SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

From Courthouse to Community

The Ellsworth Courthouse Relocation, the Merrill Lane Extension, and the choices ahead

City of Ellsworth · 1 City Hall Plaza · October 5, 2026



Architect's rendering of the new Hancock County Judicial Center

Tonight's agenda

1	**Charlie Pearce** City Manager	Project background and public policy considerations	**15 min**	0:00–0:15
2	**Mike Harris** Public Works Director	Road work to date and courthouse coordination	**10 min**	0:15–0:25
3	**Sara Devlin** Deputy City Manager	Costs to date	**5 min**	0:25–0:30
4	**Chris Nemeth** Chief Financial Officer	Financing: the 2026 bond and TIF payback Scenarios	**5 min**	0:30–0:35
5	**Twila Fisher** Community Development Director	Economic development and the Central Corridor TIF	**10 min**	0:35–0:45
6	**Sara Devlin** Deputy City Manager · **ACTION ITEM**	Merrill Lane Extension RFP and staff recommendation	**10 min**	0:45–0:55

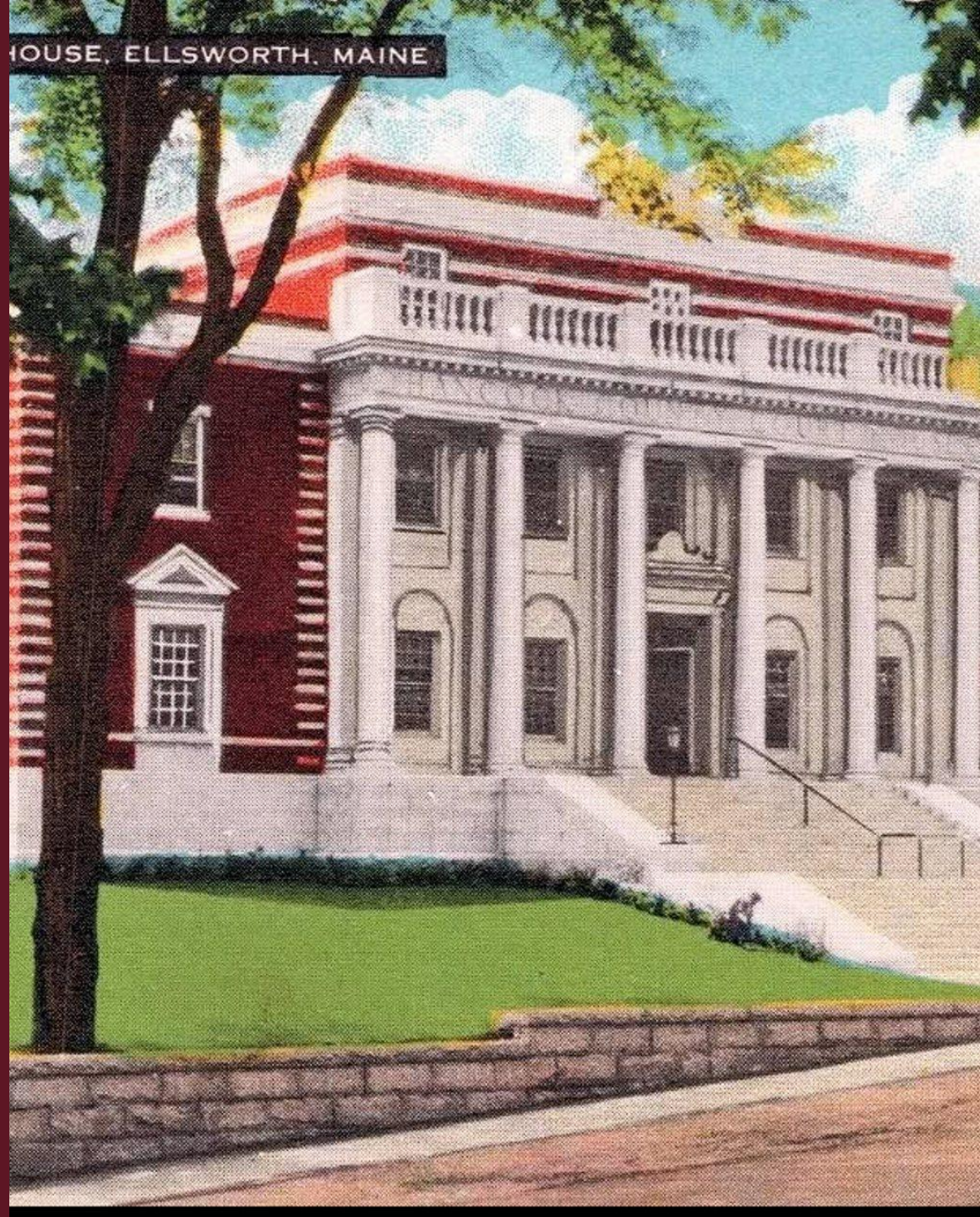
PART 1 OF 6

Charlie Pearce

City Manager

Project background and public policy considerations

15 MINUTES



A generational problem, and an opportunity

PEARCE · 15 MIN

THE PROBLEM

In 2024 the State Judiciary purchased land in a Surry Road neighborhood zone for a new, approximately $55 million courthouse. Residents and City officials questioned whether that location fit the neighborhood — and the city's future.

The City had three paths

Accept

the Surry Road proposal

Moratorium

the project

Partner

with the State on an alternative

COUNCIL'S CHOICE

Context: The Hancock County Judicial Center was the State's highest-priority courthouse replacement. LD 2090, presented by Ellsworth's Senator Nicole Grohoski, authorized the financing.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Relocate development to the Urban Core to:

- Unlock development potential
- Increase commercial and housing opportunities
- Expand the tax base
- Increase quality-of-life recreational opportunities

QUALITY OF LIFE AT THE DOORSTEP

87 miles

Down East Sunrise Trail: ATV, hiking, biking

20 miles

to Acadia National Park

Walkable

to the nationally designated historic downtown

Two centuries of courthouse decisions

PEARCE · 15 MIN



1834

Bridge Hill

County government moves from Castine. The buildings later serve as city hall and are now the Courthouse Art Gallery.


The Bangor Daily News

BANGOR, MAINE, SATURDAY MORNING, MARCH 15, 1930

Destroys Hancock County Court Ho

emen Killed When Collapsing Cupola Hurls Four Men to Bas

Japan Agreement rly Complete

Welfare Workers Express Views On Prohibition

Fine Old Building Goes Up in Smoke

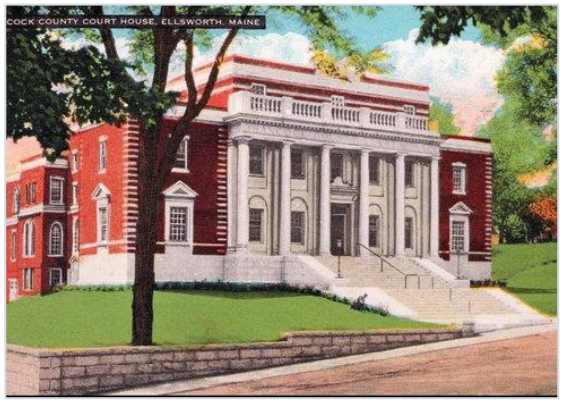
County Officials Estimate the Will Be $

Mayor Walker And Communist Leaders Meet

1880s–1930

State Street

A courthouse and jail complex rises near new downtown commerce, until fire destroys it in 1930.



Early 1930s

Rebuilt courthouse

Rebuilt on the same site, it serves for nearly a century but was built for a different era.



2028

New Judicial Center

A modern facility designed for the next century of court operations.

Each generation built for the needs it knew, and left the next to maintain, adapt or replace it.

Community/Council opposition

PEARCE · 15 MIN

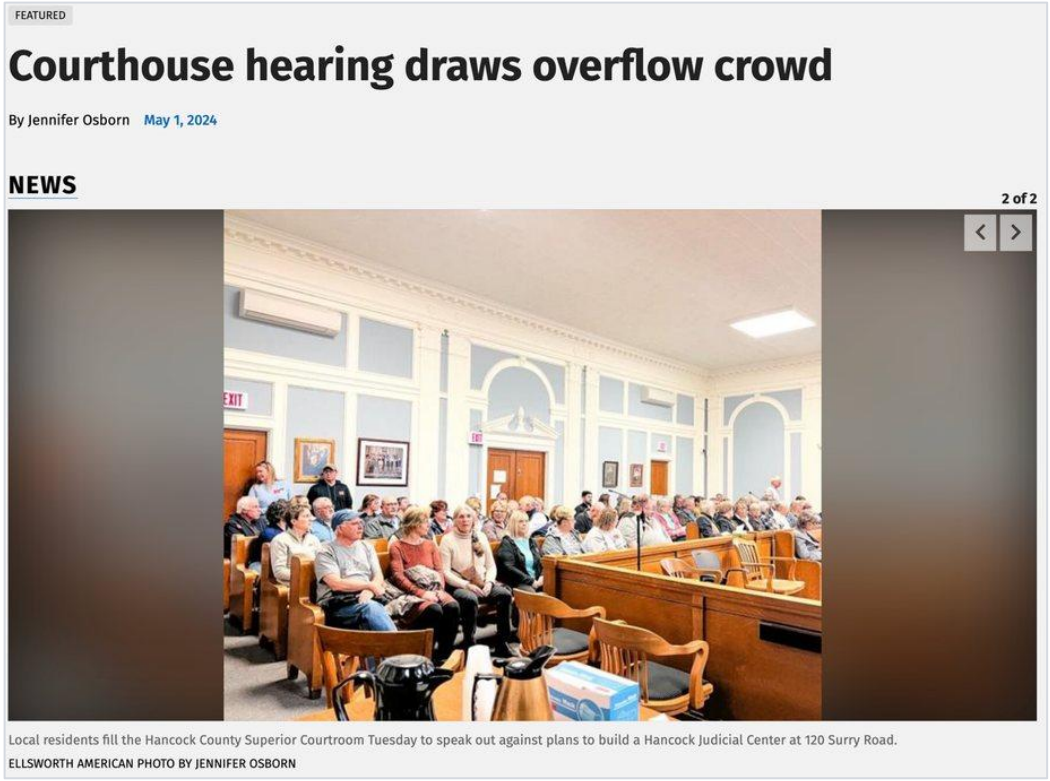
Fall 2023 City staff at the time confirm the State can use a neighborhood-zone site under its public-institution exemption. No community or Council discussion follows.

