

Place-Based Strategies for Economic Resilience in Rural Northern Maine

by Kristen Henry, Jay Kamm, Jared Tapley, and Jon Gulliver

INTRODUCTION

Rural communities throughout America face complex challenges to sustainable growth. These challenges include economic transitions such as the decline of traditional industries, population decline, particularly among younger residents, eroding labor force participation among middle-aged workers, public health issues including drug addiction, increasing poverty levels, rising median housing values, infrastructure issues like aging roads, schools, or public utilities, and a history of underinvestment, especially when compared to more urban areas (Davis et al. 2023). In rural northern Maine, these issues are compounded by geographic remoteness, persistent outmigration, harsh winters, and a slow recovery following the closure of Loring Air Force Base (LAFB) in the early 1990s. At the time, LAFB directly supported a population of nearly 10,000 in Limestone. Following its closure, the town's population declined dramatically, from 9,922 in 1990 to just 1,526 in 2020, an 84.6 percent decrease (US Census Bureau 1992; 2020). Aroostook County lost nearly 20,000 residents over the same period, representing a 22.8 percent drop in population.¹

Here, we examine how communities in Aroostook County are responding across five key areas: downtown revitalization, housing and land use, rural transportation, broadband connectivity, and tourism

diversification. We highlight strategies that diverge from the conventional development framework and represent tailored pathways responsive to rural Maine's unique challenges and opportunities. While each area carries its distinct challenges and solutions, common themes emerge: the need for flexible policy that avoids one-size-fits-all approaches, the importance of scale-appropriate solutions, and the value of capacity building within and across rural communities.

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

In rural Maine communities, where a major redevelopment may be difficult, micro-activation, such as pop-up shops, food carts, or sidewalk musicians, offers a low-cost, high-impact alternative. These activities spark energy and shift public perception. These quick wins build momentum, demonstrate possibility, and help communities push back against negative mindsets. Traditional downtown revitalization strategies, on the other hand, often center around capital-intensive interventions, full streetscapes, urban design master plans, or large developer-led projects. While valuable in the right context, these models frequently fail in rural towns due to low commercial demand, limited tax capacity, and a lack of speculative investment. Conventional strategies also assume infrastructure and population thresholds that rural communities don't have. A town of 1,500 people

with a part-time economic development coordinator and volunteer-led boards cannot implement a full-blown business improvement district or launch large public-private partnerships. Instead, rural municipalities need adaptive, incremental strategies that are built from what already exists.

In Aroostook County, Van Buren has leveraged partnerships with Drexel University and Clemson University to create community art and promote its low-cost electricity (Bouchard 2024, 2025). Houlton and Caribou are testing creative ways to reinvigorate their downtowns from seasonal street festivals and pop-up coworking hubs to winter light displays and collaborative public art projects (Bouchard et al. 2023). Often powered by volunteer energy and modest grants, these efforts demonstrate how small towns can cultivate vibrant civic spaces through persistence, creativity, and local pride.

To translate these revitalization efforts into sustained, long-term transformation, however, rural municipalities need policy tools that reflect the realities of small scale. One area of opportunity is zoning. Flexible, mixed-use zoning can allow historic downtown buildings to serve as both commercial and residential spaces. Equally important is the ability for towns to authorize temporary or seasonal uses, such as pop-up shops or food trucks, without excessive regulatory burden. These uses bring life to downtowns without requiring large-scale commercial investments.

Small grants can also make a big impact in rural places. Municipal or regional microgrant programs offering between \$500 and \$5,000 can jumpstart high-visibility projects like murals, public art installations, or façade touch-ups. Such investments often

provide the spark that draws community members back into the downtown and builds momentum for further change.

Recognizing the limited staff capacity in most rural towns, there is also a need for simplified economic development tools. For example, a “TIF Lite” model could allow municipalities with populations under 5,000 to capture a portion of incremental tax revenue for reinvestment, without navigating the complexity of a full Tax Increment Financing district. Policies that encourage inter-municipal collaboration should also be considered. Neighboring towns, for example, could jointly hire a downtown coordinator or grant writer to pool talent and streamline access to funding and implementation expertise.

