town of VH                                                | \$ 2,000                | 2.5, 6.6               |

## Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

| Goals Addressed                                                                     | Capital Projects and Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Partners and Collaborators                                                                | Timing | Funding Sources | Est. Cost               | Ref. Section          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
|    | 22) In coordination with efforts of the <i>Net Factory Site Re-Use Committee</i> , design and develop additional parking areas at the former site of the Town Garage, as an interim, initial use of the site.                               | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Site Re-Use Committee | 2023   | TBD             | \$250,000-<br>\$300,000 | 2.1, 2.6,<br>6.8      |
|    | 23) Designate one or two additional wheelchair-accessible parking spaces between High Street and Water Street.                                                                                                                              | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran                          | 2023   | Town of VH      | Minimal cost            | 2.6, 6.8              |
|    | 24) Designate two existing curbside parking spaces to fit wide delivery trucks better and avoid their obstruction of the roadway during deliveries. Consider designating and posting those spaces as <i>Loading Zones</i> with time limits. | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Planning Board<br>Select Board                            | 2023   | Town of VH      | Minimal cost            | 2.6, 6.8              |
|    | 25) Designate curbside parking between Clamshell Alley and Water Street in conjunction with reconstruction of the Clamshell Alley intersection and creation of a south side pedestrian walkway.                                             | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board                                              | 2023   | Town of VH      | Minimal cost            | 2.6, 6.8              |
|  | 26) Determine, establish, and enforce an appropriate daytime time limit for all curbside parking spaces between High Street and Water Street.                                                                                               | Town Planner<br>Planning Commission<br>Planning Board<br>Select Board                     | 2023   | Town of VH      | Minimal cost            | 2.6, 6.8              |
|  | 27) Designate a separate multi-purpose lane on the south side of Main Street from the Ferry Terminal to High Street, suitable for use by slow-moving vehicles and bicycles.                                                                 | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran                          | 2023   | Town of VH      | Minimal cost            | 2.4, 2.7,<br>4.2, 6.7 |

## Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

| Goals Addressed                                                                     | Capital Projects and Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Partners and Collaborators                                                                   | Timing | Funding Sources                                                      | Est. Cost           | Ref. Section        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|    | 28) Modify the Downstreet parking lot to accommodate a pedestrian walkway and benches along the waterfront, and to host community events, but only after additional parking areas are established near Downtown.                                                                                                                  | Town Planner<br>Planning Board<br>Select Board                                               | 2023   | Town of VH                                                           | Minimal cost        | 2.9, 6.8            |
|    | 29) Evaluate the need for modifications at the Downstreet parking lot and wharf to accommodate passenger vessels and water taxis.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Planning Board<br>Harbor Ordinance Committee | 2023   | Town of VH                                                           | Minimal cost        | 2.9, 3.4, 4.1, 6.11 |
|    | 30) Elevate the Downstreet parking lot as needed to match a raised Main Street and reduce periodic nuisance flooding.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Sea Level Rise Committee                     | 2025   | USEPA Resiliency Grants<br>FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program | \$200,000-\$280,000 | 4.5, 6.10           |
|  | 31) Encourage a collaborative effort between the <i>Historic Downstreet</i> group and the <i>Vinalhaven Historical Society</i> to develop and fund an outreach and support program that provides interested property owners with assistance in identifying their building's heritage and posting appropriate signs to that effect | Town Planner<br>Planning Commission<br>Historic Downstreet<br>VH Historical Society          | 2023   | Town of VH<br>VH Historical Soc.<br>Private Donations                | Minimal cost        | 2.1, 6.14           |
|  | 32) Develop notification process warning of flooding and storm events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Town Planner<br>Sea Level Rise Committee<br>Select Board                                     | 2023   | SLR grants                                                           | \$10,000            | 4.5, 6.10           |

## Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

| Goals Addressed                                                                     | Capital Projects and Actions                                                                                                                       | Partners and Collaborators                                                   | Timing | Funding Sources                                                                                                 | Est. Cost         | Ref. Section |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
|    | 33) Monitor availability of waterfront properties and consider acquisitions to increase access to wharves, float space, and parking for fishermen. | Town Planner<br>Select Board                                                 | 2023   | ME Land and Water Conservation Fund                                                                             | TBD               | 4.2, 6.11    |
|    | 34) Install pedestrian benches on sidewalks along Main Street                                                                                      | Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>VH Chamber of Com.                           | 2023   | Town of VH<br>Star of Hope Fdn<br>Private donations                                                             | \$4,000-\$8,000   | 2.9, 6.13    |
|    | 35) Create a small park at the Clamshell Alley intersection with Main Street                                                                       | Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>VH Parks Committee                           | 2023   | Town of VH<br>ME Land and Water Conservation Fund<br>ME Project Canopy<br>Star of Hope Fdn<br>Private donations | \$20,000-\$30,000 | 2.9, 6.13    |
|   | 36) Create a small park on the Carvers Pond waterfront                                                                                             | Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>VH Parks Committee<br>Main Street Landowners | 2023   | Town of VH<br>ME Land and Water Conservation Fund<br>Star of Hope Fdn<br>Private donations                      | \$20,000-\$40,000 | 2.9, 6.13    |
|  | 37) Increase the use of Grimes Park through signage and sidewalks                                                                                  | Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Legion Post<br>VH Parks Committee            | 2023   | Town of VH                                                                                                      | Minimal cost      | 2.9, 6.13    |

## Vinalhaven Downtown Master Plan - Capital Projects and Actions Timetable

| Goals Addressed                                                                    | Capital Projects and Actions                                                                           | Partners and Collaborators                                                         | Timing | Funding Sources                                                     | Est. Cost    | Ref. Section   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
|   | 38) Encourage landscaping and plantings along Main Street without impeding movement or reducing safety | Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>VH Chamber of Com.<br>Main Street Landowners       | 2023   | Town of VH<br>VH Chamber<br>ME Project<br>Canopy<br>Property Owners | Minimal cost | 2.9, 6.13      |
|   | 39) Establish a graphic standard for signage in the Main Street corridor.                              | Town Planner<br>Planning Commission<br>VH Chamber of Com.<br>VH Historical Society | 2023   | Town of VH                                                          | Minimal cost | 2.9, 6.13      |
|   | 40) Secure access to another boat ramp outside the Main Street corridor.                               | Town Manager<br>Town Planner<br>Select Board                                       | 2025   | Town of VH                                                          | TBD          | 4.2, 6.11      |
|   | 41) Consider a long term plan to raise wharf elevations                                                | Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Sea Level Rise Committee                           | 2030?  | Town of VH                                                          | TBD          | 4.2, 4.5, 6.10 |
|  | 42) Modify millrace structure with a gate to inhibit flow to Carvers Pond                              | Town Planner<br>Select Board<br>Woodard & Curran<br>Sea Level Rise Committee       | 2030?  | TBD                                                                 | TBD          | 4.5, 6.10      |

