

Town of Harvard, MA



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK

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Draft Vision/Mission Statement and Goals

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Harvard lacks a coherent economic development plan that establishes concrete, achievable goals and objectives that takes the vision developed in broader planning documents and lays out specific programs, projects, and tasks that pursue an economic future aligned with this visioning. This document is intended to provide a framework for pursuing such plan, including specific project ideas that have been developed by staff as well as boards and committees tasked with growth, land use, or development responsibilities. At the core, economic development in Harvard must center on both the Ayer Road commercial corridor and the legacy agricultural community. Also to be considered are the opportunities that Devens disposition may offer, taking advantage of existing assets such as the rural character and history, forests and open spaces, and the small businesses presently operating in Harvard. The purpose of this strategy and action plan is to begin to map out the pursuit of an economic development plan over the next several years so that economic development can be a formalized and structured program rather than an ad hoc pursuit of disparate opportunities unlinked to a prescribed planning process.

INTRODUCTION & PROJECT OVERVIEW

This Draft Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan Framework is the product of staff review and discussions at the Planning Board and presents initial draft strategy initiatives for the Town in relation to 2016 Master Plan goals and actions as well as other perceived needs based on a changing economy.

This draft policy document was developed by the Harvard Community and Economic Development Division of the Land Use Boards Office. It reflects pre-outreach brainstorming and post-Master Plan evaluation of the continuing relevance of specific goals and action items.

This framework outlines what a draft Economic Development Strategy and Plan will include such as significant public outreach, data collection including market analysis, fiscal impact analysis, project details, and tax policy review. An employer survey will also be conducted among a select group of area employers. The employer survey will gather information on the availability, quality, cost, demand, and trainability of labor; the quality and use of local and regional educational institutions and training resources; the quality and cost of utilities and other infrastructure-related items, incentives, and the overall operating environment.

At this Phase 1 stage of the project, the Planning Board has expressed interest in the following projects and policy initiatives (preliminarily prioritized) to be further considered based on data collection and public outreach results:

- Priority 1: Ayer Road Corridor Planning Project
- Priority 1A: Establish Economic Development Commission
- Priority 2: Townwide Economic Development Plan
- Priority 3: Ecotourism, Agritourism, and Rural Life Action Plan and Bylaw
- Priority 4: Village Centers Business Opportunities Project
- Priority 5: Forestry Management and Research Initiative
- Priority 6: In-Home Occupation Regulatory Amendments

Several of these projects are expected to provide critical information, including a strategic planning framework, leading to an understanding of:

- Marketable strengths that can be capitalized upon
 - Deficiencies that can be corrected cost-effectively
 - Development opportunities
 - Issues having an impact on the community's or region's economic development future
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- Obstacles to development

For example, the Townwide Economic Development Plan Project will be an in-depth comprehensive economic development strategic plan that will look at market conditions and trends. The Ayer Road Corridor Planning Project, the keystone project for the Town, will include a market analysis of the existing commercial corridor and assess supportable uses and square footage thresholds that can inform vision planning and regulatory solutions. See the document entitled [Ayer Road Corridor Vision Plan Framework v 8.0](#) for more details regarding this proposal.

These initiatives are intended to help us grow and enhance the local economic base while preserving and enhancing Harvard's rural character and high quality of life. These initiatives are also intended to dovetail with other local projects and address key local issues, such as:

- Providing support for Harvard's agricultural community
- Enhancing tourism opportunities
- Providing commercial opportunities for local residents, businesses, and visitors
- Protecting the rural character and landscapes of Harvard

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PART I: THE DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Economic Strategy Initiatives		
Priority #	Short Name	Brief Description
1.	Ayer Road Vision Plan Project	<p>Based on the document, <u>Ayer Road Corridor Vision Plan Framework</u>, seek funding for and execute three-phase planning program for the development of the Ayer Road Corridor, the singular commercial zoning in Harvard. The three phases are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Market Analysis and Fiscal Impact Analysis</u> – Data supporting the types and scales of uses that the market area can support. Reveal how much this development will contribute to local municipal revenues. 2. <u>Corridor Vision Plan</u> – A comprehensive plan for a specific area, the Ayer Road commercial corridor, which will include traffic and transportation network analysis, land use and zoning analysis, design analysis, public and stakeholder outreach, and other criteria relevant to studying the commercial objectives of the town while preserving and protecting what is important to the town’s character as the Town moves forward. 3. <u>Zoning and Regulatory Tools</u> – An anticipated result of the Corridor Vision Plan is a recommendation to significantly improve the zoning and other regulatory tools that govern the C district along Ayer Road. Once these tools are on place and other facets of the Vision are achieved, then the desired type and scale of development can commence with much less concern over the outcome and impacts. It should be noted up front that water and sewer infrastructure should not be available for corridor lands until this regulatory framework is in place. <p>Timing: Summer/Fall 2021 through Fall/Winter 2022-23</p> <p>Funding: CPIC or Grant Funded</p>

