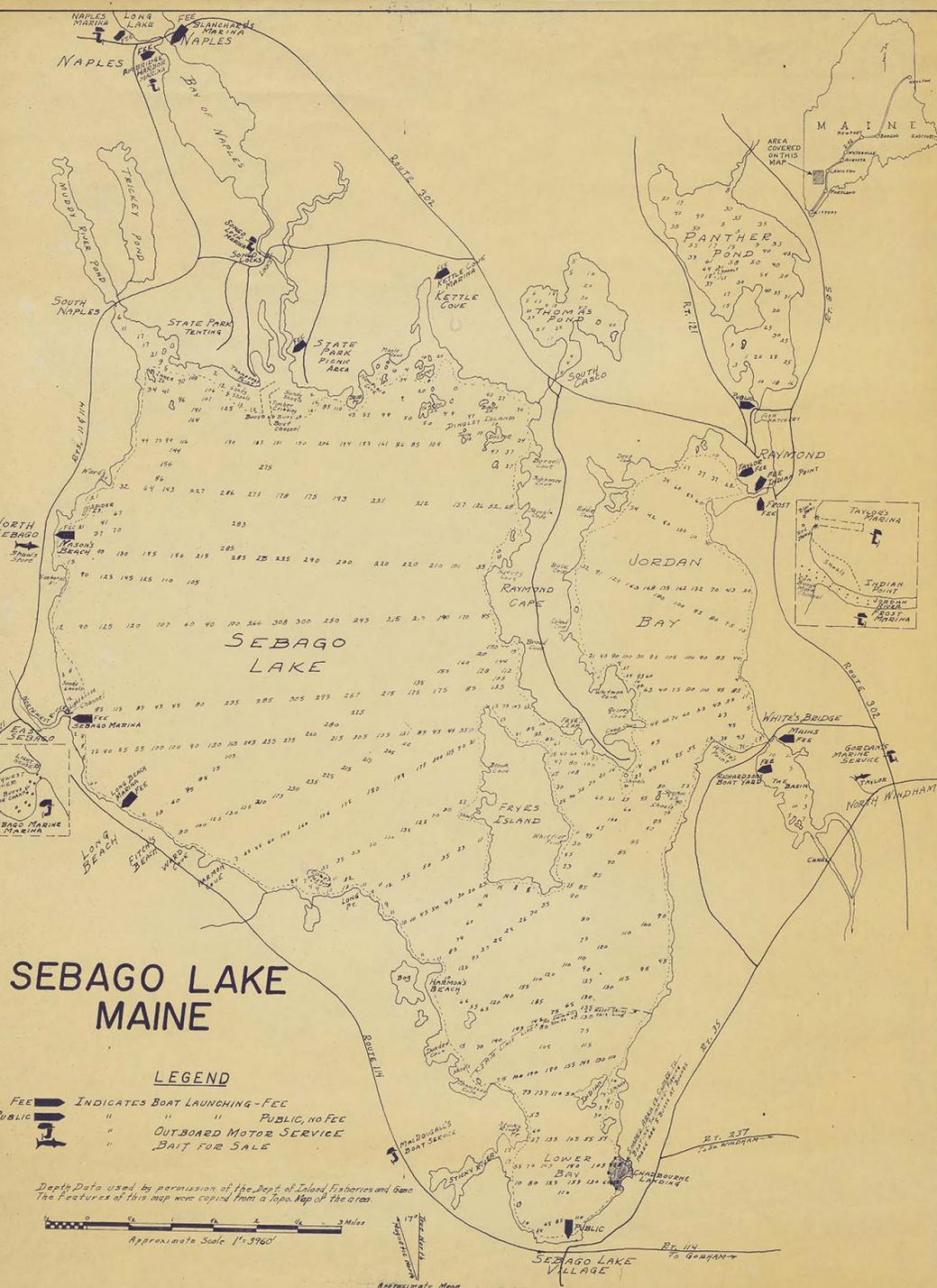


Lakes Region Homeless Services Study



Cumberland County Commissioners
November 18, 2024



LEVINE PLANNING STRATEGIES
Tools for Building Communities



NORTHSTAR
PLANNING

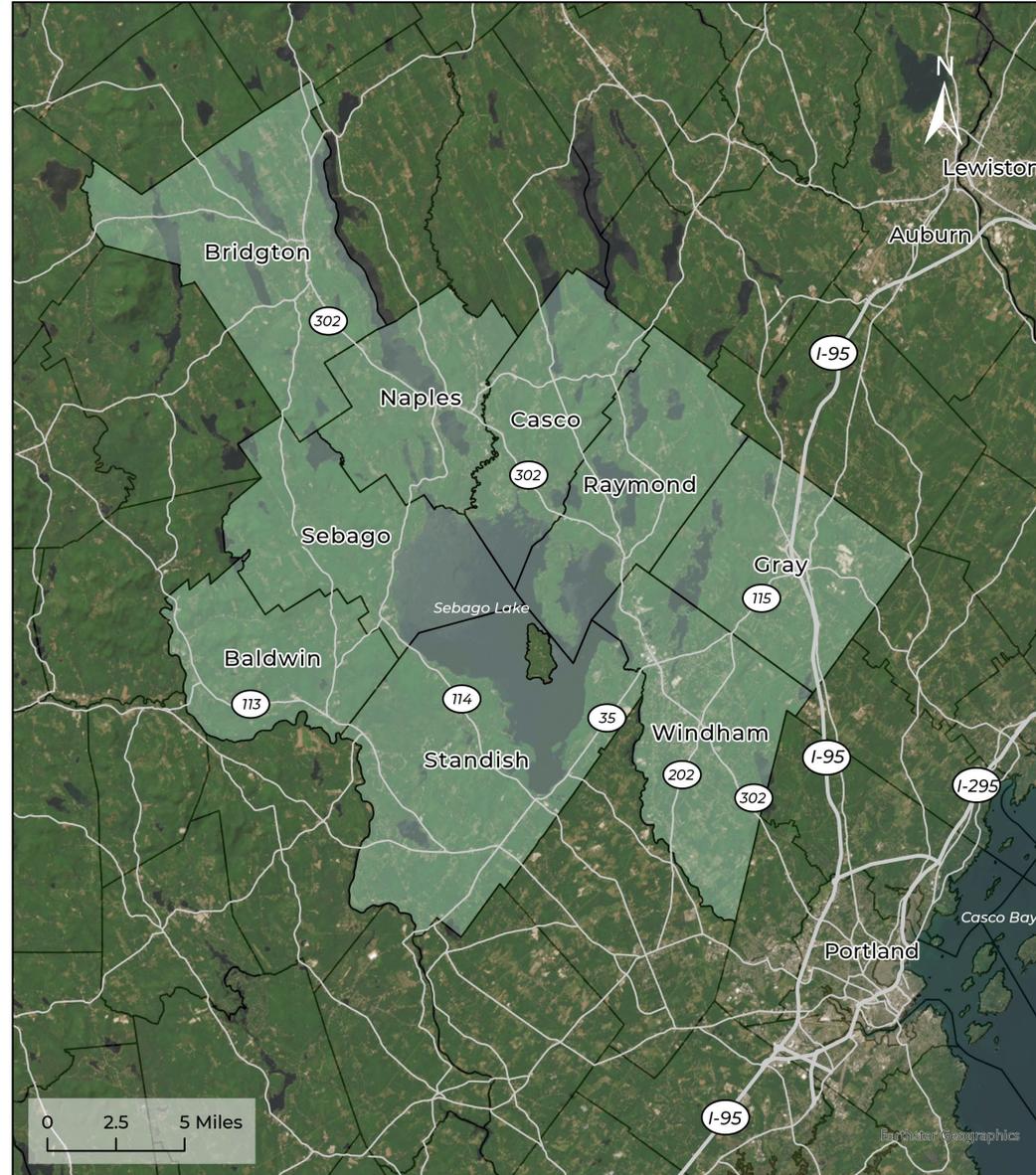
Project Background

- In June 2023 Cumberland County contracted with Levine Planning Strategies and its partners Human Services Research Institute and North Star Planning to examine the need for homeless services in the Lakes Region communities (see next slide)
