



# Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

**Great Road Corridor  
Revitalization**

**Acton, MA**



# Acknowledgments



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This plan has been made possible through technical assistance provided by the Baker-Polito Administration's Local Rapid Recovery Planning program.



The Local Rapid Recovery Planning (RRP) program is a key part of the Baker-Polito Administration's Partnerships for Recovery Plan, the strategy established to help communities stabilize and grow the Massachusetts economy as a result of the economic impacts brought on by COVID-19. The plan invests \$774 million in efforts to get people back to work, support small businesses, foster innovation, revitalize downtowns, and keep people in stable housing.

In addition to the planning program, recovery efforts include a Small Business Relief Program administered by the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation. This program, which concluded in May 2021, provided more than \$687.2 million to over 15,000 businesses across the Commonwealth, with a focus on businesses located in Gateway Cities, among demographic priorities, or operating in sectors most impacted by the pandemic. Cities, towns, and non-profit entities are using Regional Pilot Project Grant Program funding for recovery solutions that seek to activate vacant storefronts, support regional supply chain resiliency, and create small business support networks. To promote recovery in the tourism industry and support the ongoing My Local MA marketing initiative encouraging residents to support their local economies by shopping, dining and staying local, another \$1.6 million in grants were awarded through the new Travel and Tourism Recovery Grant Pilot Program. Through April 2021, MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program has invested \$26.4 million in municipal Shared Streets projects to support public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce.

In support of the overall recovery strategy, the Administration made \$9.5 million in awards for 125 communities to create Local Rapid Recovery Plans, through the MA Downtown Initiative Program. These plans address the impacts of COVID-19 on local downtowns and small businesses by partnering with Plan Facilitators and Subject Matter Experts to pursue locally-driven, actionable strategies.

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The Planning Team would also like to thank the following individuals for participating as key stakeholders throughout the planning process:

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David Martin, Select Board  
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Corey York, DPW Director  
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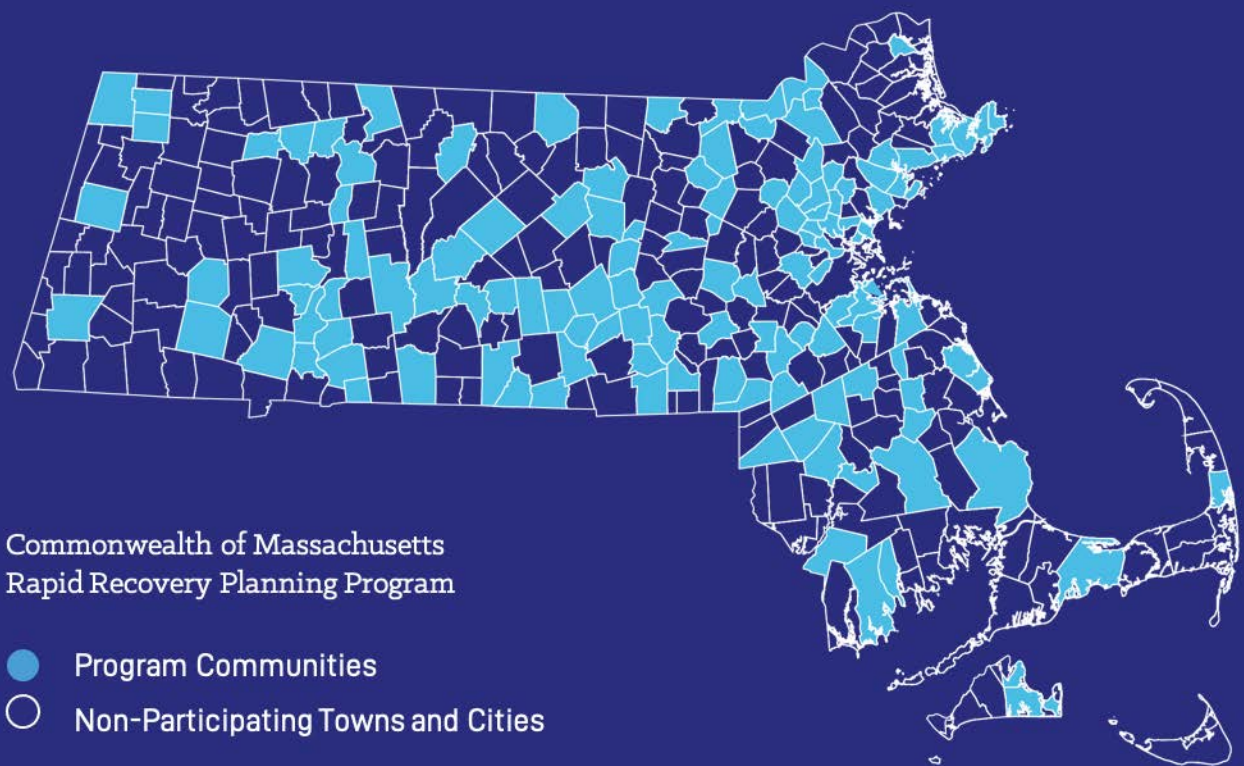
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## 125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

52 Small Communities  
51 Medium Communities  
16 Large Communities  
6 Extra Large Communities

Mass Downtown Initiative distributed nearly \$10 million across 125 communities throughout the Commonwealth to assess impacts from COVID-19 and develop actionable, project-based recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges in downtowns, town centers, and commercial districts.



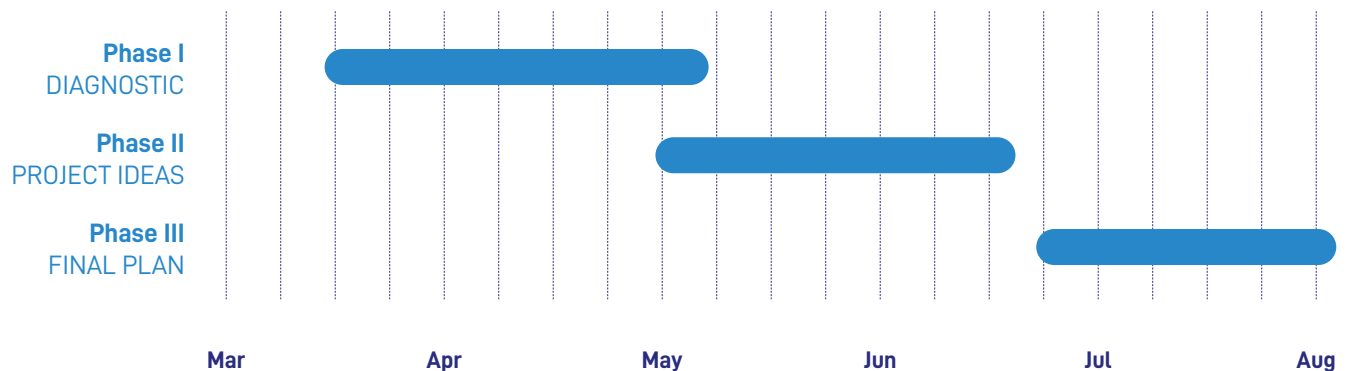
# 1.0 Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

The Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program is intended to provide every municipality in Massachusetts the opportunity to develop actionable, project-based recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges and COVID-19 related impacts to downtowns, town centers, and commercial areas across the commonwealth.

The program provided technical assistance through Plan Facilitators assigned to each community applicant (e.g., city, town, or nonprofit entity) and Subject Matter Experts who supported the development of ideas for project recommendations and shared knowledge through best practice webinars and individual consultations.

Communities and Plan Facilitators were partnered through the program to assess COVID-19 impacts, convene community partners to solicit project ideas and provide feedback, and develop project recommendations. The following plan summarizes key findings from the diagnostic phase of the program and includes a range of priority project recommendations for the community.

Each Rapid Recovery Plan was developed across three phases between February-August 2021 (extended to October 8th, 2021.) Phase 1 - Diagnostic, Phase 2- Project Recommendations, Phase 3 - Plan.



In Phase 1: Diagnostic, Plan Facilitators utilized the Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework that was adapted from the award-winning Commercial DNA approach as published by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) in "Preparing a Commercial District Diagnostic", and authored by Larisa Ortiz, Managing Director, Streetsense (RRP Program Advisor).

The framework was designed to ensure methodical diagnosis of challenges and opportunities in each community, and to identify strategies and projects that aligned with the interests and priorities of each community. The framework looks at four areas of analysis: Physical Environment, Business Environment, Market Information, and Administrative Capacity - each equipped with guiding questions to direct research conducted by Plan Facilitators.

## Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



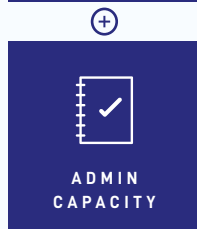
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



How conducive is the physical environment to meeting the needs and expectations of both businesses and customers?



What are the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses in the Study Area? How well does the business mix meet the needs of various customer groups?



Who are the key stewards of the Study Area? Are they adequately staffed and resourced to support implementation of projects? Are the regulatory, zoning, and permitting processes an impediment to business activity?

Following the diagnostic in Phase 1, Plan Facilitators, in close coordination with communities, developed and refined a set of recommendations that address priority challenges and opportunities. These project recommendations are organized in clear and concise rubrics created specially for the Rapid Recovery Plan Program. Project recommendations are rooted in a set of essential and comprehensive improvements across six categories: Public Realm, Private Realm, Revenue and Sales, Administrative Capacity, Tenant Mix, Cultural/Arts & Others.



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue & Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

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## 2.0 Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

## Great Road in Acton has Great Businesses that are Open for Business

Acton, Massachusetts is a predominantly bedroom community located west of Boston along Route 2. Great Road is an active commercial and retail corridor traveling diagonally across the town from Route 2 along the southern edge heading north to the Littleton Town line.

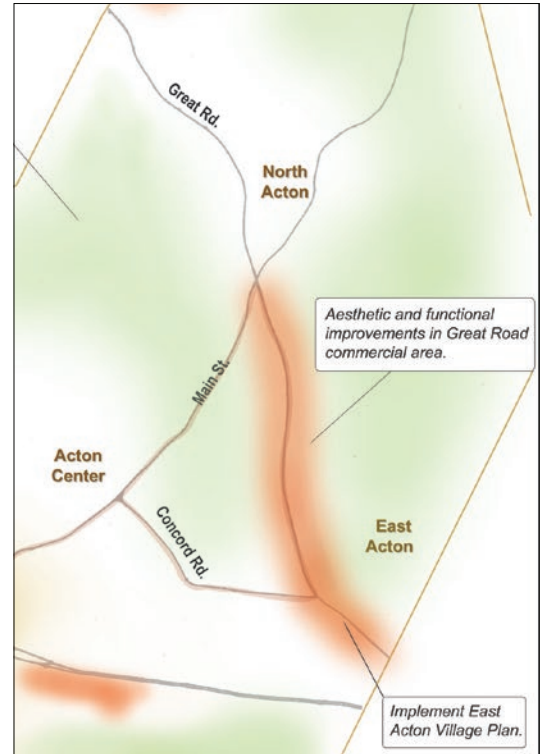
Acton was incorporated in 1735 as a town utilizing the open town meeting system still in place today. Settlers utilized sawmills, gristmills, the manufacturing of barrels, pencils, and woolen clothing to sustain their livelihoods. In the middle 1800s the introduction of the railroads caused the town to grow rapidly, and the rail beds remain today as the locations of the Assabet River Rail Trail and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Known for its apples, many active orchards were replaced with housing in the early and middle 1900s.

Approximately 80% of homes and businesses in Acton use private on-site septic tanks. Larger apartment and condo buildings typically use private sewers and private small-scale treatment plants. South Acton is the only location with a municipal sewer system. Completed in 2001, the sewer system serves roughly 10% of the Town. Previous planning efforts have identified Great Road as an area in need of "aesthetic and functional improvements" in the commercial areas. The project team acknowledges that Great Road is in need of some aesthetic and functional updates, including traffic calming, additional pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, signage, and the possibility of municipal sewer throughout. Acton is in the midst of a strong recovery from COVID-19 shutdowns as businesses reopen and people take to the rail trails.

To ensure that Acton has a strong post COVID-19 recovery, the project team is recommending the following projects be implemented:

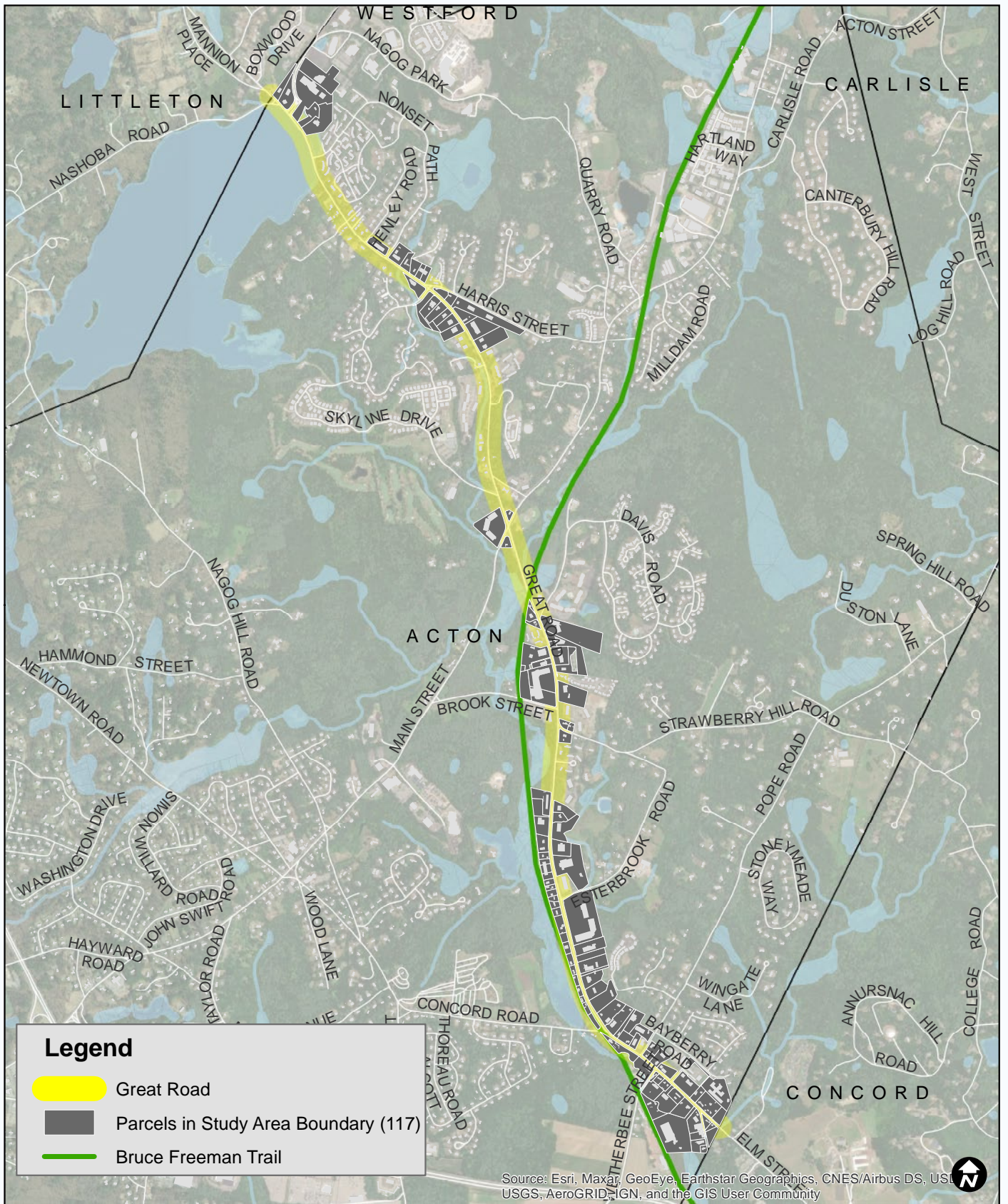
1. **Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Wayfinding Signage Study and Installation**
2. **Great Road Wayfinding Signage Study and Installation**
3. **Conduct a Feasibility Study & Preliminary Design to Expand the Municipal Sewer System**
4. **Shared Marketing Campaign**
5. **Fill Existing Sidewalk and Crosswalk Gaps**
6. **Pole Banners "Great Businesses along Great Road"**
7. **Create a Local Search Enabled Multi-Vendor Marketplace**
8. **Coordinated Communications Program**
9. **Develop an Education and Certification Campaign**
10. **Pop-up Shops Program**
11. **Public Art Campaign**

A map of the Great Road study area in Acton can be seen on the following page.



**The Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan includes a destination heat map with recommendations for improvements along Great Road**





A map of the study area -- Great Road in Acton from the Concord town line to the Littleton town line

**BETA**

0 0.5 1 Miles

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## 3.0 Diagnostic

# Key Findings



## The Town's customer base is older

The largest demographic age group by percentage of the total population is the 55 - 64 years age group which makes up 17% of residents. The median household income for the Town is just over \$145,000.

The Town's Comprehensive Community Plan includes demographic forecasts. The Road Map document makes the case that the senior population will continue to grow. Therefore, there is an emphasis on developing a mix of housing with fewer bedrooms per unit that meets the needs of seniors. Key to the success of a growing senior population is conducting planning activities today that encourage those folks to comfortably age in place. Often, project recommendations that allow folks to age in place also encourage economic development and steady retail and commercial success. These projects include sidewalk, path, and trail connections, signage, shade trees, and a comfortable and inviting area of businesses, goods, and services clustered close together near housing.

DEMOGRAPHICS	TOWN OF ACTON	STUDY AREA
Population	22,120	188
At Least Some College (or higher)	91%	85%
Median Income	\$145,110	\$110,368
Age (0 - 18)	25%	19%
Age (19 - 54)	42%	44%
Age (55 +)	33%	38%
Race (Non-White)	35%	33%

Source: US Census Data, American Community Survey 2019, retrieved using ArcGIS Pro 2.7.0



## Perceptions about the existing physical environment

The consultant team examined the condition of the public realm during field work analysis. See the table at right for the study area cumulative score of each of the elements examined during the field visit. Acton's business owner survey received 31 responses, or 16% of the 190 storefronts examined by the consultant team in the study area. The business owner survey revealed that the primary area of dissatisfaction among business owners and merchants was the condition of private buildings, storefronts, and signs. The business owner survey included a question about possible ways to improve the physical environment, atmosphere, and access for customers and employees. The top rated options include:

- Improvement of streetscape and sidewalks
- Improvement in safety and cleanliness

The field analysis team observed strong customer activity at Acton Woods Plaza, Gould Plaza, and some of the other retail plazas along Great Road. The team also observed many people enjoying leisure and recreational activities including jogging, walking, and bicycling. At a high level, it appears that the existing public realm environment appears to meet the needs of business owners, employees, and customers. The field analysis determined that Acton suffers from a lack of public outdoor seating and public or private outdoor dining options. Additionally, our public outreach indicated that there is interest in additional public transportation options, wayfinding signage, and filling vacant storefronts and commercial spaces.

PUBLIC REALM ELEMENTS	CUMULATIVE SCORE
Lighting	NA / Fail
Wayfinding & Signage	NA / Fail
Sidewalk	B
Street Trees & Benches	NA / Fail
Roadbed & Crosswalks	B





## Great Road businesses were strongly impacted by COVID-19 shutdowns

While there is no method to determine which vacancies were a direct result of COVID-19, it can be assumed that many of the 20 vacancies observed by the project team along Great Road in Acton were caused by COVID-19 related restrictions and shutdowns. The individual first-floor storefront or office spaces that were vacant at the time of the field audit (last week of April, 2021) are shown on a map on pages 10 and 11.

See the map on the following pages that show the location and number of vacancies examined in Acton. The first page is the northern portion of the study area and the second page is the southern portion of the study area.

Similar to the scoring process used for the public realm, elements of the private realm were also scored during the field work analysis. See the table at right for the study area cumulative score of each of the elements examined during the field visit.

PRIVATE REALM ELEMENTS	CUMULATIVE SCORE
Lighting	C
Facade	B
Awning	NA / FAIL
Signage	C
Outdoor Display & Dining	NA / FAIL
Window	C



## Committee advocate role

Multiple committees exist that provide analysis and advice to Town officials and work closely with business owners and the public to generate thoughtful recommendations. Committees in Acton are designated by the select board and often have representatives from other committee.

The sewer sub committee worked hard to bring sewers in South Acton to a town vote. Land was purchased on Adams Street and a sewer treatment system was built serving South Acton. Some homes, businesses, and schools in the area had been experiencing sewage effluent overflowing their septic and leech field systems prior to the construction of sewers. Although the south Acton sewer vote did pass, a deal was struck that requires any future betterment be paid for by users, and not with Town tax revenues.

This report recommends that a committee be formed for Great Road sewer analysis. Specifically, the Town selectmen should form a committee to plan sewerage along Great Road. Items to be critically analyzed include the option to only offer sewerage services to commercial plazas and require tie-ins for commercial properties, vs. allowing any residential property who wishes to tie in to have the option of doing so. Additionally, examining package treatment plants is recommended. (Package treatment plants are pre-fabricated treatment facilities used to treat wastewater in small communities or on individual properties).



## Legend

## Great Road Acton - Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program

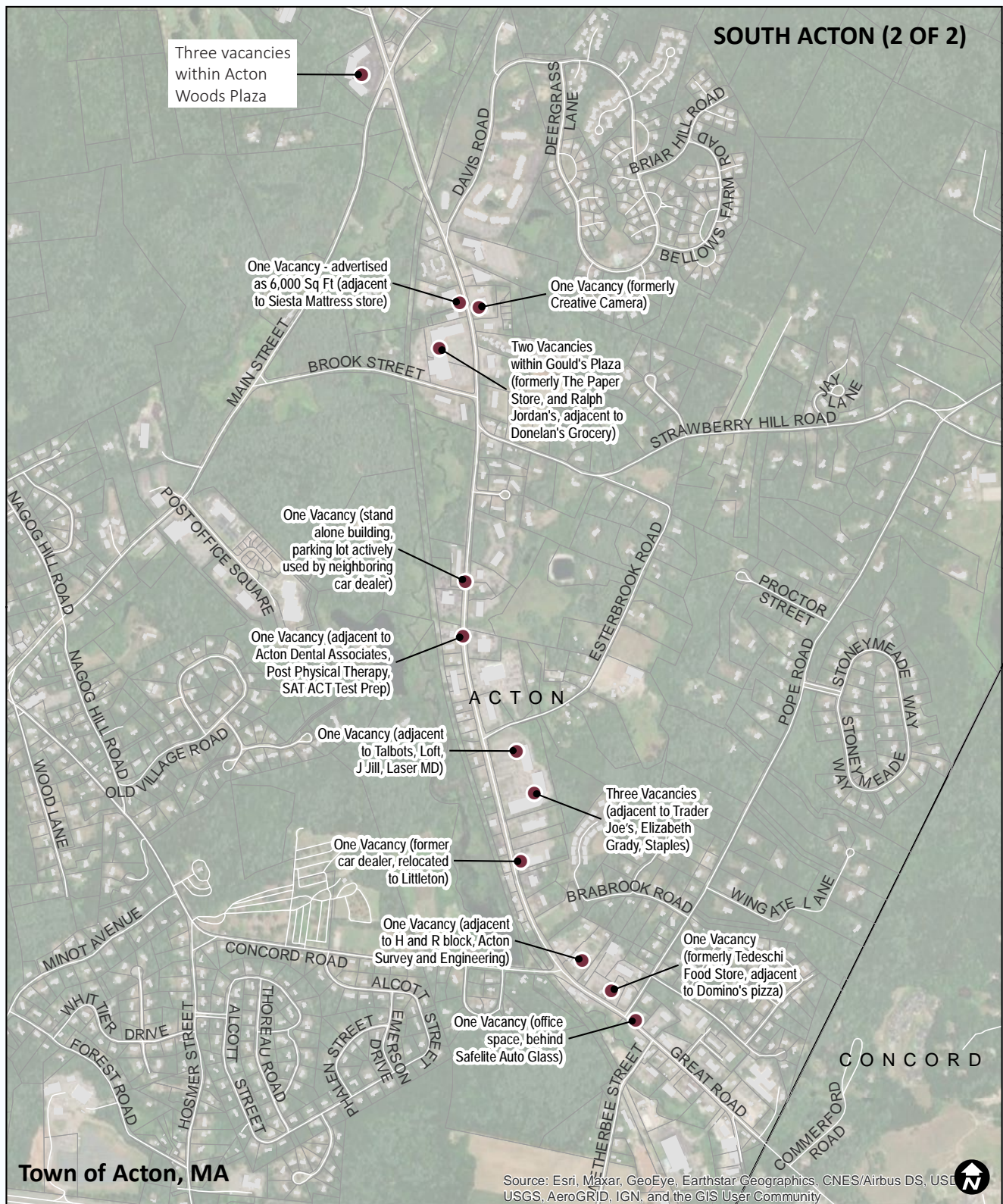
**BETA**

- Vacant Storefronts in Acton (May 2021)

*A map showing vacant storefronts examined during fieldwork in April and May, 2021*

0 0.25 0.5 Miles





## Legend

## Great Road Acton - Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program

**BETA**

- Vacant Storefronts in Acton (May 2021)

*A map showing vacant storefronts examined during fieldwork in April and May, 2021*

0 0.25 0.5 Miles





## Analysis



### EXISTING VACANCIES + SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS VENTURES

Great Road businesses rely on locals and commuters heading to Route 2 and I-495 for a large portion of their business revenue. There are approximately 20 vacant store fronts or commercial office spaces along Great Road, many a result of COVID-related economic downturn, shutdowns, and the dramatic decline in daily automobile commuters.

"The Town launched a COVID-19 Small Business Grant Program through the CARES Act to assist businesses with wage coverage, rent, loss of inventory and other fixed costs not already compensated by other federal COVID-19 financial assistance or relief programs. Even with the [grant program] effort, the Town has still lost businesses; others are still struggling, and will in the foreseeable year without proactive investment in Acton's economic infrastructure." - *Quote from the Acton LRRP Planning Application.*

In concert with the Town Planning Director, the project team has developed a flyer that is proposed to be installed on vacant storefront windows. The flyer includes a few sentences about the LRRP program, a map that identifies the vacant storefronts along Great Road, and QR code to a survey that asks locals to provide input on what types of businesses they would like to see in storefronts along Great Road. The Town has agreed to further develop the draft flyer, generate a digital survey, and update the QR code to link to the future survey questions following the conclusion of the LRRP planning project process. (See the following page for a draft version of the empty storefront window flyer.)

***Some of the signs advertising available commercial spaces along Great Road in Acton***



### GREAT ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

The study area would benefit from a variety of physical and aesthetic improvements to foster a sense of place and create a welcoming environment for visitors. The following bullets highlight key issues the team found during our field analysis:

- Nagog Park is not pedestrian friendly and includes almost no signage directing visitors to the office park behind the businesses
- Traveling south from Acorn Park, the sidewalk ends abruptly at the Sport Loft
- There is no crosswalk at the intersection of Harrison Road at Great Road
- There is no sidewalk in front of Niro Eye Care and the Music Maker School
- There is a dead-end sidewalk in front of Alpha Cars
- There is no sidewalk at the Dunkin Donuts, Chrysler-Dodge-Ram dealer (and would complement the rail trail connection)
- There is no sidewalk at the Holy Grail sports bar, bike shop, or pizza place
- The plaza that includes Colonial Spirits would benefit from the addition of sidewalks and shade trees
- The Subway restaurant and adjacent buildings have generous curb cuts that encourage high speed turns, this plaza area would benefit from access management and a reduction in the width of and number of curb cuts
- Trader Joe's area plaza has inadequate pedestrian connections to the sidewalks along Great Road and to neighboring side streets and plazas
- The right-of-way along Great Road is wider in the vicinity of the Trader Joe's plaza, but has few to no street trees and a very narrow sidewalk buffer
- Gould Plaza (Donelan's grocery store area) includes a crosswalk that does not connect to a sidewalk at the Coach Estates apartment complex

Although not an exhaustive list, the above transportation- and visitor-experience related issues include sidewalk gaps and plaza aesthetics that if corrected would create a more comfortable walking / bicycling / visitor environment at the various businesses examined during the field study.

