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The town of Coventry has several target areas of opportunity - Come grow with us

November 17, 2009 - Connecticut

Gateway to the Last Green Valley; birthplace of Nathan Hale; historic, rural ambiance with modern conveniences; an emerging outer ring marketplace, all describe our community. Conveniently located 20 minutes east of Hartford and just west of the home of the UCONN Huskies in Storrs, the town of Coventry is the place to grow your business. Our town continues to grow and has approved commercial space ready to be built and larger parcels suitable for your plans. Just this month Walgreens and Daisy Creamery have opened; a second phase of Kenyon Mills Condos started; and roads were cut in for Flanders Woods condos. Single family housing starts are continuing. Despite the economy we are the growth spot.

Coventry occupies 38 sq. miles with an estimated population of 12,750 in 4,709 households with over 200,000 persons within a 10 mile radius. Our median household income is a strong \$80,175, which is \$12,939 or 16% above state average. 66% of the population is in the key demographic age group of 18-65, with 24% children, and 10% seniors. We average 50 new homes per year, and population growth at a steady 1.0% increase per year. Our Regional Farmer's Market at the Hale Homestead draws over 30,000 visitors per year and is considered the premier market in the state and is starting a winter market at our high school.

With only 3% of the town's Grand List comprised up of commercial/industrial property, we are the perfect opportunity for retail, services, and commercial development. The Tolland County region has a 32.7% retail leakage rate (ESRI) demonstrating the market potential. The town is committed to additional commercial growth to re-balance the community from being so residential. A development incentive policy to allow phased in assessments was adopted to help new businesses offset start-up expenses. We are participating in a Regional Economic Development study with the Windham Council of Governments, and a Rte. 6 Corridor study with four neighboring towns. Both reports should be complete within the next several months. The town's Economic Development Commission, working with other town boards and commissions, is creating a positive business climate by making the zoning regulations both reasonable and predictable. The P&Z Commission will complete the update of the Plan of Conservation and Development in February. Design guidelines for the village area and Rte. 44 are available to assist assuring your project is compatible with citizens' desires. A community survey indicated only 29% were satisfied with current shopping opportunities, 45% felt that retail growth was too slow, and 81% felt that job growth was too slow.

The town has several target areas of opportunity. The Rte. 44 corridor, with convenient access to Rte. 384, connects the Manchester/Vernon marketplace with the UCONN area. With almost 20,000 cars per day, 18,900 s/f of commercial space is approved for retail/office space next to a new CVS and Dunkin' Donuts. Walgreens just opened across the street and neighboring Meadowbrook Plaza

has just undergone a major facelift. Several other key prospects have also been identified for development or adaptive re-use including an 8-acre commercial property near the Bolton town line. Rte. 31 connects north to the I-84 corridor (4 miles) with prime commercial and industrial land available including a 60-acre commercial property with a former air strip, across from an 18-hole golf course. The Rte. 6 corridor (2 miles to Rte. 384) offers a 100-acre commercial property suitable for a corporate headquarters or campus style development.

The historic Coventry Village is a beehive of activity. An old mill site has been converted to condos with a build out of 46 units. The town is working with the state on a major traffic calming project on Main St. (Rte. 31) slated for completion by 2012 which will include sidewalks and streetscapes to facilitate and grow our antique businesses, specialty stores, and consumer service providers. Several other old mill sites are available for adaptive re-use which can take advantage of newly relaxed state flood plain regulations. Many properties are eligible for historic tax credits and Brownfields Study Funds are expected. New zoning rules allow mixed uses and less stringent site requirements.

Town staff and agencies stand ready to assist you. Please contact me at Jelsesser@Coventryct.org. For further information, development guides and to view videos about the town please visit www.Coventryct.org. Don't miss out on the opportunity to be part of historic Coventry's future.

John Elsesser is town manager for the Town of Coventry.

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