

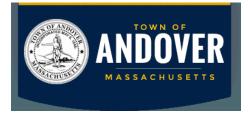
# Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Andover



# Acknowledgments



Town of Andover

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# neighborwaysdesign

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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 The Planning Team would also like to thank the following individuals for participating in interviews and on-site discussions during the planning process:

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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, projectbased recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges in downtowns, town centers, and commercial districts.



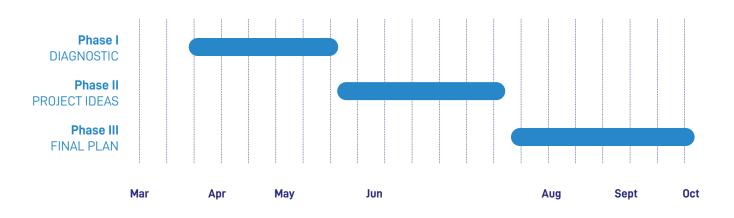
# Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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 awardwinning 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 T

Tenant Mix

Revenue & Sales Admin Capacity

acity Cultural/Arts

Other



## **Executive Summary**

## Active Downtown Needs Better Connections to Residents

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Andover had experienced another crisis. In 2018, natural gas lines in Andover, Lawrence and North Andover exploded, causing fires, the destruction of homes, and the evacuation of over 30,000 people. Small businesses also experienced significant negative impacts during this period. While electricity was restored to most areas fairly quickly, natural gas was unavailable for cooking, heating, and business operations for a significant amount of time. Funding was provided to assist the communities with recovery efforts.

The Town of Andover already had experience in assisting residents and businesses with disaster recovery, and had capacity in place to assist with addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, including staff and some resources. As described below, the Town was able to support outdoor dining efforts relatively quickly, and begin planning for post-COVID recovery by focusing on planning for infrastructure improvements related to mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists to assist businesses in the long term.

At the beginning of the process, Town staff identified a series of goals for the planning process to evaluate. The original goals, below, have been incorporated into the recommendations for this plan; others have been added as a result of public input and evaluation of best practices to address some of the challenges discovered during this process.

These goals were as follows:

- Increase the number of people walking and biking downtown to support local businesses.
- Address unsafe conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists, especially younger residents.
- Link neighborhoods to the Downtown with better sidewalks, bike lanes, or shared streets.
- Shift downtown outdoor space to people rather than cars.

Andover's Downtown is a fairly compact cluster of stores, restaurants, offices, and municipal buildings, including the Memorial Hall Library and the Old Town Hall. This cluster starts on Main Street/Route 28 just before Punchard Avenue, including the Andover Center for History & Culture and a multifamily building. It ends at an X-shaped intersection created by the intersections of High, Central, and Main Streets. Beyond this compact area, the Downtown transitions to primarily residential.

- To the north, the LRRP area extends beyond this X-shaped intersection along North Main Street. A mix of small businesses and residential uses line North Main Street as the road slopes downward to the Whole Foods Market, roughly opposite Sweeney Court. Railroad Street connects North Main Street to the Andover commuter rail platform.
- To the east, Park Street and Barnard Street lead to two municipal parking lots. Chestnut Street leads to The Park, a large public park that connects Downtown to several municipal assets: Town Hall, the Senior Center, the Cormier Youth Center, Doherty Middle School, and Acorn Park. Residential uses, mostly single-family homes, lie beyond this cluster of municipal uses.
- To the west, Central, Essex, and Chestnut Streets link the neighborhoods and the commuter rail station to the Downtown. School Street loops back to the Downtown from Essex Street to Morton Street. This loop encloses the rear parking for the businesses along Main Street, Christ Church and St. Augustine's School, and several houses.



Map of LRRP Area Source: Innes Associates, ESRI, MassGIS

- North of the Essex, School, and Morton Streets loop (and still west of Downtown) is a triangle formed by Railroad Street, North Main Street, and Essex Street. This area also contains parking for Main Street businesses and the library, the Town of Andover Fire Department, St. Augustine Parish, and a cluster of businesses close to the commuter rail platform.
- To the south, Main Street is residential between the Andover Center for History & Culture and a few small stores near Morton Street.

The key to understanding the relationships among these subareas is the topographical changes. The cluster of businesses on Main Street to the X-intersection is fairly flat. Beyond this flat stretch, the roads slope towards the other subareas, significantly in some directions. Some of the connecting streets have a sidewalk on one side of the street; none have bike lanes. For residents who are younger children or with less mobility, walking, biking, or using a wheelchair to get from their homes to Downtown is not perceived as safe. The Town had already begun a program to identify improvements before the LRRP program started.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, outdoor activity became increasingly critical as it was identified as the safest way for people to interact. COVID-19 is an airborne virus that spreads less easily outdoors. Outdoor dining became a response to help restaurants survive during this period. Although most businesses did not have sufficient space on-site for outdoor dining, the Town was able to dedicate some on-street parking spaces for outdoor dining. The ability to expand that program is dependent upon reducing the need for parking. Andover's response is to prioritize methods of encouraging residents to walk or bike downtown so that additional on-street parking can be used to activate the Downtown. This action has the added benefit of supporting overall community health by encouraging an increase in individual physical activity, and a decrease in vehicular use with a corresponding reduction in air pollution.

The Town is already reorganizing its own parking to further support local businesses. The parking area closest to the Old Town Hall is the process of being updated to create another gathering spot at the rear of the Old Town Hall to match the seating and planters in front of Old Town Hall. The Town's goal is to use this building and the improvements as an anchor for downtown activities to support local businesses. The Town lacks public gathering space in this central core; it also owns land between Caffè Nero and UBurger that could be reorganized as a additional gathering spot further south along Main Street.

The evaluation of existing conditions (the diagnostic stage of this planning process) and public engagement sought to confirm the needs suggested by the Towns goals and establish other actions to help address the negative impacts felt by the downtown businesses and exacerbated by existing conditions. A summary of the diagnostic research completed in March and April is provided in the next section. Public engagement in June and July supplemented the research with the experiences of residents and local business owners from two outdoor public meetings. Input provided included comments about walkability for the Downtown and feedback on possible actions. A third meeting is scheduled in mid-October with the Economic Development Commission to discuss the recommendations of this report. In addition, invitations were sent to business owners to discuss the downtown; two followed up on the opportunity (others attended the in-person engagement events).

## Key Findings

The diagnostic process included two site walks, a survey of businesses, and research. The key findings from this process are grouped into four categories: customer base, physical environment, business environment, and administrative capacity. For Andover, the four key findings are as follows:



Businesses respond to Phillips Academy Andover and the region.



Transportation links to downtown prioritize arrival by car.



The environment is not perceived as friendly to smaller and/or newer businesses.



## Businesses could benefit from a dedicated organization.

Feedback from the two-in person options (self-guided tour on June 2 and Coffee with the Planners on July 21), follow-up emails from attendees, and discussions with business owners provided input on the current conditions and hopes for the Downtown. Many mentioned access: concerns about sidewalk conditions, lack of signage to the nearby commuter rail station, desire for the MVRTA bus to link to communities further south, and more facilities for bicyclists, including bike storage.

Other comments focused on the tenant mix and opportunities to provide additional activities. Comments included anecdotal information about the lack of affordable shopping options, the loss of newer small businesses to other communities due to rent increases, and missing draws, such as a place for people in their twenties to gather at night or family-oriented needs, such as a local dentist or gift store. Activation ideas included creating "shop late" nights, providing more lighting and events at night, more outdoor seating, more 15-minute parking spaces, and making Old Town Hall a gathering/cultural space.

Connecting to businesses, whether in-person or virtual, was also seen as a significant need. Regular communication by email and in-person meetings were seen as the most helpful ways of connecting. Other ideas include a calendar of events, a directory of businesses, and more creativity for business-to-business connections.

## Downtown Walking Tour



## Summary of Actions for Recovery

Recovery for Andover's Downtown focuses on public improvements that encourages more people to walk or bike downtown and strategies to help small businesses manage increasing rents in a higher-rent market.

This plan recommends a series of actions the Town, with partners, can take to address the needs of Andover's Downtown. In the short-term, these actions will focus on supporting the businesses as they recover from the negative impacts of the pandemic. Longer-term actions will address physical conditions that detracted from the businesses ability to operate successfully during the pandemic.

The categories with recommendations specific to Andover are as follows: Admin Capacity, Public Realm, Revenue & Sales, Tenant Mix, and Cultural/Arts. While all actions are important, immediate priorities for Town staff are in **bold** text.



#### **ADMIN CAPACITY**

1. Support a downtown-focused business-led association that includes businesses within walking distance of Main Street. (page 25)



#### PUBLIC REALM

- 2. Improve connections from neighborhoods, including crosswalks with appropriate level of signalization/warning. (page 29)
- 3. Develop a wayfinding/signage strategy that encourages people to walk or bike to the downtown. (page 34)
- 4. Transform Old Town Hall into a center of activity and events. (page 40)



#### **REVENUE & SALES**

- 5. Develop a joint marketing campaign and consider marketing clusters of businesses (food, clothing, family-oriented). (page 46)
- 6. In the short-term, consider a "locals shop local" event with incentives for people who walked or biked to Downtown. (page 54)
- 7. Provide technical assistance to small and/or emerging business owners to increase their viability. (page 59)



#### TENANT MIX

- 8. Engage the real estate community to identify businesses that address a mix of needs when spaces become vacant. (*page 65*)
- 9. Work with landlords to attract small and emerging businesses to the Downtown and support their growth within the Downtown. (*page 68*)



#### CULTURAL/ARTS

10. Create a storefront program to support local artists and showcase local history. (page 72)

# Diagnostic

## Key Findings



### Businesses respond to Phillips Academy Andover and the region.

## INPUT FROM PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUGGESTS THAT THE CURRENT RETAIL/RESTAURANT MIX SERVES A SMALLER DEMOGRAPHIC.

Comments from public meetings and interviews indicate that a broader variety of price points for different goods would help activate the Downtown. The comments suggested that the current mix, which includes national chains and boutique stores, offer products at a higher price point that is unaffordable to some residents.

A pharmacy (CVS) is located in the Downtown and Whole Foods anchors one end of the extended area, however, few stores address everyday needs and the downtown boutiques are more likely to draw customers from the wider region.