March 2024 The State purchases the Surry Road parcel.

April 30, 2024 Hundreds attend a meeting with Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill: traffic, parking, safety and commercial pressure on a residential area.

Spring 2024 Council directs outreach to the Judiciary. To its credit, the Judiciary agrees to reconsider.

"A permissible use and a desirable long-term location were treated as the same question. They were not."



FEATURED

Courthouse hearing draws overflow crowd

By Jennifer Osborn May 1, 2024

NEWS

2 of 2

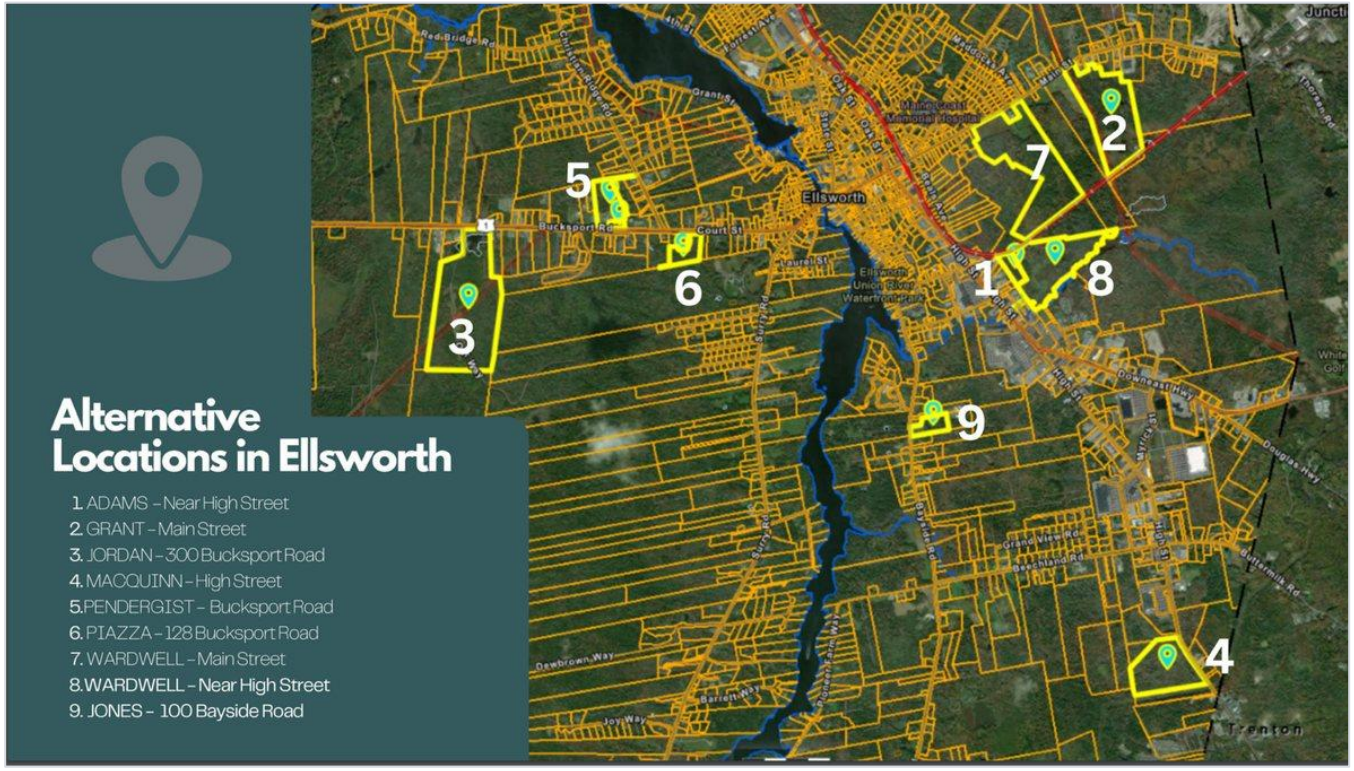
Local residents fill the Hancock County Superior Courtroom Tuesday to speak out against plans to build a Hancock Judicial Center at 120 Surry Road.

ELLSWORTH AMERICAN PHOTO BY JENNIFER OSBORN

Public turnout during the debate over the Surry Road location, as reported in the Ellsworth American.

An open, public search for a better site

PEARCE · 15 MIN



Alternative locations around Ellsworth's Urban Core considered during the public search.

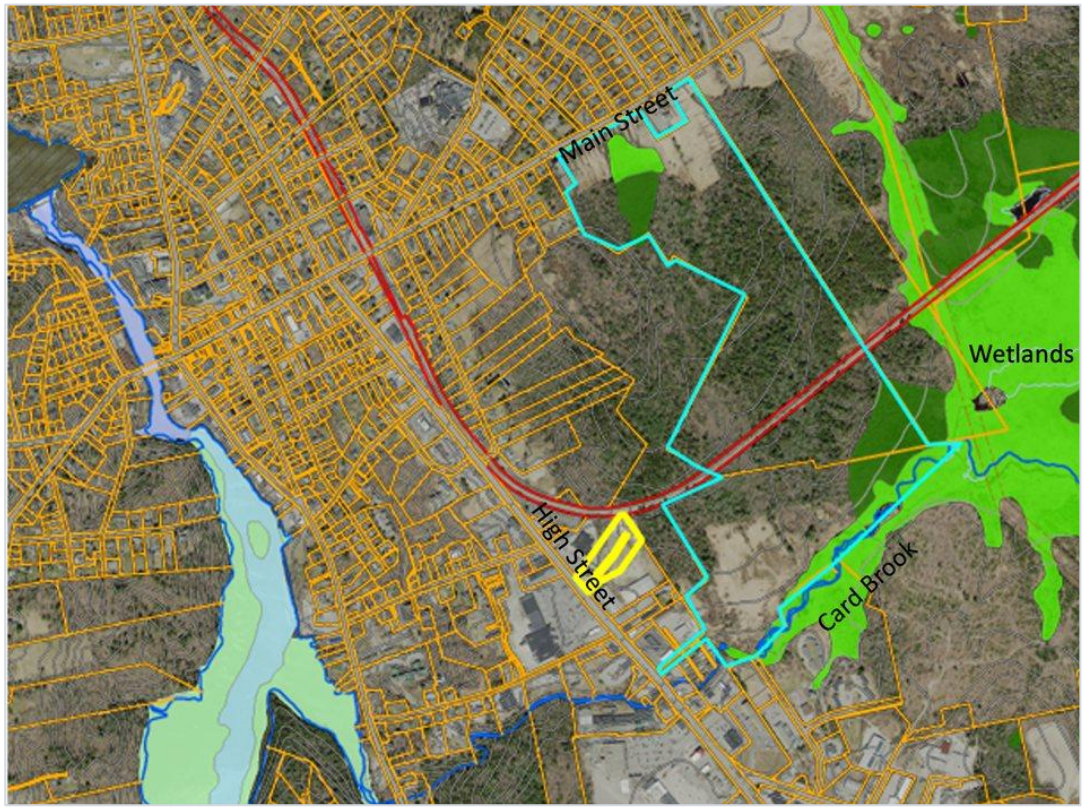
9 alternative sites proposed by local landowners and the real estate community

- **July 30, 2024** — Public workshop
- **Sept. 26, 2024** — Public workshop
- **October 2024** — Council presentation
- **November 2024** — Council workshop

Evaluated with the Judiciary and local surveyors/engineers: access, utilities, environmental constraints, cost and suitability.

Why the Wardwell land was compelling

PEARCE · 15 MIN



The Wardwell property (light blue outline) and the surrounding Urban Core. Usable area depends on environmental constraints and future approvals.

- Places a major public institution near existing commerce: High Street, Main Street, the hospital and the rail trail
- One large landholding allows coordinated development, not scattered projects
- Homes can be served by public water and sewer instead of extending rural sprawl
- Opens one of the Urban Core's last large undeveloped areas, which local business owner Leslie Harlow calls “Eastside Ellsworth”

2024 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN · PRINCIPLE 5

The City will “expand water and sewer infrastructure to better support growth in the City's Urban Core.”

January 7, 2025: Council chose partnership

PEARCE · 15 MIN

OPTION A

Courthouse moratorium

Questions about legal authority and fairness, and risk to an urgently needed State project.

OPTION B

Let Surry Road proceed

Permitted under existing rules, but with extensive, lasting community opposition to the project.

OPTION C

Land exchange and new road

A better planning fit and development potential. The City accepts the road, utilities, borrowing and long-term maintenance.

6–1

Council vote to proceed with Option C

Why not wait? The Judiciary's bond and project schedule made delay costly. Without an alternative, the State could proceed at Surry Road, or the replacement itself could be put at risk for another generation.

Recommendation for the next phase

PEARCE · 15 MIN

ADVANCE

- Authorize a defined next phase on Eastside Ellsworth housing, with a work plan, policy direction renewed/specifically authorized by council and continued public reports
- Keep seeking State (up to $750,000) and Hancock County contributions
- Look at developer contributions, connection charges or impact fees
- Utilize new TIF Committee to evaluate future valuation and infrastructure/credit enhancement agreement support for workforce housing

PAUSE AND SET GUARDRAILS

- Pause or scale back Thriving Communities and Village Partnership work (High Street, Bridge Hill) while capital planning and financial reconciliation are completed
- Focus on Existing infrastructure needs and rebuilding the city finance systems before considering any future investments not relative to current depreciation
- Consider a referendum in November 2028 for larger initiatives to ensure full community feedback on proposals during a likely large turnout year

PART 2 OF 6

Mike Harris

Public Works Director

Road work to date and courthouse coordination

10 MINUTES



What the agreement asks the City to build

HARRIS · 10 MIN



Courthouse area before construction.

