



**Ridgefield
Economic &
Community
Development
Commission**

400 Main Street • Ridgefield, CT 06877
203.546.2547

Arnold Light
Chairman

Robert DeFalco
John Devine, Vice Chair, Secretary
Paul Levine
M. Augustus Ryer
Stephany Sanderson
Karen Sulzinsky

Rudy Marconi,
First Selectman
Ridgefielddevelopment.com

**Approved RECDC Meeting Minutes
December 4, 2017 at 6:30pm
Small Town Hall Conference Room**

In Attendance: Arnold Light, Robert DeFalco, Paul Levine, M Augustus Ryer, John Devine

Absent: Stephanie Sanderson, Karen Sulzinsky

Guests: Sean Dowd, Cathy Savoca

Meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. Due to the time constraints of our guests, acceptance of the minutes was postponed until after their presentations.

Guest Speaker – Sean Dowd, Ridgefield Co-Working Space

Background was given regarding what brought Sean to explore this idea – he leases a property on Catoonah St., but purchased a retail property near Starbucks for the Bicycle Shop. He has a lease with term remaining at the original property, and is seeking alternate uses. He attempted a sublease, but wasn't pleased with the results.

Sean considered renting co-working space on several occasions during a prior career, but found few options in Ridgefield. This led him to consider converting his leased space into a co-working business, called Work the Ridge (www.worktheridge.com). He has three primary goals:

1. Recoup as much rent as possible from the existing lease
2. Create a collaborative environment – even when professionals from disparate industries gather, they can develop creative solutions, find commonalities, and grow together

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3. Have the co-working space serve as a place for the members to pitch business ideas, and as a platform for venture capital investment. This is the smallest aspect now, but an intriguing area for growth

The business is meant to be Ridgefield-based, from the individual members to the investors who may be interested in funding the businesses – thinking globally, acting locally. Ridgefielders have a sense of local pride, and may have access to capital, judging by the fundraising activity in the town. Sean has considered running the space as a non-profit, as his goal is to simply break even.

Currently, the space is a proof of concept. There is a conference room (only members can reserve, though he is considering offering it to non-profits at no charge) and a phone booth for the times when someone wishes to have a private conversation. There are three levels of membership (all in an open floor plan):

1. \$100 - (5 small desks)
2. \$200 - (8 medium desks)
3. \$400 - (7 dedicated desks)

There is currently no reception or phone service, as he finds most members operate from their cell phones, and outsource other administrative tasks. There are currently 6 members, all having joined within one week of opening, and capacity is roughly 20. Marketing and networking is proving a challenge. He has spoken with Hamlet Hub and the Ridgefield Press. John D. will send a press release to Patch, and available space will be placed on the ECDC website.

Sean does not view Work the Ridge as competing with other office products in town – this is meant to be a first step, from which a professional will move to an executive suite office, and from there to a traditionally-leased office. John D. suggested that he contact the Library, which hosts classes for entrepreneurs.

Cathy S. suggested that this could be a very profitable business, while still also serving the community – it will be important to maintain Ridgefield support. She will put Sean in touch with her son, who is involved with a similar concept in Cincinnati, and may have some experience to lend.

Dedicated desks are in more demand than general membership, and if other membership tiers remain vacant, he may convert those to dedicated desks. Once his lease expires, there are two options: renew the lease and continue, or move to a larger building.

Paul L who has experience with co working space will advise Sean on how to manage this undertaking.

Guest Speaker – Cathy Savoca, Ridgefield Hospitality Accommodations

Cathy and her husband are forming a 2-bedroom B&B in Ridgefield. The ECDC has previously discussed that the town is in need of accommodations for visitors. As it seems a hotel is a remote possibility, a number of B&Bs may be the solution, including a professional association of B&Bs.

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Cathy has a business called Alternative Resources, which assists hospitality businesses (hotels, inns, etc.) with purchasing their furnishings, decorations, etc. She also managed a hedge fund in a prior career. She believes Ridgefield is a perfect town for additional Bed and Breakfast locations. She presented a discussion of the hospitality industry (see attachment A).

Other than Cathy's Front Porch Farm B&B (which is not operating yet), there are no other B&Bs in Ridgefield. There are approximately 6-8 properties in town with approvals, but which are being used as private residences.

