Green Spaces, Blue Edges: An Open Space Plan for the City of Portland

Department of Planning and Urban Development, Portland, Maine

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GREEN SPACES, BLUE EDGES:
AN OPEN SPACE PLAN FOR THE
CITY OF PORTLAND

CHAPTER THREE:
NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILES AND
INVENTORY OF EXISTING RECREATION
AND OPEN SPACE FACILITIES
ISLANDS OF PORTLAND

The chain of islands within the City of Portland represents a unique ecological land form. While the City's mainland has matured into a comfortable mosaic of urban neighborhoods, the waters of Casco Bay have buffered the islands from much of mainland life providing a pastoral and rural enclave. Bill Caldwell, in his book, *Islands of Maine* eloquently speaks of the special character of islands along the Maine Coast.

"But the islands of Maine are far more than the historic roots where our nation really began, for more unique and lovely jewels of the North American coast. These islands are special havens where man's spirit is renewed, where a human is dwarfed by nature and timelessness, and yet finds a happy unison, instead of rivalry, with the universe.

Stand on a Maine island alone and feel the awesome glory of rock, sky and sea. On a peacock day in summer, these islands, more than most places on earth, can give world-stained mankind the healing balm of natural peace."

The islands within the City of Portland include Peaks, Great Diamond, Little Diamond, Cliff, Cushing, House, Fort Gorges and Jewell. While the mainland occupies a land area of ___ acres, the land of the islands total ___ acres. If one were to include the waters of Casco Bay, the islands would be almost ___ the size of the mainland.

Christopher Levett became the first white settler in Portland by building a stone shelter in 1623 on House Island, only three years after the Pilgrims settled in Plymouth. Although the islands were the first areas of Portland to be settled, they remained sparcely settled until the late 19th century when steamboats plied Casco Bay bringing tourists and cottage owners to their newly constructed island retreats.
The islands represent an unparalled recreation resource. Since the late 19th century when summer cottages, inns, hotels, amusement parks (on Peaks), were established and reliable ferry service became available, people have enjoyed the serenity and tranquility of the islands. The natural beauty of the coastline and the spiritual sense of separating oneself from the daily affairs of mainland life has been an irresistible pull for many people. The islands and the surrounding waters are truly a special open space resource. This was recognized in the Portland Islands Land Use and Zoning Study that stated "the City should adopt a policy of considering the islands as unique and valuable natural areas whose primary use is as seasonal residential and recreation areas . . . ."

The number of people on the islands contrasts sharply between winter and summer. There are about 1100 year-round residents on the islands but during the summer this swells to about 4,500. The islands open space is used by many people beyond the residential population of the island. The island summer lifestyle is a popular one for summer residents, vacationers and day trippers. The legacy of the summer colony can be seen on Little Diamond and Great Diamond where residents have established community association buildings and common open space.

Residents on the islands (summer and year round) have traditionally taken steps to protect open spaces or provide recreation facilities. This can be seen on Peaks with the Trefethen Association and the Casco Bay Island Development Association purchase of the former military reservation on the backshore. On Cliff, groups have acquired land and constructed a community building for the island's recreation needs.

While the auto age has had a profound affect on the mainland, their influence has been muted on the islands by the presence of Casco Bay. On Great Diamond, Little Diamond, Cliff there are few autos because there is no need for them. Grassed pathways or gravel trails are the norm for these islands not wide seas of black top. This has resulted in a quiet pastoral environment. Peaks has many quiet roads but the influence of the automobile is much more dominant than the other islands.

An important factor on the islands overtime has been the development of military fortifications on the islands to defend the harbor. Virtually every island in Portland - Great Diamond, Peaks, House, Fort Gorges, Jewell, Cushing-have had fortifications built on them. None of them fired
a shot in anger because the enemy never came. Many of the forts were outdated shortly after they were built because of advancements in military technology. The U.S. Government was at one time, the largest property owner in Casco Bay and when many of these facilities were declared surplus after World War II, there were few takers. The City for example was offered several of these facilities and was not interested. These properties overtime have offered contrasting opportunities to conserve as open space or as the focus of land development schemes.

NOTE: This section includes excerpts from the following books:

Islands of Maine, Where America Really Began, by Bill Caldwell, Published by Guy Gannett Publishing Co. (1981)


Peaks Island an Affectionate History, by John K. Moulton (1993)

The Romance of Casco Bay, by Edward Rower Snowe, Published by Dodd Mead & Company (1975)
LEGEND
Publicly Owned Open Space
1. Peaks Island Baseball Field
2. Long Point
3. Torrington Beach
4. Brackett Cemetery
5. Forest City Ferry Landing
   (parking lot/ wastewater treatment
   facility/ Old Army Pier)
6. Peaks Island Community Center
7. Peaks Island School
8. Former Evergreen Ferry Landing
9. Maine Department of Inland Fisheries
   and Wildlife
10. Peaks Island Reservation
Privately Owned Open Space
11. Peaks Island Lions Club
12. Trefethen Property
13. Maine Audubon Society Sanctuary
14. Oceanside Conservation Trust
15. Star Foundation

PEAKS ISLAND NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE
DRAFT
11/93
Vicinity Map

DEPT. OF PLANNING & URBAN DEVELOP
Portland City Hall Room 211
389 Congress Street
Portland, Maine 04101
PEAKS ISLAND

History of the Island

Peaks Island is the largest island in Portland in terms of land area and population. Its close proximity to the mainland has lent itself as a commuters' island and as a quick boat ride for summer visitors. Originally called Mitton Island, Brackett Island and then Pond Island (because of the large pond in the southeast shore), the name Peaks was used for the first time in the 18th century. During the early 1800's, there were only a handful of houses.

