

May 10, 2021

Dear Senator Curry, Representative Roberts and Esteemed Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, development, Economic Advancement, and Business:

My name is Michael Hall and as Executive Director of the Augusta Downtown Alliance, I have seen firsthand the progress that our capital city's downtown has made during my tenure. Having gone from a sleepy street with a vacancy rate of 50% in 2016 to being named one of the Best Places to Live in Maine due to its thriving business district and restaurant scene just five years later, the transition has been nothing short of remarkable.

While I am no doubt pleased with the whirlwind success I've seen, I still recognize that we still have a long ways to go. For although the vacancy rate now stands at just below 20%, there are several large properties around the downtown area that sit vacant due to the cost prohibitive nature of private development. One of these properties in particular is a former textile warehouse which has sat virtually abandoned since 1987. The large 30,000 + square foot complex is the last vestige of Augusta's once enormous Edwards Mill, which dominated the area north of downtown. This relic has undergone several changes of ownerships over the years, but has thus far managed to elude every developer's vision due to its cost prohibitive nature. Because of this, the area immediately surrounding the structure has suffered, and the north end of Downtown has continued to remain stagnant.

In passing LD 1694, I see an opportunity to spur more growth by making it easier to develop more properties like these. For these reasons, I'd like to state my own personal support for this piece of legislation.

Thank you,

Michael Hall