

Freeport : Vision 2025

Freeport Economic Development Corporation

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Vision 2025

Town of Freeport

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The development of this document involved numerous members of the Freeport community. Below is a list of the people that made this analysis possible.

Freeport Economic Development Corporation

Mission Statement:

To partner with the community to promote sustainable economic growth that strengthens and diversifies the economic base and enhances the quality of life and unique character of Freeport.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

In 2000 and 2001 the Town of Freeport outlined economic development goals and objectives in Vision 2010. Through hard work and dedication by the Town, FEDC, and other organizations many of the key projects identified in Vision 2010 have since been accomplished. Vision 2010 has led to expanded economic opportunities in Freeport, and the Town and FEDC want to update the Plan and create a Vision 2025 Plan for Freeport. FEDC has engaged Camoin Associates, an economic development consulting firm with economic development strategic planning experience, to lead the update effort including revising the vision and plan to guide policies and practices over the next ten to fifteen years.

Work Performed & Public Engagement

In order to develop a well rounded and comprehensive economic development strategy for the Town, it was necessary to conduct significant background research. The first step was to review existing research and planning documents as they relate to the Town's past and present efforts, including the Vision 2010 planning document, the Town's Comprehensive Plan, results of the fall 2011 public meetings, town planning, land-use, and policy documents, regional studies and plans, and the visioning work done for Route 1 South. To supplement this, Camoin Associates completed a full economic data analysis, looking at: (a) historic and projected industry and occupation employment data, (b) levels of educational attainment, career pathways, and program completions (i.e. the number of students who successfully completed a program), and (c) various statistical comparisons to both a larger economic region and the State of Maine to identify areas of similarities and differences.

In addition to the demographic and socioeconomic data based work, Camoin Associates worked to gather information from the Freeport community. Camoin Associates

conducted over 25 interviews with key stakeholders to learn about specific issues and opportunities that exist in Freeport. The goal of the one-on-one stakeholder interviews was to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the regional economy and to formulate an economic development vision statement. The SWOT analysis and vision exercise helped prioritize and inform the specific goals and initiatives for the Action Plan.

Following the SWOT analysis and the development of some initial themes and ideas, Camoin Associates facilitated a public meeting to gather further input and feedback from residents and property owners in Freeport. This event was well attended and provided additional information to Camoin Associates, the Town, and FEDC regarding economic development goals of the Town and specific issues and opportunities that are important to residents. The public meeting held in the summer of 2012 was in addition to public engagement efforts that occurred in 2011 prior to Camoin Associates' involvement. The fall 2011 efforts helped guide the economic development strategic planning process and acted as the groundwork to be used by the consultants once hired.

The final step of the planning process was to use all the previous information to list and prioritize the goals and future actions to achieve the FEDC Board's vision for the future. This was done through input from the FEDC Economic Development Plan Steering Committee as well as specific input from involved agencies and stakeholders. In addition, performance measures were developed so that progress can be reviewed on a regular basis as a way to document successes and areas for improvement.

Document Organization

What follows is the outcome of the work performed by Camoin Associates, FEDC, and the Steering Committee in the form of the Vision for the Future and the Action Plan. This document is intended to be used regularly to guide and prioritize the economic development

initiatives of the community and FEDC. Additional background material, summaries of public engagement, and economic data research is available upon request from FEDC and is not included here in an effort to reduce document size and define the focus of the Plan.

II. STRATEGIC PROJECTS, PROGRAMS, AND ACTIVITIES

Vision Statement

In the year 2025, the Town of Freeport is well known for both local and national retail shopping, small business, and has become an international destination for outdoor recreation enthusiasts. The Town is attracting everyone from shoppers to mountain bikers and marathon runners to history buffs. Town residents and organizations have partnered to work towards a more diversified future that includes a mix of opportunities for residents, businesses, workers, and visitors alike. The Amtrak Downeaster is bringing new people to the Town, start-up businesses are locating in downtown Freeport and along Route 1 South, and the area has become known for its excellent selection of schools and an outstanding public school system, high quality workforce, business friendly climate, environmental sustainability focus, and high quality support services.

Action Plan

The following is the FEDC *Vision 2025 Action Plan*. It is organized with four strategic goals, supported by action items that are important to further economic development in the region and should be pursued. The strategic actions include tasks to support existing efforts, establish new programs, and initiate capital projects that will encourage economic development. The Action Plan will help FEDC, the Town, and their partner organizations prioritize economic development initiatives and provide direction for future efforts to help achieve these goals.

