



# Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Town of Adams



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.

**For more information, contact DHCD:**  
**100 Cambridge St, Suite 300**  
**Boston, MA 02114**  
**617-573-1100**  
**[mass.gov/DHCD](https://mass.gov/DHCD)**

# Acknowledgements



## Downtown Adams

Stephen Stenson, Heather Blake , Carrie Burnett, Yina Luo



## Town of Adams

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

Thunderbolt Ski Runners	Heather Linscott
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Adams Roundtable	Carol Cushenette
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Adams Arts Advisory Board	George LeMaitre
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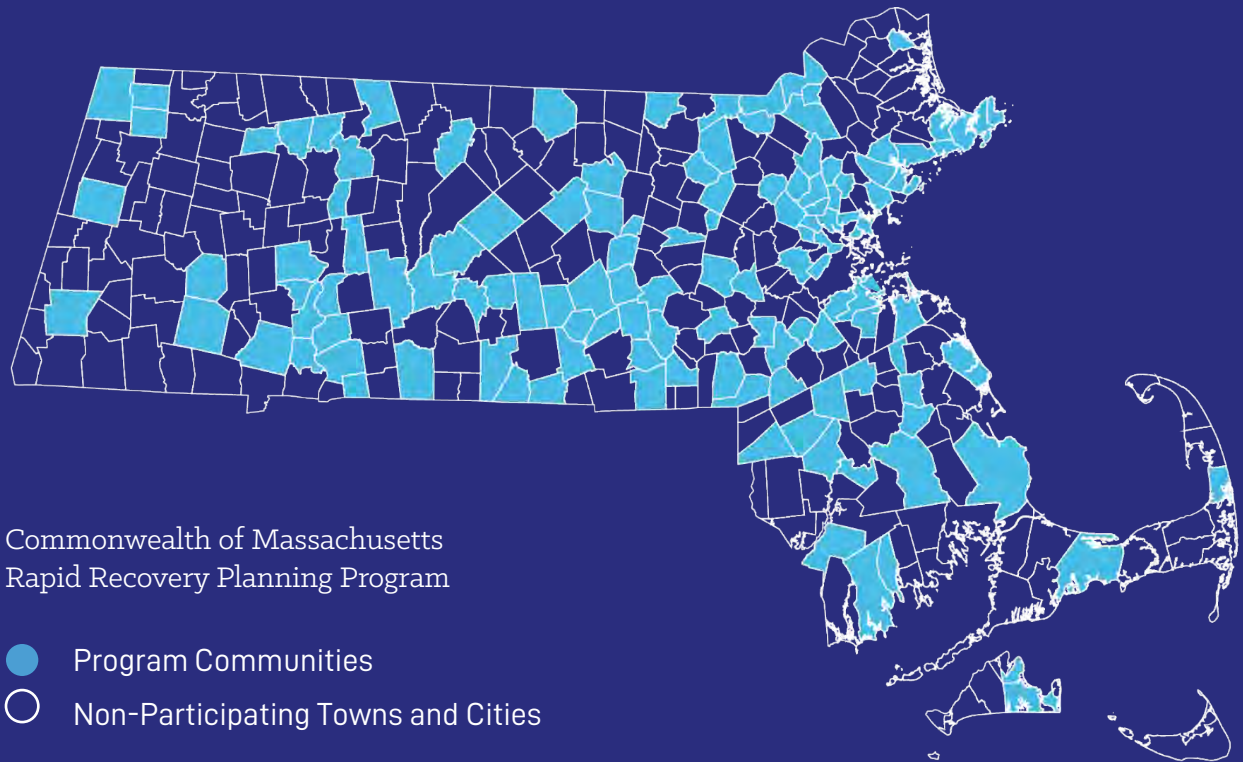
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## 125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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.



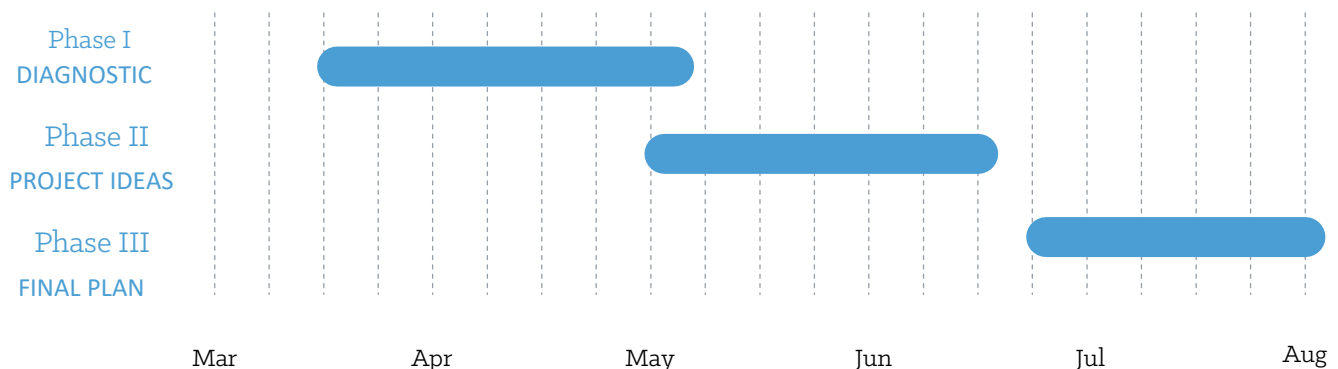
# Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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. 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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## Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

Prior to COVID-19, downtown Adams had struggled attracting and retaining businesses. COVID-19 exasperated the problem and led to more business closures. The town's recovery from the pandemic will require a mix of infrastructure improvements, business attraction, and building organizational capacity. The Downtown Adams organization, along with ProAdams, and the Town of Adams, will further these projects with support from other community organizations.

Downtown Adams, with two commercial districts on Park Street and Summer Street; the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail; the Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum's Hoosac Valley Line and Adams Station; the Hoosic River; and amazing views of Mount Greylock to the west and Savoy Mountain to the east; has the potential to be a thriving attraction and business environment.

Strategic improvements have been made in the downtown over the last two decades, focusing mainly on infrastructure. These improvements include Park and Summer Streets, the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, the Berkshire Scenic Railway Station, Armory Court, and the Pleasant Street Park. Further improvements are needed to unite these features into a cohesive downtown.

There are a variety of businesses types within downtown Adams, but there could be more businesses that visitors would frequent, such as boutique dining and retail. Numerous vacant stores are available to prospective businesses but need aesthetic improvements.

The pandemic highlighted the need for investments to improve the economic environment through twelve projects. These projects focus on three general themes: Bringing people to the downtown, getting around downtown, and getting businesses back to downtown.

Bringing people to downtown will be done through a variety of mechanisms:

- Public Spaces
- Cultural District Designation
- Downtown Events Programming
- Surveying User Needs

Getting around downtown will be done through:

- Wayfinding
- Walkability
- Enhance the Bicycle Culture

Getting businesses back to downtown will be accomplished through:

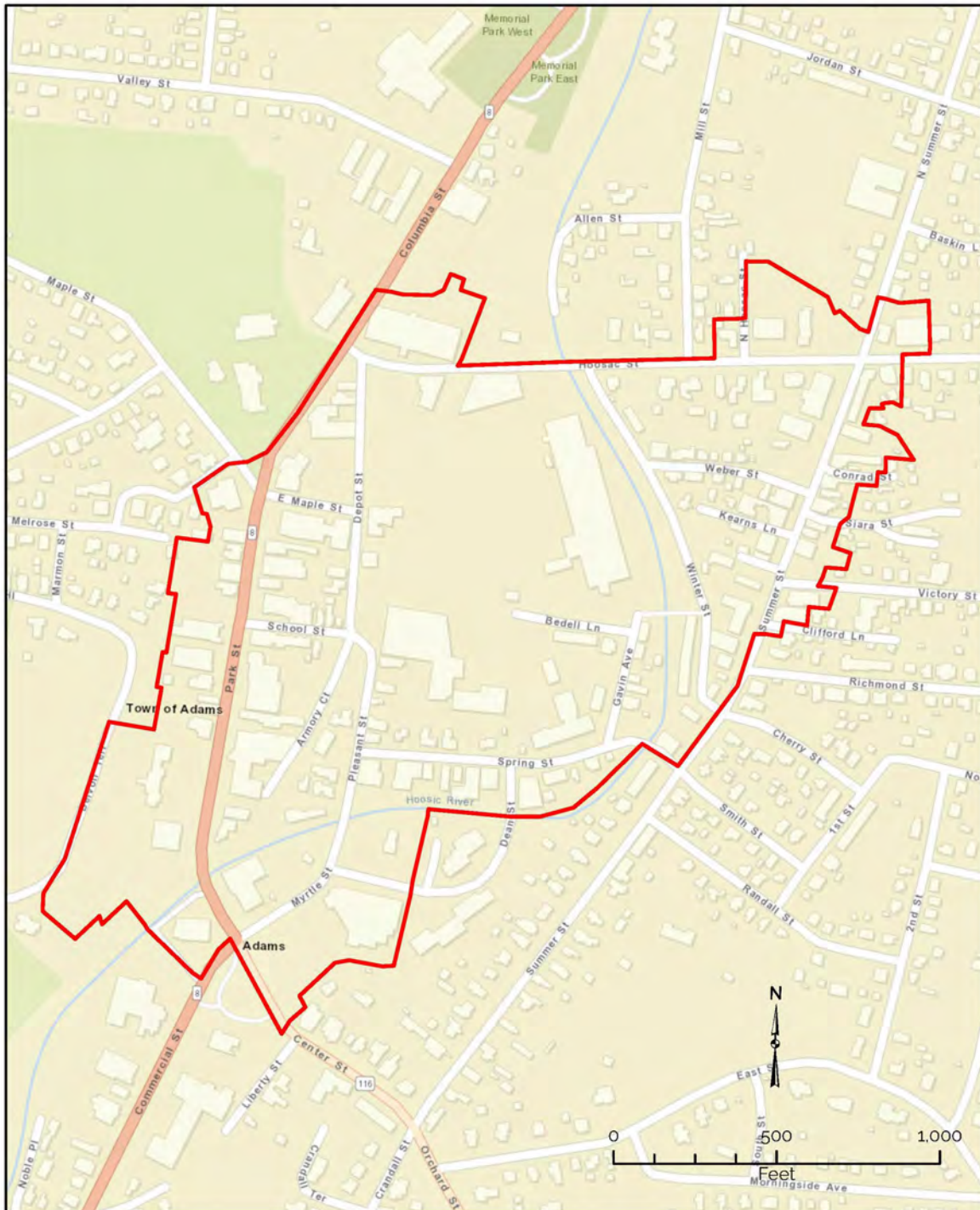
- Pop-up Stores
- Adams Kickstart
- Storefront Revitalization
- Food Destination
- Updating Business Guide

All the above projects can individually improve the economic situation of downtown Adams, especially in light of the pandemic. Together, they can create the lasting improvements needed to revitalize the downtown.

## Downtown Adams: Study Area

The Study Area is composed of two main commercial corridors: Park Street and Summer Street. These two streets run parallel and are connected by both Hoosac Street and Center Street. Park Street is the main thoroughfare through town, gets the most traffic, and has the most commercial activity. Commercial activity also exists in the core of the area along Myrtle, Pleasant, and Spring Streets. The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail bisects the study area, as does the Hoosac River.

### Downtown Adams Local Rapid Recovery Planning



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## Diagnostic

# Key Findings



## CUSTOMER BASE

### Downtown Adams attracts residents from throughout town and beyond

Downtown Adams has a small population of 695 but attracts consumers from throughout the town. The residents of downtown tend to have lower incomes and fewer years of formal education than the rest of the town.



## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

### The town has a mix of new and aging public infrastructure

The town has spent significant resources over the last decade to reconstruct the two main commercial corridors of Park Street and Summer Street, and both continue to be in good condition. Other streets within the downtown have not been maintained as well, as evidenced by deteriorating sidewalks and roadbeds and car rather than pedestrian-focused lighting. There are several small parks and other public areas throughout the downtown, but outside of these, there are few amenities, such as benches or street trees. Signage is mostly vehicle focused and does a poor job directing visitors to key assets.

The private buildings within the downtown range widely in terms of their condition. Park Street's buildings are mostly in good shape, while Summer Street and other roads tend to be well-worn. Signage, awnings, and building lights are generally poor throughout the district. Private buildings will need significant investment to make the area more attractive.



## BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

### Downtown Adams is anchored by a mix of retail and food services, but also has an abundance of vacant properties

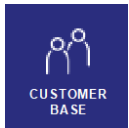
One third of active businesses in the downtown provide retail or accommodation and food services. The remaining businesses provide finance and insurance, real estate and leasing, education, healthcare and social assistance, and other services. There are 72 active businesses downtown and 43 vacant businesses.



## ADMIN CAPACITY

### The town has a mix of downtown organizations overseeing recovery efforts, but with limited resources

Adams has many stakeholders that can help oversee recovery efforts downtown. The Town of Adams has full-time staff focused on community development; however, it has many ongoing projects and cannot focus solely on downtown. ProAdams is a volunteer-based organization aimed at promoting Adams, but they have a limited budget. The Downtown Adams group is an informal group of business owners and individuals with an interest in improving conditions in the town center, but they too lack funding.



## Highlights from the Customer Base

Downtown Adams has an estimated population of 695, which represents approximately 8% of the entire town, whose overall population is 8,125.

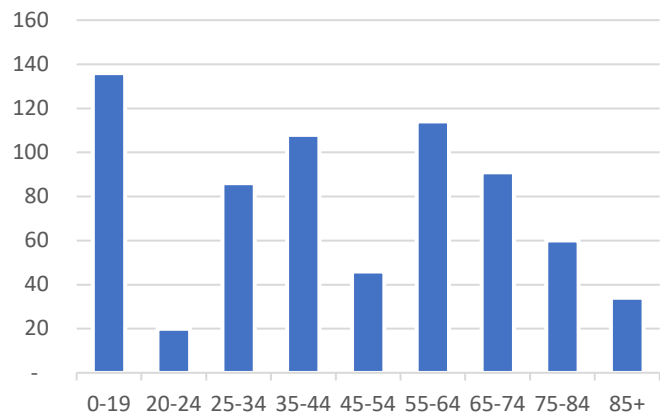
Downtown residents' median age (44.7) parallels that of the Town of Adams, and both the town and downtown have similar age distributions, with a higher percentage of residents aged 45 to 54 and a much lower percentage aged 20-24.

Downtown households tend to be smaller than those in the rest of the town (1.7 vs 2.2 people/house).

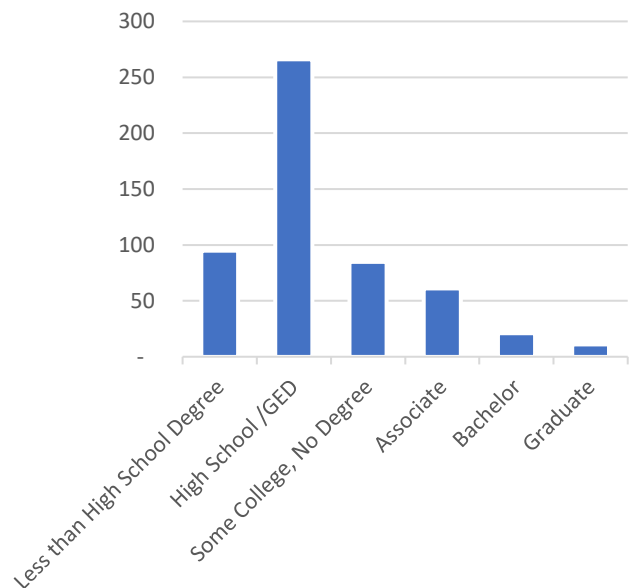
The downtown area is more racially diverse than the Town of Adams, with 10% of downtown residents self-identifying as non-white as compared to 5% in the town. Ethnically, the town and downtown, are more similar, with an equal percentage of residents self-identifying as Hispanic (1.5-1.8%).

The educational attainment of downtown residents is much lower than that of the town overall. Downtown, 67% of residents have a high school diploma or less as compared to 50% of residents in the Town of Adams. Six percent of downtown residents have a bachelor's or graduate degree versus 24% of town residents.

The median household income in downtown (\$33,281) is half of that of the entire town (\$65,712). This is likely due to residents' smaller household size and lower educational attainment.



*Age Distribution of Downtown Residents*



*Educational Attainment of Downtown Residents*



## Highlights from the Physical Environment

### Access

The town of Adams has invested in the reconstruction of both Park Street and Summer Street over the last decade. These roads and sidewalks are in good condition, however, the roads between them (Center, Myrtle, Pleasant, Depot, and Hoosac Streets) all need improvements, especially for ADA accessibility. In addition, improving pedestrian crosswalks with bump outs, signage, line painting, and surface material changes should be considered to make the pedestrian more visible.

Within the downtown, there are 1,057 parking spots in parking lots and along streets. This appears to be sufficient to accommodate current visitor and resident activity; however, the main parking lot by the Visitors Center does not adequately highlight access to the commercial corridors of Park and Summer Streets, thus missing an opportunity to encourage further pedestrian exploration.

### Visibility

Street lighting downtown is good, but lighting for individual buildings is poor. This means visitors walking at night can likely see what is ahead of them on the street but may have difficulty viewing what is sold inside shop windows. Improving building lighting to better highlight what is offered would improve the overall visitor experience.

Signage along streets is also poor. Street signs aim to move driver's quickly through downtown but neglect to help them find the commercial districts or parking. Similarly, despite the highly-touristed Ashuwillticook Rail Trail and Berkshire Scenic Railroad Museum's Hoosac Valley Line both being centrally located, there is no signage near either site to connect visitors to other activities around the commercial districts. Some business owners have invested in high-quality signs to showcase their own shops, but many have not. These stores display signs of poor quality that do not describe the offerings inside.

### Aesthetics

The condition of building facades downtown tends to be poor. Park Street buildings are generally good, but most other downtown buildings show signs of age and awnings also tend to be of lower quality, which causes the overall aesthetics of downtown to feel dominated

by concrete and asphalt.

Downtown would also benefit from more street trees and planters to make it more visually attractive as well as to provide shade to visitors.

Downtown Adams also has little public art. There are a few older murals and a sculpture or two, but they do not appear to be maintained nor are they presented in an organized fashion.

### Parks

There are several parks and parklets downtown. Maintenance on some is needed and vegetation in many could be improved but, overall, parks tend to be in good shape.

Armory Court, Victory Street Parklet, Pleasant Street Park, the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, the Visitors Center lawn, the Columbia/Hoosac Street Parklet, and the Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum's Adam Station areas all contribute to the appeal of downtown. Currently, however, there are few locations for outdoor dining or relaxing on benches. Park and Summer Streets have a few benches and outdoor dining locations, but other areas downtown have neither.

Just north of downtown, is the Hoosac Valley Coal and Grain park that is under development and includes an off-leash dog area, picnic areas, and a play area for children.



## Highlights from the Business Environment

### BUSINESS MIX

There are currently 72 active businesses downtown covering a range of sectors from retail (17%), dining and accommodation (15%), and finance and insurance (13%). Retail and hospitality are the main drivers bringing people downtown. The town should work to increase representation from these businesses as 32% coverage is relatively low for a downtown district.

Other sectors represented downtown include Healthcare and Social Assistance (10%) and Other Services (17%), which includes a mix of businesses including repair and maintenance, personal and laundry services, and religious organizations.

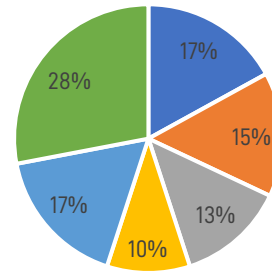
Previous reports identify diversifying the types of businesses downtown, including complementary businesses, to attract more people.

### BUSINESS SPACE

There are 115 business locations downtown, with 43 (37%) vacant. This is a high vacancy rate that leads to a sense of decline and abandonment. A high number of vacant properties has also contributed to a low asking rent of \$8/square foot.

Many business locations downtown are on Park and Summer Streets, which form the towns two main commercial corridors. There are also a smaller number of businesses located on Depot, Pleasant, and Myrtle Streets.

Business Mix



- Retail Trade
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Finance and Insurance
- Healthcare and social assistance
- Other Services
- Other Businesses

*Mix of business by NAICS category.*



*Commercial development along Park Street*



## Highlights from the Admin Capacity

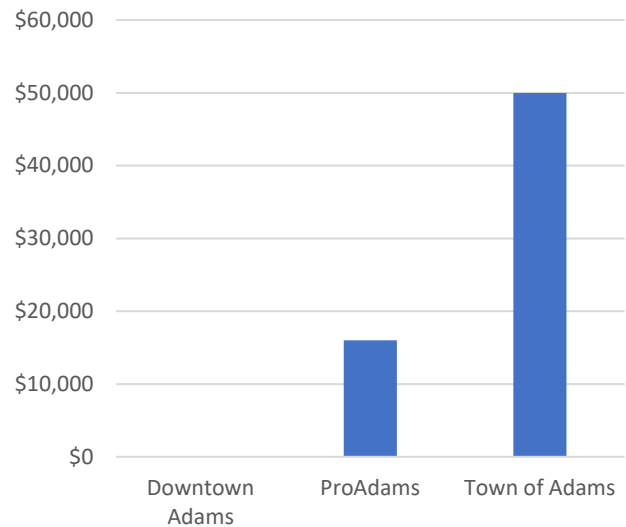
The downtown area is covered by three groups, the Town of Adams, ProAdams, and the Downtown Adams group. In addition, there are several additional groups that aid in the development of downtown, among them the Thunderbolt Ski Runners and the Adams Arts Advisory Board.

The Town of Adams has a Community Development Department, which actively works to revitalize downtown and the rest of town. Over the past two decades, it has overseen an active façade and signage program that reconstructed Park Street and Summer Street and developed Armory Court, Pleasant Street Park, the Hoosac Scenic Rail Museum's Adams Station, the new Visitor's Center parking lot, and the extension of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, all downtown. They also support larger marketing efforts for downtown Adams.

ProAdams is an entirely volunteer-led nonprofit whose mission is to (a) assist the Town of Adams promote the Town as the recreational hub of Berkshire County; (b) educate potential residents about the unspoiled small-town experience and authentic hometown lifestyle enjoyed in Adams; (c) promote an active and lively downtown by educating business owners about the opportunities that exist in Adams; and (d) help the Town promote and evolve community events and attractions into regional ones. ProAdams has a small budget to fund organizing and marketing of events it hosts each year.

The Downtown Adams group is a loose affiliation of downtown building and business owners focused on business recruitment and retention. The Downtown Adams group is run by volunteers and has no budget.

In addition, the Thunderbolt Ski Runners work to develop, maintain, and promote the Thunderbolt Ski Trail on Mount Greylock as well as trails within Greylock Glen. The recently funded Greylock Glen Outdoor Center (\$6.5M from Governor Baker), part of the larger Greylock Glen project, is a vital piece in the revitalization of the Town of Adams.



*Annual Budget for Economic Development*



*Adams Town Hall*

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# Enhance the Bicycle Culture

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Study Area
Origin	ProAdams
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) Funding Sources: Commonwealth Places, Shared Streets and Spaces, T-Mobile Hometown Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk – Difficulty raising funds, problems securing locations for bike racks and air stations, regulatory restrictions, lack of community support/interest
Key Performance Indicators	Usage of air station, periodic check-ins with businesses to ask about bike rack usage and retail/restaurant activity resulting from bike visitors
Partners & Resources	Town of Adams: Community Development Coordinators, Department of Public Works, Existing and Future Businesses, McCann Tech Metal Fab Students/Staff and/or Local Metal Sculptor/Artist (for construction of bike racks) and other Community Organizations.



*Bike Rack at Pleasant Street Park*

## Diagnostic

During the pandemic, outdoor recreation expanded in popularity. Downtown Adams has the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail passing through the center and is an untapped resource for local businesses. With a recent expansion of the trail, the future expansion of the trail into North Adams, and the additional users from the pandemic, the town can work to make bike users more welcome throughout the downtown. By embracing cycling, users will feel more comfortable in the area and be willing to spend time and money, enhancing the benefit to local businesses.

## Action Item

This project is designed to bring enhancements to the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail running from the Adams Visitor's Center to the Greylock Federal Credit Union's side of Park Street. Such enhancements include, but are not limited to, a bike maintenance station, an air station for tires, and two or three thematically inspired bike racks placed strategically in our downtown business district. By adding new and unique features in strategic locations around our downtown asset (e.g. Visitor's Center, Armory Court, Train Station, etc.), the Town of Adams could draw bikers short distances from the Rail Trail to local businesses by providing safety, peace of mind, and an aesthetically pleasing experience. Bike racks will be strategically located close to restaurants and local hotspots in the downtown quadrant so residents and visitors can dine and experience what Adams has to offer without the fear of theft.



Armory Court

## Process

- Build a team of volunteers and/or community stakeholders who will spearhead the project and engage with key Town of Adams' decisionmakers to advocate for its implementation.
- Present the project concept and partner with the Town of Adams. Secure approval for it from key town decision-makers (e.g. DCR, DPW, Community Development, Selectboard, etc.)
- Clearly delineate who will be responsible for each portion of the project (i.e. Town of Adams, DCR, DPW, volunteers).
- Work with all parties to reach a consensus on the placement of the bike racks and air station.
- Engage the Town of Adams to secure funding for design and capital costs for each component of the project.
- Have volunteers and/or community stakeholders, under the auspices of a 501c3 or fiscal sponsor, apply for and secure grant(s) for the bike maintenance station, air station, etc.
- Ensure ongoing dialogue with the Town of Adams.




