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*Revitalization in Action*

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# MARTY GROHMAN

## Mayor of Biddeford

I am thrilled at this opportunity to welcome you to Biddeford and the Maine Downtown Center Conference to celebrate Maine Downtown Center's 25th Anniversary. The theme this year is "Revitalization in Action," and that couldn't suit Biddeford better.

Over the last ten years Biddeford has experienced tremendous growth, including a wonderful revitalization of our Main Street. Our downtown now boasts a boutique hotel, a vibrant art scene, new restaurants, and many thriving small businesses and stores. Our schools are celebrating twelve straight years of enrollment growth. We just cut the ribbon on a new school addition last week, and broke ground on another, to accommodate all the new students.

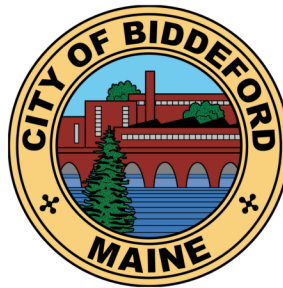
However, what you see here today was not always the case. Like many mill cities, when the factories closed and the workers left for other opportunities, activity in the downtown area slowed. Large retailers on the outskirts of town took away business, and a car-based lifestyle developed. But spurred by key investments by city leadership and partnerships with some very motivated citizen groups, most especially the Heart of Biddeford, our city has made a remarkable comeback.

I'm fond of saying that in Biddeford, community is a verb, as in, here in Biddeford, we community well. That's evident in our many events, including River Jam, Oktoberfest, Art Walk, and Winter Fest. We get together and build lasting bonds, and that helps lead to support for future initiatives. As a result, voters have consistently supported further investment in our downtown, and in our schools. Stated another way, where the Main Street organization goes, the investment will follow. When you arrived this morning, I hope you saw the light gleaming off the newly renovated clock and bell tower on City Hall, standing 6 stories high above Main Street. That golden dome is quite literally a shining example of the kinds of projects made possible through strong community partnerships. That didn't happen by accident. In 2017, our own Heart of Biddeford organization led the community to win a \$150,000 Partners in Preservation Grant to renovate the clock tower, with a theme called, "It's Our Time!". Just three years later, voters approved an additional \$3 million in funding for the remainder of the project, including refurbishing all of City Hall, and yes, re-gilding the dome.

And we've followed on with other initiatives. The City has placed 88 planters around downtown, with beautiful well-tended flowers all summer long. We built a 550-space parking garage using an innovative public-private financing partnership. The Biddeford City Theater has a full schedule of shows which often sell out, drawing hundreds of visitors downtown. The City Council has invested in new playgrounds in our parks. And although this is an area we need to do better, walking and biking trails are fairly easily accessible from the downtown area, as well.

Even though we have more to do, it's nice to look back; and we are very proud of all that has been accomplished. I'm especially pleased that one of our newest downtown businesses, Rhona Beauty, has won the MDC 2024 Downtown Small Business Award (my recommendation: book an appointment today for a shampoo and a chair massage – you'll be glad you did).

In closing, thank you for visiting beautiful downtown Biddeford. I look forward to meeting you at the conference, and I am so excited to see where we go from here. We find success when we community well.



Marty



## JODI MACPHAIL

### Mayor of Saco

As the Mayor of Saco, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone to the Saco/Biddeford area. Hundreds of years ago we started as one city and over time, separated and became two cities with one river, but I believe, today, we are one river bridging together two communities. The beautiful and historic Saco River does not recognize imaginary border lines, it connects us both. From our Two City Halls, both

located in the heart of downtown on Main Street and everything in between, the Saco/Biddeford downtown district is a line blurred between our two communities, offering countless dining, shopping, cultural, residential and the commercial needs of our continued growing population. From our shared community parades to our shared goals and visions, to the countless hours of work put in by our downtown organizations, Saco Main Street and Heart of Biddeford, all of it done to help enable a vibrant, sustainable downtown economy.

Join us in celebrating this modern revolution that truly benefits all of us.



# Maine Downtown Conference

20  
24

*Revitalization in Action*

**Welcome to Biddeford and Saco: two communities, one Main Street.** We are so excited to bring back the Maine Downtown Conference during this very special time for Maine Downtown Center, celebrating our 25th anniversary! As we look back on the past quarter century, there is so much to reflect on and be proud of.

Maine Downtown Center started in 1999 with MDF's Craig Freshley and Henry Bourgeois, Evan Richert from the State Planning Office, and Bath business owner, Bill King. They all believed in the Main Street Program and believed it made sense for MDF to be home of the Maine Downtown Center. Four communities, Gardiner, Norway, Bath and Saco, were selected through a competitive process to be the pilots for Maine's Main Street Program. Today the program has 11 Main Streets, 13 Downtown Affiliates and 4 Municipal Programs. In addition, MDC serves as a statewide resource for any community interested in downtown revitalization. We are proud of our first 25 years and can't wait to see what the future brings.

