



## Comments from Loomio Discussion as of 8/31/2017

This flows from the answers to the prior question about what we love about Cape. What are some creative ways we can address population shifts that are likely before us? Many of us do not wish to see our small-town and rural character disrupted with new buildings. Does there need to be a lot more new housing stock for one generation (Boomers), when at some point that will constitute too much housing and too much of a change to what so many of us find spiritually fulfilling? How does a school system allow for significant fluctuations in population? How can we work with other communities to accommodate such shifts to make Cape environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable?

First, thank you for presenting this information. I think most people understand that Cape Elizabeth sets itself apart from other towns in the region. There is less focus on the business community, and more emphasis placed on maintaining the natural beauty and enjoyment of the environment.

The demographics showcase an aging population. This may become an issue in the near future should estates shifting generations lead to non-standard residential zoning. Not that growth resistance is desirable; this community should not over control what people decide to do with their properties. Perhaps a zoning moratorium for new construction after estate transfers can be negotiated by the town council.

Seeing Cape Elizabeth as the highest educated population in Maine, and the school system as top rated makes me proud. I believe the continuation of this tradition should be paramount. The only concern is the low <5 age group, though this is likely due to the lack of housing availability for young families as average occupancy age rates are so high. Again, as estates transfer and in-home elder care comes about that will shift demographics.

Not necessarily related to this document, but being able to have safe and inviting access to Cape Elizabeth's natural beauty is an opportunity. The sidewalk system built on Shore road demonstrates what should exist in more areas of the community. Being able to zone the space, while being fair to residents and their land ownership will be a careful conversation. There has been a steady increase in bicycle and foot traffic on major and minor roadways throughout the town. Special events such as parades and road races are becoming more prevalent (a great thing). Having more sidewalk access secures this safety and maintains beauty.

The aging population relies on certain community departments for entertainment and social integration. This is a dual use, as young families also utilize these same services for daycare and afterschool care. Enlarging these services will provide more for the population on both groups.

I hope more people add to the discussion, as we all benefit from continued conversation and debate! I found the population and demographics section to be very interesting, eye-opening and of some concern. With that I have some questions and comments:

Under 'Key Findings' on page 1 the 3rd bullet states -

"Between 2000 and 2015 the population over 80 has increased by almost 80%, and the under 5 population has decreased by nearly 50%."

Wondering if and how the Village Crossing Nursing Home on Scott Dyer skews the 80 year old

statistic?

Comments:

~ Having the under age 5 population decrease by 50% does not seem to bode well for needed focus on the school system and young families. A healthy school system is needed to attract new families to the community and also strengthens, I think, desirability and the real estate values of our town.

~ On page 2 and 3 it appears that CE is a very low growth community, along with Yarmouth, growing only 1% in the 5 years from 2010 to 2015. Compare this to other towns in CC and Maine. I would like to see Cape Elizabeth grow at a somewhat higher rate, especially via younger families, to offset the aging in place that may be occurring.

~ I was really struck by the statistics on page 6, with accompanying chart on the following page. As of 2015 CE's median age was 51.1, about 25% older than Cumberland County's median age of 41.9. Compare this to 42.7 for Maine and 37.2 for the US. Again, I do not know how the Village Crossing Nursing Home might possibly be skewing these figures?

~ Same Page 6, it cites the 50% decline in children under 5 years old over a 15 year period and further states that CE is likely to see a declining enrollment in its schools.

Baby Boomers (45 to 64) are by far the largest group by age in CE. Will they "age in place" after their children leave home and they retire, thereby continuing to this aging trend? If and when they leave will younger families be able to afford to move into this community given the high real estate cost barriers? I think that CE needs to figure out how to attract young families to this community to keep it vital.

I agree with the above comments. I am equally pleased and very concerned with the increased bike/foot traffic on narrow Two Lights Road. I would love to see a multi-use path connecting Route 77 existing bike path to Two Lights State Park

I would love to see some kind of modest, tasteful, retail development of the town center. Something along the lines of CSalt--maybe a Rosemont-type market, or an art gallery, something more in the center of town we can all walk to. I think this would go a long way to attracting the young families we all agree the town needs.

Thank you for your comment. It is a difficult problem to deal with... how to balance the housing needs of the aging baby boom, while recognizing that 30 years from now we might have a glut of housing stock no longer desired. Coordination with other communities is important.

Thank you for your comments! We have heard from many people the importance of sidewalks, so stay tuned!

Thanks for all of your detailed points! The committee did discuss at its meeting last week the impact Village Crossing had on the population numbers. The impact was negligible.

Attracting young families has been a discussion at the committee. Thank you for being part of the conversation!

