



GARDINER CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET



Meeting Date	05/27/2026	Department	Planning/Economic Dev
Agenda Item	4.d)Consideration of a contract for Municipal Land Use Planning Services in support of the City's Comprehensive Plan update		
Est. Cost	\$90,000		

Background Information

Council directed the Economic Development Department to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for planning services related to the Comprehensive Plan update on April 1, 2026. The RFP was released on April 16, 2026. In response, the City received five proposals from consulting firms across New England. Previous project work submitted by each firm was reviewed, references were contacted, and several phone and Zoom interviews were conducted with the Planning Coordinator.

The proposals were evaluated by the Planning and Economic Development Department, Interim City Manager, Denise Brown, Gardiner Resident, Phyllis Gardiner, and Andrew Love, a member of the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee. Based on the scoring sheets and overall evaluation process, Haley Ward emerged as the outstanding candidate and was unanimously selected as the top choice by all reviewers. The City earmarked TIF funds in the FY26 budget to support planning services for the Comprehensive Plan update.

Haley Ward demonstrated a strong community engagement platform, a highly qualified team, and direct experience working with the City of Gardiner, most recently through the Climate Vulnerability Assessment project.

Attached are Haley Ward's proposal, scoring sheets, and municipal references, all of which support the conclusion that Haley Ward is the best overall fit for Gardiner's Comprehensive Plan needs.

Economic Development Director Melissa Lindley and Planning Coordinator Angelia Christopher will be present at the meeting to answer any questions regarding the consultant selection process for this project.

Information for all the proposals received for the RFP can be accessed here:

<https://www.gardinermaine.gov/Government/Boards-Committees/Comprehensive-Plan-Review>

Requested Action	"I move to instruct the Acting City Manager to accept the contract with _____ for Municipal Land Use Planning Services in support of the City's Comprehensive Plan update."
City Manager and/or Finance Review	
Council Vote/ Action Taken	
Departmental Follow-Up	

City Clerk Use Only	1 st Reading _____	Advertised _____	EFFECTIVE DATE _____
	2 nd Reading _____	Advertised _____ w/in 15 Days	
	Final to Dept _____	Updated Book _____	Online _____

Municipal Land Use Planning Services Comprehensive Plan Update

City of Gardiner, Maine

April 29, 2026



HALEY WARD

April 29, 2026

Comprehensive Plan Update: City of Gardiner

Dear Ms. Christopher,

Thank you so kindly for taking time the other day to discuss your needs for the development of Gardiner's new Comprehensive Plan. Based upon our conversations and experiences, we feel confident that we can pick up where the community and committee left off and pivot in a way that is both respectful of the efforts to date and energizes your community for the work to come.

We have a highly experienced team with demonstrated success in public facilitation, comprehensive planning, data analysis, and communications to help guide the community through this process, as well as a head start on data chapter elements related to the environment given our recent climate vulnerability work in Gardiner. While it is not imperative that the same consultant handles both comprehensive planning and facilities/capital improvement planning, Haley Ward is also working towards a submission to respond to the City's needs around this topic as well. There are certainly notable efficiencies to be gained from a coordinated communications and data management effort. Regardless of that effort, we are well situated to ensure that the public understands how these planning efforts are intertwined.

We understand you've been working since Fall of 2025, and a number of tasks remain to be completed. Our tested methodologies for robust community engagement and efficient team workflows can deliver a plan in 8 months. Our process is similar to the "Heart and Soul" model that Gardiner had positive experiences with, including a full suite of maps, analyses visuals, plans, and renderings to support the plan's consensus-driven policies and action strategies.

What you will hear from our references: our team strongly believes in providing personal attention and quality service to the people we work for. We've enjoyed our working relationship with Gardiner's staff and community thus far. Under my leadership and joined by a professional writer, an expert in GMA-compliant data chapters, and Jason King of Able City East (a national, award-winning urban planner and designer), we look forward to continuing serving the City throughout the comprehensive planning process.

We know intimately what it's like to wear many hats at one time. We will be respectful of your time, leverage the assets that are suitable (i.e. KVCOG, as appropriate), and allow staff and committee to focus on engagement, visioning, and goal-setting for the future. We encourage you to reach out to our municipal colleagues, Julie Erdman (or Jimmy Dealaman) in the Town of Brunswick, or George O'Keefe, Town Manager in Rumford; these are our two most current comprehensive planning.

If you have any questions regarding this submission, please feel free to contact me directly. Thank you for your consideration!

Vanessa L. Farr, CNU-A
Regional Manager of Planning & Design
vlfarr@haleyward.com | 207.671.7885





Vanessa L. Farr, CNU-A

Project Manager

ulfarr@haleyward.com | 207.671.7885

Vanessa L. Farr has nearly 30 years of professional planning and development experience. Although trained as a generalist, Vanessa has developed specialization in master plans, urban design, place-based economic development, and outcome-driven zoning policy. Vanessa founded Maine Design Workshop in 2015, is the Co-Founder of Build Maine, served on the New England Board of the Congress for the New Urbanism, and was the recipient of the 2014 Maine Association of Planners Professional Planner of the Year award. Vanessa joined Haley Ward in 2024 as Regional Manager of Planning and Design, launching the Northeast planning division.

