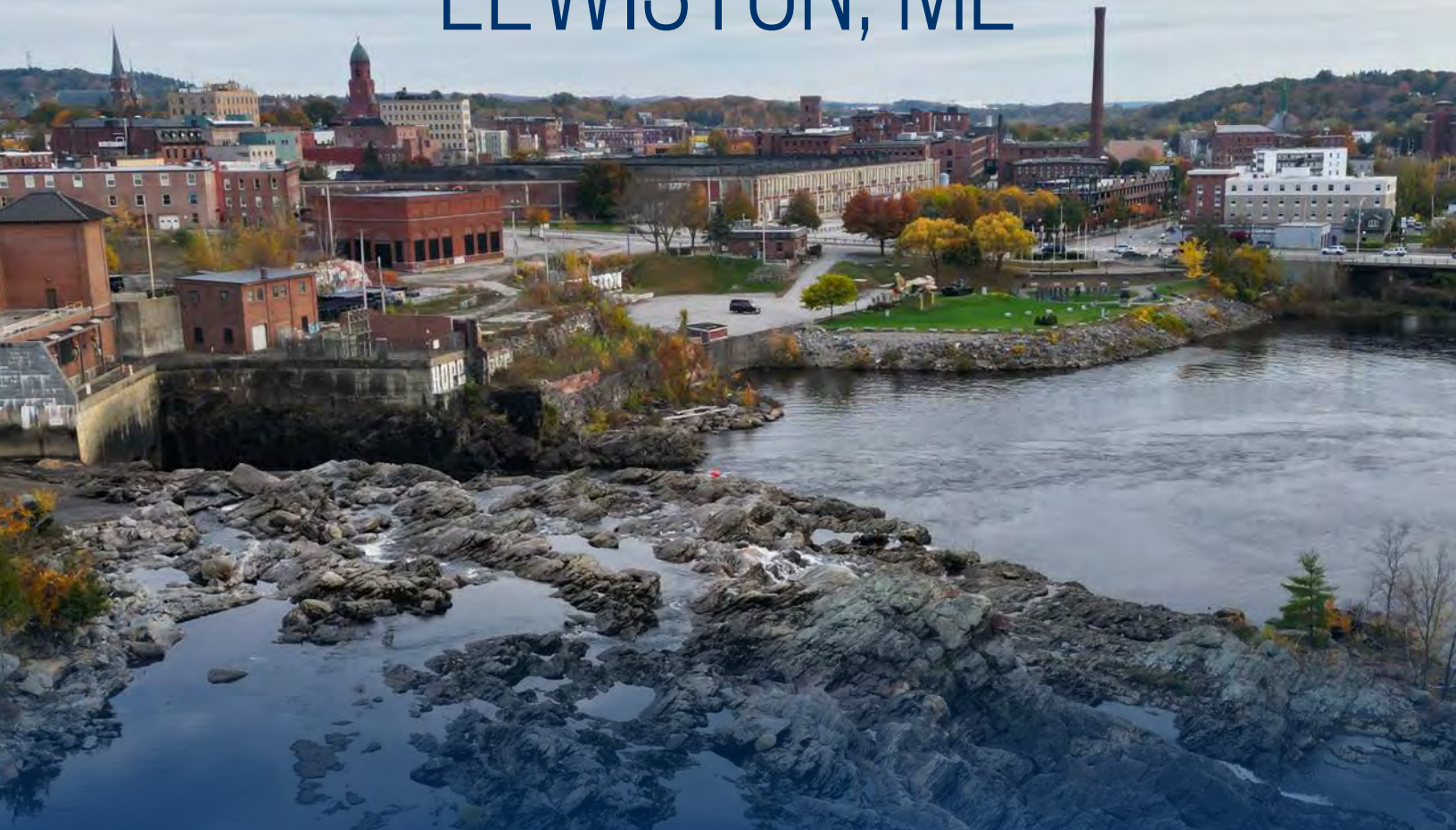


ECONOMIC RESILIENCY CASE STUDY

LEWISTON, ME



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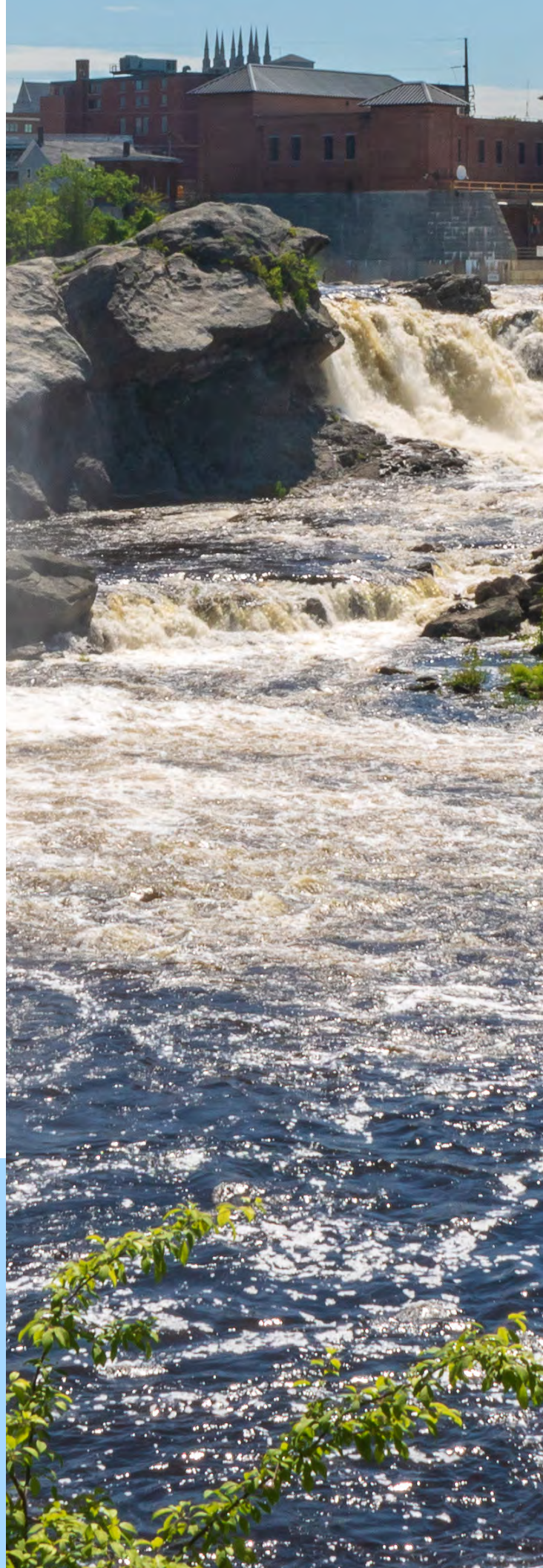
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INTRODUCTION

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

The research for this particular case study was designed to capture measures and insights to inform resilience planning for the community of **Lewiston, ME**.

