

Town of Canton, Connecticut
Economic Development Agency

2009 Activities Report

Date: December 15, 2009
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Summary

2009 has brought several changes to Canton's Economic Development Agency (CEDA). Specifically, the *CEDA Ordinance 118* was modified to reduce the number of CEDA members required for a meeting quorum from five (5) members to three (3) members. This change has had a positive result and the agency has resumed regular CEDA meetings since May of 2009.

The agency has also experienced a change in membership. In July of 2009, Del Higham, a long time standing member of the agency, resigned his position. Anthony Trelli also resigned his position in September of 2009. In May, 2009 the agency gained two new members Michele Dube and Joseph Danajovits and in November, 2009 Leslie Wilson joined the agency as a new member. Anne Raftery has stayed on and continues to be a significant contributor to the agency. Through these changes the CEDA has lost some valuable knowledge and experience. However, the CEDA has also gained some new perspectives and enthusiasm, which has reinvigorated the agencies cause.

As noted, in May of 2009, the CEDA resumed regular meetings breaking a 16 month absence of CEDA meetings, due to the inability to achieve a quorum. The absence of CEDA activities during the 16 month pause, coupled with new membership, has provided an opportunity for the agency to reevaluate the agencies mission (see Appendix A) and develop a new strategy for promoting favorable economic development in the Town of Canton.

As such, the core strategy of the CEDA is to promote favorable economic development. This promotion will be facilitated through the collection and analysis of data representing Canton's cost of community services¹ (COCS) and through the establishment of Canton's current business profile. The COCS analysis will provide quantitative data with respect to the relative costs of land usage. Canton's business profile will provide data with respect to existing business development in Canton. These data sets will be used to correlate proposed economic development opportunities with the goals, policies and recommendations outlined in Canton's 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development. The intent of this strategy is to promote the use of COCS and business profile data, by the respective town agencies, to encourage a development mix optimizing residential and business development for the benefit of Canton's residents.

Other supplemental strategies include the agencies involvement with community engagement to promote favorable or preferred development coinciding with findings of Canton's 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development. These activities include the organization and staging of a community forum, preparation of promotional material, updating CEDA webpage, and business outreach. While the core strategic objectives will take significant time and effort to develop, the agency will pursue in parallel the supplemental initiatives to support economic goals focused on short-term results.

Canton has many challenges to the pursuit of successful economic development, such as limited infrastructure and land use challenges, but the CEDA believes these challenges also provide opportunities in terms of premium characteristics of the town to be leveraged for targeted favorable economic development.

¹ ACOCs is an analysis used to determine the fiscal contribution of existing local land uses.

To overcome these challenges, the CEDA is evaluating the MetroHartford Alliance program benefits. In previous years, Canton's membership to the MetroHartford Alliance has provided Canton with the resources needed to apply for grants. Grant opportunities include, but are not limited to Brownfield clean-up and redevelopment, and opportunities from the Federal Economic Development Agency through the development of a "CEDS", Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. While this is still applicable, the organization provides additional services an active CEDA can utilize to assist Canton with economic development opportunities. The MetroHartford Alliance acts as agent for the town, to identify economic opportunities and direct businesses, which is vital to Canton's economic growth. In Canton's fiscal year 2009, the funding of this membership was cut from the budget.

Summary of Current CEDA Projects

Cost of Community Services / Charting Canton's Business Profile

The cost of community services, when fully developed, will quantify the economic impact of land use and planning decisions by the respective departments and agencies within Canton's municipal government. Each land use classification corresponds to a relative cost to the residents of Canton. Knowing this cost will foster and support responsible economic development based on quantified costs to the residents of the town.

Charting Canton's existing business profile (see Appendix B) will help to identify Canton's business population based on their primary North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) registration with the United States Census Bureau. By charting Canton's business populations, CEDA will be able to determine the business segments in deficit as well as segments in surplus.

Coupling cost of services with the town's existing business profile will help identify as well as qualify potential areas of economic development most favorable to the town. Through the cost of services analysis, it may be determined medical businesses are most favorable to Canton's cost structure. If Canton's business profile shows a deficit of medical businesses, the CEDA would focus efforts towards economic development initiatives attracting and incenting these businesses to Canton, thereby providing a the greatest potential of benefit to Canton's tax base as well as Canton's residents.

The cost of community services and the business profile analysis, when fully developed, will provide Canton's general public with practical information to assist with informed decisions to support beneficial businesses development. The cost of community services and business profile will also identify development processes to effectively stimulate Canton's economy, while preserving Canton's character, which is one of its most valued assets.

Develop Promotion Material Supporting Canton as a Place for Economic Activities

The CEDA has recognized a gap in efforts to promote Canton as a town to establish a new business for prospective businesses or entice existing businesses to remain and grow. Due to the absence of promotion a material, representatives of Canton have no means to communicate what Canton has to offer. The development of this material is fundamental to educating and attracting organizations/businesses to Canton. As such, the agency is working towards the development of material promoting why Canton is the place to establish a new business or grow an existing business.

The analysis of the cost of services/business profile project will be used in conjunction with the development of promotional material to promote and attack the development opportunities, which are most favorable to Canton's residents as well as the tax base.

Host a Local Forum Promoting Canton's Economic Strengths and Opportunities

The Local Forum venue provides the CEDA with an opportunity to educate the public about the economic opportunities and the respective knowledge to take advantage of the economic opportunities in Canton.