- **Project Purpose:** Evaluate the needs and options for the provision of programs and services for people experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness.
- Tasks:
 - Community Housing Profiles
 - Needs Assessment
 - Site Identification
 - Findings & Recommendations

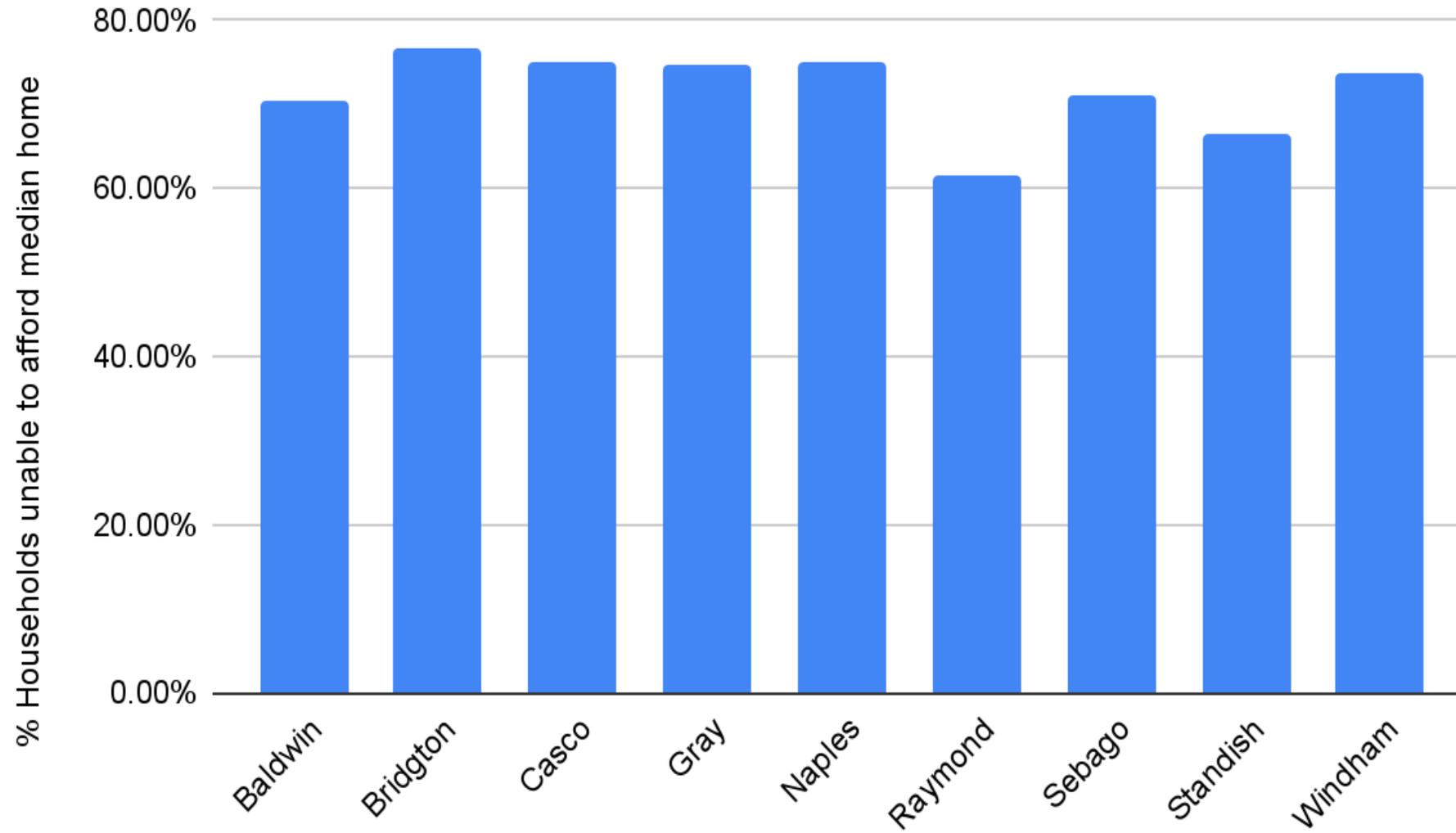
Community Housing Profiles

- ✓ Baldwin
- ✓ Bridgton
- ✓ Casco
- ✓ Gray
- ✓ Naples
- ✓ Raymond
- ✓ Sebago
- ✓ Standish
- ✓ Windham