This case study was informed by a review of municipal and community documents and studies, in-depth interviews with Lewiston leadership and stakeholders, and a survey of community members.

It also includes input from community engagement meetings that focused on the community's resilience-building needs and opportunities.

METHODOLOGY

INTERVIEWS were conducted with local stakeholders, community leaders, officials, and residents to gather qualitative insights into challenges, experiences, and resilience strategies in Lewiston.

This mainly involved using a holistic approach that ties economic factors with environmental, health, community, individual, and organizational prosperity and well-being. All these factors greatly contribute to economic and community resilience in Lewiston.

SURVEYS were conducted to capture the local stakeholders' perceptions and quantitative data regarding the community's state of resilience and other related factors.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS of official reports, relevant planning documents, and existing literature and studies was conducted to contextualize the state of resiliency in Lewiston. Through the analysis of existing community data, important demographic, economic, housing, infrastructural, and other data were identified and used to inform the resilience assessment.



COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Lewiston is Maine's second-largest city with a population of around 38,000 residents (2023). The city sits along the Androscoggin River at Great Falls, where early settlers built mills that used the power of the falls to run their operations. Across the Androscoggin River lies its sister city, Auburn. Lewiston is known for its close-knit community and sense of community belonging.

Although 81% of Lewiston residents identify as white, the city is more diverse than many Maine communities, with 11% identifying as Black and 4.1% identifying as two or more smaller ethnic groups. Approximately 10% were born outside of the US, and, on average, one in five residents speaks a language other than English at home.

Compared to other communities in the state, Lewiston has a younger population (median age of 37.8), while still having a significant elderly population (more than 20% of the population is over age 65).

The average annual household income in Lewiston is about \$56,500, with an average per-person income of \$30,000. Eighteen percent of its residents live below the poverty line.

LEWISTON'S CURRENT ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Lewiston's past is one of an industrial center focused primarily on textile production in the 1800s. The community has since transitioned into a much more diversified economy. Today, the primary sectors are Health Care and Social Assistance (generating over \$1 billion in receipts annually), Education, Financial Services, Precision Manufacturing, and Telecommunications and Distribution.

Lewiston's post-secondary educational institutions, including Bates College, contribute to the economy and cultural life. Retail, Accommodations, and Food Services also contribute to the city's economy, with retail sales exceeding \$464 million in 2022.

The labor force participation rate in Lewiston stands at just over 60%, consistent with national estimates for similarly sized cities. Women make up a substantial share of the workforce, representing more than half of Lewiston's civilian labor force.





COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT: LEWISTON, ME

THE PEOPLE

38,000
residents in 2023
+0.2% growth
since 2018

81%
identify as white

11%
identify as Black

10%
are foreign-born

1 in 5
speak a language
other than English
in the home

High
digital connectivity
(most residents have access to
computers and the Internet)

\$214,000
average home
value

50%
of housing units are
owner-occupied

THE ECONOMY

\$56,500
median household
income

\$30,000
per capita income

18%
poverty rate

60%
labor force
participation rate

More than half
of workers are women

**The majority
of businesses**
are owned by women,
minorities, and veterans

KEY BUSINESS SECTORS

Health Care and Social Assistance • Education • Financial Services • Precision Manufacturing
Telecommunications and Distribution • Retail, Accommodation, and Food Services

CORE RESILIENCY ISSUES

Economic vulnerability • Poverty and income inequality • Aging infrastructure
Public safety concerns • Social integration • Housing

Business ownership in the city reflects growing diversity, with women owning a large portion of the local employer firms and notable representation among minority- and veteran-owned businesses.

HOUSING AND INTERNET ACCESS

Lewiston's average home value is \$214,000, which is below the national average. Half of all housing units are owned by residents, and most residents have access to computers and the Internet, showing relatively high levels of digital connection.

URBAN CENTER INFLUENCES

Lewiston's downtown has served as Maine's urban core for many years. It contains four of Maine's five poorest US Census tracts, where nearly half of the households live below the poverty line, and most housing units are rentals. This has greatly increased housing instability, with low vacancy rates driving up rents and limiting options amid overcrowding in poorly designed, neglected buildings.

The proximity of the downtown to its sister city, Auburn, has influenced crime and economic patterns, including mall reopening effects on local retail and drug trafficking from out-of-state sources. Lead exposure in aging downtown rentals remains a public health crisis, with 40% of the state's cases occurring in the Lewiston-Auburn area, hindering workforce stability and investment.

WHAT COMMUNITY RESILIENCE MEANS TO THOSE LEADING, LIVING & WORKING IN LEWISTON

In 2025, Camoin Associates' internship team worked with local leaders, organizations, and residents to understand their perceptions of resilience, resilience-building needs, and aspirations.

The community described resiliency as not just the ability to "bounce back" but also to "bounce forward;" to learn from past hardships, build new systems of support, and foster a sense of belonging and hope for all community members.

In Lewiston, community resiliency is widely understood as the city's collective ability to recover from, adapt to, and ultimately grow stronger in the face of adversity, whether from economic shocks, public safety incidents, or other disruptions. This perception of resilience has been cultivated through both historical challenges and recent events experienced in Lewiston.

The city's history as a textile powerhouse in the 18th century exemplifies this resilience. Settlers arrived at the Androscoggin River's Great Falls and camped in the area. Early investors built dams and canals in the 1830s-1840s, which powered mills that became Maine's largest employer by the late 1800s. Most of the mills supplied the Union Army with textiles during the Civil War.

More immigrants, including the Irish, French Canadians, and later Somalis, moved into the area, fueling Lewiston's growth. However, after World War I, the city faced competition, and in the 1950s-1960s, deindustrialization led to the closure of many mills in Lewiston. This

led to job losses, the emptying of downtowns as businesses and residents moved out, and increasing poverty.

There were also cases of lead poisoning and urban decay challenges that residents overcame through community activism, like the resistance to the 2004 urban renewal demolition. These shocks fostered a "bounce forward" mindset, evident today in Lewiston's economic diversification and trauma response.

