

# South Portland Economic Development Strategic Plan

## Community Meeting | Breakout table notes | October 1, 2015

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### Common strategies identified across multiple tables

- Develop underutilized properties and sites
- Branding and marketing of city (neighborhoods, businesses)
- Business attraction and retention
- Workforce & education initiatives (SMCC)
- High speed internet (broadband or fiber optics)
- Poverty alleviation strategies
- East-West corridor transportation
- Office of Economic Development/Ombudsman/Local development corporation

### Table 1

#### **Strengths**

- Streamlined planning process works well
- Strong bond rating (micro loans)
- Good working relationship with businesses and education (TI/SMCC)
- Access to transportation hubs
- Neighborhoods/schools
- People/diversity
- Mall area driving force for economy

#### **Needs Improvement**

- Developing underutilized sites is critical
- Branding – currently non-existent
- Office of economic development (internal v. external)
- Gateways to city
- Working relationships/industry connection to workforce at younger age
- East-west transit corridor
- Manufacturing sector

#### **Goals & Priorities**

- Increase wages
- Balance development
- Workforce
- Improve Broadway

## **Strategies**

- Branding: both of city, and of industries within the city
- Entrepreneurial/small business development plus public education, attracting larger companies to pay into tax base
- Develop underutilized sites
- Community education, engagement, leadership
- Workforce development initiatives
- Office of Economic Development/regulatory agency – mixed view of value

## Table 2

### Strengths

- Neighborhoods \*\*
- Smart development \*\*
- Business diversity (small/large, various industries)
- Public transportation expansion to support business needs and neighborhoods \*\*\*\*
- Socioeconomic diversity
- Access to community college system \*\*\*\*\*
- Large tax base to create opportunities \*
- Support City Planning Department staff \*\*

*These asterisk appeared on the notes but we are not certain what they indicate*

### Needs Improvement

- Help landowners redevelop underutilized properties
- Improve Knightville to be a vibrant area
- Decrease vacancy rates in office space
- Improve regulatory stability and certainty for new/existing businesses
- Waterfront business development (consider impact on transportation systems)
- East/west traffic

### Goals & Priorities

- Focus on development that minimizes impact on resident quality of life
- Attract high paying industry
- Develop workforce to meet high-paying industry needs
- Stability and fairness in permitting process
- Work to improve business friendly image
- Improve city aesthetics (Main St., Broadway, Downtown)

### Strategies

- Develop underutilized sites through actively marketing South Portland
- Identify highest and best use for under used properties

Table 3

**Strengths**

- Workforce housing
- Access to ocean/waterfront (Turner's Island)
- Emskip
- Rail service (Rigby)
- Highway access, Airport
- Deep water pier
- Low crime
- Public bus service
- Good quality of life
- Good TIF incentive

**Needs Improvement**

- Food/nutrition safety net for kids
- Winterization program/audits
- More bus routes throughout day
- Housing stock for workers
- "Exit interviews" for departing businesses
- Recruit business to backfill vacant space

**Goals & Priorities**

- "Maslow Hierarchy"
  - Take care of human condition basic needs – food/shelter of good quality
- Better paying jobs
- Prepare for self-employed/high tech
  - Continue investment in hi-speed internet: broadband
- Recreational spaces for non-organized sports
  - Destination small parks with benches and flower

**Proposed Strategies**

- Workforce & Employment initiative
  - SMCC – use staff/students as partners and workforce
- Business & Development
- Main Street Program

**Missing Strategies**

- Open space preservation
- Awareness of climate change opportunity/threat

## Table 4

### **Strengths**

- Neighborhoods
- Educated population
- Waterfront
- Mall area
- Separation of delis business area and residential
- Location – central and connected to transportation
- Educational opportunities (SMCC)

### Disadvantages

- Perception (T&F) of negative business climate
- Tankage – plus or minus?
- Tankage – cleanup when petroleum industry declines
- Unattractive gateways to city
- Poor public transportation

### **Needs Improvement**

- n/a

### **Goals & Priorities**

- Increase dense, mixed use areas
- Supporting/celebrating local businesses – get the word out
- Development ombudsmen
- Develop priorities to enhance city brand
- Keep regional development focus. No South Portland island
- Reverse the tide of increasing poverty statistics
  - Education (secondary, adult, etc.).

