PLANNING BOARD 15 Central Street HILLSBOROUGH, NH July 16, 2025

TIME: 6:00 p.m. –6:54 p.m.

DATE APPROVED: 8/6/25

CHAIRPERSON: Susanne White VICE CHAIRPERSON: Dana Clow,

MEMBERS: Andrew Morris, Steve Livingston, Bryant Wheeler, Kim Opperman

EX-OFFICIO: James Bailey III

PLANNING DIRECTOR: Robyn Payson

ALTERNATES: Cathy Houle, **Excused:** Andrew Morris

Public: Jame Ainsworth,

,

Guest: Mike Tardiff and Matt Monahan- Central NH Regional Planning Commission,

Economic Development Commission: Riche Colcombe, Jennifer Crawford, Laura Buono, Rich

Peletier, Keith Cobbett

Board of Selectmen: Jim Bailey, Rich Pelletier

Pledge of Allegiance

Call to Order:

Chairperson Susanne White called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and called the roll. Cathy Houle was seated in place of Kim Opperman until his arrival and then she was seated for Adrew Morris.

Minutes

6/4/25- Steve Livingston made a motion to approve the minutes. Bryant Wheeler seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Economic Development Plan

Mike Tardiff and Matt Monahan presented the first draft of the Economic Development Plan. (see attached)

Mike Tardiff talked about the tools the town had available for economic development.

Mike Tardiff talked about upgrades to Henniker Street. It is a top priority but did not make it into the DOT 10-year plan yet. He said there is room for improved signage.

Mike Tardiff talked about the parking utilization study that was revisited from 10 years ago and it came out almost the same.

Mike Tardiff talked about the need for an Economic Development website to have a home for all of the information.

Mike Tardiff said he was looking for input on the information gathered.

Matt Monahan reviewed the data in the plan. (see attached)

Susanne White opened the meeting for discussion.

Riche' Colcombe asked about the number of businesses cited in the data. She asked where the number came from.

Matt Monahan said it came from the census. He said that because of the margin of error the numbers should be treated as general and not exact.

Laura Buono said she loved the data that they put in the report and as the Town Administrator this is probably the first time in a long time when she hasn't felt like "there is so much to do" she said there is still plenty to do but this is such a wonderful outlook for our town. She said to see how much we've grown and accomplished; it's such a breath of fresh air to see to see this and to know that people are talking about Hillsborough in a wonderful way, and it is all of the hard work that everyone has put in including the CNHRPC staff. Because without them she didn't know how we would have gotten here. She said kudos to everyone who has come up with the plan.

Mike Tardiff said he likes that with a plan like this you can say "here are the things we have in place, and we want to make sure you know about it" vs you have to go to three town meetings to try and get that through.

Rich Pelletier said that they raise a good point, when you are talking about at lot of these things for months if not years how do you come up with a list of priority items that we can start working on as a town so they are not on a list in three or four years and you come to do this again.

Mike Tardiff said that is part of the next step. There are things in the report that can happen concurrently. There's no reason why you can't put something out next month looking for who's interested in being on the trails committee? Let's start that and members of their staff would love to meet with that committee, help organize it, talk about the things that committee could do while at the same time we are going to be talking about Henniker Street. He said he wasn't sure if the Planning Board was ready to discuss another Gateway zone. In the master plan we talked about three zones. We have one but there are other opportunities. He said the EDC could set priorities. He said there are things that could happen this fall.

Matt Monahan said the website thing is huge it get's all the information out there. He said the recent Chronicle episode about Hillsborough should be on there. He said he can see the momentum and how businesses coming into the downtown snowballed.

Mike Tardiff said there are things that could be put on the existing website but he suggested choosehillsborough.org (domain is available). It would be a destination for economic development that also ties in that planning and quality of life things that continue to separate Hillsborough. There is an incremental approach to some, and we are ready to talk trails this fall.

Riche' Colcombe said she liked the Chronicle story as well and she thinks one of our priorities should be to put a lot of focus on our downtown because in talking with some of the owners down there, they aren't seeing the new traffic. People get off route 202 and 9 and they keep on going. She said Livingston's kicked it off with their new building which became more of a destination location where people were coming in and shopping there. We need to keep them coming up and into the downtown and not have it end at our stop lights.

