

Town of Athol

# Developer's Toolkit for Business Growth & Expansion

Created with  
assistance by:

**Eric Smith**

Director of Planning & Development

**Caleb Zimmerman**

Planning Department Intern

**Morgan Woroner**

Volunteer

**Bridget Armentrout**

Executive Assistant





**Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Manager**

Email: [ssuhoski@townofathol.org](mailto:ssuhoski@townofathol.org)

**Bridget A. Sullivan, Executive Assistant**

Email: [selectmen@townofathol.org](mailto:selectmen@townofathol.org)

Greetings!

As the hub of the North Quabbin region the town of Athol has seen unprecedented private and public investment in recent years with a half million square feet of new construction and over 150,000 square feet and counting of redeveloped properties.



We welcome new businesses even as we seek to re-energize our historic downtown district that still bustles with pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Targeted infrastructure improvements, an active downtown committee, ongoing planning projects and favorable zoning all contribute towards making our downtown a viable business district.

The Town's residents have expressed a desire for new businesses in downtown, particularly more and varied restaurants and shopping space. And, existing business owners overwhelmingly noted being happy with their location. These conditions provide a strong foundation for new businesses to open and thrive in a new look downtown Athol.

Nestled in the north-west corner of Worcester County, Athol provides a unique mix of outdoor recreational activities, festivals and events that attract thousands of visitors annually; a prime opportunity to gain new customers. Future plans include siting a hotel proximate to Exit 77 off Route 2 to complement the North Quabbin Commons development next door and a major upgrade to Lord Pond Plaza in the downtown district.

In short, Athol is poised to continue its growth in the coming years and this document will provide helpful information and resources to help you join our amazing community.

If you need more information please feel free to email me directly at [ssuhoski@townofathol.org](mailto:ssuhoski@townofathol.org) or to contact Eric Smith, Director of Planning and Development at [esmith@townofathol.org](mailto:esmith@townofathol.org).

We are here to help.

Sincerely,

Shaun A. Suhoski  
Town Manager



**The Town of Athol, founded in 1762, is a scenic community in Northern Worcester County located between picturesque Tully Mountain to the North and the Quabbin Reservoir to the south.**

### **Small Town Character:**

- Town Population: 11,945
- North Quabbin Region Population: 25,000+
- High Proportion of local, independently-owned businesses
- Natural resources and outdoor amenities surrounded by hundreds of thousands of acres of conserved forests, farmland, lakes, and hiking trails
- 2010 Green Community designation

### **Community Assets:**

- Affordability and low cost-of-living
- Consistently among lowest property tax burdens in the Commonwealth
- Great K-12 schools, including a new elementary school
- Community organizations, including YMCA, a newly-renovated library, senior center, and the Millers River Environmental Center
- Located two minutes from Route 2
- Within 45 minutes of Greenfield, the Pioneer Valley, Keene, Fitchburg, Leominster, and Worcester





## Our History

Nestled in the hills of north central Massachusetts along the Tully and Millers River, Athol boasts of a rich past that has retained a strong influence on the current character of the town. After the King Philip's War in 1676, European settlers founded a community in the area centered around farming and hunting. Developed in the 1730s, this community was known as the Pequoiag.

In 1762, the town was incorporated and renamed Athol. By the end of the century saw, and fulling mills powered by the two rivers were the leading employers for Athol residents. Over the course of the 1800s, the industrial sector boomed for many mill towns across the United States, including our town. As a result of this growth and the need for larger scale regional connectivity, new railroad construction commenced linking Athol to larger cities in the region, such as Springfield, Fitchburg, and parts of Vermont.

