Greater Portland and the Lakes Region: Maine’s Economic Engine


2017 Update

Adopted May 17, 2017
Our Regional Vision

The Greater Portland and Sebago Lakes region is the *best place* in New England to live, work, and play. The only way to have a sustainable future for our children and to preserve the Maine way of life is to focus on working TOGETHER to grow good quality jobs by helping new businesses start and existing businesses grow and expand. We are committed to driving entrepreneurship, investment, and innovation through:

- Access to capital
- High quality workforce
- Predictable regulatory environment

The Metropolitan Statistical Area for Greater Portland, Maine’s Economic Engine, accounts for 49% of the State’s Gross Domestic Product
Our Regional Goals

"To really move the economy forward as a region, we must set goals that are ambitious, measurable, and realistic."

Ed Suslovic, former Portland City Councilor

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<tr>
<th>Standard Indicators (2010-2016)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attract 10,000</strong> people to sustain region's historic population growth rate</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Region has gained 9,853 people for a growth rate of 4%</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase the pool of available workers by 1%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Labor force has increased by 2%</em></td>
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<td><strong>Increase rate of participation in the labor force by 1%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Labor force participation rate has decreased 1%</em></td>
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<td><strong>Create 8,000</strong> new jobs</td>
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<td><em>Region has gained 10,767 jobs for a growth rate of 7%</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase regional Gross Domestic Product by 7%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Gross Domestic Product has increased by 12%</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase average wage per job to $52,000</strong></td>
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<td><em>Average wage has increased 13% to $48,828</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase the region's total wages by 27%</strong></td>
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<td><em>Region's wages have increased by 21%</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase per capita income by 17%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Per capita income has increased by 17%</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase attainment of Bachelor's Degrees to 45% of the adult population</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>43% of adults hold a Bachelor's Degree or higher, up 3%</em></td>
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<td><strong>Increase access to high speed Internet to 100% coverage</strong></td>
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<th>Region Indicators (2010-2016)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attract 5,000+</strong> people aged 25-44 from outside the region</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Number of adults aged 25-44 has decreased by less than 1%</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Triple</strong> the number of adults with an Associate's Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Number of adults with an Associate's Degree and no higher remains a steady 9%</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decrease the region's commercial vacancy rate to 7.5%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Region's commercial vacancy rate has fallen 5% points to 7.87%</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase annual number of new business starts by 1,000</strong></td>
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<td><em>Number of net new businesses is 507</em></td>
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<td><strong>Reduce the region's dependence on foreign oil</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Household dependence on oil as a primary heating source has decreased 9% to 61%</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase access of small businesses to the right resources at the right time</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Volume of SBA loan guarantees has decreased 49% to $33 million</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decrease the rent-to-income ratio to the national average</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Rent-to-income ratio has increased to 36%, which is 10% above the national average</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase transit ridership by 1 million</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Transit ridership has increased by 932,440 riders, or 19%</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decrease the time it takes to permit a commercial project</strong></td>
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The robust and diverse economy of Greater Portland serves as Maine’s economic engine, accounting for over one third of the state’s economy. But growth has leveled as Greater Portland continues to transition from an old growth economy grounded in traditional manufacturing to a new economy defined by emerging technologies. From 2000 to 2010, we lost over 4,000 manufacturing jobs. While the region has remained vibrant, we have fallen behind other regions around the country in terms of growth. But the tide is slowly changing. For the first time in three decades, the number of manufacturing jobs has increased—by 1,005.

We must focus on existing businesses to drive our economic growth. Together, we can build a sustainable economy where young and old can earn a livable wage, enjoy a high quality of life, benefit from a quality education and training system, start a business, and raise a family.

**Our Challenges**

- We have the highest median age in the nation
- We are the least diverse state in the nation
- We are the most oil-dependent state in the nation
- Our university system is not graduating students in science, technology, and engineering fields sufficient to meet the needs of our knowledge-based economy
- Our region is divided by an urban versus rural dichotomy that creates silos and inefficiencies
- Our businesses find it increasingly difficult to recruit qualified applicants and to expand

*“...Maine’s economic future is tied to the economic performance of its most dominant region, Portland. This means that ensuring the region’s well-being is not only in the City’s and region’s best interest but also the entire state’s interest.”* Portland Regional Chamber, *Looking Out for Portland and the Region*

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**Sense of Urgency**

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*Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Maine Department of Labor*

*During the 1990’s, the region attracted 23,000 new jobs and 22,000 new residents. During the 2000’s, we attracted just 4,000 new jobs and 16,000 new residents. During the 2010’s, new household formation and new housing production has not kept pace with population and job growth.*
>30%

The region’s most serious housing problem is cost burden: **29% of homeowners and 52% of renters** pay more than 30% of their income for housing.

