

2013

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Commission Members: Jerry Firkey, Barbara Higgins, Robin Lane
Greg Morgan (Chair) and Betty Poulin

Commission Advisors: Trevor Lashua, Assistant Town Manager;
Greg Duggan, Town Planner;
Robin Pearce, Essex Junction Planning Director; and
Curt Carter, Vice-President, Greater Burlington Industrial Corp.
(GBIC)

Ex-Officio: Michael Plageman, Selectboard Member, Town of Essex
Lori Houghton, Trustee, Village of Essex Junction

This year the EDC has sought to adopt new ways to include both Town and Village perspectives, just as the two entities have explored ways to consolidate services. The addition of a Town and Village elected officials as **ex-officio members** and the enhanced participation of planners from both entities has significantly broadened the EDC's reach.

- **Land Positioned for Commercial & Industrial Development:** In 2013 two **proposed** developments, when coupled with existing available commercial space, have positioned Essex as Vermont's major source of land available for commercial and industrial development in Vermont. Essex is sitting on land that can accommodate the development of over 1.5 million square feet of space. The Essex Junction Planning Commission approved IBM's proposed master plan to establish the **Champlain Valley Innovation & Technology Park**, up to 300,000 square feet of light industrial and professional office space off Maple Street. Actual development depends on interest from prospective occupants.
- At the end of legislative session the State of Vermont sold Building 617 at **30 Allen Martin Drive**, a former IBM chip testing facility structure located on 50 acres, to Williston-based REM Development. REM proposes to replace the existing structure with 3 buildings totaling 420,000 square feet to be phased in over 10 years. The Essex Planning Commission and ACT 250 approvals were in place by the end of 2013. Neighbors from adjacent Maplelawn Drive participated actively at every stage of the permitting process.
- **Saxon Hill Industrial Park** in the RPD-I District has multiple lots available for development.

Business News – Additions, Subtractions and the Top Employers:

- **Huber+Suhner:** In October, the Swiss owners of Huber+Suhner announced the company plans to move operations to North Carolina and New Jersey by mid-2014. More than 60 jobs will be lost to Essex and to Vermont when the move is complete.
- At year's end the **United States Department of Homeland Security (USCIS)** is completing construction on an annex at its River Road location. Space for up to 300 additional employees is being created.
- **Reinhardt Food Services** is the nation's largest food wholesaler. The company is moving its Vermont operations to Thompson Drive by building a new facility to consolidate its two existing facilities.
- **Citizen Cider:** Two years ago, three entrepreneurs started making an "all-Vermont" hard cider in the Essex part of Fort Ethan Allen. To promote their product, a tasting room followed. The EDC wants to thank Essex Town's planning staff for their concerted efforts to assist Citizen Cider through the Town's permit process which would have established basic health and safety conditions on the site. Late in 2013 the Citizen Cider team announced plans to relocate to Pine Street in Burlington. The EDC expects this remarkable business to make major contributions to the Vermont economy.