In the spring of 2010, the CEDA has proposed a local forum presenting a panel discussion consisting of panel members representing key strategic aspects of business (e.g., finance, law, operations, etc...) The strategy of the forum is to educate and empower individuals contemplating starting a business as well provide information to existing businesses for growth opportunities.

The subject matter of the forum will emphasize recommendations outlined for initiating economic development in Canton's 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development (PCOD.)

Update and Maintain Canton's EDDI

Economic Development Data and Information (EDDI) is a searchable database representing hundreds of data points for the Town of Canton. The data points represent key information about Canton such as labor force statistics, leading employers, maps, promotional material, etc... These data points are accessible to the general public through the Internet and are used for determining economic opportunities by entities looking for locations to establish a business or grow an existing business.

The EDDI database is maintained by The Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) (http://www.cerc.com/Content/About_Us.asp) which is a non-profit corporation providing marketing and economic development resources for the purpose of making Connecticut a more competitive business location. The ability to take advantage of the EDDI database services of CERC is available only through the town's membership with the MetroHartford Alliance.

In 2009, budget cuts have prevented the town from actively participating in the membership. The current CEDA has evaluated the benefits of the MetroHartford Alliance and believes it is important to fund Canton's membership in order to have the benefit of promoting Canton's EDDI for prospective economic development opportunities.

Summary of CEDA Member Activities

- Connecticut Main Street Center Programs - "The Return of Investment of Historic Preservation" and "Straight Talk from Kent Burnes";
- 2009 Annual Meeting of the 1000 Friends of Connecticut organization;
- The First National Bank of Litchfield representative meeting;
- Meeting with Courtney Hendrickson, Economic Development Director of Farmington and;
- Attended MetroHartford Alliance program "The Value of Sports as an Economic Development Tool".

Appendix A – Agency Mission and Purpose

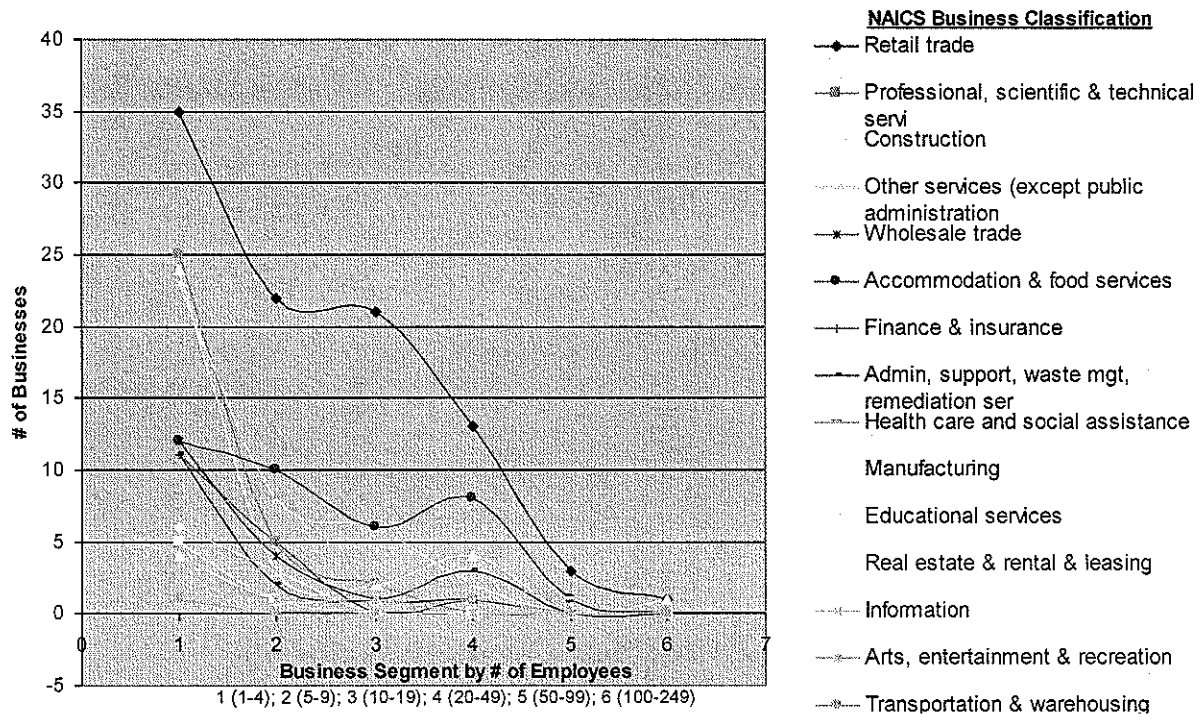
Agency Mission (per CEDA minutes of 12/11/2007 meeting):

The mission of Canton's Economic Development Agency is to foster and support economic development, provide educational resources to business enterprises, and to stimulate Canton's economic vitality while enhancing its essential character.

Agency Purpose (State Statute; Sec. 7-136. Municipal Economic Development Commissions):

- *Conduct research into the economic conditions and trends within the agency's municipality;*
- *Make recommendations based on research for the improvement of economic conditions and foster optimum development strategies within the agency's municipality;*
- *Coordinate economic activities of and cooperate with unofficial bodies organized to promote economic development and sponsor, fund, and support activities to further this purpose.*

Appendix B – Canton’s 2007 Existing Business Profile



Source: U.S. Census Bureau