

Economic Development

I. What has Hatfield said about this topic in earlier plans?

2001 MASTER PLAN, EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (page 4)

- Business is attracted by easy access to I-91 and has almost doubled in acreage from 1971 to 1997.
 - The Route 9 bottleneck at the Coolidge Bridge and the exhaustion of available commercial real estate along Rt.5/King Street corridor in Northampton are spurring increased interest in Hatfield’s West Street neighborhood.
 - Only 21% of residents work in town, while many from outside the community work in town.
 - The town of Hatfield does not have a sufficient market within its own borders to support additional services in the town center, such as a bank or more shopping opportunities.
 - The Town must focus on enhancing its own tax base by allowing further economic development that has the fewest negative consequences (traffic, neighborhood disruption, etc).
 - Much of the land currently zoned for commercial and industrial development is too environmentally sensitive for such development and is also broadly scattered across the community, so that full buildout would harm the town’s character.
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2004 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN (pages 4 – 21)

Note: page numbers refer to page in PDF version; there are no page numbers in the document (except in the Table of Contents).

- The town’s tax base is stable; it has grown moderately over the past few years.
- However, the local tax burden is increasing in order to fund local services.
- As the Pioneer Valley trends toward small and midsize businesses, Hatfield may become a real competitor for midsize operations with more modest site requirements.
- Employment in Trade and Services sector in Hatfield grew from 40% in 1985 to nearly 75% in 2001.
- The ten largest businesses in town accounted for 23% of the total tax revenue in FY03 and this will decrease to 20% in FY04.
- Overall business assessments decreased from 31% of local revenue in FY03 to 25% in FY04.
- Businesses perceive Hatfield as a “business-friendly” community.
- An increasing number of Hatfield households derive income from self-employment (13%).

- Hatfield’s labor force remained stable from 1990-2001 (about 1,720) and household median income rose. Unemployment figures mirror regional trends but are generally lower than average.
- The town has many development assets including solid transportation infrastructure, high quality of life, functioning water and sewer infrastructure, close proximity to Greater Springfield labor market. (note: 2012 plan says the public utilities are “somewhat antiquated,” p. 1)
- Large employers include:
 - C&S Wholesale Grocers (1,000 employees)
 - Verizon (130)
 - Brockway-Smith (110)
 - Scitech’s Mill Valley Molding (50-100)
 - Hatfield Equipment (50-100)
 - Hatfield Public Schools (50-100)
- Hatfield also has a viable farm economy, although some decline. The number of full-time farmers in town dropped from 19 in 1980 to 15 in 2003.
- The plan identified seven key economic development parcels or areas:
 - North Hatfield Business Park site (50-75 ac)
 - South 5/10 corridor light industrial area (5-10 ac)
 - Mid-5/10 corridor light industrial area (40-50 ac)
 - Upper 5/10 business corridor
 - Northeast industrial area
 - Plain Road industrial area
 - Upper 5/10 corridor industrial area (15 ac)
- It also identified several vacant or underused buildings as opportunities:
 - SciTech (Wilderness Mold/Mill Valley Molding)
 - Western MA Regional Library building
 - Valley Advocate building
 - Town Center Business/Retail Center
 - Danco Commercial Center
 - West Track

2010 TOWN CENTER STUDY SUMMARY REPORT

Overview: This report looks specifically at the historic town center in Hatfield and a variety of land parcels and vacant buildings within it. The goal is to revitalize the town center, and residents were adamant about seeing some progress in this realm. Most of the report is focused on these specific properties, most of which are desired for recreational, civic, or possibly residential use. Some “considerations” outlined on p. 21 are provided in Section II of this background paper.

