



November 3, 2015

Deborah Johnson  
Director, Office of Community Development  
Maine Dept of Economic and Community Development

Re: CDBG 2016 Plan

Dear Ms Johnson,

I am writing in opposition to one component of the administration's proposed 2016 CDBG work plan, which will eliminate \$500,000 of the annual Community Development Block Grant investments in downtown revitalization. This zero's out a high performing investment of \$100,000 in the Maine Downtown Center and \$400,000 in community grants for downtown revitalization.

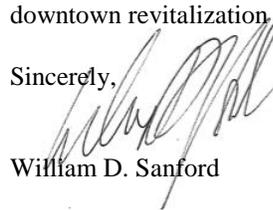
As a developer who has invested time and money in downtown Biddeford, I can speak to the value of Heart of Biddeford and the statewide Main Street Program that supports the work of local organizations. If not for the Maine Downtown Center and the local Main Street program, my work to create quality space for jobs, housing, restaurants and more would not be the success that it is.

In the Pepperrell Mill, there are 133 businesses employing approximately 400 Mainers. These jobs range from manufacturing to accounting, consulting to brewing beer! Our work has succeeded because we offer value to our tenants AND because of the lifestyle downtown Biddeford now offers. Yes, Biddeford! Our tenants want to be able to enjoy dinner on the town before going to City Theater for a show, they make personal and business connections at the great coffee shop, and they can now find retail stores in the downtown for gifts and basics. Our Main Street program, Heart of Biddeford, has been instrumental in drawing Elements coffee shop, Biscuits & Company, Palace Diner, Sugar clothing store, Trillium home goods, Desert Moon Leather, and Full Circle Gallery, to name a few. As importantly, they help retain long-time businesses like Reilly's Bakery, P&C Insurance, and La Corseterie, which have been serving the community for more than 200 years combined. These businesses mean jobs for our community, and they lesson the tax burden for the citizens of Biddeford.

The Maine Downtown Center provides training and development programs that the Heart of Biddeford's staff and volunteers draw upon as they successfully apply the Main Street Four-Point approach. The Maine Downtown Center also offers extremely low-cost opportunities to network across the entire state, so that each Main Street and Network community enhances the work of the others.

Elimination of the downtown revitalization from the CDBG program for 2016 is a serious setback to towns like Biddeford that are actively working and succeeding in improving the lives of low and moderate income persons by replacing blight conditions with thriving downtowns. Please restore funding to the Maine Downtown Center and the downtown revitalization grants. Thank you

Sincerely,

  
William D. Sanford