



Rapid Recovery Plan

Town of Dartmouth
October 2021

Acknowledgements



Town of Dartmouth

Cody Haddad, Director of Development



Stantec

Steve Kearney, Plan Facilitator

Sarabrent McCoy, Urban Planner

Subject Matter Experts

Ann McFarland Burke

Ann Burke, Principal

Civic Space Collaborative

Michelle Moon, Urban Planner

Selbert Perkins Design

Cory DePasquale, Senior Designer

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

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

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

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



For more information, contact DHCD:
100 Cambridge St, Suite 300
Boston, MA 02114
617-573-1100
mass.gov/DHCD

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Rapid Recovery Program	10
Introduction	11
Diagnostic Framework	13
Data Collection Methodology	14
Diagnostic Key Findings	22
Community Area Map	24
Customer Base	30
Physical Environment	34
Business Environment	50
Administrative Capacity	53
Summary of Needs	54
Project Recommendations	55
Identification and Prioritization of Projects	56
Project List	59
Project Profiles	60
Implementation/ Next Steps	117

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Local Rapid Recovery on a Statewide Scale

Like thousands of communities across the United States, Massachusetts' towns and cities experienced months of significant financial loss during the COVID-19 pandemic as business districts had to temporarily close and then face extended periods of safety-related measures that limited visitation. For many businesses, this meant permanent closure. Others were aided by federal and state programs, working diligently to keep their livelihoods intact during a very difficult period. These difficulties were particularly notable in New England. Over 350 distinct jurisdictions make up the Commonwealth, and nearly every place has at least one village center, commercial corridor, or downtown greatly impacted by COVID-19. Every one faces serious challenges recovering from the pandemic.

Fortunately, the LRRP is a tremendous opportunity to leverage upcoming stimulus dollars for downtown and business district benefits across the state. While hundreds of distinct districts are a challenge to address systematically, this diversity is a natural strength for Massachusetts. Every affected downtown or commercial corridor is the crossroads for its broader community, and there are lessons that carry across municipal lines. Working with municipal officials, LRRP Plan Facilitators have quickly leveraged the energy of commercial corridor merchants, engaged residents, vested landowners and community organizations to create the solutions within this plan—solutions tailored to the unique character of this place. Dartmouth's General Business District, like over 120 other communities in Massachusetts, now has a comprehensive recovery strategy and the momentum to implement lasting change, collectively supporting the entire Commonwealth.

Addressing Top Priorities for Economic Recovery in Dartmouth

The Dartmouth General Business District faces challenges that are detrimental to the economic fabric and vitality of the Town overall. The Town and key stakeholders are passionate about the revitalization of their community; a planning initiative such as the Local Rapid Recovery Program can act as a vital step to move closer to economic recovery. The program and plan serve as a resource for the Town to prioritize rapidly implementable solutions that provide tangible solutions which can address economic recovery impediments right away. It also creates a toolkit for the Town to implement long-term recommendations and programs that address public and private realm needs, as well as programs to increase business resilience and business diversity in Dartmouth's General Business District.

Dartmouth Faces Notable Challenges for Recovery

The LRRP diagnostic framework provides a comprehensive database of market demand profiles specifically generated for the LRRP Dartmouth study area, as well as an assessment of public and private infrastructure conditions and administrative hurdles and challenges. This database serves as a resource for Dartmouth champions to apply for future external funding opportunities and justify project recommendations. Key challenges and needs in the Dartmouth community that arose from the public engagement process, diagnostic data collection and analysis, and project idea development include:

- Dartmouth needs a champion to improve communication and collaboration amongst businesses and undertake collective street-level improvement activities.
- The Dartmouth commercial corridor streetscape is uninviting, unsafe, and inaccessible to users of diverse ages and abilities.
- Dartmouth's General Business District could benefit from more programming and stronger relationships with regional arts and culture organizations and institutions.
- Dartmouth's General Business District has a number of commercial vacancies, potential homes for new businesses to diversify the business mix.

Developing Solutions in Partnership with the Dartmouth Community

Public outreach efforts for the Rapid Recovery Program involved virtual, COVID-19-friendly meetings. During Phase I of the project - focused on robust data collection and analysis efforts - the project team worked with the Town to engage key stakeholders to better understand Dartmouth issues. The project team also hosted a virtual meeting at the initial stage of the project to discuss project goals and key findings. Due to enduring concerns related to the Delta variant of COVID-19, a second meeting was held online as the project neared its end, where the business community and the public had the opportunity to provide input on preliminary project ideas.

Priority Projects

The Town, along with key stakeholders and the LRRP project team, developed a set of project ideas that addressed a range of solutions focused on short-term recovery and long-term vitality within Dartmouth's General Business District. Public engagement efforts revealed that projects that expanded access to business support and improved the street-level experience of the General Business District ranked highly on the list of LRRP projects. Final project ideas are part of a comprehensive set of solutions that implemented together can facilitate Dartmouth's recovery.

Implementing Strategies for Recovery & Revitalization in Dartmouth

The plan developed for the Dartmouth community through the Local Rapid Recovery Program is based on a robust diagnostic assessment of public and private infrastructure, business community needs, market demand statistics, and administrative gaps and challenges. A comprehensive set of recommended projects vetted by local businesses and the public has been developed that addresses economic vitality solutions and revitalization efforts for the Dartmouth business community.

Each proposed project provides detailed information on project budget, potential timelines, key partners and performance indicators, as well as critical action items, processes, and considerations. Funding sources noted in the project rubrics are resources for the Town and community groups to seek external funding and commence the next phase of project design and implementation. The comprehensive and diverse set of project recommendations can aid in immediate recovery for Dartmouth's General Business District, or long-term solutions that improve the overall economic, commercial, and social health of Dartmouth. The Town is encouraged to pursue grant funding immediately for many of these projects to help Dartmouth overcome COVID-19's challenges with smart and resilient solutions that can be deployed quickly.

Project List

Category	Project	Description	Timeframe	Budget	Priority Project
Public Realm	Create a Wayfinding System around and to the Dartmouth General Business District, with an Emphasis on Welcoming Gateways	Design and install a wayfinding system for Dartmouth, prioritizing interesting gateway signage at major pedestrian and vehicular access points. Gateway installations will visually alert visitors to the proximity of these places and encourage people to explore.	Short	Medium	
Public Realm	Undergo a Branding Process and Identify Components for Short- and Medium-Term Installation	Develop a branding identity for Dartmouth that draws on local cultural themes, physical siting, and history. Install elements throughout and beyond the study area. Include elements that are cohesive across Dartmouth but distinguish between villages, the study area, and other areas of interest.	Short	Low-Medium	
Admin. Capacity	Identify Most Appropriate Business District Management Model	Identify best form of, and build support for, a business association.	Short	Medium	✓
Public Realm	Invest in Public Realm Improvements to Enhance Bike and Pedestrian Safety and Amenities	Prioritize pedestrian realm improvements and investments in bike infrastructure such as improved crosswalks, sidewalks, bike lanes, pedestrian signage, ADA-compliant curb ramps, crossing islands and curb extensions to make walking and biking safer within Dartmouth's commercial corridor and to better connect visitors and residents within and to the commercial corridor.	Short	Medium	✓
Public Realm	Develop Outdoor Dining Strategy and Guidance	Take lessons learned from the pandemic experience to develop a permanent outdoor dining program that is affordable for restaurants to implement	Short	Low	
Private Realm	Develop Private Realm Improvement Program	Determine appropriate form of and develop incentive program to support investment in the private realm, particularly facades, in and around Dartmouth's General Business District.	Medium	Low	
Arts and Culture	Support Arts Groups to Expand Visibility and Programming in the General Business District	Build on existing programming and partnerships to expand arts programming within the General Business District. Could involve display of art initiatives in stores (vacant and not), further programming with schools.	Short	Low	
Public Realm	Enhance Lighting Across General Business District	Identify locations in Dartmouth's commercial corridor that require additional lighting fixtures to provide increased safety for those on foot and bike. Develop lighting solutions that serve as branding elements in addition to safety infrastructure.	Short	Medium	✓
Tenant Mix	Maintain Vacancy Database and Tracking Tool to Support Tenant Recruitment Strategy	Maintain the vacancy database and tracking tool and build a tenant recruitment program to match potential entrepreneurs and new businesses with vacant storefronts, as a means of diversifying the commercial corridor's tenant mix and activating empty properties.	Short	Small	✓
Tenant Mix	Collaborate with UMass-Dartmouth Programs on Temporary Activation	Pursue formal collaboration with existing UMass-Dartmouth initiatives to temporarily activate vacant storefronts and potentially incubate new tenants.	Short	Low-Medium	
Admin. Capacity	Increase Utility of Town Website and Online Presence to Residents and Businesses	Build on ongoing Town efforts to increase the utility of the Town's website and online presence in engaging the community and supporting business owners.	Short	Low-Medium	✓

Rapid Recovery Plan Background



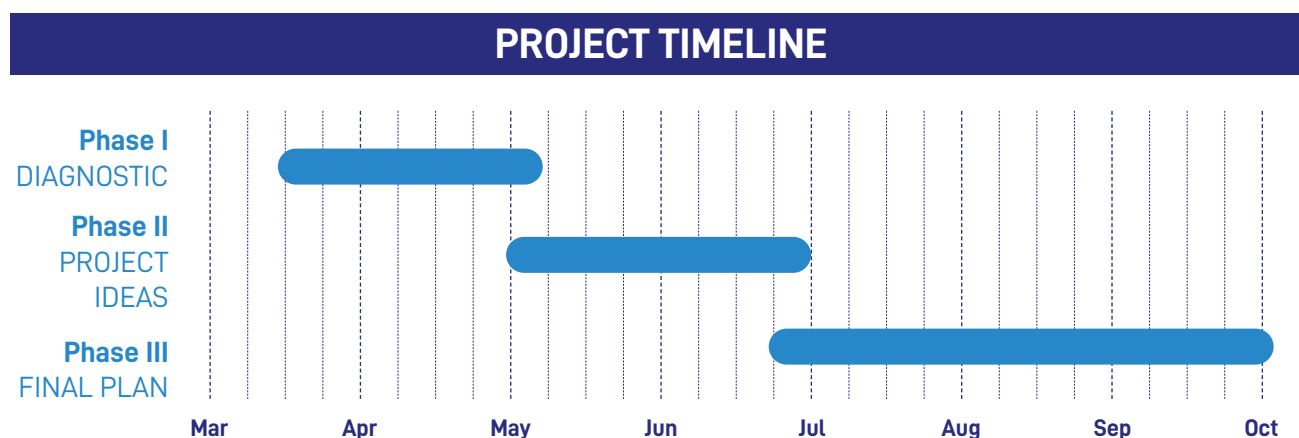
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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, City 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-October 2021. Phase 1 - Diagnostic, Phase 2- Project Recommendations, Phase 3 - Plan.



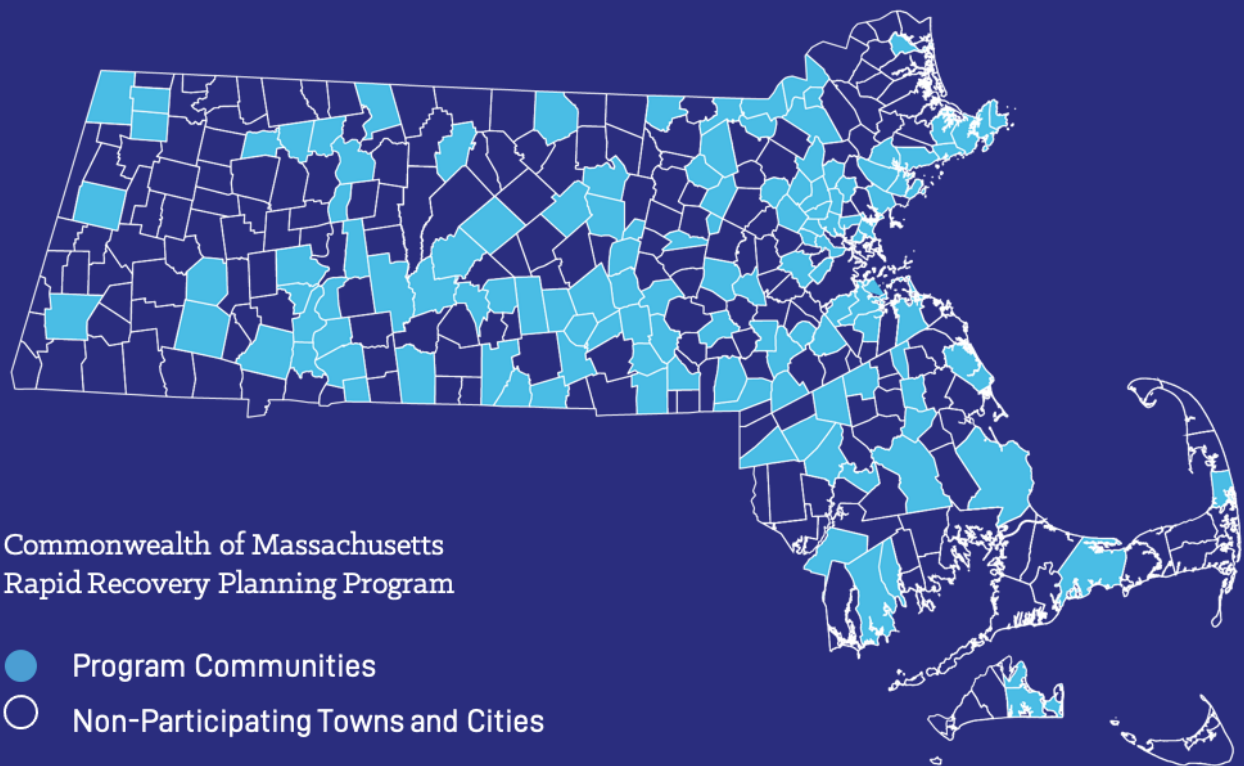
In Phase 1: Diagnostic, Plan Facilitators utilized the Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework that was adapted from the award-winning Commercial DNA approach as published by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) in "Preparing a Commercial District Diagnostic", and authored by Larisa Ortiz,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

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

125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



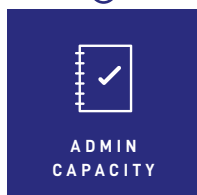
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public
Realm



Private
Realm



Tenant
Mix



Revenue
& Sales



Admin
Capacity



Cultural/
Arts



Other

Diagnostic Data Collection Methodology

Data Collection Goals

Baseline data collected will be used by the Commonwealth to communicate overall program impact and to support future funding and resource allocations that may be used toward implementation of final projects across participating communities.

Baseline data sets a minimum expectation for data collection and only reflects what the Commonwealth is requesting from all Plan Facilitators such that it will enable the measurement of COVID impacts at the State level for all participating communities. Beyond the baseline data outlined in this guide, it was expected that Plan Facilitators (PF's) would glean additional insight from their analysis, observations and feedback from the community and businesses. Plan Facilitators ensured that additional information collected through their own discretionary methods and processes would be integrated into the Diagnostic section of each final Rapid Recovery Plan and were used to inform the unique Project Recommendations that emerge through this process.

Diagnostic Asset Breakdown

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) worked with Larissa Ortiz, the Managing Director at Streetsense, to adapt the "Commercial DNA Framework" as published by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) and Streetsense. The framework uses four major components – Market Demand (Customer Base), Physical Environment (Public and Private Realm), Business Environment, and Administrative Capacity – to assess the vitality of a commercial district. The Local Rapid Recovery Program team tailored this framework to align with the vision to develop plans and a comprehensive dataset that analyzes economic challenges to downtowns and town centers.

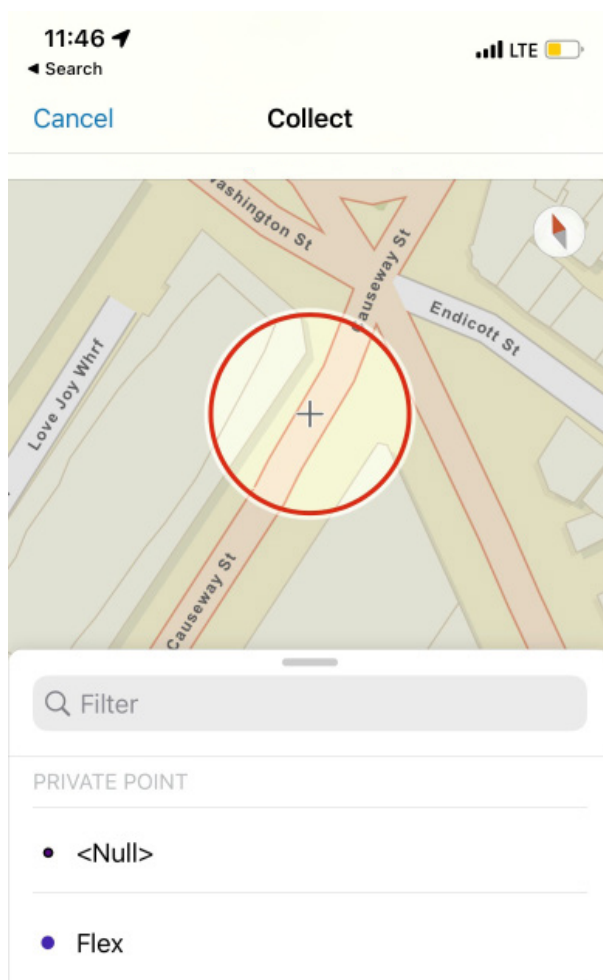
Data Collection Process

In order to effectively capture public and private infrastructure, market demand data, and business environment statistics within the study area, the Plan Facilitator team developed a robust data collection structure. The team utilized platforms such as ArcGIS Field Mapping and Spatial tools, ESRI Business Analyst, and Co-Star Market Data software to collect data for their community and adhere to the Rapid Recovery Program requirements.

To gather the public and private realm physical environment data, the team deployed field collectors utilizing ArcGIS Collector software and hardware to conduct site visits lasting between four to eight hours to spatially record all physical environment assets. The field collectors used the ArcGIS Collector tool to record field observations, take imagery for each public and private realm asset, and document various characteristics and assets within the defined LRRP study area. The ArcGIS Collector platform compiled all field data alongside other spatial information on business environment details such as vacancy rates and annual average rent into a geodatabase that could be analyzed and mapped remotely.

Public and private realm characteristics collected in the field included elements such as the condition, width, placement/location, and presence of streetscape amenities, lighting, seating areas, and ADA-compliant infrastructure. Based on the observations and characteristics for each diagnostic category, the data collector determined an

objective grade for each public and private realm asset, such as a crosswalk, sidewalk, awning, or façade. The collectors adhered to the grading system developed by the DHCD LRRP team, which ranged from A (highest grade) to Fail (lowest grade). More details on the field categories and type of data collected can be found on pages 21-23.

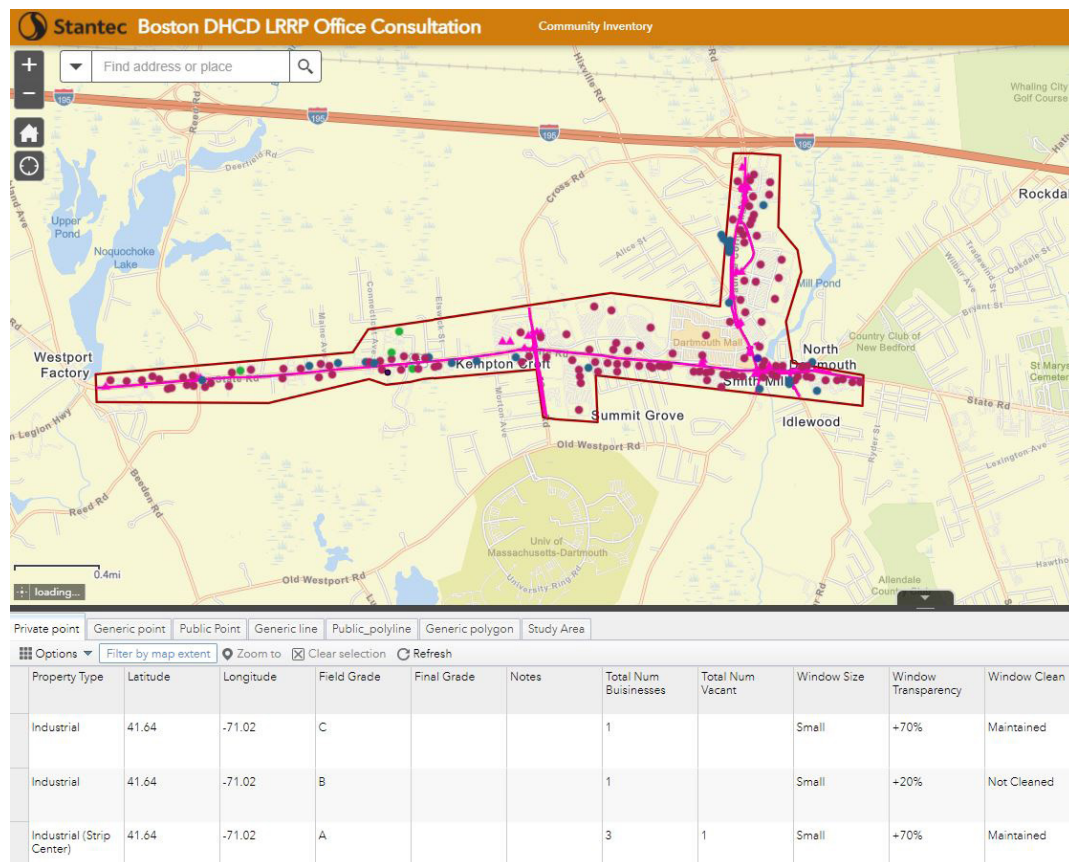


The ArcGIS Collector tool allowed data collectors in the field to develop an online database for public and private realm data

Data Analysis & Outputs

Upon completion of data collection efforts for the public and private realm physical environment assets, Plan Facilitators used the spatial database and ArcGIS WebApp platform (as seen in the image below) to assess collected assets and their associated attributes and characteristics. The Plan Facilitator also reviewed each field grade determined by the data collector by comparing to the field imagery. Each asset received a final grade once the Plan Facilitator conducted a thorough review of each asset characteristic, image, and observations. For example, a crosswalk asset that received a “C” field grade could have a width between four to six feet, poorly maintained paint, and lack a detectable panel and/or curb ramp on either side. The Plan Facilitator confirmed or changed this grade after a final review of the asset attribute data and documented field image.

Developing a database for the spatial elements of the diagnostic data highlights major gaps within the commercial fabric of the business district and identifies areas that lack adequate streetscape amenities or connectivity infrastructure. Ultimately, the data gives communities the opportunity to capitalize on these challenges and promote projects that enhance their downtowns or town centers.




The ArcGIS database platform allows Plan Facilitators to query data based on asset type, final grade, or condition/maintenance level.

Final Diagnostic Grade Analysis





The final stage of the data collection process included developing an aggregate score for each physical environment element. Plan Facilitators conducted an analysis that created an average score of "A" (highest score), "B", "C", or "Fail" (lowest score) for diagnostic components based on the collective grades for each individual asset. For example, the public realm category "Sidewalks" received one final, overall grade for the study area, and the private realm category "Building Facades" received a study area grade as well (as seen in the image below).