The most recent trauma event, a mass casualty shooting at Just-in-Time Recreation and Schemengees Bar and Grille, took place in October 2023. It was the worst mass shooting in Maine's history. In the *FRONTLINE* documentary series episode, "Breakdown in Maine," Robert Card, a 40-year-old Army reservist and trained grenade instructor, was identified as the shooter who claimed the lives of 18 people and wounded another 13.

The episode documents the existing systemic failures and the missed opportunities by military officials, law enforcement, and mental health providers before the tragedy occurred. It deeply affected the community and, later, led to the establishment of the Maine Resiliency Center.

This tragic mass shooting exposed critical gaps in mental health care, military oversight, law enforcement, and gun laws at many levels. Addressing the identified gaps could serve as a new, more resilient foundation for the city, including the development of prevention and response plans that are critical to achieving community resiliency in Lewiston.

HOW DOES COMMUNITY RESILIENCY CONNECT WITH ECONOMIC RESILIENCY?

Those interviewed and surveyed for this case study see economic resiliency as a vital component of overall community resiliency. City officials and relevant stakeholders acknowledge that a strong, adaptable economy is a prerequisite for the community's resiliency against critical crises (e.g., the mass shooting tragedy in 2023 and the COVID-19 pandemic) and the long-term challenges experienced in the city, such as systemic poverty and the ongoing shortage of a stable workforce.

Economic resiliency in Lewiston currently focuses on supporting local businesses and local entrepreneurs. It also helps attract new investment and diversify the economic base, and provides access to good jobs and career pathways for all residents, including immigrants, refugees, and non-English-speaking people.

The economic development initiatives in the city are intentionally related to larger resiliency goals of supporting a workforce poised for the future, entrepreneurship, and participation in the creation of a more inclusive and equitable economy.

WHAT ARE LEWISTON'S CORE RESILIENCY ISSUES?

Lewiston faces a number of resiliency issues that have affected its capacity to respond to, recover from, and adapt to community challenges. These issues are multidimensional and include various combinations of public safety, economic conditions, housing, infrastructure, social cohesion, and governance. The following section will analyze each of these issues in detail.



Public Safety and Trauma Recovery

Lewiston has recently faced public safety issues, which include the mass casualty shooting in October 2023 that seriously impacted the community negatively. The shooting made a lasting impression and spurred the timely arrival of the Maine Resiliency Center as a facility for trauma recovery, mental health services, and continuing support for the survivors, families, and issues related to the shooting.

The collaborative model of the Resiliency Center not only reflects the community's desire to develop resilience from the collective trauma and loss, but also shows how the community has come together to build resilience and create healing that will move towards a long-term commitment of support. The center's funding sustainability is uncertain because it relies heavily on federal grants, which are always limited in duration.

Interviews identified evolving drug trafficking trends and drug use in the city of Lewiston, which have concurrently led to an increase in gun violence. These combined issues have had a marked negative impact on public safety, perceptions of safety, and crime rates in the city. It is important to note that dealers



often originate outside Maine, notably from Massachusetts, but actively influence local crime dynamics.

Interviews also reveal that drug trafficking gangs are particularly targeting low-income single mothers through manipulation and coercion. Additionally, recent immigrants who are part of the vulnerable population in Lewiston have also fallen victim to these gangs.

Interviewees shared that challenges in the larger Lewiston-Auburn area often involve combinations of public safety and immigrant relations. Some of the community members noted ongoing heightened tensions following the mass shooting event in Lewiston, as well as lasting effects from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some interviewees, specifically residents, emphasized the need for better communication, particularly the need for clear and authoritative statements from official sources during crises, mainly to counter misinformation and reduce confusion caused by social media during such incidents.

A number of community organizations are still recovering from pandemic impacts, which greatly affected their ability to address ongoing safety and social integration challenges.

The residents of Lewiston also share that they continue to be deeply affected by community trauma since the mass shooting event. Residents have faced ongoing challenges processing the trauma, and they live in fear of the recurrence of such an event within the community.



Economic Challenges

Lewiston's economy has significant strengths and weaknesses. The city has a diverse and broad industrial base and a relatively low cost of living, which makes it attractive to a lot of people. Contrastingly, it also faces serious economic challenges characterized by an 18% poverty rate (one in five residents lives below the poverty line), which is higher than the national average of 12%.

Similarly, Lewiston has a declining tax base, which is largely because a significant portion of properties are non-taxable. The city also faces a limited workforce. All these challenges limit the city's ability to invest in its economic development, infrastructure, and public works. Interviewees also identified regional economic factors influencing local safety and crime patterns, including proximity to the Auburn Mall and rising housing costs. Some attributed shifts in drug trafficking and retail dynamics to the mall's sustained operations and cross-border activity from Massachusetts dealers targeting vulnerable Lewiston residents.

During the interviews, it was also established that immigrants in the city have had a positive impact on Lewiston's economic vitality through the small businesses they own and operate.

There is also a need to counter the common stereotype about the relationship between immigrants and crime.



Limited Housing and Rental Units

Lewiston is experiencing a housing crisis driven by insufficient market housing units and over-concentration of low-income and state-subsidized housing. Downtown Lewiston includes four of Maine's five poorest US Census tracts, in which almost half of households live below the poverty line (and nearly all are renters). The lingering poverty in this part of Lewiston is both a cause and an effect of the city's limited housing choices and economic opportunities.

Lewiston's rental vacancy rates often fall below state and national averages, a warning sign of a limited rental market that raises tenant rents and reduces rental choices for families desperately seeking stability.

Overcrowding and poor housing conditions are a new norm in the city of Lewiston. Many families within the city find themselves living in older buildings that have been neglected or were never improved to comply with the existing housing code. In addition to the dilapidated state of available housing and limited options, the city's supply of new housing has not kept up with demand due to numerous barriers, including land issues and other regulatory and financial disincentives.

This combination of limited developable land and little investment in new housing has forced many families into precarious housing situations where affordability and stability are threatened.

These housing issues in Lewiston have broader implications for the city's economic mobility, its ability to recruit a stable workforce, and the overall health of the community. The absence of affordable housing options, especially quality housing, limits a family's ability to move into safer and better neighborhoods or improve their housing situation and housing options.

It is important to note that a disproportionate reliance on subsidized housing may perpetuate continued poverty and limit neighborhood diversity in Lewiston. As noted, the city is supporting downtown redevelopment and

developing mixed-income units and newer affordable housing types to attract investment back to Lewiston. Still, redevelopment is slower due to financial and infrastructure capacity constraints.

