

WHY BANGOR NEEDS A CHANGE

A footnoted brief on crime, downtown safety and accountability in Bangor, Maine.

HOW THIS BRIEF WORKS

Every number in these pages comes from a public record or a published news report. Each one carries a source number, and the full citation with a web address is on page 12, so you can check it yourself.

Where a figure could not be matched to its source, it was left out. When a source added context that cuts the other way, like a caveat about how police departments report crime, we kept it in.

This brief does not name, support or oppose any candidate. It is about the record of a city, not a person.

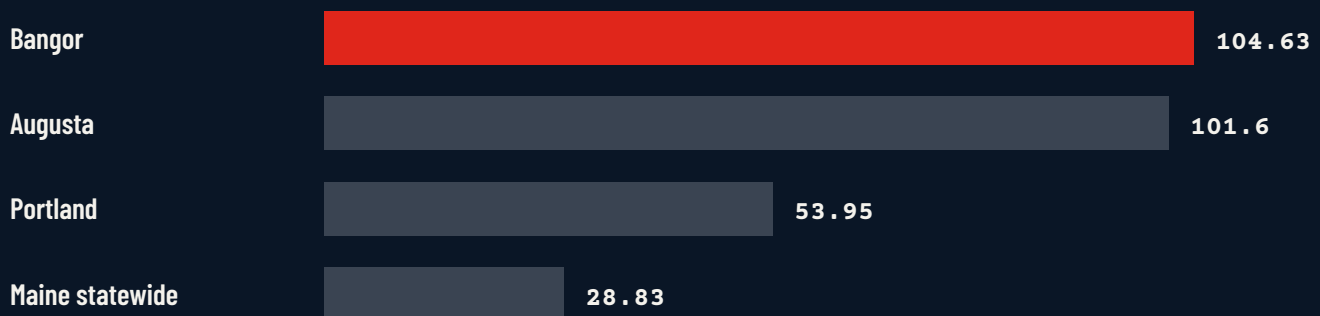
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THE HIGHEST CRIME RATE OF ANY CITY IN MAINE

104.63

reported crimes per 1,000 residents in Bangor in 2024.

CRIMES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS, 2024



Bangor's rate was more than three and a half times the statewide rate, and almost twice Portland's, a city about twice its size.

Source 1. Full citations on page 12.

UP WHILE THE REST OF THE STATE WENT DOWN

4,124

crimes reported in Bangor in 2024, up from 3,700 in 2023. That is an increase of about 11 percent.

704

cases of intimidation, the most commonly reported crime in Bangor in 2024.

28.83

crimes per 1,000 residents across Maine in 2024, down from 29.77 the year before.

33

homicides statewide in 2024, down from 60 in 2023.

A FAIR CAVEAT

Maine police departments moved to the FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System in 2021, and the Bangor Daily News notes that departments may be reporting crimes differently, which can widen the gap between cities. The trend inside Bangor, from 3,700 to 4,124, compares the city with itself.

AT THE TOP FOR THEFT AND BURGLARY

No 1

A 2024 SafeHome.org ranking of Maine municipalities by larceny, burglary and motor vehicle theft placed Bangor among the three cities with the most property crime, alongside Waterville and Augusta.

The ranking used 2022 incident data reported to the FBI. The same report listed Washburn, Rangeley and Richmond with the lowest property crime rates in the state.

A SAFETY PROGRAM RESIDENTS AREN'T SURE ABOUT

\$310K

yearly budget of Streetplus, the downtown ambassador program run by a New York company on a three year contract.

\$193K

what the city actually put in last year, from its downtown tax increment financing fund. The cap is \$230,000.

6

ambassadors in orange shirts, mostly working between noon and 6 a.m., seven days a week.

541

needles picked up by the team in July and August, along with 57 wellness checks.

Supporters, including the Downtown Bangor Partnership, say business owners asked for years for more safety downtown. Critics say they rarely see the team and ask whether the money would do more as additional police officers. One city councilor told the Bangor Daily News she had “zero faith” in the program.



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04 / HOMELESSNESS

CLEARING A CAMP DOESN'T END IT

40+

people living at the encampment along the railroad tracks at its peak.

DEC 22

the day a CSX crew cleared the camp in 2025, three days after the city's closure deadline.