Example

ELEMENT: WINDOWS



How Dartmouth ranks:

			
<p>Windows are generally transparent</p>	<p>About 50% of storefront windows maintain windows with at least 70% transparency.</p>	<p>More than 25% of storefronts have windows with limited transparency.</p>	<p>All storefronts are boarded up and/or have limited transparency.</p>

As required by the Program, all Plan Facilitators presented the final diagnostic results to their communities during a public meeting. This forum allowed municipal representatives and the public to provide input on the program approach, diagnostic framework, and final results. Each Plan Facilitator ultimately submitted the entire database of all diagnostic categories to DHCD to be compiled with the results from all LRRP communities.



Diagnostic Asset: Physical Environment (Public Realm)

Physical Environment: Public Realm Diagnostic Geodatabase Fields	
Field	Field Description
Indicator Type	Wayfinding/Signage Park Open Space Other
Diagnostic Grade	A, B, C, Fail
Image	Data Collectors took imagery of each asset
Signage Condition	Wayfinding/general signage condition/maintenance
Signage Icon	Presence of icons on signage (pedestrian for walking, arrows for direction, bus for transit stop)
Signage Point of Interest	Directions or distance of current location to Downtown points of interest
Signage Distance	Presence of walking/driving distances on signage
Signage Map Presence	Presence of Downtown map on signage
Signage Technology	Presence of smart technology/interactive screen on signage

Physical Environment: Public Realm Diagnostic Geodatabase Fields	
Field	Field Description
Indicator Type	Sidewalks Crosswalks Pedestrian Signals Roadbed Streetscape Amenities Lighting
Diagnostic Grade	A, B, C, Fail
Image	Data Collectors took imagery of each asset
Sidewalk Assets	Width, condition, material type
Crosswalk Assets	Width, condition, presence of a detectable panel and ADA ramp, material type, crosswalk type, presence of sign (s)
Pedestrian Signal Assets	Presence of pedestrian signal
Roadbed Assets	Material type, condition, paint condition
Streetscape Amenities	Trees: number of trees, tree health, tree pit maintenance, tree shade cover Benches: number of benches, bench age, condition, cleanliness of bench
Lighting Assets	Condition of lighting structure, extent of light brightness

These tables provide details on the physical environment elements collected during site visits to the LRRP study area. Data collectors created assets for each public realm component, and populated the fields with characteristics such as asset condition or dimensions. Each asset then received a grade (A, B, C, or Fail) based on field observations.



Diagnostic Asset: Physical & Business Environment

Physical & Business Environment: Private Realm Diagnostic Fields	
Field	Field Description
Property Type	Retail Office Industrial
Diagnostic Grade	A, B, C, Fail
Occupancy	Number of businesses and number of vacant storefronts
Window Assets	Window size, transparency of window, maintenance/cleanliness
Outdoor Display & Dining	Storefront Displays: presence of storefront display, cleanliness of display, condition of display Storefront Dining: presence of outdoor dining facilities (chairs, benches, tables), outdoor dining protection from vehicles, canopies present, accessibility infrastructure (ADA ramps, detectable panels)
Storefront Signage Assets	Exterior signage present, visibility of signage from 10-feet away, condition/maintenance, signage branding (integration with storefront design)
Storefront Awning Assets	Storefront awning present, retractable capabilities, condition/maintenance, protection from weather events, awning design (integration with storefront design)
Storefront Facade Details	Building façade condition/maintenance, building façade material, building facade paint condition/maintenance
Storefront Lighting Assets	Exterior and interior lighting fixtures present, lighting present/turned on after standard working hours
Business Characteristics	Average asking price, average rent, average unit square footage, number of units, percentage vacant, property address, annual rent by square footage, zoning classification

This table provides details on the physical environment elements collected during site visits to the LRRP study area. While in the field, data collectors provided edits to the existing storefront assets that assessed storefront infrastructure such as lighting, outdoor displays, and windows. Each asset then received a grade (A, B, C, or Fail) based on field observations. The private realm database later incorporated business characteristics (for each storefront) such as average rent, number of units, and vacancy information.



Diagnostic Asset: Business Environment (Business Survey)

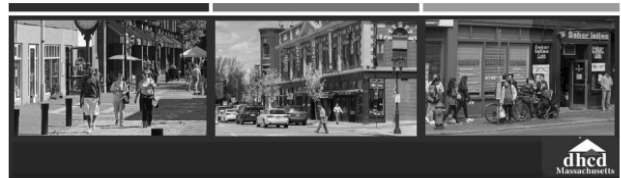
The DHCD LRRP program included a survey of local business owners located in the targeted Fall River LRRP study area. The purpose of the survey was to obtain business input to help guide strategy development, garner buy-in from the local business community and provide data from all LRRP participating districts for DHCD to inform programs and policy.

The LRRP team administered the survey online and via printed hard copies to representatives from for-and non-profit businesses (including temporarily closed businesses). The Plan Facilitator (PF) and Fall River LRRP team promoted the survey to local businesses and distributed the link to encourage response. The business survey opened on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, and closed on Monday, April 12, 2021. DHCD developed the survey in both English and Spanish, and additional languages were accommodated through oral interview methods (with translators).

The DHCD LRRP team worked FinePoint Associates to finalize the design of the survey. After the survey closed, FinePoint developed a summary results report for each LRRP community. The report produced provided results in aggregate form only so that the results will be anonymous. These results contributed to the diagnostic phase data collection efforts and helped inform project idea and plan development.

The business survey included questions that addressed the following topics areas:

- Business characteristics and satisfaction with location
- COVID-19 impacts on businesses and their operations
- Potential strategies to support businesses and improve the commercial district



Local Rapid Recovery Plan Program - Business Survey

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development has launched a program to help communities develop Rapid Recovery Plans for their downtowns and commercial districts.

The business survey was distributed online and via paper hard copies in each LRRP community. The Fall River PF team worked with the Fall River staff to distribute and promote the survey.

Sample Questions:

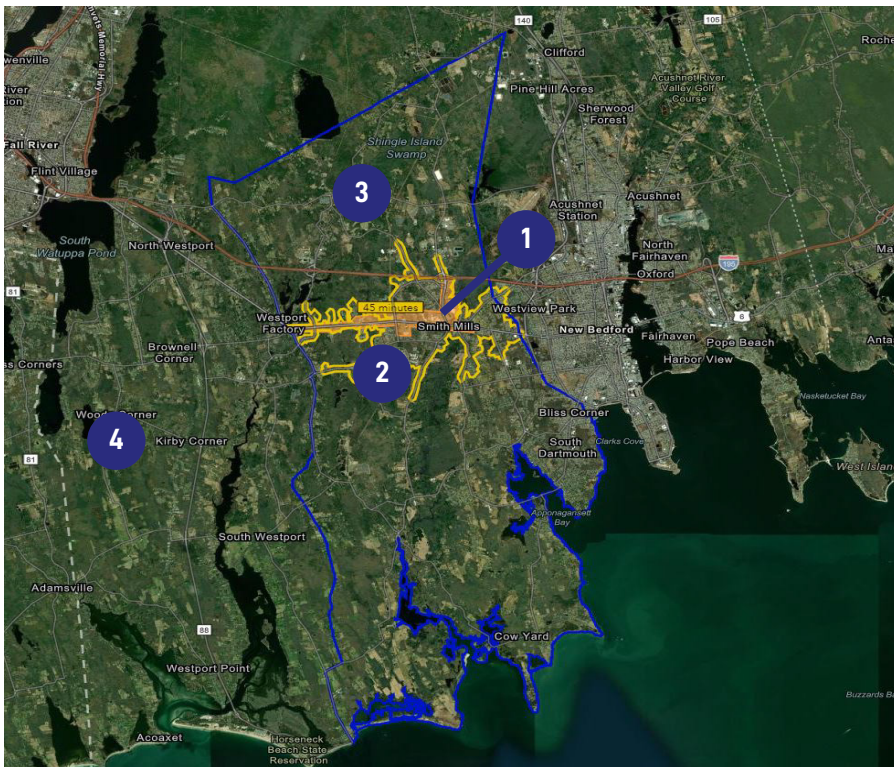
- **Do any local regulations (not related to COVID) pose an obstacle for your business operation?**
- **How did your 2020 business revenue compare to your 2019 revenue?**
- **Considering the conditions in your commercial area, how important to you are each of the following strategies that address Attraction and Retention of Customers and Businesses? (Strategies included more opportunities for outdoor dining, creation of a district management entity, and recruitment programs to attract businesses)**



Diagnostic Asset: Customer Base

To supplement DHCD's diagnostic data, the LRRP Plan Facilitator team extracted market demand data (customer base data) from ESRI's Business Analyst tool to understand demographics, customer statistics, and market profiles. The data looked at customer base profiles for four regions: statewide, municipal-wide, "locality" (1.5 mile radius), and the LRRP study area. The following table below summarizes the specific data collected for this diagnostic category.

Customer Base Data	
Data	Data Description
Demographics	Population Trends Age Distribution
Education	Educational Attainment
Customer Statistics	Average Household Size Employment and Income Statistics Jobs-to-residents ratio Median Home Value Home Value Growth
Retail Market Profile	Retail Leakage (total retail surplus) Grocery Store Leakage (total surplus) Restaurant Leakage (total surplus)
Other Statistics	Crime Index Vehicle Ownership Poverty - unemployment status



- 1 **LRRP Study Area Boundary - Commercial district**
- 2 **Local Market Area - 1.5 mile radius, which includes a 30-minute walk and 10-minute bike ride**
- 3 **LRRP Communitywide - encompasses all of the municipality**
- 4 **Statewide - encompasses all of Massachusetts**

The above map highlights the four regions included in the Customer Base analysis

Diagnostic Key Findings



LRRP Study Area

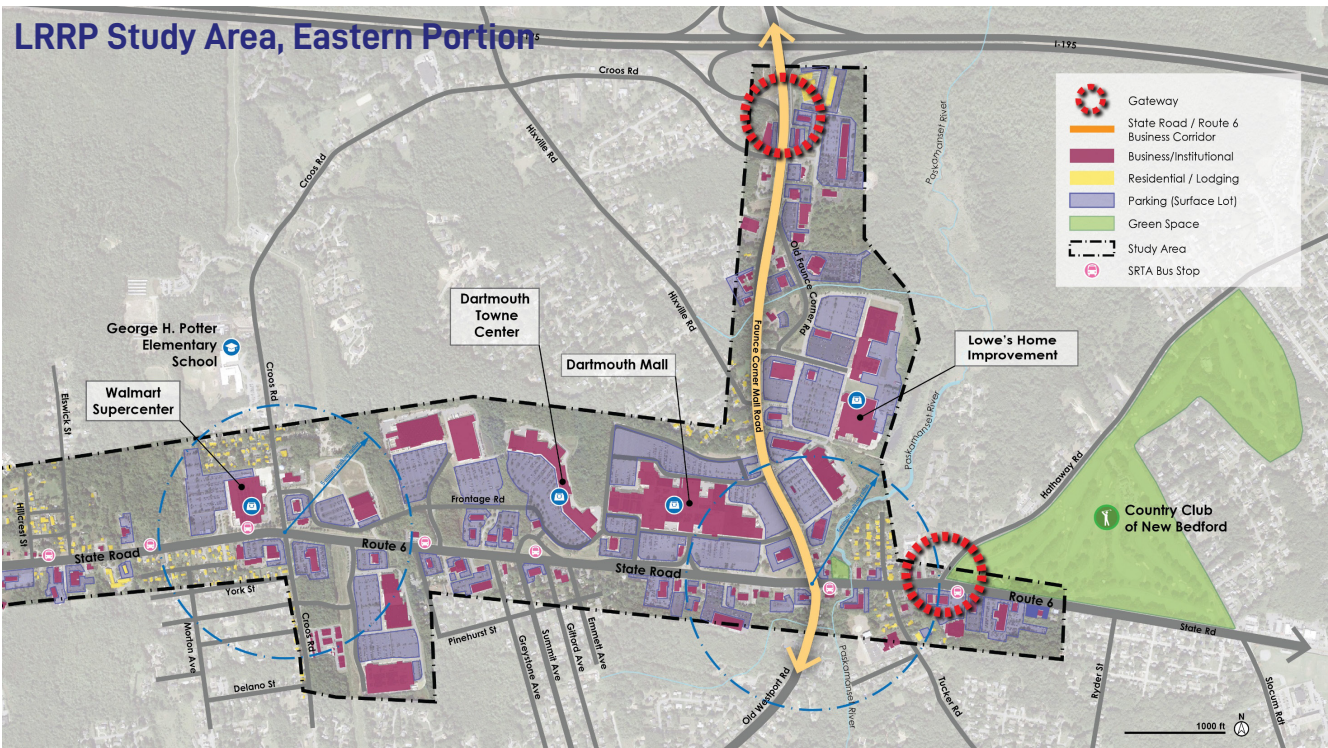
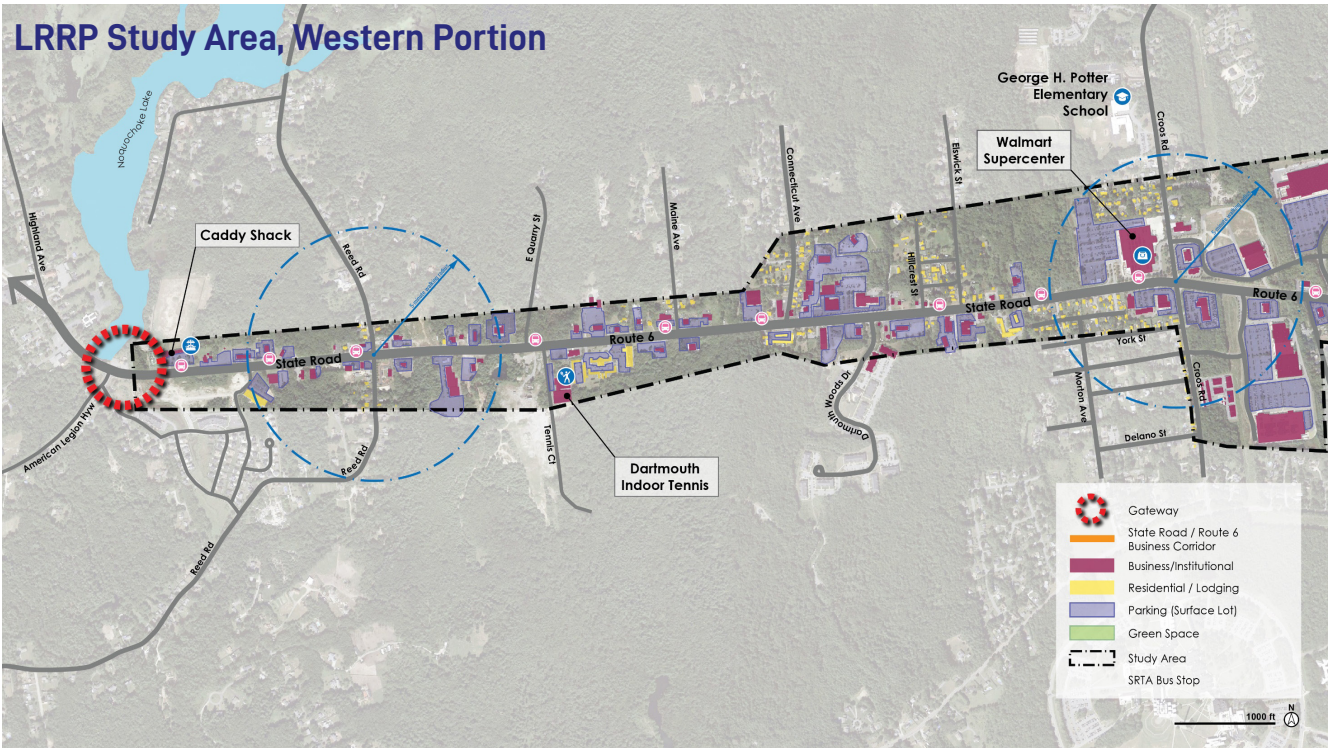
Why Focus on the Commercial Core?

The Local Rapid Recovery Program targets downtowns, town centers, and commercial districts in order to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on local businesses and downtown activity. LRRP study areas include concentrated areas of commercial and retail activity (i.e., "Nodes, Corridors, Town Centers or Commercial Areas"), therefore excluding significant areas of non-commercial, non-retail uses. This program did not look at residential zones or collect data related to residential infrastructure or local residential statistics. By focusing on the commercial/retail core, communities can use the LRRP plans and diagnostic data to implement data-driven, easily implementable solutions to revitalize a downtown.

Dartmouth LRRP Study Area

The Dartmouth Study Area overlaps with the General Business District, as defined by the zoning code. It is one of a handful of concentrated commercial areas, along with Bliss Corner and South Dartmouth, but unlike those smaller commercial areas, the General Business District is mainly comprised of big-box stores and national chains, which serve the larger region. The Study Area is oriented around Route 6, a key South Coast connector, which brings visitors to and from Barnstable County to the east and Providence to the west.

Study Area Map



Source: Stantec

Key Findings Summary



CUSTOMER BASE

Dartmouth's Local Market Area customer base skews young

While the average age of the study area is older than that of the rest of the state, Dartmouth's Local Market Area is skewed toward a younger demographic, given the presence of UMass-Dartmouth. The area has a relatively lower population of people of Hispanic or Latino heritage, and is overall less diverse than the state. The homeowner rate is much higher in Dartmouth than in the state overall. The number of jobs in the study area is five times that of the resident population.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Properties are in good shape but lack pedestrian orientation

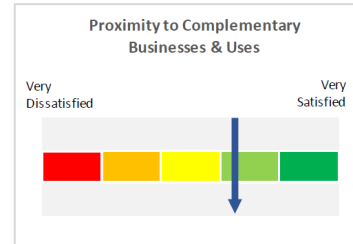
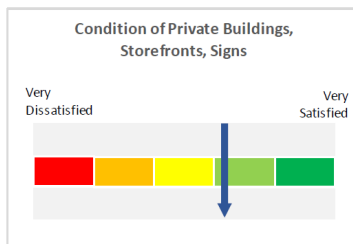
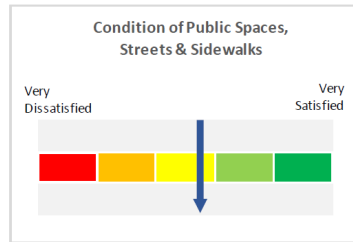
Properties are geared toward auto access, even though there is a number of pedestrians and bike-users. The lack of outdoor dining or retail spillover is a significant hindrance to increasing vitality within the study area. Ground floor design and maintenance improvements are needed. Storefront and window design, awnings, and building lighting can all be improved to highlight local businesses and enhance visual appeal.



BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Business owners are generally satisfied with the location

Dartmouth benefits from a concentration of diverse retail activities. Business owners are satisfied with the condition of public spaces, buildings, and the safety and comfort of customers and employees. However, a majority of businesses saw a decrease in revenue in 2020, and 61% had fewer customers at the beginning of 2021 than they did before the pandemic.



ADMIN CAPACITY

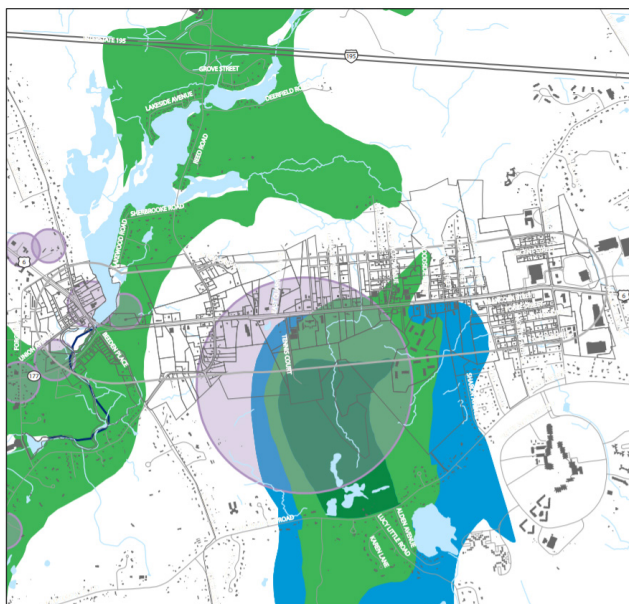
The Town has no business organization to oversee recovery

There is an overall need to improve administrative capacity to support business in the study area and a specific need for some form of district business organization. Dartmouth has yet to identify the most appropriate form of business organization.

Previous and Concurrent Plan Review

The Town of Dartmouth has completed or been the subject of a number of planning efforts over the past decade or so, some of which are summarized below. The LRRP seeks to build on these community-based planning efforts and not duplicate them. Planning efforts that align closely with the LRRP are highlighted below.

Route 6 Low Impact Development Study



- MassDEP Interim Wellhead Protection Area
- MassDEP Medium-Yield Aquifer
- MassDEP High-Yield Aquifer
- MassDEP Zone II Aquifer
- Study Area Parcels
- DFG Coldwater Fisheries
- Interstates
- Arterials and Collectors
- Local Roads
- Water
- Town Boundaries

Low Impact Development Study Area Water Resources
Source: *Low Impact Development Study, Town of Dartmouth*

The Low Impact Development Study (completed 2014) identified potential commercial development growth areas (and low-impact development priority areas) within a half-mile radius of Route 6, given the Route 6 corridor's

proximity to and partial location within the Town's Aquifer Overlay area. The report presented means of enabling high-value development sensitive to water resources, such as employing transfer of development rights, updating site plan review and planning rules and regulations to promote low-impact development, and use the existing Aquifer Overlay to more explicitly require and incentivize low-impact development.

Relevant Priority Actions:

1. Build on the foundation of the existing Aquifer Overlay to implement low-impact development credits and incentives
 - Consider increasing development densities (in the form of increased height) and/or reducing other requirements (such as parking requirements) as a means of both offsetting the cost of any additional LID techniques and achieving its goals for increased development in the study area.
2. Identify successful bylaws and contact town planners, conservation agents, boards, and EOEAA to draw from their experience.
 - Initial local case studies might include: Bellingham, Franklin, and Plympton.
3. Pursue Technical Assistance to draft and pass a TDR bylaw.
 - The bylaw should include market incentives (in the form of density

bonuses or reduced requirements) for including LID component in each project.

Dartmouth Master Plan



2007 Dartmouth Master Plan



Slocums and Little Rivers

Photo: Pictometry



2007 Master Plan Cover
Source: Town of Dartmouth

Dartmouth's most recent Master Plan was completed in 2007. The planning process for an update is underway.

