

Town of Richmond
Future Land Use Visioning
Workshop Report
November 17, 2015

Marcia Buker Elementary School, Richmond, Maine

Draft Report prepared by Good Group Decisions



Good Group Decisions

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This report is organized by topic, not necessarily the order in which things were discussed.

About the Meeting

The Town of Richmond Comprehensive Plan Committee is working on a vision for future land use and convened a series of two workshops to solicit input from the public on several questions:

- Where do we want stores and businesses?
- Where do we want residential development?
- How do we preserve our farms, rural areas, and natural resources?

In this November 17 workshop, we addressed the above questions and we also discussed a vision that had begun to emerge at the first workshop held on October 21, 2015. To ensure a fair, efficient, and productive process, the meeting was professionally facilitated and documented by Craig Freshley and Kerri Sands of Good Group Decisions.

Attendance

About 35 people were in attendance, including members of the public and members from the Town of Richmond's Selectboard and Comprehensive Plan Committee. Also attending were Victoria Boundy, Richmond's Director of Community and Business Development, and facilitators Craig Freshley and Kerri Sands of Good Group Decisions.

Agenda and Ground Rules

Facilitator Craig Freshley explained the planned agenda (see Appendix A) and a few ground rules to help us have an efficient and productive meeting. The following comments were captured.

- Kerri and I are not experts in land use planning and we don't have a stake in what comes out of tonight. We are simply here to help you have a good discussion and provide some notes of this meeting.
- We will review the draft map that came out of the last meeting and take questions and comments, and if we have time we review chapters of the plan - but we only have 1.5 hours
- Ground Rules
 - All views heard - Let Craig call on people
 - I might not call on people in the order that hands were raised - I might call on the person we haven't heard as much from
 - Written comments also welcome
 - Hand in your comments to Victoria at the back of the room tonight, or send her an email
 - Okay to disagree

- Eventually the committee will have to agree on a recommendation to send to the town, but we don't have to agree with each other tonight
 - We can each have our own opinion
- Staff and Committee Members are here to listen and clarify
- Civility and respect
 - It is a privilege to be able to come together and talk
 - Listen to each other's comments, don't interrupt, no personal comments
- Themes and comments now and later
- Neutral facilitation - we are here to serve the group as a whole

Welcome and Opening

Richmond Selectboard Chairman Peter Warner welcomed everyone and opened the workshop with the following comments:

- I am pleased to see so many people here tonight
- Tonight, we will hear about the Comprehensive Plan, and where we are at
- Tonight's meeting is one of many to discuss future land use
- The map we are showing is just an indication of people's ideas - that's it
- We have been working on this for two years and we are looking for as much input as we can get
- No one's ideas are less important than anyone else's

Victoria Boundy, Richmond's Director of Community and Business Development recognized the following members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee who were present, noting that they have been working really hard for over two years:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| • O'Neil Laplante | • Linda Smith |
| • Tom Nugent | • Mike Grizkewitsch |
| • Jennifer Bourget | • Bette Horning (past committee member) |
| • Peter Warner | |

Why We Are Doing Comprehensive Planning

Committee member O'Neil Laplante provided a brief explanation of comprehensive planning, why we are doing it, and how the plan will be used. Participants had an opportunity for questions and clarifications. The following remarks were captured:

Key Points

- A Comprehensive Plan is required by the state
 - Although this by itself is not a good reason

- We all have a genuine interest in deciding the direction in which we want to head
 - When we are ALL involved it's better than someone deciding for us
 - Let's do this from the bottom up
- It's a learning process – a chance to learn about our town
 - For instance, we have learned about the very high cost of sewer lines
 - We have learned that's it's important to take care of the businesses that are already here
- The Comprehensive Plan is an important part of how we develop our land use ordinances
 - It's important that WE, the people of Richmond, decide the basis for future land use ordinances
- It can help us avoid future controversies like the Family Dollar Store
- It can help us prevent unwanted development

Discussion

Victoria joined O'Neil to answer questions from participants.

