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**L.D. 1673, Resolve, Establishing a Working Group to Coordinate Collaboration
Among State Agencies for the Purpose of Promoting Smart Growth and
Development in High-use Corridors**

**Report to the Joint Standing and Joint Select Committees of the Legislature
Having Jurisdiction Over Housing Matters**

From the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future

January 15, 2025

A. Introduction and Summary

As directed by L.D. 1673 Resolve, Establishing a Working Group to Coordinate Collaboration Among State Agencies for the Purpose of Promoting Smart Growth and Development in High-use Corridors, the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future convened an agency working group to coordinate collaboration among agencies to promote smart growth.

Thoughtful land use planning that maximizes state resources and promotes smart growth in communities has been the focus of several recent state initiatives – such as the creation of the Maine Office of Community Affairs in 2024 and the inclusion of land use focused strategies in the 2024 update to the state's climate action plan, *Maine Won't Wait*.

The Maine Climate Council recognized that the state must take a thoughtful approach to land use planning that acknowledges regional and local differences in land use patterns, demographics, wildlife and habitat values, natural and working land assets, and suitability for development including housing, economic opportunities, and clean energy resources. Thoughtful land use management will optimize co-benefits to people and nature and our state's strong support for environmental protection while meeting Maine's current and future housing and economic development needs and streamlining the transition to clean energy. It is important to note that during the *Maine Won't Wait* 2024 update process, the Maine Climate Council recognized that capacity at the state, regional, and local levels need to be bolstered to provide the technical expertise needed to support communities in effective land use planning that achieves smart growth goals, climate goals, clean energy siting goals, and protects natural and working lands.

The Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) was established in 2024 to partner with Maine communities to strengthen planning and implementation at the local level. MOCA will serve as a one-stop shop within state government to provide coordinated and efficient planning, technical assistance, and financial support to towns, cities, tribal governments, and regional entities, which will help them better plan for common challenges, pursue solutions, and create stronger, more resilient communities. Programs involving land use, housing, and floodplain planning, as well as code enforcement, coastal management, and some climate resilience funding and programs will be reorganized into the new office starting in July 2025.

L.D. 1673 provides an opportunity to increase collaboration among state agencies to maximize state resources for land use planning, specifically to support smart growth and development in high-use corridors, and align these efforts through MOCA. The L.D. 1673 working group identified the key existing programs and policies that promote smart growth, walkable neighborhoods, and high-use corridors, which are described in Section B of the report. Section C describes a plan for further interagency coordination to maximize state resources that promote smart growth principles and provide robust technical assistance to communities.

The following is a summary of key findings and recommendations identified in this report:

- Numerous existing programs within state agencies provide technical assistance and financial resources to Maine's municipalities that encourage higher density downtowns and walkable neighborhoods, mixed-income housing, redevelopment of underutilized lands, and other smart growth principles.
- Existing state agency programs and resources include the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry's Municipal Planning Assistance Program (MPAP), the Maine Department of Transportation's (MaineDOT) Village Partnership Initiative, MaineDOT's Complete Streets Policy, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Brownfields Redevelopment Program, the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development's (DECD) Housing Opportunity Program, the DECD's Community Development Block Grant Program, DECD's site selection online tool, the Maine Department of Marine Resource's (DMR) Maine Coastal Program, the Maine Fire Marshal's Office Code Enforcement Training and Certification Program, and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's (DIFW) Beginning with Habitat Program.
- Maine's ten Regional Councils are supported through annual contracts from multiple state agencies above to provide technical assistance and training to municipal officials in land use, comprehensive planning, local regulation, capital investment planning, and seeking and administering funding for municipal needs. This financial support has fluctuated significantly over the decades, with greater recent support for both housing and climate resilience.
- Maine's Metropolitan Planning Organizations and MaineDOT have developed a Memorandum of Understanding to advance collaboration and success between state, regional, and municipal partners in regional corridor planning. The Metropolitan Planning Organizations are responsible for developing Corridor Management Plans that identify and plan candidate projects for integrated infrastructure to achieve economic, housing, equity, quality of life, and climate goals in key corridors in their region. The MaineDOT will provide technical assistance in the development of these candidate projects.
- The new Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) provides an important opportunity to expand the collaboration between existing programs that provide planning technical assistance and funding, and to further the reach and assistance that these programs provide to communities, municipalities, and regions. Aligning existing state resources for communities through the one-stop shop model of MOCA will allow communities to more effectively pursue funds and receive technical assistance that can achieve multiple smart growth goals, such as mixed-use development and mixed-income housing, village centers, and walkable neighborhoods.

