

# December 2021

## Update of the Economic Development Committee

*See what the Economic Development Committee (EDC) has been up to this past month including a short summary of business trends and priorities for the EDC.*

### DOWNTOWN INITIATIVE

- At the Special Town Meeting held on November 1st 2021, the new Downtown District zoning bylaw passed. 73% of Southborough residents voted in favor of implementing the Downtown District with accompanying zoning map. The Downtown District allows for certain identified uses by-right including mixed-use.
- Phase II of the *Downtown Initiative* will focus on connectivity, beautification and further exploration of a central wastewater solution.

### MICRO ENTERPRISE GRANT:

*The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), made available by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), is a federally funded program, created to assist micro-enterprises with emergency needs during the COVID-19 crisis. Southborough participated in a regional application with 23 communities in cooperation with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).*

- The last round of funding was finalized in December 2021.
- Southborough awarded 12 grants worth **\$155,000** to local small businesses (microenterprises)
- Some feedback from Southborough microenterprise grant recipients:

*“The grant couldn't have come at a better time, our computer crashed so we needed to upgrade, then the upgrade wasn't compatible with our color copier, so we ended up getting a rebuilt copier. Without the grant, I would have considered closing our doors. Thanks again for all your help!”*

*“Thank you for all your support in bringing awareness of this program to the businesses of our community. For businesses like mine that are largely in-person with our clients, this grant program was the breath of life that allowed our continuing on during the COVID pandemic. I know we are all ever so grateful to you, to the staff at MGCC and to all involved who worked tirelessly to help small businesses through this most challenging period.”*

*“The two Small Business Grants I received were a life boat for my business. In precarious times, I certainly appreciate the assistance so that GOODNESS REMEDIES is still here after the past couple rough years. And I am so appreciative to the town of Southboro and Marijke!”*

## GRANT APPLICATIONS:

*The EDC submitted grant applications with three different State agencies over the Summer of 2021. All applications are part of the EDC's effort to increase business competitiveness for Route 9. The requests for assistance aim to address the hurdles to economic development that were identified through previous research and business outreach.*

### 1. COMMUNITY ONE STOP FOR GROWTH

Project Scope:

- Conduct a review of the current zoning code of Southborough's Business Highway and Industrial zoned areas along Route 9,
- Provide recommendations for a zoning update for these areas,
- Provide recommendations for implementing specific Economic Development tools,
- Provide recommendations to improve traffic patterns that will facilitate access to businesses along Route 9.

Grant Request: \$65,000

Notification of Award: **Southborough was not awarded grant funding for the FY22 round of funding.**

The EDC submitted another Expression of Interest in December 2021, for the next round of funding (FY23). The project application for FY23 will solely focus on a review and recodification of the Business Highway and Industrial zoned areas along Route 9.

### 2. EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Project Scope: Review and Update "Wastewater Disposal Alternatives" for Route 9 sites

Grant Request: \$50,000

Notification of Award: **Southborough was awarded \$45,000 to be used by June 2023.**

### 3. MASSDEVELOPMENT – REAL ESTATE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Project Scope: Recommend Economic Development tools and/or District Improvement Financing options for Southborough's Route 9 Business Corridor including concrete steps for implementation.

Grant Request: \$30,000

Notification of Award: **Southborough was not awarded grant funding.**

## BUSINESS ROUNDUP:

- [Apothecary Artists](#) have moved into the space at 1 Boston Road. The art gallery and working studio will have a second Grand Opening on January 22, 2022.
- Two addiction recovery centers have opened in Southborough in recent weeks. [Paramount Recovery Center](#) at 120 Turnpike Road and [Northstar Recovery Center](#) at 132 Turnpike Road.
- Trivedi Advanced Technologies HQ is moving to Northborough. In June 2021, Trivedi sold the property at 200 Turnpike Road to JC Grounds after having purchased it just 6 months earlier in December 2020.
- JC Grounds is currently going through the permitting process with the Planning Department. The building will be renovated to house a commercial snowplowing business.  
<https://www.jcgrounds.com/blog/worcester-county-here-we-come>
- The redevelopment sites at 241 and 245 Turnpike Road have been sold to Transatlantic Management Inc. for the development of luxury car condos.
- 250 Turnpike Road (former KAZ building) is under contract to be sold.
- Wendy's on Route 9 and Pizza 19 at 150 Framingham Road have permanently closed.
- The 495/MetroWest [Regional Supply Chain Directory](#) is now live on the EDC page of the Town website. Local businesses are advised to submit their information to be included in the directory if eligible.

