

OUGHT TO PASS
LD 1751 “An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws”

DATE OF HEARING: Thursday, May 8, 2025

Honorable Senator Curry, Honorable Representative Gere, and Distinguished Members of the Housing and Economic Development Committee:

My name is Lynne Seeley, I have been a planner for 40+ years, 35 of those years in Maine. I am Vice President of the Maine Association of Planners. I am testifying in support of LD 1751.

Maine planners know full well the challenges, shortcomings, and strengths of Maine’s Growth Management Law. With that background, Maine planners have put their daily experience into the creation of LD 1751, a bill that addresses needed changes to the Growth Management Law. LD 1751 is written by professional planners, and grounded by our collective, and cumulative, experience in the field. It is a bill of integrity for the Maine comprehensive planning process.

I would like to focus my comments on the inventory requirements for a Comprehensive Plan, an important difference between LD 1751 and LD 1940. I believe the approach to the inventory step, and a connection to State Goals, is a fundamental component of a **complete, meaningful and optimized comprehensive planning process**, and a distinct strength of LD 1751.

Comprehensive planning is about guiding growth, and helping communities thrive and be the best version of themselves. To support this outcome, **a complete inventory is needed, including both local needs conversations AND review of each State Goal as recognized elements contributing to a healthy community**. Each element deserves attention, to determine relevant data to inform the community conversation and understand the complete picture. It is like the approach for your own best health. If you get a physical, the doctor talks with you about how you are feeling AND reviews your blood work to evaluate and diagnosis possible concerns you might not be feeling but might warrant monitoring and/or addressing to stay healthy. How you feel AND blood work data provides the most complete foundation for achieving your best health. It is the same for communities with the comprehensive planning inventory process. Both locally identified needs AND relevant State Goals data are needed to thoroughly diagnose issues and achieve thriving communities.

At the same time, **comprehensive planning involves understanding both the natural environment AND human activity, to guide future growth. For a complete inventory, relevant human data is needed to understand the day-to-day social, housing, economic, services and population conditions experienced in a community, and in turn, to plan for**. Inventory mapping without the accompanying human data is like a picture book without the narrative. The story is missing. The human community experience is needed as part of the inventory to provide a complete community picture.

LD 1751 provides for a revised, complete and relevant inventory task to inform the comprehensive planning process and is linked to State Goals to optimize consistency review. I respectfully request your support for LD 1751.

In closing, I want to recognize LD 1940, the 4 years of work, and the shared intention of updating the Growth Management Law. As a professional planner it has been an engaging “policy moment” process. And although our paths diverged, I am still hopeful that we can bridge the differences to focus on the common ground for updating Maine’s Comprehensive Planning process.

Thank you,
Lynne Seeley