



# Maine Community Development Association

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## Message From the President

Dear Community Developer:

I want to thank you for your dedication to your community, for building a better place for us to live and work, and for your commitment to better yourselves and the people around you.

My name is Isaac Wagner, and for the next two years I will be serving as President of the Maine Community Development Association. In my day job, I work at the Washington Hancock Community Agency as the agency's Housing Developer. I know first-hand the challenges we are facing in the next few years to finance and maintain our community building projects. But I know that we have a solid core of people, both in our membership and around the state, who will keep these projects on track.

2005 year was particularly challenging because of the proposed elimination of the Community Development Block Grant Program. The CDBG program has been key to the success of many important initiatives and projects undertaken by Maine communities over the last 30 years. The potential elimination of the CDBG program threatened the ability of many of us to successfully bring to fruition vital infrastructure, housing and economic development projects on which our communities depend.

The Maine Community Development Association advocated strongly for the retention of the CDBG program. We partnered with the Maine Municipal Association and others to fund an analysis of the impacts of the CDBG programs on Maine communities over the past 23 years and worked with Maine's Congressional Delegation to provide information about the many good projects that were made possible in part by CDBG funds. Additionally, approximately 75% of Maine communities adopted resolutions requesting the Administration to fund the CDBG program in FY 2006. MCDA assisted in gathering those resolutions. As you know, the CDBG program has been spared elimination for the time being, but the funds available for the 2006 Fiscal Year to the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development have been reduced by more than \$2 million. As of this writing, 2007 funding had not been finalized, but additional, significant cuts in the CDBG program have been proposed. Clearly, our work is not done.

*Continued on Page 2*



## Affordable Housing TIF, a Practitioners Workshop

Friday  
February 10, 2006

Maine Motor  
Transport Association  
142 Whitten Road,  
Augusta

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Presented By:  
Maine Community  
Development Association

### *Housing TIF Workshop a Success*

On February 10<sup>th</sup>, MCDA sponsored a workshop in Augusta that was designed to help communities and developers understand Tax Increment Financing for Housing (Housing TIF). Our presenters were Tom MacDonald from MacDonald Associates in Bath, and Noreen Norton from Eaton Peabody Consulting Group. By all account the workshop was a big success. There were 56 attendees, roughly twice the number planned, and right from the opening remarks the speakers were barraged with questions...a good indication of the interest level. Special thanks should be extended to MCDA members Cyndy Carney, Joella McBreairty, and Isaac Wagner for organizing this event. Also the support from the MMA staff Margaret Langhill and Jennifer Giggey were critical the success of this workshop.

Housing TIFs have amazing potential in our communities that are struggling to provide affordable housing opportunities. If you would like more information on housing TIFs please contact Isaac Wagner, or go to [www.mainehousing.org](http://www.mainehousing.org).

This year MCDA has organized a solid professional development, advocacy, and strategic planning program, some of which will be written about elsewhere in this newsletter. In February, we ran a very successful workshop on how to create and utilize Tax Increment Financing programs for housing purposes. There were over 50 attendees, most from municipalities! In late April we will cooperate with the Maine Office of Community Development to begin a strategic planning process for the creation of the 2007 CDBG program statement. In June, in conjunction with Maine Association of Planners, we will be hosting a session in Brunswick to learn about efforts to redevelop and reuse Brunswick Naval Air Station. We will continue with our customary networking opportunities at CD Appreciation Day in August, at the MMA Conference in October, and by sending a representative to the annual COSDA conference. Last, but not least, we will continue to advance our communications capabilities through the web, email, and teleconferencing.

The MCDA exists to support our members. As a first step in supporting our members, I would like to thank you again for all the good work you do. Second, I would invite anyone to contact me about how MCDA might better support you in your projects and initiatives. Finally, I encourage you to participate in all of our 2006 functions.

