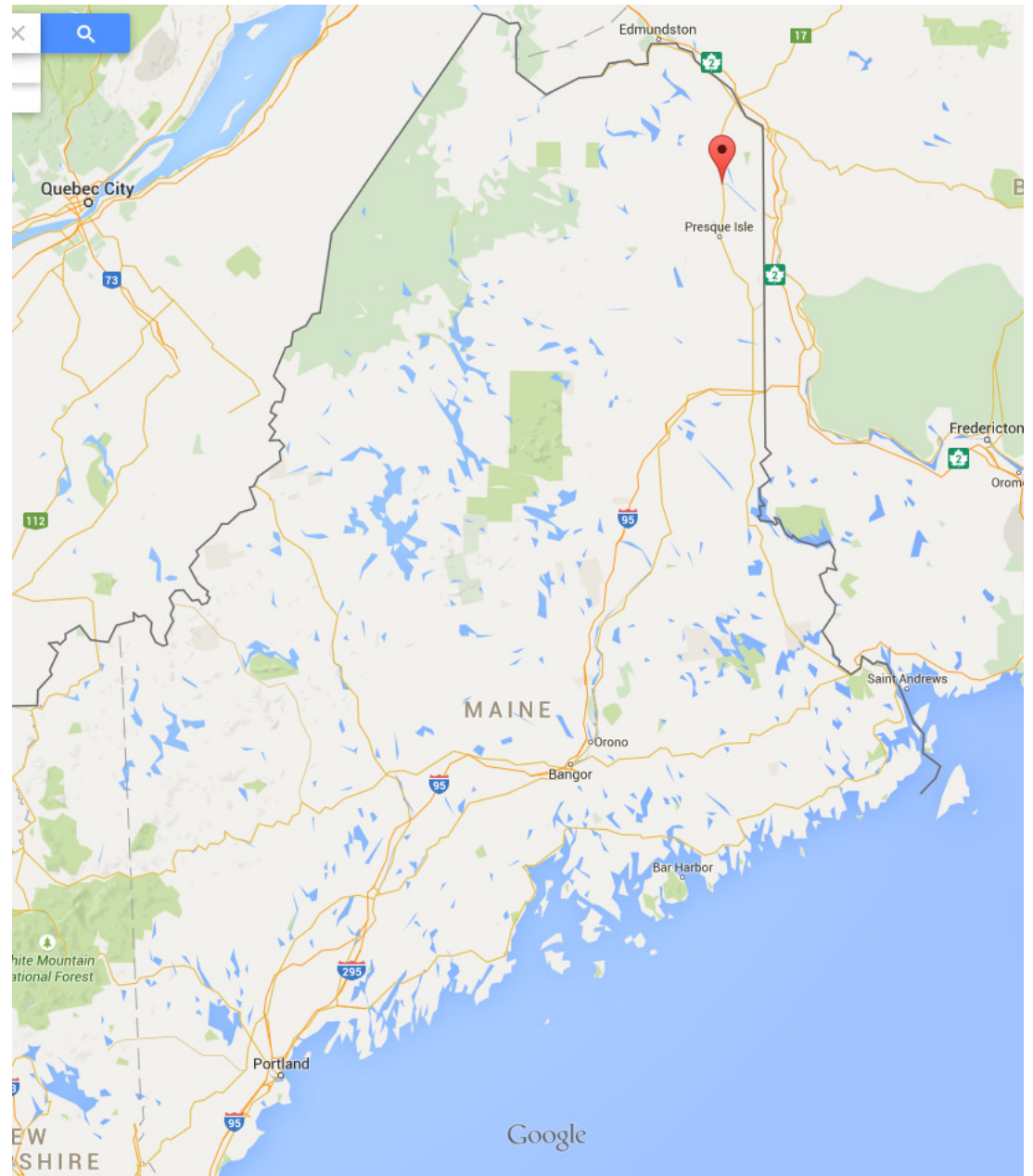


# Placemaking in Caribou, Maine

Austin Bleess  
City Manager  
Caribou, Maine



# About Caribou



# About Caribou (continued)

- Population 8,137
- Unemployment Rate 7.3% (Aroostook County)
- Oldest County, in the Oldest State
- Loring Air Force Base closed in 1994
- Out migration is a big issue



















# The Idea

- A family friendly event that would encourage people to come downtown and enjoy the best of what Caribou has to offer.
- Something with
  - Music
  - Games
  - Vendors
  - Food

# Thursday's On Sweden

- The idea and vision are there, but how do we make it become reality
- Police, Fire/Ambulance, Parks and Recreation and Public Works all pitched in to help
- Local businesses/vendors set up booths

# Parks and Recreation

- Inflatables for kids to jump in
- Help organize vendors

## Police, Fire, Ambulance

- Volunteered to help grill hamburgers and hotdogs

## Public Works

- Built a mobile band stage for the musicians



# Vendors

- People selling things they've made
- Organizations that want to raise some money
- Public service groups that simply want to get their name out there















# The Events

- Every other Thursday evening, early June to late August
- 6-9pm
- In 2013 started with 20 vendors, now we are up to 80 vendors
- In 2013 we averaged 500 attendees, now we are up to nearly 2,000 attendees

# Showcasing our community











# How we did it

- In 2013 the budget was \$1,500. Half was covered by sponsors.
- In 2015 the budget was \$17,000, of which \$15,000 was covered by sponsors.
  - \$15,000 was bands and \$2,000 was advertising.
- Dedicated support of the staff to volunteer their time and efforts
- Vendors

# Impact

- More interest in downtown buildings
- Sitel Operating Company has located downtown, with 325 new jobs
- Restaurants see positive impacts
- Stores on Sweden Street see increased traffic
- Citizen morale has increased
- Spawned more events

# Impact (continued)

- Vendors sell a lot of their goods/wares
- Springboard to opening local store
- Over 44% of vendors sell 100 or more items each night
- Nearly 5% of vendors sell more than 300 items

# Heritage Days

- Celebrate local person/family and their impact on the community
  - O.P. Pierson - inventor of the frozen French Fry
  - Alexander Cochran – First settler of Caribou
  - Collins family – Owned first sawmill and lumber yard in town
- Get community involved for day long activities
  - Church group to do breakfast
  - Car show in the downtown area
  - Health Fair
  - High School soccer games
  - Live music and fireworks



# Downtown Ski Festival

- Brought ski races into the downtown
- Over 100 competitors sprinted down Sweden Street on skis
- Had Olympic Biathlon viewing party to go with it



# Other Impacts

- Makes people want to be in our downtown
- Civic pride is increasing and interest in volunteering
- Creates a better story for grant writing





# Closing Thoughts

- **“It’s Placemaking, not Placemade. It’s a *process*. You are never finished.”**  
—*Place Governance working group*
- **“Don’t think ‘build it and they will come’; find the local leaders and help them build ‘it’ where they already are.”**  
—*Healthy Communities working group*
- **“Government’s role: Be the host, don’t try to be the life of the party.”**  
—*Place Governance working group*
- Source: <http://www.pps.org/blog/overheard-in-detroit-ten-great-quotes-from-the-placemaking-leadership-council/>

# Questions/Comments?

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