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Rough Draft
Town Center Recommendations
(from July 15, 2013 brainstorming session)

Recommendations

1. **Economic Development Assessment.** An assessment of the economic development potential of the town center should be conducted with the intent to adopt a proactive economic development strategy. (9 points)

Issues: Need financial investment, both public support and public/private partnerships; need to adjust the perceived value of investments; need to positively change the economics of the area or conceded we are just going to make what we have pretty; how do we promote development on vacant land; what should be done with that land?; can we tax it to promote action to develop it?; We [the Town] are the regional open space area, not known for commercial uses; insular

The assessment, or market analysis, should evaluate factors and focus on nuts and bolts recommendations to improve the economic viability of the town center. Actions to increase the number of retail and restaurant businesses in the town center should be identified. The assessment should be conducted by a commercial real estate or economic development professional and be based in part on regional commercial development data and trends.

The analysis should also address the following questions:

- With 27,000 sq. ft. of highly dispersed and below grade A commercial space, is the Cape Elizabeth town center hampered by a “below-minimum” critical mass of commercial space? Is the dispersion or quality of space an issue?
- Is there a niche market(s) that the Cape Elizabeth Town Center should target?
- How do the town center rental rates compare to the region and to comparable town centers?
- Would upper floor housing in a mixed commercial/residential use building influence construction financing? If yes, how much? And is that

1 amount enough of an incentive to stimulate development? If not, what is
2 the funding gap? Recommendations for filling the gap?

3
4 In addition to the economic development assessment, the vision of the
5 town center should be revised so that the town center is not just targeted
6 to residents, but also to visitors. Resident patronage alone is probably not
7 sufficient to support a vibrant town center, especially when most Cape
8 residents do the bulk of the shopping in South Portland. Only businesses
9 with low overhead and high volume will survive in the town center,
10 although businesses with specialized offerings may also be viable.

- 11
12 **2. Zoning.** The Town Center Zone should be reviewed and either revised
13 (adjustments) or replaced with a Form based code. (8 points)

14
15 The discussion should begin with a discussion of the town's values. The
16 2007 Comprehensive Plan Vision statement and Economy chapter should
17 be incorporated into the town values discussion. A vision statement for
18 the town center should then be developed.

19
20 [The 2007 Comprehensive Plan policies related to the Town Center were
21 imported from the 1993 Town Center Plan. For this reason, it would be
22 appropriate for the Town Center Plan Committee to recommend a Town
23 Center vision that is different than the statements in the Comprehensive
24 Plan. The "new" town center goals should be compatible with the town-
25 wide Comprehensive Plan Goals, and a Comprehensive Plan amendment
26 with the new Town Center Goals may be needed.]

27
28 Once the town center vision is drafted, appropriate zoning changes
29 should be made to implement the vision. A major format change would be
30 to convert the town center zone to a form-based code. The form-based
31 code approach may advance other economic development goals by
32 adopting a code that depicts the possible buildings on town center lots.
33 These "potential" buildings can highlight opportunities for developers.

34
35 Zoning changes also suggested for consideration include:

- 36
37 • Allowing parking in the front yard setback
38 • Decreasing site requirements that increase development costs
39 • Reviewing the Town Center boundary

- 40
41 **3. Housing.** Multi-family housing incorporated into mixed use/commercial
42 buildings and adjacent to the Town Center District should be constructed.
43 (4 points)

1
2 Multi-family housing is needed in and adjacent to the town center to
3 increase the viability of commercial ventures in the town center. Housing
4 constructed on upper floors of mixed commercial/residential use
5 buildings may provide a reliable revenue source to subsidize first floor
6 commercial space and is consistent with the affordable housing goals of
7 the Comprehensive Plan. Multi-family housing constructed immediately
8 adjacent to the town center is located within walking distance to town
9 center businesses and may serve as a catalyst for other development.

