

# Economic Vitality Division 2025 Annual Report

Submitted by Mimi Graney, Economic Vitality Manager

The Economic Vitality Manager collaborates closely with the Tourism Manager and is based within the Office of the Town Manager. The EV Manager supports the Economic Vitality Committee, Concord Cultural Council, and West Concord Cultural District Committee. This role involves partnerships with local organizations including the Concord Business Partnership and the Concord Chamber of Commerce as well as coordination with other town departments.

## Key Goals and 2025 Achievements

### 1. Revitalize Village Centers

- Public Space Amenities
  - Installed 15 “Concord 250” benches in Concord Center, with funded secured from the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism.
  - Through community engagement created a map for additional seating as funding becomes available. With private support installed three new benches and a bike rack in West Concord and secured funding for four additional benches in West Concord, Concord Center and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to be installed in 2026.
- Wayfinding and Visitor Experience
  - Oversaw production and installation of 250th anniversary wayfinding maps for the Visitor Center and Thoreau Depot.
  - Produced and installed 120 signs to support pedestrian movement of visitors in and around Concord Center on Patriots Day weekend.
  - Advanced community engagement for placement of BFRT-branded wayfinding signage scheduled for installation in 2026.
- Cultural District Activities
  - Produced Third Thursdays events from June through October and Jingle and Mingle on December 5 to expand shopping hours and leverage existing arts and culture programming to support holiday shopping in Concord Center. Funded by the Mass Cultural Council through the Concord Center Cultural District.
  - Supported Concord’s two Cultural Districts. Closely supported work planning for the Concord Center Cultural District and advised Town leadership regarding changes to district designation by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

- Public Art: Continued to build capacity in creative placemaking as a tool for economic vitality and community engagement.
  - “Freedom’s Silhouette” by Liz Helfer installed as a temporary feature in Monument Square for the 250<sup>th</sup> remains on site. New installation location identified for 2026.
  - Supported installations executed in 2025 including the West Concord Art Loop and Poetry Phone (West Concord Cultural District Committee), and Thoreau Depot signal box (Concord Cultural Council). Advanced projects for 2026 including Pianos on the Town (Concord Conservatory of Music), Pride Crosswalks (DEI Committee), and Black Heritage Trail markers (Robbins House and DEI Committee).

## 2. Deepen Understanding of Concord’s Business Landscape

- Business Support and Inventory: Annual inventory of businesses updated with primary focus on retail business districts.
  - Assisted 28 new local business owners.
  - New or expanded businesses included Bluemercury, Anita’s Shoe Boutique, Happy on Main, KW Boston Northwest Keller Williams Realty, Oakes Fitness, Eva’s Little Kitchen, Chipotle Mexican Grill, Starbucks, Create Health & Wellness, and Pyramid Healthcare.
  - Notable closures included Revolutionary Concord, KC Tailoring and Dry Cleaning, and E & S Mobile Auto Service.
- Commercial Vacancy Tracking: Began monthly tracking of commercial property listings in August 2025. Preliminary findings show 79% of listed vacant space classified as office use.
- Municipal Revenue Analysis: Produced a detailed report examining municipal revenues from commercial activity, including meals tax, room occupancy tax, business certificates, personal property tax, and commercial building permits. Case studies compared Concord’s property taxes and revenues to other Massachusetts towns.
- Zoning Policy: In collaboration with the Economic Vitality Committee and the Planning Board, support passage of two zoning bylaw amendments at 2025 Town Meeting:
  - Removal of minimum parking requirements within Business Districts for changes between permitted uses with no increase in square footage.
  - – Allowance of accessory retail uses in industrial districts.

## 3. Foster a Business-Friendly Community

- Age-Friendly Business Initiative: Expand accessibility and inclusion within Concord’s business districts.

- Produced an Age-Friendly Business Toolkit and best practices materials in collaboration with MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council).
- Produced set of high quality promotional and educational videos showcasing local businesses and age friendly best practices.
- Conducted a walk audit of Monument Square with AARP.
- Food Safety Program
  - Awarded equipment grants to 6 farm stands and 11 food businesses along with 100 commercial-grade thermometers. Funding provided by ARPA.
  - Conducted three full-day trainings and certification exams, training 75 food managers.
  - Planned bilingual Food Handler training for 2026.

#### 4. Build Capacity for Economic Development

- Communications and Outreach
  - Web Portal: Maintained centralized resource on ConcordMA.gov for businesses.
  - Newsletter: Grew the monthly Economic Vitality e-newsletter to 882 subscribers, a 40% increase over 2024, with a 34% open rate.
  - Media: Supported extensive media coverage highlighting downtown events, amenities, and local businesses. Produced set of video business profiles with Minuteman Media Network.
- Legislative and Advocacy Activities
  - Coordinated closely with the Economic Vitality Committee on zoning articles and policy discussions.
  - Provided input on redevelopment, infrastructure, and sewer capacity issues affecting businesses.
- Partnerships: Continued collaboration on economic development initiatives, including the MCI-Concord redevelopment and Land Use Working Group.

#### 2026 Priorities

- Develop an Economic Vitality dashboard to identify key metrics and monitor trends in economic activity over time.
- Support Health, Building, Planning and Water & Sewer Divisions in the creation of step-by-step workflows for business permitting, beginning with food establishments.
- Complete closing phase of the Food Safety Program with service staff training.

- Continue investment in public realm amenities such as benches and signage.
- Support arts and culture initiatives with a focus on cultural districts.
- Expand the business newsletter audience and communication tools.

Business Metrics Snapshot:

New business licenses issued: 143 (39% increase over FY24).

- Commercial building permit value: \$625,889 (370% increase over FY24).
- TMO license revenue: \$87,575 (1.6% increase).
- Meals tax revenue: \$462,944.
- Room occupancy tax revenue: \$565,911.

Trail usage data from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail continued to show strong weekday and weekend activity, reinforcing the economic value of recreational infrastructure.

Tax Revenues Year Comparisons

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Meals Tax	462944.35	460363.05	\$470,010.43	\$429,415.25	\$267,370.51
Room Occupancy	\$565,911.15	\$524,710.00	\$597,687.83	\$474,405.86	\$219,427.00
Business Certificates	\$5,720	\$4,100	\$4,165.00	\$4,960.00	\$5,695.00
Personal Property	\$875,265.09	\$826,410.03	\$828,034.37	\$852,941.40	\$728,106.03
Building Permit -					
Commercial	\$625,889.78	\$133,113.38	\$420,915.44	\$139,274.21	\$46,400.93
TMO licenses	\$87,575.00	\$86,208.00			