For building owners and small businesses, streamlined façade improvement programs can reduce barriers to reinvestment. Prepackaged design templates, vetted contractor lists, and simplified applications make it easier for local entrepreneurs to improve curb appeal of their properties.

Public spaces also need to be made more adaptable. Local ordinances should be updated to permit creative use for sidewalks, streets, and green spaces, such as outdoor markets, sidewalk cafés, live performances, and seasonal events, through quick, low-barrier permitting processes. To support local entrepreneurship, municipalities and counties could create low-interest revolving loan funds specifically aimed at businesses that activate downtown areas, especially those offering food, art, or other experience-based services that increase foot traffic and dwell time.

Digital infrastructure can help modernize even the smallest downtowns. Free public Wi-Fi, interactive signage kiosks, or mobile-friendly downtown directories can connect residents and visitors to local businesses

and events, increasing visibility and economic activity without major infrastructure investment.

HOUSING AND LAND USE

Many rural Maine communities use traditional Euclidean zoning, which divides the community into distinct zones that strictly separate land uses to prevent nuisances.² This type of zoning is often criticized for being reactive rather than proactive, leading to low-density development, housing shortages, and urban sprawl. Rural Maine is no exception, and planners are reviewing current zoning practices to develop new approaches to increase housing supply.

In 2022, Maine’s governor signed into law LD 2003—An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions, which is designed to remove regulatory barriers to housing production. This legislation allows municipalities to increase housing density, ADUs, and duplexes, triplexes, and townhouses in areas previously zoned for single-family homes.

Traditional zoning ordinances often include land use districts with small differences in permitted uses. For example, Caribou’s Chapter 13 zoning ordinance had three residential districts: R-1 for single-family homes, R-2 for single-family and two-family homes, and R-3 for single-family, two-family, and up to four-family homes (City of Caribou 2019). The city’s planning board is now combining similar districts to allow for a broader range of housing types, reducing the number of districts and the review processes, and encouraging new investment (Lizzotte 2022).

Instead of strict use-based zoning, some rural Maine communities are

adopting performance zoning, which allows for diverse uses as long as they meet specific criteria. Performance-based zoning does not exclude developers but still protects the community from the adverse impacts of development. For example, the southern Maine town of Sebago uses performance standards for accessory apartments, requiring developers to provide a site plan.³ The review is designed to allow for a variety of housing types while still protecting the look and feel of the community.

The implementation of preapproved accessory dwelling unit plans can be a transformative strategy in addressing the critical challenge of affordable housing. ADUs create additional housing options within existing residential properties. With preapproved plans, local municipalities and planning boards have already vetted standardized designs, expedited the approval process, and minimized the administrative burden on both homeowners and local planning departments. This efficiency translates into cost savings for homeowners, as shorter approval times reduce associated fees and holding costs.

Several northern Maine communities are also working to assist developers or create residential developments to spur growth. Notably, the towns of Easton and Fort Fairfield have taken significant steps. In the mid-1990s, Easton began creating town-owned subdivisions. Town selectmen decided to raise funds for purchasing property and constructing infrastructure (roads). Lots were permitted under the town’s subdivision ordinance, ensuring each lot had adequate water and sewer for residential development. As lots are sold, funds are returned to the community. As of 2025, Easton has developed two 14-lot subdivisions and one 7-lot subdivision. These subdivisions have been extremely popular, and town officials continually seek additional land

for purchase (J. Kamm, personal communication, May 2025). Fort Fairfield created a program called Quality of Place as they recognized that a declining population created issues within the community, including maintaining essential services and providing quality education. The Quality of Place program established incentives to improve older single-family homes to make them more affordable (The County 2017). The town partnered with the Fort Fairfield Housing Authority to develop a single-family home subdivision, with homes in the \$100,000 range. As homes were sold, funds were returned to the community for purchasing and rehabilitating additional properties.

