

# Technical Assistance Panel Application

**FINAL**

(revised, 1/30/12)

Please provide the following information and submit to ULI Boston

Applicant Organization: Town of Mt. Desert (Hancock County, Maine) Revitalization Committee)

Date: January 30, 2012

Contact Person: P. Hamilton ("Ham") Clark, III

Title: Revitalization Committee Chair

Address: (Winter) – "Markham Willows" 3383 Sage Rd. Markham, VA 22643  
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Please attach the following:

## 1. Statement of the problem/issue.

*Provide a brief description of the major problems or issues that you wish the Panel to address. Include a brief history and current status of the project/study area/issue.*

The Town of Mount Desert (TMD) is a Township that cuts across the middle of Mt. Desert Island, and it is comprised of six small villages. The largest of these is Northeast Harbor where the Town office is located. TMD has a year-round resident population of 2070, but is also home to a vibrant and affluent summer resident community who swell the Town's population in the months from June – October to over 7500. Over the years, these summer residents, who contribute 75% of the Town's tax revenue base, have purchased much of the land in and around Northeast Harbor. While these seasonal residents greatly support the economy when they are on the island, the local economy all but dries up for eight months of the year. In addition, the year-round population has gradually migrated to the more rural parts of the Town where there is more affordable housing.

While our Committee acknowledges that these dynamics are not altogether different from many "summer" communities in New England, the impact of these economic and demographic changes to Northeast Harbor in particular have become very acute in recent years. There are now at least four vacant lots on Main Street, the result of separate fires several years ago, and it has become increasingly difficult to attract any new businesses to this village due to the extreme market seasonality. Among the year-round businesses in Northeast Harbor, the local market, the hardware store, and the gas station / variety store barely have enough customers to warrant them staying open but for several hours a day in the long off-season months.

There are a number of large year-round employers on Mount Desert Island (such as the Jackson Labs, MDI Hospital, College of the Atlantic, MD Biological Labs, to name a few), but most of their employees now commute to their jobs from off of the island due to the

lack of affordable and market rate housing on the Island. These large employers are aware of this problem, and we believe they would be willing partners with the Town of Mount Desert to help plan for attractive, mixed housing communities in the Town, perhaps even in close proximity to Northeast Harbor.

Our Committee made a series of recommendations to TMD's Board of Selectmen in April, 2011 (attached), which pointed out the need to engage outside counsel with expertise in revitalization "best practices." We have since come to the conclusion that some form of a public/private partnership with financial clout is needed to address these issues, and we are seeking input from the ULI as to the structure and approach this partnership should have.

## **2. Sponsor information**

*Please describe (1) the type of and major business activity of the sponsoring organization; (2) what role the sponsor plays in the particular issue(s) suggested for the Panel; and (3) include a brief history of important projects/activities that recently have taken place or are planned or under consideration.*

**(1) - The Revitalization Committee was formed in September, 2010 as a partnership between the Summer Residents Association and members of the year round population to address perceived economic issues in the Town and to foster a closer working relationship between the two groups.**

**(2) - Included in this Committee's primary recommendations to the TMD Board of Selectmen in April, 2011 was the call for an engagement of a TAP from ULI. After much discussion and education about the ULI, this approach was formally agreed by the Selectmen at their meeting in September, 2011. Budget funding was also approved by the Town to cover the costs of the TAP.**

**(3) - There is a \$2.2M capital project underway in the Town to improve the land-based features of the Town's marina in Northeast Harbor, which was funded by the Town via \$2.0M in bonded indebtedness. This project is scheduled for completion in June, 2012. The Revitalization Committee has recommended that the Town leverage this project further upon its completion by seeking out private partners to develop additional commercial businesses in the immediate vicinity of the marina and to link this area more closely with Main St.**

## **3. Questions and issues to be addressed by the Panel**

*List the major questions/issues to be evaluated by the Panel. Be as specific as possible. Please organize questions/issues by major topic, such as (1) market issues; (2) planning and design issues; (3) feasibility and financing issues; (4) management and implementation issues; and so on.*

**(Q1)- What types of tactical strategies could be appropriate for the Town and community leaders to consider to encourage and enable new business investments in the Main Street commercial district of Northeast Harbor ? ... and what uses are appropriate for developing the vacant lots on Main Street?**

**(Q2) – What strategies can be used to enable existing local businesses to attain and maintain profitability given the high seasonality of the local economy (e.g. marketing efforts, signage, volunteer pledges to 'buy local,' changes to land use ordinances, etc.)?**

(Q3) – What opportunities could be considered for better utilization of the public and private space next to the new marina, and how can this area be better connected to the Main St. commercial district? Should the Town consider the creation of an independent Public-Private Planning Committee to act as an “action agent” in this regard?