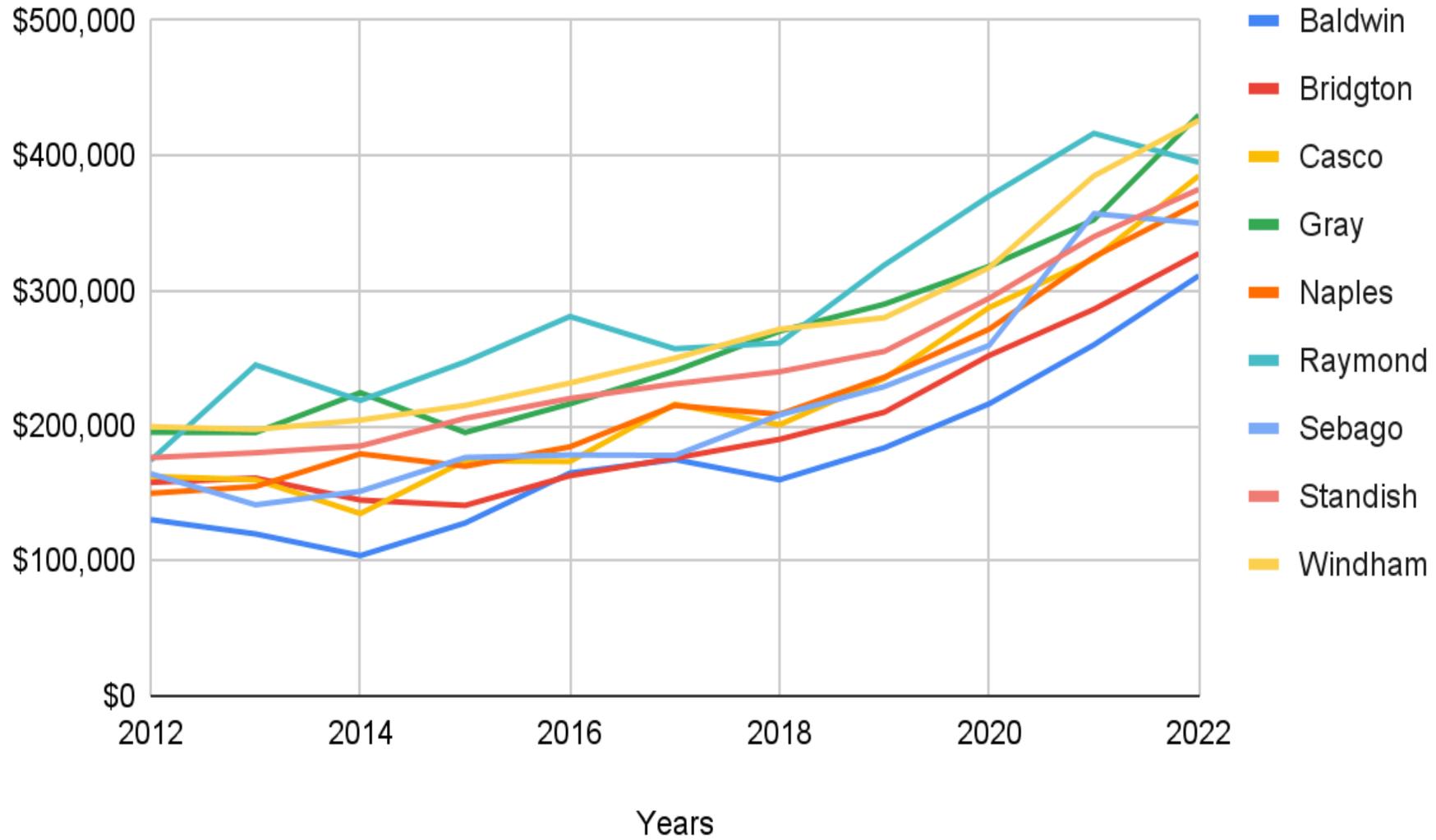
Lakes Region Study Area



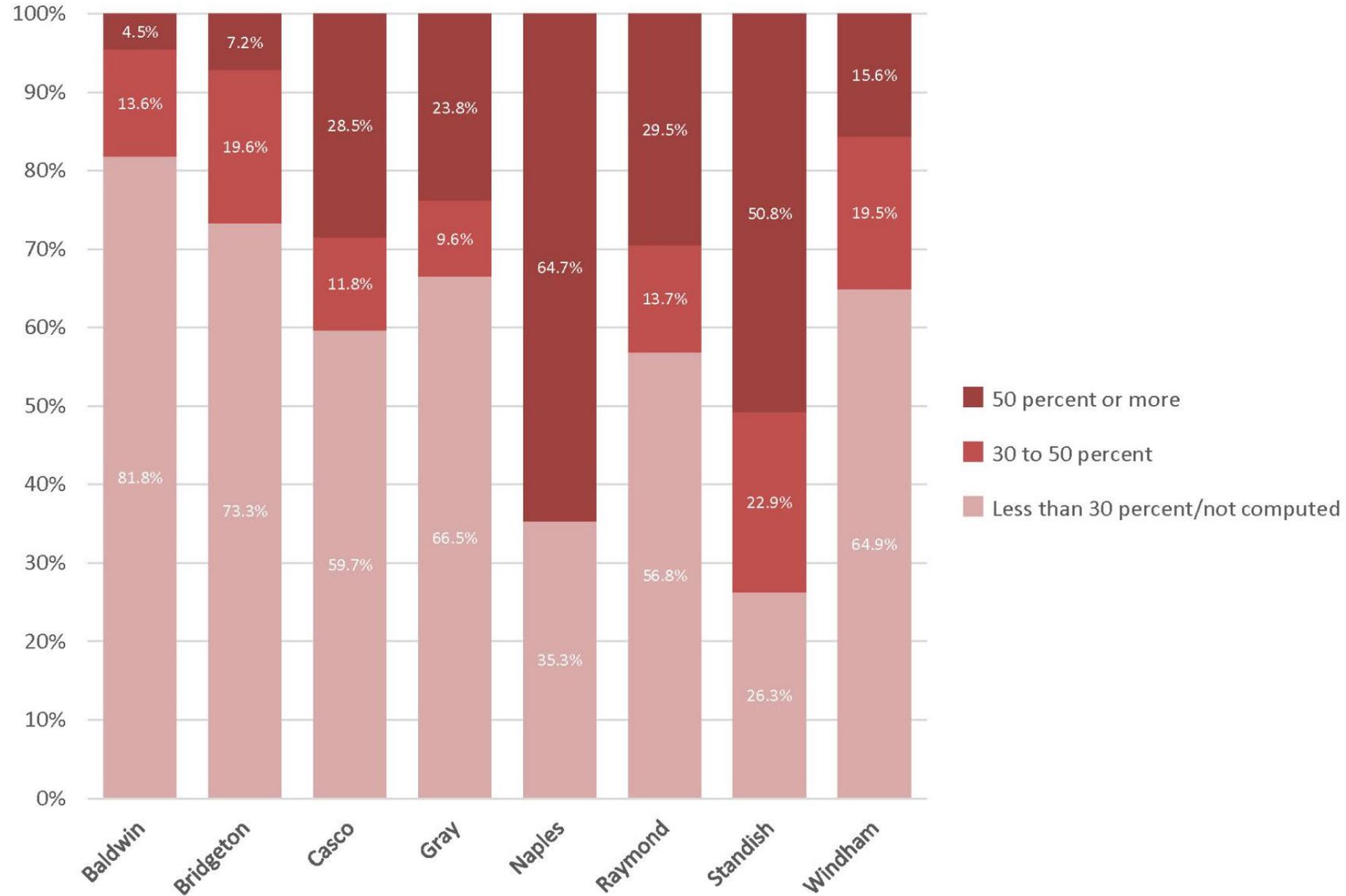
% Households Unable to Afford Median Home



