

Economic & Community Development Strategy

Town of Castine, Maine

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Economic & Community Development Strategy

Town of Castine, Maine

Introduction

Economic and community development is vital to preserving and improving the level of service the citizens of Castine enjoy and to recapturing the vitality of the community. The purpose of this proposed strategy is to provide guidelines for maintaining, enhancing and creating economic activity so as to ensure the long-term viability of town services, provide a variety of employment opportunities, and ensure adequate selection and availability of goods, services, and opportunities for all Castine residents.

This plan is meant to be a living document to guide programs, policies, projects and possibilities within Castine. This is not a list of mandatory actions but, rather, a vision of the initiatives that may work to attain the definitive goal of a thriving year-round community. It is a community-wide economic vision to be implemented by those willing to participate and to make specific programs and projects a reality. Rather than being the sole effort related to economic and community development, this document serves as a guideline and catalyst for moving forward.

Ultimately, the goal is to change any widespread negative beliefs about Castine into positive beliefs. The important point with this plan is not that everyone has to agree with all its details. What matters is that everyone has a say, that their comments are respectfully considered, and that a majority feels the plan incorporates the best ideas. Strong partnerships and positive working relationships among local businesses and organizations, government agencies, foundations, and corporations are essential to this work.

The following are general areas of concentration for this Economic & Community Development Strategy:

1. Support the existing business community and revitalize the downtown commercial district
2. Encourage socio-economic diversity
3. Develop a year-round economy



In order to address these areas of concentration in a way that is appropriate for Castine, the following goals were established and considered in formulating all recommendations:

- Promote local citizen support of businesses located in Castine.
- Retain existing businesses and provide opportunities for growth.
- Attract new businesses that provide living wage jobs and a diversity of products and services desired by Castine residents and visitors.
- Develop and maintain a strong, diversified and sustainable economy, while respecting the natural and cultural environment and preserving or enhancing the quality of life in the community.
- Improve the quality of life and create places where people can live, work, learn, shop and play.
- Encourage economic development activities that take into consideration the capacities of the area's natural and cultural resources, public services, and public facilities.
- Increase livable wage jobs and develop a year-round employment opportunities.

In reading the recommendations contained in this plan it is important to keep in mind that truly sustainable economic and community development is a long-term effort. It requires vision, commitment of resources, a great deal of hard work, and may even involve a little discomfort. However, statements made by individuals far wiser than the author of this document eloquently sum up Castine's circumstances and the importance of the journey before us.

"We do not reject our traditions, but we are willing to adapt to changing circumstances, when change we must. We are willing to suffer the discomfort of change in order to achieve a better future."

- Barbara Jordan, American politician and civil rights leader

"The wise man must remember that while he is a descendant of the past, he is a parent of the future."

- Herbert Spencer, Victorian era philosopher, biologist, and sociologist



Support the Existing Business Community & Revitalize the Downtown Commercial District

Castine is a unique place full of history, charming attractions and natural beauty. In looking forward we should not lose sight of the past. We must make the most of our assets, such existing attractions, Maine Maritime Academy, and picturesque waterfront and leverage our inventory of historic buildings to differentiate Castine. They are the threads that hold the fabric of our community together and help to create the “sense of place” that is essential to vibrant downtowns.

It is often noted that Castine’s downtown suffers from lack of a year-round population. True, the demographic landscape of the town varies greatly between the summer months and the “off season”. However, if considered purely from a numbers standpoint we get a different picture. With the exception of a lull in May and early June, the population of Castine is relatively consistent. What changes is *who* is living in town and what their needs are. Summer residents and tourists are replaced by Maine Maritime Academy students. They, as well as non-resident faculty and staff, can become more regular customers of local businesses and be engaged in community activities. What is required is a seasonal shift in the goods and services available in Castine and in the community activities offered so as to accommodate this shift in demographics. The Castine business community should explore ways in which the MMA campus might be linked to the downtown activity center to promote economic opportunity for downtown businesses and a greater sense of community for MMA students, faculty and staff. There is opportunity there. Let’s take it!

There is no question that the commercial district in Castine has been declining, as it has in many other communities in Maine. Buildings that once held shops, cafes, galleries and the like have been converted into residences and professional offices and businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to survive. If the commercial district is to remain viable Castine must be open to changes in business models, be proactive in seeking and creating opportunities, develop support systems and incentive options, and allocate resources to support commerce throughout Castine. In order to attract visitors, serve the current population and to encourage younger families to make Castine their home it is critical that the Town and the business community work together take steps that encourage investment.

Retail experts believe that competition is good; it draws more customers into the district, gives existing business more exposure, and forces everyone to improve. It is difficult to justify any community as a “destination” with a handful of shops and restaurants and an attraction or two. This describes a community that may be considered for a quick excursion but not a place that would be considered a destination for any length of time and certainly not one that is attractive for those considering where they might live. It is



Things alter for the worse spontaneously, if they be not altered for the better designedly.