## VACANT COMMERCIAL SPACE SURVEY

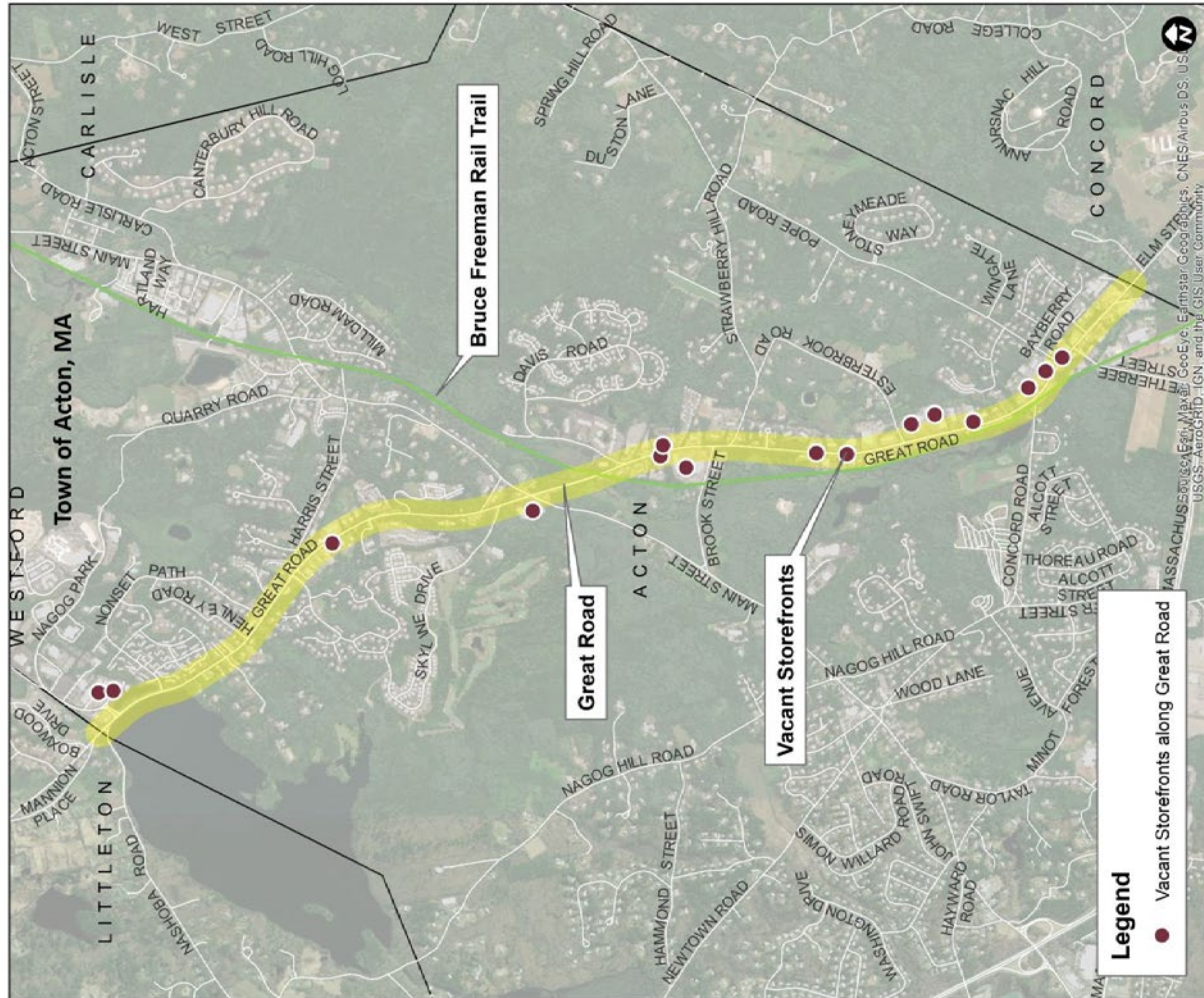
The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development has sponsored the Local Rapid Recovery Program. This program has identified priority projects along Great Road in Acton for businesses and residents to emerge stronger from COVID-19 related shutdowns through Economic Opportunity.

The Town of Acton wants YOUR OPINION on what you would like to see fill these vacant store fronts. A grocery store? A gym? A restaurant? Scan the QR code with your smartphone to fill out the survey today.



QR code goes here (TBD)

SCAN ME



A draft of the proposed vacant storefront flyer. This flyer will show vacant storefront locations and ask folks to provide input on what types of businesses they'd like to support along Great Road

For more information contact: Kristin Guichard, Planning Director and Zoning Enforcement Officer  
Phone: (978) 929-6631 | [kguichard@actonma.gov](mailto:kguichard@actonma.gov) | 472 Main Street, Acton, MA

# Analysis



## DATED STRUCTURES

Acton businesses would benefit from updated retail and commercial plaza options. Many of the existing structures are dated and in need of facade and other upgrades.

## WAYFINDING + CONCEPT MAP DEVELOPMENT

Folks using the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail may not know about the many retail and dining options available to them just off the trail along Great Road. There was great enthusiasm during the initial public meeting and in subsequent meetings with Town planning staff about a wayfinding signage plan for the trail. A draft concept including a few different Bruce Freeman Rail Trail signage options can be seen below.

See the following page for an example of a concept map that shows Bruce Freeman Rail Trail users the locations where the trail connects directly to businesses. This map, or a future iteration of a similar map, could be printed and inserted into a trail kiosk to orient trail users to Great Road business locations. Additionally, a simple QR code could link trail users smart phones to a digital version of this map showing individual businesses, their hours of operation, and logical connection points.

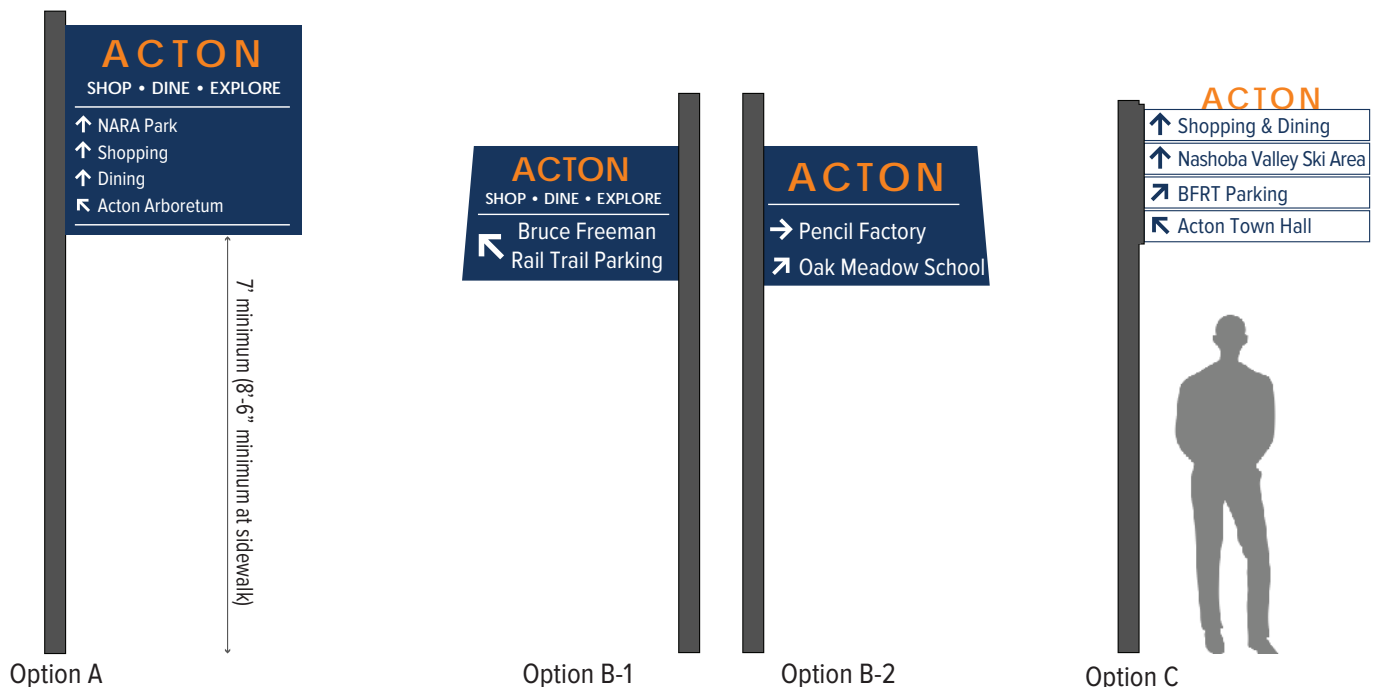


## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce provides a variety of services for member businesses:

- Network events, business luncheons, breakfasts, and events with guest speakers
- Advocates for changes to traditional business lease programs, including encouraging building owners to allow year-to-year
- Encourages businesses to grow, adapt, and helps new entrepreneurs find suitable rental spaces
- Social Media Marketing 101 events

### Wayfinding signage draft concept examples



Source: BETA Group, Inc.



# Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Connections to Great Road Businesses

**BETA**

JULY 2021



*A draft concept map showing connections from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to Great Road businesses. A future iteration is proposed to be included on a kiosk or wayfinding signage along the trail.*



## Public Input

### PHASE ONE PUBLIC MEETING

The project team hosted a public meeting on June 16th that included 18 attendees. Following the presentation, a lively roundtable of comments, questions, and answers ensued. The critical issues brought up and discussed during that meeting were transformed into the project recommendations available in the next section of this report.

### TABLING SESSIONS

On August 12th, the project team met in-person with plaza / building owners and business owners at three plazas along Great Road that have vacant commercial spaces. We set up a table and had copies available of the Subject Matter Expert rubric applications for the four proposed projects, draft versions of the BFRT concept wayfinding signage family and map including location of proposed signage, and additional project-related resources.

The plazas where we hosted tabling sessions and engaged owners, employees, and customers include Acton Woods Plaza, Gould's Plaza, and Brookside Shops.

The project team gathered valuable input about issues both positive and negative facing tenants:

#### Negative

- The inability of plaza owners to transform spaces from retail to restaurant use due to sewer restrictions
- Inflexible lease arrangements that were resulted in the decision of the individual store to close (Acton Woods Plaza)

#### Positive

- Landlords offering more flexible lease agreements to help struggling businesses (Gould's Plaza)
- Feedback about wayfinding signage, placemaking, and collaborations in regards to cross promoting businesses

#### Acton Woods Plaza



Members of the project team met with local business owners to discuss sewer capacity at Acton Woods Plaza (no photographs available)

#### Gould's Plaza



A local employee, a member of the project team, and a Town Planner discuss placemaking outside of Donelan's Grocery store

#### Brookside Shops



A member of the project team, a local business owner, and a digital marketing expert discuss opportunities for cross-promoting neighboring businesses



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## 4.0 Project Recommendations



## 4.1 Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Wayfinding Signage Study and Installation

Category		Public Realm & Revenue and Sales
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director   Phase One LRRP Public Meeting Feedback
Budget		Small Budget (less than \$50,000). Requested funding amount: \$43,000 for the rail trail wayfinding program (see budget on following pages)
Timeframe		Short Term (1-2 years) - 6 months planning, 6 - 12 months design, engineering, and construction
Risk		Low Risk – Risks associated with approval from MBTA
Key Performance Indicators		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Increase in Bruce Freeman Rail Trail users utilizing local businesses</li> <li>2) Increase in sales and revenue</li> <li>3) Increase in number of folks engaged in surveys and community meetings</li> </ol>
Partners & Resources		<p>Town of Acton Planning Department, Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce, The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), MassDOT (Route 2A), Local walking and bicycle advocacy and trail groups; Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Assabet River Rail Trail, Inc., Acton Select Board, Transportation Advisory Committee, Nashoba Regional Greenway, Champions in local businesses (Cindy McCullough), Internal departments; Recreations Department, Engineering, Public Works, Planning, Communication, Sustainability Director</p>



*Bruce Freeman Rail Trail users park their bikes for a break at Dunkin Donuts along Great Road in Acton.*



*Downtown Concord, NH has attractive wayfinding signage in the historic downtown.*

Source: <https://twitter.com/BrentToderian/status/971842182742122496/photo/2>

**HIGH PRIORITY****Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact**

- Business survey and public meeting identified the need to market area businesses using signage and create path connections to those businesses to increase sales and revenue
- 100% of business survey respondents indicated that they were impacted by COVID, with 71% reporting a decline in revenue, and 52% reporting a temporary or permanent closure, and 45% reporting that they had to lay off employees

**Action Items**

- Develop some signage options
- Study the inclusion of a QR code on signage that would easily allow users to access a map showing a variety of area retail and dining options (this could be updated with operating hours, etc.)
- Distribute signage options to the public, local business owners, the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, and the MBTA Department that administers the land where the rail trail is located to solicit public feedback and input

**Process**

- Determine which Town of Acton staff member will administer the project
- Secure funding through grants or utilizing ARPA funds
- Work internally or hire an expert to come up with 3-6 different signage options, include branding, a logo (consider addition of "Great Businesses Along Great Road!" or similar branding technique)
- Review MassDOT guidelines for wayfinding bike signs
- Generate a map that shows which sign will go where. Include both decision points and confirmation points
- Develop an ongoing engagement process online and in person to gather feedback on sign designs and locations
- Engage with additional professionals to administer funds to fabricate signs
- Record on a sharable digital map which signs were installed where, how many, and what they say. Use this document to ensure maintenance over time and reference if the public ever submits comments of vandalism or additional text information needed

*The photo and graphics are courtesy of the NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide*



**The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban bikeway Design guide includes helpful guide to wayfinding signage.**  
 Photo Credit: <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/bikeway-signing-marking/bike-route-wayfinding-signage-and-markings-system/>

**CONFIRMATION SIGN****TURN SIGN****DECISION SIGN**

**The current terminus of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is a prime location for wayfinding signage to encourage trail users to dine and shop at Great Road restaurants and shops.**

## Budget: Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Wayfinding Signage

TASK	AMOUNT	NOTES
<b>Project Initiation</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss project goals</li> <li>Schedule and advertise public meetings</li> <li>Achieve consensus on deliverables timeline</li> </ul>
<b>Base Maps and Draft Signage Family Options (Early Design Stage)</b>	<b>\$9,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maps that include each parking area, trail kiosk, portable toilet, at-grade road crossings, bridge crossing, and neighborhood connection</li> <li>Up to three (3) distinct wayfinding signage family types, with unique icons, branding, and font</li> </ul>
<b>Public Engagement</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three (3) public meetings to be held throughout the planning study</li> <li>Use outreach / public engagement to solicit feedback on proposed signage family</li> </ul>
<b>Final Design Stage &amp; Sign Fabrication &amp; Installation (27 metal signs &amp; 2 wood signs)</b>	<b>\$26,600</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 Confirmation (Rail Trail) Wayfinding Signs (\$2,400 @ \$500 each)</li> <li>7 Turn (Rail Trail) Wayfinding Signs (\$1,800 @ \$400 each)</li> <li>14 Decision (Rail Trail) Wayfinding Signs (\$7,000 @ \$800 each)</li> <li>Two Premium Wood Signs "Welcome to Bruce Freeman Rail Trail" signage (\$10,000 @ \$5,000 each)</li> </ul>
<b>Draft &amp; Final Report</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>	
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$43,000</i>	



## 4.2 Great Road Wayfinding Signage Study and Installation

**HIGH PRIORITY**

Category		Public Realm & Revenue and Sales
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director, First LRRP Public Meeting Feedback
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) Requested funding amount: \$98,000 for the wayfinding program (see budget on following pages)
Timeframe		Short Term (Less than 5 years) - 6 months planning, 6-12 months implementation
Risk		Low Risk – There is low risks associated with cooperation among different participants
Key Performance Indicators		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Meeting with local business owners and a wide cross section of the public to distribute different signage options and solicit their feedback.</li> <li>2) Increase in foot traffic, or motor vehicle traffic, that stops and shops in retail or restaurant offerings along Great Road after the signs are installed (consider travel intercept surveys before and after implementation to assess the increase in people walking, biking, and driving to local shops)</li> </ol>
Partners & Resources		Town of Acton Planning Department, Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce, residents of Acton (the public), MassDOT



Wayfinding signage combined with street signs in Cedar Falls, Iowa

Source: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2015/13-short-range-livability-solutions.html>

**HIGH PRIORITY****Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact**

- General wayfinding signage along Great Road to help direct visitors to the multiple Town centers, retail plazas, and other destinations was identified at the first public meeting as a way to increase foot traffic, sales, and revenues
- 100% of business survey respondents indicated that they were impacted by COVID, with 71% reporting a decline in revenue, and 52% reporting a temporary or permanent closure, and 45% reporting that they had to lay off employees

**Action Items**

- Conduct study and develop some signage options
- Develop a concept map that indicates preferred signage locations (include different icons for decision points and confirmation points)
- Distribute options and preferred locations map to the public, local business owners, and others to solicit public feedback and input

**Process**

- Determine which Town staff member will administer the project
- Apply for grants, or utilize ARPA money (generally secure funding)
- Work internally or hire an expert to come up with 3-6 signage options, discuss early-on in the process using colors and/or branded icons that are specific to Acton
- Generate a map that shows what sign type, and what specific text, will go where along Great Road. Include confirmation signs, turn signs, and decision sign types.
- Develop an ongoing engagement process online and in-person
- Record which sign was installed in which location and what the precise text wording says. Use this document to ensure maintenance over time



*Great Road signage and placemaking would encourage folks to dine and shop at Great Road restaurants and shops.*

## Budget: Great Road Wayfinding Signage

TASK	AMOUNT	NOTES
<b>Project Initiation</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss project goals</li> <li>Schedule and advertise public meetings</li> <li>Achieve consensus on deliverables timeline</li> </ul>
<b>Base Maps and Draft Signage Family Options (Early Design Stage)</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maps of existing wayfinding signage locations (if any) and possible future signage locations</li> <li>Up to three (3) distinct wayfinding signage family types, with unique icons, branding, and font</li> </ul>
<b>Public Engagement</b>	<b>\$6,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four (4) public meetings to be held throughout the planning study</li> <li>Use outreach / public engagement to solicit feedback on proposed signage family and possible installation locations</li> </ul>
<b>Final Design Stage &amp; Sign Fabrication &amp; Installation (16 metal signs &amp; 2 wood signs)</b>	<b>\$76,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Six Large Vehicular Directional Signs (\$30,000 @ \$5,000 each)</li> <li>Six Small Vehicular Directional Signs (\$24,000 @ \$4,000 each)</li> <li>Four Destination Identification Signs (\$12,000 @ \$3,000 each)</li> <li>Two Premium Wood Signs (can feature individual businesses OR include "Welcome to Great Road Corridor" signage (\$10,000 @ \$5,000 each)</li> </ul>
<b>Final Report</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$98,000</i>	



## 4.3 Conduct a Feasibility Study & Preliminary Design to Expand the Municipal Sewer System

Category		Public Realm
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director   Phase One LRRP Public Meeting Feedback   Tabling Sessions (additional public outreach)   Phase One Business Owner Survey
Budget		Large budget (More than \$200,000) Requested funding amount: \$350,000 - \$400,000 for an additional sewerage study (see budget on following pages)
Timeframe		Short Term (1 - 5 years) - 12-36 months planning and completing the study and preliminary design
Risk		Medium Risk – Some risk involved in financing a large capital construction project such as a municipal sewer system
Key Performance Indicators		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Completion of a Sewer Feasibility Study</li> <li>2) Completion of a preliminary design for system expansion</li> </ol>
Partners & Resources		Town of Acton Planning Department, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, Acton Department of Public Works, MassWorks program, property owners and businesses



**Brookside Shops - Pier 1 Imports closed, and retail/commercial uses are limited due to the lack of municipal sewer tie-in at the site. The site was vacant at the time this report was published.**

Source: <https://www.blacklinere.com/property/brookside-shops-acton-ma/>



**The West Acton sewage treatment plant**

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMJwj507IE8>

**Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact**

- Connecting existing buildings to a new municipal sewer system would allow those building owners to promote the spaces to a much wider variety of potential tenants, including restaurants, other food preparation outfits, gyms, and other exercise facilities
- The consultant team observed large number, approximately 20 vacancies during field analysis
- 100% of business survey respondents indicated that they were impacted by COVID, with 71% reporting a decline in revenue, and 52% reporting a temporary or permanent closure, and 45% reporting that they had to lay off employees

**Action Items**

- Conduct a feasibility study
  - » Determine location of existing service and areas to tie-in to developed retail and commercial plazas along Great Road
  - » Obtain public input and distribute concise information about opportunities and constraints and a fee schedule for those that tie-in to the new system
  - » Draft a plan with cost estimate and timeline for preliminary design, engineering, construction, and maintenance

**Process**

- Conduct a feasibility study
  - » Identify Town department staff responsible for leading the coordination effort
  - » Examine opportunities for funding
  - » Map suitable areas for a package treatment plant (location relative to the shopping plazas, soils, wetlands, water table, ownership, etc.)
  - » Understand the discharge options (current wastewater treatment plant or other) and identifying land for discharge if appropriate
  - » Evaluate the actual flow from existing businesses and proposed and preferred new businesses
  - » Calculate the total required capacity and evaluate against suitable sites
  - » Evaluate if effluent recharged from the treatment plant would remain with Acton
  - » Develop a cost-benefit ratio of cost of sewer vs. increase in tax base from fully occupied plazas
  - » Generate preliminary design planning documents

**Next Steps****HIGH PRIORITY**

The business and property owners should provide data about actual usage to compare against state requirements for capacity evaluations.

Once a cost-benefit calculation has been established for the different options, a public engagement effort should seek to educate residents about the issues, options, costs and implications. This education and discussion process will help the Town decide on its options (full municipal sewer, centralized system, or distributed system) and decide which option(s) should be further explored. The town should consider revising the bylaw(s) to allow for more flexibility in installing the sewer, including giving the people the option to pay when they connect and not when the betterment is installed.

The final stage of the planning process would be to choose one or more options for an in-depth engineering analysis and determine final feasibility and selection from there.

**Additional Considerations**

The Town should expand its past research to evaluate other options. Town-wide sewer has many benefits, including environmental benefits from replacing failing septic systems, but it can be expensive and, depending on the community, logistically difficult.

Smaller package treatment plants serving several plazas could be a feasible option. The Town should investigate possible locations for the plants, which plazas would be served, and calculate the cost-benefit ratio of increased economic development from a public-private partnership to install the plants. Fortunately, ARPA funds can support sewer and additional infrastructure funds may become available. At the state level, MassWorks is also a potential funding source.

The Town should consider whether those plants would serve only the plazas or plazas plus residents. This will have implication for capacity calculations, funding sources, and final costs to the property owner.

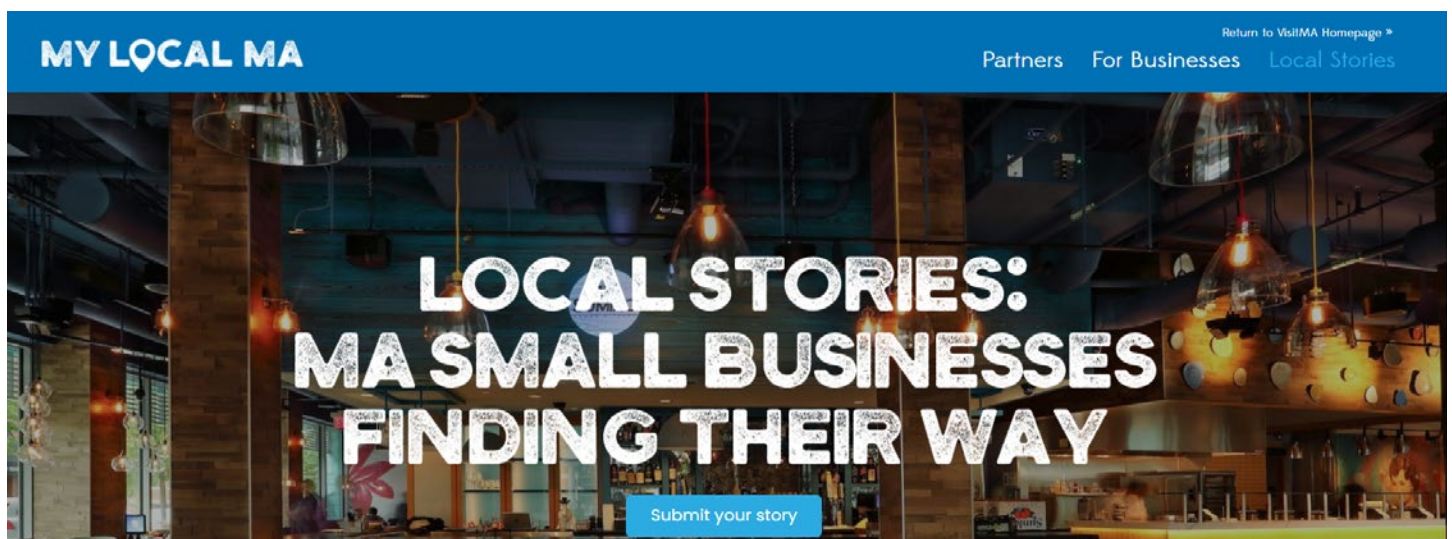
NOTE: For Package Treatment - prioritize locations north of the Brook Street/Great Road intersection and the Main Street/Great Road intersection. This portion of Great Road is within the watersheds of Nagog Brook and Nashoba Brook, upstream from the Acton Water District Conant well fields in Central Acton. Thus the effluent water recharged from the treatment plant would remain within Acton and could eventually be captured by the Conant wells and reused after treatment at the Center Acton Water Treatment Plant. This would be especially important if new or renovated businesses were high-water usage businesses such as restaurants.

