



# Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Downtown Framingham



# Acknowledgements



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And all local small businesses and entrepreneurs in Downtown Framingham who demonstrate a true passion for building something great for their businesses and for Framingham!

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF  
**HOUSING AND  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

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

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

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

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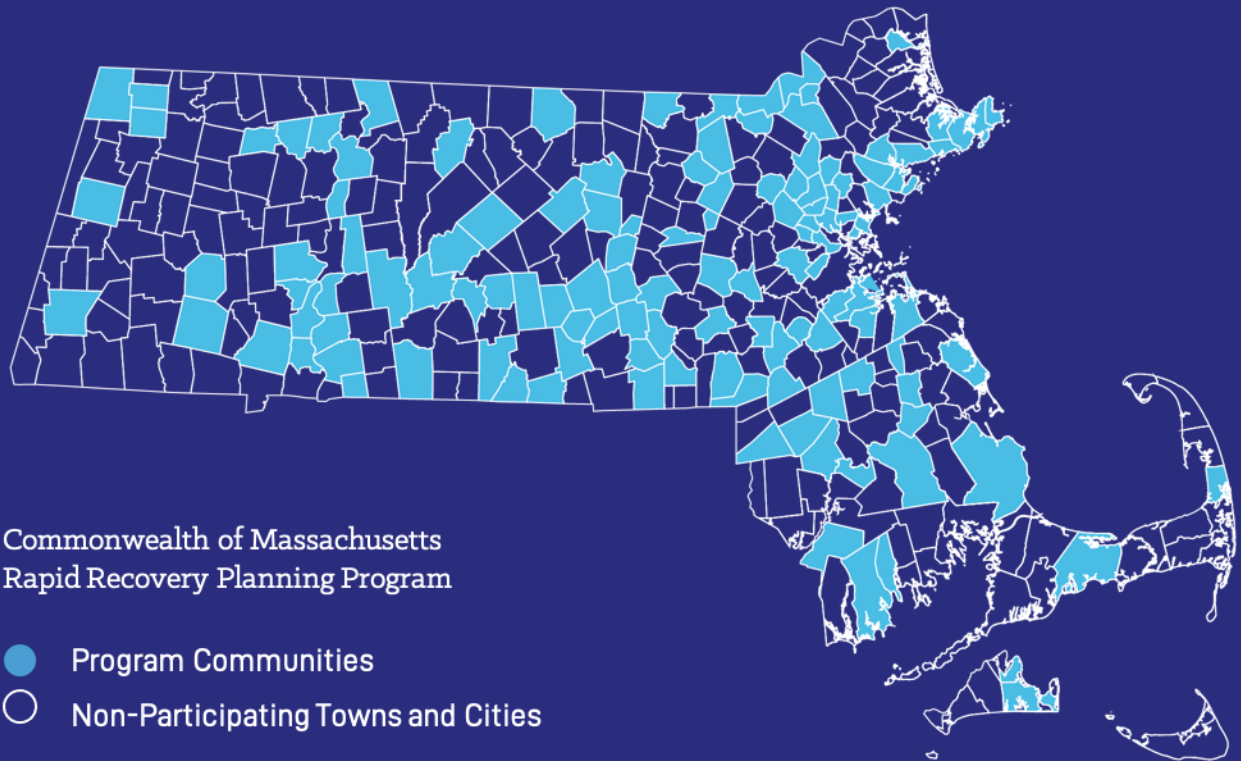
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## 125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



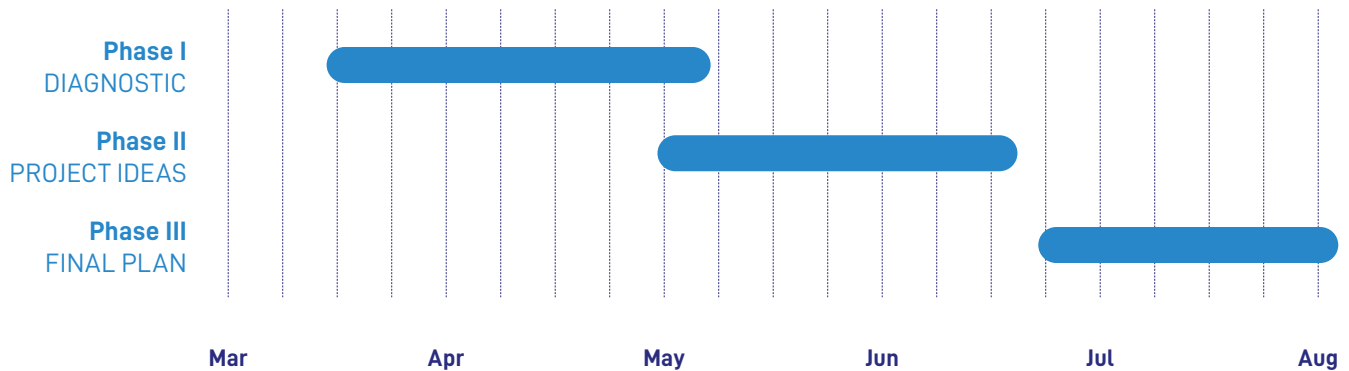
# Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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

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

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

Each Rapid Recovery Plan was developed across three phases between February-August 2021. Phase 1 - Diagnostic, Phase 2- Project Recommendations, Phase 3 - Plan.



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

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

## Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



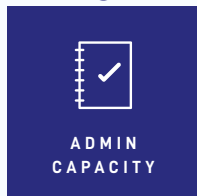
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue & Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

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# Executive Summary



# Executive Summary

## Framingham: A dynamic and unique Downtown

Downtown Framingham is a dynamic, dense commercial district featuring a mix of residential, office, retail, and institutional land uses. The area boasts a walkable street grid, historic buildings, green space, cultural institutions, and a commuter rail station providing 50-minute access to Downtown Boston and uniquely offers itself as a vibrant cultural center for the Brazilian American community of Massachusetts. Furthermore, entrepreneurs from across Latin America and around the world own and manage small businesses in this thriving city center, selling everything from homemade food to specialty services.

Downtown Framingham represents a key commercial node in Framingham and has played a critical role in the development of the city itself. The orientation of Downtown draws customers from Natick, Ashland, Marlborough, and Sherborn, but also other locales such as Boston, Everett, Cambridge, Somerville, as a destination for the Latinx community, creating both opportunities and challenges for the district, given the high volume of vehicle traffic.

Framingham's City Hall serves as the main anchor for the district, in addition to nearby public resources such as the Public Library, the Framingham Commuter Rail Station, Farm Pond Park, MetroWest Medical Center, as well as a local skatepark. Events and amenities in and near the district also serve as a draw, such as Oktoberfest celebrations, MetroFest, the Brazilian Independence Day Festival, the Framingham Restaurant Rush, as well as a segment of the Boston Marathon route.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented and extremely disruptive impact on Framingham's local economy, small business community, workforce, and renters. As the nation adapts to these impacts, the City of Framingham has assisted those who were at risk of losing their jobs and businesses due to the virus, particularly through their Small Business Grant Program. However, the pandemic has left the future of both public and private revenue streams uncertain. The restaurant and service industry has been impacted daily by the pandemic and the reduction of customers, who are now working from home. The arts and culture community, which has a significant population downtown, has also been deeply impacted by the pandemic. Amazing Things Art Center, for example, has seen a reduction in clientele and was forced to close temporarily during the summer of 2020.



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*

This is coupled with the ongoing perception amongst some that Downtown Framingham experiences quality of life issues, although there seems to be a disconnect between the thriving community that frequents downtown and residents from outside of the district, something that this document will later address. There is also a perception of crime within Downtown Framingham, however, a review of Uniform Crime Report data by Applied Geographic Solutions for the entire city shows its total crime index to be comparable to similar-sized communities like Brookline, Somerville, and Waltham, and half of the crime rate of the nation as a whole.

This Local Rapid Recovery Plan for Downtown Framingham represents another milestone in the City's efforts to support its unique assets, namely the businesses and residents of Framingham. Over the past several years, the City has led a set of planning processes that have resulted in increased civic engagement, redesign of City processes and services, and the implementation of new policies and targeted investments. This includes infrastructure (sidewalks, benches, greenery, etc.) in Downtown Framingham in pursuit of the goal of ensuring that Framingham is a place where everyone can thrive.

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## Current Plans and Literature Review

# Current Plans and Literature Review

## **Five-Year Consolidated Plan 2021-2025 (2021 Action Plan)**

The Consolidated Plan creates a comprehensive overview of the housing and community needs of the city based on collected and analyzed data. Goals include:

- Preserve and maintain an adequate supply of safe, decent housing that is affordable and accessible to homeowners and renters with a range of incomes and household needs.
- Support programs that overcome barriers to affordable housing in Framingham through development and maintenance
- Improve public infrastructure that serves low- and moderate-income neighborhoods in South Framingham
- Improving the provision and diversity of various kinds of public services for residents of lower-income neighborhoods, immigrants, and others most in need.
- Support workforce development and expand opportunities by progressing the economic conditions for small/microenterprise businesses in the Downtown Commercial Area
- Improving Downtown through rehabilitation and signage efforts, and attracting/retaining more business for job opportunities, especially for South Framingham residents.
- Assist with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic in a timely and supportive fashion, supplying financial support to small businesses and those at risk of losing their housing due to job loss and or a significant reduction in business traffic.

## **2014 Housing Plan Update and Action Plan**

The 2014 report constitutes a review of the 2007 Housing Plan. It provides updated housing data, an analysis of changes in market conditions, a summary of housing achievements, and a statement of action plan priorities for the next two years. It contains a population profile, a housing profile, the rate of housing production and supply, and housing needs, as well as barriers and challenges.

## **Downtown Framingham Transit-Oriented Development Action Plan**

The 2015 Transit-Oriented Development Plan was created to optimize land uses by encouraging higher density, transit-oriented development (TOD) in Downtown to take better advantage of existing infrastructure, especially Framingham MBTA commuter rail service from Downtown Framingham to Worcester and Boston and the MWRTA public transit system. It also served to support the multi-cultural businesses to strengthen a unique urban experience in Downtown that provides for residents and visitors by encouraging a mix of uses while respecting the character of the historic buildings and urban fabric.

Additionally, the TOD Plan served to promote reinvestment and redevelopment of existing housing stock and create opportunities for new investment to increase housing Downtown and provide more residential types for a diversity of incomes. The plan incorporated goals for the city to provide increased tree canopy, passive open space, and active parks, and enhance linkages to natural resource areas including Farm Pond and Cushing Park. The study focused on the area within about a ten-minute walk of the Framingham commuter rail station.

## **2017 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan**

The Framingham Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan documents the process and recommendations of the city (then Town) of Framingham's first effort to establish a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure plan. An interdepartmental Bicycle and Pedestrian Staff Working Group comprised of planners, engineers, and other professionals worked together with the community to create a vision, evaluation methodology, and ultimately create recommendations for improving multi-modal conditions and increasing connections for bicycle, pedestrian, and other non-vehicular transportation.

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### **2020 Long-Range Strategic Plan**

Framingham created its first long-range strategic plan to further support its transition to a city form of government. It was intended to guide the municipality's overall approach to its resources, needs, assets, and opportunities to ensure that the community is moving forward deliberately and effectively. It seeks to ensure that the city is using cross-functional goals and objectives that complement work across the city, rather than operating in silos and potentially cross purposes. Goals were created for conservation, diversity, equity & inclusion (DEI), economic development, housing, community engagement, facilities, finance, health, municipal performance, public safety, recreation, history, culture, transportation, and workforce.

### **2017-2020 Downtown Framingham Inc. Annual Reports**

Downtown Framingham Inc. (DFI) releases an annual report after every year. Reports include a note from the Executive Director, a snapshot of accomplishments, a needs assessment, measurable outcomes, and goals. It also includes the identification and promotion of current partnerships, members, supporters, new businesses, forthcoming businesses, the DFI board, as well as events and programs. Its most recent report looked back on issues surrounding economic survival in Downtown Framingham and forging ahead with 2021 goals as the pandemic surged.

### **Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Action Plan**

The City of Framingham's Community Development Division, an arm of the Planning and Community Development Department, administers the municipality's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The Community Development Department developed this action plan to detail the proposed uses of CDBG funds in Framingham. The plan outlines the community's plans for using projected program income. The Community Development Department uses CDBG funds for activities in the areas of housing rehabilitation, economic development, code enforcement, public facility improvements, and public services.

The plan summarizes the objectives and outcomes from items from the housing and homeless needs assessment, the housing market analysis, or the strategic plan.

### **2020-2025 Economic Development and Industrial Corporation Strategic Plan**

Framingham's Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC) is a quasi-public entity established by Framingham through Massachusetts General Law. Its mission is to promote economic growth by supporting new and existing businesses, promoting entrepreneurship, and attracting, developing, and retaining talent. Short-term efforts focus on building capacity for the EDIC, adding membership, promoting visibility, and providing a gradual transition to a predominantly private board with seats for City designees. Mid-range goals include creating a business plan and identify emerging projects, as well as marketing, positioning, and imaging. Longer-term outcomes include creating a consensus about roles, responsibilities, funding for economic development, further autonomy, and visibility, as well as creating capacity for real estate development.

### **FY2021-FY2025 Capital Improvement Plan**

The Capital Improvement Plan is a five-year citywide plan that invests critical resources in valuable assets, including School and City buildings and structures, equipment, roads and sidewalks, water and sewer infrastructure, and handicapped accessibility and includes a major push toward energy conservation and climate change preparedness as it relates to stormwater remediation and sustainability.

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### **FY2021-FY2026 Framingham Public Library Long-Range Plan**

A basic tenet that informed the creation of its Long-Range Plan is Framingham Public Library's value of providing equal access to its resources. Its goal is to ensure that it is providing the best and most relevant materials, learning experiences, and enrichment opportunities, and that it reflects the community's needs. Its objectives include catalyzing small businesses, entrepreneurship, and the creative economy by providing research expertise, technology, services, collections, and spaces. Some of its economic development goals include:

- Partner with Framingham State University (FSU) Entrepreneur Innovation Center and establish FSU satellite classes at the Main Library.
- Actively participate in Downtown Framingham Inc. initiatives and advocate for a seat on the board.
- Create a co-working space that provides meeting and networking opportunities for businesses, job seekers, and entrepreneurs.
- Become the research headquarters for municipal government.
- Create an interdepartmental computer lab classroom at the Main Library.

### **Framingham Master Land Use Plan (2020 Update)**

The Master Land Use Plan serves to be a living, working document to guide the city in its future efforts. The plan is designed to harness the energies, resources, insights, and lessons learned by the community to change the perception of a negative business environment into a positive one leading to major revitalization through attractive land-use practices and policies. It further allows for collaboration and the use of innovative land-use efforts. Through the plan Framingham seeks to:

- Establish a business-friendly environment that attracts and retains employers, employees, and other industries that are supported by those businesses.
- Plan new communities while strengthening older neighborhoods.
- Build a sustainable and healthy community.

- Promote the city's economic development efforts that place the city as a hub for the MetroWest
- Maintain, invest, and reinvest in Framingham's infrastructure
- Create a diverse housing stock that meets the needs of those who seek to make Framingham their home.
- Create an energy-efficient and environmental community.
- Engage the city's diverse population through traditional and innovative platforms
- Engage in planning efforts to work with neighboring communities to support regional land-use efforts.

### **Economic Development Strategy: Phase 1**

The Economic Development Strategic Plan effort, or EDSP, was initiated by Town Meeting in 2016 to work towards addressing current challenges and making Framingham a more vibrant and economically self-sustaining community. This first phase of the EDSP aims to develop a community consensus on the specific economic development goals to be pursued and provides a market-based assessment of the city's competitive ability to achieve them. The second phase is currently underway.

The study centered on revitalizing the city's downtown Central Business District and taking advantage of valuable MBTA Commuter Rail access. It also found that Framingham can capitalize on both its proximity and access to downtown Boston as well as its established economic base in corporate operations, life sciences, and healthcare. It also recommended an increase in diverse housing stock options to provide opportunities for new households across the income spectrum to establish roots.

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### **2009 Downtown Railroad Study (2010 Update)**

The study examined the highly congested area around the intersection of Concord Street, Waverly Street, and the Commuter Rail and freight tracks in Downtown Framingham. The scope of the study includes detailed updates of traffic counts and other relevant data. It reviews the ongoing significant delays for vehicles and pedestrians within the intersection. These delays cascade throughout much of the Downtown regularly. While delays related directly to the intersection's operations are excessive, matters are further exacerbated by service interruptions created by the adjacent at-grade railroad crossing.

Additionally, two rail services run through the Downtown area: CSX and the MBTA. The Boston Mainline tracks, which run parallel to Route 135, create a significant physical divide between the north and south areas of the Downtown. Downtown Framingham has an MBTA commuter rail station and there are three CSX rail yards located near the Downtown.

Downtown Framingham has a high volume of pedestrian activity due to the presence of the MBTA commuter rail station on Waverly Street and the concentration of commercial and civic activities. The pedestrian environment is dominated by the character of the historic buildings that line the main commercial corridor.

The consultant elaborated on four alternatives for the current blockage, specifically:

- Grade Separation of Route 126 Under Route 135 and the Rail Tracks
- Grade Separation of Route 135 Under Route 126
- East Bypass – Loring Drive Alignment
- Far East Bypass – New Alignment

### **2016 Southeast Framingham Brownfield Plan Study**

The study details how Southeast Framingham is characterized by a relatively high density of brownfield properties, meaning properties burdened by the reality or perception of environmental contamination, which has great potential to deliver more productive and beneficial uses to the community if the environmental contamination issues are addressed. The study evaluated potential strategies and developed recommendations to transform the existing brownfields into more productively utilized properties that serve the neighborhood and community more fully. Goals of the study include:

- Identifying more holistic impediments, remedies, regulations, and incentives to stimulate productive and beneficial re-use of brownfields in Southeast Framingham.
- Reducing uncertainty regarding potential environmental liabilities associated with redevelopment in Southeast Framingham.
- Developing and communicating tangible environmental assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment strategies to potential stakeholders that will further stimulate investment in Southeast Framingham.
- Helping guide the future investment of Framingham Brownfields Program funds in assessment and cleanup planning that will generate more substantive benefits to and investment in the Southeast Framingham community.
- Providing preliminary recommendations to revitalize, repurpose, and redevelop sections of the neighborhood impacted by environmental contamination.
- Providing recommendations as to reasonable and feasible actions the Town can take to catalyze more investment in Southeast Framingham

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# Administrative Capacity and Current Efforts

# Administrative Capacity and Current Efforts

## City of Framingham

The City of Framingham is Massachusetts' newest city and is staffed by 822 city staff (not including Framingham Public School staff) in approximately 14 departments and divisions. Various departments work in business and economic development efforts throughout the city, including in the downtown area. They are:

### Office of the Mayor

The Mayor is responsible for providing leadership to the community and administration of all City departments and services. The Mayor's Office responds to citizen inquiries and requests, coordinates with City departments to conduct neighborhood meetings regarding community concerns and works with the City Council on its mission to improve the quality of life for those that live, work, and play in Framingham.

### City Planning and Community Development Division

Planning and Community Development is engaged in a variety of planning projects and programs. The division's involvement ranges from conducting the initial studies to implementing plan recommendations. Plans are prepared and updated as required and coordinated with other City departments as necessary.

The Planning staff supports the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Historical Commission, the Historic District Commission, and the EDIC, as well as long-range planning, new zoning bylaws and implementation of the Master Plan. The Community Development Division is responsible for administering the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnership (HOME) Programs.

### Licensing Department

The Licensing Department serves to assist business owners or their representatives in applying for, renewing, and amending a license as quickly and easily as possible.

### Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer

Reporting to the Mayor the Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer is the principal advisor to the Mayor on issues of diversity, inclusion, and equitable practices throughout the City of Framingham. This position provides cohesiveness and serves as a channel for numerous divisions, a resource for the school department, and a driver of staff programs and activities to promote inclusive excellence and welcoming environments for all.

This role performs professional and organizational duties relating to formulating policy and administering and supervising programs that promote diversity and equal opportunity for both the solicitation of vendors and recruitment of employees. This role is developing programs designed to support new vendors with compliance and bidding requirements. This role ensures organizational efficiency in the application of prescribed policies, procedures, and methods.

### Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs Department

The purpose of the Framingham Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department is to create recreation opportunities, preserve open space, manage public athletic fields and parks, and administer recreation programs and facilities for the varied population of Framingham. They provide over 300 formal programs geared towards Framingham's diverse community and it includes the Council on Aging.

### Department of Public Works (DPW)

The Framingham Department of Public Works is comprised of a team that designs, builds, refurbishes, replaces, oversees, and maintains a complex combination of above-ground and below-ground public infrastructure.



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Additional city initiatives include:

- **EPA Brownfields Assessment Program.** Since 2008 the City has used Brownfields Assessment Grant funds from EPA to stimulate reinvestment and reuse in Framingham's environmental justice communities.
- **Soofa Signs.** Two new digital downtown wayfinding signs were installed in 2021. In addition to displaying mapping and current events notifications, they also help count pedestrian passerby.
- **Mayor's Institute on City Design.** The [Mayors' Institute on City Design](#) convenes mayors and design experts to solve the most critical planning and design challenges facing their cities. In 2019, Mayor Spicer participated in a charette that looked at ways to improve the City's gateways into the southside. In 2021, the City was awarded a technical assistance grant to continue that work and look deeper at access and mobility on the southside.
- **Outdoor Dining Legislation.** Framingham created a [Temporary Restaurant Outdoor Use for Reopening Application](#). Discussions around creating something more with the City's Solicitor's Office to update the zoning bylaws to make parking spaces an accessory use to restaurants are ongoing. Additional resources for setting up updated [outdoor dining guidelines](#) will be elaborated within the Plan Recommendations.
- **COVID-19 Small Business Grant Program.** The City also established a [Small Business Grant Program](#) to assist in stabilizing existing small businesses within Framingham that have had significant business disruption due to the impact of the pandemic.
- **LGBTQIA+/BIPOC/Women-Owned Business Directory.** Similar to the [City of Somerville's LGBTQ Directory](#), the city will release a directory of BIPOC- (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), LGBTQIA+, and women-owned businesses. This will be available online for those wishing to buy local and support these businesses.
- **Racial Equity Municipal Action Plan Team.** The City of Framingham is currently participating in the Racial Equity Municipal Action Plan (REMAP) Program, a collaboration between the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the Government Alliance for Racial Equity (GARE), and the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.
  - The City is currently receiving technical assistance to develop and implement a racial equity municipal action plan to further racial equity in Framingham.
  - The first four months of REMAP include training, reflection, and self-assessment.
  - The following eight months will be devoted to crafting and the city's plan and putting it into action to address the structures that perpetuate racism in our community.
  - Framingham was one of six communities selected for the first REMAP cohort, out of 22 applicants.
  - Its current team leads are Hannah Voit, the City's Senior Advisor for External Affairs, and Dr. Maritsa Barros, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer. The interdepartmental team includes representatives from departments such as Police and Human Resources.
- **Economic Development Strategy: Phase 2.** Working with RKG Associates, the City of Framingham is currently updating its Economic Development Plan for Phase 2.
  - The study will conduct a build-out analysis of commercial and residential space in Framingham.
  - RKG will update revenue information and budgetary information for the city.
  - They will conduct a fiscal impact analysis and link it to the build-out analysis.
  - Update data from Phase 1 of the study to address Covid-19.
  - Connecting small area plans for each neighborhood within Framingham.
  - Review zoning opportunities within the downtown.
  - Review opportunities for strategic development for downtown.

## Downtown Framingham Inc. (DFI)

Downtown Framingham, Inc. is an independent non-profit organization that is dedicated to serving both the residents and local businesses of downtown Framingham. Per its website, Downtown Framingham, Inc. (DFI) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission builds business, community, and culture through the Main Street America model's four tenets of economic vitality, area promotion, urban design, and organizational partnerships. This collective mission fuels local, urban initiatives to include both Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and Complete Streets. Actionable deliverables of each tenet are affected through a responsive feedback loop that includes businesses, residents, and local leaders. Continued business and residential growth display the community's unique sense of belonging, which permeates all facets of this culturally rich, historic-built environment.