## 6.5 Ordinances, Building Codes, and Design Standards

Several ordinance amendments are recommended as part of this Master Plan. The following timetable is suggested for modifications, with reference sections listed under each action.

| Topic Area                                                                                                                                                                                             | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Timing    | Ref. Section         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| <b>Pedestrian Safety</b><br>                                                                                          | 3. Review current ordinances regarding compliance with regulations for curb cuts and road access points                                                                                                                                                     | 2019-2020 | 2.5, 2.10            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 4. Review ordinances to determine if changes are needed regarding sidewalk maintenance responsibilities                                                                                                                                                     | 2019-2020 | 2.5, 2.10            |
| <b>Parking</b><br><br>               | 4. In the <i>Parking Ordinance</i> , establish a section addressing curbside parking time limits and loading zones                                                                                                                                          | 2020-2021 | 2.6, 2.8, 2.10, 4.2  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 5. In the <i>Land Use Ordinance</i> , modify onsite parking space requirements for Downstreet apartment conversions                                                                                                                                         | 2020-2021 | 2.10, 4.3            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 6. In the <i>Parking Ordinance</i> , institute a rule and process for allowing long-term permit parking in a Town lot                                                                                                                                       | 2020-2021 | 2.6, 2.10, 2.8, 2.10 |
| <b>Housing</b><br><br>              | 4. Revisit the topic of allowing second floor residences in the <i>Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District</i> , and consider a revision of the <i>Land Use Ordinance</i> to allow such conversions while protecting access and use of the harbor | 2020-2022 | 2.8, 2.10, 4.3       |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 5. Consider <i>Land Use Ordinance</i> modifications regarding conversion of apartments to condominiums unless year-round occupancy and usage controls can be met                                                                                            | 2019-2020 | 2.3, 2.10, 4.3       |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 6. Review and consider <i>Land Use Ordinance</i> modifications to control and limit non-owner-occupied short-term rentals in the Downtown area                                                                                                              | 2019-2020 | 2.3, 2.10, 3.6       |
| <b>Waterfront Access</b><br><br> | 3. Review existing <i>Land Use Ordinance</i> language allowing “Other commercial activities” in the <i>Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District</i> with regard to businesses that are not directly related to the commercial fishing industry     | 2020-2021 | 2.10                 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 4. Determine if any ordinance language needs to be modified to set guidelines and limits for private passenger ferry services to operate in the harbor and utilize Town docking facilities                                                                  | 2021-2022 | 2.10, 3.4, 4.1       |
| <b>Historic Buildings</b><br>                                                                                       | 3. Consider establishing a blight ordinance that addresses actions related to deteriorated buildings posing public health or safety risks                                                                                                                   | 2019-2020 | 2.1, 2.3, 2.10       |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 4. Review and consider the viability of instituting a simple design review ordinance and process, including a demolition clause that would cover a designated portion of the historic Main Street corridor                                                  | 2021-2022 | 2.1, 2.3, 2.10       |
| <b>Building Codes</b><br>                                                                                           | 4. Review existing <i>Floodplain Ordinance</i> regarding requirements for new construction and renovation                                                                                                                                                   | 2019-2020 | 2.10, 4.5            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 5. Modify the <i>Floodplain Ordinance</i> to allow definition of a “locally significant property” that could qualify for a variance without a formal federal or state listing being required.                                                               | 2020-2021 | 2.10, 4.5            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 6. Review and consider the viability of instituting a simple Design Review ordinance and process                                                                                                                                                            | 2020-2021 | 2.3, 2.10            |

## 6.6 Capital Projects and Actions - Pedestrian Safety and Sidewalks

*Sidewalks; crosswalks; safer intersections; wayfinding*

### **Project/Action**

- 1) Design and construct a sidewalk extension along the north side of Main Street from the Public safety building to the Ferry Terminal.
- 2) Redesign, elevate, widen, and level all sidewalks between High Street and Water Street to eliminate multiple sidewalk elevations, eliminate steep slopes, provide more width for pedestrians, make sidewalks and buildings for the elderly and people with mobility limitations, and accommodate a 1-foot sea level rise scenario.
- 3) Review potential curb cut improvements along West Main Street
- 4) Request MSFS clear obstructions from and improve their sidewalk
- 5) Improve Town maintenance of West Main Street sidewalks to remove gravel
- 6) Design and construct a crosswalk at the Ferry Terminal to the new sidewalk extension
- 7) Design and construct more visible and safer crosswalks at the Downstreet parking lot and the Water Street intersection
- 8) Design and construct an elevated sidewalk, or a street-level multi-purpose walking lane, on the south side of Main Street from the Downstreet parking lot to Water Street
- 9) Install Pedestrian warning signs near all crosswalks

### **Ordinance Changes**

- 1) Review the current Town ordinances regarding compliance with State regulations for curb cuts and road access points
- 2) Review existing ordinances to determine if any changes are needed to address maintenance responsibilities for sidewalk segments.

### **Justifications (Also see Section 2.5)**

The number one priority for the community is providing safer walking conditions and pathways for Main Street pedestrians, whether young or old, resident or visitor, all the way from the ferry to the Library. That has been the stated priority of stakeholders for more than a dozen years. Safe and level sidewalks are critically important for the safety and well being of pedestrians, to enhance the community's physical and mental health, provide building access for those with mobility limitations, and convey a sense of vitality to the downtown. The current sidewalk conditions, and the absence of critical sections of sidewalk, pose risks to pedestrians and drivers alike.

### **Design Considerations**

- All designs must meet current Federal Highway and ADA requirements for pedestrian access routes (PARs), including minimum widths, slopes, surface materials, and curbing.
- All designs must meet current Maine DOT standards and requirements for sightlines, materials, and stormwater management.

- Designs should consider appropriate guidelines and information from the Town Sea Level Rise Committee regarding adaptation and resiliency for flooding and sea level rise
- Maintain current appearance of concrete sidewalks rather than asphalt where possible.
- Consider the use of granite curbing where possible and if cost effective.
- All engineering designs should be coordinated with abutting property configurations to ensure minimum impacts to properties

### **Constraints**

- 1) The Coop’s gas pumps are less than 16 feet from the south edge of West Main Street. They require a vehicle approach and “line-up” parking area occupying several car-lengths immediately on the shoulder to the east and west of the pumps. Depending on the time of day, multiple vehicles may either be at the pumps, lined up waiting, or driving in or out of the facility. That traffic, combined with the narrow shoulder, eliminates safe pedestrian passage for a 60-80 foot distance through that property and precludes the construction of a safe sidewalk on the south side of West Main Street.
- 2) The Coop parking lot on the north side of Main Street is the only parking available for Coop staff and members. It currently has no curb cuts or other restrictions on vehicle access. Installing a sidewalk on that side of the road will require a design that does not eliminate parking spaces, adds curb cuts for pedestrian safety, and meets ADA design standards.
- 3) Downstreet buildings that are low in elevation and already at risk of flooding will need to either: a) have the structure raised to accommodate a higher-elevation sidewalk; or b) have the sidewalk slope down to a lower elevation in front of their building (at least until the building is raised in the future.) Both scenarios should be evaluated in consultation with the property owner during the design phase.