It was discussed what the ECDC could do to help. Cathy S. said that the current zoning process was fair and comprehensive, but it would be beneficial to make the process more accessible to others wishing to open a similar business. A lack of readily available information is one of the biggest blocks. For example, fire safety is paramount when converting to a B&B, and not all homes are physically capable of meeting the regulations without extreme overhaul.

She believes that B&Bs are a no-risk option for the town to increase its hospitality options, while still maintaining the character of the town. Despite some of the opposition to her B&B, she believes strongly that the overwhelming sentiment among the residents is that of support for B&Bs.

Approval of Minutes

Arnold Light asked for acceptance of the minutes from the November 6, 2017 meeting. John D. motioned and Paul L. seconded. Minutes were accepted 5-0 with a correction.

Research and Taskforce for First Floor Retail

Gus R. presented business lists and NAICS code analysis. There was discussion of how to apply the data, and whether it could be applied to the office market. He said that it could be applied to office, medical, or any industry. A discussion of retail gap analyses followed. He will explore this route further and will report to the committee.

Senior Gold Program Report

Bob D. led a discussion/update on the project. See Attachment B. He feels that, now that the program is running, Social Services should take over the ongoing management of the project.

First Floor Retail

Sending the proposal to the BOS 12/19. See Attachment C. John D. and Arnold L. are meeting with Rudy M. on the week of December 11th. It needs to be presented to the BOF beforehand. The group discussed the history of our efforts, making sure that we have the best strategy moving forward. It was agreed that Arnold L. would meet with Rudy M. before submitting the plan to BOF in order to get his feedback.

2018 Budget Review

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See attachment D. The topic began with a discussion of the budget for website maintenance. It was determined that a member of the ECDC will need to continue creating content, rather than hiring a third party.

Next, we discussed the Jazz Festival allocation of \$3,000. We discussed the difficulty of measuring our success. Gus R. brought up the topic of coupons. The ECDC could use a unique code through

Facebook and other digital marketing tools, partnering with local retailers and restaurants. For example, if an attendee uses a code from the ECDC they would get a small discount. That way the ECDC could track its reach, conversion rate, various digital advertising vehicles, and how much money is brought into the town.

Should we still advocate for a part-time EDC?

2018 OGSM

Deferred discussion until the next meeting when more members are present.

ECDC Web Site Update

Bob D. led a discussion of the ECDC website. See Attachment E. The website has been performing well, maintaining Google search placements and breaking another traffic record. Stephanie has been leading the Facebook page, which has been growing.

2018 Commission Membership

Bob D officially announced (following earlier conversations with Arnold Light) that he will not continue on the commission following the completion of his 2nd term in March 2018. Bob strongly recommends that a replacement Commissioner have Website Administration experience, preferably with WordPress.

Meeting adjourned at 9:23 p.m. Motion by John D., seconded by Arnold L.

Attachment A

Ridgefield Economic and Community Development Commission | December 4, 2017 Hospitality Highlights | Ridgefield, CT

Hospitality is experience based and the broader the range of options that can be provided to guests the better. The challenge is to find the right mix for Ridgefield.

Current Inventory

Ridgefield needs to increase the options to best meet the needs of our community. An overview of our current closest hospitality options include:

Brand Hotels

- €Ethan Allen Hotel - 7.2 miles [L][SEP]
- €Crowne Plaza Danbury - 7.3 miles [L][SEP]
- €Residence Inn Danbury - 7.0 miles [L][SEP]
- €SpringHill Suites Danbury - 7.1 miles [L][SEP]
- €Hotel Zero Degrees - 7.2 miles [L][SEP]
- €Super 8 Danbury - 7.3 miles [L][SEP]
- €Holiday Inn Express & Suites - 7.7 miles [L][SEP]
- €Hilton Garden Inn Danbury - 7.7 miles [L][SEP] Brand Motels [L][SEP]
- Days Inn Ridgefield - 2.4 miles - 25 rooms Inns and Boutique Hotels
 - €West Lane Inn | 18 rooms | Breakfast Served [L][SEP]
 - €Stonehenge Inn (minimal to no operation; For Sale) [L][SEP] Bed and Breakfast [L][SEP]
 - €Green Rocks B&B (closed 11/30/17) | 4 rooms | Breakfast Served [L][SEP]
 - €Front Porch Farm B&B (Not Yet In Operation) | 2 rooms | Breakfast Served [L][SEP]
 - €Others | Approved, but not in operation; examples [L][SEP] Each offer a different experience to meet visitor demands and each have pros and cons on development side that align with town planning objectives. [L][SEP]

