



2012 Annual Report

Economic Development Commission

The Hudson Economic Development Commission respectfully submits our annual report for the year 2012. The Commission met four times over the course of the year, with Donald Garcia continuing on as Chairman. Mr. Garcia also continued as a member of the Master Plan Steering Committee, representing the economic development interests of the Town during the current planning process. The Master Plan's forum on Housing & Economic Development was held in December 2012. As both a member of the EDC and President of the Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce, Sarah Cressy presented on Hudson's business community: the number and types of industries in Hudson, Hudson's strengths and weaknesses from an economic development point of view, businesses' wants and needs from town government and potential areas for future government and business collaboration.

Throughout 2012, the Commission continued its support of the Route 85/Washington Street road widening and reconstruction project. In April, the EDC sponsored a public information session: "Hudson Construction ~ Current, Pending & Future." The forum's primary focus was on the Washington Street/Route 85 road widening project, but updates were also given on the Houghton Street Bridge replacement and the future Washington Street Bridge reconstruction. The public was invited to meet with Town officials and representatives from the Mass. Department of Transportation, and were also given the opportunity to inspect plans, view maps, discuss schedules and ask questions. Nearly 200 people turned up for the event, a record turnout. Construction on Route 85 began in late-spring 2012, and while no construction project is problem-free, the EDC believes this project is going extremely well and will be a big benefit to the Town, once completed. Mr. Garcia facilitated a number of discussions between the Town, MassDOT, and commercial abutters to the Route 85 project, helping to problem-solve and maintain open communications.

Another important project affecting Hudson's business community is the future reconstruction of the Washington Street Bridge. This structurally deficient state-owned bridge is on the state's Accelerated Bridge Program. In October, MassDOT brought two possible construction scenarios to the Town's Internal Traffic Committee for initial reaction: maintaining a single south-bound lane or maintaining a single lane in either direction. The EDC invited the ITC to its meeting in November, to discuss whether a third full-closure option should be explored. A letter was sent to MassDOT requesting the exploration of this potential third option. Once all scenarios have been fully vetted by MassDOT, the EDC will sponsor a business information session in 2013 to discuss all options and their impacts to the business community.

In early 2012, a large 40B apartment complex was proposed on two state-designated Priority Economic Development Sites located at the end of an office park on Cabot Road. This open land is among the last substantially-sized parcels of Hudson's commercially/industrially zoned land. For this reason, the EDC wrote a letter to MassHousing in February, urging it to reject the site's eligibility for housing, attempting to make the case that the land was better suited for commercial development. While the site was eventually approved by the state, the EDC wrote a subsequent letter to Hudson's Zoning Board of Appeals, asking them to consider the economic development ramifications the new residential use implied, such as making sure there are adequate pedestrian accommodations connecting the new residents to surrounding businesses.

Development continued up at Highland Commons, with the new Market Basket expecting to be opened in 2013. New businesses also continue to open in our Downtown and Washington Street areas, and our vacancy rates are slowly decreasing. The EDC is pleased to welcome: Jaynajane Nails & Spa, Rail Trail Flat Bread, Harvard Sweet Boutique, ABI Computer Solutions, the Franklin Performing Arts School, Get Centered Muscular Therapy Studio, Koko Fit Club, Smyles Frozen Yogurt and Hogan Tire. In March, the Board of Selectmen approved Burger King's request for 24-hour drive-through operation. From a job-creation standpoint, the EDC supported this endeavor because a third-shift not only allows for more flexible schedules for current employees, but also serves as supplemental income for many individuals. We were sad to see Geek Boutique close, but Wood Square Design moved into its location at 18 Church Street, thereby allowing for the expansion of Bryley Systems into the Wood Square space on Main Street. Networks Unlimited closed its doors in March, and the magnificent Victorian building with carriage house is currently for sale. Other closures we saw this year were the Colonial Paint Shop and Stanhope & Associates, CPA. The Good, Good Sheep moved from the Downtown to Washington Street, while Fantastic Sam's moved from Washington Street to the Downtown. Hudson Trading & Loan has been busy renovating the former Aubuchon's building located at 109 Main Street. We look forward to its grand opening in 2013, as it moves from its current location on Market Street. Another local business, Arrow Moccasin, received some well-deserved publicity when it was featured on the television show Chronicle in October.

We were pleased to see the Hudson Mill Business Center, located at 43 Broad Street, complete its new parking lot on Houghton Court. A project in the works since 2009, this parking lot has been a collaborative effort between property owners, Town government & MBTA officials, as accessing the building from the lot involves a set of stairs crossing up and over the Assabet River Rail Trail. The addition of these parking spaces will now allow the Hudson Mill Business Center to accommodate a tenant with 80 to 100 employees.

The commercial/industrial tax rate is always a sensitive topic for any town. Many EDC members and business owners spoke in favor of lower rates at the Town's tax rate hearing held on December 17. The total value of commercial and industrial property decreased by 4.8% from last year, a decline of nearly 4% more than the residential decline of 1.1%. Although Town officials were reluctant to raise commercial tax rates substantially, in order to offset the lost tax valuation in the total commercial tax sector, the new commercial rate ultimately rose to \$32.90 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, up from \$29.55 in FY12. This commercial rate increased at a rate twice the rate of increase for the residential tax rate, which increased from \$15.51 to \$16.38. The total tax impact to individual properties varies. However, it is worth noting that the reductions in assessed valuation help to ease the burden of this rate increase.

Although financial uncertainty remained a constant through 2012, the EDC continued its commitment to encourage and assist our business community whenever possible. We are looking forward toward an eventful and productive 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

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