

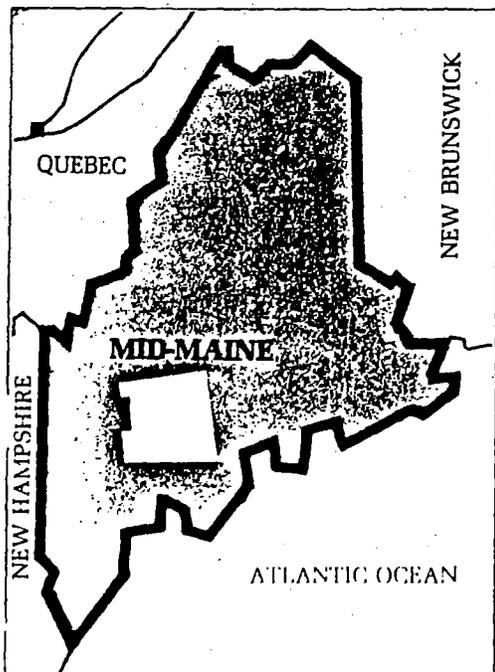
MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the
LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from scanned originals with text recognition applied
(searchable text may contain some errors and/or omissions)

MID-MAINE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



Prepared by:
The Maine Development Foundation

Prepared for:
The Mid-Maine Economic Development
Strategy Steering Committee

September, 1986



MID MAINE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Executive Summary

This report summarizes nine months work of a Steering Committee formed last fall to prepare an economic development strategy for the Mid-Maine region -- Waterville, Winslow, Fairfield and Oakland. The Committee was organized by the Maine Development Foundation at the request of local business and government leaders who were concerned about the future of the economy. The Foundation is a private, non-profit, statewide development corporation created by the Legislature in 1977 to promote economic development through a public-private partnership. Financial support to prepare the strategy was provided by the four municipalities, nineteen local businesses and the foundation.

The 30-member Steering Committee met monthly between October, 1985 and August, 1986 to prepare this strategy. In addition, a major conference was held in June to solicit community ideas, and 35 local leaders were interviewed to gain their insights. Sub-committees also worked to refine the details of the plan.

The Committee's first step was to prepare a detailed economic analysis. Economic Consulting Services of Hallowell was engaged to prepare the three-volume analysis, which examined major economic trends, strategic strengths and weaknesses of the economy, transportation, energy and capital availability, and provided extensive data on the region's manufacturing and service industries, and are the basis for formulating the strategies. The reports also serve as an economic benchmark for measuring the success of future development efforts.

Next, the Committee prepared five-year goals and three-year strategy statements based on the economic analysis. Specific one-year action steps were added to implement the strategies. The statements were presented to 75 business, government and education leaders at the June 4th conference at Colby College to solicit their reactions and suggestions. The goals/strategies/action steps cover six major economic sectors: Manufacturing, Retail and Commercial, Recreation, Agriculture, Business Support and Financial Services, and Education and Health Care. The Committee decided that the manufacturing and Retail/Commercial sectors were the highest priority sectors needing attention within the development strategy.

The action steps led quickly to preparation of detailed work tasks to accomplish in the first year, and a list of specific functions to be performed. Attracting new businesses to the region and assisting existing businesses are considered the most important functions.

Finally, the Committee approved the creation of the Mid-Maine Development Corporation to carry out these functions and implement the strategies and action steps. The organization plan calls for the creation of a non-profit corporation whose principal aim is the improvement of the business climate and creation of jobs in the Mid-Maine region. Working in partnership with the North Kennebec Regional Planning Commission and the Mid-Maine Chamber of Commerce, the new Corporation would undertake an aggressive three year program under the guidance of a 15-member Board of Directors. The new corporation would be supported financially with local business and government contributions, which would enable the hiring of a full-time professional staff person.

MID-MAINE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Table of Contents

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
PART I:	
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS	2
FIRST YEAR WORK TASKS AND FUNCTIONS TO BE PERFORMED	10
MID-MAINE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION: ORGANIZATION PLAN	18
PART II:	
STRATEGIC FACTORS INFLUENCING THE FUTURE OF THE MID-MAINE ECONOMY	21
MID-MAINE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS: INTRODUCTION	25
PART III: Appendix	
STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS	38
ECONOMIC ISSUES SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS	41
ECONOMIC ANALYSIS SUB-COMMITTEE	42
CONTRIBUTORS	43
BUSINESS SURVEY - PERSONAL INTERVIEWS	44
BUSINESS SURVEY - BUSINESS LEADERS PERCEPTION	49
MAINE DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION FACT SHEET	55