RECDC Plan | Objectives | Strategies and Hospitality Impact

- €Part of 5 Point Plan is to preserve Ridgefield's image and personality and strive for sustainable economic growth. Examining hospitality options is an important part of accomplishing both to bring more visitors to town in support of our businesses, retail, restaurants, arts and culture. [L] [SEP]

- €Stated goals of RECDC include investigating retail zoning in partnership with P&Z to develop Main Street as a consumer destination. An increase in retail leasing decisions by landlords require demand. Residents alone are not meeting the demand requirements, but more visitors translates to more demand.

[L] [SEP] Planning and Zoning | Plan of Conservation and Development 2010 [L] [SEP]

- Hospitality options support commercial component of the tax base Plan in different ways to support goals. They ALL meet the Overall Plan Philosophy communicated in the Executive Summary:

OVERALL PLAN PHILOSOPHY Ridgefield should be a community where: ○ important natural and cultural resources are protected, [L] [SEP] ○ community character is preserved and enhanced, [L] [SEP] ○ the single family residential character is maintained,

○ appropriate economic development is promoted, [L] [SEP] ○ overall development patterns and transportation choices promote

environmental sustainability, [L] [SEP] ○ and all residents can benefit from and enjoy amenities that make Ridgefield

unique.

- €Hotels, Motels and Inns are all allowed in B-1, B-2 commercial zones with Special Permit; not allowed in B-3, CBD, NBZ, CDD zones under current regulations (requires confirmation) [L] [SEP]

- €Plan did not directly consider hospitality; best fit in Job Classifications listing is "Other Services". Good problem to have that we need to consider hospitality to meet growing economic needs and visitor

interest since the Plan was developed! [L] [SEP]

- €B&B residential zone regulations marry well with Plan goal of low-intensity home occupations throughout the town; regulations maintain the current single family residential character of the community [L] [SEP]
-
-

Guest Base Drivers

- 1.Business Travel | Large businesses mostly Danbury based [L] [SEP]
- 2.Hospitals | Danbury based [L] [SEP]
- 3.Colleges/Universities | Small and Danbury based [L] [SEP]
4. Arts, Culture, Dining, Retail, Leisure | Ridgefield and surrounding area based

Information In Support of Expanding Hospitality Options in Ridgefield Based on Driver 4

- €A recent fundraising letter from The Ridgefield Playhouse indicates their 100,000 patrons shop, dine and stay in nearby hotels...but, not in Ridgefield given very limited options. Those patrons add an additional \$3.8 million to our local economy and their ability to stay in Ridgefield would increase that amount. [L] [SEP]
- €In a 2016 Townvibe publication essay by Jay S. Walker he writes that, "...one aspect that makes us unique even among highly successful towns around us is our culture of creativity. So when we look ahead, we need to focus on building on our unique asset." [L] [SEP]
- €Curbed NY lists Ridgefield as the #17 destination for a day (or weekend) trip from NYC to "...drop everything, pack a bag, and get outta town.". Limited to a day trip unless visitors can stay somewhere! (ny.curbed.com 8-29-17) [L] [SEP]

- €Ridgefield Playhouse introduced the idea of a Jazz Festival to RECDC for August 2018. With plenty of great restaurants and quality entertainment the missing link is enough places to stay in Ridgefield. (RF Press 8-10-17) [L] [SEP]
- €New hotel openings in Danbury with some combining F&B within the hotel to draw people in, but they don't provide a Ridgefield based hospitality experience. [L] [SEP]
- €Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County website: "Creating jobs. Generating Commerce. Driving Tourism" Ridgefield based members include: [L] [SEP] Ridgefield Arts Council Ridgefield Chorale Ridgefield Community Center Ridgefield Conservatory of Dance Ridgefield Guild of Artists Ridgefield Independent Film Festival Ridgefield Playhouse Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra Ridgefield Theater Barn [L] [SEP]
- €Cultural Alliance of Western CT website supports the need for hospitality: "People Love to Visit and Live Where the Arts Thrive" [L] [SEP]

Pros and Cons of Hospitality Options

Regardless of the type, we need to be able to "tell a story" about Ridgefield that encourages development of new hospitality options and supports the required financing. What is our story and what are the facts that support the need? Volume of visitors has to support and align with development efforts.

