



**Recommendations to Foster Economic Development in Milford**  
**Report to the Milford Board of Selectmen and Planning Board**

Prepared by the Economic Development Advisory Committee  
June 8, 2009

Department of Community Development  
Town of Milford, New Hampshire



# **Recommendations to Foster Economic Development in Milford** **Report to the Milford Board of Selectmen and Planning Board**

Prepared by the Economic Development Advisory Committee  
June 8, 2009

## **Economic Development Advisory Committee Members**

Tom Sapienza, Chair	Hampshire Hills
Rich Ball	Cirtronics Corporation
Tracy Bardsley	Downtown Ongoing Improvement Team (DO-IT)
Brad Chappell	Chappell Tractor
Matt Ciardelli	Ciardelli Fuel Co.
Chris Costantino	Milford Conservation Commission
Rosie Deloge	Milford School District SAU 40
Rick Holder	Hampshire Hills
George Infanti	Milford Paint and Wallpaper
Janet Langdell	Milford Planning Board
Heather Leach	Centrix Bank
Walter Murray, Jr.	Milford Water and Sewer Commission
John McCormack	West Milford Tax Increment Financing Board
Tim O'Connell	Butternut Farm
Mike Putnam	Milford Board of Selectmen
Sean Trombly	Trombly Gardens
Dale White	Leighton A. White, Inc.
Bill Parker	Department of Community Development – Staff Support
Shirley Wilson	Department of Community Development – Staff Support

**Recommendations to Foster Economic Development in Milford**  
**Report to the Milford Board of Selectmen and Planning Board**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>ES-1</b>
<b>I. Introduction and Purpose</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>III. Recommendations from the Committee</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>IV. Summary</b>	<b>13</b>

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Town of Milford is faced with the challenges brought about by rapid, dynamic, and forceful local, regional, and global economic conditions shared by communities everywhere. An absence of any kind of strategic Town-wide economic development plan causes the Town to be ill-prepared to address these challenges and creates reactive rather than proactive decision-making that may not sustain the long-term economic health and vitality of both current and future residents.

Recognizing this void, the Milford Board of Selectmen and Planning Board desire to encourage economic development in the Town and identified the need to establish strong policies, goals, and actions to support local business and industry and promote ongoing balanced economic growth. To initiate the effort, the Planning Board, with the support of the Selectmen, created the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) to:

*"...formulate a comprehensive economic development strategy that contains a vision supported by realistic goals and implementation steps to promote balanced, sustainable economic development in the Town of Milford. This plan should be based on community values and strengths, and address community deficiencies and constraints to economic development. The EDAC plan, with recommendations, will be presented to the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen to form the basis of sound economic development policy for the Town in May 2009."*

The Economic Development Advisory Committee consists of a broad range of local economic development stakeholders, ranging from agricultural businesses, small and large commercial and industrial firms, and boards, commissions, and public entities whose policies and decisions play a crucial role in the Town's economy. Through meaningful and thoughtful consideration of identified issues and constraints, the EDAC developed six key goals based on its findings. The six goals are as follows:

1. Establish a proactive business support and business development policy at the Board of Selectmen level.
2. Maintain existing municipal infrastructure facilities and services, and wisely plan for and implement construction of necessary new and expanded facilities and services to cost-effectively and fairly distribute the cost so there is no undue burden on either the business/development community or the taxpaying citizens of Milford.
3. Continue to support and implement economic development initiatives that strengthen Downtown/The Oval as the physical, historic, and symbolic hub of community economic activity.
4. Undertake a Town-wide analysis of existing land uses and overlying zoning districts to identify areas for future commercial and industrial development, redevelopment, and workforce housing in relation to land development capacity, needed infrastructure improvements for the transportation network, utilities, stormwater management, municipal facilities, physical and natural constraints, neighborhood compatibility, and protection of open space and Town character.
5. Increase, through all available and cost-effective marketing opportunities including an enhanced state-of-the-art website, local, regional, and national awareness of Milford as a community that is a welcoming and business-friendly environment affording superior quality-of-life.
6. Enhance communication and program development involving the School District, Business Community and the Town in matters of joint economic development and in particular those matters that focus on budgeting and capital improvements.