Converting existing buildings, such as vacant office buildings or storefronts in downtown areas, into residential units can be a cost-effective way to add housing. Houlton, Presque Isle, and Caribou have reviewed zoning ordinances and now allow residential development in these buildings, including second-story conversions. The Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority works with these communities to rehabilitate blighted, abandoned, and environmentally hazardous properties to create economic opportunities and stabilize property values. The program creates vibrant, prosperous, and sustainable communities in partnership with municipalities, public organizations, counties, and state agencies.⁴

TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS IN NORTHERN MAINE

Other articles in this issue of *Maine Policy Review* explore the topic of rural transportation in more detail (see Caldwell 2025; Evans-Ralston et al. 2025), so we highlight a few innovative solutions being used in northern Maine.

The Aroostook Regional Transportation System (ARTS), for instance, received a workforce transportation grant

from the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) to expand service in the central Aroostook region. With this grant, ARTS purchased two vans and hired drivers to provide weekday and Saturday rides to major employment centers in Presque Isle. Many riders, previously reliant on walking or family rides, now have reliable, affordable transportation (Brewer 2025).

In the spring of 2025, the Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP) introduced its mobile service unit to address long-standing transportation barriers. The unit acts as an office on wheels, delivering a wide range of services such as energy and housing assistance, employment coaching, WIC nutrition, and early childhood outreach directly to residents in rural areas (Triplett 2025). A similar program was initiated by the Center for the Advancement of Rural Living. Its County Area Ride Service provides volunteer-based rides for residents over the age of 65 in Caribou, helping them reach appointments, grocery stores, and social events.⁵

Presque Isle, Caribou, Van Buren, Madawaska, and Fort Kent have partnered with MaineDOT through the Village Partnership Initiative (VPI), to create more vibrant communities by calming traffic and enhancing pedestrian environments in key downtown corridors. The initiative emphasizes collaborative planning between municipalities and the state, combining technical expertise and infrastructure funding to help smaller towns modernize their transportation networks.⁶

BROADBAND IN AROOSTOOK

Over the past decade, Aroostook County has quietly rewritten its digital narrative. Once considered one of Maine's most daunting "last mile"

broadband challenges, the region now boasts near universal access. According to provider filings and coverage maps, roughly 99 percent of households have at least one internet option, whether fiber, cable, DSL, fixed wireless, or satellite.⁷ Yet infrastructure alone does not ensure adoption. Only about 80 percent of households subscribe; the remaining 18 to 19 percent cite cost, limited device access, or the lingering belief that the old connection is good enough (Ogrysko 2022).

Fiber availability now reaches nearly half of all homes in Aroostook. Providers like Fidium Fiber and Pioneer Broadband lead this expansion, collectively serving more than 50 percent of the market, while smaller players such as Great Works Internet and Spectrum cover additional clusters. Where fiber has yet to reach, cable provides a critical bridge. Spectrum's cable service extends to approximately 77 percent of residents, offering gigabit download speeds and sufficient bandwidth for remote education, video calls, and business operations.⁸

The COVID-19 pandemic crystallized broadband's role as a determinant of economic stability. Real estate agents report that broadband access is among the first questions prospective buyers ask, particularly remote workers seeking a reliable home office setup. This trend has not only stabilized local housing demand but also begun to attract boomerang Mainers: younger professionals who left and are now willing to return, provided the internet can keep up.

Despite widespread infrastructure, three core obstacles continue to limit broadband adoption. The first is the subscription gap: roughly 20 percent of households decline service even when it is available. Cost is a primary concern, but so too is the perception that the faster internet isn't worth the

FORMER MILITARY BASES AS RURAL ECONOMIC DRIVERS

The closure of Loring Air Force Base in Limestone in 1994 removed the largest economic driver in northern Maine. At its peak, the base supported more than 10,000 military and civilian personnel and catalyzed housing, services, and small businesses in the region (Snider 2025). Its loss not only erased thousands of jobs but also accelerated population decline and tax base erosion. Since then, the Loring Development Authority (LDA) has worked to reposition the site as a hub for logistics, food manufacturing, aviation, and clean energy. While several tenants have moved in, including the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, a potato chip factory, and a drone manufacturer, much of the facility remains underused.

