

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The mission of the Shaftsbury Economic Development Committee is to develop and implement plans that will ensure the continuing economic revitalization of the town. We continue to address the items identified in the 2003 South Shaftsbury Economic Revitalization Plan:

Provide sewer service to two Shaftsbury Growth Centers. We conducted a sewer feasibility study as well as a needs/cost survey. Upon understanding the costs of the project the community chose not to go forward with the initiative at that time.

Develop a growth center strategy. We worked with the Planning Commission to ensure the Town Plan addressed the revitalization of the Village area. Additionally, our work on securing a Village Center Designation has paved the way for further work on this initiative.

Develop a recreational and cultural trail. The trail, which could connect Howard Park to the Lake Paran trail continues to be a focus item for the Committee. The trail from the Robert Frost museum to Paran Creek has been cleared. The construction of a bridge over the creek is required to complete the connection to the Lake Paran trail. The Economic Development Committee continues to support the Fund for North Bennington as they develop their plans for both the bridge as well as connecting the trail to the Robert Frost museum to Howard Park.

Capitalize on the railroad. A representative of the Economic Development Committee attends any railroad council meetings to emphasize the importance of passenger rail from Albany through Rutland and Burlington to Montreal. We have solicited and received letters of support from BCIC and BCRC.

Work to nurture medically-oriented industries. This initiative was focused on finding businesses for the old Stanley Tool building. The Economic Development Committee provided support in the process of bringing Bernstein displays to Shaftsbury, which brought upward of 125 jobs to town.

As the Committee moves forward, it is determining the best method for developing a strategic plan for further work the Committee can undertake. The Committee is currently discussing whether or not there is a benefit to developing a “Streetscape” that would “paint” a vision of what the South Shaftsbury Village Center Designated area could look like. This would then be used to inform all future municipal improvements.

Last year, the Economic Development Committee secured from the State two Village Center Designations: South Shaftsbury and Shaftsbury Center. This year, we continued to work with both the State and businesses to identify viable projects which could qualify for the tax credit benefits. This designation played a role in Shaftsbury qualifying for other the grants, such as the Transportation Enhancement Grant which funded the sidewalk project. We have developed a survey of communication and technology needs of small business people who work from their home. We are working with BCRC and VCGI on a state-wide implementation plan. The Town Plan limits sprawl. The Economic Development Committee hopes to be able to work with the Planning Commission on regulatory documents to ensure they continue to support the goal of limiting sprawl and encouraging housing consolidation and business development in the village area.

We encourage all businesses, large and small, to work with us in improving the economic development of our community. As always, the Economic Development Committee welcomes new members.

Respectfully submitted

Art Whitman, Chairman