

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION UPDATE

JANUARY 2021

The following summarizes Economic Development Division activities for January 2021.

Additional news specific to Groton Economic Development is found here:

<http://www.exploremoregroton.com/news-and-media/news>

Economic Development Activities:

- COVID-19 (General Response): Staff and town approvals (Town Council and RTM) have been gained to advance the \$150,000 PPE grant for stockpiling. By mid-January all qualified financial institutions were able to offer federal PPP loans to customers. Staff continues to use the ExploreMoreGroton Business Assistance web page <https://bit.ly/GrotonBizRecovery> to distribute key government and industry guidance specific to COVID. Lastly, the Long Term Recovery Committee met on January 27th and many updates were provided by state and local leaders including the latest preliminary Naviretail Survey Phase 3 findings.
- Shoreline Menus: Staff coordinated a public forum for the EDC on January 11, 2021 introducing Shoreline Menus to local restaurants <https://shorelinemenus.com/> Shoreline Menus is an alternative local delivery option for Groton restaurants. Enough interest has been created to launch soon. At this time, it appears this will occur in February.
- Naviretail Local Business Analysis: Naviretail provided staff the preliminary Phase 3 business survey results (see below).

Business Issues:

- Restaurants -

Most restaurants have not gone back to normal operating times and the main reason is due to loss of business. Most restaurants have also expressed a loss in business recently (fall).

- Cosmetic related business (Barber shops, nail salons, etc.) -

Similar to restaurants, they are closing early due to loss of business.

Business Performance and Sentiment:

- 51.1% of businesses that stated that they are doing worse compared to their performance before the pandemic.
- 34.4% of businesses stated that their current performance has been or has reached expected performance.
- 14.5% of businesses are performing better than expected.
- Overall, there seems to be a drop in business performance recently compared to previous calls

PPE:

- Concerns with a lack of PPE has picked up recently, with 8.8% of businesses expressing difficulty obtaining supplies compared to 3.1% in the previous calls.
- More medical offices have stated concerns over increasing difficulty securing PPE/rising costs of PPE

Product Supply Chain:

- 55.8% of businesses stated they had difficulty or experienced large delays when receiving

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supplies from distributors.

- Most liquor stores mentioned that many types of alcohol have been out of stock for a while
- Some retailers have mentioned that computer parts and gun parts are difficult to obtain

Online Activity:

- 34.1% of businesses stated they do not keep their hours updated on any online formats.
- Only 29.3% of businesses have added some online component to their businesses since the pandemic.

COVID Funds:

- 44.2% of businesses applied for COVID-Relief funds and 90.5% of those who applied received either a loan or funds
- Wayfinding Sign Implementation: Groton is finalizing the bid documents for the initial implementation phase with limited funding. The first phase will be the intersection of Route 1 and North Road plus a portion of the North Road corridor from I-95. Additionally, there will be some signage and a kiosk installed in downtown Mystic.
- Industrial Property Interest: Staff continues to respond monthly to state and private interests regarding industrially-zoned properties in Groton. DECD and Advanced CT have been working with local staff in promoting such properties to national interests for projects. Groton's favorable transportation, land value, location, and existing economic base are attractive to companies seeking expansion.
- Affordable Housing Plan: Staff finalized interviews with consultants that responded to the Affordable Housing Plan RFP. A selection will be made shortly and funded partly by a \$15,000 state grant the department secured in 2020. The plan will focus not only on the numbers of needed units, but also on the quality and need for Groton's existing units.

Public Property Redevelopment:

- Public Property Redevelopment (Mystic Education Center): The "Mystic River Bluffs" project continues to advance. See the link for more project information where more information has been uploaded <https://resplerhomes.com/mystic-river-bluffs/>. The Planning & Zoning Commission continues to address the draft zoning district creation including a meeting on January 21st. This was preceded by Respler's public outreach meeting with their team held on January 20th. The project's vision, concept plans, and other proposed ideas were discussed and many questions were addressed. The Town Council received a presentation by Groton's Park and Recreation Department and consulting team (Greenplay/Pirie) specific to the completed Recreation Needs Assessment for the Pratt Building including recommendations for interior public recreation building use. There has been concern regarding the future use of the existing auditorium/theater space within the building specific to whether it would be used as a theater or recreational "flex space." At a COW meeting on January 26th, it was decided that further community survey results are desired to address this specific matter. The results will help guide the use for that portion of the building's interior use. CT DAS has inquired about the project

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schedule since they desire to complete the sale of the state property in 2021.