-Isaac Wagner 664-2424 x4450

*Message from the President – Continued from page 1*

## 2006 CDBG Program Announcements

The Office of Community Development announced *Round One of the Economic Development Program Awards*. They are:

✓ Hiram	\$400,000	Creation of 20 New Jobs
✓ Limerick	\$150,000	Creation of 5 New Jobs
✓ Madawaska	\$400,000	Creation of 45 New Jobs
✓ Millinocket	\$400,000	Creation of 15 New Jobs
✓ Patten	\$400,000	Creation of 29 New Jobs
✓ Perry	\$120,000	Creation of 4 New Jobs
✓ Rockland	\$100,000	Creation of 5 New Jobs
✓ Sanford	\$400,000	Creation of 28 New Jobs

The Office of Community Development announced *Community Enterprise, Downtown Revitalization and Non-Profit Development Grant Awards*. They are:

➤ Doverfoxcroft	\$100,000	Micro-Enterprise Assist.
➤ Farmington	\$150,000	Streetscape Improvements
➤ Grand Isle	\$77,500	Micro-Enterprise Assist.
➤ Mars Hill	\$60,085	Streetscape Improvements
➤ Rockland	\$150,000	Business Facades
➤ Rumford	\$150,000	Business Facades
➤ Waterville	\$150,000	Streetscape Improvements
➤ Bridgton	\$340,000	Downtown Improvements
➤ Skowhegan	\$400,000	Downtown Improvements
➤ Skowhegan	\$250,000	Downtown Improvements and Business Access

***Congratulations to all Awardees!***

**For More Information on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, please contact the following technical assistance providers:**

Michael Baran – DECD, Office of Community Development	<a href="http://www.meocd.org">www.meocd.org</a>
Joella McBairty – Northern Maine Development Commission	<a href="http://www.nmdc.org">www.nmdc.org</a>
Michael Bush – Eastern Maine Development Corporation	<a href="http://www.emdc.org">www.emdc.org</a>
Kennebec Valley Council of Governments	<a href="http://www.kvcog.org">www.kvcog.org</a>
Amy Landry - Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments	<a href="http://www.avcog.org">www.avcog.org</a>
Lincoln County Economic Development Office	<a href="http://www.lincolncountymaine.org">www.lincolncountymaine.org</a>
Mid Coast Council for Business Development	<a href="http://www.mcbdp.org">www.mcbdp.org</a>
Greater Portland Council of Governments Commission	<a href="http://www.gpcog.org">www.gpcog.org</a>
Hancock County Regional Planning	<a href="http://www.hcpcme.org">www.hcpcme.org</a>
Penobscot Valley Council of Governments	<a href="http://www.emdc.org/planning.htm">www.emdc.org/planning.htm</a>
Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission	<a href="http://www.smrpc.maine.org">www.smrpc.maine.org</a>



Rodney Lynch, AICP, is the newest member of the MCDA Board of Directors. Rodney is the Community Development Director for the City of Rockland, as well as a resident homeowner in that community. He has been employed by the City as CD Director since March, 1998. Prior to working for Rockland, he has been employed as a professional city and regional planner, and a town manager for several agencies and communities including MCRPC, AVCOG, City of Auburn, Town of Bethel and Town of Norridgewock. Since assuming the position of Community Development Director for Rockland, his department has obtained and implemented approximately \$2,000,000 in CDBG, DEP, MITF, SPO, MDOT, and Forest Service grants for multi-family housing rehabilitation, economic development, public infrastructure, planning, tree planting and signage, and septic system replacement.

Rodney is pleased with the fact that he enjoys the support of the City Council and the City Manager.

***HOULTON: On the Radar***

Don Keiser, Planner

Houlton is “on the radar.” That’s what someone recently told me in response to a question about whether he had heard about what is going on in Houlton. Despite our location, people around the state are beginning to hear about Houlton. Why? The Town, under the direction of the Council and the Town Manager, has embarked on an aggressive course leading toward community-wide renewal and revitalization. Previously, with grants from EDA and CDBG, the Town completed two major studies; one for regional economic development, the other to develop a Downtown Plan that has been accepted by DECD. The blueprints are in place AND, we are now moving toward implementation.



One key effort included the formation and appointment of a Downtown Committee to recommend and assist in efforts to make the Downtown Plan a reality. This committee of citizen volunteers is working on several fronts in parallel with the overall development efforts being led by the Town Manager, supported by the Town Planner, the Northern Maine Development Commission and the Southern Aroostook Development Corporation. Interest in the Downtown among both citizens and folks “from away” has increased dramatically in the past six months. Workshops and public hearings have been well attended, and media coverage is expanding. In short, the Downtown is on the move.

A second major effort involves the submission of three (3) Tax Incentive Financing District Applications to DECD in March 2006. There is already activity in all three proposed districts and the TIF program will play a major part in development of infrastructure, setting up revolving loan funds and administering the districts. TIF “revenues” will free “regular” property tax dollars to support other aspects of community development including housing, town-wide infrastructure and the Downtown. Speaking again of the Downtown, Houlton will also submit an application for a Downtown TIF!

