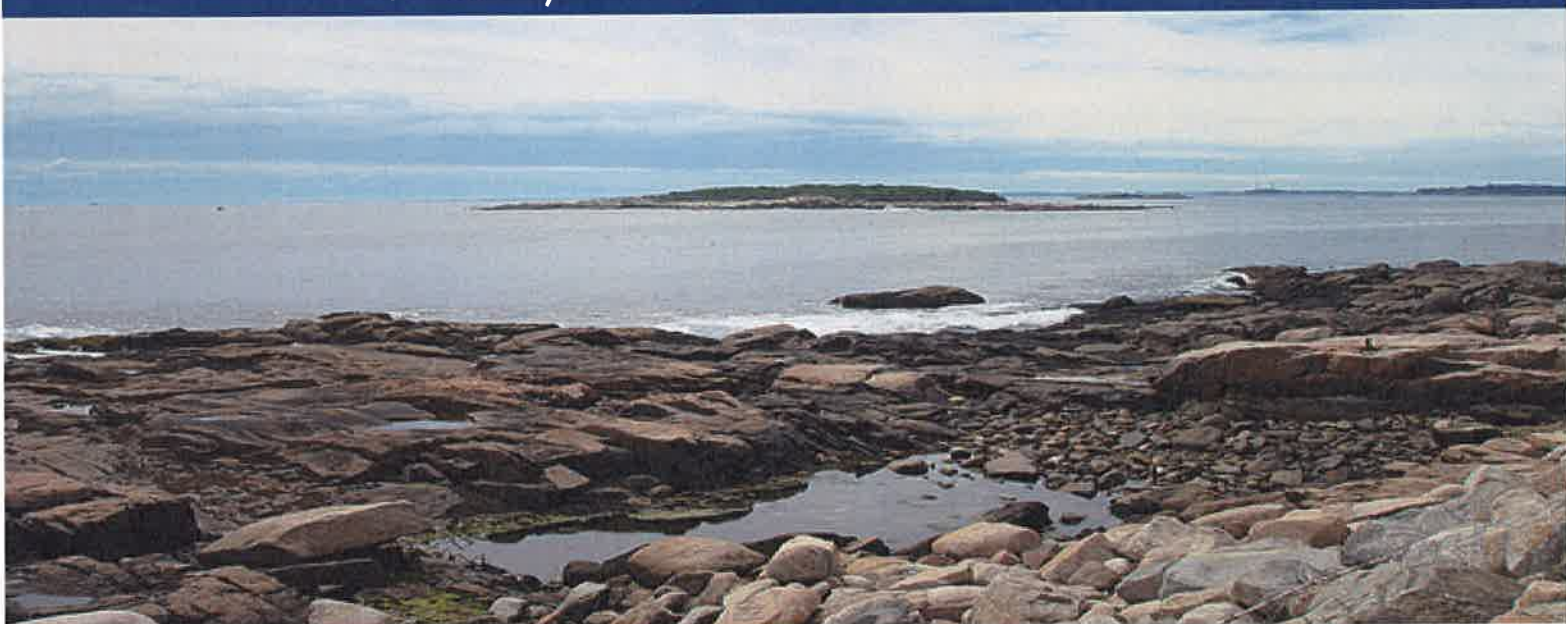


Rockport Community Visioning: What Future Do We Want For Our Community?

Town of Rockport, Rockport Planning Board

Prepared by The Metropolitan Area Planning Council
November, 2017



Acknowledgements

Rockport Planning Board

Herman S. Lilja, Chair

Edward S. Hand, Jr., Vice-Chair

Hank Betts

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Professional technical assistance provided by staff from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council:
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Wallace, PhD; Joshua Weissman LaFrance, and Steve Winter.

Thanks extended to Aidan Weissman LaFrance for providing event photography

This project was funded by:

Massachusetts Community Compact,
provided by the Town of Rockport and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

District Local Technical Assistance,
provided by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council

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This is our intent

"Planning boards across the Commonwealth occasionally produce master plans for their towns or cities. We've done the same thing over the years. Sometimes such plans lead to actions that significantly improve life for residents. But often they are produced by outside consultants and result in around 50 recommendations, often without prioritization or details of implementation."