DFI has led multiple efforts for the local Downtown community, including Oktoberfest, a safe, half-mile event field with street performances, dancers, musicians, a fenced-off beer garden, an antique car show, and more. They also have held Yoga on the Downtown Common to activate this well-maintained greenspace. DFI, the Framingham Restaurant Council, and the Framingham EDIC have also partnered together to support local restaurants during Framingham Restaurant Rush, a summerlong restaurant promotion event that concludes with an awards ceremony for the city's top diners.

DFI has also helped businesses in the sign and façade program, helping them apply and renewing their storefronts and signs. They've also created promotional events to get people downtown and spend money. Furthermore, they've held charity events like Clips for Confidence, where free haircuts are provided for kids going back to school with Twins Barbershop.

Current DFI capacity goals include:

- General operating and fundraising efforts.
- Helping businesses in the sign and façade program, helping them apply and renewing their storefronts and signs.
- Holding promotional events to get people downtown and spend money.
- Utilizing staff to diversify business offerings, especially away from national mobile corporations.
- Supporting start-up permitting and marketing.
- Checking in with businesses individually once a week.
- Marketing and assessing vacancies for potential uses

- Working with local businesses with issues relative to growth and success in response to the pandemic and recovery, including marketing and accounting.
- Liaising to convey business policy matters to the government.
- Completing a stormwater management project for new landscaping features to address flooding through planters boxes and horticulture, particularly in areas of need, such as across the street from the MBTA station.
- Enhancing current greenspace, adding more greenspace, and adding trees throughout Concord Street.
- Creating more direct partnerships with businesses, property owners, residents, and the city. Marketing the business district, connecting future business owners, residents, and employees to downtown opportunities.
- Holding further community events and organizing similar to the Twins Barbershop charity event.

## Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC)

EDIC is a quasi-public entity that was established by the City in the 1990s to address the loss of industry in Framingham and is charged with executing economic development plans. The EDIC focuses on economic development citywide, including downtown revitalization work, beautification programs, and marketing programs, as well as other redevelopment plans and projects.



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*

## Framingham Public Library (FPL)

With two branches, including one located Downtown, the FPL provides guidance, resources, and programs to meet the diverse needs of individuals and groups using traditional and innovative technologies. FPL provides a friendly, physical environment that serves as a community meeting place, encouraging curiosity, free inquiry, and lifelong learning. As a vital community asset, they have built upon their responsibility to actively and broadly promote awareness of the library's resources and services.

Furthermore, the Library has expanded its economic and community partnerships through its Business Resource Center (FBRC). The FBRC is a one-stop shop for: expert guidance for City of Framingham business resources, forms and procedures, small business and entrepreneurship support, LinkedIn Learning's database, and other print and electronic business resources and databases.

The 2020 FPL Action Agenda includes objectives in:

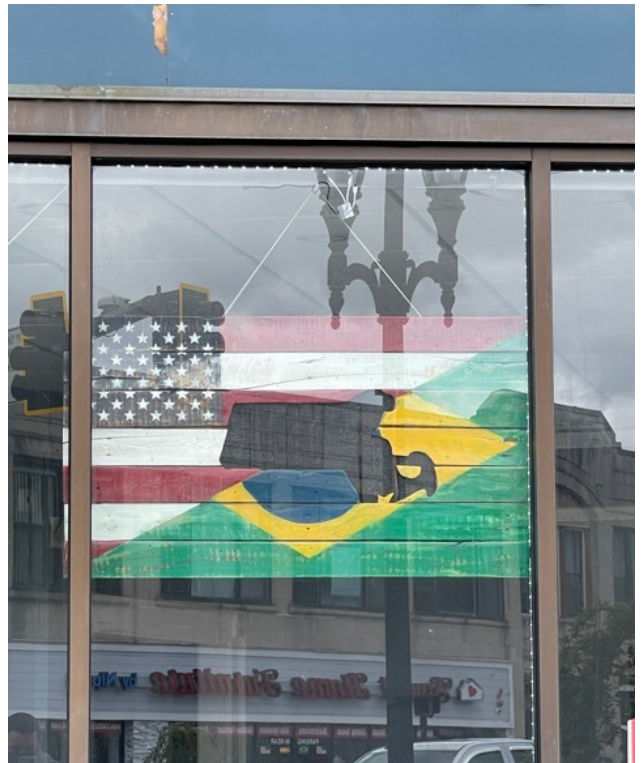
- Catalyzing small business, entrepreneurship, and the creative economy by providing research expertise, technology, services, collections, and spaces by dedicating staff time to businesses and partnering with Framingham State University's Entrepreneur Innovation Center and DFI.
- Leveraging their physical location to support the development of a vibrant downtown. This includes installing an additional Wi-Fi municipal access point at the downtown library to ensure access to free, reliable Wi-Fi. They also plan to conduct a marketing and outreach initiative for Downtown residents, businesses, and social service organizations. Additionally, they are providing outreach to Downtown apartment developments to ensure residents are familiar with Library offerings and activities.
- Creating a library presence across the city, reinforcing the fabric of Framingham's neighborhoods. Activities include continuing to grow and develop Bookmobile routes and offerings and working with Parks and Recreation to install story walks and Bookshares throughout the city's parks.
- Providing resources for entry into the job market and support career development. Activities include developing a Job Skills Workshop Series, offering weekly resume building, and providing electronic resources for the Career Building Collection.
- Fostering meaningful and active collaborations with community, municipal, and business organizations, including Parks and Rec, the Callahan Senior Center to the Early Childhood Alliance of Framingham, and the Framingham Community Connections Coalition.

## Amazing Things Arts Center (ATAC)

ATAC (stylized as atac) is a non-profit arts organization in Downtown Framingham. Founded in 2005, ATAC hosts high-quality, professional musicians and performers as well as being home to a variety of programs, open mics, and classes. Their vision includes bringing together a diverse community of artists and art appreciators of all ages, cultures, and interests in a supportive and nurturing environment.



*Credit: City of Framingham*



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*

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## Framingham State University (FSU)

Framingham State University is a public university that offers undergraduate programs as well as graduate programs, including MBA, MEd, and MS for a total of 39 majors. FSU's mission is to "[provide] affordable, high-quality education to all qualified students, and maintaining a commitment to student involvement, engagement, and academic excellence." Seven residence halls house over 1,500 students at FSU.

Additionally, FSU has an Entrepreneur Innovation Center, a piece of the FSU campus that has been set aside for shared working space. They pledge to help startups emerge in our region which both help create jobs and globally competitive businesses. The Center provides benefits including:

- Ability to work alongside dozens of entrepreneurs, and other professionals, from different industries ranging from IT to fashion design, and healthier eating.
- Student interns from Framingham State University's Computer Science, Management, and Graphics will do mid-sized projects for the entrepreneur members.
- Entrepreneurs learning from each other in the Commons, the Café, and at events.
- Workbar membership, which includes good systems, and the ability to work at the downtown Boston and Cambridge center locations 2 days per month.
- Free black and white printing and a mailing address for companies.

## MassBay Community College

With a campus just north of Downtown Framingham MassBay Community College currently has 60 two-years associate's degrees and one-year programs. MassBay works closely with FSU on key programs and initiatives.

Additionally, the MetroWest College Planning Collaborative is a joint Framingham State University and MassBay Community College college-access initiative, aimed at connecting area youth from underrepresented communities, first-generation college students, and adults, who are not in the traditional college-age group on a path towards the completion of a certificate or a college degree.

## MetroWest Chamber of Commerce

The MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, located in Framingham, is a regional, not-for-profit business association serving more than 500 member organizations ranging from sole proprietorships and small/mid-tier businesses to Fortune 100 enterprises, municipalities, and not-for-profit organizations in the Greater MetroWest region.

They provide programming and events for networking and business development, an independent "voice for business" at municipal and state levels, and support for community and economic development within and among the communities they serve.

## MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)

The MWRTA is a regional bus system that serves 16 communities and has its hub in Downtown Framingham. MWRTA is funded by Federal and State Agencies, local assessments and fare box recovery. It is responsible for fixed bus routes and para-transit routes, which mimic the normal bus routes, but provide a smaller bus with lift capability for people with disabilities. This is a critical asset for the southside residents to access jobs, education, and affordable housing.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Groups

While there are no formal bicycle and pedestrian committees, there are a number of residents who are vocal advocates for these issues and have participated in efforts to plan for and implement Complete Streets improvements in the City.

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# Potential Projects for Funding with Impacts to Downtown Framingham

# Potential Projects for Funding with Impacts to Downtown Framingham

## Framingham Community Center

This funding would be used to create a Framingham community center, as the city currently lacks such a facility that could house everything from historical presentations to public meetings to art exhibitions to theater performances and concerts. The proposed location is Athenaeum Hall in the village of Saxonville, which is one of the oldest public buildings in Framingham.

## Pearl Street Garage

A feasibility study was conducted in 2019 for the Pearl Street Garage. The next step is hiring an architect/structural engineer to perform a current evaluation of the parking structure and stair towers which will then incorporate their analysis into construction documentation for bidding of this project. Funding is needed in part for the city to acquire services for the construction and renovation of the Pearl Street Garage. The Administration would then seek funds from the City Council to cover the remaining costs to complete the project.

## Environmental Justice (EJ) Projects on the Southside of Framingham

The City's Brownfields program will use these funds to undertake assessment and remediation work across the EJ Communities in Framingham. In addition to several City-owned properties that may require some remediation, the City would create a grant program to assist property owners who want to invest with assessment and remediation efforts. It is then possible that a \$6,000,000 state bond bill earmark would be distributed, with approximately \$1,000,000 for Phase 1 and 2 assessment sites (\$40,000 for each of 25 sites) and the remaining \$5,000,000 for environmental remediation. (Remediation costs could run up to \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 per site). With funding in place, the city would engage a Licensed Site Professional (LSP) to undertake the public and private environmental assessment and remediation work. There are over 150 sites in Framingham suspected of Brownfields contamination, most of which are located in environmental justice communities.

## High Priority Sewer Defects Phase III

The City currently has a funding request to continue addressing high-priority sewer main and manhole defects. Two common construction methods will be used, replacement "dig" repairs (replacing sewer pipe) and rehabilitation "no-dig" repairs (sewer lining). In a recent Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Survey (SSES), sewer infrastructure deficiencies located between Waverly Street and Worcester Road as well as areas east of Concord Street were identified.

## Culvert Replacements

The total estimate is \$1.5 million for the replacement of culverts identified through the City's Culvert Assessment and Prioritization Report, Dated March 2021, as being in poor condition and having some of the highest Total Risk Scores.

## Water Main Replacements

Through the City's water main flushing program, the City has found that many streets have less than the 1,000 gallons per minute flow required by the Fire Department.

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# Community Outreach and Engagement

# Community Outreach and Engagement

Stakeholders of the Downtown Framingham study area guided this plan through two primary mechanisms—the local task force of DFI and the City and the engagement activities listed below.

## Engagement Timeline

- A survey conducted: March-April
- Community meeting: May 24
- Stakeholder interviews: May-July
- Feedback on recommendations: July-September
- 

## Prioritized Audience

- Business owners
- Property owners
- Anchor businesses
- Spanish and Portuguese-speaking businesses
- City staff
- Partner organizations
- Business support providers



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*



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## Key Findings

# Key Findings



Improve outreach efforts to local businesses by bolstering current staffing, partnerships, and access to resources.

**Build DFI's organizational capacity in language availability, small business outreach, and community building through events and placemaking projects.**

- Create a position description for a full-time coordinator who is fluent in Portuguese and/or Spanish and identify funding mechanisms.
- Develop a continual strategy to connect DFI with property owners, with the end goal being the construction of a Business Improvement District.

**Create a Marketing Strategy Plan for Downtown Framingham Inc. to attract members and couple it with the city's online business outreach efforts.**

- This includes how to address certain public perceptions of Downtown Framingham.

**Build City's capacity for outreach to small businesses, particularly BIPOC-owned Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking businesses.**

- Incorporate models for building City's capacity, particularly for Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking, culturally competent outreach.
- Build trust to better serve all small businesses in Downtown Framingham.

**Create a permanent online presence to answer business questions, share information on processes, host One-Stop Permitting and Licensing, and add new ways to promote existing resources.**

- Create a process for the City to update its website to navigate to the correct department and resources.
- There are many inconsistencies in this effort currently, as each department plays a unique role in working with local businesses. Although a one-stop shop is the end goal, immediate efforts should be made to update permitting.



Create opportunities for new customers and investment by increasing housing, including housing for a diversity of incomes, within Downtown Framingham.

**Increase foot traffic in the downtown in the near-term and the long-term through additional housing.**

- Create an economic multiplier effect by reducing the reliance on cars, particularly as traffic has gotten worse.
- The more residents Downtown Framingham has, the more businesses will thrive.
- Connect existing housing nearby to downtown businesses. This includes improving wayfinding and multimodal access.



Incorporate opportunities to improve transportation access to Downtown Framingham by providing more bicycle and pedestrian access, reviewing parking opportunities, and integrating wayfinding strategies.

**Improve access and wayfinding for multimodal visitors to downtown.**

**Create a plan for rail commuters, including identifying parking for the station and getting people from**

**Construct a Parking Study for the Downtown Area to improve options and review opportunities.**

**Install attractive and helpful wayfinding signage, including hard-to-find public parking options.**

**Include bike parking throughout the downtown and include a bike parking map within the city Soofa kiosks.**



Enhance current arts and culture resources and connect them closely to the thriving Latinx community downtown.

**Actively promote Amazing Things Art Center as a performance venue and outdoor activities anchor in Downtown Framingham, connecting closely to the local community.**

**Support City and community-based arts, events, and programming that celebrate the cultural diversity of Downtown Framingham's businesses and residents.**

**Increase Quality of Life efforts within downtown by creating placemaking for events, beautification, popups, landscaping, lighting, community chairs and tables, more murals, and public art downtown.**

**Identify downtown alleyways where murals and additional lighting could be incorporated.**

**Work with DFI, Framingham State University, Framingham Makerspace, and/or ATAC to establish an incubator space to support aspiring entrepreneurs.**



Address challenges within the current built environment to improve access to downtown.

**Review underutilized space along Waverly Corridor and improve the uniformity of the district.**

- Create a Façade improvement program
- Provide bike lane and sidewalk improvements within Waverly Corridor connecting it to other areas within the downtown
- Provide additional multimodal connectivity to the Framingham Commuter Rail Station
- Work with MWRTA to further bus stop access as well as bus transit shelters near downtown destinations.
- Create a survey to understand the current systems of access, travel times, destination analysis. This survey is to be done in multiple languages.

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# Diagnostic Phase

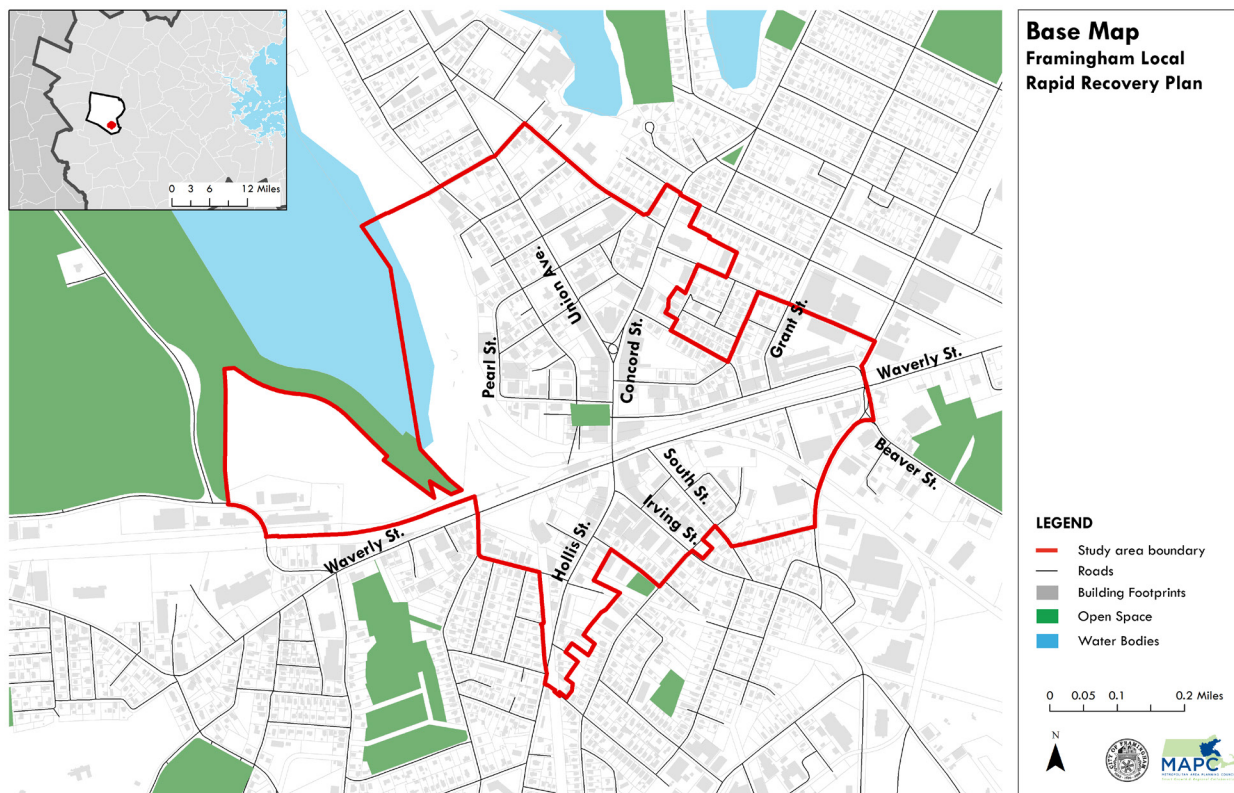
# Diagnostic Findings

## Overview

The local rapid recovery plan for Framingham considers the Central Business District as the focus of the plan. Particularly, the plan focuses on three main streets i.e., Waverly Street, Concord Street, and Union Ave., and is referred to as Downtown Framingham going forward. The area is also anchored by the MBTA Commuter Rail Station with varying degrees of urbanism and density as we move outwards. A map below (fig.1.) outlines the boundary of the study area.

The Diagnostic Phase of this plan concentrated on collecting required and additional data to establish baselines and measure COVID impacts on Downtown Framingham. The information collected throughout this phase aims to inform our understanding of market constraints and opportunities, and to guide the community to strategically prioritize public and private sector investments. That said, data can only show a part of the picture and should be used as a guide and only in conjunction with the broader context. Data collected is broadly divided into four key categories: physical environment, market information, business environment, and administrative capacity.

**Figure 1 Local Rapid Recovery Plan study area – Downtown Framingham**



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## New investment brings opportunities and challenges

Downtown Framingham has many strengths including but not limited to transit accessibility, cultural diversity, affordability, organizational support in the form of DFI and EDIC, and an active and responsive community. The area is also slated for multiple new housing developments both on the eastern and western sides. These transit-oriented developments spurred by the recently permitted multi-family housing zoning in 2015 are opportunities to create a more vibrant and affordable downtown. This upcoming development will provide the existing businesses with opportunities to grow and diversify their customer base while also attracting new businesses. One of Downtown Framingham's strengths is a low rate of commercial vacancy. If demand for commercial space in the area increases with the aforementioned residential development, this leaves businesses potentially vulnerable to rising rents driven by heightened demand.

Framingham benefits from having a well-utilized commuter rail station. However, the train tracks for both the Framingham/Worcester Line of the commuter rail, as well as the CSX freight yard, bisect the study area. Studies have examined the highly-congested area around the intersection of Route 126, Route 135, and the Commuter Rail and freight tracks in Downtown Framingham. MBTA has long-range plans for improving services on this route, including track improvements along the line.



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*

# Methods

Primary data was collected through various community engagement efforts between April and June 2021. These included a business survey designed by DHCD and distributed with the assistance of the City's Planning Department and the Office of the Mayor and Downtown Framingham Inc., assessments during site visits, virtual public meetings, and structured interviews with various stakeholders including City officials as well as business owners of, particularly Minority- and Women-Owned Businesses. Secondary data sources included both paid as well as public data. These sources provide data for various geography levels and time durations. The table below provides information on each of these secondary data sources.

**Table 1 Data Sources**

<b>Data sources</b>	<b>Timespan</b>	<b>Geography Level</b>	<b>Description</b>
ESRI Business Analyst	2020, 2021 estimates	Study area, intermediate, city level	Paid data source; demographic and socio-economic data for the study area, retail leakage estimates, business locator dataset
Infogroup	2016	Study area	Paid data source; utilized to supplement business list creation
CoStar	2020 estimates	Study area	Paid data source; real estate indicators like rents, vacancy, retail space estimations
Census Bureau (ACS)	2014-2019,	Study area, city	Public data source; parcel data, building footprints, city boundaries
5-year estimates	City, census tract	Public data source; demographic estimates, at-risk population data like households with 1+ person with a disability, households with no vehicles	Public data source; Average Annual Daily Traffic estimates and mobility dashboard for pedestrian counts
MassGIS	-	Study area, city	Public data source; parcel data, building footprints, city boundaries
MassDOT TDM System Database	2019 and 2020	Locations around the study area	Public data source; Average Annual Daily Traffic estimates and mobility dashboard for pedestrian counts
City of Framingham and DFI Inc.	-	City	Public data source; zoning map, parking studies, past planning efforts, GIS resources





## Access

**Pedestrian Activity:** According to the MassDOT mobility dashboard estimate, between 2019 and 2020, the city has seen an overall 29% increase in pedestrian counts. These trends are similar to the regionwide experience in the past year. Public safety, health, economic vitality, and quality of life are deeply connected and critical for a Downtown's appeal.

**Sidewalks and Crosswalks:** Based on on-site visits and assessments conducted in the months of April-May 2021, the sidewalk quality varied throughout the study area. Most sidewalks along Union Ave and Concord Street were wide and well maintained. However, sidewalks along Waverly Street were found to be narrow and discontinuous, negatively impacting pedestrian experience alongside the train.

Similar to the sidewalks, the crosswalks along Union Ave and Concord Street were ample, well maintained, and extensively used. Along Waverly Street, however, only a few crosswalks exist, with a poor pedestrian experience on a car-centric street and mostly inaccessible for pedestrians with a broader set of needs like such as curb ramps and wide sidewalks.

**Traffic:** MassDOT Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) estimates from 2019 for the northeastern side of the study area at the intersection of Mt Wayte Ave. and Union Ave, show approximately an 18% decrease in traffic between 2019 and 2020. Similar trends were observed on the eastern side of the study area, along Concord Street showing a decrease in AADT estimates by approximately 17% between 2019 and 2020. Most of these trends can be attributed to the decrease in traffic seen all over the region due to COVID19 impacts.

Traffic congestion and resulting safety issues have been key concerns in the past and continue to be part of the discourse. The presence of the rail stations along with key regional vehicular corridors in central Downtown Framingham are critical factors affecting the downtown experience.

Waverly Street has experienced further traffic issues throughout the years, with pedestrian and bike access limited in comparison to other areas of Downtown Framingham, despite being the location of the Framingham Commuter Rail Station. There has been a proposal to depress Waverly under Concord Street to invest in Concord Street, particularly given the traffic snarl in the area. It is currently served more as a highway, to get people from Ashland to Natick. Access to downtown is critical, both Union Ave and Franklin Street both serve as opportunities.



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*



*Credit: Downtown Framingham Inc*



## Access (cont'd)

**Parking:** There are approximately 950 parking spaces in Downtown Framingham based on estimates from the aerial surveys and input from DFI and the city. These parking spaces are subject to various types of regulations, time limits, and levels of enforcement and are both public and private. It is important to note that these estimates do not account for on-street parking inventory due to a lack of current estimates. Table 2 gives the estimated parking inventory for the area.

