

Town of Sorrento Comprehensive Plan

2025 - 2035



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The committee would like to recognize the contributions of ‘friends of the committee’ Tom Bailey, Diana Gazis, and Heather Parker who served as committee members in all but title. And our Sorrento town staff, selectpersons, and committee members all of whom provided unstinting support.

Consultants

In particular, the committee would like to give special thanks to our principal consultant, Adi Philson, who patiently guided us through the planning process and prepared the plan document. And to the staff of the Hancock County Planning Commission, Averil Varney and Alice Cockerham, for their invaluable assistance.

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Introduction

This Sorrento Comprehensive Plan is the product of a three-year community effort to understand Sorrento as it exists now and to articulate a long-term vision for its future. The plan provides guidance for the town as it seeks to build on its strengths, address its management challenges, increase its capacity, and respond to anticipated changes. In addition, the comprehensive plan is required for the town to be eligible for certain State programs, grants, and loans.

The comprehensive plan is intended to be a clear statement of the town's values, collective vision, and future goals. It is meant to inform and guide the town as it makes management and planning decisions. ***The plan is not legally binding and creates no requirement, regulation, or ordinance of any kind. The expectation is that any recommendations or proposals contained in the plan will be given further consideration through the normal town public decision-making process.*** Throughout the plan, goals, objectives, and strategies are presented to help guide the town forward; those marked with an asterisk (*) are required by the State.

To ensure that the comprehensive plan reflects the views of our residents, the Comprehensive Plan Committee conducted an extensive series of public participation events. They included:

- Kickoff session and introduction to comprehensive planning
- Community engagement survey with nearly 300 responses
- Targeted focus groups with waterfront businesses, small business owners, young families, long term residents
- Visioning event, *Sorrento Moving Forward*, on shared community values, hopes, priorities, and vision for the future
- Conversations on housing, development, future land use, transportation, short term rentals, community resilience and climate change

In all there were twelve community events attended by an estimated 325 residents over a period of two years.

In a very real sense this plan is the product of the many people who completed surveys, took part in focus groups, and participated in community meetings. People who distributed flyers, prepared food for events, and set up chairs. People who provided essential information, wrote drafts, and reviewed chapters. This plan is truly a community effort.

Sorrento Comprehensive Plan Committee,
Ann Hoffner, Trina Wellman, Al Scott, Bob Worrell, Chuck Bennett

Vision & Overarching Priorities

Sorrento envisions a future that honors and conserves its natural beauty, coastal heritage, and strong sense of community. As a small town with a rich history and remarkable shoreline, Sorrento will continue to protect its scenic landscapes, clean waters, and quiet character while thoughtfully adapting to changing needs of its population.

Over the next decade, the town seeks to maintain a high quality of life for both year-round and seasonal residents by supporting housing opportunities and initiatives that reflect community needs, encouraging small-scale economic activity that fits the local character, and maintaining essential infrastructure and services. Sorrento will encourage voluntary land conservation, responsible development, and climate resilience to preserve its environmental assets for future generations.

Through careful planning and active civic engagement, Sorrento will remain a welcoming, resilient, and livable community—one that values its rural pace, fosters connection among neighbors, and sustains the qualities that make it a uniquely special place to call home.

Overarching Priorities

1. **Protect Sorrento's Natural and Coastal Resources:** Safeguard the town's environmental assets—including clean drinking water, shoreline ecosystems, and scenic views—through land use policies, watershed planning, and climate resilience. Ensure that future development minimizes impact on the land and water that define Sorrento's identity.
2. **Preserve Small-Town Character and Quality of Life:** Maintain Sorrento's quiet, rural, and scenic atmosphere while allowing for modest, well-managed growth. Guide land use decisions to reflect the town's traditional scale, values, and long-standing appeal to both year-round and seasonal residents.
3. **Strengthen Infrastructure and Public Services Thoughtfully:** Improve essential services—including waterfront infrastructure, road maintenance, and emergency response—in a cost-effective manner that meets community needs. Prioritize grant-funded and collaborative solutions to minimize tax burden while ensuring resilience and accessibility.
4. **Foster a Supportive, Multi-Generational Community:** Promote a livable environment for residents of all ages to increase access to housing, health and emergency services, and opportunities for community connection. Plan for an aging population while also considering the needs of younger households and families.
5. **Encourage Sustainable Economic and Housing Opportunities:** Support small-scale business development and housing that fits the community's scale and needs. Balance local economic activity and tax base growth with preservation of natural and visual resources, recognizing that affordability and livability are key to long-term vitality.

Data

The population and demographic data in this chapter come primarily from two sources in the U.S. Census — the 2020 Decennial Census and the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates.

To calculate ACS estimates, the Census Bureau selects a random sample of addresses to fill out questionnaires. The 5-Year Estimates are calculated using data that is collected over a 60-month period. It should be noted that the 5-Year Estimates often have a large margin of error due to the small size of the sample subset. For example, the 5-year estimates from the ACS count 76 people between the ages of 15-19 living in Sorrento, with a margin of error around ± 49 . This is a large margin of error, and it means the data presented here from the ACS 5-Year Estimates are not reliable and should be interpreted through the lens of alternative information sources.

It is noted that this Plan presents Census data, however the Census data is not reflective of population trends observed since 2020, especially considering changing trends associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

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It is noted that this Plan presents Census data, however the Census data is not reflective of population trends observed since 2020, especially considering changing trends associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter A: Population and Demographics

1. Purpose

Population is a foundational data set to guide all aspects of a comprehensive plan. The understanding of the town's past, current, and future population trends support many other aspects of the plan, such as housing, land use, and transportation, and will help the town of Sorrento prepare for future municipal expenditures and investments. This section will:

1. Describe Sorrento's population trends;
2. Discuss how these recent trends relate to and contrast with Hancock County, the State; and
3. Review likely future population trends and how they influence the future demand for housing and public services, as well as land use.

1. Key Finding and Issues

Sorrento has experienced a steady population size with little growth anticipated in the future, although there has been a recent uptick in student enrollment. The aging population will have implications for the Town. Seasonal fluctuation in population presents unique benefits and challenges. The growth of the short-term rental industry may further increase visitor turnover as well as the overall number of visitors with implications for services and community cohesion.

2. Community Engagement

The 2022 Public Opinion Survey results show that 35% of respondents anticipated either retiring or not working full time in the next 5 years, which would likely further increase the number of retired community members in Sorrento, whether year-round or seasonal. Few respondents indicated either moving away from Sorrento with slightly more respondents anticipating becoming a year-round resident, potentially suggesting slight growth in the year-round population.

The survey results contain comments from individuals, both seasonal and year-round, who stated that they would like to see more families with children move to Sorrento and for younger working people and families to be able to afford to live here. Despite this, there was little to no support for the town investing tax dollars in business development or attraction of any size, downtown village area development/growth, encouraging tourism, improved street lighting, new residential development, parking in village area, and public transportation. Encouraging tourism was the most widely opposed investment.

The overwhelming majority of those who attended the community conversations stated that the small-town feel, rural nature, and physical beauty of Sorrento was very important to them. They do not want to see too much growth too quickly, a trend that may affect Sorrento's current way of life.

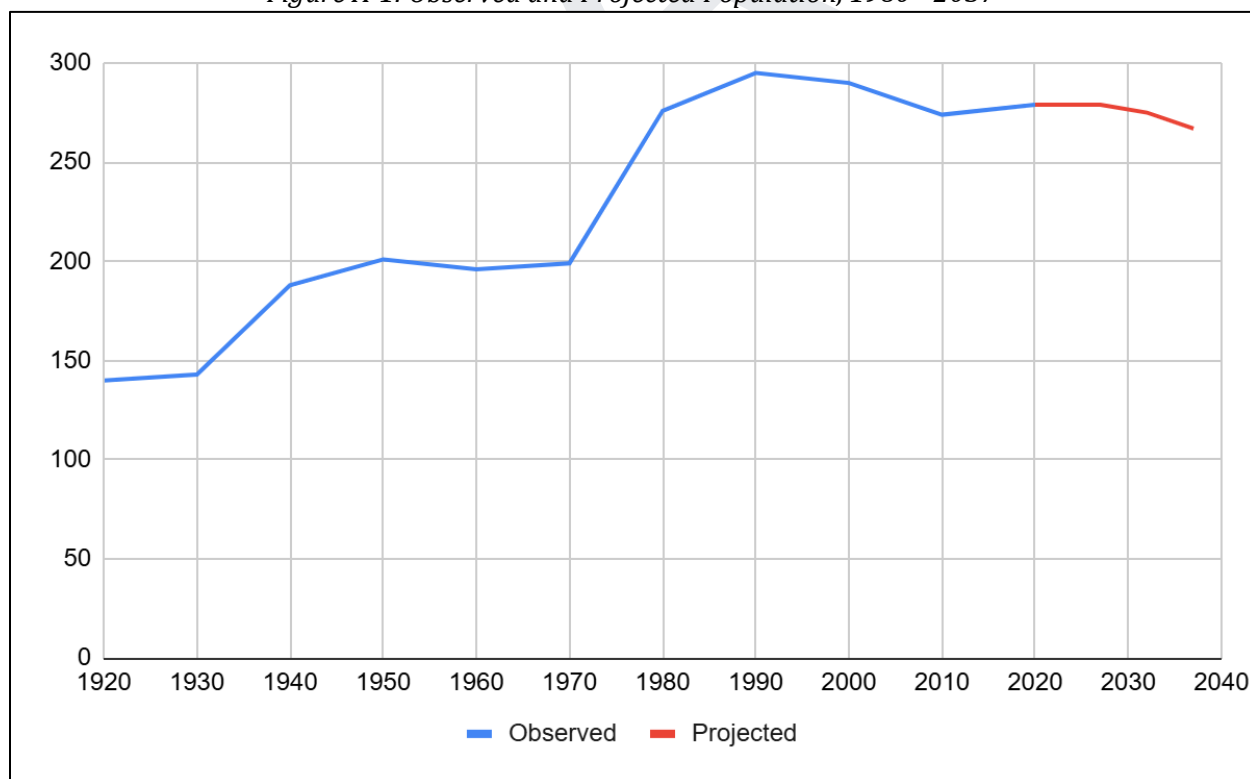
3. Historical Trends

Sorrento is a small, residential community home to 280 year-round residents as well as a significant, long-standing seasonal population. While there are a few residents whose families have resided in Sorrento for decades, most of Sorrento's current residents discovered this small, little-known town through word of mouth or other personal connections; many current year-round residents were formerly seasonal residents, who retired to Sorrento. In the last few years, the number of students enrolled in school from Sorrento has increased. Little change is projected in the number of year-round residents over the next 20 years, however, residents suggest the number of seasonal visitors has grown over the last 5 years with the increased turnover due to shorter-term rentals offered through booking sites such as Airbnb and VRBO.

4. Year-Round Population

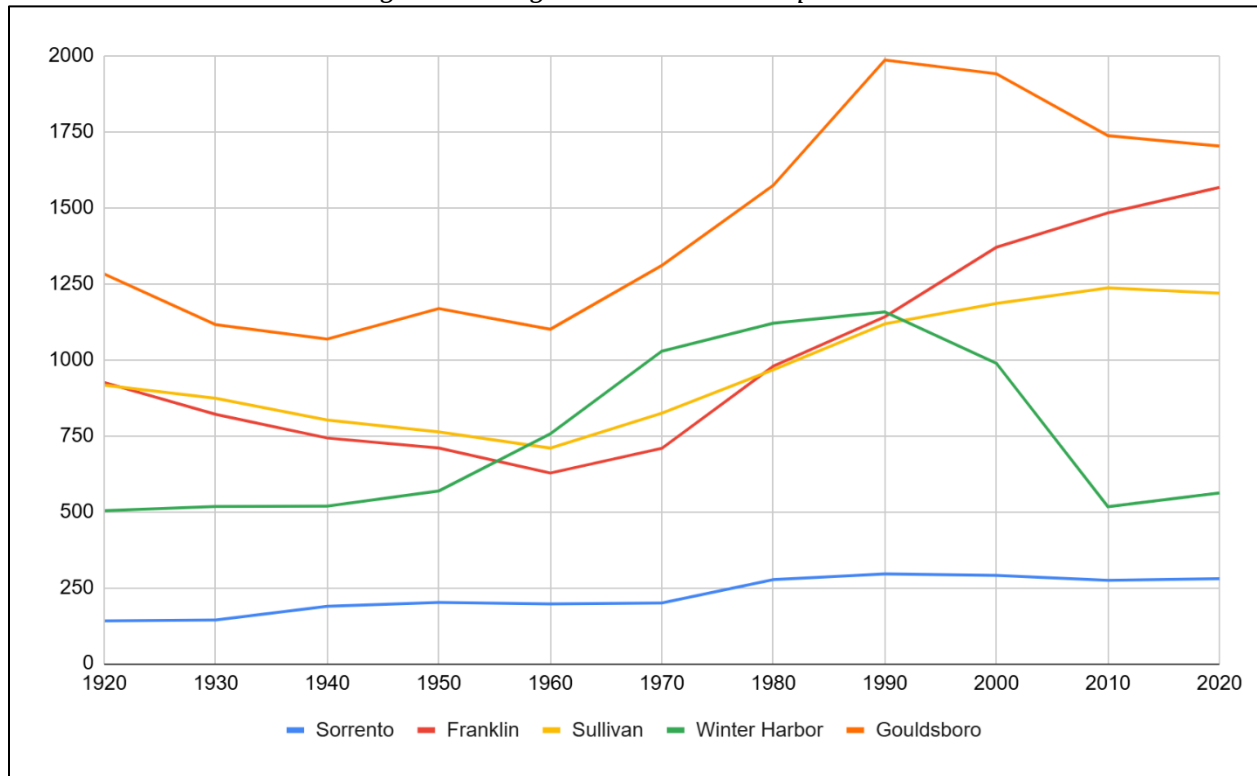
Sorrento's year-round population has remained relatively steady over the past 5 decades. However, the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily hastened the conversion of a small number (maybe half a dozen) of seasonal to year-round residents. This trend has slowed post-pandemic; however, according to the 2023 survey, 12% of seasonal respondents (20 out of 172) indicated they anticipate moving to Sorrento full-time in the future. This seasonal to year-round pipeline is a small, yet consistent source of population replenishment. The population of seasonal-turned-year-round form a significant base of volunteers who support town government and operations.

Figure A-1: Observed and Projected Population, 1980 - 2037



Source: Maine State Economist

Figure A-2: Regional Year-Round Population



Source: US Decennial Census

Table A-1: Births and Deaths, 2001 - 2023

	Births	Deaths	Net
2001	2	1	1
2002	2	0	2
2003	2	4	-2
2004	2	3	-1
2005	1	4	-3
2006	3	5	-2
2007	1	6	-5
2008	1	3	-2
2009	3	11	-8
2010	1	2	-1
2011	2	1	1
2012	3	4	-1
2013	5	3	2
2014	1	4	-3
2015	2	5	-3
2016	3	3	0
2017	1	3	-2
2018	0	10	-10

	Births	Deaths	Net
2019	2	7	-5
2020	0	2	-2
2021	2	5	-3
2022	2	3	-1
2023	1	2	-1

Source: Maine Department of Health and Human Services

4.1. Age

Sorrento's median age is older than Hancock County's, which also tends to be older than the State's overall population. Over the past 20 years, Sorrento's median age has increased by almost 10 years. Sorrento has seen the largest increase in the youngest age category (0-4) and the two oldest age categories (65-84 and 85+). This suggests that Sorrento's population is aging, which carries implications for the town in terms of sustaining services and volunteer efforts unless there is a consistent migration of new residents to the town. Despite an older population, the data suggests that there are young families still moving into Town with school-aged children.

Table A-2: Age Characteristics, 2000 - 2020

	2000		2010		2020		% Change 00' – 20'
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	
0 - 4	9	3.2%	10	3.6%	12	4.3%	33.3%
5 - 19	39	13.7%	25	9.1%	36	12.9%	-7.7%
20 - 44	63	22.2%	71	25.9%	66	23.7%	4.8%
45 - 64	106	37.3%	106	38.7%	69	24.7%	-34.9%
65 - 84	63	22.2%	54	19.7%	85	30.5%	34.9%
85+	4	1.4%	8	2.9%	11	3.9%	175.0%
Total	284	100%	274	100%	279	100%	

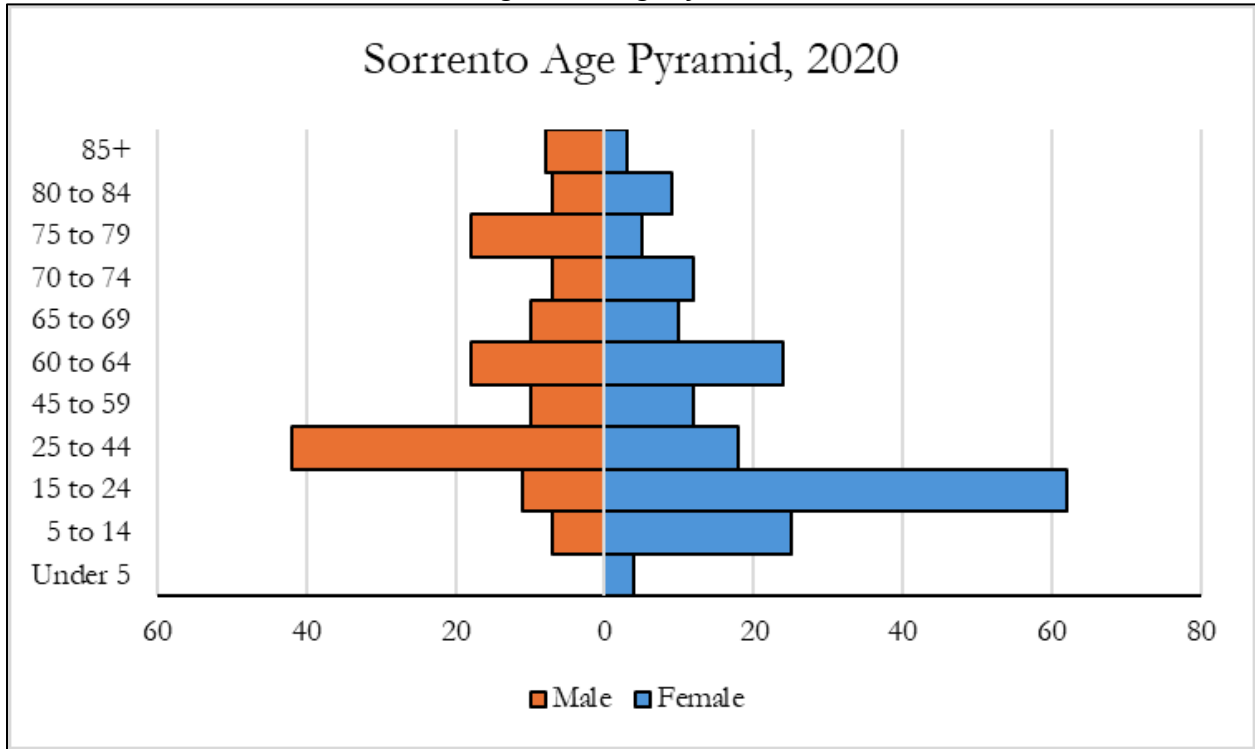
Source: Decennial Census

Table A-3: Median Age, 2000 - 2020

	Sorrento	Hancock County	Maine
2000	46.7	40.7	38.6
2010	52.5	46.3	42.7
2020	56.1	49.5	45.1

Source: Decennial Census

Figure A-3: Age Pyramid



Source: 2020 Decennial Census

4.2. Income

Sorrento has a higher median household income and a much lower percentage of families below the poverty line when compared to Hancock County and Maine.

Table A-4: Median Household Income, 1990 - 2022

	Sorrento	Hancock County	Maine
1990	\$19,792	\$25,247	\$27,854
2000	\$42,125	\$35,811	\$37,240
2010	\$51,042	\$47,533	\$46,933
2020	\$68,625	\$58,345	\$59,489
2022	\$77,969	\$64,149	\$68,251

Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates and Decennial Census

Table A-5: Poverty Rate

	Sorrento	Hancock County	Maine
2012	4.6%	8.0%	9.0%
2020	6.7%	6.5%	6.7%
2022	1.4%	6.8%	6.4%

Source: ACS 5-year Estimates

4.3. Educational Attainment

Sorrento residents also tend to have a higher level of educational attainment, particularly when comparing the percentage of a population who have completed a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table A-6: Educational Attainment

	Sorrento	Hancock County	Maine
% High School Graduate or Higher	93.8%	95.0%	94.1%
% Bachelor's Degree or Higher	46.7%	36.6%	34.1%

Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

4.4. Race

According to the Census Bureau, over 93% of Sorrento's residents identify as being white alone, while around 7% of the population identify as being of a different race.

Table A-7: Race

Race	% of Population
White	93.2%
Black or African American	0.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.0%
Asian	0.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.0%
Some Other Race	1.1%
Two or More Races	5.0%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	2.9%

Source: 2020 Decennial Census

4.5. Average Household Size

While Sorrento's average household size appears to have increased between 2020 and 2010 but still falls below that of Hancock County and Maine. A smaller average household size of around 2 is a characteristic of older populations and would seem to reflect Sorrento's large percentage of older adults.

Table A-8: Average Household Size

	Sorrento	Hancock County	Maine
1990	2.46	2.48	2.56
2000	2.27	2.31	2.39
2010	1.94	2.2	2.32
2020	2.14	2.21	2.29

Source: Decennial Census

5. Seasonal Population

Sorrento's summer community traces back to the Victorian era when Frenchman's Bay Water Company was established and bought most of the land in southern Sorrento. Today, Sorrento's

seasonal population continues to revolve around the summer months of June through August. However, a portion of Sorrento's seasonal population are considered part-time residents, who spend the better of the year (usually 7 months) in Sorrento and are therefore eligible to vote in Sorrento but reside elsewhere during the winter months. While it is challenging to get an estimate on the exact number of part-time residents, roughly 10% (19 people) of self-identified seasonal survey respondents indicated that they live in Sorrento more than 6 months each year.

A 2025 analysis estimated that there is 600 seasonal residents annually in Sorrento. This seasonal fluctuation in Sorrento's population has created a unique socio-economic dynamic between year-round and seasonal residents that presents both challenges and benefits to Sorrento that differ from other towns of the same size. In some cases, there are significant gaps in terms of wealth and occupation between year-round and seasonal residents. While seasonal residences pay a significant portion of the Town's annual property taxes, the assessed value of those seasonal residences has increased dramatically over the past several years which has driven up the tax base for all the Town's properties. These ever-increasing property valuations have, in turn, rendered many of the Town's properties unaffordable to some current or aspiring year-round residents. Surveys of Sorrento's taxpayers indicate a desire to maintain a balance between the year-round and seasonal communities so that current and aspiring year-round residents can live affordably in Sorrento while acknowledging and embracing seasonal residents as valued members of the overall community and an important element of the Town's fiscal structure.

There is a 150-year tradition of shared interest and stewardship between Sorrento's year-round and seasonal communities. Survey results yield a strong Town-wide desire for, and commitment to, year-round and seasonal residents being able to live in Sorrento willingly, happily and neighborly, despite some notable demographic and socio-economic disparities.

A complicating factor is the growth of the short-term rental industry through companies such as VRBO and Airbnb, which some feel has changed the nature of the seasonal community, particularly due to the lack of renters' ties to the town. Growth of this industry may further increase visitor turnover as well as the overall number of visitors to the small community. For a more thorough discussion of short-term rentals, refer to Chapter C: Housing.

6. Population Projections & Implications

According to population projections provided by the Maine State Economist, Sorrento's year-round population is projected to remain relatively steady over the next 20 years, decreasing by just over 4% between 2020 and 2037. The unaffordability of housing, limited opportunity for new housing, and lack of winterized homes to accommodate additional year-round residents contributes to this population stagnation. For example, as year-round residents passed away or migrated to more affordable areas, the homes in the village center neighborhood have largely turned into summer residences. Rather than returning to Sorrento, children of long-time residents are more likely to settle in Sullivan and Franklin, which tend to receive the overflow of community members who cannot find housing in Sorrento.

Unaffordability of housing to local residents may contribute to further displacement of year-round residents by seasonal population and short-term visitors, particularly if commercial interest in short-term rentals continues to grow and land use regulations remain the same. Moreover, there is considerable concern that short-term rental property owners, often based out of state with no connection to the town, will not keep up the tradition of philanthropic contributions that has helped to sustain the small town's community life and services, which could have significant implications for the town's wellbeing.

As Sorrento's population continues to age, the town may face increased pressures to provide supportive services and housing to accommodate aging in place. Emergency and medical services in particular may see increasing demand. Since the majority of in-town services and Town committees are provided through volunteer efforts, Sorrento may also need to create a strategy to sustain volunteer efforts and/or provide town services in light of an aging population and limited volunteer base.

7. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Sustain a Healthy and Engaged Population			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Strengthen Volunteerism and Civic Participation	Create and actively maintain a roster of necessary municipal paid and volunteer positions and periodically assess needs.	Selectboard	1 year-ongoing
	Cultivate an involved community with a strong volunteer base.	Town Committees	Ongoing
	Continue to support participation by seasonal residents in volunteer roles.	Town Committees	Ongoing
	Develop a town-wide communications plan to improve awareness of volunteer opportunities.	Selectboard, HCPC	1-2 years
Engage and Integrate Residents	Create an information packet for residents.	Town Office	1 year
	Host community events that bring together seasonal and year-round residents.	Community Building Committee	Ongoing
	Facilitate periodic dialogues or forums to connect residents across seasonal lines.	Selectboard, HCPC, Planning Board	Ongoing

Chapter B: Economy

1. Purpose

Understanding past, current, and potential economic trends in the local and regional economy is essential for assessing Sorrento's future needs. Employment patterns change due to fluctuations in numbers of at-home workers and telecommuters, regional changes to major sources of employment, and/or changes in retail and other sectors; consequently, transportation, telecommunication and energy infrastructure may all be impacted and require adequate planning. Sorrento's demographics and seasonal populations have a highly significant effect on the economic picture of the Town. The rising sea level and increased temperature in the ocean/on land may also induce changes. Specifically, this chapter:

1. Describes employment trends in Sorrento;
2. Describes the local and regional economy, including current jobs, property taxes (especially on seasonal homes), and the large percentage of retirees; and
3. Discusses likely future economic trends and market changes that may impact Sorrento.

2. Key Findings and Issues

As of 2023, Sorrento's labor force is declining, due to the increasing number of retired residents. Additionally, the number of self-employed workers has increased over the last two decades, which may be a result of new migration patterns and work preferences. Current improvements in broadband capabilities across the Schoodic region will play a major role in increasing the volume and quality of remote work options.

Sorrento's current unemployment rate stands at 1.9%, marking the lowest level observed in the past two decades. The Town's quarterly employment trends reflect seasonality of the fishing and summer service industries.

Residents of Sorrento are committed to preserving the town's residential character, while also supporting the coexistence of waterfront services, the local fishing community, and remote business employment. Beyond this, there is little interest among community members in any economic development in Sorrento.

3. Community Engagement

Replies to the Public Opinion Survey showed that 56% of respondents were retired. 24% indicated that they worked full-time and another 8% indicated that they were working part-time. Only 11% percent indicated they were self-employed.

Roughly 75% of respondents' annual household income is \$75,000 or more. The largest proportion of respondents (30%) earn an annual household income of \$200,000 or more. 2021 ACS reported

median household income of \$72,734 for year-round residents. Therefore, while Sorrento residents' annual household incomes are generally higher than the rest of Maine or Hancock County, this survey seems to have captured a higher proportion of respondents who fall into higher income brackets. However, 26.5% of respondents skipped this question, so these results may not accurately represent respondents. Looking at annual household income by resident type, seasonal and non-resident respondents reported higher annual household incomes than year-round residents.

It is evident that survey respondents want the general aspects of the Town to remain the same, and there is little interest in additional economic development or tourism. 84% of year-round respondents do not want the Town to invest in tourism and 75% of year-round respondents do want the town to invest in any kind of business development. Seasonal respondents shared similar responses.

4. Local Economy Overview

Sorrento is primarily a residential and seasonal community and therefore has limited economic activity. Historically, the town's economy was intrinsically linked with its coastal character. The town's long-standing businesses: bait fishing, lobster and shellfish harvest, and boat storage and repair revolve around the waterfront. The handful of other town businesses (including the Sorrento Golf Course, Guyette Gas and Propane, Ready Seafood, Sorrento Dental, Tee Tee Redemption, and private building contracting, housekeeping and property management services) provide services catering to local residents and the summer community. Even with the influx of residents during the summer, Sorrento does not have enough people or infrastructure to sustain even seasonal business growth. In addition, given its location on a peninsula means that the town does not get much through-traffic or general tourism.

The town's location, available land and resources, lack of broadband internet, combined with residents' desire to remain largely residential mean that it is unlikely that Sorrento will become an employment center or generate significant economic impacts to the region. Residents appear content to rely on outside employment opportunities in Ellsworth and nearby communities (See Section Employment by Industry and Occupation below), develop smaller private service businesses, and/or work remotely for businesses outside the region. In addition, residents appear content to spend their earnings in surrounding towns rather than develop local shopping opportunities. Therefore, Sorrento will never be an economic engine, and the town's role will be in supporting regional businesses and efforts to develop a more stable economic base.

4.1. History

During the 19th Century farmland covered what is known as Waukeag Neck. Farms were built facing the water because roads were nonexistent and water was the means of transportation. Many of the people who lived in Sorrento depended on coastal trade, or coasting as it was called, for their living. Coasting was the main source of transportation for people and goods until dirt roads winded

their way down from Sullivan and the horse and buggy became the way to travel followed. Rail service was also initiated to nearby Hancock in the late 1800s.

In addition to farming, revenue was generated in the area from the fishing industry. The cod fisheries was the most constant source of fishermen's earnings, with hake replacing cod in some areas. By the middle of the 19th century lobster became the predominant source of income. The number of fishermen engaged in the lobster fishery quadrupled in a very few years. Much later in 1942 the Sorrento Lobster Pound was built by the Creamer family. That business has changed hands several times and is now a lobster distribution center owned by Ready Seafood.

Weir Fishing for herring also began in the mid-19th century, initially to provide bait for the lobster fishermen. Clamming was also a constant, sometimes marginally, source of income for local residents. Most fishermen did some clamming in the winter when boats were hauled for the season. The timber industry and its mills along with granite quarrying constituted other earlier industries in the area. Finally, mining had a brief craze in the 1870's and '80s with the "Boss of the Bay" copper mine below the Blink Bonnie Golf Course and the "Golden Circle" gold mine on Treasure Island.

In the 1880's a summer home community in Sorrento became a mainstay of the local economy. Local residents began selling lots and farms became summer homes and a grand hotel was built for the seasonal residents and visitors arriving from Hancock and Mount Desert Island. In addition, a golf course and saltwater swimming pool were built. Waukeag Neck became a playground for the wealthy and as such the design and building industry grew significantly well into the 1970's. Much of the local economy to this day revolves around services provided to the seasonal community.

4.2. Employers and Businesses

There are very few traditional employers in Sorrento. Almost everyone employed by businesses in Sorrento lives outside of Sorrento. Much of this has to do with the high cost of housing in Sorrento as a coastal community combined with the lack of high-paying jobs. In turn, most Sorrento residents work outside of Sorrento. In fact, only 3.3% of residents are employed in Sorrento according to 2022 Census on the Map data. Instead, Sorrento's local economy largely revolves around the gig economy supporting the summer community, as well as home businesses, which are a growing part of the community. The Town does not have capacity to support tourism beyond the current residential seasonal community and there is little desire to invest in supporting a tourism industry in Sorrento.

Although few Sorrento residents are employed in the industry, fishing, shell fishing, and ancillary services supporting the fishing and summer boating communities make up the largest local industry in Sorrento.

Table B-1: Businesses in Sorrento

Business Name	Description	Employees
Sorrento VIA	Recreation Programs (Golf, Tennis, Sailing, etc.)	5-9 (seasonal)
Sorrento Dental Assoc	Dentists	5-9
Ready Seafood	Lobster distribution	20

Business Name	Description	Employees
Sorrento Lobster	Seafood and bait	5-7
Crucible Corp	Boat Storage	1-4
Guyette's LP Gas	Gas-Liquefied Petro-Bttld/Bulk (whls)	1-4
Town of Sorrento	City Government-Executive Offices	1-5
United States Postal Service	Post Office	1-4
West Cove Boat Yard	Boat Storage	4-8
Tee Tee Redemption Center	Returnable containers	2

Source: Sorrento Comprehensive Plan Committee

Ready Seafood, a trans-shipment enterprise located on Sorrento's waterfront, is the town's largest commercial enterprise employing 20 fulltime people and is a source of regular traffic in the town due to box trucks and tractor trailers servicing the business. Sorrento Lobster is a bait and seafood company on the north end of the peninsula and is not on the waterfront.

4.3. Home Businesses

There are several sole proprietor home based businesses in Sorrento (e.g. West Shore Caretaking). These businesses supply contracting services, housekeeping, and property management work that supports the year-round community but is critical to seasonal residents. In fact, there is community support for the Town of Sorrento to encourage and support the development and sustainability of these types of businesses. In addition to these sole proprietor full time businesses, there are also several smaller supplemental operations that contribute to the town such as roadside floral design, and vegetable and egg sales.

4.4. Labor Force Trends

As an older community, a large percentage of Sorrento's population is retired. This also impacts the available workforce in Sorrento, which is a comparatively smaller percentage than in neighboring towns, such as Sullivan, with a younger median age.

Table B-2: Labor Force as a % of the Population, 1980 – 2023

		Sorrento	Sullivan	Hancock County
1980	#	132	457	19,551
	%	47.8%	47.3%	46.8%
1990	#	154	598	24,576
	%	52.2%	53.5%	52.4%
2000	#	152	671	28,841
	%	52.4%	56.6%	55.7%
2010	#	135	670	29,941
	%	49.3%	54.2%	55.0%
2020	#	117	610	27,591
	%	41.9%	50.0%	49.7%

Source: Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce Research and Information

4.5. Employment By Industry and Occupation

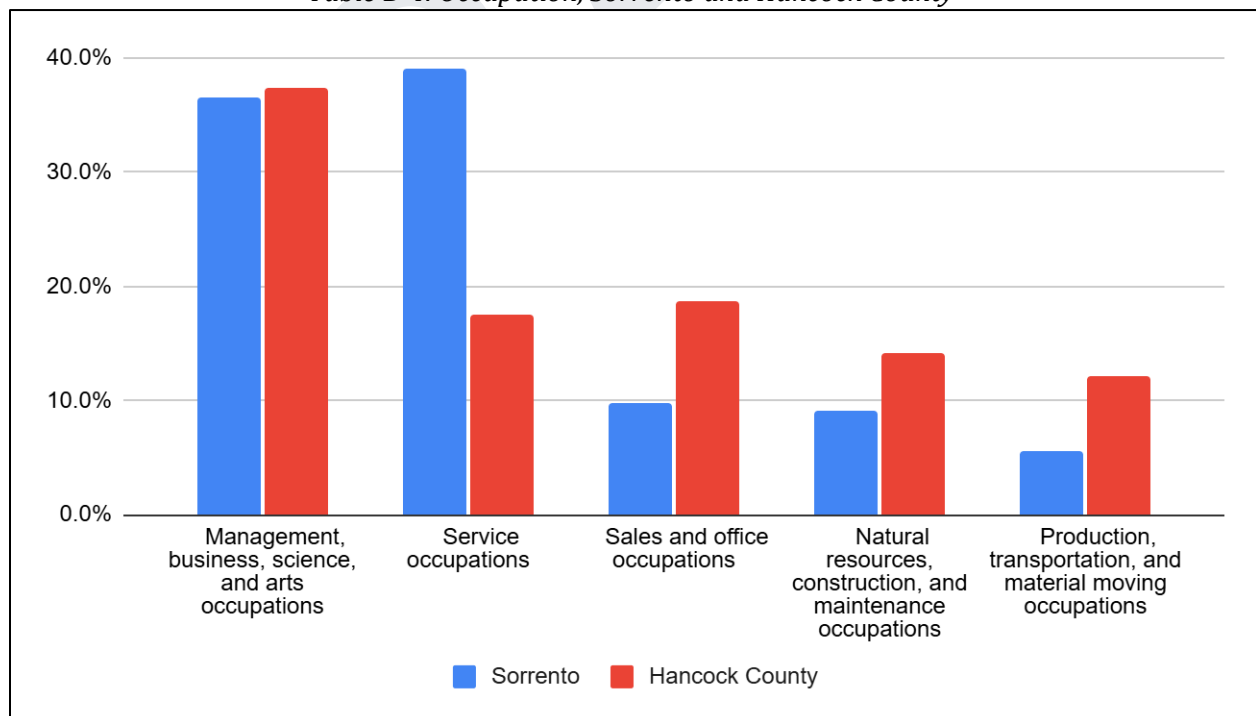
Over the past 20 years, the greatest share of Sorrento's workforce has been employed in the professional, scientific, and technical services sector and the educational services, health care, and social assistance sector.

Table B-3: Labor Force by Industry, 2000 - 2020

Industry	2000		2010		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	6	4.5%	2	1.7%	12	7.8%
Construction	13	9.8%	10	8.4%	6	3.9%
Manufacturing	11	8.3%	4	3.4%	4	2.6%
Wholesale trade	-	-	3	2.5%	0	0.0%
Retail trade	16	12.1%	6	5.0%	3	1.9%
Transportation, warehousing, utilities	5	3.8%	8	6.7%	0	0.0%
Information	4	3.0%	3	2.5%	2	1.3%
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental, leasing	2	1.5%	9	7.6%	1	0.6%
Profess., scientific, manag., admin, waste manag.	20	15.2%	20	16.8%	64	41.6%
Educational services, health care, social assistance	29	22.0%	37	31.1%	38	24.7%
Accommodation and food services	12	9.1%	15	12.6%	3	1.9%
Other services, except public administration	11	8.3%	2	1.7%	13	8.4%
Public administration	3	2.3%	0	0.0%	8	5.2%

Source: Decennial Census

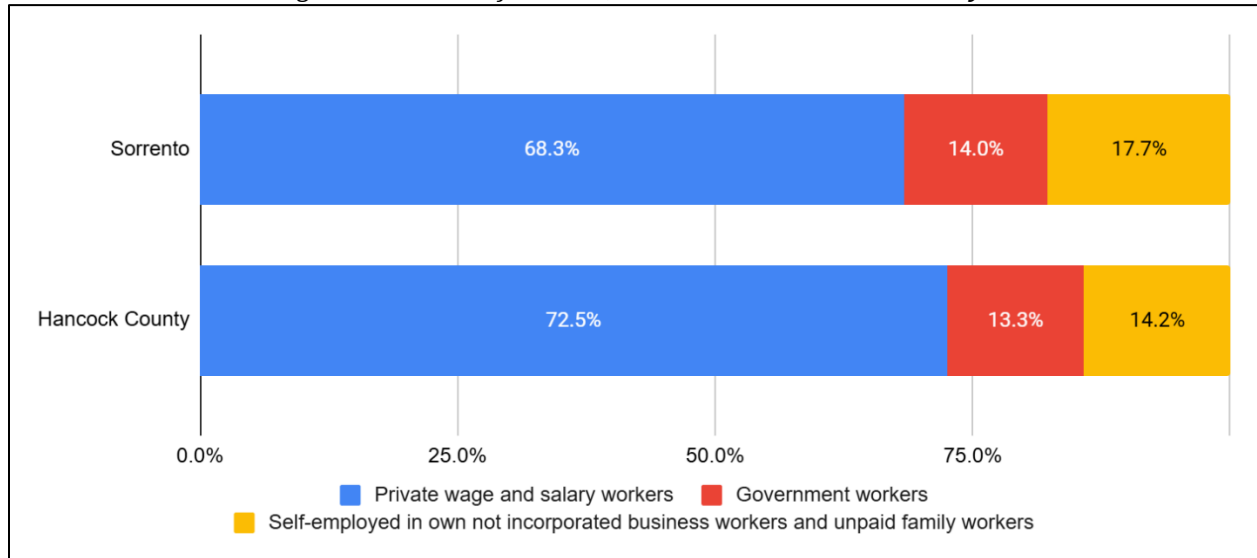
Table B-4: Occupation, Sorrento and Hancock County



Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

Compared to Hancock County, Sorrento has a very similar self-employed percentage rate, while the rate of private wage and salaried workers is slightly higher in the County. It is important to note that the upcoming Federal and State investments in broadband services may further increase the number of self-employed people in Sorrento.

Figure B-1: Class of Worker, Sorrento and Hancock County

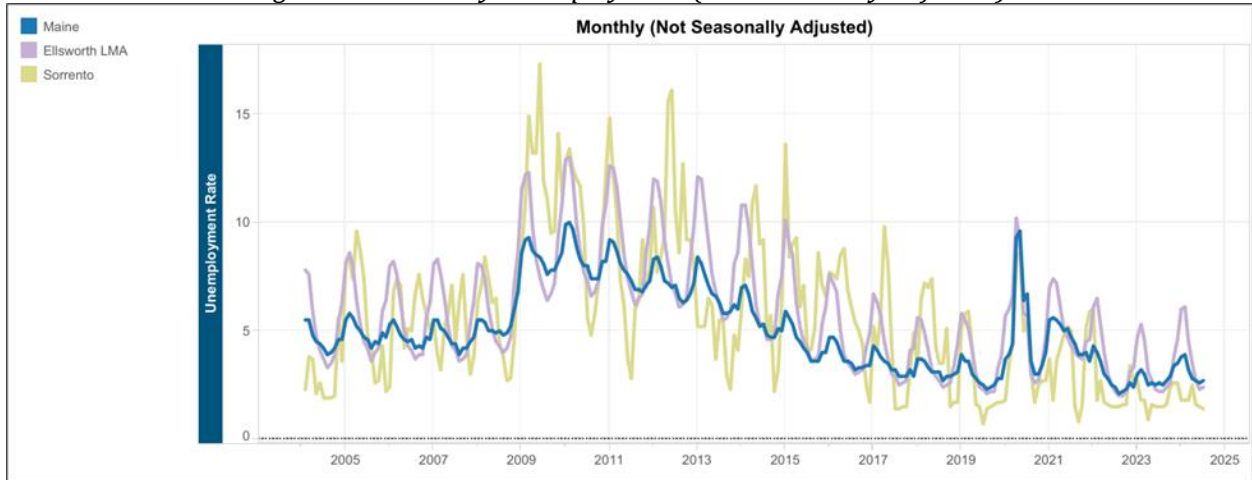


Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

4.6. Unemployment

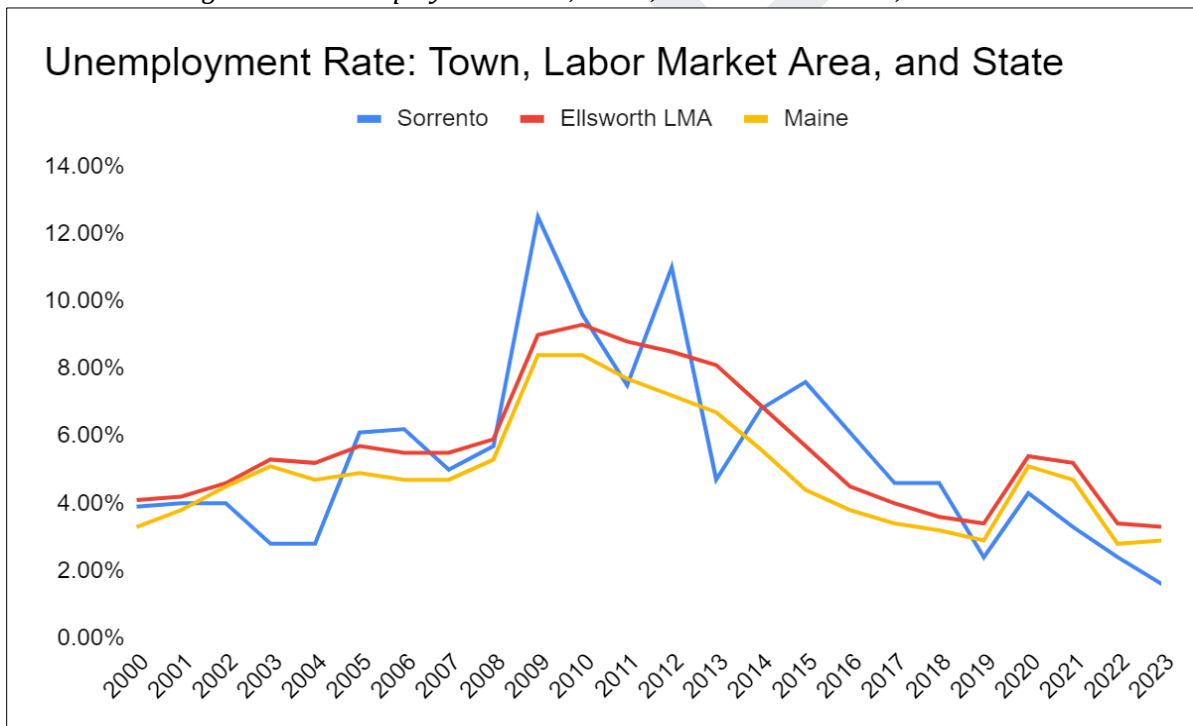
Following the 2008 financial crisis, unemployment rates spiked in Sorrento reaching an all-time high of 12.5% in 2009. Since the financial crisis, Sorrento's unemployment rate has varied, but generally decreased, with a small spike in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sorrento's current unemployment rate stands at 1.9%, marking the lowest level observed in the past two decades. This trend is also reflected at the labor market and State levels. Such a low unemployment rate typically is a sign of a strong job market for workers, while employers may struggle to fill jobs. Sorrento's quarterly employment trends reflect seasonality of the fishing and summer service industries.

Figure B-2: Monthly Unemployment (Not Seasonally Adjusted)



Source: Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce Research and Information

Figure B-3: Unemployment Rate, Town, Labor Market Area, and State



Source: Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce Research and Information

5. Economic Development

Residents of Sorrento are committed to preserving the town's residential character, while also supporting the coexistence of waterfront services, the local fishing community, and remote business employment. Beyond this, there is little interest among community members (according

to the Comprehensive Plan Survey 2023) in economic development in Sorrento. Residents are generally opposed to commercialization, industry, and any businesses that would draw additional visitors and traffic aside from some interested in additional small local businesses serving the community or unobtrusive home-based businesses.

A focus group of local business owners included the following as possible barriers to doing business in Sorrento:

- Lack of three phase power and public utilities
- Frequent power outages
- Lack of overnight shipping services
- Small population with seasonal fluctuations (lack of customers as well as workforce)
- Absence of fiber optic broadband internet
- Business support and economic development is a low priority for the town

Refer to Marine Resources Chapter for challenges specific to waterfront businesses

Despite the challenges that businesses face in Sorrento, the few that exist have been successful in finding ways to work within the community's constraints. For the farmers, that has meant being able to offer fresh and locally convenient food for Sorrento's community members, who otherwise would have to travel to nearby towns for groceries. For Sorrento Seafood, that has been building off the needs of the existing fishing businesses. Most of the business owners in Sorrento have chosen to locate there because they enjoy living in Sorrento, not due to the convenience or business potential the community offers.

The lack of a local economy is not new for Sorrento. Historically, the town has relied on property taxes from the large number of seasonal residences. Sorrento's vistas and coastal charm will continue to make the town a desirable place for seasonal homes, which will continue to sustain the town's tax base. However, the town will need to begin to think about how sea level rise might affect property values and therefore the tax base (See Chapter on Climate Change).

If the town were to have any additional economic growth, there may be support for commercial development near Route 1 which is in keeping with Sorrento's residential character.

Local and Regional Economic Development Plans

The only recent local or regional economic development plan that includes Sorrento is the *Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2021 – 2025*. The last more local economic development plan, *Where Community, Nature, and the Economy Meet: The Future of the Schoodic Region*, was in 2001, following the closure of the Navy Base in Winter Harbor.

6. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Support a Small-Scale, Locally Oriented Economy That Reflects Sorrento's Character			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Facilitate Local Economic Connections and Services	Develop a communications platform to connect residents and businesses with service providers.	HCPC	1 year
	Support the development of home-based businesses and cottage industries by minimizing unnecessary regulatory barriers.	Planning Board, HCPC	1-2 years
*Guide the Scale and Location of Future Commercial Development	*Limit the scale and intensity of commercial development to preserve Sorrento's rural and residential character, and ensure ordinances reflect these values.	Planning Board	1-2 years
*Coordinate and Resource Economic Development Activities	*Assign responsibility for economic development coordination.	Selectboard	1 year
	*Identify appropriate financing tools to support economic development, where needed.	Selectboard, HCPC	1-2 years
	*Participate in any regional economic development planning efforts.	SALT, HCPC	Ongoing
Support Marine and Water-Dependent Industries	Encourage the continued viability of marine-based economic activity.	Island Institute, Selectboard	Ongoing

Chapter C: Housing

1. Purpose

A Comprehensive Plan needs to address key housing issues. These issues include changes in the conditions and needs of housing as well as projecting a future demand for housing. Specifically, this chapter:

1. Describes recent trends in Sorrento's housing stock in terms of types and number of units created;
2. Discusses housing affordability (cost to rent or own);
3. Projects future housing needs;
4. Discusses ways to increase the supply of housing to support a multi-occupational and multi-generational community.

2. Key Findings and Issues

Sorrento's housing landscape is shaped by a growing affordability crisis, with rising property costs and seasonal housing demand, including short-term rentals, making it increasingly difficult for younger generations and long-time residents to stay or return to the town. Many who grew up in Sorrento or work in the community find themselves priced out of the housing market, facing limited availability and high prices. The town's housing supply is constrained due to the dominance of multi-generational landownership, physical limitations of the land, and the scarcity of properties available for new development.

Overall, the town's housing goals center on ensuring that housing options remain affordable and accessible to local residents while maintaining Sorrento's unique character and fostering a balanced, sustainable community. Addressing these housing needs will require a delicate balance between preserving the town's charm, accommodating the needs of its residents, and planning for the future.

3. Community Engagement Summary

Out of those that took the Public Opinion Survey, 35% stated that their primary residence was in Sorrento, while 62% stated that they were seasonal residents. The proportions of year-round and seasonal/part-time survey respondents seem to reflect the community's makeup, assuming seasonal/part-time residents are twice the year-round population.

The majority of year-round survey respondents have lived in Sorrento 30+ years. The next largest group of respondents were year-round residents (14.5%) having lived in Sorrento 0-5 years, followed closely by 15-30 (14%), and lastly by 5-15 (11%). Only 12% of seasonal residents anticipate becoming year-round residents.

Most year-round and non-year-round respondents reported that they do not rent their property to others. That said, more non-year-round respondents rent out properties for short-term rentals than year-round residents. Few respondents rent out their properties as long-term rentals. The majority of respondents believe in some level of regulation of short-term rentals. Opinions on short-term rental regulation are consistent between year-round and non-year-round residents for all categories, except slightly more non-year-round respondents were undecided.

The community has expressed a clear preference for preserving the town's character, with significant resistance to new development. There is, however, a desire to shift the balance between seasonal and year-round residences to help sustain the town's operations and strengthen the sense of community. While many residents favor increasing the number of year-round homes, they remain cautious about new construction, fearing that new developments may change the community's character. This has raised questions about whether such developments should be regulated. An important aspect of this discussion is understanding the impact of short-term rentals on the housing market and examining if they are exacerbating the issues of affordability and availability.

4. Housing Trends

Sorrento has evolved into a community dominated by seasonal use. Historically, large tracts of land have been owned by a relatively small group of families. These families have expanded over the years, purchasing existing homes and building new seasonal properties, which has limited opportunities for new development. Meanwhile, the high demand for waterfront properties has driven real estate prices beyond the reach of most working families, prompting many locals to move to more affordable areas. This shift has contributed to a decline in year-round residents. A key factor in this trend is Sorrento's limited development potential: much of its coastal land lies within the Shoreland Zone, and much of the interior is undevelopable due to rocky soils, steep grades, poor drainage, and ledge. Additionally, conservation easements have preserved large portions of land, further restricting development. As a result, the town has gradually transitioned into a seasonal community with fewer permanent residents.

