



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Town of Halifax



Acknowledgements



Town of Halifax

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

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

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



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Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Local Rapid Recovery on a Statewide Scale

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

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

Addressing Top Priorities for Economic Recovery in Halifax

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

Halifax Faces Notable Challenges for Recovery

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

- Halifax needs a champion to unite businesses and spur commercial activity
- The Halifax commercial corridor streetscape is uninviting and inaccessible to users of diverse ages and abilities.
- Halifax businesses and destinations face many below-average physical conditions and several vacancies. Landscape improvements and targeted vacancy solutions are needed.



Existing conditions

Source: Stantec



Developing Solutions in Partnership with the Halifax Community

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

Priority Projects

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

Implementing Strategies for Recovery & Revitalization in Halifax

The plan developed for the Halifax community through the Local Rapid Recovery Program is based on from a robust diagnostic assessment of public and private infrastructure, business community needs, market demand statistics, and administrative gaps and challenges. A comprehensive set of recommended projects vetted by local businesses and the public has been developed that addresses economic vitality solutions and revitalization efforts for the Halifax business community. Within the overall program, each proposed project provides detailed information on project budget, potential timelines, key partners and performance indicators, as well as critical action items, processes, and considerations. Funding sources noted in the project rubrics are resources for the Town and community groups to seek external funding and commence the next phase of project design and implementation.

The comprehensive and diverse set of project recommendations can aide in immediate recovery for Halifax's commercial corridor, or long-term solutions that improve the overall economic, commercial, and social health of Halifax. The Town is encouraged to pursue grant funding immediately for many of these projects to help Halifax overcome COVID-19's challenges with smart and resilient solutions that can be deployed quickly.

Project List

Category	Project	Description	Timeframe	Budget	Priority Project
Admin. Capacity	Develop a Business Association for Halifax	Form a business association to help businesses collaborate to promote themselves and the businesses of Halifax in a more coordinated and sustained manner.	Medium	Low	
Revenue and Sales	Develop a Small Business Support Toolbox	Consider initiating an RFP process for a provider to create a Small Business Toolkit for New and Existing Businesses. Materials may be created for self-service support to existing small business owners and new businesses.	Short	Medium	
Revenue and Sales	Create a Marketing and Branding Campaign for Halifax	Develop a brand for the community that will build awareness of the community, incorporating branding and marketing elements to create a sense of place for Halifax.	Short	Medium	
Private Realm	Develop Outdoor Dining Strategy and Guidance	Take lessons learned from the pandemic experience to develop a permanent outdoor dining program that is affordable for restaurants to implement.	Short	Low	
Public Realm	Support Landscape Improvements to the Public and Private Realms	Establish Landscape Grant Approval Committee and matching grant program for property owners. Identify and work with partner organizations to support landscape improvements within the public realm.	Short	Low	
Tenant Mix	Redevelop Vacant Property at 277 Plymouth	Support clean-up and redevelopment of likely-contaminated, high-visibility site at the intersection of Routes 106 and 58, working with developer to secure grant funding and technical assistance.	Medium	Large	

Rapid Recovery Program Background



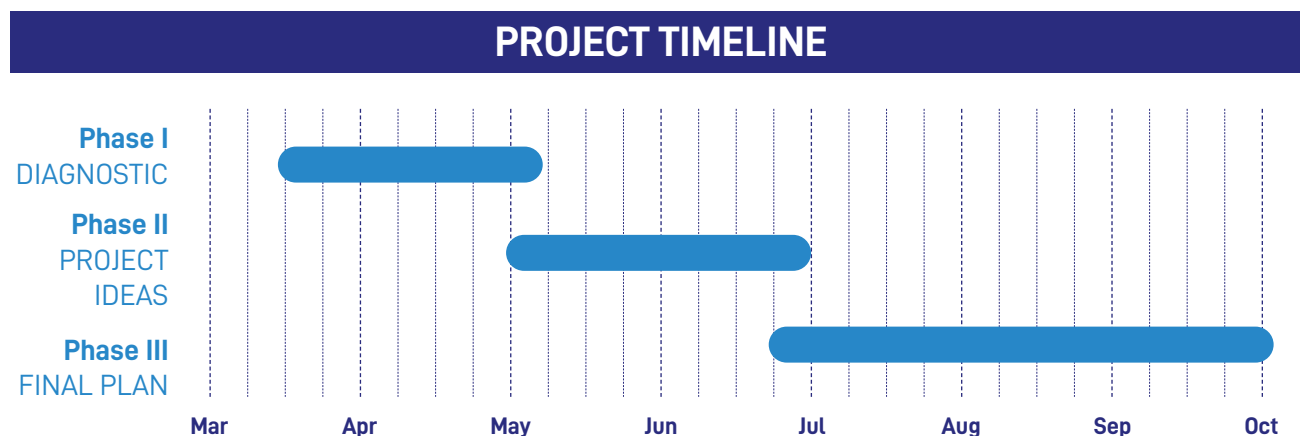
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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

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

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

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



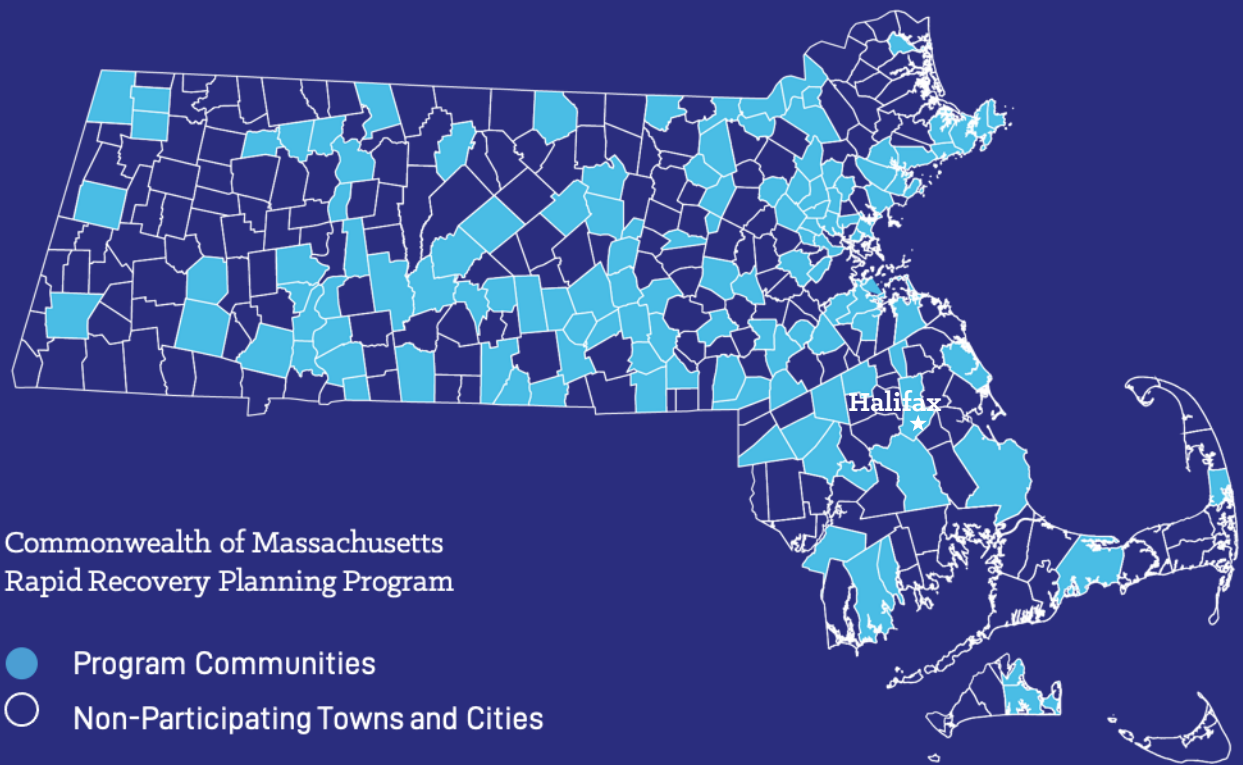
In Phase 1: Diagnostic, Plan Facilitators utilized the Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework that was adapted from the award-winning Commercial DNA approach as published by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) in "Preparing a Commercial District Diagnostic", and authored by Larisa Ortiz,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

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

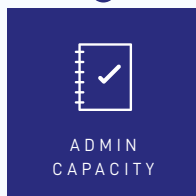
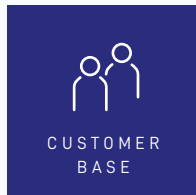
125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?

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

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

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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue & Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

Diagnostic Data Collection Methodology

Data Collection Goals

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

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

Diagnostic Asset Breakdown

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

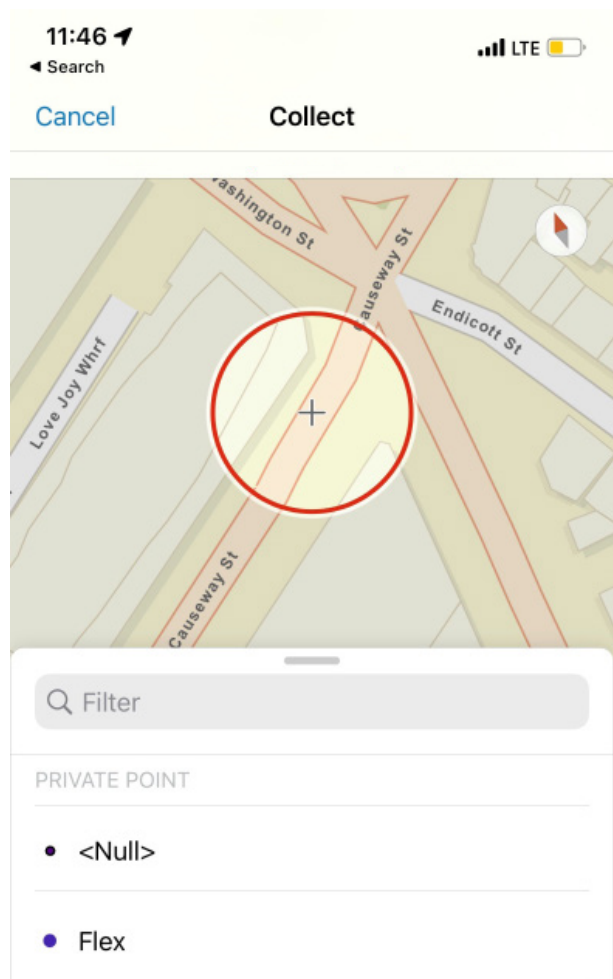
Data Collection Process

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

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

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

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

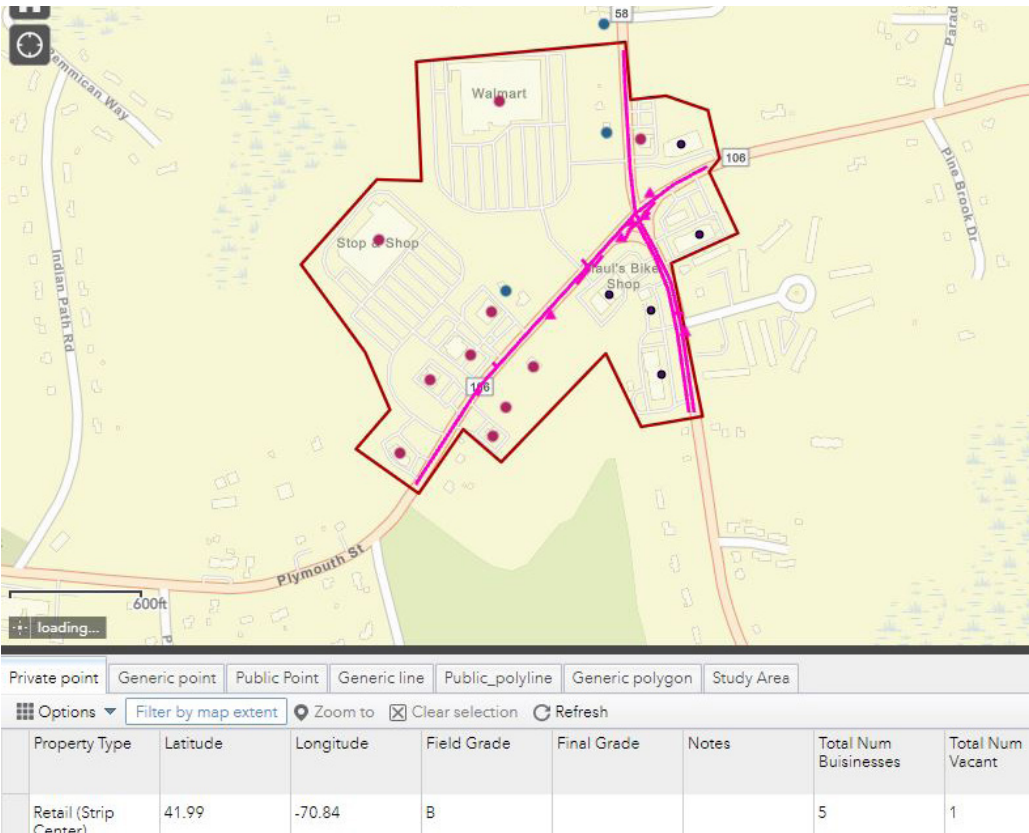


The ArcGIS Collector tool allowed data collectors in the field to develop an online database for public and private realm data