"This time we're doing something different. We want ideas to come from residents and want those ideas to go through a process that results in just a few that have very strong resident interest. Then we might well expect firm town support for the one or two per year that come up in town meeting or other venues."

"Discover one or a few initiatives over the next several years that attract strong support from residents and key town organizations, and are likely to lead to major improvements in some aspects of quality of life in our town."



Executive Summary

Rockport is in Essex County, Massachusetts. The population was 5,276 as of July 1, 2017. Rockport is approximately 40 miles northeast of Boston at the tip of the Cape Ann peninsula. It is directly east of Gloucester and is surrounded on three sides by the Atlantic Ocean.

It is part of the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH Metropolitan Statistical Area. The town has a total area of 17.6 square miles, 7.1 miles of which is land and 10.5 miles of which is water.

The National Oceanographic and Aeronautical Administration (NOAA) offers these 2010 demographic statistics for Rockport:

- 1) Unemployment Rate: 5.2%
National Rate: 7.9%
- 2) Median Household Income: \$70,625.00
National Average: \$51,914.00 (updated 2011)
Individuals in Rockport living in poverty: 3.7%
Poverty threshold, individual, defined by US Census for 2010 as \$11,139
- 3) Median age: 51.2
National median: 37.2
- 4) Race: Rockport only
White: 97.0%
All other: 3%
- 5) Foreign Born: 3.9%
National Average: 12.7%
Speak English less than very well: 1.1%
National Average: 8.7%

MAPC and the full membership of the Rockport Planning Board conducted town-wide information gathering exercises that brought Rockport residents and members of the Rockport small business community together to enunciate challenges the town is facing in terms of growth and development.

MAPC and the Planning Board worked together to identify which, of the challenges surfaced, are the most critical to the future of Rockport. The Planning Board visited all elected boards and commissions in Rockport to gather acknowledgement of and support for integrated, town-wide strategies to address the issues that both hold high significance and are commonly-held.

There is a lot to like about Rockport.

And indeed, Rockporters have a dedicated and commonly-held sense of stewardship to preserve the authenticity of character, historic nature, and old New England charm of the town. The outdoors---beaches, rocky shores, woods, conservation land, paths, trails are natural resources that are part of everyday life, in every season.

There is an awareness in Rockport that town demographics reflect issues that can be addressed only through realistic, sustainable long-term strategies, implemented now and showing results in the future.

Preservation of ocean view corridors is a high priority for a town whose residents value and take comfort from the natural, untamed elements seen in a New England town built close by the Atlantic Ocean. Rockporters believe the ancient ocean vistas that so much define their town are owned by all and should be seen by all, and should be not view-obstructed by large single family homes built directly on the ocean front. The community feels strongly about preserving the unchanged, ancient view corridors to the Atlantic Ocean that surrounds the town on three sides.

References to the harbor spoke of the serenity and beauty of the harbors---moorings, recreational boats large and small, open water, charter fishing boats, docks, and various marine support services. We heard many comments about the waterfront; large numbers of people feel there is an unmet need for additional mooring space where there is not now mooring space.

Living next to the water, there is a natural utility and function the New England coast brings to those who are inclined to use it for recreational and wellness activities. This perspective extends to coastal uses like kayaking, swimming, sailing, SCUBA diving, commercial whale watching, distance sailing race activities, recreational fishing, and other active recreation that can be done close to shore. Rockport wants a participatory waterfront. What do we need to do to use this resource in a way that makes sense to all---and not just look at it?

Automobile, bicycle and pedestrian traffic have an uneasy relationship to one another in this small town, particularly in the summer. Parking is a problem that is significant and chronic.

Rockporters are beginning to understand the value of intra-town shuttle service that serves residents of all ages, and visitors as well.

Pigeon Cove Ledges and Rockport High School Apartments offer a total of 61 units for fixed income elders. Millbrook Park offers 80 units of state and federally subsidized housing for low income seniors.

The visioning sessions highlighted two issues that intersect one another: (1) encouraging younger families to make Rockport their home and (2) attainable housing. Rockport is now exploring Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) as a possible way to address both issues. TOD is a type of development that includes a mixture of housing, office, retail, and other amenities integrated into a walkable neighborhood and located within a half-mile of quality public transportation.