### Transportation links to downtown prioritize arrival by car.

## DESPITE ACCESS TO BUS AND RAIL, ARRIVAL TO THE DOWNTOWN IS PRIMARILY BY CAR, INCLUDING LOCAL TRIPS.

The Downtown is primarily car-dependent, which is reflected in the amount of parking behind the buildings lining Main Street, both public and private. On-street parking is also available, but some spaces are currently used for outdoor dining. Parking on some side streets is also allowed. As noted earlier, side streets do not have the same quality or width of sidewalk as Main Street or the streets east of Main Street. Coupled with a lack of bike lanes and bike storage, the environment appears unsafe for non-drivers wanting to shop or eat Downtown. Some wayfinding signage exists, but is direction-based and does not include distances or times, which is a newer best practice.

One person noted that people do not like to pay for parking; the public lots do charge and payment can be made at a central kiosk or via an app. Another saw a need for more 15-minute parking along Main Street for quick pick-ups/drop-offs.

The area has two public gathering spaces: one in front of the Old Town Hall, which has seating and planters and a second at the intersection of Main, Elm, Central, and High, with additional seating across the street at the Memorial Hall Library and the building opposite it (1 Elm Street). Town-owned property at the southern end of Main Street might provide an opportunity for a third gathering spot.

In general, the private realm is good, with some attractive storefronts. However, the windows at CVS represent a lost opportunity to activate an entire block, and the bank and gas station opposite are also missed opportunities for enlivening the area.



# The environment is not perceived as friendly to smaller and/or newer businesses.

#### THE DOWNTOWN HAS HIGHER RENTS AND FEW VACANCIES.

Average asking rents for ground floor retail is \$20.91 per square foot and is higher (\$23.42) for office. At the time of the site walk in May, there were no ground floor vacancies. Anecdotal information identified one business that closed but reopened in a nearby community at a lower rent. The higher rents may be tied to reported concerns about the high prices of some of the merchandise.

As noted earlier, many of the tenants are either national chains or local businesses with several locations. Andover does not actively encourage smaller businesses to incubate and grow within the town. The Andover Chamber of Commerce, part of the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce, does not appear to have been active during the pandemic and has thus not been available as a resource for small businesses.

Comments from people at the two events suggested more activity in the Downtown – one person noted that the outdoor dining brought a vitality after 7pm that had not been present before. Others suggested bringing in more events, including holiday events or "shop late" events. Another person noted the lack of places open until 11pm for twenty-somethings in the Downtown; current options are further away.



## Businesses could benefit from a dedicated organization.

#### THE TOWN HAS CAPACITY THAT COULD BE LEVERAGED BY A BUSINESS-LED ORGANIZATION.

The Town of Andover is part of the Merrimack Valley and is thus associated with the Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce. However, interview subsequent to March 2021 indicate that the chamber is not currently active in Downtown Andover and that no other downtown-specific business organization exists.

The Town has a Director of Business, Arts and Cultural Development, Ann Ormond, who has been fully involved in the RRP effort and seeks to further leverage the results of this study into active engagement with the business community. Tony Collins, a member of the Town's Planning Division, has also been deeply involved with the process, although his responsibilities extend beyond the Downtown.

The Town is revitalizing its Economic Development Commission, who could act as the drivers of the recommendations of this report on the Town's side; either a refocused Andover Chamber of Commerce or a new business-led organization that could act as partner with the Town is also needed.



## Highlights from the Physical Environment

#### ACCESS TO THE AREA

Main Street is part of state Route 28, and the town is easily accessed by I-495, and state routes 114, 125, and 133. Andover has a commuter rail station on the MBTA's Haverhill line, with direct access to Lawrence and Haverhill to the north and Wilmington, Reading, Melrose, Madlen, and Boston to the south. The MVRTA's Route 32 bus connects the Andover Train Station and the Downtown to the Buckley Transportation Center in Lawrence, which has additional links to regional buses.

Town planning staff sponsored an online Shared Streets survey as part of their ongoing work to define opportunities to promote more walking/biking connections from the neighborhoods to Downtown. 316 people responded; many chose "Bike for walk to downtown or other destinations" as a reason to use a shared street. Almost 61% of respondents were very supportive of shared streets; another 14.5% were supportive.

#### **ACCESS TO BUSINESSES**

Direct access to business is good; along the core of Main Street the sidewalks are wide enough to accommodate people in wheelchairs and pedestrians. Most storefronts along Main Street appear to have direct access to the ground floor businesses. A few have steps that present mobility challenges. Some businesses on the side streets have steps or ramps to accommodate the change in grade as the land slopes away from Main Street.

#### PARKING

As noted earlier, space for outdoor dining/retail is limited. One way to open up new space is to convert parking spaces to space for outdoor use that is non-vehicular, such as parklets. Businesses have already expressed concern about the availability of parking, including the need for short-term (15-minute) parking spaces. Gaining their support for parking space conversion will require assurance the their businesses will not suffer from any loss in parking.

#### **PUBLIC REALM**

In addition to parking and sidewalk infrastructure, discussed earlier, other components of the public realm have an impact on the Downtown. Lighting on Main Street transitions to pedestrian-scaled, historic design at Punchard Avenue, signaling the entry to the Downtown. Sidewalk material also changes at this point. That same transitions happens at the multistreet intersection at the north end of the Downtown core; reinforcing the importance of that stretch of Main Street. Utilities are also underground here.

A different style of street light is provided on the connecting streets east of Main Street, although it is still pedestrian-scaled. However, Chestnut Street does not appear to have street lights on either side of Main Street.

On the west side and to the north and south, street lights are cobra head light fixtures attached to telephone pole.

#### **PRIVATE REALM**

With some exceptions, business and property owners have treated the storefronts and buildings with care. As noted earlier, there are a few sites and storefronts with missed opportunities for engaging pedestrians. Because the Downtown does not have much green space, businesses could help enliven the area with planters in front of their storefronts or landscaping within their front setbacks for those buildings set back from the street.

Some businesses have added planters, seating, and outdoor display. These tactics add a liveliness that is missing from other areas.









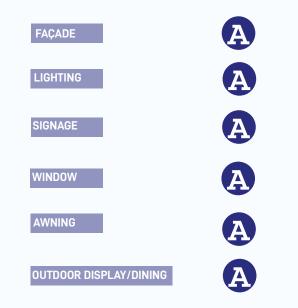


Public Realm Conditions in Andover Photographs: Innes Associates











Private Realm Conditions in Andover Photographs: Innes Associates



## Highlights from the Business Environment

#### **IMPACT FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Of the approximately 606 business within the onemile radius of the center of Downtown, twentynine businesses responded to the business survey developed for the RRP. Although the sample size was small, the information provided was helpful to this process. These businesses reported the following:

#### **BUSINESS CHARACTERISTICS**



#### CHANGES

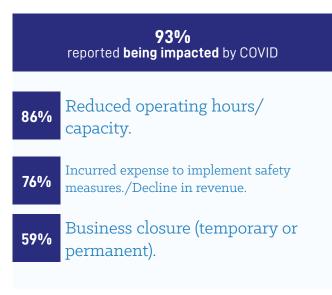
72% generated less revenue in 2020 than in 2019.

For 51% of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more.

73% had fewer on-site customers in Jan/Feb 2021 than pre-COVID.

41% laid off employees 56% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more.

#### **SPECIFIC IMPACTS**



At the time of the survey, 76% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed.

#### SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT CONDITIONS

Condition	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Safety and comfort of customers and employees	59%	31%
Proximity to complementary businesses and uses	59%	28%
Condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks	59%	21%
Condition of private buildings, storefronts, and signs	52%	24%
Access for customers and employees	<b>59%</b>	10%

52% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation: parking regulations (28%) and signage regulations (24%).

#### PREFERENCES AND PRIORITIES

In terms of the physical environment, atmosphere, and access, respondents ranked the potential strategies in order of importance (items ranked by highest combined score):

In terms of attraction/retention of customers and businesses, respondents ranked the potential strategies in order of importance (percentages shown are important/very important):

Strategies	Important	Very Important	Strategies	Important	Very Important
Changes in public parking availability, management, or policies.	29%	36%	Implementing marketing strategies for the commercial district.	48%	28%
Improvement/ development of public spaces and seating areas.	36%	25%	More cultural events/activities to bring people into the district.	38%	34%
Improvement of streetscape and sidewalks.	39%	14%	More opportunities for outdoor dining and selling.	28%	38%
Amenity improvements for public transit/bike users.	25%	14%	Recruitment programs to attract additional businesses.	22%	30%
Improvements in safety and/or cleanliness.	21%	14%	Changes to zoning or other local regulations.	30%	7%
Renovation of storefronts/building façades.	19%	4%	Creation of a district management entity.	8%	23%

# 59% expressed interest in receiving some kind of assistance.

Assistance (top 3)	
Participating in shared marketing/ advertising.	45%
Training on the use of social media.	24%
Low-cost financing for purchasing property in the district.	21%



## Highlights from the Customer Base

## SELECTED POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS WITHIN ONE-MILE RADIUS

Almost half the workforce and most of the population of Andover is within a mile of the geographic center of Andover's Downtown. Household incomes within this one-mile radius are slightly higher than the town overall as is average age, while the household size is slightly lower.

	Andover	LRRP area
Total Resident Population*	8,914	7,634
Working-Age Population* (20-64)	5,154	4,534
Median Household Income*	\$95,600	\$102,058
Median Age*	42.1	43.2
Avg. Household Size*	2.33	2.16
*ESRI Business Analyst (2021 estin	nate)	
	Andover	LRRP area
Total Workforce**	6,727	3,245
**On the Map (2018 or later)		

ADMIN CAPACITY

## Highlights from Admin Capacity

#### **REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

- The Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce includes the Andover Chamber of Commerce.
- The regional planning agency for Andover is the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission.