Relevant Goals and related Priority Actions:

1. Preserve the unique qualities of Dartmouth's villages and support them as vital centers within the Town.
 - Adopt village design standards
 - Study off-street parking in village areas
2. Manage growth in commercial areas to achieve high standards for safety, accessibility, compatibility and aesthetics.
 - Allow mixed-uses in general business district
 - Restrict big boxes to Route 6 between Cross Road and Faunce Corner Road
 - Support locally owned small businesses
3. Develop a Dartmouth marketing strategy.
 - Re-establish Industrial and Economic Development Commission
 - Pursue the creation of a multi-community or regional economic development position
4. Use existing commercial and industrial zoned areas efficiently.
 - Generate and maintain an inventory
 - Research height increases
 - Study proposals to convert commercial/industrial land to other uses
 - Explore new road to relieve traffic on Route 6, and prepare a mitigation plan for Route 6 traffic
5. Pursue economic development that preserves Dartmouth's rural character.
 - Develop mixed use standards
6. Coordinate economic development with traffic management, including circulation and parking standards.
7. Increase the community's appreciation for the Town's rich resources.
 - Provide uniform signage throughout the Town, noting town boundaries, scenic roads and vistas, historic sites, town parks and beaches, etc.
8. Encourage non-vehicular transportation and passive recreation opportunities
9. Reduce traffic and congestion and improve air quality in the town
 - Redesign and construct new

- Design a strategy for Padanaram to capitalize on tourists

- Encourage internal automobile and pedestrian connection between adjacent businesses and commercial developments
10. Encourage land use changes that have positive impacts on transportation system capacity
 - Promote higher-density mixed-use developments in areas that currently meet the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians
 - Develop and implement zoning regulations to support and encourage bicycling, walking, and transit use
 11. Create a network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities to encourage more residents to use these modes for transportation and health
 - Require bike/pedestrian facilities in all new roadway construction, even if it means limiting the scope of a project
 - Mandate bike racks at all new commercial developments and redevelopments over 40,000 sq ft
 - Implement pedestrian improvements

Open Space and Recreation Plan

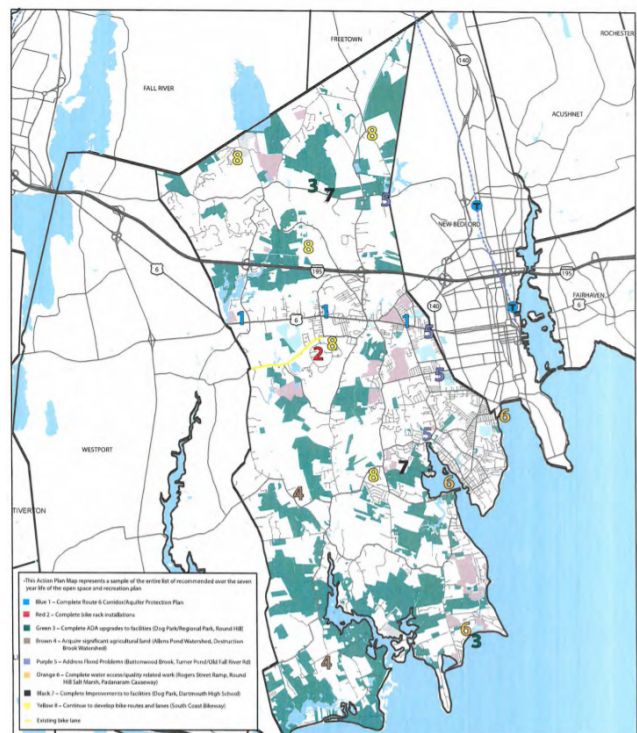
Dartmouth's most recent Open Space and Recreation Plan was completed in 2015, outlining local values and goals for improving open space and recreation areas for all users and ecological functions. An update is expected in 2022.

Relevant goals:

1. Manage and channel growth in a manner that retains the character of the town and its natural, cultural, and historical assets
2. Provide a range of active and passive recreational facilities and programs that address the changing population and

density characteristics within the Town

3. Promote a healthy and livable community that encourages multi-modal, non-vehicular transportation
4. Relevant priority actions
5. Evaluate road and street lane widths when they are repaired or redone to consider bicycle traffic accommodations
6. Continue to develop, install, and maintain a system of signs, plaques, and street furnishings to mark historic resources and village centers



Action Map

Source: Town of Dartmouth Open Space and Recreation Plan 2015



Customer Base Highlights

WHAT IS THE CUSTOMER BASE DIAGNOSTIC?

Demographic data helps us to understand the local customer base, their spending habits, and the degree to which businesses are capturing customer dollars. Data such as a community's population trends, age and education profiles, household statistics, vehicle accessibility, and employment and income profiles help to tell a story on who is frequenting the town center or commercial district. It also highlights the demand for certain retail or commercial uses, therefore assisting in community-wide economic development efforts.

The Customer Base Diagnostic poses the question: **Who are the customers of businesses in the LRRP Study Area?**

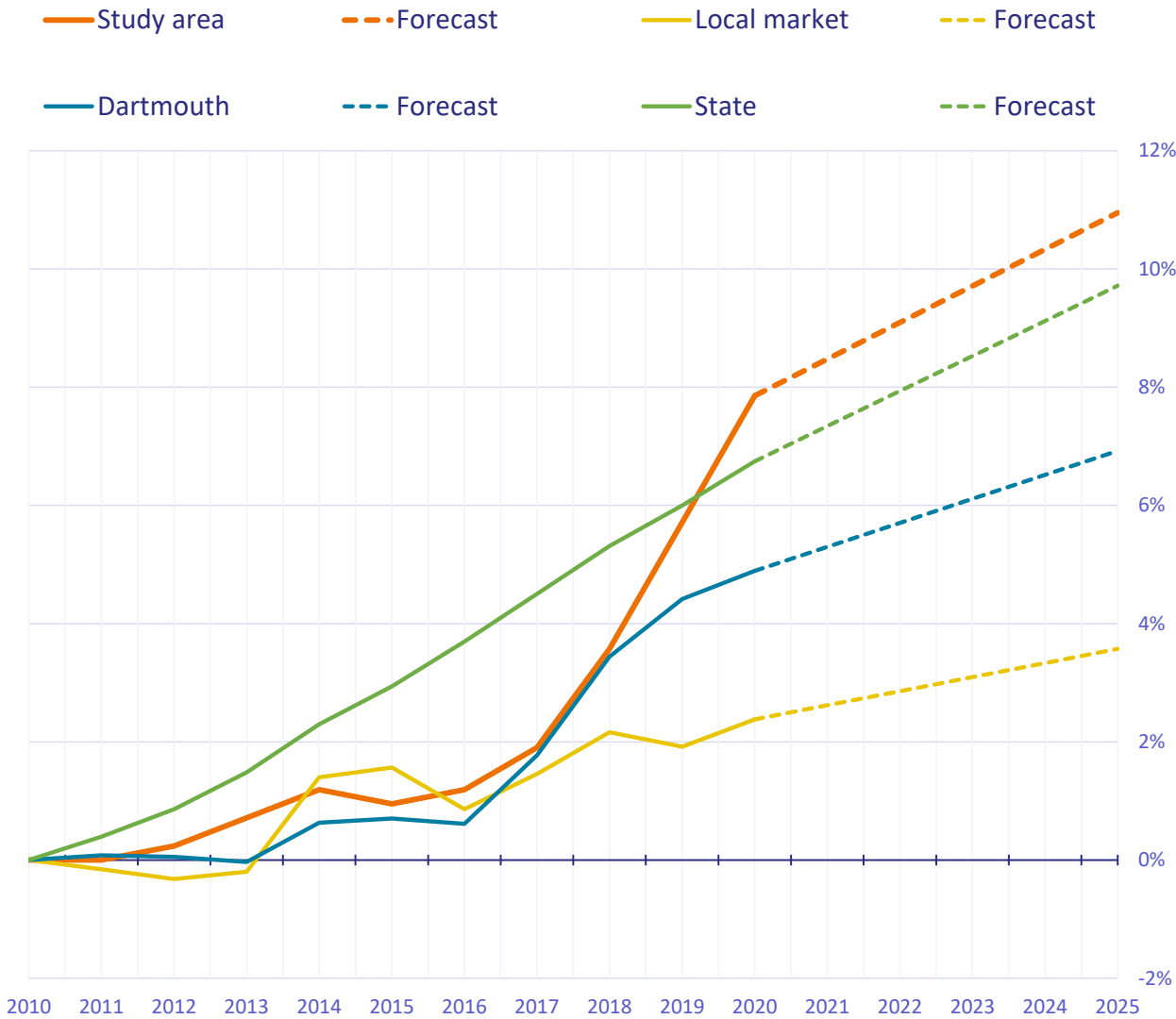
CUSTOMER BASE RESULTS IN DARTMOUTH

New housing projects are bringing more residents to live, shop and eat in the Dartmouth Local Market and Study Area, even as the population of the Study Area remains quite low, as it is largely commercially programmed. In the Local Market, there is a younger population to engage, with a significant higher proportion of 18-20 year olds due to UMass-Dartmouth.



DEMOGRAPHICS

While the Study Area is largely commercial, there are currently an estimated 453 residents, with projected growth of 13 additional residents by 2025. The local market is growing more slowly than Massachusetts and Dartmouth overall. It should be noted that these numbers do not reflect the proposed 40B project at the old Joe's Used Cycles property, which is projected to add 288 units to this number.



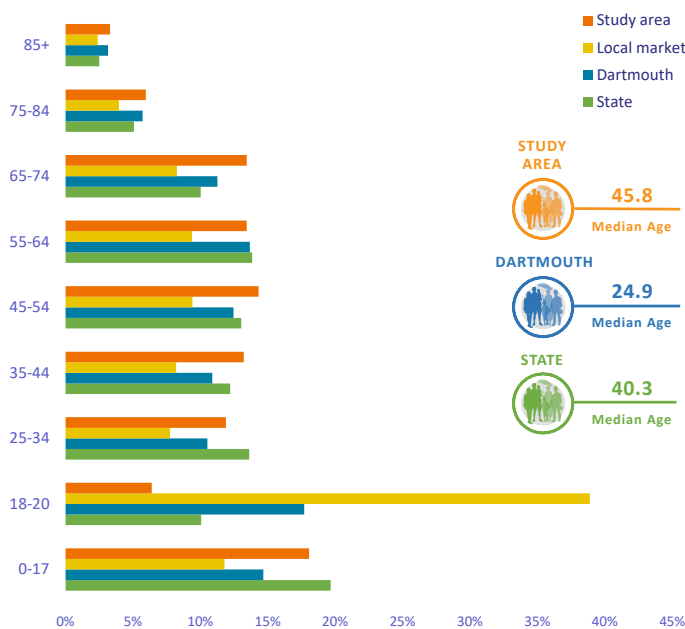
Source: ESRI Business Analyst



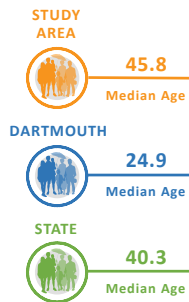
DEMOGRAPHICS

The Study Area's age distribution approximately matches the state's. The Local Market Area's age distribution is heavily skewed towards ages 18-20 due to the presence of UMass Dartmouth. The Study Area, Local Market, and Dartmouth overall are all less racially diverse than the rest of Massachusetts.

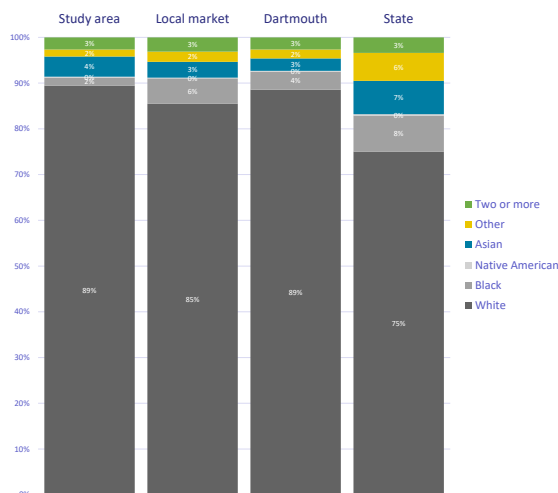
Age Distribution



Source: ESRI Business Analyst



Race and Ethnicity



Source: ESRI Business Analyst



DEMOGRAPHICS

The number of jobs in the study area is about 5 times the residential population. The study area, local market, and Dartmouth have higher home-ownership rates than the State.



Population

	Study Area	Local Market	Dartmouth	State
Avg. household size	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.5
Residential population	453	9,286	35,719	6,993,463
Households	168	2,206	11,963	2,702,578
5-year forecast, population change	+13	+108	+692	+194,486
5-year forecast, household change	+5	+46	+274	+73,332
Median Age	46	25	42	40



Employment and income

Median household income	\$78k	\$72k	\$81k	\$81k
Employees	2,182	4,848	15,947	3,384,476
Students (secondary & above)	41	3,746	6,841	933,098
Jobs-to-residents ratio	4.8	0.5	0.4	0.5



Housing

Median home value	\$327k	\$315k	\$483k	\$415k
5-year forecast, home value growth	9%	12%	16%	17%
Owner-occupied housing	73%	68%	76%	61%



Physical Environment Diagnostic Highlights

WHAT IS THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT DIAGNOSTIC?

The integrity of public infrastructure and private buildings and storefronts plays an important role in the experience of a downtown, town center, or commercial district. Accessibility from a parking lot to the sidewalk, comfortability while using streetscape amenities, and an inviting storefront window all have an impact on the vitality of a town center. It is important to bifurcate the physical environment into the public and the private realm to acknowledge the fundamentally different nature of the tactics and funding mechanisms available for each. The following public and private elements of Dartmouth's physical environment have been analyzed:

- Public Realm: Sidewalks, street trees & benches, lighting, wayfinding and signage, roadbed and crosswalks
- Private Realm: Storefront windows, outdoor display and dining, signage, awning, facades, and lighting

The Physical Environment Diagnostic poses the question: **How conducive is the physical environment to meeting the needs and expectations of both businesses and customers?**

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT RESULTS IN DARTMOUTH

While Dartmouth is primarily auto-oriented, it also serves a significant number of pedestrians and bikes. The facilities to support the pedestrians and bikes, however, are limited, and do not ensure access by visitors all ages and abilities. Notably, more than 25% of sidewalks pose challenges to the pedestrian experience, proving too narrow or to require maintenance. The lack of benches, or places to rest, limits who can enjoy Dartmouth's public realm, and how. Dartmouth needs bus shelters and other infrastructure to provide opportunities to rest and seek protection from the elements.

While a majority of storefronts are well-lit with large windows, most street lighting is directed into the roadway. Decorative and pedestrian-scale lighting will encourage more evening use in both public and private areas.



Dartmouth Physical Environment Grade

B

The commercial corridor's physical environment receives an overall grade of "B". Businesses are in good condition, with generally clear signage. There are a number of trees, primarily on private property. Still, there are some gaps, including safety and comfort features for pedestrians and people on bikes.

Importantly, because the Dartmouth study area is a commercial corridor rather than a typical downtown, some of the rating factors—developed for traditional downtowns across Massachusetts—did not necessarily apply.

Regardless, there are some key takeaways from this analysis, that will inform needs assessment and project recommendations. Those include:

- Creative public space activation can draw people to this business corridor and encourage them to linger. A variety of placemaking and activation strategies can appeal to a broad audience and encourage increased customers.
- Landscaping and public realm amenities are weak. While some individual businesses have high quality landscaping, the overall quality in both public and private areas could be improved. Amenities including benches are lacking.
- Lighting improvements are needed. Most street lighting is directed into the roadway. Decorative and pedestrian-scale lighting will encourage more evening use in both public and private areas.
- Pedestrian and bike safety needs to be enhanced. While this area is primarily auto-oriented, there is a significant number of pedestrians and bikes. Improved connectivity should be a priority





SIDEWALKS

Dartmouth's sidewalks differ in materials and level of maintenance. Some areas are not served by sidewalks at all.

A

More than 75% of sidewalks in the study area are cleaned, well-maintained and accessible to multiple users across different ages and abilities.

B

About 50% of sidewalks in the study area are cleaned and well-maintained.

C

More than 25% of sidewalks in the study area pose challenges to the pedestrian experience (including narrow sidewalks and lack of cleanliness/maintenance).

F

There are no sidewalks in the study area.



Existing Sidewalks, Dartmouth

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Sidewalks should be wide enough to accommodate both the flow of customers and spillover retail/dining activity. In addition, sidewalks should be clean and well-maintained to ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians.



STREET TREES AND BENCHES

The area is in need of benches and bus shelters to support pedestrian activity. Existing seating is in need of maintenance or cleaning.

A

Street trees and benches are readily available throughout the study area. They are well-designed, well-maintained, and offer shade and comfort to pedestrians.



Existing Streetscape, Study Area

Source: Stantec

B

Although street trees and benches are available, these amenities have not been cleaned or well-maintained, and require improvements.

C

Limited availability of street trees and benches creating uncomfortable pedestrian experience.

F

There are no street trees and benches in the study area.



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Sidewalks should facilitate a variety of activities, including resting, people-watching and socializing. Street trees and benches are key amenities that support such activities and should be made available without disrupting the flow of pedestrians.



LIGHTING

The study area has few instances of pedestrian scale lighting. Existing lighting is oriented towards cars.

A

More than 75% of the study area utilizes a range of lighting strategies to ensure safety of pedestrians and motorists, as well as highlight the identity and history of an area.

B

About 50% of the study area is serviced by street lighting that supports pedestrian visibility and safety.

C

Street lighting on the primary street in the study area does not support pedestrian visibility and safety.

F

There is no street lighting in the study area.



Existing Streetscape, Study Area

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Street lighting improves pedestrian visibility and personal safety, as well as aids in geographic orientation.



WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

Wayfinding signage is needed to inform visitors that they have arrived in Dartmouth and the General Business District. Existing signage does not adequately direct pedestrians and bike users.

A

There is a comprehensive and cohesive wayfinding system that offers geographic orientation to pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. Signage reflects brand/identity.

**B**

Wayfinding in the study area is primarily geared towards directing cars. There is limited signage to identify key assets and destinations to pedestrians.

**C**

Limited to no signage available throughout the study area.

F

There is no wayfinding/signage in the study area.



Existing Streetscape, Study Area

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

A wayfinding system supports overall accessibility of a commercial district. It benefits pedestrians and bicyclists and directs motorists to park and walk. Without clear visual cues, customers may find it difficult to park or may be less aware of local offerings.



ROADBED AND CROSSWALKS

While some crosswalks in the area have been recently improved, there is a remaining, broad need to improve safety features for pedestrians.

A

Roads are designed to balance the needs of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians and create a safe environment for all users.

B

Roads are designed primarily to move motor vehicles across the study area efficiently, with limited crosswalks for pedestrians.

C

Roads are hazardous to all users.

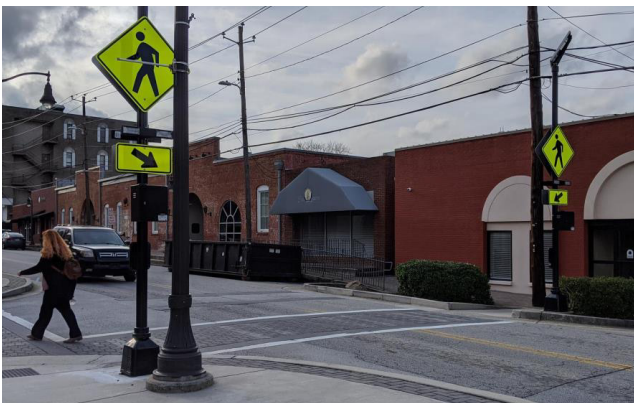
F

The study area is not connected by any major roads.



Existing Streetscape, Study Area

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Roads should be well-maintained to ensure safety of drivers and pedestrians. Crosswalks that are unsafe or inconvenient to customers may undermine accessibility between stores and overall shopper experience.



WINDOW

Some storefronts are well-designed with transparent windows to promote safety and engage passersby. But many storefront windows in the area are obstructed or small.

A

More than 75% of storefronts maintain windows with at least 70% transparency.

B

About 50% of storefront windows maintain at least 70% transparency.

C

More than 25% of storefronts have windows with limited transparency.

F

All storefronts are boarded up and/or have limited transparency.

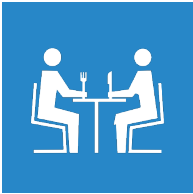


Existing Streetscape, Study Area
Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Storefronts that maintain a minimum of 70% transparency ensure clear lines of sight between the business and the sidewalk to enhance attractiveness of storefront, as well as improve safety for the business, customers, and pedestrians.



OUTDOOR DISPLAY AND DINING

There are very few examples of outdoor dining in the in the study area.

A

More than 75% of storefronts feature an attractive window display and/or spillover merchandise and dining areas that align with the brand and identity of the district.

B

About 50% of storefronts maintain an attractive window display with limited spillover merchandise and/or dining areas.

C

Only about 25% of storefronts have spillover merchandise display and outdoor dining limiting the pedestrian experience.

F

There is no spillover retail/restaurant activity in the district.



Existing Streetscape, Study Area

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Attractive window displays and spillover retail/restaurant activity on sidewalks or adjacent parking spaces can help contribute to overall district vibrancy.

SIGNAGE

Signage is generally clear, well-lit, and auto-oriented.

A

More than 75% of storefront signs reflect the unique brand identity of tenants and can be easily seen from more than 10 ft distance.

B

About 50% of storefronts have clear signage that reflect basic business information and can easily be seen from adjacent sidewalks.

C

More than 25% of storefronts have signage that does not communicate names of business or types of products/services being offered.

F

Storefronts in the study area do not have signage.



Existing Streetscape, Study Area

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Signage can help customers identify the location of storefronts and businesses from a distance. Signage should also reflect the visual brand and identity of tenants to help attract new customers.



AWNINGS

There are few awnings in the study area, and many offer little utility to pedestrians and outside patrons and are instead primarily decorative.

A

More than 75% of properties in the study area have retractable awnings that have been well-maintained and cleaned.

B

About 50% of properties in the study area have functioning awnings that have been well-maintained and cleaned.

C

More than 25% of properties in the study area do not have awnings and/or have awnings that are unusable or have not been cleaned and maintained.

F

Storefronts in the study area are not equipped with awnings.



Existing Streetscape, Study Area

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Awnings can provide shade during warmer months, enabling comfortable outdoor dining arrangements for customers. However, they must be well-maintained and designed in coordination with other elements of the storefront.



FACADE

Facades are generally well-maintained, but could more effectively draw in visitors and give the sense that Dartmouth's General Business District is cared for and vibrant.

A

Storefronts that use high-quality materials, and paint and color to differentiate from other businesses, can dramatically improve the appearance of the commercial district.

B

Most properties have clean and well-maintained façades, but at least one significant property requiring structural façade improvements.

C

More than 25% of properties require significant building façades improvements, including power washing, painting, and structural enhancements.

F

All properties in the study area require significant façade improvements.



Existing Streetscape, Study Area
Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Storefronts that use high-quality and durable building materials, as well as paint and color to differentiate from other businesses, can dramatically improve the appearance of the commercial district to potential customers.



STOREFRONT LIGHTING

In most cases stores are well-lit with large windows, both of which serve to make the area around the shop more inviting and comfortable for all users.

A

More than 75% of storefronts have lighting that help illuminate sidewalks.

B

About 50% of storefronts have some interior lighting that help illuminate sidewalks.

C

More than 25% of storefronts do not have lighting.

F

All storefronts in the study area are shuttered and dark at night.



