



TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD

Planning and Economic Development Department Report

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NEW BUSINESS ACTIVITY 2014

In spite of the challenging economy new business starts were a bit higher when compared to the past few years.

During 2014 we welcomed 30 businesses to Town:

Buffalo Wild Wings, Gordon Bonetti Florist, Supa Fitness, Gillette Furniture Consignment, New Life Fellowship Church, Aspen Kitchen Bath, Ben Tablione State Farm Insurance, Chip's, Old Wethersfield Country Store, Edo Ichi, Planet Fitness, Pretty Pups and Mutts, Scott Kneeland Karate, Ensafe, Romp N Roll, Aon Consulting, Senior Link, Utsav Restaurant, CBS, lefall and Lefall, CT Police Chief's Association, Omar's Barber Shop, Annie's Nails, VHB, 61 Arrow Automotive, Jones Insurance, Fabi Firearms, Red Onion Restaurant.

By comparison, during 2013, we welcomed 21 businesses to Wethersfield.

BUSINESS RETENTION/EXPANSIONS 2014

In 2014 we were able to retain 16 businesses that either relocated to new space in Town or required additional space to expand.

Relocations (6) - Berkshire Hathaway, Wooden Toy, River Rock Yoga, Steve's Liquor, Pizza Time, Red T.

Expansions (10) – CT Multispecialty, Hartford Healthcare, Double A Veterinary, Griffith Academy, Dance 10, Salon Paris, Good Year Tire, Price Rite, Live-Right Wellness.

By comparison in 2013 only 5 businesses relocated to new space in Town or expanded.

COMMERCIAL BUILDING PERMIT ACTIVITY 2014

In terms of commercial building permit activity the values were almost identical to last year. \$7,800,000 in 2014 vs. \$7,400,000 in 2013.

Some of the highlights this year:

- 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.

RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

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

VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTY

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.
- Construction well underway for redevelopment of 176 Cumberland Avenue (former CLP) CREC Magnet School.

EDIC

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

- Successfully applied for and received an additional \$250,000 in STEAP funding for the façade improvement program.

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 today 390 businesses have joined, please visit business link on Town website to add your business.

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.

TOURISM COMMISSION

The Tourism Commission continues to promote the Historic Wethersfield brand to residents and visitors visit the website www.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.
- Group Tour Package. We are working our State Tourism District staff to create a package of offerings that might be attractive to group tour providers.
- 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 FORWARD TO 2015

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 CRCOG 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.
- Applied for \$500,000 in funds from the STEAP program for renovations to the Solomon Welles House.
- Completion of Wayfinding signage program.
- EDIC working on it's Why Wethersfield initiative to help promote the Town to prospective residents, business, visitors etc....