



March 2021

**“Maine is a joy in the summer. But the soul of Maine is most apparent in the winter.”**

- Paul Theroux, travel writer

With the wind roaring Maine full force into March this week, our state’s soul is still readily apparent, but I do believe Spring is on its way. I also accept that we are currently in 'False Spring', in which we still feel the creaking cold of winter, but begin to look towards the warmer joys of summer, seek the longer hours of sunlight, and wonder if Maine Maple Sunday might happen in some form this year. There is more winter to enjoy and (or endure, depending on your disposition) but the days are indeed extending their eager light with the sun stronger in the sky.

Meanwhile, GrowSmart Maine marches forward with our work:

**GrowSmart is fulling engaged as the Maine  
Legislature is “zooming” along with their  
committee work.**

Though the process is different in many ways, most visible are the lack of in-person committee meetings and morning sessions of the House and Senate, legislative work is underway. Bills were submitted by the December deadline

and batches are printed and become public each day. Public hearings and work sessions are “zooming” along, and soon the House and Senate will convene to consider bills released by the committee. In addition, the Governor’s biennial budget is being considered by the Committee on Appropriation and Financial Affairs.

In early January, GrowSmart Maine reviewed all 1600+ bill titles with an eye towards identifying those for which our engagement will provide a unique perspective and a critical voice in determining the outcome. Our focus areas this year include housing, land use and planning, equity, climate change, transportation, and efficient function of government. Our initial review resulted in roughly seventy bills, and we’ve been reaching out to bill sponsors to learn more, and reading bills as they are printed.

We have identified a dozen key bills for which we will likely offer support, and already have for a few!

These include:

<b>LR#</b>	<b>LD#</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>SPONSOR</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
		An Act to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Promote Weatherization in the Buildings Sector		Public Hearing
780	<a href="#">201</a>	by Extending the Sunset Date for the Historic Property Rehabilitation Tax Credit	Sen. Nate Libby of Androscoggin	postponed due to storm, rescheduled 3.18

58	<a href="#">2</a>	An Act to Enact the Racial Impact Statement Act	Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross of Portland	2.17: committee voted out a divided report
				Public Hearing
871	<a href="#">446</a>	An Act to Reestablish the State Planning Office	Rep. Kyle Bailey of Gorham	3.4 GrowSmart testified in support
384	<a href="#">609</a>	Resolve, to Establish a Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions	Spkr. Ryan Fecteau of Biddeford	
934		An Act to Identify and Address Barriers to Housing Choices	Sen. Eloise Vitelli of Sagadahoc	Not yet printed
1616		Resolve, to Study Best Practices and Different Area Needs for Development of Affordable Homes and Expanding Home Ownership in Maine Communities	Rep. Traci Gere of Kennebunkport	Not yet printed

### Highlighting Two Priority Bills:

1. ***LD 446: An Act to Reestablish the State Planning Office.*** Though the bill title seems to indicate otherwise, this proposal is focused on restoring planning resources at state and regional levels. We are encouraged by a recent conversation with Representative Bailey, in which he outlined his vision to reinvent a one-stop shop for municipalities, regional planning commissions, and economic

development districts to access planning and development tools and strategies, as well as to help municipalities navigate occasional misalignment of regulations between state agencies as well as facilitate regional planning collaboration. Realizing this is not an ideal time to propose a new state agency, as well as the immediacy of the [Climate Action Plan](#) and [10-Year Strategic Economic Plan](#) ***We support a study or stakeholder convening to address this and related proposals to report back to the Legislature next year.***

This proposal, which ought to also support the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC) is essential as towns, cities, and the LUPC wrestle with increasingly complex issues at the intersection of Maine's economy, community, and environment; planning to meet increased ***demands for housing and sustainable communities*** as well as increasing investments in ***broadband infrastructure***; response to ***evolving markets for fisheries, forestry and agriculture***; and ***preparing for sea level rise and other impacts of a changing climate.***

[Read our  
Testimony in  
Support](#)

We made two additional points when speaking to the Committee on State and Local Government. First, that the two staff positions at the Municipal Planning Assistance Program are funded outside of the legislative process; one through a federal program and the other through Commissioner's discretion. The

legislation has no skin in the game for local and regional planning and implementation.

***2. LD 201: An Act to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Promote Weatherization in the Buildings Sector by Extending the Sunset Date for the Historic Property Rehabilitation Tax***

**Credit:** GrowSmart Maine continues to support Maine's historic rehabilitation tax credit by advocating to extend the sunset. We are working with several members of the [Maine Alliance for Smart Growth](#) steering committee and MEREDA in this effort. CEI, Maine Preservation, Greater Portland Landmarks and Genesis Fund all consider this a priority to ensure community revitalization, sustainable economic growth, and municipal fiscal health through rehab and reuse of Maine's historic buildings. As the title of LD 201 denotes, there is a significant climate value in reuse of existing building materials on location, compared with demolition/new construction and greenfield construction.

**Partnerships:** In addition to the Maine Alliance for Smart Growth, we are working with two other collaborative efforts this session: We have joined Climate Maine to review and prioritize legislative proposals that fall within our policy priorities to ensure our advocacy is effectively coordinated with others. In addition we continue to lead the policy work of the [Maine Broadband Coalition](#), which will focus on several key funding and policy bills.