Data Analysis & Outputs

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

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



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

Final Diagnostic Grade

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

Example

ELEMENT: SIDEWALKS



How Halifax ranks:

A

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

B

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

C

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

F

There are **no** sidewalks in the study area.

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

Diagnostic Asset: Physical Environment (Public Realm)

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

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

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



Diagnostic Asset: Physical & Business Environment

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

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



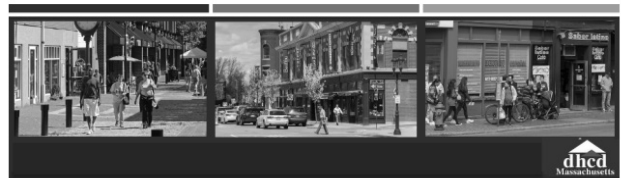
Diagnostic Asset: Business Environment (Business Survey)

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

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

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

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



Local Rapid Recovery Plan Program - Business Survey

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

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

Sample Questions:

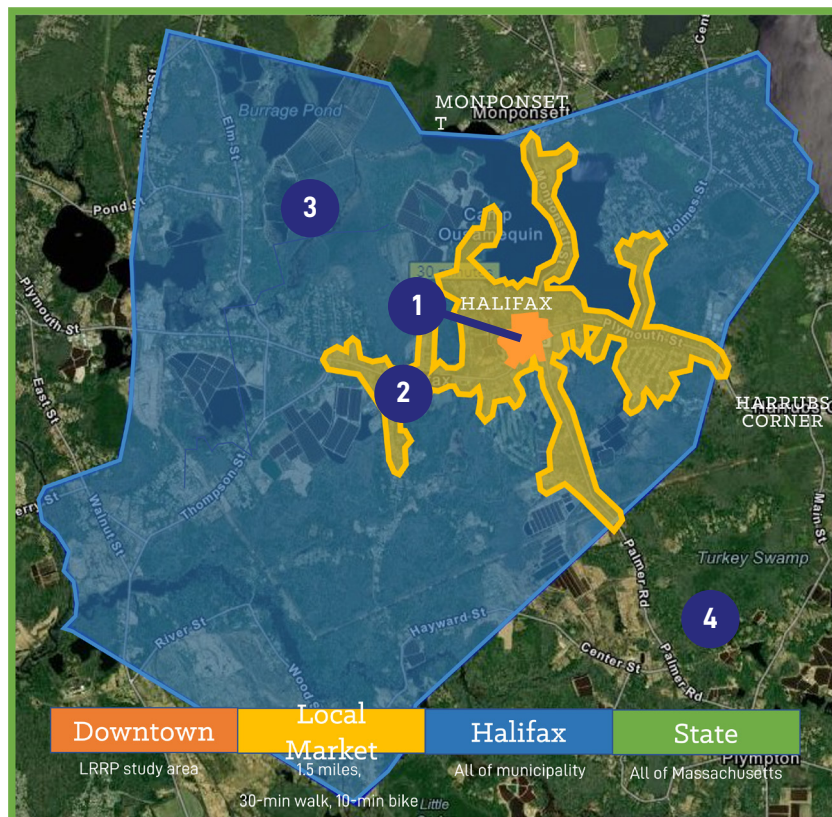
- **Do any local regulations (not related to COVID) pose an obstacle for your business operation?**
- **How did your 2020 business revenue compare to your 2019 revenue?**
- **Considering the conditions in your commercial area, how important to you are each of the following strategies that address Attraction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



Diagnostic Asset: Customer Base

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

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



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

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

Diagnostic Key Findings



LRRP Study Area

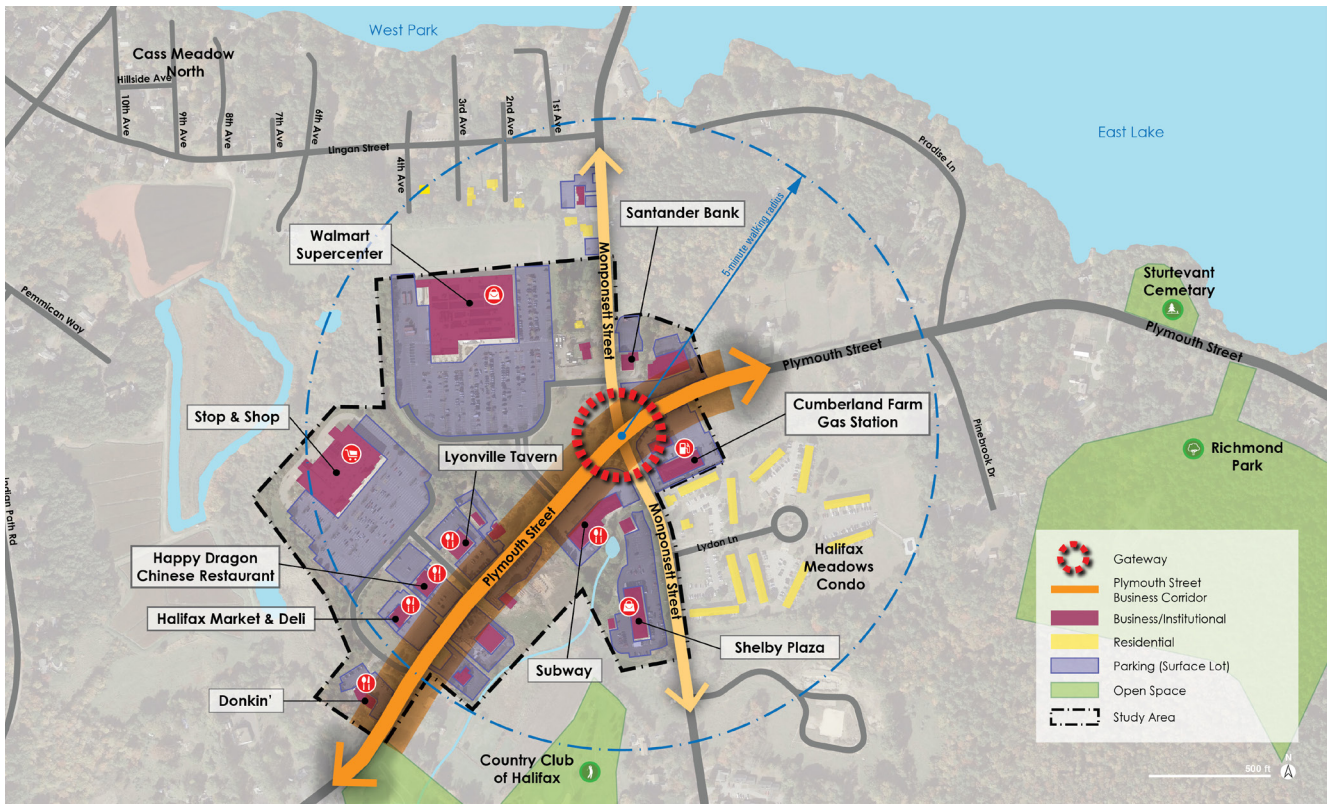
Why Focus on the Commercial Core?

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

Halifax LRRP Study Area

The Halifax Study Area is oriented around Route 106, through the heart of Halifax, including the intersection with Monponsett Street. It is largely comprised of standalone commercial buildings, both big-box and smaller-footprint buildings, and surface parking. Many of the commercial owners and tenants within the Study Area are national chains.

Study Area Map



Halifax Study Area Map
Source: Stantec



Existing Crosswalk, Halifax
Source: Stantec



Existing Commercial, Halifax
Source: Stantec



Existing Sidewalk, Halifax
Source: Stantec

Key Findings & Diagnostic Data Overview



Halifax has a growing customer base.

Halifax is a largely residential community in the heart of Plymouth County, with a small commercial zone near the center of town. It is largely a community of homeowners. There is a large proportion of residents older than 70 years old living within the Local Market Area, and both the Local Market Area and Halifax overall are whiter than Massachusetts overall.



Halifax is a traditional and healthy suburban commercial node.

The study area is oriented around a typical commercial strip. While Halifax does not have a traditional downtown, and is largely auto-oriented, the Town has good overall pedestrian infrastructure, especially for a town of its density and size. However, the town is lacking some pedestrian lighting infrastructure and could benefit from elements such as covered bus stops.

Business signage within the study area is adequate, but could be more cohesive.



Halifax's business properties are well-kept and auto-oriented.

Overall, business properties are in good shape, and Halifax has a good mix of retail options. But few are safely, reliably accessible to pedestrians. Pedestrian-focused amenities such as retail spillover and pedestrian lighting would make the study area more welcoming, as would ground-floor design upgrades and maintenance improvements. Storefront and window design, awnings, and building lightings can all be improved to highlight local businesses and enhance visual appeal.



Halifax has limited administrative capacity.

Much of Halifax's administrative capacity comes from the Town Administrator. Old Colony Planning Council and Metro South Chamber of Commerce provide some support and could serve as collaborative partners in future endeavors.

Previous and Concurrent Plan Review

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

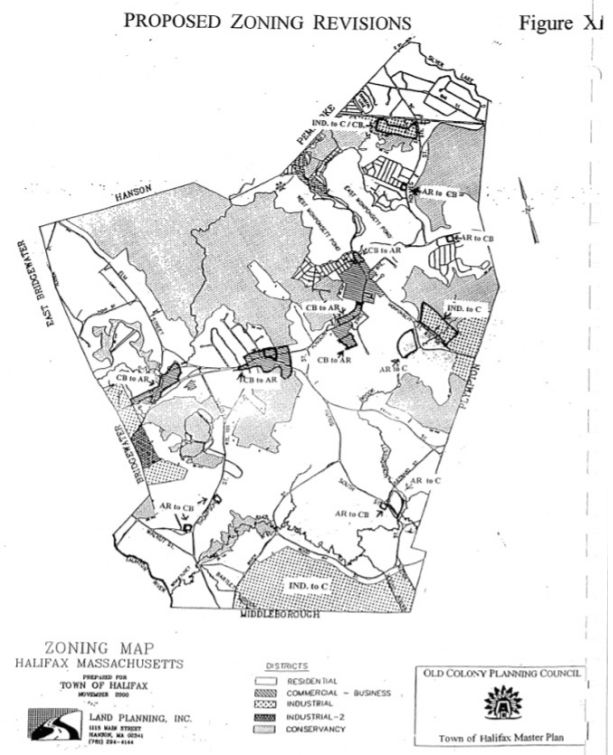
Halifax Master Plan

Halifax completed their most recent Mater Plan in 2010. The following quote sums up the key findings regarding the LRRP study area:

"Despite its relative concentration of stores, restaurants, banks and other business, the Plymouth St./ Monponsett St. area does not function as a continuous, pedestrian downtown. Its layout remains more that of three highway-oriented strip malls and one big box store with people rarely walking between the quadrants."

