

Village District Loan Program to Begin With Presentation on September 23rd

The Portland Economic Development Commission (EDC), **Liberty Bank**, and **TD Bank** have partnered to establish a short term, low interest loan program to promote the revitalization of Portland's **Village District** businesses. The availability of funds at a low interest rate has a proven record of encouraging reinvestment in existing commercial properties in similar programs offered throughout Connecticut and the neighboring New England states.

The EDC and its' partners seek to offer Village District businesses and building owners the opportunity to make changes to a buildings' façade, landscaping, sidewalks, paving, lighting, or signage without the need for an immediate capital outlay. Building and business owners may be eligible to apply for funds to complete specific renovation and restoration projects regulated under the **Village District Design Guidelines**. Renovation projects must be submitted to and approved by, the Village District Architect prior to making an application for financing with one of the partner financial institutions. Applications must meet the requirements of the specific lenders who have agreed to work in partnership with the Portland EDC for this project.

The Village District Design Guidelines were adopted in 2008 to provide a framework for future changes to our historic Main Street buildings. CR3 of Simsbury was awarded the contract to provide site planning and landscape architectural assistance to Village District businesses. Fees for Village District permits begin at \$75 and provide the applicant with access to professional design services and consultation.

On September 23, 2010 at 6 p.m. at the Portland Library, The EDC members, participating bank representatives, and Jeffery Gebrian, principal partner of CR3 will provide an overview of the program and answer questions from business and building owners. Members of the public are also encouraged to attend and learn more about the revitalization of our historic Main Street. For more information about the program, please contact Mary Dickerson, Economic Development Consultant at (860) 342-7302.

Geato's Florist Closes After 73 Years

Geato's Flowershop & Greenhouse, located at 12 Middlesex Avenue, has closed after 73 years in Portland. Owner Pam Geato retired from the business on June 30th. The business opened greenhouses and a shop in Portland in 1937 to expand the offerings at the existing Middletown location. The original owners, Joseph and Concetina Geato sold the business to son Lambert and his wife Pam in 1977.

Lambert Geato passed away in August 2009. Pam Geato, who has been a floral designer with the business for 36 years, has been running the retail business alone since then. The family closed the greenhouses in 2008 as the price of fuel increased.

Pam's floral artistry will be missed in the community. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Art Education and a degree in Floral Design. Through the business, Pam has had the opportunity to share both the joyous and sad occasions with her customers. After so many years in the business, she has celebrated births, birthdays, proms, weddings, anniversaries, and funerals with her customers. Local churches have relied on her to supply their Altar displays and many community groups have been the recipients of the businesses generous donations to the community over the years.

Pam's plans are simple; to enjoy her retirement and take life as it comes. The property, greenhouses and shop along with an adjacent piece of property used for a brownstone quarrying operation are available for sale through Commercial Acquisition Services, LLC.

2010 COMMUNITY PARTNERS PROGRAM MEMBERS

Portland High Schools' Town-Tech Program Offers Reduced Price Web and Technology Services

If you are a business looking to establish or update your web presence or have another technology related project you would like to have completed for your business, The Town-Tech Program may be able to assist you.

The Portland High School Town Technology Educational Partnership, or, Town-Tech, offers students at Portland High School the opportunity to learn about computer programming, web design and hosting, graphic design, GIS mapping, digital photography, and audio visual technologies in a hands-on setting. The students receive credit for completing the course work that includes classroom instruction and real world applications. Under the direction of Advisor Dave Kuzminski, the students produce the Comcast show, *Portland on the Move*, maintain the website for the Town of Portland, produce the town's Annual Report, and assist with town technology projects.

The students who complete the Town-Tech class are eligible for employment with the program through the summer months. These students are highly skilled and offer their services through the Town-Tech program to local businesses at a reduced rate. If you would like more information about how Town-Tech can assist your business, contact Dave Kuzminski at (860) 342-6769.

Business of the Month Recognition Program Continues

Have you had a great experience dealing with a local business? The Portland EDC wants you to know that nominations of local businesses from citizens and customers are encouraged and always welcome.

The "Business of the Month" Program is sponsored by the EDC to recognize Portland businesses for exceptional customer service, product selection, pricing, or community service. Businesses are selected from the group of nominees by the EDC at their monthly meeting.

The winning business is recognized with a sign designating them as "Business of the Month" and a press release submitted to the Rivereast, Hartford Courant, and Middletown Press. Any business operating within the town of Portland is eligible. To nominate a business, send a short note indicating the business and its' address and the reason for the nomination.

Nominations may be mailed to:

Economic Development
Commission
c/o Portland Town Hall
P.O. Box 71
Portland, CT 06480

2010 COMMUNITY PARTNERS PROGRAM MEMBERS

Portland Town Place Project Moves Forward

The Portland Town Place project is awaiting approval from the State of Connecticut's Traffic Commission in order to move forward with the planned 150,000 square foot commercial and 81-unit residential development. Once the State Traffic Commission grants its' approval, the Town of Portland approves the final traffic plan and the State of Connecticut will issue the permit to the developers.

