

# Building Youth Hope

Assessing Community Assets and Opportunities for Supporting  
Youth Well-Being in the Sagadahoc County Area

JUNE 2025



## Acknowledgments

Thank you to United Way for your partnership and commitment to supporting youth in Sagadahoc County. Thank you for thoughtful design and careful collection of the information from the community members.

Thank you to Abigail Ramirez, Bowdoin College student intern for the initial data compilation, cleaning, and analysis.

Thank you to all the community members who participated in the engagement activities. Specific shoutouts to Bowdoin College Upward Bound students for sharing your insights on the strengths and weaknesses in your communities, service providers from Sagadahoc County, and the Working Communities Challenge Steering Committee members for your contributions to the asset map. Your feedback and experiences are essential, and we could not do this work without you!

Thank you to Maggie Cummings, Nicole Evans, Nicole Brassard, Melissa Fochesato, Misty Parker, Claire Berkowitz, Michael Walton, and Deb Hagler, MD for your peer review of this report and thank you to Sarah Loudon for proofreading.

This project was funded by a Working Community Challenge grant from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

### AUTHORS

Emma Schwartz

Jillian Foley, MPPM

Tim Atkinson, MPPM

### REPORT DESIGN

Becky Wurwarg



**UNITED WAY**  
Mid Coast Maine





# Contents

Forward	4
---------	---

Introduction	5
--------------	---

Findings	11
----------	----

- ▶ Local Strengths and Community Assets Supporting Youth
- ▶ Gaps and Barriers Impacting Youth Well-Being
- ▶ Opportunities for Investing in Youth Well-Being

Discussion & Recommendations	21
------------------------------	----

- ▶ Ensure youth have access to assets that respond to their individual, interpersonal, and community needs.
- ▶ Expand youth connections to informal supports, schools, and community spaces.
- ▶ Continue to center youth voice and expand opportunities for youth to be more involved in decision-making.

Conclusion	24
------------	----

Appendices	25
------------	----

Endnotes	29
----------	----

# Forward

## About the Project

The Sagadahoc County Working Communities Challenge Initiative aims to increase youth hopefulness by focusing on vulnerable youth and their families and supporting their future workforce development opportunities. The Initiative, led by United Way of Mid Coast Maine (UWMCM), includes partners from the Bath Brunswick Topsham Regional Chamber, City of Bath, First Federal Savings, Midcoast Maine Community Action, MaineHealth Mid Coast Hospital, Midcoast Youth Center, and RSU 1. The work is supported by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, State of Maine, national and local philanthropic organizations, and private sector employers. Partners in addition to Initiative members include the Brunswick School Department, MSAD 75, Retail Association of Maine, Richmond Schools, and RSU 1.

Through a grant awarded to the Sagadahoc County region by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, local organizations have come together to support youth and the workforce for a thriving region by establishing programs that highlight youth contributions, and sharing resources with community members to help educate and improve our economic landscape. Project partners work together to foster environments of inclusivity that support the mental well-being of our youth and the entire community.

In the summer and fall of 2024, the project team engaged community members in multiple asset mapping opportunities to better understand the landscape of resources for youth in Sagadahoc County. For more information visit: <https://www.uwmcm.org/connectingtomorrow.html>.

UWMCM partnered with the Place Matters project at the University of Southern Maine, Catherine Cutler Institute as a data analysis partner to build on previous research<sup>1</sup> and asset mapping that was conducted in the Sagadahoc County and the Midcoast region in 2020. Place Matters is a research, policy, and community engagement initiative focused on building a community-based continuum of care that is responsive to local needs for all of Maine's communities. For more information visit: <https://placemattersmaine.org/>.

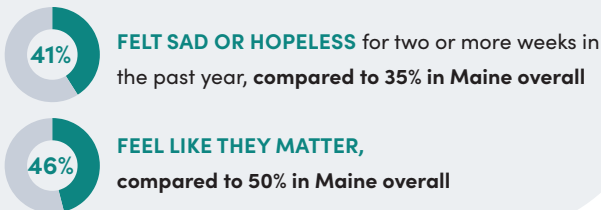
This report aims to build on previous research and provide updated information on strengths, challenges, and opportunities for community investment in Sagadahoc County with the goal of improving youth outcomes related to hopefulness, belonging, and well-being.

# Introduction

## Background

Sagadahoc County is one of four counties (including Knox, Lincoln, and Waldo) that make up Maine's Midcoast region. With a population of approximately 37,500 people<sup>2</sup>, and the southernmost county in the Midcoast, Sagadahoc shares many resources with other regions of the state, including larger towns and cities like Brunswick and Lewiston. With just over 35 thousand miles of coastline, Sagadahoc is known for scenic views and waterfront towns, an identified strength among participants in this project.

### High school students in Sagadahoc face challenges related to mental health, loneliness, and isolation



MIYHS 2023

Recent research indicates that youth in Sagadahoc County face greater challenges related to their mental health and well-being than students statewide. According to the most recent Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS), in 2023 **41% of high school students in Sagadahoc County said they felt sad or hopeless** for two or more weeks in the past year. Although this rate decreased since the 2021 MIYHS survey, it is higher than the statewide rate (35%) and rates in every other Maine county. Additionally, while 50% of all high school students in Maine reported feeling like they mattered in 2023, only 46% did in Sagadahoc. However, 34% of high school students in Sagadahoc reported seeking help from an adult when they felt sad or hopeless, a significant improvement compared to previous years, and higher than the rate of 32% of students statewide.<sup>3</sup> These data indicate that while young people in Sagadahoc face greater challenges related to mental health, loneliness, and isolation, there are opportunities to build on protective factors and get youth the help they need.

In 2024, 27 youth in Sagadahoc County were referred to the Maine Department of Corrections Juvenile Services Division<sup>4</sup> and in 2023, 20 youth were removed from their families and placed in foster care.<sup>5</sup> While the number of system-involved youth in Sagadahoc County is relatively low, disparities in a sense of belonging and mental health are felt more acutely among them.

**System-involved youth** are an underserved population, including young people who come into contact with any system, such as the juvenile justice, child welfare, school discipline, and mental and behavioral health care systems. These youth typically have higher rates of behavioral health needs and face steeper obstacles as they transition to adulthood. Notably, youth of color, girls, and LGBTQ+ and gender nonconforming youth often make up a disproportionate percentage of system-involved populations<sup>6,7</sup> and face greater challenges related to their mental health and well-being. According to 2023 MIYHS data, 23% of high school students in Sagadahoc County considered suicide in the past 12 months. Statewide, 36% of LGBTQ+ students and 52% of transgender students reported they seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months.







In response to disparities felt by system-impacted youth, previous research in 2020<sup>8</sup> engaged community members to strategize responses so that all youth in Sagadahoc County could successfully transition to adulthood. Community feedback and the research identified key resources for system-involved youth in Sagadahoc County and discussed opportunities for investment in the region. Community participants in asset mapping in 2020 identified opportunity areas for a more robust community-based Continuum of Care. They suggested an increase in attention to school-based services such as health clinics, counseling, and social workers. They also identified opportunities for more youth development options, particularly around mentoring. Participants shared that housing and transportation affordability and availability presented barriers to accessing services and to overall individual well-being. The report highlighted many community-based organizations working to reduce barriers to services and to increase well-being for youth in Sagadahoc.

Participants in the Working Communities Challenge engagement activities identified many of these same themes, indicating the long-term investment necessary to create systems change. Making meaningful progress towards systems improvement and tracking that progress requires coordination between backbone organizations, community members, and public agency partners as well as dedicated sustainable funding to support the work.<sup>9</sup> This project highlighted the commitment of the Sagadahoc County area community to continue to engage in these efforts.