Based on information and perspective surfaced in the visioning process, the Planning Board is developing a number of action-oriented ideas that address commonly-held and frequently mentioned issues that are representative of the concerns many Rockporters see the town facing over the next 10 to 15 years.

The Planning Board will facilitate processes that allow town residents to look at the larger, comprehensive list of priorities and identify those most important to them. In this way, residents can guide limited resources to address issues of greatest local significance.

###

This is what we did:

The Planning Board for the Town of Rockport wanted the citizens of Rockport to identify issue areas that might have the inertia to develop into projects in Rockport over the next 10 to 15 years. The intended outcome is to enhance the quality of life for all. The Planning Board wanted to give a unified voice to citizen thinking on what kinds of change is seen as important by Rockporters. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) implemented information gathering sessions to capture that voice. The mission of MAPC is to promote smart growth and regional collaboration by engaging the public in responsible stewardship of our region's future.

MAPC talked with the Planning Board to understand the kinds of citizen perspective that would be helpful in planning for the future. The Board wanted to focus on identifying a few clearly stated issues that are commonly held and show strong support within the town. The Planning Board would then suggest projects the town can implement, one by one, to address those issues without overwhelming the limited resources of a small town.

The Planning Board was very involved in identifying the kinds of information we collected at the events. Every member of the Planning Board came to both events and worked at the stations, greeting participants and helping any who asked with clarifying information.

The Planning Board wished to pose broad and general questions that each person would answer according to individual perspective and experience. How important is promoting population growth and balance and how should we do this? What amenities are important to the great majority of our residents? How important is Rockport's character and charm and what initiatives would support this?

The two visioning sessions designed by MAPC used identical formats for gathering perspective, the only difference being that one was scheduled for an early weekday evening, and the other for a Saturday. The intended outcome of the visioning sessions is to uncover areas where change might be needed; change seems likely to strengthen the quality of life in our town over the next several years. Both workshops took place at the Brenner Friends Room of the Rockport Public Library.

These public forums used the open house model: people are welcome to drop by any time between posted hours and stay for as long as they wish or are able. The average visit at an open house forum is between 30 and 45 minutes. The forums offer a two and one half hour window to attend.

Coffee and light refreshments were provided. One table was set up for children and had paper, pens, pencils, and markers. Tables and chairs were set up off to the side so that participants could sit down and provide space for thoughtful, unhurried responses for each station. Also, there was a lot of discussion at these tables about Rockport in the near future.

Upon entering the open house and registering, each visitor was given a map of the "stations" in the room, and what kinds of feedback and perspective each station was seeking. Please see

the chart at the end of this report for a sense of what the room looked like, and how people provided information and perspective. Also included are a map of the way the room was set up, and samples of the cards participants used to provide perspective.

A small number of easels held wall-size posters providing information about Rockport including: current demographics, current zoning, population trends, and a map showing approximate locations where the people who attended the event could note where they lived, and how they traveled to work. These posters gave information about the town, but also provided a place for people to gather and talk about the information, and about the town. Planning Board members worked at assigned stations, staffed the registration table, or circulated throughout the room engaging attendees in conversation about Rockport.

Each station asked for targeted information.

1) Station One: Where do you live? How do you get to work?

This shows what neighborhoods were represented. This helps us understand where we need more active outreach the next time we bring people together.

2) Station Two: Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities

What makes Rockport a great place to live? What can we do better? What are our strongest community assets?

3) Station Three: Visual Preference

There were a variety of pictures on the table---streets, sidewalks, homes, downtown areas, open space, etc. People were asked to select three pictures that represent something they really like about Rockport---or pictures that represent something we do not want in our future. In an open space below the picture, we asked why the picture was selected.

4) Station Four: Priorities for the Future

Each participant asks of ones self: "What is important to me?" over the next 10 years.

The Planning Board set up an online poll at Survey Monkey to draw additional comments, and also for those who were not able to attend either public meeting. Please see the Rockport Planning Board web site for more information about this interesting survey.