Brand Hotels and Motels

- €Substantial existing inventory within 10 miles (all Danbury or other based) [L] [SEP]
- €Cost per "key" for a brand hotel: \$213,000 [L] [SEP]
- €Occupancy rates in Fairfield County hotels Jan - May 2017 at 57%; average room rate [L] [SEP] \$123-slightly below national average; Revenue per room is down 5.9% from 2016 to [L] [SEP] \$70.59 [L] [SEP]
- €Costs to comply with ADA Federal and State requirements and exposures are [L] [SEP] significant; ADA lawsuits on the rise [L] [SEP]

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- €Route 7 location has been mentioned; need that is not being met by Danbury or [L][SEP]Norwalk options would need to be demonstrated from development perspective [L][SEP]
- €Motels interesting option as they do not support guests socializing on property; [L][SEP]encourage people socializing in the community Inns and Boutique Hotels [L][SEP]
- €Bigger impact on increasing room count than B&B option; over 8 rooms/16 guests in Ridgefield qualifies in commercial zones as an Inn or Boutique Hotel [L][SEP]
- €Perfect fit to create a unique hospitality experience, but expensive to renovate or new build to meet zoning, safety, fire and ADA requirements [L][SEP]
- €This type of hospitality option is usually most successful in a "mature" market where brand hotels have succeeded and a smaller, more intimate option has a fit and demonstrated volume to support [L][SEP]Bed & Breakfast [L][SEP]
- €All costs of operating incurred by homeowners, but this option is limited in terms of numbers of people/residences that are a "fit" in various ways [L][SEP]
- €Creates "hometown" experience that can vary by location and description all within regulated environment to protect residential zones while bringing visitors to the community. An unregulated Airbnb approach is not supported in Ridgefield [L][SEP]
- €Small in scale as compared to other hospitality options, but all can work together to create network of hospitality in Ridgefield

The website ctvisit.com says, "On the water or tucked away in a winding country lane, Connecticut's charming inns and cozy B&Bs are known for their comfort, personality and classic New England style." B&Bs are a distinctive New England form of hospitality that allow for creation of a local experience

Looking Ahead

- €As ECDC works to "tell a story" about Ridgefield and develop marketing plan, determine where hospitality fits in to that story.

• Determine if the facts/volume support the success of hospitality development opportunities; determine which options likely more successful than others • Work with P&Z to evaluate current regulations, confirm where hospitality options are allowed and ensure they support appropriate hospitality development options • Survey of current locations by land or existing structures that could be sites for hospitality development

• Presentation to hotel management/development firms to determine interest.

Attachment B1



Ridgefield
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SENIOR GOLD PROGRAM REPORT 12/04/17

Since our last meeting:

- I delivered another 40 SG Guides to Founders Hall. These were taken from the Town Hall inventory that is now nearly depleted. I feel that Social Services should now be following this going forward. A new printing contract should be discussed with Squash's. I recommended that future printing be limited to 250 at a time to keep inventories down.
- Squash's has the ability to cut & paste info from our website Business Directory from which the Senior Gold Merchants are sourced. They should contact us before accessing because we utilize an abbreviated merchant description set-up for the Senior Gold Book and this must be adjusted by me or someone administering the website anytime in the future.
- The proper Window Clings have now arrived at Squash's. I created a Senior Gold Donor mailing list for Squash's to use for the mailing. 200 envelopes were purchased. I

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drafted a letter of appreciation **from the ECDC** and delivered it to Squash's on Friday, November 1st. They will have their intern make 120 copies of the letter, stuff 120 envelopes, and do all post stamping. Mailing should be complete this week. (ECDC appreciation Letter and Window Cling is attached to this report.)