**How can you engage?** We'll keep you posted on bills as they are printed and work their way through the legislative session, and invite you to participate as you are comfortable. You can offer written or oral testimony for any bill, and track its progress on the Maine Legislature's website <http://legislature.maine.gov/>

[Read GSM's 2021  
Public Testimony](#)

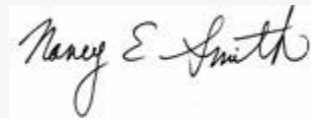
## **SAVE THE DATE!**

We are marking Thursday, **October 21st** as the date for our **Summit 2021**.

### **Smart Growth Webinar addressing Land Use and Broadband.**

As universal access to broadband is deployed, what tools are available to municipalities to ensure that growth patterns reflect the values captured in community long term plans and strategies? And how do we encourage use of these tools? **Stay Tuned for More Information developed by our board!**

**Stay well, warm, and working for Maine's future.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy E. Smith". The signature is written in black ink on a white rectangular background.

## Updated Educational Resources

Many people in your community probably agree with the principles of smart growth. And many more may be looking for alternative approaches to growth and development, approaches that will protect your community's unique character and quality of life while supporting economic prosperity and equality.

GrowSmart Maine continues to regularly update our compiled resources designed to help your community understand some of the issues around managing sustainable growth, and outlines the techniques and resources available to help your town.

We will highlight an updated resource in each 2021 newsletter. Please share these resources with others in your community interested in smart growth solutions. And let us know if you have any questions.

This month:

### **Accessory Apartments: An Affordable Housing Strategy**

Affordable housing can often present a challenge for communities. How can a town expand affordable housing choices in a way that balances community needs with community character? How can a town create affordable options to keep people in the community as they age or to accommodate changing lifestyles and housing needs? How can people more easily stay in their homes longer as children move out and/or income changes? How can a town support affordable housing without building new developments?

Accessory apartments are one way to help address these community challenges.

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## Racial Equity

As we shared in our [Racial Equity Statement](#) this June, GrowSmart Maine is committed to doing our part to end racial inequality throughout Maine and our nation.

Since creating our statement, a board-led committee has outlined strategies to ensure equity in our programming and organizational structure. The committee shared their work with the full board during our September board meeting, leading to agreement on plans moving forward.

[Read our Action  
Statement](#)

GrowSmart Maine will begin reaching out to learn more from underrepresented peoples and invite those with interest to learn about us. We strive for relationships of value to all parties, to broaden the reach of our work through deliberate outreach, and offer our expertise to aligned work by others.

We are compiling a series of forums focused on racial equity and land use, beginning with a history of People of Color in Maine, highlighting how land use and land ownership are still creating divides between people, and exploring how to promote strategies to end these indoctrinated practices.

We are glad to be part of a growing movement in Maine and beyond to both elevate the voices, experiences, and expertise of Black, Indigenous, and people of color while also expanding the stakeholder and leadership opportunities for BIPOC in GrowSmart Maine. As a historically and currently white-led



organization, we are taking this issue very seriously. Please let us know if you would like to join us in our efforts.

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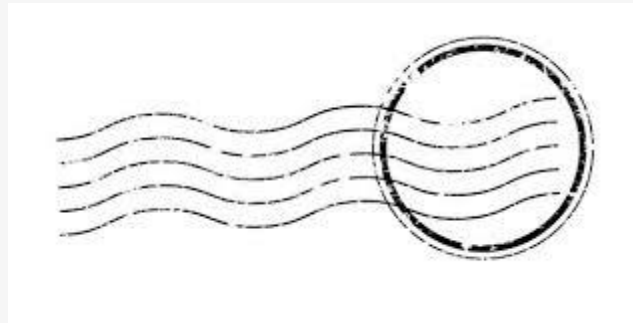
## **Be social!**

### **Did you know GrowSmart Maine is online in many ways?**

- [Our Website](#) - our board and staff, our calendar, our blog, event summaries and results
  - [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) - Where we share what is important to us, whether our events, activities, or important matters across the state
  - [YouTube](#) - our Summits and other events, forums and webinars, and the GrowSmart Award's video
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## Help us continue to help Maine

**As we march forth working to keep Maine ... *Maine*, we ask for your help, there are many ways to help GrowSmart Maine throughout the year!**



If you want to protect the things that are special about Maine, while encouraging sustainable prosperity now and in the future, please join us!

With your help, we can make these values an integral part of Maine's legislation and state and local policy.

We know there have been many continued calls for financial assistance recently. What are some easy ways you support GrowSmart Maine and promote smart growth in Maine?

- **Follow us on social media.** We are on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#). Follow us, like, and share our posts! Join us for future events, talks, and webinars.
- **Become a GrowSmart Member** - Our supporters know the satisfaction of being part of a movement of Mainers who want to protect the things that are special about Maine, while growing sustainable

prosperity for all parts of the state. With your help, we are working on the ground in communities around the state to build a network of engaged individuals, organizations and businesses that are shaping Maine's future.

Our annual memberships give you discounts to all of our events and supports our efforts in your neighborhood and beyond.

- **Give Smart to GrowSmart** - make a recurring monthly donation of your choice to GrowSmart Maine
- **Support Small Businesses** - live out the smart growth principle of creating and securing a **strong sense of place**, by shopping at locally owned businesses all year long.
- **On-line shopping**- Shopping from home? Shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com). By making your regular purchases here, any time of year, AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to GrowSmart Maine. [Elect GrowSmart Maine as your designated charity here](#)

**Every effort counts, and we thank you for your support of our work in giving communities choices in how they respond to growth and change.**

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GrowSmart Maine

<http://growsmartmaine.nationbuilder.com/>