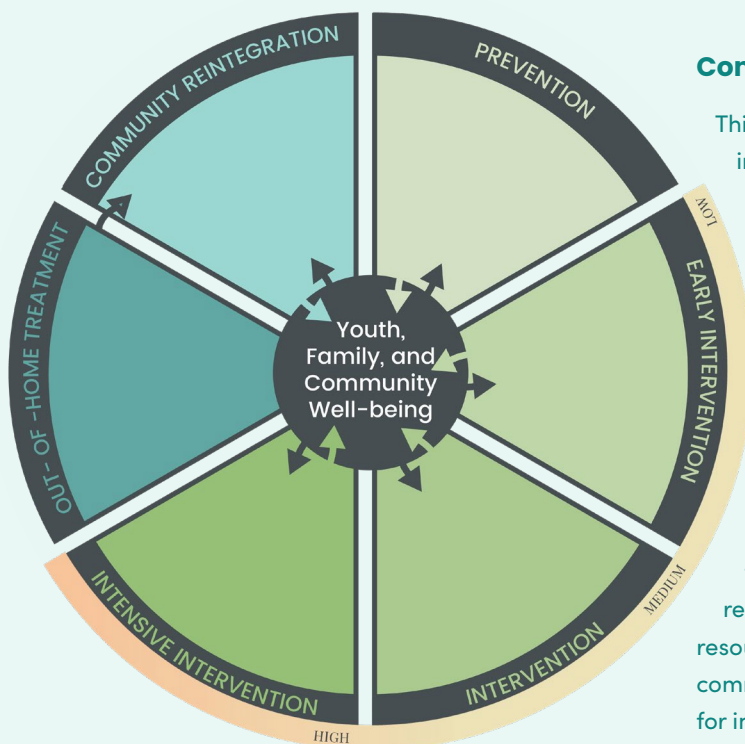
# Community Asset Mapping: A Framework for Shifting Local Power & Resources

**Community asset mapping** is a strengths-based approach to gathering information about community resources and needs through a combination of data analysis and community stakeholder engagement. Community asset mapping aims to increase opportunities for investment in response to community members' identified priorities.<sup>10</sup> In this report, a community's strengths or assets include programs and services, organizations, places, and individual people.

Although the process of community asset mapping looks different depending on a community's specific goals, typically it includes some common distinct elements.

**Community asset mapping aims to be strengths-based** to disrupt the deficit-based narrative that is often used when discussing under-resourced communities. To achieve this goal, the problem-solving process begins with a focus on a community's strengths and gifts. This strengths-based approach helps shift power to local, community-based organizations and, by extension, to community members.<sup>11</sup>

**Community asset mapping should also be place-based and community-led.** While external partners can offer expertise to support activities, the central ideas and decision-making power should be held by local community members. Additionally, it is critical to center the voices of those community members with lived experience. Clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of community members and organizations can help emphasize local voices, while allowing for collaboration with external partners.<sup>12</sup>



## Continuum of Care Framework

This report utilizes a Continuum of Care<sup>13</sup> framework to inform the community asset mapping process, findings, and recommendations. This framework aims to identify assets, gaps, and opportunities for investment along a range of resources and services available to support youth and families. A significant body of research points to strategic investments in a community-based Continuum of Care as the most effective way to keep youth out of systems, connect youth to opportunity pathways including education and work, and improve their sense of well-being and belonging.<sup>14</sup> The Continuum of Care framework identifies phases of need ranging from prevention and intervention, to out-of-home treatment and community re-integration. In an appropriately resourced Continuum of Care, youth would have access to resources to meet their needs and help them thrive in their chosen community. Community insight into the gaps and opportunities for investment along the continuum is a key outcome of the asset mapping process.

# Methods

In 2024, the Sagadahoc County Working Communities Challenge team engaged youth and adults in asset mapping activities related to resources in Sagadahoc County and surrounding areas. The team collected data from the engagement events through survey results, worksheets, posters, and written notes. In spring 2025, the project team shared anonymous data with Place Matters for an analysis guided by the following questions.

What are the assets, strengths, and opportunities along the Continuum of Care for youth and families in Sagadahoc County?

Where do youth and families turn to for help – both formal and informal supports – in Sagadahoc County?

What are the barriers that prevent youth and families from accessing those resources?

What are the opportunities for strengthening and expanding existing assets in Sagadahoc County?

In what ways have the assets identified in summer 2024 changed from the assets identified in 2020-2021?

## Data Collection and Analysis

### JOURNEY MAPPING EVENTS

In June 2024, United Way hosted a Journey Mapping event with 12 high school students participating in Upward Bound from Bath, coastal Washington County, and Lewiston-Auburn areas. Youth participated in a variety of individual and group activities such as answering worksheet questions, drawing individual maps, and creating a group map to dream up a fully resourced neighborhood. Activities were designed to help youth identify assets, challenges, and barriers in their communities. The Place Matters team used qualitative coding to analyze youths’ individual and group maps and their answers to the worksheet questions. All assets were categorized using the Continuum of Care and the broader community-based asset coding frameworks. Names were removed from journey maps for confidentiality.

### COMMUNITY ASSET SURVEY

Over a 3-month period in 2024, United Way surveyed adults and youth from Morse High School, Bath Middle School, and Richmond Middle and High School about formal and informal assets. Participants answered two questions: 1.) What are the places that are important to you and your family in your community? and 2.) Where do you go for help in your community when you are struggling? A total of 308 respondents generated 517 answers to the first question and 370 to the second. The Place Matters team received the survey data and analyzed it for themes.

**JOURNEY MAPPING**<sup>15</sup> is an arts-based narrative methodology that elicits youth life stories. Arts-based methods use creative works to allow young people to express themselves and articulate their life experiences in a less prescriptive manner. Art-based research uses techniques such as drawing, photography, film, theatre, music, or poetry to enable participants to express themselves in non-verbal ways.



## COMMUNITY DATA WALKS

The Working Communities Challenge team hosted two data walks with adult service providers and community members. In the first, service providers examined assets included in the Place Matters 2020 asset map which leveraged the Continuum of Care framework. Participants added new assets to the map and discussed barriers to accessing assets that already exist in their communities. The second data walk was open to the public and encouraged participants to reflect on data from the 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey about mental health, substance use, and protective factors among middle and high school students in Sagadahoc County. Both events generated a list of assets, barriers, and opportunities that informed the recommendations in this report.

## COMMUNITY ASSET MAP DATABASE

To supplement the data gathered during the community engagement events, the Place Matters team built on the community asset map from 2020, a database of assets including the phase of the continuum addressed, the service area, and relevant contact information for each asset. The Place Matters team conducted online research to update and verify the list of assets, including searching public databases and organization websites to confirm information. The final 2025 map includes both this research and new assets identified through the Working Communities Challenge community engagement events.

## DEFINING AND CODING ASSETS

Participants identified a range of assets through a variety of community engagement formats and events. The Place Matters team used two broad frameworks to categorize and code these assets. The first was the Continuum of Care, where formal assets were coded with the six continuum categories as applicable. In addition, the Place Matters team adapted a broader framework from the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute.<sup>16</sup> The codes, definitions, and examples that guide this framework are outlined in the box to the right.

### Asset Based Community Development Codes, Definitions, & Examples

- ▶ **Businesses:** Organizations that operate for a profit (e.g., restaurants, shops, grocery stores).
- ▶ **Community-Based Organizations:** An organization, typically nonprofit, that has a vested interest in the local population served and serves people within a specific geographic area/community.
- ▶ **Community Spaces:** Public, physical places that facilitate interaction and connection (e.g., public parks, downtown areas, trails).
- ▶ **Culture/Values:** The held beliefs and qualities of a place or community.
- ▶ **Government Resources:** Specific government programs that support individuals and families and are funded at the local, state, or federal level (e.g., SNAP, WIC).
- ▶ **Individuals:** Individual people identified by participants who provide support, such as a parent, friend, or mentor.
- ▶ **Institutions:** Local organizations of paid staff with physical buildings that offer free services or programs typically supported by public funding (e.g., schools and libraries).
- ▶ **Natural Features:** Unmodified elements of a landscape (e.g., public beaches, lakes, rivers).
- ▶ **Networks:** Locally tailored methods, both in-person and virtual, for sharing and accessing resources (e.g., Maine's 211, Online Groups).
- ▶ **Residents' Associations:** Small, voluntary groups led by residents (e.g., churches, block clubs).
- ▶ **Service Providers:** Organizations that offer a particular service or treatment program, often related to health and well-being (e.g., hospitals, counseling, substance use disorder treatment).



## Limitations

While these data provide important insights for the landscape in Sagadahoc County, the insights are limited in scope. This report intends to present a picture of the assets and opportunities identified by participants; subsequently, there are programs, services, and organizations doing beneficial work in Sagadahoc County and surrounding areas that were not captured by this process. Additionally, this report is not intended as an evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs identified as this type of analysis is beyond its scope. Finally, the findings and recommendations that emerged from this process are intended to inform next steps for key project partners, organizations, and policymakers focused on Sagadahoc County. Community engagement efforts were intended to engage young people and were not designed for research purposes; therefore, findings from these data are not generalizable and should be considered within the context of the community engagement events themselves.