Planning this conference took a village. We want to give a huge thank you to our village- Our planning committee (Scott Berk, Karoline Ellis, Holly Gordon, Sarah Hansen, Delilah Poupore, Angie Presby), our awards committee (Mac Collins, TerryAnn Holden, Jay Muth), and all the MDF staff who came together to assist our team of three over the past year of planning.

Thank you for joining us!



# Important Information



## Registration and Check In

The registration and check in table will be set up at Pacifico (the site of our Welcome Reception) on Wednesday, November 6th from 4:30PM-5:30PM.

On November 7th, registration will be located in the lobby of City Theater from 7:30AM-9:30AM. Please be sure to check in before headed to breakout sessions as you will need a name tag and a lunch ticket.

## Transportation

We encourage the use of [BSOO Transit Silver Line Circulator](#) when convenient. Rides are free and offered every 15 minutes. Scan the QR code or follow the link above for a route map and schedule. Stops are clearly marked.

\*Please note the blue lines indicate a longer route circulating to UNE campus. Please do not board at those times.

**Thank you to our Trolley Sponsor!**



## Restrooms & Quiet Spaces

Each conference site has restrooms and water refill stations available. An all-gender restroom is available in the Heart of Biddeford office, along with a private space for nursing. All locations are identified on the conference map (pages 4-5).

## Let Us Know How We Did

Questions? Comments? Concerns? Fill out the conference feedback form [HERE](#) or at the QR code.




# Conference Map




ADA Accessibility - All conference sites and all lunch locations are ADA accessible **with the exception of Catface Cafe, FinestKind, and Sea Spray Confections.**



AED On Site - (Library, City Theater, City Council Chambers)