EDUCATION

B.S. Environmental Studies, School of Urban & Regional Planning, University of Waterloo, Canada

SELECT PROJECTS & EXPERIENCES

Rumford Comprehensive Plan | Rumford, ME

Leading the Planning Board and community through a highly participatory community process to create a strategic, visionary plan for Rumford 2035.

Brunswick Comprehensive Plan | Brunswick, ME

Project managed writing and content development for Brunswick's new Comprehensive Plan. Led the charrette process and meetings with project partners to ensure all community voices were heard.

Nashua re-CODE | Nashua, NH

Project managed and drafted form based code elements for the first 1/2 of the city-wide rezoning effort. This included directing two multi-day visioning and coding charrettes and managing a public engagement plan. GIS analysis informed the code framework by mapping street hierarchies and examining existing metrics and nonconformities.

Somernova | Somerville, MA

Vanessa provided zoning expertise, code-writing, and master planning for the preparation of a \$30B rezoning effort to redevelop an approximately 7-acre fabrication campus into a climate and equity innovation district.

Maine PlaceCode Library | Statewide, ME

Vanessa is a co-author and contributor to the Maine PlaceCode Library, a form-based code library of building types, place types, and site development standards drawing on innovations in coding across the rural to urban transect. The project is co-funded by the Maine Department of Economic Development.

Code Audit | Bethel, Greenwood & Woodstock, ME

Vanessa performed code audits to a number of Western Maine towns to identify barriers to housing and potential zoning code and policy fixes. Several case studies were prepared exploring different place types (village infill, suburban, rural) and different development programs using missing middle housing typologies.

Comprehensive Plan | Casco, ME

Comprehensive Plan & Code | Newcastle, ME

Comprehensive Plan | Long Island, ME

Comprehensive Plan | Topsham, ME

Comprehensive Plan | Scarborough, ME

North Main Street Corridor Study | Providence, RI

Freeport Downtown Vision Plan | Freeport, ME

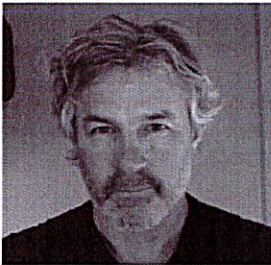
Parkwood Crossing | Carmel, IN

Mashpee Commons By Design | Mashpee, MA

Complete Streets & Vision Zero | Casco, ME

Rt 236 Mixed-Use District Plan & Code | Eliot, ME

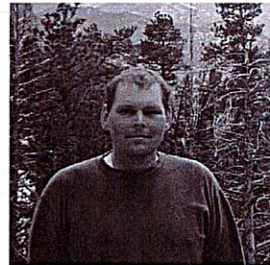
Project Team & Relevant Projects



Dan Edwards

Lead Writer
& Communications

Through the evolution of a varied career, Dan Edwards has worked as a real estate attorney, creative director, content developer, and communications strategist. In recent years, Dan's work has increasingly shifted toward municipal markets, where he works with planners, developers, and municipalities to develop short- and long-term communications strategies and produce the targeted content necessary to inform and guide decision-making by local, regional, state, and federal leaders and residents alike.



Abraham Dailey

Planner & Data Analyst
Regional Planning

Abraham Dailey is a self-directed GIS Analyst with 15 years of regional planning and environmental experience. He previously worked for the Maine Municipal Planning Assistance Program, where he reviewed comprehensive plans for consistency with Maine's Growth Management Law. Abraham is passionate about sustainable development and earned a Master's in Community Planning and Development from the Muskie School to implement sustainable solutions at the local and regional level.



Ben Meader, GISP

Geospatial Analyst

Ben Meader brings deep experience in geography, environmental science, GIS, and cartography. He has worked with small towns across Maine and New England, creating maps and analyses that support environmental assessment, planning, and community decision-making. Ben is especially skilled at distilling technical data into clear, accessible information that residents and decision-makers alike can understand. By combining strong science communication and public engagement, he ensures data gaps are filled with local knowledge and stakeholder input.



Sarah Turner

Geospatial Analyst &
Planner

Sarah Turner is a planner with extensive experience using GIS to support municipal planning, infrastructure, and land use projects. She has worked with towns and regional organizations across New England to analyze zoning codes, automate spatial workflows, and communicate data through clear maps and visuals. Sarah combines technical skills in spatial analysis and database management with a deep understanding of community development, making her especially effective at turning complex data into actionable insights for local governments.



Jon Whitten, Jr., PE

Civil Engineer
Land Development

Jon H. Whitten, Jr. has over 20 years of civil engineering experience related to site development project management, design, and permitting. His design experience includes private and public infrastructure: roadways, utilities, stormwater systems, and erosion control. Jon has extensive experience coordinating Local, State, and Federal zoning, natural resources, and regulatory permits in the State of Maine.



