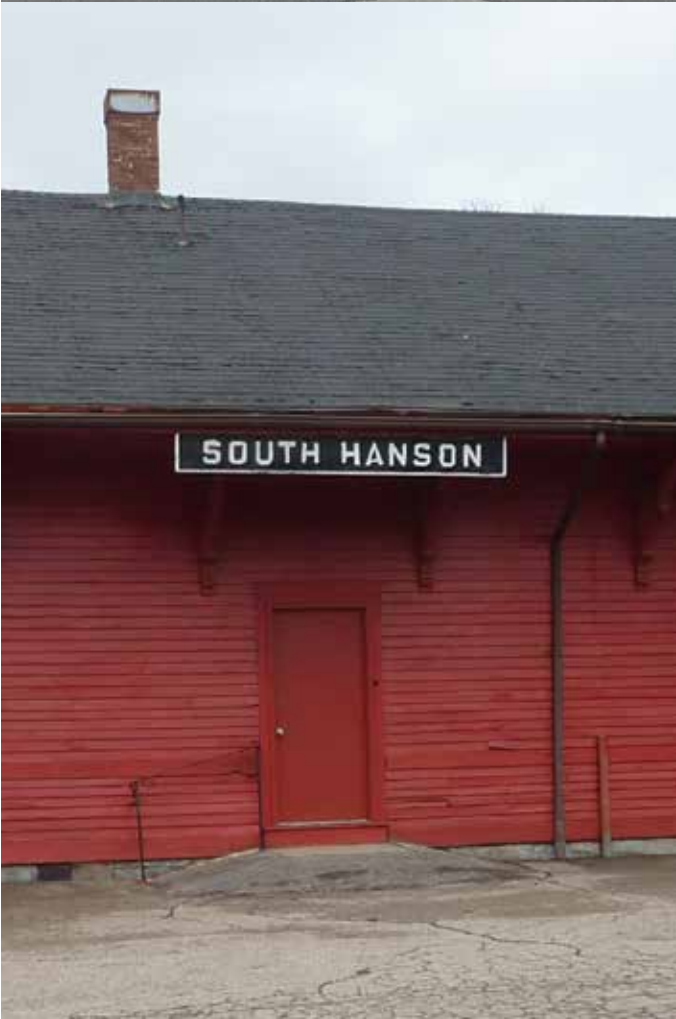




Rapid Recovery Plan

October 2021

Town of Hanson



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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 where historic village centers have defined communities for generations. Over 350 distinct jurisdictions make up the Commonwealth, and nearly every place has at least one village business district 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 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 is the crossroads for its broader community—typically a compact and walkable place where vacancies may be readily visible but where every business knows each other and has come together to face the pandemic. The interdependencies are quickly evident when talking with local stakeholders who take ownership of their village centers. Working with municipal officials, LRRP Plan Facilitators have quickly leveraged the energy of downtown merchants, engaged residents, vested landowners and village organizations to create the solutions within this plan—solutions tailored to the unique character of this place. The Town of Hanson, 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.

Why Develop a Local Rapid Recovery Plan for South Hanson

The Town of Hanson is a community of 11,000 people living and working south of Boston. While it lacks a traditional downtown setting, the South Hanson Village area has the potential to become one of several centers of activity in the community. The area is anchored by an MBTA commuter rail station that provides service on the Kingston line. The Ocean Spray collective first started in Hanson and one of its early facilities still stands on Main Street where it currently houses several small businesses. The Lockwoode Industrial Park is a contemporary collection of commercial and industrial businesses that contribute to the Town's tax base. Other businesses in South Hanson Village include several restaurants, a variety of service commercial establishments, and artists.

The Burrage Pond Wildlife Management Area is located just south, an attractive natural landscape of shallow bogs and woodlands with a network of walking trails. The Bay Circuit Trail passes through Hanson near here as well.

While South Hanson Village has several assets in and nearby, it has long been perceived as having unrealized potential and declining physical conditions. The Rapid Recovery Plan program is an opportunity to re-assess this area's role in the community and chart a new path forward, acknowledging the natural and physical constraints while building forward momentum through public and private investment. The recommended projects set the groundwork for this process, with the goals of benefitting local businesses and improving the area's physical appearance.



A view of Main Street in South Hanson Village.

What are the Greatest Needs and How Do They Align with Project Goals?

South Hanson Village has several significant, long-standing needs. The condition of the public and private realms is perhaps the most notable. Aging infrastructure, narrow sidewalks that feel unsafe to use, and limited lighting make the public realm uninviting. Several buildings are in need of significant exterior maintenance to improve their appearance. Despite being a small area, there is a lack of cohesion in architectural style further detracting from any potential sense of place.

