

2021

Annual Report



January 26, 2022

Overview

The COVID Pandemic significantly disrupted the Norwich business community. At the end of the first quarter of 2020 unemployment soared to over 20% and much of the hospitality industry was shuttered by the Governor's Executive Orders. NCDC's role pivoted to focused entirely on business retention activities with a goal of enabling businesses to take advantage of any state and federal programs or rules.

Despite the rise of the Delta and Omicron variants, the business community of the City of Norwich demonstrated resilience and pandemic recovery continues to gain traction. The matriculation of businesses out of Foundry 66 and the Sunlight building onto Main Street is one signal. The Norwich business community has embraced getting back to normal and business continues to pick up across Norwich. That said, the variants did exacerbate an already difficult job market, as vacancies and turnover have stressed some entities.

Over the course of third quarter, NCDC worked through how to best utilize the NCDC allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies to build, retain, enhance and develop small and large business in Norwich. The Downtown Bond Program (DBP) will be rebranded as the Norwich Revitalization Program (NRP) to highlight the intent to help more than just downtown business. Successes have been achieved on both ends of the spectrum with steady growth in cowork space occupation in Foundry 66, a first-use allocation of ARPA monies to a small business in the Taftville Region of town, and a City commitment to further development of Business Park North in the Occum region of town.

In the final quarter of the year, the Cannabis industry interest in Norwich peaked following our Cannabis Conversations event on November 19th in the Sunlight building. The state Social Equity Commission Director has commended Norwich's active approach to this important business development possibility. As a result, 3 of the top 10 cannabis operators have inquired about business in Norwich as have another 5 regional players and a number of local business men and women interested in social equity applications. Norwich has taken the lead in Connecticut amongst the municipalities identified as Disproportionally Impacted Areas.

External Economic Development

- Coordinated outdoor dining response to enable restaurants to use parking areas for outdoor dining – Ongoing for Summer of 2021
- Ponemah Mill – South Mill – Was recently awarded a Brownfield Grant of \$975K from DECB. NCDC will administer the grant.
- Business Park Development Meetings continue; \$740K bonded to support planning and

development and permitting projected for 1Q2022.

- Ponemah Mill – South Mill – Financial Assistance Plan (FAP) executed jointly between DECD and NCDC. Allocation of \$795,000 grant to NCDC for administration will occur in 1Q2022 and a Sub-Recipient agreement with OneKey to be developed. Asbestos remediation should begin immediately, and efforts are underway to place a restaurant in the retail space or at Taftville Landing.
- 77-91 Main Street project was approved for \$800,000 in ARPA funding. Private funding of just short of \$8,000,000 demonstrates a 10:1 private/public ratio of investment. Demolition should occur in 1Q2022.
- Outreach to Businesses City-Wide continues. Fielding multiple queries from Downtown landlords who were queued by the story about 77-91 Main, a positive development that could portend future downtown revitalization.
- Reid & Hughes negotiations indicate possible replacement for the now defunct Women's institute development partner. NCDC serving as intermediary.
- NCDC part of a Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC) Federal grant application under the leadership of seCTer. Our Business Park North (BPN) project is a supporting effort to the seCTer Offshore Wind Industry Cluster (OWIC). Successful Phase 1 grant recipient; one of 60 selected from among 529 applicants. Potential awards in the \$25M to \$100M range.
- Cannabis industry business inquiries at a peak – both cultivation and retail.

New Business Openings

- Assured Quality Home Care opened a classroom for employee training and development at Foundry 66 in the 1Q2021 and by the end of the year had moved into an independent retail space.
- Two businesses moved from Sunlight building/Foundry 66 to a Vanilla Box location on Main Street, Wombs and Wankle and Enso Studios.
- Ventura Barber Shop opened in Taftville, 1st recipient of ARPA funds - \$10,000 for code correction.
- CREAM Coffee Shop opens on Franklin Street in the Sunlight Building
- Solar Seal has begun development of a high-tech glass manufacturing business, signing a 10-year lease purchase agreement for 40 Wisconsin Ave. This business represents a \$15 million investment, 80 jobs, and a utility growth of approximately 20%.

Achievements

- CT Humanities Grant for Global City Norwich to conduct the Bank Street Blues bilingual music program at Otis Library
- Rose City United NPD Community Group – Award Recipient for the NAACP Norwich Branch with a Daniel D. Jenkins II Memorial Award.

- Ponemah Mill – Brownfield Grant.
- Commenced execution of the Norwich Revitalization Program (to replace the Downtown Bond Program). Ventura Barber Shop in Taftville, 1st recipient of ARPA funds - \$10,000 for code correction.
- NCDC President completed Interational Economic Development Council Professional Development Course throughout the 4th quarter.

Foundry66

- Foundry 66 has continued to be actively engaged with members and marketing efforts throughout Norwich and other local communities.
- Currently testing targeted marketing via Gannett News to reach entrepreneurs and mobile professionals conducting business along the I95 to I395 corridor in an attempt to gain new members.
- Revenue growth over the course of 2021 approximately 8%, driven by a net gain in members over the course of the year



Marketing

- Created the Lunch and Learn Program - Mindset Workshop with Gary Decker of Win Moves Coaching
- Created the In-House Banker Program in conjunction with Chelsea Groton Bank for Foundry 66 Members
- Engaged Gannett News Service to assist in Cannabis Marketing – above industry standard click-through and open rates, validated by event attendance and impact.
- Issued several NCDC e-news articles and updated NCDC and Foundry 66 websites.

Global City Norwich

- Faces/Places/Spaces – Yale Urban Design Group – Trinicap Properties site walk for courtyard community space.
- Received Grant for the Working Lab Project – to identify and educate entrepreneurs by providing tools and resources to start successful businesses either online or in brick-and-mortar locations
- GCN hosted, co-hosted, participated in summer events from bringing hundreds of people of all ages, all inclusive, family friendly events. Five of the events were held in Downtown.
- GCN assisted with Lt. Gov visit to Downtown Businesses for Hispanic Heritage Month,
- City Council approved \$150,000 of ARP funds for next 3 years of GCN funding
- In November the Downtown Streetscape Lighting Phase II 100% complete.
- December 6 to 10 Mohegan Cultural Week with GCN participation.

Policy Development

- Completed NCDC Employee Handbook
- All employees now enrolled in Simple IRA plan.
- Preparing for Board member turnover in December – 4 directors rolling off the board.

Norwich Revitalization Program (American Rescue Plan)

- Funding received from the City's allocation of ARPA funds. The original Downtown Bond Program that concluded in April 2021 has been used as a start point for methods and applications for the code correction and Vanilla Box programs implemented under ARP/NRP.
 - Investigating the use of software that allows for the business community and residents to provide feedback on the use of ARPA funds (impact and ideas)
 - Norwich Revitalization Program design charrettes held from October 18 through early January to firm up application process, qualifications, and data collection approach.
 - Solicitations will be made to 4 qualified Design/Construction firms in late January to secure a "clerk of the works" or GC to oversee NRP project efforts.
 - Strategic Messaging campaign to be formulated in late January.
- Program structure unveiled/announced at Annual Meeting of NCDC.