

# Chapter 9 – Economic Development Policies and Strategies

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## Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan's Economic Development Policies and Strategies section describes the goals, policies, standards and implementation strategies related to economic development in Wells. The local economy in Wells has been in transition away from agriculture, forestry, and fishing as major industries for some time, and this change continues today. Only a small percentage of Wells residents are now employed within the Town in any sector, and the majority of working residents commute to workplaces in nearby York, Portland, Ogunquit, and Kennebunk. This means that workers from surrounding communities are commuting into Wells to fill these jobs.

The local economy in Wells is directly tied to the transportation system and other required infrastructure. With no current village or downtown area established, businesses primarily locate along Route 1 and other roadways where the necessary infrastructure is available. As a result, the local economy is tied to the land use and infrastructure changes that result from this Comprehensive Plan. Given the broad community concerns related to growth and development in Wells, the identified need for housing options for all residents, and the desire for a more walkable area(s) with a downtown or village feel this presents new opportunities for the community to pursue. Identifying, zoning, and investing in the infrastructure for "village" development areas will accommodate higher density development and redevelopment opportunities and a mix of uses currently lacking in Wells.

## Goals

### State Goal:

Promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and economic well being. ~~(Growth Management Act)~~

### Regional Goals:

~~Encourage a diversity of commercial development, and expansion of the economic base wherever adequate resources and infrastructure support it.~~

Goals identified in the 2021 Southern Maine Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy are:

1. Market the region as New England's leading place to live, raise a family, work and visit.
2. Strengthen the area's diverse, dynamic and thriving economy.
3. Develop and attract a highly skilled and inventive workforce that embraces cutting edge technologies in the cultivation of traditional industries and

manufacturing companies.

4. Recognize the critical significance of quality of life by preserving our historic downtowns, mills and farms, promoting our culture and the arts, and managing our natural resources including our coastline, inland waters, and forests.

5. Provide and emphasize recreational, art, and cultural opportunities. Southern Maine is home to a diverse network of trails which are a substantial resource to the region and its economy.

### **Wells Goals:**

1. Improve Wells' economic climate by promoting investment, revenue generation, and year-round, good quality job opportunities. This will be accomplished by working to retain existing businesses while encouraging the development of new diverse small businesses and industries that are consistent with and reinforce the community's small-town distinct character.
- 1.2. Identify, regulate, and invest in areas for higher density pedestrian friendly development activity. This should include a mix of uses including year-round mixed income housing units above and adjacent to commercial uses.
- 2.3. Provide suitable areas for low-impact businesses that have-provide access to major transportation resources such as the Maine Turnpike.
- 3.4. Encourage small-scale, neighborhood commercial enterprises in appropriate areas west of the Route 1 corridor. **CPUC - if this goal is to remain, where specifically?**
- 4.5. Foster home occupations and cottage industries that are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
- 5.6. Enhance and encourage (non-amusement) tourist-related activities and small-scale development that are consistent with the character and scale of the community and the image of Wells as a family resort area, especially in the Route 1 Corridor/Beach Business Area. However, restrict the development of commercial tourist "attractions" designed to appeal primarily to the transient tourist or "non-family" travelers, such as nightclubs, bars, amusement parks, and water slides.
- 7.6.—Protect natural resource-based business and industry while minimizing both environmental degradation and impact to adjacent property owners.

