

Main Street Bath and City of Bath

Report of Findings from  
Downtown Visioning Meetings and Facebook

Prepared by Good Group Decisions  
May 9, 2018



Good Group Decisions

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## About

Main Street Bath has partnered with the City of Bath to gather input and develop a vision for downtown Bath. The City will use the vision to help guide the upcoming revision of the City's Comprehensive plan. Main Street Bath will use the vision to help guide development of its strategic plan.

The strategic planning process is being overseen by the Strategic Planning Committee of the Main Street Bath Board:

- Andrew Deci
- Mari Eosco
- Gretchen Jaeger
- Sally Johnstone
- Marc Meyers
- Will Neilson

Craig Freshley, Kerri Sands, and Amy Scott of Good Group Decisions in Brunswick were hired to assist with process design, stakeholder input gathering, meeting facilitation, and preparing a written draft of the strategic plan.

As part of the strategic planning process, Craig, Kerri, and Amy gathered input from a variety of stakeholders to help develop a vision for Downtown Bath. Input was gathered in the following ways:

### 1. Community Input Meeting, March 3

A 3-hour community meeting was held on March 3, 2018, to gather input from residents of Bath and surrounding towns. Approximately 160 people attended. Four main topics were addressed in the meeting:

- What We Love and Want to Keep
  - What do we love about downtown Bath; those things that want to be sure and preserve and grow? What do we like about our stores, our sidewalks, our events, our buildings? What about less tangible things like how our downtown “feels,” how we interact with each other, or how others think of us? What about our reputation do we want to maintain and grow?
- What We Want to Change
  - What do we wish were different or better; those things that we want to see improved? Would we like our downtown to look different? Function differently in terms of car, foot, or bike traffic? Would we like a different mix of stores? Restaurants? Services? How about people living in the downtown? Or visiting downtown? Or working downtown? What would we like to see change?
- A Draft Vision for Downtown Bath
- How to Drive the Vision

- What are the most important things that Main Street Bath should do in order to help achieve the vision? What is it most important for the City to do?

During the meeting, Craig and Amy captured notes on the screen to reflect participants' comments and identify themes.

## **2. Community Input Meeting – Written Comments**

At the March 3 Community Input Meeting, small groups were given paper forms to provide written input about What We Love and Want to Keep, What We Want to Change, and How to Drive the Vision. Each small group identified several top ideas in response to each of the three questions. Main Street Bath board member Sally Johnstone transcribed the top ideas from the submitted forms.

## **3. Downtown Merchants Input Meeting, March 5**

On March 5, a 1.5-hour meeting was held to gather input from downtown merchants. Approximately 25 people attended. The following questions were addressed in the meeting:

- a. What do you value most about downtown Bath?
- b. How would you like downtown Bath to change over the next ten years?
- c. What events do you think are best for bath?
- d. What would you like to change about downtown Bath events?
- e. Are there new types of events or specific events that you would like?
- f. What do you think about the mix of stores in the downtown?
- g. What do you think about the services available in downtown Bath?
- h. What about store hours? Would you like them to change? If so how?
- i. What about how downtown is promoted? What would you like to change?
- j. Any advice for Main Street Bath on how to better support downtown?

During the meeting, Craig and Kerri captured notes on the screen to reflect participants' comments and identify themes.

## **4. Bath Housing Input Meeting, March 5**

On March 5, a 1.5-hour meeting was held to gather input from residents of Bath. Approximately 5 people attended. The following questions were addressed in the meeting:

- a. What do you value most about downtown Bath?
  - Why do you live here? Or visit here? Or work here?
- b. How would you like downtown Bath to change over the next ten years?
  - Would you like it to look different? If so, how?
- c. What events do you think are best for bath?
  - And why? What kinds of events do you like to go to in downtown Bath?

- d. What would you like to change about downtown Bath events?
- e. What do you think about the mix of stores in the downtown?
  - Are there kinds of stores you'd like to see opening? Or closing? Or different?
- f. What do you think about the services available in downtown Bath?
  - Are there additional services that you'd like to see offered?
- g. Any advice for Main Street Bath on how to better support downtown?

During the meeting, Craig and Kerri captured notes on the screen to reflect participants' comments and identify themes.

#### **5. Bath Area Nonprofits Input Meeting, April 2**

On April 2, a 1.5-hour meeting was held to gather input from Bath area nonprofit organizations. Approximately 25 people attended. The following questions were addressed in the meeting:

- a. What do you value most about downtown Bath?
- b. How would you like downtown Bath to change over the next ten years?
- c. What events do you think are best for bath?
- d. What would you like to change about downtown Bath events?
- e. Are there new types of events or specific events that you would like?
- f. What do you think about the mix of stores in the downtown?
- g. What do you think about the services available in downtown Bath?
- h. What about how downtown is promoted? What would you like to change?
- i. Any advice for Main Street Bath on how to better support downtown?

During the meeting, Craig and Kerri captured notes on the screen to reflect participants' comments and identify themes.

#### **6. Individual Stakeholder Interviews, March 2-26**

Between March 2 and March 23, Craig Freshley interviewed 9 individuals. The list of interviewees was developed by the Main Street Bath Strategic Planning Committee and each person was provided with the questions in advance. Most interviews were done by phone and some in person. Interviews lasted between 25 and 60 minutes. Craig asked the following interview questions:

- a. What do you value most about downtown Bath?
  - In other words, what's special about downtown Bath that we should be sure to maintain?
- b. What opportunities and challenges do you think the downtown faces?
- c. How would you like downtown Bath to change over the next ten years?
  - Specifically:
    - Would you like it to look different? If so, how?
    - What would you like to change about downtown Bath events?

Are there kinds of stores or services you'd like to see opening?  
Or closing?

- d. In ten years from now, what would you like downtown Bath to be known for?
  - In other words, what should be our reputation? People would say, "Downtown Bath is the place where \_\_\_\_\_."
- e. If you are familiar with Main Street Bath, as an organization, do you have any advice for us on how we can better support the downtown?

The results of these interviews were shared with the Main Street Bath Board of Directors and are not included in this report. When comments were shared with the board they were organized by topic and all comments were provided anonymously with no attribution.

#### **7. Facebook Downtown Tomorrow Page Comments**

A Facebook Group called "Downtown Tomorrow" was established and attracted 389 members and over 600 comments. Comments were actively moderated and answers to specific questions were encouraged; questions similar to what was asked in the community input meeting, stakeholder input meetings, and telephone interviews. All comments made during January, February, and March, 2018 were analyzed and themes were discerned based on the most common types of comments. Click here to view all the comments:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/DowntownTomorrow/>

#### **8. Other Written Input**

Throughout the process, all participants were encouraged to provide written input by email. As of the deadline of April 4, 2018, three individuals had provided comments.

## **Conclusions**

*There is a danger in trying to draw conclusions from such a vast amount of input. We have heard from so many people on so many different topics. And with so much passion! To pick just a few top themes or to draft just a few paragraphs is sure to leave things out.*

*Yet there is also value in picking themes and drafting conclusions. It lets everyone see what rises to the top; what seemed to be mentioned the most. So from a neutral perspective we have tried to identify the things we heard most often and with the most conviction; tempered with a dash of “what makes sense.” And we have tried to focus on assets and challenges that we have local influence over and have intentionally omitted state-wide and national assets and challenges. Here goes.*

## **Assets**

### **Bricks and Mortar**

The enduring thing that Bath has going for it is the downtown buildings, the history they represent, and the river they overlook. These are the bones. The foundation. The structural elements of Bath that transcend generations. People love the look and feel of the downtown buildings and the way they are configured so close together. People love that they reflect the maritime history of the city. People love that the city is by the river.

