

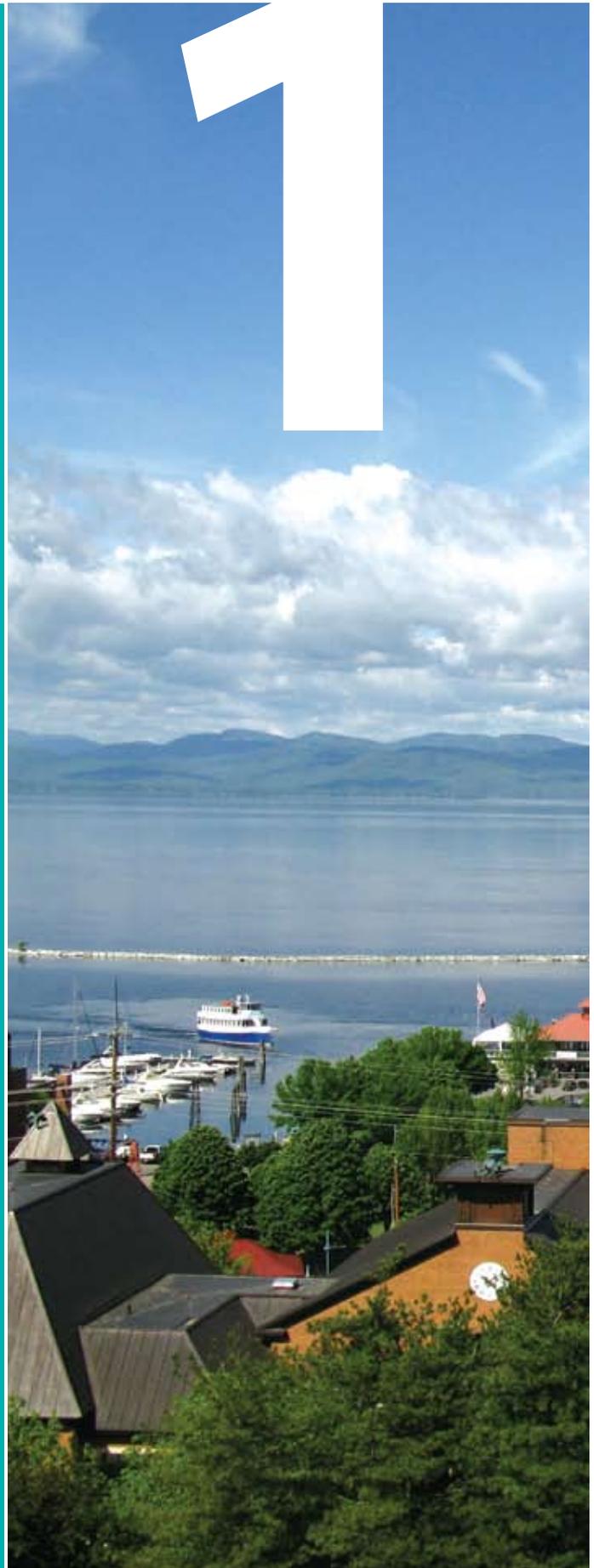
# ELEMENT

**Mix land uses,  
including water-  
dependent uses**

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Mizner Park in Boca Raton, Florida, features shops, restaurants, homes, and office space all within easy walking distance.



A mix of restaurants and shops and an active waterfront create a vibrant community in Newport, Rhode Island.

In contrast to conventional development approaches that isolate residential, commercial, and civic uses from one another, mixing these land uses creates vibrant, sustainable communities. Putting homes, stores, offices, schools, and other uses close to one another makes it easier for residents to walk or bike to their daily destinations instead of driving. Communities can use existing infrastructure more efficiently, with the same sidewalks, streets, and utility systems serving homes, commercial centers, and civic places. Having these diverse uses in the same neighborhood generates vibrancy from active, pedestrian-friendly streets, sidewalks, and public spaces.

In coastal and waterfront communities, thoughtfully integrating a mix of land uses with the waterfront can deliver these same benefits. This approach can also incorporate the area's distinctive visual, historical, and natural features into the daily life of residents and visitors, giving people a strong connection to the water. On the coast or waterfront, a mixed-use approach to development may mean weaving water-dependent uses with those not dependent on the water. While some uses may complement one another, others may require buffers, such as warehouses, research facilities, or open space, to separate ports and heavy industry from homes, schools, shops, and other incompatible uses. Integrating compatible, non-water-related uses with the water-dependent ones that have traditionally defined the identity of coasts and waterfronts can provide a more stable economic base. If water-dependent activities slow down because of economic conditions, weather, or seasonal fluctuations, the compatible non-water-dependent uses can help sustain the local economy and continue to serve the daily needs of those who live, work, and play in the community.

The challenge in many waterfront and coastal communities is to provide and protect this mix of uses when faced with changing development conditions. Population growth, demographic changes, and declining natural resources like fish stocks will affect the value and use of waterfront land.<sup>5</sup> In communities experiencing rapid growth and high demand for land, as well as those with slower growth or economic decline, a mixed-use approach to development provides a way to plan for growth that protects the environment and strengthens the economy. In all cases, preserving working waterfronts and public access to the water requires communities to plan ahead and create a vision for future growth that retains this mix of uses.

