

# Greater East Grand Region

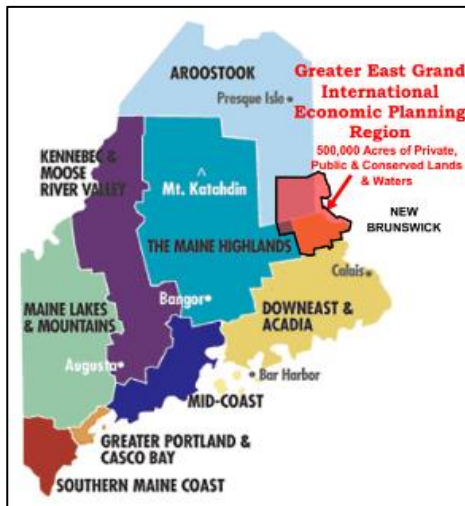
## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### 2030 Economic Development Plan (September 2020 Draft)

#### Introduction

Launched in April, 2019, the **Greater East Grand Region (GEGR)** economic planning initiative was designed from the beginning to be a citizen-led effort involving the towns and residents of a multi-jurisdictional territory of remote rural Maine. It soon became apparent that the people, heritage, and culture of the towns and communities which make up the Greater East Grand Region are each influenced by a broad, distinct and nearly independent landscape.

Thus, the true strengths and assets of the Greater East Grand Region are based on a compendium of diverse landscapes, combined to form a highly unique area of over 500,000 acres in size - a landscape which includes the eastern portions of the watersheds of the Middle and Lower Mattawamkeag River, nearly all of the Baskahegan River drainage and most of the Upper St. Croix River watershed including its internationally controlled waters and adjacent shore lands in western New Brunswick.



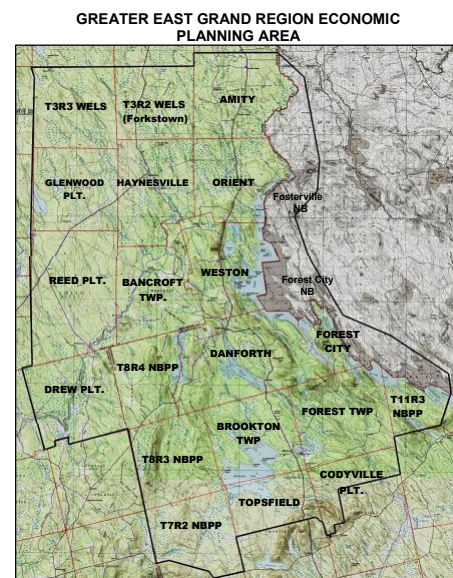
The specific Maine planning region includes the towns of *Amity, Danforth, Haynesville, Orient and Weston*; the plantations of *Drew, Glenwood and Reed* including the Village of *Wytopitlock*; the Unorganized Townships of *Bancroft and Brookton Village, Forest City Village, Forest Twp., T11R3 NBPP, T7R2 NBPP, T8R3 NBPP, T3R3 Wels and T3R2 Forkstown*, the forest lands in the northerly parts of *Codyville Plantation and the Town of Topsfield*. The landscape of western New Brunswick is included in the greater region because of the internationally controlled waters of the Upper St. Croix River including East

Grand Lake and the associated shore land cottage owners who rely on the region's service center located in Danforth.

The project objectives from the beginning have been to:

1. Establish a credible economic development voice for the region;
2. Identify, through citizen input and participation, community and regional assets that have economic potential; and
3. Develop specific recommendations on how those assets and relationships can be used to foster economic growth.

The initial public meeting in May, 2019 introduced the planning effort and invited participation by all that were interested. A project steering committee was formed and topic-focused small work groups initiated to do more comprehensive planning on several key economic development opportunities. The strategy of asset-based economic planning for rural economies was



chosen as the vehicle to help guide the process including conversations and formal meetings with dozens of individuals and groups including forestry business owners, snowmobile and ATV club leaders, local business owners, town leaders, private economic development corporations, and local and national conservation organizations.

The **GEGR Steering Committee** included Elbridge Cleaves, Judy Cleaves, Dwayne Young, Ardis Brown, Jackie Morse, Peggy White, Denise and Wayne Smith and Heather Zakupowsky.

The **Recreational Infrastructure** work group included Elbridge Cleaves, Colin Brown, Kyle Burdick, Dwayne Young, Dave Conley and Sue Swead. Snowmobile and ATV club leadership from the region provided important input.

The recently formed **GEGR Broadband Task Force** is co-chaired by Dwayne Young and Jennifer Fronczak and includes Ardis Brown, Elbridge Cleaves, Peggy White, Jessica Potter, Carolyn Fickett, Kyle Burdick and Susan Hatton.

**With the publication of this draft plan, the next phase of community discussion begins.** This is a work-in-progress and the most important step over the next few months is to seek input, expertise, and direction from a broader audience to the recommended goals and priorities outlined in this report.

