

# Doing Business In Southborough

This is second in a series of monthly articles on Southborough's economic development and its impact in our community and beyond. At the April 2017 Annual Town Meeting, Article 25 was passed to establish a permanent Southborough Economic Development Committee. The purpose of this series is to educate residents and businesses on the value of what our investment in economic development brings to our town.

## ***"What are You Doing about Downtown?"***

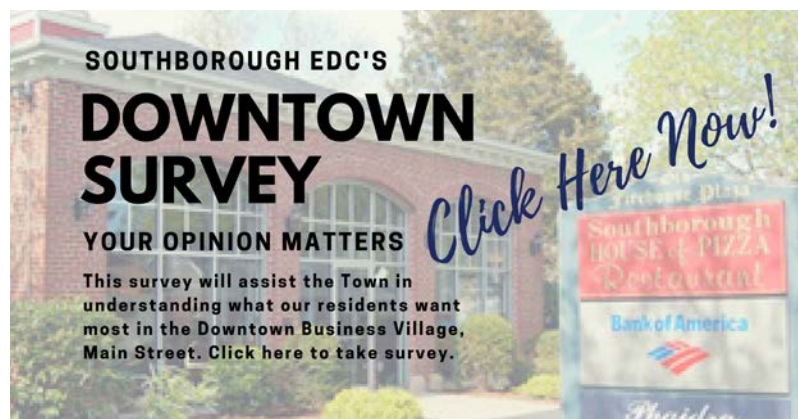
September 2017

**B**eing a member of the Economic Development Committee entails focusing a lot of time and energy on the "behind the curtain" mechanics of our Town. Come to our meetings and you'll hear in depth conversation about industry sectors, vacancy rates, regional transportation, sewer systems, and permitting processes. Nevertheless, the first question residents ask me when they find out I'm on the EDC is much more tangible - ***"What are you going to do about Downtown?"*** I get it. When I first joined EDC, I was motivated in part by my own personal vision of what a vibrant, community oriented Downtown should look like. But of course, "fixing" Downtown means different things to everyone. Many residents are concerned about traffic flow and over development, and want to take measures to preserve our bucolic charm. Others envision a mixed-use "village" in the Downtown area to enhance the services, restaurants, and amenities our residents already enjoy there. Seeking middle ground offers plenty of room for innovative discussions which may include beautification, parking, walkability, small businesses, and connectivity to other areas of town.

A variety of factors present hurdles to immediate meaningful improvements - private land ownership, zoning, water treatment, and limited space all inhibit most of the grander visions, but since so many people are asking the questions *"What are you going to do about Downtown?"* the EDC is proposing a roadmap to answering that question.

The EDC is comprised of residents, and residents are who we serve. We understand our Main Street is the heart of our community, and it belongs to everyone who calls Southborough home. In trying to answer this question, we are taking all-encompassing steps to ensure that any project we seek to promote or accomplish is built upon the desires of *the residents*, and maximizes resident input and transparency. In short, revitalization efforts driven by the EDC will be accomplished with resident

input and participation, and we envision the role of the EDC to be simply structural - we will put the tools



in place to collect data on what residents want, analyze and present that data, host open meetings to discuss, engage outside, non-partisan groups to help us hone and create a roadmap for potential improvements, and then present the proposed “next steps” to the residents at the annual Town Meeting in the Spring.

The EDC has begun to take the first step in learning more about the visions and priorities the residents of Southborough have for Downtown. We’re aiming to get a wide swath of opinions and to engage as many of our neighbors as possible. So please, take a couple of minutes to fill out our survey at [southboroughedc.com/downtownsurvey/](http://southboroughedc.com/downtownsurvey/). Your voice matters, and we will read the comments. The survey will be available through the end of September, after which we will analyze and present the results in public forums where we will seek additional input and feedback. We will work with outside groups, such as the [Urban Land Institute](#), to help us refine our goals based on resident feedback from the survey and our open sessions. We will seek grants, if applicable, and with support of Town leadership, committees and commissions, present a revitalization plan to the Town for your consideration at the Spring 2018 Town Meeting.



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Julie Connelly, Vice Chair, Southborough EDC

With the Main Street roadway construction project forthcoming, the time is ripe to harvest collective opinion and determine how to restore and revitalize the heart of our community, Main Street. We look forward to working with you to accomplish this effort. It takes a village to make a village. Help us make our Downtown the best it can be today and for generations to come.

We welcome and encourage your attendance at our monthly meetings, and please take our Downtown Survey; your opinion matters. [www.southboroughedc.com/downtownsurvey/](http://www.southboroughedc.com/downtownsurvey/)

*Julie Connelly is Vice Chair of the Southborough Economic Development Committee. She has served on the committee for 4 years and has been a resident of Southborough for 6 years. She is a commercial real estate attorney at Seyfarth Shaw, LLP where she serves retail and business clients in all aspects of real estate law.*

For more information on Southborough’s economic development, contact Pam DiGiovanni at: [pdigiovanni@southboroughma.com](mailto:pdigiovanni@southboroughma.com) or visit [southboroughedc.com](http://southboroughedc.com). For more information on this topic, please join us for our biannual *Broker Breakfast* on September 22, 2017. Visit the [EDC’s events page](#) for more information and to RSVP.