### **Strategies**

- Support zoning and development planning [that supports goals]
- Publication and marketing [of businesses]; microloan program
- TIF funds for economic development/business ombudsmen
- Leadership around branding/marketing of city
- Increase participation in recruitment efforts. Adopt “no poaching” rule
- Drill further into poverty data and develop strategy

## Table 5

### **Strengths**

- Educational system/SMCC
- Casco Bay availability/access to quality business services
- Quality public schools
- High bond rating
- Recreational access
- Anchor businesses/employers, etc. TI, Fairchild

### **Weaknesses**

- Utilization Access to Casco Bay
- Traffic flow Broadway/East – poor circulation
- Brownfields (too many)
- Limited housing
- Utility costs

### **Needs Improvement**

- Educate citizens on approval process
- Clear vision of economic development plan
- Incentivize brownfield redevelopment
- Increase fiber optic internet
- Job fairs
- Keep up with diversity of population

### **Goals & Priorities**

- n/a

### **Strategies**

- Increase training partnership opportunities (employers)
- Develop brownfields
- Market quality of life to businesses
- Improve traffic situation (public transit)

## Table 6

### **Strengths**

- Location access – waterfront/highway
- Diverse economy
- Hi-speed internet
- Waterfront
- Schools/educational resources – opportunities for success
- Neighborhoods: vitality, sense of community and place
- Quality of life – recreation, green space, walk/bike/run

### **Needs Improvement**

- Gateways – physical assets, transportation corridors
- Waterfront uses
- Rail (underutilized)
- Improvement of our commercial centers (Mill Creek)
- Build consensus about appropriate vision for (re)development
- Reclaim entrepreneurship
- Attract tech jobs

### **Goals & Priorities**

- Can't put a square peg in a round hole: focus on business development that is realistic and matched with available land
- Main Street Programs
- Build a brand while allowing for distinction among neighborhoods
- Elevate design standards for our infrastructure – street appeal
- Long term – transition from petroleum based industries to renewable, with participation from industry
- Maintain economic diversity

### **Strategies**

- Expand high speed internet access
- Actively market South Portland
- Regional or local development corporation in order to acquire/aggregate land that would be available to developers
- Activate the flourishing tourism market [so South Portland will benefit]
  - Waterfront
  - Wainwright
- Long term master plan for the mall area

## Table 7

### **Strengths**

- Build upon existing educated workforce
- Unique location/airport
- Waterfront
- Attractive neighborhoods

### **Needs Improvement**

- Underperforming properties
- Clear ordinances/problems of interpretation
- Living wage
- City support of citizen vote/wishes
- Public access to waterfront/encourage new business
- Entice companies for the good of the city
- Image
- Education, education, education

### **Goals & Priorities**

- Strategic plan for urban open space/green spaces
- Improving underserved neighborhoods
- City working closely with SMCC
  - Incubator business program
- Fully support new Assistant City Manager

### **Strategies**

- Remove dead space and revitalize
- Improve relationships with existing businesses
- Local government transparency
- Engage more technology to attract 18-35 year olds to the area



## Table 8

### **Strengths**

- SMCC plus two other colleges
- Turnpike availability
- Strategic location: water, rail, airport
- Existing commercial areas
- People
- Strong middle class
- Hometown feel

### **Needs Improvement**

- Loss of business friendly feel; Not promoting businesses
- Distrust of City Council; unbalanced Council
- Disconnect – pipeline decision with people and business
- Knightville and traffic issues
- Lack of willingness to compromise
- Don't talk – businesses and neighbors
- Transparency

### **Goals & Priorities (opportunities)**

- Waterfront – ripe for redevelopment, businesses, better use
- SMCC and colleges
- SPSHS – connect with SMCC
- Increase business to cover more of taxes – less from homeowners
- Crosstown/east-west road!
- Alternative transportation to lessen traffic
- Pay attention to young people [and their needs]
- Change the lives of low income people

### **Threats**

- Resting on laurels; must be proactive
- Economics not a top priority
- Lack of flexibility; rigid
- [transceits] population – threat to neighborhoods
- Lack of alternative modes of transportation
- High levels of traffic in neighborhoods

### **Strategies**

- PR campaign to let people know it is time to work together
- Strategy to bring the less fortunate up, up, up

- Start earlier education
- Community buy in, work as a team
- Engage the 25-40 group in building community