Technologies for Retail

dhcd
Massachusetts
RAPID RECOVERY PLANS

This toolkit 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

Toolkit prepared by:

mondofora

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The Impact of COVID & Changing Trends in Retail

It is not an exaggeration to say that the pandemic hurt the US retail industry. A record 12,200 stores closed in 2020 (CoStar Group), with another 10,000 estimated to close in 2021 (Coresight Research). UBS estimates that over the next five years, as many as 81,000 US stores could close.

A significant contributor to this phenomenon is that, while total retail spending has increased, with estimated growth of 7.9% for 2021, consumers are increasingly shopping online, with projected sales of $933 Billion this year, an increase of 17.9% over 2020 (eMarketer). "An enduring legacy of the pandemic is that online penetration rose sharply," observed UBS analyst, Michael Lasser. "We expect that it will continue to increase."
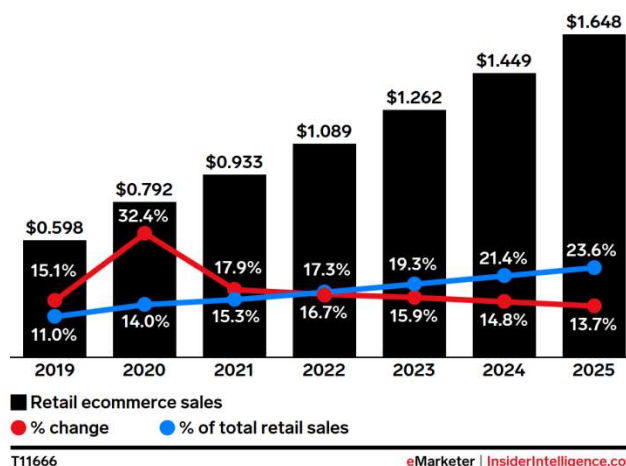
Retail Ecommerce Sales in the US, 2019-2025
trillions, % change, and % of total retail sales

T11666   eMarketer | InsiderIntelligence.com

Source: eMarketer, Sep 1, 2020

In fairness, the pandemic did not create the trend towards online shopping, but it did dramatically accelerate the process – with a spike of 32.4% in ecommerce sale in 2020 largely from the impact of COVID. As shown in this chart, while total holiday retail sales increased in 2020, in-store sales actually decreased overall. Of greatest importance to this audience, this growth in online sales came at the expense of local, non-ecommerce sales. And, if left un-addressed, we could expect to see the growth of online sales to continue to erode in-store sales.

Going forward, growth is expected to return to a steadier, but still significant 17% - 25% growth rate. This continued trend will be driven by changing consumer behavior and expectations. Shoppers have identified convenience and ease becoming their primary factors steering the shopping venue choices, areas where online shopping excel.

The Good News: the changing technology landscape is making once prohibitively expensive capabilities accessible to even modest businesses, enabling new capabilities and business models. And the vast majority of consumers, 83.9% according to a survey by Red Egg Marketing, have expressed that they are willing to spend more to purchase from a local business. An increase of $10/week per Massachusetts household buying locally online will add ~$1.4 Billion to total Massachusetts Retail revenues.

Definition of Terms

As a "How-to-Guide" intended to support implementation of RRP programs, it is important that we not get tripped up by terminology. Before we dive into solutions and implementation, we'd like to define a few concepts and terms.

Ecommerce: broadly, commercial transactions conducted electronically on the internet. For our purposes, we will use the term to refer specifically to retail transactions conducted electronically on the internet.

Brick & Mortar: relating to or being a traditional business serving customers in a building as contrasted to an online business. For our purposes, we will use the term to refer specifically to retail businesses operating exclusively from a physical store.

Bricks & Clicks: a business model in which a company uses both stores and the internet to sell products. Sometimes referred to as "Clicks & Mortar".

Omni-channel: a business model in which a retailer uses multiple sales channels, with both online and physical capabilities, to increase the market presence. This could be as simple as a single physical store and a single online store, or as complex as a multi-location retailer that also sells via multiple online platforms.

Website: a collection of web pages and related content that is identified by a common domain name and published on and accessible via the internet.

Cart: or more fully, an electronic shopping cart, is a software resource, incorporated into a website, which facilitates online transactions.

Platform: broadly, a website run by a business for the purpose of allowing other businesses to operate. For our purposes, we will use "platform" to refer to an ecommerce platform, which enables buying and selling over the internet. Sometimes referred to as a **"Software as a Service" (SaaS)** or **"Platform as a Service" (PaaS)** business model.

Marketplace: traditionally used to mean a location where multiple retailers sell in a single location. The term is now used, sometimes as "ecommerce marketplace", to refer to a platform that allows consumers to shop and buy from multiple sellers via a single website.

Directory: an index of companies and company information, typically listed alphabetically and grouped by industry, sometimes referred to as "ontological search". The most famous form of printed business directory is probably the Yellow Pages.

BOPIS: Buy Online and Pickup In Store. A retail transaction in which the purchase is made online and the product(s) are fulfilled at a local Brick & Mortar retail location. Also referred to as "Click & Collect" or "Click & Pick"

BOPAC: Buy Online and Pickup At Curb. A retail transaction in which the purchase is made online and the product(s) are fulfilled at a local Brick & Mortar retail location with a store representative bringing your purchase to your car, as opposed to entering the store.

Advantages of Marketplaces

Marketplaces provide many benefits to both sellers and buyers. For shoppers, the bringing together of many sellers creates a single, central shopping destination with a large product selection and variety, pricing, and expertise. For sellers, this provides a large audience of buyers actively seeking to purchase.

They also provide access to expensive and complex technology that would otherwise be beyond the abilities of individual retailers to afford and manage. Marketplaces substantial investments in design, development, management and maintenance are spread across many sellers, who each pay only a small fraction of the cost, but collectively make the technology and infrastructure costs manageable. Consequently, the manpower and training required to manage the sellers marketplace activities is also reduced, typically requiring only admin/management of marketplace generated sales reports, product fulfillment, and inventory records – activities already performed in the management of brick & mortar operations.

> "You can't wait for customers to come to you. You have to figure out where they are, go there and bring them back to your store"
>
> ~ Paul Graham, Y Combinator

The addition of technology-enabled operations, also creates opportunities for new business models and ways of organizing store operations. The world, and customer expectations, are changing quickly. Shoppers are increasingly looking online first before going to stores. This initial online activity is for the purpose of product research, pricing information, and product availability. This is the "new normal". And as technology and customer expectations become increasingly demanding, late adopters are likely to find themselves further behind and with a shrinking audience. Playing "catch-up" is getting harder and more expensive.

But perhaps most important for traditional retail operations, an online presence improves the shoppers total experience and increases the likelihood of making the sale and generating additional product purchases from the store. An online presence actually augments, rather than replaces, store operations, and is best utilized as the new "front door to the store". Customers that buy online and pickup in store (BOPIS) buy additional products 85% of the time at pickup (Salesforce Shopping Index).

Advantages of Local Retail

This may make it sound like ecommerce marketplaces are taking over the retail industry. And the headlines, if to be believed, would imply that local retail is an industry with no future. Nothing could be further from the truth. The reality is that retail is an industry that has been in a constant state of innovation, from the days of the seafaring merchants looking for exotic products to bring to market, to the many innovations of the 20th Century: department stores, shopping malls, catalog and mail order shopping, cash registers, Point-of-Sale software, international supply chains, robotic warehouses, just-in-time inventory management, gps logistics, etc.

The reality is that modern retailers owe a tremendous debt to Jeff Bezos, Jack Ma, Pierre Omidyar, and other ecommerce innovators for creating powerful new business models that leverage internet technologies and have shown a generation of retailers a new way to add value and customer experience to their operations

The first, and perhaps most important, aspect of local retail is that the vast majority of purchases made are for products that are available within 20 miles of home or business. The collective inventory of most communities is substantial, rivaling that of most ecommerce businesses. And these products don't need to be shipped from a warehouse 200 – 300 miles away.

Additionally, there are other dimensions of competition in retail besides product selection that lead shoppers to select one store over another. Retailers compete, and shoppers choose, based on such dimensions as price, quality, product selection, location, customer service, product expertise, aesthetics, in-store "shopping experience", entertainment factor, product demo, etc. This multi-dimension experience explains why a shopper will drive an extra five miles to buy a suit at Brooks Brothers versus the neighborhood Macy's, or why the Chevy dealership two towns away may be preferable to the local dealer.

The current leading factor expressed by shoppers why they shop online is "convenience" – with "product selection" and "shopping from home" the two biggest elements of online shopping convenience. However, as marketplace technology and "local search" become more available to brick & mortar retailers, the primary advantage of online shopping convenience is levelled and the shopping preference should turn to those other dimensions of competition, where local retail has the advantage: customer service, in-store experience, product demo, etc.

> "Everyone wants the power and convenience of online
> and the service and experience of brick & mortar.
> They work together and one supports the other."
>
> ~ Jan Kniffen, Retail Expert

Cost (Build, Buy, or Subscribe)

Our goal is not just to propose a series of solutions and recommendations without regard to cost. We know how expensive an investment in technology can be. But despite how costly some government projects can be, most communities do not have unlimited budgets to spend on new projects.

We also recognize that it is not necessarily in the best interest of the community – the residents, businesses, or municipal administration – to be the "owners" of additional assets that require long-term maintenance and administration, and are likely to be superseded by newer technologies and/or business models. As a general rule, we will take the approach that it is less sensible to "build it" when there are existing and market-proven solutions available which can be bought.