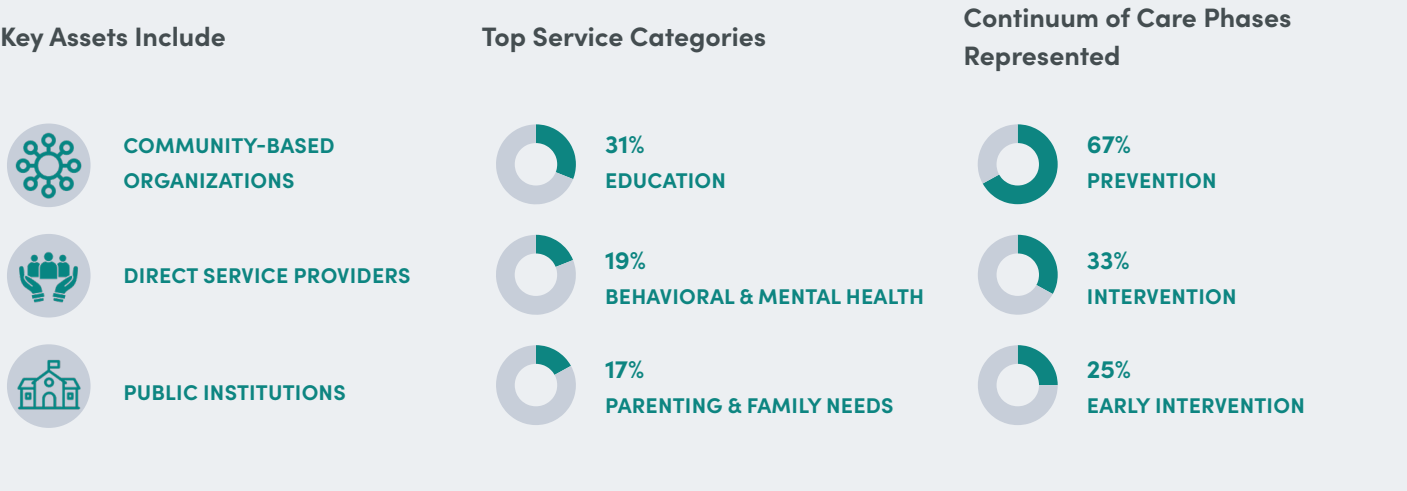
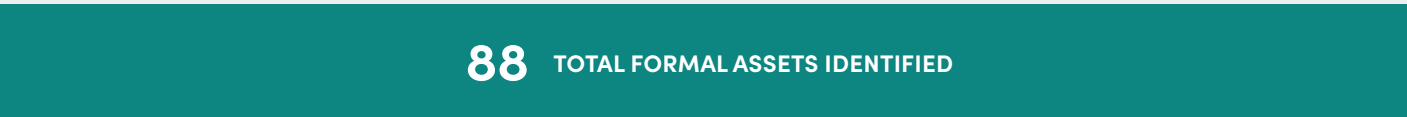
# Findings

## Local Strengths and Community Assets Supporting Youth

Overall, 88 formal assets serving Sagadahoc County were identified through the data collection and community engagement activities.<sup>i</sup> Key assets identified include community-based organizations like Bath Area YMCA and Midcoast Youth Center, direct service providers like Clarvida Maine and Spurwink, and public institutions like the local schools. Most of the assets identified (67%) offer services related to the prevention phase of the Continuum of Care; 25% relate to early intervention and 33% relate to intervention. The most commonly offered supports relate to education (31%), behavioral and mental health (19%), and parenting and family needs (17%). The figures below show the distribution of assets across the phases of the continuum and their primary service areas.

### AT-A-GLANCE

### Sagadahoc County Community Assets



<sup>i</sup> This includes assets that are serving Sagadahoc County but may be located in another part of the state (42 are physically located in Sagadahoc). Only formal assets (specific organizations) are included in this list. Informal supports are discussed later in this report.

TABLE 1. Community assets survey and journey mapping participants identified the following:

Community-Identified Assets	Important Places n=517	Go for Help n=370	Journey Mapping n=163
INSTITUTIONS	137	82	34
COMMUNITY SPACES	183	13	42
COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS	94	99	5
BUSINESSES	57	8	49
INDIVIDUALS	3	104	1
RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS	17	24	5
NATURAL FEATURES	18	0	19
SERVICE PROVIDERS	4	22	4
GOVERNMENT RESOURCES	3	8	3
CULTURES/VALUES	2	0	1

Community participants identified a range of formal and informal supports to promote well-being.

Through the survey and journey mapping activities, the formal assets named commonly included community spaces, public institutions, and businesses revealing the importance of recreational activities in the lives of youth and adult community members. Additionally, responses from both activities underscore how informal supports, such as personal connections, support youth and community members in times of need. The journey mapping activity also revealed the many layers that help youth feel connected to a place: home (and individuals who live there); the businesses and institutions they enjoy going to or that provide formal support like a job or education; and the places they go that feel fun and expansive, including community-based organizations, the skate park, and other outdoor spaces. Youth responses suggest that having adequate access to and feeling a sense of belonging in all of these spaces promotes their overall well-being.

The table above shows the distribution of assets named in response to both survey questions and prompts during the journey mapping activities. Participants interpreted these questions in different ways and many individuals named multiple assets in response to each question, resulting in a range of responses.

As demonstrated in the table, responses to both survey questions and results from the Journey Mapping activity revealed that community members rely on both formal and informal supports when they need help and to feel a connection to the place they are from. The National

Wraparound Initiative describes formal supports as those that are invested in the outcomes and interests of the individual they formally represent. To this end, they are typically focused on providing pre-defined interventions and supports and are accessible during regular business hours rather than during times that families are naturally together. In contrast, informal supports are tied to the interests and outcomes related to a family's hopes and dreams. They are more involved in the daily life of a young person in natural ways and can subsequently support them during times that fit with the rhythm of a young person's life.<sup>17</sup>

Most assets do not fall neatly into only one category or another, and they may incorporate elements of both formal and informal supports to respond to the needs of a young person and their family. Rather, youth benefit from a combination of formal and informal supports. A report on the factors that predict high school completion describes how social supports from multiple sources buffer the effects of adverse life experiences. Relationships that provide both emotional (nurturing students through challenging times) and instrumental (connecting students to resources and opportunities) support are a strong predictor of graduation without interruption.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, assets identified through this project provide a blend of support that ranges in formality to respond to the variety of needs expressed by young people.



## Youth frequently named recreational and community spaces as important to them.

Responses demonstrate the role of community spaces and recreation in the lives of community members in Sagadahoc County. Youth in particular need safe recreational places where they can socialize with their peers and benefit from personal connections and networks of support. Among the 517 assets named, the most common were recreational community spaces, such as the Waterfront Park (43 mentions, 8%), playgrounds (29, 6%), other public parks (28, 5%), and the skate park (14, 3%). The Bath Area YMCA was named 54 times (15%), and the Midcoast Youth Center was named 15 times (4%) in response to the question about what places are important to individuals and their families. Journey mapping participants highlighted similar assets, with public, outdoor spaces among the most commonly identified assets, ranging from official public places like Maine Street in Bath and recreational spaces like the skate park, to more individualized spaces like “my road” or “the farm.”

“

I love Mid Coast Youth Center. I’ve spent a lot of time there during my Freshman and Senior year.

—YOUTH PARTICIPANT



## Access to supportive individuals and known community-based organizations bolsters support for youth in times of need.

While many places and organizations are important in times of need, answers to the second survey question suggest that when community members are struggling, their first thought is to reach out to a trusted person in their network for help. Responses also point to the important role of key community-based organizations with a strong reputation for providing connections to resources including basic needs. In addition to the survey responses, a journey mapping participant said that one of the good things in their community is “*how close everyone is and how strong the community is as well*”.

When asked where they go for help, the most common assets identified were individuals and community-based organizations, though some also named public institutions and service providers. Among the individuals identified, participants mentioned family members (39, 11%), friends (36, 10%), and neighbors (9, 2%). Commonly named organizations for help included Midcoast Maine Community Action (21, 6%), the Bath Area Food Bank (17, 5%), the Midcoast Youth Center (14, 4%), the Salvation Army (11, 3%), and the Bath Area YMCA (10, 3%).

## Youth commonly named “home” as an important place for them.

The journey mapping activity underscored the importance of home for young people. Of the 172 responses to worksheet questions as part of the asset mapping activity, 18 (10%) included the words “home” or “house”. Often, the places where youth reported going after school or getting together in groups centered around their own home, a friend’s, or an extended family member’s home. For example, in talking about where they go after school one participant wrote, *“I go home, to decompress and watch my brother when my mom works.”* Another wrote, *“I usually have clubs after school, or I go home.”* On the maps youth drew, almost all participants identified their current home and sometimes included the places they lived in the past. Notably, youth from the Lewiston-Auburn areas named places like their own, friends’, or families’ homes more frequently than youth from other areas.

