



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

ANTICIPATING DISRUPTION AND
TURNING IT INTO OPPORTUNITY



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Camoin Associates is the nation’s only full-service economic development and lead generation consulting firm. Since 1999, we have helped communities and organizations of all sizes navigate change, anticipate disruption, and build stronger, more resilient economies through expert analysis, actionable strategies, and intentional connections. This paper builds on decades of experience working with communities across the country and reflects our recent efforts to deepen and expand our understanding of community economic resilience.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past year, Camoin Associates set out to build our knowledge of the various frameworks for community economic resilience.

OUR GOALS

- 1 | Test and verify the tools communities use to anticipate disruptions and economic shocks
- 2 | Determine the range of strategies that best support economic resilience
- 3 | Assess the ability to adapt

OUR APPROACH

Our research immersed us in understanding the conditions that contribute to the economic resilience of a community or region. This is a broad topic, and our core interest is in how economic components fit into an overall resilience framework.

Our approach integrated environment, health, community, individual, and organizational prosperity.

In the course of our work, we explored these core questions:

- What is resilience and community resilience?
- What is economic resilience and community economic resilience?
- How is community economic resilience measured? What are the components/conditions that contribute to the economic resilience of a community
- Who is planning for economic resilience and how?
- Are there tools available for communities to assess, plan for, and improve economic resilience?

Our work was grounded in data-driven research and identifying core indicators that led to depth of understanding and action.

Ready to answer these questions for your community?

Connect with our team today to develop and implement a resilience action plan.

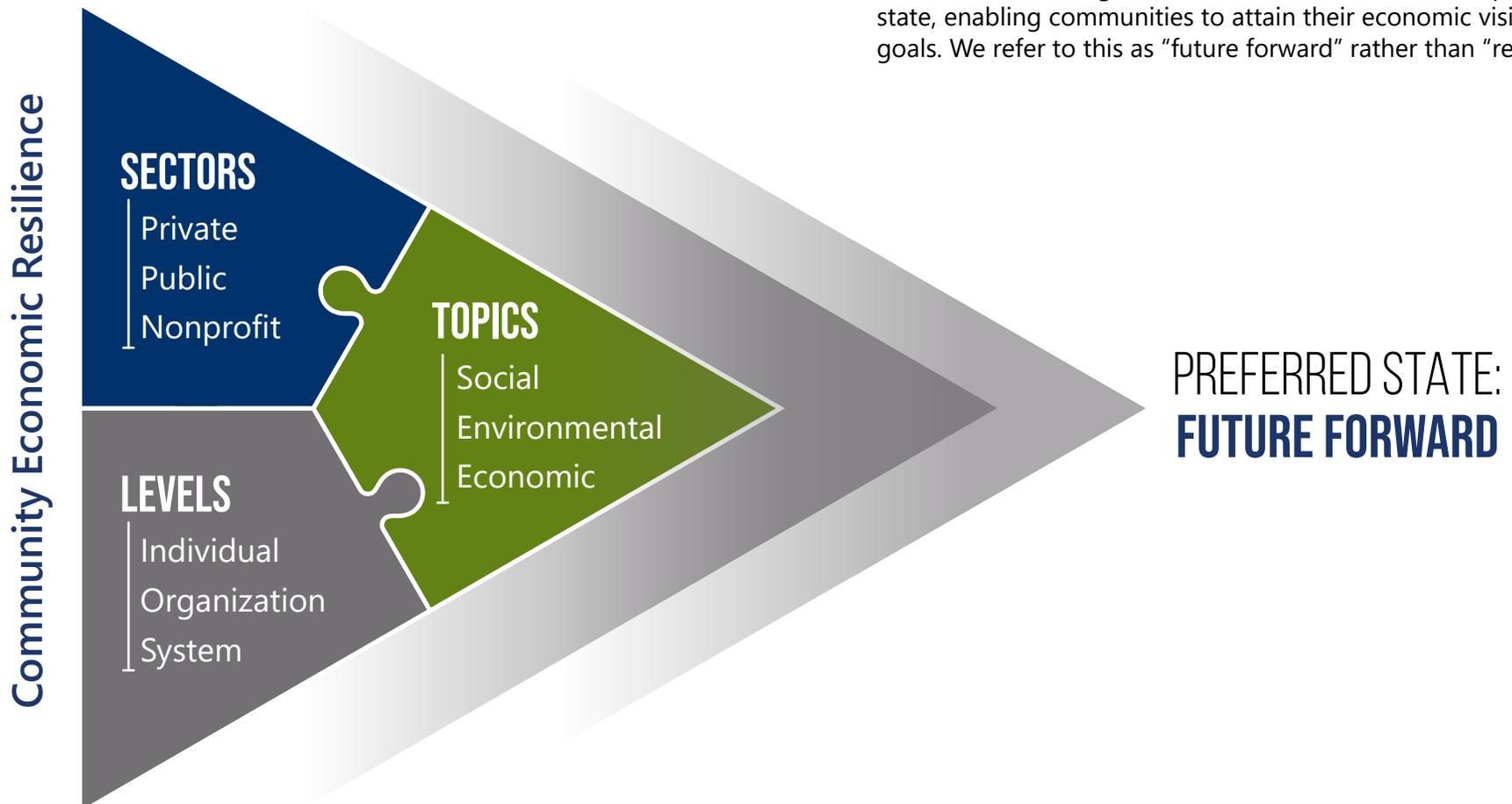
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HOW WE DEFINE RESILIENCE

