May 12, 2021

To: Grant Review Committee, Community Development Building Grants

Re: Town of Danforth, Maine CDBG grant application

The Greater East Grand Economic Council (GEGEC) offers its enthusiastic support for the Town of Danforth’s application for a CDBG grant to support downtown redevelopment and economic development for the region.

Beginning in 2019, a citizen-led group embarked on an economic planning initiative for a citizen designated region in northeastern Maine with a commitment to turn the tide on the demographic trends in remote, rural Maine. Called the Greater East Grand Region (GEGR), it covers an estimated 500K square miles, borders New Brunswick CA with the St. Croix River, includes three counties with twelve communities. Danforth Maine is the small service center that anchors the region with a core collection of key institutions, agencies, businesses and enterprises.

GEGEC’s mission is to provide economic assistance to a distressed area of Eastern Maine by building collaborations and partnerships; offering professional advice to individuals, organizations and municipalities; and providing financial and technical support for projects designed to increase employment thru entrepreneurism, successful business succession, tourism and youth professional development.

The 2030 GEGR economic development plan was published in 2020 and is available at [www.eastgrandregion.org](http://www.eastgrandregion.org) Critical to achieving the vision is the continued redevelopment of downtown Danforth as a hub for new small businesses, four-season tourism, and cross-generational community building that supports the aspirations of youth/young adults, and ensures elders can thrive in place.

The specific plans in the grant application are directly aligned with a current pilot project focused on building entrepreneur capacity with youth and young adults in the region. Tourism is an important part of the regional economy. Danforth’s downtown redevelopment to re-establish a vibrant park and market-in-common on the banks of the Baskahegan River will attract new visitors and new businesses to the area. Investment in refurbishing downtown properties is an essential strategy to advance this shared vision.

Thank you for your consideration of the Danforth application.

Sincerely,

Wayne Smith

GEGEC Board President