

Summary of Economy Chapter Discussion on Loomio

Question: What opportunities for the town do you identify in the Economy Chapter



Most Commented facts from the Economy Chapter:

- 90% of Cape Residents commute out of Town for employment.
- Population of residents working from home increased from by 5% between 2000 and 2015.

Issues Identified:

- Need to strictly limit future commercial expansion.
- Need to expand commercial opportunities in a carefully controlled manner in clearly defined areas.
- Cape Elizabeth is a bedroom community, with a peaceful, serene, pastoral environment and should remain so.
- Importance of proximity to employment and service centers of South Portland and Portland.
- Lack of public transportation and sidewalks.
- Need to maintain current level of commercial services.
- Inadequate wireless infrastructure.
- Threats to commercial fishing and fledgling aquaculture industries.

Ideas:

- Retain current physical attributes (rural, green, pastoral etc.) while allowing some expansion of small commercial endeavors within carefully controlled areas.
- Upgrade Pond Cove commercial center and allow some expansion.
- Don't change anything.
- Provide public transportation and enhance pedestrian facilities.
- Expand commercial fishing and aquaculture opportunities in Kettle Cove area.

Comments from Loomio Discussion as of 10/5/2017:

I haven't gotten to go through this in detail, but it strikes me that there isn't more data around the self-employed, especially with the statistic that "the number of residents who reported working at home has grown from about 4% in 2000 to over 9% in 2015."

Hello, my name is Harvey Rosenfeld and I am a member of the Comprehensive Plan Committee and the moderator of this section. Thank you Nicole for your comment, I am hoping that a dialogue will develop looking beyond our Town's current economy and look toward the future. Recognizing that the Cape is an affluent bedroom community, with few services and little commercial development, is it time for community leaders and residents to look toward expanding commercial opportunities in order not only to meet the needs of our current residents, but to help attract younger families, adding to the vibrancy of the community? In response to Nicole's comment, are we providing sufficient services, i.e. high speed internet, cell phone infrastructure, library services, etc. to expand this segment of our economy? On another tack, should the Town look to expanding commercial zones beyond those earmarked in the current plan to encourage other commercial development, i.e. Incubators, co-working space, hi & bio tech, headquarters and back office facilities, etc. given the fact that the majority of workers in Cape commute out of town, not surprisingly solo by automobile. I am throwing this out to hopefully spur a lively discussion to allow the committee to make recommendations that will help the community move forward in a positive direction. Please let us know your thoughts and opinions.

Hi Harvey, my name is Nick Owens (as a kid, I mowed your lawn!). I believe that our community is currently vibrant and that it is very attractive to people of all ages, including younger families. I believe that the current state of commercial offerings is adequate and sincerely hope that our town leaders choose not to pursue the commercial model of development that Scarborough has. I don't have anything against Scarborough, but it's not what I want Cape Elizabeth to become. As it is, Cape Elizabeth is a highly desirable place to live. I love it here, and my neighbors and friends do too. So as we look to the future, I encourage our town leaders to seek to retain the current attributes of the town that make it so desirable. That doesn't mean that things can't change, but a "business hub" is not what I have in mind.

Cape is not only a bedroom community, but due to its geography it does not attract any through-traffic from other communities. This is good and bad. On the one hand I love the quiet character of Cape and how peaceful and serene it feels compared to surrounding, larger communities. On the other hand I work from home, and I really wish there were more offerings -- primarily in terms of food and groceries -- here in Cape rather than in Portland or South Portland. I agree with Nick, above, in that I don't want to see Cape turn into a business hub. I would hate to see Cape with any "big-box" retailer, or blighted with bland, utilitarian office buildings or warehouses. But a tasteful center with cafes, a nicer market like Portland Food Coop or even Rosemont, would be amazing. Or even better yet, a coop marketplace with separate vendors for green groceries, dry goods, meats, fish, etc., so we could bring together the best the area has to offer in one place (Farm Stand, Green Spark, etc.). I hesitate to say this since I suspect I might be in the minority, but I really don't like the Pond Cove Shopping Center. I think it is physically unattractive, and there are no businesses there I frequent. It could be a much more welcoming, community-oriented gathering space, if thoughtfully redesigned and developed. So much about Cape Elizabeth happens in that square mile or so--it just seems a natural epicenter to start integrating the community and creating a space where everyone can--and has a reason to-- gather.

Nick and Santosha, I couldn't agree more. I appreciate Cape Elizabeth for its multitude of wooded trails, its proximity to the ocean, its sylvan beauty, and the short commute to Portland. In fact, as a Portland business owner who lives in Cape Elizabeth, I love my short 5 mile bicycle commute.

