

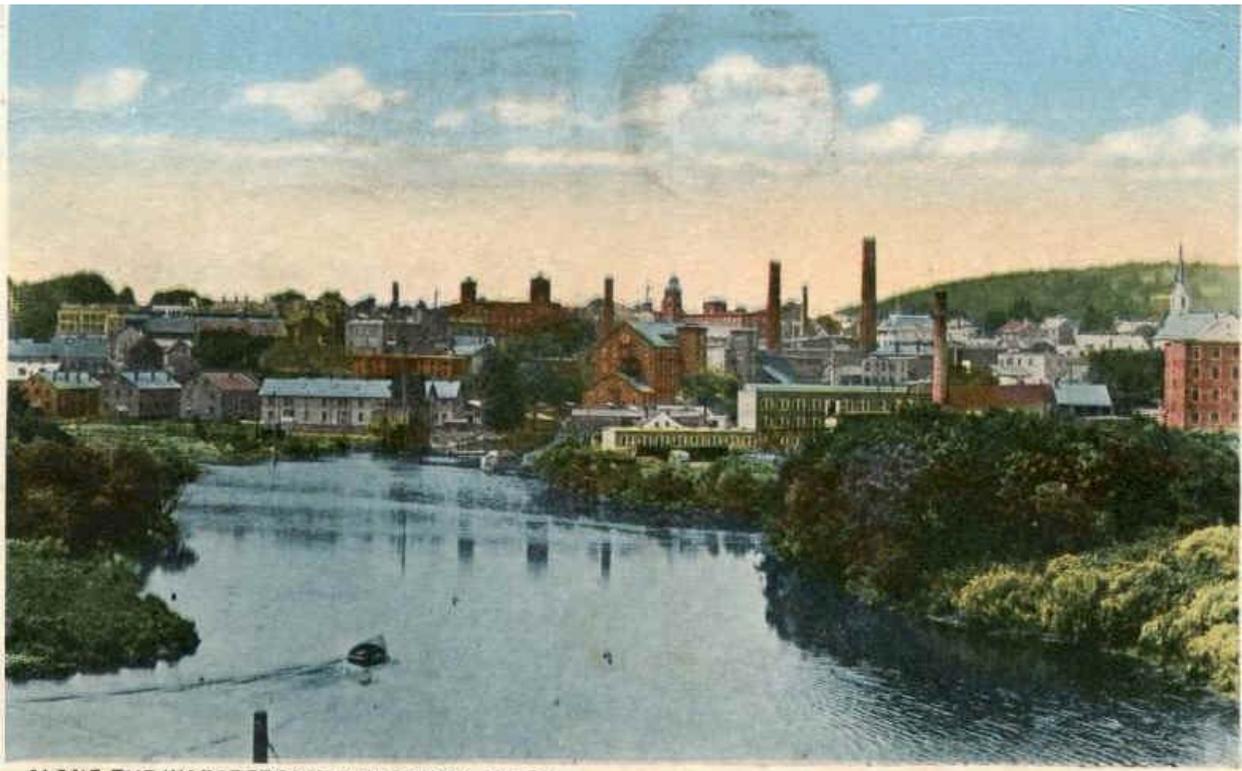
The City of Amesbury Community Development Strategy

Submitted for the Community Development Block Program

January 2015

Mayor Ken Gray

William Scott
Director
Office of Community and Economic Development
City of Amesbury
scottw@amesburyma.gov



Introduction

Man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow-men.

Mahatma Gandhi

The City of Amesbury continues seeks positive growth yet understands the implications of gentrification common to former mill communities facing growth. The needs of low and moderate income residents are prevalent today as households struggle to stay within the community with an older housing stock while facing the pressures of gentrification. Despite other communities realizing a loss in affordable units the City of Amesbury is able to sustain its populations in a diverse socio economic mix. However economic pressures will continue as surrounding communities face even greater pressures of increased housing costs. The City must establish a means to sustain a livable community for all of its residents now and into the future.