Relevant goals

- To guide the Town's evolution to meet the needs of diverse population groups, and protect attractive neighborhoods, landscapes, and natural resources
- To accommodate a reasonable amount of residential and commercial growth while preserving the town's man-made amenities, townscape, landscape, and rural character, and meeting needs for town facilities
- To provide opportunities for a range of housing types and tenure alternatives to accommodate more diverse populations in more varied traditional neighborhoods
- To meet Halifax's need for retail services while preserving and strengthening a maximum of its present character especially along Plymouth St.



Proposed Zoning Map
Source: Halifax Master Plan (2010)

Relevant priority actions

- Revise zoning map and revise development controls to concentrate growth in villages, near commuter rail service, and where sewer and treatment works allow.
- Attract a range of needed retail activities
- Control strip commercial development along Plymouth St
- Revise zoning to guide commercial development in order to create a compact, "park-once" commercial corridor at Routes 58 and 106
- Link open spaces with usable corridors along features such as power line easements
- Develop sidewalks where needed
- Revise subdivision rules and regulations to encourage or require pedestrian and bicycle ways between cul-de-sac subdivisions and points of interest
- Improve pedestrian connections between Wal-Mart and other points of interest in the commercial center
- Consider enacting a downtown-oriented district minimizing yard requirements and encouraging rear parking or shared parking.
- Develop zoning provisions requiring special permits for developments above a certain size, perhaps 40,000 sq. ft., and draft related special permit guidelines.
- Identify area suitable for small walkable neighborhood-serving retail areas and map them CB on areas of 1-2 acres (or retain small amounts of existing CB zoning) at sites such as the intersections of Thompson and Summit Sts., South and Hayward Sts., Plymouth and Carver Sts., and Plymouth St. and Redwood Rd., along with the present store site on Holmes St. near Annawon Drive, and a spot on Rte. 105 near Highland Drive.
- Closely study housing and commercial

uses of the remaining Industrial and Commercial/Business-zoned land adjacent to the rail station, and consider re-mapping the land around the station to AR or CB

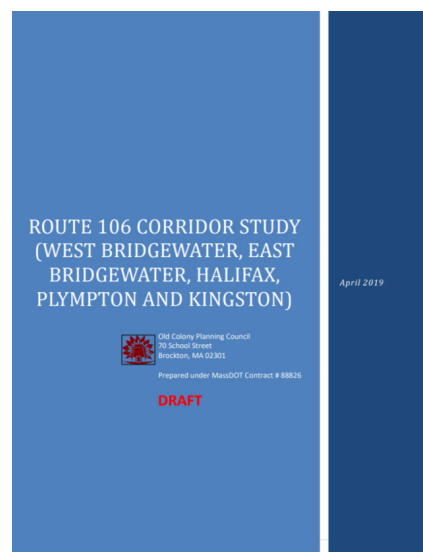
- Examine ways to discourage retail/service uses and to encourage light industrial uses of the less central C-B zoned areas, while protecting residential uses.

Route 106 Corridor Study

Old Colony Planning Council completed a corridor study for the 16-mile stretch of Route 106 that runs through West Bridgewater, East Bridgewater, Halifax, Plympton, and Kingston, to enhance the movement of people and goods, improve circulation and traffic flow efficiency, improve safety and bicycle and pedestrian accommodation, and reduce gaps to essential services.

Relevant priority actions

- Sidewalks along the north side of Route 106, from Cranberry Drive to Circuit Street (through the Route 106/Pine Street intersection) will improve pedestrian safety within the corridor





CUSTOMER
BASE

Highlights from the Customer Base Data

What is the Customer Base Diagnostic?

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

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

Customer Base Results in Halifax

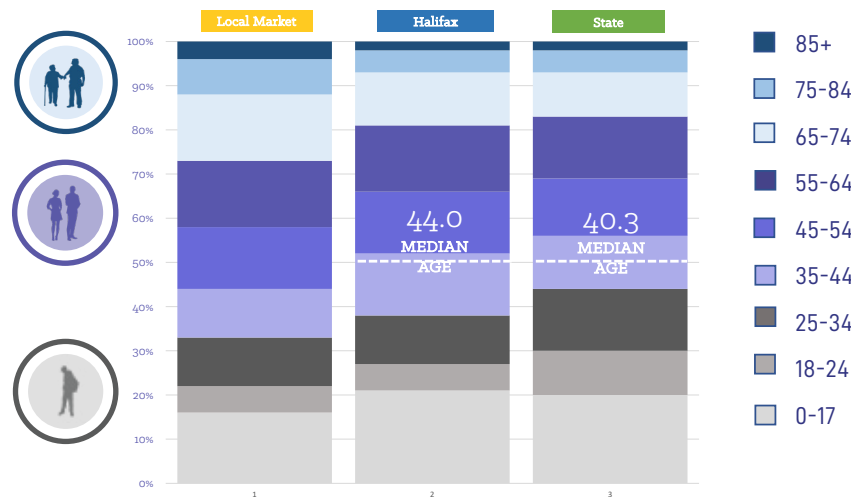
Halifax has a growing population, surpassing Massachusetts' overall recent and expected growth rate. Halifax has a higher proportion of older residents than the state overall but is generally less racially and ethnically diverse. Most residents have access to an automobile, though there are many Halifax residents relying on bikes and pedestrian infrastructure to get around. Halifax has a lower crime-rate than the national average.



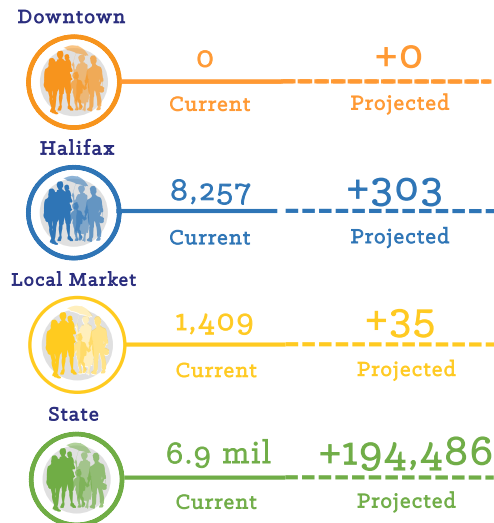
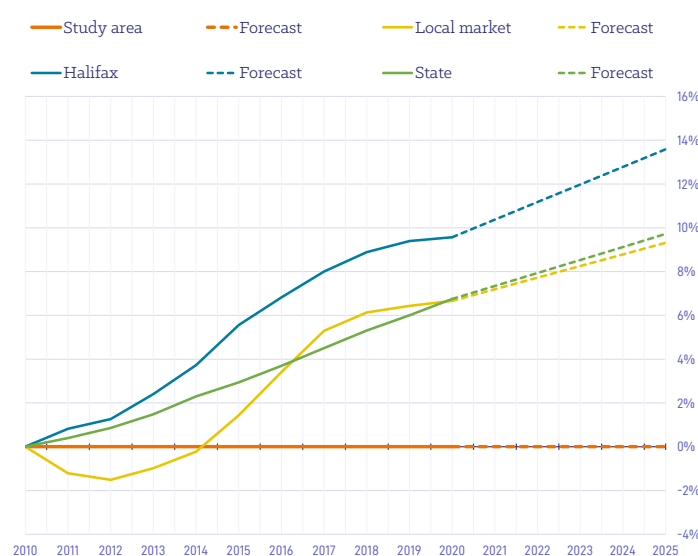
DEMOGRAPHICS

Halifax's recent and expected growth rate surpasses Massachusetts' overall growth rate. The Halifax local market's age distribution skews slightly older than the state average.

Age Distribution

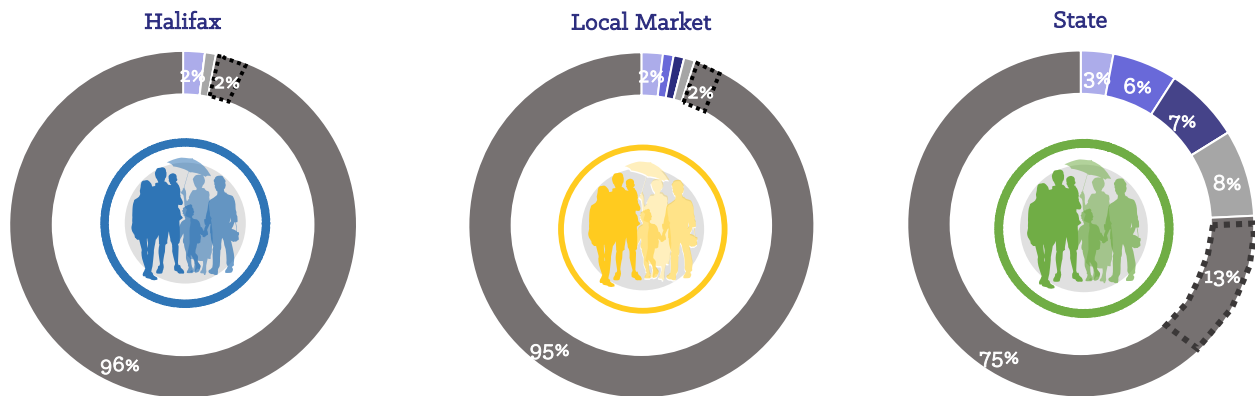


Population Trends



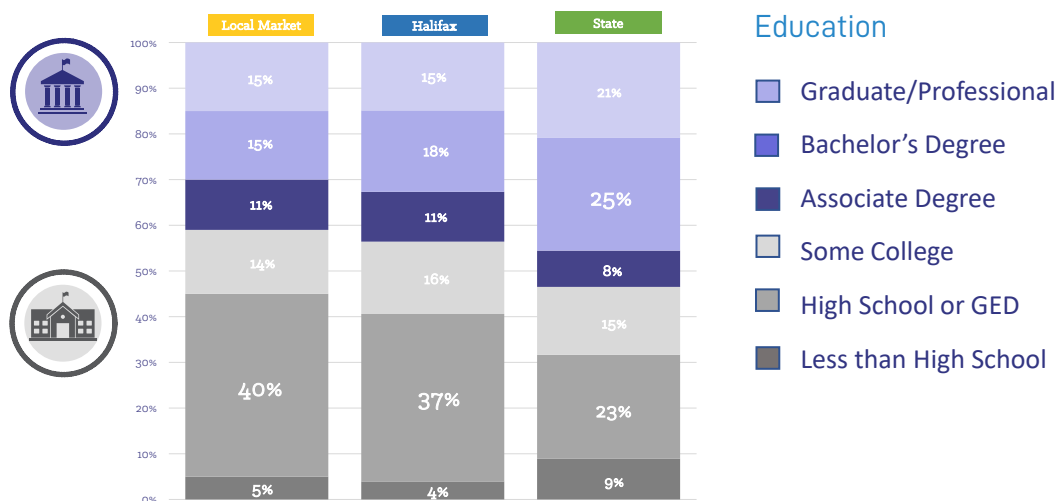
DEMOGRAPHICS

The local market and Halifax overall are both less diverse than Massachusetts overall, with a relatively lower proportion of people of Hispanic origin.



EDUCATION

The local market and Halifax overall have slightly lower educational attainment than the state.



CUSTOMER STATISTICS

Estimates suggest that the Halifax local market will be adding 15 households this year, but this does not account for the 30 units of affordable housing currently in development. Most housing is owner-occupied. There are roughly 644 jobs in the study area, the vast majority of jobs in the larger local market.