In addition to the already mentioned concerns, it is striking that the city has a large number of housing units susceptible to lead poisoning. The old rental houses in Lewiston, particularly in and near downtown, have a significant rate of childhood lead exposure, which is an ongoing public health crisis. Approximately 40% of childhood lead poisoning cases in the State have occurred in the Lewiston-Auburn area, with many cases stemming from deplorable housing conditions among low-income renters.

The City has tried to address this challenge by clearing most of the units; however, many older houses remain unsafe due to lead paint and lead dust. This has greatly endangered the health and wellness of residents. This environmental health challenge has created housing instability in Lewiston and reduced the economic viability of the city.



Aging Infrastructure

Over the years, Lewiston's infrastructure has faced serious challenges, including aging transportation systems and utilities. Many of Lewiston's roads, bridges, and sidewalks are well past their due date for repair and, in some cases, total reconstruction.

Water and sewer systems are also deteriorating, leading to breakdowns and overflows during extreme weather. Public transportation has also worsened over time, making it even harder for locals without cars to access job opportunities and services.

Although broadband access and Internet connectivity have shown signs of improvement in Portland, many neighborhoods are still experiencing technology deficits, which were particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to note that the City's financial capacity is limited by a narrow tax base and competing budget priorities, making it difficult to fund infrastructure maintenance and upgrades. The City has received some federal and state grants to upgrade its infrastructure; however, these grants require local matching funds that the City does not have.

The absence of modern and reliable infrastructure will hinder Lewiston's economic growth by not attracting or supporting new businesses.



Preparedness for Future Shocks

Lewiston has displayed remarkable adaptability to recent community challenges, including public health emergencies and shared grief moments like the mass casualty shooting in October 2023. In response to the increasing frequency and complexity of risks (from climate change and extreme weather events to economic shocks and public health crises), it has become clear that necessary systems must be put in place for long-term strategic planning, which will be weighed against emerging risk factors.

In response to this, Lewiston has taken necessary steps to enhance its resilient development process by participating in state programs that bolster resilience, such as Maine's Community Resilience Partnership. This program is run by the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and Future. It seeks to provide municipalities with tools to consider and implement a range of climate mitigation and adaptation options, including energy upgrades to maximize energy efficiency, improvements to stormwater systems, and local emergency planning.

From the interviews we conducted, we established that the Community Credit Union has been promoting financial stability, which, in turn, supports broader community resilience by allowing vulnerable residents to avoid economic shocks and build long-term assets. The credit union helps residents build healthy credit and

savings and develop homeownership plans, which will help the city prepare for potential social and economic disruptions as these efforts complement investments in infrastructure and social services.

The City of Lewiston clearly values resiliency and economic resiliency because it has demonstrated this through participation in state and regional resilience programs. Lewiston has also included resilience in hazard mitigation and in relevant City planning documents, which are part of its efforts to prepare for and adapt to unprecedented future shocks. This is exemplified through:

1 | Participation in State and Regional Resilience Programs

Lewiston is an active participant in the Maine Community Resilience Partnership, which helps municipalities plan for and address challenges to climate resilience and broader resilience. The program enables local governments, like Lewiston, to assess vulnerabilities, plan for climate adaptation, and secure funding for climate-related resilience improvement projects that will foster community and economic resilience.

2 | Regional Hazard Mitigation and Emergency Planning

Lewiston is part of the Androscoggin County Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan focuses on readiness programs for unforeseen shocks and public health crises. The plans include economic resilience as a key focus, targeting protective measures to sustain infrastructure and services during shocks, as well as recovery strategies for post-disruption periods.

3 | City Planning and Economic Development

Lewiston's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) and economic development strategies focus on and discuss the need for a stable tax base, local business support, and infrastructure investment, all key aspects related to economic resilience. The City's planning documents reference the need for diversification in this regard to address workforce issues and to account for economic downturns.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCY PREPAREDNESS IN LEWISTON

Over the past few years, the City of Lewiston has embraced a multifaceted approach to building local economic and community resiliency, addressing both immediate and long-term challenges. As part of that effort, it has made appropriate plans, established partnerships, and launched targeted initiatives to build economic and community resilience.

COMPREHENSIVE AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

The City's comprehensive plan, Legacy Lewiston, integrates resilience as a key principle that addresses sustainable development, land use, infrastructure investment, and community wellbeing, while also addressing environmental stewardship, social equity, and future risk preparedness.

SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND INITIATIVES

The City of Lewiston has established relevant committees to boost resilience among its residents. Committees such as the Energy Saving Committee work on sustainability and environmental projects in the city. A number of initiatives, such as community engagement, think tanks, and volunteer groups, have also been adopted to help boost resilience.

The Transformation Action Group (TAG) was also discussed in our interviews as a co-creative framework in which the city and community organizations can identify challenges together and set objectives. This network has strengthened communication between grassroots initiatives and the local municipal government. There is also determination in Lewiston to connect with local schools and workforce training organizations to expand community integration efforts.

TRAUMA RECOVERY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

The Maine Resiliency Center, located in Lewiston, offers a number of social support services, including trauma-informed counseling, support groups, and community resources. The One Lewiston Resiliency Fund, established by the City and the Lewiston-Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, will support long-term healing and economic recovery for those affected by the mass casualty shooting in 2023.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Lewiston is included in the Androscoggin County Hazard Mitigation Plan, which fosters cooperation between regional partners to identify hazards, rank mitigation strategies, and collaborate on emergency readiness plans.

SOCIAL EQUITY AND ENGAGEMENT

Resiliency planning emphasizes community input with socially equitable processes, focusing on affordable housing, green and healthy homes, improved transportation, and broadband access.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND STRATEGIC INVESTMENT

The economic expansion strategies adopted by the city of Lewiston promote diversifying the local economy, assisting small business growth, and investing in infrastructure to attract new employers while retaining existing talent.

The City's planning documents indicate that a stable tax base and workforce development are prerequisites for the economic protection of the city during times of economic uncertainty.

The Community Credit Union in Lewiston is a good example of an organization that has taken the initiative to diversify and strengthen

the local economy. They mainly focus their services on residents who have been historically marginalized and excluded from financial services. By offering culturally relevant and innovative alternative financial products and financial education, the credit union helps residents access economic growth and investment opportunities in Lewiston.

GRANT FUNDING AND EXTERNAL SUPPORT

The City of Lewiston has secured federal and state grants that support economic and community resilience, including funding for behavioral health, trauma recovery, and infrastructure improvements.