I have trouble envisioning the benefits to current residents resulting from an influx of businesses into our town. Perhaps we should focus on improving what we already have. I would echo Santosha's call for better options for grocery shopping, South Portland's "Farm Stand" is fantastic and I could see a similar market, focused on local meat, vegetables, and fish as a real boon to our community. It seems to me that such a market would accurately reflect Cape's rich agricultural and fishing traditions. I agree that the Pond Cove Shopping Center feels slightly incongruous to my idea of Cape Elizabeth, I would hate to see more of the same.

We moved to the Cape for exactly the same reasons the previous commentators did. We were trying to get out of the hubbub of the city and have a pleasant, quiet community whose residents shared our values of quality education, concern for the environment, and overall quality of life. However, the committee must hear from as many residents as possible to insure that its recommendations to the Council at the end of the process accurately mirrors that of the community at large. I think the response from everyone is is great. My goal was to prompt a dialogue to find out what people were thinking and begin a real discussion as to where the Town should head in the future, if anywhere. I am not making any value judgements about the current state of the Town or recommendations for the future, just throwing out ideas so we begin thinking either "within or out of the box". When thinking about economic development you must take into account a number of factors and ask some questions. Do you want to see

more small sustainable development? How do you see development affecting "quality of life" in a community such as ours? Should we be creating more employment opportunities? Should we think about diversifying the tax base to include limited business development? Should the Town center be expanded? So far these are all great points, and we look forward to hearing from more residents.

Hello-

I couldn't agree more with what has previously been said about commercial or businesses development. We live and cherish Cape Elizabeth for the things that it is....more rural, outdoor accessibility, farm land, great, supportive community, etc.....My husband and I both work from home and have no problem finding the resources we need when we need them in very near by Portland, South Portland and Scarborough. We have lived in Cape almost 30 years and raised our boys here. We are reminded of how special Cape is as we watch our kids go off to college, live & work in other cities only to have them realize just how lucky they were to grow up here! It is then that they really have such an appreciation for this beautiful place! If we are looking for some economic development let's look at what we already have available. The IGA business area could certainly be renovated, in addition to the currently empty properties in town. I see no need to expand the commercial zones or try to change the character of the Cape.

We also enjoy Cape for its proximity to "the city" with a more rural, quiet feel. I grew up in a big city, and my husband grew up in the County, so Cape is a really happy medium for the two of us.

I wouldn't want to see big box here or another Pond Cove Shopping Center, but I also don't enjoy the empty commercial buildings and the lack of cohesive character in our town center commercial area. I'd like to see something other than the Cumby's and the Transfer Station as the town gathering haunts. ;)

I agree with much of what has been said already. I think much of the charm of Cape is that it isn't a business hub and is a quiet, small town. I think a nice town center where we could have a few shops would be a great addition.

Harvey, this statement, "...is it time for community leaders and residents to look toward expanding commercial opportunities" is very leading, to me. It contains assumptions and a vision that have not come from the majority of citizens and isn't found in past surveys. I hope (and in my heart, know) you and the rest of the Comp Plan Committee will take the townspeople's values and vision and go from there. I think we are lucky to have all that SoPo, Portland, and Scarborough offer us--within a very few miles which to me means we don't need to duplicate, triplicate, or quadruplicate that. (First time writing some of those words!! haha) Cape is so incredibly unique and it is that 'natural capital' that brought so many of us here, or kept us here after growing up. What we are is a hub for natural beauty and coastal rural character in Southern Maine--and the world. Not commerce or big businesses. If it turns out that most residents want Cape to have or be a greater economic engine, well, I await finding that out. But I believe the

views expressed here speak for the vast majority of Capers. Bottom line: I totally agree with Nick, Santosha, Jane, Michael, Lisa, and Michelle. :)

I agree with Michelle and Nicole and everyone who voiced their suggestions for an updated Pond Cove shopping area. Not sure who the owner is, though. Jane Vachon

There appears to be a problem in my mind with some of the comments offered above. We all agree with the charms of Cape as it is. Many of the observations then go on to offer a wish list of commercial offerings that would enhance life here. Businesses like Rosemont and 'The Farm Stand' will not come to Cape without a critical mass of potential customers to justify the financial risk. Some component of the the rural, sparsely populated landscape would need to be compromised. I think Pony hit the nail on the head. I do not know if quadruplicate is a real word, but it certainly captures the sense of what we may be trying to accomplish. We will not have the retail services in Cape that we would like until and unless we wish to encourage the population density that allows such businesses to succeed. Meanwhile it is 5 minutes by car or 20 by bike to reach those businesses all around us. Meanwhile our median age is increasing and there are fewer children that will be needing a quality education.