There was discussion about how to direct people toward the downtown.

There was discussion about how difficult it was to get the blue business signs from DOT.

Cathy Houle said it was the Village Café that started the Chronicle feature.

Mike Tardiff said he was clad to hear that they are on the right track and the next step is going to the EDC to talk about prioritizing and next steps.

Susanne White thanked Mike and Matt for all of there good work and she said it was pleasant to be optimistic.

There being no other business, Jim Bailey made a motion to adjourn. Steve Livingston seconded the motion.

Meeting Adjourned 6:54 pm

Respectfully Submitted, Robyn L. Payson, Planning Director

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HANDOUT OVERVIEW

This handout describes some of the key findings of several data collection and analysis efforts to date. It is intended to be used as a tool to steer the conversation toward a vision for Hillsborough's economy. Specific sections include:

- Location Quotient Analysis
- Employment Projections
- Demographics
- Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) results
- A snapshot of the Hillsborough Economy
- Preliminary Recommendations

LOCATION QUOTIENT ANALYSIS

A location quotient (LQ) is a primary tool for determining what industries are important to a community. It does so by comparing the share of a particular industry of a smaller geography to that of a larger one. This analysis will create a statistic – the LQ. An LQ closer to 0 means the industry in question is of equal importance or greater importance to the larger geography. The closer to 1 or more than 1 means that the industry in question is more important to the smaller geography. Key findings for the LQ analysis were:

- Excluding governmental jobs, the following industries in Hillsborough exceeded the threshold of 1, meaning they were more important to the Town than the County:
 - o Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining (LQ of 21.3 somewhat skewed due to geographic size, but still more important to the Town than the County)
 - o Wholesale Trade (LQ of 2.49)
 - o Retail Trade (LQ of 1.49)
 - Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services (LQ of 1.39, likely driven by restaurants)
- A second tier of industries that are close to the threshold of 1 and are also important to Hillsborough include:
 - o Transportation and warehousing, and utilities (LQ of 0.96)
 - o Manufacturing (LQ of 0.87)
 - o Information (LQ of 0.88)
- The Educational services, and health care and social assistance industry sector shows as a high LQ (0.97) but this is likely due to the school system which is listed as one of the larger employers in Town.
- The industries that are more important to the County than the Town represent potential areas for target recruitment to expand. Of note is that these industries, while closer to the 0 threshold, are not that far from 1, suggesting these industries already have a presence in Town. These include:
 - o Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing.
 - o Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management

The overall takeaway with Hillsborough's LQs is that there are several private sector industry clusters that the Town's economy has relied upon. There are also other industries that the Town could expand into to further diversify the economy.

Location Quotient of Town VS County in 2023							
Industry	Town 2023 Number	Town 2023 Percentage	County 2023 Number	County 2023 Percentage	Town LQ		
Base Industry: Total, all industries	2,985		246,233				
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, and mining	106	3.6%	411	0.2%	21.3		
Construction	152	5.1%	19,926	8.1%	0.63		
Manufacturing	351	11.8%	33,112	13.4%	0.87		
Wholesale Trade	151	5.1%	4,995	2.0%	2.49		
Retail Trade	489	16.4%	27,087	11.0%	1.49		
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	134	4.5%	11,551	4.7%	0.96		
Information	48	1.6%	4,490	1.8%	0.88		
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	123	4.1%	18,181	7.4%	0.56		
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and	204	0.597	27.562	15.3%	0.62		
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	284 672	9.5%	37,562 57,195	23.2%	0.97		
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	275	9.2%	16,278	6.6%	1.39		
Other services, except public administration	87	2.9%	9,282	3.8%	0.77		
Public administration	113	3.8%	6,163	2.5%	1.51		

Location Quotient (LQ): Ratio of analysis-industry employment in the analysis area to base-industry employment in the analysis area divided by the ratio of analysis-industry employment in the base area to base-industry employment in the base area. AN LQ of 1 would indicate the employment concentration in the county or region is roughly the same as that of the state. An LQ below .80 indicates that the industry is less important locally while an LQ above 1.20 indicates more local importance.

