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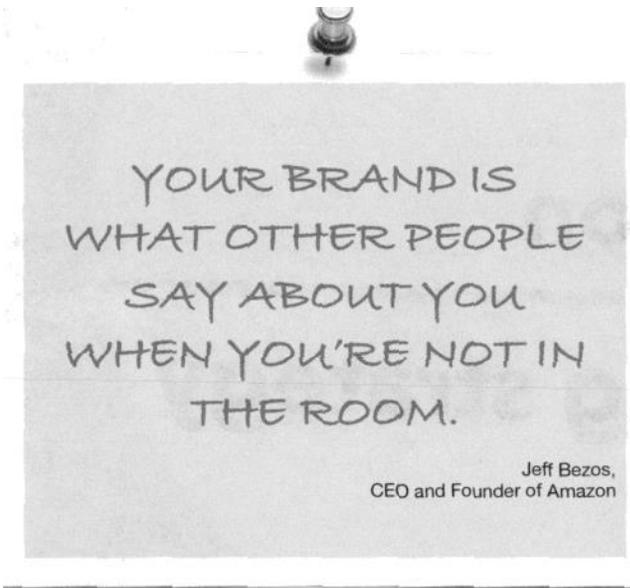
9/6/2018



Thompson Branding Strategy

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YOUR BRAND IS
WHAT OTHER PEOPLE
SAY ABOUT YOU
WHEN YOU'RE NOT IN
THE ROOM.

Jeff Bezos,
CEO and Founder of Amazon

1. Introduction

What one word
or phrase would
you use to
describe
Thompson?

What place or
activity would you
recommend to
someone visiting

The focus of the branding strategy for Thompson is on the town's desire to attract new residents, stimulate business development new and existing of all sizes and develop the town as a tourist destination. The goal of this strategy is to craft a message about the special offerings of the town that will resonate or appeal to persons and businesses inside and outside of Thompson.

A branding strategy is NOT a *marketing plan*. The branding strategy is the initial step — defining the brand and actions related to it to reinforce the brand — the marketing strategy is the next step. A branding plan or strategy attempts to capture "the enduring essence of a community, including its reputation and the thoughts, values and expectations that form a competing promise enabling people to choose that community over another."¹

A marketing strategy consists of the strategy and tactics to sell a community including the "activities, institutions and processes involved in Creating, Communicating and delivering value in a manner that propels a community toward its goals."²

Having a branding strategy and complementary marketing strategy is fundamental to those goals to enhance the economic standing of the Town.

The first step in this process is to develop the town's brand and with that a branding strategy. Communities typically develop branding strategies for the following reasons.³

- ❑ Putting your community on the regional and national map
- ❑ Increasing a sense of local identity, well-being and pride.

A place brand is related to the visual, verbal, and behavior characteristics of place. Once you define those characteristics and experiences, a place marketing campaign can be developed to share the place brand story in a way that relates to your key audience/stakeholders. Sharing the brand story supports attracting investment, tourism, and a changing citizens' perceptions.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities

¹ University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension System

² IBID

³ COMMUNITY BRANDING AND MARKETING –Federation of Canadian Municipalities Tool for Local Economic Development

Thompson has Long history of economic activity and growth. The mills and farms are confirmation to the past. Although the Town is no longer a mill town, nor is it dependent on agricultural production, Thompson has an active and growing business community. Unlike the Town's economic past, there exists today no dominant employment type or employer. Its business base is not large, but is growing and has over 300 businesses.

Thompson POCD, Page 28

- Attracting new businesses, industries, investments and high profile events
- Drawing in new populations and a diversity of skills and talents
- Increasing tourism
- Developing and maintaining a clear and consistent sense of community identity and messaging for the outside world
- Supporting coherent local development efforts overall as physical, social, economic and cultural sectors come together to deliver your community's brand promise.

The branding process began with the creation of a special committee. The Economic Development Commission created the committee which was made up of members from the Economic Development Commission, business and civic leaders and residents interested in the betterment of the Town. This committee began its work in December of 2016. The town engaged the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments to facilitate the planning process to develop the branding plan. The work was made all the more urgent with the news that the River Mill, which has stood as a symbol of the town's rich economic past, may be salvaged for its brick and timbers.

It is important to understand that community branding is not about pretending to be something you're not, creating a catchy logo or unique slogan for the town. Branding is about revealing, packaging and promoting awareness about what the community is and how that can be beneficial.

Creating a brand suggests a blank slate, a point where the town begins the process of establishing who "we" are; such an assumption is wrong. While Thompson does not have a formal brand — it nonetheless is branded. "Every citizen in a city, region and nation has a perception of that place. Through their actions and beliefs they express the brand. Complex brand perceptions about place are created over time and through functionality and experience. For cities, that means looking at the livability (i.e., functionality) and quality of life (i.e., citizen experience) of our cities, and understanding how that

...all communities have their own unique assets and resources. Each of these communities needs first to understand its own local economy in order to develop economic development strategies that will genuinely benefit the lives of its residents.

Towns need to be aware of the risk of creating too wide a gap between the brand message and reality. Ideally, towns should be able to demonstrate a characteristic, then communicate it.

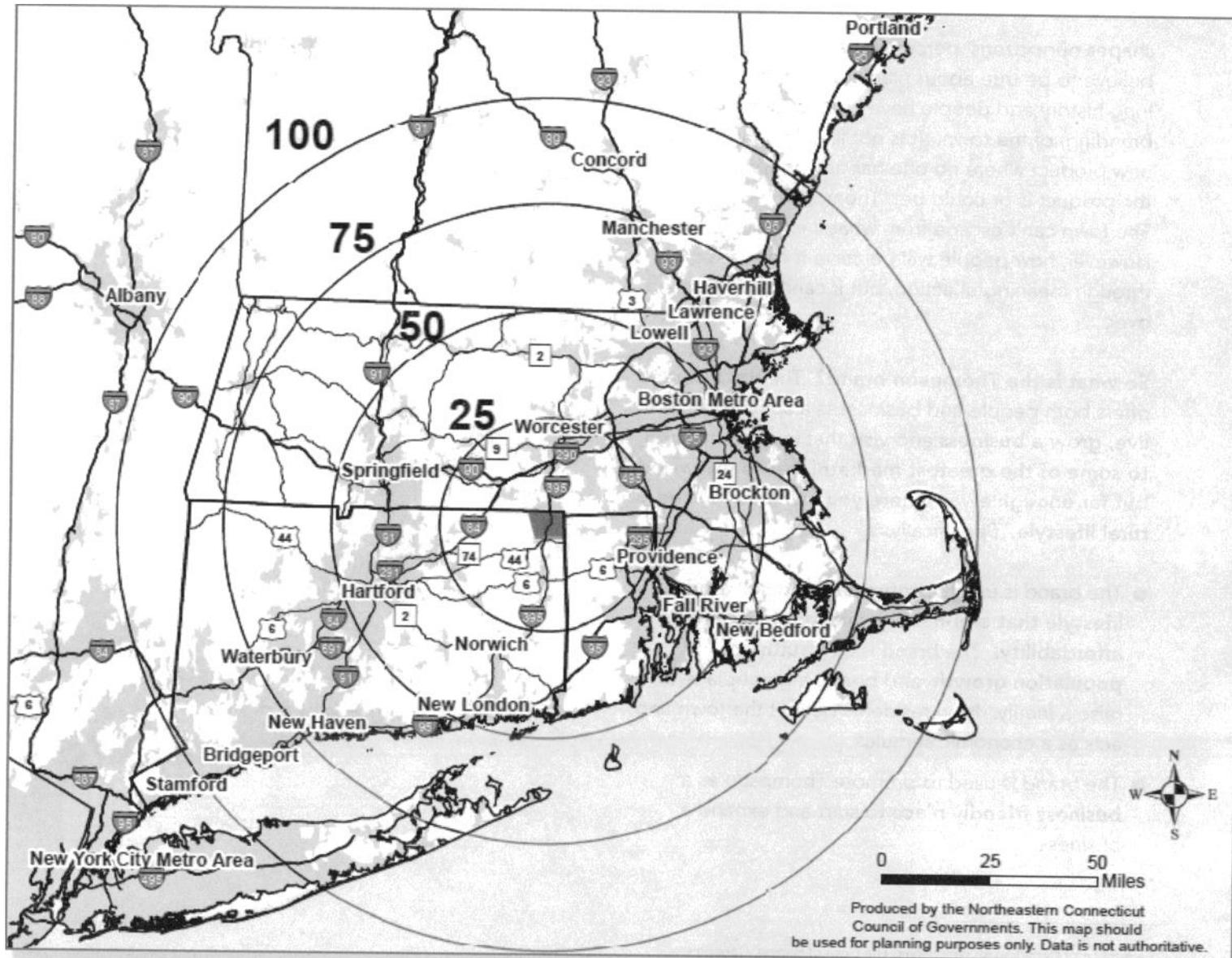
shapes our citizens' perception and what they believe to be true about place.⁴ Thompson has a long history and people have impressions (a form of branding) of the town. It is not like the launch of a new product where no one has any notion as to what the product is or could be. Thompson has history. The town can't escape from what it is, and has been. However, how people will perceive it can change through meaningful action, but it cannot be glossed over.