- Francis Bacon



essential that Castine use any available resources at its disposal to promote a critical mass of businesses providing the types of goods and services that are desired by visitors and residents alike.

Commercial district revitalization gets visible improvements and positive momentum happening with a modest budget and is the ideal way to stimulate confidence and reinvestment in the entire community because of the district's visibility and role in the community. This is achieved through a long-term, persistent effort led by local businesses and residents that draws resources from the private and public sectors.

The following is a list of suggested programs, policies, projects, and possibilities that may be considered in addressing the goal of supporting existing businesses and revitalizing the downtown commercial district.

Marketing

Create a brand for Castine and its economic and community development activities. The current Economic Development Committee has already taken the step of creating a more marketing-oriented name for themselves in order to facilitate their efforts to develop resources and raise funds for their activities.

CastineCED (Community & Economic Development) will be involved in a number of initiatives aimed at promoting Castine. The group is currently engaged in developing a short and memorable vision and mission statements, short and long-term goals and an overall image that can be used as part of a comprehensive marketing and branding strategy.

Establish a new website that is marketing oriented and partners with the existing municipal site. The aim of this site would be to promote tourism, local businesses, and community events. In addition, it would provide information on living, working, and doing business in Castine and would cross-link with the current www.castine.me.us website for municipal information. Content will be regularly reviewed and updated by the Economic & Community Development Consultant and advertising may be allowed in order to cover the ongoing expenses of maintaining the site. Cost: Up to \$3,000 for initial development and up to \$500 per year for ongoing maintenance.

Use social media to promote Castine. Establish a Facebook page on which events, items of note, photographs, etc. may be posted by the Economic & Community Development Consultant. Advertising by area businesses and organizations would not be permitted on this page but it would serve as another outlet for information about the dynamic community of Castine and another way communicating community news and events. Blogging and a presence on other social media sites such as Twitter and Pinterest should be explored and considered. Use of these services is free although low-cost Facebook advertising may be considered to promote particular events or activities.



Business Support

Provide counseling, mentoring, and education for existing businesses. Using the expertise of the Economic & Community Development Consultant and resources such as SCORE, SBA, Eastern Maine Development Corporation, and a network of local mentors, assistance may be provided in business planning, finance, marketing, human resources, business expansion and a host of other business-related issues. Business owners are busy people and may not always have knowledge of or access to existing resources. By bringing more of these assets to them and providing workshops, one-on-one counseling and mentoring, and professional development opportunities we can provide the tools necessary to increase the likelihood of success. The office of the Economic & Community Development Consultant can be the hub for educational opportunities, networking, referrals, and access to materials that can assist existing businesses as well as provide services to those considering doing business in Castine. There may be costs incurred to engage certain presenters but these may be paid through program sponsorships or other fundraising efforts.

Launch a “Buy Local” Campaign. Buy Local campaigns have been widely used as an effective tool to attract customers to downtown commercial districts and encourage local citizen support of the entire business community. CastineCED should work closely with the Castine Merchants’ Association to develop this campaign and use the Economic & Community Development Consultant to coordinate promotional efforts.

Establish financial assistance programs for Castine businesses. The recent credit crisis has resulted in greater difficulty in obtaining loans for small and micro-businesses. Our local businesses often need relatively small amounts of capital to undertake improvements to their storefronts, install new equipment, obtain new inventory, etc. and these needs typically arise at the beginning of the “season” when cash is scarce. It is recommend that a micro-loan/grant program be developed and that networking efforts be launched to encourage local private investment by people of means, provide loan packaging assistance, and other similar financial assistance programs. There are many grants available to fund such activities.

Plan, manage, and cross-promote events throughout the year which provide activities for visitors and residents alike. Beyond simply providing something to do, events can bring new customers, promote what is special or unique about a community, and even be fundraising opportunities. An important thing to do as part of revitalizing the downtown commercial district is to answer the question “Why Castine?” for potential visitors as well as potential and current residents. Events are part of what defines a community and are one of the threads that hold the fabric of the community together. Continuing events such as Waterfront Wednesdays and Light Up Castine and assisting in promotion of events managed by organizations other than CastineCED are important to revitalization efforts. Additional events may include:



- 2-day festival to be developed as a coordinated effort of CastineCED, Castine Merchants' Association, and other organizations
- Monthly movie series of second-run popular films to be shown in the 2nd floor of Emerson Hall
- Workshop series in "off season" designed to engage year-round residents and the MMA population

Every effort should be made to work with a range of organizations in the community in order to collectively promote an array of events that serves to create a big picture of community vibrancy and convey the message that there really is something going on in Castine!

Implement the Downtown Network plan with support from the Maine Development Foundation.

