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There are many senior citizens who are on a fixed income. They cannot afford an increase in taxes.

PROVIDE SUPPORT TO RESIDENTS

Protecting the tax base so people can afford to live in Casco is crucial to ensure a multi-generational population. To retain and attract residents to Casco, the Town should find creative ways to support the community. Casco has the opportunity to not only foster trust between the government and citizens, but also attract new residents to support the tax base.

Strategies

01 /

Find ways to support people in keeping their homes well-kept such as matching funds for installing solar, or community house-repair funds.

02 /

Explore ways to bring Town Hall services directly to neighborhoods.

03 /

Add leadership incentives to attract a diverse selection of volunteers for town boards and committees.

04 /

Consider job sharing to attract highly skilled talent to the town.



Maintain Fiscal Stability & Accessible Government



BUILD MECHANISMS FOR FUNDING

Lack of government positions increases the workload for existing staff. The Town may also miss out on funding opportunities due to overburdened staff capacity. Increasing funded staff positions, finding additional funding opportunities to complete town projects, and setting an open and clear budget will improve town operations.

Strategies

01 /

Include funding in the budget for a part-time staff person to support the Town Manager and Code Enforcement with town planning and economic development.

02 /

Continue to use an open and participatory budgeting process.

03 /

Evaluate if new job structures or changes to workplace culture should occur to attract new talent to government services.

04 /

Fund staff professional development to improve budgeting and town operations for long term capital improvements.





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Be Leaders of Resiliency

Casco envisions itself as a community committed to sustainability. Residents want to create a resilient community that prepares for and adapts to climate change. Work should continue to lessen the Town's impacts on the environment by improving energy efficiency and conserving resources. It also means ensuring the people in Casco can afford to live in the town, age in place, and respond to climate disasters. The Town should ensure that decisions going forward are made through climate-informed policies and actions.



DEVELOP INVENTORIES AND BASELINE DATA

To better prepare for the future, Casco residents want to know what is here now. The town feels they do not have enough detailed data and analysis to understand the at-risk critical infrastructure, ecosystems, and people most vulnerable to climate change. Creating a comprehensive body of documents and plans that identifies the climate hazards and impacts the town faces will guide high-priority actions and aid in creating goals for climate adaptation planning.

Strategies

01 /

Conduct a greenhouse gas inventory, vulnerability assessment, and/or climate action plan to understand the infrastructure, ecosystems, and people most vulnerable to climate change.

02 /

Complete an inventory of all invasive species in the town and set up an invasive species management plan.

03 /

Incorporate climate data into new or updated town plans.





ENHANCE COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING ON SUSTAINABILITY

Understanding of the ways in which climate change will influence our daily experience can help build support for sustainable actions in the community. Informing the community about possible impacts, and existing resources and solutions, is essential to building resilience in a community. Casco residents understand that the information is only part of the solution, the other is how to get that information out. The Town has an opportunity to bolster both their education and communication.

Strategies

01 /

Update communication strategies to distribute informational materials more easily, including keeping the town website up-to-date and possible town newsletter.

02 /

Consider creation of a new resident welcome package that provides an overview on property care, volunteer committees and opportunities, importance of sustainability, and/or ongoing projects.

03 /

Use the Community Center to host environmental programs for kids and adults.

04 /

Partner with the school district, Lakes Environmental Association, and other organizations to bring sustainability focused education to the kids.

05 /

Include funding for sustainable education and outreach in future budgets.

06 /

Facilitate educational workshops to teach residents on composting, recycling, emissions reductions, green infrastructure, and sustainable actions.

07 /

Educate residents and businesses on point-source pollution, and the importance of groundwater and surface water protection.

08 /

Partner with organizations, such as Maine Lakes, communicate on the importance of water quality and environmentally safe practices. This might take the form of participating in the LakeSmart programming from Maine Lakes.





BOOST THE RESILIENCY OF PEOPLE

Many residents said that affordability is a driving factor forcing people to leave or preventing people from moving to town. Prioritizing actions that address social vulnerability will build healthier communities and sustain the population. There is a strong desire to build a sense of community to help one another and make the town a more vibrant place to live. Casco Residents are also interested in joining with organizations to learn new skills, protect their homes, and increase social connections.