Attachment B2



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Arnold Light, Chairman
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Karen Sulzinsky
Robert "Bob" DeFalco

Rudy Marconi, First Selectman
www.ridgefieldct.org
www.ridgefielddevelopment.com

RIDGEFIELD SENIOR GOLD PROGRAM

Dear Senior Gold Program Sponsor,

The 9th edition of our Senior Gold Benefit Guide has now been distributed with more than 1000 copies circulated since it was introduced in September 2017. The program objectives emphasized further support for our expanding senior population, while also promoting "***It Pays to Buy Local***" targeting this important demographic.

The reaction to this new edition has been remarkable. Sponsor's generosity was extraordinary, resulting in an immediate enthusiastic appreciation among Ridgefield senior residents.

Enclosed find a **complimentary window cling** that when conspicuously placed, will further distinguish your business / organization as a prominent Senior Gold Program sponsor. We hope that you will display it proudly.

Please accept our sincere appreciation for your generous support of this important program. Do not hesitate to contact the ECDC for business related assistance, should the need arise.

Attachment C

December 1st 2017

Economic & Community Development Commission First Floor Retail Proposal

Background:

Over the past ten years, the village has evolved to an ever decreasing percentage of retail merchants populating first floor space in Ridgefield. The ratio of service to retail merchants has increased to such an alarming rate that the ECDC concluded this trend would continue if changes were not enacted quickly.

An informal survey in 2017 of 48 buildings (strictly on Main Street) reflected a vacancy rate of 14%, as well as a Non-Retail rate of 30%. It is well understood that this trend has recently worsened with 3 of the existing vacancies soon to be filled with a Barber Shop, Hair Salon and Fitness Center respectively.

During a well-attended P & Z meeting back in February 2017, concern for this trend was discussed resulting in the formation of a task force representing all of the Ridgefield stakeholders involved to include the ECDC, Merchants, Landlords, Residents and Town officials.

Other meetings were held with these stakeholders to discuss details of the First Floor Retail issue. Without question the overall judgment of all participants was a need for a higher percentage of First Floor boutique retail establishments in the Village District. However, solutions to the problem were not easily amenable. Eventually it was determined that before pursuing a permanent zoning change, we should attempt to develop incentives that would spur landlords to give marketing priority to retail merchants.

Recommendation:

Generally speaking, the ECDC is proposing that a three point First Floor Retail incentive package be established that would include:

1. Creating a \$24,000 fund that would be used to provide Real Estate Tax incentives to landlords / new first floor retail merchants for a maximum three years based on Sq. Footage. (More detail below)***
2. A three-year Personal Property Tax waiver.
3. New Application Planning Fees Waiver.

Further details of this proposal:

Leases to non-retail tenants are ineligible for all incentives. Non-retail is described as a service industry business such as insurance, real estate, salons, barber shops or other professional services. Professional service businesses that also sell products as a secondary component of their business (eg. personal grooming products) do not qualify.

The current real estate tax equates on average to \$2.50 to \$4.00 per square foot. The average square footage of a typical retail storefront in the Village District is approximately 1,000 sq. ft.

Using the highest tax rate of \$4.00 x 1,000 sq. ft. equates to \$4,000 per year per average storefront. Forecasting six new retail storefront leases in any given year conservatively equates to a town revenue decrease of only \$24,000.

Qualification specifics:

1. To qualify for the incentive package, landlords must lease their vacant first floor space to a retail tenant regardless of the vacancy time involved.
2. Term of all leases must be three years minimum.

3. The incentive applies only to the first three years of a lease and is capped at 1,000 sq. ft. per new rental unit
4. The incentive would also apply to any existing business that expands into additional or new space. (Only the additional or new space would be available for the incentive not existing space).
5. There is no requirement that the incentive be spent on improvements, but all new leases must comply with Town and building codes.
6. The incentive would be earned annually for a period of three years under the terms of the current lease with no change of use.
7. 100% of the property tax incentive must be credited to the retail tenant and included in the terms of the lease. Leases structured in which the landlord receives the incentive would require that the landlord pass the incentive to the tenant on an annual basis. Leases in which the tenants are responsible for paying the taxes would result in the town rebating the taxes directly to the tenant from the fund.
8. All applications for the real estate and personal property tax incentive must apply to and be approved by the ECDC. All applications will be reviewed by the Tax Assessors office.
9. This incentive is available on a first come, first serve basis. Once the \$24,000 fund is expended for a given year, they are no longer available.
10. Leases to be considered for this incentive must be signed 30 days after enactment of this program.