Businesses in South Hanson Village are mostly inward facing with few active storefronts along Main Street. While some have modern websites that support online marketing and sales, others have minimally functional sites or lack one altogether. Because of this, local awareness of the businesses in South Hanson Village is limited.

The zoning in South Hanson Village, like the rest of the Town, is dated, poorly organized, and difficult to interpret. It is not easy for property owners or prospective developers to understand what is permitted or required. Additionally, Town staff is limited in their capacity to tackle significant projects in South Hanson Village.

How Did the LRRP Process Engage with the Community?

The project team met with the Economic Development Committee and Town Board of Selectmen on several occasions. Two public meetings were held to solicit additional ideas and feedback. A business survey was distributed in April 2021 to businesses in the South Hanson Village study area.

What are the Priority Projects That Came from the Plan?

Based on the identified needs, public input, and guidance from the Town and Economic Development Committee, several projects emerged as priorities. Funding opportunities and partnerships will ultimately direct project implementation.

- Conduct Town-wide visioning process to define South Hanson Village's future role in the Town and its desired character.
- Improve building facades and business storefronts.
- Promote local businesses within Hanson and the region.
- Improve the pedestrian environment near the MBTA station.

What are the Next Steps for Hanson to Implement This Plan?

A set of recommended projects has been developed that addresses the needs of South Hanson Village. Each proposed project description provides key information on project budget, potential timelines, partners and performance indicators, as well as critical action items and processes. 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.

These project recommendations provide both short-term and longer-term initiatives to address physical needs, business conditions, and the overall appeal of Main Street. Hanson is encouraged to pursue funding opportunities immediately for several of these projects to help South Hanson Village respond to COVID-19's impacts and chart a course for its future.



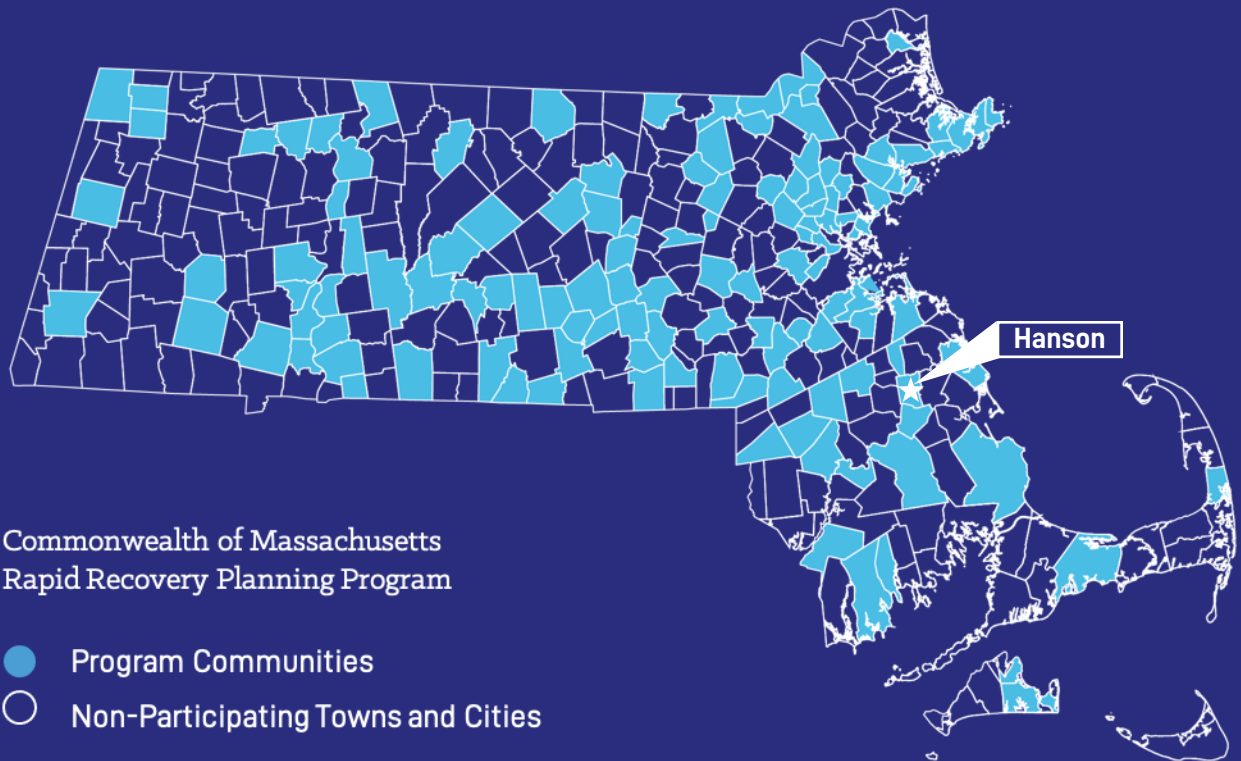
Rapid Recovery Program Background



125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

52 Small Communities
51 Medium Communities (Hanson)
16 Large Communities
6 Extra Large Communities

The 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 these downtowns, town centers, and commercial districts.



Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

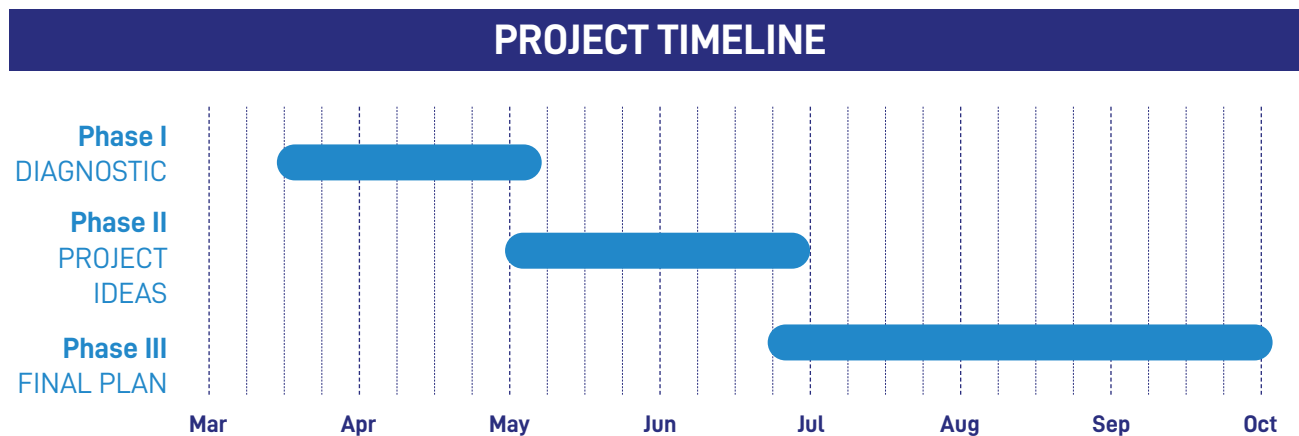
Introduction

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

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

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

Each Rapid Recovery Plan was developed across three phases between March and October 2021.



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

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

Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



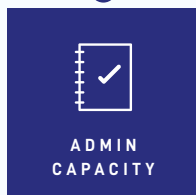
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public
Realm



Private
Realm



Tenant
Mix



Revenue
& Sales



Admin
Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

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.

