



WATERBURY AREA

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

IN AFFILIATION WITH REVITALIZING WATERBURY

Economic Development FAQ:

Who is the Economic Development Director?

The Economic Development Director (EDD) works to enhance and support Waterbury's economy through business support, recruitment, planning, and policy. The EDD can provide a variety of resources for current and prospective businesses including a list of available properties, information about funding sources and municipal processes, and connections with other entities within Waterbury and across the state. The EDD also collaborates with regional and state entities to work towards common economic development goals.

Alyssa Johnson is the current EDD in Waterbury. Alyssa believes that economic development and community development are intrinsically related, and has a strong commitment to public engagement. Alyssa encourages anyone interested in economic development or a particular project to contact her at alyssa@revitalizingwaterbury.org or 802-585-9525 to discuss their ideas. She also welcomes any and all inquiries related to economic development and the Waterbury community.

What is the Waterbury Area Development Committee (WADC)?

The WADC is a committee of Revitalizing Waterbury (RW) that oversees and guides the work of the EDD. The WADC is comprised of a group of local business owners and professionals, including Jeffrey Larkin of Arvads Grill, Cindy Lyons of New England Landmark Realty, Mark Frier of the Reservoir, Charles and John Grenier of Grenier Engineering, Stephen Van Esen of Pilgrim Partnership, Ed Rooney of Edgeworks Creative, Jenn Kimmich of The Alchemist, Megan Cicio of Northfield Savings Bank and Melissa Gorham of Keurig Green Mountain. Municipal Manager William Shepeluk also attends WADC meetings whenever possible. Jeffrey Larkin serves as the chair of the WADC and is the direct supervisor of the EDD.

There are many overlaps between the WADC, RW and the municipality, which help create strong continuity, communication, and accountability. Jeffrey Larkin is the President of Revitalizing Waterbury in addition to the chair of the WADC. Cindy Lyons and Melissa Gorham are members of the RW Board of Directors in addition to the WADC. The EDD also attends RW Board meetings and provides updates on

their work. The EDD attends Town Select Board, Village Trustee, and municipality-led meetings whenever appropriate to report or comment on projects and issues in Waterbury. Mark Frier is a Waterbury Select Board member and WADC member and provides another connection to the municipality. Finally, the EDD reports to the Municipal Manager, Select Board and Village Trustees on a monthly basis.

Why is the WADC part of RW?

The EDD position was originally a municipal position. While the position was vacant for a period of time, the municipality had the opportunity to reflect on how the EDD position fit within the community. It was determined that RW was a more appropriate entity to oversee the position for the following reasons:

- Revitalizing Waterbury's mission is to maintain and enhance the historic, social and economic vitality of Waterbury. Economic development clearly falls under this mission.
- As Waterbury grows, the municipality has more positions and departments to oversee. Economic development was competing for the attention of municipal staff. RW has the capacity to appropriately oversee economic development and implement strong accountability measures.
- The EDD needs to maintain confidentiality with projects, which is allowed under the nonprofit structure. If the EDD were a municipal employee, all of the EDD's work would be public information, making it impossible for projects to remain confidential.

If the WADC is part of RW, isn't RW the same as the WADC?

While this question is certainly a reasonable one, the answer is no. A good analogy is the square and rectangle: a square is a rectangle, but a rectangle is not a square. The WADC is part of RW, but RW is much larger than the WADC. RW is Waterbury's Designated Downtown organization, and has several committees that carry out a variety of tasks. These include:

- Marketing and Promotions: This committee works to promote the downtown as the center of commerce, culture, and community life for residents and visitors through events, marketing and promotional campaigns. This committee is responsible for the Wrap It Up & Win promotion and the Waterbury Arts Fest.
- Design: This committee plays a key role in shaping the physical image of Main Street as a place attractive to shoppers, investors, business owners and visitors. Examples of the committee's work include the seasonal flower barrels dispersed around Waterbury and the banners at the roundabout.

- RW Board of Directors: The Board oversees RW's work towards furthering its mission, including hiring and supervising the RW Executive Director.
- Waterbury Area Development Committee: The WADC works with and oversees the EDD. They also vet potential projects, provide resources for the EDD and clients, and carry out economic development strategic planning.

The WADC has a unique autonomy under this structure where if the committee makes a decision or takes a stance on a particular issue, that position does not necessarily reflect the views of the entire RW organization. As previously described, there is overlap between the WADC, the RW Board, and the municipality, however, there will be times that the entities take differing standpoints, as is natural in many community development issues.

Why does the EDD have to keep some projects confidential?

To put it simply, starting a business can be like having a baby: it is something you can be very excited about, but not want to share too early in case things change. Business owners who are looking to purchase a property, rent space, or start a new business can be mindful of the complexities that come with these steps, and not want to get too many people involved too early. This can also be for specific reasons such as:

- A business may be leaving their current rental space and have not yet told their landlord.
- A developer could be purchasing a new property. Real estate can change quickly and many things can happen during the purchasing process that may cause the situation to change.
- A business' employees might not yet be aware of the change, and business owners need to work through the details before employees can be brought into the conversation.
- There may be competing businesses that could challenge or ruin plans.
- A business may be struggling to make ends meet, but does not want that information to be public knowledge.

Current Economic Development Director Bio:

Alyssa Johnson is Waterbury's current economic development director. She has lived and worked in Vermont for four years while attending the University of Vermont, where she studied environmental sciences, community development and applied economics, and food systems. While at UVM, she was heavily involved in the Student Government Association and Real Food Working Group, and served as a student representative on the UVM Board of Trustees. She is originally from Harvard, Massachusetts, and feels incredibly lucky to be living and working in the Vermont and Waterbury communities. In her free time, she loves hiking, backpacking, and all things food.