## Public institutions and service providers play a role in providing help.

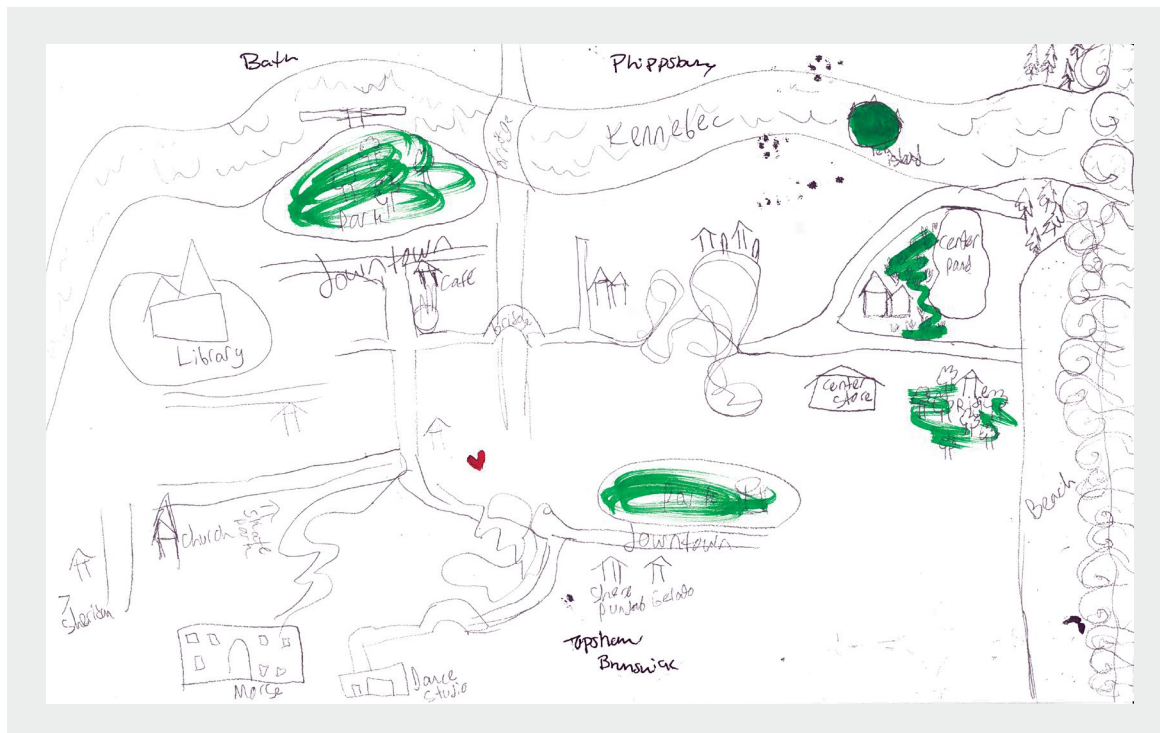
Public institutions were frequently named as important places for youth and families. Some of the most commonly identified in response to the first survey question were local libraries (76, 15%) and schools (45, 9%). In response to the second survey question, participants said they go to public institutions including schools (21, 6%), libraries (13, 4%), and the Police Department (10, 3%) for help. Most of the named service providers had to do with counseling, either at school, through a social worker, or through a therapist (14, 4%). Institutions like schools, libraries, police stations, and town offices appeared on youth journey maps as well. School was the most common public institution identified by youth in the journey mapping activities as a resource. Some participants listed “school” broadly in response to questions or identified schools on their maps during the group activity. This underscores the importance of schools as a community resource, especially in more rural areas.



## Youth rely on businesses as places to go for fun and socialization.

Youth participants identified broad categories of business as assets as well as specific ones related to their own towns and neighborhoods. For instance, stores, restaurants, and gas stations were all identified through the group mapping activity. Youth also named specific businesses, ranging from local ones like Cafe Creme (Bath) and the House of Pizza (Lewiston-Auburn), to bigger chains like Subway, Hannaford, and 7-Eleven as places where they like to go. Many youth emphasized that they go to local businesses for fun because there is not much else to do in their town. As one youth said, *“We don’t have much of anything in our town. A few towns over we have a Walmart and Tractor Supply. That’s pretty much it.”*





## Natural features and outdoor spaces help youth feel more connected to the places they are from.

Natural features and outdoor spaces were identified explicitly through survey questions and appeared consistently on individual and group maps. Youth identified landmarks such as the Kennebec River, Center Pond, and more general kinds of outdoor spaces like the beach and the forest. Some participants shared outdoor spaces more specific to their own families or communities. One respondent shared that they spend time “on our land in the woods or on our farm.” Another participant referred to a swimming spot near their house as a place they frequently go. Excerpts from one map shown above demonstrate the role natural features play in participants’ ideas about the places they are from. Overall, the responses and map display the range of assets from more widely recognized places like the Kennebec River to places that may be more personal or individually significant.

While all youth named outdoor spaces and natural features as important places in their communities, youth from more rural areas were more likely to talk about outdoor spaces during the Journey Mapping activity. Generally, respondents from more rural places cited fewer things to do involving formal assets that were not businesses. Instead, outdoor places related to their own home or street and nearby swimming spots emerged in response to questions about important places or where they go outside after school. By contrast, survey and written responses from young people in Brunswick and Bath made more frequent reference to park areas or well-known landmarks that may have more public funding to maintain or promote them. These responses provide insight into the places youth seek out and can provide a baseline for local leaders who seek to improve accessibility to existing outdoor spaces.

# Gaps and Barriers Impacting Youth Well-Being

Like the barriers identified by community members in the Midcoast region in 2020, participants in the Working Community Challenge events pointed out key systemic barriers that impact youth well-being. Their feedback highlights gaps in services in Sagadahoc County and the surrounding areas. Many participants emphasized the toll that substance use takes on their communities, the widespread use of drugs and alcohol, and the impact of both on community safety. Youth in more urban areas also noted that frequent crime and conflict among various groups in their community make them feel unsafe. Both youth and adults discussed the high cost of living, rising housing costs, and lack of workforce opportunities as challenges for youth and young adults. Youth also highlighted a lack of recreational activities and youth-specific spaces.

## Many youth feel unsafe due to substance use and a lack of trust among people in their communities.

During the Journey Mapping activity, youth participants were asked to individually list strengths and issues and then synthesize their list as a group. Youth commonly named challenges related to community safety and substance use, including drugs, alcohol, and parties. Some individual responses generally referred to *"lots of drug use"* as a problem in their community. However, youth from different areas described different types of challenges that influenced their sense of safety. Participants from the Lewiston-Auburn area and some from coastal Washington County more frequently indicated crime, inter-personal and inter-group conflict, drugs, and alcohol as issues in their communities.

Overall, youth responses highlighted a desire to feel safer in public places. One young person wrote, *"I avoid places that seem unsafe because of not being able to trust others."* Other responses also indicated a lack of a sense of safety in public spaces like parks or downtown areas. One youth shared that they avoid the parks because they do not feel safe around the men that are there. Another shared that they avoid most places in town because the drug problem is so bad, they feel unsafe. Importantly, responses to other prompts demonstrated that youth participants have a strong interest in being comfortable, safe, and free to express themselves in public spaces like parks.

### YOUTH PARTICIPANTS REPORT

“

I avoid places that seem unsafe because of not being able to trust others.

“

I could label where the crime usually happens.

“

Downtown is scary.



## **Adults and youth described a community with rising costs of living, unaffordable housing, and a lack of workforce opportunities.**

Across all events, participants identified the high cost of living, limited housing, and workforce constraints as issues that impact their quality of life. At the Community Asset Mapping event with providers in June 2024, participants pointed to a lack of workforce opportunities as a key barrier across the Continuum of Care. In their responses to questions and other prompts during the Journey Mapping activity, youth demonstrated an awareness of the cost of living and housing availability as systemic barriers in their communities. One young person wrote *“Not cheap”* under a list of community issues, and another group identified homelessness and expenses as two key issues. Notably, youth visioning for how to address the issues in their communities focused less on the specifics of what it would take to alleviate these larger systemic challenges. Instead, they emphasized access to resources and to public spaces. Multiple maps made a connection between green spaces, the waterfront, and food procurement. One group included an apple orchard on their map, and had a conversation that addressed how the orchard could be a safe place for people experiencing homelessness or fighting food insecurity.

