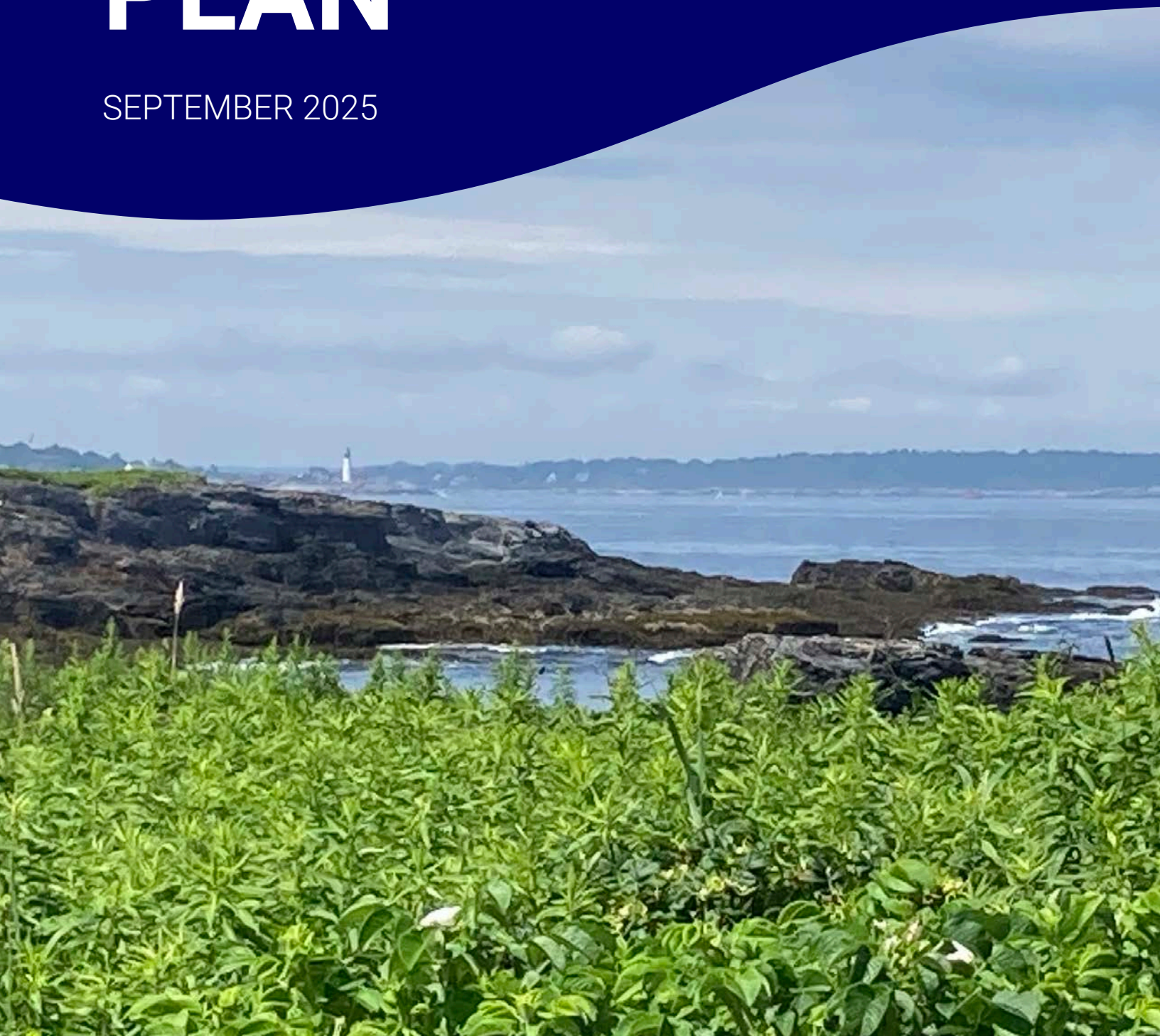
CAPE ELIZABETH

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2025





Together we can make Cape Elizabeth become a stronger, more resilient community that is sustainable for many generations to come.

The Climate Action Plan was adopted by Town Council on September 8, 2025

Acknowledgements

Cape Elizabeth's Climate Action Plan would not be possible without the support, dedication, and significant contribution of many involved. Thank you to all residents, local organizations, committees, and municipal staff who provided invaluable insights and feedback throughout the development of this plan. Your input helped insure this plan reflects the priorities and values of our community.

CAPE ELIZABETH

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SPECIAL THANKS

Thomas Memorial Library for hosting events

Cape Elizabeth Students for participating in surveys and attending events

Gulf of Maine Research Institute for providing climate change presentations and materials

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APPENDICES

The Plan presents 20 strategies across 5 sectors for how our town will reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. For each sector, we set out the goals, challenges , milestones, and actions for achieving those goals.

BUILDINGS AND ENERGY

Cape Elizabeth's buildings are energy efficient and powered by renewable sources. Our homes and businesses cost less to heat and maintain and are better for the environment.

1.1. Promote energy efficient buildings
1.2. Reduce community usage of fossil fuel heating sources
1.3. Expand usage of renewable energy sources
1.4. Prepare buildings for future climate hazards

TRANSPORTATION

Cape Elizabeth's transportation network is a robust, well-connected network of roads, sidewalks, bike lanes and EV infrastructure that allows emissions-free travel for everyday activities.

2.1. Expand accessible and safe active transportation infrastructure
2.2. Adapt infrastructure to climate impacts
2.3. Expand the usage of electric vehicles and EV infrastructure

LAND USE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Cape Elizabeth's coastlines, beloved beaches, and natural ecosystems are protected through climate-resilient land use and adaptation policies that conserve important open spaces and guide thoughtful growth.

3.1. Protect wetlands and open space
3.2. Align land use policies and adaptation techniques
3.3. Prepare for sustainable growth

RESILIENCE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Cape Elizabeth is a resilient community that adapts to risks, protects the vulnerable, and promotes sustainable resource use by investing in strong social networks, robust emergency preparedness, and a vibrant circular economy.

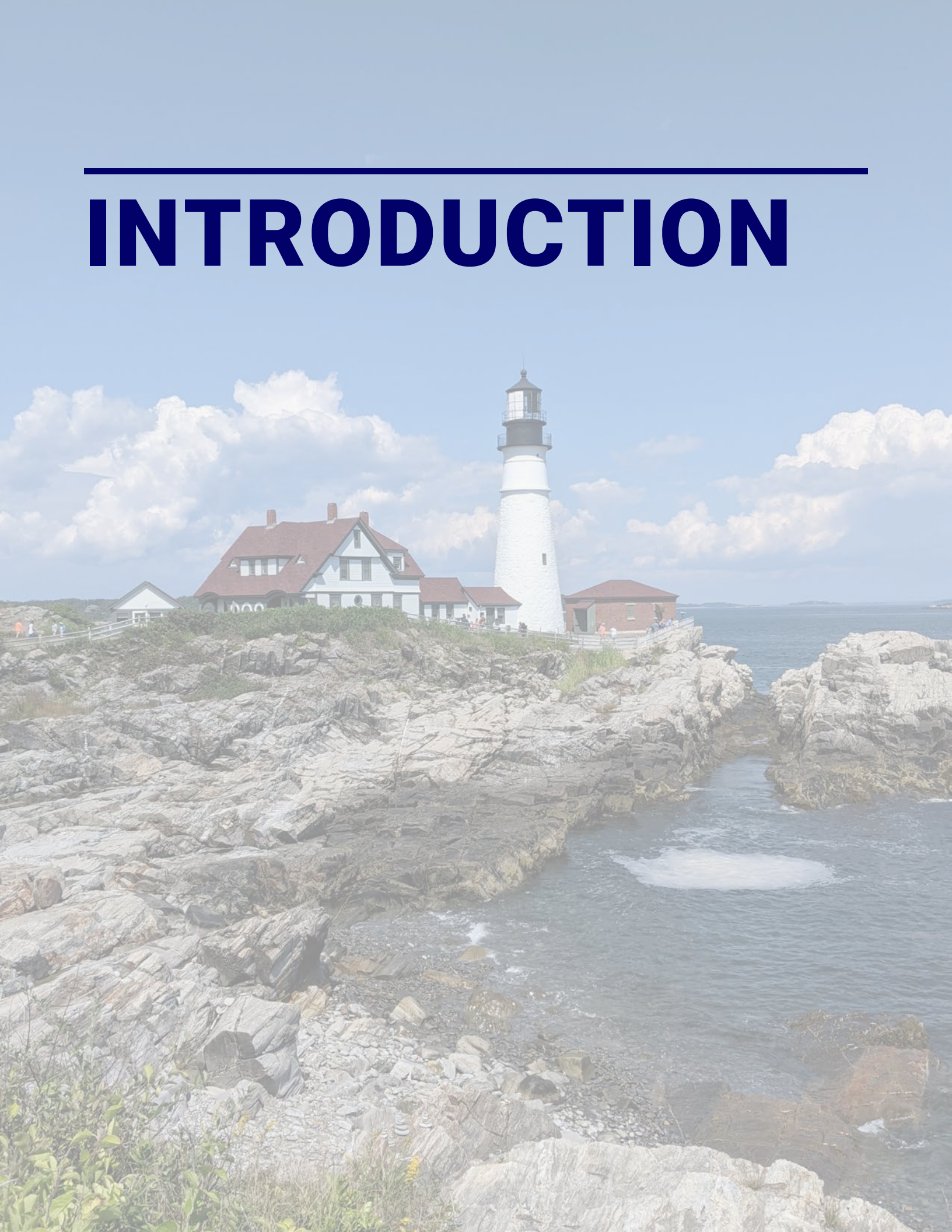
4.1. Promote healthy natural spaces
4.2. Adapt for extreme weather, power outages, and public health risks
4.3. Reduce waste volume and promote local resources
4.4. Protect local water and food supply
4.5. Update emergency management plans and techniques

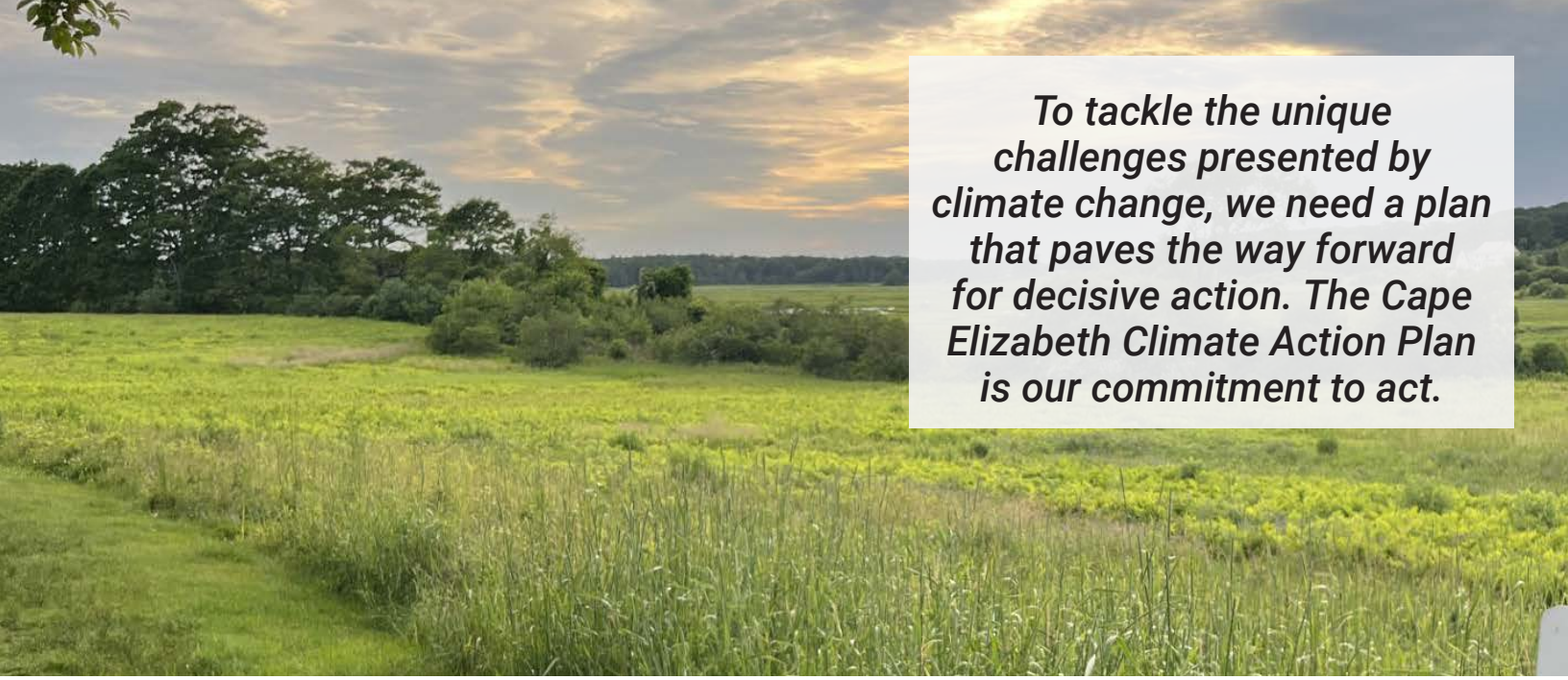
MUNICIPAL AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Cape Elizabeth's schools, Town buildings, and municipal fleet are energy efficient and powered by clean electricity. The Town serves as a leader of and model for climate resilience and adaptability in our community.

5.1. Improve energy efficiency of municipal and school buildings and facilities
5.2. Reduce fossil fuel use in government facilities
5.3. Ensure town leadership and support to enact Action Plan
5.4. Reduce GHG emission from the municipal vehicle fleet
5.5. Redevelop municipal procurement and discarding policies

INTRODUCTION





To tackle the unique challenges presented by climate change, we need a plan that paves the way forward for decisive action. The Cape Elizabeth Climate Action Plan is our commitment to act.

The Town of Cape Elizabeth is committed to taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance our ability to adapt to and recover from climate hazards. Our community is already feeling the impacts of climate change, with severe storms accelerating coastal erosion and flooding on coastal roads. Changing climatic conditions like these stress the community's infrastructure, ecosystem, and community resources.

Cape Elizabeth's Climate Action Plan draws from extensive data collection and community input. Over the last two years we have heard from residents, business owners, workers, and Town staff, whose combined voices helped shape the priorities and strategies emphasized in this plan.

By planning for climate change impacts and emissions reductions, we're investing in a resilient and sustainable future for our region. Through proactive action, Cape Elizabeth will safeguard its resources and foster a vibrant community for future generations.

WHAT IS A CLIMATE ACTION PLAN?

Cape Elizabeth's Climate Action Plan (CAP) is a strategic roadmap for the Town to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt and prepare for climate impacts, with the aim of creating a more livable future for everyone.

This plan will serve as a(n):

- Assessment of Cape Elizabeth's existing greenhouse gas emissions and climate vulnerabilities
- Framework for shaping Town policies and implementation strategies that support a financially sustainable response to climate change.
- Resource that aligns with and enhances existing plans across all Town departments and committees
- Strategic roadmap for identifying and implementing actionable strategies and potential partnerships to improve climate resilience
- Engagement tool to inspire our community to take part in tackling climate change

Why act now?

Reduce risk.
Strategies outlined in this Plan help manage current climate impacts and lower future risks. Through immediate and planned action, we have the power to create a sustainable, resilient future while enhancing our ability to respond to challenges.

Protect our values.
Cape Elizabeth is a coastal community that protects and values its natural resources and open space, and supports local food, working farms, and commercial fisheries. Adopting the strategies outlined in this plan will advance Cape Elizabeth's vision for protecting the community's heritage, iconic scenery, and natural beauty.

Promote sustainable investments.
Developing this plan provides the Town with a guide for smart, long-term investments in infrastructure, energy, and resilience. By aligning sustainability goals with fiscal responsibility, it ensures that public resources are used efficiently to build a healthier, more economically stable future.

Strengthen the community.
We have the chance to come together as a community to shape our path forward. Developing an action plan equips the community with adaptive strategies that protect public health, safety, and economic stability.

Build local action.
When local communities commit to climate action, they create meaningful changes on a global scale. By adopting a climate action plan, Cape Elizabeth joins a global movement of communities looking to act boldly to reduce emissions, strengthen local resilience, and invest in a sustainable future.



The Cost of Doing Nothing

"The failure to act against the effects of climate change carries a great risk for Maine, as doing nothing will cause costly damage to Maine's buildings and infrastructure, vulnerable ecosystems, iconic species, and public health." - 2020 "Maine Won't Wait" Climate Action Plan

According to the State's 2020 "Cost of Doing Nothing" report:

- The cost of inaction could be in the **billions for the state**
- **Damages from climate hazards are by far the biggest projected cost** and will increase over time the more we delay
- Flooding from sea level rise could cause building losses valued anywhere from **$512 million to $1.2 billion dollars**
- Forecasted sea level rise by 2050 threatens more than **21,000 coastal jobs** in tourism, fishing, and real estate across Maine
- Job losses in sectors such as natural resources and winter tourism would result in Maine's GDP decreasing anywhere between **$118 million to $2.4 billion dollars**, depending on sea level rise scenario

Proactive Investments Pay Off

Acting for climate solutions is a smart investment into our shared future. We save money by investing in our resiliency today through renewable energy and climate-ready infrastructure—avoiding the more expensive costs of disaster repairs and economic downturn that will happen if we don't prepare and adapt. From the 2025 Maine Infrastructure Resilience Report:

Every $1 invested in resilience avoids $13 in damages and economic losses.

Total costs of storms in Maine over the past three years will likely be over $100 million.

State and Regional Action

Cape Elizabeth is not alone in preparing for climate change. This plan aligns with regional and state initiatives that take bold steps towards a new future for Maine.

State Level Action

The Maine Climate Council released "Maine Won't Wait ," the State's Climate Action Plan in 2020, with an update in 2024. The State has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050 from 1990 base levels and reaching carbon neutrality by 2045. In addition, Maine is targeting 100% renewable energy sources for electricity by 2050.

Regional Level Action

By adopting this plan, Cape Elizabeth also joins more than 25 other communities across Maine that have adopted municipal climate action plans.

Funding for Climate Action

Carrying out the actions in this plan will involve substantial planning, resources, and funding. Some actions will be free or low-cost, while others will require significant financial investment. Although the up-front costs to mitigate and adapt may be high, the cost of inaction is far greater. The goal is to make climate action affordable and accessible, limiting the financial impact on the town and individual residents.

A variety of funding programs and mechanisms are already available to support the actions outlined in this plan which would not require increasing taxes. The State of Maine offers established funding opportunities that include grants and incentives that support local government action. Funding streams are continuously evolving, and new programs, technology, and collaborations may emerge in the upcoming years that could make actions more affordable. By creating this plan, Cape Elizabeth is best prepared to take advantage of these opportunities as they become available.

See pages 72-73 for more information on funding sources.



Navigating the Plan

The Climate Action Plan is developed through use of local data, shaped by community input, and driven by actionable strategies. The plan presents the challenges we are facing, the process we are developing, and the road we are taking to achieve our goals.



Climate Context

Learn how Cape Elizabeth is contributing to climate change through a variety of GHG emission sources and how climate change is affecting our community.

Building the Plan

Explore Cape Elizabeth's efforts to develop this plan into one that centers the needs and visions of the community.

Taking Action

Explore the 20 strategies and 88 specific actions developed for Buildings & Energy, Transportation & Infrastructure, Land Use & Natural Resources, Resilience & Public Health, and Municipal & School Operations.

