

GrowSmart Maine's Top Twelve Bills for 2021

LD# (click for link to bill)	TITLE (click to read our testimony)	SPONSOR	OUR POSITION/WHAT IT DOES	LATEST NEWS: Updated July 20, 2021
FINALLY PASSED:				
1733	"An Act To Provide Allocations for the Distribution of State Fiscal Recovery Funds"	Sen. Breen (Governor's Bill)	We testified in support of this bill with particular focus on transportation, broadband, housing and energy efficiency, and business support for the natural resource sector. As passed, this bill includes all these provisions as well as investments in clean energy and healthcare workforce, State Parks, and property tax relief.	Signed into law July 19th without an Emergency Preamble, so it takes effect in 90-days.
221	"An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations for the Expenditures of State Government, General Fund and Other Funds and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2021, June 30, 2022 and June 30, 2023"	Governor's Bill, Biennial Budget	This is the Governor's budget proposal, including the Change Package. We support passage and testified in support of several components of the budget and change package.	Signed into law July 1st.
609	Resolve, to Establish a Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions	Spkr. Ryan Fecteau of Biddeford	We strongly supported the formation of a Commission to review municipal barriers to housing choices, specifically zoning and ordinances. This review will benefit those who struggle to secure suitable housing, and also across many policy areas from land conservation and climate resiliency to economic opportunity and affordable internet access, to ensuring strategic use of public infrastructure including roads, water and sewer. Our testimony was endorsed by the Maine Alliance for Smart Growth because of its potential for such broad benefits.	Signed into law June 15th
1530	An Act to Allow People to Live in Tiny Houses As a Primary or Accessory Dwelling	Representative David McCrea	In its final form, It requires municipalities to permit tiny homes to be placed or erected on individual lots where single family dwellings are allowed or as an accessory structure, subject to all applicable land use requirements as single-family dwellings or as an accessory structure. We support this bills in its amended versions as it removes barriers to small yet effective solutions to Maine's housing crisis. ADUs and Tiny Houses are two housing choices at the intersection of home rule and urgent lack of housing. We also acknowledge the tension between the urgent housing crisis and the tradition and value of home rule.	Signed into law June 15th
2	An Act to Enact the Racial Impact Statement Act	Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross of Portland	We strongly support this bill. It defines a pilot project for legislative committees to consider racial impacts of bills and resolves, with a report to Legislatigte COuncil in order to broaden this framework beyond the pilot.	Signed into law March 17th
CARRIED OVER FOR NEXT SESSION				
1240	An Act to Identify and Address Barriers to Housing Choices	Sen. Eloise Vitelli of Sagadahoc	We strongly support this bill, as it is an outcome of our Summit 2020 and calls for Dept of Economic and Community Development/Office of Community Development to conduct a review of barriers to regional solutions to making housing affordable, accessible, available, functional and compatible with strategies outlined in Maine's climate action plan. This includes updating the Growth Management Act, assessing the intersection of regional and statewide transportation policies with housing, Identification of regional approaches to address significant mill rate differentials, and provide municipalities with choices and resources to meet statewide housing goals.	6.9 Carry Over to next Session Request Approved.
1694	An Act To Create the Maine Redevelopment Land Bank Authority	Representative Melanie Sachs	We provided qualified support for this bill, while expressing significant concerns for several components related to the Development Ready Community proposal. This bill establishes the Community Redevelopment Land Bank Authority to coordinate the acquisition of blighted, abandoned and environmentally hazardous or functionally obsolete property for redevelopment and municipal redevelopment authorities to coordinate property ownership and redevelopment. The bill establishes a fund to support the purpose of the authority, which includes as a source of revenue a fee on the disposal of construction and demolition debris. The bills set a process to establish a Development Ready Community Planning Committee for the purposes of establishing statewide community redevelopment guidelines.	6.3 Carry Over to next Session Request Approved.
201	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	Sen. Nate Libby of Androscoggin	We strongly support this bill. It extends the current sunset on Maine's tax credit to support rehabilitation and reuse of historic buildings. Advocacy for Maine's historic rehabilitation tax credit has been a long time priority of GrowSMart Maine and other members of the Maine Alliance for Smart Growth, as well as MEREDA.	7.1 Appropriations included this in the bills to be carried over to next year.
446	An Act to Reestablish the State Planning Office	Rep. Kyle Bailey of Gorham	We strongly support the amended version of this bill. In spite of its title, this bill is about providing planning and development resources to municipalities and regional planning entities. Since the disembowelment of the State Planning Office, the lack of a well-staffed and resourced first-stop for municipalities has been an serious barrier to strategic land use planning.	6.17: Placed on the Special Study Table, carried over to next year.
1246	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	With its focus on addressing barriers to home ownerships, we see LD 1246 as compatible with LD 1240 and stated so in our testimony. The amended version gained support of nine committee members, with two opposed and two absent. Maine Housing will provide current research available, proponents can raise and spend private fund for this effort (up to \$50K) and if passed, the group will provide recommendations to the committee next year.	7.1 Appropriations included this in the bills to be carried over to next year.

1312	An Act to Remove Barriers to Accessory Dwelling Units and Allow Accessory Dwelling Units where Single-family Houses Are Allowed	Rep. Valli Geiger of Rockland	The House and Senate passed an amendment put forward by Maine Municipal Assn with support from GrowSmart Maine. The final version of the bill requires municipalities to allow one accessory dwelling unit as long as the unit complies with minimum shoreland zoning guidelines adopted by the Department of Environmental Protection, subject to locally adopted accessory dwelling unit land use requirements, and either the primary or accessory dwelling is owner-occupied. It prohibits a municipality from adopting an ordinance or regulation that circumvents the requirement. We support this bill in its amended version, having supported MMA in their efforts to have the bill address their concerns.	7.1 Appropriations included this in the bills to be carried over to next year.		
1235	An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Connect Maine with a World-class Internet Infrastructure	Senator Richard Bennett	This is a \$100 million bond proposal. In our support we note that with the significant funding coming to Maine through the federal American Rescue Plan Act, those essential federal and municipal dollars are coming to Maine, and private investment funds have consistently been part of the broadband solution. Especially at this critical time, significant state funding is needed to increase the overall financial resources available, but just as importantly, to demonstrate that Maine is willing to invest in itself.	7.1 Appropriations included this in the bills to be carried over to next year.		
983	An Act To Authorize a General Fund Bond Conservation, Working Waterfronts, Water Access and Outdoor Recreation	Senator Catherine Breen	This is a \$80 million bond to fund Land For Maine's Future program. When I describe the work of GrowSmart Maine, I often reference our organization as the one place where land conservation and downtown revitalization come together across the state. We need to see these not as competing interests, but as opposite sides of the same coin.	7.13 Carried over to next session. However, \$40 million funding for Land For Maine's Future was included in the Governor's final budget, which passed on July 1st as well as funds for State Park infrastructure in the Governor's spending plan for federal COVID relief funds.		