

Economic Development Committee
Meeting Notes
February 15, 2000

PRESENT: Michael Burkin, Dave Kerrigan, Ron Stephan, Kirsten Roopenian, Marianne D'Angelo, Larry O'Brien, John Drobinski, Abner Sollant, Jody Kablack, John Mullin

John Mullin, Professor of Planning and UMass Amherst, ran the meeting. John has extensive experience in planning and economic development nationwide. We first told him what efforts the EDC has done to date, which included:

- press releases
- demographic study
- historical perspective
- research into affinity cards
- overview of the town budget
- compilation of a list of commercial properties.

It was also noted that the Town is in the process of studying wastewater treatment options for the business district.

What we haven't done yet (formally) is a commercial build-out analysis in order to determine the potential for additional development. Usually this is done by identifying large parcels (100 acres+) along appropriate roads. Identifying those parcels with owners over the age of 65 can also be helpful. The 100 acre parcel size is the Urban Land Institute definition of an acceptable size for a first class office/industrial park.

John then described a variety of actions that the EDC could work on in terms of stimulating commercial growth to increase revenue:

- Create a vision and do a build-out analysis for what we want – utilize the skills of the Harvard Design School students, or pay 10 local architects 1 day's pay to create sketches of a modern site design for Route 20. John felt that visuals were very important and can be obtained at a fairly low cost. The build-out analysis should identify possible properties for development or redevelopment, calculate the assessed values and produce a fiscal impact analysis determining economic return.
- If rezoning of large parcels is unacceptable, locate small "vest pocket parks" of 5-10 acres in size that could be rezoned (such as the Color Studio on Old County Road). By using strict design standards, these sites can blend in well with other surrounding uses.
- Create a Business Improvement District (BID) and set up an Economic Development and Industrial Commission (EDIC) which has authority to buy property, borrow money, etc.
- Continue to investigate wastewater disposal options. The town can easily increase density of the commercial area by increasing the height of buildings if additional wastewater capacity is available (of course traffic impacts need to be assessed).

- Promote the idea that commercial development is an amenity to the community, which adds value to the residential experience (for convenience particularly).
- Look into other revenue generating sources, such as cellular towers, multi-family and senior housing developments.
- Investigate Tax Increment Financing options, which freeze a property's value at a specific date so that tax breaks occur in successive years as property values increase.
- Explore grant opportunities for economic development.
- Lobby state and federal representatives for funding.
- Conduct an Assets Study, which describes what is good about Sudbury and the corresponding value that an asset brings to both the local and regional economy.
- Create benchmarks in order to monitor progress of actions.
- Conduct focus sessions with key players and try to recruit – more Chamber of Commerce members, locals banks for compliance with Community Reinvestment Act, Retired Men's Association.

The EDC needs to prioritize these actions.

Statistics by Mullin:

- \$1 million paid out will generate \$25,000 in revenue
- Commercial land is generally built-out to 30% of its lot area (building only)
- The elderly generally do not have strong preferences where they live.

Next Steps:

- **Committee must re-read the Master Plan**
- John will come back and do SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) to help create a vision
- at least 5 business people must be recruited for the exercise (Ron Stephan and Marianne D'Angelo working on this)
- recruit other key players – school people, Conservation Commission, etc...
- Create a list of grant programs (Jody is working on this)
- Letter to the Editor on activities to date and upcoming SWOT exercise (Jody)

The next meeting with John Mullin will be scheduled and noticed.