

Economic Development and Community Planning
Annual Report
FY2023

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 Board of Appeals (part-time), as well as interns, work co-op students and Senior Work-off Program participants.

During the Fiscal Year the impacts of the COVID 19 Pandemic were waning, but something was gained from the experience. The Pandemic taught us, as an organization, several things, including the value of remote meetings and remote work. As we turned to the new normal both have been integrated into the way we do business.

The Department continued to look for collaborative opportunities with other Town departments as well as the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, regional neighbors, local non-profit organizations, and historic preservation groups. The EDCP continued to take the lead in a number of studies and strategies intended to move the community forward. The pivotal project continued to be the repurposing of the McCloskey Building as the Uxbridge Municipal Campus. A comprehensive project briefing was provided to the Board of Selectmen in September in anticipation of a public discussion to be held during the months that followed. In February 2023 the EDCP Director, presented an overview and the “next steps” to the Board of Selectmen, The Board rejected the request to add the project to the Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant, effectively putting the project in a holding position, and all but eliminating it as proposed.

The Comprehensive Community Plan – Section A - Main Street Initiative was completed during the final days of FY23. EDCP staff prepared the plan in-house with the assistance of other Town Departments, CMRPC and several external organizations, as well as consultants. The Plan will offer new strategies, designs, ideas, and program frameworks to decision makers, investors, and business owners. The Plan, as prepared, will serve as a “road-map” for the reimagining of the Main Street District.

The Project Review Team under the auspices of EDCP continued to meet with prospective new businesses and developments.

The EDCP hosted and facilitated a day-long workshop (*Town Hall Advance*) for Town Department Heads. The workshop focused on teamwork, common goals, projects, problems, and ideas.

Over the past several years, Economic Development and Community Planning has benefited from the availability of student interns, co-op students, special employees, and senior volunteers. Those relationships continued, affording EDCP the ability to conduct research, collect data and information, and in general support and enhance the performance of the professional staff. In particular, during FY23, the Town’s Senior Work-off Program provided the Department with extraordinary support..

Among those that provided assistance were Matthew O’Brien (Suffolk University/Harvard University) and Kennedy Keville-Wagner (University of Vermont) and Thomas “Randy” Fields (Senior Volunteer). Of note, 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 continued to be recognized for outstanding economic development and community planning programming and efforts by State agencies, developers, site-planners, business owners, and funding organizations.

During FY23 the Director of Economic Development and Community Planning, Michael Gallerani continued in his role on a part-time basis. As Michael departs at the conclusion of FY23, the function and responsibilities of EDCP will be rolled into other Town Departments.

The staff, has found the experience of working with other Town Departments, local businesses, the Commonwealth of MA, regional planning organizations, the local education and workforce organizations, boards and committees, and individual residents rewarding. It can be said, without reservation, that the efforts put forth in the name of Economic Development and Community Planning have made Uxbridge a better place.

Michael Gallerani, CEcD
Director