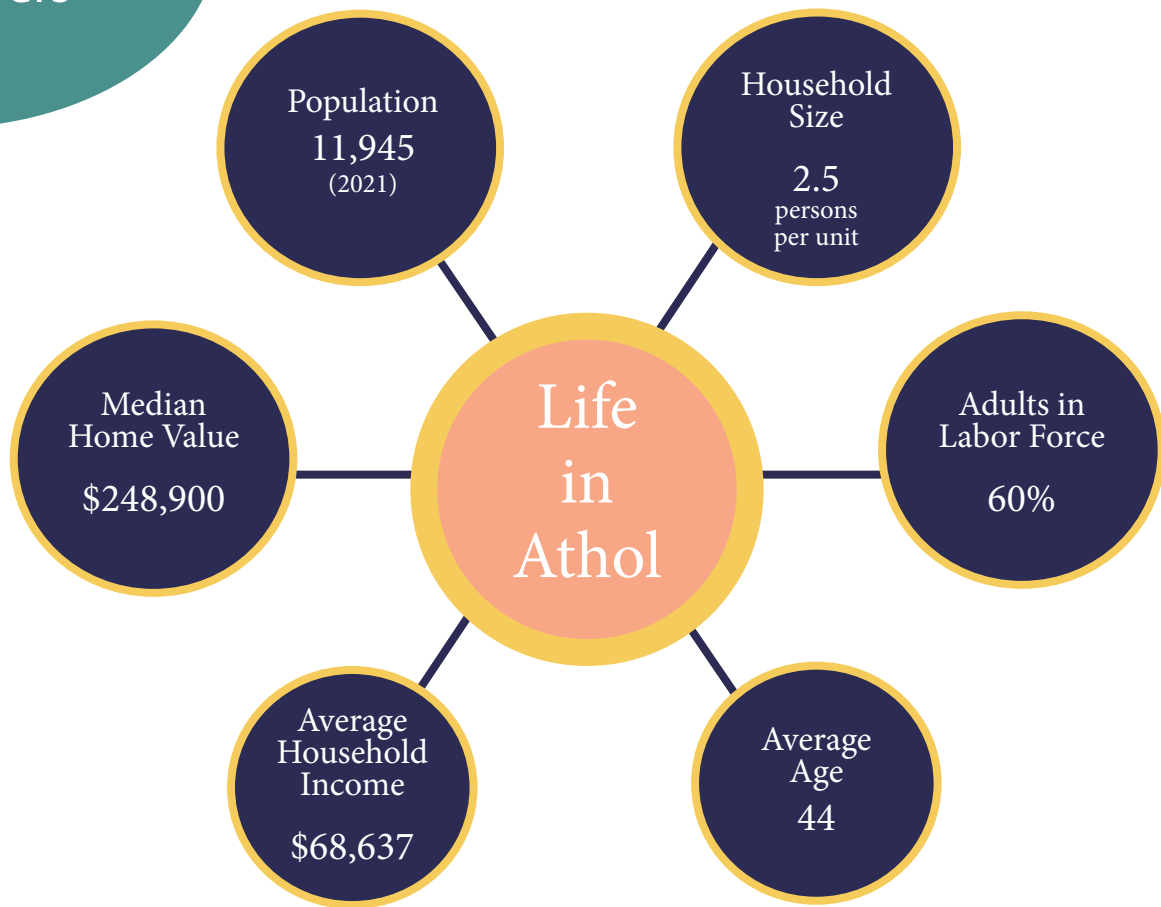


In 1868, the Athol Machine Company was established to produce a chopping machine invented by Laroy S. Starrett. Thirteen years later, Mr. Starrett founded the L.S. Starrett Company, now an international company still producing high-quality precision tools. In 1905, the Union Twist Drill Company opened a mill that manufactured metal cutting tools and quickly grew to become the second largest employer in Athol. These two companies helped create Athol's legacy as the "Tool Town." To this day, the Starrett Mills dominate the downtown landscape along the Millers River and the company remains the largest local employer.

Athol has retained much of its historic character through the preservation of buildings from previous eras - this is particularly evident in the downtown area. The town and North Quabbin region are blessed with natural beauty and many recreational opportunities. From camping, to swimming, to fishing, to hiking trails with stunning vistas, the area is rife with opportunities to interact with nature. Today, Athol is a safe and affordable community that nearly 12,000 people call home.



