

Section II.

Islesboro 2030 Guiding Statement

A. CHARACTER OF THE COMMUNITY

Islesboro is an island community with unsurpassed natural beauty. Its history is steeped in colonial settlement, farming, fishing, boating, shipping, and summer colonies that have left their marks – some more visible than others – on the fabric of the town’s built and natural landscape, services, and institutions. Its citizens are made up of proud generations of year round and seasonal residents who are fiercely committed to supporting their vibrant community.

The identity of **Islesboro** is captured in its historic buildings and “cottages” – Grindle Point Light, Alice L. Pendleton Library, Free Will Baptist Church, Second Baptist Church, Christ Church, St. Mary of the Isles Catholic Church, Masonic Hall, Historical Society, and Dark Harbor Shop. Its built environment is embedded in its equally beautiful natural setting, including Pendleton Point, Seal Harbor, the Narrows, Hutchins Island, Turtle Head, and Charlotte, Coombs, and Parker Coves. Gathering places, like the Community Center, Central School, Boardman Cottage, the two island grocery stores, the Post Office, Town Office, Big Tree Beach and Boating, the Sporting Club, and the Tarratine tennis, golf, and yacht club with separate, scattered facilities, are also highly valued by the community.

Historically, the Island included four self-sufficient villages – Pripet, also known as Warren’s or Beckett’s Landing, North Islesboro (west of Ryder Cove), Islesboro, also known as Guinea Village, and Dark Harbor. Since transportation was limited to walking, bicycling, and horse-drawn vehicles, there was little communication or interchange among the four main areas of the Island. “Each village had its own church, grade school, sewing circle...stores, and amusements...”¹

Today, signs of most of the historic villages in Islesboro have faded away, though their presence is still evident in clusters of smaller lots, businesses, and community buildings at Pripet, Ryder Cove, Islesboro (Guinea Village east to Hewes Point), and Dark Harbor. In addition, elements of a more contemporary town center are emerging near the intersection of Mill Creek and Pendleton Point roads in the vicinity of the Town Office and the new elderly housing facility, Boardman Cottage.

While many visitors have the benefit of seeing only a slice of Islesboro, its long term year round and seasonal residents know full well the value of its neighborhoods, each with a distinct character. More than half of Islesboro’s land, 4,649 acres, is made up of parcels that include residences. About 1/3 of the Island is undeveloped. Approximately 65% of Islesboro’s parcels and nearly 56% of its acreage is residential, the vast majority being single family homes. Residences are scattered across the community, generally in relatively large lots, although there are clusters of small lots in a number of places, reflecting historic settlement patterns in small villages. Only about 11% of the land includes all of the Town’s commercial, mixed commercial-residential, conservation, town-owned, agriculture, state-owned, industrial, utility, and civic uses. Clusters of commercial land uses occur in the vicinity of Kedears Hill, North Islesboro, near the Town Office, James Cove, and Dark Harbor; but many people operate businesses out of their homes.

¹ Farrow, John Pendleton, History of Islesborough Maine 1764-1892. Picton Press, Rockland, ME. 2007. Islesboro Historical Society, History of Islesboro, Maine 1893-1983. Seavey Printers, Inc., Portland, ME. 1984.

Up Island – Islesboro’s pre-1900 pattern of larger blocks of open land remains intact in much of this area, particularly near Kedears Hill and within the loop created by Meadow Pond and Main roads, west of Meadow Pond and along Sprague Cove, an area extending northwest from Fire Island across Main Road, and a small area either side of Main Road. Nevertheless, the 1980’s and 1990’s brought increasing development Up Island, particularly on the west-facing shores of Seal Harbor, Marshall Point, and in the vicinity of Turtle Head.

Thus far in the first decade of the 21st century, most of Islesboro’s development has taken place Up Island, again on larger parcels of land, some on the eastern shore. Up Island is also home to the Transfer Station and Sporting Club. Special places and scenic views include Sprague Beach, Main Road toward Beckett’s Landing, Main Road across fields to Parkers Cove, and Ryder Cove.

