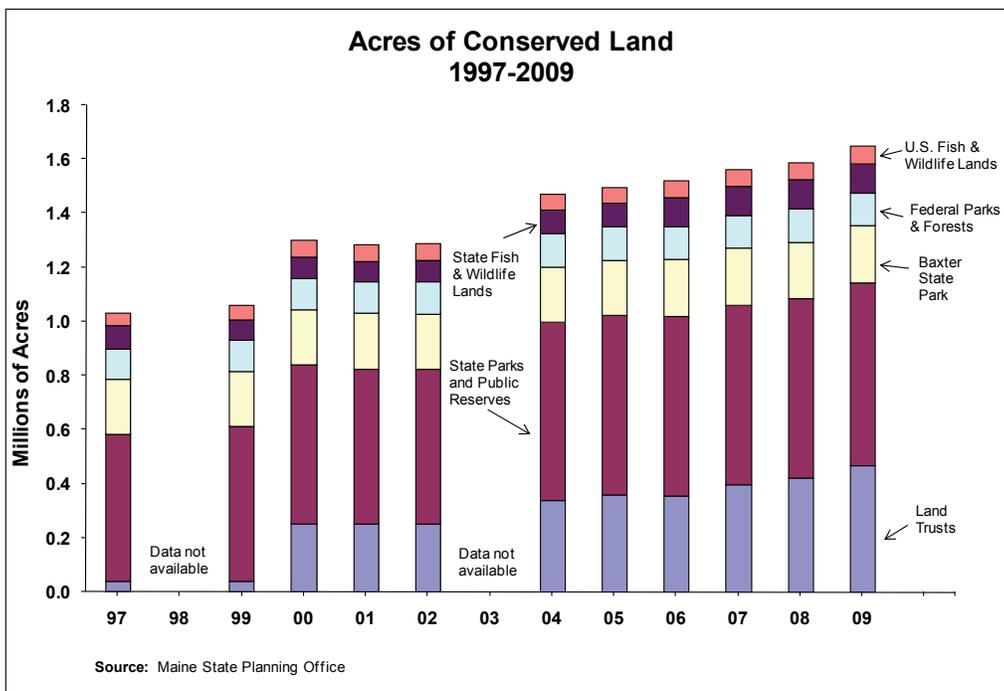


Quality of Place

“Maine’s principal advantage in today’s global competition is our Quality of Place. We have majestic mountains, unbroken forests, open fields, wild rivers, pristine lakes, a widely celebrated coast, picturesque downtowns, lively arts and culture, and authentic historic buildings. We must learn to think of them as the basic infrastructure of Maine’s future prosperity.”

Governor’s Council on Maine’s Quality of Place,
Quality of Place and Job Growth: A New and Needed Maine Investment Strategy, 2008

Quality of Place encompasses a wide range of unique and desired assets. These include natural assets, such as mountains, open space, forests, coastline, and lakes. Quality of Place also includes our built environment: civic and cultural assets such as historic downtowns, theaters, churches, community schools, libraries, and museums. There is a cultural and arts component which includes festivals, artisans, fairs and a wide range of cultural events. Although the phrase may mean different things to different people, Maine’s unique combination of desired assets, its Quality of Place, makes the state a desirable place to live, work, and play.



Maine’s natural assets have played a key role in our state’s culture, helping to shape our identity, offering recreational enjoyment, and providing raw material for our industries. As

the chart on the previous page shows, Maine has made a considerable investment in conserving land for public use. Maine's tradition of sustainable resource management has enabled our working forests, farmland, and fisheries to be a mainstay of our economy for generations. The continued sustainable management of these working landscapes continues to be essential to our economic prosperity.

Map of Maine Development Foundation's Downtown Center Communities



Ten years ago, Maine established the Downtown Center to preserve the cultural, civic, and historic assets of our Main Street business districts. As the map above shows, the Downtown Center, run by the Maine Development Foundation, is working with communities in every county across this state to help preserve and develop their Quality of Place.

In this day and age, with workers and capital more mobile than ever before, these natural, civic, and cultural Quality of Place assets give Maine a competitive advantage in retaining and attracting people and businesses. This asset-based approach to development, which

builds on existing strengths and advantages, is already under way in Maine, and should be expanded upon.

Facts and Findings

Maine's Quality of Place assets include both the natural and built environment.

- Public access to lakes, ocean, rivers and mountains
- Forests, farmlands, and working waterfronts
- Historic downtowns and authentic communities
- Cultural and civic assets including libraries, churches and theaters

In a knowledge-based, technology-driven economy, workers are more mobile, and Quality of Place is seen as a major attractant to young people, retirees, entrepreneurs, and creative people.