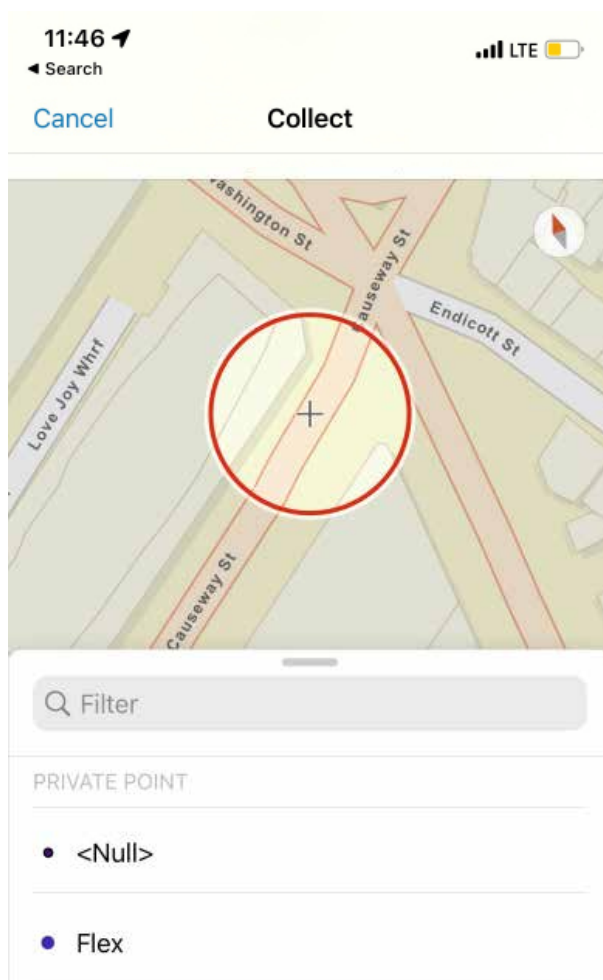
Data Collection Process

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

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

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

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

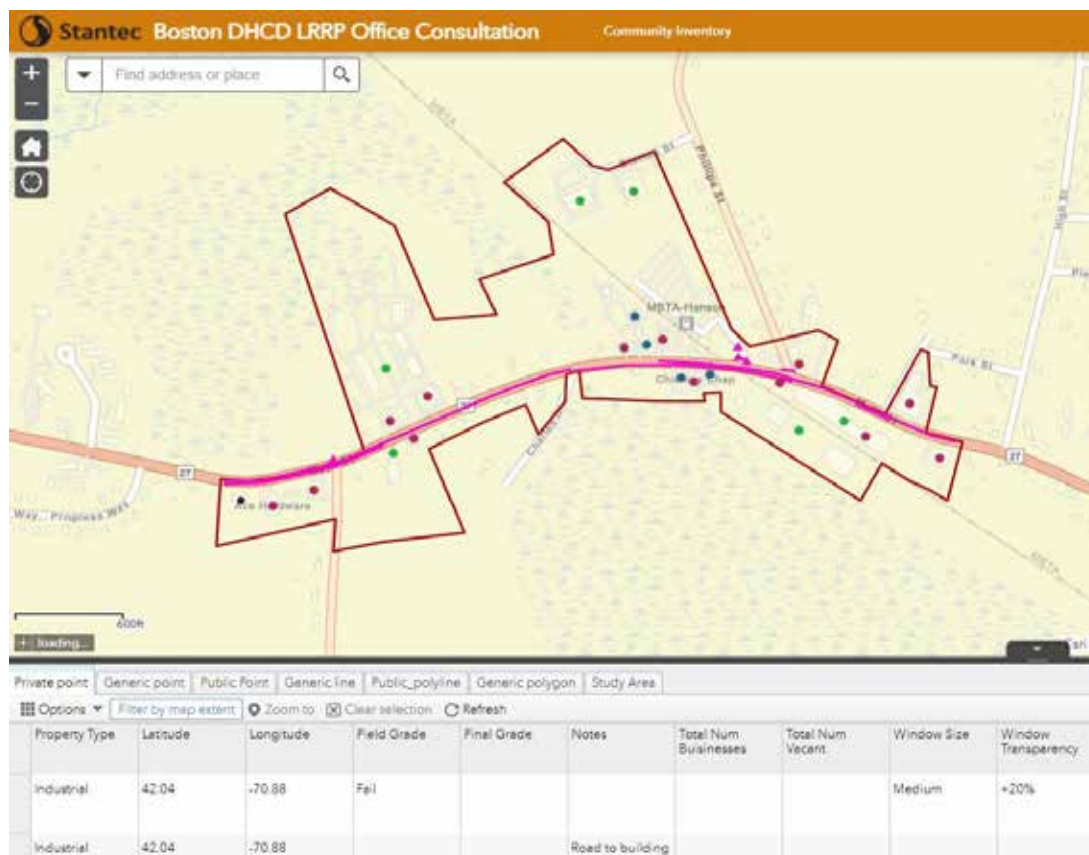


The ArcGIS Collector tool allowed data collectors in the field to develop an online database for public and private realm data

Data Analysis & Outputs

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

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



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

Final Diagnostic Grade Analysis

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



Example diagnostic grade for Hanson's "signage conditions" for all businesses within the LRRP 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 (Private Realm)