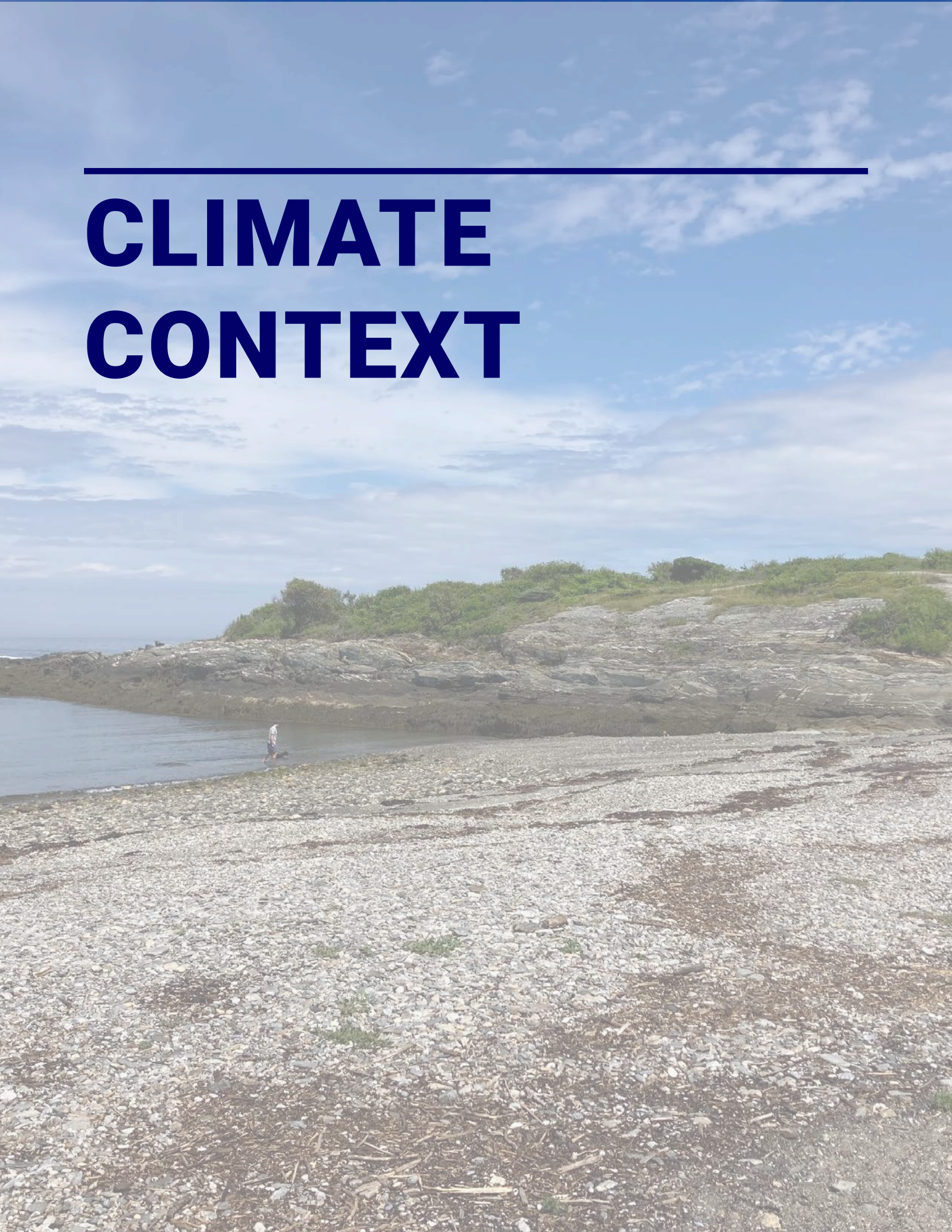
Path Forward

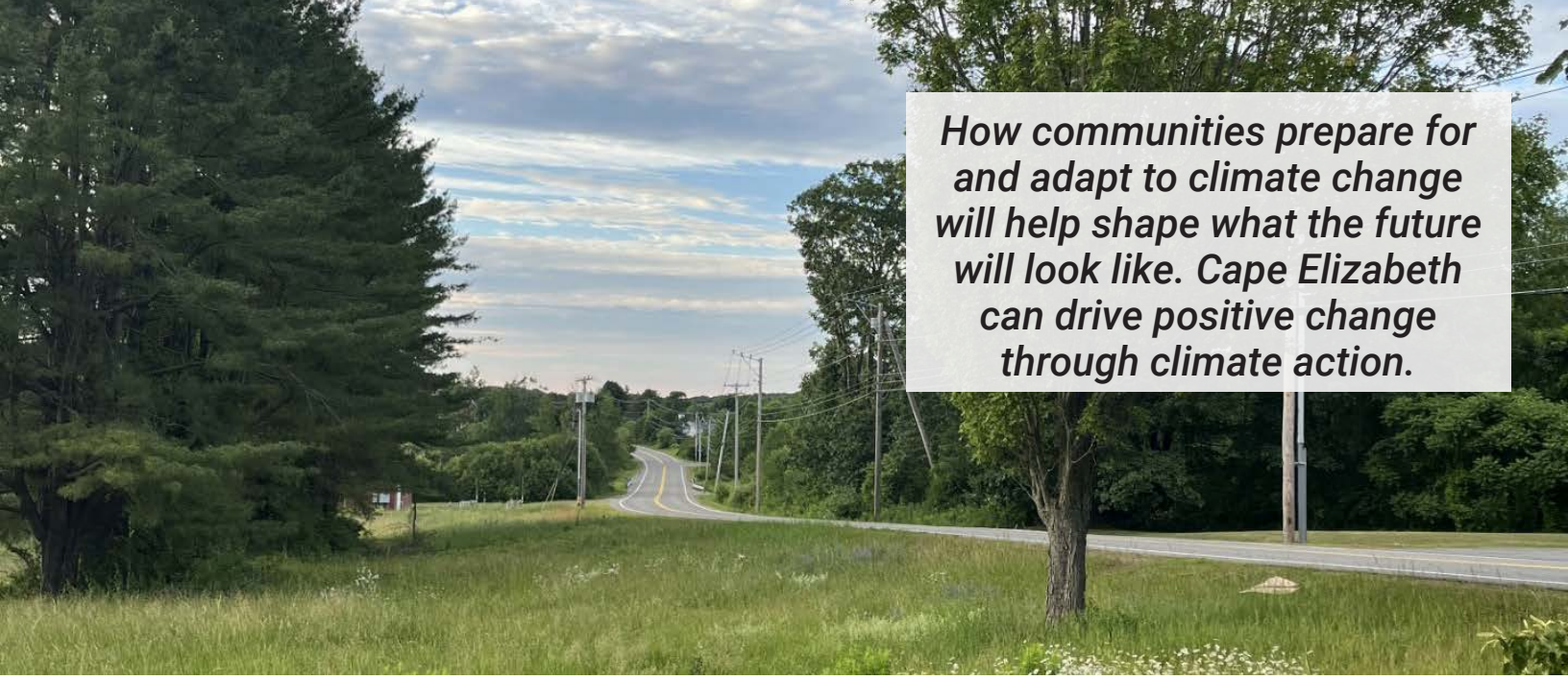
Discover the steps, metrics, and ways the town can implement the action plan and how we can make our own contributions to creating a sustainable future.

Dive into the Details

This plan is followed by technical documents: an Implementation Table, which further details the actions we will follow to reach our goals; a Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Vulnerability Assessment which layout data to shape our baseline knowledge; and the complete results of the community engagement participation.

CLIMATE CONTEXT



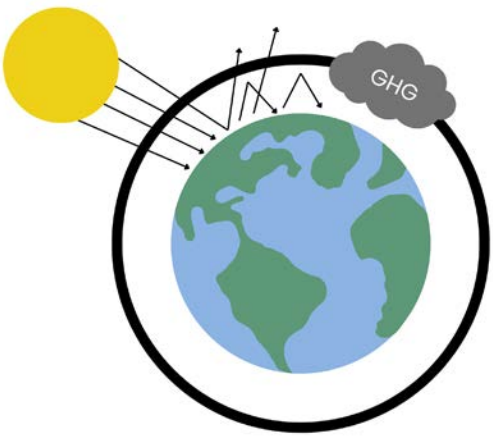


How communities prepare for and adapt to climate change will help shape what the future will look like. Cape Elizabeth can drive positive change through climate action.

Climate Change

Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are gases that trap heat inside the Earth's atmosphere. GHGs regulate the planet's temperature through a "blanket" effect that keeps surface conditions on Earth suitable to support life. While greenhouse gases can occur naturally, human activity has driven up the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere exponentially. When we burn fossil fuels such as coal, oil, or natural gas to heat our homes and power our vehicles, we produce GHG emissions. These emissions accumulate in our atmosphere, trapping heat and disrupting global climate patterns.

Our community already experiences the effects of climate change mainly through rising sea levels, coastal and inland flooding, and erosion of our shorelines. These challenges are only expected to intensify in the coming years, and the consequences of inaction are clear—costly repairs after severe storms, worsening health issues, and growing financial burdens on residents. By monitoring our emissions, assessing our vulnerabilities, and implementing proactive strategies, Cape Elizabeth charts a course toward a stronger, more resilient future.



Uncertain Climate Future

Climate modeling experts develop global climate projection scenarios to explore future emissions, related impacts and risks, and possible mitigation and adaptation strategies. These scenarios are based on a range of assumptions, such as carbon dioxide concentrations and socio-economic variables, and represent hypothetical situations that could unfold, depending on the presence or absence of climate policies. This makes planning for the future difficult, therefore we must prepare for a range of likely scenarios.

Cape Elizabeth's Climate

From our schools, homes, and businesses to our roads, parks, and beaches, climate change impacts all areas of our community. Climate hazards such as sea level rise and severe storms will exacerbate risks to the natural environment, economy, public health, and infrastructure of our community.

What we are seeing today

Over the last century Cape Elizabeth's climate has changed by:

+3°F
AVERAGE ANNUAL TEMPERATURE

+3
EXTREME DROUGHTS SINCE 2000

+6 INCHES
ANNUAL PRECIPITATION

+7.5 INCHES
SEA LEVEL RISE

-2 WEEKS
OF WINTER SINCE 1985

+2.5°F
CASCO BAY WATER TEMPERATURES

What we will see in the future

By 2050, Cape Elizabeth's climate is expected to be

+2-4°F
AVERAGE ANNUAL TEMPERATURE

4x
EXTREME HEAT DAYS (>95F)

+5%
ANNUAL PRECIPITATION

-50%
ANNUAL SNOWPACK

+2 WEEKS
GROWING SEASON

+1.5 FEET
SEA LEVEL RISE

Risks and Impacts

To take meaningful climate action, we first need to understand where Cape Elizabeth is most at risk. As part of our Climate Action Plan, Cape Elizabeth has conducted a Vulnerability Assessment (Appendix C). The Vulnerability Assessment looks at the threats that climate hazards bring, both now and into the future. It identifies the climate hazards our community is likely to face, and what parts of our community—resources, infrastructure, and natural resources—are most vulnerable. By understanding the risks to our community, we can prepare to act, adapt, and create local solutions for a changing climate. See Appendix C for more information on climate vulnerabilities

"Since long before I was born, My Grandmother and Grandfather's house has been a perfect spot right on the ocean, but when a bad storm hit, it flooded their basement and came up on the lawn. And the water is just going to keep rising, so they have started to think about selling or renting it."

-Cape Student



Key roadways, including Shore Road, Sawyer Road, and Spurwink Ave, are at-risk of flooding, restricting access. The town needs to proactively ensure these roadways and surrounding culverts can handle the increase in water and manage emergency routes.



Sea level rise, storm surge, and inland flooding can damage or strain the capacity of utility systems. The town will need to continue to inventory, monitor, and upgrade these systems to protect public infrastructure.



Climate hazards could impact over 100 buildings and properties in town, decrease property values, and increase financial burdens for residents, businesses, and the municipality. Proactive planning for sea level rise and increased flooding can protect these resources and save money long-term.



Extreme storms increase the risk of power outages – disrupting residential, commercial, and municipal operations. State and regional cooperation will be crucial to strengthen the grid, while residents can take action to maintain a backup system.



Heat-related illness, pest-borne diseases, food insecurity, and demand on social resources, will rise. Increasing resources and awareness on these public health and safety impacts will create a more resilient community.



Vulnerable groups, such as elderly (25% of the population) low-income (4%), will have the hardest time adapting to climate change. Planning processes should work to address these inequalities and safeguard access to social resources.



The Town has over 200 acres of tidal marshes and 1,100 acres of conserved land which will be threatened by climate hazards. Conserving land and protecting natural systems will ensure both the ecosystem and residents can better adapt.



Coastal bluffs and low-lying areas, particularly sand dunes around Crescent Beach or Kettle Cover,, are at risk of erosion and overtopping by storm surge. These areas are strong candidates for reinforcement, restoration, and preservation.

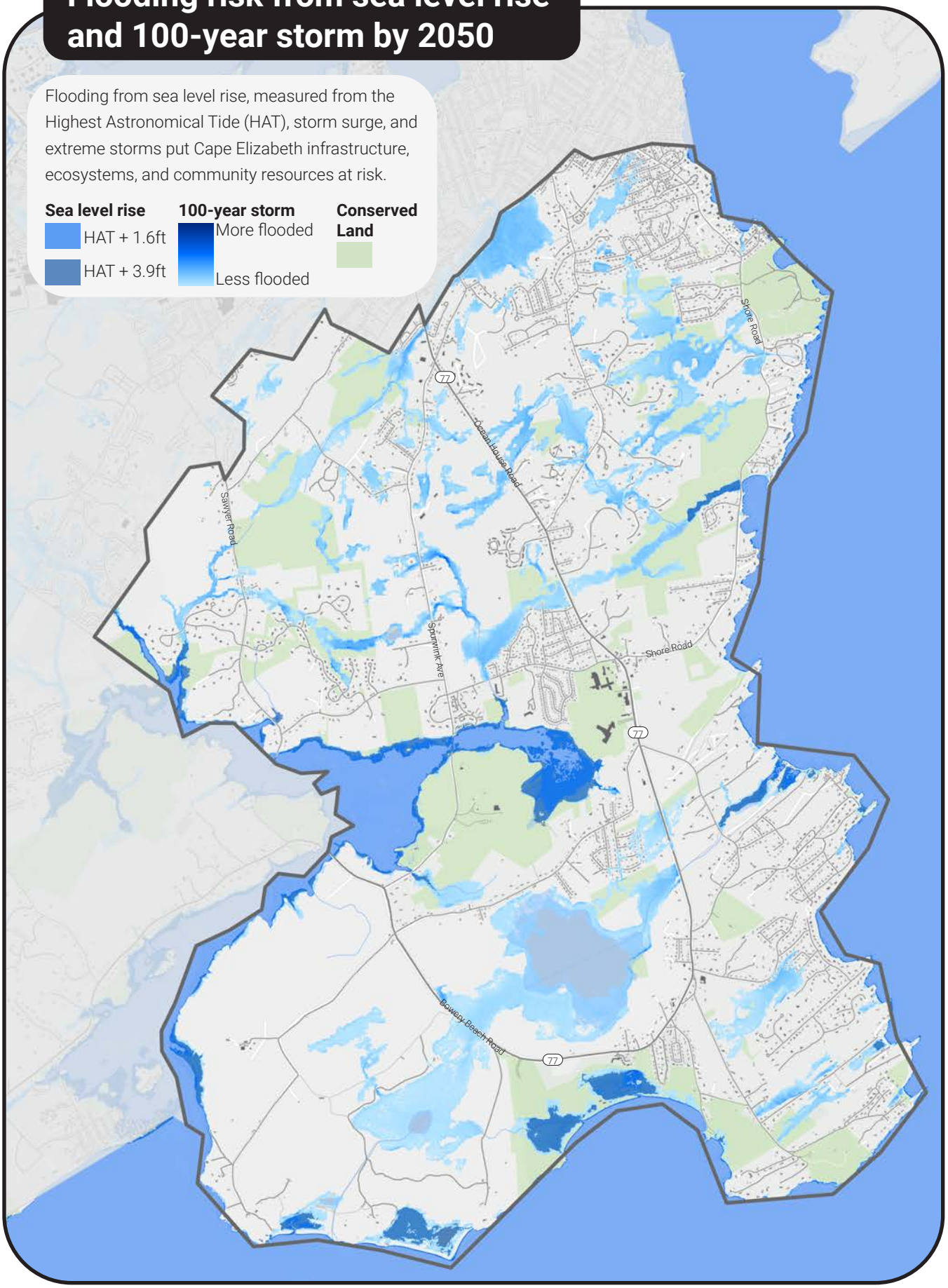
Flooding risk from sea level rise and 100-year storm by 2050

Flooding from sea level rise, measured from the Highest Astronomical Tide (HAT), storm surge, and extreme storms put Cape Elizabeth infrastructure, ecosystems, and community resources at risk.

Sea level rise
- HAT + 1.6ft
- HAT + 3.9ft

100-year storm
- More flooded
- Less flooded

Conserved Land



Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Driving, heating and cooling our homes and businesses, and processing waste all burn fossil fuels, creating greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to the already high levels of GHGs in our atmosphere. The more we can reduce our emissions, the better chance we have of reducing the pace of climate change.

To understand where our current emissions are coming from, and pinpoint opportunities for improvement, Cape Elizabeth conducted a Greenhouse Gas Inventory (Appendix B). The inventory looks at municipal and community-wide emissions and includes emissions that resulted from activity within the Town's boundary for the baseline year 2022. By measuring the sources of our emissions, we can focus our efforts on where they'll make the biggest difference in emissions reduction. As we continue working toward a more sustainable future, measuring our annual emissions every few years—and continually tracking key metrics—will allow us to see our progress and adjust our strategies accordingly.

EMISSIONS AT A GLANCE

The biggest sources of community-wide emissions are **residential buildings**, **passenger vehicles**, and **commercial buildings**. These three sources combined account for 80% of total community wide emissions.

74,506 MT CO_2e
TOTAL COMMUNITY-WIDE EMISSIONS

41% **COMMUNITY EMISSIONS PRODUCED BY RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS**
THE HIGHEST SINGLE SOURCE OF EMISSIONS

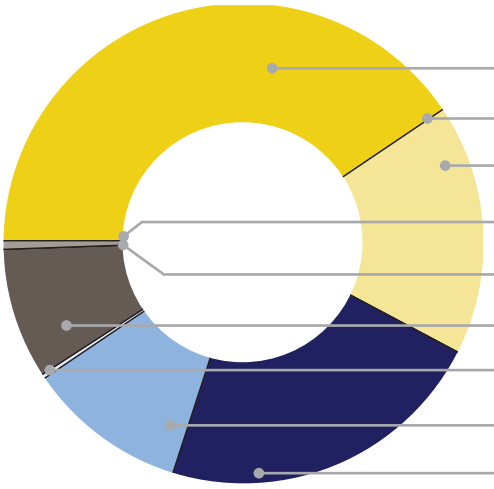
53% **OF RESIDENTIAL EMISSIONS ARE FROM FUEL OIL**

22% **EMISSIONS PRODUCED BY PASSENGER VEHICLES**

<5% **CONTRIBUTION OF MUNICIPAL + SCHOOL EMISSIONS**
TO TOTAL COMMUNITY EMISSION

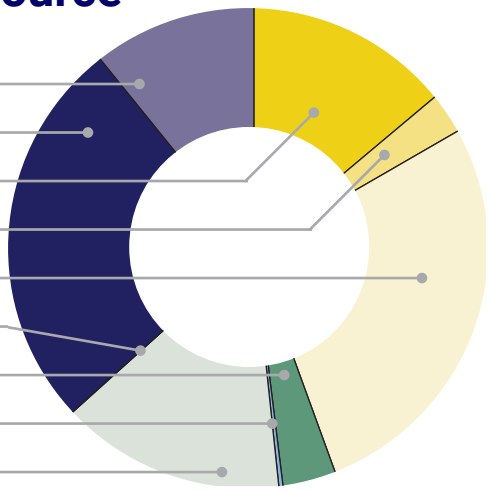
FROM MUNICIPAL/SCHOOL EMISSIONS
67% **ARE PRODUCED BY SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES**

Community Emissions



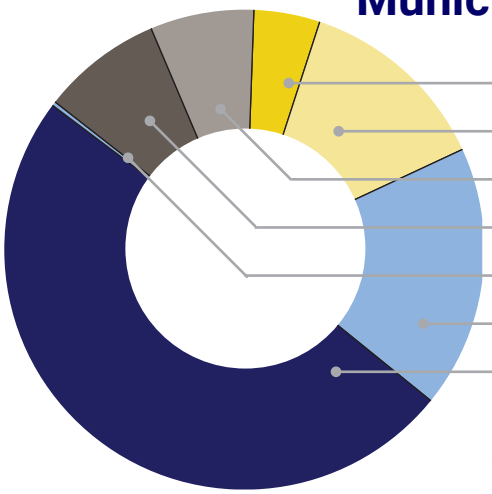
41% Residential Buildings
<1% Industrial Buildings
17% Commercial Buildings
<1% Wastewater Treatment
<1% Fugitive Emissions - Septic
8% Solid Waste Processing
<1% Buses
10% Commercial Vehicles
22% Passenger Vehicles

Emissions by Energy Source



11% Diesel Vehicles
26% Gasoline Vehicles
14% Residential Electricity
3% Residential Natural Gas
28% Residential Discrete Fuels
<1% Industrial Electricity
4% Commercial Electricity
<1% Commercial Natural Gas
15% Commercial Discrete Fuels

Municipal & School Emission



5% Municipal Electricity
13% Municipal Discrete Fuel
7% Fleet-Gasoline
8% Fleet-Diesel
<1% Street Lights & Traffic Signals
18% School Electricity
49% School Discrete Fuels

**Municipal and School emissions account for less than 5% of total community emissions*

EMISSISON SOURCES

Stationary
Emissions from homes, business, and industrial buildings from electricity use and burning of fossil fossils for lighting, heating, and cooling.