1,225 ft

from High Street to the courthouse parcel

66 ft

public right of way

17.9 acres

Surry Road parcel exchanged for Wardwell land

Under the April 2025 Courthouse Collaboration Agreement, the City builds the road and its utilities.

- The permanent road turns today's gravel access into a finished municipal street
- Drainage, sanitary sewer, water, electrical and communications, lighting and roadside improvements
- The same utilities will serve future development in this part of the Urban Core

Wardwell

contributed road land

Adams

transferred a key parcel

Merrill

Transferred multiple key parcels among landowners/leaseholders

Progress to date

HARRIS · 10 MIN

Site and right of way	DONE	Land transfers announced October 2025
Permitting	DONE	Maine DEP and Bureau of Land Resources approvals, October 2025; suspected vernal pools ruled out
Early access	DONE	Clearing, grubbing and gravel construction road in place
High Street utility stubs	DONE	Completed over four nights by City crews
Design	DONE	Plans, specifications, logistics; engineer's estimate July 27, 2026
Procurement	UNDERWAY	RFP August 10; four proposals; amended proposals due October 1
Permanent road	NEXT	Complete and accepted as a public way by October 1, 2027



Ground view of the road corridor during clearing.

0.22 miles

of gravel construction road built by City crews: clearing, grubbing, cross culverts, gravel fill and compaction (479 staff hours)

Four nights on High Street

HARRIS · 10 MIN

4 nights

Before MaineDOT repaved High Street, Highway, Water and Wastewater crews worked through the night with the Public Works Director to install the utility stubs, so no one has to cut into the new pavement later.

$52,153

total utility stubbing cost

434.25

staff hours ($16,765 in pay)

$35,389

materials and equipment



Road corridor before clearing.

“The project advanced because people kept solving the next practical problem.”

Working alongside courthouse construction

HARRIS · 10 MIN



Courthouse groundbreaking, July 7, 2026.



Public Works team at the groundbreaking.

Groundbreaking

The City credited Public Works' access road with making the July 7 ceremony possible. Bowman Constructors is building; occupancy expected in 2028.

Sharing the road

Our contractor must keep alternating one-way travel on Merrill Lane and coordinate weekly with Bowman.

Night work and schedule

Work at the High Street end (Sta. 0+00 to 1+75) is limited to 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. A joint schedule comes before notice to proceed.

Traffic permit and intersection work

HARRIS · 10 MIN

Sept. 8, 2026

Traffic Movement Permit issued to the Judicial Branch

64,200 sq ft

Hancock Judicial Center

237 / 205

morning / evening peak-hour trips

Required at High Street and Merrill Lane

- Additional Design Configuration Changes
- Continuous sidewalk from High Street to the courthouse
- Signs, markings, curbing, ADA access, stop controls and driveway lighting

Judiciary Contribution/Deadlines

Up to $415,000

State reimbursement for covered permit costs. A cap, not funds received.

Jan. 1, 2027

Any extra property needed must be acquired

June 15, 2027

Last day for the State to receive invoices

Oct. 1, 2027

Merrill Lane and intersection complete and accepted

What remains to build

HARRIS · 10 MIN

Earthwork

and ledge excavation

2 asphalt courses

on aggregate base, plus curbing, sidewalk work, retaining wall and markings

9 soil filters

underdrained, with drainage pipe

1,192 ft

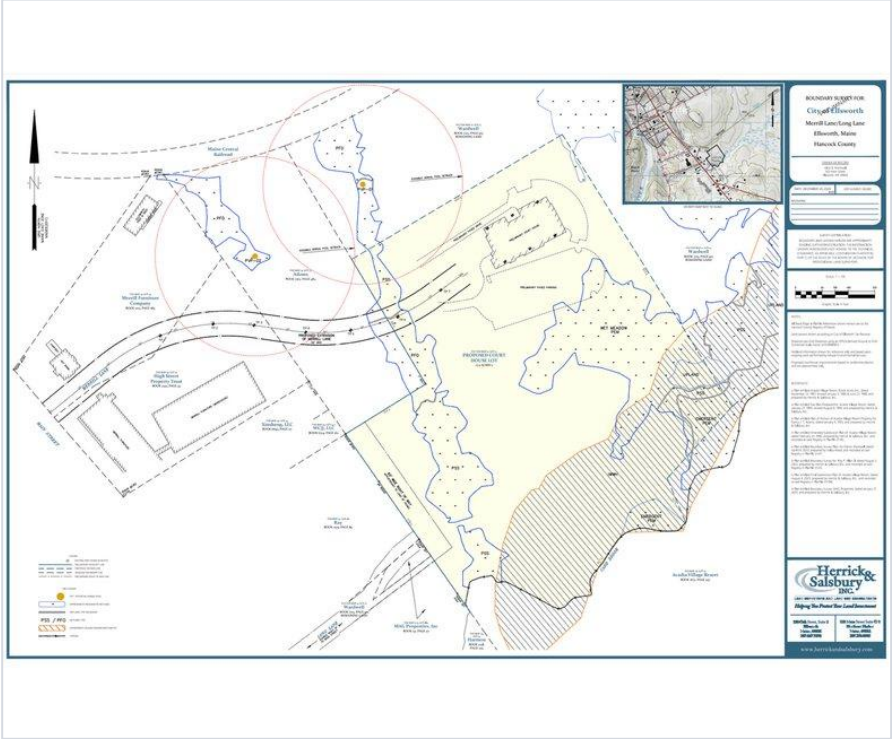
of 8-inch sanitary sewer main and 7 manholes

1,176 ft

of 12-inch water main and 3 hydrants

Power and lighting

underground electric and communications, street lighting



Boundary survey and preliminary courthouse site plan, Herrick & Salsbury.

Bid quantities, not installed quantities. Testing, disinfection, inspection, restoration and final acceptance complete the job.

PART 3 OF 6

Sara Devlin

Deputy City Manager

Costs to date

5 MINUTES



Cost to date by phase and source

DEVLIN – 5 Minutes

Phase	Consultants	Materials and equipment	Staff hours	Staff paid	Total
Road design and engineering	$159,336.45	—	—	—	**$159,336.45**
Real estate and easements (incl. $205,000 land)	$251,605.77	—	—	—	**$251,605.77**
Developer Agreement	$11,209.00	—	—	—	**$11,209.00**
Supplemental Developer Agreement	$2,812.00	—	—	—	**$2,812.00**
Requirements of the Developer Agreement	$11,915.00	$2,973.84	—	—	**$14,888.84**
Preliminary road construction	$163.08	$71,511.34	479	$13,882.40	**$85,556.82**
Preliminary road construction: utilities	—	$35,388.51	434.25	$16,764.90	**$52,153.41**
Final road design and engineering	$18,165.00	—	—	—	**$18,165.00**
General	$10,734.91	—	—	—	**$10,734.91**
Total	**$465,941.21**	**$109,873.69**	**913.25**	**$30,647.30**	**$606,462.20**

Consultant costs are payments made October 17, 2024 to August 17, 2026; City costs are charges recorded through September 29, 2026. Invoices received but not yet paid are not included.

Every payment, by date and by firm

DEVLIN – 5 Minutes

Attachment A: Line Items by Phase

Item	Date Paid / Week Beginning	Hours	Cost
Road Design and Engineering			
Consultant Invoices			
Andrew McCullough Engineering	10/17/2024		$6,680.00
Andrew McCollough Engineering	12/6/2024		$2,000.00
Andrew McCollough Engineering	1/15/2025		$4,800.00
Andrew McCullough Engineering	4/10/2025		$2,400.00
Andrew McCullough Engineering	5/29/2025		$15,687.50
Andrew McCullough Engineering	6/30/2025		$36,650.00
Andrew McCullough Engineering	9/3/2025		$18,050.50
Andrew McCullough Engineering	10/31/2025		$16,300.00
Andrew McCullough Engineering	12/3/2025		$7,500.00
Andrew McCullough Engineering	12/3/2025		$1,462.50
Herrick & Salsbury Inc	3/18/2025		$8,503.00
Herrick & Salsbury Inc	6/25/2025		$18,442.50
Herrick & Salsbury Inc	9/4/2025		$7,467.50
Herrick & Salsbury Inc	10/1/2025		$82.50
Herrick & Salsbury Inc	10/1/2025		$5,400.00
Moyse Environmental Services	10/25/2024		$224.00
Moyse Environmental Services	10/25/2024		$1,519.00
Moyse Environmental Services	10/25/2024		$429.00
Moyse Environmental Services	10/25/2024		$225.00
Moyse Environmental Services	10/25/2024		$73.70
Moyse Environmental Services	1/24/2025		$4,918.95
Moyse Environmental Services	7/16/2025		$520.80
Consultant subtotal (22 payments)			**$159,336.45**
Phase total			**$159,336.45**
Real Estate and Easements			

Attachment A: every line item with date paid (page 1 of 5).

Attachment B: Consultant Payments by Firm

Firm	Phases	Payments	Total Paid	Share
Land purchase (paid through Acadia Law Group LLC)	Real Estate and Easements	2	$205,000.00	44.0%
Andrew McCullough Engineering	Final Road Design and Engineering; Road Design and Engineering	12	$128,255.50	27.5%
Herrick & Salsbury Inc	Real Estate and Easements; Road Design and Engineering	7	$66,153.50	14.2%
Acadia Law Group LLC	Developer Agreement; General; Real Estate and Easements	19	$25,560.27	5.5%
Pierce Atwood	Requirements of the Developer Agreement	2	$9,360.00	2.0%
Kleinfelder, Inc.	General	5	$8,057.41	1.7%
Moyse Environmental Services	Road Design and Engineering	7	$7,910.45	1.7%
Jones, Kurillf & Sargent LLC	Real Estate and Easements	1	$6,975.00	1.5%
Rudman & Winchell LLC	Developer Agreement; Supplemental Developer Agreement	3	$4,511.00	1.0%
Darren Richardson Electric, Inc.	Requirements of the Developer Agreement	1	$2,360.00	0.5%
Ronald J. Fortier	Final Road Design and Engineering	2	$1,440.00	0.3%
Bangor Daily News	Requirements of the Developer Agreement	1	$195.00	0.0%
Ellsworth Chainsaw, Inc.	Preliminary Road Construction	1	$163.08	0.0%
Total		**63**	**$465,941.21**	**100.0%**

Firm names are standardized where the source spells the same firm more than one way. Line items in Attachment A keep the spelling from the source report.