According to the Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place, People, Place and Prosperity, June 2007:

- Today, the economic playing field favors professional services and high value-added manufacturing over traditional manufacturing and resource extraction
- Today's growth industries are based on knowledge, skills, and innovation, rather than low cost, low skill manufacturing
- Research shows that Quality of Place amenities such as Maine's natural environment, historic downtowns, and livable communities help to attract economic activity
- As an economic development strategy, Quality of Place entails a comprehensive effort to protect, enhance, and market the characteristics that make a region distinct and attractive as a place to live, work, and recreate

According to Brookings Institution, Charting Maine's Future: An Action Plan for Promoting Sustainable Prosperity and Quality Places, 2006:

- For sustainable prosperity, Maine must invest in its two most promising assets: Quality of Place and research ideas and clusters

Maine's working landscapes, which are a key component of Quality of Place, are threatened.

According to the New England Environmental Finance Center and the Margaret Chase Smith Center for Public Policy, The Land for Maine's Future Program: Increasing the Return on a Sound Public Investment, 2004:

- From 1999 to 2004, over one quarter of Maine's total land area changed ownership, with much of it subdivided into smaller parcels with multiple owners
- Land values in southern and coastal Maine are increasing rapidly, making development of working landscapes more likely

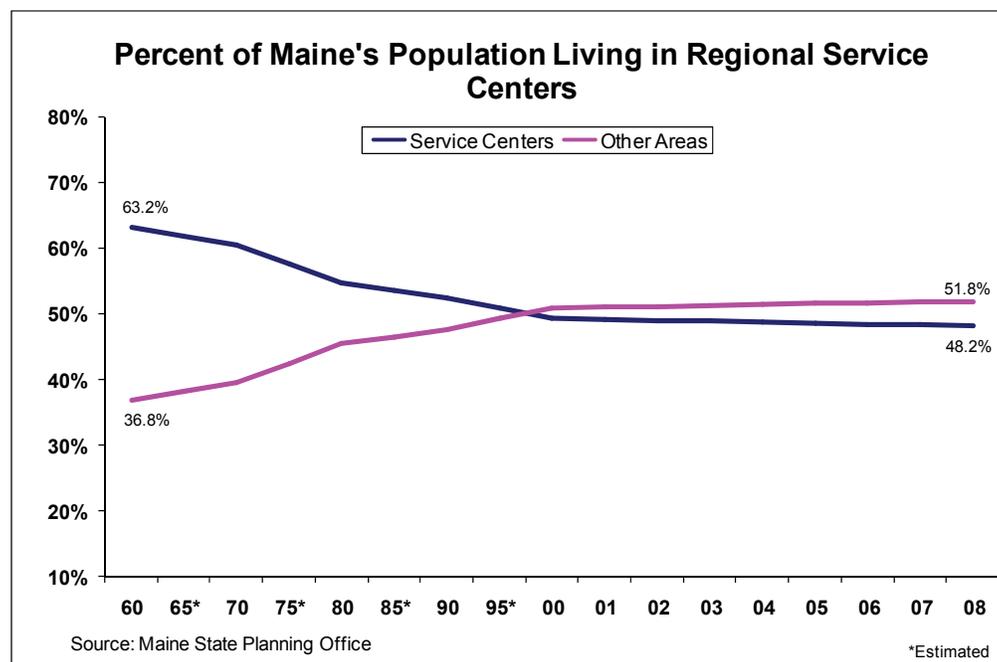
According to Mike LeVert, Charles Colgan, and Charles Lawton, Are the Economics of a Sustainable Maine Forest Sustainable?, 2007:

- The high prices landowners have paid for timberland in recent years indicate that buyers are pursuing short-term profit rather than long-term sustainable forest management

Perhaps the greatest threat to Maine’s Quality of Place is the quiet, piecemeal pattern of sprawling development over the past several decades. This pattern of development imposes a number of costs (see chart below).

According to the Maine State Planning Office, The Cost of Sprawl, 1997:

- Fiscal costs – as service center communities experience an erosion of their residential and commercial tax base and new, redundant public infrastructure such as schools and roads must be built in outlying communities
- Environmental costs – as land is consumed at a much higher rate and people are living further away from their jobs and services, the natural environment is altered, run-off and non point source pollution grows, and increased commutes add to air pollution
- Civic costs – as people live farther from their work and services, commuting time takes a toll on family, community and civic participation



Maine has initiated many successful programs and policies over the years to protect and enhance its Quality of Place assets.

According to Laurie Lachance, Maine Development Foundation, In Search of Silver Buckshot, 2006:

- Progressive environmental policies such as the nation's first billboard legislation, the bottle bill, and waste management and recycling policies have made Maine one of the top recyclers in the nation
- Land for Maine's Future Program
- Maine Downtown Center
- Maine's historic tax credit
- Uniform, statewide building codes

According to the Maine State Planning Office:

- Mobilize Maine, a collaborative, bottom-up approach to community and economic development

Survey Says

MDF worked in partnership with several Maine trade and professional associations to distribute a survey to their members to understand their experiences with investment and policy issues in the state. 1,039 business leaders responded to the survey. The following is a summary of responses concerning Quality of Place.

