

5/3/2017

**Western CT Economic Development
Strategy Committee**

Held at the Comstock Community Center
180 School Rd, Wilton, CT 06897

MEMBERS

Hal Kurfehs	Coldwell Banker Commercial
Joe Ercolano	CT Small Business Development Center
Lisa Scails	Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut
Eugene Schreiner	Fairfield County Bank
Tom Long	The Workplace
Liz Stocker	Norwalk Economic Development
Christal Preszler	Newtown EDC
Virginia DeCristoforo	Innovation Center

ALSO ATTENDING

WestCOG staff Elizabeth Esposito and Nicole Sullivan.

WELCOME

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM by Associate Planner, Elizabeth Esposito.

DISCUSSION

The group was briefed on background of and examples for Strategic Action Planning, which included conversation of funding, grants, and feasibility.

The group then reviewed the first draft from the previous meeting. Changes to the outline were explored. A second draft is attached.

Members not in attendance may give their input to Elizabeth by May 12.

This Strategic Action Plan will continue to be refined in the coming meetings.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Next Meeting: May 22, 2017 at 2pm at the Comstock Community Center.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Strategic Action Plan Outline for Economic Development in Western Connecticut

DRAFT - GOALS DO NOT APPEAR IN ORDER OF PRORITIZATION

- **Goal**

Description

- Objective
 - Project

- **Regional Planning and Cooperation**

Build a stronger regional economic development program that achieves closer coordination among municipalities, and between Western Connecticut, the state, and other surrounding regions

- Increase intra-regional cooperation and continue to plan on a regional level for the development of Western Connecticut's economy
 - Continually update the CEDS
 - Pursue Economic Development District status for the Region
 - Encourage municipal elected officials to meet continually regarding regional economic development
- Achieve better coordination between Western Connecticut and interregional planning efforts
 - Identify opportunities to leverage shared resources, especially with MetroCOG, NVCOG, and Westchester County

- **Improved and Maintained Transportation and Public Infrastructure**

Maintain, improve, and develop the region's infrastructure so that it meets the needs of the workforce as well as existing and growing industries

- Expand the availability of gigabit internet access
- Update the electric grid
 - Prioritize projects that incorporate alternative energy and more resilient strategies
- Minimize the amount of new infrastructure that must be developed for economic development projects
 - Prioritize development projects that reuse previously developed sites and have compact footprints
- Support and advocate for transportation and mass transit improvements that increase connectivity and reduce travel time

- Coordinate site development projects with transportation improvement plans contained in the Region’s Long-Range Transportation Plan
 - Advocate for improvement to the Region’s major transportation spines I-95, I-84, Route 7, Merritt Parkway, and Rail lines
 - Prioritize projects near transportation nodes, especially public transit stops
 - Create a Freight Plan
 - Implement Transit Oriented Development Plans
 - Work with bus and shuttle providers to coordinate services
 - Create a regional on-road bicycling network
 - Create a Tax Increment Financing District(s) to fund improvements to the Danbury Branch Line
 - Advocate to extend MetroNorth service to New Milford, and for feasibility studies for new stations

- **Improved Business Climate**

Foster an environment that encourages creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, and strengthens existing clusters

 - Improve marketing of business resources
 - Coordinate with business resources to create a unified marketing strategy
 - Encourage the revitalization of village, town, and city centers
 - Create a Regional Main Street Program
 - Leverage local arts community
 - Engage in legislative advocacy at the State level to improve the business climate
 - Encourage Business Support and Recruitment
 - Study the demand for incubator space focused on specific clusters and industries
 - Work with staff at existing incubators to study the needs of “graduating” incubator firms
 - Improve “customer” experience for business owners in every municipality
 - Conduct a review of municipal zoning and suggest efficiencies
 - Partner with existing organizations to educate volunteers on municipal boards and commissions
 - Advocate for incentives for brownfield redevelopment
 - Make the Region a leader in innovation
 - Create and support makerspaces, business incubators, and other business support resources in every municipality

- **Cultivated Conditions to Support a Diverse Workforce**

Attract, retain, and develop a skilled and diverse workforce that meets the needs of existing employers and is attractive to new firms providing high quality careers

- Recruit and retain young professionals
 - Partner with existing organizations to identify effective policies and initiatives
- Retain professionals over 50
 - Partner with existing organizations to identify effective policies and initiatives
 - Identify best practices for workforce retraining and “career ladders” programs
 - Work with employers to assess the skills needed for advancement and if incentives are needed to retrain staff
 - Work with employers to identify third-party continuing education certificates they would accept
- Create a diversity of housing that all sectors of the workforce can afford
 - Partner with existing organizations to identify effective policies and initiatives
 - Create a housing inventory and analysis
 - Advocate for local policies that encourage adaptive reuse instead of demolition
- Encourage partnerships between higher-ed and vocational institutions, and regional industries
 - Work with educational institutions to develop new programs that respond to industry needs
 - Work with educational institutions to develop a “learn here – stay here” initiative
 - Work with area companies to list internship opportunities
- Advocate for industry focused educational programs at the elementary school level
 - Work with area colleges and universities to provide local high school students with the opportunity to take college classes
 - Support and advocate for programs that provide children with early exposure to trades and entrepreneurship

- **A Region More Resilient to the Impacts of Climate Change**

Promote responsible strategies that contribute to sustainability and economic development

- Create a Regional Plan of Conservation and Development
- Study the impacts of coastal and riverine flooding
- Provide businesses resources for disaster recovery

- Educate municipalities and businesses about disaster preparation and recovery
 - Work with municipalities to make recovery centers for businesses
 - Encourage policies that minimize the amount of newly developed land, especially in environmentally sensitive areas or near critical environmental resources
 - Minimize the amount of new infrastructure that must be developed for economic development projects
 - Prioritize development projects that reuses previously developed sites and have compact footprints
- **A Positive Regional Identity**

Forge a favorable Regional entity that is well known globally and inspires pride in residents

 - Identify/ create a Strategic Communications Plan for municipalities to spread and acknowledge positive news and “wins” for the region
 - Lead a campaign to pursue national/international awards and recognition
 - Improve the online presence of the Region
 - Encourage registration of businesses on various websites, (e.g. Google Maps, Yelp, etc.) and create workshops to teach businesses how to do it
 - Help businesses get listed on ctvisit.com
 - Enhance Tourism
 - Leverage the arts community for projects and programming
 - Help businesses get listed on ctvisit.com
 - Assist in the development of itineraries and packages unique to the Region’s resources