- Question: This is supposed to be the plan of the citizens. Whatever we figure out here, the State has to approve, and if they don't like it, what happens? Who wins?
 - Responses
 - Yes, the State will provide input on the future land use section of plan
 - That's why we want consensus from community on our direction
 - The State will likely guide us toward development in sections of town that already have utilities and don't have natural resources or habitat
 - If there is a difference of opinion we will have to work with them on that
- Question: Are we supposed to consider ideas as if money is not a consideration?
 - Responses
 - There are loose parameters - let's not shy away from something just because it costs money, but if we spend, let's spend wisely
 - It is Victoria's job to take all the input and consider all the constraints and come up with the best plan
 - The State gives towns a leg up for funding programs if they have a consistent and updated comprehensive plan or downtown plan
- Question: We have a comprehensive plan now and this is supposed to be an update, but it sounds like it will be a whole new plan, not just an update. The original plan talked about maintaining the rural nature of the town, and already tonight I have heard about new development. How much of this plan will be new and how much will be carried forth from the old plan?
 - Responses
 - Development was mentioned because people have raised development questions - how much, what type, what impact it will have
 - We also want to identify critical resources to preserve

- The last comprehensive plan was a much lauded, well done effort. However, it was adopted in 1991 and the State is recommending that towns update every 10-15 years

Explanation of Emerging Vision

Craig Freshley explained the “emerging vision” from the October 21 workshop, as depicted on the composite map he made to reflect workshop themes (See Appendix B). Craig made the following comments:

- We can’t pretend that this map reflects ALL viewpoints of everyone who attended the last meeting. It’s what’s called a “bubble map” - the lines are fuzzy lines depicting general areas, not specific parcels of land.
- Here are the general ideas that emerged:
 - Commercial and industrial development
 - Large retail
 - Nowhere
 - Medium retail (perhaps under 50,000 square feet)
 - Near the interstate and 197
 - Small retail
 - By the interstate and 197
 - In the downtown village area
 - Commercial/industrial
 - Along the rail lines
 - In vacant, historic buildings
 - By the interstate and 197
 - Traffic calming in the downtown
 - 197 Corridor
 - Mixed use/hodgepodge
 - With buffers and/or with controls
 - Farmland and natural resources
 - No more town-owned or state-owned preservation needed
 - Encourage that town-owned property be used for agriculture
 - Some preservation would be good
 - More farmland is helpful for farmers
 - Residential development supports farms
 - Residential development that “carves up” land is not good for farms
 - Agriculture economies of scale and commercial activities (such as shared cold storage or farm stands) would be good if allowed right near the farms
 - Residential development
 - Regulate the pace of agricultural land being divided up for residential use
 - Residential development should be concentrated or clustered

- To leave big spaces for farming
- Preserve and beautify in-town homes
- Encourage affordable housing

Craig reminded participants that not everyone agreed to all these points at the October 21 meeting.

Refining the Vision

Participants had an opportunity to ask questions and make comments about the emerging vision. During the discussion, Craig sketched revisions to the map. See Appendix C for the revised map.

Key Points

- Industrial development in vacant buildings
- Don't limit use of the rail line in the future
- Be mindful of preserving wildlife habitat
- Need to be mindful of private property owners' rights
- Make sure that infrastructure and parking keep pace with growth
- Less restrictions on residential property
- More preserved land if it doesn't cause taxes to go up
- Keep Richmond affordable
- Consider a community center or recreation facility
- Develop vacant residences before encouraging new residential development
- Attract jobs and opportunities for young people to stay here and move here

Discussion

- The former farmland across from Acord's storage unit - are you proposing that that area be reserved for farmland?

Craig clarified that the sketch map did not represent zones.