When asked to rate the influence of 19 public policy issues on their businesses or organizations:

- Respondents rated Recreational Resources and Natural Features as the 2nd most positive influence and Availability of Natural Resources as the 4th most positive.

In the open-ended comment section at the end of the survey that asked about the supports and barriers to economic growth in Maine:

- Close to half of the respondents cited Quality of Life as a positive factor
- Natural beauty and natural resources were also mentioned frequently as positive factors.

Experts Recommend

The following is a summary of key recommendations from various reports, committees and efforts around Quality of Place over the past few years.

Joint Select Committee on Future Maine Prosperity, Time for Change, 2008:

- Policy makers should support preserving open space, investing in and protecting downtowns, and fighting sprawl through land use policies

- Revamp policies to enhance Quality of Place:
 - Build on special assets of the Tribes
 - Expand comprehensive planning capacity
 - Develop statewide building code
 - Make permitting for land more effective and efficient
 - Tax credits for historic rehabilitation

Brookings Institution, Charting Maine's Future: An Action Plan for Promoting Sustainable Prosperity and Quality Places, 2006:

- Invest in building a place-based, innovation-focused economy
 - Create a Maine Quality Places Fund (\$190 million, 10-year revenue bond) to fund:
 - Community revitalization
 - Land and farm conservation
 - Access to forests and lakes
 - Tourism promotion
- Support the revitalization of Maine's towns and cities while channeling growth
 - Create the Maine Community Enhancement FundK
 - Change the deed transaction fee to collect \$20 million
 - Fund the Maine Downtown Center, the Municipal Investment Trust Fund and historic tax credit
 - Fully implement building code reform
 - Provide better visioning assistance and tools for towns
 - Provide incentives for multi-municipal and region-scale planning

The Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place, Quality of Place and Job Growth: A New and Needed Maine Investment Strategy, 2008:

- Develop and implement a Maine Quality of Place investment strategy that will protect, strengthen and build economic opportunity upon natural and built Quality of Place assets
- Organize state programs and agencies to create incentives and to support bottom-up, asset-based development efforts
- Align Maine's workforce development system and programs with Quality of Place opportunities
- Strengthen and resource Maine's tourism workforce and product development strategies
- Develop and provide historic and neighborhood preservation training for local planning boards and state agency staff working with the built environment
- Support regional landscape conservation
- Recognize and support private landowners' crucial role in protecting Maine's Quality of Place
- Adopt a clear and unequivocal policy statement in support of Maine community and downtown revitalization
- Provide communities with development assistance

Investment Imperatives

Maine's Quality of Place has long been appreciated by those of us who live or have spent time here. In addition to enriching our own lives, our unique Quality of Place assets are a key to our economic future. Maine has already institutionalized some of the policies and programs that are necessary to protect, and build an economic development strategy upon, these assets. The following recommendations will help to ensure that we fully capitalize on this potential.

Recommendations

Continue and expand upon regional, asset-based economic development initiatives

- Continue to support the Mobilize Maine approach and other such models
- Work directly with the philanthropic community to jointly prepare and execute a long-term Quality of Place investment strategy that considers both our natural and built environment assets
- Promote Maine's Quality of Life aggressively nationwide with a message that Maine is the best place to live, work and play

Preserve open space, natural amenities, and working landscapes

- Support open space protection, investment in and protection of downtowns, and land use and financial policies that prevent sprawl
- Create a Maine Quality of Places Fund through bonding to fund:
 - Community revitalization
 - Land and farm conservation
 - Access to forests and lakes
 - Tourism promotion
- Recognize and support the crucial role of private landowners in protecting Maine's Quality of Place
 - Work with Maine's farmers on business development and marketing
 - Support existing property tax exemptions for farmland, open space, tree growth, and working waterfronts
- Support regional landscape conservation and provide incentives for regional planning
- Provide bond funds for Land for Maine's Future including:
 - Working waterfront
 - Farmland
 - Working forest lands
- Direct natural resource and economic development agencies to analyze the land needs of Maine's natural resource industries in 50 years, and compare to what is projected to be available based on status quo policies

- Support the implementation of a comprehensive land use plan for lands under the jurisdiction of the Land Use Regulatory Commission (revision approved in March of 2010)

Limit sprawl and invest in existing downtowns and working landscapes

- Fully Fund the Maine Downtown Center with the long-term goal of bringing all service center communities into the Maine Downtown Network and at least half of them into the Main Street Maine program
- Provide incentives for historic preservation
- Invest in waste management and recycling
- Invest in alternative means of transportation
 - Public transit where appropriate
 - Passenger rail
 - Walking, biking trails