

LA Maine: Forward

An Economic Growth Strategy for Lewiston Auburn Maine

Prepared by the Lewiston Auburn Economic Growth Council



*Version 1.0
October 2, 2015*

This is Version 1.0 of an economic growth strategy for Lewiston Auburn Maine. It is presented for initial input and guidance from LAEGC Board and City Council in Auburn & Lewiston

It is an emergent document.

It is a living-breathing document designed as planning—not a plan.

It is intended to guide the community's collective efforts

It will evolve and be revised and updated through ongoing community engagement and collaboration

Red text in this document reflects future edits

We intend to add more graphics and photos to the online version, with hyperlinks to more details.

Overview

The Lewiston Auburn Economic Growth Strategy: **LA Maine: Forward** is crafted and prepared by the Lewiston Auburn Economic Growth Council (LAEGC). LAEGC was commissioned by the City of Lewiston and Auburn to craft this Strategy as part of a redefined Scope of Services for the agency. This Strategy has been prepared by LAEGC through an effort to engage the entire community: citizens, businesses, social service agencies, cultural and arts organizations, and others. This is LA’s Strategy, not LAEGCs.

The intent is that this Strategy be a living and working document; it will be posted on-line at [\[web site link TBD\]](#) where it will be available to all for continued review, updating, and evolution.

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Our Vision

The LA Future Forum (LAFF) was organized in 2010 by a group of citizens representing LA’s business, government, education, health care, cultural and recreation communities. The purpose of the Forum was to explore ideas and solutions to make LA a better place to live, learn, work and play. In 2014, the LAFF published three White Papers summarizing its work and advanced what we propose as our three Principles and Vision for this Growth Strategy. The LAFF White papers can be found at [\[web site link TBD\]](#).

In summary, they are:

1. **People.** LA Maine is a community that supports childhood and lifelong learning as a right and a need. Our economic growth and future requires people who are well educated, who continue to grow and learn, and who embrace civic responsibility and engagement. As critical as education and training is, LA will also encourage in-migration of “New Mainers,” and a wide range of entrepreneurs of all age. We will encourage innovation and creativity. We will value all people of all skills, abilities and disciplines to build a strong and diverse economy.
2. **Place.** People will be attracted to new, renovated, and welcoming communities. LA Maine is that and can be more. An attractive place has a wide variety of places and activities for a wide variety of interests and cultures. Our downtowns and riverfronts form the backbone of our Place. This Strategy embraces the new and updated comprehensive, neighborhood, and targeted area plans to renovate structures and build new innovative and creative places, greenways, walkways, bikeways, and a variety of transportation networks.
3. **Prosperity.** An Economic Growth Strategy must first be about doing business. LA is Maine’s second largest urban area and is a good place for business. Our existing business community will collaborate along with our economic development partners to help expand business activity. As we seek networks, resources and capital to expand our existing business community, we will create and attract new businesses to LA Maine. From startups to major employers, we will foster an inviting and innovative business environment.

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The above summary and a draft Vision Statement was shared with participants at a community forum on March 31, 2015. Combining with input received at that forum, ***our Vision is:***

LA Maine is a community that embraces, attracts, and fosters a well-trained, educated, and engaged citizenry, with skills of all types to meet our current and future economic demands.

We are a community that fosters entrepreneurship, innovation, and the continued development of Maine's most desirable place to live, learn and work.

This Strategy and its implementation are based on the following key principles.

1. The Economic Growth Strategy identifies key assets and ***competitive advantages that set the community apart from others around the world.***
2. It identifies projects to improve our competitive position and encourage new investment and economic growth—***projects for action*** in the short, mid, and long-term with clear deliverables, and measurable outcomes.
3. It identifies who will do what---who will be lead agency (organization) for each project or initiative--***Who will be the catalyst for action?***
4. It is ***implemented through coordination and collaboration*** between all engaged in economic development in LA.

This vision forms the foundation for this Strategy and will, through collective effort, form the foundation for a new brand for Lewiston Auburn Maine (see Marketing LA Maine: Lewiston Auburn, page 45).

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Purpose & Outline of Strategy

The purpose of this Strategy is to confirm and clarify the LA community’s collective effort for economic development. LAEGC will use this Strategy to enhance its present *and* future role working for the betterment of both Auburn and Lewiston, or “LA Maine”. Thus, this Strategy is **LA Maine: Forward**.

This Strategy defines the [Assets](#) of value in LA Maine. For economic development purposes, these must set us apart and help define our competitive advantage as a place to live and do business. Additionally, we identify [Challenges](#) we must address to improve our economic position.

The Strategy was ordered, jointly, by the cities of Auburn and Lewiston when they entered into a Scope of Services for LAEGC.¹ Strategy development was initiated by LAEGC in January, 2015. The Strategy makes use of a number of recent and current strategic planning documents.² **LA Maine: Forward** is the culmination of our review of those documents, outreach to community, business, and economic development partners, and a brief yet focused community engagement process that unfolded during the first five six months of 2015. This Strategy is, by design, not completed. **LA Maine: Forward** is a living and

¹ For a copy of the Scope of Services visit—[hyperlink to website](#)

² [Appendix A lists and provides links to the various planning documents.](#)

working document. Partners, businesses, and citizens are encouraged to continually review and offer input to the Strategy. LAEGC will foster and oversee its progress. It **will be** posted on-line so that it may be reviewed, questions asked, suggestions made, and progress made.³ We will hold annual review sessions with the public to further update, monitor, and modify the Strategy.

#LAMaine

Since January, 2015, LAEGC has been using the hashtag #LAMaine. It has evolved and has caught on with the community. It speaks to the long history of collaboration between Auburn and Lewiston. It denotes our place in the world. It attracts attention; it “sells”.

LA Maine: Forward is the community’s Strategy. We have worked to engage the community in its development—and will continue to do so. We have also encouraged and engaged a variety of organizations, agencies, and individuals in its development. We will rely on many of them to be engaged in its implementation.

LAEGC will serve as a coordinator, collaborator, and catalyst for implementing the Strategy. As a coordinator, LAEGC will facilitate initiatives and projects to support the Strategy. LAEGC will maintain awareness of projects undertaken by others and follow up with them to encourage movement towards measurable outcomes. As a

³ This current V1.0 is available as a PDF. A future version will be part of a new LAEGC website and published as an online document that shall be continually updated as the Strategy evolves.

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collaborator, LAEGC will commit to the use of its staff and financial resources on projects core to our mission and provide expertise to support others in moving their projects forward. We will work with other collaborators to identify and track measurable outcomes and we will report on those outcomes. As a catalyst, LAEGC will initiate and provide leadership for distinct and actionable projects and programs.

LA Maine: Forward presents [Opportunities for Action](#) based on the information and input we have gathered. It defines actionable projects and clearly identifies LAEGC’s and other collaborators’ roles in implementing the Strategy and how LAEGC will collaborate and coordinate with our community partners. We define strategic measures and actionable metrics to evaluate our own work. In the end, we propose time-tested, sound economic development principles together with innovative projects to meet the goals of this Strategy.

LA Maine: Forward is organized and presented through three themes: [People](#), [Place](#), and [Prosperity](#). While there is overlap between these themes, their purpose is to organize the issues and opportunities facing the community and to focus on defining assets, competitive advantages, and projects.

Under each theme, we identify our community assets. Assets may be fully developed or may be identified as the focus for continued improvement. This helps clarify and confirm LA’s competitive advantage for economic development. Identifying assets also helps focus attention on specific projects or opportunities to improve our competitive advantage by investing in an asset. To be competitive,

LA Maine must set itself apart from other communities. We have assets that help us do that, but we must be focused and strategic in identifying the competitive advantages that can be leveraged to meet our goals.

Within each of the [Opportunities for Action](#), we define actionable projects—to get the work done. LAEGC has coordinated and developed this Strategy, but the work is to be undertaken by all partners and collaborators. Projects are “assigned” to partners as each commits to those assignments. A complete matrix of projects, timelines, and assignments is presented in Appendix C. LAEGC does not assume management of our partners but will take responsibility to “check in” on partner efforts and their “assignments.” We will not and cannot “run” those efforts, but will encourage and seek out means to assist partners in their efforts. Likewise, we will celebrate accomplished assignments and tasks as we monitor progress towards our goals as measured by outcomes.

During the Build Maine 2015 Conference, one speaker spoke of timelines for projects. Timelines and metrics are critical in any business or economic development strategy. Instead of using phrases like short, mid, and long term, we have adopted his recommendation: “Now, Soon, Later”.

No Strategy is complete without a means to measure its results. Thus, we have identified Strategic Measurements using the recent work called Benchmark LA, modified and focused for use in the Strategy.

See our Venn diagram describing our Themes [\[link to web site TBD\]](#).

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Community Collaborators

Developing and implementing this Strategy is the responsibility of the community and the individuals and organizations that make up LA Maine. The collection of potential community collaborators is likely larger than we have identified thus far. We wish to acknowledge the primary partners and collaborators identified thus far. Each of these partners has their own mission, their own market, their own organizational structure and focus. Our intent for **LA Maine: Forward** is to foster and encourage continued and expanded collaboration and coordination.

The LA Maine Economic Growth Strategy is a **community strategy**. It will focus our collective energies and provide direction on multiple fronts. It is not LAEGC's Strategy but the community's Strategy. We offer the following definitions to be clear about our collective role.

Collaboration: the action of working with someone to produce or create something.

Coordination: organization of the different elements of a complex body or activity so as to enable them to work together effectively.

Catalyst: a person or thing that precipitates an event.

Appendix B names the organizations that play a role in fostering economic growth in LA Maine. We also list the acronym used to refer to each organization in Appendix B. It is not intended to be exhaustive and will grow as the Strategy evolves. We have identified these as our primary partners and collaborators at this time, for purposes of identifying lead organizations to take action on opportunities identified.

Please see our Venn diagram that demonstrates, as an example, the roles of different agencies, partners, and organizations in the implementation of the Strategy [[link to web site TBD](#)].

Assets--Competitive Advantages

Our Strategy is organized under three Themes. Here, we define each, then present, based on community input and professional experience and guidance, our primary competitive assets that represent each Theme. A competitive advantage is a characteristic of this community that sets us apart from other places in the world. It is a characteristic that would encourage a new business to locate here; a family to move here; or an entrepreneur to start a business here. Every community on the planet claims to have a “great quality of life.” We challenged participants in our community engagement—and still do as this Strategy evolves—to identify those characteristics that truly set us apart and are LA Maine’s competitive advantage.

People

It is the intuition, initiative, and talents of people that drive business and our economy. People also help define the Place and its culture. In the context of our Strategy, People are the key asset in our community. There are several reasons why.

There is strength in numbers, and businesses in LA Maine have access to a deep pool of customers and employees. Lewiston is the 2nd most populous city in Maine and Auburn is the 5th. Our combined population is nearly 60,000 [2010 US Census]. About a

quarter of the state’s population (more than 300,000 people) is located within 25 miles of LA Maine. Nearly 60% of the state’s population (more than 780,000 people) lives within 50 miles of LA Maine [Maine Department of Labor, 2007, updated 2013].

“Strength in numbers” also applies from a workforce perspective. The Civilian Labor Force for the Lewiston Auburn Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) - a 16 community geographical region delineated by Federal and State agencies for statistical purposes and utilized by site locators for the purposes of business expansion planning and investment – was 56,613 in 2014. A Civilian Labor Force of 165,000 lives within 25 miles of LA Maine; more than 420,000 potential employees live within a 50 mile radius [Maine Department of Labor, 2007, updated 2013]. LA Maine’s MSA is Maine’s second largest.

