

MAINE'S DOWNTOWN QUALITY OF PLACE INVESTMENT PROGRAMS



Downtown Revitalization

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Prepared for the :
Maine State Planning Office

By
Alison Worster

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 3

Section 1

Findings & Recommendations.....4

 Policy Area #1

 Local Leadership

 1.1 Evaluations.....5

 1.2 Managers.....5

 1.3 Communication.....6

 1.4 Organization.....7

 Summary.....7

 Policy Area #2

 Funding

 2.1 Grant Writing.....7

 2.2 Fundraising.....8

 2.3 Revolving Loans.....8

 2.4 Marketing.....10

 Summary.....11

 Policy Area #3

 Recommendations for the Maine Downtown Center

 3.1 Legislation.....12

 3.2 Structure.....12

 3.3 Budget.....13

 3.4 National Affiliation.....14

 Summary.....14

 Policy Area #4

 Expanding Support Available to Towns

 4.1 Planning.....15

 4.2 Alternatives.....15

 4.3 Preservation.....16

 4.4 Adaptive Use.....16

 4.5 Wi-Fi.....17

 4.6 Housing.....18

 Summary.....18

Section 2

Town Case Studies.....19

 Bath19

 Damariscotta.....21

 Lewiston/Auburn.....22

 Lincoln.....23

 Norway.....25

 Rockland.....26

 Saco.....27

 Skowhegan.....28

Appendices.....31

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Downtown Project Executive Summary:

The attached report is the result of a summer intern's work to evaluate state support for Maine's downtowns. Her report gives detailed findings and recommendations, based on eight case study towns: Bath, Damariscotta, Lewiston/Auburn, Lincoln, Norway, Rockland, Saco and Skowhegan. There are many ideas included in the report, but they do not represent policy positions of the State Planning Office, but rather, are ideas intended to stimulate discussion. Alison Worster, an intern employed at the State Planning Office, conducted this study. We owe her many thanks for her diligence and thoughtful work.

Key Findings:

1. Three state programs offer technical assistance on downtown revitalization: The Main St. Maine Program provides a technical assistance model for local downtown revitalization. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program provides planning and infrastructure grants, façade improvement grants, micro-loan program funds, public facilities grants, and business assistance grants. The Maine Historic Preservation Commission provides technical assistance related to rehabilitation and restoration of historic buildings, nominates commercial districts to the National Register of Historic Places, awards grants to communities and assists property owners in applying for federal and state historic tax credits. Some towns have created their own downtown revitalization programs, without state assistance.

2. Strong local leadership and public-private collaboration are the key ingredients for successful downtown revitalization efforts. The need for strong local leadership and involvement of local merchants cannot be emphasized enough. Successful downtown revitalization efforts have both. The Main St. program focuses on leveraging these elements. Additional leadership training would be beneficial to towns who seek to improve their downtown areas.

3. In order to revitalize Maine downtowns, both technical assistance and public infrastructure funding is needed. Upgrading public infrastructure such as lighting, landscaping, roads and parking can draw private investment into downtowns. Hands on technical assistance can help towns secure grant funds, develop promotional events, create traffic and excitement and work to attract new business to their downtowns. Both technical assistance and public infrastructure are essential for revitalizing Maine downtowns.

4. If more towns are to be served or new services added to the Main St. program, new funding will be needed. Main St. Maine is a copyrighted program offered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and administered by the Maine Development Foundation. Currently, nine towns participate in this program. As many as 20 other towns are on a waiting list to join. Additional funding is needed if this program is to be expanded.

5. There is an unmet need for technical assistance to help smaller towns. A program that assists smaller towns to get

organized, apply for grants and make decisions about how to improve their downtowns is needed. These towns are either too small to meet the requirements of the Main St. program or don't wish to participate in it. The Maine Downtown Center and the Maine Development Foundation are interested in creating a program to meet this need, if funding can be found to support such an effort. DECD has recently provided CDBG funds to be used for this purpose, but whether the funding is enough to provide the outreach and hands-on assistance that these towns need remains to be seen.

6. A architect and a grant writer would make an enormous difference to towns seeking to revitalize their downtowns. Funding a staff or consulting grant writer and an architect who could serve towns on an as-needed basis would help towns leverage additional funding and generate additional rehab activity across the state. While CDBG applications are user friendly, federal and foundation grants require professional skills to be put together in a way that can compete for funds.

7. The Quality of Place Council should make sure funding for downtowns is included if they make a funding proposal. State funding for downtown revitalization would open the door to additional federal and private investment. Programs that now fund downtown revitalization:

- The Riverfront Community Development Program, which funds river restoration and riverfront projects
- The New Century Community Program, which funds cultural programs and preservation of the historic and cultural built environment
- The Municipal Investment Trust Fund, which funds public infrastructure such as lighting, sidewalks, pocket parks, and parking,

The Council should consider funding existing programs, rather than creating new programs.

8. A stronger, more organized advocacy effort to support downtowns is needed. In order to secure federal, state and philanthropic resources, a broad coalition of support is needed. Cultural agencies, developers, municipal governments, downtown merchants, chambers of commerce and volunteers could work together to identify and advocate for funds, and to make regulatory changes to support downtowns. The success of the new historic tax credit and building codes legislation shows that coalition building and hard work can pay off. The fledgling Downtown Coalition is working to build momentum and should consider a broad agenda that includes both funding and regulatory measures that will support downtowns.

On the whole, Maine's downtowns are doing better now than they were ten and twenty years ago. However, there are still empty storefronts and dilapidated buildings in many places that need attention. Increased public support of downtowns would sustain Maine's Quality of Place, and leverage business and philanthropic investment in Maine's downtowns.

Introduction

In December 2007, the first Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place published its first report *People, Place and Prosperity*, which identified Maine's downtowns as an integral aspect of Maine's Quality of Place. The second report from this first council, issued May 2008, builds on the prior report and offers 10 recommendations. Recommendation 10 urges the governor and legislature to adopt a policy statement in support of community and downtown revitalization. A remaining task identified by the council was an evaluation and analysis of current downtown revitalization programs, identifying gaps in service to all sizes and types of communities throughout the state.

The purpose of this report is to analyze the current activities to revitalize Maine downtowns. The report seeks to take stock of the services provided to Maine communities seeking to implement the recommendations contained in both the Quality of Place and the Brookings reports in both the context of the Maine Downtown Center Main Street Maine program and other varied programs. It seeks to identify the strengths of these programs as well as the weaknesses. In addition, it seeks to evaluate the level of adherence to the ideals of the Brookings Report, the Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In taking such factors into consideration, several recommendations are given in order to foster the success of downtown revitalization and smart growth in semi-urban areas throughout Maine. These recommendations are made in the context of having a goal of promoting downtown revitalization efforts throughout the state.

Towns were chosen for case studies based on a desire to provide a cross-sectional review of Maine towns. This study is not exhaustive, and there could be benefit derived from additional town analysis. Towns are varied regionally, historically and economically. For more information about the town demographics please note Appendices B-D, based on the 2000 U.S. Census. Eight total towns were chosen, four are Main Street Maine communities, Bath, Norway, Saco and Skowhegan, and four that are not currently participating, Damariscotta, Lewiston-Auburn, Lincoln, and Rockland. Each town was visited several times, and as many individuals from differing points of view were spoken

with as possible.

The Main Street program is an accredited copyrighted program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

This program has been highly successful throughout the country when implemented fully. The primary purpose of the program is to encourage economic redevelopment in the context of historic preservation. It involves a four point approach, 1.) design, 2.) organization, 3.) promotion and 4.) economic restructuring, which correspond to the four forces of real estate value, which are physical, political, social and economic, respectively. The National Trust emphasizes the need to implement all four points equally and fully. The program is intended to function as a grassroots, town driven process with assistance from the state coordinating program. The Maine Statewide Main Street Coordinating Program is currently the primary program housed within the Maine Downtown Center. There are 39 statewide coordinating programs throughout the country, and several citywide and regional coordinating programs. Currently there are 1200 active local and neighborhood Main Street programs nationally.

While there are many programs that offer grants to towns for various infrastructure projects, only the Main St. and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs offer specific technical assistance for revitalizing downtowns. DECD programs are referenced throughout this report, however they are limited to towns that are low income, where the population of the town is such that 51% or more of the population is at or below 80% of the annual median income, or for areas of the downtown that meets the HUD definition and the State of Maine definition for slum and blighted area. Slum and blight projects are limited only to exterior improvements of buildings. Programs run by the DECD require the town to apply, and matching funds must be put toward the project. The State Planning Office offers technical assistance to towns for developing local comprehensive plans. Regional Councils of Governments also offer technical assistance to towns for planning, zoning and permitting of new developments. A partial list of grants available to towns is included in Appendix E.







SECTION 1

Findings & Recommendations

Policy Area #1

Local Leadership

Providing an effective means by which to encourage local leadership to champion downtown revitalization programs.

Policy Area #2

Funding

Finding innovative ways to fund services to support statewide downtown revitalization efforts.

Policy Area #3

Recommendations for the Maine Downtown Center

Finding ways to enhance the Main Street program and maintain the high level of marketability associated with the program.

(Main Street is a trademarked program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This name carries a great deal of marketing potential both to towns and citizens. The marketability of the program is a quality sought by many towns that seek designation.)

Policy Area #4

Expanding Support Available to Towns

Finding a method to provide services to more Maine communities, including Main Street communities and those communities where the Main Street model is not scale-appropriate.



Policy Area #1 Local Leadership

Providing an effective means by which to encourage local leadership to champion downtown revitalization programs.

Finding 1.1

Downtown revitalization, regardless of program objectives, funds or state support, fails or struggles without local leadership. Leaders who are transplanted to an area can be successful; however the programs tend to be dependent on their continued presence, and do not transition well when these managers move on. Every downtown has a unique balance of powerful leadership spread throughout town organizations such as chambers of commerce, city or town government, merchants associations and citizen groups. When one group dominates the downtown revitalization program, other groups tend to take a back seat and do not get invested in the program. If citizens notice the lack of investment by long term local groups, the revitalization is often viewed as a phase that will not be sustained. Leadership often changes within towns over the lifespan of a revitalization program.

Funding from the CDBG program requires all communities who are invited into the next phase of any grant to assemble a citizens advisory committee (CAC) that includes representation of the various entities involved such as the town, the downtown group(s), and people who live in the downtown. The application for all towns is reviewed and scored on a points basis. One required piece of any application for funds is the Citizen Participation section which amounts to 20 points. Without substantial citizen involvement and participation the project will not garner enough points to be fundable.

Action 1.1

The Main Street Program currently requires that the applicant town or organization fill out an application which includes all of these considerations. National Main Street also includes in the program a resource team visit as part of the application process, one of the goals of which is to identify the leadership within a town.

Recommendation 1.1

Create a state review program for any town seeking to participate in the Maine Downtown Center's programs for downtown revitalization. The review program should take into account city participation, citizen participation, number and potential displacement of existing local groups, local economic expertise, local

economic growth councils and regional economic development districts, or Councils of Governments in order to determine where balance of power is located for each particular town. This review program should be incorporated in the resource team findings for new programs. Existing programs seeking further funding should also be reviewed on a regular basis in order to ensure that the program is taking into account any shifts in the balance of local power. The local leaders identified through the review must be invited to participate on the board of any program targeted at downtown redevelopment that is funded by the state.

Much of this recommendation could be accomplished in a resource team visit, as laid out by the National Trust, for those communities involved in the Main Street program. This would not need to include a National Trust employee, as several individuals who represent elements essential to a resource team are already invested in the Main Street Maine program and sit on the advisory council.

Finding 1.2

The National model for Main Street requires that for towns above 5,000 population, a full-time Main Street manager be hired to fill the needs of the board of directors, such as managing the program, coordinating volunteers, assisting with program implementation, and acting as a primary spokesperson for the organization. Although the role of the manager currently varies within the Main Street communities, it is integral that the board control the activities and goals of the program as it consists of varied groups of invested individuals. In Main Street, currently there is a requirement that the downtown manager be an independent individual employed only by the local Main Street program. According to the national model, Managers need to be paid a locally competitive salary. While there are several towns that currently pay below the regional median, others report that the salary requirements inhibit them from participating in the program. Furthermore, some small towns have a limited resource of individuals who have expertise in community planning, economic development, financial management, state and federal grant programs and historical preservation; all elements that are helpful to a successful downtown manager. In most small town situations, individuals with these talents are employed by the town. Towns that have not participated in the Main Street program have been successful in utilizing town officials as a quasi-manager or liaison for citizen boards.