Although the details of this item remain unclear pending a site visit and plan creation by the Downtown Network team, Castine is fortunate to have been accepted into this program. Based on a national program developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program, this system has proven highly effective in revitalizing commercial districts throughout the country. It identifies four points as the keys to success:

1. Organization – getting everyone working toward the same goal and doing the tough work of building structure and consensus
2. Promotion – selling the image and promise of Main Street to prospects and marketing the district's unique characteristics to shoppers, investors, new businesses, and visitors
3. Design – getting the commercial district in top physical shape and capitalizing on its best assets
4. Economic Restructuring – finding a new purpose for Main Street's enterprises, helping existing businesses to expand and recruiting new ones to convert unused space into productive property

CastineCED and the Economic & Community Development Consultant will be working closely with the Maine Development Foundation to implement this program.

Continue collaboration with MMA for redevelopment of Castine's waterfront. Several years ago, a joint committee was convened including members of the Maine Maritime Academy administration and town representatives. From their efforts, three concepts were created to address the redevelopment of Castine's waterfront in order to serve the interests of both the Academy and the Town. Implementation of any of these concept options is dependent on the Academy securing funding to build new facilities replacing those that would be removed from the waterfront. It is recommended that this cooperative relationship be maintained and that any opportunities to move the project forward be diligently pursued.

Establish free Wi-Fi "hot spots" in key downtown areas. Wireless internet access is becoming increasingly important to all of us. Having this access in downtown areas will allow visitors as well as year-round and seasonal residents more freedom to engage in the downtown while still remaining "connected". The



recommendation is to start with creating a free Wi-Fi hot spot on the town dock that could also be broadcast into a large portion of the mooring field giving boaters access to the system. If a collaborative arrangement can be negotiated with Maine Maritime Academy to use a portion of the bandwidth on their guest network, this could be accomplished with minimal investment on the part of the town (this hot spot would have the most traffic during a time in which the Academy's network traditionally sees much less use). A "splash page" should be created to welcome users to the network that could include a community calendar, advertising, and acknowledgement of partners in the program. Additional hot spots may include the town green and others at a future time if a need is determined. Cost: Up to \$1,000 for antenna hardware and installation and up to \$1,000 for splash page development.

Initiate an annual cleanup campaign for the commercial district. You never get a second chance to make a first impression. It is critical that Castine make the most of its beautiful downtown by ensuring that that first impression is the best it can be. As already referenced, micro-loans/grants may be made available to businesses for façade improvements and the Town should do its part to ensure that all public facilities are in excellent condition.

Undertake improvements to streets, infrastructure, parking, and streetscapes etc. Efforts have been made based on the 2009 Master Plan for Infrastructure Improvements as presented by Olver Associates and this plan should continue to be implemented on the established schedule. This would result in road repair, sidewalk repair and construction, and other infrastructure improvements. In addition, further implementation of the 2006 Comprehensive Traffic Control Study and Plan submitted by Gordon B. MacArthur should be undertaken. In particular, redesign of the angled parking on Main Street in order to address safety issues and to provide additional spaces is recommended. Other improvements may include decorative lighting, gateway signs, directional signs to parking and attractions, garbage receptacles, benches, public art, and "pocket parks" (interesting use of small spaces).

Tourism

Tourism has been, and will continue to be, an important part of Castine's economy. However, changes in the U.S. economy and tourism trends make it increasingly difficult for all tourism-dependent communities. Castine cannot afford to build its economy solely around tourism given the very short 10 to 12 week season. However, there are several things that can be done to position Castine as an attractive destination and bring visitors in which are not currently being fully served.



Market Castine outside of Castine. Marketing Castine properly is essential and some high-quality materials do currently exist, such as the walking map. However, it is difficult to find these materials until one is already in town. It is important to reach out and take advantage of opportunities to more widely distribute these materials. Materials, including event posters and such, should be distributed to area chambers of commerce and visitor centers such as the Maine Coast Welcome Center in Belfast (a display fee of up to \$400 per year may apply for this center). It is also recommended that the Town of Castine or the Merchants' Association purchase a membership in the Maine Tourism Association (up to \$180 per year) and consider purchasing display rights in their visitor information centers (\$15 to \$40 each per year, depending on locations selected).

In addition, a cooperative advertising campaign may be appropriate to increase visibility for Castine as a general destination and to promote major events. A cooperative approach is recommended among relevant businesses with contributions from economic development funds when available and where appropriate. Cooperative advertising is a more manageable way to promote the area in higher-visibility publications with a broader reach than any one business may be able to afford on their own. Publications such as *PointsEast Magazine*, *Discover Maine Magazine*, *Maine Invites You*, *DownEast, Maine.*, *Maine Boats*, *Homes & Harbors*, and other regional magazines newspapers and guides should be considered depending on available funding. Although advertising may be subsidized by economic development funds, these activities should always be primarily funded as a collaborative effort of the stakeholders and be facilitated primarily by CastineCED.