### **Estimated Costs**

\$800,000-\$900,000

### **Funding**

Community Development Block Grant

Maine DOT Pedestrian program

### **Timetable**

2020-2021

## 6.7 Capital Projects and Actions - Roadway, Traffic Calming, and Traffic Management

*Roadway redesign; traffic calming; safer intersections; signage*

### Projects/Actions

- 1) Design and re-engineer the Main Street roadway from the Ferry Terminal to Water Street to accommodate traffic calming, improved sightlines, pedestrian safety, modified parking spaces, ADA access, well-marked and consistent roadway limits, and wider sidewalks
- 2) Elevate the Main Street roadway as needed from High Street to Water Street to accommodate elevated sidewalks and a 1-foot sea level rise scenario. Coordinate site designs with abutting property owners to ensure minimum impacts to properties
- 3) Design and re-engineer the intersections at Clamshell Alley and Water Street to provide improved pedestrian safety, while accommodating current and anticipated traffic patterns on Windy Way
- 4) Coordinate engineering designs with Water District and stormwater management infrastructure project requirements
- 5) Enforce the 25-mph posted speed zone on Sands Road
- 6) Install additional speed limit signage and pedestrian warning signage on approaches to the Downstreet area. Consider additional measures to lower speeds in the corridor.
- 7) Design and install a separate multi-purpose safety lane on the south side of Main Street from the Ferry Terminal to High Street, suitable for use by slow-moving vehicles and bicycles

### Ordinance Changes

None

### Justification (Also see Section 2.4)

The downtown section of Main Street is the sole transportation corridor for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles traveling between the west and east portions of the village. Freight, mail, and material deliveries for Vinalhaven businesses also use Main Street, and large trucks pass through downtown periodically. Accommodating the required movement patterns of these trucks is critical to supporting these businesses, and should influence the design of road widths, turning radii, crosswalks, pedestrian path locations, parking layouts, and streetscapes/landscaping. However, the roadway fluctuates in width, has several sharp curves with poor sightlines, lacks pedestrian infrastructure in many places, and does not have well-defined travel lane limits in several key spots.

There are two dangerous corner intersections where many pedestrians cross the street and vehicles make turns. At the corner of Sands Road the road edge is relatively undefined, and there are no crosswalks, sidewalks, posted speed limits, pedestrian warning signs, or road edge safety lines, forcing ferry passengers, and MSFS staff managing ferry standby lines, to walk alongside the busy roadway. In addition, vehicles approaching from Sands Road often travel at high speeds and fail to slow before the corner, putting at risk drivers exiting the ferry lot as well as fishermen crossing from the Coop parking area.

Similar risks exist at the East Main/Water Street intersection, where an inconsistent roadway width, lack of a sidewalk, blind corner, lack of posted speed limits, high density of business storefronts, lack of crosswalk signage, and high vehicle speeds combine to make a dangerous combination. The situation is not improved by the adjacent, poorly-defined intersection at Clamshell Alley, where it is not clear where the Main Street roadway ends and Clamshell Alley begins, where parking is allowed, or pedestrians can walk. The lack of any sidewalk on that side of the road further complicates things for pedestrians, as well as building owners.

### **Design Considerations**

- All designs must meet current ADA requirements for pedestrian access routes (PARs) surface materials, and curbing.
- All designs must meet current Maine DOT standards and requirements for sightlines, materials, and stormwater management.
- Designs should consider appropriate guidelines and information from the Town Sea Level Rise Committee regarding adaptation and resiliency for flooding and a 1-foot sea level rise
- Travel lane widths should be consistent throughout the corridor, must accommodate passage for large trucks, accommodate sidewalks, wider curbside parking spaces, and a multi-purpose safety lane
- Intersections must address traffic calming, sight lines, pedestrian safety, sidewalk locations, parking, and ADA access.

### **Constraints**

- Buildings low in elevation and already at risk of flooding would need to either: a) have the structure raised to accommodate a higher-elevation sidewalk; or b) have the sidewalk slope down to a lower elevation in front of their building (at least until the building is raised in the future.) In the latter case, the roadway elevation will likely need to match the lower sidewalk elevation. Design will need to appropriately configure catch basins and roadway crowning, and consider installation of a closed-system stormwater management approach, to protect the property from roadway stormwater runoff.
- Any potential redevelopment of the Town Garage site must also include measures to mitigate impact on pedestrian and vehicle traffic at the Water Street intersection.

### **Estimated Cost**

\$1,250,000 - \$1,400,000

### **Funding**

Community Dev. Block Grant

MaineDOT Pedestrian Program

### **Timetable**

2020-2022

## 6.8 Capital Projects and Actions - Parking

*New parking areas; redesign curbside parking; ordinance improvements*

### Projects/Actions

- 1) Design and develop a new municipal parking lot at the former site of the Town Garage.
- 2) Modify the layout of curbside parking spaces along the north side of Main Street to designate one or two additional wheelchair-accessible parking spaces between High Street and Water Street.
- 3) Redesign and widen at least two existing curbside parking spaces to fit wide delivery trucks better and avoid their obstruction of the roadway during deliveries. Consider designating and posting those spaces as loading zones with time limits.
- 4) Redesign curbside parking between Clamshell Alley and Water Street in conjunction with a redesign of the Clamshell Alley intersection and creation of a south side pedestrian walkway.
- 5) Determine, establish, and enforce an appropriate daytime time limit for all curbside parking spaces between High Street and Water Street.
- 6) Modify the layout of the Downstreet parking lot as needed to accommodate a pedestrian walkway and benches near the waterfront and to host community events, but only after the new parking lot is completed at the former Town Garage site.
- 7) Elevate the Downstreet parking lot as needed to match a raised Main Street and reduce periodic nuisance flooding.

### Ordinance Changes

- 1) In the *Parking Ordinance*, establish a section addressing curbside parking time limits and loading zones
- 2) In the *Land Use Ordinance Section 16.II.8*, eliminate the requirement for 1 onsite parking space for each apartment for building conversions Downstreet that meet the density bonus requirements; and require 1 parking space per apartment unit instead of 2 spaces for building conversions Downstreet that do *not* meet the density bonus requirements.
- 3) In the *Parking Ordinance*, institute a rule and process for allowing long-term permit parking in a Town lot for tenants of existing Downstreet apartments that either a) received variances due to having limited or no room for onsite parking, or b) were exempted from parking space requirements due to meeting density bonus requirements. IMPORTANT: This Parking Ordinance change should *not* be adopted until a new Town parking lot is constructed at the former Town Garage site.
- 4) Other changes to the Parking Ordinance may be required as a result of the redesign and reconfiguration of parking areas along the Main Street corridor. The Planning Commission should conduct another review and revise the ordinances after engineering designs are completed, but prior to construction completion.