Each action includes a description and suggested lead agency or collaborator. The suggested “potential collaborators” indicates the agency or organization that the Steering Committee feels is best suited to work with FEDC on the particular action item. In the event that another community member, organization or stakeholder can lend assistance towards accomplishing a task their involvement welcomed and encouraged. In addition, the Action Plan also offers suggested performance measures that those implementing the Plan can utilize to measure the impact of the action item and whether improvements have been made.

Goal A: Diversify Freeport’s Economy and Employment Opportunities

The Town of Freeport has a significant portion of its commercial base in its downtown retail businesses; a base that is important to the overall economy and should be supported. However, there are opportunities to attract and retain other industries in Freeport that will complement the existing retail and/or diversify the base. Using the assets of the community, including access to recreation resources, a highly trained workforce, millions of tourists and visitors each year, and train access, the Town could attract new business owners looking to locate somewhere where they will have a high quality of life for themselves, their families, and their employees. FEDC and the Town should also foster and encourage the growth of entrepreneurship in Freeport through technical assistance and an overall supportive business environment.

Efforts should focus on business retention and expansion opportunities for the firms and companies that are already in Freeport, as there are major employers that are important to the community. Outreach through a structured business visitation and action program should be conducted to identify their needs and what they require in order to expand. Assistance may need to be provided to help them better utilize the internet and web-based retail, workforce training, financial assistance, or general business technical services. The Plan also suggests small business and start-up training and technical assistance to help businesses expand, use the internet and technology to their benefit, and improve their customer service as a way to help differentiate Freeport from other towns.

In terms of spending resources on business attraction, focus should be placed on industries that are strong in the Greater Portland area and using the assets of Freeport to attract business owners who would complement existing offerings in Town. For example, small scale value-added food production, recreation-centric businesses (touring companies, product manufacturing, retail and services), and health care are all industries that are showing strength in the region and could use Freeport as their home base and serve local and non-local customers. While the Plan does not call for a strict adherence to growing only these industries, the economic research found that opportunities exist in the following sectors: Health Care and Life Sciences; Professional, Scientific, and Technical; Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate; Value Added Food Production; Small, Niche Manufacturing; Arts, Culture, Entertainment and Recreation; and Spinoff’s and synergies from companies doing business at or within Brunswick Landing including Professional, Scientific, and Technical; Advanced Materials; Alternative Energy; and Precision Manufacturing.

It should be noted here that the Plan does not call for any speculative building by FEDC or the Town with respect to a business park. As of the writing of this report (May2013) it would not make financial sense for any major investments to be made in a business park without an anchor tenant, as there is too much affordable and available space in the region. The Plan does suggest a financial feasibility assessment be completed on a generic redevelopment scenario as a way to do some of the initial legwork for when a possible tenant or developer comes, but the Plan does not indicate major resources be allocated at this time for business park infrastructure. Furthermore, the Plan does not recommend that additional land in the Town be zoned commercial as there is sufficient commercially and industrially zoned land to accommodate near to mid-term growth.

ACTION A.1. FOSTER NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Develop and implement a focused marketing campaign to attract new business owners and residents to the area.

- Develop a campaign to encourage visitors, tourists, and existing residents to consider

Freeport as a place to start a business (including home-based businesses and sole proprietorships) and/or raise a family. Illustrate the assets of the community and target non-retail businesses for attraction. This campaign should integrate web-based and social media approaches.

- Promote the Town's high quality of life including: access to the train, recreation resources, cultural resources, market potential, and school system, which make it a great location for business owners and their employees.
- Help get the word out about Freeport by informing regional real estate agents and state economic development partners about the assets of the community.
- Provide financial and technical assistance to start-ups and new businesses to create business friendly environment for success. Financial assistance includes programs like grants and loans for specific start-up needs as well as helping businesses find access to more traditional financing options. Technical assistance includes reviewing business plans, offering training on business finances, discussing marketing, and business promotion efforts.
- Establish a grant/loan program to provide micro-lending to start-up businesses. Focus on targeting the type of business that will further the Town's goals in terms of recreation related businesses, food product manufacturing businesses, art/cultural businesses, etc.
- As part of a structured business visitation program, meet with businesses along Route 1 South to see what issues they are facing. Work together to find solutions and collaborations.

Potential Lead/Collaborators: FEDC

Performance Measures: Number of new businesses, Number of new families, Number of jobs, Number of sales, Population growth, Number of grants/loans given out, Number of meetings held with entrepreneurs

ACTION A.2. TARGET INDUSTRIES AND SUBSECTORS THAT ARE STRONG AND GROWING REGIONALLY

Implement business attraction, expansion, workforce development, and capital programs that will help Freeport diversify and grow the economic base.