No opportunity should be lost to send press releases about events and news of significance. Depending on the topic these releases should be sent regionally, statewide, or even nationally and maintain a consistent brand image. Lists of contacts in appropriate media outlets should be kept up to date and include newspapers, magazines, radio, television and online outlets.

Manage a robust calendar of events. Waterfront Wednesdays begins this July and is a prime example of the type of event that will appeal not only to our full and part-time residents but also to tourists and is likely to bring in visitors who would not otherwise consider Castine. A two-day festival of some sort, perhaps on the "shoulder season" may also be an appropriate addition to the community calendar and will be explored by CastineCED. However, not all events need to be planned and managed by this organization. In many instances, the CastineCED may act in a supporting role as the promotional agency for the community calendar as a whole. By strategic use of such tools as a new website (as referenced in an earlier part of this report), social media, a Wi-Fi splash page (as referenced in the earlier Wi-Fi "hot spot" recommendation), bulletin boards, press releases, advertising, free calendar listings online and in print, and other marketing tools, a more integrated campaign can be developed. This will have the benefit of giving a more accurate impression of the scope and depth of what is happening in the community and help to make Castine a more attractive destination.

Develop a marketing campaign that targets the "cruising" market. Often a group of large boat owners will plan a cruise itinerary of Maine harbors. This is a relatively untapped area for Castine and is an attractive



sector due to the affluence of the market and the fact that, since they arrive by sea, no parking is required for these visitors. Potential resources include advertising in such publications as *Cruising World*, *Yachting Magazine*, *Boating Magazine*, *Sailing World*, *WoodenBoat*, and *Marina Life*. Free or low-cost listings are available in publications such as *PointsEast*, on websites such as portsbyboat.com, dockmasteronline.com, and cruisersforum.com, and in travel guides targeting this market. Castine should continue to work with Maine Maritime Academy on redevelopment of the waterfront create a port that is more attractive, accessible and accommodating and to offer amenities such as guest moorings, public restrooms with showers, laundry facilities, garbage disposal, launch service, and provisions.

Promote Castine to the destination wedding market. Weddings are a \$48 billion industry with the average wedding costing approximately \$27,000. The allure of the Maine coast is an asset that can be used to Castine's advantage. By pooling the resources of stakeholders and promoting the community in its entirety as a wedding destination we can better penetrate the market. A planning guide should be developed for events to assist brides and wedding professionals in selecting sites and services within Castine. Advertising options include *Destination Weddings Magazine*, *Destination I Do*, *Destination Bride*, and other regional and specialty publications. Another resource for listings and information is the Bridal Association of America.

Promote Castine as a destination for corporate retreats. The advantage of this market is that these groups are often looking for "shoulder season" opportunities so that they may better control their costs. These groups are generally smaller than full-scale conventions or conferences and their attendees typically bring spouses or families with them who seek out entertainment and shopping opportunities. A relationship should be established with Meeting Professionals International, New England Chapter and a targeted marketing campaign undertaken with select event planners in the northeast market.

Ensure that listings in travel guides are up-to-date and accurate. There are dozens of travel guides on the market each representing hundreds of communities. Publishers of these guides make a good faith effort to keep their information current but lack the resources to keep up with the many changes in each area. A proactive approach should be taken to review the information presented about Castine in these guides each year and to report any changes. This ensures that Castine is presented accurately and establishes a positive relationship with those publishing the guides.



Encourage Socio-Economic Diversity

Castine is an aging community, even more so than the rest of the state. Although Castine has experienced a modest increase in the overall population (up less than 5% since 1980) and census results are skewed due to inclusion of MMA students, some clear trends do emerge. The resident population of children ages 0 to 14 has declined 29.7% and the number of working-age residents (ages 25 to 59) has declined 29.9% since 2000. Alternatively, the population of residents 60 years and older has increased 14.9% in the same time period.

Another trend over the past 10+ years is the conversion of homes from year-round owner-occupied residences to seasonal residences, vacation rentals and/or student rentals. These accounted for approximately 40% of the housing units in 2000 and rose to approximately 46% in 2010.

What these trends mean is that young working families that make Castine their home are harder to come by. The effect of this is demonstrated by the recent loss of the ambulance service due to lack of manpower to sustain the service and the effects will continue to be felt by community organizations and services as they struggle to recruit energetic volunteers. The Adams School is likely to suffer from a declining student population as well.

In performing research for this document many people that have either recently relocated to Castine or who work in Castine but do not live in town were interviewed. These discussions, combined with anecdotal evidence, suggest three issues faced by the working age/income group: 1) Castine lacks the amenities that make for an attractive community in which to live; 2) Castine is seen as a very closed community that is not welcoming to newcomers; and 3) Higher than average housing costs make Castine unaffordable.