Attachment B: consultant payments by firm.

IN THE FULL MEMO

- Every payment, with date and phase
- Payments by firm and share of total
- City staff hours and materials
- Reconciliation to source reports

63

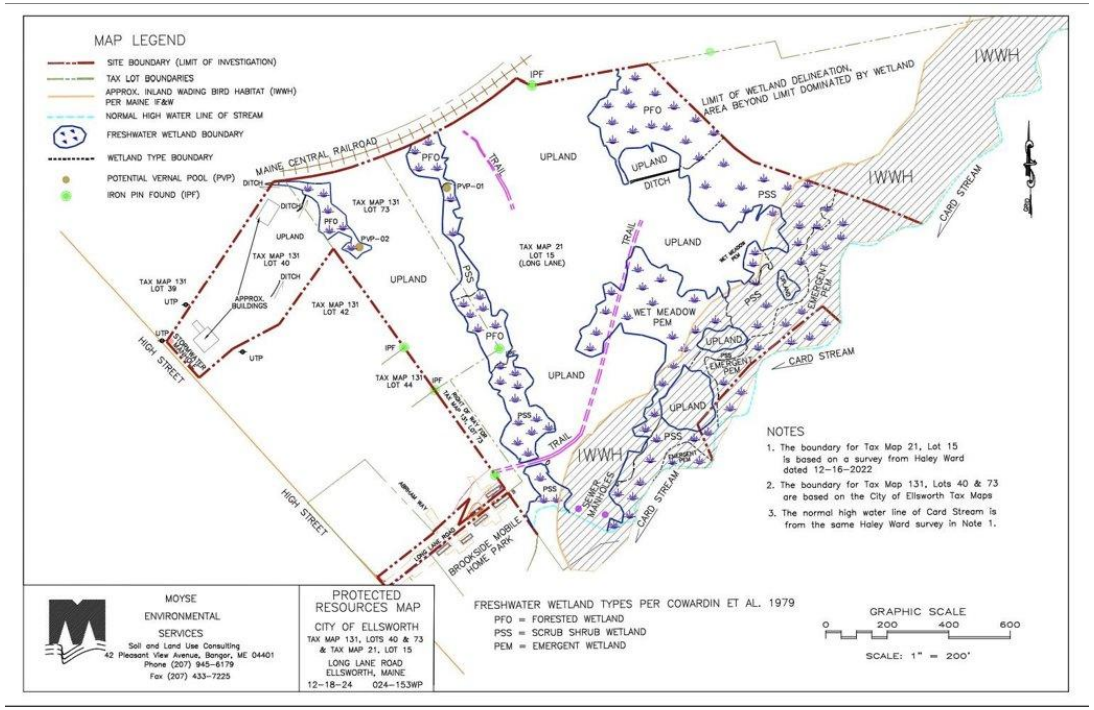
consultant payments, $465,941.21

Read the full memo: ellsworthmaine.gov/courthouse and the full October 5 Council packet

Payments by firm

DEVLIN – 5 Minutes

Firm	Payments	
Land purchases (via Acadia Law Group)	2	$205,000 · 44.0%
Andrew McCullough Engineering	12	$128,256 · 27.5%
Herrick & Salsbury	7	$66,154 · 14.2%
Acadia Law Group (legal fees)	19	$25,560 · 5.5%
Pierce Atwood	2	$9,360 · 2.0%
Kleinfelder	5	$8,057 · 1.7%
Moyse Environmental Services	7	$7,910 · 1.7%
Jones, Kurillf & Sargent	1	$6,975 · 1.5%
Rudman & Winchell	3	$4,511 · 1.0%
Four others	5	$4,158 · 0.9%



What's still to come back to Council

DEVLIN – 5 Minutes

Expected future costs, each brought to Council for approval or disapproval

Construction contract

Award requested tonight, with a not-to-exceed amount

Construction administration

Engineering oversight contract with Andrew McCullough, October 19

Inspection and testing

Construction observation, testing and certification to municipal standards

Intersection work

Traffic-permit improvements; State reimbursement up to $415,000 for covered costs

Contingency and changes

Owner contingency, utility connections, quantity changes and change orders

FINAL ACCOUNTING

- Every invoice will continue to be tracked by phase, as in this memo
- Invoices received but not yet paid will be added as they are paid
- At project completion, staff will present a final accounting and update this project binder

Updates posted at ellsworthmaine.gov/courthouse

PART 4 OF 6

Chris Nemeth

Finance Director

Financing the road: the 2026 bond and the TIF/Development payback potential

5 MINUTES



How the road is financed

NEMETH · 5 MIN

Borrow

Bond anticipation note (BAN) funds road construction

Build

Permanent road, utilities and construction access

Recover

Seek State, county and developer contributions

Grow

New development adds to the tax base over time

FINANCING TERMS

BOND amount	***$1.75M***
Rate and term	***20 Years at 4.668%***
Type	***Level Principal Note***

The 2026 General Obligation Bond

NEMETH · 5 MIN

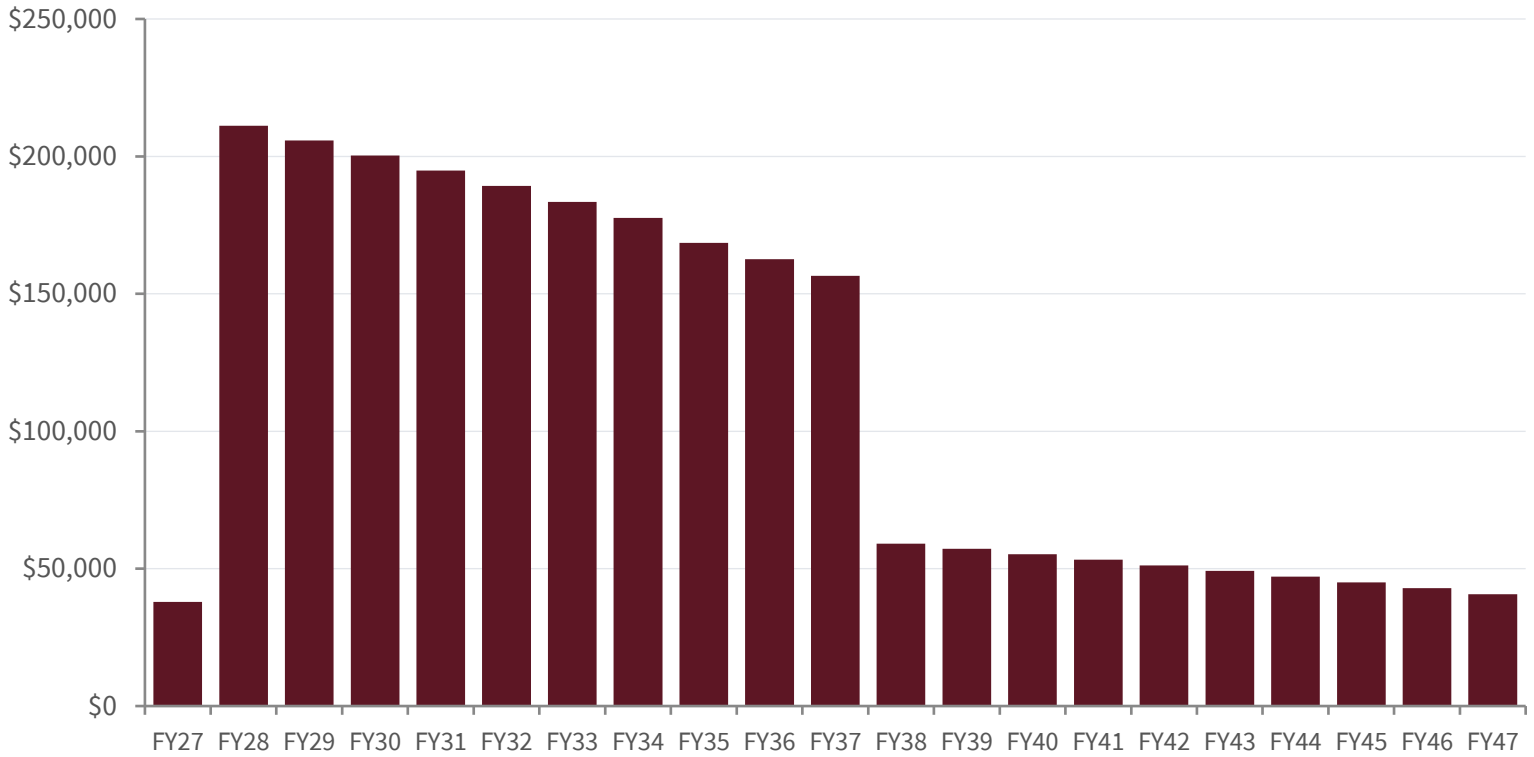
$1.75M Merrill Lane share (45.33%) of the $3,860,443 MMBB Series 2026B bond

20 years level-principal note

4.668% interest

Level principal: higher payments in the early years, in exchange for significant interest savings over the life of the loan.