*Table 2 Parking in Downtown Framingham*

Lot/Location	# of spaces
Pearl Street Garage	289
Waverly Street Commuter Lot	294
Hollis Court Lot	89
Arcade Parking Lot - 14 Frederick St	100
Fitts Parking Lot - 49 Franklin St	100
UPS parking - 42 Park St	50

*Sources: MASSDOT TDM System Database, 2019 and 2020; City of Framingham Aerial survey, DFI parking map, City estimates*

**Wayfinding:** Signage along all corridors mostly caters to motorists and there have been municipal efforts to increase wayfinding for pedestrians, particularly the inclusion of Soofa signs, which are outdoor electronic displays for downtowns. The study area also contains sharrows, road markings indicating which part of a road should be used by cyclists when the roadway is shared with motor vehicles benefitting bicyclists. The Downtown area also had a few signs marking the downtown area along with multiple DFI banners around streetlights which contributes to the district identity.

The Framingham/Worcester Commuter Rail line can average as much as 1,195 passengers through the Framingham Commuter Rail Station, with as many of 183 on average boarding the line from Framingham Station and up to 263 people getting off in Framingham on an average weekday.



## Public Realm

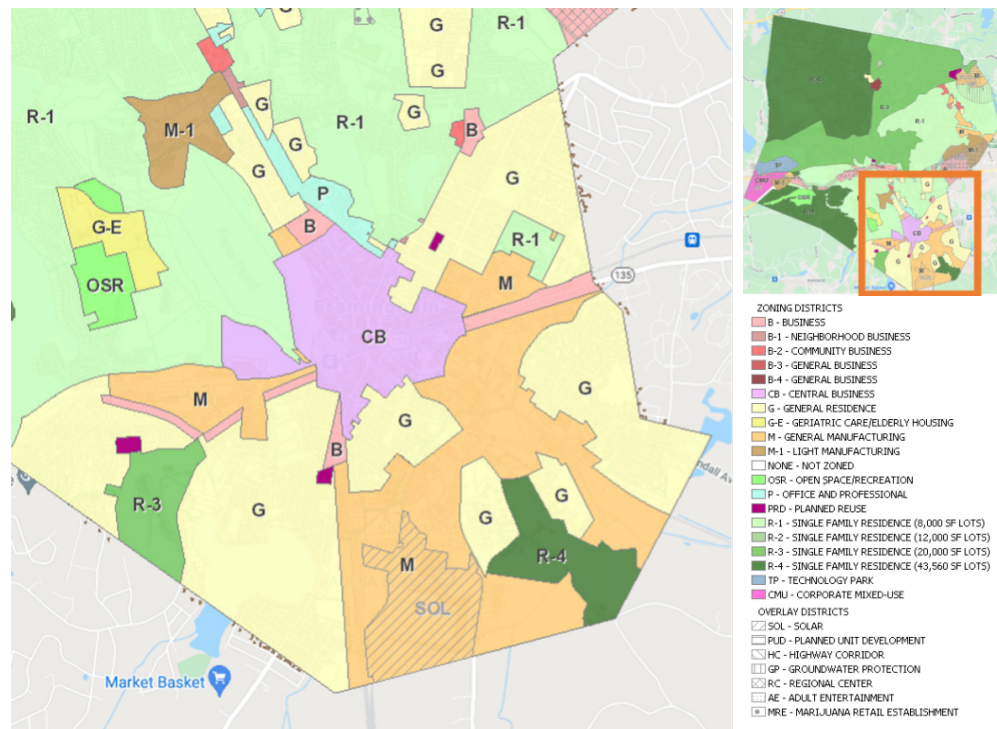
Strengths of the public realm in the study area include a strong mix of business types ranging from a variety of retail offerings including restaurants to service-oriented offerings like banks etc. Another strength of the area is the presence of several diverse businesses belonging to many ethnicities.

Downtown Framingham also has high-quality traditional/historic building facades as well as aesthetically pleasing and well-maintained areas along Union Ave and Concord Street with high-quality lighting. This is not without some challenging portions along Waverly Street which can utilize similar improvements on the public realm.

Overall, the infrastructure, such as the sidewalks, signs, and buildings facades along the streets was accessible and well-maintained in most areas except along Waverly Street.

**Zoning and Land Use:** The Central Business District (see figure 2) allows for denser development including housing. It aims to promote quality development that preserves and enhances Downtown Framingham's history and character; and further encourages a walkable, pedestrian- and transit-oriented environment. The Central Business District has a variety of land uses within its boundary with a commercial core that is surrounded by uses including institutional, residential, as well as industrial.

*Figure 2 Current zoning in Downtown Framingham – CB District (Zoning Map, 2018)*





## Private Realm

At the time of the study, a total of 443 businesses were observed and a significant portion of these businesses had storefronts. It is important to note that these storefronts differ from the total number of businesses as a few retail offerings or professional services are housed in structures without individual storefronts.

At the time of the study, seven street-level vacancies were observed which was a favorable sign following the significant shutdowns and resulting decrease in businesses due to COVID-19.

Outdoor dining options were few and provide an opportunity for Downtown Framingham to activate its public spaces and promote business operations. That being said, the assessment was done in April after a rainstorm, when the weather was cooler. There are a few more outdoor dining options in the summer with Framingham Station, Anastasia's, and Pho Dakao being well received by the public.

Both signage and window displays on individual storefronts were mostly well maintained and clear with a few exceptions along Waverly Street. Most storefronts were well-maintained, however, a few properties with vacancies appeared dilapidated. Multiple business offerings along Waverly Street have large setbacks with parking in the front. The city has leveraged Community Development Block Grant funding for façade improvements programs in the past.



## Customer Base

A 1-mile radius with the center as the intersection of Union Ave and Concord St was used to identify the immediate customer base of Downtown Framingham. Table 3 shows key demographic and socioeconomic indicators for the district and its surroundings to identify characteristics of the immediate customer base.

**Table 3: Key demographic and socioeconomic characteristics (2020)**

Indicators	Downtown Framingham	*1-mile Radius	*2-mile Radium	City of Framingham
Total Population	2,538	20,644	48,855	72,388
Median Household Income	\$40,602	\$50,563	\$72,583	\$84,648
Median Disposable Income	\$34,320	\$39,563	\$55,939	\$63,977
Average Household Size	2.06	2.66	2.45	2.51
Employed Population -16+	1,339	10,498	27,400	36,207
Minority Population	1,709	13,780	20,142	31,014
Median Age	37.5	35.8	10,981	39.7
Unemployment Rate	17.8%	17.6%	37.4	14.8%
Daytime Population: Workers	2,682	9,582	5.9%	41,759

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, American Community Survey  
\*Union Ave and Concord Street



## Customer Base (cont'd)

Downtown houses approximately 4% of Framingham's population or approximately 2,500 persons. Approximately 29% of the city's population or 40,000 persons reside within a one-mile radius of the Downtown.

The population of the downtown has significantly lower median household income, and the area within a one-mile radius of Downtown also has a lower median household income than that of the city, indicating less disposable income and resulting differences in consumer preferences.

- Downtown median household income: \$40,602
- Within 1-mile radius median household income: \$50,563
- City-wide median household income: \$84,648

**Table 4: Race and Ethnicity Characteristics**

Indicators	Downtown Framingham	*1- mile radius	*2-mile radius	City of Framingham
Total Population (2020)	2,538	20,644	48,855	72,388
White Alone	48.1%	49.4%	58.8%	64.9%
Black Alone	9.6%	10.4%	8.1%	7.0%
American Indian Alone	0.7%	0.6%	0.4%	0.3%
Asian Alone	3.3%	4.6%	9.7%	9.5%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	26.4%	25.1%	16.0%	12.4%
Two or More Races	11.6%	9.8%	7.0%	5.8%
Hispanic Origin	31.6%	35.3%	22.5%	17.6%
Diversity Index**	86.3	86.1	76.5	69.1

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, American Community Survey

\*Union Ave and Concord Street

\*\*The Diversity Index is a continuum that ranges from 0 (no diversity) to 100 (complete diversity), where an area's index tends toward 100 when the population is more evenly divided across race and ethnic groups.



## Tenant Mix and Vacancy

Approximately 443 businesses are operational within the study area.

- A note about business lists: Business lists are key elements of business support infrastructure. The city, along with the DFI aims to maintain a comprehensive list of businesses including contact information and business types to enhance programmatic business support and improve marketing.

Using various proprietary and open datasets available to MAPC, a list of 443 businesses along with the contact information and industry type was curated for Downtown Framingham. This estimate is however caveated with multiple challenges, including lack of recent and curated business lists, the impact of COVID closures not being documented comprehensively, and lack of comprehensive data sources on minority-owned businesses in the area.

- Vacancy rates of approximately 2% were observed.
- Downtown's current office, retail, and industrial land inventory (built-up space) are approximately 1.9 million sq. ft. with a vacancy rate of 9% for ground floor real estate according to CoStar 2021 estimates. Additionally, this inventory is made up of 48% office, 38% retail, and 14% industrial space.

Based on CoStar estimates, downtown has an average asking rent of \$18/sq. Ft. and \$20/sq. ft. for retail and office spaces respectively.

Based on our compiled business list, below are the top three business types in terms of the number of establishments. Figure 4 provides the distribution of these businesses based on broad categories.

- Other Services Sector: 16% of businesses in the study area belong to this sector, which includes establishments that are primarily engaged in activities such as equipment repairing, promoting, or administering religious activities, and personal care services like nail salons, etc., except public administration.
- Health care and social assistance: 12% of the establishments provide health care services along with social assistance which also includes religious and other grant-making organizations.
- Construction: 11% of businesses in the district belong to this sector which is also an industrial sector. The eastern side of the district has a relatively higher concentration of such industrial uses due to a legacy of manufacturing zones from the past.



## Customer Base (cont'd)

Table 4 displays the diversity index in Downtown Framingham (86.3, or high diversity) to areas within a one- and two-mile radius, where the diversity of the geography declines. Furthermore, the City of Framingham sees its diversity index at 69.1, lower than the other geographies.

During the 2020 Census, Framingham saw its BIPOC population jump to 46% of the total population, up from 32% during the 2010 decennial.

The average household size in Downtown is 2.06, which is smaller than that within a one-mile radius (2.66) and the city (2.51).

Table 5 provides information on populations that might have a broader set of needs.

- One in every ten households within the one-mile radius has one or more persons with a disability within the household.
- Ten percent of the population residing within the one-mile radius of Downtown Framingham is 65 years of age or older.
- Approximately 24% of the population within the one-mile radius is under 18 years of age.

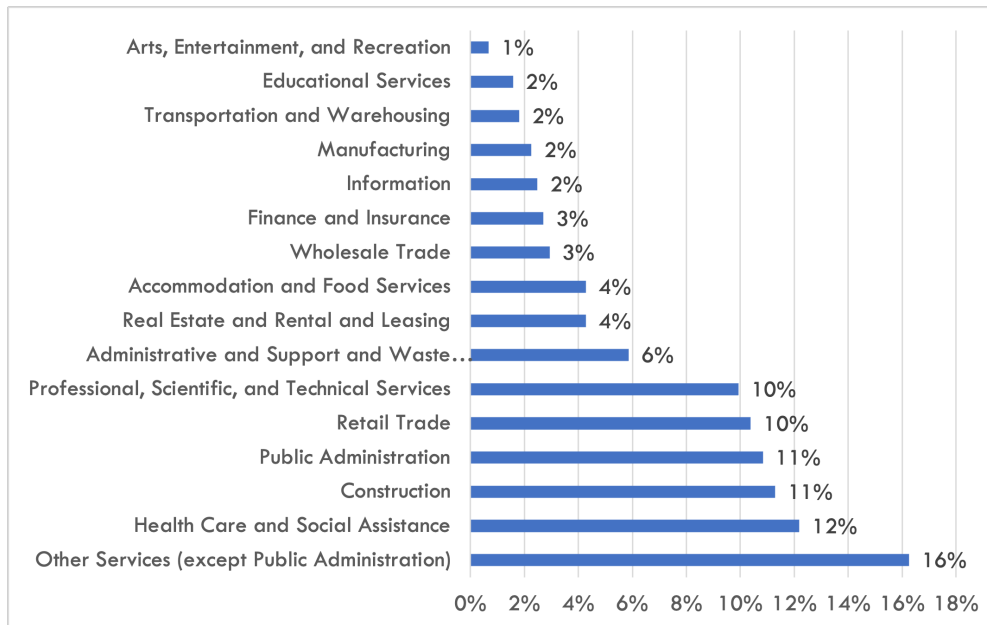
**Table 5: Customer base**

Indicators	Downtown Framingham	*1- mile radius	*2-mile radius	City of Framingham
Households with Disability (2019)	**277	1,985	4,497	6,640
Population 65+ (2020)	**246	2,111	6,915	12,026
Households below poverty line (2019)	6%	6%	5%	4%
Population under 18 years (2020)	487	4,845	10,274	15,792
Population that does not speak English well or at all (ACS, 2019)	430 (14%)	2,423 (12%)	3,059	3,487 (5%)
Child Dependency Ratio	27.0%	35.4%	32.4%	35.4%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, American Community Survey

\*Union Ave and Concord Street; \*\* area too small

**Figure 4 Types of businesses within Downtown Framingham**



## Findings from business survey administered by DHCD

Key highlights from a business survey administered by DHCD during March and April of 2021 are presented below. The survey was directed to owners or other appropriate representatives of business establishments located within the study area to solicit information on the impact of COVID on their operations.

- Participant profile: A total of 17 responses were received from primarily (59%) microenterprises with 5 or fewer employees. The top three categories of industry type the respondents belonged to included – retail (29%), health care (12%), food services and accommodation (6%), and personal services (6%). The majority of respondents (65%) rented their space.
- Impacts of COVID: The pandemic had significant negative impacts on the day-to-day operations of the surveyed businesses with 94% of the businesses reporting being impacted by COVID-19.
  - 59% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed.
  - 54% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019 with 36% of businesses reporting revenue declines of 25% or more.
  - 59% of businesses had fewer on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID.
- Satisfaction with the regulatory environment: 41% of businesses expressed concerns about the regulatory environment. The majority of those who expressed those concerns cited signage regulations and parking regulations-related concerns. For the commercial and physical environment within the downtown, businesses reported being 'satisfied' with the proximity to complementary businesses and uses. They reported being slightly less satisfied with conditions of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks, safety and comfort of customers and employees as well as for conditions of storefronts and signs.
- Input regarding specific strategies: Business owners reported feeling it was 'important' to undertake various strategies including renovation of storefronts and facades, improvements to safety and cleanliness, public parking management, and improvements in the quality of public spaces and streetscape.
- Interest in receiving assistance: 59% of businesses expressed interest in receiving some kind of assistance. Maximum interest was expressed in participating in shared marketing/advertising followed by low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements in the downtown.





## Findings from interviews with various stakeholders

In addition to the business surveys, MAPC also interviewed local small businesses and stakeholders to learn more about the opportunities and challenges businesses currently face. These interviews took place between May and July. After providing a short overview of the project, staff inquired on business background, along with questions on the effects of the pandemic on their business, opportunities for the city to streamline their processes, the impact of residential units on their business, as well as where they received city information from. Other stakeholders were asked to assess their thoughts on economic health for Downtown Framingham, as well their thoughts on furthering business development efforts.

Owners displayed a great deal of pride in their businesses, with one restaurant owner being in business for decades before opening up their Framingham location recently. The pandemic heavily impacted all interviewed businesses, with one service industry business opining, "We always plan for rainy days, but not rainy months or years." Additionally, some businesses were declared essential, while others were not, which affected their revenue streams during the first year of the pandemic.

Although one local restaurant hired about two dozen employees, the pandemic affected their ability to provide raises. Although no positions were cut, a restaurant experienced rising costs, particularly in inventory and of food products, experiencing an up to 25% increase in items like chicken.

Other businesses stated that they were having difficulty finding employees at the time of the interview (May-July 2021). Others still spoke of the perception of crime downtown as something that needed to get addressed. One business spoke of trying to make Downtown Framingham "a more welcoming space" connecting to the Latinx community downtown as well as attracting people from North Framingham and beyond. They want to have more people, particularly younger people, to live, work, and play in Downtown Framingham. They emphasized the need to revitalize the Downtown post-COVID without creating gentrification. They sought to build bridges with Spanish language organizations, major businesses, and local media.

A local banker described the need to make Downtown Framingham more cohesive as a neighborhood, and to be more of a destination for the wider community. They also stated that because freight and passenger trains bisect downtown, there is a need to make Downtown more interconnected to neighborhoods nearby.

Parking was a common thread amongst the businesses as a challenge. A bakery stated that they enjoyed the temporary reduction in time as well as free parking for some of the metered spaces, given that during the pandemic takeaway service was much more common and that as a bakery, pick-up service is more common.

Some businesses expressed concerns relative to the "bureaucratic nature" of starting up a small business, though one hair salon stated that working with the city was quick and easy. Furthermore, requiring personal protective equipment (PPE) for employees, along with enforcing masking proved to be an added burden for local restaurants.

Similarly, there have been a few industries that have been seriously affected by the pandemic that will take a longer period to recover. An auto part store had been hit hard by the pandemic and has found it slow to recover as work-from-home life has reduced the number of people who use their cars to commute.

Relative to housing in Downtown Framingham, all businesses interviewed were strongly in favor of adding residential units downtown, with some expressing their belief that more residential units downtown would increase foot traffic. A service-based business stated, "The more concentration of housing would be a great impact to my business, and also other businesses nearby, and grow restaurants, stores, salons, etc." One business warned, however, that "we shouldn't supplant the local communities" that currently exist downtown through gentrification.

One business stated that the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans and state programs were helpful, but



## Findings from interviews with various stakeholders (cont'd)

that the City's small business grant program was not large enough for businesses to go through the trouble of applying. A local restaurant stated they benefited from innovative funding from the city, namely its small business grants, and that they would like to learn about what other resources they could use, given that they currently had to replace 3 grease traps in their building, which would cost approximately \$40,000.

Some businesses applied to the Paycheck Protection Program, with one service-based business stating their loan was forgiven. Another business stated the value in incorporating the Massachusetts Marketing Technical Assistance Grant for Framingham, where marketing, branding, and online business needs were addressed.

A service-based business suggested the city have a one-stop shop or a central guidebook for current and future businesses. They also stated that it would be helpful if these resources were also in Spanish and Portuguese. One business wants the city to streamline the process in outdoor events, especially offsite events. They also enjoyed the murals that were placed in the front of their building. One business owner stated that alcohol service to-go should be permanently implemented.

When receiving information from the city or learning about new laws, regulations, and allowances being made during the pandemic, there were a variety of opinions from a local business. Many would call local business associations, like DFI or the Framingham Business Association for more information. Others would scour the City's website. One business stated that they received far too much information from different entities to decipher which newsletter or email they should review given their busy schedule.

The outlook for most businesses interviewed was one of cautious optimism. Businesses had stated that the City, especially the Planning and Community Development Department, was a great resource of information, along with DFI, the Framingham Business Association, and the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce.



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*

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# Project Recommendations

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Goal 1.

Improve outreach efforts to local businesses by bolstering current staffing, partnerships, and access to resources.

# 1.1 Build Downtown Framingham Inc.'s organizational capacity in language availability, small business outreach, and community building through events and placemaking projects.

<b>Category</b>	 Admin Capacity
<b>Location</b>	Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02
<b>Origin</b>	Interviews with DFI, City of Framingham, Ann McFarland Burke Consulting recommendations, local businesses
<b>Budget</b>	 Medium Budget: Approximately \$40,000 to \$75,000 a year for a full-time coordinator Funding: City budget, EDIC budget, ARPA (technical assistance to businesses), Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Administration for Children and Families <a href="#">Community Economic Development Projects</a> , <a href="#">Urban Agenda Grant Program</a> , <a href="#">Regional Pilot Project Grant Program</a> , fees
<b>Timeframe</b>	 Long-term, moderate-priority
<b>Risk</b>	 Medium Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Influence:</b> Lack of official authority to enact changes that businesses tell them about</li> <li>• <b>Silos:</b> Verifying that capacity should be a supplemental role to the work the city and DFI currently do, and not separate from it.</li> <li>• <b>Sustainability:</b> Strategies to continually fund the role are necessary.</li> <li>• <b>Capacity:</b> Given the city's financial difficulties, it has been hesitant to invest in new capacity either for DFI or the municipality itself. However, to improve public services and support a growing economy, new staff and training are necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>	Accessibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in technical assistance to businesses, especially BIPOC-owned businesses</li> <li>• Increase in the number of coordinated campaigns between DFI, the city, and businesses</li> <li>• Number of attendees at permitting and licensing events in coordination with the city</li> <li>• Increase in communication with Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking business owners, indicating their comfort with and the value of working with the city and DFI</li> </ul> Inclusivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved working relationships between businesses and DFI</li> <li>• The increased familiarity between DFI employees and businesses Downtown, especially BIPOC-owned</li> <li>• Increase in the number of businesses, particularly BIPOC-owned businesses, that trust DFI and the city to respect and help their success</li> <li>• Increase in % of businesses that get certified as a business</li> <li>• Increase in % of businesses that receive local support</li> </ul>

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## Partners & Resources

City Planning and Economic Development Division, Permitting & Licensing Department, Framingham Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Officer, Framingham Public Library, Framingham Police Dept, DFI, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, Entrepreneurship for All (EforAll), SCORE, MetroWest Legal Services, CDLE USA-Massachusetts, Framingham State University, South Middlesex Opportunity Council, MetroWest Visitors Bureau, Leadership MetroWest, MetroWest Regional Transit Authority realtors/apartment managers & property owners, business owners, property owners, media, civic leaders.

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### Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

Action is needed to market the business district, connecting future business owners, residents, and employees to downtown opportunities. The addition of administrative capacity to DFI during the pandemic has been crucial. Current staffing limitations and the extensive need for more post-COVID strategies have been a strain on local businesses. This would support the capacity of the Executive Director. Event planning has been particularly hard hit with the uncertainty of the pandemic and various variants adding to local business concerns.

### Action Item

**Getting Started** - This project could be initiated by creating a working partnership between the municipality and downtown stakeholders such as DFI, businesses, chambers, nonprofits, media, civic leaders, property owners, and active residents. The municipality and DFI have spearheaded the LRRP planning process. The opportunity exists to use the LRRP planning process and outreach by a (relatively new) DFI Executive Director as a launching point for stakeholder engagement. This process will help the new DFI director to further cultivate relationships with municipal leaders and other downtown stakeholders.

**Develop the Value Proposition** - It will be essential to develop the value proposition for investing human capital and the financial resources into Downtown Framingham Inc. (DFI) and communicate to the municipality and private stakeholders the impact of their investment. The goal of DFI is to build a destination that is attractive to potential businesses, residents, and visitors. If DFI and its partnership with the municipality are successful, results will be increased property values, increased sales and meals taxes, stronger tenancy, a vibrant cultural scene, and a destination where people want to shop, locate a business, dine, and live. A well-managed and sustainable downtown organization will undertake strategic programs and services that will help achieve this goal. Key talking points include:

- Ability to collectively and cost-effectively purchase priority programs and services to achieve impact /

scale

- Provide a unified voice / "seat at the table" for district priorities
- Professional management and staff dedicated to implementing supplemental programs and services in the district.
- Produce and execute cultural and event programming
- Support new and existing businesses
- Ability to respond to crises i.e., COVID
- Leverage resources and collaborations

### Stakeholder Engagement/ Leadership and Partnerships - DFI

Board of Directors and Executive Director should partner with the municipality to engage key property and business owners, and civic leaders to develop a steering committee to explore strategies to expand the organizational capacity of DFI. The clear demonstration of a public/private partnership will help move this effort forward.

Partner with local technical assistance organizations, including MetroWest Legal Services, SCORE, and the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, to efficiently provide businesses assistance with marketing, legal services, financial literacy, and business plans.

