

Press Release: "The EDIC Agrees!" Launched by EDIC Members Seeks Audience

A message from members of the Economic Development & Industrial Commission (EDIC):

We are seeking to raise awareness for projects and initiatives we see as benefitting economic and community growth within Easthampton. In that spirit, we present to you this first edition copy of "The EDIC Agrees!"

Vacant Storefront Initiative

The City Council Ordinance Committee recently took up a proposal from the EDIC to encourage the better use of abandoned and vacant commercial properties. The proposed ordinance seeks to create a public directory of vacant commercial properties to help businesses find available space. It would also include a yearly registration fee and require periodic building inspections.

The EDIC agrees... taking these steps will help curb economic blight and contribute positively to local economic growth!

Union Street Reconstruction

The Department of Public Works has been on our minds recently as our aging public infrastructure continues to shape the planning of future investments. Poor road and sidewalk conditions were noted as key findings in the recently released Rapid Recovery Plan, but the long-awaited Union Street Infrastructure Improvement project is just around the corner. With construction set to begin this Spring, the project will encompass the full reconstruction of the Union Street roadway including brand new underground utilities, sidewalks, crosswalks and the addition of a bike lane. Planning for this project began all the way back in 2013 and was made possible thanks to the Complete Streets Funding Program through MassDOT.

The EDIC agrees... there may be a few grumbles once construction begins and drivers face detours or delays, but the project is a major boon for the city in a vital commercial district we are happy to see move forward.

For more information see: <https://www.easthamptonma.gov/437/Union-Street---20212022-TIP-Infrastructu>

New City Walking Tour

Easthampton city officials recently partnered with civic and environmental consulting firm Fuss & O'Neill to host a walking tour throughout the New City neighborhood. New City had been identified as an area in need of infrastructure repairs with potential concepts supporting historic preservation. DPW and Planning Department members were on hand to discuss the

area, collect feedback and meet with local residents. The event was part of a Community Development Block Grant project to evaluate the area and make plans for the future.

The EDIC agrees... it is important to consider how New City has changed over time when planning for the future. We appreciate efforts from city officials to meet residents where they are and collect feedback directly.

For more information see: www.easthamptonma.gov/NewCity

Housing and School Re-Use

Housing needs are considered a top priority for Easthampton as the city seeks to address housing supply and affordability concerns. Goals stemming from the Housing Production Plan, a grant-funded project submitted to the city last year, include the creation of more affordable and mixed-income housing and the development of surplus city property for housing. Easthampton has reported shrinking household sizes as its population ages, a trend seen across Western Massachusetts as population growth stagnates.

The EDIC agrees... it will benefit Easthampton to pursue housing development projects, including potential school re-use scenarios, that increase and diversify our housing stock while protecting important green space within the community.

For more information see: <https://www.easthamptonma.gov/430/One-Stop-For-Growth---Elementary-Schools>

Parking / Pandemic Relief

Businesses along Cottage Street likely benefited from increased parking options for shoppers after the Maple Street School parking lot was temporarily opened to the public last year. Parking availability has historically concerned businesses along Cottage Street, however the change created an additional 25 parking spots in an effort to help businesses recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

The EDIC agrees... making parking available at Maple School was a good way to support businesses downtown and make it easier for Easthampton residents to shop locally!

For more information see: <https://www.easthamptonma.gov/436/Local-Rapid-Recovery-Program-LRRP>

Thank you for reading **The EDIC Agrees!** We hope you enjoyed hearing from us. We may have other news to share in the future, so keep your eyes peeled! Until then, stay safe and stay warm.

-The EDIC