This Report presents the background and process that led to the development of goals, as well as findings, recommendations, and actions that can be taken to achieve them and in turn build a stronger foundation for ongoing and sustainable economic development for the Town of Milford.



## **I. Introduction and Purpose**

Economic development is defined in many ways, but in general, can be stated as a program, group of policies, and/or activity that seeks to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community. Economic development not only retains jobs and provides a stable tax base but also promotes economic betterment by continually improving human development, education, health, safety, and well-being for the citizens of a community. A reasoned and sound economic development policy is essential for any community that acknowledges the community goal that economic betterment for its citizens builds overall community vitality and sustainability.

The Town of Milford, New Hampshire, located in southern New Hampshire, is the hub of the Souhegan Valley. With a population of just over 15,000 people, the local economy has a rich tradition and diversified base founded on agriculture, manufacturing, and services. The Town benefits from its location in the Boston-Nashua-Manchester metropolitan area and is well-served by several State highways (NH Routes 101, 101A, and 13). Population growth has been steady over the past several decades, averaging approximately one percent per year with periodic spurts and slowdowns tied primarily to regional economic conditions. Commercial and industrial development has grown steadily over the years. However, with the reliance on local property taxes to fund necessary public services and infrastructure, ongoing maintenance and expansion of these continues to be a challenge. The Town offers a broad range of municipal services and utilities, a solid school system, diverse housing stock, and a small-town character that has been identified as a community asset essential to maintain and protect. However, the Town is not immune to rapidly changing economic conditions and issues faced in the region and globally, and must be ready to address periods of both economic growth and slowdown.

The purpose of this report, *Recommendations to Foster Economic Development in Milford*, is to provide a foundation for local decision-makers and stakeholders on which to build a sustainable local economy that can proactively adapt to ever-changing economic forces and drivers. The Report, with its associated recommendations and actions, is not presented as an in-depth economic analysis with supporting technical data, but is instead intended to be a reasonable and practical document that identifies local economic development issues and constraints based on first-hand local stakeholder input and experience.

## **II. Background**

For many years Town of Milford economic development has been a relatively informal and reactive effort that has not been guided by a comprehensive overall philosophy that formalizes decision making policies from a strong community-based foundation. Several organizations and groups in Milford have had specific economic development goals, the Milford Industrial Development Corporation, the West Milford Tax Increment Financing Advisory Board, the Downtown Ongoing Improvement Team, the Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce, among others – but none are guided by a single overall Town vision for economic development. Although many institutional tools are in place (Master Plan goals, zoning and site plan regulations, a solid infrastructure and economic base), there is no comprehensive vision that integrates land use, business retention and attraction, transportation and infrastructure needs, housing, education, community facilities, environment, and community character.

Recognizing that the need for a clear vision exists, the Community Development Department, with the help of the Planning Board and the West Milford Tax Increment Financing Advisory Board (TIF Board) approached the Board of Selectmen in the winter of 2007 to seek its understanding and involvement in developing an economic development vision and plan for the Town. The Selectmen chose to make economic development a goal, and has supported current efforts.

In September 2008 the Board of Selectmen met with Janet Langdell, Planning Board chair, John McCormack, West Milford Tax Increment Financing District Board, and Bill Parker, Community Development Director. The Selectmen, following up on its goal, endorsed the Planning Board's desire to move forward on economic development planning and in its efforts to solicit community input.

***A. Economic Development Roundtable – November 2008***

In order to jumpstart a community-based economic development planning effort, the Community Development Department, Planning Board chairperson Janet Langdell, and TIF Board chair John McCormack hosted an Economic Development Roundtable on the evening of Wednesday, November 5, 2008 in the Banquet Hall of Town Hall. As a first step it was determined that it was essential to involve the local business community. An intentionally limited, but broadly representative group of business people were invited with the intention of seeking a first round of input relative to issues, concerns, pros, and cons of doing business in Milford. Participants represented manufacturing and industry, retail, construction, agriculture, finance, real estate, education, restaurants, and service interests from all geographic areas of Town. The event was extremely well-attended and an open and positive discussion identified several key areas of concern for the local business community. Extensive notes were recorded and are attached.