Transportation
Emissions from passenger, commercial, and municipal vehicles that at least begin or end within the town boundary.

WASTE
Emissions produced, and energy used, during the management of town waste.

WHAT ARE DISCRETE FUELS?

Discrete fuels include heating oil and propane, kerosene, and wood/biomass.

DID YOU KNOW?

Maine has the highest reliance on fuel oil to heat its homes out of all 50 states, resulting in higher than average emissions for heating homes.

EMISSIONS PER CAPITA

On a per capita basis, Cape Elizabeth emits approximately 7.8 MT CO2e per resident. This is less than many surrounding communities in the region.However, this is not an accurate estimation of emissions per person since the inventory does not account for indirectly attributable emissions such as clothing, food, or air travel.

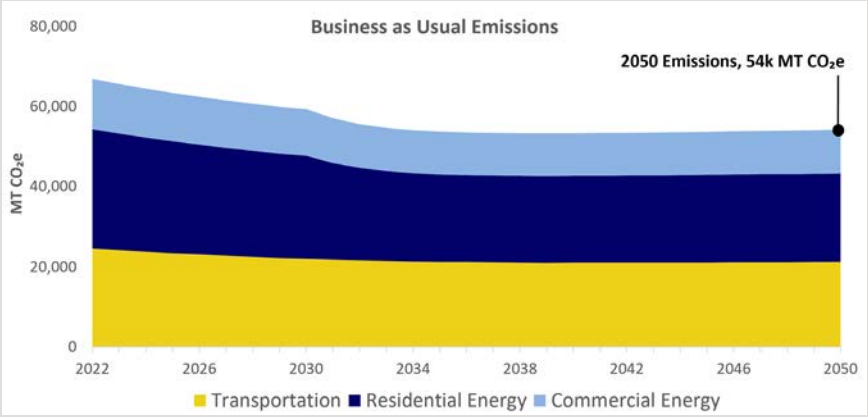
Tracking Emissions

Emission pathways show how different reduction strategies impact our emissions moving forward, compared to a baseline of "business as usual." Setting clear emissions targets can help communities to establish measurable and actionable goals for reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.

As part of Cape Elizabeth's Greenhouse Gas Inventory, Cape Elizabeth's future emissions were forecasted out to 2050, using three scenarios: a baseline "business as usual" scenario, a Maine Won't Wait targets scenario, and a Science-Based Targets scenario (See Appendix B for more information).

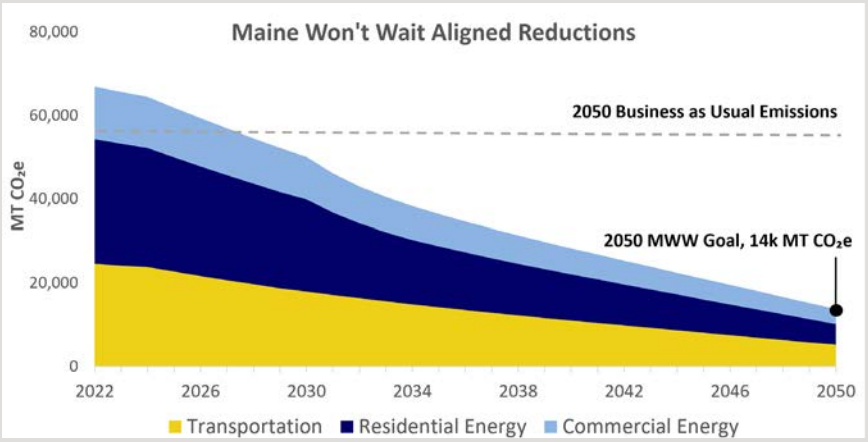
Business as Usual

Cape Elizabeth implements **no emission mitigation strategies** and continues to function without intentional reduction of fossil fuel use. By 2050, this would result in a 19% decrease in emissions from 2022 primarily due to the increased renewable energy in the regional grid.



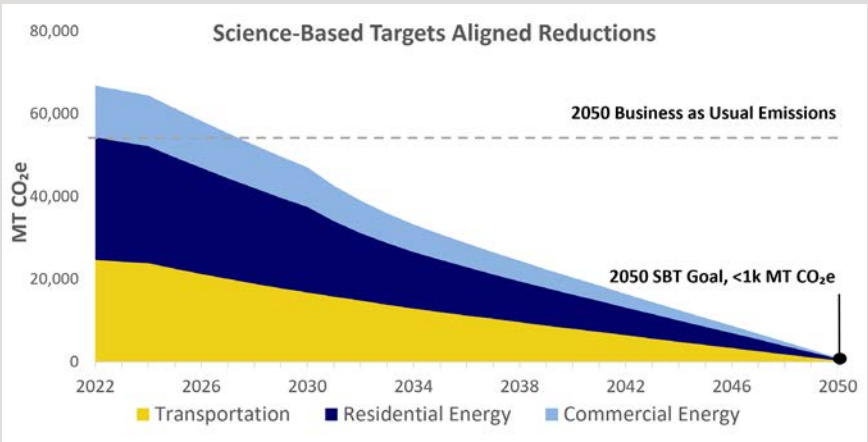
Maine Won't Wait Targets

Align with the State's "Maine Won't Wait" Climate Action Plan of an **80% emission reduction by 2050.** By 2050, this would result in a goal of releasing only 14,000 MT CO2e



Science Based Targets

Align with international climate goals to keep the global temperature increases below 1.5 C (2.7 F). This means achieving **net-zero emissions**, or less than 1,000 MT CO2e by 2050



How do we get there?

There is an urgent need to address climate change on a local level, and Cape Elizabeth is committed to doing its part. Realistic and attainable goals will drive our progress in enacting this Plan and by tracking key metrics we can build momentum for scaling up our ambitions as we make progress. At a minimum, Cape Elizabeth will align with Maine Won't Wait targets, while aspiring to reach more ambitious, science-based targets.

Cape Elizabeth municipal and school operations also have the ability to lead by example by striving to reach more a more aggressive target of net zero by 2050 for town-owned buildings and vehicles.

Cape Elizabeth is targeting an 80% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, in alignment with Maine Won't Wait. The town will aim to meet—and where possible, exceed—these benchmarks as we move forward.

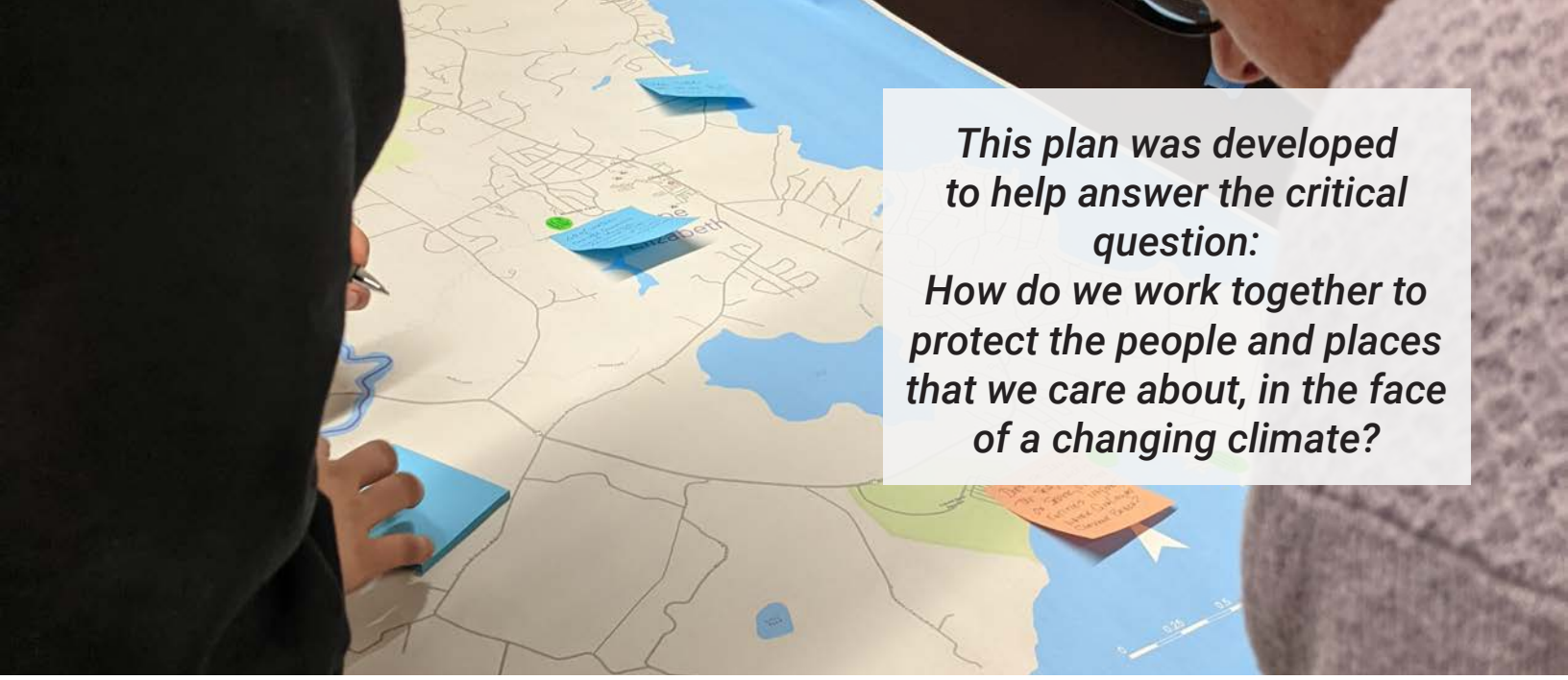
The table below highlights the potential difference in metrics needed to go from Maine Won't Wait Targets (-80% emission reduction by 2050) to Science-Based Targets (net zero emissions by 2050).

IMPORTANT: These numbers represent possible modeled pathways and are one suggested way to reach the targets, but are not absolute. More progress made in one sector can balance out less progress in another. The models also take into account potential future population growth projected by the Town.

METRIC	MAINE WON'T WAIT (80% REDUCTION)	SCIENCE BASED (NET-ZERO)	DIFFERENCE
Residential Heat Pumps	56% of homes	92% of homes	+36% of homes with heat pumps
Residential weatherization	78% of homes	130% of homes	+52% of homes weatherized
Residential Solar Energy	2,600 panels	3,000 panels	+400 panels installed
Commercial Heat Pumps	65% of businesses	92% of businesses	+27% of businesses with heat pumps
Commercial Weatherization	78% of businesses	104% of businesses	+26% of businesses weatherized
Electric Vehicles replace gasoline vehicles (% of total)	55% of vehicles	80% of vehicles	+25% of vehicles that are EVs instead of gas
Alternative Fuel Vehicles replace diesel vehicles (% of total)	25% of vehicles	50% of vehicles	+25% of vehicles that use alternative fuels
Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMTs) reduced	15% reduction	15% reduction	No change
Bus Electrification (% of total)	100%	100%	No change

BUILDING THE PLAN





This plan was developed to help answer the critical question: How do we work together to protect the people and places that we care about, in the face of a changing climate?

How the plan was developed

Cape Elizabeth's Climate Action Plan was developed in response to growing community concern about the impacts of climate change in our community and a need to prepare for these challenges.

Effective local climate action starts with listening—combining data with the lived experiences and voices of the people who call our community home. That's why community engagement is essential to making this Climate Action Plan effective and actionable.

The Vulnerability Assessment and Greenhouse Gas Inventory provide important figures that guide our planning. Alongside this data, we also heard directly from the people who live, work, and learn in our community. Conversations with Cape Elizabeth residents, workers, students, business owners, and Town staff help us understand on a personal level how climate change is already affecting Cape Elizabeth. Feedback from community members helped shape the strategies and actions in this Climate Action Plan.

Getting Involved

Throughout the planning process, there were many ways to stay informed and get involved. The project team:

- Created and maintained a website documenting the Climate Action Planning process
- Conducted two public outreach workshops
- Shared two surveys with the community
- Ensured all workshops and surveys were publicized through the Cape Climate Action website; in the Cape Courier; on the Town's website and social media pages; and Thomas Memorial Library's event page, posters, newsletters, and social media
- Presented to the Town Council and School Board on the progress of the Climate Action Plan

Greenhouse Gas Inventory

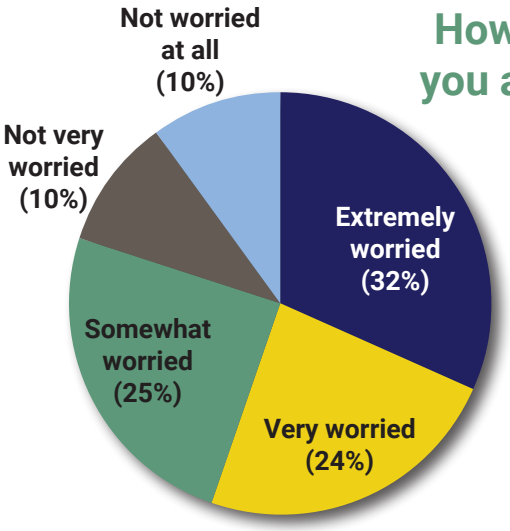
Climate Vulnerability Assessment

Community Engagement

Strategy and Action Setting

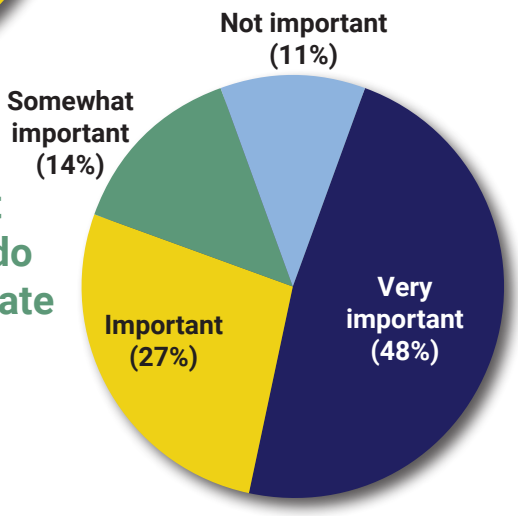
Implementation and Monitoring

How worried are you about climate change?



Results from "Climate Awareness & Concerns" Community Survey. n=199

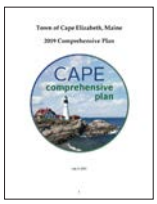
How important is it that Cape Elizabeth do something about climate change?



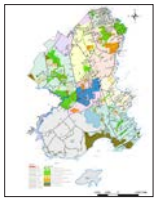
The Climate Action Plan builds on Cape Elizabeth's prior and existing efforts to assess climate-related risks and plan for a resilient future, such as:



2015 Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment
The Climate Action Plan supports progress on recommendations from the Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment, which plotted next steps for protecting public safety and infrastructure from flooding.



2019 Town Comprehensive Plan
Strategies from this Climate Action Plan align with sustainability goals from the Town's 2019 Comprehensive Plan, which include evaluating public transit options, improving active commuting safety, and adding climate change and sea level rise considerations into transportation planning.

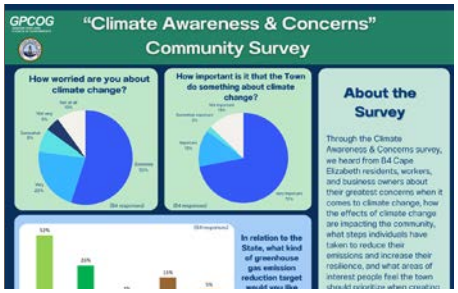


Open Space Planning
Open space protection and management is a priority for Cape Elizabeth. The Town has created several plans to reflect this value including the 2021 Fort Williams Master Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, and Open Space Inventory, among others.

Community Outreach

Community Survey 1: Climate Awareness & Concerns

The first survey aimed to better understand community attitudes and concerns related to climate change, identify common barriers to individual climate action, and begin identifying priority focus areas for the Climate Action Plan. A total of 84 Cape Elizabeth residents, workers, and business owners shared their insights, helping inform the planning process.



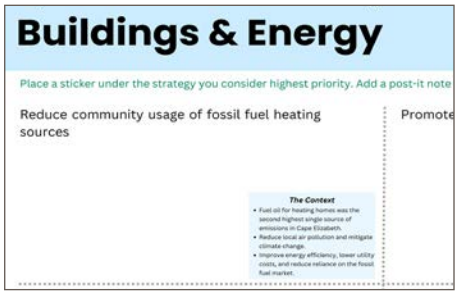


Climate Action Workshop 1: Baseline Setting

The first Climate Action Workshop brought community members together for collaborative conversation about climate change. Participants had the opportunity to share comments, raise concerns, and learn about the planning process. The workshop included an overview of Cape Elizabeth's climate vulnerabilities, an introduction to greenhouse gas inventories, and discussion of potential emissions reduction targets. The event drew more than 60 attendees.

Student Survey

To engage younger voices in the planning process, we surveyed Cape Elizabeth middle and high school students using the same questions from the "Climate Awareness & Concerns" community survey. A total of 115 students responded, sharing their thoughts, experiences, and concerns around climate and helping to build youth engagement in the broader community-wide dialogue.





Community Survey 2: Climate Actions and Priorities

The second survey gathered community input to help identify the community's highest priority climate action strategies. A total of 144 community members responded, ranking proposed strategies across 5 key sectors from "high-priority" to "non-priority." Respondents also provide detailed comments and suggestions to help guide next steps.

Climate Action Workshop 2: Action Setting

The second Climate Action Workshop focused on priority setting, soliciting community feedback on a variety of potential strategies and actions Cape Elizabeth could adopt as part of its Climate Action Plan. Participants shared which sectors of the plan they felt were most important, asked questions, and provided feedback to help shape the Plan's direction. Over 40 people participated.