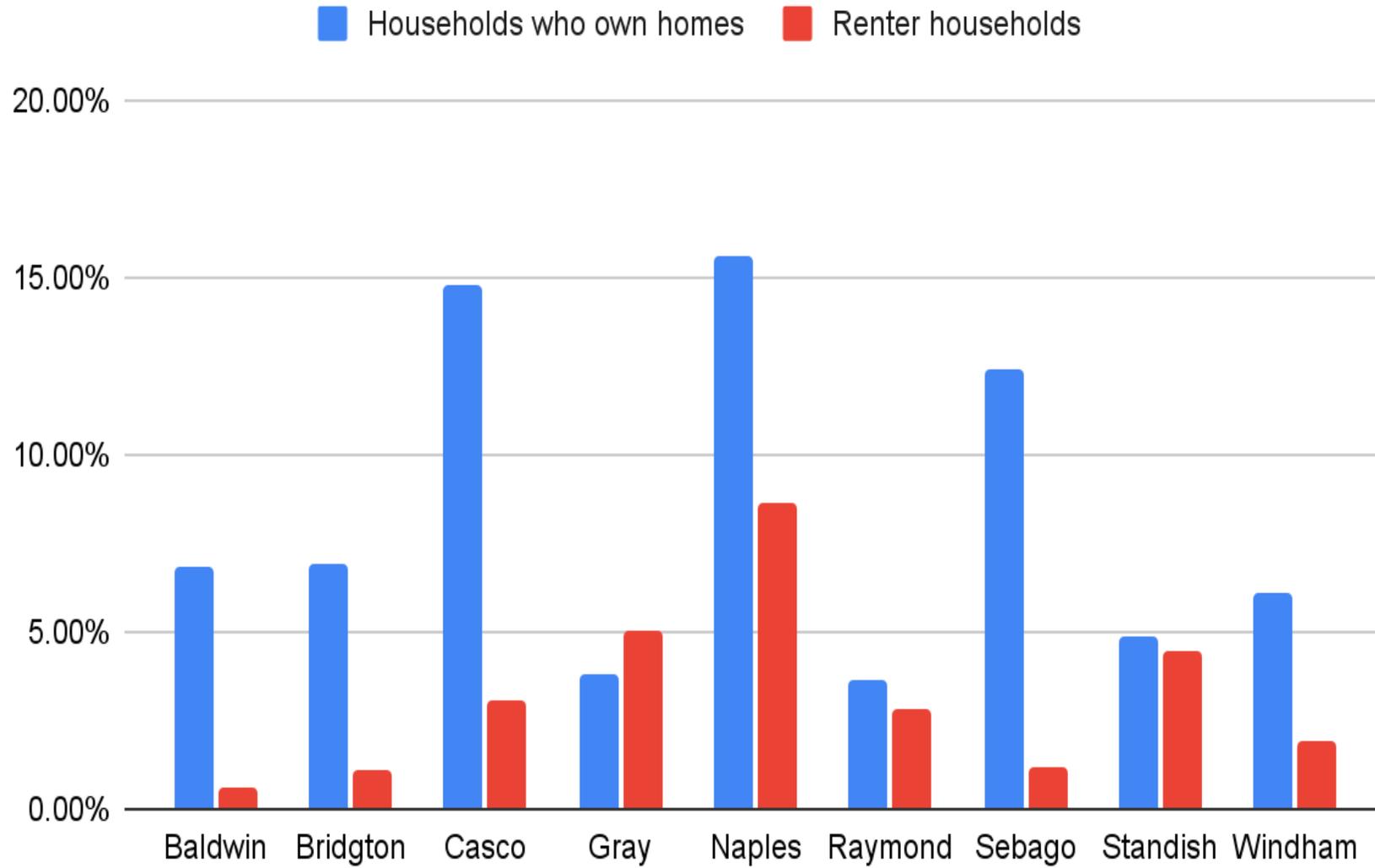
Median home price (\$)

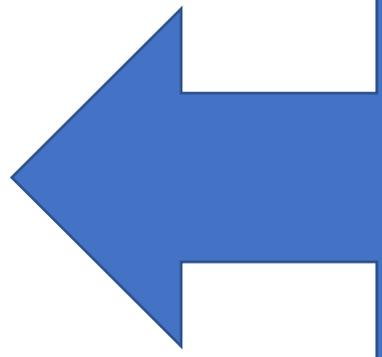
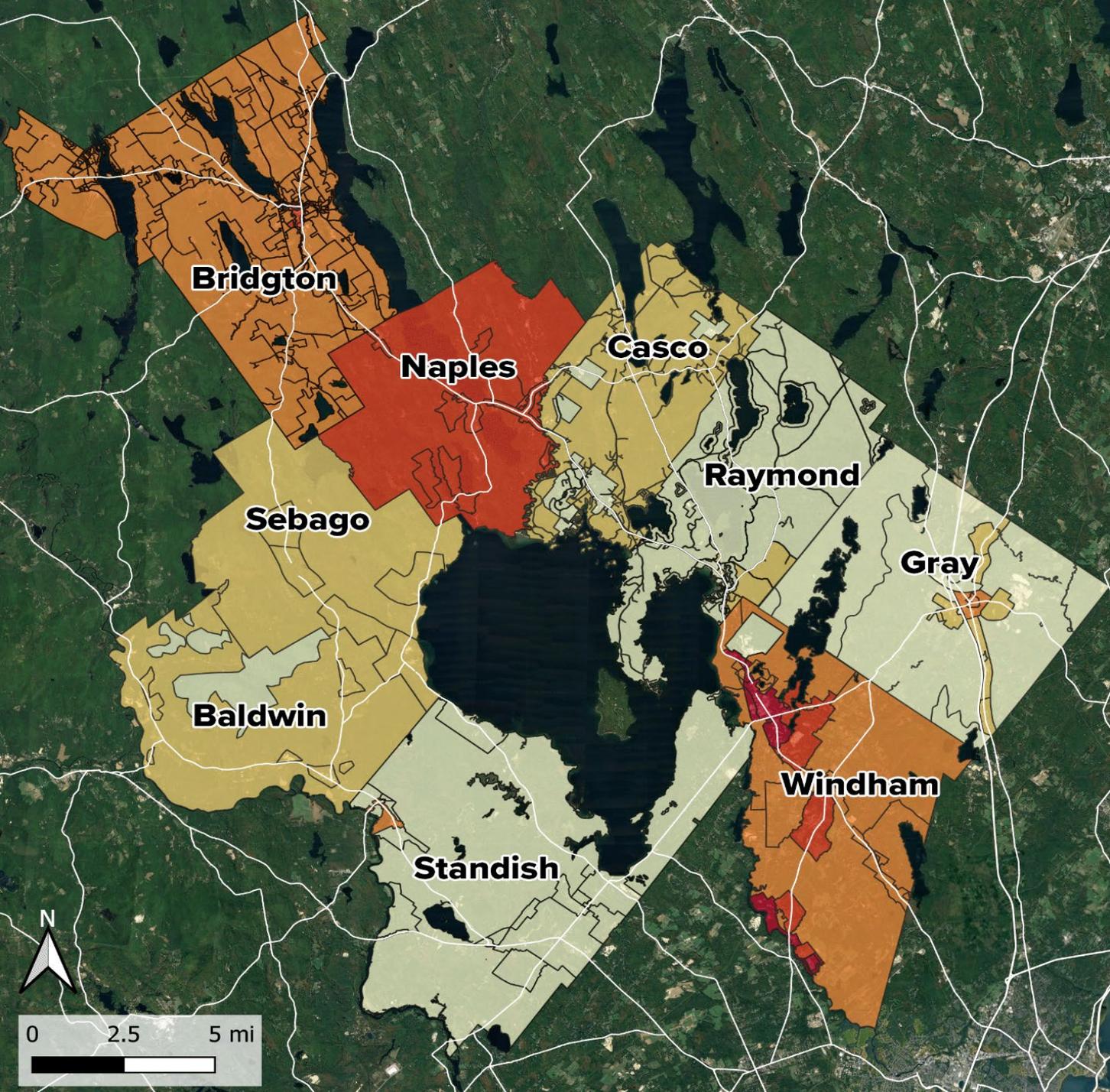


Median Gross Rent as a Percentage of Renter Household Income (ACS 2021 5-Year Sample)



Households spending > 50% on housing costs





Zoning in many study area communities make it hard to add additional housing stock

Limits to Multifamily Housing

- Few Limits
- Some Limits
- More Limits
- Many Limits
- Not Permitted

Comprehensive Plan Housing Goals

Town	Elderly or senior housing	Low income housing	First time homebuyers	Ordinance updates	Mixed use	Cluster development or density bonuses	Regional housing
Bridgton (2014)	X		X	X	X		
Casco (2023)				X	X	X	
Naples (2006)	X	X		X		X	
Raymond (2004)				X			
Sebago (2006)	X					X	
Standish (2006)	X			X		X	X
Windham (2019)				X			X

Note: Gray (2020) and Baldwin (1991) did not have local housing goals and strategies in their most recent Comprehensive Plans.