## Budget: Conduct a Feasibility Study & Preliminary Design to Expand the Municipal Sewer System

TASK	AMOUNT	NOTES
Project Initiation	\$1,000	
Base Maps and Existing Conditions	\$6,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maps of existing conditions, adjacencies, obstacles, and opportunities relevant to the provision of sewer/sewage management</li> </ul>
Public Engagement	\$8,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should include conversations with property owners and businesses</li> <li>Use engagement to help identify type of sewage management and possible locations</li> </ul>
Test Sites, Scenarios, and Implications	\$35,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May include percolation tests of 2-3 identified sites</li> <li>Scenarios include 2-3 options for where/how wastewater can be treated</li> <li>Should include estimated costs; funding strategies; required partnerships for implementation</li> <li>Scenarios include 2-3 options for where/how wastewater can be treated</li> <li>Should include estimated costs; funding strategies; required partnerships for implementation</li> </ul>
Preliminary Design - Concept Plans	~\$300,000	
Final Report	\$5,000	
<i>Total</i>	<b>\$355,000</b>	

## 4.4 Shared Marketing Campaign

Category	 Private Realm
Location	LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin	Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director, First LRRP Public Meeting Feedback
Budget	 Small - up to \$25,000 1. Local search enabled multi-vendor marketplace (\$8,000 - \$25,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (6 - 12 weeks) 1. Local search enabled multi-vendor marketplace (6-12 weeks) 2. Coordinated communications program
Risk	 Low Risk - Some business owners / plaza owners may not want to participate
Key Performance Indicators	1) Participation in initial stakeholder meeting 2) Confirmed number of participants utilizing the program 3) Survey participants at 6 months, 12 months after deployment of program 4) Track types of marketing / outreach utilized
Partners & Resources	Town of Acton, Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce, Great Road Business Owners & Employees



In response to COVID-19 economic downturn, the state launched the My Local MA campaign urging MA residents to shop at local MA businesses

Source: <https://www.visitma.com/lovelylocalma/stories/>



## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

- 53% of business survey responders expressed interest in participating in a shared marketing / advertising program in Acton
- The impact of COVID-19, combined with changing consumer behavior, on-line sales competition, and physical space utilization dynamics have reduced business sales for most small stores and shops along the Great Road Corridor. If left unaddressed, the impacts could be a long-term threat to the business community and local economy

## Action Items

- Identify community retailers
- Conduct outreach to foster cooperative marketplace mindset
- Provide onboarding support & training, operational training, and business model coordination consultation
- Work to define strategy and an array of ways to approaching marketing both collectively and individually
- Develop a Local-Search enabled Multi-Vendor Marketplace and develop local messaging timeline and channel contacts, begin seeding message
- Create on-line E commerce presence that can compete with large e-tailers by offering broad product selection and the convenience of shopping on-line. Transaction services are provided platform but processing is directly between the shopper and vendor
- Hire a consultant to help establish the program

## Process

- Secure funding for Acton "Brand Awareness" and marketing
- Create Geographic Subdomain & URL
- Build marketplace as either a large local-search enabled platform or as an Acton-only marketplace, or a combination of the two
- Leverage already existing technologies and platforms to reduce costs
- Identify a minimum number of retailers to upload inventory, train in management and administration of their e-store, and discuss strategies to leverage new online sales capability

## Other Projects Include

- Coordinated Communications Program
- Education and Certification Program
- Pop-Up Space

## Deliverable

- Presentation to retailers on benefits, strategies, and tactics of shared marketing
- Tools (Strategy, Processes, & Templates) for multi-vendor marketing
- Organization plans for retailers to develop marketing (messaging) team
- Coordination with Training (see project 4.9) & integration with business operational plans
- Prep for integration with Coordinated Communications (see project 4.8)

## Additional Considerations

- Consider adding a "consume local" marketing project that encourages shoppers to order directly from restaurants and avoid platforms like doordash, grubhub, and ubereats which siphon money out of the community



*A business on Great Road in Acton utilizing a sign with a QR code that advertises grocery delivery*

## 4.5 Fill Existing Sidewalk and Crosswalk Gaps

**HIGH PRIORITY**

Category		Public Realm
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director   Phase One LRRP Public Meeting Feedback   Business Owner Survey
Budget		Medium (\$50,000 - \$200,000). \$25,000 - \$30,000 for a sidewalk and crosswalk study, \$150,000 - \$170,000 for construction funds
Timeframe		Short Term (1 - 5 years). 1-12 months planning, 12-36 months implementation
Risk		Low Risk – Sidewalks are popular among a wide variety of the public and unlikely to be contentious
Key Performance Indicators		1) The number of overall gaps that are filled within one year of the completion of the study
Partners & Resources		Town of Acton Planning Department, Acton Department of Public Works, property owners and business owners, MassDOT



*A stretch of Great Road with no sidewalk access to the commercial / retail buildings on the right side of the photo*



*This sidewalk ends abruptly at the adjacent property line*

**HIGH PRIORITY****Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact**

- Sidewalk connectivity is critical for folks who want to access shops and plazas along Great Road but are not able to drive, can not afford to drive, or choose not to drive
- Sidewalk connectivity is a well documented critical piece of overall transportation infrastructure that allows a wide variety of folks equal access to the businesses along Great Road
- In the phase one business owner online survey, "Improvement of Streetscape and Sidewalks" was an important factor according to respondents:
  - » Moderately important: 26%
  - » Important: 42%
  - » Very Important: 13%

**Action Items**

- Define sidewalk gaps and desirable crosswalk locations along Great Road
- Come up with a cost estimate for filling in each sidewalk gap segment, including ADA-compliant slopes and other features, green landscaped buffers and street trees where feasible
- Fill in the sidewalk gaps
- Access Management: Consider consolidation of multiple driveway entrances and exits into private plaza parcels

**Process**

- Perform in-house or hire a consultant to study sidewalk gaps, including existing ADA-compliance, MassDOT right of way offsets, private property lines, and quality of existing sidewalks
- In the study, include: location of crosswalks, pedestrian ramps, desired location of proposed new crosswalks, and high-crash or low-driver yielding locations where additional features like a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon may be located
- Prioritize each gap and recommend a formal order in which they are to be filled in
- Work with plaza owners and developers to recommend and perhaps require private funding of certain lengths of new sidewalks
- Work closely with MassDOT to successfully stripe new crosswalks
- Access Management: Consider expanding the existing zoning bylaw along the Great Road corridor that requires the connection of parking lots to adjacent uses and land (EAV and EAV-2 districts)



*Visual cues like edge lines or crosswalk striping across driveways can create a more comfortable environment by reminding drivers of pedestrian activity*



## 4.6 Pole Banners: “Great Businesses along Great Road”

Category		Public Realm
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director   Phase One LRRP Public Meeting Feedback   Public Input Tabling Sessions   Fieldwork Intercept Surveys
Budget		Small \$30,000 for a few dozen pole banners designed and installed
Timeframe		Short Term (1 - 5 years). 2-6 months planning, 6-12 months implementation
Risk		Low Risk – Pole banner design and installation is generally considered a pretty low risk public investment
Key Performance Indicators		1) Number of banners installed 2) Public and business owner feedback
Partners & Resources		Town of Acton Planning Department, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, Acton Department of Public Works, Property owners and business owners



A pole banner in Randolph, MA



A road-spanning banner string between utility poles includes a “MASK-UP 01460” Public Service Announcement in Littleton

## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

- Pole banners are a known placemaking ingredient
- Placemaking can instill a sense of pride and place in a community, and recognize a corridor for being a regional retail / commercial location
- Motorists and others who travel through the Great Road corridor without stopping may be unaware of the times of services and amenities available at the variety of plazas along Great Road
- 100% of business survey respondents indicated that they were impacted by COVID, with 71% reporting a decline in revenue, 52% reporting a temporary or permanent closure, and 45% reporting that they had to lay off employees

## Action Items

- Design, print, install banners on existing utility poles along the Great Road revitalization corridor

## Process

- Identify Town department staff responsible for leading the coordination effort
- Examine opportunities for funding
- Map suitable pole locations and coordinate with local utility companies for use of poles
- Design and print banners, engage with DPW to install them
- Include "Great Businesses along Great Road" within the material



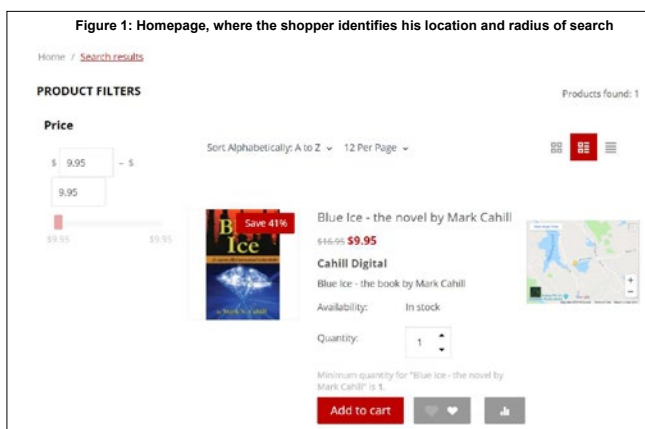
**Pole banners in Cambridge advertising the Head of the Charles rowing event**  
Source: <https://www.facebook.com/HOCR1965/posts/10156266817200807>



**Pole banners in neighboring Littleton**

## 4.7 Create a Local Search Enabled Multi-Vendor Marketplace

Category		Revenue & Sales
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director   Phase One LRRP Public Meeting Feedback (date)   Phase One Business Owner Survey   Public Outreach Tabling Sessions
Budget		\$25,000 - Small budget
Timeframe		Short Term (1 - 5 years) - 1 month planning, 2-6 months implementation
Risk		Medium Risk – Some risk involved because it is impossible to forecast the success of a future online retail business model that is new to most folks in Acton
Key Performance Indicators		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Meeting with local business owners to engage in dialogue about the e-marketplace to establish interest and gain buy in</li> <li>2) Onboarding of retailers onto the platform</li> <li>3) Evaluate total marketplace engagement and sales at 6- and 12-months</li> </ol>
Partners & Resources		(Future) Economic Development Director, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, Local business owners and employees, A consultant similar to Cepheid Solutions (runs Mondofora, an established local search enabled marketplace)



Tasks and Estimated Timeline:		
Task	Cost (est)	Time (est)
Create Geographic Subdomain & URL	\$1000 (opt.)	1 week
Outreach to Retailers	\$3000 - \$10,000	3 weeks
Onboard Retailers & Inventory	\$200/store	4-10/day
or Self-Onboarding (free tools & tutorials)	\$0/store	~3 hrs/store
Training (Webinar, group trg, - 100 people)	\$1000/webinar	1/day
or Training (in-person, store trg - 10 ppl)	\$500/store	2/day
or Self-Training (free tools & tutorials)	\$0/store	1 - 10 hrs/store
Strategic Application session	\$5000	1/day
or ongoing Newsletter & Video	\$0	ongoing
Total (range)	\$8000 - \$25,000	6 - 12 weeks

A local search enabled marketplace vendor screenshot provided by Cepheid Solutions

A proposed local search enabled e-marketplace rough cost estimate provided by Dion Kenney from Cepheid Solutions

## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

Project Overview: The Town Planner and the Chamber of Commerce have identified the goals of expanding web-based presence and sales, and to cross-market businesses in support of the Great Road Corridor. Within this community, 53% of business survey responders expressed interest in participating in a shared marketing / advertising program in Acton.

The impact of the pandemic, combined with changing consumer behavior, competitive business operational efficiencies, and physical space utilization dynamics have had negative consequences for many small businesses and the existing retail centers in the Great Road Corridor. The net impact, if unaddressed, could be a potential threat to the business community and the local economy.

Advances in technology and its utilization can not only help to address these short-term challenges, but can also help the community to be better positioned for a future in which greater reliance on and incorporation of digital technologies will be endemic. It is in our interest to leverage the capabilities of a "digital downtown", to recover from the impacts of the pandemic and to prepare for an increasingly competitive future economy in which being "online" will be a minimum requirement for all competitive businesses and communities.

E-commerce sales, as a percentage of total retail, grew dramatically as a result of the pandemic. Consequently, local retailers without an online sales channel lost sales. Even those with an online store are at a disadvantage as they won't typically have the product selection of large sophisticated e-commerce marketplaces.

100% of business survey respondents indicated that they were impacted by COVID, with 71% reporting a decline in revenue, and 52% reporting a temporary or permanent closure, and 45% reporting that they had to lay off employees.

## Action Items

- Create an online presence that can compete with the large e-tailers by offering broad product selection and the convenience of online shopping, while enabling online sales directly with local retailers
- Identify community retailers. Outreach to foster cooperative marketplace mindset
- Outreach to community retailers to coordinate presentation & deliver
- Onboard retailers, including account creation and inventory uploading
- Provide training, onboarding support, operational training, and business model coordination consultation
- Develop local messaging timeline and channel contacts, begin seeding message

- Discuss and decide on the following question: "Does the town put forward \$ in this effort?"

## Process

- Provide a local-search enabled multi-vendor marketplace of the community's vendors
- Develop a platform that provides transaction services (processing is directly between shopper and vendor)
- Decide if the marketplace can be built as a part of a large local-search enabled platform, as an Acton-only marketplace, or as a combination of the two
- Consult with other communities running similar programs (Amesbury, for example)

By leveraging already existing technologies and platforms, the cost – in dollars, manpower, and administration – are reduced to the customization costs of geographic market segmentation and, if desired, establishing a URL-redirect capable sub-domain on the marketplace server.

To be effective, this marketplace would need to on-board a minimum number of retailers, upload their inventory, train them in the management and administration of their e-store, and discuss strategies to leverage their new online sales capability. Additionally, a local marketplace would benefit greatly from a coordinated outreach and engagement messaging project.

## Deliverables


- Presentation on IT trends, strategic threats, and the power of marketplaces
- Onboarding of retailers
- Training:
  - » Integration with existing operations
  - » Leveraging online marketing capabilities
  - » Customer service
  - » Transaction processing
  - » Platform administration
- Integration with Shared Marketing (See Project 4.4), Coordinated Communications (See Project 4.8), and Education and Training (See Project 4.9)



<https://fairlylocal.market/shop/amesbury-marketplace/>



## 4.8 Coordinated Communications Program

Category		Revenue & Sales
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director   Phase One Diagnostic Business Owner Survey
Budget		\$5,000 for project initiation and first year of implementation
Timeframe		Short Term (1 - 5 years) - 6 months planning, 6-12 months implementation
Risk		Low Risk – The downside risks of an unsuccessful program are delays in creating community awareness of LRRP projects. Upside benefits of successful project implementation include community awareness and engagement, accelerated adoption of LRRP projects, and increased community integration
Key Performance Indicators		1) Identification of founding group members and roles 2) Develop metrics for articles written, articles placed in media (traditional and social), Audience impressions
Partners & Resources		Town of Acton Planning Department, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, Local businesses owners

### Tasks and Estimated Timeline:

Task	Cost (est)	Time (est)
Initial planning session	\$200	1 week
Identify grp reps and coordinator (volunteer?)	\$0	3 weeks
Initial Training	\$500	1 day
Ongoing Training	\$200 - \$500/month	4 hrs/month
Consolidate Editorial Calendars	\$0	2 days
Content Development	\$0 - \$1000/month	4 – 16 hrs/mo
Operate Program	\$0 - \$1000/month	4 hrs/month
Planning & Coordination	\$0	1 – 3 hrs/weekly
Program Reporting	\$0	1 hr/week
Total (to launch)	\$900	3 wks
Total (ongoing)	\$200 - \$2500/mo	ongoing

**Tasks, timeline, and costs associated with a communications effort.**

Source: Provided by Dion Kenney from Cepheid Solutions

## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

- 100% of business survey respondents indicated that they were impacted by COVID, with 71% reporting a decline in revenue, and 52% reporting a temporary or permanent closure, and 45% reporting that they had to lay off employees
- This recommendation is for the establishment of an intentionally designed organization (people and activities) which will collectively create and promote messaging to create awareness of the retail community's initiatives (Marketplace, events, goals, etc) and encourage enthusiasm and participation in these activities
- Creation of a community-based volunteer-led communications program would:
  - » Improve community awareness of LRRP projects
  - » Enhance effective distribution of municipal content
  - » Encourage greater emphasis on information of interest to the various constituencies in Acton (residents, businesses, media channels, town administration, etc.)

## Action Items

This objective is shared among multiple constituencies in the community – businesses, residents, municipal government, community organizations, the media (traditional media and social media), each having their own agenda, mindset, and messages. The second step is establishing the resources and processes to get these different constituencies to collaborate and message their respective audiences in a coordinated and complementary manner. The strength of this project is not in creating a single powerful marketing group, but in leveraging the combined strength of many voices to create a unified and effective communication eco-system.

- The first step in this process is recognizing a shared objective – to create and manage a coordinated messaging program for businesses in the community
- Identify candidates to represent each of the various constituencies in the community. Select a point person to be responsible for coordinating with each representative
- Identify local media channels (existing traditional media and social media, social media platforms to establish new presence). Collect and coordinate editorial calendars (where they exist). Identify roles, responsibilities, and messaging timelines.
- Manage team and projects to consolidated calendar
- Develop a group charter
- Manage team and projects to consolidated calendar

## Process

- Provide training (initial and ongoing) on relevant platforms
- Create timeline of LRRP projects & milestones
- Select author(s)
- Interview Stakeholders
- Develop content
- Promote to identified list of media contacts
- Push to social media platforms

## Next Steps

This group will have continued value and utility to the community beyond the completion of LRRP projects. To leverage this value for long-term community benefit, the following steps should be taken:





- Establish a long-term goal and organization for the group
- Develop mission statements
- Create a succession plan
- Continue to recruit volunteers
- Continue to provide on-going training

## Deliverable

- Assess current levels of tech knowledge and incorporation in business operations. Evaluate areas of greatest need/benefit for training
- Establish roadmap and target milestones for technology adoption
- Provide calendar for training and certification completion

## 4.9 Develop an Education and Certification Campaign

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<b>Category</b>		Revenue & Sales
<b>Location</b>		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
<b>Origin</b>		Kristen Guichard, AICP, Town of Acton Planning Director   Dion Kenney, Cepheid Solutions (SME)
<b>Budget</b>		\$3,500 for project initiation and first year of implementation
<b>Timeframe</b>		Short Term (5 - 10 years) - 6 months planning, 6-12 months implementation
<b>Risk</b>		Low Risk – The downside risks of an unsuccessful program are possible delays in the rolling out of LRRP projects. Upside benefits will aid the efficient adoption of plans & technologies, and moving the community up the learning curve on how to incorporate internet technologies into business operations and long-term planning.
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>		1) Increase the level of tech knowledge among local business owners engaged in the multi-vendor marketplace website program
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>		Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce, Town of Acton Planning Department, local business owners and employees

## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

- The world is changing quickly. To implement a "digital downtown" community that can fully leverage the on-going changes in technology, the community would benefit from an education, or community enrichment, program
- 100% of business survey respondents indicated that they were impacted by COVID, with 71% reporting a decline in revenue, and 52% reporting a temporary or permanent closure, and 45% reporting that they had to lay off employees
- Business owner survey respondents were asked "are you interested in receiving assistance for your business in any of the following areas?" Responses included:
  - » Setting up an online store or other online selling channel: 13%
  - » Creating new services: 10%
  - » Participating in shared marketing / advertising: 53%
  - » Training on the use of social media: 17%

## Action Items

A community managed (or outsourced) program could offer a structure for different levels of proficiency. The courses could be offered either via internally developed content or through external content which has been reviewed & approved by Town Management or the Chamber. To provide motivation, each level could come with a "digitally trained" certification. Proposed certification levels: Internet Practitioner, Internet Manager, and Internet Master.

- Identify and prioritize subject matter needs and deficits
- Develop syllabi for each level of training (employee, manager, SME) based on appropriate groupings of related subjects
- Identify source material for training and/or create new materials
- Select to outsource or internally provide training
- Implement Certification (optional)

## Process

- Evaluate whether to outsource or perform training with existing community resources
- Develop schedule for courses (or provide self-paced program virtually)
- Sign-up attendees
- Provide evaluations (& certificates of completion, if desired)
- Coordinate training schedule with LRRP projects training needs

## Deliverable

- Assess current levels of tech knowledge and incorporation in business operations. Evaluate areas of greatest need/benefit for training
- Establish roadmap and target milestones for technology adoption
- Provide calendar for training and certification completion

### Tasks and Estimated Timeline:

<b>Task</b>	<b>Cost (est)</b>	<b>Time (est)</b>
Stakeholder interviews	\$250	1 week
Design syllabi	\$125	1 week
Develop Trainings (3 Webinar presentations)	\$2000	3 weeks
Conduct 3 sessions (recorded for reuse)	\$600	ongoing
Identify Additional sources of content	\$250	3 weeks
Evaluation/certification	TBD	ongoing
Messaging to the community	\$0	1 hr/week
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,225</b>	<b>5 wks</b>

**Educational component timeline, tasks, and costs**

Source: Dion Kenney, Cepheid Solutions



## 4.10 Pop-up Shops Program

Category	 	Public Realm and Admin capacity
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		First LRRP Public Meeting Feedback
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (1 - 5 years). 6 months for strategic planning, 3 months for pop-up vendor solicitation, 3 months for pop-up space build out, 6 months for implementation
Risk		Medium Risk – Some risk involved in utilizing Town or Chamber of Commerce resources to help temporarily fill empty commercial and retail stores
Key Performance Indicators		1) Increase in foot traffic 2) Increase in sales and revenue at neighboring food and retail businesses 3) Possible long-term tenancy at formerly vacant properties 4) Positive feedback among landlords / building owners, the public
Partners & Resources		MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, Property owners and businesses, Town of Acton Planning Department



The Corner Spot in Ashland is an example that the Town Economic Development Director should explore for further insight

Source: <https://thecornerspotashland.com/>

### Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

- At the time that fieldwork analysis was completed for this planning study, there were 20 commercial/retail vacancies along Great Road
- Great Road businesses are reliant upon spill over traffic from a patron visiting another store in the same plaza -so when one store closes there is a ripple effect more broadly across the neighboring retail and commercial storefronts
- 100% of business survey respondents indicated that they were impacted by COVID, with 71% reporting a decline in revenue, and 52% reporting a temporary or permanent closure, and 45% reporting that they had to lay off employees

### Action Items

- The project will attract small businesses that provide services not currently available along the Great Road corridor
- Pop-up stores may be unfamiliar but can build a loyal following. Residents that champion the businesses and engage with town and Chamber of Commerce officials to choose additional businesses will have a voice in what types of businesses come to these spaces and ultimately which businesses thrive as a part of the program

### Process\*

- Critical questions that need to be answered before the project begins include:
  - » How is the town identifying locations?
  - » Is the town helping to connect plaza owners and pop up opportunities? What does that process look like?
- Organize a small group of stakeholders representing local government, economic development, small business, real estate, tourism, marketing, and design/web/social media sectors to spearhead the project. Ensure representation from diverse and often under-represented groups such as low-income, minority, women, and LGBTQ residents and business owners as part of the steering committee
- Initiate a fundraising campaign to cover three months of rent for seven pop-up vendors. Build relationships with building owners to negotiate reduced rent in vacant stores for a specified period (ideally 90 days) with graduated rent for the first year made available to pop-ups that agree to stay into Year 2

- Engage internal marketing/design/web/social media experts or engage a pro bono consultant to create a website and social media campaign to promote the project. Develop marketing materials to help vendors understand community dynamics and ensure a good fit between their products or services and local resident and visitor interests
- Involve community members early in the process to increase buy-in around the project. As part of that, appoint a community ambassador to each location that can acquaint incoming business owners with neighbors, resources, and town amenities
- Create a social media campaign once pop-ups are in place and encourage businesses to offer incentives to stimulate repeat and returning patronage. Examples include coupons, sale days, promotions, and experiential offerings
- Gather regular feedback from consumers and vendors about the pop-ups' presence and impact on local culture, so that changes can be made in real time to respond to consumer demands and vendor needs. Use surveys that include rewards for respondents, and which can be activated at pop-up shops, to increase response rate
- Incentivize successful pop-ups to permanently relocate by adding a pitch competition that would bring additional funding to projects after the pilot period ends

**\*Process borrowed from the Best Practices Compendium, "Pop Ups in the Retail Mix", by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission in Adams, MA**

## 4.11 Public Art Campaign

Category		Public Realm and Arts / Culture
Location		LRRP Study Area - Great Road, Acton, MA
Origin		First LRRP Public Meeting Feedback
Budget		Medium (\$50,000 - \$200,000). \$20,000 is sought to administer the program and \$100,000 is sought to compensate the artists and fund the installation of substantial pieces on publicly owned property (outdoors)
Timeframe		Short Term (1 - 5 years) - 6-12 months planning, 12-48 months implementation
Risk		Low Risk – Some risk involved in locating suitable locations for temporary vs. permanent artists' installations
Key Performance Indicators		1) Number of artists' applications per funding cycle 2) Number of successful installations in programs first 24 months
Partners & Resources		Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council, Town of Acton Cultural Resource Planner, Town of Acton Planning Department, Property / building owners and businesses, the public

Left: A mural painted by a local Boston artist  
Right: A mural at Northeastern University



<https://www.wbur.org/news/2016/08/29/boston-best-public-art>

Cultural/Arts



## Diagnostic / COVID-19 Impact

- Public Art can create a sense of place and pride in a community, which is an important step when rebuilding the economic foundation of the Great Road Corridor that was heavily impacted by COVID-19
- Bringing artists into municipal beautification projects can encourage activity in downtown commercial and retail areas
- A grant-funded artist instillation program will provide local artists with fair compensation for their work and inject money into the local economy
- Utilizing public talent to effect change in the urban environment is a great way to create buzz and a reason for folks to come and visit the downtown area to see the new pieces
- Local artists were hard hit during COVID-19 related shutdowns and restrictions. Compensating artists for possible future works would be a direct revenue stream for area artists / residents
- 100% of business survey respondents indicated that they were impacted by COVID, with 71% reporting a decline in revenue, and 52% reporting a temporary or permanent closure, and 45% reporting that they had to lay off employees

## Action Items

- Establish a dedicated staff member to administer the project, and assign this person the role of Artist Liaison - the one stop shop for those navigating the permit application process
- Remain flexible and build flexibility into the application process - artists are good creative problem solvers, and traditional municipally-led grant application programs often are not
- Release a "Call for Submissions" and ensure that it is spread out through the Town website, on social media, and on paper flyers in different neighborhoods and in different languages
- Identify public lands, and / or privately owned spaces suitable for 3-dimensional artists' pieces or murals
- Develop the program materials, including an application, and a payment / compensation structure for artists' time
- Release the application materials and publicize the program

## Process

- Obtain grant funding
- Develop criteria for artists who apply to take part in the program
- Secure a variety of sites on publicly owned land in and around the BID
- Release a call for applications
- Include a deadline for the applications to be submitted and require artists' to explain their piece, the media/ medium, how much it weighs, if it requires electricity or plumbing, if it is 2d like a mural or 3d like a sculpture, and if it can be moved without the aid of a special vehicle
- Select winners, install the pieces, invite the press to observe and if successful, consider another round of funding for the program

## Next Steps

Consider dedicating the first call for submissions to create a piece that is specifically a memorial to Carroll Spinney, the famous puppeteer known for his work as Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch on Sesame Street from 1969 until 2018. Spinney attended Acton High School and is remembered around town with lawn signs and other signs that say "BE KIND."

Consider creating a committee dedicated to working with the town to locate a place for this permanent installation and working closely with the dedicated staff member, the Cultural Resource person, and the artist to design, build, install, maintain, and market the piece.

**Spinney pictured with his famous puppets Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch**

[https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Caroll\\_Spinney](https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Caroll_Spinney)





## The Town's recovery will depend on a mix of private and public realm projects

The following alternative proposed project idea could help bolster the project recommendations from the previous pages:

**ALTERNATIVE PROPOSED PROJECTS TABLE**

PROJECT RECOMMENDATION	TIMELINE	STEPS
Consider a zoning change process for multiple-use or new use of plazas	Medium Term	1. Examine the possibility of a zoning change to allow a new use for large vacant commercial / retail spaces 2. Micro Fulfillment Centers are one future possibility. See Appendix.
Consider expanding the zoning bylaw requirements about driveway access	Medium Term	1. The current Zoning Bylaw includes a requirement for the connection of parking lots to adjacent uses and land along portions of Great Road (EAV and EAV-2 Districts), unless the permitting Board finds that there are physically constraints or uncooperative abutters etc. 2. Consider expanding this requirement along the entire Great Road corridor. 3. This clearly relates to pedestrian and vehicular safety and accessibility goals outlined by the public input received by residents and business owners as part of this LRRP planning study.
Additional roadway lighting	Medium Term	1. Work with MassDOT to identify suitable locations for the addition of roadway lighting
Host additional festivals to grow the community of residents along great road	Short Term	1. Consider hosting a Halloween Parade, Christmas decorations contest, Dia de Muertos' celebration
Consider a circulator bus to provide transportation from residential areas to various plazas	Medium Term	1. Conduct a study to investigate adding a circulator bus to the transportation offerings in Town

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## 5.0 Funding Sources

# Additional Research & Funding Sources

## Funding Sources

Typical funding sources include federal and state grants dedicated to economic development, community revitalization, and municipal revenue. Many municipalities work with a consortium of interested parties, including local banks, that contribute to the pool of funds. Application fees can be utilized to circulate additional funding through the target area. Occasionally large institutions or private developers may join the team administering the program in an effort to revitalize the corridor and community around a campus or mixed-use development. Local institutions and developers should be contacted to determine if they would contribute to a pool of funding for a storefront facade revitalization program. No dollar amount is too small to contribute, but a specific range of choices should be agreed upon prior to engaging them. A bronze, silver, and gold level would enable their name and logo to be included on construction fencing, flyers, or project web sites. Investigate the MA Downtown Initiative in the spring under the One Stop portal offered by the Commonwealth, Community Development Block Grants, and Main Streets programs.