Timeline

2023

SEPTEMBER
GPCOG met with municipal staff for an overview of the Climate Action Plan (CAP) process and involvement opportunities

NOVEMBER
Survey #1: Climate Awareness & Concerns opens

The first Climate Action Community Workshop was held at Thomas Memorial Library. Over 60 people attended

2024

JANUARY
Town Council approves Community Resilience Partnership Resolution

FEBRUARY
GPCOG completes interviews with Town and School staff to help identify Cape Elizabeth's vulnerabilities to climate change

Shared a version of Survey #1 with high school and middle school teachers to better understand student-specific concerns

Survey #1: "Climate Awareness & Concerns" closes. The survey received a total of 84 responses

MARCH
Cape Elizabeth enrolls in the Community Resilience Partnership (CRP) through the Governor's Office of Policy, Innovation, and the Future

Gulf of Maine Research Institute hosted an informational session at the library on sea level rise and flood hazards. The talk included discussion about the latest sea level projections, the past winter's coastal storms, and what these mean for future flood risk in Maine

JUNE
The Town of Cape Elizabeth is awarded a $50,000 Community Action Grant through the Community Resilience Partnership to retrofit LED lighting in two municipal buildings

JULY
Survey #2: Action Plan Priorities opens

NOVEMBER
The second Climate Action Community Workshop was held in Thomas Memorial Library. Over 40 people attended

DECEMBER
Survey #2 closes. The survey received a total of 144 responses

2025

JANUARY
Town Council includes advancing a climate action plan as a top priority

FEBRUARY
The Town Energy Committee and GPCOG staff presented progress on the Climate Action Plan to Town Councilors at a Town Council workshop open to the public

APRIL
The Energy Committee and GPCOG presented progress on the Climate Action Plan to the School Board

MAY
The Town of Cape Elizabeth secures a second Community Action Grant totaling $39,400 to install heat pumps in the Community Services building

SEPTEMBER
The Climate Action Plan is presented to Town Council for approval

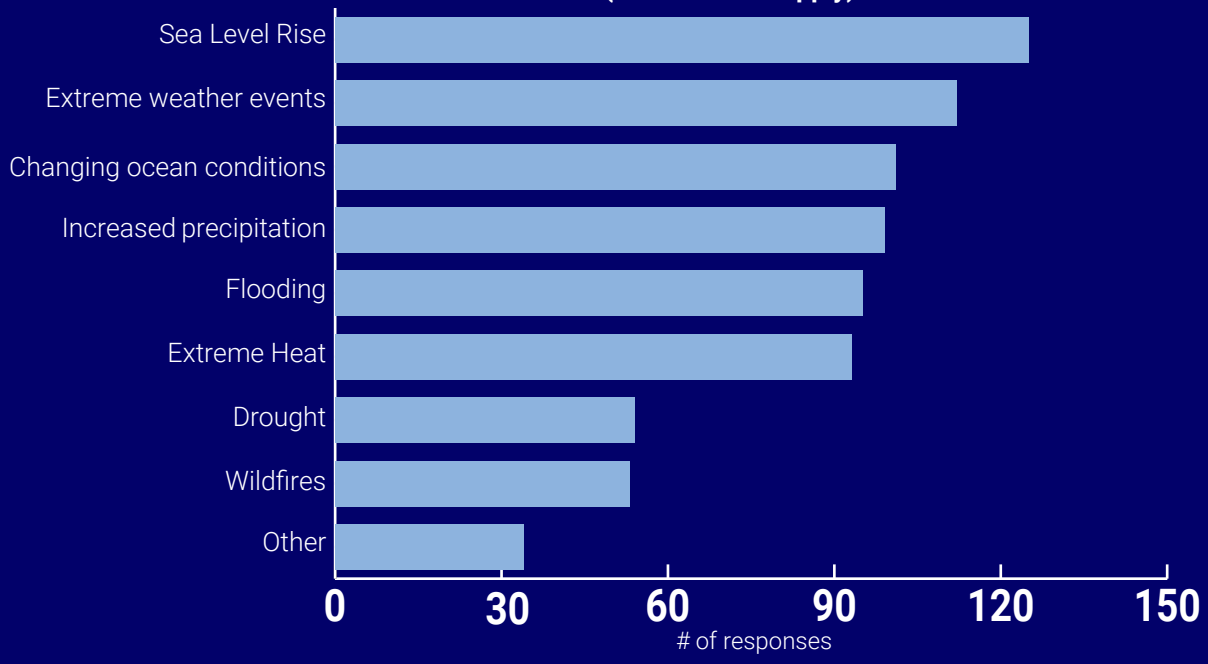
Cape Elizabeth Energy Committee

The Energy Committee served as the community's liaison for the plan's development. The committee's dedicated involvement ensured the plan was representative of the Cape Elizabeth community and reflected the town's goals and priorities. The committee members helped guide the plan's process, promoted community engagement, recommended and reviewed actions, and provided feedback on all plan materials. The Energy Committee is committed to climate action, energy efficiency, and sustainability across the town.

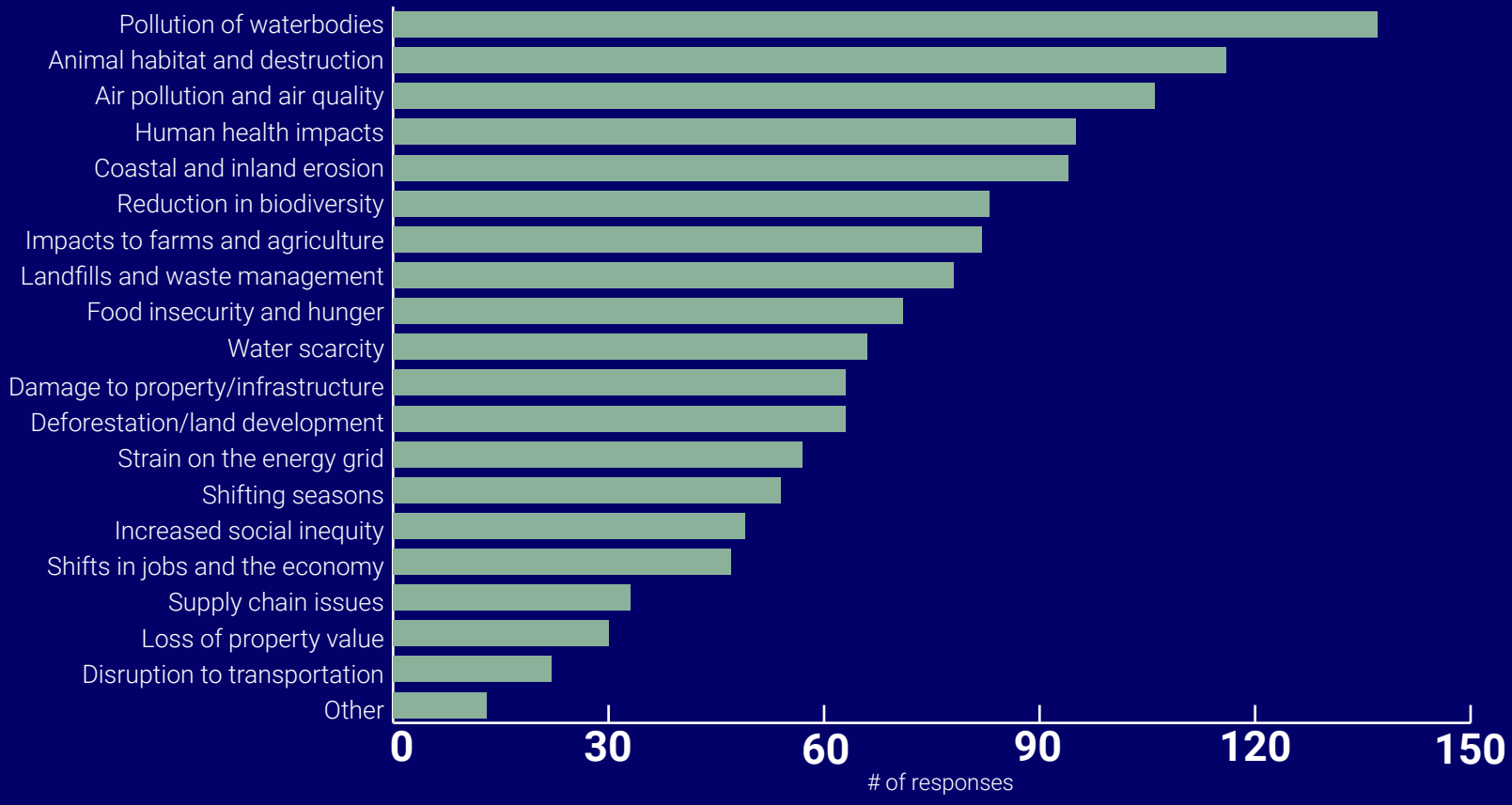
What we heard

Which climate hazards are you most worried about?

(select all that apply)



Which potential climate change impacts are you most concerned about? (select all that apply)



Responses to the Climate Awareness and Concerns Survey. Total number of respondents = 199

For complete results, see Appendix D

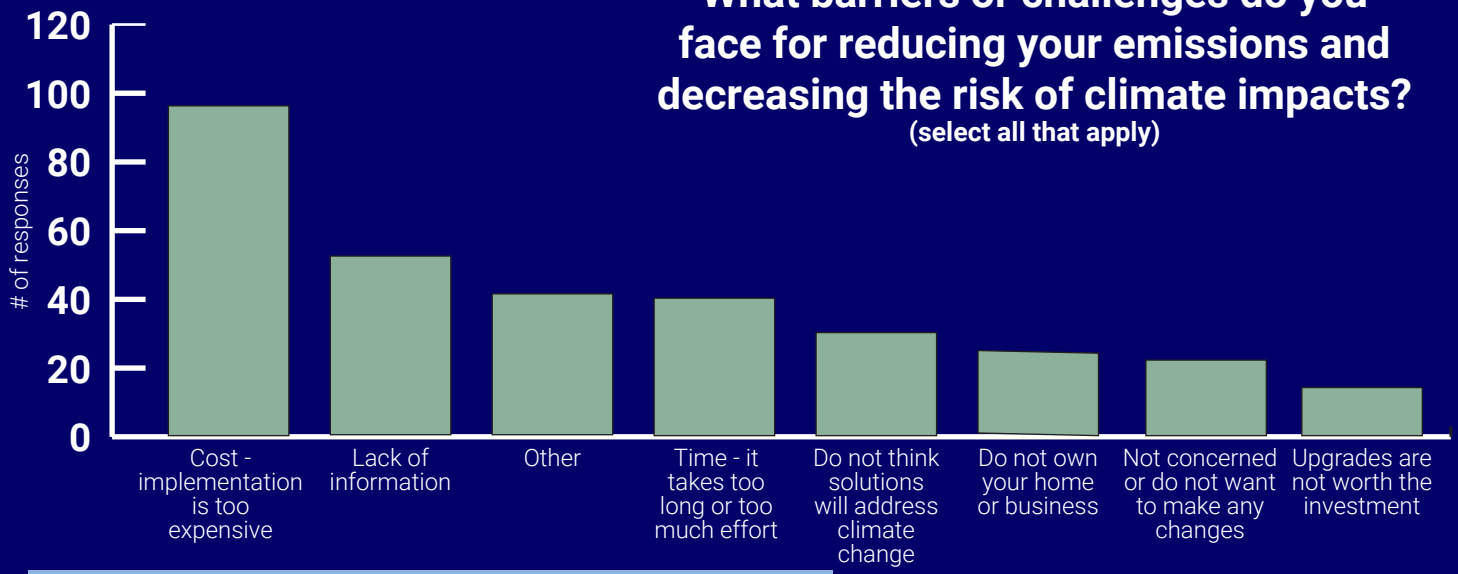
In which of these ways are you prepared or preparing for the challenges of climate change?

(select all that apply)



What barriers or challenges do you face for reducing your emissions and decreasing the risk of climate impacts?

(select all that apply)



What do students think?

The graphs above show the total responses from both the broader community survey and the student survey (see page 24 for more information on the surveys). Student responses were generally aligned with other Cape Elizabeth stakeholders, however, there were a few notable differences.

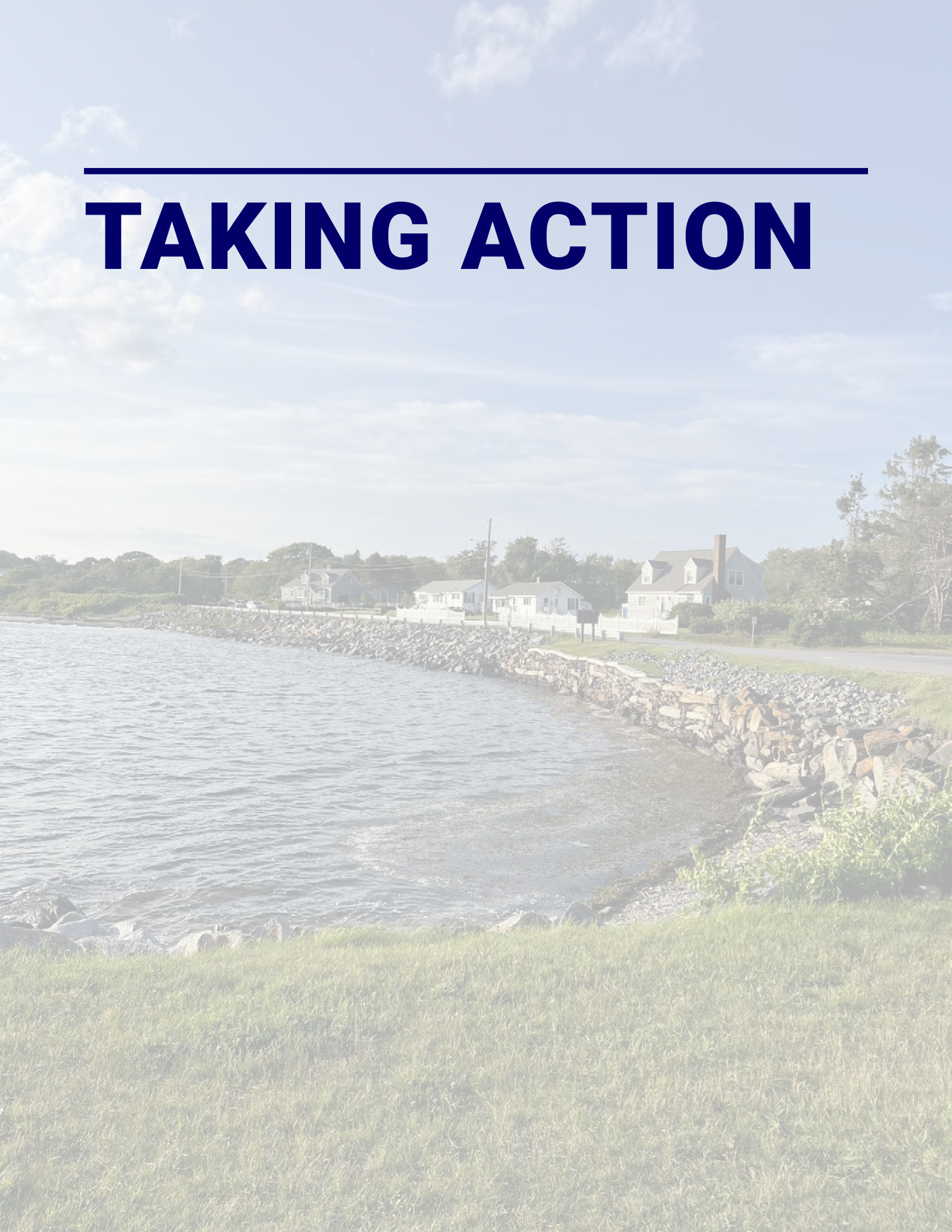
- Overall, the students were less concerned about climate change then the general public.
- Students were less inclined to support aggressive greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and more supported being aligned with state targets.
- Students were much less concerned about coastal and inland erosion.

"Work on reducing energy costs and taxes for everyone. Rising energy costs and taxes make Cape [Eizabeth] less livable."

Survey Respondent

Responses from the Climate Awareness and Concerns Survey. Total number of respondents = 199
For complete results, see Appendix D

TAKING ACTION





This Plan is divided into five sectors, each outlining specific actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance climate resilience in Cape Elizabeth. These sectors are interconnected, meaning progress in one supports progress in others, and to be effective all strategies must be achieved. Each sector details goals, strategies, actions, and key metrics developed to be practical, achievable, and impactful—guiding Cape Elizabeth toward a thriving, sustainable future.

Draft strategies and actions were shared with the Energy Committee for initial review and then presented to the public and town staff for comment. Through this vetting process, actions were added, removed, or revised as needed, resulting in a final set of strategies that received full approval. The strategies for each sector are listed in priority based on community input.

Further details on each action, including relative cost, mitigation and adaptation potential, and responsibility is in Appendix A.

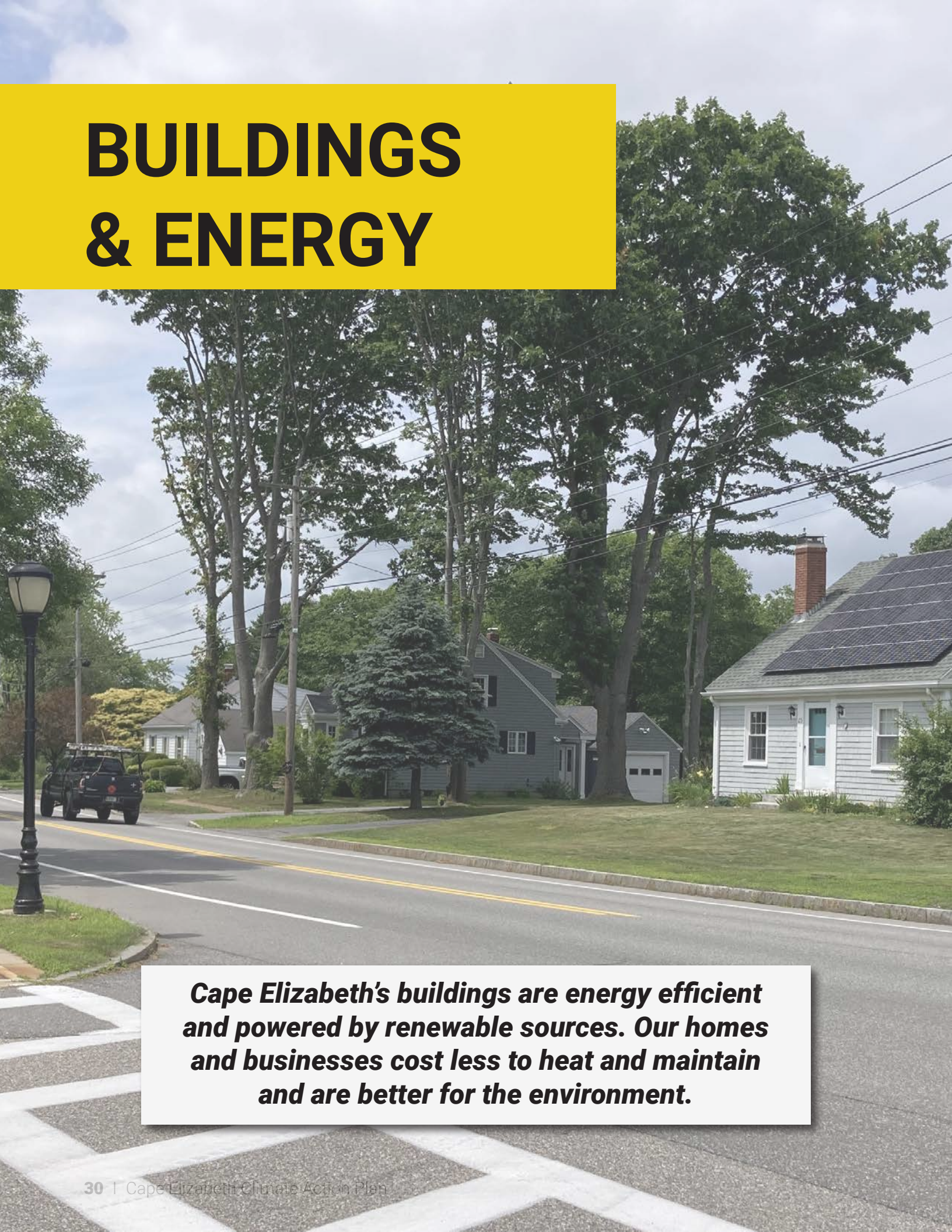


Community Top Priorities

1. Protect wetlands and open space
2. Expand accessible and safe active transportation infrastructure
3. Promote energy efficient buildings
4. Promote healthy natural spaces
5. Improve energy efficiency of municipal and school buildings and facilities

Ranking based on public input from workshops and surveys

BUILDINGS & ENERGY



Cape Elizabeth's buildings are energy efficient and powered by renewable sources. Our homes and businesses cost less to heat and maintain and are better for the environment.



Buildings & Energy

The Buildings & Energy sector outlines strategies to enhance building resilience and energy infrastructure, improve energy efficiency in homes and businesses, and prepare buildings for the impact of flooding and sea level rise. With heating oil as Cape Elizabeth's second-highest emissions source, promoting electrification and energy efficiency can reduce emissions, lower air pollution, cut energy costs, and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Energy-efficient buildings ease pressure on infrastructure and improve resilience to extreme weather and power outages. By investing in clean energy and educating community members on climate risks, Cape Elizabeth will maximize efficiency, reduce recovery costs, and protect property. The actions in this sector build community resilience while creating a sustainable energy future.