### **YOUTH PARTICIPANTS REPORT**

“

**There is no dedicated spot for older teens.**

“

**We have parks in our town but they don’t really get used.**

“

**Have to go out of town to do fun activities.**

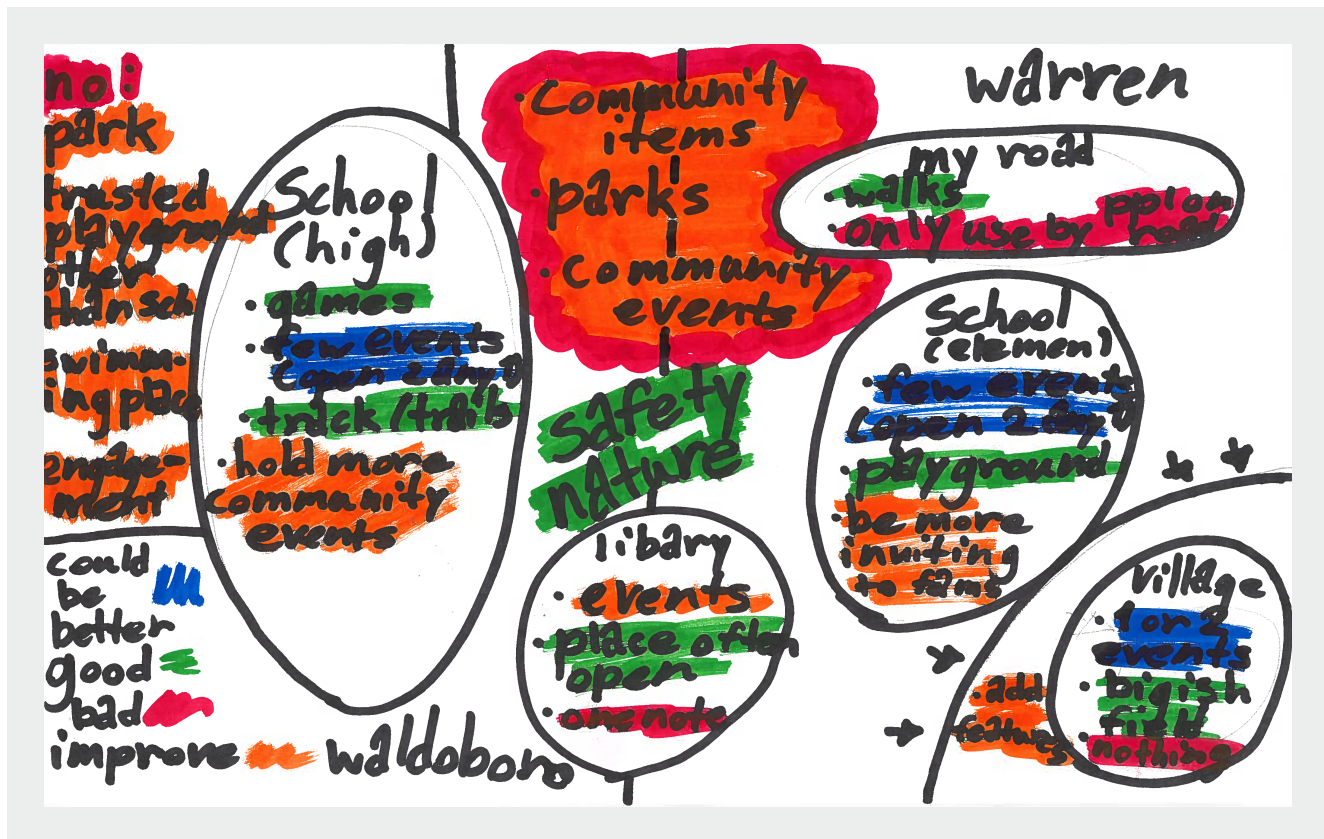
## **Older youth need more recreational spaces and free time for pro-social activities.**

The most commonly expressed need among youth participants in the Journey Mapping event was for community spaces that foster connection and opportunities for older teens. Their comments highlighted the connection between access to these kinds of spaces and experiencing a sense of belonging. However, many young people noted a lack of recreational spaces, and a lack of free time as barriers. Many specified that boredom and having “nothing to do” for older youth prevents them from feeling connected to their community.

Responses to Journey Mapping prompts revealed that youth spend their time outside school in more structured spaces, alone, or with friends. Some answered that they spend time in after-school clubs and sports; others shared answers related to work or household responsibilities; and others shared that they go home to rest. Only a small number of youth answered that they spend time exploring or hanging out with friends, and some responses underscore the lack of time and space youth have for play and exploration in their lives. In response to the question, *“Where do you go after school?”* one youth answered, *“Nowhere, I’m always busy.”* As mentioned above, a few young people who live in more rural areas highlighted the importance of feeling a connection to the place where their own individual home is and hang out on land close to their own home. As was common across responses, these did not explicitly reference friends or community.

While the foundations for connection and community-building are available, youth want to see more opportunities to foster these important relationships. In the group activity, most of the “issues” that the second group identified related to a limited sense of belonging and a lack of community spaces. They included:

- ▶ No inclusive spaces to hang out.
- ▶ Nothing to bring people closer.
- ▶ Not very homey (lots of tourists)
- ▶ Everything closes early (5pm)
- ▶ No place to hang out for teens.



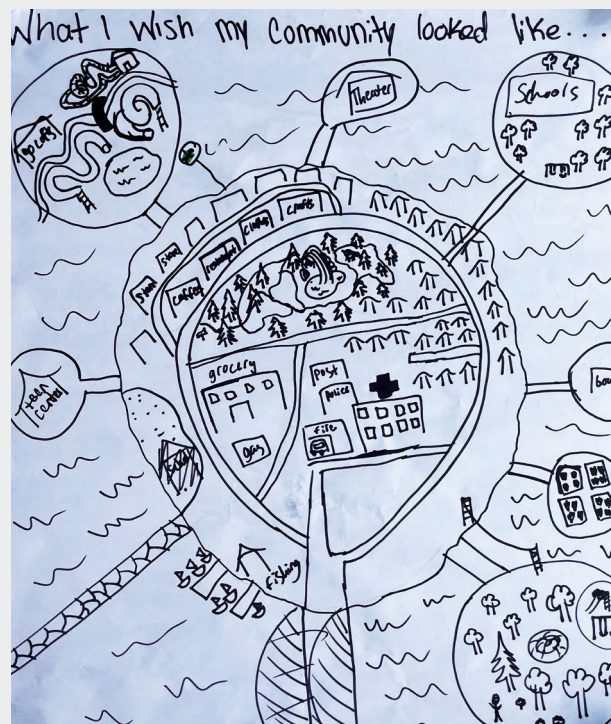
Individual responses reflected similar sentiments. One youth shared that they have to go out of town to do fun activities. Another wrote that issues included, "Opportunities. Places for older teens. Not many things to do." One response to the question about places youth avoid shared, "Lately I avoid [Organization Redacted] because there are mostly little kids there and not just teens like it used to be so it's not so much fun anymore [sic]." Even though many young people listed this same place as an asset, this comment highlights the need for spaces that are suited to the specific needs of older teens.

One young person's journey map adds depth to the expressed need for more connection through public, community places. This young person color-coded community assets on a scale- "good, could be better, bad, improve." Almost all areas for improvement relate to community places for gathering with other people: parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, and community events. Of the community spaces that do exist, such as the elementary school playground and some public events, this young person pointed out how they could be more inviting to families.

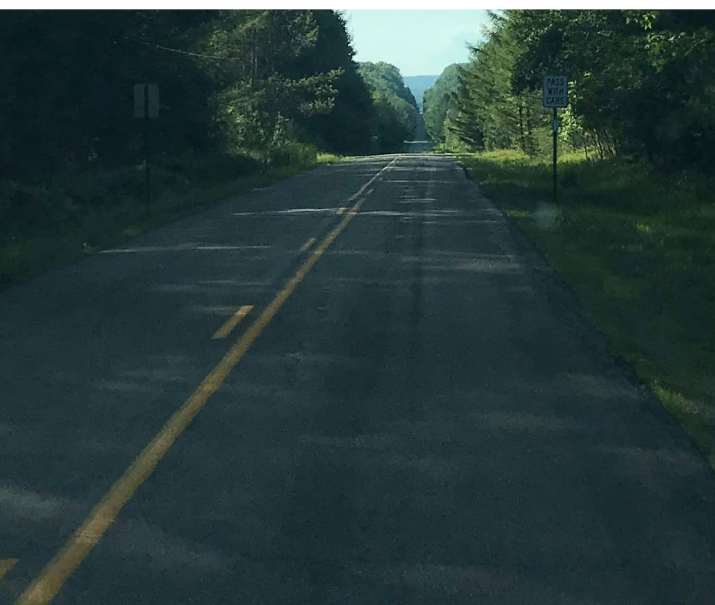
# Opportunities for Investing in Youth Well-Being

The strengths, assets, barriers, and challenges identified in Sagadahoc County and surrounding communities point to opportunities for investment that could improve youth well-being, connection, and belonging. Youth and adult participants shared many informal supports and resources in their communities. Still, youth indicated a need for more opportunities for connection and for spaces that promote full self-expression and community building.