"Planning boards across the Commonwealth occasionally produce master plans for their towns or cities. We've done the same thing over the years," Planning Board member Cameron Smith said. "Sometimes such plans lead to actions that significantly improve life for residents. But often they are produced by outside consultants and result in around 50 recommendations, often without prioritization or details of implementation."

"This time we're doing something different. We want ideas to come from residents and want those ideas to go through a process that results in just a few that have very strong resident interest," Smith said.

###

This is what we heard

Issues Important to the Town of Rockport

Schools:

Maintain our small school system to measureable standards of excellence

- Maintain our small school system to measureable standards of excellence (Teachers Salaries, MCAS scores for Grade 10, Per Pupil Expenditure, Percent of students at each level of MCAS Graduating students attending higher education)
- Employ other system wide evaluation methodology not directed by numbers and statistics

Parking, Transit, Cyclist safety:

Getting around the town

- Rockporters want a parking strategy that is compatible with a historic, small New England town and serves residents, tourism, and local small business
- Rockporters are beginning to understand the need and value of intra-town, locally planned transit service that serves residents of all ages, and visitors as well
- Parking management is a high priority issue
- Pedestrians and cyclists sharing the roadways with automobiles feel unsafe in their own town, and is a high priority issue
- Pedestrians and cyclists do not---currently---safely share roadways with automobiles
- Make Rockport bicycle-friendly
- Place bicycle amenities on the roadways, at the Commuter Rail, at the beaches, at the trail heads, and downtown

Businesses/Stores:

Improve support of town businesses

- Town-wide support for local small business---this is not so much about “buy local” although that is a good idea, but it is more about the town and its citizens understanding the role of small business in the town’s economy
- Our business community feels somewhat isolated
- Some in the hospitality industry cluster---B & B, Inns, lodges, restaurants, catering—do not feel their needs or their contributions are fully recognized by the town
- Are there regularly scheduled listening sessions where the small business community can interact informally and off the record with municipal staff, boards, and commissions?
- Tourism is a significant driver of the economy
- The juncture of tourism, traffic, parking, and pedestrians---is problematical. However, tourism and day visitors are not solely responsible for the problem, but they are one component part of the problem.
- If traffic management, pedestrian management, and parking management and not fully under control---this adversely affects business.
- Is there an awareness of how tourist dollars create business tax income?
- Is there an awareness of how much local spending tourism generates?

Families/Young Families:

Create incentives that will bring young families to Rockport

- Creating a diversity of attainable housing stock will attract younger families to Rockport
- Diversity in culture, ethnicity, race is important

- Attracting younger people to settle and raise families in Rockport is a high priority
- Part of preserving the small town character of Rockport is bringing in more younger families to live here
- A public school system that can demonstrate excellence is one part of attracting younger families to Rockport

Homes/Housing:

Attainable Housing, Racial and Cultural Diversity, Families

- Creating a diversity of attainable housing stock
- Rockporters are not opposed to changes in the demographics of their town
- Want to develop more moderate income housing
- Asking for planning and strategies now for a Rockport in 15 years that shows diversity in ages, incomes and cultures
- Create incentives that will bring young families to Rockport

Character/Charm/Open Viewscapes/Environment:

Preserve the small town character and historic New England charm of Rockport

- Preservation of ocean view corridors is a high priority for a town that values and finds comfort in the natural and untamed environmental elements found in a coastal New England town
- Protect our ancient ocean vistas by limiting the size of homes along the shoreline
- Do we understand challenges related to climate change impacts on beaches.
- Develop a focused and resolute climate change adaptation strategy for Rockport

- Can we work to understand a natural lightscape?
- Plan and sustain a downtown that meets the needs of business, traffic management, parking, safe streets, and also has accessible public spaces for people to gather informally

###

Appendix:

I. Parking Resources & Best Practice in Massachusetts

II. Best Practice in Development of Employment Housing

III. Rockport Open House Visioning Sessions

IV. Outreach Material

Appendix:

I. Parking Resources & Best Practice in Massachusetts

Parking Resources & Best Practice Found in Massachusetts

Resources

[Sustainable Transportation: Parking Toolkit](#)

This toolkit, created by MAPC, is designed to help local officials, developers, citizen board members, and advocates understand the sources of parking issues in their communities and identify potential solutions.