Recommendation 1.2

For certain small town communities, some variation from the full time manager requirement may be needed. This may mean that these programs can not be nationally accredited as Main Street communities, which would call for an alternate designation (See Finding and Recommendation 4.2). In towns where there is a strong board that is representative of different facets of the community, including, but not limited to, business, homeowners and residents, town officials should be allowed to function as the required manager. This would increase town ownership in the program and allow small towns to support a full time manager through the town as an employee. In these cases, boards should make sure that the manager works collaboratively with all stakeholder groups, so that the essential three way partnership, between the municipality, citizens and businesses is maintained and the program is not viewed as a municipal program. Alternatively, in a town with a strong board, the board should be allowed to vote to independently contract for specific tasks that it decides need to be addressed, instead of employing a manager to do them. This would allow the board to find individuals specifically qualified for these tasks.

Finding 1.3

In successful revitalization programs there often emerges a “town champion.” Whether this person is on the board, the manager or a town official dedicated to the success of the program, they tend to be the primary source of new ideas and the go-to person for problems. Individuals in this role have asked that they be connected to other people undertaking revitalization programs in other towns. Such communication would enable them to share experiences, both successful and not successful, collaborate for large events and to have a network of support when they encounter issues. As many of these town champions hold full time positions outside of the revitalization program, it is often difficult for individuals to take time to travel to meet in person.

Communities interested in pursuing a downtown redevelopment program often reach out for assistance. If they are looking to become an accredited Main Street Program, they often look for personal experiences of other town leaders with the program, what the start up challenges and goals are, and how others have started the programs in their towns. If they are not scale-appropriate, or economically sound enough, to partake in the Main Street program, they look for other

models that have worked in Maine communities similar to their own. Since these models are often developed in-house, there is very little published material or training available.

Action 1.3

The DECD is providing a total of \$300,000 in financial assistance to Maine Downtown Center (MDC) over a two-year period. One of the purposes of the funding is to bring information and resources to more communities that need the basic organizational piece to get them ready to potentially become part of a larger state funded revitalization program.

The MDC holds quarterly meetings for Main Street managers, which allows for some communication between the towns via their managers. The MDC also hosts a full day informational conference for all those interested in downtown development. The MDF is currently redesigning their website, and MDC will be included in this effort, as the MDC online presence will remain part of the MDF site. The MDC recognizes the importance of an online resource bank and is planning on including many of the resources listed above.

Recommendation 1.3

Continue to provide quarterly meetings and the conferences through the MDC. Build on the current effort to establish and improve on an online resource and communication site dedicated to downtown revitalization, open not only to Main Street communities, but to all towns interested in participating in a downtown revitalization program. This site could include different areas that are restricted to different groups of individuals in order to encourage frank and helpful conversation. Conversations posted on the website should not be allowed to be considered when evaluating the downtowns for continued accreditation. Suggested site areas include one for chambers of commerce, one for downtown managers, one for board members, one for town officials, one for local businesses and one for Main Street communities. Site areas may overlap for some topics. Included in the site should be an electronic library containing versions of National Trust materials, contact information for downtown consultants in different areas of the state, updates on Maine laws regarding downtown revitalization and sample promotion and design projects. Recognizing the importance of web tools, MDC is in the early stages of creating an enhanced website.

Finding 1.4



One of the current aspects of the Main Street program that appeals to prospective towns is the element of organization and structure that it brings to a downtown revitalization program. Therefore, it is in the best interests of the program to protect this appeal and enhance the structure provided to the towns. Currently, there exists confusion as to the relation of the board to the manager. Some towns are structured to have a strong board which directs the activities of the manager, while other towns have a manager, or executive director, who steers the activities of the program with advice from the board.

Action 1.4

The Main Street model endorses the strong board and facilitating manager approach, and is currently planning to provide more board training. It has been difficult to sustain this kind of training as the membership of the boards turns over on a regular basis.

Recommendation 1.4

The MDC, in concert with the Advisory Council, should make an effort to clearly define the roles of the board and the managers. The MDC should continue its planned efforts to train the board and the managers as to their appropriate role within the Main Street structure.

Policy Area #1 Summary

- Identify local leadership and include them as part of the formation of a downtown redevelopment program
- Allow for flexibility in how the local management of downtown revitalization programs is carried out
- Continue to upgrade and improve web resources that allow for resource sharing and inter-town communication
- Clarify leadership structure for local Main Street Programs

Policy Area #2 Funding

Finding appropriate means by which to maintain funding to provide services to undertake statewide downtown revitalization efforts.

Finding 2.1

The principal sources of funds in Maine downtown revitalization programs are CDBG grants and TIF revenues. Both of these sources require a certain level of expertise to maximize. Furthermore, there are additional funds that may be available through grants from the federal government and private foundations. While these funds are extremely competitive, revitalization programs in other states have been able to accelerate their programs through grant funds. Capital is most essential at the onset of a program, as it allows the revitalization group to demonstrate the types of projects they will do in the future, and build credibility and community support for the program. Once the benefits of revitalization are established, a downtown program generally has the momentum to maintain itself through volunteers and donations. If the state program were to expand to include more towns, the demand for capital will increase.

There are several other grant programs currently available to support downtown revitalization, and many applicants for CDBG funds are encouraged to apply for these additional resources. The DECD recommends that for public facilities such as libraries private grants from foundations such as the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation could be sought. For infrastructure projects such as sewer or water, communities often apply for grants and loans from the Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service. Issues surrounding potable water may be able to obtain assistance from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services Drinking Water program. Communities with combined sewer overflow (CSO) issues may be able to obtain funds from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. Brownfield projects are encouraged to apply to the federal Environmental Protection Agency for clean up money.

Action 2.1

The application process for CDBG grants current includes a benefit of three (3) points if the community is a Main Street program participant. The CDBG program publishes an instructional booklet for applications, and all applications are scored on a point system that adheres to the instructions in the booklet.

The Maine CDBG Program staff provides annual training workshops; a two-day certification



training for administrators is held every summer, there are application workshops held every autumn in at least four locations scattered statewide. The COGs/EDDs receive funding from the Maine DECD to provide workshops and training in their regions. These funds are readily utilized in their entirety; yet do not satisfy the demand for this type of assistance.

The Maine Philanthropy Center provides a resource for groups and municipalities to conduct grant research.

Recommendation 2.1

Although the CDBG publishes an instructional booklet, towns without in-house expertise still struggle to complete grant applications. Private grant funds are very rarely accessed, despite the Maine Philanthropy site, and not regularly utilized in Maine downtown revitalization efforts. If the Maine Downtown Center's programs are expanded to include all of the service centers over a set time period, towns should have more resources to assist in the grant application process. Options for such assistance include a staff or consulting grant writer housed in the MDC to visit the participating towns and complete the grant applications, specialized training for program managers in the grant writing process, or annual funds from the state for towns to contract with consultant grant writers.

Furthermore, inter-agency communication is essential in order to maximize the funds that are available. The Office of Community Development, housed in the DECD, annually convenes an inter-agency meeting, inviting involved agencies such as the Department of Transportation, Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Bond Bank, Rural Development, and the Drinking Water program. This meeting is held to review priority projects that coincide between these agencies. This allows for the agencies to work together to fill the gaps and get projects done. A downtown advocate at these meetings may allow the MDC to correlate their efforts with other agencies and serve as a liaison for the downtown groups.

Further study should be done to assess other means to coordinate all of these applicable programs and funds in order to maximize their

impact.

Finding 2.2

Fundraising presents a challenge to nearly every community. While the split between the four goals of promotion, design, organization and economic restructuring provides groups with a distinct focus, it places fundraising in the purview of both the organization committee and the board. Some towns have structured themselves to allow each committee to raise funds for its own projects, which results in an unbalanced approach as some committees are more successful in their efforts than other committees. Some towns have approached fundraising as a program objective, but have then struggled with which committee then receives the funds for their projects. Organizations often fail to place priority on fundraising, and do not view each promotion as an event that could generate funds. Very few groups have maximized the potential of sponsorships; the giving of advertising in exchange for donations to a specific promotion or project. The potential for sponsorship is large, as many community promotions that currently do not accrue revenue are largely attended and an ideal venue for advertising.

Recommendation 2.2

Similar to the prior recommendation regarding the structure provided to the downtowns for the role of the manager, the structure of fundraising within revitalization groups should be clearly defined. Clear definitions of different types of promotions, as well as methods of generating funds from these promotions, should be included in the online resource bank. Standardized forms and regulations for taking sponsorships should be issued from the MDC, and use of these forms should be included in manager training.

Finding 2.3

Integral to every community's vision of a downtown are viable healthy businesses. Throughout the last 20 to 30 years, there has been a mass exodus of businesses from many downtown areas. Many current downtowns face large numbers of vacancies. Vacancies in the downtown area drain from the remaining businesses, and reinforce the view of a dead downtown. Towns have seen local businesses move to the malls or commercial sprawl



areas. Some believe that educating local business on the importance of staying downtown may stop this migration, while others have seen business owners who are very supportive and knowledgeable of the importance of downtown leave because they cannot survive in a downtown with large numbers of vacancies. Some town revitalization efforts have even tried pledge forms formalizing the business owner's intention to stay in the downtown, and have still witnessed that when the anchor stores relocate, the complementary businesses follow. Traditional anchor stores, typically large retail stores, have already left a large number of downtowns due to the pressure of competing with national retail chains. While maintaining businesses is easier than finding new business, for many communities the window of time to retain the prior economy has passed and they are now faced with a complete or nearly complete recreation of an economy in the downtown area. The problem of empty storefronts hinders all aspects of revitalization efforts. People are drawn to downtown for events, or because exterior improvements have been made, and see the vacancies. This leaves the impression of not only a downtown that still has nothing to offer to the individual citizen, but also that the downtown revitalization is simply a superficial improvement. While these exterior improvements may draw some business into the area, and increase property value, it is often difficult for a downtown scale business, such as a coffee shop, small retail shop or small service business to begin the process of repopulating the downtown. Many service centers currently have very little business still located in the downtown area.

A component of the Main Street program is economic restructuring, but without an existing economic base it can be difficult to implement a restructuring program. Under the Main Street Program the purpose of economic restructuring is to strengthen the existing economic base while finding ways to expand it. Economic Structuring in National Main Street model refers primarily to the downtown itself, rather than to the local economy in general. The National model looks to identify what are the local market niches that the downtown can fill that are not being filled in the local economy – e.g. a shoe store, a health club, copy center, or a broader restructuring such as office space, a service center, health clinic. In Maine, this portion of Economic Restructuring

is not prevalent in many downtowns, which focus on developing current business and encouraging expansion. Furthermore, it is generally difficult for these “main street style” niche businesses to acquire the start up costs for inventory, interior remodeling, ADA accessibility, first year carrying costs and décor from traditional loan or grant methods, as they are high risk businesses. While the current model utilized in economic restructuring is extraordinarily helpful for current businesses on board with the Main Street program, it does not provide the framework for attracting and developing new business needed to restart a downtown. For Main Street communities, it is therefore essential that all parts of economic restructuring be part of a Main Street program.

In a broader economic development sense economic restructuring refers to the shift from a manufacturing-based economy to a service-based economy. Many of Maine's communities were established around a manufacturing facility such as a grist mill, a textile mill, a paper mill, a tannery, or shoe factory. Some have made a successful transition to a service-based economy, but far too many have not. The Main Street Maine program can assist businesses even if it is not thriving, but it can't currently create a downtown economy where none exists. This is not the role of Main Street. Successful Main Street programs, in Maine, have generally arisen out of towns who have previously undertaken a significant amount of work independently to recruit and start businesses, or have arisen out of already economically healthy downtowns with room to take their economy to the next level. The role of Main Street is to encourage new businesses to open in downtown rather than the edge of town by creating a healthy business environment through design and promotions. When downtown vibrancy starts to occur, the community has positioned itself as an attractive location for new business. However, vibrancy must be companioned by public-private partnerships that encourage and facilitate a business to locate in the downtown versus the outskirts of town or in other areas.

The existence of all four factors, economic restructuring, design, organization and promotions, is essential to the National Trust Main Street Model. This model has been nationally successful, and has reported successes far beyond other revitalization



programs. However, when the program is broken down, and only some of the facets are focused on, it loses its unique equation for success. Pilot programs emphasizing only certain aspects of the program have not reached the same levels of success.

For non-Main Street communities, the previous few paragraphs attest to the need for a program that is based on the Main Street key points, yet applicable to the 493 cities and towns that are not Main Street Maine Communities.

Recommendation 2.3

The state, if it establishes as its goal a program to promote and protect healthy downtown areas throughout the state, needs to develop a preparatory program for downtown revitalization focused on the creation of a sustainable economy tailored to the unique advantages and market that exists in each town. Public-private partnerships are essential when creating an economy in a targeted area.