## American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA)

ARPA provided roughly \$385 million to be split between 313 Massachusetts communities with populations under 50,000. Acton is slated to receive \$7.1 million. ARPA Funding can be used for direct relief related to COVID-19 impacts through the use of Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (CLFRF) in the following five core areas:

1. **Respond to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19 or its negative economic impacts** - this includes COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral health, and certain public health and safety staff
2. **Economic impacts of the public health emergency** - these include efforts to mitigate economic harm to workers, households, small businesses, affected industries, and the public sector
3. **Lost public sector revenue** - payments may be used to fund government services to the extent of revenue reductions from the pandemic
4. **Premium pay for essential workers** - funds may be used for additional support for those who have faced the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure sectors
5. **Water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure** - recipients may invest to improve access to clean drinking water, support wastewater and storm water infrastructure, and expand access to broadband internet:

- » Wide range of eligible water and sewer infrastructure projects – specifically, all that would otherwise be eligible to receive financial assistance through the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) or Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)
- » Broadband projects must provide service to unserved and underserved households and businesses. Eligible projects are expected to be designed to deliver, upon project completion, service that reliably meets or exceeds symmetrical upload and download speeds of 100 Mbps

Potential eligible uses within these five core areas include the following expenses:

- Direct COVID-related costs (testing, contact tracing, etc.)
- Public health and safety staff
- Hiring state and local government staff up to the number of employees to pre-pandemic levels
- Assistance to unemployed workers, including job training
- Assistance to households
- Small business assistance
- Nonprofit assistance
- Aid to impacted industries
- Expenses to improve efficacy of public health or economic relief programs
- Survivor's benefits
- CLFRF funding cannot be used to:
- Replenish a "rainy day" fund or other reserve fund
- Make a deposit to a pension fund

## Additional Funding Sources for Public and Private Realm Improvement Projects

The following funding sources were included specifically for recommendations generated as part of this ongoing planning study. The list can be applied to a wide variety of public realm and private realm improvement projects.

## Municipal Sewer Funding Sources

### Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant Program is a federally funded, competitive grant program designed to help small cities and towns meet a broad range of community development needs. The Community Development Fund (CDF) awards grants to communities throughout the Commonwealth. This program helps eligible cities and towns to meet a broad range of community development needs in housing, infrastructure, revitalization, economic development and public social services. It supports CDBG eligible activities and encourages applicants to develop coordinated, integrated and creative solutions to local problems. Eligible CDBG projects include but are not limited to:

- Housing rehabilitation or development
- Micro-enterprise or other business assistance
- Infrastructure
- Community / public facilities
- Public social services
- Planning
- Removal of architectural barriers to allow access by persons with disabilities

## Wayfinding Funding Sources

### Massachusetts Downtown Initiative

*Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community One-Stop for Growth*

*Department of Housing and Community Development*

All communities are eligible to apply. This program provides technical assistance and design services for a variety of downtown improvement elements. MDI staff will assign a consultant to assist the community with the technical services, which could include studying and generating a range of design

“Programs focused on commercial properties are usually administered and staffed by a municipality’s planning, community development, or economic development office; a Main Street organization; a business improvement district, or other government-affiliated entities.”

<https://plannersweb.com/2013/10/how-facade-improvement-programs/>

options and offering a blueprint for how to move forward. The next application round opens in the spring. In 2018, Foxborough, North Chelmsford, and Winchendon received grant awards for wayfinding.

### Commonwealth Places Program

*MassDevelopment*

This competitive grant advances locally driven placemaking projects in downtown and neighborhood commercial districts in eligible communities throughout Massachusetts. The aim of Commonwealth Places Resurgent Places is to help community partners prepare public spaces and commercial districts to best serve their population during COVID-19 social distancing and the phased reopening of the economy.

- Seed grants available from \$250 - \$7,500
- Implementation grants available up to \$50,000
- Successful examples of this grant include:
  - » Marlborough received \$15,000 for wayfinding and branding strategy development
  - » Greenfield received funding used by the Greenfield Business Association for reimbursing restaurants to purchase outdoor dining furniture

## Alternative Funding Programs

The following funding programs are grouped as alternative because they either do not stem directly from a local or regional agency or governing body or they do not directly fund the type of proposed improvement projects recommended in this report.

### Local Banks and other Community Development Financial Institutions

Local banks with a community development financing program for small businesses may be able to help provide low or no interest loans to small businesses for their share of the improvements, especially for a storefront or sign upgrade. The focus of the program at each bank is different; contact your local bank(s) and discuss how they could participate in investing in the community.

### Business Improvement District (BID) or Other Downtown District

Funds from a BID may be used for planters, trash and recycling receptacles, sanitation and maintenance staff, graffiti removal, storefront facades, windows, doors, and sign maintenance, and a variety of other elements.

### Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

*Massachusetts Historical Commission*

This is available for significant rehabilitation of historic buildings and may help supplement a larger project in a downtown. The guidelines developed for the municipal façade/storefront improvement program could be incorporated into the review of larger projects.



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### **Collaborative Workspace Program**

#### *MassDevelopment*

This grant provides owners and operators of collaborative work spaces up to \$100,000 for new equipment or building improvements. Alternatively, seed grants of up to \$15,000 to plan for new co-working spaces are available. This grant is an opportunity to address the exterior and the interior of a building while also helping to support existing local jobs and create new job opportunities.

### **Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund**

#### *Massachusetts Historical Commission*

This is a 50% reimbursable matching grant for preserving properties, landscapes, and sites listed in the State Register of Historic Preservation. Applicants are limited to municipalities and nonprofits. Many downtown and village centers include nonprofit and municipal anchors. This grant could be used to ensure that all properties in a target area are brought, over time, to the same standard of repair. The program does have limitation on allowable costs. A preservation restriction is required.

### **Summary**

The above funding sources may be used to fund a variety of public and private realm improvement programs, maintenance, and streetscape improvements. While many of the above funding sources could be leveraged in combination with other funds to develop a façade improvement program, the list in general was developed with a wide variety of improvement projects in mind.

See funding spreadsheet in the Appendix for comprehensive list of possible funding sources provided by Department of Housing and Community Development.

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# Appendix

## APPENDIX A - Comprehensive Funding Spreadsheet

Name of Fund	Available for RRP Projects	Funding Sector	Agency/ Organization	Maximum Eligible Grant Amount per Applicant	Eligible Applicants	Description/Allowable Use of Funds
Regional Pilot Project Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development	\$250,000	Partnerships of municipalities, public entities, or 501(c) organizations	To fund projects that support businesses and communities in stabilizing/growing their regional economy with one or more of the recovery efforts under Partnerships for recovery. no capital-related projects will be funded.
MA Downtown Initiative Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	\$25,000	Municipalities	Technical assistance for downtown revitalization in 6 categories
Restaurant Revitalization Fund	Yes	Public	Small Business Administration		Eligible entities include restaurants, food stands/trucks/carts, caterers, bars/saloons/lounges/taverns, snack and non alcoholic beverage bars, bakeries, brewpubs, breweries/microbreweries, wineries, distilleries, inns, and licensed facilities of a beverage alcohol producer. Priority group: Small businesses that are at least 51% owned by one or more individuals who are women/veterans/socially and economically disadvantaged.	Funds may be used for specific expenses including rent, payroll, mortgage, debt, utility, business maintenance expenses, construction of outdoor seating, business supplies, business food and beverage expenses (including raw materials), covered supplier costs, and business operating expenses
BIZ-M-POWER	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	\$20,000	Small businesses (i.e. employing 1-20 FTE employees, including 1 or more of whom owns the business, annual revenue not exceeding \$2,500,000) in brick-and-mortar (physical) establishment operating within Massachusetts	To assist low-income and moderate-income entrepreneurs with their acquisition, expansion, improvement or lease of a facility, purchase or lease of equipment, or with meeting other capital needs of a business.

Shared Streets and Spaces	Yes	Public	MassDOT	\$200,000	Municipalities	To support the repurposing of streets, plazas, sidewalks, curbs, and parking areas to facilitate outdoor activities and community programming, including but not limited to facilities for eating, shopping, play, and community events and spaces for all ages.
Small Business Technical Assistance Grant	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	\$85,000	501(c)3 organizations	To fund specific counseling and training programs that assist small businesses in securing new or increased financing for growth, providing digital grants (MGCC Program), establishing crowdfunding campaigns through the Biz-M-Power grant (MGCC Program), achieving stability and viability, creating/retaining jobs, increasing the economic vitality of the neighborhood, community, or region.



Build Back Better Regional Challenge	Yes	Public	Economic Development Administration	\$500,000	<p>Eligible applicants under this NOFO include a(n): (i) District Organization of an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD); (ii) Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; (iii) State, county, city, or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; (iv) institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; or (v) public or private non-profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a general purpose political subdivision of a State. Under this NOFO, EDA is not authorized to provide grants or cooperative agreements to individuals or to for profit entities. Requests from such entities will not be considered for funding.</p>	<p>Through this American Rescue Plan Act Build Back Better Regional Challenge Notice of Funding Opportunity (ARPA BBBRC NOFO), EDA aims to assist communities and regions impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has caused, and continues to cause, economic injury to U.S. communities and regions in devastating and unprecedented ways. This ARPA BBBRC NOFO is designed as a two-phase competition to (1) help regions develop transformational economic development strategies and (2) fund the implementation of those strategies that will create and grow regional growth clusters. Such efforts will help regional economies recover from the pandemic and build economic diversity and resiliency to mitigate impacts of future economic disasters.</p> <p>In Phase 1, EDA will provide technical assistance grants to approximately 50-60 coalitions (through a lead institution). These coalitions will be considered “finalists” and the grants will be used by the finalists to prepare more detailed applications for transformational projects that benefit their respective geographic regions and are aligned around a holistic approach to building and scaling a strategic industry.</p> <p>In Phase 2, EDA will award each of the 20-30 finalist coalitions \$25-75 million (and potentially up to \$100 million) to fund the collection of projects they identified. The projects will be funded through grants to coalition members.</p>
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Regional Economic Development Organization Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development		Eligible organizations shall be corporations, foundations, organizations or institutions that operate regionally and service 10 or more contiguous towns/cities. They must be exempt from federal taxation under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code, and have a primary focus of economic development and perform the services required by MGL Chapter 23A Section 3J and 3K.	Grants should be used to assist entrepreneurs, small businesses, and business partners in order to stabilize and/or grow regional economy. They may not, however, be used to increase salaries or hire additional staff for the organization.
Seed Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$1,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$100,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support groups launching new projects or starting to significantly change the direction of an existing project. Most often, groups have been working on the project less than a year and usually don't yet have much direct experience with implementing the idea.
Grow Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$4,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$100,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support groups to deepen their work by further developing a community vision, lowering barriers to participation, identifying new stakeholders and working to bring more voices and lived experiences into core decision-making processes.
Young Leaders Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$6,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$175,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support projects led by young leaders aged 15-25
Small Business Matching Grant	Yes	Private	NewVue Communities	\$5,000	22 North Central Massachusetts cities and towns from Athol to Harvard with a combined population of 240,000 (refer to <a href="https://newvuecommunities.org/cities-towns-we-serve/">https://newvuecommunities.org/cities-towns-we-serve/</a> )	To support micro-enterprises (businesses with 5 or fewer employees) that need help with marketing and accounting.

Merrimack Valley Municipal Business Development and Recovery Fund	Yes	Private	Essex County Community Foundation/Columbia Gas	\$2,000,000	City of Lawrence, the Town of Andover, and the Town of North Andover	To provide direct support (individual business support, general business promotions, technical assistance and business consultation services, economic development and planning) to the municipalities and their business communities (not businesses directly) impacted by the recent gas disaster in Andover, North Andover, and Lawrence
Efficiency and Regionalization grant program	No Longer Available	Public	Community Compact Cabinet	\$100,000	Municipalities, regional school districts, school districts	For governmental entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives that allow for long-term sustainability. These grants provided funds for one-time or transition costs for municipalities, regional school districts, school districts considering forming a regional district or regionalizing services, regional planning agencies and councils of governments interested in such projects. Small capital purchases or improvements that are integral to the implementation of a functional program such as equipment or software; Technical assistance including consulting services, assistance in drafting contracts or other agreements; and Transition or project management costs, not to exceed one year.
Shuttered Venue Operators Grant	No Longer Available	Public	Small Business Administration	\$10,000,000	Businesses such as live venue operators or promoters, theatrical producers, live performing arts organization operators, museum operators, motion picture theater operators (including owners), and talent representatives.	Funds may be used for specific expenses including rent, payroll, mortgage, debt, utility, taxes and fees, administrative costs, advertising, production transportation, and capital expenditures related to producing a theatrical or live performing arts production.
Regional Pilot Project Grant	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development	\$250,000	Municipalities, public entities, or 501(c) organizations that are federally tax exempt under the Internal Revenue Code and intend to promote regional recovery from the economic impacts of COVID19	To support businesses and communities in stabilizing and/or growing their regional economy through solutions including (but not limited to) job creation, transportation, childcare, digital marketing and promotion efforts, digital business directories. This funding should not be used to fund projects or purposes for which there is already state or federal funding available (i.e. Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program, Paycheck Protection Program, Small Business Grant Relief programs). No capital-related projects will be funded through this program.

Business Equity COVID-19 Emergency Fund	No Longer Available	Private	Foundation for Business Equity	See grant.	Black and Latinx majority-owned (51% or more) businesses with revenues of at least \$250,000	Flexible loans may be used for working capital and other demonstrated business needs (e.g., salaries and wages, inventory, equipment, marketing, etc.)
Urban Agenda Grant Program	Maybe	Public	Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development	See grant.	Cross sector consortiums and coalitions	Funding to local partnerships to implement projects that are based on collaborative work models with the goal of advancing economic progress. Typically, Early Stage Strategy Development and Strategy Implementation by an Existing Cross-Sector Consortium or Coalition
Community Development Block Grant	Maybe	Public	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	\$1,350,000	Municipalities with a population of under 50,000 that do not receive CDBG funds directly from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Municipalities may also apply on behalf of a specific developer or property owner.	To meet a broad range of community development needs - including projects such as housing rehabilitation or development; micro-enterprise or other business assistance; infrastructure; community/public facilities; public social services; planning; removal of architectural barriers to allow access; downtown or area revitalization



Name of Fund	Available for RRP Projects	Funding Sector	Agency/ Organization	Maximum Eligible Grant Amount per Applicant	Eligible Applicants	Description/Allowable Use of Funds
Planning Assistance Grants	Yes	Public	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs	\$125,000	Municipalities and Regional Planning Agencies	To fund technical assistance and help communities undertake public process associated with creating plans and adopting land use regulations consistent with the Baker-Polito Administration's land conservation and development objectives including reduction of land, energy, and natural resource consumption, provision of sufficient and diverse housing, and mitigation of/preparation for climate change.
Regional Pilot Project Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development	\$250,000	Partnerships of municipalities, public entities, or 501(c) organizations	To fund projects that support businesses and communities in stabilizing/growing their regional economy with one or more of the recovery efforts under Partnerships for recovery. no capital-related projects will be funded.
MassWorks Infrastructure Program	Yes	Public	Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development	See grant.	Municipalities	The most flexible source of capital funds to municipalities and other eligible public entities primarily for public infrastructure projects that support and accelerate housing production, spur private development, and create jobs - particularly for production of multi-family housing in appropriately located walkable, mixed-use districts.
Community Compact IT Grant	Yes	Public	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	\$200,000	Municipalities	This is a competitive grant program focused on driving innovation and transformation at the local level via investments in technology. support the implementation of innovative IT projects by funding related one-time capital needs such as technology infrastructure, upgrades and/or purchases of equipment or software. Incidental or one-time costs related to the capital purchase such as planning, design, installation, implementation and initial training are eligible.
Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency/FEMA	See grant.	Property Owners	To reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of flood damage to buildings, manufactured homes, and other structures insured under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

MA Downtown Initiative Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	\$25,000	Municipalities	Technical assistance for downtown revitalization in 6 categories
TDI Creative Catalyst	Yes	Public	Mass Development	\$40,000	Individuals and organizations in current and graduated Transformative Development Initiative Districts	To support public-facing projects that enhance local arts and cultural infrastructure and contribute to economic revitalization - including public art, placemaking, and stabilization of organizations and creative business collectives
Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency/FEMA	See grant.	Property Owners	Hazard mitigation projects reducing the risks from disasters and natural hazards
Commonwealth Places	Yes	Public	Mass Development	\$300,000	Municipalities	To help community partners prepare public spaces and commercial districts to best serve their population during COVID-19 social distancing and the phased reopening of the economy, including improvements to sidewalks, curbs, streets, on-street parking spaces and off-street parking lots in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce in their communities. This program complements the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) Shared Streets & Spaces.
Community Preservation Act	Yes	Public	Community Preservation Trust Fund/State Department of Revenue (DOR)	See grant.	Only communities that have adopted the Community Preservation Act are eligible to receive CPA Trust Fund matching funds annually.	To preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities.
Partnerships Matching Funds Program	Yes	Public	Department of Conservation and Recreation	\$25,000	State park friends and advocacy groups, civic and community organizations, institutions, businesses, municipal governments, dedicated individuals	To support capital investments at DCR-owned state parks, beaches, and other reservations.

Restaurant Revitalization Fund	Yes	Public	Small Business Administration	See grant.	Eligible entities include restaurants, food stands / trucks / carts, caterers, bars / saloons / lounges / taverns, snack and non alcoholic beverage bars, bakeries, brewpubs, breweries / microbreweries, wineries, distilleries, inns, and licensed facilities of a beverage alcohol producer. Priority group: Small businesses that are at least 51% owned by one or more individuals who are women / veterans / socially and economically disadvantaged.	Funds may be used for specific expenses including rent, payroll, mortgage, debt, utility, business maintenance expenses, construction of outdoor seating, business supplies, business food and beverage expenses (including raw materials), covered supplier costs, and business operating expenses
BIZ-M-POWER	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	\$20,000	Small businesses (i.e. employing 1-20 FTE employees, including 1 or more of whom owns the business, annual revenue not exceeding \$2,500,000) in brick-and-mortar (physical) establishment operating within Massachusetts	To assist low-income and moderate-income entrepreneurs with their acquisition, expansion, improvement or lease of a facility, purchase or lease of equipment, or with meeting other capital needs of a business.
Shared Streets and Spaces	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Department of Transportation	\$200,000	Municipalities	To support the repurposing of streets, plazas, sidewalks, curbs, and parking areas to facilitate outdoor activities and community programming, including but not limited to facilities for eating, shopping, play, and community events and spaces for all ages.
Small Business Technical Assistance Grant	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation	\$85,000	501(c)3 organizations	To fund specific counseling and training programs that assist small businesses in securing new or increased financing for growth, providing digital grants (MGCC Program), establishing crowdfunding campaigns through the Biz-M-Power grant (MGCC Program), achieving stability and viability, creating/retaining jobs, increasing the economic vitality of the neighborhood, community, or region.

Economic Adjustment Assistance	Yes	Public	Economic Development Association	\$10,000,000	<p>Eligible applicants under the EAA program include a(n): (i) District Organization of an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD); (ii) Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; (iii) State, county, city, or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; (iv) institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; or (v) public or private non-profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a general purpose political subdivision of a State. Under the EAA program, EDA is not authorized to provide grants or cooperative agreements to individuals or to for profit entities. Requests from such entities will not be considered for funding.</p>	<p>EDA's ARPA EAA NOFO is designed to provide a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions as they respond to, and recover from, the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, including long-term recovery and resilience to future economic disasters. Under this announcement, EDA solicits applications under the authority of the Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) program, which is flexible and responsive to the economic development needs and priorities of local and regional stakeholders. This is the broadest NOFO EDA is publishing under ARPA and any eligible applicant from any EDA Region may apply.</p>
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Competitive Tourism Grants	Yes	Public	Economic Development Administration	\$10,000,000	<p>For EDA Competitive Tourism Grants, eligible entities include a(n): (i) District Organization of an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD); (ii) Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; (iii) State, county, city, or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; (iv) institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; or (v) public or private non profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a general purpose political subdivision of a State. 42 U.S.C. § 3122(4)(A); 13 C.F.R. § 300.3.</p>	<p>EDA's ARPA Tourism NOFO is designed to provide a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions to rebuild and strengthen their travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industry through various infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects. Under this NOFO, EDA solicits applications under the authority of the Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) program, which is flexible and responsive to the economic development needs and priorities of local and regional stakeholders.</p> <p>EDA's travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation grants will be delivered through two components: (1) State Tourism Grants and (2) EDA Competitive Tourism Grants.</p>
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Build Back Better Regional Challenge	Yes	Public	Economic Development Administration	\$500,000	<p>Eligible applicants under this NOFO include a(n): (i) District Organization of an EDA-designated Economic Development District (EDD); (ii) Indian Tribe or a consortium of Indian Tribes; (iii) State, county, city, or other political subdivision of a State, including a special purpose unit of a State or local government engaged in economic or infrastructure development activities, or a consortium of political subdivisions; (iv) institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education; or (v) public or private non-profit organization or association acting in cooperation with officials of a general purpose political subdivision of a State. Under this NOFO, EDA is not authorized to provide grants or cooperative agreements to individuals or to for profit entities. Requests from such entities will not be considered for funding.</p> <p>Through this American Rescue Plan Act Build Back Better Regional Challenge Notice of Funding Opportunity (ARPA BBBRC NOFO), EDA aims to assist communities and regions impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has caused, and continues to cause, economic injury to U.S. communities and regions in devastating and unprecedented ways. This ARPA BBBRC NOFO is designed as a two-phase competition to (1) help regions develop transformational economic development strategies and (2) fund the implementation of those strategies that will create and grow regional growth clusters. Such efforts will help regional economies recover from the pandemic and build economic diversity and resiliency to mitigate impacts of future economic disasters.</p> <p>In Phase 1, EDA will provide technical assistance grants to approximately 50-60 coalitions (through a lead institution). These coalitions will be considered “finalists” and the grants will be used by the finalists to prepare more detailed applications for transformational projects that benefit their respective geographic regions and are aligned around a holistic approach to building and scaling a strategic industry.</p> <p>In Phase 2, EDA will award each of the 20-30 finalist coalitions \$25-75 million (and potentially up to \$100 million) to fund the collection of projects they identified. The projects will be funded through grants to coalition members.</p>
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Statewide Planning, Research, and Networks	Yes	Public	Economic Development Administration	\$6,000,000	See grant.	<p>The ARPA Statewide Planning, Research, and Networks NOFO is part of EDA's multi-phase effort to respond to the coronavirus pandemic as directed by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Specifically, this NOFO seeks to build regional economies for the future through two primary avenues: a) Statewide Planning and b) Research and Networks.</p> <p>Subject to the availability of funds, awards made under this NOFO will help develop coordinated state-wide plans for economic development and data, tools, and institutional capacity to evaluate and scale evidence-based economic development efforts, including through communities of practice and provision of technical assistance among existing and new EDA grantees.</p>
Regional Economic Development Organization Grant Program	Yes	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development	See grant.	Eligible organizations shall be corporations, foundations, organizations or institutions that operate regionally and service 10 or more contiguous towns/cities. They must be exempt from federal taxation under section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code, and have a primary focus of economic development and perform the services required by MGL Chapter 23A Section 3J and 3K.	Grants should be used to assist entrepreneurs, small businesses, and business partners in order to stabilize and/or grow regional economy. They may not, however, be used to increase salaries or hire additional staff for the organization.
Hometown Grant Program	Yes	Private	T-Mobile	\$50,000	Towns with population <50,000	To build/rebuild/refresh community spaces that help foster local connections in town.
Greener Greater Boston Program	Yes	Private	Solomon Foundation/ Barr Foundation	\$20,000	Municipalities, Trail conservancies and non-profits	To fund preliminary design (for each stage of design), capacity building and operational support, and public engagement and implementation toward projects that enhance the beauty, utility, and accessibility of Greater Boston's greenways.

Nellie Leaman Taft Foundation Competitive Grants	Yes	Private	Nellie Leaman Taft Foundation	\$15,000	Non-profits 501 (c)(3) (small to mid sized) that benefit residents of greater Boston inside the Route 495 beltway	To seed funding for new ideas and initiatives, start-up and on-going support for grass roots organizations, and entrepreneurial projects that may enable an organization or its constituents to achieve greater self-sufficiency.
Seed Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$1,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$100,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support groups launching new projects or starting to significantly change the direction of an existing project. Most often, groups have been working on the project less than a year and usually don't yet have much direct experience with implementing the idea.
Grow Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$4,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$100,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support groups to deepen their work by further developing a community vision, lowering barriers to participation, identifying new stakeholders and working to bring more voices and lived experiences into core decision-making processes.
Young Leaders Grant	Yes	Private	Grassroots Fund	\$6,000	Volunteer-driven groups that have no more than 2 full-time paid staff and an annual operating budget of under \$175,000. Note that the group does not need to have formal tax status or a fiscal sponsor.	To support projects led by young leaders aged 15-25
Small Business Matching Grant	Yes	Private	NewVue Communities	\$5,000	22 North Central Massachusetts cities and towns from Athol to Harvard with a combined population of 240,000 (refer to <a href="https://newvuecommunities.org/cities-towns-we-serve/">https://newvuecommunities.org/cities-towns-we-serve/</a> )	To support micro-enterprises (businesses with 5 or fewer employees) that need help with marketing and accounting.
William J. & Margery S. Barrett Fund	Yes	Private	Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation	See grant.	Nonprofit organizations, public agencies or community organizations that provide services to the residents of Adams, Cheshire or Savoy, MA.	To fund projects, programs, capital improvements and general operating support of initiatives that benefit the community in arts and culture, early childhood development, environment, and health and social services.
Central Berkshire Fund	Yes	Private	Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation	\$5,000	Nonprofit organizations, public agencies or community organizations that provide services to the residents of the communities of Becket, Cummington, Dalton, Hinsdale, Peru, Washington and Windsor.	To fund projects, programs, capital improvements and general operating support of initiatives that benefit the community in arts and culture, early childhood development, environment, and health and social services.