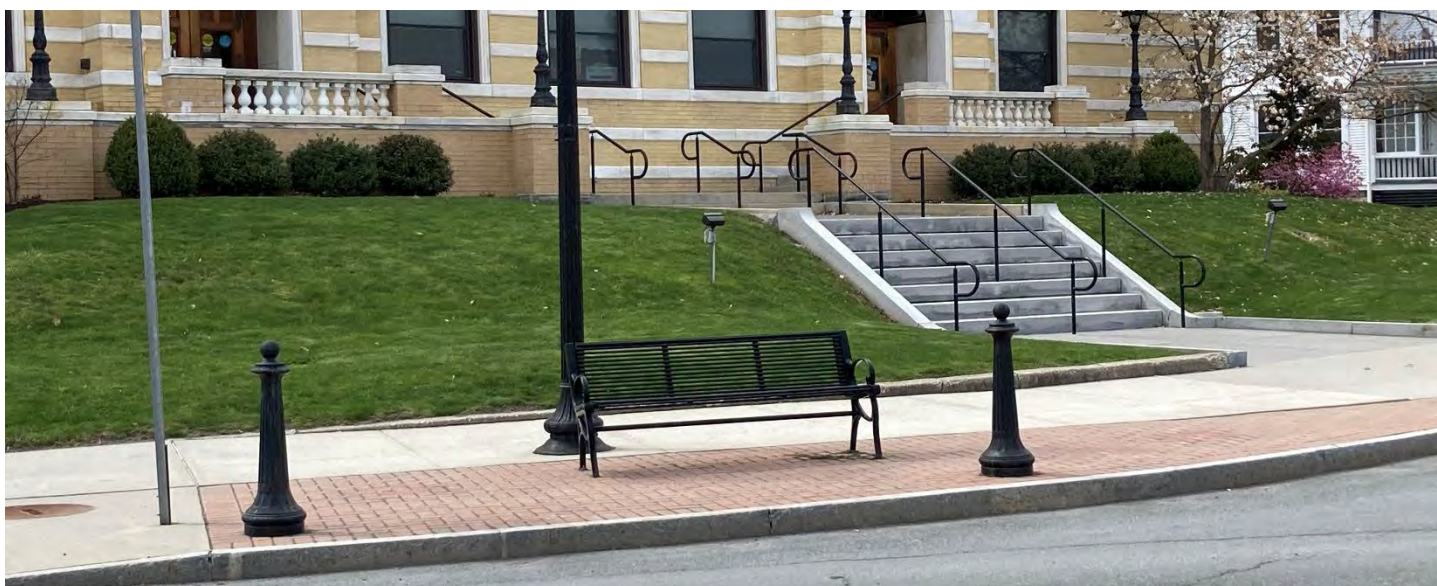
*Bike Racks at Visitor Center*



*Bike Lane on Park Street*

# Make Downtown Walkable

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Downtown
Origin	Town of Adams
Budget	 Large Budget (over \$200,000)  Funding Sources: MassWorks Infrastructure Program, MA Downtown Initiative Program, TDI Creative Catalyst, Commonwealth Places, Shared Streets and Spaces, Economic Adjustment Assistance, Community Development Block Grant, T-Mobile Hometown Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 High Risk – Insufficient funding for larger infrastructure project
Key Performance Indicators	Installation of at least two improvements to walkability in Town.
Partners & Resources	Town/DPW, MassDOT, Volunteer, local businesses and organization to help with map distribution.



*Benches on Park Street*

## Diagnostic

Visitation to downtown and local businesses declined over the course of the pandemic and several businesses closed. Improving walkability could help encourage foot traffic to businesses and encourage new businesses to relocate to vacant storefronts. Existing walkability is hampered by a lack of ADA ramps, pedestrian crossings, and the sidewalks need improvements.

## Action Item

Develop a plan to implement improvements to make downtown Adams more walkable through pedestrian bump-outs, crosswalk design, sidewalk improvements, sidewalk ramps, and signage, referencing the Adams Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. The Town of Adams engaged consultants Vanesse Hanglin Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) in 2017 to develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan consistent with the requirements for the Complete Streets Program established by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. The Crotteau Street project identified in the plan was recently completed by the Town and included new sidewalks, added crosswalks, new accessible ramps, and pavement rehabilitation to improve connectivity to Albert Reid field. The LRRP will focus on projects identified as priorities within the downtown area and could be implemented on a test or temporary basis for quick and affordable implementation. The development of a digital or printable walking guide to downtown Adams will also be pursued.

## Process

Review the top-ranked project opportunities in the Complete Streets Plan to identify any that may be implemented quickly at low cost on a test or temporary basis using paint, temporary barriers, or signage. Potential projects that can be advanced to the design stage should also be identified.

## Project Planning:

Project planning will be guided by the Adams Complete Street Plan for long-term street and sidewalk recommendations. Project participants will also explore developing a print or digital walking guide for downtown Adams.



*Crosswalk on Park Street*



*Walking on Park Street*

## Process

### Design and Planning Process:

#### Development Phase

- Priority walkability projects for the downtown include:
  - Installation of "Your Speed" radar indicator signs on Howland Ave. and Summer St.
  - Route 8 (Park Street) Restriping.
  - Hoosac Street Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Crossing.
  - Park St (Rte. 8), Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Crossing.
  - Route 8 (Columbia Street) from Maple Street to Valley Street. Restriping, crosswalks, ADA improvements.
  - Summer Street pedestrian enhancements including restriping, crosswalks and ADA compliance.
- Review low-cost temporary measures with Town Staff, DPW, and possibly MassDOT to determine adherence to regulatory requirements, impact to DPW maintenance requirements, or other concerns.
- Continue to identify walkability projects and update the Tier 2 Complete Streets project list as needed.
- Review existing walking guides or maps of downtown Adams, as well as walking guides for other towns or cities as a reference.
- Review and edit walking guide with LRRP members and develop budget for print versions. Identify online venues for a digital version.
- Develop scope of work for selected walkability projects that require engineering or design.
- Issue RFP for walking guide.

#### Design Phase

- Select engineer/designer for walkability projects requiring engineering and permitting.
- Award contracts for walkability project engineering and for walking guide design.
- Work with engineer/designer to advance projects to bid phase.
- Identify sources of funding for project implementation.

#### Implementation Phase

- Issue construction document bid package to identify potential contractors for implementation.
- Print finalized walking guide design.
- Award contract for walkability project construction.
- Oversee construction of walkability project.




*Sidewalk on Park Street*



*Ashuwillticook Rail Trail*

# Public Spaces

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Downtown
Origin	Town of Adams, the Downtown Adams group
Budget	 Low Budget (under \$50,000)  Funding Sources: MassWorks Infrastructure Program, MA Downtown Initiative Program, TDI Creative Catalyst, Commonwealth Places, Shared Streets and Spaces, Economic Adjustment Assistance, T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program, Community Development Block Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk – Lack of support from Town of Adams or MassDOT, Lack of Volunteers or partner support, Inability to raise needed funds, Regulatory limitations
Key Performance Indicators	Installation of at least one improvement in each of the four identified public improvements. Visible increased traffic and use of each space.
Partners & Resources	Town/DPW, Businesses, ProAdams, Youth and Art Organizations, Local Volunteers, Funders, AAAB, the Downtown Adams group



*Pocket Park on Hoosac and Depot Street*

## Diagnostics

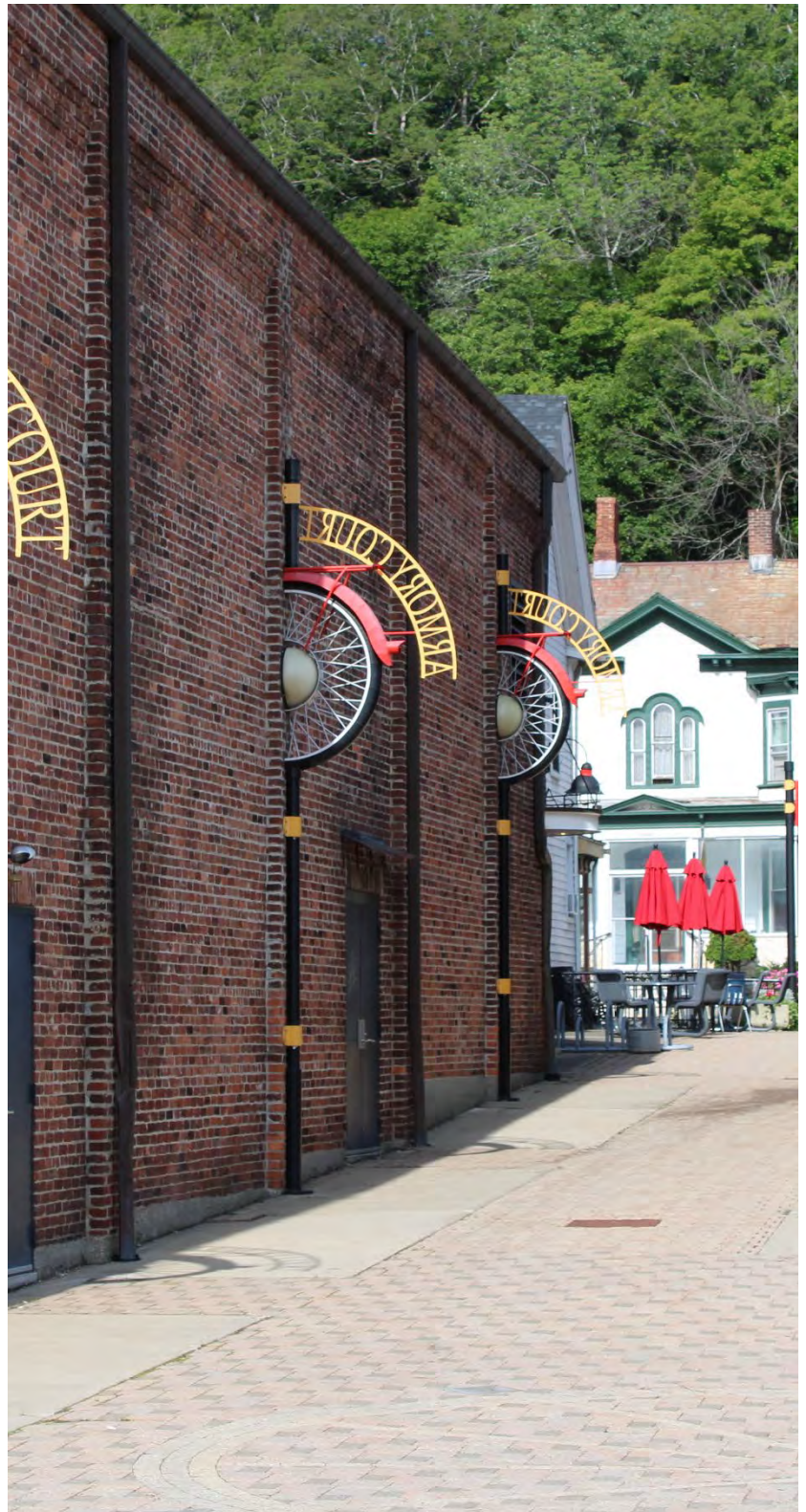
Many public spaces in downtown Adams are uninviting due to their lack of street furniture, plantings, or condition, and thus underutilized. They do not encourage residents or visitors to spend time exploring Adams, which negatively impacts civic engagement and reduces foot traffic for local businesses. COVID-19 further increased the number of empty storefronts and restaurants.

## Action Items

The Public Spaces Project aims to create inviting public spaces that encourage visitors and residents to spend more time in downtown Adams, visit local businesses, and participate in ongoing or one-time events and activities. The project will focus on physically enhancing and beautifying four locations in downtown Adams:

- The intersection of Park, Commercial, and Center Streets. This location serves as one of the main 'entryways' to Adams from the south and is adjacent to the newly renovated Town Common;
- Armory Court, which serves as the central connecting route for pedestrians from Park Street to The Visitor's Center, Adams Station, and Ashuwillticook Rail Trail;
- The two bridges at Pleasant and Hoosac Streets. Although other bridges need beautification, these are the most centrally located to pedestrian and bike traffic. If successful, bridge improvements can be expanded to other locations.

The project will result in the installation of planters, benches, and artistic elements; improved general maintenance; and increased volunteer engagement.



*Armory Court*

## Process

### Development

- Review and confirm final sites to be included in Public Spaces Project.
- Review other LRRP projects to identify potential areas of common interest, such as Wayfinding, Walkability, Biking, and Event Planning.
- Outreach to residents, civic groups, and businesses to explore interest in adopting a location(s) to help with maintenance, such as watering plants and annual cleaning or painting.
- Propose art installation partnerships to civic and arts groups (e.g., IS183 Art School, Guild of Berkshire Artists, Real Eyes Gallery in Adams, and organizers of the Berkshires Arts Festival).
- Explore and raise funds for material, labor, consultants, or permitting fees.
- Facilitate discussions with local event organizers and Berkshire County theater and arts groups to develop one-time or ongoing events for public spaces (e.g., musical performances, vendor stalls, theater, or dance performances).
- Identify possible funding and donation sources.

### Design

- Collaborate with the LRRP team, engaged volunteers, and public art partners to develop a plan for each site to include amount and type of improvements desired, material needed, labor required, permitting costs, and maintenance needs.
- Research local and national examples of low cost/big impact Public Space improvement projects.
- Present plan to key stakeholders, including local volunteers, civic organizations, Town of Adams staff and elected officials, and MassDOT; secure permits as required.
- Schedule events in beautified public spaces.
- Seek funding through donations and grant applications for ongoing programming and maintenance.

### Implementation:

- Engage volunteers for initial clean-up event to include weed removal on bridge areas and installation of planters and sitting areas.
- Install physical improvements developed for each site assisted by volunteers, Town DPW, or contractor, as necessary.
- Promote improvements and events through social media, website, and local media.



*Pleasant Street Park*



*Visitor Center Lawn*

# Wayfinding

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Downtown Adams
Origin	ProAdams
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) Funding Sources: Regional Pilot Project Grants, MA Downtown Initiative Program, Seed Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Medium Risk - Insufficient funding may result in failure to implement some elements of the system. There may be additional complications due to regulatory restrictions.
Key Performance Indicators	Increased foot traffic and sales in the LRRP Study Area. Google Analytics will be used to track web-based wayfinding usage.
Partners & Resources	Adams Community Development, Code Enforcement, Town Council, Board of Selectmen, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and MassDOT.



Signage on Hoosac and Depot Streets

## Diagnostic

The pandemic caused the closure of local businesses and a reduction of visitors to the downtown. With the reopening of businesses and additional visitors coming to the Berkshire Scenic Railroad Museum's Hoosac Valley Line and the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, the public needs to be directed to local businesses and attractions.

Throughout the downtown, there is a lack of coordinated wayfinding signage. The signage that is there is often focused on vehicular traffic and not pedestrian traffic. There is a lack of signage directing people to the two commercial districts (Park Street and Summer Street), and a lack of signage connecting people from the railroad and rail trail to the commercial areas. Some of the existing signage is also outdated.

## Action Item

The Adams Wayfinding Project seeks to design, develop, and oversee the production and installation of a wayfinding system for Adams, Massachusetts. The wayfinding system will direct vehicular, bicycle, and foot traffic to retail, dining, service businesses, galleries, cultural attractions, parking and other points of interest in and near downtown Adams. The popular Ashuwillticook Rail Trail and Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum's Hoosac Valley Line are both located in the LRRP study area; Greylock Glen, an outdoor recreation destination, is nearby.

Wayfinding will be designed to encourage visitors to these attractions to venture into town. Physical signage, a mobile-first, web-based wayfinding system, and printed materials will be evaluated as possible elements of this system. Physical signage will be placed on public property. The system will follow the Town's existing brand graphics standards to create a unified presentation of the town through visual design.



*Signage on Hoosac and Columbia Streets*

## Process

### Development Phase

- Review current signage and information kiosks in Adams to determine which need to be replaced or improved. Determine if any low-cost temporary signage can be installed at key locations.
- Develop scope of work for physical signage by identifying specific locations, types of signs, and content.
- Develop scope of work for a mobile-first, web-based wayfinding system.
- Develop scope of work for printed materials such as maps and brochures.
- Obtain preliminary approval from the town for the installation of signage at specific locations on public property.
- Work with Community Development and Town Council to prepare Request for Proposals for physical signage design, mobile-first, web-based wayfinding design and printed materials.
- Send RFPs to qualified design firms.
- Evaluate proposals to inform the general range of the design budgets.
- Secure funding for design budget.

### Design Phase

- Evaluate proposals from design providers for physical signage, mobile-first, web-based wayfinding, and printed elements.
- Work with Community Development and Town Council to develop design contracts.
- Award contracts.
- Work with designers to produce conceptual design renderings for approval.
- Present design concepts to town officials to obtain approval to proceed.



*Kiosk by Visitors Center*



*Directional Signage in Downtown*

- Send approved concept renderings for physical signs to qualified sign fabrication and installation companies for bids.
- Evaluate sign fabrication and installation bids to inform second round of funding. Confirm that the Town of Adams will be the entity to secure capital improvement funding for physical signage.
- Secure funding for physical sign production.

#### Implementation Phase

- Install low-cost temporary signage in key locations as needed.
- Work with the town to evaluate physical sign bids and discuss potential regulatory issues.
- Award contract.
- Oversee development and testing of mobile-first, web-based wayfinding.
- Work with the town to oversee production and installation of physical signage.
- Launch mobile-first, web-based wayfinding app.
- Obtain estimates for printed materials and print enough for one year.
- Annually review maps and printed materials to ensure they stay current.
- Remove existing signs that are no longer needed based on the new Wayfinding System.



*Signage on Columbia Street*



*Kiosk on Armory Court*

# Storefront Revitalization

Category	 Private Realm
Location	Downtown Adams
Origin	Downtown Adams group, Adams Arts Advisory Board
Budget	 Low Budget (under \$50,000)  Funding Sources: Donations, Regional Pilot Project Grant, Real Estate Services Technical Assistance, MA Downtown Initiative Program, BIZ-M-Power, Economic Adjustment Assistance, Seed Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk – Owner and Adams Arts Advisory Board buy-in. Release from liability for the storefront owners may be required.
Key Performance Indicators	Number of storefronts improved. Impact each display has on local businesses
Partners & Resources	Building owners, Adams Arts Advisory Board (AAAB), Town of Adams



Businesses on Summer Street

## Diagnostic

The pandemic resulted in numerous businesses being closed in downtown. The appearance of the buildings in downtown Adams is generally of poor quality and unattractive. Improving the look of these buildings will make them more attractive for prospective businesses and visitors.

## Action Item

Target several vacant storefronts to improve the overall look and feel. The plan would concentrate on the display area 3.5.- 5 feet above ground. This is the line of site for pedestrians and passing traffic. We would target the type of business that could go there or would be the best fit for the location. This could also be used to promote a downtown campaign or walkable tour around town or themes (historical, Susan B, train or outdoor recreation material).

As an addition a Townwide campaign with 10" x 10" campaign info in all storefronts, on sidewalks, and street furniture to convey promotional or informational message.

## Process

1. Identify 2 to 4 storefronts that are vacant and in reasonable shape for a revitalization.
2. Determine if owner needs to do any re-painting, improving lighting and minor repairs.
3. Obtain approval and agreement from the storefront owner.
4. After owner repairs, conduct an initial clean-up of the storefront, washing windows and cleaning storefront.
5. Design and print quality for lease signs and storefront (banner) scenes in coordination with the Arts Advisory Board.
6. Advertise on social media and
7. Arrange community installation day.



*Vacant Building on Summer Street*



*Business on Spring Street*

# Food Destination

Category	 Revenue and Sales
Location	Downtown Adams
Origin	Downtown Adams group
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)  Funding Sources: MDAR Urban Agriculture Program, Regional Pilot Project Grant, MassWorks Infrastructure Program, MA Downtown Initiative Program, BIZ-M-POWER, Seed Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 High Risk – Participation of key stakeholders would be essential and ultimately funding sources for implementation.
Key Performance Indicators	Increased number of restaurants, mobile pop-up, and gather locations. Participation of farmers and restaurants. Quantity of local produce used.
Partners & Resources	Local restaurants and farmers, Town of Adams, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, Berkshire Grown, Marty's Local, Food Access Organizations, ProAdams



Closed Restaurant (Firehouse Café)

## Diagnostics

The pandemic caused a significant loss of restaurants in downtown. There are several restaurants that are available for rent currently and more could be made available with investment. In addition, there are numerous local farmers that could use a way to connect with the local restaurants and distribute their food. Establishing the town as a food destination would lead to an increase in visitation and further economic development.

## Action Items

This project establishes a connection to food through a food and wellness hub, food innovation district, and connecting restaurants to local farmers. The project can be sub-divided into several distinct components:

- A. The Food Innovation District ([www.mausert.com/food-innovation-district.html](http://www.mausert.com/food-innovation-district.html)) links and coordinates local farms, restaurants, food orientated businesses, anchor institutions and community through events and activities to spur regional food system development and increase access to local and healthy food.
- B. In conjunction with the Streeteries (Pop-up Stores project) long term locations for outdoor dining will be designated
- C. In conjunction with the Cultural District (Cultural District Project) culinary art and dining opportunities will be developed with a marketing strategy with a mix of different communication methods.
- D. Additional support will be researched, including restaurant support programs; technical Assistance; and funding mechanisms;
- E. The proposed Food and Wellness Hub ([www.foodandwellnesshub.com](http://www.foodandwellnesshub.com)) in downtown Adams may be a central location for coordination of the food destination activities.

The activities result in development of four key community and economic growth sectors - Wellness, Tourism, creative economy and lifestyle.

A local Steering Committee has already been formed with representation from local restaurant; local farm; Town of Adams and the Regional Agricultural planning organization.



*Corner Lunch and Shire Donuts on Summer Street*



*Rainbow Shack on Summer Street*

## Process

Step for setting up the Food Destination Adams will include four to six planning and workshop meetings at the appropriate stages (or regular monthly /bimonthly intervals) to bring together all stakeholders involved including the public.

1.Complete list of farms in the wider North County area and restaurants in Adams.

2.Coordinate list of events and downtown activities (LRRP Downtown Events project)

3.Conduct a needs assessment to determine appropriate scale, extent and wider location

4.Identify assets and Opportunities of current infrastructure to define the focus, vision and opportunities for further planning and development.

5.Identify Board of Health Requirements amend to allow expanded agriculture and food related uses.

6.Identify Town Zoning and amend to allow expanded agriculture and food related uses

7.Develop the vision defining the scope, intent, and goals and identity(brand)as it relates to other initiatives in the context of a public conversation, with input from a variety of stakeholders.

8.Obtain commitments from these further stakeholders to “partner” and engage as a core stakeholder group to develop the Innovation District -

- Economic Development agencies
- Higher Education Institutions
- Venture/Angel/Regional investors



*AJ's Trailside Pub*



*Future Food Hub on Park Street*

## Process (cont.)

9. Explore available and potential programs, funding, approaches to entice businesses to form clusters business attraction and economic development including

- A Restaurant and farmers Support Program
- Technical Assistance/ Initiative for Food Service and Restaurant Businesses and farms
- Provide access to funding programs and technical assistance.

10. Determine legal structure to establish a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization to operate and to take on this project/endeavor.

11. Meetings will be held based on the EPA's agenda and workshop tasks noted in their Local Foods, Local Places Toolkit –

- Initial Workshop and Planning meeting
- Planning meeting #2 – determination of goals
- Planning meeting #3 – Logistics, outreach plan and preparation for convening
- Workshop Session #1 – Community values, vision and goals
- Workshop Session #2 – Action Brainstorming
- Workshop Session #3 – Action Planning

12. Publish a Community Action Plan.






*Closed Restaurant (Red Carpet)*



*Closed Restaurant (Miss Adams Diner)*

# Pop-up Stores

Category	 Revenue and Sales
Location	Downtown
Origin	Downtown Adams group
Budget	 Low Budget (under \$50,000) Funding Sources: Regional Pilot Project Grant, Real Estate Services Technical Assistance, MA Downtown Initiative Program, Seed Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Owner buy-in is essential. Release from liability for the storefront owners may be required, Budget.
Key Performance Indicators	Number of storefronts; mobile pop-up; and gathering locations. Potentially how many businesses are permanently created would be a final performance indicator.
Partners & Resources	Building owners, Adams Arts Advisory Board (AAAB), Town of Adams, DPW, Police, ProAdams



*Food Truck at Visitor's Center*

## Diagnostics

Pop-up stores offer a great opportunity for businesses to sell their wares during events and at high-visitation times. There are currently no opportunities (or very limited) for businesses to open a pop-up store for a day. Having pop-up stores will bring people to the downtown and help support new and existing businesses. There are numerous spaces throughout the downtown that could be utilized by pop-up stores, including the Visitor's Center parking lot and lawn, Adams Station, municipal parks, vacant lots, and vacant storefronts.



*Visitor's Center Lawn*

## Action Item

Create opportunities for business to sell and market at existing high traffic areas and events like the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail; Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum's Adams Station; and annual events through:

- Pop-up Stores in existing vacant stores for Holiday Marketplace (Nov – Dec);
- Adams Summer Marketplace (June through September) with Pre designated Mobile pop-up locations and wayfinding during downtown events to attract foot traffic to Park and Summer Street.
- Pop-up outdoor gathering and/or eating places called Adams Streeteries and Food Trucks.



*Vacant Lot on Park Street*

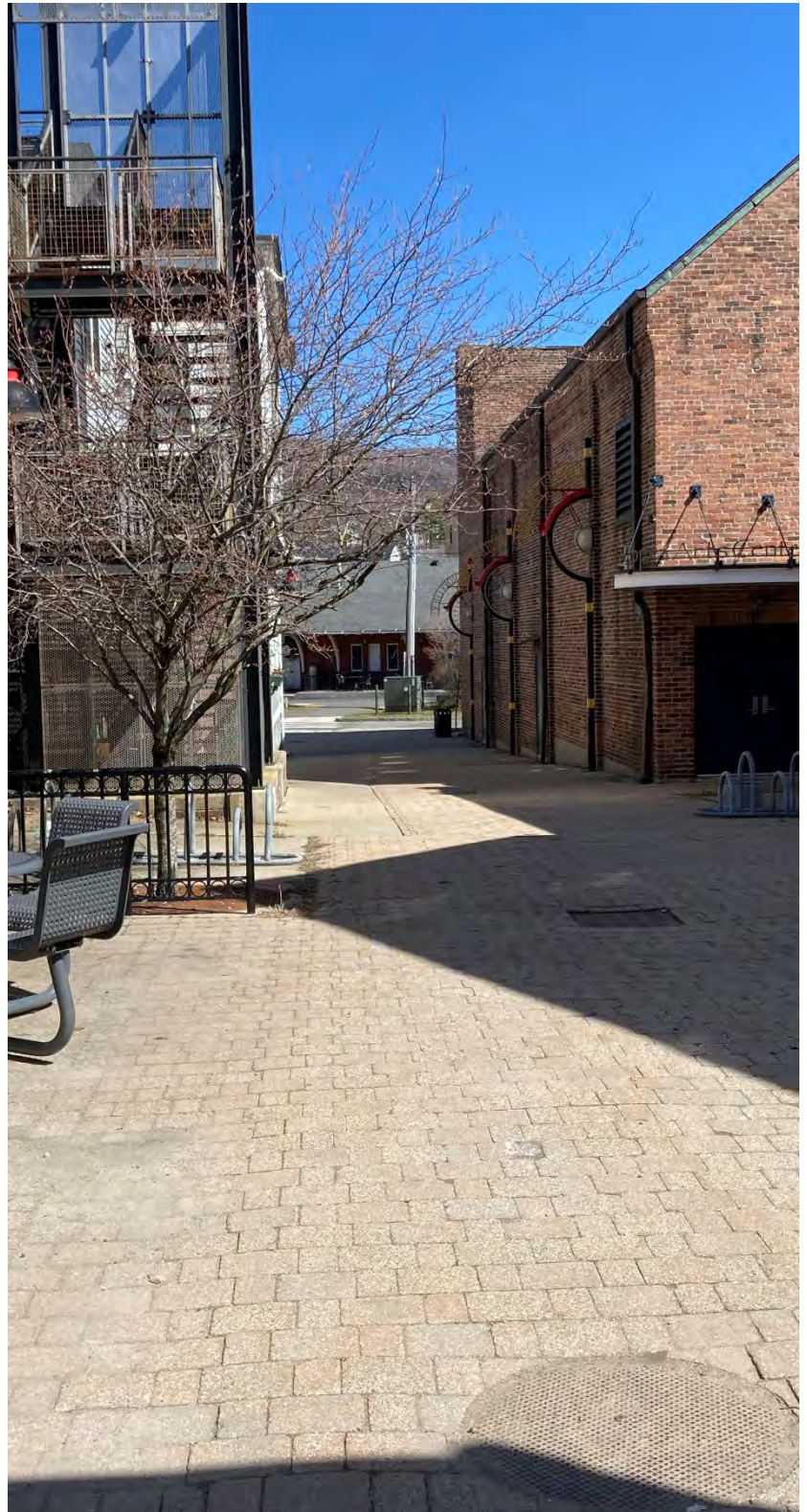
## Process

### Steps for Holiday Marketplace

- Review downtowns vacant storefront database and select 2 to 4 properties on Park and Summer Street.
- Approach owners to determine their plans and whether unit is occupiable.
- If unit is not occupiable, review with Owner/Building Commissioner requirements for occupancy
- Determine budget – occupancy budget; insurance; utilities.
- Set dates – Holiday Marketplace (November / December)
- Social Marketing – rename Adams Open Air Market groups and invite vendors
- Coordinate with ProAdams on other downtown marketing channels.
- Update existing pop-up applications including outlining vendor responsibilities
- Arrange for logistic transfer (keys, utilities etc)

### Steps for Adams Summer Marketplaces

- Review downtowns vacant storefront database and select 2 to 4 properties on Park and Summer Street.
- Approach owners to determine their plans and whether unit is occupiable.
- If unit is not occupiable, review with Owner/Building Commissioner requirements for occupancy
- Work with AAAB to develop designs for mobile pop-up location prototype(s)
- Determine budget – occupancy budget; insurance; utilities.
- Set dates – Holiday Marketplace (June through September)



*Amory Court*

#### Process (cont.)

- Co-ordinate with Downtown Events (ProAdams) and Hoosac Valley Train for specific dates / themes.
- Social Media Marketing
- Coordinate with ProAdams on other downtown marketing channels and wayfinding from town events.

