

Section 2: Goals, Objectives and Recommendations

Economic Development Goals and Objectives

Goal:

- Develop an Environmentally Sound Economy that will provide a Wide Range of Economic Opportunities and Employment for the Town and Area Residents.

Objectives:

- Establish a Local Economic Development Committee
- Review Adequacy of Current Zoning
- Identify New Areas for Economic Development Opportunities
- Work to Redevelop “Brownfields”
- Enhance Communication with Businesses
- Facilitate the Existing Permitting Process
- Aggressively seek Funding for Road/Infrastructure Improvements
- Regionalization of Services and Consolidation
- Prepare a Retail Market Study to Identify Potential Business
- Research and Consider Ways to Guide Development and Enhance Connectivity within the Downtown

Proposals and Recommendations

The following is a description of recommendations to enhance economic development in the Town of Winchendon. These will help local officials gain an understanding of the range of possibilities available to the Town to promote economic development while maintaining the character of the community. Generally, these recommendations could be characterized as a mix of both short and long range strategies that could be implemented following community outreach and support.

1. **Establish a Local Economic Development Committee:** The Town should establish a local Economic Development Committee to coordinate all the various elements of an economic development strategy for Winchendon. Some smaller sized communities in the Montachusett Region (Town of Shirley) and even smaller communities (Town of Ashby) have successfully done so and have very active committees. And, just recently, the nearby Town of Templeton has formed such a committee. The committee would work with municipal boards and departments such as the Board of Health, Finance Committee, the Sewer, Water, Fire and Police departments, emergency services and the School Board.

Responsible Municipal Entity: Board of Selectmen.

2. **Review Adequacy of Current Zoning:** the Town could conduct a review of current zoning bylaws and determine their adequacy for accommodating desired land use and development

meetings are staffed by MRPC and meetings are held at MRPC offices in Fitchburg. Because of the wealth of knowledge of meeting attendees, some communities have utilized these meetings as a vehicle to work with others and resolve brownfields questions and sometimes even acquire grant funds - MRPC is sometimes successful in acquiring grant funds from EPA to fund environmental site assessments (ESA) - Winchendon is eligible to apply to MRPC to fund ESA's - several MRPC communities have taken advantage of this program over the years including the Town of Winchendon.

Responsible Municipal Entity: Planning Board/Department until an Economic Development Committee was formed.

5. **Enhance Communication with Businesses:** The town could develop a survey that can be used to solicit information from existing businesses as to their level of satisfaction with Winchendon as the location for their operations. Such a survey - whether a mailed document, web-based form, phone call, or a simple and informal personal visit to a business site - can be used to determine future business needs in the community and help local officials to plan ahead for necessary changes or improvements. Moreover, the town does have a Business Development web site. The Town should put additional local and regional economic information on the webpage including data included within master plan chapters such as the top employers; contact information; economic, housing, demographic, labor, education; transportation; any market information; and current/future projects. This is the easiest and least costly way to make information available to those who need it. The town does have its open space and recreation plan on the business development web site which is positive; firms place a premium on quality of life issues.

It should also be noted that MassDevelopment can provide assistance to potential businesses and manufacturers that wish to locate in Winchendon. MassDevelopment provides low-cost financing to businesses for real estate and equipment. Its programs and tools are especially advantageous for manufacturers including industrial bonds, the emerging technology fund, and the export program. MassDevelopment can also provide real estate pre-development services and various levels. More details are found at <http://www.massdevelopment.com/>.

Responsible Municipal Entity: Planning Board/Department until and Economic Development Committee is formed.

6. **Facilitate the Existing Permitting Process:** The Town could put together a comprehensive development permitting guidebook to assist all customers with projects of any type and scale or that need to obtain any permit and develop separate handouts for more substantive processes that require additional detail or guidance. One potential funding source is MRPC's District Local Technical Assistance Program (DLTA) funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. While there is no guarantee that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will fund the DLTA program from year to year, streamlining the permitting process has been an eligible project in the past. In fact, the Town of Ashby recently drafted such a document with MRPC DLTA assistance knowing

anywhere near possible without appropriate infrastructure so the town needs to promote infrastructure in these areas that are suitable to support economic development.

Road/ Infrastructure improvements should also be part of an integrated capital improvement plan (CIP). A CIP is an on-going capital expenditure plan that identifies upcoming capital needs, schedules their purchase, and outlines how they will be purchased. Such plans usually look six-to-ten years down the road in terms of identifying capital needs. A capital need is a tangible item (equipment, building, etc.) that is above and beyond a municipal department's regular operating budget. A CIP can have the following benefits:

- Facilitate the coordination between capital needs and departmental operating budgets.
- Enhance the community's credit rating, control of its tax rate and avoid sudden fluctuations in its debt service requirements.
- Identify the most economical means of financing capital projects.
- Increase opportunities for obtaining federal and state aid.
- Focus attention on community objectives and the Town's fiscal capacity.
- Keep the public informed about future community needs and projects.
- Coordinate the activities of municipal departments so as to reduce duplication of services and share equipment where possible.

Therefore, it is recommended that the town establish a concise plan for infrastructure improvements that sets as a priority, the provision of services to key economic development sites in the community. This Infrastructure Plan should be incorporated into the town's Capital Improvements Planning process so that important projects are considered well in advance of their necessity and so that appropriate and adequate sources of funding are sought to help pay for these projects. It should have a prioritization schedule and a corresponding development schedule and upgrades and expansions should be targeted to those areas planned for future development.

Responsible Municipal Entity:

8. **Regionalization of Services and Consolidation:** Winchendon should explore any regionalization opportunities with neighboring towns that have the potential to reduce operating costs. One resource that could further any effort made by the town is MRPC's District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program. The DLTA program, funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, enables MRPC staff to provide technical assistance at no cost to its 22 communities to encourage municipalities to work together to achieve and/or enhance cost-effective service delivery. Over the past eight years, MRPC received funding from the Commonwealth in fall/early winter. Shortly thereafter, MRPC forwarded a Request for Service Delivery to member communities. Last year, examples of eligible projects categorized as municipal partnerships included but were not limited to:

- Shared services (e.g., regional lockup, regional 911 centers, other public safety and emergency response responsibilities, information technology/data

network. The Town should contact the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission to discuss potential funding of this study through MRPC's Unified Planning Work Program.

Responsible Municipal Entity: Planning Board/Department.

DRAFT