By 1860, Peaks Island was clearly becoming established as a growing community. There were almost fifty houses, up from four, in 1800. Boat service could be relied on during summer months and was available, on occasion, in the winter. Three wharves (Forest City/Jones, Trefethen and Evergreen) were in place and there were at least four hotels. Residences and hotels were clustered near the mainlandings. Roads were starting to replace some cow/ox paths. A small elementary school was built.

Peaks Island's population grew only moderately during most of the nineteenth century. The pace quickened in the century's last two decades. By 1883, there were 13 hotels and boarding houses. Three steam boatlines served Peaks including twenty-nine daily trips to Forest City/Jones Landing, as well as numerous trips to Trefethen Landing. New cottages were being built.

Peaks was a hub of activity. While many summer visitors came to Peaks to enjoy the natural beauty and tranquility of the island, there were other diversions that brought people to Peaks. A prime attraction was the Greenwood Garden amusement park. This complex was located within walking distance of the Forest City landing (the main landing) near Torrington Point and the old cemetery. The park offered concerts, dancing, skating, exhibits of wild animals and dogs, magical acts, acrobats, fireworks, balloon ascensions, and other amusements. The park was a large complex with a fanciful entryway and numerous buildings to house the exhibits. A prominent feature of the park was a five story, seventy-five foot observatory building that offered magnificent views of the bay.
If visitors were bored by the amusements, another attraction was the Gem. The Gem was an unusual building that resembled an oversized wood "quonset hut". Built originally used as a roller skating rink, its unusual shape next to the ferry landing was undoubtedly meant to lure daytrippers from the steamboats. The building was converted to a theater in 1898 and became the first summer stock theater in Maine. Seating capacity was 1,600. The theater closed in the 1920's and burned down in 1934.

At the turn of the century, Peaks was a cottage city. By 1917, there were 550 cottages. Peaks had evolved into its present development pattern - cottages ringing the shore from Evergreen Landing, Forest City Landing to Torrington Point. The area near Forest City Landing was particularly busy. Hotels were packed near the main landing including the Coronado Hotel which was 5 stories high.

With the closing of Greenwood Gardens (____) and the Gem (1925), this signaled the end of Peaks as a major entertainment center; cottages ruled supreme during the summer.

The State of Maine gave more men to the Union cause, proportionally, than any other state. Two Maine Regiments - the Fifth and the Eighth - were honored with memorials on Peaks. In 1888, the Fifth Maine Regiment and Memorial Society dedicated a memorial hall to the members of this regiment. Three years later an Eighth Maine Regimental Hall was dedicated. Both memorial halls were designed in the Queen Anne Architectural style and offer a magnificent overlook of Whitehead Passage. Today, both buildings are used as a community center for special events.

Up until World War II, harbor defense fortifications were limited on Peaks. With the attack on Pearl Harbor, this changed quickly. Two large artillery batteries were built on the back shore, Battery Craven and Battery Steele. Two concrete six-story towers were built as an observation posts for the batteries. Seven hundred troops were stationed on Peaks. Like other island fortifications, after World War II, they were no longer needed by the government. The property fell into private hands. In 1966 the Casco Bay Island Development Association (CBIDA), an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life on Casco Bay Islands, proposed Project Oceanside. Project Oceanside intended to protect the military reservation land (100+ acres) as open space and a nature preserve. CBIDA
PEAKS ISLAND

Land Use Patterns/Housing

Peaks Island has a land area of 720 acres, the largest island in the City of Portland. The springboard for the development of Peaks was the establishment of ferry landings - Evergreen, Trefethen and Forest City Landing. The most densely developed areas of the island are within a short walking distance of these piers. This is evident today when scanning the shore from Evergreen Landing to Torrington Point. Housing on compact lots sprouted up in these areas as well as some commercial uses. These lots range in size from 5,000 sq. ft. to less than 10,000 sq. ft. These smaller lot sizes continue almost to mid-island for those streets closest to the Forest City Landing. On the backshore along Seashore Avenue the lot sizes are much larger. These range from in size about 20,000 sq. ft. to 40,000 sq. ft. or more. The higher density on the frontside of the island is partially offset by the large tract of publicly owned land that was part of the former military reservation.

The lone business zone on Peaks is oriented toward the Forest City Landing. It runs from a point north of Torrington Point along Island Avenue to near Church Avenue. Only a fraction of the properties within this zone are actually used for commercial purposes. This business district however is the largest one on the islands and offers the most diverse range of services - grocery store, restaurants, lumber supply store and other business uses.

There are several Recreation-Open Space (R-OS) Zones on the island. These properties are primarily City owned and include the former military reservation property, the baseball field and the site of the combination parking lot/wastewater treatment facility/Old Army Pier/beach area adjacent to the ferry landing. The Department of Inland and Fisheries and Wildlife nature preserve is also zoned R-OS. The Star Foundation, Maine Audubon Society and the Oceanside Conservation Trust own large parcels on the backshore area of the island that are kept for conservation purposes.