The City is a suburban community in northeastern Massachusetts with a unique industrial and manufacturing history. First settled by Europeans in 1645, the town's earliest industries included mills, shipyards and a heavily used ferry operation across the Merrimac River to Newburyport. Agriculture was secondary to an aggressive maritime and industrial economy that included shipbuilding, shipping and fishing. By the 19th century, however, textiles, ironworks, and the saw and gristmills that had been established along the Powow River, supplanted these maritime industries. Carriages for horse and buggy were one of Amesbury's chief products until the 20th century, when the carriage mills converted their production facilities into plants for making automobile bodies. Until the Great Depression of 1929, auto body making was a major industry in the town.

Today, Amesbury's convenient location at the crossroads of I-95 and I-495, just 43 miles north of Boston, has made the town attractive to both residential and commercial development. Due to economic shifts in recent decades, Amesbury has continued to move away from the typical mill town employment base toward a more suburban employment structure, with increasing emphasis on service related employment. Amesbury benefits economically from this association and is well positioned to absorb economic growth. The Town has excellent access to both the Boston and Southern New Hampshire market areas and has the land to accommodate new commercial development. More importantly, however, Amesbury's residential growth in recent years continues to be dramatic, demonstrating the potential for continued economic recovery.

The town's population today is just under 16,500. Some major trends in the past decades have included a high rate of growth. Another focus for the Town has been to ensure a sufficient supply of affordable housing in order to comply with Executive Order 418. At the same time, efforts are being made to ensure a diverse housing stock to accommodate a wide range of income levels and lifestyles. There have been major strides over the last decade to revitalize the downtown, including redeveloping vacant mill space, making facade improvements, and updating all downtown infrastructure and public amenities.

As strong regional growth pressures continue and as more jobs are created along the I-495 and I-95 corridors, there will be greater pressure on Amesbury as a residential location. As the residential base of the community expands, there will be greater demand for local services which will in turn expand and broaden the economy.

As growth occurs the City's low and moderate income residents could be a victim of the City's own success. This community development strategy is meant to address the current needs of the City's Low- and Moderate Income Persons, Persons with Disabilities, the Elderly, and Minorities, while creating opportunities to provide opportunities in the presents and sustain a future for these residents.

Amesbury City Facts

- 2010 Population...16,283 (US Census)
- Nov 2014 Labor Force 8,972, Employed 8,539, Unemployment Rate 4.8% (MassGov)
- 2010 Total Housing Units 7,027 (US Census)
- Housing Units 1939 or Earlier 2,687 (US Census)
- 2010 Per capita income \$38,659 (US Census)
- 2010 Median household income \$78,486 (US Census)
- FY14 Average tax bill \$6,101 (Assessor)
- FY14 General Budget \$52,436,264 (City Finance Dept)
- FY14 Water Budget \$3,670,571 (City Finance Dept)
- FY14 Sewer Budget \$2,777,042 (City Finance Dept)

The City Master Plan as the Community Development Strategy

The City of Amesbury's comprehensive Master Plan is the unified driving force behind the development of its Community Development Strategy (CDS). The Master Plan is the planning document that will guide the City's actions over the next several decades. It is the policy document for achieving the community's vision for future growth and development, preserving critical wildlife habitat areas, maintaining scenic corridors and vistas, ensuring protection of farmland and water resource areas, and developing the proper framework to promote opportunities to accommodate the housing, employment and service needs for its residents. In addition to the Master Plan, the City commissioned a housing needs assessment that was the springboard for the Amesbury Planned Production Plan.

Amesbury's planning documents reflect the collective voice of the people who live, work, and play in Amesbury. Through an extensive public outreach and involvement process, a series of Focus Groups looked at trends, opportunities, and current issues and problems within selected topic areas. The Focus Groups consisted of five to seven community members with specific areas of experience and expertise, and met at least monthly to analyze data, develop a vision and goals for each Master Plan Element, and to develop a series of strategies and action items to achieve the goals. A series of public meetings, workshops, and events were held throughout the process to solicit community input and feedback. The extensive planning process involved hundreds of residents who provided tremendous input regarding key issues of concern, strengths to build upon, and comments on goals, strategies, and implementation actions. In addition, the Strategy is revised on a yearly basis to reflect the changing needs of the community through a Public Hearing process.

