

Economic Development Committee Vision Statement. Mission and Charge

Submission to the Groton Board of Selectmen December 14, 2016

Vision:

To enhance the character, culture and commerce of Groton Massachusetts as a destination community supporting the quintessential “New England” experience through such activities as outdoor recreation, music, arts and education for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

How:

Leverage Groton’s natural resources, and educational, agricultural, artisan, and commercial entities to attract visitors to Groton who are interested in ecotourism¹, as well as recreational, historic, cultural and educational activities.

Why:

In addition to recreational and cultural offerings, Groton is unique in its historical and agricultural background, geographical characteristics, and natural beauty. Groton has hiking trails; biking trails; rivers for kayaking and canoeing; trails for snowshoeing and cross country skiing; a country club for playing golf; and lakes and ponds for swimming, boating, kayaking, canoeing and paddle boarding. Nationally known as the home to the Groton School and Lawrence Academy, and recognized for its highly rated public schools, and the Groton History Center. Groton offers great historical educational opportunities from exploring its founding in 1655 as the Groton Plantation on America’s first “Frontier” through its important role in the American Revolution, to today.

Looking forward, the new Groton Inn is scheduled to open in 2017, and, if approved by the Town of Groton Planning Board, the Music Center at Indian Hill will open in 2020 and become a magnet for music students and people from far and wide interested in music education and/or attending music concerts of all types. These students and their families, and concert audiences, will want to enjoy local food, beverages, lodging, and boutique shopping. This influx of visitors will create increased demand for existing and new restaurants and additional lodging in Groton such as will be provided by the new Groton Inn and local B&Bs. According to *Americans for the Arts*, local attendees at art events spend about \$25 per person per event on meals and babysitting while people outside the local area spend twice that amount.² Another study by *Americans for the Arts* showed major economic stimulation because of demand created by “Cultural Tourism”.³

In addition, parents of Groton School and Lawrence Academy students who come for parents’ weekend and other school events are likely to stay longer (or come earlier) to take advantage of what Groton has to offer culturally and recreationally.

¹ From www.nature.org: Ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel to natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature and accompanying cultural features.

² <http://www.americansforthearts.org/news-room/press-releases/americans-for-the-arts-to-study-the-economic-impact-of-spending-by-nonprofit-arts-and-culture>

³ <http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/cultural-tourism-attracting-visitors-and-their-spending>

Economic Development Committee Charge 2016

The 2011 Groton Master Plan is a comprehensive guide to envisioning Groton's future by balancing economic opportunity and social equity with protecting the natural resources on which the town and its region depend. This plan established goals for core elements of community development and calls for a coordinated approach to addressing Groton's present and future needs.

As stated in the 2011 Master Plan, one of the core elements is Economic Development:

***“Economic Development:** a detailed economic profile of the town, considering its labor force characteristics, its employment base, the types of businesses operating in Groton today, and the role of agriculture and agricultural businesses in the local economy; a review of the zoning requirements that encourage or constrain commercial and industrial development; an analysis of local capacity, needs, potential opportunities, incentives, and barriers to economic growth; and recommendations to build a vital local economy.”*

Economic Development Committee Mission Statement

The Economic Development Committee (EDC) will work proactively to promote and encourage the development of Groton's commercial tax base enhancing the quality of life in Groton. The EDC will promote, support and expand our local business community in addition to engaging new business to establish, invest and grow in Groton. An expanded business community will offer resources to town residents that will enable them to live, work and thrive in an economically forward looking and financially strong community.

To that end, the Economic Development Committee is charged with the following Goals & Objectives:

Growth:

Identify, prioritize and develop economic opportunities and relationships that are sensitive to the intent of the master plan, the character and culture of Groton, which will make Groton an holistic and exceptional community in which residents can live, work and thrive while visitors can engage and enjoy Groton as a destination community for recreation, music, arts and education.

Education:

Ensure the community, local businesses, committees and outside interested parties are easily connected to information and tools that facilitate the role and mission of the Economic Development Committee in Groton. Provide accessible information relative to past, present and future policies and other information that reinforce the importance and benefits of Economic Development and identifies Groton as being business friendly.

Communication:

Provide communication plans to various audiences to promote Groton as a place to visit, enjoy and which to invest.

Regulation:

Review current regulations and/or policies through the lens of economic development, as well as facilitate and support modification of existing policies and/or development of new policies that will promote existing or new businesses to grow and stay in Groton.

2016/2017 Targeted Focus Items, Goals & Objectives

Growth:

- Begin “Stage Two” Master Plan for Economic Development: Identify key issues that need to be resolved to achieve a sustainable economic base that would provide a vibrant local economy needed to support both the growing financial needs of the municipality, and the Groton Dunstable Regional School District.
- Identify and pursue business types that have the best chance of starting, growing and thriving in Groton, given the commercial environment of our town and the near-by established businesses in Littleton, Westford, Ayer, Devens and Townsend.
- VISIONING CHARETTES – Identify business types existing or potential that can provide resources to the town, reinforce existing or soon to come businesses and/or promote Groton as a destination community. Develop options and concepts around ideas such as Ecotourism, Farm to Table, etc. Identify potential parcels on a map and identify regulatory impediments and solutions to fulfilling the envisioned option.

Education:

- Develop content for marketing materials (online/offline) on Economic Development.
- Hold feedback focus group sessions with various constituent groups to understand current beliefs about Economic Development in Groton, as well as communicate our vision for the future to ensure community alignment
- Develop and present recommendations to various Groton Boards and Committees on the Economic Development Committee’s economic five-year vision and plans.

Communication:

- Develop communications plans to disseminate important information about the Economic Development Committee and current/future projects and development in Groton
 - Community
 - Various Boards
 - Groton Board of Trade (GBOT)
 - Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce
 - Potential business in conjunction with the Town Planner
- Concept Plan issues outreach for future Town Meeting in conjunction with the Planning Board
- Identify key influencers and community groups such as GBOT that support and promote the goals of the Economic Development Committee

Regulation:

- Explore, recommend and implement regulatory changes as needed
- Work together with the Planning Board to support the elimination of the Concept Plan
 - Ensure proper safeguards are in place to address concerns on appropriate development in keeping with the character, look and feel of Groton
- Recommend effective incentives to encourage new business development, and retain existing businesses.
- Explore the possibility of offering early years property tax reduction and other incentives to encourage new businesses to come to, grow and thrive in Groton.