38%

By 2030, seniors age 55 and over will comprise 38% of the region’s population, compared to 28% in 2010.

$100,000

While the average salary in the biotechnology sector is $100,000, **fewer than 500 students per year** graduate from the University of Southern Maine with a degree in the physical or life sciences.

$1,360,000,000

Transportation is responsible for almost half of the **$1.36 billion** spent on energy in Cumberland County.

91.6%

While the **percentage of minorities has doubled since 2000**, non-Hispanic Whites account for over 90% of Cumberland County’s population.

“It is clear we still have work to do... we are lagging in pivotal areas including key industries, a higher tax burden and housing affordability.” Michael Bourque, Vice-Chair, Portland Regional Chamber
On May 28, 2014, the White House designated Greater Portland, as one of the nation’s 12 Manufacturing Communities under the Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership (IMCP) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Commerce. On September 27, 2016, Greater Portland was redesignated.

Goals

- Scale up home enterprises to food manufacturing operations
- Find markets for raw food that is wasted
- Add value to raw food now shipped out of state for processing
- Increase global markets for Maine food
- Replace imported manufacturing inputs with Maine product
- Replace imports by households, restaurants and institutions with local food

Potential Impact

2,500 Jobs
$400 million

Partners

Axiom Technologies
City of Portland
Coastal Counties Workforce Inc.
Coastal Enterprises Inc.
Greater Portland Council of Governments
Gulf of Maine Research Institute
Jordan’s Farm
Maine Community Foundation
Maine Food Strategy
Maine International Trade Center
Maine Office, U.S. Export Assistance Center
Maine Port Authority
Maine Sustainable Agricultural Society
Mobilize Maine
Northern Girl
Southern Maine Community College
University of Southern Maine
Woodard & Curran

GPCOG Activities for 2014-2017

- Hosted quarterly meetings of the IMCP Consortium and participated in weekly conference calls with the 24 IMCP regions.
- Developed an inventory of over 200 food enterprises in Greater Portland.
- Hosted the Portland Food Launch and Festival, which attracted 1,200 people in an epic one-day celebration filled with educational programming, art, food, and music.
- Developed strategic partnerships with dozens of service providers and industry associations in Maine and New England.
- Assisted 100+ food enterprises through technical assistance, workshops, and services.
- Produced Scaling Local, a 70-minute documentary at https://youtu.be/nkJhmGtN2A premiered at the Phoenix Fare, a daylong celebration of food in East Bayside.
- Attracted $48 million in State, Federal, and private resources to implement the IMCP’s catalyst projects.
- Secured a $25,000 USDA grant to conduct a yearlong study on the institutional market for local foods, which culminated in a food summit attended by over 100 people.
- Secured $200,000 in USDA grants to provide education, outreach and technical assistance to help agricultural producers and rural small businesses to implement renewable energy systems.
- Secured $10,000 to facilitate More Maine Meat, a partnership with the Maine Society for Sustainable Agriculture to determine the feasibility of siting a new processing facility.
- Helped secure full funding for catalyst projects, including Fork Food Lab, a $1.6 million commercial kitchen incubator in Portland, and QC2, a $500,000 laboratory at USM to support quality assurance for Maine’s microbreweries.
- Secured a $200,000 EPA Brownfields grant with the City of Portland to develop an area-wide plan for East Bayside, Portland’s hotbed for food production.
- Secured $400,000 in new Brownfields funds to assess sites for food-related reuses.
- Delivered IMCP presentations at national conferences, including three IMCP Summits, National EDA conference, New Partners for Smart Growth conference, Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association’s conference, and the NADO Research Foundation’s food summit in Louisville.

