

### **Additional Business Thoughts**

The Business Report focuses on the most crucial elements for the Town to address. Without employment opportunities, young people will not move here. Wilbraham must do more to encourage and assist the business base

Again and again, survey respondents and interviewees mentioned that they have to go shopping and seek services in other towns because the stores and services they prefer are located elsewhere. If new businesses we bring to Wilbraham encourage people to shop in Wilbraham, we can bring convenience to our residents and raise more revenue to enable other efforts to realize residents' visions for the town's future.

Opportunity is being lost in business. Clearly the town needs to show more interest in or connection to business by

- Creating a current list of businesses,
- Making greater efforts to assist businesses,
- Creating a development plan and
- Supporting town revenues by enabling better use of land already designated for business.

### **Ideas generated by the Land Use Team while preparing this report:**

1. Wilbraham has limited arable land and much of the remaining open land is suitable for grazing, woodlots and hay. Wetlands are protected by the state of Massachusetts, as are a few sites with archeological significance. Open space -- and this includes wooded areas -- does have value in maintaining aesthetic and recreational needs of the citizens. State leasing programs, in the process of being defined, will encourage land use for agricultural purposes. Leasing is a way of putting municipal lands into use and/or aiding aging homeowners who cannot do the work of maintaining acreage. Leasing will also reduce the loss of town revenue from these lands.
2. Along with leasing arable lands, citizens in Wilbraham can find other ways to reduce the loss of revenue associated with the land preservation needed to maintain Wilbraham "exactly as it is". For example, interested citizens in town could establish a private endowment for preserved lands. The income from the endowment could be used to offset town revenue lost through conservation restrictions, agricultural restrictions, or through the donation of properties to the town.
3. Create mitigation strategies for landowners to visually screen their neighbors and visitors from unattractive vistas.

4. Food imports, the diversion of US crops for other than consumption, increased manipulation of US crops, and natural disasters all make the trend to eat locally increasingly appealing. Massachusetts is second only to California in popularity of Farmer's Markets. Although Wilbraham does not have the fertility of soil found along the Connecticut River, its Community Garden has been an example for other communities to follow. This is another reason why Wilbraham should maximize its use of arable land by leasing municipal lands for agricultural and private use and should encourage landowners to use Chapter 61, 61A and 61B.
  
5. Obesity is the largest health issue facing the population of the country as reported by the Center of Disease Control (CDC). Land areas that can be used for outdoor exercise and for the production of local fruits and vegetables are two considerations for future planning. Both can be part of the solution in stemming the obesity epidemic.