

Cumberland County Community Development Program  
2012 CDBG Planning Program Application  
*Community Cover Page*

**Project Title**      Town of Harpswell Economic Development Plan

**Lead Community**      Harpswell

**Additional Communities**      \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information**      Name Carolyn Tukey, Town Planner

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**Amount of CDBG Funds Requested**      \$10,000

**Total Estimated Project Cost**      \$15,120

**Name of Authorized Official**      Elinor Multer, Chair of Board of Selectmen

**Signature of Authorized Official**      

1. Describe the community problem or needs you wish to address with planning funds.
  - a. Describe the scope, magnitude, and severity of the problem.

The Town of Harpswell, with a population of roughly 4,700 year round residents, is interested in creating an economic development plan that outlines the goals, objectives and strategies for assisting its local businesses thereby improving the local economy and business climate. The Town of Harpswell relies heavily on its residential tax base, and is interested in looking at ways to develop more of a commercial tax base.

Without dedicated personnel and expertise in this area, its ability to develop such a plan is limited. Having a plan will put the Town in a better position to access and leverage resources to aid in the effort. The creation of a plan will enable to the Town to express its views on what role Town government should play in assisting economic development, including whether the Town

Community	% of Free and Reduced Lunch
Yarmouth	10%
Scarborough	16%
Gorham	21%
Freeport	25%
Windham	33%
<b>Harpswell</b>	<b>42%</b>

should focus on assisting existing business as well as working to attracting new business. Today, many of the community's families are forced to travel long distances, over an hour one way in some cases, in order to find a decent paying job. High gas prices and a weakened economy are making those jobs harder to find and less worth the long commute. In the past, the fishing industry,

Brunswick Naval Air Station and Bath Iron Works provided Harpswell families with ample employment opportunities. Now however, one would be hard pressed to find a full time job opening in the region that provided not only a livable wage, but also one that provided benefits. Evidence of area's decline can be seen in a variety of economic indicators. However, the most telling statistic that shows the recent economic recession's impact on families in Harpswell is the percentage of students in public schools receiving free or reduced lunch because of their family's income. For this academic year, nearly 42% of students from Harpswell use the program because of their low family income. To put that number in context, please see the table to the left, detailing just some of the other communities in Cumberland County and their free and reduce rates.

Without a strategy in place, the community and its leaders lack the necessary direction to determine what initiatives to implement and what Town resources the community is willing to invest that will help the business climate. As a result, the community is uncertain about its role in supporting its many small businesses and fostering job opportunities for its residents.

- b. Describe past efforts, if any, to address the problem.

Last November, the Town of Harpswell sought input from the Harpswell Business Association and other members of the business community by organizing a discussion forum. The forum was created in response to many Harpswell businesses discussing their challenges and limitations to growing, or even maintaining their businesses. One of the most prevalent themes discussed at the forum was the need to increase the marketing and awareness of the community and its assets. Some direct quotes from that event include: "We are not known on maps", "People don't know

how to get here or even that we exist,” and another referred to Harpswell as a “Hidden Treasure.” Another theme to the event was that the Town could and should be playing a role in marketing the community, its assets and its businesses to the larger region and to visitors.

c. **Does the problem have specific impacts on low/moderate income households or low/moderate income neighborhoods?**

With reduced economic activity, there are fewer local job opportunities for citizens, especially those who are low to moderate income persons. Traditionally, LMI persons are disproportionately affected by this trend due to their lower degree of educational attainment and lack of prior work experience that make them more marketable. With fewer local job opportunities, LMI persons are forced to commute longer distances to work. With already reduced incomes, the costs of transportation to and from work are disproportionately higher than others in the workforce.

Additionally, there are even fewer opportunities for LMI persons to start their own business. With fewer economic opportunities, many LMI persons are forced to be an employee rather than an employer, and are forced to settle for less income. What results is an ongoing cycle that creates little to no opportunity for upward mobility.

d. **Why are CDBG funds critical to the planning activity's success?**

As demonstrated before, CDBG funds are essential for this project because the greater Brunswick area, of which Harpswell is a part, is in need of economic development like never before. While this effort will not solve all of the community's economic issues, if coupled with the Mitchell Field reuse plan and other local projects, it will build momentum and continue to reignite the interest and the confidence of residents to do more about their community's economic future.