Military reuse in rural areas is complicated by several factors. First, the size and complexity of legacy infrastructure often dwarf local demand and exceed municipal maintenance capacity. Buildings are oversized, utilities are outdated, and environmental contamination requires expensive remediation (GAO 2025). Second, employers struggle to recruit workers from a shrinking, aging workforce, and many potential hires lack credentials for modern logistics or manufacturing operations (MECEP 2023). Third, reuse authorities like LDA are frequently underfunded and structurally constrained. They must navigate federal disposal rules, obtain competitive grant funding, and coordinate across several jurisdictions—while managing thousands of acres of property with little revenue.¹³

A promising strategy for rural reuse is modeled on the just-in-time (JIT) supply chain framework used by major manufacturers. The BMW plant in Spartanburg, South Carolina, is a powerful case study. Its arrival catalyzed the development of a full ecosystem of suppliers: Tier 1 firms located immediately adjacent, Tier 2 firms spread throughout the upstate region, and Tier 3 suppliers nested within the larger logistics corridor (Leonard 2020). Key enablers included investment in infrastructure, coordination between workforce systems and industrial users, and early planning to accommodate supply chain clustering (Brookings Institution, 2018). Such an ecosystem could be cultivated for Loring. For example, a drone manufacturer on-site could serve as the anchor tenant. Tier 1 suppliers for avionics or battery technology could be located in nearby buildings, with Tier 2 or Tier 3 parts manufacturers based within a 50-mile radius. Targeted incentives, shared utilities, and supply chain marketing could position Aroostook County as a defense-tech corridor serving both US and Canadian markets (MITC 2022).

The key to adapting these models to rural areas is scale and sequencing. Instead of assuming a megaproject will transform the region, planners should design modular, phased developments around one or two anchor sectors. A phased industrial park, with buildings pre-permitted for food processing or component manufacturing, reduces time-to-market and appeals to mid-sized firms. Military reuse in rural regions like Aroostook County is not just a land-use challenge; it is a test of economic imagination. By aligning infrastructure, workforce, housing, and brand strategy, communities like Limestone can convert federal legacies into future assets. The transformation of rural former military installations will not happen overnight, but with the right investments and leadership, it can anchor the next generation of rural industry in northern Maine.

investment. Older residents, particularly those without streaming habits, often remain unconvinced of its benefits, even as telehealth, e-banking, or

digital literacy could dramatically improve quality of life.

Affordability remains a second major hurdle. Maine ranks near the

bottom of states for price-per-megabit, with an average bill around \$89 per month.⁹ Finally, access to devices and digital confidence presents a third barrier. Tablets and phones alone cannot substitute for a reliable laptop. For low-income residents, purchasing a device, and learning to use it, can be daunting. Without both tools and coaching, a 200-Mbps fiber drop is little more than a wasted asset.

Aroostook's communities have responded with ingenuity and collaboration. Public Wi-Fi hubs now blanket parking lots and reading rooms at more than a dozen libraries, town halls, and adult-ed centers. These networks deliver symmetrical 100 Mbps service, funded by Maine Connectivity Authority grants and local match dollars (MCA 2024). The most celebrated success story is Easton. By combining \$300,000 in American Rescue Plan funds with \$275,000 in private investment, the town delivered universal fiber without raising taxes (Bagnall 2023).

For older adults and isolated households, connectivity enables social inclusion. The Aroostook Agency on Aging has launched a Connectivity Hub program “to empower older residents to become more confident and capable participants in an increasingly digital world (MCA 2024). The program will also include a Tech Connect Center in Presque Isle, staffed by friendly, tech-savvy volunteers, where older adults can access the technology and expertise they need to participate in lifelong learning experiences, telehealth services, or online social engagement activities.