- I want to develop my land to include a small personal home orchard and organic garden. I would like to do this without a business going up right next door. But people should be able to have a small commercial business, like a farmstand or a small home business that doesn't create too much traffic.
- I am having a difficult time with the industrial area on the river extending up to South Gardiner. What about environmental impact and sensitivity? The railroad tracks are a long shot from Route 24.
 - The railroad is not upgraded and in use enough to take the traffic

- I like industrial but it doesn't seem like a good fit
- Industrial uses should be in existing buildings which do not extend that far
- Industrial uses should fill unused buildings along the rail line
- However, if you take the railroad tracks up to the new bridge, that would be a great space for an intermodal facility
 - The railroad was grandfathered in and they can do some cool stuff
 - Don't discount the railroad - it keeps heavy freight off the road
- There is a wildlife preserve in the bottom right hand corner of the map. There are also homes all through the area. We won't be able to do certain development.
 - Some of that land is owned by the state - The Merrymeeting Bay Wildlife Management Area. It is open for foot traffic and recreational purposes.
 - The preservation area covers blocks, with exceptions of houses
- Preservation and conservation is fine and dandy but it's up to the railroad people who own the track to do what they want there, if the line is ever opened up again
- The railroad track is wide enough in one area for 2-3 tracks to do a train exchange
 - If the state or the railroad decided to land there again, it's always a possibility
 - Anything else along the high slopes would be hard to do
- The rest of the town is full of opportunity
 - Keep the old fashioned look by putting businesses in old homes, like Freeport
 - If we don't create the breadcrumbs the ants won't follow
 - I want my children to grow up here in Maine
- A state Fish and Wildlife expert said that the whole length of railroad and riverfront from where the old buildings are up to the Gardiner line is significant wildlife habitat
 - The original plan said we should maintain that section in its natural state because of wildlife and scenic character along the river
- We are not going to force anyone to do anything with private property, but we are giving opinions about what we'd like to see
- Whatever comes out of this, it's important to remember that it reaches a tiny portion of people. It's a recipe for inflammation. We should proactively mail out the results of the discussion tonight. A summary, or a comment card with a request for feedback.
 - However, mailing costs money. If you care about this, be here or figure out a way to participate. Ask for meetings to be held on weekends.
- This town is remarkably diverse. Don't price people out of the ability to live here. Our budget does nothing but grow.
- Property taxes are an issue - people who have lived here a long time are cash-poor and land-rich. Their land is their retirement and that is part of preserving residents.
- Solicit input from people on town decisions
- Before carving up new land for new developments and housing, have we considered vacant land in the village? If someone owns it and it's not developed is there an incentive?
 - We should develop vacant lots first rather than build tract housing on farmland
 - Focus on vacant lots first, or alongside cluster housing in existing developments
- Nothing will be developed unless private owners want to develop their land

- The original comprehensive plan has a lot of “should”. We should do this, maintain that, protect that. Did anything ever happen to enforce those shoulds? If I want to build a factory is there any ordinance that actually prevents that?
 - I understand that the previous plan was successfully implemented, though not everything was accomplished. The focus was on having a strong village and downtown, and preserving walkability. The intention was to preserve important outlying areas.
 - We spent years trying to revise our ordinances to meet consistency with the comprehensive plan. There would be some activity and then it would peter out. The current ordinance is actually a result of that comprehensive plan.
 - We are supposed to look at how new projects conform to comprehensive plan
 - We might want to take a look at how the zoning ordinance matches up with this new vision we are developing now
 - Our intention is to make sure that vision is carried out
- If we encourage business growth downtown, this brings increased truck traffic. Is there a way to ensure that as we increase business or manufacturing we can limit the hours of deliveries that block the streets?
 - Downtown I would like to see a pleasant street with small vehicle traffic
 - There are already more trucks especially with the new bridge
- We need to look at infrastructure. It must be in sync with the growth we are attracting.

Peter Warner clarified that Transportation is a whole other section of the plan and that the committee would like input on that section as well. He encouraged participants to view all the plan sections at Richmondmaine.com.

- In residential areas, some people were shut down and couldn't build a garage. I don't understand why people are shut down for building a garage. I don't want others to control my property.
- For residential areas, you are limited in what you can do. If you make a residential area, make it not so restrictive. What is the benefit of having it be a residential zone?

Craig clarified that this discussion was about painting a picture for the future; not necessarily about proposing changed zoning for the Town of Richmond.