 BSOOB Silver Line Circulator Route

 Walking route to Sacred Profane



Conference Site

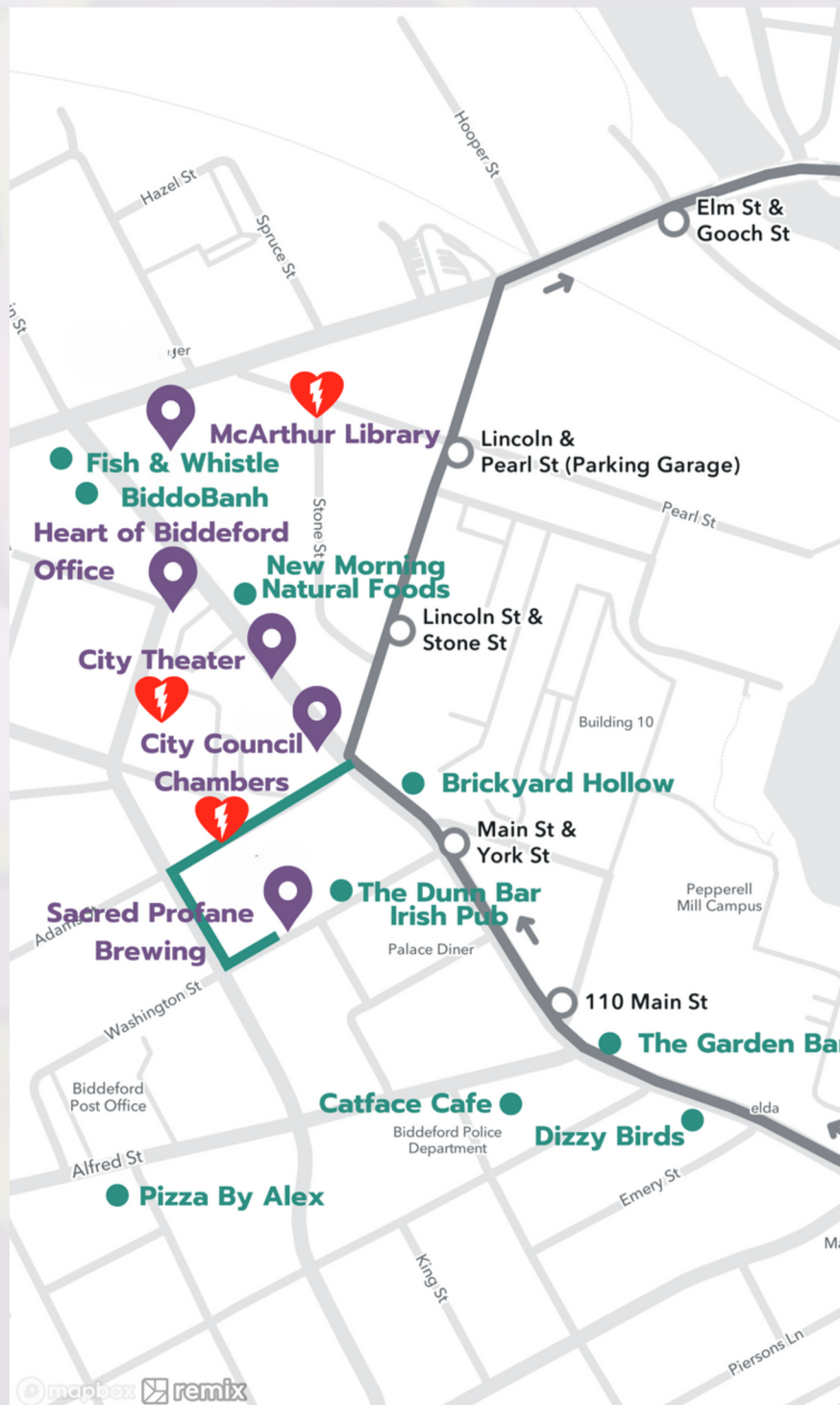


Lunch Site

Each conference location has bathrooms available. An all-gender restroom and Nursing station is available at the Heart of Biddeford Office.

It's easiest to travel by trolley. For schedule and info, visit the [BSOOB webpage](#) for the Silver Line Circulator. Please make special note to avoid the route out to UNE campus as indicated on the schedule

Walking time between Biddeford and Saco lunch options range from 5-15 minutes.



# Conference Map





# Schedule at a Glance

## Wednesday, November 6th

- 03:00 PM - 04:00 PM **Saco Riverfront Park Tour**  
**Historic Downtown Saco Tour**
- 04:30 PM - 05:30 PM **Registration Open**
- 04:30 PM - 07:00 PM **Welcome Reception at Pacifico**

## Thursday, November 7th

- 07:30 AM - 08:45 AM **Registration and Light Refreshments**  
**Design in Action: Show and Tell**
- 09:00 AM - 10:00 AM **Education Sessions**
  - What Does "Main Street Is for Everyone" Really Mean?
  - Playing in the Sandbox Together: Municipalities and Main Street Working Together
  - Emergency Preparedness 101
  - Downtowns: Where Tourism Comes Alive
- 10:15 AM - 11:15 AM **Education Sessions**
  - Beyond Shelter: Understanding the Complexities of Housing Insecurity in Communities
  - A Lifetime of Floods: Hallowell's Emergency Response and Recovery
  - More Hands On Deck: Strategies for Capacity Building
  - Building Community Through Spaces





# Schedule at a Glance

## Thursday, November 7th

- 11:30 AM - 01:00 PM **Lunch & Conversation (retrieve lunch ticket at registration)**
- 01:15 PM - 03:00 PM **Keynote and MDC Annual Awards**  
Erin Barnes, President & CEO, Main Street America
- 03:15 PM - 04:15 PM **Education Sessions**
  - Office Hours and Rapid Fire Consultations
  - Community Crowdfunding: Fueling Innovation with Coffee & Cookies**Tours**
  - Biddeford Mills Tour
- 04:15 PM - 05:15 PM **Reflect & Connect Social Debrief**

# November 6th

## Welcome Reception



We hope you will join us for an experiential welcome reception where you can connect with fellow attendees, share insights, and kick off this exciting event in style. Enjoy delicious bites and beverages while having some fun mingling amongst local artisans and musicians. Join us at Pacifico in Saco from 4:30-7:00PM.

**This reception is included with your conference registration!**

## Tours - 3:00-4:00PM

### Saco Riverfront Park Tour

**Meeting Location: Pacifico**

**Speakers:** Angie Presby (Saco Main Street)

**Description:** Join us for a walking tour of Riverfront Park to discover the exciting improvements made possible by the T-Mobile Hometown Grant. The tour highlights the creation of the Riverwalk walkway, which enhances access to the Saco River, providing beautiful views and recreational opportunities. Along the way, we'll share some fascinating river history, including its role in powering local mills and shaping the community. Activating the Saco River – in Saco – is the focus of Saco Main Street's Experiential Tourism project with Planeterra.

The walk covers about 1.5 miles, offering a scenic and informative journey through this revitalized public space. Don't miss this chance to see how the park is being transformed for all to enjoy!