GOALS

- Reduce community usage of fossil fuel heating sources.
- Promote energy efficient buildings
- Expand usage of renewable energy sources
- Prepare buildings for future climate hazards

"Please do not force people away from gas generators which protect our energy and heat sources when major storms hit...Give incentives rather than scare people with harsh penalties."
Survey Respondent

FAST FACTS

53% of residential energy usage in 2022 came from fuel oil

17% of community emissions in 2022 came from commercial buildings

56% of homes were built before 1970, providing ample opportunity for future energy upgrades (2022)

289 number of Efficiency Maine heat pump rebates in 2022

114 weatherization installation rebates from Efficiency Maine in 2022

>100 buildings are at risk of flooding during a storm by 2050



TARGETS TO REACH

- Electrify over 2% of each residential homes and commercial buildings every year
- 56% of residential homes and 65% of commercial buildings have heat pumps by 2050
- Perform energy efficiency retrofits to 3% of homes and commercial buildings every year
- 78% of homes and commercial buildings are weatherized for energy efficiency by 2050
- Install 400 KW renewable energy capacity per year

MONITOR PROGRESS

- ↑ Number of heat pumps installed (Efficiency Maine rebates)
- ↑ Number of weatherization installations (Efficiency Maine rebates)
- ↑ Number of buildings and total installed capacity of solar or renewable energy systems (permits issued)
- ↑ Number of homes using renewable energy sources or electricity
- ↓ Total annual community energy use
- ↓ Number/Percent of buildings using heating oil, natural gas, propane or coal
- ↓ Number and cost of properties damaged by flooding each year

Community Spotlight

Town Solar

Cape Elizabeth is already a leader in the region for residential renewable energy, primarily with rooftop solar. In addition, the Town of Cape Elizabeth has invested in a solar field to be developed on the landfill adjacent to the Recycling Center.

At the recommendation of the Town's Energy Committee, the Town contracted with Encore Renewal Energy to design, build, and maintain for the duration of a 20-year contract a solar field at the Recycling Center's former landfill site. Besides converting non-usable land into an investment in clean energy, the solar field is a cost-saving initiative that will save the Town money annually on energy costs without increasing Town annual expenses.

Over a 20-year period, the solar array will produce clean energy that the Town purchases at a discounted rate for savings of around $900,000. The Town stands to save $127,000 per year through its contract with Encore, with $123,000 in savings to electric energy costs and $4,000 from its lease to Encore.

In addition to reducing fossil fuel usage, renewable energy has lower long-term costs and enhances community energy security. Continuing to invest in renewable energy projects will further climate resilience in Cape Elizabeth.

Buildings and Energy Action Tables

STRATEGY 1.1
Promote energy efficient buildings

Improving the energy efficiency of residential and commercial buildings results in lower utility costs and greenhouse gas emissions. Energy efficient buildings ultimately decrease strain on local infrastructure and make the community more resilient to extreme temperatures and power outages.

#	ACTION
1.1.1	Continue to adopt the most recent IECC building code and consider adopting the stretch code
1.1.2	Conduct an outreach program on energy-efficient practices and upgrades for residents and businesses
1.1.3	Provide information on weatherization upgrades, local contractors, and financial incentives through the town website
1.1.4	Increase efficiency of large buildings (determined by zoning location) by implementing standards to increase efficiency over time and require programs to track and disclose energy consumption.
1.1.5	Establish a program to help residents and businesses increase energy efficiency. Program could include establishing energy coaches or providing incentives, with priority given to low-income residents

STRATEGY 1.2
Reduce community usage of fossil fuel heating sources

Fuel oil for heating homes is the second highest single source of emissions in Cape Elizabeth (see Greenhouse Gas Inventory in Appendix B). Transitioning from fossil fuel to electric heating/ cooling systems will reduce local air pollution and mitigate climate change. Cleaner energy sources improve energy efficiency, lowers utility costs, and reduce reliance on the fossil fuel market.

#	ACTION
1.2.1	Incentivize (or require) new buildings to use electric systems as a primary source of heating . Start with financial incentives and consider developing an ordinance or incorporate into the existing zoning ordinance.
1.2.2	Develop a Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program
1.2.3	Launch an educational campaign for electrification, including financial resources and technical details of heat pumps
1.2.4	Provide information on heat pumps , local installers, and financial incentives through the town website

Buildings and Energy Action Tables

STRATEGY 1.3
Expand usage of renewable energy sources

Cape Elizabeth is already a leader in the region for residential renewable energy, primarily with rooftop solar. In addition to reducing fossil fuel usage, renewable energy has lower long-term costs and enhances community energy security. Continuing to invest in renewable energy projects is key to making Cape Elizabeth climate resilient.

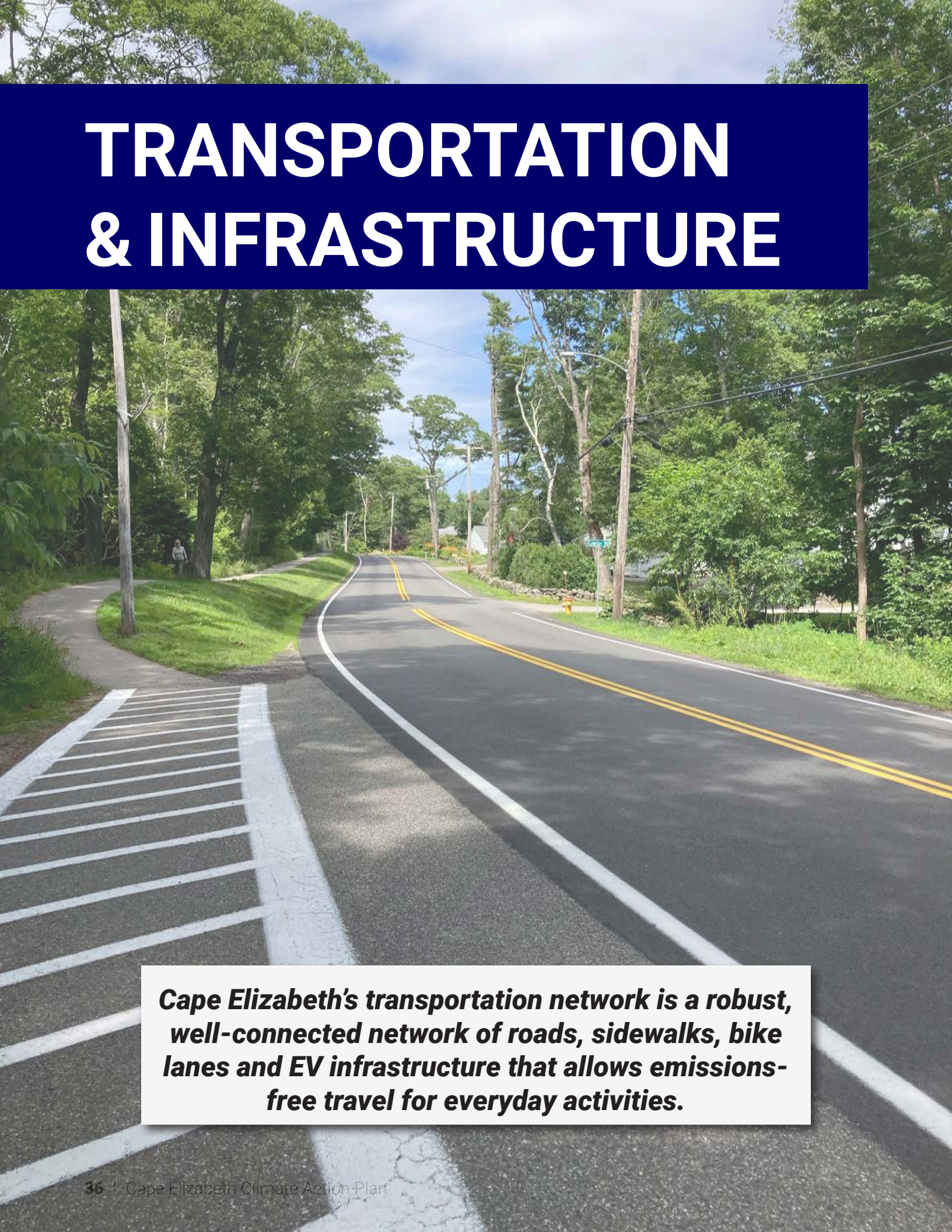
#	ACTION
1.3.1	Provide outreach and educational resources on financial incentives and benefits of renewable energy
1.3.2	Consider establishing a program to provide additional incentives to install renewable energy
1.3.3	Establish process to track progress of on-site renewable energy installation through existing permit applications (i.e. electrical)
1.3.4	Explore a community energy partnership , such as a solar power purchase agreement, for the town to benefit households that are less likely to incorporate renewable energy systems due to unfavorable location or burdensome cost

STRATEGY 1.4
Prepare buildings for future climate hazards

The impacts of climate hazards, such as storms, floods, and extreme temperatures, can be mitigated by collaborating with and providing education to building owners. The Town will work with property owners and the larger community to efficiently prepare neighborhoods. Proactive measures can reduce repair and recovery costs, safeguard the wellbeing of residents, and ensure that the community remains adaptable and secure in the face of climate challenges.

#	ACTION
1.4.1	Incorporate sea level rise and flooding projections into municipal planning documents to inform residents and developers of potential damage
1.4.2	Conduct a sustainability and resilience ordinance audit to identify potential policy updates that would increase resilience and reduce the impact of climate change
1.4.3	Limit reconstruction of buildings damaged by climate hazards in areas that are expected to recur
1.4.4	Encourage (or require) local contractors to utilize sustainable and resilient building practices for new or redeveloped buildings, particularly those in flood-prone areas
1.4.5	Work with power companies, and regional and state organizations to advocate for improved grid resilience and capacity to support the increase in electric demand
1.4.6	Develop and implement a plan for maintaining power at critical facilities during a power outage

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE



Cape Elizabeth's transportation network is a robust, well-connected network of roads, sidewalks, bike lanes and EV infrastructure that allows emissions-free travel for everyday activities.



Transportation & Infrastructure

The Transportation & Infrastructure sector outlines strategies to promote alternatives to gasoline-powered passenger vehicles, Cape Elizabeth's largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions. The sector also addresses the need to build resilience into the transportation system in response to coastal flooding and other climate impacts. By enhancing walking, biking, and EV-charging infrastructure, the town will make electric vehicles, public transit, and active transportation safer and more accessible. These investments will reduce emissions, improve air quality, and strengthen community health and resilience.

GOALS

- Expand the usage of electric vehicles and EV infrastructure
- Expand accessible and safe active transportation infrastructure
- Adapt infrastructure to climate impacts

"We can help reduce carbon emissions by becoming a bike and walk friendly town. I live less than a half mile from the high school and NEVER walk to school because of the lack of sidewalks on busy roads with narrow to no shoulders. We can do better!
Survey Respondent

"Focus energy and money much more on bikes/walking/public transport than on privately-owned motor vehicles. A huge percentage of trips are under 2 miles"
Survey Respondent

FAST FACTS

22% of community emissions were from on-road passenger vehicles in 2022

63% of commuters drove alone in a car, truck, or van (2022)

>4 miles of roadway are at risk of flooding during a storm by 2050

461 registered electric vehicles in Cape Elizabeth (2022)

11 EV charging ports (2022)



TARGETS TO REACH

- 55% of registered gasoline vehicles are electric vehicles by 2050
- Reduce VMT by 15% by 2050

MONITOR PROGRESS

- ↑ Miles of sidewalks and bike lanes. Miles of “Complete Streets”
- ↑ Number of community members using active transportation
- ↑ Number of registered EV vehicles
- ↑ Number of EV chargers installed
- ↓ Vehicle Miles Traveled
- ↓ Number of collisions, injuries, and fatalities involving pedestrians and bikers each year
- ↓ Cost of infrastructure repairs due to flooding and climate hazards

Community Spotlight

Pedestrian Safety

Cape Elizabeth is taking steps to reduce crashes and improve pedestrian safety. In 2023, Cape Elizabeth was one of the towns included in Greater Portland Council of Governments Vision Zero Greater Portland plan. This plan aims to eliminate all fatalities and serious injuries resulting from crashes on roadways by 2045. The plan highlighted the Town Center Intersection – Ocean House Road (Route 77) and Sawyer Road—as a high crash location within town.

Then, in 2024, the Town Council voted to move forward with improvements to this location that squares up Scott Dyer Road, Ocean House Road, and Shore Road to provide greater separation centerline to centerline, shorten pedestrian crossings, and add pedestrian crosswalks with flashing crossing lights. This option eliminated the tax burden while still providing safety improvements, traffic calming, and added green space.

Transportation and Infrastructure Action Tables

STRATEGY 2.1
Expand accessible and safe active transportation infrastructure

Cape Elizabeth encourages active transportation by creating networks that complement the natural environment. Expanding safe, accessible sidewalks, trails, and bike paths encourages walking and biking for local trips, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions and strengthens connection to nature. The town can also support public transit and reduce vehicle miles traveled to further reduce emissions.

#	ACTION
2.1.1	Increase sidewalk and bike lane mileage in areas with high commuting populations, such as the town center or those identified through surveys and community workshops
2.1.2	Require sidewalks and bike lanes in future construction or re-design of roads, especially along major routes or roads in residential areas
2.1.3	Create a Vision Zero Plan. Incorporate safety features into town plans and ordinances, including protected pedestrian lanes and reduced vehicle speed limits
2.1.4	Discourage vehicle idling through education programs and ordinances
2..1.5	Collaborate with regional partners (e.g. PACTS, Bicycle Coalition of Maine) to plan ways to improve regional active and public transportation, decrease vehicle miles traveled, and improve the safety of the commuter workforce

STRATEGY 2.2
Adapt infrastructure to climate impacts

Being a Town with extensive coastline, Cape Elizabeth has a high risk of coastal and inland flooding- a hazard exacerbated by climate change. Flooding impacts roads , culverts, and other public infrastructure. The Town can proactively engage in measures to build resilience, such as raising roads or upsizing culvert, to avoid disruptions to the community and costly repairs

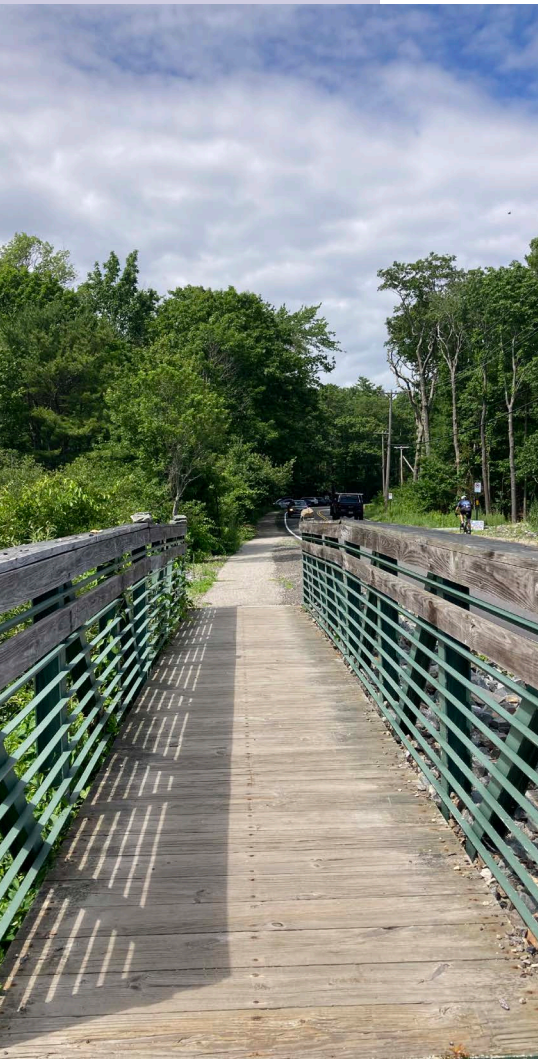
#	ACTION
2.2.1	Establish an order of prioritization for at-risk public works infrastructure, including at-risk roads, bridges, culverts, utilities, sewer, and stormwater.
2.2.2	Incorporate climate impacts for critical infrastructure into project design to ensure that the infrastructure has improved capacity and resilience. Modifications may include raising roads, upsizing culverts, adding drainage, and potentially removing/adding throughways as necessary
2.2.3	Collaborate with PACTS, municipal partners, and regional organizations to track regional infrastructure vulnerabilities to adjust plans to current conditions and coordinate future projects
2.2.4	Prioritize low-impact development and consider natural solutions for stormwater
2.2.5	Prioritize road connectivity and multiple routes of access for emergency services in planning

Transportation and Infrastructure Action Tables

STRATEGY 2.3
Expand the usage of electric vehicles and EV infrastructure

The highest emitting single source in Cape Elizabeth is gasoline passenger vehicles. By transitioning towards electric and public transportation options, the town can significantly reduce emissions and local air pollution. The Town can encourage the switch and ease barriers to clean transportation by educating residents on the benefits of EVs and investing in public charging infrastructure.

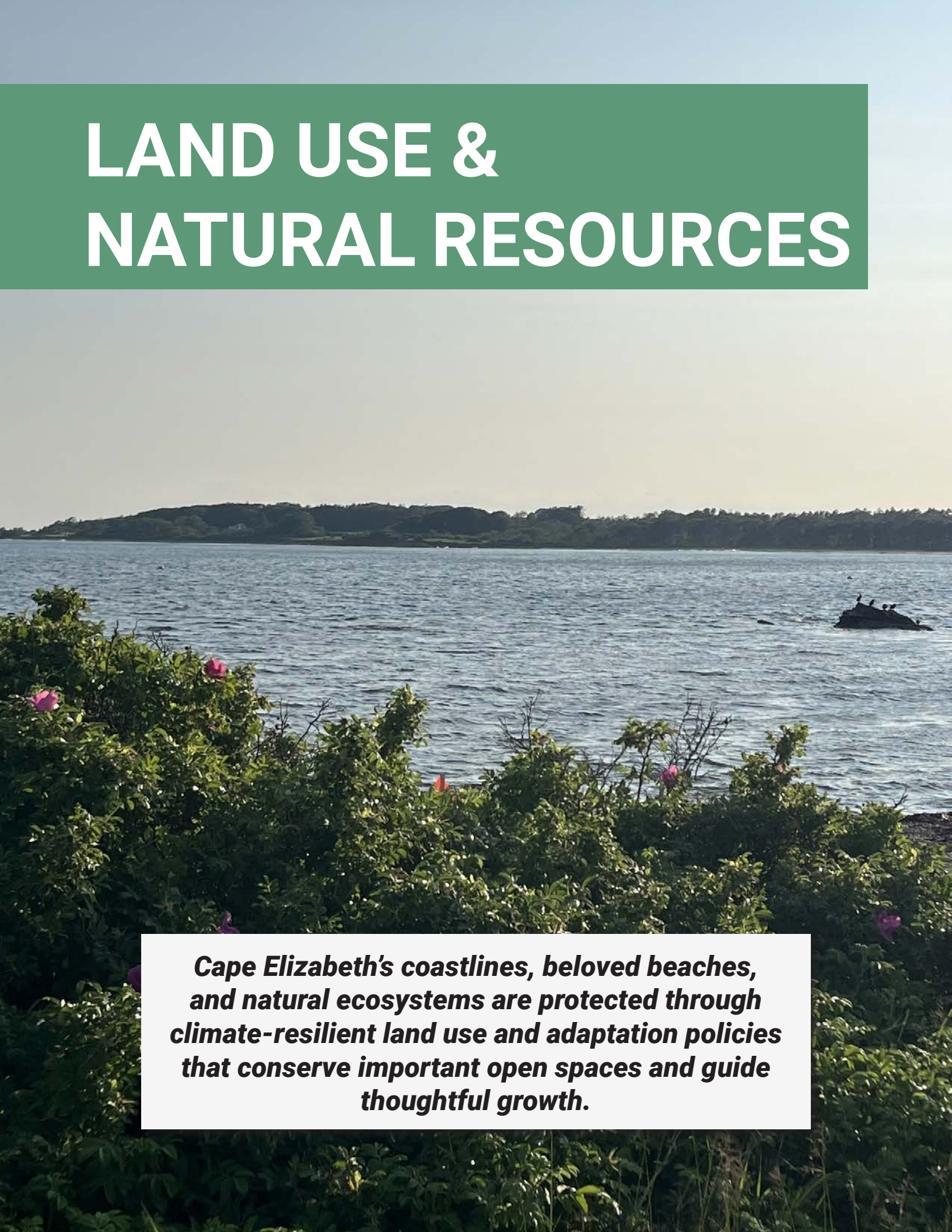
#	ACTION
2.3.1	Launch an education and outreach campaign on the benefits and financial incentives for electric vehicles
2.3.2	Consider reduced registration fees for electric vehicles
2.3.3	Create an ordinance requiring EV charging infrastructure in new construction
2.3.4	Explore partnerships with private installers to facilitate build out of EV charging infrastructure







LAND USE & NATURAL RESOURCES



Cape Elizabeth's coastlines, beloved beaches, and natural ecosystems are protected through climate-resilient land use and adaptation policies that conserve important open spaces and guide thoughtful growth.