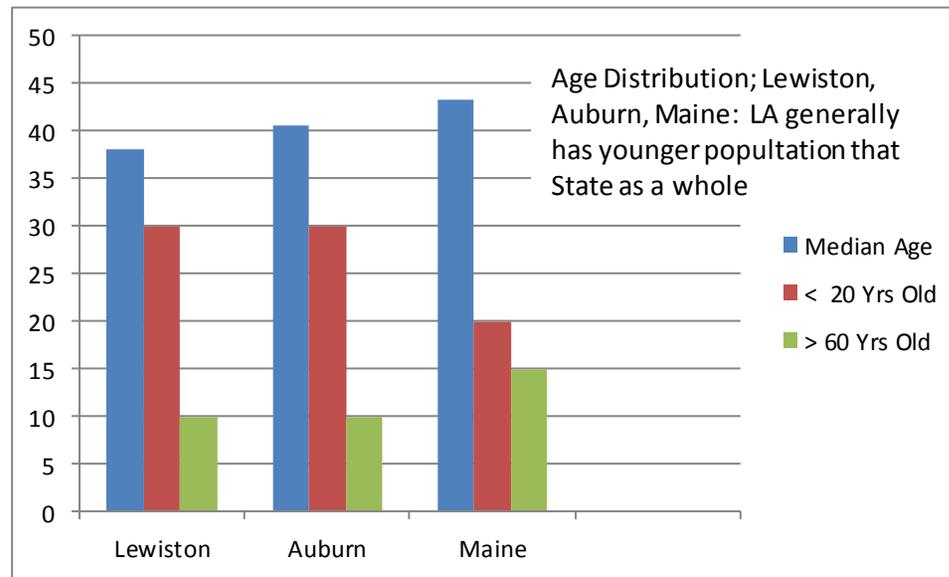
But it goes beyond sheer numbers—there are key population characteristics that set LA Maine apart.

LA Maine is younger. The state’s median age is 43.2 per the 2010 Census; Lewiston’s was 5 years younger (38.1) and Auburn’s was nearly 3 years younger (40.5). Both cities have a higher percentage of persons aged 20 and under than does Maine; equally, both cities have a smaller percentage of persons aged 62 and over than the state [2010 US Census].

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LA Maine is more diverse than the State and most of Northern New England. US Census data show LA Maine to be more racially diverse than Maine as a whole. The 2010 data for Lewiston shows that 85.5% of residents are non-Hispanic white (compared to 94.4% of Maine residents), 8.7% black (compared to Maine at 1.2%), 2.6% multi-racial (Maine is 1.6%), 1% Asian, and 2.0% Hispanic or Latin origin (Maine is 1.3%). In 2010, Auburn residents were 92.8% white, 2.5% black, 2.1% multi-racial, and 0.9% Asian, and 1.5% Hispanic [2010 US Census].

When compared with the state as a whole, **LA Maine boasts a greater concentration of employment in a number of key occupational groups**, including Transportation & Material Moving Occupations, Production Occupations, and Health Care Practitioners

& Technical Occupations [2014 Maine DOL Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates]. This signals a workforce with key competencies that can be leveraged for future expansion and attraction.

LA Maine is also well positioned to meet future demands on the workforce due to the presence of **multiple institutions of higher learning** such as Bates College, Central Maine Community College, University of Southern Maine-Lewiston Auburn College and Kaplan University as well as other workforce training/skills improvement providers such as the LA Career Center and adult education programs. In 2015, Northeast Training Institute opened their newest center in LA. The award-winning culinary programming offered by the Lewiston Regional Technical School is another people-based asset.

When compared against average wages for the state as a whole, **LA Maine offers competitive wage rates for existing, expanding or new businesses**. As one example, the average hourly wage for experienced workers across all occupation groups in LA is 4% lower than the state average wage [2014 Maine DOL Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates]

Assets—People

During the development of **LA Maine: Forward**, we challenged the community to define its distinguishing assets. In regards to People, the comparative and competitive assets that distinguish LA Maine are:

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1. **Critical Mass.** Employers in LA Maine have access to vast numbers of potential employees.
2. **Diversity.** Diversity in age and diversity in ethnicity, relative to the balance of Maine, Northern New England, and Eastern Canada.
3. Core **workforce competencies** in Transportation, Distribution and Logistics, Manufacturing, and Health Care.
4. An abundance of **institutions of higher education** and workforce training providers
5. **Competitive wage rates** for existing, expanding, and new businesses.

Place

Place represents our public and private physical assets. It is, to use a traditional term, our infrastructure. But it is also our relative location to other places that compete with us for economic development. As noted above, Place and People define community. LA Maine is defined by its Franco-American and newly changing “New Mainer” immigrant population, the river that connects the two cities, and the private structures and architecture of the Modern Mill City.

Assets—Place

The Place called LA Maine is distinguished by its location relative to Maine and New England, its transportation assets, its architecture (unlike any other place in Maine), and the river and Great Falls that

have been the primary attractor of people and prosperity for centuries.

The comparative and competitive assets of Place that distinguish LA Maine are:

1. **Location.** Nearly 60% of the state’s population (more than 780,000 people) lives within 50 miles of LA Maine.
2. **Transportation and logistics.** LA Maine offers easy access to and from our region to the northeastern mega-metro marketplace and beyond to the world.
 - a. I-95 access to industrial and commerce area
 - b. AL Airport
 - c. Transportation and logistics business providers and developable sites off of Exits 75 and 80.
 - d. The shared investment and ownership of the Lewiston Auburn Railroad Company and rail access to markets around the continent.
 - e. The “Port of Auburn” and the Maine Intermodal Center connects rail and truck transloads to the Port of Portland and provides an easy rail-to-truck transload location for products.
3. **Architecture of the combined downtowns.**
 - a. Unique and usable available space with lower rental and development rates relative to the balance of southern Maine.
 - b. Unique neighborhoods including Lisbon Street, the riverfronts, New Auburn, and the Bates College neighborhood, as examples.

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4. **Fiber Optics.** LA Maine is home to Oxford Networks, now merging with Bay Ring Communications. Oxford has invested and installed miles of fiber optics within our community—providing direct access to fiber for many business locations.
5. The **Androscoggin River and Great Falls.** Cleaned up and available to draw active and passive recreation and business ventures.

Prosperity

We use this theme to define how we generate wealth. That is Prosperity. In today's world, we enhance our prosperity through commerce—through the exchange of ideas and products. It is about doing business and expanding business to create income and wealth for business owners and employees.

Assets—Prosperity

In regards to Prosperity, the comparative and competitive assets that distinguish LA Maine are:

1. **Business Mix** – LA Maine is home to nearly 2,000 businesses which employ more than 37,000 workers across a broad array of industries. Due to a number of factors ranging from work force competencies to geographic location, several industry 'clusters' have emerged as prime drivers for the LA Maine economy. This is shown by higher than average employment concentrations (compared to the

state, and in some cases, to cities like Portland and Bangor) in four major sectors:

- a. **Transportation, Logistics and Distribution**
 - b. **Call Centers, Back Office and Administrative Support**
 - c. **Health Care practitioners, technicians and support functions**
 - d. **Manufacturing**
2. Many of our companies, large and small, have **markets, partners, or other connections across the globe.** This provides us unique opportunities to expand our markets and attract people and business from those markets.
 3. Relative to Southern Maine, LA Maine is a **competitive cost center.** As noted previously, hourly wages paid to employees in the LA Maine market tend to run lower than average wages for Maine as a whole, providing a comparative advantage over other areas in the state. *We recognize that lower wages may likely result in lower incomes and the dual disadvantage of lower incomes. We encourage the provision of livable wages by all employers.*
 4. A further advantage exists within the realm of commercial real estate. According to commercial sale and lease information, the **average asking sales price for commercial real estate in LA Maine runs between 60%-80% of the state's average** asking price depending on category (office, industrial and retail). The same holds true for average per square foot lease prices. There is an even greater disparity in sales and lease price when LA Maine is compared to the state's largest urban area, Portland.

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Challenges

LA Maine: Forward is about moving the community ahead. But there are concerns that must be identified and addressed as we move forward. We identify those, broadly stated, here for context as we collectively work on our [Opportunities for Action](#).

People

Improving LA Maine's schools is a challenge given how public education is funded in Maine and our changing demographics. As State aid declines and property values lag, funding decreases—while, at the same time, costs rise. This requires continued efforts to improve efficiencies and increase property values within the community.

LA Maine's schools are quality centers of education. Graduates from our schools are regularly successful in the best colleges and universities in the country and many distinguish themselves in technical programs and in employment where they have already received their industry credentials. Yet, according to local administrators, **25% of our students do not graduate from high school.** Many of these students that fail to complete high school are from families living in poverty, often from generations of poverty. This, in turn, lowers student expectations and aspirations. **This is the schools' and our community's greatest challenge—**

lowering the number of families in poverty and encouraging and fostering aspirations for students.

Continued improvement to LA Maine's schools will require additional funding to provide smaller class sizes, more pre-kindergarten classrooms, expanded summer and afterschool programming, and more innovative and alternative pathways to meet the needs of individual students. The needed funding is restricted by limited State resources and stagnant real estate valuation growth within our community.

Continued **training and education for our current and future workforce** is another challenge we face. According to the 2013 American Community Survey, only 28% of LA Maine residents have attained a higher degree (Associate's, Bachelor's, Graduate or professional degree) compared to 37% of Maine residents, and 36% of U.S. residents.

We propose a number of Opportunities for Action and Projects within our People theme to address the challenges around improving education and training our workforce.

We highlight and believe the ethnic diversity in our community is an asset, yet it does come with challenges. The challenges are often in bridging the cultural differences between our people. Challenges in providing financial assistance to those truly in need exist. There are challenges for our new residents and existing

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residents alike, learning to adjust and welcome one another. We propose projects to address both the opportunity and challenges diversity provides us. The question, we must pose to ourselves is, are we and do we want to be a welcoming community to new people and new ideas. We propose that the answer is a resounding yes—but we need community agreement and engagement to truly answer that question.

Place

As a City built in and by the previous industrial revolutions, ***we have a stock of older and, in many places, deteriorating commercial and residential properties.*** As much as 40% of the combined 27,548 housing units in Lewiston Auburn were built before 1940 and 57.5% were built before 1960 [2013 American Community Survey]. Many of these older properties – both owner-occupied and multi-family units - are in need of maintenance and upgrading to comply with today’s codes, particularly in LA Maine’s downtown neighborhoods.

The same applies to a number of in-town multi-use commercial properties – large and small - that should become candidates for redevelopment.

There is a comparatively large inventory of vacant and available commercial buildings and land, yet there is a paucity of Class A office space and a lack of manufacturing space in the 7,000 to 10,000 SF range. There are significant retail vacancies in areas that once were vibrant shopping districts.

Our [Opportunities for Action](#) offer ways to address and encourage investment in housing, multiuse, and commercial buildings. Targeted actions for improving housing variety are outlined in both Cities Comprehensive Plans. Improving housing stock and commercial investment is a difficult challenge. Financing is often difficult for those in rental units or for the owners that supply such units. Residential and commercial zoning and building codes must be modernized with work underway in targeted areas. Continued focus, innovative new code changes, incentives, and financing options must be a priority to improve the housing and commercial properties.