Annual net debt service, Merrill Lane share



$211,157
peak payment, FY2028

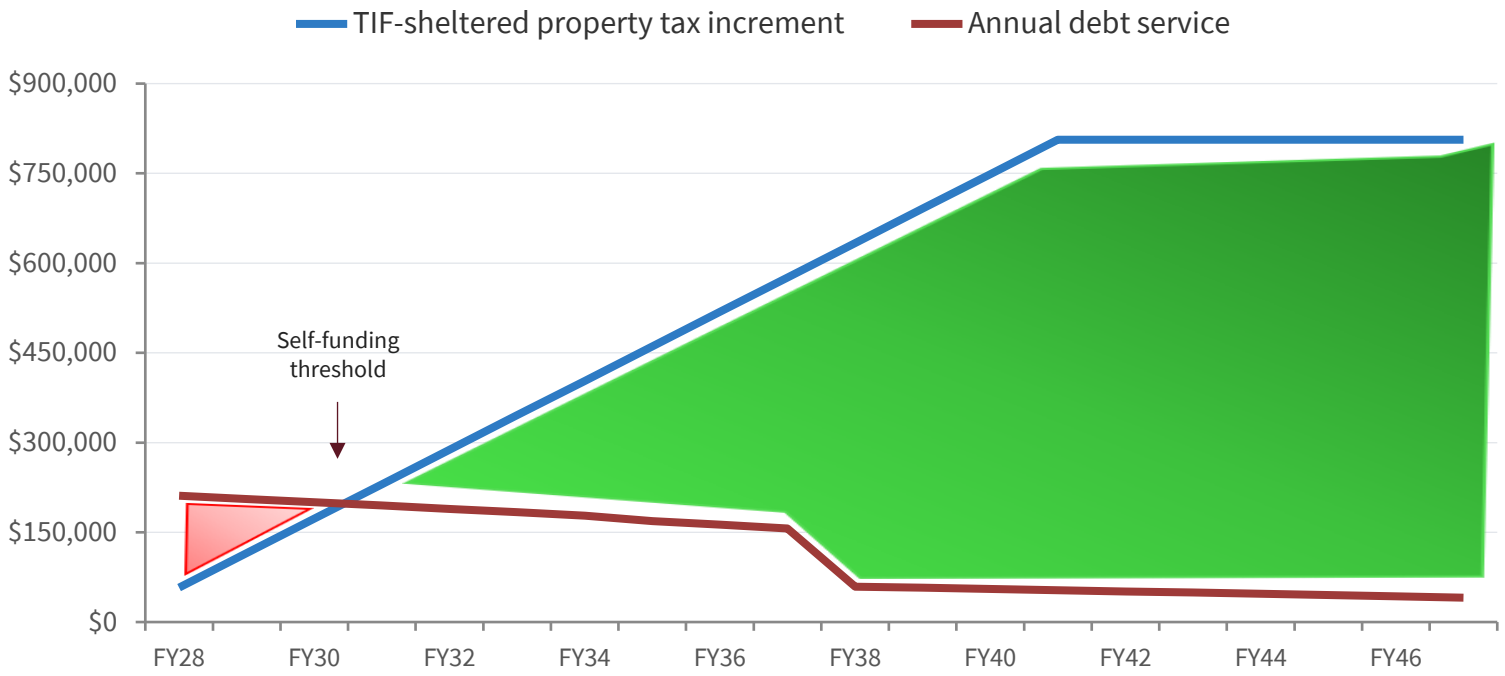
$113,752
average payment

$40,738
final payment, FY2047

$638,785
total interest

TIF revenue overtakes debt service

NEMETH · 5 MIN



FY28–FY30

Investment period

Debt service exceeds TIF revenue

FY31

Self-funding

TIF $230,340 vs. debt $194,821

FY32 onward

Value creation

Cumulative TIF passes cumulative debt

$806,190

annual TIF increment at full build-out (FY2041 onward)

$2.39M

total debt service over the life of the bond

Assessor's conservative base case:
40 developed lots built out evenly over about 14 years at statistical averages of FY2025 assessed values and a $17.45 tax rate. Property tax only.

Outside help: pursue it, don't budget it

NEMETH · 5 MIN

PENDING

State reimbursement bill

Up to $750,000 for the road. To be taken up again next session; passage may be difficult.

PROPOSED

Surplus bond proceeds

A legislative idea: use any surplus from bonds for Maine's three new courthouses to reimburse the City.

TABLED

Hancock County

The City Manager asked the county to share the cost. The request was tabled.

TO EXAMINE

Developer contributions

Connection charges or impact fees, designed with authority, fairness, feasibility and actual cost in mind.

Uncommitted assistance should not be treated as available revenue.

The courthouse serves the whole region. But earlier reluctance to contribute has to inform the City's financial planning.

Levers to shorten the investment period

NEMETH · 5 MIN

Beckwith Hill TIF

Use Beckwith Hill TIF revenues to cover a significant share of debt service, especially in the early years.

Downtown and Central Corridor TIFs

$116,600 a year for road improvements, shared with other bond road projects, if Council chooses full capture.

Water and sewer fees

Revenue from connecting new water and sewer customers.

Impact fees

A simple impact fee model to speed up cost recovery and break-even.

Goal: fund the project, especially the early years, with the least adverse impact on the general taxpayer.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

$20M+

unfunded liability for necessary infrastructure in the Capital Improvement Plan. Not “nice-to-have” projects: core infrastructure.

~$1.5M / yr

debt service on $20M over 20 years at 4.5%. Districts like Merrill Lane are how the City can afford it.

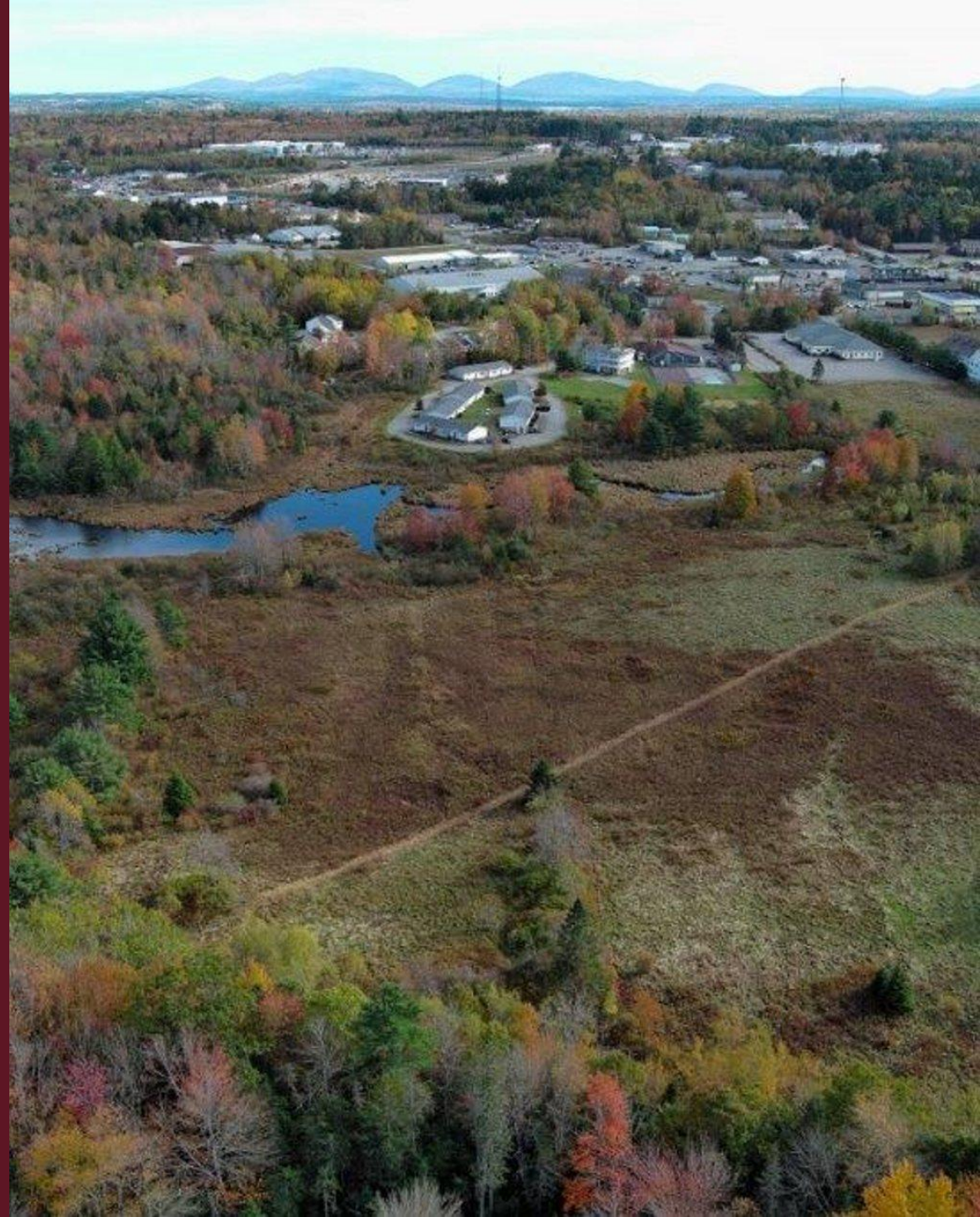
PART 5 OF 6

Twila Fisher

Community Development Director

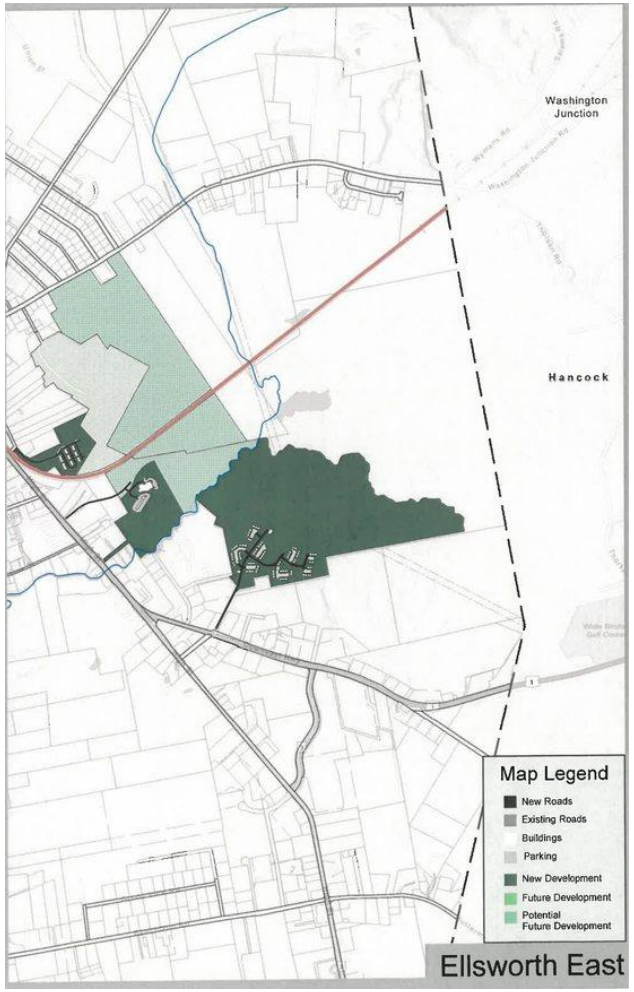
Opening up long-term housing and commercial investment in the city's urban core