- Focus on attracting and expanding targeted industries that are strong in the Greater Portland Region and the Brunswick/Southern Midcoast Region and industries that will complement existing businesses and supply chains in addition to general economic development for all sectors.
- Regionally strong sectors include: Health Care and Life Sciences; Value Added Food Production; Professional, Scientific, and Technical; Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate; Small, Niche Manufacturing; Business and Resident Services; Construction and Related Trades; Home-based Businesses and Independent Workers; Arts, Cultural, and Recreation-Centric Businesses. These industries represent opportunities for Freeport.
- Establish grant/microlending programs specific to targeted clusters or sectors.
- Increase cross-promotion of targeted sectors such as food and recreation related activities. Encourage companies to work together to offer package deals, coordinate with hotels, and increase overall visitation and name recognition.

Food Production and Manufacturing specific tasks:

- Meet with current companies in Freeport involved with food production; identify their needs, constraints, challenges and opportunities to grow. Respond to those constraints as feasible and set up regular meetings.
- Encourage all businesses to open their doors to visitors to create a more active and inviting manufacturing sector in the Town. Tours, tastings, instructional events, etc. all will support the tourism economy as well as the local manufacturers. Help them “create an experience” for visitors.
- Become a member and active participant in the Maine Food Producers Alliance – develop awareness and relationships with food producers.
- Develop and implement a marketing campaign to existing specialty food manufacturing companies in New England

and the northeast. Inform them of the benefits of expansion to Freeport including access to highway for distribution, close proximity to Portland-Boston markets, a globally recognized community brand through association with retail (L.L. Bean) and outlets, a growing specialty food business network locally and regionally, available sites for development, a Maine brand focused on quality and purity, regional availability of labor from the Bath/Brunswick LMA, Portland LMA, and Lewiston Auburn LMA. Lists of companies to market to can be obtained through state and regional specialty food industry associations such as the Maine Food Producers Alliance as well as business listing services such as Hoovers.

- Develop a webpage off of the existing FEDC site dedicated to marketing and providing information on food producers in Freeport and opportunities.
- Develop and implement an email marketing campaign with follow-up phone contact to food producers in the Northeast.
- Develop with partners at least one major food event per year to increase the awareness of Freeport food products and related businesses. Examples include harvest on the Harbor in Portland and the Kennebunk Food and Wine Festival.
- Become engaged in the Greater Portland and City of Portland efforts to market to and grow the food and food production sectors in the Greater Portland Region and continue to engage and be a part of MidCoast efforts for the same.
- Work with existing food producers and food related businesses in Freeport to address industry issues to promote growth and expansion as well as to engage businesses in identification of other companies outside of Freeport to direct attraction efforts toward. Have Freeport businesses become actively engaged in working with FEDC on an attraction campaign.
- Include video testimonials from current food related businesses on FEDC website and utilize in the marketing campaign.

Recreation/Outdoor industry specific tasks:

- Build up the Town’s reputation as a great place to live for people in the outdoor/athletic gear industry including access to recreational resources, creative workforce, and consumers. Highlight the numbers of people who visit Maine for recreation and visit Freeport for outdoor gear and the potential that exists for further development of the cluster.
- Identify programs that will help the smaller businesses be more successful and expand such as financing, internships, specific training programs, etc.
- Meet with local higher education providers to discuss the need for specific programs focusing on design, marketing, production, and innovation in the athletic gear industry.
- Organize networking events for those currently in the industry to help build ties and connections within Freeport’s existing recreation industry (producers, retailers, and venues).
- Look for ways to help companies produce their goods in Freeport and reduce the cost of manufacturing such as helping companies be more efficient, reduce overhead, and improve their business model without sacrificing local tax revenue

Potential Lead/Collaborators: FEDC

Performance Measures: Number of jobs, in targeted industries, Amount of sales in targeted industries, Number of establishments in targeted industries, Level of wages in targeted industries, New partnerships

ACTION A.3. RESEARCH THE FEASIBILITY OF EXPANDING AGRICULTURE AND AQUACULTURE INDUSTRIES IN FREEPORT

Support the value-added food production industry by researching the feasibility of expanding sustainable and natural agriculture and aquaculture industries in Freeport.

- Begin discussions with key stakeholders.

- Identify and implement training programs necessary to support such industries.
- Use property inventory to identify potential locations for industry expansion where the proposed use complies with the Town’s zoning ordinance.

Potential Collaborators: Shellfish Commission and Harbormaster, local farms and food producers

Performance Measures: Completion of feasibility analysis, Number of shellfish related jobs, Number of establishments, Value of harvest

ACTION A.4. DEVELOP A MARKETING CAMPAIGN AROUND THE DOWNEASTER AMTRAK SERVICE AND LEVERAGE OPPORTUNITIES CREATED

Market to train commuters about Freeport as a great community to live, work, and develop a business.