Merrimack Valley Municipal Business Development and Recovery Fund	Yes	Private	Essex County Community Foundation/Columbia Gas	\$2,000,000	City of Lawrence, the Town of Andover, and the Town of North Andover	To provide direct support (individual business support, general business promotions, technical assistance and business consultation services, economic development and planning) to the municipalities and their business communities (not businesses directly) impacted by the recent gas disaster in Andover, North Andover, and Lawrence
Efficiency and Regionalization grant program	No Longer Available	Public	Community Compact Cabinet	\$100,000	Municipalities, regional school districts, school districts	For governmental entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives that allow for long-term sustainability. These grants provided funds for one-time or transition costs for municipalities, regional school districts, school districts considering forming a regional district or regionalizing services, regional planning agencies and councils of governments interested in such projects. Small capital purchases or improvements that are integral to the implementation of a functional program such as equipment or software; Technical assistance including consulting services, assistance in drafting contracts or other agreements; and Transition or project management costs, not to exceed one year.
MDAR Urban Agriculture Program	No Longer Available	Public	Mass Department of Agriculture	See grant.	Municipalities, Nonprofit Organizations 501(c)(3), Public or non-profit educational or public health institutions, Established urban farmer with more than three (3) years of commercial urban farming experience	To fund long-term, capital investments such as infrastructure improvements, building upgrades, purchase of computer software and systems, land procurement, and purchase of farm equipment to increase access of fresh, local produce in urban neighborhoods with a high concentration of low-moderate income residents
Cultural Facilities Fund (Systems Replacement)	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Cultural Council	See grant.	Nonprofit Organizations 501(c)(3) engaged in the arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences; municipalities, and colleges or universities that own cultural facilities	For 20-year capital needs assessments of buildings and mechanical systems.

Coastal Resilience Grant Program	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management	\$1,000,000	Municipalities located within the Massachusetts coastal zone; Certified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that own vulnerable coastal property that is open and accessible to the public	To provide financial and technical support for local and regional efforts to increase awareness and understanding of climate impacts, identify and map vulnerabilities, conduct adaptation planning, redesign and retrofit vulnerable public facilities and infrastructure, and restore shorelines to enhance natural resources and provide storm damage protection.
Housing Choice Capital Grant	No Longer Available	Public	Mass Housing Choice Initiative	See grant.	Housing Choice Communities	To plan and build the diverse housing stock located on publicly owned land, leasehold, easement or right-of-way, or are for the purchase of public land - includes pre-construction survey, design, engineering and construction costs, feasibility studies, land acquisition, etc.
Cultural Facilities Fund (Capital Grants)	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Cultural Council	See grant.	Nonprofit Organizations 501(c)(3) engaged in the arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences; municipalities, and colleges or universities that own cultural facilities	For the acquisition, design, construction, repair, renovation, and rehabilitation of a cultural facility.
Cultural Facilities Fund (Feasibility and Technical Assistance Grants)	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Cultural Council	See grant.	Nonprofit Organizations 501(c)(3) engaged in the arts, humanities, or interpretive sciences; municipalities, and colleges or universities that own cultural facilities	For the planning and assessment of a cultural facility.
Shuttered Venue Operators Grant	No Longer Available	Public	Small Business Administration	\$10,000,000	Businesses such as live venue operators or promoters, theatrical producers, live performing arts organization operators, museum operators, motion picture theater operators (including owners), and talent representatives.	Funds may be used for specific expenses including rent, payroll, mortgage, debt, utility, taxes and fees, administrative costs, advertising, production transportation, and capital expenditures related to producing a theatrical or live performing arts production.



Regional Pilot Project Grant	No Longer Available	Public	Massachusetts Office of Business Development	\$250,000	Municipalities, public entities, or 501(c) organizations that are federally tax exempt under the Internal Revenue Code and intend to promote regional recovery from the economic impacts of COVID19	To support businesses and communities in stabilizing and/or growing their regional economy through solutions including (but not limited to) job creation, transportation, childcare, digital marketing and promotion efforts, digital business directories. This funding should not be used to fund projects or purposes for which there is already state or federal funding available (i.e. Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program, Paycheck Protection Program, Small Business Grant Relief programs). No capital-related projects will be funded through this program.
Real Estate Services Technical Assistance	No Longer Available	Public	MassDevelopment	\$10,000	Eligible applicants include municipal officials, planners, local stakeholders, and others.	Grants may be used toward technical assistance opportunities in Surplus Property Reuse (e.g. Constraints and Feasibility Analysis, Master Planning, Test Fits, RFP/Q Assistance) or Local District Management Implementation Technical Assistance (e.g. District Improvement Financing, Business Improvement District formation)
Business Equity COVID-19 Emergency Fund	No Longer Available	Private	Foundation for Business Equity	See grant.	Black and Latinx majority-owned (51% or more) businesses with revenues of at least \$250,000	Flexible loans may be used for working capital and other demonstrated business needs (e.g., salaries and wages, inventory, equipment, marketing, etc.)
Brownfields Redevelopment Site Assessment Fund	Maybe	Public	MassDevelopment	\$100,000		To finance the environmental assessment of brownfield sites in Economically Distressed Areas (EDAs) of the Commonwealth
Urban Agenda Grant Program	Maybe	Public	Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development	See grant.	Cross sector consortiums and coalitions	Funding to local partnerships to implement projects that are based on collaborative work models with the goal of advancing economic progress. Typically, Early Stage Strategy Development and Strategy Implementation by an Existing Cross-Sector Consortium or Coalition

Community Development Block Grant	Maybe	Public	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	\$1,350,000	Municipalities with a population of under 50,000 that do not receive CDBG funds directly from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Municipalities may also apply on behalf of a specific developer or property owner.	A broad range of community development needs - including projects such as housing rehabilitation or development; micro-enterprise or other business assistance; infrastructure; community/public facilities; public social services; planning; removal of architectural barriers to allow access; downtown or area revitalization
Brownfields Redevelopment Remediation Fund	Maybe	Public	MassDevelopment	\$500,000	See grant.	To finance the remediation of brownfield sites in Economically Distressed Areas (EDAs) of the Commonwealth
National Endowment for the Arts Grants	Maybe	Public	National Endowment for the Arts	See grant.	Regional Arts Agencies	This funding will be allocated to local state and regional arts agencies to distribute through their funding programs
Housing Development Incentive Program	Maybe	Public	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	See grant.	Developers (projects located in Gateway Cities)	Tax incentive to undertake new construction or substantial rehabilitation of properties for lease or sale as multi-unit market rate residential housing
MassTrails Grants	Maybe	Public	Department of Conservation & Recreation, Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs	\$100,000	Public entities and non-profit organizations (with documented land owner permission and community support)	To design, create, and maintain the diverse network of trails, trail systems, and trails experiences
MassEVIP Fleets Incentives	Maybe	Public	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection	\$7,500	Public Entities	Helps eligible public entities acquire (buy or lease) electric vehicles for their fleets.

Abandoned Housing Initiative Strategic Demolition Fund Grant	Maybe	Public	Massachusetts Attorney General's Office	\$125,000	Municipalities, Municipal Housing and Redevelopment Authorities, Nonprofit organizations	To be used for the construction of an affordable housing structure.
Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund	Maybe	Public	State Historic Preservation Office	See grant.	Municipalities and private non-profit organizations	To support the preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites (cultural resources) listed in the State Register of Historic Places - including pre-development work, development projects such as stabilization, protection, rehabilitation and restoration
Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program	Maybe	Public	State Historic Preservation Office	See grant.	Municipalities and private non-profit organizations	To support efforts to identify and plan for the protection of the significant historic buildings, structures, archaeological sites and landscapes of the Commonwealth (including cultural resource inventories, nomination of properties to National Register, community-wide preservation plans, other studies/reports/publications to identify and protect significant properties)
Massachusetts Recycling Fund	Maybe	Private	BDC Capital	See grant.	See grant.	To help Massachusetts businesses active in recycling-related activities obtain the capital needed for any reasonable business purpose.
Closed Loop Infrastructure Fund	Maybe	Private	Closed Loop Partners	See grant.	Municipalities and private companies	Provides below-market rate loans to fund replicable, scalable and sustainable recycling and circular economy infrastructure projects across collection, sortation, processing and new technologies.

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# Appendix

## APPENDIX B - Phase One Public Presentation

Local Rapid Recovery Plan  
Impacts of COVID-19  
Acton, Massachusetts  
Great Road Commercial Corridor  
June 16, 2021



## Agenda

# Tonight's Meeting – 6:00-7:30PM

1. Introductions
2. Overview of Local Rapid Recovery Program
3. Schedule
4. Project Goals
5. Acton, Great Road Commercial Corridor Study Area
6. Existing Conditions: Diagnostics and Business Surveys
7. Public Comments
8. Next Steps

## Project Team

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### BETA Group

Thomas Loughlin, PE

- Plan Facilitator

Charlie Creagh

- Project Planner

### Town of Acton

Matthew “Selby”

- Land Use and Economic  
Development Director

Kristen Guichard

- Planning Director / Zoning  
Enforcement Officer

# **LRRP Program**

## Local Rapid Recovery Plan

- Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
- The Local Rapid Recovery Program (LRRP) provides municipalities an opportunity to develop actionable, project-based recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges and COVID-19 related impacts to downtowns, town centers, and commercial areas
- Three Phases:
  - Phase I: Diagnostic and Business Surveys
  - Phase II: Project Recommendations
  - Phase III: Plans

## Schedule

# Local Rapid Recovery Program

## Phase I: Diagnostic and Business Surveys

- Completed between March and May

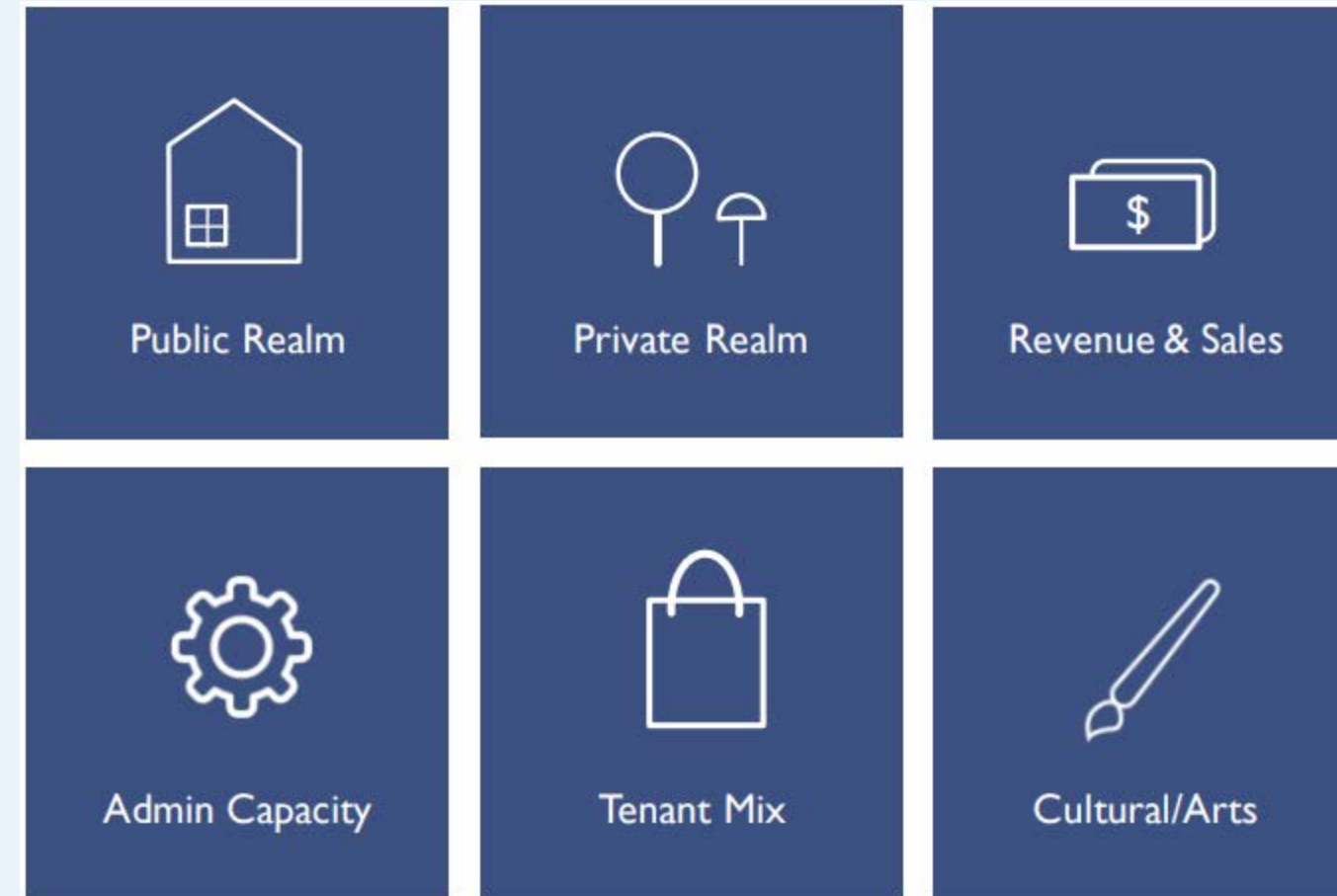
## Phase II: Project Recommendations

- In progress May -> June
- Gather additional input from business owners and stakeholders

## Phase III: Plans

- July -> August

### PROJECT PLAN CATEGORIES

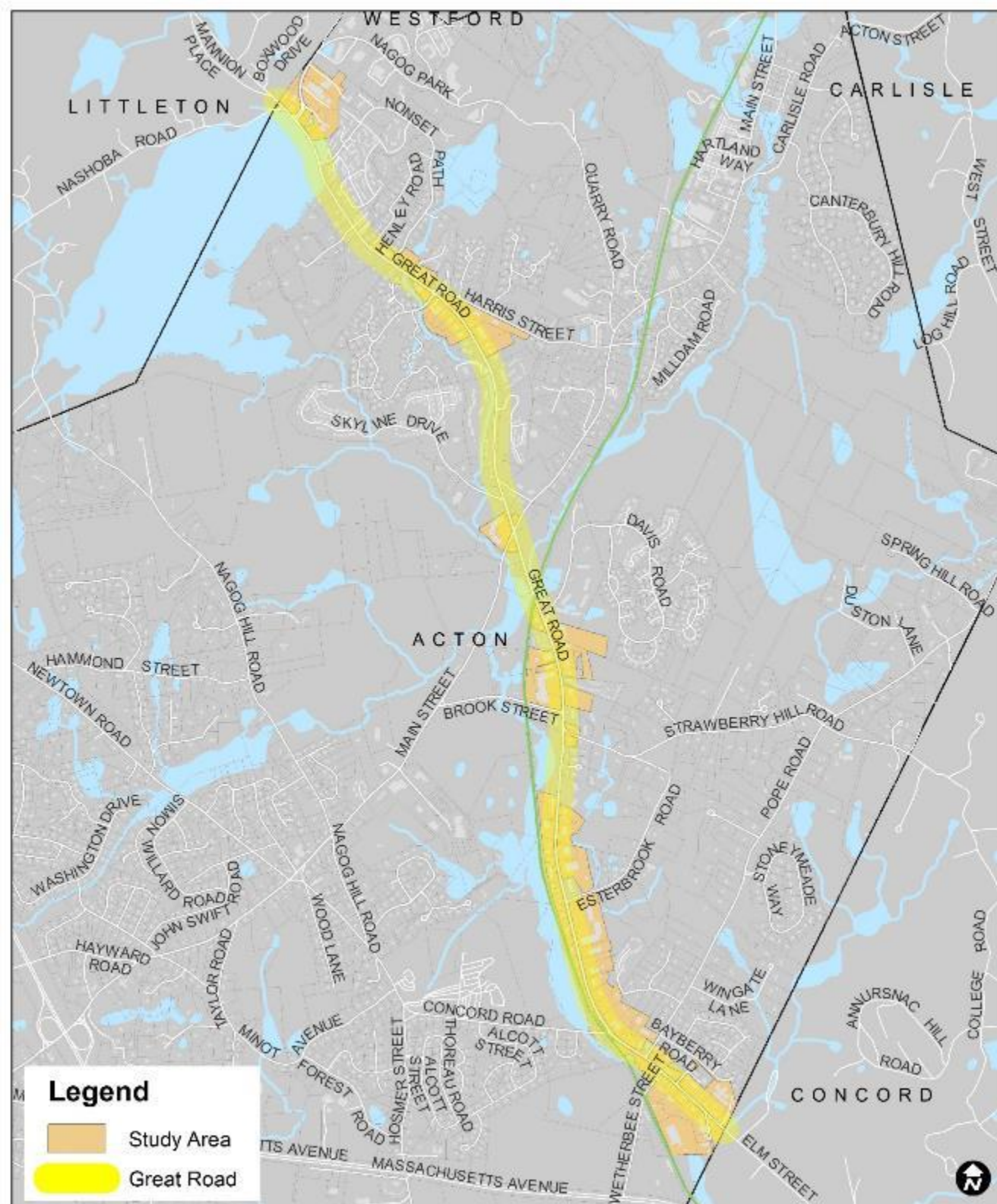


## Goals

# Local Rapid Recovery Plan

PHASES		GOALS
Phase I: Diagnostic and Business Surveys	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collect baseline diagnostic data</li><li>• Engage stakeholders to understand COVID impacts and district concerns</li><li>• Provide an overview of on-the-ground conditions within the Study Area</li></ul>
Phase II: Project Recommendations	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consult key stakeholders on priority projects</li><li>• Refine design of projects with Subject Matter Experts</li><li>• Develop final list of projects</li></ul>
Phase III: Plans	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create draft of Rapid Recovery Plan</li><li>• Gather community feedback on draft Plan and Project Recommendations</li><li>• Finalize Plan for submission to commonwealth</li></ul>





# Study Area



# Phase I Diagnostic Category

Consumer Base:

- Who are the customers?
- What are their preferences and needs?

# Data Collection Analysis

## District Demographics

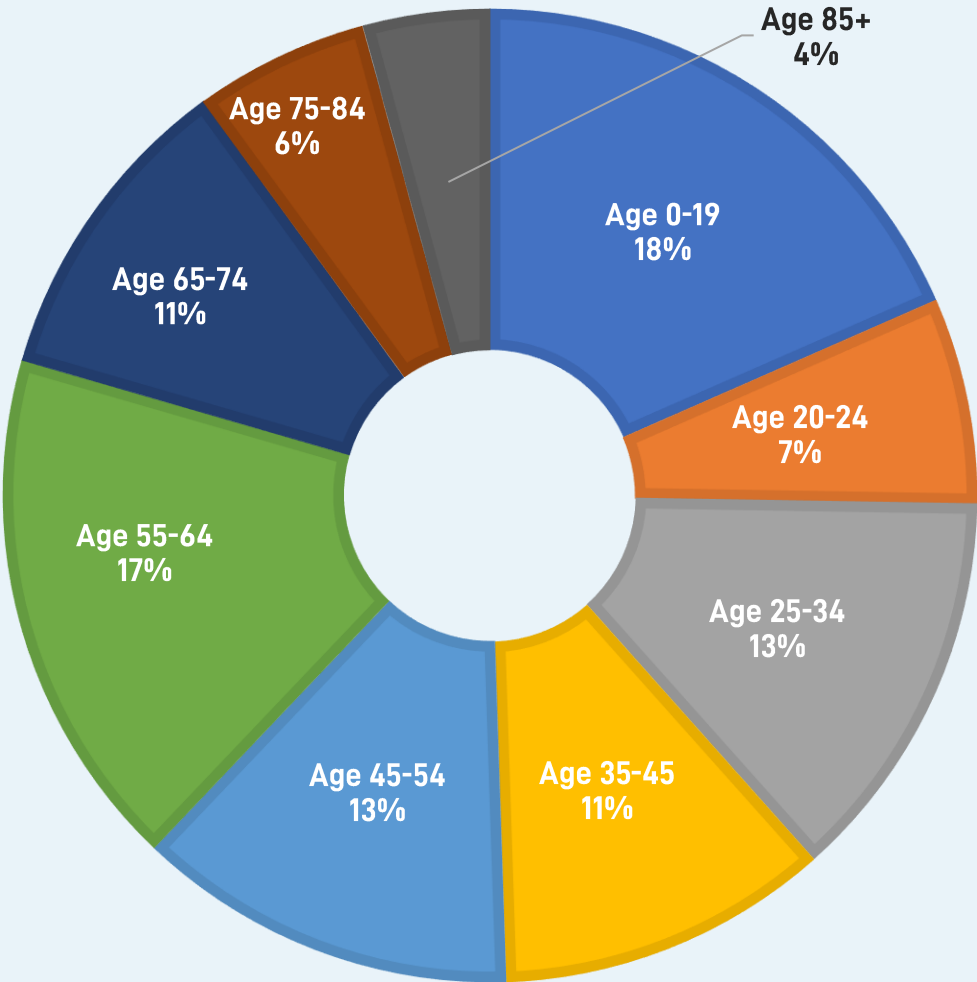


	Study Area	Whole Town
Total Resident Population	188	23,120
Median Household Income	\$110,368	\$145,150
Median Age	46	43.8
Median Household Size	1.7	2.7