However, over the years, a steady, if gradual, trend has emerged of seasonal residents transitioning to full-time living, particularly as they retire. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift, with many seasonal property owners converting their homes into year-round residences. This change has helped maintain the town's population, offering a form of population replacement despite the challenges posed by escalating housing costs.

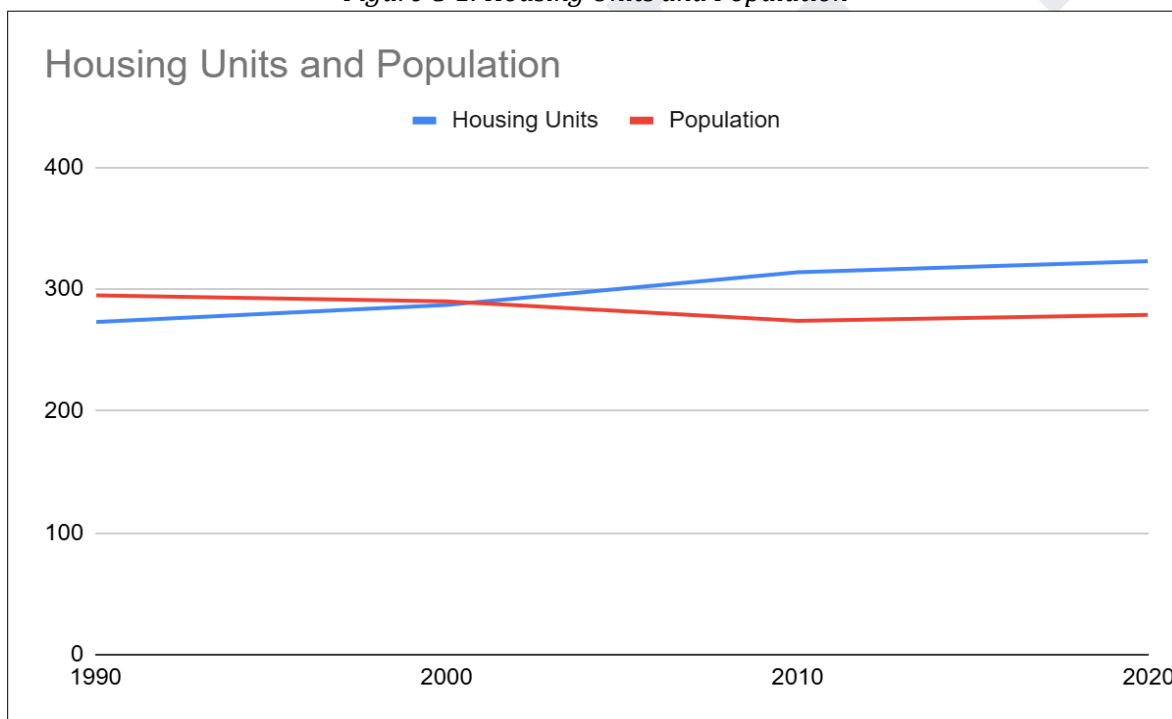
5. Growth

Sorrento has experienced modest yet steady housing growth over the past three decades, averaging approximately 16 additional units per decade. According to Census data, the town's housing stock increased by 50 units between 1990 and 2020. There was a population shift beginning earlier with homes built in the 1950's onward in the inland areas. Notably, the most significant growth occurred

between 2000 and 2010, when 27 new units were added. During this same period, however, Sorrento's population decreased by 16 people (Decennial Census), suggesting that much of the housing growth has been driven by seasonal households rather than year-round residents. The town's average household size decreased from 2.46 to 2.36 between 1990 and 2020; this decline in household size may also help explain the increase in housing units despite the slight population decrease, as fewer people per household can drive demand for more total housing.

Between 2015 and 2024, a total of 19 building permits were issued for new residences or cabins/cottages in Sorrento. Due to turn over in code enforcement, however, data is not available for three years. While building permits provide a useful indicator of interest in new construction, they do not always translate directly to completed housing units. These permits show that although Sorrento has experienced notable building activity, the number of homes being demolished and replaced with contemporary residences has outpaced the construction of new homes in the community.

Figure C-1: Housing Units and Population



Source: 1990, 2000, 2010, 2020 Decennial Census

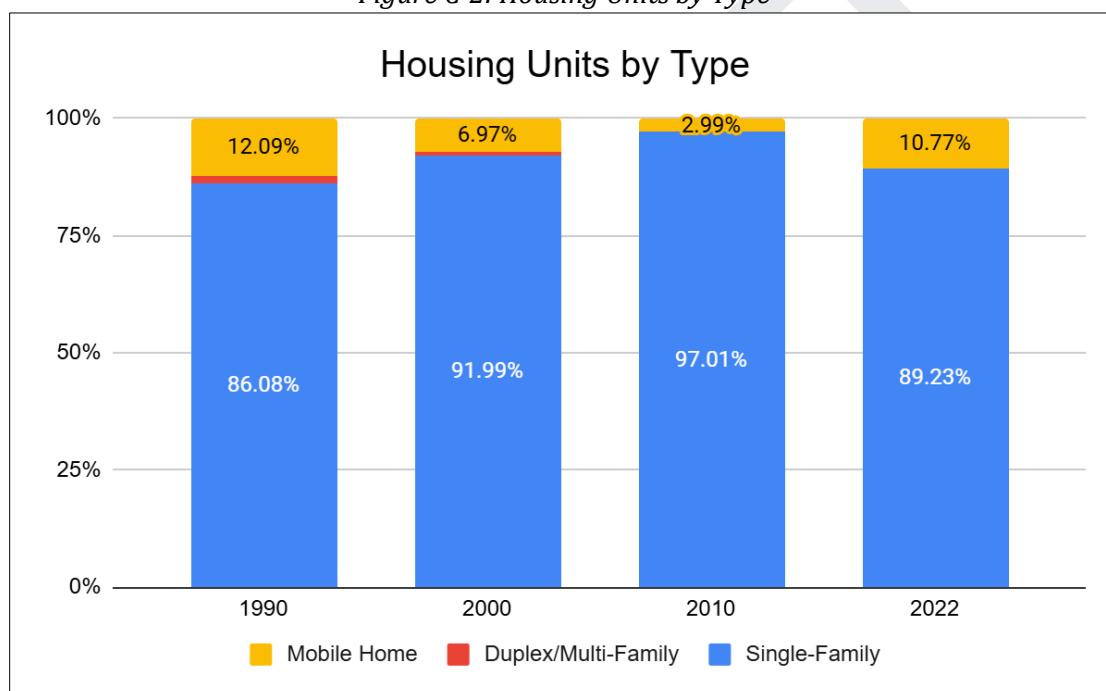
6. Housing Types

Sorrento's housing stock has remained overwhelmingly composed of single-family homes over the past several decades, with a gradual decline in both mobile homes and multi-family units. As of 2022, single-family homes remain the overwhelming majority at 89.2%, while mobile homes make up 10.8% of the housing stock. Duplexes and multi-family units continue to be absent from Sorrento's housing mix.

The steady increase in single-family homes, coupled with the disappearance of duplexes and multi-family units, indicates a narrowing range of housing options. This trend may pose challenges for affordability and accessibility, particularly for renters, young families, and seniors looking to downsize. The near-total absence of multi-family housing suggests limited availability of rental units or more affordable alternatives to homeownership.

The decline in mobile homes from 12.1% in 1990 to 10.8% in 2022 reflects a shrinking supply of one of the town's more affordable housing options. While mobile homes still provide some flexibility, their decreasing numbers suggest that lower-cost housing choices may be becoming less available over time.

Figure C-2: Housing Units by Type

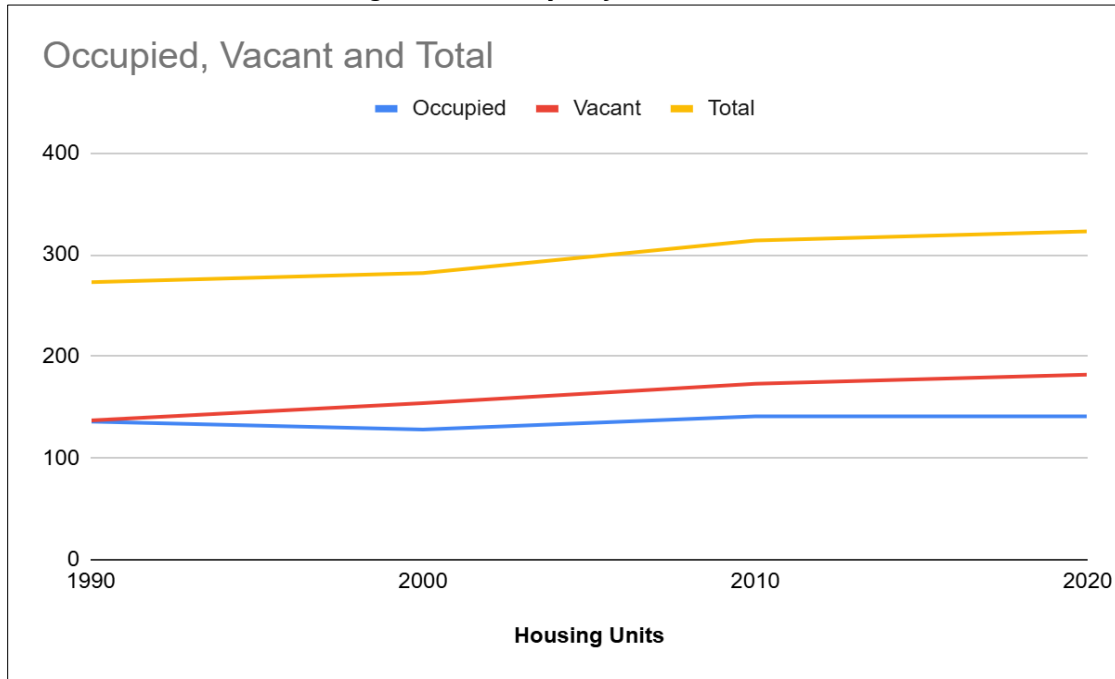


Source: 1990, 2000, and 2010 Decennial Census, 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

7. Occupancy

Sorrento's housing stock has remained predominantly seasonal, with a significant portion of homes vacant for part of the year. Between 2000 and 2020, the total number of housing units grew modestly from 287 to 323, yet the proportion of occupied homes remained relatively consistent, from 45.3% in 2000 to 43.65% in 2020. Notably, the number of occupied residences showed no change between 2010 and 2020. This suggests that while the total number of housing units has increased, the overall occupancy rate has remained stable, indicating that the increase in homes has not led to a significant rise in year-round occupancy.

Figure C-3: Occupancy, 1990 - 2020



Source: Decennial Census

Table C-1: Occupancy, 1990 - 2020

	1990	2000	2010	2020
Occupied	136	128	141	141
Vacant	137	154	173	182
Total	273	282	314	323

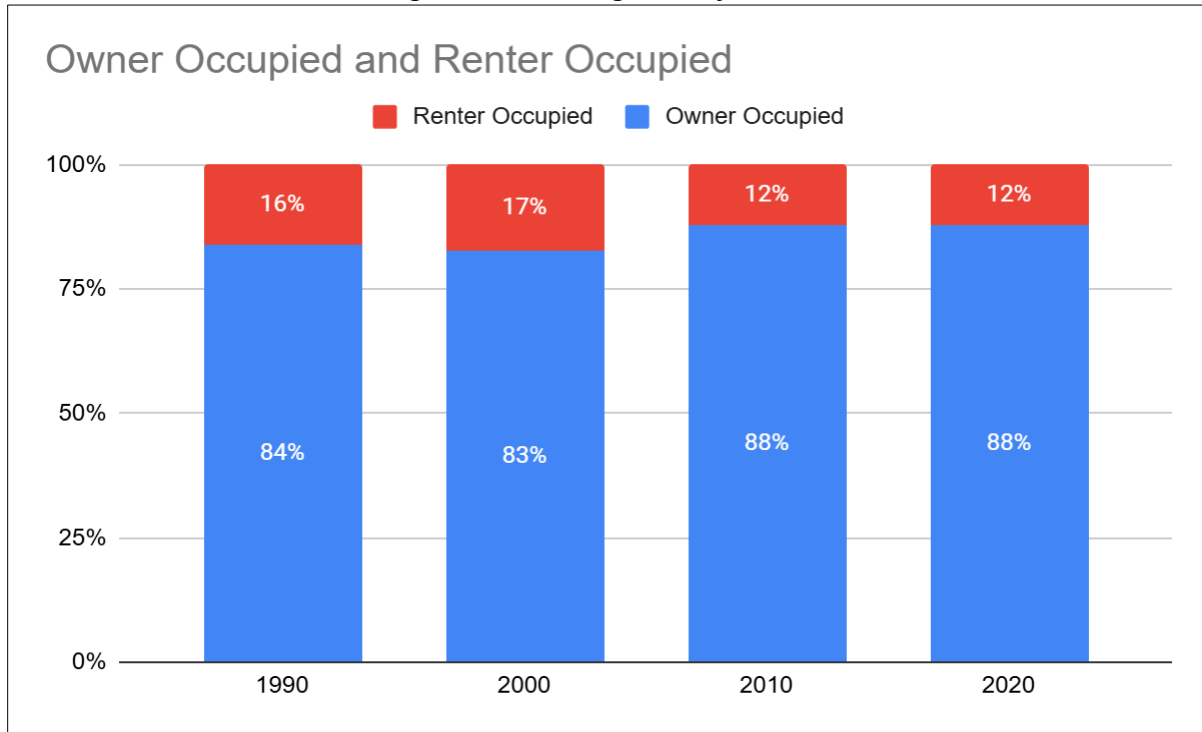
Source: Decennial Census

8. Tenure

Sorrento's year-round housing is primarily owner-occupied. In 1990, 84% of occupied units were owner-occupied. This share has remained relatively stable, reaching 87.94% by 2020. Meanwhile, the proportion of renter-occupied homes has steadily decreased, dropping from 16% in 1990 to 12.06% in 2020.

The shrinking rental market suggests limited housing availability for those who do not or cannot purchase homes, potentially impacting affordability and accessibility for younger residents, seasonal workers, and those looking for more flexible living arrangements. With a low proportion of rental units and a high rate of seasonal vacancy, Sorrento's housing landscape is oriented toward homeownership and seasonal use.

Figure C-4: Housing Units by Tenure



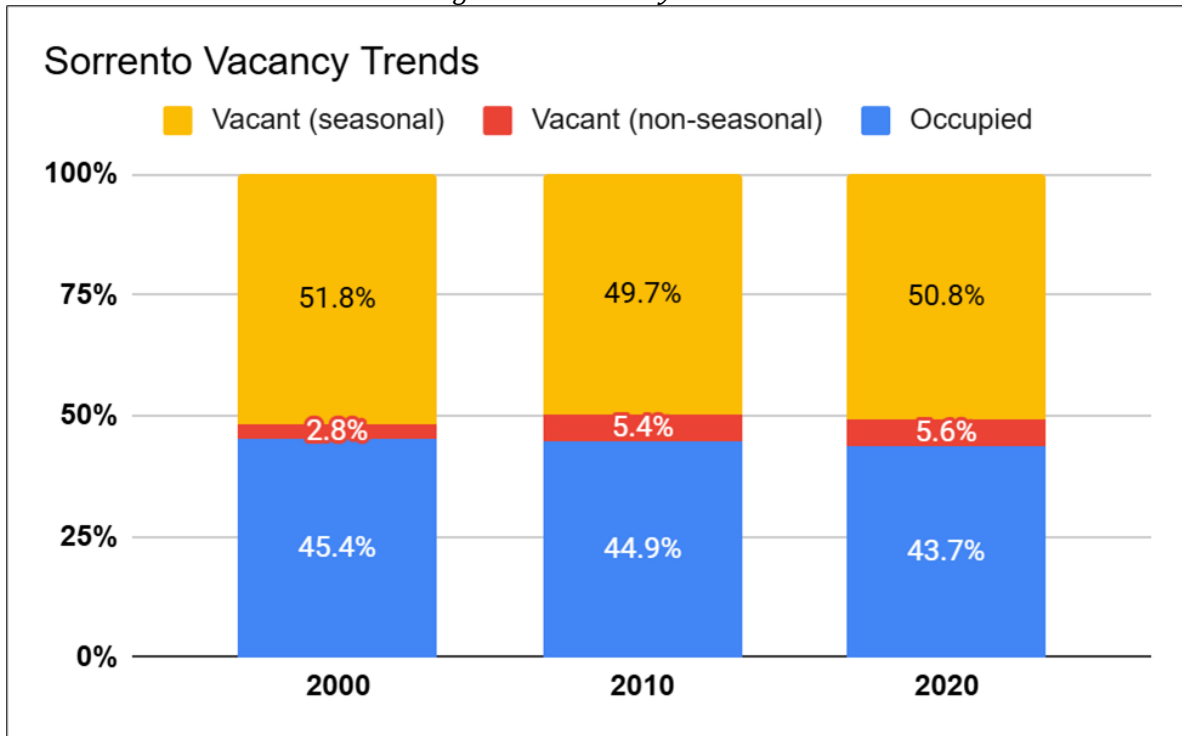
Source: Decennial Census

9. Seasonal Housing and Vacancy Trends

Seasonal housing continues to be a dominant feature of Sorrento's housing market, reflecting the town's appeal and heritage as a coastal retreat, with many properties serving as second homes rather than primary residences. The percentage of vacant seasonal homes in Sorrento has fluctuated slightly over the years but has consistently remained around 50% of the town's housing units. As of 2020, 50.8% of Sorrento's housing was vacant for seasonal use.

While the majority of vacancies in Sorrento are seasonal, the share of non-seasonal vacant units has gradually increased. Non-seasonal vacancies—often due to homes being for sale, in transition, or in disrepair—rose from 3.1% in 2000 to 5.6% in 2020. Although this increase is relatively small, it may indicate challenges such as difficulty selling properties, homes in need of repairs, or changing dynamics in the local housing market.

Figure C-5: Vacancy Trends



Source: Decennial Census

10. Short-Term Rentals

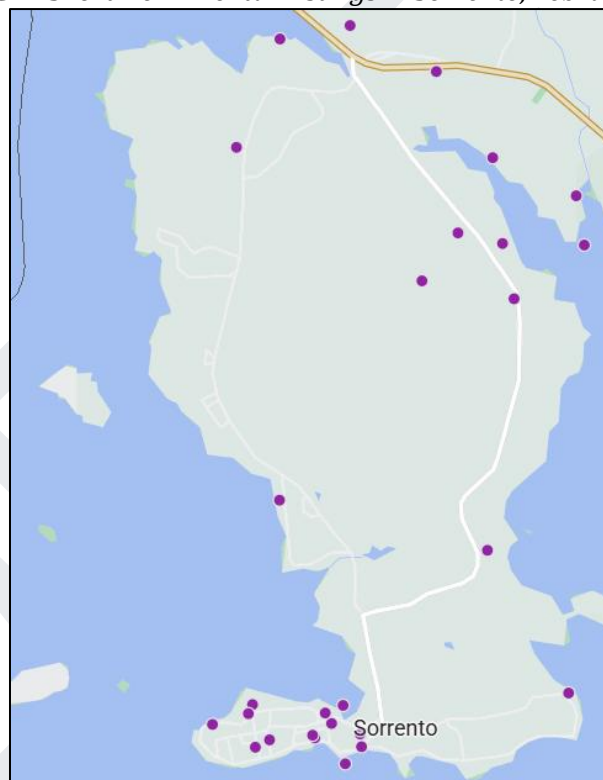
Short-term rentals (STR) have become an increasing area of concern in Sorrento as their numbers are perceived to have grown within the community. A central point of debate is how to define them in a town that is heavily seasonal and has a long history of summer rentals. Additional concerns include their impact on town services, the integrity of the community, and the scale and ownership of short-term rentals—whether they are operated on a commercial scale or are individually owned, as well as the issue of out-of-state ownership. The primary concern, however, is whether they are exacerbating Sorrento's housing affordability issues. At the same time, short-term rentals can provide a valuable source of additional income for residents.

Short-term rentals, for the purposes of this comprehensive plan, are defined as a residential property rented out for a brief period, typically ranging from a few days to a few weeks. These rentals are commonly booked through online platforms like Airbnb and VRBO and are used for temporary stays, such as vacations or business trips. Unlike other forms of seasonal rentals, which are often rented by the same tenants for a few weeks to a month each year (providing a stable, recurring seasonal experience), STRs typically involve more frequent tenant turnover with varying durations of stay. These rentals cater to transient guests, whereas seasonal rentals generally attract repeat visitors who return each year for a consistent, longer seasonal stay.

AirDNA, a leading provider of short-term rental data, collects data from public and proprietary sources, including Airbnb and Vrbo, to track and analyze STRs. This data can be analyzed by either market, submarket or individual address. Most of Hancock County falls within the “Maine Down East/Acadia Coastal” market. This market is subdivided into 15 submarkets; Sorrento falls within the “Hancock” submarket, which also includes the towns of Franklin and Sullivan.

There were a total of 221 short-term rental listings in the “Hancock” Submarket between the three-year period of July 2021 and June 2024 according to AirDNA. The majority of STR listings are for an entire home with the remainder being for a private room within a residence. These 221 unique listings, whether active or not, account for nearly 10% of the total housing units in Franklin, Sullivan, and Sorrento. There were a total of 220 listings in this submarket as of February 2025. This number typically increases during the summer months. The figure below shows that of the listings in Sorrento, most are located in the village area.

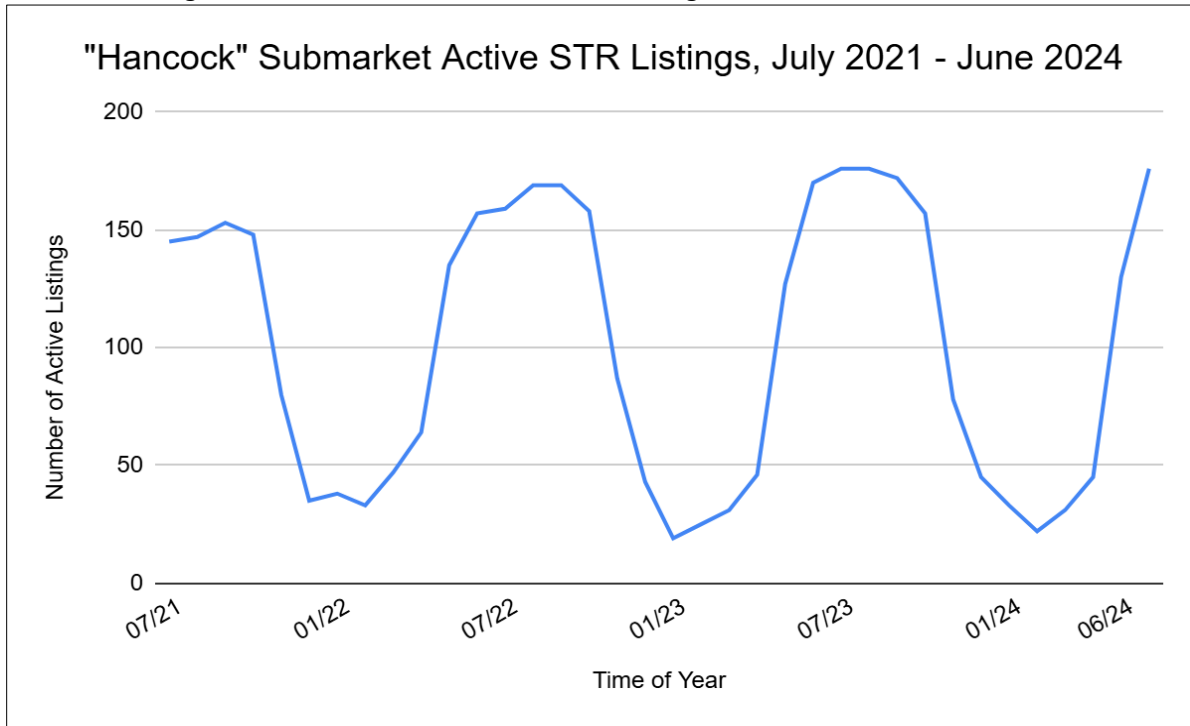
Figure C-6: Short-Term Rental Listings in Sorrento, February 2025



Source: AirDNA

The figure below shows the number of *active* listings by month in the “Hancock” submarket between July 2021 and June 2024. Much like the rest of Hancock County, active listings are seasonal, typically peaking July through September. The peak number of active listings has increased each year since July 2021, with a total of 176 active listings in both July and August 2023 and in June 2024.

Figure C-7: Active Short-Term Rental Listings in the Hancock Submarket



Source: AirDNA

11. Affordability

Housing affordability in Sorrento reflects broader trends across Hancock County, where rising home prices, limited supply, and demographic shifts are reshaping the market. The gap between home prices and household incomes has grown significantly, making it increasingly difficult for local residents to afford housing.

The State of Maine defines affordable housing as safe, decent, and sanitary accommodations that cost less than 30% of a renter's income and less than 33% of a homeowner's income. According to MaineHousing, in 2020, 61.9% of households in Sorrento could not afford the town's median home price of \$280,000. By comparison, the median home price in neighboring Sullivan was \$181,450, while Hancock County's median home price was closer to Sorrento's, at \$274,000.

Though additional years of affordability data for Sorrento is unavailable, housing costs in Hancock County have sharply risen. By 2023, the countywide median home price had reached \$405,000, a nearly 48% increase from 2020. Meanwhile, median household incomes grew by only 18%, widening the gap between housing costs and local earning power.

While Sorrento's median home prices align closely with those of Hancock County, the town's median rent of \$1,675 is significantly higher than the countywide median of \$1,000 per month. However, the proportion of renters in Sorrento who are considered cost-burdened—spending more than 30% of their income on rent—is relatively low, at only 9.1%. In contrast, 50.5% of

renters in Hancock County are cost-burdened, highlighting a notable difference in rental affordability.

Sorrento's rising home prices and the lack of long-term rentals mirror broader trends in Maine's coastal communities, where demand from out-of-state buyers and second-home owners has driven prices beyond the reach of many local residents. If this trend continues without a corresponding increase in local wages or the development of more affordable housing options, it could accelerate demographic shifts, potentially pricing out working families and disrupting the balance between seasonal and year-round residents.

12. Housing Needs

Sorrento's housing needs mirror the challenges faced by many small, coastal communities in Maine, where rising housing costs, limited supply, and a seasonal economy strain year-round residents. Although Sorrento's population is not expected to grow in the next 15 years, the town faces substantial housing issues due to the scarcity of affordable, year-round housing. The Hancock County Housing Needs Assessment (January 2025), compiled by the Hancock County Planning Commission, estimates nearly 300 owner-occupied units and over 250 renter-occupied units are necessary just to create a balanced, healthy housing market in the county. By 2030, the county is projected to need a total of 3,400-3,700 additional housing units to address both historical underproduction and future growth needs.

This broader regional housing shortage directly impacts Sorrento, where high property costs and a seasonal economy have increasingly made it difficult for local residents and workers to find housing. The town shares in the county's shortfall of housing units, highlighting the pressing need for additional housing options to accommodate year-round residents and the local workforce. Sorrento must consider strategies to address these housing gaps, by tackling these challenges, the town can maintain a balanced, sustainable community with an appropriate mix of seasonal and year-round residents.

Housing needs in Sorrento include:

Affordable Housing

One of the town's most pressing issues is affordable housing. As home prices have risen sharply in recent years, many local residents—particularly those with lower or fixed incomes—find it increasingly difficult to afford homes. The availability of housing for year-round residents is further reduced as properties are often purchased by out-of-state buyers or used for short-term rentals, pushing up both rental and homeownership costs.

Workforce and Senior Housing

Affordable housing for the workforce is a critical need. Service workers, teachers, and other essential personnel are often priced out of the market, leading to long commutes or housing insecurity. Additionally, Sorrento's aging population has created a demand for more affordable, accessible housing options for seniors, particularly those on fixed incomes.

Rental Housing

The need for long-term rental housing remains a significant concern. Long-term rental properties offer a more affordable option for local residents, especially younger families and older adults, who are often priced out of the homeownership market. Expanding the rental housing supply would help ensure that a broader range of year-round residents can live in the community without facing housing insecurity.

13. Local Regulations & Policies

Sorrento's land use policies for housing are relatively minimal compared to other Maine communities, primarily because it does not specify a minimum lot size. Aside from setback requirements, the main regulations governing housing are outlined in the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, which mandates a 250-foot setback from the upland edge of coastal and freshwater wetlands to protect these sensitive ecosystems. Additionally, housing developments must comply with the town's Floodplain Management Ordinance, ensuring that new construction is designed to be resilient to flooding. Fire safety regulations also play a role, imposing height restrictions—such as limiting window heights to 36 feet and overall building heights to 40 feet—and requiring fire-resistant materials for roofing and structural components.

14. Regional Coordination

While there are currently no local or regional affordable/workforce housing coalitions, the Schoodic Area League of Towns (SALT), in which Sorrento participates, is an informal convening of the four towns on the Schoodic Peninsula to discuss topics and identify solutions to regional issues, such as housing. These ongoing SALT discussions could lead to the establishment of long-term entities that address housing in the area. Additionally, regional organizations such as Downeast Community Partners offer assistance for various homeowner needs and provide at-home support for seniors.

In 2025, the Town of Sullivan was notified of its successful application for a Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) Housing Opportunity Program Municipal Grant. Through this funding opportunity towns on the Schoodic Peninsula, including Sorrento, will collaborate with the Hancock County Planning Commission (HCPC) to engage in several projects, including the creation of a monthly regional housing forum. By meeting regularly, this project will provide a consistent avenue for communicating needs and ideas regarding housing in the region.

15. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Expand Housing Opportunities That Meet Community Needs			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Establish Capacity and Build Understanding	*Establish a Regional Housing Committee	SALT, HCPC	1 year
	Conduct a Housing Needs Assessment	HCPC, Planning Board, Housing Committee	2-3 years
*Align Policy and Regulation with Housing Goals	*Continue to ensure that Sorrento's Land Use Ordinance allows for a range of housing types that meet the needs of working families, young adults, and older residents	Planning Board, HCPC	1-2 years
	Monitor and define the role of short-term rentals in Sorrento's housing market, with emphasis on rentals of less than two weeks	Planning Board, HCPC	1 year
	*Seek to ensure that at least 10% of new residential development over the next decade is affordable to low- and moderate-income households	Planning Board, Housing Committee	Ongoing
Evaluate and Pursue Long-Term Housing Solutions	Identify Potential Land for Housing Development	Housing Committee, HCPC	Ongoing
	Evaluate the Feasibility of a Local Housing Trust	Housing Committee, HCPC	2 years
	*Collaborate with regional housing coalitions to support the development of a Regional Housing Trust	Housing Committee, SALT, Housing Committee, HCPC	Ongoing

Chapter D: Historical & Archeological Resources

1. Purpose

Historical and archaeological resources are vital elements of a community's identity. A comprehensive plan must identify important historical and archaeological resources not only for the sake of the historical record, but also to preserve their present-day value to the Town's identity and character. Specifically, this chapter will:

1. Present a brief history of Sorrento and the region;
2. Describe historical and archaeological resources;
3. Assess threats to these resources; and
4. Assess the effectiveness of existing measures to protect and preserve these resources.

2. Key Findings and Issues

Several buildings in Sorrento have significant historical value. Although the Sorrento Library building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995, the potential exists for additional buildings to be designated as such. A new historical survey would help identify as many worthy properties as possible for protection and recognition.

When last surveyed in the 1990s, there were twenty-two sites of archaeological or historical importance identified in town, sixteen of which were considered for possible nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. While the history of the resort community of Sorrento is better documented, less has been done to recognize and study its colonial and pre-colonial heritage. Coastal erosion and the effects of global warming are new threats that the town is confronting, and these will also potentially impact local historical and archaeological resources.

3. Community Engagement

The following survey questions and responses are good indicators of community support for the focus on historic and archaeological resources in the Town: 56% of year-round respondents replied that historic preservation is adequate to good and 25% replied that there could be improvements to historical preservation in Sorrento.

Attendees of various community engagement events wanted to see the continued preservation of historic buildings and possible funding opportunities to help support the upkeep of buildings or infrastructure of historical significance.

4. Historic Record

Sorrento's history has been documented in various sources, including the *Bicentennial Report* prepared by the Historical Society in 1989.

Native American Presence

For more than 12,000 years the Wabanaki, or People of the Dawn, and their forbears have occupied the land we now know as Maine. The Wabanaki Confederacy includes the Abenaki, Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot tribes. What is now referred to as Downeast Maine and Frenchman Bay was traditionally the territory of the Passamaquoddy people. They were likely drawn here by hunting, fishing, and shellfish harvesting. The shorelands of Sorrento and surrounding islands are marked by numerous shell middens, sites characterized by large amounts of discarded shells and other kinds of refuse.

The arrival of the French, the first European settlers, in the 17th century and to a greater extent, the English in the 18th century, who seized and occupied the land displaced the indigenous people. Native Americans had no immunity to the diseases brought by the Europeans and the English which decimated the indigenous population and degraded their tribal structures. As their population declined, remaining tribal members withdrew to interior settlements and by the 19th century the Passamaquoddy were restricted to reservations in Washington County.

Early European and English Settlement

The first known English settlement in the Sullivan-Sorrento area dates to around 1762, though evidence suggests the possibility of earlier French settlement at Waukeag Neck Point, now Sorrento.

In the late 18th century, the Massachusetts General Court granted six townships along the Donauqua River (now the Union River) under specific settlement conditions. Tract Number 2, known as New Bristol, encompassed present-day Sullivan, Hancock, and Sorrento and was incorporated in 1789. Hancock was the first to separate in 1828, while Sorrento became an independent town in 1895 following authorization by the Maine State Legislature.

19th-Century Industry and Economic Shifts

During the 19th century, Waukeag Neck, then part of Sullivan, thrived on farming, lumbering, and fishing. Much of the land was farmland, with notable properties including the Bean, Bragdon, and Ingalls farms—now recognized as Weir Haven Farm (Herson, 1995). At the time, transportation was primarily by water, and farmhouses were built facing the shore due to the lack of roads. Weir fishing for herring, initially to supply bait for lobster fishermen, began in the mid-19th century, while clamming provided a steady but sometimes marginal income. The area experienced economic prosperity in the 1860s and 1870s with the rise of Maine's menhaden fishery. However, as railroads opened interior Maine to development in the mid-1850s, Sullivan's shipbuilding industry—once thriving with as many as 60 vessels built—declined.

Mining saw a brief boom in the mid-to-late 1870s, particularly around Taunton Bay. Copper, gold, and silver deposits were also discovered on Waukeag Neck, leading to mining ventures such as the “Boss of the Bay” and “Golden Circle” mines. The *1881 Colby Atlas of Hancock County* identified the *Golden Circle Mine* on Sowards Island (later renamed Treasure Island), which was worked briefly around the turn of the century. However, once it became clear that the ore was of low quality and richer deposits existed in the western U.S., mining activity rapidly declined.

The Rise of Summer Tourism

Until the late 19th century, like most coastal communities, Sullivan and Waukeag Neck depended on the sea for transportation. Poor road conditions limited overland access, but this began to change with the arrival of railroads and steamship service. By the 1880s and 1890s, seasonal industries had firmly taken root in Sorrento, paralleling the rise of exclusive summer colonies on Mount Desert Island.

Recognizing Waukeag Neck’s potential as a resort destination, the *Mt. Desert Land and Water Company* was incorporated in 1885 under the leadership of Frank Jones. This marked the beginning of Sorrento’s transformation into an exclusive summer retreat. Large tracts of land were purchased, leading to the construction of a grand hotel, annexes, and numerous summer cottages, establishing the area as a seasonal haven for the wealthy.

20th-Century Development and Growth

C. Herson (1995) describes the next phase in Sorrento’s history as the “*Builders of Sorrento, 1911–1971*.” During this 60-year period, the summer community grew significantly, with many homes built by Charles Edgar Hale and Clifton K. Hale. These homes remain a testament to the architectural tastes of past and present residents and are integral to Sorrento’s identity. Rail service played a crucial role in Sorrento’s accessibility. Passenger trains served the area until 1953, while freight service continued until 1959. The Calais rail line remained in limited operation until 1985.

Sorrento’s Lasting Legacy

Today, while Sorrento’s economy is increasingly tied to the broader Hancock County region, summer visitors and seasonal residents continue to play a vital role in the town’s character and economy.

Many of Sorrento’s historic sites remain, including early summer cottages and the Church of the Redeemer. Future research and preservation efforts should also focus on the area’s colonial and pre-colonial sites, such as the indigenous shell middens, which offer valuable insight into Sorrento’s past.

5. Identified Historic and Archaeological Sites

The Sorrento area is rich in both prehistoric and historic records, highlighting the need for further documentation and preservation of these valuable resources. Maine’s Historic Preservation

Commission has identified and recorded several significant historical and archaeological sites in Sorrento.

5.1. Prehistoric Archeological Sites

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission last inventoried prehistoric archaeological sites in Sorrento in the 1990s. Twenty-four shell midden sites, camp sites identified by discarded clam shells, were identified in that study, sixteen of which were considered significant enough to warrant consideration for nomination on the National Register. All of the sites are located within the shoreland zone, usually on eroding landforms, and deserve protection. One such site was where in the early 1900s, American archaeologist [Dr. Warren Moorehead conducted an extensive survey](#) on a nearby island. Numerous shell heaps were discovered and excavated. The agency recommended that an excavation of test sites be completed to prepare for the National Register nomination process.

One other significant archeological site in town that has been studied in-depth is the Waterside Shell Midden first documented and investigated by the Sorrento-born archaeologist and scholar [John Howland Rowe](#) in the 1940s. In 1998, Rowe placed the site under the protection of the [Archaeological Conservancy](#), and in [2020 Brianna Ballard](#), a PhD candidate at the University of Maine, featured the midden in her research on archaeological fish remains as an indicator of environmental change.

Within the last 20 years, several sites have seen professional archaeological test excavations, mostly led by the Abbe Museum. Most notable of these sites is the Ewing-Bragdon site. Previously excavated in the 1930s and 1940s by archaeologist Wendell Hadlock, the Abbe Museum Field School re-excavated the site in 2008-2009. Among the participants was Dr. Arthur Spiess, the current Chief Historic Preservationist of Prehistoric Archaeology at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. The modern excavations of the site indicate that people occupied the Sorrento area year-round. Pottery, bone tools, shell beads, and more artifacts were discovered at this site. A report on the ceramic fragments found at the site appears in the Maine Archaeological Society Bulletin in their Fall 2011 edition written by Kessi Watters Kimball. The artifacts from the Ewing-Bragdon site were also featured in the Abbe Museums “Layers of Time” exhibit.

In addition, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission recommended at the time that future fieldwork focus on sites relating to the earliest European settlements in town, beginning in the late 1700s. MHPC noted that although most of the larger sites are probably known to archaeologists, no systematic, complete professional survey of the Sorrento shoreline has been done.

5.2. Historic Archeological Sites

To date the Maine Historic Preservation Commission has documented 9 historic archaeological sites in Sorrento.

Table D-1: Historic Sites

Site Name	Type	Periods of Significance	Description
Hautville Settlement	possible settlement	c. 1697	This was an Acadian land grant in the larger Sullivan-Sorrento area. There is no record of this settlement per se, but later English settlers noticed evidence of French settlements on the Sorrento Peninsula.
De La Mothe Settlement	possible settlement	1688	This was an Acadian land grant in the larger Sullivan-Sorrento area. There is no record of this settlement per se, but later English settlers noticed evidence of French settlements on the Sorrento Peninsula.
Daniel Sullivan Homestead	farmstead	c.1700 - c.1800	A marker on Doane's Pt. That identifies the probable location of prominent colonial resident Capt. Daniel Sullivan.
Sullivan Dam	mill, sawmill	1765 - 1776	Tide-driven wood mill in Long Cove between Sorrento and Sullivan. The mill was out of use by the 1800s due to vulnerability to British attack
Bragdon Cemetery	cemetery	1821-1929	A local family cemetery of one of the original colonial settlers with headstones of descendants from the 18th & 19th centuries. It is located on private property and maintained by the current owner.
Daniel Sullivan Cemetery	cemetery	18th & 19th Century	A historic cemetery encompassing 19th-century graves of descendants of several colonial settlers and a memorial marker installed by the town that details the life of Capt. Daniel Sullivan. The property is maintained by the Town of Sorrento and is adjacent to but not part of the modern Doanes Point Cemetery which has gravesites and memorials of contemporary residents.
Jackson Cemetery	cemetery	19 th & 20 th century	A family cemetery for the Jackson family. The cemetery consists of ten memorials is located on private property at the intersection of West Side Road and Nautilus Road.

Source: Maine Historic Preservation Commission

5.3. Historic buildings

As of 2025, only the [Sorrento Library in Sorrento is listed in the National Register of Historic Places](#). The most recent study of Sorrento's historic buildings was conducted by Roger Reed of the MHPC in July 1989 and identified the library as the most significant historical structure. His report also included a brief description of the history of the development of the town, and this was included in the application to the National Park Service. The report prepared by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission in 1989 was entitled "**Sorrento. A survey of Selected Buildings,**" and identified nineteen structures in town that were still in existence in the 1980s.

The Captain's House is a distinctive red house that has overlooked Sorrento Harbor since the late 1880s. The building was part of the Frenchman's Bay and Mount Desert Land and Water Company's office complex and is the final physical reminder of that era of local history. The Frenchman's Bay and Mount Desert Land and Water Company built a wharf for steamships bringing visitors to

Sorrento from Bar Harbor and the Hancock train depot. The company also built the Hotel Sorrento in 1900 as part of their plan to develop Sorrento as a summer colony.

The red house later became a social club for Sorrento residents and acquired the name “Captain’s House” when the hotel burned in June of 1906, and the Ewing Family bought the remaining structure. The house housed Captain Hanna, the family’s yacht master.

The Sorrento Library was built in the late 1890’s by Martha Leavitt Jones, Frank’s wife. Over the years, the landmark structure has been extensively restored and today is used as a civic and social gathering point and event venue. It is a building known and appreciated for its beauty and functionality, though the story behind its existence is both interesting and curious. Spending upwards of \$25,000 on a library in a community of less than 200 people, it is said that Mrs. Jones was exercising a form of extortion on her husband for his long and notorious affair with his mistress who summered up the road in another summer cottage in Sorrento that Frank had built for her. The intrigue and notoriety associated with its existence, while sensational, has never diminished the value and utility of the Library to the Sorrento community.

The Church of the Redeemer was founded in the mid 1880’s by Eva Smith Cochran from New York, who purchased a house with an adjoining acreage on a hill near Sorrento’s harbor. A small gothic-like chapel, patterned after one Mrs. Cochran had seen and admired in Sweden, was built in 1889 on the Cochran house’s adjoining acreage. The first service was held in June of 1890. A bell tower was added in 1896 and a rectory built in 1906. Services have continued for 135 years to this day. Over the years, the Church has conducted countless services and presided over hundreds of weddings, christenings, organ and choir recitals and assorted other community gatherings and events.

The Church and the Library are not only historically relevant structures but also functional in their own rights today. The Captain’s House is now a private residence.

5.4. Existing Protections and Preservation Efforts

Preserving Sorrento’s historic resources is a collaborative effort, driven by private individuals and dedicated organizations.

Sorrento Public Library Corporation (SPLC)

The *Sorrento Public Library Corporation (SPLC)*, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was established to protect and preserve the Sorrento Public Library, ensuring its continued role as a vital historical and community resource.

Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society

The *Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society* actively promotes public awareness and the preservation of local history, including historic buildings and homes. Founded in the 1970s by concerned citizens from both towns, the nonprofit organization has worked to safeguard the area’s historical heritage. Over the years, the society has:

- Established an extensive archive to preserve donated local artifacts and documents.
- Organized a small museum to showcase the region's history.
- Sponsored lectures, presentations, and educational programs.

Currently, the society is planning the restoration of a historic home once owned by a prominent local citizen. Once preserved, this building is expected to serve as a new location for the society's museum and archives. The organization is supported through member donations, grants, and modest annual contributions from both towns.

5.4.1. Historic and Archaeological Preservation Resources

Several programs and organizations support the preservation of historic and archaeological sites in Sorrento:

National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)

The NRHP recognizes sites of national, state, or local significance. While listing provides some protection against federally funded projects that might impact historic sites (such as highway construction), it does not directly prevent private alterations or demolition.

Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC)

The MHPC oversees the NRHP nomination process for Maine and maintains an inventory of historic, archaeological, and coastal heritage sites. Though it has no direct authority to protect sites, it coordinates the distribution of limited preservation and restoration funds, which may increase with future appropriations or bonds. Archaeological sites in Maine also receive some protection under state antiquities laws.

UMaine Midden Minders

The University of Maine's Midden Minders program engages local citizens and conservation organizations in monitoring and documenting changes to shell middens along the coast. This effort helps preserve critical archaeological data for researchers and cultural resource managers. By leveraging these resources and continuing to document Sorrento's rich history, the community can better protect and celebrate its heritage for future generations.

5.5. Threats and Planning Implications

Sorrento's historic sites face multiple threats, ranging from environmental changes to economic pressures and development.

5.5.1. Threats to Archaeological Sites

Archaeological sites are particularly vulnerable to alteration or destruction due to development, construction, and natural erosion—especially when their historical significance is not well documented. Some sites also face the risk of artifact looting, which further diminishes their cultural value. Coastal archaeological sites are especially vulnerable to sea level rise and storm impacts,

such as the intense winter storms experienced by the coast of Maine in December and January of 2024.

While the historic cemeteries of Sorrento are not oceanfront and vulnerable to sea level rise and flooding, they are vulnerable to storm damage from trees and their limbs falling, increased levels of precipitation, and other associated impacts. The status and needs of the Daniel Sullivan Cemetery were assessed in 2012, and recommendations were made to the Town to trim or remove dead trees. In 2012, a number of fallen gravestones were re-stood which prevents damage from acid soil erosion. Some highly deteriorated original gravestones were replaced with granite prior to 2010 and it was recommended that the original fragments be put into protected storage. The Bragdon and Jackson Cemeteries have not been assessed.

5.5.2. Threats to Historic Buildings

Historic buildings are at risk from neglect, inappropriate alterations, and encroaching development. While preservation is widely valued, maintaining historic properties is often costly, and property owners may struggle with the financial burden. Many face economic pressure to either adapt these buildings for sustainable modern use or reduce maintenance efforts, which can lead to deterioration over time. Similar to the threats to archaeological sites, historic buildings in coastal areas are vulnerable to flooding and other storm impacts.

5.6. Balancing Preservation and Development

While there is broad support for protecting historic resources, the extent of protection—and the financial and property rights considerations involved—poses complex challenges for any community.

Additionally, growing development pressures could alter the town's character, impacting its cherished historic landscape. Currently, Sorrento's Land Use Ordinance does not include protective measures for significant historic and archaeological resources beyond the shoreland zone. To enhance protection, it is critical to integrate historic and archaeological considerations into subdivision and site plan review processes. These components of the land use ordinance can serve as vital tools to assess and mitigate the potential impacts of development on significant resources, ensuring that preservation efforts are maintained across the entire town, not just in the shoreland zone.

5.7. Environmental Impacts

Beyond direct threats from human activity, environmental changes—particularly those linked to global warming—pose an increasing risk to Sorrento's historic resources. Rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and shifting weather patterns threaten fisheries, beaches, and shoreline structures. To maintain Sorrento's unique heritage, a proactive approach is needed—one that balances preservation with sustainable growth while integrating climate resilience into long-term planning efforts.

6. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Identify, Protect, and Celebrate Sorrento's Historical and Archaeological Resources			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Identify and Assess Historic and Archaeological Sites	*Conduct a comprehensive survey identifying sites of historical and archaeological significance throughout the town.	Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society Committee	3 years
	Encourage the University of Maine's Midden Minders program to share results of shell midden surveys along the Sorrento shoreline. Support efforts to document, monitor, and protect these vulnerable archaeological resources.	Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society Committee, UMaine	Ongoing
*Promote Preservation Through Recognition and Protection	*Amend the Land Use Ordinance to broaden protection of historic and archaeological resources beyond the shoreland zone.	Planning Board	5 years
	Encourage partnerships with land trusts and preservation organizations to help safeguard key properties.	Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society Committee	Ongoing
	Pursue public acquisition or cooperative stewardship of historically significant properties when appropriate to prevent deterioration or loss.	Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society Committee, Selectboard	Ongoing
	*Ensure that local development review processes align with state and federal historic preservation guidelines, especially when grant funding or permitting triggers applicable laws (e.g., Section 106 or 16 U.S.C. §470).	Planning Board	2 years
Expand Public Awareness and Engagement	Support local participation in preservation programs such as UMaine's Midden Minders, which offer opportunities for citizen science and site monitoring	Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society Committee, UMaine	Ongoing
	Develop public-facing educational materials on Sorrento's historical and archaeological resources, including web content, signage, and seasonal events or tours in partnership with local organizations.	Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society Committee	
Encourage the discovery, preservation and sharing of Sorrento's history.	Support the efforts of the Sunrise County Economic Council in their work with the DownEast National Heritage Area.	Schoodic Byway Committee, Historical Society, HCPC	Ongoing

Chapter E: Water Resources

1. Purpose

As a coastal community, Sorrento's identity, economy, and quality of life are inextricably linked to its water resources. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the critical importance of protecting and sustaining these natural assets for current and future generations. Specifically, this chapter provides an overview of Sorrento's water resources, aiming to:

1. Describe the characteristics and quality of Sorrento's significant water resources as well as their ecological, recreational, and economic roles in the community;
2. Discuss and consider how future growth, land use changes, and development patterns may threaten the health of water resources, with a focus on nonpoint source pollution, stormwater runoff, and shoreline erosion; and
3. Assess the effectiveness of current policies, ordinances, and conservation measures in safeguarding water resources and in identifying areas where improvements are necessary to address emerging challenges.

2. Key Findings and Issues

Sorrento's ponds and streams are all unnamed and do not play any significant role in the Town. Long Pond, located in Sullivan, is the water supply for 74 customers, including half of winter households and some summer households in Sorrento, Sorrento golf course, town fire hydrants, municipal buildings in Sorrento (as well as some homes, hydrants, and the regional high school in Sullivan). This supply is administered by the Long Pond Water District, a municipal utility shared by Sorrento and Sullivan, which also maintains a website with information about that system. Private drilled wells supplement water needs for Sorrento residents. No major threats to ground or surface waters are known to exist. However, recent climate-related changes in storm frequency and intensity are setting new expectations for potential impacts and how the Town will need to prepare.

3. Community Engagement

When asked to provide an opinion on the quality of Town drinking water, 10% rated it as excellent, 21% as good, 21% as adequate, 20% think it needs improvement, and 9% want the Town to invest more in drinking water quality. Concerns have been raised about Town water quality despite results of Town water quality tests indicating no issues, and there is interest in seeking out a comprehensive study of the aquifer. The infrastructure for supplying water year-round is aging, specifically the below ground pipes and hydrants. There are concerns regarding the water's coloration in the winter due to rust content and decreased flow. The extensive above ground network that serves seasonal demands does not seem to be experiencing the same issues with rust content. There is a diminishing demand for Town water as residents become more likely to rely on or invest in private wells. Owners of private wells report common issues with radon and arsenic levels in their water supply.

4. Surface Water Resources

4.1. Lakes, Ponds, Rivers, and Streams

Sorrento, Maine, falls primarily into the Frenchman Bay Watershed, with smaller sub-watersheds draining into the bay and nearby water bodies. While there are no Great Ponds in Sorrento, according to a visual survey using Google Earth, Sorrento has approximately 18 small, unnamed ponds, most of which were artificial, previously built for logging or ice ponds. The watershed of a lake or river is the land area which drains into that lake or river, activities on which can affect water quality.

There are no named streams in Sorrento. There are intermittent seasonal streams, and in recent years, with increased precipitation, these seasonal streams have flooded, demonstrating more consistent flows, possibly with the potential to cause damage through flooding, erosion, culvert failures, and road overflow. Ocean debris has clogged culverts where these streams meet the sea.

