

Ben Frey
Newcastle

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

My name is Ben Frey and I am in full support of LD 1694, An Act to Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority.

I currently serve as the Chair of the Planning Board for the Town of Newcastle, having also served as a Selectman for the Town for the previous nine years. Newcastle has recently implemented a new Comprehensive Plan and a Land Use Code, a process that took the better part of the last five years. Throughout that planning process, many of the values, goals, and visions for the future of Newcastle revolved around how to increase economic activity, grow the tax base, encourage a vibrant mid-coast downtown with traditional mixed-use developments, and address the critical shortage of affordable housing while maintaining the rural character our residents and visitors cherish.

As with many other small towns in Maine, property taxes are high and local funds to support the implementation of our goals are either small or non-existent. We lack the capacity in town staff to accomplish meaningful, impactful change. The proposed legislation will help small towns like Newcastle that have the vision but need tools and resources to bring our plans for development and re-development to fruition.

I urge you to support LD1694.

Respectfully,

Ben Frey