# Project Recommendations

# Support a business-led organization.

Category 🧔	Admin Capacity
Location	Downtown Andover
Origin	Town Staff
	SME Consultant: Perch Advisors
Budget	Low: Support could come from existing Town staff.
Timeframe	Short-term: <2 years
Risk	Medium: Requires buy-in from a variety of business types and sizes. Organization could be the existing Andover Chamber of Commerce with a new focus.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul> <li>Town facilitation of initial meetings to discuss the organization.</li> <li>Establishment of an organization with the capacity to independently raise funds for marketing, promotion and other activities related to the health of the Downtown.</li> <li>Number of engaged stakeholders that have/maintain an active role in the information gathering and decision making processes.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Ongoing, regular meetings of the organization.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Achievement of other goals in this report requiring business support.</li> </ul>
Partners & Resources	Select Board, Town staff (including Director of Business, Arts, and Culture), business owners, Andover Chamber of Commerce



Main Street Source: Innes Associates

Action Item	Actions
	Support businesses in forming a business-led organization to better collaborate on issues important to the Downtown. This organization could be the Andover Chamber of Commerce if its mission includes a focus on the Downtown.
	Develop Steering Committee and identify leadership
	• Establish a purpose for the association.
	Create an information database and structure.
Diagnostic	
	While the Town of Andover has a Director of Business, Arts and Culture Development, the other recommendations of this report would be more easily implemented with a strong business organization that could be an effective voice for the needs of the businesses, a resource for tools for recover, and a partner with the Town for future efforts.
	If this organization were a new one, it would not replace the existing Andover Chamber of Commerce. Rather, it would focus on the needs of Downtown business and property owners; typically Chambers of Commerce serve an entire town or region across many business types. However, the Andover Chamber of Commerce could have a focus on the Downtown and serve as this organization.
Risk Factors	Mitigation of the risk factor identified above could include the following options:
	• Include all businesses in outreach and conversation, not just the most engaged.
	<ul> <li>Sustain, engage and support leaders and other volunteers throughout the creation process.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Guarantee continued funding for programs and activities (annual dues, fundraising campaigns, merchandise).</li> </ul>
	• Gain the trust of businesses by listening and following up.
	• Engage with property owners when advocating for small businesses.
Budget Items and Funding Sources	The estimated cost for this project is \$15,000. This includes a project manager to help with the formation, development of an initial website, and administrative needs for the creation of the initial database.

Funds from the American Recovery Plan Act may be used for this project.

#### Process

If the Town chooses to support a new organization:

Develop Steering Committee and identify leadership.

• Identify merchants capable of playing an active role in the formation and leadership of a merchants association.

Establish a purpose for the merchants association.

- Develop a set of goals that respond to the identified corridor needs and challenges.
- Solidify goals into a purpose or mission statement which can be communicated to neighborhood stakeholders.
- Articulate achievable goals
- Create Vision and Mission Statements.
- Create and seat interim/permanent leadership (i.e. Advisory Committee, Board of Directors).
- Create standing and ad-hoc committees as needed to address different projects.
- Schedule meetings (ideally quarterly); agendas, attendance records, meeting minutes.

Create an information database.

- Engage steering committee to assist in the development of a database containing property and business owners, and commercial vacancies.
- Complete business and property survey with contact information and key data points (ie, key retail groups and organizations, regular vacancy updates, property transactions, partner organizations with synergy).

Next Steps.

- Create a formal organization structure (501(c)3. 501(c)6, etc) dedicated to independently marketing and promoting the district.
- Create by-laws for the organization.
- Evaluate whether organization should become a formal Business Improvement District (see Best Practice on next page).



ource: Ann Burke

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE ADMIN CAPACITY COMPENDIUM

# Formation of a Business Improvement District in Hudson, MA



Admin Capacity

Location

Hudson, MA

SME Consultant: Ann McFarland Burke, Downtown Consultant

#### **Action Item**

Note: Although this recommendation is not for the formation of a BID, the lessons learned from this Best Practice are applicable to this process. To form a BID, a community must have the support of 60 % of the property owners representing 51% of the assessed within the proposed district. Hudson is a small BID with 120 parcels in the district.

The Downtown Hudson Business Association, in partnership with the Town of Hudson, spearheaded activities to form a BID and executed the step- by- step process to successfully create a BID in Hudson. This included:

- Identification of staff and financial resources.
- Establishment of a strong property owner based steering committee.
- Creation of a property owner outreach strategy.
- Consensus among stakeholders on program priorities, fee structure, boundaries and budget.
- Execution of the petition process and formal approval by Board of Selectmen.
- Initialization of BID services.

# Improve connections from neighborhoods to the Downtown.

Category	F	Public Realm
Location	C	Downtown Andover
Origin		Fown Staff SME Consultant: Neighborways
Budget	•	<ul> <li>High:</li> <li>Phase 1: Neighborway network and project prioritization planning and pilots (\$25-\$50K)</li> <li>Phase 2: Design and Installation (\$100K-\$200k/year)</li> </ul>
Timeframe	S	<ul> <li>Short-term:</li> <li>Phase 1 (1 year) – Planning and Design</li> <li>Phase 2 (1-3 years) – Procurement and Installation (&lt;2 years)</li> </ul>
Risk	l) n	Medium: Project is contingent upon state funding. Parking removal may be challenging and an opportunity for education and discussion / eedback with community.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul> <li>Online and Intercept surveys, and multimodal speed and volume counts to determine before and after impacts of projects to illustrate the change in travel behaviors and speeds.</li> <li>Number of people walking to the Downtown from their homes.</li> <li>Number of people biking to the Downtown.</li> <li>Number of street trees installed to fill gaps in coverage.</li> <li>Number of benches installed to assist those who are les mobile.</li> <li>Bicycle improvements installed such as sharrows designated. Neighborhood greenways with traffic calming, signs and shared lane markings.</li> <li>Painted and signed bicycle lanes and/or, separated bicycle lanes on higher volume streets,</li> <li>Ample bicycle racks at key trip generators.</li> </ul>
Partners & Resources		Fown staff and department, Town elected officials, MassDOT, and residents of low volume streets selected for interventions.

Action Item	<ul> <li>Improve sidewalk connections from neighborhoods, including crosswalks with appropriate level of signalization/warning. All crosswalks should shall meet ADA requirements including curb ramps, tactile warning panels, and accessible signals where present.</li> <li>Improve bicycle connections from neighborhoods which may include sharrows shared lane markings and/or painted lanes and branding/ signage at gateways.</li> <li>Extend street tree network to ensure sidewalks are comfortable for pedestrians in hot weather. Consider tactical implementation of street trees in the street using self-watering planters, and low-impact construction strategies.</li> <li>Install sidewalk amenities such as benches at appropriate points to encourage less-mobile residents to walk to downtown.</li> <li>Engage residents and business leaders about street performance standards that better meet their needs including traffic calming, signage, seating and more opportunities for walking, bicycling and public outdoor activities.</li> <li>Transform selected areas of on-street parking, over time, to drop-off/pick-up and outdoor dining.</li> </ul>
Diagnostic	In common with many communities, the Town of Andover saw increased pedestrian activity. However, while the sidewalks on Main Street and some of the side streets are in good condition, pedestrian connections to the neighborhood are lacking. In addition, between the Downtown and the neighborhoods is a significant change in grade. This makes walking more difficult for those who are less mobile. Safe and comfortable bike routs to Downtown are also missing.
	Businesses in Downtown Andover saw significant negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. These included reduced operating hours and capacity, declines in revenue, increased costs to implement safety measures, temporary business closures, new methods of selling and delivering products and employee layoffs.
	Parking is a significant concern among businesses. Improving the ability of residents to walk or bike from their homes to Downtown would reduce pressure on parking spaces, allowing the Town to shift some of those spaces to other uses, such as dining, parklets, or expanded event space, and support healthy and active living, climate change resiliency, and social integration.
Budget	<ul> <li>Potential funding sources include the following:</li> <li>Chapter 90.</li> <li>American Recovery Act (ARPA).</li> <li>Shared Streets and Spaces (MassDOT).</li> </ul>

• Complete Streets Funding Program (MassDOT).

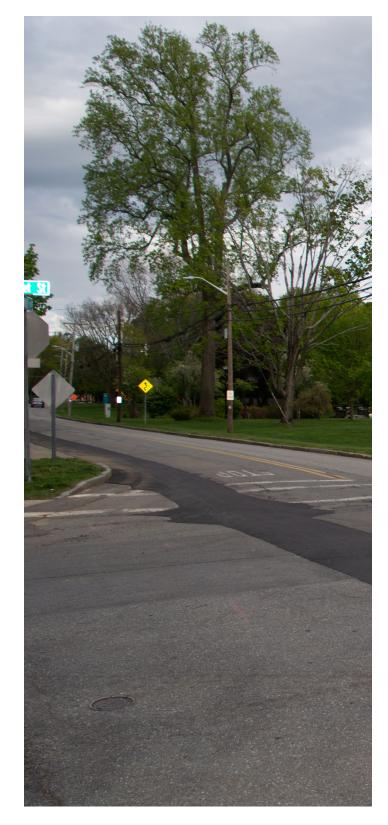
#### **Process** (continued)

Phase 1: Network Planning and Pilots

- Conduct fieldwork and network analysis to select pilot streets that create useful corridors linking neighborhoods and the Downtown.
- Develop tactical design plans for pilot project including low cost interventions such as painted curb extensions, shared lane markings, wayfinding and branding signs, traffic calming, self watering planters with street trees, street art, etc.
- Conduct targeted outreach with neighbors, networking with local organizations, and door to door canvassing to identify streets with strong support for traffic calming and all-ages-andabilities travel (free range kids).
- Develop DRAFT and final tactical plans to pilot for feedback and implementation.
- Evaluate impacts of pilot projects. Potential Opportunity to engage residents to help document before and after traffic speeds and capture the success of interventions.
- Publicize results and promote program to encourage more people to nominate streets via online surveys and applications for safety & mobility improvements.
- Conduct fieldwork and more detailed network analysis, and based off of engagement and community requests prioritize projects for design and installation.

Phase 2: Implementation

- Hire on-call design consultants to support the design and build out of project priorities.
- Work across departments (DPW/Engineering) to install sidewalk and ADA priorities.
- Hire on-call contractor to install pavement markings, signs, flexposts, and tactical traffic calming elements.
- Hire contractors to install site-specific construction projects.