One option to incentivize new business is low interest revolving loan accounts. Such loan structures are already present under the regional economic development entities, COGs and EDDs, but are primarily focused on business development. This is because public funds are often tied to job creation activities and retailers have not traditionally been willing, or able, to hire people full time, pay a living wage, and provide benefits. Therefore they have been unable to access the public funding. State agencies and state-funded entities are following the State's economic development strategy that has been set forth. The State economic development strategy focuses economic development in those areas which the state has a competitive advantage in; certain industries that meet that standard have been clearly identified. While downtown Quality of Place is not listed as a mature or emerging industry, the Brookings report identified this as an area which Maine has an inherent advantage. Another part of the State's economic development strategy is to encourage entrepreneurship in Maine citizens, and such a loan program would allow for entrepreneurs, located in the downtown areas, to have access to funds that they would not be able to acquire in a traditional loan due to the high risk nature of the business. The loan program

could be housed in either the COG/EDD's who are already familiar with operating the revolving loan accounts or perhaps in the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) or Coastal Enterprises (CEI) offices. If the state were to initiate a similar program targeted at leveraging for downtown business there is the potential to dramatically increase the number of towns participating in downtown redevelopment. Further research on existing revolving loan funds is needed so that the program can fill the market need for downtown businesses.

The state would need to protect any investment made into these towns, and into the businesses. In order to do so, it is recommended that the state attach as a condition to the loan funds a requirement to formulate a Main Street style revitalization group within one year of its participation in the loan fund, which would involve local leadership and have flexibility in the manager requirement. This requirement would allow for many varied types of organizations, ranging from those run by the town to those run by a non-profit to merchant associations. The group could eventually be admitted to the Main Street program, if funding permitted, at which point it would need to adhere to the standards of a full fledged Main Street community. If the group chose to maintain a structure that is not conducive to receiving a designation as Main Street community, especially since alternate solutions have been successful in towns throughout the state, they could do so as long as they placed priority on the four key elements of economic restructuring, design, organization, and promotions. Such organizations could designate themselves as something similar, such as a Downtown Development District (See Findings and Recommendation 4.2).

Finding 2.4

While marketing is not the same as fundraising, it is an additional area that each town experiences difficulties with. It is included in this section because in order to increase marketing efforts specific funds would need to be raised or alternate solutions would need to be found. Regional markets are accessible by individual town efforts, but statewide and broader markets are inaccessible due to limitation of funding and expertise.

As Maine continues to be a destination



for tourists, and expands the number and types of tourism to include such things as experiential, historic and cultural tourism, downtowns should be aware and able to capture this particular market. In relation to the Brookings Report, such tourism centered on Quality of Place could turn into a sustainable economic driver for towns that have lost manufacturing or natural resource based industries.

Action 2.4

The Maine Office of Tourism is promoting walking historic tours throughout Maine. While these do not specifically list downtowns, they target many buildings in the downtown areas.

Any town that wants to have a link to the Maine Office of Tourism (MOT) website can do so. The MOT solicited communities for inclusion on the website, and those who responded have had a web page created for them by MOT and linked to the site.

Recommendation 2.4

Continue efforts to market Maine's Quality of Place for tourism, and include the character and intrinsic qualities of each downtown throughout the state. One option is an aggressive marketing campaign, centered on a few towns each year. An application process could be put in place by either Maine Office of Tourism or by the MDC. Towns selected would receive additional promotion specific to their town within the activities of the Maine Office of Tourism. This could play into the branding of Maine as a whole, not just as the coast, as it would highlight additional treasures spread throughout the state. Additional resources may be needed to accomplish this.

Additionally, an online website could be created to market all of the Main Street and Downtown Development communities. This website would need to be professionally created, linked to all major search engines and up kept with the latest internet trends, as it would be marketing to individuals familiar with planning their trips on the internet. This would include a comprehensive calendar of events throughout the state, searchable by town or region. Links from the calendar could direct the viewer to the downtown organization's website for more information. Individuals could purchase tickets to events, make donations and sign up for more information about volunteering through the site.

The calendar would be updated with information from each community by the community. The site would include a comprehensive list of businesses within the downtown areas, and be searchable by genre and location. Downtown area restaurants could post digital menus, and have a link to place an online reservation. These menus would be provided to and posted by the local downtown organization. Downtown area stores could provide links to online resources. All of these services would be accessible to Main Street and Downtown Development organizations as part of their designation.

Communities that are not currently Main Street or Downtown Development communities could pay to place their events on the calendar as well, the funds of which would be placed in an account for the maintenance of the website. Downtown business not located in designated communities could submit their information to the site with a fee in order to be accommodated. This fee would also be placed in an account for the maintenance of the website. A fee system would not only help to alleviate the cost of such an extensive website, training to use it, and maintenance, it may also cause merchants to join together in non-designated towns and apply for designation. Further study is needed to develop the above ideas and determine what agency could host and maintain this site.

Policy Area #2 Summary

- Provide additional grant writing assistance to towns looking to apply for private, federal and state grant funds
- Provide assistance to towns to promote fundraising efforts
- Establish a revolving loan account managed by the COG/EDDs, FAME or CEI to promote new economies, specifically targeted at downtown business
- Create an online marketing tool to promote and market downtowns

Policy Area #3 Recommendations for the Maine Downtown Center

Finding a way to for the Downtown Center maintain adherence to the Main Street program and maintain the high level of marketability associated with the program.



Main Street is a trademarked program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This name carries a great deal of marketing potential both to towns and citizens. The marketability of the program is a quality sought by many towns that seek designation.

Finding 3.1

The purpose of the Maine Downtown Center, enabled by 5 MRSA § 3307-F, is primarily to serve as an information center for towns focused on downtown revitalization. However, it is the only state program in place to provide the technical assistance needed to the downtowns, and the full program only covers nine towns. The MDC does direct other towns toward downtown revitalization information, but is not able to support them with more extensive services. There exists a need to provide more services to towns that do not qualify or fit in the Main Street Program. The services most needed are hands-on technical assistance services, tailored to an individual community with little to no economic base. (See list of suggested services in Policy Area #4) In order to provide these services to more towns, more resources and staff would be needed.

Scattered grant programs that could assist communities in downtown revitalization, such as New Century Grants, Riverfront Community Development Bond Program, Maine Brownfields Grant, Small Harbor Improvement Program (SHIP) and the Municipal Investment Trust Fund (MITF), are administered by varying agencies. While the delivery systems for these programs are consistent, and the towns are aware of and desire them, they are funded erratically, and are exhausted quickly.

As the Brookings Report indicates, the downtown centers throughout the state contribute significantly to the quality of place that makes each town unique. The sense of a distinct place is often defined by the downtown area.

Action 3.1

The MDC does fulfill the purpose laid out in 5 MRSA § 3307-F 2.

The MDC is also working on:

- More fully supporting current Main Street communities
- Developing tools and resources to be available to more towns
- Creating and launching a Maine Downtown Institute, a series of six informational workshops that target specific areas of downtown redevelopment
- Developing a concept for an Affiliate program that could be implemented as resources become available
- Possible a la carte services to communities for a fee

Recommendation 3.1

If the state desires to maintain the current structure and place the MDC as the primary entity to service and promote downtown revitalization, its purpose, structure and resources may need to be expanded. Additional resources will be needed to add more towns to the Main Street program, and to create new programs and services for towns that don't fit the Main Street Maine model.

Previously mentioned scattered programs should be consistently funded as a proven method of delivering help to communities in need. The Quality of Place Council should consider funding downtown technical assistance and infrastructure as a key part of its funding package.

Finding 3.2

The structure of the MDC, as a program of the Maine Development Foundation (MDF), is unique to Maine. Other programs, currently ten nationwide, do operate as non-profit organizations, but do not generally operate as a program within an existing non-profit. There are advantages to operating as a private non-profit, one of which is that this structure allows the program to raise private funds. With so little funding available from the state, housing the DTC at MCF may be the best approach for Maine. The MDC has an advisory council made up of professionals with experience in downtowns and historic preservation. According to some of those interviewed, the role of the advisory board isn't entirely clear.

The majority of states house the Main



Street program within state government with 16 out of 37 such programs housed within the DECD.

Recommendtion 3.2

The leadership at MDC strongly expresses contentment in their location at the MDF. There needs to be good communication and cooperation between MDC and other state agencies looking to accomplish the same goal of healthy vibrant downtowns.

Attendance at an annual meeting, either the one already established by the DECD, or an additional meeting of involved agencies targeted at downtown development, would help to integrate the informational and technical assistance available from the MDC into the funding assistance available from other agencies.

Finding 3.3

In order for each Main Street Maine community to be nationally accredited they must adhere to the standards set forth by the National Trust. The Main Street Maine coordinating program is also asked to adhere to the standards set forth by the National Trust for coordinating programs; standards which significantly increase the chance of success for a downtown program. This may potentially become a requirement in the near future, and failure to adhere to these standards could result in the Maine program losing national accreditation. Maine's program primarily complies with the new standards. However there are several new organizational services that will be required that will place a significant burden on the MDC.

Furthermore, the MDC struggles to maintain the existing services it provides to the Main Street programs. Many Main Street organizations elsewhere in the country, as noted below, have several staff members in order to service a program of similar size to the current Maine program. The MDC highlights the point that the program provided is a self-help program, and the services that they offer are primarily technical support during the first three years. Many Main Street organizations throughout the country have more than one staff member in order to service a program of similar size to the current Maine program, in varied disciplines, such as architects or design professionals, economic development

specialists and other downtown revitalization professionals.

Action 3.3

The MDC continues to strive to meet all standards set forth by the National Trust. Town services, such as resource team visits, consultants and training, are provided as much as possible based on the funding available. Furthermore, a strategy is being developed with the Maine Development Foundation to maximize the services available within its current budget.

The enabling legislation allows the SPO, DECD and MDF, as well as other state agencies, to coordinate with and maintain the MDC.

Recommendation 3.3

Foremost, as the National Trust requirements for the coordinating organization are made public, the MDC must be adequately funded and managed to meet the requirements. The median coordinating program (includes city-wide and regional coordinating programs) budget is \$331,000 annually, with an average of three full-time and two part-time staff serving a median of 19 local Main Street programs each; the average state coordinating program budget is \$508,224, with an average staff size of 3.09 full-time and 1.64 part-time staff serving an average of 30.11 local Main Street programs; Maine's coordinating program budget is \$150,000, with 1.5 full time staff, serving a total of nine towns.

To meet current service demand and be in a position to advance the state's Quality of Place agenda, specific funding needs to be made available, regardless of the location of the program. A possibility for this funding is TIF districts for designated communities with the funds directed to downtown development in that town, federal funds from the proposed Northern Border Regional Commission, if they are received, or general fund money. A state match program which matches the annual private funds raised with public funds would give the MDC leverage in fundraising and foster the Main Street goal of public private partnerships. Regardless of the source, this funding needs to be a long-term initiative in order to give MDC the ability to invest in promulgating its own name and work, as well as

promote the image of a long-term commitment to the downtowns which the towns and the citizens can invest in.

Finding 3.4

There are benefits to maintaining a national accreditation from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, even though they do not provide funding or free services to the state program. The National Trust for Historic Preservation owns the trademark for the phrase “Main Street” as it applies to the revitalization of traditional and historic commercial districts. Only those programs which meet the specification of The National Trust are able to utilize the name. The National Trust requires the State coordinating program to annually assess the communities in their region to authorize their continued use of the Main Street name. The National Trust allows the four point approach and the name to be used in non-accredited programs which abide by the National Trust’s guidelines, and some states, such as Georgia, have chosen to do so and still maintain a large Main Street program.

In order to maintain an official accreditation, such as Maine currently has, the coordinating program pays annual dues. Maine has paid \$2000 each year in the past for this accreditation, and this amount will increase in the near future.

Benefits of affiliation with the national program include:

- National networking opportunities for both the state and local managers
- Use of materials, listserv and web resources of the National Trust
- Contracted access to National Trust staff and expertise

Despite these benefits, the Downtown Advisory Council should regularly evaluate the relationship between the National Trust and the state Main Street Maine program.

Policy Area #3 Summary

- The Main Street program is limited to nine fully participating towns and has a number of interested communities waiting to begin the process of becoming a fully designated Main Street community. The Maine Downtown Center should make it a priority to seek funding in order to add more towns to the program.
- The Maine Downtown Center should continue to educate policy makers and potential funders on the need to develop technical assistance programs for towns that can’t meet the criteria of the Main Street program.
- The Quality of Place Council should consider funding for downtown technical assistance (through the MDC) and downtown infrastructure grants (through state grant funds such as the Municipal Investment Trust Fund) as part of their funding package.
- MDC benefits from being housed in the MDF, because it allows them to be competitive in obtaining private funds to match the funds received from the state. This structure is unique to Maine, but with so little state funding, it may be the best solution if the Center is to continue to function as it does.
- While it may be the best solution to continue to house the MDC at the MDF, additional measures need to be taken to coordinate this program with other state downtown programs and policy initiatives involving downtowns.
- The National Trust affiliation should be periodically evaluated by the MDC advisory council and other involved agencies.