*****In order to be able to implement the program in 2018. The ECDC will seek at least a commitment of \$12,000 for the balance of the fiscal year ending June 30th 2018 and then the full amount of \$24,000 for FY2018-19.**

Considering the trend of ever increasing service oriented businesses populating our village, the ECDC believes that time is now of the essence. Lacking a compelling package of financial incentives such as this that would encourage landlords to view first floor retail as a good business decision for themselves and for the local economy, our only alternative would be to approach P & Z with a proposal to create strict First Floor retail zoning.

BOS approval of this incentive should provide landlords a magnet to attract retailers to downtown Ridgefield.

Attachment D

December 14, 2017

The Hon. Rudy Marconi
First Selectman
Town of Ridgefield
400 Main Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877

Dear Rudy:

For the fiscal year of 2018-19, the Ridgefield Economic & Community Development Commission (RECDC) respectfully requests an annual budget of \$16,500. A detailed scope of work associated with this request follows on the next pages. **In addition there is a special request of \$24,000 for a tax incentive in order to attract First Floor Retail businesses to Ridgefield. A detailed report for this request is attached.**

For the coming year, the RECDC has outlined an agenda intended to support and strengthen Ridgefield's business environment, as well as generate new tax revenue for the Town. Through its continued collaboration with the Town's many agencies, boards, commissions, departments, businesses and residents on several important economic development opportunities within Town, the RECDC's goal is to assist the Town in adapting to the changing market and workforce demands within our region and State.

The RECDC's planned scope of work for 2018-19 includes projects that will help the Town increase its economic footprint by creating new revenue opportunities and will be funded through the allocated budget presented herewith or funded by initiatives that would require added Town investment. Where possible, the Commission has minimized costs to the Town through utilization of existing resources and programs. Additionally, the Commission has worked hard to establish goals and objectives for each initiative that will maximize the Town's return on investment within a reasonable, and where possible time frame.

The RECDC looks forward to the opportunity to appear before the Board of Selectmen during this year's budget review process to present this important budget and its special request of \$24,000 and to answer any questions the Selectmen may have.

Sincerely,

Arnold Light, Chairman, RECDC

The RECDC's work plan will include, but not be limited to, the following tasks:

RECDC 2018-19 WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

Task 1: RECDC Website Maintenance & Expansion

One of the most important initiatives for the RECDC in FY16-17 was to remake the website and put it on a user-friendly Word-Press platform. The Ridgefield Business Portal site has proven to be robust and mobile friendly. The objectives are to continue to get more viewers to the site in order to properly market Ridgefield's available retail and commercial properties to potential businesses and investors and to showcase the Town's existing business community. To maintain and keep the site fresh and vibrant we hired ACI who in FY 2017-18 has done more than a credible job and we therefore will retain their services.

(Anticipated cost: \$2,400)

Task 2: Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

In order to properly market the new RECDC Business Portal, SEO is vitally important. Organic Search traffic is perhaps the most essential factor that determines a web sites success or failure online. For that reason we are recommending this moderate budget so that we may continue the formulation of competitive key words and the strategic execution of SEO in the hopes of gaining top website rankings and increased traffic to the RECDC site.

(SEE ATTACHMNET A FOR CURRENT ANALYTICS)

(Anticipated cost \$2,500)

Task 3: RECDC Answering Services

Part of the Ridgefield Business Portal was the use of an outside answering service. This service gives us immediate text messages from callers and we are able to respond to callers within minutes of any inquiries.

(Anticipated cost: \$650)

Task 4: Supply & Administrative Support

Throughout the year, the RECDC will need office supplies and administrative support for its monthly public meetings, and occasionally for its stakeholder meetings and workshops.