Strategies

- 01 /

Encourage aging in place through development of efficient, resilient, multi-generational housing.
- 02 /

Develop affordable housing, both for rent and to purchase, to support and promote working-class living in Casco.
- 03 /

Create an outreach program to connect with underserved and historically underrepresented residents of Casco.
- 04 /

Establish multi-generational social connections to bring the community together.
- 05 /

Develop a local bus or shared ride connection to services for seniors and youth.
- 06 /

Partner with local organizations, such as the Wild Seed Project or WindowDressers, to offer local workshops on energy efficiency and implement sustainability projects.
- 07 /

Develop an emergency response communication system that relays information to residents but also ensures emergency vehicles have sufficient access to all areas of town.



ENSURE EFFICIENT AND DURABLE TOWN INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure upgrades and efficiency improvements would reduce overall emissions and can result in lower long-term costs, saving the town money. Resilient infrastructure also ensures reliable transportation during emergencies, protects residents and private property, and reduces strain on the natural environment. Paved surfaces are often impervious and shed large volumes of runoff. Implementing bioswales, rain gardens, and green infrastructure can conserve these spaces while enhancing the Town's landscape.

Strategies

01 /

Improve the energy efficiency of municipal operations by installing renewable energy, electrifying buildings, and switching to electric vehicles.

02 /

Create incentives or ordinances to increase green infrastructure and improve energy efficiency in new commercial and residential developments.

03 /

Work with regional organizations to build local awareness for the social, environmental, and economic benefits of green infrastructure.

04 /

Consider adopting the building stretch code.

05 /

Take climate data into consideration when updating plans, policies or ordinances. This could include taking increased precipitation into account when updating culvert sizing.

06 /

Update zoning codes to align with flooding projections.





PROTECT THE NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS



Protecting open space improves water and air quality while increasing resilience for the surrounding communities. Green space also benefits residents’ health by reducing the impact of heatwaves on elderly and vulnerable populations. Casco residents consistently mention the need to conserve open space and protect the lakes and ponds.

Strategies

- 01 /

Protect water quality by reducing stormwater and runoff from development, roads, agriculture, and fertilized lawns.
- 02 /

Explore ways to expand monitoring of Casco’s surface water quality to maintain healthy lakes.
- 03 /

Create environmentally safe landscape standards for planting of open space (native vegetation, pollinator habitat, drought resistance) and lawn care maintenance.
- 04 /

Understand the extent of invasive species (terrestrial and aquatic) and work to monitor and remediate impacted areas.
- 05 /

Assess the impact of PFAS on sites where town sludge was formerly spread.
- 06 /

Explore public and private partnerships to increase recycling and composting.
- 07 /

Review current zoning regulations to ensure goals and objectives are being met.



SHIFT TO RENEWABLE ENERGY

Casco wants to encourage use away from fossil fuels to renewable, sustainable energy sources. Renewable energy investments will reduce overall emissions and save the town money. However, the Town also needs to balance competing land uses to protect the resources that are part of Casco’s life and identity.

Strategies

- | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| <p>01 /</p> <p>Create a solar ordinance to balance sustainability with the preservation of agriculture, forested lands and open space.</p> | <p>02 /</p> <p>Install renewable energy projects (solar, wind, geothermal, anaerobic digestion, etc.) on municipal buildings and properties.</p> | <p>03 /</p> <p>Work with private EV installers to consider incentives for businesses to install charging stations for EVs.</p> | <p>04 /</p> <p>Encourage electric vehicle usage and expand available charging stations in high-use public areas.</p> | <p>05 /</p> <p>Promote awareness and use of Efficiency Maine.</p> |
|--|--|--|--|---|



REDUCE VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED

Transportation is the leading source of greenhouse gas emissions in Maine. Most towns are reliant on personal vehicle use. Increasing transit and alternative modes of transportation will reduce vehicle miles and reduce overall emissions. Improving bike and pedestrian infrastructure would encourage active transportation. Active transportation not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but also improves the health of residents.

