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## **The Newtown EDC provides an array of services designed to help businesses grow and flourish**

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Newtown Economic Development Commission (EDC) has set forth a road map to implement a robust plan for economic growth and expansion in the community. Continuing to be responsive to the town's changing demographics, opportunities and trends, the EDC looks to enhance business growth and increase employment opportunities and tax revenue by strengthening existing commercial and industrial districts and by advocating for the expansion in areas such as Hawleyville, the Fairfield Hills campus, along the South Main St.corridor and in Sandy Hook Village. Among the strategies being explored, representatives from the Newtown EDC recently completed working with students in the MBA program at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut on a project that researched the potential for a Business Innovation Center in Newtown. This group of MBA students explored the potential need for a business incubator in town, how it might be established, and the variety of ways of creating a resource for Newtown's start-up community. The students were able to offer recommendations on small-business strategies and possible partnerships providing the EDC with a spring board for action.

The Newtown business incentive plan, one of the most comprehensive in the region, was adapted to help improve developers' bottom line. The incentive plan is designed to promote job creation and business development by encouraging private investment that will improve the physical appearance of the community and expand the local economic base. The Newtown EDC recently supported two applications for local tax relief and is confident that the proposed projects will help Newtown realize its economic development goals.

The EDC is actively working with the state of CT and EPA to secure brownfields grants that will help the redevelopment of abandoned commercial sites. The brownfields programs are designed to help local communities by providing expertise and the necessary funding that is needed to leverage the cleanup and reuse of sites which may require special preparation to be safe for future development. The EDC has approached developers who are willing to work with them to cleanup and redevelop sites. Additional opportunities are being sought out.

The EDC has been working closely with the Newtown Water and Sewer Authority to advance a sewer expansion project in Hawleyville. This area just off I-84 at exit 9 has a few large tracts of undeveloped and underutilized land. Expanding the current sewer line could provide abundant new economic opportunities in the area. The feasibility study has been completed, the town approved the funding for the sewer expansion and the project is underway.

The Fairfield Hills Campus also has available building sites totaling more than 25 acres. The campus, a central community consists of historic buildings in a suburban setting. Development may

involve the reuse of the buildings or the construction of new buildings. The campus is located off of I-84 at exit 11 and is served by public water, sewer and natural gas.

The Newtown EDC worked with the town administration on a 45-day Fast Track program for development applications. The town staff and boards will work with applicants to assure that applications are completed within a 45 day period.

The Newtown EDC has worked closely with several new development projects which have recently "broken ground." The Lexington Village is a redevelopment project that will bring 4 new buildings totaling 60,500 s/f, which consists of 30,250 s/f of office space and 30,250 s/f of retail space to the central district in the Borough Village of Newtown. Several new tenants have been identified that will bring new jobs and much needed commercial space to the central business district. Maplewood Medical Center also recently held groundbreaking ceremonies. The Maplewoods development will consist of a 2-story, 26,000 s/f medical office building. DaVita Inc., a national provider of dialysis treatments, will become the lead tenant with approximately 38% of the ground floor. Due to the trend of hospitals moving many of their non-core businesses off-site and closer to the communities they serve, this location would be very suitable for a variety of medical and health care related uses.

The Summit at Newtown is also a project currently underway. The property at 146 S. Main St. is Newtown's newest mixed-use development that features a retail/office/medical component and 10 luxury apartments.

The EDC has partnered with the Newtown Chamber of Commerce, Newtown Savings Bank and the local SCORE office to provide small business seminars on topics ranging from:

- \* "Small business emergency preparedness" to assist business owners to prepare for an emergency;
- \* Business continuity and disaster recovery plans;
- \* Digital Marketing;
- \* Entrepreneurship - starting your own business and writing a business plan; and
- \* Financing for your small business.

These programs have been well attended by existing businesses and by those who are preparing for the start-up of a new business. New programs are being planned for the fall.

The Newtown EDC welcomes all inquiries and has a staff that is trained to handle inquiries professionally and confidentially. Come and discover Newtown, Conn.

Jean Leonard, MBA, is senior financial advisor with Jean Leonard and Associates. She is also the chairman of the Newtown EDC.