### **Sense of Community**

People love that Bath is welcoming, safe, and inclusive. “Newcomers get adopted quick,” someone said. “My eleven-year-old can ride his bike downtown,” someone else said. People in Bath know each other and help each other and volunteer. People show up and do stuff for the good of the community.

### **Mix of People**

Bath is not just about tourists or just about residents. It’s not just a factory community or just a bedroom community. The people are not just natives or just newcomers. The housing is not just high priced or just affordable. The people of Bath are a rich mix of different types of people all sharing the same community. Bath does not put on airs. It is what it is. We are who we are. It is an authentic place with real people; all of us.

### **Economic Diversity**

The Bath economy is supported in an impressive variety of ways. Of course BIW is a huge driver of economic activity and currently almost 500 BIW employees live in the City of

Bath. Yet the Maine Maritime Museum and other attractions draw thousands of visitors. Unique specialty stores delight visitors yet the downtown also has a grocery store, a drug store, and a department store where local people buy everyday goods. Shop downtown Bath for Tiffany diamonds and Carhartt jeans.

## **The City and Main Street Bath**

People are looking out for the downtown; caring about its future and paying attention to preserving and growing the good things we have. Two institutions in particular are worthy of calling out. City Hall is located at the crossroads of downtown and city officials, both elected and appointed, are consistently supportive of pro-downtown initiatives. In addition, Bath has an organization whose very job it is to preserve, nurture, and develop the downtown: Main Street Bath.

## ***Challenges***

### **Building Ownership**

Over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of downtown buildings are owned and managed by a single owner. It's known that the owner plans to sell. Sagadahoc Real Estate Association has played a key role for many years by deliberately managing the types of tenants in downtown buildings. Further, the owner has not been burdened by mortgage interest and has intentionally kept rents affordable. It's hard to see how new owners will be able to maintain or replicate these conditions.

### **Taxes**

Bath property taxes are high relative to surrounding communities. This serves as a detriment to people choosing Bath as a place to live and threatens long-time low-income residents with having to leave.

### **Misperceptions**

While we heard no evidence that there is anything actually wrong with Bath schools – and we heard many good things about the schools – we heard many comments that add to a generally poor perception of the schools. Similarly, there seem to be misperceptions about other Bath institutions also. Whether real or imagined, negative misperceptions serve as a detriment to people moving to Bath and visiting Bath.



## Coordination and Communications

There is a lot of nonprofit, community-based, and community-service activity going on in Bath! This makes it extra hard for someone to understand what's happening when, and for who. And it increases the risk of duplication, competition, and inefficiency. Currently, coordination of and communication about all such activities is lacking.

### ***Vision***

*At the Community Input Meeting of March 3, facilitator Craig Freshley drafted a vision statement on the spot based on what he heard. You can find that draft later in the report. Below is a refined vision statement drafted by Craig based on all that he heard, designed to include a much wider range of opinions, many of which we heard in ways other than at the March 3 meeting. This statement is not designed to include everything that we hope Bath will become, but rather provide an ambitious yet realistic representation of our top aspirations; a vision, not a promise.*

Imagine it's 10 years from now.

Downtown Bath looks much as is does today, much as it has looked for many years, yet even more vital and active.

Not only are the street-level retail spaces filled but people live upstairs. The upper floors of the old downtown buildings are largely renovated, handicap accessible, and filled with both residents and service businesses. Downtown Bath has become known as not only a great place to shop but a great place to live. Many people living downtown work nearby or take public transportation to jobs. They are okay with having a car parked a short distance away, or have no car at all.

Many properties in downtown Bath have changed ownership and the new owners are community-minded and in it for the long run. There is not wide scale redevelopment but rather thoughtful, incremental renovation and improvements to downtown properties. Retail rents have increased to support increased investment, but higher foot traffic supports higher levels of commerce and for the most part retail merchants stay and thrive.

Houses all around the downtown have become renovated or are being renovated by young families and by retirees. These are people who value living close to the downtown and are willing to invest in older, relatively affordable homes and fix them up. It's part of the "do-it-yourself" culture of Bath. Yet there is also new housing in and near downtown Bath that allows people to age in place. Although not necessarily subsidized, such new housing is relatively affordable, accessible, and low maintenance. The property of the old YMCA and soon to be available high school property might become such housing.

The do-it-yourself culture is part of the maker culture that Bath has become known for. There is shared maker space by the waterfront where artists and craftspeople of all types make and sell things to locals and through wholesale channels. Building things on the waterfront is nothing new for the City of Ships; yet it's now being done in new ways, called the creative economy. This culture attracts 25-40 year-olds and young families.

Waterfront Park remains a key downtown feature yet it is more active with events and might have a small playground; one of two new downtown playgrounds, with the other possibly being at Library Park. The properties between Waterfront Park and the bridge are newly developed and bustling with activity. People from neighboring towns visit Bath just to visit the waterfront. Waterfront Park food trucks have long lines on summer evenings; with live music in the air from a nearby stage.

Heritage Days continues as the largest and most successful event. Although it continues to draw select criticism it brings many people to the downtown and many people secretly love it, so it endures. There are also several new and smaller events for families such as movies in the park.

The new Bath High School has helped turn the tide of impressions about Bath Schools. A deliberate outreach campaign has also helped. Realtors are telling prospective home buyers how great the school system is and we increasingly hear of people moving here specifically for the schools. Misperceptions of other Bath institutions and organizations have also been corrected and there are no "lingering negative myths."

People visit downtown Bath from away because it has a history you can touch and feel. And it has a vibrancy you can experience. There is public art on the streets. There are friendly owners and staff in the stores. You don't just buy things or eat things or see things in Bath, you experience things.

People visit downtown Bath from nearby neighborhoods and from nearby towns because, in addition to providing a fun and warm experience, it has everything we need at affordable prices. And you can find a place to park and find your way around. It is extremely bike-friendly with bike lanes and bike racks and courteous drivers. The sidewalks and cross walks are safe for pedestrians.

The people of Bath are connected to each other. Newcomers are not just welcomed but adopted. Business owners don't just give money, they give heart. Nonprofit and community organizations are way more than a safety net; they are the community fabric supported by people who love to volunteer.

Downtown Bath continues to be well-known and cherished for how it looks; the historic buildings, the vibrant shops, the water views. And it continues to be well-known and cherished for how it feels; a community of authentic people who know each other, care for each other, and just do stuff for the downtown they love.