Community Amenities

By implementing the recommendations outlined in the earlier section that discusses “Support the Existing Business Community & Revitalize the Downtown Commercial District” Castine can make considerable progress toward creating the type of community that will attract a greater diversity of residents. “What is there to do in Castine?” is a question often asked by those who do not have ties to the community, and even by many who do. By concentrating efforts on building Castine into a thriving year-round economy and organizing “off season” events that appeal not only to retirees but also to young families and MMA students, this question can have a more positive and enthusiastic answer.

Welcome to Castine

In an effort to provide a more welcoming environment to those considering Castine as their home, the following recommendations emerge:



Develop a relocation package for prospective newcomers. This would include municipal information, a listing of businesses and community organizations, maps, and special offers. It may also include current property listings from the town's real estate offices.

Establish an Ambassadors network. Castine is filled with residents who have an enthusiasm for the town and information they are willing to share. It is recommended that a group of volunteers be established with various backgrounds who can provide one-on-one support to those new to the community – parents of school-aged children, parents of pre-school-aged children, retirees, business owners, Merchant Mariners, telecommuters, etc. Participants would be referred by realtors, MMA, and other community groups into this network and would be paired with an appropriate volunteer to welcome them into the community and provide information and guidance and they acclimate to their new home.

Housing

No discussion of the future of Castine would be complete without addressing the issue of housing. The median value of a single-family detached home in 2009 was \$611,724, 104% higher than the median value for Hancock County and 164% higher than the median for the state of Maine. Although this may be considered beneficial to current property owners it has created a situation in which young people and families are not able to afford to make Castine their home.

Castine needs a diverse year-round population in order to maintain its character, revitalize the downtown, support a year-round economy, sustain services and entice business development and job creation. Every effort should be made to encourage the development of moderately priced housing including, but not limited to, zoning changes that provide opportunity and incentive for the type of development. The Economic & Community Development Consultant and CastineCED should work closely with the Housing and Zoning Committees to ensure that opportunities are made available that address this situation.

Other Possibilities

There is already a core population of Merchant Mariners who may work elsewhere in the world but make their home in Castine. They have homes in Castine, pay taxes in Castine, their children go the Adams school and spouses work in area businesses and volunteer in Castine organizations. It is possible, through a partnership with Maine Maritime Academy, perhaps, to target this market and bring more of these families to Castine.

In addition, with the rise of telecommuting there is an opportunity for Castine to attract new residents who would be interested in a small coastal town as a lifestyle choice. Several associations and consulting firms exist that work to support successful telecommuting arrangements. Relationships with these organizations are worth further exploration.

Develop a Year-Round Economy

Although an essential part of the overall economic and community development strategy which must be undertaken simultaneously with the previously-discussed areas of concentration, it is the most difficult to address and requires long-term vision and commitment. Working to create a year-round economy does certainly involve working closely with existing business to seek out opportunities outside of the traditional “season”. However, a focus on positioning Castine as a viable business location and an attractive lifestyle choice is essential in attracting private investment.

Market vacant buildings in the downtown commercial district to targeted new businesses. Actively seek businesses that add to the downtown mix, provide goods and/or services not currently available in Castine, and have strong potential to be open year-round. Many communities have created unique initiatives to address filling vacancies. Biddeford, for example, created the Main Street Challenge through which they solicited for businesses to pitch their plan and compete for an attractive package of incentive. This package includes a forgivable loan, six-months free rent, and in-kind services (legal, accounting, etc.). Businesses are selected based on the viability of the project and its ability to meet the needs of the community. It is recommended that the Economic & Community Development Consultant work with CastineCED to research potential models and identify opportunities to implement a similar program.

Streamline the licensing and permitting process. Ensure that Town licensing and permitting practices and procedures are consistent, expeditious, and clearly communicated. Where specialized industry requirements call for inspections by other government agencies, coordinate with those agencies to strive for consistency and minimize duplication of efforts.

Undertake a Market Analysis using the method recommended by the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This process would identify current conditions and opportunities within the entire Castine business community, not just the downtown commercial district. This analysis would then be integrated into all other elements of Castine’s economic and community development and would provide the information needed to develop a business recruitment package.

Pursue certification through the state’s Business Friendly Community Program. Maine has recently established this program and the first round of communities attaining certification were announced in May 2012. The program is an effort to encourage business development and growth in communities throughout Maine and recognizes communities that provide exceptional service and streamlined regulatory processes for business owners. The Certified Business Friendly Community Program seeks to identify, recognize and



promote communities that show a true commitment to business development. Certified Business Friendly Communities will become a key part of Maine’s Business Attraction strategy and can utilize the “Open for Business” logo on official community correspondence. Certified communities may also be eligible to receive bonus points in the State of Maine Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs.

