

**DRAFT – NOT ADMINISTRATION POLICY**  
**2/26/08 version**

**IMPLEMENTING AN**  
**ASSET-BASED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN MAINE**

**A draft recommendation to the Governor, for consideration as legislation or executive order.**

**I. Preamble or Purpose:**

Maine is rich in resources and potential for economic growth based on the state’s unique character and quality of place.

Entrepreneurs, employers, and skilled workers in today’s high-growth industries especially value quality of place, making it a critical driver of future economic growth and prosperity.

Maine’s quality of place assets, both natural and built, are diverse and plentiful, and are today at risk from sprawl, the loss of access to working waterfronts and outdoor recreation, the loss of agricultural land, the selling off of industrial forests, and the lack of investment in downtowns and historic assets.

Quality of place is a compelling framework for local and regional economic and community development in Maine, as a necessary complement to traditional development strategies.

Maine now has underway a variety of promising, asset-based development initiatives, including nature-based tourism, land conservation, cultural inventorying, and transportation planning; but Maine government is not now well-organized and financed to carry out these and other asset-based development strategies.

It is the policy of the State of Maine to pursue an asset-based development strategy to complement its traditional economic development programs.

The U.S. House of Representatives and Senate have enacted the Northern Border Regional Commission, patterned after the Appalachian Regional Commission that promises to bring substantial federal assistance to Maine in support of regional asset-based development strategies and initiatives.

**II. Definition:**

“Asset-based development” means a strategy that builds on existing resources and strengths to create valued products and services that can be sustained for regional and local benefit. In practice, asset-based development is locally-based and regionally organized, strategic from both a regional and statewide perspective, involves broad cross-sections of people in planning and decision-making, and engages the private, public, and nonprofit sectors in its financing and implementation. At a minimum, it includes the five, sequential steps of asset-mapping, strategic planning, education and training, financing, and marketing.

**III. Goals:**

The goals of Maine’s asset-based development strategy include:

1. Protect, strengthen, and develop Maine’s quality of place assets, both natural and built;

2. Make the State's several regions more economically competitive and prosperous through increased job opportunities, incomes, investments, and revenues; and
3. Create valued products and services in Maine that will be sustained for regional and local benefit.

#### **IV. Maine Quality of Place Council:**

There is established a Maine Quality of Place Council to provide strategic direction and support for the State's asset-based economic development efforts.

- 1. Composition:** The Maine Quality of Place Council will comprise eleven members, six (6) private citizens and five (5) state executives, appointed by the Governor :
  - A. The six (6) private citizens will be selected by the Governor for their knowledge of and commitment to protecting the State's natural, historic, cultural, recreational and downtown assets;
  - B. The five (5) state executives are appointed by the Governor to represent state quality of place interests, including the departments of economic and community development, transportation, conservation, planning, and cultural agencies;
  - C. Terms and compensation: Members will serve three year terms, staggered to assure continuity, and will serve without compensation.
- 2. Duties:** The duties of the Maine Quality of Place Council shall be to:
  - A. Identify opportunities for improved coordination among all related state agency activities, regulations, programs, and policies;
  - B. Establish standards for regional asset-based strategic plans; review and approve regional asset-based development plans; and award regional asset-based planning grants to the state's regional councils of government/federal economic development districts;
  - C. Establish standards for and award regional asset-based planning and implementation grants for broad asset-based development projects of statewide significance;
  - D. Develop, apply, and report on quantifiable measures to assess progress towards the goals of the State's asset-based development strategy; and
  - E. Coordinate with the Governor's Council on Competitiveness and the Economy, the Maine Economic Growth Council, Community Preservation Advisory Committee, and Intergovernmental Advisory Commission.
- 3. Meetings:** The Maine Quality of Place Council chair shall call meetings of the Council and establish their agendas, as needed, but at least three times annually.
- 4. Staffing and guidelines:** The State Planning Office shall provide staff support to the Council. At the direction of the Council, the State Planning Office shall publish guidelines for creating asset-based development strategies to preserve and market Maine's forests, rivers, coastlines, downtowns, historic and cultural facilities, civic structures, open space, and other assets. The guidelines will present means to:

- A. Develop the State's assets and identify new and creative ways to generate jobs, income, investment, and revenues from these assets.
- B. Create regional inventories of cultural, natural, structural, and leadership resources, for use in developing strategies to increase their social and economic value to communities and regions.
- C. Identify best practices for how to carry out asset-based development.
- D. Identify benchmark standards for asset-based development strategies to evaluate regional strategies' progress towards achieving the state's Quality of Place goals

**5. Reporting:** The Council shall report regularly to the Governor, but not less than annually on November 15 of each year.

