

Economic Development and Community Planning
Annual Report
FY2021

The Department of Economic Development and Community Planning mission is to continuously improve the quality of life and promote economic growth, stability and vitality in Uxbridge by supporting existing and new businesses and facilitating investment and economic development that is beneficial to the Town, its neighborhoods and business districts, and that meet or exceed community expectations.

The Department is staffed primarily by the Economic Development and Community Planning Director with limited assistance from the Land-Use administrative staff whose primary functions lie with the Planning Board (part-time) and Board of Appeals (part-time) respectively, as well as interns, work co-op students and Senior Work-off Program participants.

The COVID-19 Pandemic influenced the Department's approach. No longer could staff meet directly in-person with others in the typical meeting format. Rather we had to adjust to ZOOM meetings, conference calls and email exchanges. The Pandemic affected how businesses and the development community moved projects forward. The Department continued to support the Board of Health and Emergency Management/Police/Fire in their efforts to message matters related to COVID-19 in an efficient and complete manner.

The Department continued to look for collaborative opportunities with other Town departments as well as the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), local non-profit organizations, historic preservation groups and neighboring communities. A variety of studies, programs and grant applications resulted, including the McCloskey Building Study, the Farnum House Architectural Survey and Study, the initial phase of the Main Street Initiative, the Americans with Disabilities Act Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan and related All Abilities Initiative, Town-owned property strategic plan, a full range of emergency management policies, procedures, and planning tools including the Regional Emergency Operations Center Study, a regional housing study, the start of a study focusing on the Route 146 Corridor, and the rezoning and development of a large parcel involving the Towns of Sutton and Douglas.

In collaboration with CMRPC, the Department was able to bring a team of students from Boston Architectural College (BAC) to work with us in the development of a Main Street survey and study and design concepts for buildings situated in the Main Street district.

The Department offers special thanks to the variety of boards and committees that we have had the privilege to work with including the Uxbridge Historical Commission, the Historic District Commission, and our planning and development partners, the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Land Use, and Building Inspector, as well as those that work with us to ensure that decisions are made that bring the best outcome for Uxbridge, including the Town Manager, Treasurer Collector, Assessor, Department of Public Works, Police and Fire Departments.

Economic Development and Community Planning benefits from a team of student interns and co-op students, special employees, and senior volunteers. Massachusetts Maritime Academy (MMA) has been an outstanding partner in our ongoing efforts over the past several years. As a result, we were able to complete several emergency management studies and recommended policies and procedures including the Preparedness and Resiliency study, and the Emergency Management Communications study. In addition, we had an opportunity to have a student volunteer that researched and crafted a fleet transition study that focused on the transition of the Town's vehicle fleet to hybrid and electric vehicles.

The Town's Senior Work-off Program has provided the Department with outstanding support of the past several years. The volunteer has been a tremendous asset in the effort to complete research about the local businesses, land-use and values, and historic properties.

Among the many that provided assistance were Shane Keville – Wagner (MMA) and Rourke Moran (MMA), Ian Kavanaugh (George Washington University/Suffolk Law), Becker Schmidt (BAC), Thomas Randy Fields (Senior Work-Off Program), and Matthew O'Brien (Suffolk University/Harvard University). Of note, Lynn Marchand and Melissa Shelley from the Land Use Department provided immeasurable professional support during the year.

Because of all of the above, the Department of Economic Development and Community Planning was recognized for outstanding economic and community planning programming and efforts by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission at their Annual Dinner.

During FY21 the Director of Economic Development and Community Planning, Michael Gallerani, retired from full-time employment. Michael continued in his role on a part-time basis, limiting his focus to economic development and community planning activities.

The staff and future volunteers, interns and work co-op students as well as temporary staff, look forward to working with other Town Departments, local businesses, the Commonwealth of MA, regional planning organizations, and the local education and workforce organizations to continue make Uxbridge a community ready for the next level of excellence and relevance.

Michael Gallerani, CEcD
Director