My name is Jim Huebener (not sure if I set up my account correctly to reflect this). I agree that the Pond Cove center is visually unattractive, and could be greatly improved upon. More could be done with it, but since it is sort of at the end of the line (not enough people pass it on their way to other things, unlike Mill Creek), I don't see much changing in the short term.

One of the troubling things to me in the population report is the 80% drop in the number of children under 5 years old. This does not bode well for the future of the schools, and the town. The only way to change that is to attract younger families, but it is now too expensive for them. I see that changing, though, with the addition of apartments in the two new buildings now under construction. I suspect more apartments will be coming in the when the old Cumberland Farms is demolished. I hope they're affordable.

I may be in the minority, but I would like more commercial development in business districts A & C, and the Town Center District. None of the districts are geographically large, and there are enough restrictions in the town ordinances that big box stores won't happen.

One thing that could be changed to help businesses is to change the hours they can be open. Presently, I believe they can stay open till 10 PM, and three times a year till 11 PM. I would like to increase the number of days they can stay open later, and maybe change the closing time to midnight.

Another item helping local fishermen. Kettle Cove is a huge and wonderful resource. You may not have noticed, but there are more commercial boats moored at Kettle Cove than in a long time. That's because the pier owners in Portland are raising their rents on boat slips, forcing some of them to relocate to Kettle Cove. There is also a fledgling aquaculture industry in the waters off of Kettle Cove. But KC's popularity (due to the State not enforcing

the parking fee) is causing problems for the fishermen to access their boats. There is a lot to discuss here, but unfortunately I have to finish writing. I may have stirred up a hornets nest with my comments - we'll see.

I also echo the sentiments of Nick, Santosha, Jane, Michael, Lisa and Michelle. We chose to live in Cape 14 years ago specifically because it was a small town and charming bedroom community, just on the outskirts of Portland. Cape's geographic location is a destination town, versus a Falmouth/Yarmouth/Scarborough with Route 1 and 295 bisecting the community, which lends themselves to commercial development. Our current Town Center's physical boundaries are ample to support the basic needs of the community, especially if the vacant space was filled. I do not want to see the Town Center district expanded in any way. The high vacancy and turnover rate of the existing commercial area is an indicator that residents choose to shop in communities that are 10 minute drives away. Since we arrived two banks, a hardware store, and many other businesses have closed. Cape is currently a unique town, close to Portland, with a vibrant agricultural community, with authentic rural character and charm, with public access to beaches, trails and scenic vistas. Installing sidewalks on both sides of the Town Center along Rte. 77 and reducing the speed limit could further enhance the charm some folks are looking for within our Town Center. I often ask newcomers to Cape why they chose to live in Cape specifically, and the answer mirrors my sentiments. I don't want to jeopardize what makes Cape a special and unique place to live by adding more commercial establishments.

As a community we need to put this issue to bed, meaning we must decide whether we want to be a ("Freeport, Ogunquit, Kennebunkport, and nauseam) crowded noisy tourist trap or build upon the theme that has been started as a quiet bucolic country town where one can "detox" from the frenetic world beyond. There seems to be an element in our community (I want to suggest commercially bent individuals) that see just \$\$\$\$ signs in their dreams and continue to push for "economic development", I ask for whose benefit? We are blessed with having the best of all worlds in the sense that a CE resident can access retail, entertainment and recreation in close proximity to our homes without duplicating more of it for "economic gains". I often hear the old saw that more business will lower our taxes, think twice, look what happened to Freeport, it just raises the municipal side of the budget in order to provide support to maintain the growth (firetrucks, police, sewers) Really folks who wants to have a strip mall on Route 77 replete with a big Irving Gas station, a Seven/Eleven, how about a McDonald's, why not it's "economic development"..

PS: Harvey as a committee member I think it would more appropriate for you to propose a "leading question" without adding your own views on the topic as it already seems to bias your position "for development". This is in reference of your comment --"is it time for community leaders and residents to look toward expanding commercial opportunities "--

As a resident of Cape Elizabeth since 1993 and a homeowner since 1996 I am grateful for the thoughtful way our town has been developed. I would object to further commercial development. As others have said, retail markets can be accessed easily by car or bike. I suspect there are residents not as mobile as I, who might prefer to be closer to a large pharmacy or grocery store. If that is of concern, I would prioritize new public transportation programs over new development. I just returned from a trip out of state, which reaffirmed my gratitude to those who have acted to protect Cape Elizabeth's natural beauty by choosing to not, in the words of Tracy Chapman, "pave paradise and put up a parking lot."