Strategies

01 /

Adopt a Complete Streets policy.

02 /

Prioritize funding for expanding the bicycle and pedestrian network.

03 /

Continue discussions with transit providers to connect Casco to regional destinations.

04 /

Work with transit providers to develop an intra-town transit service.

05 /

Work with local organizations to coordinate and provide a range of transportation services for the needs of the aging populations and youth.

06 /

Consider partnering with regional organizations to provide incentives for ride sharing.





Protect Woods, Waters, & Open Space

Casco is known for its scenic beauty. Residents embrace access to the outdoors and enjoy exploring the lakes, trails, and natural landscapes. These resources also attract more people to the area, both to live and visit. This makes conserving natural areas a key priority for the Town. However, residents expressed frustration over the lack of access, inventory, and preservation. There is an opportunity to better manage and protect the resources that make Casco thrive.



DEVELOP A REFINED TRAIL NETWORK

Casco has an extensive network of trails on state parks, public preserves, and town-owned land as well as a more informal network crossing private property. The trails support hiking, walking, snowmobiling, and ATVs. Local recreation clubs are very active in maintaining existing trails, especially within private property. Trails are also maintained by Loon Echo Land Trust, the State Park, and the Town. As development continues to occur, especially with the sale of large parcels, the community could lose many of the informal trails unless steps are taken to purchase trail easements or to require developers to provide direct and convenient trail connections as part of their development projects. The Town needs to continue partnering with organizations and property owners to develop new trails and preserve the existing network.

Strategies

01 /

Build relationships with large parcel landowners and the state park to secure long-term, generational access and preservation to key trail linkages and connections, with the consideration of working towards establishing formal agreements.

02 /

Update zoning to clearly articulate when trail corridors should be preserved or added as private development occurs.

03 /

Create an open space and trails connectivity map to identify important trail corridors and connections for future private development.

04 /

Consult with interested parties to solidify use and easement agreements with private landowners.

05 /

Seek private and public funding to expand the number of trails and pedestrian/bicycle paths.

06 /

Prioritize funding for sidewalk and bicycle network expansions.

07 /

Continue to work regionally with surrounding communities and organizations to extend regional trails.

08 /

Expand and enhance the work of the Open Space Committee to develop relationships with external partners and private landowners.







ENHANCE GENERATIONAL ACCESS TO TRAILS & WATERWAYS

Many people don't know which lands are open to the public, where trails are located, or how the outdoor recreational spaces can be used. Residents expressed the desire to have increased access to the outdoors but noted the difficulties in accessibility. The Town will need to be active stewards and partners to help maintain public access to public and private lands. Casco can leverage the very active recreation clubs in the area to create and distribute information about the available trails.

Strategies

01 /

Create trails and water access points that are ability-inclusive and accessible by means other than car.

02 /

Install low-cost, low-impact signage along trails and water access points to aid in navigation and private property use.

03 /

Seek private and public funding to expand the number of access points to natural resources and water access.

04 /

Improve public awareness and knowledge of the trails by expanding volunteer opportunities and creating trail, water access, and outdoor recreation maps and informational materials.

05 /

Develop relationships with private landowners and provide ongoing stewardship assistance to ensure continued access to trails.

06 /

Work with local and regional organizations to offer four-season, nature-based activities and programming for people of all ages and abilities.

07 /

Enter into agreements with private landowners to formalize trail and water access points.





KEEP LARGE AREAS OF CASCO WILD AND UNTOUCHED

Residents want to preserve open spaces, natural resources, and wildlife to enhance the environment and preserve the natural character of Casco. The Open Space Commission is always looking to improve the Town’s open space inventory. High priority areas include the Pine Hill/Owl Pond/Heath area, Rattlesnake Mountain, Quaker Ridge East, and Quaker Ridge West.

Strategies

01 / Work with the local land trusts to pursue state and federal grant funding to increase land conservation.	02 / Protect the town’s natural heritage by acquiring and preserving private, open, underutilized land for wildlife and low-impact recreational use.	03 / Use the Open Space Fund as a strategy to purchase open space and protect important natural resources and land conservation in Casco.
04 / Plant wild and native meadow seeds along Crooked River School.	05 / Update the zoning code to require developers building appropriate scale projects within the rural districts to protect high quality open space.	06 / Create connections between conserved lands for increased wildlife corridors and trails.