A waterfront master plan can be an effective starting point to engage the community in envisioning future development and articulating the values that new planning policies will support. In addition, an effective harbor management plan can govern activity in the water, complementing the community's waterfront master plan, or can manage activities in both the water and the adjacent land area.<sup>6</sup> By recognizing the interdependence of land and water uses and crafting rules that value and support water-dependent uses, both types of plans can help communities fulfill their vision. In New York State, for example, waterfront communities integrate these two approaches into a comprehensive local waterfront revitalization program, developed in partnership with the state's coastal management program. The local plan provides a framework for addressing waterfront issues, beginning with a community's vision for its waterfront, and leading to specific projects to achieve the vision. By aligning local resources with state priorities for economic growth and environmental health,



The cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda, New York, used their waterfront revitalization plan to enhance boater and pedestrian amenities.



In Portland, Maine, compatible offices are co-located above commercial fishing businesses.



With careful planning, water-dependent uses such as fishing facilities can be managed in harmony with non-water-dependent uses.

communities can leverage public investments for revitalization. Since 1994, over \$158 million has been appropriated for at least 1,100 projects in 300 New York waterfront communities to revitalize waterfronts, downtowns, and local economies, create public access, restore habitats and wetlands, and improve water quality.<sup>7</sup>

Other approaches, such as building and zoning codes, can help a community achieve its vision. Zoning, in particular, is critical to managing and maintaining an appropriate mix of water- and non-water-dependent uses. Portland, Maine, adopted a comprehensive approach to zoning for a mix of uses, both vertically (within buildings) and horizontally (across the waterfront), that resulted in a more vibrant working waterfront (see the Portland, Maine, case study below for more detail).

In addition to codes and ordinances, certain fiscal policies can help communities ensure that water-

dependent uses remain a viable, stable part of the mix of uses. Tax abatements, tax exemptions, and current-use taxation programs can reduce the overhead costs for commercial activities that are critical to a working waterfront. Tax increment financing districts can generate funds to support infrastructure improvements, such as pedestrian or boating access to the water. Communities can better support their working waterfronts by improving access to the water and ensuring that space along the waterfront exists for support facilities.

By ensuring that water-based activities and compatible non-water-dependent uses are close together, where appropriate, and by protecting and ensuring access to the water for water-dependent uses, coastal and waterfront communities can provide the basis for more sustainable growth that allows residents and businesses to thrive.

# 8



## Portland, Maine

### CASE STUDY

Portland, Maine, located on Casco Bay, began its waterfront planning effort by identifying a range of land uses appropriate for its commercial harbor (water-dependent, marine-related, and compatible non-marine) and then developing zoning approaches that allowed these uses to be mixed together. The community found that adopting a mixed-use zone that allows compatible non-marine uses to

be located above, and in certain areas along side, water-dependent uses was more successful (and flexible) than the previous zoning designation, which restricted the waterfront area solely to water-dependent uses. This zoning change allowed pier and wharf owners to fill vacant properties and generate income by leasing second-floor and other commercial space, which helped pay for the high

costs of maintaining commercial marine infrastructure. For instance, Portland's Union Wharf rents dock-level space to commercial fishers and harbor support industries, while the upper-level space is rented to law offices and other businesses. The rent from the non-marine tenants subsidizes the water-based activities on the dock. The mixed-use overlay also allows development of



Portland, Oregon's vibrant downtown is a short walk from the Willamette River.

Baltimore, Maryland's Inner Harbor provides a diverse mix of uses along its revitalized waterfront.

KEY ACTION OPTIONS	POLICIES, TOOLS, AND TECHNIQUES FOR IMPLEMENTATION
<p><i>Adopt zoning policies and building codes that support mixed-use development</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Create overlay and special area zones that permit horizontal and vertical mix of uses</i></li> <li>• <i>Create form-based codes that prescribe building type, not use</i></li> </ul>
<p><i>Plan for the needs of water-dependent recreational, commercial, and industrial users</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Employ visioning exercises to determine community support for maintaining working waterfront</i></li> <li>• <i>Develop waterfront master plans to guide land-based uses</i></li> <li>• <i>Develop harbor management plans to guide water-based activities</i></li> <li>• <i>Create special area management plans to supplement existing plans for natural resource protection in specific areas</i></li> </ul>
<p><i>Implement fiscal policies and incentives that support a mix of uses</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Use current-use zones, tax abatements, and tax exemptions to reduce the cost of critical activities of a working waterfront</i></li> <li>• <i>Create tax increment financing districts to improve infrastructure to support water-dependent activities</i></li> </ul>

appropriate “transitional” uses, such as research facilities, that can buffer marine industries (such as shipping or processing facilities) from nearby residential or commercial uses and provide jobs within walking distance of homes and services. Additionally, retail and restaurant uses are concentrated along Commercial Street, Portland’s waterfront drive, away from the working ends of piers and closest to

downtown and historic shopping areas. Economic downturns, coupled with long-term declines in fishing and maritime industries, continue to challenge the feasibility of maintaining the waterfront’s aging marine-related infrastructure. Portland’s innovative application of mixed-use zoning is an important strategy to help generate the funds needed to protect and maintain that built infrastructure.<sup>8</sup>



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