Needs Assessment

Data Sources & Number of Participants

Data Source	Number of Participants
Key Informant Interviews	26
Community Listening Sessions*	29
Focus Groups with People with Lived Experience of Being Unhoused/Homeless*	17

*Does not include Cumberland County staff and other staff/interested parties that attended the meeting

Community Listening Sessions

- Conducted in Bridgton (Bridgton Community Center), Naples (American Legion), and Windham (Windham Public Library) in January and February 2024
- Utilized a community listening session guide and flyers which were reviewed by Cumberland County
- Flyers for each session were posted in the locations ahead of the meeting, by Cumberland County on their website, and in newspapers (i.e., *Portland Forecaster*, *Portland Press Herald*, *American Journal*, and Lakes Region free papers)
- Sessions lasted 90 minutes and were recorded with consent.

Focus Groups

- Conducted two in-person focus groups
- Held in Bridgton in partnership with the Lakes Region Recovery Center and at the Naples Town Hall in partnership with Crosswalk Community Outreach in January 2024
- Utilized a focus group guide which was reviewed by Cumberland County
- Created flyers and shared them with the organizations hosting the sessions
- Groups lasted 90 minutes and were recorded with consent

Qualitative Data Analysis

- Conducted deductive and inductive qualitative analysis of the interviews, listening sessions and focus group summaries
- Developed an organizational coding structure based on the key informant interview guide
- Performed a line-by-line coding of the themes arising from the sources, inductively representing the topics and ideas as they came up in each source
- Analysis allowed the identification of key themes that consistently came up across interviews, listening sessions, and focus groups regardless of organization represented or role within the system
- Key themes are summarized in the report and this presentation

Needs Assessment Findings

Homelessness in the Lakes Region

Extent of Homelessness

Populations Facing Homelessness

Factors Contributing to Homelessness

Extent of Homelessness

- Estimates range to around 30 with higher estimates provided by the McKinney-Vento Liaisons that work with children and youth enrolled in public school districts and their families
- Did not have access to the annual point-in-time counts for towns within Lakes Region
- Few informants did not see homelessness as a huge problem; others saw it as increasing
- Informants noted that many people are at imminent risk of homelessness (e.g., within 30 days) - with people being one check or one emergency away from being unhoused
- Challenge of hidden homelessness in a rural area
- Plan to work with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to develop better estimates if possible

Populations Facing Homelessness

- Single adults typically live in the woods or in tents; while families tend to live in cars, campers, trailers, or are staying with families or friends (i.e., couch surfing)
- Despite influx of people moving to Maine during the COVID-19 pandemic – they are mostly people originally from the Lakes Region or who have lived in the Lakes Region for a long period of time
- People do not want to leave the area where they are from and have family and friends, especially if they have children in the area
- People not originally from the Lakes Region or state end up in the Lakes Region because of access to Route 302 and because Maine is seen as having rich resources for those that unhoused

Factors Contributing to Homelessness

Specific Housing-Related Challenges

- Transportation challenges to finding affordable housing
- Lack of affordable housing and limited housing stock (rents in area \$900 to \$2,600)
- Increases in property values which were impacted by influx of people moving to Maine and the Lakes Region during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Increases in investment properties that are turned into seasonal/short-term rentals
- Lack of multifamily housing
- Lack of credit and funds needed to obtain housing (application fees, deposits, & security)
- Housing vouchers not accepted by landlords
- Animals not accepted in housing
- Limited availability of hotel or motels
- Barriers to staying housed (e.g., houses in probate, foreclosed, condemned; people being evicted from housing or asked to vacate with short notice; housing of poor quality)

Housing and Homeless Resources & Services

- 211 Maine
- Avesta Housing
- Bridgton Community Center Navigator Program
- Bridgton Hospital
- Cumberland County/Opportunity Alliance Homeless Prevention Program
- Faith community (e.g., First Congregational Church in Bridgton)
- Food Banks/Pantries
- General Assistance
- Homeless Service Hub 2
- Lakes Region Recovery Center
- Law Enforcement
- Others

Resources & Services Barriers, Gaps & Needs

- Transportation barriers are significant in the Lakes region- few alternatives to car ownership and high cost of maintaining a vehicle are challenges
- Barriers in counting and identifying persons experiencing homelessness
- Lack of emergency shelter and transitional housing
- Insufficient Rapid Rehousing services to get people into permanent supportive housing
- Insufficient capacity for service provision
- Long waiting lists for services
- Lack of supports to prevent persons becoming homeless
- Cell phone reception and service
- Lack of mailing addresses to obtain MaineCare
- GA/McKinney-Vento barriers

Create a One-Stop Service Center

- Develop a One-Stop Service Center with shelter beds
 - Follow the service hub model
- Factors informing location:
 - ✓ Proximity to Route 302 and Lake Regional Explorer bus route
 - ✓ Proximity to existing services
 - ✓ Central location within Lakes Region
 - ✓ Size of town

One-Stop Service Center Design Considerations

Design considerations for Longer Term Stay:

- Have space available where pets could be accommodated
- Separate spaces for single adults and families
- Locked storage space
- Showers
- Area to stay warm and dry during day
- Access to TV and computer areas
- Beds set up in quads with charging stations
- Laundry facilities
- Kitchen or food prep area
- Follow design of the Homeless Services Center in Portland

One-Stop Service Center Management

Convene	Convene a community advisory board for the center
Create	Create a formal political liaison position to increase host community buy-in and support
Provide	Provide dedicated mobile outreach services to all the towns within the Lakes Region

Increase the availability of affordable and safe housing

- Explore creative solutions to developing affordable housing:
 - Utilize/develop/redevelop unused properties in towns
 - Use of tiny home/small footprint affordable home development
 - Firefly Field in Rockland
 - Building one bedroom, 500 sq foot residences; duplexes with 2 bedroom, 1000 sq foot and 3 bedroom, 1200 sq foot residences; and single-family homes (1000-1500 sq feet)
 - Cabin in the Woods at Togus
 - One bedroom, 550 sq foot; two bedroom, 700 sq foot cabins
 - Use of micro-housing or shelters
 - Conestoga Huts

