



Main Street Skowhegan
48 Court St.
Skowhegan, ME 04976
207-612-2571
info@mainstreetskowhegan.org
MainStreetSkowhegan.org

May 12, 2021

Committee on State and Local Government
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Subject – Support for LD 1694 - An Act To Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority

Good day Senator Curry, Representative Roberts, and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business:

In my capacity as the executive director of Main Street Skowhegan, a nonprofit organization focused on the revitalization of Skowhegan, I am pleased to support Representative Melanie Sachs and Senate President Troy Jackson in their effort to pass LD 1694 to create the Maine Redevelopment and Land Bank Authority.

As one of Maine's 10 nationally accredited Main Street programs, [Main Street Skowhegan](#) is charged with implementation of the proven Main Street Approach for community revitalization. We are supported in this effort by the National Main Street Center and the National Trust for Historic Preservation and locally by the Maine Downtown Center/Maine Development Foundation. Our mission is to celebrate Skowhegan's rich heritage while achieving our brightest future as a thriving economic, cultural, and recreational community where residents enjoy a high quality of life.

Blighted historic buildings in our commercial district are constant roadblocks to our revitalization efforts. Skowhegan is severely lacking in quality workforce housing, and we have empty second and third floors in our downtown, but property owners won't redevelop these spaces because the investment is far greater than the current return. Skowhegan, like many other historic towns in Maine, needs to find a way to incentivize redevelopment of our historic buildings. Instead of forcing our residents to opt for mediocre housing, or worse, driving them to live elsewhere, we need to figure out a way to offer quality housing in our currently vacant downtown buildings. This is an imperative next step as we work to reverse the 20-year population decline.

In addition to increasing housing options, redevelopment of historic properties downtown will increase the number of move-in-ready retail spaces available for new businesses to open in Skowhegan, which will grow our tax base and diversify our economy. More people living downtown will frequent these businesses, bringing foot traffic to locally owned merchants and vibrancy to Skowhegan's commercial core.

The proposed solution to form a Redevelopment Authority would provide communities such as ours with a clear set of tools to overcome the extraordinary costs, title issues, or other problems that prevent the private market from engaging these properties, and would move them into productive reuse. The land bank provides a strong mechanism for cooperation between the public

and private sectors, helping to open up new market potential in places where neither the private nor public sector can independently overcome these entrenched challenges.

Main Street Skowhegan is prepared to be an advocate of the bill, and if passed, bring our connections and applicable resources to bear in order to catalyze its usage in our community. Blighted buildings and underutilized second and third-floor spaces are impeding Skowhegan's progress. The creation of the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority will help us to move these buildings into productive reuse—the next step toward a rejuvenated Skowhegan with a strong, diverse, and resilient economy and engaged and productive community members.

We urge you to PLEASE pass this bill for the sake of Skowhegan and your rural Maine communities.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KMC', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kristina Cannon, Executive Director