Source: Innes Associates



Source: Neighborways

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

# Connect Neighborhoods to Business Districts via Neighborways



Public Realm

Location

Somerville, MA SME Consultant: Neighborways Design

#### **Action Item**



Source: Neighborways

In 2021, Somerville plans to expand the Neighborways network of permanently marked roadways using existing and new treatments such as:

- Gateways to slow turning vehicles and provide wayfinding via painted tan curb extensions, painted red crosswalks, flexible posts at corners, and branding signs.
- Contra-Flow Bicycle Streets (One-way for people driving / two-way for people biking) to expand network accessibility via signs and pavement markings.
- Midblock Traffic Calming to slow speeds to 20 mph or less via speed humps /cushions, curb extensions, yield streets, flexpost neckdowns, one-lane yield conditions.
- Vehicle Volume Reduction to reduce conflicts and create lower stress, comfortable routes via regulatory signage, median islands / diverters, and one-way street direction changes.
- Placemaking to brand and engage the community via public art (sculpture, paint day block parties), stencils, lighting, planters and street trees, and rain gardens.



ource: Stantec

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

# Increase Outdoor Dining and Safe Bike/Pedestrian Connections

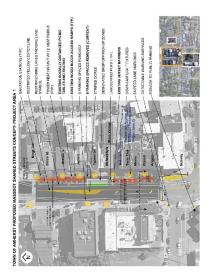


Public Realm

Location

Amherst, MA SME Consultant: Stantec Consulting

#### **Action Item**



Source: Stantec

The key project elements included: installing expanded on-street dining areas and designated rideshare/pick-up areas by removing on-street parking; adding propane heating towers for diners; preservation of bicycle facilities by removing a turn lane; adding detectable warning surfaces for crosswalk ramps; adding new picnic tables in the Town Common; adding new pedestrian-scale streetlights; and installing heated bus shelters at two downtown stops.

Key action items included:

- Developing a detailed concept plan that could be used for installation as part of the grant application (aided by a Technical Assistance grant from the Barr Foundation).
- Obtaining letters of support from affected businesses.
- Identifying roles and responsibilities for the procurement, installation, and maintenance of various components of the project.
- Procuring and installing the project components;.
- Developing a summary report for MassDOT as part of the requirements of the grant.

# Develop a wayfinding/signage strategy that encourages people to walk or bike to the downtown.

Category		Public Realm
Location		Downtown Andover
Origin		Town Staff
		SME Consultant: Neighborways
Budget	\$	Medium: \$30,000 design fee + \$80,000 for implementation
Timeframe		Short-term:
	$\left(\begin{array}{ccc} 9 & \mathbf{L} & 3 \\ 6 & \mathbf{L} \end{array}\right)$	• Phase 1 (1 year) – Planning and Design.
		• Phase 2 (1-3 years) – Procurement and Installation.
Risk		Medium: Project is contingent upon Town or state funding. Buy in and agreement from businesses and Town on branding and style.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul> <li>Multimodal counts / intercept surveys to assess impacts in travel behaviors and reach goals of increasing the number of people walking and biking to and around the Downtown.</li> </ul>
		<ul> <li>Number of people engaged in project, number of businesses involvement.</li> </ul>
		• Number of people walking to the Downtown from their homes.
		Number of people biking to the Downtown.
		Number of new signs installed.
		Recognition of sign program by users.
		Number of businesses included.
		<ul> <li>Number of businesses experiencing uptick in people who walk or bike.</li> </ul>
Partners & Resources		Town elected officials, Town staff, local businesses, Andover Chamber of

Town elected officials, Town staff, local businesses, Andover Chamber of Commerce or new business-led group and Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Diagnostic	In common with many communities, the Town of Andover saw increased pedestrian activity. The Town already has some wayfinding signs. However, there are two problems: gaps in the signage program and no Indication of distance. The Town would like to create a more comprehensive signage program that links businesses within walkable distance of Main Street including the commuter rail and the businesses surrounding it. They would also like the signage program to Indicate the distances to destinations based on time to walk or bike (or steps) rather than miles or feet.
	Businesses in Downtown Andover saw significant negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. These included reduced operating hours and capacity, declines in revenue, increased costs to implement safety measures, temporary business closures, new methods of selling and delivering products and employee layoffs.
	Responses from the public site walk included comments about a lack of signage to the commuter rail. A comment from a business owner in the survey indicated a need for more signage. The town has some wayfinding signage already; this signage could form the basis for a larger network.
Action Item	Actions for this program include the following:
	<ul> <li>Develop an inventory of current wayfinding signs and evaluate the information provided.</li> <li>Develop a signage strategy that encourages people to walk or bike from homes to local businesses.</li> <li>Develop signage strategy to encourage people to park once in lots and walk to destinations.</li> <li>Supplement existing wayfinding signage with coordinating new signage.</li> <li>Incorporate Andover's history and public art into the wayfinding program to reinforce its unique identity.</li> </ul>
Budget	<ul> <li>Costs include the following:</li> <li>Staff time for review and management.</li> <li>Hire consultant to develop wayfinding and branding design and implementation plans.</li> <li>Hire local businesses to manufacture signs.</li> <li>Hire contractors install wayfinding signs.</li> </ul>
	In addition to municipal funds, the following are appropriate sources:
	American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).
	<ul> <li>Massachusetts Downtown Initiative.</li> <li>District Local Technical Assistance Grant.</li> </ul>
	DISTICT LUCAT RECITICAL ASSISTANCE OFAIL.

• Mass Cultural Council or Andover Cultural Council grants.

#### Process

Existing conditions assessment

- Review existing studies and relevant reports including LRRP, and existing town branding.
- Inventory current signage within the LRRP area.

**Community Engagement** 

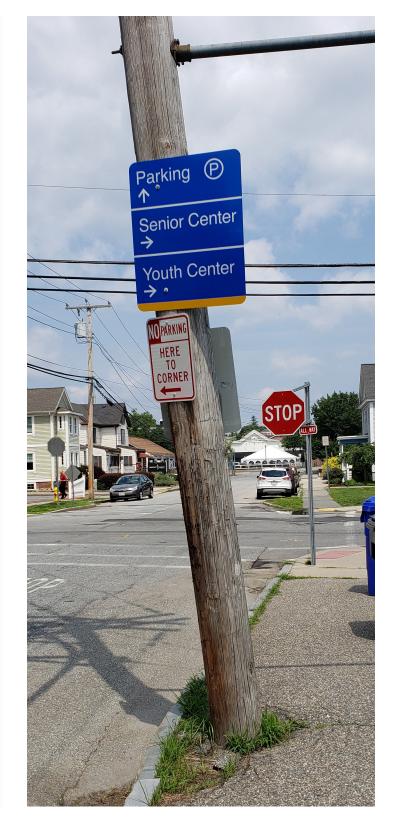
- Develop an ongoing engagement process online and in person.
- Goals of engagement are to be inclusive, welcoming, and leverage local creativity.

Planning and Design

- Develop draft and final branding and design templates including consistency in theme / branding / colors / logos. This may serve as the template for the rest of the Town of Andover.
- Develop draft and final comprehensive multimodal wayfinding installation plans which may include:
  - Consolidation of existing signage.
  - Branded welcome / gateway signage.
  - Park branding signage.
  - Signage for people driving to access parking and major destinations.
  - Walking and biking wayfinding to connect points of interest.
  - Artistic wayfinding (e.g, murals, pavement markings, sculpture).
  - Digital / online wayfinding strategies (focus on access to parking on street and off-street, add public parking lots to Google Maps).
  - Digital kiosks.

Implementation

- Hire contractors to manufacture and install sign plans.
- Evaluation of key performance metrics.



Existing wayfinding signage Source: Innes Associates



BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

# Create a wayfinding strategy to incorporate existing and new signage



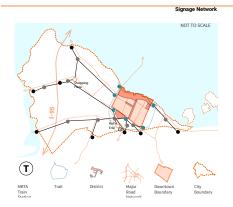
Location

Newburyport, MA SME Consultant: Innes Associates Ltd.

### **Action Item**







Source: Harriman

Funded by a grand from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, this project accomplished the following objectives:

- Developed an inventory of existing wayfinding sign types, styles, and functions.
- Identified gaps in the existing network leading from I-95 to Downtown Newburyport.
- Developed a hierarchy of sign types based on distance from the destination and destination type.
- Suggested appropriate content and locations for each sign type.
- Analyzed components of existing signage (colors, materials) based on function and suggested ways to integrate new signage into the system without disrupting existing signage.



Source: Favermann Design

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

# Create a wayfinding theme based on the community's seaside location



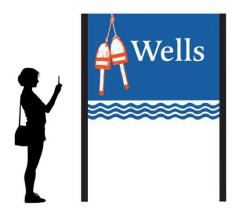
Public Realm

Location

Wells, ME

SME Consultant: Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

**Action Item** 



Source: Favermann Design

- Meetings with the Advisory Committee were scheduled over the next four (4) months.
- Utilizing existing conditions, community history and natural areas, each meeting looked at another aspect of the program.
- Locations were explored in terms of decision points and directional element considerations.
- After accessing needs, street furniture design versions were explored.
- Public art was looked at as potential focal point and visual markers.
- Local capability for fabrication was reviewed and discussed.
- New and existing public buildings, signage needs were considered.
- Colors were tested and explored.



ource: Selbert Perkins Design

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

# Integrate Brand and Art into your Wayfinding System



Public Realm

Location

Worcester, MA SME Consultant: Selbert Perkins Design

**Action Item** 



Source: Selbert Perkins Design

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. Things to consider adding in the future:

- Dynamic signage.
- Walking distances.
- Sculptural landmarks.
- Integrated elements to reinforce District stories.
- Revenue generation.