- The state, through MOCA, should enhance communication to Maine’s municipalities about existing state programs that promote smart growth principles. Within communities, MOCA should support proactive communication and encourage community engagement to support effective land use planning that is inclusive of their community needs and local context and distributes benefits equitably.
- Defining a “high-use corridor” is a priority next step to further the promotion of smart growth and development in high-use corridors.
- As emphasized by the Maine Municipal Association and Maine’s Regional Councils, resources for Maine’s communities regarding smart growth principles should provide pathways and choices for communities, rather than a uniform approach or mandate. Resources should be shared in a manner that is accessible and explicitly responds to the needs of communities.
- Technical assistance and resources must provide communities with a menu of choices and be applicable to both urban and rural communities.

B. L.D. 1673 Approach, Process, and Findings

[L.D. 1673 Resolve, Establishing a Working Group to Coordinate Collaboration Among State Agencies for the Purpose of Promoting Smart Growth and Development in High-use Corridors](#) was passed by the Maine Legislature in March 2024. The Resolve directs the Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF) to convene an agency working group with the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (DACF), the Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), and the director of the Maine State Housing Authority (MaineHousing) to design a plan for agency coordination to maximize state resources and promote smart growth, walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use development, and mixed-income housing in high-use corridors, near higher-density downtowns, village centers, or crossroads, and through infilling and redevelopment of underutilized lands. The working group shall also propose a plan for technical assistance grants to municipalities for the development of ordinances and zoning regulations governing high-use corridors including model transit-oriented development zoning ordinances for municipal consideration.

GOPIF is required to submit a report including the proposed plan to the Joint Standing and Joint Select Committees of the Legislature Having Jurisdiction Over Housing Matters by January 15, 2025. This report fulfills that requirement.

Over the past several months, GOPIF and the convened working group – including MaineDOT, DEP, DACF, DECD, and the Maine State Housing Authority – have compiled and reviewed existing state programs and resources that promote smart growth principles, avenues to further maximize these resources and technical assistance for Maine’s communities. Beyond the working group, GOPIF has also consulted with stakeholders, including representatives of Maine’s Regional Councils and the Maine Municipal Association, to provide input about the stakeholder needs and offer recommendations.

GOPIF wishes to thank the Maine Municipal Association and the Regional Councils, who took the time to share their concerns, ideas, and recommendations, and the state agency staff who assisted to develop this report.

Key Programs and Initiatives

The following section highlights existing state resources and programs that promote smart growth, walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use development, and mixed-income housing in high-use corridors near higher-density downtowns, village centers, or crossroads through infilling and redevelopment of underutilized lands.

1. Maine Office of Community Affairs

The Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA), a new office [created](#) by the Governor and Legislature in 2024, will partner with Maine communities to strengthen planning and implementation at the local level. MOCA will serve as a one-stop shop within state government to provide coordinated and efficient planning, technical assistance, and financial support to towns, cities, Tribal governments and regional entities, to help them better plan for common challenges, pursue solutions, and create stronger, more resilient communities.

In establishing MOCA, the state recognized that the number and volume of planning grant and technical assistance programs provided by state government have grown substantially in recent years, while the system for coordinating and delivering those services remains severely limited since the elimination of the State Planning Office in 2012. The new office will bring together programs that provide planning grants and technical assistance to communities and will improve communication and collaboration across state planning programs.