While all this activity is somewhat visible, much of what is happening behind the scenes cannot be divulged at this time. However, suffice it to say that economic activity, as measured by new construction and building permits, increased dramatically in 2005. Projections for 2006, based on new permit applications and sub-division applications, already point toward a sustained expansion. The perception that, “nothing ever happens in Houlton” is now giving way to, “what has changed to bring on all this activity?”

What is different is a growing recognition that the Town must be proactive regarding change. Houlton must work with the various state and regional agencies and organizations that are available to assist in revival. However, ultimately the Town has to take control of its own destiny, and this is exactly what is occurring.

Yes, *Houlton is on the radar*, and as we move toward 2007 and celebration of our bicentennial, change will accelerate. Our Bicentennial event, while celebrating the past will also serve to introduce people to the new Houlton and its exciting future. Come See Us!

# Maine Downtown Center

Maine is blessed with unique, historic downtown districts that play a key role in the state's economy and famous quality of life. Vibrant downtowns promote business development, job growth, creative entrepreneurship, and cultural opportunities, while providing an attractive, unique environment of beautiful historic buildings and natural landscapes.

In recognition of the importance of Maine's downtowns, the Maine Downtown Center, a program of the Maine Development Foundation, was created in 1999 to be the statewide resource for downtown revitalization efforts. We work with all Maine communities interested in developing and implementing downtown revitalization strategies.

In 2001, we launched the Main Street Maine initiative. Using the Main Street™ economic development model developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1980, we provide targeted technical assistance and training to communities selected through a competitive application process. Main Street is a comprehensive, long-term model to not only improve the physical appearance of downtowns, but also create economic vitality and bring people back to the downtown through promotions, special events, and collaborative advertising. The model is volunteer intensive, requires a public-private partnership, and involves not only downtown merchants and building owners, but town officials and community residents. It also provides a great framework for developing community leadership and channeling grassroots community organizing efforts.

We are currently working with eight communities under the Main Street program: Saco, Norway, Bath, Gardiner, Waterville, Skowhegan, Eastport, and Van Buren. Since 2002, the hard work these communities have undertaken has resulted in:

- ❖ Over \$22 million in new public and private investments
- ❖ The creation of over 70 new downtown businesses
- ❖ The creation of over 400 new downtown jobs
- ❖ Over 70,000 volunteer hours

In addition to the Main Street Maine program, the Maine Downtown Center offers a number of training opportunities across the state each year as well as our annual downtown conference.

This year, our annual conference will be held in Downtown Waterville on October 11<sup>th</sup>. Our theme will be "Engaging Community", and we are lining up our keynote speaker and sessions now. We are delighted that the "Ladies of the Commons" in Eastport will be returning to give us an update on their community-initiated development strategy, and fill us in on their newest project! We will also offer a tour of the Hathaway Mill, which is a former textile mill undergoing a fabulous renovation effort, as well as our traditional historic walking tours. We will also be announcing our newest Main Street community and the winners of our annual Downtown Achievement Awards.

Finally, the newly formed Maine Council of Main Streets – a group of local Main Street board members, staff and volunteers – is working to educate state leaders on the challenges of the building, fire, elevator, and ADA codes here in Maine. It doesn't seem to matter whether it's Biddeford or Madawaska, the barriers that our code system presents to economic development are both frustrating and costly. While we are all advocates for safe and accessible buildings in our downtowns, we have to figure out a more effective and efficient way for rehabbing our historic buildings and creating mixed-use spaces that incorporate retail, offices, and housing. Hopefully, the Main Street communities' efforts to bring attention to this issue will lead to positive change.

For more information about the Maine Downtown Center and its programming, please visit our website at <http://www.mdf.org/downtown> or contact Lori Allen, Program Director, at [lallen@mdf.org](mailto:lallen@mdf.org) or 622-6345.



# Upcoming Events

**May 23, 2006**      **8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**  
**CDBG IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP**  
Location: Augusta American Legion  
Post 2  
Capitol Street Extension

**June 9, 2006**      **8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**  
**MCDA/MAP CONFERENCE**  
Location: Topsham Public Library  
Bus Tour of Navy Base Facilities in Topsham  
and Brunswick planned!

**July 12, 2006**      **8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**  
**CDBG ADMINISTRATOR'S CERTIFICATION**  
Location: Augusta American Legion  
Post 2  
Capitol Street Extension