From this initial input session from the local business the community, the following key issues were identified (in no particular order or prioritization):

1. There is no common set of goals, as set forth in the Master Plan, that guides what Milford wants for its future.
2. Although many local industries are performing well, there are problems with attracting skilled and trained labor.
3. Some local industries are having difficulty in attracting qualified labor and employees to the area due to the high cost of housing relative to their current location.
4. Although there are several Town government departments that are cooperative and helpful there are several that are not good to do business with – causing additional cost in time and expense.
5. The permitting process for new development needs to be more responsive to the business community. Interdepartmental communication needs improvement.
6. Governing boards need to share common goals that encourage business and this philosophy needs to come from "top down" to the departments.
7. The Town must be prepared in advance for oncoming development.
8. Milford has a lot to offer, but does not market itself well.
9. Building and safety codes need to be responsive and flexible for adaptive reuse of old structures.



10. Municipal and regional infrastructure improvement needs hamper redevelopment.
11. Some downtown property owners do not reinvest in their properties and do not encourage leasing opportunities.
12. Volunteer boards do not have the training that they need.
13. Some regulations, either mandated from the State level or adopted at the local level are onerous and impractical – a common concern for all types of business. Of particular note are State mandates on agriculture, and local event and signage regulations.

The Roundtable was well-received and the Community Development Department received very favorable comments on the effort – including how essential it is to keep the momentum going forward. Several participants indicated their willingness to assist in this. There were several ideas which immediate attention was given, such as establishing a working group consisting of DO-IT representatives and Town building and fire code officials to work on the common goal of code compliance relative to downtown building rehabilitation and remodeling and Planning Board review of sign code concerns for potential 2010 Town warrant presentation.

### ***B. Economic Development Advisory Committee Process***

In December 2008, capitalizing on the momentum generated at the November Roundtable, the Planning Board authorized establishing an economic development advisory committee that would solicit participants from the Roundtable. The Planning Board provided the following charge:

*“Milford’s Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) is charged with formulating a comprehensive economic development strategy that contains a vision supported by realistic goals and implementation steps to promote balanced, sustainable economic development in the Town of Milford. This plan should be based on community values and strengths, and address community deficiencies and constraints to economic development. The EDAC plan, with recommendations, will be presented to the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen to form the basis of sound economic development policy for the Town in May 2009.”*

The EDAC met weekly from mid-January until mid-May, 2009. The group committed to several weeks of due diligence background education, hearing from representatives of the Milford Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC), the School District, Conservation Commission, the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation, Grubb & Ellis Commercial Realtors, and the Water and Sewer Commission, listened to presentations from the Community Development Department on current and projected land use and development proposals including an update on the BROX and West Milford Tax increment Financing District properties, reviewed appropriate sections of the Milford Master Plan, and considered the strengths and weaknesses from the Northeastern University Economic Development Self-Assessment undertaken by the TIF Board. Additionally, the Committee created its own list of community strengths, weaknesses, and issue areas.

From the educational process, utilizing input gained from the Roundtable, and many group discussions, the Committee grouped its preliminary findings into eight primary “issue areas” (listed below in no particular order or priority):

- Municipal website
- Municipal policy and procedures
- Downtown/The Oval
- Municipal infrastructure and services
- Business community/School District/Municipal Relationship
- Marketing
- Land Use
- Community Competitiveness

### ***C. Economic Development Vision Statement***

Knowing that creating a 'vision statement' was a requirement of the Committee's charge, the group again had lengthy discussion on what the economic vision for Milford should be, and agreed upon this statement:

*"As the hub of the Souhegan Valley, Milford shall continue to develop a diversified, growing, and sustained economy by supporting existing businesses and employers, recruiting compatible business, and providing a business-friendly environment through promotion, supportive government, commitment to infrastructure improvements and maintenance, and land use policy that reflects its rich community character."*

## **III. Recommendations from the Committee**

Section II of this report lays out the background and process used by the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) which led to its recommendations. The EDAC remained cognizant of the Vision Statement established by the group to guide it:

*"As the hub of the Souhegan Valley, Milford shall continue to develop a diversified, growing, and sustained economy by supporting existing businesses and employers, recruiting compatible business, and providing a business-friendly environment through promotion, supportive government, commitment to infrastructure improvements and maintenance, and land use policy that reflects its rich community character."*

The Committee's six primary issue areas were developed based on lengthy debate and serious critical evaluation. The Committee grouped and ranked the issue areas according to what it felt were the most strongly indicated concerns at the November 2008 Economic Development Roundtable and from ensuing Committee work. The following recommendations reflect the Committee's findings and actions needed to move forward with a proactive, comprehensive, and strategic Town-wide economic development plan and developed its recommendations accordingly.