Land Use & Natural Resources

The Land Use & Natural Resources sector outlines strategies to protect Cape Elizabeth's natural areas while preparing for climate impacts that will reshape our community and coastline. Known for iconic landscapes—Portland Head Light, beaches, parks, and over 1,100 acres of conserved land—the town faces climate risks to key habitats and recreation areas like Kettle Beach and Crescent Cove. The actions in this sector strive to preserve these valuable natural spaces that define our community identity, provide ecological value, and contribute as carbon sinks for climate mitigation. The sector also emphasizes responsible planning for future population growth, prioritizing both environmental and community resilience.

GOALS

- Protect wetlands and open space
- Align land use policies and adaptation techniques
- Prepare for population growth and climate migration

"Future land use should be denser in order to increase walkability and preserve forests and marshes, which will be critical for our resiliency"
Survey Respondent

"I want all marsh land protected because loss of that ecosystem will impact us all."
Survey Respondent

FAST FACTS

12% of Cape Elizabeth's land is in conserved areas (1,139 acres) (2023)

30% of the town is located in Resource Protection Districts (2019)

>200 acres of existing tidal marshes over 100 more acres will be needed to accommodate migration due to sea level rise (2023)

>100 acres will be needed to accommodate tidal marsh migration due to sea level rise (2023)

30% of Cape Elizabeth is in an area classified as an undeveloped block of habitat (2023)

TARGETS TO REACH

- 30% conserved land by 2050

MONITOR PROGRESS

- ↑ Acres of conserved land
- ↑ Acres of preserved tidal marshes and wetlands
- ↑ Acres of farmland and forest land
- ↑ Percent of Town-wide tree canopy coverage
- ↓ Country-wide drought conditions and wildfire risks
- ↓ Number of affordable housing units created



Community Spotlight

Sawyer Road

Cape Elizabeth is taking action to mitigate risks and prevent future costs due to extreme flooding on Sawyer Road. The Town, in a cooperative agreement with the Town of Scarborough, secured $1.6-million from the Maine Natural Resources Conservation Program to remove a low-lying section of Sawyer Road that runs through Spurwink Marsh.

Currently this section of Sawyer Road interrupts natural tidal flows and is vulnerable to flooding that poses a danger to drivers. The removal of this section will be a vital first step to restoring tidal flow in an important wetland habitat. In addition to being a defining part of community identity, Cape Elizabeth's open spaces and wetlands are important carbon sinks that can reduce the risk of flooding and other climate impacts while mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and other pollution.

By removing a small section of Sawyer Road, we can restore valuable saltwater marsh habitat and promote regional ecological resilience, while avoiding future exorbitant upkeep costs.

Land Use and Natural Resources Action Tables

STRATEGY 3.1
Protect wetlands and open space

Cape Elizabeth's natural areas, in addition to being a cornerstone of the community's identity, are also key to mitigating climate impacts. Wetlands and open space act as a natural barrier to flooding and are important carbon sinks. Protecting and expanding natural environments is crucial to ensuring long-term protection from flooding, erosion, and sea level rise.

#	ACTION
3.1.1	Promote restoration or enhancement of natural areas. Collaborate with regional partners to prevent net coastal wetland habitat loss and monitor changes in Casco Bay's marine systems
3.1.2	Facilitate conserving lands, through town ownership or local land trusts that are vulnerable to climate hazards and that can help mitigate impacts by providing coastal resilience, flood mitigation, critical habitat, and carbon sequestration. Focus on areas adjacent to tidal wetlands
3.1.3	Maintain guidelines for zero or reduced net forest loss in town boundaries

STRATEGY 3.2
Align land use policies and adaptation techniques

Flooding threatens human and environmental safety and creates inconvenient and expensive repairs. To avoid the worst impacts of climate change, Cape Elizabeth will pursue adaptation projects to protect residents and their homes. The Town will also evaluate if a managed retreat of municipal resources is appropriate for the most vulnerable areas.

#	ACTION
3.2.1	Launch an education and outreach program to provide information on smart, sustainable growth that maximizes open space and natural resource conservation
3.2.2	Identify growth zones to facilitate smart development and housing, and minimize vehicle miles traveled. Prioritize areas with existing density and access to public transportation, as well as high resilience to climate hazards
3.2.3	Explore opportunities for multi-family and affordable housing units in mixed-use areas through collaboration with residents and developers
3.2.4	Plan for upgrades to communications systems to increase service coverage and improve resilience in storms

Land Use and Natural Resources Action Tables

STRATEGY 3.3

Prepare for sustainable growth

The community can prepare for a growing regional population while maintaining its abundant open space and local character. Cape Elizabeth will incorporate factors like current density, proximity to public transportation, and resilience to flooding when determining appropriate growth areas. Accommodating controlled growth stimulates the local economy, attracts business.

#	ACTION
3.3.1	Launch an education and outreach program to provide information on smart, sustainable growth that maximizes open space and natural resource conservation
3.3.2	Identify growth zones to facilitate smart development and housing, and minimize vehicle miles traveled. Prioritize areas with existing density and access to public transportation, as well as high resilience to climate hazards
3.3.3	Explore opportunities for multi-family and affordable housing units in mixed-use areas through collaboration with residents and developers
3.3.4	Plan for upgrades to communications systems to increase service coverage and improve resilience in storms





There are already local organizations and services within town that are building climate resilience within the community. While those listed below are only a few examples, there are many additional partners that can be supportive for a sustainable future.

Cape Elizabeth Land Trust

The Cape Elizabeth Land Trust (CELT) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the natural beauty and rural character of Cape Elizabeth—from shorelands and marshes to farmlands and woodlands—for ecological benefit and for the enjoyment and education of all people. CELT partners with landowners, donors, the Town, and other conservation organization to focus on strategic land conservation, responsible land stewardship with climate resilience in mind, and educational programming to foster environmental awareness and community engagement.



How they can be involved:

CELT is a good partner to move forward actions that advance protecting and conserving natural resources (3.1.2) and those on outreach and education for responsible environmental stewardship (4.1.2).

Cape Farm Alliance

The Cape Farm Alliance is a cooperative of growers, gardeners, and community members committed to sustaining and promoting local agriculture in Cape Elizabeth through advocacy for farm-friendly policies, educational initiatives on the importance of local farming, and supporting food assistance programs. With nearly 20 member farms producing a diverse array of products—from fruits and vegetables to livestock and honey—the Cape Farm Alliance plays a vital role in maintaining the agricultural heritage and economy of Cape Elizabeth.



How they can be involved:

The Cape Farm Alliance will be helpful to advance the actions which support local agriculture (4.4.2), reduce waste (4.3.4), and increase community engagement to enhance the agricultural roots of the town

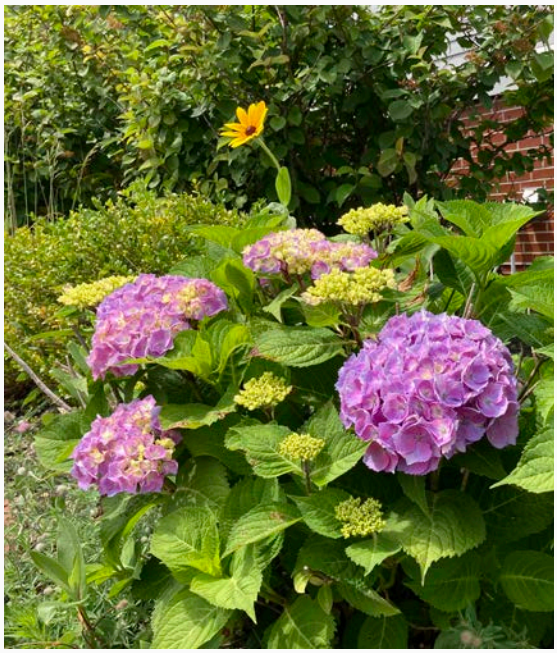


Thomas Memorial Library

Thomas Memorial Library is a vital part of the community that not only serves as a traditional library, but is also a community resource for digital accessibility, is a designated a heating/cooling center, offers home delivery for those unable to make it in person, and hosts many educational programing. The library is supported by the Thomas Memorial Library Foundation.

How they can be involved:

Thomas Memorial Library can help with a wide range of actions from advertising outreach materials (3.3.1, 4.2.2, 4.3.2) to hosting educational programming (4.2.4), to maintaining a tool library (4.1.4, 4.3.5), and continuing to serve as a heating and cooling center (4.2.1)



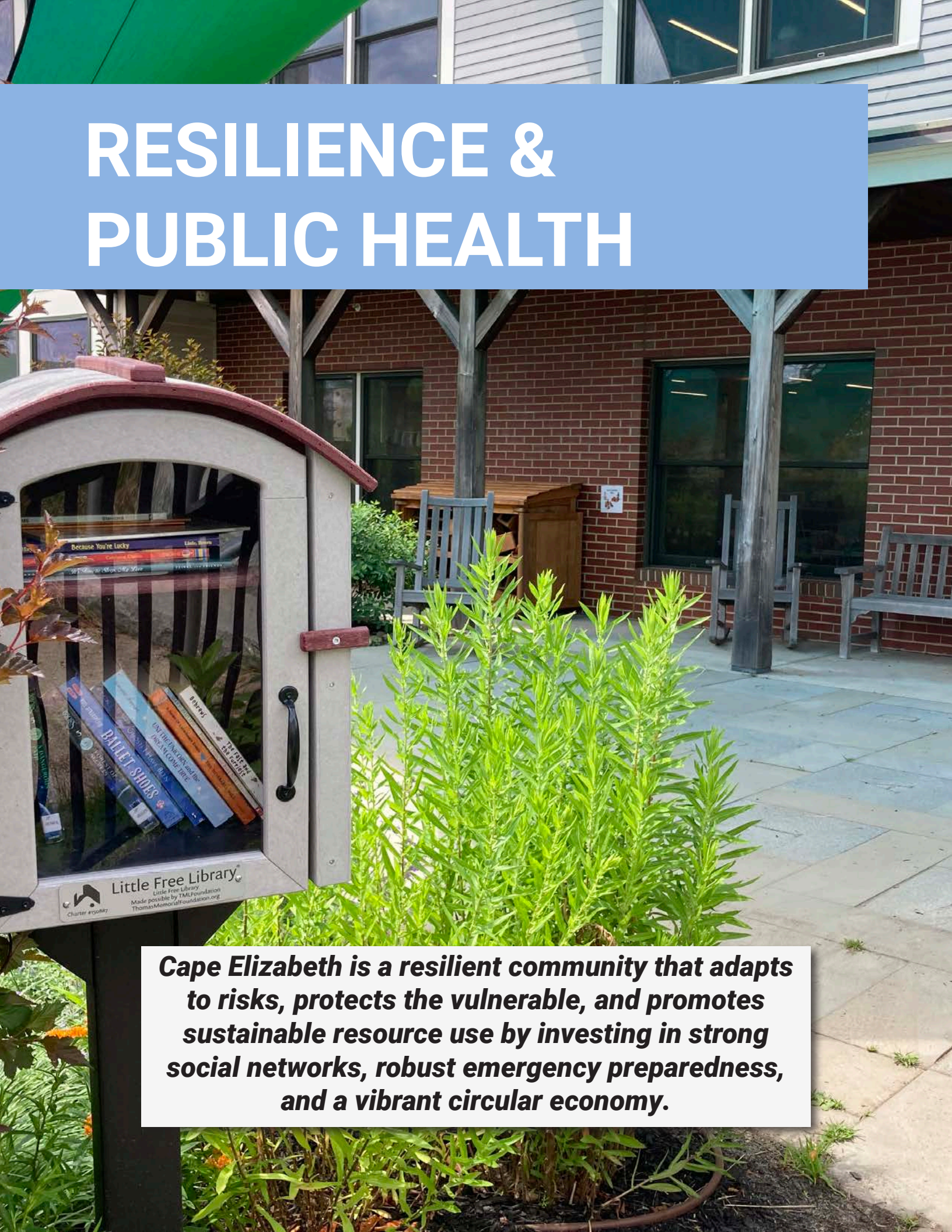
Friends of Fort Williams

Friends of Fort Williams Park is a nonprofit organization with a mission to preserve and enhance the natural and historic resources of Fort Williams Park. Through initiatives like the Ecology Project, they focus on ecological restoration, invasive species control, and environmental education to improve the park's sustainability and visitor experience. Their efforts ensure that Fort Williams Park remains a cherished space for both the community and wildlife

How they can be involved:

In addition to being good stewards of Fort Williams Park, the organization can help assist with many public education and outreach initiatives, especially those on native planting (4.1.2) and landscape management (4.1.1)

RESILIENCE & PUBLIC HEALTH



Cape Elizabeth is a resilient community that adapts to risks, protects the vulnerable, and promotes sustainable resource use by investing in strong social networks, robust emergency preparedness, and a vibrant circular economy.



Resilience & Public Health

The Resilience & Public Health sector outlines strategies to strengthen Cape Elizabeth's climate resilience by protecting local resources, building community support networks, and improving preparedness for climate impacts. Well-informed communities are better equipped to response effectively and efficiently to challenges. Cape Elizabeth has already experienced extreme temperatures, utility outages, and related health risks. To strengthen our ability to respond, Cape Elizabeth will enhance emergency management systems while expanding public outreach and education.

GOALS

- Update emergency management plans and techniques
- Adapt for extreme weather, power outages, and public health risks
- Promote healthy natural spaces
- Protect local water and food supply
- Reduce waste volume and promote local resource networks

"I also think anything we can do to support the viability and resilience of our local farms is important to climate action planning."
Survey Respondent

FAST FACTS

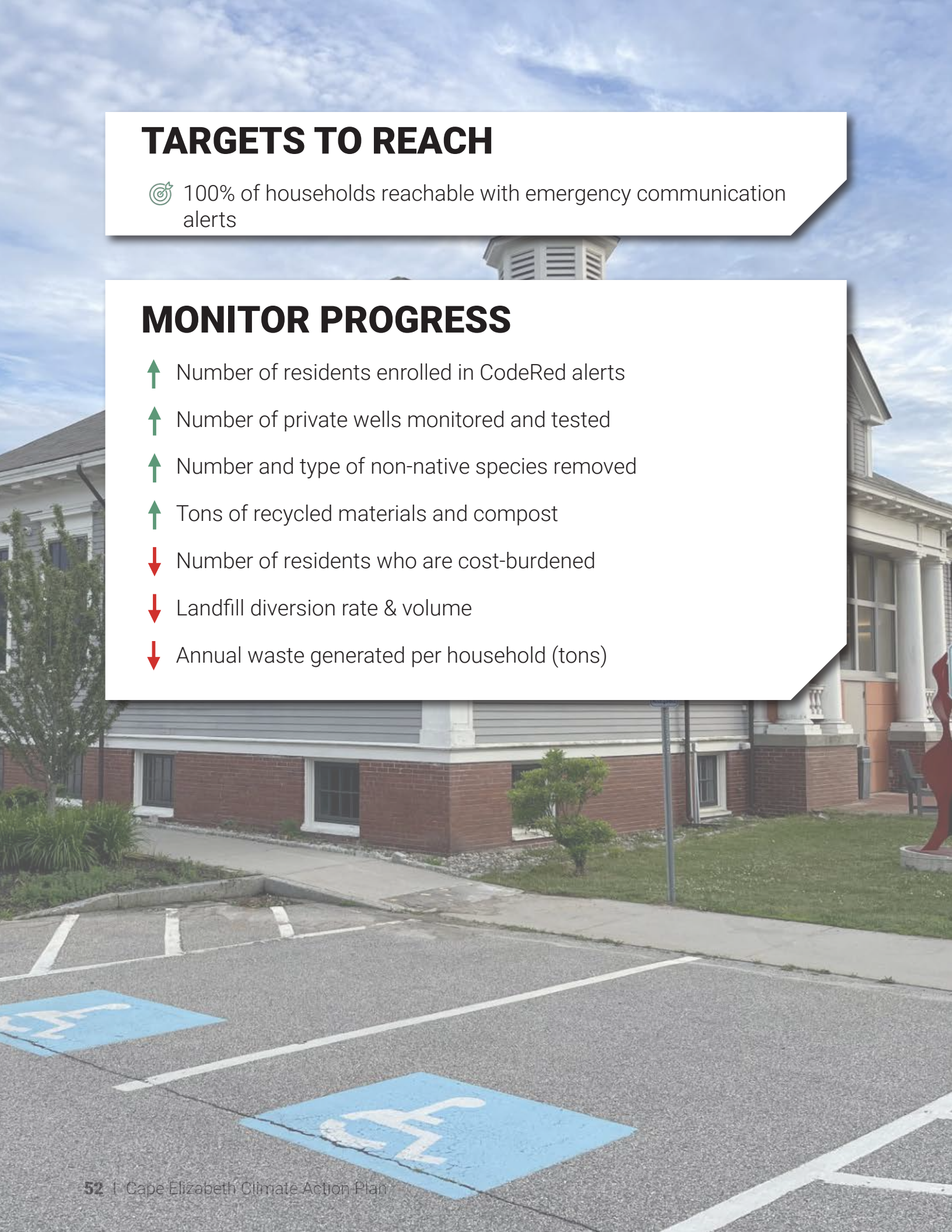
25% of Cape Elizabeth's population is 65 years old or older, 26% of which live alone (2023)

23% of Cape Elizabeth's population is 18 years old or younger (2023)

23% of homeowners are cost-burdened (spend more than 30% of income on housing costs) (2022)

9% of community emissions came from processing waste (2022)

24% Recycling rate (EcoMaine 2020)



TARGETS TO REACH

- 100% of households reachable with emergency communication alerts

MONITOR PROGRESS

- ↑ Number of residents enrolled in CodeRed alerts
- ↑ Number of private wells monitored and tested
- ↑ Number and type of non-native species removed
- ↑ Tons of recycled materials and compost
- ↓ Number of residents who are cost-burdened
- ↓ Landfill diversion rate & volume
- ↓ Annual waste generated per household (tons)

Community Spotlight

Keeping it local

Cape Elizabeth is already building the foundation for a more sustainable and resilient future through its strong sense of community and commitment to local resources. These efforts not only benefit the environment but also strengthen social bonds and local self-reliance. For example, the Cape Elizabeth Swap Shop is a vibrant hub where residents share usable goods, giving items a second life rather than sending them to the landfill.

In addition, Cape Elizabeth's two community gardens, with a total of 90 plots, empower residents to grow their own food, fostering food security, healthier lifestyles, and deeper connections to the land. Importantly, several plots are dedicated to supporting neighbors in need, supplying fresh produce to the Maine Hunger Prevention Program and Judy's Pantry, which serves Cape Elizabeth residents with limited resources.

These initiatives highlight how cutting down on waste, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and building local resilience to climate change can arise on a local level.

