

The Massachusetts Economic Development Incentive Program

APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AREA (EOA)

PART A: Applicant Information

Date of application: February 1, 2005

1. Please check one:

☒ **X** This is an application for designation of a new EOA within a previously approved Economic Target Area (ETA).

☐ This is a request to amend an EOA previously approved by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC).

2. Community submitting this application:

**Town of Athol
584 Main Street
Athol, MA 01331**

3. Name of proposed EOA:

DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AREA

PART B: Mandatory Requirements for the Proposed EOA

1. Location of proposed EOA(s)

Provide a detailed map of each EOA, indicating the existing streets, highways, waterways, natural boundaries, and other physical features, along with a legally binding written description of the EOA boundaries (with parcel number if appropriate). If the written description is longer than one paragraph, please submit on a computer disk.

The Downtown Economic Opportunity Area is that area in Athol located on Assessors Maps 23 and 30, comprising approximately 35 acres, and bounded on the north by Main Street, on the west by the Millers River, on the south by South Street and a line continuing in a westerly direction from the west end of South Street to the Millers River, and on the east by Exchange Street.

2. Description of EOA(s):

Describe why each proposed EOA was chosen for designation. Include a brief, descriptive narrative of each area, which helps to explain the particular situations, issues, or reasons why EOA designation is requested.

The area was chosen because of its proximity to the Athol downtown area, and because this historic hub of Athol's business center is in need of economic stimulus. The 2004 Community Development Plan identified the Downtown area as vulnerable and threatened, with respect to its vitality, and in need of a specific economic strategy.

There are presently several vacant storefronts located on Main Street, as well as several vacant industrial buildings from the former industrial boom of the 1900's, located primarily along the South Street edge of the proposed EOA. Recent proposals in the proposed area indicate there are business opportunities in the planning stage which the Town is committed to supporting.

3. Basis for EOA designation:

Check the applicable category or categories (see definitions in attachment at back of application) for each proposed EOA:

_____ The area proposed for designation as an EOA is a "blighted open area".

___X___ The area proposed for designation as an EOA is a "decadent area".

_____ The area proposed for designation as an EOA is a "substandard area"

_____ The area proposed for designation as an EOA has experienced a plant closing or permanent layoffs resulting in a cumulative job loss of 2,000 or more full-time employees within the four years prior to the date of filing this application.

4. Effective time period for EOA designation:

How long do you propose to maintain the EOA designation? The EOA designation may remain in effect for a minimum of five (5) years and a maximum of twenty (20) years.

The TOWN seeks to maintain the EOA designation for 20 years. There are several vacant industrial building that may take a number or years to develop plans for.

5. Local criteria for designation of EOA:

Describe how each proposed EOA meets your criteria for designation of EOAs, as specified in your application for designation of the ETA.

The Greater Franklin County ETA did not specify criteria for designation of each Town's Economic Opportunity Areas, but the criteria used for the designation for the Downtown Economic Development Area are consistent with and are expected to advance the goals of the Athol Master Plan, the Athol Community

Development Strategy, and the Athol Community Development Plan. This designation will have a positive effect on advancement of the following Town supported goals:

- Creation and retention of commercial and industrial jobs
- Expansion of the commercial and industrial tax base
- Attraction of new commercial and industrial businesses
- Revitalize the downtown area
- Identify and Promote Infill Development Opportunities
- Market Downtown area

6. Economic development goals:

Describe the economic development goals for each proposed EOA during the first five years of EOA designation.

The economic development goals for the first 5-year period of designation are:

- Applications for any grants or other funding sources as may be required for the development of the EOA
- Develop a Marketing strategy for the Downtown area
- Protection of natural resources and the environment as may be required to sustain long term growth and expansion of businesses
- Infrastructure and other repairs as may promote the development of businesses within the EOA
- Creation of a Public Relations program as may be required for the development of the EOA
- Provide municipal support to new and expanding businesses

7. Local services:

Describe the manner and extent to which the municipality intends to provide for an increase in the efficiency of the delivery of local services within the proposed EOA, i.e., streamlining permit application and approval procedures, increasing the level of services to meet new demand, changing management structure for service delivery.

- The Town of Athol has created a Tax Incentive Finance (TIF) Committee for the purpose of promoting economic development
- The Town of Athol is committed to the prospect of a streamlined permitting process, either through adoption of a site plan review bylaw, or through creation of a permitting policy guideline manual
- The Town of Athol is in the process of upgrading the wastewater treatment facility, which will support addition development
- The town has a recently appointed Economic Development Industrial Committee (EDIC) that will expand its present activity to include a development plan for the Downtown area

8. Compliance with Community Reinvestment Act:

Include a copy of a municipal plan or policy, if any exists, which links the municipality's choice of banking institutions to the bank's compliance with the requirements of the Community Reinvestment Act.

The Town of Athol will develop a policy with respect to the requirements of the Community Reinvestment Act.

9. Project Approval:

- a) Identify the municipal official or group/board, which shall be authorized to review project proposals for and on behalf of the municipality.

The Town of Athol has appointed a TIF Committee consisting of the Town Manager, the Town Planner, the Town Accountant, the Town Assessor, and the Chairman of the Athol Finance Committee. This Board will respond to any inquiries regarding TIF agreements, and will make recommendations to the Athol Selectmen for terms and acceptance of any TIF agreements.

- b) Identify the standards and procedures for review of proposed project proposals, including the application procedures, the timeframe for review and determination, and the criteria and process for approval of the project proposals.

If you intend to use supplemental application material, i.e., municipal cover letter with instructions, job commitment sign-off sheet, supplemental questions to be required by the municipality, etc., it must be attached here and must be approved by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC). Please attach, if applicable.

The TIF Committee will create a procedure manual for applicants, which shall include the documents, contained herein, above, and shall submit it to the EACC for approval. To date, the TIF Committee has created a process for determination of terms to be offered a TIF applicant (attached), with respect to length of the TIF agreement and percentage of deferment.

10. Intent of businesses to locate in EOA:

Identify the names and nature of businesses, if any, that have indicated an intention to locate or expand in the proposed EOA. If possible, include letters of intent from the businesses, outlining the number of jobs that would likely be created and providing a timetable for development of projects.

Two businesses have approved Certified Project Applications and signed TIF agreements, with businesses to be located with the proposed EOA

- **Millbrook Realty Trust dba Baxter Chiropractic**
- **Ocean State Job Lot of MA2005, LLC and OJS of Athol, LLC**