Prosperity

As noted in the previous section of this document, hourly wages paid to employees of LA Maine businesses tend to run lower than average wages for Maine as a whole. While this may provide the area with an advantage when competing with other communities for business investment, it can also make it more challenging to attract the skilled employees that LA Maine will need to secure that business investment.

Similarly – One of the area’s strengths is an abundance of local groups and organizations committed to making LA Maine an even more desirable place to live, work and play. However, it can be quite challenging to forge communication, coordination and collaboration between these groups. Ultimately, this can make it difficult to maximize the area’s resources, ensure we are all pulling in the same direction, and maintain a clear and concise vision to be

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articulated both inside and outside of LA Maine. To be most effective in our community economic growth, we must be efficient. We believe efficiency in our common work grows through communication, coordination, and collaboration—a foundation for this Strategy.

Perhaps ***the greatest challenge is the negative perception of Lewiston and Auburn held by many inside and outside of the community.*** While there is plenty of evidence to suggest otherwise, there remains a sense that LA Maine is a place in decline, with unappealing housing options, limited economic opportunities, little to do culturally or recreationally, and little hope for a brighter future.

Perception becomes reality in the minds of many. ***LA Maine: Forward*** is about taking action and changing perception. The challenges are noted here, but the reality is far from the perception held by many, as documented by the assets identified within this document.

We will address this challenge by resolutely moving forward. We will develop new brands for our own work and a regional brand for the community. We will use that brand to market the community to encourage visitors, events, investors, and business. (See Marketing LA Maine, Page 45)

LA Maine, Lewiston and Auburn, is evolving. As it evolves, new, innovative, and creative approaches to economic development are necessary. The challenge is in designing these approaches, providing resources, and taking action to affect change. With

limited public funds, private funds are required. Yet, in a community as close-knit as LA Maine, private funds are often spread thin. We must, then, make the most of our limited resources by being efficient, effective, and focused.

In a community as historic as LA Maine, it can be a challenge to try new things. Still, creativity in all aspects of business and economic development is important.

LA Maine has a diverse economy based on manufacturing, health care, distribution and logistics, and as a service center to Western Maine. ***The service and retail economy has developed and expanded over centuries and, notably, in recent decades.*** There is a balance between the more recent retail and service economy and redevelopment of downtowns. We propose to encourage that balance.

We must continue to find a balance to serve as that regional center offering a wide range of experiences, products and services to Western Maine while growing our attraction as a shopping and visitor center.

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Opportunities for Action

Opportunities are advantages that must be pursued. Here, we identify those opportunities and projects that have been identified as most pressing and outline how they will be addressed. Some opportunities will require immediate action. Others need additional input and development before clear actionable projects can be identified—thus why this Strategy must and will evolve.

We define opportunities and projects to be undertaken now, soon, and later, or what might otherwise be called short-term, mid-term, and long-term. **We propose that “now” projects be completed within 6-12 months, “soon” projects in 9-18 months, and “later” projects in 12-24 months.**

Now	Completed 6-12 months
Soon	Completed 9-18 months
Later	Completed 12-24 months

We categorize Opportunities and Projects under our three themes; People, Place, Prosperity. We recognize that there is overlap across these themes, but organize them as such.

Some Opportunities and subsequent Projects may be complicated for any number of social, financial, political, or other reasons. They stem from the community and our engagement with the community. There may be new ones added as the Strategy evolves. **Priority is set by the lead organization and agency. Some projects may lose priority. Others may rise in priority—based both on our community dialogue and the lead agency. LAEGC will facilitate the follow up and progress of the Opportunities and Projects.** We will serve as the lead for the continued implementation of **LA Maine: Forward**. On some Projects, LAEGC will take active direct role, on others we will assist, coordinate or facilitate in some way.

People

The following are Opportunities for economic development to help build and strengthen the people of our community.

Fostering Entrepreneurship

Today’s global economic landscape makes it possible for business and entrepreneurs to locate anywhere, subject to access to supplies or markets. Entrepreneurship thrives in places that have an innovative and creative spirit.

The Lewiston Riverfront Plan, the New Auburn Master Plan and Village Center Study, the new location of Museum LA, and private

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investments within both downtowns indicate a focus on “New Urbanism” that will lead to the formation of creative places and creativity in LA Maine. The opportunity is now to continue to foster this revival.

The issue is how to encourage such continued developments, both physically and socially. LAEGC has established LA Maine as one of the State’s innovation and entrepreneurial “hubs” through the Maine Accelerates Growth Program (MxG). As such, LAEGC will reach out to coordinate and collaborate with interested organizations and programs to help promote and coordinate all efforts into an effective program to spur the next wave of entrepreneurship in LA Maine.

We must also promote the development of places that build upon this theme. This includes private development and, perhaps, publicly financed spaces. Co-workspaces shared maker-spaces, innovative design of public spaces and public art that further LA Maine as a creative and “modern mill city” are all aspects of creative spaces that stimulate entrepreneurship.

Also, we propose to tap into the LA Maine’s new demographics; fostering entrepreneurship at all ages and by all ethnic groups will propel our growth. New programs to integrate immigrants into entrepreneurship and business development will broaden diversity and creativity in LA.

Entrepreneurship Projects

LA Maine is becoming a “hub” of entrepreneurial activity and we shall continue to encourage and expand this activity.

Entrepreneurship is about innovation and creativity. Entrepreneurs of all ages and types can and should be found and encouraged to create. Entrepreneurs are not only start-up companies but are found in existing companies, many that have been in business for many years.

● [Top Gun LA](#)

Soon

Top Gun Maine offers training, mentorship, and business coaching to early stage businesses in Maine. It brings together entrepreneurs, mentors and speakers for a dozen classes, workshops and events that historically have run January through May. During classes and in between, mentors and entrepreneurs meet to identify and focus on the most critical issues businesses face as they move towards progress.

Offered by the Maine Center for Entrepreneurial Development (MCED) in collaboration with the University of



Maine and other partners, Top Gun is limited to 30

entrepreneurs across Maine via classes in Portland, Orono and Rockland. Top Gun costs \$500 per team (scholarships are available) but expenses have run closer to \$7900 per team. In order to prepare companies to have effective mentor relationships, MCED has also developed an eight week online class called Top Gun Prep, which helps many first-time entrepreneurs “learn the language of business.”

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MCED would like to expand Top Gun further and LA Maine is one alternative. To host Top Gun, LA needs to continue to develop and foster its “entrepreneurial community” serving the larger region of Western Maine.

LAEGC is taking on the role of coordinating and lead agency for entrepreneurial development in LA—in part funded by its role as a “Hub” of the Blackstone Accelerates Growth Program.

The current focus will be on cultivating and promoting LA Maine’s entrepreneurial community, with an eye to hosting Top Gun, in the future. While developing our entrepreneurial community, we will promote Top Gun Prep and other offerings from MCED.

- [LA Maine Developers Boot Camp](#)

This project will encourage would-be “developers” to consider and invest in properties in and around the community. The Boot Camp is designed to focus on small, relatively simple projects. The project was brought to LA at the 2015 Build Maine Conference. LAEGC and City Staff hosted this event in September, 2015. The intent is for follow up with the participants to encourage their planning, financing, and development of small scale projects in our community.

Now

- [Bobcat Venture Challenge](#)

The Bobcat Ventures Challenge (BVC) was created by a group of innovative and entrepreneurial students at Bates College. In its first year, 13 teams (each composed of 2-4 Bates Students) participated in an intense training program, developed their business model, and pitched their idea for \$5,000.

Now



As part of our strategy, LAEGC will collaborate with Bates to expand and promote entrepreneurial offerings to both the Bates and the LA communities. LAEGC will help open up the seminar series to the public. Together with Bates, LAEGC will expand and promote the BVC to make it a cornerstone for the entrepreneurial communities of both the College and LA Maine.

- [Start-Up Weekend\(s\) & Maine Create & Start-up Week](#)

LAEGC will continue to expand local participation in Maine Startup and Create Week in 2016. LAEGC will explore ways to integrate MSCW into its Business Trade Show and other efforts.

Soon

As we build our entrepreneurial community and “environment”, LAEGC will consider hosting our own Start-up Weekend. Such an effort was considered in the not so

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distant past and we wish to learn from that experience, build our community support, and develop a sustainable program. To that end, LAEGC will work with MCED and others in the community to design and plan this program.

● [LA Maine: Engage Entrepreneurs & Develop Our Entrepreneurial Environment](#)

As part of LAEGC’s Maine Accelerates Growth Hub, LAEGC will organize and publicize Now regularly scheduled “meet ups” for entrepreneurs. These meet ups will include engaging speakers on subject of value to the entrepreneurial community.

The immediate goal is to coordinate and collaborate on the various ideas and efforts to engage and foster entrepreneurship. LAEGC will act as the catalyst for that coordination and engagement. A proposed schedule of events is being announced as the first version of **LA Maine: Forward** is released.

Such coordination includes integrating the Young Entrepreneurs Academy, among other programs.

Taught at the Lewiston Regional Technical Center, the Young Entrepreneur’s Academy is a yearlong program that instructs high school students on the art of entrepreneurship. Students develop business ideas, write business plans, conduct market research and pitch their plans to a panel of investors to potentially launch their

businesses. Guest speakers, mentors and field trips are also part of the class. Students can earn two high school credits and three college credits from Central Maine Community College, which can be transferrable.

LAEGC will take on the effort to foster the entrepreneurial environment—and to engage and collaborate with others including Bates, LSD, APS, Kaplan, CMCC and YPLAA.

● [Make it Easy to Start Business](#)

A simple guide on the agencies available to assist entrepreneurs will help them connect to those agencies. LAEGC will work with City Staff to produce a “How to Start a Business in LA” guide. This guide will be made available to area banks, the Career Center, and other locations. Now

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Empowering LA's Diversity

LA Maine has a unique diversity that sends a powerful message: anyone can and will make it here. We propose that we celebrate and encourage the diversity of LA Maine's past and present. Our diversity began, of course, with the immigration of the Irish and Franco community in the previous century. It continues and repeats itself with the immigration of Somali and other immigrants from the African Continent and beyond. Now, with the significant investment and establishment of a medical-tourism facility in Auburn, we will have additional ethnic diversity from Mainland China. The challenge and opportunity is to tap into eager and entrepreneurial immigrants and develop and nurture an educated and engaged workforce.

There is much "we" can learn from our new visitors and our new community members. We must strive to encourage dialogue for our common future.

There are a variety of organizations that support the transition of immigrants or "New Mainers" to the US, Maine, and LA Maine. We propose that a common and coordinated effort of all these agencies, groups, and organizations, including those that provide economic development opportunities, is needed.

In July of 2015, the Shengtong Group of Beijing, China announced plans to convert a former shoe factory building on Minot Avenue in Auburn (known locally as 'The Barn') into a state of the art health

and wellness hotel aligned with Central Maine Medical Center in Lewiston. A \$30 to \$40 million investment by the group will transform the former factory into a luxury medical tourism facility with upwards of 200 rooms.

Shengtong Group officials anticipate that up to 5,000 wealthy Chinese citizens will visit the facility in its first year to receive medical treatment and preventative care outside the Chinese system while experiencing the many recreational and cultural benefits of life in LA Maine and "Vacationland".

LA Maine has a unique diversity that sends a powerful message: anyone can and will make it here.
We propose that we celebrate and encourage the diversity of LA Maine's past and present

Officials of the Shengtong Group chose LA Maine because they were impressed with the quality of care at CMMC but also equally with the beauty of the state and of LA Maine. They and their patients desire the fresh air and clean water that many of us take for granted. Local officials believe that their interest and commitment in the area will lead to more investment; there is already talk among investors of more projects in the area. Some may even consider living here one day.