# Input

## ***Community Input Meeting, March 3***

### **What We Love and Want to Keep**

#### **Themes**

- Vibrant community
  - Friendly
  - Family Friendly
  - Lively family-friendly cultural scene
  - More venues to support that—economic and social stability
  - “You can live here like we did when we were kids”
  - Safe
- Economic diversity and vibrancy
- Uniqueness—BIW and quaint town existing together
- Walkable
- Embrace our History
  - City of Ships
    - Important, but this is a community-based city
    - Encourage involvement by the community in the community
  - Shipbuilding
  - Diverse architecture
- History of adopting outsiders
  - All people feel that they belong
  - Kind
- Green City
  - Maintain trees, new trees, keep parks
- Waterfront accessibility/River as focal point
  - Keep the downtown open to the river—preserve the view
  - Gathering space
  - Waterfront Park for all ages
  - A space for community gathering (freight shed and waterfront park)
  - More businesses that interact with the river
  - Boat launches
- Your destination in Maine.
  - What differentiates Bath from everywhere else
  - Gateway to Mid-Coast—via river or road
  - Maritime Museum
  - For day trips, too
- Affordability
  - You can live here within your means

- You can be part of the community no matter who you are
- Community and cultural organizations
  - Farmers Market
  - The Freight shed
- Working, year-round downtown
  - More businesses in general, more to do here/places to stay
  - General Store for the entire region—venue for whatever you need
  - Businesses offer Experiences AND Retail AND Social
    - Support community institutions—partnering
    - Nonprofit and For-Profit work well together
    - Mutual economic and social support
  - Greater community supports Bath—surrounding communities
- Diverse outdoor recreation opportunities

## What We Want to Change

### Themes

- Increase evening life downtown
  - Drop-in center
  - Coffee house
  - Adults and teenagers
  - “We work” space—cloud port—shared working space
    - Rent for one or two hours
  - Movies
  - Affordable events (Less than \$10)
  - New types of events that are more diverse for local community
- Variety of concerts in the waterfront park and other venues
- Be welcoming
  - Increase diversity
  - Attractive place for new Mainers
  - Attractive to young people
- Playground
- Library open on Sunday
- One Saturday per month, access city services, like the dump, get your tag, etc.
- Keep/increase affordable housing downtown
  - Higher density housing near downtown
  - Increase mid-income senior housing
  - Third floor housing in downtown—but where is the parking?
- Economic viability of downtown business/building owners
  - Community space on second floors—requires a director to manage something like that

- New businesses—Bakery, restaurant, Mexican, Italian, flower shop, food trucks
- Affordable shops
- Sports rental equipment (bikes, ice skates, affordable)
- Businesses open year-round and all week (Sundays, too)
- Transportation/Walkability/Bikes/Connectivity:
  - Shuttle bus to Popham Beach (no parking there)
  - Parking garage
  - Water Taxi
  - Improve sidewalks for safety
  - Walking mall without traffic (Summer St. and Elm St.)
  - Bike traffic—increase
    - Can connect cultural hubs in town via bike lanes/boulevards
    - Can encourage bike traffic
  - Route 209: move to Washington St., better link between South Bath and Downtown
  - Connect to system of trails—Downtown to other parts of Bath
  - Walkways and connection to condos
  - Corridor to connect high school to downtown
- Park above the water—highline opportunity (old train bridge turned into an above ground park)—Food trucks there
- Expanded definition of downtown—more regionalization of Bath as a service center
- Expand idea of what Main St. is—connection to organizations
- Increase medical services
- Include BIW in community organizations—good neighbor
- Better link between school system and community
- Energy and sustainability (heated sidewalks)
  - Accessible to everyone—transportation, affordable housing

## **Our Vision for Downtown Tomorrow**

### **Draft Vision**

Craig shared a draft vision on the screen for the group to consider, based on all the input heard so far today. He asked for people’s reactions to this first draft:

Imagine it’s 5-10 years from now……

Downtown Bath thrives because her people love their little city. The fun, feel, and convenience of the downtown is one reason people live here. It’s the place we want to raise our kids. And our grand-kids.

People visit Bath because it's a perfect little Maine City by the sea with a history you can touch and feel. The historic buildings clustered and throughout the City, with water views, are snapshots of charm. The river anchors our past and our future.

There is so much to do in Bath for residents and visitors alike. You don't just buy things or eat things or see things in Bath, you experience things. Way more than shopping and eating, residents and workers experience cultural events in many ways; in our historic buildings and outside in our parks and on our trails.

Bath is a city for all ages and all incomes. Downtown housing encourages diversity. Downtown stores and events cater to all abilities and all tastes. And businesses thrive here on the foundation of a solid customer base. Our City is accessible with adequate parking, safe sidewalks, and friendly features for bikes.

The people of Bath are connected to each other. Newcomers are not just welcomed but adopted. Business owners don't just give money, they give heart. Nonprofit and community organizations are way more than a safety net; they are the community fabric supported by people who love to volunteer.

Craig made a few comments as he read the draft out loud to the group:

- Gender of the city—city of ships, which have genders
  - You can decide
- It's a little flowery. I know you're going to change these words.
  - Remember what visitors think.
  - Trying to capture the experience.

### **Discussion Comments**

Participants offered the following comments on this first draft of a vision statement:

- Change "sea" to "river".
- Residents and "workers" is important—workers are not visitors but may not be living here.
- I like the first paragraph. It captured the kind of feel and safety of a place where you want live.
- Add to the second sentence: The fun, feel, and convenience of the downtown is one reason people live, work and establish their businesses here."
- Authenticity—not sure this captures it.
  - Focuses on visitors too much.
  - Focus on US instead—those characteristics that make it a great place to live are what will attract people here.
- Authentic—Almost "it's a wonderful life-esque." Really need to say that.
- Let's add in that this is a place we want to raise our kids because we're known for our top-rated schools in 5-10 years. That would be great.

- Maine Maritime relies on visitors. We need to include visitors to sustain all these great things we want to offer in the community. Investment is critical to keep all these things going.
- Raising kids is enough—don't include "grand kids"
  - Add—"live life and love life."
  - Expand inclusiveness and attitude beyond just through housing.
- Missing: Connectivity and accessibility of downtown area.
  - Walkways, bike paths, from downtown to HS, trails, YMCA, other parts of community, etc.
- Genuinely friendly. Genuinely inclusive. In addition to authentic.
- Cherish history. Don't lose that.
- Those of us here today represent a higher income population in the community. We have a huge low-income population here and we need to take needs of that population into consideration.
- We want to attract people to see the town that we live in. When driving up route 1, what makes us different?
  - Diversity of economy
  - BIW biggest industrial employee
  - More than just the shipyard—it's also the future of ship building
  - Unique and real—highlight those things
- Homogeneous group today. But the process includes other ways to get input:
  - Facebook group
  - Several small group meetings happening too
- Bath build on the days of sail, before railroads and cars and car separated zones
  - Have something to offer that more people want today
  - Mixed uses
- Bath has always been a steward of our community
  - Ownership of our downtown
- I want Bath to be the place where my kids come back to live and raise their families. I liked including the grandkids in the statement.
- Relationship to the River
  - Access to the city and the river. Not a lot of dock space. No commerce established for people to stop into Bath.
  - All this space here. Want to encourage boat traffic to stop in Bath.
- Bath is a working city. One of the economic engines of the state. More jobs here than residents. Authenticity. Recognized nationally.
- People chose to live here. They don't put up with living here.