### Justification (See also Section 2.6)

Providing public parking is critical to the downtown economy, particularly for downtown retail businesses, services, restaurants, and periodic events and performances that make for a vibrant downtown. To address concerns and problems about public parking in the Main Street corridor,

several actions are proposed that are interconnected. The overall parking solution for Downtown approaches the problem from two directions: 1) increasing parking spaces, and 2) reducing demand. The former is relatively straightforward and involves capital projects. The latter is a bit more complicated and requires changes in behavior and ordinances.

Adding public parking spaces in a downtown area comes from either the creative redesign of existing parking spaces or the conversion of other areas to provide new parking. On Vinalhaven, both are required, and fortunately, both are possible.

Redesign of the existing Town waterfront lot (across from Carver's Market) would probably not yield any new spaces. That lot is already reasonably well-designed to maximize parking space while still providing access to the Town dock and float, as well as off-season access by fishermen for loading and unloading gear. Retaining that traditional fishing access remains an important priority, unless and until additional wharf space on West Main Street is acquired in the future that provides alternative commercial fishing access.

Parking demand is expected to gradually increase with a growing trend toward more use during the shoulder seasons than in the past. We assume the two MSFS parking lots on Vinalhaven will continue to be fully occupied during the summer season, and increasingly so into the shoulder seasons. The MSFS does not currently have any plans to increase their parking capacity either onsite or through acquisition and construction of any future satellite lot.

Creating new parking areas near downtown is a high priority of this Plan. Initial re-use of the current Town Garage/Net Factory site to have additional parking areas would be a logical, straightforward, and affordable action that could solve multiple parking issues Downtown, but it must be done in a way that does not preclude future redevelopment of the site with a possible multi-level building. Such an initial re-use would: ease pressure on the Downstreet parking lot; provide an alternative to Main Street curbside parking; provide a long-term permit parking option for Main Street residents and workers; allow the Downstreet lot to host community activities such as the Flea Market; and serve as a catalyst for possible development of the Pondsides along Carvers Pond. Parking is also an appropriate ground-level use of the site in light of sea level rise, due to its location entirely within the FEMA floodplain.

The two existing curbside wheelchair-accessible parking spaces on Main Street are inadequately designed for proper egress and access. In addition, there is an aging population on Vinalhaven and an increased need for parking and building access for those with mobility challenges. Use of these wheelchair-accessible spaces should be limited to those with disabilities and the elderly.

Existing parking constraints related to downtown housing have been discussed in Section 2.6. Parking is currently prohibited along the south side of Main Street from the Tidewater to Clamshell Alley, along West Main Street, and along Sands Road. Without any onsite parking available, some Main Street apartment residents and workers park for long periods in curbside spaces or in the Downstreet lot. There are no time limits for parking along Main Street, and overnight parking in Town lots is prohibited. To free up more curbside spaces, and to encourage more year-round housing units, this Downtown Master Plan is recommending three changes in the Town Ordinances covering the Downstreet area only. This includes modifying the Town Parking Ordinance to establish a one-hour time limit for parking in spaces along the north side of Main Street between Water Street and High Street to allow for more turnover of space for shoppers and visitors.

## **Design Considerations**

- Curbside parking spaces must provide appropriate ADA-compliant access and vehicle egress to the re-constructed and newly-elevated sidewalks.
- Curbside loading zone spaces must be wide enough to not force delivery trucks to extend into the roadway while parked, and should include appropriate curb cuts and/or ramps to allow the use of hand trucks for deliveries.
- Any new parking areas at the former Town Garage site should be designed in a way that maximizes parking spaces while providing safe passage for pedestrians. Its layout should include curbing and vehicle access control rather than an open uncontrolled lot. The lot surface, as well as that of Windy Way, should be paved, unless an alternative porous surface is recommended for stormwater management reasons.
- At the same time, Windy Way should be defined with a paved, delimited roadway, and adjoining parking spaces on private property should be identified and marked.
- The parking area design should consider a pedestrian path or sidewalk around the perimeter for accessing parked vehicles or simply walking, and appropriate pedestrian crosswalks. There should be pedestrian access from Main Street, as well as to possible future walkways or parks along the Carver Pond waterfront.
- New parking areas must provide the appropriate number of wheelchair-accessible parking spaces required, and include appropriate walkways and safety measures to allow
- A redesigned stormwater management system for the Downtown area may include collection and conveyance pipes, catchment basins, and outfall pipes that must cross the Town property. The location of stormwater infrastructure must be accommodated either within the Windy Way roadway or through new parking areas in a way that allows access for maintenance and repair.
- The routing of stormwater pipes and other utility infrastructure should be done to avoid any interference with or limitation of potential future development of the site with a multi-story building.
- All designs should consider appropriate guidelines and information from the Town Sea Level Rise Committee regarding adaptation and resiliency for flooding and sea level rise

## **Constraints**

- The layout and design of curbside parking will need to be closely coordinated with the sidewalk and roadway redesign, taking into consideration the Main Street right of way width compared to property lines and desired widths of sidewalks and parking spaces.
- The Town must coordinate with Maine Water and the Vinalhaven Water District Trustees to help relocate their office and activities currently located in a portion of the Town Garage site. According to Water District trustees, the current office location provides an office space, storage of seasonal resident water meters and connectors (“horns”), and a water system monitoring system, and the location of a future facility only needs to have a connection to a water main for monitoring purposes.
- Design and construction of any new parking areas must consider the potential impacts that additional vehicle traffic using Windy Way will have on the Water Street

intersection. It will be important to coordinate the roadway, sidewalk, and intersection designs to ensure pedestrian and driver safety and traffic calming.

- The design and routing of stormwater pipes and other utility infrastructure underneath the new parking lot should be done to avoid any interference with or limitation of potential future development of the site with a multi-story building.
- The Town Garage site is located entirely within the current FEMA floodplain's VE Zone. The Downtown Master Plan has recommended that the Town pursue a Letter of Map Revision with FEMA to change the map status to be an AE Zone. But even if that is successful, the site will still be located in a floodplain, and thus will need to conform to the Town's floodplain ordinance requirements unless variances are sought. The site will also continue to be at risk of flooding from storm events or sea level rise, and thus any ground-level use at the site should be limited to parking facilities that can be subjected to periodic flooding without sustaining significant damage.
- It is not known whether further development of the site would happen as conceived by the 2017 DART study, i.e., with construction of a parking garage, community center, affordable housing, office space, or some combination of those. The initial re-use of the site as a parking area is a simple and affordable step, but the site design and subsurface preparation should be done in a way that does not jeopardize the needs of future construction for foundations, pilings, or utility service installations.