Identify the number of homeless individuals and families

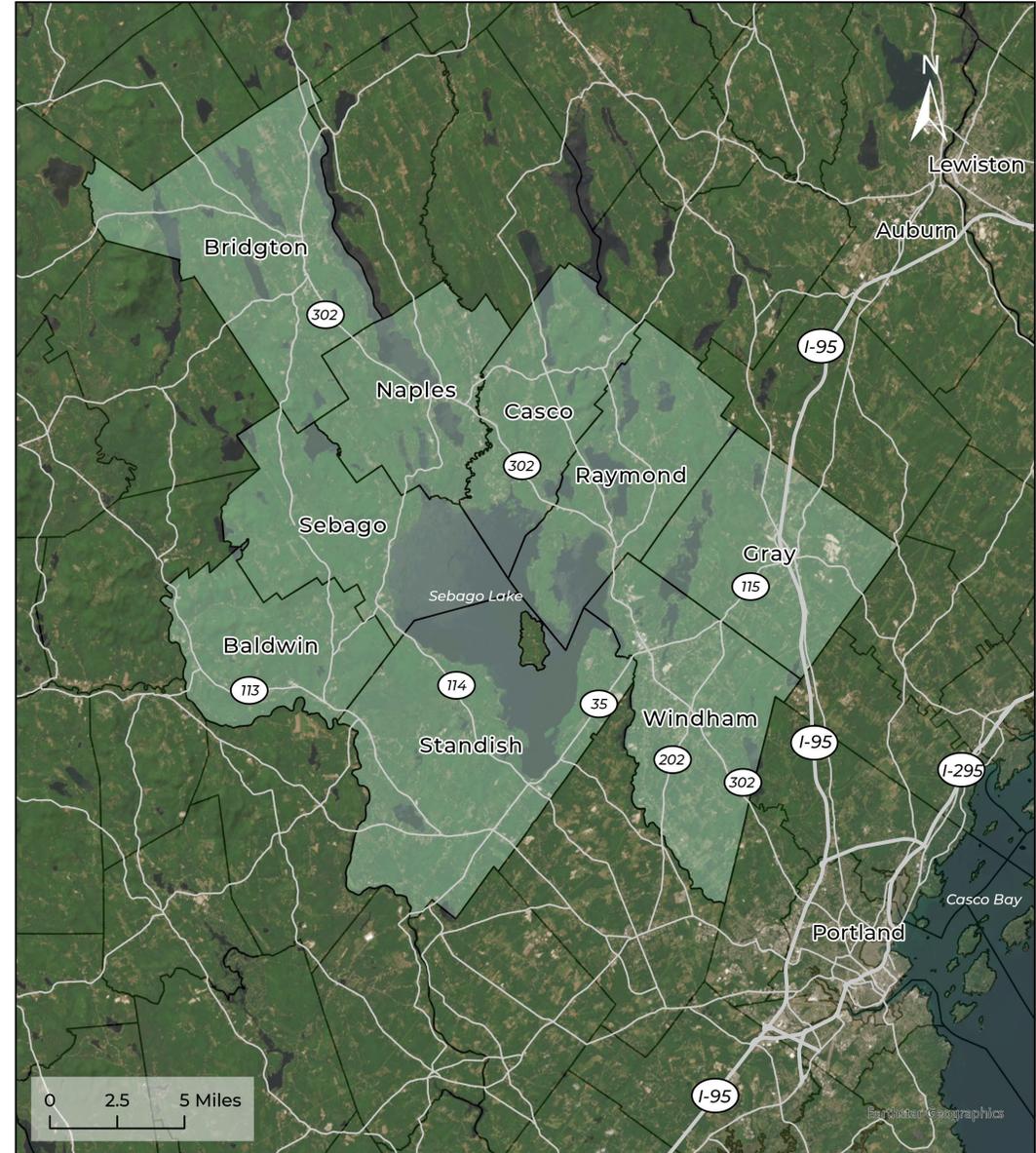
- Development of service center itself should lead to improved estimates for area
- Will be able to track numbers served through Center, towns of residence
- Mobile Outreach team contacts will help quantify how many might be in communities but not connected/being counted

Increase outreach and education to landlords regarding vouchers and subsidies

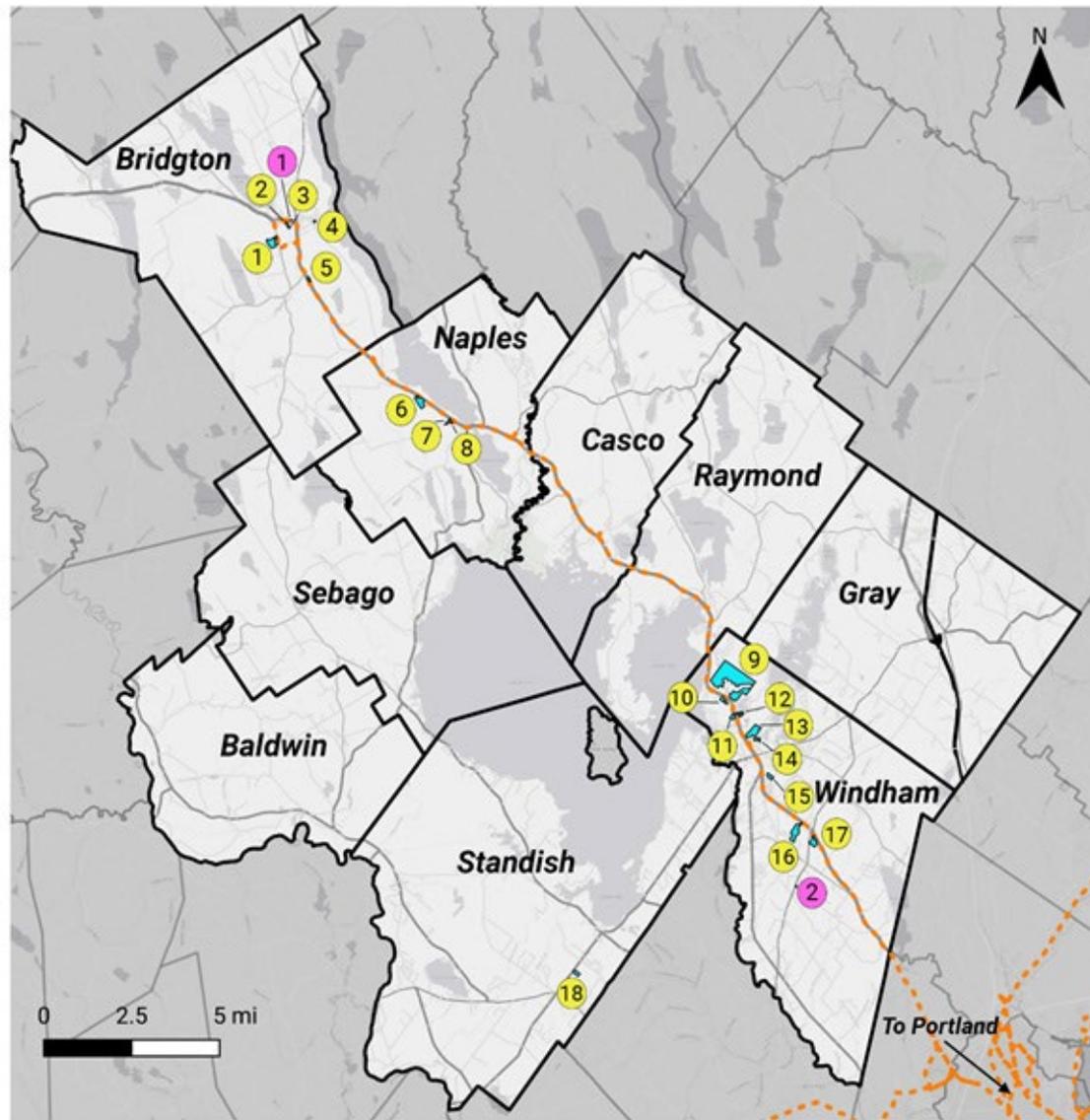
- Educate landlords regarding the voucher programs, dispel myths, and address stigma related to mental health and substance use. Focus on:
 - ✓ Benefits of programs (e.g., guaranteed payment each month, payment made directly to the landlord, helping your fellow Mainers in need, etc.)
 - ✓ Countering common misperceptions (e.g., that someone with a voucher can't be evicted)
 - ✓ Providing first person accounts from people in Maine of how a voucher and a landlord willing to take a risk were pivotal in helping individuals transition from being unhoused to achieving life goals
 - ✓ Enhance sharing of information by providers of voucher friendly landlords through creation of a centralized list/database