This report 1) highlights key programs and initiatives in state agencies that promote smart growth, walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use development, and mixed-income housing in high-use corridors near higher-density downtowns, village centers, or crossroads through infilling and redevelopment of underutilized lands; and 2) recommends how MOCA can maximize these resources for communities by providing interagency collaboration and robust technical assistance to communities.

2. Municipal Planning Assistance Program at the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

The Municipal Planning Assistance Program (MPAP) and the Floodplain Management Program, both currently at DACF will move to MOCA in July of 2025. These programs provide land use planning expertise for Maine citizens, municipalities, Regional Councils, state agencies, and the Legislature, and promote growth management principles in state and local policies, programs, regulations, and investments. This technical and financial assistance includes model ordinances and other guidance documents, workshops and webinars, one-on-one technical support, planning data, training for local officials, annual grants to Regional Councils, and competitive grants for specific planning projects.

MPAP guides municipalities in developing local Comprehensive Plans and land use ordinances and administers Maine's Growth Management Law. Several recent initiatives have significantly improved access to essential information and decision-support tools needed by regional collaborators and municipalities. These resources are assembled in a [Maine MPAP Open Map](#) portal that provides connections to the [Maine Comprehensive Plan Data Portal and Mapping Services](#) story map; [Maine's Assets and Hazards Map](#), [High-Resolution Land Cover](#), a data set recently released by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); the [Maine Schools and School Districts](#) web map; and a

website providing access to [Maine Municipal, Regional and Statewide Plans](#). These resources provide municipalities, consultants, and Regional Councils quick access to the information and data needed to complete comprehensive plans, site infrastructure, and conduct capital investment planning in collaboration with their neighbors and the state.

A [Growth Management Program Survey and outreach meetings conducted in 2024](#) garnered input from approximately 200 local officials and professionals around the state, which will help MOCA establish priorities for Growth Management Program improvements and planning technical assistance needs. Key findings include integrating climate and hazard mitigation planning into the Comprehensive Plan process and determining ways to reduce the inventory requirements in all municipalities and increase flexibility for small communities while retaining data-informed decision-making. Priority technical assistance requests include the development of stronger models for support to promote compact development and housing in serviced areas, training in community engagement techniques, and an updated Comprehensive Planning guidance manual that defines growth and rural areas, place types, and model climate vulnerability assessments and climate action plans.

3. Maine Coastal Program at Maine Department of Marine Resources

DMR's Maine Coastal Program is a partnership among local, regional, and state agencies that manages Maine's coastal resources for the public benefit. This program will also move to MOCA in July 2024. The Coastal Program provides grants to counties, municipalities, unorganized territories, Tribal governments, and Regional Councils in Maine's coastal zone for projects that build community resilience and promote sound waterfront planning, harbor management, and balanced development of shore and harbor areas to improve marine infrastructure and assure access to the shore.

4. Code Enforcement Training and Certification Program at the Office of the Maine State Fire Marshal, Maine Department of Public Safety

The Code Enforcement Training and Certification Program, currently housed within the Office of the State Fire Marshal at the Maine Department of Public Safety, will move to MOCA in July of 2025. The program provides training in shoreland zoning, land use planning, internal plumbing, subsurface wastewater disposal, building standards, and legal issues. Certification is achieved through a written examination in each area of code enforcement specialization and a legal issues exam. The program also offers certification training and examinations for third-party inspectors to enforce the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC).

Training is provided in person and through online virtual webinars recorded in an online training library; however, many of the recordings for shoreland zoning, land use, and subsurface wastewater are more than 10 years old. Coordination among programs moving to MOCA can ensure that training expands beyond the current focus on building codes.

Rural areas are often challenged to secure Code Enforcement Officers or third-party inspectors due to limited stipends, lack of benefits, and lack of support for training/certification from individual small towns. To address these issues, the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments has applied for a \$3 million FEMA grant to collaborate with six Regional Councils serving the state's most rural areas to develop a regional code enforcement pilot program.