### Historic Downtown Saco Tour

**Meeting Location: Pacifico**

**Tour Leader:** Anatole Brown

**Description:** Take a stroll down Main Street in Saco and discover the rich history woven into its buildings and streets. This walking tour will guide you through the heart of downtown, where 19th-century brick structures stand tall as a testament to the city's industrial past. Learn about the mills that powered Saco's growth, the historic storefronts that once served bustling businesses, and the architectural details that make this area unique. As we walk, you'll hear stories of the people who shaped the community, from local entrepreneurs to influential families, and how the area has transformed over the centuries while preserving its charm. The tour is ADA accessible on flat sidewalks.

# Session Details

November  
7th

## What Does "Main Street Is for Everyone" Really Mean?

Location: Biddeford City Council Chambers

**Speakers:** Tae Chong (Maine State Chamber of Commerce), Denise Cilley (Sunrise County Economic Council), Shelly Gibson (City of Biddeford), Delilah Poupore (Heart of Biddeford)

**Description:** The core of the Maine Downtown Center approach to revitalization is a commitment to creating places of shared prosperity, equal access to opportunity, and inclusive engagement. Explore the business, ethical, and community engagement aspects of social inclusion through this dynamic session. Case studies will highlight how relationship-building has either advanced or impeded progress in various settings. Participate in an interactive activity to apply these insights and enhance your approach to inclusive practices.

Breakout Sessions  
09:00-10:00AM

## Playing in the Sandbox Together: Municipalities and Main Street Working Together

Location: Sacred Profane Brewing

**Speakers:** Ross Cunningham (Town of Lisbon), Melissa Lindley (City of Gardiner), EJ Roach (City of Old Town)

**Description:** Join us for a dynamic talk show-style discussion. We'll delve into the crucial collaboration between downtown organizations and local government to achieve revitalization goals. Learn practical strategies for building partnerships, navigating bureaucratic processes, and advocating effectively with city staff and officials. Don't miss this opportunity to gain valuable insights from experienced professionals and enhance your revitalization efforts.

## Emergency Preparedness 101

Location: McArthur Library

**Speakers:** Jack Clukey (Town of Dover-Foxcroft), Shanna Cox (LA Chamber of Commerce), Clare Marron (Monkitree, Gardiner)

**Description:** In this session, we'll explore comprehensive strategies for emergency preparedness, focusing on building resilience from natural or human-made crises on downtown businesses and organizations. Learn how to prepare communications, navigate resources, fortify infrastructure, and bolster small business readiness. Join our expert speakers for a valuable discussion on preparedness strategies for your community.

## Downtown: Where Tourism Comes Alive

Location: City Theater

**Speakers:** Carolann Ouellette (Maine Office of Tourism), Jamie Sweeting (Planeterra)

**Description:** Tourism is increasingly recognized for its potential to transform communities, with Maine's vibrant downtowns being a prime example. Learn about MOT's priorities for marketing Maine and the role of downtowns. Explore the intersections of MOT and Planeterra's (a worldwide organization turning travel into positive community impact) work to enhance economic recovery and resilience while offering insights into tourism's role in sustainable development.

# Session Details

**Session Group 2**  
**10:15-11:15AM**

## **Building Community Through Spaces**

**Location: McArthur Library**

**Speakers:** Amy Grommes-Pulaski (Discover Downtown Westbrook), CJ Opperthausen (Friends of Congress Square Park), Abby Wilson (Discover Downtown Westbrook)

**Description:** Join us for an engaging and hands-on session that delves into the dynamic world of placemaking and placekeeping. Discover how to transform underutilized spaces into vibrant community assets by honoring the rich tapestry of local stories and integrating untold narratives. This session will explore strategies for activating spaces while fostering deep connections between community members, business owners, municipalities, and elected officials. Through an interactive charrette, participants will gain practical insights into the placemaking process, learn how to effectively navigate different interests, and develop actionable plans for creating meaningful, inclusive spaces.

## **Beyond Shelter: Understanding the Complexities of Housing Insecurity in Communities**

**Location: Biddeford City Council Chambers**

**Speakers:** Victoria Abbott (Bread of Life Ministries), Jake Hammer (City of Biddeford), Cary Tyson (Portland Downtown)

**Description:** Explore the complex challenges of balancing downtown revitalization with housing insecurity. Our expert speakers will discuss their challenges and insights working with revitalization efforts and all community members. Discover how downtown associations can effectively collaborate with social service agencies to ensure that safety and inclusivity are prioritized for business owners, downtown visitors, and unhoused community members.