Each of the identified priority elements contains a specific list of derivative goals. The CDS highlights the priority goals in each element, and assimilates the derivative goals outlined in the Master Plan.

LAND USE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT ELEMENT

Provide a Distinct, Attractive, and Vital Downtown in a Protected Context

Amesbury will build upon and continue its heritage as a classic New England village. The identity of neighborhoods within the Village Center will be preserved, the central business district will be enhanced, and development in outlying areas will be managed to preserve the environmental and scenic characteristics that make Amesbury a special place to live. Long-term residential growth will be controlled to make best use of current and economically feasible enhancements to the City's infrastructure. Future development will support the goals to be a sustainable community, and land use patterns will reinforce Amesbury's small city character.

HOUSING ELEMENT

Ensure a Variety of Housing Options for an Economically Diverse Population

Amesbury has a great diversity in its housing stock, with a broad range in home prices and rents suitable for a variety of income levels, age groups, and needs. Our community will continue to offer housing opportunities that meet the needs of Amesbury residents of all ages and income levels, as well as meeting the Commonwealth's guidelines to provide at least ten percent of its housing stock at affordable levels. The goal to provide a range of housing choices will be consistent with smart growth principles, promoting housing opportunities within the downtown area, preserving open space and natural resources, and Amesbury's historic homes and neighborhoods.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Encourage and Support a Diversified Local Economic Base

Amesbury is a vibrant community with a diverse tax base that protects and improves the quality of life while respecting the existing cultural and community character. Planned economic development will keep Amesbury affordable and provide community oriented services in the downtown. A diverse and ecologically sound economic base will include retail, commercial, light industry, as well as using culture and the arts to stimulate economic growth. Downtown development will be balanced to provide goods and services for Amesbury residents, and to encourage discreet industrial development in appropriate areas to enhance the tax base. Amesbury will highlight its natural, cultural, and historic resources to promote tourism and ecotourism in City, complementing regional attractions.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENT

Provide Efficient Services and Facilities to Support the Quality of Life in Our Neighborhoods

Amesbury's public services provide fundamental elements to support the quality of life and the needs of Our community. The City will continue to implement, maintain, and upgrade essential public services that support the needs of Amesbury residents, by utilizing sustainable technologies, protecting the community's environmental and natural resources, and ensuring a high level of public safety, education, and protection. The City will ensure the provision of infrastructure to meet the current needs of its residents, and to support economic growth where feasible and appropriate. The City will continue to provide efficient, open communications, education, collaboration, and cooperation on projects and issues of concern to the general public.

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

Provide Efficient Services and Facilities to Support the Quality of Life in Our Neighborhoods

Amesbury will provide and maintain safe, healthy, efficient, adequate, and environmentally friendly networks for all modes of travel. Safe, quiet streets and efficient transportation systems will enhance the quality of life in its neighborhoods. Pedestrians and cyclists will have access to a wide-range of local and regional resources. The City will explore alternative methods of public and private transportation, especially for connections to regional attractions, jobs and other transportation systems. The City will support commercial and residential viability, promote a pedestrian oriented downtown environment supported by convenient and adequate parking, and streets and sidewalks that are safely connected to adjacent neighborhoods and recreational amenities.

SOCIAL SERVICES ELEMENT

Provide Access to Social Services that Facilitate and Support the Quality of Life to Residents

Amesbury's social services provide fundamental elements to support the quality of life and the needs of our community. The City will continue to support social service programs that provide for the physical, emotional, and social needs of Amesbury residents. The City will continue to improve outreach and access to supportive services, and increase coordination among Amesbury service providers. The City will provide efficient, open communication, education, collaboration, and cooperation on social service programs and issues of concern to the general public.

