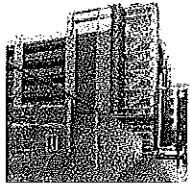


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## From the Editor

### Eastport's economic development effort gets down to street level

**B**ack in October, Mainebiz held an "On the Road" event in Eastport, the easternmost city in the country.

Apart from the deer we hit on the drive back, the entire visit to Eastport was one of the highlights of the year.

First off, Eastport is spectacular, even by the freakish standards set by the rest of Maine. With the fall light reflected off the water, you could stand on Water Street, Eastport's main commercial thoroughfare, and look across at Campobello Island, New Brunswick, on the other side of the bay. Many of the stately, brick downtown buildings date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. As far as basics, Eastport has it.

Where Eastport needs some help is in attracting people — permanent residents, homeowners, business owners, investors and so on.

This was my first time in Eastport. Walking down Water Street, we did see a number of businesses that were closed for the season, but very few empty storefronts. There were gift shops, galleries, restaurants and a wildly colorful candy store. There was a vitality that seems to be missing when you look at the Google Maps "street view" images, which date to October 2007 and show numerous vacancies in the downtown.

Mainebiz's recent NEXT List honorees included Chris Gardner, executive director of the Eastport Port Authority, a dynamic advocate for the city. Eastport has one of three deep-water ports in Maine (along with Portland and Searsport). At 65 feet, it is also the deepest port on the East Coast — a factor that is increasingly important as cargo ships get larger and larger.

Recently, City Manager Elaine Abbott got in touch to say that the city is launching its first organized economic development effort.

It has created a website and an eight-page brochure, "Eastport Leads the Way." To help create Eastport's economic development campaign, the city brought in one of its own residents, Colleen Morton, owner of Bridge Solutions International LLC.

Not surprisingly, Eastport's effort revolves around the deep-water port, an effort to harness tidal power and its airport.

Eastport also stresses its "fast-track" permitting process and workforce development initiatives.

Its poster child for growth may be Millennium Marine USA. Readers might remember a profile Mainebiz had

earlier this year about Cory Guimond, who moved his boat-building operation from New Brunswick to Eastport within the past few years. At the time we talked with Guimond in May, Millennium

Marine was in the process of building its staff from 30 people to 50. It had orders taking it well into 2016.

Other attributes highlighted by Eastport include its downtown redevelopment efforts and quality of life, including arts and culture and local food initiatives.

The city is getting the brochure into the hands of the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Maine Office of Tourism, and also getting into trade shows, conferences and other economic development avenues.

"Eastport has never had an organized push at economic development, but there's been 100% community buy-in and support for the project," Abbott says. "Eastport is truly an innovative community and we're quite proud of this effort."

The other day, as part of going back and forth with Elaine Abbott on details of the economic development campaign, I mentioned my experience looking at Google Maps' street view — the images that date to 2007. By day's end she had sent a letter to Google asking them to come out and take another look at Eastport. Time to update that 8-year-old street view, which can shape the outside view. Lubec must have been visited by Google on the same stop, in October 2007, but Machias (2011), Millinocket (2014) and Houlton (2014), to name a few, have all had more recent visits. ■



Peter Van Allen  
pvanallen@mainebiz.biz

bernsteinshur.com

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