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Medway hopes to jump-start economic development

By Aaron Wasserman/Daily News staff

GHS

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MEDWAY — Planning officials are looking to a Northeastern University program to help bolster the town's economic development plan.

They are privately raising \$5,000 from local businesses to join the Economic Development Partnership, part of the university's Center for Urban and Regional Policy, hopefully by this summer.

Officials said the partnership will review what the town now does to promote development and what improvements can be made. It should also raise the town's profile among commercial real estate and relocation firms, who consult businesses on where to expand, they said.

"We don't want to operate in a vacuum," said Planning Board Chairman Andy Rodenhiser yesterday. "We want to be at the forefront of what's necessary to diversify our tax base."

Northeastern's Economic Development Partnership works with a few dozen cities and towns in New England, nearly all in Massachusetts. It starts by having a town do a self-assessment of its development strategy and then Northeastern officials recommend what works, what needs improvement and what should be jettisoned, as well as what practices have worked well in other towns, Rodenhiser said.

The partnership would not have a time limit, either, he said, and officials from the school could routinely re-examine Medway's economic development plan.

Planning Board assistant Susan Affleck-Childs said the partnership can provide ideas on what types of businesses would be attracted to Medway based on the ones already here and the property available; the town's permitting process for new development; and what traffic and transportation changes the town could consider making.

Affleck-Childs also said the partnership would come at a key time as a town committee is updating Medway's master plan.

"It just segues so beautifully with the master plan update," she said. "The outcome of this could become the core of the economic development part of the master plan."

Rodenhiser said he is raising money from local firms that would benefit most from new industrial development coming to town, such as banks and insurance companies.

A summer intern in the planning office will oversee the town's self-assessment to start the partnership.

"We're finding unique ways to pay for this and help the town become more viable economically," he said.

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