#### **V. State Government Support of Maine's Quality of Place Assets:**

The Director of the State Planning Office and the commissioners of Conservation, Economic and Community Development, and Transportation shall lead an effort by the executive agencies of state government to provide a continuing and sustainable framework for regional asset-based development.

At their direction, the commissioners and heads of all executive agencies of state government shall:

1. Review their missions to identify where they do not actively protect, strengthen, and support building upon Maine's quality of place assets;
2. Examine their statutes, funding, policies, and programs and making appropriate administrative changes or propose statutory changes needed to support regional asset-based development strategies;
3. Concentrate public investments within regions on asset-based development projects where there is a significant potential for future growth, and where the expected long-term return on public dollars invested will be the greatest;
4. Revise grant program requirements to reward asset-based development strategies by providing set-asides for asset-based development or establishing preferences for asset-based development;
5. Review regulatory statutes and functions to identify where they compromise or run counter to protecting Maine's quality of place and the goals of Maine's asset-based development strategy; and
6. Identify opportunities for leveraging additional partnership efforts and resources.

MaineHousing, Finance Authority of Maine, University of Maine System, and Maine for Community College System are invited to join this important effort, to examine their missions, operations, funding, policies, and programs, to identify where and how they may best support the State's new asset-based development strategy, and to report as described below.

The State Planning Office shall develop guidelines to assist agencies in examining the impact of their mission, statutes, regulations, funding streams, policies, and programs on Maine's quality of place efforts and regional asset-based development strategies.

By February 1, 2009, the lead executives specified above shall report to the Maine Quality of Place Council and to the Governor with a comprehensive, state government-wide blueprint for implementing Maine's asset-based development strategy, complete with specific assignment of

tasks, timelines, responsibility, and benchmarks for each state agency to align its mission, programs, funding streams, and activities with this strategy. Thereafter, the Council shall monitor progress toward achievement of the blueprint and report in annually to the Governor on agency progress to this end.

## **VI. Regional Focus:**

The State Planning Office shall convene regional government and economic leaders to promote asset-based development strategies as follows:

1. The Office shall convene representatives of the six regional councils of government designated as federal economic development districts, namely, the:
  - A. Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments
  - B. Midcoast Economic Development District
  - C. Kennebec Valley Council of Governments
  - D. Northern Maine Development Corporation
  - E. Eastern Maine Development Corporation
  - F. Southern Maine Economic Development District
2. At the direction of the Maine Quality of Place Council, the State Planning Office shall assist and enable the RCOG/EDDs to conduct planning and implementation of regional asset-based development strategies, and help determine how each RCOG/EDD will:
  - A. Create and staff at least one regional quality of place council within the geographic region covered by each RCOG/EDD, as follows:
    - 1) Each regional quality of place council shall represent the main, marketable quality of place assets within the region; and include public officials, community leaders, and representatives of stakeholders engaged with local and regional business, tourism, transportation, natural resources and the landscape, historical and cultural assets, intellectual and educational assets, recreational assets, downtown development, and non-profit assets.
    - 2) Each regional quality of place council shall:
      - a) Identify appropriate and marketable regional assets through asset-mapping and inventorying;
      - b) Develop regional asset-based strategic plans, in conformance with state standards and overall existing regional development plans;
      - c) Establish strategic priorities among potential asset-based investments and initiatives; and
      - d) Evaluate and recommend grants for asset-based implementation project grants based on criteria developed by the Maine Quality of Place Council.
    - 3) RCOG/EDDs may establish a joint regional quality of place council if the relevant geographic area and assets lie within the jurisdiction of more than one RCOG/EDD; they may also establish sub-regional councils as appropriate to particular, market-based opportunities, the strategies for advancing which will comport with overall regional development strategies.
  - B. Administer state asset-based planning and implementation grant funds, including contract administration;

- C. Leverage federal and other funds to further the State's asset-based development strategies and goals;
- D. Provide technical assistance to regional nonprofit organizations seeking to develop funding proposals for place-based assets; and
- E. Coordinate with neighboring RCOG/EDDs on plans and projects that cross regional boundaries.

## **VII. Funding**

Funding for asset-based development planning and implementation shall come from reconfiguration of existing state and federal resources and other funding sources approved by the Legislature.