

RESOLUTION FOR COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT

**Its time to
reinvest in Maine.**



August 2020

DRAFT FOR REVIEW + CALL FOR SIGNATURES

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Its time.

Maine is a home rule state with a rich network of rural and urban communities all working to improve quality of life and the economic potential for it's local people.

Because of a tradition of strong local control, it is critical that State and Municipal priorities are closely aligned so that increasingly limited resources can be put to good use.

Misaligned priorities reduce the impact of state, regional, and local investments.

The RESOLUTION FOR COMMUNITY INVESTMENT is a suite of policy changes needed to improve the working relationship between state, regional, and local levels of government, so that the dollars we spend can better meet local and state goals.

Together we can improve quality of life, grow our local economies, protect our natural lands and the people who rely on them, and be better stewards of our state and municipal finances.

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Its time to direct funds toward projects that support our local economy.

Its time to support the people managing our working farms, forrests, and waterfronts.

Its time to prioritize places that support local quality of life, more active lifestyles, and our tourism economy.

Its time to support a range of housing that is attainable, equitable, and that meets the needs of all Maine people.

Its time to make it easier to build communities that are financially and environmentally resilient.

Its time to make smarter investments so we can better protect our community wealth and tax base.

Its time to direct funding to all parts of Maine, including our rural communities.

RESOLUTION FOR COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT

This resolution is hereby presented as support for the creation of a structural and operational framework that supports a balanced and coordinated relationship between the State and local communities to move Maine forward towards increased resiliency, prosperity, and equity, regardless of community size or geographic location within the State.

WHEREAS Maine quality of life and the Maine brand relies on the presence and availability of natural landscapes, working landscapes, and a vibrant mix of working waterfronts, villages, towns, and cities;

WHEREAS Maine is dedicated to supporting local business, local agriculture, local fisheries, and local forest products;

WHEREAS developable land is a limited resource and Maine municipalities rely on the property tax structure, making it ever more urgent to ensure communities are yielding to the highest and best development on this limited resource;

WHEREAS Maine is committed to making investments that have positive financial returns and that reduce the burden on residential taxpayers;

WHEREAS Maine is experiencing a shortage of attainable, equitable, and decent housing options to meet the needs of Maine's most vulnerable people, to respond to changing demographics, and to attract and retain employees;

WHEREAS Maine is experiencing the financial, economic, social, and cultural effects of climate change;

WHEREAS the investment of private and public resources is principal instrument for taking action and achieving social, economic, environmental, and fiscal outcomes; and

WHEREAS the principal role for the State is to organize a coherent structure for making investments that improve outcomes for local communities and the State as a whole.

NOW THEREFORE, the State of Maine, working with municipalities should establish a coordinated and integrated system of investment that enables resiliency planning and funding to: respond to climate change; support private-sector development of buildings in locations where there is a higher return on investment; provide space for housing and business activity located within our villages, towns, cities; invest in rural and working landscapes that are the foundation of our food economy, forest economy, fishing industry, tourism economy, and that define our collective sense of identity here in Maine.

To construct such a system, THE STATE should take the following actions:

1. Establish an inter-agency team to coordinate existing state discretionary funding and establish new private and public sources of funding to support investment in regions and communities projects that meet baseline development readiness thresholds.
2. Prioritize and direct state resources and funding into projects located within locally-identified priority investment areas, including downtowns, neighborhoods, villages, crossroads, commercial corridors, farms, and working waterfronts.
3. Support a “development ready community” framework as a mechanism to help communities remove barriers to development within priority investment areas and align state and local goals related to climate change, housing, transportation, economic development, and infrastructure investment.
4. In partnership with regional planning organizations, non-profit organizations, and the private sector, provide funding and technical assistance to Maine towns and cities so they can do the local work of identifying priority investment areas and updating planning, capital improvement plans, and development regulations to demonstrate baseline development readiness.
5. In partnership with municipalities, regional planning organizations, non-profits, and professional groups, identify and reduce barriers to investment within priority investment areas, including updating and reprioritizing comprehensive planning requirements, simplifying environmental rules, updating transportation policies, revisiting tax policy that disincentivizes improvements to land and buildings, and considering other ways to reduce the cost and complexity of projects within priority investment areas.
6. Establish a state-level land bank, with provisions that enable local land banks to be established by regional planning organizations or municipalities to assist in the work of clearing title, addressing contamination, and providing a financial mechanism to address extraordinary costs and return underperforming properties back into productive re-use.
7. Establish a Department of Community Redevelopment, which would encompass the Development Ready Community grant program, the Land Bank Authority, and the Municipal Planning Assistance Program, and would provide assistance to municipalities for developing local projects.
8. Continue to support and fund the existing historic tax credit program and provide additional programming and funding for non-commercial historic buildings to support rehabilitation of rural farms, hamlets, and villages, which are predominantly made up of historic homes that currently don't qualify for funding.

To participate in such a system, MUNICIPALITIES should take the following actions:

1. Municipalities and/or regions will act of their own free will to identify priority investment areas, update local planning documents and land development regulations, and meet the baseline requirements to become certified as "development ready" in order to gain access to state funds.
2. Municipalities who are certified as "development ready" will act of their own free will to submit projects to the State or its designee for funding, including public infrastructure projects, placemaking projects, and development projects.
3. The following organizations, including municipalities, businesses, regional planning organizations, non-profits, and professional organizations hereby support the above stated Resolution.

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