5. Maine Department of Transportation's Village Partnership Initiative

MaineDOT's [Village Partnership Initiative](#) is a partnership between MaineDOT and local officials to reinvest and revitalize village centers or downtowns to reflect the community's future vision. The Village Partnership Initiative is an opportunity for communities to enhance existing or create new Village Centers that are mixed-use areas and serve the surrounding community with goods, services, and housing. MaineDOT provides technical assistance that helps communities engage in the visioning process, discuss conflicting space needs such as parking, and envision a vibrant village center.

Villages should be the focal point of a community and should reflect the personality, character, and history of that community. Village Centers and Downtowns when built will be at least a half mile in length, have characteristics supporting speed limits of 30 mph or less, be built on a human scale making them walkable and bikeable for patrons and residents, and have broadband available. The initiative outlines that most investments will be made where provisions for broadband internet are or will be available, as good internet connections are as important as physical connections.

The Village Partnership Initiative supports village projects that vary from small spot improvements to large once-in-a-lifetime investments if the partnership can successfully access federal discretionary funds. Some Maine municipalities may have more than one village center that serve distinct communities within the municipality.

6. MaineDOT's Complete Streets Policy

MaineDOT's Complete Streets Policy, developed initially in 2014 and revised in 2024, outlines how MaineDOT and its project partners will consider the needs of all users when planning and developing projects. The updated policy now utilizes the MaineDOT Roadway Context Classifications in providing contextually appropriate guidance for incorporating Complete Streets elements into transportation projects. The intent of this policy is to help ensure that all users of Maine's transportation system, including bicyclists, pedestrians, people of all ages and abilities, transit users, and motor vehicle users, have safe and efficient access to the transportation system.

MaineDOT strongly supports a multimodal transportation system and recognizes that pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, separated facilities, transit stops, ADA-accessible routes, etc., are crucial elements of the transportation system. In addition, a safe, multimodal, and vibrant transportation system is vital to Maine's economy and to the community environments which are such an important component to our transportation system.

7. MaineDOT Speed Limit Setting to Promote Village Centers

MaineDOT sets speed limits on all public roads in Maine, including both state and local jurisdiction roads pursuant to 29-A § 2073 §-1 and 2075, §- 3. To set consistent and repeatable speed limits that consider local context and road user safety, MaineDOT has created an [updated methodology to set speed limits](#). This new methodology is based on recent research detailing how roadway context influences driver behavior. The Department is changing practices to gain voluntary speed compliance from drivers by posting speed limits which consistently align with road user expectations. Research indicates that changing a speed limit sign alone does not significantly impact vehicle speeds. When appropriate, MaineDOT will strategically use speed management techniques in combination with speed limit postings to achieve the Safer Speeds objective on the state highway system. The roadway and roadside elements

used for speed management will more clearly convey the intended and appropriate operating speed to drivers. MaineDOT has established a [Roadway Context Classification System](#) that identifies the current context of a roadway based on many factors. The five context classifications are: Rural, Rural Town, Village, Suburban, and Urban.

MaineDOT's new speed limit setting procedure will maintain system reliability while improving safety, economic opportunity, and quality of life.

8. Maine Department of Environmental Protection's Brownfields Redevelopment Program

DEP's [Brownfields Program](#) encourages redevelopment of properties that are considered brownfields. Through this program, DEP works with municipalities and potential owners to assist them with conducting investigations and remediation where necessary to allow for productive reuse of brownfields sites. Brownfield sites are properties that are "abandoned, idled, or under used industrial and commercial facilities/sites where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination." Properties with an industrial past can be assumed to have environmental liability associated with development or reuse – resulting in the encouragement of communities and industry to be located in "greenfields," or undeveloped properties in more rural areas. This pattern exacerbates sprawl and leaves existing infrastructure, such as sewer and water, underutilized where it already exists, resulting in expansion of services to new areas.