Jason King, AICP

Able City East
Principal In Charge,
Planner

Jason King, AICP is a Principal and Partner at Able City with over two decades of experience in urban planning and design. He has led more than 200 multidisciplinary projects for cities, neighborhoods, and corridors across the U.S. and internationally. He is the author of *The Climate Planner: Overcoming Pushback Against Local Mitigation and Adaptation Plans* (Routledge, 2021), and his work is featured in foundational texts such as *Sustainable Urbanism*, *Form-Based Codes*, and *Street Design*. Jason's thought leadership has been recognized by The New York Times, Planning Magazine, and NPR.



Claudia Etrillard

Associate Planner
& Designer

Claudia Etrillard joined Haley Ward upon the completion of her B.A. in Architecture and Environmental Studies at Middlebury College. She has an extensive research background in sustainable urban habitability, equitable economic development, and ecological restoration. At Haley Ward, Claudia specializes in design and planning services for a variety of municipal projects. Claudia combines her knowledge of design and community engagement to provide clients with effective communication tools.

Comprehensive Plan | Rumford, ME

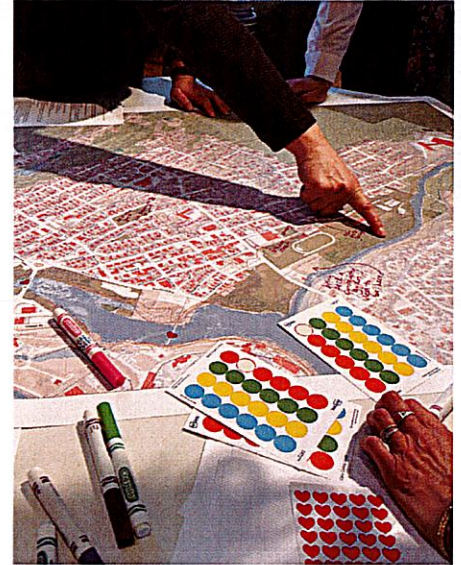
Date: 2026 - Present

Key Staff: Vanessa L. Farr, CNU-A, Ben Meader, GISP, Sarah Turner, Claudia Etrillard, Dan Edwards, Abe Dailey

Project Team: Haley Ward, Able City East

Status: In Progress

The Town of Rumford is currently developing a new Comprehensive Plan to guide community priorities for the next decade. Located in western Maine's Androscoggin River valley and surrounded by mountains, forests, and trail networks, Rumford has a strong connection to outdoor recreation and the region's growing outdoor economy. Haley Ward is leading a planning process that emphasizes community engagement and mapping-based analysis to better understand how residents use the town's natural assets. As part of this effort, our team conducted detailed mapping of trails, open space, and recreational resources to support public conversations about access, connectivity, and future investment. The resulting plan will help Rumford strengthen its community, support economic revitalization tied to outdoor activity, and guide long-term land use and infrastructure decisions.



Comprehensive Plan | Brunswick, ME

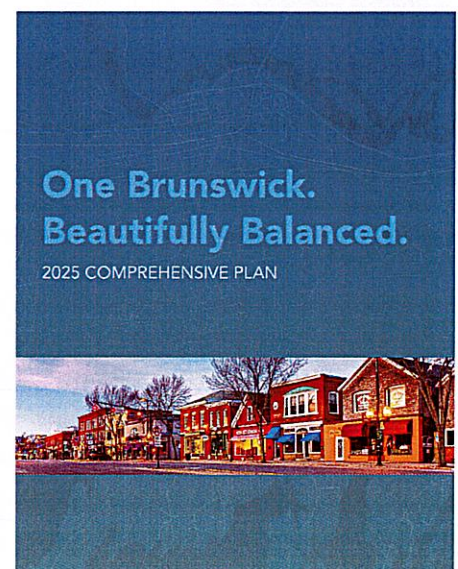
Date: 2025

Key Staff: Vanessa L. Farr, CNU-A, Ben Meader, GISP, Sarah Turner, Dan Edwards

Project Team: Haley Ward, Able City East

Status: Complete

The Town of Brunswick had been working to update its 2008 Comprehensive Plan for over five years, but progress stalled due to changing staff capacity, shifting priorities, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, Brunswick faced pressing concerns regarding infrastructure capacity, housing affordability, and increasing development pressure. Haley Ward was hired to get the project back on track and deliver a comprehensive plan draft in short order. The first full draft was completed in just seven months, after our team reviewed and synthesized years of prior outreach and data collection, worked closely with Town staff and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, and engaged key regional partners to ensure alignment with existing planning initiatives. The final plan reflects Brunswick's vision of "One Brunswick, Beautifully Balanced" by addressing the Town's need to protect its natural resources while guiding growth to areas supported by existing infrastructure.



