



March 5, 2025

Dear Sen. Chip Curry, Senate Chair and Rep. Traci Gere, House Chair, Committee on Housing and Economic Development and the Sponsor is Representative Tiffany Roberts:

I am writing to express Heart of Biddeford's strong support for "An Act to Restore Matching Funding to the Maine Development Foundation LD 629." The impact of the Maine Development Foundation (MDF) and its Maine Downtown Center (MDC) program are evident across our state, and its work has been instrumental in the revitalization and ongoing success of Biddeford's downtown and mill district.

A striking example of the effectiveness of this network occurred this past year when the Maine Downtown Center conference was held in Biddeford. During lunchtime, 160 conference participants were set to eat at 16 different downtown restaurants. However, just before noon, a local construction incident struck a transformer, cutting power to all of these businesses. Despite this unexpected challenge, the response was immediate and seamless. The Maine Downtown Center, along with hosts from Heart of Biddeford and Saco Main Street, sprang into action, contacting each restaurant to determine who could continue serving with cold foods. Within 80 minutes, all participants were successfully fed, and the conference continued without missing a beat.

While this may seem like a story about one unique incident, it is, in fact, a metaphor for the essential role of the MDF/MDC. It highlights what is possible when a small, dedicated group of individuals—skilled in communication, adaptability, and collaboration—comes together to problem-solve and sustain momentum toward shared goals. These skills are precisely what the Maine Development Foundation cultivates through its programs, and they are more necessary than ever in a time of economic uncertainty, social divisions, and environmental challenges.

Heart of Biddeford's mission is to foster a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable downtown, and the Maine Downtown Center has played a vital role in supporting this mission. The Main Street program provides communities with the tools and training necessary to sustain and grow, and Biddeford's ongoing revitalization is a testament to the power of this work. Since we were awarded the Great American Main Street Award in 2022, our city has become a national model for downtown redevelopment, attracting visitors and inquiries from across the country about how we've achieved this success. The foundation of this transformation can be traced back to the support, guidance, and strategies provided by MDF/MDC.

This past year, Heart of Biddeford applied for a \$20 million EPA grant in collaboration with the University of New England. This rigorous five-month process was a major undertaking, and while we were not among the 4% of applicants selected, the experience built invaluable skills and partnerships that will serve us in future opportunities. The confidence and expertise to take on such a challenge is directly attributed to the training, high-bar and leadership we have received from the Maine Downtown Center.

The work of MDF/MDC goes far beyond one community—it is a statewide force for

economic and community development. It has helped foster entrepreneurship, attract investment, and create thriving downtowns that serve as economic and cultural hubs for our state. Without their guidance, many of Maine's historic downtowns would struggle to define and sustain themselves. Instead, under their leadership, communities are flourishing and sustaining.

We urge you to restore the \$500,000 in funding that was the intent of the legislature when MDF was originally started. This amount is adjusted for inflation from the original amount in 1978. The return on investment for their work is exponential, and their continued support is critical to sustaining Maine's economic vitality. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



Delilah Poupore
Executive Director

Mission Statement:

Powered by the strength of community involvement, Heart of Biddeford fosters a vibrant, inclusive and sustainable downtown for residents, businesses, and visitors.

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