PARTICIPATION IN STATE RESILIENCE PROGRAMS

Lewiston is an active member and participant in the Maine Community Resilience Partnership program, which allows it to access funding and technical assistance for climate adaptation, hazard mitigation, and economic resilience projects from the State of Maine.


PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION


Lewiston has embraced an approach that centers on partnerships with local organizations, non-profits, and the business community, with an aim of fostering innovation and generating additional resources for resilience projects.


COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

IS THE CITY OF LEWISTON APPROPRIATELY PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR FUTURE CRISES?

In Lewiston, there is a general consensus among residents, leadership, and community stakeholders that the City is taking proactive steps to plan and prepare for unprecedented future shocks. They all recognize that resilience is an ongoing process that requires continuous adaptation and improvement, exemplified by:

 The City of Lewiston has a comprehensive plan, Legacy Lewiston, as well as other strategic plans/documents that emphasize the growth of the city, development of infrastructure, and community well-being while anchoring all this to resiliency. Residents and other key stakeholders regularly participate in forums and discussions where they provide relevant input and feedback on the planning documents. This, in turn, ensures that resilience remains a central and evolving area of focus in Lewiston.

 The City has various committees, such as the Energy Saving Committee, which address resilience and sustainability from different perspectives. Moreover, the City is actively engaged in the Androscoggin County Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Maine Community Resilience Partnership, demonstrating the intention to integrate local actions with regional and state-level progress.

 The City of Lewiston has been notably successful in obtaining federal and state grants for trauma recovery, behavioral health, infrastructure, and climate adaptation funding, which demonstrates its proactive leadership and ability to attract and leverage external resources.

Some of our interviewees also expressed interest in the link between health, energy efficiency, and housing quality in Lewiston. They believe weatherization will enhance housing conditions, which will, in turn, improve residents' health.

Residents also described how the City is supporting environmental reviews and the setting up of affordable, eco-friendly homes. This initiative is crucial to Lewiston's resiliency planning because it addresses foundational issues such as baseline economics, education, poverty reduction, and homelessness.

From the interviews, we established that a number of residents are aware that energy projects are a key part of achieving Lewiston's resiliency strategy. They expressed the need for initiatives that reduce the overall energy costs while still contributing to the city's economic growth.

During some interviews, residents also highlighted the local government's role in fostering economic resiliency through programs such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and tax increment financing (TIF).

Even with the above measures, which are all vital, City officials and community members need to realize that resilience will not happen overnight or even in one lifetime. Resilience is built gradually over time. There are long-standing limitations in funding, staffing, and infrastructure that remain unresolved. This implies that preparedness strategies need to be viewed as living documents that can be revised and prioritized to meet the community's needs.



WHAT MORE WOULD THEY LIKE TO SEE DONE?

In the interviews, people expressed a need for more funding and investment to promote and strengthen both community and economic resilience. According to recent statewide and local initiatives, the City aims to build on its current efforts in several key ways:



Increased Funding and Grant Support for Resilience Projects

Maine's Community Resilience Partnership has distributed over \$15.8 million in funding since 2021 to help advance climate adaptation, emissions reductions, and resilience projects throughout Maine, including in Lewiston.

Local leaders want ongoing and expanded funding to conduct additional infrastructure, stormwater, and emergency preparedness projects to help reduce vulnerabilities related to extreme storms, flooding, and climate change impacts. The new State laws directing tens of millions of dollars to the area for climate resilience—including grants for homeowners, rebuilding infrastructure projects, early warning systems, among others, and flood modeling—represent a growing commitment to supporting climate resilience projects. Lewiston would benefit from continued investment in turning these funding opportunities into local and community-level actions.

Some of the key investors we interviewed are keen to acquire and renovate properties to add 20 additional housing units over the next 3–5 years to help curb the shortage of affordable, eco-friendly housing units. This will be possible through the sale of currently owned units, which will generate funds for this project. Part of the funds will come from philanthropy and loans from key partners, including the Sewell Foundation (for the first phase) and the Genesis Fund (for the second phase).



Broader Public Engagement and Inclusion

Community members have expressed the need for a more inclusive community engagement program. This is meant to ensure resiliency strategies are inclusive and address the needs of all populations, including historically underserved populations. This includes improving access to transportation and broadband, affordable and eco-friendly housing, and working collectively with local organizations, agencies, and nonprofits to build trust and a collective commitment to engaging the community.

Community engagement and involvement of family members prior to the mass shooting would have also been key in preventing this unfortunate occurrence. Family members and close contact community members should be empowered with resources and safe channels to report any concerning behavior from gun holders.

During the interviews, respondents identified Lewiston's multilingual and literacy challenges as a significant barrier to effective communication within the city. Outreach in Lewiston's Somali community is particularly challenging due to high illiteracy rates in both English and the Somali language. There is a need for grassroots, community-based organizations and municipal collaboration to improve outreach and community engagement, which will help tackle misinformation and racism.

The Transformation Action Group (TAG) was also discussed as a co-creative framework where the City and community organizations can identify challenges together and set objectives. This network has strengthened communication between grassroots initiatives and the local municipal government. There is also determination in Lewiston to connect with local schools and workforce training organizations to expand community integration efforts.



Greater Economic Diversification and Workforce Development

Community stakeholders understand that economic resiliency is only possible with a diverse and stable economy and workers who are well-trained. They would like to see targeted investments that attract new sectors, increase support for small businesses, and improve vocational and technical training; and this can help buffer the local economy from shocks and promote better economic resiliency in the community.

Some of the people we interviewed emphasized the need for youth development as a vital component of economic resilience. They advocated for leadership and innovation-focused entrepreneurship over traditional business models. They also linked youth development to economic development and noted a significant shift in economic priorities toward housing, transportation, and childcare as essential factors for workforce stability.



Integration of Resilience into All Aspects of Planning

The residents of Lewiston have recognized the need to integrate resilience principles across all forms of City planning, from land use and housing policies to infrastructure and emergency management, so that the city can adapt dynamically to changing risks and capitalize on emerging funding opportunities.

Some of the interviewees suggested trauma centers and a community-wide trauma response plan, which would lead to better preparedness in case of such occurrences in the future. They also emphasized the need for ongoing outreach to community members indirectly affected by traumatic events.



Amendment of Relevant Laws and Policies

Another key aspect of resiliency planning that could have been initiated prior to the mass shooting event is the streamlining of Maine's unique "yellow flag" gun law, which has a lot of legal steps and evaluations before a firearms permit can be revoked for a person who is deemed dangerous. Having a more flexible and streamlined process, like "red flag" laws in other states, could give law enforcement officers stronger preventive tools, which in turn may prevent such incidents from recurring.