**Estimated Cost**

\$250,000-\$350,000

**Funding**

Community Dev. Block Grant

MaineDOT Pedestrian Program

**Timetable**

2022-2023

## 6.9 Capital Projects and Actions - Flooding and Stormwater Management

*Fix stormwater system; elevate infrastructure; revise FEMA flood map; work with property owners*

### Projects/Actions

- 1) Initiate an engineering modeling effort and Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) request to FEMA covering the entire inner harbor, Main Street, and Carvers Pond area, in partnership with other affected private property owners through a cost-sharing approach. This larger-scale effort should achieve savings for all of the parties compared individual LOMR efforts.
- 2) Refresh the 2007 stormwater management engineering study and design with updated information from the Sea level Rise Committee on storm event magnitudes and frequencies.
- 3) Coordinate the design and installation of appropriately-sized and located catch basins, collection pipes, culverts, and outfall pipes, with engineering designs and layouts for reconstruction of Main Street roadway and sidewalks. Install one-way valves on outfall pipes to prevent backflow.
- 4) Provide information from the 2017 Ransom report to Main Street property owners regarding engineering and construction options that could help mitigate potential flood damage to their properties, and provide information on potential funding options for private property owners.
- 5) Explore the option of establishing a non-profit redevelopment entity that could seek and distribute grant funds and/or provide low-interest loans to assist property owners with adaptation and resiliency measures for increased flood risk and sea level rise.

### Ordinance Changes

- 1) Review floodplain ordinance adequacy regarding requirements for new construction and renovation.

### Justification (Also see Section 4.5)

Stormwater management within the Downtown study area is currently inadequate, and poses a significant limitation to growth and investment in the Downstreet area. A reconstruction of the stormwater system between Atlantic Avenue and High Street is necessary.

A 2007 engineering assessment of the Downtown stormwater management system concluded that the existing system was not designed as a coordinated system and is not capable of properly handling 25-year flood events, let alone the larger events that are now more common. Flooding from large rainfall events periodically occurs now in several Downstreet buildings and streets as a result of runoff exceeding catch basin capacities, with some stormwater backing up through storm drains especially when high tides coincide with storm events. In those conditions, water may also percolate up underneath Downstreet buildings that are built on grout fill containing voids and sinkholes. In addition, in places the Main Street roadway is pitched toward several low-lying buildings with inadequate stormwater collection at those locations. Many other storm drains are at incorrect elevations and locations to properly intercept water before it overwhelms low-lying areas and buildings.

The 2007 study provided a redesign of catchment areas, basins, pipes, culverts, and outfalls, to properly address handling larger 50- and 100-year flood events. Recommended measures

included larger collection catch basins and outfall pipes, replacing aging metal corrugated culverts with smooth plastic culverts to improve water flow, installing one-way valves on outfall pipes to eliminate backflow, and considering closed-system collection near low-lying buildings with an option to discharge to the wastewater management system. However, none of those measures were funded or implemented.

The uncertainties surrounding flooding and sea level rise may discourage some from investing in Downstreet buildings for the long term. Raising individual structures might represent options for individual landowners to consider to save structures in the face of future flooding. There may be funding solutions available in the form of grants, low-interest loans, or financial underwriting by a community development organization or non-profit investor group. Creating or securing that kind of support has been successfully accomplished recently by several Maine towns facing revitalization challenges, such as Bridgton, Monson, and Damariscotta.

### **Design Considerations**

- A redesigned stormwater management system for the Downtown area may include collection and conveyance pipes, catchment basins, and outfall pipes that must cross the Town Garage property. The location of stormwater infrastructure must be accommodated either within the Windy Way roadway or through the new parking lot in a way that allows access for maintenance and repair.
- The routing of stormwater infrastructure should be done to avoid any interference with or limitation of future development of the Town Garage site with a multi-story building.

### **Constraints**

- Buildings that are low in elevation and already at risk of flooding would need to either: a) have the structure raised to accommodate a higher-elevation sidewalk; or b) have the sidewalk slope down to a lower elevation in front of their building (at least until the building is raised in the future.) In the latter case, the roadway elevation will likely need to match the lower sidewalk elevation. Stormwater system design will need to appropriately configure catch basins and roadway crowning, and consider installation of local closed-system segments, to protect the property from roadway stormwater runoff.
- The design and routing of stormwater pipes and other utility infrastructure underneath a new parking lot at the Town Garage site should be done to avoid any interference with or limitation of potential future development of the site with a multi-story building.

### **Estimated Cost**

\$450,000-\$550,000

### **Funding**

Federal CWSRF

Resiliency Grants

### **Timetable**

2021-2022

## 6.10 Capital Projects and Actions - Sea Level Rise Adaptation

*Implement adaptation measures for roads, sidewalks, utility infrastructure; inform owners*

### **Projects/Actions**

#### *Near term – Adaptation*

- 1) Elevate road and sidewalks (as recommended above)
- 2) Evaluate stormwater and sewer system risks, and reconfigure them for adaptation (as recommended above)
- 3) Encourage private property owners to consider flood-proofing measures (as recommended above)
- 4) Develop and institute a notification process or system to provide property owners with a long-term schedule and advance warning of expected nuisance flooding events, and warning of storm events
- 5) Implement ways to adapt to nuisance flooding under a 1-foot sea level rise, using recommendations from the Sea Level Rise Committee
- 6) Request that MSFS calculate and publicize well in advance a schedule of planned ferry schedule adjustments due to loading ramp operation interference during peak tides
- 7) Encourage the MSFS to evaluate and address flood and wave risks to ferry infrastructure under climate change and sea level rise scenarios

#### *Long term – Protection and/or Retreat*

- 1) Encourage new development at higher elevations within the Main Street corridor
- 2) Consider a long term plan to raise wharf elevations
- 3) Consider modifying millrace sluice structure with a gate to inhibit flow to Carvers Pond
- 4) Encourage private property owners renovating Downtown buildings to have first floors located above future FEMA base flood elevation
- 5) Consider further elevating all structures in the Downstreet area
- 6) Take advantage of lifecycle replacements and upgrades

### **Ordinance Changes**

- 1) Review existing Floodplain Ordinance regarding requirements for new construction and renovation
- 2) Review and consider the viability of instituting a simple Design Review ordinance and process that will include review of sea level rise and storm surge adaptation/readiness.

### **Justification (Also see Section 4.5)**

A present, any high tide above 11.5' floods a portion of the Downstreet parking lot for a short period of time, generally less than 2-3 hours at peak slack tide. Inundation of other Town infrastructure, such as lower-lying sewer system pumping stations, occurs at the same time. Buildings with thresholds or facilities below the 9' elevation are at risk from these same tides. Hydraulic pressure from such peak tides can also result in subsurface infiltration of seawater under Downstreet buildings, as water percolates up through voids in the man-made grout fill.

Seawater can also force its way back up through stormwater systems and out through connected storm drains into the streets at peak tides, unless one-way valves have been installed in the stormwater discharge pipes.

