

# Franklin aims for streamlined permit process for companies

By Angel Roy/Daily News staff

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FRANKLIN - With many buildings empty or underutilized, Planning and Community Development Director Brian Taberner said the town has to be creative to give property and business owners incentives to fill them.

Franklin Industrial Park is the third priority development site approved in town by the State Interagency Permitting Board, joining Forge Park and Pond Street.

Taberner said the designation will allow the town to guarantee a quick, streamlined permitting process as an incentive for companies moving to the sites or existing companies looking to expand.

The town, Taberner said, is working on the streamlined process.

"(The permit decision) does not necessarily have to come to a positive outcome - for example, if it is not a good project or should not be allowed because of zoning bylaws - but the companies will have a decision in a short time whether it be yea or nay," Taberner said.

The areas designated as priority development sites will be near the top of the list as far as the state is concerned in helping to market property, Taberner said.

"One thing that we need as a community is assistance from the state in marketing our properties that are empty," Taberner said.

"I think that the marketing angle (of the designation) is very important," he continued, adding that priority development sites are also given preference when applying for state grants.

The town received permission from the property owners at the industrial park to apply for the site designation.

As another incentive for each of the priority sites, each one was classified as an economic opportunity area. That allows business owners to negotiate tax increment finance agreements with the town for the redevelopment of empty or underutilized properties or in the creation of permanent jobs.

The 20 parcels of the industrial park sit on about 250 acres of land located on four roadways - Constitution Boulevard, Discovery Way, Freedom Way and Liberty Way - off Interstate 495's Exit 16.

The park is home to Eagle Stainless Tube and Fabrication, Inc., Fidelity Investments, Thermo Fisher Scientific and EMC, the town's largest employer.

Of the 20, one parcel is undeveloped.

"A lot of companies are struggling right now and when they have choices to make, we are hoping that they choose to stay here or expand here," Taberner said.

"All we can do is try."