So what is the Thompson brand? The town's brand offers both people and businesses a special place to live, grow a business and visit that is close enough to some of the greatest marketplaces in the world but far enough away where you can enjoy a true rural lifestyle. Specifically :

- The brand is used to represent and sell a rural lifestyle that emphasizes quality of life and affordability. The brand is a recruitment for population growth and boasts a great place to raise a family. New residents benefit the town and act as an economic stimulus;
- The brand is used to promote Thompson as a business friendly place to start and expand a business;

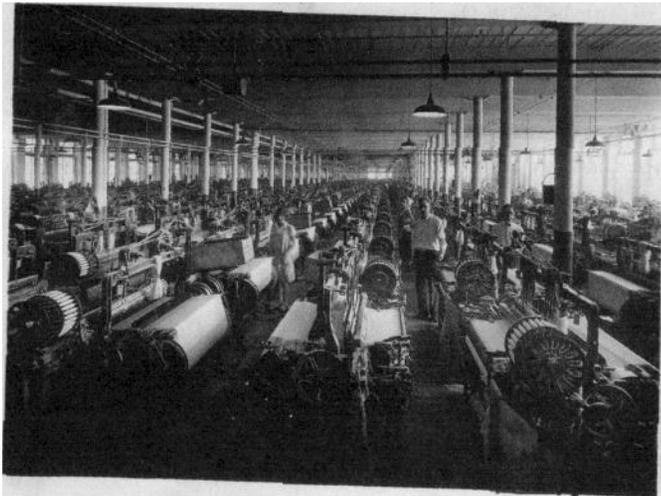
- The brand is used to entice people to visit the town to enjoy (as well as spend money) the multiple tourist destinations; and
- The brand is to be used to foster and grow a sense of place and pride for the residents of Thompson.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2011. Council of Ministers, Canada



2. Thompson in Perspective

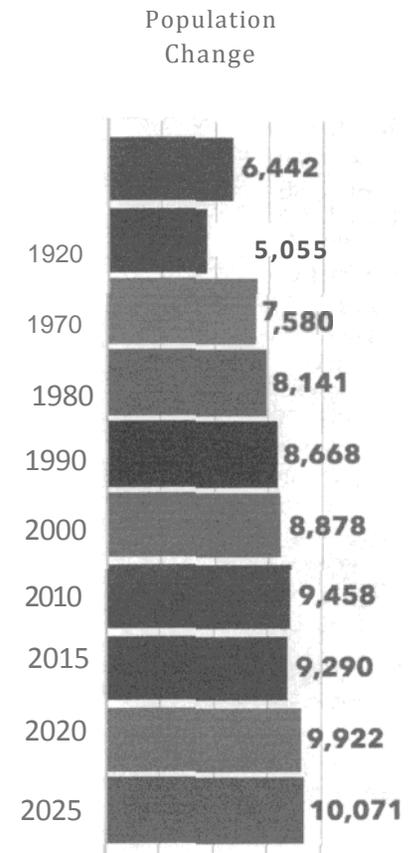
Thompson is a rural town located in northeastern Connecticut forming the corner that borders Massachusetts to the North and Rhode Island to the East. Major cities in close proximity to the town include Worcester (15 miles), Boston (50 miles) and Providence (30 miles). Thompson is one of 169 towns in Connecticut. The town (which covers 47 square miles) has a population of 9,290 (2015) or just 198 persons per square mile compared to a state average of 742 persons per square mile. The town has approximately 4,100 housing units. Thompson



is composed of ten villages: East Thompson, Fabyan, Grosvenordale, Mechanicsville, North Grosvenordale, (including the North Grosvenordale Mill/ Historic District), Quaddick, Quinebaug,

Thompson Hill (including the Thompson Hill Historic District), West Thompson and Wilsonville Villages in New England towns are quite common and have their origins in both the Colonial era and the Industrial Revolution.

The town's economic foundation was built on location and an abundance of reliable water power. The Quinebaug and French rivers, flowing through the west of town, allowed for multiple water-powered industries that thrived through the Industrial Revolution until the late 1970s. The mill factories were primarily related to the production of fabric and employed hundreds of persons during a more than 100 year period of time. Today the remains of these mills and the one fully standing mill (which has approximately 750,000 square feet) are all that is left of this manufacturing past. Thompson has a long history of economic activity and growth.



The North Grosvenordale Mill, known as Mill No. 2, was built in 1872. It is four stories tall and measures a gigantic 464' x 75'. In 1864, William Grosvenor, a Rhode Island physician and investor, purchased two small textile mills and associated water privileges along the French River in Thompson. He built large new mills at each site, starting in 1868. The North Grosvenordale Mill ran 65,000 spindles and employed 850 people in 1882. Employment increased to 1,122 in 1890 and 1,750 in 1900. By concentrating on high-value goods, the mill's productivity and employment steadily increased. The Depression of the 1930s was a serious blow; the company reduced workers' wages and, in 1938, sold most of its houses.

<https://www.slideshare.net/BillHosley/connecticut-industrial-trail-list-and-site-profiles-by-william-hosley>

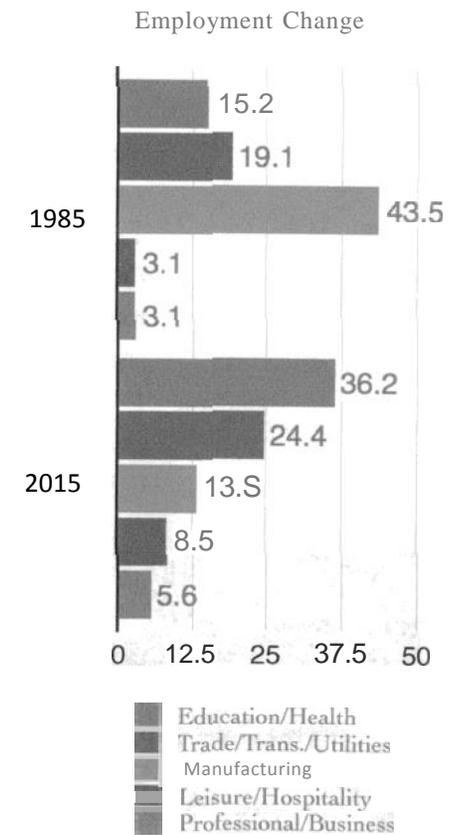
This history is marked by active participation in the industrial revolution that lasted well into the twentieth century and production agriculture that still colors much of the town's landscape. The River Mill in North Grosvenordale, which contains approximately 750,000 square feet of space (more than that occupied by 4 "super" warehouse stores), is the iconic symbol of this history. This mill has been partially restored and still contains some active tenants. "Thompson's factory roots are still clear in a town with 10 villages within its borders, seven built around mills. The most imposing landmarks in town are a massive former cotton mill in North Grosvenordale, that closed in 1954 – and now is on the National Register of Historic Places and the remnants of a once equally imposing textile mill in Grosvenordale which was mostly torn down several years ago.

Today, the town's manufacturing base consists of a handful of small firms, none in textiles. Whatever the product, and wherever the

factory is, it's clear that local residents cling to a factory culture."

Thomson has, throughout its history, had significant agricultural production. "Agriculture takes many forms and Thompson has a range of agricultural operations. The Town has two dairy farms, several nurseries greenhouse operations, tree farms, crop farms, orchards, private and commercial equestrian operations, apiaries, organic farms and home gardens." Agriculture has been expanding in terms of the number of farms, diversity of operations and impact on the economics of Connecticut. According to a recent study by the University of Connecticut:

Using three models of the Connecticut Economy, this analysis estimates the 2007 statewide economic impacts of the CT agricultural industry as follows:



Source: U.S. Census American FactFinder

* https://articBs.couram.cxn/2D11-04-11/news/hc—thompson-factory-workers—20110400_1_woolen-mill-cotton-mill-textile-rrull

GROWN IN THE LAST GREEN VALLEY



THOMPSON
Grown

A guide to the
Agricultural
Products and
Services in
Thompson, CT

AGVOCATE



ADVOCACY FOR
LOCAL AGRICULTURE

Produced by:
Thompson Agriculture
Commission
In Conjunction with the
AGvocate Program



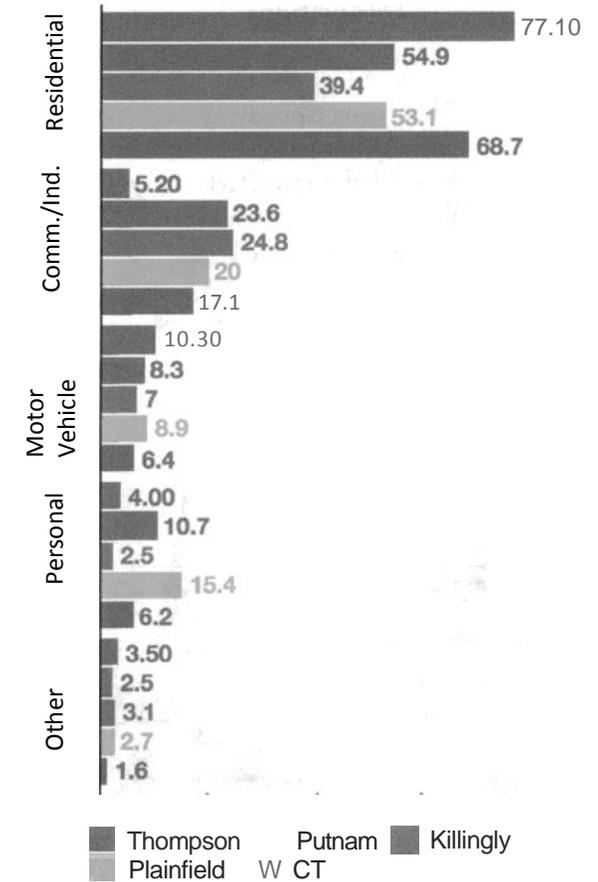
Statewide sales are in the range from \$2.7 to \$3.5 billion, generating 16,650-22,753 jobs and approximately \$1 to \$1.7 billion in value added. Additional impacts flow from ecological and social benefits from agricultural and forest production and related recreation, wildlife, and quality of life effects.”

Although the town is no longer a mill town, nor is it dependent on agricultural production, it has an active yet mostly unknown business community. Unlike the Town's economic past, there exists today no dominant employment type or employer. Its business base is diverse and this may be surprising to many: growing - with 715 companies identified (102 with paid employees and 613 without paid employees) ⁸. In May of 2017 Thompson had a labor force of 5,3d7; of that total labor force 5,119 were employed and 248 were unemployed*.

Tourism, special events (weddings, anniversaries, fundraisers, parties) and

recreation bring many visitors and revenue to Thompson. The town has long been a destination for visitors. The town is home to the Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park which features the first purpose-built road course and first asphalt high-banked oval in America. The Speedway also includes a 18 hole golf course, restaurant and banquet facility. This destination alone held more than 240 events in 2016. Lord Thompson Manor has held extravagant weddings & events often times extending the events over an entire weekend - rehearsal dinner - wedding brunch & spa at Cottage House -wedding, then the day after brunch (3 days and two nights).