Because of the cyclic nature of tides, periodic nuisance flooding due to tidal forces can be predicted months and even years in advance with tide tables and software. Alerting property owners well in advance can help them prepare for and adapt to such periodic flooding with minimal disruption.

The 2017 Ransom report identified some engineering and construction options that could help mitigate potential flood damage from sea level rise to individual private properties. These include raising structures and various floodproofing measures within buildings. Property owners along Main Street may or may not be aware of these options, and the Town should help make that information available, along with information on potential funding options that private property owners might consider for such improvements.

Based on information received from the MSFS, it appears the State has not completed a risk analysis or feasibility study addressing the potential impacts to Vinalhaven ferry infrastructure from climate change or sea level rise. The Ferry Pen infrastructure could be susceptible to damages from wave run-up and overtopping, as well as flooding from an extremely high tide. Ferry infrastructure is critical for continued viability of the community, and must be protected and modified as needed to continue service to the island.

In the long term, it is possible that sea level rise will cause some Main Street properties to be inundated daily, under normal tidal conditions. It is also likely that a structure subject to tidal flooding would be damaged by a storm event long before sea level has risen enough for this concern to play out. If long-term plans are not implemented to raise or otherwise protect properties so that they can accommodate daily flooding, as well as flooding from more extreme events, the best approach may be to remove structures from these areas (i.e., retreat).

**Estimated Cost**

TBD

**Funding**

TBD

**Timetable**

TBD

## 6.11 Capital Projects and Actions - Waterfront Access and Development

*Strengthen ordinances; support marine businesses; consider acquisitions to improve access*

### Projects/Actions

- 1) Monitor the availability of waterfront properties and consider Town acquisitions to provide more access to wharves, float space, and parking for the fishing community and the public.
- 2) Retain the existing public boat ramps along Main Street, and explore options for identifying and securing access to another boat ramp location outside of the Main Street corridor.
- 3) Evaluate conditions and make improvements as needed at the Town's Downstreet lot and wharf to accommodate small passenger vessels and water taxis
- 4) Encourage the development of new marine-oriented businesses along the Main Street corridor
- 5) Encourage a mixed-use re-development of the Harborview Apartments property that will retain year-round housing and include increasing access and use of the existing wharf and harbor access at the site.

### Ordinance Changes

- 1) Review the existing ordinance language allowing "Other commercial activities" in the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District*, to clarify the intent to allow flexibility in approving uses and businesses that are not directly related to the fishing or commercial maritime industry.
- 2) Review and determine if any ordinance language needs to be modified to allow a private passenger ferry service to operate in the harbor and/or utilize Town docking facilities

### Justification (Also see Section 2.3)

Protecting and supporting the fishing economy and commercial fishing operations around the harbor is a top priority of this Downtown Master Plan. Maintaining and increasing public access to the waterfront, including more dock and float space for fishermen who lack other access, and maintaining scenic harbor views, are also important priorities. A number of properties on the waterfront have harbor access infrastructure but today are not primarily marine facilities. Encouraging re-use of those properties in ways that preserve housing, provide space for small businesses, and increase harbor access can add value to all three of the Vinalhaven economies.

### Design Considerations

As part of the Main Street roadway redesign, include sufficient sightlines, road widths, and appropriate signage to accommodate the two existing boat ramps on Main Street.

### Constraints

Waterfront property values may exceed funding availability.

### Estimated Cost

TBD

### Funding

Land for Maine's Future program.

### Timetable

2021-2025

## 6.12 Capital Projects and Actions - Housing

### Projects/Actions

- 1) Explore and support the establishment of a community investment corporation as described in Sections 2.8 and 6.2, that would be capable of seeking and administering funding to support affordable housing in the Main Street corridor.

### Ordinance Changes

- 1) Revisit the topic of allowing second floor residences in the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District*, and consider a revision of the *Land Use Ordinance* to allow such conversions while protecting access and traditional use of the harbor.
- 2) Review and consider *Land Use Ordinance* modifications that could influence or prevent the conversion of apartments to condominiums unless year-round occupancy and usage controls can be met.
- 3) Review and consider ordinance modifications to control and limit non-owner-occupied short-term rentals in the Downtown area
- 4) Consider amending the language in the *Land Use Ordinance* Section 13.I.H.1 to clarify the exclusion of Lot 62 from the *Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District*

### Justification (Also see Section 2.8)

A shortage of housing for Main Street employees emerged as an important concern for stakeholders interviewed in this study, and the Vinalhaven Housing Committee has identified an overall shortage of year-round apartments on the island, particularly in the *Village Overlay District*. The preservation and creation of year-round housing is a priority for this Downtown Master Plan.

There is a potential risk of losing year-round housing units through the conversion of single-family residences to become multi-unit, non-owner-occupied, short-term rentals, and by the conversion of year-round apartments to condominiums that could become short-term rentals or have seasonal use only. Preserving year-round housing can be helped by making changes in the Town's ordinances to limit the conversion of existing residences to non-owner-occupied, short-term rental units, and by exploring the possibility of limiting the conversions of apartments to condominiums.

Several waterfront businesses have also expressed interest in converting at least a portion of the upper floors of their year-round commercial buildings to have small year-round apartments, which could be used by employees, owners, or managers of these businesses. There is a valid argument for allowing the use of upper floors of waterfront buildings for residences, but only if that use does not interfere with or in any way reduce access to the harbor for the fishing and commercial marine industries.

### Constraints

Downstreet apartment-related *Parking Ordinance* changes should not be adopted until additional parking areas are constructed in the downtown area.

### Estimated Cost

N/A

## **Funding**

There are federal funding programs available that provide grants and subsidies to non-profit housing organizations for the purchase, construction, and operational support of affordable housing facilities for the elderly and low-income individuals. Examples include:

- The HUD *Main Street Grant Program* provides grants to small communities to assist in the renovation of an historic or traditional central business district or “Main Street” area, by replacing unused, obsolete, commercial space in buildings with affordable housing units. Grants of up to \$1,000,000 have been available through this program in the past. The obsolete building space property may be publicly or privately owned. The objectives of the program are:
  - Redevelop central business districts (Main Street areas);
  - Preserve Historic or traditional Main Street area properties by replacing unused commercial space in buildings with affordable housing units;
  - Enhance economic development efforts in Main Street areas; and
  - Provide affordable housing in Main Street areas.
- The HUD *HOME Investment Partnerships Program* (HOME) provides formula grants that communities use - often in partnership with local nonprofit groups - to fund a wide range of activities including building, buying, and/or rehabilitating affordable housing for rent or homeownership or providing direct rental assistance to low-income people. HOME is the largest Federal block grant to state and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households.
- The HUD *Section 202 Program* provides capital advances to finance the construction, rehabilitation or acquisition with or without rehabilitation of structures that will serve as supportive housing for very low-income elderly persons, including the frail elderly, and provides rent subsidies for the projects to help make them affordable.