## **A Lifetime of Floods: Hallowell's Emergency Response and Recovery**

**Location: City Theater**

**Speakers:** Fred LaMontagne (Avangrid), George LaPointe (City of Hallowell), Lauren Roderigue (CMP)

**Description:** This session will focus on emergency response and recovery strategies for downtown businesses and organizations, housed in the case study of Hallowell's lifetime of floods. Learn best practices for emergency response and recovery, with a specific lens on electrical power restoration and community resilience for longterm recovery. Learn hot tips for what to do in an emergency involving power. Speakers will share lessons learned from flood responses, recovery funds, and strategies for long-term recovery and rebuilding. Participants will learn how to assess damage, prioritize recovery efforts, and access resources to rebuild and restore their operations, communities, and downtown areas.

# Session Details

## More Hands on Deck: Strategies for Capacity Building

**Location:** Sacred Profane Brewing

**Speakers:** Kristina Cannon (Main Street Skowhegan), Angie Presby (Saco Main Street), Cara Romano (Heart of Ellsworth)

**Description:** Dive deep into the world of capacity building for small downtown organizations. This session will unleash a treasure trove of innovative strategies directly from Main Street leaders. Directors of three Main Street programs will share practical tools, success stories, and lessons learned from their hands-on experiences. Whether you're looking to enhance your organization's operational efficiency, engage your community more effectively, or unlock new avenues for growth, this session promises to deliver actionable insights and inspire new ways of thinking. Don't miss this opportunity to gain the inside scoop on what's working and how you can apply these strategies to elevate your organization's impact.

**Session Group 3**  
**03:15-04:15PM**

## Office Hours and Rapid-Fire Consultations

**Location:** City Theater

**Content Experts:** Anne Ball (Maine Downtown Center), Mac Collins (Preservation Architect), Abbe Levin (Cultural Consultant), Brett Richardson (Town of Freeport), Janet Sydnor (Maine Development Foundation)

**Description:** Have an issue in your downtown you would like help with? Come by and ask an expert your most burning downtown revitalization questions related to organization, design, events, economic vitality, tourism and more! How do you start a downtown revitalization effort? What do you do about a downtown building or streetscape that needs help? Do you need ideas to attract more retail or another business type? Do you want to know how to work with tourism partners? Need help with fundraising for a downtown initiative? Our experts are standing by ready to brainstorm and troubleshoot with you!

## Community Crowdfunding: Fueling Innovation with Coffee & Cookies

**Location:** McArthur Library

**Speakers:** Ross Chanowski (NuMarket), Matt Wagner (Main Street America), Mary Chapman (The Cheese Shop/Sissle & Daughters), John Stirratt (Otyokwa)

**Description:** Join us as we examine the future and far too often misunderstood world of crowdfunding through a new lens in which small businesses are able to attract needed investment as a direct result of the strong connections they've built with their customers and community. This session will be part of a new episode of the Main Street Business Insights podcast from Main Street America, where we'll lead a conversation with the founder and CEO of NuMarket, a unique crowdfunding platform operating in Maine and growing across with country. We'll also hear from the real-world experiences of two of NuMarket's small business campaign participants right here in Maine.

# Session Details

## Biddeford Mills Museum Tour

Meeting Location: City Theater (3:10PM)

**Speakers:** Mills Museum Tour guide(s)

**Description:** Take a dive into Biddeford's history as a mill town and see the updated museum space. Walking tours are often guided by former mill workers, who know first-hand the history of these old brick buildings. See the unique architecture of a cotton house, walk among the towering walls of a weave shed, and visit the underground canals where the Saco River once powered these historic textile mills.

Tour is designed for those able to climb minimal stairs. Walking shoes should be worn.



**Thank You Session Sponsors:**



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# Lunch Options

Lunch vouchers are available at registration. Attendees will have an option to select a voucher to their restaurant of choice - feel free to trade amongst other attendees! There are plenty of vegetarian, vegan, GF, and even kosher and halal options. Each voucher is worth \$15 and can be used only at the restaurant listed. Each has guaranteed options that fall within this price range. Please be sure to tip where appropriate.

## Saco

- [Fernleaf Bakery](#) (V, VE, GF) - 20 Free Street, Saco
- [Finestkind](#) (V) - **NOT ADA ACCESSIBLE** - 17 Pepperell Square, Saco
- [Saco House of Pizza](#) (V, GF) - 163 Main Street, Saco
- [Sea Spray Confections](#) (V) - **NOT ADA ACCESSIBLE** - 209 Main Street Suite 103, Saco
- [The Deli & Company](#) (V, GF) - 110 Main Street #1204, Saco

## Biddeford

- [BiddoBanh](#) (V, VE, GF)- 299 Main Street, Biddeford
- [Brickyard Hollow](#) (V, VE) - 180 Main Street #3, Biddeford
- [Catface Cafe](#) (V, VE, GF) - **NOT ADA ACCESSIBLE** 17 Alfred Road, Biddeford
- [Dizzy Birds Rotisserie](#) (V, VE, GF, H) - 65 Main Street, Biddeford
- [Fish & Whistle](#) (V, VE, GF) - 299 Main Street Suite 104, Biddeford
- [New Morning Natural Foods](#) (V, VE, GF, K) - 230 Main Street, Biddeford
- [Pizza by Alex](#) (V, GF)- 93 Alfred Road, Biddeford
- [The Dunn Bar Irish Pub](#) (V, GF) - 12 Washington Street, Biddeford
- [The Garden Bar](#) (V, VE, GF) - Pepperell Center Floor 1, 40 Main Street,

Thank you to our lunch sponsor!