Grand List Components
Comparison



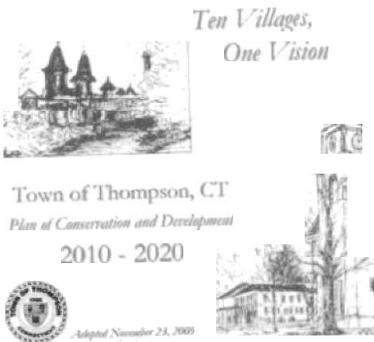
⁷http://are.uconn.edu/ResearOutre_2_3E7016128.pdf

⁸ Source: <http://es1fir1nronn>c nnvymkmt/uan/1 mmv' tnsn1v xv.' AD1EGWXXI isn9G1A7.5970> Source: CT Department of Labor,

<https://www1.ctdol.state.st.us/lmi/laus/laustown.asp>

Key Thompson Destinations

Fort Hill Farm
Thompson Motorsport Park
Quaddick State Park
West Thompson Dam
Recreation Area



The town is also home to Fort Hill Farms - a "three season family destination." At Fort Hills Farms visitors can enjoy events like their bluegrass festival, Lavender Garden (one of the largest in New England), the Corn maze, Pumpkin Patch and ice cream made from milk produced at their farm and sold through a consortium called The Farmers Cow. The town has seven restaurants and more than a dozen retail stores. Thomoson also boasts a wealth of nature-based recreation with hiking on

the Airline Trail (which traverses the entire town), West Thompson Dam recreation area and Quaddick State Park. "West Thompson Lake is rich with natural resources and a great diversity of habitats, landscapes, plant life, and wildlife. Park Rangers manage the 1,857 acres based on a multiple-use approach focusing on water resources, forest health, wildlife, and recreational use...¹ The West Thompson

¹ <http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/vest—Thompson-Lakes>

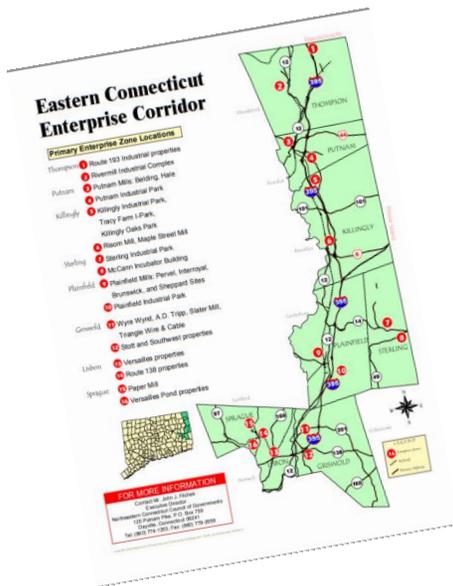
Dam, Quaddick State Park, the extensive trail system and Marianapolis School bring people from throughout southern New England. Additionally, the Town's two golf courses bring in a steady flow of people from outside the Town.

Despite the number of attractions, awareness of the town's destinations and offerings is limited. This is demonstrated by an internet search of things to do, places to eat and places to stay in Thompson.

Trip Advisor lists four things to do: Thompson Motorsports Park, Fort Hills Farms and Quaddick State Park. The fourth item is located in Canada. Yelp lists just one destination - Fort Hill Farms - for visitors to Thompson. Trip Advisor lists nine places to eat on their ten best places to eat in the town. Yelp lists just two Thompson restaurants in their top ten.

Thompson, Connecticut Branding Strategy





In terms of places to stay [hotels.com](https://www.hotels.com) lists no places in Thompson and the majority in Massachusetts. *Trip Advisor* lists three places to stay: Lord Thompson Manor, Samuel Watson House and the Cottage House. The Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park has as their preferred hotel partner Mohegan Sun; just over 45 miles from the facility. The Connecticut tourism page provides the opportunity for each town to highlight destinations, events and other happenings in their towns. To date, the town has not taken advantage of this opportunity. The Thompson website does little to promote the town and there is currently no social media presence or strategy in place.

Since 1995 the town has been part of the *Eastern Connecticut Enterprise Corridor (ECEC)*. The ECEC is a rural version of an urban enterprise zone where the state in partnership with the town incentivizes business development. The ECEC provides "a 5-

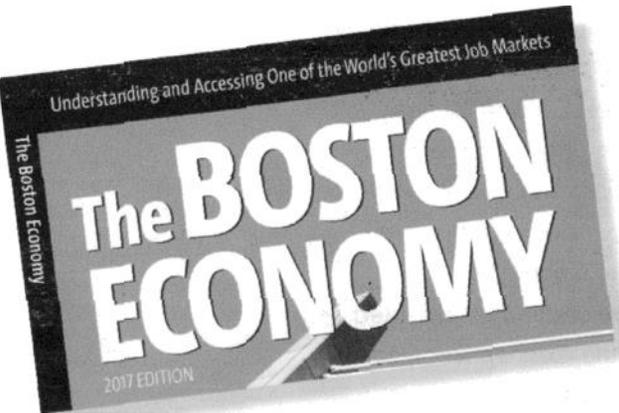
year, 8086 abatement of local property taxes on all qualifying real and *persona!* oroperty that are new to the Grand List of the town as a result of the business expansion or renovation project and a 10-year, 25% or 50% credit on that portion of the Connecticut corporate business tax that is directly attributable to this business relocation, expansion or renovation project as *determined* by the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services and as provided under Section 12-217(e) of the Connecticut General Statutes.¹¹ Thompson has multiple properties eligible for the ECEC all located in and around the Route 12 corridor.

Connecticut, through its State Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) has designated much of the Route 12 corridor as a Public Investment Area.

This means that new ventures and infrastructure improvements are more



¹¹ <http://www.ct.gov/ecd/cwp/view.asp?1a=1080&q=249764#Enterprise>



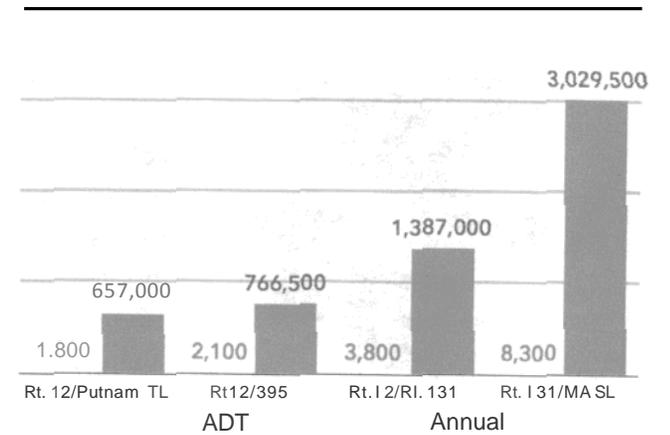
readily funded by the state. This area is also largely part of the greater Worcester Metropolitan Area which makes roads designated as collectors¹² eligible for federal funding. Collector roads are identified on functional classification maps approved by the Department of Transportation.

The town is bisected north-south by Interstate 395 (3 exits and approximately 7.6 million vehicle trips annually or 20,900 daily pass north or south at the Massachusetts line and 23,600 daily at the Putnam town line. Each of the three exits experience only a small fraction of the average daily traffic activity with 1,000, 1,100 and 800 reactively daily average traffic counts for the three exits or just 12.3 percent of the total traffic moving through the town on Interstate 395. The Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90), the major east-west interstate in Massachusetts and

direct connection to Boston, is just twelve miles from the town. Currently, 47.2% of Thompson's workers stay in state - 52.8% work out-of-state. The Boston metro region includes more than 2.9 million working age persons.

"Boston's economy grew by 3.6 percent between 2014 and 2015 as measured by Gross City Product (GCP). This builds on 3.8 percent growth the prior year, running a point ahead of the growth rate of the overall U.S. economy. Boston outperformed both Massachusetts and the nation with annual job growth of 2.7 percent between 2014 and 2015. Total employment rose in 2015 to

Route 12/131 Corridor traffic



¹² According to the Federal Highway Administration, roadways that provide a high level of mobility are called "Arterials", those that provide a high level of accessibility are called "Locals"; and those that provide a more balanced blend of mobility and access are called "Collectors." Collectors serve a critical role in the roadway network by gathering traffic from Local Roads and funneling them to the Arterial network. Within the context of functional classification, Collectors are broken down into two categories: Major Collectors and Minor Collectors. In the rural environment, Collectors generally serve primarily intra-county travel (rather than statewide) and constitute those routes on which (independent of traffic volume) predominant travel distances are shorter than on Arterial routes.

757,344, the highest level since employment data became available in 1969.¹³

There is limited public transportation within the town and for access within the northeast region of Connecticut. There is no commercial bus service and no transit connections to other regions in Connecticut or Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Thompson is bisected north south by an active freight railroad (formerly Providence Worcester Freight Railroad) now owned by the Genesee & Wyoming family of railroads. According to the Connecticut Department of Transportation:

"The Providence and Worcester Railroad Company (P&W) is a regional FRA designated Class 2 railroad... P&W has classification yards in Plainfield and Willimantic, and operates an intermodal facility in Worcester, Massachusetts, where it interchanges with CSX Transportation (CSX). It interchanges with Pan Am Railways (PAR) in Gardner, Massachusetts, and the New England Central Railroad (NECR) at Willimantic. The connections at Willimantic and New London provide access to the Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian National Railway. P&W serves many industrial facilities and supports a large number of rail and industrial jobs in Connecticut. Among its dozens of clients, P&W serves the Frito-Lay production facility in Killingly, a chemical

and bulk plastic transfer facility in Plainfield, several rock quarries and gravel pits, a construction and demolition debris facility in Portland, and metal transfer facilities in New Haven and Middletown. It has a maintenance-of-way equipment repair facility in Plainfield; along with a fully equipped spray-paint facility for locomotives and rolling stock. In 2010, the company transported nearly 35,000 carloads of freight that included a mix of chemicals, plastics, and minerals, and nearly 24,000 intermodal shipments, some of which originate or terminate in Connecticut, and estimates it diverts more than 100,000 truck trips from Connecticut's highway system Annually.

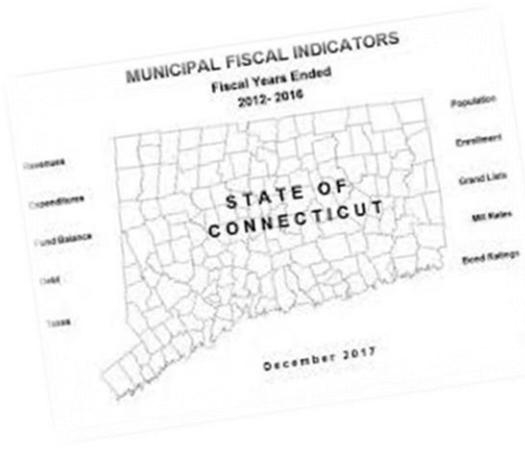
In Thompson the only current use of freight rail is by a gravel operation.