Food Manufacturing in Portland area

- Beverages 26%
- Dairy 25%
- Seafood 17%
- Bakeries 25%
- Dessert 6%
- Other 1%

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**ECOSYSTEM ELEMENT**  Workforce Development

**GOAL**  Develop complete career pathways in Southern Maine for Culinary Arts, Food Science and Mechanical Engineering.

**METRICS**  STEM graduation from the University of Southern Maine (USM).

**PROGRESS**  Since the IMCP designation in 2014, the number of STEM graduates at USM has increased 16%.

Source: USM Office of Institutional Advancement

**ECOSYSTEM ELEMENT**  Supply Chain

**GOAL**  Replace $100 million in food imports by households, manufacturers, restaurants, and institutions with local.

**METRICS**  Market value of Maine farm and fish products.

**PROGRESS**  Since the IMCP designation in 2014, market value of Maine fisheries has increased $180 million, from $541 million to $721 million.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture; Maine Department of Marine Re-

**ECOSYSTEM ELEMENT**  Infrastructure

**GOAL**  Increase global markets for Maine food by 25%.

**METRICS**  Dollar value of Maine food exports.

**PROGRESS**  Since the IMCP designation in 2014, the value of Maine food exports increased 72% from $401 million to $691 million.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**ECOSYSTEM ELEMENT**  Trade & Investment

**GOAL**  Scale up 50 home enterprises to food manufacturing operations.

**METRICS**  Jobs in food manufacturing.

**PROGRESS**  Since the IMCP designation in 2014, food manufacturing employment in the Portland area increased 11% from 1,713 to 1,897.

Source: Maine Department of Labor

**ECOSYSTEM ELEMENT**  Capital Access

**GOAL**  Add value to 10% of raw food that is now shipped out of state for processing.

**METRICS**  Investment in food manufacturing operations.

**PROGRESS**  Since the IMCP designation in 2014, average SBA loan volume to food manufacturers has increased 68%.

Source: www.usaspending.gov
Six Drivers of Growth and Prosperity

- Asset-based Cluster Development
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Education and Workforce Development
- Access to Capital
- Infrastructure and Environment
- Leadership

While it may seem that we are powerless to combat these global forces, Maine has implemented dozens of promising initiatives. In 2006, the Maine Development Foundation interviewed over 100 leaders to identify Maine’s most successful economic development policies and programs. In examining a 30-year period spanning six administrations, they found that we do not lack for great ideas – the single silver bullet that will solve all of our problems. But these priorities changed every four to eight years, leading to failures of planning and execution. Through Mobilize Maine, the seven Economic Development Districts should instead seek the silver buckshot – a broad agenda implemented consistently across administrations.

The rise and fall of our region’s economy tracks closely with the national economic cycle. For example, when the national economic recession hit in 2008, Greater Portland’s job growth plunged −3.4%, paralleling the U.S. rate of −4.5%.

"Because economic development efforts have been primarily led by government without the full and sustained engagement of the private sector in guiding and implementing economic development policy, priorities have tended to change every 4-8 years, initiatives have not always transcended Administrations, the focus has been more on equity rather than cost effectiveness (ROI), and we have been less nimble in responding to economic change.”

Maine Development Foundation, 2007

Implementation

Through Mobilize Maine, we have identified the six drivers of economic development that will be implemented across time in each of the state’s seven economic development districts.

- Asset-based Cluster Development
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Education and Workforce Development
- Access to Capital
- Infrastructure and Environment
- Leadership
Unlike the old economy, where machines powered growth, in the new economy it is people and intellectual creativity. In 2001, Maine identified seven technology clusters as targets for innovation and investment. Four have been selected as areas of focus: agriculture & fisheries, tourism, precision manufacturing, and the knowledge-based industries of biotechnology, environmental technology, and information technology. According to the Center for Business & Economic Research, health care, which employs over 33,180 people, is the region’s most robust cluster, demonstrating the highest specialization and the greatest 10-year job growth.

### Cluster Analysis of Greater Portland

An economic cluster can be defined as a group of businesses in a related industry sector that benefit from geographic proximity. **Clusters are defined not by what products are made, but the knowledge and skills that reside or are developed within a region.** Important components of each cluster include research and development, production and distribution, entrepreneurship, and knowledge networks. Focusing on any one component can create economic opportunity. For example, we are only growing enough food in Cumberland County to meet 10% of the annual $934 million in demand generated by residents and visitors.