[MAPC's Parking Assistance Program](#)

Getting parking right can help municipalities meet many of our other goals, like increasing affordable housing, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, encouraging economic development, and promoting public health.

- ✓ [Local Parking Studies](#)
- ✓ [Parking Management Planning by MAPC](#)

[Perfect Fit Parking](#)

- ✓ MAPC has opened an initiative to develop the data and tools that communities need to establish informed, sustainable, and economical parking policies.
- ✓ MAPC Contact: [Kasia Hart](#)
- ✓ Biography: [K. Hart bio](#)

[Community Transportation Technical Assistance](#)

- ✓ Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and MAPC
- ✓ The process begins with the community inviting a team of transportation planners to discuss the issues----and ends with the planners recommending solutions to address the concerns.
- ✓ Funded by the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Parking Resources & Best Practice Found in Massachusetts

- ✓ April 2013
- ✓ Funded by the EPA Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Technical Assistance Grant and the Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance
- ✓ Paige Duncan AICP, Planning Director pduncan@foxboroughma.gov

Town of Gloucester, MA

- ✓ Downtown Gloucester Parking Study
- ✓ 2015
- ✓ Gregg Cadematori, Director, Community Development Department
gcadematori@gloucester-ma.gov
- ✓ Matt Coogan, Senior Planner, Community Development Department
mcoogan@gloucester-ma.gov

Town of Holliston, MA

- ✓ Downtown Holliston Parking Analysis: MAPC
- ✓ September 2014
- ✓ Funded by the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- ✓ Jeff Ritter, Town Administrator ritterj@ho11iston.kl2.ma.us
- ✓ Sarah Kurpiel Lee, Deputy Director of Transportation, MAPC slee@mapc.org

Town of Holliston, MA

- ✓ [Downtown Holliston Parking Analysis to 100% Design](#) McMahon Associates
- ✓ February 2017
- ✓ Gary McNaughton, Vice President & Regional Manager for New England
gmcnaughton@mcmahonassociates.com

Parking Resources & Best Practice Found in Massachusetts

- ✓ Contact: Eric Bourassa, MAPC, ebourassa@mapc.org
Sarah Kurpiel Lee, MAPC, slee@mapc.org

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance Program

- ✓ The primary mission of the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative is to make downtown revitalization an integral part of community development in cities and towns across the Commonwealth.
- ✓ Funded by MA Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
- ✓ Emmy Hahn, Program Coordinator/MDI elizabeth.hahn@state.ma.us

Best Practice

Town of Cohasset, MA

- ✓ Cohasset Village Parking Analysis: MAPC
- ✓ June 2015
- ✓ Funded by the Town of Cohasset & Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- ✓ Clark Brewer, Chair, Cohasset Planning Board jpilzak@cohassetma.org

Town of Essex, MA

- ✓ [Essex Center Parking Strategy](#) Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates
- ✓ October 2016
- ✓ Funded by Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance Program
- ✓ Matthew Coogan, AICP, CNU-A mcoogan@gloucester-ma.gov
- ✓ Jason Schrieber jschrieber@nelsonnygaard.com

Town of Foxborough, MA

- ✓ Foxborough Downtown Parking Study: MAPC

Parking Resources & Best Practice Found in Massachusetts

Town of Hudson, MA

- ✓ [Comprehensive Downtown Parking Study](#)
- ✓ December 2014
- ✓ Jack Hunter, Community Development Director jhunter@townofhudson.org

Town of Ipswich, MA

- ✓ Hammatt Street Parking Lot Management Recommendations: MAPC
- ✓ April 2017
- ✓ Glenn Gibbs, Planning Director glenn@ipswich-ma.gov

Town of Littleton, MA

- ✓ Commuter Rail Parking Study: MAPC
- ✓ September 2014
- ✓ Funded by the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- ✓ Keith Bergman, Town Administrator kbergman@littletonma.org