Policy Area #4 Expanding Support Available to Towns

Finding a method to provide services to more Maine communities, including Main Street communities and those communities where the current Main Street model is not scale-appropriate.

Finding 4.1

Towns throughout the state are struggling to keep a strong economic center in the downtown commercial area. Each town presents unique challenges to be overcome, and unique advantages. Often towns lack a direction when





beginning a downtown revitalization program. Consultants are available, but tend to be too expensive for most towns to afford.

Recommendation 4.1

In order to assist more towns in achieving their potential, there should be a staff person charged with town evaluations housed in the same office as the Main Street program. This staff person would be available to complete localized studies and provide a plan of action to towns considering a commitment to downtown revitalization. This is a high priority staff addition. In order to recommend an action plan for each town, they must be thoroughly evaluated individually. While this service would be paid for by the towns, it would be subsidized by the state to bring it to a level affordable to all towns. While there is potential that this be offered as a service by consultant, it would be beneficial to have a staff person in order to provide uniform consistent evaluations and the ability to spread town successes and innovations throughout the state. The DECD expresses agreement with the importance of this aspect of planning and technical assistance. Additional resources could support this activity.

Finding 4.2

Often the cost of participating in the Main Street program is too much for small communities to maintain. Towns in Maine with above a 12% poverty rate or a small population tend to struggle to support such an extensive program. For many towns that have historically been centered around natural resource based industries there is a lack of knowledge about the economic value of downtown revitalization efforts. The Main Street program has been used for small low-income towns throughout the country; however it requires a large amount of town citizen investment, as well as intensive assistance from the coordinating program. Other state programs, such as that in Tennessee, which have taken a similar self-help approach, have resulted in reports of similar difficulty in economic development.

Many towns which are too small for the Main Street program are still interested in preserving their downtown. Certain services could be provided to encourage their success, and

possibly prepare them for eventual admittance to the Main Street program. However, a distinct, non-affiliated program may allow for the best flexibility without pressuring the towns to put in place a model that may not work in their unique situation.

Participation in any state program assists the town champions in recruiting support for the program, from both the citizens and the town government, as it gives their efforts and the program more clout.

Action 4.2

The Maine Downtown Center is currently working on an affiliate program, details of which have not been finalized. An affiliate program could help many downtowns who are looking for a revitalization program but are not ready or do not want to become a Main Street community. The MDF expresses the desire to not stretch resources overly thin, so an affiliate program can't be fully implemented at this time.

Recommendation 4.2

Create an alternate program to the Main Street program. This program could be applied for by town champions who may not necessarily have the support, the economy or the organization required to receive the Main Street designation. While this program would be entirely separate from the Main Street program, the towns would still receive education about the four key elements that make up the Main Street program. Towns would receive an alternate designation, such as a Downtown Development District. This program would be an economically focused program to build economies in towns where there is none.

The program would need to include at least a market assessment, business recruitment (see Finding and Recommendation 2.3), town education, organization, local leadership education, marketing assistance, fundraising and grant application assistance and consultant assistance. Other specific services that are currently needed, and should be included, are indicated in the following findings and recommendations. Towns may elect to receive the entire package in order to overcome the roadblocks commonly associated with beginning a downtown revitalization



program. Towns may also request targeted technical assistance for a specific challenge they have encountered in their own program, such as vacancy infill, streetscape design, downtown architecture. Costs for the program should be minimal to the town involved, so as to make it accessible to all interested towns.

Ideally, this would be an extensive program that would include many towns and details would need to be established by the governing agency. There would need to be further research to determine the best location for this program, one of the possibilities is the MDC, which expresses a desire to be the place for all downtown revitalization activities but would need additional funding and perhaps an expanded purpose. Due to the nature of the program, there would exist a need for dedicated staff members and sustained long term funding, otherwise it will not succeed. Staff members would need to spend significant amounts of time in each participating town in order to help in the education process and recognize inherent town advantages and disadvantages.

Finding 4.3

Towns with large numbers of historic buildings are spread throughout the state of Maine. These historic buildings present unique challenges when attempting to create a downtown revitalization plan. Furthermore, historic downtown redevelopment requires certain preservation architecture in order to maintain its historic sense of place.

Recommendation 4.3

While a staff member skilled in historic architecture or downtown architecture would be ideal, another efficient use of funds would be an on-going state-level contract with an architecture firm for downtown revitalization work. This contract should guarantee a lower rate for towns associated with the downtown center, and should allow for towns to view the work done in other towns in a shared portfolio. This would allow the towns to utilize work already done by the architects to serve as a resource to towns looking for ideas of what could be done in their town, or as a resource for presenting to citizens

the impact of a historic renovation. In order to use CDBG funds for preservation rehab, each building would eventually need its own individualized scope of work and specifications to be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Commission for review and approval.

If possible, such a contract could be co-sponsored by an existing historic preservation group.

Finding 4.4

When many of the downtown areas were built, large homes were built in and around the commercial district. With the rising cost of heating and maintaining these homes, many of them have been divided into small apartment style housing. Many of these homes have fallen into disrepair. City officials from several regions have voiced the concern that as the cost of heating rises, the amount the landlords are able to charge for rent will not cover the heating expenses. If this becomes fact, many of these homes will remain empty throughout the winter and fall further into disrepair. These homes may not to be an attractive investment to developers due to the large expense in modernizing and the limited market for large in town single family homes.

Action 4.4

Uniform statewide building and rehab codes may make the development of these homes more attractive to investors. The historic tax credit may also make the development of these homes more attractive to investors.

There are a number of programs available to support low income housing. Examples include: The Maine Housing Authority (MHA) has the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program and the Revolving Loan for Acquisition program both targeted to affordable housing production.

Recommendation 4.4

Towns need to encourage alternate uses of these large buildings. They are ideal for housing municipal, social welfare or education offices, can be used as meeting and recreation centers, or can be developed into store fronts with owner occupancy. Store frontage would disqualify redevelopment from tax credits and Historic



Preservation Commission Approval, so, for those wishing to utilize these incentives, adaptive uses without such should be encouraged. Plans and ideas for large homes adjacent to the downtown should be made available to the communities associated with the MDC. The state could offer these towns incentives in the form of tax credits or tax breaks for alternate use and redevelopment of these homes. TIFs could also be used to counter the costs. If federal funds are used to remove housing units from local housing stock, federal law requires a one-for-one replacement of those units with comparable housing in the community. Replacement units could be located in the second and third floors above the storefronts.

Homes suitable to downtown apartments should be required to meet certain basic design requirements so that the buildings and grounds retain their original architectural style and character. While this may not be popular in towns initiating a program, it could be a goal for mature communities as they begin to achieve success in the downtown. These requirements are to be determined by the town, and should be put in place by ordinance. Sample ordinances to restrict appearance of downtown homes should be placed in the online resource library.

Finding 4.5

One of the target demographics for Quality of Place is the high tech industries. These industries choose to locate in areas that provide their employees with the highest quality of residential life. However, these individuals not only value a quality downtown with business, or scenic views, but also the ability to connect and communicate with the outside world.

Many downtowns do not have the internet connection preferred or expected by young professionals in the high tech industry. Very few have wireless access points available for public use throughout the downtown.

Recommendation 4.5

Use state funds and leverage to improve internet communication throughout the state, targeting service centers.

Provide downtowns with wireless internet service. A state funded program could utilize

technology grants and federal technology funds. Further information on this can be found in the study conducted by Tony VanDenBossche at the State Planning Office regarding municipal internet service. It is recommended to encourage the private sector to explore wireless service to only the Main Street and Downtown Development District towns, and market this as an exclusive benefit to those participating towns.

This incentive would not only provide a motivation for towns to participate in the Main Street or Downtown Development programs, but also provide another marketing tool. The state marketing campaign could include this information. Wireless service would increase the downtown park and pavilion use, as people would visit the downtown to access the internet. This service would also promote downtown residential development, discussed in section 4.5, as it would allow developers to market homes with included wireless internet service.

Many national chains have already identified the draw of wireless internet service, as it is now routinely available at hotels, coffee shops and bookstores throughout the country.

It is important to note that some businesses, particularly those who have already identified the marketing capacity associated with wireless internet service, may view this as taking away from their business, as they would lose that unique competitive advantage. Overall, a strong marketing campaign able to advertise free wireless service in every Main Street community should bring enough bodies to the downtown area to balance out the loss associated with providing free service to all businesses.

Finding 4.6

Residential development is essential to downtown development. Cities that have paired residential development with downtown redevelopment have been more successful than those who have not, yet residential development is not an emphasized component. Residential development is most successful when targeted at varied price ranges. A successful downtown offers a range of housing types responding to the full spectrum of housing needs. Housing is a complex



field with many players and only a brief overview of this topic is given here.

Action 4.6

Many other agencies and organizations have identified the issue of the necessity of all integrated income levels in residential development in downtown areas; however no individual agency or organization has emerged as the leader of such an effort.

The Maine CDBG program has been providing communities with housing rehab grants for low to moderate income for over two decades. MaineHousing includes “smart growth” criteria in their loan programs in order to encourage new housing to be built within walking distance of basic amenities.

Recommendation 4.6

Local investment should be strongly encouraged. This can be accomplished through the use of the downtown investment fund laid out in 2.3. Training and help in accomplishing residential renovation should be provided to property owners. Funding for low income housing grants through MaineHousing should be continued and perhaps increased (an analysis of this was beyond the scope of this study).

The DECD provides housing rehab grants. However, rehab grants primarily go to single-family homes where the owner is income eligible-low-to-moderate income of less than 80% of area median income. They also assist in rehab of multi-unit residential where 51% of the tenants are income eligible, and the landlord signs an agreement so that they don't raise the rent any higher than HUD's established Fair Market Rent for that area. CDBG does not do housing rehab for families that are above the income eligibility guidelines. It is essential that these grants continue, and it may be possible to integrate into the scoring system a bonus for a downtown location, similar to the “smart growth” criteria already included in MaineHousing.

Although DECD programs do not fund mid to upper level housing development, private investment in all levels of housing often follows CDBG funding. All levels of housing are essential

as many of these individuals are the patrons and employees that drive downtown businesses.

Towns should be encouraged to use mixed use zoning in the downtown area to allow for residential development. Working with MDC and others, the State Planning Office has commenced gathering examples of mixed use ordinances from communities in Maine.

Policy Area #4 Summary

- Create a new program to serve the needs of towns not currently covered by the Main Street program
- Provide state assistance to towns considering downtown revitalization
- Contract with an architecture firm to provide more towns with the use of an architect for downtown projects
- Develop recommendations and incentives for large former single-family homes in the downtown area
- Provide wireless internet service to all downtowns
- Promote residential development in concert with downtown development



SECTION 2

TOWN CASE STUDIES

Bath, Maine
Main Street Community

Damariscotta, Maine
Merchant -Community
Group Revitalization, Not a
Main Street Community

Lewiston/Auburn, Maine
City Revitalization, Not a
Main Street Community

Lincoln, Maine
Town- Merchant
Revitalization, Not a Main
Street Community

Norway, Maine
Main Street Community

Rockland , Maine
Town-Chamber
Revitalization, Not a Main
Street Community

Saco, Maine
Main Street Community

Skowhegan, Maine
Main Street Community

Bath, Maine

Main Street Community since 2001

Bath is a city of rich history located in the Mid-Coast Region of Maine, first incorporated in 1782. Bath has historically been, and remains presently, renowned for ship-building. Bath Iron Works, a General Dynamics company, is the economic driver for the area. Bath Iron Works provides a large number of steady middle and upper class employment opportunities with generous benefits, lending the city to a fairly stable residential population. At the 2000 census, Bath registered around 9,000 residents.

Bath has many inherent advantages for a downtown revitalization program. The city itself is situated at the head of Casco Bay along the Kennebec River, and the downtown has the advantage of a beautiful waterfront area backing the commercial area. Bath has embraced its rich history as a city, creating two distinct historic districts, the Bath Historic District and the Trufant Historic District. The city has retained much of its Federal, Greek Revival, and Italianate architecture, including the 1858 Custom House and Post Office at the gate of the downtown. The downtown area has been free from many of the pressures of irresponsible modernization or destruction of historic buildings due in part to the fact that the majority of the property in the downtown area is owned by a handful of individuals, and the will-

ingness of these individuals to maintain the character of the area.