# Transform Old Town Hall into a center of activity and events.

Category	Public Realm
Location	Downtown Andover
Origin	Town Staff
Budget	\$ Low: Furniture, signage, etc.
Timeframe	Short-term: six month to one year.
Risk	Low: Requires approval of the Board of Selectmen.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul> <li>Events hosted.</li> <li>Number of users.</li> <li>Number of satisfied users.</li> <li>Increase in business during and after events.</li> </ul>
Partners & Resources	Board of Selectmen, Town Planning staff, Businesses, Arts community



Old Town Hall Source: Innes Associates

Action Item	<ul> <li>Convert the Old Town Hall to a community-building tool to bring businesses, artists, and volunteers together.</li> <li>Use the space for gathering, seating, dining, performances, and small events.</li> <li>Consider expanding the interventions at Old Town Hall to other Town-owned sites in the Downtown as later states.</li> </ul>
Diagnostic	During 2020, outdoor spaces for gathering, seating, and dining became increasingly important as the airborne transmission of the COVID-19 coronavirus became more widely understood. Communities raced to open up outdoor spaces to helps businesses survive and preserve activity in suddenly deserted downtowns. As the Delta variant spread in summer 2021, these outdoor spaces continued to be important. Old Town Hall is perfectly positioned to act as the center of public events in the Downtown and serve as the hub for many of the marketing activities mentioned in other recommendations. The Town is already making improvements to the adjacent parking lot to support events on both sides of the building. Indoor ground floor event space could be available for workshops, gallery space, event planning space, or temporary pop-ups for emerging businesses. All these activities address the decline in revenue local businesses experienced in 2020.
Process	<ul> <li>Define needed equipment: furniture, signage, materials, etc.</li> <li>Identify partners for implementation: <ul> <li>DPW and other Town staff</li> <li>Volunteers</li> <li>Paid contractors</li> </ul> </li> <li>Secure funding. <ul> <li>Grants, donations, Town resources (see below)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Order and Install <ul> <li>Watch lead times for supplies.</li> <li>Outdoor materials should be durable and address likely weather, sun, and salt conditions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Enjoy!</li> </ul>
Budget	<ul> <li>Events may range between \$5,000-\$10,000 per event but may be less with volunteers and donated materials.</li> <li>Funds from the American Recovery Plan Act may be used for design and installation of improvements to public spaces.</li> <li>Other appropriate funding sources: <ul> <li>Commonwealth Places</li> <li>Mass Cultural Council and Andover Cultural Council</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



ource: Harriman/Innes Associates

**BEST PRACTICE** 

### Placemaking Playbook



Public Realn

Location

Burlington, MA SME Consultant: Innes Associates Ltd.

**Action Item** 



Source: Harriman/Innes Associates

The Massachusetts Downtown Imitative sponsored this report for the Town of Burlington. The project examined Burlington's Town Center and identified strategies to help bring a stronger sense of place to this corridor. Strategies included wayfinding, murals, spaces for outdoor eating and gathering.

A follow-on project included a design for one of the areas identified in the plan. Because of a significant slope to the area and the need to make it accessible, the proposed placemaking project was about \$50,000. However, strategies in the plan identified less costly options, some of which could be implemented by volunteers.



Source: Toole Design

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

### Gove Street Crossing: Pop-up Park + Plaza

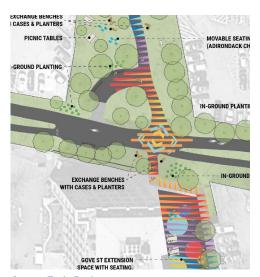


Public Realm

Location

East Boston, MA SME Consultant: Civic Space Collaborative

#### **Action Item**



Source: Toole Design

The budget for this project included a grant of \$16,000 from the Barr Foundation and \$20,000 in pro bono design from Toole Design.

The Friends of the Mary Ellen Greenway (FoMEWG) worked with the Boston Society of Landscape Architects (BSLA) to host a design competition for the Gove Street section of the Mary Ellen Greenway. A 12-member jury selected Toole Design to work on a seasonal installation.

Over three months, Toole Design worked to refine the design by engaging East Boston residents. The final design and project included:

- a. A pop-up plaza on Gove Street next to a residential apartment building, and
- b. A seasonal installation on the Greenway.

Both designs included a pavement graphic and seating. The FoMEWG hosted several programs at the pop-up plaza.

This project was funded by a Barr Foundation grant to the Friends of the Mary Ellen Welch Greenway.



# Grand Openia June 28th 5:00 pm Music Food

ource: Bench Consulting

**BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM** 

### The Corner Spot



Public Realm

Location

Ashland, MA SME Consultant: Bench Consulting (from Patronicity)

**Action Item** 



Source: Bench Consulting

Total funding was \$59,000, including a Commonwealth Places grant that match the crowd-funding raised through Patronicity.

The Corner Spot is a placemaking opportunity for downtown Ashland where businesses can test drive the market and residents can come together to increase the sense of community and help revitalize the downtown area.

The Corner Spot is intended to stimulate economic activity in Ashland, attract new developers and business owners as well as increase foot traffic downtown to help support existing and future business. You'll need to locate a prime site for this, ideally on a property controlled by the town, whether municipal parking lot, vacant lot or centrally located space. Once you have the space determine any initial permitting issues that may preclude or hinder you from using the site for certain passive or commercial activities. Develop a site layout plan and a rough preliminary budget and allocate any funding opportunities including grants and private donations that may be available. Ensure you have an adequate programming plan and maintenance plan lined up for the site. Maintenance could require some funding so ensure you have long term funding set aside to operate the site.



Source: The Musciant Group

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

### Winter Activation at the Panoway in Downtown Wayzata



Public Realm

Location

Wayzata, MN SME Consultant: The Musciant Group

**Action Item** 



Source: The Musciant Group

The project took a holistic approach to the activation of the space and its impact on the entire downtown. We combined the physical enhancement of the space with a spectrum of programming and promotion to support a continuum visitation – from daily, to weekly outing, to first-time local tourist.

- Action #1 Persona Generation + Experience Mapping
- Action #2 Building Partnerships
- Action #3 Physical improvements
- Action #4 Execute Programming
- Action #5 Promotion

# Develop a joint marketing campaign for the Downtown.

Category \$	Revenue & Sales
Location	Downtown Andover
Origin	Town Staff, public input SME Consultant: Perch Advisors
Budget	Medium: See breakdown below.
Timeframe	Short-term: Six to twelve months.
Risk	Medium: Project would require participation from local businesses.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul> <li>Increased number of customers/visitors to Downtown.</li> <li>Increased recognition of Downtown as a destination.</li> <li>Participation in the program by the recommended business-led association.</li> </ul>
Partners & Resources	Town staff and department, Town elected officials, business owners, Andover Chamber of Commerce or new business-led group and Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce



Main Street Source: Innes Associates

Action Item	<ul> <li>Develop joint marketing campaign and consider mark businesses (food, clothing, family-oriented).</li> <li>Link this to other Project Recommendations for the p downtown organization, cooperation with local arts g public art in storefronts and on public and private pro</li> </ul>	roposed business-led proups, and installation of
Diagnostic	Businesses in Downtown Andover saw significant negative in pandemic. These included reduced operating hours and capa increased costs to implement safety measures, temporary b methods of selling and delivering products and employee lay Respondents to the business survey indicated that the highe marketing strategies was participating in shared marketing/ events and activities was highest on the list of strategies. A Downtown-wide business strategy could focus on existing (food, clothing, and accessories) while highlighting the many Andover.	acity, declines in revenue, ousiness closures, new yoffs. est priority in terms of 'advertising. More cultural y clusters of businesses
Budget	Funds for this coordinated series of projects could come from Plan Act, as the actions are a direct response to the losses s beginning with the shutdowns in the spring of 2020. Project and Event Planning/Campaign Establish Communications Platforms:	
Key Performance Indicators	<ul> <li>Physical <ul> <li>Geography impacted.</li> <li>Quantity of plantings.</li> <li>Quantity of garbage collected.</li> <li>Quantity of lots cleaned.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Social <ul> <li>Strategic partner participation (business sponso profits, elected officials funding).</li> </ul> </li> <li>Digital engagement <ul> <li>Increased Google/Yelp hits.</li> <li>Increased views/likes/followers on social media</li> </ul> </li> <li>Economic Impacts <ul> <li>Funds raised.</li> <li>Local multiplier effect (local purchasing for exected income increases on event days.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	ì.

### Process

### Establish Communication Platforms/Digital

A marketing/communications plan making use of a unified identity/brand, a logo, and social media for advertising will aid in communicating the purpose and benefit of the Downtown and maintain stakeholder awareness.

- a. Logo and Slogan creation
  - Engage with local artists; community-based slogan contest with prizes or cash award.
- Determine best platforms for presence and messaging and create accounts (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn)
  - Time and skill may be required to help individuals develop comfort with online platforms; build consensus on platform choice.
  - Maintenance and content updates required for website and social media may require personnel or contractors.
- c. Create internal communications platform for businesses to communicate freely with each other. Maintain engagement with regular posts and interactive messaging. Access to technology may be different for some businesses. Options include:
  - Facebook Page.
  - Corridor Listserv.
  - Whats App.
- d. Create digital platforms for the Downtown and encourage/assist individual businesses to create and maintain an online presence to communicate with community using multiple digital platforms, such as:
  - Downtown Andover website.
  - Social media.
  - Slogans, logo, hashtags, QR codes displayed on all written promotional materials.



Main Street, Spring 2021 Source: Innes Associates

### Process (continued)

- Maintenance and engagement will require assistance from staff, government partners or contractors
- Create an "Asset File" to encourage consistent use of images and design elements.

Specific challenges for communications platforms include the following:

- Digital infrastructure capacity.
- Broadband access.
- Reach and Inclusion: Aim for widest reach; do not overlook any potential user-base/population/demographic/ community.

Specific Key Performance Indicators for communications platforms:

- Ad-hoc committee created to oversee process.
- Creation of a brand / logo and a slogan / motto based on Andover's historic identity or other unique characteristics.
- Identified engaged platforms
- Number of businesses engaging with social media.
- Number of "followers" over specific timelines (30 days, 90 days, 1 year).
- Number of likes, comments, other responses.
- Post frequency by individual businesses.
- Success stories of user engagement.
- Creation of multi-platform media (website; social media; billboard) specifically for promoting the Downtown and communicating with customer base(s).
- Track use of links to/from municipal website) for attracting businesses and offering resources to new and existing businesses.

### Project & Event Planning/Campaign

Rally stakeholders to work together to build relationships and achieve immediate desired outcomes. Successful event execution builds organizational foundations that can be leveraged for further merchant organizing.



Main Street, Spring 2021 Source: Innes Associates

### Process (continued)

- Rally businesses around a specific shared concern or objective, such as the following:
  - Beautification.
  - Clean Streets/Clean Up Days .
  - Marketing.
  - Increased engagement with local institutions/potential partnerships.
  - Needed physical improvements.
- b. Connect seasonal and annual events in Andover to Downtown using sponsorships and opening public spaces, including the Old Town Hall.

