

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HARRISON AT A GLANCE

- Friendly village with a small, walkable downtown
- Vacation destination with access to lakes and mountains
- Strongly seasonal economy with an unstable offseason
- 8% of Harrison residents live and work in town
- Aging population with higher than average Median Age
- Limited household income relative to cost-of-living pressures



	Harrison	Oxford County	Cumberland County
Median Age	56	48.2	42.2
Median Household Income	\$57,000	\$60,000	\$96,000
Family Poverty Rate	12.3%	9.4%	3.7%
Change in School-aged Population	-45%	-5%	5%

Why Economic Development may be a concern in Harrison

- Harrison's aging population may lead to declines in workforce availability, which could result in a shortage that worsens the offseason economy.
- Harrison's aging population may lead to declines in the service economy (education, business, healthcare, etc.). As health care needs rise, health care access may shrink.
- Over-reliance on nearby towns for jobs and services may weaken Harrison's existing institutions, leaving them vulnerable to changing economic conditions.
- Harrison may become increasingly unaffordable for younger people and families.

CASE STUDY: OAKLAND, ME



OAKLAND'S DOWNTOWN TIF DISTRICT

- Downtown TIF covers 37.27 acres
- Provides tax incentives that encourage Downtown investment
- Helps business retention and expansion
- Beautification through the Downtown Facade and Improvement Grant Program
- Funds the improvement and expansion of trail network

WHY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MAY NOT BE A CONCERN IN HARRISON

- Seasonal residents, vacationers, and retirees add to Harrison's tax base.
- Business, education, and healthcare services may be obtained in nearby communities.
- Harrison could potentially consolidate public services with other local towns.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BEST PRACTICES

- Local organizations and public officials supporting Main Street business development
- Nearby towns working together to "Regionalize" to provide public services and stimulate economy
- Mixed-income housing in the village center that supports a local workforce
- Improving high-speed telecommunications to support business operations
- Facilitating aging in place for older long-term residents

HOUSING

HARRISON AT A GLANCE

- Residents earning 120% of the median household income can afford a home priced up to about \$255,000
- Median home price in Harrison is roughly \$457,000
- 28% of houses are vacant due to seasonal use
- Harrison lacks housing variety and multi-family options

	Harrison	Oxford County	Cumberland County
Median Home Price	\$457,000	\$310,000	\$565,000
Population Cost-Burdened by Housing	38%	25%	22%
Percentage of Single-family Homes	89%	76%	63%
Percentage of Renter-Occupied Homes	10%	19%	30%

Why Housing may be a concern in Harrison

- People moving to Maine cite the lack of attainable housing as their #1 concern.
- Without enough housing, community growth is limited and younger residents may find it harder to remain in town.
- Harrison may face the “Amenity trap,” where the qualities that make the town attractive to seasonal residents also make it harder for long-term residents to afford to stay.
- The lack of attainable housing could weaken the local workforce and economy. The availability of essential services depends on workers being able to live nearby.



CASE STUDY: HOPE VILLAGE, RI



HOPE'S VILLAGE REVITALIZATION PLAN

- Small town lacking public sewer
- Zoning allows smaller lot sizes and setbacks in village center
- Tackling affordability issue through incremental housing development
- Increasing housing variety through the construction of varied cottages, ADUs, and townhouses
- Investing in trails, pedestrian infrastructure, and parking to improve connectivity to amenities

WHY HOUSING MAY NOT BE A CONCERN IN HARRISON

- Harrison may choose to prioritize its rural character over growth.
- Harrison may choose to become a town primarily for wealthy retirees and vacationers.
- Workers may commute from nearby towns, like Bridgton, that offer more attainable housing.