## How to Drive the Vision

Craig asked participants what they thought Main Street Bath and the City should do to help drive this vision. Below are comments captured on the screen:

- General
  - Downtown Bath is good!
  - Maintain good and open communications
  - Provide alternative transportation, bus routes, connectors
    - Better marked trolley and bus stops
  - Affordable housing
  - Be welcoming to the Downeaster
    - Make sure our train station is really welcoming, a gateway to Bath that we're proud of
  - Long-range
    - Be more involved in economic development
    - Take into account environmental planning
      - Sea level rise
    - Consider assets, such as bridge
  - As a city, be known for and plan to be a sustainable community, work toward energy independence
  - Hear from everyone—go to where people are to get their input
  - Use a human tone to show our identity and our values. Share our story and invite people to join us to build our community. Heart.
  - Work aspirational energy into the vision statement. Keep a doable pace of work but include big plans.
  - Embrace today's technology
    - City-wide wifi
    - Consider how people are actually working today
  - Start a youth chamber of commerce—get our youth into the downtown working with businesses
  - Have the opportunity to take risks, try new things, be innovators and early adopters
- Main Street Bath
  - It's all of us! Needs more participation—include surrounding communities.
  - Broaden its scope—community-wide model—maybe an auxiliary model
  - Keep a strong Main St. in Bath
  - Solicit more volunteers, stewards, support, resources to do all this work
  - Insist on partnership and input from RSU1, BIW—be active neighbors
  - Set priorities and a timeframe
  - Keep engagement going to be more inclusive, increase diversity, more ideas and voices



- We need to do a much better job of explaining what Main Street does and what we contribute to the community, regardless of our future vision and strategy.
- We also need to let people know that volunteers are welcome to step up and participate, but they have to volunteer their interest versus wait to be invited.
- The City of Bath
  - Liaison to BIW—they are part of our city
  - Communicate to the outside world—we're open for business, offer resources
    - Create a "Welcome to Bath," like we had for new residents
    - Ways to garner new revenues
    - Market to NY, Boston, bring more people here
  - Weekend/night hours to do city business

## ***Community Input Meeting – Top Ideas from Written Comments***

### **What We Love and Want to Keep**

*What do we love about Downtown Bath - those things that we want to be sure and preserve and grow? What do we like about our stores, our sidewalks, our events, our buildings? What about less tangible things like how our downtown feels, how we interact with each other, or how others think of us? What about our reputation do we want to maintain and grow?*

- Preserve look and feel and walkability
- Keep downtown full and vibrant
- Year-round community and activities
- Fundamental philosophies!
- Variety of amenities; farmers market, shops for most needs, walkability
- Friendly and inviting atmosphere that allows for effortless interactions with fellow community members
- Walk ability and skill of downtown
- Business owners are friendly and care about the town
- Variety of stores
- Sidewalk/parks nearby
- Livability
- Embrace the river
- Community sense of spirit, volunteerism

- Shops are geared to year-round residents also appealed to tourists and visitors
  - Walkability
  - Community spaces - library, waterfront park, freight shed
  - Concert series on waterfront, at library and YMCA
- Welcoming nurturing community
  - Walkable
  - Good size
  - Another type of venue for movies,dance, theater
  - Bike rack
- Expand water front park (waterfront walkway plans?)
  - Genuine warmth
  - Family owned businesses working year round
  - Affordability (housing)
- Variety of businesses
  - Mutual economic and social support
  - Combination of architecture and green space
  - Variety of events
  - Walkability and drivability
- Walkable with good central parking clean and great features history nature the river
  - Accessible businesses scenic buildings
  - Friendliness engagement camaraderie
  - Even more community engagement/social opportunity
- Accessibility to all your needs.
  - Feeling of home and the ambience.
  - Focus on the river.
- A downtown experience that includes shops, parks, and historic centers, like the Winter Street Center
  - A Working year-round downtown
  - Maintain a clean authentic and functional focus
  - Maintain its historic character and inviting experience
- City has worked hard to improve public spaces
  - Walkability – human scale
  - People not cars
  - Businesses that have experiences and retail
  - Concerts at library and waterfront parks

- Friendly, sense of place, history
  - Safety walkable belonging
  - Stewards who care for the town
  - Adopting outsiders
  - Small shops
  - Compact
- 
- Streetscape is beautiful
  - Walkability is key
  - Ability to access all services and needs
- 
- Committees - Great organizations
  - Partners in life Bath and community
  - Architecture (traditional)
  - Trees and parks, river
  - Inviting atmosphere and traditions
  - Activities and events
  - Authenticity of city
- 
- Music venue - waterfront
  - Expand on skate park - community center
- 
- Authentic owner operated establishments
  - Community events
  - Palpable friendliness
  - Young families
- 
- Avoid gentrification! Our top theme is community and we want to preserve the tightknit community feel and inclusiveness for all. Concerns about keeping affordable housing options and rising property taxes.
- 
- Develop Commercial St., corridor
  - Extend the visitor experience
  - Free, outdoor places to hang out - pocket park, use existing spaces
  - Rail and bus transportation
  - Connect Bath to Brunswick
  - "Y" Parcel
- 
- Maintain economic diversity of community
  - Variety of public events
  - Maintain sense of community
  - Pride of living in bath
  - Optimism about the future

- Keeping residents involved
- Events year-round
- Diversity - shops and services
- Look and feel of Bath – quaint, small, safe, historic, green space, places to sit
- Access to River
- Solid infrastructure, well-maintained
- Community and family friendly events
- Walkability and reliable public transportation until 6 PM
- Maintain economic diversity, walkability, safety, embrace of history and sense of community/familiarity
- Nature of downtown - historic, compact, charming, walkable
- Location on river, but also convenient to Portland, Lewiston, etc.
- Friendliness, community, community events - a feeling
- Economic diversity including BIW as part of our community
- Two degrees of separation
- Kindness
- Community character
- Family friendly

## What We Want to Change

*What do we wish were different or better; those things that we want to see improved? Would we like our downtown to look different? Function differently in terms of a car, foot, or bike traffic? Would we like a different mix of stores? Restaurants? Services? How about people living in the downtown? Or visiting downtown? Or working downtown? What would we like to see change?*

- Be relevant not trendy
- Businesses that encourage activity social aspects
- More activity areas example playground, sports areas
- Events the drawl younger audiences also expand the diversity of events as at Chocolate Church
- Bath is Maine’s best kept secret. More needs to be done to promote the virtues a Bath.
- Increase evening offerings
- Co-working space

- Movie theater
- Playground downtown
- Dump open on Saturday
- Food trucks
  
- Affordable events under \$10.00
- After school activities for ages 9 to 14
- Evening life
- Workspace with a cloud port
  
- Downtown living
- Parking lot
- Zoning changes to increase density
  
- Transportation Central for the Mid Coast area
  
- Direct public access to water-walkway
- More kid oriented activities – playground
- Business open year-round, Sunday, late – library, restaurants, businesses
- Lower socioeconomic groups (affordable housing)
  
- Transport
- Keep historic charm
- Affordable middle income senior housing
- Bakery, movie theater, and medical services
  
- Parking - more parking, maybe a garage year-round retail and diversity of business, more clothing, shoes ,entertainment, downtown movie theater dance hall, club
  
- Interconnectivity of transportation services to all of Bath via bike paths, upgraded sidewalks, walking trails, bus services, even the other local attractions and towns
  
- Infrastructure - sidewalks, Rt. 209, Shoreline resilience
  
- Universal design of streets and parks
- Parking garage behind Reny's
- Play ground under route one
- Railroad track under route one to museum
- Food trucks
  
- Waterfront and outdoor areas: more water focused events, outside eating, activities, play areas
- Improved walkability north to south
- Involvement by a cross-section of people who want to be involved

