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Gardiner to Receive Grant for Playground Project

Gardiner, ME, December 5, 2008 — One of Gardiner's most visited and historic public parks, the Common, is about to receive a timely boost! Maine's Department of Conservation has announced that the State has set aside \$25,000 in Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant funding to assist the City with its community playground project. The grant will help the City replace the wooden playground as early as next Spring.

Replacing the existing playground was identified as a high priority in the city's 2008 Master Plan for the Common. Earlier this year, the public participated in several workshops, facilitated by Kent Associates, and provided feedback on a number of issues, including whether the playground should stay or go, concerns about public safety, and maintenance issues to name a few. Final approval came with the Council's adoption the Common Master Plan on July 30th, 2008. (To view the complete Master Plan for the Common, please go to: http://www.gardinermaine.com/Public_Documents/GardinerME_EcDev/gardinercommonplan. In connection with this process, the City determined it was necessary to remove the existing playground facility, as it had reached the end of its useful life.

The City will facilitate the process to help select the final design for the new playground and will encourage public participation in this process. It is anticipated to begin this process in February of 2009. During the Master Plan process, the community developed the following design guidelines for the future playground:

- ◆ Replace the playground on the Common; the playground's design must be sensitive to its context (the historic Common); size, height, materials, color and location (specifically related to the fountain) must all fit with the historic character of the park.
- ◆ The new playground should be relocated slightly south of the existing playground site, so that it is separated from the Palmer Fountain.
- ◆ The replacement playground should be smaller than the old unit, with a smaller overall site footprint, and the height of structures limited (similar to the old unit).
- ◆ The replacement playground should be vinyl-coated metal or wood (not chemical treated) with no (or minimal) plastic components, and should be restricted to natural or neutral colors, such as dark green or brown/tan.
- ◆ The replacement playground should not have enclosed slides/tubes.

Built in 1989, the City's wooden playground has served as a fun outdoor recreation meeting place for lots of families and children. Its' location, virtually in the center of the community, make it an easy destination to walk or drive to. Once completed, the new playground will be a great place for outdoor recreation once again.

The Common planning project was included in a group of 13 other City planning and design projects, referred to in the Bundled Projects RFP. Prior to developing the plan as a part of the Bundled Projects process, community interest in the Common peaked in 2007, as a group of citizens called "Citizens for the Common Good" presented a summary of a survey that was conducted on the need to improve/replace the playground. The grass roots effort helped the City move forward to develop a comprehensive plan for the Common Park.

If interested in learning more about the Common, or other planning projects, please contact Jason at 207-582-6888, or email to econdev@gardinermaine.com.