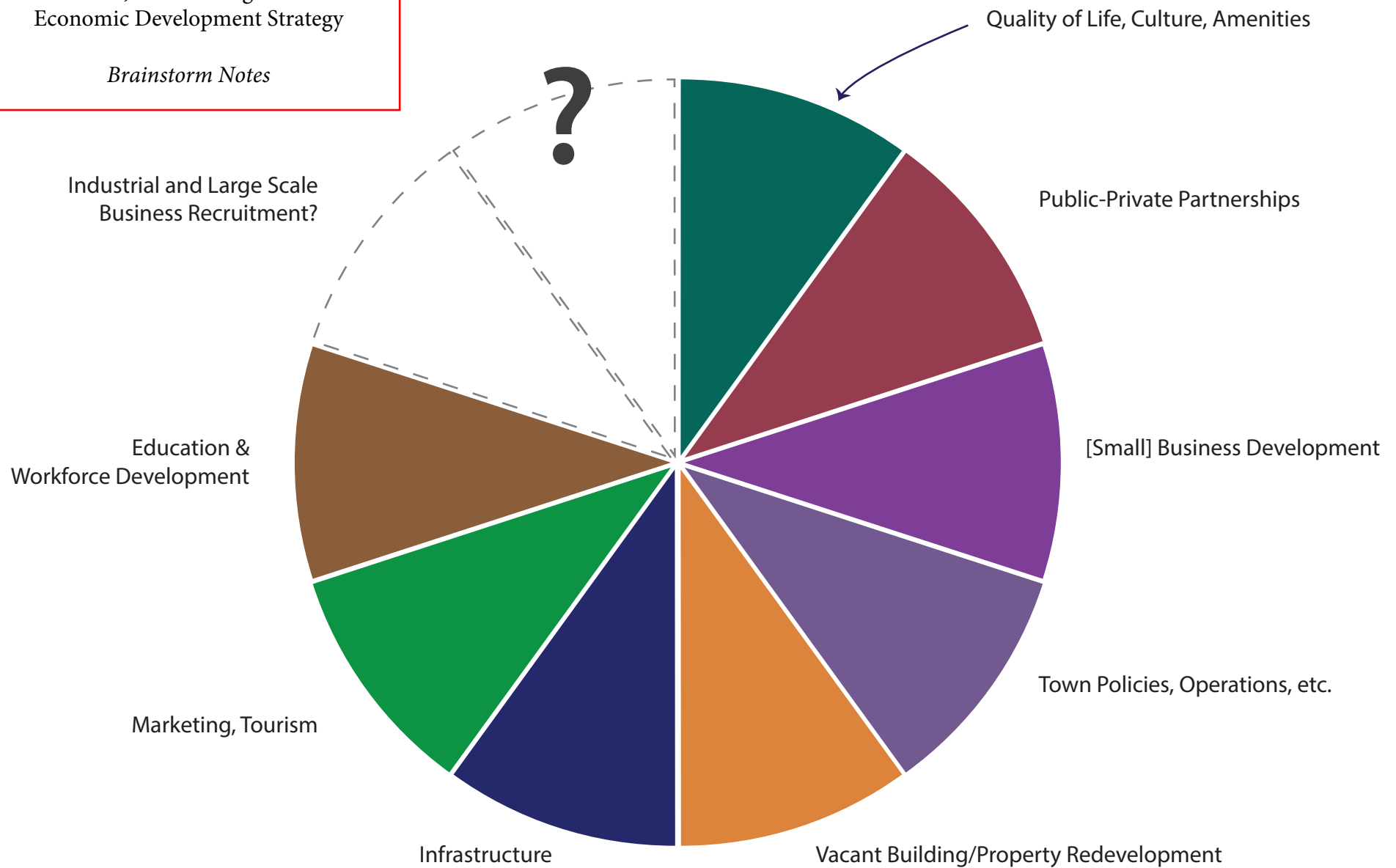


January 8, 2014

Athol BPCD & EDIC
Joint Meeting
Economic Development Strategy

Brainstorm Notes



QUALITY OF LIFE, CULTURE, AMENITIES

ideas from 1/8/14 meeting

- More Arts
- More Jobs
- Eco-tourism and Agri-tourism
- Greenway b/w Athol & Orange for biking and hiking
- Movie theater
- More entertainment options for young people:
 - arcade
 - laser tag
- Inn-to-Inn “trail” for biking, hiking, and other recreational activities
- Bring back Tool Town Live

.....Other ideas.....

- Implement Urban River Visions recommendations (encourage projects like river park @ library; “boardwalk,” investment in Marble St. area, urban greening projects, “art” trail)
- Industrial heritage tourism - “Steampunk” festivals, expand Starrett museum hours
- Commission or encourage public art installations, exhibits, and the like. Also work with private businesses to exhibit art in storefronts
- Improve level of participation from younger generations - social groups like NQ2030 club, more outreach to highschool.
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PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

ideas from 1/8/14 meeting

- Creative ways to re-use old factories (e.g. LP Athol Building) as business incubator space
- Integrate job training with local companies
- Work with Athol Heywood Hospital to develop health and wellness programs, esp. trails and gardens (e.g. Prescription Trails program)
- Continue multi-purpose “creative hub” Millers River Environmental Center (100 Main St)
- Have a process in place for area businesses to work with/go to each other first for networking and professional advice
- Revive the Athol Business Association
- Fiberdrop (?)

.....Other ideas.....

