

# 2013 Annual Report

## Economic Development Commission

The Hudson Economic Development Commission respectfully submits our annual report for the year 2013. The Commission met twice 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 draft Master Plan chapter on Housing & Economic Development was released to the Master Plan Steering Committee in September 2013. After the Committee review, the chapter was released to the public for comment in December.

In June, the Hudson EDC co-sponsored a program on the state's Worksite Wellness Tax Credit Program. This Tax Credit is open to any Massachusetts business with 2 - 200 employees & allows a tax credit up to \$10,000 annually for businesses that participate. This event was co-sponsored with Metrowest Moves, the Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Marlborough Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Metrowest Chamber of Commerce.

Throughout 2013, the Commission continued its support of the Route 85/Washington Street road widening and reconstruction project. 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. Throughout the summer, MassDOT met several times with the Town's Internal Traffic Committee. These meetings are public & they were attended by many residents, business owners and members of the EDC. MassDOT presented two possible construction scenarios. Both had different bridge designs, construction staging & duration lengths. It was determined that a rapid-construction, full-closure option was not feasible. The construction scenario chosen to be the most beneficial to the Town while being the least detrimental to the business community will result in a wider bridge & will keep a single lane southbound open throughout construction.

Development continued up at Highland Commons, with the new Market Basket opening in June 2013. In November, Highland Commons & Brothers in Cream both vied for the Town's last available liquor license. Brothers in Cream, a dessert bar opening across the street from & owned by the proprietors of Rail Trail Flat Bread, was chosen to advance in the application process. As Highland Commons is fully permitted for several restaurants, the Town is going through a public process to see if we should petition the state for additional licenses. The EDC will sponsor several public forums in early 2014.

New businesses also continue to open in our Downtown and Washington Street areas, and our vacancy rates continue to decrease. College Funding Solutions moved from the Yates

Law Office building into its own Main Street storefront. The Hair Cuttery moved from Washington Street to Technology Drive, and Great Clips moved into their old location. We were sad to see Your' & Mine II close its doors after so many years in business, but are pleased to welcome Amaia Martini Bar opening in its place in summer 2014. The Good Good Sheep closed, while Paint Misbehavin' opened on the corner of Main & Tower Streets. Congratulations to both Harvard Suite Boutique & Rail Trail Flatbread for celebrating their one year anniversaries. Arrow Moccasin was featured in Worcester Living magazine. Hudson Trading & Loan completed the exterior renovation of the former Aubuchon's building located at 109 Main Street. It is now renovating several storefronts which will be the new home of Medusa Brewery, opening in 2014.

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 2, 2013. The total value of commercial and industrial property decreased by 3.7% from last year, a decline of 2.5% 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 \$34.45 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, up from \$32.90 in FY13. This commercial rate increased at a rate 1.5 times the rate of increase for the residential tax rate, which increased from \$16.38 to \$17.42. 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.

We are hopeful to see an upswing to the financial uncertainty that has been constant throughout the past several years. Throughout 2013, the EDC continued its commitment to encourage and assist our business community whenever possible. We are looking forward toward an eventful and productive 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

*Donald M. Garcia, Chairman*  
*Sarah B. Cressy*  
*Thomas Davis*  
*Michael DiBona*  
*Hugh R. Gardner*  
*Anthony Loureiro*  
*William J. Sullivan*  
*Christopher W. Tibbals*  
*Matthew Tucker*