#### Steps for Adams Streeteries (May through October)

- Coordinate with Town of Adams to determine locations for Streeteries and food trucks.
- Work with AAAB to create designs for Streeteries and develop mobile pop-up location prototype(s).
- Determine budget – occupancy budget; insurance; utilities.
- Co-ordinate with restaurants / Food Destination District for specific dates / themes.
- Co-ordinate with Downtown Events (ProAdams) for to determine installation dates and promotion.
- Social Media Marketing
- Determine logistics, police detail, street sweeping, insurance liability etc. and storage depending on permanence of installation.



*Billboard for Wi*

# Adams Kickstart

Category	 Revenue and Sales
Location	Downtown Adams
Origin	ProAdams
Budget	 <p>Low Budget (under \$50,000) to start. Unclear ongoing operational costs</p> <p>Funding Sources: Regional Pilot Project Grant, Real Estate Services Technical Assistance, MA Downtown Initiative Program, TDI Creative Catalyst, BIZ-M-POWER, Economic Adjustment Assistance, Seed Grant, Urban Agenda Grant Program</p>
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 <p>Low Risk – insufficient number of landlords make vacant spaces available. Inability to waive fees and regulatory restrictions, cost of liability insurance, and lack of funding.</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Number and character of new start-ups, landlord satisfaction, longevity and growth of start-ups, impact on existing businesses
Partners & Resources	Town of Adams Community Development and code enforcement officers; landlords; existing businesses; and other community organizations will be involved.



*Vacant Store on Hoosac Street*

## Diagnostic

There are numerous vacant storefronts in Adams. Many of these are the result of business closures associated with the pandemic. Starting a new business, especially during the pandemic, is a challenge. Providing start-up businesses the incentive of free rent for a few months, and a willing landlord, can help them establish themselves and prove the business is viable

## Action Item

The Adams Kickstart program will work to fill currently vacant storefronts in the downtown Adams LRRP Study Area. Program managers will work with landlords to offer rent-free spaces to new startup tenants at no risk to landlords.

Space leasing will be on a 30-day rolling basis that allows landlords who have found a paying tenant to legally give 30-days notice to non-paying or non-complying tenants. Landlords may also continue to market spaces while short-term tenants are in place. Tenants will be expected to pay utilities, provide their own fixtures, perform any necessary minor space renovations and perform basic maintenance of their space. Over time, successful tenants will begin to pay a portion of fair-market rent.

Program managers will work with the Town of Adams to reduce new business fees, taxes, and regulatory hurdles. The possible development of a low-cost umbrella business liability insurance policy, including funding, will be explored.

The program will be marketed to artists, artisans, creative economy producers/makers, independent retailers, and other start-up ventures within a 50-mile radius.



*Storefronts on Park Street*

## Process

- Secure funding for start-up costs including legal fees, marketing and project liability insurance.
- Prepare introductory program information materials.
- Negotiate with Town of Adams to obtain an agreement to reduce or eliminate fees and taxes and minimize regulatory hurdles.
- Negotiate with insurance providers for group liability.
- Prepare 30-day rolling lease, future payment schedules and other necessary legal documents.
- Hold face-to-face meeting with landlords to introduce the program and obtain agreements to participate.
- Develop marketing plan to include PR, website, social media, and search engine marketing targeting start-up businesses.
- Establish procedure to screen and evaluate prospective tenants and match them to an available vacant space.
- Secure funding for on-going costs, including marketing and legal fees.
- Establish an on-going program management process for tracking and reporting results, conducting periodic interviews with tenants and landlords to ensure satisfaction, and to analyze the effectiveness of the marketing.



*Vacant Store on Summer Street*



*Vacant Store on Summer Street*

# Guide to Setting Up a Business

Category	 Tenant Mix
Location	Town of Adams
Origin	Downtown Adams group
Budget	 Low Budget (Under \$50,000) Funding Source: Seed Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Business Recruitment, Business Retention and Regulatory Environment. Completion of each guide.
Partners & Resources	The process is jointly run with three members of the Downtown Adams group (with Attorney, Business Consultant and Architect/Developer) and the Town of Adams (Community Development; Zoning and Planning) with Nico Dery of the North Adams Chamber of Commerce and Ben Lamb from 1Berkshire.



Min-mall on Spring Street

## Diagnostic

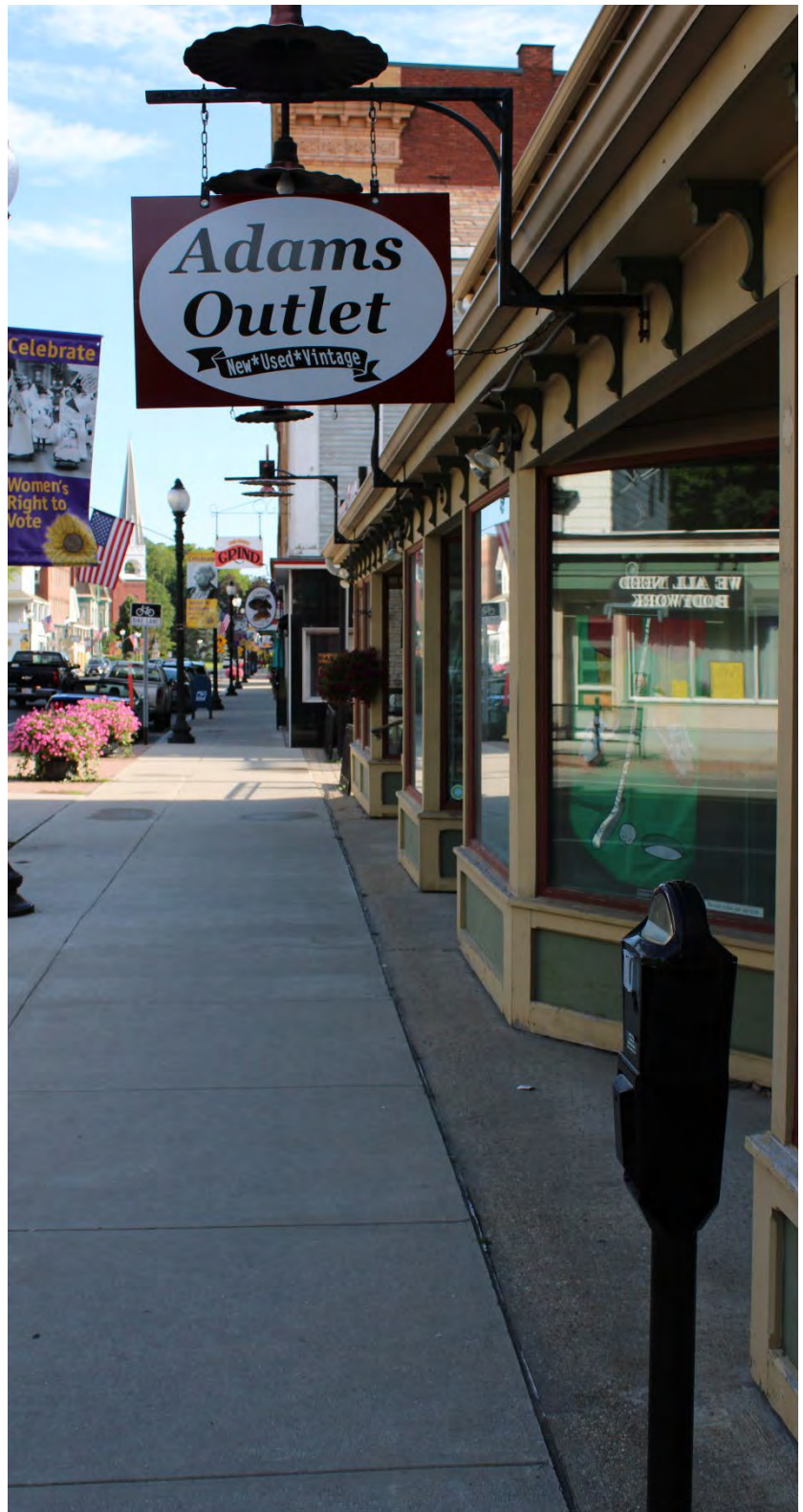
When the pandemic started, business shut down. This resulted in numerous vacant storefronts and offices within the downtown area. In order to get new businesses to open in Adams, the town and others need to make it easier for businesses to start. Updating the numerous guides on starting a business in Adams to reflect current regulations and requirements will aid in bringing businesses to town and improve the economic environment.

## Action Item

Refine and update and complete the following three guides – Guide to setting a Business and Business Investment Guide by the Downtown Adams group and the Town of Adams’ “The Roadmap to Ribbon Cutting”. As part of the process provide suggestions on how the regulatory environment can be improved as it interfaces with business. The aim is to provide readily available information to start-ups as well as resources needed for business retention, either through updated or consolidated guides. At the end of the process a range of regulatory recommendations will also be presented.

## Process

1. Collect together and distribute all the guides to 8 members of the reviewing team. The consists of representatives from the Town of Adams, North Adams Chamber of Commerce, Berkshire1, Planning Board, Zoning Board and from downtown Adams an Attorney, Business consultant, and Architect/Developer.
2. Complete a review meeting with the recommendations for any changes/consolidation of the various reports.
3. Issue the preliminary recommendations to local businesses prior to having a meeting with the businesses to review the guides and recommendations.
4. Make further outreach to the community in person and online on any issues that arise from the review of the Guidelines.
5. Make final recommendations and to the presentations to the business community, Selectboard and general public.



*Businesses on Park Street.*

# Survey Visitors

Category	 Tenant Mix
Location	Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, Berkshire Scenic Railroad Museum, Greylock Glen
Origin	Carrie Burnett, ProAdams
Budget	 Low Budget (Less than \$50,000) Funding Source: Donations, Seed Grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk – Insufficient participation may result in statistically unreliable results..
Key Performance Indicators	Survey respondents, a complete picture of visitors, identification of amenities needed, improvements needed to the downtown and visitor destinations
Partners & Resources	Town of Adams, Berkshire Scenic Railroad Museum, Berkshire Bike Path Council, Thunderbolt Ski Runners



*Ashuwillticook Rail Trail sign*

## Diagnostic

The Town of Adams has several key destinations for visitors; the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail which runs through downtown, the Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum's Hoosac Valley Line, which terminates in downtown, and Greylock Glen, which is an outdoor recreation area which currently provides hiking, mountain biking, skiing, and snowmobiling trails, and is only a few minute drive from downtown. The visitors to these destinations are an untapped resource for improving the economy of downtown.

Outdoor Recreation is a major component of the visitors that come to the Berkshire region, but often goes untapped as economic development. During the pandemic, the visitors to the outdoor recreation facilities increased dramatically. With further expansion of Greylock Glen and the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail planned, more visitors will be coming to the area.

When the pandemic hit, local businesses were shuttered, and the downtown economy slowed. Tapping into the visitors to the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum, and Greylock Glen can help the downtown recover economically from the pandemic.

## Action Item

implementation of a User Needs Survey for the Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum, Greylock Glen and the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail.

1. The objectives of the studies will be to determine the characteristics of users of these areas. This would include residence, demographics and usage patterns (type and frequency of activity) and their perceptions in terms of enjoyability, safety, cleanliness and maintenance.

2. Determine, of the three destinations used, what amenities are desired by users that could bring them into and through Adams.

3. Determine the spending patterns of trail users, how much they spend on equipment, meals, snacks, lodging in conjunction with their trail activities, and where they might stop or stay.



Greylock Glen

## Process

- Use the questionnaire developed by MassDOT and DCR for use on trails in other parts of the Commonwealth as the basis of the survey.
- Make minor adjustments to create separate surveys for use at the three destinations: Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum and Greylock Glen.
- Post signage around the destinations asking visitors to participate in the survey.
- Print a simple card offering people a chance to win a gift card to an Adams restaurant and/or retailer, for participating in the survey. The card will include Give a QR code and URL to an online survey.
- Subscribe to Survey Monkey or another online survey tool and set up surveys on that platform.
- Purchase a dozen or so \$25 gift cards and award them at the end of the survey period.
- At the end of the survey period, run statistical analyses and produce a report. The report will be made available to anyone interested.
- Use the results to aid in marketing of the town and destinations
- Use the results to aid in business recruitment to the downtown by promoting the needs of the visitors.



*Adams Station – Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum's Adams Station*



*Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Sign*

# Cultural District Designation

Category	 Culture/Arts
Location	Downtown Adams
Origin	Adams Arts Advisory Board (AAAB)/Town of Adams
Budget	 Low Budget (under \$50,000)  Funding Source: Donations, Town of Adams, Cultural Facilities Fund (Feasibility and Technical Assistance Grants), Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, MA Downtown Initiative Program, TDI Creative Catalyst, Competitive Tourism Grants, Seed Grant, William J. & Margery S. Barrett Fund
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Moderate Risk– The Town of Adams/AAAB may not qualify for designation
Key Performance Indicators	Culturally related businesses. Tracking visitors and attendance as the district is promoted.
Partners & Resources	Town of Adams Community Development, Adams Board of Selectmen, Adams Arts Advisory Board, the Downtown Adams group, ProAdams, and Mass Cultural Council, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission



Adams Theater on Park Street

## Diagnostic

Visitation to downtown Adams declined during the pandemic and local businesses closed. Currently, and even before the pandemic, the cultural assets of Adams were not fully recognized nor promoted. By establishing a Cultural District, the Town of Adams can begin to better showcase its under-recognized cultural assets and attract visitors downtown. A Cultural District will also help promote local non-cultural businesses such as retailers and restaurants.

## Action Items

The purpose of the Adams Cultural District designation project is to design, develop and build a vital Cultural District in the LRRP study area for the Town of Adams. The Cultural District will be an additional attraction to the town and will encourage foot traffic in Adams. The Cultural District will be working closely with the Wayfinding Project, the Renew Adams Project, the Public Space Project, and the Downtown Events Programming Projects to promote the Town assets.

Goals are:

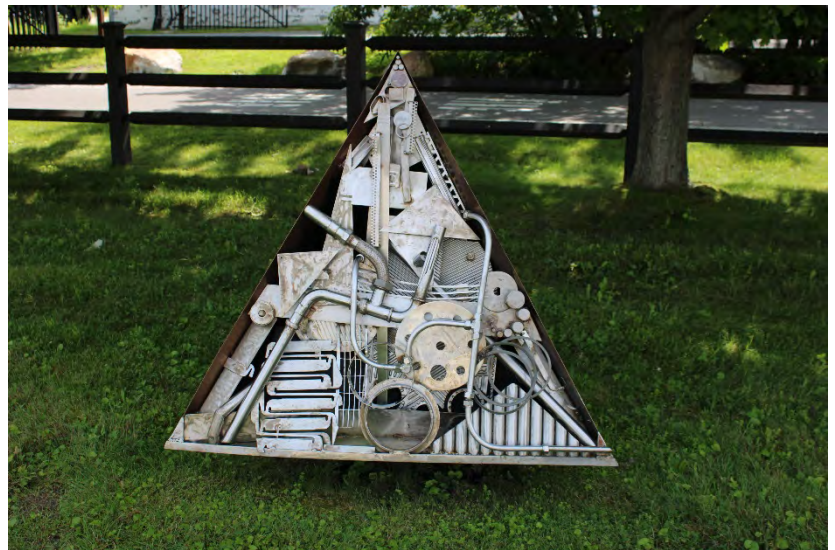
- Attract artists and cultural enterprises
- Encourage business and job development
- Establish the district as a tourist destination
- Preserve and reuse historic buildings
- Enhance property values
- Foster local cultural development

An example strategy is to

- a) hold well publicized events such as open artist studios & galleries, that will garner increasing attention to the growing cultural vibrancy of Adams
- b) cross market cultural events with restaurants and other businesses (ie dinner and a show offerings)
- c) create unique cultural experiences that are unique to Adams that play to our natural resources (Greylock, Hoosic River, Rail Trail etc) and unique built infrastructure (mills, library, commercial, and church buildings, bike path, etc), and of course Susan B. Anthony.



*Real Eyes Gallery on Park Street*



*Sculpture on Depot Street*

## Process

### Development Phase

- The AAAB will take a leading role in the development of a Cultural District map and all documentation needed to complete an application for approval with the State in conjunction with the Town of Adams.
- Contact and catalog culturally connected assets and businesses within the LRRP study area.
- Develop a map of the cultural district that fits the criteria set out by the State Cultural District Program.
- Contact local and state officials for support and endorsements.
- Contact the State Cultural Council (Luis Cotto Cultural District Program Manager) and establish a working relationship.

### Design Phase

- Design a map of the proposed Cultural District within the LRRP study area.
- Design a promotional campaign for the District that fits with the other newly developed promotional material that will be generated through the LRRP programs.

### Implementation Phase

- Present documentation and application to Town Board of Selectmen for approval.
- Present same documentation and application to State Cultural Council for approval.
- The AAAB would meet with the existing cultural community and work to link them together as a cooperative marketing entity through the other LRRP programs.



*Mural on Park Street*



*Thunderbolt Ski Museum*

# Events Programming & Marketing

Category	 Culture/ Arts
Location	Downtown Adams
Origin	ProAdams
Budget	 Low Budget (under \$50,000) Funding Sources: Donations, Regional Pilot Project Grant, William J. & Margery S. Barrett Fund
Timeframe	 Short Term (<5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk – Difficulty securing funding for the project. Town regulatory restrictions around public event permitting, legal and liability issues, and volunteer participation are also concerns.
Key Performance Indicators	Track interest in events on social media and through performance of Google Ads. Event attendance and attendees’ residence (i.e., locals versus visitors). Observations and business owners’ reports about the effect of events on sales/revenue.
Partners & Resources	Adams Events Committee, Adams Theater, other event organizers. the Town of Adams, Mass DCR, community organizations, and community-minded volunteers.



*Ramblefest*

### Diagnostic

In downtown Adams, there are several large events - Ramblefest and Thunderfest. These mostly attract locals and do not bring new visitors to the downtown, nor do the local businesses see an increase in usage. Having more large events, many small events, and spreading them out throughout the downtown may help businesses that are struggling due to the pandemic.

### Action Items

This project will use events and creative marketing to encourage foot traffic in the LRRP study area of downtown Adams. The project will result in a major event being scheduled each month and smaller events weekly. Project leaders will coordinate with organizers of established events to help them bolster their marketing with the goal of increasing attendance. Leaders will monitor attendance data and collect feedback from attendees to identify opportunities for improvement. New events will be created to fill an evolving calendar over time. The group will encourage and assist organizations and businesses create and promote new events downtown, while being careful to avoid timing, competitive, and thematic conflicts. When possible, events will be free and designed and marketed to appeal not only to residents, but also tourists and people from surrounding communities. Outdoor events at the Visitor Center and Armory Court will leverage the appeal of two popular Adams sites: The Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, which brings thousands of walkers and bicyclists to town each year, and the Berkshire Scenic Railway Museum (BSRM), which serves 8,000 visitors annually with scenic train rides. While these attractions are well-used, they do not currently draw people further into town. This project will work to change that by planning events that increase interest in happenings along main street corridors. The project will also create and maintain an online, mobile-friendly calendar of events that will serve as an essential marketing tool and help local organizations coordinate event planning.



*Adams Free Movies Sign*

## Process

- Identify existing Adams' event organizers and invite them to participate in the program.
- Contact service and retail businesses, cultural organizations, artists, and craftspeople in Adams not currently offering public events and explore their interest in doing so (e.g., yoga and fitness classes, art shows, craft fairs).
- Brainstorm new events that can fill an annual calendar for downtown Adams.
- Develop a budget for new events.
- Research and select technology to develop an online calendar. If possible, develop and maintain the calendar with assistance from volunteers. If volunteers are not available, identify a web developer and obtain budget estimates.
- Create a marketing plan for the event calendar, emphasizing low- and no-cost strategies such as the use of ProAdams' Google Ads Grant and low-cost social media advertising.
- Work with the Town to reduce or eliminate single-day event permits, regulatory hurdles, and police presence fees. Explore the possibility of having the Town provide liability insurance for events on public property.
- Seek funding to pay for calendar technology, marketing, insurance, and performer fees.
- Create a management system to ensure volunteer staffing at events and long-term viability of the program.
- Work with the Town of Adams to secure capital funds to make physical improvements to the Visitor Center's south-facing porch, including installation of wind screens on the east and west, installation of overhead infrared heaters, a sound system, and stage lighting to make it suitable for year-round performances.



*Adams Ramblefest*



*Adams Thunderfest*

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Host a downtown cultural event to support businesses and show positive change	124
Host a block party to support ground floor activation efforts downtown	129

## Massachusetts DHCD Rapid Recovery Plan Program BUSINESS SURVEY REPORT



This report provides the results of a business survey conducted during March and April of 2021. The survey is part of a program launched by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development to help communities develop Rapid Recovery Plans for downtowns and commercial districts. The survey was directed to owners or other appropriate representatives of business establishments located in the targeted commercial areas. (For Data Tables, see page 9.)

### Adams

Downtown Adams

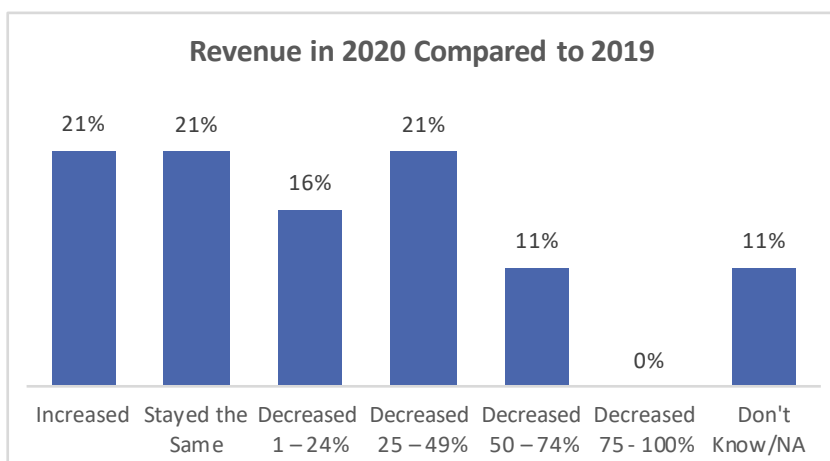
Responses: 19

### Impacts of COVID-19

#### Decline in Business Revenue

48% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019.

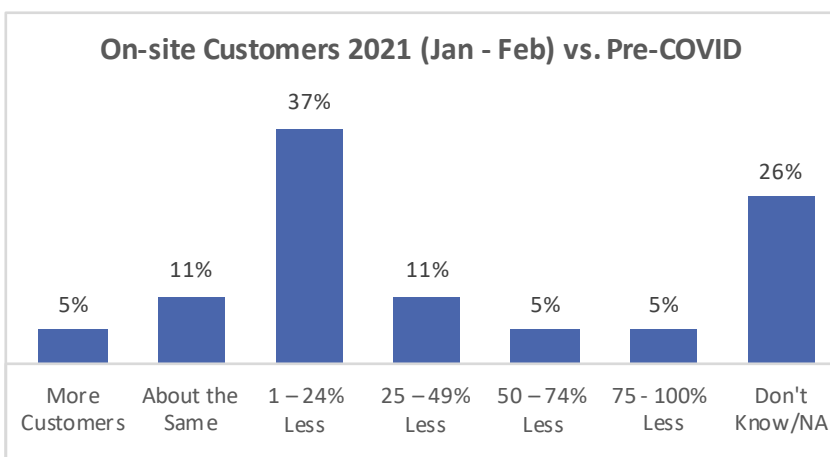
For 32% of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more.



#### Less Foot Traffic in Commercial Area

58% of businesses had less on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID.

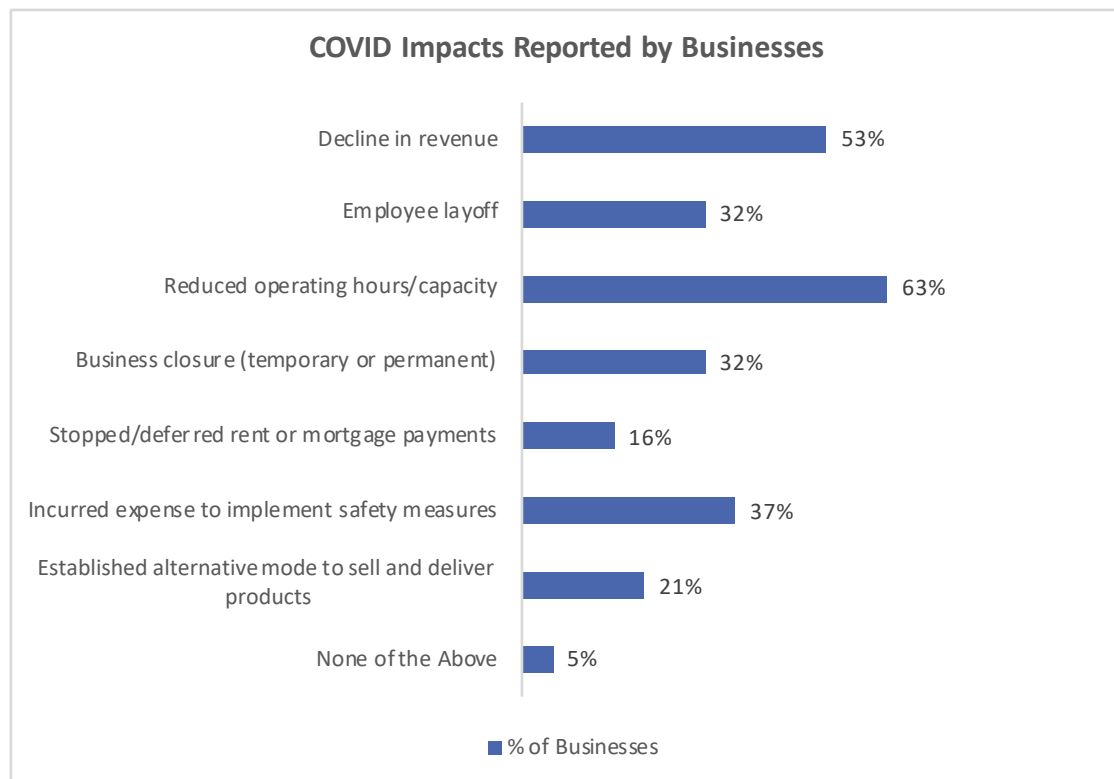
21% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more.