### **Issue I: Municipal Policies and Procedures**

**Findings:** The Town has historically had no official policy at the Board of Selectmen level, based on the Milford Master Plan, stating economic development is of highest priority to insure support, encouragement,

and growth of existing business and industry, promotion of Milford as a location for new business development, and clear direction that Town governmental services be responsive to the needs and requirements associated with business and industry development. This policy is essential to balance sustainable growth and development in the property tax base while preserving and enhancing community character and the assets that make Milford attractive as a place to live and conduct business. Without a sound overarching policy to rely upon and continually refer to, economic development initiatives are often handled by decision-makers and viewed by the Town's citizens reactively rather than proactively. To achieve and maintain a healthy and diverse local economy for generations to come, there must be a leadership and community-supported philosophy that drives the economic engine.

**Goal:** *Establish a proactive business support and business development policy at the Board of Selectmen level.*

**Recommendations:**

1. *Incorporate a strong, community-supported economic development vision with achievable common goals and actions, supported by boards, commissions, and other stakeholders, into the Milford Master Plan.*

**Actions:** A. Obtain Planning Board support to prioritize an update of the Economic Development chapter of the Milford Master Plan;

B. Continually communicate the economic development vision to the community.

2. *Adopt a proactive and all-inclusive leadership approach to municipal departments from the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board that supports the economic development vision.*

**Actions:** A. Obtain official Board of Selectmen support of the economic development vision and recommended proactive approach to build a stronger municipal board, commission, and department mindset that balanced economic development is essential to the short-term and long-range health of the community;

B. Provide the management objective to be responsive and accountable for implementing departmental policies and procedures that are responsive to business community constraints and requirements (in recognition that time is money), are communicated effectively, are consistently and fairly applied, are flexible and practical within legal and regulatory constraints, are 'user- friendly' and easily navigated (i.e. checklists and flowcharts);

C. Enlist the support of the Town Administrator in strengthening responsiveness and customer service provided by municipal departments by directing appropriate municipal departments to streamline permitting and application procedures (within legal and regulatory constraints), continue to further develop comprehensive development, construction, building, and safety code procedure checklists that encourage 'one-stop' applications, are time and deadline sensitive, and are communicated to the business community in a cooperative and timely manner;

- D. Institute new and enhance existing ongoing public outreach and education on policies and procedures
3. *Establish a formal economic development advisory council, advisory to the Board of Selectmen, to coordinate economic development on behalf of the Town. Such an organization would serve to listen to and nurture existing businesses and act as a conduit or in an "facilitator" role for business development, assist in outreach and marketing of Milford's economic development opportunities, and advise the Selectmen and the Planning Board on economic policy matters. Such an advisory body would supersede the Milford Industrial Development Corporation and have a broader economic development charge.*

- Actions:**
- A. Have the Board of Selectmen appoint an economic development council to assist in strengthening the necessary public/private partnership to achieve sustainable economic development.
  - B. Establish target groups (business community; civic organizations; general citizenry) to collaborate on methods to engage the public in becoming knowledgeable on the permitting process;
  - C. Develop stronger municipal involvement in State and regional economic development organizations to take advantage of available and appropriate programs and resources.

## **Issue II: Municipal Infrastructure and Services**

**Findings:** Milford is extremely fortunate to have an infrastructure in place (municipal water and sanitary sewer, functional road network and capacity) and supporting services (municipal departments, facilities, utility companies, and schools). All citizens of Milford benefit from these services, either directly or indirectly. It is a civic responsibility to proactively maintain, improve, and expand these services in spite of funding challenges and constraints. It is important to recognize that the cost must be shared by all stakeholders while avoiding undue burden on either the individual taxpayer or the business/development community to insure sustainable economic growth. To carry out economic development objectives, the Board of Selectmen, Budget Advisory Committee, boards and commissions, business community, and general citizens must be informed, supportive, and involved. The following recommendations and actions should be integrated into a top-down philosophy guiding municipal policy.