Similarly, we will identify and recommend, where possible, technologies, platforms, and/or solutions that are owned, managed, and maintained by private companies, who are incentivized to stay current and competitive, that already have the necessary engineering and marketing resources to do so. Access to these capabilities are often available either on a subscription basis, with costs fractionally covered by the businesses or individuals that utilize the service.

The question of the role of government involvement in commercial technology decisions may be compared to the role of government in commercial construction decisions. The benefit of providing organization and incentive, with guidance on long-term goals, collaboration, and regulation, can help to ensure community-centric goals and long-term planning, while mitigating negative outcomes. This is particularly necessary with large complex projects in which individual actors may not have the means, perspective, or incentive to create solutions with the entirety of the community in mind. E.g., local communities do not have to design airplanes, fuel standards, or air traffic control best practices to benefit from a local airport. And, as with zoning ordinances, each community can decide how best to implement the various guidelines for the best interest of the community, to encourage economic growth, residential benefit, and aesthetic conformance.

Getting Started

Getting Started

How to use this toolkit

With the dramatic changes and innovations in retail-related technologies and the ways they are being employed to augment business operations, or create entirely new business models, it would be unrealistic to expect that this toolkit could anticipate a future that is still being written. We recognize that each community has their own level of tech-enablement and their own vision of where they might like to steer their community.

It is our hope that this toolkit will provide actionable plans that will allow most communities to address their objectives. With the expectation that each community is likely to have their own community specific approach, we've tried to provide solutions that allow the greatest degree of flexibility and customization feasible.

The specific recommendations provided are therefore able to be used in three ways:
1. Provide guidance for individual projects that can create immediate benefit to the local retail community.
2. Implement several complementary projects in tandem, with the goal of creating a 1+1=3 benefit
3. Initiate a community dialog which will provide the foundation for the long-term planning and goal-setting for the community's incorporation of internet activities.

Long-Term vs Short-Term

For many communities and retail businesses, the biggest concern is that they are already behind the curve and under-utilizing existing technologies that could benefit their community today. Our main goal is to offer solutions and recommendations that can be deployed immediately to address these short-term deficits. Many of these projects are inexpensive and with a short implementation timeline to complete. In many cases, the biggest challenge the will face is an "inertial resistance" to change and new technologies, and a difficulty in marshalling the community will to act.

We also believe that the development and adoption of retail technologies is only going to accelerate. So our secondary goal is to create a sense of what could be a first step in the long-term digital planning for the community, and to create a foundation and path which will facilitate a transition towards long-term goal setting. Towards this latter objective, it is important to recognize that the longer we wait to begin the process the further behind we will be, and the more ground we will have to makeup. Like the plane that leaves with unfilled seats, under-utilized technologies are missed opportunities for sales today that are gone tomorrow.
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Master-Planning Your Digital Community

Most communities already have in place a Master Planning process. This is the comprehensive process by which the community identifies its goals for community development. The result is a plan that outlines and regulates public policies on transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, and housing. According to Chapter 41 Section 81D of the General Laws of Massachusetts a Master Plan is:

> "A statement through text, maps, illustrations or other forms of communication that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality..."

If we think of technology as an additional dimension of community development and a foundation for future economic performance, then it may be worthwhile for communities to begin thinking of establishing a "Digital Master Planning" process for the community's use of technology. In many communities, there is currently very little municipal planning, coordination, and regulation of long-term community internet infrastructure.

We can easily imagine that businesses 5 - 10 years from now will be both built on and dependent on internet-centric technologies in an increasingly competitive environment. Going forward, it is likely that businesses without access to competitive infrastructure will be disadvantaged. And communities that don't plan accordingly will find themselves unable to attract, foster, or retain competitive businesses and talent.

It is, therefore, our opinion that communities throughout the Commonwealth should start planning for that "Digital Downtown" and how they will encourage, coordinate, and regulate a deliberate outcome through the establishment of a Digital Master Planning process. That process is beyond the scope of this particular document, but it is our hope that the recommendations and discussion provided here will help to encourage and inform those efforts.

Figure 1: Toolkit Checklist

	Action	Page
☐	We want to provide a Local Business Directory.	14
☐	We want to enable a Local Retail Marketplace.	18
☐	We want to create a Community Coordination Group.	21
☐	We want to establish a Shared Marketing Program.	22
☐	We want to establish an Education & Training Program.	23
☐	We want to help Local Businesses create an Online Presence.	25

Getting It Done

Getting It Done

We want to provide a Local Business Directory

The goal of this project is to create an easy-to-use, one-stop website that encourages community engagement, provides easy information access, and meaningful links to the many resources of the community. Examples of these kinds of links would include a business directory (ontological search – by category) which provides a Yellow Pages-like guide to local businesses (plumbers, dentists, mechanics, architects, etc.), a community calendar, links to municipal services, etc.

We reviewed other communities' that had developed directory solutions to provide a community-centric approach to engagement, and we identified the functionality they have included. We broke these core services down into four distinct families of information, shown in Figure 1. This is not intended to either be an exhaustive or a permanent list, and it is possible that different communities may add or delete specific functions to the organization that we developed.
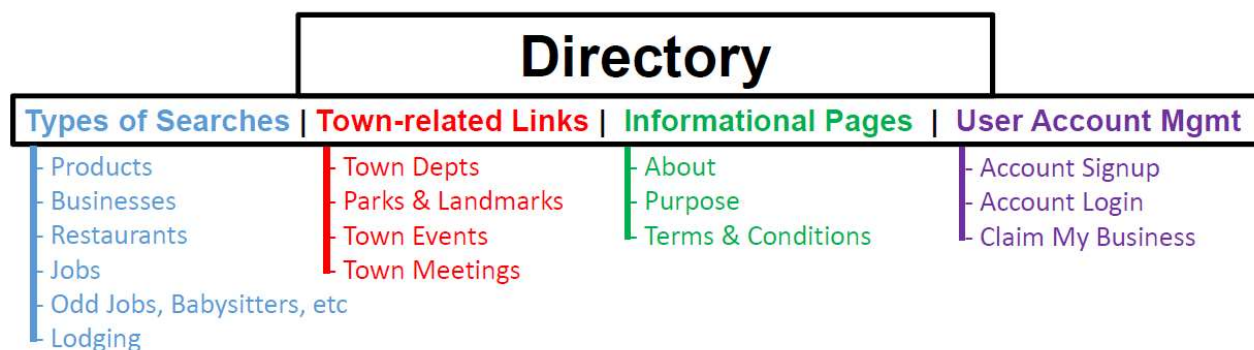

Directory

Types of Searches	Town-related Links	Informational Pages	User Account Mgmt
- Products	- Town Depts	- About	- Account Signup
- Businesses	- Parks & Landmarks	- Purpose	- Account Login
- Restaurants	- Town Events	- Terms & Conditions	- Claim My Business
- Jobs	- Town Meetings		
- Odd Jobs, Babysitters, etc			
- Lodging			

Figure 1: Division of Directory services by information family

There are several pre-built solutions which already have many of the functions we have identified, which can be hosted and customized for any community. Some of the better known Commercial Off The Shelf (COTS) products include ShopWhereILive, CivicPlus, and BrilliantDirectories. They do not all have the same built-in features, and in each case selecting the feature-set for your website will primarily entail defining which features to turn off, rather than adding additional features that are not in the base product. In considering these types of solutions, it is important to compare them across multiple dimensions - such as features & functionality, complexity and time for customization, and path to future enhancements - in addition to cost.

There are also pre-designed Content Management System (CMS) platforms (such as WordPress, Joomla, Squarespace, etc.) with "design themes" and function-adding plug-ins that enables simplified development of very complex websites, designs, and functionality by using a Lego-like snap-in place development model. As of 2020, WordPress powers ~40% of all websites, and ~64% of websites that use a CMS. That doesn't necessarily make them the best choice, but it does mean that the installed base of website designers (agencies and freelancers) is also the largest, and they

can range in price and sophistication to match virtually any budget. In terms of functionality, WordPress also has the largest selection with over 50,000 plugins available.

These plugins can add powerful functionality to a website with little to no coding required by the owner/administrator or their development team. But probably the most compelling benefit of WordPress over other options is that the plug-ins provide an upgrade path to internet business models yet-to-come, as those platforms adapt to changing technologies, internet use and application, and connectivity.

The goal for a community directory should be to provide a friendly and simple-to-navigate user experience, increase "sticky" functionality (encourage engagement and repeat use), and build solutions that encourage "future enhancements" as new technologies and use-models evolve.

Our general recommendations fall into a few categories:

- identify functionality/services – consider providing a wide selection of additional service add-ons and plugins, but also recognize that starting with a limited set of functions and adding additional features over time may encourage users to "learn early" and incrementally upgrade their understanding of the sites features as new ones are added. As a "new feature" is added, it also provides a new opportunity to announce and engage with the community, effectively creating multiple opportunities to create interest.

