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February 7, 2023

Senator Margaret Rotundo, Chair, Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs
Representative Melanie Sachs, Chair, Committee Appropriations and Financial Affairs

RE: Support of Funding for the Maine Downtown Center of Maine Development Foundation for \$25,000 as part of a \$58,000 appropriation to Maine Development Foundation for the Realize Maine Network

Founded in 1972, Maine Preservation is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving historic places, buildings, downtowns and neighborhoods, strengthening the cultural and economic vitality of Maine communities. We have partnered with the Maine Downtown Center since its inception and I have been a member of its Advisory Council since 2021.

The Maine Downtown Center of Maine Development Foundation is affiliated with the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Since 1980 this program has been the nation's leading downtown revitalization program with more than 2,200 communities enrolled nationwide. In Maine, 26 communities are participating in this program, which continues to show great success. In fact, communities that use this program's historic tagline, "Economic development in the context of historic preservation," have seen successful throughout not just Maine, but the entire country.

In communities like Biddeford, Norway, and Augusta, the tangible results of millions of dollars of investment in rehabilitating downtown buildings clearly shows the impact of this program. But in many other communities like Gardner, Belfast, and Skowhegan, the consistent and focused approach practiced through this program is also producing great results.

The Maine Downtown Center is regularly convening these communities to discuss strategies and working on the ground to support businesses that are helping sustain vitality through this challenging time. Frankly, the \$25,000 requested is not nearly enough to support the critical activities of the Maine Downtown Center, and Maine Preservation is strongly and unreservedly supportive of this appropriation. We hope that you will continue the support of the State of Maine for this critical program.

Sincerely,

Tara Kelly
Executive Director

cc. Clerk Justin Purvis, (State House Room 228, AFA@legislature.maine.gov)