**Goal:** *Maintain existing municipal infrastructure facilities and services, and wisely plan for and implement construction of necessary new and expanded facilities and services to cost-effectively and fairly distribute the cost so there is no undue burden on either the business/development community or the taxpaying citizens of Milford.*

**Recommendations:**

1. *Support the Planning Board in its annual review of the Facilities Chapter of the Milford Master Plan to insure the goals and recommendations for infrastructure and facility improvements are implemented.*

- Actions:**
- A. Utilize the annual six-year Capital Improvements Plan policy document in the development of the annual Town budget and warrant articles;
  - B. Educate and inform decision-makers on the costs/benefits of needed improvements for maintenance of current services and facilities.
  - C. Consider renovation of existing municipal facilities and construction of new facilities in locations that enhance economic development opportunities.

2. *Upgrade infrastructure in areas of Town that have deficiencies and expand infrastructure into areas of Town that can support commercial and industrial development.*

- Actions:**
- A. Build community support of the West Milford Tax Increment Financing District Advisory Board in its efforts to market and implement infrastructure expansion in the West Milford Tax Increment Financing District (the BROX and Hendrix properties);
  - B. Encourage and incorporate where practical energy-efficient and resource conservation 'green-thinking' policy in all improvement projects to sustain ongoing economic, smart growth, and cost-efficient development;
  - C. At all levels of municipal government, investigate and implement where practical and feasible residential, commercial and industrial tax-incentive programs for such items as 'green development' and downtown property improvements;
  - D. Explore and be knowledgeable of funding mechanisms and partnerships for infrastructure improvements that are fair, flexible, and creative;
  - E. Review the cost/benefit of impact fees, permitting fees, utility connection fees, off-site-development requirements and modify if necessary to insure there is no undue burden on any specific stakeholder;
  - F. Support partnerships and agreements between the business/development community, the municipality, and the Water and Sewer Commission that equitably spread the cost of needed infrastructure improvements among all stakeholders that benefit from such improvements;
  - G. Increase communication and working relationships with non-municipal utility, power, and communication companies to effectively improve and expand needed infrastructure;

- H. Provide funding for anticipated project construction designs and plans, based on planned improvements, to allow the Town to be quickly responsive to potential Federal and State funding sources.
3. *Encourage the establishment of public transportation opportunities both within Town and from Milford into the region, providing transportation to commercial and employment destinations.*

- Actions:**
- A. Work with the Planning Board to incorporate public transportation planning and implementation into the Milford Master Plan Traffic and Transportation chapter;
  - B. Work with the Nashua Regional Transportation Commission, Nashua Transit Service, the Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative, and other service and resource providers to establish implementation and funding mechanisms to expand public transportation into and within Milford.

### **Issue III. Downtown/Oval**

**Findings:** The foremost goal in the 2007 update of the Community Character chapter of the Milford Master Plan is to:

*“ensure that downtown Milford (Union Square, The Oval, and adjacent neighborhoods) remains the commercial, social, and community hub of Town by protecting its historic character, promoting and enhancing its economic vitality, and integrating the Souhegan River and its tributaries into the public realm.”*

The Economic Development Advisory Committee fully embraces this goal, and recognizes the central economic role that downtown Milford plays in both identifying the Town and serving as the hub of business activity. The Oval and Milford’s nationally recognized Main Street efforts have brought about increased pride

and renewal. However, The Oval and adjacent neighborhoods are continually faced with economic and property owner-related challenges that affect its sustained vitality. The Downtown Ongoing Improvement Team (DO-IT) advocates for business-development and physical improvements, but needs continued support from the community and decision-makers. With this in mind, the EDAC strongly recommends that there continues to be ‘top-down’ emphasis and support of ‘The Oval’ as the centerpiece of the community.

