

Knox Area Housing Landscape Document

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Prepared by Northbound Research and Consulting in collaboration with the Midcoast Council of Governments for the Midcoast Regional Housing Trust

Background: Housing Barriers in the Midcoast

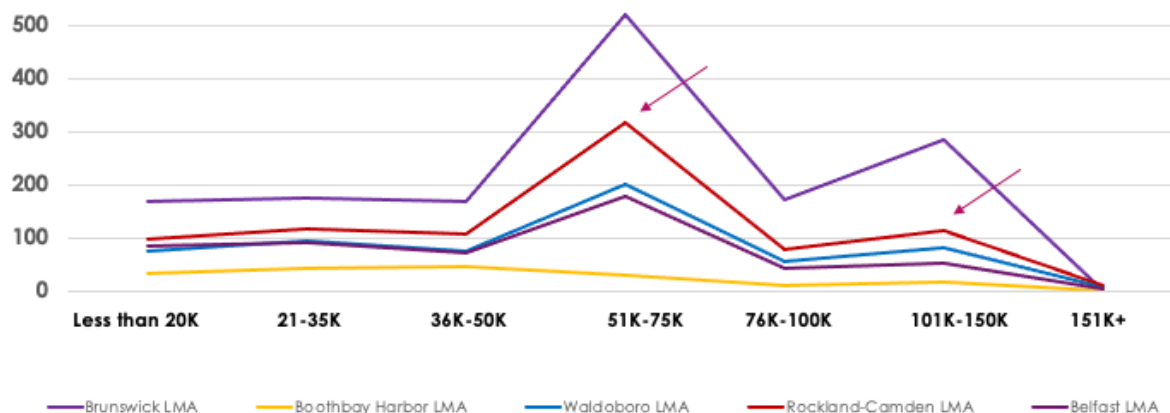
The preservation and construction of units across the full housing continuum are essential to ensuring that Maine families can continue to live, work, and retire in Knox County. However, barriers to securing safe, local, affordable housing – especially among Maine’s wage-earning, middle-income families -- are on the rise

In Knox County, 64 percent of families with children have incomes between \$50,000 and \$150,000. These middle-income, wage-earning households represent the largest demographic block in the region and also face the most significant housing shortfall (see Table 1). Conservatively, an additional 613 owner-occupied housing units, priced between \$150,000 and \$380,000, are necessary to meet the current demand from workforce families in Knox County alone. Additionally, a projected 800 more units across the region are needed to meet workforce demands through 2028.

This housing snapshot reinforces the data presented by Homeworthy, formerly the Knox County Homeless Coalition. Homeworthy highlights the stark barriers to housing affordability for local families. For example, in 2023, the median home price in Knox County rose to \$450,000, putting homeownership out of reach for 80% of those who live and work here. In 2022, 75% of renter households in Rockland could not afford the median rent.

Table 1

Owned Housing Units Needed by Income



Number of units needed for homeowners in each LMA across income categories - 2021 5-year ACS census

Knox County Housing Stakeholder Landscape

Thanks to a diverse network of public and private stakeholders with expertise in constructing and rehabilitating units across the housing continuum, Knox County is well-positioned to address the current and future housing needs of communities, families, and employers.

Each of the three anchor housing organizations in the region—Homeworthy, Midcoast Habitat for Humanity, and the Midcoast Regional Housing Trust—has a differing but complementary mission and expertise. Their overlap creates a fully integrated housing support pipeline.

Homeworthy: Focusing primarily on households with incomes from zero to \$60,000. With more than 10 years of experience ensuring families in Knox County experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity have safe, stable housing, Homeworthy's housing services include a family shelter, youth transitional housing, and a youth emergency shelter, along with two rental units in Rockland.

Midcoast Habitat for Humanity (MHFH): Focusing on households with incomes from approximately \$17,500 to \$75,000 (within 30-80% of area median income). Midcoast Habitat has a strong track record of creating affordable homeownership opportunities for low to moderate-income families and individuals in the Midcoast. They have created a total of 54 units since launching with an additional 13 units currently under construction. Earlier this year, a 12-home pocket neighborhood, Philbrick Commons was completed. The first of its kind in the area. Currently, MHFH has partnered with Homeworthy, Maine Housing, and the Maine State Prison building program to create an integrated housing development called Firefly Field at Talbot Avenue, focused on affordable rental and homeownership. Additional collaborations and affordable housing developments in Rockport and Thomaston are in the planning phase.

Midcoast Regional Housing Trust (MCRHT): Focusing on households with incomes ranging from \$55,000 to \$128,000. This segment of the Midcoast population – area nurses, teachers, stern men, store managers, daycare workers, small businesses owners - are drivers of the local economy and important to the sustainability of anchor institutions and the businesses community. The lack of safe, attainable housing for these middle-income workforce families has become a pressing economic development issue in the region. Positioned as a key partner, MCRHT specializes in extending the housing continuum in the region to create and preserve safe, affordable, and local home ownership and rental units for this important segment of the region's workforce.

MCRHT's Unique Contribution to Housing in the Midcoast:

Both Homeworthy and MCHH focus nearly exclusively on affordable housing, serving low-income families, specifically those whose incomes fall at or below 80% of the area median income (for Knox County, 80% AMI is now \$73,300 for a family of four). As a housing trust, MCRHT is uniquely positioned to collaborate with partners to add to the stock of affordable housing in the region and extend beyond these statutory income restrictions to help serve a middle-income workforce struggling to find safe, attainable, local housing. Like the Island Housing Trust on Mt. Desert Island, MCRHT's mission centers on building and preserving local housing for middle-income workforce families – both pathways for single family ownership and rental units - offering an important addition to the housing support system in the Midcoast.

Primary Organizational Focus: Household Income Range

