

To: Town Council, Economic Development Commission

From: John Elsesser, Town Manager; Eric Trott, Director of Planning and Development

Re: Economic development updates

Date: October 18, 2019 (**updated January 15, 2021 – in bold**)

We thought we would take a minute to share some Economic Development updates. This is to keep you in the loop and have accurate information as the social media world sometimes gets ahead of the truth. In general it would be helpful to not widely distribute this information since it can change quickly and you may be caught in passing on stale information.

Village:

1600 Main St: The old house and barn next to the School Admin building was proposed to be demolished soon to address the blight conditions by the owner, but it has not occurred. Now being advertised and marketed for commercial use: 2 acres on sewer - commercially zoned. New owners are not interested in building new gas station/convenience store. **Staff has learned that the demolition is being pursued again and is expected to occur in the coming weeks.**

1465 Main St: Former Devine's building (former small engine/boat repair). Sold to new owner who wishes to do fleet vehicle repair (oil truck) and repair of tractors for personal use. **Exterior site work has been completed and has provided much improvement to the site.**

Reid's: Property has been purchased by owner of Lakeview Restaurant who recently opened a take-out only pizza restaurant after he temporarily closed Lakeview. **Staff is aware that a new restaurant is pursuing the site, but formal permits have not been submitted.**

1340 Main St: Coventry Antiques - Environmental clean-up conducted by Red Tech (owner) who are looking for buyer. Have someone interested and trying to get CT DEEP paperwork to allow a mortgage to be issued. Prospective owner has hired an architect and engineer, and plan on a professional office.

1011 Main St: Beebe House. **Husky Pizza has relocated from Downtown Storrs and is in the process of gaining final approvals to open.**

Sanborn's Garage: Sale unlikely without an environmental study. Eric Trott went to a CRCOG brownfields workshop to learn what type of assistance is available. There are limited opportunities for private gas station sites. Rental is still possible. Staff understands that there had been some environmental testing done which revealed no contamination of the site.

Teleflex: EDC visited with Teleflex in late 2019 and learned of the growth of the firm. They are running three shifts and looking for 15 or so more employees. Staff met with the plant manager to discuss their plans, how we may be able to work on parking issues, and how we can help in recruiting. Teleflex is now renting the lower level of the building where Pizza on Main is located for storage.

1034 Main St: Former Sanborn Auto Parts - antique shop closed – new tenant is occupying and selling pool table supplies and antiques. New owner exploring options including residential.

580 Main Street: DragonFire Meadery - (Mead me on Main...too soon?) Owner will be proceeding with sampling in the mead production building which was delayed due to the need to change liquor control law. Mead is a fermented substance made from honey. The owner continues to perform work to the site to further accommodate the business. The PZC recently approved a permit to allow a deck to be constructed to serve as an outdoor public space for tastings.

1409 Main St: Former House on the Hill Antiques – Property actively on market for sale, but no inquiries have been made with Land Use Office. \$699,000 price likely not reasonable considering constraints of site.

Bidwell Spirit Shoppe: Owner of Spirit Shoppe has purchased entire building and has done minor improvements to stabilize building and rentals.

Nathan Hale Antiques: Nathan Hale Antiques is attempting to purchase the entire building, but complications have arisen with a deed restriction which appears to limit adaptive re-use. Their attorney appears to have gotten a sign-off from the State Attorney General's Office to address the deed issue.

Coventry Laundromat building: New personal training business has moved into the upper level.

Lakeview Restaurant: The owner was contemplating improvements to the cottage that is located within the limits of the outdoor patio, which would allow for it to be utilized on a year round basis for residential purposes. A ZBA variance was approved recently to accommodate this use. **The owner has recently listed the vacant commercial property for sale on Woodland Road that was used for overflow parking.**

Former Bea's location: Husky Pizza has relocated from Downtown Storrs and is in the final stages of permitting.

RT 44:

1600 Boston Turnpike: Former eye doctor office. The property has been conveyed to a developer who is looking to establish a retail use. IWA and PZC have approved the project. Construction is expected this fall. **Demolition of the residence has occurred and site preparation/construction continues on site.**

Dunkin Donuts: DnD wants to change their drive through configuration to improve cueing. Waiting for permission from Colvest (owner). Designer has been hired to prepare plans, which staff has reviewed and commented on. A special permit amendment will be necessary for the proposal. The owner refuses to endorse an application of DnD (the leaseholder) to allow the project to move forward. **The owner's legal representative has been in contact with Staff about pursuing a Zoning Regulation Amendment with hopes to alleviate this situation.**

Colvest: Colvest has leveled out their property next to CVS and is working on a septic repair. No discussion recently on any new construction but they did have an approved permit which expired for a large plaza which could be quickly re-permitted. Staff contacted Colvest about the potential of supporting a new building for Integrated Rehab to relocate in town. They have increased space needs. **Colvest has not followed up with staff or Integrated Rehab.**

Hartford HealthCare (Dr. Keenan replacement office): **Staff continues to have ongoing communication with HHC and their developer on how they plan to continue to have a medical presence in town. HHC has indicated that they are in a holding pattern for new development due to the pandemic.**

1776 Boston Turnpike – (former Dr. Keenan office): HHC has confirmed that a local financial advisor is pursuing the purchase of the property and is seeking financing at this time.

Cumberland Farms: A CO has been issued and it is now open to the public.

On the Go gas station: Owner was approved to make sandwiches but has not started the project. They also recently received a grocery beer liquor permit approval with PZC and the State. The owner has completed the replacement of the fuel storage tanks.

