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Middlesex 3 Coalition Spotlight: Melisa Tintocalis, Economic Development Director at the Town of Burlington

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Melisa Tintocalis
Town of Burlington

How has your community navigated the COVID-19 pandemic? The town of Burlington has persevered through the pandemic addressing both social issues and maintaining a high level of service for residents and businesses to get through the challenging times. For instance, the town collaborated with nonprofit organizations and local grocery stores to ensure seniors and those in need were able to access food. Deliveries and special curbside pickups were created that safely allowed certain residents to secure food. The town also quickly adopted new technology to allow for online permitting and virtual meetings that enabled businesses and residents to advance projects and planning efforts through the pandemic's shut-down. For instance, Parm, a new restaurant, and Vulcan, a new additive manufacturing firm, received the necessary approvals to proceed with their projects during this time. And as we work towards a reopening and recovery, the town has worked to adopt regulations to expedite various temporary approvals in order to support the reopening of restaurants and other services.

What is the most exciting economic development project for your community in 2020? The most exciting development project prior to the pandemic was the Burlington Mall renovation. The project remains exciting, however, the town will have to be patient. Simon Group has undertaken the transformation of the old Sears building and outlined plans for new restaurant and retail space. In addition, there is significant interior rejuvenation underway that will bring fresh amenities and inspiring spaces to the mall. Although the pandemic has slowed these efforts, the town's officials and Simon Group, the mall owners, are confident the demand is deep and will quickly revive as our communities navigate the recovery. A less visible, yet significant economic development project for Burlington is the expansion of our water system. Burlington decided to supplement its local water supply by joining the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA), a \$4.4 million investment. This effort is phase one of a two phased project which will create a more reliable water system and augmenting the daily supply to 6.5 million gallons of water a day supporting residents and business growth.

What attracts businesses to your community? Businesses are attracted to Burlington for its geographic location, business friendly approach, and the access to a smart and talented workforce. Burlington is part of the Boston metro region, located directly off Rte. 128 – the area's key beltway – and a short drive to Cambridge and Boston. Burlington has supported business growth through the adoption of positive land use policies and a strong practical "get things done" attitude. Local town government officials are accessible and responsive to the business community and value a diverse economic base. Lastly, Burlington and the surrounding areas offer an educated and capable pool of employees, with approximately 55% of local residents having a college degree or higher.