The DEP's Brownfield Program, conducted by the state with funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), maintains a public record of brownfield sites, conducts environmental site assessment activities on behalf of municipalities that apply to the program with interest in obtaining ownership or that have a redevelopment plan for the property, and provides up to \$50,000 for remedial activities at municipal brownfield sites. Maine's Regional Councils and Economic Development Districts have a long track record of successfully obtaining and implementing EPA Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup grants. Significant achievements include the redevelopment of former mills in multiple communities into housing, retail, and office space, as well as dozens of assessments of former gas stations, dry cleaners, and former industrial sites. Once the environmental, legal, and financial uncertainty associated with this real or perceived contamination is assessed, the private sector can and has acted to redevelop these sites.

9. Housing Opportunity Program at the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development

The [Housing Opportunity Program](#), currently located within DECD, will move to MOCA in July 2025. Through technical and financial assistance to municipalities to increase housing opportunities, the program encourages and supports the development of additional housing units, including housing units that are affordable for low-income and moderate-income individuals.

The Housing Opportunity Program provides technical assistance to municipalities to help them understand and implement PL 2021, ch. 672 (LD 2003), legislation that requires municipalities to remove unnecessary regulations that decrease housing development. The law requires municipalities to allow for different housing typologies; an increase in density in residential areas, particularly in growth areas (including many village centers); and an increase in affordable housing development in areas that can

support this type of development. Through the Housing Opportunity Program's outreach to municipalities, the program also encourages municipalities to consider their municipal regulations beyond the requirements of L.D. 2003, including other land use regulations such as minimum lot sizes, setback requirements, permitting procedures, mixed-use development, and density requirements. The Housing Opportunity Program also encourages regional land use planning initiatives to create consistency and transparency for developers who work across municipalities.

Housing Opportunity Program grants provide financial assistance to service providers and municipalities for community housing planning and implementation services. These grants can be used for many different projects, including, but not limited to, regional educational programming on housing; technical assistance to municipalities interested in revising land use and zoning ordinances to increase housing; better housing data collection procedures; and determining the feasibility of affordable housing development on certain lots in a municipality. For example, a municipality could use these grants for master planning initiatives to support housing density and mixed-use development in village centers.

10. Community Development Block Grant Program at the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development

The Maine Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, administered by DECD, provides funds to help municipalities achieve their community and economic development objectives. CDBG funded projects are locally driven and include (but are not limited to) minimizing development sprawl consistent with the State of Maine Growth Management Act, supporting the revitalization of downtown areas, and improving deteriorated residential and business districts and local economic conditions. All CDBG funded activities must meet one of the three National Objectives: benefit to low- and moderate-income persons, the prevention and/or elimination of slum and blight conditions, or meeting community development needs having a particular urgency.

11. Maine Department of Economic and Community Development's Site Selection Tool

DECD maintains an [online site selection tool](#), which promotes the state for business relocation and expansion. The easy-to-use tool makes property listings and workforce data instantly accessible in a clear, relatable format to community leaders, site selectors, realtors, and businesses making location decisions. The tool is free to use and requires no additional account to access information. This tool is an important resource for building and site re-development.

12. Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife's Beginning with Habitat Program

Beginning with Habitat is a program located within the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIFW) that helps Maine municipalities make scientifically informed choices about where to encourage development and where to focus their conservation efforts. Recognizing the importance of Maine's natural resources and environment, Beginning with Habitat works closely with municipalities to promote responsible development while protecting important natural resources.

Beginning with Habitat consolidates the wealth of habitat information produced by separate federal, state, and local agencies as well as non-governmental organizations, and creates comprehensive

packages for each Maine municipality, which include multi-layer maps, information about native habitats, and localized conservation strategies. Beginning with Habitat also provides technical assistance to help planners, land trusts, and private developers put the data to use. Ultimately, this program is designed to empower decision-makers to guide growth in such a way that 50 years from now Maine's quality of place, including fishing, hunting, wildlife watching, and outdoor recreation – and all the economic activity it brings to our state – will endure.