- I live at the border of residential and ag lands, could I open a business there if I wanted to? When we look in the future what do we want?
- Not sure where the idea of “no more town or state owned preserved land” came from. The Peacock Beach riverfront, the new reserve land, and the town forest - these things define the town and what's good about it. There should be more preserved land.
- I'm okay with it conservation easements and preservation ordinances, as long as they are not coming out of the taxpayer's pocket.
- The state-owned CMP ground was good ag land and is now going to waste. It's a preserve for wildlife, but we have lost good feed and grass land. Taking away the grains has limited the ducks on the river.

Craig checked to see if there was any disagreement about continuing to maintain and preserve the lands that are already preserved. There was no disagreement.

- Preserved lands shouldn't come off the tax rolls - should be subject to the same taxes
- Is the tax bill going to double or triple? The money comes from folks in this room.
- We really need to define what we mean by preservation.
- Separate the house lots. House lots should be taxed differently than other uses. Whether more or less depends on what the use is.
- We talk about making a residential area, but there are already empty houses. Is something being done to bring people here? When the air station left, it killed the town.
- How to bring people here? What should future land uses in the town do to support economic development?
 - Keep it affordable. People are looking at Brunswick and Bowdoinham and saying they are not affordable. It's affordable here. I was alarmed to see a market study that said our incomes are rising faster than the state average and surrounding towns. People with higher incomes want more services.
 - Improve the schools. Realtors on the comprehensive plan committee say that yes, Richmond homes are less expensive, but what keeps people away is the lack of opportunity in our schools. Families want to go to other schools.
 - Find ways to encourage recreation for the next generation, like a community center or a gym. We used to have 100 kids show up for basketball on Sunday mornings!
- There should be no new residential growth. Encourage foreclosed or existing for-sale homes first.
- The average tax bill is \$3500 for a new home, but it costs \$10,000 to educate each kid
- Should we encourage residential growth?
 - Look at what's in the village. What houses are there and can we get owners to refurbish them? Or can we give incentives to sell in town houses or lots for development?
 - Be careful on the other side of this question. I chose my property to get outside of the village. I wanted land of my own to spread my wings. Yes, let's start filling places that are empty, but I have a problem with not allowing people who own their land to do what they need to do to be comfortable living in the town of Richmond.
- It seems that when you have growth, either construction of houses or industrial growth, unless you have an unusual situation, taxes just go up. Growth means higher taxes.
 - New roads, new police protection, more kids in schools
 - However, small commercial businesses, retail, etc. provide jobs and taxes, and don't send kids to school
- The comprehensive plan might encourage business development, but discourage new residential development and instead encourage infill
- I am opposed to any development. More people equals more taxes and more trucks. Let's not become Massachusetts. I moved here because I liked the rural community.

- If we could get a Maine Yankee or something that would pay all our taxes, that would be okay. I am open to something industrial or commercial but no new people.
- For the last 10-15 years what really has been developed? How many more people do we really have? What are the businesses that have come and stayed, or left? We need rational data to make decisions.

Victoria clarified that there is demographic data available on the town website. She noted that there is not a lot of population growth projected and that Richmond residents are getting older. She encouraged everyone to review the data and ask questions.

- I am concerned that as we develop our plan, we are cognizant about where industrial and commercial projects go. This is an established community. Residents have been here for hundreds of years. Don't want to change the nature of what life here has been like for a long time.
- Abutting a new recent development is bothersome. It changes the property values and the quality of life in a rural community when you are adjacent to development. Even though it provides value for the town, it displaces individuals and doesn't provide for them. I am in favor of redress for people who are adjacent to potential areas to be developed. We need a feedback process that has teeth. I have to accept the adjacent development, but there is no rebate on my taxes even though my property value is diminished.
- I am concerned because we have had new businesses downtown who have gone out because we are not supporting them, or are they not the kind of businesses we are looking for. If we aren't encouraging development of new homes, then we have to do something to keep taxes reasonable. New businesses could help.
- I understand you don't want residential development, but what happens when your kids says he has a job at BIW and wants to come back and build a house here? I want a future for my sons and grandchildren here.
- If we are aging, and if we want a vibrant community, we've got to have young people. How do we get enough young people to stay?
- We have been talking with high school students. We asked them: Do you like Richmond? Yes, they like living here. We asked them: After you graduate do you want to work here? No, they want to work in Brunswick or Portland, but they know that they want to live here and raise kids here. We can't keep it so tight that we don't encourage our best resources, our kids.
- If you look at the stats, they are scary. We are losing young people from town. The average age of people here is going up.
- Heavy truck traffic and parking is a problem. People have to park and walk up the hill. If there is any development, we need to be keep up with parking.
- It would be good to have a pharmacy
- Are we happy being a bedroom community or not? We should decide this as a community - do we want our own job base? We can have both; it's a question of balance. We have auto wholesalers, whoopee pie makers. Richmond has allowed a vibrant mix of