Hi All, I am Sara Lennon, also a member of the comp plan committee. Thank you all so much for joining the conversation and speaking up about what you love & cherish in our town--and what you'd like to see improved. This is the feedback we are hoping for as we draft the road map for the coming 10-15 years. So spread the word that this is a great place to be involved. I want to draw people's attention to the list of recommendations at the end of the chapter because these are really where the rubber hits the road, so to speak. We must, by law, have our ordinances align with the plan's recommendations, which means that whatever recommendations we have at the end of each chapter will become the reality for our town. As such, do focus on those each month and let us know what you think of them. I am copying the ones at the end of the economy chapter; now is a good time to offer your opinion on any you wish because next month we will take all the citizen comments into consideration as we deliberate and decide what we should recommend for our town's economy going forward. Here they are:

Goal 1: The Town Center shall be promoted as the primary commercial area of Cape Elizabeth and shall be developed consistent with the Town Center Master Plan to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to implement the Town Center Master Plan (2014) and updates.
2. Construct sidewalks throughout the Town Center and improve pedestrian connections from neighborhoods to the Town Center.
3. Develop mixed use buildings that include commercial uses on the first floor and allow residential uses on upper floors.
4. Create a village green.
5. Implement the Town Center Stormwater Plan.

Goal 2: The Business A and Business B districts shall continue as secondary commercial areas that meet the needs of town residents and are sensitive to the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

6. Retain the Business A District Design requirements that require commercial development to be sensitive to adjacent residential areas.
7. Continue to allow commercial uses that provide necessary services and are not consistent with the village character of the town center to be located in the Business A and Business B districts.
8. Statement allowing expansion of/new business districts?

Goal 3: Commercial activities in residential districts should be allowed when the peaceful enjoyment of residential neighborhoods is preserved.

9. Continue to allow in-home businesses, day care businesses, short-term rentals, and other low- impact commercial activities in residential areas, subject to restrictions that protect residential neighborhoods.

To Jim, I appreciated reading your comment. On this point: "The only way to change that is to attract younger families, but it is now too expensive for them. I see that changing, though, with the addition of apartments in the two new buildings now under construction. I suspect more apartments will be coming in the when the old Cumberland Farms is demolished. I hope they're affordable."

I think you've hit the nail on the head. Of about fifty new units either being developed or potentially being developed and already planned, not one is truly affordable--unless we consider the State definition to be reasonable; I do not. So whenever I see proposals for new apartments or condos or whatever here in Cape, I want to see the proof--the concrete, signed in ink proof--that the Town will *make sure they are truly affordable, in the real world*, for new families especially but not only. I'm a bit of a broken record on this, but I think you are so right to note that and want to highlight it. Thank you Sara, so much, for posting that list. I think all such "rubber to the road" info should be posted *as a comment within the discussion--hopefully opening it*, not only as a link.

Under the 1st Goal:

1. I think it ought to be reviewed because some of the premises or hoped-for conditions are no longer applicable.
2. Yes.
3. This is one area that needs community-wide discussion before being carved in stone for the next many years. We have some of this underway, so let's get real world feedback on what a lot of townspeople feel about it. To me that's a no-brainer as part of the CPC work. Gather lots of info--based, in part, on what's happening in Cape now, and write to-dos based on that.
4. It ought not to be a goal in a new Comp Plan if most people don't even know what it means or necessitates. The village green idea, as presented in 2014, no longer makes sense. Recently it has been (re)confirmed by the State--on 77, 25 or 30 mph ain't happenin' in or near Town Center. So, there's no sense or safety in having it on the east side of 77 and where exactly might it go on the west side of 77, even hypothetically? Also, there has never been agreement about what "village green" even means.

Re: Goals 2 and 3:

All of that needs big, community-wide discussion, face to face, online, cups and string, and any other way. I think it premature to argue for or against policies or propositions before that. We need way more input than within Loomio to make wise, community-supported decisions. Yay community!

I believe I already commented on this issue but don't see it in the stream so want to be sure that I have voiced a concurring opinion regarding maintaining the rural character of our town. I agree that we are so lucky to have beaches, green space and close proximity to stores in neighboring towns. I would love to see the current town center improved upon without further development. I realize these buildings are privately owned but perhaps there is some way to influence/incentivize the owners of empty lots, buildings to establish businesses that can thrive.