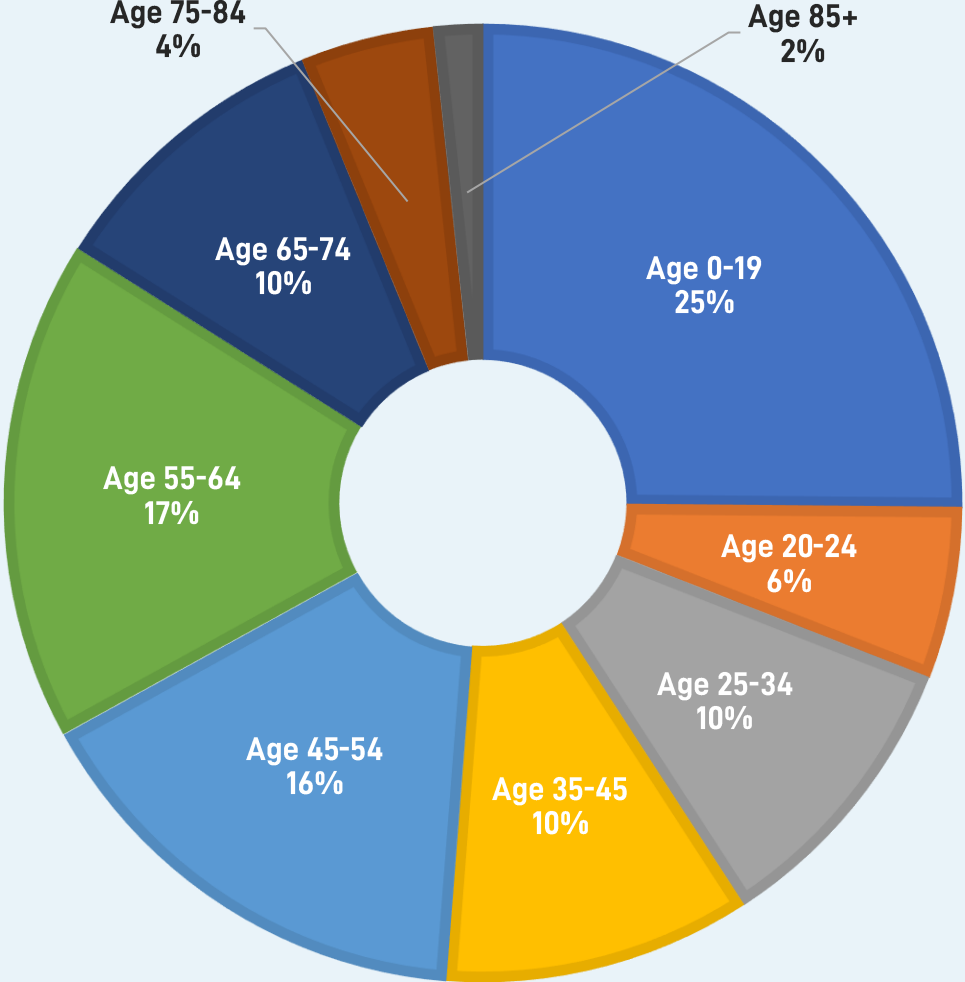
Population By Age Distribution



STUDY AREA



WHOLE TOWN



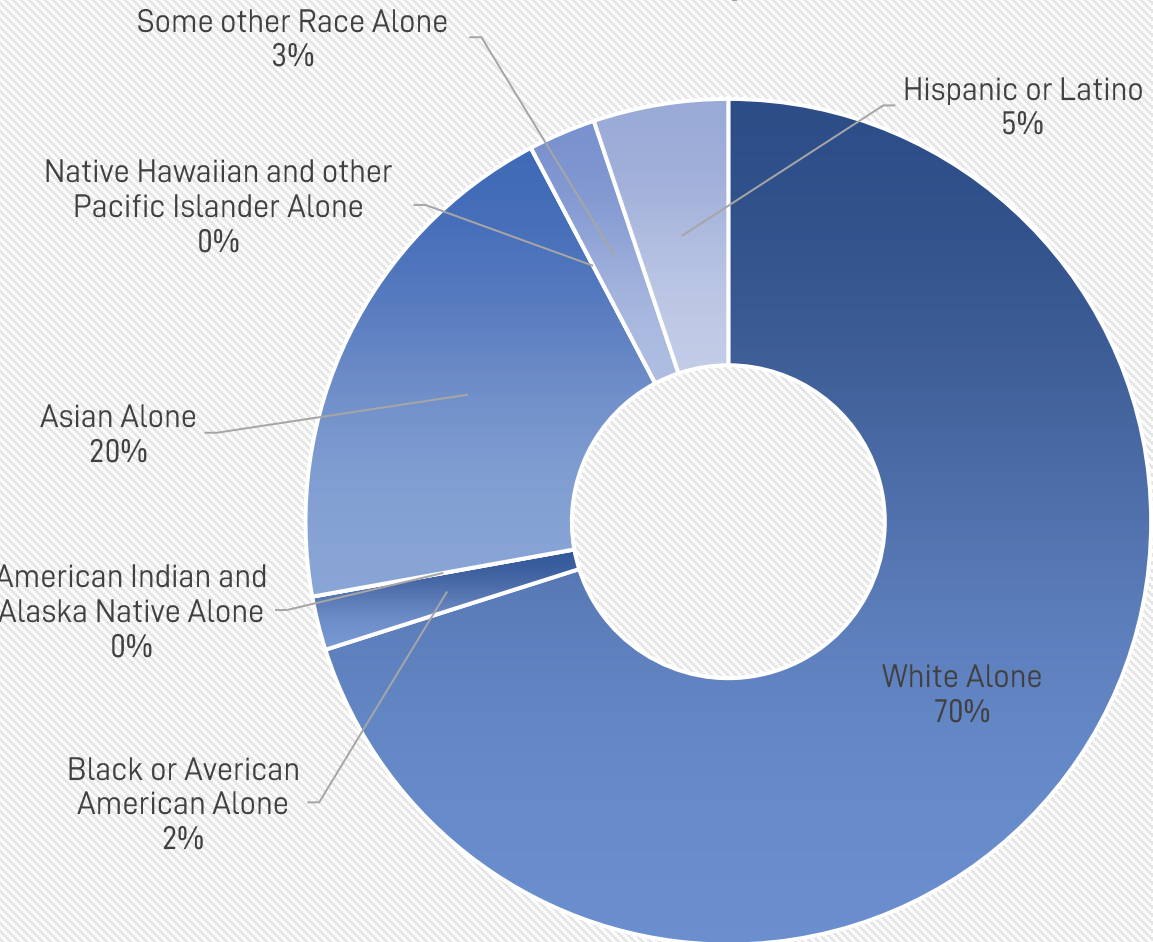


# Data Collection Analysis



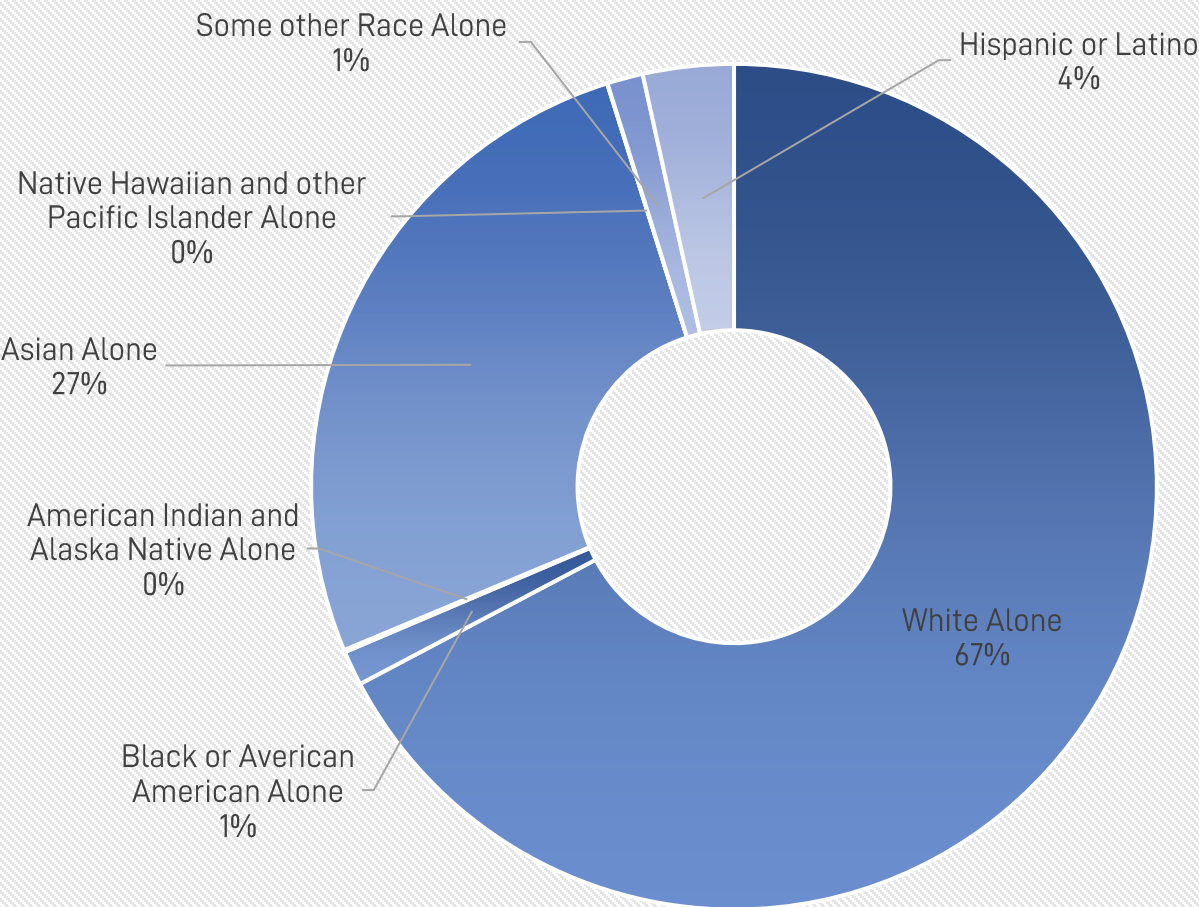
## Population By Race/Ethnicity

Study Area



Acton, MA

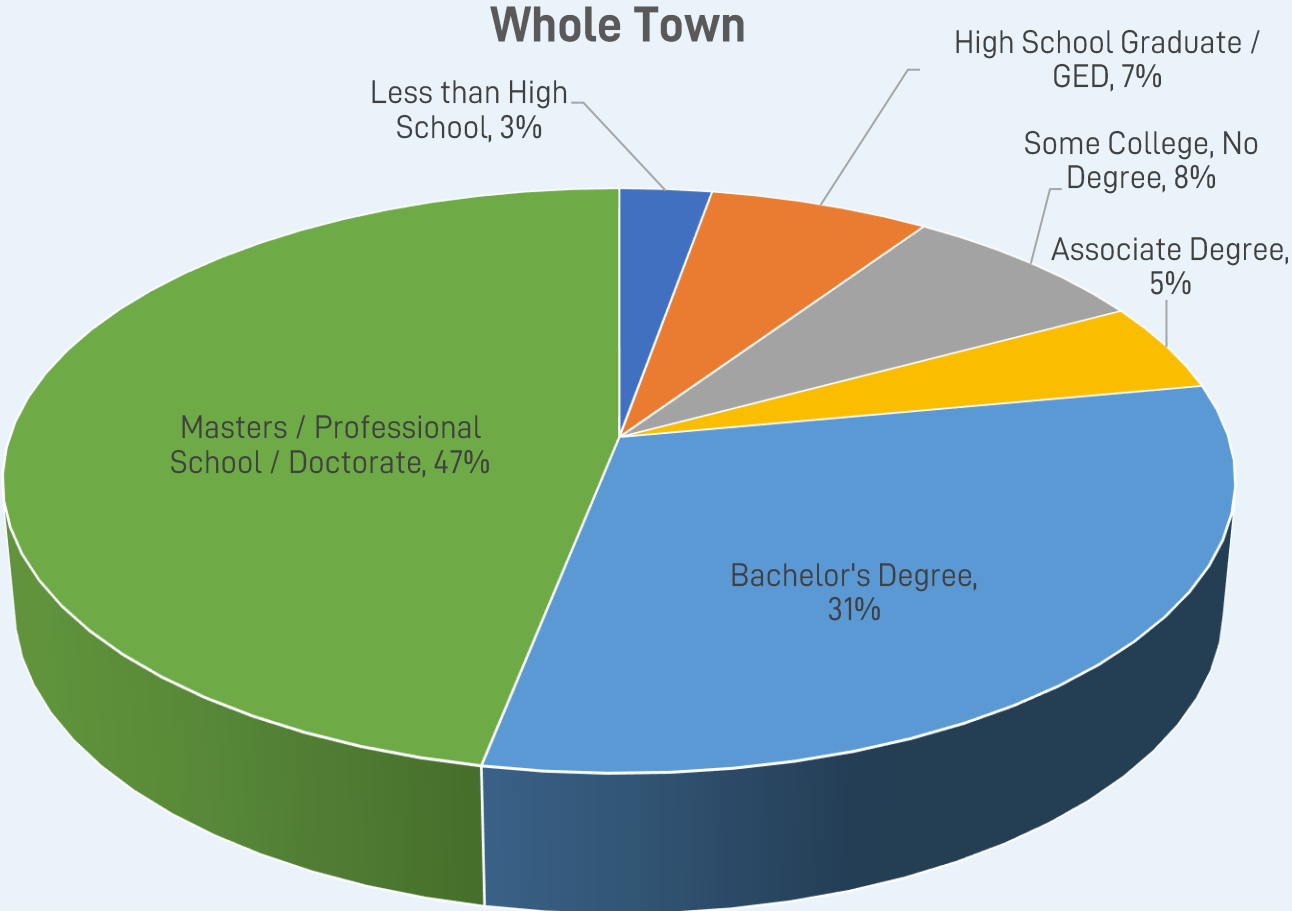
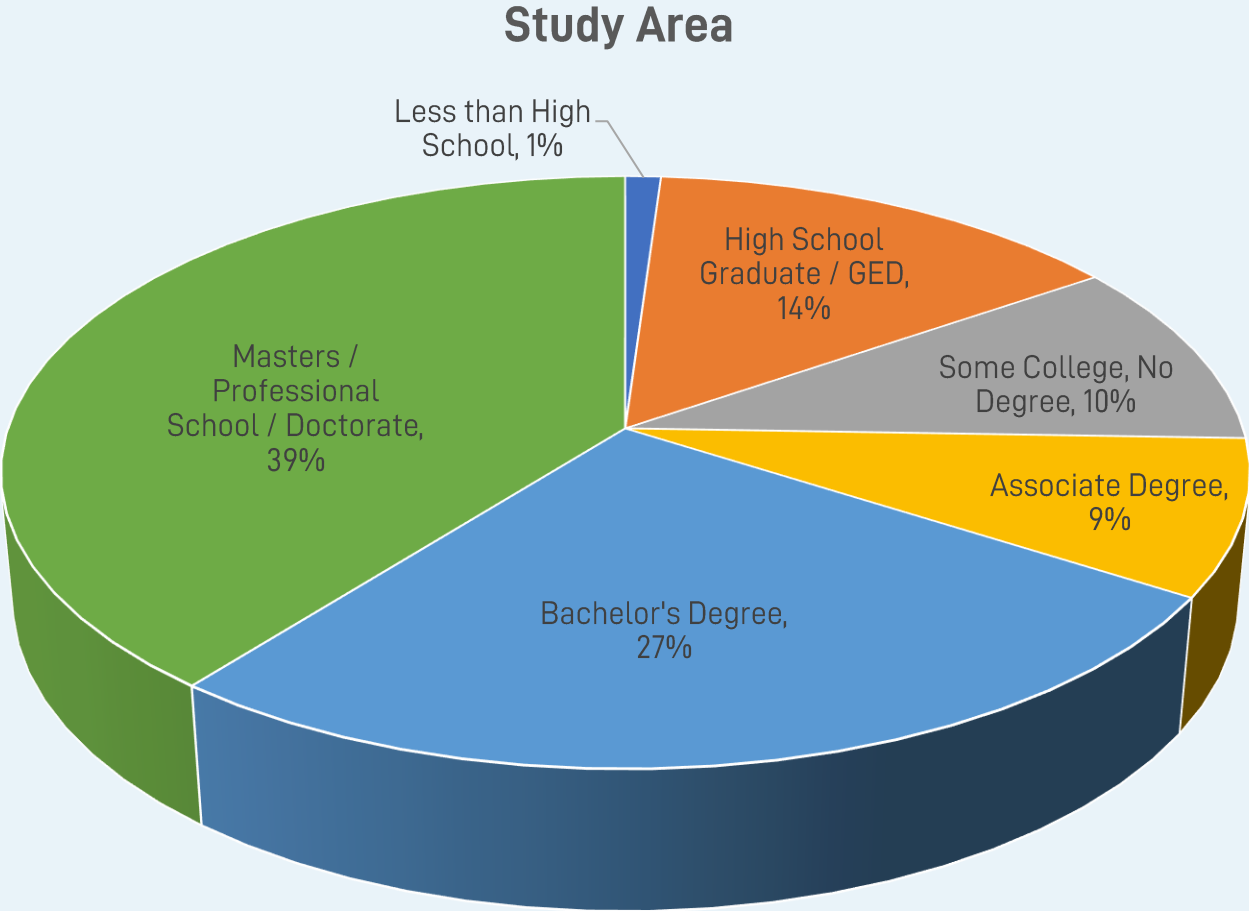
Whole Town







Population by Education Attainment





# Phase 1

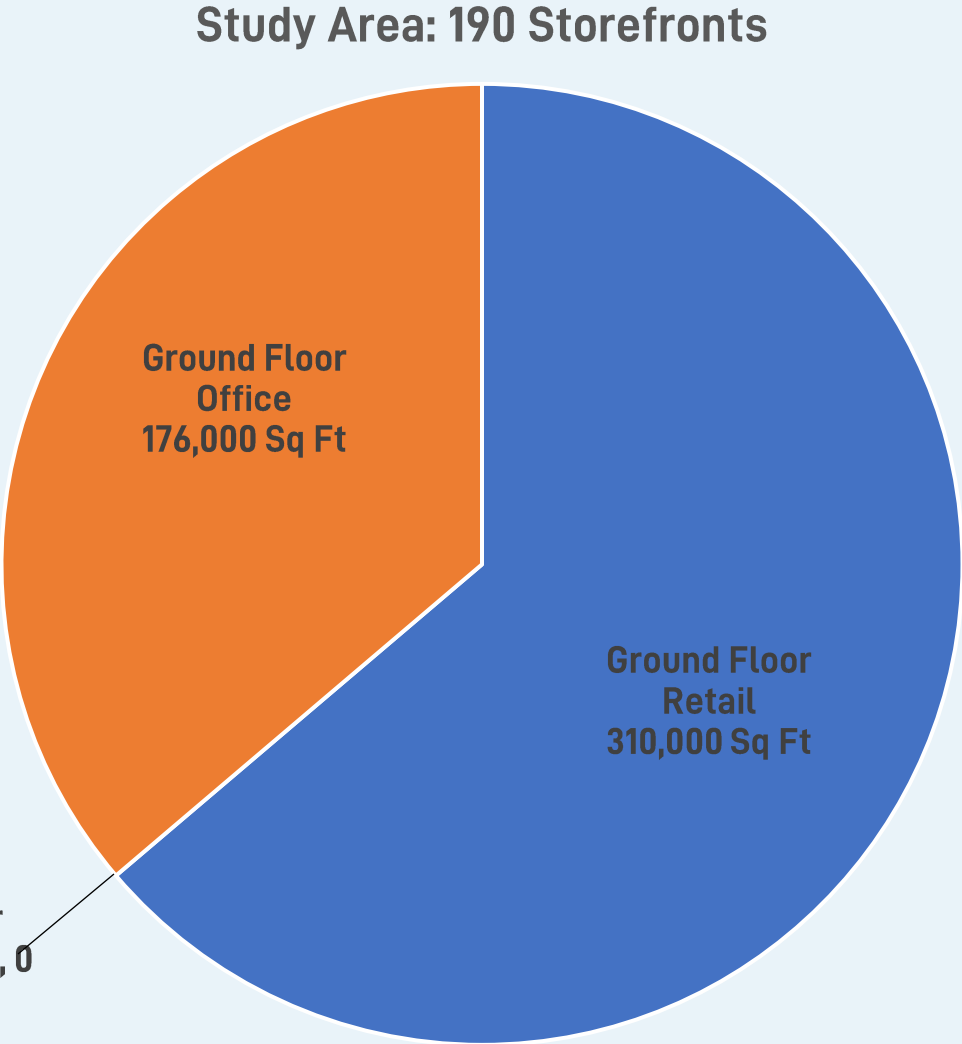
## Diagnostic Category

### Business Environment:

- What are impacts of COVID-19 on businesses?
- Is there an anchor, destination, or mix of businesses driving the local economy?
- How well does the business mix meet customer groups?



Storefronts



# Massachusetts DHCD Rapid Recovery Plan Program

## BUSINESS SURVEY REPORT

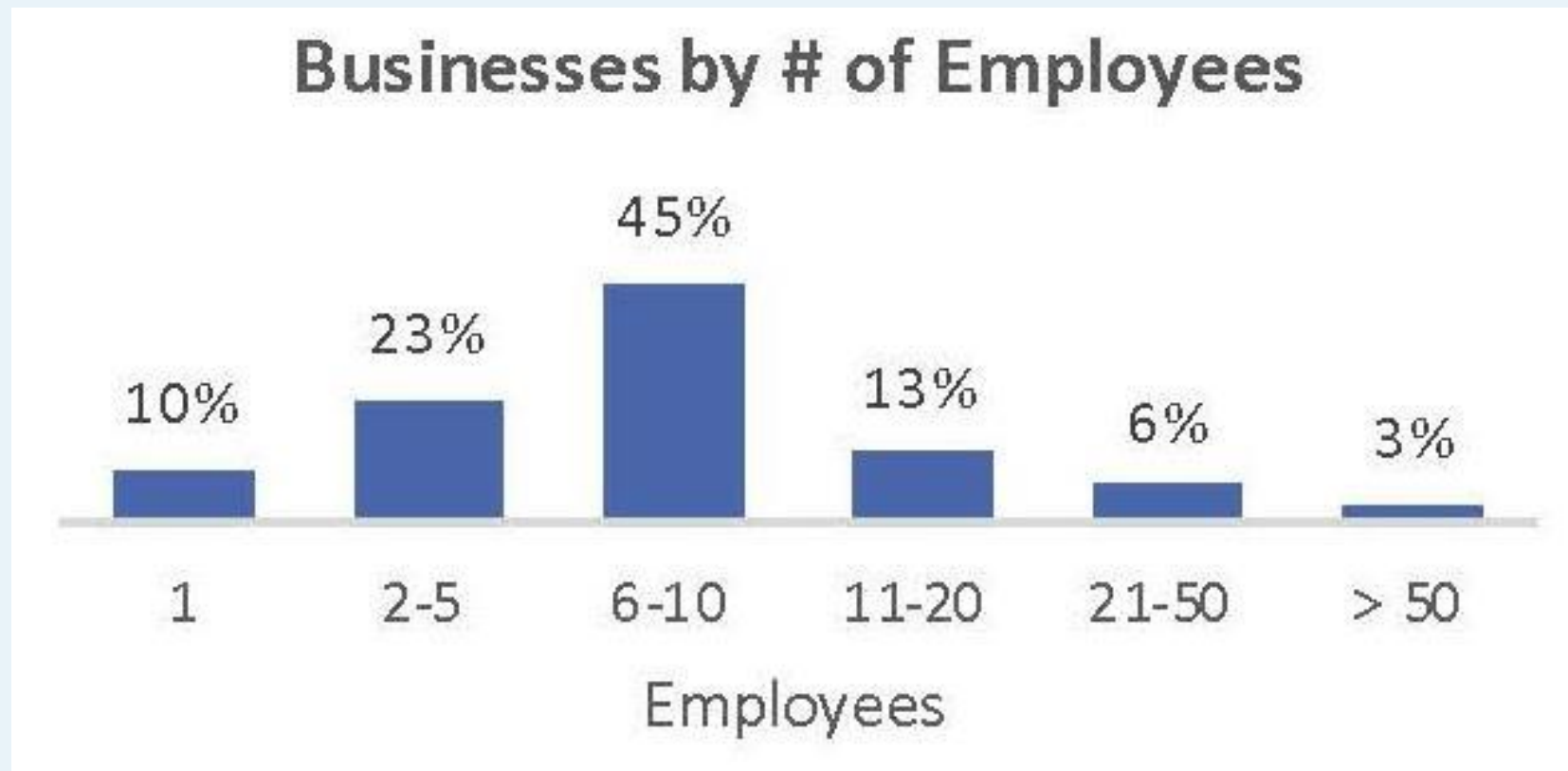


- Results of a business survey conducted during March and April of 2021
- Survey was launched by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- To help communities develop Rapid Recovery Plans for downtowns and commercial districts
- Directed to owners or other appropriate representatives of business establishments located in the targeted commercial area

## Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

### Business Characteristics - Business Size

- **33% of businesses are micro-enterprises (<= 5 employees)**
- **78% of businesses have less than 10 employees**

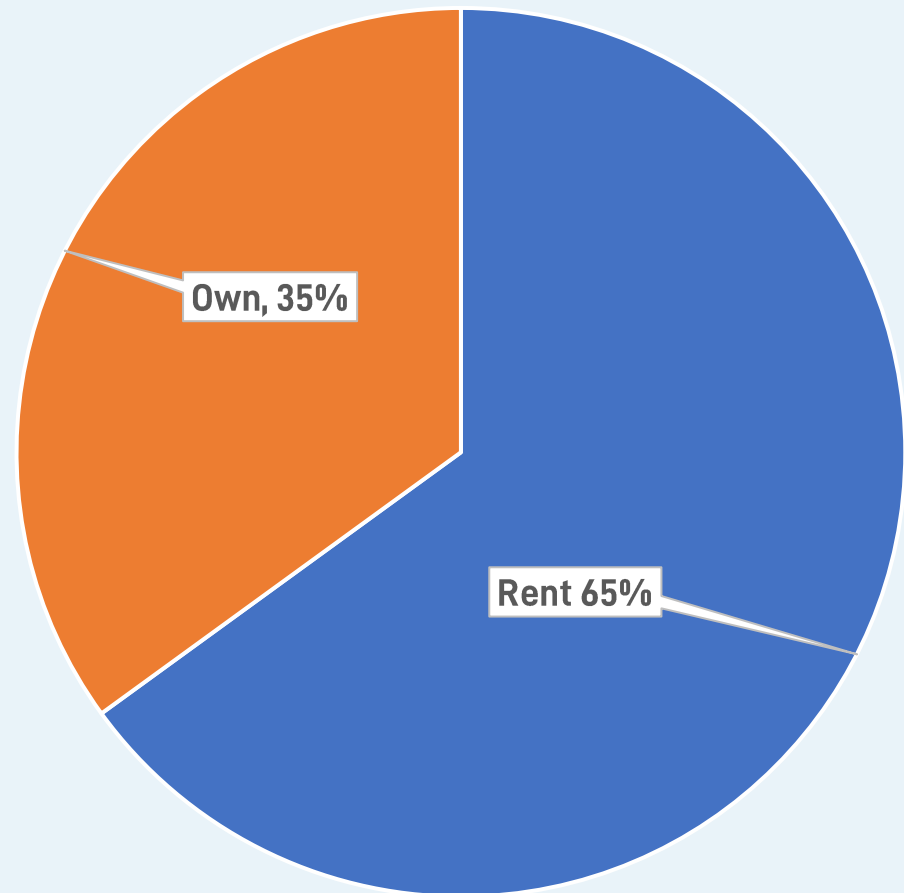


## Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

### Business Characteristics - Business Tenure

- **65% of businesses rent their space**

Owner VS Renter





# Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

## Business Characteristics - Business Type

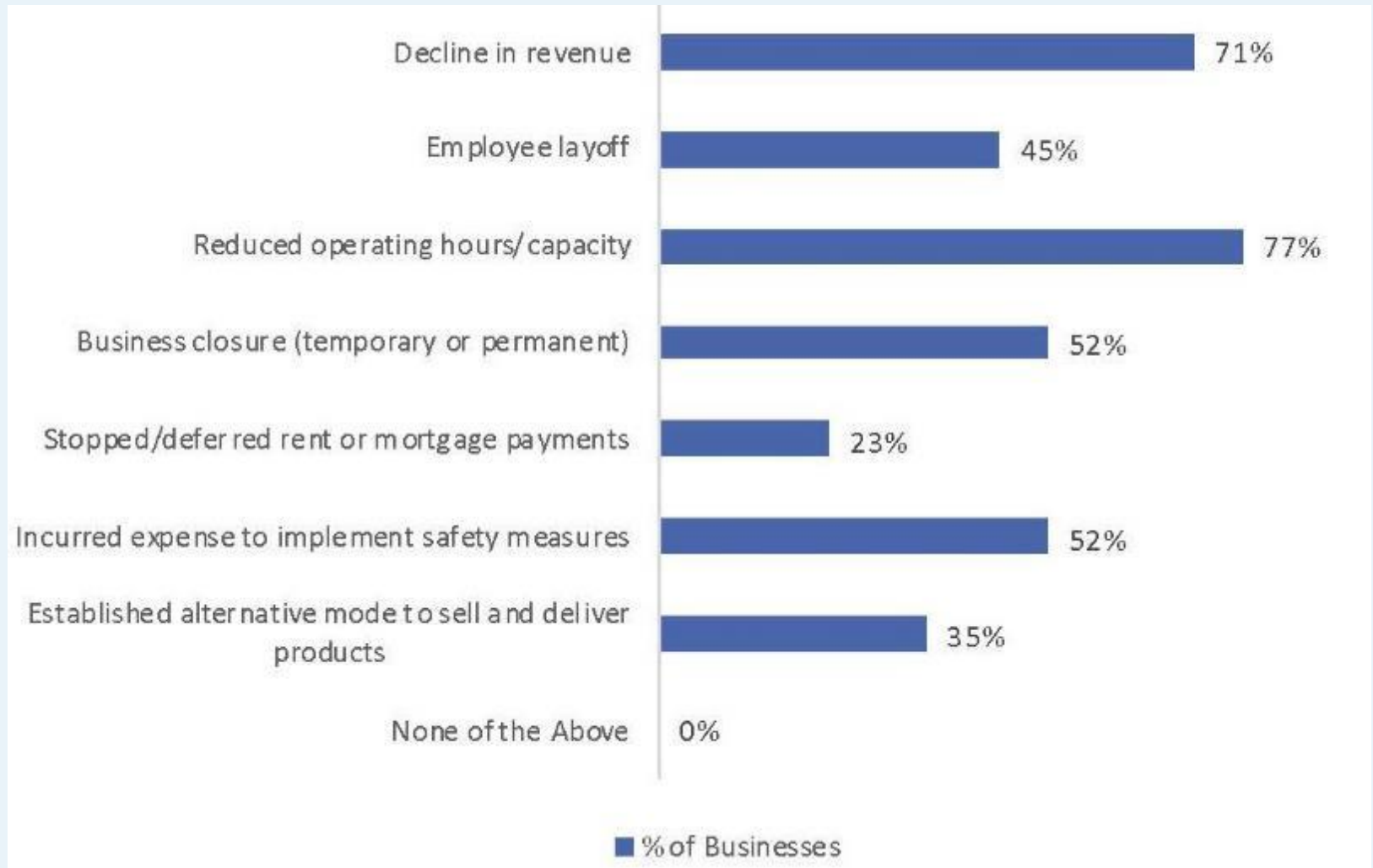


## Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

### Reported Impacts

- **100% of Businesses reported being impacted by COVID**

### COVID Impacts Reported by Businesses

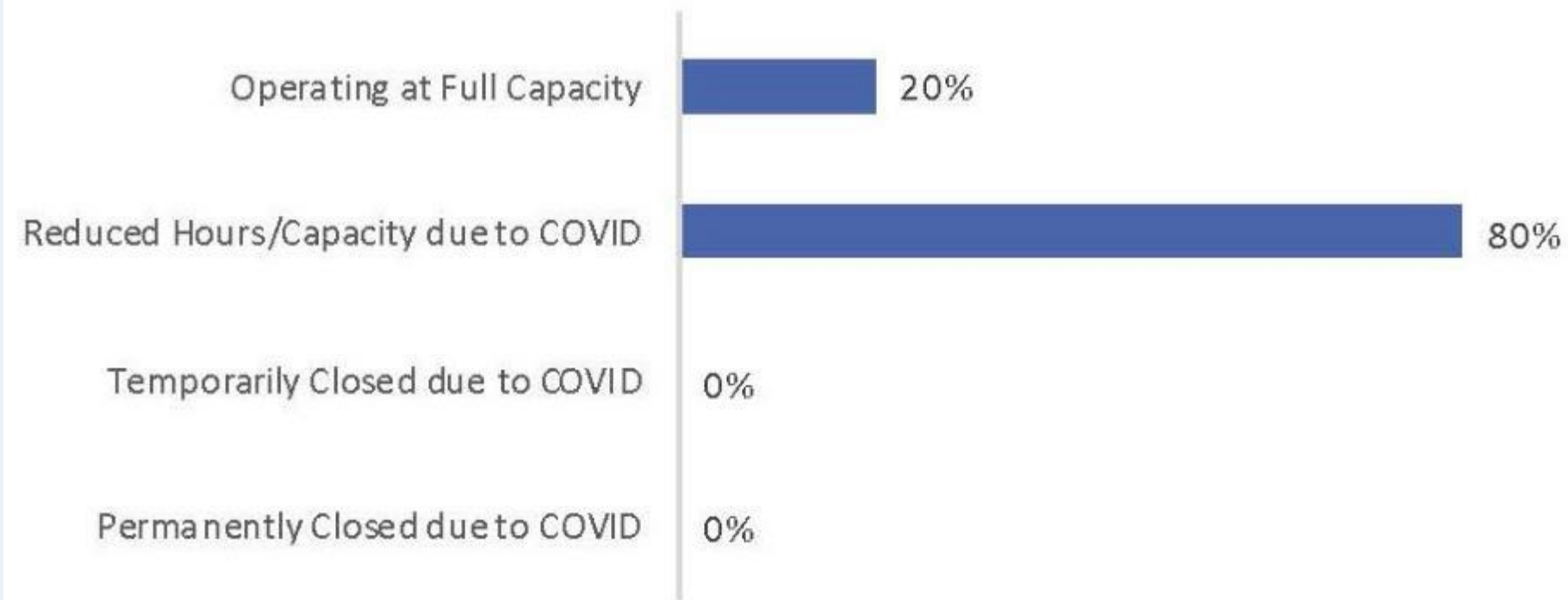


## Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

### Operating Status

- At the time of the survey, 80% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours / capacity or closed