Each generation has value and contributes to the Town. Cape Elizabeth schools educate our children and then these young adults with the blessing of their parents decide if they wish to remain in Cape and the State of Maine or seek different opportunities elsewhere. Cape reflects what is taking place in the State.

Thank you for your comment! You are right - statewide we have an aging population. It was striking to me when reading the population chapter how drastically different Cape Elizabeth is from the rest of

Cumberland County, though. In Cape, the population of children under 5 decreased nearly 50% over 15 years. Cumberland County saw children under 5 decrease only 8% for the same time period. On the opposite end, CE's population of people over age 80 increased 80%, while Cumberland County saw that age group increase by only 22%.

Thank you for your reminder. I wonder if our purpose is to problem-solve our demographics or to discuss what opportunities we can identify with the demographics as they have been projected?

Thank you.

Many Boomers I know have sold their larger, family homes to downsize locally, perhaps in a more walkable/accessible area. They have also sold homes to split time between the Northeast and a warmer climate. The home prices in CE prevent many younger families from coming in. Scarborough and South Portland have seen greater shifts because they have a greater inventory of more affordable housing. Many young families are saddled with student debt, large down payments for houses are hard to save for, and many of the surrounding communities can offer a good school system while also allowing them to purchase their first or second home at a lower cost than most of the homes in CE.

In terms of helping our aging population, I think having a walkable and accessible town center is paramount. It should be safe for people of all abilities and ages and we already have many services provided in a central location. We are lucky that Town Hall, the IGA, the pharmacy, the library, and schools are all so close together. Having sidewalks coming in from other parts of town will be crucial in the coming years. We live on Fowler Road and there are so many families who would also benefit from this. I also think it increases our appeal. Many young families I know are looking for a special mix of small community feel, walkable neighborhoods/town centers, and good schools. More affordable housing will bring these families in.

I really appreciate the time to share these views, concerns, and solutions with the town planners. Thank you for creating this forum and your responses.

I think it is a balancing act of meeting the needs of our existing and projected demographics, while also ensuring that Cape can remain accessible to new residents and families. A decreasing population could have deleterious effects on our town.

I found your comments to be thoughtful and valuable! Thank you!

I think one thing that might help is having the public bus system come down this way. When I was in the process of looking for a new house (back in Jan-March 2016), the one thing that didn't make it from my list was being close to public transportation. I had this grand idea I would be on a public bus line where it would be easier access for the design students at MECA who needed an internship to come work for me a few hours a week. At the time my boyfriend and I only owned one car, and he was using it to go to his office in Portland every day. We've always been one car (no car actually for 6 years) house hold up until moving here. (Prior we lived in both Boston and San Francisco - both cities with huge public transportation options). This gives a variety of people an option to actually live here and work elsewhere - or the opposite. Even if it was just going around on 77 it would be a huge help.

Another thing is affordable rental units. I mean to be honest since Portland is so hot right now, the sprawl is just going to come this way for people that need housing - so I don't think we're in any real trouble. But why couldn't those 5+ bedroom 5+ bathroom houses (I'm thinking about Corey Hill that's behind my house) be converted down the road into 2-3+ apartment units? Or co-sharing houses? I'm in my mid-30s and have loads of art friends my age and below who don't have kids (or will have kids) that still like sharing a house together and there is no way any of them, even with their good paying

jobs, could afford a mortgage on those houses by themselves. I got super lucky when I bought (after the market crash) /sold (the market bounced back considerably) my house in SF and actually could afford to live here. I grew up in rural Southern Maine... and living in this town was never an option. I think my grandma would always refer to it as 'the richie rich town' (Anyways, I'm off on a tangent, sorry!)

But I really think a bus line would be a good thing to start with for all people and businesses around here.

It seems to me that there are mutually exclusive alternatives that need to be balanced. Apart from the schools, Cape Elizabeth is not very attractive to young adults and young families. There has been a concerted effort to conserve undeveloped land which is wonderful, but an unintended consequence of that effort is to limit affordable housing and commercial development which adds a vibrancy to the community that is appealing to a younger generation. I would like the town to encourage small businesses in the center and simultaneously add sidewalks and bike lanes to make traveling to the center easier and more enjoyable. We have a "30 something" daughter who is looking desperately for an affordable house in Portland. She would not even consider Cape because of the cost of housing and remoteness from services and businesses. I happen to love the rural feel of our town, but I accept that it may be an impediment to growth of a younger and more dynamic demographic. Easier access to Portland i.e. bike lanes and public transportation may encourage younger people and families to consider Cape.

I agree. This may be an unpopular opinion, but I have found my peers to be willing to sacrifice the "best schools" for "good or great" schools in a more accessible area.