Creative Living Community of CT: Application for a mixed use at the former Crestland Llama farm was approved. They are trying to find financing for the first phase of mixed apartments and farm retail. Agricultural activities have commenced on site, as well as stabilization of the buildings. Staff worked with CLCC to submit a Neighborhood Assistance Act application with the State to gain funds to help support the construction of a 'vocational' greenhouse. CLCC is also moving forward with the farm stand and a portion of the parking lot at the front of the property. The NAA has been approved. In order to facilitate the funding, a 'sponsor' business needs to 'adopt' the project for tax credits. The deadline for this to occur is October 1. Staff is helping with outreach to gain a sponsor. One sponsor was found for the amount of \$5000 and is being pursued. CLCC had a Farm Stand Day – Open House for their new farm structure for retail sales of products. **CLCC appeared at the December PZC to do a preliminary review of a revised concept plan for their development of a residential/agricultural 'hamlet'. The plans were well received by the Commission. A formal re-application for the Special Permit will be required due to the nature of the changes to the plans.**

Other projects:

Charles Boggini Company: Staff is working with the Boggini brothers on Bread and Milk Street for an addition to their building that requires the location of a different septic reserve area. Have had productive meetings between staff and the owners to chart options to go forward. They need space to address new CDB production that they have contracts for by using their expertise in emulsions from their soda syrup business. Staff continues to reach out to the owners to offer assistance, but indicated that they are on hold for the moment.

Vinton Village: Wicked Slice reopened in the fall of 2019. No real movement on CanDance studio space or other tenants yet. The plaza owner also owns the adjacent apartments and is hoping to tear them down and construct new units. Design for a new apartment project continues and has gotten preliminary approval from the State DEEP on septic design. **Staff has been informed by the owner that they are putting the apartment project on hold at the moment due to costs. Permits for a juice bar are in process at this time. Staff is working with the owner to fill the vacancies in the plaza.**

Daly Road and Main: The building owner is looking to add a rear deck to the Penalty Box. Design for this has been considered. No urgent plans for the empty end unit. However, some prospective plans for interior modifications have been reviewed by Town Staff that improve the Penalty Box unit and connect it with the end unit for expanded food service.

Caprilands: The Town hired an architect and engineering team to conduct a historic building assessment that is being funded by a State Historic Preservation Grant. The report is complete, and was included in a RFP for adaptive reuse. The RFP was issued in March with a May 11 deadline. Only one response was submitted that was not deemed adequate. The property on the open real estate market and an offer has been made for purchase. The prospective owner wishes to establish a farm on the premises. **Staff is working with the designer to prepare plans for a new residence and agricultural use. Staff has learned that the owner is pursuing the dismantling of the residence for future reconstruction by a respectable historic reproduction company.**

Dimitri's: Owner commenced interior renovation project to expand take out area and shift bar further into restaurant. Permits were previously approved to begin work.

Dana Barnes – owner of Twin Hills Country Club: Staff met with Dana to discuss the improvements that he is doing on site. Dana is also a real estate developer. Ideas were shared and discussed on how he could potentially be involved in a Coventry project.

Knights of Columbus building – Snake Hill Road – Staff worked with a commercial archery club that wished to purchase the property for indoor and outdoor activities. A special permit application was approved by the PZC in April. Unfortunately, the new use will not proceed due to the impact by the pandemic. Interest continues with the property. Staff is aware that the property has been sold. The property has been sold to a party who wishes to use it as a residence. **Work continues on site, but the property is now subject to a dumping violation.**

Nadeau: The EDC reached out to Ron Nadeau (owner of Sabrina Pools and Industrial Park on Bread and Milk Street) to discuss his plans for the site and others that Nadeau owns. He did not wish to meet with the EDC. Staff met with Ron to discuss his current plans with the property. Both parties will keep each other in the loop as concepts are considered or interest occurs.

Sadlak Innovative Design: The EDC reached out to the owner who is located in the Nadeau Industrial Park to see if he would be interested in attending an upcoming EDC meeting to see if the Town can help. He politely declined at this time.

RTE 44 sewers: We continue to push the Town Line (Bolton/Coventry Gateway) sewer extension concept. Staff had a recent meeting with State Staff to rectify this matter. **Staff has submitted a revised letter on how the project complies with the State, Regional and Local Plans as well as sewer service area maps and other details. DEEP has forwarded this information to OPM for comment.**

Regional Economic Development Action Plan: The consultant, AdvanceCT (formerly the CT Economic Resource Center, has completed a first draft of the action plan. The final draft is complete. A public forum, via Zoom, was held on September 16 to unveil the document. **Monthly meetings continue in order to work on the implementation of the Plan. The 4 Town Team is focusing on an asset inventory of unique resources within the towns for future marketing efforts as well as the creation of a 4 Town event calendar. Tim Liptrap's Nichols College students will be assisting with the creation of a logo/slogan campaign for the effort that will support future marketing efforts.**

Plan of Conservation and Development update: The Plan was adopted on June 22 and was effective on July 1.

3399 Main Street: A solar farm project is being considered for the site. A preliminary discussion was held with the PZC and the developer to gain input, answer questions. A lease is the process of being finalized. Once complete the developer will pursue a special permit with PZC.

Meadowbrook Plaza: Staff has learned that Swiss Cleaners will be closing, Integrated Rehab is exploring other site that will meet their space needs more adequately, and that Dr. Adelheit is pursuing a more appropriate space out of town. Staff is working with the owner to assist in filling the vacancies.

Nathan Hale Farm and Feed: Met with the EDC in the fall to discuss their new operation and how they can be of service to the community. Work continues on the property to prepare for a full opening.