

ASSET-BASED DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREA
Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place
September 11, 2007

Examples of Asset-Based Development Outside of Maine

Numerous states, counties, cities, and non-profit organizations pursue "asset-based development" although sometimes not by that name. For some it is a comprehensive framework for sustainable economic development, community preservation, and natural resource management. For others it is a new strategy for delivering specific services, such as public assistance, mental health, and youth development.

Examples: Minnesota Rural Partners, City of Seattle (Washington), City of Asheville (North Carolina), Loudon County (Tennessee), Appalachian Regional Commission, Northwest Area Foundation (Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon), Kellogg Foundation

Commonalities of asset-based development initiatives:

- Ideas, priorities, and leadership originate at local and regional level
- Higher levels offer technical assistance, facilitate, fund, and inform local and regional efforts
- Comprehensive approach to economic development
- Joint private, public, and non-profit support, commitment, and involvement
- Effective long-range planning and implementation
- Often weak on performance measures and evaluation (which is not unusual)

Asset-Based Development in Maine

Asset-based development refers to initiatives that build directly upon a region's competitive advantage to create economic opportunity. It begins by identifying those unique assets with market value and potential – the expertise and abilities of the workforce, businesses, organizations, and institutions; and its natural, historical, and cultural resources. It then designs initiatives that connect and enhance these assets to multiply their productive potential and usefulness. It differs from the traditional "needs-based" approach that identifies a region's deficiencies and attempts initiatives to correct them. Asset-based development is a complement to, rather than a substitute for this traditional approach.

Maine's unique and marketable assets include its:

- natural environment,
- clean air and water,
- cultural heritage and traditions,
- historic heritage and downtowns,
- forest products, maritime, and agricultural heritage,
- working lands and waterfronts,
- reputation for hard work and quality,
- physical infrastructure, businesses, and organizations that support the assets and provide access to them.

Examples: Maine Downtown Center, Maine North Star Alliance, Western Mountain Alliance, Maine Highlands Guild, Maine Winter Sports Center, Baxter State Park, Acadia National Park, Maine's Working Waterfront Initiative

Increasing the economic opportunities that these assets provide to Maine people will require strategic alignment and integration with the state's workforce development system.