

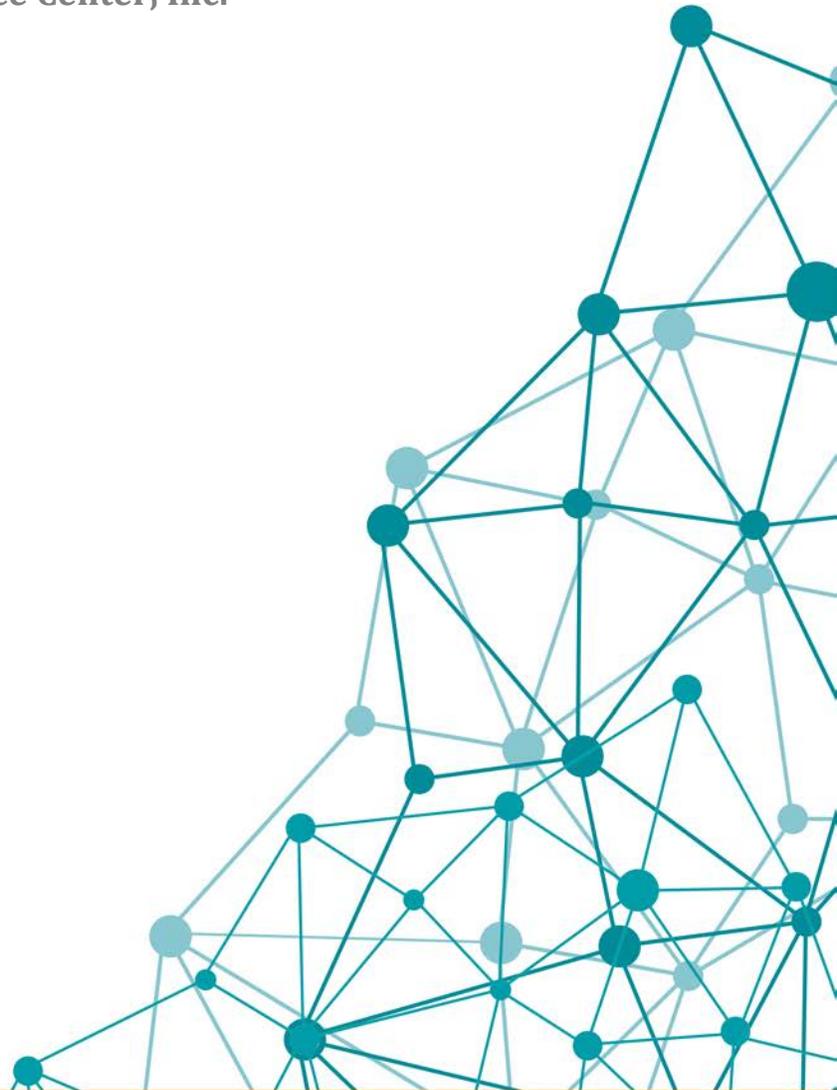


Economic Development Commission Action Plan

Prepared for Town of Madison

Prepared by Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc.

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Collaboration at work

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The Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. (CERC) is a nonprofit corporation and public-private partnership that drives economic development in Connecticut by providing research-based data, planning and implementation strategies to foster business formation, recruitment and growth. CERC has proven and relevant expertise providing clients with the knowledge and insight they need to gain a competitive advantage. CERC is a pioneer in the development of programs, technologies and capabilities to support effective economic development and offers a complete range of services from economic impact analysis, strategic planning, data gathering and communications, to outreach, site selection and business assistance. CERC has earned a reputation for excellence in Connecticut's economic development community through our accomplished, professional staff, commitment to customer service, and connection to a network of strategic partners.

BACKGROUND

The Town of Madison asked CERC to assist the Economic Development Commission in developing a strategic mission and defined goals. Because the EDC is made up of volunteers, members can dedicate only a small amount of time outside of regular meetings to performing economic development work on behalf of the Town. As a result, the Town of Madison aims to ensure that this time is being spent in a meaningful and effective manner.

The Town of Madison has a rich history, a vibrant culture, and a scenic coastal character. CERC helped Madison's EDC explore its priorities and turn them into a five-year plan. CERC is pleased to provide the Town of Madison with this action plan for EDC to make a meaningful impact on the local business community.

FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW KEY THEMES

Understanding perceptions of Madison and putting it all together.

Leading a focus group with the EDC members and local property/business owners:

CERC's project team designed and facilitated two focus groups to solicit issues and top priorities and compare them against the EDC's past actions as well as those best-practice actions which may make the most impact in town. The first focus group was held with the Economic Development Commission. The second focus group was held with local business and property owners and Chamber members.

We understand that Madison does not have a large commercial base and we designed our ideas and solutions that guide the Economic Development staff and volunteers to make the best use of their limited time and resources. It was valuable to hear from these groups to help gauge how the town is doing on a certain challenge and focus on what the public finds most important.

A five-year action plan: CERC drafted a five-year action plan for the EDC after receiving feedback from both groups. In addition to providing specific goals, this plan will serve as a

detailed prioritized implementation plan with action steps, breaking out costs, partners, timelines, task leads, roles for staff and EDC members, and chronological milestones,

The plan will help the Economic Development Commission answer the question, “So what?”. By including information on the predicted outcomes of each of the strategic actions, this will allow the EDC to better understand how its own vision will impact the future of economic development in Madison. The action plan articulates a cohesive set of achievable economic development actions that build on Madison’s strengths, takes advantage of opportunities and addresses local and common challenges.