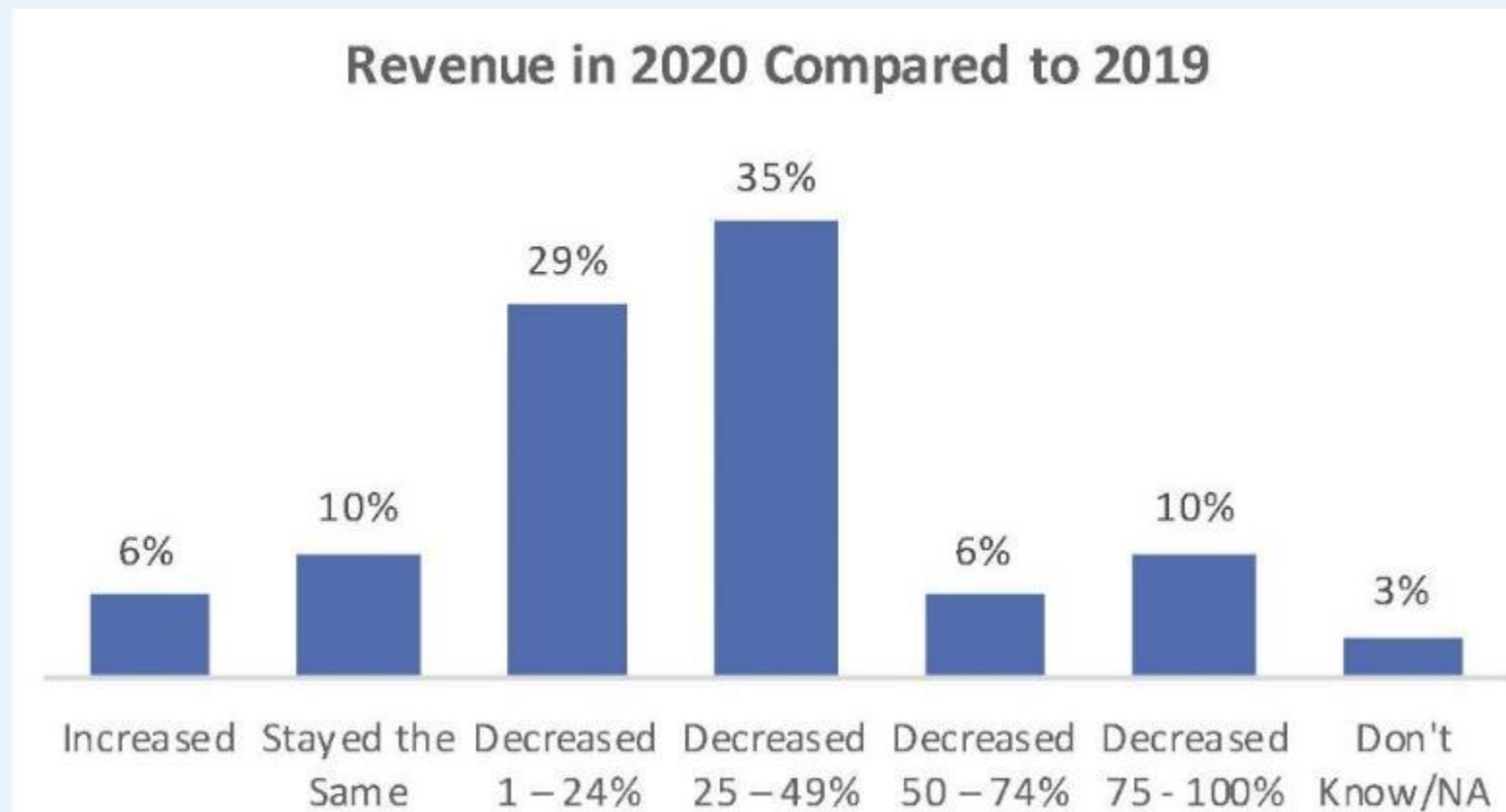
#### Current Operating Status of Businesses (March/April 2021)



## Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

### Decline in Business Revenue

- **80% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than in 2019**
- **For 51% of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more**



## Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

### Less Foot Traffic in Commercial Area

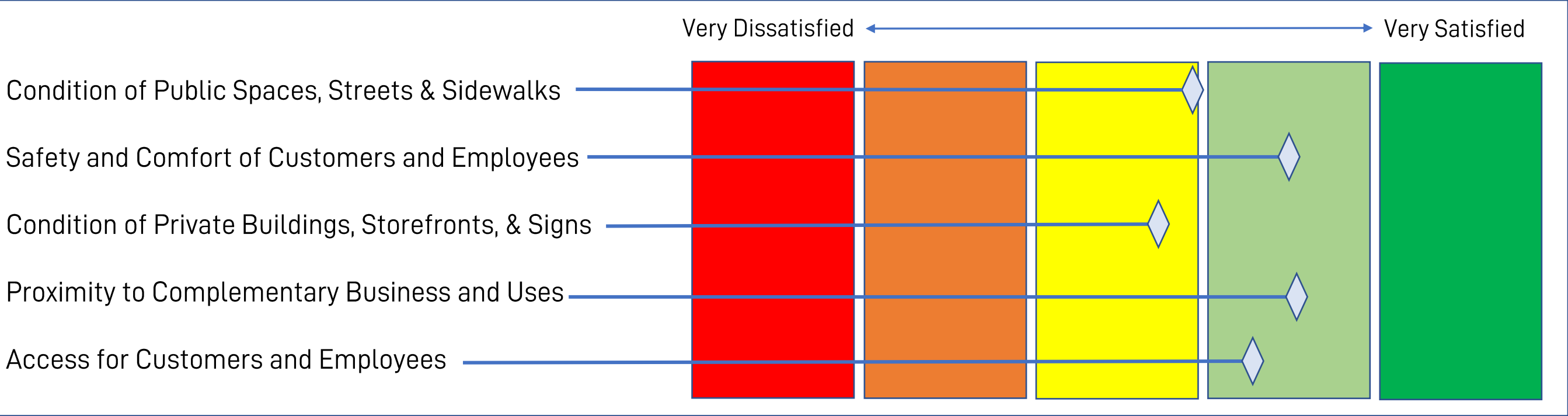
- **75% of businesses had less on-site customers in January/February of 2021 than before COVID**
- **49% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more**



# Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

## Business Satisfaction with Commercial District

The charts below illustrate the average satisfaction rating among respondents regarding various elements.

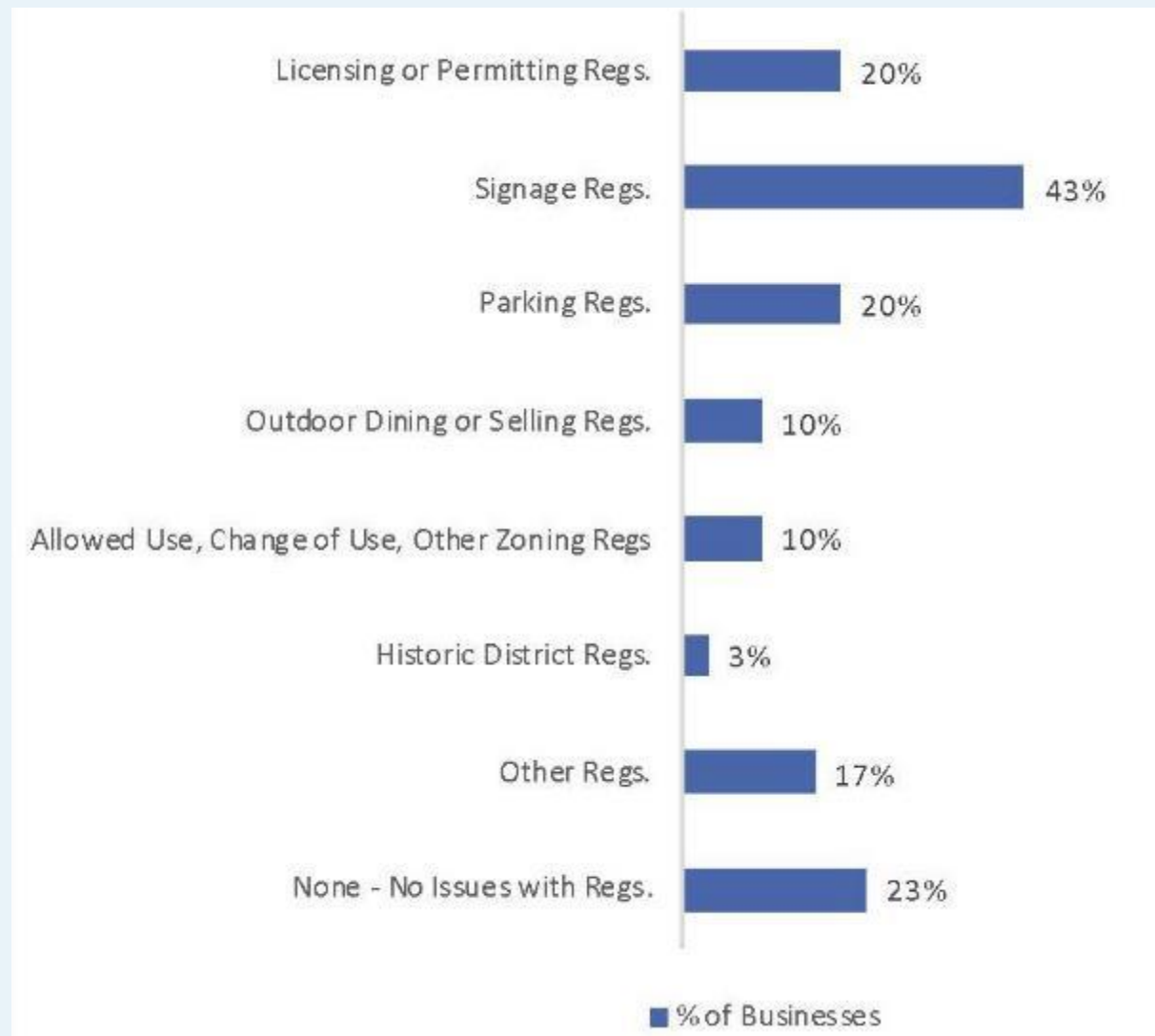




## Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

### Business Satisfaction with Commercial District - Regulatory Environment

- **77% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation**

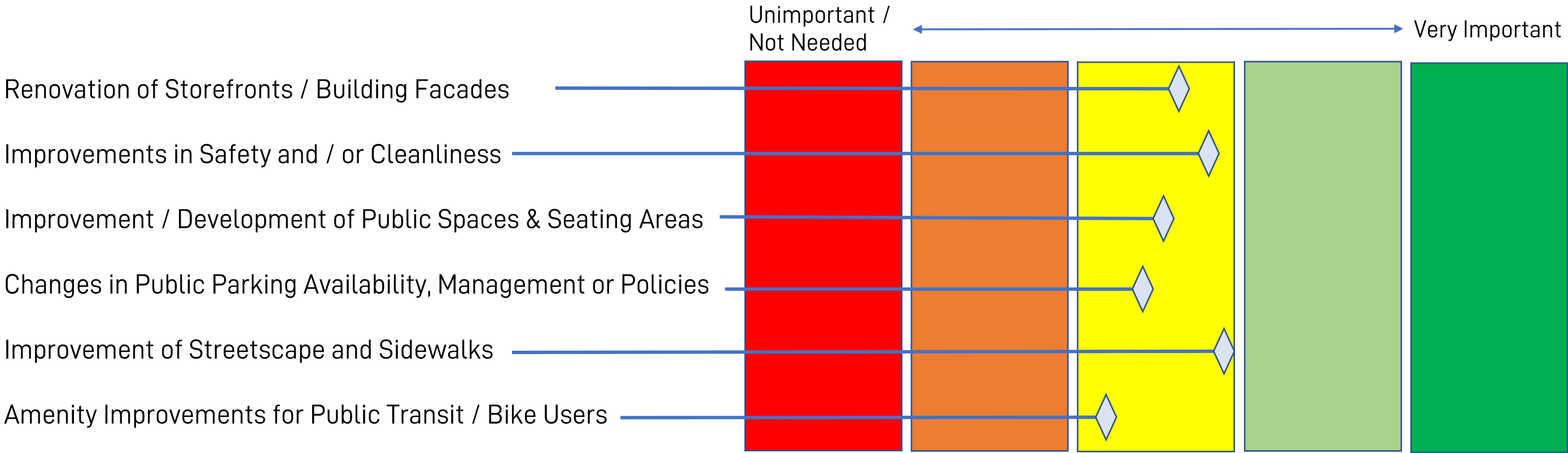


# Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

## Business Input Related to Possible Strategies

- Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access

The charts below illustrate the average satisfaction rating among respondents regarding various strategies.

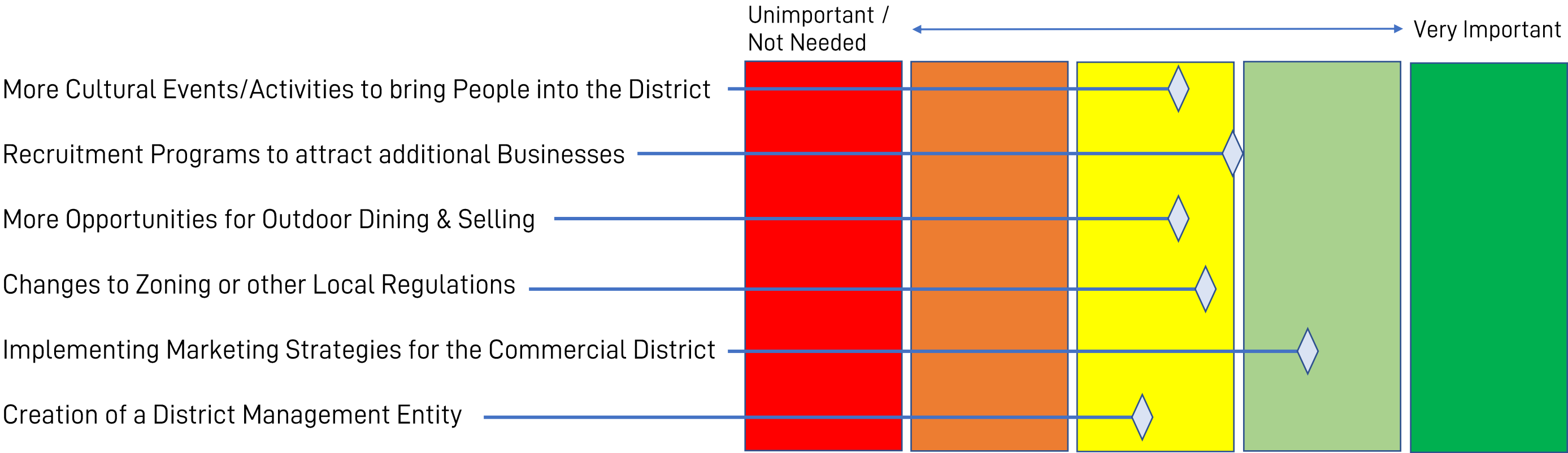


## Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

### Business Input Related to Possible Strategies

- **Attraction / Retention of Customers and Businesses**

The charts below illustrate the average satisfaction rating among respondents regarding various strategies.



## Great Road Commercial Corridor: 31 Responses

### Business Input Related to Possible Strategies - Business Support

- **73% of businesses expressed interest in receiving assistance**





PHYSICAL  
ENVIRONMENT



# Phase 1

## Diagnostic Category

### Physical Environment:

- How is the physical environment meeting the needs of businesses?
- What are the challenges and opportunities:
  - Public Realm
  - Private Realm
  - Access + Visibility



# Data Collection Analysis

## Private Realm



Feature Grading	Most Positive			Least Positive
	A -	B -	C -	
Window				B
Outdoor Display/Dining				NA/FAIL
Signage				B
Awning				C
Lighting				B
Façade				B





# Physical Environment: Private Realm

SCORING RUBRIC				
ELEMENT	A	B	C	FAIL / NA
<b>Windows</b> <i>Windows are maintained and appear 70% transparent</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>Storefronts are boarded up or windows have no transparency</i>
<b>Outdoor Display / Dining</b> <i>Attractive window displays / spillover restaurant &amp; retail activity on sidewalks</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>There is no spillover retail / restaurant activity in the district</i>
<b>Signage</b> <i>Storefront signage reflects the unique brand identity of tenants and can be easily seen from a distance</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>Storefronts in the study area do not have signage</i>
<b>Awning</b> <i>Awnings are retractable, well-designed, maintained, and clean</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>Storefronts in the study area are not equipped with awnings</i>
<b>Façade</b> <i>Facades should be attractive, well-maintained, and not require any major structural upgrades</i>	< 75%	<i>At least a few require major upgrades</i>	> 25%	<i>Nearly all properties in the study area require significant façade improvements</i>
<b>Lighting</b> <i>Interior storefront lighting after business hours improves the sidewalk lighting conditions</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>Nearly all storefronts in the study area are shuttered and dark</i>

# Data Collection Analysis

## Public Realm



Feature Grading	Most Positive			Least Positive	
	A-	B-	C-	NA/FAIL	
Sidewalks					B
Street Trees - Benches					NA/FAIL
Lighting					NA/FAIL
Wayfinding - Signage					NA/FAIL
Roadbed - Crosswalks					B



# Physical Environment: Public Realm

SCORING RUBRIC				
ELEMENT	A	B	C	FAIL / NA
<b>Sidewalks</b> <i>Sidewalks are clean, well-maintained and accessible to multiple users across different ages and abilities</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	> 25%	<i>There are no sidewalks</i>
<b>Street Trees and Benches</b> <i>Street trees and benches are readily available and offer shade and offer opportunities to rest and socialize</i>	<i>Street trees and benches are readily available throughout out the project area</i>	<i>Street trees and benches have not been cleaned and require other improvements</i>	<i>Limited availability of street trees and benches results in an uncomfortable pedestrian experience</i>	<i>There are no street trees and benches</i>
<b>Lighting</b> <i>Street lighting improves pedestrian and motorist safety as well as highlights the history and identity of an area</i>	< 75%	+/- 50%	<i>Street lighting on the primary street in the study area does not support pedestrian visibility and safety</i>	<i>There is no street lighting</i>
<b>Wayfinding / Signage</b> <i>Cohesive wayfinding systems offer visual cues for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as direct motorists where to park and walk</i>	< 75%	<i>Wayfinding is primarily intended for motorists, little to no signage for pedestrians and bicyclists</i>	<i>Limited or no signage</i>	<i>There is no wayfinding / signage</i>
<b>Roadbed and Crosswalks</b> <i>Roads are well-maintained to ensure motorist and pedestrian safety and are balanced to the needs of different users</i>	< 75%	<i>At least a few require major upgrades</i>	> 25%	<i>The study area is not connected with major roads</i>



## Existing Conditions

- Store fronts
- Window decorations
- Outdoor planters
- Lighting
- Limited outdoor seating (private)





## Existing Conditions

- Plaza / strip mall
- Pockets of retail / commercial use along Great Road



## Existing Conditions

- Outdoor signage advertising businesses





## Existing Conditions

- Temporary / road-side signage advertising businesses
- Typically only allowed 45 days per year / signage regulations loosened due to COVID





## Existing Conditions

- ADA Accessibility
- Sidewalks / connectivity





ADMIN  
CAPACITY

# Phase 1 Diagnostic Category

## Administrative Capacity:

- Who are the stewards of the study area?
- Are there adequate resources?
- Are regulatory, zoning, or permitting processes impediments to businesses?



ADMIN  
CAPACITY

# Phase 1 Diagnostic Category

## Administrative Capacity:

- Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce (8 towns)
- Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail





## SUMMARY



# What We Have Heard from Businesses





## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT



# Businesses Least Satisfied with

- Condition of private buildings, store fronts, and signs

## Improvement Strategies for Physical Environment

- Improvements of Streetscape and Sidewalks
- Improvements in Safety / Cleanliness



# Regulations Pose an Obstacle to Business Operation:

- Signage Regulations: 43%

## Improvement Strategies to Attract and Retain Customers

- Recruitment program to attract businesses
- Marketing strategies





**BUSINESS  
ENVIRONMENT**

# Additional Strategies

- Bike Path – wayfinding / promote businesses
- Sidewalk gaps
- Business Improvement District (70% of owners required)
- Investigate feasibility of sewers
- Vacant storefront program match



## COMMENTS



# Comments

# Next Steps:

- Gather & summarize additional information
- Develop recommendations
- Discuss with town staff
- Finalize plan and recommendations
- Final presentation: July - August
- Submit plan to DHCD: August



# Thank You!

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# Appendix

## APPENDIX C - Select Board Presentation

# Local Rapid Recovery Plan Impacts of COVID-19

Acton, MA  
Great Road Commercial Corridor  
Steering Committee Update Meeting  
August 19, 2021



## Agenda

# Today's Meeting – 10:00-11:00AM

1. Introductions
2. Project Team | Schedule + Goals
3. Acton – Great Road Study Area
4. Recommended Projects
5. Q & A | Comments
6. Next Steps

## **Project Team**

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### BETA Group

**Jeff Maxtutis**

- Plan Facilitator

**Charlie Creagh**

- Project Planner

### Town of Acton

**Kristen Guichard, AICP**

- Planning Director / Zoning  
Enforcement Officer

**Kaila Sauer**

- Assistant Planner



## Goals

# Local Rapid Recovery Plan

## PHASES

## GOALS

### ***COMPLETE***

#### **Phase I: Diagnostic and Business Surveys**



- Collect baseline diagnostic data
- Engage stakeholders to understand COVID impacts and district concerns
- Provide an overview of on-the-ground conditions within the Study Area

### ***ONGOING***

#### **Phase II: Project Recommendations**



- Consult key stakeholders on priority projects
- Refine design of projects with Subject Matter Experts
- Develop final list of projects

### ***AUGUST-OCTOBER***

#### **Phase III: Plans**



- Create draft of Rapid Recovery Plan
- Gather community feedback on draft Plan and Project Recommendations
- Finalize Plan for submission to commonwealth



**BUSINESS  
ENVIRONMENT**

# Regulations Pose an Obstacle to Business Operation

- Signage Regulations: 43%

## Improvement Strategies to Attract and Retain Customers

- Recruitment program to attract businesses
- Marketing strategies

## Additional Strategies

- Bike Path – wayfinding / promote businesses
- Sidewalk gaps
- Business Improvement District (70% of owners required)
- Investigate feasibility of sewers
- Vacant storefront program match



# Recommended Projects



# 1. Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Wayfinding Signage

## Observations:

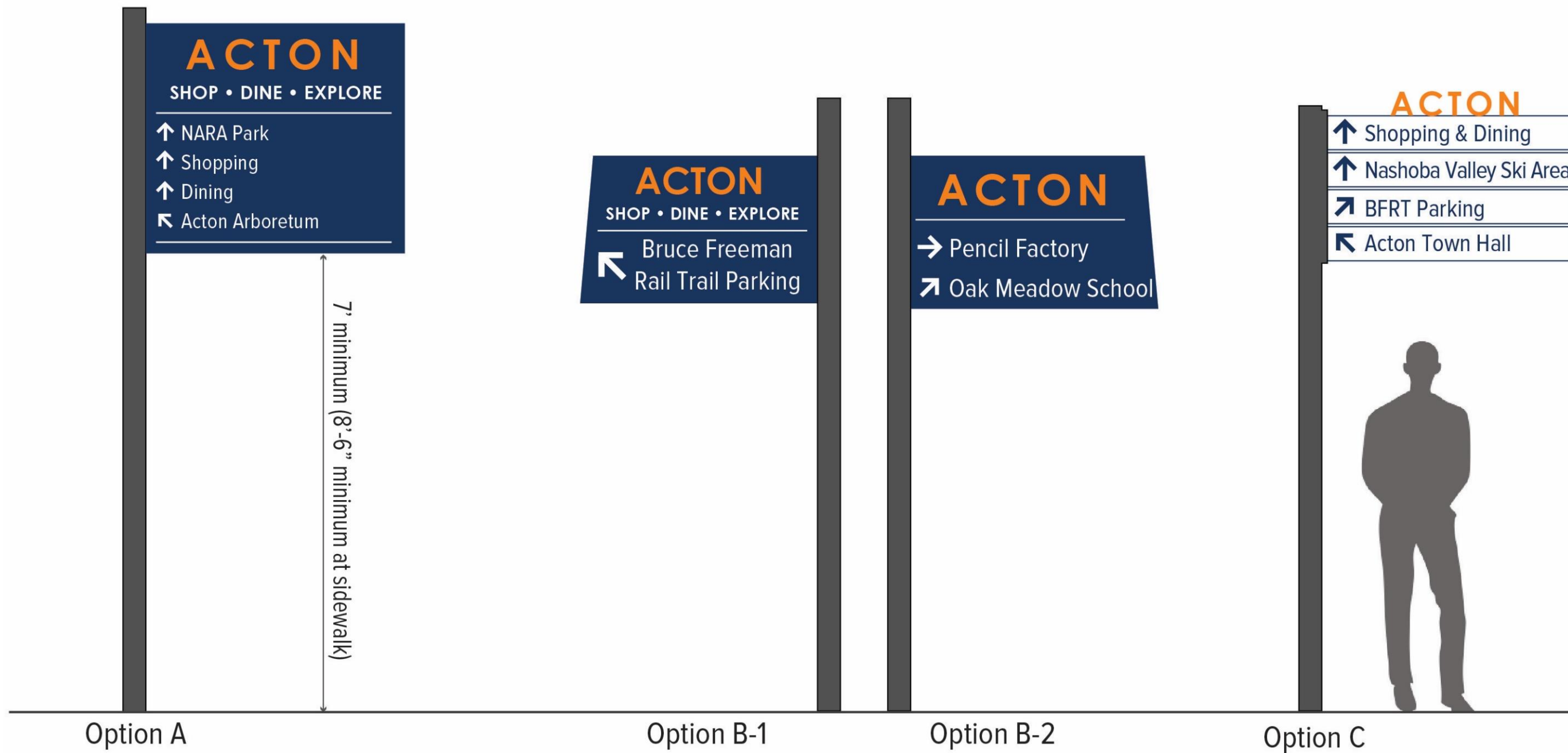
- There is a strong desire to create signage and formal connections from BFRT trail to Great Road businesses

## Recommendations:

- Generate wayfinding family signage options
- Solicit public feedback and input on sign choices and locations
- Potentially utilize ARPA money for sign installation
- SME: Neighborways



Signage indicating the proximity of Great Road businesses would encourage trail users to shop at local businesses





## 2. Great Road Wayfinding Signage + Placemaking

### Observations:

- Signage along Great Road would reinforce the area as a commercial district that is open for business

### Recommendations:

- Develop a brand for the Great Road corridor
- Generate wayfinding family signage options, consider pole banners
- Solicit public feedback and input on sign choices and locations
- Potentially utilize ARPA money for sign installation
- SME: Neighborways



Wayfinding and placemaking signage along Great Road would reinforce the area as a commercial / retail destination



# 3. Shared Marketing Campaign

## Observations:

- Strong desire indicated in the LRRP business owner survey for a Great Road business marketing campaign

## Recommendations:

- Work in tandem with the Chamber of Commerce and other interested groups to offer shared marketing resources and workshops
- Encourage cross-marketing
- SME: Mondoforma



Folks attending a future cooking class at Kitchen Outfitters could receive a coupon for a discount at Blackbird Café, for example



## 4. Expand the Municipal Sewer System

### Observations:

- Very strong interest by business owners and property owners to increase sewer capacity to allow for other uses (restaurant, gym)

### Recommendations:

- Study use of ARPA and MassWorks funding for possible sewer infrastructure expansion
- Perform critical public outreach, solicit input
- Forecast and share cost information
- Garner support from public officials, business owners
- SME: Innes Associates



The empty storefront pictured here at Brookside Shops in Acton is limited in future uses due to site septic requirements



## COMMENTS



# Comments

# Next Steps:

- SME Meetings
- Finalize recommendations
- Discuss with town staff
- Finalize plan and recommendations
- Final presentation: September
- Submit plan to DHCD: October 8th



# Three SME Meetings:

1) Wednesday, August 25<sup>th</sup> @ 11:00am with Neighborways

- Discuss wayfinding along BRFT and along Great Road and placemaking at trail wayside behind Donelan's

2) Date To Be Determined

- Sewer expansion with Innes Associates

3) Date To Be Determined

- Shared Marketing with Mondoforo

# Thank You!

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# Appendix

## APPENDIX D - Shared Marketing - Mondofoa Subject Matter Expert

**PROJECT: Acton Shared Marketing Campaign**

**COMMUNITY:** Acton, MA – Great Road Corridor

**PLAN FACILITATOR:** BETA Group

**SME:** Mondoforma (Cepheid Solutions Inc.)

**Project Overview:** The Town Planner and the Chamber of Commerce have identified the goals of expanding web-based presence and sales, and to cross-market businesses in support of the Great Road Corridor. Within this community, 53% of business survey responders expressed interest in participating in a shared marketing / advertising program in Acton.