It is also crucial to have proper and clear coordination between law enforcement and military authorities for the removal and restrictions of weapons from persons deemed to pose a danger to others.



Clear and Proper Lines of Communication

An additional factor that may have helped prevent the mass shooting incident is clearer lines of communication between the identified stakeholders. Open and trusted communications between law enforcement, military, mental health representatives, families, and community groups regarding concerns are essential when it comes to sharing critical, emerging information and developing an agreed-upon plan to intervene rapidly. It should be noted that preparedness for resilience primarily involves establishing and sustaining clear communication and working relationships to avoid isolated failures that lead to catastrophic consequences.

WHAT RESOURCES AND SUPPORT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL?

Lewiston’s pursuit of community and economic resilience can be greatly enhanced with targeted support and resources in several key areas. According to City planning documents, recent public input, and statewide strategy reports, these are the resources and types of support Lewiston can most use:



Expanded Grant Funding and Financial Assistance

Infrastructure Resilience Grants: Funding is urgently needed for stormwater drainage management, flood mitigation, transportation improvements, and utility upgrades to enhance the city’s preparedness for climate-related extreme weather events and chronic hazards.

Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Funding: With these funds, households will have easy access to affordable and sustainable housing options that will also enable them to address outdated infrastructure in low-income neighborhoods.



Inclusive Community Engagement Resources

Programs for Public Participation: Strengthen ongoing efforts to develop and sustain inclusive community engagement programs that reach historically underserved groups in Lewiston and ensure their needs are reflected in the current City resilience planning.



Technical Assistance for Planning and Implementation

Climate Adaptation Planning: Lewiston needs expert guidance in resiliency and planning to better integrate climate resilience across key policies and services, including land use, zoning, housing, transportation, and emergency response and preparedness.



Regional and Cross-Sectoral Partnerships

Collaborative Networks: By forming stronger partnerships among City agencies, local non-profit organizations, regional planning groups, and State government, Lewiston can help share best practices, leverage expertise, and pursue joint funding.

Effective resilience also demands seamless coordination among respective agencies. The mass shooting incident may have been prevented if the involved agencies—i.e., the police, military commanders, mental health providers, and courts—had developed a joint information sharing plan and undertaken joint training for management of unforeseen threats.



Mental Health Awareness and Treatment

It is important that Lewiston ensure proactive mental health intervention. According to the aforementioned *FRONTLINE* documentary about the 2023 mass shooting, early detection and ongoing monitoring of persons who display severe psychological symptoms, paranoia, or violent tendencies must be prioritized in order to avoid such incidents from recurring.

It is also important to provide accessible and consistent mental health treatment while involving key stakeholders like close family members, respective military units (if any) or employers, and law enforcement.

WHO DO THEY /WOULD THEY LOOK TO FOR RESOURCES?

The City of Lewiston has relied on a broad network of funding sources to support its immediate and long-term resilience efforts. These entities include local, regional, state, federal, and nonprofit organizations.

These entities are not limited to providing funds; they also offer technical assistance, crisis response, planning, and essential community services that aid in building resilience. Some of the key partners and resource providers include:



Local Non-Profit Organizations and Community Agencies

In Lewiston, there are several non-profits and community agencies that operate resiliency centers. Community Concepts, a non-profit, runs a community resiliency center that offers housing, economic development, and community support programs aimed at building resiliency.

Non-profits and community agencies in Lewiston also build resilience by partnering in emergency responses and actively participating in workforce development initiatives within the city.

We also learned from the interviews that the City has had strong community networks, a sign of the strong personal relationships between organizations. These relationships, however, have been hindered by funding limitations. Collaborations have mainly focused on housing and public safety.

Key stakeholders plan to counter this by conducting site visits and further engaging with financial institutions, including initiatives to establish connections with Credit Unions, to bolster community initiatives.



Regional Organizations

Regional organizations like the **Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG)** play a vital role in promoting resiliency in Lewiston by providing key services and technical support for the Maine Community Resilience Partnership, including support in grant applications and project coordination to advance community resiliency.

The **Androscoggin County Emergency Management Agency (ACEMA)** provides services in Lewiston, assisting communities with disaster preparedness, vulnerability assessments, federal grant access, hazard mitigation planning, and regional emergency response coordination.



State Government Initiatives

The City of Lewiston is enrolled in the Maine Community Resilience Partnership, which receives grants, technical assistance, and climate adaptation guidance from the State.

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services also supports the Lewiston community through long-term trauma recovery and mental health services.



Federal Agencies

The US Department of Justice and Office for Victims of Crime have played an important role in building resiliency in Lewiston by providing grant funding supporting the Maine Resiliency Center, which supports trauma recovery and long-term community healing.

Hazard mitigation grants and technical support for disaster recovery from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have also helped build resilience in Lewiston.

From the interviews conducted, the respondents acknowledged that the FBI's emergency victim response team played a critical role following the mass shooting; however, they were faced with logistical constraints (e.g., limitations on resource center locations) that limited their response.



Philanthropic Organizations and Cross-Sector Funding

Philanthropic organizations have also played a role in building resiliency in Lewiston by funding some of these initiatives and providing technical support. The Maine Community Foundation is one notable philanthropic organization that administers the Lewiston-Auburn Area Response Fund, which supports victims, families, and other recovery efforts that seek to build resilience.

Cross-sector funding for resiliency projects has also been seen in Lewiston through the One Lewiston Resilience Fund, a collaboration between the City of Lewiston and the Lewiston-Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. It pools private donations and distributes funds for resiliency and recovery within Lewiston.



SUMMARY & LESSONS LEARNED

From this case study, we can conclude that the City of Lewiston has demonstrated that building community resilience needs a holistic approach that includes housing, economic, public safety, and environmental planning.

The strengthening of multi-sector and community-level collaborative partnerships is also key to achieving resiliency in any community.

To build resilience, targeted investments are needed to break down existing structural barriers in the community. Building resilience requires long-term strategic planning and ongoing awareness of the local context, which prepares communities to face future challenges.

Some of the lessons learned include:

1 | THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Economic challenges experienced in Lewiston, such as high poverty rates, a limited workforce, and declining tax revenue, have a direct negative impact on community resilience.

A stable workforce and availability of job opportunities, consistent income, and the availability of affordable housing are key factors in achieving economic and community resilience.

