Some positive economic development news in Sussex County

The pandemic has definitely put a hurting on the economy of Sussex County but through it all, there are people out there working extremely hard to protect those businesses that are already here and to seek new businesses that are looking to relocate. I have asked a number of SEDAC members who work in economic development to provide you with a short report on their activities in these trying times. You can find their full reports on SEDAC’s web page at [www.sedac.de.org](http://www.sedac.de.org), but here are some brief highlights from those reports.

As we all know, tourism, as well as agriculture, is a major part of economic development in Sussex County. The first two reports are from that area. Scott Thomas, of Southern Delaware Tourism, has provided a report, only on what’s going on, but offers a great guide as to how economic development can work in Sussex. His report highlights many projects that are being developed along our waterways, including Grove Park Dock in Rehoboth, Baywalk in Dewey Beach and Milford’s vision of an extended Riverwalk.

Ray Sanders of the Delaware Botanic Gardens at Pepper Creek adds great information on this hidden gem in Sussex, just outside of Dagsboro. This great attraction offers residents and visitors alike a great opportunity to experience and learn about the unique flora of the coastal plain and to discover the ornamental horticulture that thrives here.

Linda Price, Secretary of SEDAC and President of the Greater Georgetown Chamber of Commerce provides a great review of what’s going on in the Georgetown area. From the development of the new apartment complex, the Oaks at Georgetown, to the opening of the Sun Behavioral Hospital and the VA Hospital extension, things are happening in and around Georgetown. The re-opening of the Counting House on the Circle and its’ many new events have made Georgetown the place to be.

Ed Lewandowski of the University of Delaware worked with the Town of Laurel and the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation to develop a comprehensive waterfront redevelopment plan for Laurel. It is known as “The Ramble” and provides some insight as to how a community can reconnect to its water resources. With the assistance of the University’s Sea Grant Sustainable Coastal Communities Initiative, the Ramble is an opportunity to develop a land use/growth scenario that would bring people and jobs back to downtown Laurel. Seaford, Laurel and Georgetown are also working with the State through its Downtown Development District grant program.

Trish Newcomer, Economic Development Director for the City of Seaford, reports on several exciting developments in Seaford. From the luxury apartment complex known as the Residences at Riverplace to the brand-new car dealership on Rt 13, Lakeshore Motors, things are popping in Seaford. Oyster House Park will be constructed giving a nod to the significance of the oystering industry in Western Sussex in the early 1900’s. The creation of the new Western Sussex Unified Sewer District, through the efforts of Sussex County, Bridgeville, Greenwood and Seaford will provide additional opportunities for all northwest Sussex County.

Jamie Burk, Assistant Town Manager of Millsboro, provides a great update on happenings in Millsboro. He proudly points to the new Avid Hotel and Grotto Pizza both under construction in his town. Anticipating new growth and with an eye to having infrastructure in place when business comes knocking, the town is completing the design of a second water treatment plant and is beginning the design for expanding the capacity of its existing treatment plant. Mayor and Council are to be commended for their foresight.

Bill Pfaff, Sussex County Economic Development provides a detailed report on the many economic development activities of our County Government. The County maintains a number of grant and loan programs designed to assist both and old and new businesses to expand and move to Sussex County. The Coastal Business Park at the County’s airport has been a focus for the County and has added two new businesses to its existing client base. When Covid 19 hit, the County began an advertising campaign to assist existing businesses through this pandemic. The County provided $65,000 to create this program. Check our website for more details of what is available.

Finally, Lauren Swain, Sussex County Manager for the Division of Small Business, has provided a list of a number of financial assistance programs that are available through her division, including the Hospitality Emergency Loan Program. All these programs are designed to provide help for small businesses to assist them through the pandemic.

These are some of the good things that are going on in Sussex for economic development. But these are not the only SEDAC members involved in creating jobs, attracting new businesses, and retaining and supporting existing businesses. Our membership includes individuals and companies involved in development, real estate, banking, engineering, poultry production, education, media, utilities, workforce and community development, the legal profession, tourism unions, manufactured homes, government, contractors and financial businesses. SEDAC will continue to encourage the retention, expansion and attraction of business and industry to Sussex County.

Joe Conaway, Chairman

Sussex Economic Development Action Committee