(Q4) – What initiatives could be undertaken to attract and enable more affordable housing in and around Northeast Harbor? What role can or should private funding (philanthropy, property tax surcharge, etc.) play in enabling a growing and economically sustainable year round community in and around Northeast Harbor?

(Q5) - How best can the larger on-island employers (such as Jackson Labs) be engaged in enabling affordable housing solutions for their employees in Northeast Harbor and the Town of Mount Desert?

(Q6) - Should the Town consider opening up public (or private) land for housing development in and around Northeast Harbor? What are possible public-private partnerships and opportunities for collaborations in this regard? How would such a partnership be funded and how would it work with the Town?

#### **4. Sponsor responsibilities - planning and logistics**

*Please identify the individuals who will be responsible for working with ULI Boston to prepare background and briefing documents; organizing and scheduling interviews; conducting a project/area tour; providing physical facilities for panel work sessions and presentation; and providing general logistical support. Also identify to extent known the key people whom you believe can contribute to the panel's understanding of issues. Please provide name, organization and title, telephone and fax numbers for all individuals listed.*

##### **Primary Contacts:**

Ham Clark; Revitalization Committee Chair  
(see contact information on p.1 of the application)

Lanie Lincoln; Revitalization Committee  
Winter – 978 738 4673  
Summer – 207 276 5146

Durlin E. Lunt; Town Manager, TMD  
P. O. 248  
21 Sea St.  
Northeast Harbor, ME 04662  
Ph -- 207 276 5531  
Fax -- 207 276 3232

##### **Key Panel Contributors:**

TMD Board of Selectmen:  
Thomas G. Richardson; Chairman, Board of Selectmen  
Rick Mooers, Vice Chairman  
John Macauley

Dennis Shubert  
Martha Dudman

**Other Stakeholders and Knowledge Sources (list to be narrowed down to 3-4 people)**

**Community Leaders:**  
Rick and Linda Savage  
Chuck Bucklin  
Sam Shaw  
Nancy Ho  
Jean Bonville  
Marilyn Damon

**Influential and involved Summer Residents:**  
Peter Godfrey  
Ed Lipkin  
Kathe McCoy  
Malcolm Peabody  
David Reis

**Other Knowledge Sources:**  
Chris Spruce; Executive Director, Island Housing Trust  
TBD; Director, Human Resources, Jackson Labs

**(Other members of the Revitalization Committee, but probably not contributors)**  
Stephanie Kelly-Reece  
Kathy Branch  
Buddy Brown  
Katie Bell

## **5. Fee arrangement**

*In December 2011, ULI Boston instituted a \$5,000 fee for the TAP program. This fee helps underwrite the overhead costs and staff time that is associated with the TAPs. Additional costs include the report writer's fee (\$1,500), transportation costs for the panelists (mileage to and from the TAP), lunch, briefing material and other logistical costs. The panelists donate all of their time preparing for the TAP, the day of the TAP and contributing to the final report, a \$30,000 - \$40,000 value.*

**Our Committee understands and agrees to all the fee arrangement, as delineated above, including lodging for panel members. Also, to facilitate more efficient time utilization, the sponsor agrees to pay for round trip air transportation from Boston (or other New England cities) to Bar Harbor, ME. [note: to avoid higher ticketing costs, the sponsor requests that these tickets be purchased as soon as possible after the TAP application is approved and the dates confirmed]**

## **6. General Panel Schedule**

*The attached schedule represents the general format and timing of the Panel process. The schedule is subject to change depending on the issues involved in the assignment.*

**The proposed dates for the TAP are June 24-25, 2012 (or any other dates during that week). Other possible dates for the TAP would be during the week of June 4<sup>th</sup>, between June 20-22, and many dates in July starting the week of July 8<sup>th</sup>. The detailed schedule and**

agendas will be developed and finalized with the ULI TAP members upon application approval.

**Note: we have set aside the dates June 3<sup>rd</sup> and June 4<sup>th</sup> for the TAP, with a report of findings from ULI-Boston scheduled for Monday evening at the Town of Mt. Desert Board of Selectmen's Meeting (time TBD).**