Peaks has a number of freshwater wetlands that have been designated for shoreland protection. Most of the wetlands straddle the Seashore Avenue area of the island near the backshore. These wetlands include the largest freshwater pond on the islands, Trout Pond, which is north of Alderbrook
Road. The largest (forested) wetland (42 acres) on the island is located between Pleasant Avenue, Seashore Avenue and the City baseball field (R-OS Zone).

A 1984 estimate indicated that Peaks had a year-round population of 1,000 residents with a seasonal peak population of 3,376, the largest number of any Portland island. The number of housing units was estimated to be 844 although this total is now closer to 900.

Existing Recreation and Open Space Resources

Peaks Island has approximately 110 acres of public open space. The former military reservation land on the back shore encompasses 100 acres of that total. This property, the largest City-owned property on the islands, also includes over 1 mile of rocky shorefrontage along Seashore Avenue. The parcel also includes a portion of Trout Pond, the largest freshwater pond on the island. The property is wooded and includes several wetlands. A city transfer station for rubbish is located on the property (Brackett Avenue) which replaced a City dump that was recently closed.

Adjacent to the former reservation near Brackett Street is a 20 acre nature preserve owned by the State of Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

The Peaks Island baseball field can be found in the middle of the island off Central Avenue. The 5 acre parcel includes a baseball field that can also function as a multi-purpose field.

Long Point also known as "picnic point" is a rocky point about 1 1/2 acres in size that juts out into Whitehead Passage. The point is used by picnickers and sunbathers to enjoy the water views.

Torrington Beach is a small sandy beach at Torrington Point. Less than an acre in size, it offers the best beach sand on the island.

Peaks Island Elementary School, which is located on the corner of Island Avenue and Pleasant Avenue, has a playground and a half court basketball court.

Brackett Cemetery is an older cemetery located near Torrington Point.
The 1/2 acre parcel offers sweeping views of the harbor.

The Forest City Landing is the public ferry landing to the island. Owned by the State of Maine, it is the hub of activity on the island. It is part of a larger complex which includes a parking lot, a new wastewater treatment facility and a small beach owned by the City. Adjacent to the landing is a small strip of green space with benches and ornamental lighting that overlooks the beach and the harbor. On the far easterly side of the beach is the Old Army Pier. Rebuilt in the 1980's, the pier is used by fishermen, transient boaters and people enjoying the water views.

Peaks has a number of private recreation and open space facilities. The Maine Audubon Society has a 14.2 acre parcel nature preserve on the back shore near Ocean Spray Road.

The Star Foundation controls a 13.7 acre parcel which was part of the old military reservation. A unique feature of the property Battery Steele, is a massive concrete artillery enplacement. The top of the concrete battery offer great views of the shore. The property is used as open space. Also on the backshore is a 3.6 acre parcel owned by the Oceanside Conservation Corp.

The Trefethan Evergreen Improvement Association was formed in 1912 as a civic organization dedicated to improving the quality of life on the island. The Association property includes a large community hall close to the water, a beach and 3 tennis (clay) courts.

The Lions Club owns a portion of the former Greenwood Gardens property. This property is used for Lions Club events including picnics and lobster bakes.

There are a number of beaches on the island that are not necessarily publicly owned but are used by public for swimming and sunbathing. This includes a beach near City Point off Centennial Street.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>STREET LOCATION</th>
<th>FACILITY TYPE</th>
<th>ACRE</th>
<th>USE TYPE</th>
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<td>Open Space</td>
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<td>Seashore Avenue</td>
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<td>Open Space</td>
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<td>School/Playground</td>
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<td>Cemetery</td>
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<td>.16</td>
<td>Open Space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Army Pier</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaks Island Community Ctr.</td>
<td>Island Avenue</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>Community Ctr.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL:** 110.1

**Distribution of Parks**

The baseball field is located in the middle of the island. The playground and basketball court are on the site of the Peaks Island School, in the most densely populated area of the island. Although most of the people on the island live within a ten minute walk of the school, roughly half of the island's land area is not. Generally public or private open space is available within a 5 minute walk from virtually every residence.

**Amount of Open Space and Population**

Public open space on Peaks totals 110 acres or just over 30 acres of land area per 1,000 residents based on the seasonal peak population. This amount of open space is much larger than the norm of a typical mainland neighborhood.

Peaks has 1 baseball field and 1 playground which is near the city norm for a neighborhood of this size. The baseball field has the capability of functioning as a multi-purpose field. There are no public tennis courts on Peaks but there are 3 tennis courts at Trefethan Evergreen Improvement Association property. Peaks has a half basketball court. Ice skating occurs at Trout Pond as well as other private ponds.
Peaks has a number of beaches (Torrington Point, City Point) which exceeds the availability of beach areas on the mainland.

**LINKAGES - BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN**

**Existing Linkages**

Peaks Island has the strongest linkages to the mainland of all the islands because it has the most frequent ferry service.

The existing island roadway provides an interconnecting network of trails. Seashore Avenue and Island Avenue are the two main roadways along the perimeter of the island that provides visual and physical access to the shore. There are a number of improved and unimproved roads that provide access to the shore or to open space.