**Economic Driver #1: Asset-Based Cluster Development**

- Align our CEDS Planning efforts around three industry clusters: Food, Energy, and Freight.
- Facilitate the Greater Portland Sustainable Food Production Cluster, one of the nation’s 24 Manufacturing Communities under EDA’s IMCP initiative.
- Link capacity-building efforts with other state and national initiatives, such as Focus Maine, Envision Maine, Maine Food Strategy, and the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation.

“While the specialization (relative concentration indicating competitive advantage) of related industries within a region is a necessary condition for clusters to exist, clusters are defined by the interconnections and network relationships between industry firms and institutions that lead to innovative activity.”

Ryan Wallace, Project Director, Center for Business & Economic Research, University of Southern Maine

33,946

$934 million
Entrepreneurship is a key source of innovation in our economy. One quarter of the region’s labor force is working for themselves or for a micro-enterprise with less than five employees. In any given year, 500 to 1,000 businesses startup operations. Over the last decade, this churn has added an average of 290 net new businesses to the economy each year.

“People thought that the way to grow entrepreneurship and innovation is only through (access to) capital, but what we've learned is it's more than just capital. That effort can be accelerated by creating networks of people who know that they're not the only person in their community doing it. Having a network to encourage you, help you get the resources, helping you get back up if you fail is a very important part of a startup-and-create community.”
Jess Knox, Founder, Maine Start-Up and Create Week

Fresh out of college, young people under 30 are the most mobile of age groups – and the most likely to take risks. These risks can result in new start-ups that mature to small businesses employing dozens of workers. On average, however, Greater Portland loses 141 young people aged 25-44 per year. Still, talented people are moving here, moving back (the "boomerangers") or striking out on their own with ideas that can compete on a national or global basis. The businesses could be built anywhere, but people want to do it in Maine: personal wind turbines, augmented reality apps, artisanal food and beverages, applied composites, diagnostic medical devices, and much more.

Implementation

- Host second Portland Food Launch, which is focused on helping food entrepreneurship and small business scale to the next level.
- Recruit entrepreneurs to participate in such training programs as Scale-Up and Top Gun.
- Work with New England Ocean Cluster House to develop the nation’s first ocean-based commercialization center.
About half of adults have not completed any college. Of these, 19% take college courses but drop out without completing a degree. Income rises with education. According to the Census Bureau, today’s high school graduate can expect to earn an average of $1.2 million dollars over their lifetime, while those with a Bachelor’s degree, $2.1 million. In Cumberland County, 43% of adults age 25 and over hold at least a Bachelor’s degree or higher. Short-term training programs, however, can assist those without a degree become more competitive in the marketplace.

“The evidence is emerging that like a Maine spring, USM is slowly but beautifully surviving a dark Maine winter and it is going to get brighter and brighter.” He added, “We’re on the road to fiscal sustainability, from which there’s no turning back. We enjoy strong community support. And enrollment will be our #1 priority – we are heading in a new direction.”

Dr. Glenn Cummings, President, University of Southern Maine

The region faces a demographic winter. By 2018, the State estimates that Maine’s population will peak and thereafter decline as the Baby Boom generation transitions from the workforce to retirement without a sufficient generation of younger workers to support them. One source of population growth is foreign in-migration. But those who do come face long waits for courses in English as a second language. Many are unable to work in their chosen career because they lack American credentials.

Maine manufacturers typically recruit scientists and engineers from out of state for careers that offer high wages. The average job in the Biotechnology sector pays over $100,000 per year. On average, however, only 400 students a year graduate from the University of Southern Maine with a Bachelor’s degree in the physical or life sciences.

Implementation

- Work with Coastal Counties Workforce Inc. to develop career pathways in targeted industry clusters.
- Work with Southern Maine Community College to develop short-term training programs that result in jobs for the underemployed, veterans, and immigrants.
- Work with the University of Southern Maine to implement the institution’s vision for a Metropolitan University.
We are a region and state built on small business. According to the Small Business Administration (SBA) which guarantees an average of $39 million in loans per year in Cumberland County. **97.1% of all Maine businesses employ less than 500 people.** Indeed, 88% employ fewer than 20 people.

