

MDI Tomorrow — Community Design & Land Use Worksheet Progress Report

What are the issues/opportunities?

- Threats to the character of island's working waterfronts
 - ☞ increasing property values (residential & commercial pressures)
 - ☞ increasing use by recreational boating.
- Threats to MDI's approaches from unrestrained commercialism.
- Threats to community character
 - ☞ loss of year-round businesses
 - ☞ lack of diverse businesses (too many tourist-oriented)
 - ☞ decline in architectural quality (too big, designs don't fit, poorly constructed)
 - ☞ imbalance between number of summer homes and year-round residences
 - ☞ lack of affordable housing
- Sprawl
- Traffic (parking, road congestion, environmental impacts . . .)
- Burgeoning demand for infrastructure (roads/driveways, power lines, sewer/water systems)
- Degraded environmental quality
 - ☞ growth affecting water quality/quantity
 - ☞ first-ever island-wide algal bloom in 2001 closing all clamming flats
- Outdated comprehensive plans, and inadequate ordinances
 - ☞ ordinances not flexible enough to allow/encourage cluster housing, new uses for existing buildings, etc.
 - ☞ plans don't provide enough guidance to develop strong ordinances
- Planning boards don't have enough time for planning, becoming permitting boards
- Need to preserve rural character
 - ☞ limit commercial expansion to only currently developed commercial zones
 - ☞ promote cluster development to retain open space, perhaps also providing more affordable, year-round housing
 - ☞ provide incentives to guide acceptable development (abatements, tax breaks for providing employee housing, etc.)
 - ☞ provide/increase bicycle and walking paths for safety and convenience

Why is this an issue/opportunity something that should be addressed by an MDI Tomorrow-like process?

- Natural resources do not recognize political/municipal boundaries
- Towns share many similar concerns that would benefit from a coordinated approach

- Quality of life is an island-wide issue
- Many issues are too large and/or costly for one town to deal with
- Reduces incidence of reinventing the wheel

Who does this issue/opportunity affect? How are they affected?

- Everyone living on, working on, and visiting Mount Desert Island
- The issues affect the quality of life of residents, property values, the visitor experience, incomes made from commercial endeavors and tourism, traffic, and safety

Who are the partners who might be able to address these issues/opportunities

- Town governments (selectmen, town managers, planning boards)
- ANP and Friends of Acadia (e.g. village connector trails, natural resource information/research, etc.)
- MDI Bike Association/Maine Bicycle Coalition
- Hancock County Regional Planning Commission
- Maine Coast Heritage Trust
- MDI Historical Society (historic preservation)
- College of the Atlantic (e.g. research, GIS mapping, planning, etc.)
- MDI Housing Authority
- Island Institute
- MDOT
- Chambers of Commerce
- ME Department of Tourism
- Local Board of Realtors
- ME Municipal Association
- Bar Harbor/Maine Innkeepers Associations

What are the implications for local government? For the private sector?

- Promote island-wide collaboration. Ideally, towns would coordinate “cross-jurisdictional” land use issues. Approaches would be coordinated, but not necessarily with one governing entity. The aim would be to encourage participation, but not to diminish the individual characters of the island communities. Shared issues include:
 - ☞ Algal blooms
 - ☞ Watersheds – quality and quantity of water
 - ☞ Traffic management
 - ☞ Loss of affordable housing / year-round residents
 - ☞ Loss of year-round businesses
 - ☞ Need for places to work (jobs, physical places to house businesses)
 - ☞ Loss of year-round businesses
 - ☞ Property taxes/values

- ☞ Land consumption for residences
- ☞ Marine resources: clamming flats, lobstering, worming, etc.
- ☞ Threats to commercial waterfronts
- ☞ Sprawl
- ☞ Light pollution
- ☞ Noise pollution
- Selectmen, town managers, planning board members, design/ordinance review committee members all need to be involved in island-wide planning, perhaps in a “League of Towns” format.
- Planners need to work with finance department, tax collector, and town manager to develop financial incentives to encourage preferred development; and to pace development (and impact on capital improvement demands).
- Local governments and private sector need to reevaluate and update technical data. More information is needed to help planning, including:
 - ☞ inventory of acreage of built impervious surfaces (roofs as well as pavement)
 - ☞ comprehensive water quality inventory
 - ☞ identification and inventory of wildlife corridors
 - ☞ survey of people’s habits, preferences, and experiences at MDI’s beaches
 - ☞ more data on nutrient loading
 - ☞ historic resources inventory
- Communicate the ideas/concerns to everyone on MDI. Need to include diverse opinions.
- Open a dialogue between the island’s planners and developers.

How are these issues/opportunities connected to other issues?

- economic prosperity
- land use
- transportation
- taxation

What are the regional and global trends regarding this issue/opportunity?

- Island residents are moving off-island, and out-of-state people moving in.
- Cluster housing is a common and practical solution to some urban sprawl.
- An imbalance of year round residents to summer residents, leaving whole communities dark for many months of the year.
- Waterfront property values are rising at exponential rates and now extending to water-view properties, having a domino effect on rising property taxes across the island, and putting financial pressure on the historic character of MDI’s waterfronts.

- (Possible) Roadblocks to consider
 - ☞ heavy demand on residents' time and energies
 - ☞ duplication of efforts among multiple groups
 - ☞ little or no funding to accomplish goals
 - ☞ no “financial muscle” — the market drives decisions