Pripet, also known as Warren’s Landing/Beckett’s Landing – Formerly the site of an active lime kiln and home to the first steamboat wharf on the Island, the remnants of the former village are found in smaller lot sizes and a public right of way and boat launch with barge access by permit. Nearby areas along the Main Road offer breathtaking views across a horse farm and fields to Parker Cove.

North Islesboro – Durkee’s General Store and some smaller lots are what largely remain of this former village. Still, the store is a valued place to meet and shop in the community. Further north, the Free Will Baptist Church (Up Island Church) provides another community gathering spot.

Ryder Cove – Ryder Cove and Sabbathday Harbor drew visitors to Islesboro’s shores in its earliest days to relax, presumably on the Sabbath. Shortly after the Civil War, “pioneers” began to build summer cottages at Ryder Cove² and soon, the Bangor to Bar Harbor steamboat was stopping there. Existing homes were expanded and new summer hotels, that accommodated 100 or more guests, were constructed. Small cottages lining the shoreline are all that remain.

The Narrows – The low area that divides Up Island from Down Island, the Narrows was originally settled in big lots that extended from west to east bay. Between 1901 and 1970, when the decades long trend of declining population bottomed out and started to rise again, development of smaller parcels in Crow Cove and Northeast Point took place. Today, the area is home to many of Islesboro’s special places, including Seal Harbor, Big Tree Beach and Boating on the western shore, and Bounty Cove and Islesboro Harbor on the eastern shore.

Down Island – More intensely developed areas are found Down Island, although there is significant undeveloped land within the old Islesboro village extending into the loop created by West Bay, Main, and Mill Creek roads, an area around the intersection of Mill Creek and Pendleton Point roads extending south toward Charlottes Cove, and some scattered parcels on either side of Pendleton Point Road, mostly north and west of Dark Harbor. A small section of Dark Harbor is also undeveloped.

² Ibid.

A pattern of large parcels was developed, pre-1900, north of Jones Cove on the west side up to the Narrows. Between 1901 and 1970, a trend of more development on smaller parcels Down Island is apparent. When development started to shift northward in the 1980's and 1990's, small parcels continued to be developed Down Island, on Grindle Point and elsewhere.

Islesboro – Islesboro, or the village of Guinea, was long a center of activity for the Island. Near Islesboro Harbor, and a stone's throw from the summer colony of Hewes Point, the old Masonic Hall is nearby, as is the old baseball field (Bertha's Field) and the Alice L. Pendleton Library.

Hewes Point – Hewes Point was the second spot developed for summer cottages in Islesboro. By 1875, the Bangor to Bar Harbor steamboat also stopped at Hewes Point, existing homes were expanded, and summer hotels were constructed. Summer cottages on small lots are today the only reminder of bygone days. Maddie Dodge Field serves year round and summer residents alike.

Town Center – The emerging town center reflects both old and new development, including the Second Baptist Church, Island Market, and Post Office. The Town Office, which also houses the Health Center and Nursery/Preschool, Boardman Cottage, and the Community Center are evidence that this area is the center of community life for the Island.

Grindle Point – Most people come to and leave Islesboro via the Grindle Point Ferry, the historic Grindle Point Light Station and Museum providing the first welcoming sight for those returning home. Broad Cove is another of Islesboro's special places.

Dark Harbor – By the late 1800's, prominent New York, Boston, and Philadelphia families began to build more elaborate summer homes on the southern part of the Island at Dark Cove. By 1890, the first realty company on the Island, the Philadelphia and Islesboro Land and Improvement Company, had purchased 2000 acres in Gilkey Harbor north of Dark Harbor to build a summer colony of cottages and an elegant hotel. In 1891, they opened a wharf that tied into a steamboat run from Portland to Machias and in the following years opened new roads to different points of interest and beauty in the southern half of the Island. Today, much of this area remains intact, including the original retail structures and the nearby Tarratine yacht and tennis clubs.

Warren Island, Spruce Island, Many small surrounding islands – Islesboro includes a number of islands, including Warren Island, home of a state park, Seven Hundred Acre Island, Ram, Flat, Spruce, Seal, and other small islands that provide important bald eagle and sea bird nesting habitat.

