



TOWN OF FREEPORT

Housing Task Force

Wednesday, June 11, 2025
Beginning at 5:00PM

Freeport Town Hall
30 Main Street, Freeport, Maine
(In Person)

Agenda

- 1. Welcome & Introductions**
- 2. Review Draft Minutes from May 22, 2025**
- 3. Community Vision Implementation Work Plan update**
- 4. Review of Housing Task Force Recommendations Relative to Comp Plan Goals**
- 5. Task Force Sunset and Discussion of Ongoing Collaboration**

Requesting Reasonable Accommodation (& ADA Notice)

Please contact the Town Clerk's Office at (207) 865-4743 or email swilson@freeportmaine.com prior to scheduled meetings or events to discuss auxiliary aids or services needed to participate in Town activities.

The Town of Freeport is an equal opportunity employer and service provider that celebrates diversity and is committed to creating an inclusive environment for our employees and those we serve.



TOWN OF FREEPORT

Housing Task Force

Thursday, May 22, 2025
Beginning at 5:00PM

Freeport Town Hall, 30 Main Street, Freeport, Maine
(In Person)

Draft Meeting Minutes

1. **Attendees.** Mitch Rouda, John Egan, Matt Peters, Mari Miya, and Brett Richardson welcomed new attendee, George Casey.
2. **Update on Projects.** Task Force members updated George on the group's activities and priorities to advance the task force charge of making recommendations to Town Council to support the creation of new housing supply in Freeport. The group discussed land use policy, funding, and public-private partnerships, Town-led development projects similar to the City of Bangor, and other tools and strategies included in the Task Force Recommendations.

Attendees discussed barriers to housing creation both locally and nationally, including challenging macro-economic conditions. George shared examples of his work as a housing developer and lessons learned that could be helpful in Freeport.

The group discussed how to continue to bring attention to the need for housing in Freeport and opportunities to engage in ongoing municipal planning initiatives to build local support to increase housing supply.

3. **Community Vision Implementation Work Plan discussion.** Brett updated attendees on recent staff activities related to Task Force goals and plans to seek alignment among the Town Council and Planning Board on a work plan for the implementation of housing-related activities.

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On May 7, The Town Council an engagement with Stantec and Speck Dempsey for the MaineDOT Planning Partnership Initiative to study the Route 1 corridor from the Breez stop at Maine Beer Company north through Downtown to Upper Mast Landing Road. The project, named the Village Corridor Initiative, will identify opportunities to enhance bicycle/pedestrian facilities and village placemaking amenities along the corridor, plus study development potential within 1,000 feet of Route 1 in the study area. The project's public kick-off will take place on the evening of June 17th at the Freeport Performing Arts Center with a presentation by *Walkable City* author, Jeff Speck.

On May 20th, the Town Council endorsed an engagement with Berstein Shur to develop a tax-increment financing strategy for the Village Corridor Initiative study area. The TIF is envisioned as a opportunity to create a dedicated funding resource for the Town to implement recommendations from the Comp Plan, Downtown Vision, and Village Corridor Initiative.

At the June 3rd Council meeting and subsequent June 4th Planning Board meeting, Brett will present a work plan, including priority land use updates, to align priorities and activities. Brett noted the alignment between the work plan and Task Force recommendations and priorities.

The meeting adjourned at 5:58pm for the Town Council Budget Workshop.

AD HOC HOUSING TASK FORCE

NEAR TERM POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Raise the building height limit to 55-60' in specific areas of VC-1, namely Depot St. School Street, and Rt. 1 below (south of) the Railroad overpass. Potentially establish these limits for areas within a certain distance of transportation nodes.
2. Increase predictability and maximize density calculations based on what's physically possible, while maintaining appropriate protections for sensitive natural resources.
3. In the Dog Bone district, reduce minimum lot area per dwelling unit to zero – so that higher density projects could be proposed on those sites that can physically handle the project – no change to the requirements for setbacks, avoiding wet areas, site access and visibility with exits. Also, eliminate mandatory parking requirements, allowing the market to dictate required space counts.
4. Zoning districts within the Dog Bone/MaineDOT study area should be consolidated, dramatically reduced in number, and simplified with an integrated focus on density within this primary growth area served by infrastructure.
5. Density allowances should also be significantly increased for land within Designated Growth Areas that is well served by infrastructure in order to enable the development of a diversity of housing types.



AD HOC HOUSING TASK FORCE

NEAR TERM POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'D

And, coming right out of the attached State of Maine “Road map for future production” report:

6. Update Chapter 602 of the Freeport Ordinances to enhance a robust, staff-level pre-development team structure including all department heads; extend preliminary staff review timeframe to enable a thorough review and detailed feedback to applicants; institute a process whereby **staff** deems a proposed application is complete and that projects are brought to the PRB only after staff have rendered a professional finding that the project meets the relevant standards.
7. Enable a specific staff or channel to regularly track, chart publicly and report to council on a regular basis the status of housing project applicants, progress through permit/entitlements and estimated dates for public hearings. Purpose here is to raise visibility of ALL housing projects so we as advocates can be better prepared for the public hearings and also for the Council to be able to track applications and how fast they move forward. This is item #2.4 pg44-46
8. Direct the Town to actively pursue a housing project through a sketch design process, site identification, location, typology (rental, ownership, types) and then establish/engage in the permit process for such project - and then once approved at PRB, Invite developers to assume the permitted and site project to then execute on a plan that reflects EXACTLY what the community is looking for. The pre-permit specifics are designed/specified/and written by a small work group that holds several public input sessions, and then creates a housing project application by The Town of Freeport. Purpose and Intent here is to blaze a trail/break the jam/ and get some **positive visible progress** on creating more housing downtown.