Community Development Strategy Priority Logic

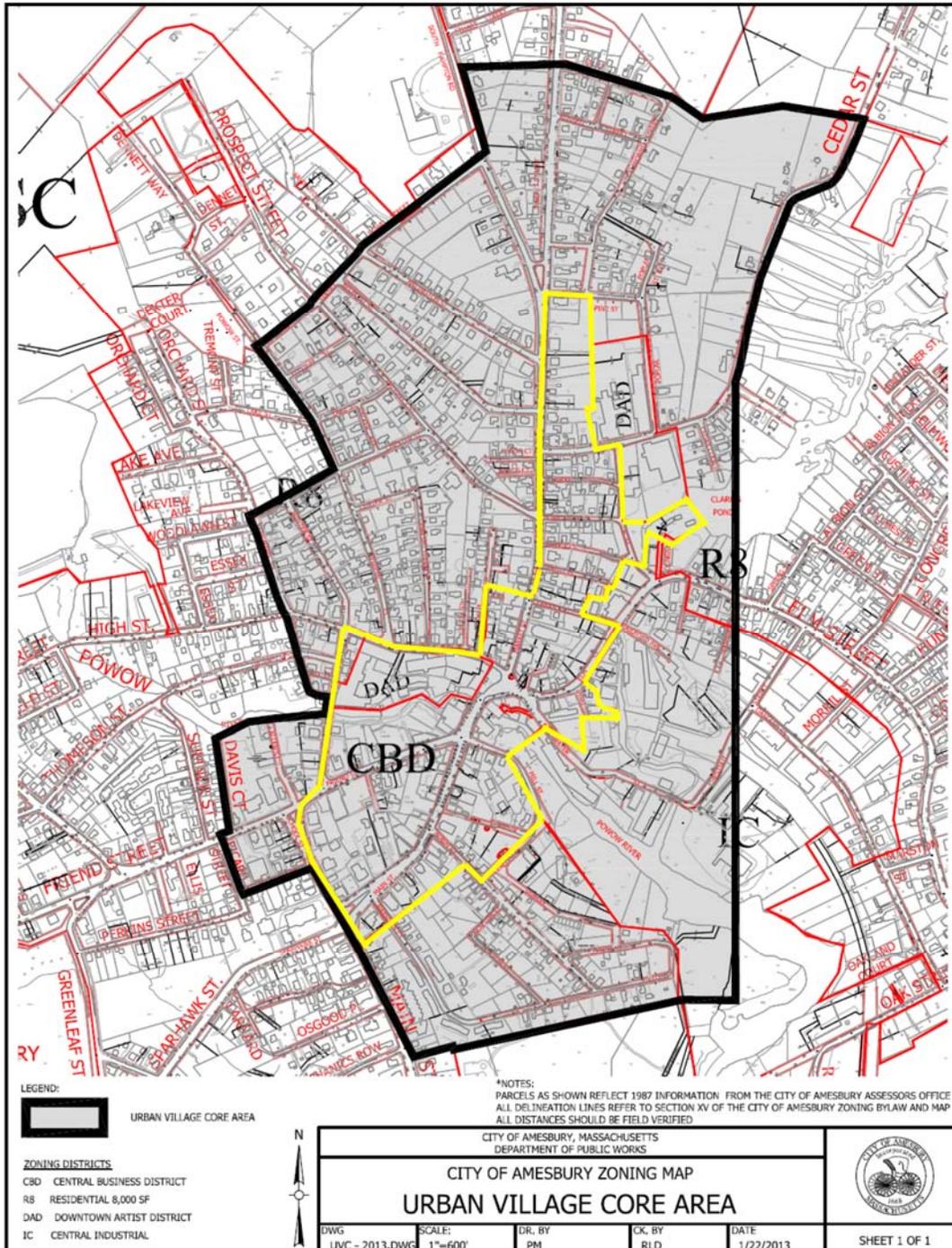
The following table provides an overview of the City goals and objective relating to priority areas, the problems and needs leading to those areas, the service or activity that could address the priority and the term (short or long) to address the priority. Similar to the HUD Logic Model the table provides a relationship between the issues that the communities faces with the opportunities the City wishes to employ to create a cohesive and comprehensive approach to sustain the socio- economic mix that has served Amesbury since before its incorporation. The table is organized by the Elements provided in the Master plan and the Priorities are closely tied to the Goals of the document.