## Impacts of COVID-19 (cont'd)

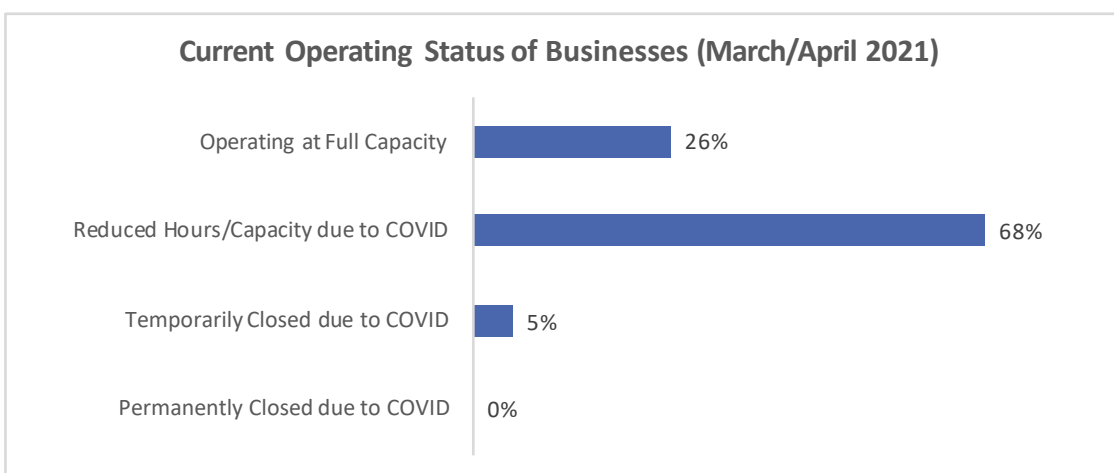
### Reported Impacts

95% of businesses reported being impacted by COVID.



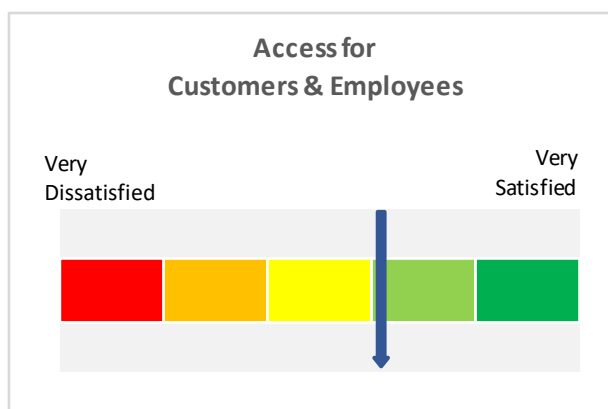
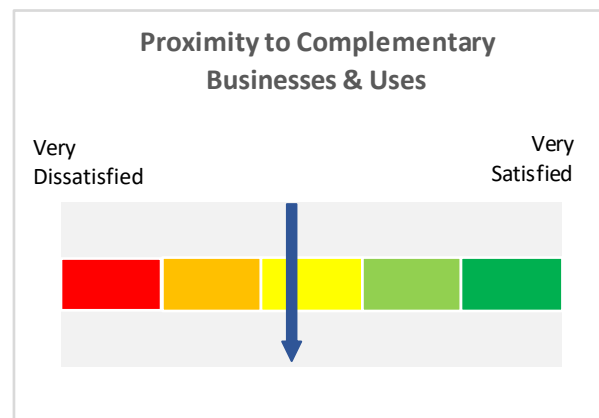
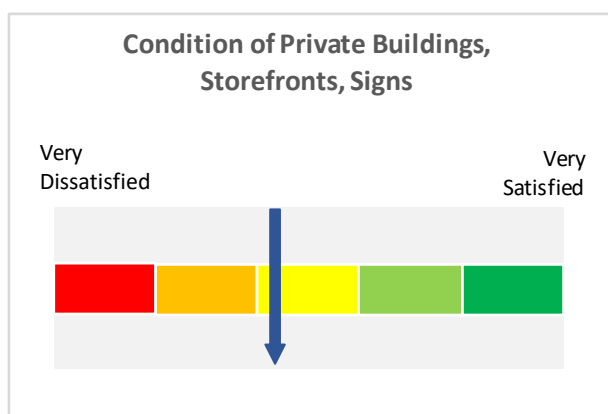
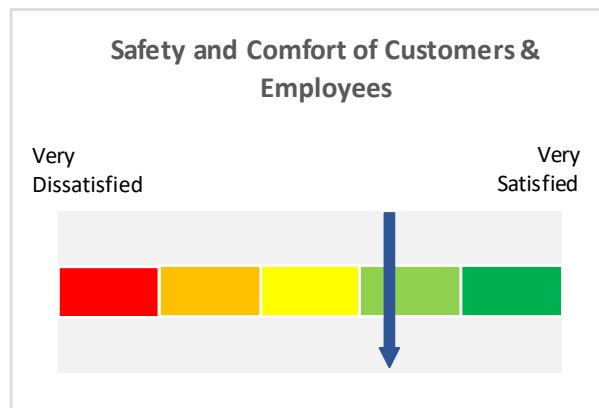
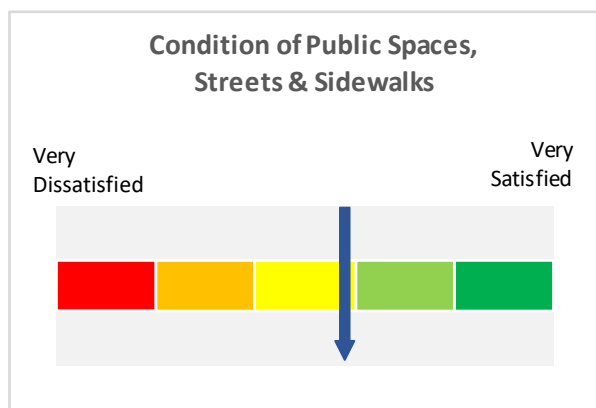
### Operating Status

At the time of the survey, 74% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed



## Business Satisfaction with Commercial District

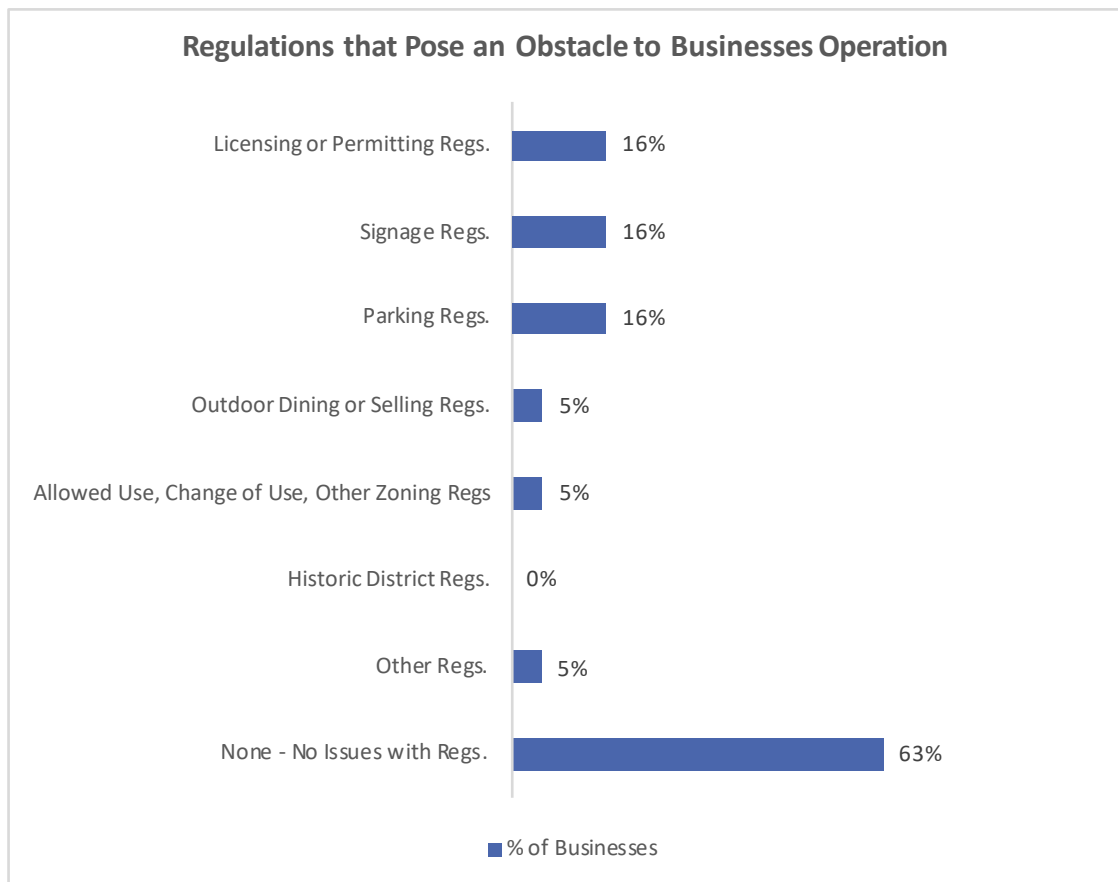
The charts below illustrate the average satisfaction rating among respondents regarding various elements.



## Business Satisfaction with Commercial District (cont'd)

### Regulatory Environment

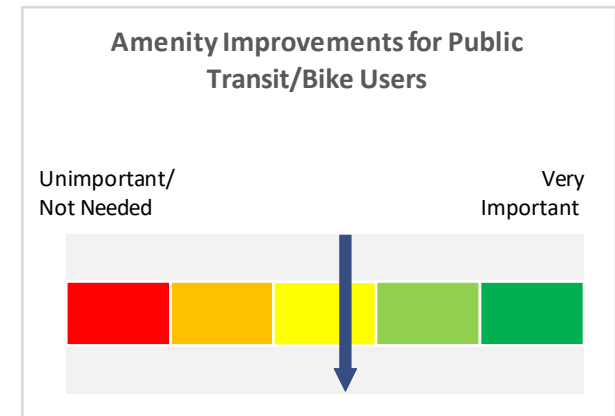
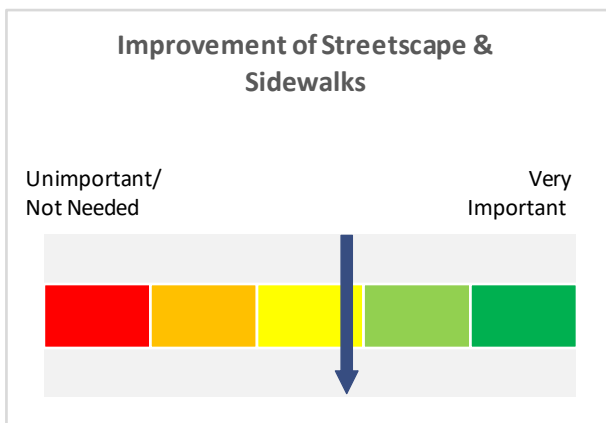
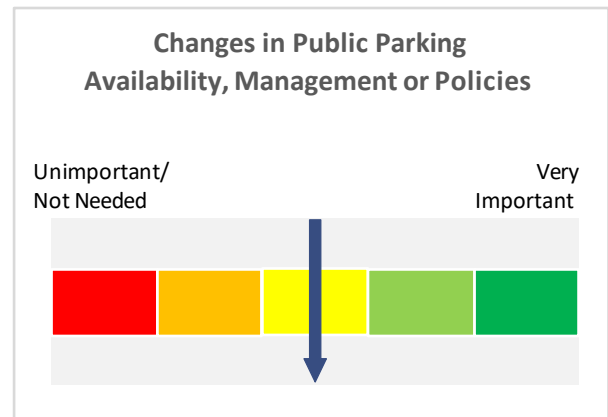
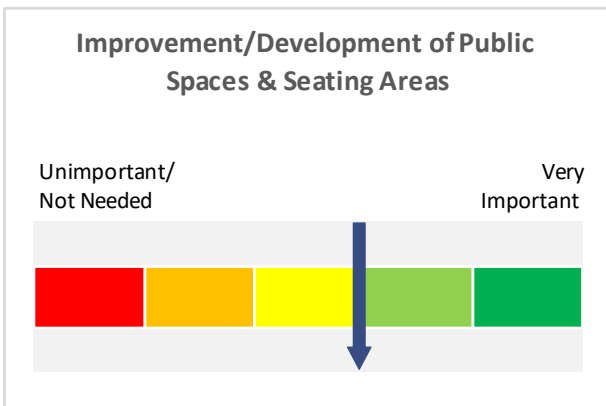
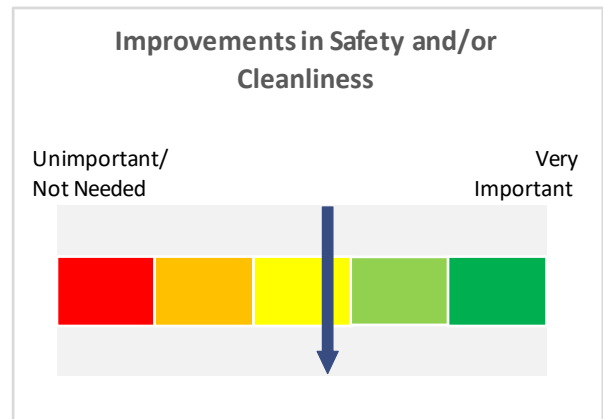
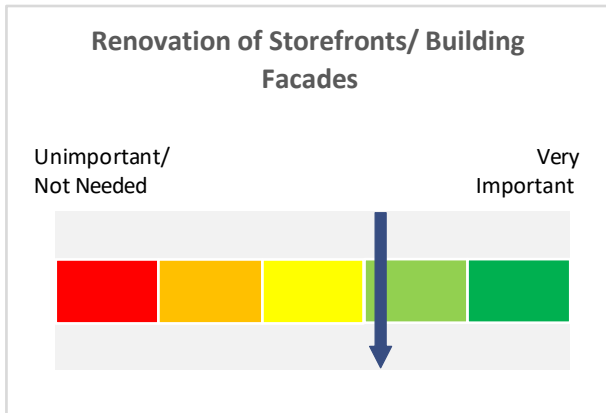
37% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation.



## Business Input Related to Possible Strategies

### Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access

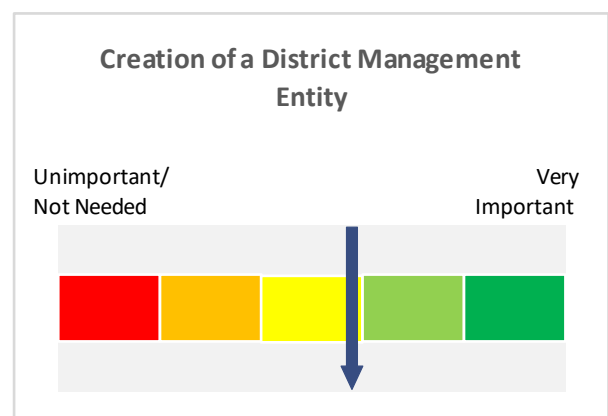
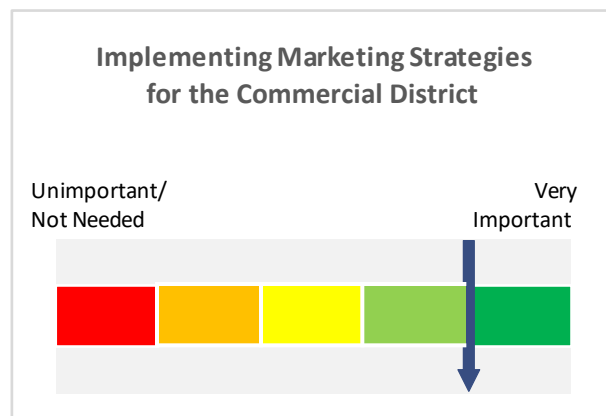
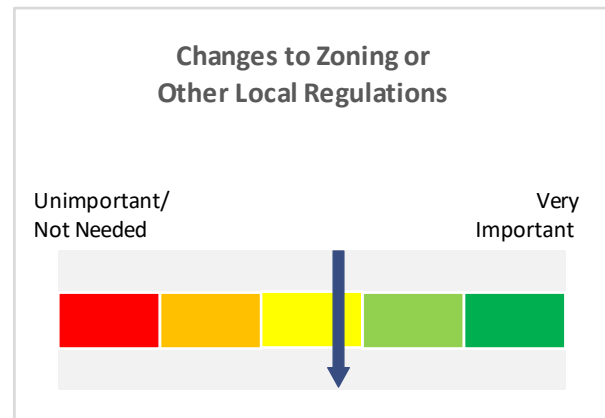
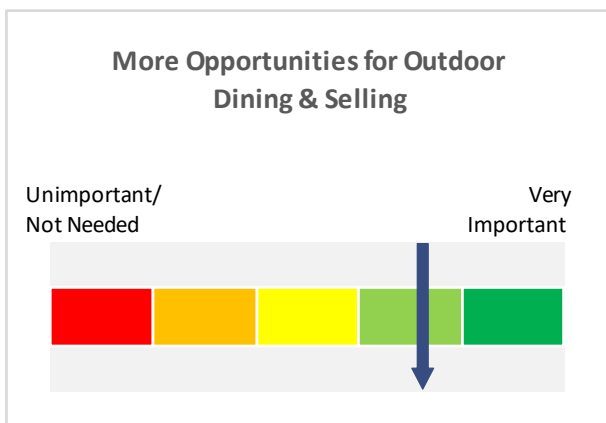
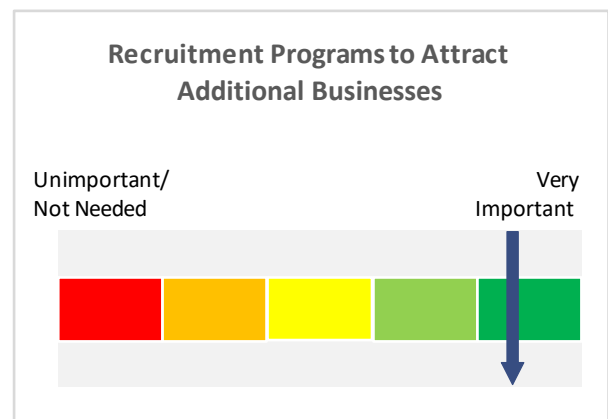
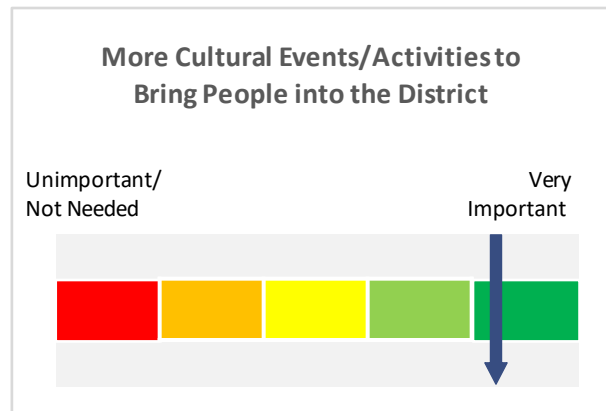
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



## Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

### Attraction/Retention of Customers and Businesses

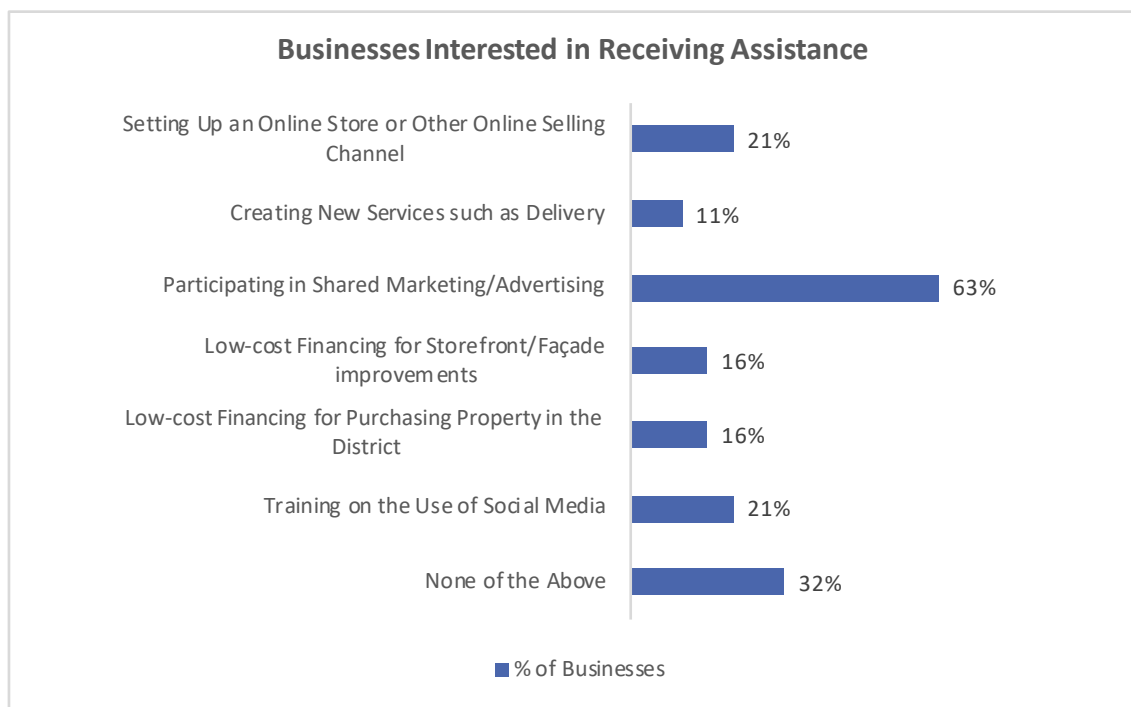
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



## Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

### Businesses Support

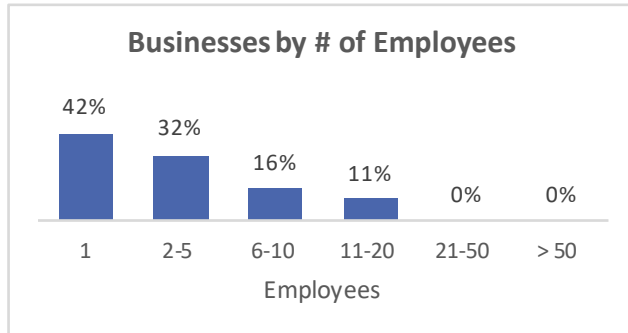
68% of businesses expressed interest in receiving some kind of assistance.



## Business Characteristics

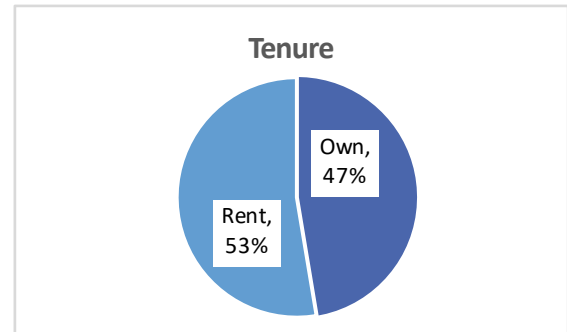
### Business Size

74% of businesses are microenterprises ( $\leq 5$  employees).



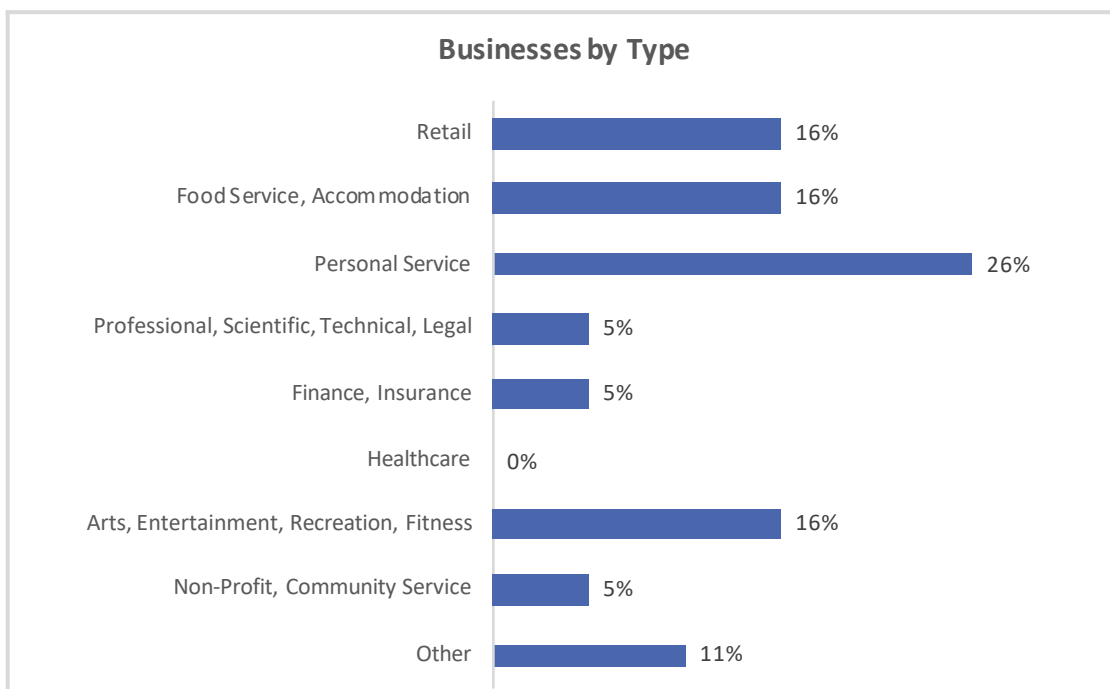
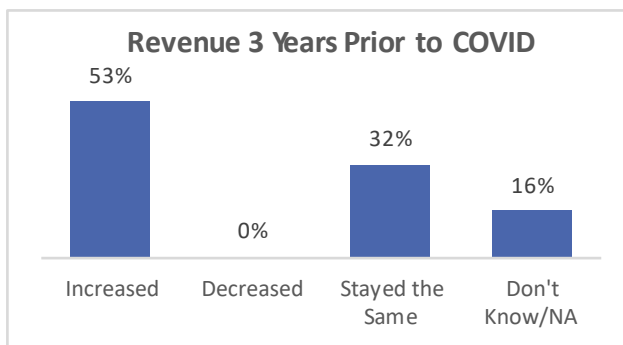
### Business Tenure

53% of businesses rent their space.



