

Wells Draft Focus Group Questions

Economic Development

- Commercial use of land occurs in four primary areas in Town: Wells Beach along Mile Road/Wells Harbor, along the Route 1 corridor, near the Maine Turnpike interchange (Exit 19), and along Routes 9 and 109. What opportunities exist in these areas related to economic development?
- Based on public feedback we've heard so far, some community members think Route 1 is growing and developing in an uncoordinated way that is impacting (or eliminating) the Town's small town character and causing issues like traffic congestion and undesired aesthetics (neon signs, etc.). What are strategies for the Town to consider to improve the development pattern, traffic flow, aesthetics, and amenities of Route 1?
- Do you think it's possible for the Town to encourage a more defined village center (that is compact, mixed use, and walkable)? If so, where would this be appropriate? What tools are you aware of that should be employed to bring this idea to reality?
- How should public infrastructure be improved to accommodate future commercial development? (roads, traffic, bike/ped infrastructure, water/sewer, etc.)
- How can the Town play a role in retaining or recruiting businesses to Wells? What are some of the biggest challenges in retaining or recruiting businesses?
- In what ways can the Town support property owners and business owners as they improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of their buildings in Wells?

Housing

- In 2020, the Maine State Housing Authority ranked Wells' Affordability Index as being 0.70, making it one of the least affordable communities in York County. How should the Town support affordable housing needs and development in the community, while also addressing the community's desire to slow housing development in general?
- The number of households have increased 14.3% in Wells between 2010 and 2019. Additionally, the town has seen a 19.5% increase in seasonal homes from 2010 to 2019. Future population projections also indicate a continued increase in population growth in subsequent years. Considering these trends, what kinds of policies and strategies should the Town consider to accommodate future housing while maintaining the remaining aspects of its small town character?
- Wells has a significantly older population in 2019 than it did twenty years ago. What kinds of policies and strategies should the Town consider to meet the housing needs of those over 65?
- Public feedback has indicated that there is concern with the capacity of Wells' public infrastructure (wastewater treatment, solid waste disposal, roadways, etc.) to handle the population increase that has been happening and will continue to happen in Wells. In what ways should Wells plan for and fund upgrades to its public infrastructure to accommodate the addition of new residents and visitors?

- What other actions should Wells consider implementing in the next ten years to address housing needs, manage housing growth, and address other relevant housing issues in the community?

Land Use

- Increased residential and commercial development along the Town's major transportation corridors has continued since 2005. There is concern and a public perception of unplanned and uncoordinated development that has changed the small town character of the community. Additionally, the Town's Growth Management Ordinance expired in 2008. What tools, policies, and strategies should Wells consider moving forward to manage and direct growth in the future? What tools have you seen other communities use to manage and direct growth that would be viable here?
- New subdivision activity continues to expand west of Route 1 and residential development is still densest in the waterfront area of Wells. How might Wells balance residential development and open space protection to preserve its rural areas? What are your opinions on the existing cluster subdivision ordinance as a mechanism to preserve more open space in town?
- How should Wells guide future development along Route 1? What strategies could be used to better manage the density and mix of land uses and the resulting transportation demand on Route 1? What opportunities and barriers are there to developing a public transportation system and expanded bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in Wells to reduce the number of cars on the road?
- Are there any changes needed to how commercial or residential development activity is guided west of I-95? How should this area grow in the future? Do the Route 9 and Route 109 corridors require different strategies/considerations?
- Would you be supportive of making Wells more walkable and bikeable if it meant cars were slowed, traffic diverted, and driving was overall more difficult? What areas in Town are in most need of: traffic calming, pedestrian infrastructure, and bicycle facilities?
- More than 17% of Wells' land area is permanently protected as open space, which provides ecological, social, and recreational value to community members. Where and how should Wells focus on preserving additional open space in the future? Are there new tools or approaches that should be considered to guide these efforts?

Coastal Impacts and Natural Hazards

- How do natural hazards, sea level rise, and climate change affect different sectors of the community? (fishing community, homeowners, government, etc.). What should be done to address these threats?
- Approximately 1,429 buildings are in areas that are inundated under sea level rise projections by the State of Maine. Which kinds of strategies should be explored or used first for addressing climate hazard impacts and sea level rise? (examples include building adaptation, flood infrastructure, land use regulations, inland migration,

preservation of open space adjacent to the marsh and along coast, etc.) What is the Town's role in employing these strategies?

- What are the most difficult challenges facing the Town of Wells as it addresses the issues of coastal resilience, climate change adaptation, and mitigation?
- To what extent do codes, regulations, and standards need to be updated to consider climate change? What regulatory tools or changes would you recommend the Town consider to help mitigate the impacts of sea level rise and climate change?
- How might the Town prepare for the financial impact of climate change and sea level rise related to loss of property tax revenue, impacts on infrastructure, and demand for services?

Open Space and Conservation

- More than 17% of Wells' land area is permanently protected as open space, which provides ecological, social, and recreational value to community members. Where and how should Wells focus on preserving additional open space in the future? Are there new tools or approaches that should be considered to guide these efforts?
- How can Wells continue to protect its natural resources from the impacts of a growing population and development (including its wildlife habitat areas, flood zones, coastline, water resources, forests and farms, soils, etc.)? Are there tools or strategies not currently being used that should be considered (additional resource specific overlays or setbacks, etc.)?
- The cluster subdivision regulations have proven to be controversial among residents. What issues are causing the most concern or confusion, and how can the regulation be better communicated or improved?
- The public feedback we have received so far indicates that Wells residents want to see development slowed and more open space protected. What are some challenges and barriers to open space protection in Wells? Are there ways the Town can further support land acquisition and conservation, or better direct future development away from critical lands?