Canton Economic Development Agency

Three-Year Plan
11/06/2014
Membership - EDA

- Robert Bessel, Chair
- Amy Parchen, Vice Chair
- Theresa Sullivan Barger, Member
- Diana Boorjian, Member
- Tom Bradley, Member
Mission Statement

- The Canton Economic Development Agency (EDA) fosters and supports the growth and development of Canton’s business sector by:
  - Recruitment of new businesses
  - Providing services and support to help existing local businesses grow
  - Creating a friendly environment for entrepreneurs and start-ups
  - Educating Canton citizens about the value of responsible economic development
  - Forming partnerships and enhancing communications between organizations involved in Canton economic development.
  - Identifying opportunities for and obstacles to economic development.
Business Recruitment

- Goal
  - Recruit and attract businesses that will add to the town’s tax base, create employment opportunities, and improve Canton’s quality-of-life.
Business Recruitment

- Strategies
  - Develop a targeted marketing campaign to promote Canton as an attractive location for business
  - Demonstrate consistently that Canton is “business friendly” in all marketing activities
  - Conduct research as necessary to define Canton’s advantages as a business location
  - Work cooperatively with property owners, area brokers, site selection consultants, state and non-governmental economic development organizations to enhance our efforts and broaden our reach
  - Build partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce, Canton Main Street, and other local organizations to focus and amplify our message.
Business Recruitment

- Tactics
  - Identify target business segments most likely to find Canton attractive
    - Define best media and communications vehicles for reaching priority segments
  - Message definition/”brand”
    - Conduct informal, qualitative discussions with a sample of the kind of individuals we would target: e.g., large retail developers, business owners, location consultants
    - Craft a “brand statement” that articulates our brand and key messages
Business Recruitment

- Tactics
  - Marketing Communications: Launch a communications campaign to prospects in our target markets; support via social media
  - Create a printed sales package for promotion of Canton as a business location by area brokers and town representatives; develop web-based version
  - Develop a business welcome package in conjunction with Chamber of Commerce
Business Recruitment

- **Tactics**
  - **Site Inventory**: Create and maintain an easily accessible, complete inventory of available sites and buildings
    - Inventory should include expanded descriptions/key information about major sites, including Collins Company site, Harts Corner, etc.
  - Investigate possibility of ARC/GIS based platform
  - **Business Liaison**: Create a stable of “ambassadors” who can help businesses find appropriate locations and navigate Canton’s regulatory process.
Local Business Support

- Goal
  - Create opportunities for cooperative efforts that help local businesses market their goods and services, gain access to technical and educational resources, and interact more effectively with local government agencies.
Local Business Support

- Strategies
  - Build a closer relationship with the existing business community through partnerships with the Chamber, e.g., cooperative marketing programs, cluster marketing, events
  - Communicate regularly with business owners with information about government and private resources that may be helpful to them
  - Conduct events that offer educational opportunities, e.g., marketing and/or business finance seminars
Local Business Support

- **Tactics**
  - Cooperative Advertising: Investigate potential for cooperative advertising vehicles that will gain exposure for local businesses at a lower cost
  - Chamber/Main Street Liaisons: Maintain a consistent presence at Chamber and Main Street meetings; work to reduce redundancy and integrate economic development-focused activities; participate in cooperative events
  - Communications: Contribute to Chamber/Canton Main Street communications vehicles to keep membership informed of EDA activities, contributions
Local Business Support

- Tactics
  - Events: Conduct at least one event annually for local business owners and operators, both to provide support and to foster a stronger sense of community and cooperation. (Event could be a cooperative venture of all Canton economic development organizations.)
  - Business Visits: Organize a consistent timetable for EDA members to visit local businesses
Promoting Entrepreneurship

- **Goal**
  - Develop a mindset and environment in Canton that values and supports the launch of start-up and new business ventures, and the growth of existing small businesses.
Promoting Entrepreneurship

- Strategies
  - Develop a stronger internal understanding of potential entrepreneurship/innovation development initiatives
  - Identify potential incubator space
  - Investigate potential for partnerships with area universities/colleges, e.g., providing space for student entrepreneurs
  - Work with DECD and local banks to develop a start-up financing initiative
Promoting Entrepreneurship

- Tactics
  - Identify an individual/individuals with a passion for fostering entrepreneurship to spearhead these efforts
  - Other tactics TBD until we “get smarter”
Educating Canton

- **Goal**
  - Educate Canton citizens about the value of economic development in ensuring the town’s health and future, and enlist their active engagement in and support for town economic development initiatives.
Educating Canton

Strategies

- Communicate directly and consistently to local citizens through online vehicles
- Work with local news media to keep people informed and up-to-date
- Hold and participate in public events offering opportunities to educate people about economic development
- Measure citizens’ understanding of economic development issues on an annual basis
Educating Canton

- **Tactics**
  - Benchmark Survey: Conduct an annual email survey of Canton to measure understanding/support
  - Blog: Provide regular updates on EDA activities, occasional “primers” on economic development-related topics
  - Media Relations: Maintain relationships with the Courant, Compass, and other area media; place news and stories about economic development news, EDA initiatives
  - Events: Develop a town-wide event (separate, or as part of a larger town gathering) focused on discussion of Canton’s economic development needs and initiatives. Hold “coffees” 2-3 times per year for specific groups to discuss relevant issues, perhaps in conjunction with the Chamber and Canton Main Street.
Improve Development Process/Advocacy

- Goal
  - Help create a more attractive, less onerous process for submitting development and business expansion proposals.
Improve Development Process

- Strategies
  - Participate in continued efforts to streamline Canton’s regulatory process
  - Evaluate proposed projects for economic impact
  - Endorse and advocate for proposed projects that will have a positive impact.
Improve Development Process

- Tactics
  - Develop a quantitative system for evaluating the economic impact of major development proposals
  - Work with Planning & Zoning, the Town Planner, the Boards of Selectmen and Finance, and other agencies and commissions to streamline and enhance review and regulation of economic development proposals.
EDA – Focus Champions

- Business Recruitment/Communications – T. Bradley, R. Bessel
- Business Recruitment/Site Inventory - TBD
- Local Business Service & Support – T. Sullivan Barger, D. Boorjian
- Entrepreneur Support – TBD
- Community Education – T. Bradley
- Partnerships/Integration – A. Parchen, T. Sullivan Barger
- Process Improvement/Development Advocacy – R. Bessel