Siting Analysis

Lakes Region Study Area



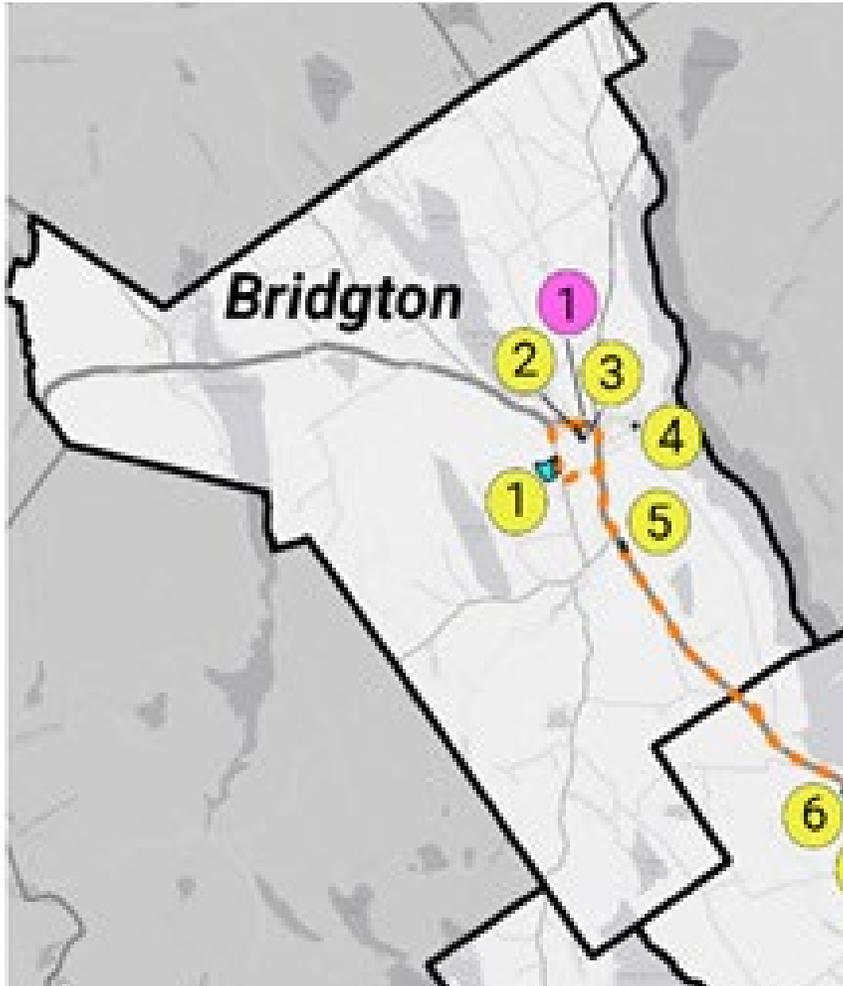
Lakes Region Homeless Services Study: Site Identification



Legend

-  Potential Sites
-  Potential Smaller Sites
-  Greater Portland Metro Route

Potential Bridgton Sites



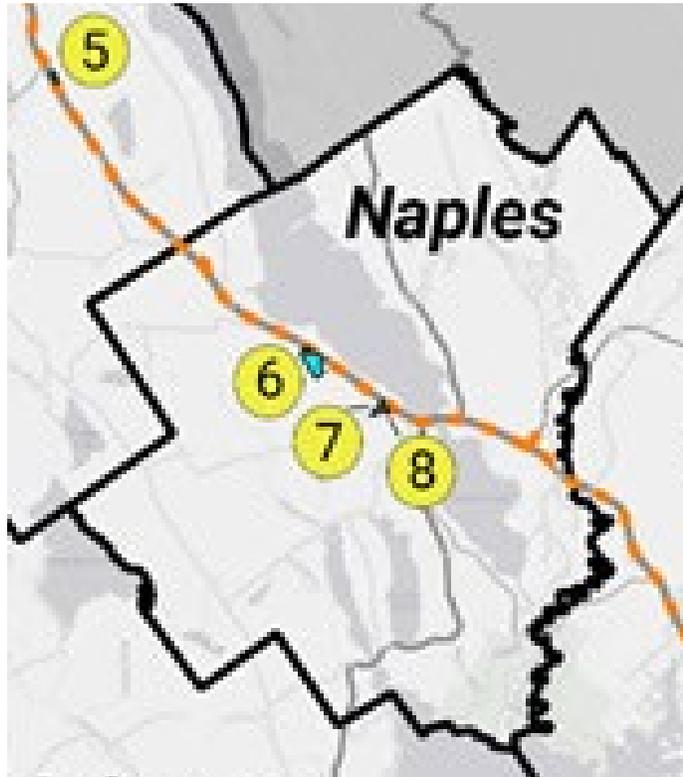
Larger Sites
(in yellow)

- 1: 25 Hospital Drive (36 acres)
 - Owner: Bridgton Hospital
 - Current use: Hospital facilities and additional undeveloped land
- 2: 15 Depot Street (3.58 acres)
 - Owner: Town of Bridgton
 - Current Use: Bridgton Community Center
- 3: 13 Skillins Circle (about 1 acre)
 - Owner: MSAD 61
 - Current Use: unused building, part of school campus
- 4: 507 Main Street (1.83 acres)
 - Owner: Town of Bridgton
 - Current Use: Harmon Field
- 5: Portland Road (3 acre sites)
 - Owner: common private owner
 - Current Use: undeveloped

Smaller Sites
(in magenta)

- 1: 214 Main Street, Bridgton (0.38 acres)
 - Owner: Bridgton Historical Society
 - Current Use: Food pantry, historical society, museum

Potential Naples Sites



Larger Sites
(in yellow)

6: Roosevelt Trail (31.55 acres)