Residential development is a priority to the City of Bath. The city has focused on increasing home-ownership, and made large town investments in the residential area. The downtown area is within reasonable walking distance from virtually all of the fairly dense residential area.

Bath is a regional destination area, which benefits from both in-state and out-of-state tourism. Bath is located on Route 1, and is central to State Parks such as Popham Beach and Reid State.

Bath's focus on local economy is deep seeded. The first local merchant's association was created in 1905, followed by the localized chamber of commerce in the 1940's. The modern revitalization effort began with in-migration from larger metropolitan areas, (refugees of the big cities), in the 1980's. These individuals, both men and women, came to Bath to escape from large business, and to pursue their own entrepreneurial ambitions. This new wave of merchants sought to create a new progressive merchant's association. The pending arrival of Wal-Mart in Brunswick and the prospects of competing with a highly successful national chain, served as a catalyst to organize in the early 1990's.



The new merchant's association was heavily focused on the downtown area, and meetings were held in the center of town after hours to encourage attendance from sole proprietor businesses. The association formed several guiding principals that carry over to the current Main Street organization. They include the "spider-web," a requirement that each member of the board also be a member on the board of another regional organization, the ownership rule, a requirement that if an individual puts an idea on the table it is theirs to run with and carry out, and the requirement that every promotion must break even or make money. These rules helped to strengthen the position of the organization, encourage collaboration between regional groups, balance the workload between all members and keep within a limited budget. The organization had no staff and a budget of \$4,000 annually.

While the merchant's association looked at the Main Street Model at its inception, it wasn't until 1995 that the leadership felt the association and the national model had both developed enough to make the program work in Bath. The association leaders reached out to the National Trust, and hired them to do an assessment of the downtown. The assessment found that, in order for a Main Street program to be successful in Bath, a choice needed to be made to either have a Main Street or a merchant's association or to attempt to work out a method for co-existence. The merchant's association chose to merge with the new Main Street program, and the membership and board were rolled into Main Street Bath.

Main Street Bath Design



Main Street Bath regularly raises money for and maintains flower displays throughout downtown.

The current Main Street program, adopted by the State in 2001, strongly emphasizes the need for a three way partnership between city, residents and business. Main Street Bath retains its roots as a merchants association, and has significant merchant input and membership. In addition, Main Street Bath (MSB) has been able to loosely maintain the principal rules that governed the merchant's association listed above.

Main Street Bath, as a predecessor of the state program, adheres closely to the Main Street National Model. MSB is governed by a board of 17 members, and has one full time paid manager and a paid office manager. The chair of each committee sits on the board, and each committee presents its activities to the board on a regular basis. Each of the four committees is very strong and independent, functioning with minimal assistance from the manager. Each committee creates its own budget and request for funds, which is then either approved or modified by the board and taken out of the general fund. The committees must run their events in a manner where they will at least cover their own expenses. If an event makes a profit, there is an individualized discussion as to whether profits may be kept by the committee or put into the general fund.

MSB is highly visible in the community, and participates in 18 + promotional and beautification events annually. Through its strong partnership with the City, MSB is charged with several large town events, including Heritage Days, a four day 4th of July celebration that attracts thousands to the Bath area. MSB coordinates with many local organizations, partnerships traceable to the "spider-web" of the merchant's association, in order to accomplish these events; however, MSB is the principal organization.

While Bath is a highly successful program, and was awarded the National Trust Dozen Distinctive Destination designation in 2005, there continue to be challenges presented to the city and the organization. There continues to be a demand for training and resources as the town searches for new and better ways to improve the downtown. As Bath is structured to have a strong board that steers the operations of the organization, and maintains term limits for board members, there exists a need for in depth training to get new board members prepared to deal with the duties associated with running a large organization. MSB could also benefit from state-wide promotions of its events. Although it publishes a periodic newsletter, there is little marketing

outside of the region other than that on-line, and things such as Heritage Days or the walking Historic Tour could attract, and are capable of accommodating, a larger audience. MSB could also benefit from increased participation of young professionals in the area. While MSB board and manager have made a concerted effort to reach out to this key demographic, additional assistance from the state coordinator and statewide support for such an effort could build upon their efforts.

Damariscotta

Merchant-Community Group Revitalization, Not a Main Street Community

Damariscotta is a small historic town located in the Mid-Coast Region of Maine. Settled in the mid 17th century, it was first incorporated in 1848. With a year round population of only 2,041, Damariscotta serves as a service center to approximately 9,000 citizens from the surrounding communities. Damariscotta has historically been home to a working waterfront and several natural resource based industries, such as mills and tanneries. The current economic driver is tourism from not only Damariscotta itself but surrounding coastal destinations, such as Boothbay and Pemaquid. The majority of residents are employed in service, management or professional sectors.

Damariscotta has the inherent advantage of a scenic location on salt water at the head of the Damariscotta River Estuary, only 12 miles from the ocean. Adjacent to the downtown is a large marina, which houses many small scaled watercraft. While Damariscotta posted a population of around 2,000 residents in the 2000 census, it experiences a large influx of summer residents annually, many of whom have a significantly higher annual income than the residential population.

Despite the existence of a Route 1 bypass around the town, Damariscotta enjoys a large amount of traffic, as the downtown is located on the only road with access to the Pemaquid New Harbor area. In addition, restrictions on access to Route 1 have spurred dramatic growth along the Business Route 1, which serves as the main route through downtown Damariscotta. To serve this growth is a large public parking lot behind the downtown area. This allows for ease in parking for shoppers, contributes to walking traffic, and allows for traffic to flow freely through the downtown without having to stop and go as cars pull out from parking spaces.

Damariscotta home values are higher than the state average, but comparable with the region. Damariscotta has a highly vested community, with less 1/3 of homes rental properties.

Damariscotta



Damariscotta working waterfront adjacent to downtown and public parking.

Damariscotta downtown organization is a fairly recent development. In the past, the strong market has maintained the downtown area with little planning or organization. In 2005, faced with the prospect of a large national chain development, Damariscotta residents coordinated to pass an ordinance provision for a retail size cap. The effort was largely coordinated by a grass-roots group called Our Town, which organized citizens and businesses alike. This issue generated a 90% turn out for the special referendum vote, and illustrated how ill equipped the area was to deal with continued development of the Maine coast. Our Town has since helped to organize similar pushes for size caps in neighboring Newcastle and Nobleboro. In response, the town created the Damariscotta Planning Advisory Committee (DPAC). DPAC is charged with planning for the growth of Damariscotta and preserving the sense of place associated with the town. Damariscotta Region Business Alliance (DRBA), members of which gave both financial and visual public support to the effort, was an additional outcome of the size cap debate, and continues to grow and promote downtown vitality.

Damariscotta recently applied for and received a Heart and Soul Community Planning grant from the Orton Foundation for \$100,000.

Damariscotta is struggling with the rapid growth associated with its location, particularly in the downtown area. While the constant flow of traffic is enjoyed by the

merchant community, as the area continues to grow it may overpower the human scaled downtown area. The downtown continues to be the heart of the town, frequented by local residents and tourists, and is able to maintain a rare retail stronghold in the area.

Lewiston/Auburn

City Revitalization, Not a Main Street Community

Lewiston and Auburn, although separate cities, are considered in this report together as they have many shared assets and challenges. The two cities share a main throughway that joins both downtowns. Lewiston and Auburn are located in South-Central Maine, on opposite sides of the falls at the Androscoggin River. Lewiston, independent of Auburn, is the second largest city in Maine, with approximately 35,000 residents. Combined, Lewiston-Auburn is one of the largest metropolitan regions in Maine, with approximately 59,600 residents.

Lewiston was officially incorporated in 1795, and grew rapidly after attracting the attention of Boston investors in the early 1800s. Lewiston experienced a boom in textile manufacturing, modeling itself after textile giants such as Lowell, Massachusetts. Bates Mill became the largest employer in the region, attracting large numbers of French Canadian immigrants, brought in by train from Quebec, whose continued influence is still felt in present day. Auburn, originally part of Minot, was independently incorporated in 1842. Auburn grew rapidly after its incorporation, based primarily on the successful shoe manufacturing mills. Similar to Lewiston, Auburn experienced a large influx of French Canadian workers, jumping from a population of 4,000 to 12,000 over the course of 30 years.

Androscoggin River



Photo from 1847 of the Androscoggin River that runs between Lewiston and Auburn and drove the mill economy for 150 years.

The Lewiston Auburn area enjoyed a long pe-

riod of prosperity, which was reflected in their booming downtown areas. However, in the 1950's the area began to decline with the closing of many of the textile mills in Lewiston. By the 1980's, nearly all of the downtown retailers had moved to the outskirts of Lisbon Street, in Lewiston, and the Auburn Mall area despite large town investment in streetscapes and façade programs. The closing of B. Peck and Co. in downtown Lewiston, a large department store that was home to Santa Claus, in 1982 signaled the end of downtown prosperity fostered by the mills.

Lewiston-Auburn, ("L/A") has several inherent economic advantages. As a large urban center, they no longer have an economy dependant on a single industry. They also are HUD CDBG Entitlement communities, which guarantee each city a set amount of CDBG funds. Auburn has capitalized on the use of these funds by creating a revolving loan program to incentivize redevelopment, which has now earned the city money to cover the administrative costs of the program. They successfully joined efforts and were rewarded additional funds to participate in HUD'S HOME Program. HOME is the largest Federal block grant to State and local governments designed exclusively to create affordable housing for low-income households. L/A serves as a major service center to the surrounding area accessible to I-95.

Downtown revitalization in the twin cities has primarily been the work of motivated city officials partnering with private developers. Both cities have completed a downtown revitalization plan, targeting key economic development projects that are both commercial and residential. Auburn has demonstrated its commitment to downtown revitalization by its renovation and relocation of city hall to the historic location at the cross roads of downtown. In 2001, the Bates Mill complex was sold to a private developer, and currently houses several restaurants, galleries, a creative photo cut center and professional offices. Portions of the mill are still undergoing renovations, with plans in place to continue to include the entirety of the mill complex in the renovation.

The success of the downtown revitalization has not been without challenges. Lewiston encountered difficulties in 2004 when it proposed an urban renewal plan. The plan called for the demolition of dense low-income housing in order to build a boulevard from the downtown business area to the then Androscoggin Bank Coliseum. Outraged citizens of the area that was to be



demolished formed citizen groups to challenge the city's plan, claiming that they had little input in the decision making process. In response, the city halted the plans to demolish the area and created a downtown task force. The impact of the downtown task force was evident during the creation of Knox Street Park, a community recreation and green space that replaced a neglected park on Maple Street which was targeted for commercial development.

Auburn, noting the difficulties in Lewiston, has focused heavily on residential redevelopment, targeting distinct areas for improvement. Auburn has also focused on increasing home-ownership within target areas. Auburn has been especially successful in working with landlords who reside outside of the area which have become disconnected from their properties impact on the community. Improvements on these properties have been facilitated with the use of CDBG funds and the leveraging of other public funds. Recently, there have been some calls for restraint from the community, which feels as though high property taxes are the result of such intense downtown revitalization.

Lewiston is also home to a large number of Somali and Bantu refugees. This point has been a topic of political and economic concern as the city struggles to provide a fair opportunity for entrepreneurs and working citizens from this sector and an overtaxed social welfare system. A large number of unemployed workers prompted several public derogatory statements from both the private and public sectors. These statements resulted in a level of distrust and contempt between the city and the refugees that is struggled with today.

Both cities have utilized the inherent advantage of a scenic riverfront location. Auburn has created Festival Park, and holds many cultural events largely attended by residents and tourists. Attendance at these events is increased by the availability of public parking directly behind Auburn Hall in the heart of downtown. Lewiston created Railroad Park, which consists of community open space, and has plans in place to bring in high level residential development on the river, within walking distance of the downtown commercial area.

The twin cities do not encounter the same difficulties as other locations throughout Maine. Lewiston Auburn is not struggling for sources of funding for downtown revitalization projects because of the federal funding that they receive. Rather, there are conflicts among involved parties as to what the image and audience

Auburn



Festival Park along the river in Auburn is home to many community events, as well as events that bring in large numbers of tourists such as the Balloon Festival.

should be in the future. The retail center that once existed in their downtowns is no longer a reality, as there is an abundance of retail readily available in the surrounding area. Citizens are involved in community promotions, but do not frequent downtown as a walking destination when there are not events taking place. This challenge is severely aggravated by the large amount of traffic through both downtown areas. They also struggle with a way to attract middle income residents into their downtown area, which provides substantial affordable housing for the community.

The National Main Street model has been used in large metropolitan areas with some modification, which would be necessary for the unique challenges posed by Lewiston Auburn.