**Proposed Linkages**

The Shoreway Access Plan suggested that a nature trail loop be designed near the backshore. The trail would run from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife property off Brackett Street, through the former military reservation (City and Star Foundation property) to the Maine Audubon Society property (Daevis Sanctuary). Much of the trail network already exists. Another proposed trail (Whaleback Walk) would connect the Evergreen Landing Beach with the Daevis Sanctuary.

The plan also suggested that future improvements to Seashore Avenue and Brackett Avenue should include either an extended paved shoulder with marked lanes for bicycles and pedestrians or an unpaved off-road shoulder to accommodate bikes and pedestrians.

**Conditions and Quality of Open Space**

Field evaluation sheets for each open space on Peaks Island are shown in Appendix ____.
**PARK/FACILITY PROFILE**

**Name:** Peaks Island School  
**Neighborhood:** Peaks Island  
**Type:** Neighborhood School-park  
**Size:** .5 acres

**Description:** Peaks Island School is a K-5 elementary school in a mixed, residential neighborhood. Enclosed on two sides by a chain link fence, it is a small, two-story, brick building situated very close to Island Avenue. The front and side of the lot is a paved play area. To the rear is a small grassed lot, wooden play equipment, and a half-court basketball facility.

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<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Trees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gymnasium</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Turf</td>
<td>Poor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Play equipment</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Soil</td>
<td>Poor</td>
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**Accessibility/Parking**

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<td>Barrier Free</td>
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**Utility Access**

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<td>Water</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electrical</td>
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</table>


**Linkages:** Pedestrian access is good from the most densely settled portions of the island, mostly by Island roads. There is a paved sidewalk for much of Island Avenue leading up from the ferry landing (a 5 minute walk). There is also a traditional path leading from the school to ________ Avenue. Automobile access is by means of Island Avenue.

**Deficiencies:** The lot size is very small and doesn't allow for enough space for recreation activities such as kickball, softball, or general running room.

**Historical Notes:**

**Recreation Programming:** The gymnasium is used for teen and adult gymnasium programs three times per week.

**Other:** The basketball half-court is the only public, outdoor basketball space on the island.

Draft: 11/93
LEGEND
Publicly Owned Open Space
1. Public Ferry Landing
2. Basketball/Tennis Courts
3. Playground
4-10. City Owned Property
Privately Owned Open Space
11-21. Great Diamond Island Association
22. Private Landing

GREAT DIAMOND ISLAND NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

DRAFT 11-93
GREAT DIAMOND

History of the Island

Great Diamond was originally called Great Hog Island. This distinctive name was coined as a result of farming activities which included numerous hogs that roamed around the island. With real estate opportunities being discovered on the islands in the 1880's, Great Hog became Great Diamond. The name was taken from the pockets of quartz and crystals at Diamond Cove that glistened in the sun.

In 1882, the Diamond Island Association was formed to divide the island property into house lots as a summer colony. The Association's acquisition comprised of 214 acres, leaving 70 acres to the U.S. Government adjacent to Diamond Cove. Shares were sold and for $100, each shareholder received a 100 x 100 foot lot. Over 500 lots were created.

Seven years after the land was purchased, 57 cottages had been built and it was estimated that the summer population was about 300 persons. Most of the cottages were designed in the shingle style design which was popular during the late 19th century. Eighty (80) percent of the island's existing cottages were built during this period of time.

Association members built tennis courts and a nine hole golf course. The Portland Club built a club house on a prominent knoll to view the comings and goings of the shore. Steamboats provided services to 3 different landings. The island had all the trappings of a seaside resort.

Great Diamond, like other islands, was influenced by the U.S. military who viewed Portland as an important harbor to defend. In the 1870's, the U.S. Government purchased Cow Island and 70 acres of Great Diamond to defend Hussey Sound and Diamond Road. Later, 123 acres were added to the Great Diamond parcel when the government realized they didn't have enough land for the anticipated fortifications.

Construction of a fort began in the 1890's. In 1901, the name Fort McKinley was adopted for the fort, honoring the recently assassinated President. Fort McKinley had an extensive array of artillery in its massive concrete batteries. Fort McKinley was like a town onto itself, with housing for military personnel, a power plant, a hospital, a recreation building, a theater, a school and other services that made the fort a self-
contained community. The facility had 125 buildings and housing for 700 men. Perhaps the most magnificent element of the fort was the parade ground. The parade ground was an oversized town common (4 acres) ringed by the stately brick officer quarters and enlisted men's barracks. The parade ground area and the surrounding buildings is on the National Register of Historic Places.

After World War II, the government no longer needed Fort McKinley. The city was offered the property but was not interested. The property fell into several hands including the National Youth Science Foundation which had a summer camp for children. Later King Resources, who had visions of building a tank farm and oil refinery in Casco Bay, owned the property. After their demise in bankruptcy, Phoenix Resources acquired the property. In 1984, Dictar Associates purchased the fort to develop a major residential community. The brick buildings encircling the parade ground were to be recycled into condominiums and the remaining land would have houses built along the shore. The proposed development was controversial and was fought by island groups and environmental organizations. Although the developer originally proposed ____ dwellings, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection limited the project to ____ dwellings.
GREAT DIAMOND

Land Use Patterns/Housing

Great Diamond is the second largest island in Portland (414 acres). It is a seasonal island with only a handful of year-round residents. The island is completely residential except for some businesses at Diamond Cove (restaurant, store). The southerly side of the island has single family residences while the Fort McKinley complex has been approved for single family residences as well as condominiums within the fort complex.