Considerations and challenges for events/ campaigns include the following:

- Plan and host events that leverage merchant participation with community involvement benefiting both businesses and residents.
- Events should highlight the added services that are available to the community residents/target audience through the merchants in the Downtown.
- Seek synergies among clusters of businesses (food, clothing, recreation, family-oriented, etc)
- Scan of external media (think hashtags on your event locations, public spaces, businesses) - what does the external world use to describe your town?
- Artist recruitment.
- Engagement with local institutions/ regional partners.

Additional Resources

https://www.pitkinavenue.nyc/realestate

https://www.hudsonsquarebid.org/ business-resources/

https://makemusicny.org/

Source: Perch Advisors



Source: CivicMoxie

**BEST PRACTICE FROM THE REVENUE & SALES COMPENDIUM** 

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

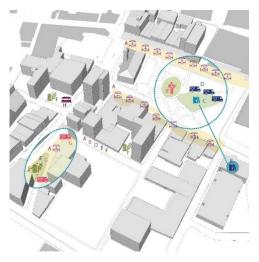


Revenue & Sales

Location

Worcester, MA SME Consultant: Susan Silverberg, CivicMoxie

**Action Item** 



Source: CivicMoxie

The Block Party was a means to test the "collaborative muscle" of various partners, including MassDevelopment, 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.



Source: Bench Consulting

**BEST PRACTICE FROM THE REVENUE & SALES COMPENDIUM** 

# Coordinated Social Media Marketing



**Revenue & Sales** 

Location

Online

SME Consultant: Cepheid Solutions

**Action Item** 

- Initial planning session (1hr one time).
- Training (ongoing but i2.5 hour initial self-paced training course).
- Interview Stakeholder(s) (1hr one time).
- Setup Social Media Accounts (3 hrs one time).
- Content Development (1-10 hrs monthly).
- Operate Program (4hrs monthly assuming weekly posts).
- Planning & Coordination (1 hr weekly).
- Program Reporting (1 hr monthly).

# Rapid Website Development



Location

Boston, MA SME Consultant: Cambridge Retail Advisors

#### **Process**

### **Onboarding Phase**

- a. Explain the simple design process and benefits of the end website.
- b. Purchase the desired domain name.
- c. Set manageable goals with clear timeframes.

### **Discovery Phase**

- a. Gather content and determine look/feel for the website.
- b. Collect media such as photos and video (Schedule photographer if required).
- c. Link Social Media (if applicable).
- d. Link online selling platforms (if applicable).

### **Review/Finalization Phase**

- a. Review website with business owner prior to publishing live.
- b. Publish site and encourage business owner to incorporate their new website into their marketing plan.
- c. Hand off website to business owner and encourage frequent edits!

# Consider a "locals shop local" event with incentives for people who walked or biked to Downtown.

Category	\$7	Revenue & Sales
Location		Downtown Andover
Origin		Town Staff, public input
Budget	\$	Low: Less than \$5,000
Timeframe		Short-term: Six to twelve months.
Risk		Medium: Project would require participation from local businesses and volunteer coordination.
Key Performance Indicators		• Number of people who walked or biked locally to event.
		Number of businesses participating.
		• Participation in the program by the recommended business-led association.
Partners & Resources		Town staff and department, Town elected officials, business owners, Andover Chamber of Commerce or new business-led group and Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce



Bicyclist on Main Street, Spring 2021 Source: Innes Associates

### **Action Item**

- Develop an "Locals Shop Local" event to showcase pedestrian and bicycle connections from the neighborhoods to the Downtown.
- Provide prizes for people who walk or bike to the Downtown and visit a certain number of stores.
- Collect data on how many people used either mode of transportation, where they came from, how long it took, and how comfortable they felt.
- Event could be repeated after new infrastructure is installed to measure change.

### Diagnostic

Businesses in Downtown Andover saw significant negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. These included reduced operating hours and capacity, declines in revenue, increased costs to implement safety measures, temporary business closures, new methods of selling and delivering products and employee layoffs.

A key element of responding to COVID-19 has been prioritizing outdoor activity. Other recommendations in this report are focused on creating bicycle and pedestrian connections; this recommendation helps to gather information to support the implementation of those recommendations – or celebrate the results!

### **Budget**

Funds for this coordinated series of projects could come from the American Rescue Plan Act, as the actions are a direct response to the losses suffered by businesses beginning with the shutdowns in the spring of 2020.

The budget for this project is approximately \$5,000-\$10,000 for coordination, marketing, signage, and printing. Some of this cost may be offset by volunteers.



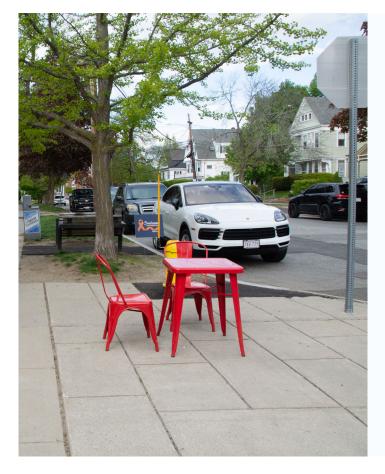
Main Street, Spring 2021 Source: Innes Associates

### Process

See the marketing recommendation for general event planning. The Town has already done shared street events that could serve as a model.

For this specific project:

- Identify volunteers to help guide people and collect information.
- Recruit businesses to participate.
- Solicit donated prizes.
- Develop the graphics and materials for the event:
  - Flyers, social media images.
  - Routes for pedestrians and bicyclists.
  - Cards to be stamped or punched by businesses.
  - Surveys for participants (customers and businesses).
- Choose a rain date!
- Consider adding other activities in Downtown.



Main Street, Spring 2021 Source: Innes Associates

### Pledge To Support Local



Location

### Amherst, MA SME Consultant: Amherst Business Improvement District

**Action Item** 

Incentivize people to shop local over a 2 month period in a fun and light way.

- Treasure hunt concept boiled down to a check list.
- Make sure it is within reach, a bit of a stretch but nothing too daunting:
  - 10 restaurants
  - 5 retail
  - 3 services
  - 10 weeks to complete
- A Pledge to support: involved, active, challenge for the greater good.
- Create and print Pledge Cards.
- Marketing: Honest "State of the Downtown": Businesses down 70+%, dueto pandemic, you make the difference: a call to arms.

### Marketing Plan:

- 12-week Radio Buy: 4 radio stations playing 15 spots daily.
- 4 full page full color back page of the local paper with "cut out lines."
- 10,000 rack cards distributed to all local business to hand out and include with take away orders and shoppers bags.
- Download pledge card from BID website.
- Social Media promotions and push to neighboring areas.



Source: Amherst BID



Source: FRACC

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE CULTURAL/ARTS COMPENDIUM

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



**Revenue & Sales** 

Location

Worcester, MA SME Consultant: Susan Silverberg, CivicMoxie

#### **Action Item**



Source: CivicMoxie

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.

# Provide technical assistance to small and/or emerging business owners to increase their viability

Category	\$7	Revenue & Sales
Location		Downtown Andover
Origin		Town Staff, public input Additional information from SME Consultant: Revby LLC
Budget	\$	Low: \$20,000-\$30,000.
Timeframe		Short-term: Program could happen within the next six-nine months.
Risk		Low: Program is voluntary for business owners.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul> <li>Number of new and local businesses in Downtown.</li> <li>Length of tenure in Downtown.</li> <li>Number of businesses participating in the educational component.</li> <li>Number of businesses with first-time online platforms.</li> <li>Number of businesses with first-time social media presence.</li> <li>Increase in online sales.</li> <li>Increase in overall sales.</li> </ul>
Partners & Resources		Town staff, businesses, Andover Chamber of Commerce or new business- led group and Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce



Main Street storefronts Source: Innes Associates

### **Action Item**

Develop Webinars to assist with technical skills, including the following:

- Online marketing.
- Social media.
- Negotiation strategies with landlords.



Main Street storefronts Source: Innes Associates

#### **Diagnostic**

Businesses in Downtown Andover saw significant negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. These included reduced operating hours and capacity, declines in revenue, increased costs to implement safety measures, temporary business closures, new methods of selling and delivering products and employee layoffs.

Comments from public input indicated that new and/or smaller businesses have hard time staying in Andover because of the high rents for retail space in the Downtown. Other input has suggested the need for assistance in online marketing, including social media. Webinars to teach specific skills to small business owners would be valuable in helping them survive longer in a higher rent market during this challenging economic period.

### **Budget**

Funds from the American Rescue Plan Act can be used to directly assist businesses with programs such as these.

ARPA funding must be committed by 2024 and expended by 2026. These funds could be used to kick-start a pilot program which could then be funded either by the recommended business-led organization of the Andover Chamber of Commerce.

### **Process**

- Begin with outreach and engagement to provide business owners with a voice; provide an opportunity to listen before there is any perception that you are "pushing" something to them that is not relevant considering their current mindset. Workshops can help business owners understand the subject matter and help them define what "online" and "eCommerce" can mean for them, on their terms, for their brand, and their comfort level. Sample questions to raise during in-person conversations or a survey:
  - What about your business keeps you up at night? What is top of mind right now?
  - What is your comfort level and time capacity to manage technology aspects of your business, including your POS system and website? What help would be most welcome in these areas?
  - Would you welcome resources that can help you bring more customer traffic to your store? Resources that may include help with your Google My Business listing and presence elsewhere online?
  - Do you have a system in place to collect customer information, such as name, email address, cell phone number, or purchase history?
  - Reflecting on the last year and a half, what resource or knowledge could have helped you be more resilient through the pandemic?
- Develop webinar/in-person programming to address these issues.
- The Old Town Hall would be an ideal location for technical assistance programs because of its proximity to local businesses.



Main Street storefronts Source: Innes Associates

# Relaunch

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Source: Revby LLC

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE TENANT MIX COMPENDIUM

A Collaborative Small Business Technical Assistance Effort to Drive Business Resilience and Opportunity to Diverse Communities



Tenant Mix

Location

Arlington, VA SME Consultant: Reby LLC

**Action Item** 

Community Action Items:

- Identify partners/providers to implement program in a timely fashion.
- Identify marketing tools to reach the target market.
- Identify what microentrepreneurs need the most help with in solidifying their organizations.
- Ensure there are enough resources to meet the need.
- Consider CARES Act Funding to help with impact.
- Ensure quick turnaround with Purchasing Office to Select consultants.