There are two coastal watershed areas draining into either Sullivan Harbor or Flanders Bay. One of these coastal watersheds is Isaac's Beach. One small watershed area drains into the wetland area named "Swallow Hollow" located between the two main elevations of Waukeag Neck. All of these drainages are unnamed streams, and there are only small estuarine drainages. These have all been assigned a water quality B/SB classification by Maine DEP.

The Water Resources and Riparian Habitats map depicts nearby aquifers and drainage divides; wetlands (see more below); and surface water features, including Sorrento's numerous unnamed ponds and streams with their associated riparian habitat.

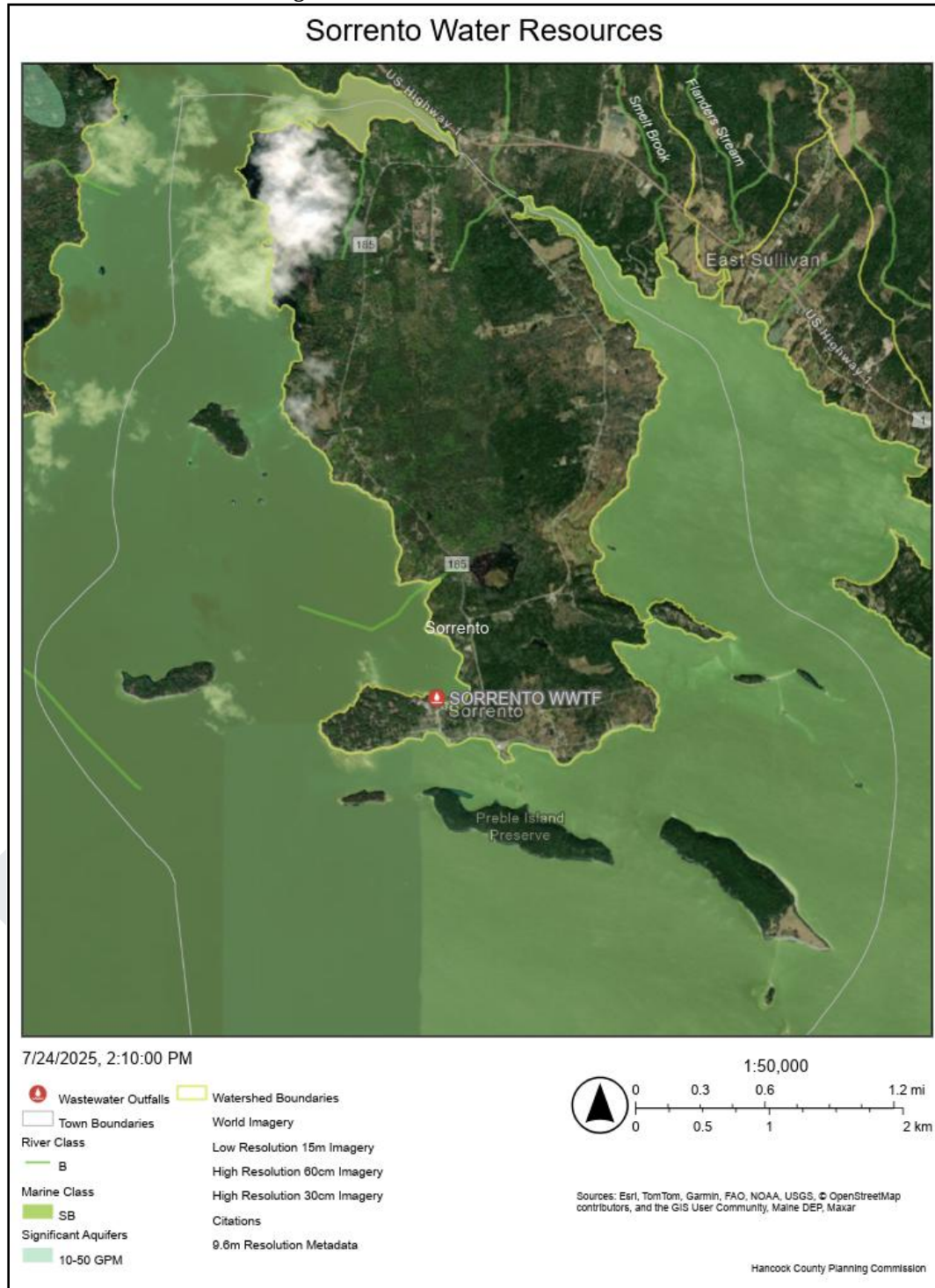
[illegible]

The DEP classifies all surface waters in Maine. These classifications regulate the discharges of pollutants. Sorrento's salt waters are presently classified SB. This is the second highest classification of salt waters. It is applied to waters which are suitable for recreation, fishing, aquaculture, propagation and harvesting of shellfish, industrial process and cooling water supply, hydroelectric power generation and navigation, and as a habitat for fish and other estuarine and marine life.

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contributing to bacterial loads. The channel between the mainland and Dram and Preble Islands is subject to temporary closures, dependent on storm runoff from the more densely developed village shoreline. Additional areas are under “Conservation Closures” that allow the mudflats and shellfish populations to recover.

Figure E-2: Sorrento Water Resources



5. Groundwater Resources

Sorrento has no known sand and gravel aquifers, or areas of high groundwater yield. According to the Natural Resource Conservation Service, roughly 216 acres in Town could be classed as sand and gravel aquifer soils. This type of soil is found in the northern end of Town, where some gravel extraction has occurred in the past and where some groundwater bearing soils are likely to be found. The only other indicator of an aquifer is in the bog in the southern-central area of Town, which has numerous bubbling springs. Surficial deposits are typically thin in Sorrento and bedrock outcrops occupy 15-25 percent of the surface area of Town. All of the bedrock found in Town is hard, dense and impermeable. This means that groundwater supplies could be limited in the future. Residents have described varying water yields from drilled and dug wells. Although many wells are 200-300 feet in depth, supply is sufficient. Most wells in Sorrento have been drilled in bedrock which normally has provided adequate water for domestic use. There are cases where bedrock fractures may provide yields as high or higher than some of the highest yielding sand and gravel wells. This means that Sorrento may have additional groundwater potential in the bedrock which underlies the town. The fact that the Long Pond Water District also supplies a large part of the Town also helps to minimize the impact on the supply and availability of groundwater in Sorrento.

The Maine DEP has rated Sorrento's groundwater quality as GWA. This is the highest DEP classification for groundwater and states that these waters shall be of such quality that they can be used for public water supplies and be free of radioactive material or any matter that affects their taste and odor.

6. Drinking Water

6.1. Long Pond Water District

Long Pond is a 58-acre spring-fed pond in Sullivan serving primarily customers in Sorrento by [Long Pond Water District \(LPWD\)](#). The pond is a clean, spring-fed water source with a 100 foot buffer zone under conservation easement. The history of this water system dates back to the 1890s when it was created to service a hotel in Sorrento. It operated as a privately owned company from about 1906 until 1990. Updates to the Safe Drinking Water Act in the 1980s required new expensive treatment systems. The Company was not able to cover these costs at a rate affordable to customers so, after a vote in each town, the stockholders dissolved the Company and created a public corporation created under Maine Law to deliver limited public services. This new water district was formed by Sullivan and Sorrento and is a public corporation overseen by a board, which is legally required to have members from each town. Sullivan and Sorrento have no jurisdiction over the water district, only the board of directors and the State have jurisdiction.

The water district has received a \$320,000 grant to evaluate compliance issues due to trihalomethane levels after periods of noncompliance. They have also just upgraded their water quality monitoring system and hired a consultant to examine chemical additives.

Figure E-3: Long Pond Water District and Private Wells



6.1.1. Current Status

Long Pond, located in Sullivan, is the water supply for 74 customers, including half of winter households and some summer households in Sorrento, the Sorrento golf course, town fire hydrants, municipal buildings in Sorrento as well as some homes, hydrants, and the regional high school in Sullivan. This supply is administered by the Long Pond Water District, a municipal utility shared by Sorrento and Sullivan, which also maintains a website with information about that system.

The system could support more users but aging distribution mains and the cost of new infrastructure limit expansion. The current system can only supply drinking water at the Sumner Learning Campus, but not fire protection.

The District's water is tested by the operator monthly. There has been a continuing problem with high levels of trihalomethanes (THMs) which are a product of chlorine treatment and organic matter in the water. Continuing adjustment of use of polymer treatment to remove the THMs is ongoing.

Recently, chlorine levels have been found to be too high at residential outlets, yielding harmful byproducts. Seasonal lake turnover has led to challenges maintaining the correct chlorine levels. The District plans to replace the filter. Long Pond Water District measures the chlorine byproducts every couple of months; if the levels test high for two consecutive tests the District takes action. The operator monitors the system for leaks, evidenced by changes in billing levels. The LPWD budget always runs close to even due to ongoing loan payments and system maintenance.

Water samples are collected before and after treatment and at selected end-user sites. Those are sent to a State-certified laboratory to be tested according to the Safe Drinking Water Act regulations for bacterial contamination, chlorine by-products, lead and copper, inorganic and organic chemicals, and radioactivity. The results of these tests are sent to the Water District and to the users.

In 2005, LPWD partnered with Frenchman Bay Conservancy to purchase a 300-foot buffer zone surrounding Long Pond that had previously been held by the Sullivan Harbor Foundation. The Nature Conservancy has vested rights for low impact trail access and use. The District owns a strip. In 2013, the District erected a 14-foot security gate and installed signage for the access road, which is the only vehicular access to the pond.

The water intake at Long Pond, located at a distance of about 40 feet from the shore, delivers water by gravity through a pipeline to the filtration plant located southeast of Punkinville Road. At the plant water is checked for turbidity, with sediment removed by filtration. Chlorine is added to kill bacteria and the water is stored at the treatment plant and then pumped to a large standpipe on East Side Road in Sorrento from which it is sent to users.

6.1.2. Ecological Status of Long Pond

Long Pond is currently included on the Maine DEP Nonpoint Source Priority Watersheds List as a “Threatened Lake” because it is both “unimpaired” and is licensed by the Maine CDC Drinking Water Program as a public water system with a lake or pond as the surface water source.

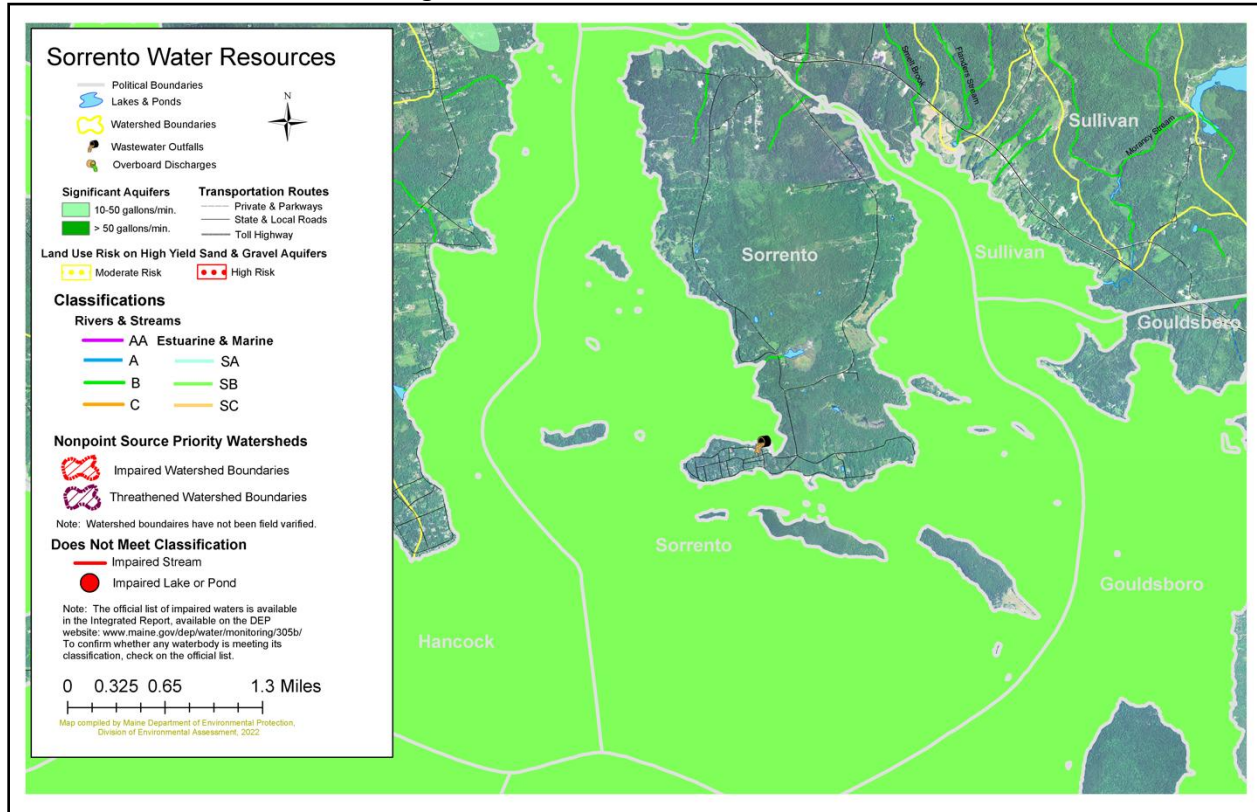
6.1.3. SWAP Ranking and Recommendations

The Maine Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) factors indicate that overall susceptibility of the water quality in Long Pond is low. This conclusion is based on the general conditions observed, including the lack of development in the watershed, the predominantly rural, forested land use, and the absence of potential threats from land use activities. Specific factors considered in assessing the overall risk are summarized below.

Figure E-4: Long Pond Surface Water Assessment

Zone	Measure	Findings	Risk Level
Watershed	Ambient Water Quality Existing Conditions	Class GPA, in full compliance. Land use characteristics present a low threat to water quality; timber harvesting & public use is limited.	Low Low
	Future Development	Zoning absent to control development of privately held land although the remote/rural setting suggests low development pressure.	Low-Moderate
	Overall		Low
Shoreland	Pond Classification Soils	Oligotrophic Potentially erodible soils on steep, rocky slopes, (Turnbridge & Scoodic (15-65%).	Low Low
	Activities Posing a Threat Potential for Future Threats	RV use on trails near pond shoreline. Future development is controlled in part by shoreland zoning and protective buffer held in Foundation ownership; yet, land in private ownership control is at some risk to future development.	Low Low-Moderate
	Overall		Low
Intake	Raw Water Quality Ownership/Control	TE2 & TE3 testing shows good quality. No ownership protection for intake area; access road gated and locked.	Low Low
	Activities Posing a Threat	Limited use of pond and shore for non-contact recreation.	Low
	Potential for Future Threats Overall	Change in shoreland protections.	Low-Moderate Low
Overall			Low

Figure E-5: Sorrento Water Resources



6.2. Well Water

There are 87 wells in Sorrento recorded in [Maine Geological Survey's Maine Water Well Database](#) (the database only accounts for wells drilled after 1987). Of the 87 wells, 19 lack location information. There are a few dug wells in Town which have occasionally been known to run dry and there have been complaints about the taste of the water, however, tests have shown the water quality to be high, and that the gradual replacement of dug with drilled wells has corrected inadequate supply.

Maine's maximum exposure guidelines define safe levels of contaminants as a way of measuring water quality. Data from private well water samples analyzed at the State of Maine Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory suggest that Sorrento's well water is generally within maximum exposure guidelines. However, wells in Sorrento do exceed maximum exposure guidelines for arsenic, manganese, and uranium.

Table E-1: Well Exposure

	Max. Exposure Guideline	95th Percentile (ug/L)	Max. (ug/L)	Median (ug/L)	# Wells Tested	% Above Guideline
Arsenic	10 ug/L	13	18	1.25	26	7.70%
Chloride	250 mg/L		130		18	
Fluoride	2 mg/L	1.6	1.88	0.27	28	0%
Manganese	0.3 mg/L	0.16	0.86	0	25	4%
Nitrate	10 mg/L	1.98	4.6	0.12	29	0%

	Max. Exposure Guideline	95th Percentile (ug/L)	Max. (ug/L)	Median (ug/L)	# Wells Tested	% Above Guideline
Nitrite	1 mg/L	0.03	0.03	0.03	29	0%
Uranium	30 ug/L	18	78	0.25	21	4.80%

Source: Maine CDC Environmental and Occupational Health Program, 2016

7. Existing and Potential Threats to Water Quality

There are two different types of water pollution: point source and non-point source.

Point Source Pollution: Point source pollution comes from a specific source, such as a pipe, and can easily be identified, measured, licensed, or removed. A wastewater outfall in southwest Sorrento is listed with DEP. The five-year license for this Maine Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MEPDES) was last renewed in 2015 and it needed to be renewed in 2020. The Maine DEP has the renewal application which they have accepted as complete, but the processing of the application has been delayed for several years. The new permit will likely require additional operational tasks and result in higher costs. The outfall is for the public sewer system for the village, serving about ten households which cannot have septic systems installed, and also drains stormwater. There are plans to separate stormwater and redirect that to another location. This will allow for lower chlorine application. That funding proposal will be in development over the next year.

Non-point Source (NPS) pollution: Non-point source pollution is diffuse and harder to pinpoint than direct pollution. It encompasses a wide range of issues, including stormwater runoff, leaking underground storage tanks, and runoff from agricultural, lawn, and forestry activities. Additional contributors include faulty septic systems, improper waste disposal (both illegal and unintentional), landfills, and improperly managed salt piles. Wetland and shoreline alterations further degrade water quality by disrupting natural filtration systems.

As of 1994, Sorrento's West/Back Cove has been permanently closed to shellfish harvesting due to a combination of septic systems, pollution from boating activities, and overall poor water quality. Eastern Point Harbor and the main harbor also experience seasonal closures for similar reasons.

Historical shifts in land use have influenced non-point source pollution in Sorrento. The decline of agriculture, including the closure of chicken farms, has reduced some nonpoint source threats to freshwater and marine ecosystems. Today, agricultural activity is limited to small-scale home gardens.

However, new challenges have emerged with the impacts of climate change. Increased storm frequency and intensity have heightened the risk of non-point source pollutants infiltrating Sorrento's soils and contaminating the surrounding bay waters. These evolving threats underscore the importance of proactive measures to protect the town's water quality.

To date, no formal analysis has been conducted to assess the presence of invasive aquatic plants in Sorrento's waters. Currently, no known infestations have been identified. However, further

investigation and regular monitoring are recommended to ensure early detection and prevention of potential threats to local ecosystems.

8. Adequacy of Existing Protection Measures and Current and Future Water Supplies

Given the flat rate of growth projected for Sorrento, the Town's water supply should be adequate for the foreseeable future. Long Pond integrity and water quality is expected to remain stable given its protected location surrounded by Frenchman Bay Conservancy lands.

Since there is no town-wide zoning and only very general subdivision ordinances, Sorrento's water resources presently receive minimal protection. Therefore, the quality of Sorrento's water supply could be unintentionally damaged. The Town should consider developing more detailed standards for erosion and sedimentation control, which could help maintain water quality when a property is developed.

9. Opportunities for Regional Cooperation

One regional issue is shared embayments. Increased storm frequency and intensity is subjecting coastal communities to increased storm runoff, and shoreline erosion and damage. This brings increased non-point source pollution into coastal bays, while conversely bringing more saltwater into contact with terrestrial, freshwater environments. Fortunately, this should not pose much threat to Sorrento's primary drinking water supply at Long Pond, but could pose risk for private wells. Sorrento may want to meet with neighboring towns to discuss potential impacts to their shared harbors.

The Long Pond Water District Board includes representatives from Sorrento and Sullivan, and in this way the towns cooperate around this shared resource, but the towns have no jurisdiction over the district.

10. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Protect and Sustain Sorrento's Surface and Groundwater Resources			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Strengthen Drinking Water Infrastructure and Oversight	Identify funding to improve the Long Pond Water District system, including replacement and extension of aging underground pipes and upgrades to treatment infrastructure.	Selectboard, LPWD Board	1 year
	Work with Sullivan to support the management capacity of the Long Pond Water District by evaluating succession planning options and ensuring institutional knowledge is retained.	Selectboard, LPWD Board, Town of Sullivan	1 year-ongoing
	*Maintain, enact, or amend protections for public wellheads and aquifer recharge areas to ensure long-term drinking water safety.	Planning Board, LPWD Board	2 years
*Monitor and Improve Water Quality	*Participate in local and regional efforts to monitor, protect, and where warranted, improve water quality.	SALT	3 Years
	Document private wells including location, depth, and condition. Promote well water testing and education campaigns to encourage annual testing and informed maintenance.	Town Office	3 years
	*Adopt or amend local ordinances to incorporate stormwater performance standards consistent with: a. Maine Stormwater Management Law and regulations (Title 38 M.R.S.A. §420-D; 06-096 CMR 500 and 502) b. Maine DEP phosphorus allocation rules for lake/pond watersheds c. The Maine Pollution Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) Program	Planning Board	3 years
	*Consider amending local ordinances to incorporate low-impact development (LID) standards that reduce stormwater runoff and protect water quality.	Planning Board	3 years

Goal: Protect and Sustain Sorrento's Surface and Groundwater Resources			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
	*Adopt construction and maintenance standards for roads and public properties that protect water quality and require implementation by contractors, owners, and municipal officials.	Selectboard, Road Commissioner	2 years
	*Where applicable, develop a watershed mitigation plan for urban impaired streams to enable responsible development while avoiding further stream degradation.	Climate Resilience Committee, Selectboard	2 years
	Conduct a comprehensive assessment of water quality and quantity in Sorrento, including point and nonpoint source pollution, naturally occurring contaminants, and coastal water quality risks.	Climate Resilience Committee, Selectboard	1 year
Educate and Engage the Public in Water Protection	*Encourage landowners to use best management practices for water quality protection.	Town Office	Ongoing
	Provide contact information at the municipal office for local resources including NRCS, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Maine Forest Service.	Town Office	Ongoing
	*Distribute educational materials about water quality and invasive aquatic species at appropriate public locations.	Town Office	Ongoing

Chapter F: Natural Resources

1. Purpose

This chapter provides analyses and a detailed overview of Sorrento's vital natural resources and addresses issues related to wildlife, fish habitats, and other important ecological systems. It highlights how development in or near these resources could disrupt ecological systems and negatively impact many quality-of-life issues such as clean drinking water, flood protection, air quality, and soil quality. The purpose of this chapter is to:

1. Describe Sorrento's critical natural and scenic resources;
2. Assess the effectiveness of existing efforts to protect and preserve these resources; and
3. Predict future impacts to these resources as a result of growth and development

2. Key Findings & Issues

Sorrento's natural resources include habitat for a variety of plants and animals, as well as exceptional scenic views and vistas, particularly along its coastline. While development does not currently pose a major threat to natural resources, proactive planning remains important. The town may want to consider measures such as monitoring water quality, maintaining forested buffers, and supporting conservation efforts for ecologically significant areas.

3. Community Engagement

In an open-ended response question about resident's concerns for Sorrento's future, only 10% of seasonal respondents and only 3% of year-round respondents said natural resource preservation and access was a concern they had for the future.

In another open-ended response question on what residents value most in Sorrento, many respondents listed some aspects of nature, natural beauty, hiking trails, etc. as having significant importance.

4. Topography

Sorrento is characterized by a diverse topography shaped by its location along Frenchman's Bay and its glacial history. Key features of Sorrento's topography include:

Coastal Terrain: The town's shoreline along Frenchman's Bay is marked by rocky outcroppings, coves, and tidal flats, creating a dynamic and varied coastline. These coastal features are shaped by the high tidal fluctuations of the Gulf of Maine, influencing the land's shape and the marine ecosystem.

Rolling Hills and Uplands: Inland from the coast, Sorrento is characterized by gentle to moderate hills and slopes. These upland areas are covered with dense forests of hardwoods and conifers, typical of the region's natural vegetation. The elevation gradually rises as you move further inland, contributing to the area's picturesque views.

Coastal Islands: Sorrento is home to 23 coastal islands, ranging from small rock outcrops and ledges to several larger islands. Many of these islands are uninhabited. The island environment, in general, is much more fragile and ecologically sensitive than the mainland. The combination of exposure, strong winds and wave action, thin soil cover, weakly anchored or stressed vegetation, and limited freshwater resources requires considerable caution when these areas are used by humans.

The following table summarizes the known characteristics of these islands. Of the 23 islands, 14 are smaller rock outcrops, each less than a half-acre in size. Four islands range between five and 15 acres, while five islands are larger than 15 acres. Additionally, 11 of the islands are under some form of public and/or private conservation management.

Figure F-1: Sorrento Offshore Islands

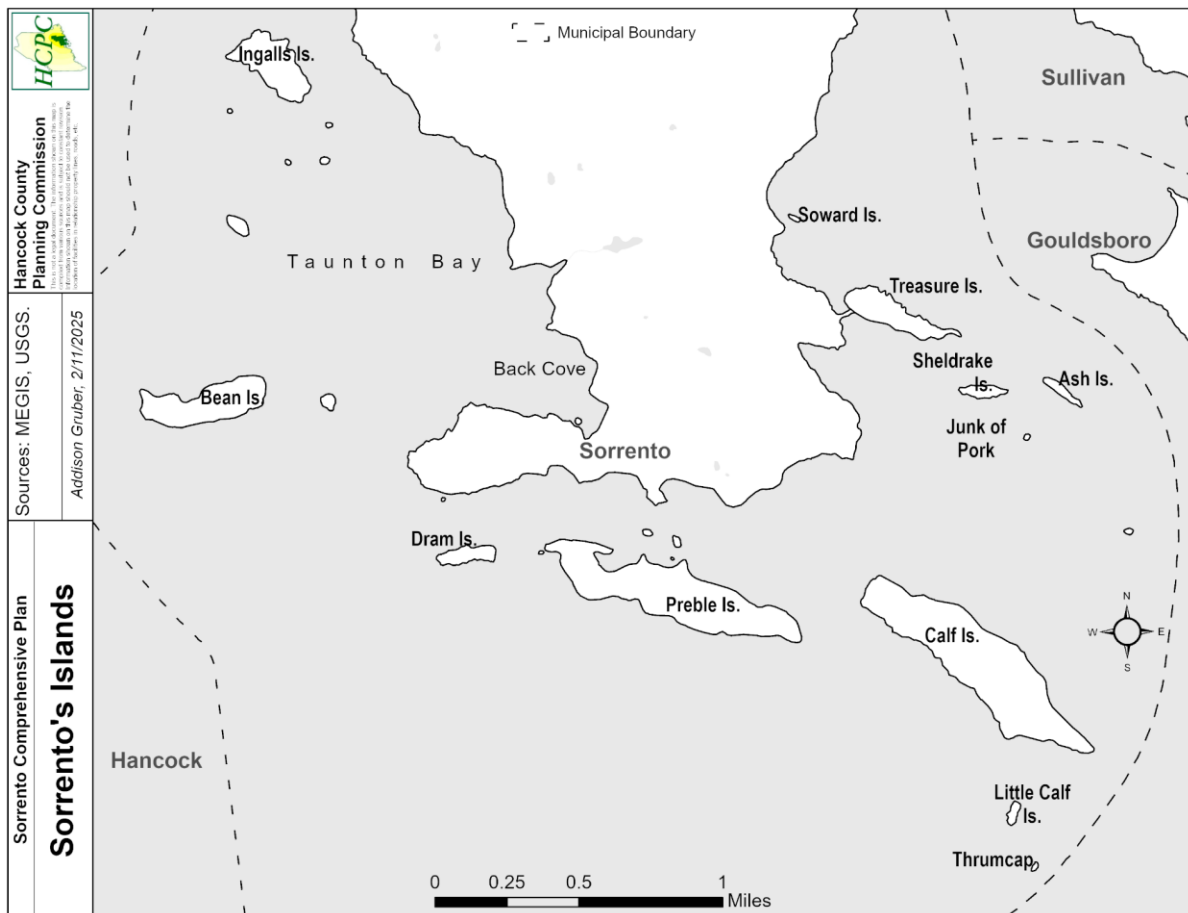


Table F-1: Characteristics of Offshore Islands

Coastal Island Registry Name	Island Resource Type	Size (acres)	Distance From Mainland (feet)	Major Steep Slopes	Other Comments
Soward Island	1,2	< 0.5	< 2000	No	Small islet off Blink Bonnie Golf Links.
Treasure Island	3	15 - 100	< 2000	Yes	Fully developed as a mostly seasonal residential area; tied to the mainland.
Sheldrake Island	3	3 - 15	< 2000	No	East of Treasure Island. Forested. Mud flat and bar extend at low tide between it and Junk of Pork Island.
Ash Island	3	0.5 - 3	> 2000	No	Forested, seasonal use.
Junk of Pork Island	1,2	< 0.5	> 2000	No	Small but high sand/soil islet with a distinctive profile in Flanders Bay.
Long Ledge	1	< 0.5	> 2000	No	Shorebird nesting, feeding and staging area. Rock with sandy edges almost covered at high tide. At low tide sand bars almost connect to Junk of Pork Island. Critical seal haulout. Juvenile eagles have been sighted.
Calf Island	3	15 - 100	> 2000	Yes	Most of this large island is undeveloped forest. The Southeastern end has cabins and outbuildings seasonally used by owners. One end has a long meadow that terminates in a mud/shell beach.
Little Calf Island	1,2	0.5 - 3	> 2000	No	Uninhabited forested island connected at low tide to the southeast end of Calf Island and Thrum Cap. Privately owned.
Thrumcap Island	1,2	< 0.5	> 2000	No	Small island connected at low tide to Little Calf Island.
Preble Island	3	15 - 100	< 2000	Yes	Apart of Acadia National Park, with limited access via a beach at its western end and a primitive walking trail.
Dram Island	3	3 - 15	< 2000	No	Inaccessible except at certain tides and features steep slopes throughout. Owned by Acadia National Park and The Nature Conservancy.
Bean Island	3	15 - 100	> 2000	No	Waterfowl nesting area; public access site and beach. Owned by Frenchman Bay Conservancy.
Welch Island (Captain Kidd Island)	1,2	< 0.5	< 2000	No	Conservation easement held by The Nature Conservancy.
Ingalls Island	4	15 - 100	< 2000	No	Shorebird nesting, feeding and staging; seasonal use.
<i>Island Resource Type:</i> 1 = bare ledge 2 = soils and grass/shrub vegetation 3 = soils and forest vegetation					

5. Development Constraints

Sorrento's two largest blocks of undeveloped land face considerable development constraints. One, located in the center of the peninsula, consists primarily of ledges, making it difficult and costly to develop. The other is a substantial area of conserved land on the southern part of the peninsula. This land is privately owned with easements to the Frenchman Bay Conservancy and is forested with considerable wetlands and wildlife habitat. The easements are registered with the Hancock County Registry of Deeds, reserve the right to the owners to limit public access but preserve the undeveloped land as a scenic view.

Soils

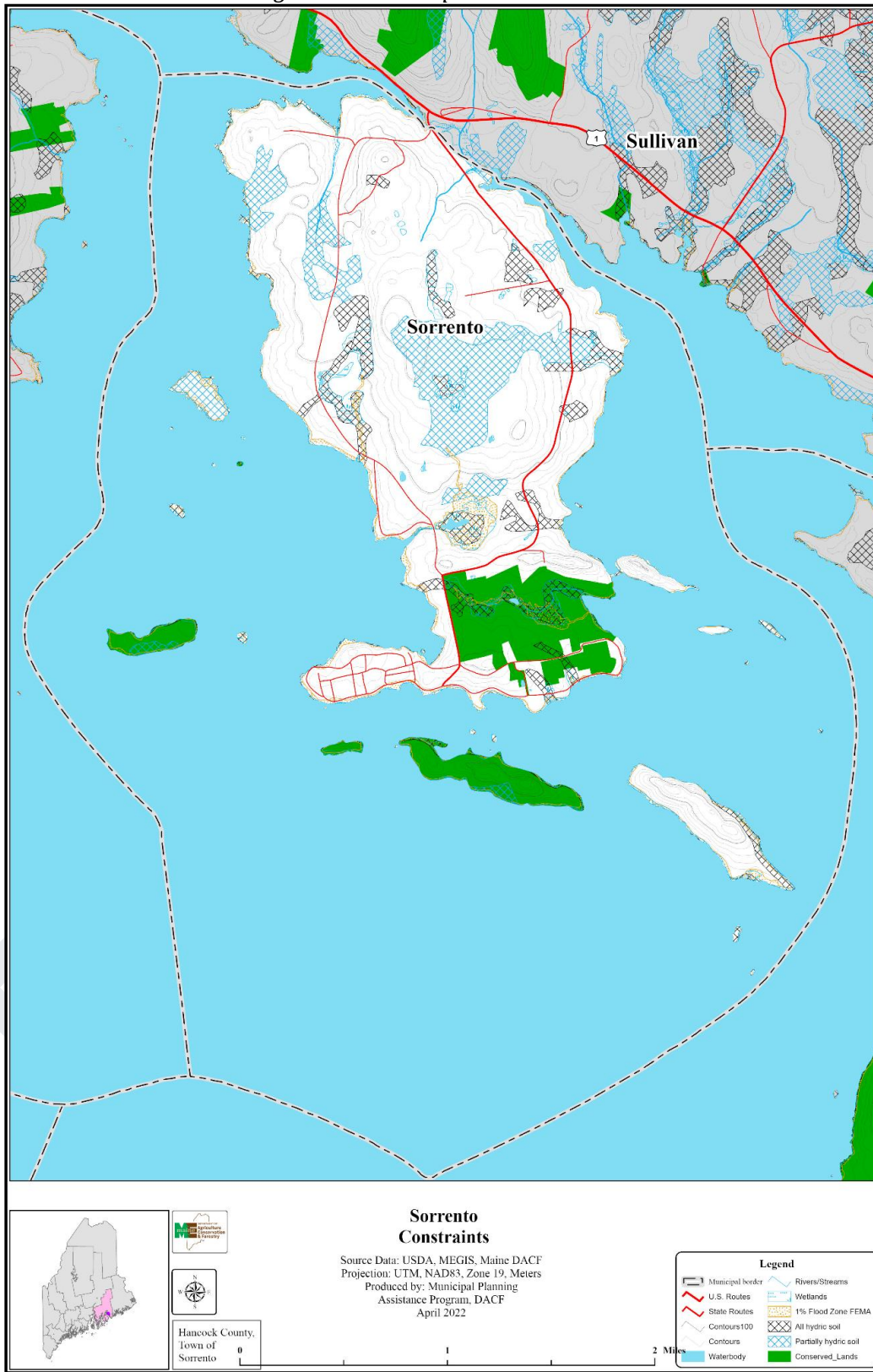
Sorrento's soil composition indicates that while a large portion of the town may face challenges for development due to rocky, stony, and steeply sloped soils, there are areas that can still support development with careful planning and consideration.

Soils like Lamoine silt loam (LaB) and Scantic silt loam (Sa), covering approximately 20% of the land, are ideal for residential, agricultural, and light commercial development. These soils have relatively flat slopes, good drainage, and provide a stable foundation for development with minimal groundwork needed.

However, just over 50% of the town consists of rocky and steep soils, which pose significant challenges for development. The largest soil types by area include:

- **Lyman-Schoodic complex (LsE)**, with slopes of 15 to 35 percent and rocky terrain, covering 350.6 acres (15.09%). The steep slopes and rocky nature make excavation and grading difficult, increasing costs and raising the risk of erosion, which makes this area challenging for construction.
- **Lyman-Tunbridge complex (LuC)**, with slopes of 0 to 15 percent and very stony conditions, covering 233.3 acres (10.04%). Although the slopes are less steep, the high stoniness complicates land clearing, potentially limiting its suitability for large-scale projects due to higher costs.
- **Hermon and Monadnock soils (HtC)**, with slopes of 8 to 15 percent and very stony conditions, covering 184.9 acres (7.96%). These soils are challenging for development due to the stony conditions, which increase excavation and construction costs, limiting development feasibility without significant investment in site preparation.
- **Naskeag-Schoodic-Lyman complex (NBB)**, with slopes of 0 to 8 percent and rocky terrain, covering 143.8 acres (6.19%). While these soils have gentler slopes, the rocky conditions still complicate land clearing and foundation work, making construction more difficult and expensive.

Figure F-2: Development Constraints



6. Habitats and Critical Natural Resources

Much of the information in this section comes from Maine IF&W's Beginning with Habitat (BwH) program. BwH brings together public agencies and private conservation organizations to consolidate information on wildlife and habitat from all over the state.

The term "habitat" refers to the resources in an area that support the survival and reproduction of a species. These include physical factors like soil, moisture, and temperature range as well as the availability of food, the absence of predators, and cover or shelter for predator evasion. Every species has particular habitat requirements; some are able to thrive in a wide variety of environmental conditions while others require a limited set of specific factors to survive.

6.1. Wetlands

Wetlands are one of the most critical natural resources. They often serve as aquifer recharge areas, allowing underground water supplies to be replenished. They are also critical wildlife and bird habitats, serving as important breeding areas for waterfowl and providing habitat for other important wildlife such as amphibians, reptiles, and insects. Wetlands are also an important part of nature's drainage system since they hold storm water. Areas that have experienced extensive filling of wetlands often face increased flooding problems.

Sorrento's major wetlands (greater than ten acres) include five freshwater wetlands scattered around the middle of the Waukeag Neck peninsula where Sorrento is located, and total just over 64 acres.

- **Freshwater Emergent Wetland:** Swallow Hollow Bog is a 26-acre Freshwater Emergent Wetland in the more southerly portion of the peninsula. This is a key feature of the Town and is a significant Inland Waterfowl/Wading Bird Habitat (IWWH).
- **Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland:** Approximately 38 acres of Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland are located in the northwest as well as southerly areas, and another 64 acres of smaller wetlands, ranging in size from 0.02 to 9.85 acres, are scattered mainly around the upper half of the peninsula. These include Freshwater/Forested Shrub, Freshwater Emergent, Freshwater Pond, and Riverine wetland types. (Source: National Wetland Inventory)
- **Estuarine and Marine Wetlands:** Sorrento is also surrounded by Estuarine and Marine Wetlands. Like freshwater wetlands, these are highly important for their wildlife and fisheries habitats. For more information see Chapter G: Marine Resources.

6.2. Wildlife

Fish and wildlife habitats in Maine are classified by the State as essential, significant, or of concern, with essential habitats receiving the highest level of protection. Significant Wildlife Habitats are defined under Maine's Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA) and are regulated by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

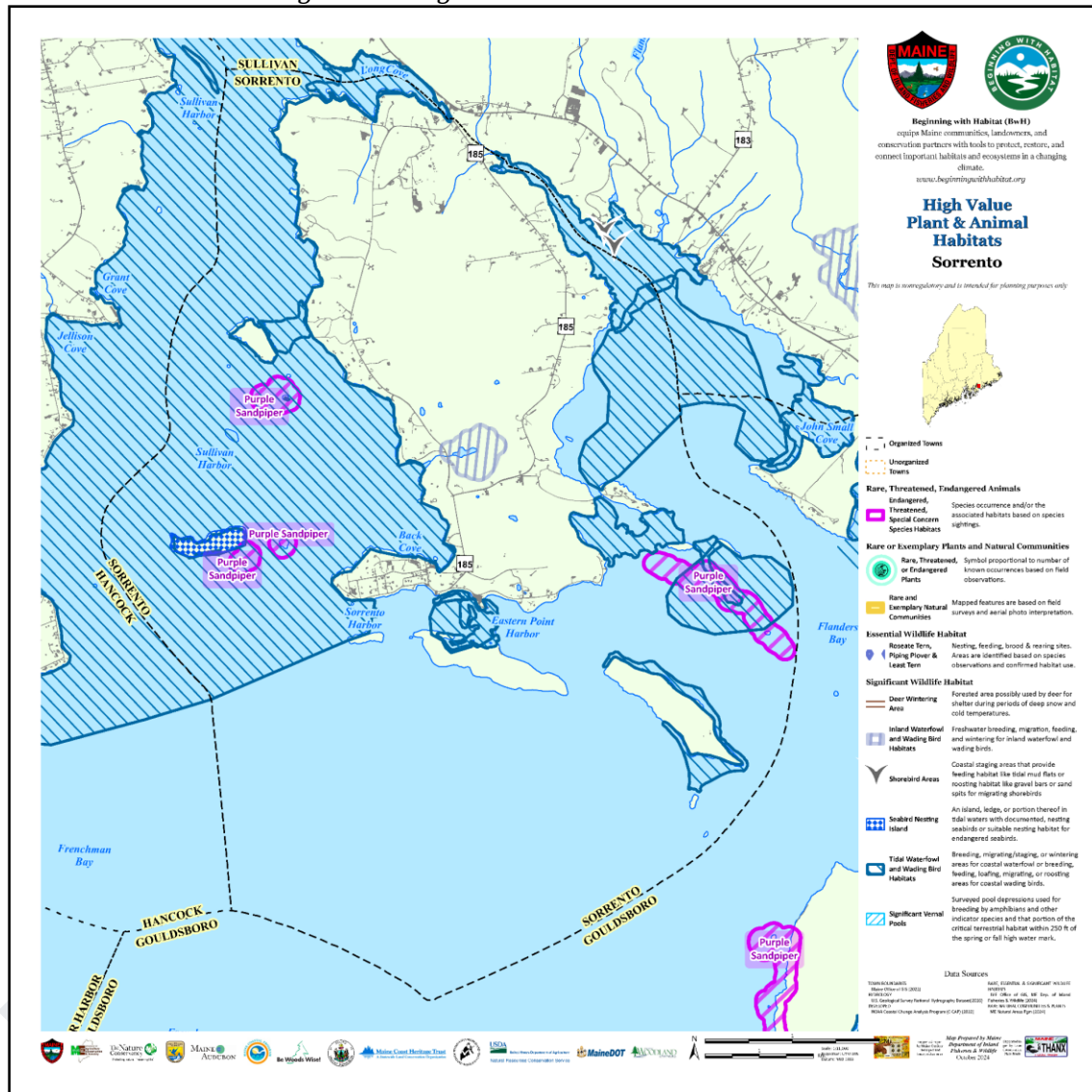
The town of Sorrento contains several Significant Wildlife Habitats. Its shoreland areas serve as vital staging and wintering areas for waterbirds and provide important foraging and nesting sites for great blue herons. These coastal areas also support critical migration and wintering habitat for a variety of waterfowl, including loons, long-tailed ducks, buffleheads, mergansers, eiders, scoters, and mallards, which migrate to the coast when inland lakes and ponds freeze. Seal haul-outs are also found in Flanders Bay and the ledges off Bean Island. Haul-out locations are critical for mating, birthing pups, resting between periods of foraging, escaping predation, and more. Although they are important wildlife features, they are not currently designated as Significant Wildlife Habitats.

The following Significant Wildlife Habitats have been identified in Sorrento:

- **Inland Waterfowl / Wading Bird Habitat (IWWH)** – wetland complexes and a 250-foot-wide upland zone surrounding them. The quality of a wetland complex is determined by the dominant wetland type, the diversity of wetland types in the complex, the size of the wetland(s), the interspersed of the different types, and the relative amount of open water. IWWHs in organized townships were re-mapped and re-rated in 2008 using the most current, high-resolution imagery.
- **Seabird Nesting Islands (SNI)** – In Sorrento, this includes Bean Island and a tern colony off Ingalls Island. Worldwide, seabirds live most of their lives over the open ocean and commonly nest on islands. Maine's assemblage of seabirds utilize a wide range of habitat for nesting. For instance, some seabirds will nest on small, unforested islands vegetated sparsely with various grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Other seabirds require soil conditions suitable for burrowing. Some seabirds nest in rock crevices or on cliff ledges. In order to be suitable for nesting birds, these nesting islands must be disturbance-free, particularly from mammalian predators such as foxes, coyotes, and raccoons. Many seabird species were extirpated in Maine by the end of the 19th century but have recovered dramatically because of state and federal conservation laws and restoration efforts. In 1998, 234 Maine islands were afforded protection as Significant Wildlife Habitat for nesting seabirds under the Natural Resources Protection Act.
- **Shorebird Areas** – feeding and staging areas provide migrating shorebirds with the food resources they need to acquire the large fat reserves necessary to fuel their transoceanic migration to wintering areas. Shorebird areas can be feeding areas, roosting sites, or both. MDIFW surveys shorebird areas every year; this data is used to add, delete, or modify the mapped habitats.
- **Tidal Waterfowl / Wading Bird Habitat (TWWH)** – Waukeag Peninsula is mostly surrounded by this habitat type except for some eastern portions and the southern end. TWWH includes the following habitat types:
 - Eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) beds currently mapped by Maine Department of Marine Resources that are at least 2.5 acres in size
 - Mussel bars/beds
 - Emergent wetlands at least 2.5 acres in size

- Mudflats at least 12.5 acres in size or adjacent to one of the above habitats such that the resulting complex is at least 2.5 acres in size

Figure F-3: High Value Plant & Animal Habitats



No animal species found in Sorrento have been listed as threatened or endangered by Maine or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; however, Purple Sandpipers (*Calidris maritima*) are known to use shoreline habitat in Sorrento and are considered Priority 1 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in Maine.

Purple Sandpipers

Purple Sandpiper are known to use four of the Town's islands for wintering and/or staging during migration. Risks and stressors for this species have been identified as fishing and harvesting of aquatic resources; industrial and military effluents; and lack of knowledge about other causes of the species' population decline.

Globally this bird species has a Conservation Status of G5, meaning it is at “very low risk of extinction or elimination due to a very extensive range, abundant populations or occurrences, and little to no concern from declines or threats.” However, in Maine, these birds have been in decline. They are listed as a species of concern and a Priority 1 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) for Staging/Wintering by Maine’s State Wildlife Action Plan for 2015 – 2025.

The Conservation Actions planned by IF&W for this shorebird are:

- Continue annual long term monitoring plan to determine if the Purple Sandpiper population is in severe decline. Combine an annual survey with a coastwide survey to be conducted every 5 years.
- Continue to survey and map wintering sites for oil spill contingency planning. Work with industry to locate shipping lanes away from important wintering areas.
- Continue to work with the Maine Department of Marine Resources to coordinate macroalgae harvest in important wintering sites and determine the level of impact on wintering birds.

Shellfish

Long Cove, Bass Cove, and Back Cove provide valuable saltwater fisheries habitat. Species found in these areas have included sandworms, bloodworms, soft-shell clams, blue mussels, giant scallops, rock crabs, green crabs, and lobsters. Green sea urchins, sea cucumbers, American eels, rainbow smelt, and flounder existed at one time in Sorrento’s waters, however, they do not currently exist in quantifiable numbers.

More information about saltwater fisheries can be found in Chapter G: Marine Resources. The Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Conservation program is discussed in that chapter. This program resulted from an interlocal agreement among seven towns to share the management of and education about shellfish resources in Frenchman Bay.

6.3. Plants

No rare plants or animals have been identified within Sorrento to date that are found to be endangered, threatened, or of special concern by the Beginning with Habitat Program (BwH). However, Sorrento does have a number of valuable marine plants. For example, rockweed is abundant. However, eel grass is in decline with limited communities found up Taunton River further into the Frenchman Bay/Taunton Bay system.

The northwestern portion of Sorrento is identified by BwH as being within the Taunton Bay Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance.

6.4. Taunton Bay Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance

Focus Areas of Statewide Ecological Significance are identified based on their plant life, geology, wildlife, scenic values, and the presence of rare, unusual, or at-risk species and habitats. While the

program does not provide formal protection for these sites, it serves to identify and inventory such resources across the state.

Though Sorrento is not directly associated with Taunton Bay, a small portion of northeastern Sorrento lies within the Taunton Bay Focus Area, as recognized by the State. Due to its Downeast Maine location, Taunton Bay experiences significant tidal fluctuations, creating expansive tidal estuaries. These high tides interact with freshwater tributaries in the region, mixing nutrients and generating highly productive waters. Estuaries like those in the Taunton Bay Focus Area are vital to the Gulf of Maine's productivity, contributing to one of the most biologically productive water bodies in the world.

The Taunton Bay Focus Area is ecologically significant, home to key species and habitats. It hosts one of the largest aggregations of bald eagle nest sites in the region, a testament to the availability of abundant food sources. The state-threatened arctic tern breeds here, migrating up to 20,000 miles annually. The bay also has large numbers of softshell clams. The area includes large, unfragmented coastal habitat blocks along Taunton Bay and the Skillings River, which serve as critical wildlife corridors. Additionally, rare habitats such as the Black Spruce Woodland on Hyde Point and the Spruce-Fir-Northern Hardwoods Ecosystem on several islands are present.

Sorrento's inclusion in the Taunton Bay Focus Area underscores the ecological significance of its coastal regions, emphasizing the need for careful land use planning, resource management, and environmental stewardship to preserve the productivity and biodiversity of this invaluable area.

Figure F-4: Taunton Bay Focus Area



Source: Maine IF&W, Beginning with Habitat

In the interests of protecting this valuable natural resource, it is recommended that communities:

- Educate recreational users about the ecological and economic benefits provided by the Focus Area.
- Encourage best management practices for forestry, vegetation clearing, and soil disturbance activities near significant features.
- Maintain natural hydrologic regimes by avoiding drainage or impoundment of the wetlands, streams or adjacent water bodies; and identify and restore tidal restrictions.
- Improve approaches to development that may impact focus area functions.
- Encourage landowners to maintain enhanced riparian buffers.

6.5. Habitat Connectivity

Habitat connectivity is essential for sustaining healthy ecosystems, especially in landscapes increasingly fragmented by human activity. It allows wildlife to move freely between different habitats, access vital resources, and maintain genetic diversity, which is crucial for long-term population health. This connectivity leads to healthier populations, more resilient ecosystems, and the preservation of biodiversity.

6.6. Undeveloped Habitat Blocks

Undeveloped Habitat Blocks are large, contiguous areas of natural land with minimal human development, providing critical habitat for a variety of wildlife species. These areas support biodiversity by offering shelter, breeding grounds, and food sources while also serving as corridors for wildlife movement. In Sorrento, over 1,000 acres have been classified as Undeveloped Habitat Blocks, making them a key component of the town's ecological landscape and allowing for human uses such as hunting, harvesting wood for fuel, and preserving officially or unofficially recognized trails. Some of this land is privately owned, which puts it at risk of being fragmented if developed.

Because these habitat blocks indicate strong connectivity—essential for maintaining healthy wildlife populations and allowing species to adapt to environmental changes—they should be carefully considered in land use planning. To balance development with habitat protection, efforts should be made to prevent fragmentation, maintain wildlife corridors, and ensure connectivity between natural areas. The use of buffer zones or conservation easements can further safeguard these vital ecosystems.

Figure F-6: Map of Fish Passage Barriers in Sorrento



Culverts are identified as barriers based on factors like fast or turbulent flow, vertical drops at the outlet, improper size or design, and misalignment with the stream. These conditions can hinder fish movement, especially for larger or migratory species. The tool uses field surveys and stream data to identify potential barriers and guide improvements.

StreamSmart, a State program, recommends best practices for improving fish passage, including designing culverts that mimic natural stream conditions. This involves ensuring proper size, slope, and placement, along with fish-friendly features like baffles or roughened channels. Culverts should

also be resilient to climate change impacts and prevent issues such as water submersion or waterfalls, balancing aquatic habitats and road resilience to flooding.

Table F-2: Sorrento Stream Crossing Barriers

Site ID	Spans Stream	Elevation matches stream	Slope matches stream	Substrate in crossing	Notes
50367	No	No (inlet and outlet)	No	No	Debris/Sediment/Rock blockage; alewife habitat, and modeled salmon habitat
51751	No?	No (outlet only)	No	No	Tidal marsh, alewife habitat, and modeled salmon habitat
51752	No	No (outlet only)	No	No	alewife habitat, and modeled salmon habitat

Source: Beginning with Habitat Maine Stream Habitat Viewer

Figure F-7: Stream Smart Best Design Practices



Source: Maine Audubon

7. Scenic Views & Vistas

Sorrento offers exceptional public access to scenic views and vistas, particularly along its coastline. Ocean Avenue, a public road, runs for over 1.5 miles along the town's southern coast, providing uninterrupted views of the water. This road is a popular walking route for both residents and visitors from nearby towns. Public access to the shoreline and water for swimming is available at the main harbor and a beach near the eastern end of Ocean Avenue. Similarly, Bayview Avenue provides a walking route but without the same access to the shoreline and water.