Partner with MetroWest organizations, including the MetroWest Visitors Bureau, Leadership MetroWest, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, and MetroWest Regional Transit Authority, to galvanize a broader reach of the area's assets while assessing new system links and infrastructure opportunities.

**Confirming Organizational Model** - Once organizers have established the downtown priorities, proposed programs, and budget, it will be important to achieve consensus that the DFI organizational model is appropriate for Framingham, or if another model should be considered.

**Resources for Startup and Sustainability:** Seed money is required to undertake the effort to expand organizational capacity for DFI. The Massachusetts Downtown Initiative or ARPA funds maybe two sources to consider underwriting this effort. Additionally, local institutions, foundations, and key stakeholders/ Individual contributors may be sources for seed money. Careful consideration should be given to developing a realistic budget and creating strategies to identify a variety of revenue opportunities for the organization. This may include stakeholder membership categories, fee for services, sponsorships, event revenue, grants, foundation, and individual giving.

## Process


Framingham may consider the following steps to begin the process of building support to expand the organizational capacity of DFI.

- Create a downtown partnership with DFI, Municipality, key property owners, key local destination businesses, and chamber of commerce to launch the effort. Consider conducting a "retreat" or another forum for DFI Board, members, and other stakeholders to develop a strategic plan for DFI.
- Partner with higher education institutions, the Framingham Public Library, CDLE USA-Brasil, and SMOC Financial Services, among others, to connect technical support tailored to businesses, particularly those within the immigrant communities.
- Secure seed funding for technical assistance through Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (now part of the One-Stop), ARPA, Foundations, and other stakeholder support to undertake a strategic planning process.
- Form a broad-based advisory committee to provide input and feedback.
- Build cross-collaborations and share resources for marketing, safety, and parking management.
- Create community outreach events, widely distribute user surveys, conduct focus groups, and other engagement tools to develop program priorities.
- Conduct one on one conversations with stakeholders to secure support and engagement in the process.
- Create a platform to implement the Downtown Discount Program.
- Build consensus with stakeholders on DFI model /programming /budget.
- Consider executing a demonstration project that could "show" potential programs and services provided to the downtown through an expanded DFI.
- Develop a sustainable funding plan and secure key stakeholder and municipal commitments for multiple-year funding for administrative and program support.
- Develop a strategy for public and nonprofit grant support aligned with program priorities
- Serve as a vendor at partner events throughout the year, reaching new audiences through in-person engagement.
- Develop a sponsorship opportunities catalog.
- Strengthen DFI Board of Directors and committee participation.
- Administer the annual business climate survey and the annual marketing survey.
- Create paid social media promotions for Downtown Framingham, Inc. business members.
- Create liaison service to convey business policy matters to government.
- Connect prospective businesses with local property owners to find the perfect space for each business.
- Consider Organizational model alternatives if appropriate.



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*

# 1.2 Create a Marketing Strategy Plan for Downtown Framingham Inc. to attract members and couple it with the city's online business outreach efforts

<b>Category</b>		Revenue & Sales Improvements
<b>Location</b>		Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02
<b>Origin</b>		Interviews with DFI, FBA, City, Third Eye Network recommendations, and Downtown Businesses
<b>Budget</b>		Medium (Between \$50k to \$100K) Funding: <a href="#">Regional Pilot Project Grant</a> , Community Development Block Grant, <a href="#">SBA Community Navigator Program</a> , <a href="#">EDA Annual Economic Adjustment Assistance</a> , and <a href="#">Planning Grants</a>
<b>Timeframe</b>		Short-term, high priority
<b>Risk</b>		Low <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Political Support:</b> DFI and City business outreach efforts depend on City Council approval for current funding.</li> <li>• <b>Sustainability:</b> These efforts have begun in earnest, but need to be fully sustainable to continue post-COVID-19</li> <li>• <b>Access:</b> The plan and efforts should be accessed by hard-to-reach businesses and populations although DFI has a fairly extensive network. Digital access is key.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>		This digital marketing plan and marketing strategy for DFI will support the administrative capacity of DFI to reach two different audiences: (1) members of the DFI and provide and receive regular updates and (2) new members to join the DFI.  Impacts should be seen in the next 3-5 years. Key indicators would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DFI members receiving and engaging with regular updates on DFI activities</li> <li>• DFI members reporting back to DFI staff updates to property (tenants turnover vacancies, etc.)</li> <li>• Measuring increase in marketing reach with metrics</li> <li>• Increase in DFI membership over the next 3-5 years</li> </ul>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>		Downtown Framingham Inc, Local businesses, City of Framingham Planning and Economic Development, MetroWest Chamber, Framingham Business Association, Regional BIDs, Public Library, FSU/MassBay



## Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

Downtown Framingham suffered impact from the COVID-19 pandemic similar to many other cities and towns in the region. With programming and many other activities that usually bring residents and visitors downtown on pause for a year, there is a lot of anticipation to bring life back to the community. From Oktoberfest to the 2022 World Cup to being on the Boston Marathon route, Downtown Framingham serves as a cultural center for the community. There is a need for the city and DFI to align their efforts in marketing efforts during the pandemic when businesses were inundated with information and were unable to access key information on business assistance. According to DFI's 2020 Annual Report, 35% of 26 surveyed businesses cited workforce hiring and retention as an obstacle to success, up from 26% in 2019. Furthermore, 65% of businesses do not have paid online advertising. During COVID, agency is needed to use virtual marketing tools, such as 26 year-end business thank you videos on social media platforms. This strategy would be utilized by both the city and DFI as a starting point for identifying business growth post-COVID.



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*

## Action Item

Investing in a marketing strategy and digital marketing plan that consolidates and maximizes the reach of current communication channels will support the efforts of DFI to lead Downtown Framingham in recovery and engage members, both current and new. The strategy and plan will serve as a starting point for Downtown Framingham to gauge growth in the next 3-5 years

- Analysis of the needs and opportunities facing small businesses in the city, as well as an analysis of the needs of future small businesses (based on recent trends and expected developments).
- A summary of available resources (provided by local and state government entities).
- An analysis of the gaps in the services available, based on the business analysis conducted.
- Research on best practices for small business programs in comparable cities and towns.
- Create a marketing strategy that aligns with City's and Public Library's business outreach efforts.
- Create a digital plan for updating the DFI website and coordinate it with the city's outreach website.
- Grow email listserv and social media base through new community partnerships and digital marketing.
- Drive internship and career opportunities by integrating DFI projects and practices into applicable curricula from institutions of higher education, including Framingham State University and MassBay Community College.

## Process

Through the marketing plan, create a Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy. The Steering Committee should undertake community outreach efforts to engage businesses, property owners, and interested residents to continue to identify needs and priorities for the downtown. This work has begun through the LRRP process but will need to continue to refine the work program for DFI. Additionally, these engagement strategies provide the opportunity to offer community education on the DFI organizational model, identify needs and opportunities and build support for the organization. This could happen in a variety of ways, including:

- Community Forums - fun, engaging, and informational visioning sessions
- Peer Learning Panels - Executive Directors from other downtown organizations from similar communities.
- Visits to other communities with downtown organizations to see programs in action
- Community surveys of needs and priorities. Business surveys were conducted through the LRRP process. Additional surveys would be geared to a broader community of customers, property owners, and other downtown stakeholders.
- Focus groups with specific stakeholders such as residents, property owners, cultural entities, restaurants, office workers, entrepreneurs, etc.
- Review language assistance guides and common Spanish/ Portuguese translation and interpretation guides to strengthen outreach efforts.
- Websites/social media.

Similar to the first Recommendation, establish steering committee for implementation that includes stakeholders from DFI, the City of Framingham, the business community, and residents. Utilize hired staff to work with steering committee.

The marketing strategy will be developed through both feedback from the DFI Executive Director, DFI Executive Board and the larger community.

Run #shopdowntownframingham social media campaigns to educate the public on the numerous statistical and evidence based reasons to support small businesses that generate positive community impacts.

Actively promote City of Framingham's Sign and Façade Subsidy program, assisting business and property owners with new or restored signs and façades.





Final deliverables will include:

- A physical and digital marketing brochure for Downtown Framingham
- An updated website
- A professionally produced promotional video
- Social media engagement strategy

*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*



# 1.3 Build City’s capacity for outreach to small businesses, particularly BIPOC-owned Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking businesses

<b>Category</b>	 Admin Capacity
<b>Location</b>	Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02
<b>Origin</b>	Interviews with the city, community-based organizations, Third Eye Network recommendations, and small, BIPOC-owned businesses
<b>Budget</b>	 Medium Budget (~\$100,000 annually for increased staffing, \$15,000 for a Language Access Action Plan)  Funding: City budget, EDIC budget, Massachusetts Office of Business Development, Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation, Community Compact, EDA ARPA Funds, <a href="#">Refugee Microenterprise Development Program</a> , <a href="#">Urban Agenda Grant Program</a> , <a href="#">Regional Pilot Project Grant Program</a>
<b>Timeframe</b>	 The time frame depends on the strategy, but this is a high-priority, short- to mid-term project recommendation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Short term (0-3 months): Host first convening (see below for details)</li><li>• Short term (3-6 months): Map out existing business support services, service providers, creative industry leaders, etc.</li><li>• Midterm (6-12 months): Communicate the options for business support services to help businesses more easily access what they need</li><li>• Midterm (6-12 months): Creation of <a href="#">Language Access Plan</a></li><li>• Midterm (1-2 years): Address gaps in support services, and develop a tracking system for measuring and improving support for BIPOC-owned businesses</li></ul>
<b>Risk</b>	 Low <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Silos:</b> One risk to the strategy of the City hiring a staff member or team of staff to focus on outreach to BIPOC-owned and Spanish-speaking businesses is that the work is then siloed and not integrated into all of the other operations and programming of the City. The additional capacity should not be a replacement or independent of the City and DFI's work, but an added supplement to promote equity and access.</li><li>• <b>Ineffective:</b> One risk of the project is that the city invests in a greater capacity, but that the gap between the business community and the city's technical assistance and resources continues.</li></ul>

## Key Performance Indicators

The anticipated outcomes are invaluable. Currently, there is a gap between the resources and technical assistance that the City and DFI's offer and the small, BIPOC-owned businesses Downtown. Bridging this gap will be critical to the success of the businesses, as well as to the vibrancy and cultural diversity of the Downtown. Determination of a single point of contact within the City for all things Downtown, likely through a new or dedicated position.

- Increase in familiarity and coordination between City, EDIC, DFI, and business and creative economy leaders
- Increase in # of partnerships and coordinated efforts between the city, DFI, EDIC, and business and creative economy leaders
- Increase in grant funding awarded to support businesses through partnerships among existing organizations
- Increase in % of businesses that know who to ask for help for various needs, including financing, translation, marketing, permitting, etc.
- Increase in % of businesses that feel comfortable asking for help for various needs, due to increase in clarity of process, language accessibility, etc.
- Increase in technical assistance to BIPOC-owned businesses
- Greater familiarity of City staff with BIPOC-owned businesses
- Greater trust between businesses and the city
- The success of BIPOC-owned businesses
- Retaining BIPOC-owned businesses Downtown

## Partners & Resources

Potential partners: DFI, ATAC, MetroWest Chamber of Commerce, Framingham Business Association, Brazilian American Center, Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, REMAP Team, Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce, Entrepreneurship for All (EforAll), Without Borders, small businesses.

Resources: The Salem Economic Development Recovery and Revitalization Task Force (EDRR) provides a potential model for improving coordination and collaboration between the city and business and creative economy leaders. Mayor Driscoll created the EDRR in March, composed of municipal staff, elected officials, and leaders in Salem's business and creative economy, to focus on business support. Its objectives are to:

- Identify short- and long-term needs of the business community in Salem.
- Develop and support programs aimed at business recovery and revitalization.
- Serve as a communication vehicle to seek input and share information with the local business community.

In less than a year and a half, the EDRR has led successful efforts to:

- Better understand the needs of businesses and consumers through two surveys
- Improve communication between the city, service providers, and the business community through weekly newsletters (in English and Spanish), industry sector meetings for business owners, and Town Hall-style meetings with a panel of local experts to answer questions from the business community
- Make permitting and funding distribution processes more efficient through outdoor dining and retail permitting process; creation of a Microenterprise and Small Business Grant Program with Federal and local funding; and simple one-pagers on [Financial Resources for Businesses](#), [Informational Resources for Businesses](#), and [Business Support Resources](#) (in English and Spanish)
- Encourage foot traffic through a Salem Together Pledge to market Salem locally as a safe place to enjoy
- Provide resources for businesses through distributing 300 PPE kits free of charge to businesses

## Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

BIPOC-owned businesses were hit hard by COVID, both economically and personally. Through individual interviews with business owners, several business owners shared stories of family members or close friends ill with COVID. Some of them benefited from federal relief, but few benefited from city resources. Based on interviews with community leaders, some of the reasons may be that greater outreach and assistance is needed to Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking business owners. Additionally, they stated there is a lack of coordination and collaboration between business support and local businesses, particularly when it came to language access. Specifically, through interviews with local organizations and small businesses, we have heard:

- Several have not received any city assistance, mostly because they weren't sure of which types of assistance exists, especially during the height of the pandemic, where information for businesses was both sporadic and overwhelming.
- Remarks from businesses that they are not aware of the resources available to them, and when they do learn of them, it is too late to effectively take advantage of the opportunity, or the process was too byzantine to address with the limited amount of time businesses had.
- Examples of businesses being unable to meet with correct City staff when seeking assistance, generally because they either didn't know which office was best to address their need or concern, there was a language barrier, or their desire to start or expand a business was too preliminary.
- Examples of staff and resources not being in languages that business owners are the most comfortable using.

## Action Item

This project aims to improve coordination and collaboration between the City, DFI, the Library, non-profit, and private business support services utilizing existing capacity and resources to better reach and support POC-owned businesses. Based on this project, potential increases in staff capacity at the City, DFI, or non-profit organizations for Downtown Framingham business support services, including in-person outreach to Spanish- and Portuguese-language, BIPOC- and immigrant-owned businesses. Other actions include:

- A strategic small business assistance plan to work in conjunction with the DFI, the Public Library, and key partners.
- Hire culturally competent positions, including multilingual staff.
- Utilizing the Framingham REMAP Action Plan currently being drafted to inform policies, outreach, and efforts.
- Use of a [Racial Equity Tool](#) with policies or programs: Each department and office pilot use of the GARE Racial Equity Tool in a select policy or program.
- Develop and implement a [Language Access Action Plan](#): Provide a systematic approach for addressing translation and interpretation needs of businesses, employees, and residents. The plan will include: strategies to communicate through traditional and non-traditional methods in regular communications and emergency situations; priorities for implementation; and methods for ongoing assessment and adaptation as community needs change.
- Incorporate racial equity and language access into budgeting processes.
- Release event-based newsletters that cover business-related news, highlighting employment opportunities, business enhancements, and façade improvements.
- Grow email listserv and social media base through new community partnerships and digital marketing.

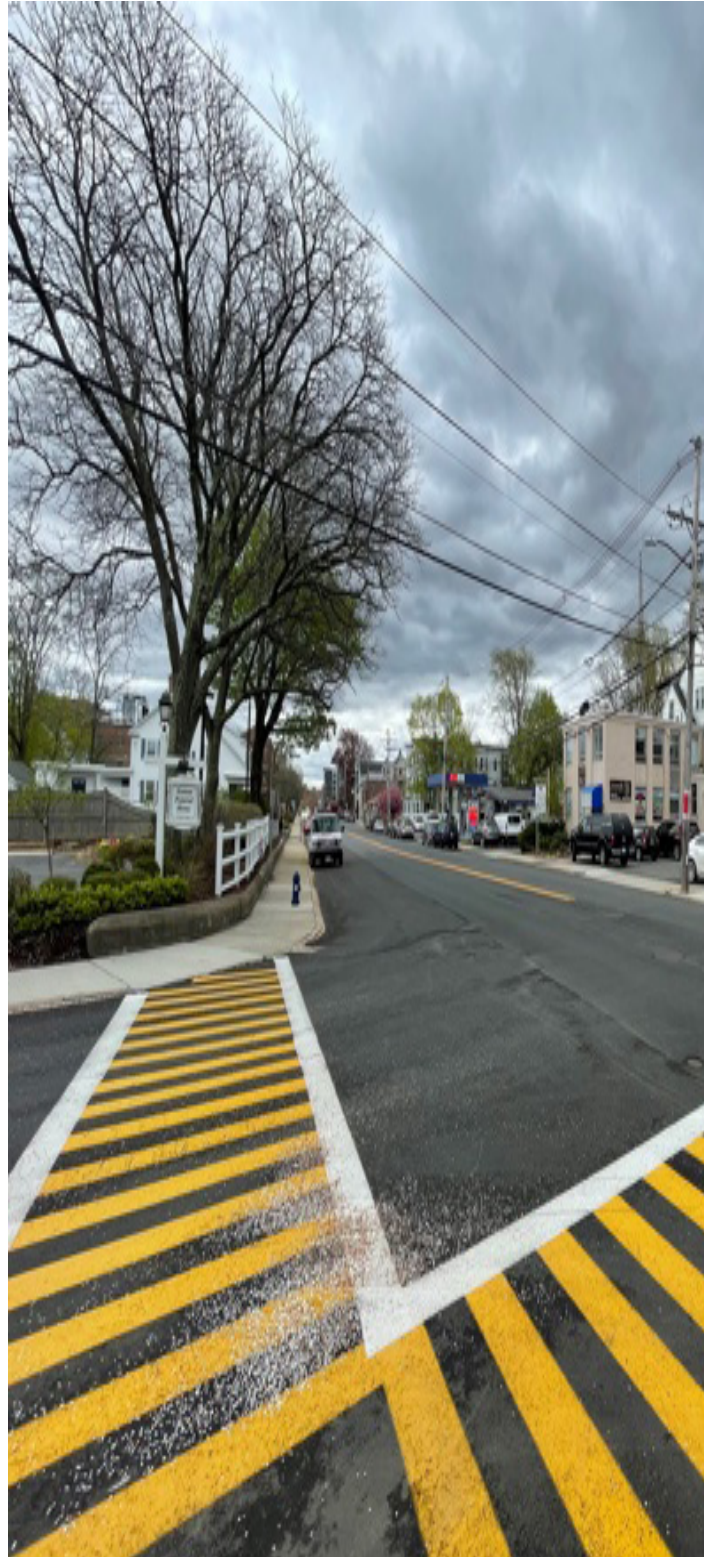
## Process

City of Framingham EDIC hosts a meeting of business support service providers to reflect on the past 18 months, identify lessons learned, and start strategizing about business outreach and program collaboration.

Building off of the initial meeting, City invites service providers and business and creative economy leaders to join a task force focused on improving support for BIPOC- and immigrant-owned businesses. Where possible, help identify funding for non-profit partners to participate in the coalition.





City continues to convene the task force to complete the following:

- Review the LRRP, including the diagnostic assessment and community engagement findings
- Along with DFI, identify and map out existing service providers, their missions, and what services each offer.
- Identify who businesses should reach out to for inquiries about each offered service, and identify those that speak Spanish and Portuguese. For example, [Prosper Portland's Inclusive Business Resource Network website](#) includes an easy-to-navigate list of every business provider, role they serve and the services they provide, their contact information, and whether they speak Spanish.
- Conduct a broad, coordinated outreach campaign to effectively communicate these resources to BIPOC- and immigrant-owned establishments. Outreach campaign must be based on in-person communication in English, Portuguese, and Spanish and should be conducted annually.
- Finalize the BIPOC-, immigrant-, women- and LGBTQIA+-owned business directory and translate it into Spanish and Portuguese. Post the directory within the City's website, DFI's website, and the Public Library's website.
- Identify and address gaps in business support services. For example, based on the community engagement for this plan, there is a lack of in-person, Portuguese- and Spanish-language outreach to businesses. An example of how to address this gap is from Prosper Portland, which offers "navigators" in certain neighborhoods to help businesses and entrepreneurs access the resources they need. Where needed, identify sustainable funding sources for service providers to address the gaps.
- Track and publicly communicate key metrics of support for BIPOC- and immigrant-owned businesses, in order to monitor and improve services, such as outreach, financing, and technical assistance.
- Identifying businesses that have opened without business permits and connect them to partners that assist in the business formalizing process.



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*

## 1.4 Create a permanent online presence to answer business questions, share info on processes, host One-Stop Permitting and Licensing events, and add new ways to promote existing resources

<b>Category</b>		Revenue & Sales Improvements
<b>Location</b>		Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.03
<b>Origin</b>		City Licensing Dept, Citizen Participation Officer, DFI, Levine Planning Strategies recommendations
<b>Budget</b>		<p>Small Budget: Creating online technical assistance and streamlining, creating a modern online presence for businesses, paying for event space and equipment (Under \$50,000)</p> <p>Funding: <a href="#">IT Community Compact Grant</a> during its next iteration once the City is again eligible, CDBG funds, EDA Planning, and ARPA dollars can be used to help cover the capacity needs as they arise.</p>
<b>Timeframe</b>		Short- to medium-term
<b>Risk</b>		<p>Low</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accessibility:</b> Since many downtown businesses are "microbusinesses," it is very difficult for business owners to attend events away from their stores.</li> <li>• <b>Staffing:</b> There is a need for dedicated staff and resources for this process.</li> <li>• <b>Updating:</b> Online presence could fall into trap of being static.</li> <li>• <b>Collaboration:</b> Multiple departments have multiple responsibilities for assisting businesses, adding to potential confusion. Will require collaboration among departments as well as sensitivity to the technical limitations of small businesses.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved working relationships between the City and businesses as permit/ license applications are completed more accurately and then can be processed faster.</li> <li>• Reduction in the amount of time required by City staff to respond to inquiries from local businesses.</li> <li>• Reduction in the amount of time required to obtain licenses and permits.</li> </ul>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>		DFI, FBA, Multiple City Departments, local businesses, library

## Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

Conversations with businesses indicated the need for there to be a unified voice in business assistance, particularly when the pandemic struck, as multiple proprietors were waiting with bated breath as to the regulatory changes from the city. Coupled with the need for businesses to reopen in the new normal and entrepreneurs seeking to start new ventures after the recession, a one-stop-shop for business assistance and streamlining of licensing and permitting requirements is necessary.

Furthermore, not many businesses were aware of the funding opportunities that were available during the pandemic, and issues (such as language access) prevented them from taking advantage of local, state, and federal programs.

As requirements from local businesses changed in response to the pandemic, and later to a potential post-pandemic period, there is an ongoing need for a coherent and online business process.

Licensing programs currently being used by the City:

- Civicplus is for the website and Choose Framingham
- OpenGov for budgeting
- Accela for Inspectional Services and licensing

Municipalities within the MAPC region can identify some of their IT priorities via the [MAPC IT Needs Survey](#).

## Action Item

- Creation of a permanent online presence in multiple languages to assist the city in its business outreach efforts.
- Create a space in multiple languages to further address business owners' and entrepreneurs' questions on processes, permitting, and licensing.
- Promote current resources that are available to help small businesses.
- Stronger coordination with the state guidance.
- Review current licensing programs within the city and identify most user-friendly and impactful program for Framingham (OpenGov, CivicPlus, Accela, etc.).
- Completion of [MAPC IT Survey](#) by multiple city departments.
- With the Community Compact [Information Technology Grant](#) being available intermittently, Framingham should be evaluating technology priorities. This grant offers a great opportunity for municipalities to prioritize shared needs and identify common solutions that can be successful.

*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*





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## Process

### Project Initiation:

1. Assign a project manager and allocate a reasonable portion of his/her time to completing this project.
2. Convene a working group of departments involved in permitting and licensing, preferably with instructions from the mayor's office to be active participants.
3. Determine what outcomes the project initiators and working group specifically seek to accomplish with this project, and what additional desirable outcomes exist.
4. Speak to any additional local stakeholders whose experiences and needs factor into this project.
5. Create a shortlist of achievable, desirable outcomes.