	Local Market	Halifax	State
Population			
	2.1	2.7	2.5
Avg. household size			
Residential population	1,409	8,257	6,993,463
Households	669	3,111	2,702,578
5-year forecast, population change	35	303	194,486
5-year forecast, household change	15	101	73,332
Median age	49	44	40

	Local Market	Halifax	State
Employment and income			
	\$77k	\$88k	\$81k
Median household income			
Employees	742	2,507	3,384,476
Students (secondary & above)	126	808	933,098
Jobs-to-residents ratio	0.5	0.3	0.5

Housing			
	\$288k	\$324k	\$415k
Median home value			
5-year forecast, home value growth	4%	9%	17%
Owner-occupied housing	89%	92%	61%



PHYSICAL
ENVIRONMENT

Highlights from the Physical Environment

What is the Physical Environment Diagnostic?

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

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

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

Physical Environment Results in Halifax

Halifax benefits from strong vehicular access, given its positioning at the intersection of Routes 106 and 58. It is served by the MBTA Commuter Rail (Kingston Line). While this area is primarily auto-oriented, there are also significant numbers of pedestrians and bikes. Halifax's existing sidewalks are well-maintained, but there are many gaps. Crosswalks are adequate but require maintenance. Improved connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists should be a priority.

Halifax has strong street visibility, though visibility is worse around larger big-box stores like Walmart and Stop & Shop. Lighting for pedestrians is lacking and can be improved. Existing street lighting is directed into the roadway and limited overall within the study area. Added decorative and



Halifax Physical Environment Grade

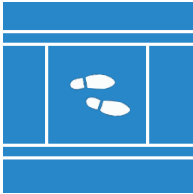


The commercial corridor's physical environment receives an overall grade somewhere between a B and a C. Businesses are in good condition, with generally clear wayfinding signage for cars. Still, there are some gaps, including landscaping and public and private realm amenities to improve pedestrian and biking safety.

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

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

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



SIDEWALKS

About 25% of sidewalks in the study area are cleaned and well-maintained but there are many gaps. Crosswalks are adequate but require maintenance.

A

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

B

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

C

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

F

There are no sidewalks in the study area.



Existing sidewalks

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

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



STREET TREES AND BENCHES

Landscaping and public realm amenities are weak. While some individual businesses have high quality landscaping, the overall quality in both public and private areas could be improved. Amenities including benches are lacking.

A

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

B

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

C

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

F

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



Existing street trees and benches

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

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



LIGHTING

Lighting improvements are needed. Street lighting is directed into the roadway and limited overall within the study area. Decorative and pedestrian-scale lighting will encourage more activity.

A

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

B

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

C

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

F

There is no street lighting in the study area.



Existing lighting

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

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



WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

There is an opportunity for Halifax to improve pedestrian and bicycle wayfinding in its downtown. Wayfinding and signage improvements are also opportunities to improve branding for the downtown.

A

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

B

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

C

Limited to no signage available throughout the study area.

F

There is no wayfinding/signage in the study area.



Existing wayfinding signage

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

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



ROADBED AND CROSSWALKS

Pedestrian and bike safety needs to be enhanced. While this area is primarily auto-oriented, there is a significant number of pedestrians and bikes. Improved connectivity should be a priority.

A

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

B

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

C

Roads are hazardous to all users.

F

The study area is not connected by any major roads.



Existing crosswalks

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

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



WINDOW

While many businesses have large windows -- letting in natural light, improving safety, connecting the business interior to passersby outside -- many others offer limited transparency or lack transparency altogether.

A

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

B

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

C

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

F

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



Existing storefront windows

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

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



OUTDOOR DISPLAY AND DINING

Very few storefronts offer outdoor displays, and few restaurants offer outdoor dining. Outdoor displays can engage passersby, while outdoor dining has served as a key business resilience measure (and been in high demand) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A

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

B

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

C

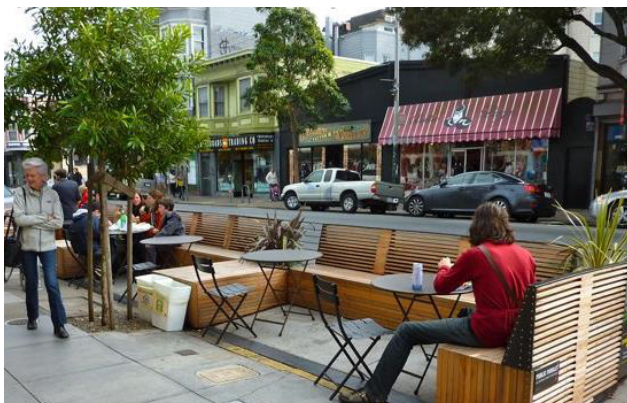
Only about 25% of storefronts have spillover merchandise display and outdoor dining limiting the pedestrian experience.

F

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



Existing outdoor commerce and dining
Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

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

SIGNAGE

Many study area signs are well-lit and large. Because many businesses in the study area are national chains, their brand identity is strong and cohesive with locations elsewhere.

A

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

B

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

C

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

F

Storefronts in the study area do not have signage.



Existing signage
Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

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



AWNING

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

A

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

B

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

C

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

F

Storefronts in the study area are not equipped with awnings.



Existing awnings

Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

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



FACADE

Many facades are in good shape, but there were a number of vacant and other properties in disrepair.

A

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

B

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

F

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

F

All properties in the study area require significant façade improvements.



Existing facades

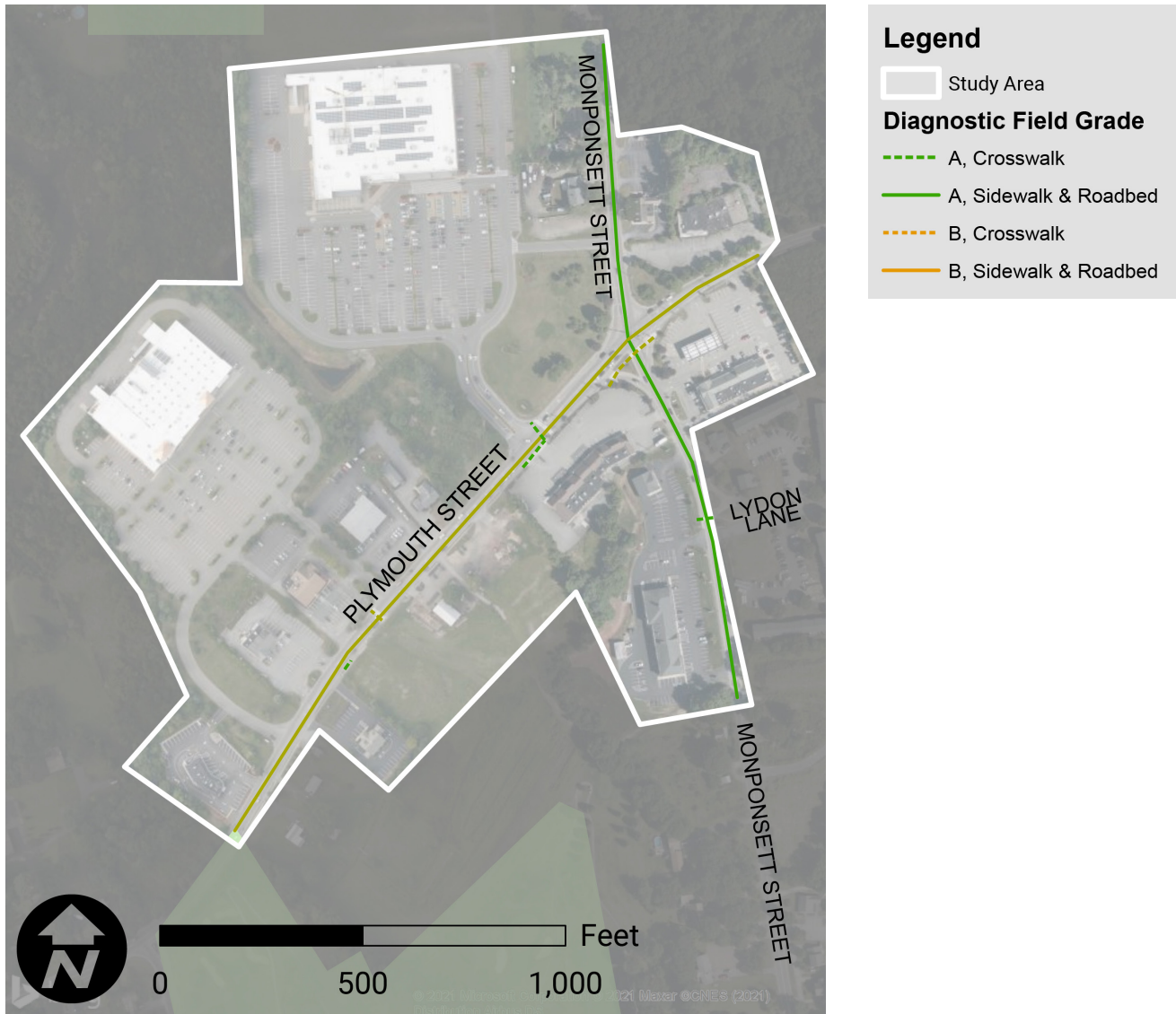
Source: Stantec



Best Practice Guiding Principles:

