

Hi Folks,

This doc is a place to collect thoughts, ideas, and questions from people interested in Brooklyn's rebooted Economic Development Commission as we discuss how to get moving and begin the search for a part-time Economic Development Director.

How to use this doc:

- I've started with some of the thoughts that were discussed at our last meeting
- Please put your name at the beginning of any thoughts you add. This will facilitate easier followup discussions at the next meeting
- You can add whatever you'd like in whatever section you think makes the most sense (or add new sections, too!), just please don't delete anyone else's additions

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### **Economic Development Commission Purpose:**

1. Retain current businesses in Brooklyn
  - a. Advocate for business interests in town as appropriate
  - b. "Shepherding" current businesses through growth processes/permits if needed
  - c. Helping Brooklyn be more business friendly/focused
  - d. Find ways to promote local businesses through events, marketing, working with BBA and Chamber of Commerce
2. Attract new businesses to Brooklyn
  - a. Strategy around what space is available and who/what types of businesses would be a good fit
  - b. "Shepherding" new businesses through the various processes/permits required to get started
  - c. Networking with business owners
  - d. Helping Brooklyn be more business friendly/focused
  - e. Marketing Brooklyn to potential businesses
3. Support Brooklyn's [Plan of Conservation & Development](#)
  - a. Strategy around what types of businesses Brooklyn would like to attract, and planning infrastructure projects to support those goals
  - b. Balance commercial growth with residential growth
  - c. Track and report on business metrics & economic trends
  - d. Coordinate with Economic Development Commissions from neighboring towns
4. **Joe Bellavance - Hire new Economic Development Director**
  - a. **Develop job description**
  - b. **Set length of contract and employment expectations**
  - c. **Assist First Selectman with candidate interviews**

**What does EDC need to do/have/figure out in order to be successful this time around?**

- Clarity on Commission's role vs PT Economic Development Director's role and reporting structure
- More info about pain points from previous commission and why it ended up disbanding
- Joe Bellavance - Determine relationship with other branches of town government: i.e. Town Planner, Zoning Commission, etc..
- Joe Bellavance - Clarity of EDC purpose
- Joe Bellavance - Initial time commitment for commission members time

**Some first steps we can take (in no particular order):**

- Inventory of available commercial spaces
- Directory of businesses registered in Brooklyn
- Process map of steps to start a business in town (process will vary for different types of businesses)
  - Turn into a "How-To" guide
  - Figure out how to make process more efficient - minimizing time between cash outlay and ability to start bringing in revenue as a new business is imperative to new business success
- Create role description and job listing for Economic Development Director
- Discuss/propose any additional budget needs for the commission (recording secretary, etc)
- Survey current businesses in town
- Consider future grant subsidized projects that would provide better infrastructure for economic development

**Joe Bellavance**

**Economic Development Director Position Job Description Pieces**

- Develop business space inventory of commercial space
- Coordinate new business guide resource to include permitting, zoning, health dept, etc.
- Establish ED budget

**Joe Bellavance**

**Commission's Overarching Goal:**

Create a successful ED Director position and commission such that the town will support both in its annual budget discussions going forward.

## Important Section to read in Brooklyn's [Plan of Conservation & Development](#):

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### **Background / Status**

Brooklyn is clearly a town with the best of both worlds, old and new. Although most of Brooklyn is rich in history with a distinct New England charm, the eastern corridor is home to the Planned Commercial District. This zone is the area designated by the Planning and Zoning Commission as the principal commercial area of the Town, for retail shopping and compatible uses. It is currently home to a diverse group of businesses from small to large in size and locally to nationally owned.

The center of town is home to the crossroads of a federally designated Scenic Highway, Route 169, and Route 6, the major route between Hartford and Providence. This is also the home of Brooklyn's Village Center District where smaller businesses and residences neighbor the historic town hall, churches and monuments. Additional commercial zones in Brooklyn include the Restricted Business Zone and the Neighborhood Commercial Zone which allow for smaller scale business in various areas of town.

Brooklyn's Economic Development Commission (EDC) is overseen by both the office of the First Selectman and a group of appointed volunteers. The Commission was created by ordinance in 1967 and is further governed by Connecticut State Statute. The Commission's role is advisory and is charged with studying economic trends and making recommendations to town officials in an effort to promote economic development. The current Commission includes five regular members and two alternates, all appointed by the First Selectman for four year terms.