- Among the add-ons that we would recommend are services that provide a community-centric service and/or encourage engagement. Examples include: different kinds of search (business directory, community activities or town meetings, aggregated job listings, odd-jobs listings, etc.), discussion forums, live-feed content, etc.
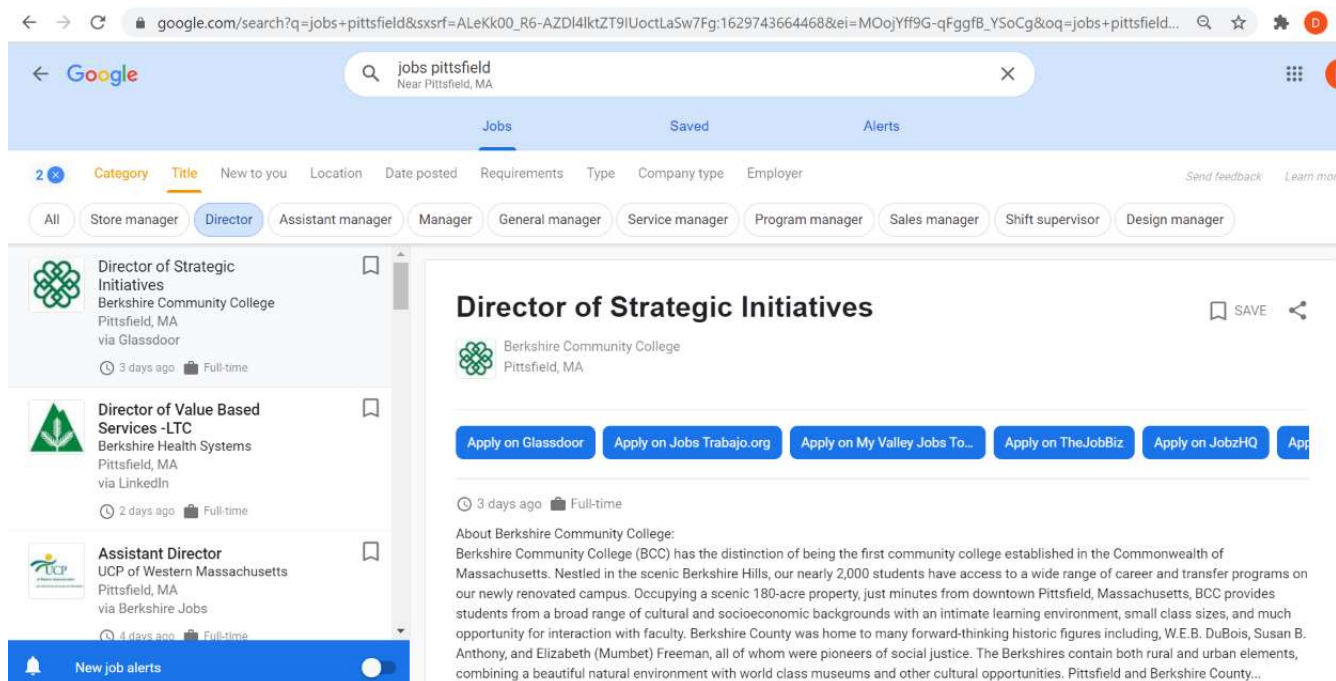

Figure 2: Example of a local jobs page, delivered by iframed Google page

Figure 3: Example of a live streaming page, which enables incorporating video content in real-time or from pre-recorded sources
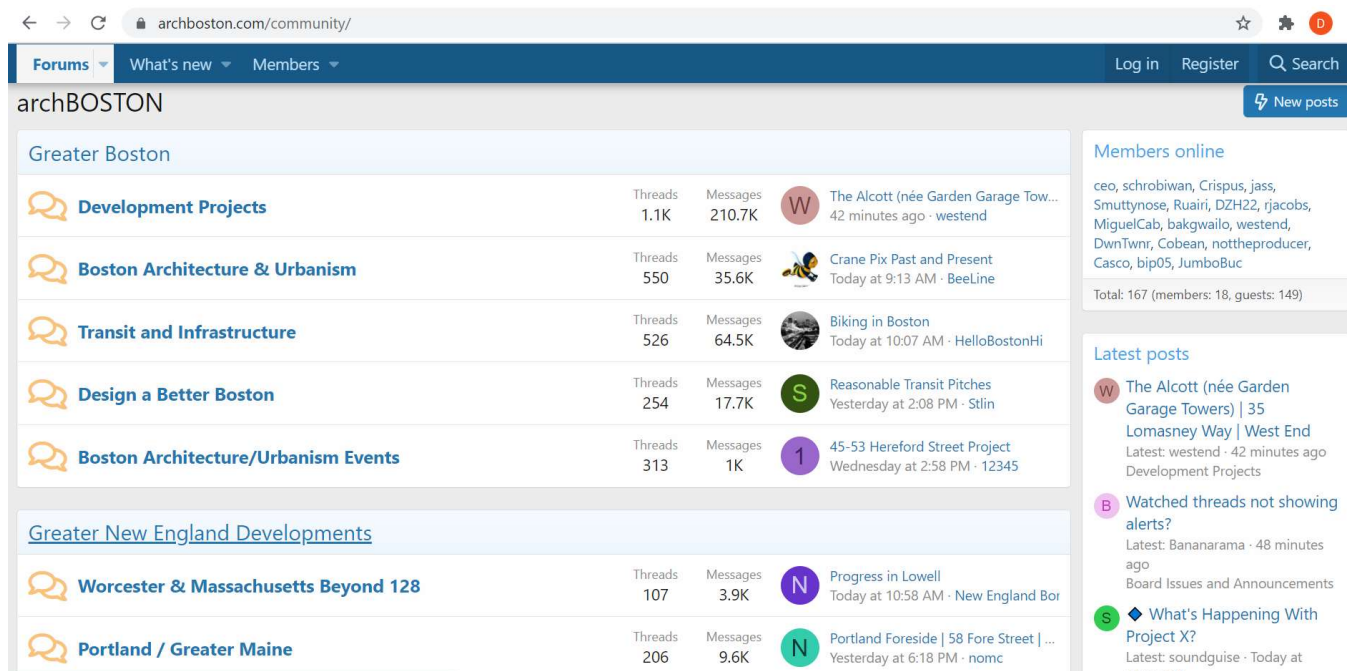

Figure 4: Example of a community forum page, which enables moderated threaded conversations on a variety of topics

These additional add-ons and functionality are a great way to create engagement with the community. A thoughtful discussion of the additional functionality should be performed as a step in the planning process. To maintain a sense of continued user engagement, the process of continually evaluating and incorporating new functionality and technologies should be part of the website's continued existence. Best practices for site design include the following recommendations:

- simplify navigation and page(s) utilization – use the same page layout, headers, logo, and menus on all pages, make the archive of articles searchable, simplify the searching of businesses, etc.
- incorporate User Generated Content (UGC) capability – This could include a variety of different types of content: articles/blogs, photos, reviews, etc. and can build on the augmented functionality discussed above. The goal is to give people a sense of being involved and a motivation to "check back in".
- leverage mailing lists, build in email-based newsletter – If possible, include a newsletter, with easy to update content and sent to a broad audience. Recommendations to improve the value of a newsletter include: sending brief emails with links to articles on the website (rather than emailing the entirety of the articles), creating a database of past articles which can be searched by keyword, using the newsletter email as a means to link to other pages on the website (such as upcoming events, profiles of businesses, a photo collage of user created content, etc.)

Unfortunately, pricing for the pre-built solutions was not publically available. We recommend contacting the vendors directly, and make sure to enquire whether their prices also include estimates for the customization and community content uploading.

Tasks and Estimated Timeline: (WordPress developed site)

Task	Cost (est)	Time (est)
Identify/embed add'l services/plug-ins	$1000	3 weeks
Embed add'l services/plug-ins	$3000 - $10,000	6-8 weeks
Review website design, develop edit list	$800-$1000	2 days
Present & select design recommendations	$0	1 day
Design email & newsletter templates	$500	4 days
Organize article archive	$500	1 week
Total (range)	$4000 - $13,000	6 – 12 weeks

It is important to mention that these proposed Directory options all entail the purchase, setup, and ongoing administration, maintenance, and upgrading of the Directory website and the relevant software and any required add-on components. The difference between the COTS and CMS options is that CMS is a "build" option, with the development effort performed by a website developer which the community would then "own", but the COTS option is a "buy" option with customization of the website performed on the selected software.   It should also be noted that some COTS options are "leased" rather than "owned", with a specified period of use of the software – generally, one, two, or four years.

We want to enable a Local Retail Marketplace

Ecommerce sales, as a percentage of total retail, grew dramatically as a result of the pandemic. Consequently, local retailers without an online sales channel lost sales. But even those with an online store can be at a competitive disadvantage as they won't typically have the product selection of large, sophisticated ecommerce marketplaces. They also won't typically have the IT team or marketing budget to match the operational capability of deep-pocketed ecommerce sites.

This project is designed to provide a local-search enabled multi-vendor marketplace of the community's vendors. This approach would create an online presence that can compete with the large e-tailers by offering broad product selection and the convenience of online shopping, while enabling online sales directly with local retailers. An advantage of this approach is that transaction services are provided by the platform but processing is directly between shopper and vendor.

Figure 5: Homepage, where the shopper identifies his location and radius of search

The marketplace can be built as a part of a large local-search enabled platform, as a community-only marketplace, or as a combination of the two. By leveraging already existing technologies and platforms, the cost – in dollars, manpower, and administration – are minimal. If desired, it is possible to establish a community specific URL that is a redirected sub-domain on the marketplace server.

Figure 6: Search Results page, showing Product, Vendor, Price, and Location

As mentioned in the Business Presence recommendation, individual websites can be integrated with the marketplace solution, allowing customers to either "shop the store" or to "search the community" for the products they are looking for. And similarly, the marketplace can be linked to a community directory to leverage and augment the existing business identification capabilities. Communities that have linked business websites and local directories with local marketplaces have found that they create a "1+1+1=5" result by layering a directories ontological business search and the marketplaces product search and transaction processing onto the company websites business information role.