## By The Numbers



## Top Athol Employers:

- L.S. Starrett Co.
- Athol Hospital
- Athol-Royalston School District
- Hannaford Supermarket
- Market Basket
- Quabbin Valley Healthcare

## Transportation:

- MART bus service
- Easy access to Route 2 & 202
- Within 45 minutes of Greenfield, Pioneer Valley, Keene, Fitchburg, Leominster, and Worcester
- Within 90 minutes of three major airports - BOS, BDL, and MHT

## Key Contacts for Developers:

### **Department of Planning & Development**

Eric Smith, Director of Planning & Development

(978) 721-8500 ext. 517

[esmith@townofathol.org](mailto:esmith@townofathol.org)

Please direct development inquiries and questions to Mr. Smith.

### **Town Manager & Board of Selectmen's Office**

Shaun Suhoski, Town Manager

(978) 721-8451

[ssuhoski@townofathol.org](mailto:ssuhoski@townofathol.org)

Bridget Armentrout, Executive Assistant

[barmentrout@townofathol.org](mailto:barmentrout@townofathol.org)

### **Board of Health**

Deborah Vondal, RS, Health Agent

[dvondel@townofathol.org](mailto:dvondel@townofathol.org)

Jane O'Brien, Assistant Health Agent

[jobrien@townofathol.org](mailto:jobrien@townofathol.org)

(978) 721-8405

### **Planning & Development**

Eric Smith, Town Planner

[esmith@townofathol.org](mailto:esmith@townofathol.org)

(978) 721-8500 ext. 517

Heidi Murphey, Asst. Town Planner

[hmurphey@townofathol.org](mailto:hmurphey@townofathol.org)

978-721-8500 ext. 519

Alyssa Moore, Fiscal Manager

[amoore@townofathol.org](mailto:amoore@townofathol.org)

(978) 721-8500 ext. 518

### **Building Department**

Robert Legare, Building Inspector

[rlegare@townofathol.org](mailto:rlegare@townofathol.org)

(978) 721-8449

Daniel Joly, Gas & Plumbing Inspector

(978) 249-9583

Becky Young, Office Assistant

[byoung@townofathol.org](mailto:byoung@townofathol.org)

### **Assessor**

Lisa M. Aldrich, MAA Principal Assessor

[laldrich@townofathol.org](mailto:laldrich@townofathol.org)

(978) 721-8447

Randi Biorlin, Administrative Assistant

[rbjorlin@townofathol.org](mailto:rbjorlin@townofathol.org)

### **Town Clerk**

Nancy Burnham, CMC/CMCC, Town Clerk

[nburnham@townofathol.org](mailto:nburnham@townofathol.org)

(978) 721-8445

Leanna Dennis, Asst. Town Clerk

[ldennis@townofathol.org](mailto:ldennis@townofathol.org)

### **Public Works**

Richard Kilhart, Superintendent

[dkilhart@townofathol.org](mailto:dkilhart@townofathol.org)

(978) 721-8448

Raul Raskevitz, Asst. Superintendent

[prakevitz@townofathol.org](mailto:prakevitz@townofathol.org)

## Town of Athol

584 Main St, Athol, MA 01331

(978) 721-8500

[athol-ma.gov](http://athol-ma.gov)

Mon., Wed., Fri.:

8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Tues.:

8:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

### **Economic Development**

Keith McGuirk, Chair

[keithmcguirk@live.com](mailto:keithmcguirk@live.com)

### **Zoning Board of Appeals**

Elvin Chartrand, Chair

Robert Legare, Zoning Agent

(978) 721-8449

### **Conservation Commission**

Robert Muzzy, Chair

[conservation@townofathol.org](mailto:conservation@townofathol.org)



# Permits in Athol

## The Department of Planning and Development

The Department of Planning and Community Development works closely with the Board of Planning and Community Development (BPCD), which issues the following permits:

[Site Plan Review Application](#)

[Special Permit Application Form](#)

When undertaking any new building construction over 5,000 sf, a site plan review approval is required.

