

William F. King Jr.

300 Front St.

Bath, Me. 04530

To: Senator Margaret Rotundo. Chair, Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

To: Representative Melanie Sachs, Chair Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

I have been involved with the Maine Development Foundation's Downtown Restoration program known as the Maine Downtown Center while serving on the Advisory Council for 24 years and as its Chair for 6 years. I was one of the original founders bringing to Maine the National Historic Trust's Main Street Model for Downtown Revitalization in Maine. I was also a founder of Main Street Bath and am still a committee volunteer. I have done restoration consulting and advising in some 40 Maine old downtowns with my wife Jayne Palmer and in N.Y., Ct., Mass. and N.H.

I have over half a century of business experience in the wholesale and retail trades in old downtowns in Bath and Camden, Maine, in Burlington, Vt. and Boston, Mass. I know how important it is to have one's business in a vibrant downtown. The MDC Main Street Model brings people downtown with events that are, social, cultural, and economic so people want to be part of their downtown in their shopping and dining and maybe have a business downtown and eventually they might want to live in this very busy environment.

In Bath after 30 plus years our downtown first floor store fronts are all full, our second floor apartments and offices are full, and our third and fourth floors are virtually full of tenants. Then too Bath's immediate residential community to downtown which was sliding to commercial use as is the usual case in old downtowns is going back to residential, because people want to live within walking distance of their vibrant downtown. This is a true sign of successful downtown revitalization.

The alternative to downtown revitalization is to do nothing. Let the merchants leave for the malls or other towns. Then the offices leave followed by the residents. Then the tax base erodes and taxes go up for lack of paying businesses, offices, and residents. The town can't pay its bills for utilities and Maintenance services and the town will become a financial drag to the county and state.

With ever more demand from distressed old Maine downtowns for help with revitalization MDF/MDC needs funding for staff, training sessions, seminars, and conferences. Most recent figures from the National Trust claim that for every \$1 invested in preservation of our old downtowns there is presently a \$20 return on that investment. Where else can the State of Maine get such a return? We hope you can help us to gain funding to better maintain this important attraction that is Maine's old downtowns.

Sincerely yours, William F. King Jr

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207-751-2988