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Maine's Rural Development Council

February 23, 2024

Portland Mayor Mark Dion and Esteemed Councilors,

On behalf of the GrowSmart Maine board, I am writing to articulate our support for the proposed Village Partnership Initiative agreement between the City of Portland and MaineDOT for the Franklin Street redesign planning process.

This Village Partnership agreement with MaineDOT for the next phase of Franklin St planning - with the goal of funding and implementation - will create an opportunity to right past wrongs. Improvements to Franklin Street can integrate land use and transportation planning along the corridor for an outcome that supports fiscal, economic, environmental and community sustainability.

Franklin Street redevelopment, long in the works, will achieve many smart growth goals, including:

- strengthening the traditional urban street-grid and better balancing transportation choices
- capitalizing on place-making opportunities in reclaimed land, including restoring land to historic Lincoln Park, which was decreased in size to accommodate the current oversized version of Franklin Street
- generating economic development opportunities on lands restored to the tax rolls for fiscal sustainability
- creating the context for housing opportunities near goods and services, public spaces, and employment
- providing significant regional value, as an example of how to reimagine a space and then implement the vision.

The 2015 Franklin Street Master Plan was one of Grow Smart's first Maine Smart Growth award recipients in 2018. It's important to note that, while many assume that wider streets mean faster traffic, often a well-designed Complete Street allows all modes - including cars- to get through an area safely and quickly. A Complete Streets solution would also allow for economic and social activity that the current Franklin Street corridor does not.

We are happy to see this plan finally move forward with a clear target of reconstruction.

Sincerely,

CEO