“I love the rural, country setting of Casco”



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Preserving the quality of our lakes and streams is of the utmost importance.

PRESERVE LAKES, PONDS, AND WATERWAYS

The lakes and ponds in Casco are the economic engines for the town. The water quality in the majority of Casco’s lakes and ponds is stellar, but are at risk to threats by development in the region. Residents want to take an active approach to conserving open space in order to protect the watershed. There is an abundant number of water protection organizations in the region that is helping to monitor and protect these vital resources.

Strategies

01 /

Continue to work with local organizations to actively monitor the health of the lakes and ponds.

02 /

Consider limiting or halting water extraction to protect long-term viability of water resources.

03 /

Educate residents on shoreline management best practices, invasive species, and the importance of water quality.

04 /

Partner with neighboring communities and regional pond associations to monitor, protect, and improve water quality in the region’s watershed.





Protect Woods, Waters, & Open Space



PROTECT FARMS AND WORKING LANDS

Casco's working lands provide natural benefits such as improved water quality and carbon sequestration, along with supporting the local economy. Residents expressed the desire to protect these farming, forestry, and all working lands to ensure longevity and transition to the next generation.

Strategies

01 /

Update the zoning code to protect high quality open space within the rural districts.

02 /

Work regionally to develop marketing materials to showcase outdoor amenities, farms, and local food sources unique to Casco.

03 /

Encourage working farms and forests to participate in the Farmland and Tree Growth Tax Program.

04 /

Work with the Maine Farmland Trust, the Department of Agriculture, and other organizations to attract and support farmers and agricultural- based businesses.

05 /

Develop a solar ordinance that protects farmland, forests, and working lands





PROTECT HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

There is a need for further survey, inventory, and analysis of Casco's prehistoric and historic archaeological sites and historic buildings, structures, and objects. Notably, there have been no professional surveys for historic archaeological sites in Casco. Many known and suspected sites are located within proximity to water. Shoreland zoning and resource protection district permitting addressed those sites, however information is limited.