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

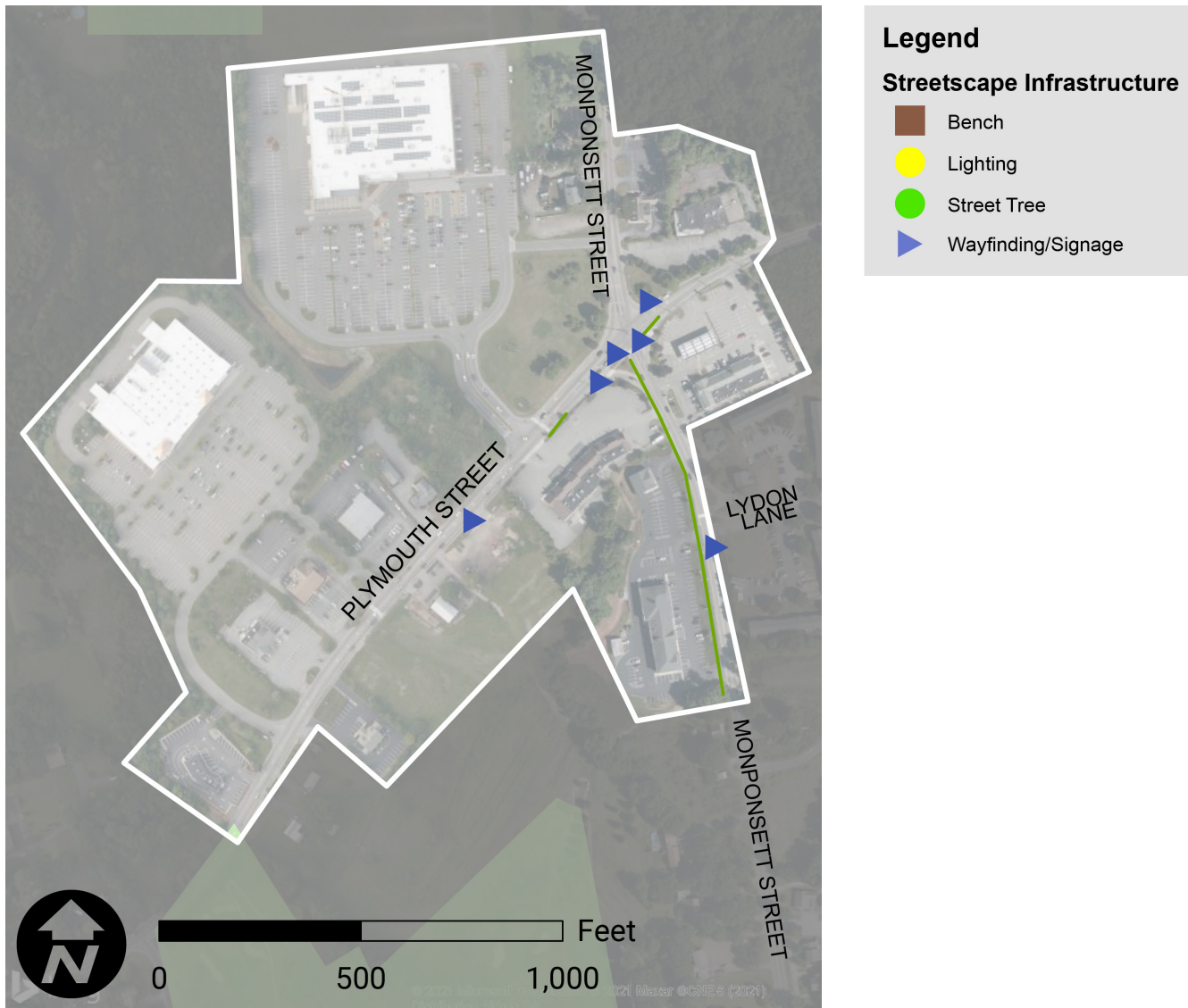
SIDEWALK AND CROSSWALK CONDITIONS



Map 1: Sidewalks and Crosswalks in the Halifax LRRP Study Area

Source: Stantec

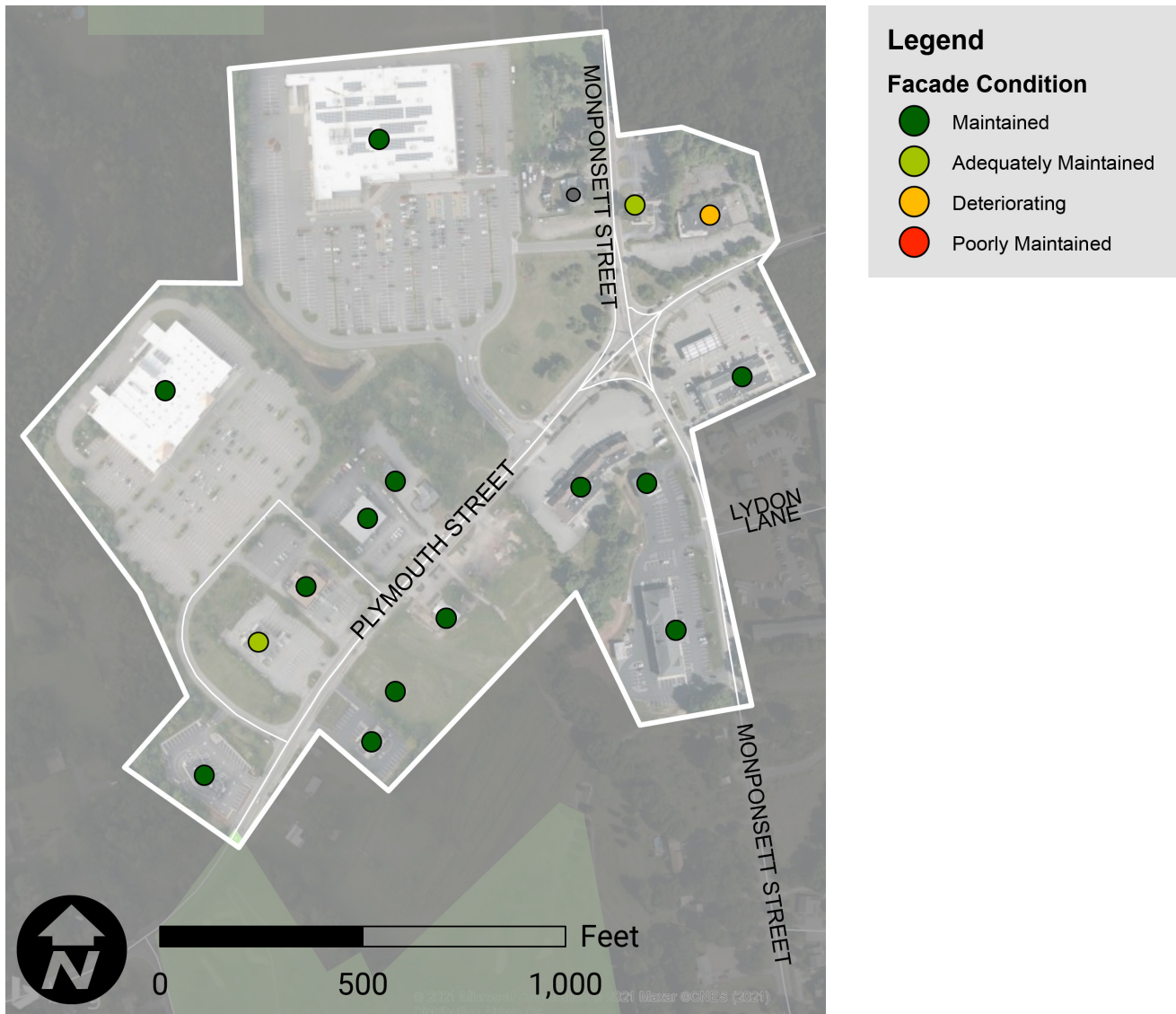
STREETSCAPE INFRASTRUCTURE CONDITIONS



Map 2: Streetscape Infrastructure in the Halifax LRRP Study Area

Source: Stantec

FACADE CONDITIONS



Map 3: Facade Conditions in the Halifax LRRP Study Area

Source: Stantec



Highlights from the Business Environment

What is the Business Environment Diagnostic?

The conditions of the local business environment, including business density, quality, and type of offerings, play a critical role in how successful businesses are in meeting the needs of the district's customers. Collecting data related to the tenant mix and concentration of stores provides an insight into the health of local businesses, as well as highlights the presence (or lack of) major anchors and drivers that attract visitors and residents to frequent businesses in the district. In support of this diagnostic, the State sent out business surveys at the beginning of the LRRP and shared results with Plan Facilitators.

The Business Environment Diagnostic poses the questions **“What are the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses in the Study Area, and how well does the business mix meet the needs of various customer groups?”**

Business Environment Results in Fall Halifax

While no businesses in the study area have permanently closed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, all businesses surveyed reported seeing major changes to their businesses' operations, capacity, and/or sales. While there are only 4 vacancies in the Study Area, they account for a sizeable portion of the 29 storefronts.

The business environment is small but well-positioned through the heart of Halifax. However, Halifax businesses find that many visitors are one-stop shoppers, and identified a need to encourage longer stays. The commercial corridor is not currently a destination in itself; individual stores are.



Highlights from the Business Environment

VACANCY ANALYSIS

There were a total of 29 storefronts in the Study Area. At the time of the study, 4 of the storefronts were vacant, including a very visible vacancy at 277 Plymouth. Halifax saw no permanent closures since the beginning of COVID-19.

BUSINESS SURVEY

A business survey was completed by businesses in the area. The response was limited but clearly showed an impact from COVID-19.

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

Due to the pandemic, all businesses surveyed reported needing to operate at reduced hours and capacity. All businesses surveyed saw fewer on-site customers than the year before. The top three COVID-19 business impacts from the 2021 business survey were:

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

On average, business owners or representatives were generally satisfied with the condition of the business environment. They were fairly

Top 3 most reported COVID-19 impacts:

- Moderate decline in revenue
- Incurred expenses for safety measures
- Established alternate mode to sell/deliver products

100% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity.

100% of businesses reported fewer on-site customers.

satisfied with the proximity of their business to other businesses and users. They ranked their level of satisfaction with the safety and comfort of customers and employees similarly.

Attitudes toward the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks were still positive overall, but slightly less so. On average, business owners reported being somewhat satisfied with the condition of these public realm elements, recognizing room for improvement. .

STOREFRONT VACANCY CONDITIONS



Map 4: Vacancy / Occupancy Profile in the Halifax LRRP Study Area
Source: Stantec



Highlights from the Administrative Capacity

What is the Administrative Capacity Diagnostic?

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

The Administrative Capacity Diagnostic poses questions such as:

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

Administrative Capacity Results in Halifax

Administrative capacity is highly limited in Halifax, and essentially comes from the Town Administrator. Past initiatives have attempted to increase administrative capacity through potential business associations. Previously, a loose business association between Halifax and Plympton existed, and provided some additional administrative capacity, but that entity no longer exists.

The Town Administrator has many responsibilities, and has limited time available to devote to any additional initiatives in the study area beyond existing responsibilities.

Administrative capacity gaps and opportunities are discussed further in the Project Recommendations section of this report.

Summary of Needs

Key Findings

Customer Base and Business Environment Findings

- Halifax surpasses the state's growth rate
- Most residents have access to an automobile, and the study area is largely auto-oriented.
- The study area's 4 vacancies account for a sizable portion of its 29 total storefronts, though no businesses were reported to permanently close during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Based on results from the survey, business owners are generally satisfied with the current conditions within the study area

Physical Environment Findings

- Overall, properties are in good shape. Halifax benefits from the variety of retail options, but overall properties are geared toward auto access. The lack of outdoor dining or retail spillover, benches, pedestrian lighting does not create a welcoming environment.
- Ground floor design and maintenance improvements are needed. Storefront and window design, awnings, and building lighting can all be improved to highlight local businesses and enhance visual appeal.
- Creative public space activation can draw people to this business corridor and encourage them to linger. Placemaking and activation strategies can appeal to a broad audience and encourage increased customers.
- Landscaping and public realm amenities are weak. While some individual businesses have high quality landscaping, the overall quality in both public and private areas could be improved. Pedestrian/bike safety needs to be enhanced. While this area is primarily auto-oriented, there is a significant number of pedestrians and bikes.

Alignment of Goals and Key Findings

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

Project Recommendations



Identification & Prioritization of Projects

Integration of Project Goals & Recommendations

During the first phase of the diagnostic planning effort, and based on stakeholder input, a series of priorities emerged to help guide the recommendations moving forward. These include:

- Develop opportunities to support our businesses
- Identify current—and future—public funds available for local businesses
- Improve the public realm with increased amenities
- Support 'Pop-Up' activities and other programming to increase customer presence and visits
- Achieve 100% storefront occupancy
- Support safety improvements for pedestrians and bikers
- Identify most appropriate business organization
- Strategies to get beyond the 'one-stop' trips; extend stays to up to two-three hours
 - Social media photo opportunities
 - Passports to encourage multiple stops
- Cohesive branding strategy
 - Banners
 - Funding from OCPC

These goals, additional public input, and subject matter guidance — as well as a review of previous and concurrent planning initiatives in Halifax — have directly informed the choice and structure of the following project recommendations.

Public Engagement Efforts

In order to understand the needs and goals of the Halifax community, the LRRP team included a series of engagement efforts with the public and key stakeholders.

PHASE I DIAGNOSTIC DATA PUBLIC MEETING

The Town hosted a Zoom event on May 26, 2021 to present the initial diagnostic findings and discuss goals and preliminary implementation project ideas and considerations.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The consultant team in collaboration with the Town Administrator conducted stakeholder interviews with key businesses, including local bank offices, retail establishments, and restaurant owners.

PHASE II PROJECT REVIEW

The consultant team provided a review of all projects to the Town Manager and Town Officials.



*Halifax Public Meeting presentation, given to present diagnostic results
Source: Stantec*

Project Overview

Project Categories

Physical Environment: Public Realm

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

Physical Environment: Private Realm

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

Business Environment: Revenue and Sales

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

Business Environment: Tenant Mix

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

Administrative Capacity

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

Project List

The following section provides an overview of the project prioritization results from the public engagement efforts and stakeholder feedback, along with a map that illustrates project locations at a site and district-level. The Halifax LRRP report includes 6 projects, all of which address dynamics measured in the diagnostic, including Physical Environment, Business Environment, Customer Base, and Administrative Capacity.