While the Small Business Administration lends an average of $39 million per year in Cumberland County, the most popular ways to finance small business are family and friends and traditional bank financing. The greatest challenge is to connect businesses to the whole array of resources available to them, but that are not necessarily well known. Many economic development practitioners believe that programs designed for specific purposes are often forgotten or under utilized because it is too difficult to keep up with the number of programs and the requirements of all of those resources. Even so, not every business is ready for financing and even fewer for alternative types of financing such as venture capital. **We believe there are hundreds of federal, state and local resources available to businesses in the region.** Many resources beyond capital can help an entrepreneur move their idea forward. From prototype development to low-cost laboratory space, we need a way to connect people as quickly and efficiently as possible to the right resource at the right time.

**Implementation**

- Expand GPCOG’s Revolving Loan Fund to support businesses in targeted industry clusters.
- Implement a comprehensive Brownfields program for the assessment, clean-up, and redevelopment of industrial, commercial, and institutional properties.
- Provide technical assistance to help communities and businesses access State and Federal programs, such as EDA, Efficiency Maine, and the Cumberland County CDBG program.
Infrastructure supports communities, businesses, families, and workers, encompassing every aspect of where we live, work and play, including water, sewer, gas, electric, and broadband as well as roads, airports, interstates, ports, and rail lines. Much of this infrastructure is old and expensive to maintain. In addition, residents and visitors demand opportunities to get around via public transit. Since 2000, ridership has increased by 19%, a reflection of both new routes, such as the Downeaster to Boston or the Lakes Region bus, and improved services, such as an increase in frequency and real-time transit info.

The region faces a variety of infrastructure challenges:

- Aging water, gas, and sewer lines in Portland, South Portland, and Westbrook.
- Lack of water, sewer, and gas infrastructure outside of urban areas, particularly the Sebago Lakes Region.
- Lack of safe, decent and affordable multi-family housing for the region’s workforce, which on average, consumes 36% of household income.
- High cost of home ownership, particularly along the coast, that is four to ten times the average salary.
- Abundance of vacant, abandoned or idle Brownfields sites in villages and downtowns.
- High cost to preserve, renovate, and reuse historic buildings.
- Lack of high speed internet and cellular phone service in parts of the Sebago Lakes region.
- Lack of public transit outside of urban areas.
- Maintaining the region’s bridges and collector road systems.
- Heavy dependence on foreign oil as a home heating fuel.

Implementation

- Support the implementation priorities of Destination Tomorrow, the long range transportation plan for the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS).
- Serve as the transit planning agency for Greater Portland, including coordination of the PACTS Transit Committee.
- Complete development of the Southern Maine Regional Transit Development Plan.
- Coordinate Maine Clean Communities, a U.S. Department of Energy program that promotes the use of clean fuels and electric vehicles.
- Integrate the strategies adopted by Sustain Southern Maine, a HUD Sustainable Communities partnership, into GPCOG’s ongoing projects and programs.
- Coordinate the efforts of the Energy Action Team to champion education and energy-related projects.

Since 2013 the Icelandic steamship company Eimskip established its single U.S. port of call in Portland, Maine connecting Maine directly, for the first time in decades, to Scandinavia, Northern Europe, Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland. This shift brought Maine as close to these countries, from a freight cost perspective, as it is to the mid-Atlantic.

Patrick Arnold, Director of Operations and Business Development for the Maine Port Authority
Economic Driver #6: Leadership

Since 1969, the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) has provided responsive service and leadership to our member communities, who own and govern the organization. With a professional staff of 19, GPCOG offers a range of programs and services, including land use planning and ordinance review, transportation planning, economic and community development, energy planning, GIS/mapping, and cooperative purchasing. We serve as one of the leading advocates for regional coordination and cooperation.

Our municipal dues of $1 per capita leverage state and federal grants to achieve the goals outlined in this document. Our level of involvement in the plan's strategies can be characterized by the following continuum:

**Administrator:** We exercise complete autonomy to develop and administer a program, project or service consistent with our mission and goals.

**Manager:** We exercise our discretion to develop and administer a program, project or service consistent with our mission and goals, usually through a state or federal contract.

**Facilitator:** We pursue the development of a program, project or service consistent with our mission and goals.

**Consultant:** We implement a scope of work for a study or service determined by a client.

**Support:** We provide technical assistance to support a member or partner, such as research, mapping, facilitation, planning, or grant writing.

