

Dover Business and Industrial Development Authority

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288 Central Avenue  
Dover, NH 03820

# Strategic Action Plan

*FY2008 through FY2011*



Adopted February 7, 2008

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## **Introduction**

The Dover Business and Industrial Development Authority (DBIDA) is a local economic development corporation formed pursuant to RSA 162-G and RSA 292:1. In accordance with its most recent bylaws, DBIDA's mission is to foster and encourage positive economic growth along with providing leadership and coordination necessary for the development of business and industrial facilities within the City of Dover. In fulfilling its charge established by State law and assignment by the Dover City Council, DBIDA has and continues to fulfill a key role in guiding the economic development efforts on behalf of the entire City of Dover community.

Previous Dover Master Plans have identified the importance of consciously balancing growth throughout the Dover community to achieve a fiscally sound mix of and a regional "fair share" of new nonresidential investments. DBIDA has supported this overall objective by developing and actively marketing industrial and business office parks in the City including Crosby Road and Enterprise Park along with assisting various businesses in coordinating and financing their business expansion and/or relocation plans here in Dover for more than 3 decades.

To ensure its continued success in supporting the economic development needs of the Dover community, the DBIDA Board of Directors undertook a strategic planning effort during the fall of 2007. This effort involved a review of past activities, an inventory of existing resources and consideration of future efforts needed to further stimulate and support the type and amount of economic growth necessary to ensure the long term health and sustainability of the Dover community. This process culminated in an all-day planning session held by the DBIDA Board of Directors on September 13, 2007 and the resulting generation of this written plan for strategic action which is being recommended to be undertaken through to June of 2011.

Ultimately, the DBIDA Board of Directors acknowledges that a successful economic development effort for any community is a major undertaking. It requires focused leadership and the development of a community-wide consensus on goals and objectives. Major commitments of time are required of a diverse group of people including community leaders, citizen volunteers and staff along with the targeted involvement of federal, state and community organizations. Therefore this strategic action plan focuses on the interrelationships that exist and partnerships that must be nurtured and subsequently coordinated to ensure a successful economic development program benefiting the Dover community for the long term.

## **What is Economic Development?**

The term economic development means different things to different people. To some it means building up the community's property tax base or attracting new businesses; to others it means controlling growth or managing land use; and to others it means renovating and restoring obsolete factories, stores or houses and providing new infrastructure to attract investment into the community. Some also view economic

development as initiatives that go beyond land and buildings to emphasize employee vocational training and education and general workforce development activities. In Dover, economic development must continue to involve all of these activities and more; it is, first and foremost, a process that is intended to make our community a more vibrant and attractive place for people to come together to live, work and visit.

## **Why is Economic Development Important?**

The goals of any economic development program, generally speaking, are to protect and strengthen the economic health and viability of a community. From these goals are various objectives such as jobs creation, property tax base expansion, personal income growth, increased educational attainment of the population, diversification of the existing economic base, and a continuing ability to properly maintain and improve the condition and capacity of the public's infrastructure. Ultimately in working towards the goals and achieving the objectives involved in local economic development, Dover will be able to sustain and improve upon the overall quality of life shared by its population whether they are residents, employees, business owners and/or visitors.

## **How is Economic Development Realized?**

The process of economic development here in Dover, as in any community, is one that must continue to be nurtured, coordinated and supported over the long term. It is not a process that will be successful if undertaken in fits and starts and without vision and long-term direction. Economic development involves a series of distinct steps that involve coordination with varied stakeholders across both the public and private sectors. It requires a broad consensus on goals; a detailed strategy to achieve those goals; a coordinated effort and ongoing implementation of that strategy; cooperation to overcome inevitable obstacles and conflicts; and, regular evaluations and adjustments by all involved to ensure that the process remains on target to achieve desired goals.

## **Who is Involved in Economic Development**

Numerous public and private entities have a role to play in shaping and contributing to Dover's economic development process. Key local players in facilitating economic development here in Dover include the leadership of the City Council, the Dover Business and Industrial Development Authority and the Dover Planning Board along many other entities including the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street and the Dover Housing Authority. State agencies that are also involved include the State of NH Department of Resources and Economic Development, Business Finance Authority, and Pease Development Authority along with expertise available through the programs provided by the International Trade Resource Center, the US Rural Development Agency and the Small Business Administration. The involvement of educators from our local public and private schools along with McIntosh College, the NH Vocational Technical Colleges, the University of NH and other post secondary education programs also should not be overlooked. And certainly commercial realtors, private developers, utility operators and bankers are essential participants to be working in partnership with the community. Ultimately, a common vision shared and understood by all of these entities is needed in realizing a successful and viable long-term economic development program here in Dover.

## **Perceived strengths impacting Economic Development**

There are many community characteristics and demographics which provide strength to Dover's economic development climate. These include a well developed transportation system with linkages to other regional business markets, quality educational programs, various means and availability of access to financial capital, a modern energy and telecommunications infrastructure and a high quality of life as reflected in both the natural and built environment.

More specifically, the Dover community benefits from a multi modal transportation system having major highway links to not only the more urban areas of Boston but also Manchester, Portland, ME and ready access to other parts of NH and ME. This transportation system includes access via highway, rail, marine and air.

In addition to being centrally location in the Seacoast business market, Dover is also able to take advantage of a designated enterprise trade zone whose tax advantages in combination with Dover's well managed regulatory processes provide an incentive for economic development to be attracted to and flourish in the community.

Lastly, in today's more prevalent information economy, Dover's economic development efforts are also strengthened by the availability of quality educational programs including both public and private secondary schools along with the nearby presence of UNH, McIntosh College, and the State run career technical schools.