## **Timetable**

Near term (2019-2020) for ordinance changes

Medium term (2020-2023) for establishing an entity to support affordable housing on the island.

## 6.13 Capital Projects and Actions - Streetscapes, Public Spaces, and Wayfinding

*Downtown benches; multi-purpose spaces for events; pocket parks; wayfinding signage; roadside landscaping*

### **Projects/Actions**

- Install pedestrian benches on sidewalks at appropriately spaced locations along the Main Street corridor, primarily Downstreet
- Negotiate with landowners to create a small park with appropriate landscaping and benches at the redesigned intersection of Clamshell Alley and Main Street
- Negotiate with landowners to create a small park with appropriate landscaping and benches on the Carvers Pond waterfront adjacent to the Town Garage site
- Work with the Legion Post and MSFS to encourage increased use of Grimes park through better wayfinding signage and safer pedestrian access
- Encourage private property owners to install landscaping and plantings along their frontage
- Establish a graphic standard for wayfinding signage throughout the Main Street corridor
- Encourage Main Street property owners to install and properly manage roadside plantings and landscaping where possible

### **Ordinance Changes**

- None

### **Justification (Also see Section 2.9)**

Many stakeholders have requested the establishment of a few informal public gathering spaces throughout the Main street corridor, but particularly Downstreet, where there are no public areas that serve as green space, gathering places, or designated points of interest. For pedestrians walking from the Ferry Terminal, the marine industrial corridor of West Main Street leads to a historic and commercial Downstreet with no benches, roadside landscaping, pocket parks, or even many trash cans along the way. The costs and time required for maintaining public areas are valid concerns, but some pedestrian amenities could be added at minimal cost and great benefit.

The Downstreet parking lot is a highly scenic location that attracts many Main Street pedestrians. Although there is a maintained public bathroom adjacent to the wharf, there is no additional infrastructure for the public to use in this area. There are no benches for seating, no picnic tables to enjoy a take-out lunch from one of the restaurants, no trash cans, no designated areas to safely walk outside of parking lot travel lanes, no bike racks. This parking lot is in one of the most desirable and scenic parts of downtown, and yet the Town cannot take advantage of the location as a public space because it is the primary parking area downtown, and it cannot accommodate park-like features without impacting parking availability. The solution is adding another parking lot nearby and within the Main Street corridor, which is a recommended action in this Downtown Master Plan. Adding small pocket parks in that vicinity will also provide places for pedestrians to rest and meet.

**Estimated Cost**

\$80,000-\$100,000

**Funding**

Town of VH

ME Project Canopy

ME Land and Water Conservation Fund

Star of Hope Foundation

VH Chamber of Commerce

Private donations

**Timetable**

2023

## 6.14 Capital Projects and Actions - Historic Preservation

*Strengthen and modify ordinances; property owner assistance*

### **Projects/Actions**

- 1) Monitor proposals to the Planning Board for proposed renovations or demolition of historic buildings Downstreet, and ensure existing ordinance requirements are being met during the review process with regard to sites of historic importance to the community
- 2) Encourage a collaborative effort between the *Historic Downstreet* group and the *Vinalhaven Historical Society* to develop and fund an outreach and support program that provides interested property owners with assistance in identifying their building's heritage and posting appropriate signs to that effect
- 3) Consider having the Town of Vinalhaven establish a historic preservation commission and join the State of Maine's *Certified Local Government Program* to provide access to grants and other financial support and resources.
- 4) Establish a graphic standard for historic information signage in the Village

### **Ordinance Changes**

- 1) Consider the establishment of a blight ordinance that addresses actions related to deteriorated buildings posing public health or safety risks
- 2) Consider whether the existing floodplain ordinance is providing the intended results for protecting properties from damage or destruction with regard to tidal flooding, storm surge, and sea level rise
- 3) Review and consider the viability of instituting a simple design review ordinance and process, including a demolition clause that would cover a designated portion of the Main Street corridor

### **Justification (Also see Sections 2.1 and 2.10)**

Many Downstreet historic structures have been well-maintained or recently renovated, and those present an attractive appearance to the street and add vibrancy to Downtown. Not all structures have been maintained to the same extent, however, and the lack of form-based design requirements or related façade ordinances has allowed some historic structures to be modified or demolished over time. Protecting and preserving these historic structures is of great interest to residents and visitors alike. However, despite community interest, a Historic Building Ordinance has not been adopted, although the existing Vinalhaven Land Use Ordinance does include a requirement for considering historic value in development or construction activities

The Town's Floodplain Ordinance stipulates permit conditions and some technical requirements for new construction and renovations within the FEMA flood zone, which constitutes all of the Downstreet area. It is unclear whether these requirements have been required for construction and renovations performed within Downstreet in the past decade, or whether those requirements were waived by the Planning Board or Code Enforcement Officer. There also are no Vinalhaven ordinances defining or dealing with building deterioration or "blighted properties", although there can be fire, health and safety issues that arise with such conditions.

With regard to architecture, facades, and exterior features, there are no specific form-based codes or design requirements in any Vinalhaven zoning district. Design standards that might include demolition controls are perceived by some as intrusive or threatening to private property rights, yet the absence of any standards can result in the demolition and loss of historic properties, as well as detrimental changes or degradation of neighborhood character and appearance. Form-based codes can be a burdensome approach for small communities with small or no planning departments, but there are other solutions available for towns with limited resources. For example, a *form-based design review* is a streamlined, alternative approach that can target smaller designated areas of a town to achieve specific preservation goals and preserve character.

The concept of establishing a historic district in the Downtown study area was reviewed by the DTC for this study, and by other community groups in recent years. Depending on its designation as a federal- or state-certified historic district, there can be some financial or tax advantages to historic property owners, as well as opportunities to obtain funding for restoration or preservation activities. There also can be some constraints on construction and exterior treatments, but usually only if federal funds are received for the work. Although the community wants to see historic buildings preserved, such potential restrictions are not popular with many islanders, and so seeking historic district designation at this time is not a recommendation of this Downtown Master Plan.

A preferred alternative approach is to simply focus on educating residents, property owners, and visitors on the historic aspects of Vinalhaven's buildings, and to instill a sense of pride throughout the community regarding our architectural heritage. This can be done through outreach, interpretive signage, occasional architectural walks led by Vinalhaven Historical Society volunteers, and providing interested property owners with assistance in identifying their building's heritage and in posting appropriate signs to that effect, if the owner desires. The VHS has already created a "Walking Tour of Vinalhaven" brochure highlighting some of the more historic buildings and points of interest in the Village, which can serve as a starting point for these efforts. Establishing a graphic standard for signage in the Village can also lend consistency and a sense of a unified district.