Camoin Associates defines resilience as the ability to anticipate disruptions and successfully adapt. Within that broader resilience framework, economic resilience is about advancing economic activity that ensures businesses and residents can share in economic opportunity.

Community economic resilience is complex, involving multiple sectors (private, public, non-profit), multiple levels (individual, organization, system), and multiple topics (social, economic, environmental, and more).

Additionally, resilience should provide an opportunity not just to “bounce back” to a given state but to transform into a preferred state, enabling communities to attain their economic vision and goals. We refer to this as “future forward” rather than “recovery.”



STAGES OF RESILIENCE

To create a clear understanding of how to assess and plan for community resilience, based on our research and experience, we break resilience down into three stages:

STAGE 1 | Vulnerability: The likelihood that event(s) might occur and have economic disruption/consequences

STAGE 2 | Preparedness: The capacity to plan for, avoid, absorb, recover from, and successfully adapt to adverse events

STAGE 3 | Recovery/Performance: The ability to continue core economic activities to meet the objectives of economic opportunity and prosperity

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE PLANNING PROCESSES



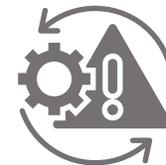
Strategic Foresight and Adaptive Planning

A process of using data and information, along with community engagement, to understand recent and emerging trends and possibilities to set vision, goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics in continuous cycles to be responsive to changing conditions.



Resilience Planning and Implementation

Focusing on understanding how possible future conditions and events might impact a community and building capacities to avoid negative impacts and create opportunities.



Disaster Preparedness and Recovery

Planning and preparing for tactical, on-the-ground responses to disasters or "shocks" to the system.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL FOR:



Local and regional economic, community, and workforce developers and planners



Business and industry stakeholders



Those working on and with environmental, climate, health, and other categories of resilience



Community, regional, and state policymakers and entities



Those working on disaster preparedness and recovery



MAINE CASE STUDIES

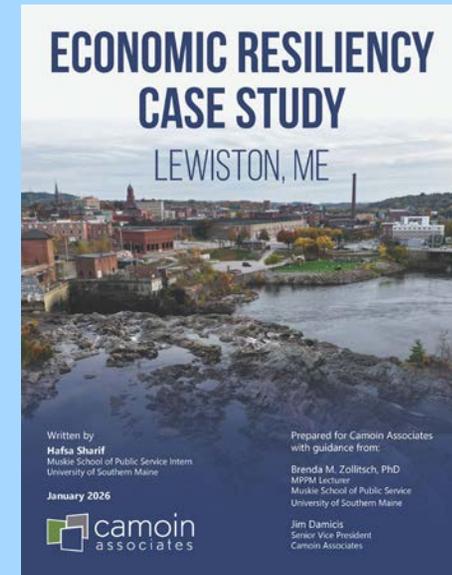
In 2025, Camoin Associates worked collaboratively with two interns from the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service to conduct economic resilience case studies.

The Maine communities chosen for case studies were the City of Lewiston and the Town of Stonington. They were chosen because of Camoin Associates' past experience creating economic development plans for them, the communities' willingness to participate, and because they were very different from each other: Lewiston is a larger inland city, and Stonington is a small coastal, bridged-island community.

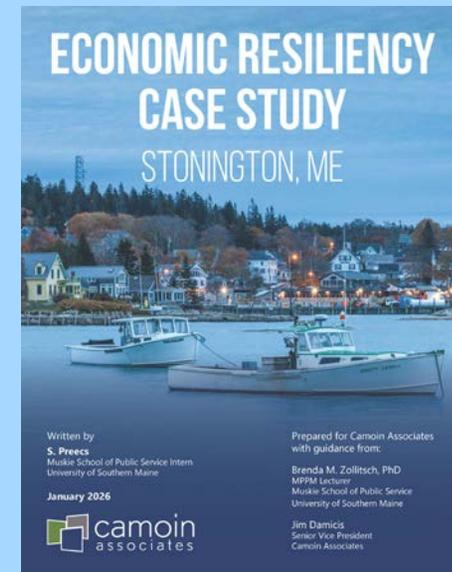
The case studies were informed by a review of state, regional, and community documents and studies, in-depth interviews with community leadership and stakeholders, and surveys of community members. Additionally, the case studies included input from community engagement group meetings that focused on the community's resilience-building needs and opportunities.