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

Figure 7: Fulfillment Selection page, showing Vendor-specific fulfillment options (this can include local pickup and courier-delivery options that non-local cannot)

Tasks and Estimated Timeline:

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

Unlike the Directory project, a Local Marketplace is typically implemented as a "subscription" based project. Because they are inherently a multi-vendor system, Marketplaces are built from the ground up as platforms. The community and individual retailers therefore do not own the marketplace, and are not responsible for the development, administration, maintenance, or upgrading of the platform. The vendors are responsible for managing their own product listings, inventory, sales activities, and fulfillment. Since these transactions are local-online purchases, all customer service and returns are between the customer and vendor. Transaction processing is performed by the platform as a pass-through with the exception of any transaction processing fees, and is also a direct customer vendor relationship.

We want to create a Community Coordination Group

This recommendation is for the establishment of an intentionally designed organization (people and activities) which will, collectively, create and promote messaging to build awareness of the digital downtown programs (Business Websites, Marketplace, events, goals, etc.) and encourage enthusiasm and participation in both the near-term activities and the long-term goals of digitally enabling the local economy.

This is intended to be a community-wide project, with the goal of creating community awareness and engagement. Content creation is probably already occurring within the community, in the form of business newsletters, article writing, blogs, etc. What we are proposing is the coordination of these activities to create a more powerful messaging effect. So the emphasis is on the coordination, with content creation efforts added to shore up missing components. To be fully effective, this project should be seen as a two-part project.

Photo by Jason Goodman on Unsplash

The first part is the creation of the organization The key role is that of the central organizer, but equally important are recruiting other participants who will act in concert, creating a powerful megaphone for community goals, events, etc. There are multiple constituencies in the community – businesses, residents, municipal government, community organizations, the media (traditional media and social media), and they each have their own agenda, mindset, and messages. Including and aligning these different agendas is the goal.

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

Action Items:
- Identify candidates to represent each of the various constituencies in the community. Select a point person to be responsible for coordinating with each representative.
- Develop a group charter
- Identify local media channels (existing traditional media and social media, social media platforms to establish new presence). Collect and coordinate editorial calendars (where they exist). Identify roles, responsibilities, and messaging timelines.
- Manage team and projects to consolidated calendar

We want to establish a Shared Marketing Program

The second step, the establishment of a Shared Marketing Program is establishing the resources and processes to get these different constituencies to collaborate and message their respective audiences in a coordinated and complementary manner. The strength of this project is not in creating a single powerful marketing group, but in leveraging the combined strength of many voices to create a unified and effective communication eco-system.

Photo by Jason Goodman on Unsplash

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

Action Items
- Identify community retailers. Outreach to foster cooperative marketplace mindset
- Provide onboarding support & training, operational training, and business model coordination consultation
- Develop local messaging timeline and channel contacts, begin seeding message

Tasks and Estimated Timeline:

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

We want to establish an Education & Training Program

Every community has businesses with varying levels of digital marketing understanding and expertise. In order to effectively coach local businesses; a multi-level digital marketing training program would benefit the business community.

We recommend a managed program offering with a structure to address the different levels of proficiency:

Level 1
- Why digital marketing is important to your business
- Time/effort requirements of digital marketing
    - Do it yourself model
    - Hiring a vendor to launch and/or operate a digital marketing program
- Measuring success, how do you determine the impact of your digital marketing efforts on your business growth

Level 2
- Web Presence Management
    - How to determine the best platform for your primary web presence
        - Facebook/Google My Business
        - Simple Google Website
        - WordPress, Wix, Squarespace, etc.
    - Time and frequency of content updates
    - Managing leads/appointments/orders
- Google My Business (GMB)–
    - Profile set-up & optimization
    - Posting schedules and content
    - Responding to ratings & reviews
- Social Media
    - Determining which Social Media platforms are important
    - Profile set-up
    - Posting schedules/topics based on business vertical
    - Responding to customer postings, ratings & reviews
- Analytics
    - Platforms
        - Google Analytics
    - Understanding which measures have importance
        - Goal tracking

Level 3
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Advertising & Promotion
    - Google Ads
    - Facebook Post Boosts
    - Display Advertising
    - Local Digital Options
        - Newspaper online editions
        - Patch

- Video Development and Promotion
  - Creation and editing software
- Advanced Social Media – benefits and time effort requirements:
  - Facebook
  - YouTube
  - Instagram
  - TikTok
  - Twitter
  - Instagram

Tasks and Estimated Timeline:

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

We want to help Local Businesses create an Online Presence

The starting point for most businesses – retail and service – to become "internet ready" is the creation of a company web presence. Once upon a time, a company would set up a website which was just the company brochure laid out on an HTML document with a company-specific URL. Today, a business online presence – whether a website, a Facebook page, or a Google My Business account - should provide some actual business functionality: allow a business to be searched for online (SEO), provide clients a way to contact them (email), allow online transactions (product purchase or appointment making), set an appointment, create customer relationship (CRM), possibly enable direct interaction (chat), etc.

Today, attractive, high-function websites are reasonably quick and easy to create. For those businesses that do not yet have an online presence, there are three easy-to-implement approaches to creating a quick and appropriate solution, divided into business digital sophistication. The Education and Training program should be considered a prerequisite for establishing an online presence, as it will provide a comprehensive background in both "Why?" and "How To?" for business owners that currently operate without an online presence.

At the "easiest & fastest" level, the best solution is often likely to be in the form of a Facebook Business Page. Basic accounts are free, and can be created in less than an hour. Additionally, businesses can add many of the previously mentioned functions (appointments, events, live streaming, online transactions, etc.) to create a simple and easy to manage online presence. Facebook also has built-in advertising capabilities, allowing the business to target ads to specific audiences (for a cost). And a nice feature is the "chat" window, which allows customers to dialog with the business online.
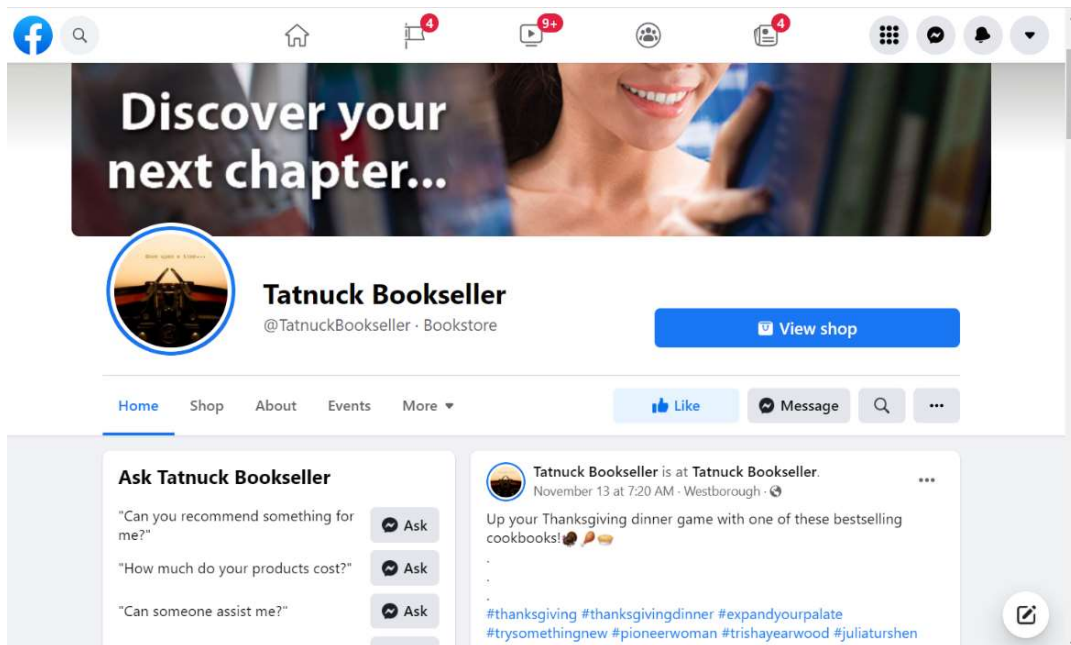

Figure 8 FaceBook Business page

At the "more sophisticated and more capable" level, Google My Business (GMB) provides an effective way to create a business listing on Google (Figure 9). However, creating a Google My Business account also adds an identified landmark on Google Maps along with a map-based company profile, business hours, and contact information (Figure 10). It also provides the means to directly engage with customers via reviews and business responses, direct messaging, and to set up associated alerts.
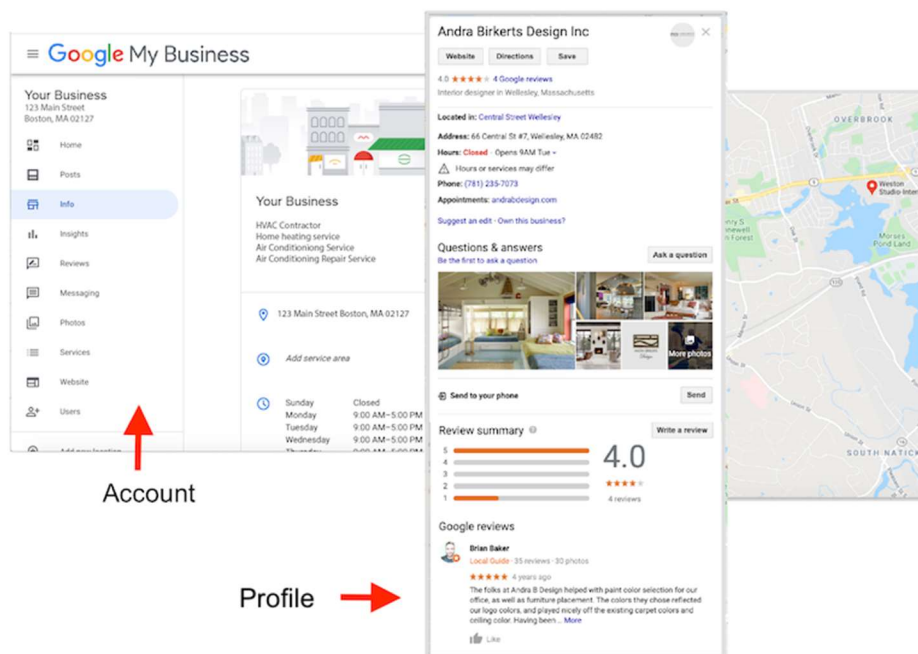