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# 2024 MDC Annual Award Winners



The MDC Annual Awards celebration is one of the events we look forward to most every year. Each year our Advisory Council and staff are astounded by the nominations we receive for each of our awards. Through our awards ceremony, we celebrate the outstanding achievements and innovative contributions of individuals and organizations within our downtown communities. Each year, it is our pleasure to recognize and applaud those who have demonstrated exceptional dedication, creativity, impact, and hard work that drives progress and excellence in downtowns across the state.

This year we are presenting the Downtown Project of the Year, an award that has been presented for many years now. Recipients have spanned from The Saco Scoop, an ice cream shop and community hub providing sustainable income to the Main Street organization, to Friends of Woodfords Corner and Bike Maine's "Imagine People Here" temporary traffic calming demonstration.

We are also presenting a new award: The 2024 Downtown Small Business of the Year. It is small businesses that bring downtowns to life and make each community unique. You will see these qualities in our inspirational inaugural winner.

We are honored to be presenting Maine Development Foundation's William F. King Jr. Downtown Champion, an award reserved as the highest of honors given by MDC for outstanding individual contribution to downtown revitalization efforts across the state.

Congratulations to all of our 2024 award winners!



# 2024

# Downtown Project of the Year



## The Uptown - Bath, Maine

The Uptown, a 60-unit residential development, including 42 units that have affordable rents, is the redevelopment of two existing buildings along with the construction of new housing on an adjacent infill vacant lot. The project rehabilitated two historic properties, which had existing residential and commercial space, and the addition of loft-style apartments and communal space.

The Uptown project builds density in Downtown Bath, recreates underutilized space and provides attainable housing for older residents, all the while honoring goals set out in our newly completed comprehensive plan. Project partners sought to facilitate the preservation of the character of downtown Bath, encourage economic stimulus in the walkable central core and maintain rental housing at modest prices for those who live and work in Bath.

Congrats to the Szanton Company and all project partners who brought this development to fruition!



**Thank you to our  
award sponsor!**





# 2024

# Downtown Small Business

## Rhona Beauty - Biddeford, Maine

Rhona Beauty is a hair salon on Main Street in Biddeford that the owner, Rhona Deah, says "helps multi-cultural women achieve their best hair and lashes." Rhona creates a positive environment in her shop that promotes "empowerment and self-love." In addition to hosting multiple booths for other stylists, Rhona employs two braiders to meet hairstyling needs from people primarily from African heritage communities. Rhona is an immigrant from Liberia and her customers regularly remark that Rhona builds a welcoming and joyful community in her shop.

Rhona Beauty is a winner of the "Inclusive Backing" grant from Main Street America and a host for BIPOC entrepreneur and professional networking via The Third Place. The salon is helping to fill the void for the underserved ethnic hair community here in Maine.

Congrats to Rhona and team!



**Thank you to our award sponsor!**





# 2024 William F. King Jr. Downtown Champion

## Luke R. Dyer - Van Buren, Maine

This year, MDF and MDC are honored to present the Downtown Champion Award to Luke Dyer, Town Manager of Van Buren, Maine. After holding a law enforcement career spanning over 30 years, he retired as Van Buren's Patrol Sergeant and transitioned into an administrative role for the town. In 2022, he became the Town Manager, a position in which he continues to serve the citizens of Van Buren. In 2024, he completed the Maine Development Foundation's Institute for Civic Leadership, proudly joining the ranks of the Elephant Class.

As Town Manager, Luke has been at the forefront of several economic development projects in Van Buren, including the Grant Street Park & Community Garden project, funded through the Community Resiliency Partnership through the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and Future and the Van Buren Acadian Passage lighting project funded in part by Maine Community Foundation. Several upcoming projects include a \$1.8 million community tech hub and the renovation of the former Van Buren Municipal Building into a community market and small business incubator. Luke's vision and energy for his community is both admirable and inspirational.

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# Our Speakers

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## Victoria Abbott

Victoria is the Executive Director at Bread of Life, a homeless outreach organization in Augusta, and serves as President of the Board at the Augusta Downtown Alliance. She has worked in the field of non-profit management, marketing, and fund development for the past twenty years, and is a leader advisor at the Olympia Snowe Women's Leadership Institute.