HOUSING BEST PRACTICES

- Village Center allows for mixed-use, denser development while the countryside prioritizes preservation
- Mixed-income housing through varied development (duplexes, multi-familys, ADUs, etc.)
- Smart Growth encouraged through grants and density bonuses
- Reuse of existing, underutilized structures for housing

WATERWAYS & AQUIFERS



HARRISON AT A GLANCE

- Harrison's major waterways include Long Lake, Crystal Lake, Island Pond, Pierce Pond, Crooked River, and Mill Stream.
- Motorboat activity may increase shoreline erosion, releasing phosphorous into waterways. Phosphorus increases the likelihood of algal blooms and can reduce water clarity.
- Stormwater runoff caused by increasingly common heavy precipitation events may also increase erosion and water pollution.
- New England's lakes have been warming 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit per decade since 1980. This has reduced ice coverage and increased the frequency of algal blooms.
- Harrison's Bear River Aquifer Protection Ordinance manages aquifer recharge areas and protects groundwater from contaminants.

Why Waterways & Aquifers may be a concern in Harrison

- Harrison's water quality conditions may be worsening. Island Pond, in particular, has become increasingly vulnerable due to shoreline undercutting.
- If the quality of Harrison's waterways declines, recreational opportunities for residents and visitors may be negatively impacted.
- Harrison's seasonal economy could become unstable if water and environmental conditions worsen. The offseason, which is already unstable, may also be affected by reduced ice coverage on waterways.
- Property values may also drop. This is important because lakefront properties make up nearly half of Harrison's tax base.
- Commercial extraction of groundwater may lower the water table and negatively impact residential wells.

CASE STUDY: ISLAND POND



ISLAND POND'S DECLINE

- 115-acre pond in northern Harrison
- Increasing phosphorous levels and decreasing clarity
- Decline in lake health is likely due to increased motorboat presence
- Wakes from motorboats have increased undercutting of shoreline
- Harrison has limited local power over motorboating
- Community education is important to improve the health of Island Pond

WHY WATERWAYS & AQUIFERS MAY NOT BE A CONCERN IN HARRISON

- Harrison already has shoreland zoning that helps to protect waterbodies.
- Water monitoring is already done yearly by the Lakes Environmental Association.
- Harrison already has an Aquifer Protection Ordinance to safeguard groundwater.

WATERWAYS BEST PRACTICES

- Improve watershed and shoreland protections
- Concentrate growth in already developed areas and protect forested and wetland areas within watersheds
- Educate the community on healthy lake practices
- Consider an ordinance to protect against large-scale water extraction

SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCY

HARRISON AT A GLANCE

- Harrison faces numerous hazards year-round, including snowstorms, heatwaves, thunderstorms, and more.
- Heavy precipitation, flooding, and extreme temperatures have increased in frequency.
- Mainers are also experiencing more “Winter weather whiplash” or weather patterns characterized by rapid shifts from freezing to thawing conditions.
- Maine’s “Maine Won’t Wait” plan aims to reduce fossil fuel reliance for heating and electricity to contribute to reduce both costs and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Currently, Maine’s electricity prices are among the highest in the US, and a significant portion comes from the burning of imported fossil fuels.

Why Sustainability & Resiliency may be a concern in Harrison

- Severe weather has a disproportionate impact on rural, older, and lower-income residents.
- Aging housing stock without weatherization may increase heating costs for residents.
- Harrison’s recreation-based economy is especially vulnerable to severe weather and warming temperatures.
- Increased severe weather may increase demand for Emergency Medical Services (EMS), which may negatively affect response rates.
- Growth pressures, alongside a lack of zoning ordinances, may impair Harrison’s ability to conserve protective natural resources such as wetlands. Protective natural resources can absorb flood waters during heavy precipitation events.