## **Perceived weaknesses impacting Economic Development**

Of course there are also community attributes which reflect weaknesses or, at the very least, challenges which need to be considered in the context of supporting future growth in the Dover economic climate. These include the decreasing availability of land for new non residential development, increasing traffic and parking congestion in the Downtown area, the lack of tax incentives to spur desired growth, and relatively high utility rates for electricity, telecommunications, and water and sewer services. Also of note are the water pressure concerns in the North-end of the City along with growing fiscal constraints which curtail ongoing and future investments in local street, road and other public facility maintenance.

## **Current Challenges for successful Economic Development**

Taking into account both the strengths and weakness noted above, there are immediate challenges needing to be addressed in achieving a positive economic development program here in Dover. These include:

- Establishing consensus between the varied stakeholders in defining what truly is balanced, responsible and sustainable economic growth for the community.
- building the "capacity" to leverage and achieve the desired growth identified by consensus as essential for a vibrant economy
- determine and agree upon which entity most appropriately leads and promotes overall economic development efforts on behalf of the community
- appoint and ensure long term commitment of a point person(s) to coordinate and manage economic development efforts on behalf of the designated entity and the entire community

- establish an agreed upon set of measures for determining the continuing success of an economic development program here in Dover

## **Longer Term Issues impacting Economic Development**

Beyond the challenges associated with instituting a successful economic development program are longer term issues that may positively or negatively impact implementation and therefore must be considered. These include:

- State political environment (unsettled fiscal situation including transportation/schools)
- Local political environment (community image/stability)
- Nature of the economy (changing demographics, international trade/competition, mix of industry type)
- Capital access for new and existing business/employees
- Technology changes
- Housing market supply/demand/value fluctuations
- Ability and willingness to leverage public/private investments
- Public infrastructure maintenance/development/capacity (energy, telco, water, sewer, solid waste, traffic, parking)
- Available workforce (quality, skills, education)
- Sustainable quality of life (existing municipal services including schools, culture/recreation and public safety)

## **Shared Values concerning Economic Development**

Appropriate types and levels of economic development generally are viewed as beneficial to a community. The shared values that support economic development efforts here in Dover include:

- Attractive community
- Become destination (new dollars, desirable location)
- Increase property values
- Reduce tax burden
- Ensure quality jobs
- Increase employment opportunities
- Pride in community
- Need for quality education

## **Conflicting values concerning Economic Development**

Inherent in any community will be differences of opinion concerning the best approach and purpose behind an economic development program. Conflicting values that impede economic development efforts here in Dover include:

- Maintain past (retain community character/economy)
- Anticipate future (adjust to changing community character/economy)
- Become destination (traffic, parking, increased need for services/taxes)
- Nature of development (none, residential, commercial, mix)
- Expectation of growth (good or bad, inevitable/avoidable, controlled/rampant)
- Understanding of individual property rights/limitations of land use regulations

- Community spending priorities (tax/user fee burden for municipal services/infrastructure)

## **Achieving consensus on Economic Development**

In order to develop a coordinated economic development program for the community, consensus must be achieved between the various stakeholders. Efforts to achieve this consensus include:

- Identify and understand roles of players
- Educate public (public relations)
- Demonstrate results
- Involve public and business community
- Establish and sustain message
- Big picture (connect the dots, see the forest)
- Provide relevant information, projections and ongoing measures
- Include community activists
- Leadership

## **Opportunities for Economic Development Activity**

There currently exist many opportunities to enhance and expand economic development activity here in the community. These include:

- Identify and promote properties available for development
- Identify and promote community aspects that contribute to retaining and growing the work force
- Enhance the availability of information accessible to business owners (interactive web site, regular visitation program)
- Encourage downtown in-fill
- Promote opportunities for public/private partnerships (waterfront, First Street lot, School Street, parking garage, north-end water tower, other infrastructure upgrades)
- Promote financing opportunities through local bank programs
- Encourage small entrepreneurial business growth (locally owned, all sectors)
- Support maintenance of incubator space for new business growth
- Promote a positive community image and market business successes

## **Geographic areas of Economic Development Activity**

There currently exist many areas throughout the City where economic development activity has and continues to take place. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Enterprise Park
- Crosby Road
- Dover Industrial
- Knox Marsh Road (Rt 155)
- Coheco Mill
- One Washington Center
- Downtown (including infill potential)
- 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Street area downtown (Holmwoods)
- Chestnut Street (transportation center)

- Waterfront
- Indian Brook/Exit 9
- Sixth Street/Liberty Mutual
- Rt 108 North beyond Week's Crossing
- Miracle Mile
- Central Ave – surrounding Hospital
- Rt 108 South and Mast Road
- Dover Point Road - Thornwoods

## **Goals necessary to implement a “successful” Economic Development program**

Ultimately, in its simplest form, a successful economic development program must support and facilitate existing business retention and expansion along with attract new business within the community. In articulating the many aspects that have and will continue to contribute to a successful economic development program here in the City of Dover, this report concludes with three specific recommendations for further action.

- Inform and generate buy-in from key players to support and participate in a necessary community consensus building effort required to establish a shared vision and longer term goals for a coordinated community wide economic development program (residents, business owners, City Council, Planning Board, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, DHA, etc.)
- Seek commitment by City Council to fund DBIDA activities for a 3 year minimum period to allow for the hiring of a skilled and knowledgeable Executive Director who will remain committed to facilitating the development of stakeholder consensus and the subsequent implementation of a plan of action that coordinates and revitalizes the local economic development function
- Assemble and share local economic growth data and periodically report to interested stakeholders (residents, business owners, City Council, Planning Board, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, DHA, etc.) on the progress made in achieving the economic development expectations that result from the stakeholder consensus.