The lower half of Great Diamond is split by an IR-2 Zone (minimum lot size of 20,000 sq. ft.) and an IR-1 Zone (minimum lot size of 40,000 sq. ft.) which has only a handful of residences. The developed or village area (IR-2 Zone) was originally subdivided into 10,000 sq. ft. lots. Many of the houses were built on double or multiple lots to provide additional land area. The IR-1 zoned area features a vacant parcel of over 70 acres owned by Albert Glickman, which covers about one half of this end of the island.

The northerly half of the island includes the Fort McKinley complex. The lot sizes of the proposed single family subdivision ranges from 1 acre to acres. The proposed condominium development would have a net density of 35,000 sq. ft. per dwelling.

Great Diamond population was estimated (1984) to be 14 year round residents and 272 residents during the peak summer months. The number of dwelling units was 68. A 1989 survey indicated there were 70 houses. These figures do not include the Fort McKinley property (___ proposed dwellings) which has developed only a limited number of housing units on the parade ground area at this time.

Existing Recreation and Open Space Resources

Great Diamond has 6.7 acres of public open space. These landholdings include developed spaces - a playground, basketball court and tennis court - as well as vacant lots for green space. Four of these spaces are over one acre in size. The ferry landing is a public space.

The ferry landing on the southerly end of the island is a public space. Private landholdings of open space on Great Diamond are considerable. The Great Diamond Island Association owns 5.6 acres of land. These parcels
include the Association's community hall and community open space.

Diamond Cove Associates owns the 190 acre Fort McKinley property. The center piece of the development is the 4 acre village common called the parade ground. The parade ground is framed by a brick complex of former military residences. The property includes several miles of shorefrontage and a number of beaches. Except for the parade ground buildings and the buildings at Diamond Cove, the remainder of the property is open wooded land, though a single family subdivision has been planned by the developer for this area. As part of the development agreement for the project, the developer is required to provide public pedestrian access from Diamond Cove around the parade ground and connecting to Diamond Avenue on the southerly end of the island.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>STREET LOCATION</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>Open Space</td>
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</tbody>
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TOTAL: 6.77

**Distribution of Parks**

Public open spaces are close to the existing residential neighborhood on the southerly end of the island. All of the residences are within 5 to 10 minute walk of these spaces.

On the northerly half of the island, the Diamond Cove development has a series of private open spaces throughout the property.

**Amount of Open Space and Population**

Great Diamond has about 6.7 acres of public open space. This projects at current population levels, over 20 acres of open space per 1,000 residents.
on the southerly end of the island. This total excludes the 5.6 acres of open space owned by the Great Diamond Island Association as well as the privately controlled open space at the Fort McKinley facility.

Publicly improved recreation spaces on Great Diamond include a small playground, a tennis court and a second tennis court that has a basketball hoop.

The Great Diamond Island Association owns a community hall that is used for association activities and social events. A beach that stretches along the westerly side of the island is adjacent to the community building.

The Fort McKinley property features a number of recreation amenities for its residents. Tennis courts, a swimming pool, several beaches and large open spaces for unstructured recreation activities are among the facilities offered.

**Linkages - Bicycle and Pedestrian**

**Linkages**

There are two ferry landings on Great Diamond. The southerly landing is public, the northerly pier is part of the Fort McKinley complex and is private. Great Diamond is connected to Little Diamond by a sandbar that can be used during low tide.

Existing gravel roads and pathways provide for a interconnected trail system on the island. As part of the development approval for the Diamond Cove Development, a public pedestrian trail easement was established. Its runs from Diamond Cove around the parade grounds to road that leads to the southerly end of the island.

The *Shoreway Access Plan* recommended the following:

Shoreway access network currently exists. This includes existing grass ("street") paths and established paths to the shore. The roads to be included in the network are Nancy Lane, Waymouth Street, Spring Avenue, Meadow Avenue, Crescent Avenue, Nicholas Street, and the approved pedestrian trail that is included in the Diamond Cove Development.
LITTLE DIAMOND ISLAND NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

DRAFT 11-93

LEGEND
Privately Owned Open Space
1-3. Little Diamond Association
4. St. Joseph's Covent

Vicinity Map

DEPT. OF PLANNING & URBAN DEVELOP
Portland City Hall / Room 211
339 Congress Street
Portland, Maine 04101
LITTLE DIAMOND

History of the Island

Like Great Diamond, Little Diamond shared the common name - Hog Island - until it was realized a reference to hogs was not an asset in marketing the island for cottages. Summer residents did not become a factor on the island until the late 19th century. Prior to that time, the island had few trees, and was used for grazing.

In 1875, the U.S. Government purchased a 4 acre parcel for a lighthouse. It was used as a Coast Guard buoy station until the property was bought by Ted Rand in 1954. The property was used as a residence with a fishing pier and a small store.

The northerly end of the island (30 acres) was bought by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese in 1882 for a children's summer camp. This property is adjacent to the sandbar that connects Little Diamond to Great Diamond. It was used for as a summer camp for nearly 100 years, until about one-half of the property was subdivided into 13 house lots in 1984.

