



Town of Groton
Economic Development Commission
2025 Annual Report



Presented by:

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Introduction

In preparation for identifying the Economic Development Commission (EDC) 2025 Annual Goals, Town staff worked with Commissioners to revisit the EDC mission and created a short and sweet purpose statement to help empower EDC members in their efforts to support the business community and Town goals, and for those who meet EDC members to easily understand their purpose.

- ***Purpose of the EDC: Advocate for the needs of Groton businesses and entrepreneurs to support their retention, growth, and sustainability.***

The EDC then set its 2025 Annual Goals around this purpose statement, and below is the 2025 Annual Report on the EDC's efforts and accomplishments throughout the year.

2025 EDC Goals Recap

Goal One:

Advance Town Goals

Based upon priorities as identified in the Economic Development Strategy and Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), advocate to advance Town goals and priorities, such as increasing housing opportunities and supporting local businesses.

Actions:

- Vocalize support for projects and policies that advance Town goals and priorities of the Economic Development Strategy and POCD during public comment at Town Council and RTM meetings.
- Collaborate with other Town commissions to learn where Town goals overlap and ways to support each other's work.

Staff Role:

- Staff will provide information and resources to help inform EDC members of Town goals.
- Staff will identify opportunities to support and advocate for Town goals as they become available.
- Staff will make introductions and identify opportunities for the EDC to collaborate with other Town commissions.



The EDC Met Goal One in the Following Ways:

POCD 2035 - Joint Commission Meeting

- The Office of Planning & Development launched the update of the *Plan of Conservation & Development - Groton 2035* in partnership with the Horsley Whitten consulting firm. Horsley

Whitten facilitated a two-part meeting series, where one, Horsley Witten joined the June, 2025, EDC meeting to meet the EDC and learn about its role, its overall efforts, how the EDC interacts with the public, and ideas for improving access for residents ranging from how to increase diversity in commission membership to better reaching business owners.

In September, they hosted a second meeting where Town commissions could come together to review initial draft policies for the *Plan of Conservation & Development - Groton 2035* (POCD) and work together to understand each commissions role, how they can work together, and provide direct feedback on the draft POCD goals.

The meeting included the EDC, Planning & Zoning Commission, and Conservation Commission and was part of an ongoing effort to facilitate more communication and collaboration amongst these groups, helping the EDC begin reaching the related 2025 goal.

EDC Recommendations to Town Council – Water Street Truck Loading Zone

- In response to traffic congestion challenges around the Water Street truck loading zone area in Mystic, the Public Works team proposed a Capital Improvement Project that would remove 3 public parking stalls and add an off-street loading zone, subsequently helping to remove loading trucks from idling on the street. The Town Council forwarded the topic to the EDC and asked for their feedback based on area local businesses opinion of the project.

Several EDC members visited the businesses in the immediate area and collected feedback, and ultimately determined that while congestion caused by truck parking is a concern, the proposed loading zone would not effectively resolve the issue and would take away much-needed parking spaces. In March, 2025, staff forwarded the EDC's recommendation in a memo to the Town Manager, utilizing their efforts to reach out to businesses in the area to help inform the Town Council.

Economic Assistance Fund - EDC Subcommittee & Recommending Body

- The Town of Groton maintains a local Economic Development Assistance Fund (EAF) with established guidelines to promote economic development with an emphasis towards infrastructure, and provides a one-time financial reimbursement for public infrastructure improvements or business development expenses associated with business opening, relocation, or expansion. Per the Town process, any EAF requests are reviewed by staff to verify that the application and project meets the program parameters and to determine the amount of EAF funds



it may qualify for which is provided to the EDC. First, a three-member Subcommittee (EAF Subcommittee) reviews the recommendation, then it is reviewed by the full EDC, where their recommendation is then forwarded to the Town Council.

In May, 2025, the EAF Subcommittee met to consider an EAF application for 1002 RT 12 for infrastructure improvements to support the construction of a new 29-unit residential building. After reviewing staff's recommendation to award the applicant \$119,344.12 based on qualifying costs and program parameters, as well as discussing the improvements that have the most public benefit, the EAF Subcommittee endorsed the application be awarded the qualifying amount. Afterwards, the full EDC reviewed and supported the application and EAF Subcommittee endorsement. Subsequently, staff presented the application and EDC endorsement at the Town Council Committee of the Whole and Town Council meetings, where it received final approval in July, 2025.