The primary concentration of targeted services will be the *Urban Village Core Target Area (see map next page)*. The Urban Village Core contains in its eastern border the section known as the Aubin-Nayson Neighborhood, the centrally located Central Business District (CBD), and the Market Street Neighborhood located in the northern and western borders. The Central Business District (CBD) is located in a Designated Slums and Blight Area (121B). This area is the oldest and most underserved of the City's 25 distinct neighborhoods, and is the focus of a comprehensive revitalization.

The residential characteristic of the Urban Village Core is predominately balloon construction dating back to the late 1800's. The neighborhood feature is a mix of densely populated, single and multi-unit homes.

The basis for assigning priority needs includes data derived from the U.S. Census, local studies, and information gathered from cooperative relationships and consultation. The framework for priority assignment was shaped by North Shore HOME Consortium Continuum of Care coordination and public hearing process, the City's Citizen Participation Process, Community Action, Inc. Strategic Plan and Needs Assessment, and Community Development Block Grant regulations. The Community Development Strategy is consistent with and reflects the sustainable Development Principles outlined by the Office for Commonwealth Development. Other documents used in the development of this strategy are as follows:

- Historic Preservation Plan (1999)
- Redevelopment Plan – Lower Millyard (2002)
- Planned Housing Production Plan (2006)
- Route 110 Economic Development Study (2007)
- Economic Diversification strategy (2008)
- Housing Production Plan (2012)
- Open Space and Recreation Plan (2012-2019)
- Regional Strategic Framework Plan - Sequel to the 2009 Priority Growth Strategy (MVPC, 2011)
- Merrimack Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2013)



Priority Table Logic Model

Element	Priority	Problems and Needs	Service Activity	Term
Land Use	<p>Reduce in the number of blighted, abandoned and fire-damaged buildings in targeted neighborhoods.</p> <p>Increase the mix of housing types throughout the Urban Core.</p> <p>Create diversity in the downtown economy to sustain broader services for the Urban Core residents.</p> <p>Identify areas within the 25 distinct neighborhoods that are in need of revitalization and community improvement.</p>	<p>The constraint of abandoned, and blighted structures negatively impacts neighborhoods.</p> <p>From the above constraint there are opportunities for housing for low and moderate income residents.</p> <p>Housing diversity is dependent on market forces in the absence of opportunities to facilitate diversity.</p> <p>There is a need for affordable housing construction grants and incentives.</p> <p>Vertical integration of land uses will facilitate diverse goods, services and housing opportunities.</p>	<p>Acquisition and Rehabilitation of boarded housing in targeted neighborhoods for affordable housing purposes.</p> <p>Construction of rental housing in vacant infill properties with privately provided financing and grants.</p> <p>Development of Rental housing and Assisted Living supportive services for low-income elderly.</p> <p>Zoning that facilitates mixed uses in the Urban Core.</p>	<p>Long term acquisition, infill, and housing development plan by target areas.</p> <p>Short Term focus on Urban Core for initial phases.</p> <p>Short Term seek grants, provide incentives, and facilitate with zoning diverse growth to fulfill needs and guide development.</p>
Housing	<p>Removal of Barriers to Affordable Housing.</p> <p>Increase homeownership opportunities.</p> <p>Promote decent affordable housing.</p> <p>End Chronic Homelessness.</p> <p>Provide Increased Homeownership and Rental Opportunities for Low- and Moderate Income Persons, Persons with Disabilities, the Elderly, Minorities, and Families with Limited English Proficiency.</p>	<p>Urban Core housing represents the oldest area of housing stock.</p> <p>Low and Moderate income homeowners are faced with choices between supporting the household OR sustaining safe and decent housing.</p> <p>Housing stock is not available in sufficient numbers nor financially accessibility to end homelessness.</p> <p>Diversity of housing stock for a variety of socio-economic sectors is required to expand and sustain diversity for the population.</p>	<p>Rehabilitation of owner occupied housing units in one to four family dwellings. Identify and assist units to be rehabilitated in the City's Urban Village Core.</p> <p>Lead Abatement activities in 1 to 4 family dwellings and reduction in childhood lead poisoning and hazards.</p> <p>Rehabilitation of structures for homeless and disabled populations.</p> <p>Lead Abatement activities in investor owned multifamily properties.</p> <p>Rehabilitation of rental housing projects.</p>	<p>Long Term continue programs with evaluative process to assess effectiveness of programs.</p> <p>Short Term continue on annual approaches to achieve continued success in increments.</p>