Strategies

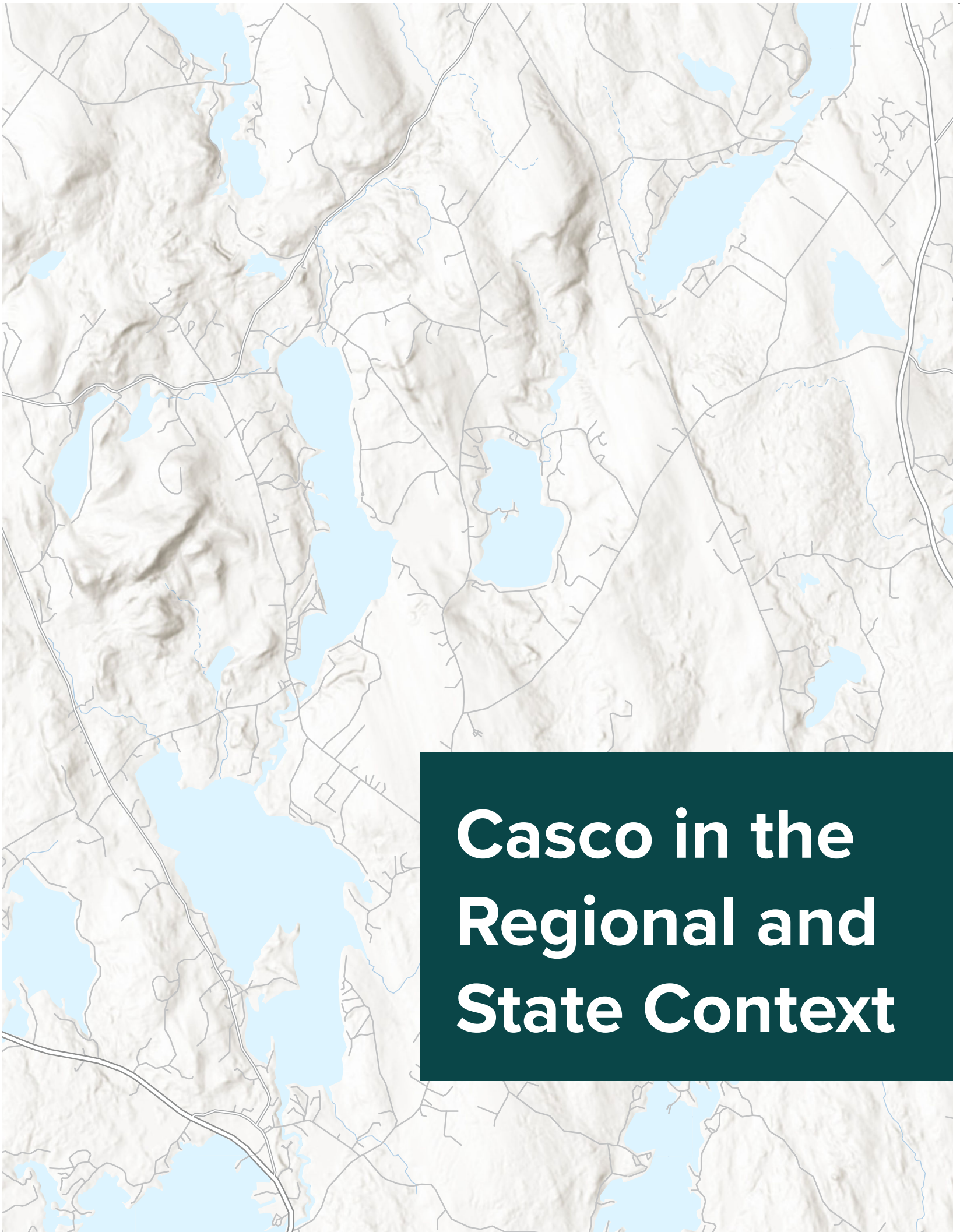
01 /

Complete a survey of historic properties and archaeological sites.

02 /

Identify properties that may be nominated to the National Register for historic places.





Casco in the Regional and State Context



Regional Context

In summary, Casco coordinates with regional entities as follows:

- The Casco Fire Rescue Department (CFRD) participates in a regional system of mutual aid, sharing fire and EMS services with the neighboring towns of Naples, Raymond, and Otisfield. For further details see Public Facilities and Services chapter.
- The School District is shared between the towns of Casco, Naples, and Bridgton with elementary, middle, and high schools spread across the Towns. For further details see Public Facilities and Services chapter.
- Waste Management is handled at a transfer station shared with Naples and located in Casco. For further details see Public Facilities and Services chapter.
- Water resource protection and land conservation efforts are shared with neighboring towns. Many local lakes and ponds are shared between towns and consequently share lake and pond conservation associations. Land Trusts and nonprofits that work in Casco such as the Loon Echo Land Trust and Sebago Clean Waters have regional scopes. For further details see Water and Natural Resources chapter.
- The town is enrolled in the Community Resilience Partnership, a state-wide program for community and climate resilience funding. The town will be among a cohort also including Hartford, Lovell, Oxford, and Sumner working with the Center for an Ecology-Based Economy (CEBE) which acts as a service provider in the region.
- The Lakes Region Explorer provides regional bus transportation through Casco between Portland and Bridgton. For further details see Transportation chapter.
- Casco is part of the Lakes Area Collaboration to improve and expand regional broadband access together with the towns of Bridgton, Fryeburg, Harrison, Naples, Naples, Raymond, Sebago, Standish, and Windham. The collaboration is being facilitated by GPCOG. For further details see Public Facilities and Services chapter.