- 10
11 4. **Village Green.** The Town should create a public open space to function as
12 a village green. (3 points)

13
14 Issue: The Town Center should be a destination for people, business
15 friendly and a place to socialize;

16
17 The 1993 Town Center Plan also strongly recommended the creation of a
18 village green. Alternative locations were suggested, but public funding to
19 landscape existing town land as a village green or purchase land to create
20 a village green was not provided.

21
22 This plan should identify a location for a village green, in order to increase
23 the potential for implementation. The village green should be visually
24 attractive and designed to represent town center values, such as framing
25 the edges of the green with buildings. It should be a place to socialize and
26 to host events such as town concerts. Existing vacant land in the town
27 center should be evaluated for their potential as a village green, including
28 vacant lots subject to use restrictions.

- 29
30 5. **Traffic.** The Town should review the roads, sidewalks and pedestrian
31 pathways in the Town Center for adequacy and safety for all users. (3
32 points)

33
34 Ocean House Rd, or Route 77, is Cape Elizabeth's "main street" and also
35 the town's only designated arterial. It carries over 2,200 trips annually.
36 Within the town center, traffic on Ocean House Rd needs to flow at a
37 speed slow enough for the safety of pedestrians and multiple vehicle
38 turning movements. Traffic calming for pedestrians and cars should be
39 reviewed, with consideration of the use of techniques such as but not
40 limited to bump outs, median with plantings, and on-street parking.

41
42 The Ocean House Rd/Shore Rd/Scott Dyer Rd intersection was studied
43 for installation of a red/yellow/green traffic light. Twice the Town has

1 been offered a grant to pay for up to 70% of the cost of installing a traffic
2 light at the intersection. Both times, the Town Council decided not to
3 support the project.
4

5 The Town accepted a grant to construct and reconstruct sidewalks in the
6 town center. The 1993 Town Center Plan recommended sidewalks on both
7 sides of the street for all portions of Ocean House Rd, Scott Dyer Rd and
8 Shore Rd, located within the Town Center. Gaps remain in the Town
9 Center sidewalk network. At the same time, the Shore Rd path was
10 completed in 2012 and now provides a safe pedestrian facility connecting
11 the Town Center to the entire northeastern section of town. With the
12 completion of the Shore Road Path, further extension of the sidewalk
13 network may be requested and desirable, such as sidewalk connections to
14 neighborhoods nearby the town center, such as Cross Hill.
15

- 16 **6. Integration of Public Facilities.** The Town should maintain and improve
17 integration of public facilities in the town center. (2 points)
18

19 The Town Center currently hosts the School campus, Town Hall, Library,
20 Community Center, Public Safety building and Town Center Fire Station.
21 In addition, the largest commercial entity, such as the Pond Cove
22 Shopping Center, is also located in the Town Center. These facilities are
23 almost completely linked by a sidewalk system. Integration at multiple
24 levels of public facilities should continue.
25

- 26 **7. Visual Identity.** The Town should undertake efforts to create a visual
27 identity for the town center, such as the use of banners, and should also
28 partner with private property owners to upgrade and expand commercial
29 properties.
30

31 Issue: What is the incentive in the Town Center?; Hope the shopping
32 center upgrades; every issue connects
33

34 The 1993 Town Center Plan included in its vision statement creating a
35 town center with “visual vitality.” Other communities have elevated the
36 visibility of their commercial core by making large capital improvements,
37 such as streetscape and lighting improvements, and less costly efforts,
38 such as installing banners or pennants. Outside the public right-of-way,
39 private properties should be encouraged, with regulatory changes,
40 financing plans, or other incentives to upgrade their properties consistent
41 with the town center goals. Several properties in the town center have the
42 opportunity to add a floor to an existing building, which adds value to the

1 property owner, to the town's tax base, and furthers the town center
2 aesthetic.

3

4 **8. Implementation driven.** The Town Center Plan should identify as top
5 priority 1-3 recommendations in order to improve the chances of
6 implementation. Goals should have specific criteria.