The Lewiston and Stonington case studies demonstrate that communities with very different sizes, economies, locations, and demographics often face shared economic challenges. Despite their differences, both communities highlight the importance of intentional, inclusive, and long-term approaches to building economic resilience.

At its core, resilience is not a single initiative but a system of interconnected strategies that strengthen both the economy and the community as a whole.



[READ THE LEWISTON CASE STUDY](#)



[READ THE STONINGTON CASE STUDY](#)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Economic and Community Resilience are Deeply Interconnected

A resilient economy depends on housing, infrastructure, social networks, and inclusive governance, not just job creation or growth metrics.

Multi-Sector Collaboration Strengthens Resilience

Cross-sector partnerships among government, nonprofits, businesses, and residents increase capacity, distribute risk, and unlock resources that no single entity can access on its own.

Participatory Planning Matters

Economic resilience is a participatory sport. Engaging residents, workers, employers, and entrepreneurs across the community ensures plans reflect real community needs and priorities.

Targeted Investment is Needed to Address Structural Barriers

Long-standing gaps in housing, infrastructure, workforce access, and land use must be addressed to build lasting resilience.

Zoning and Land-Use Policy are Critical Tools

Land-use policies can either enable or constrain housing availability, business growth, and adaptive reuse—making them central to resilience planning.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITIES

Communities that want to plan for and strengthen economic resilience should consider the following strategies as an integrated, holistic approach:

1 | DEVELOP A CONNECTED AND INCLUSIVE RESILIENCE PLAN

- Integrate economic resilience into comprehensive plans, economic development strategies, climate, and environmental plans.
- Regularly update plans using community input, data, and scenario analysis.

2 | USE FORESIGHT AND SCENARIO PLANNING

- Apply future-oriented thinking to test assumptions, explore uncertainties, and encourage creative problem-solving.
- Use scenario planning and community dialogue with engagement to understand opportunities, challenges, and connections among differing scenarios.

3 | MOVE FROM “STRATEGIC” PLANNING TO “ADAPTIVE” PLANNING

- Strategic planning, which emphasizes defining a clear direction and end goals, works best when there are predictable future environments and data. These conditions are increasingly less common. Adaptive planning considers multiple possible futures and uses imperfect or evolving data to guide decisions as conditions change.
- Shorten your planning timeframe and commit to continuous planning, measurement, and adaptation.



4 | BUILD STRONG PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS

- Leverage relationships with regional, state, and federal agencies, nonprofits, and private-sector partners.
- Use partnerships to access funding, technical expertise, and shared learning opportunities.

5 | ENABLE GRASSROOTS ENGAGEMENT

- Bring planning processes to the community and support resident-led and locally driven initiatives.
- Maintain continuous dialogue and information sharing—don't wait for a crisis to engage.

6 | FOCUS ON EXISTING ASSETS

- Identify and strengthen existing community assets—people, institutions, businesses, and place-based advantages.
- Balance short- and long-term investments to support immediate needs while preparing for future opportunities.

7 | DIVERSIFY THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- Support small-scale businesses and entrepreneurship in emerging and growth-oriented sectors.
- Reduce reliance on single industries to protect against sector-specific downturns and encourage innovation.

8 | CONTINUALLY INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE—DO NOT DELAY UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE

- Prioritize transportation, utilities, broadband, public facilities, and climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Ensure infrastructure investments support both everyday economic activity and emergency response.

9 | INVEST IN HOUSING AS ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

- Expand comprehensive and affordable housing solutions to stabilize the workforce and support economic participation.
- Align housing investments with land-use and transportation planning.

MOST IMPORTANTLY: GO BEYOND RESILIENCE AND TOWARD FUTURE READINESS

Building economic resilience goes beyond recovery. Communities must remain **human-centered**, focusing on what resilience means for residents, workers, and entrepreneurs: the ability to thrive, prosper, and clearly see—and access—opportunity.

Communities that emphasize inclusion, adaptability, partnership, and asset-based planning are best positioned not only to withstand disruption but to shape a more sustainable and equitable future.



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RESILIENCE-BUILDING SERVICES