AD HOC HOUSING TASK FORCE

MID TERM POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For possible future implementation: assuming we are challenged with an abundance of housing project applications, consider a ranking/rating system for the Council to review and establish a “priority rating” to accelerate an application and the applicant's path through permit process – potentially even combining PRB meetings to shrink the timing to public hearing and presumed approval. I suggest that this be advanced in a second tier because we do not yet have enough housing applications to demand sorting and prioritizing....

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2. Review TIF options and other potential financing and grant strategies to support desirable projects.

3. Consider the creation of an Affordable Housing Fund.



COMMUNITY VISION IMPLEMENTATION WORK PLAN

JUNE 2025 ~ MARCH 2026



**Prepared By
Community Development Office
30 Main Street
Freeport, ME 04032**

BUILDING FREEPORT'S COMMUNITY VISION

The Freeport community has reached consensus over the last several years about how to reinvigorate the Downtown, conserve rural open space and natural areas, invest in bicycle/pedestrian facilities to support active lifestyles, support smart growth and infill to mitigate climate change, and welcome new housing for a variety of household types. This *Community Vision Implementation Work Plan* summarizes a series of priority municipal actions from June 2025 to March 2026 to realize local goals.

INVESTMENT, PARTNERSHIPS & POLICY.

To advance the community's vision, infrastructure, funding, and land use must work together. This plan organizes and sequences these related efforts to ensure coordination across staff and key stakeholders,

Infrastructure. The Town has kicked off the Village Corridor Initiative (VCI), a Planning Partnership Initiative with MaineDOT to produce a buildable plan to construct a Route 1 corridor that supports walking, biking, new housing, and economic activity on Main Street in the Downtown Village and Village Gateway. The VCI will:

- Analyze desirable development potential with a buildout analysis for adjacent land.
- Create a coordinated development plan based on the build out analysis that will anticipate future traffic volumes and mitigate congestion.
- Inform the development of capital plans and design of Town funding tools.

Close alignment between the Town Council and Planning Board to update land use policies and project review processes is critical to leverage related infrastructure and funding plans.

Funding. To leverage municipal Infrastructure investment, the Town has engaged Bernstein Shur to develop a Transit-Oriented Development Tax Increment Financing District (TOD TIF). The TOD TIF will:

- Support design and construction of Main Street upgrades designed via the Village Corridor Initiative.
- Enable public-private partnerships to support infrastructure that unlocks high-quality development in Town growth areas.

Planning & Policy. As the Town prepares to adopt a new Comprehensive Plan in Fall 2026, staff, Boards, and Committees have identified land use policy and project review updates to:

- Increase flexibility and density for diverse housing types in growth areas, particularly on Depot St.
- Streamline site plan, subdivision, and design review processes for Board members, staff, and applicants.

March 1, 2026. The Town will need State, regional, and private sector partners to build the Freeport community's vision. Dedicated funding through the TOD TIF is a critical ingredient to Town goals. As a result, this work plan organizes activities over the next nine months with a completion date of March 2026 to be consistent with the State of Maine's tax increment financing calendar. Endorsing this Work Plan, allocating the necessary funding, and initiating the recommended steps will send clear and concrete signals to potential and future partners that the Town is committed to build the community's vision for the Downtown Village, Village Gateway, and Route 1 South designated growth areas.

WORK PLAN PRIORITIES & MILESTONES

The following deliveries and timelines are based on the following assumptions:

- Staff is directed by Council to prioritize the items below.
- Applicant-driven zoning amendments and development review volumes remain consistent with historical levels relative to current staff capacity.**
- Council and Planning Board are prepared to act promptly on the items below once elevated by staff through routine policy development processes.

Infrastructure.

1. VCI Build Out Analysis ~ *July – August 2025*
2. VCI Coordinated Development Design ~ *August – September 2025*
3. VCI Route 1 Design Alternatives ~ *September – December 2025*

Funding.

4. TOD TIF District Structure & Strategy ~ *June-August 2025*
5. Development Program Design (based on Tasks 1 and 2) ~ *October – December 2025*
6. State Department of Economic & Community Development Approval ~ *January – March 2026*

Planning & Policy

7. Increase Height Allowance on Depot Street focus area ~ *June – September 2025*
8. Update and streamline Site Plan Review ~ *July – December 2025*
9. Overhaul Design Review Ordinance ~ *July – December 2025*
10. Modernize Subdivision Ordinance ~ *January – March 2026*
11. Adopt Comprehensive Plan Update ~ *October 2025*
12. Overhaul Ordinances in Village Gateway and Rte 1 South Growth Areas ~ *October 2025 – March 2026*

***Staff will deliver quarterly progress reports to ensure that all parties remain aligned and to communicate any resource constraints.*