COUNTY EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS BY INDUSTRY

The New Hampshire Labor Market Information Bureau produces economic projections by industry at the county and state level on a periodic basis. When compared to the LQs for Hillsborough, the following seem to be growth opportunities: Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Health Care and Social Assistance. Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation are already a significant sector for Hillsborough, and these projections suggest that the Town should continue to support this industry.

	Long-Term Projections, H	illsborough C	County 2020 t	to 2030		
NAICS		Estimated	Projected	2020-203	2030 Change	
Code	Industry	2020	2030	Numeric	Percent	
Total E	mployment (incl. Self-employed)	208,108	227,062	18,954	9.10%	
101	Goods Producing Industries	34,140	35,783	1,643	4.80%	
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	595	697	102	17.10%	
21	Mining	61	58	-3	-4.90%	
23	Construction	8,076	8,929	853	10.60%	
31	Manufacturing	25,408	26,099	691	2.70%	
102	Service Providing Industries	162,502	179,872	17,370	10.70%	
22	Utilities	294	323	29	9.90%	
42	Wholesale Trade	6,900	7,036	136	2.00%	
44	Retail Trade	25,931	24,907	-1,024	-3.90%	
48	Transportation & Warehousing	6,236	6,945	709	11.40%	
51	Information	5,720	6,020	300	5.20%	
52	Finance & Insurance	10,212	11,219	1,007	9.90%	
53	Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	2,182	2,399	217	9.90%	
54	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	12,520	15,173	2,653	21.20%	
55	Management of Companies & Enterprises	3,025	2,899	-126	-4.20%	
56	Administrative & Waste Management Services	10,839	11,919	1,080	10.00%	
61	Educational Services	16,830	18,243	1,413	8.40%	
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	28,985	34,099	5,114	17.60%	
71	Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	2,467	3,585	1,118	45.30%	
72	Accommodation & Food Svcs.	12,756	15,895	3,139	24.60%	
81	Other Services (Except Government)	8,502	10,004	1,502	17.70%	
	Government	9,103	9,206	103	1.10%	
	Self-employed Workers	11,466	11,407	-59	-0.50%	

Source: NH Labor Market Information Bureau, 2023

STRENGTH, WEAKNESS, OPPORTUNITY, THREAT (SWOT) ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis is a tool for evaluating Hillsborough's economy by assessing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities available, and potential threats. The Hillsborough SWOT is compared to a regional one.

Hillsborough SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Town's beauty and rural character, natural resources, and historic character
- Strong sense of local engagement, people/community spirit
- Located at a midpoint between Keene and Concord on a key arterial (US 202/NH 9).
- Hillsborough is seen as a more affordable option for housing and commercial development
- Hillsborough has a walkable, compact downtown
- Hillsborough's assets include a wide variety of conservation lands and numerous hiking trails, as well as the Contoocook River
- Current redevelopment efforts in the Downtown area could lead to additional investment

COMMUNITY WEAKNESSES/THREATS

- Empty storefronts and rundown buildings, which can have a negative effect on aesthetics and investment
- Concerns about protection of rural character in the face of development
- Changing demographics and an aging workforce
- Issues with parking, notably confusion parking in Central Business District
- Inadequate sidewalks
- Tax burden for residents
- Sewer capacity challenges
- Limited dining and retail options
- Poor cell phone coverage and internet access in places
- The need to travel outside of Hillsborough for some basic shopping, dining, and entertainment

OPPORTUNITIES

- Investing in downtown beautification, supporting small businesses, improving core infrastructure, and enhancing access to the Contoocook River to better utilize its recreational potential
- Establish a community-oriented space for events, programs, and social engagement
- Use available economic development and land use regulation tools offer an opportunity to promote appropriate and sustainable growth, such as the recently approved North Branch Gateway Zone Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Plan and accompanying zoning changes.
- o Grow vocational training opportunities in the trades, as well as expanding training opportunities in tech and healthcare
- e Expand local trail networks to leverage recreational tourism, enhance quality of life, and promote community wellness. The Hillsborough Riverwalk is an example of these efforts
- Study options for public transportation, such as a demand-response service or extension of existing bus services from other municipalities to support local mobility and economic connectivity
- Prioritize thoughtful, mixed-use developments along US 202/NH 9 that incorporate housing, retail, and office space while preserving the town's desired aesthetic character