There have been multiple studies regarding the introduction of passenger rail along the existing freight rail line. Costs to upgrade crossings and similar improvements coupled with a predicted limited ridership makes such an option doubtful.



¹³Boston Planning & Development Agency Research Division, May 2017

¹⁴http://www.ct.gov/dot/1ib/dot/documents/dplansprojectsstudias/plans/state_rail_plan/State_Rail_Plan_Final_Draft_8-24-17.pdf



However, just 20 minutes north in Worcester is Union Station with connections directly to Boston. Passenger services from this Location have recently been expanded.

"Riders on the first ever non-stop train from Worcester to Boston on Monday gained an extra half hour Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito said. And while that made for happy riders, the real benefit to the so-called 'HeartToHub' train will be a boost to the local economy... Polito on Monday echoed what Worcester officials have been saying for a number of years: It's cheaper to live in Worcester than in Boston, and it's not that far away The hope is that Worcester is attractive to not only people living in Boston now, but to some of the 35,000 college students who regularly move east for the money after graduation... 'Worcester is half as expensive to live in as Boston is,' Petty said. 'Worcester is cheaper to run a business in. These trains will allow those people who work in Boston to get to Worcester in an hour to allow people who own a business to get to Worcester in an hour Hopefully that will make Worcester and Central Mass. more attractive. It's a great place to live, and now maybe more people will see that.'"

The town ranks 128 compared to the state's 169 towns in terms of median household income at \$68,869 for the town, \$37, 429 for N. Grosvenordale.

Unemployment rates for the town overall are 4.9%; N.

Grosvenordale is 7.7% for 2016.

Personal Per Capita income is \$31,077 for the town as a whole and \$22,760 for N.

Grosvenordale.

Poverty rate for Town is 7.6% and for N.

Grosvenordale \$15.5%.

Thompson, Connecticut
Branding Strategy

Selected Monthly Owner Costs As A Percentage Of Household Income (SMOQAP)

Housing units with a mortgage (excluding units where SMOCAPI cannot be computed)

| | "own | | N. Gros, | |
|------------------------|------|-------|----------|-------|
| Less than 20.0 percent | 838 | 42.0% | 32 | 20.1% |
| 20.0 to 24.9 percent | 383 | 19.2% | 72 | 45.3% |
| 25.0 to 29.9 percent | 324 | 16.2% | 9 | 5.7% |
| 30.0 to 34.9 percent | 75 | 8.8% | 8 | 5.0% |
| 35.0 percent or more | 277 | 13.9% | 38 | 23.9% |

Gross Rent As A Percentage Of Household Income (GRAPI)

Occupied units paying rent (excluding 1 unit where GRAPI cannot be computed)

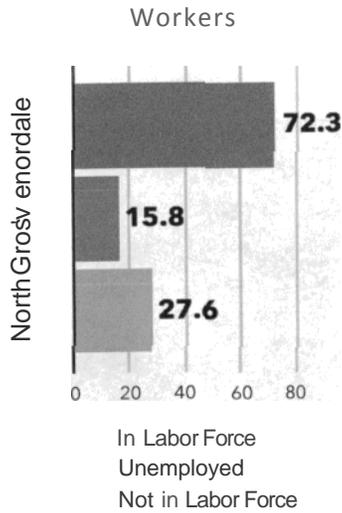
| | Town | | N. Gros. | |
|-----------------------|------|-------|----------|-------|
| Less than 5.0 percent | 154 | 21.5% | 124 | 33.7% |
| 15.0 to 19.9 percent | 95 | 13.2% | 79 | 21.5% |
| 20.0 to 24.9 percent | 54 | 7.5% | 15 | 4.1% |
| 25.0 to 29.9 percent | 78 | 10.0% | 11 | 3.0% |
| 30.0 to 34.9 percent | 78 | 10.9% | 33 | 9.0% |
| 35.0 percent or more | 258 | 36.0% | 106 | 28.8% |

" For Worcester, a booming economy is the goal of a one-hour train to Boston By Michael D. Kane http://www.masslive.com/news/worcester/index.ssf/2016/05/for_worcester_a_booming_economy.html

"VAT 2015 State Fiscal Indicators

" IBID

" IBID



Debt per capita (2015) was \$1,050; ranking 123rd in the state-compared to the state average of \$2,430 per capita and a median of \$1,598¹⁹. The town's poverty rate is 7.3 percent compared to the 11.4 percent for Windham County and 10.5 percent for the state²⁰. The total budget for the town is \$24,374,888.

Thompson is, comparatively speaking, affordable as a place to live and do business. The town currently (November, 2016) has a solid Moody's Bond Rating of A1. Property tax revenues as a percentage of total revenues come in at 57.1 percent or 150th out of 169 towns; the Connecticut average is 71.886 in this Category and the median is 76.4 Percent.²¹ The adjusted current year (2015) adjusted tax levy measured on a per capita basis is \$1,508 (compared to a 2,712 average and \$2,791 median for the state) — this makes Thompson the

165 lowest taxed town in Connecticut.²² Comparing mill rates, using the state's Equalized Net Mill Rate²³ with other Connecticut towns, Thompson has the 130th lowest mill rate. Data from the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) for 2015 show that the town's mill rate was 16.87. The state mill rate average for this

period was 18.80 and the median 19.865. In terms of Grand List (the aggregate valuation of taxable property within a given town) the list breaks out as follows

| Year Housing Built | | |
|-----------------------|-------|--------------------|
| Total housing units | 4,132 | |
| Built 2014 or later | 0 | 0.0% |
| Built 2010 to 2013 | 9 | 0.2% |
| Built 2000 to 2009 | 321 | 7.8% |
| Built 1990 to 1999 | 447 | 10.8% |
| Built 1980 to 1989 | 589 | 14.3% ^a |
| Built 1970 to 1979 | 452 | 10.9% |
| Built 1960 to 1969 | 463 | 11.2% ^b |
| Built 1950 to 1959 | 528 | 12.8% ^c |
| Built 1940 to 1949 | 291 | 7.0% |
| Built 1939 or earlier | 1,032 | 25.0% |

| Year Householder Moved Into Unit | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------|
| Occupied housing units | 3,736 | |
| Moved in 2015 or later | 10 | 0.3% |
| Moved in 2010 to 2014 | 808 | 21.6 % |
| Moved in 2000 to 2009 | 1,036 | 27.7% |
| Moved in 1990 to 1999 | 787 | 21.1% |
| Moved in 1980 to 1989 | 452 | 12.1% |
| Moved in 1979 and earlier | 643 | 17.29% |

¹⁹ IBID

²⁰ IBID

²¹ BRD

²² The mill rate is the rate of taxation levied on property subject to taxation under Connecticut General Statutes. One mill is equal to 1/1000 of a dollar. For example, a tax rate of 20 mills is equivalent to \$20.00 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Generally, the mill rates of special taxing districts located within the municipalities are not included. The Equalized Mill Rate, or the Elective Tax Rate, is calculated by dividing the adjusted tax levy as presented in the municipality's Tax Collector's Report, by the Equalized Net Grand List. The Equalized Net Grand List is the estimate of the market value of all taxable property in a municipality. Municipal Assessor's Grand Lists based on schedules established by the Connecticut General Assembly (CGS 12-62). Thus, there can be a marked difference between the market value of all property and the assessed value. OPM calculates the ENGL from sales and assessment ratio information and grand list reports filed by the municipality. The Net Grand List is the assessed value of all taxable property in a municipality net of exemptions allowed under state statutes as of October 1.

²³ CT 2015 State Fiscal Indicator

- Residential - 75.4%
- Commercial/Industrial - 5.8%
- Motor Vehicle - 1.2%
- Personal - 4.3%
- Other 3.3%.

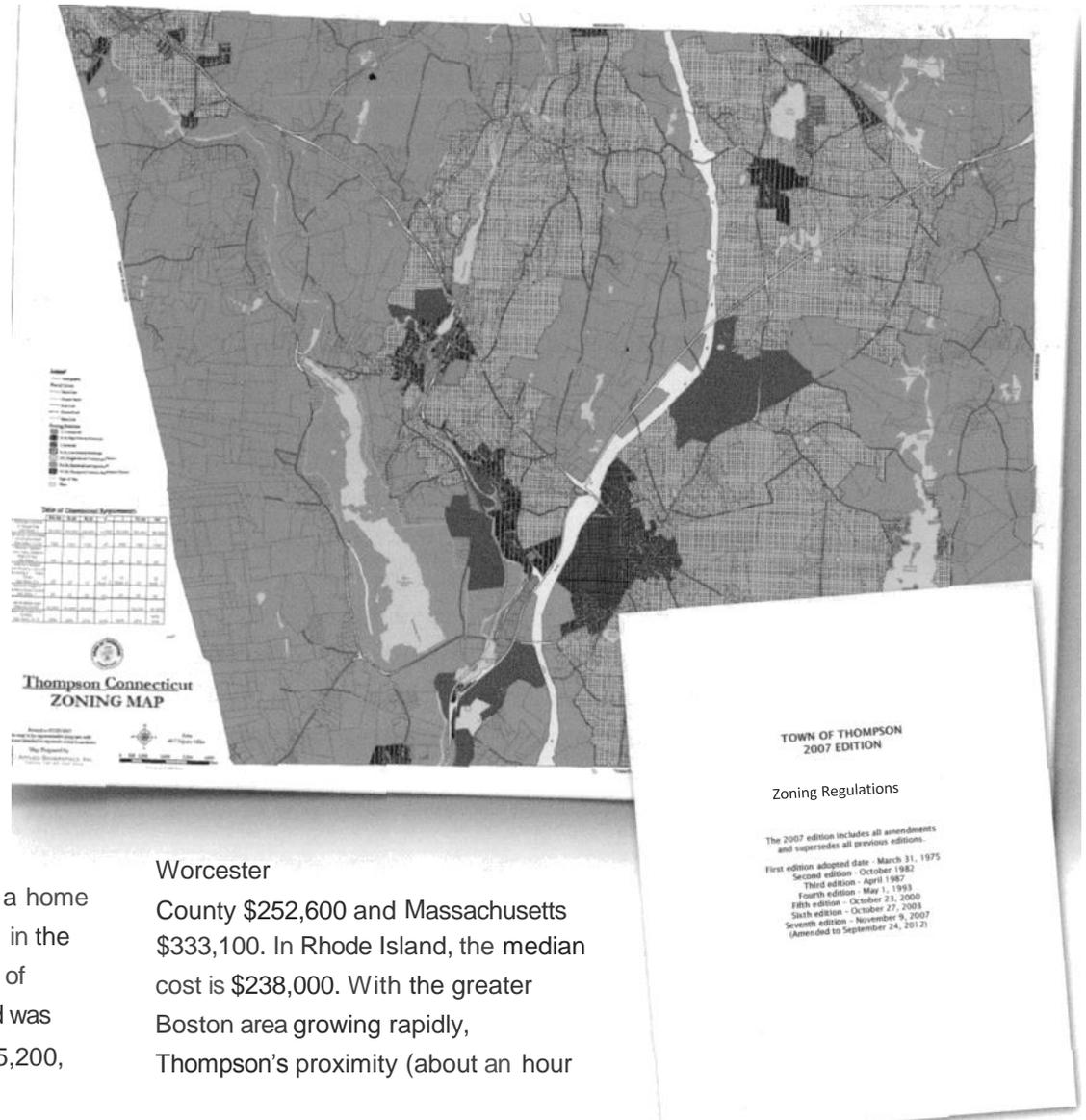
Despite the comparably low town tax burden, Thompson is under regular pressure to diversify its tax base by developing commercial activity to offset any increases to the current property tax level.