Comprehensive Plan | Topsham, ME

Date: 2019

Key Staff: Vanessa L. Farr, CNU-A, Ben Meader, GISP

Project Team: Maine Design Workshop, Rhumblin, Principle

Status: Complete

The team led a robust community-centric process that identified opportunities for growth and revitalization in the Lower and Upper Village areas, and redevelopment opportunities to expand the downtown towards the more suburban auto-centric edges of town. A dynamic engagement and communications strategy led to a sweeping adoption at Town Meeting and broad political support to direct fiscal resources and staff capacity towards redevelopment of blighted sites in the Lower and Upper Village areas. This shifted economic development focus from the highway interchange to areas where the town had already made sewer, water, and street infrastructure investments. Social and physical connectivity emerged as central themes. Haley Ward is currently working with the Town to implement its goal of creating “Streets for People” through a Complete Streets Plan and Policy framework.



Comprehensive Plan + Code | Newcastle, ME

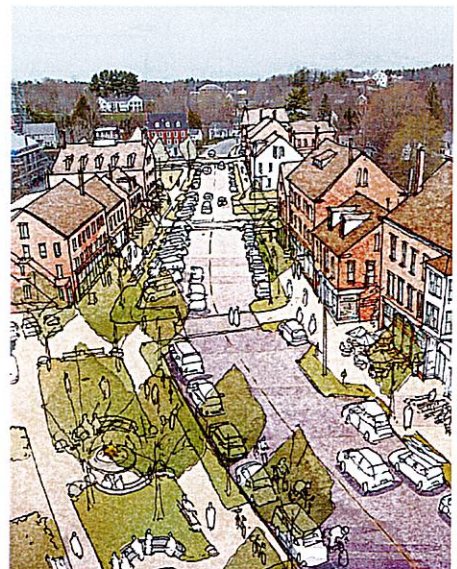
Date: 2018

Key Staff: Vanessa L. Farr, CNU-A, Ben Meader, GISP

Project Team: Maine Design Workshop, Rhumblin, Principle

Status: Complete

The Town of Newcastle needed to address its imbalance between costs and revenue in order to maintain a stable tax rate. Using an iterative design approach, our team learned residents were comfortable with intensive development in certain areas of town, and desired a Main Street of its own similar to that found across the river in Damariscotta. This led to a series of catalyst site drawings, including a new mixed-use neighborhood wrapping around Lincoln Academy, which incorporated existing and expanded industrial operations with workforce housing surrounding the old rail station. Vanessa worked with transportation officials to design a new square, linear park and Main Street within the bounds of the MaineDOT right of way. The Town also worked with Vanessa to overhaul its zoning ordinances, and within two years, approximately 40% of the plan had been implemented through adoption of the new code. The Town of Newcastle is now working with MaineDOT through the VPI process to implement its Comprehensive Plan goals for downtown.



References

George O'Keefe (Haley Ward)
Town Manager, Town of Rumford, ME
207.441.4843 | townmanager@rumfordme.org

Julie Erdman (Haley Ward)
Planning Director, Town of Brunswick, ME
207.725.6660 | jerdman@brunswickme.org

James D. Rabbitt (Able City East)
Planning Director, Town of South Kingstown, RI
401.789.9331 x1246 | jrabbitt@southkingstownri.gov

Select Project Websites & Completed Plans

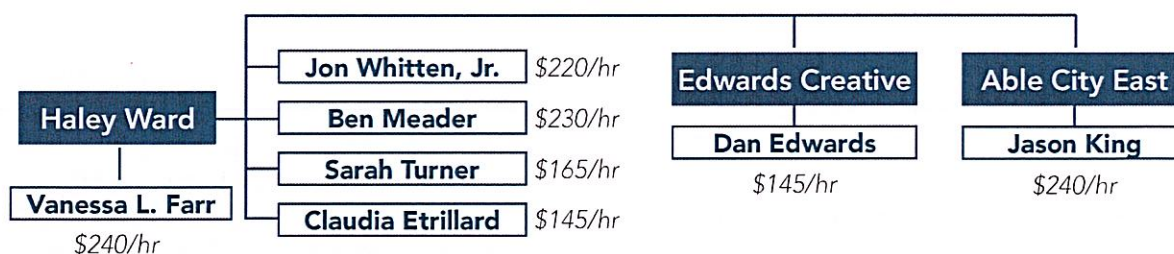
Rumford Comprehensive Plan
<http://bit.ly/rumford2035>

Brunswick Comprehensive Plan
<https://www.planbrunswick.org>

Topsham Comprehensive Plan
<https://ecode360.com/TO1615/document/574380003.pdf>

Newcastle Comprehensive Plan
https://www.newcastlemaine.us/sites/g/files/vyhlf6211f/uploads/comprehensive_plan_june_12_2018_approved.pdf

Cost Proposal & Hourly Rates



To perform the scope of services outlined in the enclosed proposal for Comprehensive Planning services, Haley Ward proposes a fixed rate fee not to exceed \$90,000 and inclusive of all indirect expenses. Additional services may be performed upon request based on this rate structure for 2026.

