



# Maine Association of Planners

## Press Release:

### For Immediate Release

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Responsible Party: Matthew Williams – 2025 Maine Association of Planners Awards  
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At the Planning Awards and Policy Event on June 26, 2025, the Maine Association of Planners bestowed the following awards:

#### **Plan of the Year – Lakes Region Homeless Services Study for Cumberland County**

This award goes to a plan exhibiting the highest merit of planning. The plan is original, transferable, of high quality, including public participation, and promotes actionable results. The team led by Levine Planning Strategies including North Star Planning and Human Service Research Institute are this year's recipients for the Lakes Region Homeless Services Study for Cumberland County.

This study, prepared in 2024, was initiated by Cumberland County to determine how to best serve residents of the Lakes Region experiencing homelessness. The project took an objective approach to evaluating needs and options for the provision of programs and services for people experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness in the Lakes Region towns of Baldwin, Bridgton, Casco, Gray, Naples, Raymond, Sebago, Standish, and Windham.

This plan combines a strong human services approach with land use and zoning analyses to identify the scope of regional needs and challenges. Recommendations include programming recommendations for a services facility to serve the region, as well as a preliminary siting analysis.

#### **Project of the Year – City of Portland, ReCode - Land Use and Zoning Ordinance**

This award goes to a project that is of unusually high merit and makes a difference in the lives of the people affected. The City of Portland's ReCode project, unanimously approved in the Fall of 2024, was the first comprehensive rewrite of the City's entire land use code and zoning map in over 50 years. The effort began in 2017, incorporating countless public, committee and board input opportunities. ReCode created a new, unified development code, aimed to serve the City of Portland for the 21st century. The project is nominated for its thorough and innovative solutions to common planning issues, including addressing housing choice, redefining parking requirements and introducing transit oriented zones. The new code "aims to balance change and

growth” through incremental adjustments along historically low-density residential areas and larger changes to bustling downtown regions, stated Planning Director Kevin Kraft.

**Professional Planners of the Year – Jennie Franceschi, Director of Planning and Code Enforcement, City of Westbrook and Eli Rubin, Community Planner, City of South Portland**

This award goes to a planner that has sustained a contribution to the field of planning through their distinguished practice, including increasing the public’s understanding of planning principles and the planning process as well as formulating and implementing plans and furthering the cause of planning.

While typically given to one outstanding planner in a given year, 2024 saw incredible achievement and work from two planners surrounding the Growth Management Act and increasing MAP’s credibility on a statewide level. This year we are fortunate to bestow this honor on two special planners, Jennie Franceschi and Eli Rubin.

Jennie and Eli have worked tirelessly with the highest level of commitment on MAP’s greatest legislative priority in decades: LD 1751-*An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws*, which was signed into law by Governor Mills on June 20, 2025.

Jennie demonstrated unwavering leadership and a superlative level of dedication as Chair of the MAP Growth Management Subcommittee. Her leadership ensured that Maine planners’ expertise positively influenced policy change that will benefit all Maine communities. Jennie is a consummate professional who was the backbone of MAP’s effort to update the Growth Management Law. She consistently worked towards amicable outcomes and has had an immense impact on the future of planning in Maine!

Eli’s extraordinary leadership as a past Chair of MAP’s Legislative Policy Committee has advanced MAP’s involvement in planning-related legislation. Under Eli’s leadership, the LPC has been given an unprecedented seat at the table to give input on state-level policy. His work was effective in advancing good planning practice as well as respect of the planning profession statewide. His contributions have improved the relationships necessary to continue dialogue about critical planning issues at the state level. He has set a high standard for excellence in the planning profession.

**Citizen Planner of the Year – Kaela Gonzalez of Raymond**

The criteria for this award is that it is for a non-professional citizen who has made a distinguished contribution to planning. The nominee is dedicated to increasing the understanding of planning principles and the planning process, as well as the goals of the community. The award goes to a nominee that has promoted the cause and advanced the merits of planning.

Kaela Gonzalez is recognized for her service and dedication to the community of Raymond. She

served as the co-chair of the Raymond Comprehensive Plan Committee from 2023-2025 and consistently went above and beyond her responsibilities to ensure the Plan was completed with meaningful public engagement and comment. Kaela led the public outreach process, creating and sharing social media content, organizing pop-up events on election days and went out of her way to ensure the Visioning process was a success and the residents of Raymond were involved and informed. Ben Smith of North Star Planning states “Because of Kaela, we greatly expanded our outreach and were able to reach parents and children in the Raymond community who were less engaged with town planning efforts.”

**Special Recognition for Extraordinary Contributions and Advocacy related to the Growth Management Act: Eli Rubin, Jennie Franceschi, and Judy East**

Special recognition is being given to three professional planners who demonstrated Extraordinary Contributions and Advocacy related to the Maine Growth Management Law. They were instrumental in the development of LD 1751-*An Act to Improve the Growth Management Program Laws*, which was signed into law by Governor Mills on June 20, 2025.

Their efforts included detailed review and evaluation of the impacts of countless drafts of proposed Growth Management Law amendments over multiple legislative sessions, and communication with bill sponsors, MAP leadership, professional planners, stakeholders, and municipalities. Their work to overhaul and update the Law was grounded by sound planning principles aimed at simplifying the comprehensive planning process to be efficient, flexible, and cost-effective to ensure the Law works across the diversity of Maine’s municipalities.

**Lifetime Achievement Award: Mark Lapping, Distinguished University Professor Emeritus, University of Southern Maine**

Mark Lapping has worked in the planning field nationwide for over 55 years, giving the last 31 years of his expertise to the state of Maine. Mark held many roles for institutions of higher education including; University of Southern Maine, Portland, University of Maine, Orono, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, and Unity College. Over his illustrious career, Mark has authored over 90 academic articles and nine best-selling books. He has served on the editorial boards for several academic journals including the Journal of the American Planning Association.

The Awards Committee included Joan A. Walton, AICP, Director Municipal Planning Assistance Program Bureau of Resource Information and Land Use Planning, Matthew Williams, Planner at The Musson Group, Keri Ouellette, AICP, Manager with BerryDunn, and Scarborough Director of Planning and Codes, Autumn Speer.

These nominations will be submitted to the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association for consideration for a regional chapter award.

More information about the Maine Association of Planners can be found here: <https://nne.planning.org/sections/maine/>