However, severe winter storms in 2024 caused extensive damage to this coastal area, highlighting its vulnerability to erosion, storm surges, and sea-level rise. With the increasing likelihood of future southerly storms and king tides, proactive measures may be necessary to protect these scenic coastal resources from degradation.

Doane's Point Road, a dirt road connecting the eastern end of Ocean Avenue back to town, passes through conserved forest and is an integral part of a popular walking loop. As a natural and scenic corridor, it may also warrant consideration for protection.

Given the significance of Sorrento's coastal landscapes to its identity, economy, and quality of life, the town may want to identify priority scenic resources for protection.

8. Conservation & Open Space

Sorrento contains a variety of conserved lands that protect its unique natural features and support ongoing conservation efforts in the region. Conserved islands in Sorrento include Bean Island, Dram Island, and Preble Island, all of which are protected by both public and private conservation entities. Additionally, 179 acres in the eastern part of the southern peninsula are under a conservation easement with the Frenchman Bay Conservancy.

The following map, "Sorrento Co-Occurrence," highlights areas of relative conservation value and serves as a starting point for discussions on planning and future conservation efforts. The map layers include buffer zones around water features, important natural communities, listed plant and animal species, and areas of undeveloped land. The darker the green, the higher the area's score as a valuable natural resource.

The town views natural forces as more of a threat than development, but both contribute to coastal erosion. Coastal erosion is seen as one of the largest threats and impacts all of Sorrento, not just areas more exposed to the larger Frenchman Bay area. New developments along the shoreline or streams that drain water from inner areas of Sorrento could disrupt drainage patterns and contribute to coastal erosion by providing new areas for high water to erode the shoreline.

Much of Sorrento's most ecologically valuable land is already conserved, including several islands and large portions of the southern peninsula. Additionally, the town's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance helps protect land within 250 feet of water bodies, preserving critical fisheries, shellfish habitats, and wetlands. In 2021, Sorrento updated its ordinance to align with state shoreland protection requirements set forth in Chapter 1000: Guidelines for Municipal Shoreland Zoning Ordinances. Since most inland areas remain largely undeveloped and forested, they continue to support wildlife habitat, maintain water quality, and contribute to the town's rural character.

However, Sorrento does not currently have a town-wide zoning or subdivision ordinance to protect natural resources beyond the shoreland zone. Sorrento may want to consider implementing general performance standards for residential and commercial development outside the Shoreland Zone. These standards could focus on protecting the town's scenic coastal resources, ensuring that new development does not negatively impact the visual appeal, natural beauty, and ecological health of Sorrento's coast. These performance standards could guide developers in maintaining the aesthetic and environmental integrity of the town, ensuring that future growth is compatible with its coastal environment.

While development does not currently pose a major threat to natural resources, proactive planning remains important. The town may want to consider measures such as monitoring water quality, maintaining forested buffers, and supporting conservation efforts for ecologically significant areas. Ensuring that existing protections remain effective will help safeguard Sorrento's natural resources with minimal regulatory burden.

10. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Protect and Sustain Sorrento's Critical Natural Resources and Ecological Integrity			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
*Identify, Prioritize, and Protect Critical Resources	*Ensure land use ordinances are consistent with state law regarding protection of critical natural resources.	Planning Board	2 years
	*Establish an Open Space Plan to identify priority parcels for conservation or public acquisition, incorporating Critical Resource Area designations, wildlife habitat, and ecological connectivity.	BwH, Selectboard	5 years
	Maintain and protect wildlife corridors across the town, focusing on high-priority linkages that support species movement, biodiversity, and climate resilience.	BwH, Selectboard, Climate Resilience Committee, HCPC	Ongoing
	*Pursue public-private partnerships to conserve key parcels through acquisition or conservation easements from willing landowners.	MCHT, FBC	2 years
	*Initiate or participate in interlocal and regional efforts to manage and protect shared natural resources such as watersheds, forests, and wildlife habitat.	SALT	2 years
	*Designate Critical Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan to ensure that protection priorities are clearly integrated into long-range planning and development review.	Planning Board, Comprehensive Plan Committee	
	Participate in regional planning and management efforts to conserve important shared natural resources (e.g. Taunton Bay and Frenchman Bay).	SALT, Downeast Conservation Network, FBC, MCHT	Ongoing
	Collaborate with partners to develop and act on a plan to manage threatened and endangered species habitat.	SALT, Downeast Conservation Network, FBC, MCHT	Ongoing
Strengthen Ordinance-Based Protections	*Require developers (for subdivisions or non-residential projects) to identify on-site critical natural resources and take appropriate protective measures—such as modifying site layout, limiting excavation, or timing construction to avoid sensitive periods.	Planning Board	Ongoing
	*Require the Planning Board to incorporate Beginning with Habitat (BwH) maps and data into the review process to ensure informed decision-making.	Planning Board	2 years

Goal: Protect and Sustain Sorrento's Critical Natural Resources and Ecological Integrity			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
	Adopt Dark Sky standards to minimize light pollution and protect night skies, wildlife, and rural character.	Planning Board	2 years
	Adopt overlay districts with specific performance and design standards to protect identified scenic resources and sensitive ecological areas.	Planning Board	2 years
Protect and Promote Understanding of Local Natural Heritage	*Provide educational resources to landowners living near critical natural resources, including information on applicable regulations and enrollment in current use tax programs (e.g., Tree Growth, Open Space).	BwH, Planning Board?	1 year-ongoing
	Develop and distribute materials about Sorrento's Taunton Bay Focus Area of Statewide Ecological Significance, as well as habitats supporting Priority 1 Species of Greatest Conservation Need, such as the Purple Sandpiper.	Friends of Taunton Bay, BwH	2 years
	Prevent and manage invasive species by organizing community education efforts and collaborating with state and regional partners.	Friends of Taunton Bay, SALT	3 years
	Conduct a baseline survey of invasive aquatic plants in local freshwater bodies, in partnership with experts from the Maine DEP or conservation organizations.	Maine DEP, MCHT, FBC	4 years
Improve Environmental Resilience Through Infrastructure and Planning	Evaluate road-stream crossings (culverts) to identify improvements that support aquatic organism passage and reduce flood risk. Prioritize projects that improve habitat connectivity and infrastructure resilience.	HCPC, MEDOT, Road Commissioner, Selectboard	2 years

Chapter G: Marine Resources

1. Purpose

It is important that the Comprehensive Plan for a coastal community such as Sorrento addresses marine resources. The purpose of this chapter is to:

1. Describe Sorrento's marine habitats and marine-dependent uses in terms of access, infrastructure, and importance to the local and regional economy;
2. Assess the adequacy of existing harbor facilities, and public access points to handle current and projected demand;
3. Assess the effectiveness of existing measures to protect and preserve marine resource areas and important water-dependent uses;

2. Key Findings and Issues

Sorrento's waterfront has historically been a defining part of the community's character from its scenic coastline to the marine industries it supports. While fewer Sorrento residents are participating in waterfront industries today, community members feel the harbor and related businesses contribute to the town's economy and preserve its heritage as a traditional Maine fishing village. However, there is growing concern over the threat posed by warming coastal waters to Sorrento's fisheries and associated businesses, and the potential implications for the town's character. No shorefront lands are currently enrolled in the State's Working Waterfront Taxation Program.

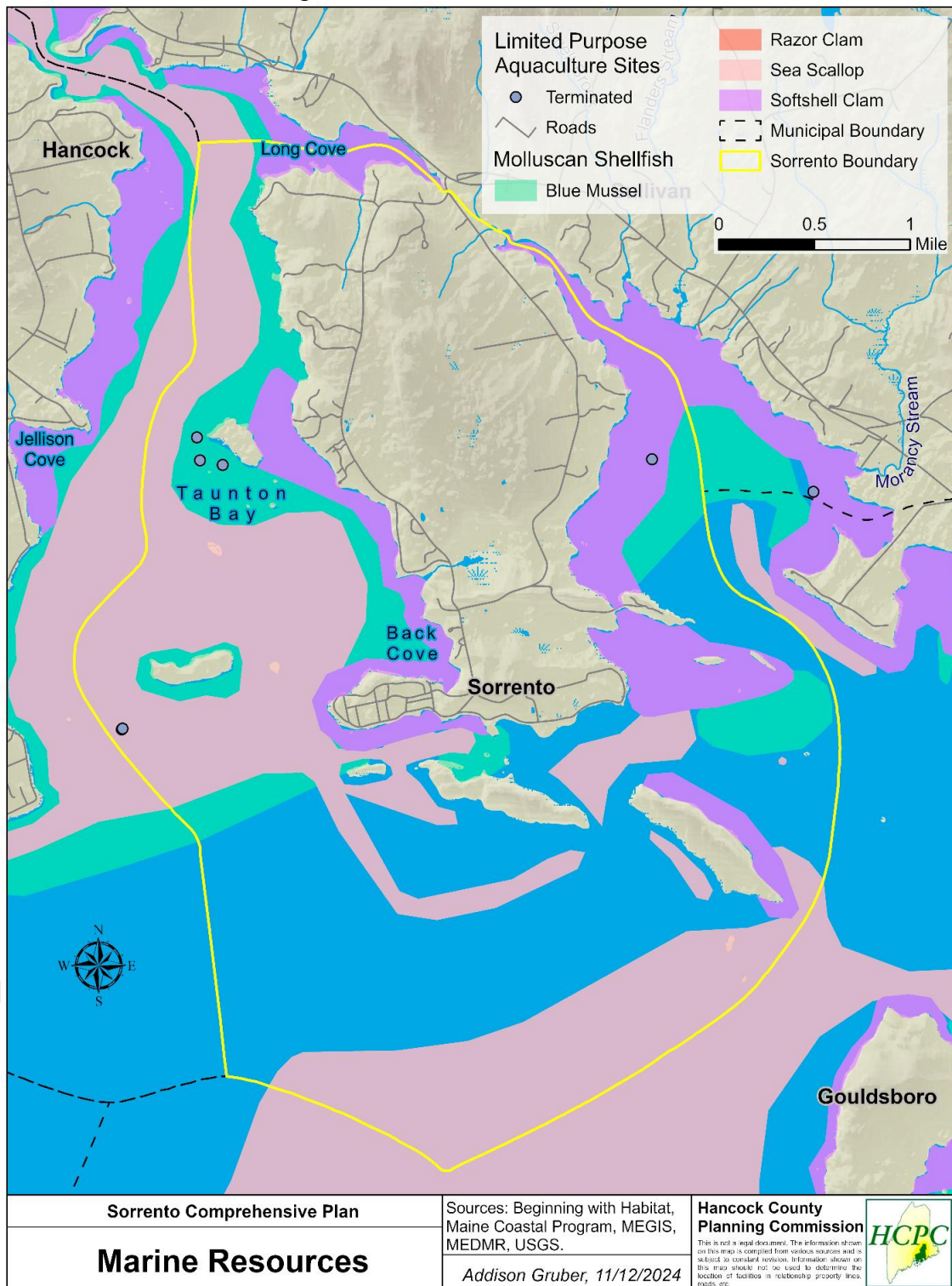
3. Community Engagement Summary

86% of respondents to the public opinion survey felt that marine/wharf facilities in Sorrento are adequate to excellent.

4. Coastal and Marine Habitats

Sorrento is positioned at the confluence of Flanders Bay, Taunton Bay, and Frenchman Bay. As a peninsula, Sorrento's roughly 10 miles of coastline form a series of coves and harbors including: Long Cove, Back Cove, Sorrento Harbor, and Eastern Point Harbor. Sorrento's surrounding waters provide over 8.5 thousand acres of significant wildlife and aquatic species habitat. These habits include shellfish growing areas suitable for blue mussels, sea scallops, softshell clams, quahogs, and crabs, as well as high value reef and mudflats for tidal waterfowl and wading birds. Eelgrass, a threatened and federally protected keystone species, is also found in the waters of Taunton Bay on the western side of Sorrento.

Figure G-1: Sorrento Marine Resources



4.1. Fisheries

Sorrento's main fisheries revolve around lobster, menhaden, clams, and scallops. As of 2022, 33 marine fishing licenses were issued to Sorrento residents, of which 24 were for commercial purposes. The number of residents who fish has decreased by three to five individuals who aged out of the industry over the past 20 years.

One indicator of the importance of marine resources to coastal economies is the number of marine fishing licenses. Licenses are tied to home addresses. Any licensed fisherman may fish in numerous locations so these reflect residents of Sorrento but not residents from other towns who may fish in Sorrento waters. Therefore, these figures should be seen as only a very general estimate of the amount of fishing in town. Note that it is common for individual harvesters to hold multiple licenses. [Also note that many fishermen have numerous mooring permits, more than they have boats, in various locations for safety reasons or other purposes. The total number of registered vessels includes both commercial and recreational boats.]

Table G-1: Maine DMR Licenses and Length of Registered Vessels as of March, 2022

License Type	# of Licenses
Dealer Licenses	
Ready Seafood	1
Sorrento Seafood	1
Harvester Licenses	
Commercial Fishing Crew (CFC)	2
Commercial Fishing Single (CFS)	2
Commercial Pelagic and Anadromous Crew (CPC)	2
Commercial Pelagic and Anadromous Single (CPS)	1
Lobster/Crab +70 (LCO)	1
Lobster/Crab Class 1 (LC1)	2
Lobster/Crab Class 2 (LC2)	4
Lobster/Crab Class 2 + 70 (LC20)	1
Lobster/Crab Class 3 (LC3)	3
Lobster/Crab Non-commercial (LNC)	3
Lobster/Crab Student (LCS)	1
Menhaden Commercial (MENC)	3
Menhaden Non-commercial (MENR)	1
Recreational Saltwater Fishing Operator (SWRO)	1
Recreational Saltwater Registry (SWR)	3
Scallop Dragger (SD)	2
Scallop Non-commercial (NCS)	1
TOTAL	33
Vessel Length (feet)	
8-15	2
16-20	1
21-25	1
26-30	6
31-35	6
36-40	8

License Type	# of Licenses
41-46	4
Blank	5
TOTAL	33

Source: Maine Department of Marine Resources

Table G-2: Sorrento Landings Weight & Value by Species (2008 to 2023)

	Lobster		Clams (Soft)		Menhaden		Scallops		Crab (Jonah)	
	Lbs	Value	Lbs	Value	Lbs	Value	Lbs	Value	Lbs	Value
2008			11,976	\$15,748						
2009			33,462	\$41,366						
2010	357,789	\$1,086,208	52,452	\$65,005			5,063	\$43,937		
2011			29,038	\$38,036						
2012	706,049	\$1,490,194	55,205	\$75,749						
2013			37,841	\$54,380						
2014	760,155	\$2,331,604	4,798	\$10,580			5,491	\$73,935		
2015	919,405	\$3,120,573	26,044	\$74,475			2,341	\$31,766		
2016	785,598	\$3,374,131	11,359	\$22,778					2,234	\$1,072
2017	730,746	\$2,929,069	20,782	\$38,559			2,629	\$34,194		
2018	778,851	\$3,419,482	26,698	\$46,378			5,949	\$79,936	23,784	\$15,414
2019	577,205	\$3,019,053	21,871	\$46,150	431,200	\$116,855				
2020	589,284	\$2,726,452	1,303	\$3,038	598,150	\$157,313				
2021	575,163	\$4,067,444	5,243	\$14,916	1,210,651	\$521,791				
2022	484,228	\$2,018,494	4,055	\$12,077	858,554	\$462,761				
2023	467,637	\$2,370,327	5,058	\$17,214	984,200	\$423,206			14,263	\$10,585

Source: Maine Department of Marine Resources

4.1.1. Lobster

Commercial lobstering is the primary year-round fishery in Sorrento. It is both the highest grossing fishery as well as the most active in terms of the businesses and people that support it. The harbor facilities support only a limited number of lobster fishermen with little capacity to accommodate additional fishermen, both in terms of space and harvest capacity. The number of lobstering licenses issued to Sorrento residents has remained relatively consistent since the 1990s—at the time of the last comprehensive plan in 1991, 14 lobstering licenses were recorded, as opposed to 15 in 2022. Two lobster dealers operate in the Town: Ready Seafood and Sorrento Seafood, which are critical in supporting the lobster industry through providing sales, bait, and product distribution.

4.1.2. Menhaden

Menhaden, commonly known as pogies or bunker, are a highly valued species of baitfish. Since 2019, seining for pogies has become a more significant part of Sorrento’s fishery both in value and in weight as many fishermen spend more of the summer months fishing for pogies than lobster. This aligns with the lobster bait crisis in 2019 which caused the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) to reopen the menhaden fishery under the very limited “episodic event set aside (EESA) program.” The lobster bait crisis was the result of extensive cuts to the quota of Atlantic Herring made by the New England Fishery Management Council at the beginning of 2019. At the time, DMR was considering allowing the use of exotic species of fish for bait. Fortunately, the looming bait crisis coincided with the upswing of the pogie population, which typically undergoes a

20-year cycle of population rise and fall. This cycle has been recorded multiple times since the 1960s.

While the poundage of menhaden caught in 2023 is nearly double that of lobster, menhaden are a lower value product by weight. As of 2023, this fishery has grossed nearly \$425,000. The value of the fishery depends heavily on the lobster industry, as pogies are widely used as bait in lobster traps. Similar to scalloping, lobster boats can be equipped to fish for pogies and then converted back to their lobstering gear setup. Pogies can be kept by the person who catches them to use them for bait, sold directly to fishermen, or sold to larger fishery related businesses such as fishing co-ops and commercial wharves.

4.1.3. Shellfish

The coast and waters of Sorrento have previously and are currently supporting numerous shellfish fisheries. Blue mussels used to have a presence in the area, but their numbers have sharply declined so there is no viable local harvesting. Invasive species like green crabs and other factors have contributed to their decline. There is one active scallop dragger in Sorrento. Since the introduction of multiple regulatory measures to protect scallop stocks in Maine—halting the issuance of any new licenses in 2009 and implementing rotating zone closures—it has been harder for fishermen to enter the scallop industry, which would account for the small number of local fishermen involved in the industry.

Softshell clams are another significant fishery in Sorrento, although according to harvesting data this fishery has declined in recent years. The Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Conservation Committee oversees the flats and sets temporary closures for conservation purposes to limit overfishing and give flats a chance to recover. Predators such as invasive green crabs and native milky ribbon worms affect the clam numbers as they feed on small clams and consume large numbers of them, preventing them from growing large and repopulating the flats. As clammers age out, there are fewer young people entering the fishery, reducing the number of active licenses.

While the total softshell clams harvested averaged around 28.5 thousand pounds per year between 2010 and 2019, this has decreased to around 4,000 pounds per year between 2020 and 2023. The total value of softshell clams harvested in Sorrento has decreased accordingly, from \$47,000 in total value per year (2010-2019) on average to roughly \$12,000 per year (2020-2023).

Unlike lobstermen, clammers do not have to report their catch to the state, but local clam dealers are responsible for reporting the amount of clams they buy and sell so these numbers reflect their reports, not necessarily the total poundage of clams harvested from Sorrento's flats. Any resident of one of the seven towns of the regional shellfish commission that has a commercial license from the commission or a recreational license from Sorrento can harvest clams from Sorrento's flats.

Sorrento has had two shellfish areas under permanent closure since 2012; one located in Back Cove around the wastewater outfall for the public sewer system and the other at the drainage for

Swallow Hollow Bog due to the runoff from wildlife in the bog. Both were closed due to bacteria. The figure below shows shellfish closures and aquaculture leases.

Table G-3: Shellfish Closures and Monitoring Data

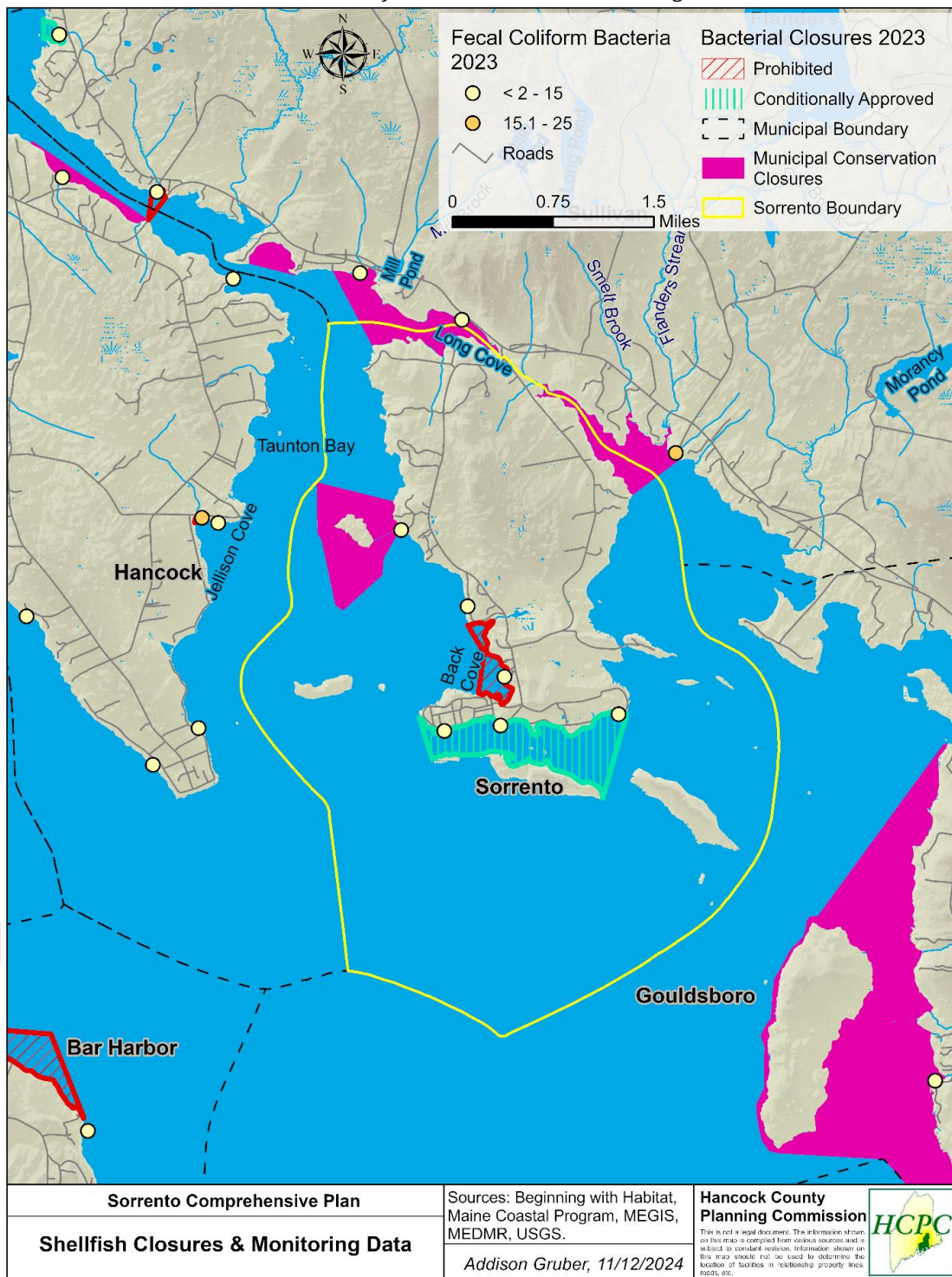


Table G-4: Sorrento Softshell Clam Landings 2019 - 2023

Year	Total Pounds	Avg Value/Pound	Catch/Unit Effort (lbs/trip)
2019	21,871	2.11	121
2020	1,303	2.33	69
2021	4,610	2.85	89
2022	4,015	2.99	109
2023	5,058	3.40	137
5 Yr Avg	7,371	2.74	105
5Yr % Inc/Dec	-76.9	61.1	13.2

Source: Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Conservation

4.1.4. Aquaculture

Aquaculture is the farming of aquatic organisms such as fish, shellfish, and plants. It can refer to both marine and freshwater species and includes land-based as well as ocean production. In recent years aquaculture has become more common in Frenchman Bay. Seven marine aquaculture leases are scattered around Sorrento waters. Oyster and kelp are the largest aquaculture operations in Sorrento's waters: currently there is a kelp farm south of Preble Island, a long-standing oyster farm in the Sullivan River, and several other leases mostly for mussels and scallops. Species in past experimental leases have included salmon, halibut, and cod.

In accordance with state law, towns may acquire intervenor status and have a say in whether an aquaculture lease is appropriate for its waters but at this time has no authority to either approve or deny a lease. Sorrento does not have an aquaculture ordinance, however, presently, there are no issues with aquaculture overcrowding in Sorrento.

At the 2022 Town Meeting Sorrento voters rejected a proposed moratorium ordinance on all industrial-scale aquaculture development in the waters of Sorrento. In keeping with most aquaculture in Frenchman Bay, leases that have been granted by the state are for small farms. The moratorium that was rejected was intended to give time for Sorrento to decide how aquaculture operations should be handled and to prepare regulations and ordinances that they deem to be necessary before they are built. It was thought at the time to be too restrictive and to potentially cause difficulties for lease holders or potential lease holders who wished to farm in the size range between "small" and "industrial," a term which was not easy to define.

Figure G-2: Sorrento Licensed Aquaculture Leases



Table G-5: Aquaculture Leases in Sorrento Waters

Leaseholder	Site ID	Primary Species	Lease Type	Lease Status	Waterbody	Expires	Acres
Acadia Aqua Farms, LLC.	FLAN WN	Mussel Blue Sea, Oyster Eastern/American, Oyster European Flat	S	A	Flanders Bay	9/15/27	14.36
Acadia Aqua Farms, LLC.	FREN BI	Mussel Blue Sea	S	A	Frenchman Bay	1/12/39	32.26
Frenchman Bay Oyster Company, LLC.	SULL II	Oyster Eastern/American	S	A	Sullivan Harbor	8/23/41	5.83
West, James and Springtide Seaweed, LLC	FREN PI4	Mussel Blue Sea, Scallop Sea, Kelp Sugar, Nori/Laver, Dulse, Sea Urchins Green, Oyster Eastern / American, Clam Northern Quahog / Hard, Kelp Winged, Irish Moss, Kelp Fingered / Horsetail	S	A	Frenchman Bay	5/21/25	35.65
<i>S = Standard</i> <i>E = Experimental</i> <i>A = Active</i> <i>T = Terminated</i>							

Source: Maine Department of Marine Resources, 2024.

4.1.5. Other Species

Between 2008 and 2023, the following species have been recorded in DMR's landings data, though not established as part of Sorrento's fishing industry:

- Crab (Jonah)
- Bloodworms
- Sandworms

No alewife, rainbow smelt, or sea run brook trout are known to use Sorrento streams. However, both Taunton Bay and Flanders Bay on either side of Waukeag Neck are recorded as active smelt access routes by the State, according to Maine Stream Habitat Viewer. Residents are not aware of any elver fishing in Sorrento waters. Worm harvesting is not managed or tracked locally and therefore data is not readily available.

Figure G-3: Sorrento Alewife & Sea-Run Rainbow Smelt Habitat



5. Harbors and Waterfront Access

Sorrento offers several public access points to the water and shores, however, almost the entirety of Sorrento's shoreline is owned by private landowners. Therefore, most shore/beach access is granted through informal agreements with property owners.

The loop of coastal road provides a well-loved walking route for Sorrento residents and visitors with ample scenic ocean views, see Chapter F: Natural Resources. Isaac's beach is a public access beach used for walking and recreational swimming; commercial access is prohibited.

The number of boats in Sorrento's main harbor is unlikely to change in the near future as it is controlled by suitable space for moorings. The composition of boats may shift but it's unlikely that the fishing fleet will leave though it may change gear and goals as the fisheries in the bay change. Sorrento is fortunate in having well protected harbors and it has invested in a floating pier for commercial use as well as upgrades to the public town dock which is mostly used by recreational boats. The biggest limiting factor in providing access to the waterfront is parking, not only for fishermen and boaters, but also to walkers of the village loop. Due to the density of development in the village area on Bean Point as well as the adjacent conservation land, there is little opportunity or desire to locate additional parking in this area.

There are no marine services such as electricity, pump out, garbage dump, or fuel in Sorrento.

Table G-6: Sorrento Coastal Marine Facilities

Name & Location	Facilities
Town Dock	Town owned pier with floats (May-November), 10 parking spaces, 125 mooring permits, and dinghy tie-up spaces.
Town Boat Launch	Town-owned paved boat ramp; limited parking available at adjacent town dock; minimal informal parking in road right of way; parking for 4-5 vehicles next to the ramp; seasonal finger floats
Ready Seafood	Private pier
Eastern Harbor Beach	Privately owned and only used for recreational access for hand launch kayaks
West Cove Boatyard Dock and Floats	Privately owned and open to use for people who have moorings in area

5.1. Town Dock & Boat Launch

The main public access to salt water is provided by the Town-owned dock. The wharf has water piped to it used by both commercial fishermen as well as pleasure boaters. Mostly recreational users, but also some commercial fishermen, tie up there to work on their boats. There is a time limit for using the dock.

Sorrento's boat ramp, 200 yards from the Town Dock, is of crucial importance and value to lobstermen and West Cove Boat Yard, as well as community members. The boat ramp has several adjacent finger floats that are reserved for fishermen but also used by recreational boats during

launching. Non-resident recreational boats, but not non-resident commercial boats, are permitted to launch from the town boat ramp.

The boat ramp has not been renovated since at least the early 1980s and the surface is poor. The ramp is susceptible to erosion and not easily accessible at low and mid tide. Fishermen would like to have the ramp repaved and extended to allow for launch at any tide. Efforts to find grant funding to support the project have been hampered by the requirement of matching funds from the town. Some residents are also afraid such a renovation would increase the popularity of this ramp and lead to overuse and crowding; the use of public funds might require the town to open use of the launch to the broader public, therefore making it harder to manage non-resident use. Others feel the ban on commercial fishing for non-residents, along with the limited parking, would prevent this from becoming an issue.

5.2. Sorrento Harbor

Sorrento Harbor is a small anchorage, used by a limited commercial fishing fleet year-round and small pleasure craft in summer. Sorrento Harbor is frequented by many small yachts. Most vessels in town are small sailboats and whaler types, with some large sailboats and the commercial fleet. Harbor facilities are used by both pleasure boats as well as fishing vessels. There is ongoing demand for the Town's conveniently located and well-equipped harbor facilities, but nonresident permits are limited. The harbor master reports no conflicts between recreational and commercial use of the harbor.

No harbor plan exists but the harbor master sees no current issues with regulating the number of moorings, particularly as there is no capacity to add additional moorings. For all of Sorrento there are currently approximately 237 mooring permits, with 125 of those in the main harbor. The other moorings are located in West Cove, East Cove, and 15 private docks.

The small parking lot at the main harbor is primarily used by recreational boaters. There is also some parking along the edge of the adjacent beach, but storm-related erosion where the main road meets the harbor is an increasing concern. The harbor master recommends adding a paved apron off of the road to improve this zone.

5.3. Ready Seafood

Ready Seafood, which has three facilities in Maine and one in Boston, MA, operates a cold water live lobster holding and shipping operation in Sorrento's Eastern Harbor. They buy lobsters from local fishermen and from others outside Sorrento. The operation houses 1,800 to 2,000 crates of lobsters and serves as a hub for fishermen from Stonington to Cutler. They are one the biggest lobster processors in the state. Local fishermen feel the company has been good for the industry because lobstermen are getting a better price due to Ready Seafood's ability to be the direct buyer and processor. They are doing value-added business without passing the product on to other dealers/processors, and this is good for local fishermen.

Loading and unloading there by fishermen was temporarily halted due to damage caused by 2024 winter storms, but operations have resumed. Ready Seafood employs approximately 20 local workers. The Ready Seafood Brand has been purchased by Premiere Foods with the land leased from original Ready Seafood owners.

5.4. Sorrento Seafood

Sorrento seafood is a small company that harvests lobster and bait fish (predominately menhaden). In addition, the company purchases lobster and bait fish from fishermen in neighboring towns and then distributes to local customers and other co-op's outside Sorrento. They hold lobsters in tanks and freeze or salt the bait fish.

5.5. West Cove Boatyard

West Cove Boat Yard on Back Cove provides launch/haul, storage, shrink wrapping, boat repairs, and mooring services to Sorrento and the surrounding communities on Frenchman Bay. This boatyard mostly services recreational boats. The business started in 1981 and was incorporated in 2007.

6. Potential Threats to Marine Resources

One major threat to marine resources is that traditional, informal access points to the shore have gradually been lost as property has changed hands. A related threat is increased land values which make it more difficult for fisheries related businesses to afford to operate in place or find land for expanding their business. One way this threat can be addressed is to limit commercial development to marine dependent uses in appropriate portions of the shorefront. The DEP encourages such regulations through shoreland zoning. The Town of Sorrento currently has zoned the mainland coastline, opposite Preble Island, as a commercial fishing district.

Invasive Species

Green crabs have been found in local waters since at least 1939, but evidence of their harm has increased dramatically in the recent past. Cold winters help to suppress their numbers, but all the evidence is that Maine's ocean temperatures are warming. While warming water in general may not be the cause of its proliferation, what has kept the numbers down has been our cold winters, which seem to be a thing of the past. This species is currently considered an important predator for the region's clam population. They are known to damage eel grass beds and local lobstermen encounter them in their traps. A local trapping effort is helping to determine their habits. At this time there is no known successful way of limiting the green crab population other than trapping and removal.

Sea squirts (also known as tunicates or ascidians) are also becoming increasingly prevalent in Maine waters. Species of sea squirts can be solitary or colonial, the former being easier to remove than the latter which forms a sort of living gelatinous crust. Invasive solitary species include the club sea squirt, the sea vase, and the European sea squirt. Invasive colonial species include the

pancake batter (or sea vomit) tunicate, chain (or orange sheath) tunicate, golden star tunicate, and the jelly crust (or diplosoma) tunicate

Some species are not native to local waters and, as with green crabs, colder water temperatures help keep their numbers under control. Other species, such as the pancake batter tunicate, grow more quickly at winter temperatures than summer temperatures. Sea squirts are referred to as part of the “fouling community” due to settlement on hard surfaces such as docks, boats, and fishing gear, completely covering them in some cases and leading to increased effort to keep marine infrastructure and gear clean and usable. By one observation, they have become a significant problem in just the last few years and appear to have a more pronounced negative impact each year.

7. Current Protective Measures

Sorrento adopted the State’s shoreland zoning ordinance, last updated in 2021, which asserts measures designed to protect and regulate development of shorelands. This is Sorrento’s primary protective mechanism.

Since Sorrento has no town-wide zoning or subdivision ordinance, the town has very little power to regulate many development-related activities that could affect marine water quality outside of the shoreland zone. For example, a commercial establishment that did not lie within the shoreland zone would receive no planning board review. Therefore, environmental impacts such as stormwater runoff could escape the town’s notice. Similarly, erosion and sedimentation from a subdivision would not receive an in-depth review. Given the Town’s present regulations, there is a risk that future development could unintentionally damage Sorrento’s marine resources.

Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Conservation program (FBRSC) Ordinance

At the time of the last Comprehensive Plan in 1994, Sorrento managed harvesting on the shellfish flats and coastal waters through a municipal Shellfish Ordinance created in 1965. In 2010, after pollution and overharvesting threatened the local waters, the municipalities of Ellsworth, Franklin, Hancock, Lamoine, Sorrento, Sullivan, and Trenton signed an Interlocal Agreement to “act collaboratively as stewards to preserve, protect, manage and enhance the shellfish resources and ecological well-being of the Greater Frenchman Bay Region and to ensure a sustainable harvest of shellfish and opportunity for those who make their living on the tide.”

They also agreed to uphold the 2010 Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Conservation program (FBRSC) Ordinance by which, following state law, the seven towns jointly manage their shellfish resources, issue licenses and collect fees, and administer conservation plans and municipal area closures to ensure an ongoing supply of shellfish. This mostly pertains to soft shell clams but includes other shellfish species such as quahogs, razor clams, and hen clams, which are currently not harvested. Residents of the seven towns can apply for a recreational clamming license, which gives permission to dig on flats that are not closed for conservation or as a result of pollution. Individual towns, including Sorrento, issue and collect fees for recreational licenses but commercial

applications are currently handled through the Town of Franklin. Money collected goes to paying a shellfish warden and to support conservation projects on shellfish beds.

8. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Preserve and Improve Access to Marine Resources for Both Commercial and Recreational Use			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
*To protect, maintain and, where warranted, improve marine habitat and water quality.	Work with neighboring communities on the protection of critical upland, intertidal, and marine habitats.	Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Program, Friends of Taunton Bay	Ongoing
	Conduct a study of the economic value of Taunton Bay to the region.	Friends of Taunton Bay, Regional Economic Development Committee	2 Years
*Protect and Expand Shoreline Access	*Evaluate opportunities to preserve or expand public access to the shoreline through acquisition, easements, or access agreements, especially in areas serving both commercial and recreational needs.	MCHT, FBC	Ongoing
	*Work with landowners, land trusts, and other partners to protect physical and visual access to the coast, particularly along public roads and at scenic viewpoints or public parks.	MCHT, FBC, Selectboard	Ongoing
	Consider land use ordinance amendments that enhance shoreline protections beyond Shoreland Zoning to preserve scenic, ecological, and access values.	Planning Board	2 years
Improve Coastal Marine Infrastructure	Renovate and lengthen the town landing boat ramp to improve access at a wider range of tides for both commercial and recreational users.	Selectboard, Harbor Master	1 year-ongoing
	Prevent erosion of the beach and roadside parking area by installing a paved apron off the main road and implementing erosion control measures.	Selectboard, Road Commissioner	4 years

Goal: Preserve and Improve Access to Marine Resources for Both Commercial and Recreational Use

Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
	Explore opportunities to expand parking near the town landing to accommodate the needs of commercial fishermen.	Selectboard, Road Commissioner	2 years
	Identify and pursue funding options—such as state and federal grants—to support boat ramp improvements, shoreline stabilization, and parking enhancements.	Selectboard, Climate Resilience Committee, HCPC	1 year
Support Working Waterfront and Commercial Marine Activity	*Provide information to waterfront property owners about the Working Waterfront Access Protection Program and the current use taxation program for commercial fishing access.	Selectboard, Harbor Master	1 year-ongoing
	*Encourage local marine businesses and boatyards to participate in Clean Marina or Boatyard Certification Programs to improve water quality and operational sustainability.	Selectboard	Ongoing
	Support the implementation of regional harbor and bay management plans.	Harbormaster, Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Program, Friends of Taunton Bay	5 Years
	*Ensure sufficient funding and staffing for the harbormaster and/or harbor commission to carry out duties related to mooring management, enforcement, and harbor access.	Selectboard	Ongoing

Chapter H: Agriculture & Forestry Resources

1. Purpose

This chapter presents an overview of Sorrento's Agricultural and Forest Resources, especially land available for natural resource utilization and the human benefits gained from the natural environment, including drinkable water, recreation, productive soils and timber lands, and scenic value. Specifically, this section:

1. Provides a detailed inventory and overview of Sorrento's farming and forest lands, including their current use, distribution, and ecological value;
2. Quantifies lands held in the Farmland, Tree Growth, and Open Space current land use taxation program;
3. Predicts potential threats to the long-term viability of these resources resulting from increasing development pressures, climate change, and shifts in land use; and
4. Assess the effectiveness of existing measures to protect and preserve important agricultural and forestry land for future generations.

2. Key Findings & Issues

Sorrento does not currently have active commercial farms, and no land is enrolled in the Farmland or Open Space Tax Programs. Agricultural activity has been largely absent from the town since the early 20th century, but the presence of about 630 acres of soils classified as prime or of statewide importance suggests potential for future small-scale or diversified agriculture if supported and preserved. While farming is not a current land use, it remains a valued part of the town's heritage and may be an opportunity area with appropriate land use planning and conservation tools.

Forests are the dominant land cover in Sorrento, comprising approximately 90% of the town's total land area. Although forestry is not a major sector of the local economy, the town maintains a modest level of forest management. As of 2023, five parcels totaling 273 acres—approximately 11% of Sorrento's land area—were enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Program.

Despite the ecological and scenic importance of Sorrento's forests and open lands, the town lacks local regulations specifically aimed at protecting productive farmland or forestland. The Land Use Ordinance focuses on general development and shoreland standards, and current protections rely on state-level programs. As a result, land conversion and fragmentation—particularly from residential and seasonal development—pose an ongoing threat. Many forested parcels are privately owned and lack permanent protections, making them vulnerable to future subdivision or development, especially as properties change ownership.

Climate change introduces additional risks, including increased storm intensity, drought, and pest and disease pressures, which threaten forest health and productivity. Agricultural soils may also be

impacted by erosion or shifting seasonal conditions. These environmental changes could further reduce the viability of working lands without proactive management and support.

3. Community Engagement

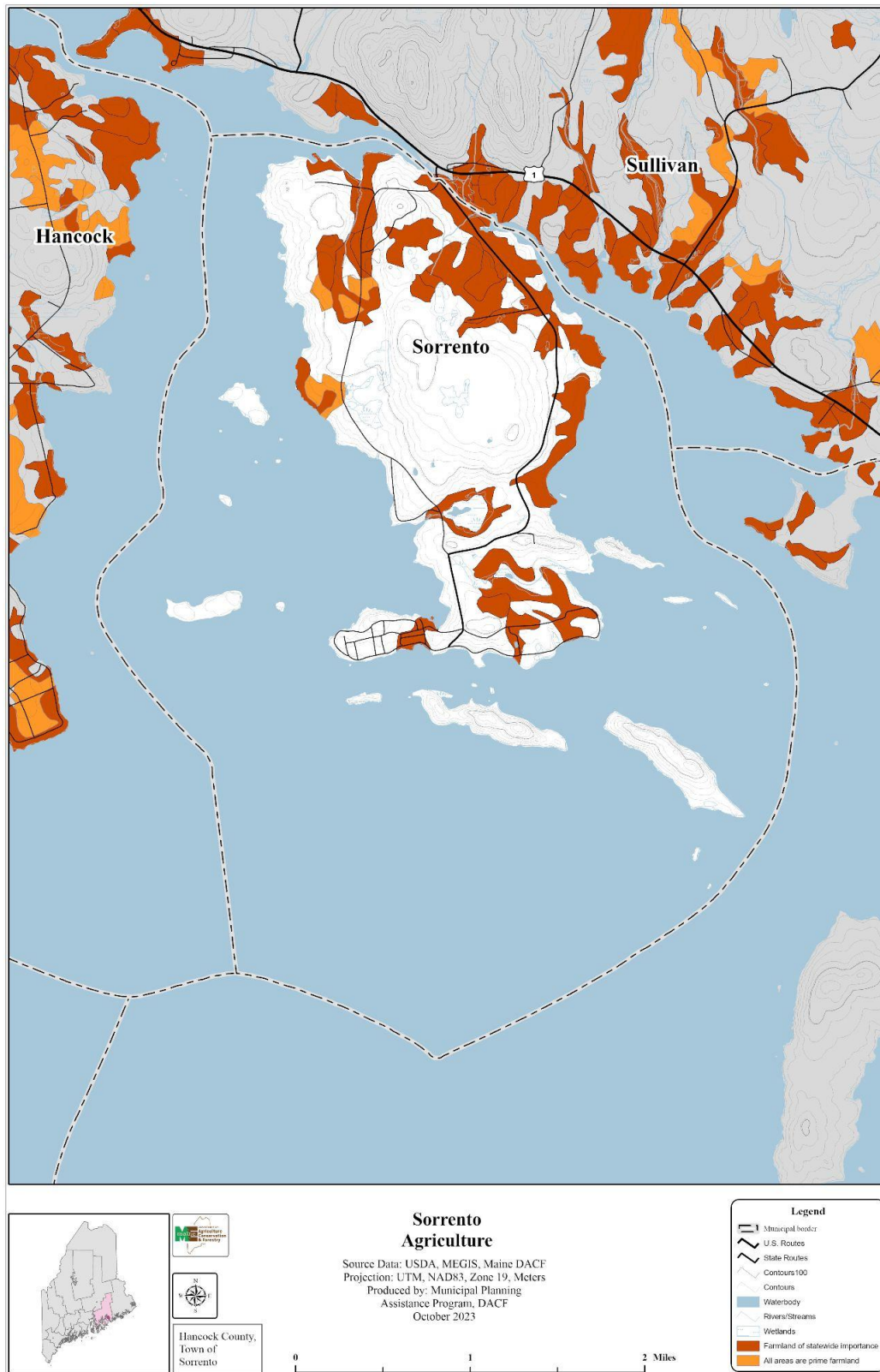
Most respondents favor that agriculture (51%) and forestry (45%) should be limited to designated areas of the Town.

4. Agricultural Resources

4.1. Soils & Land Cover

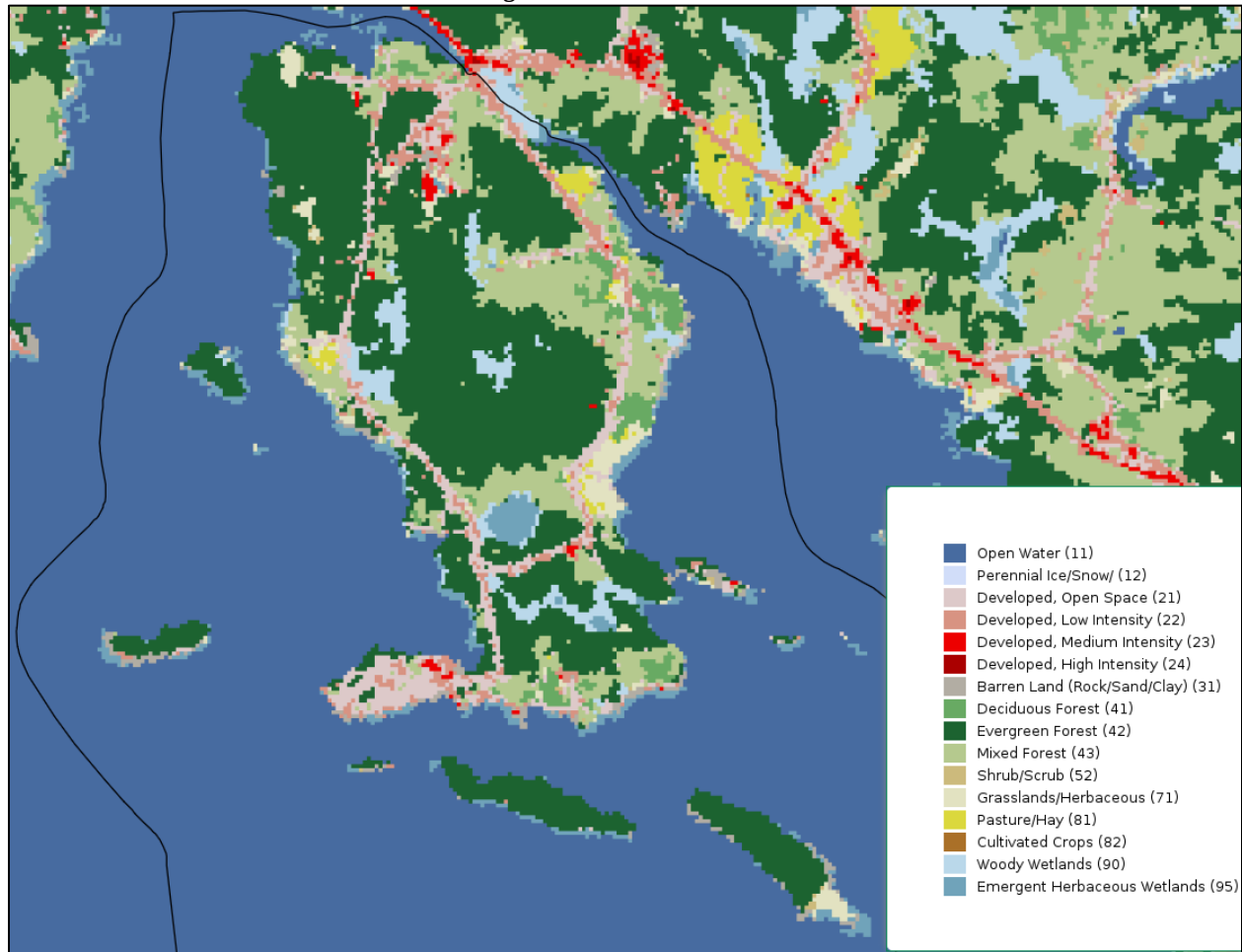
Only a small portion of Sorrento's soils have been rated by the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as prime farmland soils—soils that are considered the most suitable for agriculture but may not necessarily be farmed. Soils of Statewide Importance refers to soils that have a more modest potential yield. Sorrento has 45.26 acres of prime farmland soils and 584.62 acres of farmland soils of statewide importance. Agricultural soils account for about 25% of the Town's total land area of about 2,561 acres.

Figure H-1: Sorrento Agricultural Soils



The figure below shows 2024 crop-specific land cover for Sorrento; this data is produced by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service using satellite imagery and agricultural ground reference data. These data show evergreen and mixed forest are the predominant cover types in town. The area classifications in this map are inexact and should be used as a starting point for further analysis and ground-truthing.

Figure H-2: Land Cover



Source: USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service

4.2. Farmland & Open Space Enrollment

Sorrento has no farms and, as of 2023, there were no lands enrolled in the Farm or Open Space Tax Program. The 1994 Comprehensive plan also recorded no farms or land in the Open Space program. The Farm and Open Space Act, similar to the Tree Growth law, allows owners of farmland to benefit from property tax reductions for parcels over five contiguous acres provided that certain conditions are met such as a minimum farm income requirement.

5. Forestry Resources

Forests are a defining feature of Sorrento's landscape, covering approximately 90% of the town's total land area. These forests contribute significantly to the town's ecological health, rural character, and natural beauty. According to the U.S. Geological Survey's National Land Cover Database, the dominant forest types in Sorrento include evergreen, mixed, and deciduous forests. Although The Town of Sorrento does not own or manage any public woodland, privately held forests remain a valued natural asset that support wildlife habitat, scenic quality, and informal recreational opportunities such as hiking, birdwatching, and nature observation.

Forests also play a critical role in providing ecosystem services—such as carbon sequestration, water quality protection, and flood mitigation—that help buffer the community against the impacts of climate change. Rising temperatures, increased frequency of droughts, and more intense storms may increase forests' susceptibility to pests, disease, and storm damage, threatening long-term forest health. These shifts could compromise both forest productivity and ecological resilience over time.

While there is currently no large-scale commercial logging in Sorrento, the presence of unprotected forestland means such activity could become more common in the future. Maintaining healthy forest cover will require monitoring climate-related risks, encouraging responsible forest management, and considering conservation strategies that protect the town's forest resources while supporting compatible land uses.

Figure H-3: Woodland Areas



5.1. Tree Growth Tax Use

The Tree Growth Tax Program provides information on Sorrento's forest resources. Similar to the Farm and Open Space Act, it allows qualifying forested parcels to be assessed as forest land rather than for potential development value. The program encourages landowners to keep property as productive woodlands and support Maine's wood products industry. To qualify, a parcel must have a minimum of 10 acres of forest land managed primarily for the production of commercial forest products, and the property owner must maintain a forest management and harvest plan.

If forest land no longer meets eligibility criteria or the owner withdraws from the program, a penalty is assessed. Depending upon the enrollment time of the parcel, the penalty is 20%-30% of the difference between the 100% Tree Growth value and the fair market value of the land.