Statement of Availability

Our team is committed to averaging 15 - 30 hours per week with fluctuations of effort based on phase of process. Example: during the charrette specifically, we commit to having a team on site for a minimum of 5 1/2 days at 10 hours per day or 55 hours multiplied by a minimum of 4 team members at all times.

Project Approach

Our team brings passion to the work of creating thoughtful, action-oriented comprehensive plans. What sets our team apart is the approach we take to public engagement and the development of plan content. We work “by design” to deliver a robust, action-oriented planning process. Our strategy improves upon the basic design charrette by integrating various mini-master plan activities, big idea policy brainstorming, and on-the-ground tactics to more fully engage the community in generating ideas for community improvements. We do hands-on work to test ideas and build local trust

by embedding ourselves in the community as much as possible. While the State Growth Management Act (GMA) sets forth a framework for preparing the plan, we will listen carefully to input from the community to identify what is most important to Gardiner’s residents. As we gather public comments, we will coordinate with KVCOG to create Gardiner-specific data analyses that support data chapter development while ensuring the visions, goals, and action strategies address the City’s unique needs.

Communications & Engagement

Haley Ward team members are experts in communications, public engagement, and facilitation in planning processes, which sets our team apart from other consulting firms. We put people at the center of planning, with strategies that make participation welcoming and accessible for all ages. Here are just a few of the participatory techniques we will use to augment in-person engagement, described later in the Scope of Services section:

Project Website

We will provide professional, human-generated media content for posting on the city’s website. This will enable the public to read about the planning process, participate in engagement activities through surveys and comments, and generally follow along from project kick-off to town meeting adoption.

Survey and Crowdsourcing Mapping

We design each engagement tool and event with

intention. For straightforward input, such as ranking priorities or rating satisfaction, simple online surveys (e.g., Google Forms or SurveyMonkey) are the most effective. For place-based feedback, we use ArcGIS Online to build interactive maps where residents can drop pins, add comments tied to a location, and see what others have shared. This makes feedback more visual, transparent, and rooted in the geography of Gardiner. By offering both traditional surveys and map-based tools, we make it easy for residents to participate in the way that works best for them.

Branding

We will develop a brand guide for the project that informs the design of posters, signs, banners, and postcards. A clear visual identity makes it easy for residents to recognize project materials and know they are part of the comprehensive plan. The brand will carry through to the visual design of the plan itself.

Scope of Services

Haley Ward follows an intensive six-phase process that provides a clear work plan, goals, and timeline for completion. The cornerstone of our workflow and proposal is the use of the public design charrette to engage stakeholders and set a clear vision and

goals for the City of Gardiner. We propose to deliver you a draft plan ready for adoption in 8 months. A Comprehensive Plan generally has a shelf-life of 12 years. It shouldn’t take two years to make one.

01. Project Onboarding | May 2026

- Make introductions and hear about your aspirations for the project.
- Establish roles of staff, team members, and the Comprehensive Plan Committee.
- Coordinate with staff/KVCOG to off-board their work and/or set parameters for specific chapter completion. Determine the status of data chapter updates.
- Review the planning process.
- Discuss timeline and target dates for deliverables, and set a schedule of meetings.
- Review platforms and protocols for communications and collaboration.
- Discuss charrette logistics, topics, and potential dates and locations.
- Gather all current and completed reports, planning documents, studies, and regulations pertaining to Gardiner including the State Data packet (if one was provided).
- Tour the city with the client, and discuss concerns, aspirations, and goals from the city's perspective.

02. Data Gathering & Analysis | May-Jul 2026

Our team takes a unique approach to the collection and use of data. While we commit to preparing complete data chapters to achieve certification of the Comprehensive Plan by the Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA), we turn to the community to find out what it is that they are concerned about and what they need to know in order to make solid decisions about

their futures. Every place is unique, and every plan should let that uniqueness shine through.

Once gathered, the full team will review pertinent data and emerging trends in advance of Phase 4, Public Planning Charrette. Data can help inform priority-setting and determine the right strategies for Gardiner.

03. Public Outreach & Engagement | Jun - Dec 2026

We first became acquainted with your community during the Community Vulnerability Assessment. With our expanded team we'll work with you to customize a public outreach and engagement strategy custom

to the needs of this project. The methodology we'll be using for this project is more intensive and thus will require its own strategy of outreach and communication to yield high participation rates.

