

Town of Litchfield Economic Development Strategy

Introduction

(Background To be added)

The main goals of an economic development program in Litchfield are to:

- ❖ Provide a planned and coordinated approach to economic development that benefits all area residents;
- ❖ Broaden and increase the job and tax base; and
- ❖ Preserve rural-agricultural community character.

Adopting formal arrangements for economic development between businesses, community, and elected and appointed governmental leaders helps to generate the political and monetary resources necessary to shape economic policy. Economic development is a complex subject consisting of many interrelated issues and subjects. Based on an examination of the assets, opportunities, and constraints to economic development in Litchfield, four main categories have been selected to provide an organizing context.

The four overlapping components of the Litchfield economic development strategy are:

1. **Organization:** Establish a local economic development framework that will provide support for community economic development

The organizational component of the economic development strategy refers to institutional structures used to coordinate and stimulate local economic development. Development activities are conducted by a variety of institutions at the local, regional, state and federal level. Assuming that the community supports economic development, such an initiative requires leadership and execution. Strong management will keep the effort for economic development focused on the most important goals and will promote consistency. Analyzing economic development in a systematic way will also provide continuous feedback and help identify ongoing improvements. Policy-making and programming should be instituted with the intent to establish a strong, viable and on-going organization that benefits all future and current residents.

2. **Promotion:** Develop a public relations and marketing function to educate the public and promote Litchfield for business. Utilize Town website, cable TV (Local Access), and Hudson Litchfield News (Local features & Press releases).

Economic development requires clear and consistent communication with a variety of audiences. The community must be aware of the need for economic development and the

policies selected to achieve it. Stakeholders must be aware of and informed about specific initiatives, both within the community and outside of it. For example, the business community requires awareness of special policies or targeted opportunities in Litchfield. The marketing or promotional element represents the formal and comprehensive approach to publicizing the Litchfield economic development program and conducting public relations.

Communication is an important part of the collaborative process of synthesizing different perspectives and options into workable policies that are feasible to implement. While it may seem cumbersome to continually publicize programs and educate the public, the community can help identify the most practical solutions to unique problems that arise in Litchfield. The community is also a constituency that must be informed of current activities; otherwise, adequate public support may not be generated over the long-run.

3. Economic Restructuring: Cultivate the local capacity to provide high-quality economic planning and decision-making. Strive to optimize community benefits and private sector opportunities.

The process of nurturing the local economy and directing/managing future growth is complex. Developing high degrees of public-private sector collaboration requires that potential policies fit the needs of all parties involved. Programming should be effective and efficient so that precious resources are not wasted. Careful analysis must occur to gain understanding of the range of direct and indirect impacts of different policies. Analyzing the risks to the community and private sector actors in different options ensures that the methods of action selected are the most mutually beneficial to all involved.

The economic restructuring element involves defining and implementing specific policies to achieve intended economic affects within the public and private sector. It represents the attempt to influence markets for the public good and the benefit of private sector actors willing to share in the risk. It is assumed that by analyzing the local and regional economy and providing continuous monitoring of the economic environment that the risks become more manageable.

4. Litchfield Involvement In and Relationship to the Regional Economic Planning Process: Develop strong ties with regional economic development officials and the numerous economic development initiatives underway at the state and regional level.

Recognizing that contemporary economic systems extend beyond the borders of one municipality, this part of the plan represents the active process of forging links with economic development stakeholders outside Litchfield. Economic initiatives in New Hampshire typically occur within a regional delivery system. Many organizations provide unique services that aid development. The actors offer specialized services to address specific problems, or they are a source of funds to implement economic change in defined

geographic areas. Thus, there are numerous partners who can provide resources to address problems at the local and regional level.

Collaborating with outside organizations ensures that the methods selected are feasible to implement, not redundant, and will not adversely affect other communities. Strengthening the competitive position of the region, promoting indigenous growth, and improving the physical environment of the whole region will benefit Litchfield. Forging regional level economic cooperation acknowledges that the ability of one community to act without cooperation from the larger region is limited. There are complex relationships between economic development, infrastructure, state and regional trends, and land use planning. The regional approach acknowledges that laissez-faire approaches to economic development are outdated. By working with stakeholders around the state, it is possible to tie into the already established regional economic response system.

Recommended Action Strategies

The Economic Development Subcommittee reviewed, revised and prioritized the recommendations from the 2000 Economic Development Analysis:

High Feasibility / High Impact

- Promote agriculture as viable and important to community character and the local economy. (P 7)
- Actively promote the use of community character guidelines to improve the physical lay out of commercial areas (P 10)
- Promote the development of a community web site, and if successful, help establish a Litchfield economic section of the site (P 18)
- Collaborate with DRED to take advantage of its business resource services. (L 2) Some objectives Litchfield would like to achieve are:
 - Development of a commercial property database
 - Designing effective promotional materials
 - Promoting Litchfield as a site for economic development
 - Providing business leads to the committee
- Lobby for the Town to support an economic development program by allowing an economic development committee to use town facilities and cable. (O 5)

High Feasibility / Moderate Impact

- Contact local chambers of commerce, such as Hudson, Nashua, and Manchester to gain understanding of their programming and to determine which groups are most important to join or partner with. (L 8)
- Improve the business image of Litchfield. As noted in the 'promotions' section, there has to be active interaction with outside actors to promote awareness of Litchfield's goals,

objectives and economic development initiatives. NH Cooperative extension can assist business visitation surveys to define local business leaders' needs and opinions.(L 5)

