

PART 1 INTRODUCTION

TOWN VISION

To preserve and protect the existing way of life and the historical, scenic and natural resources from encroachment while guiding small scale sustainable growth throughout the town.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is twofold, to comply with state requirements and remain true to Maine's Growth Management Plan and, most importantly, to provide a blueprint for Edgecomb's future, which will realize the vision and preserve the special qualities valued by its citizens. The plan seeks to implement the town's goals while maintaining a delicate balance between emotional sensitivities and political/fiscal reality. The plan recognizes Edgecomb's role in and dependency upon a regional partnership.

The Comprehensive Plan is written as a guide to provide for inevitable changes while preserving the quality of Edgecomb's precious natural environment, protecting individuality and diversity of the Edgecomb community, providing safety for its citizens and managing town government and services in a fiscally responsible manner. The plan offers policies and strategies and provides the structure for oversight of the timely implementation of its recommendations.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

"The best thing about Edgecomb is what it doesn't have." - quote from the January 7, 2008 Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting

Edgecomb's special topography with its rocky spine wedged between the Sheepscot and Damariscotta rivers powerfully influenced its earliest pattern of land development. An 1815 map shows long strips of landholdings extending inland from the rivers' edge. This pattern can still be seen on the parcel maps of today with many of the original tracts still in place.

Early settlers established multipurpose households, tilling the soil, herding their animals, fishing, and gradually engaging in small home-based enterprises. The nineteenth century brought new prosperity with more Edgecomb men turning toward the sea as ship captains, merchants and ordinary sailors. The Sheepscot, Damariscotta and Cross rivers still have a hold on Edgecomb's character and identity. The notion of the family homestead with its barns, workshops, boathouses and outbuildings is still a romantic ideal with small home-based business scattered throughout the town.

Most Edgecomb land was too rocky and poor to sustain vigorous agriculture, and survival entailed mixed farming, orchards, brickyards and sheep grazing, which eventually degraded the land. Timber for fuel, construction and power for nascent industry deforested the land over the years.

New housing continues to be primarily single-family homes expanding along the 18th and 19th century roads. As woodlands returned during the twentieth century replenishing natural resources, flora and fauna, Edgecomb, with huge parcels of unfragmented woodland, has become a quiet place, free from light pollution and with only distant traffic rumbles and local land based enterprises disturbing the peace.

Edgecomb has always had a strong identity as a town. Maine's climate, which rewards neighborliness, and its tradition of local control and community self-sufficiency have reinforced Edgecomb's sense of itself.

For at least 200 years, the town has also looked outward -- for supplies, for the livelihood of many of its citizens and for communications, education and medical and other services. Although today's residents depend heavily on the economies and services of nearby towns, they testify in survey after survey that they return with relief to the town's quiet nights, open woodlands, views of rivers, and scattered settlements.

Municipal services for this thinly populated area consist of a few paid general administrative people, the school staff, minimal road maintenance contractors and a small army of volunteers for fire and other safety protection and town committees. Police and other essential services are dependent on cooperation from the surrounding towns.

The town, without a defined town center, is trisected by the two heavily trafficked arteries, Routes 1 and 27, with the bulk of commercial growth occurring along these roads. It is the overwhelming desire of Edgecomb citizens to retain this pattern for future generations.

OVERVIEW OF PLANNING IN EDGECOMB

The first of five formal planning documents, *Preliminary Report for the Edgecomb Comprehensive Plan*, was prepared by the Planning Board in 1971. The plan documented Edgecomb's history, goals, resources, problems and recommendations for guarding town assets and maximizing town potential.

A second planning document, *Edgecomb Growth Profile and Preliminary Planning Issues*, was prepared under contract by the Southern Mid-coast Regional Planning Commission in April 1980, as preparation for writing a formal Comprehensive Plan. Toward the end of 1980, this Commission ceased operations. The town then engaged Land Use Consultants, Inc. of South Portland to complete the *Comprehensive Plan*, which they did in February 1982. The recommendations for Building Codes, Shoreland Zoning, Subdivision Regulation and Site Plan Review Ordinances were subsequently incorporated into Edgecomb's ordinances. In 1987, a precursor to another Comprehensive Plan was published, the *1987 Public Opinion Survey*.