As a final step in the process, CERC is happy to partner with the EDC to create a mission statement that will reflect the five-year plan. and ensure that the members’ vision is being met.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EDC

EDC Representation

When nominating new members, think about adding people with the following skill sets and experience: commercial real estate, business ownership, Chamber member, workforce partner

DOWNTOWN

Help Keep Downtown Retail Unique and Local

Have EDC members visit and get to know the existing businesses and recognize where new uses may fit with the character of the downtown and overall community. Where appropriate, advocate for these new uses.

Review Parking Requirements

As EDC members receive feedback from local businesses, provide that to the land use commissioners who have the ability to make appropriate revisions.

Review Septic Utilization/Future Needs

As EDC members receive feedback from local and prospective businesses, provide that to the Town leaders who have the ability to make appropriate investments.

Retail Hours

Use business visits and Chamber partnership to encourage longer retail hours on weeknights and Sundays.

MARKETING WITHIN TOWN

Inquire about Town Services

EDC members can ask residents and businesses which services they most heavily rely on and how the Town can best serve them. This may be accomplished through a survey or some focus groups.

Ask about Future Vision

EDC members can ask residents and businesses about their visions for the future of the community and how the Town can best accomplish. This may be done through a survey or some focus groups.

Place-making

Help educate existing residents and businesses that “creating a great place here” is critical to the success of the local economy

Develop Brand/Identity

Consider retaining a firm that can assist in creating a logo and a tagline that all can use.

MARKETING OUTSIDE of TOWN

Highlight Local Assets

Consider targeted marketing efforts using social media and other techniques; highlight what sets you apart from other communities. Focus on attracting residents.

Social Media

Start or strengthen social media efforts using Instagram, Facebook

Include Seasonal Residents

Ask them to serve on Boards and Commissions and encourage their involvement in year-round efforts in an attempt to engage them fully into the community.

SUPPORTING BUSINESS

Promote Existing Businesses

Using e-news or traditional PR methods, announce new and expanding businesses and other positive business news. Consider hosting an annual award eg Business of the Year to recognize their efforts.

Visit Businesses

Start a formal visitation program where staff and EDC visit existing businesses on a regular basis gathering information to use for trends and potential policy changes.

Assist Entrepreneurs

Help them grow/scale their business by holding events, setting up some common co-working space and tap experts in the community to assist them with legal, accounting, marketing, IT, etc

Highlight Strong Industries

Using the strengths in software, biotech, construction, etc, make sure the community knows that these are industries to build on and grow locally.

State and Federal Resources

Create a list of state and federal contacts and programs (grants, loans, technical assistance, etc) that businesses can use.

Promote Tax Abatement Policy

Encourage its use by ensuring that prospective and growing businesses know about it and what it requires.

FUTURE NEEDS

Plan of Conservation and Development

When the update is being conducted, offer to assist with the creation/revision of the economic development portion.

Aging Population

As resident age increases, help determine which services will need to be strengthened and what their needs are. This will help guide business attraction efforts. This can be accomplished through survey and community conversations.

Education for Responsible Development

To balance a vocal population that deters change, provide education on balanced development that welcomes conservation and smart land use and fits the character of the community. This may be accomplished through written materials and forums.

Advocate for Transportation Options

Work with federal and state legislative delegation as well as SCCOG and CT DOT to advocate for Tweed expansion, 2nd rail platform and other transportation improvements.

Utility Capacity

Determine need for and community perception of increased water and sewer capacity and help the appropriate Boards and Commissions plan for these needs/wants.

Grand List Growth

Pro-active economic development efforts like business retention, expansion, recruitment and creation will help ensure long-term sustainable growth of the commercial grand list.

LAND USE REGULATORY PROCESS

Engage PZC and EDC Together

Using staff that serves both commissions, start meeting regularly and communicate about responsible growth and applications that further this goal.

Promote the Land Use Process

Collect and promote examples of positive outcomes from the land use regulatory process. Gather testimonials and case studies that can show the prospective applicants that the process is predictable and consistent.

PARTNERSHIPS

EDC and Chamber

Ensure roles are aligned and clarified. Consider having an EDC member serve as a non-voting member of the Chamber Board and a Chamber member serve as a non-voting member of EDC.

Surrounding Towns

Work with surrounding towns on tourism and business attraction efforts.

Board of Education

Work together to promote the excellent school system as a draw for future residents and young families moving to the area.

Commercial Real Estate Industry

Pro-actively reach out to brokers, developers, site selectors and others to ensure that they are thinking of Madison as they guide their clients in the region. A once-a-year event allows them to network with one another and with Madison community leaders and gives the Town the opportunity to update them on positive news and ongoing/future developments.

INVESTMENTS

Infrastructure Investment

Work with Town leaders to determine best way to invest in sidewalks, fiber connections in commercial areas, sewer and water capacity, etc. Grants, capital funding and bonding all can assist in these efforts.

RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

Targeted tax Incentives

Encourage tax incentive policy use by ensuring that prospective and growing businesses know about it and what it requires. It can serve as a powerful benefit to doing business in Madison.

Area Property

Working with the State and relevant property owners and abutters, continue to explore options for property across from Hamonasset as well as 11 acres at Exit 62 interchange.

Existing Commercial Corridors

Conduct a gateway study of the commercial areas heading into Town from North, East and West to ensure the best utilization of Post Road and downtown – infill with the best uses.

Housing Options

Continue to educate residents about new types of housing and appropriate density in the appropriate parts of town.

Long-term Planning

As appropriate, engage community leaders to look at Town services comprehensively. For example, utilization of existing municipal facilities, updates to surf club, use of pond at the fire house, etc

OTHER

Environmental Assets

Promote the beaches, open space, trails and recreation options as competitive advantages to your community.

Grants

Explore grant opportunities to help fund economic development initiatives.

Economic development staff and commissioners can tackle these activities together to meaningfully improve business retention and recruitment efforts while maintaining the character of Madison.