

Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place

Downtown Focus Group

Key Recommendations

1. Enact the Maine Community Preservation Act with \$25 million a year for five years to:
 - Acquire land and easements for urban parks and trails, river and canal walks, and greenways and green spaces and public access to them
 - Rehabilitate historic structures for use as public gathering places, such as city halls, opera houses, grange buildings
 - Fund related community enhancements to “set off” the newly-restored structures, such as sidewalks, street lamps, benches, and parks and trail infrastructure, with an emphasis on community gateways
2. Create the Maine Intrastate Trail System
 - Identify and plan a system of multi-use trails from Kittery to Fort Kent from Eastport to Bethel. The system would not only link rural trails, but would also provide access through sidewalks, urban trails, and greenways to downtown shops, restaurants, and cultural attractions.
3. Provide Communities with Downtown Development Assistance
 - Fund the Maine Downtown Center at \$300,000 a year to support the Main Street Maine program
 - Provide \$100,000 to the Maine Downtown Center to support a technical assistance program for communities that do not have the resources to commit to Main Street Maine.
4. Enhance Historic Preservation Tools
 - Support the *Act To Amend the Credit for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties* (LD 262) to make historic rehabilitation projects economically feasible
 - Create an administrative structure for Maine's rehabilitation code that encourages rehabilitation of historic structures
 - Develop model zoning language that helps communities preserve the traditional character of their historic neighborhoods
5. Support the Work of the Resolve 46 to Implement Uniform Building Codes

Other Recommendations

Housing/People living in Downtowns

Work with Maine State Housing Authority to use their criteria to infuse walkability, use compatible architecture, preserve character-defining historic architectural elements, and support other Quality of Place goals in their housing projects.

Schools

Address issues that discourage the rehabilitation of historic school buildings and that force schools out of downtowns (like requiring minimum acreages and imposing the same codes and standards as for new construction).

Public Buildings

Reverse policies that encourage federal, state, and local buildings (court houses, post offices, municipal buildings) to leave and provide incentives to keep these buildings in our downtowns.

Incentives for Entrepreneurs

Provide incentives to locate in downtowns and in historic buildings (creative economy link)

Downtown Development Tool Box

Create a downtown development tool box for planning boards, municipal officials, and local stakeholders that helps them access historic tax credits, understand building codes, implement transfer of development rights (linking greenways), and assess development fees for greenfield development

Promotional Resources

Provide “unique destination” resources for downtowns to use as an economic development tool to attract businesses, employers, workers, visitors, and tourists.

Coalition of Downtown Preservation/Environmental Groups

Support a coalition of downtown advocates as powerful as Maine’s natural resource and land conservation organizations; ultimately joining forces.