

Executive Summary

The Council's first report to Governor John Baldacci, dated December 4, 2007, has a purposeful title: *People, Place, and Prosperity*. These four words convey what the Council found in its research and observations: that a more *prosperous* Maine is directly and inextricably tied to the exceptional qualities of this *place*, our state, and to our ability in a competitive world to attract and keep *people*.

Here is why. Maine's traditional economy is forever changed. In years past, Maine inhabited a powerful economic niche tied to resource extraction and the use of our natural resources as commodities and inputs for manufacturing.

Maine's economy today focuses more on services, both lower- and higher-paying. Fast-food chains offer service jobs, and so do medical and professional services, boat and motor vehicle repair, media services, and computer programming and design. Manufacturing today requires more sophisticated technologies and greater worker skills, whether in the production of lumber, paper, boats, or bio-medicines.

Maine's principal advantage in today's global competition is our *Quality of Place*. We have majestic mountains, unbroken forests, open fields, wild rivers, pristine lakes, a widely-celebrated coast, picturesque downtowns, lively arts and culture, and authentic historic buildings. We must learn to think of them as the basic infrastructure of Maine's future prosperity.

We are no longer a place set largely apart from the forces shaping the national and global economies. Maine today is engaged in a world-wide competition for people — people to create and sustain prosperity in the 21st Century. The Council has found that Maine's *chief* economic asset in this competition is our *Quality of Place*.

To understand what this means, think of your home in Maine. You may like your home because it's in a historic neighborhood near cultural amenities, or because it's in a quaint town surrounded by open space and recreational opportunities. You may like your home because you enjoy farming or gardening, because you love being by the coast or near a lake, or because you are inspired by your scenic views or your relationships with community members.

Our homes in Maine represent many values to us, just as do our historic downtowns and Maine landscapes of all kinds. But at times in our lives, a home's primary value becomes its economic one: we want to move and need to sell. How do we market our home? We fix it up, paint it up, polish it up, to show it in its best light. We attract prospective buyers by touting our home's architecture; its neighborhood or town location; its access to cultural, recreational, or community amenities; its views of sunsets, mountains, or open fields. We need to distinguish our home as of better quality than others we're competing with for a sale.

That's what we need to do for Maine's future prosperity. We must attract new "buyers" — visitors, retirees, businesses, and skilled workers — to Maine. Our distinctive, competitive advantage in a world that has become one giant economic neighborhood is Maine's spectacular, place-based, natural and built assets.

So, we must look to our historic downtowns, cultural amenities, forests, fields, mountains, lakes, rivers, and coast — and access to them — as resources we must husband and market to keep and attract business, skilled workers, visitors, and retirees. To market these place-based assets effectively, we must ensure investment in their well-being and improvement. We must learn to think of them as the basic infrastructure of Maine’s sustainable prosperity — much as our highways and bridges are among today’s basic infrastructure, requiring continuing maintenance and investment.

This, then, is the Council’s goal, to which its recommendations are directed: to protect and strengthen our outstanding Quality of Place. To do so, we propose to add to our traditional approaches to creating prosperity for Maine people a new and needed development tool — a Quality of Place Investment Strategy (QPIS).

The Council proposes to add to our traditional approaches to creating economic prosperity a new and needed approach — a Quality of Place Investment Strategy.

To this end, the Council offers ten recommendations that build directly upon its earlier report:

A. Maine Quality of Place Investment Strategy: Using Quality of Place to Drive Job Growth

1. For sustainable prosperity, the State must develop and implement a Maine Quality of Place Investment Strategy (QPIS) that will protect, strengthen, and build economic opportunity upon Maine’s Quality of Place assets, both natural and built.

B. Workforce Development and Quality of Place

2. The University of Maine System (UMS) is strongly urged to designate hospitality and leisure as “a critical discipline” within the new *UMS Agenda for Action*, and to aggressively pursue tourism workforce and product development, education, research, and outreach.
3. The UMS Center for Tourism Research and Outreach (CenTRO) is well-conceived and positioned to lead the effort to develop a statewide strategy for tourism workforce and product development, by catalyzing state-wide dialogue.
4. The Maine Community College System is urged to add hospitality and leisure to the list of areas in which it will focus workforce education and training under its new *Rural Initiative*.
5. The Maine tourism industry, itself, is strongly encouraged to assume a leadership role in strengthening and resourcing Maine’s tourism workforce and product development strategy.
6. The University of Maine System is urged, as well, to designate community planning and architectural design as a “critical discipline” within the *UMS Agenda for Action* and, to develop related education, research, and outreach capacity.

7. The Maine Community College System should add to its existing offerings training in historic preservation, high-quality building techniques, and traditional and contemporary crafts art.
8. Greater Portland Landmarks (through its Center for Architecture and Preservation), the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, and Maine Preservation should collaborate to develop historic and neighborhood preservation training for local planning boards and state agency staff working with the built environment.

C. Private Landowners and Public Access

9. The State is urged to support and strengthen its Maine Landowner Relations Program (MLRP) to ensure continuing public access to private land.

D. Community and Downtown Vitality

10. The Governor and Legislature are urged to adopt a clear, unequivocal policy statement in support of Maine community and downtown revitalization.

With these recommendations, together with those from its first report, the Council offers a way to realize the full potential of Maine's Quality of Place as a driver of economic opportunity and sustainable prosperity for all Maine people. If they are acted upon, the purposes for which this Council was created will be achieved: that is, Maine's outstanding Quality of Place will be more secure for ourselves, for future generations, and for all who benefit from it; and its potential to generate significant economic opportunities for Maine people will be realized.