

GrowSmart at a Glance August to November 2020

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As we continue to pivot, adapt, reframe and improvise, the work of GrowSmart Maine creatively evolves through this global health and economic crisis. We've hosted a successful Summit and two Smartinis events, launched the Energy Efficiency Community Campaign and advocated for sound state policy and investments. We are preparing to launch a new program: Housing Choices for a Well-Rounded Community. In addition to these efforts, we are establishing our role in highlighting historic and ongoing connections of land use with racial equity and climate change. These fundamental issues are not individual silos, but two threads to be woven into everything we do.

Beyond our programming we focused on the future of the organization. GrowSmart qualified for the Payroll Protection Program and State COVID Recovery funds, which greatly reduced the impact of lost revenue related to the pandemic. Jodi Castallo left for a new career path in September, and given the ongoing uncertainty, we will delay hiring a new Community Outreach Director until spring.

Highlights from the past few months:

[Summit 2020 Flexing the Power of Home Rule: A Path Toward Regional Solutions](#) brought together 56 people in person at six locations across Maine with 73 virtual participants. Supported by our sponsors and regional partners, the Summit provided a chance to hear two keynotes discuss the history, relevance, connections and value of home rule and regionalism and join breakout sessions to dive deeper into the topic. See photos of the event [here](#) and video of the keynotes and more on our [YouTube Channel](#). Our third annual [Maine Smart Growth Awards](#) features people and projects exemplifying smart growth across Maine.

Post Summit Forum:

The following week, we hosted 25 people for a 90-minute forum to develop action items. The results will soon be shared on our website with an invitation for all those interested to engage in the three top issues: **Increased access to Renewable Energy, Housing Choices, and Land Use Regulation and Enforcement**. Each of these is seen as a critical issue which can be best addressed regionally, building on the power of home rule.

Energy Efficiency Community Campaign In partnership with the Island Institute and with funding from Horizon Foundation and Onion Foundation, we offer this residential energy efficiency program **featuring informational workshops and on the ground action**. With full support of partners and funders, we adapted this program to broaden its focus from weatherization to overall energy efficiency, to facilitate timely action during the pandemic. In September, the in-person workshop was converted to a webinar marketed to Windham but open to anyone, and a similar presentation was given to Biddeford's Citizen Advisory Committee. We are working with Windham and Biddeford municipal staff to move this forward in both locations, as well as engaging an AmeriCorps member to begin in the next month and work with us on community engagement through 2021.

Advocacy When the Maine Legislature shut down in March, many bills died without final resolution. However, we achieved two significant successes. With a group of **Maine Alliance for Smart Growth** partners and the Maine Real Estate and Development Association, once again we rallied support for **Maine's historic rehabilitation tax credit**, resulting in an extension of the imminent sunset. This success was due in large part to the proven economic, environmental, and community impact of this tax credit, which makes financially viable the restoration and reuse of historic buildings and structures. Read the [Economic Impact Study](#). In addition, through our leadership role with the **Maine Broadband Coalition**, we worked to secure passage of the **\$15 million broadband bond** on July 14th with nearly 75% Maine voter approval.

Maine Alliance for Smart Growth Smartinis These **COVID-compliant outdoor networking events** were held in downtown Augusta in August and at Stevens Commons, Hallowell in October. Each event brought together about twenty people for a smart growth walking tour and the chance to visit with each other, six feet apart, that we've all been craving. We'll watch the COVID updates and hope the pandemic will weaken and allow for a bonfire Smartinis over the winter. We posted photos on our Facebook page for events at [Stevens Commons](#) and [Downtown Augusta](#).

Looking Ahead: Emily Dufour has joined GrowSmart as our **Membership Coordinator**, managing much of the logistical and marketing work for the Summit, as well as communications and memberships. In the coming year we will continue to offer events, beginning with online discussions of racial equity and land use, and our autumn Summit 2021. Our direct community engagement includes the Energy Efficiency Community Campaign and Making Headway in Your Community. In 2021 we will launch **Housing Choices for a Well-Rounded Community**, with its informational workshop outlining municipal level tools and community technical assistance.

Of course, we will continue to advocate for greater smart growth outcomes across Maine, tracking recommendations from the Governor's [Economic Recovery Committee](#), the [Maine Economic Development Strategy](#) and the [Maine Won't Wait Climate Action Plan](#)