CNHRPC Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Well-educated population
- Relatively low business costs (real estate, wage rates)
- Proximity of natural resources/outdoor activities
- Centrally located to amenities & urban centers
- Legislation establishing accessory dwelling unit guidelines

- Good highway access
- Strong presence of businesses in health, finance, & trade
- More relaxed quality of life
- Clean air/water
- Low unemployment
- Business friendly environment
- High percentage of selfemployed & work at home
- Quality local schools (Grades K-12)
- Many colleges/universities
- Communities with varied densities

REGIONAL WEAKNESSES/THREATS

- Lack of labor availability
- Limited public transit, including commuter rail
- High housing costs & lack of diversity
- Limited tax incentives
- Slow pace of government change
- High student debt

- Inconsistent broadband/telecommunications coverage
- Limited public water/sewer
- Opioid/drug epidemic and stigma
- Lack of inter-municipal cooperation
- High price of utilities
- Differing needs in urban, suburban, and rural communities

- No major research university
- Workforce age and skills not always aligned
- Low wages and high cost of living
- High reliance on property taxes
- Meeting aging population needs

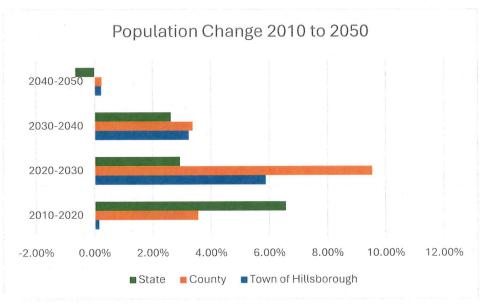
OPPORTUNITIES

- Stronger partnerships between universities, local schools, businesses, governments, & industries
- Available pre-approved sites inventory and fasttrack planning board approval process
- More outreach to refugees and immigrants – underutilized workforce
- Target industries to community strengths/assets

- Coordinated marketing (towns, firms, brokers)
- Entrepreneur relations including incubator start-ups
- Improve housing diversity
- Utilize synergies among seniors/young adults
- Maintain quality of life by balancing natural resources/recreation needs with economic development
- Identify, engage, and reengage local champions for economic development projects

- Regional branding, including an eye towards tourism
- Efficient access to development information – one stop shop website
- Strengthening focus on transition of military to civilian careers
- High School training for trades
- Small business expansion
- Support for local farms/local food sources

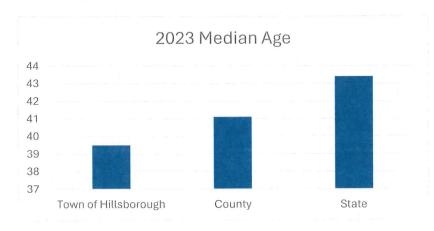
KEY DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DATA Population



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

Since 2010, Population growth percentage in Hillsborough has been less than that of the state. It is projected to continue in this manner in the future, beginning to decline by 2040.

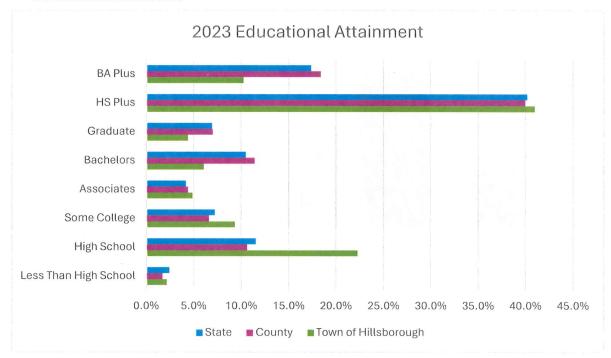
Median Age



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

Hillsborough has a younger average age than that of both the county and state.