(Anticipated cost: \$1,000)

Task 5: Marketing of Commercial Vacancies

The Town has never had a marketing program. In order to market the town in accordance with the SCRE recommendations and the new Town and RECDC websites the RECDC has taken on this important task. Through digital resources and the Town's new online presence the RECDC will form a task force that will research a way to attract successful first floor retailers

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who specialize in experiential and boutique experiences from other town's to open businesses in Ridgefield. In addition our effort will also encompass attracting consumers in other zip codes that are in proximity to Ridgefield that will represent new economic potential for spending.

(Anticipated cost: \$5,000)

Task 6: RECDC Educational Forums For Businesses

In cooperation with the Library RECDC during the 2018-2019 time period will conduct Forums for small businesses on how to stay competitive. There are some general rules of thumb that can help retailers and small businesses to focus on efficiency and maintain relevancy to the consumer groups in their markets. The RECDC Forums will focus on website creation, online marketing and social media ideas for improving the bottom line.

(Anticipated cost: \$0)

Task 7: 2018 Jazz Fest Promotion

For the past year the RECDC had recommended the creation of a Jazz Fest during a weekend where the Playhouse had booked several Jazz acts. Through the efforts of Allison Stockel and Commissioner John Devine this was achieved. As a result the success of this program the RECDC has meet with Ms. Stockel and it was agreed the effort should be expanded. An event of this type could have a big economic impact by attracting both residents and non-residents to Town the weekend of September 13-16, 2018. The RECDC's role would be to promote the Fest with such support as small ads in adjacent towns, social media and a shuttle bus from Hotel Zero to Town and the various events.

(Anticipated cost: \$3,000)

Task 8: RECDC End of Year Awards

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In order to support the efforts the ECDC is promoting we would like to start recognizing on an annual basis those businesses or persons who have achieved a successful year by creating an economic impact on the Town. These awards would be given out annually. In addition to a plaque or certificate to recognize the accomplishment the ECDC would award either a gift certificate or restaurant accommodations to be used in Town. Typical awards could be for Most Successful Business of the year, Outstanding Start-up, Person, Most Creative Business, etc.

(Anticipated cost \$2,000)

Table 1: Estimated Budget for 2018-2019 RECDC Work Plan Tasks

TASK	DESCRIPTION OF WORK	ESTIMATED COST
1	RECDC Website Maintenance & Expansion	\$2,400
2	Search Engine Optimization	\$2,500
3	ECDC Answering Service	\$650
4	Supply & Administrative Support	\$1,000
5	Town Marketing Expansion	\$5,000
6	RECDC Educational Forums For Businesses	\$0000
7	2018 Jazz Fest Promotion	\$3,000
8	RECDC End of Year Awards	\$2,000
	Total 2018-19 RECDC Budget Request:	\$16,550

Attachment E



Ridgefield
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12/04/17

CURRENT ANALYTICS

November Website / Facebook summary report.

(Google Analytics Statistics submitted under separate cover).

- SEO continues to be very good. All of our previously established **Search Phrases** are now reflecting **Google Page #1 performance**. No one submitted new Search Phrases in November.
- November was another record performance month for **Users and Sessions**. **2663 Users** and **3333 Sessions in November** represented increases of **17% and 25%** respectively over our previously high in October, 2017.

- **Referral** traffic (977 Sessions) was excellent in November. Facebook represented 626 sessions, 95% of all referrals.
- **Landing Pages:** The Town Calendar Events postings led all post visitations @ 1,839 sessions. Also popular in November were; The Holiday Stroll, Annual Tree Lighting, Our Home Page & video, Available Commercial Space, The Senior Gold program, Woman's Club Craft Fair and our Merchant Directory.
- New seasonal **slider photos** were added to our home page, representing the Winter & Holiday seasons.
- Our **Business Directory Plugin** required an update in November that caused numerous problems to include three days of not functioning properly. Art Schobey spent unknow hours with the Plugin designers getting it back to normal.
- Steph is doing a great job adding new Posts & Events on our Facebook page.
- I visited Paul Roche at the Recreation Center and asked them to add our Logo & URL to their website. I'm still not receiving Website Referrals or Website Content from our ECDC commissioners