# 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 Tamwireless, 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.

COVID Impact Survey: conducted impact assessment of local

**Enable Business Growth** 

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

# Support New & Existing Businesses

- Street Fair: coordinated annual fair to give exposure to local businesses
- Business Brochure: published annual business listing
- New Business: co-sponsored Veteran small business week
- Tourism: helped launch TVC and provide ongoing support given the importance of tourism to Tamworth's economy
- Business Needed: drove business idea generator "BIG" to identify what Tamworth needs
- Fire Tower Camcorder: raised grant money for fire watch monitoring on the Tamwireless tower



Agribusiness: brought farmers together to help market

Business Planning: sponsored forum on writing business plans

Business Financing: sponsored education session on

sources for small businesses

Technology: drove "Tech Forum" to help upskill local business

Taxes: encouraged local business tax incentives

businesses

capability (website development, social media, etc.)

Mission

products

# Storement MISSIM INTERDEPENDANT Mission

# Statement

# Support Resident Employment Base

- wanted" job site on TEDC's website to support local employment Employer Job Board: created local employer "help
- Resume Development: conducted workshop for residents New Career Day: drove program to help unemployed &

underemployed find jobs - "award of excellence" by LRPC

- Tamworth Economic Needs "TEN": drove coordination of a forum on Tamworth's business and economic needs
- Health: co-sponsored, with TCNA, program on building a healthy business community
- Wet Paint: sponsored forum for artists on how to market

# **Coordinate Regionally**

- **ERZ**: supported adoption of Economic Revitalization Zone in town for State business tax deductions
- · TIFF: supported tax increment financing districts
- Broadband: coordinated with the inter-departmental NH agencies to promote broadband access (ongoing)
- Carroll County Fiber Optic: supported ongoing activity to develop access Solar Array: participated to help provide incentives to build and implement solar-based electricity
  - to advanced, high-speed broadband (*ongoing*)
    - Age Friendly Community: participated in MWV program (ongoing)

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>	% of Total		<u>Unique #</u>	% of Total
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:

Home Services Home Services Associations Shopping / Retail Associations All Other Artisans/Fine Crafts Farm Products Automotive Construction Shopping / Retail ■ Health Services ■ Event Venues Landscaping Artisans/Fine Crafts Manufacturing ■ Personal Care Products Schools Campgrounds Farm Products Places of Worship Forestry & Tree Services Lodging Musicians/Instruction Excavation Automotive Excavation Musicians/Instruction Lodging Construction Forestry & Tree Services ■ Restaurants Places of Worship Health Services Schools Campgrounds Event Venues Personal Care Products Manufacturing Landscaping ■ All Other

**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' biggest, unprompted issues fell into six broad areas of concern – many of these issues are inter-related.

### **Areas of Most Concern** (Order not important)

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