Many youth comments revealed that connecting to others is a value they observe within their communities. One young person shared as a strength, *“Everyone stays cautious and aware of each other,”* and this theme of community members watching out for each other also arose during one of the group discussions. The importance of ample access to outdoor spaces as an opportunity to build community was clear in one group’s ideal community map, where more formal assets were drawn on a central island surrounded by forests, shoreline, and a fishing dock. As discussed in the previous section, youth want more opportunities to use those spaces to build connections with each other.







Community spaces, including parks, beaches, libraries, school playgrounds, and community-based organizations were common features in survey responses and on Journey Maps, indicating the importance of third places to community members in Sagadahoc County. Youth and community feedback outline a clear opportunity to invest in third places to promote positive youth development, connection, and sense of belonging. Across multiple locations, in response to the Journey Mapping worksheet question, *“Are there places where people get together in large groups?”* youth comments described the existence of parks and outdoor spaces, but that they are not very *“fit”* or *“appealing to the community”* and that they *“don’t really get used.”*

Additionally, youth and community participants identified schools as key players in cultivating third places. Youth named school spaces as important community hubs, and some of their responses encouraged schools to do more to make event spaces and playgrounds more accessible as community gathering locations. Adult community participants in the Data Walk noted that schools have an important role to play in bolstering protective factors. In the 2023 MIYHS survey, 66% of high school students in Sagadahoc County reported eating dinner with their parents five or more days a week, the same as Maine’s overall rate. Participants suggested schools could play a role by hosting community dinners and supporting parents and families.

Institutions and local governments that manage schools and parks also have a role to play in increasing access to third spaces for youth in Sagadahoc County. Working in tandem with young people to identify important community spaces and ensure those spaces are accessible to them has the potential to increase connection and a sense of belonging among youth in Sagadahoc County.

# Discussion & Recommendations

Youth in Sagadahoc County want to feel a sense of belonging and connection in their communities. They seek opportunities and places that facilitate their ability to explore and connect with each other and the wider community. These places can include outdoor spaces near their homes where they like to spend time; local businesses where they like to hang out; and community events tailored to youth. Services along the Continuum of Care have an opportunity to collaborate with informal supports and non-traditional formal supports like businesses to better address the full range of youth needs and goals. Youth also need access to assets that are responsive to the multiple layers of individual and systemic barriers, and mentors and resource navigators to help them access services. Furthermore, youth want to engage in their communities and need more opportunities to share their stories, ideas, and participate in local decision-making.

## Ensure youth have access to assets that respond to their individual, interpersonal, and community needs.

Youth and community members identified a variety of assets that support the ability of Sagadahoc County youth to access services, get help, feel more connected to other people, and foster a connection with their environments. The social-ecological model observes that adolescents' optimal development and well-being relies on a web of interacting factors, including individual, interpersonal, community, and societal influences.<sup>19</sup> This framework suggests that individual characteristics, relationships, and place all influence a young person's development and behavior. Additional macro-level societal and cultural norms further influence well-being. Research also shows that prevention and intervention strategies are more effective when they account for each of these social-ecological levels.<sup>20</sup>

Youth and community participants identified assets across the first three levels of the social-ecological model including home, friends, community spaces, and groups. They also identified greater cultural qualities related to places such as convenience, independence, and reliability. As organizations and policymakers consider how to coordinate between assets, engaging across all levels of this model will help improve outcomes for young people.

Strategies should consider the various needs for youth, including engagement with families, fostering connections, and creating a sense of belonging in the community. Further, programs and services should aim to address systemic barriers by centering equity and accessibility.

While it is unrealistic to imagine one program capable of addressing all of these needs and being a fit for all young people, ensuring that youth have access to a variety of assets and resources that support their holistic well-being can help improve their long-term outcomes. In practice, addressing the youth-identified challenge with substance use in the area may require significant investments in individual behavioral health services, peer support models, and mentorship programs as well as community engagement opportunities and harm reduction strategies that increase safety, and build community awareness and understanding. Supporting access to services for all youth by addressing barriers, including costs, can help alleviate existing systemic inequities and enable all Sagadahoc County youth to get the support they need to thrive and be well.

## Expand youth connections to informal supports, schools, and community spaces.

A key difference in takeaways from the 2020 Place Matters report, findings from the Working Communities Challenge asset mapping project emphasize the role of informal supports and community spaces over more formal services and community-based organizations. Suggestions from youth and communities about the function of informal supports have important implications for improving resource navigation in Sagadahoc County.

Informal supports can increase accessibility of resources by reducing barriers like stigma and complicated referral processes and by boosting awareness of available resources. They can also serve as resource navigators and connect youth to the resources they need to thrive, ranging from job and education to mental health services. Strategies for increasing accessibility and reducing stigma related to resource navigation include training individuals with pre-existing relationships with youth to be resource navigators, expanding peer support and mentorship programs, and hiring individuals with lived experience to provide navigation support.<sup>21</sup> On the youth and community survey, when asked, “Where do you go for help in your community?” participants most commonly named an individual in their personal life or an already known support professional like a counselor. Research from medical settings shows that when transitions from one provider to another occur with the patient and directly engage them, it improves appointment show rates and health outcomes and decreases social needs for child patients.<sup>22</sup> This “warm hand-off” process can be adapted to help connect youth at any stage of the Continuum of Care to improve access and engagement with community resources. Building the capacity for individuals with existing connections to youth to be able to guide them to formal supports has the potential to increase the accessibility of resources across the Continuum of Care.

Many youth and community members also had suggestions for how places like outdoor parks and schools can foster connections between youth and connect them to positive adult mentors and services.

Multiple youth participants talked about their schools as important community spaces, and some called on schools to focus more on engaging youth and their families. Adult community members also suggested that schools have the potential to fill in gaps and support families by providing meals or offering more casual community spaces for youth. Similarly, in the 2020 report, participants from Sagadahoc County recommended increasing school-based services including expanding school-based health clinics, counseling services, and social workers. Building the capacity of schools to act as a trusted resource for young people who have difficulty feeling a sense of belonging can reduce barriers to effective and equitable resource navigation in these critical youth-serving spaces. For rural communities especially, schools are an important space and resource which can fill a need for collective gathering, networking, and community building.

Additionally, expanding access to community spaces outside of schools can help fill gaps for youth in the Sagadahoc County area. These “third places,” are a core setting for informal public life beyond home, work, and school. These spaces offer connection, community, sociability, and civic engagement.<sup>23</sup> For youth, third places help develop a sense of community and self, as well as a consciousness of the greater world.<sup>24</sup> Research indicates that access to third places can help bolster positive youth development and protect against risk factors such as contact with law enforcement and substance use.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, third places have an important role to play in the lives of youth who experience marginalization because they can provide the flexibility to affirm young people who might not feel supported at home, school, or work.<sup>26</sup> Like the assets named in the survey, third places for youth might include after-school programs, extracurricular activities, sports, libraries, and clubs. Community-based organizations can also act as third spaces offering recreational activities, mentorship programs, and after-school activities. Informal assets, schools, and third places together represent a suite of opportunities for youth to connect to community and to resources that meet youth where they feel comfortable.



## Continue to center youth voice and expand opportunities for youth to be more involved in decision-making.

Centering youth voice was a strength of the Working Communities Challenge community asset mapping, which has implications for next steps to increase hope and to improve the accessibility and quality of services along the Continuum of Care. Youth engagement should continue to guide future efforts to improve accessibility of resources and, more broadly, youth well-being in Sagadahoc County. Young people in the Sagadahoc County area are interested in civic engagement and more opportunities for youth participation in local decision-making could help develop a sense of belonging and foster more positive connections with adults and peers.