04. Public Planning Charrette | September 2026

Our team will be on site for a multi-day, public planning charrette. We will hold community workshops, conduct focus groups (including a curated invitation list, but open to public), and facilitate hands-on participatory work. This phase of the work is more than just community engagement — it's how we'll glean and process the greatest volume of information in an efficient manner, and turn that information into actionable goals and strategies to achieve the future Gardiner wants. Working by charrette creates synergy between team and community to produce better, effective solutions. By directly involving the public in the work, it also ensures strong community support

for adoption. Approximately 4 weeks before the charrette, we'll launch engagement efforts via print and online media to raise awareness for the process and event. We'll offer up a first call to action. Activities will be conducted out of a temporary workspace in a central location that is welcoming and barrier-free to the community. Choosing a high-visibility location will further boost traffic into the studio. The space will be open to the public from morning to evening, to provide your community access to our team in a way that cannot be realized by breaking apart the engagement process into a series of meetings over a longer period of time. Having the studio fully open to the public

allows participation by those whose jobs, caregiving, or other factors that might otherwise prevent them from contributing. Visitors to the studio can count

on being greeted by a team member, updated on the process and insights learned to date, and shown ways they can leave their mark on the work.

05. Document Production | Aug - Dec 2026

At the conclusion of the charrette, the team will have reached 80% production on all big ideas, policies, and strategies, 80% production on maps and diagrams, and 90% production on renderings or artwork. Renderings and artwork will be finalized two weeks after the charrette. The Future Land Use Map and Big Ideas will be finalized over a series of three (3) workshops with the Committee. The following content will be featured in a highly graphical Part I of the plan:

- Welcome message from leadership, committee with call to action.
- The Story (narrative of plan).
- Growth Management Program (including Future Land Use Map).
- Big Ideas (a collection of visions), Policies + Actions/Strategies.
- Required and Community-Initiated Maps and Diagrams
- Capital Investment Strategy.

- Implementation Plan + Matrix.

The following content will comprise Part II of the plan:

- All Data Chapters.
- Any identified/relevant material for appendices.

We use an open-source format, providing you access to data chapters as they are completed and the opportunity to participate as appropriate. A team member from Haley Ward will be designated as chapter lead and will hold working meetings to refine information. The team will look to the client to help coordinate access to assessors' data and any local sewer, water infrastructure data.

The final plan will be an approachable, graphically rich, readable, and actionable document. Drone photography, hand and digital rendering, and 3D modeling will support the visual communication of ideas and potential outcomes.

06. Final Presentation and Review | Jan - Feb 2027

Haley Ward will prepare one public review draft and one public hearing draft. We'll work with the Comprehensive Planning Committee to develop a review and adoption schedule that is responsive to Gardiner's needs at the time the plan concludes. We will make sure to build in ample public review and time for production and revision by the Committee. The public review draft will be launched at an Open House event, structured to orient the community to the plan, describe the process and high-level recommendations, and make the team and client available to answer questions in a gallery format.

Once the review period is complete, Haley Ward will ask the client to provide one concise set of edits. We have found that flexibility may be needed during the review process, and successful conclusions will come from strong leadership and frequent communications between client and consultant. Some communities need more time during review, while others need less.

We'll remain prepared to adjust workflows to meet your needs.

Haley Ward will provide 16 hours of technical support during the State review process. State timelines have historically been unpredictable (sometimes lasting over six months), as has the depth of agency review and comment. In preparation for their review, we will work collaboratively with you to complete the Self-Assessment checklist — which is not mandatory for submission. After State certification, Haley Ward will be happy to discuss additional services, special training, or capacity-building to help kick-start the plan's implementation efforts. Upon completion, Haley Ward will provide the city with production files as needed (InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, Acrobat PDF, PowerPoint/Google Slides, MS Word/Docs and Excel/Sheets) and high-resolution scans of all original illustrations. The PDF files will be both web and print-ready.



	Haley Ward	Resilience Planning & Design LLC	VHB	IOV Community Planning & Design	Berry Dunn
25%	- Current relationship with Gardiner through Climate Vulnerability Study - Have previously demonstrated a strong working cadence and engagement model with a citizen committee.	Concern about size of team. Likely would require collaboration outside this company so effectively you are hiring two or more companies. Location outside of Maine puts them at a disadvantage.	- Team is local, conducted other comp plans - Big company resources with local individual delivery potential. This could be a positive to draw on for Gardiner.	Heavy on references to goals, engagement, light on data ability. Concern on this being an upgrade in that department which is necessary.	The proposal is very formal and given my experience work with Berry Dunn I think that's the type of experience that The City would receive.
25%	Strong background in Comprehensive Plans	Other plans so clearly they have experience. Unclear about the length of experience and how much Main specific experience.	Mix of long and medium term experience. Positive that they provided individual stakeholder details.	Less experience compared to peers	Strong background in Comprehensive Plans
20%	- Project website and branding demonstrate results based approach. - Their approach consult with KVCOC during onboarding may present challenges. - Data gathering by consulting community has proven results with the Climate Vulnerability study. They did an excellent job on data.	I found this proposal lacking in a lot of detail on approach and methodology. It read a generic and basically educating on the basics of how a Comp Plan could or should work.	- City tour inclusive of City staff and CPC could provide value in conjunction with the initial meeting to ensure effective alignment. - Section 2.1 targeted review and overall approach to data is positive. - They detail aspects of the actual comp plan in a different manner than others.	- Multiple public meetings are a plus, small team conducting. - Engagement of youth, non-taxpayers or those paying rent, should not inform public policy. The overall approach comes off more emotional than substantive. - Website build	Website build, strong public engagement approach with virtual focus groups, multiple in-person public meetings, virtual engagement tools consistent with a large firm
10%	Cost and overall value	\$80,000	\$80,000 - Section 4.3 Implementation plan creates value for the city on a go forward basis	\$39,000 - Concern about the ability to deliver on this price	\$90,000.00
20%	Availability and project completion timeline	As stated above staff size and location bring concern about availability.	11 month projection Monthly meeting would be virtual on the part of VHP	9 month projection, availability due to team size a concern and overlap of another plan wrapping mid summer. If the team is small being able to effectively pick up the work on a second plan and finish strong could be an issue.	8 months
	Score	41	36	21	37