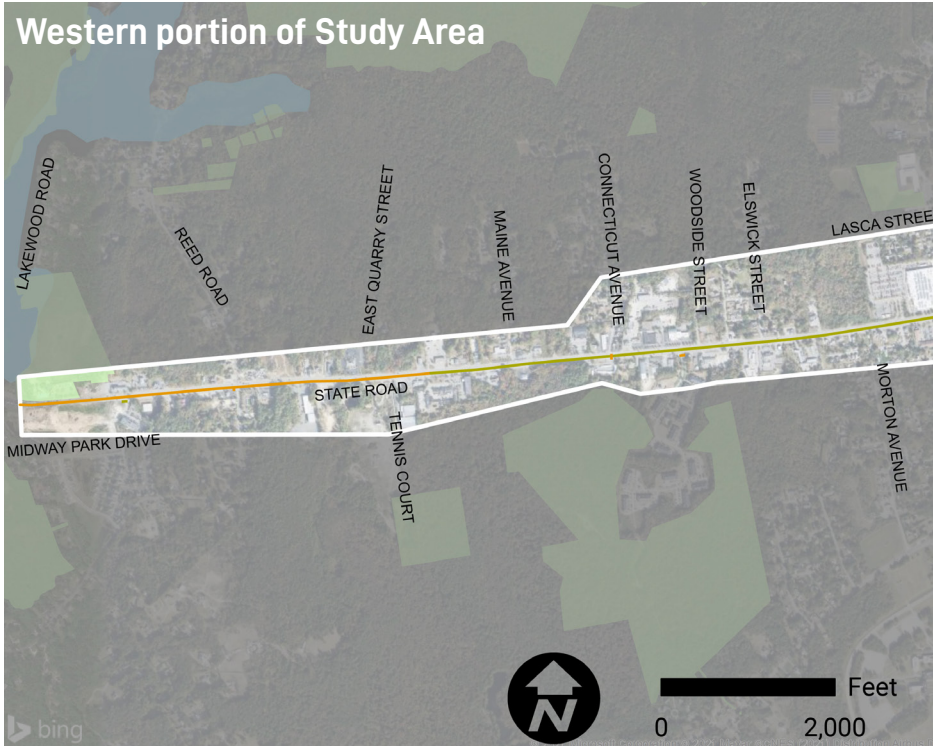
Existing lighting, Dartmouth
Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

Storefront interior lighting after business hours helps enliven the corridor and boost security on the street.

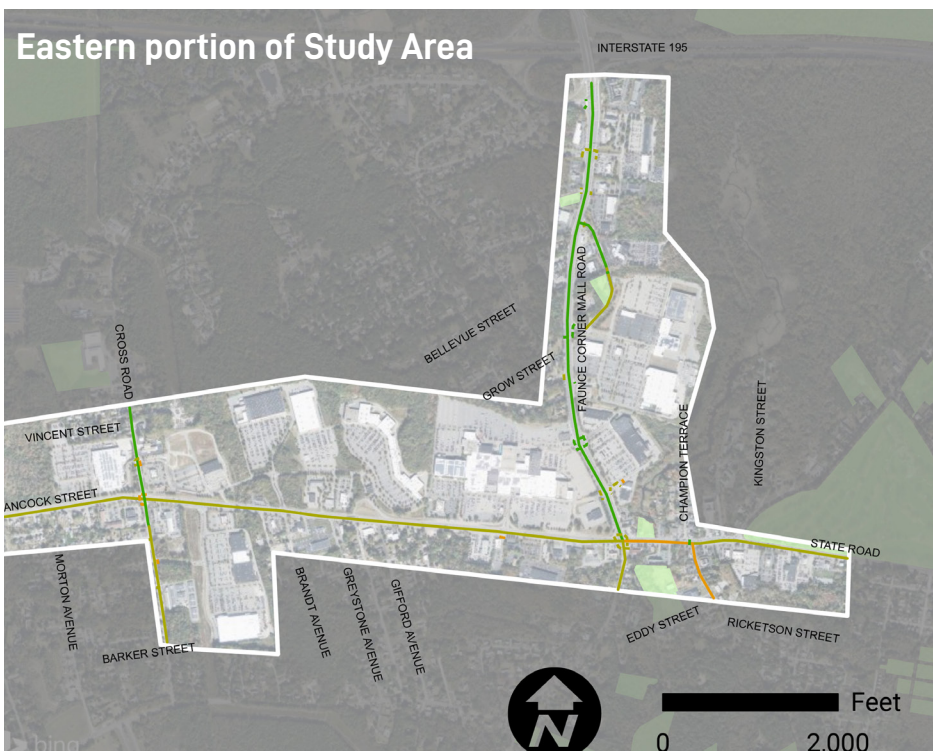
CROSSWALK, ROADBED AND SIDEWALK SCORES



Legend

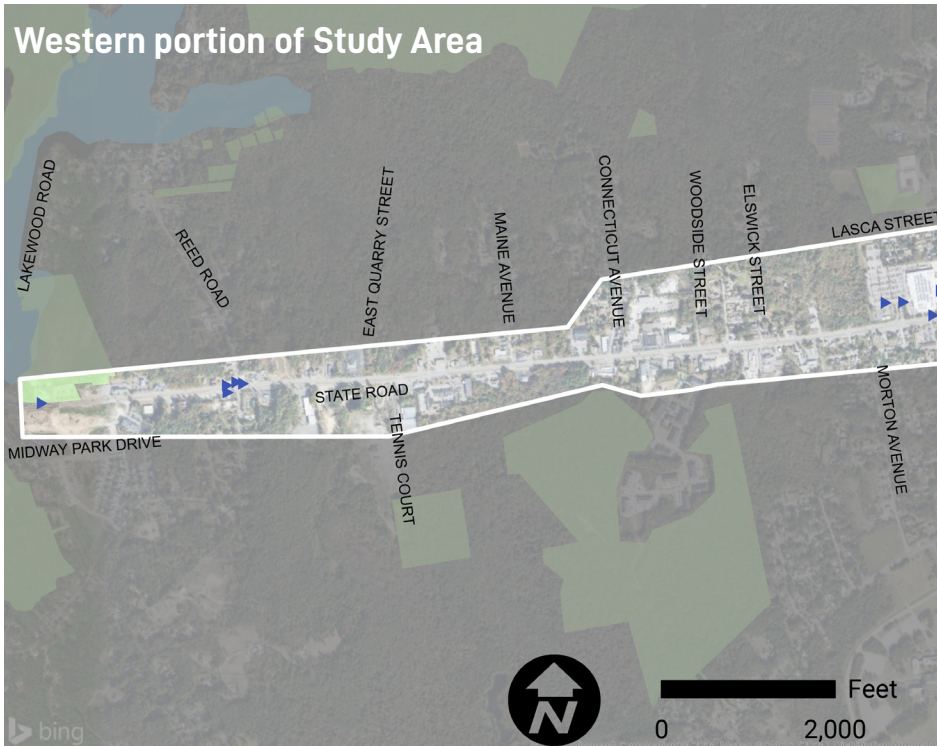
Field Grade, Indicator

- A, Crosswalk
- A, Roadbed/Sidewalk
- B, Crosswalk
- B, Roadbed/Sidewalk
- C, Crosswalk
- C, Roadbed/Sidewalk
- Fail, Crosswalk
- Fail, Roadbed/Sidewalk





STREETSCAPE AMENITIES



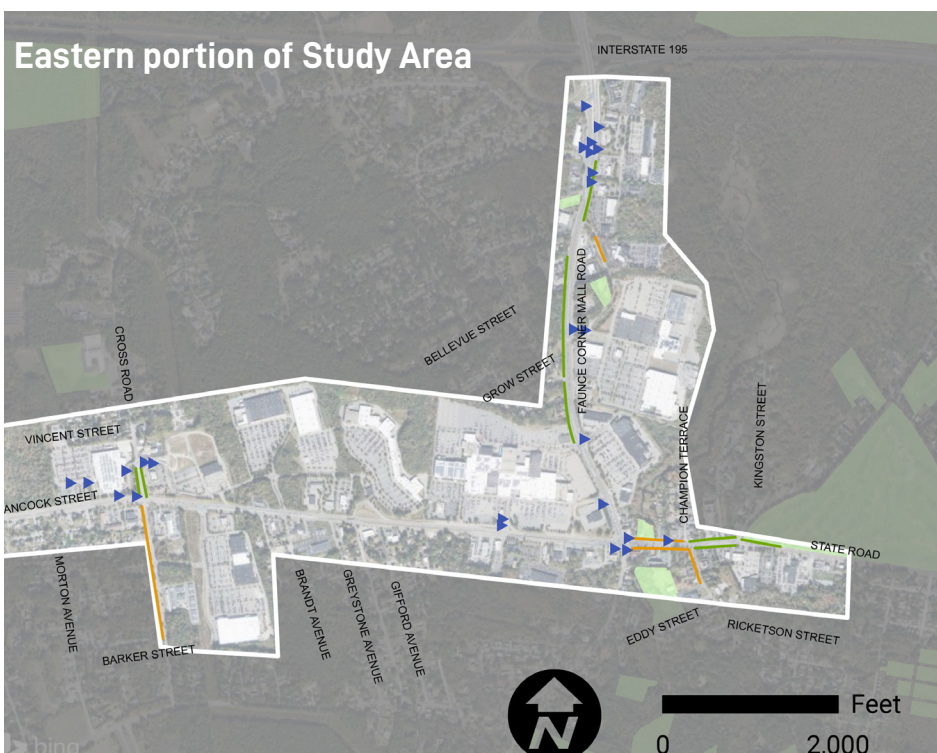
Legend

Trees/Lights/Benches

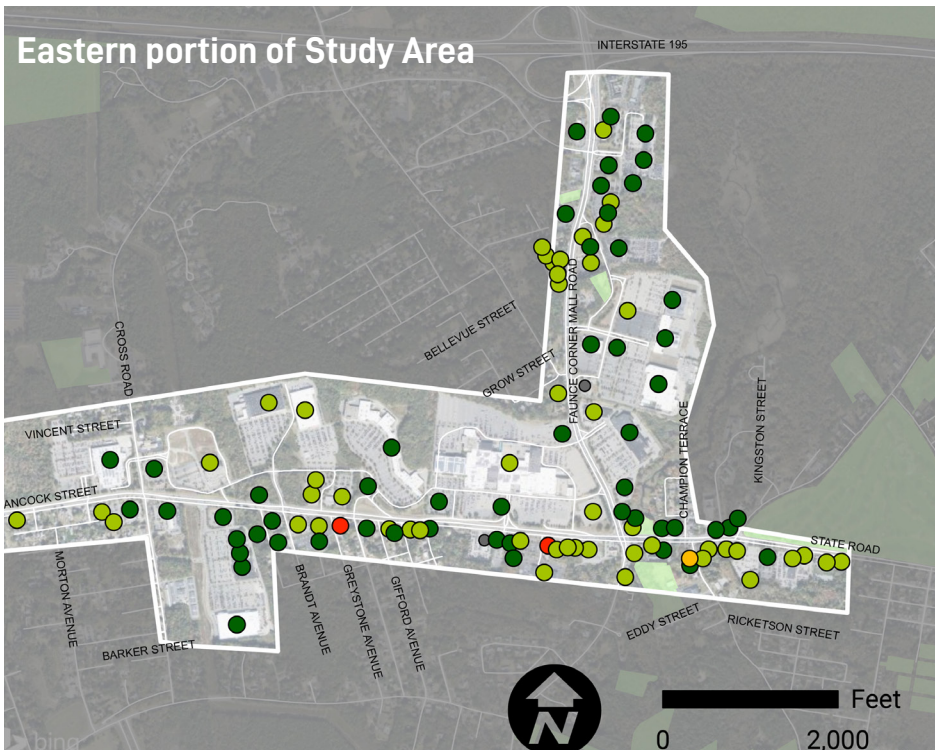
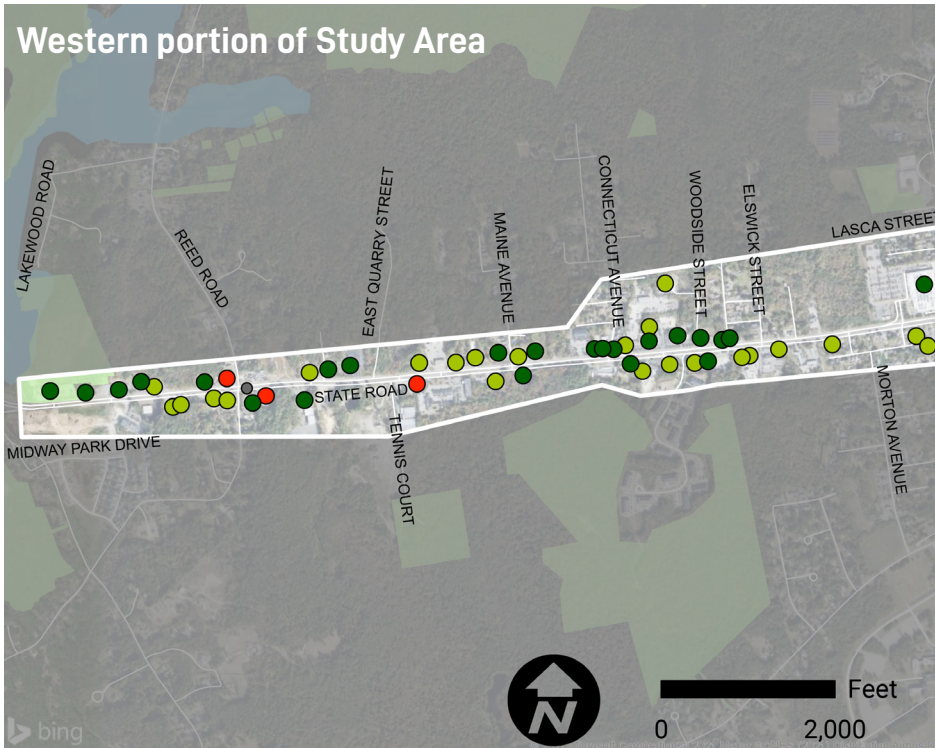
Field Grade

- A
- B
- C
- Fail

▶ Wayfinding/Signage



FACADE SCORES





Business Environment Diagnostic Elements

WHAT IS THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT DIAGNOSTIC?

The conditions of the local business environment, including business density, quality, and type of offerings, play a critical role in how successful businesses are in meeting the needs of the district's customers. Collecting data related to the tenant mix and concentration of stores provides an insight into the health of local businesses, as well as highlights the presence (or lack of) major anchors and drivers that attract visitors and residents to frequent businesses in the district.

The Business Environment Diagnostic poses the question:

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

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT RESULTS IN DARTMOUTH

Dartmouth has a diverse business type mix, with largest shares of professional and technical services (35%) and healthcare and social assistance (13%). Fourteen businesses have closed either temporarily or permanently since the beginning of the pandemic, eight of which were accommodation or food services businesses. Including those additional closures, there are 52 total vacancies in the Dartmouth study area, out of 421 total storefronts



Business Environment Diagnostic Highlights

BUSINESS SURVEY

A business survey was conducted in March and April of 2021. The survey received 21 responses.

Business owners or representatives were asked about COVID-19 impacts to their business operations, sales, and capacity. They were also asked about their business' relationship to the public realm, and their level of satisfaction with the existing public realm.

A majority of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did the year before. 3 in 5 businesses were still serving fewer customers (than before COVID-19) nearly a year after initial COVID-19 related restrictions were put in place. The top three COVID-19 business impacts from the 2021 business survey were:

- A decline in revenue
- Incurred expenses for safety measures
- The cost for establishing an alternative to sell and delivery products more safely

On average, business owners or representatives were somewhat satisfied with the condition of the business environment. They were fairly satisfied with the condition of private buildings, storefronts, and signs, but recognized potential for improvement. They ranked their level of satisfaction with the safety and comfort of customers and employees similarly; relative proximity to complementary businesses and uses was ranked similarly, with a generally positive, verging on lukewarm, "Somewhat Satisfied".

Attitudes toward the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks were a bit more neutral. On average, business owners reported being neither entirely dissatisfied or satisfied with the condition of these public realm elements.

54%

of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019

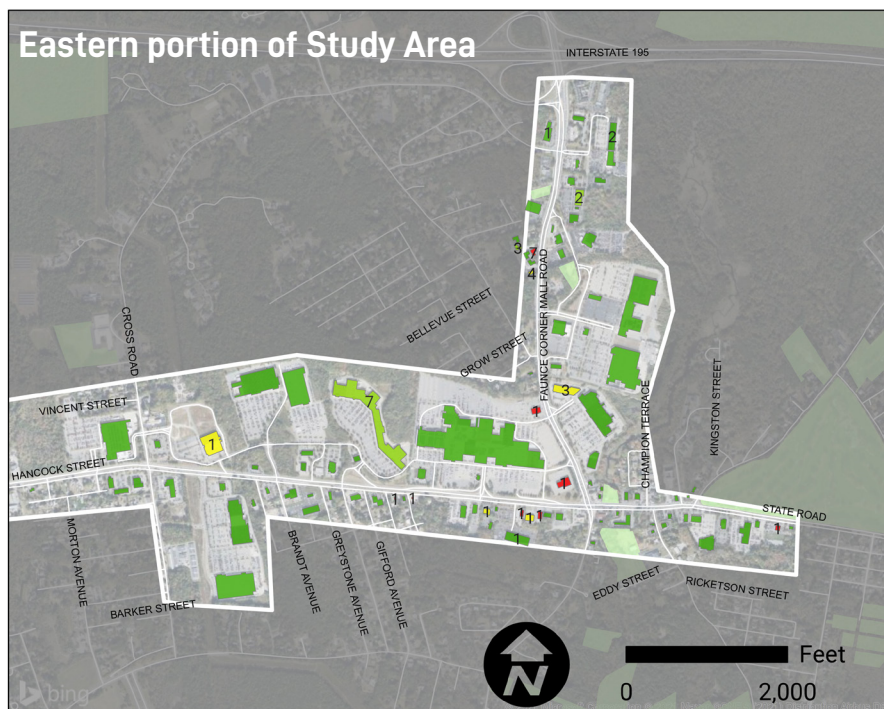
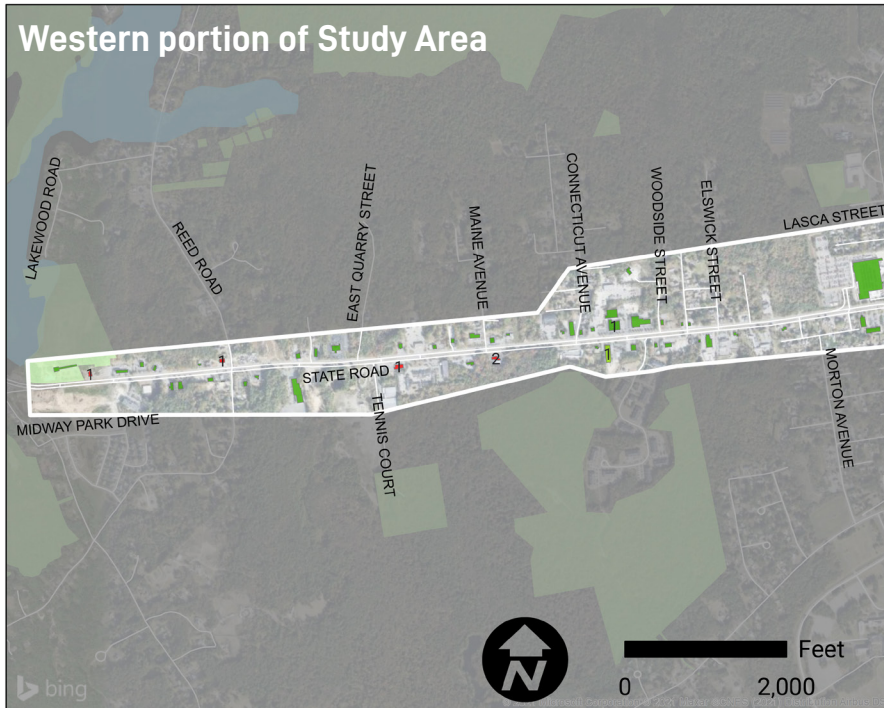
61%

of businesses had fewer on-site customers in Jan. and Feb. of 2021 than before COVID-19.

Top 3 COVID-19 business impacts from the 2021 Business survey:

- Decline in revenue
- Incurred expenses for safety measures
- Established alternative mode to sell/deliver products

VACANT PROPERTIES MAP

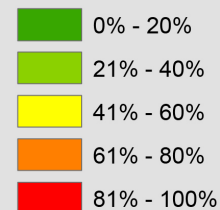


Dartmouth's New Vacancy Tracking Tool

One distinct benefit from the LRRP process for Dartmouth was that, based on the extensive diagnostic work (including geo-locating all businesses both occupied and vacant), the Town of Dartmouth was able to set up a GIS-based vacancy tracking report. The report included such information as building addresses and square footage. With this new tool comes an opportunity to match new potential entrepreneurs and businesses with retail, restaurant, and office locations within Dartmouth.

Legend

Storefront Vacancies



No. of Vacant Storefronts



Administrative Capacity Diagnostic Highlights

WHAT IS THE ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY DIAGNOSTIC?

Administrative capacity refers to a combination of leadership, organizational capacity, resources, and regulatory and policy frameworks that enable catalytic investments and improvements to take root. Understanding leadership roles and champions as well as funding mechanisms and existing partnership are critical components to assessing the administrative capacity of a community.

The Administrative Capacity Diagnostic poses questions such as:

- Who are the key stewards of the LRRP Study Area? Are they adequately staff and resourced to support implementation of projects?
- Are the regulatory, zoning, and permitting process an impediment to business activity? Why or why not?
- If lack a stakeholder entity, is a discussion needed on District Management?

ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY RESULTS IN DARTMOUTH

Administrative capacity is a key priority in Dartmouth. There is interest in building capacity through a business association or other organizational model to help improve communication and collaboration amongst businesses, undertake collective activities, create a destination, develop more opportunities for shoppers to visit more than one business, and support small businesses to further COVID-19 recovery efforts. Expanded organizational capacity is needed to make Dartmouth's recovery and revitalization a reality. The Town has limited capacity to serve this function but could build on their existing efforts to identify potential property or business partners.

Summary of Needs

Key Findings

CUSTOMER BASE AND BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT FINDINGS

- New housing projects are bringing more residents to live, shop and eat here.
- There is a younger population to engage, with a significant higher proportion of 18-20 year olds due to UMass Dartmouth.
- Due to the density of businesses, the study area has a large surplus of retail.
- Based on results from the survey, business owners are satisfied with the current conditions within the study area

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FINDINGS

- Overall, properties are in good shape. Dartmouth benefits from the variety of retail options, but all commercial offerings are geared heavily toward auto access.
- The lack of outdoor dining or retail spillover is a significant hindrance to increasing vitality within the study area. Creative solutions needed to work within existing physical constraints
- Ground floor design and maintenance improvements are needed. Storefront design, awnings, and building lighting can all be improved to highlight local businesses and enhance visual appeal.
- Creative public space activation can draw people to this business corridor and encourage them to linger. A variety of placemaking and activation strategies can appeal to a broad audience and encourage increased customers.
- Landscaping and public realm amenities are weak. While some individual businesses have high quality landscaping, the overall quality in both public and private areas could be improved. Amenities including benches are lacking.
- Most street lighting is directed into the roadway. Decorative and pedestrian-scale lighting will encourage more evening use in both public and private areas.
- Pedestrian and bike safety needs to be enhanced. While this area is primarily auto-oriented, there are also many pedestrians and bikes. Improved connectivity should be a priority.