- Economic realities and opportunities encourage folks to stay
- Big ships bus people to Bath, need to know ahead of time so we can prep and have tours maybe
- Realtors upstairs so businesses can be down
- More public seating
- More public art - playing music, art, etc. in different locations
- Add outdoor movies to Heritage Days
- Invite and accommodate young people in downtown with residences, activities, music, internships, employment, and playground
- Encourage small shops, protection of historic buildings
- Use multiple layers of buildings. Invite people to second and third floor
- Stores and city services open later and weekend options
- Better sidewalk structure, signage, clear
- Diversity in activities
- Programs for youth
- Library open six days a week
- More outdoor activities for locals - more access to river and river front, bike rentals, boat tours to Merrymeeting Bay and back run by the Maritime Museum but leaving from town dock
- Community events for the whole community
- Diverse housing downtown affordable to luxury
- Entrepreneurs incubate new businesses
- Accessible economic and physical no matter what form of \_\_\_\_
- Energy independence
- Heated sidewalk
- Higher density of housing downtown
- Kids activities (affordable)
- Expand engagement, more welcoming to new comers
- Link between community and school system
- Expand definition of downtown better signage
- Specific items - Mexican restaurant with margaritas, more variety of summer concerts, rental equipment
- Parking
- Affordable/diverse shopping
- BIW as better members of community
- Bike friendly path

- Connecting two sides of bath

## How to Drive the Vision

*What are the most important things that Main Street Bath should do in order to help achieve the vision? What is it most important for the City to do?*

- Communication!
- The city could better position itself to be attractive and Philly to new businesses by communicating or marketing itself more – “Bath is open for business”
- Some direction to new business owners to what resources are available when needed. One idea - to have a welcome to Bath for new businesses like the recent one for residents, where new businesses can be connected to people they need to know.
- A review of some restrictions on businesses that could help businesses who want to be creative and gain other revenues.
- Long range planning economic and environmental - future flooding
- Focus on function - make this a city that works
- City Council be mindful of/seek out lower income residents - all stakeholders include all of Bath
- Be more involved with economic development and long-range planning
- Encourage volunteers more volunteers more people
- Strategic financial planning for the city to implement policies, using TIF, bonds ,etc.
- Encourage more diverse artists/art space
- City picks low hanging fruit and accomplishes key goals
- “Our City”
- Expand Main Street’s mission to promote all of Bath? Recognize interdependence between downtown and all town
- MSB: Keep engagement going , expand the circle of participants
- MSB: Work faster toward ideas that are viewed as desirable. Priority? Get it done!
- General - Build connectivity – physical, social
- General - Make Bath a better place to work, live, and visit
- Main Street: Expand/re-define scope or footprint; move to community-wide model, maintain downtown focus, support tourism
- City: Alternate transportation; connect bus routes, bikeways, fitness trail. Higher density affordable housing

- Keeping ideas moving forward i.e., playground in library park and affordable housing for downtown.
- This format works for meetings and discussions
- Communication: Constant w/city and residents; keep on track with progress; keep up a set priorities for work; liaison with BIW.
- Keep offering forms to express selves like for youth
- Promote explicit volunteer opportunities
- Keep communication open and transparent. Try new ways, more ways, social media

## ***Downtown Merchants Input Meeting, March 5***

### **What We Value About Downtown Bath**

#### **Themes**

- Sense of community
  - Cooperation and mutual caring
  - Openness and compassion to newcomers
  - Caring about the future
  - We want to help each other succeed
  - We know each other
  - Volunteerism
- Diversity of events and businesses
  - Year-round community
- Change and growth
- Customers who shop small and local
- Supportive physical infrastructure
  - Walkability
  - Relationship to the river – important to protect this!
- Connectivity

#### **All Comments**

- Diversity of creative businesses and events
- Diverse shops
- Economic diversity including arts and year-round experience
- Diverse, year-round economic community
- Walkability
- Our customers care about our success – we are in a partnership
- “Shop local” minded customers
- Everyone proactively refers customers to local business



- Easy sense of connection with business owners
- Sense of community
- Community
- Tight-knit community
- Community spirit
- Community pride immediately felt in shops
- Sense of pride in working here and being here
- Collaborative spirit
- Collaboration with Main Street Bath
- City and neighbors are welcoming and cooperative
- Mutual concern and support rather than competition
- Sense of strength, mutual support, and enthusiasm
- Tangible sense of openness and compassion
- Downtown changes and grows
- Increasingly vibrant and cooperative, even in troubled times
- Concerned about its future – deliberate visioning
- We take the time for visioning

## What We'd Like to Change

- Make more of our unique visual characteristics
  - Great images on social media; promote high quality of life
- Really listen and thoughtfully consider what people are saying and respond
- How it looks
  - Improved entrance from Route 1
    - Visitor center with promotion of local businesses
    - Better than just “the green sign”
    - Change the metal rail
    - Remove fence in middle of highway
    - Public artwork on pillars
  - Many ways to reflect our maritime history
    - A ship to visit
    - Walking path through historic sites (like Freedom Path)
    - Audio walking tour of Bath history
    - Playground tied to maritime history (like Providence ship climbing wall)
    - Public art with maritime themes
  - Make more of the river
    - River walk
    - A place to swim!
    - Demystify and elevate our relationship with the river
  - Walkability
    - Make a pedestrian mall

- Connecting to local trail system
  - Playground
- Connect the different parts of town
- Parking
  - Provide more parking for customers
    - Parking garage provides ease and convenience
  - Better parking management
    - Clean up parking signage
    - Better enforcement
    - Encourage merchants and employees to park further out
  - Better use of the archway ramp
    - Promote it esp. for those with less mobility
  - Concerns about more parking
    - Paying for a parking garage
    - Visual impact of lot, garage, or more cars
  - Satellite parking ideas
    - Parking out of town with trolley to downtown
    - Consider parking garage for BIW
    - Satellite lots for employees or for snowstorm parking
  - Zoning creates challenges not just on Front and Center
  - Parking issues will be complicated if there are more residents downtown
  - Encourage more walkability-friendly behaviors
  - Better connect to other public transportation
    - To Portland – to reduce need to have a car
    - Connect downtown to the Downeaster
  - Add charging stations for electric and hybrid cars
- Add recycling and returnable bins next to trash cans downtown
  - Convenient for all
  - Sends message about being green, and caring
- Would love to see Front Street crowded with families on Sunday morning

## Events

- What we are doing well
  - Family friendly events
  - Older adult events
- Do more
  - Cultural, art and music events
  - Events to draw an adult crowd
  - Riverfront events
  - School bands playing downtown
    - Develop a regular schedule
    - Like the Friday Night Concerts in the street
  - Maine's First Ship

- Use as focal point
    - Use freight shed for events
  - Events for 15- to 30-year-olds
    - Such as
      - Music
      - Movies outdoors
      - Skateboarding and bike demos
      - Coffee house
        - Pop-up style
        - Acoustic music; poetry
    - Why
      - There's a vibrancy when young people are in town
      - When town looks busy, town gets busy
      - Help young people love the City, and stay
      - Give young people reasons to hang out here
      - Alternatives to bars
      - They bring their families
    - How
      - Incorporate Hyde School as well as public schools
      - Get young people involved in event creation
        - Offer volunteer opportunities
          - Promote at schools
            - Newsletters
            - Flyers
            - Announcements at assembly
            - City reps ask in person
        - Cooperate with local merchants
          - Event comes with a coupon to a local shop
            - Example: Beer and Bras!
          - Would be even better if merchants had more to offer this age group
            - Both products and experiences
              - Example: Geocache
    - More balanced number/type of events
      - Concerned about amount of resources into Heritage Days
        - Some merchants feel burden but less direct benefit; some merchants feel direct benefit
        - Event benefits Main Street which does benefit businesses
    - Events that are easy for merchants to get involved with
      - Themes events that bring people to stores
      - Chili and chowder festival
      - Chocolate tour
      - Toys and games tour
      - Drinks tour