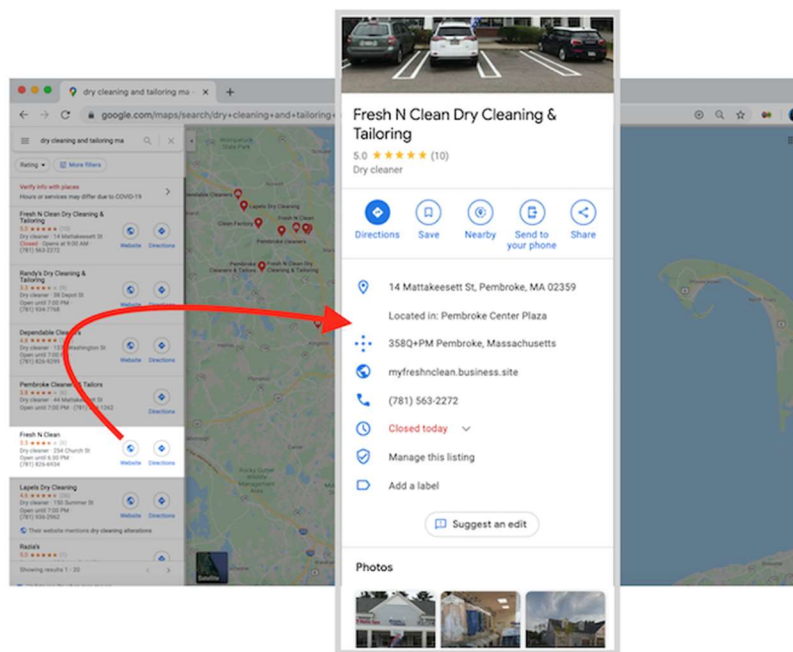Figure 9: Google My Business Account and Profile views

Figure 10: Business Profile on Google Maps

Google, as the dominant internet search engine, has its primary focus on SEO, and so the tie between GMB and Google Search is probably its strongest feature. Less obvious, but a natural result of this connection is the data driven business insights that Google provides, including: a breakdown of actions taken on your listing, how your photos are performing compared to other profiles in your category, and ways to track clicks from a Business Profile via UTM parameters and Google Analytics. Again, it is highly recommended that businesses complete the Education and Training Program section on Google My Business to have a solid foundation in the basics of the platform and how to leverage it.

Not to be overlooked is the ability to create Google Ads as a means to target audiences. Combined with Google Analytics, this can be a powerful tool. And a fully completed Google My Business account will create an impressive website for the business, using the built-in GMB Website Builder.
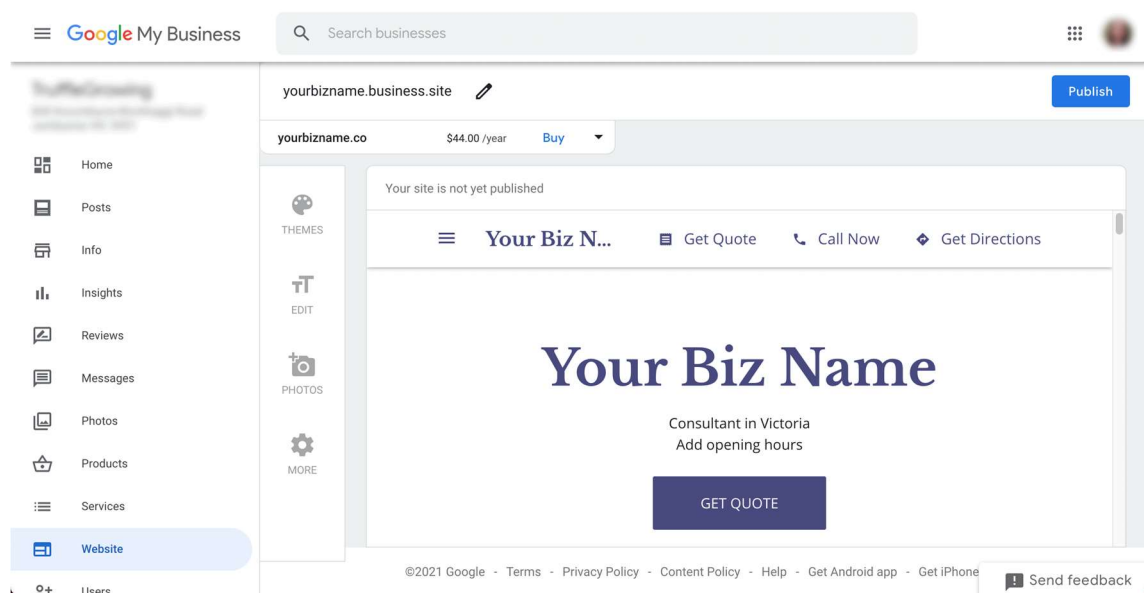

Figure 11: GMB Website Builder

At the more complex level, sophisticated businesses wanting greater functionality, more creative design, or integration with additional platforms may want to consider a template-driven content management system (CMS) approach, such as WordPress, Squarespace, or Wix. The broad availability of capable website developers, and an extensive catalog of functional plugins, can make these a cost-effective approach for any business to have a custom-designed online presence.

Customization, quality, and cost-containment are all possible using defined scope of service, a CMS-enabled template, and a finite set of function-enhancing add-ons. We recommend using WordPress-based templates, as they are inexpensive, have the largest installed base of business usage, a large catalog of plugins, and a pool of experienced developers that are plentiful and reasonably priced.
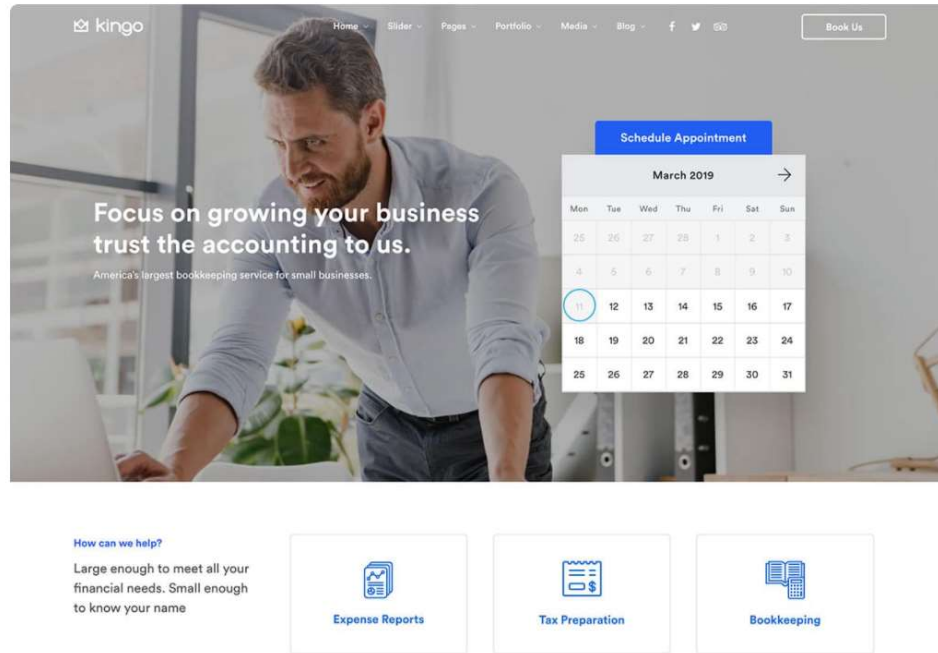
Figure 12: Example template-based website development

Examples of WordPress plugins:

Figure 13: Example of a WordPress appointment plugin
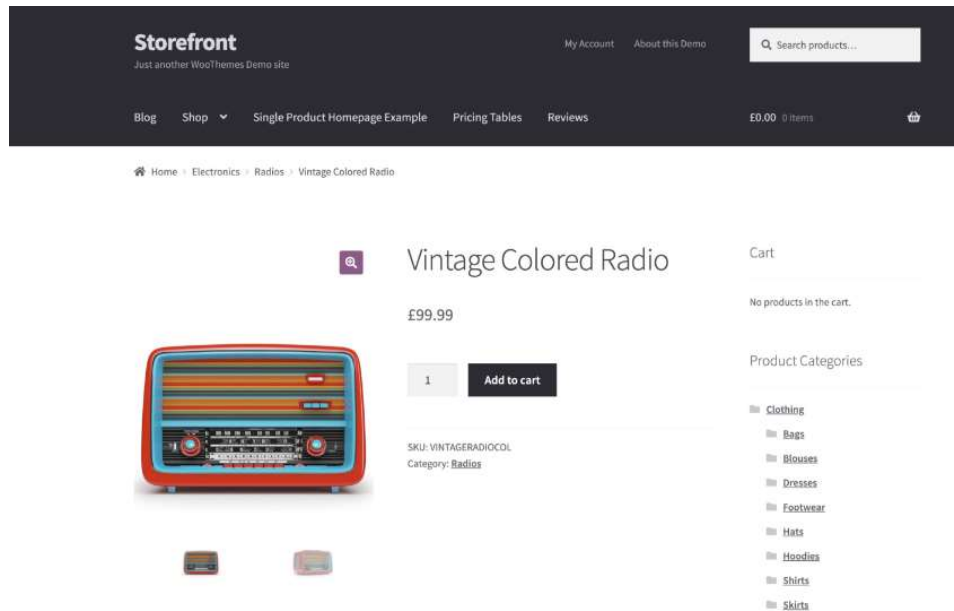
Figure 14: Example of an eCommerce plugin
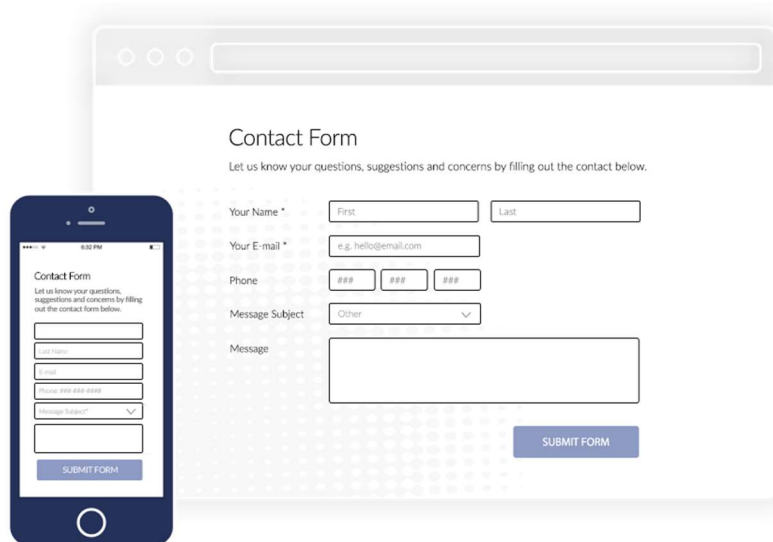
Figure 15: Example of a Forms plugin (contact form, survey, registration, etc)

These plugins add functionality easily and inexpensively, and are a great way to create engagement with customers. But perhaps most importantly, they can enable integration with other websites and services, such as marketplaces, blogs, news-sites, etc. which can provide the foundation for future enhancements and a path towards a communities Master Plan defined long-term digital goals.

Tasks and Estimated Timeline:

Task	Cost (est)	Time (est)
Businesses selection	$0	2 weeks
Create catalog of themes & plugins	$0	.5 days
Present & select design recommendations	$0	1 day
Page design & planning consultation	$300/business	.5 days/business
Build website	$600/business	1 day/business
Review website design, develop edit list	$300/business	.5 days/business
Organize article archive	$300	.5 days/business
Total (range)	$1500/business	2 wks + 1wk/bus

The Local Business Online Presence project is a business support program in which the end product, the FaceBook Business Page, Google-My-Business Account, or Business Website, will be the property of the business. The role of the community is in providing guidance, assistance, and support to businesses. It is anticipated that the ongoing ownership and associated costs would be the responsibility of the business, and not the community. So the above Tasks and Estimated Timeline line items represent the community's costs to provide the necessary initial support services.

How Others Are Doing It

How Others Are Doing It

Lessons on Technology & Community Building

It was not that long ago that "technology" & "community" in the same sentence probably referred to either the Greater Boston or Silicon Valley communities. Since then, many cities, states, and regions have recognized the importance of the tech economy and established their own "Silicon Prairie", "Telecom Triangle", or "Multimedia Gulch", to attract business, talent, and economic prosperity. We have even heard of Massachusetts described as the "Dot Commonwealth"- clearly a recognition that our entrepreneurial capabilities have extended beyond the historic Route 128 Corridor.

With a nod to this recognition that technology is no longer region-specific, and is in fact deemed to be universal infrastructure, we'd like to look at other examples of adoption and usage so we can learn from their experience.

Case Study: Marketplace - Quebec, Canada

In recognition of the very serious impact of COVID and ecommerce on the retail community in the province, the Government of Quebec created a public-private collaboration to create a local retail directory with the goal of encouraging consumers to shop local online with retailers in Quebec.

The original implementation was a directory of retail businesses in the province paired with a "shop local" advertising campaign. Public response was so dramatic and immediate, that they overwhelmed and crashed the servers, requiring an increase in bandwidth to meet the demand. The initial decision to use a directory platform, with no transaction capability, instead of a transaction-capable marketplace platform, caused some frustrations for many shoppers that were looking for online shopping and buying. Le Panier Bleu has since then become a marketplace, and are now on their first full-year of operation.

Case Study: Directory - Pittsfield, MA

Widely recognized as the business hub of the Berkshires region of Massachusetts, Pittsfield has already taken many of the steps necessary to implement a robust Digital Downtown. Among the many actions taken to plan and implement a forward-looking strategy, is a community directory.

Designed and operated by the non-profit membership organization Downtown Pittsfield Inc (DPI)., the site offers a full slate of services for the benefit of businesses, residents, tourists, cultural & entertainment venues, including business listings, events calendar, shopping and restaurant guides, recreation and community services.

Consistent with the recognition that technology and function continue to evolve, DPI continues to explore new services and functionality to the website. Their activities are driven by the city's Strategic Plan, and builds upon the growth of the downtown through previous strategic planning accomplishments.
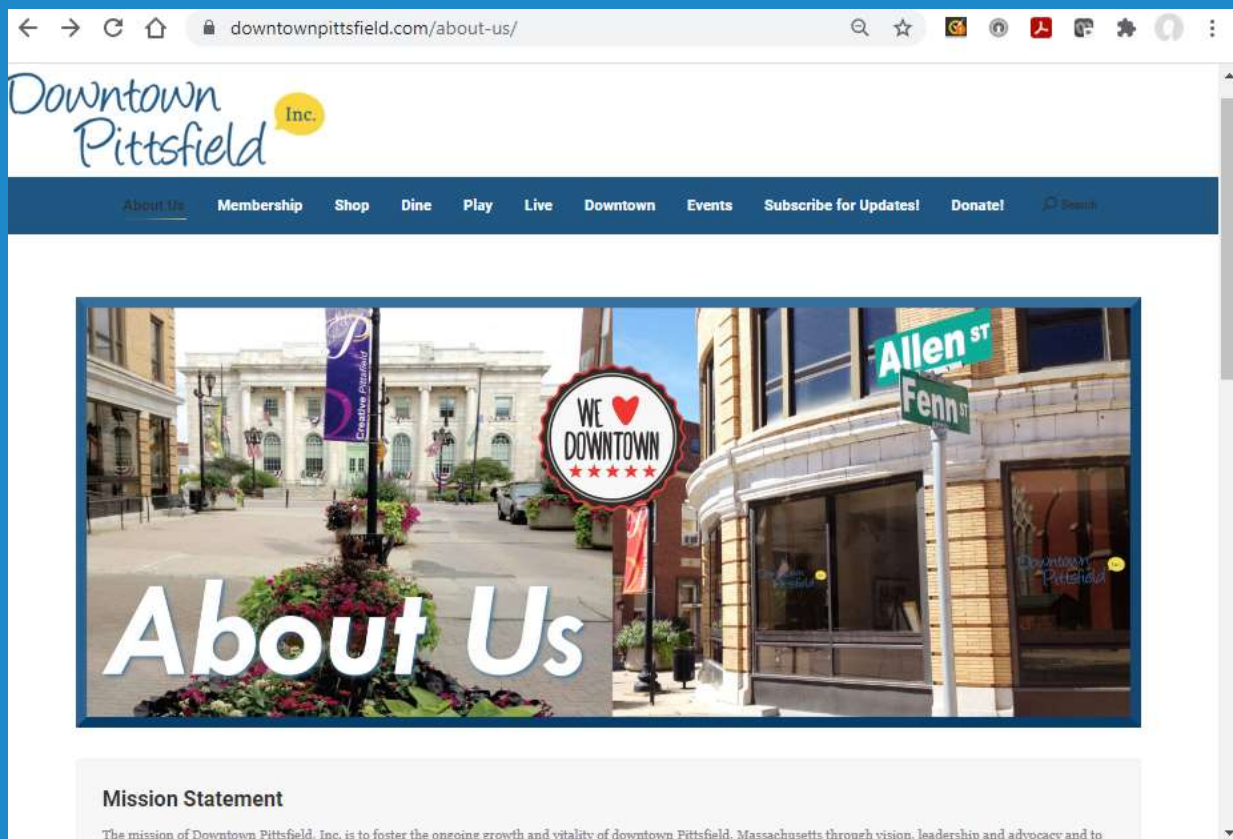
Overcoming Challenges

Overcoming Challenges

Community Inertia

Businesses and communities' fortunes rise and fall based on their ability to respond to changing circumstances. Many once-prosperous businesses – like Kodak and Blockbuster – have largely disappeared because they did not adapt to a changing competitive landscape. Similarly, many once-prosperous communities have seen t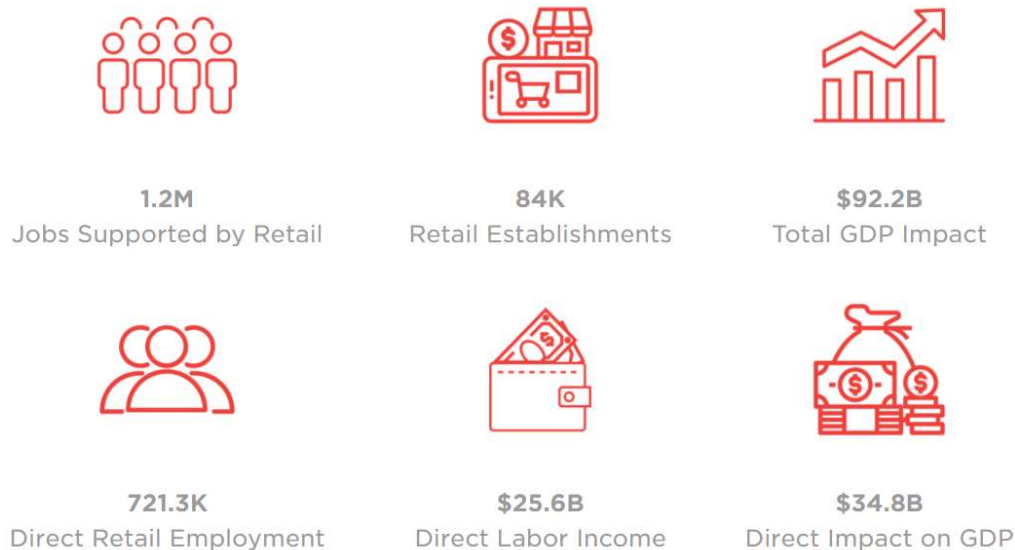heir circumstance decline, as they failed to adapt to the changes impacting their local economies. The Northeast has dozens of examples of formerly flourishing communities that did not adapt, and have declined as other communities have prospered.