The largest employer, as is the case in most small to medium sized towns, in Thompson is education. In Thompson's case, the town additionally has one parochial school and a private school (Marianapolis Prep).

The town's housing is relatively affordable compared to its immediate and regional neighbors. The median price of a home in 2014 was \$195,000 compared to \$203,200 in the county and \$274,500 for the state. The town of Webster median cost was \$210,200, Oxford was \$230,600, Auburn \$240,700, Worcester \$205,200,

Worcester

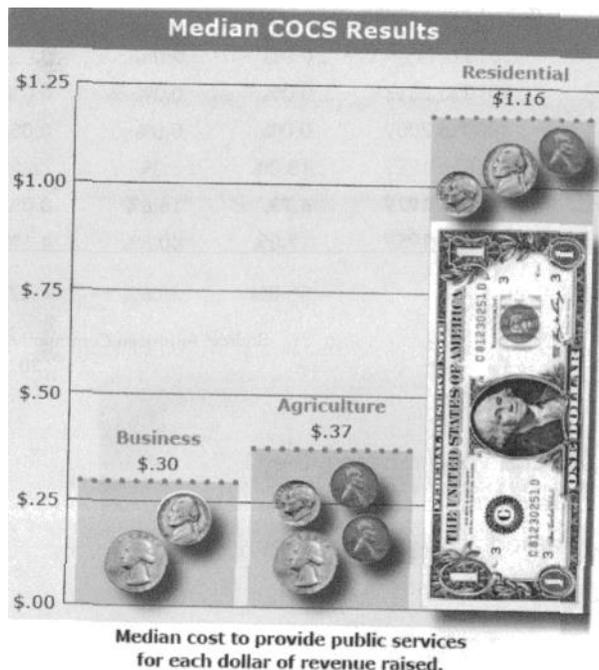
County \$252,600 and Massachusetts \$333,100. In Rhode Island, the median cost is \$238,000. With the greater Boston area growing rapidly, Thompson's proximity (about an hour



commute) makes it an attractive location to live.

Land use in Thompson is dominated by lands zoned for residential or agricultural use; with lands set aside for commercial or industrial use being limited. "Land use largely determines the revenues and expenditures of municipal governments. Different land use including residential, commercial,

industrial, agricultural, and open space—generate different amounts of revenue because they are taxed at different rates and are responsible for different amounts of intergovernmental aid. They also demand *different* expenditures for municipal services ranging from public education, police



²⁵ <http://environment.yale.edu/kotchen/pubs/COCS.pdf>
www.farmlandinfo.org

North Grosvenordale - Poverty Status 2015

| | All Families | | Female Householder, No Husband Present | |
|--|--------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | Total | % Below Poverty Level | Total | % Below Poverty Level |
| All Families | 424 | 6.8% | 63 | 46.0% |
| With related children of householder under 18 years | 214 | 13.6% | 63 | 46.036 |
| With related children of householder under 5 years and 5 to 17 years | 71 | 40.8% | 29 | 100.0% |

Source: American Community Survey, 2011-2015

protection, roads, and other forms of infrastructure. When land uses change, therefore, the balance of municipal revenues and expenditures changes as well.* It is noteworthy to understand that different land use types require different levels of services or costs by town. On balance for each dollar in taxes received on residential properties it requires in excess of a dollar to provide town-based services and for each dollar received from open space, agriculture and commercial properties it takes less than a dollar to provide town based services. The American Farmland Trust", which developed the methodology

for cost of community services, has consistently demonstrated that residential development costs significantly outweigh other aspects of development.

Thompson's primary land use tool is zoning; it has had zoning in place since 1975. "Zoning allows a local government to control and regulate the uses and characteristics of buildings, structures, and land within its boundaries. The authority for zoning is broadly based on a Community's police power, allowing for the protection of the public's health, safety, and general welfare.²" The approach to zoning, similar to most municipalities in Connecticut and across the country is Euclidian. Euclidian zoning is one where different and presumably non-compatible uses are separated to avoid conflict. "A zoning ordinance divides a local government's jurisdiction into districts or zones. For each district or zone, the zoning ordinance regulates the type of land uses allowed, intensity or density of development, height, bulk and placement of structures, amount and design of parking, and a number of other aspects of land-use and development activity."³ An alternative form of zoning taking hold across the nation is form-based zoning.

With form-based zoning the primary concern is not land use (commercial, residential, industrial, etc.), rather how the resulting building or development looks, functions, and relates to the street or other public spaces. The idea was developed by leading new-urbanist thinkers and practitioners and is highly context sensitive —meaning the code is intended to be adapted to particular communities and architectural styles. Like any code or ordinance, they have the force of law and are not mere suggestions. As with conventional, use-based zoning codes, they function in tandem with a subdivision/street

North Grosvenordale - Housing Characteristics

| | Occupied housing units | Owner-occupied housing units | Renter-occupied housing units |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Estimate | Estimate | Estimate |
| Occupied housing units | 654 | 265 | 389 |
| Year Structure Built | | | |
| 2014 or later | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| 2010 to 2013 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| 2000 to 2009 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| 1980 to 1999 | 18.0% | 6.0% | 26.2% |
| 1960 to 1979 | 6.7% | 16.6% | 0.0% |
| 1940 to 1959 | 19.0% | 40.6% | 4.1% |
| 1939 or earlier | 56.3% | 36.6% | 69.7% |

Source: American Community Survey, 2011-2015

² <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/news/displayrwe.asp?NewsID=7B7&Target> 239
³ <http://urbanland.uli.org/industry-sectors/zoning-at-85/>

standards code. Most notably, they're highly graphic and visual."

Thompson's immediate competitors are the other towns in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. This means that there are 556 municipal governments attempting to do much the same as Thompson! This list includes places well known on a national and international basis such as Boston, Providence, Sturbridge, Cape Cod, Newport and Cambridge. In the immediate vicinity of the Interstate 395 corridor there are more than a dozen similar sized communities to Thompson that are aggressively seeking to grow their economic base. The City of Worcester is New England's second/third largest city and whose metropolitan area extends into and beyond Thompson is less than twenty minutes up the road on I-395. Differentiating Thompson is one of the primary challenges in branding the town.

Thompson has a rich history, beautiful landscape, many natural features, an array of businesses - including several that draw visitors year-round, strategic location in proximity to major metropolitan areas and is relatively affordable. The challenge,

going forward, is to wrap these elements into a cohesive package for the betterment of the community.



" <http://stateplanning.delaware.gov/inforrmtion/documents/FBC-Primer-Full-2014-04-16.pdf>

3. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Near the beginning of the planning process the Study Committee was asked to conduct a SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis of the town. This exercise was repeated on several occasions and the list has been modified as the planning process has evolved. A SWOT analysis is a tool to identify issues; it is not a process that necessarily offers solutions or necessarily prioritize issues.

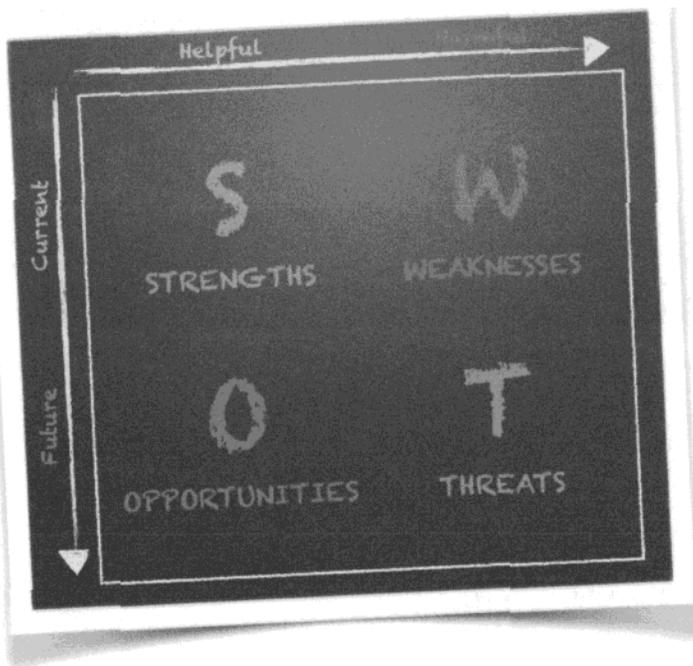
According to the Economic Development Administration:

"A SWOT analysis... should answer the question, 'Where are we now?' by using the relevant data and background information to help identify the critical internal and external factors that speak to the town's unique assets and

competitive positioning. The SWOT is a strategic planning tool used by organizations to ensure that there is a clear objective informed by a comprehensive understanding of a [town's] capabilities and capacity. A SWOT analysis identifies the (town's) competitive advantages—those indigenous assets that make the (town) special or competitive in the national and global economies—juxtaposed against those external or internal factors that can keep a (town) from realizing its potential. Determining and analyzing what the (town) already possesses that could be leveraged better to build the capacity for growth, including competitive cultural, economic, technological, intellectual and physical assets, is critical to developing the strategic direction and implementation plan to promote (the town) economic vitality. Leveraging assets refers to using the activities and engagement of business, government leaders and other stakeholders to maximize the economic potential of a [town].