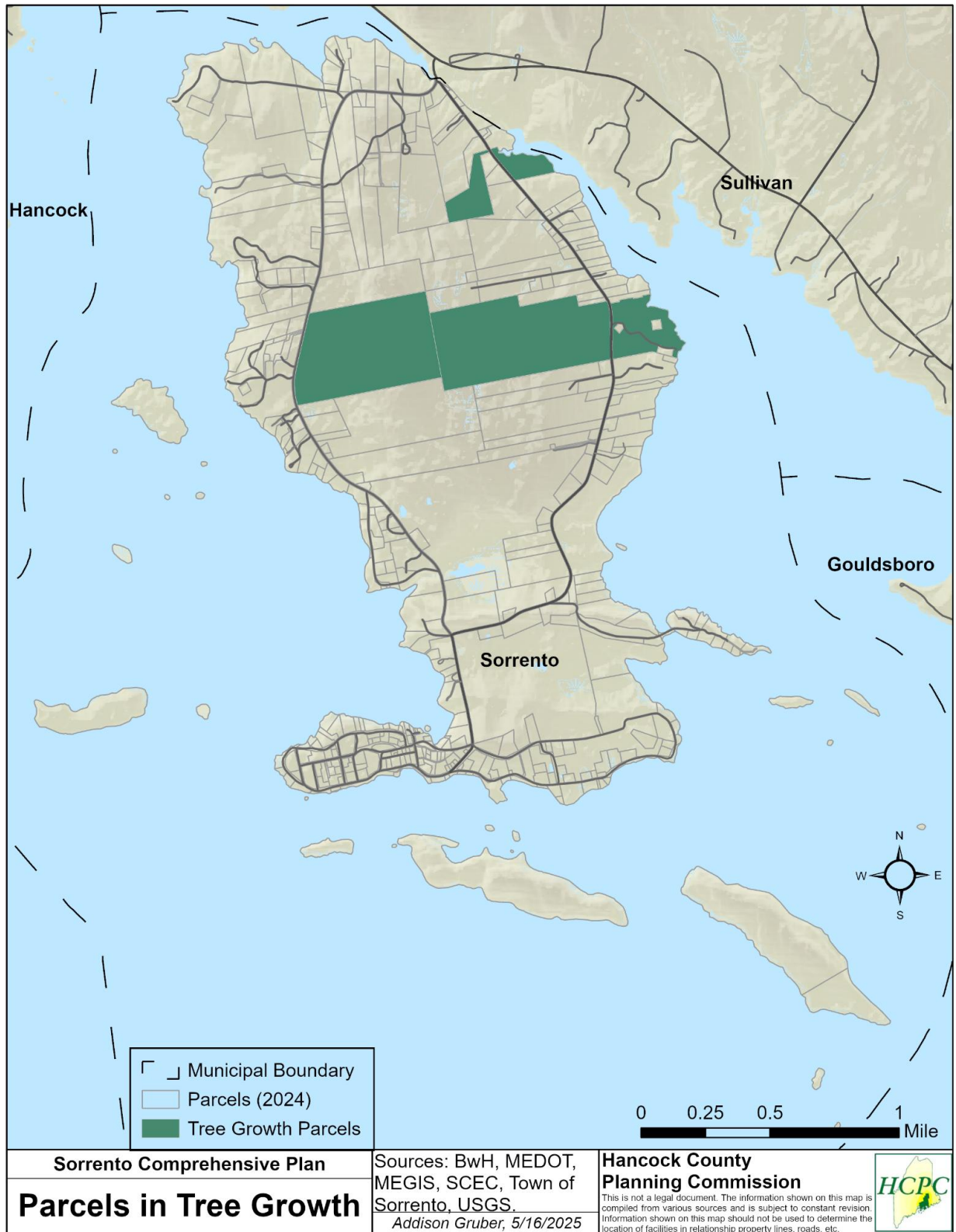
As of 2023, five parcels totaling 273 acres were enrolled in the Tree Growth program, down from seven parcels and 351 acres in 2009. The largest drop occurred between 2010 and 2011, when 81 acres were withdrawn from the program. Although total acreage declined in the early part of the period, enrollment been stable since 2014. This suggests that while initial participation declined—likely due to land sales, development pressures, landowner decisions to withdraw from management, or local conservation efforts—a core group of parcels has remained committed.

In terms of forest composition, softwood acreage has consistently made up the largest share of enrolled land, though it declined from 219 acres in 2009 to 192 acres by 2019. While Tree Growth parcels account for a relatively small share of Sorrento's land base, they represent an important component of the town's rural character, natural resource economy, and conservation landscape. Maintaining land in long-term forest management contributes to habitat connectivity, carbon sequestration, and the protection of open space. As land ownership continues to change over time, the Town may wish to consider strategies—such as landowner outreach or partnerships with conservation organizations—to encourage continued participation in the program.

Table H-1: Sorrento Tree Growth Parcels, 2009–2023

	Number of Parcels	Softwood Acres	Mixed Wood Acres	Hardwood Acres	Total Acres
2009	7	219	94	38	351
2010	7	219	94	38	351
2011	5	193	39	38	270
2012	5	193	39	38	270
2013	5	193	39	38	270
2014	5	196	51	23	270
2015	5	196	51	23	270
2016	5	196	51	23	270
2017	5	196	51	23	270
2018	5	196	51	23	270
2019	5	192	58	23	273
2020	5	192	58	23	273
2021	5	192	58	23	273
2022	5	192	58	23	273
2023	5	192	58	23	273

Figure H-4: Parcels in Tree Growth



Sorrento Comprehensive Plan

Parcels in Tree Growth

Hancock County Planning Commission

This is not a legal document. The information shown on this map is compiled from various sources and is subject to constant revision. Information shown on this map should not be used to determine the location of facilities in relationship property lines, roads, etc.

5.2. Timber Harvesting

Timber harvesting trends are shown in the table below. These data represent timber harvests that are subject to State reporting. Between 1990 and 2020, 654 acres of timber were harvested across 38 reporting events. The majority of this activity occurred during the early 2000s, with 321 acres harvested between 2000 and 2004 alone, nearly half of the total over the 30-year period.

Timber harvesting in Sorrento has primarily relied on selection harvesting, which accounted for over 90% of all harvested acres and reflects a low-impact, sustainable approach that retains overall forest structure. Shelterwood and clearcut harvesting were rare and largely confined to the 2000–2004 period, with only 39 acres and 12 acres, respectively, reported over the entire time span. No timber harvests during this period resulted in land use conversion, indicating that Sorrento’s forests have remained in productive use and have not been cleared for development. After a decline in activity during the late 2000s and early 2010s, timber harvesting increased again between 2015 and 2020, with 135 acres harvested exclusively through selection cutting. Overall, timber harvesting in Sorrento has been infrequent but consistent with sustainable forest management practices.

Table H-2: Timber Harvesting Trends, 1990–2020

	Selection Harvest, Acres	Shelterwood Harvest, Acres	Clearcut Harvest, Acres	Land Use Change, Acres	Total Harvest, Acres	Number of Reports
1990–1994	30	-	-	-	30	3
1995–1999	62	-	-	-	62	4
2000–2004	296	20	5	-	321	15
2005–2009	58	-	7	-	65	6
2010–2014	22	19	-	-	41	6
2015–2020	135	-	-	-	135	4
Total	603	39	12	-	654	38

Data compiled from Confidential Year End Landowner Reports to Maine Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. To protect landowner information, data is reported only when three or more landowner reports reported harvesting in the town.

5.3. Community Forestry & Agriculture

There are currently no formal community agriculture or forestry initiatives in Sorrento, but some home gardeners sell produce at roadside stands at the entry to Sorrento or neighboring towns along Route 1. Small, individually owned and maintained home gardens are supported by the community, but there is no consensus or widespread support regarding larger-scale community agriculture or forestry initiatives.

6. Challenges to Farmland and Forestry

Although Sorrento has limited active agricultural land, its extensive forest cover and scattered open lands remain vital to the town’s rural character, ecological health, and long-term sustainability. However, these working landscapes face a number of ongoing and emerging threats that may compromise their future viability for forestry, farming, and conservation purposes.

6.1. Land conversion and fragmentation

One of the most significant threats is land conversion and fragmentation, particularly from low-density residential development. As demand for housing—especially seasonal or second homes—increases, larger tracts of undeveloped land may be subdivided or converted for residential use. Even modest development can fragment the landscape, making it less suitable for forestry operations or future agricultural use. Many of Sorrento’s forested parcels are privately owned and lack permanent protections, leaving them vulnerable to future development pressures. As land changes hands—particularly from older landowners who may not have succession plans in place—there is a heightened risk of these parcels being withdrawn from productive use.

6.2. Economic Viability

Another challenge is the limited economic viability of farming and forestry in the region. Sorrento has little active farmland, and while some forest parcels are enrolled in the Tree Growth Tax Program, there is no large-scale commercial forestry operation. The limited local market for farm and forest products, combined with the costs of management, often makes development a more financially attractive option for landowners.

6.3. Climate Change

Climate change also presents a growing threat to forest health. Rising temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns, increased drought, and more frequent and intense storms can increase the risk of damage from pests, disease, and windthrow. These changes may reduce forest productivity, increase management costs, and alter the composition and health of native forest ecosystems. Agricultural soils, though limited in extent, may also be impacted by erosion, soil degradation, or shifting growing conditions.

6.4. Lack of Public Awareness and Engagement

Finally, the town faces a general lack of public awareness and engagement regarding the long-term value of its forest and open lands. There is a consensus among residents that the town’s forests and open land contribute to the character of the town and its scenic beauty, but there is no consensus regarding the value of those contributions, whether to actively preserve them, or how to preserve them. Without broad community recognition of the ecological, scenic, and economic benefits these landscapes provide, it may be difficult to build support for policies or programs aimed at protecting them.

Addressing these threats will require a combination of voluntary land conservation, landowner outreach, expanded use of current-use taxation programs, and planning tools that guide development away from the town’s remaining forested and open spaces. Promoting long-term stewardship of working lands will be essential to sustaining Sorrento’s rural identity and environmental resilience.

7. Protection of Productive Farm and Forest Lands

At present, the Town of Sorrento does not have local regulations specifically aimed at protecting productive farmland or forestland. The Town's Land Use Ordinance focuses on general land use, shoreland zoning, and construction permitting, but does not contain provisions dedicated to agricultural or forestry land protection beyond what is required under state law.

Sorrento relies on state-level programs and regulations to provide limited protections for farm and forest lands. The town follows the Maine Forest Service's statewide standards for timber harvesting within shoreland zones and applies the state's Shoreland Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. These frameworks offer environmental protections near water resources but do not address broader land conservation or working land preservation objectives.

Some landowners participate in the Tree Growth Tax Program and Farm and Open Space Tax Program, both of which offer property tax reductions in exchange for maintaining land in productive use. However, these programs are voluntary and revocable—landowners can withdraw their parcels at any time, often resulting in development or land fragmentation. Therefore, these programs provide only temporary, non-regulatory protection.

To support long-term preservation of its working lands and open space, the Town may wish to consider strengthening its land use policies, expanding outreach about current-use tax programs, and exploring partnerships with conservation organizations that serve the broader region.

Importantly, Sorrento benefits from the active involvement of regional land trusts in protecting its natural and working landscapes. The Frenchman Bay Conservancy (FBC) has established a significant presence in the community. Notably, 179 acres in the eastern portion of the southern peninsula are permanently protected under a conservation easement held by FBC. This easement helps preserve important forested lands and supports the long-term conservation of ecological and scenic values in Sorrento. While there are no town-managed conservation lands or formal agricultural protection zones, partnerships with land trusts like FBC offer a key tool for securing long-term protection of open space, forestland, and potential farmland.

Moving forward, the Town may wish to consider expanding its collaboration with land trusts, encouraging broader participation in current-use tax programs, and exploring options for voluntary conservation easements to support the long-term viability of its natural resource lands.

8. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Sustain and Steward Sorrento's Agricultural and Forest Resource			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Support Sustainable Land Use and Resource-Based Activities	*Limit non-residential development in critical rural areas (if designated) to resource-based businesses, home occupations, and low-impact uses such as nature tourism and outdoor recreation.	Planning Board	2 years
	*Amend land use ordinances to require subdivision or commercial development in critical rural areas (if applicable) to maintain areas with prime farmland soils as open space to the greatest extent practicable.	Planning Board	2 years
Ensure Best Practices in Regulation Development	*Consult with the Maine Forest Service district forester when developing or amending any land use ordinances related to forestry or timber harvesting.	Planning Board, Maine Forest Service	2 years
	*Consult with the Soil and Water Conservation District when drafting or updating ordinances that impact agricultural land use or soil conservation practices.	Planning Board, HCWSD	2 years

Chapter I: Climate Change

1. Purpose

As a coastal community in Maine, climate change will have impacts on Sorrento. This chapter assesses projected impacts on the community, including infrastructure, human habitation, coastal and inland habitats, historical and archeological assets, and economic and future development. Climate change is a key cross-cutting theme in all the chapters; highlighted here are findings and strategies given their critical importance. Specifically, this chapter:

1. Examines data in Maine related to changes in temperature, precipitation, sea level rise and coastal flooding, drought, and wildfire;
2. Analyzes the potential effects of climate change on transportation and other infrastructure, public facilities and infrastructure, natural resources, the local economy, and future development in Sorrento; and
3. Makes recommendations for actions to adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts in Sorrento, with a correlation to the Town's Capital Improvement Plan to ensure significant expenditures such as engineering plans and construction projects related to mitigating future conditions like sea level rise, extreme rain, and drought are captured in future budget planning.

2. Key Findings & Issues

As is expanded upon in the Current Conditions and Trends section below, Sorrento is susceptible to an increase in sea level rise, storm surge, and coastal flooding, as well as an increase in rainfall precipitation and subsequent interior flooding. As such, the capacity of current stormwater, flood management, and coastal infrastructure to handle the increased volume of water and to minimize risk to residents, businesses, and properties should be considered. Sorrento's transportation infrastructure is particularly at risk of failing stormwater and flood management infrastructure, including Ocean Avenue, a town-owned road.

Sorrento and Sullivan are conducting a joint vulnerability assessment which will evaluate current and projected flooding and subsequent critical transportation and waterfront infrastructure, property, natural resource, and socioeconomic impacts. A particular focus will be placed on vulnerable transportation networks, waterfront infrastructure, and community assets highlighted in recent storms. This project will quantify the effects of these vulnerabilities on people, property, and the economy if adaptation steps are not taken.

Sorrento, like other communities in Maine, is also susceptible to extreme heat and extreme cold temperature variations, which can be harmful to public health, the environment, and natural resources. Extended periods of heat with no precipitation has also led to drought-like conditions, which can trigger wildfire. In addition to interior and coastal flooding, Sorrento has begun planning

for these climate related impacts as they understand how these conditions can burden the livelihood of residents, visitors, and the workforce.

3. Community Engagement

In Sorrento, the impacts of coastal flooding, erosion, and storm events have been brought up and discussed frequently in visioning sessions and focus group events. In the Comprehensive Plan survey, in which the majority of responses were collected before the 2023-2024 winter storms, almost 80% of respondents said they had experienced or observed coastal erosion in the last three years, and almost 70% said they had experienced increased property damage from storm events and more frequent utility outages.

In the Transportation and Climate Change community conversations, the majority of the discussion focused on concerns over the impacts of sea level rise and flooding on critical transportation infrastructure. State-owned Route 185 on the Sullivan/Sorrento town line was a major concern, as it is the only access point in and out of Sorrento. This intersection between Route 1 and Route 185 was inaccessible during one of the 2024 storms, cutting Sorrento off from vital services located outside of the Town. Ocean Avenue, a town-owned road, was also brought up as a major concern as it sustained significant damage during the 2023-2024 storm events.

In addition to the survey and focus groups, community engagement related to climate change was also captured as part of Sorrento's enrollment into the State's Community Resilience Partnership. As part of this process, the Town created a Climate Resilience Committee, which will continue to work and engage with the community on efforts related to climate resilience and adaptation, as well as natural hazard mitigation. The committee was formed in the Spring of 2024 and enrolled in the partnership in the Fall of 2024.

A Community Resilience Self-Evaluation was completed by the Town, with input from residents, to help outline Sorrento's approach to increasing resilience to natural hazards and climate change impacts. One of the top priorities revealed through the self-evaluation process was to move forward with a vulnerability assessment, analyzing the risk of Town infrastructure, facilities, and vulnerable populations. This assessment will help to identify adaptation measures designed to mitigate risk and provide an estimated cost and potential sources of funding to complete the projects. Other priorities mentioned in the self-assessment include energy efficiency improvements to the community building, as well as more consistent, improved code enforcement for new development in vulnerable areas. Members from this committee have also begun to participate in conversations with other Schoodic Peninsula towns on how resilience projects might be conducted at a multitown scale.

4. Current Conditions and Trends

4.1. Sea Level Rise, Storm Surge, and Coastal Flooding

Sea level is 7.5 inches higher than in early 20th century Maine, and the rate of sea level rise has nearly doubled in the past 30 years. Over the past 30 years, the rate of sea level rise was 1.4 inches per decade, while the previous rate was 0.7 inches per decade. Sea level rise rates in Maine remain similar to the global averages for both short- and long-term rates.

Record-high sea levels were measured along the coast in 2023 and 2024. 2023 set a new record-high annual average sea level at all three of Maine's long-term tide gauges and also set numerous new monthly average sea level records. In 2023, the record for highest monthly average water level was broken at all long-term gauges for at least six months out of the year, with all remaining months except one falling within the top three highest levels for each month.

The Maine Climate Council asks the State and its municipalities to commit to preparing for sea level rise at a minimum of 1.1 to 1.8 feet by 2050 and 3.0 to 4.6 feet by 2100. Given Sorrento's proximity to the coast and previous damage as a result of storms, it is recommended that the Town prepare for significantly higher sea level rise scenarios which forecast 3 feet by 2050 and 8.8 feet by 2100. As such, this plan will include goals and objectives to help meet this recommendation and request of the State's Climate Council.

It is important to consider the effects of storm surges and flooding when managing the effects of sea level rise on Sorrento infrastructure. The real risks of storm surges in the context of sea level rise occur when storm surge events coincide with high tides. High tide levels have risen in recent years as a result of sea level rise and are projected to continue to do so. This will increase flood risk in coastal Maine towns such as Sorrento.

The combination of high tide and storm surge (called storm tide) on January 10 and 13 of 2024 were not historically unprecedented; however, rising sea levels were a contributing factor in causing these storms to break records. An increase in sea level, in combination with high tides and storm surge, contributed to severe coastal flooding during the back-to-back January 2024 storms. During these January storms, Sorrento sustained historic damage to road infrastructure that has yet to be repaired, over a year later.

4.2. Precipitation and Extreme Storms

Maine has increasingly experienced more intense and frequent precipitation events, with statewide annual precipitation (rainfall and snowfall) increasing by 6 inches since 1895. Heavy storms of 2 to 4 inches of precipitation are becoming more frequent, which increases the probability that floods that will erode infrastructure and degrade water quality in ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, and coastal areas. Precipitation variability between years is increasing and has recently produced impactful seasonal extremes. For example, the 2020 growing season was the driest on record, while summer

2023 was the wettest. This increasingly variable precipitation, including droughts and extreme weather events, will likely cause harm to vegetation and natural habitats in Sorrento.

Extreme storm events also cause power outages, with the majority of Maine's electrical grid located above ground and therefore susceptible to downed poles and lines from winds, heavy precipitation, and tree damage. Extended power outages can cause economic burdens, as well as impact residents who rely on electricity to support their public health. Without a generator, extended outages during periods of extreme cold or heat, can be detrimental to residents. A town-owned heating/cooling center, described in more detail in this chapter, is one means to help alleviate this risk to residents. In addition, Sorrento is located within Versant Power's jurisdiction. Versant has been engaged in grid and climate planning work and meeting with local communities to discuss their efforts and initiatives to become more resilient. More information on Versant's efforts can be found on their Grid and Climate Planning webpage - <https://www.versantpower.com/about/environmental/grid-climate-planning>. It is recommended that the Town review the efforts and initiatives Versant has conducted as part of their grid and climate planning efforts and reach out to the Versant team to open the lines of communication between the municipality and the power company.

4.3. Wildfire

In addition to a greater number of extreme precipitation events, Maine has been experiencing more short-term dry periods, with extreme drought occurring in 2016, 2002, 2020 and 2022. As seen in Chapter F: Natural Resources, there is a significant amount of forested land in Sorrento, which could present increased risk during dry periods. This danger is exacerbated by the difficulty Sorrento and many other communities in rural areas of Maine have in maintaining their volunteer fire departments.

4.4. Extreme Temperatures

The past four years in Maine (2020-2023) have ranked among the ten warmest on record. Across the globe, record high temperatures were set by a large margin in 2023. Temperature projections for Maine are for a 2–4°F increase by 2050 and up to 10°F by 2100. Temperature projections worldwide and for Maine are based on modeled Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs), which define a range of possible greenhouse emissions based on estimates of future energy use and development worldwide.

Maine residents are vulnerable to extreme heat as public facilities and households currently utilize low rates of air conditioning due to the rarity of severe heat experienced in years past. Community needs for the future could include additional air conditioning, community cooling centers, increased tree cover, and public health monitoring and education.

In the winter months, increased storm frequency and storm severity result in power outages, sometimes lasting days. Residents who rely on electricity to heat their homes and get water, and who do not have a generator, become extremely vulnerable to cold temperatures. The Town is planning to renovate the Community Building to make it more efficient and function as a warming/cooling center for residents during extreme weather events and in 2024 received a grant to install new insulation.

4.5. Climate Migration

Wildfires in the western United States and increased flooding events due to hurricanes and storms along the Gulf Coast and southern Atlantic coastal regions have contributed significantly to increased climate induced human migration. The Schoodic Peninsula may not always be seen as a place of climate refuge, but trends show that people move to a place that has other types of climate impacts from what they are currently experiencing.

The Maine Climate Council has a goal of developing a stronger understanding of potential migration patterns and population shifts. More information is needed to enable projections of climatic impacts on population, including settlement patterns and migration to and within the state. This information—gathered using demographic projections, build-out scenarios, and real estate data—would provide a better understanding of the impacts of shifting populations and settlement patterns on a wide range of human systems including housing, transport, electrical grids, healthcare systems, tourism and tax revenues. The Town of Sorrento, with assistance from organizations such as the Hancock County Planning Commission, should monitor this data and trends once they become more readily available.

5. Sorrento Infrastructure and Habitats

5.1. Town Infrastructure and Transportation

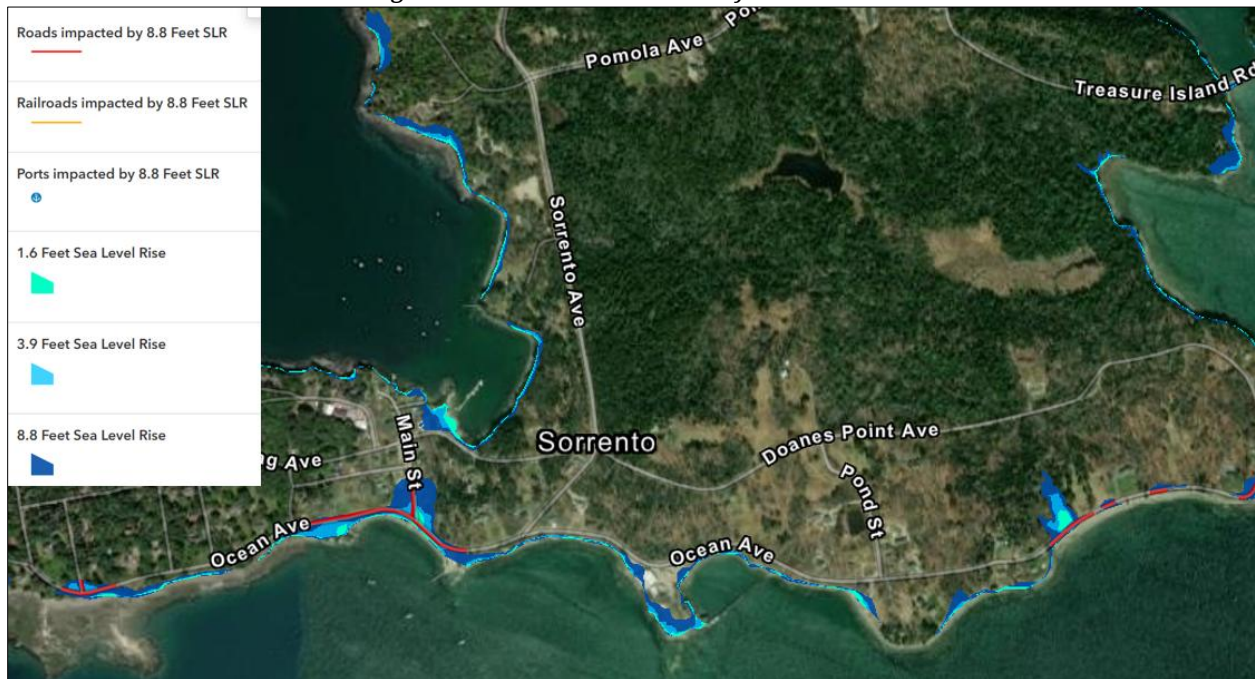
The Town of Sorrento is actively considering sea level rise, storm surge and flood projections, and stormwater runoff as outlined in this chapter, and their impacts on Town infrastructure and assets.

In Sorrento, the storms of Winter 2023/2024 highlighted the vulnerability of Ocean Avenue, a municipal road directly adjacent to the shoreline. Ocean Avenue leads to Sorrento's only points of access to Frenchman Bay, which supports commercial fishing activities and a regional lobster processing facility, as well as provides access to a public pier and a number of private residences. While Sorrento has limited economic activity, its economy is intrinsically linked with its coastal character. The Town's long-standing businesses (lobster and bait-fishing) both revolve around the waterfront. The handful of other town businesses provide local services that cater to residents, both year-round and seasonal. Ocean Avenue and Sorrento's shoreline are critical to sustaining the Town's economy.

Ocean Avenue and Nautilus Road are two town-owned roads that have been identified as being severely impacted by the winter 2023/2024 storms. A vulnerability assessment is being conducted as this plan is being written, which will help to identify all roads susceptible to sea level rise and flooding.

As seen in the figures below, Ocean Avenue has multiple vulnerable locations that will be threatened with just 1.6 feet of projected sea level rise. The only entrance to Sorrento, East Side Road off of Route 1, will also be vulnerable to just 3.9 feet of projected sea level rise.

Figure I-1: Vulnerable Road Infrastructure



Source: Maine Climate Impacts Dashboard

Figure I-2: Vulnerable Road Infrastructure



Source: Maine Climate Impacts Dashboard

Much of the coastal infrastructure in Hancock County consists of underperforming culverts and stormwater drainage systems. Many coastal culverts throughout Sorrento face either partial or complete failure during major tidal inundation events and during heavy rainstorms. Small streams that are networked throughout the Town flood during high precipitation events, which result in failing culverts and flooded roads.

The vulnerability assessment that is underway with the Town of Sullivan will portray drainage and transportation infrastructure (both state- and town-owned) that are susceptible to sea level rise and flooding. Sorrento should prepare to consider and prioritize the recommendations resulting from the vulnerability assessment and integrate them into their Capital Improvement Plan in order to implement these infrastructure adaptation projects over time. In addition, the Town should communicate the results of the town-owned culvert vulnerability assessment with the MaineDOT and continue to monitor MaineDOT's evaluation and potential adaptation of vulnerable State-owned culverts located within the town's jurisdiction. As of writing this plan, it is anticipated that the State-owned culvert on East Side Road is expected to be replaced due to increased runoff from upland areas. However, additional communication with the MaineDOT should remain a priority.

As mentioned above, Sorrento is impacted by sea level rise, storm surge, and coastal flooding, in addition to interior stormwater runoff. Based on preliminary sea level rise maps (shown above), major Town assets that will be threatened as a result of sea level rise and subsequent coastal flooding are the following:

- Town public beaches
- Town dock/pier and floating dock
- Town boat ramp
- Ready Seafood
- The golf course

6. Floodplain Management

According to Sorrento's Floodplain Ordinance, Sorrento is a participating community in the National Flood Insurance Program, with a current effective flood map date of July 20, 2016. It is the intent of the Town to require the recognition and evaluation of flood hazards in all official actions relating to land use in the floodplain areas having special flood hazards (i.e. the 100-year floodplain and the 500-year floodplain). The Floodplain Management Ordinance requires builders to obtain a Flood Hazard Development Permit to ensure all proposed developments are reasonably safe from flooding and to determine that all pertinent requirements of Article V1 (Development Standards) have been or will be met.

7. Future Development

Sorrento's Site Plan Review Process includes criteria related to development within the floodplain and the shoreland zone (per State requirements). No additional land use development controls that would mitigate climate change's impacts upon any future development (residential, commercial, or industrial) exist at this time. Sorrento could consider providing guidance or educational materials to developers on climate change. The Town could also consider incorporating modified or additional land use standards into their land use ordinance and site plan review process that would help to mitigate damage from climate impacts. Guidance for municipalities who are interested in pursuing regulations and policies that promote resilience are available for review. An example is "Municipal Guidance for Coastal Resilience: Model Ordinance Language for Maine Municipalities"

developed by the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission and FB Environmental Associates. Sorrento could also consider developing a stormwater management plan, capital improvement plan, or economic development plan that considers climate change impacts and projections.

8. Marine Habitat

Climate change will continue to have significant impacts on marine resources. As in many coastal Maine towns, harvesting lobsters and bait fishing are the principal focus of Sorrento's small commercial fishing fleet, with some boats also tending aquaculture farms that grow oysters and seaweed. While the lobster resource is currently viewed as being stable, there are substantial risks on the horizon due to the uncertain effects of warming water temperatures and increased acidification of the water. The warming ocean water has also led to an increase in invasive species, like green crabs, and the colonization of lobster gear and sea scallop habitat by native sea squirts. Northward shifts in mid-Atlantic species are likely to result in established local populations in the future. In the short term, species interactions and/or competition may threaten inshore lobster populations.

9. Wastewater and Drinking Water

The Town does not have a wastewater treatment facility but does have a public water source (see Chapter E: Water Resources chapter). Those not connected to this system are entirely dependent on private wells for their drinking water supplies. With continued development activity, there is heightened risk that unsustainable volumes of water may be extracted, leading to dry wells or saltwater intrusion. Sorrento residents have also faced issues with location of development and wells, having to dig hundreds of feet to reach water. Future climate change, to the extent it results in lower rainfall amounts and drought – even seasonal, could exacerbate this emerging issue.

10. Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resources

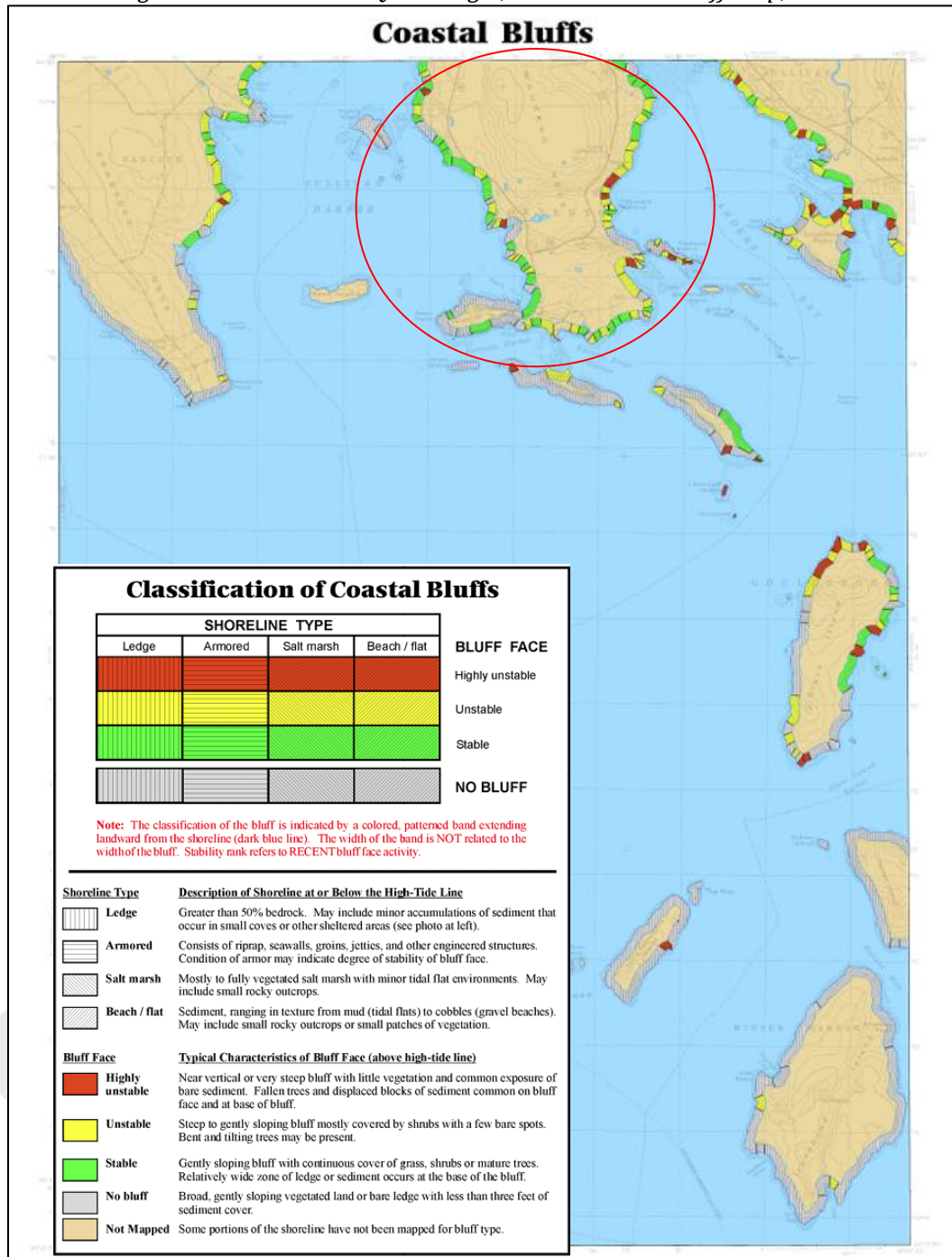
Increased variability in precipitation as well as temperature will impact Sorrento's farms and woodlots. Small home-farms and gardens are an important part of Sorrento's identity and culture. It will be important for the Town to have an up to date understanding of how climate change may be impacting the viability of these resources.

The various impacts of climate change create a need to understand its direct and indirect impacts on existing plant and animal species in Sorrento. Fortunately, there are regional, State, and nonprofit partners with whom Sorrento citizens and officials can call on for information relevant to the Town. An evaluation of threats to natural resources in Sorrento may be included at a high level in the climate vulnerability assessment.

11. Coastal Bluffs

Coastal environments are dynamic and subject to continuous change. Gravitational processes of creep, slumping, and occasional landsliding modify the shape of coastal bluffs. Rising sea level along Maine's coast allows storms and coastal flooding to reach further inland and erode sediments at the base of the bluffs. The slope, shape, and amount of vegetation covering a coastal bluff and the adjacent shoreline are directly related to the susceptibility of the bluff face to ongoing erosion. Understanding the processes that erode bluffs can help determine what solutions are appropriate to reduce future rates of property loss. The map below shows the shoreline type and relative stability of bluffs along Sorrento's coast. The colored categories correspond to field conditions when the map was made. Conditions have changed within the last few years. According to the map below, Sorrento has 1 mile of highly unstable bluff and 2.8 miles of unstable bluff. However, since the map was produced bluffs along Doanes Point Avenue and Ocean Avenue on the southeastern part of Sorrento have been revealed to be highly unstable.

Figure I-3: Bar Harbor Quadrangle, Maine Coastal Bluff Map, 2005



Source: Maine Geological Survey

12. Historic Resources

Currently, Sorrento has no properties listed on the National Historic District website, but there are older, historic buildings in Town that hold local significance. These buildings include the Church of the Redeemer and the Sorrento Library. While sea level rise does not pose a serious threat to these

properties, increased wind as a result of more severe storms adds risk of trees falling and causing damage. Additionally, archaeological resources, such as shell middens, in Sorrento have been affected by storm surge events and coastal flooding. One midden located by the Town Green on Ocean Avenue was exposed due to the 2023-2024 storm surge. It now has signage indicating it is a preserved area by the State.

13. Economy

The repercussions of a changing climate will affect those at the most local level but will have ripple effects statewide and nationwide. Migration will have an impact on housing and rentals. Rising sea levels will have an impact on the working and recreational waterfronts. Invasion of new species, from increasing ocean temperatures and acidity, impacts local harvestable species and marine industries. Local lobstermen have commented on the limited harvest of lobsters in the 2024 summer. In addition, sea squirts are foaling gear and competing with mussel spat thread attachment.

For Sorrento, the Town is primarily a residential and seasonal community with limited economic activity. Historically, the Town's economy is intrinsically linked with its coastal character. The town's long standing businesses: bait fishing, lobster and shellfish harvest and boat storage and repair revolve around the waterfront. Losing the waterfront as a result of climate change would be detrimental to Sorrento's small economy and year-round working population. Evidence of climate change's impact on the small business economy was apparent after the 2024 winter storms. Ready Seafood's Wharf was destroyed in the storms and later rebuilt; costly infrastructure imperative to the business's functionality. Part of Sorrento's economy is also tourism in the form of summer residents, and any deviation away from the coastal character and natural resources can harm this industry and visitation. The recommendations noted in other sections would help to alleviate impacts on the local economy if implemented (i.e. transportation adaptation projects, working with partners on adapting to climate change, waterfront adaptation projects, etc.)

14. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Implement adaptation practices to address climate change impacts already occurring and those anticipated over the next decade.

Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Strengthen Climate Adaptation Planning and Coordination	Continue participation in the State's Community Resilience Partnership to access technical support and funding opportunities for local climate adaptation initiatives.	Climate Resilience Committee, HCPC	Ongoing
	Finalize the Sullivan-Sorrento vulnerability assessment, implement recommendations, and communicate results to relevant State agencies such as the MaineDOT.	HCPC, Musson Group, Town Manager, Road Commissioner	1 Year
	Participate in and help strengthen the Schoodic Area League of Towns (SALT) to coordinate shared climate strategies and resilience planning across the microregion.	SALT, Selectboard	Ongoing
	Integrate large-scale adaptation projects into the Town's Capital Improvement Plan to ensure long-term investment in infrastructure resilience, including stormwater systems, culverts, and shoreline protection.	Climate Resilience Committee, HCPC, Selectboard	Ongoing
	Apply for grant funding to support a climate resilience fellow or intern who can help advance projects initiated through the Community Resilience Partnership and manage data, outreach, and planning coordination.	Climate Resilience Committee, HCPC	1 year
Improve Outreach, Local Policies, and Development Standards	Review land use ordinances to identify changes that reduce vulnerability to extreme weather events, sea level rise, and flooding. Consider updates that address setbacks, elevation standards, erosion control, and climate-resilient design.	Planning Board, HCPC, Climate Resilience Committee	2 years
	Meet with Versant Power to understand regional climate preparedness goals and explore alignment with local infrastructure and energy planning needs.	Climate Resilience Committee	1 year
	Provide public education on the feasibility of solar panels, battery storage, and generators as backup power options for homes and critical facilities.	Climate Resilience Committee	Ongoing

Chapter J: Transportation

1. Purpose

Transportation and mobility are vital to a community's economic prosperity, health, and social cohesion. The term “transportation” describes the act of moving something or someone, whereas the term “mobility” describes the ability of a person to move or be moved. This section will:

1. Identify and profile Sorrento’s roadway and transportation systems in terms of extent, condition, and use;
2. Assess the adequacy of those systems in handling current demand;
3. Consider whether transportation improvements will be needed to adequately accommodate the demands generated by potential future development, and;
4. Consider areas where sustainable transportation alternatives and long-term cost savings in infrastructure management may exist.

2. Key Findings and Issues

As a small, self-contained peninsula community, Sorrento has roughly 13 miles of public roadway and experiences moderate traffic compared with surrounding communities. State-maintained Route 185 is the town’s sole entrance road, connecting the tip of Sorrento to the Route 1 corridor along the Schoodic National Scenic Byway. Route 185, otherwise known as East Side Road, forms a loop with West Shore Road connecting much of the community. Sorrento also includes eight islands, which are accessible via boat.

The continued increase in seasonal traffic, speeding enforcement through town, and the noise and safety of truck traffic are among issues of concern. The town does not currently have any sidewalks or active transportation infrastructure, and accessibility via public transportation is minimal. Route 185 on the Sullivan/Sorrento town line is a major concern in the face of climate change, as it is the only entry point into Sorrento.

3. Street Network

There are a total of 13.33 miles of public roads in Sorrento, of which 3.38 miles are state roads and 9.95 miles are local roads. Roughly 12 miles of private dirt roads, many of which are seasonal or provide access to residences.

Federal Functional Classification (FFC):

FCC describes the functionality and geographical characteristics of public streets and highways based on the character of service they are intended to provide. This classification reflects how the highway provides the ability for transportation. Route 185 is classified as a collector, while all other public roads are classified as local. There are no arterial roads in Sorrento.

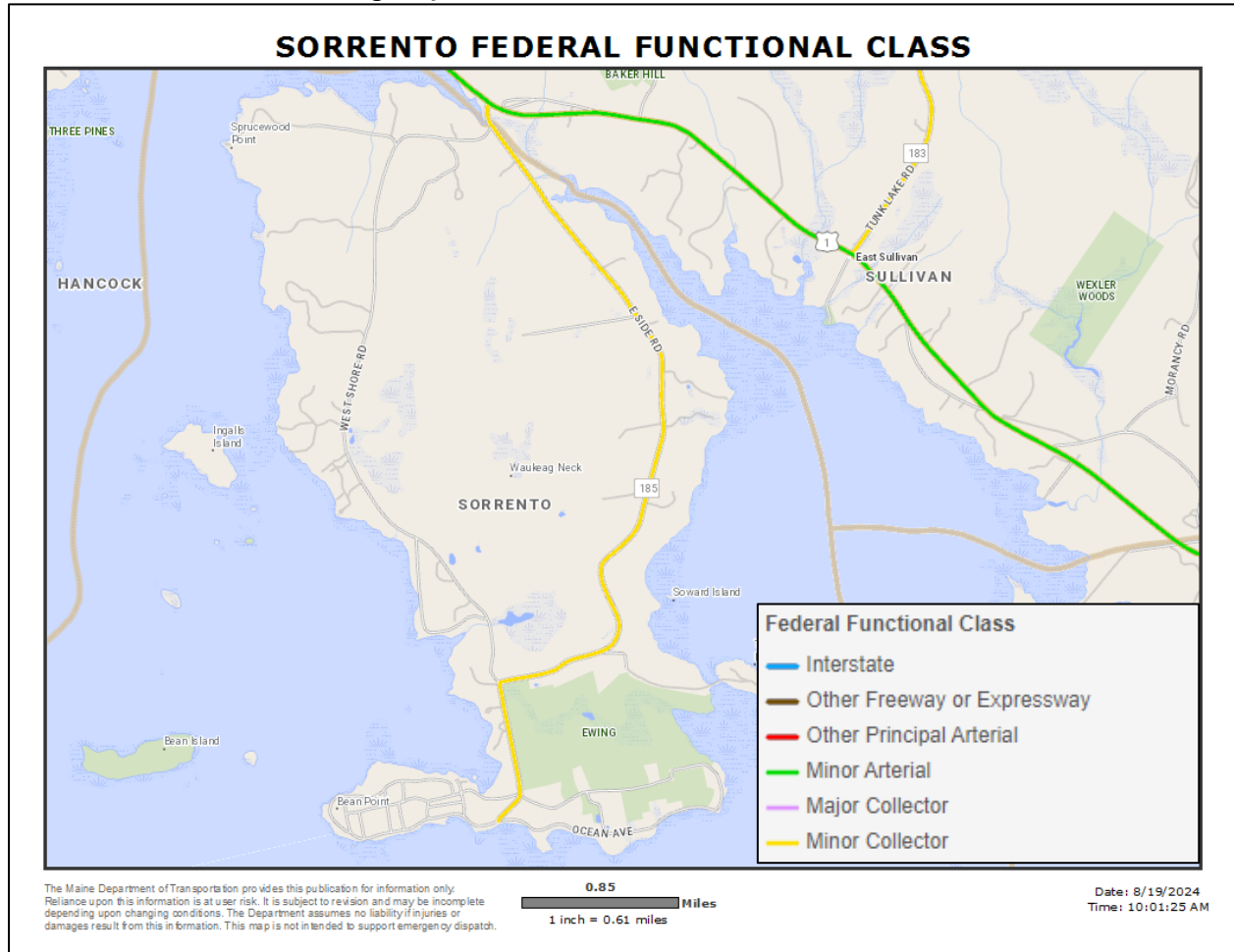
Private roads, defined as roads serving three or more dwellings, are not classified in the FCC. Roads serving two or fewer dwellings are defined as driveways.

Table J-1: Federal Functional Classification (FFC) Characteristics and Roadway Miles by Class

FFC	Subclassification	Types of Service	Typical Speed	Traffic Volume (vehicles/day)	Miles in Sorrento	% of Total Miles
Arterial	Principal and Minor Arterial Roads	Connect major trip generators (larger cities, recreational areas, etc)	High speed	5,000-30,000	0	0.0%
Collector	Urban Collectors, Major Rural Collectors, Minor Rural Collectors	Support traffic within a town or group of small towns or disconnected neighborhoods	35-45 mph	1,000-5,000	3.38	13.3%
Local Roads	All other public roads not included in the State classification system	Provide access to private property or low volume public facilities	Under 35 mph	Up to 1,000	9.95	39.3%
Private Roads	N/A	Roads that serve three or more dwellings. Roads serving two or fewer dwellings are defined as driveways			≈12	47.4%
Total					25.33	100%

Source: MaineDOT; Town of Sorrento

Figure J-1: Sorrento Federal Functional Class



Source: MaineDOT Public Map Viewer

4. Road Maintenance and Condition

The State Highway System determines responsibility for maintenance. As a State Aid Highway, the State is responsible for summer maintenance of Route 185, whereas Sorrento is responsible for winter road maintenance. Sorrento is responsible for maintaining all other public roads. Private roads are maintained by their residents.

Table J-2: State Highway Classification Characteristics and Roadway Miles by Class

State Highway Classification	Description	Responsibility	Miles in Sorrento	% of Total Miles
State Highway	Connected routes through the State that primarily serve intra- and interstate traffic	MaineDOT	0	0.0%

State Highway Classification	Description	Responsibility	Miles in Sorrento	% of Total Miles
State Aid Highway	Connect local roads to the State Highway System and generally serve intercounty traffic movement	Usually maintained by MaineDOT in the summer and by towns in the winter	3.38	13.3%
Town Ways	All other public roads not included in the State classification system; provide access to adjacent land	Municipalities or counties	9.95	39.3%
Private Roads	Roads that serve three or more dwellings. Roads serving two or fewer dwellings are defined as driveways		≈12	47.4%
Total			25.33	100%

Source: MaineDOT; Town of Sorrento

4.1. Condition

Regular maintenance and repairs of Town roads by town officials has kept the town's system of roads in fairly good condition. No major reconstruction or rebuilding is envisioned over the next five years, although some improvements to the West Shore Road are needed in the near future. Maintenance on the road is done annually to repair the seasonal effects of winter and then, situationally throughout the rest of the year, as required. In the Spring, the Road is "posted closed" as frost upheavals and other effects of winter are mitigated and repaired; these post-winter operational obstructions are usually resolved by late April. Coastal road erosion and flooding have become an increasing issue along Ocean Ave. in particular. Grant money has been awarded to the Town to reengineer and rebuild this road after the damage of the storms of December and January of 2023/2024. See the Chapter I: Climate Change for more information.

Sorrento was included in the rebuilding of 156 linear feet of shoulder and the application of 163 square feet of pavement legend in work performed by MaineDOT in 2024. The town received \$16,656 in local road assistance payments from MaineDOT in FY25.

An evaluation by MaineDOT rated State Route 185's condition as A, with the exception of the portion of Route 185 that is Kearsarge Ave, which received a score of C due to ride quality. In accordance with, and dependent upon, seasonal weather conditions, Sorrento's roads are subject to "postings" which define periods of time during which prescribed weight limits of commercial vehicles (with some exceptions) are listed. These "postings" restrict certain commercial vehicle access throughout Sorrento.

Historically, Ready Seafood's truck traffic (inbound empties and outbound loads, to and from their lobster pound) has been regular and often, from May through October, has seen between 5 and 10

loaded outbound trucks per day. This traffic all moves on State Route 185 (Eastside Road). At certain peak times during the summer, the noise created by this traffic has been bothersome to some residents along the routes.

In July of 2025, the lobster pound's assets were sold and while the facility will continue operating as a lobster processing and distribution center, it is uncertain as to what levels of traffic the facility will generate.

4.2. Bridges, Causeways, and Culverts

There are no bridges, owned by either the state or the town, located in Sorrento. The causeway to Treasure Island is owned by the Treasure Island residents; all maintenance and operational costs associated with the causeway are borne by the Treasure Island residents and not the Town of Sorrento.

There is a regular process every year of ditching in and around the culverts, so water flows smoothly.

4.3. Budgeting for Road Maintenance and Improvements

As previously noted, the town receives an allocation of local road assistance payments from MaineDOT to be used for capital improvements to local roads. Additionally, as part of MaineDOT's Three-Year Work Plan, an estimated \$500,000 in funds are allocated for improvements to the Ready Seafood facility in town in 2025 as part of a grant program "for Wharves and Piers that provide a significant and compelling benefit to Maine's commercial fishing and aquaculture industries."

In the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 town budget, \$96,550 was appropriated for snow plowing and sanding, approximately \$25,000 was appropriated for the salt/sand stockpile, and roughly \$42,000 was appropriated for additional town road maintenance.

5. Regulations & Design Standards

The main roads into Sorrento off of Rt. 1 (East Side Road and West Shore Road) are not entirely safe or practical for biking or pedestrian traffic; serious bikers use these roads but pedestrians tend to avoid them and instead transport themselves into the village and walk from there. There are no sidewalks in Sorrento and while there has been conversation about reinstating some there does not seem to be significant support for doing that. Posted and enforced speed limits of 25 mph in the village have strong support from many members of the community.

While Sorrento does not currently have road design standards, the Town has an ordinance regulating vehicle weights on posted roads to "prevent damage to town ways and bridges" and to "reduce the public expense of their maintenance and repair." These limits are not themselves posted on the roads and therefore not always adhered to.

Local road construction standards usually address required width of the right of way, required width of pavement, depths and types of base material, thickness of pavement, minimum and maximum grades and side slopes. The Town's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance regulates setback requirements, expansion rights, sloping and other design standards for the construction of new roads.

West Shore Road was built as a horse and carriage road - not built for motor vehicle traffic. The roadbed is a problem that repaving won't address.

5.1. Local Access Management

Access management represents an effort to increase safety and reduce congestion by limiting the number of exits and entrances onto primary roadways. Good access management promotes safe and efficient use of the transportation network and encompasses a set of techniques that state and local governments can use to control access to highways, major arterials, and other roadways.

Setback requirements, expansion rights, sloping and other design standards for the construction of new roads and driveways in relation to the shoreland zone are defined in the Town's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance; however, it does not establish procedures for roadway access. The Town's Land Use Ordinance does establish the dimensions of driveways and also states that "major developments shall have two or more routes of access - in and out".