Resilience and Public Health Action Tables

STRATEGY 4.1
Promote healthy natural spaces

Environmental health is directly tied to public health. Protecting the health of local ecosystems creates beautiful and biodiverse natural spaces and builds resilience to climate impacts. Cape Elizabeth will make local and regional efforts to reduce pollution and promote native species.

#	ACTION
4.1.1	Develop a management plan for invasive species on public land and native vegetation plan or ordinance to encourage use of native plants for landscaping on town lands
4.1.2	Promote native vegetation through educational programs
4.1.3	Pursue resilient lawn programs, such as “No Mow May” or “Mow Tall Til Fall”, to reduce water usage and encourage biodiverse landscapes
4.1.4	Encourage residents to use electric lawn care equipment through incentives, an electric tool library, or educational materials
4.1.5	Continue to create and enforce sustainable landscaping approaches, such a fertilizer ordinance to reduce pollution from runoff

STRATEGY 4.2
Adapt for extreme weather, power outages, and public health risks

The community has already felt the impacts of climate hazards, through extreme temperatures, utility outages, and related health risks. Cape Elizabeth will continue to promote and expand public resources that serve the public during emergency events. In addition to risks to physical health, climate change threatens mental health, particularly in the youth. The Town will mobilize educational resources to raise awareness of health impacts and available resources.

#	ACTION
4.2.1	Spread awareness of the Library as the Town’s cooling/heating center and continue to expand community resources available during extreme weather. Develop plans for transportation to the facility for residents with limited mobility
4.2.2	Conduct an awareness campaign about the risks of high heat and access to the cooling center, with a focus on higher risk groups
4.2.3	Coordinate with relevant departments to plan for increased use of open spaces and waterways
4.2.4	Educate residents on the impacts of climate hazards, extreme weather, and power outages (i.e. water quality changes, dangerous food safety issues, flooding impacts)
4.2.5	Develop an accessible resource library for organizing public health information related to the risks of climate change
4.2.6	Partner with schools and local organizations to address public health challenges relating to climate change

Resilience and Public Health Action Tables

STRATEGY 4.3

Reduce waste volume and promote local resource networks

Waste disposal generates greenhouse gas emissions, as well as air, water and soil pollution. Recycling and composting divert volume from the waste stream and return organic material to natural systems. Adopting aspects of a circular economy also reduces waste and promotes community connection.

#	ACTION
4.3.1	Collaborate with businesses and neighboring towns to advocate for statewide restrictions on single-use plastics
4.3.2	Launch/expand public education on effective recycling and composting techniques
4.3.3	Identify business leaders and commercial facilities to discuss recycling opt-in. Encourage organics recycling for applicable businesses
4.3.4	Establish/expand community tool library, and pursue grants/funding to provide additional equipment through municipal facilities
4.3.5	Continue to create and enforce sustainable landscaping approaches, such a fertilizer ordinance to reduce pollution from runoff
4.3.6	Continue to support the Swap Shop and promote the use of in-person and online forums for exchanging goods between community members such as “Buy Nothing” groups, clothing swaps, repair cafes

STRATEGY 4.4

Protect local water and food supply

Climate change will threaten the security of our local water supply and food production. Cape Elizabeth will collaborate with regional partners to track changing conditions that may impact water quality or local farms. Proactively protecting these resources can help to avoid human and ecosystem harm, as well as costs for emergency supplies.

#	ACTION
4.4.1	Work with regional partners to ensure protection of safe drinking water supply in the Sebago Watershed and to educate residents on water quality
4.4.2	Survey local farms to identify needs and challenges, in order to increase resilience and promote locally grown food
4.4.3	Provide information on monitoring and testing of wells and septic tanks. Focus should be on those at risk of saltwater intrusion and groundwater rise

Resilience and Public Health Action Tables

STRATEGY 4.5

Update emergency management plans and techniques

Cape Elizabeth has sophisticated emergency response personnel and systems capable of responding to a range of weather-related emergencies. The Town will continue to add protocols as needed to address emerging climate hazards.

#	ACTION
4.351	Develop or enhance early warning systems and community evacuation plans
4.5.2	Complete the Maine Flood Resilience Checklist
4.5.3	Launch an outreach campaign to increase enrollment in Code Red alerts
4.5.4	Incorporate sea level rise and severe weather projections when planning evacuation routes
4.5.5	Develop a storm debris management plan
4.5.6	Develop a heat wave management plan by 2030 to provide an organized list of actions to reduce community vulnerability during heat waves







Residents are excited to take action!

Responses from community surveys and workshops.
For full results and comments, see Appendix D.

Take a holistic approach to land use planning to incorporate climate. Steer development and density to appropriate places and enhance infrastructure around those places.

Improve the condition of natural areas by removing invasive plants and allowing native plants, birds and pollinators to thrive.

Expand accessible and safe active transportation infrastructure

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the municipal vehicle fleet

I would like to see town incentives for home builders to use green construction materials, methods and designs for both new buildings and renovation projects

Create high density, walkable downtown with public transportation and separated bike lanes to make moving around without a car easier.

Educate residents on benefits and savings from heat pumps. Provide financial incentives- particularly for lower income.

We could ban or limit the use of gas-powered lawn maintenance equipment because of their highly toxic emissions and damaging noise levels.

Replace at least one school building with a new building that meets or exceeds current energy code, is all electric, and powered with solar!

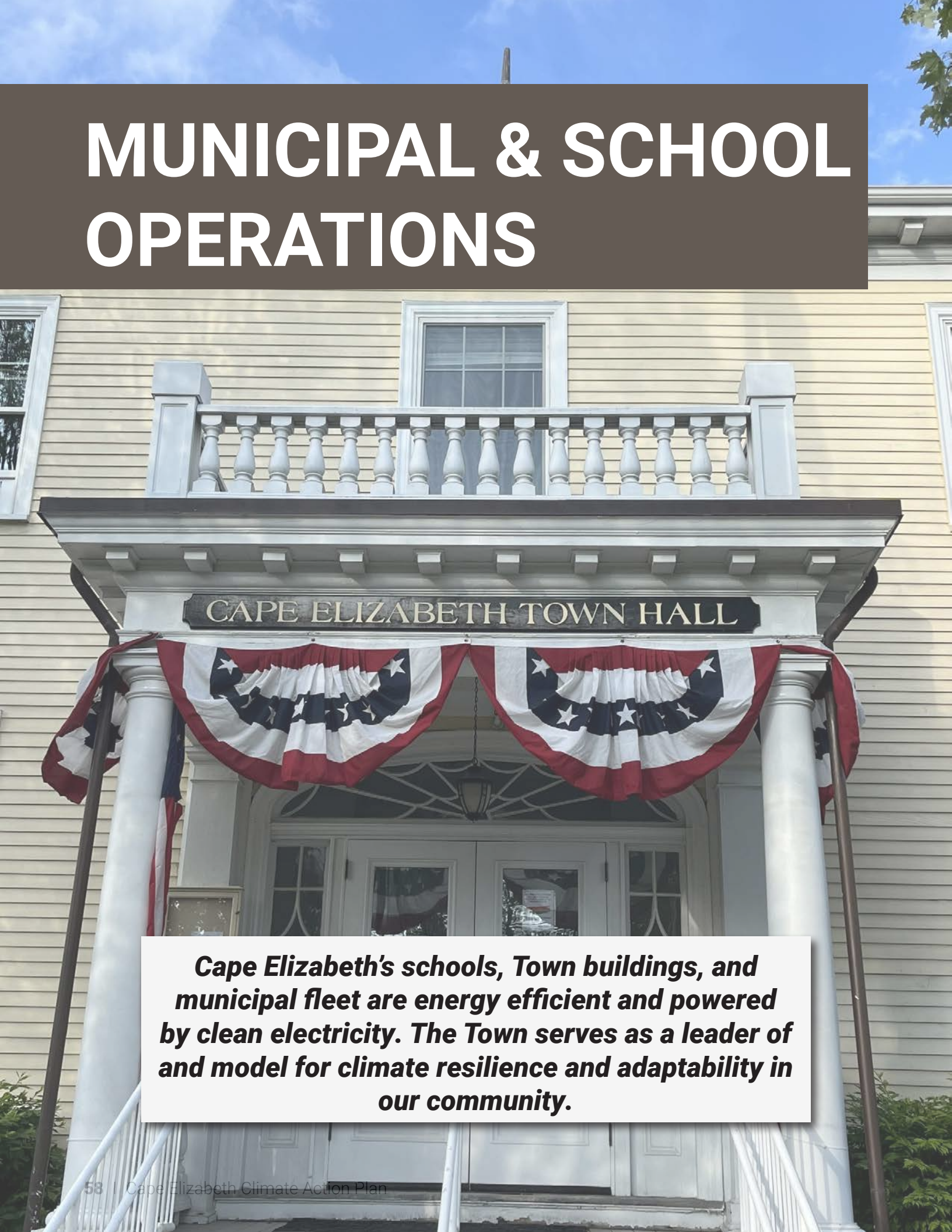
Opposition to Climate Action

While the majority of public input was in support of climate action, it is important to note that not everyone feels the same way. Some people were supportive of certain actions but very opposed to others while other respondents were critical of climate change and any action, especially those which would cost taxpayers.

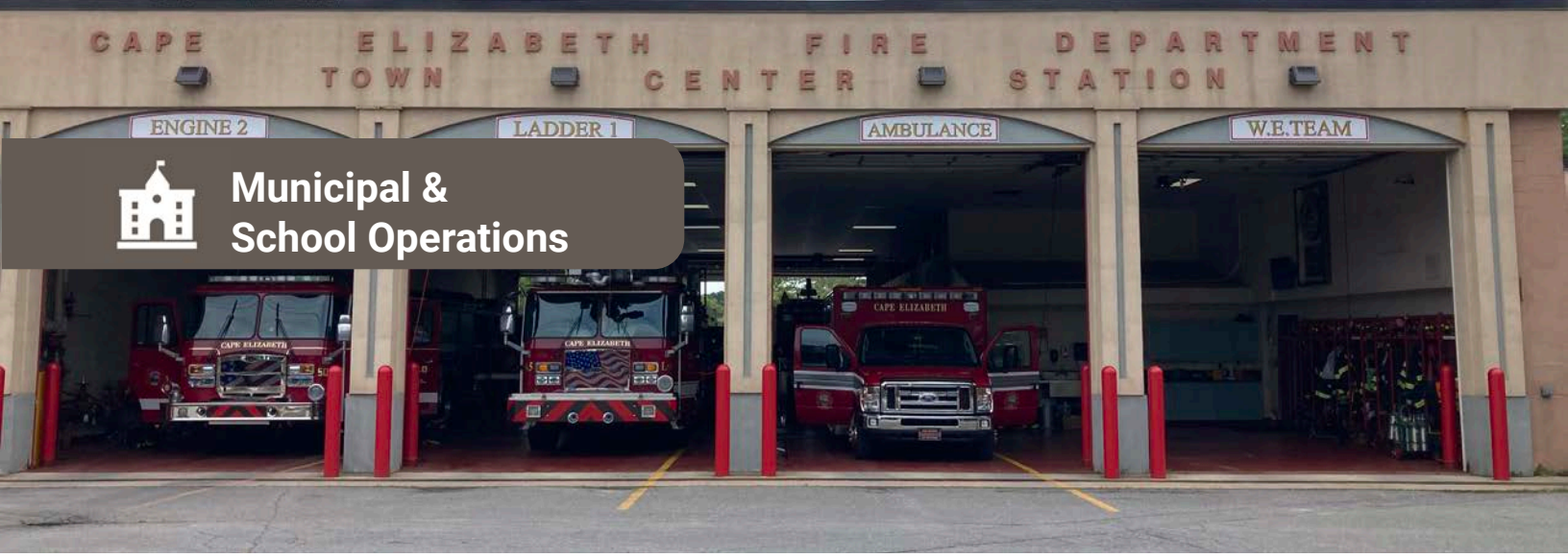
What we heard:

- I'm concerned that too much money is being spent on climate change at the detriment of other programs
- We don't need affordable housing or further development
- EVs are probably the most polluting item. Too much focus on EVs
- There are many state programs to subsidize and help people make better choices, like heat pumps. We don't need to engage in this at the local level

MUNICIPAL & SCHOOL OPERATIONS



Cape Elizabeth's schools, Town buildings, and municipal fleet are energy efficient and powered by clean electricity. The Town serves as a leader of and model for climate resilience and adaptability in our community.



Municipal & School Operations

The Municipal & School Operations sector outlines strategies to strengthen public infrastructure against climate impacts, reduce municipal greenhouse gas emissions, and inspire community action. Heating Town-owned buildings with fuel oil is the largest source of municipal emissions. Through building efficiency improvements, fleet electrification, community outreach, and partnerships, these actions build resilience, reduce fossil fuel use, and create long-term cost savings through effective resource management. The necessary maintenance of critical infrastructure and public services will continue to support public health and safety.

GOALS

- Improve energy efficiency of municipal and school buildings and facilities
- Reduce fossil fuel use in government facilities
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the municipal vehicle fleet
- Redevelop municipal procurement and discarding policies
- Ensure capacity to enact Climate Action Plan

FAST FACTS

5% of community wide emissions in 2022 came from municipal and school operations

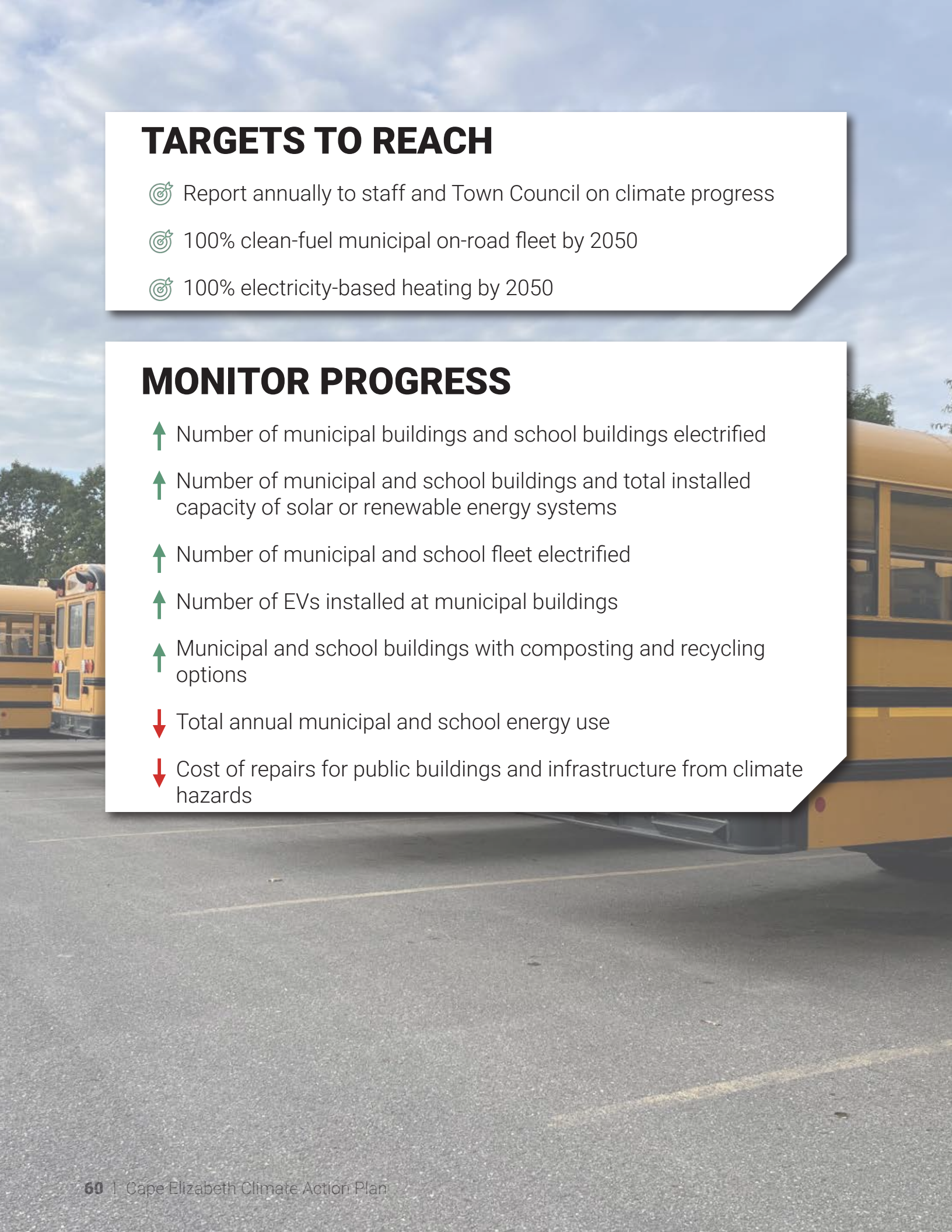
49% of municipal and school emissions came from heating school buildings and facilities with fuel oil and propane in 2022

53% of of municipal and school transportation emissions were from diesel vehicles in 2022

"If we don't enact or implement the plan, then what good is it?! Ensuring capacity seems crucial so the plan isn't forgotten."
Survey Respondent

"We need leadership locally and nationally, education and incentives for people and municipalities to make changes."
Survey Respondent

"Town Hall, while it is an historical structure is very energy inefficient."
Survey Respondent



TARGETS TO REACH

- Report annually to staff and Town Council on climate progress
- 100% clean-fuel municipal on-road fleet by 2050
- 100% electricity-based heating by 2050

MONITOR PROGRESS

- ↑ Number of municipal buildings and school buildings electrified
- ↑ Number of municipal and school buildings and total installed capacity of solar or renewable energy systems
- ↑ Number of municipal and school fleet electrified
- ↑ Number of EVs installed at municipal buildings
- ↑ Municipal and school buildings with composting and recycling options
- ↓ Total annual municipal and school energy use
- ↓ Cost of repairs for public buildings and infrastructure from climate hazards

Community Spotlight

Community Resilience Partnership

Cape Elizabeth has already begun to advance sustainability through municipal energy efficiency improvements. In March 2024, the Town enrolled in the State of Maine's Community Resilience Partnership (CRP), a program that supports municipal climate action. Since enrolling in the CRP, the Town has secured two Community Action Grants to support projects that reduce energy usage and emissions in Town buildings.

In June 2024, the Town secured $50,000 to retrofit the Town Hall and Police Department with LED lighting. In April 2025, the Town was awarded $39,400 to support heat pump installation in the Community Services Building. These upgrades boost municipal energy efficiency, provide long-term cost savings, and enhance our Town's resiliency in the face of severe storms that stress grid infrastructure.

Municipal and School Operations Action Tables

STRATEGY 5.1

Improve energy efficiency of municipal and school buildings and facilities

Upgrading Town and School facilities to be more energy efficient is key to reducing fossil fuel consumption and creating work and community spaces resilient to extreme temperatures. There are long-term cost savings for upgrading to energy efficient insulation, windows, lighting fixtures, and appliances.

#	ACTION
5.1.1	Conduct an energy audit to determine municipal buildings most in need of energy efficiency upgrades
5.1.2	Update asset management plans to establish a timeline for implementing energy efficiency upgrades
5.1.3	Establish a process for encouraging (or requiring) energy-efficient alternatives for routine upgrades and repairs , such as high-efficiency water heaters or low-flow faucets and toilets.

STRATEGY 5.2

Reduce fossil fuel use in government facilities

Fuel oil used to heat Town-owned buildings is the single largest source of Cape Elizabeth's municipal emissions. As the electricity grid is increasing powered by renewable sources, it will reduce emissions significantly to transition to electric heating/cooling systems. Additionally, using on-site renewable energy projects makes the Town more resilient to power outages and changes in energy prices.

#	ACTION
5.2.1	Evaluate feasibility of on-site renewable energy for municipal facilities
5.2.2	Discontinue use of fossil fuel heating and cooling systems in newly constructed facilities
5.2.3	Transition municipal buildings to have electrical systems as the primary mode of heating and cooling
5.2.4	Explore power purchase agreements and new renewable energy sources to increase the use of renewable energy

Municipal and School Operations Action Tables

STRATEGY 5.3

Ensure town leadership and support to enact Climate Action Plan

Implementing this climate action plan will take collaboration between community members, Town staff , committees, and regional partners . Cape Elizabeth will seek support from community organizations to secure funding and effectively complete projects.