Revby (the TA provider) Action Items:

- Create a system to approach small business technical assistance topics, such as digital marketing, eCommerce, financial, and strategy with empathy, patience, and encouragement acknowledging that the topics are difficult for many of the diverse audiences that suffer from a digital divide disadvantage.
- Provide materials that can be referenced following time the one-on-one TA sessions.

### Provide Funding and Technical Assistance to Enable Business Viability During COVID-19



Tenant Mix

Location

Arlington, MA SME Consultant: Revby LLC

**Action Item** 

The Department of Planning and Community Development Action Items:

- Administering a relief program for Arlington businesses with twenty or fewer full-time-equivalent employees, including the owner.
- The program provides short-term working capital assistance and technical assistance to enable the viability of the business during the severe economic interruption related to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing restrictions.

Technical Assistance Project Action Items (consultant):

- Build trust with the business owner during the first sessions and collaboratively work on a plan on how the technical assistance time allotted may be used to support the business owner in the best way possible.
- Conduct several TA sessions over Zoom.
- Provide a final project deliverable that outlines the work completed and provides resources and recommendations for the business owner's ongoing use.
- Provide workshops on topics including business resilience and digital marketing.

# Engage the real estate community to identify new businesses for vacant spaces.

Category	Tenant Mix
Location	Downtown Andover
Origin	Town Staff, public input SME Consultant: Perch Advisors
Budget	\$ Low: Town staff may be able to undertake the database with assistance.
Timeframe	Short-term: Six months to two years
Risk	Low: This is a Town-led program, with assistance from the recommended business-led organization.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul> <li>Creation of a quarterly retail report that can be mailed to multiple potential lessees and commercial real estate brokers and live online on the website.</li> <li>Plan and Execute "Roll Up the Gates" events to show multiple</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Plan and Execute Roll op the Gales events to show moltiple vacant properties to prospective lessees on a single day.</li> </ul>
	Comprehensive and regularly updated database,
	Determined map outputs.
	Marketing support templates for available sites.
Partners & Resources	Town staff, real estate brokers, landlords, new business-led organization

Town staff, real estate brokers, landlords, new business-led organization and Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce/Andover Chamber of Commerce



#### Source: Innes Associates

Action Item	Engage the real estate community to identify businesses that address a mix of needs when spaces become vacant.		
	Engage the real estate community and use their input to create and maintain an up-to- date database.		
	• Knowing industry personnel and creating substantive relationships with brokers can produce enhanced outcomes.		
	<ul> <li>Knowing where development opportunities and vacancies are, how long they exist, and when they lease is a powerful tool in knowing district's strengths and weaknesses</li> </ul>		
Diagnostic	Businesses in Downtown Andover saw significant negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. These included reduced operating hours and capacity, declines in revenue, increased costs to implement safety measures, temporary business closures, new methods of selling and delivering products and employee layoffs.		
	Comments from public input indicated that new and/or smaller businesses have hard time staying in Andover because of the high rents for retail space in the Downtown. Other comments related to the higher price points of goods in the current stores which makes Downtown less attractive as a destination for people searching for items that are less expensive.		
Budget	In addition to municipal funds, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) could be a funding source for any additional staffing required for the project.		

### **Process**

- Identify desired business types or structures, Identify real estate stakeholders and determine compelling and best scenario for engagement.
  - "Broker's Breakfast" at an onsite venue or online with a PowerPoint presentation on the benefits (local amenities, testimonials, retail market opportunities) of locating a business in the Downtown.
  - "Rolling Up the Gates."
- Survey and tally vacancies within the district on a monthly (or at least a quarterly) basis.
- Gather information from property owners and brokers about square footage (SF), prices, amenities (kitchens,backyards).
- Create maps using proprietary or open-source data showing vacancies with other landmarks and assets in downtown.
- Key considerations:
  - Include relevant data points (ie, vacant properties with SF, price per SF, broker info, etc.).
  - Avoid saturation of the market while attracting complimentary businesses.
  - Legwork and time required for surveying.
  - Engagement with property owners on asking prices for leases (bringing down the price for the best long term outcome).



For Rent Sign Source: Innes Associates



Source: Perch Advisors

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE TENANT MIX COMPENDIUM

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



Tenant Mix

Location

New York, NY SME Consultant: Jeanette G. Nigro, Perch Advisors

**Action Item** 

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.

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 wi-fi) or if a landlord would be willing to provide short term access to these services.

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 SBDC'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.

# Work with landlords to attract and support small and emerging businesses.

Category	Tenant Mix
Location	Downtown Andover
Origin	Town Staff, public input
Budget	\$ Medium: Property tax foregone will be the highest cost but may be supplemented by other funding sources.
Timeframe	Short-term: Program could happen within the next six to nine months.
Risk	Low: Program is voluntary for business and property owners.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul> <li>Number of new and local bushinesses in Downtown.</li> <li>Length of tenure in Downtown.</li> <li>Number of landlords participating.</li> </ul>
Partners & Resources	Town staff, Town elected officials, landlords, Andover Chamber of Commerce or new business-led group and Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce



Main Street storefronts Source: Innes Associates

### **Action Item**

Work with landlords to attract small and emerging businesses to the Downtown and support their growth within the Downtown.

- Consider property tax relief for landlords who support start-up businesses for a specific time period.
- Work with landlords to offer reduced rents for desired new businesses for a defined period to allow businesses a growth period without need to relocate.
- Combine this with technical support for small businesses, another Project Recommendation.

### Diagnostic

Businesses in Downtown Andover saw significant negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. These included reduced operating hours and capacity, declines in revenue, increased costs to implement safety measures, temporary business closures, new methods of selling and delivering products and employee layoffs.

Comments from public input indicated that new and/or smaller businesses have hard time staying in Andover because of the high rents for retail space in the Downtown. Other comments related to the higher price points of goods in the current stores which makes Downtown less attractive as a destination for people searching for items that are less expensive.

#### **Budget**

Funds from the American Rescue Plan Act can be used to supplement rent for small businesses or replace lost property tax revenue. These funds should only be used to support businesses in the desired categories, as noted in Process, below.

These funds could also be used to kick-start a pilot program which could then be funded either by a Business Improvement District or a continued property tax reduction that would gradually return to the full property tax due the longer the business stayed in place. For example, year 1 of rent could be a 50% property tax reduction dropping to no reduction in year 5 of rent for the same business.





Main Street storefronts Source: Innes Associates

### **Process**

- Identify desired business types or structures, Public input suggested that small, new businesses or those with more affordable products have a hard time staying in the Downtown. The Town should develop criteria for the businesses it wishes to support either by direct funding or by developing a program for rent supplements. The desired categories could include one or more of the following:
  - New businesses started by local residents.
  - Small businesses that provide goods or services at lower prices points that are missing from the Downtown.
  - New business owners who could qualify for other support, such as state programs for Disadvantaged Business Enterprises.
- Work with landlords to find appropriate vacant space throughout the Downtown for these business types. (See notes on developing an inventory in the next Project Recommendation).
- Work with Town officials and Town Treasurer to develop tax and rent rebate program.
- Develop criteria for application.
  - Business owners should have a business plan that is consistent with the term of the lease agreement.
  - The landlord and the business owner must have a signed lease agreement that includes a belowmarket rent. The rent may increase over the term of the lease, but must be less than market rate for as long as the landlord is receiving tax benefits.
  - The Town and the landlord must have an agreement that matches the terms of the lease. Property tax reductions must be limited to the specific business being supported.
  - If the lease is broken, for any reason, the property taxes revert to their normal level.



Main Street businesses Source: Innes Associates

# Small Business Relief Fund 2.0



Tenant Mix

Location

Boston, MA SME Consultant: Innes Associates Ltd.

Action Item

This action item draws from the description of the program on the City of Boston's website: <u>https://www.boston.gov/departments/</u> <u>economic-development/small-business-relief-fund</u>

The program has two grants: the Relief Grant and the Growth Grant. This description is of the Relief Grant' more details about the Growth Grant can be found on the website. Expense must have been incurred between March 3, 2021 and December 31, 2024. This time period aligns with the funds from ARPA.

Up to \$10,000 to support outstanding debts for:

- Rent or mortgage
- Inventory
- Payroll, or
- Fixed expenses.

The City of Boston notes that businesses may apply for both grants and that grants are allocated based on the budget submitted with the application. Priorities for funding are those businesses "in industries most directly affected by closures, policies, or general loss of revenue realted to COVID-19."

# Create a storefront program to support local artists and showcase local history.

Category	Cultural/Arts
Location	Downtown Andover
Origin	Town Staff, public input
Budget	\$ Low: \$5,000-\$10,000; primarily the cost of insurance and marketing.
Timeframe	Short-term: Program could be implemented in less than a year.
Risk	Low: Program is voluntary.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul> <li>Number of storefronts participating.</li> <li>Number of artists participating.</li> <li>Increase in customers for participating businesses.</li> </ul>
Partners & Resources	Town staff, business owners, new business-led organization, Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce/Andover Chamber of Commerce, local artist community, local historians, Memorial Hall Library



Blank storefronts on Main Street Source: Innes Associates

Action Item	<ul> <li>Encourage local arts and history groups to become involved in branding and public art installations to showcase local talent.</li> <li>Partner with businesses to allow public art installation on private property.</li> <li>Art and history installations can be a primary display in vacant storefronts or integrated into the storefront displays of existing businesses. An example would be an "Andover Day" in which all participating storefronts would showcase some element of Andover's history.</li> </ul>
Diagnostic	Businesses in Downtown Andover saw significant negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. These included reduced operating hours and capacity, declines in revenue, increased costs to implement safety measures, temporary business closures, new methods of selling and delivering products and employee layoffs. Events attract people downtown, but require resources of time and money. Changing storefront displays that showcase local arts, history, and culture can also be opportunities to draw people downtown, and into stores and restaurants, on a regular basis.
Process	<ul> <li>Identify artists, historians, and local cultural representatives to form a committee with new business-led group.</li> <li>Identify storefronts that would be appropriate for the effort,</li> <li>Decide on a theme, timing and length of display.</li> <li>Don't forget about written-word artists: the windows could have a continuing story that could appeal to all ages!</li> <li>The display should be for a limited amount of time to encourage people to visit Downtown during that period.</li> <li>Existing retail displays could use the work of art as a theme for the entire window. For example, clothing could be based on the colors of a painting; jewelry could be displayed on a sculpture.</li> <li>Art works can also fill blank store windows instead of curtains or paper.</li> <li>Secure agreements with businesses.</li> <li>Provide insurance for original artworks. It may be possible to get a single policy to cover all participants.</li> <li>Market the instillations as an event (see earlier Project Recommendations on event planning).</li> </ul>
Budget	<ul> <li>American Rescue Plan Act</li> <li>Mass Cultural Council or Andover Cultural Council</li> </ul>



