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November 13, 2015

Via e-mail to Deborah.Johnson@maine.gov

Ms. Deborah Johnson
Director, Office of Community Development
Maine Dept. of Economic and Community Development (DECD)
Augusta Maine 04333-0059

Dear Ms. Johnson:

The Saco Maine Street Organization, formerly Saco Spirit, was chosen in September 2001 by the Maine Downtown Center as one of four inaugural Main Street Communities. Prior to that time, we were a few dedicated citizens working with city departments trying to cobble together a vision for our underutilized mill district, Main Street, and downtown. Saco, like other Main Street communities in Maine has a charm and tradition that defines its people and sense of place. These qualities are what make Maine, "The Way Life Should Be". But life in this century is unfortunately complicated by very old infrastructures that pose various hurdles when trying to attract vital economic growth; congested narrow streets, lack of parking, strained utilities and crumbling facades just to mention a few.

The Maine Downtown Center has provided our community with a framework for revitalizing our downtown and a structured way to engage our citizens in volunteer work that is meaningful and which makes a significant difference in the quality of our downtown. This framework helps to hold us accountable so that we exemplify what other Main Street communities can become, and the encouragement of a national network allows us to strive for national recognition. This is positive recognition that our elected leadership should want for our state.

The Saco Main Street Board has discussed Governor La Page's impending budget appropriation of \$500,000 and we implore him to keep the Community Development Block Grant funding for both the \$100,000 for the Maine Downtown Center and the \$400,000 for the Downtown Revitalization grants. For purposes of disclosure, one of our board members, Brian Doyle, an employee of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development has recused himself from our discussions on this matter and he was not involved in our decision to send this letter.

We thank you for your prompt attention to this most important matter.

Respectfully,

Bette Brunswick, Chair

On behalf of the Saco Main Street, Inc. Board of Directors and all whom we serve.

cc: Lorain Francis