Economic Strategy Initiatives		
Priority #	Short Name	Brief Description
		Responsibility: Planning Board and Staff + Consultant
2.	Establish Economic Development Commission	<p>Harvard has lacked an EDC since the mid 2010's and such a body is necessary to assist in developing and carrying out policies and programs related to economic development. Develop a charge and seek to get this established as a high priority.</p> <p>Timing: Fall 2021</p> <p>Funding: N/A</p> <p>Responsibility: Select Board</p>
3.	Townwide Economic Development Plan	<p>Once EDC has been established, use internal economic development priorities as a basis for preparing a comprehensive townwide economic development plan for Harvard. Such a plan shall employ innovative and broad public participatory mechanisms to gain consensus for the plan. The plan should mesh with sustainability and climate action goals and objectives of the Town.</p> <p>Timing: Fall 2022 through Fall 2023</p> <p>Funding: N/A</p> <p>Responsibility: EDC, Staff</p>
4.	Economic Development Website	<p>Further develop and maintain a webpage specific to Harvard's economic development programs and services. Seek recommendations on economic development website content and function are necessary.</p> <p>Timing: Summer/Fall 2021</p> <p>Funding: TBD</p> <p>Responsibility: Staff</p>

Economic Strategy Initiatives		
Priority #	Short Name	Brief Description
5.	Ecotourism, Agritourism, and Rural Life Action Plan and Bylaw	<p>Agriculture has historically been the backbone of Harvard's local economy. Master plans and a recent Agricultural Climate Action Plan (AgCAP) funded by an MVP Action Grant, have established goals and actions for the agricultural sector. These actions should be bundled and the program implemented.</p> <p>Timing: Fall/Winter 2021-22</p> <p>Funding: N/A</p> <p>Responsibility: Agricultural Advisory Commission, Planning Board, Staff</p>
6.	Village Centers Business Opportunities Project	<p>Develop a village center action plan leading to a new zoning district for Harvard Center.</p> <p>Timing: Fall 2021 through Spring 2022</p> <p>Funding: N/A</p> <p>Responsibility: Planning Board, Staff</p>
7.	Marketing and Branding Strategy	<p>Develop a branding and marketing strategy for Harvard and its assets.</p> <p>Timing: Spring 2022</p> <p>Funding: TBD</p> <p>Responsibility: Staff, Consultant, web-based competition</p>

Economic Strategy Initiatives		
#	Short Name	Brief Description
8.	Forestry Management and Research Initiative	<p>Harvard has important forest assets that are threatened by poor management practices and climate change. As a multifaceted economic asset, the Town seeks to develop a comprehensive forestry management plan for both public and private lands. Look for external funding for the management plan and work with Harvard University to consider establishing a forest research facility at the Oak Ridge Observatory site.</p> <p>Timing: Fall 2020 and Ongoing</p> <p>Funding: TBD</p> <p>Responsibility: Staff, Community Resilience Working Group, Consultant</p>
9.	In-Home Occupation Regulatory Amendments	<p>In-home occupations make up a substantial share of the local economy but not much information is available on this subsector. Seek to collect information and conduct survey to see if the Town can assist in the viability and assess needs. Modify regulations as needed.</p> <p>Timing: Summer/Fall 2022</p> <p>Funding: TBD</p> <p>Responsibility: Staff, EDC</p>

PART II: DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MISSION/VISION STATEMENT & GOALS

Draft Vision Statement and Goals

Economic Development Draft Mission and Vision Statement

Harvard, MA is a unique rural community situated within the fast growing I-495 and Route 2 corridors. In order to shape our own economic destiny, Harvard, working with the community and all of the Town's boards and commissions, seeks to devise an economic development program that maintains the historic, natural, and cultural assets that the town possesses while addressing long-term economic, social, and economic sustainability. We see a sustainable Harvard in 2050 that has a diversified housing stock, a more robust economic base, a healthy and protected environment, and a socially conscious community welcoming to all.

Draft Economic Development Goals

The unifying theme of Harvard's proposed economic development program is to create and sustain a multi-faceted small-town economic base that includes agriculture, technology-oriented office and research businesses, offices, retail and services, tourism, and other types of uses that may find Harvard an attractive location. This will be accomplished through a combination of:

- Leadership and cross-cohort communication
- Diversified locally-appropriate business attraction
- Business outreach and assistance for retention and expansion
- Entrepreneurship and small business development
- Sustainable physical and economic vitality
- Intelligent planning and community development