What you say is true but consider the following. Most of CE residents live on the "North Shore" along Shore and off of Shore Road. This area is approximately 4-6 miles from downtown Portland depending upon where you live. Handy enough for quick trips to the "city" and shops. The Cape and its government has to come to the realization that this is a bedroom community and government should not be in the job of "encouraging" retail development at the town center. Having said this, if indeed more retail is needed it will happen organically dictated by the demand for such. Agree with the concept of "bike lanes" public trans. but frankly as long as the school budget is the de-facto municipal budget these ideas are dreams. You are right on the cost of housing but this is true across this country and not unique to CE.

Thank you so much for your comments. One of the chapters of the comp plan is focused on transportation. Your input will be really helpful, as I am sure public transportation access will come up!

Thank you for this forum and its focus on the Comprehensive Plan. I would like to propose that the Town Council start such a "Loomio" forum for other town issues that are "priority" topics under consideration.

Over time there have been various initiatives and committees formed to increase the public's participation in providing input and direction to the Town Council on large budget and capital matters, various surveys, focus groups etcetera have been formed with marginal participation. A Town "Loomio" would involve all citizens, and especially those unable or unwilling to attend town meetings. How would I go about proposing this or maybe it is already in the works? I would hope that Town Council members are reading these comments right now.

Thanks again for your time in setting up this conduit for chatting and sharing views, it's a great way

to get the public involved. Cheers.....

PS: I just noticed on the Loomio header that Judy George started this thread? at any rate kudos to her as well

Thank you for the feedback. The comp plan committee unanimously agreed from the very first meeting that getting public input is a priority. Judy Colby-George is the public participation consultant hired to help us achieve that and she recommended this forum (thank you, Judy!). I am thrilled to see it is garnering such thoughtful engagement. Each member of the comp plan committee will take a turn at moderating the questions, so you will get to interact with all of us. Another way to reach us is through our meetings (3rd Wednesday of the month at 7PM), which are always open to the public! Thank you both! May I ask where is the location of your meetings on the 3rd Thursday of every month?

I may have missed this information.

I should have included location! The meetings are held in the Jordan Conference Room at Town Hall on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7pm. The next one is August 16th. Hope to see you!

Thank you!

So many thoughts and comments that have popped in my head since reading the report last week.

As a household with one child under 5, we can definitely see the lack of young children around the area. Here's a few challenges I see coupled with ideas for attracting soon-to-be and new families. (For context, we moved here in 2010, at the age of 24 and started our family in 2014.)

+ Almost everyone I know locally sends their young children to daycare in South Portland or Scarborough. There simply aren't enough affordable options close to home, especially if you need full day coverage.

+ Playgrounds that are safe for very young children, with a splash pad for the summer would be great. If there are sidewalks to get there via stroller, even better.

+ We need to be marketing the heck out of our Children's Library and librarians. It is an AMAZING resource and whenever we talk to other parents there (who don't live in Cape), they are extremely impressed with it.

+ Along the same lines as above, there's many programs for seniors (since they are the bulk of our population), but we should launch events targeted to millennials. Think: donation-based yoga at Kettle Cove.

+ Recognize that millennials may not see buying a home as a long-term thing. It may be a 5-year thing. Our housing market needs to support transitional goals.

+ It's also harder than ever to leave the nest. Starting salaries + student loans + housing prices = no extra money for snow blowers, lawn mowers, septic treatments, etc. Condos are the typical answer to this, but I think there's an opportunity in leveraging Maine neighborliness and pioneering a community with shared resources. Why should every single home have its own lawn gear when you only use it for an hour a week? Uber makes millions of dollars without owning a single car. AirBNB doesn't hold any real estate but does the same. We're in a sharing economy now, and we have to find

innovative ways to apply it to how we run our communities.

+ Increase our connections with the communities around us. Someone else mentioned the lack of a bus line, and I totally agree. Having regular public transport to Old Port would be huge for commuters. Monthly parking passes were \$75/month in 2010 and they're \$180/month now.

Other thoughts that are more observations than anything:

+ Diversity, diversity, diversity. I did not grow up in Maine, and the lack of diversity really bothers me, even 10 years later. Parents today care about quite a bit more than "good schools". It's arguably not even a selling point anymore. We're the most educated generation EVER. We know that we can settle in a "good but not great" school district, expose our children to experiences and diverse culture, and we can fill in the "gaps" of their education with our own resourcefulness.

The <5 year old is up from his nap now, so I'll have to leave this list here. ;)

I couldn't agree more with that last bit. Thanks for articulating it.