10 MINUTES



Eastside Ellsworth:

FISHER · 10 MIN



INFRASTRUCTURE CAN

Reduce barriers to building with water, sewer and road access

IT CANNOT

Make sure the resulting homes are affordable on its own

Tools to connect infrastructure to housing outcomes

- Credit Enhancement Agreements and affordable housing TIF
- Workforce Housing Infrastructure agreements, possibly funded by the recently passed bipartisan federal housing bill
- Public solicitation of willing landowners and developers
- Enforceable terms: defined housing outcomes, an affordability period, protection of the public investment

Two new TIF districts, adopted March 2026

FISHER · 10 MIN



Central Corridor TIF

362 acres ~ 34 parcels

Undeveloped Eastside Ellsworth and key future development parcels along High Street and the Downeast and Douglas Highways, including the Merrill Lane corridor

Original assessed value: $13,634,050 (March 31, 2024)



Downtown Corridor TIF

145 acres ~ 377 parcels

Much of the historic downtown and nearby areas: Main, Water, State, Franklin, Elm, Pine, Hancock and Deane Streets and Bucksport Road

Adopted with the City's new Downtown Development Plan

Original assessed value: $85,620,839 (March 31, 2024)

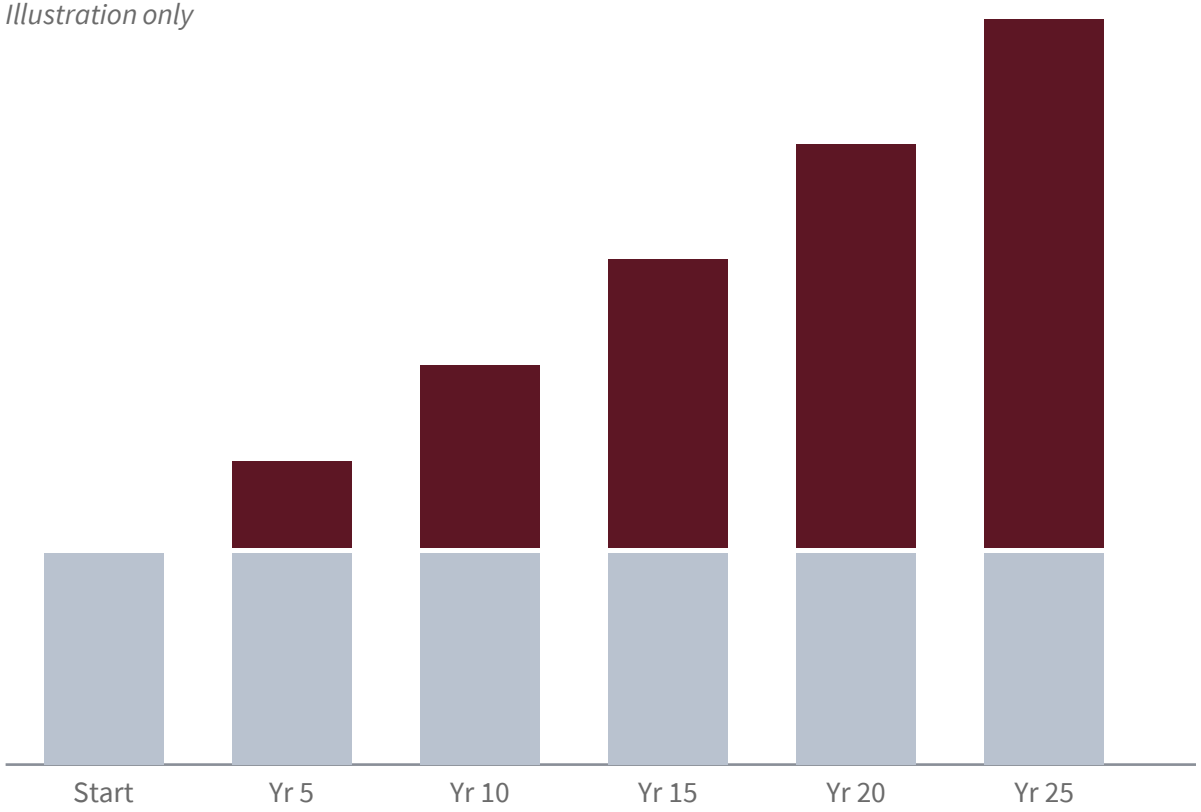
BOTH DISTRICTS

- Capture up to 100% of new assessed value, using the State's two-year look-back
- Pay for roads, sidewalks, stormwater, traffic improvements, public facilities, grant matches and economic development
- Together provide $116,600 a year for roads and $99,500 for sidewalks
- Overseen by a new citizen-staff TIF committee

TIF 101: how tax increment financing works

FISHER · 10 MIN

Illustration only



Original assessed value (OAV): frozen when the district is created

Increment: new value above the OAV, which the City can capture

1

Freeze the baseline

When a district is created, its original assessed value is set. Taxes on that base keep flowing to the General Fund.

2

Capture the new value

Up to 100% of the taxes on new value (the increment) can be captured, for up to 30 years.

3

Reinvest it

Captured revenue pays for approved projects: in the district, directly related infrastructure outside it, and citywide economic development.

4

Uncaptured value

Any new value the City does not capture goes to the General Fund like any other tax.

Why sheltering matters: protecting state aid

FISHER · 10 MIN

WITHOUT A TIF

New development raises Ellsworth's total value reported to the State.

- **State school subsidy goes down**
- **State revenue sharing goes down**
- **Ellsworth's share of county tax goes up**

Approximately $.64 of every new tax dollar is lost to these shifts.

WITH A TIF

Captured value is left out of the total reported to the State for the life of the TIF, up to 30 years.

- **School subsidy protected**
- **Revenue sharing protected**
- **County tax share held steady**

The new revenue stays in Ellsworth and is reinvested in the district.

State limits

2%	of City acreage for any one district
5%	of City acreage for all districts
5%	of total taxable value for all districts
30 yrs	maximum term

Tools to recover the City's Road investment

FISHER · 10 MIN

1

Central Corridor TIF

Original assessed value $13,634,050 (March 31, 2024). At 100% capture, FY28 projects about $38,756, very conservatively. Merrill Lane is in the TIF development plan, so up to $500,000 of TIF shelter over 30 years can recover costs.

2

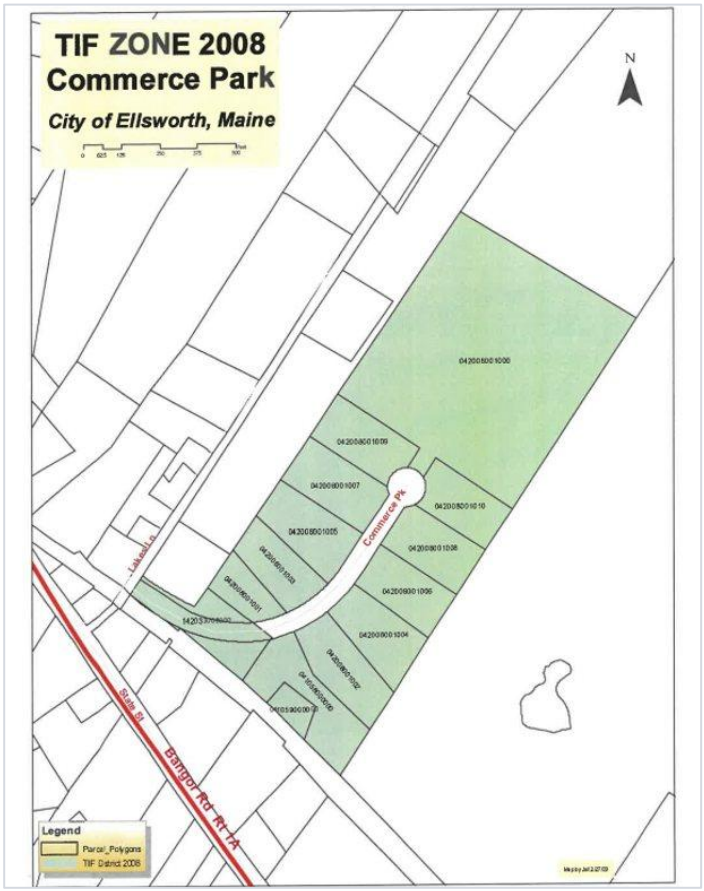
Build-out increment

About $800,000 a year at full build-out could be fully or partially sheltered through the TIF to pay the debt service on this and many other infrastructure/housing related projects.

