

Middlebury Economic Health Task Force Recommendations to the Selectboard July 2017

In recognition of the community benefits attainable through a focused and deliberate economic development strategy; an understanding of the local and regional organizations currently engaged in economic development activities; and an awareness of the existing pressures on Town resources, the Middlebury Economic Health Task Force recommends that the Town of Middlebury and its Selectboard continue to support economic development through its policies, procedures, Town Plan, website, and marketing materials. Specifically, we recommend the following.

1. Do not, at this time, reinstate the \$0.01 tax (per \$100 of assessed property value) used to support the Middlebury Business Development Fund (MBDF).

2. Establish a Middlebury Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)

Combine the remaining Middlebury Business Development Fund money with the money from the prior Community Development Block Grant to create a Revolving Loan Fund of approximately \$200,000 to support startup, early stage, and growing Middlebury businesses. Seek assistance from the Addison County Economic Development Corporation (ACEDC) in developing the framework and guidelines that will govern the RLF, along with the ongoing operation and administration of the RLF

3. Create an Economic Development Committee to review applications to the RLF, monitor economic conditions, and analyze local economic strategies.

The committee should meet on a quarterly basis (or as needed) and make recommendations to the Selectboard on all Revolving Loan Fund applications it reviews. The committee should also review economic indicators and trends, identify potential challenges and opportunities, and inform and advise the Selectboard on economic development issues. The committee should generally consist of community members with a background in business, economic development and/or finance. The committee will bring in people with expertise to advise it of trends and indicators. The committee will make recommendations annually to the Selectboard regarding ways the Town can improve or change its economic development strategy.

4. The Town Website has the potential to be a key driver for business support in Middlebury. It should show that the Town is business-friendly and helpful. We recommend revising the Town Website to include a business support and resource section, permitting information, and revolving loan information.

5. Create a local permitting brochure similar to the State Permit brochure that can be downloaded and picked up at various locations.

6. Use surplus Local Option Sales Tax revenue to fund and leverage additional funds for infrastructure projects directly related to economic development.

The Selectboard should set aside one half of the annual excess revenue generated by the Local Option Sales Tax (not already designated for debit service or maintenance of the Cross Street Bridge) for economic development infrastructure improvement projects. The proposed Economic Development Committee should consult with the Infrastructure Committee to develop criteria for qualifying projects and should create and maintain a list of potential projects for Selectboard consideration.

7. Continue to explore the option to create a Tax Increment Financing District.