entrepreneurs and we are ideally located for the localvore movement. We could be a hub - there is organic food all over the place.

- There is no place to stay if someone comes to visit. We need a hotel. Not a 200 unit Marriott out by the highway, but a nice small motel. After all, we are vacationland. Let's catch people going up and down the highway; capture money from people from out of town without adding to the burden of schools.
- People talk about Main Street, but you don't realize you are here until you see the signs. Would love to see signs in proper locations.

Closing Comments

Peter Warner thanked everyone for participating and closed the meeting with the following comments:

- Any more comments you have are important. Please go online and look at the other segments of the plan and give us input.
- Our last plan talked about parking. That's still in our plan. It's an ongoing plan.
- Kudos to Victoria for her work to save aspects of Richmond that are important
- We are doing more outreach - we are meeting with seniors, and with parents at story hour
- The Comprehensive Plan Committee has regular meetings - usually every second Tuesday at the town office, 6:00-7:30 pm. Anyone is welcome, just call ahead to make sure it's happening.
- If you are interested in reading stats about the town, look on the website: <http://richmondmaine.com>, or contact Victoria. They are an eye opener!
- Richmond is changing. We are trying to control how that happens.

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 pm.

Appendix A: Planned Agenda

Richmond Future Land Use Workshop Help Us Map a Vision for Richmond's Future!

November 17, 2015, 6:30–8:00 p.m.
Marcia Buker Elementary School, High Street
Snacks and Beverages Provided

About the Meeting

The Town of Richmond Comprehensive Plan Committee is working on a vision for our future land use and we want hear from the community about your vision for the future of Richmond. Where do we want stores and businesses? Where do we want residential development? How do we preserve our farms, rural areas, and natural resources? In this workshop we will address these and similar questions. We will discuss a vision that began to emerge at the Public Workshop of October 21, 2015. To ensure a fair, efficient, and productive process we will be assisted by Craig Freshley of Good Group Decisions, a professional facilitator from Brunswick.

Agenda

- 6:30 **Welcome and Opening**
Selectboard Chairman Peter Warner will welcome everyone and start the Workshop. Facilitator Craig Freshley will explain the format and some ground rules to help us have an efficient and productive workshop.
- 6:35 **Why We Are Doing Comprehensive Planning**
Committee member O'Neil Laplante will provide a brief explanation of comprehensive planning, why we are doing it, and how the plan will be used. There will be a chance for questions and clarifications.
- 6:45 **Emerging Vision**
Craig Freshley will explain the “emerging vision” from the October 21 workshop as depicted on a map. He will also explain some key comments received at other workshops on November 2 and 4. There will be a chance for questions and clarifications.
- 7:00 **Refining the Vision**
This is the time for comments and discussion on the emerging vision and refinement of that vision. As we discuss where we want commercial development, residential development, and agriculture and natural resources, Craig will sketch themes on a new map. We will discuss what specific kinds of businesses and residences we want to encourage, and what specific natural resources we want to preserve.
- 7:45 **Other Recommendations**
As time allows there will be a chance for questions and comments about any of the recommendations (not just related to land use vision) being drafted as part of the new Plan.