## Jack Clukey

Jack is the town manager for the Town of Dover-Foxcroft where he has served since 2004. Jack has been involved with various downtown revitalization efforts in Dover-Foxcroft including the Mayo Mill Redevelopment and the Central Hall Renovation Project. He is currently involved with Dover-Foxcroft's Climate resilience efforts as a member of the Maine Community Resilience Partnership.



## Shanna Cox

Shanna is the President and CEO of the Lewiston Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. She creates and implements strategies to attract and develop businesses, enhance quality of life, and grow the economy of Androscoggin County.



## Kristina Cannon

Kristina has been the central coordinator of Main Street Skowhegan's strategic projects for 9 years and counting. She was named a 2024 MaineBiz Woman to Watch, the 2023 Maine Outdoor Industry Leader of the Year, the Mid-Maine Chamber 2020 Outstanding Professional, and was a 2019 MaineBiz Next List honoree.



## Ross Cunningham

Ross is the Economic and Community Development Director for the Town of Lisbon, a community that he has called home for over 25 years. He brings a wealth of experience and a unique perspective as a Retired Naval Officer and through several post military positions including the CEO of the Kennebec Valley Chamber in Augusta and Founding member of Positive Change Lisbon.



## Ross Chanowski

Ross is the Founder and CEO of NuMarket, a financial inclusion platform for community businesses. With degrees from the London School of Economics and the University of Michigan, Ross has spent the entirety of his academic and professional career digging into the questions of how capital markets can more effectively spur systemic change.



## Shelly Gibson

Shelly started her career in leadership and team development. She's worked in education and non-profits, with teachers, business leaders, students, and currently with the City of Biddeford's HR dept. She is passionate about justice and working to create spaces where people arrive and feel like things were designed with them in mind; the 'with us and for us' mindset.



## Tae Chong

Tae is the Director of Multicultural Markets and Strategies for the Maine State Chamber of Commerce. He has worked in economic development for the past 12 years specializing in immigrant and refugee business and employment. He is the first Asian elected to the Portland School Board and the first Asian elected to the Portland City Council. He is a recovering politician.



## Amy Grommes-Pulaski

Amy has dedicated her career to solving community problems. Trained in engineering and community development, she has the ability to see across disciplines to create holistic solutions. For the past four years, Amy has served as the Director for Discover Downtown Westbrook. She has helped to stabilize and grow the organization post-pandemic.



## Denise Cilley

Denise is Sunrise County Economic Council's Associate Director. She led the development of MaineStreet Business Building in Machias and founded the Small Business and Entrepreneurship team. Denise is key in implementing business and workforce programs, including Partners in Entrepreneurial Pathways and the Washington County Recovery Friendly Workplace Network.



## Jake Hammer

Jake has worked with the City of Biddeford in multiple roles since 2020. Starting as the Police Department's behavioral health liaison, then the city's General Assistance Supervisor and Unhoused Services Coordinator, Jake now strives to make systemic quality-of-life improvements for the community's most vulnerable members.

# Our Speakers



## Fred LaMontagne

Fred represents Avangrid and Central Maine Power as a Senior Manager in the Emergency Management Division. With this role he champions system and process changes to develop all hazard response plans. In a response effort, he uses his leadership skills, collaborative work philosophy and project management skills to fulfill the role of the Planning Section Chief for CMP.



## Carolann Ouellette

Carolann was the Director of the Maine Office of Tourism from 2010-2016. In 2018, she returned to DECD to serve as the first Director of the newly created Office of Outdoor Recreation focused on leveraging Maine's assets and outdoor recreation heritage to grow the outdoor recreation economy and build Maine's outdoor recreation brand. She currently serves as Director of Tourism, Film & Outdoor Recreation



## George LaPointe

George is serving his second term as mayor of Hallowell. Previously, he served four years as an at-large City Council member. He served as Commissioner of Marine Resources from 1998 to 2011. After 2011, he was engaged in a small marine fisheries / oceans consulting company



## Angie Presby

Angie is the Director of Saco Main Street, where she leads efforts to revitalize and promote the historic downtown district. A proud native of Saco, Angie has deep roots in the community and a strong passion for preserving its unique charm and character.



## Melissa Lindley

Starting as a volunteer then becoming Executive Director, after six years with the Gardiner Main Street, Melissa transitioned to the municipal sector as Gardiner's Director of Economic Development. In this role, she focuses on city-wide economic growth and advocates for investments that strengthen the local economy.