Lincoln

Town- Merchant Revitalization, Not a Main Street Community

Lincoln, located in Eastern Maine, was incorporated in 1829. Historically centered on natural resource based industry, such as lumbering and farming, Lincoln experienced early growth in population, but not large amounts of manufacturing. Lincoln was affected heavily by the depression in the 1930's, and shifted away from lumber and farming to one based on Lincoln Pulp and Paper.

Economic redevelopment in Lincoln has historically revolved around the maintenance of Lincoln Pulp and Paper. When faced with a mill closure in the late 60's, citizens of Lincoln joined together to raise the funds needed to secure financing for continued opera-

tion of the mill in three weeks.

Lincoln



The Lincoln movie theater was a fixture of downtown until the 1990s when it was torn down to make way for a parking lot.

Downtown Lincoln has experienced highs and lows in concert with prosperity of the mill. In the early 60's, amid a profitable period at the mill, the town experienced its most prospered, becoming home to a bowling alley, a movie theater and many locally owned retail stores. Lincoln downtown then began a slow decline, losing many of the retailers due to the proximity and growth of the Bangor area. In the 90's Lincoln downtown experienced a series of large fires, which devastated two separate areas of the downtown. One of these areas was rebuilt through private investment and TIF use, while the other remains an empty foundation at the downtown gateway.

Lincoln has the advantage of a beautiful natural environment. It is home to thirteen lakes, a section of the Penobscot River, Mattanawcook Stream and a portion of the IT trails. Lincoln attracts tourists in the summer to the lakes, and in the winter for snowmobiling. Adjacent to downtown Lincoln is a town park on Mattanawcook Lake, an attraction to local residents throughout the summer months, and home to many town recreation programs. There exists a large residential population within walking distance of the downtown area, ranging from affordable and elderly housing to upper income lake housing.

Driven by town administration, and accelerated recently by higher fuel prices, Lincoln has begun to redevelop. Use of CDBG funds have updated streetscapes along the Main Street, putting in place wider sidewalks, streetlights and a town gazebo at the gateway. The town has also sponsored the creation of a marina on Mattanawcook Lake to give lake residents access to the

downtown via lake. The town sponsors many events that bring citizens into the downtown, and citizens respond with high levels of attendance. Downtown business has struggled to maintain a downtown presence, due in part to the growth of large scale business on the adjacent West Broadway. Private investment over long periods of time have established several anchor stores, hence Lincoln strives to maintain retail centered downtown.

Possibilities



Possibilities is a main street anchor store in Lincoln that renovated and expanded into a vacant shoe store.

Lincoln has reviewed the Main Street program and would like to join in order to utilize the structure provided and gain a slight advantage in CDBG applications, but feels unable to commit to funding a full time manager. Many of the downtown business owners participate in a downtown merchant's association. This association would easily transform into a Main Street organization. This would allow the town to support the program more fully, as the goals of a Main Street program are broader than that of a merchant's association. Lincoln faces a need for a distinct vision for the downtown, and tools to make the vision happen. There is a distinct need for the town to provide for public private partnerships to encourage redevelopment of vacant or demolished buildings, something that it has struggled with over the years.

Norway

Main Street Community, Since 2002

Norway is a small historical village of approximately 5,000 residents located in Western Maine. First incorporated in 1797, it has deep roots in natural industry powered by Penesseewassee Stream. Norway developed rapidly, becoming home to a varied collection



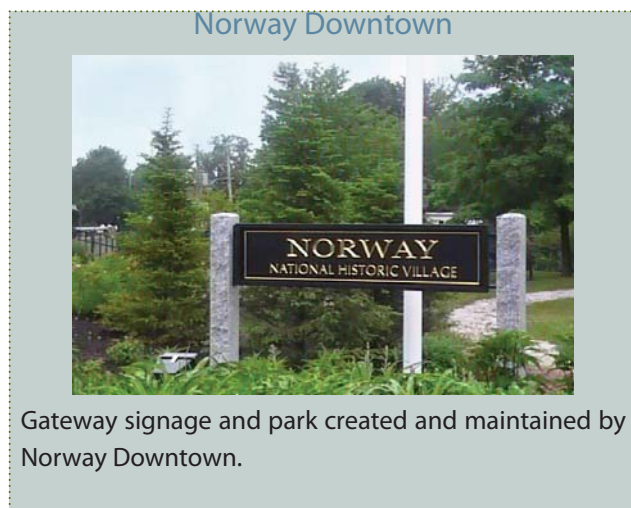
of mills and factories. Home to 32 stores in the downtown in the early 1800's it had the fastest growth rates of any town its size in the state.

Norway continued to be a mill and factory town throughout the 19th and early 20th century. It was the home of the Tubbs Snowshoe Factory, producer of 70% of the US Government supply of snowshoes during WWII. With the loss of Tubbs to Vermont, and eventually China, Norway began to decline in the 1950's. One of Norway's largest mills, C. B. Cummings and Son Company, a wooden dowel manufacturer, continued to operate in the heart of Norway Downtown until 2001, when it closed its doors due to competition from overseas.

Norway continues to retain the mentality of a mill town by continuing to pursue a large employer to support the town. Residents have long history within the town, and are much vested in its survival. Some residents commute to Portland or the Lewiston Auburn area, but the primary local economic drivers are the locally originated Norway Savings Bank and the Stephen's Memorial Hospital.

Norway has many inherent advantages that could foster a healthy downtown. Some of the downtown has been preserved to reflect its historical prosperity, however, the continued cycle of manufacturing and mill change has left different levels of renovation throughout the downtown. Home to Lake Penneesseewassee, Norway has a high number of summer lake residents, as well as winter snowmobile tourists. Connecting snowmobilers to the downtown area could bring even more business to Norway. Norway has a large number of historical residential structures that abut the downtown commercial area. Although Norway is adjacent to a large number of national chain stores, it serves as a supplemental service center, which allows it to have the freedom to define itself without the burden of providing the elements necessary to a service center. Home to a large amount of art and cultural events, Norway has the potential to enhance itself as a cultural destination through organization and promotion .

Norway was designated as a Main Street Community in 2002, along with the town of Eastport. Since its designation, Norway Downtown has focused on maintaining the period architecture that dominates the downtown. Featured on the Maine Historic Walking Tour, Norway Downtown has emphasized the potential to create a historic tourism industry.



Gateway signage and park created and maintained by Norway Downtown.

Some say, Norway's largest challenge is Norway. The historic ties to natural and manufacturing industries are extraordinarily strong and are pervasive in the local culture. There are limited amounts of entrepreneurs from the local area, although there are some young professionals beginning to invest in downtown. The citizens look for traditional investment opportunities, and tend to entertain the idea of downtown revitalization but not necessarily believe that it will empower the community. Local economic pressures from declining manufacturing jobs in the surrounding areas, such as the modular home industry in Oxford, is leading to increased pressure from the town to cut down on extra expenditures, including historic preservation and downtown redevelopment efforts.

Norway has experienced events that have lessened the trust vested in the local Main Street organization. In order to prove their worth to the community, Norway has suspended fund raising efforts and focused on high visibility activities. These activities include green space, parks and signage throughout Norway. Norway Downtown is the recipient of a creative economy grant, which it has used to publish downtown maps, informative flyers and create a new website. Unfortunately, these publications do not contain the Main Street name or inform readers of the four part process, nor do they emphasize the fact that Main Street is an economic redevelopment tool. Promoting the Main Street Program through these publications could help the community to accept and support the program.

As a small town, Norway has primarily struggled with the Main Street requirement of a salaried downtown manager. The board is structured to be very strong, led by

a president with significant historic preservation experience. Under the supervision of the strong board, they have structured a unique solution in lieu of hiring a full-time Maine Street program manager. The board, realizing that it is unable to complete all of the necessary management tasks itself, has contracted for services such as website design and maintenance, promotion organization and publications. This allows them to get each task accomplished quickly rather than attempt to find a single individual able to do everything. The board maintains a downtown office with an office manager in order to keep a presence in the downtown.

Rockland

Town-Chamber Revitalization, Not a Main Street Community

Rockland is located in the heart of the Mid-Coast, now referred to as the “Gold Coast”, region of Maine. With approximately 7,600 residents, Rockland was first incorporated in 1854. Rockland was never a center for mill industry as it lacked the water power of other locations. Rockland has always been centered on its working waterfront. The shipbuilding, fish processing and lime production industries contributed to slow steady growth in the area until the arrival of the Knox and Lincoln Railroad in 1871. The railroad brought a new industry to the area, tourism. Fueled by the tourists arriving by rail, Rockland was soon home to several resorts and service industry businesses.

Rockland remained a robust tourist destination until the depression. Following the depression, the availability of automobile transportation, instead of rail, further weakened the local economy. Competition from destinations such as Rockport and Camden caused the Rockland downtown to remain in an economic depression throughout most of the later 20th century. Rockland developed a reputation as a coastal town anecdotally speaking “to go to for a beer and a beatin.” This image was further reinforced by the large numbers of motorcycle gangs, decline in housing, and high crime rates.

Downtown revitalization in Rockland was spurred by the renovation and expansion of the Farnsworth Museum, home to the Wyeth Center. The investment in the museum attracted attention from other art galleries and service industries. The strong economies in Camden and Rockport became an advantage, as Rock-

land was a coastal location without the expense. Private investors are slowly realizing the potential in Rockland.

Strand Theatre



The Historic Strand Theatre in the center of Rockland's downtown first opened in 1923 and was restored in 2004 by a private investor.

Rockland has huge potential to prosper. Located directly on the ocean, Rockland Harbor has a large marina, capable of accommodating very large cruise ships. The city receives large amounts of walking and driving traffic, as it is located along the coastal Route 1 corridor, close to already successful tourist destinations, and is home to several island ferries. Rockland is home to several large privately run events, such as the North Atlantic Blues Festival and the annual Lobster Festival. Rockland also has the distinct advantage of having activities for tourists and residents alike to engage in, from ferry rides, to the Maine Lighthouse Museum, to the Farnsworth.

This investment has been heavily facilitated by a very active chamber and several motivated town officials. In the 1990's, Chamber leadership changed, and certain events, such as Summer Solstice, were recreated. Economic redevelopment was encouraged on a small scale basis, through personal interactions between Chamber leadership and business owners, focused on actions such as window cleaning and sidewalk maintenance. Local pride was encouraged through open letters to the community from active local champions at the Farnsworth, the City and the Chamber. Chamber leadership has actively recruited local summer residents with the potential to become investors to invest in the city. Finally, due to the size and location of their marina, the chamber has facilitated the recruitment of large cruise lines to the area. Due to overbooking of nearby ports, Rockland has become a very attractive destination. These ships bring in large amounts of foot traffic, and provide an instant market for downtown businesses.

City officials have routinely applied for and re-



ceived CDBG monies toward traffic calming, facades and streetscape projects, in order to prepare Rockland to compete with neighboring towns. Rockland city officials have successfully leveraged private investment in the downtown in exchange for public investment, and have utilized development impact fees as a means by which to accomplish needed downtown improvements. Large landmarks, such as the Strand Theater and the Masonic Temple, are well maintained by private investment. Further, the city has encouraged different income levels of residential development in and around the downtown commercial area, ranging from low income housing to very high end condominiums. As part of the residential development, the city has encouraged home ownership.

Rockland



Rockland streetscaping was accomplished primarily through the use of CDBG funds

Rockland local organizations such as the Chamber and the Farnsworth have partnered together to form the Downtown Alliance. The success of this organization is viewed as a benefit to both the activities of the Farnsworth and the Chamber, rather than competition. Chamber leadership has been instrumental in this shift in thinking, and has been supported by the large numbers of individuals returning to the state of Maine after living and working elsewhere.

Rockland continues to face challenges in the downtown revitalization process. The most prevalent is the challenge to maintain the character of Rockland and avoid over gentrification. Rockland, a coastal city now centered on arts and culture, has an inherent level of gentrification that is unavoidable, but still maintains a somewhat gritty, working waterfront feel. It is essential to the citizens, the town and the chamber that this character remains. As a regional center, the downtown needs to serve not only the lucrative summer industry, but also

the residential winter industry. Rockland faces a real challenge in managing the inevitable development that will occur as they continue to make the town a more attractive locale for investors. This challenge is already being felt by stores pressured to keep up with the market, increased hours, increased demand for high end materials and products and increased variety.

Saco

Main Street Community, Since 2001

Saco is an oceanfront Southern Maine hometown with rich history. Incorporated in 1867, the city has a population of approximately 17,000 residents. Originally a natural industry capital capable of producing over 21,000,000 feet of lumber annually, Saco shifted over to a textile center in the mid 1800's. Factory Island, or Saco Island as it is now known, was home to several textile mills. This industry remained dominant in the area for nearly 100 years, and influenced much of the Georgian, Victorian and Federal architecture that remains the heart of the downtown today.