Research shows that youth engagement in policymaking and systems change provides benefits for both individual young people and the community. Not only does youth engagement lead to more effectively designed services, but it has also been shown to improve well-being, self-esteem, and sense of belonging among youth. It even decreases the likelihood of young people engaging in behaviors such as substance use.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, engaging youth in their communities has positive impacts on academic success and career opportunities. Civic engagement also helps youth develop connections and build trust with others in their community while fostering a sense of responsibility.<sup>28</sup>

Opportunities for youth civic engagement should focus on creating authentic means of participation that offer mutual benefits and avoid tokenism. A 2007 report highlights the various ways that youth can be engaged in local communities, including youth development and leadership opportunities, community service, civic activism, and full community decision-making.<sup>29</sup> Meaningful engagement ensures that youth are not only given an opportunity to voice their opinions but also empowered to make decisions and allocate resources to create authentic change in their communities. One strategy for empowering youth to participate could include giving youth seats on boards or creating youth-specific councils to advise adult decision-makers. For these efforts to be effective, youth must be given equal votes and authority as adult members to fully participate.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, youth should be compensated similarly to adult participants. Other ways to engage youth in systems change conversation could involve using digital platforms and technologies, which has been shown to greatly improve the participation and engagement of youth in policy processes.<sup>31</sup>

# Conclusion

Through multiple community engagement efforts, the Working Communities Challenge team collected insights offered by community members, including youth, in Sagadahoc County and surrounding areas. This included information about the facilitators of and barriers to youth hope, belonging, and well-being. Like findings from previous research in the Midcoast region, housing affordability, transportation access, high costs, and workforce shortages remain barriers to accessing services for community members. Youth responses also demonstrated a desire to connect to one another and to feel safe, comfortable, and free to explore their identities and their roles in their communities. While youth identified some existing community spaces where this kind of connection could take place—such as local parks, community-based organizations, and downtown areas—they want these spaces to be more welcoming, safe, and accessible. Schools and community-based organizations have an important role to play in cultivating community spaces where youth can connect to one another, interact with positive mentors, and learn about resources to support them and connect them to opportunities.

Going forward, stakeholders in Sagadahoc County can improve accessibility to youth-serving assets by continuing to engage young people in decision-making. Local leaders seeking to design resource coordination and navigation programs to enhance youth connection and hopefulness will be most effective working collaboratively with youth with lived experience related to behavioral health, mental health, homelessness, or other systems. The high level of engagement from youth and adults during this project demonstrated that community members of all ages in Sagadahoc County are proud of the strengths in their communities and eager to work together to build communities that can fully support all young people as they grow into adulthood.



# Appendices

## Appendix A. List of places and resources that are important to community members

### Resources Identified by Participants in Bath

- ▶ 211
- ▶ Adults
- ▶ After Schools Activities
- ▶ American Legion in Bath
- ▶ Amusement Parks
- ▶ Anywhere we can be together
- ▶ Basketball Courts
- ▶ Bath
- ▶ Bath Area Food Bank
- ▶ Bath Food Kitchen
- ▶ Bath Housing
- ▶ Bath Police
- ▶ Bath Recreation
- ▶ Bath Sports Fields
- ▶ Beaches
- ▶ Bike Paths
- ▶ BIW
- ▶ Book Stores
- ▶ Brackett's Market
- ▶ Business Men/Women
- ▶ Café Crème
- ▶ Celebrate Recovery (45 Floral St)
- ▶ Child Development Services
- ▶ Children's Mentors/ Coaches
- ▶ Church
- ▶ City
- ▶ City Hall
- ▶ CMP Services
- ▶ Coaches
- ▶ Community Areas
- ▶ Community Elders
- ▶ Community Events
- ▶ Community Food Pantry
- ▶ Community Health
- ▶ Community members
- ▶ Community Organizations
- ▶ Community Pages on Facebook
- ▶ Community Water Park
- ▶ Convenience
- ▶ Counseling
- ▶ Covid Grocery Delivery
- ▶ Coworkers
- ▶ Department of Veterans Affairs
- ▶ Dike Newell School
- ▶ Doctor
- ▶ Dog Park
- ▶ Donations
- ▶ Downtown
- ▶ Downtown Areas
- ▶ Downtown Bath Events
- ▶ Downtown shops
- ▶ Eateries
- ▶ Events
- ▶ Facebook Groups
- ▶ Family
- ▶ Family Activities
- ▶ Farmer's Market
- ▶ Farmwing Parkway
- ▶ Fire Department
- ▶ Fishing Spots
- ▶ Food Bank
- ▶ Fountain Shop
- ▶ Free programs for Kids
- ▶ Freight Shed
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ Friends through children's sports
- ▶ Front Street
- ▶ Front Street Shops
- ▶ Fuel Assistance
- ▶ Fun
- ▶ Fun events
- ▶ GED
- ▶ Georgetown Aftercare Program
- ▶ Get together
- ▶ Goddard's Pond
- ▶ Golf Course
- ▶ Grocery Stores
- ▶ Guidance Counselors



## CONTINUED

- ▶ Hannaford
- ▶ Healthcare services
- ▶ Healthy Lincoln
- ▶ Helpline
- ▶ Hiking Trails
- ▶ Home
- ▶ Housing Services
- ▶ Immigrant Resource Center
- ▶ JJ Parker @ MMCA
- ▶ JR Maxwell's
- ▶ Kid Friendly Events
- ▶ Libraries
- ▶ Libraries Park
- ▶ Local Bath Restaurants
- ▶ Local businesses
- ▶ Local Hospitals
- ▶ Local organizations
- ▶ Local Playgrounds
- ▶ Local Shops
- ▶ Main St. Bath Events
- ▶ Main St. Bath Organization
- ▶ Maine Maritime Museum
- ▶ MCC
- ▶ MCMA
- ▶ McMann & Morse Fields
- ▶ Midcoast Hunger Prevention Program
- ▶ Midcoast Youth Center
- ▶ Music
- ▶ My House
- ▶ Neighbors
- ▶ Never needed to
- ▶ New Hope
- ▶ Not aware of any services
- ▶ Nurses
- ▶ Ocean
- ▶ Online Community
- ▶ Outdoor Fun
- ▶ outdoors
- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Parks
- ▶ Parks and Rec
- ▶ People
- ▶ People to People (Damariscotta)
- ▶ PFL
- ▶ Pharmacies
- ▶ Playgrounds
- ▶ Police Department
- ▶ Popham Beach
- ▶ Preserves
- ▶ PTA
- ▶ Public Dock
- ▶ Public Transportation
- ▶ Readily Available Assistance
- ▶ Recreational Department
- ▶ Red Envelope
- ▶ Reny's
- ▶ Restaurants
- ▶ RSU1 Faculty
- ▶ RSU1 Schools
- ▶ Rumpus Room (Brunswick)
- ▶ Safe place for kids
- ▶ Sagadahoc Communications
- ▶ Salvation Army
- ▶ School Board resources
- ▶ School Counselors
- ▶ School Recreation
- ▶ School Resources
- ▶ Schools
- ▶ Schools Case Workers
- ▶ Schools RSU resources
- ▶ Schools Staff
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Shaws
- ▶ Shops
- ▶ Skate Park
- ▶ Skate Parks
- ▶ Small Businesses
- ▶ Social Worker
- ▶ Sports
- ▶ Sports Fields
- ▶ Sports Teams
- ▶ State
- ▶ Sweetser
- ▶ Swimming
- ▶ Take a 2nd job with Door Dash
- ▶ Teachers
- ▶ Tedford
- ▶ Teen Mental Health Groups
- ▶ Bath Area YMCA
- ▶ The Downtown Community inc.
- ▶ The Fountain
- ▶ The Freight Shed
- ▶ The Sweet Shoppe
- ▶ The Synagogue
- ▶ The Xylophone
- ▶ Therapist
- ▶ Thorne's Head Preserve
- ▶ Town

## CONTINUED

- ▶ Town Hall
- ▶ Town Office
- ▶ Toy Store
- ▶ Trails
- ▶ Treasure Island Toys
- ▶ Trolley
- ▶ Trouble with WIC
- ▶ United Way of Midcoast Maine
- ▶ Veggie Van
- ▶ Walmart
- ▶ Waterfront Activities
- ▶ Waterfront Park
- ▶ WIC
- ▶ Wilson's
- ▶ Wiskeag Trail
- ▶ YMCA
- ▶ Youth Center

## Resources Identified by Participants in Richmond

- ▶ 211
- ▶ American Legion
- ▶ Church
- ▶ Community gardens
- ▶ Counseling
- ▶ Dairy Treat
- ▶ Doctor
- ▶ Family
- ▶ Family Activities
- ▶ Food Bank
- ▶ Food Pantry
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ Grocery Stores
- ▶ Home
- ▶ Ice Cream Shop
- ▶ Keeping Safe
- ▶ Libraries
- ▶ Local Businesses
- ▶ Outdoor activities
- ▶ Play groups
- ▶ Playgrounds
- ▶ Richmond Area Food Pantry
- ▶ Richmond Facebook Group
- ▶ Richmond Waterfront
- ▶ Schools
- ▶ Sports Fields
- ▶ Town Hall
- ▶ Town Office
- ▶ Waterfront Park