Fred Hassan, a partner in the Portland Town Place development, provided an update of the project at the June meeting of the Portland-East Hampton Division of the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Hassan noted that at the request of local neighbors, there will be no access to the project from Perry Avenue, allowing the neighborhood to maintain the minimal traffic flow that is common on the small dead end street.

When the final permits are issued, site work on the 15-acre parcel can begin. Residential houses purchased along the west side of Perry Avenue are currently vacant and will be raised. Construction of the project is expected to be completed in two phases. The first phase will include the completion of 150,000 square feet of retail and professional space. The second phase will include the construction of the 81 planned residential units.

Did you Know?

Locally-owned firms contribute more to local charities and fundraisers that do their national counterparts.

Source: Anderson Study of Retail Economics

Final Phase of Brownstone Avenue Improvement Project Completed

The Brownstone Avenue Extension Project, funded by a Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) Grant, has been completed for the busy summer season. The road extension was formally opened at a December 15th Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. The paved parking area at the intersection of Brownstone Avenue and Middlesex Avenue and the new sidewalks along Middlesex Avenue were completed this spring.

The project creates a direct link between the growing quarry and riverfront attractions and the Main Street Village District. The parking area will offer additional parking for visitors to the **Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park**, the town owned trails along the riverfront and the sports fields along Middlesex Avenue. In addition, an overlook area has also been cleared and new guardrail installed along Middlesex Avenue, to provide panoramic views of the Connecticut River, the Brownstone Quarry National Landmark and the Arrigoni Bridge.

The Project was a cooperative effort between the Portland Public Works Department, Town Engineers Nathan L. Jacobson and Associates, Inc. of Chester, and Nutmeg Gravel and Excavating, Inc. of Colchester. The Portland Public Works Department performed all of the preliminary site work, removing brush, trees, and stumps from the hillside near Middlesex Avenue. Nathan L. Jacobson and Associates, Inc. performed all of the project engineering. Nutmeg Gravel and Excavating, Inc. was selected as the general contractor to complete the construction of the roadway, parking area and sidewalks.

MHS Primary Care Celebrates Opening of New Location

MHS Primary Care, Inc., has completed a long anticipated move to their new location at 270 Main Street. The medical group, managed by Middlesex Hospital, opened at their new location on May 24th. The new building offered **MHS Primary Care, Inc.** the chance to provide patients with state of the art computer technology and updated medical facilities.

Patient response to the new location has been overwhelmingly positive. Although a few patients have mentioned missing the cozy fireplace in the waiting room of the former location, a converted Victorian home at 259 Main Street, the amenities of the new facility are many. **MHS Primary Care, Inc.** now offers a large patient waiting area, 12 examination rooms, a large nurse's station, two tech rooms, and private office space for medical providers. The street level location of the new offices has eliminated the need for patients to climb steps and offers convenient and newly paved parking.

The new owners of the building, **270 Main Street LLC**, completed renovations of the former Country Market building. The group, which includes developers William H. Coons Jr. and William H. Coons III along with East West Real Estate Associates, has been committed to completing this project for nearly a year. Negotiations began in the spring of April 2009 and despite delays in finalizing the many contracts, the group remained committed to becoming a part of Portland's business community. The central location and mix of commercial and retail properties along Main Street were key components in the group's decision to bring a medical project to Portland. A portion of the building, approximately 1,900 square feet, is still available for lease from the owners.

MHS Primary Care, Inc. is a family focused medical group offering patients three full time medical providers; Dr. George Rosenfeld and two Nurse Practitioners. The medical group offers convenient hours : Monday through Thursday 8 am to 9 pm, Friday 8 am to 5 pm, and two Saturday mornings per month. **MHS Primary Care, Inc.** can be reached at (860) 342-3392.

Thinking About a New Business or Business Expansion?

Tuesday nights are a great time to meet with the *Development Team* at the Town Hall to discuss plans for a prospective new business or to expand your existing business! Our *Development Team* can give you an overview of the approval process and provide you with the technical information required to complete your project. To schedule a meeting with the *Development Team*, including the Fire Marshal, Building Official, Planner, Director of Public Works, Sanitarian, and Economic Development Consultant, contact Deanna Rhodes, Planning and Land Use Administrator at (860)342-6720.

The Economic Development Commission meets the second Thursday of each month at 7 pm at the Portland Library 20 Freestone Avenue.

The **Portland Business Journal** is a quarterly publication of the **Economic Development Commission**. Issues are published in March, June, September, and December. If you have ideas for future articles or notices for meetings or events to be included in the **Portland Business Journal**, please contact Mary D. Dickerson, EDC Consultant at 342-7302 or by e-mail at marydickerson@yahoo.com.