City Manager Carollynn Lear acknowledged that closing camps moves people rather than housing them, and that the city keeps repeating the same pattern. Hope House, Bangor's only low barrier shelter, had been consistently full in the months before the sweep.

Source 4. Full citations on page 12.

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS, EVEN AFTER THE BIGGEST PROGRAM CLOSED

349,356

needles handed out by Bangor’s two remaining programs between Nov. 1, 2024 and Oct. 31, 2025. In the same period, 386,462 were disposed of.

NEEDLES HANDED OUT IN BANGOR



Health Equity Alliance, the city’s largest provider, shut down at the end of 2024. Across Maine, 2,696,610 sterile syringes were distributed in 2025.

Source 5. Full citations on page 12.

WHO PAYS FOR IT

\$17.13

property tax per \$1,000 of valuation for fiscal year 2027. A \$300,000 home pays about \$5,139 a year.

\$17.70

the rate for fiscal year 2026, which the city described as its lowest in 15 years.

32,518

residents, the Census estimate for July 2025. Bangor is Maine's third largest city.

17.9%

of residents live in poverty. Median household income is \$59,942.

Taxes have come down slightly. The question this brief raises is not only what residents pay, but what they get for it on the streets they walk every day.

WHEN THE COUNCIL HAD TO APOLOGIZE

At a June 22, 2026 meeting, during a heated policy debate, the Council's own words describe what happened: disruptions to decorum and procedure that

“fell short of the standards expected of the City Council.”

On July 27, 2026 the Council unanimously passed a resolve reaffirming its commitment to civility, procedural order and public trust. It included an apology for the disruption to public business and a pledge to follow the rules of debate under the direction of the Council Chair.

An apology is a start. Residents can hold the Council to the pledge it wrote for itself.

WHAT RESIDENTS CAN ASK CITY HALL

- 1** Why did reported crime in Bangor rise by about 11 percent in 2024 while it fell across Maine?
- 2** What results has Streetplus delivered for its \$310,000 a year, and who is measuring them?
- 3** Where did the people from the railroad encampment go, and how many are now housed?
- 4** What is the plan for shelter when Hope House is full?
- 5** How will the Council show it is keeping the civility pledge it passed in July 2026?

Sign the pledge and get updates on the [Hold Bangor Accountable](#) page.

SOURCES

CHECK EVERY NUMBER

- 1** Bangor Daily News, "Crime in Bangor climbs, defying statewide trend," Jan. 6, 2026. Figures from the Maine Department of Public Safety.
bangordailynews.com/2026/01/06/bangor/bangor-police-courts/bangor-crime-rate-2024/
- 2** WABI TV5, "Bangor among Maine cities with highest property crime rates, report says," Sept. 5, 2024 (SafeHome.org report on 2022 FBI data).
wabi.tv/2024/09/05/bangor-among-maine-cities-with-highest-property-crime-rates-report-says/
- 3** Bangor Daily News, "Bangor is paying for a program to make downtown safer. Residents aren't sure it's working," Oct. 27, 2025.
bangordailynews.com/2025/10/27/bangor/bangor-government/bangor-program-downtown-safer-arent-sure-its-worki-ng-joam40zk0w/
- 4** Bangor Daily News, "Railroad company begins clearing Bangor homeless encampment," Dec. 22, 2025.
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- 5** Bangor Daily News, "Needle distribution in Bangor plummeted after city's biggest provider closed," June 23, 2026.
bangordailynews.com/2026/06/23/bangor/bangor-health/needle-distribution-bangor-joam40zk0w/
- 6** City of Bangor Assessing Department, mill rates for fiscal years 2026 and 2027.
bangormaine.gov/160/Assessing
- 7** U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts: Bangor city, Maine. Population estimate for July 1, 2025; income and poverty from the 2020 to 2024 American Community Survey.
census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/bangorcitemaine
- 8** City of Bangor, "City Council reaffirms commitment to civility, procedural order, public trust," news release, July 2026.
bangormaine.gov/m/newsflash/home/detail/390

Figures checked against their sources on Sept. 30, 2026. Cover and page 7 images: Illustration generated with AI. Not a photograph of Bangor.

Hold Bangor Accountable is an issue advocacy project. It does not support or oppose any candidate for office.

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