Though there is general enthusiasm locally over the economic benefits of this remarkable project, there is also trepidation on the part of some. Some residents may be simply curious and uncertain about a new culture being introduced to the area; others may be resistant and unwelcoming to this sort of change. This resistance – if unchecked – could ultimately leave our new guests and partners with doubts about their decision.

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Longtime residents and community leaders remind us that this pattern has played out before in LA Maine; there was resistance when the Irish came to build the mills that established the area and more resistance when Franco immigrants came to work in them. Similarly, there has been more recent resistance to the arrival of Somali immigrants to LA Maine. Yet longtime residents and community leaders also remind us that at every turn, LA Maine has persevered through the unknown to find prosperity; the mills drove the growth of Maine's second largest city and helped the area dominate economically and culturally into the Industrial Age and well beyond. And even though the Somali community has only just arrived in the last 10-15 years, their entrepreneurial spirit is already contributing to the rebirth of Lisbon Street's retail and commercial district.

There may be no more important task for the leaders of LA Maine to help our neighbors overcome their fear of the unknown and recognize what is in their own self-interest than embracing our diversity. An open, welcoming LA Maine will embrace new things and reap the many benefits offered by new cultures, new partnerships, and new opportunities. The challenge now falls to LAEGC and others to lead the effort to foster a welcoming community.

- [A Symposium on Diversity](#)

A number of community leaders and organizations have been meeting and Soon organizing in order to identify methods and means by which LA Maine can better discuss and have dialogue around

immigrant issues, race, and related issues and, perhaps, stream-line immigrant transition to the US, Maine, and LA Maine. Stream-lined integration includes cultural and language training and skill and entrepreneurial development to foster transition into the economic well-being for the immigrant and community.

The current organizers further believe that smaller, focused conversations are necessary as an ongoing way to keep the issues alive and that these should take place in neighborhoods across LA in a series of forums, presentations, or seminars on these topics. This should not be a one-time event; rather, it should be an organized and sustained effort. The question is how to organize to make this happen. It is clear that a lead organization must be identified.

We would not be the first community to launch such a program. Many communities around the world face the challenges of new immigration—and many are embracing it as an economic engine.

LAEGC will collaborate with USMLAC, YWCA, and other organizers to further define the vision and work for a Diversity Symposium to be the starting point for this community effort.

- [Explore and Foster Franco Heritage](#)

Working with the Franco American Center and

Soon

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the Franco American Collection at USMLAC, we shall reach out to other Franco communities to foster awareness of LA Maine’s Franco heritage. We propose that we identify and formalize “sibling city” relationships as part of building new markets for business (see page 42). These need not be official governmental relationships, although they could be. They need not be exclusive of the Franco heritage. But the Franco heritage offers logical starting point for what this project may include.

At the same time, the continued exploration and celebration will be a part of our Strategy—led by the Franco American Center.

We will also engage with the Province of Quebec and the more direct immigrant lineage between the Province and LA.

● [Expand the International Children’s Fair at the Franco Center](#)

The Franco Center for Heritage and the Performing Arts recently hosted a unique Now International Children’s Festival. The two-day event was planned in partnership with the Somali Bantu and other communities in Androscoggin County, and consisted of two days of workshops for children 4 to 18 years of age. Performing artists from each of the communities led workshops to help the children share aspects of their own cultures while learning about the cultures of others. We propose the community and the Franco Center evaluate this

event and look for opportunities to sustain and expand the program.

This may be a relatively small project in the context of the larger issue, but serves as an example of small, immediate, and concrete steps towards empowering LA Maine’s diversity.

Expanding our Workforce—through Education (PK-12)

Establishing a pre-kindergarten (PK) through 12th grade education system, like no other, is the opportunity that must be pursued. PK education is critical to the future engagement of youth as students and adults. All communities strive for this. LA Maine must do the same. We believe we have the components of such a system:

- Infrastructure (schools, walkways to and from neighborhoods, buses, etc.);
- A Chamber of Commerce focused on this issue;
- A community that, when focused, supports strategic education initiatives (Consider LA is the only place that embraced and still supports College for ME, Androscoggin, in the State);
- Institutions of higher education and training
 - Bates College
 - Central Maine Community College
 - Kaplan University
 - University of Southern Maine—LA College
 - Northeast Training Institute

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LA Maine and Androscoggin County is the only location in Maine that has built upon the College for ME initiative launched over 10 years ago. College for ME Androscoggin is preparing to, with input from the ***LA Maine: Forward*** collaborators, launch a significant and bold initiative to seek funding to provide funding for college for every student in the county. Coupled with its First Class Scholarships for adults, such an initiative would be a significant economic development asset.

● Expanding and Sustaining College for ME Androscoggin

College for ME Androscoggin aims to build a collaborative bridge between educational attainment and economic sustainability in Androscoggin County. College for ME – Androscoggin recognizes that the impact post-secondary planning has on our students is vital to our youth’s sense of self determination. Soon

College for ME Androscoggin is launching a revived program to increase student aspirations countywide. They will work closely with each of the six high school’s college access teams and guidance counselors, Lewiston Regional Vocational Center, College admissions and enrollment counselors. They will make use of MELMAC and FAME to optimize access to financial resources available for high school students to plan, prepare and pursue a post-secondary plan highlighting further education.

● Alert Schools and Take Students to Job Openings

An effort to alert high schools of job openings in area businesses may help non-college bound students to find work and businesses to find needed employees. This may be as simple as asking development professionals that are meeting with businesses (see BEAR LA, page 40) and become aware of job openings to alert the High School Guidance Counselors to those openings. Perhaps too, a distinct visit to a business by a small group of students, after school, might open-up opportunities for the student. Now

As part of BEAR LA (see page 39), when we identify a business with some openings that would be appropriate (entry-level), we will make a referral to the guidance counselors at LPS and ASD. The counselors will then work with teachers and students (with parents’ permission) to refer students to the employer, or arrange a group of students to visit the employer, and also help with filling out applications, etc.

● Support and Expand the Bridge Year Program in Local HS

The Bridge Year program affords high school students the opportunity to acquire job skills through technical training while completing college-level math, science, English and history courses during their last two years in high school. As a result, the program produces career-tracked high school graduates who can Now

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affordably earn their associate degree within 12 months of their high school graduation.

Locally, Edward Little High School is the first participant in the program, which is sponsored in part by grants from the State Department of Education. This fall 20 students will be enrolled in the technical skills-based education that will put them on a career path while also significantly reducing their college expenses. Lewiston High School is likely to begin Bridge Year programming by 2017. The Lewiston Regional Technical Center will provide the technical skills training for both.

We propose to advocate for funding for LHS & EL including funding beyond state grant program. LAEGC will integrate this pilot (grant) program into our BEAR LA business visits, helping to direct students and programming focused on local employer needs.

● [InternHelpME Program](#)

Soon

The Androscoggin County Chamber of Commerce has teamed up with the Maine State Chamber to run an 18-month pilot program aimed at creating internship opportunities for students and local companies. Internships are a proven method of building a future workforce; more than 60 percent of students who intern with a company are offered full-time employment there when they graduate. During the pilot program, the chambers will work with the business community to understand more about what

internships are already offered locally, and to identify what tools and resources are needed to help employers who haven't offered internships to make the commitment to offering them in the future.

The Chamber, as part of the BEAR LA team, will help businesses to access and take advantage of this program.

● [USMLAC as Part of USM Metropolitan University](#)

The University of Southern Maine was an early member of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU), which formed in 1989. The members of CUMU, today numbering nearly 100, share a purposeful commitment to the place in which each resides, an abiding engagement and a mutually beneficial relationship with their communities and the needs of those communities.

Soon

USMLAC is leading the charge as USM seeks Carnegie Designation as a Metro University. USMLAC by its very creation and the way it operates is a MU. It continues to focus on community engagement as a core to its mission.

The full development and improved community engagement of USMLAC is encouraged.

Expanding our Workforce—through Training

Differing from Education, training is the development and delivery of specific programs that provide specific skills to workers to meet

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the employer’s needs. The LA Career Center has training funds available to assist with training current (incumbent) workforce. We need to expand opportunities use these funds to train incumbent workers so that they may be promoted, and use other training funds to replenish their old positions with new workers.

There may be another source of workers from traditionally “untapped” segments of the population, including the “young seniors”, the disabled, the long-term unemployed, even ex-offenders. LAEGC and its partners will explore opportunities to engage those citizens through programs coordinated by the Central Western Maine Workforce Investment Board.

● [Know Who to Contact](#)

Now

As one simple, low-cost project, LAEGC, as part of its BEAR LA program (page 40), shall produce simple business referral cards listing local experts in training programs and funding. Leaving these with business is one way for them to inquire and seek out those funds to build their workforce.

● [Ready To Work Academies](#)

Now

The Ready to Work Academy (RWA) is an 80-120 hour intensive training program that provides local employers with applicant recruitment and work preparatory training services that focus on building, reading, math, communication and problem solving skills, among others. The LA Career Center has developed and conducted RWA’s for nursing (CAN and PPS), welding, and IT

technical support. The center is currently developing similar programming for stitchers and other manufacturing functions.

LAEGC and other economic development partners will promote and share the availability of RWA slots. LAEGC shall integrate this into its new social media marketing plan.

Expanding our Workforce—through Attracting People

Another possible avenue of workforce expansion is to seek out workers from other places. We propose consideration of a coordinated and focused marketing effort to seek out workers from places around the globe. Business “members” would provide funding to support attendance at job fairs or direct tours for seniors in high schools from around rural places in New England or beyond. The coordinated effort would promote LA jobs and the community to pools of potential workers in other areas. Those pools may be high school seniors, college students, or veterans leaving the military.

LAEGC will work with interested parties to develop a model for such an effort, including how it might be funded, what areas might be targeted and how such a program might be launched.

● [Develop a Work Force Attraction Program](#)

LAEGC will develop a model for a sustainable, privately funded program to promote LA Maine as a place to work and live. LAEGC will work with the Chamber and others in the development of this model. We

Soon

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envision a “membership model”, supported by the business community, to promote the availability of jobs in LA Maine to potential employees in other communities through direct recruitment activities.

LAEGC will develop a proposed model to share with its Board and the Chamber for consideration. The current thinking is a membership model to raise funds to support an innovative and aggressive marketing and employee recruitment effort. The implementation of this project will be dependent upon that feedback and support.

● Create and “Publish” Welcome Videos

Soon

Some have discussed creating a welcoming video that may be used by a number of employers, LAEGC, the Chamber and others as they do their own work to attract employees, business, or visitors. Recently, the Chamber has helped organize and “produce” a video to highlight the area for the meeting and convention market. Another video is in the works to draw attention to LA in the social media market.

Other video exists that might compliment these efforts and be edited into a short Welcome Video. Snippets or other short videos might be produced for direct marketing on social media. The Chamber, with partners, will begin to produce a number of videos, available to members to welcome persons and business to LA Maine, promote our visitor assets, and other subjects.

Healthy Lifestyles

There are a number of collaborators working within the wellness, food security, and local food development arena. This subject has been recognized around the world as an area of importance in local community economic development. The Good Food Council of LA is a coordinating body for these initiatives.

Soon

There may be opportunities to expand existing business and build new businesses while promoting local food wellness by making use of the significant portion of land in agricultural production in Auburn (and Lewiston, to a lesser degree). There may also be ways to promote new business and expansion of business while maintaining that land as open agricultural space. Additional review and input on economic opportunities while sustaining open space and productive farm land may be considered.