Category	Project	Description	Timeframe	Budget	Priority Project
Admin. Capacity	Develop a Business Association for Halifax	Form a business association to help businesses collaborate to promote themselves and the businesses of Halifax in a more coordinated and sustained manner.	Medium	Low	
Revenue and Sales	Develop a Small Business Support Toolbox	Consider initiating an RFP process for a provider to create a Small Business Toolkit for New and Existing Businesses. Materials may be created for self-service support to existing small business owners and new businesses.	Short	Medium	
Revenue and Sales	Create a Marketing and Branding Campaign for Halifax	Develop a brand for the community that will build awareness of the community, incorporating branding and marketing elements to create a sense of place for Halifax.	Short	Medium	
Private Realm	Develop Outdoor Dining Strategy and Guidance	Take lessons learned from the pandemic experience to develop a permanent outdoor dining program that is affordable for restaurants to implement.	Short	Low	
Public Realm	Support Landscape Improvements to the Public and Private Realms	Establish Landscape Grant Approval Committee and matching grant program for property owners. Identify and work with partner organizations to support landscape improvements within the public realm.	Short	Low	
Tenant Mix	Redevelop Vacant Property at 277 Plymouth	Support clean-up and redevelopment of likely-contaminated, high-visibility site at the intersection of Routes 106 and 58, working with developer to secure grant funding and technical assistance.	Medium	Large	

Implementation / Next Steps

Project Action Plan

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

Obtaining Funding





Considering the vast number of project ideas and differing budget ranges (less than \$50K or greater than \$400K), it can be overwhelming and overly timeconsuming for communities to seek assistance and find funding opportunities. The Department of Housing and Community Development provides extensive resources that contain information on existing local, state, and federal grant programs, organized by the diagnostic categories including physical environment, business environment, administrative capacity, and customer base.

The table on the following page organizes the 6 projects in LRRP plan by implementation timeframe (short, medium, or long-term), as well as budget range (less than \$50K or greater than \$400K). Organizing projects by potential budget and timeframe can act as a resource for communities to assess projects that could be implemented quickly and cheaply, and which projects should be addressed at a later date due to funding, political, or administrative setbacks.

Project Profiles



Develop a Business Association for Halifax

Category	 Admin Capacity	Administrative Capacity
Location		Study area
Origin		Town of Halifax
Budget		Low Seed money will likely be required. Further information on sustainable funding sources can be found at the end of the Process section.
Timeframe		Medium There are opportunities to improve collaboration and communication between businesses in the short-term, but the process to determine the right form of business association and set it up would need more time.
Risk		Low The Town is interested in partnering with business and property owners to initiate the effort. The challenge is there is no group currently interested in taking the lead. The LRRP project to develop a business association in Halifax will be starting from the ground up to initiate the conversation and will require some leg work to identify business and property owner partners. The Town has limited capacity to serve this function but may be able to provide some seed money to support the effort.
Key Performance Indicators		Initial meeting with business owners to assess interest Development of committee to research potential organization Development of business association
Partners & Resources		Town of Halifax Local business owners Metro South Chamber of Commerce

Diagnostic

In Halifax, there is interest in developing a business association to help businesses collaborate to promote themselves and the businesses of Halifax in a more coordinated and sustained manner.

The proposed business association would improve communication and collaboration amongst businesses, undertake collective activities, market Halifax as a destination, develop more opportunities for shoppers to visit more than one business, and support small businesses to further COVID recovery efforts.

Whether in the form of an official Business Association or something more informal, any form of more meaningful collaboration between district businesses would go a long way to support Halifax's recovery from COVID-19 and longer-term economic success.

Action Item

Halifax can consider the following action items for launching an effort to create a Business Association:

- Getting Started
- Develop the Value Proposition
- Create a Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy
- Resources for Sustainability

Process

The process steps include:

- Create Marketing flyer to describe benefits of forming a business association in Halifax.
- Create a downtown partnership with Town, key property owners, key local destination businesses, and chamber of commerce (if possible) to launch the effort.
- Form a broad-based advisory committee to provide input and feedback
- Secure seed funding for TA to explore business association models through Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (now part of the One Stop), ARPA, and another stakeholder support
- Hire Coordinator through Town (using ARPA funds or other resources (to undertake the following activities:
 - Create community outreach events, widely distribute surveys and other engagement tools to develop program priorities
 - One on one conversations with stakeholders to secure support and engagement in process
 - Consensus building with stakeholders on model / programming / budget
 - Create launch
 - Execute a demonstration project that could "show" potential programs and services provided to the through a business association. This could be a business directory or "welcome the Halifax" kit for new businesses or coordinated promotion.
 - Formally create business association, Board of directors and membership structure
- Create MOU with regional Chamber for Administrative support at least in the initial startup period.

(continued on next page)

Process, continued

Getting started: Halifax may initiate this project by creating a working partnership between the Town and business and property owner stakeholders such as Walmart, Stop and Shop, owners of local restaurants, library, and small business owners. Additionally, the Town may engage active community leaders or special interest groups who may be interested in helping form an organization. The opportunity may exist to use the LRRP planning process as a launching point for stakeholder engagement. Town outreach to businesses could include the following activities:

- Hire project coordinator to undertake research, outreach, and coordinate planning effort.
- Increase communication to property owners about LRRP Plan Projects
- Develop database of businesses, property managers and property owners in Halifax.
- Promote Kick off convening event/ LRRP program on Local Facebook and Instagram pages.
- Directly reach out to key businesses to become partners in promoting the business association concept.
- Work your media connections to promote interest in getting involved in forming the business association and the benefits and organization would be able to provide.

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

- Ability to collectively and cost effectively undertake programs to achieve impact / scale
- Provide a unified voice / "seat at the table" for business priorities
- Produce marketing materials / new business welcome tool kits
- Enhanced digital marketing and utilization of existing social media outlets.
- Produce and execute cultural and event programming
- Ability to respond to crisis - COVID
- Leverage resources and collaborations

Stakeholder Engagement, Leadership, and Partnerships:

The Town can launch the conversation and provide initial coordinating support for forming a business association but will need to partner with businesses to create sustainable buy-in for the concept. The clear demonstration of a public / private partnership will help move this effort forward.

Create a Business Engagement Strategy:

The Town and a core group of businesses could begin efforts to engage other businesses to identify their needs and priorities. This work has begun through the LRRP process but will need to continue to refine the activities that a business association would undertake. Additionally, this affords the opportunity to identify potential private sector leadership for the business association. This could happen in a variety of ways including:

- Business Forums - fun, engaging and informational visioning sessions held at local businesses like Rodney's Kitchen or the public library.
- Peer Learning Panels - Invite Executive Directors from Business Associations in other similar communities to talk about their programs.
- Visits to other communities with Business Associations to see programs in action
- Surveys of needs and priorities (although this has recently been done through the LRRP process but could include a broader distribution to other stakeholders).
- Take advantage of existing active Halifax Community Facebook and Instagram pages to invite and promote the concept.

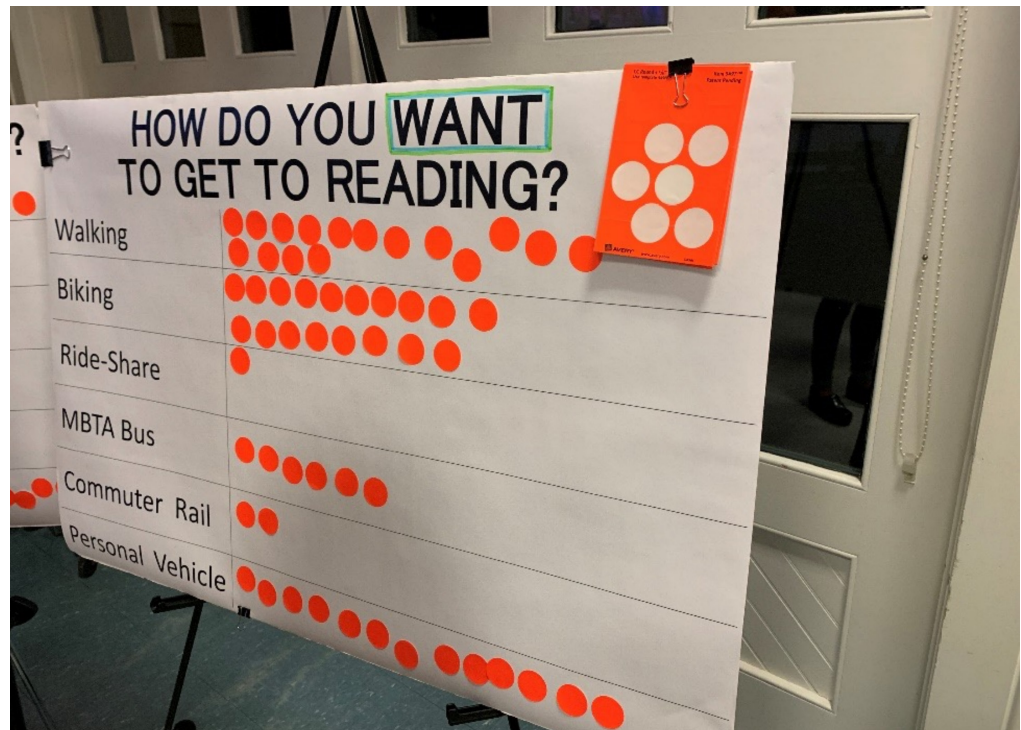
Resources for Sustainability: Seed money may be required starting a Business Association.

Sources include TA through the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, or ARPA funds (if the development of the organization is tied to implementing COVID recovery activities).

Additionally, local Institutions, foundations and key stakeholders/Individual contributors may be sources for seed money to launch.

- Consider allocating ARPA Recovery Funds to fund a project coordinator
- Town could apply to One Stop for the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative for TA funds for organizational capacity to form a Business Association.
- Identify other local foundation, business supporters like local banks or other institutional stakeholders
- Explore support from regional Chamber to provide "back of house" infrastructure like webhosting, conference space, modest administrative assistance.
- Develop membership structure model for sustainability
- Identify program specific grants and foundation funding sources

Activities at a Reading, MA meeting related to identifying the most appropriate district management model.
Source: DHCD.



BEST
PRACTICE

Determining a District Management Model for Downtown Reading



Location: Reading, MA

Best Practice: Reading MA's Engagement Process to Find Best-Fit District Management Model

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

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

This included:

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

PROCESS

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

Develop a Business Support Toolbox to Achieve 100% Storefront Occupancy

Category	 Revenue & Sales	Revenue and Sales
Location		Study area
Origin		Town of Halifax
Budget	 Medium	Medium Potential sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARPA – economic development, admin capacity and business support, Build Back Better • Small Business Technical Support Assistance Grant • Small Business Matching Grants • Urban Agenda Grant Program • Under Utilized Properties Grant
Timeframe	 Short	Short
Risk	 Low	Low. May require political support to allocate grant funding for this use.
Key Performance Indicators		Achieve 100% storefront occupancy
Partners & Resources		Town of Halifax Local businesses Metro South Chamber of Commerce

Diagnostic

During the site tour and through stakeholder engagement, the need for new tools and incentives to attract entrepreneurial new businesses to "achieve 100% occupancy" became a core goal/priority.

Action Item

Consider initiating an RFP process for a provider to create a Small Business Toolkit for New and Existing Businesses. Toolkit materials may be created for self-service support to existing small business owners and new businesses considering Halifax as a business location.

