



FREEPORT MAINE.... BUILDING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

FEBRUARY 2025 COUNCIL UPDATE

(INCLUDES REFERENCE INFO FROM OCTOBER 2024 COUNCIL AND 2025 UPDATES)



FREEPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

FEDC Board is Actively Meeting, Driving Activity and Bringing Success Through Relationships and Knowledge:

broad expertise, town history and knowledge, passion, and community connection with commitment to Freeport success.

Mary Davis (President), Realtor, former IDEXX

Dan Bacon (Vice President) M&R Holdings Director of Development, former Scarborough Town Planner

Candice Rinaldi (Treasurer) Bath Savings Senior VP Retail Lending

Leanne Barschdorf-Nichols Keller Williams Portland founder, Maine Real Estate Commission

Rebecca Doten, Doten Construction, owner

Stefanie Millett Davis Foundations Grants Manager

Mark Malone, Malone Commercial Broker founder

Ken Sparta, Freeport Oyster Bar, owner/founder, Spartan Sea Farms, owner/founder

Jason Sulham, L. L. Bean Manager of Public Affairs

Nikki Yanok Gulf of Maine Research Institute Climate Finance Specialist

Tawni Whitney, Freeport Chamber Executive Director

Andrew Arsenault, Freeport Business Owner, Planning Board, the Historian

John Egan, Town Council Chair, Liaison

Brett Richardson, Freeport Development Manager, Town Liaison





Our continued collaboration
matters!

Wins are contagious and
move the needle!

**“We are better and
stronger together!”**

Tawni Whitney, Co-Chair Downtown Vision Implementation

Town Council
Town Manager
Town Economic Development
Freeport Chamber of Commerce
FEDC
Freeport Businesses



Founded in 2000
Vision and Mission Remain True today

Vision:

Freeport is a premier community to live in, an authentic destination to visit, and an exceptional place to grow a business with a balanced, sustainable economic base for the future.

Mission:

To partner with the community to promote sustainable economic growth that strengthens and diversifies the economic base and enhances the quality of life and unique character of Freeport.



What we do, Not duplicative, Additive... Working our Lanes!

Advocacy

Leveraging the Boards' broad experience and market insights, FEDC identifies and advocates to support Freeport economic growth:

Examples:

Rebuilding Downtown

The Downtown Vision

Housing in Downtown

Downtown TIF

Programming & Activation, Working Group "The Street Gang":

Provide Industry Knowledgeable, Independent Voice

FEDC brings together ideas and opinions and an independent voice.

FEDC brings experiences from their industries to provide a strategic view of the economic climate.

FEDC board member's background and experience of bringing independent views/voices to conversations.

Provide collaborative support

FEDC responds and adjusts to current needs bringing economic data, support, project work. Goal setting and project scope aligned with town.

**Our Partnerships
and joint
participation
continues to work**

Collaboration

**Bringing ideas
together.....**

**Learning and
Adjusting**

**October 2024:
FEDC Workplan
focused on
Business Outreach**

Downtown Vision

Coordinating with Partners to Drive Progress

Comprehensive Plan

Participation in meetings/process

Streamline Permitting Process and Update Zoning

Working to support simplification & clear expectations

Housing

Collaborating w/ stakeholders to increase desirable housing production

Grant Support

Supporting grant opportunities for businesses

Transit-Oriented Development/Dog Bone

Leveraging unique transit assets to target development and funding

Business Outreach, Recruitment & Support

Representing Freeport, supporting new businesses and retention

Business Outreach

We said we could:

- Attend Selected Conferences, User Groups,
- Create “Touchpoints” with businesses, landowners, businesses
- Coordinate with Town Economic Development on business needs

Amplify Voice of Freeport

Marketing, Courting for expansion and attraction. Retention, Voice and Advocacy for Freeport.