- Develop new and expand existing multi-recreational trails connecting Athol’s open space, natural, historic & cultural resources to its residential areas, and create better directional signage; expand/enhance public access points to the Millers River by working with state, non-profits, and insitutions (FY14 CDS)
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SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

ideas from 1/8/14 meeting

- Prioritize economic needs (expenses vs. revenue)
- Zoning updates - ongoing - redistrict downtown
- Downtown facade program
- Get business groups more active
- Route 2 off-ramp @ South Athol Rd
- Continue development of the new Business Park
- LP Athol as a private/public partnership for incubator
- More marketing and focus on local farms, buy-local, co-op
- Big business tech or manufacturing to provide jobs and commit to local skill development. i.e. read about IBM and Burlington VT
- Teach hands-on skills
- Cold-calling targeted businesses to locate here

.....Other ideas.....

- Continue promoting the North Quabbin Revolving Loan Fund
- Continue to develop strategies for encouraging heritage and recreational tourism-related businesses (FY14 CDS)
- Continue expansion of Agricultural sector as an economic driver by encouraging CSA business, wholesale good enterprises including storage and processing (FY14 CDS)

TOWN POLICIES, OPERATIONS, ETC.

ideas from 1/8/14 meeting

- Update website more regularly; improve layout and functionality overall
- Add webpage about “doing business in Athol.”
- E-News for residents
- get current with FourSquare, Yelp, etc.
- More energy efficiency upgrades to municipal buildings
- Prepare shovel-ready development sites
- Blog about area, town offerings

.....Other ideas.....

- Streamline permitting process - improve coordination between departments; more informational materials and “How-To” guides online for prospective business owners, property owners, developers
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VACANT BUILDING/PROPERTY REDEVELOPMENT

ideas from 1/8/14 meeting

- RFPs for town-owned buildings -- make sure proposal is viable and get back on tax roles, otherwise, tear it down
- Indoor agriculture
- Continue *Commercial Property Tours* (work with Chamber of Commerce, North Quabbin Community Coalition)
- Check zoning, interest for available businesses
- “Knock ‘em down”
- Advertise Receivership program to local contractors
- Boathouse with rowing program
- Indoor community greenhouse

.....Other ideas.....

- Be proactive about selling and re-using vacant elementary schools

INFRASTRUCTURE

ideas from 1/8/14 meeting

- Update Zoning
- Resurface roads
- Downtown - upgrade Exchange St/Marble st roads/sidewalks
- Establish multi-use trail b/w Athol and Orange, along Millers River
- Beautify Buildings (especially on Main St. downtown)
- Decrease amount of paved areas in town
- Develop burnt-out lot of Canal St. (former Cass Factory site)
 - e.g. riverfront park
- Bike Park
- Skate Park
- Fiberoptics & High-Speed Internet availability

.....Other ideas.....

- Support District Improvement Plan for programming and facilities and fund the construction of a new elementary school building (FY14 CDS)
- Support final renovations of the new Senior Center (FY14 CDS)
- Lord Pond Plaza traffic re-engineering and redevelopment (FY14 CDS)
- Support local bus transportation as an economic development strategy - support ongoing public service, new terminal and bus routes, including links to Westminster Train Station and Greenfield (FY14 CDS)
- Make downtown more pedestrian and bicycle friendly (FY14 CDS)
- Limit the extension of water and sewer infrastructure to areas planned for growth and development (FY14 CDS)
- Improve facilities in existing parks through town appropriations or by applying for grants (FY14 CDS)

MARKETING, TOURISM

ideas from 1/8/14 meeting

- Signs off Route 2 (e.g. Visitor Center, Blue Trail, Boat Launch)
- Marketing Campaign focused on proximity to cities like Boston, Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, Keene, Pioneer Valley
- Cross-Country sk trails (groomed), see Carlisle MA example
- Brochures placed at Route 2 Visitors Center in Leominster, Greenfield RMV/Visitors Center, and other high-visibility areas.
- Connect trails from Newton Reservoir to Tully Trails
- Make Athol/region a day-trip/vacation destination
- Hospitality services- restaurants, B&Bs -- train owners in marketing and other skills
- Increase positive advertising of Athol and area

.....Other ideas.....

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING

ideas from 1/8/14 meeting

- Accountability in the AARSD -- set goals: results, improvements, “or else.”
- Work with local companies to promote job training (e.g. advertise the Workforce Development Fund opportunity); partner with MOBD
- Re-establish Satellite facility in Athol for Greenfield CC, MWCC
- Consider establishing a vocational school
- Health care profession education & training (esp. elder care)

.....Other ideas.....

- Collaborate with local agencies to support pre-employment, job training, and employment skills development (FY14 CDS)
- Business Plan Competition (co-sponsor with Chamber) see Binghamton NY example
- High-school age technical skills development, apprenticeship programs
 - internship program: local businesses and students
 - learning/making space @ high school or elsewhere - with shared materials, instruction, creative development
- “Green” energy sector job training

INDUSTRIAL ATTRACTION

- Explore use of New Markets Tax Credits
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- Figure out existing clusters and those to attract: for example:
 - agriculture/food processing
 - small batch manufacturing in existing factory bldgs
 - reclaimed wood, construction materials, and antiques (e.g. Mann Lumber)
 - health, wellness, nature retreats, elderly care
 - artisinal products
 - tools
 - natural products

ideas from 1/8/14 meeting

.....Other ideas.....