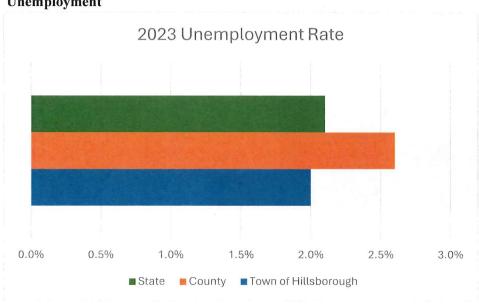
Educational Attainment



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

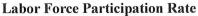
Hillsborough's workforce is predominantly high school graduates.

Unemployment



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

The Town's unemployment rate is less than both the state and county.

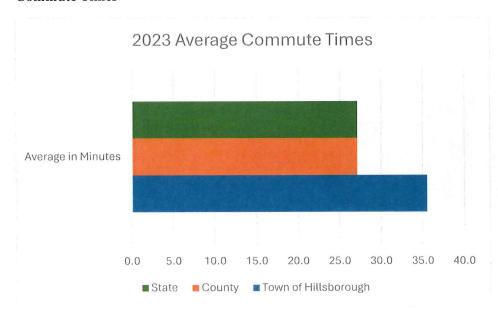




Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

The labor force participation rate is greater in both the county and state.

Commute Times



Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data

Average commute times in Hillsborough exceed that of the state and county.

Industry in Hillsborough

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Industry	Hillsborough 2023	Hillsborough County 2023	State of NH 2023	NH Projections in 2032
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, hunting, and				
mining	106	411	2,411	2,543
Construction	152	19,926	7,354	7,577
Manufacturing	351	33,112	16,817	17,156
Wholesale trade	151	4,995	4,408	4,616
Retail trade	489	27,087	23,953	23,628
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	134	11,551	4,277	4,479
Information	48	4,490	1,628	1,697
Finance, insurance, real estate, leasing	123	18,181	5,167	5,272
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management	284	37,562	13,611	14,982
Education, health care, and social assistance	672	57,195	45,110	47,491
Arts, entertainment, recreation, hospitality, and food services	275	16,278	21,620	23,510
Other, except public administration	87	9,282	5,725	5,851
Public administration	113	6,163	10,484	10,959
TOTALS	2,985	246,233	162,565	169,761

Sources: 2023 US Census ACS Data and NH Labor Market Bureau Industry Projections 2022 to 2032

The top three industries in Hillsborough, in order, are: education, health care, and social assistance; retail trade; and manufacturing. In the county, they are the same. In the state, they are education, health care, and social assistance; retail trade; and arts, entertainment, recreation, hospitality, and food services. The top three projected growth industries are the top three industries in the state.

A SNAPSHOT OF HILLSBOROUGH'S ECONOMY

- Location Quotient Analysis and Economic Projections for the County:
 - Hillsborough has some strong industry clusters across several sectors that should continue to be supported by the Town. These include: Agricultural, Wholesale, Retail, and Food Service, as well as Transportation/Warehousing, Manufacturing, and Information Services.
 - When coupled with the County's projected economic growth estimates, opportunities in Professional Services, Health Care, and Entertainment could be targeted to diversify the economy even more.

• Demographic Analysis:

- o Like most of the Northeast, Hillsborough has an aging population, but it is notably younger than the county and state which can be attractive to businesses seeking to expand or relocate.
- O Hillsborough has a larger segment of the employment-aged population that is not in the labor force. Coupled with the fact that Hillsborough residents are commuting, on average, farther to work than those in the County and State as a whole, and it suggests that there could potentially be an available workforce to support new or expanding industry.
- A potential challenge is that Hillsborough has a smaller percentage of collegeeducated workers than does the county or state. This could prove a challenge to efforts to expand into healthcare or professional services, and attracting a greater percentage of college-educated workers will be needed.