Grow L+A is focused on efforts to further develop a local-regional ‘food economy’ and aggregating such activity through a possible food facility in Bates Mill 5. Coupled with the Food Council’s ‘Healthy Food System’, there are opportunities to promote wellness and economic growth. By interconnecting the various pieces of the system from production to processing to point of sale (wholesale and retail) to waste management, value is generated through the recirculation of local dollars and value. Also important to LA Maine’s People are the efforts of Healthy Androscoggin and others to promote physical activity, healthy eating, prevention of drug use, and smoking cessation programs.

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A local food economy is often the basis of a “buy local” program. LAEGC will explore such programs, together with the Chamber and in coordination with the GFCLA.

Place

Place includes our location in the world, our public and private infrastructure, and attention towards development of our downtowns.

Space for Business—Buildings & Business Parks

Our community has tremendous variety in the spaces available for business. There are mill spaces, downtown storefronts and office buildings, traditional commercial spaces, and new permitted business and commerce parks all available in LA Maine. These all represent opportunities that must be marketed in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

● [Market LA Maine as a Place for Business](#)

LAEGC will continue to expand its role in marketing LA Maine as a Place for Prosperity—a place for business. It will do so in coordination with other marketing efforts under a new regional brand, and LAEGC’s own new brand. It will do so in concert and coordination with efforts in Auburn and Lewiston. See LAEGC Marketing for Business Development for more on how we are proposing to undertake this effort.

Now

● [An “Inventory” of Places for Business](#)

Now

LAEGC has historically been responsible for maintaining an inventory of available spaces in LA Maine. As we go forward, LAEGC intends to expand this function. This does not necessarily mean LAEGC will create and maintain an all-encompassing “data base” but rather, we will focus on developing stronger and more open relationships with commercial realtors and property owners and developers in LA Maine. We may explore ways to integrate the most used existing commercial real estate websites into our own.

Owners and real estate agencies that manage their own inventories and properties will be encouraged to connect with LAEGC so that they can be included in our network and inventory of spaces for new business and development. LAEGC must expand its awareness and its access to this inventory as it takes on its efforts to promote and develop entrepreneurs and the expansion and attraction of existing and new business.

Information on how to be connected into our “inventory” will be forthcoming as we develop the new LAEGC website. In the immediate short-term, it is simply a call or email to LAEGC to share information about existing properties.

Commercial Retail Opportunities

Our Downtowns have their unique place and focus, yet, to be a striving metropolitan area, we must continue to develop and

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redevelop areas for national retail, lodging, and other commercial places.

Additional research and market data may help foster continued evolution and growth of retail and commercial areas in LA. LAEGC will work with the University of Maine to research the current retail market in Lewiston and Auburn as part of the projects outlined here.

● [Exit 75 and 80](#)

Soon

Our two interchanges off I-95 are key areas for continued and carefully planned commercial (and industrial development).

Both offer key access points to industrial, warehousing, logistics, and manufacturing facilities. Additional development off of Exit 75 might focus on build-out of the Hartt Transportation Business Park, the Auburn Enterprise Center, and additional property to and around the Auburn Lewiston Airport.

There are plans for new commercial and light industrial/manufacturing space around Exit 80 in Lewiston. Plans for the next phase include 1,000,000 square feet of new development—significant opportunities to expand the Lewiston tax base and attract jobs to LA Maine. LAEGC will work with Lewiston ED and the developer of the property to identify ways to help promote the development of this area.

Both City ED Departments will take the lead on development of these sites with business and developer leads generated by LAEGC.

● [Continued Redevelopment of Existing Sites](#)

The continued development or redevelopment of the mall and commercial area in Auburn is Now critical to expanded and diversified economy in LA Maine. Working with private interests, Auburn ED and LAEGC will continue to encourage development in this area. This may include new and creative ways to use traditional “big box” developments—such as the development of the Auburn Mall with the TD Bank call center and other such projects.

This area is home to the Norway Savings Ice Arena, which offers a tremendous new attraction for LA Maine. The Arena will be creative and explore new events and opportunities to bring to LA Maine. Working with the Chamber, such events can be integrated and add value and business across the community.

Auburn ED, the Arena, the Chamber and LAEGC shall coordinate and communicate common marketing and development projects. This coordination and communication will help make each of those agencies efforts most efficient.

Likewise, redevelopment of older and now underutilized commercial areas is important in Lewiston. Legacy

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Lewiston, the city’s comprehensive plan, speaks to the transformation of key commercial areas like intersection of Lisbon St. and East Ave., and the Sabattus ‘crossroads’ (the intersection of East Avenue and Sabattus Street). [LINK to City Web site and Legacy Lewiston Plan]

Creative Community Places—Public and Private Spaces

Auburn and Lewiston, both individually and collectively, recognize the importance of investing in place. We encourage and want to foster the continued investment in creative community places. These are public spaces that foster community pride, interaction, and often serve as a place for entrepreneurs to create new ideas. These are, as well, private investments, small and large, in buildings and homes.

Soon

There are many examples of such places. The redeveloped gazebo at Kennedy Park, the relocation of the bells from the St. Louis Church, the installation and redevelopment of historic monuments, the new amphitheater at Simard-Payne Park, and small “pocket parks.” Other efforts are being organized to encourage public (and private) “clean up days” of these kinds of spaces.

As a community, we must encourage the continued development and redevelopment of such spaces and walkways. We must, collectively, be creative in finding the volunteers and funds to develop such spaces.

The Androscoggin River and its Great Falls represent a tremendous, if only partially “tapped” opportunity. Access to the river, outlooks, and use of the water itself offers a means to further define this

place we call LA Maine. The Androscoggin River has tremendous appeal and potential to serve as a catalyst for new investment, visitor attraction, and economic development. There are publicly-developed plans and significant investments in walkways and public spaces to foster activity. There shall be more.

Continued Redevelopment of Mill Spaces

LAEGC and the City ED Departments have, along with a group of sponsors, planned and held a LA Maine Developer Boot Camp to identify small projects and foster entrepreneurial developers. Still, we propose that continued redevelopment of the historical mill complexes is an important part of our economic future. In the end, this requires the attraction of new investment, entrepreneurship, and the expansion of business.

Now & Soon

Still, we propose that an expanded effort to work with property owners and developers is important. LAEGC shall continue to reach out to the owners of these properties and identify available space, desired redevelopment plans and the necessary investments required for the redevelopment. These properties become part of our inventory of available spaces.

One area we wish to explore is the continued and expanded use of spaces for **high-value, low-volume, niche manufacturing**. LA has a number of such firms in existence,

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and we can expand and market these companies presence to attract new such businesses.

LAEGC may seek out creative funding sources to help build a focused plan around this niche. Sources could include the Maine Technology Institute and USDA Rural Development. A focused plan will help us brand our existing companies in this cluster, identify costs and sites for new firms, encourage our entrepreneurial development in this cluster, and attract new investment and business to our redeveloped mill sites.

Bates Mill 5 is on the verge of redevelopment. The owner /developer is working with the YMCA and CMHC on expansion opportunities in the space. In addition, Grow L+A is focused on providing assistance and guidance for the redevelopment of Bate Mill 5. This includes the engagement of the community in a continued focus of Mill 5 as a center of wellness and the “food economy.” Grow L+A is also seeking interested tenants and business that would like to be part of the future development.

● Walkways and Connecting River to Community

Some work has been completed and more is proposed to expand walkways along the river and to better connect the community to the river. We recommend ***focus on further development of walkways and bikeways that extend up and down the river, into the downtowns, and connect Auburn and Lewiston.*** We

Soon

propose the Lewiston Riverfront Master Plan be integrated with the New Auburn Village Master Plan, the New Auburn Greenway, and other plans for paths and walking trails, many being put forth by the Androscoggin Land Trust. A regional , if not statewide, walkway (bike, pedestrian, snow travel) may be created extending from Androscoggin Riverlands State Park along the river into Auburn Center, extending into and through New Auburn and out to the Little Androscoggin, and looping into Lewiston, extending out into the Lewiston downtown to Bates and into the balance of the community.

An integral part of this project will be to review and plan for ways to make walkways along the canals more inviting.

We are not proposing a new plan. Rather, we propose that we coordinate and collaborate to “connect” these plans and seek funding to build the proposed pathways together. LAEGC will meet with leaders of these plans to strategize how to do just that.

● Investments in Riverfront Properties

Auburn and Lewiston ED have a focus on fostering new private investment along the riverfront. Both cities continue to make public investments in the riverfronts to further encourage private investment. LAEGC also plays a role in its work to seek out new investments.

Soon

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A key to the development of the riverfronts is continued coordination, dialogue, activity (including events), and public investment. These are all underway as outlined in the Lewiston Riverfront Island and the New Auburn Master Plans.

LAEGC will review these plans and activities and engage staff from both cities and offer any additional recommendations and input on their riverfront investment plans, including use of tax increment financing and CDBG funds.

Our community has a number of existing and potential places to “play”—places to recreate, to visit, explore, and experience. From the historic mills and their architecture, the river and walkways, parks, growing culinary scene, to our cultural experiences, LA Maine has and could have more developed places to play.

The promotion and marketing of LA for experiential visitors is proposed as a Chamber activity (see Chamber (tourism) marketing) and other agencies in collaboration, e.g., LA Arts, the Franco Center, the theaters, etc.

We propose the exploration, development, and marketing of other recreation assets.

● [Other recreation on riverfront](#)

The community is engaged and looking for new recreation assets along the river. Soon
Expanded walkways, rock walls, new stages, river access

points with rentals, lighting, and art displays are all means to create new opportunities along the riverfront.

A dialogue and “community brain-storming” session may be encouraged as part of the LA cultural plan or some other program—or on its own merits. Such a session may also be part of a future Build Maine Conference (the last two being held in LA).

A community leader or organization must be identified on a case-by-case basis. Recreation sites are often on public space, but need not be exclusively. Some may be managed and maintained by a private organization on behalf of a city.

We propose we foster new design, architecture, and other means to create places that inspire community and commerce in LA Maine. LA Arts has secured funding from the Maine Arts Commission for a Cultural Plan, and the development of that Plan can help further identify project and how to build Place through arts and creativity.

● [Cultural Plan](#)

LA Arts has been awarded a grant from the Now Maine Arts Commission to engage advisors and the community and craft a Cultural Plan for LA Maine. Together with their partners and others, the Cultural Plan (and planning process) will follow and complement ***LA Maine: Forward***. The Cultural Plan will build upon many of the themes and Opportunities for Action here. It will also identify new opportunities to build Place in LA Maine.

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LAEGC will work with LA Arts and other cultural organizations to leverage the preparation of the Cultural Plan into actionable projects and events. We will also work together to seek out funds to foster continued arts and cultural development. This may include expanded Art Walks, a plan for new public art funding and installations, and other culturally-based events in our downtowns and along our riverfront venues.

- [LA Maine. Maine’s City of Lights](#)

Soon

Many monuments and places of significance in LA have been illuminated regularly. The Basilica, Lewiston City Hall, Franco-American Center, the St. Louis Church are examples places that have been “lit up” partially or fully.

As part of the 2015 Build Maine Conference, a group presented its thesis on illuminating places. As a follow up, we propose that the community embark on a plan to use light and lighting as a means to develop creative and welcoming space in LA. Let’s establish LA Maine as Maine’s City of Lights.