An enterprising businessman, George Brown, bought 40 acres of Little Diamond in 1908 with visions of creating a summer resort on the southerly end of the island. The property was divided into 40 lots with each lot having 50 feet of shorefrontage. He hired John Calving Stevens, noted practitioner of shingle style architecture, to design the cottages.

Brown installed waterlines, maintained the streets, planted 100 maple trees, built a heated saltwater swimming pool, a lobster pound and a casino (restaurant). Brown had vision, but lacked business sense and within 4 years his real estate company collapsed. The Little Diamond Association, an island property owner's association formed in 1908, inherited the vacant land and the casino. The casino, which is located on the edge of the public landing, is used as a community hall by the Association.

In 1914 there were 36 cottages on the southerly end of the island. Today there are 43 cottages so that Brown's vision of a summer colony was accomplished in only a few years. A distinguishing characteristic of the island (southerly end) are the grass pathways of the islands streets.
LITTLE DIAMOND

Lane Use Patterns/Housing

Little Diamond is the smallest populated island (73 acres) in Portland. Little Diamond is a summer island so there are only a few year-round residents. There are two Island Business Zones on the island, one at the public ferry landing and one at the former Rand property but there are currently no businesses, the island is completely residential.

The southerly end of the island has a distinctive village character and is zoned IR-2 which requires a minimum lot size of 20,000 sq. ft. The northerly half of the island has a minimum lot size of 40,000 sq. ft. (IR-1 zone). Most of the island's remaining open land is located on this part of the island.

A 1984 estimate indicated a year-round population of 2 residents with a seasonal peak population of 164. Total housing units were pegged at 41. A more recent survey indicates there are 47 dwelling units.

Existing Recreation and Open Space Resources

There is no publicly-owned open space on the island except for the ferry landing. The roads of the islands which are closer to grassed pathways provide visual and physical access to the shore.

The Little Diamond Island Association owns a community hall at the ferry landing. The Association also controls a parcel of 15,536 sq. ft. with shorefrontage near the ferry landing.

The Sisters of Mercy owns land (16 acres) on the northerly end of the island which was formerly used as a youth summer camp.

Distribution of Parks

There is no publicly-owned parkland on Little Diamond.

Amount of Open Space and Population

Little Diamond does not have any developed recreation facilities on the
island - public or private. There is a small beach adjacent to the ferry landing as well as one just north of the ferrylanding and in other areas along the islands shoreway. The Little Diamond Island Association has a community hall near the ferry landing.

**LINKAGES - BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION**

**Existing and Proposed Linkages**

Little Diamond is served by the Casco Bay Island Transit District ferry. At low tide, the island is connected to Great Diamond by a sandbar.

The *Shoreway Access Plan* had the following comments:

Shoreway Access network currently exists. This includes existing grass ("street") paths and established paths to the shore. Signs should be provided to direct access users to appropriate shoreway trails. The roads to be included in the network includes Rockledge Avenue and its extension through the Sisters of Mercy Subdivision, City View Road, Fessenden Avenue and Anderson Avenue.
LEGEND
Publicly Owned Open Space
1. Cliff Island School
2. Ferry Landing
Privately Owned Open Space
3. Cemetery
4. Property Zoned for Resource Protection
6. Cliff Island Corp for Athletics and Conservation
7. Cliff Island Association Hall/Library
8-9. Land Associates of Cliff Island

CLIFF ISLAND NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

DRAFT
11-93

DEPT OF PLANNING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT
Portland City Hall / Room 211
319 Congress Street
Portland Maine 04101
CLIFF ISLAND

"Cliff Island really combines all that an island should be, being insular in both character and personality . . . It seems to be a town within itself, possibly because it is farther out than any other inhabited areas in Casco Bay which have any sort of real population. It combines pine forests, rocky coves and inlets, beautiful hills, valleys, meadows and sandy beaches. Two miles long, the main part of the island is approximately a quarter mile in width for most part . . ."

"When flying in from Halfway Rock toward Portland, the shape of Cliff Island reminds me of a cannon facing Cape Elizabeth. Others believe the letter H is also suggested."

Edward Rowe Snowe,
The Romance of Casco Bay

Cliff Island is the most remote of Portland's inhabited islands. This remoteness defined a different path for Cliff than other islands within the City. While the islands closest to the mainland became summer resorts and had some services somewhat comparable to the mainland such as public water, (cable TV on Peaks) and frequent ferry service, Cliff's location 10 miles from the mainland made it more secluded. The one and a half hour ferry ride to Cliff has limited the number of daytrippers visiting the island as well as the number of potential houses that might be built.

In 1832 there were 6 families living on Cliff all of whom derived their livelihood from the sea. Prior to that the island was used for grazing cows. Cliff initially was called Crotch Island. This did not prove to be a popular name and at some point it was changed to Cliff Island.

In the last 19th century, Cliff developed a reputation for boat building. The Crotch Island Pinky, as it was called, was built by boat builders and fishermen on Cliff and became popular with fishermen along the coast.
By 1886 there were 9 property owners listed on Cliff. In 1914 there were about 115 residences shown on the Richards Atlas for Cliff Island. Cliff experienced a "building boom" of over 100 houses in the span of less than three decades. This truly qualifies as a meteoric rise in the island's development since there are only 141 houses on the island today.

In the 1920s and 1930s Cliff had 4 or 5 stores. This contrasts with the 1 store and 1 restaurant on Cliff today.