• SWOT Analysis:

- o Capitalize on Hillsborough's location, halfway between Concord and Keene. This could be enhanced by highlighting the key industries in town like manufacturing.
- The lower cost of living is another potential draw, as lower housing costs could be found in Hillsborough, as opposed to Concord or Keene (or Manchester, too).
- O The quality of life is a significant draw and this can help draw workers to the community, especially those in industries that Hillsborough may seek to expand into, such as healthcare and professional services.
- o Infrastructure needs, including sewer, roads, sidewalks, cell phone, and internet connectivity need to be addressed.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Actively promote the use of the Community Revitalization Tax Incentive (RSA 79E), Commercial/Industrial Tax Exemption (RSA 72:81) and North Branch Gateway Zone Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Plan: The challenge in promoting the Community Revitalization Tax Incentive, Commercial/Industrial Tax Exemption and North Branch Gateway Zone TIF stems from communicating their existence and how they are used. As part of an economic development website, Hillsborough can promote them with maps, provide contacts, and application materials. Fact sheets can also help to clearly convey these tools and how they are used.
- Address sewer capacity issues related to infiltration: Continue to promote coordination between the Town and the Hillsborough Water and Sewer Commission to address sewer capacity/infiltration issues.
- Develop and promote the use of Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZs): The Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) program allows municipalities to establish certain zones in a community where a business can then seek a credit on its New Hampshire Business Profits Tax. To establish a zone or zones, the Town may apply to the program (administered by the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development) following a process outlined in NH RSA 162-N:8. The ERZ program currently has \$825,000 available per year for tax credits throughout the State of New Hampshire. To be eligible for the program, a designated zone must meet one of the following requirements:
 - (a) Unused or underutilized industrial parks; or
 - (b) Vacant land or structures previously used for industrial, commercial or retail purposes but currently not so used due to demolition, age, relocation of the former occupant's operations, obsolescence, deterioration, brownfields, or cessation of operation resulting from unfavorable economic conditions either generally or in a specific economics sector.
- Continue to assess/clean up Hillsborough's brownfields sites: Assessment and cleanup have been underway for many years at the Woods Woolen Mill and Associated Electric sites. The Woods Woolen Mill site is most appropriate for a trail head/park use, while the Associated Electric parcel's location on Main Street offers an opportunity for redevelopment in a key location.
- Form and support the Hillsborough Trails Committee: Many communities with successful trail systems have a Trails Committee that is dedicated to developing, maintaining, and promoting the trails in their community. In a time where a lack of volunteerism can be an issue, trails can bring new enthusiasm and bring some new people active in the community. A Trails Committee would likely consist primarily of local volunteers, but would also be most effective if it is provided support and have involvement from various boards and committees such as the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and Economic Development Committee. CNHRPC staff are available to support the Trails Committee. Potential tasks to be undertaken by the Trails Committee could include:
 - Map existing trails, formal "official" trails and informal trails and paths
 - Map public lands where trail building is likely to be permissible
 - Identify connections between disconnected trail systems
 - Identify routes and methods to connect trails to people and destinations
 - Communicate with private landowners over permissions for public trails on private property
 - Assist the town in raising private and public funds for the purpose of trail development
 - Look for how trails can serve economic development purposes

- Develop a vision for a trail system in Hillsborough.
- EV Charger Planning: Support future grant applications and public/private partnerships to provide Level 1 and Level 2 EV chargers in strategic locations near the Central Business District.
- Prepare for Henniker Street Improvements: Henniker Street improvements are proposed for inclusion in the 2027-2036 NH Ten-Year Plan. The project was the highest ranked project in the most recent regional Transportation Improvement Program. Henniker Street has antiquated storm drainage, a lack of sidewalk in most places, sidewalks in poor condition where they exist, no curbing, unsafe pedestrian crossings, and a lack of ADA compliance all need to be addressed to meet present and future needs. The proposed project would reconstruct the roadway to improve access management, upgrade storm water drainage, construct sidewalks, improve pedestrian crossings, and upgrade to ADA compliance.
- Downtown Parking Availability and Signage Analysis: Review previously completed and recently
 updated parking utilization studies and signage plans to address concerns related to available
 parking to the Central Business District.
- Establish Economic Development Website Linked to Town Website: Most municipal websites are geared towards local residents locating various services. An Economic Development website that promotes the Town in a way that is more of a marketing effort. Recreation, schools, housing, permitting, as well as economic and demographic data can help in that regard. Reviewing the website with an eye toward finding these elements of information in "one or two clicks" can help market the community. The website can also be used to highlight available Commercial/Industrial sites in partnership with property owners.