- Include the train in marketing material as an asset to business owners and as a way to showcase Freeport's positive business climate and ease of transportation access.
- Conduct an on-board survey to identify who is riding the train and what opportunities exist.
- Prepare an on-board marketing tool or information packet.
- Collaborate with Brunswick for the campaign.

Potential Lead/ Collaborators: FreeportUSA, Amtrak Downeaster

Performance Measures: Development of marketing campaign, Number of new businesses and families, Number of persons riding train for business commuting that start or end in Freeport

ACTION A.5. CONDUCT A FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS ON THE POTENTIAL FOR A SHARED OFFICE COMPLEX CONCEPT

Study the potential for a small scale office building that accommodates small businesses with room for growth. The complex should provide flexible floor plans, shared spaces, third

places (coffee shops, etc.), and support services (copy center, wi-fi, etc.). Nearby examples include Peloton Labs, Engine Room, and ThinkTank in Portland.

- Review the inventory of property in the Town for potential locations. Consider property in close proximity to the rail facility to encourage ease of transit.
- Build a list of similar types of developments in the region for background information and comparables.
- Conduct a feasibility study that can determine whether a shared office complex would be successful and whether any incentives from the Town would be needed to make it feasible.
- Use the findings of the feasibility study to attract developers. If the findings suggest municipal participation, begin discussions with the community leaders.

Potential Lead/Collaborators: FEDC and Town of Freeport

Performance Measures: Completion of the feasibility analysis

ACTION A.6. RESEARCH THE MARKET AND FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY OF VARIOUS REDEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Prepare generic market and feasibility studies on potential redevelopment scenarios for property along Route 1 South.

- Consider infrastructure improvements that would need to be made to make the project feasible (including natural gas extension to Yarmouth) and return on investment (ROI) potential for a variety of development scenarios.
- Use this information to prioritize future infrastructure investments as well as to help inform property owners about potential ROI.
- Engage an engineering or planning firm to complement the market research through design, visuals, renderings, and master planning. The firm can help create and demonstrate the vision for the site including the look, size, scope, etc. to the residents and property owners.

Potential Lead/Collaborators: FEDC

Performance Measures: Completion of the feasibility analysis

ACTION A.7. CONSIDER VARIOUS FUNDING MODELS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND SITE IMPROVEMENTS

Identify funding sources for infrastructure and site improvements necessary for Route 1 South such as access to natural gas. Consider setting aside \$500,000 for improvements should an opportunity present itself. Consider funding through bonding, TIFS, grants, and private investment.

- Identify funding sources, maintain database, and check regularly for new funding opportunities. Apply for funding as available.
- Prioritize infrastructure improvements based on likely return on investment.

Potential Lead/Collaborators: FEDC and Town of Freeport

Performance Measures: Funding sources identified, Applications submitted, Funding awarded

ACTION A.8. PROVIDE SMALL BUSINESS AND START-UP TRAINING AND NETWORKING PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Work with regional economic development and workforce organizations and the Freeport Chamber of Commerce to implement a training and networking schedule to offer assistance to small local businesses within the region. Training programs should focus on ways local businesses can compete on a global scale and increase their marketing efforts (examples include use of the internet for sales, social media, innovative marketing, and experiential retail).

- Discuss training needs with local business owners.
- Identify potential trainers, locations, schedules, etc.
- Market and promote the classes to local and regional businesses.

- Host an event that connects residents with skills in emerging technology with business owners who may be looking to use more technology in their business. Highlight businesses that use technology to advance their business and to complement their “in-store” operations.
- Work with regional higher education centers to identify students with skills in internet sales/technology to provide assistance to business owners and start-ups on integrating technology into their business model.
- Meet with Greater Portland Council of Governments, the Chambers, Small Business Development Centers, SCORE, and others to discuss the needs and what collaboration possibilities.

Potential Lead/Collaborators: Chamber and FEDC

Performance Measures: Number of training programs offered per year, Number of attendees, Feedback from attendees

ACTION A.9. INCREASE SMALL BUSINESS AND START-UP ASSISTANCE CAPACITY AT FEDC

Develop the capacity to provide a wide range of business assistance to start-up, relocating, and existing businesses in the Town of Freeport.

- Provide training on a broad variety of skills to help businesses succeed including competitive intelligence, marketing, financial planning, capital needs, and other issues of concern for Freeport businesses.
- Establish a technical assistance training and internship program. Working with regional education providers, connect students with business owners to provide technical assistance to increase use of technology in business (online sales, QR codes, social media skills, etc.)
- FEDC Director should regularly attend conferences, meet with other regional economic development officials, and continue to research techniques for creating business friendly environments for

small businesses, start-ups, and entrepreneurs.