Alignment of Goals and Key Findings

Dartmouth applied to LRRP with key goals in mind. The key findings of the diagnostic align with and clarify the needs of Town of Dartmouth in alleviating the negative impacts of COVID-19 on its General Business District. Those original key goals follow in the next pages.

Project Recommendations



Identification and Prioritization of Projects

Integration of Project Goals and Recommendations

The Town of Dartmouth applied to the LRRP program with key priorities in mind. Those were:

FIRST PRIORITY

- Provide support to businesses to alleviate negative impacts from the Pandemic
- Improve public realm in commercial areas

SECOND PRIORITY

- Data-driven analysis of Pandemic impacts
- Identify long-term strategies to support Mall area

THIRD PRIORITY

- Identify action-oriented initiatives to support businesses post-pandemic
- Long-term strategies to support 'brick and mortar' businesses

The project recommendations that follow are directly informed by these priorities.



Source: Stantec

Public Engagement Efforts

Ongoing Engagement Process

LRRP has been a process of iteration between the project team and stakeholders, to clarify and most effectively present diagnostic results and develop project recommendations that are realistic, exciting, and plugged-in to work already underway, to most effectively address what Dartmouth and its commercial corridor need.

Diagnostic Results Meeting

On June 9, 2021, using the Town's Zoom account, the Town hosted an event where diagnostic results and initial project ideas were discussed. The event was held virtually to facilitate participation by all community members regardless of comfort level with in-person gatherings due to COVID-19. The event was recorded and widely distributed through the Town's social media accounts.

Project Recommendations Meeting

An in-person Open House event was scheduled for September 2021, but due to concerns related to the COVID-19 Delta variant, the decision was made to host the event virtually, through Zoom again. During this meeting, additional diagnostic findings and details from each project were reviewed with the community.



*(top) Diagnostic Results meeting presentation cover
(bottom) Diagnostic Results meeting Zoom audience*
Source: Dartmouth Community Media

Projects Overview

Project Categories

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT: PUBLIC REALM

Projects for the public realm enhance streets and public spaces in communities to spur other investment and create opportunities for business activity and gathering that lead to community vitality. The recovery of Massachusetts downtowns, town centers, and business districts has relied on public spaces like these to extend the areas in which business communities and public life can operate.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT: PRIVATE REALM

These project focus on enhancements on private properties and buildings, improving the aesthetics and attractiveness of existing buildings but also helping new buildings to contribute to a commercial district's recovery in a positive way.

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT: REVENUE AND SALES

Projects intended to increase revenue and sales can include strategic organizations such as task forces and business improvement districts, but also include more creative approaches that draw on attributes of the physical environment and special events to promote businesses in a downtown district and encourage increased visits and spending.

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT: TENANT MIX

These project efforts are intended to diversify the types of businesses in communities. This can not only respond more closely to community needs, but also work toward a more resilient commercial fabric in business centers so that major disruptions like COVID-19 do not result in disproportionate closures and a lack of activity.

ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY

Capacity-building projects help make local governments and their partner agencies more able to take on the other kinds of project efforts recommended in this Local Rapid Recovery Plan.

Project List

Category	Project	Description	Timeframe	Budget	Priority Project
Public Realm	Create a Wayfinding System around and to the Dartmouth General Business District, with an Emphasis on Welcoming Gateways	Design and install a wayfinding system for Dartmouth, prioritizing interesting gateway signage at major pedestrian and vehicular access points. Gateway installations will visually alert visitors to the proximity of these places and encourage people to explore.	Short	Medium	
Public Realm	Undergo a Branding Process and Identify Components for Short- and Medium-Term Installation	Develop a branding identity for Dartmouth that draws on local cultural themes, physical siting, and history. Install elements throughout and beyond the study area. Include elements that are cohesive across Dartmouth but distinguish between villages, the study area, and other areas of interest.	Short	Low-Medium	
Admin. Capacity	Identify Most Appropriate Business District Management Model	Identify best form of, and build support for, a business association.	Short	Medium	✓
Public Realm	Invest in Public Realm Improvements to Enhance Bike and Pedestrian Safety and Amenities	Prioritize pedestrian realm improvements and investments in bike infrastructure such as improved crosswalks, sidewalks, bike lanes, pedestrian signage, ADA-compliant curb ramps, crossing islands and curb extensions to make walking and biking safer within Dartmouth's commercial corridor and to better connect visitors and residents within and to the commercial corridor.	Short	Medium	✓
Public Realm	Develop Outdoor Dining Strategy and Guidance	Take lessons learned from the pandemic experience to develop a permanent outdoor dining program that is affordable for restaurants to implement	Short	Low	
Private Realm	Develop Private Realm Improvement Program	Determine appropriate form of and develop incentive program to support investment in the private realm, particularly facades, in and around Dartmouth's General Business District.	Medium	Low	
Arts and Culture	Support Arts Groups to Expand Visibility and Programming in the General Business District	Build on existing programming and partnerships to expand arts programming within the General Business District. Could involve display of art initiatives in stores (vacant and not), further programming with schools.	Short	Low	
Public Realm	Enhance Lighting Across General Business District	Identify locations in Dartmouth's commercial corridor that require additional lighting fixtures to provide increased safety for those on foot and bike. Develop lighting solutions that serve as branding elements in addition to safety infrastructure.	Short	Medium	✓
Tenant Mix	Maintain Vacancy Database and Tracking Tool to Support Tenant Recruitment Strategy	Maintain the vacancy database and tracking tool and build a tenant recruitment program to match potential entrepreneurs and new businesses with vacant storefronts, as a means of diversifying the commercial corridor's tenant mix and activating empty properties.	Short	Small	✓
Tenant Mix	Collaborate with UMass-Dartmouth Programs on Temporary Activation	Pursue formal collaboration with existing UMass-Dartmouth initiatives to temporarily activate vacant storefronts and potentially incubate new tenants.	Short	Low-Medium	
Admin. Capacity	Increase Utility of Town Website and Online Presence to Residents and Businesses	Build on ongoing Town efforts to increase the utility of the Town's website and online presence in engaging the community and supporting business owners.	Short	Low-Medium	✓

Create a Wayfinding System around and to the Dartmouth General Business District, with an Emphasis on Welcoming Gateways

Category		Public Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		Town of Dartmouth
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$150,000)
Timeframe		<p>Short Term (<5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop RFP and solicit bids for gateway design team – 2 months • Select and contract with design team – 2 months • Create design committee to manage and review the design process • Conduct public outreach to solicit ideas and review concepts - ongoing • Complete design process from conceptual to construction drawings – 9 months • Install gateway elements – 4-6 months
Risk		Medium Risk – Will require support from business and property owners. Building consensus among key stakeholders and community representatives can be challenging.
Key Performance Indicators		<p>Improved customer experience</p> <p>Continued use by visitors and residents</p> <p>Number of gateway signs installed</p> <p>Public sentiment gauged via social media impressions</p>
Partners & Resources		<p>Town of Dartmouth</p> <p>Future business organization</p> <p>Local business and property owners</p>

Diagnostic

Photo analysis and stakeholder input confirmed a significant problem with wayfinding in Dartmouth, with a particular concern raised about lack of gateway signage.

The study area includes a primary entrance to the town, but there are no indicators that one has arrived in Dartmouth.

Well-branded, visually-interesting gateway markers at the entrances to town will help attract visitors and tourists to key destinations within Dartmouth and the commercial corridor. They will provide an opportunity to promote what the area has to offer and create a sense of place.

The wide-ranging impacts caused by Covid-related shutdowns and public gathering restrictions emphasize the importance of visitor experience to draw people back to Dartmouth and its commercial corridor.

Covid has severely impacted Dartmouth and its businesses. Re-building excitement and interest in the commercial corridor is an important way to help attract visitors again by making it feel welcoming and inviting to everyone.

Action Item

Design and install a wayfinding system for Dartmouth, prioritizing interesting gateway signage at major pedestrian and vehicular access points. Gateway installations will visually alert visitors to the proximity of these places and encourage people to explore.

Action:

Develop conceptual sketches to promote ideas and gather initial feedback

Process

- Determine what the priority locations are
- Determine whether the gateway development process will be part of a larger branding process. Additionally, coordinate this effort with the website redesign to ensure brand consistency.
- Solicit gateway installation design team – artists, engineers, lighting experts, etc. – and agree to contract
- Engage community and local artists for design ideas for gateway locations
- Develop initial concept designs for gateway installations
- Share concepts with public for feedback
- Revise design concepts based on feedback
- Share revised concepts for additional feedback
- Finalize design and complete construction documents
- Solicit bids for installation (if needed)
- Install gateway elements
- Publicize installation via social and print media to raise awareness and create buzz
- Leverage lessons learned from gateway design and implementation process to expand wayfinding signage throughout and to the study area, to guide both autos and pedestrians



Existing conditions. *There is a lack of signage notifying visitors that they have crossed into Dartmouth / Dartmouth's General Business District.*

Source: Google Maps.

Branding Component: Gateway Signage

One key component of a wayfinding effort would be to create a significant signage element to signal entrance into Dartmouth and/or Dartmouth's General Business District. One potential location, illustrated here, could be on Route 6, near the western town line, which also marks the beginning of the General Business District.



Gateway illustration, along Route 6/State Road, looking east.

Source: Stantec

The Bandstand was the inspiration for signage shape.
Source: DHCD



Best Practice: Wakefield MA's Wayfinding Initiative

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

Wakefield Center and
Greenwood.

BEST
PRACTICE

There was no universally accepted brand or wayfinding system for the Town of Wakefield. On the edge of Wakefield Center, Lake Quannapowitt is a popular setting for walkers, joggers, bikers, and in-line skaters off Route 128 in Middlesex County. It is the site of many organized races from 5Ks to Ultra Marathons. However, rarely do outside visitors travel beyond the lakeside the 200 yards to the Town of Wakefield's Downtown. This is a lost

Wayfinding System to Help Reinforce the Downtown Experience

Location: Wakefield, MA





Along with interested citizens, town officials including the Town Planner, Police Officer, City Councilor, and Main Street board members made decisions regarding locations. Source: DHCD

opportunity to support restaurants and shops in the Downtown.

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

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

and fabrication of informational kiosks.

The two overlapping programs took two different paths.

Over an eight-month period, the branding and wayfinding design process went through a series of group meetings with a large Advisory Group of 24 representatives.

A month after the town landscape-based brand was approved by the Advisory Committee and presented in the local daily newspaper and to the Town Council, a devastating lightning-induced fire burned down the majestic church steeple. The loss of the church set back

the discussion of whether or not the approved image should be brought forward as a historical image or changed to reflect the current conditions.

The designs and branding and wayfinding program were put on hold.

Overseen by the Wakefield Main Streets Board of Directors and invited Town officials, the kiosk design program was mandated to have only 3.5 months to complete design, design review, put out for bidding and start implementation.

The kiosk program went fully ahead. However, some community members felt left out of the design and placement of the project elements. Their concerns had to be integrated.

PROCESS

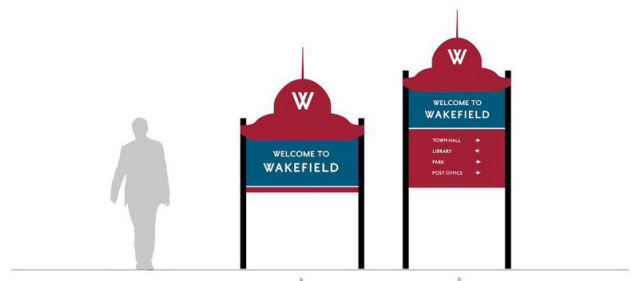
After a number of kiosk design alternatives were presented to the Wakefield Main Streets Board, one design was chosen to develop, locate and specify. Three (3) of the kiosks were to be twosided and analog; the fourth was to be digital and four-sided. The digital one would be set closest to the lake. Historical town images and commentary was developed to fit around as a border around a business directory for one side of the directory. Set in an airtight locked Plexiglas window, this information could be easily changeable on the two-sided kiosks. On the opposite side was space for timely event posters and community announcements. The digital kiosk was designed to have a screen/monitor that was programmable from the town hall. There was much criticism around the placement and look of the digital kiosk. The town council eventually addressed the public and took a stand that the location, size and look of the kiosk was the best possible solution. Kiosk-opposing residents were invited to an

expanded Branding and Wayfinding meeting to assist with eventual sign element placement on maps.

Favermann Design was then hired by the Town administration to create a style guideline to reflect the iconic kiosk toppers.

After a period of about four months the guidelines have resulted in the establishment of a consistent Town of Wakefield visual brand for internal communication, the official website, emails, business cards, interior town hall signage, newsletters and even drop boxes.

These guidelines were in place during the Covid-19 pandemic, and further thought was given to the on-hold wayfinding program. It was decided that a new approach should be taken that abandoned the problematic landscape and instead visually reflected the kiosk and style of the Town of Wakefield. Utilizing the new design approach, plans are going ahead for a new directional sign for the Greenwood neighborhood. A test will take place during the Summer of 2021 to see how wayfinding can connect the Lake with downtown.



From wayfinding signage to printed informational materials and the Town's website, the Town of Wakefield "branded" elements and strictly adhered to style guidelines demonstrate how programs can build upon and even improve each other to reinforce a sense of place, a sense of arrival and a sense of shared experience.

Source: DHCD

Undergo a Branding Process and Identify Components for Short- and Medium-Term Installation

Category		Public Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		Town of Dartmouth
Budget		<p>Small-Medium, depending on services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand Strategy \$5-10K • Stakeholder engagement (interviews) \$5 – 15K • Public Engagement (survey – online or in person) \$10K – 20K • Logo/Identity Design \$15 – 25K • Brand extension – supporting visuals \$10K – \$20K • Print or digital collateral - \$5K – \$50K • Brand Guide - \$5 – \$20K
Timeframe		Short Term (1 year planning; 2-3 years for design and installation.
Risk		Low risk. Branding projects are typically considered low risk. The only plausible risk to a branding effort would be a negative public perception of a new municipal brand. This can be avoided by including the public in the process, through surveys and public presentations throughout the process to keep them involved
Key Performance Indicators		<p>Improved customer experience</p> <p>Support by local businesses</p> <p>Public surveys</p> <p>Continued use by visitors and residents</p>
Partners & Resources		<p>Town of Dartmouth</p> <p>Future business organization</p> <p>Local business and property owners</p>

Diagnostic

Photo analysis and stakeholder input confirmed a significant problem with branding/wayfinding in Dartmouth. The study area include the primary entrances to the town, but there are no indicators that one is entering the town, or what to do when there.

Branding materials will help build excitement about returning to the commercial corridor, conveying a renewed level of activity that is appealing to the customer base and business owners alike.

Action Item

Develop a branding identity for Dartmouth that draws on local cultural themes, physical siting, and history. Install elements throughout and beyond the study area. Include elements that are cohesive across Dartmouth but distinguish between villages, the study area, and other areas of interest.

Tie the identity into gateway elements (see pg. X) and other public realm improvements prioritized with this RRP plan.

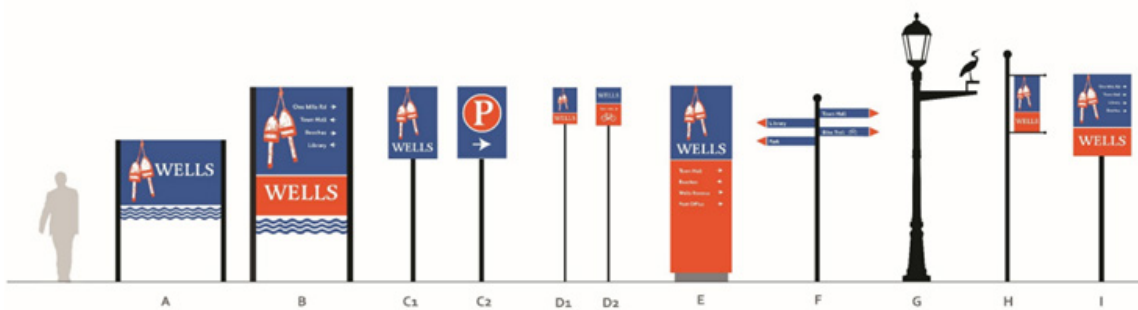
Process

- Solicit branding team – artists, engineers, lighting experts, etc. – and agree to contract
- Engage community and local artists for design ideas, important cultural threads to represent, and element locations
- Develop initial concept designs for branding package and physical elements
- Identify key areas to distinguish between in branding package. Are there different elements for the villages vs the commercial corridor?
- Share concepts with public for feedback
- Revise design concepts based on feedback
- Share revised concepts for additional feedback
- Finalize design and complete construction documents
- Solicit bids for installation (if needed)
- Install physical elements
- Incorporate digital elements into Town website and social media accounts
- Publicize installation of physical elements via social and print media to raise awareness and create buzz

Precedent

WELLS, MAINE BRANDING - GATEWAY, WAYFINDING, TRANSIT SHELTERS, INFORMATIONAL SIGNAGE

- The town of Wells, ME, incorporated elements from a larger branding design effort into gateway signage at key town entrance points. The branding elements, including lobster buoys, called back to Wells' identity and history as a lobster fishing town.
- The same elements were repeated on trolley stop shelters and beach rules signage



WELLS | Sign Elements and Wayfinding Specifications

Favermann Design | January 2019

Branding materials for Wells, Maine

Source: Favermann Design

BRANDING BANNERS IN CHARLES TOWN, WV



Branding materials for Charles Town

Source: JessCreates.com

SHOP,
ENJOY,
EAT,
SPEND,
EXPERIENCE,
SUPPORT,
LOCAL.



BEST
PRACTICE

Municipal Branding Toolkit for Small Businesses

Location: Salisbury, MD



Dartmouth could consider creating a Municipal Place-based branding toolkit for small businesses. An initiative like this can help create fresh branding for Dartmouth's General Business District as a desirable area shop and do business.

Salisbury, MD Shop Local Toolkit

Salisbury, MD founded a campaign for small businesses called the Shop Local Toolkit. The campaign includes a toolkit with free marketing materials and tips for participating business owners. The toolkit includes social media material, such as a Facebook business page cover photo, an Instagram story, and flyers.

The City describes the campaign as follows:

"The Shop Local Salisbury campaign centers around a Shop Local Business Directory housed on the City's website, featuring locally owned and operated businesses, what they offer, where they are located, and more. The website allows users to select from a wide variety of categories in order to find exactly what they



are looking for, all while supporting a local business. The website also has the option for users to view minority-owned, veteran-owned, LGBTQ-owned, and women-owned businesses in Salisbury."

The toolkit includes the following components, available from the campaign website:

- Come In, We're Local sign
- Facebook Cover Photo
- Storefront Flyer
- Shop Local Logos
- Social Media messaging

The campaign site also includes a Salisbury Business Directory and links to additional resources, such as the National Main Street Centre and Amex Small Business Resources.

A CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT LOCALLY OWNED AND OPERATED BUSINESSES AND ENCOURAGE OUR COMMUNITY TO SHOP LOCAL WHENEVER POSSIBLE

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SHOP LOCAL?

YOU STRENGTHEN OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

Local businesses hire local employees and purchase locally sourced products to stock their inventory

YOU GET TO ENJOY PRODUCT DIVERSITY

Unique inventory and locally sourced products result in a shopping experience that you won't get at big box stores.

YOU PUT MONEY BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY

Locally owned and operated businesses are more likely to give back to the community than those that aren't.

City of Salisbury Shop Local Campaign

Source: City of Salisbury, MD

Identify Most Appropriate Business District Management Model

Category	Administrative Capacity	
Location	Study Area	
Origin	Town of Dartmouth	
Budget		Medium
Timeframe		Short Term (1-2 Years)
Risk		Medium Risk – Political , property owner, tenant and other stakeholder consensus for preferred organization model is required.
Key Performance Indicators	Establishment of a sustainable business district organizations with a real defined program, sustainable model and appropriate staff support.	
Partners & Resources	Town of Dartmouth Future business organization Local business and property owners	

Diagnostic

The COVID pandemic significantly impacted downtown businesses. Business surveys have verified that most downtown small businesses, dining, cultural attractions, residential developments, and tourist destinations experienced loss of employment, revenue, customer base and foot traffic. Downtowns with active downtown business organizations were able to pivot and respond to this crisis to help their small businesses weather the storm and plan for COVID recovery.

In Dartmouth, there is interest in developing the capacity through a business association or other organizational model to help improve communication and collaboration amongst businesses, undertake collective activities, create a destination, develop more opportunities for shoppers to visit more than one business, and support small businesses to further COVID recovery efforts. The district is comprised of national chains, strip developments and independent small businesses. While there is interest in marketing, outdoor dining, tenant recruitment and other efforts, no organization or leaderships currently exists to undertake this activity.

The municipality is interested in partnering with business and property owners to initiate the effort. The challenge is there is no group currently interested in leading this effort. The LRRP project to develop a business association in Dartmouth will be starting from ground zero to initiate the conversation and will require leg work to identify business and property owner partners. The Town has limited capacity to serve this function but could build on their existing efforts to identify potential property or business partners.

Action Item

Dartmouth may consider the following steps to begin the process of building support for a Business Association.

- Develop role of and hire Economic Development Coordinator for Town of Dartmouth
- Create a downtown partnership with Municipality, key property owners, key local destination businesses to launch the effort.
- Form a broad-based advisory committee to provide input and feedback
- Secure seed funding for TA to explore business association models through Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (now part of the One Stop), ARPA, and another stakeholder support
- Create community outreach events, widely distribute surveys and other engagement tools to develop program priorities
- One on one conversations with stakeholders to secure support and engagement in process
- Consensus building with stakeholders on model / programming / budget
- Consider a phased approach
- Organizers may consider executing a demonstration project that could "show" potential programs and services provided to the through a business association. i.e., a holiday tree lighting event.

Process

Dartmouth may initiate this project by creating a working partnership between the Town and business and property owner stakeholders such as the Mall, key strip development owners and other businesses with whom the town has interacted as part of the LRRP process, permitting or business support. The opportunity may exist to use the LRRP planning process as a launching point for stakeholder engagement. Town outreach to businesses could include the following activities:

- Increase communication to property owners about LRRP Plan Projects
- Develop database of businesses, property managers and property owners in district.
- LRRP Project Launch - Target 20 businesses / property owners to attend.
- Post projects / invitations on Website and social media

continued on next page

Process, continued

- Directly reach out to Mall manager to engage in concept/LRRP Plan
- Directly engage larger owners to seek participation / access to tenants.
- Contact Businesses who have applied for permitting /licenses and businesses that have received TA from Town, and properties participating on vacant property listing
- Work media connections to promote interest in getting involved in forming the business association.
- ID one tangible achievable project to start. One idea might be tree lights for holidays or another visible, tangible project.