The retention of existing businesses currently operating in the Town is the most important goal as it relates to economic development. Local businesses are the backbone of the local economy in a Town such as Brooklyn. To promote business retention, open lines of communication with businesses and the determination of the needs and wants of the Town and its residents is crucial. The EDC has recently embarked on a business recognition program. The EDC Chair and member(s) make a brief presentation and award a plaque recognizing the business and its contribution to the community. The EDC also welcomes new businesses with a plaque presentation and a ribbon cutting. Not only does this program provide a business with some free publicity, but also makes residents and businesses aware of the efforts of the EDC.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

During 2009, the Planned Commercial District was the subject of controversy with the application and approval of a 162,000 square foot retail and food store. From a planning perspective, the focus on this application has created opportunity for dialogue about the type and scale of development in Brooklyn's commercial districts. The EDC is an active participant in this ongoing discussion and shall continue to support projects that meet the current applicable zoning regulations.

In order to generate maximum growth of the Grand List, development of the Planned Commercial (PC) zone should be fostered and encouraged. The commercial grand list has grown from 19,402,950 in 1998 to 28,967,110 in 2008, an increase of 49.3 percent. During the same period the residential grand list has grown from 202,303,401 to 383,293,510, an increase of 89.5 percent. The residential growth far outweighs the commercial. Ensuring an appropriately balanced growth will provide the town with viable tax revenues from both sources.

### **Objectives & Relation to Key Priorities**

- 1) Balancing the Grand List between Residential, Commercial and Protected Lands which is key to a healthy economy that promotes business, provides goods and services to its residents and supports our education system
- 2) Route 6 Commercial Development should be encouraged in an effort to increase the Grand List and reduce the burden to residential taxpayers
- 3) Route 169 Scenic Corridor and Village Commercial District should encourage businesses that provide goods and services on a smaller scale while preserving its historic character
- 4) Regional cooperation with Economic Development Commissions of neighboring towns is essential to promote Economic Development on a larger scale across northeastern Connecticut
- 5) Retaining and growing existing businesses remains critical to the economic health of Brooklyn

In the 2009 Residents Survey, the highest level of support for location of new businesses was in the Route 6 Planned Commercial Zone around Day Street and Brickyard Road (3.34/5) and the redevelopment of a mixed-use zone for the former Arrow Hart property near Tiffany Street (3.38/5). Support was low for commercial development in the Village Center District (1.75/5) and the Route 6 Restricted Business District between Brickyard Road and Brooklyn Center (2.15/5). Generally, smaller scale businesses under 15,000 square feet were preferred (3.89/5) to larger scale retail. The preference for development of new business parks (2.56/5) was higher than that of industrial parks (1.98/5), though neither represented a major endorsement. It should be noted that the survey was conducted in the midst of a highly controversial large-scale retail development application process, and questions concerning commercial development were by far the most polarizing in the entire survey.



## **Recommendations**

1. Review existing goals for development in Planned Commercial district relative to existing regulations to ensure that the permitting and development of appropriate uses is encouraged, enabled, and streamlined.
2. Develop an inventory of available buildings and developable land throughout the town that can be accessed by potential developers, real estate professionals, and Town officials.
3. Research and pursue development, as appropriate, of a Business Park Zone for Brooklyn that could foster smaller start-up businesses and lighter industry that would not require major highway or rail infrastructure.
4. Establish and fund Town staff position of economic development coordinator to be responsible for the daily operations of the office of Economic Development; meeting with potential businesses; marketing of the Town; managing the website; providing professional guidance to the EDC and encouraging the coordination between Town commissions, particularly EDC, P&Z and the Board of Selectmen.
5. Identify and prioritize infrastructure improvements for STEAP and other grant opportunities.
6. Work with landowners and developers to explore the pre-permitting of priority development sites.
7. Support formation of local business owners association to promote Brooklyn businesses and pool resources for encouragement of local economic development activity.
8. Conduct a build-out analysis of the Planned Commercial District.
9. Consider the appropriateness of the Zoning District designation of the Industrial Zone located between Route 6 and South Street.