**Additional factors:** The impact of the pandemic, combined with changing consumer behavior, competitive business operational efficiencies, and physical space utilization dynamics have had negative consequences for many small businesses and the existing retail centers in the Great Road Corridor. The net impact, if unaddressed, could be a potential threat to the business community and the local economy.

Advances in technology and its utilization can not only help to address these short-term challenges, but can also help the community to be better positioned for a future in which greater reliance on and incorporation of digital technologies will be endemic. It is in our interest to leverage the capabilities of a “digital downtown”, to recover from the impacts of the pandemic and to prepare for an increasingly competitive future economy in which being “online” will be a minimum requirement for all competitive businesses and communities.

**Solution Guidelines:** As with any project, there are some desired design features, specifications, and limitations that are identified as being important to any proposed solutions. Among these are:

- Leverage internet technologies to encourage local sales
- Enhance local businesses visibility
- Increase community awareness and cross-selling opportunities
- Facilitate events promotion and branding
- Facilitate wayfinding in the community
- Encourage creative space utilization
- Low-moderate cost to create
- Low-moderate cost to maintain
- Low-moderate manpower requirements
- Minimize ownership complexities
- Leverage ecommerce and online selling models and tools

**Approach:** Our initial thoughts were focused on retail shopping and marketing & messaging capability. But we recognized that these tools and resources, when combined with other readily available tools, can address many of the pandemic-related consequences while creating significant long-term value for the community. We will also provide suggestions for other projects which could help the business community address the space utilization question and provide a meaningful contribution to Acton retail, but whose specific project details are beyond the scope of this consultation.

Perhaps the greatest threat to local retail is the increasing consumer reliance on online shopping. The convenience and product selection provided by the giant e-commerce websites makes it easy for shoppers to opt for online shopping as the first resort when looking for specific products. The net result is that products are purchased and shipped from 300 miles away, even when available in a local store. The solution is to create a local search enabled marketplace which combines all the collective product selection of the local brick & mortar retail businesses, and the ease and convenience of shopping online.

We also identified solutions to address the needs of the community to create awareness and engagement. To ensure that Acton will be a “digitally rich” community, with the supporting organization, processes, and tools to effectively deliver a social media function. And lastly, we identified an inexpensive approach to personal and professional education and tech-enrichment to encourage digital sophistication.

**Proposed Solutions:** We are proposing three distinct but mutually beneficial projects, each of which addresses a specific aspect of the goals discussed with BETA Group and Town representatives. Each project can be developed and run independently, but each will also benefit from their mutually reinforcing nature. The projects include:

**Local-Search enabled Multi-Vendor Marketplace** – Ecommerce sales, as a percentage of total retail, grew dramatically as a result of the pandemic. Consequently, local retailers without an online sales channel lost sales. Even those with an online store are at a disadvantage as they won’t typically have the product selection of large sophisticated ecommerce marketplaces. Our proposed project is to provide a local-search enabled multi-vendor marketplace of the community’s vendors. This approach would create an online presence that can compete with the large e-tailers by offering broad product selection and the convenience of online shopping, while enabling online sales directly with local retailers. An advantage of this approach is that transaction services are provided by the platform but processing is directly between shopper and vendor.

The marketplace can be built as a part of a large local-search enabled platform, as an Acton-only marketplace, or as a combination of the two. By leveraging already existing technologies and platforms, the cost – in dollars, manpower, and administration – are reduced to the customization costs of geographic market



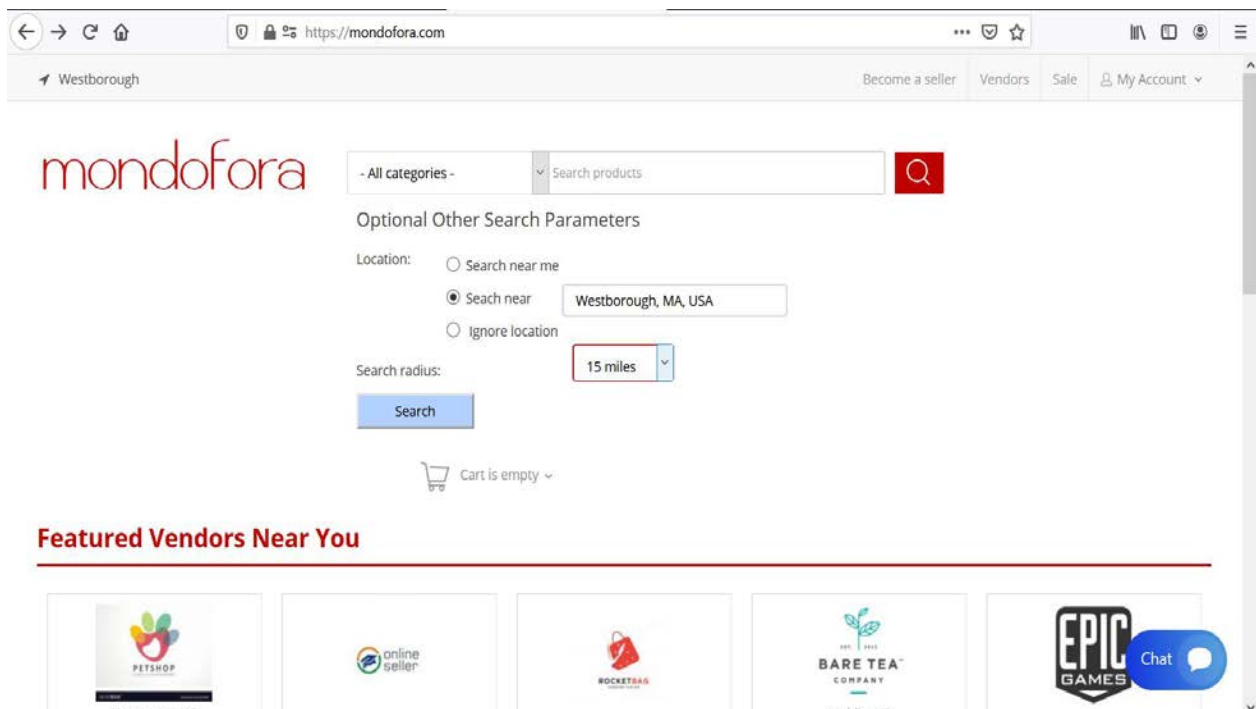
segmentation and, if desired, establishing a URL-redirect capable sub-domain on the marketplace server.

To be effective, this marketplace would need to on-board a minimum number of retailers, upload their inventory, train them in the management and administration of their e-store, and discuss strategies to leverage their new online sales capability. Additionally, a local marketplace would benefit greatly from a coordinated outreach and engagement messaging project.

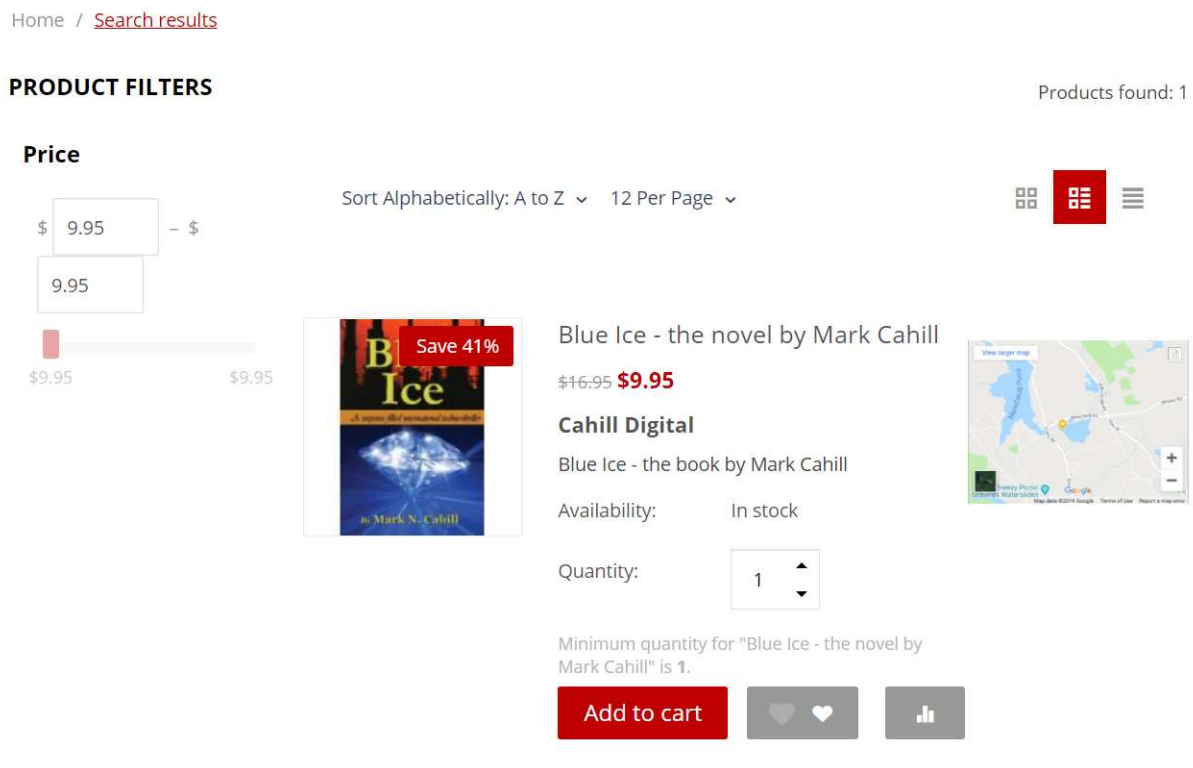
### Tasks and Estimated Timeline:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Cost (est)</u>	<u>Time (est)</u>
Create Geographic Subdomain & URL	\$1000 (opt.)	1 week
Outreach to Retailers	\$3000 - \$10,000	3 weeks
Onboard Retailers & Inventory	\$200/store	4-10/day
or Self-Onboarding (free tools & tutorials)	\$0/store	~3 hrs/store
Training (Webinar, group trg, - 100 people)	\$1000/webinar	1/day
or Training (in-person, store trg – 10 ppl)	\$500/store	2/day
or Self-Training (free tools & tutorials)	\$0/store	1 – 10 hrs/store
Strategic Application session	\$5000	1/day
or ongoing Newsletter & Video	\$0	ongoing
Total (range)	\$8000 - \$25,000	6 – 12 weeks

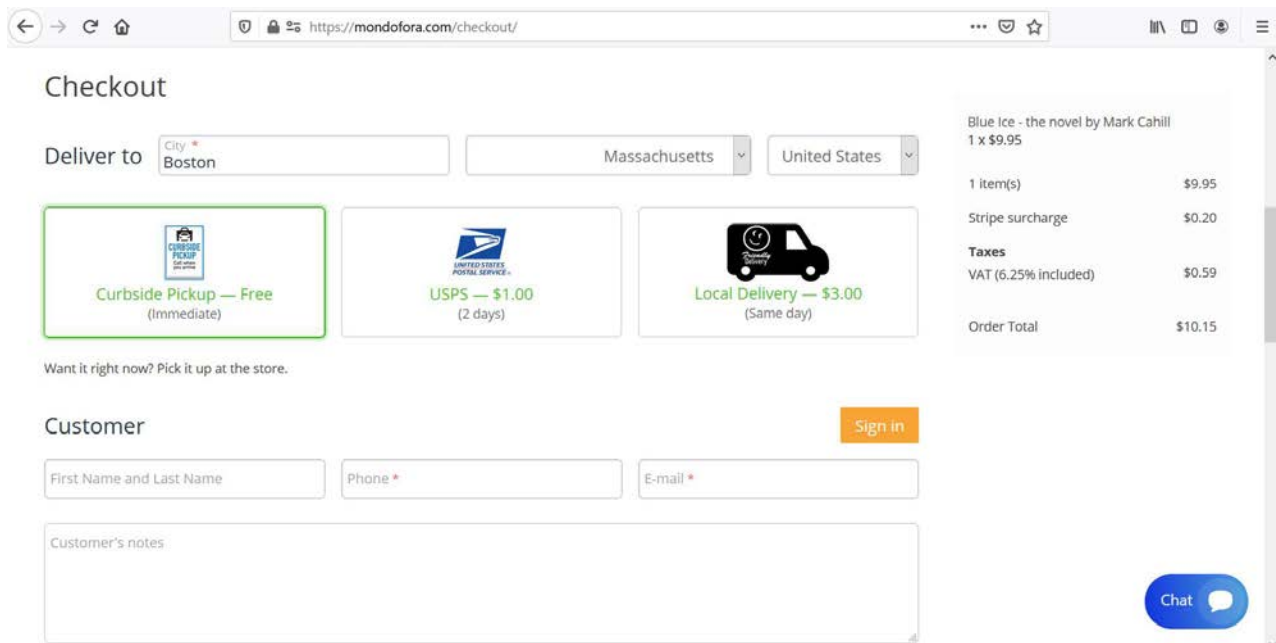
Here are a few screenshots of what a local-search enabled marketplace could look and act like:



**Figure 1: Homepage, where the shopper identifies his location and radius of search**



**Figure 2: Search Results page, showing Product, Vendor, Price, and Location**



**Figure 3: Fulfillment Selection page, showing Vendor-specific fulfillment options (this can include local pickup and courier-delivery options that non-local cannot)**

**Coordinated Communications Program** – This recommendation is for the establishment of an intentionally designed organization (people and activities) which will collectively create and promote messaging to create awareness of the retail community’s initiatives (Marketplace, events, goals, etc) and encourage enthusiasm and participation in these activities.

The first step in this process is recognizing a shared objective – to create and manage a coordinated messaging program for businesses in the community. This objective is shared among multiple constituencies in the community – businesses, residents, municipal government, community organizations, the media (traditional media and social media), each having their own agenda, mindset, and messages. The second step is establishing the resources and processes to get these different constituencies to collaborate and message their respective audiences in a coordinated and complementary manner. The strength of this project is not in creating a single powerful marketing group, but in leveraging the combined strength of many voices to create a unified and effective communication eco-system.

**Tasks and Estimated Timeline:**

<b><u>Task</u></b>	<b><u>Cost (est)</u></b>	<b><u>Time (est)</u></b>
Initial planning session	\$200	1 week
Identify grp reps and coordinator (volunteer?)	\$0	3 weeks
Initial Training	\$500	1 day
Ongoing Training	\$200 -\$500/month	4 hrs/month
Consolidate Editorial Calendars	\$0	2 days
Content Development	\$0 - \$1000/month	4 – 16 hrs/mo
Operate Program	\$0 - \$1000/month	4 hrs/month
Planning & Coordination	\$0	1 – 3 hrs/weekly
<u>Program Reporting</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>1 hr/week</u>
Total (to launch)	\$900	3 wks
Total (ongoing)	\$200 - \$2500/mo	ongoing

**Education and Certification program** – The world is changing quickly. To implement a “digital downtown” community that can fully leverage the on-going changes in technology, the community would benefit from an education, or community enrichment, program.

A community managed (or outsourced) program could offer a structure for different levels of proficiency. The courses could be offered either via internally developed content or through external content which has been reviewed & approved by Town Management or the Chamber. To provide motivation, each level could come with a “digitally trained” certification. Proposed certification levels: Internet Practitioner, Internet Manager, and Internet Master.

### Tasks and Estimated Timeline:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Cost (est)</u>	<u>Time (est)</u>
Stakeholder interviews	\$250	1 week
Design syllabi	\$125	1 week
Develop Trainings (3 Webinar presentations)	\$2000	3 weeks
Conduct 3 sessions (recorded for reuse)	\$600	ongoing
Identify Additional sources of content	\$250	3 weeks
Evaluation/certification	TBD	ongoing
Messaging to the community	\$0	1 hr/week
Total	\$3,225	5 wks

**Additional Solutions (outside scope):** Consistent with the goals of creating retail capability, augmenting sales, and utilizing retail space in the Great Road Corridor, we want to recommend the relevant parties to further explore two specific opportunities. These were both discussed with the community and have great potential, but are beyond the specified scope of this specific engagement.

The first is related to online commerce, and specifically to local-search enabled marketplaces. This is the concept of the Micro-Fulfillment Center (MFC) – essentially a mini warehouse-like space which provides local product fulfillment without a retail store attached. MFC's can represent a single store or multiple stores, and are becoming a popular efficient local retail functionality. An article on MFC's will be provided.

The second goes by the description of “pop-up space” essentially short-term space – typically either holiday related retail (Halloween store, Christmas store, etc.) or short-term shared space, such as a farmer's market or flea market. These are typically low-infrastructure needs spaces, with short-term usage. They are quick to set up and disassemble, and can be tied to a larger community event planning process. They do, however, require a messaging strategy and coordination to ensure community awareness and engagement.

**Adjacencies:** It is tempting to think of these kinds of projects in isolation. However, they are likely to both benefit and complicate other aspects of town operations, and other LRRP projects under consideration. As an example, online sales and community engagement will impact other aspects of the community – such as parking, traffic flow, signage, etc. It would be worthwhile considering how the community could leverage their benefits.

Some of the changes to be considered would include: modifications for Curbside Pickup (Parking area layout, signage, traffic flow, etc), Internal Layout (Online Purchase pickup area, floor plan, wayfinding, etc), Staff Training (new business models, customer service, online chat, marketplace administration and inventory uploading, etc.), and considerations for community space like roadways, sidewalks, public parking, landscaping, etc. These specific items are beyond the scope of our analysis, but should be considered as part of an ongoing process of development and modernization.



## HOW WILL MICRO-FULFILLMENT CENTERS CHANGE THE RETAIL INDUSTRY?

Micro-fulfillment centers (MFCs) are small warehouses that are compact enough to place almost anywhere, and they are designed to fulfill online orders fast and efficiently, close to where customers live. To satisfy the expanding demand for e-commerce fulfillment, click-and-collect, and home delivery, MFCs seek to transform last-mile delivery logistics so that on-demand e-commerce can become a profitable and scalable business model.

### Consumer Demands

The modern-day grocery store was developed in 1916 by Clarence Suanders when he launched his grocery chain, Piggly Wiggly. It offered customers a full-service store that displayed items on shelving, with price tags, and available for customers' inspection. It linked fulfillment and marketing, and the business model has stayed relatively unchanged since that time.

The definition of a grocery store, however, may be changing from “a place to shop” to “a place of convenience at the right moment within people’s lives.” In fact, four factors are responsible for creating a new normal:

- **Urbanization.** Fifty-four percent of the world’s population live in urban areas, and this number is expected to rise to 68% by 2050.
- **Instant Gratification.** Consumers have become increasingly impatient waiting on their stuff to be delivered. They want it now.
- **Access to Anything.** Consumers expect online retailers to offer a seemingly unlimited variety of products.
- **Convenience.** Consumers demand a fast and easy ordering process and free delivery.

### Supply Chain Challenges

In addition to the challenges that evolving consumer demands create, retailers also must contend with evolving challenges in the supply chain:

- **Lack of Space.** Industrial and logistical real estate vacancies are at near record lows.



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# Appendix

## APPENDIX E - Wayfinding - Neighborways Design Subject Matter Expert



# Mission

To help communities rapidly transform streets into safer, more beautiful places for everyone.





# Goals / Performance Indicators

- Meet with local business owners and members of the public to distribute signage options and solicit feedback.
- Increase the number of people walking, biking, and driving to stop and shop along Great Road.
- *Placemaking? Create destinations people want to visit and linger.*
- *Fill vacant store fronts?*
- *Community participation – increase # of folks engaged in surveys and community meetings?*
- *Connect local neighborhoods to the rail trail?*

# Partners and Resources

- Partners
  - MassDOT (Rt2A) and MBTA (Bruce Freeman RT)
  - Local walking and bicycle advocacy and trail groups – Friends of the BFRT, ARRT Inc,
  - Acton Select Board Transportation Advisory Committee
  - Nashoba Regional Greenway
  - Champions in local businesses / chamber of commerce – Cindy McCullough, stay engaged with Chamber as it changes leadership
  - Internal departments – Recreations Department, Engineering, Public Works, Planning, Communication, Sustainability Director
- Resources
  - Federal Grants – ARPA
  - FBFRT – may have funds
  - Downtown Initiative MDI – applied in past for townwide wayfinding
  - Foundation Grants – Solomon Foundation, Barr Foundation
  - [MassDOT](#)
    - [Statewide bicycle and pedestrian plans Update](#)
    - Complete Streets Grant program (crossing improvements)
  - MassDevelopment Grants
  - Massworks Grants
  - Developers
  - [LRRP Funding Resources](#)



Bruce Freeman Rail Trail

Picnics  
/benches  
/ shade /  
bike  
parking

Gould's Plaza

Desire Line – potential painted walkway.

Private  
cafe  
Seating

Make picnic tables more  
accessible / visible – better  
bike racks

Picnic  
Tables??  
Older style  
bike racks





*Digital Version*



*Corrugated Plastic (2-4 years)*



*Aluminum (Permanent)*

## Examples of Wayfinding Signage (12" x 24")

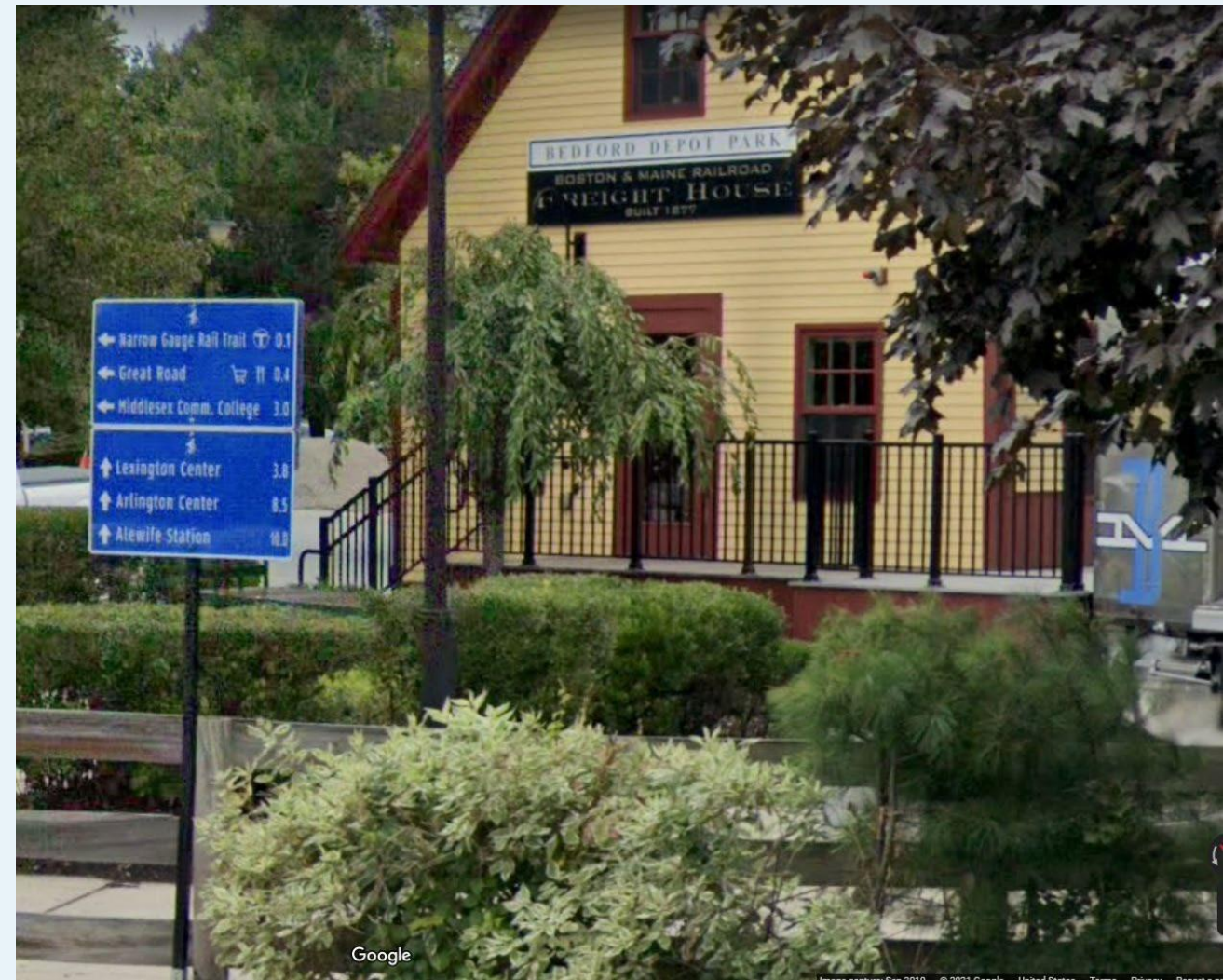
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*Image Sources: Civic Space Collaborative; Ball Square Main Streets*



# Examples & Resources

- [Navigating the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway](#)
- Lexington MA – Across Lexington Trails
- [Assabet River Rail Trail – Maynard and Hudson](#)
- Reimagine Broadway, Everett, MA



*Wayfinding to Downtown at the Minuteman Bikeway Trailhead in Bedford*

*Image Source: Google Maps*



## Across Lexington

Accessing  
Conservation land  
Recreation areas  
Open space  
Schools and  
Streets in **Lexington**





## Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT) – Maynard & Hudson

- Incremental steps have been taken to complete the ARRT's routing immediately adjacent Downtown Maynard and Hudson
- Demonstration routes on strategic routes can help residents and key decision makers to envision potential impacts on active transportation, placemaking and economic development



*Approaching Downtown Maynard on the ARRT (Source: ARRT Facebook)*









*Digital Version*



*Corrugated Plastic (2-4 years)*



*Aluminum (Permanent)*

## Examples of Wayfinding Signage (12" x 24")

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# Final Steps of SME Consultation

1. Comments on rubric
2. Send this presentation
3. Share additional resources from discussion if any

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neighborwaysdesign