Cliff's year round population has traditionally made their living by the sea. Lobstering enjoyed a spurt after World War II, when veterans returned from the war. Lobster prices bottomed out in the mid 1950s and the island actually lost population from 1948 to the early 1960s. Cliff benefited from the "back to the land movement". The year round population of the island actually doubled in the 1970s from the low of the early 1960s.

This spurt in population has stabilized the earlier losses but today's year round population of 64 is well below the peak of 150 residents earlier in the century. Cliff has the distinction of having the smallest school in Portland - ___ students.
CLIFF ISLAND

Land Use Patterns/Housing

Cliff has a land area of 296 acres. Cliff is primarily a residential island with only a few non-residential uses - a store, fire house, school, post office, restaurant, library. There are two business zones on Cliff - one near the ferry landing, the second a small zone with an existing grocery store on the southerly side of the island.

The existing minimum zoning requirement on the island is 60,000 sq. ft. per lot. The actual lots on Cliff ranges from less than 10,000 sq. ft. to several acres. The smaller lot sizes are mitigated in part by the large tracts of land owned by private groups. The present residential density on Cliff (total land area of the island divided by the number of existing housing units) is 82,000 sq. ft. per dwelling unit.

According to a recent estimate (1993) there are 65 year-round residents and between 225 to 250 residents during the summer on the island. Cliff has the second highest year-round population of any Portland island.

Existing Recreation and Open Space Resources

Public open space on Cliff Island is limited to a play yard at the elementary school and public space at the ferry landing. The playground at the school is fairly compact although the total site is over an acre. There is a strong tradition of private groups purchasing open space for the benefit of island residents. Residents built the Association Hall and library (32,589 sq. ft.) in 1949, which is used as a community meeting hall. A tennis court is located on the property. On the top appendage of the island, a 17 acre parcel was purchased by the Cliff Island Corp. for Athletics and Conservation. The property features a 4 acre multi-purpose field.

A second group, the Land Associates of Cliff Island was organized by residents to acquired 23 acres of land for protection as open space. This land is located on Island Avenue, a short distance from the ferry landing.

Approximately 34 acres of marshes and sensitive beach areas on the island have been zoned for Resource Protection. Resource Protection Zoning aims to protect sensitive land areas by restricting their
development to low intensive use such as open space. Although this land is privately owned, the property owners requested this zoning designation. These properties are also in the top appendage of the island where there are several significant beach areas.

A small cemetery (4,500 sq. ft.) is located on Island Avenue just east of Emhardt Street.

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</table>

TOTAL: 1.29

Distribution of Parks

As mentioned previously, Cliff has a limited amount of publicly owned open space. The school playground is located in a central location of the island. The community association property and its tennis court are near the main ferry landing. The large athletic field owned by the Cliff Island Corp. for Athletics and Conservation is on the top appendage of the island but given Cliff's pedestrian character, this is not an unduely long walk from other areas of the island.

Amount of Open Space and Population

Public open space totals only about 1.29 acres which is a very low figure. However, if the Cliff Island Corp. for Athletics and Conservation and the Land Associates properties are factored in, the total rises to over 40 acres which is comparable to the open space/population ratios for Portland's other islands.

The school has a small playground with a basketball hoop. Although the site is over an acre in size, most of the site is taken up by a steep slope.

The Cliff Island Corp. for Athletics and Conservation property is 17 acres in size. Four (4) acres of the land are a multi-purpose athletic field which the remaining 13 acres are marshland.
LINKAGES - BICYCLES AND PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

Existing Linkages

Cliff is served by the Casco Bay Island Transit District Ferry and there is a public pier. Island Avenue is the primary road that circles the island. There are few autos on Cliff so that the island paths or roadways serve as excellent pedestrian trails.

Proposed Linkages

The existing roadway network including paths and rights-of-way provides for an adequate linkage system at this time.
LEGEND
Privately Owned Open Space
1-13. Cushing Association Inc.
14-19. Cushing Island Conservation Corp.
CUSHING ISLAND

History of the Island

The Ottawa House on Cushing Island was the first large resort hotel on the islands. The original hotel was constructed of brick on a high granite cliff overlooking the bay. A fire destroyed this building in 1886, but a large 6 story shingle style building was constructed to replace the hotel. It lasted until 1917 when another fire struck. It was not rebuilt.

Cushing also became a summer colony for those preferring their own cottage. By 1914 there were 18 cottages on Cushing. Many of them large magnificent shingle style cottages.

With the onslaught of the Spanish American War, vacationers were replaced by the military. A garrison built in 1670's to protect settlers from the Indians was rebuilt for the Spanish American War. This was enlarged again for World War I and then further expanded for World War II. The government holdings totalled 125 acres. The complex included 15 brick residences and barracks, underground tunnels and concrete gun enplacements.

In 1956, the fort was abandoned by the government and sold into private hands. Later the property was bought by a group called The Cushing Island Associates which was composed of Cushing Island property owners.

In 1970 Whitehead Associates was formed to purchase the old fort and the 50 acres around it from Cushing Island Associates. The real estate deal was set up to protect the scenic views and remaining open space of the island. Seventy-five acres of the parcel was deeded to the Nature Conservancy. This parcel includes a large stand of trees. The remaining 50 acres including the remnants of the fort complex was limited to 18 houses. A number of the fort's brick structures including a jail and barracks, have been recycled into residences.