Applicant Name	Cost (10%)	Experience (25%)	Approach & Methodology (20%)	Availability and Timeline (20%)	Overall fit for Gardiner's needs (25%)	Total points	Ranking
Haley Ward	\$50k fixed	5 4 to 6-person team has a lot of experience; recent work on vulnerability study means they already know Gardiner	22 • Sincere and strong focus on community engagement; multi-day public charrette in Sept. with lots of advance outreach to raise awareness	18 15-30 hrs/week average over 8 months	18 they seem to grasp where we are at/what we need, and they have a good plan to engage the community in the process	18 81	1
Resilience Planning & RKG Associates	\$70k - \$140k	4 6-person team; 2 principals have 18- 25 yrs experience, but no info provided re other team members	18 approach is not clearly outlined; proposal uses standard language and does not reflect a tailored approach	8 would ensure completion by spring 2027	10 hard to tell; proposal is too generic	10 50	5
VHB	\$68,585	7 younger team; only one has 20 yrs experience	12 they appear to have done the most homework to learn where we are in comp plan process; very clear steps outlined; reference to chapters of the plan to be written by the city suggests no review or revision on their part; and 4 group interviews do not sound adequate to get public engagement early in the process	15 anticipate 11-month schedule with plan completion by April 2027	10 local base seems positive, but their approach seems too rigid and just recaps a lot of the state requirements; I don't get the sense it would be that well tailored to this city	10 54	4
IOV	\$37,841	8 small team; only 7 yrs experience; result is a lower rate	10 public engagement approach includes city-wide postcard mailings; up to 3 topic exploration meetings and 2 future land use workshops plus a youth engagement effort; cost and task breakdown is very detailed; factors in work done to date	15 limited availability before July; anticipates completion of plan in February 2027	15 like fresh approach and focus on community and particularly youth engagement (no other firms mentioned this); but that may not balance out limited experience	15 58	3
Berry Dunn	\$89,535	5 strong team with big firm depth of experience	22 community engagement relies heavily on website tools, which may be well done but less effective than in-person; plan is for 2 public meetings; an in-person future land use workshop and 5 virtual focus groups with reps of community organizations; proposal also references a lot of "applied methodologies"; does not seem likely to gain valuable community input	12 plan to complete by Jan. 2027	18 the team's experience is their biggest asset, and they have a standard approach; I'm uncertain whether it is innovative and creative enough to truly engage the community	16 73	2

Angelia Christopher

From: George O'Keefe <townmanager@rumfordme.org>
Sent: Monday, May 18, 2026 3:35 PM
To: Angelia Christopher
Cc: Richard Coulombe; Erin Baker; Travis Palmer
Subject: RE: Haley Ward reference

Good Afternoon Angelia,

I will answer your questions in sequence:

1. Haley-Ward's approach was very effective working across a wide cross section of residents, staff, and elected officials.
2. We are very pleased with the product to date and the overall experience. I can't say "finished" product because the plan is still being drafted. To date it's been awesome frankly.
3. Ensuring underrepresented groups were engaged was something that we worked on very closely together. In our case we had various members of the Planning Board, staff, and officials who took on spreading the word to all of their contacts. Our Planning Board is quite diverse (in socio economic terms) and has excellent connections throughout the community including to marginalized populations. Haley Ward did excellent work making sure that the process was structured in such a way that it was approachable and their staff is friendly, welcoming, and accommodating. We handled the citizen recruitment through our social media channels, personalized email invitations, and direct contacts. The combination of their accessible process and schedule along with our ability to engage residents made for some very lively, respectful, and healthy conversations.
4. Feedback received from citizens was strongly positive. I have cc'd Richard Coulmobe, Code Enforcement Officer, Erin Baker, Code Enforcement Administrative Assistant, and Travis Palmer the Chair of the Planning Board for further confirmation on feedback in re: the process should that be of interest.
5. They were very professional in all respects. Our Comprehensive Plan envisions taking some pretty big steps with regards to Critical Rural Area designations. These are in response to community opposition and/or concerns about housing development encroaching on areas of Town which have remained largely agricultural in character since the founding of the Town.
6. Top strengths are listening, the ability to synthesize the community's best vision of itself, the ability to suggest innovative proposals and approaches that are accepted practices for planning purposes under the Maine Growth Management Act. Areas needing improvement would be very sparse. The pacing for the community charette is very tight. But that's by design. Just make sure to be ready for a very intense couple of weeks leading up to the charette and you'll be fine.
7. Very timely so far. No concerns at all.

