

**REMARKS OF RICHARD BARRINGER, CHAIR, GOVERNOR'S
COUNCIL ON MAINE'S QUALITY OF PLACE,**

DECEMBER 4, 2007

- THANK YOU GOVERNOR - FOR YOUR VISION AND LEADERSHIP. WE TAKE YOUR WORDS TO HEART IN THIS, OUR FIRST REPORT YO YOU.
- A YEAR AGO THE BROOKINGS REPORT ASSERTED THAT MAINE'S QUALITY OF PLACE IS AN ECONOMIC ASSET OF GREAT AND INCREASING VALUE -- INDEED, THAT IT IS MAINE'S CHIEF ECONOMIC ASSET IN THE GLOBAL COMPETITION FOR ENTREPRENEURS, FOR SKILLED WORKERS, FOR SEASONAL VISITORS, AND FOR RETIREES.
- BROOKINGS WROTE THAT AS THE SEARCH FOR QUALITY PLACES GROWS, MAINE HAS A GLOBALLY KNOWN BRAND BUILT ON AN IMAGE OF LIVABLE COMMUNITIES, STUNNING SCENERY, AND GREAT RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. THIS ASSET, THEY CLAIMED, IS TODAY UNDER THREAT, DIMINISHING MAINE'S FUTURE ECONOMIC PROSPECTS.
- EARLIER THIS YEAR YOU CREATED THE COUNCIL TO EXAMINE THESE CLAIMS, TO DETERMINE WHETHER MAINE'S QUALITY OF PLACE IS IN FACT AN ECONOMIC DRIVER, AND IF SO, HOW WE MAY BEST SECURE ITS FUTURE.
- I WISH TO THANK EACH MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL AND OUR STAFF FOR THEIR DEVOTION TO THIS EFFORT. TODAY IS OUR 10TH MEETING IN VARIOUS MAINE LOCATIONS. STAFF HAVE UNDERTAKEN EXTENSIVE RESEARCH, WE HAVE HEARD FROM NUMEROUS WITNESSES FROM ALL SECTORS, AND WORKED HARD TO CREATE A REPORT THAT IS WORTHY OF YOUR TRUST AND THE SUBJECT AT HAND.

- OUR RESEARCH CONFIRMS THE BROOKINGS FINDINGS. MAINE'S QUALITY OF PLACE - OUR WOODS AND WATERS, OUR OPEN FIELDS, OUR HISTORIC AND CULTURAL HERITAGE, OUR PICTURESQUE DOWNTOWNS AND WORKING WATERFRONTS, OUR TRADITION OF PUBLIC ACCESS TO PRIVATE LANDS - IS AN ASSET OF GREAT AND INCREASING ECONOMIC VALUE TO MAINE PEOPLE;
- TODAY THIS ASSET IS AT RISK FROM A VARIETY OF FORCES AND EVENTS - FROM THE SELLING OFF OF OUR INDUSTRIAL FOREST, THE DECLINE OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS, THE ARRIVAL OF LARGE-SCALE NATIONAL RETAILERS, THE SPREADING OUT OF HOMES AND SCHOOLS ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE, THE BUYING UP OF COASTAL, RIVERFRONT, AND LAKEFRONT LANDS, AND THE LACK OF INVESTMENT IN OUR DOWNTOWNS.
- TO COUNTER THESE TRENDS AND SECURE OUR FUTURE, WE MAKE 15 RECOMMENDATIONS IN THREE PARTS, RESPECTING:
 - REGIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION ,
 - COMMUNITY AND DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION, AND
 - A NEW, ASSET-BASED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR MAINE'S SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY
- ON REGIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION, WE RECOMMEND THAT WE
 - RECOGNIZE, INCENTIVIZE, AND REWARD BOTH PRIVATE LANDOWNER CONTRIBUTIONS TO PUBLIC ACCESS, AS WELL AS THE GROWING NUMBER OF REGIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION EFFORTS LIKE AGAMENTICUS TO THE SEA AND THE DOWNEAST LANDTRUST

- ON COMMUNITY AND DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION, WE RECOMMEND MEASURES TO
 - STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWN AND COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION EFFORTS
 - ENHANCE MAINE'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION TOOLS AND RESOURCES
 - CREATE A STATEWIDE PEDESTRIAN TRAIL SYSTEM TO LINK MAINE'S MANY QUALITY PLACES, FROM KITTERY TO FORT KENT, FROM EASTPORT TO BETHEL.
 - *(GOVERNOR, YOU CAN BE A NEW PRESIDENT DWIGHT EISENHOWER, WHO ENVISIONED THE NATIONAL INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM!)*

- AND IN OUR MOST SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURE FROM CURRENT PRACTICE, WE RECOMMEND
 - NEW FOCUS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ,TO INVEST IN THESE KEY ASSETS
 - WITH PRIME RESPONSIBILITY AT THE LOCAL/REGIONAL LEVEL - BOTTOM-UP
 - AND A NEW STATE ROLE - TO HELP ORGANIZE AND TO OFFER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, SEED MONEY, AND ON-GOING SUPPORT

- THIS APPROACH IS CALLED "ASSET-BASED" DEVELOPMENT
 - MOST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AIM TO COMPENSATE FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL WEAKNESSES
 - THIS ONE BUILDS ON THEIR KEY STRENGTHS AND ASSETS
 - WE NEED **BOTH** TO PROSPER TODAY AND TOMORROW

- WE PROPOSE TO
 - CREATE REGIONAL COALITIONS OF TOURISM INDUSTRY, HISTORIC PRESERVATIONISTS, LAND CONSERVATIONISTS, CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS,

LOCAL OFFICIALS, CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, AND THE LIKE

- TO IDENTIFY KEY ASSETS IN LOCAL AREA
- TO DESIGN STRATEGIES TO PRESERVE, MARKET, AND ENHANCE THESE, AND
- TO CARRY THROUGH AND MAKE TRHESE NEEDED INVESTMENTS IN OUR FUTURE
- WE RECOMMENND USING EXISTING MECHANISMS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS:
 - REGIONAL COUNCILS, IN COLLABORATION WITH
 - EXISTING STATE AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS

BUT THIS WILL REQUIRE SOMETHING OF THE STATE, ITSELF; THAT IS,

- SEED MONEY TO DEVELOP THESE STRATEGIES
- NEW FLEXIBILITY WITHIN STATE PROGRAMS TO ALIGN THEIR MISSIONS AND PROGRAMS WITH THE EFFORT; AND
- DECENTRALIZATION OF SOME AUTHORITY AND RESOURCES
- THIS REPRERSENTS A PROFOUND CHANGE FROM THE STATUS QUO
- GOVERNOR, WE FEEL AN URGENCY ABOUT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS, AND WE DEEPLY APPRECIATE YOUR ENTHUSIASM
 - HISTORIC CHANGE IS NOW UPON US
 - HOW WE RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGE WILL DETERMINE OUR FUTURE PROSPERITY
- ON BEHALF OF COUNCIL, THANK YOU AGAIN FOR THIS OPPORTUNIUTY. WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO KEEP WORKING ON THESE ISSUES FOR YOU. THE CHALLENGE IS

GREAT, AND THE POTENTIAL REWARDS FOR MAINE, WE BELIEVE, ARE EVEN GREATER.