- Utilize interns and board members to help with business communications and regular business visitation.

Potential Lead/Collaborators: FEDC

Performance Measures: Number of small businesses in Town, Number of businesses assisted, Satisfaction with assistance

ACTION A.10. EXPLORE TOWN REGULATIONS AS THEY RELATE TO BUSINESS CLIMATE

Review the zoning ordinance, permitting regulations, and development review process as they relate to business climate. Consider ways to make regulations more equitable and attractive to new and existing businesses.

- Review the Project Review and Design Review Board processes.
- Implement a postcard survey system to receive feedback on the Town's processes.
- Recommend changes as necessary to make the process more straight forward, reduce time and process delays, and increase predictability for investors.

Potential Lead/Collaborators: FEDC, Town Planning

Performance Measures: Review of the Town Ordinances, Changes made

ACTION A.11. ESTABLISH A BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SWAT TEAM

Create a designated process for new development proposals including a point person to manage and oversee each project. Incorporate a system for including all necessary parties in the discussion early on. Encourage and help developers to host public meetings in the early phases to receive public input.

- Identify what departments/agencies need to be included (Town Planning, FEDC, Town Code Enforcement, etc.).
- Establish a process for project review that clearly articulates steps for developers including organizational chart, schedule of meetings, phone tree, etc.
- Promote “SWAT Team” on the website, with headshots of team members, to highlight how business friendly Freeport is.
- Follow-up with developers who went through the program to see what improvements can be made.

Potential Lead/Collaborators: FEDC and Town Planning

Performance Measures: Establishment of team, Number of projects reviewed and assisted per year, Months from project start to completion

ACTION A. 12. MAINTAIN COMPREHENSIVE, EASILY ACCESSIBLE, AND UP TO DATE INVENTORY OF PARCELS WITHIN THE TOWN

Continue to maintain an updated inventory of existing properties in the Town of Freeport with information on utilities, zoning, allowable uses, and infrastructure.

- Provide detailed information via an on-line database and promote through newsletter and social media available sites for development and available existing commercial space. This can be accomplished through online subscription tools such as Zoom Prospector and Catalyst.
- Market available properties through discussions with real estate agents and developers.

Potential Lead/Collaborators: FEDC and Town Planning

Performance Measures: Number of parcels on inventory, Number of times per year it is updated, Number of “Hits” site receives

Goal B: Enhance and Promote Freeport’s Quality of Life and Community-based Assets

In today’s highly connected and digital world, many businesses have the ability to locate anywhere they want and often find themselves choosing based on perception of predictability in the development process, quality of life for residents, and their ability to attract qualified employees. The Town of Freeport must put its best foot forward in order to attract businesses to the Town in order to increase economic activity, diversify the tax base, and create job opportunities for residents.

In addition to economic development focused goals, the Plan encourages implementation of community development initiatives that will improve the quality of life for existing residents and attract new. For example, the Plan suggests that improvements to the public schools in Freeport be celebrated, marketed, and documented to encourage new families to locate in Freeport using a tool like a dashboard that shows various indicators and statistics showing the improvements. Additionally, there has been an increase in the amount of performing arts opportunities, which is attractive to many families, both young and old, who are looking for cultural activities to round out their lives.

The Plan calls for creation of a town-wide assets map with cultural, historic, recreation, and natural resources mapped as well as a trail system that connects these assets. A town-wide trail system would be able to connect downtown businesses with major recreation assets like Bradbury Mountain, Wolfe’s Neck State Park, and other areas in Town allowing businesses to offer their customers unique opportunities to try out their new equipment.

A large part of the Town’s quality of life comes from the accessibility of natural resources and many residents are concerned with long-term sustainability when it comes to the environment. The Town’s efforts should place an emphasis on environmental sustainability as it relates to all aspects of the community, including attracting and retaining businesses and enhancing residents’ quality of life.

ACTION B.1. COMPLETE A TOWN-WIDE ASSET MAP

Develop an easy to update document and map (digital and hard copy versions) that include all of Freeport's assets including natural, historic, cultural, and recreational (including existing trail systems) resources. Review and update regularly.

- Send a survey out to organizations, non-profits, and resident groups requesting input.
- Develop a framework, formatting, design, technology utilization, and scale of map.
- Create a signage strategy for where the maps will be, how large, how many, and any special features.
- Coordinate efforts with FreeportUSA to promote the new asset map to all regional tourism agencies, distribute to rest stops, hotels, and anywhere else tourists get their information.

- Coordinate with FreeportUSA to update the Freeport app with asset map information.