13. Northern Border Regional Commission

The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) is a federal-state partnership that provides federal funds for essential economic and community development projects throughout the northeast. The mission of the Northern Border Regional Commission is to catalyze community vitality and economic prosperity in the northern border region with flexible funding and strategic support. Grant programs, including the Catalyst Program, the Forest Economy Program, and the Timber for Transit Program, provide support that stimulates rural economic vitality. Capacity building opportunities for rural regions offered by NBRC also include the Local Development District Partnership Program and State Capacity Grants, through which the Commission can assist member states to develop comprehensive economic and infrastructure development plans for their NBRC counties.

14. Memorandum of Understanding between Maine's Metropolitan Planning Organizations and MaineDOT Regarding Corridor Management Planning

Maine has four Metropolitan Planning Organizations – Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center, Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System, Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System, and Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System – which have developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the MaineDOT to advance collaboration and success between state, regional, and municipal partners in regional corridor planning.

The Metropolitan Planning Organizations will be responsible for developing and updating corridor management plans for key corridors in their metropolitan planning region. These plans will include safety improvements, equity, active transportation improvements, traffic management, congestion mitigation, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, transit improvements, and key maintenance implications. The plans require that corridors should be looked at as more than just one street or highway, but rather in a systems approach of a network of integrated infrastructure and as an opportunity to achieve economic, housing, equity, quality of life, and climate goals. These plans serve as a short- and long-term vision for the corridor, will be consistent with the Metropolitan Transportation Plans, and will transcend municipal boundaries and be regional in nature.

MaineDOT will provide technical assistance in the development of these candidate projects. Technical assistance may include reviewing traffic models, lane designations, cost-benefit analysis for safety and mobility, and traffic safety, and answering questions related to environmental concerns and historic properties. MaineDOT and each Metropolitan Planning Organization will work together to identify the best funding strategy and timing for each Corridor Management Plan element. In advance of developing a Work Plan each year, MaineDOT will coordinate with each Metropolitan Planning Organization on the region's Corridor Management Plans to determine funding strategy, possibilities, and priorities within the upcoming Work Plan.

Reimagining Route 1 – Example Corridor Planning Initiative

In 2024-2025, the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS) is undertaking a regional opportunity to study the Route 1 corridor, focusing on context-sensitive solutions to improve safety and reflect the communities' vision for the corridor while contemplating infrastructure needs, housing, and community development from Biddeford (at Arundel line) to Freeport (at Brunswick line).

The project recognizes that Route 1 varies considerably across approximately 40 miles in the region, with some sections serving mostly a means of getting somewhere else while others are popular destinations with defined character and sense of place. As a corridor, it plays an important role in the PACTS region and has been highlighted in recent plans. The study will group the corridor into typologies based on existing conditions, constraints (such as right of way and existing traffic volume), and expected and potential development. The typologies will inform templates for safety, infrastructure, and placemaking improvements appropriate to each typology. Improvements may vary in complexity and scope but will collectively enhance connectivity and quality of life across the corridor. Each priority center (growth area) along the corridor will have a community-generated vision for development, which includes housing.

15. MaineHousing Qualified Allocation Plan

MaineHousing is an independent state agency that connects public and private housing finance to invest in safe, affordable, warm housing for Maine people. MaineHousing works to ensure their resources are being invested in housing that is located close to important services and integrated within communities.

MaineHousing's Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP), a document that outlines rules for allocating the low-income tax credit, uses multiple smart growth principles including reusing existing structures and incorporating the proximity of proposed projects to services as a scoring criteria.

16. Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority

The new Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority was founded in 2024 to partner with local governments and community organizations to accelerate the redevelopment of neglected, abandoned, environmentally hazardous, and functionally obsolete properties within the State of Maine. The Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority offers project support and assistance to communities to redevelop or revitalize former mills, and institutional, retail, office, or residential properties.

17. *Maine Won't Wait*, the State's Climate Action Plan

The Maine Climate Council, an assembly of scientists, industry leaders, bipartisan local and state officials, and engaged citizens is responsible for developing and updating the state's plan to address the impacts of climate change on Maine, build resiliency to climate effects, and meet state statutory targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the 2024 update of [*Maine Won't Wait*](#), the state's climate action plan, the Maine Climate Council recommended promoting and incentivizing land use strategies that help communities avoid future transportation emissions, conserve natural and working lands, create affordable housing, and meet the state's clean energy goals. The Maine Climate Council recognized that capacity at the state, regional, and local level needs to be bolstered to provide the technical expertise needed to support communities in effective land use planning that achieves smart growth goals, climate goals, and clean energy siting goals, and protects natural and working lands.