Maintain a close relationship with organizations that are working to bring business to Maine.

Organizations throughout the state are successfully working with businesses looking to relocate to or expand within Maine. By networking with these organizations, such as Maine & Company and the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, and keeping them informed of local accomplishments and opportunities Castine can be more visible and competitive.

Consider establishing a business incubator. An incubator is a space made available to support the successful development of entrepreneurial companies through an array of programs, business support resources and services. Special consideration could, perhaps, be given to tenants that would benefit from the proximity to, and relationship with, Maine Maritime Academy or to those in particular targeted business sectors.

Create a “toolbox” of financial incentives for private investment. These could include, but may not be limited to, TIFs, Pine Tree Zones, and forgivable loans. It may also include working with local banks to negotiate attractive terms and faster turnaround times for projects that help achieve our goals.

Work closely with Maine Maritime Academy to identify and attract businesses in the marine-related sector.

Castine has a unique opportunity to create leverage the existence of MMA to attract businesses that would benefit from being in close proximity to the Academy or make use of the working waterfront. Businesses in the area of research and development, logistics, and other marine-related fields may be attracted to Castine.

Identify specific areas of town that may provide space for business development. Allocate land for development in appropriate locations and in sufficient acreage to attract and maintain opportunities for micro and small business development. One recommendation would be to consider rezoning the piece of town-owned land in the area of the Transfer Station for commercial use with an accompanying incentive package for appropriate businesses. Other large parcels within “the square” (as referenced in the Castine Comprehensive Plan) should also be considered for rezoning.



Pursue involvement in the Top Gun program through the Maine Center for Entrepreneurial Development.

Top Gun is an entrepreneurship program designed to accelerate the progress of early-stage innovative businesses through a combination of coursework, mentoring and networked communities over the course of nine months. Offered in Portland and Bangor in the past, Top Gun was recently awarded additional funding to expand its offerings throughout Maine.

Develop a list of specific businesses and general business cluster that may meet the needs of Castine residents, contribute to enhancing the quality of life, and/or provide livable wage employment opportunities. Identify goods and services that not currently available but are desired by full-time residents, seasonal residents, and the MMA population – pharmacy, hardware/homegoods store, hair salon, etc. Determine business clusters that may provide employment opportunities and add to Castine’s tax base – marine-related businesses for example. Actively work to attract investment through direct contact with targeted businesses and an overall marketing effort.



Additional General Recommendations

Loosen restrictions on commerce in the off-neck rural zone and on-neck areas outside of the commercial district. Implement requirements to ensure that projects are of an appropriate scale and meet the criteria of maintaining or enhancing the quality of life enjoyed by Castine residents.

Consider zoning changes that would limit the number of non-family residents permitted to occupy a long-term rental in order to discourage “frat house” living arrangements for Academy students.

Monitor, support, and where appropriate participate in Regional and State economic development efforts.

Encourage business, commercial and industrial building and site design to adhere to the highest architectural standards.

Consider zoning changes in the downtown commercial district that would prohibit conversion of commercial space on the ground floor to residential space.

Promote pedestrian oriented commercial development that incorporates a focus of activity, and is architecturally distinctive. Strip commercial development is not currently allowed and should not be allowed in the future.

Identify, encourage, and promote commercial development that generates a high annual revenue return while respecting the natural and cultural environments and preserving or enhancing the quality of life in the community.

Encourage active cooperation between the Town and local businesses concerning economic development issues, including the support of those businesses that have specialized infrastructure, building design and transportation needs.

Where appropriate, participate or otherwise assist in business-sponsored activities to increase local awareness of goods and services available in Castine.

Promote recreational and cultural activities as an economic stimulus.

Task appropriate boards, committees and organizations to identify and promote recreational and cultural activities that might serve as an economic stimulus.

Explore the potential for creating an annual “Achievement Award” that would honor significant contributions by businesses or individuals to the quality of life in Castine.



Resources

While not an exhaustive list of resources and grant opportunities, the following represent the most likely sources of assistance in the short term. Other resources will be cultivated based on their relevance to particular projects or programs

Maine Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD)

DECD is the umbrella organization for business development, community development, tourism & film, innovation, and international trade for the state of Maine. The department is dedicated to positioning Maine for growth in a global economy, while maintaining the quality of life that Maine is known for. This is done through investments focused on Maine's natural and intellectual assets and with accountability for how these investments are serving the citizens of Maine.

Maine DECD administers Community Development Block Grants in the following program areas that may be of relevance to Castine:

Housing Assistance - provides funding in to address housing problems of low and moderate-income persons. Eligible activities are those directly related to assisting or creating residential housing units including Acquisition, Code Enforcement, Conversion of Non-Residential Structures, Demolition, Historic Preservation, Housing Rehabilitation, New Housing Construction, Relocation Assistance, and Removal of Architectural Barriers.