The State of Maine, in 1988, enacted the *Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act* to help control development and preserve the state's natural treasures. In late 1988, Edgecomb selectmen asked the Planning Board to develop a Comprehensive Plan that would meet the requirements of the state's *Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act*. Finding that many of the required growth controls had been covered in previous plans and appropriate town ordinances had been enacted, the Edgecomb comprehensive plan committee focused much of its work and recommendations on zoning. The *Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Edgecomb* was published in June 1991, and amended in May 2003. During the years between 1991 and 2008, many zoning ordinances were enacted.

The 1991 Comprehensive Plan states, "Two major challenges face Edgecomb in the near term i.e., (1) how to accommodate growth while maintaining the unique character of the town and (2) to improve the quality of infrastructure without placing an unbearable burden on the lower and middle income taxpayers." These challenges continue with even greater strain on the town's natural and financial resources and increasing development pressure that compromises the quality of life, individual autonomy and privacy valued by our residents.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOR THE 2009 PLAN

In a state where final decision-making rests in the hands of citizens at the annual town meeting, residents have an opportunity to debate pressing issues, control spending and map the town's future. In addition to the required hearing and informational meetings before seeking approval of the Comprehensive Plan at town meeting, the committee sought public comments and ideas in three ways.

The first public input session took place in June of 2006. The committee held two focus group sessions to gather together participants with special knowledge or interest in each of the state required topic areas. After a brief presentation of background information, the participants joined breakout groups to consider the various subjects. Session 1 covered town facilities, emergency preparedness, public utilities, economic development and housing. Session 2 covered waterfront access, historic/scenic resources and open spaces. The information and ideas gained during these focus group meetings were compiled by the committee and provided a useful skeleton on which to build the policies of the plan.

The second opportunity for citizen participation was a 14-item questionnaire sent in August of 2007 soliciting comments as well as multiple-choice answers. The response was excellent with 365 forms returned out of a mailing to 667 households, many with two returns per household. The responses expressed a range of opinions on the various subjects, but presented an overwhelming mandate to retain the town's "rural" character.

The third and last outreach endeavor was a series of three public forums in September and October 2008 to solicit comments on and suggestions for policies to be recommended in the Plan. Sixty-five people attended the first session with an average of thirty attendees for the last two. Each session began with refreshments and time to study a poster display of photos and graphics showing background and statistical information concerning each of the topic areas covered in each session. Comments and questions validated the feelings expressed in both the focus groups and the questionnaire and reinforced a consensus of the Town vision.

DOMINANT ISSUES

The overriding issue in the years leading toward this plan was concern over managing development and curtailing rapid growth. The presence of public water and sewer in the town, although currently available on only 1% of land in Edgecomb, is also of concern; expansion of the system needs careful monitoring. In order to encourage the expansion of small business, access to high-speed internet is critical; this is a dominant issue. The perennial heavy summer traffic on Route 1 plagues Edgecomb's residents, but the solution remains in the hands of Maine Department of Transportation.

The Midcoast towns all share many of the same concerns and have formed proactive partnerships for growth management. The Friends of Midcoast Maine and the Gateway One project are examples of neighbors working to create a chain of sustainable communities along our coast.

"To call a community sustainable means that there is confidence in the long-term viability of that community, in its ability to provide for the needs of its members, and in careful stewardship of its resources so that they may be used for the longest possible time".

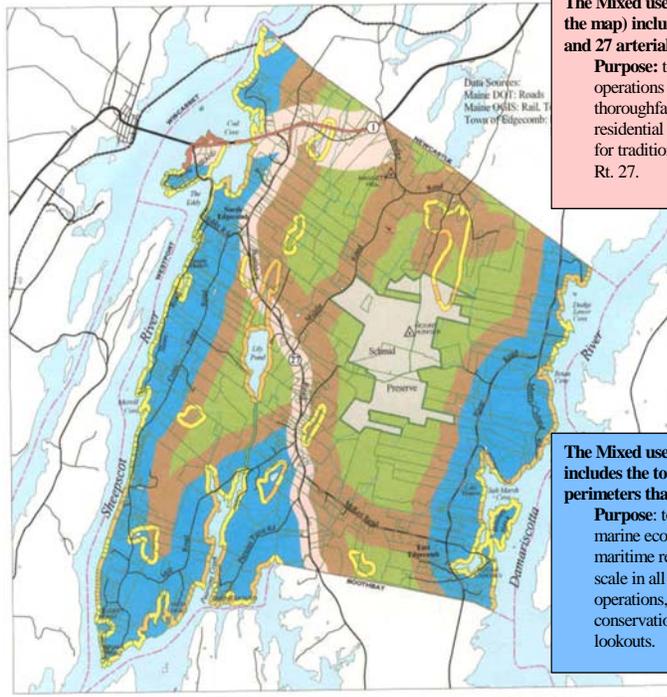
From an Essay "Having the right stuff is not enough" by Eva Murray, *Working Waterfront/Inter-Island News*, November 2008

