

Chapter 7

Economic Development

7.1 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Tamworth Economic Development Commission should strive to attract, grow, and retain businesses in Tamworth. The Commission is charged with the following responsibilities (Revised & Adopted 2/2021):

1. *Supporting new and existing businesses:*

- Promoting a supportive climate and required resources attractive to business that enhance the character of Tamworth.
- Coordinating and hosting town economic development events with local businesses, professionals, and organizations.
- Supporting the local employment base.

2. *Helping to enable business growth:*

- Making realistic recommendations to the town that enable the well-being and growth of its business base.
- Identifying and partnering on other initiatives supportive of strong core business capabilities.

3. *Coordinating regionally to support the town's business base:*

- Coordinating town economic development activities with surrounding towns.
- Working with regional and state resources, programs and initiatives to support the town's business base.

4. *Educating and enhancing opportunity awareness for local business leaders:*

- Identifying local, state, or federal initiatives and/or programs available to enable local business success.
- Hosting economic development events to help publicize and educate business leaders on opportunities that can support the health and well-being of the town's business base.

7.2 HISTORY & BACKGROUND ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The 1980 Master plan recommended the creation of an Economic Development Commission to identify the kinds of businesses that would be appropriate for the community, explore the development of an industrial district; and work with the NH Office of Industrial Development on recruitment. This recommendation was never implemented.

In November 2008, the Planning Board, through the Master Plan effort, recommended to the Town Selectmen that a Tamworth Economic Development Commission (TEDC) be established. This Commission was charged with several responsibilities: to help Tamworth's existing businesses expand and flourish, to facilitate development of appropriate infrastructure to make businesses more proficient and to attract new businesses to the town.

Prior to TEDC's formation, the forerunner group encouraged and supported the development of Tamworth, recognized the importance of tourism to Tamworth, and helped develop and launch the town's website. Since its inception, the TEDC has supported and driven numerous programs both at the local town level and in coordination with surrounding towns. It has sought regional and state resources to support its mission. In the twelve years of TEDC's existence (2009-2021) the TEDC has accomplished a significant number of programs as shown in Exhibit 1.

Many of TEDC's programs have also benefited individual residents.

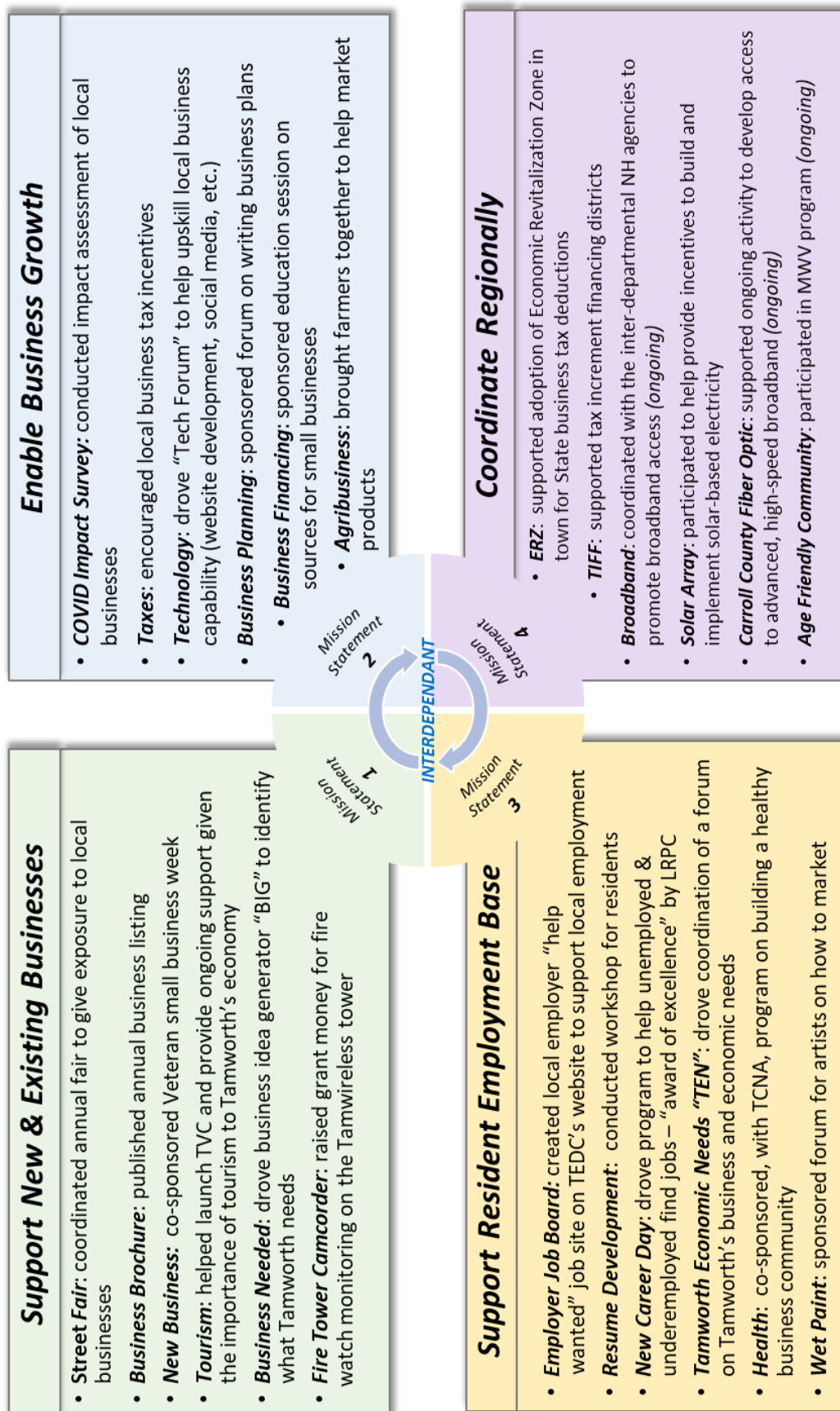
7.3 THE EXISTING BUSINESS BASE IN TAMWORTH

