

Comprehensive Plan Workshop, March 3, 2012

Economic Development Breakout Session

- **Actively pursue economic development.** Given competition from other towns, Bedford is not doing an adequate job of showcasing itself and making it easy for businesses to relocate here. The Chamber of Commerce has tried to recruit new businesses to town, but does not have the resources to devote to such a large undertaking.
- **Develop a marketing package for attracting new businesses to Bedford, and recruit those that reflect the town's vision for its future.** Desirable new businesses range from a pub, a bakery, and a seller of local produce to more offices on Crosby Drive, as well as "green" businesses.
- **Ask existing businesses what attracted them to Bedford, and what the town can do to improve the business environment, and seek to retain existing businesses.**
- **Provide one-stop shopping for permitting, to help companies understand the process and reduce permitting time. Develop clear standards so applicants understand what's required and expected of them, and limit the permitting process to 90 days.** The permitting process is cumbersome, and particularly punishing to small businesses that could not afford the lengthy process the town sometimes requires, which can include review by Planning, Conservation, and town engineers. The existing development approval process, wherein a company passes the gauntlet of town departments, leads to confusion and raises permitting costs.

Billerica put on a full-court press to convince a particular company to relocate there, with the town manager, planning director, conservation commissioner, and others together persuading the owner that the town's permitting process would be welcoming and easy to navigate.

- **Encourage retail businesses to open in the Middlesex Turnpike area, to help attract new office tenants.**
- **Create business districts with different zoning requirements, or build flexibility into zoning.**
- **Improve the sign bylaw.**
- **Encourage Bedford businesses to be more environmentally sustainable.**

Thorny Questions

- Can we expand our business base without sacrificing quality of life—such as by creating more traffic?
- Should we be using tax incentives, such as tax increment financing, to encourage companies to remain in or relocate to Bedford? How do businesses that do not receive such selective tax breaks perceive them?
- Should Bedford target certain industries and businesses while discouraging or excluding others, such as fast food?
- What kind of businesses does Bedford need, as opposed to want?
- How can Bedford affect the base closure process? Do we need new zoning for the Hanscom area?
- Can the town save money by regionalizing services, such as fire and 911?