**EXISTING LAND USE ZONING MAP
AS APPROVED IN 2003**



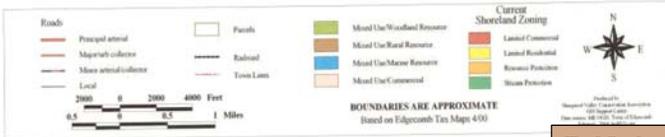
**Town of
Edgcomb**

**Proposed Land Uses
According to the
Comprehensive Plan**



The Mixed use /Commercial District (pink on the map) includes the previously zoned Rts 1 and 27 arterial corridors through town.
Purpose: to provide for commercial operations that are traffic generating, need thoroughfare exposure, or are larger than residential scale; for public facilities; and for traditional village density in Area II of Rt. 27.

The Mixed use /Marine (blue on the map) includes the town's eastern and western perimeters that border saltwater rivers.
Purpose: to allow productive uses of our marine eco system, productive uses of our maritime resources, to maintain residential scale in all non residential structures and operations, and the creation of water access, conservation land, walking trails and scenic lookouts.



The Mixed use /Woodland (green on the map) is the most restrictive district and encompasses much of the interior, including the Schmidt Preserve and River-Link.
Purpose: to limit disturbance of the natural environment; to preserve the natural environment and wildlife habitat; and to provide sustainable, productive, nature-based uses that require limited infrastructure.

The Mixed use /Rural Resource (tan on the map) encompasses lands generally accessible to agricultural and land-based uses.
Purpose: to preserve wildlife habitat; protect watersheds and wetlands; and to provide renewable working use of the land, which may employ equipment and/or live stock for small-scale operation.

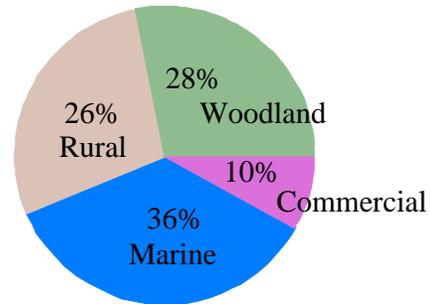
PART 2
EXISTING and FUTURE LAND USE

MAINE’S GROWTH MANAGEMENT GOAL

To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas of each community, while protecting the state’s rural character, making efficient use of public services, and preventing development sprawl.

TOWN VISION

To accommodate and guide Edgecomb’s growth while supporting the expressed wishes of the townspeople to retain their individual autonomy, the community spirit and rural environment.



Edgecomb Land Use Districts

CITIZENS’ VIEW (SURVEY RESPONSE)

Of the 357 respondents to the Comprehensive Plan Survey of 2007,

- 63%, or 226, do not favor multifamily housing or new construction on smaller lots,
- 45%, or 159, said, if allowed, smaller lots should be restricted to lot areas where part of the land was left as open space,
- 54%, or 191, felt nature preserves bring benefits to all and are worth the trade-off in lost tax revenues,
- 99%, or 326, felt that protecting Edgecomb’s unique and defining natural, historical and archaeological sites is either very or fairly important to maintain the character of Edgecomb,
- 54%, or 194, felt no new sewer and water extensions should be allowed,
- 27%, or 95, felt extensions of sewer and water should be allowed with 74 favoring extensions only if various restrictions were in place.

Citizens’ responses clearly indicate the town should remain rural in character.

CURRENT CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

EXISTING ZONING, REGULATIONS AND PROTECTION

Residential and commercial uses are allowed in all zoning districts of Edgecomb except for the restrictions in the Shoreland Ordinance. In 2001, the Land Use Ordinance was amended to designate three growth areas along Route 1, referred to as the Gateway, Thoroughfare and Commercial Growth Districts. The Land Use Ordinance was amended in 2002 to include three districts along Route 27, referred to as Areas I, II and III. In 2003, the work of the Land Use Task Force culminated with the passage of a final town-wide amendment designating three additional land use districts: the Woodland, the Rural, and the Marine, completing coverage for the whole town. (1) (*Embedded Numbers refer to State Required topic items)

Table 1 - Description of Land Use Areas

The Mixed Use Woodland District (green on the map), the most restrictive district, encompasses much of the interior, including the Schmid Preserve and River-Link.