Staff then worked with the applicant to execute the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) based on the terms of the program and application approval. The awardee is now able to submit request reimbursements as they advance through the project, and staff will monitor the project to see that commitments of the MOA are met.

The EAF Subcommittee and EDC fulfilled its recommending body role to support Town Council review of EAF funding applications.

Goal Two:

Strengthen Relationships

Proactively build relationships with local businesses to learn their needs and goals and connect them with applicable services and programs. By building relationships with local businesses and supporting their needs, the EDC will continue to establish a strong presence in the community and serve as a trusted resource.

Actions:

- Host an event in 2025 to educate business owners on business resources and incentives, the role of the EDC, and solicit questions and feedback.
- Attend one to two business, community, or economic development events this year to increase engagement, familiarity with, and access to the EDC for community members.

Staff Role:

- Staff will provide support for EDC hosted events, logistical planning, and other preparation. Staff will also keep the EDC aware of events that members can attend as guests.

The EDC Met Goal Two in the Following Ways:

Local Business Appreciation Breakfast Event

- On Monday, October 6th, 2025 Town staff & the EDC held a Local Business Appreciation Breakfast at Par 4 Restaurant & Bar to connect with local businesses, thank them for doing business in Groton, and share information and resources. The event was successful with over 40 attendees and positive feedback from the business community.

To kick things off, staff did a short presentation introducing the Town's Economic Development Team and EDC Commissioners, support available for local businesses, and shared updates on recent economic development projects and programs in Town that support local businesses. After the staff presentation, newly appointed Chair, Joe de la Cruz, spoke to give a warm welcome to businesses, let them know the door is always open and that we look forward to continuing to work with them, and spoke to the work of the EDC.

Additionally, as the Economic Development Team recently completed the expenditure of the Pivot Grant funds to support local businesses, two different Pivot Grant recipients, Raj Cash & Carry and Par 4 Restaurant & Bar, spoke about their experience with the grant and how it benefited their business. The event also hosted our local Chambers of Commerce, and Bruce Flax, CEO of the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce and Tony Sheridan, President of the Eastern CT Chamber of Commerce, each addressed the crowd to share their appreciation and upcoming opportunities to engage with their organizations. In addition to local businesses, Town Economic Development Commission members, Town staff, and City staff were in attendance.

There were two local business gift card raffle giveaways, plenty of time for networking and breakfast, and staff received interest from businesses in participating in upcoming opportunities with the Town. Hosting an event was one of the EDC's 2025 goals, and after the event's success, it is anticipated that staff and the EDC will host one to two events in 2026.



Images Above: Photos from the Local Appreciation Breakfast on Monday, October 6, 2025 at Par 4 Restaurant & Bar.

Goal Three:

Listen, Learn, and Report

Build and utilize relationships with local businesses to understand their needs and goals, as well as collect feedback on specific topics as requested to help inform policy recommendations, potential projects, and program needs.

Actions:

- Each EDC member should visit two to three businesses per month to have informal conversations, gather feedback, and share resources.
- Collect feedback and inform staff about what was learned using the outreach report tool and share learnings during EDC meetings.
- Discuss feedback and learnings to inform policy recommendations, potential projects, program needs, and the EDC’s annual report.

Staff Role:

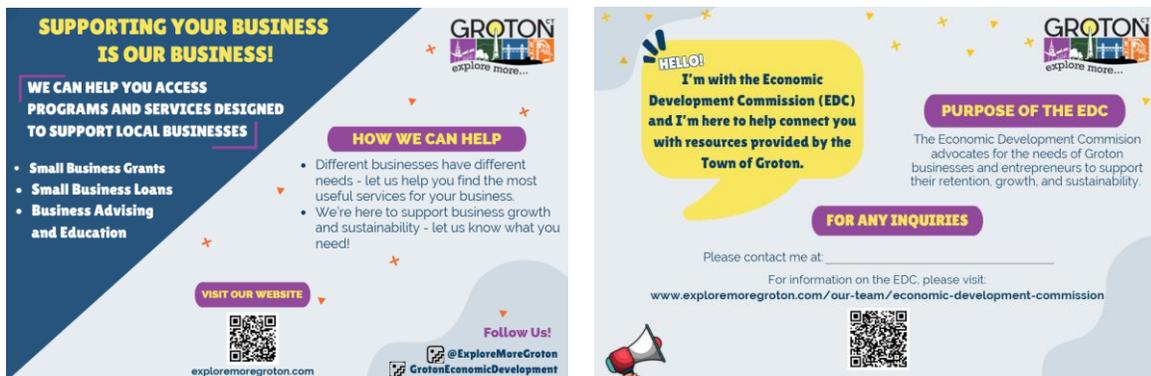
- Staff will provide business information and materials to support outreach efforts around Town programs and applicable topics.
- Staff will assist in compiling feedback to inform policy recommendations, potential projects, program needs, and the EDC’s annual report.

