



Mayor Anita Dugatto

City of Derby, Connecticut

PRESS RELEASE

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Derby Strengthens Its Economic Development Team

DERBY – Mayor Anita Dugatto favors a multi-faceted team approach to economic development.

Business retention and recruitment, strategic grant applications, and well-planned infrastructure investments are critical to advancing the well-being of the Derby community in a fiscally responsible manner.

However, responsive City services, attractive community amenities, a strong public transportation system, and long-term planning are also key components of a successful economic development program.

"These components allow us to market Derby as an attractive place in which to live, work and invest," Dugatto said.

Dugatto believes successful economic development arises through a collaborative process between City departments, boards and commissions, and outside agencies including the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments, Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce, and Connecticut's Department of Community and Economic Development. Derby citizens are part of this collaborative process as well.

"As I see it, Derby needs an economic development team, rather than a single person, to adequately address all of the important components of a comprehensive economic development program. It doesn't make sense to assign responsibility for the advancement of our community to just one person," Dugatto said.

Derby's economic development team was recently strengthened by Dugatto with the appointment of Leslie Creane to the position of Chief of Staff.

Though titled Chief of Staff by City ordinance, the position's description aligns it with the role of a community and economic developer.

Creane has extensive experience in municipal community development, most recently serving as Town Planner for the Town of Hamden for the past 10 years. She has served on anti-blight enforcement, civic improvement, and neighborhood revitalization task forces. Creane was also a liaison to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) on the largest environmental remediation project in Connecticut state history. Her professional experience includes writing successful grant proposals.

"I'm excited about being part of a team that is passionate about advancing opportunities that exist in the community. That's what attracted me to Derby," Creane said.

Dugatto said it took her longer than she had hoped to fill the position. "I was determined to find the right person for the job," Dugatto said. "I believe Ms. Creane's extensive skills and municipal experience will complement our economic development team very well."

As Chief of Staff, Creane's responsibilities will include coordinating local brownfield initiatives, conducting outreach to the local business community, recruiting new investment, and seeking out grant opportunities that align with City initiatives.

Creane will work with Derby's Building and Land Use Office to enhance the delivery of municipal services critical to doing business with the City.

According to Dugatto, the work Creane will be doing will add to the successes her administration has had to date.

The City's business community has grown with new establishments such as New England Auto World (at the site of the former blighted Dworkin Chevrolet property), The Hops Company, River Rock Tavern, and Connectikidz Pediatric Dentistry. These new businesses are in addition to those along Pershing Drive, including Panera Bread, Planet Fitness, Jersey Mike's Subs, ALDI, and PhysicianOne Urgent Care. Recent growth includes the expansion of existing Derby businesses including; The Edge Fitness Clubs and On Time Printing.

Derby has been awarded a number of grants under Dugatto's administration. One notable award is a \$445,000 grant from the Connecticut Department of Community and Economic Development. This grant is being used to revitalize the long dormant south side of Main Street. Additional funds have also come to Derby to support education and road improvement projects, important components of economic development.

Progress in the City is not exclusive to commercial investment. Residential neighborhoods have been improved through the efforts of Derby's Blight Subcommittee, established under Dugatto's administration. Five deteriorated properties have been demolished and numerous others cleaned up under the recently adopted Clean & Lien ordinance.

Long-range planning is also important to the economic development process, according to Dugatto. Such planning sets a framework for growth that is consistent with the vision of the Derby community. Comprehensive planning is defining priorities for seeking grants, identifying opportunities for improvements to the City's existing zoning regulations and ordinances, and determining the most efficient allocation of municipal investments. Furthermore, it is letting investors know where the City is headed.

"Planning, though not as glamorous as brick and mortar projects, is essential to creating a path for efficient, sustainable development," Dugatto said.

Dugatto said that is why her administration has put so much time and energy into drafting an update to the City's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), which was last addressed in 2002. The draft document will be available for public review and comment shortly.

"My administration is always looking to advance the things that make Derby a desirable place to live, work, and play. The results of these efforts strengthen our ability to retain and attract residential and commercial investment. That's how the economic development process comes full circle," Dugatto said.