- Communicate with adjoining communities and investigate the potential for joint economic development efforts. (Issues such as airport or other infrastructure) (L 9)
- Communicate with all businesses, especially home-based, to understand their needs and define economic initiatives to promote their development and expansion. (P 2)
- Provide public relations to promote economic development goals and objectives to the general public, such as through a job or business fair at the high school. Explain the benefits of pursuing a coordinated and sustained local economic development initiative. (P 3)
- Explore the potential to use geographic information systems in education and marketing. (P 12)
- Promote affordable housing to ensure that economic restructuring will benefit all community residents (E 14)

High Feasibility/Low Impact

- Adopt a marketing strategy for economic development (P 1)

Moderate Feasibility/High Impact

- Publicize and advocate for infrastructure policies at the local and regional level (P 4)
- Identify how a commercial property inventory and database would be utilized for marketing and promotions (P 13)
- After a strategy is developed, promote the opportunity for farmers from outside the community to rent or purchase prime agricultural lands for continued use as farm operations. (P16)
- Coordinate local marketing with state and regional economic development efforts. There are numerous web pages and programs to link with, including DRED. Private sector realtors, bankers, and public utilities, such as PSNH also have marketing and economic development programs. (L 7)

Moderate Feasibility/Moderate Impact

- Forge continuing relationships with stakeholders in the private and non-profit sectors and with public officials at all levels of government. Some visible and active stakeholders are; the NRPC, US Department of Housing and Urban Development; NH Office of Energy and Planning; NH Department of Resources and Economic Development; NH based banks; local and regional chambers of commerce; and the NH Community Development Finance Authority. (L 1)
- Investigate public and private funds available to assist economic development and apply for funding to support priority projects. (L 3) Identifying grant opportunities requires monitoring the public and financial sectors for the availability of funds. Based on this study, the most pressing financial needs are:
 1. farmland preservation;
 2. sewer infrastructure planning and development;

3. transportation system enhancement; and
 4. operating reserves for publicity and committee and staffing.
- Attract and cultivate the following types of businesses in Litchfield: (E 7)
 1. warehouses
 2. light industry, such as assembly and light manufacturing
 3. offices and office parks
 4. agriculture and specialized agriculture
 5. specialized commercial development (tied to the community character such as antique shops, dining, recreation, agriculture or tourism)
 6. institutional uses such as hospitals, campuses, assisted living facilities or other elderly housing.
 - Educate children about commerce and the workforce and forge school-to-work links between businesses and schools. One way to do this is by coordinating a job fair at the high school. (E 15)

Moderate Feasibility/Low Impact

- Continue monitoring Litchfield's role in the regional economy. The NRPC, NHOEP, and others should be consulted routinely to obtain up to date demographic and economic statistics. NRPC assistance in maintaining an up-to-date GIS data set will ensure that advanced methods of data development and analysis are available to the town. (L 6)
- Ensure that Litchfield has a presence in regional economic marketing efforts and investigate grants to assist with marketing. (P 8)

Low Feasibility/ High Impact

- Designate and promote Litchfield economic growth center(s), such as by highway interchanges or in developing areas. (E 2) Nodes under discussion include:
 1. A broad area east of Colby Road, where Albuquerque Avenue will join Route 3A (high priority)
 2. The Route 102 corridor
 3. A new town center designed around the intersections of Albuquerque Ave, possibly linked down to the historic town center near the Merrimack River on 3A.
- The Economic Development Committee should monitor detailed engineering, fiscal and environmental analysis relating to alternative wastewater treatment system impacts, potential designs, and funding opportunities. For example monitor potential to join an inter-municipal public sewer system compact. The group should also further analyze potential for community / cluster septic systems. (E 6)
- The committee should examine the potential to sponsor or help establish a planned business/industrial park in Litchfield. Such a park could incorporate high quality site design, including conservation design and higher density development. The committee should be prepared to support private developers with grant applications and other resources that could help achieve this objective. (E 9)

- It has been emphasized that a formal local system is needed to respond to issues and opportunities as they arise. A person (or persons) needs to be selected who will serve as local contacts on matters of economic development. The committee's recommendation is to hire an economic development specialist, at least part-time, to serve as a local contact. (O 2)

Low Feasibility/ Moderate Impact

- Inventory parcels in the commercial zoning districts and identify the most feasible and likely development opportunities. The database should contain a comprehensive set of information and attributes that can be integrated into computerized mapping programs. Examples of characteristics to define: ownership status and parcel attributes such as acreage, zoning, uses, site features, soils, types of structures, site infrastructure, utilities availability, etc. (E 1)
- Investigate alternative wastewater treatment solutions in Litchfield with assistance from NRPC. Gather detailed information for use in future grant and loan applications. (L 4)
- Once economic development goals are ratified, actively market available opportunities in Litchfield. (P 14)
- Promote and maintain the development of a user-friendly business climate. (P 15)
- Formally recognize a subcommittee of the Planning Board to oversee economic development initiatives. The committee should include representation from the budget committee, conservation commission, local businesses and citizens. It is important to specify within this structure the role of the committee chair. (O 1)
- Examine instituting tax increment financing (TIF) districts. (E 3)

Low Feasibility/ Low Impact

- Develop strategies, in partnership with local businesses, to bolster tourism and attract more visitors to existing and future Litchfield businesses. (P 11)
- The economic development committee should monitor the adoption of community character guidelines by the Planning Board and evaluate the outcomes and impacts. Provide continuous feedback to the Planning Board on the application and effectiveness of the guidelines. The committee should focus on identifying whether it is appropriate to couple incentives, such as density bonuses, with the community character guidelines to promote participation in the voluntary guidelines. (E 4)
- Provide feedback to the Planning Board on the effectiveness of existing land use laws and regulations. Work proactively with the Board to appropriately tailor zoning tools such as: performance standards, community character guidelines, site planning, environmental controls, the sign ordinance and enforcement. (E 12)
- Provide detailed analysis on potential policies and programs that are likely to assist with the coordinated economic development within the town. (E 13)