## EJ Roach

After a 20-year career in higher education, EJ transitioned to Old Town in 2019 to serve as the Director of Economic & Community Development. He serves as the director of the Old Town Development, LLC, is co-president of Downtown Old Town, and serves as president of the board for OTO-Fiber Corporation. He serves on the planning committee for the Big Gig and on the board for the Economic Development Council of Maine.



## Clare Marron

Clare opened Monkintree in downtown Gardiner in 2010 after purchasing 263 Water Street with her husband Peter Malyon in 2009. Growing the business, improving the building and being an active member of the community have occupied most of the last 15 years. Clare currently sits on three city committees- Ordinance Review, Historic Preservation Commission and Sidewalk Committee.



## Lauren Roderigue

Key Account Manager, Central Maine Power



## CJ Opperthausen

C.J., a public space nerd and plaza enthusiast, is Executive Director of Congress Square Park as well as a freelance placemaking consultant. He has over a decade of experience in public space activation and walkability advocacy, and previously was Director of Training & Placemaking for Grow Smart RI.



## Cara Romano

Cara is a non-profit leader passionate about community building and economic development. In 2016, she became the first Director of the Downtown Merchants Association, which transitioned to Heart of Ellsworth, which in 2024, became Maine's 11th Main Street. She serves on the National Heritage Area Steering Committee, Downeast Area Regional Tourism Board and member of Maine Community Foundation Advisory Council



## Delilah Poupore

Delilah has led Heart of Biddeford for 13 years. While working in higher education, she co-founded The Dialogue Consultants, promoting DEI skills in colleges and nonprofits from 1996-2012. Her accolades include the 2019 Commitment to Smart Growth award, the 2020 William F. King, Jr. Downtown Champion Award, and the 2021 VolunteerMaine Excellence in Volunteer Administration Award. Under her leadership, Heart of Biddeford won the 2022 Great American Main Street Award.



## Jamie Sweeting

Jamie is President of Planeterra Foundation, the World's leading non-profit supporting community tourism enterprises. He also serves as VP of Social Enterprise and Responsible Travel for G Adventures where he leads the company's social enterprise, stewardship and community development work.

# Our Speakers



## Cary Tyson

Cary is the executive director of Portland Downtown. He served as director and assistant director of Main Street Arkansas from 2001-2014. He is a 2020 Walking College Fellow via America Walks and a 2023 graduate of the International Downtown Association's Emerging Leaders Fellowship.



## Abby Wilson

Abby is enthusiastic about education, outreach, and community engagement. She has worked as a whale watch naturalist in the Gulf of Maine, a snowshoe guide in Western Maine, an assistant land steward on Mount Desert Island, a digital media intern with the Northeast Wilderness Trust in Vermont, and as an Education Specialist with the Scarborough Land Trust. Today, Abby takes on the role of Placemaker in Westbrook Common for Discover Downtown Westbrook.



## Matt Wagner

Matthew Wagner, Ph.D. serves as Chief Innovation Officer at Main Street America. In this role, he is responsible for leading the Innovation Team, focused on internal and external research, new business support, and piloting, testing, and launching new ideas, tools, and technologies.

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# Our Rapid-Fire Consultants



## Anne Ball

Anne became Director of MDC in 2016. She has worked in all corners of the State of Maine throughout her career and loves being at the Maine Downtown Center where all of her previous work comes together.... people, places, historic buildings, cultural heritage tourism, public health, energy efficiency, communities and most importantly stories.



## Brett Richardson

Brett is an economic development professional with diverse experience, including roles as an entrepreneur, small business development consultant for a leading CDFI, and economic development lead for two municipalities. Currently the Development Director for the Town of Freeport, he is a member of MDC's Advisory Council and former Main Street Affiliate manager for the Town of Lisbon.



## Mac Collins

Mac is a Maine licensed architect based in Freeport, focused on historic buildings, downtowns, and campuses. He has been involved with the programs of the National Main Street Center since 1980, currently serving on the MDC Advisory Council. He is a current member and past chairman of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and is an advisory trustee and past president of Greater Portland Landmarks.



## Janet Sydnor

Janet is Maine Development Foundation's Development Director. She believes in bringing people and purpose together to build community and improve lives. Her work in fundraising includes writing countless grants raising millions of dollars for projects as diverse as astrophysics research, access to prenatal care, forest products sector careers, and community concerts.



## Abbe Levin

Abbe is a passionate and experienced cultural development consultant dedicated to fostering positive community change. Abbe began her work in the public sector as the Special Projects Coordinator at the Maine Arts Commission. and currently works as the Cultural Heritage Tourism Consultant for the Maine Office of Tourism. Abbe serves on the Abbe Museum Board of Directors, the MDC Advisory Council, and the Cultural Alliance of Maine Governing Board.

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