To sustain and build Aroostook County's broadband momentum, the region must focus not only on expanding infrastructure but also on ensuring every household can fully benefit from it. Four practical strategies, each with low costs and high

impact, offer a roadmap for continued progress.

Communities should prioritize expanding municipal fiber networks, either through town-owned models or partnerships with responsive providers. Easton has already proven that rural builds can be delivered on time and under budget when local leadership, private investment, and public funding align. This model can be replicated in other towns where the market has been slow to operate, ensuring no residents are left behind.

Rural communities must strengthen their device pipeline. Thousands of refurbished laptops from businesses and institutions are currently idle or headed for recycling. With local coordination, these devices could be collected, restored, and redistributed, each one paired with a live orientation session to ensure users can navigate their new tools.

To address digital literacy, digital navigators should be seen as essential public roles.¹⁰ Just as librarians and paramedics are embedded in local budgets, so too should technology coaches become a permanent fixture in town life. With stable funding and clear visibility, residents will always know where to turn for help troubleshooting devices, accessing telehealth, or building digital skills.

Community programming should meet people where they are. Events like genealogy workshops, online craft fairs, or virtual cooking classes offer welcoming, low-pressure opportunities for residents to log on, explore new platforms, and build confidence. These activities not only support digital literacy, but they also reinforce a sense of connection and community across geographic distance.

Together, these four steps form a pragmatic and inclusive strategy for ensuring that Aroostook's broadband

investment becomes not just an infrastructure success story but a long-term engine for economic resilience, equity, and rural vitality.

AROOSTOOK TOURISM: BUILDING ON HISTORY, WEATHERING CHANGE

For much of the 20th century, tourism in Aroostook County followed a well-worn seasonal rhythm. Winters were defined by deep snowpack and a thriving snowmobile culture, while summers revolved around agricultural fairs, scenic drives, and outdoor festivals. In 1995, snowmobiling alone contributed an estimated \$600 million to Maine's economy, roughly \$746 million today when adjusted for inflation (Reiling et al. 1998). That figure represented not just a statewide boom, but a rural lifeline. Seasonal businesses, from motels to diners to repair shops, counted on snowmobiles arriving by the hundreds, filling trails and cash registers alike.

But climate patterns have changed, and with them, the reliability of seasonal tourism. The 2023–2024 snowmobiling season saw total statewide economic impact decline to \$582 million, a loss of \$128 million from the previous year (University of Maine 2025). Aroostook, historically one of the most snow-rich regions in the state, has experienced increasingly erratic winters.¹¹ Thaw-freeze cycles, lower total snowfalls, and unpredictable storm timing have made it harder to plan and promote large-scale winter recreation. Meanwhile, many smaller towns face declining volunteer capacity, aging infrastructure, and a growing need to attract year-round revenue.

To remain viable, rural tourism must shift from a static model to an adaptive one. Adaptive tourism emphasizes flexible programming, small-scale

diversification, and a place-based identity that can weather environmental and economic uncertainty. In Aroostook County, this evolution is already underway.

One of the most notable developments has been the emergence of the Aroostook SnowBowl, a winter festival that fuses competitive snowmobile racing, family activities, and cultural events. First launched in 2023 at Spud Speedway and the Aroostook Centre Mall, the SnowBowl creatively circumvents the problem of unreliable snow by trucking in hundreds of loads to create its snocross track. The event has quickly grown into a regional draw, bringing in spectators and competitors from across Maine and Atlantic Canada. With races, freestyle showcases, hill climbs, and a full slate of weekend programming, the SnowBowl has transformed a potential winter liability into a mid-season economic anchor (Brewer 2025). What sets the SnowBowl apart is not just its scale, but its intentional design for climate resilience. Rather than relying on natural snowfall, it builds its own. It incorporates food trucks, vendors, live music, and family-friendly programming to broaden its appeal. In doing so, it represents a model of adaptive tourism that works not despite the weather, but around it.