Tune up Freeport economic marketing materials: Website, marketing materials

Business Outreach: Deliverables and Measures

Vacancies:

Goal is to fill vacancies

Many in place for years, be realistic about time to fill

Business Feedback/Perception

Informs Freeport what are strengths and barriers that businesses perceive

Allows action planning on removing barriers

Reporting on Activity

Reporting on “touch points”: events attended, businesses seen
Reporting on learnings from engagements



Business Outreach Progress Marketing Freeport

A Living Digital Presence

Choose-Freeport.com

Why Freeport, sites, and more
about Freeport

Instagram and FaceBook Freeport Economic Development Corp Photos, stories, whats up

Podcasts (to be released) Matt Pouliot: Housing Matters Dottie Chambers

The collage illustrates the various digital platforms used by the Freeport Economic Development Corporation (FEDC) to engage with the community and promote the town of Freeport, Maine. The top row features the official website at [choose-freeport.com](https://www.choose-freeport.com) and the FEDC's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=6103550812556>. The bottom row features the FEDC's Instagram page at https://www.instagram.com/p/Of_C0oyuA7/ and a Facebook post from the 'choose_freeport' page at [choose_freeport](https://www.facebook.com/choose_freeport).

Business Outreach Progress

Retail Focus:

Outreach and Contacts Highlights

-International Council of Shopping Center NY Conference:

GAP CEO, Introductions through LLBean and Wilder Group

-Maine Outdoor Economy Summit:

Maine brands, LLBean retail expansion expert.

Billions of \$\$ in Outdoor recreation in Maine.

-Maine Biz Conference, Portland Chamber Financial Forecast Seminar

New norm (interest rates etc.) so keep moving; Need for more housing everywhere

-Wilder Company (Freeport Village Station) Principle and Leasing Agent

Belief in the Downtown Vision, Active in creative additions, national

-Placer AI demonstration:

Understanding data for marketing to national brands.

Quality of Freeport foot traffic is asset, unique

-National Retail Placement Expert

Strategies for attracting, determining focus, selection criteria.

Business Outreach Progress Retail Focus: Feedback & FEDC Insights

- LL Bean Expansion and Investment Across US brings Freeport interest.**
 -both for retail and housing
- Proximity to LL Bean is desired**
- Retail Brick and Mortar is not Dead!**
- Freeport is back on the map!** “Charm”, downtown, LL Destination, Outdoor
- Capitalize on the Maine Outdoor Opportunities**
- Working collaboratively brings wins....**
 - Wilder/FVS, LL Bean, WS Development, Linda Bean, Town
- Property owners are working the new realities**
 - Pop-ups, new concepts, creative arrangements, lease rates
- Trust, Time, Relationships:** the key for good Freeport matches
- Can't take our collective feet off the pedal**
- And again we hear, **Retailers want housing downtown**

Business Outreach Progress

Retail Focus

Success!! New Downtown

-42 Main Street:

Aquaculture Holiday Pop Up

-42 Main Street:

Freeport Footworks

-15 Middle Street:

Mother Tree Vintage

-35 Maine Street:

Passivhaus Maine

Others in the works:

5 Businesses

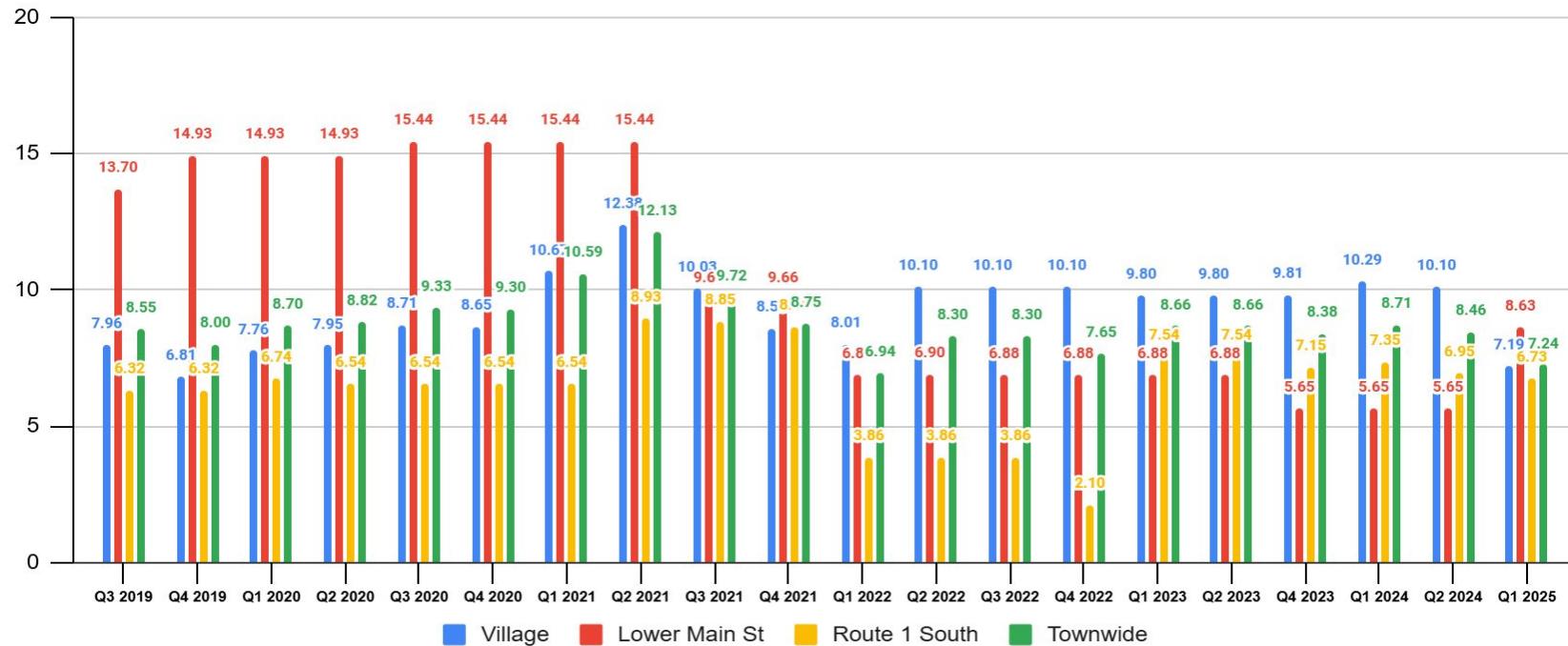
Downtown space/lease



Business Outreach Progress

Vacancy Metrics (as % of Square Footage)

Vacancy Rates in Freeport: By Quarter



Business Outreach Progress

Housing Focus: Outreach and Contacts



Downtown Freeport Main Street (Source: Courtesy of the Freeport Historical Society)

- Working with Housing Developer A:**
market-rate housing, small, “first time home buyer”
- Visited Developer B’s Current Project:**
current mixed housing in process of building
- Working with Housing Developer B and Local Builder:**
Market-rate or affordable housing.
- Housing Developer C:**
Working through diligence
- Keeping in contact with 5 other developers**
Shown prior and possible future interest
- Freeport Chamber Meeting:**
Patrick Woodcock discussion on the “missing middle” housing
- Matt Peters presentation on Freeport Housing:**
Community praise for low income, need missing middle
Developers request confidentiality until application made



Business Outreach Progress

Housing Focus: Developer Feedback and FEDC Insights

- Most discussed “want”: To Be Welcomed!
- Would rather not (some won’t) wade through zoning/ordinance changes:
 - Time delays mean \$\$\$
 - Tight margins require decisive action.
- See opportunity in Freeport: Downtown preferred
- Want the process/rules to be straightforward and predictable.
 - “Two Meeting Process”
- Need an advocate: Freeport for multi-unit housing of all types.
- Need confidentiality until “camera ready” application.
- Appreciate advisement/support



Business Outreach Progress FEDC Recommends/Urges

-Continue working together in our “Lanes”

-Don’t wait!

Move on amending ordinances and processes now!

-Encourage Highest and Best use of Downtown Land

Land is precious, use it to enact vision

-Show a big sign! Demonstrate change.

Brett’s “Start with a Yes”, Downtown Vision, DogBone

-Be ready to “go”! Time is money

-Encourage the right thing for all Freeport...

Our actions are key to managed real estate taxes for all.

Community is waiting: Go on downtown housing and Vision!

QUESTIONS?



FREEPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