### Product Research:

1. Create a sheet of potential vendors that could provide this service and communities that have utilized their services. Outline product options and any pricing information.
2. Research internal Technology Services capacity at the city level to determine if providing an in-house product is an option. Determine if funding additional staffing capacity, if needed, is likely to be cost-competitive with vendors (keeping in mind that in-house products are more likely to be tailored to local needs but can come with other challenges.)
3. Be conscious of the end-user experience as well as the internal experience using any process.

### Determine Selection Methodology:

1. Determine whether to issue an RFP/RFQ or develop an in-house product.
2. If an RFP/RFQ will be issued, outline selection criteria based on speaking to local stakeholders
3. If preferring an in-house option, also keep options open if adequate talent cannot be obtained within budget constraints.

### Select Cautiously:

1. Select an implementation path that enjoys broad support in the working group and accomplishes project goals.
2. Be conscientious consumers, making sure you understand what vendors are offering and for what cost.
3. Keep at least one backup plan in mind to provide an option to change course and maximum city leverage.
4. Be clear with a vendor or new staff as to what your top needs are. Avoid being convinced to utilize prefabricated products unless you determine they meet your needs.

### Implement System:

1. Consider inviting one or two key users to beta-test a system if possible before full launch.
2. Maintain a working group to manage implementation as it moves forward.
3. Make sure there is a clear project manager on the city side and maintain active involvement in product deployment.

### Assess Effectiveness:




1. Develop a system to assess product effectiveness, including a business survey.
2. Be open to changing courses as needed based on feedback.
3. Continue to evaluate project effectiveness on original criteria as much as possible.

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Goal 2.

Create opportunities for new customers and investment by increasing housing, including housing for the diversity of incomes, within Downtown Framingham.

## 2.1 Increase foot traffic in the downtown in the near-term and the long-term through additional housing

<b>Category</b>	 Private Realm
<b>Location</b>	Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02
<b>Origin</b>	Downtown businesses and business associations, DFI, FBA, City of Framingham
<b>Budget</b>	 Medium Budget (\$75,000) <p>The City of Framingham wishes to undertake a Housing Production Plan as defined by M.G.L. Chapter 40B in order to proactively plan for local housing need and meet the requirements of Chapter 40B. The city hopes to engage a consultant to review and update the 2014 Housing Plan and work with stakeholders to determine the best path forward to ensuring the city has a variety of housing types to meet all needs. For a budget of \$75k, this could probably also include an education and engagement component to build support for housing recommendations.</p> <p>\$200,000 per year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resources to EDIC to do a project, which is currently at low staff.</li><li>• EDIC to acquire and prep, including parcel assembly.</li><li>• Sell to interested developers.</li></ul> <p>\$70,000-\$90,000 per year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funding Economic Development staff to engage existing property owners and new developers to provide housing options in and around Downtown.</li></ul> <p>Funding: <a href="#">Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA)</a>, <a href="#">Community Preservation Act</a>, <a href="#">Housing Development Incentive Program</a>, <a href="#">Abandoned Housing Initiative Strategic Demolition Fund Grant</a>, <a href="#">State Planning Assistance Grants</a>, <a href="#">Housing Choice Capital Grant</a>, <a href="#">Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) Competitive Grant</a>, <a href="#">AARP Community Challenge</a>, <a href="#">Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant Program</a></p>
<b>Timeframe</b>	 Long-term; Starting with change zoning that limits housing development, getting community engagement and involvement, particularly on the negative impact to businesses through zoning changes and moratoriums. And lastly, creating additional housing choice and development.

## Risk



### Medium Risk

- **Political will:** Reduction of the Commercial Business zone and expansion of moratorium.
- **Community support:** Including the perception of burdening schools and creating more traffic. Furthermore, an HPP will recommend policy and program changes, but won't itself result in any new policies or programs. If the goal is to identify what housing policies and programs the city should prioritize in the next few years, then an HPP is a good tool.
- **Slowdown in economic vibrancy during pandemic:** Before COVID the city would sell downtown as an opportunity to live, work, open a business, dine, and play, but there has been some slowdown in that vibrancy, particularly during the hardest times of the pandemic.

## Key Performance Indicators

- The city recognizes the need to provide affordable housing in order to create and maintain a diverse population and to provide housing for those who live or work downtown.
- There is a closer connection to the impact of zoning and development to local businesses and economic growth.
- Periodic review of housing policy with an equity lens to include language relating housing to equity and disparities.
- Development and maintenance a database on the number and location of affordable units throughout Downtown Framingham, including rented and owned, existing and new single and multi-family family homes, condominiums, apartments. Inventory the most vulnerable properties to redevelopment and renter displacement.
- Development of specific goals to increase the number of affordable housing units by "X" and of rental units by "Y", to be determined by HPP.

## Partners & Resources

### Municipal government

- To encourage housing
- To not reduce the CB zone
- To create an HPP
- To make sure permitting for housing goes smoothly
- Economic Development staff must sell the city, sell the opportunities, push Choose Framingham to "sell"
- Review of Occupancy Rate, particularly the Bancroft building

Community support for local businesses, property owners, commercial brokers, developers.

Resources: [CHAPA Municipal Engagement Initiative](#): CHAPA's Municipal Engagement Initiative seeks to build support for affordable housing production in communities across the Commonwealth. CHAPA staff will work with community groups and municipalities to conduct public education efforts in support of housing production, with an emphasis on affordable housing. Staff will work with communities to develop strategies that work within the context of each community. This initiative will also work in concert with the efforts of other organizations providing technical assistance and other support to communities.

CHAPA is seeking communities to apply under its programs by October 28, 2021. Municipal governments and community organizations are encouraged to submit an application

## Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

Existing residents serve as the consumers or clients of businesses. Residential displacement and gentrification can contribute to commercial displacement. Therefore, as residents are displaced from the neighborhood, the consumer base of the businesses changes. In particular, if certain demographics are disproportionately impacted by displacement, then that demographic group will no longer serve as consumers. For example, if the Latinx population is displaced from Downtown Framingham, then businesses that depend on Latinx clientele will suffer from loss of revenue. If new residents move into a neighborhood, they may or may not patronize the existing businesses, depending on whether the businesses are successful at attracting and serving their needs.

All of the downtown businesses that were interviewed are supportive of new residential development and appreciate the opportunity for more consumers.

Downtown Framingham's cultural diversity, fiscal health, and quality of life, in addition to the lives of business owners and their families, are all impacted by the need to have housing diversity, including affordable housing, in and around the study area.

Businesses need customers, concerns from local businesses and biz organizations. Furthermore, residential gentrification and displacement, which have been studied for decades, are related to commercial displacement and gentrification.

## Action Item

- Require review of Housing Zoning Policy at a frequency sufficient to address current conditions and needs of constantly changing housing market and City demographics. Review policy with a race and equity lens to include language relating housing to equity and disparities.
  - Establish a Framingham Affordable Housing Policy, including language stating that the city recognizes the need to provide affordable housing to create and maintain a diverse population and to provide housing for those who live or work in the city.
  - Develop and maintain a database on the number and location of affordable units throughout Framingham, including rented and owned. Inventory the most vulnerable properties to redevelopment and renter displacement.
- Address the significant need for affordable housing of the types desired by people who wish to live in Downtown Framingham, including rental units that will not become unaffordable after a set period of time.
  - These goals should be included in the HPP. The city should work with tenants, property owners and developers to develop a plan to ensure that the affordable housing goals are achieved.
  - Halt zoning changes, moratoriums, and alteration of the Commercial Business zone
  - Review RKG recommendations and study as a guide to capacity, need and opportunities are.
  - EDIC to have a more active role in purchasing, assembling property, get permits, then sell to a developer.
  - Expand property owner and developer outreach within the downtown.
  - Promotion of the Downtown as an active community to invest money in.
  - Advocate for property owners to incentivize residents to not own cars, particularly in new mixed-use developments

## Processes

- Increase occupancy of the existing buildings (establishment of baseline)
- New housing units built downtown
- Annual surveys with the businesses through Business Climate Survey, using January's as a baseline that indicates improved business climate.
- Incorporate income questions
- Incorporate public information on downtown foot traffic
- Create zoning that encourages housing production. Implement MAPC's TOD planning for downtown Framingham.
- Make sure that the city's inclusionary policy is well-aligned with the rest of their zoning ordinance and with the city's needs.
- If the city owns any land downtown, undertake an RFI/RFP process to build affordable/mixed income/mixed-use housing.
- Create a down payment assistance program and specifically market it towards downtown employees.

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Goal 3.

Incorporate opportunities to improve transportation access to Downtown Framingham, by providing more bicycle and pedestrian access, reviewing parking opportunities, and integrating wayfinding strategies

## 3.1 Improve access and wayfinding for multimodal visitors to Downtown

<b>Category</b>		Public Realm
<b>Location</b>	Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02	
<b>Origin</b>	DFI, the City of Framingham, recommendations from Neighborways Design, local businesses	
<b>Budget</b>		<p>Large: Approximately \$150,000 for ADA Transition Plan efforts, however, the acquisition and connection of rail trails throughout the city would be more expensive (\$6-\$10 million)</p> <p>Sources: American Rescue Plan Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Funds, <a href="#">MassTrails Grants</a>, <a href="#">America Walks Community Change Grants</a>, <a href="#">Federal Transit Administration Transit-Oriented Development Planning Grants</a>, <a href="#">Efficiency and Regionalization Grant</a>, City funds</p>
<b>Timeframe</b>		Long-term: With addressing connectivity options to local businesses being the initial work and building a connection of rail trails in the long-term
<b>Risk</b>		<p>Medium Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accessibility:</b> Wayfinding signage in languages other than English are limited and pushback for signage can be extensive.</li> <li>• <b>Accessibility:</b> Downtown Framingham, and all its access points, are predominately car-centric</li> <li>• <b>Built environment:</b> Many places lack the space or access for multimodal forms of transportation</li> <li>• <b>Perception:</b> Businesses tend to view parking as an issue regardless of ongoing efforts.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased visitation to public amenities from all forms of transportation</li> <li>• Decreased complaints about parking, better parking use</li> <li>• Additional options to access downtown by increasing mode share of walking, biking, and transit.</li> <li>• Local access to downtown amenities and measure via intercept and online surveys</li> <li>• Uniformity in signage and focus on Downtown as a destination by implementing recommendations from wayfinding signage plan</li> <li>• Increase the audience and # of people visiting downtown to shop and hangout</li> <li>• Increase the number of people engaged in the public process by measuring # of survey respondents, people attending events and meetings</li> <li>• Growth in walkable, urban core by implementing policies and plans that introduce viable trends in community and economic development. Outcomes include strengthening community relationships; delivering habit forming, positive sensory experiences; and encouraging small business patronage from adjacent neighborhoods.</li> <li>• Fulfillment of the strategic merits of Transit Oriented Development and Complete Streets policies, working directly with residents, government officials, and private stakeholders.</li> </ul>	
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>	DFI, MBTA, MWRTA, City Planning and Economic Development Division, Mayor's Office, DPW, Parks & Rec, Planning, Communications, local walking, bicycle, and trail groups	

## Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

Over the past few years, the landscape of Downtown Framingham has undergone dramatic change, including major roadway, sidewalk, and lighting enhancements. The resulting mix of increased foot traffic, housing unit construction, and an influx of new businesses generated further community benefits—namely, growing employment and heightened civic participation within the culturally diverse, walkable urban core.

At the height of the pandemic, businesses saw their clientele drop, with many afraid to set foot in their stores. Restaurants in particular had to think of innovative ways to serve food without having customers dining in. The pandemic saw the growth of Uber Eats, GrubHub, and other food delivery services, as well as people opting for takeout, creating a need for short-term parking spaces. Although that has yet to dissipate, the perception of lacking parking access within Downtown has been predominant amongst businesses, especially as people begin to stream back in during this time.

Additionally, although the city has done much to improve downtown to make it more bike and pedestrian-friendly, the downtown could benefit from further implementation of the city's 2014 Transit-oriented development (TOD) study. Furthering accessibility through walking and biking to downtown would be a helpful boon to businesses that suffered from the pandemic.

Lastly, the city has not completed an ADA plan since 2005. The city currently pays for BlueDAG cloud software, which has the capability of hosting the city's ADA assessment and compliance data and then using that information to formulate a transition plan for the city. This plan will be integral in making Framingham a more accessible, safer, and welcoming city for all of its residents, employees, and visitors and provide a data management system for ongoing ADA compliance efforts across city assets.

## Action Item

- Convene a working group to review previous wayfinding options through the Beta Group Study.
- Incorporate additional bike parking options throughout downtown
- Expand dedicated bike lanes over sharrows
- Further connectivity to regional trail network and incorporate directional signage
- Connect existing housing to the downtown
- Further discussions with CSX to review their current plans for their freight lines and their interest in selling their lines to create trails throughout the city.
- Refine and implement project prioritization plans annually.
- Install Soofa signs, complete with wayfinding maps throughout the Downtown and commit to providing relevant, up-to-date information about happenings throughout the downtown.
- Update of the citywide ADA Transition Plan.
  - This funding that the city is requesting would be to pay for an architectural firm to conduct the necessary site assessments of all the city's assets.
  - Populate the BlueDAG system with the ADA compliance data.
  - Create an updated overarching, comprehensive ADA Transition Plan to meet full ADA compliance.
- Advocate for alternate transportation modes, including a group to address the implementation of Framingham's Complete Streets policy.
- Engage the adjacent neighborhoods to determine prioritization of walking paths from local neighborhoods to Downtown







## Process

- **Project Initiation** – Develop scope, apply for funding, hire consultants, identify internal department and project manager for Active Transportation Wayfinding and Infrastructure Implementation
- **Existing conditions analysis** – Review and tie into existing plans, projects, and coordinate with current construction projects and identify opportunities for improvements (routine resurfacing, ADA transition plans, DPW maintenance contracts, Sewer and Utility Work)
- **Planning, Design, and Implementation**
  - Review annual project prioritization plan for implementation for the following project types:
  - Bicycle Facility Planning and Design Implementation – neighborhood greenways to separated bike lanes)
  - Pedestrian Facility Planning and Design Implementation – Sidewalks, crosswalk
  - Parking – Parking analysis and education and expand public parking, parking demand management, pricing demand analysis
  - Wayfinding Sign Design and Implementation Plan. Conduct a marketing/branding/wayfinding implementation plan. Develop DRAFT signage options for feedback from the public and stakeholders. Revise and finalize the design and develop implementation plans that include signage for decision and confirmation points.
- Spot Treatments (fill gaps and address barriers - crossing improvements, accessibility issues)
- Traffic Calming – Raised (speed tables, humps, raised crossings) and horizontal deflection (neckdowns, crossing islands, chicanes)
- Placemaking- Beautification/amenities benches, charging stations, tables, parklets, bike parking, bike fix-it stations, water fountains, art, sculpture, green scaping - planters and street trees, etc.
- Demonstration and pilot projects – Parklets, road diets, curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands.
- Programming, education, engagement – Communication and community building
- Engagement – Ongoing coalition and community building through community engagement, education, and programming such as fireside chats with lemonade/coffee socials, walk and bike tours, regular events, etc.



Credit: Soofa Digital

### 3.2 Create a plan for rail commuters, including identifying parking for the station and getting people from the train to the bus system. Work with MWRTA to further bus stop access as well as bus transit shelters near downtown destinations.

<b>Category</b>		Public Realm
<b>Location</b>		Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02
<b>Origin</b>		DFI, City, Local businesses
<b>Budget</b>		<p>Large (\$500k and higher), this would depend on the type of improvements sought after.</p> <p>Sources: EDA Public Works Grant, ARPA Funds, <a href="#">Fiscal Year 2021 Competitive Funding Opportunity Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program</a>, <a href="#">Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning, Arts and Transportation Rapid Response Program</a></p>
<b>Timeframe</b>		Medium; At least 5 years, though this recommendation would be able to begin immediately
<b>Risk</b>		<p>Low Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Funding:</b> Major risks to this program are identifying stable funding sources as well as staff resources as this will also be a major undertaking in terms of management and staff on the municipal level.</li> <li>• <b>Political will:</b> Reaching political will to implement a major program can be difficult.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in foot traffic connecting to the Commuter Rail Station</li> <li>• Increase in bicycle counts from the Commuter Rail Station</li> <li>• More connectivity between bus routes and Commuter Rail Station</li> <li>• Increase in parking spaces for commuter rail travelers, particularly residents and nonresidents who utilize downtown amenities.</li> <li>• Installation of MBTA bus shelters</li> <li>• Expansion of bus stops to 20 stops</li> </ul>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>		City Staff, MBTA, MWRTA, DFI, FSU, MassBay

### Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

Based on interviews with the business community, parking and accessibility remain the number one issue that the area is dealing with. While many of the prior solutions can focus on better asset management and addressing supply concerning the future growth of the region, Framingham needs more accessibility options beyond the automobile. With the nearby location of the Framingham Commuter Rail Station and commuter rail access into the center of Boston, this presents an excellent opportunity to leverage that accessibility for Downtown Framingham and allow the station to serve as a gateway into downtown from the core of the region.

### Action Item

- Implement a capital improvement program that includes improved sidewalks and bicycle infrastructure that connects Downtown Framingham with the Commuter Rail Station.
- Improve bus service to provide real-time connectivity between the two aforementioned areas.
- Work with FSU and MassBay to connect their busing systems to Downtown Framingham and the commuter rail station.
- Apply to the Federal Transit Administration funds for buses, bus facilities, and bus equipment.
- Work with MWRTA to see if bus schedules can align more closely with the MBTA Commuter Rail schedule.


### Process

- Hire a design consultant to measure items such as the walk score and bicycle score in the area.
- Measure foot traffic patterns to see the most optimal pedestrian improvements available.
- Develop a capital improvement plan and timeline to implement physical improvements between the two areas in coordination with the MBTA/MWRTA.
- The city works with FSU and MassBay to create a steady revenue source to fund the shuttle service.
- Identify the most optimal route and time schedule to operate the shuttle service to the greatest benefit of the area. Marketing of the service to the business community and students should be put in place to raise awareness of the ability to utilize the service.
- The city undertakes efforts to ensure that each bus shelter meets the following requirements per the MBTA [Bus Stop Planning & Design Guide](#).
  - Conforms with shelter eligibility standards
  - Passes a site suitability test,
  - Meet the requirements of Title VI, and
  - Is fully compliant with accessibility regulations. and sidewalk by determining if the site of each bus stop meets the eligibility standards and suitability test, including Title VI requirements.



Credit: Raul Gonzalez

## 3.3 Construct a Parking Study for the Downtown Area to improve options and review opportunities

<b>Category</b>	 Public Realm
<b>Location</b>	Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02
<b>Origin</b>	DFI, City Staff, Police Department, DPW
<b>Budget</b>	 <p>Medium~\$50,000 for parking wayfinding sign manufacturing and installation, \$50,000 to \$150,000 for study</p> <p>Sources: American Rescue Plan Act, City funds, <a href="#">Regional Economic Development Organization (REDO)</a> funding</p>
<b>Timeframe</b>	 Medium
<b>Risk</b>	 Low Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Policy:</b> There is no uniform parking standard within the study area, as minimum parking requirements in Framingham are determined by particular use, using thresholds based on both square footages and employees/occupants.</li> <li>• <b>Business buy-in:</b> Such a study does not always alleviate the perception of parking issues amongst local businesses and patrons. Effective outreach and knowledge-sharing are necessary. The potential to change parking arrangements and consideration of adding more parking meters would raise many issues with business owners and customers.</li> <li>• Increased dependency on driving as opposed to other forms of transportation.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>	<p>The city should look for opportunities to leverage opportunities for parking downtown along with the MBTA and developers. Parking garages can be shared by multiple users, especially if the users have different demands by the time of day. For example, MBTA commuters will use the garage during the day while residents and business patrons will likely use it in the evening and overnight. Setting up a partnership can help share costs and reduce the burden on developers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased visitation to public amenities</li> <li>• Decreased complaints about parking</li> <li>• Increased shared parking opportunities downtown</li> <li>• Increase in access to parking.</li> <li>• Decrease in time to find parking.</li> <li>• Review of improvement or alternative use of Pearl Street Garage</li> </ul>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>	<p>Local businesses, DFI, City Planning and Economic Development Division, Mayor's Office, DPW, Parks &amp; Rec</p> <p>Resource: <a href="#">Malden Parking Study</a>. The parking study documented existing parking regulations and capacity; gathered input on parking issues from businesses and other stakeholders; and collected and analyzed data on parking occupancy and duration. The purpose of the study was to develop recommendations for improving parking availability and efficiency through updated parking policies and/or physical improvements.</p>

## Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

Over the past 10 years, the City of Framingham has worked hard to revitalize the downtown area. The storefront vacancies are low and downtown is becoming more of a regional destination. Parking studies done in the last 10 years have all relied on data that was over 20 years old. The city hopes to engage a consultant to update parking counts, including duration and spot vacancy counts in key lots and major streets. The study will also include recommendations for pricing and policies for parking demand management and possible locations for additional public lots if necessary.

Parking within the Downtown area became more crowded as the pandemic began to take effect, with curbside space becoming more limited as food delivery platforms began to grow exponentially. According to the business survey, improving parking was considered an important strategy to pursue for downtown. In addition, according to interviews with businesses, parking has become an issue, as many owners have complained about customer frustration over not finding parking and being ticketed.

The city began to implement short-term parking for metered spaces in front of many takeaway businesses, which was received positively by local restaurants, food services, and quick retail businesses.

Other issues include:

- Until the pandemic, metered spaces generally followed a two-hour maximum format.
- Curbs are highly utilized and cars sometimes queue into travel lanes, adding to traffic
- People circle to find spots closest to their destination, ignoring other parking opportunities.
- Many businesses are dependent on parking, particularly short-term and pickup/drop-off parking.
- Business employees often park in prime spots and no business parking permit program is in place
- Several private lots are used informally as parking for the area

## Action Item

- A parking study would recommend the number of allowable parking spaces for residential units and businesses
- Create design guidelines for wayfinding signs to parking spaces for downtown businesses
- Parking pricing can also be used to shift demand to areas where there is more available supply. Blocks with the most popular spaces should be more expensive, while blocks that are currently underutilized should be discounted or free. This encourages parking demand to spread evenly over the area.
- The study would create a parking count of available parking spaces during the three work shift periods, for public street parking, public parking, and customer parking spaces downtown.
- Install attractive, helpful, and trilingual, when possible, wayfinding signage, including hard-to-find public parking options.
- Include bike parking throughout the downtown and include a bike parking map within the city Soofa kiosks.
- Parking occupancy data should be collected to better understand the usage of the existing parking.
- Parking meters or kiosks can also be partnered with a smart-phone based app payment system to maximize ease of use for customers. Apps such as ParkMobile and Passport make payment easy and are widely used throughout the Boston region
- Work with companies such as [SpotAngels](#) to identify and digitally share public parking spaces.
- Review shared parking opportunities within the downtown, utilizing [MAPC's Shared Parking website](#), as well as practices nearby, for example, the City of Marlborough.
- Review of graduated pricing methods, which charges more per hour for longer stays can also be used. This is often combined with a "first 15 minutes free" approach that allows for quick pickups to take place with ease.
- "Enforcement" could entail first time forgiveness program and leaving informational flyers rather than citations on improperly parked vehicles and should be focused during the busiest times when turnover is important.
- Business cards can be left with local businesses and distributed to customers to inform them about their parking options and link to a short survey regarding parking conditions.

## Process

The parking study would require a consultant to come on board through an RFP process. This study would determine the existing parking assets on the ground and see where improvements will need to be made. The review of metered parking will be assessed in this process as well and will be determined what should be included.

- Collect background data collection and kick-off meeting
- Review any recent studies, projects, and parking analyses conducted around the downtown
- Look at existing conditions and conduct field analysis
- Analysis and evaluation of parking data
- Mapping and signage
- Produce a report
- Ensure community engagement throughout the entire process



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*





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Goal 4.