Purpose: to provide sustainable, productive, nature-based uses that require limited infrastructure and limited disturbance of the natural environment and to preserve the natural environment and wildlife habitat.

The Mixed Use Rural District (tan on the map) encompasses lands generally suitable for agricultural and land-based uses.

Purpose: to provide renewable working use of the land, which may employ equipment and/or live stock for small-scale operation, and to preserve the wildlife habitat and protect watersheds and wetlands.

The Mixed Use Marine District (blue on the map) includes the town's eastern and western perimeters that border saltwater rivers.

Purpose: to allow productive uses of the marine eco-system and maritime resources, to maintain residential scale in all non-residential structures and operations, and to create water accessible conservation land, walking trails and scenic outlooks.

The Mixed Use Commercial Districts (pink on the map) include the Routes 1 and 27 arterial corridors through town.

Purpose: to provide for commercial operations that are traffic-generating, need thoroughfare exposure, or are larger than residential scale; for public facilities; and for traditional village density in Area II of Route 27.

Table 2 - Dimensional standards

District	Min lot size	Buffer Depth main road	Buffer Depth other roads	Lot frontage	Front setback	Side and rear setback
Edgecomb Gateway	1 acre	20 ft.	20 ft.	400 ft.	100 ft.	20 ft.
Edgecomb Thoroughfare	1 acre	75 ft.	20 ft.	400 ft.	150 ft.	20 ft.
Commercial Growth	1 acre	75 ft.	20 ft.	400 ft.	150 ft.	20 ft.
Route 27, Area I	3 acres*	50 ft.	none	300 ft.*	100/200 ft. * ²	15 ft.
Route 27, Area II	1 acre	none	none	100 ft.	Average * ³	15 ft.
Route 27, Area III	3 acres*	50 ft.	none	300 ft.*	100/200 ft. * ²	15 ft.
Marine Area I	2 acres	none	none	200.ft	50 ft. or 75 ft from rd c/l	15 ft.
Marine Area II	1 acre	none	none	200.ft	50 ft. or 75 ft from rd c/l	15 ft.
Rural	3 acres	none	none	200.ft	50 ft. or 75 ft from rd c/l	15 ft.
Woodland	5 acres	none	none	200.ft	50 ft. or 75 ft from rd c/l	15 ft.

* On lots with an access shared with an adjacent lot, 200 ft. frontage is allowed.

*² Setback must be 200 ft. from centerline of Route 27

*³ Setback is the average of principal structures within 500 ft. with frontage on Route 27.

Summary descriptions of current relevant Land Use Ordinances

Shoreland Overlay District

As mandated by the State, the purposes of this ordinance are to further the maintenance of safe and healthful conditions; to prevent and control water pollution; to protect fish spawning grounds, aquatic life, bird and other wildlife habitat; to protect buildings and lands from flooding and accelerated erosion; to protect archaeological and historic resources; to protect commercial fishing and maritime industries; to protect freshwater and coastal wetlands; to control building sites, placement of structures and land uses; to conserve shore cover, and visual as well as actual points of access to inland and coastal waters; to conserve natural beauty and open space; and to anticipate and respond to the impacts of development in shoreland areas.

Floodplain Zone

The Town of Edgecomb has made relief available for damage caused by flooding within designated areas in the form of federally-subsidized flood insurance as authorized by the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968.

Wireless Communications Facility Ordinance

The purpose is to provide an environment that takes into account aesthetics and the community character of Edgecomb in the design of wireless installations and to ensure that service providers minimize the impact of their equipment as much as possible without discriminating against any business.

Sign Ordinance

The purpose of this ordinance is to help achieve a successful, attractive business climate while preserving the quality of life in the Town of Edgecomb through the regulation of all On-Premise Business Signs and more restrictive regulations of all Official Business Directional Signs permitted by the Maine Traveler Information Services Act.

Mobile Home Park Ordinance

The purpose of this Ordinance is to regulate development of mobile home parks to ensure the health, safety, and general welfare of the residents of the park and the Town of Edgecomb.

Standard Subdivision Regulations

The purpose of the subdivision regulations is to assure the comfort, health, safety, and general welfare of the people, to protect the environment, and to provide for the orderly development of a sound and stable community.

Resource-based Subdivision Regulations

By allowing resource-based subdivision (cluster) developments, the Town seeks to maximize use of existing infrastructure, including roads, to preserve Edgecomb's rural character and lands used for agriculture, forestry and traditional recreational use.

