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Former Senator Eyes Affordable Manufactured Housing Development in Augusta

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Former Maine state Senator Matthew Pouliot is planning a significant housing initiative in Augusta, aiming to develop 40 manufactured homes with the potential to add hundreds more on a large parcel of land near the city's western side.

Pouliot, who previously served Augusta in the Maine State Legislature, recently acquired over 60 acres located between Leighton and Prescott roads, just north of Western Avenue, *Bangor Daily News* reports. The site lies roughly 10 minutes from downtown Augusta and could soon become home to a large community of modest, factory-built homes.

Although the project is still in the early planning stages, Pouliot's vision centers on affordability and access. He hopes to create financially attainable homes for residents earning up to 100 percent of the local area median income. For a two-person household in Augusta, that currently stands just below \$70,000.

"It's a matter of whether there's an appetite in the community for that much," Pouliot said, indicating that community feedback and demand will play a major role in shaping the scale of the development.

Unlike traditional homeownership, Pouliot's plan would have residents purchase their homes while leasing the land beneath them. This model, commonly seen in mobile home parks, would help lower costs for buyers and increase housing access without requiring full land ownership. The homes would be installed on fixed foundations and would range in size and layout, from single-family modular homes to duplexes, with no units exceeding 1,500 square feet or more than three bedrooms.

Housing Demand

This would be the first manufactured housing community to be built in Augusta in over two decades. The last attempt was Kennebec Valley Estates, a proposed expansion of the Riverside Drive Park mobile home community in 2007. While the city approved the project at the time, the developer ultimately did not proceed with construction, according to Matt Nazar, Augusta's planning director.

The proposed project aligns with Maine's broader housing strategy, which includes a statewide goal of adding up to 84,000 new housing units by the end of the decade. By focusing on factory-built homes, Pouliot hopes to cut down construction time significantly. He pointed out that while the average homebuilder in Maine constructs just 1.5 homes per year, this project could deliver 40 homes in a single year due to the efficiency of manufactured housing.

"The average builder in Maine builds 1.5 homes a year, and we're proposing to try to do up to 40 in a year, but that's because we're not going to be building the homes," Pouliot explained.

His background in housing policy inspired the idea. As a former state housing committee member, Pouliot said he became deeply concerned after reviewing the housing statistics

firsthand. “Getting a front-row seat to the statistics was horrifying and part of the reason why I didn’t run again,” he added.

Beyond just homes, Pouliot’s plan includes shared amenities. A community building for events, a storage facility, and recreational areas like walking trails are being considered as part of the broader vision for the site.

Pouliot cited Scarborough’s State Manufactured Homes development as a source of inspiration and intends to model some aspects of the Augusta project afterward. He aims to formally submit a proposal to the city by this autumn. If approved, construction could begin as early as next spring.

City officials have expressed cautious optimism. Augusta Mayor Mark O’Brien said that while full details of the project are still forthcoming, he is encouraged by its direction. “Augusta needs additional housing across the spectrum of types and affordability, so I am encouraged when someone aims to address our shortage in a positive way,” he said. I believe Pouliot is committed to addressing Maine’s housing needs but will approach this in a thoughtful way.”

City Manager Jared Mills and Economic Development Director Keith Luke have also echoed the need for more housing across the city. As Augusta faces mounting pressure to expand its housing stock, developments like this could become essential in easing the crunch.