## Appendix B. List of formal supports in sagadahoc county

### Formal Supports in Sagadahoc County

- ▶ Art Van
- ▶ Bath Area Food Bank
- ▶ Bath Housing
- ▶ Bath Middle School
- ▶ Bath Parks and Recreation
- ▶ Bath Recreation
- ▶ Bath Skate Park Center
- ▶ Bath Tech
- ▶ Bath YMCA
- ▶ Big Brothers Big Sisters
- ▶ Camden Rotary Club - Interact Program
- ▶ Celebrate Recovery (Church of the Midcoast)
- ▶ Child Development Services
- ▶ Chocolate Church Arts Center
- ▶ Clarvida Maine
- ▶ Crisis and Counseling Centers
- ▶ Dike Newell School
- ▶ Discovery Boatbuilding- Maine Maritime Museum
- ▶ Families Can!
- ▶ Family Focus
- ▶ Fisher Mitchell School
- ▶ Headstart
- ▶ Healthy Communities MaineHealth Mid Coast Hospital
- ▶ Hyde School
- ▶ Immigrant Resource Center of Maine - Gender Based Violence Support
- ▶ Immigrant Resource Center of Maine - Housing Services
- ▶ Jobs For Maine's Graduates
- ▶ Kennebec Behavioral Health
- ▶ Kennebec Estuary Land Trust
- ▶ Kieve Wavus
- ▶ Maine Boys to Men
- ▶ Maine Children's Trust: Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention Councils
- ▶ Maine Connections Academy
- ▶ Maine Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
- ▶ Maine Parent Federation
- ▶ Merrymeeting Art Center
- ▶ Mid Coast Hospital
- ▶ Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program
- ▶ Midcoast Community Alliance
- ▶ Mid-Coast Early Childhood Center
- ▶ Midcoast Maine Community Action
- ▶ Midcoast Music Academy
- ▶ Midcoast Youth Center
- ▶ Midcoast Youth Theater
- ▶ MSAD 75 McKinney-Vento Resources
- ▶ NAMI Maine
- ▶ New Beginnings
- ▶ New Hope For Women Inc
- ▶ NFI North - Oliver Place
- ▶ OUT Maine
- ▶ Patten Free Library
- ▶ Peer Learning Community (Amistad)
- ▶ Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness
- ▶ REAL School
- ▶ Restorative Justice Project
- ▶ Richmond Area Food Pantry
- ▶ RSU1 McKinney-Vento Resources
- ▶ Salvation Army
- ▶ Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine
- ▶ Southern Midcoast Career Center
- ▶ Spark Dance Program
- ▶ Spurwink
- ▶ Strengthening Families
- ▶ Sweetser
- ▶ Sweetser Mobile Crisis Intervention
- ▶ Tedford Housing
- ▶ The American Red Cross - Northern New England Region
- ▶ The Opportunity Alliance
- ▶ The Rumpus Room
- ▶ Through These Doors
- ▶ Trekkers Inc.
- ▶ United Way of Mid Coast Maine
- ▶ University of Maine Cooperative Extension
- ▶ Veggie Van (Y Food Program)
- ▶ Wayfinder School
- ▶ Whole Families
- ▶ Youth LED Justice
- ▶ Youth Peer Support Statewide Network



# Endnotes

- 1 Sanchez, M., King, E., Schiller, S., and Foley, J. (2020). Asset Mapping in Midcoast Maine: Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, & Waldo Counties. University of Southern Maine. [https://placemattersmaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Place\\_Matters\\_midcoast\\_2023.pdf](https://placemattersmaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Place_Matters_midcoast_2023.pdf).
- 2 U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Quick Facts, Sagadahoc County, Maine. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sagadahoccountymaine/PST045223>. Accessed 12 May 2025.
- 3 Maine Department of Health and Human Services and Maine Department of Education. (2023). Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. <https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/2023-results>. Accessed 12 May 2025.
- 4 Maine Department of Corrections. (2025). MDOC Juvenile Data. Augusta, Maine. [https://www.maine.gov/corrections/sites/maine.gov.corrections/files/inline-files/2024%20JDO\\_1.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/corrections/sites/maine.gov.corrections/files/inline-files/2024%20JDO_1.pdf). Accessed 12 May 2025.
- 5 Maine Children's Alliance. (2024). Children in foster care by county of removal, 2016 –2023 in Maine. Kids Count Data Center. <https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/10548-children-in-foster-care-by-county-of-removal-2016-2023#detailed/5/3284-3299/false/2545/any/20302,20303>. Accessed 12 May 2025.
- 6 Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2014). Race for results: Building a path to opportunity for all children. <http://www.aecf.org/resources/race-for-results/>.
- 7 Movement Advancement Project, Center for American Progress, and Youth First. (2017). Unjust: LGBTQ youth incarcerated in the juvenile justice system. <https://www.lgbtmap.org/policy-and-issue-analysis/criminal-justice-youth-detention>.
- 8 Sanchez et al. (2020). Asset Mapping in Midcoast Maine.
- 9 Atkinson, T., Foley, J., & Rooks, J. (2025). Community Centered Funding Models for Maine. University of Southern Maine. <https://placemattersmaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Community-Centered-Funding-Models.pdf>.
- 10 Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. (1993). Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets. Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research.
- 11 Doner, A., Rosing, H., Hopes, K., & Dwyer-Voss R. (2017). Asset Mapping: a tool for mobilizing local assets and growing community power. Asset-Based Community Development Institute, Depaul University. <https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2022-07/tool-asset-mapping-user-guide.pdf> Accessed 22 April 2025.
- 12 Doner et al. (2017). Asset Mapping: a tool for mobilizing local assets.
- 13 Sanchez, M., King, E., & Ward, J. (2020). Aligning Investments in a Community-Based Continuum of Care for Maine Youth Transitioning to Adulthood. University of Southern Maine. <https://placemattersmaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AligningInvestments.pdf>
- 14 Heilbrun, K., Sevin, N., Redding, R. (2005). Juvenile Delinquency: Prevention, Assessment, and Intervention. Oxford University Press.
- 15 Layton, D., King, E., Foley, J., McMullan, S., and Sanchez, M. (2021). Mapping the Impact of Systems & Place on Youth Pathways. University of Southern Maine. <https://placemattersmaine.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Mapping-the-Impact-of-Systems-and-Places-on-Youth-Pathways.pdf>.
- 16 Doner et al. (2017). Asset Mapping: a tool for mobilizing local assets.
- 17 National Wraparound Initiative. (n.d.). Difference Between Formal and Informal Supports for Families. <https://nwi.pdx.edu/pdf/McIntyreDiffFormalInformalNatsupportListing3pp.pdf>.
- 18 Center for Promise (2015). Don't quit on me: What young people who left school say about the power of relationships. Washington, DC: America's Promise Alliance.
- 19 Crosby, R. A., Salazar, L. F., & DiClemente, R. J. (2013). Ecological approaches in the new public health. Health behavior theory for public health: principles, foundations, and applications. Jones & Bartlett Learning, 231–51.
- 20 Ibid.

- 21 The Tamarack Institute. (2024). Improving Youth Navigation. <https://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Youth-Service-Navigation-Guide.pdf>.
- 22 Sanderson, D., Braganza, S., Philips, K., Chodon, T., Whiskey, R., Bernard, P., Rich, A., & Fiori, K. (2021). Increasing Warm Handoffs: Optimizing Community Based Referrals in Primary Care Using QI Methodology. *Journal of primary care & community health*, 12, 21501327211023883. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21501327211023883>
- 23 Oldenburg. (1999). *The Great Good Place: Cafes, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a Community*. Marlowe and Company.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Woodland, Malcolm. (2008). Whatcha Doin' After School? A Review of the Literature on the Influence of After-School Programs on Young Black Males. *Urban Education*. 43. 537-560. [10.1177/0042085907311808](https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085907311808).
- 26 Littman, D.M. (2021). Third places, social capital, and sense of community as mechanisms of adaptive responding for young people who experience social marginalization. *The American Journal of Community Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12531>
- 27 Greater Good in Education. (2025). Civic Engagement for Students. [https://ggie.berkeley.edu/student-well-being/civic-engagement-for-students/#tab\\_\\_2](https://ggie.berkeley.edu/student-well-being/civic-engagement-for-students/#tab__2)
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2007). Engaging Youth in Community Decision Making. Annie E. Casey Foundation. <https://youthrex.com/toolkit/engaging-youth-in-community-decision-making/>.
- 30 National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. (2021). Global Youth Council Guide, Promoting Youth Voices in Local Decision-Making. <https://icma.org/documents/promoting-youth-voices-local-decision-making>.
- 31 United Nations. (2023, January). Promoting Youth Participation in Decision-Making and Public Service Delivery Through Harnessing Digital Technologies. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/papers/10.18356/27081990-149>

