

# Maine DECD Seeks Input in Identifying Possible Opportunity Zones

AUGUSTA - The Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) is seeking input from communities and local economic development entities in identifying possible Opportunity Zones across Maine.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 established this new economic development program designed to encourage long-term private investments in low-income communities. If a community becomes an Opportunity Zone, the resulting tax benefits may help attract new investment into the community to create jobs, stimulate growth, and provide greater prosperity to the individuals and families living there.

"In many Maine communities, this could be the catalyst to moving development projects forward by attracting much needed capital," said George Gervais, DECD commissioner. "I encourage input as we make final recommendations to the Governor about which low-income census tracts are best positioned for success."

Federal law requires all designations to be completed by March 21, 2018; or, states could file a 30-day extension. Only 25 percent of Maine's 123 low-income community census tracts may be designated an Opportunity Zone. Additionally, five percent of the tracts designated may come from tracts contiguous to the low-income tracts; however, Maine's total cannot exceed 31 tracts in total.

Opportunity Zones will help attract otherwise wary investors to underserved communities through the creation of Opportunity Funds. With an estimated \$2.3 trillion in underutilized capital gains, certain investments will no longer be subject to capital gains tax to incentivize long-term investor commitment.

Between now and March 9, 2018, DECD is accepting public input regarding the designation of Maine's Opportunity Zones. Interested parties are asked to submit the following:

- What criteria should be used to determine Maine's Opportunity Zones?
- Please specify tracts for consideration
- Please include justification for any criteria and/or tracts in your submission

"There are communities across Maine with vacant industrial sites and an available workforce. This program could be the catalyst to really move the needle in areas of our state that need it the most," said George Gervais.

Those willing to submit input can direct it to the attention of [deborah.johnson@maine.gov](mailto:deborah.johnson@maine.gov). Deadline for submission is March 9, 2018.

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