## Downtown Stores

- Hours
  - Support for increased hours
    - People will go elsewhere if stores not open on Sunday
    - One example – 22% of business comes from between 5 and 6 pm and on Sunday
    - Sundays are terrific!
      - We do same amount of business as a weekday, but with fewer staff
        - Fewer individual customers, but they come from farther away and spend more
      - Acknowledge challenge of finding available staff
    - Sends message about the town “being open”
  - Concern about increased hours
    - Life balance - need a day off
    - In winter, Sunday does not pay
  - If we decided to encourage uniform increased hours
    - We would need commitment and good promotion/publicity
    - Try a soft start
      - One night a month
      - Take it a half-hour at a time
    - We would need to “re-train” consumers, long term
- Future mix of stores
  - Capitalize on maker renaissance
    - Bread makers, soap makers, coffee roasters
  - Keep on being one big open-air department store
  - Bath is the place where the owners are in the shops
    - Recognize the challenge of life balance
  - Feels like an integrated unit – using each other’s products and services
  - We are doing a lot right:
    - “Bath is the happening place”
    - Young people want to move here
  - Need to support and encourage retail merchants to protect character of downtown
  - More specialty stores – you have to come to Bath for things you can’t get elsewhere
  - Develop retail clusters
    - We have a cluster of shops that appeal to women and children
    - Build on and leverage what’s here already

## Promotion

- Bring cruise ship visitors here by bus
- Bring tour busses here
  - Requires deliberate work with tour company owners
- Consider how people from outside the community hear about events here
- Better signage about what's here
  - Interest-focused kiosks
  - Help people find their way to what's available here
  - Help people find their way from one part of town to another
  - No one should ever say "I didn't know you were here"

## Advice for Main Street Bath

- Help with better marketing of what we have here
- Capitalize on strength of marketing together – a unified voice
- Mindful of how communications are changing

## *Bath Housing Input Meeting, March 5*

### What We Love and Value About Downtown Bath

- Not much there that I value now
- Excited that people are asking each other about what they want to see
- I feel like my opinion matters
- Waterfront park
  - Able to watch boats
  - Especially in good weather
  - Nice place to sit and eat lunch
- Heritage Days fair
- I love everything about downtown Bath
- A good town to live in
  - You can go to high school with your police chief!
- Brackett's
- Bath Iron Works provides good jobs
- Very safe
  - Kids can walk around and feel safe in the stores
  - You don't have to worry about being mugged
  - Everyone respects each other
- Driving to town works well

- Taking the bus to town works well

## What We'd Like to Change About Downtown Bath

- Would love to have a movie theater again
- More stores
  - A second-hand store
  - Would like to have Italian food, like Olive Garden
  - Wish there was a hobby shop
  - Would like another bookstore
  - There are lots of bars and antique shops; not everyone wants those things
  - Marden's – for the low prices
  - Shoe repair
  - A Hannaford store
    - Current downtown grocery store is too crowded and too expensive
    - Attempts to bring in Hannaford have not worked in the past
  - A KFC near the new hotel
- Better transportation
  - Wish the bus would go to medical center downtown
    - (They do! You just have to ask.)
  - And would also like the bus to go to Wal-Mart
  - Would be great to have a bus running on Saturday morning until about 1:00pm
  - Make the bus easier to get on
    - Like a lift for less mobile people who don't have a wheelchair
  - Lack of transportation is a problem, especially on weekends
  - Transportation for medical appointments and errands is possible but takes a lot of planning
  - Hourly transportation to the hospital would be helpful
- More affordable rental / real estate prices for downtown buildings
- Something for young people to do
  - Especially in the evening
  - Plenty for little kids but need more for older kids
- Current restaurants downtown are too expensive
- Would be helpful to have an eye care clinic in town
- Put the hospital back where it used to be, in town

## Events

- The Farmers Market is good
  - Would shop there more if they took credit
  - It would help if the bus ran on Saturdays

- The 2 for 1 deal with food stamps is very helpful
- Having prepared foods available would be helpful
- For Heritage Days
  - Ferris wheel is too close to highway
- How to tell people about events
  - Facebook works for some of us
  - Some of us don't have a computer or cell phone and don't know about events

## **How We Want the Downtown to Look and Feel**

- Quiet streets at night
- Would love to see the downtown cleaned up and with more color
  - Flowers
  - Murals
- Add a pedestrian bridge across Route 1
- Fix the railroad tracks because they cause problems for drivers
- Fill in all the empty buildings
  - A mini-mall like in Topsham
- More, better, and safer sidewalks for walking
  - Especially on Lincoln Street
  - Sometimes the sidewalk just runs out and we don't want to walk in the street
  - Some sidewalks are too bumpy – need to be fixed
    - Between Reny's and Wilson's Drugstore
- Hard to cross the street when BIW workers are getting out
  - Lots of traffic moving in a hurry

## ***Bath Area Nonprofits Input Meeting, April 2***

### **What We Value About Downtown Bath**

#### **Themes**

- Sense of community
  - Eleven-year old downtown on a bike is safe
  - All of this – the people
  - Welcoming to children
  - All walks of life
  - The people
  - Sense of community
  - Nodes of engagement
  - Welcoming community

- It's not hard to become involved
- Physical characteristics
  - Waterfront Park x2
  - I can walk down here
  - Historical architecture
- Shops
  - Eclectic and unique
  - Unique shops
  - I get to avoid Walmart and Target
  - Grocery store and pharmacy that deliver
- Effort to expand eco-friendliness
- Public events
- The River
- The history

### **All Comments**

- Waterfront Park
- Eclectic and unique
- Sense of community – it's all inclusive
- My 11-year-old is safe on his own, on his bike, downtown
- Variety of stores that help me avoid Wal-Mart and Target
- Can walk to downtown from my house
- Effort to expand the eco-friendly products and community
- Waterfront Park
- Unique shops and restaurants – can't find anywhere else
- Year-round public events
- The cooperation over many years
- Very welcoming to children
- Sense of community from all walks of life – from kids to seniors, committed to the town
- The people
- Sense of community
- Bath has many nodes of engagement that open up people's worlds
- Bath still has a grocery store and pharmacy that deliver – very important especially for seniors
- Welcoming community
- Wonderful to walk downtown and be welcomed and greeted
- A place where you can easily become involved if you are interested
- Citizen involvement day – barrier-free community engagement
- Historical character of downtown and historical architecture - it feels obvious but we should name it
- The river
- The maritime history



## What We Should Keep

- Historical architecture
- Green spaces
  - Such as
    - River walk
    - Library park
    - Trail system
- Access to the river
  - Views, walking along the river, launching boats
  - Not closed off by private ownership
- Variety
  - Something for everyone
  - The practical shops – essentials AND birthday gifts!
  - Shops
- Sense of community
  - Everyone welcome – a place for everyone
  - We have an opportunity to change kids' lives by welcoming them here
  - Opportunities for international exchange
    - Such as the Bath Tsugaru Exchange
- Keep the dog park