Reach out to the EDC or attend any of our upcoming meetings to get involved. Contact the EDC Coordinator at [mmunsiff@southboroughma.com](mailto:mmunsiff@southboroughma.com) or 508-485 0710 ext. 3011 with questions, ideas or for more information. Visit us at [www.southboroughedc.com](http://www.southboroughedc.com). Follow us on Facebook: **Southborough EDC**

*Thank you for Reading!*

# Economic Development Priorities and Focus for 2022

***The Economic Development Committee (EDC) wants to thank all residents who came out to vote at the November 1<sup>st</sup> Special Town Meeting. By passing the Downtown District zoning bylaw, the Town of Southborough took a first - but important - step in addressing some of the hurdles to desirable economic development. The overwhelming support of residents (73%) for the new bylaw is a clear signal that important work to revitalize downtown Southborough should continue.***

In this latest EDC newsletter, the committee would like to share the priorities and areas of focus that are identified for 2022. All of the EDC's activities are guided by recommendations presented in the 2008 Master Plan and are aimed to strengthen Southborough's economic wellbeing and quality of life. Priorities for 2022 include the Route 9 Business Corridor, the Downtown Initiative, Business Outreach and Business Assistance during the continuing COVID pandemic.

## **Sustainable Economic Development**

Only 9% of Southborough land use is zoned for commercial or industrial use. Of this commercially zoned land, only 4% was available for development in 2021. To bolster the Town's commercial tax base, to relieve pressure on residential taxes and keep up with increased spending by the Town, it is vital that existing commercial zones in Southborough are used to their fullest potential.

The EDC renewed its focus on addressing under-used lots and vacant office space along Route 9. The committee reached out to real estate owners, developers and the business community to see how the Town can work in attracting, retaining, and promoting businesses in Southborough. Some of the issues that were identified and need to be addressed include Southborough's (wastewater) infrastructure, public transportation options, zoning regulations and permitting process. The EDC also continues to look at other available tools that would help improve Southborough's business attractiveness. See Figure 1 for a SWOT analysis of Southborough.

**Figure 1: Southborough SWOT Analysis**

<b>STRENGTHS</b> Labor Force Location Diverse Economy Public School System Open Space Safety Proximity to colleges/universities and vocational schools	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> Permitting Process Amenities Housing Mix Cost of Living Infrastructure Development sites Zoning Traffic
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> Attract young professionals Create Economic niche Nurture entrepreneurship & start-ups Develop an industrial attraction policy Improve Downtown vibrancy to attract talent = investment	<b>THREATS</b> Over-development Aging population Cost of living

Source: EDSAT Study, EDC

### **A New Economic Reality**

With a new business model emerging, the EDC envisions an urgent need for more flexible zoning regulations. More amenities and outdoor spaces in office parks will be vital in bringing back employees. The hybrid workforce is expected to stay. This will result in fewer employees on location but more space required per employee due to COVID health concerns.

A boom in the life sciences industry sector is fueling the explosive demand in laboratory space all across the region. Unlike our neighboring communities, Southborough lacks a central wastewater system along Route 9 and thus is missing out on this enormous growth opportunity.

The growth in e-commerce has dramatically increased the need for various types and scale of warehousing. To attract these types of developments, sites with the proper zoning in place are paramount.

Southborough’s boards, committees and residents, need to take a focused look at what is desired for Route 9. What type of commercial activity do we want to attract and what regulatory changes and investments would potentially be needed.

### **Route 9 Commercial Corridor**

The EDC’s preliminary research, as well as feedback from business visits, have identified various areas of improvement to increase economic competitiveness. See a comprehensive [presentation](#) that was shared during the October 7, 2021 EDC meeting and is posted on the Town website.

The EDC wrote and submitted grant applications with three different State agencies over the Summer of 2021 (see them listed out on page 2 of the December update). All applications are part of the EDC's effort to increase business attractiveness for Route 9. The requests for assistance aim to address the hurdles to economic development that were identified through previous research and business outreach.

### **Downtown Initiative**

Phase I of the *Downtown Initiative* was completed with the creation of a new Downtown District zoning bylaw and the completion of a wastewater feasibility study. Both projects were made possible through a \$50,000 Planning Assistance Grant from the Executive office of Environmental Affairs (EEA).

Phase II of the *Downtown Initiative* will focus on improved connectivity, beautification and further exploration of a central wastewater solution.

The Downtown District is part of Southborough's larger economic eco-system. A vibrant Downtown is important to residents and many potential home buyers who want walkability and vibrant places to visit, eat and shop. Route 9 will also become a more attractive place for businesses with a vibrant downtown nearby.

### **Conclusion**

For Southborough to be effective in keeping and attracting businesses along Route 9, and seeing some significant growth in commercial/industrial tax revenues, strategic decisions and investments are needed.

Any potential Route 9 revenue will not be realized within the next year. It will only be realized when a well, thought-out project plan is developed and supported by all of the Town's elected boards.

**The EDC wishes you all a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year!**