Town of Scituate, MA

- ✓ Scituate Harbor Parking Analysis: MAPC
- ✓ March 2015
- ✓ Funding provided by the Town of Scituate & Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- ✓ Brad Washburn, Director of Planning and Development
planning@scituatema.gov

Parking Resources & Best Practice Found in Massachusetts

Town of Wareham, MA

- ✓ [Park Wareham](#): The Town of Wareham implemented a parking permit program to preserve the livability residential neighborhoods by discouraging non-residents from parking on residential streets for long periods.
- ✓ Kenneth Buckland, Town Planner planning@wareham.ma.us
- ✓ Derek Sullivan, Town Administrator administration@wareham.ma.us

Town of Wareham, MA

- ✓ [Onset Beach Parking Study](#)
- ✓ Jason Schrieber [Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates Inc.](#)
- ✓ Funded by Town of Wareham & [Massachusetts Downtown Initiative](#)

###

Appendix:

II. Best Practice in Development of Employment Housing

Best Practice in Development of Employment Housing

Best Practice in Development of Employment Housing

1) Mount Desert Island, Maine

Island Housing Trust

PO Box 851

Mount Desert, Maine 04660

The Ripples Hill Community

The Sabah Woods

Board of Directors

Alison Beane, Executive Director

2) Westford, MA

Westford Housing Authority

65 Tadmuck Road

Westford, MA

Cottages in the Woods

Graniteville Woods

The Residences at Stoney Brook

Board of Commissioners

Paul Teixeira, Executive Director

3) Great Barrington, MA

Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire

P.O. Box 733

Great Barrington, MA

Forest Springs

Hillside Avenue

Pine Woods

Board of Directors

Timothy Geller, Executive Director

Best Practice in Development of Employment Housing

4) Martha's Vineyard, MA

Vineyard Housing Office

Island Housing Trust
346 State Road
Vineyard Haven, MA

Board of Directors

Governance Committee

Philippe Jordi, Executive Director

5) Studio One, Inc.

Architects/Planners
115 State Street
Springfield, MA

Gregory Zorzi, AIA, President

6) Urban Land Institute (ULI)

Advisory Services Panel

Urban Land Institute
2001 L Street NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC

Beth Silverman, Senior Director, Advisory Services

The ULI Terwilliger Center for Housing

Conducts research, performs analysis, provides expert advice, and develops best practice with special attention to workforce and affordable housing.

Stockton Williams, Executive Director

Appendix:

III. Rockport Open House Visioning Sessions

Rockport Visioning Forum

Instructions on what do do!

May 24 and June 3, 2017

Station One: Where do you live? How do you travel to work?

Place a dot on the map near where you live---does not need to be exact.
Please let us know how you travel to work.

Station Two: Strength, Challenges, and Opportunities

What makes Rockport a great place to live?
What can we do better?
What are our strongest community assets?

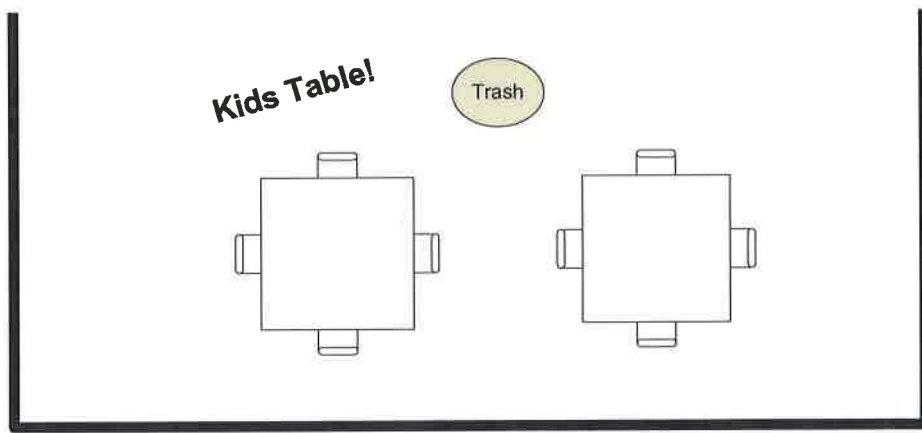
Station Three: Visual Preference

There are a variety of picture on the table.
Select three pictures that represent something you really like about Rockport.
Or pictures that represent something we do not want in our future.
In the white space below the picture, write why you selected the picture.

