

**MDI Tomorrow
Economic Prosperity Committee
Meeting May 30, 2002**

On Thursday, May 30, about 40 people attended a workshop at the Jackson Laboratory, “Economic Prosperity: What’s in MDI’s Future?” Speakers were David Cole, President of Eastern Maine Development Corporation, the regional economic development agency covering the 6 counties surrounding Bangor, and Nat Bowditch, Assistant Director of the state Office of Tourism.

David spoke about the importance of developing a year-round economy, and the opportunities available to MDI, based upon the clusters of industry already present in the area—boat building and medical research. He also talked about the possible attractions for “Lone Eagles,” people who work, using high technology, directly from home.

Nat came armed with statistics about the tourism industry in Maine and on MDI. Some of his information is summarized on an attached sheet. His final wrap-up urged MDI to protect its product, develop its product through the expansion of the shoulder season, increase transportation opportunities, and work with the neighbors in the region, including Washington County.

Attendees then broke into groups, where each person had a chance to present what he/she saw as the issues and opportunities for economic prosperity on MDI. Each group then selected their Top Ten issues/opportunities. The Top Ten lists from the 4 groups were then consolidated into what became a list of 18 issues/opportunities. Attendees then chose the 5 of those 18 that each saw as the most important. Those scores, and the Five Most Important factors for economic prosperity on MDI, follow.

The economic prosperity committee hopes to continue its work by focusing on those top five factors, working closely with associated committees, developing a strategic plan for economic prosperity for the island, and creating an ongoing task force to work closely with other local groups to implement change that will allow for economic prosperity.

Votes for top 5 issues and opportunities for economic prosperity on MDI

Diverse year-round economy

16

Affordable housing

14

Carrying capacity of both MDI and ANP

11

Infrastructure

Roads, Telecommunications, Reduce car impact, Transportation

10

Sprawl/finite land base

10

Lack of year-round retail, services, and employment

10

Maine anti-business environment

6

Living wages

5

Cohesive vision for economic development

5

Livability opportunities (great for families; great schools)

4

Wealth sources—taxes; retained earnings from tourists

4

Labor force availability

3

Absentee landlords not invested in community

3

Pressures of business consolidation (little guy gets squeezed)

2

Educational opportunities for Maine high school grads

1

Partner with regional economy

0

Support local agriculture business

0

Lack of public involvement

0

Notes from Nat Bowditch's tourism presentation:

(Most of these are year 2000 numbers)

Tourism in general: top reasons that generate overnight trips:

- Touring
- Special event
- Outdoors
- Casino

Maine

8.8 million overnight trips (20% of all visits)

48% pleasure

41% visit friends/relatives

10% business

35.2 million day trips (80%)

These focus on coastal and southern areas.

Outdoors is a major component of attraction---is this going to be sustainable as baby boomers age?

Are there more opportunities in special events for MDI?

80% of Maine's tourism marketing resources go to Eastern Seaboard states.

Tourism Dollars

5.4 billion spent in Maine in 2000

2.3 billion overnight

3.1 billion day trips

So want to focus on increasing those overnight trips, since they spend, proportionately, the lion's share of the money.

Where does that money get spent?

36% retail spending

29% food

13% transportation

12% lodging

10% recreation – is there an opportunity here?

Tax revenues from tourism are 330.2 million dollars. Tourism generates 1/4 of Maine's sales tax revenue (without auto sales, the percentage is 1/3). For every dollar spent to advertise Maine, \$24 is brought into the state.

1997 Downeast and Acadia Travel Market

1.8mm visits

1.3mm overnight

41% friends/relatives

53% pleasure

5% business ***opportunity

Touring is huge—60% of the market

Outdoors is 21%

Online and internet services are the 2nd most-used resource to plan a trip—if you're not online, you are missing business.

Year split of tourism:

April to June 22%

July, Aug, September 50%

October to December 21%

When people come to Maine, they say that they (in order):

Shop

Eat lobster

Beach

Local food

Hike

Wildlife

Day cruise

Whale watch

Museum

Recommendations:

1. Protect your product
2. Develop the product
 - a. Shoulder season
3. Transportation alternatives
4. Work with region and neighbors