Best,

George

George O'Keefe
Town Manager
Economic Development Director
Town of Rumford
(207) 441-4843 (cell)

From: Angelia Christopher <AChristopher@gardinermaine.com>
Sent: Friday, May 15, 2026 11:31 AM
To: George O'Keefe <townmanager@rumfordme.org>
Subject: Haley Ward reference

Good day,

We are in the process of bringing on an independent Planning agency to assist us with our Comprehensive Plan Update.

Haley Ward listed you as a reference for your newly developed plan. I have looked at the plan for Rumford, it's very well done.

At your earliest convenience, could you give a quick answer to the questions below?

How effective were they in working with internal teams, citizens, and local officials?

Are you and your municipality happy with the finished product and overall experience?

What strategies did they use to engage underrepresented groups in the planning process?

How was community engagement? Did people walk away feeling good about the experience?

How do they handle project delays or unexpected community opposition?

What would you say are their top strengths and areas for improvement?

How timely was the applicant in completing assignments and meeting deadlines?

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Thank you so much and have a wonderful weekend!

Angelia M. Christopher
Planning Coordinator
6 Church St.
Gardiner Maine, 04345
207-582-6892

How effective were they in working with internal teams, citizens, and local officials?

This consultant was hired near the end of a six-year comprehensive planning process, so much of the public engagement had already occurred by that point. Although the contract period was over a shorter window than a typical engagement, Haley Ward was helpful assisting staff and committee members during meetings and helping orient participants to the process. They also conducted a successful three-day design charrette that gathered additional input from committee members and held an open house following release of the draft plan to obtain public feedback. Given the targeted scope outlined in Brunswick's RFP/contract, the consultant's role was more focused on developing and refining the plan itself, while staff led most coordination with local officials. Staff felt the consultant worked effectively with internal teams and, while their involvement with the public was more limited, they were effective whenever they participated in community engagement efforts. We received very positive feedback regarding the Open House in which they participated.

Are you and your municipality happy with the finished product and overall experience?

Yes. We were very pleased with how quickly the consultant was able to turn around the final product, especially considering they joined at the end of a six-year process and had a significant amount of information to become familiar with in a short period of time. Throughout the project, the consultant communicated very effectively. Initially, staff were somewhat apprehensive about using 'Basecamp' to manage the project, but we quickly found it to be an efficient and user-friendly platform that helped streamline coordination and document management.

What strategies did they use to engage underrepresented groups in the planning process?

To reiterate, Haley Ward was hired primarily to compile and refine the substantial amount of feedback already collected during the previous six years of the comprehensive planning process. Because they were not involved in the earlier phases of public outreach and engagement, strategies specifically related to engaging underrepresented groups were generally outside the scope of their contract.

How was community engagement? Did people walk away feeling good about the experience?

Yes. Members of the public and Town Councilors responded positively to the open house and final presentations at the end of the process. It is relatively uncommon for a public event focused on a complex policy document to generate minimal opposition, but we were impressed with how clearly the consultant presented the plan and communicated key concepts. Only a few minor concerns were raised by members of the public.

How do they handle project delays or unexpected community opposition?

The primary delays during the project stemmed from extensive and detail-oriented discussions during the committee's review of the draft plan, which resulted in additional meetings and extended the anticipated schedule. Early in the process, the consultant assisted staff with staffing committee meetings; however, as the number of meetings increased, Town staff assumed a greater role in staffing meetings to help avoid exceeding the consultant hours budgeted in the contract. As noted above, there was relatively little community opposition to the plan, and any concerns that did arise were manageable through email correspondence and public meetings.

What would you say are their top strengths and areas for improvement?

Strengths:

The consultant demonstrated a strong understanding of planning concepts and terminology defined in state law, which helped provide a solid foundation for committee discussions and supported staff recommendations throughout the process. The firm also exhibited strong project management skills and took project milestones and deadlines seriously. In particular, their GIS mapping and data visualization capabilities were excellent and consistently delivered with quick turnaround times. Additionally, the consultant was good at scheduling weekly meetings with staff to make sure the project was on track.

Areas for Improvement:

If we were to go through the process again, staff would spend additional time reviewing state requirements with the consultant to ensure all applicable state review criteria were fully addressed. That said, after discussions with the State, we understand it is relatively common for comprehensive plans to require revisions before receiving a formal consistency finding on initial submission. We are currently working through several

relatively minor state-required revisions and remain confident the plan will receive state approval once those updates are completed.

How timely was the applicant in completing assignments and meeting deadlines?

The consultant was extremely responsive in completing assignments and consistently met project deadlines. GIS mapping requests and plan updates, in particular, were completed with exceptionally quick turnaround times.