Funds are critical for this project because of the demand on local tax dollars for so many important issues, including the economic development of Mitchell Field, now getting underway, yet the desire to keep taxes from increasing during difficult economic times. A project of this nature has the potential of creating considerable economic improvements over time. Small improvements in many of the 120 or so small businesses in town could readily lead to opening additional employment opportunities for local residents.

2. **What is the strategy to complete the planning project?**

a. **Describe the planning tasks to be undertaken**

Because the municipal staff lacks the expertise to conduct such a project, a consultant will be hired to complete the work outlined in this proposal. The consultant will work collaboratively with community members, town officials, the Harpswell Business Association and area businesses on initiatives, programs, and services that advance the local economy by leveraging the community's existing assets. Through a series of community forums, the community will help identify those community assets, how best to leverage them and the barriers to their growth. The consultant will compile the ideas and data generated by the community and then mold all of that into an action plan that the community leaders can then implement.

The first forum will introduce the process for developing the strategy, provide an overview to the community and solicit the unique community assets. The primary assets identified from that forum, and through separate community survey methods leading up to that event, will become the focus of the rest of the process and create the direction of the economic development study. From there, an evening will be devoted to each asset. The consultant will facilitate the conversation of how best to leverage the asset, initiatives to implement in order to strengthen it and other components. Once that process is complete, the community will be allowed an opportunity to comment on the draft strategy before it goes on to adoption and then implementation.

The public solicitation period will also be an opportunity for community leaders to identify key figures in town who will then assist with implementing parts of the strategy either through membership on the Economic Development Planning Committee, or on one of the several teams that will be developed to tackle a specific initiative that comes out of the strategy.

**b. Outline the project's schedule**

Completed by:	Task:
1st week of June	Award notification received (assumption)
4th week of June	CDBG paperwork complete, consultant selected
1st week of July	Community forum dates set and advertised; background data gathered by consultant including, but not limited to, number and type of businesses; solicitation of community assets begins
4th week of July	Kick off community forum, assets identified and prioritized
2nd week of August	First community forum held for specific asset
2nd week of August	Second community forum held for specific asset
3rd week of August	Third community forum held for specific asset
3rd week of August	Fourth community forum held for specific asset
2nd week of Sept.	Draft economic development strategy completed, out for public comment
4th week of Sept.	Final community forum to solicit feedback for draft strategy
2nd week of Oct.	Adoption of economic development strategy
4th week of Oct.	ED Committee appointed holds 1st meeting to implement strategy

**c. Are community partnerships established and engaged in the project?**

The Harpswell Business Association is very supportive of the project and will assist in advertising about public meetings and getting the word out about the project to the community. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce already assisted in the start of this project by conducting a survey of the town businesses. Furthermore, the Midcoast Council of Governments and Midcoast Economic Development District have expressed their willingness to provide guidance and technical assistance as the Town conducts the study and then moves on to implementation.

**3. Convey your community's readiness to proceed.**

**a. How has the project been conveyed to community residents?**

The project scope of work, and all efforts by the community leading up to this application, have been directly shaped by the community. Over the last several years, conversations and discussions at planning board meetings, the recently held business forum, town meetings and selectmen's meetings in the community have highlighted the need for economic development at the community level. Furthermore, there are many people that have expressed interest in volunteering on the economic development planning committee that will be created as a part of this process.

**b. Are matching funds available for the project?**

There is a budgeted dollar match of \$2,500 that will be voted on at town meeting with an in kind match of at least an additional \$2,500.

**c. Are staff and/or consultants available to complete the project?**

Municipal staff will finalize the RFP for the consultant in anticipation of receiving the award. Once award notification is received, the Town will publish the RFP and allow three weeks for proposals. It is expected that the consultant will be chosen and ready to begin within 5 weeks of the Town receiving the award notification.

<b>Planning Grant – Program Budget</b>				
<b>Cost Category</b>	<b>CDBG Funds</b>	<b>Municipal Funds</b>	<b>Other Funds</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Consultant Services</b>	\$10,000			\$10,000
<b>Advertising</b>		\$120		\$120
<b>Other</b>		\$2,500		\$2,500
<b>1. In Kind</b>		\$2,500		\$2,500
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$5,120</b>		<b>\$15,120</b>
<b>Provide the basis for determination of budget amounts:</b> An estimate of consultant cost was provided by Mark Eyerman of Planning Decisions and Jason Bird of Midcoast Economic Development District.				