> "The legitimate object of government is 'to do for the people what needs to be done, but which they can not, by individual effort, do at all, or do so well, for themselves'."
>
> ~ Abraham Lincoln

Retail is one of the key industries in Massachusetts, and is the largest employment sector for many communities around the state. And while the industry has adapted to many of the changes of the last 200 years, internet-based technologies are creating a new social and business landscape – one which can disadvantage local communities that do not proactively manage their adoption.

Massachusetts retail by the numbers

1.2M Jobs Supported by Retail	**84K** Retail Establishments	**$92.2B** Total GDP Impact
721.3K Direct Retail Employment	**$25.6B** Direct Labor Income	**$34.8B** Direct Impact on GDP

source: National Retail Federation

The complexity and speed of tech-based change pose a potentially existential threat to many retailers. While large, well-funded companies can afford to create propriety platforms, the vast majority of businesses will not. Fortunately, many of these technologies are now available as Software as a Service (SaaS) or Platform As A Service (PaaS) products, functioning like utilities – accessible and affordable to small companies without the resources needed to build their own.

However, for these platforms to be effective – both as functional tools and as a means of reducing cost per business – they must attract a sufficient number of businesses to provide a selection of products broad enough to attract shoppers. The more businesses they attract, the greater the value they can offer – to businesses, communities, and to consumers. So a significant risk to these types of transformational projects is "inertial resistance to change" leading to insufficient adoption.

While it is tempting to hope that local online marketplaces will gain sufficient traction on their own, the truth is that they are likely to require community leadership and effort to ensure action and adoption. As with community electrification, commercial development, and traffic management, municipalities that don't sufficiently motivate, coordinate, and regulate the adoption of these growth-focused infrastructure are likely to see economic stagnation or loss as other communities grow.

Regulations

As of the writing of this document, there is no single regulatory body that regulates ecommerce in the United States. This does not mean that ecommerce businesses are exempt from regulation. While online retailers may seem to operate with a different set of rules, the laws - federal, state, and local - governing all businesses apply to online businesses as well. So a stand-alone ecommerce business is still obligated to comply with all requirements regarding legal formation and registrations, tax filings, wages, etc.

Regulations that are specifically geared to online business operations, rather than general business regulations, usually fall into one of three areas: marketing, taxation, and data privacy. In this section we will focus on the first two – marketing and tax. We will discuss data privacy in the following section on Privacy & Security.

Marketing: According to the FTC, truth-in-advertising rules require advertisers to be honest about their products or services. Online advertising and marketing cannot include false claims about what the product or service is or can do. Additionally, the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 requires businesses engaging in email marketing efforts to include a way for recipients to opt out or unsubscribe from receiving future email from the business or organization. Email marketing messages must also contain a valid physical or mailing address for the originating company.

Tax: For a long time, online purchases were considered "tax-free". The general practice was that ecommerce companies were only taxed in the state in which they were physically located. So, states didn't collect sales tax from purchases that their state residents made from out-of-state companies. One of the key drivers behind this approach was the concern of the difficulty it would create for online companies to comply with the tax policies of every state and municipality to which they shipped. However, this created a powerful advantage for online retailers at the expense of brick & mortar stores, by effectively creating a "tax-free" discount for virtually all online sales.

In 2018, the landmark decision in "South Dakota v. Wayfair, Inc." led to the introduction of laws permitting sales taxes on out-of-state vendors providing goods to state residents. The reality that was recognized is that the same technology advances that enabled ecommerce, also enabled other new capabilities designed specifically for the processing of electronic payments, such as online auctions, secure credit card transactions, "crypto" currencies, and also the processing and collecting of federal, state and local sales or use taxes.

The recommendations presented in this document are primarily intended for the purposes of facilitating local commerce, rather than interstate transactions. So business regulations and tax compliance are merely a matter of continuing to collect and remit taxes to the appropriate tax authorities to whom they are already paying taxes. However, as ambitious businesses are likely to consider how to leverage technology to take advantage of broader sales opportunities, we can anticipate that some future tech-enabled business activities may occur beyond the local community. In those cases, these businesses will need to be aware of the obligation to collect and pay taxes to the appropriate jurisdiction.

Similarly, as state and local efforts are implemented to enable, support, and regulate ecommerce, we should also anticipate that new taxes and fees are likely to be considered to pay for those efforts. At the "big picture" level, we should also bear in mind that both internet marketing and tax regulations for internet commerce are being evaluated, with new regulations being considered constantly. So we should continually monitor this for ways new legislation and regulation, beyond taxes, may impact individuals, businesses and communities.

Security & Privacy

Perhaps no internet issue causes greater concern than that of Security & Privacy. The underlying technology and code is beyond most of our comprehension. It is changing too quickly to keep up. The data being collected is both miniscule and comprehensive. The ways that all of this data can be connected, combined, parsed, and analyzed to understand and monitor us seems to be magical and intrusive. And "social engineering" manipulation to take advantage of our good will and naiveté are rampant.

Seemingly, the fraudsters, schemes, scams, and even legitimate businesses using our information for purposes we might not understand or approve, is problematic. The good news is that with available software tools, services, and training, most of the risks can be mitigated. Here are four recommendations for keeping business computer usage safe:
1. Educate your teams on Data Privacy and Security with Compliance Training.
2. Keep your anti-virus software up to date.
3. Set browsers to delete cookies when finished browsing.
4. If you set up a website, request a private WHOIS listing

On the other side of the equation, there is a complex patchwork of Security & Privacy regulations, with specific areas of regulation falling into the following distinct categories:
- Financial institutions must develop, implement, and maintain a comprehensive information security program to ensure the security and privacy of customer information – regulated by the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA).

- Certain website and online service providers are required to obtain verifiable parental consent before collecting, using, or disclosing personal information from minors under the age of 13 – governed by the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).
- Public companies must provide and produce accurate and timely financial statements – regulated by Sarbanes Oxley.
- Brokers, dealers, investment companies, and investment advisers must adopt written policies to safeguard customer records and protect against unauthorized access – regulated by SEC Regulation S-P.
- "Anti-trust and Unfair Methods of Competition" defined as "unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce" are prohibited for all "persons, partnerships, or corporations" – regulated by Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Act.
- Acts of Fraud and certain computer-related activities involving the unauthorized access of a computer to obtain certain information, defraud or obtain anything of value, transmit harmful items, or traffic in computer passwords – regulated by the Computer Fraud & Abuse Act (CFAA).
- Privacy and Security of protected health information - regulated by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Additionally, there have been several proposed, but not yet passed, federal laws attempting to create and implement legislation specifically designed to address online Privacy & Security. And at the state level, there are currently four states, including Massachusetts, evaluating serious comprehensive consumer data privacy proposals.

US State Privacy Legislation Tracker
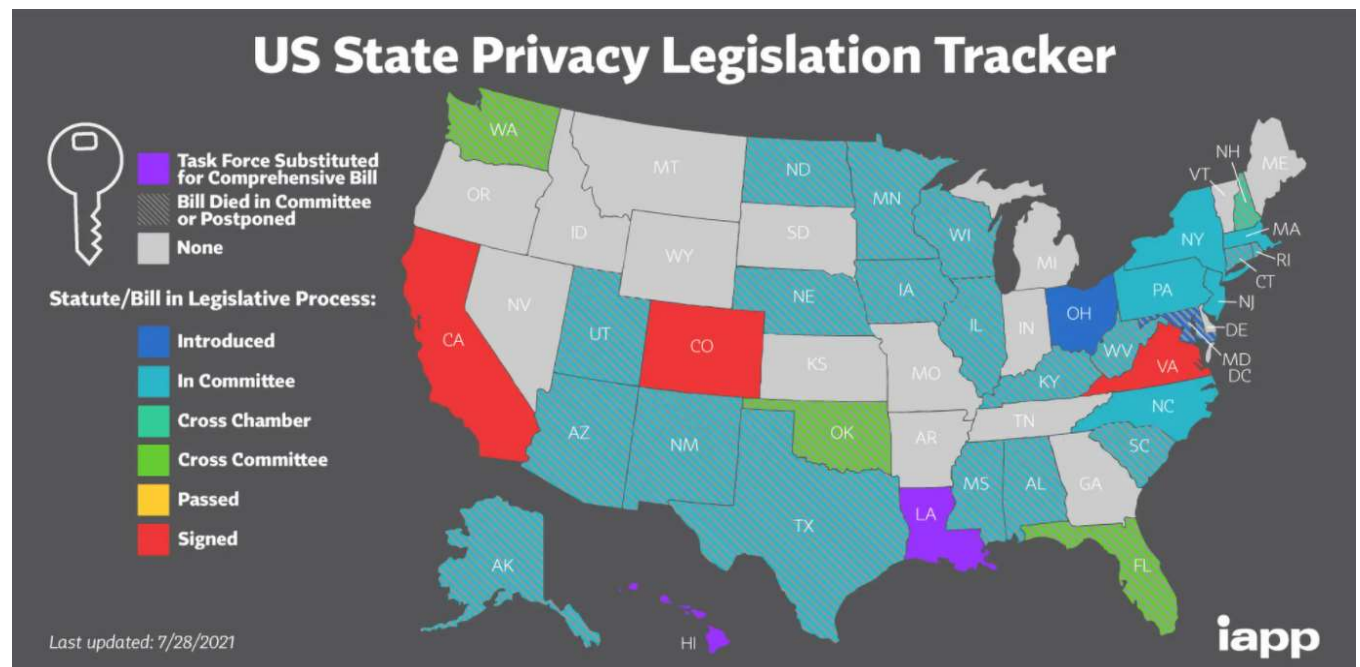
We also need to mention that there are two additional pieces of legislation that have implications for ecommerce across the USA: the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). These geographically-specific laws provide consumers with greater control over private companies' ability to collect, store, and use private data. As with the inter-state aspects of tax regulations, these laws require companies doing