It worked! My intent as moderator of this chapter was to provide a leading question in hopes of instigating a lively discussion that will help the committee make meaningful recommendations to the Town Council that truly reflect the views of the majority of Cape residents. My goal in joining the committee, was to help create a comprehensive plan, not by the committee, not by the Town Council, or consultants, but by Cape residents. For some reason, my comments were construed by the respondents as representative of my personal views as to the future I want for Cape and not a jumping off point for a discussion. It seems to have been assumed that when I spoke of commercial development, I was speaking of big box stores, large scale office development, strip malls etc., when in fact I was trying to lay out many potential areas that could be considered when looking ahead to future development. Commercial development takes many forms from a one chair barbershop to a major biotech facility and many other things in between. The important thing is to look to the community, what it wants, what it can support and what enhances quality of life. Development in communities should be different based on many factors, especially in a unique community such as ours. Thanks again for all your comments!

Hi Harvey,

Thank you for moderating this discussion - I really have enjoyed reading the various perspectives on this thread. I recently moved to Cape Elizabeth with my wife and two young children earlier this year after living for the last 13 years or so in Portland. We have enjoyed our short time here already and have been making the most of the trails, local stores, and community events. We would love to see the Town Center continue to realize its potential to be a real gathering and focal point for the community through more infill businesses to complement the existing terrific ones such as C Salt, Local Buzz, and the IGA - perhaps with a restaurant and/or a local market such as a Rosemont in the Town Center - which I think would be strongly supported by the Cape community. As others have mentioned we can and do take advantage of our location close to South Portland and Portland to continue to work, shop, and eat there but strengthening our own Town Center would likely keep us home in our new community more often! Finally, we would also like to see more sidewalks or bike paths to connect the Town Center to other neighborhoods - we live off Mitchell Road and the trek by bike or walking can be treacherous.

Thank you again and our family looks forward to participating in this great discussion about the next iteration of the Comprehensive Plan!

Adding more businesses means greater amounts of traffic and congestion. I suggest that the focus stay on keeping the "necessities" for a quality lifestyle, but the "specialties" need to stay in Portland.

Yes, more public transit, less cars!

I agree with almost everything said above. We do not need a commercial center build like Falmouth. We have plenty of access to South Portland and Portland, and in the summer, have wonderful access to farm stands. I also express concerns about the stats presented: 80% decline of those under 5 equals about 180 kids. I get that -- but if there was another measure of kids between 5-13, when parents are making more money and can afford to live here, I think that would paint a different picture. I also question the "seasonal homes" stat: does this include snowbirds who are increasingly heading out of state for the winter and to avoid Maine income taxes? There needs to be a little more discussion/interpretation on the statistics provided. In terms of the goals stated in the plan, my comments are as follows:

Goal 1, #3: What gets developed in any given space is driven by a developer choosing to develop. I assume when the plan says "develop" since the town is not the developer, that that use of the word develop implies encouraging developers to choose to develop here. How are they encouraged? If it is via modifications of restrictions or tax incentives, I would disagree with those actions as I generally oppose exceptions since the need for those exceptions is likely subjective.

Goal 2, #8: How would we allow "expansion of/new business districts" - does this mean people who have already made a decision about where they live would find the rules surrounding their property have changed?

Randi Bollenbach

I have read through the comments in this section as well as the other sections. I appreciate this platform for the opportunity to express an opinion about the future of Cape Elizabeth. I moved back to Maine 10 years ago after living in large metropolitan cities for 30+ years. My husband and I, like others, chose Cape because of it's rural character, access to beaches and trails, and close proximity to Portland. We are fortunate to have access to many good services nearby in Scarborough, South Portland and Portland. I would not like to see any expansion of commercial areas in the town.

Commercial development should be restricted to the current town center which could be improved upon. As others have stated, more sidewalks, bike lanes and a bus service into South Portland and Portland would be very attractive for many segments of the population. It seems the biggest challenge is how to provide affordable housing to attract younger families to Cape and maintaining the special qualities of the community that attracted many of the current residents to choose to live here.

I, like many others, work remotely from my home. We chose Cape Elizabeth because of its strong school system and natural beauty. I encourage the committee to focus on strengthening protections for our open spaces and farmland and avoid pressure to make our community into some sort of business hub. If anything, join South Portland in its efforts to upgrade broadband. Finally, there is no need to change the boundaries of Cape's business district. They are currently sufficient.

