

05/13/2021

In Support of LD 1694, *An Act to
Establish the Maine
Redevelopment Land Bank*

Waterville Community Land Trust

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Dear Senator Chip Curry, Representative Roberts, and respected members of the Joint Standing Committee on Innovation, Development, Economic Advancement, and Business:

Waterville Community Land Trust supports neighborhood preservation and improvement through the development of affordable housing and other community assets.

Waterville Community Land Trust (WCLT) works to improve Waterville's neighborhoods by investing in people and land. Blighted neighborhoods negatively impacted by the cycle of decline can be lifted back to health by the partnerships formed by a community trust.

Over the past few decades Waterville has slipped from a vibrant, healthy community with a proud past to one that has lost manufacturing jobs, has seen many neighborhoods change from predominantly owner-occupied homes to predominantly rental, and has unacceptable crime occurrences in too many regions of the city. Too many homes have been abandoned, are poorly maintained and/or are in foreclosure.

These challenges are difficult to turn around. Only with the efforts of many interested citizens and organizations working cooperatively with city government can new jobs be created, crime be reduced, homes restored, and the city return to having a higher percentage of homeowners. We have acquired several properties in Waterville's South End neighborhood and are focused on rehabilitating this residential area, as well as a green space close to community centers and a vibrant new downtown.

Studies such as the Augusta Housing Authority's 2021 Housing Study authored by Jeff Levine, suggest that *homeowners are 50% less cost-burdened with shelter expenses than those that rent*. Community land trusts,

especially those focused on affordable housing through rehabilitation of single-family dwellings, may benefit from the passing of LD 1694 as a potential way to form beneficial relationships with municipal leaders who also wish to see more housing choice options for their neighborhoods. This would strengthen our position to acquire properties and turn them over to low-income families with minimal investment, assuring our value to the community.

Sincerely,

Robyn Stanicki