#	ACTION
5.3.1	Provide educational opportunities to municipal and school staff on best practices for climate action
5.3.2	Collaborate with neighboring communities and regional organizations for shared education and outreach programs
5.3.3	Establish funding mechanisms to support climate resilience programs and incorporate into annual budgets and capital plans . Explore opportunities to diversity revenue sources to decrease over-reliance on taxes from properties
5.3.4	Track municipal expenditure for response, recovery, and repair related to storm and flooding events to inform prioritization and capital plans
5.3.5	Work with existing committees and staff to support implementation by seeking and applying for funding, and mediating community outreach. Consider establishing new committee or staff position as appropriate

STRATEGY 5.4

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the municipal vehicle fleet

Diesel and gasoline-fueled vehicles release significant greenhouse gases and air pollution compared to their electric counterparts. Cape Elizabeth is supporting the national transition to sustainable transportation by seeking alternatives to a fossil fuel-powered fleet. EVs typically have lower maintenance and fueling costs- resulting in long-term cost-savings for the municipality. Cape Elizabeth will consider technological advancements, costs, and practicality of use when purchasing new fleet vehicles.

#	ACTION
5.2.1	Create a vehicle procurement plan to phase out the purchases of gasoline or diesel engine vehicles, as technology becomes available and accessible. Prioritize gasoline and sedan vehicle models as well as school buses
5.2.2	Apply for state and national incentives to transition to electric school buses
5.2.3	Install EV charging ports at strategic municipal buildings to accommodate electric fleet vehicles

Municipal and School Operations Action Tables

STRATEGY 5.5

Redevelop municipal procurement and discarding policies

The Town can be a model of sustainability in the region and reduce their contribution to the waste stream by prioritizing low-impact food and goods. Choosing compostable utensils and sourcing food from local farms are examples of sustainable practices that stimulate the local economy.

#	ACTION
5.3.1	Commit to purchasing compostable or recyclable materials for municipal and school operations
5.3.2	Establish composting and recycling in all school and municipal buildings
5.3.3	Ban single-use plastics for municipal and school operations
5.3.4	Prioritize locally sourced food for school lunches and town events









Leading the Way

The town is already committed to climate action through its policies and ordinances. For example:



Flood Resilience

The zoning ordinance goes beyond state minimum by requiring structures in high-risk flood zones be elevated to at least two feet above the base flood elevation, rather than the minimum one foot.



Street Trees

The Town has requirements in several zoning areas to plant street trees during improvements and sets requirements on the types of variety of species that can be used.



Pesticide Ordinance

In 2023, the town passed a pesticide ordinance to promote the health and safety of residents and to conserve and protect the Town's waterways and natural resources by restricting the use of toxic pesticides.



Complete Streets

In 2017, Cape Elizabeth adopted a Complete Streets Policy, which guides development of safe, efficient, and accessible streets for all transportation users of all ages and abilities, whether they are on foot, on bicycles, in motorized vehicles or in public transportation.



Flood Insurance

Cape Elizabeth is part of the voluntary Community Rating System (CRS) under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Being part of this program creates discounted flood insurance premium rates to reward community actions that meet the three goals of the CRS.

THE PATH FORWARD





Implementation

The success of this Climate Action Plan depends on all of us—town staff, local organizations, and community members—working together. Everyone has a role to play in building a more sustainable and resilient Cape Elizabeth.

As technologies improve, new funding becomes available, and our community's needs and priorities evolve, this plan will be regularly reviewed and updated. It is a living document, designed to grow and adapt over time.

While it's an important step, it's just one part of Cape Elizabeth's broader efforts to reduce emissions and prepare for climate impacts. That's why coordination across departments, community groups, and related plans is essential to reaching our goals. By working together, we can turn this plan into meaningful progress – one where we meet our climate targets while building a stronger community for generations to come.

The full list of actions, including relative cost, responsibility, and tracking metrics are provided in the implementation table in Appendix A.

Suggested Quick Wins:

These are short-term actions that can kick-start action and have the potential to maintain implementation momentum

- Start creating or conducting outreach and engagement materials on any climate-related topic
  - Weatherization (1.1.2), electrification (1.2.3), heat pumps (1.2.4), renewable energy (1.3.1), Electric Vehicles (2.3.1), smart sustainable growth (3.3.1), native vegetation (4.1.2), climate hazards (4.2.4), recycling and composting (4.3.2), or CodeRed Alert system (4.5.4)
- Conduct a municipal building energy audit (5.1.1)
- Complete a sustainability and resilience ordinance audit (1.4.2)
- Configure our software to monitor different permit types and provide reports (1.3.3)
- Establish an order of prioritization for at-risk public works infrastructure (2.2.1)
- Develop a vehicle procurement plan to phase out gasoline or diesel vehicles (5.4.1)

Town Commitments and Next Steps

Tracking Progress and Reporting



Progress Report: Develop an annual Climate Action Plan progress report that can be shared publicly which provides updates on the metrics (i.e. heat pump rebates).

Annual Workplan: Each committee, staff, and the Town Council should review their assigned actions and create a workplan for the following year that prioritizes the actions and starts to develop a blueprint for implementation. This is recommended to be completed in January or align with the budgeting process.

Every 5 years the town will update the Greenhouse Gas Inventory.

Ensure Fiscal Responsibility



Thoughtful implementation: Prioritize actions that are both technologically and economically feasible, while considering the long-term costs of doing nothing.

Strategic Funding Approach: Seek out all available funding opportunities, including state and federal grants, private partnerships, and other external sources.

Transparent Financial Oversight: Clearly track metrics, regularly report investment outcomes, and review funding strategies.

Grow Partnerships



Strengthen local collaborations: Empower community organizations, support local businesses, and work with town committees to foster collaborative action.

Expand regional coordination: Participate in inter-municipal programs and projects to advance regional climate action priorities.

Advance state-level engagement: Support climate policies and share success stories with state policymakers .

Ensure Equity and Inclusion



Comprehensive stakeholder identification: Identify all potentially affected groups.

Meaningful engagement process: Ensure authentic participation.

Equity-Centered decision making: Rectify disparities and ensure that all stakeholders are involved throughout the process.

What are co-benefits?

Co-benefits are additional benefits and positive outcomes that arise from implementing climate actions and strategies. Many of the strategies and actions in this plan will have additional positive effects beyond their primary intended goals. From cleaner air and water, increased biodiversity, local economic growth, to cost savings for residents, and increased positive health outcomes, these are just a few examples of the positive effects that climate action strategies produce besides reducing GHG emissions.

Environmental Quality.
Enhances local water and air quality and ecosystem health, and/or increases biodiversity and wildlife habitat through emissions reduction, environmental remediation, pollution reduction or cleanup.

Local Economy.
Creates jobs, and/or generates economic activity and investment into local businesses and community.

Cost Savings.
Reduces costs or saves money for residents, community members, or the Town, both in the short-term and/or long-term.

Resilience.
Better prepares the community to navigate shocks and stressors related to extreme weather and other impacts through investment in infrastructure, adaptation, and community connectivity.

Public Health & Safety.
Protects, maintains, and/or improves the well-being of community members by safeguarding people and property, providing opportunities for health/wellness/outdoor recreation, and/or enhancing public safety/emergency preparedness.

Education & Awareness.
Raises public knowledge of issues related to climate and sustainability and empowers residents, business owners, staff, and community members to make informed decisions and act accordingly.

Equity.
Brings benefits to all community members, especially protections and benefits for populations most vulnerable to the effects and impacts of climate change.

How you can help

The Town understands the challenges this plan may present – recommended actions could affect daily routines and ask us to try new ways of doing things. The goal is to empower residents and businesses by offering helpful resources, guidance, and education to make these transitions smoother. When our community works together and supports these efforts, we can move forward more quickly and effectively. Therefore, here are a few things you can do to create a healthier, more sustainable Cape Elizabeth.

Buildings and Energy

- In hot months, close shades on the east side of the house in the morning to reduce heat coming in through the windows. Close shades on the west side of the house in the afternoon.
- Install energy efficiency appliances and lighting
- Get an energy audit for your home or business to identify areas for energy efficiency improvements
- Consider installing heat pumps, energy efficient insulation, solar panels, geothermal, or other energy efficient upgrades.





Transportation and Infrastructure

- Avoid unnecessary idling by turning your vehicle on immediately before driving in the summer, and 1 minute or less before driving in the winter.
- Combine and plan errands to reduce the number of trips and miles traveled, also saving your time and fuel!
- Choose walking or biking instead of driving for local trips, or consider carpooling.
- Choose an electric vehicle when considering a new vehicle.

Land Use and Natural Resources

- Limit mowing your lawn. Consider not mowing in May and mowing at a taller length until the end of Fall to support pollinators and reduces emissions from gasoline-powered lawn equipment.
- Research invasive species in your area and remove any from your property.
- Plant native species on your property and share cuttings or shoots of native plants from your garden with neighbors.
- When updating lawn care equipment, choose electric models over fossil fuel.
- For landowners, consider putting forest or wetlands into conservation or donating to a local land trust. Ensure that the open spaces of Cape Elizabeth exist for generations to come.



Resilience and Public Health



- Sign up for CodeRed Alerts to stay up to date on emergency notifications
- Ensure your homeowners or renters insurance is active and covers flooding,
- Maintain a back-up heat source such as a generator or pellet stove to ensure heating in case of power outages,
- Consider starting a personal emergency management plan – purchase emergency supply kits, learn your local evacuation routes, communicate with neighbors on potential concerns or needs.
- Support local food pantries with donations
- Choose thrift or resale shops for buying goods to reduce waste volume and long-range transportation emissions from new manufactured goods.

Community Support and Leadership

- Stay Informed and participate in town climate initiatives and events
- Volunteer your time, expertise, or resources to town committees and projects
- Encourage town leaders and decision-makers to prioritize climate action.



Funding Resources

Funding Mechanism	Description
Energy Efficiency Initiatives	Rebates and other incentives offered by a utility company or a state-designated entity for energy efficiency measures, such as heat pumps or home insulation, that result in quantifiable savings. In Maine, these are provided through Efficiency Maine.
Energy Performance Contracts	A way to partner with energy service companies to implement energy efficiency measures with guaranteed savings over time.
General Funds	A government's basic operating fund. Property taxes are a primary source of revenue for the general fund.
Grants	A public (federal or state) or private non-repayable funds allocated through programs to support specific goals.
Green Bonds	A type of bond that raises funds specifically for environmental, water, or clean energy projects. They often don't necessitate new legislation and are usually tax exempt.
Impact Investing	Attracting investments from individuals or organizations seeking both financial returns and positive environmental impact by investing in municipal climate projects.
PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy)	PACE financing programs allow property owners to finance the upfront costs for sustainable energy investments and repay over time (usually 10-20 years) through property assessments, paid through their property tax bill. The clean energy loan can be attached to the property, and transfer to the new owner if a property is sold. There are Commercial PACE (C-PACE) programs for commercial, industrial, and multi-family property owners; residential PACE (R-PACE) programs for all other residential properties.
Power Purchase Agreements	An agreement between an individual or entity to purchase credits from a renewable energy product (e.g. a solar farm). The credits are applied against the energy bill, and the money is used to develop and expand renewable energy.
Public-Private Partnerships (PPP's)	Partnership leveraged by collaborating with private entities to jointly finance and implement climate projects.
Revolving Loan Funds	This is established funds that provide low-interest loans to support climate projects, with repayments recycled into future products.
Tax Credits	These are provided by federal, state, or local governments and allow residents or businesses to subtract a certain portion of tax owed in order to incentivize investments. An example is the purchase of an electric vehicle.
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	These are employed to use tax revenues generated from increased property values within designated districts to fund economic development focused climate projects.

EXAMPLE STATE RESOURCES

Maine continues to provide a number of programs to assist municipalities in their sustainability and climate action initiatives. Many of these are available on a yearly basis.

- **Community Resilience Partnership (CRP)** assists communities to reduce carbon emissions, transition to clean energy and become more resilient to climate change effects such as extreme storms, flooding, rising sea levels, public health impacts, and more.
- **Coastal Community Grants (CCG)** is a competitive grant opportunity that provides funds to towns and regional organizations for projects in the areas of public access, water quality improvement, storm hazard resiliency, and marine-related economic development.
- **Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)** supports community development activities s such as infrastructure, economic development projects, public facilities installation, community centers, housing rehabilitation, public services, clearance/ acquisition, code enforcement, homeowner assistance, and more.
- **Shore and Harbor Planning Grants** provides competitive resources for shoreline access planning, waterfront and harbor planning, identification and resolution of waterfront use conflicts and planning, feasibility, and design efforts for resilient waterfront infrastructure.
- **Maine Natural Resource Conservation Program** uses state and federal mitigation funds for projects that protect and restore natural resources across Maine. Maine Infrastructure Adaptation Grants supports the scoping, design, implementation, and construction of necessary projects.
- **Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG)** provides grants to communities for clean energy programs and projects.
- **Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund Capitalization Grant** provides money to the state to support residential and commercial energy efficiency projects.
- **Efficiency Maine i**s the primary distributor of energy efficiency, weatherization, and building electrification rebates and grants.

EXAMPLE FEDERAL RESOURCES

The federal funding landscape has shifted rapidly with the change in administrations in 2025, there is not yet a clear picture of funding sources in the future. Here we highlight some past agencies and programs that have invested in resilience building and emission reduction projects.

- **National Coastal Resilience Fund** from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has annual rounds of funding available for coastal and watershed resilience building projects.
- **FEMA** provides funding for mitigation measures that reduce disaster loss by working to decrease long-term risk to people and property from future disasters.
- **Department of Energy** grants for energy efficiency and renewable energy in municipal buildings.
- **Federal Highway Administration** – Low/No Emission Grant program for clean transportation vehicles and infrastructure upgrades.
- **Environmental Protection Agency** provides funding through their Diesel Emission Reduction Act program for replacing old diesel engines in fleet vehicles.

Acronyms

BMP	Best Management Practice
CAP	Climate Action Plan
CCG	Coastal Community Grant
CCSWCD	Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant Program
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
CRP	Community Resilience Partnership
DMR	Department of Marine Resources
DOE	Department of Education
EMP	Emergency Management Plan
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EV	Electric Vehicle
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GOPIF	Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future
kWh	Kilowatt-hours
LID	Low Impact Development
MCP	Maine Coastal Program
MPAP	Municipal Planning Assistance Program
MT CO2e	Metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PACE (C-PACE)	Property Assessed Clean Energy (Commercial Property)
PFAS	Per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
SLR	Sea Level Rise
TIF	Tax Increment Financing
VMT	Vehicles Miles Traveled

Terms to Know

Active Transportation is human-powered mobility, such as biking and walking, that replaces vehicle travel.

Adaptation refers to the process of adjusting to or preparing for the changing climate and its impacts. These actions reduce the harm caused by climate change.

Building energy codes are a cost-effective way for local governments to cut carbon emissions, eliminate energy waste, and contribute to improved health and safety of the community. Base codes set the minimum design and construction requirements for buildings. Optional, opt-in stretch codes are, by contrast, more demanding than base codes, requiring that buildings achieve higher energy savings.

Carbon Sequestration is the act of removing carbon dioxide (CO2) from the air. Naturally occurs in plants.

A **Climate Hazard** is a physical process or event, exacerbated by climate change, that can bring harm to people, communities, or ecosystems.

A **Circular Economy** is a closed-loop system that keeps materials and products in circulation and out of landfills, through techniques such as reuse, refurbishment, maintenance, remanufacture, and composting.

Decarbonize refers to the transition from fossil fuel-based energy sources to renewables, such as wind, solar or geothermal

Discrete fuel refers to all heating oils used in stationary energy, including kerosene, propane, and fuel oil.

Emergency Management Plans outline how to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the effects of an emergency or disaster. Organizations, municipalities, or individuals can create their own emergency management plans.

Equity is impartiality, fairness, and justice for all people in social policy. Social equity takes into account systemic inequalities to ensure everyone in a community has access to the same opportunities and outcomes. Equity of all kinds acknowledges that inequalities exist and works to eliminate them.

Fossil fuels are energy resources formed from the remains of ancient plants and animals, such as coal, oil, and natural gas, which are extracted for human use. When combusted to create energy, they emit greenhouse gas emissions.

Greenhouse Gases are the gases in the Earth's atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), and nitrous oxide (N2O) responsible for trapping heat. These gases are crucial to regulating the temperature of the planet and are typically managed by natural cycles; however, these gases are also released from human activities, mainly burning fossil fuels for energy production and transportation.

Land conservation refers to setting aside parcels of land for permanent protection through fee acquisition or a conservation easement, a binding legal agreement with accompanying tax benefits that protects natural resources.

Low-impact development (LID) is an approach to wastewater management that prioritizes water quality and uses natural systems to process water.

Maine Won't Wait is the State's Climate Action Plan resleased in 2020 and updated in 2025. This plan lays out ambitious climate goals for the state of Maine.

Metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MT CO2e) are a measurement for greenhouse gas emissions. The tonnage of other greenhouse gases (e.g. methane, nitrous oxide) is adjusted to the equivalent tonnage of carbon dioxide necessary to produce the same warming effect so everything is reported in the same unit.

Mitigation are actions to reduce the sources of greenhouse gases. These actions slow the pace of climate change.

Nature-based solutions intentionally use natural or nature-based infrastructure, such as oyster reefs, to protect against climate hazards and provide economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Net Zero refers to cutting our total greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible, with any remaining emissions re-absorbed from the atmosphere through natural processes.

Renewable energy is energy from a source that is not depleted when used, such as wind or solar power.

Resilience is the capacity of communities or natural environments to adapt and/or recover quickly from impacts.

Vehicles Miles Traveled (VMT) are the total distance covered by all vehicles in a specific area over a set time. This measurement helps to assess our reliance on vehicles to get around.

Vulnerability is a measure of risk to a threat, incorporating the likelihood of the threat occurring and the severity of the impact if it occurs.

Weatherization means projects that reduce the amount of heat lost from a building by updating the building's infrastructure, such as adding insulation. Retaining heat for longer can save money and energy.


TOWN OF CAPE ELIZABETH, MAINE
INCORPORATED NOV. 1, 1765

APPENDIX A

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX



Reading the matrix

The implementation matrix on the following pages summarizes the strategies and actions, provides details on the actions, and provides implementation guidance, including relative cost, timeline, responsibility, and co-benefits. These estimates and assignments are suggestions and are based on current conditions and may change over time. As technology improves, availability of resources fluctuates, or staff capacity changes, the cost, impact, or responsibility of each action may change. Where applicable, the matrix also provides key metrics to track progress and measure success. Over time, even small incremental changes will make a big impact.

Cost–Represents the estimated capital required to implement the action, inclusive of external funding that can be used to offset direct costs. Costs can and will change as resource availability and technology change over time.

$	Low cost (free or <$1,000)
$$	Medium cost ($1,000- $100,000)
$$$	High cost (>$100,000)

Timelime–Provides suggested timeframe for beginning implementation based on priority and feasibility. Some projects may start soon but will be ongoing or take a while to complete.

Short	Begin within 5 years (2025-2030)
Medium	5-15 years (2030 - 2040)
Long	15-25 yeras (2040-2050)

Co-Benefits–Additional benefits and positive outcomes that arise from implementing climate actions and strategies. See page 69 of the Climate Action Plan for more details on co-benefits.

Responsibility–Provides suggested staff or committee who are responsible for initiating and seeing through the execution of the action, with collaboration and support.

Emission Reduction (Mitigation) – Represents the relative potential for the action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

E	None or low emission reduction
EE	Medium emission reduction
EEE	High emission reduction

Builds Resilience Capacity (Adaptation) –Represents the extent to which the action will improve community resilience. Community resilience covers physical and social infrastructure, environmental health, and general preparedness for climate hazards.

R	None or low resilience improvement
RR	Medium resilience improvement
RRR	High resilience improvement

Measuring Success–Provides example guidance for staff, committees, and Town Council to address to evaluate whether progress has been made on the action.

Performance Indicators–Provides example metrics for the town to track to reach the goals listed in the Climate Action Plan.