C. Recommendations

1. Plan for Interagency Coordination to Maximize State Resources

The recently established Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) provides a distinct pathway for the state to boost interagency collaboration, maximize state resources that promote smart growth principles, and provide more robust technical assistance to communities. Aligning existing state resources for communities through the one-stop shop model of MOCA will allow communities to pursue funds and receive technical assistance that can achieve multiple smart growth goals, such as mixed-use development and mixed-income housing, village centers, and walkable neighborhoods.

The working group convened under Resolve L.D. 1673 recommends the following strategies and actions to advance coordination of state resources for the purpose of promoting smart growth and development in high-use corridors:

a. Increase Communication to Communities, and within Communities

The state, through MOCA, should enhance communication to Maine's municipalities about existing state and federal programs and policies that support walkable neighborhoods mixed-use development, and mixed-income housing in high-use corridors near higher-density downtowns, village centers, or crossroads through infilling and redevelopment of underutilized lands.

Within communities, MOCA should support proactive communication and encourage community engagement to support effective land use planning that is inclusive of their community needs and local context and distributes benefits equitably. This will help communities align local land use policies with local priorities and state priorities, including housing and climate goals.

MOCA should use communication strategies that encourage local engagement to build shared understanding and consensus through the following means:

- Engage community members through multiple methods, including graphical representation tools and visuals to portray the benefits of housing and mixed-use development.
- Use messaging to help communities envision future changes, recognizing that it is easier for community members to understand what they are losing and harder to understand what they might gain. Proactively address fears about land use policy impacts, such as mixed-income housing.
- Shape messaging to communicate who smart growth principles benefit (e.g. which community members would benefit from increased affordable housing options).
- Share success stories from other Maine communities effectively implementing policy changes that encourage walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use development, and mixed-income housing in high-use corridors near higher-density downtowns, village centers, or crossroads through infilling and redevelopment of underutilized lands.
- Engage with stakeholders who may be affected by land use policy changes (including community, regional, and municipal leaders, businesses, land trusts, non-profit entities, and others) to support improved communications and improved processes.

b. Incentivizing Density with State Funds

State funding programs should promote and incentivize smart growth, walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use development, and mixed-income housing in high-use corridors near higher-density downtowns, village centers, or crossroads, such as with additional points in application scoring.

c. Define Key Terms for Smart Growth Principles

MOCA, in collaboration with state agencies and Regional Councils, should define key terms of smart growth principles, such as “high-use corridor” and “high density downtown”, as well as “smart growth”. A high-use corridor typically refers to a lengthwise grouping of nodes that service multiple uses but varies widely between urban and rural areas. A definition of high-use corridors must be inclusive of Maine’s variety of rural and urban communities.

d. Encourage Re-use and Re-development of Existing Buildings and Underutilized Land

To promote village centers or crossroads through redevelopment of underutilized lands, MOCA should promote compact development through infill development, upzoning, and redevelopment of existing buildings; promote infill housing development by providing financial assistance for capital improvement projects; and promote policies that locate affordable housing near jobs, transit, and services.

e. Pursue Legislation to Modify Site Location of Development Act for Multifamily Housing

The state should enact legislation to change the Site Location of Development Act (Site Law) to treat multifamily housing designed to accommodate up to four families in the same way it treats single family housing when determining whether a Site Law permit is necessary. Currently, there is a lower threshold for requiring a Site Law permit for multifamily residential development (five lots and more than twenty acres) than for single family residential development (15 lots and more than 30 acres). This legislation should also make clear that accessory dwelling units can be included on these residential lots without affecting whether a Site Law permit is required. The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has proposed legislation to accomplish these changes, which, if enacted, would increase the threshold for requiring a Site Law permit for duplexes and quadplexes to 15 lots and 30 acres and allow for accessory dwelling units on the lots.