Element	Priority	Problems and Needs	Service Activity	Term
Facilities and Infrastructure	<p>Manage infrastructure improvements and maintenance.</p> <p>Support designated low and moderate-income target areas by leveraging state and local funds, specifically in the Urban Village Core.</p> <p>Support development of public facilities to meet long-term community service and educational needs</p>	<p>Infrastructure impacts the development and improvement of housing and the safe travel in the core urban target areas.</p> <p>Equity in public services is provided by the foundation of quality facilities.</p> <p>Poor public facilities impacts the low and moderate income populations more as private sector options are not affordable.</p>	<p>Capital improvements to drainage, sewer, water and right of way.</p> <p>Continued maintenance.</p> <p>Facilities improvements and expansion to serve the general public and be accessible for low and moderate income residents.</p>	<p>Long term based on CIP plan.</p> <p>Short term maintenance efforts to sustain conditions.</p>
Social Services	<p>Improve outreach and access to supportive services</p> <p>Reduce the number of individuals and families who are hungry and without shelter.</p> <p>Reduce the number of individuals and families who are cold and without heat, specifically elderly and disabled households who have exhausted their heating allotments</p> <p>Assist individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency and independence Increase families accessing child care services.</p> <p>Increase coordination among Amesbury service providers</p>	<p>Low and Moderate income persons lacking access to multiple media outlets require distinct and targeted programs.</p> <p>Low and Moderate income needs do not recognize municipal corporate boundaries.</p> <p>The cycle of continued low and moderate income status can be altered positively by programs providing assistance to facilitate self-sufficiency.</p> <p>Low and Moderate income households are often faced with temporary financial burdens associated with heating, rent, and food.</p> <p>Redundancy in services creates both overlaps and gaps that does not maximize allocation of resources to low and moderate income persons.</p>	<p>Marketing programs media outlets, and coordination of outreach across agencies to facilitate distribution.</p> <p>Establish and expand food distribution programs to provide access to healthy meals for low and moderate income residents.</p> <p>Develop regional approaches to social services to facilitate a diverse and equitable allocation of resources to reduce gaps and redundancy.</p> <p>Sustain a funding source for temporary assistance to ensure heat, rent and utilities are addressed for low and moderate income persons.</p>	<p>Long Term approaches would include the establishment of sustainable programs that reach low and moderate income persons in a manner that can be relied upon throughout a region.</p> <p>Short term create connections with social services and determine patterns of services by requesting proposals to develop Services and Activities meeting the priorities.</p> <p>Short term establish programs within the context of longer term approaches and deliver services based on need.</p>

Element	Priority	Problems and Needs	Service Activity	Term
Transportation	Provide a viable public transportation system that includes access to all modes of travel.	Low and moderate income persons often rely on public transportation or intermodal opportunities.	Assess the relationship between origin and destination within and from the target areas for persons of low and moderate income, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.	Long Term create planning documents and capital plans to ensure the regular integration and expansion of transportation opportunities for all persons.
	Provide community sensitive roadway design policies that reinforce neighborhood areas.	Highway design and maintenance is crucial to providing walking and cycling opportunities to facilitate multiple modes.	Capital planning to develop improvement's schedule to meet the demands of the priorities.	Short term construct improvements incrementally from centers of persons with disabilities, the elderly and the urban target area.
	Ensure a safe environment for pedestrians and bicyclists and persons with disabilities.	Those with disabilities require a network provisioned with accommodations.	Seek funding for improvements to neighborhoods that serve low and moderate income persons, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.	