In addition, the SWOT analysis should consider economic resiliency. Specifically, what factors and/or elements are in place (or need to be put in place) to ensure the long-term success, viability, and durability of the [town] economy? SWOT analysis elements are commonly understood in the following terms:

Strengths are a [town's] relative competitive advantages (e.g., industry supply chains and clusters, extensive port,



Strengths

- Location
- Visuals
- Affordability
- Natural Resources
- Cultural/Historic Resources
- Destinations
- Agriculture
- Interstate 395
- Route 12/131 Corridor
- Freight Rail

Opportunities

- Tourism
- Marketing
- Rural Industries
- Infrastructure
- Jobs - Living Wage Type
- Host more events
- Railroad
- Transit Connections
- Interstate Highway Access
- River Mill
- Route 12/131 Corridor

Weaknesses

- Appearance
- No Real Marketing or Social Media Strategy
- Competition Head-start
- River Mill
- Zoning Regulations
- Economic Development
- Civic/Physical Fragmentation
- Housing Redevelopment
- Under Unemployment
- Grand List In-Balance
- Limited Options for Accommodations
- Access for People is Limited to Motor Vehicles

Threats

- Route 12/131 Corridor
- Poverty
- Housing
- Community Indifference and/or adherence to the "status quo"

rail, and *broadband* assets, specializes workforce *skills*, higher *education* levels, collaboration among *stakeholders*) and often are internal in nature;

Weaknesses are a [town's] relative *competitive* disadvantages (e.g., a risk-averse or change-resistant regional cultures, also often internal in nature;

Opportunities are chances or occasions for [a town's] *improvement* or *progress* (e.g., expansion of a biosciences research lab in the region), often external in nature; and

Threats are chances or occasions for negative impacts on the [town] or decline (e.g. several companies in the [town] considering moving to lower-cost areas of the state), also often are external in nature. ””

The Committee conducted the SWOT analysis during several meetings; refining the analysis as they further studied the issues. The SWOT analysis exercises allowed the committee to more fully focus on the branding strategy.

³⁰ adopted from the Economic Development Administration

Strengths

- The town's location relative to New England's major metropolitan areas and more than fifty universities is a strength.
 - Visually the town is quintessential New England; stone walls, red barns, waterways and lakes, a classic town green, farms and rolling hills with great fall foliage make it a terrific destination
 - The relative affordability of Thompson compared to its neighbors and especially the nearby metropolitan areas make the town a highly attractive location for both business and to live. The town offers a location where various income levels can find housing and at property taxes lower than most of the region.
 - The town has significant natural resources; many of which are protected. These include West Thompson Lake with numerous hiking trails and boating opportunities, the Airline Trail and Quaddick State Park. This feature adds greatly to the town's favorable quality of life.
 - The town is home to multiple destinations attracting thousands of persons to the town each year. Destinations include: Thompson Motorsports Park, Fort Hill Farms, Marianapolis School, Lord Thompson Manor, Thompson Hill Historic District, West Thompson Lake, the Airline Trail and Quaddick State Park. These primary destinations have a secondary value for other businesses such as restaurants and gas stations.
 - Thompson still has a very strong production agriculture presence. This adds to the rural character of the town, its economic base and quality of life that residents and visitors enjoy.
 - The town is bisected north-south by Interstate 395 and three exits into the town. The interstate provides ready access to nearby metropolitan areas as well as ease in getting away from those places.
 - The Route 12/131 Corridor is a primary corridor to and from Massachusetts - realizing more than 3 million vehicle trips annually.
 - Freight rail, now owned and operated by Genesee & Wyoming Railroad, bisects the town north to south and is in close proximity to land already zoned for commercial *development*.
-

Weaknesses

- Despite the majority of the town looking rural and classic New England, the appearance of the town is diminished by the majority of the Route 12/131 corridor. The look of disrepair and neglect are not an image that enhances the town's ability to attract and maintain people or business.
- Thompson's immediate competitor's each have significant head starts on the town. Putnam, Webster, Sturbridge, Oxford, Killingly, Auburn and Worcester have established business parks, incubators, marketing strategies, lands zoned on or near major transportation routes and favorable zoning for business development.
- The River Mill, 750,000 square feet of space, is basically empty and bankrupt. The majority of the mill was renovated in the 1990s and contained multiple businesses for several years — unfortunately, that too has come and gone. Today the mill faces the real prospect of being *demolished* for its' bricks and timbers. The River Mill is a symbol of the town's manufacturing past and the people that made it a highly productive place to work. Finding a use, other than salvage parts, is essential to the identity of the town.
- The town's zoning regulations are dated and difficult to read and understand. This makes them less than business friendly and an approach that does not foster the rural character of the town.
- The town has not had a robust or focused economic marketing strategy. The town has an economic development commission and a page on the town's website. The website page is static; providing no useful information. The Plan of Conservation and Development contains multiple references to economic *development* and related marketing; but no specific strategy *detailed* how their goals may be realized.
- The town is fragmented. It is the sum of ten villages with multiple zip codes, fire departments and histories. There is limited cohesiveness about the town that unites it.

- Housing, specifically those associated with the Route 12/131 corridor are in need of assistance. The town has had a limited (Three Rows and Gladys Green/Pineview Courts) focus on housing rehabilitation and improvement. This could change with a comprehensive approach to housing rehabilitation and a commitment to code enforcement.
- Parts of the town have significant poverty that is long—standing and multi—generational. The majority of this is focused on the Grosvenordale and North Grosvenordale villages in close proximity to Route 12.
- The Grand List is overwhelmingly skewed towards residential property taxation dependence. This places far too much burden on residential property owners.
- The town has multiple destinations for visitors and several of them lend themselves to multi-day stays. Unfortunately, there are limited options for accommodations for these visitors.
- Thompson is somewhat isolated in that access for people is limited to motor vehicles. The daily transit service is limited and does not provide an effective means for workers either accessing the town or commuting to work. Commercial and/or public bus connections out-of-state do not exist.

Opportunities

- Tourism opportunity is not maximized or cultivated by the town at present. Thompson Motorsports Park, Fort Hill Farms, Thompson Hill Historic District, West Thompson Lake, the Airline Trail and Quaddick State Park each, on their own, draw thousands annually. The opportunity to grow these attractions is real.
- The town can better market itself. Currently, there is little in terms of marketing being done — at least through the town. In fact, simple Google search reveals that the town has little social media coverage and persons looking for things to do, stay or eat in town are left with few Thompson options. The town needs to ensure that there are events each and every week and that they are publicized
- Infrastructure (roads, bridges, sidewalks, sewer, water and communications — including fiber) improvement and proper maintenance is essential to being a competitive community.
- Supporting the creation of jobs that will support a person and their family (Living Wage).
- The growth of small scale business in rural areas that do not diminish the rural nature of their location is real. Many towns have modified their zoning regulations to accommodate the placement and growth of rural industries. Currently, Thompson does not pro-actively provide for such development.
- Having an active rail line is similar to having beachfront property - they really aren't making anymore. The town is fortunate to have an active freight line traversing it and has the opportunity to expand development in cooperation with it.
- The town has three interstate interchanges. Interstate that could be developed to enhance the economics of the town.
- The River Mill is a significant opportunity and one that could serve as an anchor or cornerstone for future growth.
- The Route 12/131 Corridor (which also contains the River Mill) is a major traffic corridor that is not exploited by the town in terms of business development.

Threats

- Without major change the Route 12/131 Corridor is a significant threat to the economic prosperity of Thompson
- Poverty is always a community threat—especially when, as is the case in Thompson, it is longstanding. Poverty is a drag on economic revitalization and growth and must be addressed for the betterment of all people in town.
- Housing, which is fundamental to a town's well being, is not necessarily affordable for all people in the town. Addressing housing needs for all income levels is critical to economic stability. The housing issue ties in with income and affordability.
- Community Indifference and/or adherence to the "status quo"

4. The Thompson "Brand"

The town of Thompson offers both people and businesses a special place to live, grow a business and visit that is close enough to some of the greatest marketplaces in the world but far enough away where you can enjoy a true rural lifestyle.

Specifically:

- The brand is used to represent and sell a rural lifestyle that emphasizes quality of life and affordability and great place to raise a family. Yes, the brand is a recruitment for population growth. The town needs new residents to pay the bills.
- The brand is used to promote Thompson as a business friendly place to start and expand a business.
- The brand is used to entice people to visit the town to enjoy (as well as spend money) the multiple tourist destinations
- The brand is used to foster and enforce a sense of place and pride for the residents of Thompson.

In short, the town's brand is about the town's natural, historical and Cultural resources, destinations, strategic location and affordability.

5. Recommendations

1. Hire an Economic Development Director and Put in Place a Leadership Team

Branding a town is not a static activity. It requires constant attention from someone skilled in ensuring that the brand is cultivated and cared for. This position will serve as the business community liaison and first point of contact for both existing business owners as well as owners of businesses who wish to locate in Thompson, providing a general overview of the respective steps involved in starting a business in the town — including explaining the town's permitting processes for development. Advise Board of Selectmen and the Economic Development Commission members on complex, often confidential, economic development plans or policy issues. As necessary, apply for and manage grants related to economic development. Researches analyses and trends, and prepares corresponding reports and recommendations related to strategic economic development.

The person in this position, in addition to excellent writing, editing, communication, and Presentation skills, will need to do the following.

- Develop overall social media strategy to drive engagement and increase followers for the town
- Develop channel-specific, timely content and campaigns to support editorial calendar for Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, and Tumblr, appropriately maintaining the brand voice across platforms to engage followers
- Collaborate with public programs, education, business stakeholders to develop *compelling* content to support attendance and drive engagement in town based
- Pitch creative concepts for town-wide social media initiatives, influencer outreach, and campaigns



- Stay on top of emerging social channels; analyze and formally present opportunities for growth
- Monitor and report trends in social media, competitor, and channel topics
- Run cross-platform social advertising campaigns
- The person in this position must have:
 - ✓ Experience managing social media channels for a brand or nonprofit; integrated marketing experience
 - ✓ Strong knowledge of social media channels and tools and digital marketing
 - ✓ Above average knowledge and experience using programs such as Excel, InDesign, Mail Chimp, PowerPoint, Word, and Wordpress
 - ✓ Bachelors degree in marketing, business, communications or related field or proven track record of experience

Related to this there needs to be a leadership team made up of a cross section of people in Thompson. It should not be political or driven by the current political or fiscal environments. " " .. when elected officials take ownership of a brand, there is a chance it will be abandoned by future leaders looking to make their own mark. Ideally, ownership of your community brand should be held by a marketing partnership with representation from local government as well as big and small players from the public and private sector.³¹ " The mission of the leadership team must be to promote, protect and monitor the brand. Key to this will be getting buy in from local business, town government and civic organizations. This committee should be no more than eleven in total membership. The leadership team could well be a modification of the current Economic Development Commission.