The decline of the textile mills in the 20th century ushered in a decline in the local economy and downtown Saco. However, the proximity to Portland, a major economic center, and the presence of continued tourism to Old Orchard Beach and Ferry Beach State Park muted the effects felt by many other communities.

Saco is a fairly prosperous city, with high property values and fairly low poverty levels. It is situated on coveted Southern Maine ocean front, and although the downtown does not abut the ocean, the businesses receive the benefit of a large number of summer tourists and residents. The town is located on Route 1, but the downtown is located in a bypass area. Saco is home to Saco Defense, a General Dynamics Company, which provides a large number of local jobs, but many residents commute to neighboring Portland. The economic stability of proximity to a major city allows Saco to be continuously appealing to private investment, both in the residential areas and in the commercial areas. Residential areas are fairly close to the downtown, however creating walking traffic continues to be a challenge.



Saco Spirit hosts several annual community events including the Sidewalk Arts Festival to promote a hometown feel.

The city of Saco is home to a large number of historic buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places, many of which are privately owned and maintained. Saco has adopted provisions for historic preservation within its zoning ordinance, protecting locally landmarked structures from major alterations. Saco is one of a handful of Certified Local Government (CLG) by Maine Historic Preservation Commission, and is thereby eligible to receive funds otherwise unavailable towards the maintenance of these structures.

Saco was officially designated as one of the first four Main Street communities in 2001. The Main Street Organization, Saco Spirit, has been integral in keeping Saco a beautiful and economically healthy downtown. The design committee has been involved in several façade decisions, and has partnered with the town to provide flowerboxes throughout the downtown area. Saco Spirit has also been involved in maintaining a hometown feeling in Saco. This has been accomplished by hosting traditional town events, such as holiday festivals, and unique events, such as a fashion show and art festival, that highlight the distinctive assets of Saco. Saco Spirit earns the most praise for its role in facilitating the redevelopment of the historic brick mill with the \$100 million Island Point project.

Recently, Saco Spirit has encountered the mature community problem. The downtown looks good, the events are well planned and fairly set, the buildings are in good repair, and there are extremely few vacancies. The organization is encountering fundraising difficulties in its efforts to draw funds out of the community, as the downtown does not seem to need additional

work. Business owners take pride in their business and are fairly successful. There still are areas which could be improved, including marketing of downtown events and business to a larger audience and increased foot traffic, but more support is needed.

Skowhegan

Main Street Community, Since 2005

A mid-sized town located in central Maine of approximately 8,000 residents, Skowhegan was incorporated as Milburn in 1823. Originally a farming location, Skowhegan began its transformation to a mill town in the mid 1800's. By the end of the 19th century, driven by the power of the Skowhegan Falls, Skowhegan was the home of 19 major mills and factories. The mill industry was sustained in Skowhegan longer than in other regions of Maine, seeing new construction as late as 1986. Skowhegan major employers include SAPPI, a local mill, and New Balance.

Skowhegan has many inherent advantages. It is centrally located at the intersection of Route 150, Route 104, Route 2 and Route 201, 13 miles from I-95, and has a significant amount of traffic. The Skowhegan Fair attracts fairgoers from throughout the state annually, and the fairgrounds provide a venue for many events throughout the year. The scenic riverfront runs behind the downtown commercial area. Skowhegan is also home to a large maple syrup industry, the top producer in the country.

Unfortunately, the mill economy in Skowhegan began to decline in the 1950's. This decline was felt most dramatically in the downtown area. The influx of a national retail chain close to the Skowhegan Fairgrounds drew customers out of the downtown. Continued growth outside of the downtown, paired with the loss of centrally located mills, left large numbers of vacancies in the downtown area.

Skowhegan was admitted to the Main Street program with Van Buren in 2005. Skowhegan's Main Street program was formed with a strong energized board, who hired a very energetic manager from outside of Skowhegan who steered the activities of the organization in a very positive direction. The manager was very well liked and was the source of much success, including grants for business owners to attend a business boot camp. As the board and Skowhegan had come to rely on and embrace this manager, when she left the organiza-

tion the board struggled to fill the vacancy with a similar

Empire Grill



Before

After



The Empire Grill underwent several facade improvements, with the help of CDBG grants, and is once again a downtown Skowhegan landmark.

individual. Later a second manager resigned, unable to regroup the board and the program under her leadership. During this period of time the board began to weaken and pull apart. Skowhegan has struggled to maintain the work done by the first manager and has returned to square one to rebuild the organization. This struggle has disillusioned citizens from outside the organization. Once lost it is difficult to bring back the enthusiasm for downtown revitalization.

Skowhegan would benefit from a structural reworking. Currently, the organization is undergoing a revision of their rules and procedures at the request of their members and the MDC. This will allow them to be more prepared to accommodate a new manager and a revitalized program. This effort would pair well with a state coordinated Main Street resource team centered on organization.

Promotions, such as the maple syrup breakfast, continue but Main Street Skowhegan tends to be a collaborating organization rather than a lead organization. This support is not to be undermined, and contributes greatly to events such as Skowpendus, the Maine Maple Syrup week, and Gala events. Annual events, such as the Holiday tour and the Tent Event, that are led by Main Street Skowhegan encourage downtown business and build on already present market factors, Christmas shopping and the New Balance annual sale. While these are successful promotions, it does not give the organization the same reputation as other town Main Street programs that

are highly visible in leading many promotional activities.

City officials have taken the lead in promoting design changes through CDBG funds, and require input on this from a citizen review board. This board is attended by several Main Street members, but again demonstrates collaboration and not leadership. The city has actively sought applications from downtown business for façade grants, assisted in the design process and partnered with private owner projects, but has been receptive to the input of Main Street Skowhegan, embracing the idea of a group that is focused on the downtown.

Giovanni Building



The Giovanni Building was stripped back to brick and beams and is now in the process of being restored by a private investor.

Business owners in Skowhegan express their support of the downtown revitalization, and some sit on the board, but others have not been actively involved as collaborators. There did exist some tension between the Downtown Business Association, which pre-dates the Main Street program, and Main Street Skowhegan. While this association has been enveloped into the Main Street program, the organization is still working to thoroughly integrate the two entities. It is important to note that there several much invested businesses that have worked with Main Street Skowhegan since before its designation. These business owners continue to take positive steps to advance the downtown, and are up-beat about the recent restructuring and momentum behind Main Street Skowhegan. There is potential to provide services to the owners, such as specialized small business training, that would promote involvement and investment from the business community. Such a partnership may take time and effort, as well as funds, to develop given some of the history that exists in Skowhegan, but would strengthen the overall program.

Recently, with the return to the basic aspects of the Main Street program, Main Street Skowhegan has seen several positive indicators. Flowers in the islands in the main intersections, improved store fronts and inventory and improved morale in those involved with Main Street Skowhegan all reflect the efforts of Main Street Skowhegan.





Appendix A

Downtown Center Statute

5 M.R.S.A. § 3307-F

Maine Revised Statutes Annotated

Title 5. Administrative Procedures and Services

Part 8. State Planning

Chapter 311. State Planning (Refs & Annos)

§ 3307-F. Maine Downtown Center

Current with emergency legislation through Ch. 700 of the 2008 Second Reg. Sess. and the 2008 First Spec. Sess. of the 123rd Legislature. Also, current with Chs. 470-560 of the Second Reg. Sess. of the 123rd Legislature.

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1. Establishment. The Maine Downtown Center, referred to in this section as the “center,” is established to encourage downtown revitalization in the State.

2. Purpose. The center serves the following functions:

A. To advocate for downtown revitalization;

B. To promote awareness about the importance of vital downtowns;

C. To serve as a clearinghouse for information relating to downtown development; and

D. To provide training and technical assistance to communities that demonstrate a willingness and ability to revitalize their downtowns.

3. Collaboration. The State Planning Office within the Executive Department shall work collaboratively with the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development, the Maine Development Foundation and other state agencies to coordinate the programs of the center.

4. Funding. The center shall develop a plan for the ongoing funding of the center.

5. Definition. For the purposes of this section, “downtown” has the same meaning as in Title 30-A, section 4301, subsection 5-A.

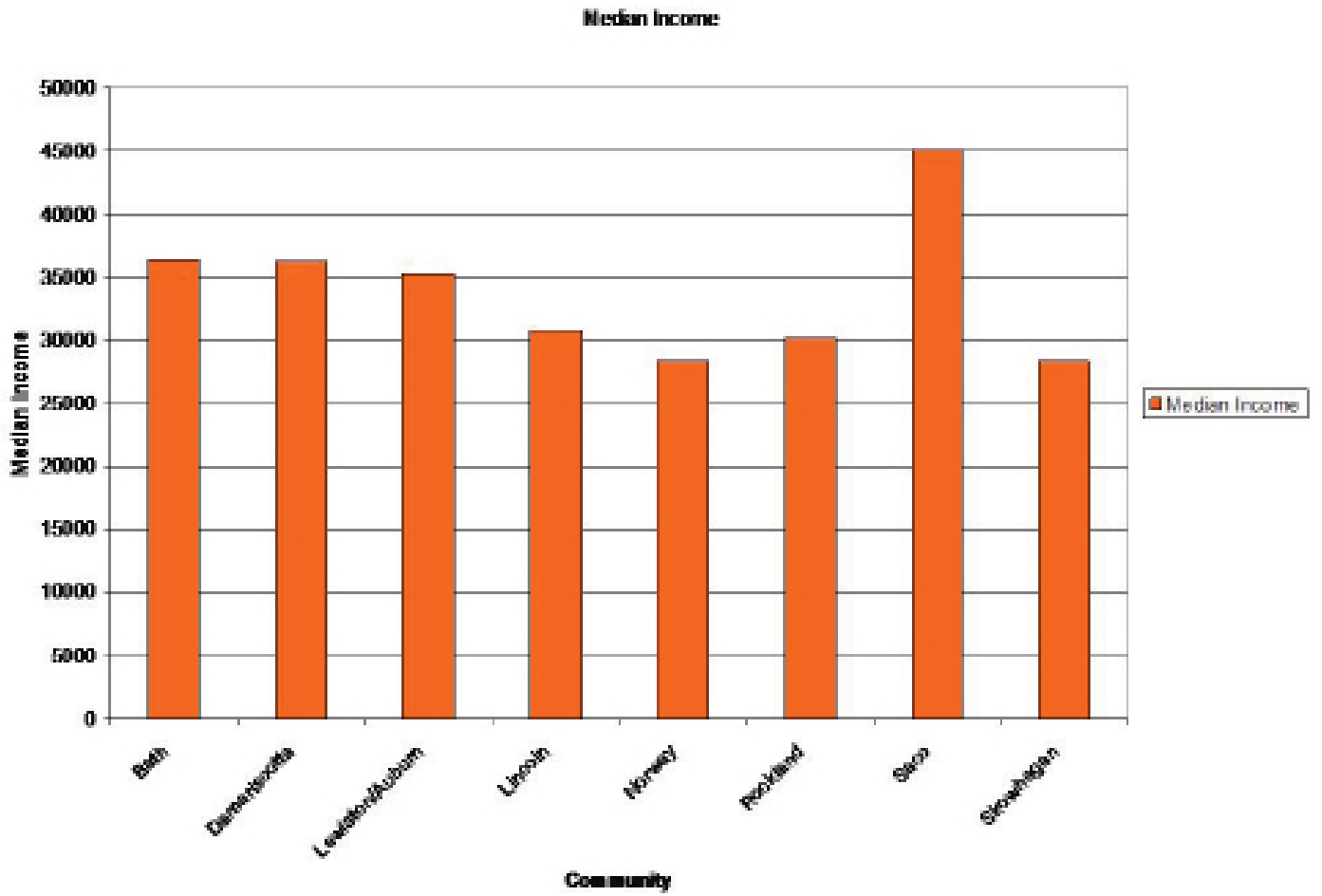
CREDIT(S)

1999, c. 776, § 3.