f. HR&A Housing Production Roadmap

The Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future (GOPIF), the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), and MaineHousing asked housing experts at HR&A Advisors, a national real estate and economic development consulting firm, to identify state-level policy strategies that could help Maine deliver more housing, more quickly, and at more sustainable costs. To advance the state’s housing production goals, the report (to be released later this month) recommends three parallel approaches to build a stronger housing ecosystem. Specific policy recommendations are offered in each of these three areas.

1. **Streamline Processes and Build Public Capacity.** Expand the capacity of state and municipal government to plan for, approve, and provide infrastructure for new homes by providing technical assistance and streamlining state and municipal processes, building codes, and land use laws.

2. **Incentivize Production and Increase Transparency.** Use incentives and increased transparency to promote the development of homes in growth areas in collaboration with municipalities.
3. **Strengthen the Private Sector.** Invest in recruitment and retention of workers in construction and skilled trades, engage employers to support workforce housing development, and explore opportunities to adopt innovations that reduce costs.

2. Plan for Technical Assistance Grants to Municipalities

The following plan would improve the efficiency of the technical assistance grants, programs, and policies described above, to ensure that the resources and technical assistance provided to communities is as effective as possible. This includes technical assistance grants to municipalities, Regional Councils, and qualified service providers to develop ordinances and zoning regulations governing high-use corridors, including model transit-oriented development zoning ordinances for municipal consideration. In addition, technical assistance should be coordinated with other infrastructure programs – including those that support drinking water and wastewater infrastructure and other applicable road and adaption funds – to prioritize infrastructure in high-density corridors when possible.

Technical assistance and resources should provide communities with a menu of choices and must be applicable to both urban and rural communities.

a. Pathways for Community Choice

As emphasized by state agencies, the Maine Municipal Association, and Maine’s Regional Councils, resources for Maine’s communities regarding smart growth principles should provide pathways and choice for communities, rather than a uniform approach or too many state requirements. Resources should be shared in a manner that is accessible and explicitly responds to the needs of communities.

As a largely rural state, technical assistance opportunities and resources must include smart growth opportunities for community infrastructure that is inclusive of rural village needs.

b. Technical Assistance Grants to Municipalities and Regional Councils for the Development of Ordinances and Land Use Regulations Governing High-Use Corridors

The working group convened under Resolve L.D. 1673 recommends the following strategies and actions to provide technical assistance grants to municipalities and Regional Councils or other qualified service providers to develop ordinances and land use regulations governing high-use corridors.

- Model ordinance language should:
 - Align local land use policies with local priorities and state priorities, including housing and climate goals.
 - Support affordable housing and housing density, especially in locations near transit and services and in areas at lower risk of climate hazards.
 - Support transit-oriented development that decreases vehicle miles traveled and encourages active transportation.
- Technical assistance and incentives should:

- o Be right-sized for different scales: regional and municipal levels; smaller versus larger communities, and rural and urban communities. Given land management needs and priorities vary throughout the state, a menu approach of model ordinance language will be most beneficial.
 - o Include providing tools that support communities as they manage conflicting goals and priorities.
- The state, through the Maine Office of Community Affairs, should:
 - o Collaborate with the Maine Municipal Association, Maine's Regional Councils, and other qualified service providers to provide support and training to municipalities.
 - o Title 30-A requires that state agencies reward municipalities with preferential grant scoring if they have Comprehensive Plans that are consistent with the State Growth Management Law. In addition, grant scoring systems should reward local land use policies that accommodate competing uses, such as allowing for economic development while protecting areas of greatest importance to the community and supporting vibrant village centers.

Ultimately, to maximize state resources and achieve good outcomes for communities, planning technical assistance and grants to municipalities should be led by or done in collaboration with the Maine Office of Community Affairs and relevant agencies, and in consultation with the Regional Councils and municipal representatives.