The EDC Met Goal Three in the Following Ways:

Business Outreach

To support the EDC reaching its 2025 goal of improved business outreach, staff did extensive work to build a shared document directory and provide monthly business visit assignments for Commissioners. The shared document allowed for EDC members to access the directory in real time and provide feedback on what they learned through their interactions, such as noting the best hours to reach a business owner, or anything unique about the business such as they have available event space they’d like to share.

Some EDC members did consistent outreach, and overall the EDC noted in the 2026 goals discussion that they continue to have room for improvement in their collective outreach efforts and adjusted 2026 goals to utilize lessons learned and focus on EDC member specializations to improve outreach strategies in 2026.



Images Above: Staff created the EDC Business Support postcard to support EDC outreach efforts as a leave behind of information including ways the EDC can help, Town resources that are available, and ways local businesses owners can get involved.

Local Business Pivot Grant Outreach

The Pivot Grant program is designed to support essential investments, enabling businesses to enhance their operations, revamp their strategies, and effectively navigate the ever-changing business landscape. The program is funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and provides limited, one-time direct financial reimbursements to businesses of up to \$5,000 for eligible expenses, and up to \$1,500 for aesthetic improvements as an eligible expense.

After an initial launch of the Pivot Grant program resulting in roughly 45% of the funds being expended, staff launched a second round of outreach in an effort to expend the remaining 55%, and partnered with the EDC to help spread the word to local businesses. Staff created the Small Business Pivot Grant postcard for EDC members to utilize to point interested businesses to GreaterGroton.com for more information. Staff was able to see the benefit of the postcard outreach effort with interested businesses visiting the website and coming into the office with their postcards to learn about the application.

Between staff and EDC outreach efforts, the ~\$55,000 remaining funds was expended, supporting 11 additional businesses, completing the project full funding expenditure of \$100,000, or a total of 18 businesses supported through the program in total.

This outreach effort supported the EDC's 2025 outreach goals, and showed the value in EDC members reaching out to local businesses to connect them with Town resources.



Images Above: Staff created the Small Business Pivot Grant postcard, and handed them out to local businesses along with EDC Members, helping to spread the word about the opportunity and point interested businesses to GreaterGroton.com for more information.



2026 Economic Development Commission Goals

- With several new EDC members joining this year, a new Chair, as well as new Economic & Community Development Division staff, the EDC and staff started 2025 with clear goals, staff support roles, and EDC member tasks to start moving towards stronger execution of the EDC mission.

After a year of making some progress, and discussing where the EDC could still improve, staff worked with the EDC to brainstorm ways to continue the momentum of the 2025 efforts, address the challenges, and add new goals for 2026 that are tangible, achievable, inspire EDC members, and help support local businesses and Town goals.

This year's work helped inform 2026 Goals and where the EDC wants to continue to go as a resource for local businesses and the Town.

Economic Development Commission Member Update

- In 2025, the EDC appointed three new Commissioners. Commissioners Alexander Hastings and Bill Keep were appointed in January and Gulshan Soni was appointed in September.

In October, Robert Boris resigned from the EDC after serving as Chair for two years and Commissioner for a total of three years. Commissioner Pantea Umrysz served the EDC for two years, and will resign at the end of 2025 after being elected as a member to the Representative Town Meeting.

During the November organizational meeting where the EDC elects new members for the upcoming year, Commissioner Joe de la Cruz was elected to serve as Chair in 2026, Commissioner Jake Dunigan was elected to serve as Vice Chair, and Commissioner George Mathanool was elected to continue serving as Secretary.