Addressing economic resilience through diversification, supporting small businesses, and investing in infrastructure should go hand in hand with addressing social determinants such as housing and public health, which affect community resilience.

2 | AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS CENTRAL TO ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Lewiston has a housing crisis marked by factors such as scarce affordable housing units, underprivileged neighborhoods, overcrowded neighborhoods, and neighborhoods that have poor, dilapidated infrastructure. All these factors have intensified economic vulnerability in the city and greatly hindered mobility.

The availability of more quality and affordable housing is necessary to resolve this and attract

and retain a stable workforce. This will, in turn, support overall community wellbeing and create economic opportunities. All of this will be possible when barriers such as land availability, regulatory hurdles, and financial disincentives are addressed.



3 | ADAPTABILITY IN THE FACE OF EMERGENCIES AND TRAUMA

Lewiston has demonstrated a strong sense of community unity and resilience when responding to challenges such as the 2023 mass casualty shooting and other public health emergencies. From this, we can see

that trauma recovery and behavioral health services funded by public, philanthropic, and federal resources are essential to building social resilience and collective healing.

4 | THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC AND INCLUSIVE PLANNING

Participating in State and regional resiliency programs allows local communities to participate in strategic and inclusive schemes. Lewiston has participated in these programs through Maine's Community Resiliency

Partnership and Androscoggin County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Such commitment allows local communities to design plans that suit their needs and help them prepare for unexpected risks.

5 | THE NEED TO LEVERAGE EXTERNAL RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Lewiston's ability to implement resilience projects has been greatly enhanced by access to grants from federal and state governments and also philanthropy (Maine Community Foundation). This shows us that public-private

partnerships and technical support enhance community-led initiatives by providing vital financial and operational resources.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

In order for Lewiston to effectively achieve both economic and community resilience, the following steps are offered for consideration and long-term planning:

1 | ADDRESS HOUSING INSTABILITY INDIRECTLY

To achieve economic and community resilience, the City of Lewiston should expand its housing options, including adding more market-rate and mixed-income units. This will balance the concentration of low-income housing options and attract a new workforce into the city.

For this to be effective, the City will have to streamline its zoning policies in order to enable

the construction of new eco-friendly, affordable houses. The City also needs to partner with non-profit organizations and other developers in order to create incentives and financing tools for the development of affordable and quality housing.

2 | STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

The strengthening and diversification of economic opportunities in Lewiston will be achieved by providing grants, microloans, and technical assistance to small-scale businesses, startups, and entrepreneurs. Economic diversification can also be achieved by investing in workforce training, especially for

underprivileged populations in Lewiston, and by collaborating with key regional stakeholders and educational institutions to align skills training with current job-market needs.

3 | ENSURE INCLUSIVE CROSS-SECTOR PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

To build resilience, it is vital to expand participation in state and regional resilience efforts (e.g., the Community Resilience Partnership and hazard mitigation planning). This can be achieved by forming cross-sector working groups that include residents, local businesses, nonprofits, and city officials to coordinate initiatives.

While doing all this, it is important to prioritize equity and inclusion in all resilience actions by engaging historically marginalized groups in decision-making processes.

4 | INVEST IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

In Lewiston, there is a need to upgrade stormwater and other key infrastructure in energy, stormwater management, and transportation to enhance functional resilience and support climate change adaptation. This

will promote energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. The City of Lewiston also needs to embed climate mitigation and preparedness in all of its planning efforts.

5 | FOSTER SOCIAL COHESION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

To attain both economic and community resilience, Lewiston needs to create and support strong neighborhood organizations and cultural initiatives that deepen social ties

and community identity. Residents also need to be involved in events and forums where they can share their views and contribute directly to resilience planning.



WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR ANY OTHER COMMUNITY SEEKING TO PLAN FOR AND PREPARE FOR ECONOMIC RESILIENCY?

Based on the findings from this case study, any community aiming to achieve, plan for, and enhance economic resiliency should integrate the following recommendations, not in isolation but as interconnected parts of a holistic approach. This will enable the respective community to withstand, recover from, and adapt to economic and environmental shocks.



Invest in Comprehensive and Affordable Housing Solutions

This will be possible by ensuring a mix of affordable and market-rate housing options that prevent the concentration of residents in poor neighborhoods. This will also help in promoting stable and inclusive neighborhoods, which set the foundation for attaining economic and community resilience.

Communities also need to remove regulatory barriers and provide incentives for the development of new infrastructure, including affordable housing. The availability of affordable market-rate housing options contributes to workforce stability and the attraction of new residents.



Diversify the Local Economy

Communities that support small-scale businesses and entrepreneurship in sectors with growth potential are often better able to retain a stable workforce and create a diversified local economy. Economic diversification makes a community less vulnerable to sector-specific downturns and opens it to innovation, which helps build resilience.



Develop a Comprehensive and Inclusive Resilience Plan

Communities need to integrate economic resilience principles into all areas of City planning. Some of the areas to include in City planning are land use, infrastructure development, and economic development.

These plans need to be updated frequently, taking into account residents' input and suggestions.

All members of the community need to be involved to ensure that plans and policies set up and adopted are inclusive, responsive, and reflect the real needs of the community.



Build Strong Partnerships and Collaborative Networks

By fostering collaboration among relevant and diverse government agencies, local nonprofits, businesses, and other key stakeholders, they can increase their access to technical expertise, resources, and funding, thereby strengthening the community's planning and response to unprecedented shocks.



Invest in Infrastructure and Digital Connectivity

Prioritizing upgrades to transportation, utilities, broadband, public facilities, and other key infrastructure supports both economic activity and the community's response to disruptions such as severe weather and economic downturns.

It is important to understand that economic resiliency rests on a foundation of **inclusive planning, economic diversity, continuous learning, strategic partnerships, and equitable investment**. Communities that take a proactive and inclusive approach usually achieve long-term and sustainable resilience.



WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TO SOMEONE CONDUCTING ADDITIONAL CASE STUDIES?

Anyone conducting additional case studies on economic or community resilience, whether in the City of Lewiston or any other community, should adopt the following recommendations:



Apply Mixed-Methods and Participatory Research

The researcher may consider having members of the community directly involved as co-researchers in the study, working on design, data collection and/or analysis. Doing so may allow the researcher to obtain knowledge and data that would likely be lost if they used the traditional approach, as in this case study. The researcher may also consider using creative qualitative tools that do not depend on data, as opposed to traditional qualitative tools.



