

An Overview of MDI Tomorrow –Summer 2005

Mount Desert Island Tomorrow is *a citizen's forum on the future of the island* and its communities. Replicating a similar process from 1987-91, organizational sponsors (University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Friends of Acadia and College of the Atlantic) called an initial meeting in October 2001 to begin the process of determining issues and opportunities facing MDI over the next several years.

The earlier version of MDI Tomorrow produced a newspaper supplement outlining *issues, current data, trends and “preferred futures”* in 1991. A series of community conferences generated discussion and progress on several issues, with tangible results:

- Island Connections, a non-profit linking volunteers with elders;
- A high-school internship program,
- MDI Community Health Plan, linking the health care providers and island employers in a variety of projects to reduce health care and insurance costs;
- Acadia Homes for Students, providing support for teens needing housing in order to stay in school;
- Kid's Corner, a child care center originally set up by employers;
- Island Explorer bus service, launched through collaboration of many organizations and agencies

The mission of MDI Tomorrow is “working to bring about vibrant, healthy and year-round communities for Mount Desert Island and surrounding towns”

The current MDI Tomorrow process began with a loose structure of “working groups” on seven inter-connected issues. A steering committee provides overall coordination. Sub-committees have coordinated overall funding for the process, shaped the community surveys, and taken on other short-term tasks. Following our April, 2003 conference, much of the work is taking place in *project groups* or task forces working on:

Increasing year-round housing options
Improving local community design and land use planning
Increasing opportunities to bike and walk safely
Connecting local food producers to local consumers and other examples of a “buy local” economy
Building school - community connections with sustainable ag. projects
Involving youth in framing and solving community issues
Addressing issues of early childhood development

Visit the MDI Tomorrow at www.mditomorrow.org, to find further background, our mission and vision statement, and **Progress Report to Our Communities** 16 pp dated June 10, 2004 (PDF) and updates on projects

The current MDI Tomorrow process is framed by its timeline:

Fall 2001/Spring 2002	Organizational meetings and Framing the issues
Spring /Summer 2002	Engaging citizens in discussion of issues Develop a “state of the island” report on current trends, data from 2000 census to help us understand the issues
November, 2002	1 st Community Conference to discuss “state of the island” and a vision of what we want for the future
Winter, 2003	Frame issues into projects for implementing parts of the vision
April, 2003	2nd Community Conference introduces and attracts volunteers for community projects
Summer 2003	Develop survey; continue work on community projects
Fall 2003	Housing Summit to frame issues, suggest action University of Maine survey to determine views on policy choices
Spring 2004	3rd Community Conference to mark and stimulate progress, examine and fine tune local policy options
June, 2004	Updated MDI Tomorrow Report, incorporating data, vision, project updates, opinion data and policy directions published as newspaper insert
October, 2004	Celebrated progress and awarded local groups / people MDI Tomorrow Spirit Awards at Harvest Supper
Winter-Spring 2005	Progress on projects underway

MDI Tomorrow is a ***parallel process to planning by each island town, business and non-profit organization***. As in the past effort, the current work may yield ***public-private partnerships, pilot projects, policy recommendations or public education***. MDI Tomorrow is not a formal organization, nor is it an advocacy group. Rather, it is a community process to identify what citizens want for the future, to suggest plans and collaborative work to bring about that “preferred future.”

The steering committee for MDI Tomorrow has raised funds to maintain a website, conduct and summarize ongoing research that helps us understand the current “state of the island,” to support community conferences and meetings, and publish an updated MDI Tomorrow document and implementation plan. Sponsoring organizations serve as fiscal managers for any funds sought and spent.

University of Maine Cooperative Extension is maintaining mailing and email list ***To receive updates, minutes of full group and working group meetings, please contact:***

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