Content of the toolkit material may include:

- How to pivot a business model / how to innovate
- How to build a more resilient supply chain
- How to create / improve digital presence
- How to create and support eCommerce activities that also support in-person activity
- How to attract, hire, and lead new employees

Process

Consider including the following tasks within the RFP workplan:

- Review existing data and literature on economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Halifax.
- Hold a virtual meeting to review this information, set milestone dates, and assign project management tasks.
- Develop technical assistance workshops for business recovery planning.
 - Workshop 1: Confirm business/industry needs and challenges identified through economic impact surveys and literature review research and provide an overview of business recovery planning, including walking through steps of planning efforts for individual businesses.
 - Workshop 2: Present the toolkits and ensure participants are familiarized with local, regional, state, and federal resources for economic recovery and resiliency
- Facilitate Technical Assistance Workshop 1.
- Develop toolkits for each industry subject area.
- Facilitate technical assistance workshop 2.
- Develop a Memo on priority recovery and resiliency strategies.

As part of the higher level goals of increasing storefront occupancy, additional activities may include:

- Creation of a self-service online portal for permitting processes
- Creation of a place-based, municipal level branding to attract consumers (locals and visitors) to the area and to support the online presence and marketing activity of individual businesses.

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



BEST
PRACTICE

Municipal Branding Toolkit for Small Businesses



Location: Salisbury, MD

Halifax could consider creating a Municipal Place-based branding toolkit for small businesses. An initiative like this can help create fresh branding for Halifax's commercial district as a safe and desirable area shop and do business.

Best Practice: Salisbury, MD Shop Local Toolkit

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

The City describes the campaign as follows:

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



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

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

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

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

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

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SHOP LOCAL?

YOU STRENGTHEN OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

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

YOU GET TO ENJOY PRODUCT DIVERSITY

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

YOU PUT MONEY BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY

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

City of Salisbury Shop Local Campaign

Source: City of Salisbury, MD

Best Practice: Barnstable County Cape Cod Commission Business Recovery Planning on Cape Cod

As the regional planning agency for Barnstable County, the Cape Cod Commission is committed to addressing the challenges of the pandemic and strengthen economic resiliency for their towns and businesses. The Commission was awarded a U.S. EDA CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant to support efforts to respond to and recover from the devastating economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and develop strategies to improve resilience in the future.

As part of its economic resiliency efforts, the Commission worked with Revby, a business consulting and technical assistance firm, to provide a multi-part workshop series designed to help Cape Cod business owners navigate COVID-19 recovery and resiliency strategies. The first workshop, which was held on February 18, 2021, focused on the second round of the Paycheck Protection Program and other pandemic-relief funding opportunities.

Industry-specific virtual workshops followed the initial workshop on pandemic-relief funding opportunities. The two-part series

of workshops targeted local industries disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The first round of workshops introduced the Commission's broader business recovery and resiliency efforts and provided real examples of business resiliency and continuity to help local businesses identify strategies. The first workshops also presented some practical suggestions for how businesses may incorporate digital marketing, e-commerce, and collaboration/networking practices in their continuity plan – all areas indicated as types of assistance still needed by Cape Cod small business owners according to the Cape Cod COVID-19 business impact surveys. The second round of virtual workshops introduced industry-specific COVID-19 Recovery and Resiliency Toolkits that offer business owners a suite of strategies tailored to address the challenges facing Cape Cod businesses now and to help businesses plan for resiliency into the future.

The following toolkits were developed:

- Cape Cod Business Recovery & Resilience Planning Toolkit
- Accommodations Businesses Recovery & Resiliency Toolkit
- Retail & Product-based Businesses Recovery & Resiliency Toolkit
- Arts, Culture, & Recreation Businesses & Organizations Recovery & Resiliency Toolkit
- Service-based Businesses Recovery & Resiliency Toolkit

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Toolkit Workshop Series for Business Owners



Location: Barnstable, MA

Best Practice: City of Burlington Central Permit and Zoning Online Resource

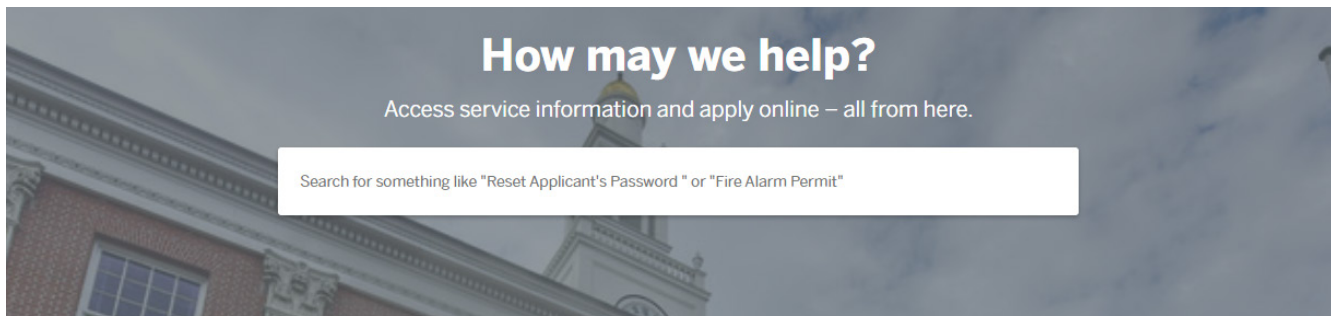
The City of Burlington, VT Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) launched an online business portal designed to support new businesses get started in the City.

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

requirements, business planning and finance resources.

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

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







**BEST
PRACTICE**

Central Permitting Online Resource



Location: City of Burlington, VT

Create Marketing & Branding Campaign to Attract New Businesses

Category	 Revenue & Sales	Revenue and Sales
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		Town of Halifax
Budget	 Medium	<p>Medium Budget.</p> <p>Since this effort will require administrative support that is not currently in place and ongoing implementation, it is recommended that a 3-5 year budget be created to effectively build the budget. Also note that first year costs will reflect non-recurring costs for design and other primary implementation costs.</p> <p>Potential funding sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARPA – economic development, admin capacity and business support, Build Back Better • MA Downtown Initiative • Hometown Grant
Timeframe	 Short	Short (3-6 months) for Planning and Implementation – program should be ongoing
Risk	 Medium	<p>Medium.</p> <p>Will require support from business and property owners. Building consensus among key stakeholders and community representatives may be challenging. Identification of available and continued funding is key to this project's success.</p>
Key Performance Indicators		<p>New business attraction to study area</p> <p>Increased customer visits and traffic</p> <p>Increased sales for the area businesses</p>
Partners & Resources		<p>Town of Halifax</p> <p>Local businesses</p>

Diagnostic

Photo analysis and stakeholder input confirmed a lack of cohesiveness within the study area. Halifax suffers from the fact that it doesn't seem to grow and has no sense of "being there." There is no identity for the community.

The study area serves as a passthrough to the "lakes region", hence the intersection of Routes 106 & 58 are key to capturing the attention of visitors. The need to develop marketing tools to "get the word out" about shopping and locating new businesses in Halifax were identified during Phase 1 of the LRRP program.

While this is not a traditional downtown setting, elements such as gateway treatments, improved signage and improved lighting were identified as needed improvements. In order to accomplish that a branding and marketing program should be undertaken and incorporated to create a sense of place.

Covid-19 impacts were on par with other communities during the height of the pandemic, though Halifax was fortunate in that there were no business closings due to the pandemic.

Since Halifax is such a small community, it is recommended that any branding and marketing program be incorporated town-wide and that elements serve to attract new businesses and support current businesses.

Action Item

- Develop a brand for the community that will build awareness of the community.
- Incorporate branding and marketing elements to create a sense of place for Halifax – such as gateway signage at key locations these were identified as the main crossroads and in the area of Town Hall.
- Utilize the branding and marketing efforts to support the current businesses
- Utilize the branding and marketing efforts to support economic development and new business attraction for Halifax

Process

Select a team to work on this effort – it should be comprised of key stakeholders from the town – officials, volunteers and business owners. This team should work with the staff or consultant to determine the “Look” of Halifax and consider the various uses of the brand.

Develop a Marketing and Communications Plan – Your plan includes the budget and funding for this program. Consider if this is done in-house (Town staff) or if there is a need to hire a marketing consultant. This will affect your budget structure. Consider that funding this program is to market the area and its businesses and to foster economic development.

This plan will be the roadmap to enhance the town brand year-round and should:

- Focus on the brand development, developing the marketing strategies and the beginning of implementation in Year 1
- Be developed as an ongoing effort that will expand the efforts to promote the area – it is recommended that a 5-year plan and budget be developed and that the efforts be evaluated and adjusted yearly as new opportunities may arise.
- Incorporate how you communicate that “you are in Halifax” – i.e., develop hashtags for social media, possibly a tagline, determine what sources can be utilized for messaging for businesses, to the public and the surrounding communities.
- Look at developing or building on signature events that will draw people to the community and to the 30+ businesses that are in the study area.
- Concentrate on the Excitement in the area – Focus should be on the highlights of Halifax what's great and unique about it and its businesses, history and culture.
- Support economic development efforts to grow the business community
- Utilize resources where available and expand on them whenever possible (i.e. – Town website and staff)

(continued on next page)

Process, Continued

Hire graphic designer – consider using a local designer that knows the area and can reflect in the design that this is a special and unique area. The designer should also be able to apply this new look to your marketing efforts – for various applications as well as for use by the area businesses.

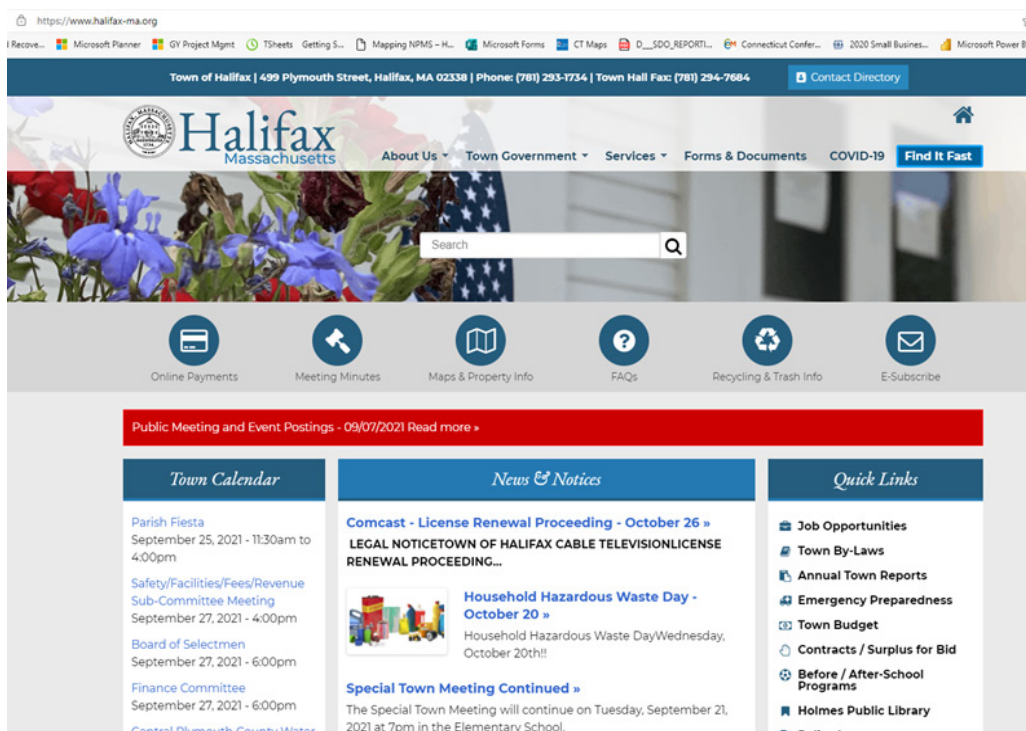
Utilize the brand to create a welcoming atmosphere to Halifax - A banner program is a visual way to launch the new brand and market the area. This can be done at the Route 106/58 intersection and the Town Hall area on 106. The new brand can also be incorporated into signage or wayfinding improvements if that is seen as a future project. (See examples)

Provide training and support for local businesses for marketing their businesses individually and in a shared format – This effort

would focus on social media, geo-targeted advertising, sales and events marketing programs will serve to enhance promotion of the individual businesses. Businesses indicated that they were open to this. Enabling businesses with the ability to self-promote and better market their businesses will also serve to draw more traffic to the area.