### Revenue Trend Prior to COVID

53% of businesses reported increase in revenue during the 3 years prior to COVID.



## Business Survey Results - Data Tables

### Community Where Targeted Downtown or Commercial District is Located

1. Please select the community where your business is located.

Adams	19
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### Business Characteristics & Satisfaction with Commercial Area

2. Including yourself, how many people did your business employ prior to COVID (February 2020), including both full-time and part-time?

1	8	42%
2 to 5	6	32%
6 to 10	3	16%
11 to 20	2	11%
21 to 50	0	0%
More than 50	0	0%
Total	19	100%

3. Does your business own or rent the space where it operates?

Own	9	47%
Rent	10	53%
Total	19	100%

4. During the 3 years prior to COVID, had your business revenue . . .?

Increased	10	53%
Decreased	0	0%
Stayed about the Same	6	32%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	3	16%
Total	19	100%

5. Please select the category that best fits your business.

Retail (NAICS 44-45)	3	16%
Food Service (restaurants, bars), Accommodation (NAICS 72)	3	16%
Personal Service (hair, skin, nails, dry cleaning) (NAICS 81)	5	26%
Professional Scientific, Technical, Legal (NAICS 54)	1	5%
Finance, Insurance (NAICS 52)	1	5%
Healthcare (medical, dental, other health practitioners) (NAICS 62)	0	0%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Fitness (NAICS 71)	3	16%
Non-Profit, Community Services	1	5%
Other	2	11%
Total	19	100%

**6. Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of the Downtown or Commercial District where your business is located.**

**Condition of public spaces, streets, sidewalks**

Very Dissatisfied	1	5%
Dissatisfied	2	11%
Neutral	7	37%
Satisfied	8	42%
Very Satisfied	1	5%
Total	19	100%

**Condition of Private Buildings, Facades, Storefronts, Signage**

Very Dissatisfied	1	5%
Dissatisfied	7	37%
Neutral	7	37%
Satisfied	4	21%
Very Satisfied	0	0%
Total	19	100%

**Access for Customers & Employees**

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	3	16%
Neutral	4	21%
Satisfied	12	63%
Very Satisfied	0	0%
Total	19	100%

**Safety and Comfort of Customers & Employees**

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	2	11%
Neutral	6	32%
Satisfied	8	42%
Very Satisfied	3	16%
Total	19	100%

**Proximity to Complementary Businesses or Uses**

Very Dissatisfied	3	16%
Dissatisfied	3	16%
Neutral	8	42%
Satisfied	4	21%
Very Satisfied	1	5%
Total	19	100%

**7. Do any local regulations (not related to COVID) pose an obstacle to your business operation?**

Licensing or permitting regulations	3	16%
Signage regulations	3	16%
Parking regulations	3	16%
Outdoor dining or selling regulations	1	5%
Allowed uses, change of use or other zoning regulations	1	5%
Historic District regulations	0	0%
Other regulations (not related to COVID)	1	5%
None - No Issues with regulations	12	63%

**Impacts of COVID**

**8. Did your business experience any of the following due to COVID? Select All that apply.**

Decline in revenue	10	53%
Employee layoff	6	32%
Reduced operating hours/capacity	12	63%
Business closure (temporary or permanent)	6	32%
Stopped/deferred rent or mortgage payments	3	16%
Incurred expense to implement safety measures	7	37%
Established alternative mode to sell and deliver products (on-line platforms, delivery, etc.)	4	21%
None of the Above	1	5%

**9. How did your 2020 business revenue compare to your 2019 revenue?**

Increased compared to 2019	4	21%
Stayed about the same as 2019	4	21%
Decreased 1 – 24% compared to 2019	3	16%
Decreased 25 – 49% compared to 2019	4	21%
Decreased 75 - 100% compared to 2019	2	11%
Decreased 50 – 74% compared to 2019	0	0%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	2	11%
Total	19	100%

**10. Please estimate how the number of customers that physically came to your business in January and February 2021 compares to before COVID.**

More customers than before COVID	1	5%
About the same number as before COVID	2	11%
1 – 24% less customers than before COVID	7	37%
25 – 49% less customers than before COVID	2	11%
50 – 74% less customers than before COVID	1	5%
75 – 100% less customers than before COVID	1	5%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	5	26%
Total	19	100%

**11. At the current time, what is the status of your business operation?**

Operating at full capacity	5	26%
Operating at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID	13	68%
Temporarily closed due to COVID	1	5%
Permanently closed due to COVID	0	0%
Total	19	100%

**Strategies for Supporting Businesses and Improving the Commercial District**

**12. A few approaches to address Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access in commercial districts are listed below. Considering the conditions in your commercial area, in your opinion, how important are each of the following strategies?**

**Renovation of Storefronts/Building Facades**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	5%
Of Little Importance or Need	2	11%
Moderately Important	6	32%
Important	6	32%
Very Important	4	21%
Total	19	100%

**Improvement/Development of Public Spaces & Seating Areas**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	5%
Of Little Importance or Need	5	26%
Moderately Important	3	16%
Important	6	32%
Very Important	4	21%
Total	19	100%

**Improvement of Streetscape & Sidewalks**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	6	33%
Moderately Important	3	17%
Important	7	39%
Very Important	2	11%
Total	18	100%

**Improvements in Safety and/or Cleanliness**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	7	37%
Moderately Important	5	26%
Important	3	16%
Very Important	4	21%
Total	19	100%

**Changes in Public Parking Availability, Management or Policies**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	5%
Of Little Importance or Need	5	26%
Moderately Important	7	37%
Important	5	26%
Very Important	1	5%
Total	19	100%

**Amenity Improvements for Public Transit Users and/or Bike Riders**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	5	26%
Moderately Important	6	32%
Important	8	42%
Very Important	0	0%
Total	19	100%

**13. A few approaches to address Attraction and Retention of Customers and Businesses in commercial districts are listed below. Considering the conditions in your commercial area, in your opinion, how important are each of the following strategies?**

**More Cultural Events/Activities to Bring People into the District**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	4	21%
Important	4	21%
Very Important	11	58%
Total	19	100%

**More Opportunities for Outdoor Dining and Selling**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	5%
Moderately Important	4	21%
Important	10	53%
Very Important	4	21%
Total	19	100%

**Implementing Marketing Strategies for the Commercial District**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	4	21%
Important	7	37%
Very Important	8	42%
Total	19	100%

**Recruitment Programs to Attract Additional Businesses**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	5%
Moderately Important	2	11%
Important	3	16%
Very Important	13	68%
Total	19	100%

**Changes to Zoning or Other Local Regulations (not related to COVID)**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	5%
Of Little Importance or Need	5	26%
Moderately Important	5	26%
Important	5	26%
Very Important	3	16%
Total	19	100%

**Creation of a District Management Entity (Business Improvement District or other organization)**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	5%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	16%
Moderately Important	6	32%
Important	7	37%
Very Important	2	11%
Total	19	100%

**14. Are you interested in receiving assistance for your business in any of the following areas? Select All that Apply.**

Setting up an online store or other online selling channel	4	21%
Creating new services such as delivery	2	11%
Participating in shared marketing/advertising	12	63%
Low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements	3	16%
Low-cost financing for purchasing property in the commercial district	3	16%
Training on the use of social media	4	21%
None of the above	6	32%

15. Please list any specific suggestions or ideas for possible projects, programs or actions that could help support businesses and improve the commercial district. (Optional)

**Comments**

—
—
—
—
—
—
—
—
—
—
—
Marketing Plan and Business start-up program
—
—
Greylock Glen development would be a boon to not just my business, but surrounding businesses. A lot of the buildings in the area are old and require major updates to be brought up to code.
—
—
Town hall needs to be more receptive to businesses. Both new and existing.
—

---

# Example Projects





# Creating Safe Pedestrian Access in a Rural Village Center

PUBLIC  
REALM

Provided by SME Consultant      Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Location      Whately, MA

Origin	The project was envisioned in a master plan for the Whately Center Historic District.
Budget	 Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) for construction Design and engineering funded by the Town of Whately Additional public participation process and construction funded through Massachusetts Complete Streets grant
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years)
Risk	 Medium Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Measures of the positive impacts of the improvements are an increased number of events, visitors, and restaurant receipts as well as a reduction in traffic speeds.
Partners & Resources	Municipal committees focused on the target area and technical assistance providers, including a landscape architecture school and the regional planning agency.

## Diagnostic

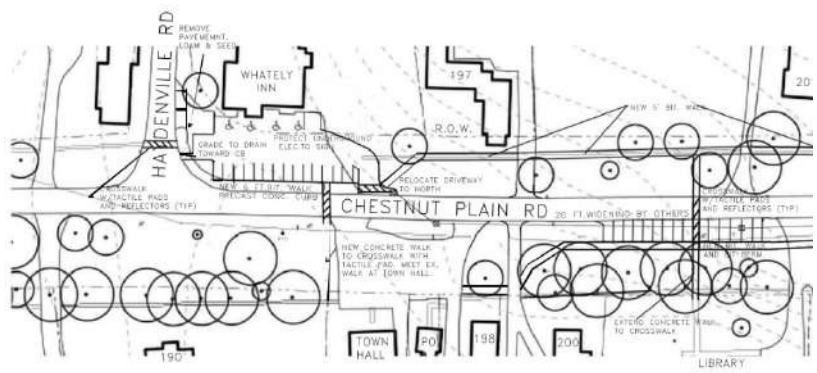
Chestnut Plain Road has a wide linear town common layout and is an integral part of the character and landscape of the town center historic district.

Creating safe pedestrian access in the village center was identified as a priority during the development of the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan that was part of the town's participation in the Mass DOT Complete Streets Funding Program. The Complete Streets Prioritization Plan was developed through a comprehensive public process. A committee comprised of representatives from the Selectboard, the Planning Board, the Historical Commission, and the Finance Committee, a Library Trustee, a resident, the Town Administrator, and the Highway Superintendent worked with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments staff to compile a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan and seek implementation funding for the project. Public outreach for the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan included a series of meetings of the committee to review and prioritize the projects, an input meeting with the general public, and a meeting of the Whately Selectboard to review and endorse the project rankings.

Therefore, to move forward, this project needed to have broad and strong community support. The project was successfully implemented because public outreach and an engaged planning process had taken place during the town center master planning process before the initiation of the final design and implementation of the improvements.



*BEFORE:* Google Maps aerial image of the Whately Inn at the corner of Chestnut Plain Road and Haydenville Road. A major renovation of the old Town Hall completed in 2019 resulted in a new community center and history museum across the street from the Whately Inn. With no crosswalks or sidewalks, the pedestrian pathway connecting these two attractions was not well defined.



*Engineering plan created by Sara E. Campbell, PE, consulting civil engineer, for the project area of Chestnut Plain Road near Haydenville Road.*

## Action Items

The The Whately Historic District Complete Streets project included the construction of new sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure on the town's main street, Chestnut Plain Road— e.g. construction of a new section of sidewalk in front of the Whately Inn, a vibrant local restaurant, where there was no sidewalk. Some of the parking for the Whately Inn was located next to the road in the space where a sidewalk would be located. The town worked cooperatively with the Whately Inn to redesign and relocate the parking area to allow for the construction of a sidewalk. By relocating the entrance to the parking area, additional parking was created and the sidewalk was constructed. Site ownership at a location where there was no sidewalk has the potential to pose an obstacle to the successful implementation of a continuous sidewalk through a project area. By the town and the Whately Inn communicating and working collaboratively this project was a success.

The project also improved pedestrian connections between the Whately Inn and the recently renovated old Town Hall, which is now a community center and local history museum. As in-person events begin to be held again at the old Town Hall, residents and visitors can safely and easily park and walk to and from the Whately Inn and the event.



*AFTER: With new crosswalks and sidewalks, pedestrians have safe access to the Whately Inn as well as the new community center and history museum, Post Office and public library across the street.*



*AFTER: The well defined parking area in front of the Whately Inn provides space for both parking and a seasonal tent for outdoor dining.*

<p>Process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Completion of a conceptual design process that included broad participation.</li> <li>■ Adoption of a Complete Streets Policy.</li> <li>■ Development of a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, facilitated by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.</li> <li>■ Approval of Complete Streets Prioritization Plan by the Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program so that the community is eligible to apply for complete streets implementation funding.</li> <li>■ Application to the Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program for project implementation funding.</li> <li>■ Approval of implementation funding through the Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program for the project.</li> <li>■ Completion of the final design for the project which includes collaboration with businesses and abutters so as to address needs for parking, outdoor dining, and pedestrian facilities.</li> <li>■ Temporary construction or permanent easements were identified and sought</li> <li>■ Conduct procurement process to hire contractor.</li> <li>■ Contractor completes project construction.</li> </ul>
<p>Importance of Public Engagement</p>	<p>Early in the project development the interests, concerns, and perspectives of many residents were considered through a master plan development process. Concerns related to the preservation of the historic streetscape while updating the sidewalks and crossings to improve accessibility for pedestrians was a challenge. Specifically, a robust public outreach process was completed that included a solicitation of input from those who would be impacted by the project. Two major considerations/challenges to implementation were making sure to preserve the historic double row of trees and to avoid damaging the root systems and also making sure that any signs did not detract from the historic character of the neighborhood. The project involved balancing pedestrian and motorist safety while also not detract from the historic qualities and feel of the area.</p> <p>With the approval of the Select Board, the Whately Historical Commission formed an ad hoc committee to focus on the Whately Center Historic District. The ad hoc committee included a broad range of representation. They engaged the Conway School of Landscape Design to facilitate a visioning process and create conceptual designs for a Whately Center Historic District master plan. Since the visioning took place early in the project development, many interests and concerns were considered and incorporated into the conceptual designs that helped communicate proposed improvements.</p> <p>Later, during the development of the design plans for the Chestnut Plain Road sidewalk, representatives of the Whately Inn were also consulted to discuss and brainstorm a solution to the parking issue. The solution was developed that improved the access to the parking lot and the configuration of the parking to allow for the construction of the sidewalk. The Inn donated towards the construction costs to compensate for a portion of the project that was on their property.</p>



Source: Manchester Connects

## Create a walking loop to attract customers and test ideas for long-term implementation




REVENUES  
& SALES

Provided by SME Consultant

Susan Silberberg, CivicMoxie

Location

Manchester, NH

Origin	An "early win" pilot project growing out of the <i>Manchester Connects</i> land use and multi-modal transportation plan for the Manchester NH Downtown and Amoskeag Mill yard/Riverfront.	
Budget		Low – under \$10,000
Timeframe		Short – planning and implementation in 4 months
Risk		Low
Key Performance Indicators	Number of attendees, Number of partners working together successfully, Good press	
Partners & Resources	Manchester Connects Steering Committee, City of Manchester, University of New Hampshire, Public Art Group, other volunteers	

## Diagnostic

There are thousands of high-tech workers and university students in the Amoskeag Millyard in Manchester, NH. These potential customers are separated from downtown by wide streets, a rail line, and a change in topography that necessitates stairs at some connecting streets. In addition, the Merrimack River at the Millyard is an underutilized resource that is lined with asphalt parking areas and minimal signage and amenities. These challenges presented opportunities that included:

- How can public art and space programming help reduce the perceived distance between Millyard and downtown to better connect the two?
- Would it be possible to establish a route that could be the focus of short and long-term improvements to encourage pedestrians and cyclists?
- Could a pilot project test the collaborative power of a citizen-led project steering committee and demonstrate the long-term viability of a bricks and mortar project enhancing connections?

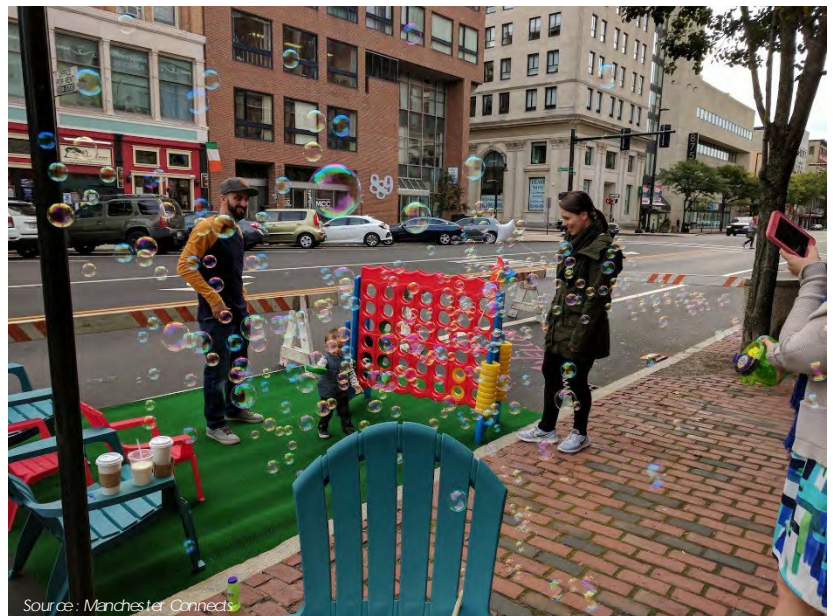
The project focused on analyzing the best route and providing technical assistance and graphics help to get the pilot up and running.



*The Amoskeag Millyard is lacking in "third places" such as restaurants and cafes, places to sit outdoors, and welcoming public spaces. Because it is isolated from Elm Street in downtown by topographical changes and wide streets, downtown businesses have trouble attracting the Millyard market and an overall sense of vibrancy is missing from the entire area.*

## Action Item

The resulting project was called "The Loop" and was the name of the designated route as well as the event that tested the conceptual idea of creating a focused path between the Millyard and downtown. Using a map created by the consultants, the steering committee programmed a series of events, coordinated public art projects, and created seating and public space areas (all temporary) along a loop that connected downtown to the riverfront and Millyard. Businesses were involved in promotions and the Public Art Commission of the City collaborated with organizers to highlight new artists' works. The downtown BID and City were also involved in helping plan and provide permitting for the event.



Source: Manchester Connects

*The Loop event demonstrated the benefit of public art and programmed spaces and the impact these improvements make on the perception of space and distance between the Millyard and riverfront and the downtown.*

## Process

The Loop event was a pilot project that grew from recommendations in the Manchester Connects plan for the Milliard and downtown. Seen as a way to demonstrate that Manchester Connects was about action, Loop Event Planning began with conceptual brainstorming with the entire project steering committee on multiple ways the committee could achieve the goal of better connectivity between downtown and the Milliard. The steps to plan and execute this type of event include:

- The consultant team identified the challenge of physical connectivity and created a suggested map of the easiest route to and from the two disconnected areas.
- A few members of the steering committee volunteered to lead the effort and began planning.
- Partners were approached, including the City of Manchester, the Public Art Commission, some local retailers, the Milliard Museum, and others.
- Local graphic designers offered their services to design promotional literature and a major social media campaign was launched, building on the thousands of followers on the Manchester Connects Facebook page.
- Collaborators planned for approximately three months, garnering good press and many attendees the day of the event.



*The Loop was identified and carefully programmed by the consultants after a brainstorming session with the client steering committee prioritized physical connections as a good pilot project to begin implementation of the plan.*



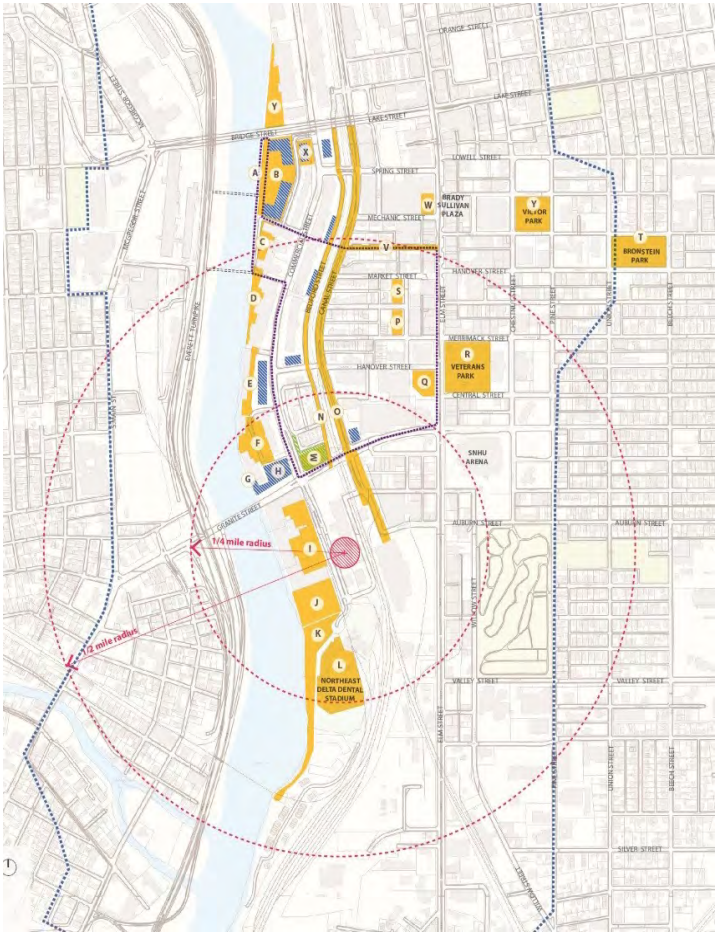
Support for the public art component of the event came from the City's Public Art Commission.

### Strategic Decisions

Careful consideration should be given to the physical environment when planning an event. The top image shows an overlay of the Mall of New Hampshire, to scale, on the core of the focus area for the Loop, demonstrating some of the challenges of connecting the Millyard to the downtown. The Loop event was a way of testing the validity of the concept that an interesting and pedestrian friendly route, filled with public art, pleasant public spaces, and eventually, active ground floor uses, would encourage connectivity between the two areas and would support downtown businesses and provide amenities and activities for Millyard employees.



The Mall of New Hampshire building footprint at scale was overlaid on the core area of focus to give a sense of scale to the area and inform design and programming decisions.



Distances were mapped to better understand the barriers to pedestrian activity and to help inform public space design and programming decisions.





# Activate Alleys: Attract People to Under-Utilized Spaces




PUBLIC  
REALM

Provided by SME Consultant

Neighborways Design

Location

Frost Alley Somernova Campus, Somerville, MA

Origin	Rafi Properties LLC / Somernova Campus, Neighborways Design, Principal Group	
Budget		Phase 1 and 2 - Labor Budget: \$30,000 Materials Budget: \$20,000
Timeframe		Phase 1: 2 to 6 months Phase 2: 6 months to 2 years
Risk		Coordinate approvals with private public partnerships for traffic flow changes, Fire department access, parking impacts
Key Performance Indicators	Use: event registrations to track repeat visitors, non-event use to track how people use alley Modal split: increase walking and biking mode share Economic Impact: evaluate event and vendor profits User Feedback: Intercept surveys to capture user perceptions and feedback	
Partners & Resources	Somernova tenants, abutters, City of Somerville Traffic and Fire Departments, Somerville Groundworks (watering / maintenance) Green and Open Somerville (Native Plant Experts), Local nurseries	

## Diagnostic

Frost Alley is a 10-minute walk from one of Somerville's most active business districts, Union Square, and for years has been a desolate cut through dominated by vehicular traffic.

Working with the development team at Rafi Properties, the Alley Activation project aims to create a more inviting, artistic, and lively space for people walking, biking, and wheeling, and as a destination for events and enjoyment.

Using traffic calming, placemaking, and programming, the team has been engaging in planning and design efforts with abutters to vision the space.

Phase 1 involved existing conditions assessment, planning, and installing self-watering planters in the summer of 2020. In 2021 working with Green and Open Somerville, we planted over 200 native plants in self-watering planters. Branded as native Nova, the planters serve as an educational tool to encourage native pollinators and community engagement in ecological gardening.

Temporary public art was sprinkled on the pavement to celebrate Earth Day and create an engaging place for a pop-up market, Somerville Open Studios. The alley hosted over 20 vendors that would have otherwise not had a space to share their art and crafts due to COVID-19.

Next steps are under way to engage local artists to implement unique and detailed art on the many blank walls and boarded up windows in the alley. Movable seating and an urban disc golf course will be installed to encourage activity and create a destination to spend time in, rather than pass through.

A youth design competition organized by a Groundworks Somerville, will engage high school students and offer prizes to the best design of custom planters.



*Before*



*Concept Rendering*



*Phase 1: Traffic Calming via Self-Watering Planters, 2019*

## Diagnostic

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## Action Items

Phase 1 involved existing conditions assessment, planning, and installing self-watering planters in the summer of 2020. In 2021 working with Green and Open Somerville, we planted over 200 native plants in self-watering planters. Branded as native Nova, the planters serve as an educational tool to encourage native pollinators and community engagement in ecological gardening.

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*Before*



*Concept Rendering*



*Phase 1: Traffic Calming via Self-Watering Planters, 2019*

<p>Process</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Project Initiation and Planning: Establish project goals, define success and how to measure it. Conduct fieldwork and “negative space” assessment to determine available space to program with traffic calming and placemaking. Coordinate master planning efforts for area.</li> <li>2. Community Design Process: Conduct feedback listening sessions to address challenges and vision opportunities for the future. Based on community feedback develop concept renderings and design plans for a phased implementation. Consider a range of finishes and cost options. Consider ways to involve the community including community design contests engaging students and local artists.</li> <li>3. Implementation: estimate quantities and procure materials. Meet onsite for installation and assemble DIY self watering planters and plant native plants. Hire local artists to install unique art pieces in the alley.</li> <li>4. Programming: Plan for temporary street closures and events in the alley. Consider hosting existing events in the space and plan new events such as pop-up markets, concerts, performances, walking tours, urban frisbee golf, food truck festivals, and rotating art installations.</li> <li>5. Ongoing Monitoring / Maintenance: hire people to maintain and water planters to ensure plants survive.</li> <li>6. Iteration and Evaluation: conduct before and after analysis including quantitative (e.g., speeds, volumes, revenue of businesses) and qualitative (e.g. photo, video, conversations, surveys) measures.</li> </ol>
<p>Lessons Learned</p>	<p>Keys to success: invest in an iterative public engagement strategy that provides multiple opportunities for engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct door to door canvassing and flyering</li> <li>• Host online community feedback meetings</li> <li>• Work to find a win-win when there are competing interests – clarify needs vs desires.</li> </ul> <p>DIY self-watering planters to reduce maintenance and save on costs. Featured planters cost approximately \$250/ea with labor and materials vs similar sized planters can range in cost from \$500- \$700.</p> <p>Challenges / Lessons Learned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide multiple opportunities and advanced notice to engage the community</li> <li>• Vandalism and theft are opportunities to bring the community together and iterate improvements.</li> </ul>



*DIY Self watering planter construction.*



*Temporary painting and native pollinator garden installation*



# Tipton Alley

PUBLIC  
REALM

Provided by SME Consultant

Bench Consulting (from Patronicity)

Location

Tipton, Indiana

Origin	City of Tipton, Tipton Main Street Association, Chamber of Commerce, Tipton County Economic Development Organization	
Budget		\$39,000
Timeframe		Two to three months to build and install most components and artwork.
Risk		Low risk assuming you can get buy in from local property owners and those who use the alley. Low investment costs makes this a low risk, high reward proposition.
Key Performance Indicators	Visitor counts, "stopping and staying time," events and attendees at programmed events. Change in area vacancy rates and, if you have willing businesses, sales numbers before and after intervention.	
Partners & Resources	Tipton Main Street, Local economic development corporation, the area Chamber of Commerce and local artists and youth organizations. Funding was provided through a combination of crowdfunding and matching grant dollars from a state government grant program.	