Other Materials Available:

- Mid-Maine Economic Analysis, Volume I
- Mid-Maine Economic Analysis, Volume II, Data Base
- Mid-Maine Economic Analysis, Volume III, Utility Survey

MID-MAINE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

The Mid-Maine Economic Development Steering Committee, at its June 12 retreat, reached consensus on priority strategies and action steps to revitalize the Mid-Maine economy over the next three-five years. Their specific recommendations are noted in Part I of this report. Their general conclusions, which Part III addresses, are highlighted below:

- * Manufacturing and retail/commercial development are the highest priority economic sectors needing attention within the development strategy. This means that most of the attention the first year will be given to implementing the manufacturing and retail/commercial priorities, with second level attention given to education/health and recreation. Implementating agriculture and business services strategies were perceived to be a lower (possibly second or third year) priority.

- * Of the 18 strategies considered (top three strategies for each of the six economic sectors), the strategy receiving the highest priority attention was the strategy within the manufacturing component to establish an economic development organization to implement the plan. A majority of those present recommended formation of a new organization, built upon the strengths of the existing agencies. The "Board" referred to in the following recommendations would be this new organization's Board of Directors.

This report is in four parts:

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies and Action Steps.
(approved June 12, 1986)

First year work tasks and action steps to implement strategies.

Functions to be performed.

Organization recommendations. (not enclosed)

Approved by the Steering Committee on
June 12, 1986



Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Action Steps

MANUFACTURING

GOAL (broad, 5-year mission)

Create an environment which is competitive and attractive to new business development, resulting in improved employment in the Mid-Maine region by strengthening and diversifying the manufacturing base.

OBJECTIVES (measurable, 5-year targets to determine if the goal was accomplished)

- A. Ensure that the stable manufacturing base is competitive.
- B. Assist 15 existing manufacturing firms to expand and grow in technology development and labor skills.
- C. Attract 5 more manufacturing firms to locate in Mid-Maine.
- D. Achieve 200 net new manufacturing jobs by 1991.

STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS

- A. Establish a professionally staffed Mid-Maine Economic Development Organization.
 1. Promote the area;
 2. Coordinate activities of other organizations
 3. Provide one stop office for business
 4. Obtain public and private funding
 5. Assist local communities in pursuing new manufacturers; and
 6. Share the tax revenues between the four municipalities for any new employers attracted to the region.
- B. Continue the improvement of the business climate through government relations and other related efforts.
 1. Assess the needs of the local firms through a visitation process.
 2. Form a regional manufacturing costs stabilization committee that would work with the manufacturers to determine where their costs were getting out of line because of governmental policy, and try and assist them.
 3. Start an incubator for enterprises that wanted to develop manufacturing firms.
- C. Training and education
 1. Personal contact -- visits by people who are qualified to assess the training and employment needs of manufacturers.

2. On-going technical assistance to the smaller firms that may not have all the capacity to address their needs.
 - organize a committee that would refer manufacturers to agencies or individuals who want to help manufacturers.
3. Form a committee to coordinate with local colleges and schools on their course offerings.

Manufac.mid/60

Mid-Maine Economic Development Strategy
RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL

GOAL (broad, 5-year mission)

To strengthen and expand the Mid-Maine retail and commercial sectors.

OBJECTIVES (measurable, 5-year targets to determine if the goal was accomplished)

- A. Establish Mid-Maine as the primary retail and commercial center in the Central Maine area.
- B. Establish Mid-Maine as a center for cultural activities in Central Maine.
 - Utilize Opera House
 - Utilize colleges more
- C. Expand the market area for Mid-Maine trade through improved offerings and other strategies to increase trade.
- D. Revitalize the traditional downtown areas of Mid-Maine and attract high traffic businesses to locate in these areas.
- E. Establish Mid-Maine as a location for quality merchandise at reasonable prices.
- F. Strengthen the retail and commercial sectors by creating new jobs within the Mid-Maine economy.

Strategies and Action Steps

- A. Revitalize the downtown and provide balanced parking.
 - 1. Restrip the parking areas.
 - 2. Educate employers, employees and owners; designate employee parking within the present downtown parking areas.
 - 3. Develop a focal point in each downtown.
 - 4. Improve the cosmetics, such as cleaning up the river banks, etc.
- B. Develop local attractions by utilizing:
 - 1. Radio, television and newspapers
 - 2. A video film for public relations
 - 3. Trade shows
- C. Attract financially sound, high quality businesses by:
 - 1. Volunteer solicitation
 - 2. Technical assistance
 - 3. Establish an Economic Development office.

