



## Town of Cape Elizabeth Town Center Stormwater Management Plan

*"Due to the amount of land transitioning in the Town Center, the stormwater study has already become a reference as site plan applications are being prepared."*

Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner



### **PARTNERS**

The Town of Cape Elizabeth partnered with the Town Center Plan Committee to undertake the study.

### **ISSUE AREA**

The subject area of the study is the Town Center District.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION** (completed December 2015)

The Town of Cape Elizabeth completed a master plan for the town center in 1993, followed up by rezoning in 1995. The town also prepared a stormwater plan for the town center in 1995. Twenty years later, the town updated the Town Center Plan (2014). The updated Town Center Plan included a recommendation to also update the stormwater plan, with a focus on integrating low-impact development techniques.

### **APPLICABILITY TO OTHER MUNICIPALITIES**

Many small Maine towns have a commercial area that has dated and/or insufficient infrastructure. Those towns often do not have the financial option to start fresh with their infrastructure. This model of inventorying what you have, and building new thinking into existing practices is a financially accessible approach.

## COASTAL COMMUNITY GRANTS: Stormwater Management

### CHALLENGE & APPROACH

The town center is the commercial, municipal and cultural center of the town. Its compact nature, supported by village oriented zoning, promotes a pedestrian friendly environment, commercial vitality and a center for community gatherings. The compact nature also limits the area available for natural treatment of stormwater. Most of the center's stormwater drains to the Spurwink Marsh. This stormwater update preserves the compact nature of the town center, including the underground collection system, and also incorporates LID techniques as part of the development and redevelopment. The town center design standards include mandatory landscaping requirements and landscaping and hardscaping elements have the potential to also treat stormwater.

### THE RESULTS

The study included a valuable update of the existing stormwater infrastructure. Extensive work was done to develop "conceptual" stormwater designs for four properties currently in transition. These properties have a high probability for development/redevelopment and the conceptual plans provide clear guidance to new owners, town boards and town staff. Recommended improvements within the public right-of-way also employ LID techniques.

### NEXT STEPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

One of the four undeveloped lots referenced above is about to initiate Planning Board review. The design engineer has been provided a copy of the Town Center Stormwater Study and is in discussions with the Town Engineer and Public Works Director about upgrades to the Town Center stormwater infrastructure. Stormwater management on-site will likely include LID techniques.

As part of its MS4 community stormwater permit, town staff are also overhauling stormwater ordinance and standards. The current proposal includes requiring LID techniques in Site Plan review and treatment of the first 1/2" of stormwater for projects with 10,000 sq. ft. or more increase in impervious surface. The Town Center Stormwater Study has been one catalyst in considering these new standards.

### NEEDS

As with most projects, funding would help with implementation of the stormwater study. Unlike the 1993 Town Center Plan, however, the 2014 plan includes funding recommendations. One recommendation is to create a Town Center TIF district targeted to funding infrastructure. The TIF is not a credit enhancement agreement. With the potential development/redevelopment of 4 lots, it is timely to adopt a TIF so that anticipated tax revenue increases from property improvements can be redirected into Town Center infrastructure. The TIF application has been approved by the State of Maine for pedestrian and stormwater infrastructure. The projected revenues are not expected to meet needs, but are a building block upon which additional funding can be added.



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### RECOMMENDATIONS

As the Maine Coastal Program interfaces with state agencies, the following may be useful:

- Stormwater in compact commercial areas. Municipalities are encouraged, and in many cases implementing, compact development policies that cluster development and preserve contiguous large areas of open space. In commercial areas, clustered development may also support infrastructure investment, such as public water, public sewer, and stormwater collection, that is financially out of reach in more dispersed land development.
- We need to be cautious that stormwater quality goals to not work in opposition to compact development. Where compact development typically results in high impervious surface ratios, reasonable mitigation should be the goal, with recognition that compact development in one area often results in no development (and no need to treat stormwater) in other areas.

### For more information

The Town Center Stormwater Study is available at:

[http://www.capeelizabeth.com/government/rules\\_regs/masterplans/CE%20Town%20Center%20SW%20Plan%20Update,%209-23-2015.pdf](http://www.capeelizabeth.com/government/rules_regs/masterplans/CE%20Town%20Center%20SW%20Plan%20Update,%209-23-2015.pdf)

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