**Goal:** *Continue to support and implement economic development initiatives that strengthen Downtown/The Oval as the physical, historic, and symbolic hub of community economic activity.*

**Recommendations:**

1. *Insure that the recommendations in the Milford Master Plan Community Character chapter specific to the economic development of Downtown and The Oval are integrated into the applicable recommendations of an Economic Development chapter update.*
2. *Strengthen communication and partnership between municipal boards, commissions, staff, and the Downtown Ongoing Improvement Team (DO-IT) to achieve common goals towards economic revitalization and redevelopment.*

- Actions:**
- A. Through an economic development advisory committee, participate with appropriate stakeholders, such as the Downtown Ongoing Improvements Team, Community Development Department staff and appropriate other municipal staff people, to advocate for continued downtown revitalization;
  - B. Increase the focus on the Souhegan River as a riverfront amenity and as both an economic and natural resource by participating in Souhegan River related initiatives implemented by and coordinated between the Town, DO-IT, NRPC, the Conservation Commission, and the Souhegan River Local Advisory Committee.

3. *Incorporate infrastructure needs and improvements in the Capital Improvements Plan that are specific to sustaining downtown vitality and services, and establish and implement strategies and funding resources to pay for improvements.*

- Actions:**
- A. Investigate funding mechanisms for downtown property revitalization and code upgrades such as community development block grants, community development tax relief, opportunity zones, and other various State and national programs.
  - B. Insure that any planned downtown traffic and pedestrian improvement projects are designed to enhance further economic development.

4. *Support increased marketing, events, and promotion of the The Oval and Downtown.*

- Action:** Continue to utilize downtown and its facilities (Town Hall, Wadleigh Memorial Library, The Oval, parks, and the Souhegan River) for events and promotions encouraging economic activity.

**Issue IV: Land Use**

**Findings:** Given Milford's central location in Southern New Hampshire, highway access, and position as the hub of the Souhegan River Valley, Milford has significant opportunities to increase development in

undeveloped areas and along highway corridors. At the top of the list is the commercial-industrially zoned BROX property and associated tax increment financing district lands, west Elm Street, Route 13 South from the edge of downtown to the Brookline town line, South Street/Hammond Road/101/Emerson Road area, and the Wilton Road/Pine Valley Mill areas. There are significant areas of Town that can also potentially support higher density residential development if adequate utility extensions and roadways are built to accommodate the growth, primarily within the 'urban compact' and north of Mason Road and south of the 101 Bypass. To accommodate additional development, flexible zoning and land use regulations need to be adopted that allow for mixed-uses and creative design, access management, stormwater and water resource protection, and energy and conservation-oriented elements – all of which should not burden the existing infrastructure. Wise future land use planning will assist in sustaining healthy economic development.

**Goal:** *Undertake a town-wide analysis of existing land uses and overlying zoning districts to identify areas for future commercial and industrial development, redevelopment and workforce housing in relation to land development capacity, needed infrastructure improvements for the transportation network, utilities, stormwater management, and municipal facilities, physical and natural constraints, neighborhood compatibility, and protection of open space and Town character.*

**Recommendations:**

1. *Update the Milford Master Plan to incorporate a Future Land Use chapter that identifies areas suitable and conducive to commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development, as well as workforce housing development that integrates local needs in relation to regional responsibilities.*

- Actions:**
- A. Obtain Planning Board support to prioritize an update of the Land Use chapter of the Milford Master Plan;
  - B. Integrate local land use planning, inclusive of infrastructure and transportation network improvements, into regional plans;
  - C. Incorporate housing-friendly goals and implementation strategies in the appropriate sections of the Master Plan that support local job growth by continuing to encourage a diverse range of housing opportunities for the existing and future local workforce;
  - D. Upon establishment of an economic development advisory council, have representation of the council participate in the development of the Land Use chapter update by the Planning Board.

2. *Review and revise as necessary the Zoning Ordinance, Development Regulations, Capital Improvements Plan, and building code requirements to accommodate anticipated land use changes that encourage economic development.*

- Action:** Proactively educate and publicize proposed changes to achieve community support for economic development.



**Issue V. Communication and Outreach**

**Findings:** Milford currently has no unified public outreach approach that promotes the community as an excellent location to do business. Essential to any marketing effort in today's competitive and technologically-savvy world is a state-of-the-art website that reflects a vibrant community attitude that supports existing and welcomes new business, and assists in how to make that happen. Milford's website currently does not compete with those websites of many other communities in New Hampshire and around the country. Additionally, marketing of specific aspects of Milford is currently done by the Downtown Ongoing Improvement Team (primarily downtown-oriented) and the Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce (greater Souhegan Valley-oriented), and the Community Development Department (the West Milford Tax Increment Financing District). Because Milford has a wealth of amenities and strengths that can be used to promote economic development, a coordinated communication effort to get the word out is essential. Because "all roads lead to Milford" the Town must be a livable, walkable, and inviting place to come do business, and return time and time again.