- Owner: private owner
- Current Use: undeveloped

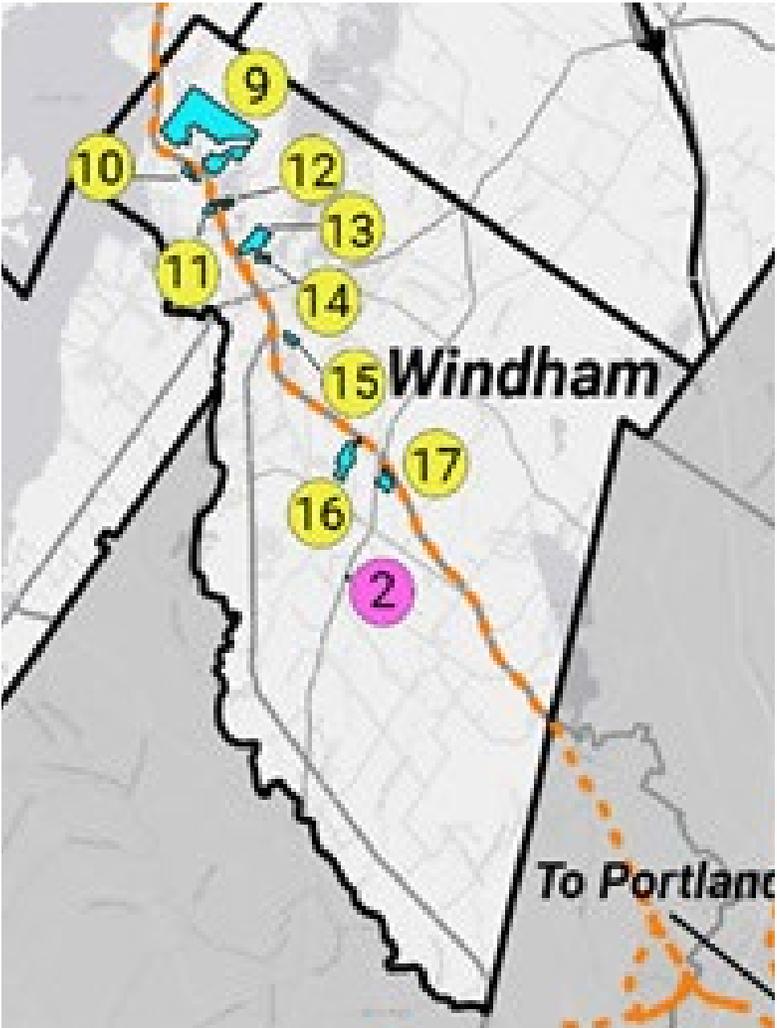
7: 1100 Roosevelt Trail (11 acres)

- Owner: Town of Naples
- Current Use: Fire Department (unused acreage at rear)

8: Lambs Mill Road (3.3 acres)

- Owner: Norway Savings Bank
- Current Use: undeveloped

Potential Windham Sites

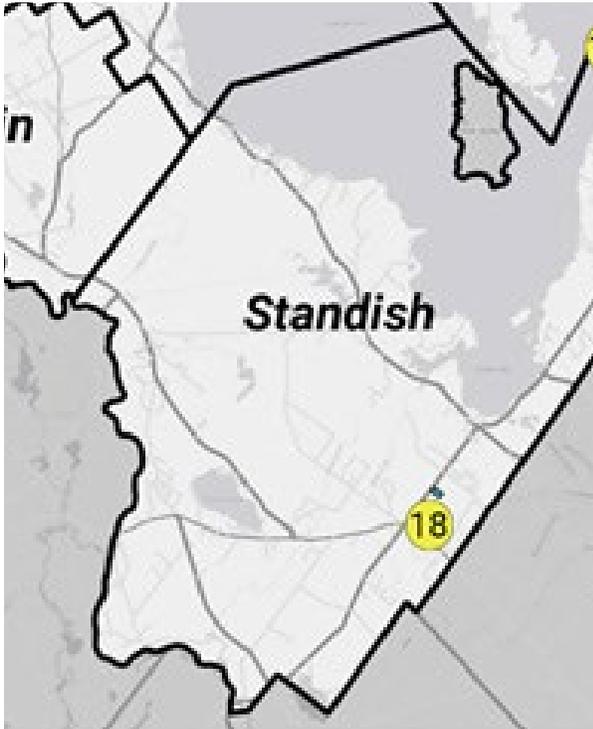


Larger Sites (in yellow)

Smaller Sites (in magenta)

- 9: Enterprise Drive (345 acres)
 - Owner: private owner
 - Current Use: undeveloped
- 10: 998 Roosevelt Trail (11.58 acres)
 - Owner: Lutheran Church
 - Current Use: church buildings with land at rear
- 11: 920 Roosevelt Trail (9.5 acres)
 - Owner: privately owned
 - Current Use: Undeveloped
- 12: 919 Roosevelt Trail (10 acres)
 - Owner: Catholic Church
 - Current Use: church buildings with additional land
- 13: 20 Franklin Dr (13.28 acres)
 - Owner: Private owner
 - Current Use: Home Depot; acreage available at rear
- 14: 38 Sandbar Road (10.5 acres)
 - Owner: private owner
 - Current Use: Undeveloped
- 15: Turning Leaf Drive (11.92 acres)
 - Owner: private owner
 - Current Use: Undeveloped
- 16: 448 Roosevelt Trail (49 acres)
 - Owner: private owner
 - Current Use: Undeveloped
- 17: Gray Road (23.95 acres)
 - Owner: Town of Windham
 - Current Use: Undeveloped
- 2: 377 Gray Road (1.08 acres)
 - Owner: Town of Windham
 - Current Use: Windham social services and food pantry

Potential Standish Site



Larger Sites
(in yellow)

18: 175 Northeast Road (11 acres)

- Owner: Town of Standish
- Current Use: Standish Town Office; acreage available at rear of parcel

Cost Estimates

- Several factors may sway these costs significantly
 1. Site control
 2. Site preparation
 3. Construction costs
 4. Building design
 5. Specific uses
 6. Entitlement/Zoning
 7. Other “soft costs”

Cost Estimate Assumptions

1. Land provided at minimal cost to the project
2. New construction
3. Site preparation costs minimal
4. Designed for overnight accommodations
5. Approximately 15,000 square feet
6. Single story building
7. No significant costs for additional space on site
8. No significant costs for off-site improvements

Cost Estimate

Order-of-magnitude cost estimate of between \$6.5 and \$8 million (based on 2024 construction costs)

Order-of-magnitude operations costs of around \$1 million, some of which may already be funding existing programs and facilities

Findings and Recommendations

Findings

- Estimates of those in the study area experiencing homelessness at around 30 or more.
- The number seems likely to be increasing.
- There is a special challenge of hidden homelessness in a rural area.
- These residents are generally reluctant to leave the area.
- Transportation challenges are significant in this area.
- While some services are available, more are needed.
- There are many sites that are large enough in which to locate any potential service center, but most of them have constraints such as zoning requirements, ownership, other uses on site, and proximity to transit.

Recommendations

There should be a One-Stop Service Center for those experiencing homelessness in the Lakes Region, including shelter beds.

The service center should be located in Bridgton or Windham if possible, or as close as is reasonably possible to the Route 302 corridor through those towns.

This service center should follow the service hub model and utilize partnerships with existing service providers.

A longer-stay facility should have space where pets can be accommodated, showers, day space, locked storage space, and kitchen space.

Separate spaces should be provided for families and individual adults.

The service center should have a community advisory board to help manage its operations.

Mobile outreach should be provided to hard-to-reach rural locations.

More affordable housing, including Housing First units, huts, and Tiny Homes, should be considered as longer-term steps into housing.

Data collection regarding numbers of persons experiencing homelessness should be improved.

Landlords should be educated on the use of voucher programs.

Next Steps

- Determining a short list of service center locations based on a closer analysis of the potential sites identified in this study, outreach to property owners, and financial feasibility.
- Developing a preliminary design of a service center should be created once the general parameters of a location are confirmed. That design will help refine cost estimates for both construction and operations.
- Outlining staffing and capital needs for implementing the recommendations, along with responsible parties.
- Creating a political liaison position, or assigning this responsibility to an existing staff position, to manage the process, increase community coordination, buy-in and support.