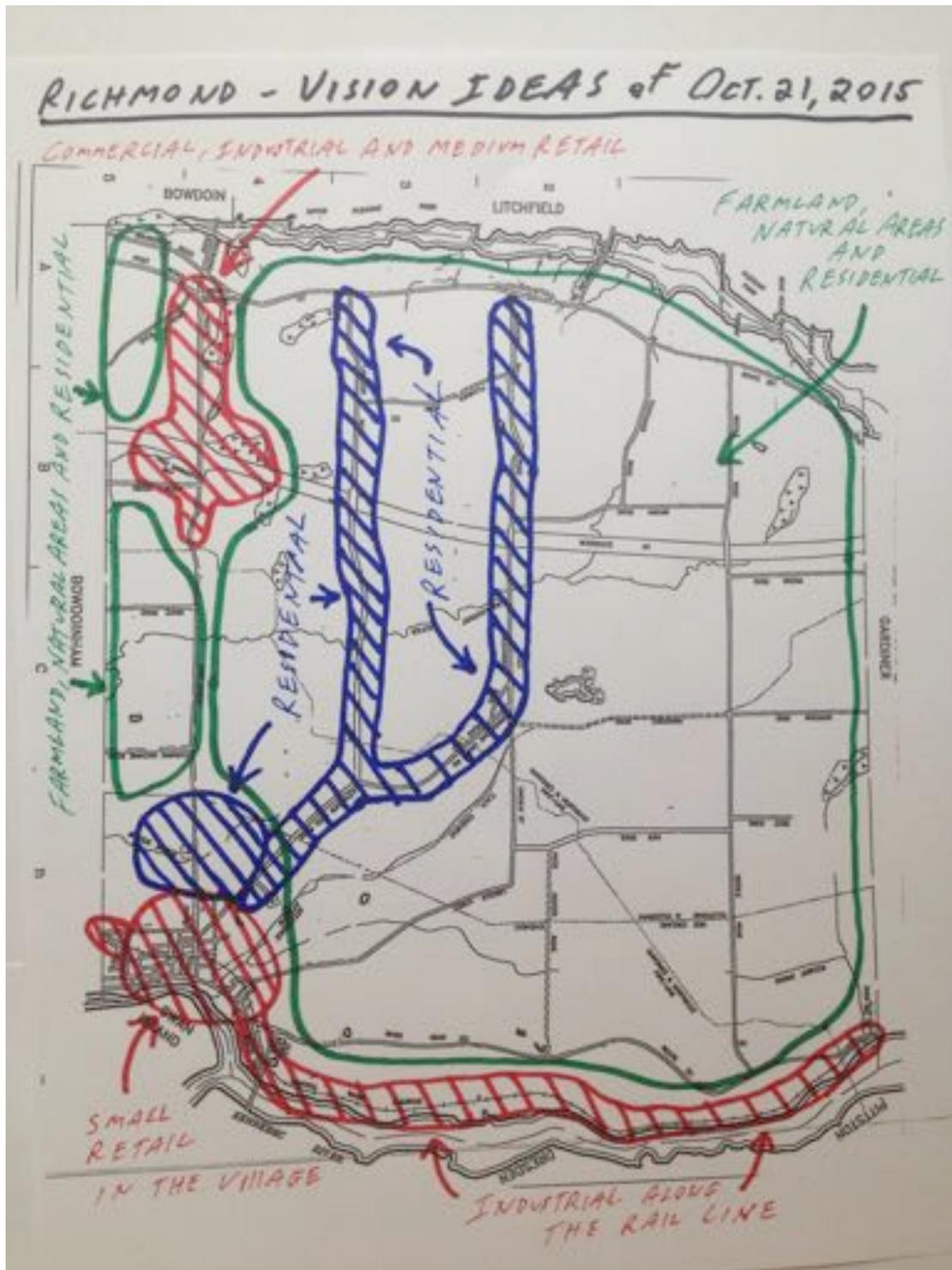
7:50 **Closing Comments**

8:00 **Adjourn**

[The future of our town is ours to shape so we hope to see you all there.](#)

Questions: Contact Victoria Boundy, Director of Community & Business Development, 207-737-4305 x331.

Appendix B: Composite Map from October 21 Workshop



Appendix C: Map Revisions Made at November 17 Workshop