Lighting Standard

The purpose of this standard is to restrict outdoor lighting so that it will not be exposed to view by motorists, pedestrians, or from adjacent dwellings and so that it will not unnecessarily light the night sky.

Nuisance Standard

This standard was enacted to control noise pollution, and the emission of dust, dirt, flyash, fumes, vapors or gases which could damage human health, animals, or vegetation, or which could be detrimental to the enjoyment of adjoining or nearby properties, or which could soil or stain persons or property.

Sewer Ordinance

The purpose of this ordinance is to promote the general welfare, prevent disease and promote health; to provide for the public safety and comfort of the people and to protect the environment.

Back lot Provisions

This section provides for development of back lots that do not have adequate road frontage.

Accessory Apartment Provision

This section allows the creation of a residential unit within an existing one-family dwelling, if the footprint of the building is not changed, providing an opportunity for affordable housing.

Big box standards design and caps

As part of a regional effort to control big box store development, Edgecomb adopted a maximum 35,000-square foot retail building size cap along with design standards that seek to retain a residential scale on buildings over 10,000 feet in size.⁽¹⁻⁷⁾

ANALYSIS AND KEY ISSUES OF EXISTING LAND USE

The most recent development is occurring in the Gateway District driven by the availability of sewer and water in the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district on Davis Island; it is both commercial and residential. This type of development is largely consistent with the community's vision as defined in the 2003 zoning district map.⁽¹⁾

Until 2002, and the approval of the TIF District, lot-by-lot was the most prevalent form of development. It followed traditional patterns, was accepted by the community and is expected to continue into the future in all areas where public sewer and water are not available.⁽²⁾

Excluding the Sheepscot Harbour Village and Resort, most previous subdivisions have been small in scale, primarily three- to five-lot owner-developed subdivisions. In the past 20 years, larger subdivisions have been developed: Cod Cove, High Head and Quarry Farm.

It is interesting to note that in 1924 a subdivision of 98 one-third-acre lots was laid out along Cross Point Road in the area of Modokowando Trail.

Edgecomb is primarily residential, with small businesses, mostly home-based or tourism-related businesses, primarily along its major roadways. This will continue to be the case going forward. The recent addition of sewer and water service through the TIF district spurred that development in part of the commercial district along the Route 1 corridor.⁽³⁾

The community considers itself rural because of its large tracts of undeveloped land, its numerous scenic roadways, vistas, historic buildings, undeveloped landscapes, lack of large-scale commercial enterprises and absence of any historical or commercial center. All areas of town have good access to and share services with one of the three neighboring commercial centers of Wiscasset, Boothbay Area

and Damariscotta, thus keeping Edgecomb's infrastructure costs low. This regional development pattern is seen as something the town of Edgecomb would like to preserve. ⁽²⁾

The current land use regulations have continued to evolve since the last comprehensive plan review with the addition of the zoning districts. The narrative description found on page 90 of the 2003 Edgecomb Annual Report provides guidance for the town boards. This predominately rural-feeling town did not begin to feel development pressures until the last five years, primarily due to the Sheepscot Harbour Village and Resort development. Pressures are expected to increase in the future causing increased tensions in the town and strain upon the various boards as they deal with difference between our "rural" vision and the realities of growth and change. ⁽⁴⁾

Land use regulatory measures could be strengthened 1) by considering Resource-based Subdivision permitting a requirement for all residential subdivisions, 2) by considering additional research and regulation governing the expansion of sewer and water services, and 3) by providing for more accountability during the development's building process.

Long term, the town needs to establish a continuing land use advisory committee to provide oversight and to assess the effectiveness of the current land use regulations. The committee's recommendations would give direction for the Planning Board and Selectmen on a yearly basis. ⁽⁵⁾

In 2006, the state projected a 50% growth in the midcoast area over the next ten years. Given the topography and natural factors inhibiting development throughout the town, it is expected that commercial and residential growth will continue to take place in areas currently showing development. ⁽⁶⁾

The community's administrative capacity to manage its land use regulation program is at present strained. The work load of both the planning board (volunteer) and the codes officer (part-time paid position) has increased in the past few years due to the pace of development in the Gateway District and continuing applications for development throughout the town. In 2007, the town had a part-time town planner; however, this position was eliminated in 2008 due to budget constraints. ⁽⁷⁾

A Mobile Home ordinance is in place; however, there has never been an application submitted for such a permit. Mobile home parks are allowed all over town. ⁽⁸⁾

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COMPONENTS AND FUTURE LAND USE CONSIDERATIONS

The Future Land Use Plan proposes to retain the existing Land Use map leaving existing districts intact as adopted in 2003 and projected to be valid for the next fifteen to twenty years. With the passage of the TIF district and introduction of public water and sewer, ordinances may need modification and adjustments to assure continued compliance with Edgcomb’s vision.