Enhance current arts and culture resources and connect them closely to the thriving Latinx community downtown

## 4.1 Actively promote Amazing Things Art Center as a performance venue and outdoor activities anchor in Downtown Framingham, connecting closely to the local community

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<b>Category</b>		Cultural/Arts
<b>Location</b>		Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02
<b>Origin</b>		City Staff, Framingham Cultural Council, Amazing Things Art Center (ATAC), Local Businesses, DFI
<b>Budget</b>		Medium (\$50,000 to \$200,000)  Funding: If the public art is related to COVID-19 relief projects, National Endowment for the Arts American Rescue Plan Grants to Organization, EDA Planning and Economic Adjustment Assistance grants, municipal budget allocation, or private funding sources, Mass Cultural Council, National Endowment for the Arts Grants, Cultural Facilities Fund (Capital Grants), <a href="#">David Helen and Marian Woodward Fund</a> , <a href="#">Shuttered Venue Operators Grant</a> , <a href="#">Massachusetts Downtown Initiative</a> , <a href="#">TDI Creative Catalyst</a>
<b>Timeframe</b>		Long-term; This project recommendation should be started immediately and will continue indefinitely in the long term.
<b>Risk</b>		Low Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Political will:</b> There can often be skepticism about the value of using public funds for art, especially when there are other important funding priorities. Public leadership and support will help mitigate this challenge and affirm the value of art in building pride in the community and a sense of place for visitors.</li><li>• <b>Staffing:</b> Commissioning events is a new responsibility of which ATAC has limited staff. Partnerships with the city, DFI, and local artists are key.</li><li>• <b>Gentrification:</b> Some arts venues can be associated with gentrification that serves those other than existing residents and businesses. To mitigate this risk, the project should continue to prioritize inclusive community engagement to ensure the art serves the public benefit.</li><li>• <b>Community involvement:</b> There is an importance of inclusive engagement with the public and artists, to ensure that public art reflects all communities. Inclusive community engagement includes language accessibility, translation of materials, and live interpretation; proactively reaching out to organizations and members of underrepresented neighborhoods or demographics, and efficient and respectful permitting design review, and payment processes.</li></ul>



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## Key Performance Indicators

- Increase in funding for public events and outdoor activities
- Increase in performances and cultural events within downtown
- Community engagement levels, e.g., number of survey responses
- Increase in downtown visitors on evenings and weekends
- Increase in sales at local bars and restaurants within downtown
- Increase in new performances venues and awareness of offerings within downtown
- More diversity of audience through ethnicity, language, age, and income.

## Partners & Resources

ATAC, DFI, Local businesses, Library, City Planning and Economic Development Division, MetroWest Chamber, Framingham Business Association, Regional BIDs

Resource: [Lynnstallation](#)

"Lynnstallation" is the result of a collaboration between MAPC and the City of Lynn. In 2018 the MAPC awarded Lynn's Department of Community Development a Technical Assistance Award to install a signature piece of art in the city. Along with the signature piece, the project also created a new model for municipalities to use in the procurement and creation of public art with community engagement at its core.

In the Winter of 2019, two focus groups made up of members of Lynn's arts, education and maker communities helped determine Lynnstallation's values of Engagement, Interaction, Multi-generational, Education, Justice, Support, Positivity and Joy and Vivid/Colorful.

The Call for Art was released in the Spring of 2020. Forty-six national, regional and local artists applied! The Evaluation Committee, made up of Lynn residents, artists, municipal employees and members of our non-profit community reviewed all of the submissions to determine the artists who were then invited to submit their concepts. In the Fall of 2020, an Information Session for the Artists was held. In this session the artists were able to hear from more members of the Lynn community and a conversation was had by all about the importance of public art and what these community members would like to see in this signature piece.

### Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

ATAC had been experiencing many chronic issues before, moving from a volunteer model to employee model. Performing arts have suffered greatly during the pandemic, with ticket sales dwindling to zero. When the pandemic hit, the business was afraid of shuttering. Additionally, multiple grants for businesses to address the recovery are not available to nonprofits. There is also a need to connect ATAC to the local Latinx community downtown, as well as being a draw for other parts of Framingham as well as neighboring communities.

### Action Item

- The creation of a marketing strategy that aligns with the city's business outreach efforts
- Working with local restaurants, host food trucks during events.
- Have Soofa signs communicate up-to-date information about community events and services.
- Establish continued support for vending and providing goods and services outside of the establishment.
- Assistance in outreach to the immigrant community, interpretation and translation services.
- Build bridges with Spanish- and Portuguese-language orgs, major businesses, local media.

### Process

- Create a process for commissioning public art working the ATAC, DFI, and the Library, including inclusive community engagement and guidance from the Framingham Cultural Council.
- Identify long-term stable funding source. Options include:
  - Percent for Art: A percent-for-art mechanism would require that a certain portion of the budget for capital projects, such as parks, would be designated for public art.
  - Municipal Budget Allocation: Dedicating funding to support a public arts program through an annual allocation out of the municipal budget would support a wide range of program needs, including non-capital expenses which are ineligible for percent-for art funding. Staff time for program administration, partnership development, and grant writing among other activities could be covered as well as funding for festivals, events, and other activities that do not generate durable works of public art.
  - Private Funding Sources: Cultivating sponsorships and grants to support the public arts program can allow for innovative partnerships, festivals, and other opportunities that activate the arts in the public realm. Previously completed mural projects have relied on a variety of private funding sources.



Credit: Creative Commons

## 4.2 Support City and community-based arts, events, and programming that celebrate the cultural diversity of Downtown Framingham’s businesses and residents

<b>Category</b>	 Cultural/Arts
<b>Location</b>	Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02
<b>Origin</b>	DFI, ATAC, City of Framingham, local businesses
<b>Budget</b>	 <p>Medium: \$70,000 for outreach and \$50,000 to \$200,000 for an Arts and Culture Study</p> <p>Funding: District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program, Planning for MetroFuture Technical Assistance (PMTA) Program, EDA Planning and Economic Adjustment Assistance grants, municipal budget allocation, or private funding sources, <a href="#">National Endowment for the Arts' creative placemaking grants program</a>, Mass Cultural Council, <a href="#">Museums Empowered</a>, <a href="#">Inspire! Grants for Small Museums</a></p>
<b>Timeframe</b>	 <p>Medium-term – Planning efforts and study, collaboration and bridge-building</p>
<b>Risk</b>	 <p>Low Risk Political will: Perception on not being able to engage the wide community, viewed as being exclusive to Brazilian and other Latinx community</p>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the city's participation in major cultural events within downtown</li> <li>• Increase the number of Spanish speaking/bi-lingual staffers within city hall to assist with business outreach</li> <li>• Increase in art, decor, and design, where people go to daily reflect racial and social diversity.</li> <li>• New artists of different background who have been welcomed to Framingham arts scene.</li> <li>• Existing artists have more connections to local community.</li> <li>• Increase of events and efforts in multiple languages.</li> <li>• Increase of funding for local artists and arts</li> <li>• Amount of funding for the cultural council and EDIC (and state cultural council)</li> <li>• Increase in awareness of different cultures represented within the city</li> <li>• Library events and activities post-vaccine</li> </ul>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>	<p>Framingham Cultural Council, Framingham DEI Officer, Mass Culture Council, Amazing things Arts Center, Framingham Library, the local community, local businesses, EDIC, DFI, Danforth Art at FSU</p> <p>Resource: <a href="#">San Francisco Arts Commission Racial Equity Action Plan</a></p>

### Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

In the past few decades, Downtown Framingham has grown as both a commercial district and also as a cultural hub. Change within the past few years in customer population to show a growing international presence.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has deeply impacted the regional arts and culture economy, there continues to be a desire in the community to incorporate more cultural assets into Downtown Framingham.

There has been a growing immigrant community downtown, including business owners. However, Latinx communities have struggled the most during the pandemic. Art and culture have generally been ignored in efforts for addressing the pandemic through funding, despite the industry being devastated by the pandemic. Furthermore, the Latinx community has felt ignored by ongoing arts and culture events and activities within Framingham.

### Action Item

- An Arts and Culture Study would encourage the City of Framingham, DFI, and ATAC to establish a blueprint for understanding arts and cultural assets and needs and outline a preliminary list of policy and programmatic actions the city can take to recover and grow arts and cultural opportunities.
- Consult and collaborate with cultural organizations and underrepresented artists. Underrepresented artists are considered those who identify as BIPOC, nonbinary, LGBTQIA, women, and people with disabilities, among others.
- Build capacity and culture support
- Further diverse placemaking events (i.e., Yoga on the Common, Oktoberfest, Brazilian Independence Day, World Cup, other efforts by DFI)




### Process

Pursue the potential to work with art groups like RAW to help tell the stories of local businesses. For example, as part of the [City of Quincy's Small Business Plan](#), MAPC produced [short videos of Asian-American business owners telling their stories](#). This creative approach helped the City and broader community better understand the value of local businesses and personalize the business owners and their challenges.



Credit: Raul Gonzalez

## 4.3 Increase Quality of Life efforts within downtown by creating placemaking for events, beautification, popups, landscaping, lighting, community chairs and tables, more murals, and public art downtown

<b>Category</b>	 Cultural/Arts & Public Realm
<b>Location</b>	Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02
<b>Origin</b>	DFI, ATAC, City of Framingham, local businesses
<b>Budget</b>	 <p>High</p> <p>Purchase of Tables and Chairs for DFI, One mural (\$40,000). Chairs and tables (\$5,000 to \$10,000). Popups \$20,000 per year. Maintenance costs are unknown. Medium (\$50,000 - \$200,000) – Potential items that would increase the budget would include staff time, contracting with third-party services, purchasing of new cleaning equipment, and so on. Low (&gt;\$50,000) additional light installation. Replacement of PA system at Loring Arena (\$100,000)</p> <p>Large: Chris Walsh Trail (\$275,000) Mary Dennison Park amenities (\$10-\$11 million), Cedar Woods Boardwalk Design &amp; Construction (\$2.4 million)</p> <p>Funding: DPW Funding <a href="#">Massachusetts Downtown Initiative</a>, <a href="#">TDI Creative Catalyst</a>, <a href="#">Arts and Transportation Rapid Response Program</a>, <a href="#">American Rescue Plan Local Arts Agencies for Subgranting</a>, <a href="#">New England Foundation for the Arts</a>, EDIC (\$10,000). City Council Funding (\$30,000)</p>
<b>Timeframe</b>	 <p>Long Term; Staff time and equipment purchases, ongoing funding process, 2-3 years to get businesses on board/site visit, and about five years for the creation of a cultural district. Larger-scale projects, like the Mary Dennison Park improvements will take the longest among of time.</p>
<b>Risk</b>	 <p>Low</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Site ownership:</b> The lighting installation may require the cooperation of several property owners. The lighting would only have a small impact on the properties but getting agreement may pose a challenge.</li> <li>• <b>Community perception:</b> There is frustration from some stakeholders that the city is focusing investment solely on beautification projects Downtown.</li> <li>• <b>Quality of life perceptions:</b> To expand efforts in outdoor dining especially after local businesses have been impacted by the pandemic. Close to Anastacia's Pizzeria, Framingham Station, Pho De Cao. Artists have been impacted negatively by the pandemic.</li> <li>• <b>Sustainability:</b> Finding continued maintenance for projects. Ownership and buy-in for the work involved. Finding volunteers.</li> <li>• <b>Replicability, longevity:</b> Some of these things are intended to be fun and new, but they don't stay as long.</li> </ul>

## Key Performance Indicators

- % Increase in foot traffic
- % Decrease in crime
- % Increase in revenue for businesses Downtown
- Commission public art projects, including 2 new murals at 80 Hollis Street and 5 utility box photo wraps

## Partners & Resources

City Planning and Economic Development Division, DFI, EDIC, DPW, Police Department, Business Owners, Parks, and Rec (they take care of the Downtown Common), ATAC, Private businesses with murals, Danforth Museum at FSU, Rep's office, Center for the Deaf, local businesses

Resources include creating an [Outdoor Dining and Retail Community Plan](#), utilizing the Outdoor Dining/Retail Community Toolkit created by DHCD. Another resource is the [Brighton Center Pop Up Plaza Pilot](#). Neighborways Design worked with the City of Boston in partnership with Brighton Main Streets to pilot a pop-up plaza in June 2021. Replacing a right-turn slip lane, the plaza created more public space for outdoor connections, programming, and supported local businesses.

## Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

During the diagnostic phase of this project, the team heard that there was interest in more downtown activation through pop-up spaces like the shared piano and more shared artist spaces and events. Businesses have also contracted with local artists to create a historical murals throughout.

Quality of life is directly linked to how safe the residents feel. When residents feel safe with their kids in their backyard, walking to the store, or jogging in the park, the neighborhood becomes more vibrant with stronger social connections.

DFI's Annual Business Climate Survey reported that negative perceptions of the area were substantial concerns affecting the long term success of their businesses. Furthermore, COVID-19 had reduced the liveliness of Downtown Framingham, something that was noted in the April 30 Site Assessment.

Respondents to the business survey and interviews expressed support for strategies that improve safety and cleanliness. Increasing and maintaining foot traffic is one of the five main goals of the LRRP. Creative lighting along

Waverly will help create an attractive gateway to Downtown and showcase the local businesses near the commuter rails station. In addition, it will improve the safety, visibility, and aesthetic of the area overall.

The 2021 Applied Geographic Solutions (AGS) crime indices currently place Framingham similar to Brookline, Somerville, and Waltham, similarly sized communities through its total crime index, with Framingham at 52, Brookline at 52, Somerville at 59, and Waltham at 42.

This crime data represents the crime rate in an area as compared to the crime rate for the US as a whole. If an area's total crime is 100, that means the number of total crimes per person is the same as the number of total crimes per person for the whole country. Regardless, when it comes to fear and perception of safety, it matters little whether major crime is a threat or not.

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## Action Item

- Collaborate with the Departments of Public Works, Health, and Police to demonstrate a healthy, viable area that is safe for all residents, which drives attention to lighting, design, and surveillance of public sidewalks, parking lots, and crosswalks.
- Further fund and expand the city's Beautification Program.
- Fund streetlamp decorations, including banners and holiday ornaments, with installation assistance from the Department of Public Works.
- Partner with the DFI and others to help deploy and store furniture for the City's Memorial Plaza public seating project.
- Arts and Culture Planning citywide
- Ask City Council for funding (\$30,000) to hire someone to give out grants for public art.
- EDA project to purchase buildings, downtown arts hub, renovate historic rehab, create an arts space downtown.
- Potential of expanding Downtown into a Cultural District. Investigate this effort. Organizing for a Cultural District Downtown
- Clarify City's baseline maintenance operations and then identify an external entity and funding source to manage a litter removal program.
- Highlight achievements in business, arts, culture, faith based missions, green/active space, design, and partnerships at the annual Downtown Celebration.
- Establish creative gateways to Downtown by piloting creative lighting along with Waverly.
- Organize new service to activate and maintain downtown trees and Route 135 streetscaping.
- Public art is needed to reflect cultural ownership
- Funding and implementation of enhanced safety and ambiance measures, including proposed downtown lamp post speakers, public piano, and WIFI
- Remediation of unkempt vegetation along urban pathways is needed.
- Public art is needed to replace graffiti and draw creative class into downtown.
- Green space event activation is needed to build community and sense of place.

### Mary Dennison Park

To construct a new neighborhood park with amenities that reflects the needs of this environmental justice neighborhood and the city, including a small shade shelter, large picnic pavilion, one lighted grass softball field, one lighted synthetic multi-purpose soccer/softball field, two lighted basketball courts, splash pad, playground, exercise area, skate spot, lighted walking paths, lighted parking lot, landscaping, irrigation, and amenity utilities.

### Replacement of PA System at Loring Arena

The current system is 10 years old and was designed and configured to function in the former rink. This would fund the full replacement with a PA system designed for peak performance in the Arena.

### Chris Walsh Trail

Funding would be used for the park design needed to get to the point where the city could have a clear budget and construction documents. If awarded design funding, the next steps for moving this project forward will be to report back to the state delegation with the proposed improvements and hold a public meeting on the concept design and estimated budget.

The city has spent \$16,000 of City funds to receive Task - 1 conceptual design drawings that will help us move into Task 2- Master Planning and community engagement. The overall project will be in the millions with the railroad crossing, cantilever bridge around the gatehouse, and the trail itself.

### Cedar Woods Boardwalk Design & Construction

Cedar Woods is a City-owned parcel of land on Framingham's Southside in a low and moderate-income, environmental justice neighborhood. The city's 2019 Conservation Master Plan identified this almost 16-acre parcel, dominated by wetlands, as a potential opportunity to add a recreational trail by adding a boardwalk through the wetlands. This project would include some brownfields site remediation as well as design and construction of the boardwalk and related improvements to the site.

## Process




- Invest in programmatic infrastructure, including seating, tents, lighting, and speaker systems, that can be used by community groups for events. Currently, each community group has to invest resources in procuring these same facilities.
- Assess potential designs and estimate costs of potential designs, including energy-efficient designs
- Work with property owners and City to find agreement on the final design
- Permit and contract installation
- Maintain lighting
- Adding more events
- Increasing foot traffic
- Create speaker series, music series, concert series
- Create arts fair
- Create an art space that celebrates Downtown Framingham
- Incorporate art in cafés, restaurants, and bakeries.
- Engaging the library
- Review of the Hudson Armory Project to see if there is applicability in Framingham
- Further efforts to create murals throughout Downtown, using the following as resources:
  - Mural at 199 Concord Street - Artist Franklin Marval
    - [Facebook post about the installation](#)
    - [As seen on the Downtown Framingham, Inc. website](#)
  - Mural at 16 Concord Street – Artist Sorin Bica
    - [As seen on the Downtown Framingham, Inc. website](#)
    - [As part of a local middle school culture tour](#)
  - Mural at 54 Franklin Street – Artists: Framingham High School students
    - [Facebook post about the installation](#)
    - [Facebook post \(2\) about installation](#)
  - Mural at 80 Hollis Street – Artists: Framingham High School students
    - [Facebook post about the installation](#)
    - [More info on the project from Framingham Patch](#)
  - Mural at 100 Clinton Street, Jack's Abby Craft Lagers – Artist: Mia Cross
    - [Facebook post about installation – in progress](#)
- Creation of working group, fully fund Planning Department
- Organize Downtown into a Cultural District
- City providing grants to artists to facilitate mural production
- City purchases downtown bank buildings and turns them into a downtown community center/cultural hub



Credit: Amazing Things Art Center



## 4.4 Work with Downtown Framingham Inc, Framingham State University, Framingham Makerspace, and/or Amazing Things Art Center to establish an incubator space to support aspiring entrepreneurs

<b>Category</b>		Public Realm
<b>Location</b>		Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02
<b>Origin</b>		Ongoing conversations with DFI and EDIC on creating makerspaces and desire to hold it downtown
<b>Budget</b>		<p>Medium: Medium (Annual \$50,000 - \$200,000), Large (Acquirement of Space)</p> <p>Funding: One Stop for Community Growth, MassDevelopment Collaborative Workspace Program, Private investment, <a href="#">Real Estate Services Technical Assistance</a>, Community Preservation Act Funding</p>
<b>Timeframe</b>		Long term (due to funding requirement)
<b>Risk</b>		<p>Medium Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Financial limitations:</b> The need for ongoing financing, these models likely require some initial investment, either from public or private sources, and a strong model to ensure long-term sustainability. There is also risk and negative consequences of not implementing this project recommendation and not supporting new business development.</li> <li>• <b>Space:</b> Not many vacancies in the area.</li> <li>• <b>Leadership:</b> "Ownership" of the project by a lead and identifying their roles and who they are.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new businesses created</li> <li>• Number of jobs created</li> <li>• If a model allows for dining, shopping or events at the facility/facilities, number of visitors</li> </ul>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>		<p>Planning office, Mayor's office, <a href="#">FSU Entrepreneur Innovation Center</a>, Framingham Makerspace, Amazing Things Arts Center, Parks and Rec, Framingham Makerspace, Library, United Way of Tri-County, Framingham History Center</p> <p>There are a few local culinary incubators that provide models. Foundation Kitchen operates a commercial kitchen in Somerville that offers licensed member and hourly rentals for entrepreneurs, caterers, and other cooking businesses. A new location in Charlestown will also feature a café and wine bar, as well as cooking classes and events.</p> <p>Commonwealth Kitchen in Boston also provides a model culinary incubator. Commonwealth operates two kitchens at a 12,000 square foot facility, including a shared commercial kitchen and a commissary kitchen for small-batch contract manufacturing.</p>

### Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

Business ownership is a key path to wealth generation, but many would-be entrepreneurs lack access to capital or training to be successful, particularly if COVID decimated existing savings. Incubators can provide helpful training, space, and resources to test business models and grow into more permanent space.

For other workers, the shared workspace will become more important as many companies consider allowing flexible or remote work.

### Action Item

- Advance efforts to create a brick-and-mortar incubator space for local entrepreneurs.
- A feasibility study for the use of the old TD Bank Building at 74 Concord Street for potential uses including makerspace, business incubator space, small offices

### Process

- Identifying the need for the program
- Identify the networks for success
- Partner with local non profits, including the Framingham History Center, Amazing Things Art Center, and United Way of Tri-County, to instill appreciation for the city's remarkable history while reinvigorating enthusiasm for our present-day culture
- through placemaking events and urban design opportunities.
- Rebuild the cultural resources downtown
- Securing a space to utilize for the city to own/ manage
- Funding the space and program



Credit: Raul Gonzalez



Credit: Raul Gonzalez

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Goal 5.

Address challenges  
within the current built  
environment to improve  
access to downtown

## 5.1 1. Review underutilized space - especially along Waverly Corridor - and improve the uniformity of the district through façade improvement programs, bike lane/sidewalk improvements, and by providing additional connectivity to the Framingham Commuter Rail Station

<b>Category</b>	 Private Realm
<b>Location</b>	Throughout the Downtown Framingham District, Census Tracts 3834, 3833, 3832, 3831.01, 3801.02
<b>Origin</b>	Ongoing conversations with DFI and EDIC on creating makerspaces and desire to hold it downtown
<b>Budget</b>	 <p>Large: Creation of storefront guidelines (\$50K - \$200K), pedestrian and bicycle improvements (\$1.5 million)</p> <p>Funding: MassDOT, City, Federal Infrastructure Bill, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), CDBG Funds through Façade Improvement Program, ARPA Allocations</p>
<b>Timeframe</b>	 <p>Short-term for storefront guidelines (Less than 5 years): Given that a façade improvement program currently exists, we anticipate that an update and expansion of the program will take less than 2 years</p>
<b>Risk</b>	 <p>Medium Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adherence:</b> Potential risks may include property owners not adhering to design guidelines, however, this can be mitigated by offering guidelines and additional financing mechanisms for implementation</li> <li>• <b>Prioritization:</b> Outside focus on safety from DPW. Efforts have been made to improve stormwater Arlington Street, but DPW has had other priorities. DPW is generally underfunded within the last year due to the pandemic, has had to push efforts elsewhere. Other emergencies (water main break, etc.) have taken priority.</li> <li>• <b>Access:</b> Disconnected trail access/needs improvement.</li> <li>• <b>Quality of life:</b> Making it look nice, addressing "safety" concerns. Ground floor retail vs. Multifamily as a right.</li> <li>• <b>Political will:</b> Might be removed from the Commercial Business Zone, further impacting density improvements.</li> <li>• <b>Multimodal access:</b> Extensive car culture in the area. There is also a movement to remove the pedestrian islands. Impasse on ownership of bus stops within the area.</li> </ul>
<b>Key Performance Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of participation by businesses</li> <li>• Improvement of connectivity from Waverly to other parts of Downtown</li> </ul>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>	DPW, Property Owners along with Waverly, Elected Municipal Officials, local businesses, DFI, MBTA/MWRTA/MassDOT, CTPS, Bike/ped advocates

## Diagnostic/COVID-19 Impacts

The [Framingham Sign and Facade Program](#) were established to provide technical and financial assistance to Downtown businesses making external improvements. This program matches private money, up to a third of the project's cost or \$10,000 for facades and two-thirds or \$3,000 for signs, with Federal funding through the city's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). In doing so, the city seeks to promote local merchants and enhance the physical appearance of the Central Business District.