Tamworth's existing business base is highly diverse, with many small and micro businesses across fifty different business sectors. There is relatively limited information on the growth, employment, and health of each business; however, it is known that many of the businesses are actively involved in community events and in the building of the Tamworth "eco-system."

The table in Exhibit 2 shows the number and diversity of businesses within Tamworth – Data was self-reported by establishments to the TEDC in its 2020 Business Listings.

The total number of businesses in Tamworth has grown dramatically since 2005 (the last census as reported in the 2008 Master Plan) from 67 to 240; this represents a nearly 9% annual growth rate. Such a growth rate may not be truly accurate and may be attributable to significant undercounting of businesses in 2005. One of the programs the TEDC launched after its establishment was to maintain an accurate census and count of businesses based in Tamworth. Regardless, Tamworth supports an extremely diverse and large number of businesses.

EXHIBIT 1: Past Efforts and Programs of the TEDC (2009-2021) to support its mission



Awards received by TEDC: LRPC Award of Excellence & Governor's letter of congratulations for Career Day Forum

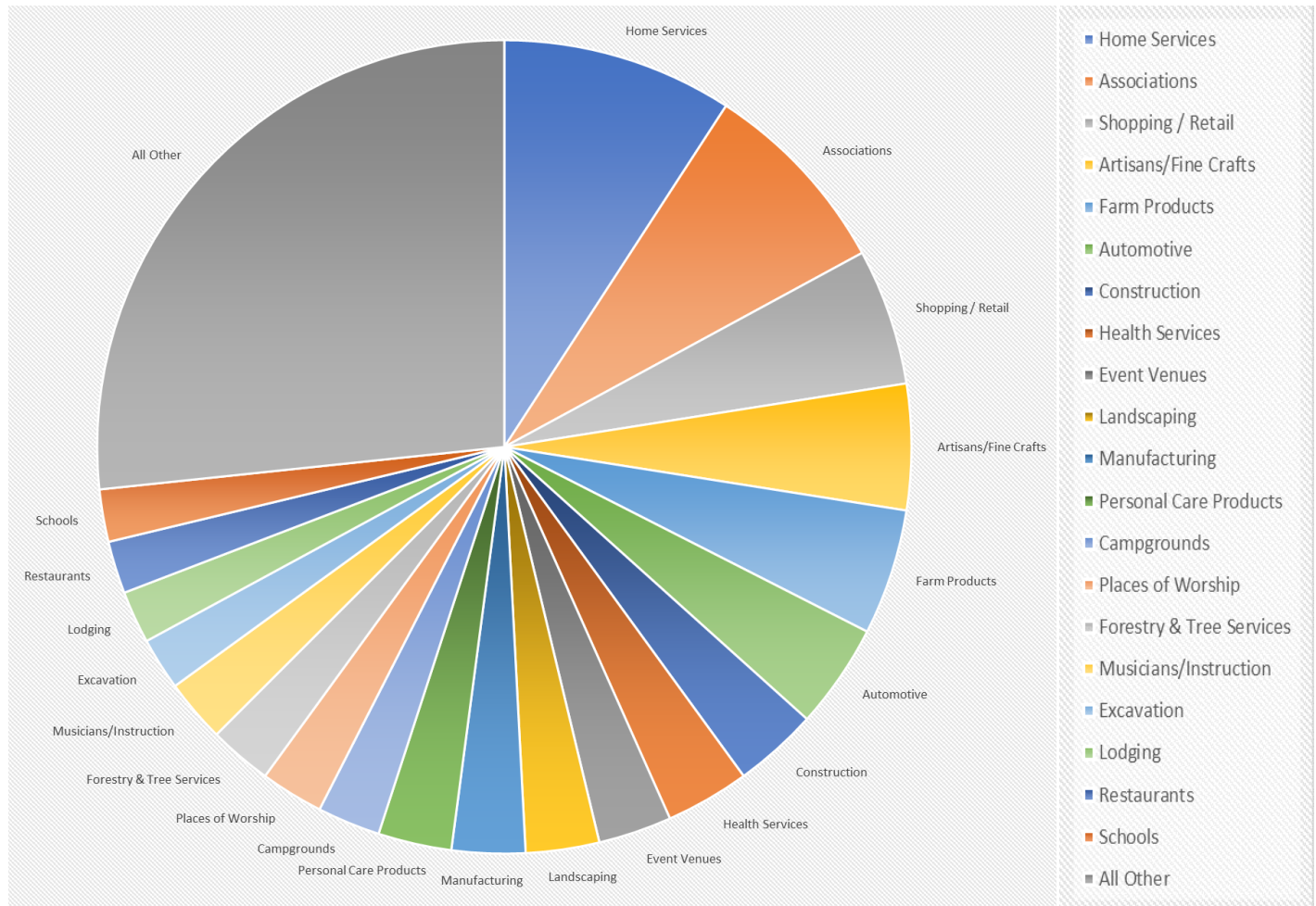
EXHIBIT 2: Unique Number of Tamworth Based Businesses - 2020

	<u>Unique #</u>	<u>% of Total</u>		<u>Unique #</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Accounting/Bookkeeping/Financial Services	4	1.7%	Lodging	5	2.1%