## What Should Change

- Increase diversity
- Bath Tsugaru Exchange needs help
- Counter service / take-out restaurant open through dinner time
- Later hours for downtown businesses, one night per week
- Encourage young families to move here
  - Areas especially for kids to play
    - Walkable from downtown
    - Safe
    - With playground equipment
    - Perhaps one in the north end and one in the south end
  - Special promotions with downtown businesses on days of youth events
    - Like discounts at restaurants during swim meets
  - Continue Library and YMCA events that are already attracting young families
  - More family-oriented activities for working parents
    - Weekends and outside of working hours
  - Affordable, livable housing
    - Grants / loans for housing rehab
    - Address property taxes
    - Accessible housing, including rental homes

- Including strollers and walkers
      - Housing specifically for young adults
      - Some great housing rehab efforts already happening
- Living options for seniors and those with limited mobility
- More things to do for teens and young adults, especially outdoors
- Make better use of our public spaces and infrastructure
  - Library
  - City Hall
- Make better use of Winter Street Church annex
  - Could be a venue like the Chocolate Church
- Entertainment venues often are run by organizations with missions; that can sometimes be a barrier

## Events

- Bath Heritage Days
  - Pros
    - Great to have rides for kids
    - Carnival rides bring revenue that supports Heritage Days
    - Composting and recycling
  - Cons
    - Seems expensive for families
- Do more composting and recycling at all events
- Love Old Fashioned Christmas in Bath
- Great variety of events for the entire community
- Love Citizen Involvement Day and kindness day – very unique
- Hope that Chocolate Church keeps doing events
  - Keep bringing in bigger names – “one notch up”
- Our unique events really highlight the personality of the community
- Community events help the area nonprofits collaborate
- Idea: nonprofits have a presence at the Farmers Market
  - Use empty tables when a vendor is not there
  - Expand market space if possible
- Job Fairs to help bring young families to the area

## Ideas for Support

- Unified support for organizations to help prevent burnout
  - Technology support
  - Website support
  - Prevent institutional memory loss when board members depart
  - Troubleshooting and or central coordination of booking, calendars

- Potential model: Bethel Area Nonprofit Collaborative pools resources and pays for admin support
- Groups collaborate to “share specialties”
- Increase volunteers so that individual volunteers are not as stressed
- List of nonprofits
  - Centrally maintained and organized
    - What each organization does
    - What help is needed
    - How to get the word out
    - List of volunteer opportunities
      - Especially for retired people moving to the community
      - United Way of Midcoast example: generated new board members
- Make it easier to get involved
  - Keep opportunities “front of mind”
- More activities like the Citizen Involvement Day
- Make better use of the Maine Maritime Museum as a gateway to this community
- Revive regular meetings of the nonprofit community
  - Needs a champion
    - Potentially Main Street Bath?
    - Potentially form a new entity with a board-style leadership
    - Consider asking for a retired volunteer leader
    - Use existing structures / resources rather than starting new

## **Shops and Services Downtown**

- Promotion
  - There’s a good mix now but we need to make them more visible, somehow
    - “I never knew this was here!”
  - St. Patrick’s Day event – “Pot of Gold” raised awareness of all the businesses that are here via a passport
- Accessibility
  - Some buildings are not accessible for those less mobile or with strollers
    - Steps, icy parking lots, and sloped parking are problems
    - How to reconcile that with our beloved historic architecture
    - Ask Freeport or other communities how they handled this
    - Review existing older studies
- Add more entertainment
  - Especially for young people
  - Dance
  - Roller rink
  - Family
  - All ages

- Bowling alley
- Movie theater
  - However, cost of renovating and cost of sustaining the business would be a concern
    - We don't have an "LL Bean" – level flow of people
- Something for teens to do, so they don't have to drive to other towns
  - Shops for teens
    - Comics and games
  - Arcades
  - Coffee shops - open late and do not serve alcohol
  - Restaurants offer specials (\$5 burgers) on early release days
- Caution about adding new things that make Bath feel overcrowded and change the feel of our community
  - There are times where downtown is underutilized, like evenings
  - Consider doing a movie in the park in the summer
- Better coordination of businesses' open hours
- We need a car wash
- Some entertainment venues, like a movie theatre, could go in the Shaw's complex
  - Rent prohibitive

## **Advice for Main Street Bath**

- Doing a good job with the resources they have
- Love the Great American Main Street video
- Love the Downtown Bath Facebook page – great engagement
- Have a regular annual assessment of Bath area nonprofits
  - A questionnaire that would catch impending issues before it's too late
- Use full page ads and printed newsletters to reach people who don't use social media
  - And it might be unique and "retro"
- Don't over-rely on Facebook if trying to reach young families
- Market on Instagram
- Engage the school district as we consider the downtown
  - Involve high school students in planning the future of the downtown
  - Increase cultural and international diversity of engagement by reaching out to the Hyde School
- Thank you to Main Street Bath for including the nonprofit community in this process

## ***Facebook Downtown Tomorrow Page Comments***

### **Themes**

#### **Why We Really Like Downtown**

- Walkability
  - Safe crosswalks
  - Proximate residences
- Convenience retail – it's everything you need
  - Reny's
  - Grocery store
  - Dry cleaner
  - Natural food store
- Safety
  - Okay for kids to walk downtown
- Appearance
  - Quaint, cozy
  - Authentic
  - Charming
  - Brick sidewalks
  - Beautiful buildings – preserved history
- Year round
  - Farmers market
- Sense of community
  - Community for people who live there
  - People know and care for each other
- Experiential Retail
  - Personality of the merchants

#### **Needs/Wants**

- Desire for things for children and families
  - Riverwalk
  - Playground
- Better store hours
  - Evenings and Sundays
  - And City hall and town offices
- Public art
  - Murals
    - Need to be done well
  - Flower boxes

- Christmas lights
- Opportunities for creating art
  - Knitting
  - Scrapbooking
  - Paint night
  - Art supplies
- Outdoor stage – More public performances
  - New stage at Waterfront Park
- Wider sidewalks
  - So merchants can sell on the sidewalks
- More parking

### **Process**

- Good that Main Street Bath asked us

### ***Other Written Input***

*Throughout the process, all participants were encouraged to provide written input by email. As of the deadline of April 4, 2018, three individuals had provided comments by email, either to Craig Freshley directly or to someone else who passed them on to Craig. The following comments were received:*

Fix the railroad tracks, my car bottoms out.

I am personally ecstatic as a resident of Bath that this process is occurring. Bath is a true community with a downtown hub. My husband and I decided to move here the moment we drove through downtown and stopped at Café Crème. My two cents is that as we move Bath forward, let's remember everyone. I moved to Bath *for* socioeconomic diversity not in spite of it. During the ten years I have been here the issue of the “two Baths” seems to be increasingly pertinent. I hope that in making decisions for our downtown, we are able to promote an inclusive community. A few blocks where artisans, retirees, retail employees, shipbuilders, and summer residents can find a commonality.

Here are some suggestions:

1. If MSB doesn't already, I propose that MSB write for grant support for its projects. And, if MSB cannot perform all it has done or wants to do, every year, then it must, like other nonprofits, scale back. I believe there is and has been donor fatigue for our citizens and independent merchants for many years. I receive many requests

for donations, not only for each activity Main Street Bath coordinates, but from all the other nonprofits in Bath. It is impossible to support them all.