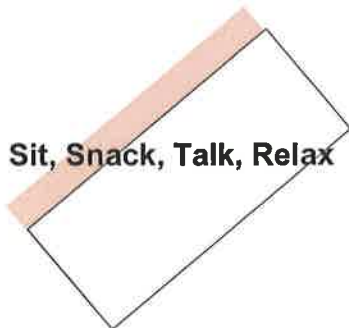
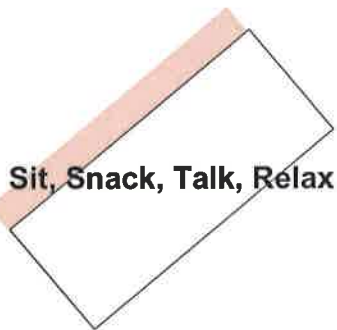
Station Four: Priorities

What are our priorities for the future of Rockport?
Each person asks of ones self: **"What is important to me?"** over the next 10 years.



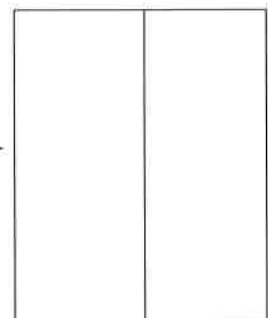


Small Step Up, Please be Careful

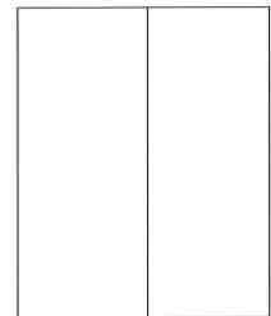


Station One
Where do you live?
How do you get to work?

Station Two
Strengths, Challenges,
Opportunities



Station Three
Visual Preference



Station Four
Priorities

Appendix:

IV. Outreach Material

Sponsored by the Town of Rockport Planning Board

Help Improve the Quality of Life in Rockport!

Open House Forum!

Two open house forums will provide opportunities for all who attend to offer feedback and perspective about challenges facing Rockport over the next 10 to 15 years.

The forums will be open houses: people are welcome to drop by any time between posted hours and stay for as long as they are able. The average visit at an open house forum is between 30 and 45 minutes.

The intended outcome of the visioning sessions is to highlight initiatives that seem likely to strengthen the quality of life in our town over the next several years and that have attracted strong support from residents and key town organizations.



TWO OPPORTUNITIES TO ATTEND!

Wednesday, May 24, 2017
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

or

Saturday, June 3, 2017
10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Rockport Public Library
*Peggy Dirk Brenner
Friends Room
17 School Street
Rockport, MA*

Light refreshments will be
served.

All ages are welcome.

ACCOMODATIONS?
Contact Steve Winter
617.933.0753





Amanda Linehan
Communications Manager
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
617-933-0705
alinehan@mapc.org

For Immediate Release: Thursday, May 18, 2017

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF ROCKPORT!

Rockport Visioning Forum will Suggest Citizen Priorities to the Rockport Planning Board

ROCKPORT – Do you live in **Rockport**? Are you interested in helping to shape the community's vision and for future development and growth?

Join the Rockport Planning Board and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) for either of two public "Open House" style meetings on **Wednesday, May 24, 2017 anytime between the hours of 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., or Saturday, June 3, 2017, anytime between the hours 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at the Rockport Public Library, 17 School Street.** Participants will help the Rockport Planning Board identify and prioritize initiatives to enhance the quality of life in town over the next 10 to 15 years.

Members of the public can stop in any time during posted hours. Most participants stay between 30 to 45 minutes, providing feedback to the Planning Board through facilitated activities.

Light refreshments will be served, and all ages are welcome.

Funding for the **Rockport Visioning Forum** is provided by the Town of Rockport and by the 2017 District Local Technical Assistance program, which enables MAPC to engage the public in responsible stewardship of our region's future.