The BCPD issues special permits for licensed marijuana establishments, flag lots, open space residential design (OSRD), ground-mounted solar photovoltaic installations, and projects included in the Mill Revitalization Overlay District. Other special permits are issued by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

## Building Department

All business must first start in the Building Department to see if the business is allowed under our zoning bylaws.

[Instructions for Building Permits](#)

[Application for Building](#)

[Application for Occupancy](#)

[Change of Use](#)

[Erect Sign](#)

[Building Fees](#)

[Inspection Application](#)

[Demolition](#)

[Permit Signature Sheet](#)

[Plumbing Permit Application](#)

[Roofing, Siding, Windows](#)

[Wiring Permit Application](#)

These forms must be completed to ensure compliance with all Athol building code regulations. Any and all changes to existing structures, along with additions, will be covered by these.

## Health Department

[Disposal](#)

[Establishment Food Permit Application](#)

[Food Permit Application](#)

These forms must be completed to ensure all public health requirements are up to compliance.





# Permits in Athol

## Fire Department

[General FD Permit](#)  
[Commercial Fire Alarm Inspection](#)  
[Oil Installation or Alteration](#)

In compliance with all regulations, these forms must be filled out to ensure safety from building emergencies.

## Board of Selectmen

[Liquor License](#)

For prospective restaurants, this form must be completed in order for any alcohol sales to occur.

## Public Works Department

[Fire Sprinkler System](#)

If you plan on altering or installing a fire sprinkler system, please contact the Public Works Water Division.

## Zoning Board of Appeals

[Special Permit](#)  
[Variance](#)

These permits are only needed in specific circumstances. See Section 2.3 of the Zoning Bylaw from October 2021 available on the town website.

## Town Clerk

[Business License/Certificate](#)

Once zoning approval has been received from the Building Department, please bring the signed approval to the Town Clerk's office to file your Business Certificate. The cost to file the Business Certificate is \$40.00





# Developer Resources

## Business Planning

[Commonwealth of Massachusetts Guide to Starting a New Business](#)

[United States Small Business Administration Opportunity Zone Program](#)

## Small Business Loans & Grants

[Franklin County Community Development Corporation](#)

[MassDevelopment](#)

[Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation](#)

[North Central Massachusetts Development Corporation](#)

[North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce](#)

[North Quabbin](#)

[Loan Fund](#)

## Athol Future Development Plans

[Downtown Rapid Recovery Plan](#)

[Greening Lord Pond Plaza](#)

[Silver Lake Park Redevelopment](#)

## Athol Existing Businesses & Market Assessment

[Downtown Athol: Analysis of Economic & Market Conditions Report](#)

## Athol Zoning Bylaws

[Zoning Bylaws](#)

## Opportunity Zone Program

[opportunity-zone-program](#)

## Vacant Storefront Improvement Program

<https://www.athol-ma.gov/downtown-vitality-committee/bulletins/vacant-storefront-improvement-program-business-assistance>



Millers River Watershed Council. Human History. <https://millerswatershed.org/human-history/>

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopedia (2013, July 15). Athol. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Athol>

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, et al. (Spring 2008). Athol Reconnaissance Report. Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/athol/download>

Athol Public Library. Union Twist Drill Company Works. Postcard Description. <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:bk128p67s>

Town of Athol. About Us. <https://www.athol-ma.gov/live/pages/about-us>

Weil, F. (1998). Capitalism and Industrialization in New England, 1815-1845. The Journal of American History, 84(4), 1334-1354. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2568084>

Greener Pasture Historic Postcards, Athol, MA. <https://greenerpasture.com/Places/Details/692>

Athol Public Library Historic Postcards, Athol, MA. <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:bk128p436>