Mid-Maine Economic Development Strategy

RECREATION

GOAL (broad, 5-year mission)

To develop the Mid-Maine region into a 4 season recreational area.

OBJECTIVES (measurable, 5-year targets to determine if the goal was accomplished)

- A. Establish a state park in the area.
- B. Develop a Kennebec River salmon sports fishery.
- C. Upgrade facilities at the Lafleur Airport.
- D. Identify historical sites within the region.
- E. Construct a communication center.
- F. Resurrect/develop several resort hotels.
- G. Establish a retirement community in the region.
- H. Enhance the region's cultural activities and awareness of these activities.

Strategies and Action Steps

- A. Establish a committee to monitor recreation activities.
- B. Transportation
 1. Enhance traffic into the area through 4-seasons promotion.
 2. Capture Canadian traffic by establishing a State Park.
 3. Enhance the "connection" with Sugarloaf.
- C. Fisheries
 1. Accelerate plans to trap and truck fish above the Augusta Dam.
- D. Promote the area through a major event.

Mid-Maine Economic Development Strategy

AGRICULTURE

GOAL (broad, 5-year mission)

Strengthen and diversify the Mid-Maine agricultural base and the support businesses that supply and service the agricultural economy of the area.

OBJECTIVES (measurable, 5-year targets to determine if the goal was accomplished)

- A. Maintain and strengthen the existing agricultural base of the Mid-Maine area and the surrounding agricultural areas.
- B. Diversify and expand the scope and scale of agricultural areas.
- C. Encourage innovation and conservation practices within the agricultural sector.
- D. Encourage market development within the agricultural sector.

Strategies and Action Steps

- A. Develop a farmers market in the Mid-Maine area.
 - 1. Have the Mid-Maine Chamber organize
 - 2. Obtain a suitable location in a downtown area.
- B. Develop an identity of the Mid-maine area as the center of the dairy industry.
- C. Encourage the retention of existing agricultural land.
- D. Determine the feasibility of establishing a bulk grain distribution system.

Mid-Maine Economic Development Strategy

BUSINESS SUPPORT & FINANCIAL SERVICES

GOAL (broad, 5-year mission)

To maintain and increase employment in the Mid-Maine region by enhancing business service delivery systems.

OBJECTIVES (measurable, 5-year targets to determine if the goal goal was accomplished)

- A. Establish a business service center identity.
- B. Enhance recognition of existing service firms.
- C. Improve the professional development of service deliverers.
- D. Attract additional service skills to compliment existing firms. i.e., accounting firms, development firms.
- E. To provide and increase availability of equity capital and debt financing to fuel establishment and growth of businesses.

Strategies and Action Steps

- A. Establish a business support Committee
- B. Provide for an increase in equity capital availability in the Region.
 1. Establish a revolving loan fund
- C. Establish the area as a business service center
 1. Establish identity
 2. Recognize existing firms
 3. Use exciting educational systems to its fullest extent
 4. Form a committee across professional lines to address common issues.

Mid-Maine Economic Development Strategy
EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE

GOAL (broad, 5-year mission)

To integrate and utilize the total resources of the area's education and health care communities and to best utilize the resources of these communities as assets to the Mid-Maine economic development efforts.

OBJECTIVES (measurable, 5-year targets to determine if the goal was accomplished)

- A. Foster the development of programs which support the area's economic development efforts and are responsive to market needs, particularly in labor force skill development.
- B. Utilize the cultural offerings of area institutions to improve the quality of life in the area to help attract entrepreneurs and management people to the area.
- C. Involve the education and health care communities in all phases of the Mid-Maine economic development effort.
- D. Develop a Mid-Maine based institute with a primary focus on Canadian studies in both economic and cultural affairs.
- E. Utilize the professional contacts existing within the educational and health care communities as leads to economic development prospects for the area.
- F. Support quality public education in Mid-Maine area school systems.

Strategies and Action Steps

- A. Establish an education and training broker.
 - Basically, a person or a place that had information and was "the expert" for education/training needs.
1. Establish an active committee on education and training that would do two things to begin with:
 - inventory existing training,
 - survey the needs, and
 - match the needs and the resources.That committee would ultimately establish that education/training program.
- B. Promote additional health and education related jobs.
 1. Set up a steering committee for establishing additional health care and health related educational services basically, to study and implement the identified opportunities that are there.

- C. Establish an applied research and development center utilizing local educational and health resources to service local businesses as well as state, national and international markets.