The same site, Spud Speedway, hosts multiple events throughout the year, including the Mud Bowl in May and the Dirt Bowl in the fall.¹² By using the same infrastructure, grandstands, lighting, restrooms, and vendor setups, organizers have created a year-round event venue that serves different audiences in different seasons, with minimal capital investment. These events have attracted thousands of attendees, helping stabilize the local tourism economy and providing a platform for local food producers, artists, and businesses.

This multi-seasonal model reduces dependency on one marquee event or climate-dependent activity. In doing so, it echoes the adaptive tourism practices of other small communities in the Northeast. In Camden, Maine, the Camden SnowBowl has long operated as a community ski hill, but it has diversified by hosting summer festivals, mountain biking, and the US National Toboggan Championships, an event that requires less snow and more community participation (Dunkie 2025).

In Aroostook, similar innovations are taking root. The SnowBowl has begun incorporating activities that don't require snow. In Presque Isle, event planners have created lighted walking trails, "ice" sculpture exhibits made of repurposed materials, and indoor children's play zones during winter festivals, providing a weather-independent draw for families. These attractions require little snow and limited infrastructure but deliver a high return on visitor engagement.

The economic rationale is clear. According to the Maine Office of Tourism, Aroostook County generated \$169.6 million in direct tourism impact in 2023, supporting 2,260 jobs and nearly 240,733 overnight stays (Maine OT 2024). The cultural implications are just as significant. Adaptive tourism creates more than economic return; it rebuilds civic identity. Events like the SnowBowl, Mud Bowl, and Dirt Bowl are designed, staffed, and celebrated by residents. They rely on volunteers, local sponsors, and regional pride. Rather than outsource identity to a resort or national chain, these festivals reflect the spirit of the community itself.

This model of rural tourism, locally owned, seasonally fluid, and weather-resilient, represents a viable path forward. It does not require major infrastructure or national branding. It requires only intentionality, coordination, and a willingness to redefine what counts as a

tourism asset. A parking lot can become a snowmobile track. A racetrack can host mud wrestling. A trail lit with string lights can become a winter walk.

CONCLUSION: A ROADMAP FOR RURAL RESILIENCE

By investing in adaptive infrastructure, layering events across seasons, and reclaiming public spaces for community use, Aroostook communities are creating a model that other rural areas would do well to follow. The transformation of rural communities hinges not on replicating urban strategies but on embracing local strengths, customizing policy tools, and fostering cross-sector collaboration.

A new policy landscape is taking shape, one that favors flexibility over rigidity and responsiveness over scale. Maine's passage of LD 2003 marked a watershed moment in housing, pushing communities to rethink exclusionary zoning and incentivize accessory units and middle housing. In broadband, municipal builds and community digital navigators are proving to be more effective than waiting for large-scale telecom investments. The Village Partnership Initiative is reimagining transportation not only as a means of connection but as a vehicle for downtown vitality.

Yet policy innovation doesn't end with these examples. We offer these threads to guide future action:

- Embed intermunicipal collaboration into funding eligibility and technical assistance models, recognizing the power of micro-regional alignment.
- Treat placemaking and public realm design as economic infrastructure, not just beautification.
- Remove regulatory bottlenecks through pre-approved building templates, expedited permitting, and simplified grant administration.

- Prioritize multi-use investments, buildings, transportation assets, or digital infrastructure, that serve multiple generations, income levels, and sectors.
- And finally, treat imagination as a core planning value. Towns that believe change is possible are more likely to see it through.

Maine's rural communities are not passive recipients of change. They are agile, inventive, and deeply rooted in place. With the right policy scaffolding, flexible, supportive, and place-conscious, these communities can serve as models of sustainable, resilient development for rural America.