Conclusion

The City of Amesbury is embarking on a new future of economic expansion. The approval of a Hotel and the resulting Tax increment financing approval will facilitate new growth in the Golden Triangle, an opportunity sought for decades. The Lower Millyard project continues the great success of downtown redevelopment set decades ago with the Upper Millyard project.

However a rising tide does not raise all boats. These positive steps to make the tax structure more affordable, create jobs, and expand opportunities for residents often leads to negative impacts on low and moderate income residents who are struggling to live within an increasingly expensive community.

The nature of the City of Amesbury is one of a mill town with a penchant for an understanding of community. The community has continued through local social services, park improvement programs, services to the elderly, and persons with disabilities to sustain a demographic mix. However the continued needs of the current day safety net are as crucial as the plans for providing opportunities for all boats to rise with the advent of a brighter future.

This plan is a crucial component to ensure that the residents typically displaced by growth have the opportunity to share in long sought after success both in the present and the future. As the City seeks to improve we should continue to do so with the residents that have been part of the community fabric for centuries.



CITY OF AMESBURY IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND FIFTEEN

SPONSORED BY: Mayor C. Kenneth Gray **BILL No 2015- 013**

At the meeting of the Amesbury City Council held on January 13, 2015, in the City Hall Auditorium the following action was taken:

Amesbury City Council Resolution to support the following steps by the City of Amesbury as outlined below:

Summary: A Resolution to support the following:

- The development of a Regional joint application, to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, by the City of Amesbury, as the lead applicant, and the Town of Salisbury as a co-applicant and management entity. Said CDBG funds are available through competitive grants to municipalities for economic development, public facilities, affordable housing projects, that benefit low and moderate income persons.
- Adopt the Community Development Strategy as attached hereto and referenced herein. The Community Development strategy is required by the CDBG process prior to filing an application and must reflect the goals and objectives contained in the application.

Be it Resolved by the City Council of the City of Amesbury assembled and by the authority of the same, considers this matter as follows:

WHEREAS the region formed by Amesbury and Salisbury has shared economic, social, and infrastructure, issues that transcend each community's borders.

WHEREAS the coordination of the two communities in one grant application will increase the capacity to provide services, marshal targeted resources, and reduce redundancy toward increasing the ability to deliver benefit to low and moderate income persons and households.

WHEREAS the Town Salisbury has an established CDBG management capacity through their Planning Office, and through a Regional Application the Town of Salisbury can serve as

management entity and thereby reduce the redundancy of efforts that a separate and additional City of Amesbury CDBG office would entail.

WHEREAS low and moderate income residents within both communities facing an aging housing stock and require the assistance, such as CDBG, to sustain a viable and safe home through programs such as Housing Rehabilitation.

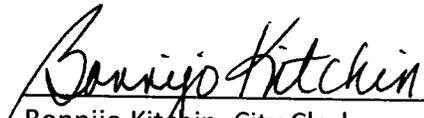
WHEREAS social services that provide opportunities for low and moderate income residents of both communities face the consistent challenge of limited resources and burgeoning demands that CDBG can address.

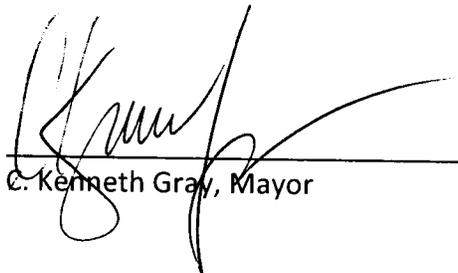
WHEREAS the City Council concurs with the Community Development Strategy as attached hereto, toward addressing the needs cited therein, to benefit low and moderate income persons or households.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it Resolved that the City Council does hereby respectfully concur with the Mayor and recommends to support the development of a Regional CDBG application, and the City Council also votes to adopt the Community Development Strategy as outlined above, which is attached hereto and cited herein.

Councilor Lavoie moved to approve the Resolution as presented. Councilor Ferguson seconded. Voted Unanimous

Witness my hand and seal for the City of Amesbury this 15th day of January, 2015


Bonnijo Kitchin, City Clerk


C. Kenneth Gray, Mayor

1/22/15
Date