2. The revolving door of staff is concerning, and has in my opinion, has not helped with the stability and growth of the organization. How can that issue be addressed? Does the BOD understand the reasons for the turnover?
3. Bath is a "service center" for the surrounding communities of Arrowsic, Georgetown, Phippsburg, West Bath, and Woolich. (Days Ferry?) I understand that the City of Bath contributes some funds to support MSB operations. I propose that Main Street Bath request modest financial support from these communities.

## Appendix A: Opening & Closing Remarks from March 3 Community Input Meeting

Recorder Amy Scott of Good Group Decisions captured the following remarks at the start and close of the Community Input Meeting of March 3, 2018.

### *Welcome and Opening Remarks*

Will Neilson, President of Main Street Bath, offered the following welcome:

- Thank you all for coming today.
- Grateful to all of you, heartened to see so many community leaders here and so many people engaged in their community. This is a sign of a healthy community that people show up and care about the quality of life in the community.
- Grateful to great board of directors. Main Street model calls for municipal government, business community and the general population to participate.
- As I introduce our board members, please stand up so people can see you. Please, use this board as a resource. Seek us out and get involved.
  - Gretchen Jaeger, Vice President
  - Laurie Rainey, Treasurer
  - Anita Demetropoulos
  - Sally Johnstone, Economic Vitality Chair
  - Roberta Jordon
  - Tamara Lilly
  - Marc Meyers
  - Caelie Smith
  - Vicky Sprague, Organization Chair
  - Becky Welsh, Promotions Chair
    - Refreshments! Thanks!
- Thanks to Camille Kauffunger
  - Really keeps Main Street going
- This will be a great morning that will bear fruit for all of us.

Mari Eosco, Interim Director of Main Street Bath and Chair of Bath City Council also offered welcoming remarks:

- This is so amazing! This is what keeps me going! That this many people care about our community and show up for an event like this. That is a special thing.
- We are trying hard to go zero waste today. Please check out and use the labeled bins. If you want more information on Garbage to Gardens, we have some sign-up sheets here. It's a great program.



- The Main Street model calls for one third of the board to be made up of city officials, and those board members are here today as well:
  - Mark Meyers, Assistant City Manager
  - Andrew Deci, Director of Planning and Development
  - Aaron Park, City Council
  - Peter Owen, Interim City Manager
- Now our facilitator, Craig Freshley will introduce himself.

Craig Freshley of Good Group Decisions offered a brief introduction:

- Have you heard about the Facebook group? Raise your hand if you have. (About 1/3 of hands up.) Fantastic. This Downtown Bath Facebook group is an excellent resource and I encourage you to check it out.
  - Special thanks to Sally Johnstone for starting and moderating that.
- A little about myself.
  - I am thrilled to be back here in Bath. I was the founding director of the Maine Downtown Center. Seventeen years ago, I was in the right place at the right time when the program was being formed.
  - I've been a strong supporter of the program since and have worked with many downtowns in Maine and have gone to three national conferences.
  - I have a company called Good Group Decisions with an office on a main street in downtown Brunswick.
  - Today I am your facilitator. I am not going to tell you what your downtown should be. I'm going to help you talk about it.

## ***Closing Remarks***

Mari Eosco offered the following closing comments:

- Thank you to the Davenport Foundation for helping support this process for Main Street Bath.
- Huge thank you to everyone here, and everyone who is going to email me with comments.
- This was a very civil discussion. That's amazing, wonderful. We really are a city of kind people.

Andrew Deci, Bath Director of Planning and Development, offered the following closing comments:

- The fun doesn't have to stop today! We are beginning a review and update of our comprehensive plan this Fall. This process will contribute toward that process.

- If you want to be involved, let me know. We are going to need volunteer committee members.
- We want to hear your ideas and thoughts.
- Thank you!

Will Neilson offered the following closing comments:

- Andrew was one of the driving forces getting us to engage Craig, so thank you Andrew.
- Excited to hear all this today.
- If you want to get involved with Main Street Bath, there are some committees that meet monthly. We need continued engagement, so you are invited to join anytime.
- Thank you for being here today.
- We also need financial engagement. Your gifts to the annual fund make money available to pay staff. We are really beyond the limits of what our current staff can do. Please donate money—even a small gift helps a lot! We need broad financial support.
- Thank you to Craig.
- And thank you for coming out today!!

Mari added one more comment about a website:

- Another way to keep info going is through BathMaine.com
  - This is for everyone!
  - You can sign up for weekly emails there.
  - Great way to keep up with what's going on in town.

## Appendix B: Ground Rules for Input Meetings

The following ground rules were explained at the start of the Community Input Meeting of March 3, 2018, and similar ground rules were explained at the start of all other input meetings.

- **All views heard**
  - In your small groups, make room to hear from everyone. Ask, “have we had a chance to hear from everyone?”
  - In the big group, wait for the mic and use it so that everyone can hear you.
  - Show me in the big group—you can applaud, show a thumbs up or down.
  - Make comments after today. Mari’s email address is at the bottom of the agenda. Please send her your comments.
    - The Facebook page is also open and you can comment there.
- **It’s ok to disagree, and agree.**
  - It’s ok to change your mind.
  - We’re moving toward consensus.
  - No final decisions today. Final decisions about the city will be made by the City Council.
- **Conversation towards consensus.**
  - This is more than just a survey of ideas. We’re working hard to understand each other this morning.
  - Imagine what’s best for all of us.
  - We’re looking for themes. We cannot implement every idea that we here today and at the FB page.
- **Ready to Move**
  - Move around this room today!
  - Great opportunity to get to know each other and hear different points of view.
  - Also means being ready to move philosophically.
  - Thanks for talking and listening.

## Appendix C: Fall 2017 Survey Results Summary

In the Fall of 2017 the Maine Street Bath Economic Restructuring Committee conducted a survey that was distributed to downtown merchant email lists, RSU 1 emails lists (all schools), Main Street Bath email lists, and multiple different social media accounts, and was also publicized in local newspapers. The following summary is from Committee Chair Sally Johnstone’s presentation to the Main Street Bath Board in January 2018.

### *Perceptions of Bath*

The language of what people love about Bath hasn’t changed.



2010



2017

## ***Visits to Downtown Bath***

- Residents visit downtown Bath frequently
  - Everyone shops downtown at least monthly for groceries, gifts, clothing
  - Everyone attends at least one event every year
  - Almost all parents attend children's events
  - 4 of 5 use downtown professional services at least monthly
  - 3 of 4 attend a live music performance at least a couple of times a year
  - 2 of 3 attend plays and musical theater
  - And all respondents say they eat out in Bath... for 1/3 it's weekly

## ***Sources of Information About Downtown Bath and Main Street Bath***

- Preferences driven by generation
  - Top sources for information about downtown Bath and Main Street Bath:
    - Social media (60%)
    - Newspaper (51%)
    - Main Street Bath Facebook page (47%)
    - Main Street Bath email or website (28%)
  - But, usage differs by age:
    - Age 65+ 2x more likely to rely upon newspapers, compared to respondents under 50 (68% vs. 32%)
    - Age 45 to 54 most likely to use email as their primary resource (43%)
    - Respondents under 50 far more likely to use social media than any other source (82%)
    - Parents even more dedicated to social media (85% social media, 34% newspapers, 20% MSB email)

## ***What We'd Like to Have in Downtown Bath***

- The 'wish we had \_\_\_' list hasn't changed
  - Public space
    - More parking
    - More waterfront public use space
    - Playground downtown
  - Businesses
    - More restaurant(s)
    - Bakery
    - Movie theater