5.2. Subdivision Roads

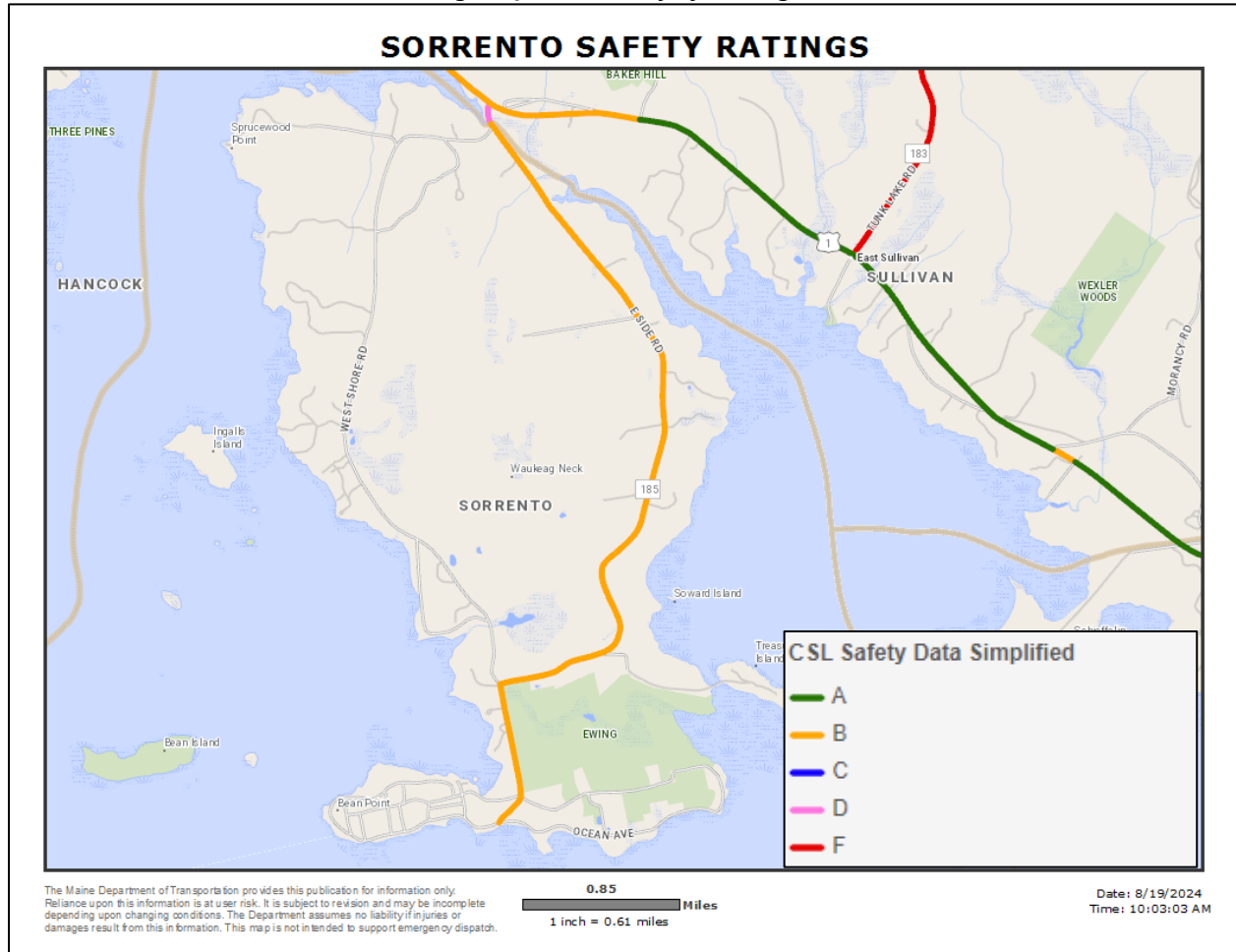
The Town does not have a Subdivision Ordinance that defines standards for subdivision roads, and as such follows state law.

6. Safety

Roadway safety is a priority among Sorrento residents, especially as the community perceives an increased incidence of speeding since the pandemic, particularly on West Shore Road and East Side Road. East Side Road and West Shore Road have speed limits of 40 mph, whereas roads in the village are limited to 25 mph. The village area roads are popular among residents for walking and biking, especially in the warmer months, despite the lack of bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure. There is generally a feeling that it is safe to walk and bicycle on village area roads due to the low traffic volumes, although residents feel that the narrowness of roads combined with speeding present safety issues, especially children bicycling. Residents expressed concern about the overall lack of enforcement for all vehicles throughout the town.

MaineDOT evaluates State road safety based on crash history, paved roadway width, pavement rutting, and bridge reliability. State Route 185 received a safety grade of B; of note however the small portion of Route 185 just outside of town limits that connects Sorrento to Route 1, received a safety grade of D due to crash history and pavement width.

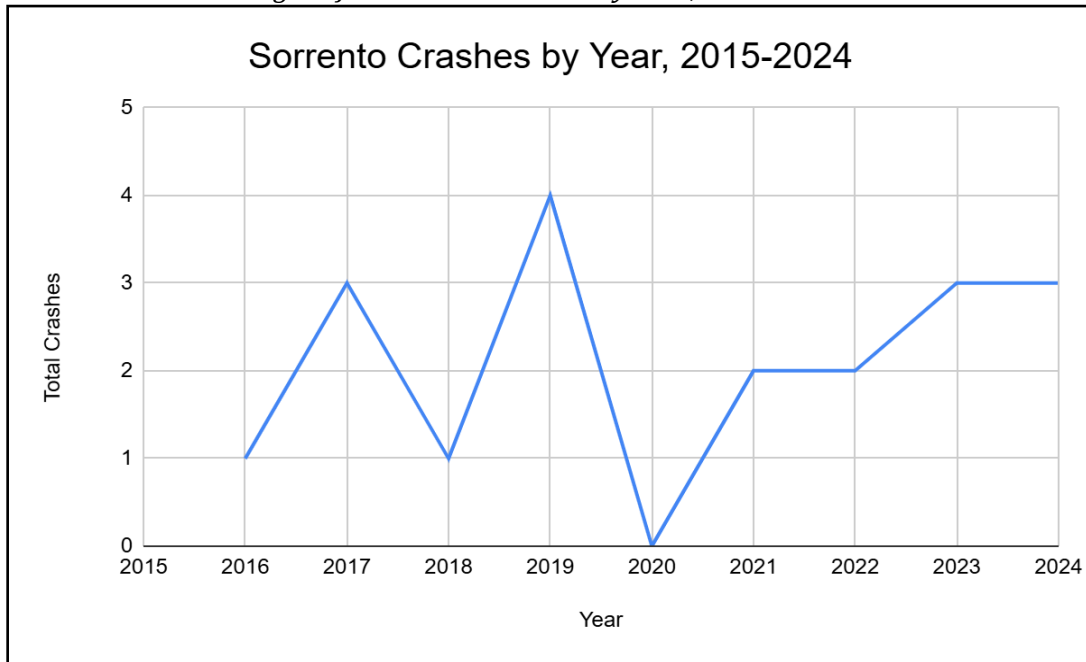
Figure J-2: Road Safety Ratings



Source: MaineDOT Public Map Viewer

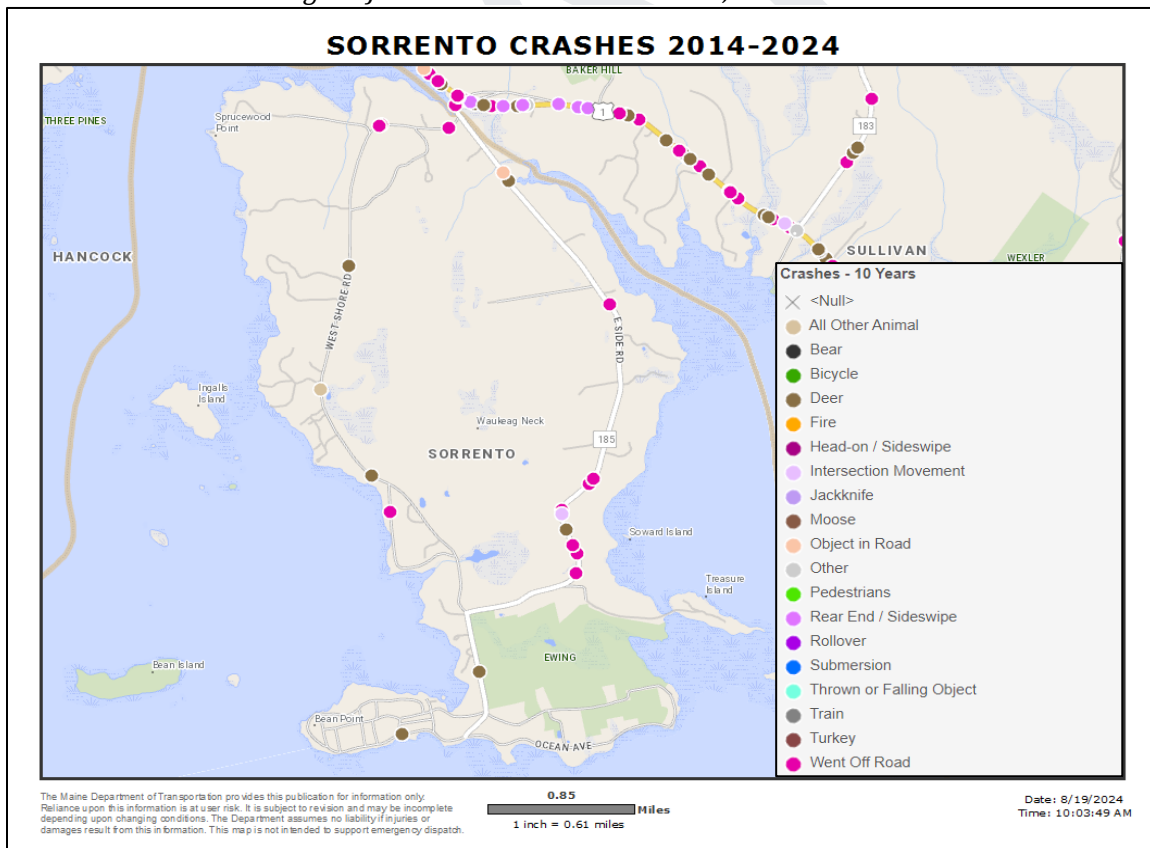
Measuring the incidences of crashes is another metric used to evaluate roadway safety. *High Crash Locations (HCLs)* are defined as an intersection or road segment with a minimum of eight accidents over a three-year period and a higher-than-average rate of accidents when compared with similar intersections across the state. Sorrento has not had any High Crash Locations over the last 10 years. Over this period of time, there have only been a total of 19 crashes in the town, many of which were classified as “went off road.” Deer were the second largest reason for crashes over the last 10 years.

Figure J-3: Sorrento Crashes by Year, 2015 - 2024



Source: MaineDOT Maine Public Crash Query Tool

Figure J-4: Sorrento Crash Locations, 2014 - 2024



Source: MaineDOT Public Map Viewer

7. Traffic

The volume of traffic in Sorrento is relatively light as a residential community; however, traffic volumes increase in the summer with the return of seasonal residents. Community members emphasize the lack of traffic as a characteristic they value about the community and are concerned with maintaining low traffic volumes going forward.

MaineDOT maintains traffic volume data for selected roads in Sorrento. Typically, AADT counts are done every three years. The area with the highest count is the Route 185 and U.S. 1 intersection near the Sullivan town line, with other higher volume areas surrounding the Route 185 and West Shore Road intersection. While count locations have changed since they were done in 1979, 1988 and 1991, the overall number of vehicles traveling through the town has increased, specifically on State Route 185 near the Sullivan town line. Note that traffic counts are not seasonally adjusted, and monthly counts in summer months are typically higher than a location's annual average.

Table J-3: Historic Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for Selected Locations

Location	1979	1988	1991
East side of Route 185, near Sullivan line	550	650	610
West side of Route 185, near Sullivan line	200	340	500
West side of Route 185, near village	130	280	-
East side of Route 185, near village	290	300	-

Source: MaineDOT, 1994 Sorrento Comprehensive Plan

As of 2024, many roads in town have an AADT count of less than 200 vehicles; most of the recent counts were taken within or in proximity of the village. For roads that had traffic counts in both 2021 and 2024, several locations saw an increase but did not change significantly.

Table J-4: Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for Selected Locations

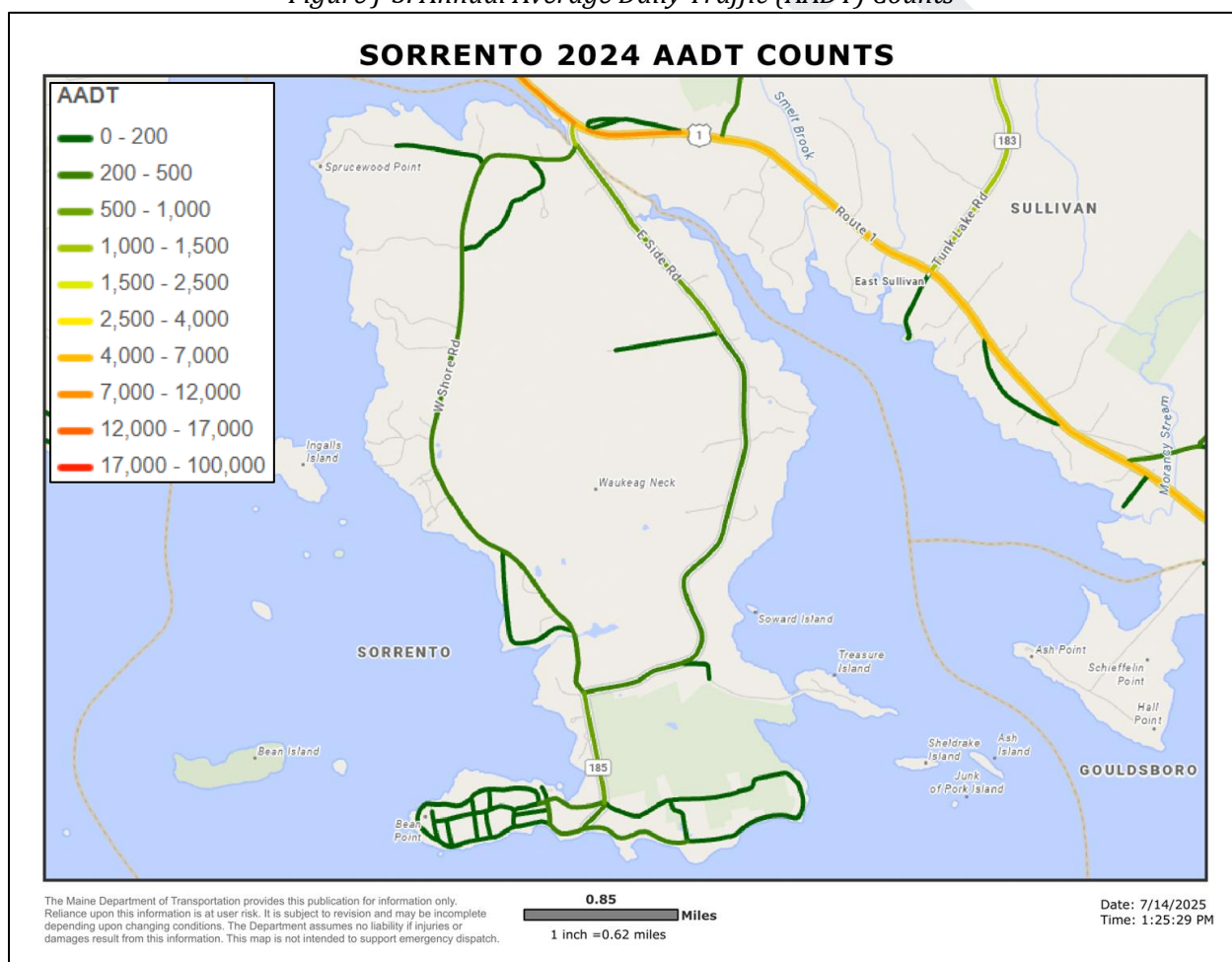
Location	2009*	2015	2018	2021	2024
Beech St north of Bayview Ave			-	70	70
Ocean Ave southwest of Main St	92	130	-	160	170
Ocean Ave southeast of Bayview Ave			-	100	70
Waukeag Ave east of State Route 185	340		-	310	350
Waukeag Ave west of Oak St			-	140	140
Waukeag Ave west of Bayview Ave		70	-	130	120
Doanes Point Ave southeast of Route 185	128		-	130	120
Bayview Ave west of Mt Desert St	48		-	40	50
Bayview Ave northwest of Ocean Ave	50		-	40	40
Bayview Ave northwest of Waukeag Ave	126		-	160	120
Oak St south of Waukeag Ave			-	30	30
Mt Desert St south of Bayview Ave			-	40	50
West Shore Rd west of SR 185	498	430	470	500	410
West Shore Road north of Pomola Ave	290		-	350	290

Location	2009*	2015	2018	2021	2024
Main St south of Waukeag Ave		140	-	280	290
Ocean Ave southeast of Main St	267	330	310	-	490
State Route 185 north of West Shore Rd @ Sullivan Town Line	1,168	1,090	980	1,010	1,030
State Route 185 southeast of West Shore Rd	719	650	450	520	610
Kearsage Ave southwest of Doanes Point Ave	252		-	320	270
Pomola Ave east of West Shore Rd	420		-	390	450
State Route 185 south of West Shore Rd	554	590	610	670	680

* Monthly count in June/July 2009

Source: MaineDOT

Figure J-5: Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) Counts



Source: MaineDOT Public Map Viewer

7.1. Speeding

Residents and visitors often walk and bicycle on village area roads due to the low traffic volumes, although the narrowness of roads combined with speeding present safety issues. Residents expressed concern about the overall lack of speed limit enforcement for all vehicles throughout the

town. In previous years, the Town put in seasonal speed humps but recently was told by the State that they are not permitted to install them, so they were removed.

7.2. Major Traffic Generators

MaineDOT defines a traffic generator as “any business, government office, or place of employment or destination that generates or attracts traffic.” Ready Seafood is the primary traffic generator in Sorrento as the lobster shipping business brings frequent refrigeration truck traffic on East Side Road, creating safety and noise concerns. Historically, Ready Seafood’s truck traffic (inbound empties and outbound loads, to and from their lobster pound) has been regular and often, from May through October, has seen between 5 and 10 loaded outbound trucks per day. This traffic all moves on State Route 185 (Eastside Road). There are also concerns of the truck traffic circulation on town roads, which were not designed for this level of weight or vehicle size. West Shore Road is a commonly used thoroughfare for commercial vehicles other than the Ready Seafood vehicles, particularly those that are providing services to residents that live off the West Shore Road. This includes those traveling to and from the boat yard, the dentist, the waterfront at West Shore, landscapers, contractors, and seasonal traffic to and from the harbor.

8. Parking

Public parking is available at the lot serving the Town Office and Community Building just outside the village area. There are an estimated 24 spaces at this location including one handicap space. An estimated 15 spaces including one handicap space are available at the Town dock, which are intended for people accessing the waterfront but there are currently no restrictions. Currently fishermen park trailers on the shore or along roads near the boat ramp as there are no designated spaces.

Due to the lack of formal parking in town, visitors often park on the side of Doane’s Point Road, along the seawall along Ocean Ave, or at the cemetery. There are also informal parking opportunities at Isaac’s Beach (6 vehicles), but no commercial parking is permitted there. With the increase of residents during the summer there is a shortage of parking spaces in the village area from June to September for those walking the village roads or using the waterfront. While residents acknowledge the value of additional parking capacity in the downtown/dock area for themselves, they are concerned that additional parking will also increase traffic and congestion. Prioritizing local fishermen’s access to parking in the downtown/dock area is an ongoing priority for the Town.

Parking regulations

The Town’s Shoreland Zoning Ordinance defines parking standards in shoreland areas. It establishes minimum setback requirements of at least 25 feet from the shoreline, except in the Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District. It also states that the setback requirement for parking areas serving public boat launching facilities in Districts other than the General Development I District and Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District shall be no less than fifty (50) feet. The appropriate size of proposed parking facilities and other requirements are also established.

With certain exceptions, the Town's Parking Ordinance, adopted in 1994, regulates areas and dates for which parking is allowed:

1. No parking along any town road from November 1 of any year through April 15 the following year.
2. Non-resident commercial vehicles may not park at any time in town pier parking lots or along waterfront roads.
3. Vehicles found to be in violation of this ordinance will be towed away at the owner's expense.

9. Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

The Town presently has no sidewalks. At one time boardwalks lined the streets of the village, but all these were gone by the late forties. The main roads into Sorrento off of Route 1 (East Side Road and West Shore Road) are not entirely safe or practical for biking or pedestrian traffic; serious bikers use these roads but pedestrians tend to avoid them and, instead, transport themselves into the village and walk from there. While there have been conversations about reinstating sidewalks support seems to be lacking, except among the seasonal community. Posted and enforced speed limits of 25 mph in the village have strong support from many members of the community.

10. Transportation Connections

10.1. Public Transportation and Bus Lines

The availability of regular public transportation or mass transit services is limited for Sorrento residents. Bangor offers year-round bus connections to Portland and Boston via Greyhound Bus lines and Concord Coach lines, but there is no public transportation to connect to either of these carriers.

Downeast Transportation provides very limited fixed-route service in the Schoodic Area and scheduled route times are infrequent. The Bar Harbor - Milbridge route passes by Sorrento on Route 1. The nearest stop, just outside of town limits at Nautilus Marine Hardware, adjacent to the State Route 185 and U.S. Highway 1 intersection, is serviced twice per day Monday-Friday. An additional stop along this route is at Young's Market in Gouldsboro. This portion of the Commute to Bar Harbor route does not provide service to the majority of Hancock County.

Table J-5: Downeast Transportation, Commute to Bar Harbor - Milbridge Route

Milbridge Route	Read Down	Read Up
Milbridge: Seaworthy Event Center	5:30am	4:50pm
Steuben: Matthew's Country Store	5:40am	4:40pm
Gouldsboro: Young's Market	5:50am	4:25pm
Sullivan: Nautilus Marine Hardware	5:57am	4:23pm
Jackson Lab	6:50am	3:40pm

Source: Downeast Transportation

Downeast Community Partners provides on-demand, limited services for eligible clients referred by Maine Department of Health and Human Services. *Friends in Action* offers transportation to and from medical appointments, as well as to other destinations; these services involve pre-arranging rides and in some cases are only available to qualified individuals.

10.2. Passenger Rail and Airports

While the railroad historically played a major role in the development of Sorrento, there has been no train service since the twenties. The Bangor Calais line, which passes through Sullivan, was discontinued In 1985. The rail line and right of way is owned by MaineDOT. The nearest freight rail service is in Bucksport.

Sorrento is served by the Bangor International Airport, which has regularly scheduled passenger air service to various locations on the east coast. There also is limited passenger service from the Hancock County Airport in Trenton, which is more heavily used during seasonal months, but available year-round.

10.3. Marine and Rail Terminals and Boat Transportation Facilities

There are no marine or rail terminals in town, however, there is a public boat launch and harbor. For more information see the Chapter G: Marine Resources.

11. Community and Regional Transportation Concerns

While Sorrento residents rely primarily on personal autos for transportation, public transportation is an important issue given the distances traveled by Hancock County residents for jobs and shopping. The lack of transportation options in Sorrento limits the number of social services and opportunities for mobility available to residents, which is a concern given the percentage of older adults in Sorrento. Future public transportation endeavors in Hancock County are sure to be most effective if coordinated on a regional level with interlocal communication through the Schoodic Area League of Towns.

Route 185 on the Sullivan/Sorrento town line is a major concern in the face of climate change, as it is the only entry point into Sorrento and was inaccessible during the 2023/2024 December/January storms. The Town of Sorrento is working with the Town of Sullivan to conduct a joint vulnerability assessment to address threats to infrastructure as a result of sea level rise and storm surge. This assessment will provide the towns with strategies for addressing identified vulnerabilities and is expected to be completed at the end of 2025.

11.1. Road Conflicts

Sometimes there are conflicts caused by multiple road uses, such as a major state or U.S. route that passes through the community or its downtown and serves as a local service road as well. In Sorrento, no major State or Interstate roads pass through the Town. Any conflicts are between residential and commercial traffic traveling within the community. This includes truck traffic on

Route 185, and boat haulers and landscapers on West Shore Road, which is narrower and without painted lines.

12. State and Regional Transportation Plans

The State of Maine has transportation plans that may have relevance for Sorrento. The Long-Range Transportation Plan Update 2050 “will convey MaineDOT's vision for a multimodal transportation system that not only provides for safe and efficient travel throughout the state, but also supports a high quality of life and economic opportunity in all of Maine's villages and communities.”

Also underway is the Maine Strategic Transit Plan 2025. MaineDOT is particularly interested in looking at new models and approaches for providing public transportation more efficiently and effectively in Maine’s rural areas.

A Statewide Active Transportation Plan, created by MaineDOT, includes an assessment of Highway Corridor Priority 3 and 4 roads throughout Maine, such as Route 185, to highlight shoulder-enhancement opportunities in rural areas. The Town can work with MaineDOT to encourage public participation and prioritization of enhancements.

13. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Improve Local Transportation Safety, Access, and Resilience			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Prioritize Infrastructure Maintenance and Resilience	*Develop and maintain a prioritized transportation improvement, maintenance, and repair plan.	Selectboard, HCPC, Road Commissioner	3 years
	Improve the Long Cove crossing to enhance flood resilience and provide reliable emergency access through a MaineDOT Planning Partnership Initiative.	HCPC, Selectboard, MEDOT	3 years
Promote Safety and Manage Traffic Flow	Implement traffic calming strategies on Route 185/East Side Road to reduce speeding, in coordination with MaineDOT. Analyze potential effects on West Shore Road and Ocean Avenue near the town dock to prevent diversion impacts.	Selectboard, Road Commissioner, MEDOT	1-3 years
	Partner with HCPC to conduct a traffic movement study to better understand seasonal traffic patterns and road use across Sorrento.	HCPC, Selectboard	4 years

Goal: Improve Local Transportation Safety, Access, and Resilience			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Expand and Manage Parking and Access	Complete a formal parking study to identify solutions to address current and future parking needs, including handicapped-accessible spaces near the harbor and walking loop.	Selectboard, Road Commissioner	3 years
	Update the parking ordinance to reflect the needs of commercial and recreational users of Sorrento Harbor and the town's scenic walking route.	Planning Board, Road Commissioner	4 years
Improve Emergency Access and Regional Connectivity	Coordinate with Sullivan to create an emergency access route into Sorrento and improve redundancy in case of road closures or emergencies.	Town of Sullivan, Hancock County EMA, HCPC	1 year
	Actively participate in regional and state transportation coordination efforts to advance shared mobility, safety, and funding goals.	MEDOT, HCPC, Selectboard	Ongoing
Enhance Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure	Install low-cost, quick-build bicycle and pedestrian improvements through demonstration projects. Work with the Bicycle Coalition of Maine and HCPC to identify seasonal or year-round opportunities.	HCPC, Bicycle Coalition of Maine, MEDOT, Selectboard	4 years
Align Local Regulations with State Transportation Policy	*Maintain or amend ordinances to address or avoid conflicts with state transportation policies, including: a. The Sensible Transportation Policy Act (23 M.R.S.A. §73) b. State access management regulations (23 M.R.S.A. §704) c. Traffic permitting requirements for large developments (23 M.R.S.A. §704-A)	Planning Board	6 years
	*Review and update subdivision and road standards to support transportation-efficient growth, ensuring that new development supports safe access, connectivity, and future transit options.	Planning Board, Selectboard, Road Commissioner	1-2 years

Chapter K: Recreation

1. Purpose

A community's quality of life is an important factor for most people deciding on a place to live and is often related to the growth and development of a town or area. This section contains an inventory of current recreation and health facilities and an analysis of how these may be affected by future change and growth. Specifically, this section will:

1. Describe current recreational resources in Sorrento;
2. Assess the current and future adequacy of these resources; and
3. Predict whether the availability of open spaces for public access and recreation will be threatened by future growth and development.

2. Key Findings and Issues

Sorrento residents are generally satisfied with the town's recreation opportunities, including access to water, community gathering spaces, and seasonal programming. Local facilities are limited but supported by strong regional assets, while the VIA adds significant seasonal capacity. The town has no formal trail system or conserved open space, and long-standing traditions of informal access to private land may decline as seasonal turnover increases. Public water access is available but constrained by parking and limited facilities.

3. Community Engagement

In the Public Opinion Survey, 81% of year-round respondents believe Sorrento's outdoor recreation opportunities are adequate or better and 87% of seasonal respondents agreed. Both year-round and seasonal residents think access to salt and freshwater is adequate or better, with few thinking it needs attention from the Town. Similarly, both types of Sorrento residents think community gathering spaces and events are adequate or better.

Almost 30% of year-round respondents support the town investing tax dollars in recreational facilities and programming, 15% supported the initiative but only if grants covered the cost. Seasonal respondents responded in a similar manner.

4. Recreation & Community Facilities

Sorrento offers a variety of recreational and community facilities that support year-round and seasonal activities for residents and visitors. These facilities, along with nearby regional resources, contribute to quality of life, promote public health, and strengthen community ties.

Within the town, recreational and cultural activities are centered around several public and private spaces. The Sorrento Community Building, owned by the Town, serves as a gathering space for

events and meetings and includes a kitchen and open hall. The Town also maintains a basketball court behind the Town Office. The Village Green is another key public space used for events and casual recreation, offering scenic views and walkable access to the waterfront. Adjacent to the Town Office and Community Center is the Pollinator Meadow Project, a local initiative that adds ecological and educational value to the area. More information about these facilities is provided in Chapter L: Public Facilities & Services.

A central feature of seasonal recreation in Sorrento is the privately operated Sorrento VIA, a membership-based summer organization that offers tennis, pickleball, croquet, a 9-hole golf course, swimming pool, and a yacht club. The VIA serves as a hub for seasonal residents with memberships available to year-round residents.

Beyond the town center, Sorrento participates in and benefits from several regional recreational assets. The Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center, located on Route 1 in Sullivan, is a shared facility offering athletic fields, a gymnasium, a playground, skate park and organized programming for youth and adults. The Town also supports regional institutions such as the Downeast Family YMCA in Ellsworth, which provides access to a swimming pool, fitness center, gym, and classes for all ages. RSU #24 Adult Education offers occasional outdoor fitness programming in the area. Finally, Sumner Middle/High School in nearby Sullivan functions as a regional recreation hub, offering the area's most extensive athletic fields and serving youth and school programs across the region.

As with many aspects of life in Sorrento, regional access to recreational facilities—both organized and nature-based—is as important as what is provided locally. Together, these resources offer residents of all ages opportunities to stay active, connect with nature, and participate in community life.

Table K-1: Recreation Resources and Facilities

Facility	Owner	Activities
Community Building	Town	Events, kitchen, and gathering space
Golf Course	Private	Golf
Town Dock/Boat Launch	Town	Boat launch, scenic views
Sorrento Village Green		Events, scenic views
Pollinator Meadow Project	Town	Gardening
Basketball Court	Town	Basketball
Sorrento VIA	Private	Summer camp, tennis, pickleball, croquet, golf, pool, library, and yacht club
RSU #24 Adult Education	RSU #24	Outdoor exercise programs
Downeast YMCA	YMCA	Gym, pool, camps, classes, and courts

5. Public Water Access

Sorrento offers public water access through its public dock and town-owned boat launch ramp located adjacent to the commercial fishing dock in Sorrento Harbor. This facility provides residents and visitors with access to the harbor and surrounding waters. Usage guidelines are posted on-site, with commercial use of the ramp restricted to town residents. The town's public dock nearby is available for general use.

Due to limited parking, users are advised to plan accordingly. The entire beach and seawall between the town dock and the fishermen's wharf/boat launch are public property.

6. Trails, Preserves, and Public Open Space

Sorrento's proximity to Acadia National Park's Schoodic Peninsula significantly enhances residents' access to hiking, scenic coastal landscapes, and nature-based tourism. The Schoodic District offers some of the most pristine and lightly developed areas of the national park system, with trail networks, coastal viewpoints, and interpretive programs that serve both local residents and regional visitors. In addition to the park, Frenchman Bay Conservancy (FBC) and Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) manage numerous preserves and trail systems in neighboring towns on the Schoodic Peninsula. These organizations also offer environmental education programming and support outdoor recreation throughout the region.

Though Sorrento does not have formal town-owned open space or publicly accessible conserved land within its borders, it benefits from the close proximity of major regional conservation lands. Notable nearby preserves include Baker Hill, Long Ledges, and Schoodic Bog, all located in Sullivan and managed by FBC. These areas provide well-maintained public trails and wildlife viewing opportunities. MCHT also owns several small islands just off the coast of Sorrento. These islands, while only accessible by private boat and lacking developed trails or beaches, contribute to the broader conservation landscape and ecological integrity of the region.

Over the past several decades, MCHT has partnered with FBC, The Nature Conservancy, the State of Maine, and others to implement a large-scale conservation vision known as "Schoodic to Schoodic." This effort has sought to protect key parcels of land between the Donnell Pond Public Reserved Land Unit (surrounding Schoodic Mountain and Tunk Lake) and Acadia's Schoodic District to create a connected corridor for wildlife and low-impact recreation. Through over 60 conservation projects, more than 55,000 acres have been conserved across the region, with MCHT playing a direct role in three-quarters of those projects. These conserved lands help anchor the region's identity while providing extensive trail systems and natural areas just beyond Sorrento's borders.

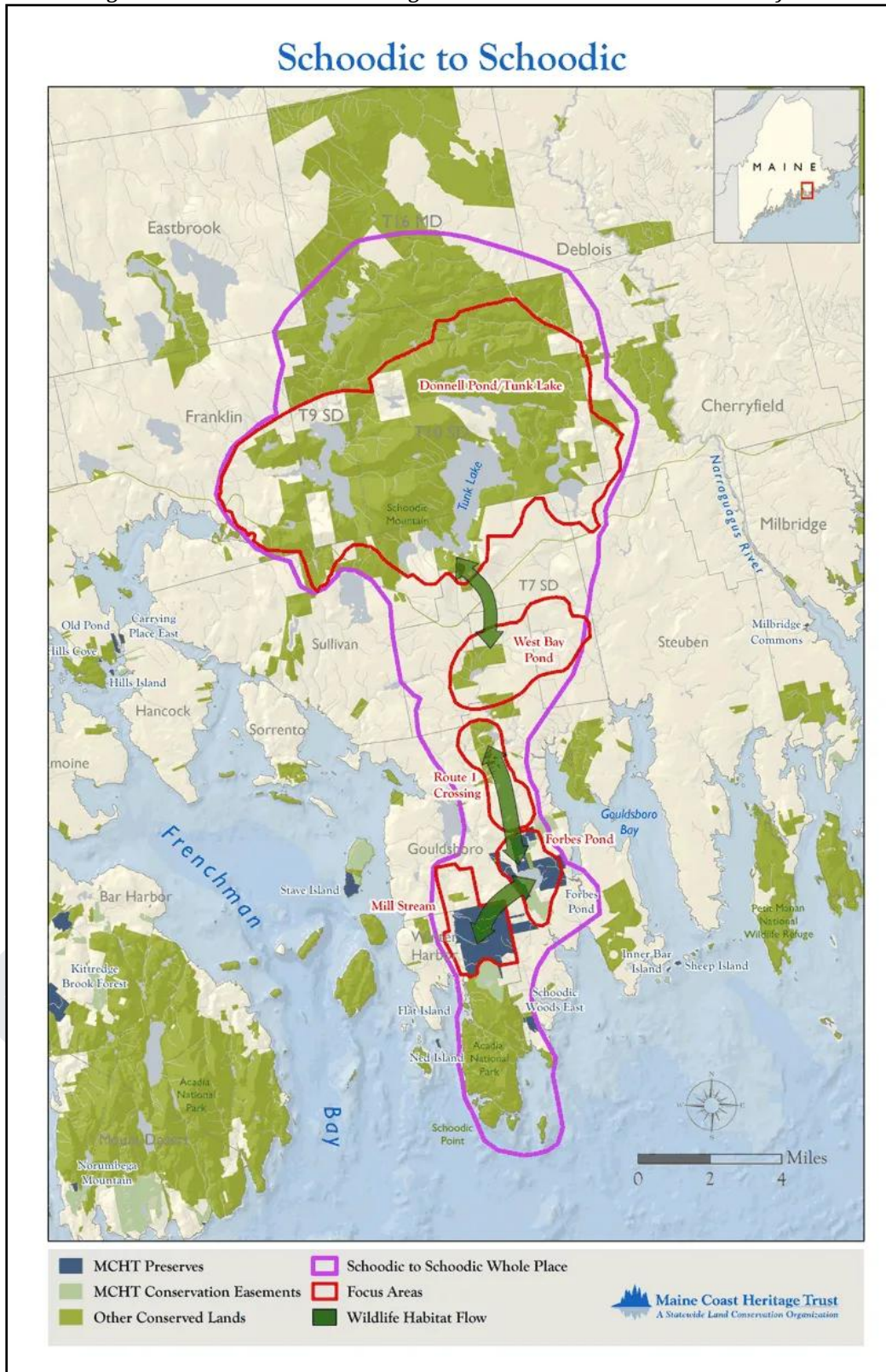
Within Sorrento, there are no formal hiking trails. In addition, many residents and visitors make use of quiet public roads and shoreline areas for walking, birdwatching, and informal nature observation. While not officially designated as trails, these routes form part of Sorrento's de facto recreational network. Doane's Point is one of these popular walking routes.

Informal public access to private land has historically been a quiet tradition in Sorrento, with residents using private woods and waterfronts for snowshoeing, walking, and shoreline exploration with little restriction. However, the rise of short-term rentals and higher seasonal turnover has the potential to erode this tradition. Newer property owners—often unfamiliar with local customs—are more likely to restrict access due to concerns about liability, privacy, and overuse. While widespread closures have not occurred, the cumulative effect could limit future access and weaken the long-standing culture of shared use.

Unlike towns with public easements or a formal trail system, Sorrento lacks mechanisms to ensure continued public access to private lands used for recreation. As access patterns evolve, preserving low-impact outdoor experiences may require outreach to new landowners, promotion of voluntary trail agreements, and exploration of partnerships with land trusts to protect key parcels or establish formal connections. Balancing private property rights with public access goals will be important to maintaining the town's rural character and supporting recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors.

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Figure K-1: Maine Coast Heritage Trust "Schoodic to Schoodic" Project



7. Adequacy of Sorrento's Recreational Resources

For a small town with a year-round population of approximately 280 residents, Sorrento maintains a reasonable set of recreational resources that meet many current needs. Facilities such as the Community Building, Village Green, and basketball court provide valued gathering spaces, and access to the harbor via the public boat launch and dock supports marine-based recreation. Regional partnerships—particularly the Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center, Downeast YMCA, Sorrento VIA, and trail systems in surrounding towns—extend opportunities beyond what the town could support alone. Public feedback from the Comprehensive Plan Survey reflects broad satisfaction with outdoor recreation and water access.

There has been discussion of the safety of public roads as walking and running routes and while there is interest in exploring alternatives, there is little interest in setting aside Town funds to implement. Community members feel coastal access is sufficient, however access is limited by lack of space for parking. For a coastal community, preserving and enhancing shoreline access for community members—particularly for passive use like walking or launching kayaks—remains a long-term priority.

With limited staff capacity and budget, the Town cannot sustain large-scale recreation efforts, but modest improvements could enhance accessibility and community use—particularly for older residents, who make up a growing share of the year-round population. Improved use of existing spaces—such as the Community Building or Village Green—could support low-cost, volunteer-led programs like walking groups, community meals, or seasonal events. Modest enhancements, such as benches or shaded areas, would improve accessibility for older adults. Additionally, limited staff capacity and budget could be used in efforts to improve communication about existing opportunities and continuing to partner regionally to provide broader access.

8. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Expand and Maintain Recreational Opportunities that Enhance Quality of Life and Strengthen Community Connections			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
*Assess Needs and Plan for the Future	*Create a list of local recreational needs and develop a plan to guide future improvements.	VIA, Town Office	2 years
	Establish formal documentation of all town-owned properties used or potentially suitable for recreational purposes, including any existing easements or use agreements.	Planning Board, Selectboard	2 years
Expand and Maintain Trail and Open Space Networks	*Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a local trail network that supports both motorized and non-motorized uses, where appropriate. Prioritize connectivity between neighborhoods, natural areas, and regional trail systems.	MCHT, FBC	5 years
	Collaborate with land trusts and conservation organizations to protect key open space and recreational parcels, particularly those that provide public access to shoreline, forestland, or scenic views.	MCHT, FBC	Ongoing
	Identify opportunities to improve access to existing recreational assets, such as the walking loop, town dock, or informal trails, through wayfinding signage, surface improvements, or additional amenities.	MCHT, FBC, VIA	5 years
Support Voluntary Access and Public Awareness	*Provide educational materials to landowners about the benefits and protections of allowing public access, including information on Maine's landowner liability law (Title 14, M.R.S.A. §159-A).	VIA, Town Office	Ongoing
	Encourage responsible public use of trails, shorelines, and natural areas through signage, community events, and outreach efforts that promote stewardship, safety, and shared responsibility.	FBC, Community Building Committee, VIA	Ongoing

Chapter L: Public Facilities and Services

1. Purpose

A community's public facilities and services are essential to the quality of life of its residents as well as for their safety and economic prosperity. This chapter provides an understanding and analysis of current conditions for Sorrento and potential future needs and issues. Specifically, the chapter aims to:

1. Identify and describe Sorrento's public facilities and services; and
2. Assess the adequacy of these services to handle current and projected demands.

2. Key Findings and Issues

Municipal services are generally adequate to accommodate the Town's existing population and demographics, but several elements of the Town's infrastructure are in varying stages of disrepair and/or capacity constrained and should be the focus of improvement or replacement over the near term. Specifically, the Town Office and Community Center are in need of modernization of heating and overall weatherization improvements as well as potential expansion of their functional capacities. Additional critical issues that face the Town include storm mitigation and repair, town roads, and Town buildings and structures.

Over the past decade, the Town has become increasingly dependent on volunteers to perform critical administrative and public service functions. The Fire Department, virtually all municipal committees, and the administration of many "town services" are populated and performed by a small core group of citizen volunteers. Going forward, the Town must acknowledge and deal with these capacity shortages. Volunteer recruitment, collaboration with other neighboring towns, and additional paid administrative and service-related employees are potential solutions.

School enrollment has been steady, and the construction of the new Sumner Memorial Middle/High School has been a huge resource for the Town. The Sorrento Fire Department has adequate equipment but lacks volunteer capacity to operate such equipment and staff all shifts. The Town relies heavily on the mutual aid agreement for fire/EMS services.

Looking forward over the next 10 years, Sorrento needs to assess how to maintain critical town services. Due to the Town's small population and limited budget, broadening the volunteer base and engaging with regional groups will be crucial in addressing how to maintain critical town services. Ensuring that there is official representation from the Town of Sorrento in these regional groups will be especially important to communicate and speak on behalf of the town.

3. Community Engagement

Year-round respondents' views on town services and aspects of community life closely aligned with opinions of all respondents. Respondents found most town services and aspects of community life in Sorrento to be at least adequate, if not good or excellent, with the exception of recycling. 65% of respondents indicated recycling needs improvement suggesting that there is broad support for establishing a town recycling program. When comparing year-round only responses against all responses, more year-round residents think housing affordability needs improvement as does police/traffic enforcement and maintenance of town roads including culverts. Respondents ranked public access to salt water, outdoor recreation opportunities, and trash collection with the highest satisfaction.

Across all categories, there was little to no support for the town investing tax dollars in the proposed categories. An even greater proportion of year-round residents opposed investments. In particular, most respondents did not support business development or attraction of any size, downtown village area development/growth, encouraging tourism, improved street lighting, new residential development, parking in the village area, and public transportation. Encouraging tourism was the most widely opposed investment. There did seem to be some support for broadband internet availability, childcare, arts & culture, working waterfront, veterans' services, town-sponsored recreation facilities, and walking & biking infrastructure; however, there were differing opinions on what the approach should be.

4. Town Administration

The Town of Sorrento is governed by a town meeting form of government with an elected Select Board with three members who are elected sequentially that also serve as the Board of Assessors. The Select Board, the Fire Chief/Road Commissioner/Emergency Management Director/Public Safety Officer, and the RSU 24 Representative are elected positions.

Officials, committees and other boards include the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Public Access Officer, Animal Control Officer, Assessing Agent, Auditor, Budget Committee, Board of Appeals, Code Enforcement Officer/Plumbing Inspector, Community Building Committee, Comprehensive Planning Committee, Harbor Committee, Planning Board, and Climate Resilience Committee, and regional Shellfish Committee representative.

Table L-1: Sorrento Officials, Boards and Committees

Position	Method of Appointment	Term Length
Select Board	Elected	Three Years
Board of Assessors	Elected	Three Years
Appeals Board	Appointed	Three Years
Planning Board	Appointed	Three Years
Budget Committee	Appointed	Three Years
Harbor Committee	Appointed	Three Years
Deputy Town Clerk, Registrar	Hired	Ongoing

Position	Method of Appointment	Term Length
Local Plumbing Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer	Appointed	One Year
Harbor Master	Appointed	One Year
Emergency Management Director	Elected (Comes with Fire Chief position)	Two Years
Road Commissioner & Facilities Maintenance Director	Elected	Two years
E-911 Addressing Officer	Appointed	Ongoing
Animal Control Officer	Appointed	Ongoing
Public Safety Officer	Elected (Comes with Fire Chief position)	Two Years
Town Clerk	Hired	Ongoing
Community Building Committee	Appointed	Three Years
RSU24 School Board Representative	Elected	Three Years
General Assistance officers	Select board elected	Three years
Public Access officer	Appointed	Ongoing
Registrar	Appointed	Ongoing
Health Officer	Appointed	Ongoing
Shellfish committee	Appointed	Three Years

The Town Office is open three days a week and specific hours can be found on the Town website. At the Town Office residents can purchase trash stickers, pay for licenses, permits, registrations, pay taxes and get information about the town and surrounding areas and services. Many services are available online as well.

Survey results indicate varying assessments of adequacy. There is general satisfaction with the Town Office customer service/hours services with around 75% of respondents stating the services are adequate, good, or excellent.

The Town Office building itself faces several inadequacies including heating/cooling issues, space and capacity concerns, and a general lack of functionality. The Community Center is adjacent to the Town Office and faces the same deficiencies. Sorrento has a small task force of volunteers looking at fundraising for improvements to both of these buildings. In the spring of 2025, the Sorrento Climate Resilience Committee received a Community Action Grant to plan for the upgrades needed to turn the Community building into a reliable warming/cooling center during extreme weather events. Upgrading these buildings will be a major capital investment (see Chapter M: Fiscal Capacity). The Town of Sorrento also faces challenges with recruiting volunteers for committee positions and also filling staff positions due to the limited budget.

Below is a table of Town-owned buildings, structures, and facilities. All of these facilities are in satisfactorily operable condition and are routinely monitored and checked to be sure that necessary maintenance and upkeep is planned for and administered as required.

Table L-2: Sorrento Municipally Owned Facilities

Building Name/Occupancy	Organization	Year Built	Flood Zone	Square Footage
Fire Station	Fire Department	2002	-	3,840
Fire Station Storage Shed	Fire Department	2006	-	288
Community Building	Municipal	1940	-	3,077
Game Library	Municipal	2023	-	32
Old Fire Station (leasing)	Municipal	1952	-	1,728
Old Town Office (vacant)	Municipal	1900	-	221
Pier Gazebo	Municipal	2020	-	96
Salt & Sand Shed - Quonset	Municipal	1995	-	2,596
Tower	Municipal	-	-	
Town Office incl. Generator	Municipal	1998	-	960
Town Pier, Gangway, Wharf & Docks	Municipal	2022	VE	3,738

Source: Maine Municipal Association Risk Management Services, 2025

5. Planning, Plumbing, and Code Enforcement

Sorrento building, plumbing, subdivision and shoreland zoning regulations are enforced by a combination of authorities.

- Code Enforcement Officer- the CEO handles all building permits within the Town and offers guidance on building and development compliance according to Town and state statutes, as seen in the table below.
- Plumbing Inspector - approves and inspects all plumbing permits. The CEO is also a plumbing inspector.
- Planning Board - consists of five individuals and one alternate who review and approve site plans and any subdivision projects particularly within the shoreland, wetland, or flood zone hazard areas for zoning compliance.
- Board of Appeals- consists of four individuals and one alternate and meets when required to resolve any disputes regarding the CEO, Planning Board, and land owner decisions.
- Harbor Committee- the five members serve on the Harbor Committee and oversee the Sorrento Harbor Master, resolving maritime related issues regarding moorings, pier and float permits/inspections, aquaculture permits, or boundary disputes having an effect on the aforementioned topics.
- Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Committee is a seven-community collaboration that works under the State law to improve the local shellfish industry. The Municipal Joint Board (MJB) consists of representatives from each participating community in the program. The conservation program as directed through the MJB, includes area rotations and flat closures, ensures harvesters have productive areas to dig throughout the year. Most importantly the ordinance protects our towns from harvesters from other areas of the state. Visit this website to learn more: [Frenchman Bay Shellfish – Town of Franklin, Maine \(franklinmaine.com\)](http://frenchmanbayshellfish.com).

Table L-3: Building Permits, 2006 - 2024

Year	New Residential	Addition	Other
2006	1	0	9
2007	2	1	5
2008	3	0	3
2009	2	0	13
2010	1	0	16
2011	2	0	5
2012	0	0	11
2013	0	1	8
2014	5	0	17
2015	1	1	8
2016	2	1	9
2017*	-	-	-
2018*	-	-	-
2019	2	0	9
2020*	-	-	-
2021	6	3	11
2022	4	5	5
2023	2	8	6
2024	1	3	7
<i>*Missing Data</i>			

Source: Sorrento Town Reports

Table L-4: Code Enforcement and Planning Board Permits, 2023

Residential Building	#
New Residences	2
Residential Addition/Renovation	8
Garage/Shed/Storage	1
Shoreland	3
Other	2
Total	16

Source: 2024 Sorrento Town Report

Table L-5: Plumbing Permits

Plumbing Permit	#
Internal Plumbing	5
External Plumbing	0
Total	5

Source: 2024 Sorrento Town Report

The Town currently has a Code Enforcement Officer. Historically, the Town has faced challenges in consistently monitoring development and construction activity due to limited enforcement capacity. Officials believe a significant amount of work occurs without proper permitting, and for those who do obtain permits, there is little follow-up beyond an honor system to ensure compliance.

Permit records are currently stored in a physical filing cabinet, and the Town does not have a digital system in place to track development activity. Implementing a digital tracking system is a future goal, as officials recognize the need for better organization, transparency, and accountability in permitting and code enforcement.

6. Fire Protection, EMS, and Public Safety

Between September 3, 2023, and June 7, 2024, the Sorrento Fire and Rescue Department responded to 61 emergency calls. These calls covered a wide range of incidents, including structure fires, water rescues, vehicle accidents, chimney and electrical fires, brush and grass fires, false alarms, and mutual aid responses. In addition to emergency calls, the department dedicated substantial time to work sessions around the fire station and vehicles—contributing countless volunteer hours to training, maintenance, and preparedness.

Table L-6: Fire Department Calls, 2019 - 2024

Year	# of Calls
2024	61
2023	95
2022	56
2021	171
2020	129
2019	105

The department's membership in the Schoodic Region Emergency Services Association (SRESA)—which includes Aurora, Eastbrook, Franklin, Gouldsboro, Hancock, Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and now Steuben—helps address ongoing manpower shortages, particularly for around-the-clock coverage. SRESA also serves as a valuable platform for coordinating mutual aid, planning regional training opportunities, sharing equipment updates, and staying current with state and federal requirements from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Because Sorrento does not have its own EMS service, and relies on mutual aid agreements with surrounding towns and Northern Light, response times are very slow and expediency is nonexistent. This is not an uncommon issue for neighboring towns, some of whom have their own EMS service. There have been discussions amongst towns in the Schoodic region to address this problem together to minimize the financial burdens on individual towns.

In addition to its emergency service responsibilities, the department played a key role in storm response. The major storms of January 2023 resulted in the loss of 37 trees in town—not including typical losses from regular seasonal storms.

Table L-7: Fire Department Vehicles, 2025

Type of Vehicle	Year	Condition	Years of Service Left
Fire Truck	1983	Good	5-8 Years
Pumper Truck	2006	Good	5-8 Years
M2106 Tanker	2016	Good	5-8 Years

Type of Vehicle	Year	Condition	Years of Service Left
7300 SSA 4x4 Fire Truck	2018	Good	5-8 Years

The fire department currently has 14 staff members (all volunteers). Only two of those employees are full time and the rest are volunteers from neighboring towns. The Fire Department has adequate equipment, including a brand new ladder truck, but lacks an adequate number of staff certified and trained to operate this piece of equipment. Currently, the training of its members and adequacy of equipment have all passed routine inspection by the State. The condition of the Fire Department's four trucks is reasonably good. The trucks are vigorously maintained in a formally scheduled routine that regularly monitors their condition as near-term replacement (5-8 years from now) is not anticipated or planned given the extreme cost of new equipment.

The acquisition of any new equipment over the next 10 years is not anticipated. Continuing the current processes of diligent inspection and maintenance of the existing equipment is a mandatory necessity. The Fire Department has a small number of professionally trained and licensed fire management and control individuals who make up the core of the Department. Complementing this core group is a legion of volunteers who react to immediate issues, circumstances and emergencies; maintaining this group of volunteers is critical to the long-term viability and effectiveness of the Fire Department.