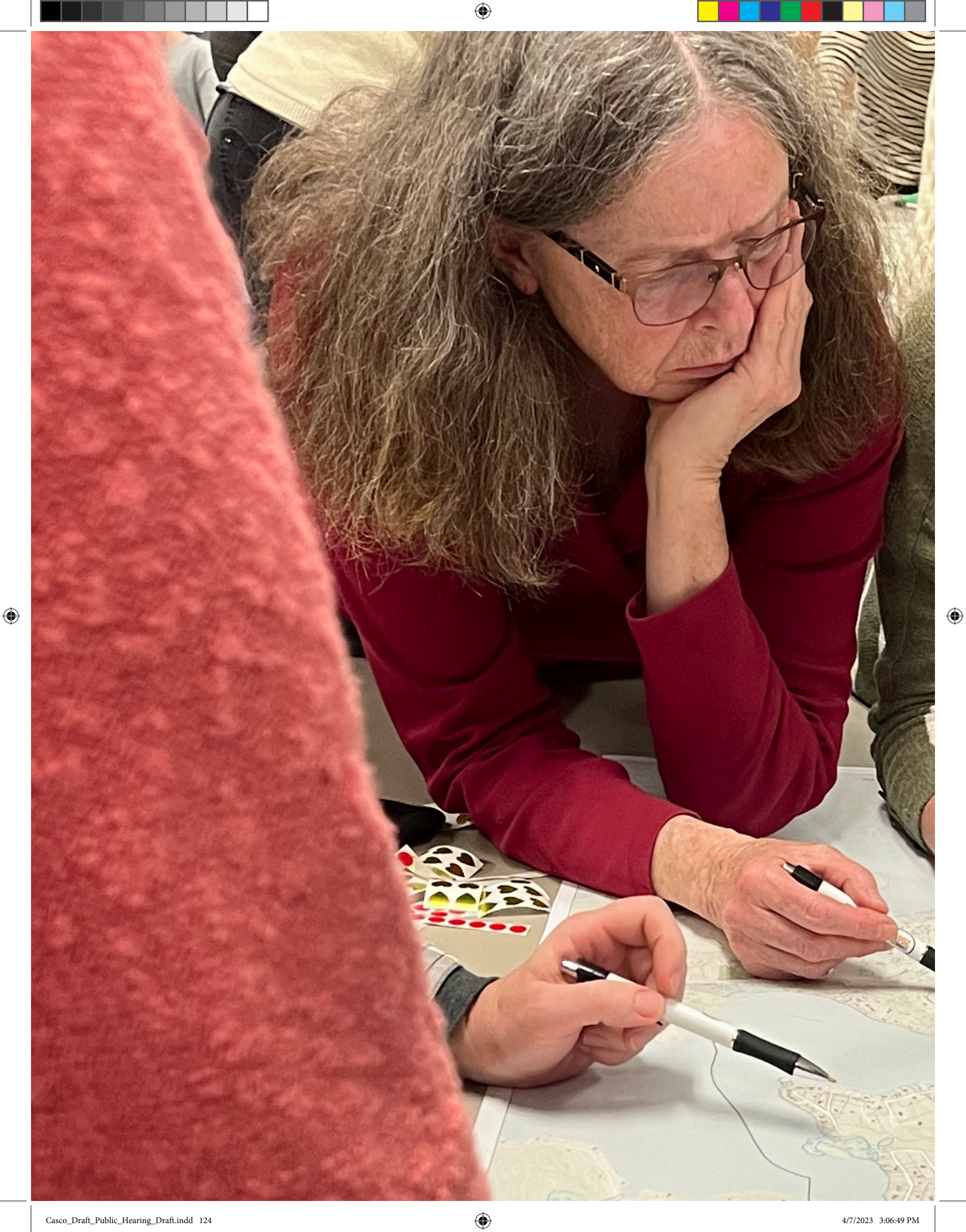
State Context

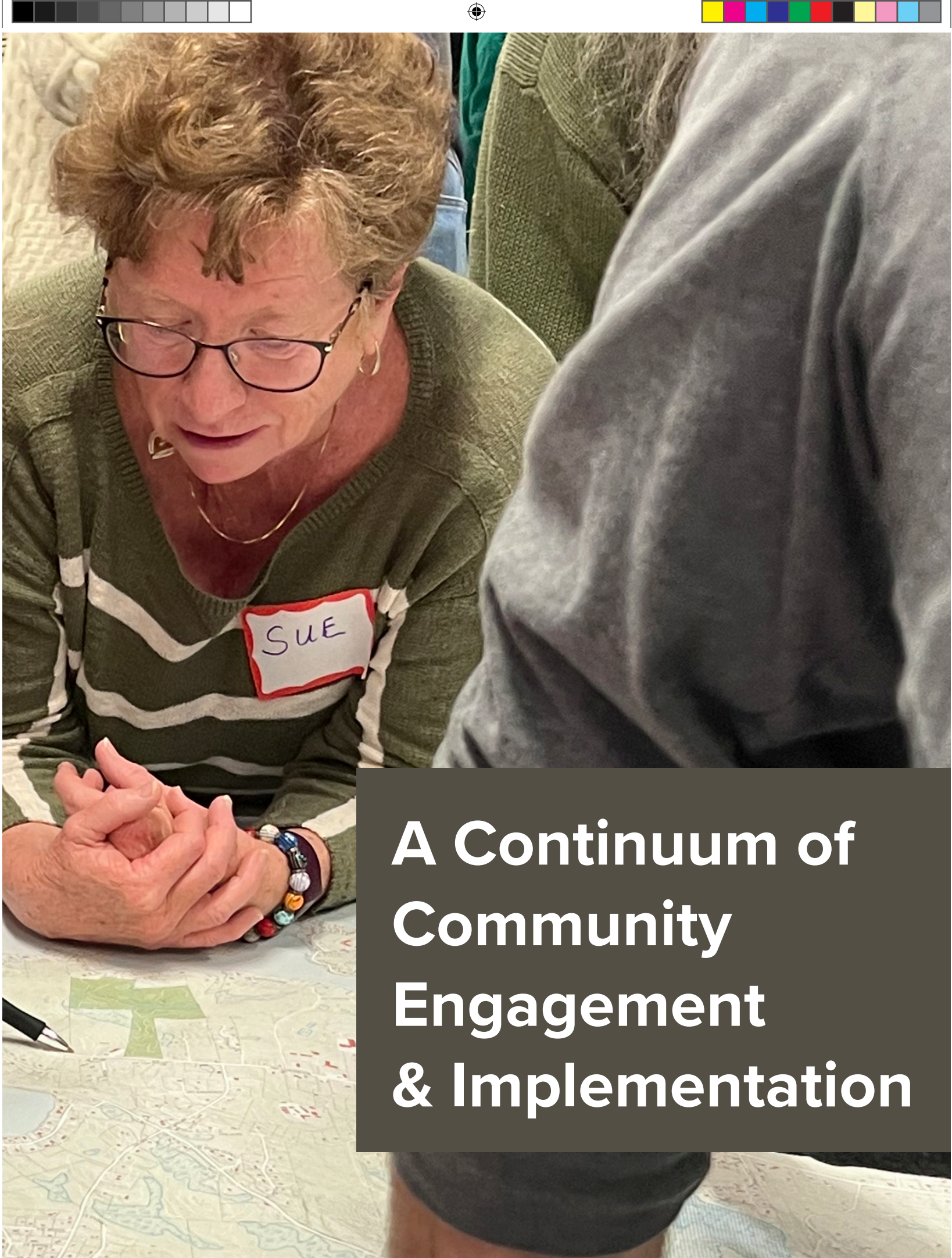
Casco has prepared this plan using an inquiry-based approach. The goals and action strategies identified in the Zoning Analysis and Recommendations, and Big Ideas sections reflect Casco's priorities as either communicated verbatim or transcribed by the planning team applying current planning best practices.

The list of policies and action strategies mandated by the State by Growth Management Act (GMA) have been reviewed for applicability and appropriateness, and are incorporated into the plan's Implementation Matrix, organized by topic as they appear in GMA. Where the Comprehensive Planning Committee and team have identified goals not to be incorporated, a brief note has been made why — most often because the Town has already implemented the policy or strategy or it's just not appropriate given the size or limited resources of Casco.

For a list of supplemental State policies and strategies, see the Implementation section of the plan.







A Continuum of Community Engagement & Implementation