

The Town of Weathersfield seeks new economic development for the purposes of

- serving local residents,
- encouraging local food production
- providing local employment and
- helping to broaden the tax base

Present economic conditions

Historically agriculture and mills were the basis of Weathersfield's local economy. As a small rural town today, Weathersfield relies significantly on jobs located in other towns. Local economic activities currently include home occupations, small stores, restaurants, contractors, gasoline/service stations, professional offices, offices, campgrounds, forestry, small scale agriculture, town government, and the Weathersfield School. Most commercial activities are concentrated in Ascutney along Routes 131 and 5. There is a secondary concentration of activity at Downers Four Corners. A 2012 inventory of businesses in town shows that there are 105 businesses, 37 of which are home-based businesses and 8 are farm or agricultural-related.

Type of Desired Economic Development

Weathersfielders have consistently expressed their desire to remain a rural community and to ensure that all forms of development retain or contribute to that desire. Of particular value to townspeople are home-based businesses and small-scaled businesses that do not detract from the Town's natural beauty or rural character. Townspeople are averse to high density, high-traffic commercial developments and types of commercial development that lead to increased crime rates and decreased property values. The type of economic development and its social and aesthetic impact is of primary concern to the Town, both as individuals and as a municipality.

Weathersfield also has valuable resources whose contribution to economic well-being is not always as obvious as a new business along a highway such as:

- 1) Village centers;
- 2) A diverse agricultural community that is answering the ever-growing demand for locally produced agricultural products, including cheese and wine making, specialty orchards and Christmas trees;
- 3) Water bodies, such as the Connecticut River, Stoughton Pond, North Springfield Reservoir and the Army Corps of Engineers Flood Control Area, all providing the means for water-based recreation and the businesses that support them;
- 4) Natural resources including Mt. Ascutney, the town forests, and the Springweather Nature Area for hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, wildlife observation;
- 5) Scenic roads for walking and biking.

The Town encourages development of appropriately-scaled renewable energy resources, both as economic development and as a benefit to the town's energy consumers.

Location of Desired Economic Development

Home businesses are the most desired type of economic development in the Town. These should be allowed wherever residential development currently exists or wherever it is appropriate for new residential development to be located. Additional economic development should be encouraged in the village centers, Downer's Corners and in the I-91 interchange corridor.

Scale of Desired Economic Development

Townspeople prefer to keep business at a scale that is appropriate for the Town. Home-based businesses were of the utmost importance to the participants of the Planning Commission's 2010 public outreach

meetings and perhaps best capture the concept of “appropriate scale”.

Policies on Economic Growth

1. The Town shall strive to foster economic growth in the community through the support and encouragement of home-based businesses and those that are appropriate in scale to the rural character of the Town.
2. The Town also values agriculture as both a source of local food that is integral to food security and as an important economic driver, and strives to protect, preserve, and expand existing agricultural businesses and lands. Thus the Town shall:
 - a. Conserve the land and other environmental resources critical to the long-term success of the local agricultural economy;
 - b. Encourage the local agricultural sector and its capacity to respond to market trends in agriculture;
 - c. Build public support for the community’s farms and farmers;
 - d. Promote, protect and assist agriculture as a functional sector of the local economy;
 - e. Promote agri-tourism.
3. Because of the natural beauty and abundant resources for outside activity, the Town shall seek ways to promote recreational tourism.
4. The Town shall protect the village character by limiting the location and density of businesses that sell products that cannot be sold to minors.
5. Economic development in the Exit 8 interchange corridor shall be consistent with the goals of the I-91 Exit 8 Interchange Master Plan dated April 11, 2008 (refer to Future Land Use map).

Projects to Foster Economic Growth

1. Develop an inventory of resources that are available and attractive to economic development and match it with businesses most likely to desire those resources.
2. Conduct comprehensive feasibility studies, including technical, political, and economic dimensions, to determine the costs and benefits of community infrastructure in the village centers.
3. Develop and publicize recreational opportunities such as bike paths, bike lanes and hiking trails in town to various points and use them to stimulate bike-related or camp-related economic activity.
4. Support propagation of high-speed internet services throughout the town.

Programs to Foster Economic Growth

1. State-wide business programs such as the Small Business Administration and other free resources are available to assist local and small businesses.