**The website link here will lead you to the longer project report, the project document library, and a simple survey to gather your ideas and comments about the draft plan.**

[www.eastgrandregion.org](http://www.eastgrandregion.org)

**We look forward to moving the vision for our region’s future forward together.**

<b>Steering and Work Group Members</b>	<b>Funders</b>	<b>Project Consultants</b>
Ardis Brown	Maine Community Foundation	Sarah Strickland
Colin Brown	Washington County Unorganized Territory TIF	Project Consultant
Kyle Burdick	Machias Savings Bank	Robbinston
Elbridge Cleaves	Lakeville Shores, Inc.	Aly Cropley
Judy Cleaves	Individual Donors	Project Assistant
Dave Conley		Brookton
Carolyn Fickett		
Mitch Lansky		
Jackie Morse		
Jessica Potter		
Denise Smith		
Wayne Smith		
Sue Szwed		
Peggy White		
Dwayne Young		
Heather Zakupowsky		

## Vision and Purpose

**Vision:** In 2030, the Greater East Grand Region is an economically stable, unified constellation of remote, rural, welcoming communities that collaborate to attract and retain people of all ages to live, work, visit and play.

**GEGR Economic Initiative Purpose:** The GEGR Economic Initiative will promote actions to unify people, communities and organization to work together to support each other’s needs, efforts and successes across the region. We believe that engaged residents inspired by a collaborative and coordinated economic development plan can turn the regional assets into opportunities.

### Our Success Looks Like:

- A sustainable, collaborative and trustworthy intermediary organization guides and coordinates economic development by supporting entrepreneurship, business succession and workforce development.
- Investment and peer-to-peer support for existing businesses, entrepreneurs and people have increased new business and employment opportunities.
- Four-season recreational tourism is a positive economic driver and supporter of existing businesses.
- Youth are involved in community, public service, stewardship and volunteer leadership roles.
- Young adults have chosen to remain or return “home” because of the region’s positive support and opportunities.
- New families have moved to the region because of the excellent education, welcoming community and job opportunities.
- Elders are able to successfully “thrive in place.”

### Success Looks Like...

#### Our Vision

The Greater East Grand Region is a stable constellation of remote, rural communities that collaborate to attract and retain people of all ages to live, work, visit and play.



#### Our Communities

Amity  
 Bancroft  
 Brookton TWP  
 Codyville Plantation  
 Danforth  
 Drew  
 Forest TWP  
 Forest City  
 Glenwood Plantation  
 Haynesville  
 Orient  
 Reed Plantation  
 Topsfield  
 Weston  
 T3R3 Wels, T3R2 Forkstown  
 T7R2, T8R3, T8R4, T11R3

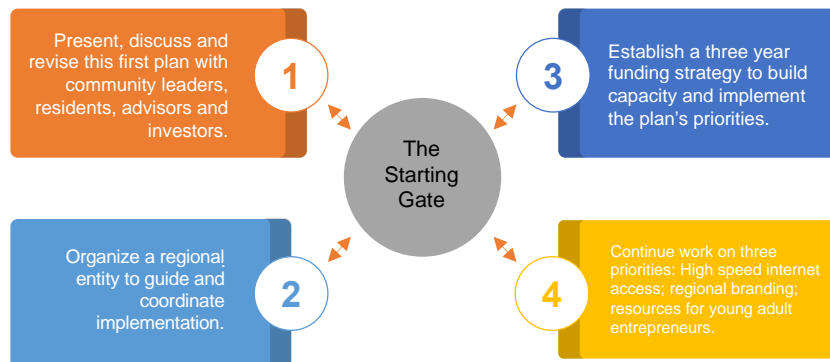
## The Starting Gate: *Regional Collaboration & Investment to Advance the Vision*

### Next Steps for 2020-2021

1. Present, discuss, and revise this first planning document with community leaders, residents, advisors and investors.
  - ▶ *Launch a website and provide materials that can be used to initiate community-wide discussions about this draft economic plan.*
2. Define and organize a regional entity to guide and manage the implementation of the economic/community development plan.
  - ▶ *Select an existing 501c3 entity to serve as the fiscal agent for the GEGR Economic Development office for three years.*
3. Establish a 3-year funding strategy for capacity building and project priorities.
  - ▶ *Prepare proposals to foundations and private donors for three years of funding to build local capacity to guide plan implementation at a sustainable level.*
4. Continue work on three regional priorities.
  - ▶ *Identify and provide resources to support aspiring and existing entrepreneurs in the region.*
  - ▶ *Complete all phases of infrastructure planning for high speed internet ([view documents here](#)) access across the region.*
  - ▶ *Initiate a “Branding & Marketing” task force ([view documents here](#)) to recommend destination marketing strategies for the region.*

## The Starting Gate

### *Regional Collaboration & Investment*



## ***Goals with Three-Year Priorities***

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### **Goal A: Economic Vitality – Stable local businesses and investment in entrepreneurs.**

1. Support sustainability and successful business succession.
2. Invest in business opportunities for young adults and encore entrepreneurs, especially in trades occupations that are needed in the region.
3. Increase access to high-speed broadband services. Complete Phase 1 assessment and secure funding for Phase 2.
4. Expand recreational infrastructure to support a four-season tourism market especially in support of existing businesses.