Before



After

<p>Diagnostic</p> <p>Action Item</p>	<p>Issues arose around pedestrian safety crossing the alley space. Located in the heart of Main Street this space was an obstacle to a safe, inviting pedestrian experience. In addition, there was a startup Main Street organization looking to develop space, build support for its work, but more importantly, the Main Street district as a whole. The street itself was extremely car oriented with more traffic than pedestrians on the streets. An improved sense of place was needed to get drivers out of their cars and on foot, a proven tactic for increasing spending opportunity. The proximity to existing businesses, the town square, and the need for a gathering space made this alley ideal for investment and improvement.</p> <p>The intention with Tipton Alley was to develop a space that could serve as the hub of the Main Street. A space, built on a human scale, that provided a respite from the busy traffic on the street while enticing people to 1) visit downtown safely and 2) extend their stays while visiting downtown, and 3) create community connections.</p> <p>As with any placemaking project, the process is as important as the outcome. How do you ensure this space will be something that residents embrace and enjoy? Have them engaged in the planning and implementation process as much as possible. Because collaboration is key and here, local artists help design the mural installations on one wall and others worked to transform the entry way of the alley to incorporate historically contextual photographs.</p> <p>Early on, it was important to have proper permissions in place to use the alley and eliminate vehicle access from the main street on a permanent basis. Enjoy maintenance plans and activation and programming plans are also in place at the start.</p> <p>It was important to not just plan for how the space would be transformed but activated so a community wide "farm to table" dinner was planned as part of the planning and fundraising. This project focused on programming of the space in the design phase and clarified the needs for ongoing maintenance and support.</p>
<p>Process</p>	<p>LOCATE: Find a space that you have reasonable site control over or a permission agreement in place that is centrally located within your main street or commercial district. Consider spaces that need care and attention.</p> <p>PARTNER: The more local representation that's involved in planning and implementing these projects, the more successful they will be. Here, local Chamber of Commerce was involved, engaging the business community, artists helped to design the public art and residents volunteered to implement.</p> <p>PLAN: Ensure site control is in order, insurance is in place and proper permissions to use any alley space have been granted before beginning to build your project. Define the potential uses for space, the more variety, the better. Consider local vendors and source products locally.</p> <p>IMPLEMENT: Consider adding elements in stages, celebrating at each milestone. Be sure your site is supervised. Communication with all contractors, artists, and volunteers is important so be sure to plan ahead. Getting community investment is critical, ask for the financial support you need locally first.</p> <p>FEEDBACK: Public comments can be typical and predictive, often they include questions about government waste, maintenance and use. Prepare your responses before hearings and reach out personally when possible. Also, prepare to preemptively share the most compelling project elements.</p> <p>ITERATE: Additional features can be added based on use, one example is WiFi. If there is a high demand for the space, ensure there is a process for renting and reserving the space.</p>



# Integrate Brand and Art into your Wayfinding System

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Provided by SME Consultant

Selbert Perkins Design

Location

Worcester, MA

# Integrate Brand and Art into your Wayfinding System



Provided by SME Consultant

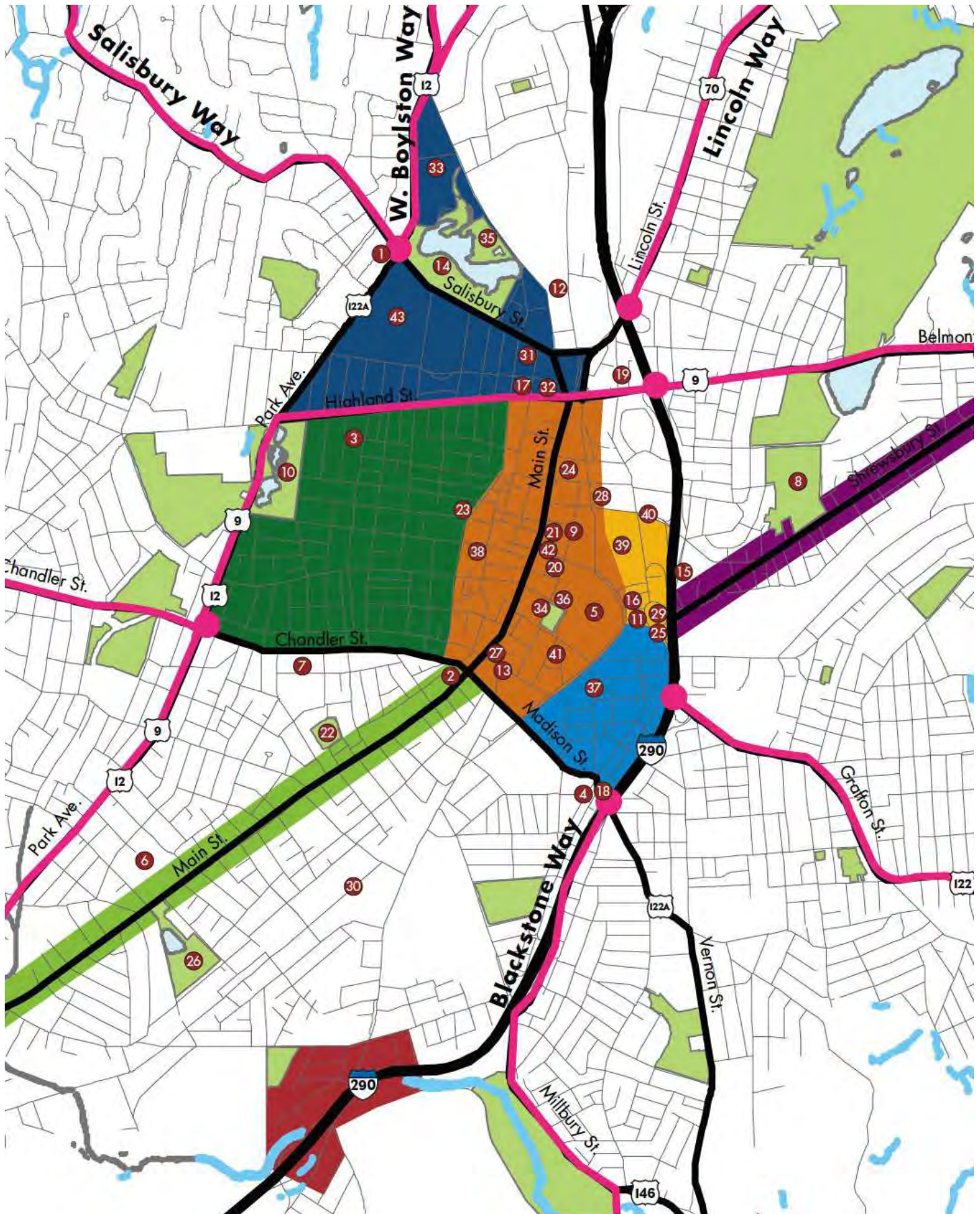
Selbert Perkins Design

Location

Worcester, MA

Origin	City of Worcester, MA
Budget	 <p>High Budget (\$200k+) - with full build-out</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Medium Term (5-10 years)</p>
Risk	 <p>Low Risk</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Ownership and longevity of brand/system, amount of development/investment
Partners & Resources	Mayors, City Planning Departments, Marketing & Communications Departments
Diagnostic	<p>SPD created a unified brand identity and wayfinding master plan for the City of Worcester, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City-wide Logo</li> <li>• District Identity</li> <li>• Storytelling and Interpretive Elements</li> <li>• Signage Design</li> <li>• Art Opportunities</li> </ul> <p>SPD collaborated with the project team to increase awareness and tourism, and to improve the overall image of the City by creating an iconic brand and functional wayfinding system for visitors and residents.</p>

Diagnostic (continued)	<p>As a large City, it was important to create consistency but also provide distinctions between districts to help people navigate and understand the unique character and stories of each area.</p> <p>The brand reflects the colors of each district and creates a scalable kit-of-parts still in use some 15 years later. Worcester implemented a sampling of signs and landmarks to raise capital for the larger system, which is being installed now.</p>
Action Item	<p>As this project continues to roll out it will be important to look at it in light of current development, updating locations and messages as-needed.</p> <p>Things to consider adding in the future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dynamic signage</li> <li>• Walking distances</li> <li>• Sculptural landmarks</li> <li>• Integrated elements to reinforce District stories</li> <li>• Revenue generation</li> </ul>
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand who the stakeholders and decision-makers will be.</li> <li>• Visit site to audit of existing conditions.</li> <li>• Conduct a Wayfinding Analysis including; multi-modal circulation, main decision points, key destinations, etc.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities for art/placemaking</li> <li>• Research the history of the place, uncover stories that might inspire the design.</li> <li>• Engage with stakeholders and the public to understand needs and perceptions. If possible, create a survey to get feedback from a larger cross-section of people.</li> <li>• Develop project goals and a positioning statement to guide design efforts.</li> <li>• Design concepts for brand and wayfinding elements.</li> <li>• Develop the preferred design into a family of sign types with materials, colors, etc.</li> <li>• Provide a sign location plan and message schedule.</li> <li>• Create Design Intent drawings and a bid document to solicit pricing from fabricators</li> <li>• Update the budget and project schedule</li> <li>• Assist with communication between the fabricator and municipality.</li> <li>• Provide Construction Administration, Site Visits, and Punch List as-needed.</li> <li>• Celebrate!</li> </ul>



Districts and Wayfinding analysis



# Create a way-finding system to help reinforce the downtown experience



PUBLIC  
REALM

Provided by SME Consultant

Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Location

Wakefield, MA

Origin	Town of Wakefield
Budget	 Medium--approximately \$80,000 (kiosk only; additional elements to cost \$30,000)
Timeframe	 Short -- planning and implementation in 3-1/2 months
Risk	 Medium --political will, lightning caused devastating fire, unjustified NIMBYism and lack of community transparency
Key Performance Indicators	Continued use by visitors and residents
Partners & Resources	Wakefield Main Streets, Town of Wakefield, Mass Legislature, Wakefield Police Department, Wakefield Public Library, Wakefield Historical Commission and Wakefield DPW

## Diagnostic

The Town of Wakefield is a north of Boston middle-income suburban community. Most residents work outside of Wakefield and commute to work. There are two MBTA Commuter rail stations in Wakefield—Wakefield Center and Greenwood.

There was no universally accepted brand or wayfinding system for the Town of Wakefield.

On the edge of Wakefield Center, Lake Quannapowitt is a popular setting for walkers, joggers, bikers, and in-line skaters off Route 128 in Middlesex County. It is the site of many organized races from 5Ks to Ultra Marathons. However, rarely do outside visitors travel beyond the lakeside the 200 yards to the Town of Wakefield's Downtown. This is a lost opportunity to support restaurants and shops in the Downtown.

With a vital mix of restaurants, goods and services, the downtown appeared robust. However, things could be improved by an effort for better direction and more on-street communication. Here was an opportunity to build on the downtown's commercial base and solidify Wakefield as a Northshore destination.

The Town's administration allotted funding to design a branding and wayfinding system. Seven months later a Massachusetts Legislative Earmark was granted to the Wakefield Main Streets Program for the design and fabrication of informational kiosks.

## Action Item

The two overlapping programs took two different paths.

- Over an eight-month period, the branding and wayfinding design process went through a series of group meetings with a large Advisory Group of 24 representatives.
  - A month after the town landscape-based brand was approved by the Advisory Committee and presented in the local daily news paper and to the Town Council, a devastating lightning-induced fire burned down the majestic church steeple. The loss of the church set back the discussion of whether or not the approved images should be brought forward as a historical image or changed to reflect the current conditions.
  - The designs and branding and wayfinding program were put on hold.
- Overseen by the Wakefield Main Streets Board of Directors and invited Town officials, the kiosk design program was mandated to have only 3.5 months to complete design, design review, put out for bidding and start implementation.
  - The kiosk program went fully ahead.
  - However, some community members felt left out of the design and placement of the project elements. Their concerns had to be integrated.



*Joggers and runners around Crystal Lake, a target audience of non-residents as potential patrons to the downtown.*



*Old Band Stand adjacent to Lake Quannapowitt in Wakefield, MA*

## Process

- After a number of kiosk design alternatives were presented to the Wakefield Main Streets Board, one design was chosen to develop, locate and specify.
- Three (3) of the kiosks were to be two-sided and analog; the fourth was to be digital and four-sided. The digital one would be set closest to the lake.
- Historical town images and commentary was developed to fit around as a border around a business directory for one side of the directory.
- Set in an airtight locked Plexiglas window, this information could be easily changeable on the two-sided kiosks. On the opposite side was space for timely event posters and community announcements.
- The digital kiosk was designed to have a screen/monitor that was programmable from the town hall.
- There was much criticism around the placement and look of the digital kiosk. The town council eventually addressed the public and took a stand that the location, size and look of the kiosk was the best possible solution.
- Kiosk-opposing residents were invited to an expanded Branding and Wayfinding meeting to assist with eventual sign element placement on maps.
- Favermann Design was then hired by the Town administration to create a style guideline to reflect the iconic kiosk toppers.
- After a period of about four months the guidelines have resulted in the establishment of a consistent Town of Wakefield visual brand for internal communication, the official website, e-mails, business cards, interior town hall signage, newsletters and even drop boxes.
- These guidelines were in place during the Covid-19 pandemic, and further thought was given to the on-hold wayfinding program. It was decided that a new approach should be taken that abandoned the problematic landscape and instead visually reflected the kiosk and style of the Town of Wakefield.
- Utilizing the new design approach, plans are going ahead for a new directional sign for the Greenwood neighborhood. A test will take place during the Summer of 2021 to see how wayfinding can connect the Lake with downtown.



The Bandstand was the inspiration for the shape of the signage.



Besides interested citizens, town officials including the Town Planner, Police Officer, City Counselor, and Main Street board member are making decisions regarding locations.

## Previous Historical Landscape Design for Wakefield's Branding and Wayfinding Shelved

- Below is an image of the previous design that was affected by the destructive church fire.
- The “new” simpler design has found favor in the community.
- The Town of Wakefield is now creating a fully consistent “look” for all its official elements.



See our 2018 Wakefield High graduation supplement

WAKEFIELD ITEM HOURS

Monday • Thursday 7:30 • 4:00

Friday 7:30 • 3:00

RECYCLE COLOR: Blue • Tuesday, June 5, 2018 • 36 Pages

# the Wakefield DAILY ITEM

Family-owned publication serving Wakefield for 124 Years • 75c Newsstand, 80c Home delivery

www.wakefielditem.com

## Sailboat with cherries

A BLACK CHERRY tree [according to the Audubon Field Guide: New England] along the shore of Lake Quannapowitt. (Robert Pushkar Photo)

## Community Meeting and Open House: Hurd School future options

WAKEFIELD — The Town Council and Town Administrator Stephen P. Mac will like to give the public an opening on the ongoing

evaluation of the Hurd School located at 27 Coffin Street in the "Lakeside" neighborhood. The public is invited to a second Open

House and Community Meeting. The first floor will be open for public viewing at 6:15 a.m. followed by the community meeting in the auditorium at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, June 20 at the school. The Town Administrator will lead the discussion and provide updates to the ongoing evaluation followed by a question and answer session about the building's future.

"After hearing from the public at our first meeting and evaluating our swing space and other needs, it is time to re-engage the neighborhood and community to discuss the best use of the building moving forward," according to the Town Administrator.

The Hurd School was declared excess property in 2005 by the Wakefield School Committee and

## Kiosks coming to downtown

### Town Council notebook

By MARK SARDELLA

WAKEFIELD — As part of the ongoing effort to revitalize the downtown area, four new kiosks will be installed at various locations offering "easy finding" and other useful information for visitors and residents. The Town Council approved the installation of the signs, one of which will have a digital component, at their meeting last week.

Bob Mailhot, president of Wakefield Main Streets, appeared before the Town Council along with Mark Faverman of Faverman Design to discuss the project. The kiosks will be paid for by Wakefield Main Streets through their private fundraising efforts. Faverman Design has been retained by the town to develop a branding and wayfinding program for the town's business districts.

Two of the free-standing, two-sided kiosks will be located on sidewalks in the Square and will be placed at Main and Water streets and Main and Albion streets. A third two-sided kiosk will be placed near Veterans Field on North Avenue. The digital kiosk will be three-sided and will be placed at the southern end of the lower Donjon, near the corner of Gonimom Street and Lake Avenue. One side of this kiosk will be digital and have a changeable screen.

Faverman talked about the design of the kiosks, which will incorporate the look of the iconic Bandstand, including a red top that

KIOSKS Page 7

## Stolen credit cards reported

WAKEFIELD — A Winthrop Drive woman called police at about 11 a.m. yesterday to report that her credit cards had been stolen.

The woman noticed that the cards were missing over the weekend but was not sure when they were taken.

Police said that fraudulent charges were made using the credit cards at Home Depot in Danvers and Target in Stoughton. The cards have been cancelled.

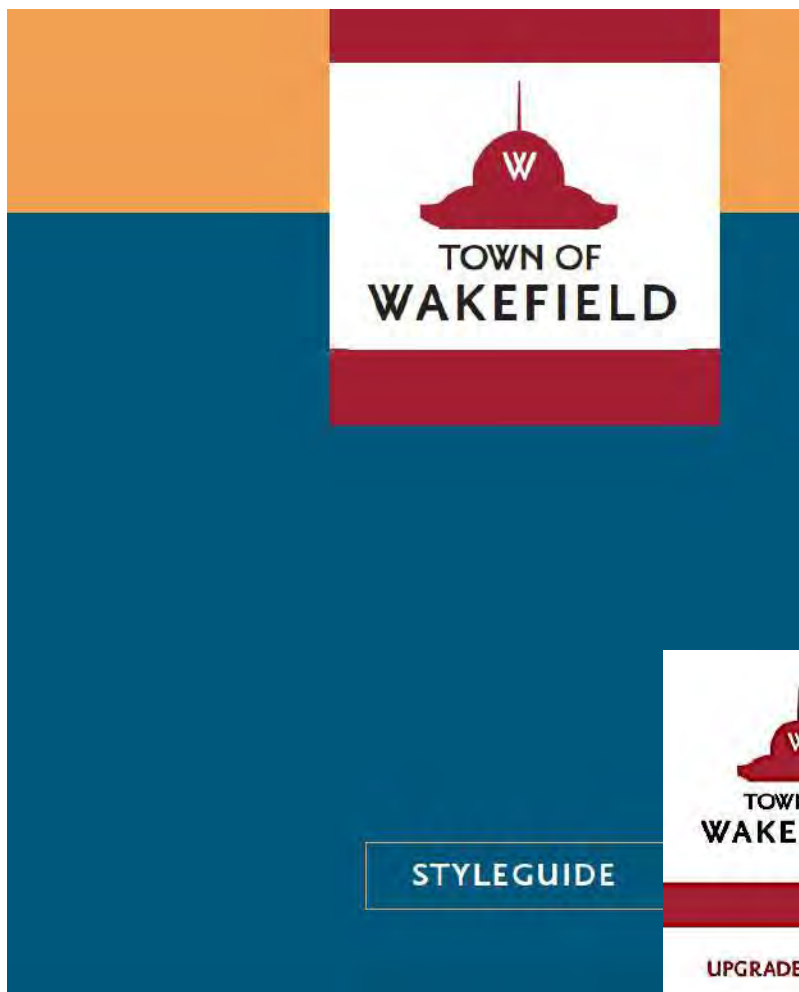
At about 3 p.m. yesterday, a caller reported that a UPS truck took down power wires at the corner of Oak Street and Orchard Avenue. Police confirmed that they were cable wires and made sure they

POLICE Page 9

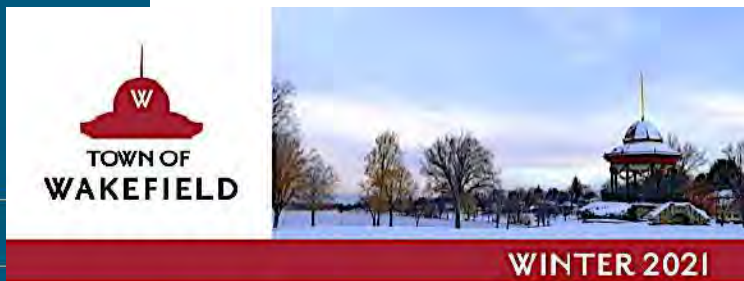
KIOSKS LIKE THIS ONE will be installed at four key locations around town to help promote the downtown area. Conceived by Faverman Design, the kiosks will incorporate the look of the iconic Bandstand.

WHD Photo 7

[illegible]



## STYLEGUIDE



### UPGRADED DROP BOXES AT TOWN HALL



With safety a top priority for Town Hall employees and guests, residents are strongly encouraged to conduct their Town transactions virtually. Payments can be made online at [www.wakefield.ma.us/online-payments](http://www.wakefield.ma.us/online-payments) for many services, including taxes, water bills, white-goods stickers, refuse bags, cemetery services, and more. Many forms and applications can also be accessed on the Town's website [www.wakefield.ma.us](http://www.wakefield.ma.us).

Town Hall has installed new drop boxes to make submitting documents so staff quick and easy. These boxes are clearly marked and located near the accessible parking spaces and sidewalk ramp, to the left of the Town Hall entrance.

### DATES TO NOTE

#### Tax Collector

Third-quarter actual real estate bill due:

February 1, 2021

Third-quarter actual personal property bill due:

February 1, 2021

2021 motor vehicle excise bill commitment #1  
Issued February 4, 2021 | Due March 8, 2021

#### Assessing Department

Abatement applications due:

February 1, 2021

Statutory exemptions due:

April 1, 2021



In 2015, Wakefield lifted its December-to-April on-street parking ban and now enforces parking limitations on an emergency basis.

When preparing for a snow event, the Town often initiates a temporary restriction of on-street parking. This allows plowing crews and public safety vehicles to safely access the roads and perform curb-to-curb cleanup. Parking ban announcements and other emergency notifications are made via our CodeRED e-alert system.

All parked cars must be removed from the roadways during a parking ban. If your residence does not have a driveway, connect with your landlord for parking options or coordinate with a neighbor who has extra driveway space. Vehicles that interfere with snow operations or emergency vehicle access may be towed.

1 Lafayette Street Wakefield, MA 01880 | [wakefield.ma.us](http://wakefield.ma.us)

The Town of Wakefield "branded" elements and strictly adhered to style guidelines demonstrate how programs can build upon and even improve each other to reinforce a sense of place, a sense of arrival and a sense of shared experience.



# Creative empty storefront treatments by Newton Community Pride's WindowArt



Provided by SME Consultant

Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Location

City of Newton (in two Villages)

Origin	Community group, artists collaborating with landlords to revitalize store closures due to impacts of COVID-19
Budget	 Low (<\$50,000)—utilization of existing artwork
Timeframe	 Medium-term – planning and implementation took 6 months
Risk	 Low Risk for project execution. However, connecting with absentee landlords will present difficulties.
Key Performance Indicators	Perceived street enhancements; No. of potential tenants engaged; No. of tenants signing leases
Partners & Resources	Town Administrators, City Departments of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts—including the Cultural Division, the Planning and Economic Development Department and the Department of Public Works, local landlords, potential tenants, arts organizations and artists

## Diagnostic

Though the Covid-19 Pandemic more finely focused on the dilemma of empty storefronts, this is a continuous, if sometimes only temporary, negative situation in downtowns and commercial districts. Vacant stores are a glaring or at least front and center visible loss to a commercial area, block or building. And most landlords do the least effort to release—simple signs, ads or word of mouth to existing tenants.

The issue is how to combine the needs of the commercial district to the resources available to be creative and commercially reinforcing. One thoughtful solution was by Newton Community Pride, a non-profit organization building community for all to enjoy through arts and culture programming.

The Newton Community Pride staff and board recognized the empty storefront needs of the City of Newton commercial districts. They also had an inventory of artwork by local resident artists.

They wanted to install artwork in as many empty storefronts as possible. However, it was challenging to ascertain landlord ownership especially with absentee landlords, as they are a subgroup of landlords with less incentive to visually enhance their empty properties. They focused on identifying and working with various owners that they could,

After a short few weeks, Newton Community Pride installed a number empty storefronts with art.

## Context

- No matter how beautiful or historical a façade is, an empty storefront makes it an eyesore.
- Empty Storefronts are distractions from a vital commercial area or downtown.
- With no rent, revenue or relief, unless enlightened or visionary, a landlord usually does the least expensive solution like just paper in the windows, standard for lease signs, etc.
- Arts organizations, student artists and community artists have all assisted to make the empty stores more visually appealing.



*Vacant ground floor uses were mapped and space characteristics noted.*



*The vacant storefronts contributed to lack of vibrancy in the City of Newton's commercial districts.*

## Action Items/Process

- Document the empty storefronts in a particular commercial area. In the City of Newton's case, there are 13 separate villages with some commercial district located in eight (8) of them.
- Select focus areas. In Newton's case, focus was centered upon the greatest concentration of stores and empty storefronts.
- Identify landlords and reach out to landlords through cold calls, e-mails, and online and print publications. Persistence in reaching out seemed to pay off the most.
- To augment the "Call for Interested Landlords," Newton Community Pride used local media through press releases including The Boston Globe, local online publications, social media and their own website to communicate the program.
- Discuss and agree with landlords on the organization's approach to the empty storefront. Individual property managers made final decisions about what went where.
- Develop an approach to the installations or create an inventory of existing artwork by local artists. In this case, the artwork already existed and had been used as part of the previously funded Newton Community Pride program, FenceArt. FenceArt produced a juried "call to artist" that generated an inventory of artwork.
- All art was previously printed on vinyl banners, and this allowed for an easy installation behind storefront windows.
- The results of the initial effort were disappointing to the organization who desired much more landlord participation. However, the lessons learned here allow for future project application.



*Even the most beautiful block architecturally with wonderful historic detailing looks bad when the empty storefronts are empty.*



*Empty storefronts in a beautiful commercial block is like the missing tooth in the beautiful smile.*

## Process – Strategic Decisions

- Establishment of a collaborative network to discuss and share resources.
- Decide who are the key decision-makers of each project be they landlords, business associations, arts organizations, city agency, etc.
- Think innovatively, out of the box. In this case, the decision to utilize existing and available artwork allowed for several steps to be skipped in the process.
- Learning from this experience, in the future it would be desirable to have a City of Newton official agency to identify landlord ownership. In turn, this would facilitate greater numbers of cooperating storefronts.
- Publicizing the successful projects to encourage more landlord/building owner involvement.
- Decision that the installed program should have a time limit for elements to be replaced.
- It was determined that this WindowArt Project was a part of the overall Covid-19 Program titled "Newton All Fresco" that also included artist-decorated Jersey barriers, painted cable spools as side tables for benches for outdoor eating and individual murals.
- A related project to WindowArt and another creative Covid-19 response is an innovative new pilot program partnered by the City of Newton, the Town of Needham and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Project: Pop-Up*.
  - This will allow small retailers to access 1-3 storefronts in Needham and 4-5 storefronts in Newton at a significantly reduced cost.
  - The retailers, many of whom are currently operating primarily online, will have access to the commercial space for 2-3 months to introduce their businesses to a wider audience and will have access to a wide range of support services.