For more information about the Rockport Visioning Forum, or for ADA accommodations, contact:

Steve Winter at 617-933-0753 or swinter@mapc.org

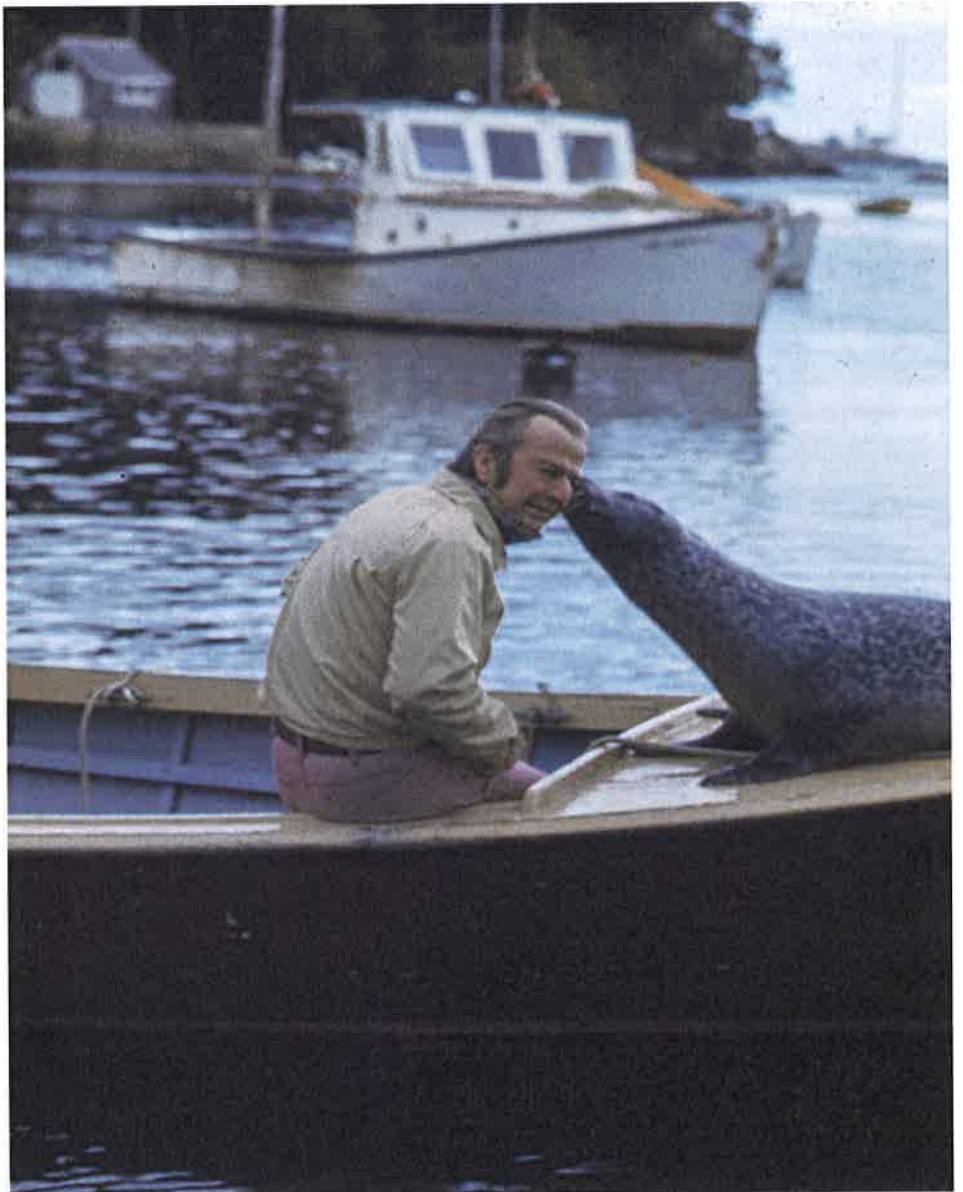
Josh Weissman LaFrance at 617-933-0741 or jweissman@mapc.org

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Rockport Community Visioning

Town of Rockport, Rockport Planning Board

Prepared by The Metropolitan Area Planning Council
November, 2017



Harry Goodridge and André the Seal in 1974
Photo taken by Lew Dietz courtesy of the Goodridge Family Archives