B. ISLESBORO IN 2030

In 2030, most new, year round development will be mixed use and take place on smaller lots for single family attached and detached units, duplexes with mixed use apartments on upper floors, and small apartments in vernacular architectural styles.³ Existing and historic villages will include:

- the middle of town near the emerging town center around the Post Office from Mill Creek to the Town Office,
- near Durkee's store from Hermits Point Road to the Drift Inn by the "Y" in the road, and
- around Dark Harbor Village from Derby Road to Alumni Drive and from East Shore Drive to West Shore Road.

Additional year round development will include affordable housing near the Transfer Station, commercial and retail uses near the airport, and year round residences and commercial fishing development near a new dock at Warren's Landing. Villages will include the community's civic and recreational infrastructure, including the Community Center, restaurants, and a farmers' market.

Denser development will be supported with public and private community water and wastewater systems. These systems, as well as a requirement to use composting toilets and other "green" conservation measures, will protect Islesboro's groundwater resources. The Town and private development will have also invested in village area sidewalks, paths, and opportunities to travel on foot to destinations like the Islesboro Central School and the Community Center. Development will be encouraged first to infill along existing roads, with common access required in villages and common roads in cluster housing developments.

While the marketplace will decide where seasonal development will occur, likely on the waterfront, at least 2/3 of new development will be year round, nearly reversing current trends.

The Town Center will expand to serve as the core of the community, containing most central services, shops, and restaurants. Most businesses will be locally owned. Some businesses will rely, in part, on tourist dollars, but will also cater to year round residents and workers who have moved to the Island for jobs provided by non-tourist businesses. Pedestrians and bicyclists will be able to move around safely and with ease, sharing the road with vehicles.

Given their distance from the Town Center, the other villages will provide a smaller set of services for the community. There will be additional homes above retail uses and within walking distance of the villages. The pedestrian character, established in the villages, will incrementally extend outward to connect the villages will nearby institutions, activity centers, and special places. Motorized traffic will continue to be prominent along public roads, but traffic speed will be reduced to protect pedestrians and bicyclists who use improved roadway shoulders and occasional off-road trails. Scooters will be in greater use to provide alternative transportation on-Island and a shuttle service will be available to transport off-Island workers to and from the ferry each morning and evening during the work week. Bicycle tourists will be respectful of the need of Islanders to travel on local roads throughout the season.

³ In the Dark Harbor area, this includes the Dark Harbor Shop Shop/Williams Market type of architecture.

In general, waterbodies, pathways, public access to the water, and scenic views will be preserved. Dark skies, enabling view of stars, continues to be an important aspect of the community. The Post Office, churches, library, school, Town Office, Historical Society, Grindle Point Light and Museum, and Community Center are central to community life.

Islesboro will continue to be made up of distinct neighborhoods, each with a unique character. It will have an expanded working waterfront, greater economic opportunity, a stellar school system, and more affordable housing that will help support a stable, year round population. Reliable, more broadly available access to high speed internet will help support entrepreneurs, artists, and 21st century trade, as well as the everyday household life of islanders who need a connection to the world beyond the Island. The Town's economic development committee will have launched an economic development corporation that helps provide residents with access to venture capital, and incubation programs for new and growing businesses. New jobs will offer attractive opportunities for Island youth, encouraging them to stay or return to Islesboro as their year round home. Seasonal residents and some tourists will come to the Island earlier in the season and stay later, attracted by coordinated marketing efforts and the availability of creative lodging and services, like two week-long resident education opportunities, that stay open in the expanded "shoulder seasons".

The community will be more self-reliant. It will host active agriculture that meets many of the needs of the local market in the summer months. An energy collective will have successfully focused residents' attention on conservation efforts and help underwrite energy costs with small alternative energy generating initiatives.

Relations between year round and seasonal residents will be better than ever. Communication with Town government and among Town committees will be a model of transparency, coordinated effort, and mutual respect for all the dedicated volunteers who help sustain Islesboro's vibrant, independent, and proud community life.