CASE STUDY: MEREDITH, NH



MEREDITH'S COMMUNITY PLAN

- Small lake town with an aging, tourism-dependent population
- Protecting and restoring natural resources through lake stewardship and open space and recreation conservation
- Infrastructure modernization on old buildings and stormwater controls
- Conducting energy audits to increase efficiency (i.e. insulation, heat pumps) and encouraging renewable energy expansion
- Improving public education and community outreach

WHY SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCY MAY NOT BE A CONCERN IN HARRISON

- Harrison is not a coastal community and does not have to worry about sea level rise or saltwater intrusion.
- Existing state protections for natural resources and low growth pressure may preserve protective natural resources.
- Harrison may choose not to pursue renewable energy projects, opting to focus more on general environmental protections.

SUSTAINABILITY BEST PRACTICES

- Preserve open space and concentrate growth in already developed areas
- Implement hazard mitigation in capital improvement and modernize infrastructure for efficiency
- Consider renewable energy projects to reduce energy reliance and lower emissions
- Pursue community education on stewardship and available state and federal programs

LAND USE

HARRISON AT A GLANCE

- In Cumberland County, Harrison is one of only two towns without a Zoning Ordinance, leaving planning up to:
 - State-required Shoreland Zoning
 - Subdivision Regulations
 - Site Plan Review
 - including parking, landscaping, lighting, traffic, buffering, signage, etc.
 - Code Requirements
 - building code requirements, plumbing and septic permitting, floodplain regulations, road and access regulations, etc.
- The town has no ordinances directing growth or land use activities

Why land use may be a concern in Harrison

- Zoning ordinances are one of the main tools towns use to accomplish comprehensive plan goals. Without it, Harrison may have a harder time implementing their plan.
- Zoning can help direct development to designated growth areas, protect natural and water resources, and support a wider range of housing options.
- When development proposals are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with limited or unclear rules, growth can become scattered and lead to sprawl. As a result, commercial and residential growth may happen in a less planned and less coordinated way.
- The town may also have fewer tools to prevent unwanted types of development.
- Conflicting land uses may also be allowed next to each other, leading to increased noise complaints and reduced neighborhood satisfaction.



CASE STUDY: CASCO, ME



CASCO'S VILLAGE ZONING

- Updating zoning for the village district to align with Comprehensive Plan and ME state statutes
- Planning with public engagement to:
 - Support local businesses and services
 - Improve walkability
 - Expand housing options near village center
 - Improve bike and pedestrian safety
 - Preserve village character
- Facilitating smart growth

WHY LAND USE MAY NOT BE A CONCERN IN HARRISON

- Harrison may choose to preserve its flexible, case-by-case review process.
- Unlike Cumberland County, Oxford County has a significant number of unzoned towns, which are home to roughly 70% of residents.

LAND USE BEST PRACTICES

- Start with a simple, district-based ordinance when adopting zoning
- Use zoning to establish growth areas and rural areas with clear rules and standards
- Utilize zoning that promotes conservation and open space to protect rural lands and natural & water resources
- Incorporate public feedback into zoning decisions
- Bolster subdivision requirements to accomplish comprehensive plan goals if zoning is not adopted

OPEN SPACE & NATURAL RESOURCES



HARRISON AT A GLANCE

- Significant wildlife habitats include:
 - Inland waterfowl and wading bird habitats, significant vernal pools, deer wintering areas, and landlocked salmon reproduction sites (one of only four native landlocked salmon reproduction sites)
- Endangered, threatened, and special concern species include:
 - Small-whorled Pogonia, Bland's Turtle, and Wood Turtle (pictured)
- Focus Area of statewide importance:
 - Jugtown Plains is 4,400-acre ecological focus area located partially within Harrison. It contains the northernmost example of a pitch pine-heath barren.
- Harrison has habitat fragmentation around waterbodies, but otherwise, the town's large habitat blocks remain intact.
- Harrison does not have a zoning ordinance so most regulatory conservation tools in town come from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

Why open space & natural resources may be a concern in Harrison

- Most small-scale local development is reviewed primarily at the municipal level. State or federal review may be required when a project meets certain size or activity thresholds, or when it affects regulated natural resources such as wetlands, great ponds, streams, shoreland areas, significant wildlife habitat, or protected species habitat.
- Unlike regulated natural resources, important natural resources such as large habitat blocks, habitat connections, and Focus Areas do not necessarily receive automatic state or federal protection.
- Development on natural resources may impact natural services, such as flood & erosion control, air pollution protection and heat protection.
- Loss of natural resources and open space may negatively impact Harrison's recreational economy and community enjoyment.
- Harrison lacks a comprehensive natural resources survey, meaning there may be more important natural resources within town that are currently undiscovered.

