

TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD
Planning and Economic Development Department
State of the Town Breakfast
January 29, 2015

Good Morning On behalf of the Wethersfield Planning and Economic Development Department which represents the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Economic Development and Improvement Commission and the Wethersfield Tourism Commission(Historic Wethersfield) I wanted to take just a few minutes to look back and report on the development activity that occurred in 2014 and identifying some of the projects that we can look forward to in 2015.

To this end I am pleased to report on the following notable accomplishments and developments:

In spite of the challenging economy **new business starts** were a bit higher when compared to the past few years. During 2014 we welcomed 28 businesses to Town. During 2013, we welcomed 21 businesses to Wethersfield: In addition, in 2014 we were able to retain 11 businesses that relocated to new space in Town or required additional space to expand, in 2013 5 businesses relocated to new space in Town or expanded. 7 out of these 11 businesses also expanded. 39 Total vs. 26

The breakdown is as follows: 9 office tenants, 7 fitness/dance, 4 restaurants, 4 retail, 4 service 3 beauty/salons, 3 medical tenants, 2 insurance.

In terms of **building permit activity** the number of building permits issued in 2014(2,369) has increased by about 9% over last year (2,202) which was up by 20% from the previous year. The total value of permit activity (\$26,000,000) increased by \$5,000,000 over the values of 2013 (\$21,000,000) which is a 24% increase.

Commercial building permit activity was almost identical to last year. \$4,911,000 vs. \$4,869,000.

- 1260 Silas Deane Highway expansion for CT Multispecialty and Hartford Hospital.
- Goff Brook Shoppes – Chip’s Restaurant, Planet Fitness, Romp N Roll, Buffalo Wild Wings.
- 100 Great Meadow Road – Putnam Park – VHB, AON Consulting, Senior Link, CBS.

We noted an uptick in new single family home construction this year (12) when compared to last year (7).

The Town remains focused on efforts to redevelop long standing **vacant and underutilized properties** progress being made:

- State grant of \$200,000 to assist in the demolition of 1000 Silas Deane Highway. Development agreement being negotiated.
- Plans approved to renovate and rehabilitate former Masonic Hall building on Main Street.
- 341 Jordan Lane – Convalescent Home
- Construction well underway for redevelopment of 176 Cumberland Avenue (former CLP).
- 295 Ridge Road – Church Homes

The **Economic Development and Improvement Commission** continued its efforts to support the local business community in 2014:

- \$200,000 STEAP grant demolition and redevelopment 1000 Silas Deane Highway

- Successfully applied for and received an additional \$250,000 in STEAP funding for the façade improvement program.
- Made significant revisions to façade improvement program to make a bit more business friendly.
- Continued to utilize the **Façade Improvement Program** to assist 4 projects in 2014:
 - 121 Main Street - new siding and painting - \$11,500
 - 4 Hartford Avenue, painting and window replacement, \$30,000
 - 326 Silas Deane Highway, Annie's Salon \$20,022
 - 20-30 Beaver Road - \$32,425

To date, the Town has approved a total of 28 façade loans and has provided financial assistance of nearly \$700,000 towards these projects. This public investment has resulted in private investment that totals over \$7 million dollars.

- Produced the 2015 Wethersfield Town Guide and Business Directory.
- In December hosted the 25th Annual Holiday Social and Salute To Business Event.
- Unveiled the new, on-line, searchable Town Business Directory Woogle. As of this morning 390 businesses have joined, please visit business link on Town website to add your business.

The **Tourism Commission** continues to promote the Historic Wethersfield brand to residents and visitors visit website historicwethersfield.org:

- Completed new seasonal brochure/rack cards for distribution.
- Conducted the 4th Annual community photo contests in 2014 and utilized photo submissions for web site and community calendar.
- Continues to coordinate and distribute a monthly event calendar of things to do in Wethersfield.
- Continues to take the lead with the implementation of the recommendations from the Old Wethersfield Master Plan.
- Continued to utilize magazine ads, media articles and literature distribution throughout the State and Region to encourage visitors.
- Northeast Group Tour Magazine
- 24 Small New England Towns You Absolutely Need To Visit

Looking ahead to the balance of 2015 we remain optimistic that as the economy continues to improve we will experience additional development activity. There are already several other positive activities to report:

- Preliminary redesign and construction of the intersection of Main and Church Streets in Old Wethersfield.
- Staff are working with CT Transit and CROG for a series of new bus shelters throughout the community.
- Grant funds have been approved for the creation of the Wethersfield Heritage Walk to enhance the visitor experience to the Historic District. Out to bid now.
- Wayfinding
- EDIC working on it's Why Wethersfield initiative to help promote the Town to prospective residents, business, visitors etc...
- Residential Development