

Introduction

The Town of Poland has experienced significant population growth over the past thirty-five years, from 2015 people in 1970 to over 5200 people in 2005. There are multiple factors contributing to this rapid growth in population. Poland is a desirable place to live with its geographic location adjacent to major employment and service centers and major transportation routes, making for an easy commute. Poland has a generally rural character, with larger lots and generally lower taxes than adjacent service center communities. Poland has a large number of lakes and ponds that are desirable for both seasonal and year round homes.

There are several large non-residential tax payers in the community, including the Poland Spring bottling plant, the Poland Spring Hotel, several youth summer camps and several natural resource based businesses (Pike Industries, Jolly Gardiner Products and Morse Brothers Bark Mulch). Collectively, these uses represent less than 4% of the taxable valuation of the community. Accordingly, the majority of the municipal tax revenue base is derived from residential uses.

Because of the Town's rapid increase in population and subsequent dramatic increases in the residential component of the tax base, the Town is concerned that the current business/commercial/residential tax base will not be sufficient to maintain and provide affordable quality municipal services to the residential and corporate citizens in the future. In order to provide a balance of tax base to support municipal services, without overburdening residential uses, non-residential valuation should exceed 30% of the community's total valuation. While Poland's non residential property valuation is currently approximately 30%, less than 4% is in real property.

In light of the above, the Town of Poland commissioned Community Dynamics Corp. (CDC) to develop a realistic and achievable economic development strategy to meet the community's long term goals. The primary objective of this strategy is to establish a workable framework to developing a sustainable and ongoing process for broadening the Town's tax base.

In developing this strategy, CDC conducted the following analyses: an inventory and assessment of current community economic development assets; an evaluation of state and regional initiatives and competitive opportunities and constraints; and an assessment of economic development opportunities within the Town and abutting communities.

Community Assets

Poland's Place in the Region

The Town of Poland is geographically situated adjacent to major growth centers in central and southern Maine. It has a unique economic history; its local economy was developed and is still centered upon its valuable water resources. Located 20 miles north of Portland and 5 miles from the center of Lewiston-Auburn, Poland is strategically located adjacent to Maine's population and economic centers. Nearly 50 % of Maine's population is located within a 30-mile radius of Poland. While Poland does not in and of itself have a broad-based, diverse economy, it is part of a much larger economically robust regional economy.

The Town of Poland is considered part of the Lewiston-Auburn Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This MSA has one of the most robust and thriving economies in the State, which possesses innovative healthcare, high precision manufacturing, financial services and printing sectors. The region is home to world-class companies, colleges and institutions. Some of the State's most prestigious companies are located in the region including Poland Spring Bottling, Proctor & Gamble's Tambrands, Inc., General Electric and L.L. Bean's Telemarketing Center, to name but a few. A recent independent study by KPMG International ranked the cost of doing business in this MSA as nearly two %age points below the U.S. benchmark, making it one of the most desirable places to do business in the State and northeast. Poland's major contributions to the MSA's economy are the Poland Spring Water Company, which employs over 400 people, and the Poland Spring Inn.

This MSA is centrally located in Maine and offers access to numerous institutions of higher learning, including renowned Bates College, L-A College, (the fastest growing campus of the University of Maine System) and Central Maine Technical College. Central Maine Technical College and L-A College work closely together to share course offerings.