I grew up in the Cape. I loved being able to roam the woods, the fields and the beaches. As a side note we could catch a bus for 10 CENTS that took us into Monument Square where we would go to see out grandfather at work, then stop at Woolworths for a snack. I also love your idea about shared equipment. Yes, some folks in my neighborhood have landscapers but many of us still mow our own lawns and sharing of lawn mowers is a novel and great idea!~

Wow Thank you so much for taking the time to read the chapter and comment. Love your ideas!

<http://www.pressherald.com/2017/07/24/greater-portland-gets-9-9-million-for-road-sidewalk-and-bike-path-projects/>

This seems exciting and promising!

As one of the Senior Citizens in Cape, I have been researching Towns and Cities who have accepted the reality of their Aging Population. Towns such as Harpswell, cities such as South Portland.

Harpswell has created a program that has been kind to their older population. Google articles about Harpswell and Aging At Home. I will attempt to forward web articles about this. Also South Portland for years has included housing opportunities for its Seniors. A March 17, 2017 article in the Forecaster entitled: "City launches home-repair for seniors, disabled" by Melanie Sochan reflects the City's efforts at assisting its older and disabled population.

<http://www.pressherald.com/2014/09/28/maine-voices-mainers-need-help-to-age-in-place/>

For me, in light of aging at home, the community I'm in is the most helpful thing. They are just incredibly caring people that notice. They don't turn a blind eye. They know whether you've been out and about or if they haven't seen you for a day or two. They are aware of you and they care.

<http://www.pressherald.com/2015/11/15/super-tight-apartment-market-torments-renters-redefines-parts-city/comments/>

This article is from late 2015 but it's still a very real situation right now in Portland. There's a big opportunity for our town to bring in new life by positioning ourselves closer to Portland.

This is a great article ... there was also a segment on NPR this week about rents in Portland and the impact is having on the city and surrounding communities.

Thank you for that link. The article sharply and painfully identifies some serious trends effectively purging and excluding all but the wealthiest in Portland--a trend which waves out into surrounding

towns, including Cape. I'm not clear what this means and would love to hear more of your thoughts on the matter: "There's a big opportunity for our town to bring in new life by positioning ourselves closer to Portland." Thank you.

"There's a big opportunity for our town to bring in new life by positioning ourselves closer to Portland."

What I'm trying to get at is: How can we expand the Portland vibe into CE to attract the new-to-the-area buyers who are having a difficult time finding something on the Portland peninsula? I am thinking along the lines of doing more to market CE's proximity to Portland and the easy commute to necessities like the mall area. "You can have your cake and eat it, too." with the trails, coast, farm-to-table in close proximity to the experiences in Old Port.

I think the appeals of living in Cape are more apparent and available than is affordable housing. People who are being squeezed out of the Portland market are not likely to find relief in Cape Elizabeth because of the very amenities you enumerated.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts! I am glad you are engaged on this subject and hope that you will bring other people into the conversation. I too think that Cape can do more to increase its marketability to people looking to relocate near a city like Portland. However, I am not sure that people seeking more affordable housing outside of Portland, will have many options here. As we move forward with this plan, we must keep affordable housing in the forefront of all conversations. Thank you!

Thank you so much, Nicole, for expanding on your points. We need our own measure and definition of 'affordable' that is genuinely useful to lower income people who, as you well describe, may want to live here for any number of good reasons. All new housing currently being built or planned for construction (over 50 units) is not affordable to anyone but the population we now have. For that to change many people will have to be heard and then Town officials will have to set a different definition than the State's. I was interested to hear about Portland's effort to keep apartment rent increases in line with cost of living increases--no more than that. I hope that effort passes there. But we need to do our own part and we also have to find ways to make current housing stock more affordable and flexible because Cape has very limited land available for new construction.

Honestly, how much increased population density does CE really want to experience? I keep seeing a recurrent pattern of comments on the quiet quality of life that the residents all cherish, but that comes at a literal and figurative cost. Green space and rural character seems to be a premium value for the town's folks, but making more housing units available will bring in more population, and the two things just don't really mix unless some infrastructure investments are made, such as public transit, sidewalks, and more multi-storied buildings to provide for great density on a smaller land footprint. If you want a look at what to avoid in the future, consider the summer crush experience of our neighbors south of us in Kennebunkport, Ogunquit, Wells, and York. In just 17 years, I've witnessed our public spaces change from being merely "busy" to "packed past capacity" on summertime weekends. Do we want that to be our experience every summer day?

I don't believe people want a population boom, but rather to even out the demographics a bit. The key findings from the population report are that our population under 5 years old is drastically shrinking (50% less than the last census) while those over 80 is increasing (80% higher).

As a town, we need to find ways to consider this and how it could play out, lest we be left with many, many properties on the market at once as the elderly population passes away. Lots of property at once without the infrastructure and reputation for a "young family friendly" locale could mean vacancies and entire communities losing value.