There are approximately 23 fire hydrants strategically located throughout the town that are clearly marked and are elevated to be easily accessible during the winter months. All of the Town's hydrants are connected to Long Pond Water District and represent the largest source of demand for the Water Company. The hydrants are tested regularly during the year to ensure the adequacy of their capacities and functionalities. Long Pond Water has 26 fire hydrants: 23 in Sorrento and 3 in Sullivan including Sumner High School.

Most survey respondents indicated they felt shared services were at least adequate. However, more year-round residents felt that both ambulance/EMT and healthcare access/availability needs improvement. This was reinforced in follow up comments, which indicated that respondents were concerned about ambulance response times. The category respondents were most willing to invest in was also ambulance/EMT, although support was still only 14% (all) or 21% (year-round).

7. Law Enforcement

There is no municipal police department in Sorrento and no regularly scheduled patrol. Police protection is provided by the County Sheriff's Department and the State Police. These departments alternate daily responding to calls in Town. Response times vary widely, depending on where the closest unit happens to be patrolling when a call comes in, and could exceed 30 minutes.

According to Maine State Police records, the crime rate in Hancock County in 2021 was 22.87 per 1,000 county residents. (Source: Crime in Maine, 2021) This was less than the State average of

32.44 per 1,000 people. Hancock County saw a total of 39 violent crimes in 2021, lower than all but six other counties in the state.

The Town contracts with the County Sheriff, who only provides regular coverage in the summertime (roughly one day a week.) The Harbor Master is legally a constable and can manage harbor related issues that arise. Marine Patrol responds to issues in Sorrento and has an almost immediate response. There is minimal crime in Sorrento, so current services are adequate for the foreseeable future.

Public Safety officer

The Sorrento Public Safety department and the Public Safety officer are responsible for anything that affects safety and security of people and property in and of the town. They coordinate between emergency services and utilities, communicate with the residents, and ensure that emergencies can be addressed with a minimum of interference by keeping road signs undamaged, making sure residents use the 9-1-1 address assigned to their property in reporting, and reporting downed trees and powerlines and keeping access to property unhindered.

8. Emergency Management Agency

The Maine Civil Emergency Preparedness Act (MRSA Title 37-B, Chapter 13) requires each community to appoint an Emergency Management Agency director. Counties also have a director. At any level of government the EMA Director's duties are to oversee planning, training, and preparing for emergency response during non-disaster times, and to act as the coordinator of emergency operations when different departments are working together during disasters. The Sorrento EMA reports to the Hancock County Emergency Management Agency in Ellsworth. and goes into action in the case of a natural disaster, such as a wind storm.

9. Healthcare

Rural communities' access to healthcare is a challenge everywhere, and Sorrento is no exception. Among the chief issues are the difficulty of attracting medical practitioners to the Town, the lack of nursing homes or services for seniors, the distance to available hospitals and emergency rooms and access to specialty care.

The only healthcare service provided in Sorrento is a dentist office; for all other services, residents must travel outside of Town and into Ellsworth or Gouldsboro for the closest medical care. Pharmacies in Ellsworth are the nearest source of prescription medications and healthcare products. In addition, residents can access multiple hospitals or emergency medical centers within approximately 50 miles, the closest being Northern Light Maine Coast Hospital in Ellsworth. Ellsworth used to provide the closest nursing homes to Sorrento, but it recently closed. Hospitals and other healthcare facilities that serve the area are listed in the table below, along with their travel distance in miles. Their distance in minutes varies with the season and the traffic.

Table L-8: Regional Health Facilities

Health Facility	Location	Distance from Sorrento	Emergency Room/Medicine
Eleanor Widener Dixon Memorial Clinic	Gouldsboro	9 miles	No
Northern Light Maine Coast Hospital	Ellsworth	17 miles	Yes
Courtland Rehabilitation and Living Center	Ellsworth	17 miles	No
Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center	Bangor	44 miles	Yes
Downeast Community Partners	Ellsworth	18 miles	No
MDI Hospital	Bar Harbor	33 miles	Yes
Trenton Health Center	Trenton	18 miles	No
Convenient MD Urgent Care	Ellsworth	16 miles	Yes

There are several additional resources for health care near Sorrento outside of traditional medical facilities. To list a few; Downeast Horizons assists adults and children with developmental disabilities; Friends in Action assists older adults and people living with disabilities; Hospice Volunteers of Hancock County enhances the lives of those experiencing life-limiting illness, grief, and loss; and Healthy Acadia addresses a broad spectrum of critical health challenges our communities face including mental health wellness, substance use disorders and treatment, homeless sheltering in the winter months and counseling on an array of socialization topics and issues, and in making it possible for all people to lead healthier lives throughout Hancock County.

Most survey respondents indicated they felt regional healthcare services were adequate. More year-round residents felt that healthcare access/availability needed improvement. More year-round respondents also felt that healthcare service quality needs improvement, however, to a lesser extent.

Figure L-1: Schoodic Area Medical Services



10. Public Works and Road Maintenance

The Town currently contracts out all routine maintenance work, including snow plowing, lawn mowing, sanding, and related services.

In 2024, Sullivan and Sorrento initiated a joint Climate Vulnerability Assessment to identify sections of local and state roads that are highly susceptible to flooding. The preliminary analysis underscores the need for improved stormwater management and potential road elevation to address projected sea level rise. While existing stormwater infrastructure is adequately maintained under normal conditions, it often fails during extreme weather events. The Vulnerability Assessment will help pinpoint the improvements required. A more detailed evaluation of transportation-related vulnerabilities is provided in Chapter J: Transportation.

One main artery road in Sorrento is owned and maintained by the State, though it is in need of repair. Town-owned roads are also deteriorating, but the high cost of repaving is currently beyond the Town's financial capacity. The particularly snowy and icy winter of 2024–2025 placed additional strain on the Town's snow maintenance budget. Strategic long-term planning will be essential to avoid continued budget pressures in the future.

Sorrento has a limited public sewer and water system but does not anticipate needing to expand these services to accommodate current or projected growth. The Town has a very small municipal sewer district that serves a cluster of customers in the downtown area. The municipal sewer district was established in 1988 per order of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to bring these properties into compliance with the Clean Water Act. The Network Discharge Monitoring Report (NetDMR) tool provides web-based technology to record and report treated wastewater monitoring data. The operators of Maine's various public and private wastewater treatment facilities are required to submit Discharge Monitoring Reports (DMRs) to the DEP. The data from these reports is submitted electronically to the Environmental Protection Agency. Most residents rely on private septic systems, and at present, there are no significant concerns related to wastewater disposal.

The Salt/Sand Shed is currently in adequate functioning condition and there are no anticipated upgrades or repairs needed in the near to intermediate term.

11. Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling

The Town of Sorrento does not have its own Transfer Station or dump, rather household trash is picked up roadside every Thursday by Harris Downeast Disposal. Their waste facility is located in Mariaville. Trash stickers must be purchased and can be bought at a few different locations. In the summer, there is an occasional service for bulky trash items. Sorrento had a recycling program up until a couple years ago but no longer offers recycling due to a lack of a service provider. There is a private redemption center in Town called Tee Tee's where residents can return deposit cans and bottles.

The closure of the Hampden waste processing facility, formerly known as Fiberight and the Orrington incinerator, formerly known as PERC, have limited the options for transfer of municipal solid waste (MSW) to landfill sites that are either filling rapidly or are located much further away. Additional options are critical for long-term viability of all regional transfer stations. Efforts are underway to restart the Orrington incinerator, now owned by Eagle Point Energy Center. The Hampden waste processing facility hopes to reopen under new ownership in January of 2026.

Hancock County currently has no program for Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection, though MDI towns have a sub-regional annual collection event. In past years the Hancock County Planning Commission has operated an annual collection, but participation for Sorrento has been light. Additional options for HHW disposal should be explored.

According to the survey, around 80% of all respondents believe the trash collection service is adequate or better, with only 5% thinking it needs improvement. 65% of respondents indicated that recycling needs improvement suggesting that there is broad support for establishing a town recycling program. Sorrento residents may use the Ellsworth Recycling Center.

12. Telecommunications and Energy Infrastructure

In recent years, Versant power has made considerable improvements to their energy infrastructure in Sorrento. Improvements have included new poles, higher lines, and tree clearing/thinning. This work has made a considerable difference in reducing the number of power outages the Town has historically faced each year. In previous years, residents could have expected several outages a winter, but now they are few and far between. Additionally, the lobster company, Ready Seafood, has improved their three-phase power lines to their building. Despite the improvements, many residents have purchased generators due to previous reliability issues.

There are four cell towers in Sorrento. One is located to the east of State Route 185, south of the Blink Bonnie Golf Club and north of the junction of the 185 and Treasure Island Rd; the other is located between East Side Road and the termination point of Flanders Bay.

The internet in Sorrento is often reliable and residents and businesses can access higher speed internet to meet their needs. The internet service has improved with the addition of new poles. There are currently nine internet providers covering portions of Sorrento through multiple types of service with varying download speeds ranging from 1 Mbps to 1 Gbps. Download and upload speeds are measured in megabits per second (Mbps). The table below illustrates the internet services currently available.

Table L-9: Sorrento Internet Service Providers

Service Provider	Connection Type	Availability (% of town)	Download Speeds (Not available in all areas)
Spectrum	Cable	88.5%	1 Gbps
Viasat	Satellite	99.6%	150 Mbps

T-Mobile	5G Internet	10.3%	87 to 415 Mbps
Hughesnet	Satellite	100%	100 Mbps
Net WiFi	Fixed Wireless	10.3%	25 to 150 Mbps
Consolidated Communications	DSL	28.1%	10 Mbps
UScellular	Fixed Wireless	73%	25 Mbps
Trailrunner LLC	Fixed Wireless	80.3%	50 Mbps
Starlink	Satellite	100%	25 to 220 Mbps

In 2025, USA Today shared a table outlining what internet speeds are needed to support various online tasks with multiple devices sharing that connection. Devices include phones, tablets, televisions, desktop computers, laptop computers, and more.

Table L-10: Internet Speed

Tasks	# of Devices	Recommended Speed Range
Browsing online, email	1-2	3 to 10 Mbps
Browsing online, email, streaming video/audio/etc	3-5	10 to 100 Mbps
Browsing online, email, streaming video/audio/etc, online gaming, remote work	6-10	100 to 500 Mbps

Broadband internet service has not been historically available in rural areas in Maine for multiple reasons. Building out high-speed internet services in rural areas is not profitable for internet service providers due to the high infrastructure costs and low population density; the number of potential subscribers to internet service in rural areas does not come close to covering the cost of building out the network to serve them, meaning for-profit businesses must absorb the infrastructure costs themselves. Additionally, the physical landscapes of rural areas and distance between homes also increase the cost and barriers to broadband deployment. Existing internet infrastructure might also meet the needs of many users, further reducing the incentive for internet service providers to build out networks or improve existing infrastructure to provide high-speed internet in rural areas.

Through the State of Maine's Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, an area of Sorrento has been identified as a prequalified service area (PSA) for BEAD funding. The BEAD program funds broadband infrastructure and digital equity across the state through federal, state, and local government funding as well as investments by internet service providers. BEAD prioritizes Broadband Serviceable Locations that are considered unserved (with internet speeds of less than 25/3 Mbps) and underserved (with internet speeds of less than 100/20 Mbps).

The prequalified service area (PSA) located in Sorrento stretches from Brinton Road diagonally across the town to the end of Treasure Island Road. As of May 2025, the BEAD process has identified the areas in most need of BEAD funding, determined participating internet service

providers, and is in the process of preparing a proposal matching with areas in need and participating internet service providers.

National, state, and county-wide efforts are underway to improve broadband access and digital skills in populations previously underserved or without access to internet services. Hancock County is included in Maine Connectivity Authority's Regional Wabanaki Broadband Partnership, a statewide initiative in its third year of funding and implementation. The Northern Midcoast Regional Wabanaki Broadband Partnership encompasses Hancock County, Waldo County, and Knox County. The partnership leadership and work in Hancock County is transitioning from Island Institute (Rockland) to Hancock County Planning Commission as of the beginning of 2025. The region's digital equity goal is:

"Everyone in our region from the hills, farms, and dirt roads to the village centers, waterfronts, and islands, will have access to:

- A. Affordable broadband (fast and reliable internet) no matter where they live
- B. Affordable internet-connected devices to meet their needs
- C. Free digital skills training and technical support to achieve their goals

Universal access to these tools will build community and economic resilience; support education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship; and decrease isolation so that all people can thrive as they live, work, and play in Hancock and Waldo County now and in the future."

Digital equity is defined as "a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy." It is deemed "necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services such as telehealth."

13. Education

Sorrento is part of Regional School Unit 24 (RSU 24), a district that serves nine communities: Eastbrook, Franklin, Gouldsboro, Mariaville, Sorrento, Steuben, Sullivan, Waltham, and Winter Harbor. Additionally, several families homeschool. Sorrento has a non-profit scholarship fund that supports local children beyond high school education.

Elementary Education

Students in grades K–5 attend Mountain View School in Sullivan, which had a 2023 enrollment of 204 students. Mountain View Elementary School facility is adequate in size for current and anticipated needs and there are no current state accreditation deficiencies. The building has several maintenance needs including the 20 year old roof, unsafe water supply, and logistical challenges meeting classroom needs.

Middle and High School

For grades 6–12, students attend the Charles M. Sumner Learning Campus, a modern facility that opened in July 2022. The \$42 million project, funded primarily by the State of Maine, replaced the former Sumner Memorial High School and consolidated the district's middle and high school programs under

one roof. RSU 24 contributed approximately 2.5% of the total project cost. The new campus has a rated capacity of 500 students and includes 26 general classrooms, 5 science labs, 13 specialized resource and intervention rooms, and 3 industrial arts classrooms. As of 2023, enrollment stood at 412 students—a number that has grown since the consolidation. Being brand new, Sumner Middle/High School faces no structural maintenance needs and is adequate for projected populations.

Adult and Continuing Education

Lifelong learning opportunities are available through the RSU 24 Adult Education Center, located in the Sullivan Town Office. The center offers business and skills training, college transition support, literacy programs, and personal enrichment courses.

Enrollment Trends

According to the Maine Department of Education, district-wide enrollment has remained relatively stable since Ellsworth withdrew from RSU 24 in 2014. A temporary decline during the COVID-19 pandemic mirrored state and national trends, but recent figures suggest a rebound.

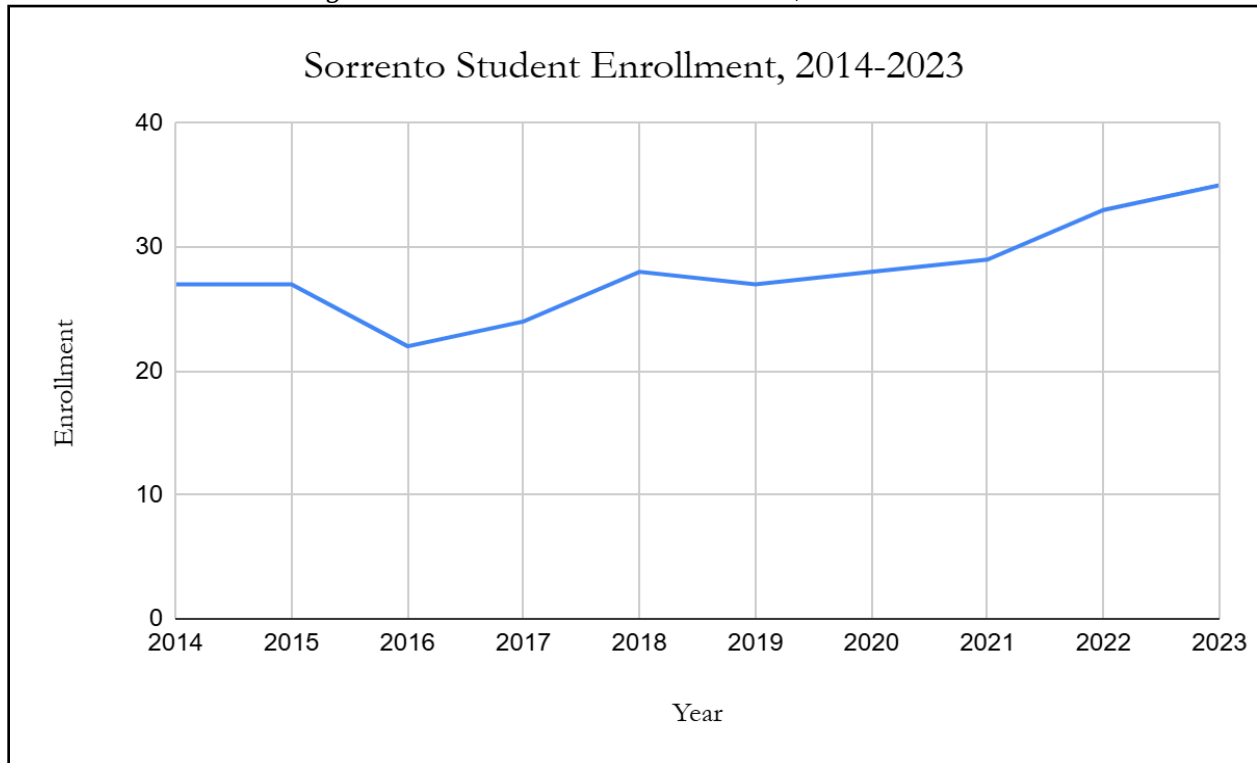
Notably, Sorrento has bucked the regional trend: the number of students from the town enrolled in RSU 24 has seen a modest increase over the past decade. Unlike many nearby towns, Sorrento did not experience a drop in enrollment during the peak years of the pandemic (2020–2021), which may reflect the town’s stable or slightly growing population of young families.

Staffing and Budget Pressures

While district staffing is currently adequate, hiring has become increasingly difficult due to the rising cost of housing, noncompetitive wage rates, and growing demand across the region. These challenges mirror broader workforce shortages in rural education systems.

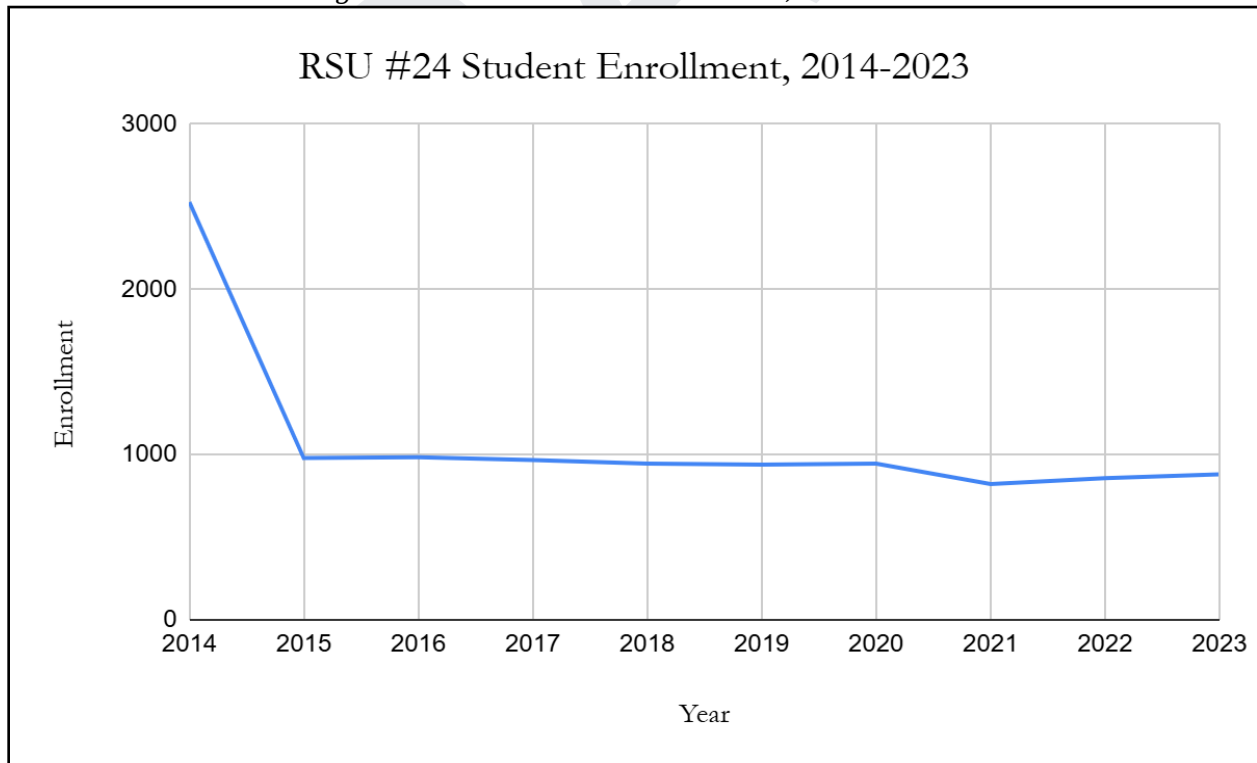
Education continues to represent the largest single expense in Sorrento’s municipal budget—accounting for approximately 42% of total expenditures. This has generated ongoing debate among residents, especially as costs rise with the construction of the new high school, while student numbers remain relatively stable. Discussions around the balance of educational quality, fiscal sustainability, and community priorities are likely to continue in the coming years.

Figure L-2: Sorrento Student Enrollment, 2014 - 2023



Source: Maine Department of Education

Figure L-3: RSU 24 Student Enrollment, 2014 - 2023



Source: Maine Department of Education

Figure L-4: Sorrento Student Enrollment

	Pre-K-8	9-12	Total
2023	25	13	38

Source: 2024 Sorrento Town Report

Table L-11: RSU #24 Student Enrollment

School Year	Mountain View Elementary			Sumner Memorial Middle/High		
	K-8	K-5	Total	6-8	9-12	Total
14-15	236	-	236	-	241	241
15-16	267	-	267	-	251	251
16-17	244	-	244	-	246	246
17-18	240	-	240	-	230	230
18-19	247	-	247	-	233	233
19-20	252	-	252	-	233	233
20-21	202	-	202	-	259	259
21-22	204	-	204	-	259	259
22-23	-	147	147	180	279	459
23-24	-	144	144	166	246	412

Source: Maine Department of Education

14. Cemeteries

Before the founding of the Doane's Point Cemetery Corporation, burials in the Town of Sorrento took place in small family plots such as the Jackson and Bragdon-Hall Cemeteries and the Town maintained Daniel Sullivan Cemetery located off the old Sullivan Road on Doane's Point. These burial grounds had served early settlers and their antecedents but could not meet the needs of a growing and changing Sorrento.

In 1964, a donated property was acquired adjacent to the "old" Daniel Sullivan Cemetery, and a committee of Sorrento residents founded the Doane's Point Cemetery Corporation to serve as a non-denominational burial ground for the Sorrento community. In 2023, with the gift of additional property, the Cemetery completed an expansion to more than double its size. To date, more than 75 Sorrento families have chosen this quiet spot as their final resting place.

As a non-profit 501(c)(13) corporation, the Doane's Point Cemetery relies on the sale of lots, tax deductible donations, and the generous support of the Town of Sorrento to meet its modest operating expenses. The Cemetery is governed by a Board of five community volunteers.

The Town is not formally involved in any of the cemetery maintenance. Sorrento is required by State of Maine law to care for and maintain veterans' graves. This includes veterans' graves in both public and private cemeteries. The Town should look into collaborating with veterans groups and other volunteer organizations to keep these sacred spaces in good condition and to place a new American flag on each veteran's grave on Memorial Day.

15. Recreation, Open Space, Library, and Historical Museum

Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center / Schoodic Gateway Event Center

In past years, the Town of Sorrento had appropriated funds annually to support the Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center, with a contribution of \$2,500 in 2023. The Rec Center is a non-profit organization. In addition to municipal support from both Sorrento and Sullivan, the Center receives private donations, rental income, and hosts fundraisers to sustain its operations.

The facility features a 3,000 square-foot auditorium and a large kitchen, which are available to rent for weddings, parties, community suppers, auctions, and other events. The Center is managed by a Board of Directors and remains a key gathering space for both towns. Currently, the Center is in year four of a five-year rehabilitation program. Interior improvements have been made to the kitchen, main hall, stairways, and storage areas, while exterior drainage and lighting around the parking lot have been upgraded. Plans for 2025 include further kitchen enhancements and exterior repairs.

To align with regional tourism initiatives, including the Sullivan end of the Schoodic National Scenic Byway and Sumner Park improvements, the Center will adopt “Schoodic Gateway Event Center” as its public-facing name, while retaining its original legal name and functions.

Frenchman’s Bay Library

Housed within the Recreation Center, the Frenchman’s Bay Library serves local residents four days a week. Services include a weekly story hour, access to the State loan system, public-use computers, and a lending collection of over 8,500 volumes. More than 100 patrons use the library regularly.

The Town appropriated \$3,000 to support the library in FY2025, covering approximately 9% of its total operating budget. Additional funding comes from private donations and special fundraising efforts.

Sorrento Public Library (Historic Building)

Constructed in 1893, the Sorrento Public Library is a colonial revival building listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1995. Although it no longer functions as a lending library, the building remains a significant architectural and historical landmark. Originally affiliated with the Sorrento Village Improvement Association (VIA), it became an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the Sorrento Public Library Corp., in the mid-1990s and is gradually restoring the building, one section at a time.

Although Sorrento has limited in-town library services, residents benefit from access to nearby community libraries, including those in Sullivan and Ellsworth. According to a recent community survey, 71% of respondents rated the shared library services with surrounding towns as “adequate” or better, while only 7% felt improvements were needed.

Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society

Operating since 1972, the Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society maintains its collection at the Recreation Center. Open to the public two days a week during the summer—and by appointment year-round—the collection is staffed by volunteers. The Society’s activities include:

- Expanding and preserving its historical archives
- Copying historic Town records
- Hosting monthly programs and workshops on regional history
- Circulating a quarterly newsletter
- Sponsoring a local scout troop

The Society is also actively restoring the historic Urann House as an interactive museum. The Town supports the Historical Society with an annual appropriation of \$1,500.

Hamilton Park

Near Sorrento’s town office is a small triangular piece of land known as Hamilton Park, dominated by a large granite sculpture called “Gate of the Sun.” The park is the site of a pollinator garden which is being designed and developed by a group of Sorrento volunteers. The park provides residents with an outdoor public space; it does not have recreational facilities.

16. Other Services

In addition to services provided by the Town, Sorrento relies heavily on a variety of private and voluntary services. A number of these services that receive Town appropriations are shown in the table below:

Table L-12: Town Support for Non-Profit Social Services

	FY25
Downeast Community Partners	\$600
Downeast YMCA	\$775
Ellsworth Public Library	\$1,116
Friends in Action	\$200
Frenchman’s Bay Library	\$3,000
Hospice of Hancock County	\$1,000
Loaves and Fishes	\$800
Sullivan-Sorrento Recreation Center	\$2,500
Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society	\$1,000
WIC Program	\$150
Total	\$4,641

Source: Sorrento Town Report, 2024

17. Regional Coordination

Many services are delivered through regional entities and through interlocal agreements. Additionally, Sorrento seeks to coordinate programs that reach beyond our borders with other local and regional governments. These are examples of interlocal coordination, but are not an exhaustive

list. Many programs are funded through “third party” requests such as LifeFlight of Maine, after school programs and programs for seniors.

Animal Control is now a contracted service with Hancock County Government. This is the result of towns, including Sorrento, working together to draft agreements with other towns and with the county to create a single full time position to provide this service.

Hancock County Fire Departments operate with Mutual Aid Agreements. Sorrento is particularly engaged in mutual aid responses with neighboring Sullivan and Hancock. The public expresses widespread support for the Fire Department, but concern for their staffing capacity and equipment. Municipal leaders in the four Schoodic towns of Sullivan, Sorrento, Gouldsboro, and Winter Harbor are exploring ways to collaborate to address common problems, such as understaffing.

Hancock County Planning Commission is contracted by the Town of Sorrento for consultation on planning, assistance with comprehensive planning and other planning support. HCPC serves 37 towns in Hancock County.

Regional School Unit 24 serves nine communities along the Down East coast of Maine. The district encompasses picturesque coastal communities along Frenchman’s Bay, Flanders Bay and the Schoodic Peninsula as well as inland communities surrounding many ponds and lakes. Four elementary schools house students in grades pre-K through five. Middle/High School students attend the new Charles M. Sumner Learning Campus. The district enrollment is around 900 students. In addition, the adult education program offers a broad menu of academic and enrichment programs including a family literacy initiative.

Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Conservation Committee is a seven community collaboration that works under the State law to improve the local shellfish industry. The Municipal Joint Board (MJB) consists of representatives from each participating community in the program.

Schoodic Area League of Towns (SALT) is a regional committee made up of representatives from the towns of Sorrento, Sullivan, Gouldsboro, and Winter Harbor. This group is a revival of a similar committee formed in the early 2000’s after the Navy Base in Winter Harbor closed. Looking forward, SALT will function as a resource/information sharing opportunity, with the prospect of collaborating on issues related to housing, infrastructure, solid waste, succession planning, and more.

18. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Maintain and Enhance Public Facilities and Services to Meet Changing Community Needs			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Plan for Growth and Changing Needs	Identify capital improvements needed to maintain or upgrade public facilities and services to support the Town's projected population and evolving needs.	Selectboard	2 years
	*Locate at least 75% of new municipal growth-related capital investments in designated growth areas, consistent with the Future Land Use Plan.	Planning Board, Selectboard	Ongoing
	*Encourage water and sewer districts to coordinate planned service extensions with the Town's land use and growth planning goals.	Selectboard, Planning Board, LPWD Board	2-5 years
	Protect suitable sources for public water supply expansion to ensure future drinking water access.	Selectboard, Planning Board, LPWD Board	2-5 years
	Evaluate the capacity of existing services—including emergency response, public facilities, and solid waste systems—and plan for long-term sustainability.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	6 years
Improve and Maintain Municipal Buildings and Facilities	Continue preventive maintenance of town buildings and facilities to extend their useful life and avoid costly repairs.	Selectboard	Ongoing
	Rehabilitate and expand the functionality of the Community Center to support programming, public meetings, and potential use as an emergency shelter or resiliency hub.	Community Center Committee, HCPC, Selectboard, Climate Resilience Committee	3 years
	Periodically assess resident interest and technological needs to guide improvements to the Town's broadband capacity and communications infrastructure.	Selectboard, HCPC	Ongoing
Strengthen Civic Engagement and Volunteer Capacity	Focus on community building to broaden the volunteer base, particularly to sustain critical services such as emergency response, community events, and board/committee service.	Community Center Committee, HCPC, Selectboard, Climate Resilience Committee	2 years
	Collaborate with veterans' groups and other local organizations to maintain cemeteries, including placing American flags on veterans' graves for Memorial Day observances.	Selectboard, Cemetery Committee	Ongoing

Goal: Maintain and Enhance Public Facilities and Services to Meet Changing Community Needs

Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
	Ensure clear, ongoing communication between the school board representative, town officials, and residents regarding educational programs and associated costs.	RSU #24, Selectboard, Budget Committee	Ongoing
	Develop an internal communications plan between municipal officials, staff, and committees.	Selectboard, HCPC	1 year
	Seek out and participate in training opportunities for municipal officials, and volunteers.	Town Staff, Municipal Officials, and Committees, HCPC	Ongoing
Expand and Coordinate Regional Service Delivery	Explore re-establishing a town recycling program, potentially through regional collaboration with Sullivan and/or grant support.	Town of Sullivan, Selectboard, HCPC	2 years
	Explore regional service-sharing opportunities, including emergency services, solid waste disposal and recycling coordination with Sullivan.	SALT, Selectboard	Ongoing
	Explore regional options for law enforcement support and emergency medical services	SALT, Selectboard	Ongoing

Chapter M: Fiscal Capacity

1. Purpose

This section presents information on Sorrento's ability to pay for the services it provides its residents and businesses. It also looks ahead to how the Town will pay for its long-term infrastructure needs. Specifically, this chapter will:

1. Examine trends in such fiscal areas as valuation, taxes, expenditures, and capital projects funding.
2. Evaluate the Town's ability to borrow to pay for capital investments.
3. Identify anticipated capital investment needs and anticipated funding mechanisms.

2. Key Findings

Sorrento relies almost exclusively on property tax revenue to fund town services. The town's small land area, limited commercial base, and high proportion of seasonal or conserved land constrains growth in the property tax base, so there is constant pressure to limit spending so as not to raise property taxes disproportionately to inflation. Expenditures—especially in education, general government, and public health—have grown sharply in recent years, creating pressure on the budget despite a tax rate that remains relatively low compared to neighboring coastal towns.

To manage rising costs and fund key capital needs—such as improvements to the community center complex, local roads, and waterfront infrastructure—Sorrento must pursue all available strategies to improve fiscal efficiency. The 2024-2025 municipal budget of \$1.78 million has \$1.6 million raised through property tax. Included in the budget is \$176,500 for capital projects and reserves. The 2025-2026 budget increases to \$1.92 million, with approximately \$320,000 in capital projects and reserves and \$1.6 million raised through taxation.

The town should take the initiative in developing specific, actionable proposals for collaboration with neighboring towns, particularly Sullivan. By putting forward concrete, mutually beneficial initiatives that offer clear advantages for all involved, Sorrento can promote collaboration in key areas such as shared fire and emergency response services, coordinated infrastructure projects like road repairs or stormwater management, and pooled administrative resources. Additionally, Sorrento could partner with Sullivan and neighboring towns on joint grant applications for regional projects or work together on long-term planning efforts that benefit both communities. Building strong, cooperative relationships will be essential to Sorrento's long-term fiscal resilience.

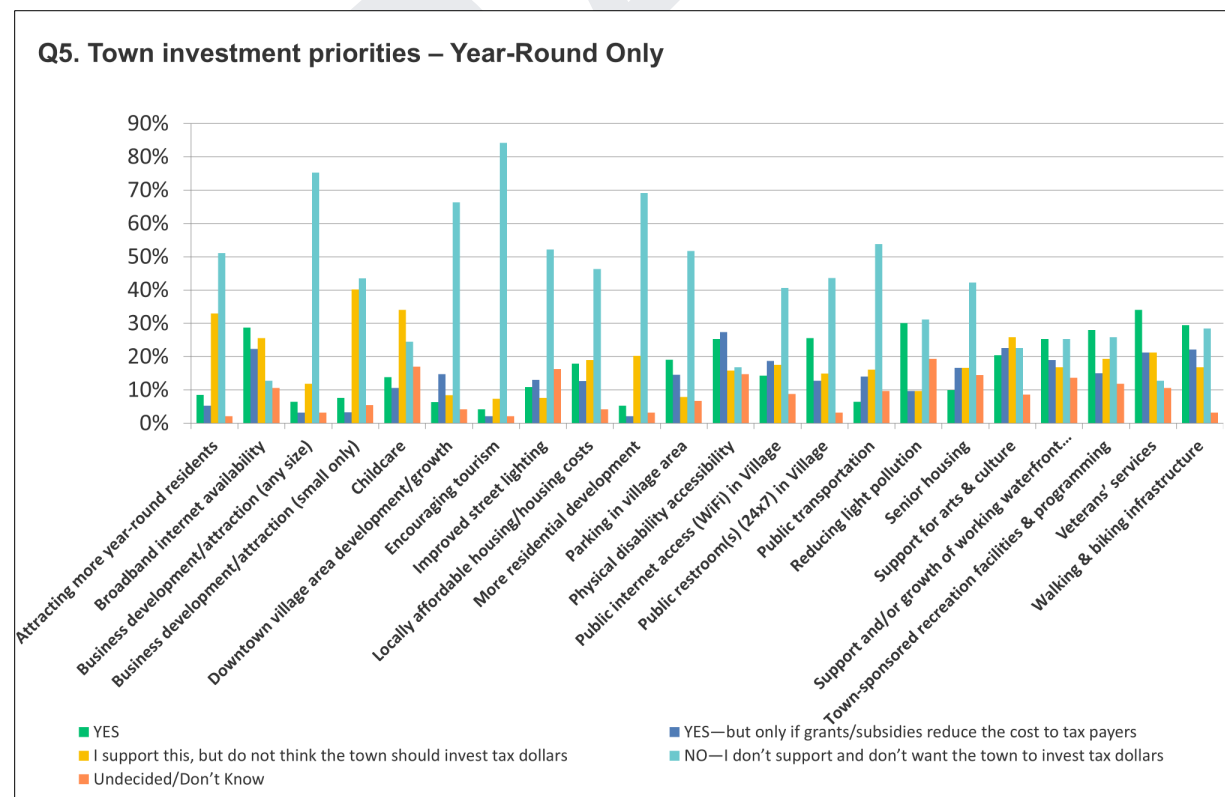
3. Community Engagement

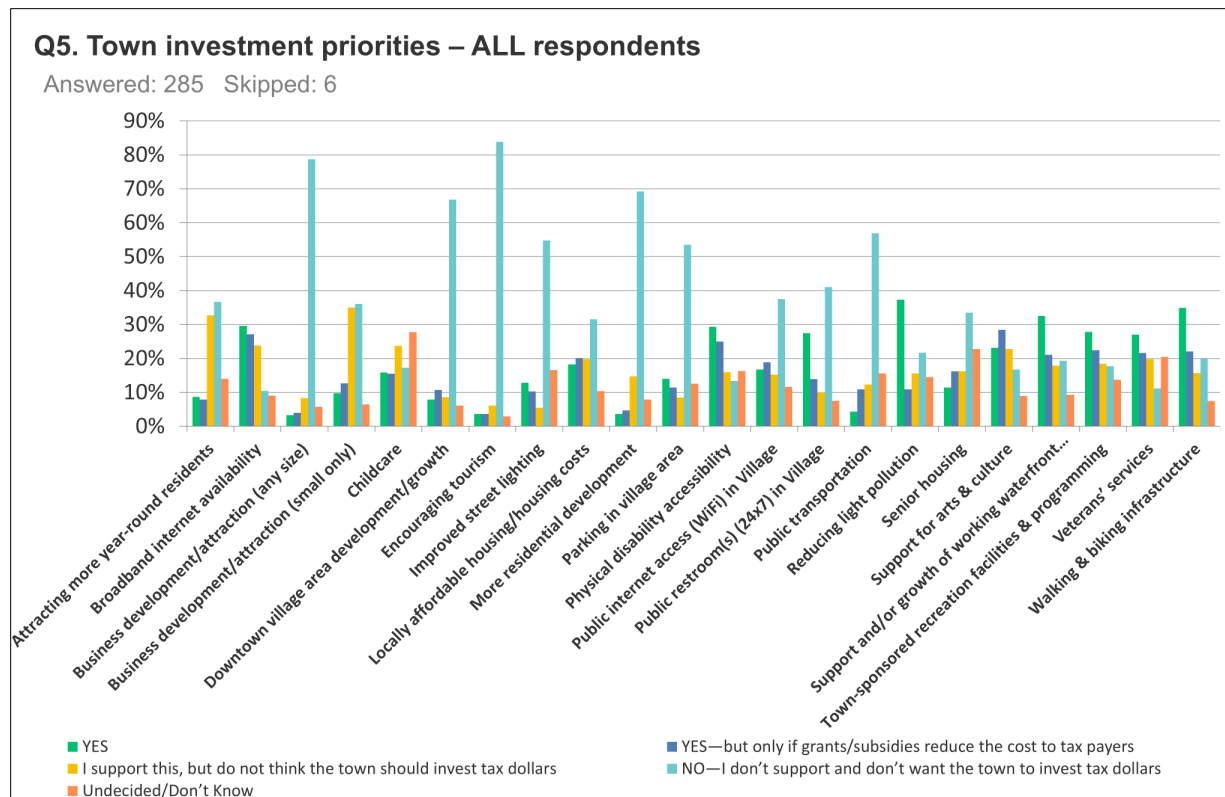
Survey responses from both the full respondent pool and year-round residents reveal that Sorrento residents are broadly supportive of improvements that enhance basic infrastructure and community well-being, though many prefer that these investments be offset by grants or subsidies

rather than direct local tax funding. High-priority areas include public internet access (WiFi), broadband availability, walking and biking infrastructure, and locally affordable housing—all of which received strong support, especially from year-round residents. These areas reflect a clear interest in maintaining essential services and improving daily quality of life for those who live in Sorrento full time.

Residents also show support for veterans' services, senior housing, public transportation, and physical accessibility, highlighting a commitment to equity and care across different segments of the population. In the areas of business development, tourism, and childcare, only a small minority of respondents expressed clear support for town investment, especially when it would involve the use of tax dollars. The charts show that most residents either oppose these initiatives, are undecided, or only support them if external funding covers the cost. Among year-round residents in particular, enthusiasm for these areas is even lower. This reflects a more cautious or skeptical stance toward investing public funds in economic growth or family-support services, at least compared to the stronger backing seen for core infrastructure and community services.

Overall, Sorrento residents appear cautiously optimistic about investing in improvements. There is a strong base of support for targeted, practical enhancements—especially those that serve the year-round population—but fiscal prudence remains a common thread. Many are willing to support community investments if they do not significantly increase the burden on local taxpayers. This suggests an openness to strategic growth, particularly when paired with outside funding opportunities.





4. Introduction

As a small coastal town with a limited commercial base, Sorrento relies heavily on property tax revenue to fund the majority of its municipal operations. With few local businesses and minimal commercial development, the tax burden falls primarily on residential property owners, including both year-round residents and seasonal homeowners. Property taxes support a range of essential services, including the maintenance of local roads, snow removal, fire protection and emergency response, administrative functions, and contributions to regional services such as education and solid waste disposal.

The town's financial planning and budgeting are organized around a fiscal year that begins on July 1 and ends on June 30 of the following year, aligning with state and school district calendars. In 2023, Sorrento strengthened its financial oversight by establishing a Budget Committee, approved by vote on May 17. The committee is tasked with developing a long-range capital improvement plan, assessing the town's fiscal health, reviewing departmental budget proposals, and making recommendations to both the Annual Town Meeting and any Special Town Meetings on warrant articles with financial implications. The committee is composed of five registered voters appointed annually by the Selectmen each April, with staggered terms to ensure continuity. Its formation reflects the town's commitment to long-term planning, fiscal responsibility, and greater public participation in the budgeting process.

5. Revenues

The town of Sorrento relies heavily on property taxes, which consistently account for the vast majority—over 90%—of total annual revenues. This dependence provides predictability and stability but also means that any major shifts in tax base could significantly impact the town’s fiscal health. From 2018 to 2023, total revenues grew by 35%, generally keeping pace with rising expenditures. Modest growth in excise taxes and a recent increase in state revenue sharing have helped, but these sources remain small relative to the overall budget. Other revenue streams, such as interest income, fees on delinquent taxes, and grants, contribute minimally and tend to fluctuate from year to year. As a result, Sorrento’s revenue capacity is limited, offering little flexibility to absorb major cost increases without raising the property tax rate.

Table M-1: Town Budget, 2018 - 2023

Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Tax Revenues	\$909,431	\$902,278	\$983,523	\$995,728	\$1,094,516	\$1,243,550
Excise Taxes	\$67,272	\$58,178	\$60,803	\$70,924	\$74,260	\$77,555
State Revenue Sharing	\$7,130	\$4,196	\$9,147	\$12,515	\$19,301	\$21,112
Interest	\$1,737	\$2,280	\$2,101	\$433	\$390	\$5,535
Interest & Fees on Delinquent Taxes	\$2,905	\$4,506	\$2,575	\$1,911	\$1,812	\$2,593
Grants & Donations	\$8,700	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$66,338	\$0
Other Revenues	\$3,932	\$1,736	\$1,109	\$2,340	\$9,057	\$2,997
Total	\$1,001,107	\$973,174	\$1,059,258	\$1,083,851	\$1,265,674	\$1,353,342

Source: Town of Sorrento annual audits

6. Expenditures

From 2018 to 2023, Sorrento’s total budget increased by 24% in real terms when accounting for inflation, primarily driven by significant increases in education, health and sanitation, and general government expenditures.

Education, the largest budget item, accounted for 44.5% of the budget in 2023, with \$720,424 allocated. Over the past six years, education spending rose by 57% in nominal terms. After adjusting for inflation, this translates to a 47% real increase, reflecting growing costs in local schools.

Health and sanitation expenditures grew by 56% nominally, or 45% in real terms, reaching \$55,823 in 2023. This increase suggests a significant rise in solid waste disposal costs.

General government spending also saw a notable rise, growing by 51% in nominal terms, or 40% in real terms, reaching \$204,055 in 2023. This increase reflects higher administrative and operational costs over the period.

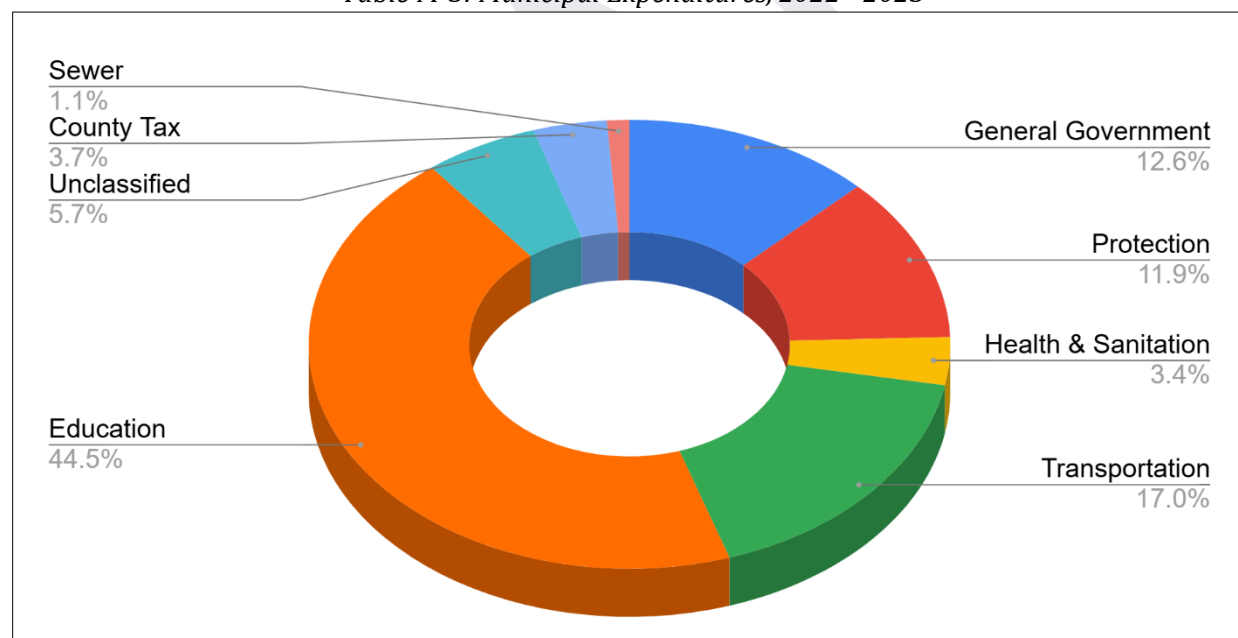
While transportation is the second-largest expenditure, making up 17% of the budget in 2023, its growth has been more modest. Nominally, it grew by 16.8%, but after adjusting for inflation, the real increase is around 6%, indicating steady but less pronounced growth compared to education and other areas.

Table M-2: Municipal Expenditures, 2018 - 2023

Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
General Government	\$134,953	\$132,221	\$136,122	\$94,664	\$201,902	\$204,055
Protection	\$203,678	\$175,477	\$235,405	\$166,459	\$193,532	\$192,717
Health & Sanitation	\$35,545	\$36,712	\$29,423	\$41,656	\$41,081	\$55,823
Transportation	\$236,200	\$234,247	\$272,871	\$240,054	\$260,878	\$275,861
Education	\$456,285	\$439,186	\$529,360	\$536,687	\$617,685	\$720,424
Unclassified	\$67,427	\$62,392	\$63,056	\$56,370	\$81,805	\$93,073
County Tax	\$45,261	\$47,478	\$49,383	\$51,117	\$54,495	\$60,091
Sewer	\$17,420	\$19,066	\$16,955	\$14,477	\$20,304	\$18,288
Total	\$1,196,769	\$1,146,779	\$1,332,575	\$1,201,484	\$1,471,682	\$1,620,332

Source: Town of Sorrento annual audits

Table M-3: Municipal Expenditures, 2022 - 2023



Source: Annual Town Report

7. Valuation

Sorrento's property tax system is based on the valuation of both real and personal property, established at the state and municipal levels. The State Valuation, determined annually by Maine Revenue Services, reflects the town's estimated full market value and is primarily used to calculate county taxes and state education subsidies. The Municipal Valuation represents the total assessed

value of taxable property within the town and serves as the basis for setting local property tax rates. Sorrento's most recent revaluation was done in 2024.

Over the past decade, Sorrento's State Valuation has risen steadily—from \$105.05 million in 2015 to \$162.8 million in 2025—marking an increase of more than 50%. The most recent Municipal Valuation, reported in 2024, was \$207.33 million following a town wide revaluation. Continued increases in State and municipal Valuation point to appreciating property values in Sorrento, with potential implications for future tax revenues and long-term fiscal planning. The last revaluation was likely over thirty years ago and no clear date has been recorded.

Compared to other Hancock County towns—particularly those with coastal frontage—Sorrento ranks in the bottom third for total municipal valuation. This is largely due to its small land area, with only 2,494 taxable acres, limited commercial development, and a significant portion of land in conservation. In contrast, neighboring Sullivan's 2025 State Valuation is nearly double Sorrento's, with 16,073 taxable acres. Winter Harbor, with a comparable year-round population, also has nearly twice the valuation and 4,207 taxable acres.

This limited valuation base has important implications for Sorrento's ability to sustain municipal services, as a smaller tax base must support similar infrastructure and administrative costs as other coastal towns.

Table M-4: State and Municipal Valuations, 2015 - 2025

	State	Municipal
2025	\$162,800,000	\$207,334,400
2024	\$147,600,000	\$207,334,400
2023	\$133,600,000	\$111,583,800
2022	\$127,600,000	\$111,166,100
2021	\$116,500,000	\$108,659,400
2020	\$111,300,000	\$107,611,800
2019	\$109,750,000	\$107,066,900
2018	\$107,200,000	\$106,490,500
2017	\$105,450,000	\$106,209,800
2016	\$106,300,000	\$105,915,500
2015	\$105,050,000	\$105,277,800

8. Tax Rate

In Maine, property taxes are based on a "mil rate," which is the tax charged for every \$1,000 of a property's assessed value. The rate is set by dividing the total amount the town needs to raise for services—like schools and the county—by the total value of all taxable property in town. Between 2017 and 2024, Sorrento's mil rate rose by 47% to 11.90. The municipal revaluation in 2024, which raised the total town valuation from \$111.413 million to \$207.334 million resulted in a decrease in the town mil rate to 7.90. Property owners are shouldering almost the entirety of municipal costs, which can raise concerns about long-term affordability for year-round residents and highlight the financial challenges of supporting the increasing cost of services without significant development or valuation growth.

Sorrento’s 2024-2025 tax rate of \$7.90 is the lowest among neighboring towns, compared to Winter Harbor (\$12.52), Sullivan (\$14.00), and Franklin (\$13.00). While this lower rate benefits property owners, it also suggests that Sorrento may face challenges in generating enough revenue to fund municipal services, given its smaller tax base.

Table M-5: Sorrento Tax Rate, 2017 - 2024

Fiscal Year	Tax Rate
2024-2025	\$7.90
2023-2024	\$11.90
2022-2023	\$11.10
2021-2022	\$10.00
2020-2021	\$9.10
2019-2020	\$9.10
2018-2019	\$8.40
2017-2018	\$8.10

Figure M-1: Regional Comparison of Tax Rates, FY24



9. Municipal Debt

Sorrento has had no outstanding long-term debt obligations in recent years and has not carried any debt within the past five years. The last time Sorrento has debt was in 2014-2015 when a new sewer outfall was constructed. Under Maine law, municipal debt limits are based on the town’s “full state valuation” as certified annually by the State. The general-purpose debt limit is 7.5% of that valuation, with higher limits allowed for specific categories such as school construction (10%), storm or sanitary sewers (7.5%), and municipal airports (3%). However, the total combined debt

for all categories may not exceed 15% of the municipality's full state valuation. As of 2025, Sorrento's certified State Valuation is \$162,800,000, giving the town an overall statutory debt limit of \$24.42 million.