Potential Collaborators: FEDC, Planning, Historical Society, and Conservation Commission, FreeportUSA

Performance Measures: Completion of town-wide asset map, Number of times updated, Number of times accessed via internet (hits)

ACTION B.2. EDUCATE HOSPITALITY AND RETAIL EMPLOYEES ON ASSETS AVAILABLE WITHIN THE TOWN

Retail, restaurant, and hotel staff are the first lines of communication for many tourists, so it is important that they are well informed of local assets and events.

- Develop a Town of Freeport briefing tool to help educate hospitality and retail workers so they are prepared to answer questions from customers/visitors.

- Update the material regularly and ask managers to post in break rooms and discuss during staff meetings.
- Consider the use of a webinar as a cost effective way to distribute the initial information, with in person follow-up.
- Find a way to recognize businesses that participate with “Ask Us About Freeport” stickers at the register or other ways to encourage a conversation about all that is going on in Freeport.

Potential Collaborators: FEDC, Chamber, FreeportUSA, and Historical Society

Performance Measures: Development of briefing tool, Number of businesses involved

ACTION B.3. CONNECT WITH REGIONAL COMMUNITIES AND HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERS TO OFFER JOB SKILLS AND WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Work with regional communities and higher education partners to identify needed skills and offer training programs focused on the hospitality sector.

- Offer training that ranges from how to train exceptional sales clerks, human resource skills, and business and financial management.
- Build on emerging collaborations with SMCC and USM.
- Consider incentives for businesses that participate such as a special seal of approval, certification, or other type of recognition.

Potential Collaborators: FEDC, Chamber, FreeportUSA, and regional partners

Performance Measures: Meetings held with higher education partners, Number of participants through the programs

ACTION B.4. CELEBRATE IMPROVEMENTS OF THE FREEPORT SCHOOL SYSTEM INCLUDING CURRICULUM AND FACILITIES

Work to communicate internally and externally the improvements being made to the Freeport schools.

- Promote success stories, investments being made, unique programs, and other efforts that will improve the perception of Freeport schools.
- Prepare fact sheets, podcasts, and videos to post on the web.
- Develop an annual dashboard including indicators on school performance, educational attainment as well as quality of life aspects such as acres of parks, numbers of trails, area of open space, access to rail, population increases, etc.

Potential Collaborators: Town and School District

Performance Measures: Number of new families, Number of positive stories about school district

ACTION B.5. ENHANCE TOWN AND SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP

- Invite school board members to meet with Town and FEDC officials to discuss partnering on programs to benefit the Town and the schools.
- Invite and encourage the school superintendent to attend FEDC meetings and vice versa to allow for open communication.

Potential Collaborators: Town and School District

Performance Measures: Number of meetings held, Projects identified and implemented

ACTION B.6. WORK WITH TOWN OF BRUNSWICK, SMCC, AND BOWDOIN COLLEGE TO BETTER MARKET AND PACKAGE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

Create new opportunities for residents by promoting regional higher education programs.

- Work with regional education providers and make sure existing residents are aware of the variety of programs that are available.

Potential Collaborators: FEDC, SMCC, and Bowdoin

Performance Measures: Number of residents attending SMCC and Bowdoin

ACTION B.7. INCREASE AVAILABILITY OF WORKFORCE HOUSING

Continue and enhance work related to increasing housing opportunities through mixed-income developments, affordable units, and multi-family housing.

- Review zoning and land use regulations.
- Identify potential locations for future affordable housing.
- Apply for grant funding to support the maintenance and development of housing for low to moderate income residents (through CDBG and other funding sources).

Potential Collaborators: Freeport Housing Trust

Performance Measures: Number of affordable units

ACTION B.8. EXPAND CURRENT CULTURAL OFFERINGS

Additional cultural offerings will encourage tourists to stay longer and will improve the quality of life for current residents.

- Meet with current cultural organizations to see how they could expand their events/offerings.
- Reach out regionally to performing arts groups to see about shows in Freeport.

- Continue and expand on current events such as the Winslow Park Summer Concert Series and other events .
- Work to attract and retain art shops within the downtown business district. Look for ways to make the cost of doing business and having a shop in the downtown more financially feasible for artists such as subsidizing rent, providing utility rate reductions, exemptions from parking requirements, etc.
- Develop a full calendar of events and promote it on the Freeport app, Freeport website, throughout Town, and in adjacent communities.

