

Southborough Awarded \$50K Planning Assistance Grant

September 25, 2019, The Town of Southborough has been awarded a \$50,000 Planning Assistance Grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. The Southborough Economic Development Committee (EDC) applied for the grant funding to support its Downtown Initiative - the EDC's effort to revitalize the Downtown Business Village District (DBVD).

The EDC plans to use the grant to move forward on two crucial issues that are currently prohibiting viable economic activity in downtown Southborough. Namely, antiquated zoning laws and insufficient wastewater management infrastructure.

The EDC will hire a professional consultant to assist with updating the current zoning laws with a mixed-use overlay district for the DBVD. In addition, an engineering wastewater feasibility study will be conducted that builds on the wastewater pre-feasibility study already conducted in-house.

About the Downtown Initiative: In 2017, Southborough residents responded to a survey indicating overwhelming support for improvements to Downtown, including dining and shopping, beautification and connectivity. The EDC has taken on this community development project known as the Downtown Initiative and created a vision for a walkable and well-connected, small town Main Street with businesses such as restaurant and pub, lunch café, ice-cream shop, boutiques style stores and/or other small businesses as well as residential properties. The mixed-use properties would provide diversity in housing stock and affordability and a larger economic base for businesses that operate Downtown. With more attractive public space and a focus on community events, the Downtown can be restored as the heart of Southborough it once was.

About the Planning Assistance Grants: The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) is offering Massachusetts cities and towns technical help to improve their land use practices. Southborough was awarded the grant based on the EDC's effort to plan, regulate (zone), and act to conserve and develop land consistent with Massachusetts' Sustainable Development Principles.

The Planning Assistance Grants are consistent with the Baker-Polito Administration's land conservation and development objectives. The plan included:

- reduction of land, energy, and natural resource consumption
- provision of sufficient and diverse housing, and
- mitigation of/preparation for climate change.

Funds help communities retain appropriate technical expertise and undertake the public process associated with creating plans and adopting land use regulations.