**Goal:** *Increase, through all available and cost-effective marketing opportunities including an enhanced state-of-the-art website, local, regional, and national awareness of Milford as a community that is a welcoming and business-friendly environment affording superior quality-of-life.*

**Recommendations:**

1. *Develop marketing strategies to promote and publicize Milford as a business-friendly community.*

- Actions:**
- A. Insure that an enhanced website is effective by being clear, easy to navigate, comprehensive, and attractive in communicating the economic development message and opportunities of the Town.
  - B. Provide the budget and technological support necessary to implement and maintain the enhanced website.

2. *Coordinate marketing strategies with other organizations and stakeholders to formulate a consistent message and 'branding' of the community for economic development opportunities.*

- Actions:**
- A. Create a working group that represents economic development interests and other stakeholders to create an official 'branding', or slogan, that presents Milford as a proactive location where business is welcome.
  - B. Insure that the website, marketing materials, and economic development message is coordinated and complements the tools utilized by other stakeholder groups such as DO-IT, the Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce, and State and regional economic development organizations.

**Issue VI. Business Community/School District/Municipal Relationship**

**Findings:** The Milford School District provides many career development related opportunities for students that can greatly benefit the local economy. There is an established and working relationship between the School District and many local employers. It is essential that the programs and facilities offered by the School District continue to support the needs of these fast-moving economic times and that adequate budgeting is understood and provided to maintain and enhance these education programs for the student of the local community. This critical necessity must be supported by decision-makers and promoted to the general citizenry for the purpose of strengthening the local economy.

**Goal:** *Enhance communication and program development between the School District , Business Community and the Town in matters of joint economic development and in particular those matters that focus on budgeting and capital improvements.*

**Recommendations:**

*1. Milford High School and Applied Technology Center offers many opportunities for business, industry, community members to participate in and contribute to the career and technical education system. Continue to encourage participation on program advisory committees, Regional Center Advisory Committee, and extended learning opportunities (internships, independent study, work cooperative, etc.) for students.*

**Actions:** A. Actively publicize and solicit opportunities for involvement by the business and community on School and Town PEG channels as well as through other means of communication.

B. Continue outreach efforts to enlist business and industry support to sustain current programs and to assist in keeping pace with technological and business-world changes.

*2. Support and participate in career development opportunities with Milford Middle School students through career day activities.*

*3. Support and participate in the career transition program with students participating in the School District's Sage School, which focuses on career exploratory experiences, such as job shadowing, internships, etc.*

*3. Continue to build increased communication and sharing of resources between the School District and the Town of Milford.*

**Actions:** A. Maintain School District participation in the annual capital improvements planning process.

- B. Establish regularly scheduled biannual or quarterly meetings between the School Board, Board of Selectmen and administrative staffs, inclusive of joint discussion of annual budgets and warrant articles.
  
- C. Strengthen existing and promote additional sharing of maintenance functions.

#### **IV. SUMMARY**

The Economic Development Advisory Committee is pleased and proud to present its report to the Milford Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen. Economic development is a vital component to a community's overall health and affects each and every resident of the Town. A balanced and growing property tax base supports the maintenance and sustainability of essential services, as well as enhancing the assets that are necessary to insure a desired quality of life. The Economic Development Advisory Committee acknowledges that Milford's economic foundation is strong and diversified, yet the Committee identified several key issues that it felt were hindering Milford's ability to capitalize on its strengths and assets. Basic to all the findings, goals, recommendations, and actions is the lack of a comprehensive philosophic principle, commonly and consistently held to by decision-makers, stakeholders, and the community at large that states jobs, services, housing, balanced development, and protection of natural resources all work together to build a stronger economy.

This philosophy must be continually communicated to all citizens, municipal services should foster strong and responsive customer-service, and the business community must be active in voicing its needs. All parties must be willing to further build partnerships to implement common economic development goals. An organizational structure should be in place to assist the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board in effecting positive and proactive change. The Economic Development Advisory Committee also recognizes that institutional change does not occur overnight, and is willing to continue its work on behalf of the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen.