business with people and entities within their respective geographies to ask for permission to share data. They also give individuals rights to access, delete, or control the use of that data provided to those companies. So, while neither of these laws has jurisdiction throughout the USA, their existence has implications for businesses beyond their borders, and is likely to impact the direction that future legislation may take.

Bias & Municipal Even-Handedness

At the core of government ethics is the concept of evenhandedness and absence of bias. In Massachusetts the State Ethics Commission oversees Conflict of Interest issues for municipalities in the Commonwealth, and they require that government employees make specific disclosures if their actions or conduct which could create a reasonable impression that they had acted with bias. The Conflict of Interest Law outlines the minimum standard of ethical conduct for all municipal employees and officials, and the State Ethics Commission provides a "Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law for Municipal Employees".

In a nutshell, governments, government officials, and employees must take appropriate steps to avoid any appearance of loss of impartiality in the performance of their official duties. Beyond the conflict of interest law, ethics regulations require all employees to recuse themselves from participating in an official matter if their impartiality would be questioned.

Why it matters? The focus of this toolkit is to provide recommendations on how to leverage technology for the benefit of businesses, in general, and retailers, in particular, within the community. In the creation of plans, groups, resources, and regulations it will be important to make sure that they be impartially established, without the impression of bias or unreasonable benefit, detriment, or exclusion to any specific party. So caution is recommended in these initiatives.

Physical Impacts of Digital Projects

Our primary focus is on the technologies themselves. However, because many of their uses are intended for brick & mortar businesses, there are likely to be physical implications to the businesses' physical space, to community spaces and their utilization, and to residents and other businesses within the community. Here is a short, non-exhaustive list of physical impacts of implementing digital infrastructure:

- Retailers may need to create new positions to operate the ecommerce sales channel. Some specific roles might include maintaining the online store inventory and pricing, delivery driver, online sales manager, and online Customer Service rep to monitor online chat, email, and other information requests, etc
- Retailers may need to create specific areas of the store to support any BOPIS or BOPAC fulfillment, including a location for the computer equipment and online sales fulfillment staff, storage area for items purchased online awaiting customer pickup, designated curbside or parking lot pickup areas, and in-store way-finding to help online customers efficiently locate the pickup area.
- Communities may need to consider whether available public parking and its layout will be sufficient for a switch to BOPAC (curbside) pickup, or the potential for short-duration, high turnover BOPIS parking. Large shopping centers with abundant and/or under-utilized

parking areas may not pose a problem, but downtown shops in congested high-traffic areas are likely to need some consideration.

- Consideration should also be given to the impact of increased retail deliveries on traffic flow, neighborhood congestion, and pedestrian safety.
- Additional or revised traffic management and signage may be necessary

New Business Models & Innovative Uses of Underutilized Space

In addition to providing brick & mortar retailers with an online sales channel and giving local businesses additional marketing capabilities, we want to mention that new technologies create new possible businesses and business models that were not previously feasible. The following ideas are examples of new businesses we have seen around the US. These business models are based on what has already been developed and implemented, not just theoretical concepts. That said, we know that providing access to the technology and infrastructure is likely to unleash the creative entrepreneurial spirit, and stimulate the development of new business models that have not yet been seen.

- Micro-Fulfillment Center (MFC) – this is a mini warehouse-like space which provides local product fulfillment without a retail store attached. MFC's can represent a single store or multiple stores, and are becoming a popular and efficient non-store retail function.
- Pop-up Store – A short-term retail operation, typically located in otherwise unused space – Pop-ups are often either holiday related retail (Halloween store, Christmas store, etc.) or product category specific (tools, art, cars, etc.).
- Short-term shared marketplace - such as a farmer's market or flea market. These are typically low-infrastructure needs spaces, with short-term usage. They are quick to set up and disassemble, and can be tied to a larger community event planning process. They do, however, require a messaging strategy and coordination to ensure community awareness and engagement.
- Fulfillment Depot – these are central retail pickup locations, which can simplify the complexity of many retailers each providing a courier delivery, curbside, or in-store pickup capability. Interesting approaches include:
  - a standalone building in a shopping mall parking lot, which is established to serve mall tenants and provide one-stop out-building product pickup.
  - a drive-through building or warehouse with staff retrieving packages and loading packages into customers car trunks.
  - store-within-a-store, where a large retailer provides an in-store pickup location for other retailers.
  - storage lockers, which allow retailers to drop off packages which are picked up by customers at their convenience.
- Local retail delivery/courier business – this is generally a software managed logistics business that acts as a delivery service for a number of local retailers. Functions as an Uber-like operation but carrying multiple packages instead of a single individuals items.
- Night-shift Fulfillment – this is a warehouse or micro-fulfillment center in which orders are picked, packed, and fulfilled after usual business hours.
- Catalog showroom – customers can try & buy products in-store and have the purchase fulfilled by a nearby warehouse that carries inventory and delivers to their location.

- Inventory replenishment – regularly used and depleted business and household items are either scheduled for regular deliveries or usage is tracked and deliveries are made as quantities get low

Undoubtedly, other applications of internet-based technologies are being deployed and developed as we speak. And other new technologies and their business application are under development now, as well. The bottom line is that technology can provide a significant competitive advantage for local businesses. Consequently, communities that have a Digital Master Plan can actively attract those businesses that depend on digital infrastructure and a digital-educated workforce.

Adjacencies

It is tempting to think of these kinds of projects in isolation. However, they are likely to both benefit and complicate other aspects of town operations, and other LRRP projects under consideration. As an example, a Shared Marketing capability will work well in tandem with a Community Coordination Group project, and an Education & Training Program will impact business hiring, employee retention, and other aspects of the community. It would be worthwhile considering how the community could leverage their benefits.

Similarly, our project recommendations could be paired with other community projects, whether LRRP projects or other projects outside the LRRP, to create a 1+1=3 value proposition. Some adjacencies to be considered could include: community notifications and informational outreach, municipal traffic management and parking, town planning and zoning, etc. These specific items are beyond the scope of our analysis, but should be considered as part of an ongoing process of community development and modernization.

Key Resources

Key Resources

Additional Reading

Global Newswire
Péloquin, M. (February 3, 2021) "Stingray Business, Le Panier Bleu, and Aliments du Québec announce partnership to encourage buying local from Quebec businesses"

Fit Small Business
Aviso, A. (October 19, 2021) "41 Online Shopping Statistics Retailers Should Know in 2022"

Harvard Business Review
Lee Yohn, D. (July 6, 2020) "The Pandemic Is Rewriting the Rules of Retail"

The Intelligent Community Forum
Bell, Robert (2020) "From Connectivity to Community: The ICF Method for Economic, Social and Cultural Growth in the Digital Age"

Albert, S., Flournoy, D., & LeBrasseur, R. (2008) "Networked Communities: Strategies for Digital Collaboration"

Gallardo, R. (2016) "Responsive Countryside: The Digital Age and Rural Communities"

New Hampshire Office of Energy & Planning
Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (2004) "Preparing a Master Plan for Your Community"

Broadband Communities (BBCmag.com)
Demlow, K. (July 2020), "Broadband Master Planning: A Holistic Approach tp Meeting Broadband Goals"

New York University
Townsend, A., Lorimer, S. (June 2015) Digital Master Planning: An Emerging Strategic Practice in Global Cities"

Funding – Grants & Loans

We were able to identify several potential sources of available funding, as of the date of this document, which we reasonably believe to be applicable to some or all of the project recommendations provided. These resources are neither guaranteed nor necessarily exhaustive, and other sources of funding may be available and should be considered.

Name of Fund	Agency	Max Amount
Regional Pilot Project Grant	Massachusetts. Office of Business Development	$250,000
MA Downtown Initiative	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	$25,000
Shared Streets & Spaces	Massachusetts Department of Transportation	$85,000
Build Back Better Regional Challenge	Economic Development Administration	$500,000
Travel & Tourism Recovery Grant	Office of Travel & Tourism	$150,000
Community Development Block Grant	Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development	$1,350,000

For more information, visit:
www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program

If you have questions about the RRP program, contact:

Emmy Hahn
MDI/RRP Program Coordinator, DHCD
elizabeth.hahn@mass.gov

Chris Kluchman
Deputy Director, Community Services Division, DHCD
chris.kluchman@mass.gov