



photo by Peter Simmons

Support Responsible Development in Maine's North Woods

Support: LR 1755 **An Act to Amend the** **Land Use Planning** **Commission and** **Enhance the** **Economic Vitality of** **Neighboring** **Communities**

Sponsored by: Sen. Brownie Carson
of Cumberland

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The Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC) is the state agency that oversees planning and zoning for 10.5 million acres of Maine's Unorganized Territories (UT). Planning decisions in Maine's UT affect nearby organized municipalities, too.

This bill authorizes enhanced coordination between LUPC and municipalities near the UT in order to guide new development into those communities. This coordination will support the economic vitality of organized municipalities that border the UT while protecting Maine's globally significant North Woods and natural resources.

LR 1755 supports Maine's economy and natural resources.

- Regional planning that guides new development into existing municipalities makes economic sense.
 - o Towns benefit from tax revenues.
 - o The cost of providing public services such as police, school bus transportation, fire, and emergency services is less than the cost of servicing sprawling development.
 - o Civic institutions like hospitals, schools, libraries, and churches benefit from new residents.
- The forests, lakes, and rivers that are the backbone of the forestry and outdoor recreation economies are maintained when new development locates in existing municipalities rather than sprawled and scattered across the mostly undeveloped UT.
 - o Maine's North Woods are part of the largest intact temperate forest in the world. Protecting the North Woods from fragmentation is critical for maintaining wildlife habitat and migration corridors.
 - o Protecting the North Woods supports recreational tourism businesses that depend upon its remote wilderness character.
- LUPC does not currently have policies to guide new residential, commercial, or industrial subdivision development into existing communities. LR 1755 would change that.

Regional planning recognizes that each region of Maine has different planning needs.

- Locally driven planning processes would consider the planning needs and development patterns of both Unorganized Territories and nearby organized municipalities together. The Rangeley region and parts of Washington and Aroostook Counties have successfully engaged in regional planning under the guidance of LUPC.
- This bill would direct LUPC to maintain the existing adjacency principle (requiring new development in the UT to locate within one mile by road of existing, compatible development) until LUPC engages in regional land use planning and zoning upon the request of one or more organized municipalities in a particular region of Maine.

Development proposals for the UT should include assessments of whether an alternative location is available in a nearby organized town.

- This bill requires commercial, industrial, or residential subdivision proposals for the UT to include an alternatives analysis to assess whether there are alternative sites available in nearby organized municipalities that would be suitable and available for proposed developments.
- Many other existing laws and rules of LUPC, the Site Law, and the Natural Resources Protection Act require similar alternatives analyses.

It is necessary for LUPC to have an up-to-date inventory of existing development locations in the UT in order to effectively plan for the future.

- This bill would require LUPC to conduct a land use structure inventory by July 1, 2020, given that the last inventory was conducted decades ago.
- Identifying the location of existing development and development patterns in the UT will assist LUPC in offering thorough, data-driven guidance during regional planning.

Appointing commissioners to LUPC with diverse types of expertise will better position LUPC to work as a partner with municipalities that border the UT.

- This bill changes the number of gubernatorial appointments to LUPC from one to four to ensure a statewide perspective. It directs Maine's governor to ensure that each of the areas of expertise (municipal government, fisheries or wildlife, forestry or forest-based recreation, and conservation) is represented on the Commission.



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