### **Policies**

To achieve these goals, consistent with the Land Use goals and policies, it is the policy of the Town of Wells to:

1. Promote Wells and its resources to companies who would be compatible with the Town's existing community vision and ~~small-town~~ environment.
2. Provide opportunities for land and access to encourage development of new business or expansion of existing businesses in appropriate areas as identified in the Future Land Use Plan.
3. Foster the establishment and expansion of small-scale local businesses that serve the tourist dependent economy in the Route 1 Corridor and Beach Business areas while addressing known transportation conflicts.
4. Provide necessary infrastructure improvements such as access management, off street municipal parking, sidewalks, and public restrooms in the ~~central area~~, identified higher density "village" areas along the Route 1 Corridor, and near Beach areas.
5. Provide specific recommendations through outreach and educational programs, and regulatory incentives, to businesses and property owners along the Route 1 Corridor as to how the corridor can become more visually attractive and functional.
6. Promote and market Route 1 as the Post Road Antiques and Arts Corridor and increase its commercial and scenic appeal consistent with the Land Use, Transportation and Town Character and Appearance and other related Plan policies and implementation strategies.
7. Continue to support the viability of Wells' working landscapes and the remaining forestry, agriculture and extractive-fishing industries through land protection, education, and by discouraging residential and commercial development in areas surrounding these uses.

## Standards

To achieve these policies, the following are Town of Wells' standards to guide development:

~~1. (To be developed in future update.)~~

1. Refine the Wells land use regulations to reflect these identified goals and policies.

~~1.2.~~Ensure future infrastructure upgrades identified in the capital improvement planning process reinforce the desired future land use pattern and address the needs of the local economy.

## Implementation Strategies

1. Establish a non-profit economic development corporation whose responsibility would be to market Wells and its resources to companies who would be compatible with the Town's existing ~~small-town~~ character, scale and market.

Financial support will need to be provided to this organization for this level of marketing and coordination.

2. Complete a comprehensive Route One Corridor study in coordination with Maine DOT. As the primary commercial district in Wells, and the largest generator of transportation and congestion related concerns this corridor needs a plan that addresses coordinated infrastructure and regulatory changes.
3. Review and amend local land use regulations to ensure they reflect the desired location, scale, and design of future development. These regulations must also address the connection to the local transportation network, and articulate how to best integrate new development activity in Wells over time. This should include the identification of “village” areas to serve as higher density mixed-use growth areas, and areas for lower density development and open space protection.
- ~~1.4.~~ Identified “village” growth areas will require zoning changes and planned infrastructure improvements over time. Other tools such as Tax Increment Financing districts should be evaluated in conjunction with these changes.
- ~~2.5.~~ Identify areas in Town that would be suitable for future wholesale commercial, research and development or low-impact businesses such as Transitional Area 5 (the Crediford Road area). These areas should have good access to the local and regional highway network and be consistent with the Land Use goals and policies.
- ~~3.6.~~ Identify and attract companies that would be suitable for Wells and would also complement the existing business environment. Such businesses could take advantage of Wells’ environmental resources as tourist attractions and could include bicycle/kayak touring, small restaurants, personal service establishments, business service and repair, and arts and crafts-type shops.
- ~~4.7.~~ Retain and expand existing businesses by facilitating technical assistance and training through State sponsored economic development programs as well as business planning and management workshops.
- ~~5.8.~~ Participate in the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) Southern Maine Regional Economic Development District (SMEDD) for technical and financial assistance.
9. Foster the development of home occupations and cottage industries that are consistent with Wells’ rural, small-town character. Review land use regulations and revise, if necessary, standards for home occupations that provides opportunity for small business yet minimizes impact on adjacent uses or the environment.

**CPUC - Is this still a need or has it been addressed?**

6.10. Establish a committee to explore ecologically oriented tourist opportunities. Said committee should include representatives from business and natural ~~resource-oriented~~resource-oriented organizations such as the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, Laudholm Trust, Nature Conservancy, Great Works Regional Land Trust, and the ~~Rachel~~Rachael Carson National Wildlife Refuge and the Mount Agamenticus Regional Trust.

7.11. Continue to support the farmers' market community and other types of "pop-up" markets and events. This should include regular programing and activity at the Wells Harbor Community Park to draw people to this wonderful area of the community without the need for permanent structures or development.

8.12. Limit residential and commercial development in areas surrounding existing resource- based industries. ~~(see Critical Rural Area standards in Chapter 6).~~