- Public Property Redevelopment (Groton Heights): The Purchase and Sales (P&S) agreement and the DECD Brownfields grant agreement are still pending. ThayerMahan has grown from three to over 60 employees in three years. They are committed to the project in making this their future world headquarters. <https://www.exploremoregroton.com/news-and-media/project-updates>
- Public Property Redevelopment (517/529 Gold Star Highway): Staff presented the option/purchase agreement to the COW on January 26th involving PJ&A and Lennar. The COW supported the project including approximately 300 apartments on 17.75 acres encompassing four lots (two town owned and two private owned). Final approval by the Town Council and RTM is anticipated shortly. <https://www.exploremoregroton.com/news-and-media/project-updates>
- Public Property Redevelopment (Seely School): Wetland approval was granted to the project. Demolition is anticipated over the next few months. Construction for the “Triton Square” project will begin early in 2021 for the 308-unit multi-family apartment development. Targeted future tenants are young professionals and “empty-nesters.” Anticipated future property tax revenue is in the magnitude of \$1 million annually. <https://www.seelyschool.com/>
- Public Property Redevelopment (Colonel Ledyard School): Staff coordinated the public hearing before the Town Council on January 5th to dispose of the property. A finalized draft option/purchase agreement will be before the COW in February. Bellsite, LLC (Bill Bellock) is the preferred developer and is eager to move this multi-family residential project forward. Phase I will consist of converting the existing school building into between 14-20 apartments. Phase II will include new buildings and apartments (less than 60 apartments) on the rear of the site. <https://www.exploremoregroton.com/news-and-media/project-updates>
- Public Property Redevelopment (Pleasant Valley School): Staff and the Review Committee completed the developer interviews in January. The objective is to determine a “preferred developer” for recommendation to the Town Council. A recommendation will be made this winter. <https://www.exploremoregroton.com/news-and-media/project-updates>

Economic Development Metrics:

Trade Name Metrics:

- There were 4 trade name certificates this month in the Town of Groton.

Social Media Metrics:

- 707 Facebook followers, a 4.75 percent increase
** Please follow the Facebook page and share our posts to your network:
<https://www.facebook.com/GrotonEconomicDevelopment/>
- 72 LinkedIn page followers, negligible change
** Please follow the LinkedIn page and share our posts to your network:
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/groton-economic-development/>
** Please like and SHARE posts on social media to expand the reach!

Website Metrics: (December 29, 2020 – January 27, 2021) www.exploremoregroton.com

- Total Sessions: 1,036 (872 new/164 returning), increase 5 percent
- Pages per session: 1.85, increase 6 percent

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- Total Page Views: 1,917, increase 13 percent
- Average Time Duration: 1 min, 28 seconds, increase 29 percent
- 483 subscribers on the Newsletter Mailing List, no change
Email addresses collected from meetings and events are added to the mailing list.
(<http://www.exploremoregroton.com/groton/news-and-media/sign-up-for-our-newsletter>)

Unemployment Data (Percent %)

Month	Groton	Norwich-New London- Westerly Labor Market Area	Connecticut
January 2020	3.7	4.5	4.4
February 2020	3.6	4.4	4.4
March 2020	3.0	3.8	3.6
April 2020	11.1	13.8	8.0
May 2020	12.6	15.0	9.4
June 2020	11.8	13.3	10.2
July 2020	10.9	12.4	10.3
August 2020	8.6	10.2	8.2
September 2020	8.0	9.1	7.5
October 2020	6.0	6.9	5.8
November 2020	8.0	8.7	7.7
December 2020	7.5*	8.5	7.5

*First time Groton has tied or been below state average since March 2020

Key Property Development Updates:

- 54 West Main Street Brewery
- 3 Water Street The Standard Construction ongoing
- 8-22 West Main Street Cardinal Honda Addition and remodel ongoing
- 425 Gold Star Highway Girard Nissan Remodeling ongoing
- Seely School Drive Triton Square Preparing for existing building demolition

Keep up to date on town meetings including agendas, minutes etc. by visiting the Calendar on the town's website here: <http://www.agendasuite.org/iip/groton>

Click here for events going on around Groton: <https://www.exploremoregroton.com/events/?v=list>

Keep up to date on news pertaining to Groton & Economic Development by going to the website here: <http://www.exploremoregroton.com/news-and-media/news>