Artisans/Fine Crafts	12	5.0%	Logging Equipment & Repair	1	0.4%
Associations/Organizations/Community Services	19	7.9%	Lumber	1	0.4%
Attorneys/Paralegal Services	1	0.4%	Manufacturing/Metal Fabrication	7	2.9%
Auction Houses	1	0.4%	Masonry, Concrete & Stone	4	1.7%
Automotive -- Repairs/Maintenance/Sales/Salvage	10	4.2%	Metal Salvage & Recycling	1	0.4%
Bakeries	4	1.7%	Museums	2	0.8%
Boats/Marinas/Service	2	0.8%	Musicians & Music Instruction	6	2.5%
Builders -- Construction/Carpentry	8	3.3%	Personal Care Products & Services	7	2.9%
Campgrounds	6	2.5%	Photography & Videography	3	1.3%
Churches/Places of Worship	6	2.5%	Printing, Graphics, Design/Marketing & Publishing	3	1.3%
Computer Services and Software	2	0.8%	Real Estate	3	1.3%
Elderly Services	2	0.8%	Recreational Activities	3	1.3%
Events/Wedding Venues & Planning/Catering Services	7	2.9%	Recreational Vehicles	2	0.8%
Excavation/Plowing & Snow Removal	5	2.1%	Rental Equipment & Party Supplies	1	0.4%
Farm Products/Farmstands/Food	12	5.0%	Restaurants	5	2.1%
Farrier Services/Horse Boarding	1	0.4%	Schools	5	2.1%
Firewood/Logging	3	1.3%	Shopping	13	5.4%
Forestry & Tree Services	6	2.5%	Small Engine Repair & Parts	2	0.8%
Hair stylists/Barbers	3	1.3%	Spirits	2	0.8%
Health Services	8	3.3%	Storage	2	0.8%
History/Historical Documents & Research/Preservation	1	0.4%	Surveyors	3	1.3%
Home Services, Improvement & Repair	22	9.2%	Theater	1	0.4%
Justice of the Peace/Notary Public	2	0.8%	Transportation	1	0.4%
Landscaping/Lawn Care/Gardening	7	2.9%	Utilities	3	1.3%
			TOTAL	240	100%

TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT

Although the numbers of employed persons by business are not currently known, likely it can be inferred that local employment may be concentrated among the top 16 industries in Tamworth, representing 73% of businesses. As can be seen from the data in Exhibit 3, just over 50% of Tamworth establishments are in eleven categories:

EXHIBIT 3: Top Business Sectors in Tamworth - 2020



Source: November 2020 Business Listing

Based on observational knowledge, it appears that the vast majority of businesses are exceedingly small – with fewer than 5 full-time employees.

7.4 CURRENT REALITIES LIMITING GROWTH

In the summer of 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 epidemic, the TEDC commissioned a study of the business community entitled “Business Health Survey.” The survey had two objectives: first, to understand the impact COVID-19 had on the health of Tamworth’s business community; and second, to determine what topics or programs the town and/or the TEDC might pursue to support local businesses. Taken from survey respondents, the current barriers to growth are discussed below.

Respondents’ most important issues fell into six broad areas of concern – many of these issues are inter-related.

Areas of Most Concern (Order not important)

- Customers
- Uncertainty
- Restrictions
- Business Practices Impact
- Financial
- Health

Respondents were concerned for their businesses and the flow of traffic/customers. Many asked that the Town and/or TEDC help support the local business economy by undertaking efforts to:

- Obtain fast, reliable internet
- Market & promote the town
- Reduce taxes
- Advertise employment
- Educate concerning financial operations
- Facilitate business networking

VIRTUAL BUSINESS BASE

The Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-2021 resulted in tremendous growth in both the remote workforce and trust and reliance on e-commerce as customers in many industries did not want to engage in traditional, in-person experiences. Remote work, healthcare, education, and retail have grown exponentially across all industries. Business owners in Tamworth were very clear in their 2020 survey responses that access to affordable and dependable high-speed internet needs to be a top priority.

The lack of access to high-speed internet across large sections of town is one of the single largest issues holding back future economic development in Tamworth.

It is the expectation that, as the TEDC moves forward in 2021 and beyond, a number of these concerns can be addressed in concert with other town offices, and with regional and state resources.

Helping to make Tamworth a vibrant place for business and a healthy place to both work and seek employment should be important objectives that the town pursues.

7.5 PRIORITIZATION CONSIDERATIONS

The TEDC is a robust and diverse commission with skills in areas of finance, retail, business ownership, regional networking, real estate development and business consultation. Financial resources allocated to the commission typically have been small – less than \$5,000 per year. As a result, it is necessary for the commission to carefully prioritize among competing interests such that the areas of most concern are addressed first. There are several considerations to this prioritization:

1. Collaboration and coordination with state and county resources and programs to allow for broader access to resources and shared benefits/results.
2. Identifying and aligning with other government agencies to support existing businesses and new businesses likely to thrive and be a fit for the town, while helping to reduce the overall tax burden on both residents and existing businesses.
3. Supporting infrastructure programs that help to maintain the existing business base, as well as help make Tamworth more attractive to new businesses.

7.6 EXECUTION AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Commission intends to report on its progress in supporting its mission by the following means:

- Provide annual “update” presentations to the Select and Planning Boards on events, forums, and TEDC led initiatives;
- Update both the business listing and distribution list annually;
- Conduct a business survey, every two years, to gauge business health and identify common areas of opportunity across the various industries in Tamworth;
- Update Chapter 7 of the Master Plan, every three years, to maintain relevancy and transparency; and
- Continue identification and outreach to community members who are willing to lend their skills and expertise to sustaining and expanding the TEDC mission.