**Estimated Cost**

Minimal

**Funding**

Town of VH  
VH Historical Society  
Private Donations

**Timetable**

2020-2025

## 6.15 Capital Projects and Actions - Broadband

The Vinalhaven Broadband Committee is continuing their evaluation of broadband service on Vinalhaven, and will be making recommendations regarding any expansions or modifications to existing services, or the creation of new service initiatives. At this time, no capital projects or ordinance changes related to broadband services are being recommended as part of this Downtown Master Plan. The topic should be revisited when the Broadband Committee completes their planning efforts.

The primary considerations related to broadband for this Downtown Master Plan are to ensure that existing internet and telecom service infrastructure, including existing poles and cabling, remain in place and intact during and following roadway and sidewalk construction activities along Main Street.

No underground broadband infrastructure is being recommended within the corridor due to concerns about potential flooding and sea level rise impacts.

## 6.16 Capital Projects and Actions - The Community Center Concept

### Projects/Actions

- 1) Establish a *Net Factory Site Re-Use Committee* charged with investigating options and developing a long-term plan to redevelop the site

### Ordinance Changes

None

### Justification (Also see Sections 2.1 and 2.9)

The 2017 DART study presented the concept of establishing a new community center in the heart of downtown, by redeveloping the existing Town Garage/Net Factory site on Wind Way into a multi-story community center. Their model was to create a pedestrian-friendly, multi-purpose facility with a parking garage on the ground floor, community center functions on a second floor, and residential housing on the upper floors. Combined with the redevelopment of open land along East Main Street into residential housing, and the creation of a park and walkway in the Pondsides area, the DART team suggested such a facility could provide a vibrant center for events, education, recreation, and living space.

There are complications with executing this idea, including complex land positions and private ownership, traffic patterns and pedestrian risks at nearby intersections, flood risks from storm events and sea level rise, and available funding mechanisms. Still, when you consider the dramatic changes that have occurred along the Main Street corridor over the past century, appropriate re-use of this central property could help transform and revitalize Downtown.

The Town is moving forward with plans to relocate the Town Garage to another location, which presents an opportunity to consider alternative uses for the Net Factory site. Although the Vinalhaven Water District shares ownership of the property with the Town and currently uses a portion of the structure for an office and equipment storage, relocation of the Water District office should be feasible and relatively straightforward.

There are very few developable properties of this size and orientation within the Main Street corridor, making it an attractive site for potential re-use. The site is relatively flat, and is within easy walking distance of important downtown resources including retail stores, the post office, library, restaurants, the grocery store, and a public dock. Because of the location, the 2017

DART study considered the site to be a key anchor property within the corridor, and the DART team proposed redeveloping the property into a multi-story community center that could provide ground-floor parking, meeting spaces, and workforce housing (Figure 2-15).

There may be some technical limitations that could influence redevelopment of this site. A 2014 engineering evaluation by Gartley & Dorsky indicates that although the existing large structure could be stabilized, it may not be suitable or economically feasible to renovate it into a multi-story mixed-use facility due to structural deterioration. The entire property also lies well within the FEMA flood zone, and thus any development of the site will need to consider and address potential risks from flooding and sea level rise. For that reason, any ground-level uses of the site should probably be limited to a parking facility that is designed to withstand periodic flooding. Finally, it is not known whether there are any environmental liabilities at the site related to its prior uses as a factory, a gas station, and a repair garage.

Considering the convenient location and size of this property, its potential value as a central public space, and the possible technical limitations for construction, this Master Plan strongly recommends that the Town establish a *Site Re-Use Committee* that is charged with investigating options and developing a long-term plan to redevelop the site. In the interim, this Plan recommends creating additional public parking areas at the site as an initial use, with the caveat that construction of those parking areas should be done in a way that will not conflict with or preclude future use of the site for other purposes.

**Estimated Cost**

N/A

**Funding**

N/A

**Timetable**

2020-2025

## Acronyms Glossary

|       |                                                             |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| ADA   | Americans with Disabilities Act                             |
| CDBG  | Community Development Block Grant program                   |
| CIP   | Capital Improvement Program                                 |
| CWSRF | Clean Water State Revolving Fund                            |
| DACF  | Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry |
| DART  | Design and Resiliency Team                                  |
| DHHS  | Maine Department of Health and Human Services               |
| DTC   | Downtown Committee                                          |
| DWSRF | Drinking Water State Revolving Fund                         |
| FEIC  | Fox Islands Electric Cooperative                            |
| FEMA  | Federal Emergency Management Authority                      |
| HUD   | U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development            |
| ICMS  | Islands Community Medical Services                          |
| ISONE | Independent System Operator, New England                    |
| ISP   | Internet Service Provider                                   |
| LOMR  | Letter of Map Revision                                      |
| LLC   | Limited Liability Corporation                               |
| MDA   | Maine Downtown Affiliate program                            |
| MDF   | Maine Development Foundation                                |
| MDOT  | Maine Department of Transportation                          |
| MMA   | Maine Municipal Associations                                |
| MSFS  | Maine State Ferry Service                                   |
| MSHA  | Maine State Housing Authority                               |
| NRHP  | National Register of Historic Places                        |
| PAR   | Pedestrian Access Route                                     |
| RALA  | Rural Active Living Assessment                              |
| SLR   | Sea Level Rise                                              |
| TIF   | Tax Increment Financing                                     |
| TWL   | Total Water Level                                           |
| USDA  | U.S. Department of Agriculture                              |
| USEPA | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency                        |

## Photo Credits

A number of the photos in this Plan were provided through the courtesy of others. The use of these photos is greatly appreciated.

| <u>Figure</u>          | <u>Photo Credits</u>                         |
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| Front Cover, bottom    | Vinalhaven Historical Society                |
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| 1-6, 2-1, 2-2          | Vinalhaven Historical Society                |
| 2-3, 2-4               | Vinalhaven Historical Society                |
| 2-5                    | Vinalhaven Historical Society                |
| 2-6                    | Jim Boone                                    |
| 2-9                    | Vinalhaven Historical Society                |
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| 2-50                   | MRLD Architects                              |
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| 2-54                   | The Tidewater, Sarah Crossman                |
| 2-60                   | The Tidewater, Sarah Crossman                |
| 2-61                   | The Tidewater, Sarah Crossman                |
| 4-1                    | The Tidewater, Sarah Crossman                |
| 4-2                    | Ransom Engineers                             |

## **Appendix**

- 1. Stakeholder interview questionnaire**
- 2. Main Street Building inventory**
- 3. Downtown Committee meeting minutes 2016-2019**
- 4. Town of Vinalhaven Comprehensive Plan (2013)**
- 5. Town of Vinalhaven Sidewalk Committee Report (2006)**
- 6. Downtown Drainage Study (2007)**
- 7. Town of Vinalhaven Economic Development Strategy (2014)**
- 8. Broadband study for the Maine Offshore Islands (2015)**
- 9. DART Report (2017)**
- 10. Ransom Coastal Flooding Report (2018)**
- 11. Vinalhaven Water District Capital Improvement Plan (2018)**
- 12. Vinalhaven Wastewater System Climate Adaptation Plan (2019)**