

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Greg Morgan, Chair

Commission Members: Barbara Higgins, Jonathan Guy, Jerry Firkey, Betty Poulin

The Economic Development Commission (EDC) thanks the Selectboard for adopting the priority strategies culled from the Economic Development and Diversification Plan completed in 2010. As the EDC reported last year, "The 13 strategies in the report were deconstructed and reconstructed prior to a review process that resulted in a priority ranking." The Commission was gratified to see our prioritized list in the revised Town Plan.

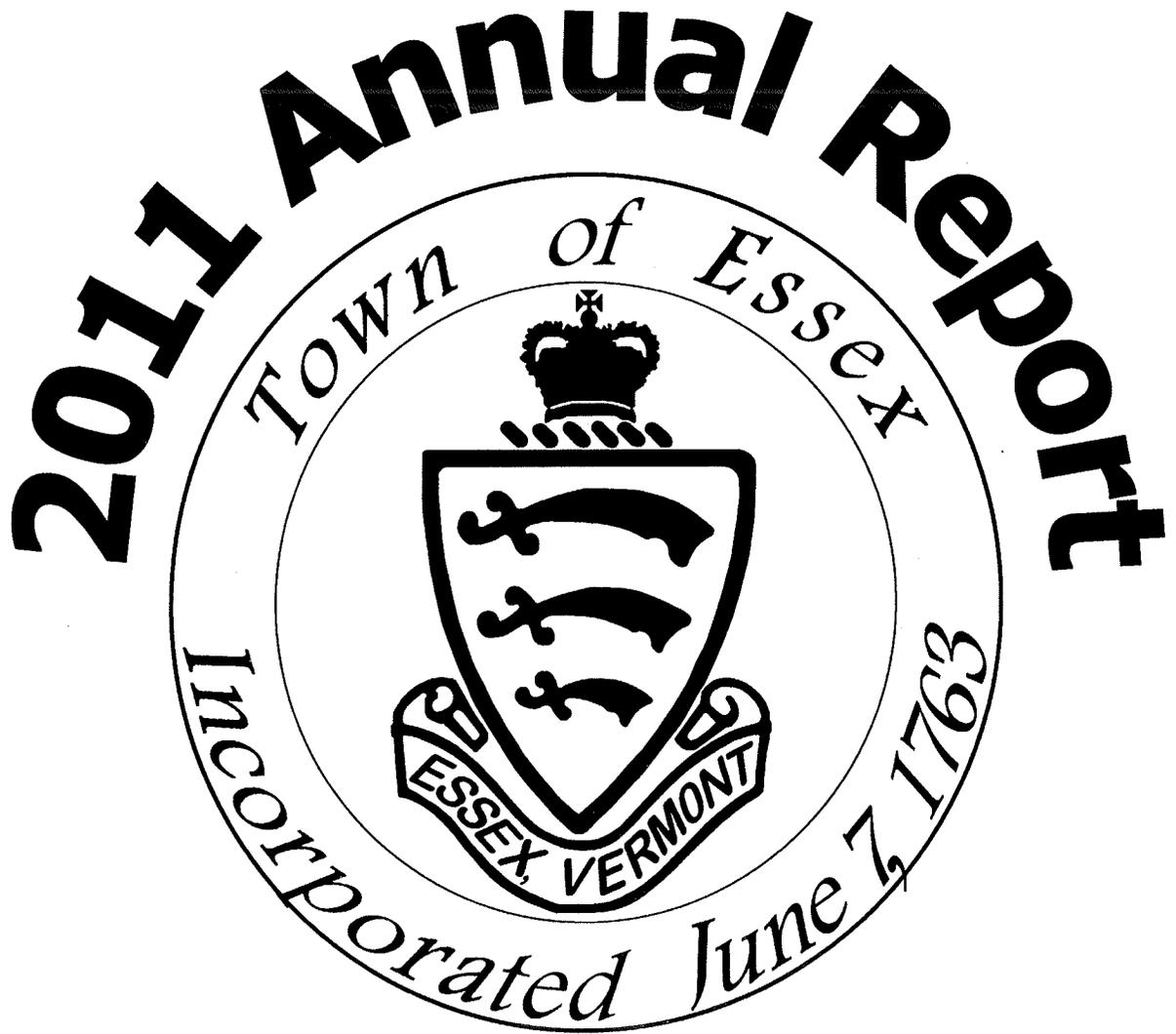
In 2011, those 13 prioritized strategies have guided the EDC's work. In response to "Strategy #3: Government Service Retention and Expansion," the group began to learn about the empty 180,000 square foot, State of Vermont owned building (formerly IBM Building 617) in Saxon Hill. The facility remained largely unoccupied for more than five years. After a meeting with the Essex delegation to the Vermont Legislature, the EDC arranged a tour of the facility. The State of Vermont is actively attempting to either occupy or sell the facility. In 2012, the EDC hopes to continue to promote productive use and occupancy of Building 617.

As part of "Strategy #4: Marketing Program," the EDC recommended participation in ShopQA, a service that would have provided a platform to create an online directory of local businesses and to enable smaller businesses without an online presence to set up a website. Because the project was not supported broadly and due to significant staff and volunteer commitments, the EDC withdrew this recommendation.

Collaboration with local and regional groups is part of the Commission's work. The EDC thanks the Essex Town Planning Commission for reaching out to begin a conversation about the economic vitality of the Town. Additionally, the Commission is grateful to the Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation (GBIC) for its support of the Green Mountain Coffee Roasters (GMCR) expansion in the Town and GBIC staff willingness to work with us on future projects.

Beyond the work of the EDC, several important economic development accomplishments occurred in 2011. GMCR has made a major commitment to expand in the Town by increasing the size of its Kellogg Road operation to more than 500,000 square feet. Construction began in the fall. The size and scope of this expansion is the most significant economic development event in Essex in decades. The EDC thanks GMCR for selecting this Essex location after conducting a site search up and down the east coast. The Commission believes that the timely and attentive work of the Town's planning staff and the Planning Commission were an important part of the GMCR decision to expand here. In addition, the EDC congratulates the Village planning team for resolving Flex-a-Seal issues in a way that enabled the company to continue to operate and grow here.

Finally, the EDC congratulates the Steering Committee that engineered the joint Village-Town application to the Orton Family Foundation's Heart and Soul Program. We look at this process as an important new vehicle to build collaboration with the Village, a collaboration that has been fostered on our Committee by the regulation participation of the Village Planner.



Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2011