Implementation

- Launch five-year update of the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).
- Ensure that resilience is incorporated into CEDS five-year update.
- Implement GPCOG’s new organizational strategic plan.
- Provide staff support to GPCOG’s regional corridor coalitions, including the Route 113 Corridor Coalition and the Metro Regional Coalition.
- Administer GPCOG’s cooperative purchasing program for municipalities and school districts.
- Host annual GPCOG Summit with educational workshops on issues of regional importance.
High Impact Projects for Regional Growth

Achieving economic growth through high impact projects demands leadership and cooperation from both the public and private sectors. The projects listed below need champions and partners.

1. Increase educational attainment in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM)
   - Promote STEAM Enrollment at the region’s colleges and universities
   - Create short-term training opportunities for careers in demand, including certificates & 2+2 programs
   - Establish a Welcome Center in Portland for recent immigrants
   - Support the University of Southern Maine’s vision to become a Metropolitan University

2. Invest in infrastructure in economically distressed areas
   - Develop and/or increase wastewater treatment capacity in North Windham and downtown Bridgton
   - Sustain regional capacity to redevelop Brownfields sites for open space, housing, and job creation
   - Promote preservation, renovation and adaptive re-use of historic building stock
   - Increase access to high speed Internet in both urban and rural areas

3. Increase access of Maine products to global markets
   - Build rail connection to International Marine Terminal
   - Increase cold storage capacity on the waterfront for farms and fisheries
   - Restore freight service on the Mountain Division rail line
   - Attract funds to dredge Portland Harbor
   - Develop an international brand for Maine products and help Maine businesses become export ready

4. Increase transit access to the Portland peninsula
   - Creation of the region’s first transit plan with short-term and long-term capital and corridor priorities
   - Implement express transit service connecting bus, rail, ferry, and air terminals
   - Create a single transit authority for the Greater Portland
   - Extend transit service to Portland North and the Lakes region
   - Expand the Portland Transportation Center at Thompson’s Point

5. Build an entrepreneurial ecosystem that facilitates creativity and innovation
   - Build affordable live/work space
   - Create hubs and incubators that support start-up and scale-up of small manufacturers
   - Offer innovative access to capital programs to bring products and services to market
   - Develop Ocean Cluster House, the nation’s first ocean-based commercialization center
   - Demonstrate costs savings of renewable energy, including solar, geothermal, wind, & biomass

6. Build convention center capacity in Portland and the Lakes region
   - Identify suitable locations on Portland peninsula (5,000+) and the Lakes region (1,000+)
   - Execute regional financing plan
   - Pursue target convention markets
   - Promote tourism in the shoulder seasons
Mobilize Maine

In 2011, the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) was designated by the Economic Development Administration, a division of the United States Department of Commerce, as an Economic Development District serving 26 communities in Cumberland County. The region’s 266,509 people represent 20% of Maine’s population and its 166,261 jobs represent 28% of its employment. As an Economic Development District, one of our core responsibilities is the creation of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the GPCOG region. To fulfill that mission, GPCOG, along with each of the state’s seven economic development districts, is implementing Mobilize Maine, a grassroots economic strategy that focuses on leveraging unique assets within each region for economic growth and quality of place. The GPCOG Executive Committee has embraced Mobilize Maine, and its asset-based economic development strategy as the organizational structure to develop and oversee the CEDS Action Plan. Our economic development efforts are built around the leveraging of existing funding streams and resources together with our staff expertise in energy, transportation, sustainability planning and the IMCP designation.

Organizational Structure for GPCOG–Economic Development District

GPCOG Executive Committee

Staff
Kristina Egan, GPCOG Executive Director
Chris Hall, GPCOG Director of Regional Initiatives
Caroline Paras, GPCOG Economic and Community Planner
Jennifer Puser Brennan, GPCOG Energy Projects Manager
Vin DiCara, GPCOG Loan Officer
Ann Thompson, GPCOG Finance Director
Maddy Adams, GPCOG Office Manager

Jerre Bryant, Westbrook, PRESIDENT
Belinda Ray, Portland, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT
Nat Tupper, Yarmouth, SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT
Mary Fernandes, Casco
Peter Joseph, Freeport

Marla Stelk, Gorham
Matthew Sturgis, Cape Elizabeth
Anthony Plante, Windham
Patti Smith, South Portland
Stephen Gorden, Cumberland County