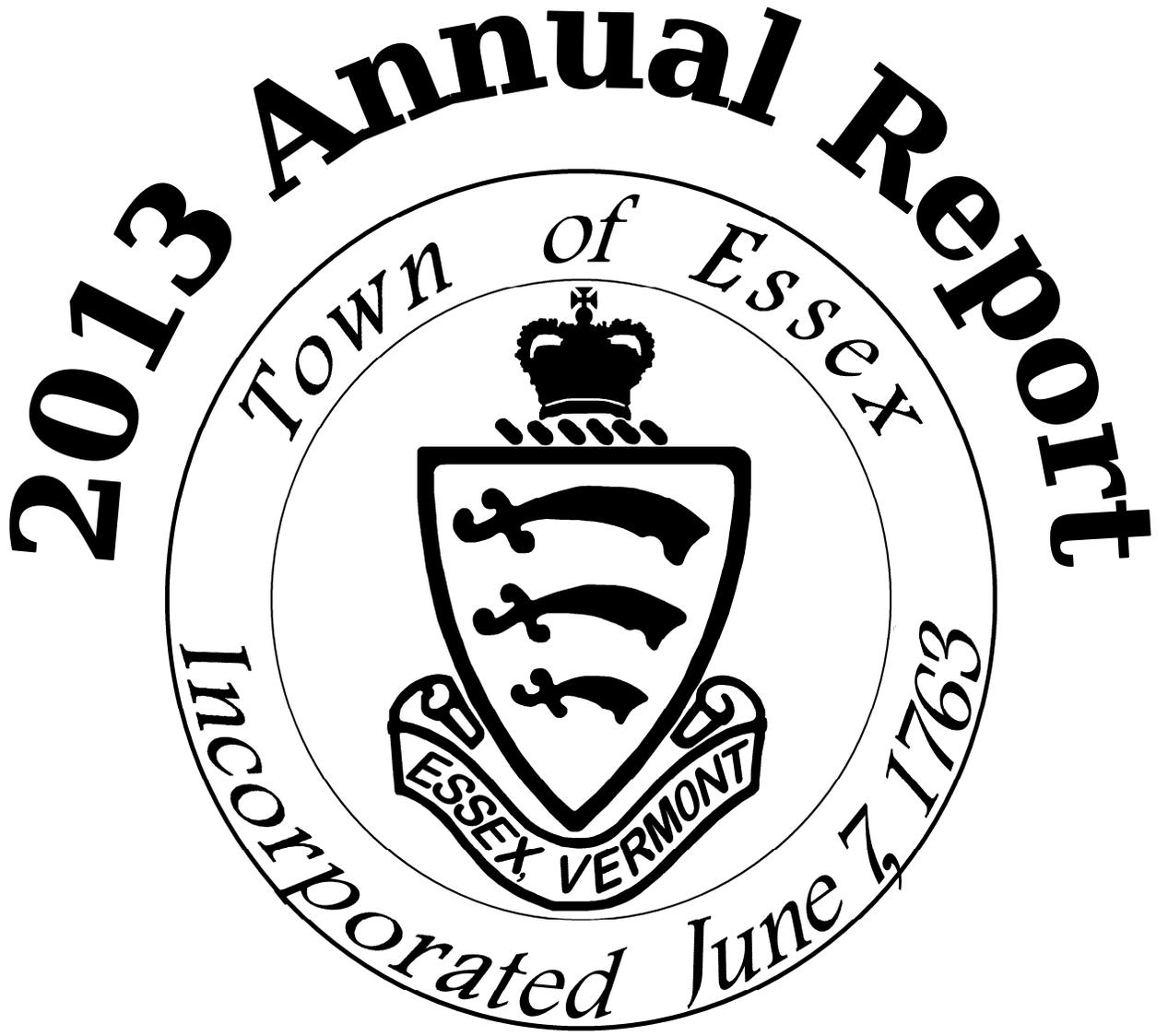
- **Top Employers in Essex - 2013:** Essex-based companies with more than 60 employees include: IBM Microelectronics (~3,800); Green Mountain Coffee Roasters (800); US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (700); Autumn Harp (248); Revision Military (170); FoodScience of Vermont (155); The Essex Resort & Spa (100); Catamount Color (85); Vermont Systems (85); Harmony Information Systems (80) (added this year); Flex-a-Seal (78); and Huber+Suhner (63).

Re-visioning Fort Ethan Allen: As a result of the process that resulted in the departure of Citizen Cider, the EDC plans to lay the groundwork for a “re-visioning” of Fort Ethan Allen. This initiative will involve working with residents of the Fort who have expressed interest and with Colchester, which also governs part of the Fort. Any land-use changes will involve revisions to the Town Plan and require support and approval from both the Essex Planning Commission and Selectboard.

Exploring Support for Start-Ups / Entrepreneurs: Vermont has an active network, led by the VT Office of Creative Economy, cultivating a culture that supports entrepreneurs – Vermonters willing to take the risk of starting their own businesses and creating jobs. The EDC is exploring ways for Essex to become more involved with this effort. In June the EDC co-hosted a *VT Tech Meetup* with FreshTracks Capital and Start-Up Vermont at Citizen Cider, with many enthusiastic Essex residents joining entrepreneurs from the region. In the future, the EDC will explore additional ways to create a local culture that supports business startups, including some of the following:

- Create a Co-Working Space/coffee shop, a version of a concept identified by Heart & Soul – Essex’s value setting process. To succeed this effort will need to be led by local entrepreneurs and free-lancing technology experts;
- Build a Maker Space, a place where innovators can learn to use the latest technology; and
- Create a community technology education program (for example, a coding class).

New Faces and Positive Energy at the EDC: This year Robin Lane was appointed to the EDC by the Selectboard. She brings a unique set of skills and experience, having served as the CEO of a Vermont technology company and having taught technology at Champlain College. She now leads the Essex Technology Center’s efforts to link its curriculum to the needs of area businesses. Also, Selectman Mike Plageman and Trustee Lori Houghton participated regularly, building EDC communication with both governing boards.



Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2013