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Hendricson shows how Farmington maintains its strong commercial base and moves forward on key development projects

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A little about me and how I got here...

1) Professionally where were you 10 years ago and where are you now?

10 years ago I was finishing my masters from LBJ School of Public Affairs at University of Texas and starting my career in economic development. Today I am proud to be leading the economic development effort in Farmington.

2) What single event professional or personal has most significantly impacted your career?

During my undergraduate work, I completed an internship at The White House and one with Senator John Kerry from my home state of Massachusetts. Neither of those felt "quite right" so, during graduate school, I interned for a city manager and knew immediately that local government was the branch for me - closer to the people (which can be both daunting and rewarding)!

3) What was the best decision that you made in the last year?

To get more involved with the local and regional industry associations in economic development and commercial real estate. I joined International Council of Shopping Centers and volunteered to serve on a committee for Connecticut Economic Development Association. I have met some great people and learned a LOT already.

4) What award or recognition has been the most meaningful to you and why?

The Special Recognition award from the Farmington Chamber of Commerce was meaningful to me. I was pleased that the Chamber recognizes my efforts to retain and attract quality business to the Farmington community. As the economic development director, I act as a liaison between the local business community, the town government and the Chamber and I understand that we all act as partners to serve our businesses.

5) How do you stay ahead of the curve?

I try to stay current on local happenings and available resources for our business community. I also attend as many events and seminars as possible so that I am continuously educating myself about new trends and programs that are working in other places.

6) Who has been the strongest influence on your career and why?

My first boss in local government who became a key mentor. I worked for her in two different cities - as she moved up, she lifted me up with her and I will always be grateful to her for those opportunities as well as for her ability to show me a woman in economic development who is sharp, savvy and a successful negotiator as well as a fun colleague and friend.

7) What advice would you give to a woman just starting a career in your field?

Seek out a mentor and take advantage of professional development opportunities that emphasize learning and networking. Relationships are key in every aspect of economic development!

This past year, Farmington has maintained its strong commercial base, attracted some notable businesses, and moved forward on some key development projects, all while maintaining one of the lowest tax rates in the Hartford region.

* The town's grand list continues to grow each year despite the recent economic downturn.

* The vacancy rate for Class A office space as well as industrial in Farmington is lower than the Greater Hartford average.

* Farmington's ratio of commercial (26%) to residential (74%) helps keep the commercial tax base strong.

UCONN Health Center

Governor Malloy's "Bioscience Connecticut" initiative aims to create 16,000 jobs and invest approximately \$1 billion in and around the UCONN Health Center and Medical/Dental Schools over the next 25 years.

With this on the horizon, Farmington is well poised to attract new bio/medical type business. This year Farmington joined Connecticut's new bioscience enterprise zone, which provides property tax exemptions, business tax credits and sales tax exemptions to eligible biotech, pharmaceutical and R&D businesses.

In addition, UCONN opened its brand new Stem Cell Institute and business incubator this year. Metro Realty continues to develop and fill medical office buildings nearby.

This year the Economic Development Commission (EDC) completed a professional survey of Farmington businesses to gather feedback on business satisfaction and to guide our future decision-making. We will use the survey results to respond to local business needs via targeted communication, quality events, and ensuring that we provide the necessary support to the local business community so that Farmington continues to be an economic leader in the Hartford region.

Courtney Hendricson is the economic development director for the Town of Farmington.