Public Facilities - provides funds for communities to address local issues, which are part of a community development strategy leading to future public and private investments. Eligible activities include construction, acquisition, reconstruction, installation, rehabilitation, site clearance, historic preservation, and relocation assistance associated with public projects such as community, child, senior and health centers; libraries; piers/wharfs; removal of architectural barriers; historic preservation as a distinct, stand alone project; fire stations or fire fighting equipment; parks and recreation facilities.

Public Infrastructure - provides funds for communities to address local issues, which are part of a community development strategy leading to future public and private investments. The eligible activities include construction, acquisition, reconstruction, installation, rehabilitation, site clearance, historic preservation, and relocation assistance associated with public projects and infrastructure in support of new affordable housing construction. Program activities are grouped as follows: Water system installation/improvements, Sewer system installation/improvements, Water/sewer system hookups, and Storm drainage, and Other Utility infrastructure; Infrastructure (utilities, roads, sidewalks, drainage, etc.) in support of new fully financed projects; streets, roads and sidewalks, parking areas, curbs and gutters.

Community Enterprise - provides grant funds to assist in innovative solutions to problems faced by small or micro-businesses and to provide streetscapes in downtown areas and business façade improvements. Activities include the following: Micro-Enterprise Grants/Loans or Business Façade and Streetscape Grants.

Downtown Revitalization Program - provides funds for communities to implement comprehensive, integrated and innovative solutions to identified problems facing their downtown districts. These downtown revitalization projects must be part of a strategy that targets downtown service and business districts and will lead to future public and private investment. Eligible activities include all those eligible under the Public



Facilities, Public Infrastructure, Public Service, Housing Assistance, Economic Development and Community Enterprise Grant programs as relevant to the revitalization of a downtown district. A community must have completed a comprehensive downtown strategic plan or updated an existing plan within in the past five years.

Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC)

EMDC is committed to leading Eastern Maine communities to a strong economic future. To this end, they provide leadership to encourage partnership and collaboration that fosters creation of a thriving regional economic climate, always mindful of the need to balance economic, social and environmental considerations, while maintaining and enhancing the unique quality of place found throughout Maine. EMDC is dedicated to establishing a competitive business climate that embraces free enterprise, encourages entrepreneurship, promotes innovation, develops a quality workforce, and supports infrastructure investment, all of which lead to a thriving economy. EMDC recognizes that partnership and collaboration are essential to our work and enters into these relationships with purpose, commitment, and focus toward achieving a common and actionable goal. EMDC is a leader in convening stakeholders, facilitating a process to identify key issues, and responding to regional challenges and concerns with integrity. In addition, EMDC strives to maintain and enhance the unique quality of place that makes our communities attractive to talented workers, resonates with visitors, and enhances our economy. EMDC is a leader in sustainability practices balancing social, environmental and economic considerations for the benefit of our residents, businesses, and visitors. Services include business finance, resources for businesses and communities, and government contracting technical assistance.

Maine Development Foundation

The Maine Development Foundation (MDF) drives sustainable, long-term economic growth for Maine. MDF stimulates new ideas, develops leaders, and provides common ground for solving problems and advancing issues. Programs include Leadership Maine, Maine Downtown Center (Main Street Maine, Maine Downtown Network, Maine Downtown Institute, etc.). They utilize the Main Street Four-Point Approach® which has a reputation as one of the most powerful economic development tools in the nation for vibrant, healthy downtowns. Established in 1999, the Center's mission is to advance preservation-based economic development in Maine downtowns.

Maine Rural Development Authority (MRDA)

MRDA provides financial assistance to communities and their development partners to help develop speculative commercial and industrial buildings and to help develop/redevelop underutilized commercial industrial properties. It is the intent of MRDA to assist with projects that cannot be accomplished by the private sector development community acting alone. The goals of these programs are to foster job creation, encourage business development in Maine, restore employment opportunities, and create employment opportunities in areas of economic need.



USDA

The USDA provides a range of grants and other resources such as Rural Community Development Initiative Grants, Rural Business Enterprise Grants, Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants, and Rural Cooperative Development Grants that may be relevant to specific programs and initiatives in Castine.

Conclusion

Successful implementation of this economic development strategy is to be pursued not just by community groups but is to be undertaken by the private sector, often with help from town government. This community-centered economic development approach is characterized by:

- Long-term focus within a targeted area
- Ongoing, multiple projects connected by a common plan and goals
- Dual goals of positive community impact and financial viability
- Smaller-scale solutions and incremental improvement

Don Allen Holbrook is a world-renowned economist who works in the area of assisting communities to position themselves so that they are globally competitive. On May 27, 2012 he posted “7 Steps to Stimulating Local Economies for Growth” in the Post Global Financial Crisis Recommendations blog for the National Rural Economic Developers Association (NREDA). These steps are paraphrased here because they are relevant to Castine and successfully summarize an approach that can focus all stakeholders on the work to be done.