Source: Favermann Design

### BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PRIVATE REALM COMPENDIUM

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



Private Realm

Location

### Newton, MA

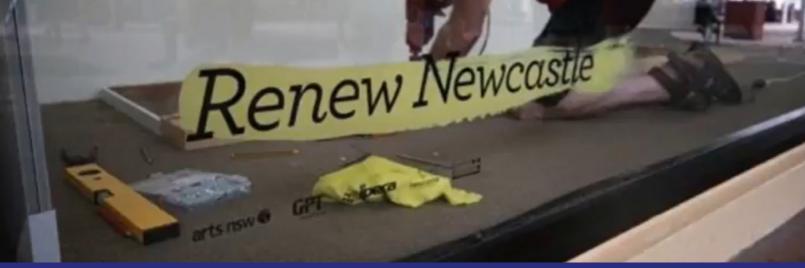
#### SME Consultant: Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

**Action Item** 



Source: Favermann Design

- 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 payoff 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.



ource: CivicMoxie

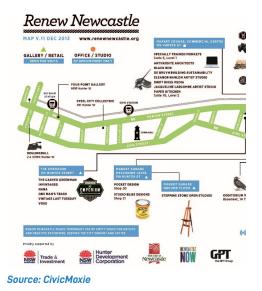
BEST PRACTICE FROM THE CULTURAL/ARTS COMPENDIUM

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

Location

Newcastle, Australia SME Consultant: Susan Silverberg, CivicMoxie

### **Action Item**



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.

Through online searches, Marcus Westbury, the creator of Renew

# Appendix

### List of Funding Opportunities

This appendix contains more information about each of the funding opportunities listed in the Project Recommendations above. Information for each opportunity is based on information provided directly from the grant program's website and supplemented, where appropriate. Additional funding sources can be found on the RRP website, under Funding: <u>https://</u> www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrpprogram

Funding cycles and requirements will vary by source and some funding sources are competitive. The information in the Project Recommendations is designed to assist in the preparation of grant applications. Best Practice Compendiums for each project category (Admin Capacity, Public Realm, Private Realm, Revenue & Sales, Tenant Mix, and Cultural/Arts) are provided as separate documents. The information in the compendiums can also help in the preparation of grants. One or more relevant best practices are identified with each of the Project Recommendations above.

The primary source of funding for most of the Project Recommendations is the **American Rescue Plan Act**, or ARPA. ARPA funding must be committed by 2024 and expended by 2026. These funds may be used for the following purposes:<sup>1</sup>

- To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality;
- To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers;
- c. For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency; and
- d. To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

The Project Recommendations in this report meet the requirements of a., above. Each recommendation has as its primary purpose the need to assist local businesses with recovery. Certain projects focus on short-term interventions, designed to bring customers into businesses as quickly as possible through technical assistance and skills-building, marketing support, and/or community events designed to attract new and repeat customers.

Other projects address systemic changes: for example, reconfiguring streets or reducing the need for parking to allow space for outdoor dining and/or retail, a critical survival strategy for certain businesses during 2020-2021. Some recommendations address regulatory changes designed to assist with the visibility of businesses to potential customers. Such changes include design guidelines, sign codes, municipal regulations for outdoor dining; many of these are also paired with façade, site, and sign improvement programs to assist small businesses with implementation. Such programs can also address accessibility and public health, by creating physical changes (the removal of barriers, addition of ramps, planting of trees) that address those who have been negatively impacted by the effects of the pandemic.

While municipalities have many claims upon the use of ARPA funds, this report provides guidelines for the strategic disbursement of those funds to assist those with the most negative impacts and reinvigorate the local economy. Municipalities should designate a portion of their funds towards these recommendations and use other funding sources to leverage the ARPA funds. Short descriptions of other funding sources mentioned in this report follow this page.

For more information:

https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-resources-and-guidance-for-municipalofficials#american-recovery-plan-act-(arpa)-

<u>https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-</u> avenue/2021/07/12/the-american-rescue-plan-canbe-a-lifeline-for-business-districts/</u>

<sup>1</sup> https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/FRF-Interim-Final-Rule.pdf

#### **Community One Stop for Growth**

https://www.mass.gov/guides/ community-one-stop-for-growth This source is probably the second most important funding source for Project Recommendations. In 2021, the commonwealth of Massachusetts rolled the application process for ten grant programs into a single process. The programs are as follows:

- Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
  - MassWorks
  - Urban Agenda
  - 43D Expedited Permitting
- Department of Housing and Community Development
  - Housing Choice Community Capital Grants
  - Massachusetts Downtown Initiative
  - NEW Community Planning Grants
  - NEW Rural Development Fund
- MassDevelopment
  - Brownfields
  - Site Readiness
  - NEW Underutilized Properties

Many of these grants are competitive. The process has two stages: the first is for the municipality to submit an Expression of Interest, which will be reviewed. In 2021, this submission period was February 8-April 2. The full application cycle was ope from May3-June 4. Communities are notified of the award in October/November.

Grants highlighted in bold are appropriate for several Project Recommendations and will be discussed in more depth in this appendix.

MassWorks provides funding for infrastructure and is particularly useful in supporting private development with public infrastructure improvements. This funding source may be used to leverage some of the longer-term Project Recommendations.

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (\$25,000)

https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massworks

**MassWorks** 

https://www.mass.gov/service-details/ massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi

https://www.mass.gov/service-details/ business-improvement-districts-bid The focus of this grant is downtown revitalization. The Technical Assistance program provides a consultant and funding for that consultant's work to communities who need help with specific problems. Project Recommendation for which this grant would be appropriate include the development of design guidelines, revision of a sign code, a wayfinding study, a pilot project or projects for façade improvements, design for streetscape improvements, economic development studies (including housing), and parking studies. MDI also provides assistance with the development of a Business improvement District, or BID.

Community Planning Grants (\$25,000-\$75,000) https://www.mass.gov/service-details/ planning-and-zoning-grants	This is a new program and provides funding for planning projects at a larger scale than the MDI program. Project Recommendation for which this grant would be appropriate might include zoning changes, particularly those that support density, studies for development within a 1/2-mile of a commuter rail station or a multi-town corridor that look at both density and multimodal connections, or other similar planning processes. As with the MassWorks grant, this grant is appropriate for leveraging Project Recommendations as part of longer-term or larger projects.
District Local Technical Assistance Grant (DLTA) Regional Planning Agencies and DHCD	Funds for this program are allocated to the regional planning agencies. These funds may be used for planning projects. Each Regional Planning Agency (RPA) has a different focus on how these funds may be used to meet the state's funding goals. All municipalities are eligible to apply directly to their RPA. The RPA will work with the municipality on the program; a separate consultant is not usually required.
Survey and Planning Grant Program Massachusetts Historical Commission https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/ mhchpp/surveyandplanning.htm	This grant is a 50/50 matching program that support planning activities that help preserve significant historic resources. For communities, whose target area contains significant resources, this source may help fund design guidelines that include specific requirements for the preservation of significant historic resources. Interested communities are encouraged to reach out to the Massachusetts Historic Commission directly about this grant; it may be tied to the creation of a local historic district.
Complete Streets Funding Program Massachusetts Department of Transportation <u>https://www.mass.gov/complete-</u> <u>streets-funding-program</u>	This program provides funds to municipalities who have adopted a Complete Streets Policy and created a Prioritization Plan. Any street infrastructure recommended in this report should be added to the Prioritization Plan. This grant program can help address recommended improvements for pedestrian and bicyclist mobility, safety, and comfort. This grant can also assist with a design guidelines; these do not have to be limited to the private realm. Creating consistency in a downtown, village, or corridor is an important part of defining its identity both within and beyond the community. As part of a Complete Streets Project, a municipality should identify the specific materials, street furniture, trees, and public signage (including wayfinding) that will be used in the target area. These choices can be incorporated into the overall design guidelines to address both public and private realms. This program could potentially be leverage with the municipality's funding under Chapter 90 to ensure that multimodal infrastructure is connected, over time, throughout the community.
Hometown Grants T-Mobile <u>https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/</u> hometown-grants	This program will fund up to \$50,000 per town and may be used to rebuild or refresh community spaces, including parks and historic buildings. The grant is awarded to up to 100 towns per year.

### Mass Cultural Council

https://massculturalcouncil.org/ organizations/cultural-investmentportfolio/projects/

### Commonwealth Places MassDevelopment

https://www.massdevelopment.com/ what-we-offer/real-estate-services/ commonwealth-places/

### Shared Streets and Spaces Massachusetts Department of Transportation

https://www.mass.gov/shared-streetsand-spaces-grant-program The Mass Cultural Council has one-year project grants for specific public programming.

Projects are for public programming, which Mass Cultural Council defines as activitis that engage with the public.

The municipality's own Local Cultural Council may have additional grants to support local arts and culture; this could include partnering on those Project Recommendations that support the integration of local arts, history, and culture into the LRRP area.

This program is another source of funding for place-making strategies with a unique twist. MassDevelopment matches funds raised by the municipality through crowd-sourcing for projects that help improve the quality of public spaces.

This program provides funds to support the improvement of "plazas, sidewalks, curbs, streets, bus stops, parking areas, and other public spaces." The focus is on public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce.

In the new funding round, starting in January 2022, the program will emphasize safety, funding "projects that improve safety for all road users through interventions that achieve safer conditions and safer speeds."

This program would partner well with other programs to support mobility and outdoor spaces for gathering and dining.