Emphasize Failure and Adaptation

Researchers may want to document failed interventions and include them in the study because the analysis of resilience strategies that did not work, why they failed, and how communities learned and adapted, fosters a more nuanced view of the resilience journey.



Adopt a Place-Based, Intersectional Lens

Instead of focusing on the broader community, the researcher can zoom in on “micro-communities” within it. They can focus on specific communities and subgroups within those communities, such as immigrant enclaves or faith-based groups, to examine how unique histories and contexts shape each group’s resilience narrative.



Evaluate the Role of Technology and Media

Researchers need to understand and embrace the media’s role in today’s world. Researchers need to assess the roles and functions of social media, digital networks, and emerging technologies in community organizing, information sharing, and crisis response, with a focus on building resilience.

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APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND SURVEY

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Name of Person(s)	Organization/ Affiliation	Role/Relevance to Case Study
Julia Sleeper	Tree Street Youth	Community leader/ youth advocate
Anne Jordan	Community Advocate/ Local Leader	Resident and civic voice
Julia Harper and Amy Smith	Healthy HomeWorks	Non-profit leaders in housing and health
Betsy Sibley	Community Credit Union	Financial institution representative
John Blaise	City of Lewiston	Municipal official
Nate Libby	City of Lewiston	City leader in Lewiston/ policy maker
Jason Levesque	Investor/City of Lewiston	Local investor and policy actor

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey used to collect some of the information in this report was conducted to obtain varied perspectives from stakeholders involved in Lewiston’s community and economic resiliency efforts.

The primary objective was to provide us with a more informed understanding of local issues, reflect on resiliency planning and processes, identify constraints to resiliency planning implementation, and identify inputs needed to achieve resiliency and community capacity to sustain it. The information we have obtained

will contribute to ongoing efforts to create capacity in Lewiston to anticipate, respond, and recover from social, economic, environmental, and public safety disruptions.

Respondent Profile

The respondents were municipal leaders, elected officials, nonprofit directors, business proprietors, community organizers, and residents. This diversity of respondents mirrors Lewiston's multi-sector approach to resilience-building, acknowledging that public institutions, private businesses, and civic organizations are each vital components in achieving sustainable community development and an equitable recovery.

Key Areas of Concern

From the survey we conducted, stakeholders noted various interconnected issues that threaten resilience in Lewiston. Economic vulnerabilities stemming from the loss of major employers negatively affect small businesses, as respondents regularly mentioned.

Public safety and crime, especially in the wake of recent violence, constituted one of the most pressing issues, along with the lack of affordable housing and suitable infrastructure, particularly transportation and the utility system. Access to health and social services, climate-related environmental risks, and general emergency preparedness were also significant issues raised from the survey.

Resiliency Planning Experience

Existing plans in Lewiston explicitly present multiple dimensions of resilience, including economic development, public safety strategies, social and health services support, infrastructure improvement, emergency management protocols, and hazard communication. The broad scope covered by these plans demonstrates that the City views resilience as a holistic endeavor.

Perceptions of Resiliency Planning

While the perception of the City's resilience efforts is generally moderate to positive, there are some concerns regarding the ability of City management to be transparent, communicate effectively, and listen to a variety of voices from the community. Participants described resilience work as a process of being active, adaptable, and engaged in continuous improvement, supported by strong community and stakeholder engagement.

Implementation Challenges

During the survey, participants consistently identified limited funding, specialized expertise, and political will as major barriers to full implementation of existing resilience plans. Economic and public safety initiatives were rated among the most difficult to operationalize. Other challenges mentioned included complicated coordinated emergency responses, the delivery of social services, infrastructure investment, and active community engagement.

Skills and Training Needed

Respondents suggested that the community would benefit most from training in: crisis and risk communication; mental health first aid; climate adaptation techniques; grant writing and management; and collaborative leadership fostering cultural competence. Integrating technical competencies with social and cultural sensitivity was underscored as essential to effective resilience-building.

To sum it all up, many respondents emphasized that relationship-building, trust, and community collaboration are just as important as infrastructure and policy mechanisms. They all agree that resilience planning is a continuous process of healing social wounds and building institutional capacity. The respondents called for more inter-agency coordination, better communication channels, and greater grassroots engagement on resilience issues.

APPENDIX C: DATA PROFILE

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Measure	Data Source	Lewiston (2023 ACS 5-Year)
Population	ACS 5-Year	37,886
Population change over the previous 5 years	ACS 5-Year	+0.2%
Labor force participation rate	ACS 5-Year	60.1%
Unemployment rate	ACS 5-Year	5.6%
Gini coefficient of income inequality	ACS 5-Year, Table B19083	0.45
% of population below poverty line	ACS 5-Year	17.7% (±2.9%)
Household median income	ACS 5-Year	\$56,558 (±\$3,779)
Median Age	ACS 5-Year	37.8 years (±1.5)

EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION INDICATORS

Measure	Data Source	Lewiston (2023 ACS 5-Year)
Total Employment	Maine Dept. of Labor (local)	18,500
Change in Total Employment in the past 5 years %	Maine Dept. of Labor	+2.2%
Population over 25 with bachelor's degree or more %	ACS 5-Year	21.7% (±2.0%)
Population with high school degree or higher %	ACS 5-Year	89.8% (±3.7%)

HEALTH AND DISABILITY INDICATORS

Measure	Data Source	Lewiston (2023 ACS 5-Year)
Physicians per capita	ACS 5-Year	1.1 per 1,000 people
Population with a disability	ACS 5-Year	13.2%
Population without health insurance	ACS 5-Year	7.6%

HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE INDICATORS

Measure	Data Source	Lewiston (2023 ACS 5-Year)
Owner-occupied housing units	ACS 5-Year	50.3% (±2.0%)
Renter-occupied housing units	ACS 5-Year	50.5% (±2.0%)
Housing units unoccupied (excluding seasonal/recreational)	ACS 5-Year	4% (±2.0%)
Households with access to broadband internet service	ACS 5-Year	83.4%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units	ACS 5-Year	\$214,200 (±\$9,031)
Number of households	ACS 5-Year	15,753 (±474)
Persons per household	ACS 5-Year	2.2 (±0.1)

Primary Source: Census Reporter, Lewiston, ME, profile (ACS 2019-2023 5-year), <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US2338740-lewiston-me/>.

It is important to note that some indicators are not shown on the profile summary page at the link provided and require extraction from specific ACS tables (e.g., B19083 for Gini, B28002 for broadband access, S2301 for labor force/unemployment, and B27010 or S2701 for health insurance).