5 M. R. S. A. § 3307-F, ME ST T. 5 § 3307-F



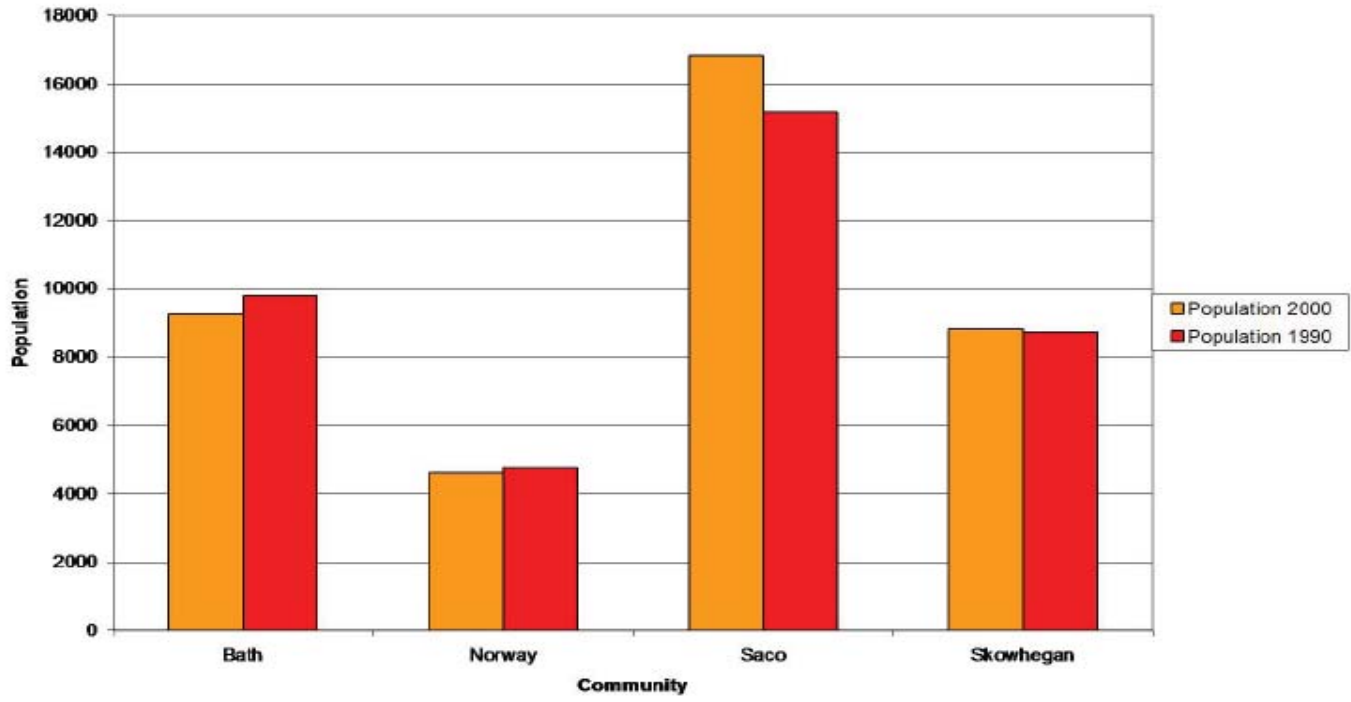
Appendix B



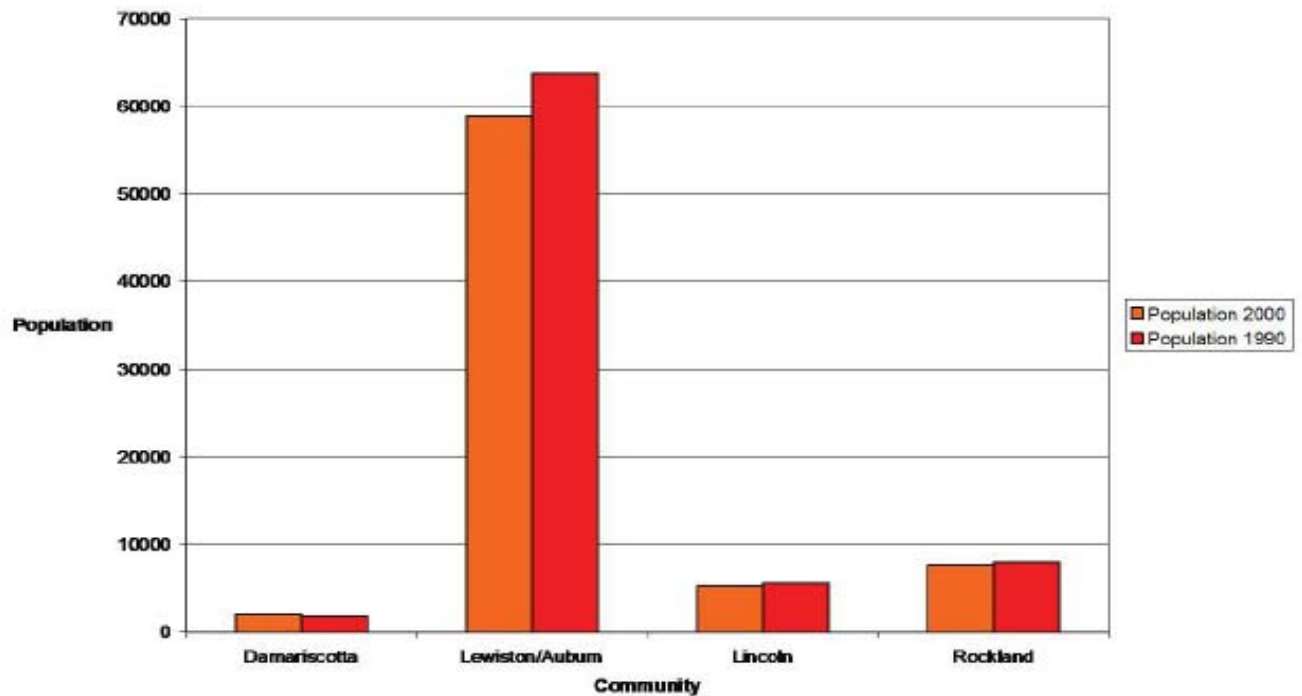


Appendix C

Main Street Community Populations

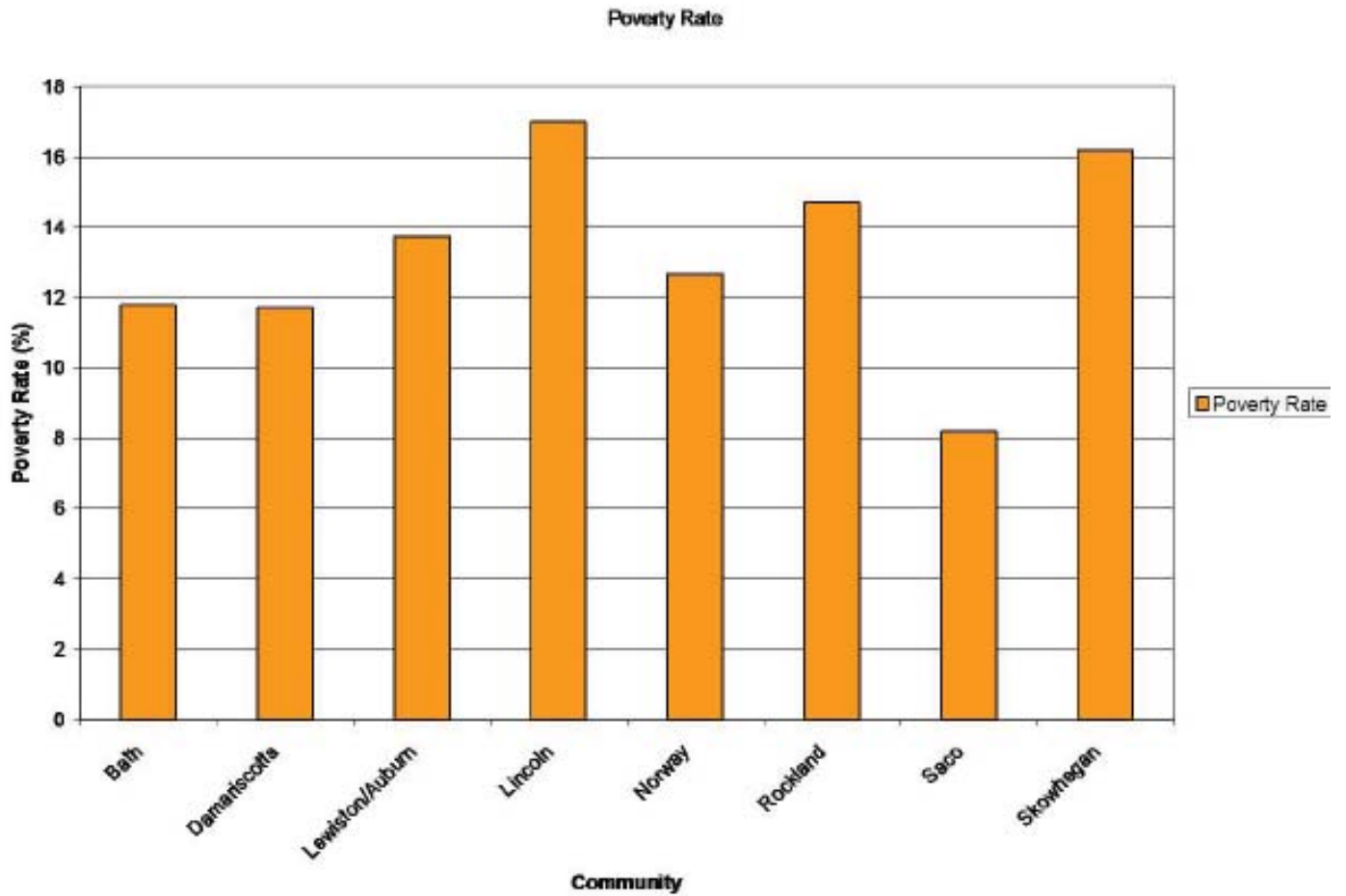


Non Main Street Town Populations





Appendix D



**Note: Graph based on data from 2000, Rockland has since dropped below the 12% poverty rate*



Appendix E

PARTIAL LIST OF PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Community Enterprise Grant Program

DECD program that provides up to \$150,000 to be used for micro-loans and/or streetscape and façade improvement.

Community Planning Grant Program

DECD program that provides up to \$10,000 to be used exclusively for planning related expenses such as studies, analysis, data gathering, preparation of plans and maps, comprehensive planning and identification of actions needed to implement plans generated.

Cultural Facilities Accessibility Grant

Program of the Maine Arts Commission which provides funding for new construction, repairs or renovations of existing facilities owned and operated by a nonprofit Maine arts organization, or repair, upgrade or replacement of capital technology equipment for a facility operated by a nonprofit, Maine arts organization

Discovery Research Grant

Program by the Maine Arts Commission which provides funds for a community-wide inventory and consensus-building process in which cultural resources and needs are identified.

Downtown Revitalization Grant Program

DECD program that provides up to \$500,000 to communities to implement a downtown revitalization plan. Funds can go to many different projects related to downtown revitalization, such as infrastructure and economic development.

Good Idea Grant

Program by the Maine Arts Commission which is designed to assist in supporting and fostering the growth of Maine's artists. The parameters of the grant are purposefully broad. They include any "good idea" that furthers an individual artist's creative endeavor(s).

Grants.gov

Websites where all discretionary grants offered by the 26 federal grant-making agencies can be found, searchable by keyword, agency and grant number.

Public Infrastructure Grant Program

DECD program that provides up to \$500,000, depending on category of improvement, towards local public infrastructure improvements that are part of a broader community development plan.

Maine Downtown Center

Legislatively created program of the Maine Development Foundation, centered on downtown redevelopment. Currently houses the Main Street Maine program.

Maine Philanthropy Center

Statewide association of grant makers. Purpose of organization is to promote philanthropy and increase its impact throughout Maine. Allows non-profit organizations and consultants to purchase a membership to view available grants.

Orton Family Foundation

Private Foundation based in Vermont that promotes community planning and development. Awards grants to provide tools, research, capital and visual representations for towns looking to preserve their community's sense of place.

Riverfront Community Development Bond

Legislation that will create competitive grants available to community-driven projects throughout Maine. Primary purpose is to promote and sustain environmentally friendly economic activity along Maine's rivers.

Small Harbor Improvement Project

DOT program created in 1995 to improve and promote public facilities and economic development along the coast, and to help municipalities create public docks and marinas.

Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation

Private non-profit foundation based in Maine that promotes strengthened communities, favors those initiatives that are community-based without recourse to traditional methods of acquiring funds. Most grants are awarded for special projects, including capital projects, innovation grants and program expansions.



Appendix F

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- CAC – Citizen Advisory Committee
- CDBG – Community Development Block Grant
- COG – Councils of Government
- CLG – Certified Local Government
- CSO – Combined Sewer Overflow
- DECD – Department of Economic and Community Development
- DPAC – Damariscotta Planning Advisory Committee
- EDD – Economic Development Districts
- FAME – Finance Authority of Maine
- HUD – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- HOME – U.S. HUD HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- MDC- Maine Downtown Center
- MDF – Maine Development Foundation
- MITF – Municipal Investment Trust Fund
- National Trust – National Trust for Historic Preservation
- MSB – Main Street Bath
- SHIP- Small Harbor Improvement Projects
- SPO- State Planning Office
- TIF – Tax Increment Financing