NOTES

- 1 LAFB closure information from <https://www.afcec.af.mil/Home/BRAC/Loring-AFB/>; 2020 Limestone population data from <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US2300339300-limestone-town-arostook-county-me/>; 2020 Aroostook County population data from <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/main.html>.
- 2 <https://legalclarity.org/what-is-the-definition-of-euclidean-zoning/>
- 3 "Land Use Standards," Town of Sebago, <https://www.townofsebago.org/ordinances/pages/land-use-standards>
- 4 Maine Redevelopment Land Bank, <https://maineredevelopment.org/>
- 5 County Area Ride Service, <https://www.carlcenter.org/>
- 6 "Planning," MaineDOT, <https://www.maine.gov/dot/major-projects/planning>
- 7 "Aroostook County, ME," FCC National Broadband Map, <https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/area-summary/fixd>
- 8 <https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov/>
- 9 "Maine Internet Coverage," InMyArea.com, <https://www.inmyarea.com/internet/maine>
- 10 "How Can We Help?" National Digital Equity Center, <https://digitalequitycenter.org/how-can-we-help/>
- 11 "Impacts of Climate Change Across Maine: Northern Climate Zone," Maine Won't Wait, <https://www.maine.gov/climateplan/climate-impacts/northern-zone>
- 12 <https://www.spudspeedway.com>
- 13 <https://oldcc.gov>

