



**FROM:** Suzi Pegg, Economic Development Director

**DATE:** August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020

**SUBJECT** September Economic Development Report

### **Recommendation**

Accept this report.

### **Social Media/ Marketing**

The priority continues to focus on keeping our business community up to date on federal, state and local assistance. All SM platforms are being utilized on a regular basis with many agencies cross sharing to help keep the public updated. From the EDD most of this information is in regards to the available funding opportunities and updates coming from the Feds or the State.

### **City of Concord Podcast**

The City of Concord podcast has been relaunched and is currently focusing on updates for the business community and 'good news'. The broadcast can be found on the City website. The September podcast will focus on the Library.

### **Measures:**

Economic Development Director Target Visits/Leads for FY2021: 150

Target leads/visits/calls for August: 15

Target leads/visits/calls for FY 2021 to date: 24

### **Updates:**

The Yellow Submarine on North Main Street has closed. The owner decided to retire 22<sup>nd</sup> August.

True Brew has decided to re-open. Its owners decided to delay retirement due to popular demand by its customers to remain open

Cols Kitchen is now in the former Willows site and is now open for business serving vegan lunches and dinners.

Superior Plus, a Canadian energy company is buying the family - owned company Rymes Propane Oil for \$159 million. The deal will close in September.

Great NH Restaurants has announced it will be opening its sixth T-Bones Great American Eatery in mid-September in Concord. The restaurant, at 404 S. Main St., adjacent to the new Tru by Hilton hotel off Exit 12S of Interstate 93, was supposed to open in May but was delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sabbow & Co. Inc., a Concord-based company that manufactures precast concrete products and granite monuments, secured a \$1.5 million revolving line of credit and \$5 million in term loans from Millyard Bank to expand its operations, with partial guarantees from the New Hampshire Business Finance Authority.

Harbor Freight Tools store has opened in the former Toys R US site. It will be open seven days a week and will stock tools and accessories in categories including automotive, air and power tools, storage, outdoor power equipment, generators, welding supplies, shop equipment, and hand tools.

## **Report**

### **COVID Impact on Business- Update**



As Council is aware, staff annually conducts a vacancy rate survey of downtown Concord and Loudon Road as part of the City's overall economic development performance report. This survey is conducted in the winter and the results communicated to Council in March. In light of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and the limitations placed on retail and restaurant/bar business in particular by public health precautions, staff felt it was important to re-visit the present situation of these areas.

In February, the vacancy rate for ground floor commercial in downtown Concord was 8.1%. During the week of August 24, 2020, this rate had increased to 11.21%.

For the same time periods, Loudon Road presented a vacancy rate of 6.4% this past winter and of 9.55% in the most recent survey.

It is important to note that these rates are snap shots in time and may not, necessarily, portend an irreversible, negative trend. Anecdotal evidence is that the pandemic was not the sole cause for the increase in many of these closures but rather one of many factors contributing to an owner's decision to close, such as the decision to take early retirement. For several, these decisions were already in the cards and COVID only accelerated their process.

However, the pandemic may very likely delay the onset of a positive trend in the vacancy rates. Storefronts that may have turned over in a few short weeks prior to COVID-19, now may take longer to be reoccupied as would-be business owners try to figure out the pandemic's lingering effects on the economy. Concord is following the trends which are being seen across the global economy. Our strength lies in continuing to market the City as a place to live, work and play. A silver lining is that we anticipate that many in the workforce will find locations like Concord even more attractive for possible relocation. Concord is a place where they can telecommute, have access to broadband internet, seasonal recreational opportunities and a community support system in place which will also support their medical and educational needs.