Anyone within the Study Area or fronting Waverly Street between the Natick Town Line and Winter Street who either owns a commercial property or owns a business and has been granted permission for the work from his landlord. There is development potential along with Waverly, more than other parts of Downtown.

## Action Item

- Public Parking Analysis and connect to parking study
- Signage to bring in patrons
- Wayfinding program
- Fundraising/Grants
- Expansion of trail routes (Chris Walsh Trail)
- Identification and mapping of bus stops
- Signage and shelters for all bus stops/uniformity of bus stop signage
- Although Parking should not be ignored, improve sidewalks outside the Union/Concord area would make the downtown area more appealing
- Exploring the potential of advertisements on bus stops/Soofa
- Develop strategies to improve last-mile connectivity between the Framingham Commuter Rail Station and Downtown
- Establish downtown storefront guidelines and reactivate storefront façade program

## Process

- Improve pedestrian, bicycle, and transit rider safety and convenience, with a focus on implementing its shared streets program, preparing for the installation of bus shelters, and connecting the Framingham Commuter Rail Station with the rest of Downtown.
- Focus on completing ADA improvements at key intersections, adding crosswalks, installing benches and other street furniture, planting street trees, adding bike lanes, and installing bike racks.
- Including how to get around town one-stop-shop on Framingham/DFI website. (<https://move-pgh.com/>)
- Work with MWRTA to further bus stop access as well as bus transit shelters near downtown destinations.
- Create a survey of current systems of access, travel times, destination analysis. This survey is to be done in multiple languages.
- Pedestrian safety improvements
- The path from Leland Street to Blandin Ave.



*Credit: Raul Gonzalez*

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# Appendices

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

**Framingham**

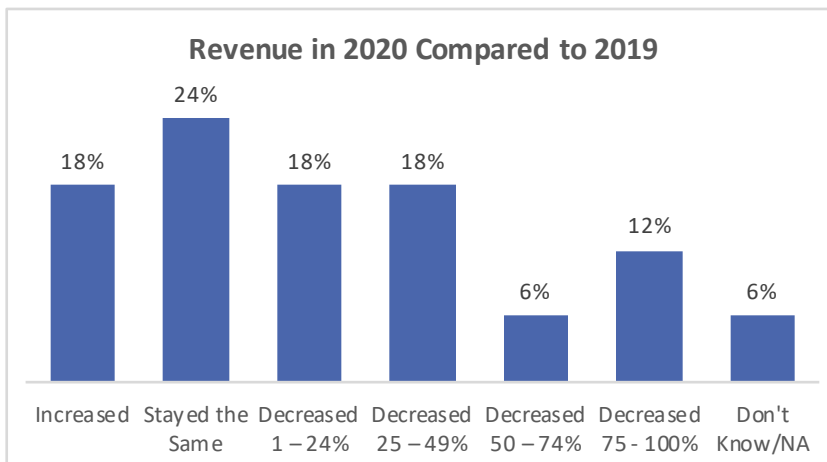
Downtown Framingham

Responses: 17

**Impacts of COVID-19**

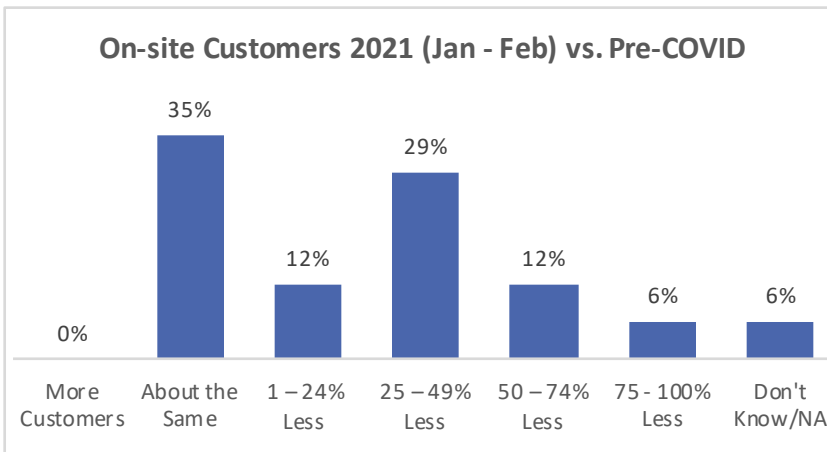
**Decline in Business Revenue**

54% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019. For 36% of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more.



**Less Foot Traffic in Commercial Area**

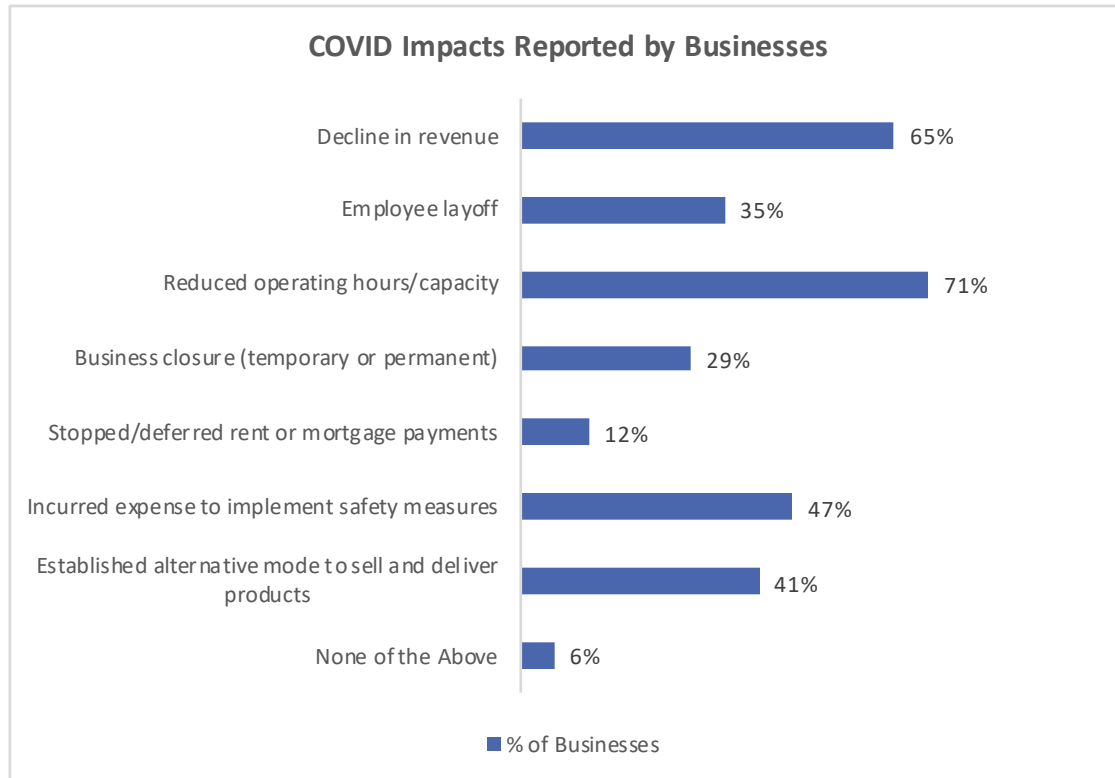
59% of businesses had less on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID. 47% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more.



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

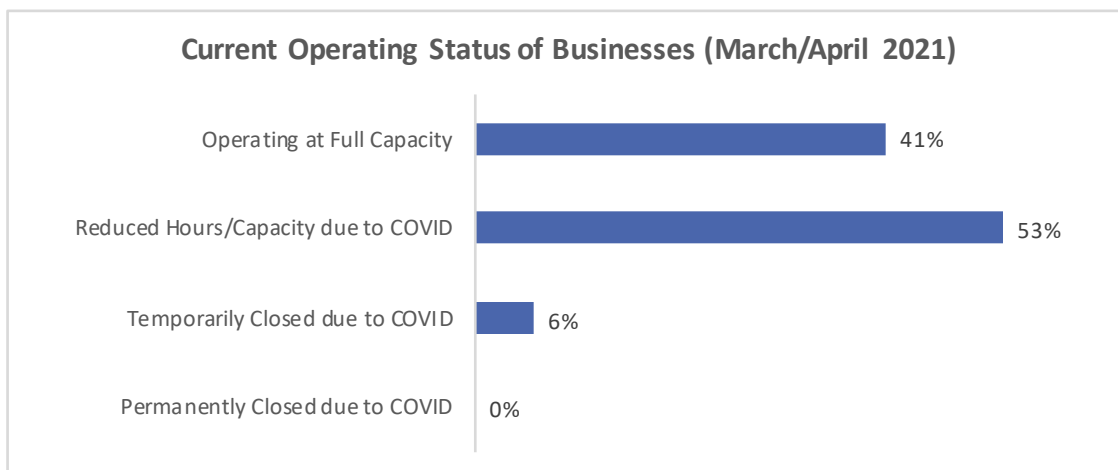
### Reported Impacts

94% of businesses reported being impacted by COVID.



### Operating Status

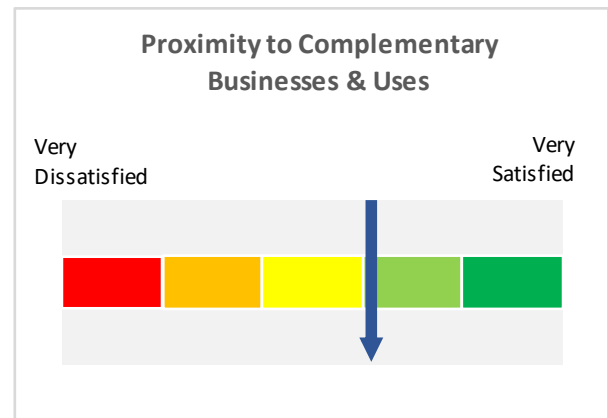
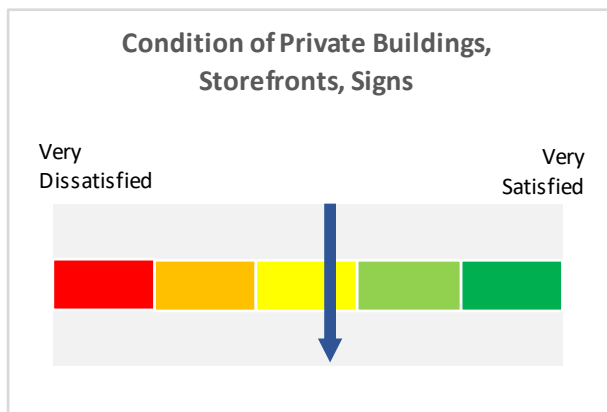
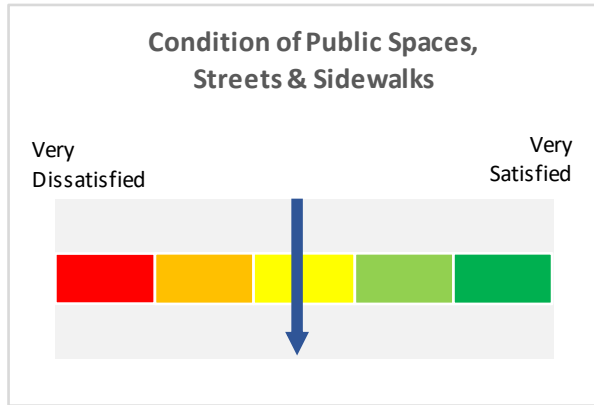
At the time of the survey, 59% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed.





## Business Satisfaction with Commercial District

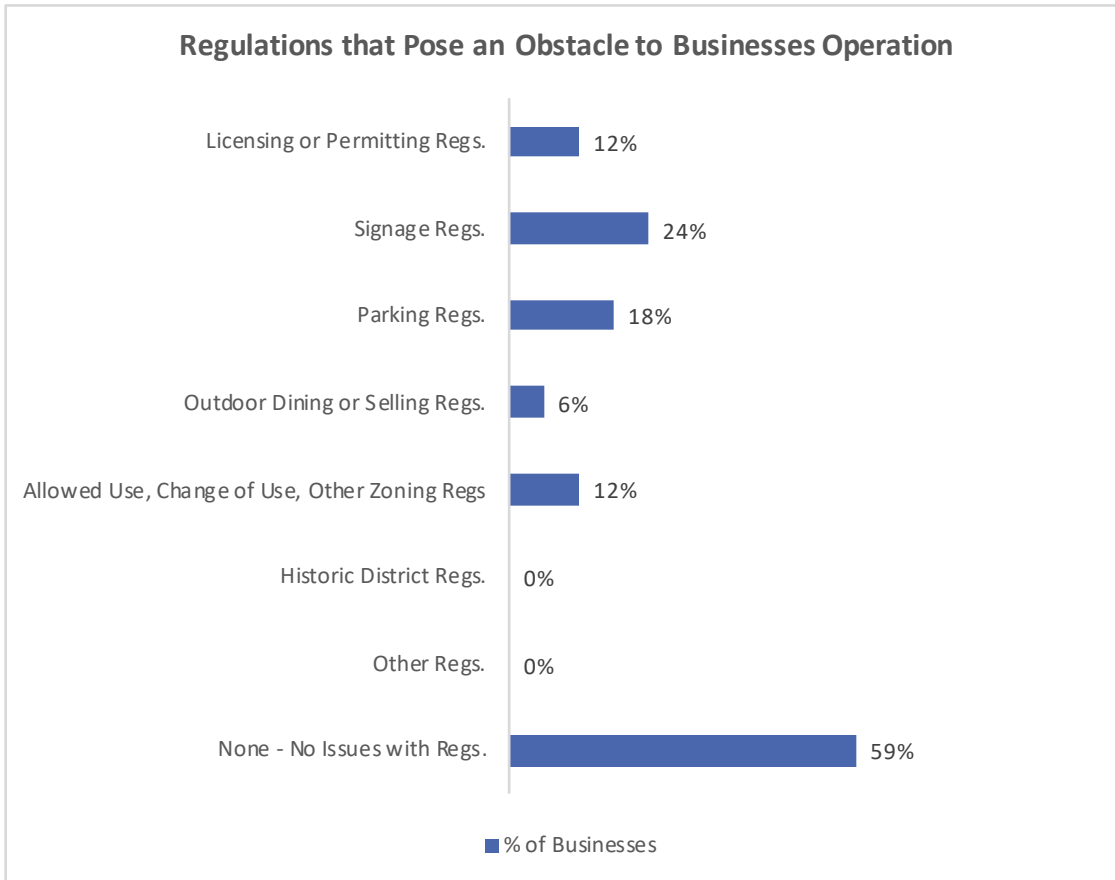
The charts below illustrate the average satisfaction rating among respondents regarding various elements.



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

### Regulatory Environment

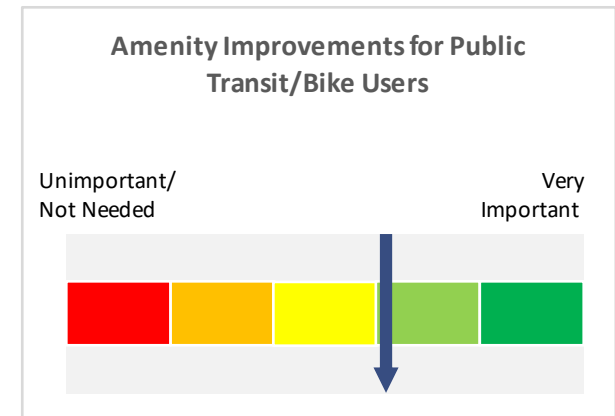
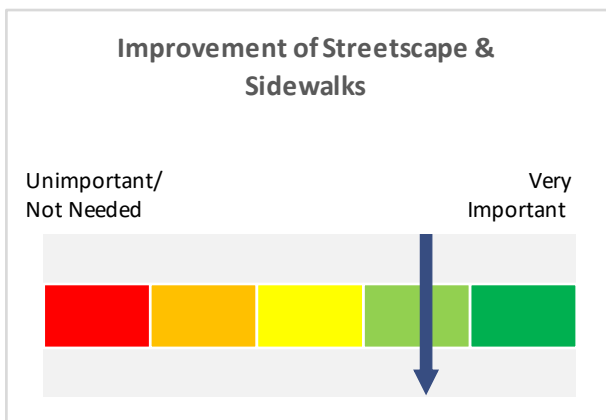
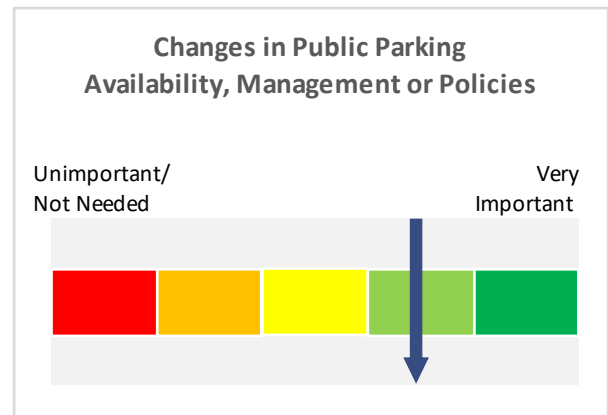
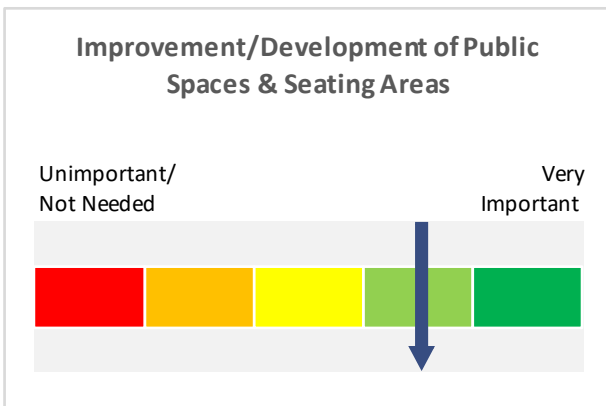
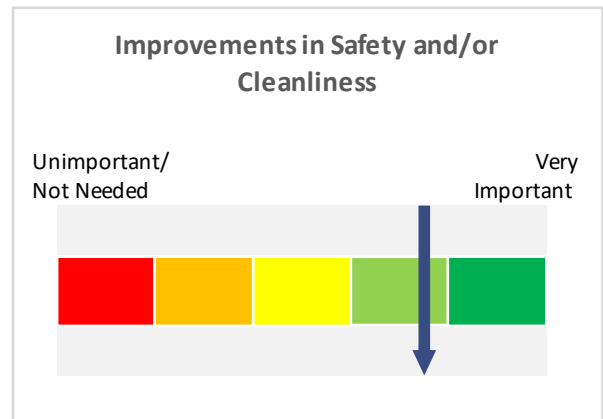
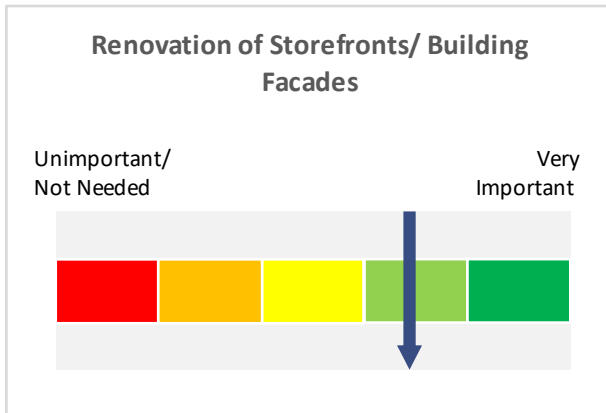
41% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation.



## Business Input Related to Possible Strategies

### Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access

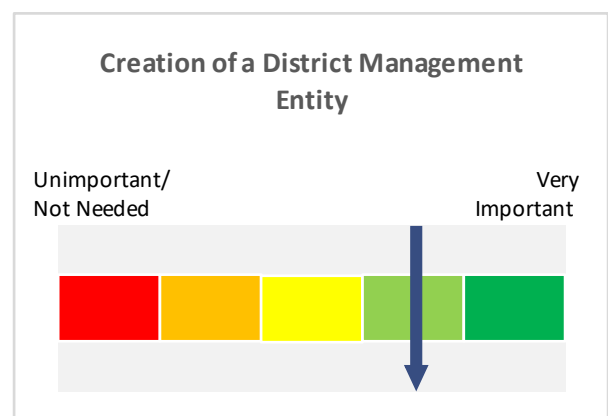
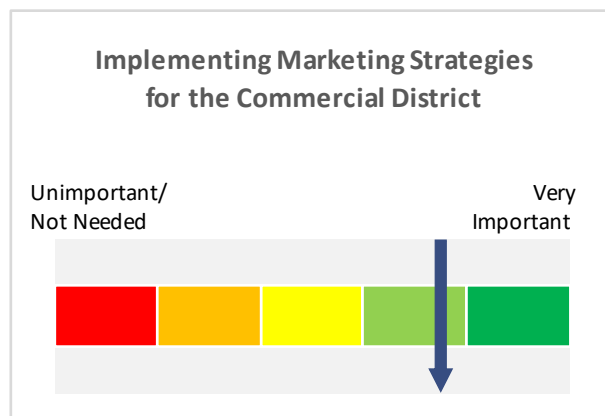
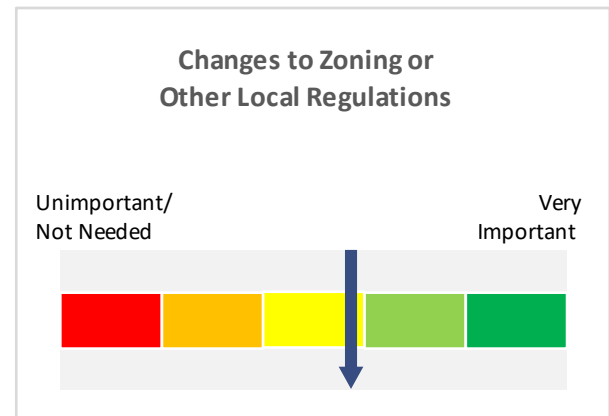
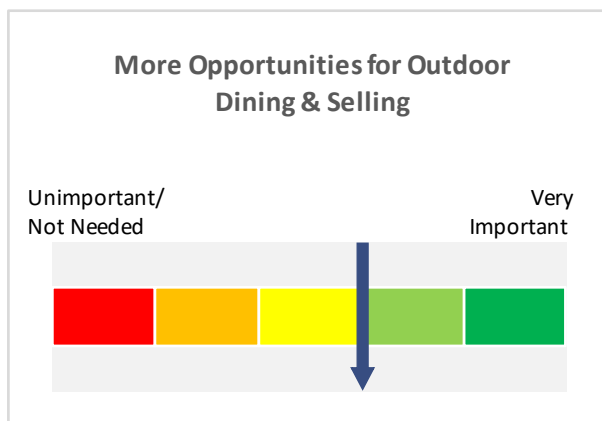
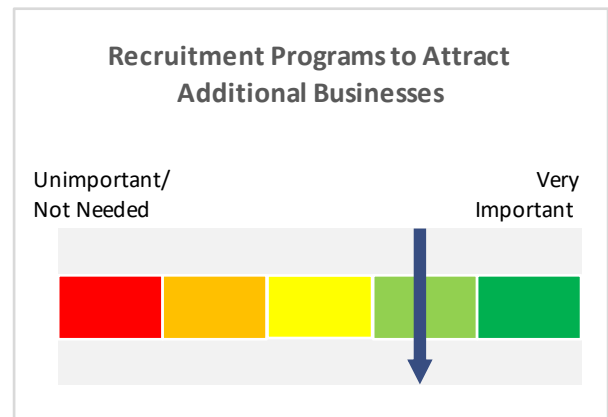
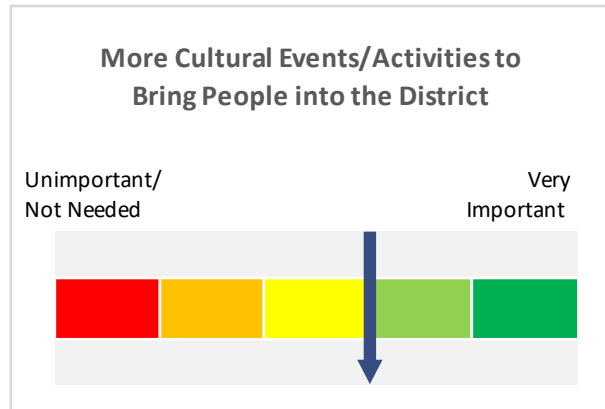
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