A proposal is in development to light the smoke stack at the Bates Mill.⁴ Other private developers have expressed

⁴ A graduate class from the Pratt Institute used LA as a case study for its graduate capstone class. Since then, one member of that class has developed a consulting and design company, Impactful Illuminations, which has offered to install lighting on the Bates Mill smoke stack .Final details are being prepared.

interest in creative uses of light to highlight their own structures. With the follow-up on the smoke stack project, we will explore the opportunity to identify other possibilities and how we might integrate these into a plan for additional lighting projects—including how such projects may be effectively funded.

- [Public Art](#)

Soon

This summer, a new piece of public art was installed along Lisbon Street in Lewiston—LA Rattle, by Charlie Hewitt. We propose that this be only the start. Working with LA Arts and as part of the Cultural Plan the development of art walks and installations may be an additional way to build our Place.

- [Future Projects for ABDC & LDC](#)

Soon

LA is fortunate to have two well established non-profit development corporations. The Auburn Business Development Corporation and the Lewiston Development Corporation have been in existence for decades. Some of the now full business and commerce parks, industrial buildings, and some urban redevelopment is the direct result of ABDC and LDC investments.

Both agencies are re-establishing themselves for new projects. ABDC and LDC desire to consider projects where the free market may fail due to any number of considerations. Along with the City of Auburn, ABDC is

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currently focused on the development of the Auburn Enterprise Center, a new business park on Lewiston Junction Road. LDC is working to finalize interest in space it has available at the Key Bank Commerce Center at 415 Lisbon Street in Lewiston.

Both agencies are seeking funding to support the development of new projects and the expansion of commercial space in LA. ABDC will focus, with LAEGC and CE Realtors, on the development and build out of the Auburn Enterprise Center. The Auburn Enterprise Center is a 93 acre business park with 8 lots that are pre-approved for commercial and industrial use, pre-permitted for wetland mitigation, and protected by park covenants. AEC is located less than a mile from the Maine Intermodal Facility and just 2.5 miles from Exit 75 of the Maine Turnpike.

LDC will continue to focus on full utilization of its current assets at 415 Lisbon Street and a 5.23 acre parcel on 25 Forrestall Street, permitted for a 40,000 square foot building and ready for development.

While focusing on the build-out of their current assets, both ABDC and LDC will explore other “small scale” opportunities to facilitate property development. These agencies are in place and can take on riskier developments that traditional developers may not, and at a lower “profit”. That said, they must also be fiscally responsible to their bottom line. In particular, both are interested in a focus on properties that may be too risky for the current “market.” This may

include, for example, properties that may have environmental concerns—by making use of US EPA Brownfield Assessment grants, currently available through AVCOG.

● Co-working and Maker Space(s)

Now

There is interest around LA in developing shared or co-working spaces. The challenge is in finding the property and owner or manager of such a facility. LAEGC shall continue to explore properties and ways to organize interested parties for such a project.

Soon

A maker space is similar but generally with focus on production of goods. Co-working and maker-spaces may be shared but a maker-space generally has more space requirements. LAEGC shall continue to seek out such a space that offers the cost savings (rents) low enough to develop a maker space—as well as an energetic and focused entrepreneur willing to take on such a venture.

USMLAC and the Auburn Public Library are considering or planning for such shared spaces. A key component to the success of any one or number of these will be coordination so as to best serve the marketplace—basic supply and demand. LAEGC will work with these parties to advise and assist on how such spaces may be developed.

There are also private developers interested in creating co-working spaces in LA. LAEGC is working with these and

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others and will coordinate and collaborate to nurture and establish such spaces.

LA Maine Gateways

We recognize, as do both City Councils and Auburn and Lewiston ED staff that the primary vehicular entryways into LA Maine are generally speaking (to be polite) not the most inviting and do not leave a good “first impression.” The development of Washington Street in Auburn and outer Lisbon Street in Lewiston are historical remnants of the expansion of the automobile. New and innovative incentive programs may be one way to encourage private investment in these approaches. Another approach may be through public investment. At this time, this requires review of previous and current plans, existing programs that may be used, and input from planning and economic development partners. What would follow might be proposals for private and public partnerships or grants to support improvements along these corridors.

Soon

As part of its review of each City’s tax increment financing and CDBG programs, LAEGC will offer input and recommendations for gateway projects. LAEGC will seek out other examples of successful projects and their funding models and with Auburn and Lewiston ED, prepare formal recommendations to City Councils. This will include outreach for input from property owners along these corridors to recognize their rights and property values—and encourage new investments that may benefit those owners.

Housing—Redevelopment and Investments

The efforts to attract and encourage new entrepreneurs, business, and development must be balanced with a coordinated and focused effort to improve the range and value of the community housing stock. As noted earlier (Challenges, page 13) LA Maine has an aging housing stock and we must continue to foster redevelopment of these properties.

The Cities and their ED Staff recognize this and are making efforts to encourage new investment in housing. Each offer the following financing or funding programs to encourage investment in housing:

City Housing Investment Programs	
Program	City
Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program	Lewiston
Homeowner Rehabilitation Loan Program	Lewiston
Homebuyer Assistance Loan Program	Lewiston
Homeowner Emergency Loan Program	Lewiston
Multifamily Energy Assistance Loan Program	Lewiston
Home Buyer Program	Auburn
Homeowner Rehab Program	Auburn
Spot Rehab Program	Auburn
Residential Rehabilitation Program	Auburn
Lead Grant program	Auburn
Commercial Rehabilitation Program (Multi Family)	Auburn

Lewiston and Auburn have both articulated means to meet this challenge. Collectively and overall, both cities call for innovative use of public funds to improve the diversity

Now

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of housing stock. It is important that we build, rebuild, and develop a range of housing stock to meet a range of lifestyles and households—from improved lower income housing, a wider range of market-rate and above market-rate rental units, single-family housing units, and even short-term housing. Legacy Lewiston and Auburn’s Plan both call for new and creative uses of CDBG and TIF programs. These plans also include some of the following recommendations:

- Selling tax acquired properties for \$1.00 to qualified buyers who will rebuild the property,
- Establishing a fund in partnership with commercial banks Community Reinvestment Funds to encourage purchase and redevelopment of vacant or abandoned units
- Working with larger employers to develop programs to encourage home (we would add condominium) ownership in the community,
- Reviewing and revising codes, to make it financially easier to redevelop targeted properties,
- Revisions to zoning and land use requirements to create new opportunities for home construction in rural areas of the community.

We encourage the continued exploration and action on the above activities and the engagement of other interested parties and collaborators.

New, Improved, Expanded Events in LA Maine, Downtown, and on the River

There are a number of events in and around our community, ranging in size and scope from the Balloon Festival, Dempsey Challenge and the Emerge Film Festival to farmer markets and others. The Franco Center, our theaters, and others hold additional events and programs. New investments in meeting and conference spaces and hotels are signs of the value of these events.

Still, there may be room for more, with some consideration given to the “poaching” of sponsors from existing events. Yet, from our community dialogue and recent and ongoing investments in the Downtowns, riverfront, and other facilities, there may be a market for new, improved or expanded events.

The Chamber is launching Downtown Trick or Treat this year—with plans and intent to expand it beyond its current Lisbon Street location. Auburn ED is proposing an “Arts and Humanities Festival” in coordination and collaboration with LA Arts and others. The formulation of such an event is important and critical to its long-term success. ***We propose a concerted and coordinated effort be launched to first inventory the existing events of all size on both sides of the river and secondly, to plan and coordinate for an event of significance that spans the river and makes use of venues in Auburn and Lewiston.***

The Colisee and Norway Savings Arena are valuable assets for new events, perhaps coordinated with other venues or locations in the

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community. The river offers a world class location for ‘theme’ festivals (fly fishing, kayaking, music, cultural).

The coordination of events in order to develop new or expanded events is important. The Chamber is redesigning its Regional Image Committee into an event and tourism committee and can serve as a coordinating body, promoter, and developer of new events or meetings and conventions at existing facilities.

During a number of our community meetings, the idea of developing a significant, world-class, cross-river multicultural event was proposed. Such an event takes 18-24 months to plan and conduct market research, and requires significant revenue. That should not deter us, but rather challenge us to consider how best to develop such an event.

LAEGC will convene community leaders and organizations to contemplate the development of a “signature event.” It will take careful consideration, community engagement, and financial support— and a carefully considered business plan to consider the current market for such events, sponsorships (without taking away from other community programs), and costs.

Soon

Connectivity to the World

As noted, we have tremendous assets and competitive advantages based on our location and our connectivity to the rest of the world. These assets include or fiber optics, rail, air and automotive and trucking connectivity.

LA Maine has over 120 miles of the highest capacity fiber optics available. Access in some areas is still limited. Yet, it is clear ***that LA Maine has some of the densest high-speed capacity in the Northeast.*** We must review, organize, and use this asset to promote our connectivity to the world.

● Market the Broadband Available in LA Maine

Regardless of the service provider, we propose that as a community we should be unabashed about this asset and make it known to the world the density and affordability of our fiber access. With input from Oxford Networks (now merging with Bay Ring) and FairPoint, LAEGC will develop a flyer as part of our business marketing campaign and make known the availability and capacity of fiber in LA.

Now

At the same time, there are gaps in the availability of fiber in and around LA. LAEGC will explore alternative service providers and financial mechanisms to invest in the infrastructure needed to fill those gaps.

Alternative means to deploy high speed internet is required across the communities.

LA Maine is fortunate to have access to rail that provides for the delivery of freight, goods, and potentially people to the balance of the continent. The key to the development of rail is the transport of freight. This is not to disparage or dismiss passenger rail - but it is a basic economic reality. Passenger rail requires public subsidies from

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various level of government (federal, state, and local). But passenger rail may provide the investment in rail that can further facilitate freight travel. Co-development of both forms may be mutually beneficial. This is a complicated and longer-term issue and opportunity—but one that must begin to be focused on and addressed.

In general, a revised, coordinated, and a focused strategy is required. ***We propose that a common vision for future rail investments from the municipal governments in Lewiston and Auburn is required as co-owners in the Lewiston Auburn Railroad Company (LARC).*** Just as our community has engaged one another in the ongoing development of ***LA Maine: Forward***, so too must LARC lead the effort to coordinate and set forth a strategic direction on the most efficient and effective use and development of our rail assets.

Together, we must explore the best political and financial strategy to build increased freight traffic to and from the “Port of Auburn.” We must do the same to consider the most strategic investments to develop passenger service, be it from the south (Portland and Boston) or north (Montreal).

The Lewiston Auburn Railroad Company is in the best position, with leaders from Auburn and Lewiston, to put that strategy together. Input from the Maine Department of Transportation, the Maine Port Authority, the Maine International Trade Center, and others will be invaluable.

LAEGC and LARC will convene a focused strategic development session with input from Maine DOT and private operators. We will engage the City ED and community leaders as well. As part of its marketing program, LAEGC will concurrently seek out companies that may take advantage of our rail assets.

● Improved and Increased Freight Rail Activity

Now

Working on behalf of LARC, LAEGC will work with the private partners, Saint Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad, and businesses to refocus efforts to increase freight traffic to LA Maine. This will include making use of the Auburn Intermodal Facility. The priority actions include revising and updating LARC relationships and leases with SLAR. Working together, with mutual interest of increasing traffic, expanding, and attracting business, we will make use of our tremendous rail and locational assets. We will seek out new and creative or innovative uses — such as we did earlier this summer, by seeking input from the Port of Saint John (not a direct line via rail but with input, advice, and collaborative and constructive recommendations).