Goal:

The goal is to ensure that the town's brand is cultivated and successful.

Actions:

Hire an Economic Development Director

³¹ City Branding: Beyond a Logo and a Line By DON McEACHERN

2. Change the Route 12/131 Corridor

One of the initial determinations of the Branding Committee was that the Route 12/131 corridor, from the Putnam town line to the Massachusetts border, was in need of special attention as it was identified as a major weakness to the town's economic well being as well as a place of significant opportunity to enrich the town. This corridor is a primary travel point through the town and connects several key village areas: Quinnebaug, North Grosvenordale, Grosvenordale and Mechanicsville - with more than 3 million vehicle trips annually. The consensus of the Committee was that this corridor is a major hinderance to any branding effort for the town.

Several meetings of the Branding Committee were devoted to studying the positive and negative elements of the corridor to develop a strategy to convert the corridor to a net positive for the town. The Committee discussed the physical, demographic and historical/cultural elements of the corridor. Sidewalks were of particular comment either because of their deteriorated condition or because of their absence. Housing was another element discussed at length; particularly the need for rehabilitation. On this subject, the Committee discovered that while the

town had Supported and secured significant housing rehabilitation monies — most of it (if not all of it) was limited to either the Pine View Courts/Gladys Green Housing or the Three Rows Housing.

The Committee conducted an exercise where five large (3' x 8') orthographic *maps* were laid out on tables and the members were asked to mark places that were positive (green *dot*), negative (red dot) and exceptional (yellow star). The results of this indicated that the number of positive elements (96) outnumbered the negative ones (29) and that there were nineteen exceptional places within the corridor. The problem or challenge is that many of the positive and exceptional elements of the corridor are hidden or marginalized by the negative elements.

A significant issue for the corridor is how the corridor is zoned. The corridor currently has five of the town's six zoning districts (Residential and Agricultural (RA-80), Low-Density Residential (R-40), High-Density Residential (R-20), Neighborhood Commercial District (NC) and Industrial (I)) intersecting it. Each of these zones have different purposes, allowed uses and standards — further complicating and

Route 12/131 Corridor Impressions



fragmenting the corridor. This also has resulted in much of the visual conflicts (commercial next to residential) that exist on the corridor.

The Committee discussed changing the zoning for the corridor from its current configuration to one where the corridor would be treated as one zone with a common set of zoning standards. The basic change suggested was to move from a Euclidean approach (one with clear separation of uses) to a Form-Based zoning approach (one where compatibility of uses is the rule). A key to this zoning approach would be the development of design guidelines for the corridor.

The Committee also examined Connecticut's Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) statute for possible usage in Grosvenordale and North Grosvenordale sections of town. The NRZ approach is one where residents, businesses and local government work in a collaborative way to address neighborhood issues. There is no administrative or regulatory authority — just the power of persuasion. In part, the NRZ should assist in addressing the significant poverty that exists in parts of the Route 12/131 corridor — specifically North Grosvenordale and Grosvenordale. A significant part of this effort has to be the reuse of the River Mill and the

potential employment that such reuse could generate. "...the success of antipoverty policy depends on local job opportunities and the effectiveness of local intermediaries and social networks..The evidence from workforce development evaluations suggests that institutional collaboration for example, the participation of business and community colleges in workforce investment initiatives----can improve employment outcomes for low-income workers³²"

It is important to note that the poverty rate is high in the Route 12/131 Corridor at 10.3% as is the unemployment rate which for 2015 was 15.8% with an additional 27.6% of the population not in the labor force. It may be beneficial to examine why almost 30% of residents in the village are not working at all. Is it because of age or disability, or because they have stopped looking for work all together? 26.9% of residents have a high school diploma, GED, and 37.8% have some college work but no diploma. It would be advantageous for the town to promote higher education or a trade path for residents. A strategy to address these long-standing issues would be to collaborate with the numerous educational institutions within the town to provide residents with those options.

" <http://aonseamh.umn.edu/bitstream/132680/2/07-1-13.pdf>

Note: All of Thompson's housing for seniors and for those with disabilities is located in this corridor which probably correlates with the high unemployment rate.

Developing Partnerships with Eastconn, QVCC, Nichols College, and universities in the city of Worcester to establish satellite locations in Thompson is critical. Thompson, providing educational and job training opportunities for individuals looking to reenter the workforce, could enhance job opportunities and economic well-being. Offering certificate, high demand training programs would not only assist unemployed and under employed persons but it would also greatly assist in attracting new businesses to the town. A trained, high skilled and quality workforce will be of benefit to the residents, businesses, and the town improving its economic vitality.

Goal:

The goal is that when a visitor or resident enters Thompson either from I-395, Putnam or Massachusetts onto the Route 12/131 corridor that they immediately know and that sense is reinforced throughout the corridor, they are in a special place.

Actions:

- Formation of a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) in Grosvenordale and North Grosvenordale
- Change to Form Based Zoning for the Corridor
- Develop a comprehensive strategy for the revitalization of the River Mill

3. Change Zoning Regulations

The town's zoning regulations are fairly standard. They divide the town into multiple zones such as residential, commercial and industrial. The regulations are showing their age in terms of their readability and logic. They are not geared toward fostering the Thomson brand. The regulations do not necessarily protect the rural character of the town, promote large and small business development or residential growth.

Goal:

The goal is to have in place zoning regulations that are logical in terms of zones and easily understood and that promotes both residential and commercial development while protecting the rural character and natural features of the town.

Actions:

- Redraft the entire zoning regulations;
- Provide for the allowance of home-based and rural enterprise throughout the town; and
- Put in place a guidebook to assist persons and businesses-making the town more user friendly.



4. Social Media

Thompson's town website essentially does nothing to promote the town. It is static with little information. "Your website is the single most important investment you can make in your brand and in your marketing overall.³³" Cost, especially in terms of personnel, is the major factor affecting any decisions going forward. The other key trend or reality is that more and more people appear to be communicating via social networking and not by traditional means of communication. In order for the town to remain understood and relevant, it must be able to be heard. Specific to these efforts are budget reductions at the state level for tourism. The days of the direct mail brochure are over. The town must now join the growing trend and go directly to potential visitors via social media. The town has little social media presence and no social media plan.

Thompson currently has no marketing strategy or social media plan. The town website is both incomplete and static. The Thompson Economic Development Commission is: "Dedicated to further growth and development of Thompson by attracting, retaining and assisting businesses, while also preserving the integrity of Thompson's rich

heritage." The Thompson Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) contains multiple references to economic development and related marketing, but no specific strategy detailing how their goals may be realized.

Sarah Durham, in her article [How to Create a Winning Brand Strategy \(and Why It's Critical for Nonprofits\)](#) wrote: "Branding is, first and foremost, about perceptions. Your nonprofit has a brand whether or not you have a fancy logo, a snappy tagline or a style guide. In every interaction, you're shaping perceptions, deliberately or accidentally....Branding (or rebranding) an organization involves proactively and deliberately trying to shape or influence perceptions. Doing so requires understanding how you're perceived, defining how you want to be perceived, clarifying how you communicate to make sure it's leading in the right direction, and communicating consistently. **Branding isn't a one-time proposition. It's an ongoing process...**The **strongest brands** in any sector are **consistent, authentic to the work itself**, and reflected not just in marketing materials, but in just about everything the organizations



³³ The Secrets to Coating a Successful Municipal Brand Nancy Marshall, Published on September 18, 2015

do.³⁴ (emphasis added) Thompson needs to do the up front work to more fully understand its current and potential audience and how they communicate. Only after this is completed should the town move forward to creating social media material/approaches to move its brand forward.

Goal:

The goal is to put in place and use a social media plan that enhances the economic standing of the town and reinforces the town's brand.

Actions:

Create a new website devoted to enforcing the town brand and marketing the town

Create a social media plan. Initially, the town needs to do the following to get moving forward on its social media plan:

1. Situation Analysis and Identification of Key Opportunities
 - a. Internal Environment:
 - 1) What activities exist in the overall marketing plan of the town that can be leveraged for social media marketing?
 - 2) Is the town supportive of the transparent and decentralized norms of social media?

3) What resources exist that can be directed to social media?

4) Is the town already prepared internally for social media activities (in terms of policy and procedures)?

6. External Environment

1) Who are our customers/target audience? Are they users of social media?

2) Who are our competitors? What social media activities are they using and how are social media incorporated in their marketing and promotional plans?

Social
Community

Twitter
Facebook
LinkedIn
Google Plus
Other

Social
Publishing

Blogs
Media Sites
• YouTube
• Flickr
• Slideshare
• Other

Social
Commerce

Facebook
TapAdvisor
Groupon
Other

Social
Entertainment

My Space
Zynga
Other

http://www.nonprofitpro.com/article/how-to-crBata-a-winning-Drand-strategy-and-why-is-critical-fc4*-nonprotit9/ask

Zynga
Other

3) *What are the key trends in the environment (social, cultural, legal, and regulatory, political, economic, and technological) that may affect our decisions regarding social media marketing?*

2. Social Media Plan Objectives

What does the town expect to accomplish through social media marketing (promotional objectives, service objectives, retail objectives, research objectives, donations, followers)?

- a. *Gather insight into target audience*
- b. *Which segments should the town select to target with social media activities?*
- c. *What are relevant demographic, psychographic, and behavioral characteristics of the segments useful in planning social media strategy?*
- d. *What are the media habits, and especially the social media habits of the segments?*

3. Select social media zones and vehicles

Which mix of the four zones of social media will be best to accomplish the town's objectives within the resources available?

4. Social community zone strategies

- a. *What approach to social networking and Relationship building should the town use?*

How will the town represent the brand in social networks? What content shall the town share in this space?