Potential Collaborators: FEDC, FreeportUSA, Freeport Creative Arts, Freeport Historical Society

Performance Measures: Number of events

Goal C: Promote Freeport as a Unique Outdoor Recreation Destination

Recreation resources, outdoor lifestyles, and access to the outdoors are all becoming more important as families decide where to live, owners look for new locations for their business, and visitors decide where they are going to spend their precious vacation time. The Town of Freeport already has recognition as the location of L.L. Bean and other outdoor retailers, but there is room for growth to enhance and leverage the assets to increase name recognition as a recreation destination, improve quality of life for residents, and increase visitor stays. Some of the assets include L.L. Bean’s worldwide brand recognition, access to the waterfront, mountain biking trails, and nearby downhill and cross-country ski facilities.

Another opportunity to increase visitor stays throughout the year (benefiting local businesses) is to increase the number of athletic events held in Town including marathons, bike races, youth tournaments, and adventure races, which will bring thousands of people in on weekends during the shoulder seasons. Maintaining access and quality of the local and regional natural resources will be essential for Freeport to continue to be an outdoor recreation destination for years to come.

In addition to support for recreation assets, the Plan calls for support for cultural and historic resources as well as working to attract more events throughout the year and working to identify a museum that would build the brand. A museum would offer a different type of attraction for those who are not interested in shopping or outdoor recreation.

ACTION C.1. CONDUCT BUSINESS ATTRACTION OF ADDITIONAL ADVENTURE AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Begin business attraction of both indoor and outdoor recreation facilities in Freeport.

- Research and call companies that specialize in outdoor adventure courses (ropes, rock climbing, zip lines, etc.).
- Research the potential for indoor activities (indoor fields, rinks) to help increase visitation through the year, improve name recognition, and complement and expand on existing L.L. Bean adventure activities.
- Communicate interest with current land owners and recreation facilities to host more events and see if they would be interested in being involved.
- Make a list of traveling sport organizations that may be looking for locations for tournaments or events and reach out to regional high school sports directors

Potential Collaborators: FEDC

Performance Measures: Attraction of new recreation businesses, Sales and employment in recreation related businesses

ACTION C.2. RESEARCH THE FEASIBILITY OF A TOWN-WIDE TRAIL SYSTEM TO FURTHER THE TOWN'S HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND ACTIVE LIVING INITIATIVES

Using the completed asset map (Action B.1.), begin researching the feasibility of making connections between existing trail systems and other assets.

- Use existing committee and public input to determine what assets should be connected, where connections could be made, how and where trails could be made accessible, and an order of priority for these connections.
- Include research into funding opportunities including potential public-private partnerships and grant sources.

Potential Collaborators: Freeport Conservation Trust, Freeport Conservation Commission and Active Living Task Force

Performance Measures: Feasibility study completion, Miles of trail connections, Trail usage

ACTION C.3. HOST INAUGURAL MEETING OF ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES TO DISCUSS WORKING TOGETHER TO BRAND THE AREA AS AN OUTDOOR RECREATION DESTINATION

Partner with nearby communities to increase overall regional visitation and create branding and marketing material that will designate Freeport as the prime location to stay when visiting nearby attractions.

- Contact the appropriate person at adjacent municipalities (ED director, tourism official, chamber of commerce, etc.)
- Develop an event that showcases the assets at each of the communities and how they all fit together to create a high quality destination.
- Work together to develop a brand and marketing strategy.
- Implement the marketing strategy with a focus on bringing people to stay in Freeport to access existing hotels and other amenities.

Potential Collaborators: Freeport USA

Performance Measures: Number of people at the meeting, Formation of a project working group

ACTION C.4. IDENTIFY AND CONTACT RACE EVENT MANAGEMENT COMPANIES AND TOURNAMENT MANAGERS

Build on the name recognition of Freeport as an outdoor recreation destination by increasing the number of athletic/sporting events. Work with event production companies to market, produce, and manage the events. Make use of the wide variety of resources available for events including Bradbury Mountain State Park, town-wide trails, water access, and roads. Consider running, swimming, field sports, triathlons, duathlons, adventure runs, etc.

- Create marketing tool that can be distributed to event management companies. Showcase available hotel rooms, activities for whole family, access to

all different recreation assets. Highlight a particular event that has been held in the Town and the logistics of it.

- Distribute a marketing tool to event managers and follow-up with a phone call.
- Communicate with event managers that currently host events in community and adjacent communities, see if there is potential for expansion.
- Educate the public regarding the impact of these kinds of events (economic benefit) and help minimize any concerns surrounding the events.

Potential Collaborators: Freeport USA

Performance Measures: Identify race event management company, Number of new races per year, Number of new overnight stays

ACTION C.5. BEGIN SEARCH FOR A RECREATION OR SPORT MUSEUM

Begin work to attract a satellite location of a well known museum or develop a new museum based on Freeport's unique characteristics. For example, consider an Olympic, fishing, Maine recreation, or sport themed museum.