CASE STUDY: BRUNSWICK, ME



BRUNSWICK'S CONSERVATION

- Designated a growth zone when facing growing development pressure
- Identified high-use wildlife areas through public focus group with developers and homebuyers and prioritized them for conservation
- Revised open space subdivision requirements
 - Changed limits on developable acreage before requiring compensatory habitat acreage
- Over 800 acres conserved so far

WHY OPEN SPACE & NATURAL RESOURCES MAY NOT BE A CONCERN IN HARRISON

- Maine DEP already protects critical natural and water resources.
- Harrison is not facing the same kind of development pressure as Brunswick.

OPEN SPACE BEST PRACTICES

- Designate a 'growth area' to incentivize denser growth and prevent sprawl
- Create an open space plan identifying high value habitat blocks and corridors
- Adopt zoning consistent with conservation goals
 - *Example:* Establish a Conservation Subdivision Ordinance.
- Consider state funding resources and collaboration with neighboring towns on conservation efforts

PUBLIC SERVICES & RECREATION



HARRISON AT A GLANCE

- Harrison Fire & Rescue Dept. is composed of 29 volunteer staffers as of 2023. 7 are trained in EMS.
- Harrison Fire & Rescue Dept. has considered the following changes in response to increased emergency call volumes:
 - Hiring a full-time administrative personnel
 - Hiring per diem coverage
 - Infrastructure upgrades
- Harrison's Fiscal Year 2027 Budget is just over \$5 million. Part of the budget is dedicated to United Ambulance and PACE Ambulance for ambulance coverage.
- The Parks & Recreation Dept. manages the following public spaces:
 - Crystal Lake Park & Beach
 - RADR/Field of Dreams Recreation Complex
 - Long Lake Park
 - 2 Public Boat Launches
- Harrison has a seasonal and recreation-based economy that benefits from these amenities.

Why Public Services & Recreation may be a concern in Harrison

- Harrison's aging population may negatively impact ambulance response times and EMS volunteer availability. Growth within the community may also increase these challenges.
- The closure of Bridgton's DFD Russell Medical Center in 2025 constrained primary care access in the area and may have affected Harrison residents.
- Harrison's public spaces may need to be adapted for an aging population.
- The Parks & Recreation Dept may need to create or expand older adult programming to promote community involvement.
- 63% of adults consider recreational opportunities when choosing where to live. Expanding these options may help attracting and retaining working adults and families.

CASE STUDY: GREENVILLE, ME

GREENVILLE'S PUBLIC SAFETY UPGRADE

- Small town with a large seasonal population spike
- Rising need for emergency services
- Built a new 20,000 square-foot public safety building in the center of town
- Paid for in part by the USDA Rural Development Community Facilities grant
- Offers newer safety features and community space as well as design for area expansion

WHY PUBLIC SERVICES & RECREATION MAY NOT BE A CONCERN IN HARRISON

- Harrison already offers many parks and recreational opportunities.
- Harrison's Fire & Rescue Dept. received a high ISO rating, and the station was found to be in good shape and location.
- Existing contracted ambulance services may suffice.



PUBLIC SERVICES BEST PRACTICES

- Collaborate with neighboring towns to improve public service efficiency and access
- Utilize state and federal grants to bolster services where possible
- Build on existing recreational opportunities for both young and older residents
- Pair open space preservation with increased trails and recreational access