- b. *What content should be shared with the audiences? Can the town develop a sufficient amount of fresh, valuable content to attract audiences to consume content online?*
- c. *What form should the town's blog take?*
- d. *Which media sharing sites should the town use to publish content? How should the town build links between its social media sites, owned media sites, and affiliates to optimize its sites for search engines?*

To make a social media plan work, the town will need to put in place an editorial calendar and a social media content calendar. The editorial calendars will be based on several factors ⁵:

(1) How the Content Resonates with the Targeted Audiences - the town needs to ensure that what it is posting and the means utilized have value and meaning for the intended audiences. To accomplish this, the town will need to conduct research into the target audience; given that currently Thompson is not active on social media, the town does not have available the analytic tools that several social media providers offer.

<http://snm4xnn.ial.rxn/innizhrx/nrcial-rv.Hie-er1itriAl-nalonr1nr/> and <http://coschedule.com/blog/social-media-editorial-calendar-template/>

The town needs to understand how often to Post for each social media tool utilized (blog, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) the organization needs to stay consistent with generally accented standards and not let the information become stagnant This will be a significant challenge and one that will requires significant lead time to avoid gaps in Postings and/or weak content.

Content calendars will outline the ongoing (weekly, monthly, annual) distribution of content to our targeted audiences. The town will need to use a worksheet such as the "Content Repository" cited in the Jamie Griffiths article: " How to Build a Content Calendar" to be successful.

To be successful, this plan must be continually reviewed for content (value to the target audience) and for usage (is the plan being used by the targeted audience or others). Tools to be employed by the town will include Facebook Reviews, Surveys (conducted by the organization directly to it's audiences), Google Blog Search, Twitter Search, Google Alerts and Google Trends. For the website in general, the town should employ various analytic tools (Google Analytics and/or Website Optimizer, Yahoo Web Analytics and Facebook Analytics and Insights).

5. Outdoor Recreation Enhancement

The town, as has been noted in this plan, has significant outdoor recreation venues. The town also has opportunities to expand these opportunities—especially as they relate to trails. Trails, especially in the context of Thompson’s economic profile, are quite important. “Communities are realizing the economic potential of trails as highly desirable destinations that bring dollars into the places they serve. In addition to preserving critical open space and providing important transportation options, trails and greenways attract visitors from near and far—visitors who facilitate job growth in tourism—related opportunities like restaurants, local stores and lodging... Trails can be powerful tools for economic development. The New York Times recently noted a National Association of Homebuilders’ study that found that trails are the number one amenity that potential homeowners cite when choosing a new community. By consciously linking trails and businesses, and by providing new desirable housing choices along trails, communities around the country are building vital, economically stable neighborhoods that are truly sustainable.”³⁶

Goal:

A seamless connected (interstate/regional and intra-town) trail system.

Actions:

Perform a gap analysis and prioritize which gaps should be addressed first

Develop funding options



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www.railetotrails.org/resoucehandler.ashx?id=4020

6. Marketing Strategy

As stated earlier in this plan, a branding plan is not a marketing plan and the town will need a marketing plan to complement the branding effort. According to the University of Tennessee Cooperative Extension:

*“Marketing should always begin with a thorough marketing plan, which allows you to evaluate the market potential for your products or services and develop strategies to meet the potential. A complete, written marketing plan contains seven main components: 1. **Market research and analysis:** The first component of a marketing plan allow you to gather pertinent information about the potential market for your product (s) and/or services(s), evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and identify a target audience. 2. **Marketing and financial goals and objectives:** This component of a marketing and financial goals and objectives. The goals and objectives will help you focus and evaluate your marketing efforts. 3. **Marketing mix:** The marketing mix component of a marketing plan describes the specific strategies you will implement to reach your target audience, entice the target audience to spend their money, and create a desire in them to return to your enterprise. Strategies covering the 4P’s of marketing (product, price, place, and promotion) are developed. 4. **Marketing budget:** This component of a marketing plan consists of developing a marketing budget,*

Which will allow you to plan for marketing expenditures. 5.

Monitoring and evaluating market response: *This component of a marketing plan describes the strategies you will use to monitor and evaluate the market response to your marketing strategies. Evaluating the effectiveness of your marketing plan will allow you to make adjustments to meet your goals. 6. **Contingency plan:** The contingency plan describes possible adjustments to make to your strategies if your marketing tactics are more or less effective than originally planned. 7. **Marketing plan checklist:** The final component of your marketing plan is a marketing plan checklist. This checklist allows you to summarize the tasks that need to be accomplished to put your plan into action.*

Goal:

Develop, adopt and implement a marketing plan

Actions: Hire a qualified firm to work with the town to develop a marketing strategy

<https://articles.extension.org/pages/35374/what-are-the-components-of-a-marketing-plan>

6. Budget

| Item | Range | | |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | Low | High | |
| Economic Development Director (full-time) | salary | \$45,000 | \$60,000 |
| | Benefits/Overhead, 35% (est.) | \$15,750 | \$20,000 |
| | Equipment (initial) | \$10,000 | \$15,000 |
| | Travel | \$5,000 | \$10,000 |
| Website | Development | \$3,500 | \$10,000 |
| Logo | Design/Development | \$750 | \$2,000 |
| Marketing Strategy | Consultant(s) | \$12,500 | \$25,000 |
| Zoning Update | Consultant(s) | \$7,500 | \$40,000 |
| Outdoor Recreation Analysis | Consultant(s) | \$1,500 | \$5,000 |
| Estimated Totals | | \$101,500 | \$187,000 |



| No. | Description | Goal | Action | Accountability | Due |
|-----|---|--|--|---|--|
| 1 | Social Media | Put in place/use a social media plan that enhances the economic standing of the town and reinforces the town's brand; | i. The Town is undergoing a redesign of the it's website keeping in mind the concepts discussed in the branding plan. ii. Social Media Policy has be developed iii. Facebook page has been established. Continue to update, promote, and improve FB. iv. Employ various analytic tools (Google analytics and/or Website Optimizer, etc. v. Expand into other social media platforms as the opportunity arises. | Contract is with the town and work is in process | The home page design is near completion |
| 2 | Marketing Strategy | Develop, adopt, implement marketing strategy; | i. Develop perhaps through the new website a town-wide calendar of events ii. Local committees reach out to each "village" person to person to share our vision with residents iii. Reduce polling locations to bring residents to the center of town iv. Use "Thompson" for every zip code to coalesce the villages. v. Hire qualified firm to work with town to develop marketing strategy. | Branding Committee with EDC input | item i. to be done immediately upon completion of new website; item ii establish plan at September meetings, implementation October/November item iii target date Spring 2020. Board of Selectmen must initiate. lii. Selectmen will conduct survey to be complete after November, 2018 election. iv. Branding will follow up on this item. |
| 3 | Outdoor Recreation Enhancement and Promotion of our Farm Friendly Community | Seamless connected (interstate/regional and intra-town) trail system inclusive of waterways | i. Perform gap analysis and prioritize which gaps should be addressed first; ii. Develop funding options. (i.e. TLGV Grant) iii. Coordinate with and support the goals of the trails committee to raise the priority level of improvements to trails in the corridor. iv. Encourage partnerships with stakeholders i.e. West Thompson Lake, Trails Committee, Recreation Department, Agriculture Committee, Business Association, local businesses TEEG, etc. to support existing and new outdoor events in the town's outdoor recreation areas as well of those of local businesses. v. Create an inclusive plan to promote existing oportunities that already exist through the use of Social Media, Website, and media print. vi. Develop a plan to support and promote the work of local organziations like Thompson Together's roadside and river cleanup iv. Increase signage and parking where necessary for outdoor recreation areas | Trails | ii. Trails submitted TLGV grant application. Notification is expected in September, 2018. defer to Trails on their timeline/goals |
| 4 | Change Zoning Regulations | Have in place zoning regulations that are logical in terms of zones and easily understood that promotes both residential and commercial development while protecting the rural character and natural features of the town; | i. Redraft entire zoning regs; ii. Provide for allowance of home-based and rural enterprises throughout the town; iii. Put in place guidebook to assist persons/businesses, making the town more business/resident friendly; | P&Z with assistance from NECCOG | We need a sense from Filchak/NECCOG how long the re-draft shuold be expected to take. 2-3 meetings have already occurred. No follow up with NECCOG is currently planned; recommend at least monthly meetings with P&Z until resolved. Target date for completion: Dec. 31, 2018. iii. Town Clerk has begun work on a municipal guide book. (examples will be provided) |
| 5 | Granting | Obtain Grants that are applicable to our needs | | Ideally this is part of a Town Planner's job. IN absence of a planner. ? | Grant application periods are ongoing, but this work should be continuous. It will be better accomplished with marketing and/or branding plans in place. |
| 6 | Change the Rt. 12/131 Corridor | When visitor or resident enters Thompson either from I-395, Putnam or MA onto the Rte. 12/131 corridor, they immediately know, and that sense is reinforced throughout the corridor, they are in a special place; | i. Formulate NRZ in Grosvenordale and N. Grosvenordale; ii. Change to Form Based Zoning for the Corridor; iii. Develop comprehensive strategy for revitalization of River Mill; iv. Review the UCDNN study of the Main Street/Riverside Loop v. Improve our "main" street with improvements to sidewalks, lighting, and increased signage vi. Main Street connector road designation by State of CT to open up addition streams of revenue | Planner in conjunction with Zoning (ii), Mill Committee (iii) & Selectman | To begin immediately upon completion of zoning re-draft. Vi. First Selectmen completed this item |

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|---|--|--|--|-----------------|---|
| 7 | Hire Economic Dev. Director & Put in Place Leadership Team | Ensure Town's brand is cultivated and successful | i. Hire Economic Development Director to: 1. Dev. Overall social media strategy; 2. Dev. Channel-specific/timely content; 3. Collaborate w/public programs/education/business stakeholders to develop compelling content; 4. Pitch creative concepts; 5. Stay on top of emerging social channels; 6. Monitor/report trends; 7. Run cross-platform social advertising campaigns; | First Selectman | A target date was proposed previously for this item. Late 2019? Dependent on inclusion in an upcoming budget. |
| 8 | Phase II of the Social Media Plan | | i. Upon hiring of a economic developer a more indepth plan for social media is recommended. | | |
| 9 | Special Projects | | | | |
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