A near term “now” project includes the full integration and single-point of contact for rail development, now handled by LAEGC on behalf of LARC and the City of Auburn Intermodal Facility. We propose that we hold a seminar or series of seminars on how our rail assets can save money, open up new markets, and develop expanded and new business. These will be promoted regionally and perhaps around the State to reintroduce the “Port of Auburn” as a

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cost-effective way to move product to and from Maine and New England.

LAEGC will work to identify possible rail users from the local business base as a means of increasing traffic – this will include a larger regional “catchment area” of potential users from Western and Central Maine, if not farther.

● Passenger Rail in LA Maine

Soon

The State is prepared to commission a study on improvement of the rail line to foster passenger service south from LA to Portland and beyond. High level consideration of improvements necessary north to Montreal may be included. This study will require local (city) match, yet to be approved.

The investment costs and specifics around passenger rail to, from and in LA is a matter of debate. The location of any such passenger station in Auburn or Lewiston is as well.

What is not of debate is the importance of strategic investment and planning for rail infrastructure. Investments to improve rail lines for passenger rail can and do improve track for freight travel.

A clear and well vetted policy and investment strategy for passenger service into and out of LA is needed. Such a policy must be span the river and be acceptable to each City. Together, both cities will have a stronger statement and ability to foster and leverage federal, state, and private

investments for future passenger rail service—that will, if planned carefully improve our freight infrastructure.

We recognize as well *the economic importance of the Auburn Lewiston airport*. We propose that, together, we better integrate the airport as an important part of the community, and better leverage its potential for economic development in LA Maine.

To make best use of the AL Airport, we believe a dedicated and focused marketing initiative needs be undertaken—in coordination with the marketing efforts being proposed in this Strategy. At the same time, strategic investment decisions to support a focused market niche is required. That market niche is in the private, charter, and potentially “air taxi” service.

● Marketing AL Airport in the Region and Across the Continent

We propose that, as part of a comprehensive community wide marketing initiative, (see **Soon** Marketing LA Maine, page 46), the Airport be marketed as a place for charter and corporate service to Maine, notably Western Maine. LAEGC, the Chamber, and the Airport may leverage their funds and other funds they are seeking to develop an aggressive marketing campaign for increasing traffic and use at the airport. Increased traffic will support our economic development efforts with both business (corporate) and high-end tourism traffic.

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Prosperity

It is well documented that business clusters evolve based on assets that are indigenous to the community, and growth of interconnected businesses, suppliers and associated institutions. In this Strategy we identify proposed “clusters” or sectors of focus. The opportunity is to cultivate those sectors and focus our limited development time and marketing activities on those sectors.

Energy

Identifying new, innovative, and efficient ways to deliver affordable energy is a significant challenge and opportunity for LA Maine and the state as a whole. We believe we have some unique assets that may allow us to do just that.

Our competitors in economic development, other cities and places, are taking action on the energy front. Many in public policy and economic development are recognizing that places taking a leadership role in lowering energy costs and creating alternative options have an advantage over those who do not.

Of particular intrigue is the development and use of alternative sources of energy, given some of our local assets. The available agricultural and open land available in Auburn and to some degree in Lewiston may offer opportunities for development of alternative uses of energy, such as solar farms —but will require additional guidance, research, and community input.

Likewise, our urban environment may offer opportunities for use of solar or geothermal energy development. The square footage of

roof tops on LA’s mill spaces offer valuable space for solar panels. Some have suggested that the canals may also be used as a source of geothermal energy.

The development of alternative energy options is worthy of exploration. As with all markets, there is a cost and benefit analysis required. There may be private enterprises that may offer some solutions.

Oil, with supplies high and prices low, will continue to play a role in the development and cost evaluation of alternative forms of energy. LA is served by natural gas (Unitil) and additional expansion of that market is also dependent upon specific cost\benefit analysis on case-by-case basis.

● [LA Maine Energy Policy](#)

LAEGC will organize and facilitate the City leaders and other collaborators to consider establishment of an Soon Energy Policy with an action-oriented plan to establish LA Maine as a new-energy center and “green city.” The initiative shall begin with public policy objectives and commitments and then focus on what projects and initiatives may be considered to continue to focus on lower energy prices in LA, increasing efficiencies, and creative energy projects.

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Primary Focus: Expanding Existing Business

Encouraging the expansion and retention of existing business is a basic tenet of economic development. From this basis, we can foster new business and investment from our existing business base.

● Business Expansion and Retention: BEAR LA

LAEGC will provide the leadership and coordination of a systematic Business Expansion and Retention program called “BEAR LA.”

Now

Many such programs include board or business volunteers and include surveying of the business community. There is value in such an approach, but that approach can become old, tired and stale as the surveys get tabulated, volunteers lose interest, and the program bogs down in process and procedures. We propose a systematic program operated by the professionals in business and economic development within the community.

The BEAR LA Team shall include LAEGC, City ED Staff, and Career Center Staff to serve as the primary outreach professionals. Business visitation is part of our regular duties and there is no need to create something new. We will begin by collectively assimilating our contacts and networks within our existing business community. We will then systematically schedule and make visits to those companies we may not have met with. We will have general and basic questions. This is not to exclude other

partners in economic development, but only to keep this effort focused. We will coordinate and collaborate with other agencies who regularly reach out to the business community (CMCC, Kaplan University, USM LAC, Chamber, etc.). We will hold semi-annual meetings to get our team’s findings together and share what we have learned with our partners.

The most important part of any business expansion or visitation program is what happens after the visit. The primary role will be to refer and connect the business with any applicable agencies or sources of information to meet their current needs and any potential expansion opportunities.

● Market Our Business Community

Based on information we learn from our business community we will market our business community and LA Maine to the world. BEAR LA will form the foundation of our entry into new markets. We will reach out and establish and nurture new connections, new networks and potential partnerships and markets for our business community. Generally stated, we will foster business-to-business activity (B2B).

Now

We will rebrand the Androscoggin Business to Business Trade Show and use it to help encourage B2B activity. By doing so, we may foster outreach to other B2B type shoes in other communities. For this we will need our business

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community participation. Such participation, if focused on communities that offer potential markets for our business, may create new opportunities.

Thus, our BEAR LA activity will help us identify new B2B markets and new ways to help expand market activity for our existing business community.

We will explore the creation of an **LA Maine Marketplace**—a shop for LA Maine products and services, cooperatively owned and managed in other markets. To create such a marketplace, we will need a number of area businesses willing to share costs for development and leasing of space. We will need to create a management structure. LAEGC and the Chamber will explore this and bring forth a proposal to its members and the community. ***An initial and immediate pilot of such a marketplace will be a Pop-Up Store in collaboration with the Maine College of Art on Congress Street in Portland.*** LAEGC will work with MECA and others to organize the space, displays, and a program to invite and include local vendors to participate.

● Buy Local Program

LAEGC is researching a buy local program. Others in the community may be interested in advising and assisting in development of such a program with LA Maine. Buy local programs generate local income and wealth by circulating income within the community, versus income exported.

Soon

There is significant research that demonstrates how “buy local” programs boost a local economy. In essence, circulating spending within the local area helps boost those participating businesses, creates a local awareness and helps identify local market gaps for new business, and fosters a unique character of the “place.” A recent study showed that “in communities with an active ‘buy local first’ initiative run by a local business organization reported average revenue growth of 8.6 percent in 2012, compared to 3.4 percent for those in areas without such an initiative.”⁵

LAEGC and the Chamber will evaluate existing programs and consider a program for LA Maine, bringing recommendations back to their independent Boards.

Attracting & Putting New Capital & Investment on the Streets

We will, as noted above, use our BEAR LA activity to expand into new markets. We will use this as a way to explore and identify new investments and new business for LA Maine. We must also continue to secure new capital for expanding business opportunities. LAEGC, CEI, CCFC, the City ED and other agencies should review and work together to expand the sources and flexibility to grant and loan funds to expanding business.

⁵ Survey Confirms Benefits of “Buy Local First” Campaigns, Finds Challenges Ahead, Rosemary Hawkins, 2013, at <http://www.bookweb.org/news/survey-confirms-benefits-buy-local-first-campaigns-finds-challenges-ahead#sthash.wNqEFblQ.dpuf>

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● Expand Existing Resources

We believe our area lenders and gap-financing agencies (LAEGC, AVCOG, CCFC, CEI) do a good job of working together to develop financing packages for startups and expanding enterprises. Like all “systems,” there may be new and innovative ways to promote the range of existing programs. LAEGC will reach out to these agencies and brainstorm new and creative ways to do just that. We will also explore new sources of capital that might be secured and put to work to build business, such as use of lender Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) funds, foundations, or other pooled lending efforts.

Soon

● Innovative uses of Current Sources of Funds

There may be ways to creatively use funds already available within the community to finance new private investments. LAEGC will explore its own loan pools to identify new ways to responsibly lend its funds.

Soon

LAEGC will review the City’s current Tax Increment Financing Development Programs in light of recent changes and evolutions of the program’s enabling state legislation that may identify new means to invest in our own municipal infrastructure and provide incentives to encourage new development.

LAEGC will also work with Auburn and Lewiston City staff as they continue to expand and make use of federal

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The intent is to be creative and explore ways to leverage those funds into new projects to support this Strategy.

It is important to note that as we explore new ways to use existing funds, we give strong consideration to the need to further encourage business ownership by immigrants, particularly through the development of alternative financing options.

Attracting New Business & Investment

We will, as noted above, use our BEAR LA activity to expand into new markets. We will use this as a way to explore and identify new investments and new business for LA Maine. We will identify and target the sectors that give us the greatest chance of success – perhaps in the manufacturing of health care products, or in other high value, low volume manufacturing, or in transportation and logistics to trigger the increases use of LA Maine’s rail infrastructure. Step one is to determine those areas where we have the greatest probability of success.

● Competitive Analysis

Now

In order to properly understand the economic base, competitive advantages and disadvantages, and develop a proper business attraction plan, LAEGC will develop a competitive analysis that determines how LA Maine fares against its true competitive base. First, LAEGC will look to find which locations in the Northeast are LA Maine’s most common competitive peers. From this,

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LAEGC will develop a matrix of salient location factors to determine specific strengths, weaknesses, and the types of industries and functions for which LA Maine would be most appropriate. This information will then guide future marketing, outreach and policy initiatives.

LAEGC will conduct this analysis by December, 2015. Input will be gathered from others, notably, Auburn and Lewiston ED. This analysis will inform LAEGC's business marketing plan to be presented at the same time.

● Further Outreach and Engagement

Concurrent to conducting the Competitive Analysis, LAEGC will also continue its current efforts to reach out and engage the private sector. LAEGC and the rest of the development community need more information on how the private sector is viewing economic conditions, regional competitiveness, and LA Maine's response to these and other issues. Further, the private sector needs to be enticed to more directly participate in sharing this information as well as become more active ambassadors for LA Maine.

Now

LAEGC is reaching out to the private sector for guidance, input, and financial support for business development. The Business Development Corps will form a private-public partnership to support business development marketing.

● LA Maine Open House

ABDC and LDC will collaborate with each other and others, including the Maine Economic Development and Real Estate Association (MEREDA) (pending the approval of their governing board), to host an "open house" for LA Maine. This is envisioned to be a ½-day event including a bus tour of area properties on the market or targeted for new investment and development.

Now

● Sibling Cities

We propose the establishment or affirmation of Sibling Cities around the world. The City of Lewiston and the Franco Center have a long history with the City of Saint Hyacinth in Quebec. Working in coordination with LAEGC, the City and the Franco Center will reconnect and plan for expansion of that relationship for the purpose of expanding LA business community connections and to seek out businesses in the Province that might hope to expand to LA.