- Review zoning ordinance and inventory of property to locate potential and appropriate locations for this facility.
- Call existing museums to see if they are interested in expanding or opening a second location.
- Make a list of the major events in the community to start to identify a theme for the museum.
- Meet with local and regional museum heads to gather information about how to get started, who to talk to, and what is involved.
- Start fundraising efforts.

Potential Collaborators: FEDC and Town of Freeport

Performance Measures: Number of contacts made, Amount of money raised

Goal D: Support Freeport’s Retail Base

With local and national stores including L.L. Bean in the Village, Freeport is known as a major retail destination. Freeport retailers are competing with other retail destinations, online shopping growth, and a reduction in consumer spending that is making it all the more important that they are able to differentiate themselves and their experience. The Town of Freeport is unique in that it is a living breathing Village with outlets and local stores, as opposed to straight outlet centers or indoor malls. With the upgrades that were made to downtown through the Vision 2010 Plan, the area is much more attractive to family members who may not be that interested in shopping, which makes the Town different from other destinations and more appealing to a wider audience.

Local retailers should continue this effort. The Plan calls for improving customer service through training and certificate programs, helping retailers to expand their online offerings to allow for shopping throughout the year, and continuing supporting local retailers as more people are interested in “shopping local” and supporting small businesses. The Town should also consider the feasibility of hiring a firm to create a "Virtual Freeport" that would offer customers the opportunity to visit all of the stores in Freeport from the comfort of their own home. A combination of Google Street View and business websites could make this a cutting edge program that would help increase sales for local businesses during the off season.

ACTION D.1. CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THE FREEPORT APP FOR SMART PHONES, TABLETS, AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

Provide the latest information to visitors and residents on village activities, directions, train schedule, and retail offerings.

- Create a process for updating the app on a regular basis.
- Add the updated asset map to the app and website. Make it easy for users to search for what they are looking for, including recreation assets, cultural assets, upcoming events, and retail stores.
- Request feedback from users on how they would like to use the app and suggest any improvements.
- Incorporate all local retailers’ websites into the app and make it easy for users to access individual businesses.

Potential Collaborators: FreeportUSA

Performance Measures: Updates to the Freeport app, Number of users

ACTION D.2. IMPLEMENT AN INTERNATIONAL WAY-FINDING PROGRAM

Implement a new way-finding program that directs people to the edges of downtown, directs people to the parking garage, and has a

special indication for locally owned businesses (include languages in addition to English). Consider the use of QR codes as a way to provide information about businesses outside of downtown.

- Review current signage and consider improvements. Look to other communities for examples of how it is done well (footprints on the sidewalk, architectural signage, kiosks, maps, etc.)
- Meet with local retailers, residents, and others to discuss what areas of Town could benefit from additional signage.
- Budget for infrastructure investments.

Potential Collaborators: Town of Freeport, FreeportUSA, and Chamber

Performance Measures: Development and implementation of way-finding program, Number of QR codes used, Sales at stores adjacent to downtown

ACTION D.3. PROMOTE THE USE OF “QR” CODES AT BUSINESSES

Provide QR codes to businesses to use in their marketing material to promote and cross-promote businesses in the Town. Provide technical assistance as necessary.

- Maintain a list of all businesses websites.

- Get QR codes for all businesses and providing training to businesses on how they can be best used.
- Help make connections between retailers and restaurants to help cross promotion. For example, a restaurant could have a map of the Village with QR codes for each of the businesses so while a patron waits for their meal they could be looking at websites of the local stores.

- Offer businesses training on “multi-channel retail” and opening channels of commerce online.

Potential Collaborators: FEDC, Chamber, and Freeport USA

Performance Measures: Feasibility analysis

Potential Collaborators: FreeportUSA and Chamber

Performance Measures: Number of QR codes established, Number of visitors using them

ACTION D.4. IMPLEMENT STREETScape ENHANCEMENTS AND SIGNAGE TO GET PEOPLE TO TRAVEL NORTH ON MAIN STREET BEYOND L.L. BEAN

Work to attract a destination for the north part of Main Street to bring people north beyond L.L. Bean. Review site plan requirements and zoning regulations for buildings on Route 1 North.

Potential Collaborators: Town of Freeport

Performance Measures: Number of people traveling Route 1 North, Complete review of regulations

ACTION D.5. STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF A "VIRTUAL FREEPORT"

Consider the feasibility of hiring a firm to create a "Virtual Freeport" that would offer customers the opportunity to visit all of the stores in Freeport from the comfort of their own home. A combination of Google Street View and business websites could make this a cutting edge program that would help increase sales for local businesses during the off season.