Demonstrate the value. It will be essential to develop the value proposition for investing human capital and the financial resources into a business organization and communicate to the municipality and private stakeholders the impact of their investment. The goal of an organization will be to improve communication and opportunities to collaborate on events, marketing, and other business support activities. Key points include:

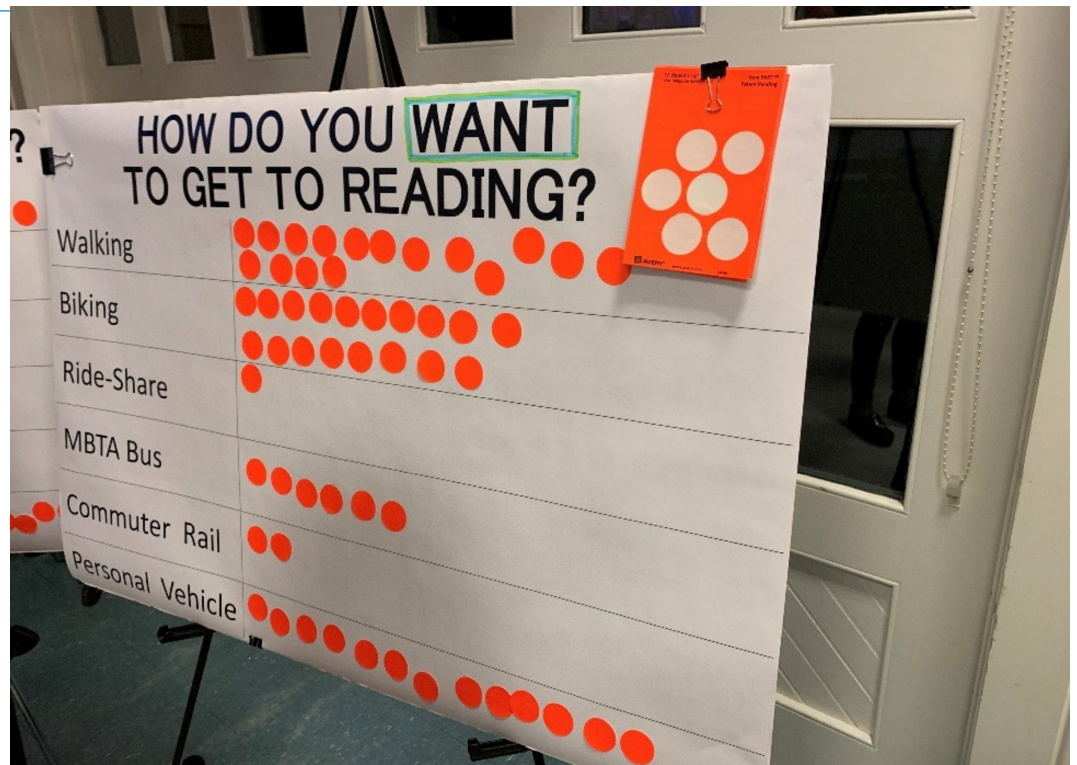
- Ability to collectively and cost effectively undertake priority programs to achieve impact /scale
- Provide a unified voice / "seat at the table" for business priorities
- Produce and execute cultural and event programming
- Ability to respond to crisis - COVID
- Leverage resources and collaborations
- Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships - The Town may identify key property and business owners to launch the conversation. The Town may initiate this effort but should transition to a private sector-led working steering committee with strong public sector

support soon. The clear demonstration of a public-private partnership will help move this effort forward.

Create a business engagement strategy. The Town and a core group of businesses could begin efforts to engage other businesses to identify their needs and priorities. This work has begun through the LRRP process but will need to continue to refine the work program for a proposed organization. Additionally, this affords the opportunity to provide community education about a business association model, identify needs and opportunities as well as potential leadership to spearhead the organizational development. This could happen in a variety of ways Including:

- Business Forums - fun, engaging and informational visioning sessions held at local businesses.
- Peer Learning Panels - Executive Directors from Business Associations in other similar communities.
- Visits to other communities with Business Associations to see programs in action
- Surveys of needs and priorities (although this has recently been down through the LRRP process but could include a broader distribution to other stakeholders).
- Websites/social media.

Identify resources for startup and sustainability. Seed money may require starting a Business Association. Sources include TA through the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, or ARPA funds (if the development of the organization is tied to implementing COVID recovery activities). Local Institutions, foundations and key stakeholders/Individual contributors may be sources for seed money to launch an effort.



BEST
PRACTICE

Determining a District Management Model for Downtown Reading



Location: Reading, MA

The creation of a downtown management organization was intended to establish a dedicated organization that would provide supplemental programs, services and advocacy for the downtown. The downtown organization would undertake activities to attract businesses, investment, customers and residents to downtown. These could include marketing, placemaking, business development and advocacy. Determining the appropriate downtown management organization model was a unique process for the Reading community, downtown property owners and businesses. The process included extensive outreach and community education to explore program priorities, financial sustainability, organizational models and champions from both the private and public sector.

Economic Development Plans for downtown Reading had included the recommendation to establish a sustainable downtown organization to support the economic and social health of the downtown. The Town of Reading spearheaded activity to launch the process of community and property owner engagement to explore what model would be appropriate for downtown Reading.

This included:

- Identification of staff and financial resources
- Creating a Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy
- Research to identify community priorities / recommendations
- Peer learning from other communities
- Consensus building among stakeholders
- Transition of leadership to private sector

PROCESS

- The Town of Reading secured Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Technical Assistance funding and committed staff to initiate and support
- A large broad-based community advisory/working group was formed to provide input and feedback
- A survey was widely distributed to community residents, businesses and other stakeholders - 1600 response were received providing insight into program priorities and community preferences
- Community Outreach Event - A Pizza/Ice Cream Social brought over 150 residents to provide input
- 3 Community Forums – Panels featuring executive directors of different types of downtown organizations described their programs, challenges and models.
- Working sessions with Advisory committee to discuss specific model alternatives / cost and benefits
- One on one conversations with key stakeholders
- Consensus building with stakeholders and recommendation of preferred model and next steps .
- Transition from town-led effort to Steering committee comprised of property owners, businesses, and other stakeholders to lead organizational effort. Town staff continued staff support. TA support continued through additional MDI grant.
- BID Steering Committee. BID organizational process underway

Invest in Public Realm Improvements to Enhance Bike and Pedestrian Safety and Amenities

Category		Public Realm
Location		Study Area
Origin		Town of Dartmouth
Budget & Funding		<p>Medium</p> <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town of Dartmouth • Property owners • Business owners • Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds <p>Walking and Biking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces • MassTrails • AARP: Community Challenge Grant <p>Placemaking and Beautification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MassDevelopment: Commonwealth Places • Patronicity (Crowdfunding) • Dartmouth Cultural Council • Buzzard Bay Grant Program • T-Mobile Hometown Grants
Timeframe		Short Term (1-2 Years)
Risk		Medium Risk – Concerns over identification of funding and being able to implement change within a State transportation corridor
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of safety improvements within the study area • Decrease in pedestrian and bike accidents • Increase in count of pedestrians and bike riders
Partners & Resources		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town of Dartmouth • Future potential business organization • Local business and property owners

Diagnostic

While some bike lanes and pedestrian amenities are in place, the Dartmouth commercial corridor remains generally unsafe for and unwelcoming to pedestrians and cyclists. Diagnostic grades related to crosswalks, sidewalks, lighting, and other pedestrian-scale amenities reflect these conditions.

Action Item

Prioritize pedestrian realm improvements and investments in bike infrastructure such as improved crosswalks, sidewalks, bike lanes, pedestrian signage, ADA-compliant curb ramps, crossing islands and curb extensions to make walking and biking safer within Dartmouth's commercial corridor and to better connect visitors and residents within and to the commercial corridor.

- Break the public realm improvements into phases, starting with easy to implement projects.
- Identify the entity responsible for the implementation and maintenance of beautification projects such as planters or banners.

Process

Phase 1: Planning and Design

Convene stakeholders: Arrange a meeting with key stakeholders listed in the Partners and Resources section to discuss project ideas identified in the LRRP process and identify key areas to focus on.

Define project scope: Identify two to three nodes or walking/biking corridors that will support the creation of destinations within the study area.

(continued on next page)



Existing conditions
Source: Stantec

Process, continued

Discuss the public realm projects identified, including, but not limited to the following:

- **Walking/Biking:** Site specific or corridor improvements to crosswalks, sidewalks, crosswalks, on-street bike facilities, and the creation of a multi-use path that would improve access to the study area and make it easier to travel between stores.
- **Outdoor seating:** Public and private outdoor seating and dining are great ways to attract visitors and encourage people to stay longer. Outdoor seating could be placed adjacent to the commercial building on a wide sidewalk or in parking spaces. Outdoor seating could include a combination of bistro sets, picnic tables, Adirondack chairs, benches, and other movable seating. The type of seating selected will depend on the site and the availability for maintenance. Providing two to three seating options is recommended to meet the needs of visitors with varying abilities. See: Outdoor Dining project profile.
- **Planters and landscaping:** Adding planters and improving landscaping can improve the overall experience of the visitor. Planters could be used as a perimeter to define an outdoor seating area.
- **Wayfinding:** Adding wayfinding signs for pedestrians or drivers is another project identified in the LRRP process. Connecting wayfinding efforts to the site or corridor where public realm improvements are would help to the project site tie into other branding efforts. See the Wayfinding project rubric for additional information. See: Wayfinding recommendation.
- **Banners:** Installing banners on light poles is helpful to create an identity for any commercial district. Banners are often



Road barrier and outdoor dining in Salem, MA

Source: DHCD

tied into branding and wayfinding efforts to create a consistent feel within the district.

Site visit and evaluation: Arrange a site visit to walk through the site and look at key features such as space availability, surface quality, crosswalk conditions, poles, electrical sources, water sources (including irrigation), storm drains, etc. Write a summary of the site and create a map with these key features that can be included in an RFP or Scope of Work.

Scope of work: Develop a scope of work that outlines key project details, including site location, project scope, design timeline, and, if known, materials budget and design fees. If the designer would be responsible for project implementation, include those details as well.

Concept design: Hire a designer to develop a site plan for the installation. The site plan may include outdoor seating, planters, landscaping, pedestrian improvements in the parking lot, and banner locations. The designer should also provide a project budget broken down



*Best practice, Keene NH
Source: Stantec*

by type of materials. The designer could help to identify products and source materials for the installation. Additional design services are needed to develop wayfinding signs and banners.

Zoning updates: A related long-term project is to update the Town of Dartmouth's zoning code to include in landscaping requirements in XX zoned parcels. Landscaping requirements can help create a more interesting and activated public realm for walkers, bikers, and drivers.

Phase 2: Funding

There are many funding sources – grants, Town, property owners, business owners – to fund many of the public realm improvements enhancing lighting, landscaping, and the use of public transportation. Multiple funding sources may be needed to implement the project depending on the scope and scale of the installation. See the funding source list in the budget section of this project rubric.

Phase 3: Implementation

Timeline: Create a timeline for the installation, maintenance, and removal of public realm projects. If the project is seasonal and needs to be removed for the winter, identify a space to store any materials.

Insurance and permitting: Acquire insurance for project implementation as needed such as general liability insurance or artist insurance, as well as any necessary permits from the Town or permission from the property owner.

Material acquisition: Purchase materials, assemble, and install for the project.

Promotion: Write a press release and post on social media to highlight the implementation of the project, which should include any key funders or sponsors

Develop Outdoor Dining Strategy and Guidance

Category		Private Realm
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		RRP Process
Budget		Low. Potential sources: Shared Streets and Spaces
Timeframe		Short
Risk		Medium. Siting conflicts with parking, pedestrian and bike infrastructure.
Key Performance Indicators		Number of applicants for permits Number of restaurants offering outdoor dining Change in sales of restaurants after expanding outdoor dining program
Partners & Resources		Town of Dartmouth Future business association Local restaurant owners

Diagnostic

The COVID-19 pandemic required quick operational changes by restaurants, and outdoor dining was one form of quick pivot to respond to the needs and interests of staff and diners alike -- to offer dining options to diners of various comfort levels and lower risk of transmission to staff. Recognizing the potential long-term benefits of outdoor dining to economic development and business resilience, many communities are looking for ways to make COVID-19 era outdoor dining solutions permanent and further expansion easier. Even as COVID-19 related concerns and restrictions change, the customer base's interest in outdoor dining options is anticipated to remain.

Action Item

Take lessons learned from the pandemic experience to develop a permanent outdoor dining program that is affordable for restaurants to implement

Key considerations:

Location: Sidewalk, or on-street parking areas?

Simplicity of permitting process

Process

- Engage stakeholders to understand needs, barriers to uptake, issues with current outdoor dining permitting system.
- Research best practices related to easy-uptake, efficient outdoor dining permitting programs
- Develop and distribute guidance and technical assistance related to types of outdoor dining solutions (whether on sidewalk or on-street parking); how to fund; where to buy furniture; adjusting business operations to account for new/different service. See LRRP Outdoor Dining Toolkit (summarized in the next few pages) to start.
- Adopt new permitting system

Guidance from DHCD's Outdoor Dining Toolkit: Streamlining the Outdoor Dining Permitting Process

When we say "streamline the process," it can include all or some of the following goals:

1. Offer a single application for businesses to apply for permits and licenses to provide outdoor dining and retail.
2. Offer an online application to help businesses save time.
3. Provide a checklist of all requirements.
4. Provide a liaison at Town Hall to guide businesses through the outdoor dining and retail rules and requirements.
5. Create a short-track or condensed timeline for permitting and approvals by coordinating Town inspections and reviews.
6. Provide clear design guidelines and other requirements that take the guesswork out of providing outdoor dining and retail.
7. Offer bulk purchasing of common items needed for outdoor dining and retail to get better prices for businesses and standardize select items that may be hard or confusing to source.

These approaches aren't mutually exclusive and you may choose to combine various methods of streamlining applications. For instance, some communities will offer a single, online application and also provide a short-tracked permitting and inspections process. If they offer design guidelines and a complete Toolkit for businesses (using this Toolkit as a guide, of course!), that's one more way to streamline the entire process for businesses.

A summary guide to these approaches follows. Further details can be found in the LRRP Outdoor Dining Guide, as can information about providing design and materials guidelines to

businesses and making temporary outdoor dining regulations permanent.

Offer a single application for businesses to apply for permits and licenses to provide outdoor dining and retail.

Creating a single application makes a simple process for businesses and municipal staff. A single application replaces all other permit and license forms that would typically be required for outdoor dining or retail. One required application also gives assurances to businesses that they are not missing any key steps.

Elements to include in a single application:

- Offer application by seating type/location/space ownership
- Offer an online option
- Provide a checklist of all requirements
- List any separate permits that may be required
- Provide design guidelines
- Offer guidance regarding alcohol sales and service
- Provide key dates and timeline for review and approvals

Some municipalities opt to incorporate all types of outdoor seating into a single application and others have a different application depending on the type. For example, Brookline, MA has a single application on which the applicant selects their proposed outdoor dining type classified by location. Categorizing applications by the proposed location or by ownership of the space (public or private) makes good sense as different considerations (and different municipal permits and review) come into play if seating is proposed for the street or a sidewalk.

Provide a checklist of all requirements.

To help businesses organize all of the materials and information they will need to successfully apply for an outdoor dining or retail permit, it is useful to provide a checklist of required items. A clearly defined checklist will decrease chances for confusion and enable the applicant to organize the proper materials in advance, rather than having to start and stop the application to seek out necessary documentation. The checklist should be as succinct and easy to understand as possible.

It is important to explicitly identify any required or optional elements that need a separate permit application from the business. It is up to the discretion of the municipality to decide which elements to include as part of the primary application and which require separate permitting. When possible, streamline the process by designating pre-approval for certain equipment and models that have been vetted to remove uncertainty on the part of the businesses. Common examples of things that may require separate municipal approval/permitting include:

- Tents/Canopies
- Outdoor Heaters
- Platforms
- Sidewalk Use/Obstruction

Offer an online application.

Online applications help ease the process for businesses and can be done two ways: If your municipality already has an online form center or portal for submitting permit applications, this is a streamlined way to allow applicants to attach any necessary uploads directly to their application and submit all in one place.

If you don't have a public portal for applications and other submittals, an alternative option is to provide fillable PDFs that applicants can submit by email along with any other necessary attachments.

Hard copy applications should also be available upon request for applicants who may lack internet access or proficiency.

Provide a liaison at Town Hall.

Designating someone as the single point person at Town Hall can help ease the process for businesses that have questions about outdoor dining permitting and provide one stop shopping. This liaison can also serve as the coordinator of staff and department requirements, providing a consistent presence and source of information. The liaison can also report back on barriers or challenges in the permitting process and initiative changes in response to real time feedback from businesses and public sector collaborators.

Create a short-track or condensed timeline for permitting and approvals.

By coordinating Town inspections and reviews, and possibly eliminating or shortening some public review processes, the overall timeline from application to permit approval can be shortened, helping restaurants make quick pivots to retain customers and staff. In addition, providing clear timelines for permitting, from application submittal through inspections and approvals, helps businesses stay on track and prevents misunderstandings and missed deadlines. Time is money for businesses; important information to include in the timeline includes:

- Date the application process opens (if applications are seasonal)

-
- Overall estimated time from submission to municipal decision
 - Outline any public review periods that are required

The application deadline and any intermediary deadlines, such as site inspections, municipal grants, or materials for loan (if applicable)
When the outdoor dining/retail season begins and ends (if applicable)

Provide clear design guidelines and other requirements including alcohol licensing checklist of all requirements

Businesses have expertise in menus, food, dining experiences for customers, service, and in the case of outdoor retail, displays and signage. The design and construction of outdoor dining and retail can stymie the most sophisticated business owner...it's just not part of their expertise and experience. Guidelines can help!

Previously, an application to extend the licensed premises to serve alcohol in a new outdoor area had to be approved by both a municipality's local licensing authority (LLA) and the ABCC. However, per Bill S.2475, An Act relative to extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency, LLA's have been granted the authority to approve the extension of licensed premises until April 1, 2022 without the need for ABCC approval. This means allowing alcohol service in a public outdoor space, including a space across the sidewalk, is fully at the discretion of the LLA. After approval, the LLA must notify the ABCC of the amended license.

As with outdoor dining in general, businesses that have been granted an outdoor extension of their premises for alcohol service through this

expedited process are presently scheduled to revert to their pre-approval status after April 1, 2022. If a business is seeking to extend their premises for outdoor alcohol service beyond April 1, 2022, they must follow the ABCC's usual regulations for Alteration of Premises/Change of Location. This consists of submitting an application to the LLA for approval, which then gets forwarded to the ABCC for approval.

Offer bulk purchasing of common items needed for outdoor dining and retail.

Some equipment or materials may be specialized and also need to meet safety requirements. Items such as outdoor heaters have to meet fire safety or electrical codes, and the storage of propane fuel, if used, can be complicated. Additionally, items such as platforms to raise on-street parking spaces to sidewalk height are fairly standardized but require construction knowledge and structural design. To get better prices for businesses and standardize select items that may be hard or confusing to source, towns and cities may choose to bulk purchase items on behalf of businesses.

Develop Private Realm Improvement Program

Category		Private Realm
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		RRP Process
Budget		Low-Medium <ul style="list-style-type: none">Collaborative Workspace Program (MassDevelopment)
Timeframe		Medium-Term (5-10 years), but depending on scale of program, it could be implemented more quickly
Risk		Medium
Key Performance Indicators		Number and diversity of business and property owners participating Number of improvements made Maintenance of improvements Number of vacant, participating properties filled Increase in or sustained participation over time
Partners & Resources		Town of Dartmouth Business owners Commercial property owners Future business association

Diagnostic

Private realm components such as storefront lighting, signage, facades, windows, and storefront displays -- all elements that can serve to draw commercial users to the General Business District and encourage them to stick around -- all received average grades in the physical environment diagnostic. While the private realm is in generally good shape, there is a need for more elements to engage a wider section of the customer base.

As measured through the diagnostic process, the issue of commercial vacancy in and as we emerge from COVID-19 times is a key issue in Dartmouth's General Business District. Private realm improvement support and guidance could help landlords fill vacancies and convey a renewed excitement about the opportunity of Dartmouth's General Business District to potential future tenants.

Action Item

Determine appropriate form of and develop incentive program to support investment in the private realm, particularly facades, in and around Dartmouth's General Business District. Broadly, steps include:

- Identify capacity within the municipality to guide the program and bring on additional capacity.
- Develop an appropriate level of design guidelines.
- Engage the businesses, property owners, and community to get buy-in for the program.
- Develop the criteria for application, approval, installation, and
- maintenance.
- Develop the funding and oversight structures.

Process

Process steps include:

- First step is determining the right program type for Dartmouth
- Review and analyze precedents elsewhere for private realm improvement programs that incorporate various elements of interest such as facades, storefront design, windows, awnings
- Review and analyze impact of existing low-Interest loan programs
- Determine whether this program would be project-based (number of projects per year) or funds-based (amount of money available per year)
- Identify eligible activities
- Outline way to get landlords interested and involved - making the business case for improved façades
- Identify priority properties to recruit, to serve as proof-of-concept success stories. Work with those landlords and business owners to identify highest-impact improvements
- Program development including criteria for eligible buildings, set guidelines, identify funding sources, create administrative structure to support the program

The program can provide grants or loans to property owners/ businesses for the improvements. Grants may provide a greater incentive to participate for reluctant property owners, while loans (no or low interest) provide a revolving fund to assist more properties. Some communities have indicated that requiring a match from the property owner may create longer-term support of the program. If the property owners are less interested in the program, the municipality might consider offering grants to the first 3-5 participants to sign up (depending on resources) and transitioning later applicants to a loan program. This method would also allow the municipality to assist specific properties as catalysts for the rest of the target area.

The Town should consider streamlining approvals of projects under this program to reduce the time needed for implementation.

Precedent

SIGN AND FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM - ASHLAND, MA



APPLICATION FOR SIGN & FAÇADE PROGRAM

Purpose:

The Sign & Façade Program was established to provide technical and financial assistance to Ashland businesses making external improvements to their establishments. This program matches up to half of the project's cost or \$5,000 (whichever is less) for façade and/or sign improvements with town funding through the Ashland Economic Development Incentive Program. In doing so, the Town seeks to promote local merchants and enhance the physical appearance of Ashland.

Eligibility Requirements:

This program is open to all businesses in Ashland but targeted to properties located on visible or high-traffic areas such as Main Street, Pleasant Street, Route 135, Pond Street. The applicant must either own the property in question or have a letter of authorization for the project from the owner. Moreover, the property must not have any outstanding obligations to the Town (i.e. no back taxes owed, town liens, etc.).

The project must have all required town approvals and permits. There is no permit required for basic landscape improvements but please consult the building department if any structures, paving or signs that are being modified.

Examples of exterior improvements that are eligible under this program include:

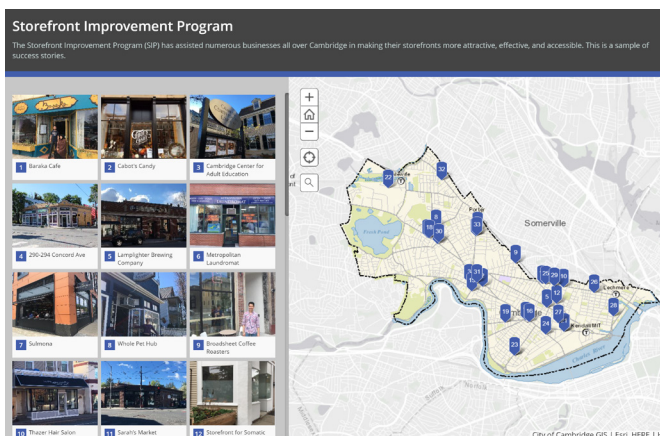
- Accessibility improvements (i.e. handicapped accessible ramps)
- Exterior signs
- Awnings
- Lighting energy conservation for windows & doors
- Painting
- Surface Parking lots
- Planters and landscaping
- Correction of Code
- Program funds may not be used for improvements to the interior of the business or to sidewalks or public walkways.

