



Weatherization is our point of entry for reducing climate change. I found myself saying this in a recent conversation about the work GrowSmart Maine is doing in the coming year, and it seems an appropriate starting point to welcome you to this month's newsletter, our fifth since the COVID-19 pandemic brought our collective world to, well, if not a hard stop, to a brain-scrambling and heart-pounding shift.

Smart growth is fundamentally about land use. ***Transportation. Housing. Conservation. Climate Change.*** But to be relevant, our work must begin with people. ***Community. Trust. Equity. Local Leadership.*** So for ten years now, I have centered our work at the intersection of these issues and values. We invite people to better know their neighbors through community gatherings where they share why we choose to live in this place. We facilitate expert presentations on smart growth topics. We connect Mainers with relevant resources to help them manage change and invite the type and scale of growth that supports their vision of the future for their communities.

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Since mid-March, while GrowSmart staff and board members have been navigating the uncertain waters in our personal lives, it's been a complex few months for the organization as well. Our mission is about the ***long term*** and our programming is based on ***engaging with people***. Here we are in a time where Mainers are staring down immediate needs and we aren't able to gather. So GrowSmart is doing what many businesses and nonprofits are doing; evaluating

and updating internal systems to strengthen and sustain the organization so that our work to achieve the mission can continue.

Though it may seem we've gone quiet these last few months, the opposite is true. Staff and board together are working more intensely than ever!

I had begun framing our work plan and budget for the coming fiscal year to **broaden our base of financial support** and more deliberately weave together the elements of our programming when I suddenly found myself applying for PPP funds as our spring appeal was canceled and we offered free membership in support of Maine municipalities. Jodi conferred with partners to **reconfigure our energy efficiency workshops** first to create their virtual equivalents and then again to reflect the reality that the in-home technical assistance these workshops are designed to promote won't be safe for many months.

We shared in leading **Yes on One** advocacy to support the broadband bond. With an astonishing **75% affirmative vote**, Mainers listened and responded; demonstrating a keen understanding that in the painful irony of our current pandemic reality, fast, reliable internet IS essential infrastructure and worthy of strategic investment of public dollars to match other sources of funding.

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We will again offer **weatherization workshops** because this is where most Mainers are ready to take on climate change. It is an important first step that is perhaps one step away from land use. But we leverage our position as a trusted convener to bring about tangible action with immediate positive climate impacts by reducing the use of energy to heat existing buildings while perhaps building support for other climate change work as well.

Soon, we'll offer workshops that explore the connections between a community's housing stock and its plans for economic and community development and offer prioritized strategies to move forward. Those who staff

and serve on planning boards and select boards and who write municipal comprehensive plans know what they want for their towns. They know why they choose to live in their hometowns. And we can offer guidance on how to ensure the **housing choices** available for current and potential residents will support those plans and keep town attributes that are most valued.

We are reframing our **Summit** to balance the human need for connections with the safety concerns of this pandemic. We are creating a virtually-connected event this fall, from our host site in Biddeford with several, maybe even a half-dozen satellite locations across the state and perhaps New England. Each will have no more than 50 attendees, with social distancing in place. The event explores the **power of home rule and the potential for regional approaches**. I'm amazed at how much MORE relevant this theme is now.

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In addition, we have been ramping up our newest program, the **Maine Alliance for Smart Growth**. New steering committee members bring experience from the private sector, government, and nonprofit partners. And we are broadening membership in the Alliance to **include all GrowSmart members**; individual, business, government and nonprofit. We are launching our **Smartinis** events designed as social get-togethers featuring a touch of smart growth. On **August 25th** (rain date 26th) meet us at Waterfront Park in our office hometown of downtown Augusta for a Water Street Smart Growth Scavenger Hunt and enjoy a signature smartini or smoctini in an outdoor setting with social interactions from a safe distance. (Limited to 50 people, \$10 in advance, \$12 day of).

Please check out our new **website**, which is sleeker than the earlier version, focused on the most recent of our work and resources. There is a **calendar** showing internal and outward-facing events, both in-person and (mostly) virtual.

We don't know what the future holds. But then, we never have. Though most of us crave the illusion of control, we now find ourselves sharing this unsolicited opportunity to instead ***find our sea legs so we can more easily respond to the unexpected*** while keeping our sights on the horizon. ***GrowSmart Maine is here to help navigate the course.***

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GrowSmart Maine is a **member-powered** statewide nonprofit organization with the mission to build lasting prosperity without sacrificing the quality of life that defines Maine.

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