1. **Awakening:** Change is inevitable but progress is optional. We must awaken to the reality of our current situation and change attitudes.
2. **Awareness:** Take stock of our actual situation and determine how we stack up against competitors. Factors to consider include taxes, business costs, workforce, education, infrastructure, economic development tools, political climate, and risk tolerance.
3. **Catalyst Decisions:** What type of projects would best create the environment that could take advantage of what we feel the community’s strategic direction should be? Start with small projects that we can say ‘yes’ to immediately and build momentum.
4. **Level the Playing Field:** Create a list of tools that Castine is willing to use in order to attract private sector investment. Demonstrate how the Town will put some of its own economic capital at risk along with the private sector investors.
5. **Opportunity Solicitation:** Create the opportunity, define the reasons for why Castine is the best place for a certain type of investment and present an unbiased business case.
6. **Community, Accountability & Transparency:** Create a communications strategy to keep the citizens of Castine apprised of developments and what specific projects mean to them.
7. **Forge Public-Private Partnerships:** Create an agreement that binds two entities to a process to achieve great results for both sides. Set the tone for the measurable expectations each side has for the other and how they will be enforced and measured.

It will only be through consistent, coordinated effort that Castine may realize the goal of becoming a thriving year-round community.

Appendix

JOB DESCRIPTION

TOWN OF CASTINE

Economic & Community Development Consultant

SCOPE

The Economic & Community Development Consultant reports to the Town Manager and is responsible for facilitating community and economic development planning and initiatives; identifying and fostering community economic development opportunities; securing funding for economic development activities and programs; assisting local organizations, businesses and individuals with establishing plans and projects; and promoting the community in order to expand economic development opportunities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Facilitate community and economic development planning in order to identify and establish economic development opportunities.

Main Activities

- Facilitate the economic and community development planning process
- Facilitate and support the Economic Development Committee
- Establish and support economic development sub-committees (i.e. events, marketing, fundraising, ambassadors)
- Recruit and manage committee volunteers
- Facilitate the implementation of an economic development plan
- Research and provide recommendations on community economic development opportunities
- Evaluate results of studies and make recommendations
- Receive and respond to inquiries, concerns, complaints, and requests for assistance regarding economic and community development

Identify opportunities for economic development projects and initiatives

Main Activities

- Establish programs and practices that lead to projects that result in capital investment, job creation, expanded tax base, creative and niche development, recreation and entertainment venues, and other quality improvements
- Identify sectorial opportunities for economic development (i.e. tourism, arts, marine-related research and development)
- Act as a liaison between local organizations, businesses, representatives of government and individuals concerning economic development
- Develop partnerships within the community to develop and promote opportunities
- Assist local organizations, businesses and individuals to take advantage of economic development opportunities and projects
- Assist with the development of job creation projects
- Conduct surveys and research on market opportunities
- Identify capital improvement program opportunities



Secure funding for economic and community development activities and programs

Main Activities

- Research private and public sector economic development funding opportunities
- Consult with industry and government representatives concerning eligibility requirements for funding
- Prepare proposals for funding to support community economic development
- Administer grant funds and donations for use in funding related projects
- Facilitate fundraising efforts including event management, capital campaigns, and private local investment

Assist local organizations, businesses and individuals with establishing economic and community development plans, businesses and projects

Main Activities

- Identify opportunities for joint ventures
- Assist with negotiations concerning joint ventures
- Provide assistance in business planning including advice on market analysis and economic opportunities, product development, identification of target markets, management and training requirements, financing, marketing, licensing, taxation, and business related requirements
- Conduct site visits and monitor business results
- Provide educational opportunities for business owners
- Prepare and maintain information on utilities, taxes, zoning, transportation, community services, financing tools, etc. and respond to requests for information and assistance
- Provide information and/or make presentations to boards, commissions, civic groups, businesses, individuals, and the general public on economic development issues, programs, services, and plans
- Advocate for the needs of the business community at the local and state levels

Promote the community in order to expand economic development opportunities

Main Activities

- Represent the community at regional and national meetings and conferences on economic and community development
- Develop community and regional networks
- Develop and maintain a business registry
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of available buildings and sites suitable for economic development activities
- Facilitate meetings of the Castine Merchants Association
- Prepare and disseminate public relations materials
- Develop sectorial strategies to promote various opportunities (i.e. tourism, arts, education)
- Develop brochures and promotional materials
- Develop and maintain a Community Economic Development website which will smoothly integrate with the existing municipal website
- Promote the use of private sector business services
- Liaise with industry and government representatives to promote local businesses and opportunities