



Shore and Harbor Planning Grants

Town of Bucksport

Town of Bucksport Downtown Coastal Resiliency Master Plan (Fiscal Year 2024, project awarded 2023)

“During the public open house sessions, the public reinforced the importance of protecting the waterfront walkway from sea level rise and coastal flooding as the walkway is important to community members’ physical and mental wellbeing.” – Rich Rotella, Bucksport Economic and Community Development Director



Aerial photo “Waterfront Area Looking East Towards Route 1 Bridge to Verona Island.” Taken from Bucksport grant application on June 2, 2023.

Project Description

The Town of Bucksport aimed to develop a master plan for their downtown waterfront that focused on a holistic assessment of current and future climate change impacts and resiliency needs, while maintaining a sense of place, connection to maritime history, and natural resources. This project augments planning work starting in Bucksport’s 2017 update to their Comprehensive Plan, which identified the downtown waterfront as an area of significant value to the community but lacked the data and understanding of cumulative environmental impacts on said downtown waterfront. These impacts include coastal erosion, storm surge, and sea level rise along the Penobscot River, as well as upland runoff due to Bucksport’s hillside topography.

Bucksport contracted GEI Consultants, Inc. for their 2024 Downtown Coastal Resiliency Master Plan, building off their 2017 Comprehensive Plan update, 2022 Waterfront Walkway Shorefront Assessment, and their 2020 Town Dock Improvements project. This 2024 Master Plan project included environmental data collection and analysis, public engagement workshops to ensure

consistency with community member priorities, draft conceptual designs, and funding estimates and strategies for those designs. The project area includes municipal infrastructure such as a public waterfront walkway, fishing pier, docks, parking lots, and abuts commercial and residential parcels.



“What do you value most about Bucksport’s Downtown Waterfront” - 2024 Public Input Survey, from Downtown Bucksport Coastal Resiliency Master Plan report January 31, 2025 (p.4).

Project Results

The Downtown Resiliency Master Plan can be found under the Community & Economic Development tab on the town’s website (www.bucksportmaine.gov). Final recommendations of this study include widening the waterfront walkway, replacing walkway paving stones with pavement, elevating the waterfront walkway from an average of 11-feet to 16-feet, better channeling stormwater runoff to the shoreline, elevating piers to conform with anticipated sea level rise in 2050, and relocating low lying buildings and utility structures.



Photo of “Fishing Pier During January 2024 Storms”, from Downtown Bucksport Coastal Resiliency Master Plan report January 31, 2025 (p. 11).



Bucksport downtown 2016 FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM)., from Downtown Bucksport Coastal Resiliency Master Plan report January 31, 2025 (p.17).

Future Plans

Bucksport is using a phased approach to seeking funding, including additional grant sources, so they may implement the master downtown resiliency plan. In the near term, the town is pursuing easement discussions with waterfront property owners so they may reroute and/or elevate the public walkway and parking lots.

Lessons Learned

Successful grant applications and projects should consider both 50- and 100-year climate conditions, which can be found in the state climate action plan, *Maine Won't Wait*.

Thanks to Rich Rotella for helping to prepare this summary.

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Photo of the public walkway at Hoffman's Point, Bucksport. Taken by Rich Rotella on November 27, 2023

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