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Town of Windham, Maine sees positive signs of economic growth

May 31, 2012 - Northern New England

According to a recent report by the Maine Real Estate and Development Association, Windham has a retail vacancy rate of just 3.7% that is nearly half the size of those in neighboring towns in Greater Portland and far lower than the national average. The vacancy data reflects a concerted effort to retain and attract businesses to the town, according to its economic development director.

"It makes sense that businesses are very successful in Windham," said Thomas Bartell, the town's director of economic development. "As the gateway to the Lakes Region, our community is a well-known destination and a place where businesses thrive."

Recent additions to Windham's commercial sector include a Tractor Supply store and Goodwill retail outlet in North Windham, and the potential development of 1.7 million s/f complex to house an hydroponic greenhouse operation.

Few towns have experienced such steady commercial growth, especially considering the challenges of a sluggish national economy and the need to ensure adequate infrastructure and resources are available to meet the increased demands of a vibrant and expanding market.

To meet those increasing demands, Bartell says the town is constantly seeking innovative and cost-effective strategies to ensure continued growth without sacrificing the community's stunning natural resources and quality of life.

As examples, Bartell points to the 21st Century Downtown Initiative, which includes goals and strategies for creating a downtown atmosphere in a village setting adjacent to the well traveled Rte. 302 corridor and the launch of a new web site that promotes the town's commercial sector at www.windhammarketplace.com.

On the recreation side, the town is finalizing plans to turn town-owned property on Chaffin Pond into a park for public use. The 123-acre parcel is located in North Windham, off of the Rte. 302 corridor.

Bartell says the town is also in the process of deliberating a potential upgrade to its wastewater system. If approved by voters, Bartell said, the new sewer project in the commercial district will enhance the town's ability to attract new and larger businesses that will help stabilize residential property taxes.

"It's an exciting time to be in Windham," Bartell said. "Our community has a lot to offer and our future is certainly looking bright."

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540