

RESEARCH ON BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES OF OTHER TOWNS – May 2004

Town	Business concerns?	Paid Staff?	Business development initiatives?	Database of businesses?	Chamber of Commerce?
Concord		None devoted to business development.	No town-sponsored business development efforts		Yes, Concord has a chamber of commerce but no information provided re: its role in business development. Also, Concord Business Partnership...
Hingham		None.	<p>- Hingham has a merchants association that meets monthly at 7:30 a.m. to increase participation. --- Also has a town appointed Industrial Development Commission (residents and business owners). The town hired a consultant to work with the Commission, and to improve streetscape.</p> <p>- Hingham has applied to the Municipal Incentive Grant Program and for PWED grants.</p>	Recommended Dunn & Bradstreet listing (\$600), or a local direct mail house.	<p>Hingham is a part of the South Shore Chamber of Commerce, serving eleven towns and working on a regional level on major projects such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - facilitated land swap for commuter boat - coordinated MBTA tunnel under downtown - Hingham shipbuilding - Hingham Pride Building
Lexington	<p>- Lexington faces many of the same problems as Belmont. Lexington Center is struggling with high rents driving out small retailers. All that's new is banks. Parking is considered a big constant problem.</p> <p>- Town's planning director recognizes problems and the importance of addressing them but two-person planning staff cannot attend to them. Says Lexington Center needs "a business improvement district, an organization with some teeth that can advocate and spend money."</p>	Not now. Used to have an economic development officer but position was eliminated when Prop 2-1/2 override failed.	<p>- Lexington Center Committee tries to attend to the needs of the Center. Consists mostly of residents with a few business people. Sponsors a few group marketing initiatives (e.g., shopping and dining guide; shoppers' night for the holidays)</p> <p>- Otherwise, the town has no business development initiatives now that the economic development position no longer exists.</p>	One was developed by the first economic development officer but since has not been maintained. Chamber is thinking about taking it on but has concerns about then having to charge a fee to provide access to the list to anyone who wants to use it. Keeping it up requires a considerable investment of time.	Yes, ED is town's former economic development officer, Mary Jo Bohart. Chamber works closely with Lexington Center Committee and is interested in doing more to address the concerns of the business community at large but it's tough because the Chamber is primarily accountable to its members and providing member services. Some town-wide effort can be expended but must be done so judiciously and works particularly well when it helps to promote the Chamber's profile and recruit new members.

Town	Business concerns?	Paid Staff?	Business development initiatives?	Database of businesses?	Chamber of Commerce?
Needham	Permitting – streamline, more user friendly; parking; streetscape	No paid staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning Dept. currently exploring redevelopment opportunities for Needham Center, including parking structures and mixed use development. - BOS appointed an Economic Development Advisory Committee that includes members of town government and business and property owners. Working on streamlining the permitting process to make it more user friendly. Will also look at parking and streetscape. - Grad student team from MIT community planning studied redevelopment of Needham Center and produced a report; Town now looking at raising \$ for a more detailed study. - Town, Chamber and Needham Business Association promote new businesses by having town officials at “ribbon cutting grand opening” events, photographs, newsletter mentions. 	None.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce may be more oriented toward Newton and national and larger businesses near Route 128. - Needham Business Association is separate – seems more oriented to small local business. See www.needhambusiness.com Purposes include improving the appearance of Needham for the benefit of the community and businesses, and promoting laws and regs for the benefit of the business community.
Watertown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watertown Square – struggles with traffic flow, parking, aesthetics. Wants to be a stopping place, not a pass through. - Coolidge Square – efforts underway to evaluate and make recommendations to improve this area, too. 	None devoted to business development. Staff of Office of Planning and Development do get involved to some extent – e.g., working with owner of Arsenal development to make prospective businesses aware of space inside “Arsenal on the Charles”	\$450,000 approved by Town Council for aesthetic improvements, pedestrian friendly crosswalks, new signage – all in Watertown Square. Otherwise, none.	Chamber of Commerce has a database of members only. Town Clerk tracks new businesses.	Yes, Watertown as a chamber of commerce. Provides members to various business-related town studies including the Watertown Square Study Commission.
Winchester		None	No business development initiatives.	No	Yes – Winchester has a chamber of commerce but role vis-à-vis business development is unclear.