Municipal debt generally funds major capital improvements and provides certainty in annual payments for budget purposes. For Sorrento, this could include improvements to municipal roads or publicly owned buildings or structures like the town pier. Maintaining the capacity to borrow money allows the town to execute projects on a timely basis when reserve fund balances are inadequate or in the event of an emergency.

10. Capital and Long-Term Improvements

Sorrento funds most of its capital and long-term improvement needs through a series of designated reserve accounts and government grants, rather than large annual appropriations or the issuance of municipal debt. Between 2018 and 2024, the town consistently contributed to key reserves such as the Fire Truck Fund, which grew from \$57,542 in 2018 to \$117,699 in 2023, and the Storm Water Catch Basin Fund, which was maintained at \$15,000 annually. A notable increase occurred in 2023 with a \$30,000 deposit into the Community Building Improvement Reserve, and in 2024, the town established two new reserves: \$50,000 for Local Roads and \$20,000 for Contingency. The Local Roads reserve fund is based on the estimated cost to pave and maintain 7 miles of paved roadways in 15 year cycles. The Contingency reserve is just that. The town demonstrates a proactive but modest approach to planning for future infrastructure and equipment needs. Recent improvements include the replacement of the floats and gangway at the town pier (funded through the harbor sinking fund and a state grant) and renovation of the community building heating and electrical systems. The town is budgeting to continue improvements to the Community Building to allow it to function as a state recognized warming shelter and recently received grant funding from the state to assist that project. The town has also received a significant grant from the Maine Infrastructure Adaptation Fund to improve stormwater management in the Waukeag Ave and Main St area to supplement local funds from the storm water reserve.

In January 2024, Sorrento's south facing coastline and significant sections of Ocean Avenue were damaged by winter storms which were subsequently deemed federal disasters. Sorrento is working its way through recovery under FEMA's Public Assistance program and has been obligated funding to complete repairs to Ocean Avenue and to mitigate the impact on public infrastructure in future storms. Sorrento's municipal budget has provided for the necessary local fund match in the most recent budget cycles. The work was performed in the summer and fall of 2025.

Table M-6: Town Funds

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Harbor Sinking Fund	\$12,080	\$7,856	-	\$0	\$2,105	\$0	\$2,626
Fire Truck	\$57,542	\$72,591	\$87,639	\$102,673	\$117,699	\$132,951	\$138,484
Community Building Improvement Reserve	\$1,356	\$1,356	\$1,356	\$1,356	\$1,356	\$30,000	\$15,000
Capital Improvements	\$56,596	\$61,703	\$51,806	\$31,882	\$11,939	\$4,001	\$19,513

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Storm Water Catch Basin	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$0
FEMA Matching Fund	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$50,000
Local Roads Capital Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	\$50,000	\$50,000
Contingency Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	\$20,000	\$20,000
Fishermen's Floats	\$5,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$1,373	\$22,260	\$11,900	\$0

11. Capital Investment Plan

The goal of the Capital Investment Plan is to identify and prioritize fixed asset needs exceeding \$25,000 anticipated in the next 10 years and to identify funding requirements and sources.

Table M-7: Capital Investment Plan

Project	Description	Priority	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Timeline
Community Building Improvements	Major renovations and expansion of functionalities	High	\$75,000–\$150,000	Capital Reserve Funds, Grants (CDBG, USDA Community Facilities), Local Bonds	2025–2028
Town Roads Improvements, Rebuilding, and Repairs	Paving, drainage upgrades, and reconstruction of aging local roads	High	\$500,000–\$600,000	Local Roads Reserve,	Ongoing (2025–2035)
Waterfront Storm Damage Mitigation & Rebuilding	Seawall stabilization, erosion control, dock repairs, and resilience measures	High	\$1,150,000–\$1,500,000	FEMA/MEMA, Harbor Fund, Coastal Resilience Grants	2025–2029

12. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Maintain Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability While Planning for Infrastructure Investment and Community Resilience			
Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Plan Strategically for Capital and Infrastructure Needs	Explore grant opportunities for major infrastructure and shoreline resiliency projects, particularly those related to stormwater, flood mitigation, broadband, and public facilities.	Climate Resilience Committee, HCPC, Selectboard	1-2 years
	Explore the feasibility of low-interest loans or other financing tools to fund public infrastructure improvements, including culverts, roads, and harbor infrastructure.	Selectboard	1 year
	Hold periodic public budget forums to engage residents in long-range fiscal planning and communicate the Town's 10- to 20-year capital outlook.	Budget Committee, Selectboard	Ongoing
	Consider the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for eligible commercial development, especially as a tool to fund public waterfront improvements.	Selectboard	2 years
	Ensure the Town maintains its state-mandated revaluation schedule to preserve predictability in property taxation.	Selectboard	Ongoing
Strengthen Financial Management and Documentation	Continue improving fiscal processes, documentation, and systems, including support for the budget committee and town staff.	Selectboard	Ongoing
	Consider hiring an external financial consultant to assist with developing a long-term financial strategy, particularly when evaluating large infrastructure investments or potential debt issuance.	Selectboard, Budget Committee	1 year
Coordinate Fiscal Planning Regionally	*Explore opportunities to collaborate with neighboring towns on shared capital investments or service delivery to reduce costs and increase efficiency.	SALT, Selectboard	Ongoing
	Coordinate emergency preparedness funding strategies to address repair and mitigation of storm-related damage to roads, culverts, and public buildings, including identifying FEMA eligibility or other state and federal resources.	Climate Resilience Committee, HCPC, Selectboard	1 year-ongoing
	Remain active in regional municipal organizations.	SALT	Ongoing
	Continue to work with surrounding Schoodic Towns in an organized manner.	SALT	Ongoing

Chapter N: Existing Land Use

1. Purpose

This chapter focuses on current and potential future land use patterns in Sorrento. An understanding of land use trends is particularly important in determining Sorrento's ability to absorb future growth. Specifically, this chapter:

1. Reviews the estimated acreage and locations of Sorrento's developed and undeveloped land;
2. Examines the potential for new development in the next ten years and Sorrento's capacity to absorb the growth and lays the groundwork for the next chapter on future land use.

2. Key Findings and Issues

The majority of Sorrento's land area is forested. Residential use, while the major land use activity, is concentrated along the Town's principal arteries, shorefront areas, and in the village area. Overall, soils are not conducive to any form of intense development. There are few regulations currently in place which guide or direct new growth. However, minimal growth is anticipated over the coming decade.

3. Land Use Patterns

3.1. Overview of Sorrento's Development

Sorrento is a small, primarily residential, coastal town with a strong emphasis on its waterfront and rural character. The town's development is shaped by its shoreline access, natural topography, and history rooted in its early establishment as a summer resort and as well as a fishing community. Historically, Sorrento was settled first in the village area. As with most towns, growth occurred where it made the most economic sense - near the harbor and landing in Sorrento Village. Growth extended along the major roadways which also hugged the coast, offering scenic views of the ocean. The majority of developed land in the Town is residential, with single-family homes scattered throughout the area. Seasonal homes and vacation properties make up a significant portion of the housing stock, highlighting Sorrento's appeal as a coastal retreat. Lot sizes vary, with older homes situated on smaller parcels and newer developments typically occupying larger tracts of land.

3.2. Geography, Topography, and Undeveloped Land

The total area of Sorrento is approximately 14.11 square miles, of which 3.99 square miles (2,553.6 acres) is land and 10.12 square miles (6,476.8 acres) is water. This makes it the smallest town in Hancock County by land area. There are approximately 900 acres of vacant, undeveloped land in Sorrento plus another 1,700 acres of additional undeveloped land on improved lots. Not all of this land is developable due to lot configuration, road access, wetlands, and topography, but the numbers here provide an approximation of Sorrento's build-out potential.

Sorrento's topography includes hilly terrain in the northern and southern inland parts of town, while the coastal and eastern-western edges are relatively level. The majority of soils are thin till deposits, which are poorly suited for development with on-site sewage disposal or agricultural use. Importantly, this means a large portion of Sorrento's undeveloped land features soils with low or very low potential for even low-density development. Approximately __ acres, or __% of the town's land area, fall into this category.

3.3. Open Space and Conservation

Large portions of interior Sorrento remain undeveloped, including forested areas, wetlands, and coastal buffers. These natural spaces, some of which are privately owned and others conserved for environmental protection, offer wildlife habitat and scenic beauty.

3.4. Commercial and Economic Landscape

Commercial activity in Sorrento is limited. Businesses include a dentist office, a boatyard, several marine seafood businesses, and a VIA which caters to seasonal visitors.

3.5. The Waterfront

Sorrento's waterfront is a defining feature of the town. The harbor and coastline are home to maritime industries, such as fishing and lobstering, and provide access for recreational boating. The town's Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District ensures the protection of these water-dependent industries, preserving the area's historical and economic connection to the sea. Waterfront access is essential for local fishermen as well as year-round residents and seasonal visitors.

3.6. Public, Institutional, and Recreational Land Uses

Public and institutional land uses are limited but essential to community functioning, including the town office, fire station, community building, library building, Village Green, pollinator meadow, and recreational areas. These spaces cater to both residents and visitors, offering opportunities for outdoor recreation and community gatherings. Additionally, Sorrento contains several cemeteries and historical sites that reflect its long history.

Beyond public spaces and buildings, Sorrento also offers privately owned recreational opportunities that contribute to its community life. The Sorrento Golf Course, a nine-hole course, attracts both local residents and visitors, offering a scenic setting for outdoor leisure activities. Integrated into the town's natural landscape, the golf course adds to the area's appeal among seasonal visitors. Furthermore, the Village Improvement Association (VIA) provides additional recreational facilities.

3.7. Looking to the Future: Managing Growth

Looking to the future, Sorrento will need to balance residential growth with the preservation of its waterfront and natural areas. Managing the town's seasonal and year-round housing needs,

protecting the working waterfront, and maintaining land use regulations that align with floodplain and shoreland zoning standards will be key to preserving the town's unique character.

4. Recent Development

Recent development in Sorrento has been relatively modest, in keeping with the town's rural and residential character. There has been some growth in seasonal and vacation homes, particularly along the waterfront, as more people seek coastal retreats (see Chapter C: Housing). This development is primarily concentrated in areas near the village center and along key roads offering scenic ocean views. However, the most notable trend in recent years is the replacement of older summer homes with larger, modern residences. Many of these older homes have been torn down and replaced with new structures that reflect updated design preferences and higher property values, signaling a shift toward more substantial seasonal homes. Additionally, most, if not all, of these properties have been upgraded for year-round use. While these homes are still largely used as summer residences, the upgrades for year-round living further increase the town's residential capacity.

5. Regulations

Shoreland Zoning Ordinance (June 2021)

This ordinance establishes land use regulations for areas within 250 feet of the normal high-water line of great ponds, rivers, and coastal waters, and within 75 feet of streams and wetlands. It aims to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and scenic resources while regulating activities such as construction, tree removal, and land clearing. The ordinance outlines zoning districts, permitted and prohibited uses, dimensional requirements (such as minimum lot sizes and setbacks), and performance standards for development in shoreland areas. The primary districts defined in the ordinance include:

Resource Protection District

This district includes areas where development could harm water quality, wildlife habitat, or other critical natural features. It typically covers wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, and other sensitive areas. Development is highly restricted to protect ecological integrity, with strict limits on new structures, clearing, and other land-altering activities.

Limited Residential District

This district is primarily for residential and recreational uses that are compatible with the natural shoreland environment. While homes and accessory structures are allowed, regulations ensure that development does not negatively impact water quality or scenic character. Standards include setbacks from the water, lot size requirements, and restrictions on vegetation removal to preserve natural buffers.

Limited Commercial District

This district allows for low-intensity commercial uses that fit within the shoreland setting, such as small businesses or service-oriented establishments. Development must follow

environmental protection measures, including restrictions on impervious surfaces, waste management guidelines, and visual impact considerations to maintain the character of the area.

General Development I District

Intended for areas suitable for concentrated mixed-use development, this district permits commercial, industrial, and higher-density residential activities. Regulations ensure that larger-scale developments comply with environmental safeguards, such as erosion control, wastewater management, and buffer zone protections.

General Development II District

Similar to General Development I but designated for even more intensive land use activities. This district may include areas with existing commercial infrastructure, such as marinas, working waterfronts, or industrial zones. The ordinance includes additional standards to balance economic activity with environmental sustainability.

Commercial Fisheries/Maritime Activities District

This district is specifically designated to support and protect maritime industries, such as commercial fishing, aquaculture, and marine-related businesses. It ensures that waterfront areas remain available for working waterfront activities, preventing the displacement of maritime industries by incompatible development. Regulations promote water-dependent uses while limiting non-maritime development that could interfere with traditional fishing and boating operations.

Street Naming and Property Numbering Ordinance (Amended June 8, 2021)

This ordinance ensures an organized system for naming streets and assigning property numbers, improving emergency response times and navigation. It requires property owners to display assigned numbers in a visible location and prohibits duplicate or confusing street names. The 911 Addressing Officer oversees enforcement, and penalties may be imposed for noncompliance.

Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Conservation Interlocal Agreement (Amended January 27, 2022)

This agreement between Sorrento and nearby towns establishes a regional approach to shellfish conservation and management. It creates a Municipal Joint Board responsible for enforcing shellfish harvesting regulations, managing conservation efforts, and setting policies for licensing and resource sustainability. The agreement helps protect local shellfish populations through conservation closures, monitoring programs, and habitat preservation efforts.

Harbor Ordinance (Amended October 17, 2022)

The ordinance regulates mooring and boating activities within Sorrento's harbors and waterways to maintain navigational safety and fair access. It defines harbor limits, establishes the authority of the Harbor Master, and sets rules for mooring assignments, usage fees, and vessel anchoring. The ordinance also addresses abandoned or derelict vessels, ensuring they do not pose hazards to navigation or environmental risks.

Floodplain Management Ordinance (May 2016)

Sorrento participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and complies with the requirements of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 to minimize flood-related risks. The Code Enforcement Officer is responsible for administering and enforcing Sorrento's Floodplain Management Ordinance, ensuring that development within designated flood hazard areas aligns with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and State of Maine regulations. Sorrento made revisions to its Floodplain maps, which were revalidated by FEMA. However, in 2020, FEMA updated the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), which delineate areas at risk of flooding, and the State of Maine subsequently drafted an updated Floodplain Management Ordinance to reflect the new maps and current FEMA standards. As a result, Sorrento will need to update its Floodplain Ordinance and ensure that accompanying maps reflect these changes.

Parking Ordinance (November 1994)

This ordinance aims to prevent traffic congestion and safety hazards by regulating parking in designated public areas and along specific roads. It establishes no-parking zones, time-limited parking areas, and penalties for violations, including towing of illegally parked vehicles. The ordinance ensures clear passage for emergency vehicles and reduces obstructions in high-traffic areas.

6. Administrative Capacity

The code enforcement officer is limited to enforcing shoreland zoning and reviewing building permits, but construction plans are not reviewed for conformity. The Town has gone through several code enforcement officers in the last decade. Members of the planning board tend to have a number of other responsibilities with other Town committees due to the limited pool of volunteers. This limits the Town's administrative capacity to review and update ordinances.

7. Future Development

Sorrento has very limited capacity for additional development due to its small size, the conservation of several large properties in the village area, lack of sewer infrastructure, and topographical and soil constraints. These factors make it difficult to accommodate significant growth without straining the town's resources. The availability of land for new development is further limited by the number of large properties owned by multigenerational families and the extent of coastal land within the shoreland zone. Minimal to no commercial or institutional growth is anticipated over the next 10 years, with only a minor amount of residential growth expected, according to historical building permit data and population projections (see Chapter A: Population and Chapter C: Housing for more information).

If Sorrento continues to grow at the same rate as the previous 10 years of building permit data, Sorrento would anticipate an additional 2-3 units per year, or between 20 and 30 new units over the next 10 years. At the minimum lot size of 20,000 sq. ft., this would be an additional 11.48 acres for 25 new units.

While there is a clear and growing need for both seasonal and year-round housing, Sorrento must carefully balance fulfilling this demand with preserving its character as a tranquil coastal retreat. Careful management of future development will be crucial to prevent overburdening the town's infrastructure and environment. Protecting Sorrento's scenic beauty and rural charm requires ensuring that any development is aligned with the town's environmental conservation goals and that its infrastructure is equipped to support the needs of both seasonal and permanent residents without compromising the town's quality of life.

Sorrento must assess the adequacy of its existing land use regulations to accommodate growth, particularly for year-round housing, while safeguarding the town's unique identity. This includes protecting the town's forested lands, coastline, and overall natural resources. Thoughtful planning and potential updates to land use policies will be essential in guiding sustainable development that respects the community's values and ensures a high quality of life for all who live in and visit Sorrento.

Chapter O: Future Land Use

1. Purpose

This section discusses likely future land use patterns in Sorrento. An understanding of land use trends is particularly important in determining Sorrento's ability to manage future growth and protect the varied interests of all residents. Specifically, this chapter:

1. Attempts to predict growth scenarios for the town;
2. Identifies land areas suitable and/or unsuitable for potential growth over the next ten years;
3. Describes options for growth management; and
4. Provides a set of steps that can be taken to engage residents in the growth management process.

2. Introduction

Sorrento's Future Land Use Plan outlines a framework to guide the location, scale, and character of future development in a way that aligns with Sorrento's distinctive geography as a peninsula community and development limitations. It is grounded in local values—protecting Sorrento's small-town character, preserving natural and scenic resources, and maintaining local autonomy. It provides a flexible approach to development, recognizing that Sorrento aims for carefully managed, small-scale growth that supports its residents and seasonal community, protects its shoreline and marine industries, and preserves its undeveloped spaces.

Aligned with the community's vision for the future, the plan protects the qualities that residents cherish about Sorrento while addressing concerns about overdevelopment and the loss of town character and lack of locally affordable housing. In doing so, it strikes a balance between preserving what residents already have, critical rural and shoreline areas, and identifying suitable locations for limited growth—particularly near the Route 1 corridor, where favorable soil conditions, accessibility, and regional coordination create opportunities for appropriate development.

The plan identifies functional land use areas: growth, transitional, and rural, each with recommended policies and guiding principles. These areas **are not regulatory zones** but strategic designations that help inform local land use decision-making, infrastructure investment, and natural resource protection.

Key terms defined:

- **Growth Area:** An area designated as suitable for orderly residential, commercial, or industrial development, or any combination thereof, into which most development projected over 10 years is directed.
- **Rural Area:** A geographic area identified and designated as deserving some level of regulatory protection from unrestricted development. Purposes may include supporting

- **Transitional Area:** Transitional Areas are places designated as suitable for a portion of projected residential, commercial, or industrial development. These areas are not intended to accommodate the amount or density of development appropriate for Growth Areas, nor do they require the same level of protection afforded to Rural Areas. Instead, they serve as a middle ground—appropriate for limited development that is compatible with the surrounding context, helping to buffer and guide the transition between more developed and more conserved parts of the community.
- **Mixed-use development** refers to a development or planning approach that combines multiple compatible land uses—such as residential, commercial, civic, or recreational—within a single area.

[illegible]

Q2. Concerns about Sorrento's Future



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3. Overview

Sorrento's residents favor a balanced approach to land use, one that supports small-scale, community-driven development while safeguarding the natural environment and preventing large, disruptive projects. The overwhelming desire to maintain local control over land use is coupled with a resistance to overly restrictive regulations.

When asked about land uses in the 2023 Community Engagement Survey, the majority of respondents opposed mining, manufacturing, industrial-scale businesses, gravel pits, quarries, inns, hotels, bed and breakfasts, and commercial-scale short-term rentals anywhere in Sorrento. Opinions on other land use categories were more mixed regarding where they should be allowed, but residential and seasonal rental properties received the strongest support for being permitted throughout the town. There was also notable support for designating specific areas for marine uses. However, a significant portion of year-round residents expressed opposition to wind farms, workforce housing, and affordable housing in Sorrento.

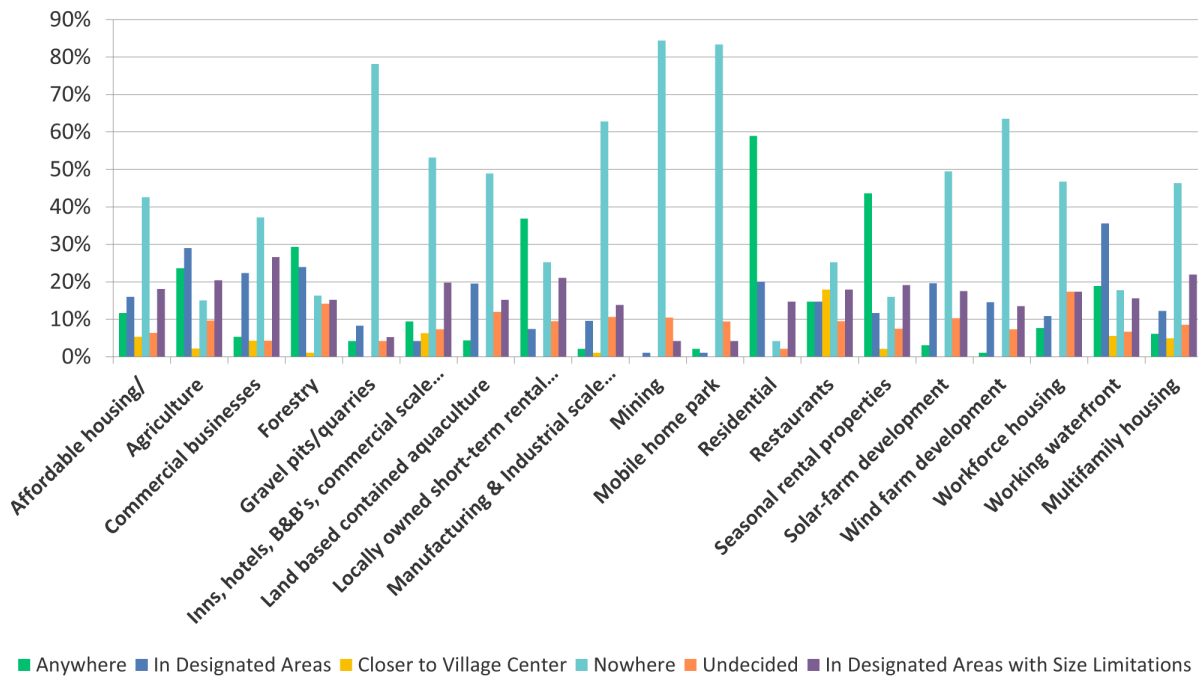
Key desires and conclusions about land use in Sorrento include:

- a. **Preservation of Small-Town Character:** Residents strongly oppose large-scale developments, such as resorts or large scale, multi-unit residential buildings such as apartment buildings or housing complexes, viewing them as out of character for the area.

This reflects the community's commitment to maintaining Sorrento's rural, small-town charm, which is central to the town's identity.

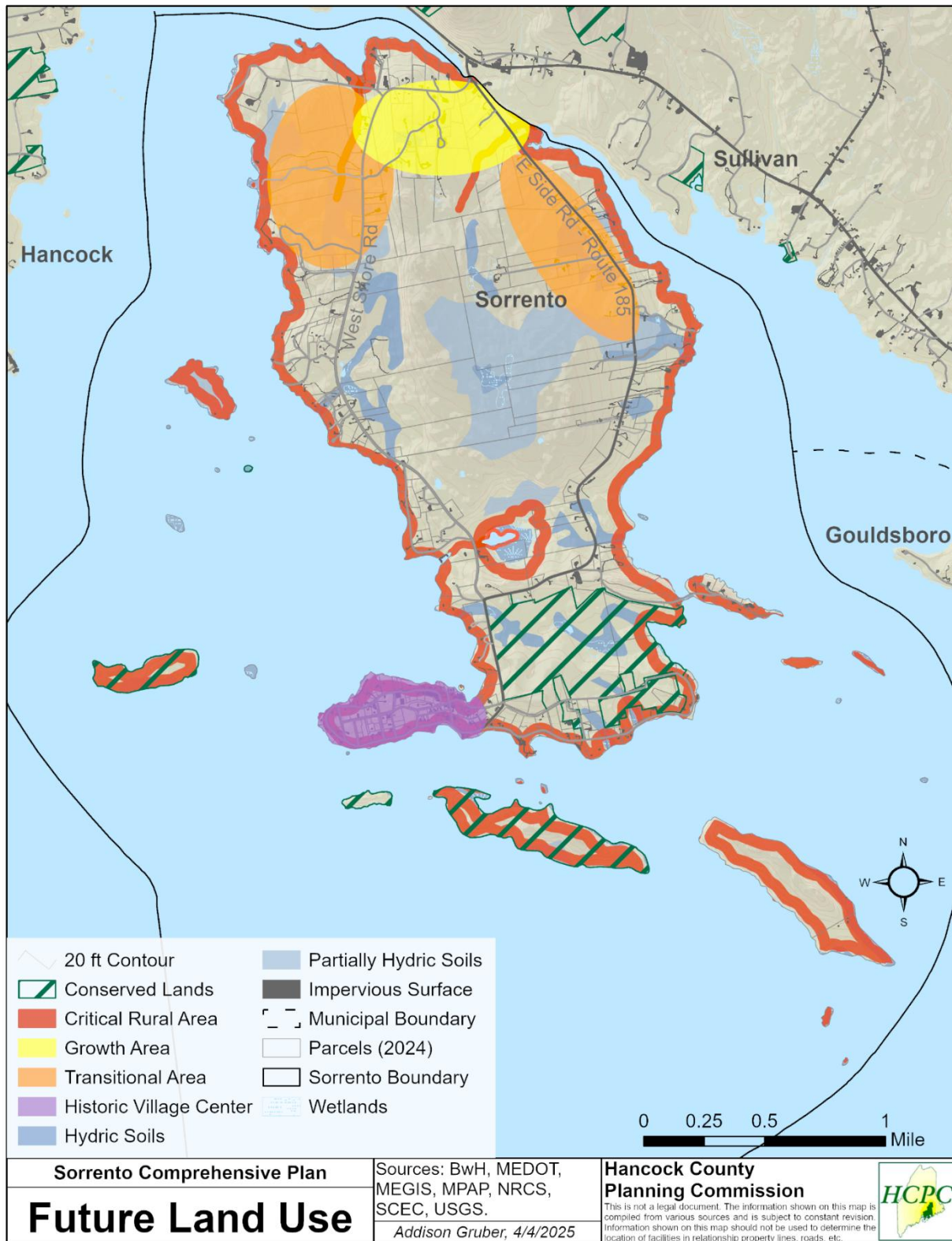
- b. **Limited Growth and Development:** There is little interest in expanding the village area, adding street lighting, or increasing parking. This suggests a preference for minimal growth and a desire to protect the quieter, more undeveloped areas of the town.
- c. **Support for Small Businesses:** While large-scale commercial enterprises face opposition, there is support for small businesses. This highlights a preference for localized, community-oriented commerce that aligns with the town's scale and character. Ensuring that businesses can thrive without overwhelming the town's scale is a key priority.
- d. **Protection of the Natural Environment:** Residents of Sorrento place a high value on preserving the town's natural environment. Minimizing environmental impacts, including reducing light pollution, is a key priority for the community. There is a strong commitment to protecting the town's landscapes, ensuring that development does not harm the surrounding natural beauty and ecosystems.
- e. **Protection of Waterfront and Marine Industries:** The community is deeply focused on safeguarding waterfront businesses and maintaining the aesthetic qualities of the shoreline. Protecting access to marine resources and uses is a critical concern, as the town recognizes the importance of marine industries to its economy and identity. Residents are committed to ensuring the waterfront remains a sustainable and active hub for both commercial and local recreational maritime activities.
- f. **Resistance to Industrial and Extractive Industries:** Broad opposition to industrial and extractive industries further reflects a commitment to preserving the town's natural landscape and residential character. Residents are determined to prevent large-scale industrial activities that could disrupt the area's tranquility and environment.
- g. **Skepticism Toward Regulations:** Despite concerns about growth and development, many residents are wary of land use regulations. This indicates a preference for greater autonomy over their own property, suggesting that the community is cautious about policies that might restrict landowners' rights.

Q6: Please check where you feel it is most appropriate for the following land uses to occur in the future – Year-Round Only



4. Future Land Use Designations

As mentioned in the introduction, the proposed land use designations ***are not zoning districts*** but **functional areas** intended to guide the direction of future ordinances, development review processes, and conservation priorities. The land use areas that follow each include a **vision statement** and a set of **goals and strategies** tailored to the area's physical characteristics, development suitability, and community priorities. Collectively, they provide a roadmap for thoughtful land use decisions that will sustain Sorrento's identity and quality of life over the next decade and beyond. The colored ovals on the map below are rough estimates of the boundaries of these areas.



4.1. Historic Village Area

4.1.1. Vision

The historic village center should retain its charm and significance to Sorrento, despite limited capacity for growth. Efforts should focus on preserving the area’s appeal while acknowledging that it is already built beyond current growth standards and vulnerable to sea level rise.

4.1.2. Description

Sorrento’s village core is a compact, walkable area. Defined by its late 19th- and early 20th-century architecture, the village includes historic homes, cottages, tennis and croquet courts, the library, the summer chapel, and proximity to the waterfront, including the town dock and boat launch. It features a mix of seasonal and year-round residences and is home to several cultural landmarks and gathering spaces that reflect the town’s heritage as a summer resort and its ongoing community life.

The village’s charm, small scale, and pedestrian-friendly layout are central to Sorrento’s identity, offering a sense of place that is valued by residents and visitors alike. Its layout reflects traditional New England planning patterns, with modest homes, narrow roads, and informal public spaces that promote walkability and neighborly interaction.

However, the village area faces significant limitations that challenge future growth and reinvestment. There is concern that many properties are undersized for adequate septic capacity, especially given that much of the village is underlain by poorly drained, shallow, or otherwise unsuitable soils for conventional wastewater treatment. The village is also located in a low-lying coastal area, making it increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, storm surge, and flooding.

These physical constraints—combined with aging infrastructure and limited space for expansion—mean that the village is essentially built out by today’s development standards. As a result, any future development or redevelopment must be carefully planned to maintain the character of the village while addressing these environmental and infrastructure concerns. Policies that support adaptive reuse of historic structures, septic system upgrades, and climate-resilient design will be essential to preserving the village’s role as the center of civic life in Sorrento.

4.1.3. Objectives & Strategies

Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Maintain Traditional Village Character	Emphasize the preservation of existing historical buildings and architectural features that define the village’s character.	Sullivan Sorrento Historical Society, Planning Board	Ongoing

Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
	Implement design guidelines that ensure new developments respect the scale, style, and materials of the village, preventing the area from losing its historical appeal.	Planning Board, HCPC	2 years
Ensure Adequate Soil Conditions and Stormwater Management	Protect public health, water quality, and environmental integrity by requiring that new development meet standards for both soil suitability and private septic systems.	Planning Board	2 years
	Encourage responsible site design by establishing minimum lot sizes, setbacks, and impervious surface limits based on local soil characteristics and septic capacity.	HCPC, Selectboard, Planning Board	2 years
	In the village core—where compact lots, shallow soils, and aging infrastructure converge—include stormwater management practices that reduce runoff, prevent erosion, and limit impacts to surface waters and neighboring properties. Strategies may include vegetated buffers, rain gardens, permeable paving, and green infrastructure solutions.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years
Support a mixed-use village core	Promote limited residential growth where appropriate, low-impact commercial activity, and reuse of existing buildings to maintain the area's historic and civic identity.	Selectboard, Planning Board	Ongoing
Promote Pedestrian Access and Safety	Improve pedestrian infrastructure, including wayfinding systems, and traffic calming measures, to enhance safety and connectivity within the village	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	4 years

4.2. Waterfront Area

4.2.1. Vision

Preserve and support Sorrento's working and recreational waterfronts as community assets.

4.2.2. Description

Sorrento's waterfront is a defining feature of the town's identity, culture, and economy. It includes critical access points for commercial lobstering, shellfish harvesting, and other marine industries, as well as recreational boating and fishing. The town dock and boat launch provide essential

infrastructure for both working and recreational waterfront users, supporting Sorrento’s legacy as a coastal fishing village and summer destination.

The shoreline is also home to scenic vistas, rocky beaches, and a mix of seasonal and year-round homes. The Village Area provides a popular walking loop along the waterfront that is a cherished part of daily life for residents and seasonal visitors alike, offering opportunities for recreation, social connection, and appreciation of Sorrento’s natural and historic beauty. This loop reinforces the community’s relationship with the coast and contributes meaningfully to quality of life and the town’s unique sense of place. These views and waterfront experiences are central to how people experience Sorrento and play a major role in property values and local identity.

The working waterfront—though relatively small in scale compared to more industrialized harbors—is vital to local livelihoods, particularly for lobstermen who depend on access to the bay. Protecting access for marine businesses and ensuring that the waterfront remains functional—not just picturesque—is a key concern for residents who wish to maintain Sorrento’s traditional connection to the sea.

At the same time, the waterfront faces pressures from climate change, sea level rise, private development, and seasonal demand. Ensuring a balance between recreational, residential, and commercial uses—while preserving access and the natural beauty of the shoreline—is essential to maintaining the waterfront’s long-term viability and character.

4.2.3. Objectives & Strategies

Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Protect Public Waterfront Access	Ensure that designated public access points (e.g., boat launches, docks, and fishing areas) are preserved and maintained for community use.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	Ongoing
Protect Scenic Ocean Views	Protect views that are visible from public roads and other key vantage points. This approach ensures these areas are respected for both the natural beauty and property rights of landowners.	Selectboard, Planning Board	Ongoing
	Continue to look into climate resilient solutions to shoreline stabilization on public lands. Coordinate projects with private land owners.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	Ongoing
Revise Commercial Fisheries Zone Boundaries	Revisit the boundaries of the commercial zone to ensure they accurately reflect the working waterfront areas, focusing on locations that are actively used for marine industries such as fishing, boatyards, docks, and marinas. The boundaries should be realistic, accommodating both current uses and potential future needs.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years

4.3. Route 1 Growth Area

4.3.1. Vision

In order to protect Sorrento's rural and coastal character in accordance with the stated desires of the residents, consider thoughtfully planned, small-scale commercial and residential growth in a manner that complements Sorrento's rural and coastal character and meets the desire of the residents of the town to limit the possibility of undesirable development while leveraging the area's relative accessibility and infrastructure capacity. If demand for potential moderate growth materializes, a growth area near Route 1 would help minimize traffic impacts on the rest of the peninsula, especially the narrow and residential village roads that are not well-suited for increased volumes. Concentrating new growth close to the town line allows for better traffic flow, emergency access, and transportation connections, reducing pressure on Sorrento's more fragile coastal and interior road networks.

4.3.2. Description

This corridor, located near the Route 1/Sullivan town line, has the most favorable soils and accessibility for future development. Its location at the entry point to the Sorrento peninsula along a major transportation route, combined with relatively flat topography and developable soils, makes it suitable for modest residential and mixed-use growth. Unlike the more constrained and environmentally sensitive coastal areas of Sorrento, this inland corridor presents a practical opportunity to accommodate additional housing at a scale and cost that better meets the needs of year-round residents.

If demand for potential growth materializes, consider designating a growth area near Route 1. This would help minimize traffic impacts on the rest of the peninsula, especially the narrow and residential village roads that are not well-suited for increased volumes. Concentrating new development close to the town line allows for better traffic flow, emergency access, and transportation connections, reducing pressure on Sorrento's more fragile coastal and interior road networks.

This area's proximity to Sullivan creates a unique opportunity for regional coordination. Planning efforts could explore shared services, transportation improvements, or infrastructure investments that benefit both communities. Development in this corridor should prioritize year-round needs while preserving open space and ensuring that new growth complements Sorrento's small-town character and values.

4.3.3. Goals and Strategies

Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Support Residential and Commercial	Consider development primarily within the Route 1 growth area, discouraging sprawl into Sorrento's contiguous undeveloped lands.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	Ongoing

Expansion Along Route 1 Growth Area			
Minimize Lot Sizes and Dimensional Requirements	Reduce lot sizes and dimensional requirements as appropriate, based on septic system needs, to promote efficient land use and allow for more flexibility.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years
Support Mixed-Use Development	Accommodate mixed-use development that combines housing with small-scale businesses serving local needs.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	Ongoing
Incorporate Low-Impact Development Practices	Encourage development practices that protect water quality and manage runoff, supporting sustainability and environmental health, by setting a maximum limit on the area of impervious surfaces.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	Ongoing
Limit the Scale of Commercial Uses	Consider adopting a maximum square footage cap (e.g., 2,500–5,000 square feet) for individual retail establishments to prevent the introduction of large-scale or regional commercial development inconsistent with Sorrento's scale, for example, big box stores.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years
Tailoring Commercial Uses to Community Needs	Differentiating commercial activities based on their impact allows a town to manage growth, preserve its character, and ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses, while minimizing negative effects like traffic congestion and environmental strain.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years

4.4. Route 1 Periphery (Transitional Area)

4.4.1. Vision

A surrounding transitional area could support moderate, well-planned residential growth, allowing for gradual development intensity while maintaining open space and scenic character.

4.4.2. Description

The Route 1 Periphery could serve as a transitional zone between the growth area near Route 1 and Sorrento's more undeveloped rural interior. This area is characterized by gently rolling topography, forested parcels, and modest access to existing transportation infrastructure. While soils are less optimal than in the core growth area, they are generally suitable for low- to moderate-density residential development.

The area would present an opportunity to accommodate new year-round housing in a form that is consistent with Sorrento's rural aesthetic and environmental constraints. Development here should be planned in a way that supports the Route 1 growth area without encouraging leapfrog or fragmented growth. It is also well positioned to support clustered residential subdivisions, single-family homes, or seasonal dwellings with appropriate infrastructure solutions.

This periphery provides a visual and ecological buffer between the Route 1 growth area and critical rural lands, and it offers an opportunity to balance housing needs with the preservation of the town's wooded and open character.

4.4.3. Objectives & Strategies

Objectives	Strategies	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Encourage Residential Development That Reflects Rural Character	Support low- to moderate-density residential uses and a diversity of housing types, including single-family homes, conservation subdivisions, and clustered housing that preserves significant natural features, maintains wooded buffers, and fits with the area's topography.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	Ongoing
Establish Moderate Minimum Lot Sizes	Require a minimum lot size in the range of 1.5 to 3 acres depending on soil suitability and septic capacity, ensuring enough space for on-site wastewater treatment, setbacks, and buffering without encouraging sprawl.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years
Encourage Shared Driveways and Access Roads	Allow or incentivize shared access points and internal roads for clustered developments to minimize curb cuts, protect roadside vegetation, and reduce fragmentation of natural features.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years
Promote Clustered Development with Dimensional Flexibility	In conservation subdivisions, allow reduced lot sizes and frontages (e.g., down to 0.5–1 acre lots) if a certain percentage of total land area is permanently conserved as open space.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years
Limit Commercial Development to Home Occupations or Low-Impact Enterprises	Restrict commercial development to home occupations or low-impact businesses that support local needs, such as small-scale retail or artisan shops, ensuring commercial activities remain compatible with the rural residential setting.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years

Objectives	Strategies	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
	Prohibit larger, more intrusive commercial developments to preserve the quiet, rural atmosphere of the town and prevent the introduction of urban-style sprawl.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years

4.5. Rural Area

4.5.1. Vision

Preserve Sorrento’s traditional rural landscapes and working lands by supporting low-density, resource-based uses and conserving open space.

4.5.2. Description

Sorrento’s rural areas are characterized by large tracts of undeveloped land, forest, and scattered residential uses. These landscapes include working woodlots, conserved lands, trails, and wetlands, contributing to the town’s natural character and sense of place. The soils in these areas—often poorly drained, steep, or rocky—limit their suitability for dense or conventional development. As such, they are better suited for low-impact uses including recreation.

These areas also play a vital role in supporting ecological systems, including wildlife habitat, water filtration, and carbon storage. They help maintain the town’s scenic quality, especially when viewed from public roads or the water, and contribute to the quiet, open feel that residents value. As development pressures increase in other parts of the region, protecting these rural areas becomes essential not only for maintaining Sorrento’s identity but also for ensuring long-term resilience to environmental change.

Future land use policies in rural areas would emphasize conservation, low-impact development, and maintaining traditional land uses. Strategies may include encouraging large lot sizes, cluster development that preserves open space, and voluntary land conservation programs. These approaches can help preserve Sorrento’s rural character while still allowing for limited, thoughtful growth that aligns with the town’s vision.

4.5.3. Objectives & Strategies

Objective	Strategy	Responsible Party	Timeline
Maintain Current Low-Density Development	Require at least 150–200 feet of road frontage for new residential lots to maintain an open space character and prevent overdevelopment.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years

Objective	Strategy	Responsible Party	Timeline
Patterns	Set minimum setbacks of 25–50 feet from front property lines to ensure that developments do not encroach too closely on roads, preserving the town’s rural, open feel.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years
	Establish larger lot size requirements for new residential development to support adequate septic capacity, maintain the town’s low-density character, and reduce pressure for more intensive development.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years
Encourage Clustered Residential Development	Promote clustered development where homes are built closer together, leaving larger portions of the property as undisturbed open space. This preserves the natural landscape and reduces environmental impact.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years
	Consider incorporating an open space requirement for all new subdivisions, ensuring that a portion of the land is dedicated to parks, green areas, or conservation.	Selectboard, Planning Board, HCPC	2 years

4.6. Critical Natural Resource Areas

4.6.1. Vision

Protect Sorrento’s ecologically and visually sensitive landscapes by maintaining low-impact, traditional uses and limiting development.

4.6.2. Description

This designation includes Swallow Hollow Bog, the town’s undeveloped shorelands, and its nearby offshore islands—together forming Sorrento’s most ecologically sensitive and environmentally valuable landscapes. These areas support a wide range of ecosystem functions and wildlife habitats. Swallow Hollow Bog, for example, is a freshwater wetland that plays a vital role in flood mitigation, groundwater recharge, and carbon storage, while also serving as habitat for rare plant and bird species.

The shorelands provide a critical buffer between land and sea, helping to filter runoff, protect water quality in Frenchman Bay, and reduce erosion. These coastal areas also offer important breeding and feeding grounds for marine and terrestrial wildlife, including shorebirds, fish, and shellfish.

Offshore islands, many of which are undeveloped or conserved, contribute to regional biodiversity and scenic beauty, offering nesting areas for seabirds and undisturbed habitat for native species.

These islands also define Sorrento’s coastal viewsheds, which are an essential part of the town’s visual identity and appeal.

Due to their ecological significance and exposure to sea level rise, storm surge, and development pressures, these landscapes are highly vulnerable to disturbance. Even small changes in land use or hydrology can have outsized impacts. For this reason, careful stewardship and protective land use policies—such as conservation zoning, setbacks from wetlands and shorelines, and limits on clearing or construction—are critical to preserving the functions and beauty of these sensitive natural areas for future generations.

4.6.3. Goals and Strategies

Objective	Strategy	Suggested Responsibility	Timeline
Preserve critical natural resources	Discourage high-impact or large-scale development.	Selectboard, Planning Board	Ongoing
	Support conservation, education, and ecological stewardship.	Selectboard, Planning Board	Ongoing
	Collaborate with conservation organizations to secure land or easements, where necessary.	Selectboard, Planning Board	Ongoing
	Continue to regulate development within and near wetlands, steep slopes, and fragile shoreline through Maine’s Shoreland Zoning. Consider increasing setbacks to preserve the coastline.	Selectboard, Planning Board	Ongoing
	Meet with neighboring communities to coordinate land use designations and regulatory and non-regulatory strategies.	Planning Board, CEO, HCPC, SALT	2 years

5. Proposed Land Use Policies

The following suggested policies are intended to guide the implementation of Sorrento’s land use vision over the next decade and beyond. Building on the growth, transitional, rural, and critical natural resource designations described earlier, these policies provide a practical framework for guiding development in a way that aligns with the town’s priorities and physical constraints.

They are designed to inform future updates to local ordinances, direct the review of proposed development projects, and support decision-making around infrastructure investment, conservation planning, and community character preservation. The intent is not to impose a one-size-fits-all model but to offer flexible strategies that balance private property rights with public goals.

These policies reflect public feedback and values expressed through surveys, meetings, and stakeholder discussions. As Sorrento faces pressure from development, climate change, and shifting demographics, this section offers tools to help the town grow deliberately, supporting its residents while safeguarding the qualities that make Sorrento distinct.

Guiding Vision: Limit Commercial Growth, while Supporting Moderate Residential Development

- Consider guiding commercial development to fit within Sorrento’s character, infrastructure capacity, and limited development potential by implementing a basic site plan review process for larger commercial projects.
- Encourage the implementation of a site plan review process that is clear, straightforward, and designed to balance commercial, recreational, and institutional development with environmental and aesthetic considerations.
- Consider establishing a village and Route 1 mixed-use district to encourage small-scale, locally oriented businesses in the village area while accommodating more flexible commercial development in the Route 1 mixed use district.
- Guide new development to the Route 1 mixed-use district to minimize peninsula traffic and leverage existing infrastructure.
- Preserve the historic character of the village center while allowing limited mixed-use development (see definition under key terms), for example, residential as well as small businesses.
- Continue to allow home-based businesses, agriculture, and forestry.
- Direct residential growth to areas with existing infrastructure while maintaining flexibility for landowners.
- Consider preserving the rural and environmental character of Sorrento’s sensitive landscapes outside the growth area by encouraging low-density development that minimizes fragmentation and conserves natural features. Establish standards such as larger minimum lot sizes, increased setbacks, and road frontage requirements, while allowing flexibility for conservation subdivisions or clustered housing that achieve the same goals.
- Encourage appropriate lot sizes areas based on soil suitability for septic, while allowing flexibility for innovative wastewater solutions.
- Revise the subdivision ordinance based on the State’s Subdivision Ordinance that reflects Sorrento's values and goals.

Regional Coordination

Each chapter in Sorrento's Comprehensive Plan identifies regional coordination challenges and opportunities pertinent to the chapter topic. These are either located within a subsection labeled Regional Issues or embedded within the Goals and Objectives subsection. This section summarizes the most important areas of ongoing and recommended regional cooperation.

Federal and State Government

Sorrento interacts with federal and state agencies in a variety of ways in the daily operations of the Town. These include statutory requirements, grants, programs, and services. The Town maintains a relationship with the State on fisheries, coastal and water quality issues, consulting with the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). On transportation issues, Sorrento consults with MEDOT. The State Police provide policing and protection to the Town as well. The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is a resource to help Sorrento advance economic goals set out in this Plan. The Maine Climate Council's Maine Won't Wait and the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation & the Future (GOPIF) provide guidance and funding for climate change planning.

County and Local Government

Hancock County provides essential services through the Sheriff's Office, Hancock County Emergency Management Agency, along with support on certain economic development issues. Sorrento is beginning to explore coordinating with neighboring towns including Sullivan, Winter Harbor, and Gouldsboro on various issues such as mutual aid for fire and emergency response, solid waste management, transportation costs, succession planning, housing, and other important economic activities through the Schoodic Area League of Towns (SALT). Sumner High School and Mountain View School in Sullivan serve all nine towns in the region.

Other Coordination with Regional Partners

Sorrento is a member of the Hancock County Planning Commission (HCPC) and works with HCPC to address issues related to economic development, transportation, climate change resiliency, and more at a regional level. Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Committee is a seven-community collaboration that works under the State law to improve the local shellfish industry. The Municipal Joint Board (MJB) consists of representatives from each participating community in the program, including Sorrento. In addition, Sorrento is currently conducting a climate vulnerability assessment with neighboring town Sullivan to assess shared vulnerabilities and interests.

Evaluation and Implementation*

Sorrento's 2025 Comprehensive Plan addresses local, regional, national and global issues that the Town will face in the coming ten years. Each chapter contains broad goals (desired outcomes), specific objectives (measurable milestones on the way to those goals), strategies (methods for achieving those objectives), a responsible party (who will implement the strategy), and a time-frame (when it will start and when it will be completed).

The Plan is a tool for supporting decision making by elected and municipal officials. It is a guide to assist the Select Board, Planning Board, and various committees to establish annual work plans to prioritize capital expenditures, investments and improvements to the Town's public facilities. The success of the Plan is contingent upon it being actively used in day-to-day Town operations.

In order to monitor implementation of the Plan, an annual meeting will be held that includes members of the Select Board, the Planning Board, various committees, Hancock County Planning Commission, and the community. The Comprehensive Plan Committee will be responsible for convening the first meeting. The findings will be published in the Annual Town Report and this addendum will be written by a person nominated by the Selectboard. This group will also be responsible for initiating the update of this plan starting in 2033.

*The Growth Management Act, Title 30-A, Chapter 187 of the Maine State Statutes, requires that progress on the Plan be evaluated, at a minimum, every five years to determine the following:

1. The degree of implementation of Future Land Use strategies;
2. The percent of capital investments dedicated to the growth areas defined in the Future Land Use Plan;
3. The location of new development relative to the established growth areas; and
4. The amount of critical natural resources, waterfront and recreation and open spaces protected through the acquisition of property, conservation easements and other methods available to Sorrento.

These four mandated requirements will serve as guidance for the annual meeting and metrics to measure implementation.

Public Participation Summary

Public participation was a cornerstone of Sorrento's Comprehensive Plan. The Town undertook a broad and inclusive outreach process to ensure the plan reflects the goals, concerns, and priorities of both year-round and seasonal residents. From the initial kickoff meeting to the final review of land use strategies, community input directly shaped the plan's content and direction. The process was designed to be open, accessible, and collaborative—incorporating surveys, public meetings, focus groups, and targeted outreach. These efforts ensured a wide range of voices were heard and laid a strong foundation for a plan rooted in local values and responsive to the needs of all who live in and care about Sorrento.

Overview of Engagement Methods

To reach a broad cross-section of the community, the Comprehensive Plan Committee:

- Developed a dedicated **comprehensive plan website** to share information, materials, and updates.
- **Distributed mailings**, posted **flyers**, and utilized the **town email list** to promote participation and keep the public informed.
- Conducted a wide-reaching **Community Engagement Survey**, hosted **community forums**, and held **targeted focus groups** to gather input from diverse perspectives.

Participation Activities

1. Kickoff & Learning Session – July 18, 2023

The public planning process began with an open meeting that introduced the goals of the comprehensive plan, described the planning process and timeline, and offered background on key issues facing Sorrento. Residents were invited to begin sharing priorities and concerns.

2. Community Engagement Survey - July through beginning of August 2023

A comprehensive survey was conducted to gather broad input from the community.

- **Total responses:** 291
 - **Year-round residents:** 98 (approx. 35% response rate)
 - **Seasonal/part-time/non-residents:** 193
- Survey results provided insight into residents' views on housing, development, infrastructure, natural resource protection, and quality of life.

3. Survey Results Presentation – October 12, 2023

Findings from the community survey were presented in a public meeting. The presentation helped identify areas of broad consensus and highlight key areas for further discussion, laying the groundwork for more targeted events.

4. Targeted Focus Groups

Small, facilitated discussions were held to gather input from:

- Waterfront businesses
- Small business owners

- Young families
- Long-term residents

These groups helped capture the perspectives of residents and stakeholders who may face unique challenges or opportunities.

5. Visioning Event: *Sorrento Moving Forward* – March 10, 2024

This event invited residents to consider Sorrento's future. Participants reviewed guiding values, shared aspirations, and discussed high-level priorities to help define the plan's vision statement and long-term direction.

6. Community Conversations Series (Spring–Summer 2024)

A series of issue-specific conversations gave residents the opportunity to dive deeper into critical topics:

- **Housing – May 2, 2024**
- **Development & Land Use – May 16, 2024**
- **Transportation – May 30, 2024**
- **Short-Term Rentals – June 6, 2024**
- **Community Resilience & Climate Change – July 11, 2024**

Each session included informational presentations, group discussions, and opportunities for participants to share feedback and solutions.

7. Public Meeting: Future Land Use Plan – June 24, 2025

Residents reviewed and discussed the draft Future Land Use Plan. Input from this meeting informed final refinements to land use strategies and recommendations, ensuring alignment with community goals.