### **Goal B: Workforce Development – an educated, reliable workforce for local businesses.**

1. Continue to invest in East Grand School and its graduates.
2. Create incentives and internship opportunities for young adults to be a part of the economic and community development activities across the region.
3. Partner with local non-profit service organizations to develop workforce development services in order to establish an increased pool of candidates for local jobs.

### **Goal C: Vibrant Communities – attract visitors, welcome newcomers, support residents.**

1. Identify and seek investment for community designated projects in Amity, Bancroft, Brookton, Codyville, Danforth, Drew, Forest City, Glenwood, Haynesville, Orient, Reed, Topsfield and Weston.
2. Complete a study on current and future housing needs across the region in collaboration with town leaders.
3. Coordinate economic development priorities and destination marketing efforts with the Town of Danforth's development plans.
4. Develop a sustainable volunteer network as current community leadership retires.

## Goal A: Economic Vitality 2020 – 2021 Recommendations

Three Year Priorities	2020 – 2021 Recommendations
<p><b>1. Support Sustainability and Successful Business Succession</b> (<a href="#">view documents here</a>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite 1:1 conversation with individual local business owners about their current and long-term financial sustainability and succession plans.</li> <li>• Provide information about business planning and technical assistance programs available through regional and state economic development agencies.</li> <li>• Stay current on the financial vulnerability of local businesses as a result of C-19 in collaboration with the East Grand Chamber of Commerce.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Invest in Business Opportunities for Young Adults and Encore Entrepreneurs</b> (<a href="#">view documents here</a>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet and interview young adults who live in the region to learn about their career aspirations.</li> <li>• Identify and interview young adults who would like to return to the region about their career aspirations.</li> <li>• Identify local people who have new small business ideas and link them to resources that can help with start-up operational and financial planning.</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with downtown Danforth’s plans for building rehabilitation to house new business start-ups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Increase access to high-speed broadband services.</b> (<a href="#">view documents here</a>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Phase 1 ConnectMaine planning project for expanded high-speed broadband service.</li> <li>• Seek funds for Phase 2 infrastructure grant in partnership with Pioneer Broadband.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Expand recreational infrastructure to support a four-season tourism market</b> (<a href="#">view documents here</a>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and test <i>destination brand</i> concept.</li> <li>• Initiate the <i>Water Trails</i> infrastructure development plan beginning with the <i>Baskahegan</i> watershed.</li> <li>• Initiate the <i>Snowmobile and ATV Trails</i> development plan in collaboration with the 7 clubs in the region.</li> <li>• Complete a feasibility plan for added water access and vehicle/DIY <i>camping sites</i> in the region.</li> </ul>



## Goal B: Workforce Development & Investment in Youth 2020 – 2021 Recommendations

Three Year Priorities	2020 – 2021 Recommendations
<p><b>1. Continue to invest in East Grand School and its students.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate priorities with the Portrait of a Graduate Project.</li> <li>• Continue to invest in the Natural Resources Pathway and project learning strategies.</li> <li>• Identify program funding needs for the 2020-2022 school years.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Create incentives and opportunities for young adults to be a part of the economic and community development planning and activities across the region.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate priorities with the Portrait of a Graduate Project.</li> <li>• Invite student and young adult participation on all economic development planning task forces. Identify specific projects related to Goal A for student participation.</li> <li>• Continue to build on volunteer activities through CORE and the EGS Outdoor Education curriculum.</li> <li>• Grow internship opportunities for students in the region.</li> <li>• Identify program funding needs for the 2020-2022 school years.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Partner with local non-profit service organizations to establish an increased pool of candidates for local jobs.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate priorities with East Grand Health Center and other social agencies supporting marginalized residents.</li> <li>• Build on existing services, invite collaboration with Community Caring Collaborative and other agencies to develop long-term strategies to mitigate poverty, trauma and addiction in the region.</li> <li>• Seek funding for a pilot project with East Grand Health Center, East Grand School, Maine Family Resource and local businesses to increase employee retention and support long-term employment.</li> </ul>

## Goal C: Vibrant Community 2020 – 2021 Recommendations

<b>Three Year Priorities</b>	<b>2020 – 2021 Recommendations</b>
<p><b>1. Identify and seek investment for community designated projects in Amity, Bancroft, Brookton, Codyville, Danforth, Drew, Forest City, Glenwood, Haynesville, Orient, Reed, Topsfield and Weston.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Priorities to be developed with local town leaders, business owners, and community volunteers.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Complete a study on current and future housing needs in the region.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Priorities to be developed with local town leaders, business owners, and community volunteers.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Coordinate economic development priorities and destination marketing efforts with the Town of Danforth’s development plans.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Priorities to be developed with Danforth town leaders.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Develop a sustainable volunteer and stewardship network as current community leadership retires.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Priorities to be developed with agencies and local leaders in the region.</i></li> </ul>