Newton Community Pride Artwork Installation in Empty Storefronts



Newton CommunityPride energizing empty storefronts with artists' work (above); Articles about the program (below).

#### Community Corner

## WindowART To Fill Vacant Windows Around Newton

Newton Community Pride is trying something a little different this year and repurposing its FenceArt project.



**Jenna Fisher, Patch Staff**

Posted Tue, Apr 20, 2021 at 10:09 am ET | Updated Tue, Apr 20, 2021 at 12:46 pm ET

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Reply

Newton Community Pride is trying something a little different this year and repurposing its FenceArt project. (Gloria Gavris, courtesy)

**NEWTON, MA** — If you've ever walked past a vacant storefront and felt a little hopeful about the potential that space has, you're not alone.

Newton Community Pride, a nonprofit volunteer group with a mission that includes beautification projects that support the community, decided to fill vacant windows with art.

### Summary

- Think of the empty storefront as an opportunity for creative artistic expression to energize a storefront, block or commercial area.
- This allows the commercial building or district to take a negative and make it into a positive through visual enhancement while generating provocative conversation or even by creating a temporary art gallery.
- Partners are necessary so that collaboration can take place smoothly between the community agencies, business and arts communities.
- Publicize the activity. This draws community interest, reinforces artists' involvement and attracts potential landlord participants.

WICKEDLOCAL.com

Jobs Cars USA TODAY Weather Legals

NEWTON-TAB

## Newton Community Pride announces WindowART to fill vacant windows

COURTESY OF NEWTON COMMUNITY PRIDE

Published 9:15 a.m. ET Apr. 16, 2021



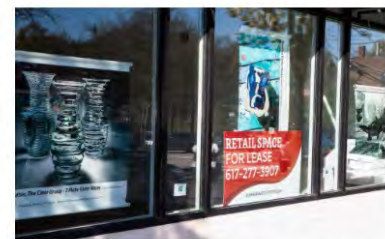
Newton Community Pride will host WindowART, a public art initiative to bring art to Newton's commercial districts.

THE HEIGHTS

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## Newton Community Pride Fills Vacant Storefronts With Artwork

By Julia Remick

April 25, 2021 Updated April 25, 2021 at 11:19 pm



A photograph of a vibrant red archway in Mexico next to a red "for rent" sign draws public attention in an otherwise empty Newtonville storefront window. As a part of a new public art initiative sponsored by Newton Community Pride, vacant Newton storefronts will display professional artwork in an effort to beautify the city.

"It's a lovely opportunity to have shoppers and diners and pedestrians stumble across a beautiful piece of artwork, as opposed to brown paper cardboard or a for lease sign, so it makes a nice addition to our villages," Gloria Gavris, board chair of Newton Community Pride, said.

The project, called WindowART, incorporates the pieces from Newton Community Pride's annual FenceART project, including local artist Howard Fineman's "Nested Arches, Mexico." This public art initiative is a submission-based competition that displays winning artists' work on fences throughout Newton, such as at the Newton Free Library and the Newton Senior Center. A jury of professional artists selects 20 submissions to be printed on vinyl banners and displayed throughout the year.

Newton Community Pride rotates the art among five Newton fences every 10 weeks, beginning in October and November, Gavris said. Submissions to the competition were open to artists who reside, work, or participate in art classes in Newton.

# Provide Small Business Technical Assistance for Food Service & Restaurant Businesses






Provided by SME Consultant

Revby LLC

Location

Boston, MA

Origin	City of Boston's Office of Economic Development – Small Business Unit
Budget	 <p>High (\$700,000) - Fund sources: Majority from CDGB. Some are from the Neighborhood Development Fund (NDF). Workshops can range from \$1000+ (single workshops) to tens of thousands for workshop series. One-on-one TA costs vary depending on the nature of work and number of hours.</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Short term – 3 years</p>
Risk	 <p>Low risk</p>
Key Performance Indicators	<p>Workshops: # of workshop attendees, either live on Zoom, live on Facebook, or those that view the recording afterwards; # of new small business owner relationships, # of businesses that reach out for one-on-one TA.</p> <p>One-on-One TA: Action plans created, tangible deliverables created, # of new entrepreneurs that successfully start a new business, # of business owners that stabilize their business, # of business owners that grow their business (revenue, customers, employees)</p>
Partners & Resources	City of Boston, Office of Economic Development neighborhood managers; Community Development Corps, Main Streets Organizations, small business owners, TA providers
Diagnostic	<p>By the municipality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changed to a rolling RFP process to allow the program to address new and relevant TA providers at any time.</li> </ul> <p>By Revby, the TA provider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A key challenge is that there are many business types and models within the food and restaurant industry category. Not every example, approach, or set of technology tools will be relevant for each sub-type. Some businesses are retail focused while others are wholesale or B2B focused. Some focus on perishables and others on CPG. Being aware of these differences help to design an appropriate approach to each TA project.</li> </ul>

## Action Item

Deliver Workshop on topics important to Food & Restaurant businesses.

### Pre-Covid:

- How to write a business plan for Food and Restaurant businesses
- One-on-One TA for early-stage food businesses that want to scale up their operations

### During Covid:

- Working safely during COVID-19: Restaurants and Food Service Businesses. Included topics such as a presentation of CDC guidance, MA sector specific protocols and best practices, including social distancing and hygiene, ventilation; info on the COVID-19 virus and bio safety; staff training

### Other Activity during COVID-19:

- Promotion of minority-owned restaurants and how to order delivery from local businesses
- Provided a map of nearly 300 restaurants across Boston that have added temporary outdoor seating.

## Process

By the municipality and TA provider:

1. Write RFP (include a non-price and price proposal request)
2. Review proposal submissions
3. Conduct interviews
4. Contract with accepted TA providers
5. Match a workshop or one-on-one TA project with a provider
6. Coordinate with TA provider for first meeting with a business owner or a workshop project.
7. TA provider delivers a "project activity and outcomes" report upon project completion

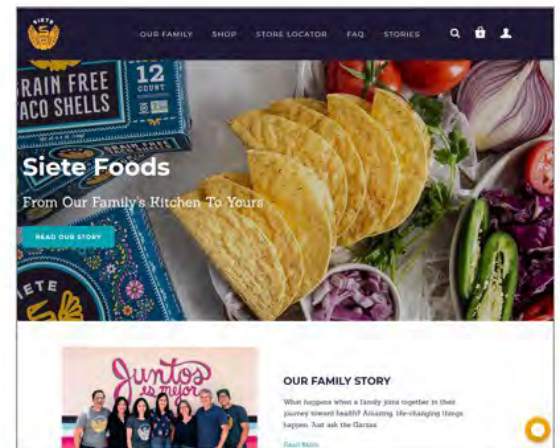
By Revby, the TA provider:

1. For workshop: Design material that anticipates the types of food businesses represented, include relevant examples, and reserve enough time for Q&A
2. For one-on-one TA: Gain buy in from the business owner on the project plan during the first meeting. Use the first meeting to build rapport and trust with the business owner. Focus sessions on open brainstorming and the introduction of subject matter that includes the use of technology that can save time and increase customer acquisition.

## An Online & Wholesale Food Business Example

- ✓ Story
- ✓ Mission: "journey toward health"
- ✓ Distinct Value
- ✓ Clear knowledge of a market and customer segment

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



Slide from a business and marketing planning workshop for food service and restaurant businesses

## Marketing Technology / Resources

Website: Custom

POS System: <https://www.toasttab.com/>

Email Marketing Platform: <https://www.toasttab.com/> (Marketing Service)

Facebook Ad Manager: [business.facebook.com/](https://business.facebook.com/)  
<https://www.facebook.com/business/tools/ads-manager>

Social Media Manager: <https://buffer.com/>

Design Tool: <https://www.canva.com/>

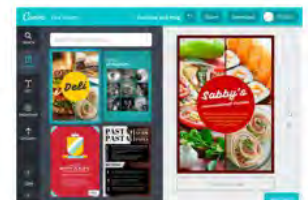
Print Marketing Resource: <https://vistaprint.com/>

Freelancer website: [upwork.com](https://www.upwork.com/)

**toast** Products Pricing Solutions

### Built to make your restaurant better

Restaurants using Toast's full point of sale platform outperformed their peers during the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>



Excerpt from business and marketing work for a one-on-one TA food business project



# Provide Welcoming Outdoor Dining

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PUBLIC  
REALM

Provided by SME Consultant

CivicSpace Collaborative

Location

Salem, MA

# Provide Welcoming Outdoor Dining



Provided by SME Consultant

CivicSpace Collaborative

Location

Salem, MA

Origin	City of Salem Mayor's Office; Salem Economic Development Rapid Recovery (EDRR) Task Force; John Andrews & Creative Collective
Budget	 <p>Medium (\$50,000-\$200,000 paid for by individual restaurants owners with City of Salem support to install custom outdoor dining spaces)</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Short (4 months)</p>
Risk	 <p>Medium (Uncertainty over upcoming state laws)</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Allowed restaurants to stay open and stay in business. Beneficial marketing for the restaurants. Beneficial marketing for the downtown district. Facilitated sense of social connection and community.
Partners & Resources	Creative Collective, City departments (Mayor's Office, Planning + Community Development, and Department of Public Works), individual restaurants owners/manager, and artists
Diagnostic	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial quick roll-out showed the community it is possible to transform underutilized public spaces into vibrant outdoor dining.</li> <li>Restaurant owners and managers are keen to keep the outdoor dining.</li> <li>Most community leaders and members love the program as demonstrated by several surveys conducted during 2020.</li> </ul> <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The transition from temporary to permanent will require significant investments in design and construction.</li> <li>Parking is a real and perceived loss for businesses and people driving into Downtown Salem.</li> <li>Considerations related to universal design, public health, and building codes.</li> </ul>

## Action Item

The outdoor dining program was a successful transformation of public and private spaces into outdoor “streeteries” for the benefit of restaurants and the Salem community, including residents and tourists.

Over 50 restaurants participated in the program in 2020, and 56 have applied for the 2021 season.

Local artists were employed with to transform protective jersey barriers into works of art.

With an eye towards making the program permanent, the design and implementation of these spaces has already evolved to be more safe, accessible, usable, and attractive.



Outdoor Seating at Rockafellas Restaurant on Washington Street in Salem, MA

## Process

- Establish a core group of stakeholders to shepherd the project and to meet weekly to get the project started.
- Hire a project manager with restaurant community connections. In Salem, John Andrews, Owner / Chief Creative Officer of Creative Collective managed, coordinated, and helped implement the program for 2020 and the evolution of the program in 2021. Creative Collective was hired by the City of Salem. The project manager brings together the stakeholders from City departments, restaurants, and local artists to create functional, safe, community minded, and aesthetically pleasing installations for outdoor dining.
- Communicate with each individual restaurant owner or manager to establish their needs and possible contribution (materials or labor). Communication with any available channels (from email to social media to going door to door) is key.
- Create a marketing strategy with a mix of different communication methods. Examples: posting to Facebook groups, direct messaging on social media, door to door campaign, and phone calls.
- Communicate design guidelines for best practices related to public health, universal design, and building code compliant design.



Sidewalk seating and tent seating at Ledger Restaurant on Washington Street

## Process (Continued)

- Determine if pedestrian right-of-way needs redesign, new accommodation. Ensure full accessibility with universal design.
- In 2021, obtain City approval based on an automated application under the viewpoint portal.
- Aid and assist as needed in the build-out of individual spaces.
- Determine items to be provided by the City. In Salem, the City provided jersey barriers, heaters, and the City also provided labor and material support on an individual restaurant basis.
- Coordinate with Department of Public Works on delivery and placement of jersey barriers and heaters.
- Hire local artists to paint barriers and coordinate mural with aesthetic input from individual businesses. The City of Salem hired the artists.
- Create a plan for storage and winterization.
- Meet with core stakeholders to iterate for the following season, learn from mistakes, and evolve the program.



*Outdoor Seating at Brother's Taverna on Derby Street*



*Outdoor Seating for Bambolina Restaurant with new pedestrian right-of-way on Derby Street*

*(Photo credit: Pamela Joye)*



# Create Calm Street Pilots and Pop-Up Curbside “Streeteries”



Provided by SME Consultant

Nelson\Nygaard

Location

Natick, MA

Origin	Town of Natick, Natick Center Cultural District
Budget	 Low Budget (Under \$50k)
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years)
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Create an Inviting Pedestrian Retail Environment (Measures: Speed of Cars Before and After, Number of Crashes, Perception Survey), Support Social-Distance-Safe Local Dining and Spending (Measures: Number of Seats Added, Sales)
Partners & Resources	MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program, A Greener Greater Boston (AGGB) program of the Solomon Foundation and Barr Foundation
Diagnostic	<p>Overly-large intersections and wide travel lanes were contributing to higher speeds of travel through the heart of Natick's pedestrian core. In order to create a more comfortable and attractive walking and biking environment, lane and intersection diets could be deployed to achieve safer operations while sustaining the same vehicle throughput.</p> <p>The team worked to design solutions working with majority already-owned materials, with limited purchases for temporary and safety materials.</p> <p>In early pandemic social distancing, while indoor dining was unsafe, the Town was seeking quick solutions to help local businesses continue serving and attracting customers. Retrofitting on-street parking spaces for outdoor dining could help create interim options for safer dining and company.</p> <p>Natick Center Cultural District also found ways to engage creative placemaking elements into the process in order to support local artists during the economic struggles of the pandemic.</p>
Action Item	<p>As communities grappled with strategies to restart local businesses – especially those that rely on foot traffic and shared spaces (i.e., retail and restaurants) – providing a safe environment that reinforces recommended COVID-19 physical distancing measures, is paramount. Given the need to provide more outdoor space for businesses to serve customers, and sidewalks unable to accommodate both business activity and pedestrian accommodation, communities like Natick were looking to repurpose streets to provide additional space so that both may be safely accommodated.</p> <p>A rapid response was necessary to help businesses recover quickly as COVID-related restrictions begin to relax and allow for non-essential business activity to resume. At the same time, ensuring the safety of restaurant users, as well as those in vehicles and on bicycles, was critical. A focus on low-cost, rapid implementation was critical to serving safety and business vitality needs. All programs and projects were designed to be flexibly modified.</p>

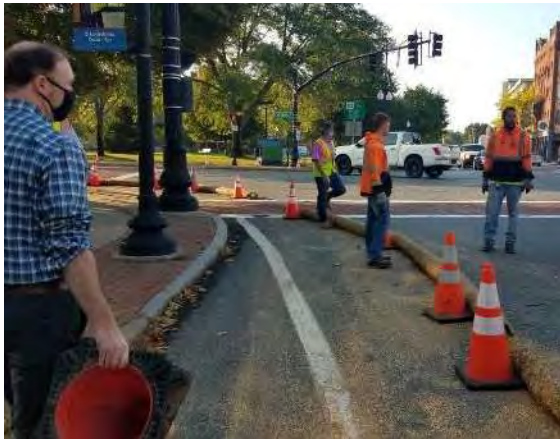
## Action Items (Continued)

### Key actions included:

- Kickoff meeting with all department officials to confirm project goals
- Site analysis and issues identification
- Business owner outreach
- Design concept development
- Stakeholder presentations and tactical event promotion
- Traffic calming testing in the field
- Confirming longer-term trial design and installing materials
- Processing feedback and engagement

## Process

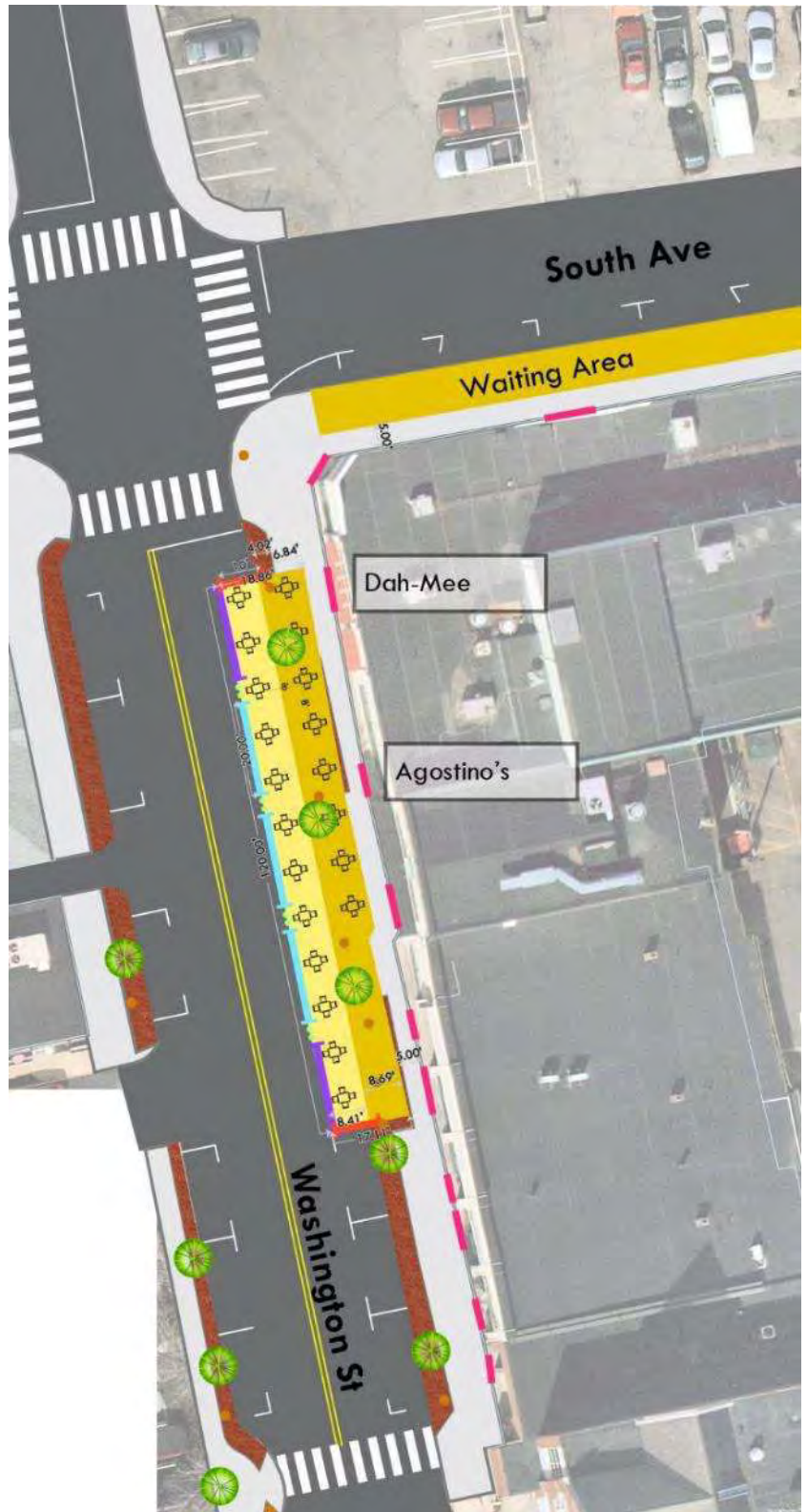
- Discuss Need for Intervention
- Field Visits and Observations, Counts, Documentation
- Measure Key Dimensions
- Create Design Alternatives
- Present to Stakeholders for Feedback
- Plan Installation Date and Timeline
- Promote Event through Fliers, Social Media, and Town-wide Announcements
- Design Business and Citizen Engagement Survey
- Create Materials List, Budget, Order Supplies, and Plan for Deliveries
- Optional: Post Virtual Messaging Signs on Approaches to Announce Upcoming Changes
- Decide on Police Detail and Oversight Needs, Cover Liability Needs
- Optional: Plan for Street Sweeping
- Create Hour-by-Hour Install Schedule and Steps for Install Day
- Day of: Measure and Lay Down Materials, Observe and Tweak As-Needed, Document through Photos and Videos, Consider Intercept Surveys and Programming around Event
- After Day of Testing, Install More Permanent Seasonal Materials
- Optional: Consider Local Art Enhancements



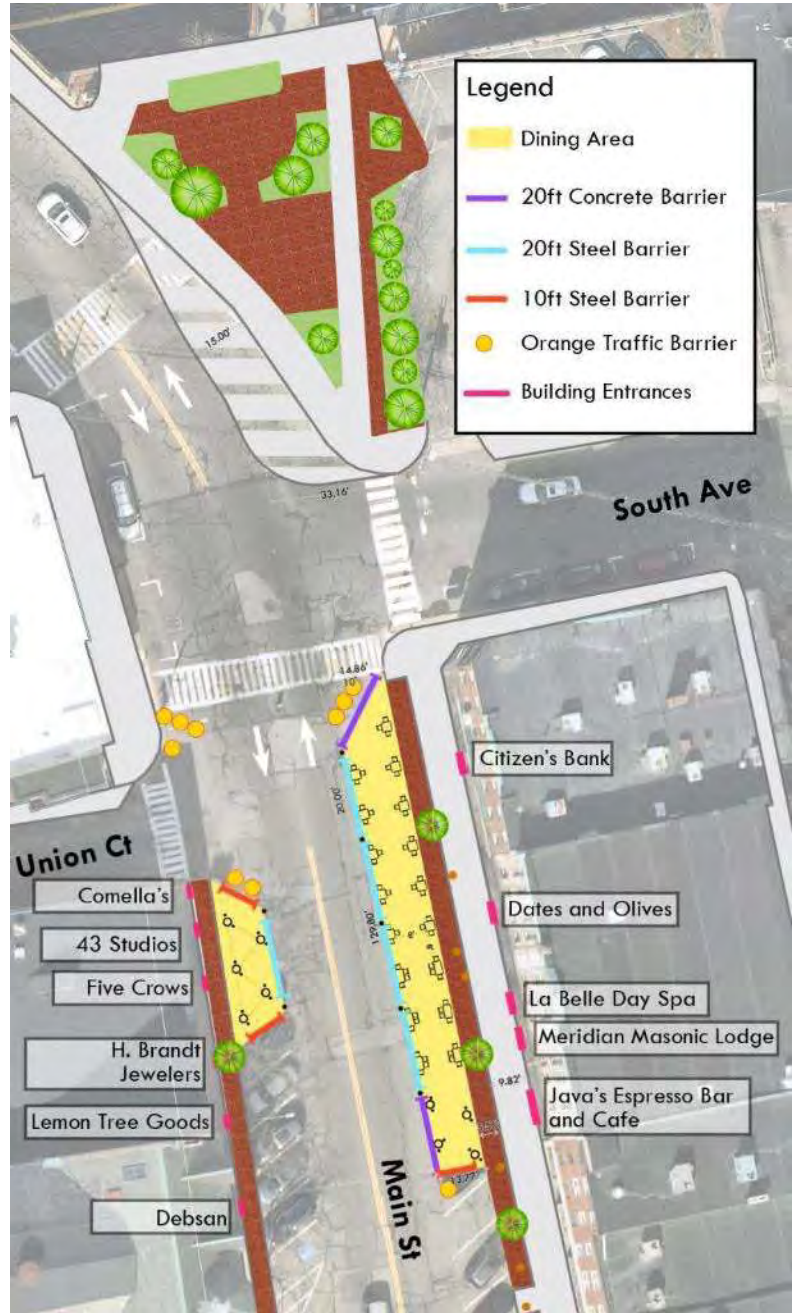
*Image of Tactical Testing Before Striping and Adding Bollards*



*Image of Washington Street Eatery As Installed*



*Layout Plan of Washington Street Eatery In On-Street Parking Lane*



Layout plan of before and after conditions for traffic calming and in-street outdoor dining on Main Street



Images of jersey barriers with reflective tape and artist mosaics and of temporary chalk art in tactical curb extensions – will receive art murals long-term. Credit: Ted Fields



Source: Renew Newcastle

# Connect artists, entrepreneurs, and makers/ crafters with landlords to fill vacant storefronts and change Main Street image






Provided by SME Consultant

Susan Silberberg, CivicMoxie

Location

Newcastle, Australia

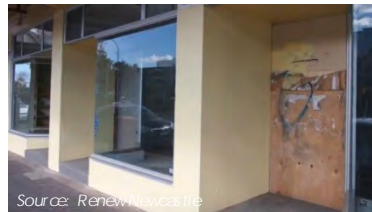
Origin	Renew Newcastle was an effort started by an urbanist and arts and events organizer to fill vacant storefronts with new creative industries in a post-industrial city.	
Budget		Medium
Timeframe		Medium
Risk		Low
Key Performance Indicators	Number of vacant storefronts filled, number of tenants that went on to rent permanent space as viable businesses, stabilization and rise of property values, reduction in crime, economic benefit to the community	
Partners & Resources	Organization that led creatives recruitment, landlord matching, and marketing, including events, City Planning Department (zoning), private funders to provide seed money for cleaning/maintenance of storefronts.	

## Diagnostic

Newcastle is a post-industrial city 100 miles north of Sydney, Australia. In 2008, there were a significant number of vacant buildings in the downtown and 150 vacant storefronts on the mile-long stretch of the city's main street. Challenges were numerous:

- What industries could take the place of the former coal, steel, and shipbuilding center of the country?
- How could low property values and crime be addressed by recruiting new 21<sup>st</sup> Century industries to the city?
- What uses could fill vacant storefronts to give vibrancy to the street?
- How might a solution be scaled to make a difference in the image of the city and significantly reduce ground floor vacancies?

The project identified new "industries" to replace long-defunct economic engines in the city.

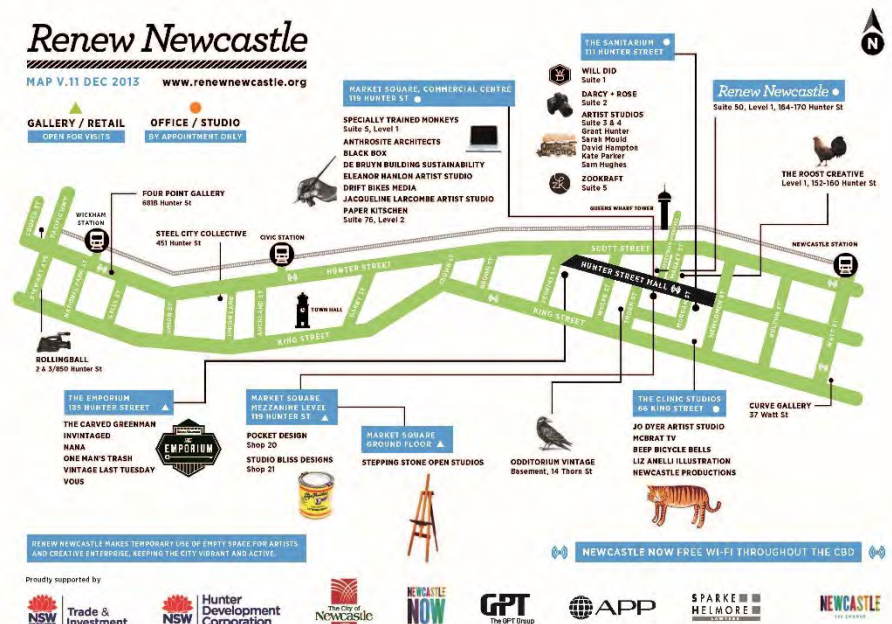


## Action Item

Through online searches, Marcus Westbury, the creator of Renew Newcastle, identified a significant number of creatives, artists, and makers living and working in and near Newcastle. By surveying those creatives about their space needs and interest in bricks and mortar locations downtown, he was able to identify a large need for space. After matching with landlords eager for even temporary tenants, the Renew Newcastle program slowly and steadily built momentum and a new image for the city...one of a destination for makers and creatives and their customers. The program focused new tenants in targeted areas and then staged events to draw attention to the businesses. The goals were to support creatives and help them transition to viable businesses and permanent space in the city.