- Town Contact: Beth Reynolds, Economic Development Director, breyolds@ashlandmass.com
- Funding by: Home Rule petition for annual appropriation and Home Rule petition for revolving fund – both approved by Town Meeting.
- Structure: 50% match up to \$5,000
- Characteristics:
 - Preferred target area (high traffic streets) but is open to all businesses in Ashland.
 - Includes building improvements (accessibility, signs, awnings, painting).
 - Includes site improvements (parking lots, planters, landscaping)

Program application. Source: Town of Ashland MA




STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM - CAMBRIDGE, MA

- City Contact: Christina DiLisio, Project Manager, cdilisio@cambridgema.gov
- Funding by: Municipal capital funds
- Structure: Tiered matching grants based on improvement type
- Characteristics
 - Includes increasing accessibility to the store (part of their Storefronts-for-All program) and improving or replacing windows and doors to address COVID19 restrictions.
 - Also recommends tax credit programs to address accessibility, historic preservation, and energy efficiency



*Screenshot of interactive map of program success stories
Source: City of Cambridge MA*

Support Arts Groups to Expand Visibility and Programming in the General Business District

Category		Arts and Culture
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		RRP Process
Budget		<p>Low</p> <p>Potential sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dartmouth Cultural Council • MA TDI Creative Catalyst • Shared Streets and Spaces • National Endowment for the Arts Grants • Hometown Grant Program
Timeframe		<p>Short (1-2 years)</p> <p>Long-term effort and partnership, with opportunities to plan events and programming in the short-term.</p>
Risk		Low
Key Performance Indicators		<p>Number of new installations</p> <p>Number of new arts events</p>
Partners & Resources		<p>Town of Dartmouth</p> <p>UMass-Dartmouth</p> <p>Cultural Council</p> <p>Cultural Center</p> <p>Business owners</p> <p>Commercial landlords</p>

Diagnostic

There are strong arts and culture assets in Dartmouth, but their connection to the General Business District in terms of programming or activation has been limited. Because Dartmouth's General Business District's retail mix is largely national chains, there is an opportunity to make programming or displays more locally-specific.

A more active cultural calendar and rotation of visually-interesting installations could encourage residents and visitors to return to the General Business District.

Action Item

Build on existing programming and partnerships to expand arts programming within the General Business District. Could involve:

- Display of art initiatives in stores (vacant and not)
- Further programming with schools
- Contests, programs tied to public and private realm improvements, like the Town's existing scarecrow storefront competition

Process

The process steps include:

- Meet with initial set of partners to identify additional potential stakeholders or partnerships
- Take stock of existing events, and use those events to gain feedback from the public about what sorts of additional programming is needed
- Take stock of public realm opportunities for arts events and displays within the General Business District
- Meet with businesses and property owners in the study area to identify those interested in hosting art initiatives such as displaying art indoors or in store windows, hosting a workshop event, hosting a performance inside or outside retail locations, participating in contests, such as storefront display contests, wherein business owners partner with local artists to create a visually interesting window or storefront display.
- Consider larger-format events or programs to which the Mall is particularly well-suited.

Best Practice: Rice + Larpenteur Alliance Activation

The Rice and Larpenteur Alliance was created to support the community and commercial interests of the low-moderate income, multicultural community that converges at the intersection of three municipalities. The central commercial district was both bustling and suffering from neglect and bad press in large part due to one business. The goals of these events in general were to:

- Generate new, lasting positive activity and visitation in the district
- Strengthen the newly launched brand for the area and reputation broadly
- Test and build support for larger capital improvements

Key opportunities included

- Building off the momentum and buy-in from the first event the year prior

Challenges included

- The need to take a concentrated event format and spread it out throughout the district
- Generate positive activity while also minimizing unsafe congregation

- Generating participation by and benefits for small businesses, especially BIPOC owned ones
- Ensuring those from communities who spoke one of 5 non English languages felt invited and included
- Overcoming negative press from high profile incident that occurred at the longstanding bad behaving business



Source: DHCD RRP Compendium

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Rice + Larpenteur: Activation and Retention in a Suburban, Multicultural Community



Location: Roseville, Maplewood, at St. Paul, MN



*Photo from the
activation event
Source: DHCD*

ACTION ITEMS

The COVID-safe approach to the events was to create a main event hub that then supported attendees to visit businesses and other activities throughout the district.

Action 1. Expand the event spaces and programming as a benefit, not a bug. While we couldn't have everyone come to a single site, we used it as an opportunity to get attendees to visit area businesses and organizations directly - which in many ways created even more benefit for them. This was done by creating an event hub that had live music and info tents that distributed district passports (with rewards to visiting all the sites) and branded bags to support shopping. The district was visibly activated by attendees who were walking between sites holding their branded bags. The event blended fun, food, community

engagement, and services for those of all ages.

Action 2. Lead with equity. Business are often seen as a source for event sponsorship revenue. As a district dominated by new and BIPOC owned businesses we wanted to ensure that the event series was as beneficial to these entities as possible. As such, small businesses were meaningfully compensated provide event features such as free food samples, live performances, and interactive demonstrations. For promotion, we both partnered with organizations and used communication channels in the native languages of those who lived in the surrounding neighborhoods to promote the event.

Action 3. Use one-time events to drive long term improvements. Many changes to the physical environment are often possible during larger events that are more difficult to



Source: DHCD RRP Compendium

put into place during non-event days. Each of the events featured physical pilots that tested out concepts that stakeholders sought to implement in larger ways going forward these included: public art, a new plaza, new patio seating areas for restaurants, expanded landscaping, seating areas, and wayfinding.

Action #4 – Leverage positive events to create new narratives. Despite much good that occurs in the district, most mentions of the area were dominated by criminal activity that occurred at one business. The event series created reasons for the media to cover the district and served the change the narrative for the broader public

PROCESS





- Establish shared goals for client, communities, small businesses, and other stakeholders
- Recruit event committee, roles, and meeting schedule
- Create event name, concept, and partner recruitment one-pager
- Conduct outreach to businesses and community organizations to host event sites and/or provide event activations
- Create promotional materials
- Secure 3rd party vendors and performers and stakeholder contributions

- Finalize site map, furnishings, supplies, give-aways, and volunteer shirts or hats
- Create passport and onsite signage
- Finalize day-of plan and program with staff and volunteer roles
- Notify press
- Execute event and track KPIs
- Create summery report with successes, lessons learned, and opportunities for increased impact in years to come

EVENT FEATURES

- Concerts and tents for participating nonprofit organizations
- Two storefront patio expansions
- Permanent planter improvements
- Art installation at local park pavilion
- Free food samples given out by compensated local businesses
- Event passport
- Event poster, lawn signs, postcards
- Gift and Go Event
- Shop Local Guide
- Gift bags with local business gift cards, swag, cookies, branded PPE (mask, sanitizer)

Enhance Lighting Across General Business District

Category		Public Realm
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		RRP Process
Budget		Medium Potential sources include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared Streets and Spaces Program
Timeframe		Short
Risk		Low Would require participation of property owners with high visibility street fronts.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Installation of lighting fixtures within the study area• Decrease in pedestrian and bike injuries• Increase in count of pedestrians and bike riders
Partners & Resources		Town of Dartmouth



Light fixtures for an outdoor mall in Minneapolis
Source: Architectural Record, via John Muggenborg

Diagnostic

The study area offers a concentration of retail and commercial activity but lacks lighting to ensure that pedestrians and those on bikes can get to and around the study area safely. Prioritizing safety for modes other than car travel could serve to increase foot traffic to and between the study area's commercial amenities.

The design and installation of additional lighting fixtures offers an opportunity to increase visual interest of the study area. In addition to typical streetlight fixture styles, uplighting and other lighting techniques or fixture styles could help strengthen the sense of place and increase visitor interest in the area.

COVID-19 has severely impacted Dartmouth and its businesses. Re-building excitement and interest in the General Business District while improving safety could encourage visitors to return.

Action Item

Identify locations in Dartmouth's commercial corridor that require additional lighting fixtures to provide increased safety for those on foot and bike. Develop lighting solutions that serve as branding elements in addition to safety infrastructure.



*(top) String lights, tree uplighting, post lighting at Assembly Row in Somerville, MA
(bottom) String lights, post lighting, and storefront lighting in Bethesda, MD*



Process

- Determine priority locations for lighting installation, and what kind (safety-oriented, branding-oriented, or both) where. There are a few options for lighting installations, including seasonal, holiday, artistic, and lights for streets and parking lots. Depending on the project's scope, whether it's a specific site or a corridor, would impact the type of lighting selected. For site-specific installations, smaller pedestrian scale lighting, such as string lights or small artist installation, is recommended.
- Solicit lighting installation design team – artists, engineers, lighting experts, etc. – and agree to contract
- Outline management process
- Engage community, local artists for design ideas for locations
- Engage community partners to manage events around new lighting installation debuts and seasonal lighting programming
- Develop initial concept designs for lighting installations
- Share concepts with public for feedback
- Revise design concepts based on feedback
- Share revised concepts for additional feedback
- Finalize design and complete construction documents
- Solicit bids for installation (if needed)
- Install permanent lighting elements
- Publicize installation via social and print media to raise awareness and create buzz
- Work with community partners to time and plan follow-up and seasonal lighting events or installations. Consider or initiate holiday lighting program to encourage private businesses to light trees on their properties to cohesively tie public and private realm lighting elements together.







Uplit trees at the Mall of Millenia, Florida
Source: Visit Florida



(top) Chestnut Hill, MA and (bottom) King of Prussia, PA

Source: Stantec

Maintain Vacancy Database and Tracking Tool to Support Tenant Recruitment Strategy

Category		Tenant Mix
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		RRP Planning Process
Budget		<p>Small (<\$50,000), with potential for expansion</p> <p>Maintain vacancy database</p> <p>Develop recruitment strategy</p> <p>Funds to incentivize moves (fit-out, lease provisions)</p> <p>Potential sources:</p> <p>Community Compact IT Grant</p> <p>Under Utilized Properties Grant</p>
Timeframe		Short-term.
Risk		<p>Low Risk.</p> <p>Market risk/perception</p>
Key Performance Indicators		<p>Frequency of vacancy data collection/updates</p> <p>Number of businesses new to the commercial corridor</p> <p>Diversity of new business owners</p>
Partners & Resources		<p>Town of Dartmouth</p> <p>Building owners</p> <p>New business association</p> <p>UMass Dartmouth Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship</p> <p>South Coast Entrepreneurs Collaborative</p>

Diagnostic

The diagnostic process revealed a higher level of vacancy than anticipated in Dartmouth's General Business District; there were 52 vacancies in total. This was a key finding of the diagnostic process, and highlighted a need and opportunity to increase entrepreneurial and new business growth within the commercial corridor.

Using the diagnostic vacancy data, a GIS-based vacancy tracking tool has been developed. There are many exciting opportunities to leverage this tool in the short-term, but there remains a need to increase capacity to ensure maintenance of and updates to the tool in the long-term.

The current retail environment in the Dartmouth commercial corridor largely consists of national chains, and there is an opportunity to diversify the tenant mix.

Action Item

Maintain the vacancy database and tracking tool and build a tenant recruitment program to match potential entrepreneurs and new businesses with vacant storefronts, as a means of diversifying the commercial corridor's tenant mix and activating empty properties.

Process

- Develop vacancy tracking report
- Seek additional funding for maintain ongoing vacancy tracking system
- Develop marketing campaign to attract new developers and businesses
- Link aspiring entrepreneurs to state training programs and scholarships for entrepreneurial workshops
- Determine whether financial assistance is needed to enhance recruitment efforts, and if so, identify a budget, funding sources, and requirements for funding.
- Monitor progress and adjust as needed.

Dartmouth's New Vacancy Tracking Tool

The Town of Dartmouth has successfully used the results from the diagnostic phase to develop a prototype vacancy tracking tool. The tracking tool includes:




- Address
- Property type (Retail, Office)
- Description
- Status
- Total Units
- Estimated Vacancies
- GIS-friendly location data

The Town of Dartmouth Vacant Commerical Property Report for the General Business District (Route 6 & Faunce Corner) Prepared as of June 2021

Property Address	Property Type	Description	Status	Total Units	Estimated Vacancies	Latitude	Long	Property Owner(s)	Additional Information
843 State Rd	Residential	Sherwin-Williams Plaza (former Cherry's Travel)	Vacancy - Heavy Cherry's	3	1	41.8944222050	-71.0196874030	Mores Family Limited Partnership	n/a
74 Faunce Corner Mall Rd	Office	Faunce Corner Office Park	Vacancies	8	4	41.8475700000	-70.9890519000	Claret Gardens (pt)	https://www.commercialvacancy.com/properties/74-faunce-corner-mall-rd/
88 Faunce Corner Mall Rd	Office	Faunce Corner Office Park	Vacancies	8	3	41.8438930000	-70.9898603000	Varies, depending on the unit	https://www.commercialvacancy.com/properties/88-faunce-corner-mall-rd/
84 Faunce Corner Mall Rd	Office	Faunce Corner Office Park	Vacancies	8	7	41.8432016440	-70.9898461970	Varies, depending on the unit	https://www.commercialvacancy.com/properties/84-faunce-corner-mall-rd/
670 State Rd	Office	Deborah Bassoni & Dartmouth Week	Partial Vacancy	1	1	41.8401205990	-71.0217104000	CRCG COMMERCIAL HOLDING LLC	https://www.commercialvacancy.com/properties/670-state-rd-dartmouth-week/
832 State Rd	Retail	Fashion Corner Uniforms (Reed Rd intersection)	Vacant - being sold by Coldwell Banker	1	1	41.8392486470	-71.0371789400	FRANCES H BELANGER LIFE ESTATE	https://www.commercialvacancy.com/properties/832-state-rd/
424 State Rd at al	Retail	Dartmouth Towne Center	Vacancies - for lease by Eastern Retail Properties	24	7	41.8432433990	-70.9905648730	Dartmouth Marketplace	Eastern Retail Properties: 617-435-1180 https://www.commercialvacancy.com/properties/424-state-rd-dartmouth-towne-center/
200 State Rd	Retail	Second Hand Lot	Vacant - For sale or lease by Giroux & Company	0	1	41.8397383970	-70.9778551650	EMPIRE MANAGEMENT CORPORATION	Giroux and Company: 508-477-8600
3 Faunce Corner Mall Rd	Retail	Dartmouth's Own	Vacant	1	1	41.8398838000	-70.9890415000	WALSH LUCILLE F TRUSTEE	n/a
19 Faunce Corner Rd	Retail	Plaza between S&S and Lowe's	Vacant	7	3	41.8435015170	-70.9878185130	A REALTY ASSOCIATES LLC	https://www.boswell.com/realty/19-faunce-corner-rd-dartmouth-ma-01924/
65 Faunce Corner Rd	Retail	Christmas Tree Shops Plaza	Vacancies	5	1	41.8457878810	-70.98462405180	FAUNCE CORNER MALL LLC	https://www.boswell.com/realty/65-faunce-corner-mall-rd-dartmouth-ma-01924/
127 Faunce Corner (Mall) Rd	Retail	Food from the Seoul Plaza et al (J.A. Cycle & Sprint)	Vacancies - total number unknown	7	2	41.8500442230	-70.98687771650	PANAGAKOS MICHAEL	http://panagadartmouth.com/properties/127-faunce-corner-mall-rd/
145 Faunce Corner Rd North	Retail	Faunce Corner Crossing (i.e. Alpha Dental)	Vacancies - total number unknown	10	2	41.85218891640	-70.98540527170	FAUNCE CORNER MALL ROAD LLC	https://www.commercialvacancy.com/properties/145-faunce-corner-rd-north-dartmouth-ma-01924/
154 Faunce Corner (Mall) Rd	Retail	Cardozo's Plaza	Vacancy (Stork Connection is permanently closed)	6	1	41.85229823090	-70.98505705450	KEYSTONE LLC	https://bostonrealty.com/Listing/24710070104-faunce-corner-mall-road-dartmouth-ma-01924/
36 Faunce Corner Mall Rd	Retail	Former Pier 1 Imports	Vacant	1	1	41.8428270020	-70.98984852270	PR NORTH DARTMOUTH LLC	https://www.prnorthrealty.com/properties/36-faunce-corner-mall-rd-dartmouth-ma-01924/
106 N Dartmouth Mall	Retail	Former Sears Auto Center	Vacant	1	1	41.84038161030	-70.98786584720	PR NORTH DARTMOUTH LLC	https://www.prnorthrealty.com/properties/106-n-dartmouth-mall-dartmouth-ma-01924/
494 State Rd	Retail	AC Moore	Vacant	2	1	41.84189250810	-71.00365247070	TOWNE CENTER WEST ASSOCIATES ETAL	https://www.boswell.com/realty/494-state-rd-dartmouth-ma-01924/
610 State Rd	Retail	Xtremely Board (Reconstruction in progress)	Vacant	1	1	41.84038763850	-71.01634020840	HOTTEL HOYT C III	n/a
654 State Rd	Retail	SalonCentre, DBS Design Center etc	Vacant - (at least 1, Next Car)	5	1	41.84035598230	-71.01649000250	TM1 PROPERTIES DARTMOUTH LLC	https://www.boswell.com/realty/654-state-rd-dartmouth-ma-01924/
634 State Rd	Retail	Fiesta, 9th Monarch et al	Vacancies (incl. Dukes... can call 508-965-1870)	10	1	41.84052179050	-71.01821848760	TM1 PROPERTIES DARTMOUTH LLC	https://www.boswell.com/realty/634-state-rd-dartmouth-ma-01924/
890 State Rd	Retail	between Caddy Shack & Dicky's Clam Shack	Vacant	1	1	41.83882978550	-71.04312124810	REIS VICTOR	Call 508-726-9080
519 State Rd	Retail	Lebanese Pita Pocket, Bermuda Bronze et al	Vacancies	5	1	41.84015511080	-71.00788052090	KOPACZEWSKI JOHN P.	n/a
943 State Rd	Retail	Dartmouth Dental Building	Vacancy	2	1	41.83941510350	-70.99113484960	PANAGAKOS MICHAEL W	http://panagadartmouth.com/properties/943-state-rd/
383 State Rd	Retail	On the corner of Speaker St	Vacant	1	1	41.83987622090	-70.9948375110	PANAGAKOS MICHAEL W	http://panagadartmouth.com/properties/383-state-rd/
331 State Rd	Retail	Soanes Martial Arts, Bylander, Pearson Vu Plaza etc	Vacancies (at least 1)	10	1	41.83848970100	-70.98874208960	331 STATE ROAD ASSOCIATES LLC	https://www.boswell.com/realty/331-state-road-dartmouth-ma-01924/
329 State Rd	Retail	Former Papa Gino's	Yes; Diversified Realty 617-233-1510 (for lease)	1	1	41.8393230000	-70.98965772510	GOLDBERG DOROTHY W TRUSTEE	http://www.boswell.com/properties/329-state-rd/
323 State Rd	Retail	Leslie's Pool and Miracle-Ear Plaza	Vacancy	3	1	41.83921041800	-70.98952130280	PEABODY-NORTH DARTMOUTH LLC	https://www.boswell.com/realty/323-state-rd-dartmouth-ma-01924/
319 State Rd	Retail	Former Card's Furniture & Mattresses	Vacant	1	1	41.83927936320	-70.98875153670	M/S N DARTMOUTH L C	https://www.boswell.com/realty/319-state-rd-dartmouth-ma-01924/
703 State Rd	Retail	New Panagakos Development across from Mike Auto 2	Vacant	2	2	41.83929377550	-71.02470539850	PANAGAKOS MICHAEL	http://panagadartmouth.com/properties/703-state-rd/

Screenshot of the tool as of June 2021.

Collaborate with UMass-Dartmouth Art and Entrepreneurship Programs on Temporary Activation of Storefronts and Vacant Properties

Category	Tenant Mix	
Location	RRP Study Area	
Origin	RRP Process	
Budget		Low - Medium. Potential sources: Urban Agenda Grant Program Under Utilized Properties Grant Nellie Leaman Taft Foundation Grants Small Business Matching Grants National Endowment for the Arts Grants TDI Creative Catalyst
Timeframe		Short
Risk		Low
Key Performance Indicators	Number of UMass-Dartmouth affiliates involved Number of new events Number of storefronts activated Number of new leases of vacant properties	
Partners & Resources	UMass-Dartmouth Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship UMass-Dartmouth College of Visual and Performing Arts Business owners, commercial property owners	

Diagnostic

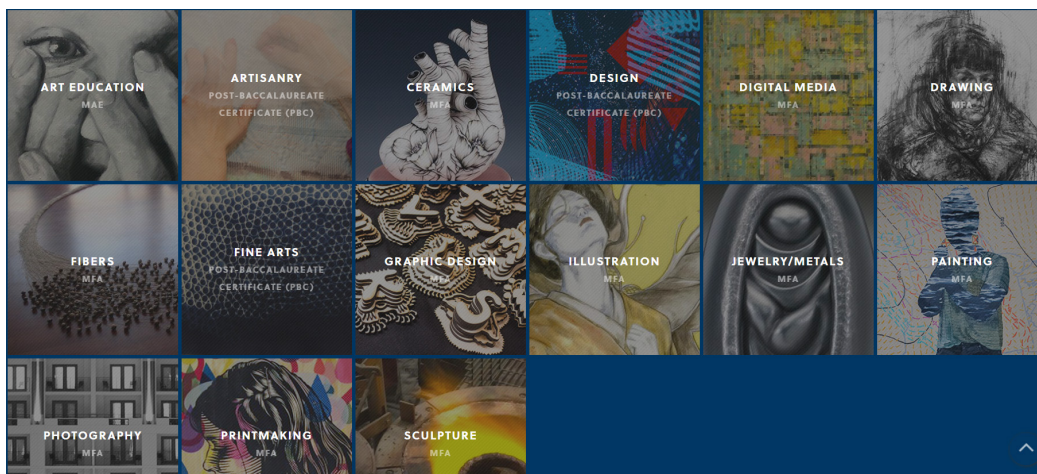
The diagnostic process revealed a higher level of vacancy than anticipated in Dartmouth's General Business District; there were 52 vacancies in total, many a result of COVID-19 closures. This was a key finding of the diagnostic process, and highlighted a need and opportunity to increase entrepreneurial and new business growth within the commercial corridor.

The current retail environment in the Dartmouth commercial corridor largely consists of national chains, and there is an opportunity to diversify the tenant mix. There is a parallel interest in retaining students that come to Dartmouth for school but so often leave after graduation. Stronger partnerships between the University and the Town, to address the need for both temporary and long-term vacant storefront activation, are a means of addressing multiple needs and issues at once.

