

# Business & Economic Development



Economic Development in the form of retail, office and industrial development is important to Windham. The town should work towards retaining existing businesses, encouraging their expansion, and seeking appropriate new development. The focus should be on businesses that provide:

- job opportunities at fair wages,
- goods and services for residents and regional patrons,
- a positive fiscal effect for future years,
- encourage a strong city center, and
- development in keeping with Windham's rural character
- opportunity for local ownership
- locally produced goods and services
- environmental sustainability

## **Smart Growth is Smart Money**

### **Smart Growth:**

Planned pattern of development that balances development opportunities with community needs and the demand for future services.

Smart Growth is Smart Money because it does not focus on the immediate tax gain but rather on the long term benefit of a positive fiscal impact.



Ribbon Cutting for Flowers ABK



Windham Airport

*“..an area's quality of life is generally a notable factor in a company's site selection process”*

**Business Facilities,**  
a leader in business  
site selection  
May 23, 2007

**Windham Labor Force (2003)**

Total	10,694
Employed	9,924
Unemployed	770 7.2%

**Windham Employment (2003)**

Total jobs	10,342
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**Windham Residents**

working in town	4,247
working elsewhere	6,059

Connecticut Economic Resource Center  
Town Profiles July 2005

**The Value of Local Business:**

For every \$1 spent at a local business, 45 cents is reinvested locally.

For every \$1 spent at a corporate chain, 15 cents is reinvested locally.

Yes! Magazine Winter '07

**Architectural design guidelines for commercial buildings** are a component of zoning regulations that ensure new commercial development or renovations fit in contextually with the unique character of Windham that townspeople value.

Design Guidelines provide assurance to new developers that surrounding development will continue to enhance his/her investment. Design Guidelines will ensure a strong future assessed value for Windham's Grand List.

A **Design Review** Committee or Board is an advisory board that makes recommendations to the Zoning Commission on commercial architecture and signs. Generally one or more members are architects, landscape architects or from a related design field, as well as other townspeople.

**Economic Development**

- Use community's assets to attract new businesses
- Seek businesses that create jobs with good wages
- Partner with ECSU and UConn for research and technology centers
- Promote the available technology of Windham's proximity to high-speed fiber-optic internet connections
- Seek businesses that have long-term positive fiscal impact; require a fiscal impact analysis on all development in excess of 50,000 sq. ft.
- New development that will increase the demand for services should provide the revenue to support those services; proactively seek businesses that will have a long term positive fiscal effect
- Seek economic development that will be an asset to the town for generations
- Become 'business friendly' by proactively providing regulatory information and assisting businesses through the development process

**Town-wide**

- Architectural design guidelines should be developed and implemented for all commercial zones so those areas become visual assets of the town and encourage repeat out-of-town shoppers and a thriving retail atmosphere
- Design guidelines reassure a new businesses that future new businesses will not detract from their business
- A Design Review Committee should be established to review all commercial development and renovations and make recommendations to the zoning commission
- Once adopted, the architectural design guidelines should be adhered to as a way to strengthen future commercial property grand list. Commercial property neither designed nor constructed well, generally does not appreciate as quickly as residential property values and may decline in value, thereby adversely impacting future grand lists by shifting the tax burden onto residential property.
- New and existing development should be made visually connected through a coordinated program of landscaping, vehicular and pedestrian access, signage and under-ground utilities
- On major thoroughfares, access management should be implemented to reduce the number and width of access points (curb cuts) from high traffic streets

- Corner lots should be designed to eliminate vehicular short-cuts that pass through without accessing the business. For example, limit curb cut to only one roadway or require a site layout with no direct/easy access to another street
- Access between adjoining parking lots should be required
- Buffer commercial zones that are adjacent to residential uses with greater setbacks and require permanent visual and noise screening
- Revise current parking requirements for suburban commercial development, use 2005 University of Connecticut Transportation Institute study on parking as a guide

### Existing Businesses and Existing Commercial Buildings

- Work to retain existing businesses and encourage their growth and expansion
- Encourage re-use of existing buildings over development of vacant land

### Strategic Planning, Smart Growth and New Commercial Areas

- Only with strategic planning and smart growth can Windham maximize the fiscal potential of new commercial development
- Build upon existing infrastructure by focusing growth in city center
- Create areas for small neighborhood businesses in a village setting in appropriate locations throughout town
- Focus General Business only in concentrated areas at appropriate locations; transition between those areas with lighter-use businesses such as professional services
- Revise zoning requirements to encourage in-fill at appropriate locations
- Focus new development in small areas along major roadways, retain rural character between these areas
- Multi-tenant developments and areas of concentrated development should be pedestrian friendly
- Mixed use/village businesses, with retail on first floor and housing and offices on upper floors, should be encouraged in certain areas
- Development must be compatible with the character, scale and architecture of the surrounding area

### Development Types

**Traditional City Center** - retail and service businesses in multi-storied buildings with offices and housing on upper level. Focus is toward the sidewalk and pedestrian access - generally with little or no setback, nor on-site parking requirements.

**Village Business** - small scale businesses (such as retail shops, small restaurants, office and personal service uses) in buildings that enhance the village centers.

**General Business** - larger scale business uses (such as shopping center, retail, restaurant, gas service stations, light industrial, and similar uses) intended to serve community and regional needs.

**Business Park** - larger scale business uses (such as office, warehouse, light manufacturing, assembly, research and development, and similar uses). Such uses could be organized in a park-type setting or occur in areas of pre-existing uses.

**Transitional Area** - areas adjacent to commercial areas where lower intensity uses (such as lodging facilities, small scale offices, day care centers, institutional uses) would provide for an orderly transition to less intensive residential uses.

A good sign code is pro-business because an attractive business district will attract more customers than an ugly one. Moreover, when signs are controlled, all businesses benefit from the 'even playing field' as customers can easily find their business.

### Commercial and Municipal/State Signage

Signs are important for direction and information, but signs out of scale or poorly placed add confusion and clutter rather than inform.

- Develop sign standards for commercial zones that will enhance the area, provide a business identifier and reduce visual clutter
- Free standing, road-side signs should only identify the business
- Advertising signs and displays should only be permitted in/on windows
- Temporary readerboards should not be permitted



Sign Frenzy is created if standards are not consistent and upheld.



Well designed, well placed signs increase a business' visibility from roadways, while reducing visual roadway clutter



### Zoning

- Include the maximum percentage of impervious surface permitted in zoning regulations for all non-residential development
- Encourage site designs to have less impact on the environment by using techniques such as Best Management Practices (BMP) methods of treating runoff and water detention
- Re-evaluate and modify existing commercial, business, manufacturing and industrial zones to better reflect current goals and opportunities
- Make provisions in the regulations for existing businesses that could become non-conforming with future zone changes