Now

This project may be particularly valuable working together with the Saint Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad Company and our own Lewiston Auburn Railroad Company.

LAEGC has, through other connections, made contact with the City of Saint John and Moncton, New Brunswick as well. Moncton, in particular, has interesting cultural (Franco) and transportation, logistics, and business similarities to LA.

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LAEGC, the Franco Center, the Franco Collection at USMLAC, and others will reach out to the City of Moncton and the City of Saint Hyacinth to initiate this opportunity. We will start small, by simply seeking introductions and mutual exploration of personal connections. Perhaps we shall seek an exchange of performers or an invitation to exchange visitors and explore each community's common but unique shared heritage.

In doing so, we shall explain ways to learn and expand upon the people, place, and prosperity in LA Maine.

LAEGC and the Franco American Center will participate in Face a Face in Moncton and share our cultural and business heritage in Progres' Magazine, a publication dedicated to business expansion in the Franco community of New Brunswick and Eastern Canada. We will also reach out to the City of Saint Hyacinth to continue to build upon the long relationship with the City of Lewiston; and expand our outreach from there.

As part of LAEGC's marketing efforts to attract new business, the Sibling City relationship may be used to establish B2B connections, expanding our existing business contacts (and potentially their partners and markets) and seeking out new business expansions.

● [Improved and New Collateral, Online, and Other Marketing Material](#)

Now

LAEGC will develop a new and improved online presence as well as other collateral materials to promote LA Maine as a place for business. This includes all new web and social media platforms, in coordination with the Chamber's own rebranding. LAEGC will do so through its annual budget and seek out additional revenues and partnerships to develop new and innovative ways to promote the LA business community and LA Maine as a place for new business. This will require additional private and public partnerships.

LAEGC will consider new ways to promote LA Maine. One creative and innovative suggestion has been the development of an infomercial to run in select markets promoting LA Maine.

Another avenue is to develop an online presence for our business community— a listing of businesses that is not competing with but complementing the Chamber membership listing. This listing might be an online source for potential partnerships and contractual relationships with companies LAEGC identifies as it promotes the community around the globe.

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Marketing LA Maine: Lewiston Auburn

Marketing itself is not a project but rather a means to move a number of the programs and projects forward. Yet it deserves attention, here, above and “across” all of the projects in the Strategy. Effective marketing is targeted and focused on a message and an audience. Lewiston Auburn has had a number of “regional” or joint marketing efforts or brands in the past--*Cities of the Androscoggin* to *LA It’s Happening Here*.

It is time, with this Strategy and on the verge of significant positive action and change to prepare a new brand—a coordinated and focused brand that, we propose, has built in longevity. LAEGC and the Chamber are both revising their own brands, logos, etc. Together, with others we propose a new brand for LA Maine.

LAEGC has established a Marketing Committee that includes a number of community representatives to consider a “regional” brand for LA Maine.

We have a Vision for our community expressed here in ***LA Maine: Forward*** (page 4). A brand, however, we must be clear, concise, and definitive. Thus, LA Maine is our place. It is not intended to replace or duplicate marketing for Auburn or Lewiston—but instead to add value and a common message. We intend to craft a community brand that can highlight our individual products. The LAEGC Marketing Committee will further define and categorize our

brand, services, and community with regards to the themes of our Strategy; People, Place, Prosperity.

The LAEGC Marketing Committee will make use of its collective experience and recent research on community brand.⁶ The Committee is charged with making its recommendations by December, 2015. This timing coincides with rebranding by the Chamber and LAEGC.

We propose and share, here, the segmentation of “marketing” for LA Maine. In short, the Chamber shall take on marketing the place to people, visitors, and for events or meetings. LAEGC will focus on marketing LA Maine as a place for business—expanding existing, entrepreneurs, or new.

Now

Chamber (tourism) marketing

LA Maine is the gateway to Central and Western Maine. At the same time, LA is evolving into a destination to its own, notably for sporting and other events. The Chamber will begin to develop marketing opportunities to increase awareness of LA for events and meetings. Our assets in this market include the Androscoggin Bank

⁶ Summary of Analysis for a Lewiston-Auburn Branding Initiative. Scorecard Strategic Planning & Research, 2012.

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Colissee, the Norway Savings Arena, and existing and new meeting or event centers being developed.

Our “cache” is the new, redeveloped urban industrial city within close proximity to Maine’s coast and the access point to the Western Maine Mountains and Lakes Region.

The Chamber is developing a virtual convention and visitor’s bureau and other ways to promote and market the city to visitors, meetings, and conventions.

LAEGC will be documenting and outlining its business development marketing plan as part of its “Scope of Services” for Auburn and Lewiston. Our current activity and planning has focused on markets that make sense and are already showing some positive results—through our current contacts and sales channels in Canada and beyond. Likewise, as part of its entrepreneurship program and in collaboration with others and Maine Accelerates Growth, LAEGC is promoting LA Maine as a hub for entrepreneurial development.

LAEGC Marketing for Business Development

LAEGC is redesigning its website and its own brand to focus on its core role to market LA Maine as a place for business. This includes entrepreneurship and small business, the expansion of new business, and attracting new business and investment—all elements of this Strategy.

LAEGC’s marketing will, therefore, focus on those targeted markets, individuals, and professionals seeking to start, grow, or expand their business. Throughout this Strategy we have proposed the programs or projects that will be used as the “hook” or means to market to those audiences.

- Entrepreneurship (see page 16)
- Expanding existing business (see page 40)
- Attracting new business (see page 42)

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Strategic Measurements

Any strategy or plan is only effective if it is measured. **LA Maine: Forward** will be reviewed regularly, analyzed against measurable objectives, and adjusted.

The challenge with economic development strategies are the measurements themselves. Unlike in business, where one can measure monthly, quarterly, and annual direct metrics of which the business has direct control over, a community strategy must rely on other measures that we do not have direct control over.

Still, we must measure our progress.

We propose the following levels of measures, long-term and mid-term to measure our progress.

These measures were identified as a result of recent work by a group of citizens and businesses with input and assistance from AVCOG, called Benchmarks LA. Further, we used input and direction from the Maine Development Foundation who produces Maine’s Measures of Growth.

We identify only a small set of measurements borrowed or derived from the Measures of Growth and Benchmarks LA for purposes of the Strategy. These measure the overall progress of our Strategy and our community’s economic development efforts—working together towards our Vision. There are many forces inside and outside Lewiston and Auburn that have an impact on these

measures—yet we propose that these may be used to best measure our progress. There will be more direct measurements of progress for each project in the Strategy—and for those we defer to the lead organization and collaborators to identify that measure and track success.

LAEGC will convene our community collaborators and others regularly to review and update **LA Maine: Forward**, including a review of these benchmarks and measures.

Soon

Population Growth, Age

The percentage of annual growth of estimated resident population, and estimated median age for the same time period, as reported by the United States Census and its annual American Community Survey. Lewiston and Auburn will be tracked and compared against the U.S and Maine.

	2013 Population	Growth from 2010	2013 Median Age	Change from 2010
U.S.	311,536,594	0.90%	37.3	+ .1 years
Maine	1,328,320	0.00%	43.2	+ .5 years
Lewiston	36,536	-0.15%	38.1	+ .7 years
Auburn	23,040	0.07%	40.5	+ .6 years

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Educational Attainment

Percentage of population, aged 25 and over, who have earned a high school diploma and higher, and who have earned a Bachelor's Degree and higher, as reported by the United States Census and its annual American Community Survey. Lewiston and Auburn will be tracked and compared against the U.S and Maine.

Educational Attainment, Population 25 years and over, 2013 American Community Survey

	U.S	Maine	Lewiston	Auburn
High school graduate or higher	86.0%	91.1%	85.6%	90.4%
Bachelor's Degree or higher	28.8%	27.9%	15.4%	24.9%

Number of Jobs, Overall, by Sector ★

Annual Average Industry Employment by Private Ownership (non-government), Overall and by Sector, as reported by the Maine Department of Labor Center of Workforce Research and Information. The Lewiston-Auburn Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and the cities of Lewiston and Auburn will be measured.

2014 Annual Average Industry Employment, Private Ownership only

LA MSA	43,468
Lewiston	22,564
Auburn	14,587

Unemployment Rate

Annual Unemployment Rate, non-Seasonally Adjusted, as reported by the Maine Department of Labor Center of Workforce Research and Information. Lewiston and Auburn will be compared to US, Maine and LA MSA rate.

2014 Annual Non-Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rates

US	6.2%
ME	5.7%
LA MSA	5.5%
Lewiston	5.9%
Auburn	5.3%

Average Weekly Wage, Overall, by Sector

Annual Average Weekly Wage, Private Ownership, Overall and By Sector, as reported by the Maine Department of Labor Center of Workforce Research and Information. Lewiston and Auburn will be compared to Maine's average weekly wage.

2014 Average Weekly Wage, All Industries, Private Employment Only

Maine	\$768	
LA MSA	\$741	96.4% of state
Lewiston	\$809	105.3% of state
Auburn	\$684	89.1% of state

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New Business 'Adds'

Number of new Lewiston-Auburn businesses added annually, as collected by Infogroup Government Division, based on new business filings (DBA's, licenses, corporations). Lewiston and Auburn and the Lewiston-Auburn MSA will be tracked.

Number of New Business Adds, Lewiston and Auburn, September 30, 2014 to September 30, 2015

LA MSA	110	
Lewiston	50	45.4% of MSA
Auburn	27	24.5% of MSA
L&A	77	70% of MSA

Increase in Assessed Value of Cities

The assessed value of all real and personal property within the municipality, as reported by Maine Revenue Services (annual Municipal Valuation Return Statistical Summary). Lewiston and Auburn will be tracked to determine annual increases/decreases in that value.

Real and Personal Property Valuation, per MVR

City	2012	2013	+/- '12 to '13
Lewiston	\$1,855,359,945	\$1,891,256,130	+1.9%
Auburn	\$2,010,510,334	\$2,005,721,383	-0.2%

Per Capita Personal Income ★

The total income of a given area divided by the area's population, as reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis. The LA MSA will be tracked and compared against U.S., regional, and state per capita personal income.

Per Capita Personal Income, 2013

	PCPI	% of US	% of ME
U.S.	\$44,765	100.0%	
New England	\$54,582	121.9%	
Maine	\$39,562	88.3%	
LA MSA	\$37,680	84.1%	95.2%

Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 2014

Real Gross GDP reflects the total value of all goods and services produced in a given year, as reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis. The LA MSA will be tracked and compared against U.S., regional, and state per capita personal income.

	2014	Change from '13
U.S.	\$15.7 Trillion	2.2%
New England	\$852.5 Billion	1.6%
Maine	\$50.9 Billion	0.2%
LA MSA	\$3.8 Billion	-0.3%

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Poverty Rate ★

Percentage of the population living in poverty, as reported by the United States Census and its annual American Community Survey. Lewiston and Auburn will be tracked and compared against the U.S and Maine.

2013 Poverty Rate - American Community Survey

	<i>Rate</i>	<i>% of US Rate</i>	<i>% of ME Rate</i>
U.S.	15.4%		
Maine	13.6%	88.3%	
Lewiston	22.9%	148.7%	168.3%
Auburn	15.1%	98.1%	111.0%

★ = Benchmarks also used to measure progress of Measures of Growth 2015, Maine Economic Growth Council

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