Action Item

Pursue formal collaboration with existing UMass-Dartmouth initiatives to temporarily activate vacant storefronts and potentially incubate new tenants. Forms of temporary activation could include arts and cultural activation (displays, performances) by students and members of UMass Dartmouth's College of Visual and Performing Arts, as well as temporary educational and interactive installations spotlighting exciting research and initiatives through the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Longer-term activation could involve partnerships with entrepreneurs at UMass-Dartmouth looking for commercial space as they spin out of CIE or other programs at UMass-Dartmouth.



Some of the many programs in UMass Dartmouth's College of Visual and Performing Arts, students and graduates of which could be interested in temporary retail, performance, gallery, or work space. Source: UMass-Dartmouth CVPA

Process

- Meet with representatives of UMass-Dartmouth's Arts and Entrepreneurship programs to identify points of alignment and get a sense of what potential partners have interest in and capacity for.
- Meet with commercial landlords to get a sense of who has interest, and in what, to identify program branding barriers, support needs, time and resource limitations. Identify potential priority sites to target.
- Based on those conversations, determine potential uses to recruit and support. On-display workspace? Performance space? Gallery space? Educational and interactive displays related to research? Retail for artisans and entrepreneurs to sell products?
- Clarify roles of UMass Dartmouth, Town of Dartmouth, and other organizations - accounting for program development, marketing, and long-term maintenance. Pending interest and availability, relevant classes could develop early strategy recommendations for the program.
- Establish rules for selection of tenants.
- Work with partners to drum up interest for the program.
- Throughout, coordinate with the Vacancy Toolbox and Entrepreneur Matching program to ensure efforts are not overlapping or conflicting, only complementary.



*The CVPA and CIE facilities
Source: UMass-Dartmouth*

Best Practice: Storefront Activation in Australia

Renew Newcastle was an effort started by an urbanist and arts and events organizer to fill vacant storefronts with new creative industries in a post-industrial city.

PROCESS

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



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

Source: <http://www.edwinrichards.com/>

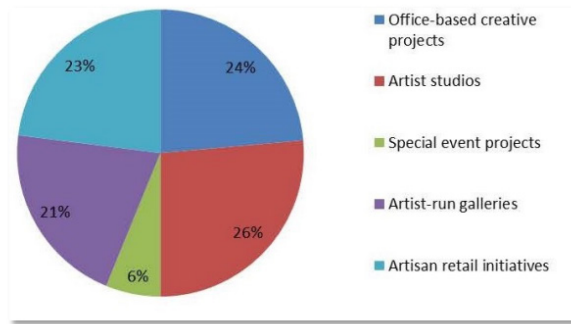
Renew Newcastle set up 250 temporary projects in vacant properties and 1/3 of the projects become sustainable businesses. Of those, 81 of those enterprises became a viable business and permanently occupied their storefronts.

BEST
PRACTICE

Connect Artists, Entrepreneurs, and Makers/Crafters with Landlords to Fill Vacant Storefronts

Location: Newcastle, Australia





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

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

STEPS

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

- With temporary leases secure, clean up/renovate store fronts.
- Help local small business/artisans move into the spaces.
- When there are several storefronts occupied in one location, host events to garner attention

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

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

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

Best Practice: Worcester's transformation of empty storefronts

Interactive Storefronts was a direct response to the shifting COVID-19 landscape, where social distancing was a key factor to maintain public health, yet engaging the community in public processes remained an important goal.

The Interactive Storefronts operated simultaneously with an online survey and the development of a Downtown Placemaking Plan. Interactive Storefronts enabled civic art for public engagement in a creative and safe manner according to current COVID-19 best practices for public safety. Staggered installation times and viewing art through a storefront was a COVID-friendly activity. The use of photography, social media, and QR codes were engaged. The project helped bring art to a diminished Downtown, support a local artist community, and engage residents in a planning process while maintaining public health. Interactive Storefronts enlisted local artists to engage residents in feedback for the Downtown Worcester Placemaking Plan and enliven downtown storefronts in anticipation

**BEST
PRACTICE**



Worcester storefront illustration

Source: DHCD RRP Compendium

of the Creative Commons at 554 Main Street. Residents and Downtown visitors were able to view the public process of the placemaking and beautification survey unfold in-person. Over several months the Interactive Storefronts traced the survey progress from survey questions, to community answers, and finally to proposed public space placemaking interventions.

The goals of the project included:

- Engaging residents to enjoy public art in Downtown Worcester.
- Encouraging residents to provide input toward the Downtown Worcester Placemaking Plan in a real physical space, and to interact with the installations

Interactive Storefronts: Engaging Residents through Artistic Installations in Storefronts



Location: Worcester, MA

through photography and social media.

- Motivating residents to access the full placemaking survey via QR codes.
- Supporting the local artist community, especially emerging artists, while keeping opportunities for engagement alive during COVID-19.
- Prototype Interactive Storefront Art for future iterations.
- Creating public art while maintaining safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The storefronts featured temporary installations from August to December 2020 of the Creative Commons at 554 Main Street. Residents and Downtown visitors were able to view the public process of the placemaking and beautification survey unfold in-person. Over several months the Interactive Storefronts traced the survey progress from survey questions, to community answers, and finally to proposed public space placemaking interventions.

The goals of the project included:

- Engaging residents to enjoy public art in Downtown Worcester.
- Encouraging residents to provide input toward the Downtown Worcester Placemaking Plan in a real physical space, and to interact with the installations through photography and social media.
- Motivating residents to access the full placemaking survey via QR codes.
- Supporting the local artist community, especially emerging artists, while keeping opportunities for engagement alive during COVID-19.
- Prototype Interactive Storefront Art for future iterations.
- Creating public art while maintaining safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The storefronts featured temporary installations from August to December 2020 with a rotation of three phased installations:



Worcester storefront illustrations

Source: DHCD RRP Compendium

- Phase 1: Placemaking survey engagement to prompt people to take the online survey (with a QR code) and respond to a question on site through safe interaction.
- Phase 2: Survey results to communicate primary survey results to the public.
- Phase 3: Placemaking proposals to illustrate primary placemaking interventions coming to Downtown Worcester.

Artists creatively brought empty storefronts to life and engaged residents to participate in a placemaking survey with such novel artistic strategies as creating a "mirror" to show who Downtown Worcester is and encouraging viewers to take a photo for themselves and post on social media.

Best Practice: ChaShaMa's Sotrefront Startup Program, with NYC Department of Small Business Services

With an increased amount of vacant space in New York City during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City partnered with ChaShaMa, a not-for-profit that generally offers space to artists, to create short term opportunities for businesses to test out a brick-and-mortar location in commercial areas across the city.

This creates opportunity to liven commercial districts with new, short-term businesses, helping landlords to activate their unused space, make the street feel more alive, create increased opportunities for commerce for small, minority and women-owned businesses, and provide no-cost space to businesses otherwise unlikely to be able to afford commercial rents in high traffic commercial corridors.

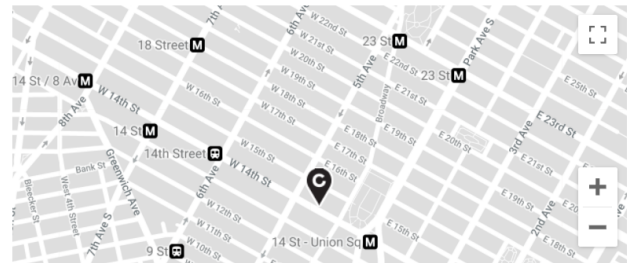
Challenges of this program currently being addressed are ensuring businesses have commercial storefront opportunities once the no-cost space has ended; supporting businesses with technical assistance such as access to capital and finding affordable, permanent space, and sustainable resourcing

A block from Union Square, this multi-use storefront contains artist studios in the rear and a white box gallery space in the front. This space previously contained an artisan furniture store with exhibition walls for artwork.

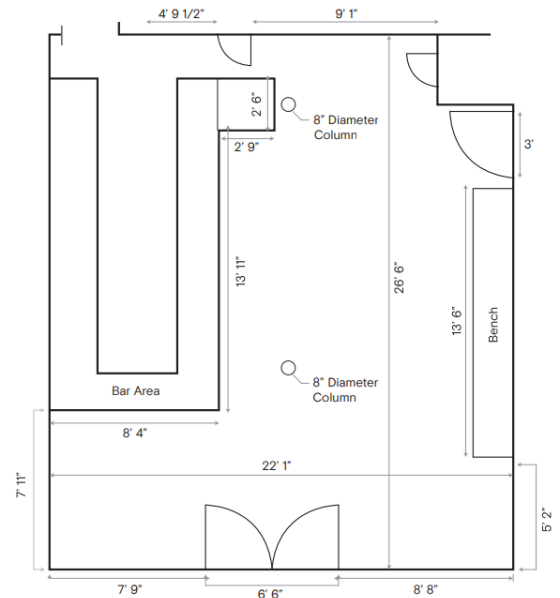
Floorplan

Use:
Presentation Space,
Workspace

Amenities:
24 Hour Access, Air
Conditioning, Heating,
Restrooms, Storefront
Window, Track Lighting,
Viewable 24/7, WiFi



ChaShaMa



220 Front Street

Floor Area
600 Sq Ft
10' ceiling

Key
○ Pillar/Beam

ChaShaMa's website provides profiles of all vacant sites, including photos, floorplans, and details about potential uses and amenities. Source: ChaShaMa

Supporting Entrepreneurs and Commercial Landlords with Pe Business Activation

**BEST
PRACTICE**



Location: New York, NY

Note: While this is not a directly applicable Best Practice profile - for one, the partner is a non-profit community organization for artists rather than an academic institution - it illustrates some of the opportunities and considerations of temporarily activating storefronts with entrepreneur tenants, many of which may apply to the proposed collaboration between the Town of Dartmouth, commercial business district landlords, and UMass-Dartmouth-affiliated artists and entrepreneurs.

of the project for the long term success of small minority and women-owned businesses. The project had a medium budget (\$50,000-\$200,000), as it required dedicated staff and project subsidies. The project launched within 90 days; space is generally tenanted for 30 – 60 days maximum.

ROLES

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 wifi) 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



One of ChaShaMa's storefronts

Source: ChaShaMa

the space and potential tenants together will help launch the matches efficiently and quickly

The lead organization should also determine business priority – is the program focused on women entrepreneurs? People of color? Create an evaluation tool to match businesses with respective spaces based on a set of priorities. Businesses should receive operating guidelines, a MOU to discuss what they can and can't do with the space, their responsibility to the program, and how long the term of the space use is.

The lead organization should provide as much support to both the landlord and tenant as possible and consider connecting with a local technical assistance provider to help the business leverage the storefront opportunity to their long-term growth.

PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

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

ChaShaMa

About Events Apply Programs **Spaces** Storefront Startup Artists Gala Donate

ChaShaMa's listing of vacancies on their website

Source: ChaShaMa

1791 Lexington Ave



Ground floor storefront in East Harlem with large windows and cellar access for storage.

Learn more

Floorplan

Use:
Presentation Space

Address:
1791 Lexington Ave
New York, New York
10029

Specific Area:
East Harlem

1795 Lexington Ave (1st Floor)



First floor (walkup) storefront and business hub.

Learn more

Floorplan

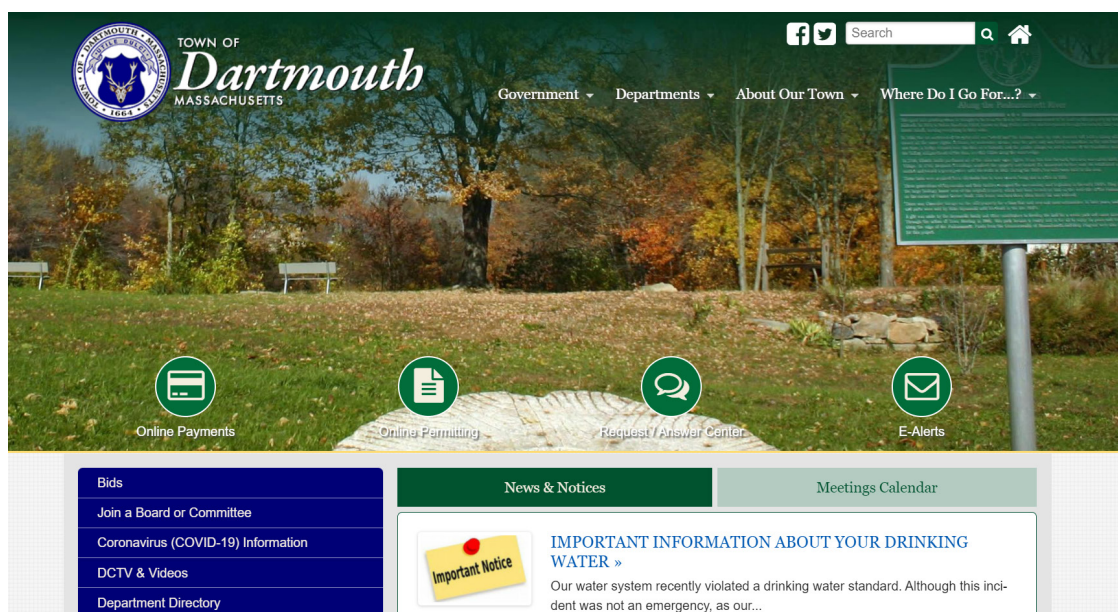
Use:
Presentation Space

Address:
1795 Lexington Avenue
New York, New York
10029

Specific Area:
East Harlem

Increase the Utility of the Town's Website and Online Presence to Residents and Businesses

Category		Administrative Capacity
Location		Town of Dartmouth
Origin		Town of Dartmouth
Budget		Low-Medium Potential source: Community Compact IT Grant
Timeframe		Short
Risk		Low
Key Performance Indicators		Development of new website Development of engagement tool Number of new permits issued
Partners & Resources		Town of Dartmouth



Diagnostic

The Town is currently pursuing funds to refresh their website, including development of an online engagement portal for broader engagement with the community. A key goal of the refresh is to make the permit application process easier and more transparent for business owners, as well as more broadly make permitting information more accessible.

Having a clear, accessible, informative website would go a long way to increase Town of Dartmouth's administrative capacity to support businesses, support organizations, and glean feedback from the public on a number of initiatives related to the Town's recovery from COVID-19, including temporary activations and redevelopments.

Action Item

Build on ongoing Town efforts to increase the utility of the Town's website and online presence in engaging the community and supporting business owners.

Process

The process steps include:

- Establish internal work committee to oversee website redesign
- Identify future users/stakeholders to gain input on current issues and future improvements
- Research best practices related to online permitting forms, guidance, and other materials.
- Identify and secure funding for website re-design
- Conduct test reviews to assess user-friendliness of redesigned website
- Launch website
- Conduct monthly review and assessment for first six months of website rollout

City of Burlington Central Permit and Zoning Online Resource

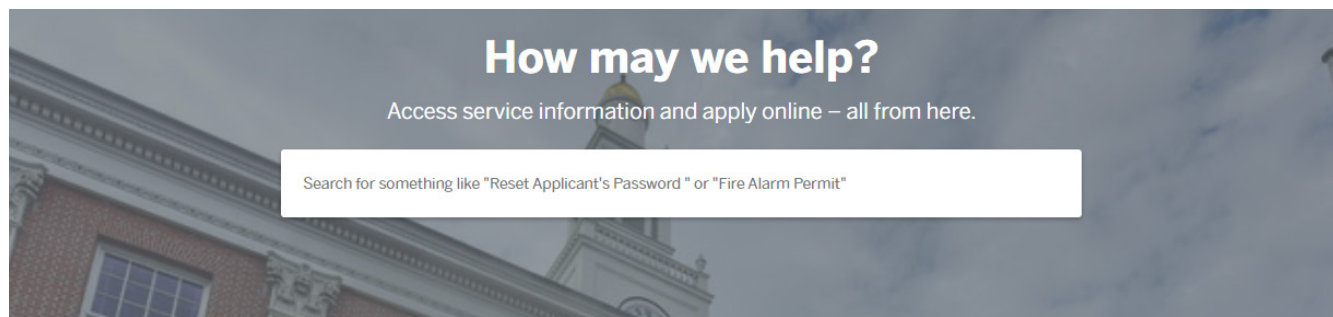
The City of Burlington, VT Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) launched an online business portal designed to support new businesses get started in the City.

Via an online portal, entrepreneurs can visit a "Startup in a Day" website (<https://business.burlingtonvt.gov>). After answering questions regarding their business type, the portal provides a customized list of the permit applications the entrepreneur will need to start their business. In addition, the website provides direct connections to relevant staff for questions. A "Resource Centre" section directs them to information on state- and federal -level

requirements, business planning and finance resources.

This user-friendly approach to municipal permitting saves businesses time and allows them to dedicate their energy to other areas of growth.

The website was launched after extensive testing with business owners, who provided invaluable input during the development of the project. The project was funded by the Small Business Administration's "Startup in a Day" prize competition. Burlington was awarded one of 25 prizes to cities across the country to help streamline and consolidate all of the processes required to start a business.



Start a Project

Choose below to start a project



Central Permitting Online Resource



Location: City of Burlington, VT

Transparent, Accessible Permitting Processes

The COVID-19 pandemic required municipalities to rapidly adapt their regulatory processes through an evolving public health crisis to help businesses survive. Though challenging, a crisis such as COVID presented communities and businesses with new opportunities for improved and streamlined operations.

When COVID-19 impacts reached Massachusetts in the spring of 2020, public health precautions quickly initiated a transition to less in-person contact for retail transactions. To adapt and remain in business, retailers sought approval for new actions such as: increased delivery service; short-term parking for take-out and curbside pickup; alcohol to go; and a transition from indoor to outdoor dining, fitness, shopping and recreational activities.

These changes required municipalities to consider new regulatory procedures, adaptation of prior regulations, and taking advantage of the state's relaxation of certain requirements. Throughout Massachusetts, municipalities and businesses met the COVID challenge by taking chances, being flexible, pivoting business models, and thinking creatively and "outside the box." Critical to the success was the transition to online permitting processes, permits and approvals for new approaches to deliver products/food to customers, leniency for

outdoor eating and drinking, and other unique and creative solutions.

Municipalities worked to quickly adapt or modify rules and regulations to support the business community, knowing that time was of the essence. The following actions were proven to be successful. These actions were either initiated by municipalities or requested by business owners and then approved by municipalities.

- Waive time limits for permits to minimize the need to re-apply to continue an approved action
- Encourage Boards and Commissions to hold joint meetings to expedite and streamline certain permitting processes
- Improve municipal websites and outreach to businesses to explain current as well as changes to the regulatory framework
- Encourage Planning Boards to either grant the following or gave planning staff the ability to provide administrative approvals to relax certain zoning requirements such as :
 - Temporary or permanent reduction in parking requirements to provide additional outdoor dining and gathering in areas currently used for parking.
 - Relaxed signage requirements to allow temporary signs to promote outdoor sales and dining
- Establish procedures for police, fire and public works to easily review/approve

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Improve Zoning, Licensing, and Permitting Interactions

Location: Various Locations

Implementation / Next Steps

Project Action Plan

The Local Rapid Recovery Program gives communities a defined and implementable compilation of projects that have been vetted by the community, as well as a data-driven plan that can alleviate the impacts from COVID-19 pandemic. This report provides detailed information on the budget ranges, timeframe, funding sources, action items, and key processes required to properly execute and implement the project ideas. The project ideas developed through this program serve as opportunities for communities to rapidly implement capital improvements and address administrative and economic development challenges. Municipal departments and planning entities can use the project ideas as a resource for internal or external funding opportunities

Obtaining Funding

Considering the vast number of project ideas and differing budget ranges (less than \$50K or greater than \$400K), it can be overwhelming and overly timeconsuming for communities to seek assistance and find funding opportunities.

The Department of Housing and Community Development provides extensive resources that contain information on existing local, state, and federal grant programs, organized by the diagnostic categories including physical environment, business environment, administrative capacity, and customer base.

The table on the following pages organize the 10 projects for the Dartmouth LRRP plan by implementation timeframe (short, medium, or long-term), as well as budget range (less than \$50K or greater than \$400K). Organizing projects by potential budget and timeframe can act as a resource for communities to assess projects that could be implemented quickly and cheaply, and which projects should be addressed at a later date due to funding, political, or administrative setbacks.

Project List

Category	Project	Description	Timeframe	Budget	Priority Project
Public Realm	Create a Wayfinding System around and to the Dartmouth General Business District, with an Emphasis on Welcoming Gateways	Design and install a wayfinding system for Dartmouth, prioritizing interesting gateway signage at major pedestrian and vehicular access points. Gateway installations will visually alert visitors to the proximity of these places and encourage people to explore.	Short	Medium	
Public Realm	Undergo a Branding Process and Identify Components for Short- and Medium-Term Installation	Develop a branding identity for Dartmouth that draws on local cultural themes, physical siting, and history. Install elements throughout and beyond the study area. Include elements that are cohesive across Dartmouth but distinguish between villages, the study area, and other areas of interest.	Short	Low-Medium	
Admin. Capacity	Identify Most Appropriate Business District Management Model	Identify best form of, and build support for, a business association.	Short	Medium	✓
Public Realm	Invest in Public Realm Improvements to Enhance Bike and Pedestrian Safety and Amenities	Prioritize pedestrian realm improvements and investments in bike infrastructure such as improved crosswalks, sidewalks, bike lanes, pedestrian signage, ADA-compliant curb ramps, crossing islands and curb extensions to make walking and biking safer within Dartmouth's commercial corridor and to better connect visitors and residents within and to the commercial corridor.	Short	Medium	✓
Public Realm	Develop Outdoor Dining Strategy and Guidance	Take lessons learned from the pandemic experience to develop a permanent outdoor dining program that is affordable for restaurants to implement	Short	Low	
Private Realm	Develop Private Realm Improvement Program	Determine appropriate form of and develop incentive program to support investment in the private realm, particularly facades, in and around Dartmouth's General Business District.	Medium	Low	
Arts and Culture	Support Arts Groups to Expand Visibility and Programming in the General Business District	Build on existing programming and partnerships to expand arts programming within the General Business District. Could involve display of art initiatives in stores (vacant and not), further programming with schools.	Short	Low	
Public Realm	Enhance Lighting Across General Business District	Identify locations in Dartmouth's commercial corridor that require additional lighting fixtures to provide increased safety for those on foot and bike. Develop lighting solutions that serve as branding elements in addition to safety infrastructure.	Short	Medium	✓
Tenant Mix	Maintain Vacancy Database and Tracking Tool to Support Tenant Recruitment Strategy	Maintain the vacancy database and tracking tool and build a tenant recruitment program to match potential entrepreneurs and new businesses with vacant storefronts, as a means of diversifying the commercial corridor's tenant mix and activating empty properties.	Short	Small	✓
Tenant Mix	Collaborate with UMass-Dartmouth Programs on Temporary Activation	Pursue formal collaboration with existing UMass-Dartmouth initiatives to temporarily activate vacant storefronts and potentially incubate new tenants.	Short	Low-Medium	
Admin. Capacity	Increase Utility of Town Website and Online Presence to Residents and Businesses	Build on ongoing Town efforts to increase the utility of the Town's website and online presence in engaging the community and supporting business owners.	Short	Low-Medium	✓

Appendix A: Business Survey Results

Appendix B: Detailed Physical Environment Diagnostic Scores