

# The Downtown Project

*Documenting the Development of Home/Studio/Stores for “Maine Made” Craft Artists*

## History

The old buildings that anchor and often define the village centers of Maine were once the centers of commerce in this State.



## The Problem

But after decades of industrial restructuring and development drift, many of these buildings and their Downtowns have lost their luster and fallen into states of disrepair.



## The Inventory

While programs like the *Maine Downtown Center* and *GrowSmart Maine* have worked tirelessly to promote the “quality of place” attributes that some of our busier Downtowns embody.....



...there are still too many examples of buildings that have fallen into disrepair because of weakened local economies, flat rents, added expenses, absentee landlords, big box competition and now the internet impacting traditional retail shops.



## The Goal

*The Downtown Project* will strive to leverage the good work of established organizations and existing programs in Maine, collaborating to develop and document concrete examples of historical rehabilitation and stories of revival, while pursuing a new investment paradigm on Main Street by creating affordable and efficient spaces for Maine's home grown talent.



## Objective #1

Pursue an investment model that brings together **Foundations**, Community Development Corporations, Community Banks, private investment, **historic tax credits** and grants to keep debt coverage ratios at levels that allow for affordability.

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FOR  
HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION

**PRIMakers**  
NETWORK



Capital for Opportunity and Change

MAINE BANKERS  
Association

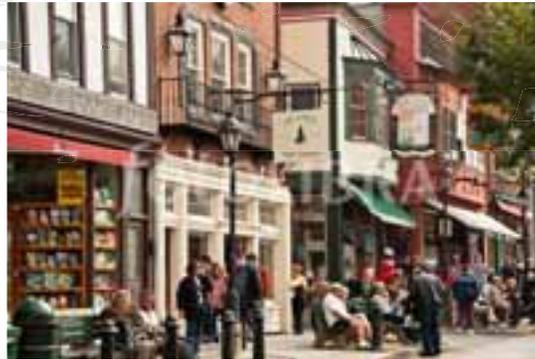
## Objective #2

Target *Maine Craft* artists to move their homes and studios to the Downtown, still focusing on their traditional markets (Crafts Fairs, and the Internet) while creating small retail storefronts for higher margins and added exposure



## Objective #3

Enhance strong grass roots efforts taking place across the State in creating ***liveable downtowns*** that thrive with local ownership and show off the talents of Maine - our uniqueness - our Main Streets



## Objective #4

Work closely with *Maine DECD*

1. Creating more low to moderate income *housing* in our Downtowns
2. Assist a thriving *micro-enterprise* industry
3. Helping to promote the Maine Products Marketing Program (*Maine Made*).

## Objective #5

Work closely with *Efficiency Maine* to target mechanical and electrical improvements that will reduce the operating costs of historically challenged structures, while also lowering carbon emissions.

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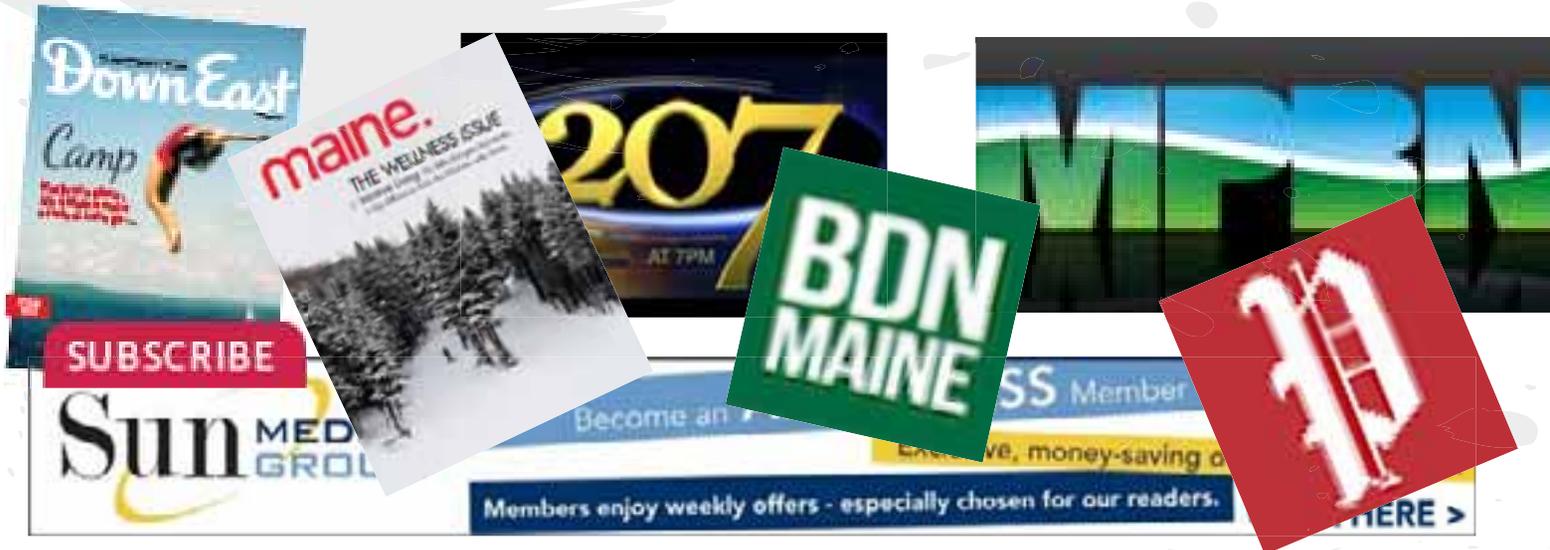
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## Objective #6

**Document** the steps of the building's rehabilitation; telling the human interest stories that abound in the creative community; highlighting the uniqueness of host communities; while subtly promoting the efforts of those organizations that are advocating for downtown redevelopment, historic preservation, energy savings and "Maine Made" crafts.



## Conclusion

**Quality of Place is developed through an asset-based investment strategy.** “Asset- based development” refers to initiatives that build upon regional strengths and capacities that stand out from the norm and have the potential to attract economic opportunities. Such a strategy first identifies a region’s assets: the skills and abilities of its residents, organizations, businesses, and institutions; and its natural, historical, and cultural resources. It then designs initiatives to build on these assets and create new opportunities by enhancing them, marketing them, and combining them in new and productive ways.

*-People, Place and Prosperity, 1st Report of the Governor’s Council on Maine’s Quality of Place, 2004*