The Marine District and the Rural District respect the qualities of the shorefront and rural land for commercial, agricultural, and recreational opportunities and scenic enjoyment. It allows for smaller one-acre lots in areas of Marine District II to accommodate affordable housing and encourage development along existing roads, following traditional land use patterns along the Cross Point Rd, Mill Road and River Road. Single-family homes and subdivisions require one and two acres per dwelling unit in the Marine district and three acres in the Rural district. A density bonus is in place in the growth areas with public water and sewer. The only capital improvements projected are ongoing road maintenance and repair and future construction of public works facilities.

The Woodland District, radiating from the steep, forested rocky central spine defining the center of Edgcomb, presents major constraints to development and provides increased opportunities for recreation and land conservation. This district is served by secondary, mostly undeveloped roads. Protecting both the land form and wildlife habitat with minimum five-acre lot sizes, the area is part of a regional “quiet” zone linking Newcastle to the north with Boothbay to the south in several large unfragmented parcels. As this district is located outside of the growth district, no capital improvements are anticipated.

The growth districts follow traditional development patterns and are governed by their function as thoroughways along the Route 1 (Midcoast corridor) and the Route 27 arterial to the Boothbay region.

Current town ordinances listed above are adequate to cover building/development consistent with the vision and projected growth over the delineated period of this plan. It may be possible or desirable to extend water and sewer in the future; however, it is considered too far out to consider at this time.

ANALYSIS AND KEY ISSUES OF FUTURE LAND USE

The Future Land Use Plan aligns with the vision statement in that we have, and use, several key land use regulatory documents. It conflicts with the vision statement in that we need to strengthen the provisions of several of these regulatory documents as soon as possible. It will be necessary to address the weaknesses that have been highlighted by the growth encouraged when sewer and water were made available in the Edgecomb Gateway District and by the increased lot by lot and subdivision development in other areas of town due to the general in-migration along the coastal Route 1 corridor. Better oversight of current regulations and additional administrative help is needed to relieve some of the pressures due to the increased workload of the Select and Planning Boards. Any policies and/or strategies proposed in this plan are in keeping with the town vision.

The least populated areas are in the interior of the town. Commercial activity, public facilities and residential development have taken place along the town's three rivers and Routes 1 and 27. This fact was acknowledged as the town developed its zoning districts now in existence. The benefit of using the historic development configuration as a base for zoning plans is that it provides for directing development away from sprawl without altering the historical growth patterns. There is a possibility of strip mall development that needs to be addressed. At the present time, the Site Plan Review ordinance is the only ordinance dealing with this potential problem.

Routes 1 and 27 are the economic engines of the area for local commercial and tourist-related activities both for Edgecomb and for the neighboring towns. This poses a challenge for a town that wishes to retain its rural flavor. The land use plan is configured to address miles of prime residential waterfront areas, busy highways, and rural interior by accentuating the existing characteristics of each. In 2004, a TIF area in the growth district was approved by the townspeople and the Selectmen. This allowed a faster and more intense growth pattern than had been anticipated and has highlighted the need for additional regulation regarding the expansion of the sewer and water service. Projected growth figures require that the town be vigilant in anticipating any problems associated with explosive growth in Edgecomb's section of the midcoast corridor.⁽²⁾

Edgecomb currently has no capital investment plan. Capital improvements - town hall, school and roads - have been distributed throughout the town; sewer and water is located in and serves only the TIF district, .32% of the town's area.

The major and vital capital improvement need at this time is a new fire station.

Critical Natural Resources are protected primarily by topography, access (or lack of access) and reduced zoning density requirements. To further protect these valuable and irreplaceable resources, the town is recommending using a combination of available programs, incentives and regulatory devices, such as:

- A. historic/scenic overlay districts,
- B. forestry and agricultural farm programs
- C. tax credit incentives
- D. conservation easements and land trust acquisitions.⁽³⁾

Refer to Vol. II for additional Information and appendices

State Planning Office Data Sets
Applicable Maps
Useful links

References:

Growing Greener, Randall Arndt

Comprehensive Planning, A Manual for Maine Communities, Evan Richert and Silvia Most