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

### Attraction/Retention of Customers and Businesses

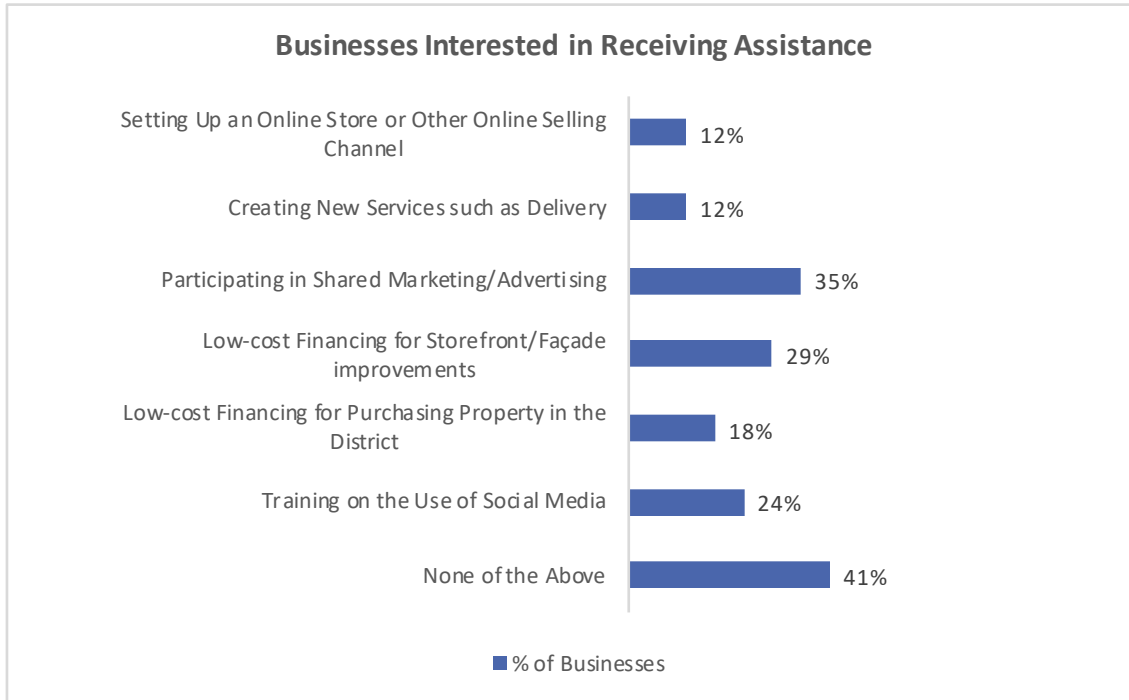
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



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

### Businesses Support

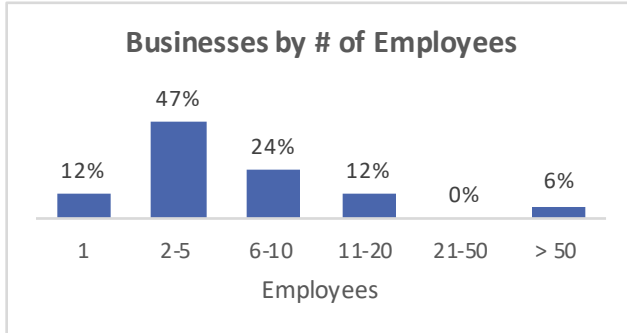
59% of businesses expressed interest in receiving some kind of assistance.



## Business Characteristics

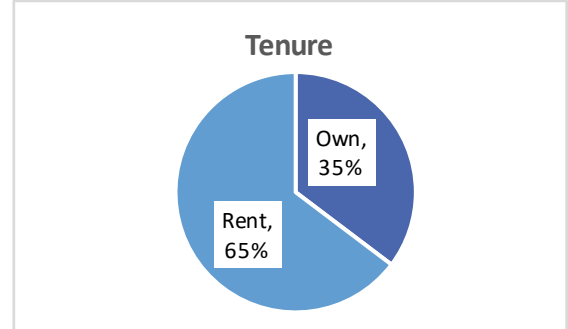
### Business Size

59% of businesses are microenterprises ( $\leq 5$  employees).



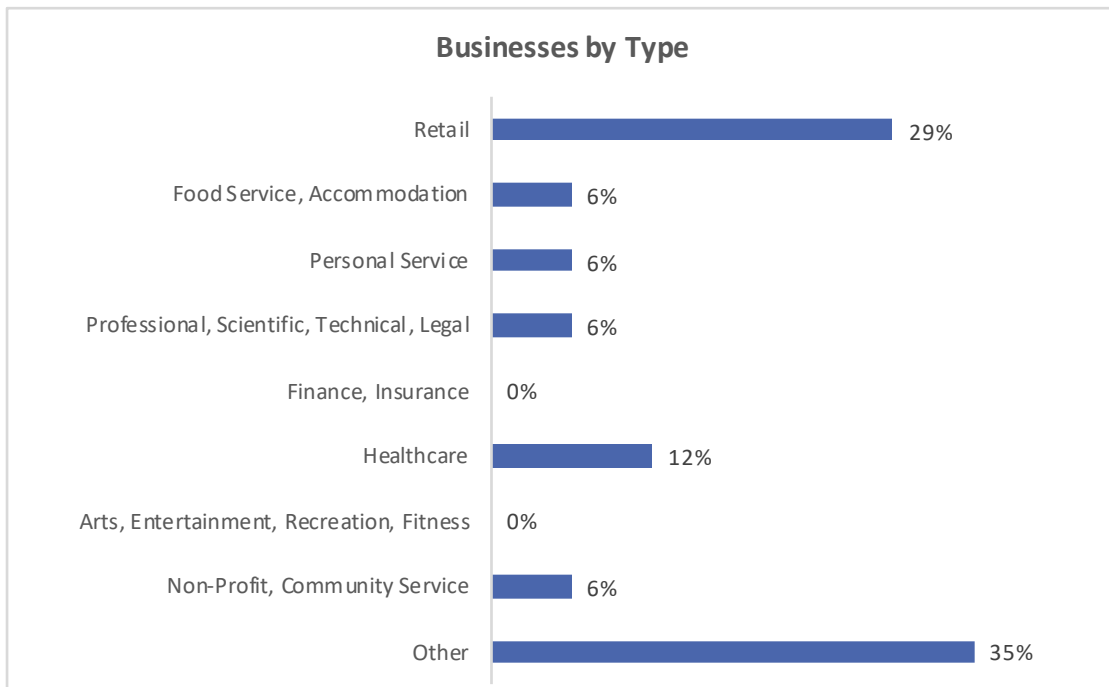
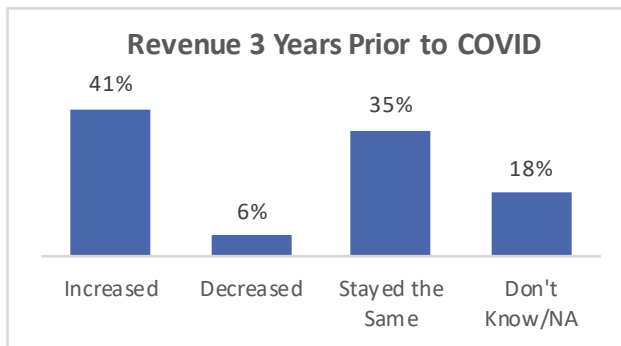
### Business Tenure

65% of businesses rent their space.



### Revenue Trend Prior to COVID

41% of businesses reported increase in revenue during the 3 years prior to COVID.



## Business Survey Results - Data Tables

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

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

Framingham	17
------------	----

### Business Characteristics & Satisfaction with Commercial Area

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

1	2	12%
2 to 5	8	47%
6 to 10	4	24%
11 to 20	2	12%
21 to 50	0	0%
More than 50	1	6%
Total	17	100%

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

Own	6	35%
Rent	11	65%
Total	17	100%

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

Increased	7	41%
Decreased	1	6%
Stayed about the Same	6	35%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	3	18%
Total	17	100%

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

Retail (NAICS 44-45)	5	29%
Food Service (restaurants, bars), Accommodation (NAICS 72)	1	6%
Personal Service (hair, skin, nails, dry cleaning) (NAICS 81)	1	6%
Professional Scientific, Technical, Legal (NAICS 54)	1	6%
Finance, Insurance (NAICS 52)	0	0%
Healthcare (medical, dental, other health practitioners) (NAICS 62)	2	12%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Fitness (NAICS 71)	0	0%
Non-Profit, Community Services	1	6%
Other	6	35%
Total	17	100%

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

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

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	7	41%
Neutral	6	35%
Satisfied	2	12%
Very Satisfied	2	12%
Total	17	100%

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

Very Dissatisfied	1	6%
Dissatisfied	2	12%
Neutral	7	41%
Satisfied	7	41%
Very Satisfied	0	0%
Total	17	100%

**Access for Customers & Employees**

Very Dissatisfied	1	6%
Dissatisfied	5	29%
Neutral	4	24%
Satisfied	6	35%
Very Satisfied	1	6%
Total	17	100%

**Safety and Comfort of Customers & Employees**

Very Dissatisfied	1	6%
Dissatisfied	4	24%
Neutral	5	29%
Satisfied	6	35%
Very Satisfied	1	6%
Total	17	100%

**Proximity to Complementary Businesses or Uses**

Very Dissatisfied	0	0%
Dissatisfied	0	0%
Neutral	10	59%
Satisfied	6	35%
Very Satisfied	1	6%
Total	17	100%



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

Licensing or permitting regulations	2	12%
Signage regulations	4	24%
Parking regulations	3	18%
Outdoor dining or selling regulations	1	6%
Allowed uses, change of use or other zoning regulations	2	12%
Historic District regulations	0	0%
Other regulations (not related to COVID)	0	0%
None - No Issues with regulations	10	59%

**Impacts of COVID**

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

Decline in revenue	11	65%
Employee layoff	6	35%
Reduced operating hours/capacity	12	71%
Business closure (temporary or permanent)	5	29%
Stopped/deferred rent or mortgage payments	2	12%
Incurred expense to implement safety measures	8	47%
Established alternative mode to sell and deliver products (on-line platforms, delivery, etc.)	7	41%
None of the Above	1	6%

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

Increased compared to 2019	3	18%
Stayed about the same as 2019	4	24%
Decreased 1 – 24% compared to 2019	3	18%
Decreased 25 – 49% compared to 2019	3	18%
Decreased 75 - 100% compared to 2019	1	6%
Decreased 50 – 74% compared to 2019	2	12%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	6%
Total	17	100%

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

More customers than before COVID	0	0%
About the same number as before COVID	6	35%
1 – 24% less customers than before COVID	2	12%
25 – 49% less customers than before COVID	5	29%
50 – 74% less customers than before COVID	2	12%
75 – 100% less customers than before COVID	1	6%
Don't Know/Not Applicable	1	6%
Total	17	100%

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

Operating at full capacity	7	41%
Operating at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID	9	53%
Temporarily closed due to COVID	1	6%
Permanently closed due to COVID	0	0%
Total	17	100%

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

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

**Renovation of Storefronts/Building Facades**

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	6%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	6%
Moderately Important	5	31%
Important	3	19%
Very Important	6	38%
Total	16	100%

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	6%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	6%
Moderately Important	1	6%
Important	11	65%
Very Important	3	18%
Total	17	100%

**Improvement of Streetscape & Sidewalks**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	19%
Moderately Important	1	6%
Important	7	44%
Very Important	5	31%
Total	16	100%

**Improvements in Safety and/or Cleanliness**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	0	0%
Moderately Important	7	41%
Important	3	18%
Very Important	7	41%
Total	17	100%

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	6%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	6%
Moderately Important	4	24%
Important	6	35%
Very Important	5	29%
Total	17	100%

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	2	12%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	18%
Moderately Important	2	12%
Important	5	29%
Very Important	5	29%
Total	17	100%

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

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	4	24%
Moderately Important	6	35%
Important	3	18%
Very Important	4	24%
Total	17	100%

### More Opportunities for Outdoor Dining and Selling

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	4	24%
Moderately Important	4	24%
Important	7	41%
Very Important	2	12%
Total	17	100%

### Implementing Marketing Strategies for the Commercial District

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	1	6%
Moderately Important	4	24%
Important	6	35%
Very Important	6	35%
Total	17	100%

**Recruitment Programs to Attract Additional Businesses**

Unimportant/Not Needed	0	0%
Of Little Importance or Need	2	12%
Moderately Important	5	29%
Important	5	29%
Very Important	5	29%
Total	17	100%

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	6%
Of Little Importance or Need	3	18%
Moderately Important	5	29%
Important	6	35%
Very Important	2	12%
Total	17	100%

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

Unimportant/Not Needed	1	6%
Of Little Importance or Need	2	12%
Moderately Important	1	6%
Important	8	47%
Very Important	5	29%
Total	17	100%

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

Setting up an online store or other online selling channel	2	12%
Creating new services such as delivery	2	12%
Participating in shared marketing/advertising	6	35%
Low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements	5	29%
Low-cost financing for purchasing property in the commercial district	3	18%
Training on the use of social media	4	24%
None of the above	7	41%

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

**Comments**

—
—
NEED PUBLIC PARKING
I've always wanted to create a downtown magazine or bulletin that would showcase each business monthly and have their specials.
—
Business grants to improve facades/retail store fronts. More policing of area and stricter drug enforcement. More generous sign laws.
—
Better parking signage and non-car transportation
POWER MOBILE INC
Create and maintain a river bank park-
Independent Association of Framingham State Alumni
Traffic in this area is a huge issue. I'm sure there's no easy answer to this problem, but any improvements could help.
—
Keep roads clean and in good condition, especially if you paint a curbside bike lane. Streets looking good = motivated to visit customers
—
—
Hiring! Very difficult to do right now.

## Draft Question List for Local Businesses

Business Name:

1. Overview of Project:
  - a. Working with the City and DFI in a five month planning process to develop a plan for Downtown Framingham to promote business recovery and resilience
  - b. MAPC will work with the project partners to produce a final plan with clear goals, strategies and funding recommendations. Plan will be sensitive to organizational and staff capacity to secure and implement funding.
2. Background on business
  - a. How long have you been in business
  - b. How many employees do you have?
  - c. Pre pandemic, what were your business hours?
    - i. What are they now?
3. Challenges
4. Opportunities
5. COVID & Recovery
  - a. What is the outlook for your business?
    - i. Are you holding on?
    - ii. Are you expanding/contracting?
    - iii. Any intentions to stay in Framingham?
      1. Would you go elsewhere?
      2. What would attract you to going elsewhere?
  - b. How has your business adapted to the changes within the past year?
  - c. Did you take advantage of COVID specific regulations?
    - i. Outdoor dining, to go alcohol etc.
  - d. Health and safety measures for staff (PPE, testing, PTO, vaccine)
  - e. Did you utilize any funding opportunities? (PPP loans, etc.)
    - i. Feedback on the City's small business grant program
  - f. Hiring (How do you feel about future employment?)
  - g. Customer base
    - i. Reopening efforts

6. Are there opportunities for the City to streamline certain processes or regulations to attract business growth downtown?
  - a. What do you need from the City?
7. How do you think more residential buildings would impact your business?
8. Where do you get city information from?
  - a. Any agencies/orgs/listservs that you rely on for information on COVID-19?
  - b. Where do you go for information on opening a business in Framingham? Who do you go to?
  - c. Do you feel like there is information that your business needs, but you're not getting?
  - d. Does your business belong to any association? (I.e. chamber, Brazilian business association, etc.)

# Case Studies

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## Study 1: Downtown Framingham Small Business

Small businesses generate growth, innovation, and are essential to the strength of local economies. In recent years, Downtown Framingham has become a hub for entrepreneurs from all over the world — having at least twenty different nationalities among its local business owners.

To recognize the diversity, contributions, and vibrancy that small businesses bring to Framingham, the Framingham Downtown Renaissance (FDR), the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (MWRC), Welcoming Framingham, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) worked together as part of the MetroFuture Walks & Talks to host the first Tour of Small Businesses in Downtown Framingham.



### Overall challenges in Downtown Framingham

- Apathy and disenfranchisement, especially among immigrant business owners;
- Disconnect from local government;
- Social problems such as drug consumption and homelessness;
- Poor pedestrian infrastructure;
- Perceptions of the downtown as a dirty and not welcoming place.



## Goals of the Event

- Create a space for participants from the public, private, and non-profit sector to connect around issues relevant to Downtown Framingham;
- Showcase how Framingham's diversity could give the Town a competitive advantage;
- Start the conversation about an upcoming Downtown Framingham Transit Oriented Development study;
- Have town leaders set priorities that directly support the growth of small businesses in Downtown Framingham.

## Project Partners

- **Metropolitan Area Planning Council:** MAPC is the regional planning agency serving the people who live and work in the 101 cities and towns of Metropolitan Boston. MAPC's mission is to promote smart growth and regional collaboration.
- **Framingham Downtown Renaissance:** FDR's mission is to promote, drive, and implement the revitalization of Downtown Framingham by collaborating with residents, Town of Framingham officials, and private stakeholders supporting a shared vision. They are committed to making Downtown Framingham a great place to live, work and visit.
- **MetroWest Regional Collaborative:** As one of MAPC's subregions, the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (MWRC) serves the MetroWest region of Eastern Cochituate Aqueducts, Natick, from I-95 to I-495 along the Route 9 corridor. They facilitate inter-local collaborative planning and problem solving to enhance the quality of life and economic competitiveness of the MetroWest region.
- **Welcoming Framingham:** Welcoming Framingham is a community-wide initiative seeking to affirm Framingham as a welcoming place for all. They encourage conversations in an effort to promote understanding among diverse people and celebrate the positive contributions that individuals from various walks of life make to the community.

## Outreach to Participants

The focus was placed on inviting a broad spectrum of Framingham leaders to the tour, including Town staff, the business community, service organizations, immigrant advocates, news media, developers, brokers, local colleges, and active citizens. The tour was organized in this manner because collaboration among public, private, and the non-profit sector are key to the successful revitalization of any downtown area. An initial list of 60 attendees was created by FDR, MWRC, and MAPC.

## Outreach to Small Businesses

After canvassing over 80% of small businesses in the downtown area, a total of sixteen business owners agreed to participate in the tour. Entrepreneurs were prepared to share their stories and explain why they chose Framingham as a place to invest and grow. A special effort was placed in highlighting how their contributions strengthen the local and regional economy.

## Event Description

Over the course of two and a half hours, fifty five town leaders came together to learn about the diversity of businesses in its downtown area; and to hear the stories, challenges, and contributions of these entrepreneurs.

After a brief “Welcome and Introductions,” participants were divided into four color-coded groups and guided through four small businesses along the downtown area (sixteen small businesses in total.) Each group stayed a maximum of twelve minutes in each location before moving on to the next host.

**Group** ●

- Brandolini Shoe Repair (Ukraine)  
Tony  
56 Union Avenue
- Attitude Fashion (Brazil)  
Elias + Joanne  
137 Concord Street
- La Casa del Chicharron (Dominican Republic)  
Francisco  
16 Irving Street
- Padaria Brasil (Brazil)  
Elias + Tania  
61 Hollis Street

**Group** ●

- Anastasia's Oven + Grill (Egypt)  
Mena  
12 Union Avenue
- Party Flowers | Gaseta Photography (Brazil)  
Nubia + Roberto  
83 Concord Street
- Pupusas y Tacos Dona Sofia (El Salvador)  
Mirna Polanco Family  
20 Concord Street
- Ta Chic (Brazil)  
Jasmine  
55 Hollis Street

**Group** ●

- Pueblito Paisa (Colombia)  
Adieli Jaramillo  
66 Hollis Street
- Neca's Bakery (Guatemala)  
Neca  
22 Irving Street
- Urbano's Furniture (Brazil)  
John Oliveira  
84 Concord Street
- Crystal Nails (Vietnam)  
Ana and Winnie  
28 Union Avenue

**Group** ●

- Tropical Café (Brazil)  
Solange + Gil Moura  
85 Hollis Street
- Inter Latin (Colombia)  
Gabriel Ferraro  
68 Hollis Street
- Frescafe (Brazil Americana)  
Pablah Linhares + Vinicius DiPaiva  
82 Concord Street
- Pho Dakao (Vietnam)  
Dang Pham  
101 Concord Street

**Downtown Framingham  
August 14, 2014**

Once the visits were finished, participants gathered at the initial reception area to debrief, have small group discussions, and grab lunch.



## Outcomes

- MAPC strengthened relationships with the Town of Framingham and other project partners.
- Relationships between local entrepreneurs and community leaders were reinforced.
- Sixteen small business owners and fifty five town leaders were engaged in a conversation about priorities for Downtown Framingham, with a focus on its diversity as a competitive advantage.
- Increased participation of small business owners in subsequent public meetings about the future of Downtown Framingham.
- Coverage of the event by two local newspapers:
  - [Officials get familiar with downtown's vast array of businesses](#), *MetroWest Daily News*
  - [PHOTOS: Story Tour in Framingham](#), *MetroWest Daily News*
  - [Framingham Downtown Story Tour Highlights the People Behind the Businesses](#), *Framingham Patch*

## Timeline of Activities

TASKS:	June				July				August
	2-6	9-13	16-20	23-27	30-4	7-11	14-18	21-25	7 - Tour!
Team Check-in		X		X			X	X	
Event Logistics	X	X							
Outreach to Businesses	X	X		X	X		X	X	
Outreach to Participants		X		X		X	X	X	
Media						X		X	

# CrimeRisk



<b>Version</b>	Release 2021A
<b>Purpose</b>	CrimeRisk is intended to provide an assessment of the relative risk of seven major crime types and their summarization to the block group scale. Relative crime rates are very important in real estate applications, insurance underwriting, shopping center and stand-alone retail facilities.
<b>Content</b>	CrimeRisk is a block group and higher-level geographic database consisting of a series of standardized indexes for a range of serious crimes against both persons and property. It is derived from an extensive analysis of several years of crime reports from the vast majority of law enforcement jurisdictions nationwide. The crimes included in the database are the “Part 1” crimes and include murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft. These categories are the primary reporting categories used by the FBI in its Uniform Crime Report (UCR), with the exception of Arson, for which data is very inconsistently reported at the jurisdictional level. In accordance with the reporting procedures using in the UCR reports, aggregate indexes have been prepared for personal and property crimes separately, as well as a total index. While this provides a useful measure of the relative “overall” crime rate in an area, it must be recognized that these are unweighted indexes, in that a murder is weighted no more heavily than a purse snatching in the computation. For this reason, caution is advised when using any of the aggregate index values. In 2020, 5-Year Projections were added to the database.



## Crime Summary

Framingham City, MA

Prepared by MAPC using  
ESRI Business Analyst

Framingham City, MA (2524960)  
Geography: Place

	<b>Framingham</b>	<b>Brookline</b>	<b>Somerville</b>	<b>Waltham</b>
<b>Population Summary</b>				
2021 Total Population	72,350	60,905	80,421	64,073
2026 Total Population	75,281	61,638	81,957	65,446
2021-2026 Annual Rate	0.80%	0.24%	0.38%	0.42%
Total Crime Index	52	52	59	42