2012 MASTER PLAN UPDATE (pages 1 – 21)

- Commercial growth expanding north along Route 5/10 from Northampton has resulted in the need for Hatfield to consider expanding public utilities to serve these developing areas.
- Town officials recognize the need to encourage a growing commercial/industrial tax base to help increase revenues for public services.
- The plan examines the zoning districts that existed at the time in some depth. There were three commercial districts and two types of industrial district. The main “Industrial District” straddles the B&M/Connecticut River Railroad line for almost its entire length through the town.
- The town’s commercial and industrial base has seen a steady increase from 1997-2005. In 2012, the town’s Business and Town Center Business Districts total 256.6 acres (if the Town Center District, which also permits limited business and mixed uses, is factored in then the total commercial acreage increases to 860 acres). From 1997 to 2005 the amount of commercially developed land increased 35% compared to 45% over the previous twelve years. Most of this growth has occurred along Route 10.
- Of the town’s 989 acres of Industrial zoned property (788.4 in Industrial, 200.6 in Light Industrial) 188 acres (19%) have been developed. Between 1997 and 2005, 73 acres were developed, an increase of 63% in industrially developed land in eight years compared to 53% over the previous twelve years. This growth has occurred primarily along the Route 5/10 and I-91 corridor.
- Much of the remaining commercial and industrial land is subject to environmental constraints.
- While there is strong sentiment to prevent Route 5/10 from developing into just another commercial strip in the region, the current zoning regulations offer few development restraints to those seeking developable commercial and industrial properties and this area is feeling the demand for continued development.

II. What have been key findings and recommended actions?

2001 MASTER PLAN (Executive Summary)

- Hatfield needs more targeted development and more say over the “shape” of that development.
- At the same time, some town regulations should be modified to ease the burden on new enterprises and existing businesses that may wish to expand.
- Adopt site plan review/approval for all commercial/industrial uses
- Adopt commercial and industrial design guidelines and performance standards.
- Promote limited business development as infill in the town center.
- Create a new light industrial and technology park district.
- Create a new satellite business center district.

2004 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN (pages 4 – 25)

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- Take advantage of updated zoning regulations (2003) to minimize negative impact of new development. P. 17 – these updated regulations include site plan review and special permitting guidelines, performance standards, and town center infill and mixed use provisions.
- The town must address the relationship between the provision of public facilities and services and the ability of the community to concurrently grow its tax base in a planned and sustainable way.
- Develop the North Hatfield Business Park
- Develop Available Economic Assets – use existing resources in a cost-effective manner.
- Infrastructure Improvements – create a concise plan to serve key economic development sites and incorporate it into town’s capital improvements planning.
- Develop a “Market Hatfield” effort to promote as prime location for business and industry in western Massachusetts.
- Business-Friendly Incentives – offer real incentives to businesses to expand or relocate in Hatfield.
- Supporting Local Business – work hard to support existing businesses. Help identify new sites for those that have outgrown their locations. Conduct business retention efforts (survey, etc.).
- Develop a peer-to-peer business development support program. This was suggested by community leaders.
- Create incentives that pertain to agricultural businesses. Support efforts to increase funding and tailor laws to strengthen farmland retention.

2010 TOWN CENTER STUDY SUMMARY REPORT (page 21 and 40)

- Hire a consultant to develop a master plan for the town center
- Rezone the area as a Town Center Business District to expand the number of development options.
- Pursue Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Funding

2012 MASTER PLAN UPDATE (page 6, 19, 21, and 22)

- Given Hatfield’s current land use and the twin goals of maintaining rural character and strengthening the tax base, the town should re-zone some land to direct economic development to locations best suited for that use.
- Rezone the Kellogg Hill Rd area from Industrial to Agricultural.

- There are many small, isolated Business Districts on individual lots or small clusters surrounded by the Rural Residential District. Many of these isolated Business Districts are no longer used or suitable for business uses, are vacant, or have already been converted to Rural Residential District uses. Consideration should be given to rezoning these parcels to Rural Residential to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses. Even where some of these individual parcels may continue to be used for business purposes, rezoning to Rural Residential should be considered to allow such uses to continue as pre-existing nonconforming, but will ensure a transition to more compatible uses in the future.
- Consider adopting Mixed Use Zoning along Rt 5/10 to avoid trend towards commercial strip development by preserving existing residential neighborhoods and clustering commercial development in mixed use nodes at strategic locations.
- Rezone areas of North Hatfield Road from Rural Residential to Light Industrial.

III. What are best practices for consideration on this chapter topic?

What should Hatfield be thinking about that might best help plan for the future, ensure greater resilience?

The most recent plan that was completed for Hatfield was in 2012, more than a decade ago. The status of commercial and industrial development at the current time needs to be ascertained. Some key questions include:

- Which of the recommended and proposed zoning changes were implemented? (this is difficult to tell without an in-depth look at the current zoning map).
- Is the town still considered “business-friendly”?
- What commercial/industrial pressures is the town experiencing today?
- Has the town expanded infrastructure (water, sewer) along Route 5/10 to serve additional business?
- Has this resulted in strip commercial development?
- Has any progress been made on re-purposing the vacant buildings in the Town Center, and has new business located there (on last visit, none was evident).

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