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For Immediate Release

Milford Joins Other Hunterdon Communities in Easing Burden on Business

FLEMINGTON -The Borough of Milford has become the latest Hunterdon municipality to review local ordinance and zoning in an effort to become more attractive for investment and more accommodating to business growth. Eight additional county towns have completed similar projects through the use of grant funding from the county's economic development office through a program approved by county commissioners in 2018. Hunterdon County commissioners recently received an update on Milford's initiative, which also included adoption of new zoning allowing for the expansion of the borough's primary business district.

County Commissioner Matt Holt, one of the board's liaisons for economic development, applauds Milford's efforts.

"A primary goal of our efforts was, and still is, to make Hunterdon as attractive for investment as possible," said Holt. "Towns making policy that encourages this is central to achieving that goal and, if the grant program can help get them there, we will partner with them at any time."

To date, the county has issued 17 economic development grants to 14 Hunterdon municipalities. Milford Mayor Henri Schepens commented that he expects the grant-funded project to have a strong local impact.

"The changes reflect the towns desire to create a thriving family-friendly business district that serves the needs of both residents and tourists alike," stated Schepens, "There's currently a lot of economic progress in Milford and the town intends to act as a catalyst to that growing momentum, not a hindrance."

According to Schepens, the borough specifically reviewed the Borough's current business zone regulations to identify changes that would help facilitate business growth by eliminating cumbersome or antiquated regulations that hinder economic development opportunities.

Among the changes are that Milford expanded permitted uses in the primary business district to include breweries, artisan shops, art galleries, spas and exercise facilities in an effort to attract visitors to the downtown zone. They also streamlined regulations by simplifying some approval processes and outdoor dining was given the green-light as a specifically permitted in the business zone. Other changes allow for conversion of existing residential structures to mixed use.

According to Hunterdon County Board of Commissioners Director Sue Soloway, also one of the boards' economic development liaisons, Milford's changes come at an opportune time

"Milford has really been experiencing an economic renaissance," she stated. "Interest in the community, and in Hunterdon's river towns' in general, has skyrocketed lately with new shops and business opening on a regular basis. You can see the progress by observing the lack of vacancies and by the foot traffic on the streets. It's very exciting to see."

Holt added, "As we reach the one year mark of the Covid-19 shut down, with warm spring weather approaching, all Hunterdon downtowns will see both locals and tourists seeking out all that these towns and local businesses have to offer. Milford is but one of our numerous downtowns that are worth a drive to check out"