



THE OLD STONE HOUSE

TOWN OF GUILFORD

31 Park Street
GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT 06437

SETTLED IN 1639

Economic Development Commission Annual Report 2015-2016

Stephen Kops, Chair
Ted Sands, Vice Chair
Mark Wasserman (became Chair June 2016)
Jennifer Cowie
Robert Cuzzo
Mark White
Fran Paranto – new member Sept 2015
Damian Gunningsmith – new member Nov 2015
Robert Levine – new member Jan 2016
Matthew Joseff (resigned Feb 2016, moved from the area)

Brian McGlone – Economic Development Coordinator, Town Staff
Representative
Edward Lazarus – Shoreline Chamber of Commerce President, Liaison
Kathy DeBurra – Recording Secretary

The Economic Development Commission is charged to conduct research into the economic conditions and trends in the Town and to make recommendations to appropriate Town officials and agencies regarding action to improve the Town's economic condition and development. The Commission may advertise, prepare, print and distribute books, maps, charts and pamphlets which will further its official purposes.

Annual Report Guilford's Economic Development Commission accomplished the following in 2015-2016:

Several significant projects were approved or began during this period and are now becoming a reality. DDR, the owners of the "rock pile" were approved through Planning and Zoning in July 2014, and began construction of Guilford

Commons, a shopping plaza that opened in November 2015. The initial stores included: The Fresh Market, Michael's Art & Hobby, Bed Bath and Beyond, Ulta, Charming Charlie's and DSW (Designer Shoe Warehouse). During 2016, Petco, Hair Cuttery and the Verizon R-Wireless Store were added. This project was approximately 7 years in the making, initially delayed by environmental concerns and then a poor economy. The Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) recognized this project for its significant contributions to our town and region, bringing products, services and employment opportunities. Tractor Supply also opened in November 2015, primarily to serve our agricultural community, trades people and residents. The West End of Town experienced additional development with Country Farms II (flowers/farm stand), The Woods at Gatehouse West (5 unit luxurious condominiums) and numerous businesses opened as part of the Holly Hock complex (apartments in the rear, businesses in front). 66 High Street (former Clinipad site) was purchased with the intention of converting it to an upscale condominium complex consisting of 50+ housing units. Renovation and construction of the historic "Mill Building" (originally built in 1884) to house 15 units began in October 2015. The initial units began selling by Q2 2016. Three additional new buildings will be constructed on this site. Oceanco acquired the former Stonehouse Restaurant buildings and converted one to an office building, housing a marine research development business. The other building remained as a restaurant use known as "Pa's Place". The iconic Guilford Food Center was purchased and redeveloped into The Marketplace at the Guilford Center. This redevelopment certainly enhanced our downtown area and is being enjoyed by many.

More than 40 businesses started up or expanded during this period. For example, new businesses included, Guilford Animal Medical Center, JMM Wellness, Massage Savy, Farmer's Insurance, Westport Capital, and The Hil, food service/restaurants like, K C's Hickory Kitchen, Rocco's Off Wooster, and Pa's Place. Existing businesses required new locations to service their operations such as, Shift, Weichart Realty, and Sensation Station. These and many other projects will support future economic development.

Interest and activity continues around town. The examples above confirm the desirability of Guilford as a place to live, work, shop and dine.

Administrative, Organizational, & Professional Development

Continued to enhance Town website with featured commercial properties inventory and additional demographic information. Members attended economic development related seminars. Incorporated subject matter experts into EDC meetings to expand knowledge base of commission members. Industry focus included; hospitality, realtors and retailing.

Events

In collaboration with the Shoreline Chamber of Commerce, participated in numerous New Member “Ribbon Cuttings”, Business-After-Hours Networking, and Tourism initiatives. Supported local events like; Taste of the Shoreline, Chowder Challenge, Sidewalk Sale Days, Wellness Fair and the Annual Tree Lighting. Co-sponsored SCORE workshops with the Chamber and Guilford Savings Bank. And, participated in the Shoreline Non-Profit Workshop Series sponsored by the Chamber and Guilford Savings Bank.

Community Outreach

Pursued and obtained a \$446.5K State Grant to upgrade the Whitfield-Water Street Parking Lot, with collaboration between the Town and abutting property owners. Major elements included sidewalks, lighting, trash enclosures, landscaping, pavement and striping. The project created an atmosphere with more “store fronts” while improving fire protection and a more pedestrian friendly environment.

Expanded scope of information and ease of use of website for residents and prospective businesses.

Continued to inform public on EDC initiatives via, press releases, E-newsletter, website-Facebook, Guilford Events magazine and the Police Department, “Coffee with a Cop” initiative.

Regional Outreach

In collaboration with Senator Kennedy, the Shoreline Chamber and Branford EDC, organized, implemented, and participated in an Economic Summit at the Stony Creek Brewery (Q1 2016). Over 150 businesses were represented, stating their concerns with CT as a place for doing business. Tough issues like regulation, taxes and budgets were discussed, providing Senator Kennedy with input as he does his work in Hartford. A smaller legislative summit was later held at the Guilford Library, attended by Senator Kennedy and Representative Scanlon in an effort to hear from the local business community.

Guilford continued as an active member of REX including the development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), the 5 year region strategic plan. Transportation and the Biotech Industry remain top priorities. Continued dialogue with Branford and Madison EDCs, Comcast and Frontier Communications, focusing on alternative High Speed Internet methods/providers to serve our towns. The Comcast and Frontier models involve a major cost sharing by the Towns. At the moment, we will look for other options that do not require major capital investments in infrastructure by the towns.

Interaction with Town Boards, Commissions, and Departments

EDC participated on the Steering Committee for major update of 2002 Plan of Conservation & Development. The updated plan was approved by the Planning

and Zoning Commission in October 2015. The EDC information was presented under the section entitled, "Make Commerce Thrive".

EDC participated on the Planning Committee of Planning and Zoning Commission. The major project focus included, the Rt. 1 West Study Committee. New regulations were developed and approved for portions of Rt. 1 West including, TS 3 and Gateway Overlay District.

EDC proposed revisions to Zoning Regulation 273-47, allowing merchant's additional time for the use of outdoor displays to promote their respective businesses. This was approved by Planning and Zoning on a 1 year trial basis, expiring at the end of December 2015. New regulations were drafted and approved (Q4 2016) allowing merchant's year round display of outside merchandise. The EDC Commission and the local businesses feel this will benefit their businesses and our community.

Expanded relationships with other boards, commissions and community groups.
Increased coordination with Town Hall South.

Submitted by Mark Wasserman and Brian McGlone May 3, 2017