3

Merrill Lane Extension Impact Fee Program

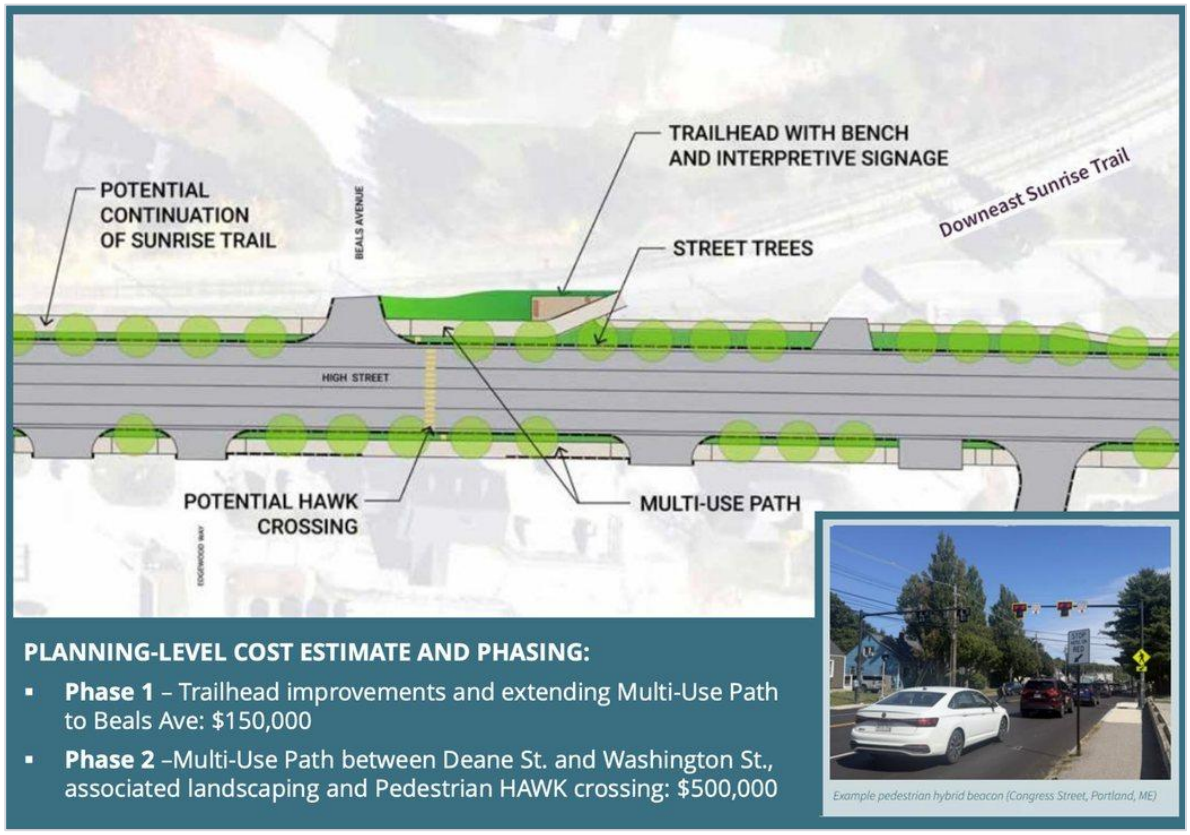
Maine law (30-A M.R.S. §4354) allows impact fees for wastewater, water, roads and traffic control, and other qualifying infrastructure. Might discourage growth if enacted.



Commerce Park, TIF Zone 2008: an earlier Ellsworth TIF district built around a new street.

Connections To High Street and Commercial Corridor

FISHER · 10 MIN



High Street concepts for a trailhead, crossing and shared path. Amounts shown are preliminary planning figures, not approved budgets.



Conceptual view of Merrill Lane and High Street improvements. Final design needs separate approval.

- Living near High Street doesn't mean you can safely walk to work, the trail or downtown
- Thriving Communities funds planning and technical help, not construction
- Further engineering, property rights, funding and approvals still needed

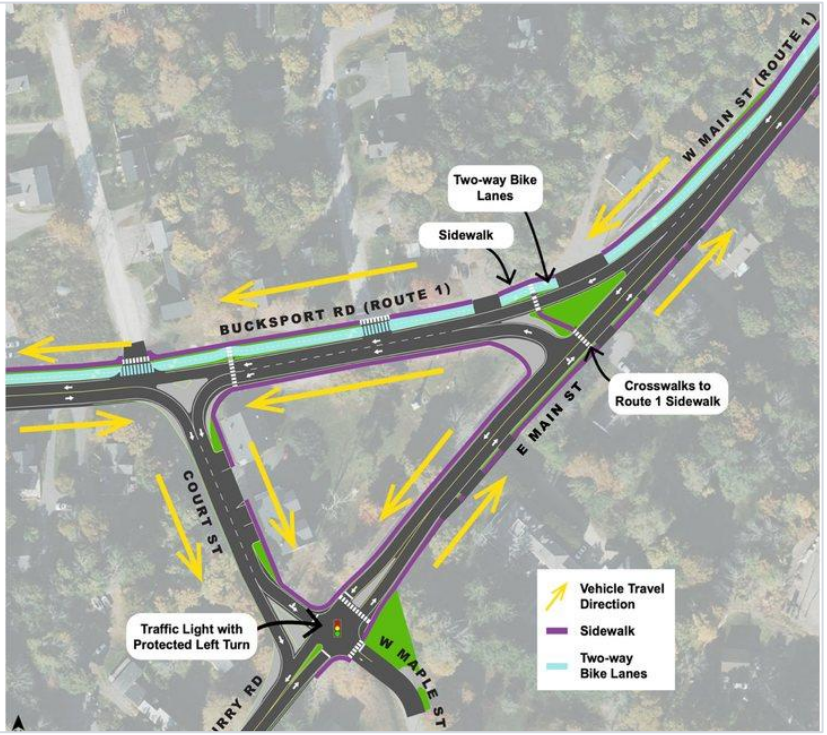
Connections to Bridge Hill, historic downtown and the marina

FISHER · 10 MIN

BUCKSPORT ROAD / MAIN STREET

Preliminary Design

- Create circular flow of traffic around court house
- Redirect eastbound Rte 1 traffic down Court St
- Add a traffic light to Court St / Main St intersection
- Add sidewalk and two-way bike lane to north side of Bucksport Rd and Main St



Preliminary Bridge Hill concept for traffic and pedestrian improvements.

PEDESTRIAN RAMP TO RIVERWALK

Preliminary Design

- Add pedestrian ramps from the sidewalks on both sides of the Union River bridge down to the waterfront
- Adding a more direct Riverwalk to Main St connection would encourage use of existing Riverwalk and potential Riverwalk extension to Harbor Park



Conceptual riverwalk access near the Union River bridge. A separate potential project.

Initial Concepts Only

Village Partnership concepts each need their own scope, funding and approval.

May need to be scaled back

The Bridge Hill intersection may not be feasible; Main Street sidewalk access alone is an option.

Plan for upkeep

Grants can build paths and parks. Staffing and operating plans keep them going.

Three approaches to the next phase

FISHER · 10 MIN

Focus on existing systems

Finish the road, maintain existing assets and improve operations. Private development proceeds under City ordinances.

Trade-off: *Protects staff capacity and limits City risk, but may not produce the workforce housing the City needs.*

Targeted housing partnerships

Work with owners and developers on year-round housing using solicitations, credit enhancement, affordable housing TIF and limited new infrastructure.

Trade-off: *Needs negotiation, administration and possibly more City funding.*

Broader set of connections

High Street, historic downtown, marina and Bridge Hill: trail access, safer crossings and public spaces. Grant matches up to 9 to 1 in some cases.

Trade-off: *Needs more staff, financing, property rights and long-term upkeep. Staff strain could be unsustainable and hurt other projects.*

These approaches can be combined or phased, but compare what each requires before asking staff to pursue all of them.

PART 6 OF 6

Sara Devlin

Deputy City Manager

Merrill Lane Extension RFP and the staff recommendation

10 MINUTES



The business before Council tonight

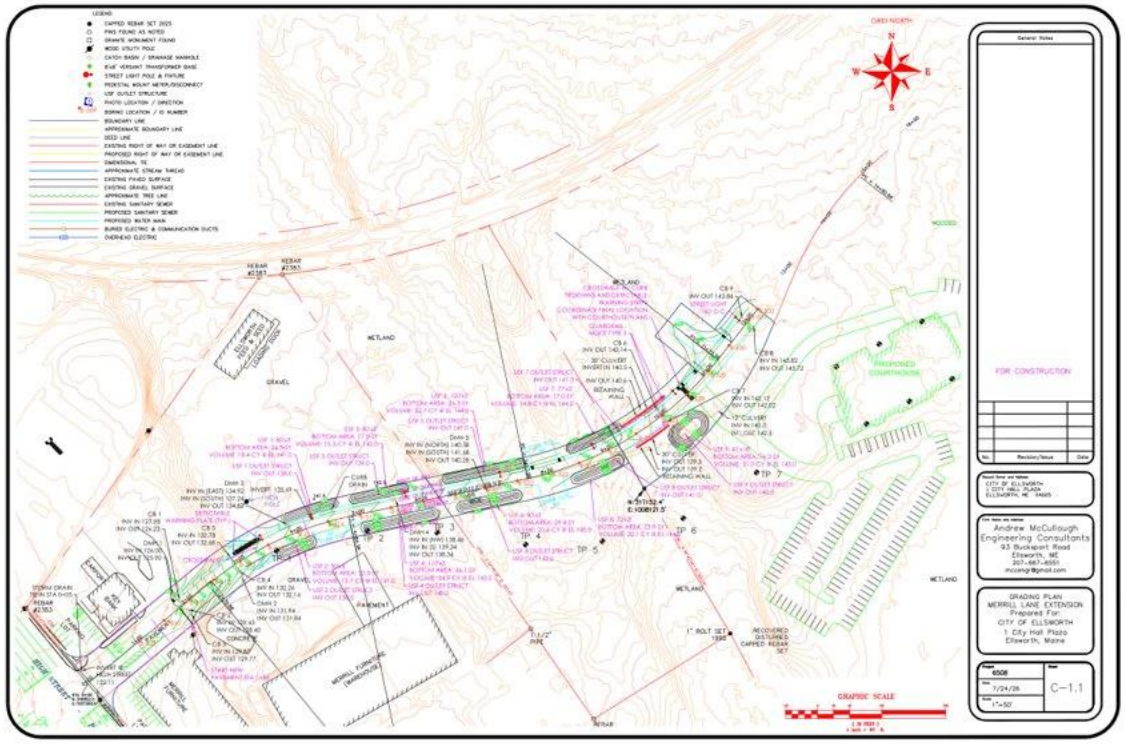
DEVLIN · 10 MIN

Award the construction contract to finish the Merrill Lane Extension.

