



# TOWN OF CAPE ELIZABETH

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September 8, 1994

William Jordan, Chairman  
Cape Elizabeth Town Council  
Town Hall  
Cape Elizabeth, Maine 04107

Re: Identification of Growth Areas

Dear Chairman Jordan:

The Planning Board had a lengthy discussion on August 16th about growth areas in the town. Because this is a comprehensive planning issue, the Planning Board has asked me to convey their comments to the Town Council. The Town Council requested in October, 1993, that the Planning Board comment on the location of growth areas and their relationship to sewer availability. Due to the press of other projects, the Planning Board had requested an extension of the original July 30th deadline.

The Planning Board began by reviewing the growth areas designated in the 1993 Comprehensive Plan. The Board re-evaluated the plan's assumptions in identifying growth areas based on natural resource limitations and agreed those assumptions were still valid. They recommend, however, that:

- The growth area immediately west of Lion's Field should be eliminated because it is largely inaccessible.
- The Town Center should be designated as a growth area based on the recommendations of the Town Center Plan.

- The northern Cape area has been designated as a growth area. The capacity for infill development in this area needs further evaluation. The amount of vacant or underdeveloped land should be inventoried and then evaluated to give a sense of how much infill development may be accommodated.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that Zoning, development guidelines, and incentives, including the availability of infrastructure, should be used to steer development to the growth areas. Otherwise, there is no difference between a designated growth area and any other undeveloped area of town. The public benefits anticipated from designating growth areas would be lost as new development locates haphazardly throughout the community.

The Board has several recommendations for infrastructure and development guidelines for growth areas which follow:

- Existing farmland in the town greatly contributes to the beauty of the community and the sense of rural character. Development guidelines should reinforce large farmlands by allowing more densely clustered development in exchange for preserving working farmland. A system that allows the landowner to take financial advantage of the development potential of the land while continuing farming activities on the remaining farmland can dovetail with the designation of a higher density growth area.
- Based on the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, the Board is concerned with how new development blends in with the overall community. New development should include a mix of housing styles and lot sizes within the development. Road access should convey a sense of community character.
- The recommendations of the Sewer Advisory Committee should be integrated with the growth areas. Sewer should be available in growth areas. The availability of sewer will be an incentive to locate a development in a growth area rather than a non-growth area.

- The provision of sewer should be preceded by development guidelines that assure clustering of development with potentially higher densities. Ideally, this would result in proportionally larger areas of land set aside as protected open space.
- To preserve the rural character of the community, open space should be preserved in full public view of access roads and not just at the rear of new development. Implementation of the Visual Assessment Report could begin with the growth areas serving as a receiving area for development that otherwise could occur in a scenic area.

The Planning Board has been an advocate for sewer for some time. Numerous house lots have been approved on subsurface disposal systems. While these systems have been designed to conform to existing local and state codes, they are located on poor soils and the Board remains concerned that these systems will fail and begin to contaminate downstream areas.

I would like to thank you for your attention to these recommendations. The Planning Board is available to discuss these recommendations further if the Town Council has any questions.

Sincerely,

  
Cape Elizabeth Planning Board  
Thomas N. Emery, Chair

cc: Michael McGovern  
Maureen O'Meara