



City of Saco

Economic Development Department

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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:

In follow up to the Public Hearing on November 4, 2015 on behalf of the City of Saco and our downtown Main Street organization, Saco Main Street, Inc. (f/k/a Saco Spirit) we want to express our dismay and disappointment at the plan to “re-direct” \$500,000 in CDBG funds from the support of the Maine Downtown Center (\$100k) and Downtown Revitalization Grants (\$400k) to the Safe Neighborhoods program for more drug enforcement programs.

We all understand that Heroin and other drugs are a scourge on our communities, state and nation. Fighting crime and the support to undertake such initiatives is one of the few remaining areas where monies from the federal Justice Department comes to communities to fight both drug use and drug crime. We in Saco urge Governor LePage and his leadership team to work with Maine communities and our Congressional delegation to seek such federal funding for the prevention of drug use and to fight the criminals who prey on our most vulnerable citizens.

We ask that these critical CDBG funds be restored to the Maine Downtown Center.

As I said at the hearing on the 4th, the work of the Maine Downtown Center is much like ads that stated
“We don’t make a lot of the products you buy. We make them better.”

**The Maine Downtown Center doesn’t do the downtown economic development work.
They provide a framework to make it easier and more fruitful.**

Saco benefits greatly from the support, technical guidance, and mentorship of the Maine Downtown Center and the peer downtown organizations whose work they coordinate here in Maine.

We are supportive of the Governor’s goal of eradicating the drug scourge from Maine – but a decision to take critical funds from a program that has received bipartisan support since its inception, makes such a positive impact, and has what I would describe as a high return on investment ought to be a last resort. Let’s work together to see if we can’t find another alternative.

Thank you for your sincere and full consideration, we look forward to working with you to find a solution that will address both challenges.

Sincerely,

William J. Mann

cc: Kevin Sutherland, Saco City Administrator Saco City Council
Saco Economic Development Commission Lorain Francis