Renew Newcastle set up 250 temporary projects in vacant properties and 1/3 of the projects become sustainable businesses. Of those, 81 of those enterprises became a viable business and permanently occupied their storefronts.

In 2008, there were 150 vacant storefronts on the mile-long strip of the city's main street.



Source: Renew Newcastle

Five years into the program, the main street of the city boasted a density of creative uses and entrepreneurs.

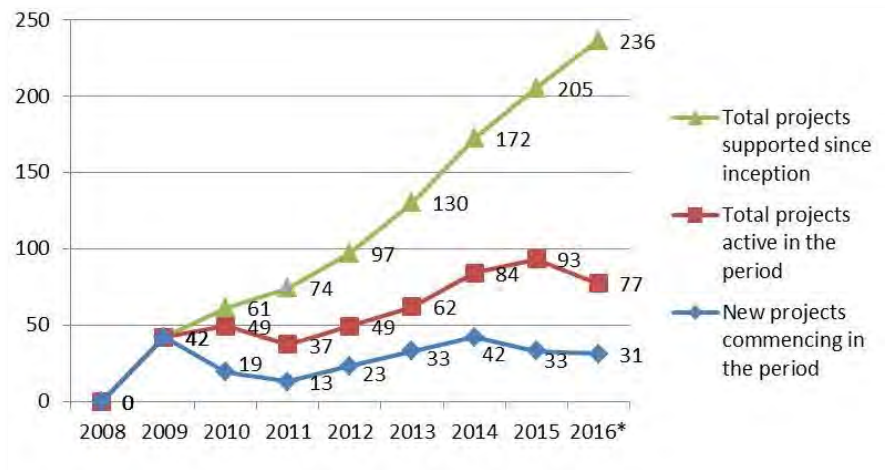
## Process

- Set up a non-profit with a board of directors that come from a wider range of backgrounds including local business, arts, community representatives. An alternative is to work under the auspices of an existing organization such as the BID, Main Streets Program, or local Chamber of Commerce.
- Survey local restaurants, artisans, makers, creatives (look on Etsy), to see who would benefit for having a temporary brick and mortar location in downtown.
- Assess ownership of all the vacant storefronts in downtown.
- Meet with planning department to discuss opportunities for temporary uses that would not require changing zoning or getting variances (avoid applications and formal legislative process as much as possible).
- Approach owners of vacant properties and ask if spaces could be "borrowed" on a very short-term basis for creatives to sell products.
- Use a Rolling 30-day license agreement.
- The Nonprofit or other entity manages relationship with property owners and works with the City to create a short-term agreement that avoids changing zoning.
- Nonprofit also carries insurance for all of the temporary projects.
- With temporary leases secure, clean up/renovate storefronts.
- Help local small business/artisans move into the spaces.
- When there are several storefronts occupied in one location, host events to garner attention.



Source for all photos: [www.edwinrichards.com](http://www.edwinrichards.com) Instagram: @edwinajillrichards

Many of the artisans and entrepreneurs went on to rent permanent space.

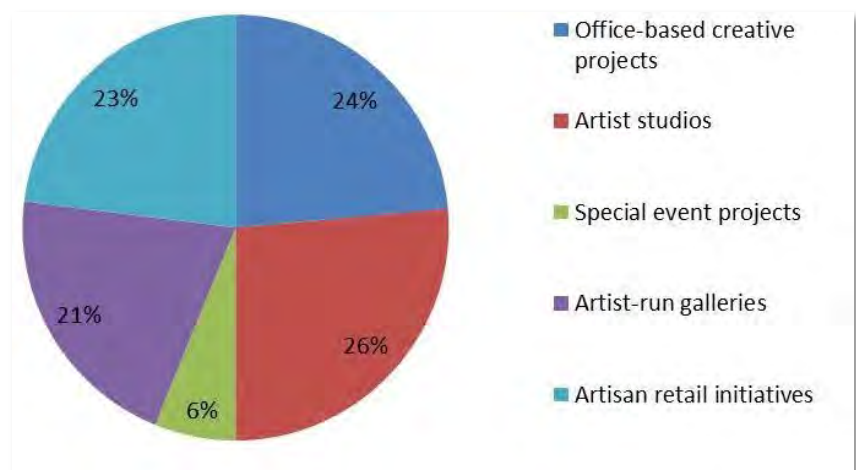


## Economic Impact to the Community

An economic impact study conducted in 2015-16 looked at the value of the following impacts:

- Creation of jobs and skills developed
- Conversion to commercial leases
- Volunteer engagement
- Mitigation of blight
- Improved business and community confidence
- Improved regional brand

It was determined that for the annual budget of \$208,000 Australian Dollars for Renew Australia, economic impact across the above areas was valued at a little over \$3m Australian Dollars for a benefit-cost ratio of 14:1.



	Estimate
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$208,000</b>
<b>Benefits</b>	
Creation of jobs and skills development	\$2,358,436
Conversion to commercial lease	\$191,828
Volunteer engagement	\$62,763
Mitigation of blight	\$100,698
Improved business and community confidence	\$55,183
Improved regional brand value	\$234,069
<b>Total Benefits</b>	<b>\$3,002,977</b>
<b>PERFORMANCE MEASURES</b>	
<b>Net Benefit</b>	<b>\$2,794,977</b>
<b>Benefit Cost Ratio</b>	<b>14.4</b>

Source: An Economic Evaluation of the Renew Newcastle Project, CoFFEE, 2016

# Etsy



Source for all photos: [www.edwinarichards.com](http://www.edwinarichards.com) Instagram: @edwinajillrichards



Photo Courtesy of [www.chashama.org](http://www.chashama.org)

## Supporting Entrepreneurs and Commercial Landlords with Pop Up Business Activations




TENANT  
MIX

Provided by SME Consultant

Jeanette G. Nigro, Perch Advisors

Location

Various Locations ((New York City))

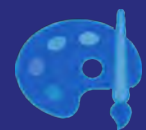
Origin	Project was created within ideation of the NYC Department of Small Business Services and ChaShaMa, property owners, and business owners, along with community orgs such as BIDs	
Budget		Medium (\$50,000-\$200,000) – Project required dedicated staff and project subsidies
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) – Program launched within 90 days; space is generally tenanted for 30 – 60 days maximum
Risk		Low Risk – Landlords with existing empty space offer short term opportunities with no permanent build out or commitment
Key Performance Indicators	Temporary commercial vacancy reduction; business increase in sales; businesses accessing space	
Partners & Resources	NYC Department of Small Business Services, ChaShaMa	
Diagnostic	<p>With an increased amount of vacant space in New York City during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City partnered with ChaShaMa, a not-for-profit that generally offers space to artists, to create short term opportunities for businesses to test out a brick-and-mortar location in commercial areas across the city.</p> <p>This creates opportunity to liven commercial districts with new, short-term businesses, helping landlords to activate their unused space, make the street feel more alive, create increased opportunities for commerce for small, minority and women-owned businesses, and provide no-cost space to businesses otherwise unlikely to be able to afford commercial rents in high traffic commercial corridors.</p> <p>Challenges of this program currently being addressed are ensuring businesses have commercial storefront opportunities once the no-cost space has ended; supporting businesses with technical assistance such as access to capital and finding affordable, permanent space, and sustainable resourcing of the project for the long term success of small minority and women-owned businesses.</p>	
Action Item	<p>Storefront Start-Up is a partnership between a not-for-profit community organization that typically supports artists in accessing work and exhibit space and the NYC Department of Small Business Services to support minority and women-owned businesses in accessing free storefront space (avg 30 days) in high traffic commercial areas.</p> <p>The non-profit or municipal partner can begin by evaluating vacant space in their commercial corridors and contacting property owners to determine their interest in short term space leases. The organization will have to determine if they can cover necessities for opening a commercial space (such as utilities and wifi) or if a landlord would be willing to provide short term access to these services.</p> <p>Simultaneously, the lead partner can connect with local businesses in need of space through social media marketing (no to low cost), partnerships with local business serving organizations (such as SBD's, chambers of commerce) and begin to create a database of businesses interested in short term commercial leases. Essentially, building both the space and potential tenants together will help launch the matches efficiently and quickly.</p> <p>The lead organization should also determine business priority – is the program focused on women entrepreneurs? People of color? Create an evaluation tool to match businesses with respective spaces based on a set of priorities.</p> <p>Businesses should receive operating guidelines, a MOU to discuss what they can and can't do with the space, their responsibility to the program, and how long the term of the space use is.</p> <p>The lead organization should provide as much support to both the landlord and tenant as possible and consider connecting with a local technical assistance provider to help the business leverage the storefront opportunity to their long-term growth.</p>	

## Process

- Determine the strategy to support businesses – are you focused on serving a specific demographic (ex. Women-owned businesses) or sector (retail, design)
- Decide on a criteria on how businesses will be selected for space
- Research and identify vacant storefront properties in communities, particular those commercial corridors that may have high current vacancy rates. Local BIDs or DIDs can help identify vacant properties.
- Connect with property owners of vacant spaces to determine their interest in short-term no-cost lease opportunities, and if so, their terms of use.
- Create a database with notes and updates on available properties and interested businesses.
- Create a standard Memorandum of Understanding to be used as a baseline of agreement between the organization, the property owner, and the business owner. For example: how long will the space be used? Who will pay for buildout costs (if any)? Who will cover utility costs?
- Begin to match businesses with potential vacant spaces. Determine how far in advance businesses would need to be “occupancy ready” and how long landlords would need for the property to be considered “move in condition”
- Support both the business and property owner with the transition into the space; troubleshoot any issues in real time to mitigate any future problems or miscommunications
- Create social media and marketing opportunities to businesses to let people know they will be in the activated space, with plenty of lead up marketing prior to the move in date
- Determine further support for the business after the space agreement has expired, if any



# Host a downtown cultural event to support businesses and show positive change






CULTURAL/  
ARTS

Provided by SME Consultant

Susan Silberberg, CivicMoxie

Location

Fall River, MA

Origin	Collaborative effort growing out of MassDevelopment TDI project and including other FRACC members involved in Viva Fall River (the Arts, Culture and Creative Economy Master Planning effort for the city)
Budget	 Low – \$37,000 plus in-kind donations
Timeframe	 Short – planning and implementation in 3-1/2 months
Risk	 Low
Key Performance Indicators	Number of attendees, Number of partners working together successfully, Good press
Partners & Resources	One SouthCoast Chamber of Commerce, Fall River Arts + Cultural Coalition (FRACC), MassDevelopment TDI, BayCoast Bank, We Love Fall River, Fall River Public Schools, City of Fall River – main partners

## Diagnostic

Fall River has many outstanding attributes but is lacking in a collaborative vision and image that can pull all the great things together. There are many different efforts and activities with no central organizing force to advocate, market, and lead the way in business support, tourism development, and arts and cultural coordination across the city.

Key challenges include high turnover and legal issues for City Hall leaders in recent years that have grabbed headlines and stolen the narrative of the good things happening in the city. In addition, there is a fragmented approach to solving problems and building momentum for positive change. The downtown has significant vacancies and the geographic spread of the city, as well as its hilly topography, make connections and focus a challenge. However, the diversity of the city, including its residents and cultural traditions, food and restaurant offerings, and presence of a small but strong "making" economy offer some unique opportunities. The city's location on the water, proximity to Boston and Providence, and abundance of relatively affordable housing and workspaces, and a sizeable inventory of old mill buildings provide many opportunities.

## Action Item

The Winterbridge cultural events (running Fridays and Saturdays for six weeks in the Winter of 2021) at Gromada Plaza downtown was planned to build on the MassDevelopment TDI work on South Main Street and to showcase the collaborative power of FRACC, a 40-member diverse group of arts and culture, business, community nonprofit, philanthropic, and public sector stakeholders. FRACC is charting new territory in the scope of its goals and Winterbridge was meant as a way to:

- Bring the community together and engender city pride (begin to take back the narrative of the city)
- Demonstrate the power of collaboration (put the power of FRACC to work)
- Provide community activities and spaces during winter under Covid-19 guidelines

Winterbridge included music, fire pits, evergreen trees, live painting, community partners providing grab n go services, dancing/Zumba sessions, live entertainers (costume characters, singers, and musicians), and a We Love Fall River window display competition.



Live painting was part of the event.



Source: for all photos: FRACC

There were over 36 businesses, nonprofits and individuals who came together to provide staff, funding, programming, marketing, and other needs for the events.

## Process

The Winterbridge cultural events grew out of the desire for an early “win” and demonstration of the power of collaboration including the Mass Development TDI and FRACC. Planning goals focused on attracting people to downtown and exposing them to music, dance, live painting, and other cultural elements...showing what the future can look like. The steps to plan and execute this type of event include:

- Set goals such as: 1) desired audience; 2) how to help businesses attract customers downtown; 3) change image of downtown; 4) practice collaboration or implement a pilot project to see feasibility, etc.
- Gather parties with similar interests, complementary resources and expertise.
- Brainstorm ways to achieve the core goals. Develop criteria to select one strategy to move forward: 1) Is there someone who has done an event before? 2) Does someone have paid staff that can lend a hand? 3) Who has graphics and marketing expertise? Can this strategy tag onto another event or a milestone in the community?
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- Work back from the goals to identify people, organizations, agencies available to help: chart interests, capacity, resources, contacts.
- What location best supports the goals? Create a plan of the area. List and draw activity areas, block party elements.
- Link program activities with partners/volunteers.
- Refine event: what happens, time, day, activities.
- Create a budget sheet for overall event, each activity area.
- Think carefully about branding: what to call it? How does this fit with overall branding and marketing for the downtown or commercial district?



*Volunteers helped build the “set” for the weekend activities.*



*Winterbridge was a success and led to increased “buzz” about what is possible downtown and also the power of collaboration and FRACC’s work.*

## Process (Continued)

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- Document what you do and think about how to make the effort sustainable in the long run. How can this event be a pilot project for ongoing programming?
- During the event, try to include ways to capture information the attendees (raffle that requires their zip code, ideas chalk wall that asks what people want to see in the district, etc.)
- Do a debrief immediately after the event to improve efforts for the future. Ask businesses for their input and reactions.



Volunteers helped build the “set” for the weekend activities.



Winterbridge was a success and led to increased “buzz” about what is possible downtown and also the power of collaboration and FRACC’s work.

The Fall River TDI District is creating an Arts & Culture Master Plan that supports the city's arts, cultural diversity and traditions, vibrant public spaces, and economic vitality. The goal is to understand how residents enjoy arts and culture in the city and region, identify what may be missing, and create a roadmap to move forward to support robust arts and culture in the city.

### SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS



Viva  
Fall  
River

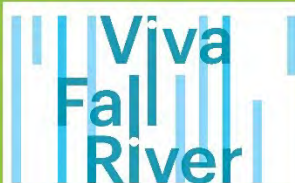
GRAB A MARKER  
AND WRITE DOWN  
YOUR IDEAS HERE!

[illegible]

facebook.com/VivaFallRiver

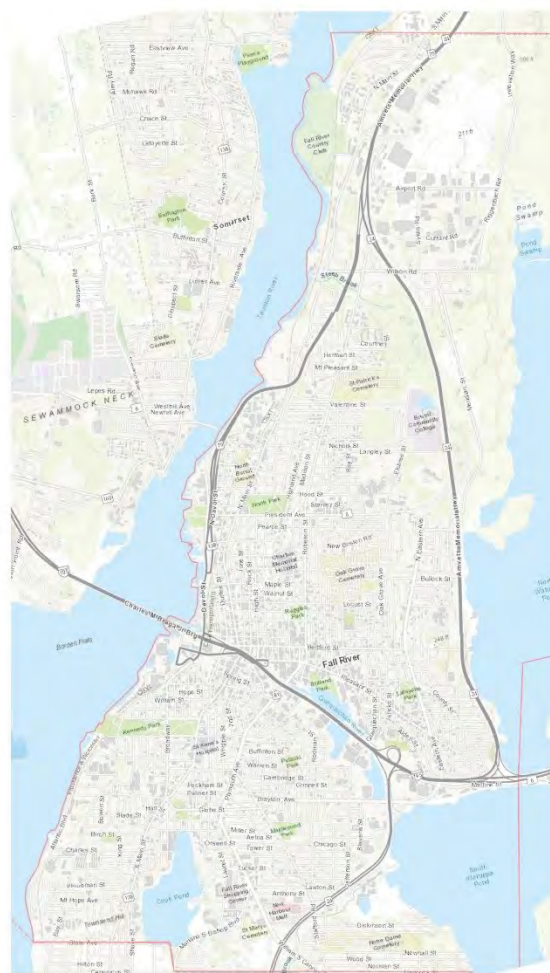
 @vivafallriver

To add important places, organizations, and art to the Fall River Map, go to: [bit.ly/36AoZ6g](http://bit.ly/36AoZ6g)



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To add important places, organizations, and art to the Fall River Map, go to: [bit.ly/36AoZ6q](http://bit.ly/36AoZ6q)



@vivafallriver

CivicMoxie

12  
8



Source: Hanover Theatre

# Host a block party to support ground floor activation efforts downtown



Provided by SME Consultant

Susan Silberberg, CivicMoxie

Location

Worcester, MA

Origin	MassDevelopmentTDI DowntownWorcester, MAInitiative with the Downtown Theatre Alliance	
Budget		Low – under \$10,000
Timeframe		Short – planning and implementation in 3-1/2 months
Risk		Low
Key Performance Indicators	Number of attendees, Number of partners working together successfully, Good press	
Partners & Resources	Hanover Theatre and Downtown Theatre Alliance with collaboration from City of Worcester, Worcester Business Development Corporation	

## Diagnostic

There were 21 vacant ground floor spaces and over 20 underutilized or vacant buildings available for private development in downtown Worcester, MA. The *Mass Development TDI Ground Floor Activation Plan for Downtown Worcester* documented vacancies and prioritized building redevelopment opportunities using criteria such as location, cost to redevelop, building footprint, suitability for feasible uses, willing owner, etc. However, key challenges were working against redevelopment and vibrant uses in storefronts:

- How to change the image of downtown and demonstrate positive trends to attract developer, business, and customer interest?
- How to support restaurants and new food entrepreneurs and grow the number of dining establishments open in the evenings?
- How to draw college students and other young adults downtown to support existing and new businesses?

There was an opportunity to build on the robust audience for the Hanover Theatre, as well as the possibility for complementary uses to extend vibrancy in the downtown to post-working hours in the evening. The block party was the selected strategy to address these challenges.

## Action Item

The Block Party was a means to test the "collaborative muscle" of various partners, including Mass Development, The City of Worcester, Worcester Business Development Corp, and the Hanover Theatre, as well as shift the perception of downtown. The partners came together to divide tasks based on skills and capacity and reached out to others in the community to provide entertainment, food, and drink. The City was a key partner in streamlining permitting and providing public safety and sanitation services the day of the event. To ensure good turnout and a diversity of participants the block party was planned in conjunction with a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Hanover Theatre Conservatory. Combining the events allowed organizers to highlight positive change and investment in the downtown. The block party included music, a beer garden, food trucks, and ribbon cutting ceremony. Interactive activities encouraged attendees to share their desires for downtown and offer ideas for improvements. Over 500 people attended the block party, meeting the goals set by the organizers.



Vacant ground floor uses were mapped and space characteristics noted.

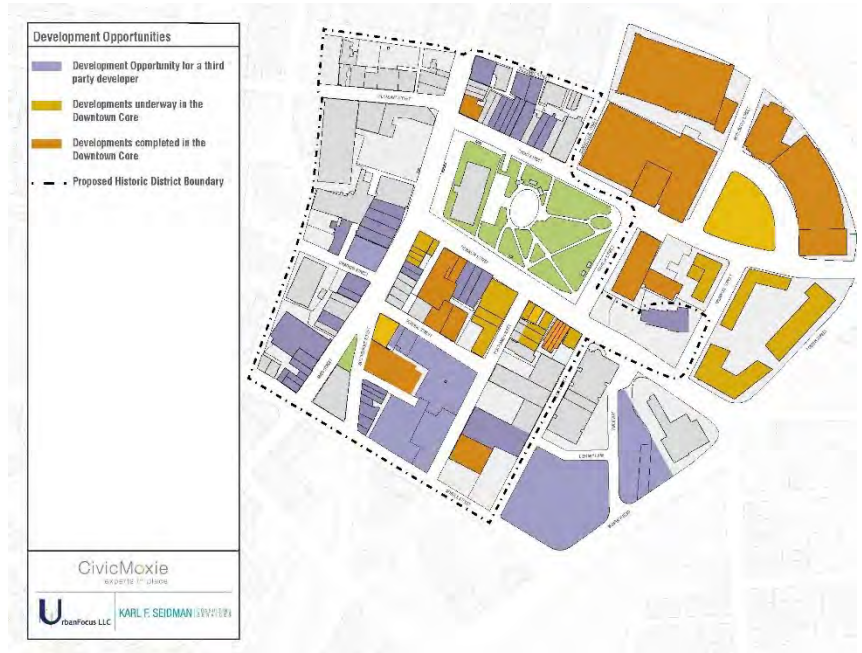


The high number of vacant storefronts contributed to lack of vibrancy downtown.

## Process

The block party grew out of the desire for an early “win” in the ground floor activation planning effort. Many plans had been prepared for downtown and the Theatre District. It was imperative to show positive movement forward. The steps to plan and execute this type of event include:

- BID, Main Streets District, Chamber, Municipality decides on goals (support local businesses, bring shoppers and diners back, celebrate a larger event, etc.)
- Gather parties with similar interests, complementary resources and expertise.
- Brainstorm ways to achieve the core goals. Develop criteria to select one strategy to move forward: 1) Is there someone who has done an event before? 2) Does someone have paid staff that can lend a hand? 3) Who has graphics and marketing expertise? Can this strategy tag onto another event or a miles tone in the community?
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- What location best supports the goals? Create a plan of the area.
- List and draw activity areas, block party elements.
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Overtwenty buildings in the district were underutilized or vacant...providing opportunities for third party developers.

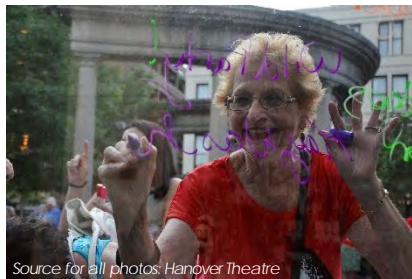


The block party was an near-term, easy action item in the overall implementation plan and was intended to support a good image for this area of the downtown and set up for larger and longer-term action items such as building redevelopment, wayfinding, and business recruitment for ground floor spaces.

Process

## Process (Continued)

- Create a budget sheet for overall event, each activity area.
- Think carefully about branding: what to call it? How does this fit with overall branding and marketing for the downtown or commercial district?
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Source for all photos: Hanover Theatre



The block party celebrated new investment in downtown (the Hanover Theatre Conservatory, and was a step toward shaping a new image for the district.

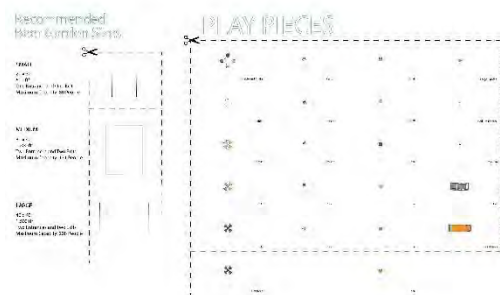
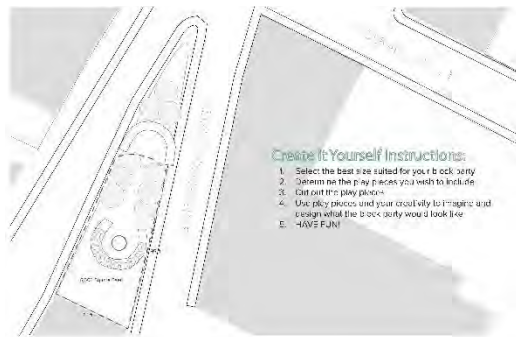
## Process- Strategic Decisions

Careful consideration should be given to matching the location, type of event, and food/entertainment with the goals of the project. In the case of the Worcester block party, the location aligned with overall goals for public space activation in downtown: one target spot was the Common and the other was the street and plaza adjacent to the Hanover Theatre. These locations were high visibility and adjacent to significant vacant ground floor space and underutilized buildings. The effort was an attempt to create a new image near these activation spots and support redevelopment and reinvestment in downtown. The collaborative efforts needed to plan the event were the start of ongoing partnerships and momentum that led to the formation of a BID in 2020.

Careful consideration should be given to ensure that events such as these support the core goals of stakeholders and don't detract from sales and patronage of local retail and food establishments.



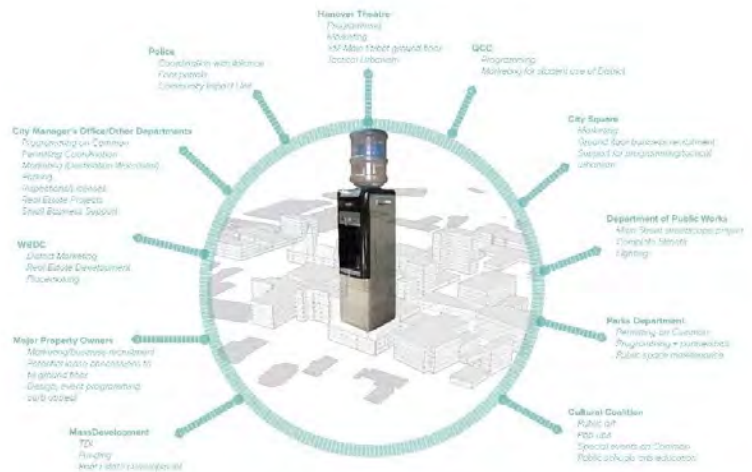
To meet overall activation goals downtown, two locations were targeted for public space events and activities.



Creating plans of the event area and to-scale elements such as beer garden layouts, seating areas, food truck sizes, etc., can help planning and ensure events go smoothly. These elements can be improved after each event and also allow business owners to participate in planning to ensure that the events support customers and visibility for stores and restaurants.



Illustrating the business district at night was a strategy to help people see that it was a safe place to come to eat dinner, attend the theatre, and perhaps one day, shop in local retail spots.



Events such as the block party can support collaborations in a kind of "civic water cooler" where many organizations and City departments work closely toward common goals. The partnerships and sharing that are needed to plan an event are an important element of overall activation of business districts.