WHAT THE CONTRACT BUILDS

- New road connection to High Street, with defined access for adjacent properties
- Pedestrian accommodations, drainage and roadway lighting
- Sewer, water, electrical and communications
- Traffic-control improvements, while keeping courthouse construction access open

Coordinated separately: MaineDOT-required intersection work, with State reimbursement of up to $415,000; it may be added through a contract change. On October 19, staff will bring an engineering contract with Andrew McCullough for construction oversight.



Merrill Lane Extension Engineering Overview Plan

A competitive process to ensure best price

DEVLIN · 10 MIN

Aug 10	Aug 17	Sept 3	Sept 21	Sept 23	Sept 24	Oct 1	Oct 5
RFP issued on OpenGov	Pre-proposal site meeting	4 proposals received	Council tables award	Mandatory meeting, 3 lowest proposers	Amended RFP issued	Amended proposals due	Council action tonight

Why table and amend?

- City-furnished materials
- Selected work by City crews
- A closer look at mobilization, scheduling and markups

FAIR AND CONFIDENTIAL

- All three contractors got the same information, the same revised scope and the same chance to submit best and final pricing
- Proposals were not publicly opened; pricing stayed confidential
- The City Attorney advised on the amended process

Could City crews build it instead?

DEVLIN · 10 MIN

Public Works' preliminary in-house estimate (September 14, 2026)

Overtime, about 6 Highway employees



$558,000 (~12,000 hours)

Materials



$1,550,000

Plus blasting, electrical work and final paving, which would still be bid to outside contractors.

For comparison

$2.1M+ in-house direct costs, before outside contracts and schedule risk

$1.75M bond allocation

Why a contractor is the better fit

Staffing

Some Highway staff have moved to Parks and Recreation since in-house work was first discussed

Labor

Not yet discussed with the union

Schedule

Material lead times, separately bid trades, weather and breakdowns

Daily operations

Emergencies, repairs, paving and winter work would pull crews away

Staff recommendation

DEVLIN · 10 MIN

BASIS FOR AWARD

The lowest-priced amended proposal, if it meets the RFP requirements and the contractor is qualified and capable of doing the work.

Amended proposal	Price	Rank
RF Jordan	$1,633,545	***1***

Pricing is confidential until the recommendation comes to Council.

WHY THIS APPROACH

- Keeps competition among three qualified contractors
- Every proposal prices the same scope, so the comparison is clear
- City-furnished materials and selected City work are built in where they save money
- Gives each contractor a fair chance at best and final pricing
- Faster and lower risk than building with City forces

After the award: path to final acceptance

DEVLIN · 10 MIN

1. **Award tonight; engineering oversight October 19**
   Construction administration contract with Andrew McCullough

2. **Joint schedule, then notice to proceed**
   Coordinated with the Judicial Branch, Bowman Constructors and utilities

3. **Build the permanent road and utilities**
   Alternating one-way travel; High Street end worked at night

4. **Intersection work under the traffic permit**
   Up to $415,000 State reimbursement; invoices by June 15, 2027

5. **Testing, inspection and acceptance**
   Accepted as a public way by October 1, 2027

Oct. 1, 2027
Road complete and accepted

Spring 2028
Courthouse opens



The gravel road City crews built becomes the base for the permanent road.

Requested Council action

DEVLIN · 10 MIN

SUGGESTED MOTION

Move to award the contract for the Merrill Lane Extension to ***RF Jordan*** for a not-to-exceed amount of $1,633,545 , as recommended by staff, and authorize the City Manager to execute the contract and related documents.

The people who made this possible

Landowners and partners

Alice and Pat Wardwell, Bob Merrill, Troy Adams; L.L.Bean and KeyBank

City team

Sara Devlin, Amanda Ray, Mike Harris, Nate Hardwick, Brian Moon; Highway, Water and Wastewater crews; finance, assessing, planning, communications and clerks

Engineering, environmental and legal

Andrew McCullough, Steve Salsbury, Herrick & Salsbury, Kleinfelder, environmental partners, Ron Fortier; Alison King (Acadia Law Group) and Tim Pease at Rudman Winchell

State and Judiciary

Senator Nicole Grohoski, Representative Russell White, Chief Justice Valerie Stanfill and the Judiciary's team

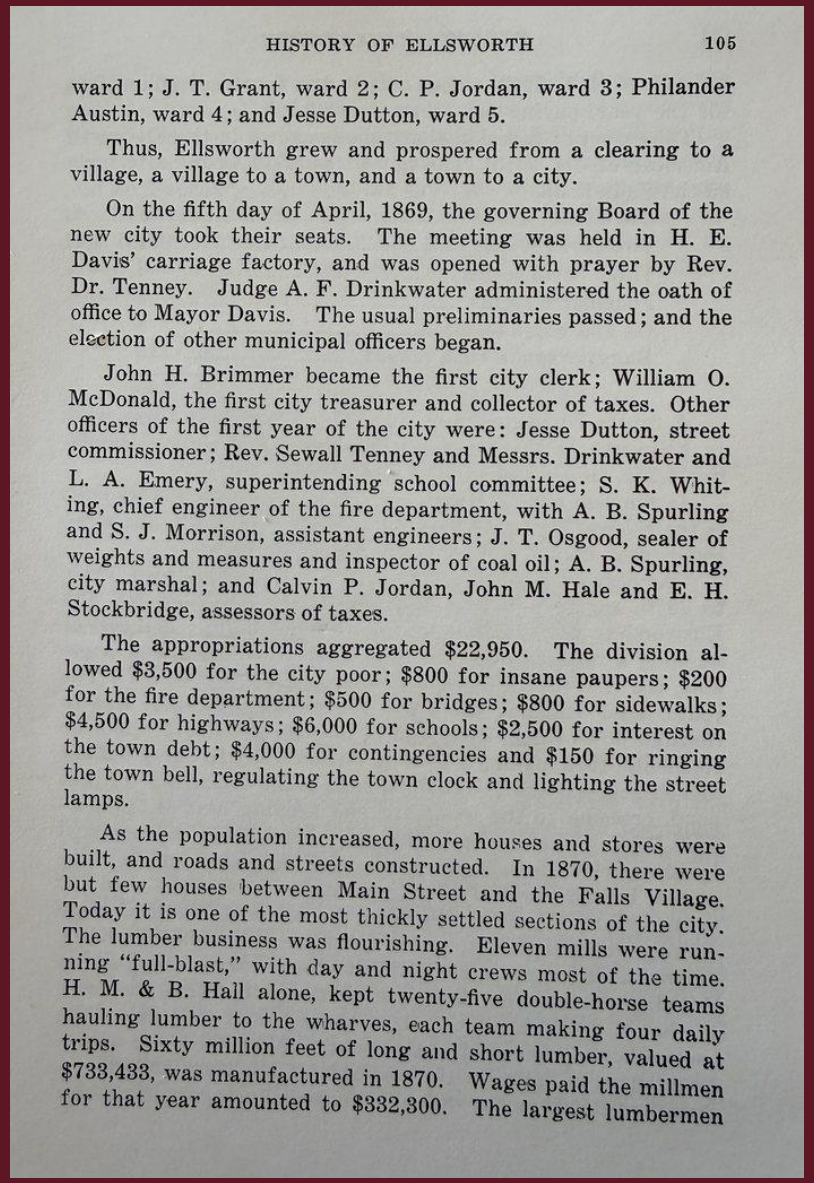
1869

$5,300 of a $22,950 budget, about 23%, went to roads and sidewalks in Ellsworth's first city appropriations.

“Tonight we choose how to finish a road. The next decisions will help determine what that road makes possible in Ellsworth.”

Questions and Council discussion

EllsworthMaine.gov



HISTORY OF ELLSWORTH 105

ward 1; J. T. Grant, ward 2; C. P. Jordan, ward 3; Philander Austin, ward 4; and Jesse Dutton, ward 5.

Thus, Ellsworth grew and prospered from a clearing to a village, a village to a town, and a town to a city.

On the fifth day of April, 1869, the governing Board of the new city took their seats. The meeting was held in H. E. Davis' carriage factory, and was opened with prayer by Rev. Dr. Tenney. Judge A. F. Drinkwater administered the oath of office to Mayor Davis. The usual preliminaries passed; and the election of other municipal officers began.

John H. Brimmer became the first city clerk; William O. McDonald, the first city treasurer and collector of taxes. Other officers of the first year of the city were: Jesse Dutton, street commissioner; Rev. Sewall Tenney and Messrs. Drinkwater and L. A. Emery, superintending school committee; S. K. Whiting, chief engineer of the fire department, with A. B. Spurling and S. J. Morrison, assistant engineers; J. T. Osgood, sealer of weights and measures and inspector of coal oil; A. B. Spurling, city marshal; and Calvin P. Jordan, John M. Hale and E. H. Stockbridge, assessors of taxes.

The appropriations aggregated $22,950. The division allowed $3,500 for the city poor; $800 for insane paupers; $200 for the fire department; $500 for bridges; $800 for sidewalks; $4,500 for highways; $6,000 for schools; $2,500 for interest on the town debt; $4,000 for contingencies and $150 for ringing the town bell, regulating the town clock and lighting the street lamps.

As the population increased, more houses and stores were built, and roads and streets constructed. In 1870, there were but few houses between Main Street and the Falls Village. Today it is one of the most thickly settled sections of the city. The lumber business was flourishing. Eleven mills were running “full-blast,” with day and night crews most of the time. H. M. & B. Hall alone, kept twenty-five double-horse teams hauling lumber to the wharves, each team making four daily trips. Sixty million feet of long and short lumber, valued at $733,433, was manufactured in 1870. Wages paid the millmen for that year amounted to $332,300. The largest lumbermen

History of Ellsworth, page 105.