Cushing is the most private island within the City. There are 39 residences on the island but no public ferry service and no public ferry landing. Residents use a private ferry service. Access to the island is by invitation of a resident.
Cushing Island Conservation Corp. (118 acres) and Cushing Island Trust controls over one half of the land which protects the land as open space. The seasonal peak population of Cushing was estimated in 1984 to be 152 residents with a year round population of only 2. There are 39 dwellings on Cushing.

The present overall residential density on the island including open space and other undeveloped land is just about 6 acres per dwelling for the 241 acre island.
FORT GORGES

History of the Island

Fort Gorges is a stone fortress located between the mainland and Little Diamond. The fort is located on an 1 1/2 acre reef. One map identifies, the fort as "Castle Gorges" - a fitting description for the six sided granite structure that rises from the waters of Casco Bay. Construction was initiated by the U.S. Government in 1858 and completed in 1864. The fort is named after Sir Ferdinando Gorges, an early Maine explorer. It was intended to guard the entrances to the upper end of the harbor. Fort Gorges was patterned after a new generation of fortifications and was closely modeled after Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina.

Development of new more powerful naval artillery rendered the fort obsolete and its cannons were never installed. During World War I, the United States Army used the fort as a submarine mine storage building. This appears to be the only military use the fort received. Some reports indicate that during the 1930's, the Coast Guard used the fort. Soon after World War II, however, the federal government declared the fort surplus property.

During the 1950's, the Portland Junior Chamber of Commerce leased the fort from the federal government, cleaned it up and held "Pirate's Balls" there in the summers of 1958 and 1959. Subsequently, the City of Portland expressed interest in acquiring the fort, after the state declined to take on its maintenance. By this time the fort was described by National Parl Service historian, Frank Barnes, as "the best preserved typical coast fortification of the mid-19th Century I've ever seen."

The City obtained title to the Fort in 1960 and apart from occasional light maintenance, has not invested in its repair or maintenance. In 1966 and 1967, the federally funded Neighborhood Youth Corps assumed some maintenance responsibilities. Announced plans to begin restoration of the fort as a training center for the building trades were never implemented.

Fort Gorges is difficult to visit. There is no scheduled ferry service to the fort. Boat access is limited to comparatively shallow draft vessels on days with comparatively calm sea conditions, and preferably at high tide. The prominence of the Fort does attract attention from boaters although actual usage of the fort is sparse.
There have been ongoing concerns about safety issues at the fort. Several injuries have occurred in recent years. It is difficult to maneuver a boat to the fort landing, the interior stairways are dark and there is no protective interior fencing along the upper story promotories.
JEWELL ISLAND

Jewell Island is the most remote of Portland's islands. Although the island is a state park, it is not served by public ferry.

Jewell Island was named after George Jewell, a European who purchased the 221 acre island from the Indians in 1637 for "one powderhorn, 12 fish hooks, and a barrel or two of rum". It is also one of the few island names that stuck overtime. Legend has it that Captain Kidd buried treasure on the island although no one has ever found it.

In the early part of the 19th century, there were four cottages on the island owned by the McKeens. With the coming of World War II, the U.S. Government "installed 70-foot-high watch towers here, great coastal gun emplacements, together with underground tunnels and bunkers." The military deserted the island when the war was over and the fortifications were left to decay.

The State of Maine purchased the island from 2 different property owners in 1976 for a state park. One of the property owners, John Absmeir, had paid $30,000 for 130 acres from the federal government 20 years earlier. His estate was paid $200,000 for the property.

Jewell is the largest uninhabited island in Portland. In many respects Jewell has come full circle. The 17th century settlers of Jewell sought the island as a home and refuge from the Indians; later it became a summer compound for a family; the U.S. Government made substantial improvements to the island for gun emplacements and now as a park, the island is being allowed to evolve back to its natural state.
HOUSE ISLAND

History of the Island

House Island was the site of the first European settlement in Portland, (1623 by Christopher Leavit). Two centuries later, the U.S. Government bought half of the House Island to build an octangular wooden blockhouse. Fort Scammel was located on the highest point of the 36 acre island.

With the outbreak of the Civil War, the fort was transformed into a large granite fortress with several levels of interior space. The granite structure was a marvel of military architecture. The interior space and walls are reminiscent of a medieval castle. With the changing technology of artillery, Fort Scammel became obsolete before the end of the Civil War.

In 1882 the northerly half of the island was bought for a fishing business. This enterprise involved cutting fresh fish in half and leaving them to dry. This process created the popular "fish flakes". Soon fish flakes covered the entire island and the business was very successful.

While Christopher Leavitt was the first European immigrant to visit House Island, he was not the last. During the late nineteenth century, immigration to Portland and other East Coast cities increased dramatically. In 1901, up to 1,100 immigrants came through Portland in one day. Custom House on Commercial Street was overwhelmed. House Island was set up by the federal government as an immigration station to process this great wave of immigration. After 17 years of use, the government closed down the facility in 1923. Immigration laws had become more restrictive and the island facility was no longer needed.

The island was used by the U.S. Navy during World War II but was sold into private hands after the war. Hilda Cushing Dudley currently owns the entire island and runs a business for clambakes, cook-outs, and historic tours of the fort.