REFERENCES

- Bagnall, Paul. 2023. "Small Aroostook Town Bringing Internet to Every Resident." *Bangor Daily News*, August 23.
- Bouchard, Chris. 2024. "Van Buren is promoting its most unique feature to attract businesses." *The County*, November 18. <https://thecounty.me/2024/11/18/business-news/van-buren-is-promoting-its-most-unique-feature-to-attract-businesses/>.
- Bouchard, Chris. 2025. "Van Buren Collaborating with Drexel Students on Community, Business Space." *The County*, April 10. <https://thecounty.me/2025/04/10/business-news/van-buren-collaborating-with-drexel-students-on-community-business-space/>.
- Bouchard, Chris, Melissa Lizotte, Kathleen Phalen Tomaselli, Paul Bagnall, Paula Brewer. 2023. "2023 Was a Year of Downtown Revitalization in Aroostook County." *The County*, December 26. <https://thecounty.me/2023/12/26/caribou/2023-was-a-year-of-downtown-revitalization-in-arostook-county/>.
- Brewer, Paula. 2025. "3rd Annual SnowBowl Draws a Crowd." *The County*, March 3. <https://thecounty.me/2025/03/03/uncategorized/3rd-annual-snowbowl-draws-a-crowd/>.
- Brewer, Paula. 2025. "New Aroostook Bus Service Strikes Gold by Going Door to Door." *The County*, July 21. <https://thecounty.me/2025/07/21/business-news/new-arostook-bus-service-strikes-gold-by-going-door-to-door/>.
- Brookings Institution. (2018). *Rethinking Cluster Initiatives: Lessons from the U.S. Advanced Industries*. Washington, DC: Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/rethinking-cluster-initiatives/>.
- Caldwell, Josh. 2025. "Addressing Climate Change by Expanding Transportation Choices for Rural Maine." *Maine Policy Review* 34(2): 198–202. <https://doi.org/10.53558/fchj3920>
- CCP (Center for Community Progress). 2024. 2023 *Impact Report*. CCP. <https://communityprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2023-Impact-Report-Center-for-Community-Progress-Spreads.pdf>.
- City of Caribou. (2019). Chapter 13 — Land Use Table & Zoning Definitions. <https://www.cariboumaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Chapter-13-Land-Use-Table-Zoning-Definitions.pdf>.
- The County. 2017. "Fort Fairfield Nonprofits Merge Resources to Better Serve the Community." *The County*, November 26.
- Davis, James C., John Cromartie, Tracey Farrigan, Brandon Genetin, Austin Sanders, and Justin B. Winikoff. 2023. *Rural America at a Glance*, 2023 Edition. USDA, Economic Research Service. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details?pubid=107837>.
- Dunkie, Daniel. 2025. "Mountain Bike Lifts and New Lodge Are Among the Ideas for Camden Snow Bowl." *Bangor Daily News*, July 10.
- Evans-Ralston, Connor, Kathleen Spear, and Jonathan Rubin. 2025. "Rural Resilience: The Role for Innovative Public Transportation." *Maine Policy Review* 34(2): 178–186. <https://doi.org/10.53558/vzlf6185>.
- GAO (Government Accountability Office). 2025. "Persistent Chemicals: DOD Needs to Provide Congress More Information on Costs Associated with Addressing PFAS." GAO-25-107401, February 24. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-25-107401>.
- Leonard, Matt. 2020. "How BMW Turned Spartanburg, South Carolina, into a Supply Chain Hub." *SupplyChainDive*, October 27. <https://www.supplychaindive.com/news/logistics-BMW-upstate-south-carolina-supply-chain-hub/587246/>.
- Lizotte, Melissa. 2022. "Caribou revisiting zoning rules in hopes of spurring more economic development." *The County*, April 4. <https://thecounty.me/2022/04/04/business-news/caribou-revisiting-zoning-rules-in-hopes-of-spurring-more-economic-development/>.
- LDA (Loring Development Authority of Maine). 2023. *Loring Development Authority of Maine Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report*. https://ldc.mainelegislature.org/Open/Rpts/hc79_d4l6_2023.pdf.
- MECEP (Maine Center for Economic Policy). 2023. *State of Working Maine 2023: Boosting Maine's Workforce*. <https://www.mecep.org/maines-economy/state-of-working-maine-2023/>.
- MCA (Maine Connectivity Authority). 2024. "Agency Launches Connectivity Hub Project to Empower Older Adults with Technology." MCA. <https://www.maineconnectivity.org/news/agency-launches-connectivity-hub-project-to-empower-older-adults-with-technology>.
- MITC (Maine International Trade Center). 2022. *2022 Annual Report: Amplifying Global Connections for Maine*. <https://www.mitc.com/about/2022-annual-report/>.
- Maine OT (Office of Tourism). 2024. *2023 Maine Office of Tourism Highlights: Aroostook County*. https://motpartners.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/MOT_GovCon_Regional_Highlight_Sheet_2023_Aroostook_v6-1-8.pdf.
- Milliken, Maureen. 2020. "Small-scale historical development can have big impact on Maine towns." *Mainebiz*, September 23. <https://www.mainebiz.biz/article/small-scale-historical-development-can-have-big-impact-on-maine-towns>.
- Ogrysko, Nicole. 2022. "Report: Nearly One in Four Aroostook County Homes Lack Reliable High-Speed Broadband." *Maine Public*, December 23.
- Pipa, Anthony F., Heather M. Stephens, David Nason, and Zoe Swarzenski. 2025. *Unlocking Investment in Distressed Rural Places*. Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/unlocking-investment-in-distressed-rural-places>.
- Reiling, Stephen D., Matthew J. Kotchen, and Rod L. Bennett. 1998. *The Economic Impact of Snowmobiling in Maine*. USDA, Forest Service, General Technical Report NE-241. https://www.nrs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/gtr/gtr_ne241/gtr_ne241_073.pdf.
- Snider, Ari. 2025. "New Signs of Economic Life at Former Loring Air Force Base, but Redevelopment Faces Challenges." *Maine Public*, December 30.
- Triplett, Karri. "ACAP Launches Mobile Service Unit to Travel the County Offering Services." *WAGM*, May 9.
- US Census Bureau. 1992. *1990 Census of Population: General Population Characteristics – Maine*. (CP-1-21). US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration. <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1990/cp-1/cp-1-21.pdf>.
- US Census Bureau. 2020. *Decennial Census Data for Limestone Town and Aroostook County, Maine*. <https://data.census.gov>.
- University of Maine. 2025. "Economic Contribution of Snowmobiling Slid Last Winter, Study Finds." News release, January 31. <https://umaine.edu/news/blog/2025/01/31/economic-contribution-of-snowmobiling-slid-last-winter-study-finds/>.

Kristen Henry is the director of economic and community development for the town of Madawaska, Maine.

Jay Kamm is a senior planner for the Northern Maine Development Commission.

Jared Tapley is a regional resiliency planner for the Northern Maine Development Commission.

Jon Gulliver is the director of economic and community development at the Northern Maine Development Commission.