Incorporate the brand to market the community to new businesses and visitors. Add a "Doing Business In" and "Visit" tab and section to the current Town website – populate it with a narrative and important links and lists.

Consider linking to, expanding and refreshing the Town website with a tab or section that features "Visit Halifax" with recreation (golf & lakes), businesses and restaurants information. Develop a section to focus on new business development and attraction. (See examples below.)

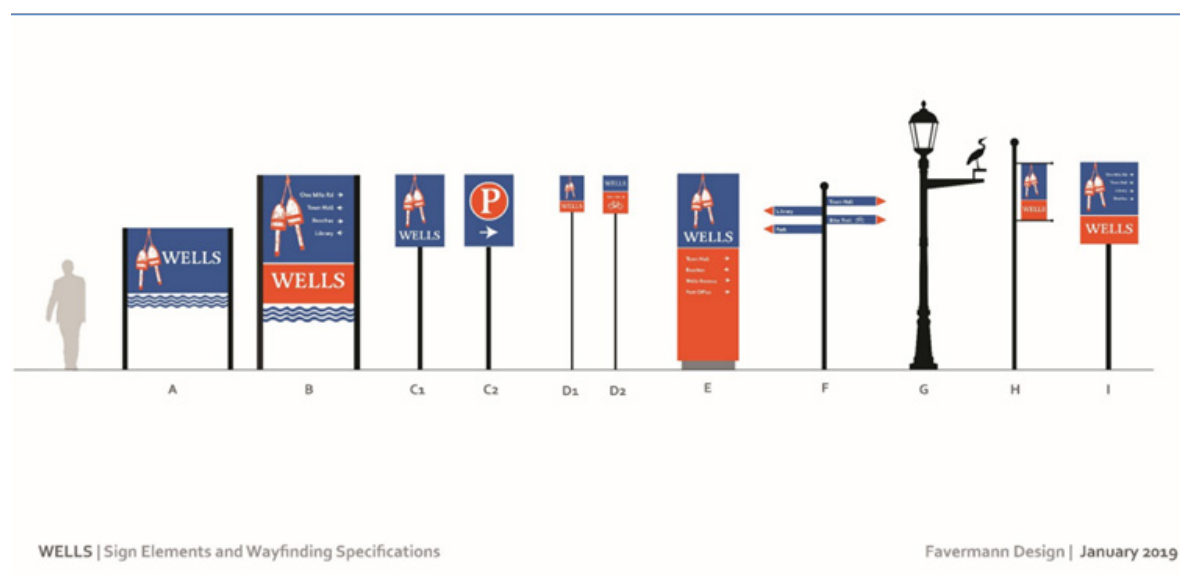


*Current Halifax website
Source: Halifax MA*

Precedent

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

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



Branding materials for Wells, Maine

Source: Favermann Design

BRANDING BANNERS IN CHARLES TOWN, WV



Branding materials for Charles Town

Source: JessCreates.com



Gateway Illustration

Source: Stantec

One potential component of a branding effort could be to create a significant signage element to signal entrance into Halifax or Halifax's commercial corridor. Potential locations include:

- The northwest corner of Routes 106 and 58. Siting the gateway signage at this location would require partnership with private property owner.
- Alternative: Near Town Hall on Route 58, approaching the business district

Develop Outdoor Dining Strategy and Guidance

Category		Private Realm
Location		RRP Study Area
Origin		RRP Process
Budget		Low. Given the small number of restaurants in the study area, the program would be very small to start.
Timeframe		Short
Risk		Medium. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Siting conflicts with parking, pedestrian and bike infrastructure• Very few restaurants in the study area, some of which nearly exclusively rely on takeout. Uptake might be slow.
Key Performance Indicators		Number of applicants for permits Number of restaurants offering outdoor dining Change in sales of restaurants after expanding outdoor dining program

Diagnostic

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

While there aren't many restaurants in the study area, guidance and support for outdoor dining could attract additional food service tenants in the future.

Action Item

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

Key considerations:

Location: Sidewalk, or on-street parking areas?

Simplicity of permitting process

Process

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

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

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

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

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

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

businesses and making temporary outdoor dining regulations permanent.

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

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

Elements to include in a single application:

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

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

Provide a checklist of all requirements.

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

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

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

Offer an online application.

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

If you don't have a public portal for applications

and other submittals, an alternative option is to provide fillable PDFs that applicants can submit by email along with any other necessary attachments. Hard copy applications should also be available upon request for applicants who may lack internet access or proficiency.

Provide a liaison at Town Hall.

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

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

By coordinating Town inspections and reviews, and possibly eliminating or shortening some public review processes, the overall timeline from application to permit approval can be shortened, helping restaurants make quick pivots to retain customers and staff.

In addition, providing clear timelines for permitting, from application submittal through inspections and approvals, helps businesses stay on track and prevents misunderstandings and missed deadlines. Time is money for businesses; important information to include in the timeline includes:

- Date the application process opens (if applications are seasonal)
- Overall estimated time from submission to municipal decision
- Outline any public review periods that are required

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

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

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

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

As with outdoor dining in general, businesses that have been granted an outdoor extension of their premises for alcohol service through this expedited process are presently scheduled to revert to their pre-approval status after April 1, 2022. If a business is seeking to extend their premises for outdoor alcohol service beyond April 1, 2022, they must follow the ABCC's usual

regulations for Alteration of Premises/Change of Location. This consists of submitting an application to the LLA for approval, which then gets forwarded to the ABCC for approval.

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

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



Salem, MA's outdoor dining. Source: DHCD

Support Landscape Improvements in the Public and Private Realms

Category	 	Public Realm / Private Realm
Location	RRP Study Area	
Origin	Site visit	
Budget		<p>Small</p> <p>For private realm beautification projects: Start with 10 projects with up to \$2,000 matching grants each for total of \$20,000.</p> <p>For public realm projects, a larger budget, potentially grant-funded, may be required.</p>
Timeframe		Short - 1 year
Risk		<p>Low</p> <p>Will require political support. Business participation might be slow at first, may require communications/recruiting effort for first year.</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Visible improvements to landscaped areas in both the public and private realms	
Partners & Resources	<p>Town of Halifax Beautification Committee Private property owners Halifax Garden Club Halifax Lions Club</p>	

Diagnostic	<p>During site visit, unkempt overgrown landscape in public and private realm gave an impression of a lack of care and investment in Halifax. Landscape improvements and maintenance would improve the public and private realm experience and increase a sense of vitality.</p>
Action Item	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and apply for funding • Establish Landscape Grant Approval Committee • Develop matching grant program for property owners, matching grants up to \$2,000 (for a total project cost of \$4,000) • Identify and work with partner organizations to support landscape improvements within
Process	<p>Two parallel processes, for public and private sector landscape improvements:</p> <p>Private</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding. Goal should be to secure \$20,000 in total to be able to support up to 10 grants for private sector participants (businesses, commercial landlords) • Identify priority sites and meet with managers/owners to facilitate and scope grant application • Develop request program that aligns with zoning requirements • Establish review committee to make sure landscape plans are reasonable <p>Public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify Town right-of-way on specific sites • Research and pursue source of funding • Will potentially rely on volunteer support. Clarify roles of Lions Club, Halifax Garden Club. Organizations can adopt key areas to sustain improvements over time

Existing Site Conditions



Source: Stantec



Source: Stantec



Source: Stantec

Precedent



Source: Stantec



Source: East Marlborough Associates



*Clay Terrace, Carmel, IN
Source: FunCityFinder.com*

Support Redevelopment of 277 Plymouth St Parcel

Category		Tenant Mix
Location		277 Plymouth St
Origin		RRP Process
Budget		<p>Large</p> <p>Suspected environmental contamination might mean this site's redevelopment would be eligible for brownfield funding. While there are available grants through the EPA's Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program, assessment and cleanup can be expensive undertakings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brownfield Assessment Grant (max. \$2Million) • Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund Grant • Brownfield Cleanup Grant
Timeframe		<p>Medium</p> <p>Brownfield assessment grants are awarded once annually. Applications for FY22 are due in December.</p>
Risk		<p>Medium</p> <p>Will require sustained political will and administrative capacity on behalf of Town to pursue funding, support remediation, guide redevelopment</p> <p>Some risk related to finding an interested developer committed to clean-up</p>
Key Performance Indicators		<p>Completion of assessment of forms of contamination at site</p> <p>Developer selection process</p> <p>Completion of cleanup</p> <p>Completion of redevelopment</p>
Partners & Resources		<p>Town of Halifax</p> <p>Old Colony Planning Council</p> <p>Cumberland Farms (existing owner)</p> <p>Developers</p> <p>Massachusetts Dept of Environmental Protection</p> <p>US EPA</p> <p>Commercial property owners</p>

Diagnostic

During the diagnostic process, four vacant properties were identified, of 29 total storefronts in the study area. While no businesses were reported to have permanently closed during the pandemic, filling existing vacancies is an objective of Halifax's revitalization, as COVID-19-related restrictions and behaviors change. Filling existing vacancies and redeveloping long-neglected sites would lend Halifax's commercial corridor a sense of investment and growth.

The 277 Plymouth St site is a long neglected site, vacant since before COVID-19. Because of its location at the intersection of 106 and 58, it is a high-visibility, high-traffic opportunity for redevelopment.

The site is expected to require remediation. It is currently owned by Cumberland Farms, which owns the gas station across the street. As of October 2021, the site next door, previously a Santander Bank, has a few interested new tenants.

Action Item

The Town can facilitate this parcel's redevelopment by identifying, recruiting, and working with a developer to make possible this site's contamination assessment, remediation/cleanup, and redevelopment.

Process

The process of redeveloping this site will entail phases of:

- Partnership-building with existing site owner Cumberland Farms
- Transfer of property and selection of developer partner
- Administrative and grant-funded support of developer partner through stages of assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment

Some first steps might be:

- Meet with Cumberland Farms site owner to discuss potential future of the site
- Perform preliminary research to better understand historical uses of the site
- Seek technical support through MA Dept. of Environmental Protection in pursuit of EPA brownfield assessment funding
- Consider engagement or recruitment strategies to identify the right type of development and developer, given the length of the project

Site Detail



Existing conditions at 277 Plymouth
Source: Stantec





Map and overview of vacant parcel

Source: GoogleMaps

Project List

Category	Project	Description	Timeframe	Budget	Priority Project
Admin. Capacity	Develop a Business Association for Halifax	Form a business association to help businesses collaborate to promote themselves and the businesses of Halifax in a more coordinated and sustained manner.	Medium	Low	
Revenue and Sales	Develop a Small Business Support Toolbox	Consider initiating an RFP process for a provider to create a Small Business Toolkit for New and Existing Businesses. Materials may be created for self-service support to existing small business owners and new businesses.	Short	Medium	
Revenue and Sales	Create a Marketing and Branding Campaign for Halifax	Develop a brand for the community that will build awareness of the community, incorporating branding and marketing elements to create a sense of place for Halifax.	Short	Medium	
Private Realm	Develop Outdoor Dining Strategy and Guidance	Take lessons learned from the pandemic experience to develop a permanent outdoor dining program that is affordable for restaurants to implement.	Short	Low	
Public Realm	Support Landscape Improvements to the Public and Private Realms	Establish Landscape Grant Approval Committee and matching grant program for property owners. Identify and work with partner organizations to support landscape improvements within the public realm.	Short	Low	
Tenant Mix	Redevelop Vacant Property at 277 Plymouth	Support clean-up and redevelopment of likely-contaminated, high-visibility site at the intersection of Routes 106 and 58, working with developer to secure grant funding and technical assistance.	Medium	Large	