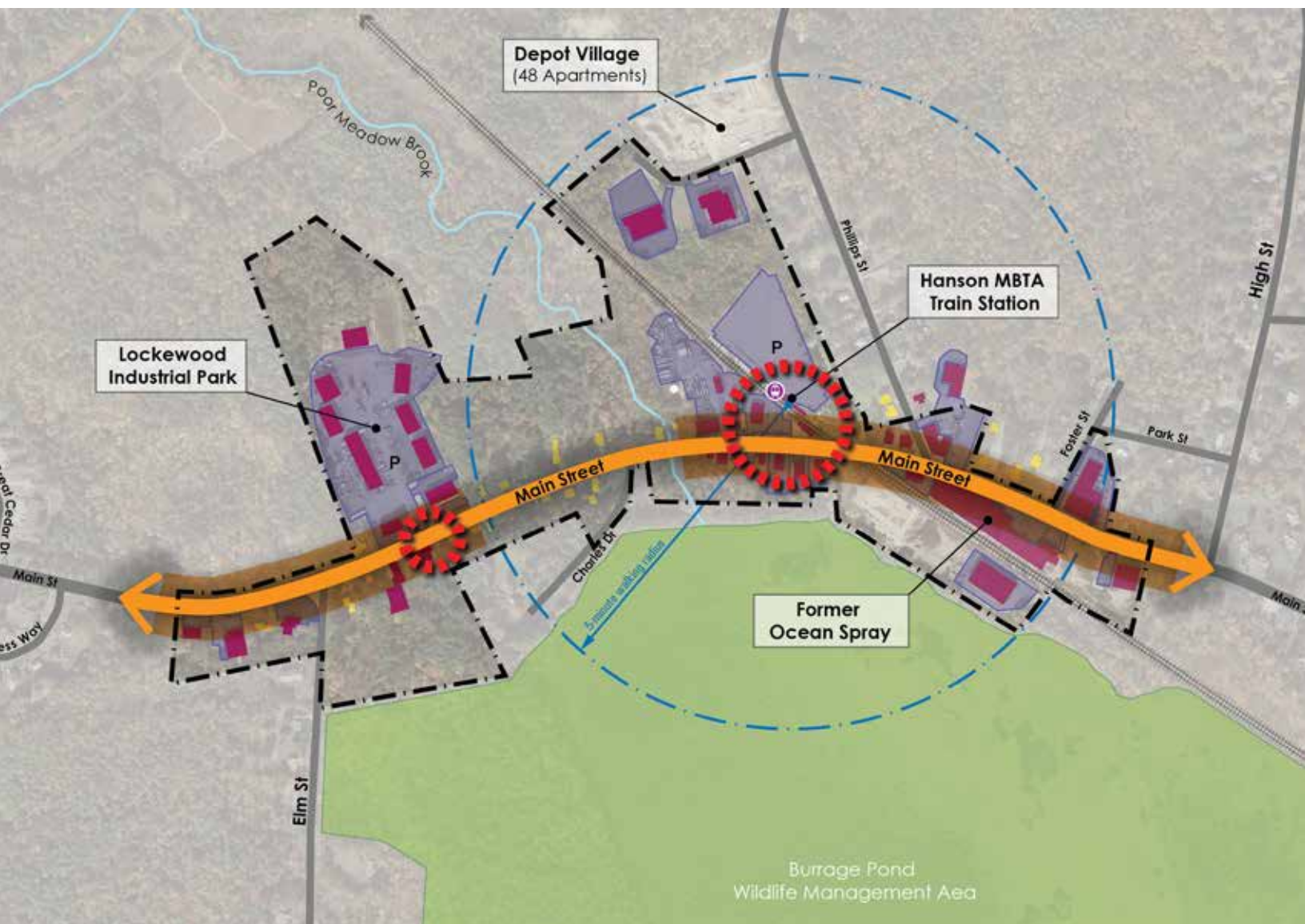
Physical & Business Environment: Private Realm Diagnostic Fields	
Field	Field Description
Property Type	Retail Office Industrial
Diagnostic Grade	A, B, C, Fail
Occupancy	Number of businesses and number of vacant storefronts
Window Assets	Window size, transparency of window, maintenance/cleanliness
Outdoor 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 Key Findings



LRRP Study Area



The South Hanson Village LRRP study area extends along Main Street/Route 27, from just west of Elm Street to just east of Foster Street. It includes the MBTA commuter rail station, Lockwood Industrial Park, the former Ocean Spray building, Cranberry Square office building, and numerous other small business establishments. It is approximately two miles south of the Liberty Street commercial area where Town Hall is located and 1.5 west of the Indian Pond commercial area at the intersection of Routes 27 and 58.



Why Focus on Downtown Hanson?

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 zones 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.



Key Findings Summary



Who lives and works here?

The LRRP study area has a very small residential population but the surrounding neighborhoods include several small multifamily communities. Median household income is high despite educational attainment being slightly lower than the state average. Hanson is an older community with a median age of 42. It is also fairly homogenous in terms of race and ethnicity, primarily white non-Hispanic.



What are the physical conditions like?

The condition of the public and private realms is perhaps the most notable area for improvement. Aging infrastructure, narrow sidewalks that feel unsafe to use, and limited lighting make the public realm uninviting. Nearby natural resources like Burrage Pond and Poor Meadow Brook create environmental constraints that limit development potential. Several buildings are in need of significant exterior maintenance to improve their appearance. Despite being a small area, there is a lack of cohesion in architectural style further detracting from any potential sense of place.



What are businesses like?

Businesses in South Hanson Village are mostly inward facing with few active storefronts along Main Street. Most are located inside multi-tenant buildings with limited exterior signage. While some have modern websites that support online marketing and sales, others have minimally functional sites or lack one altogether. Because of this, local awareness of the businesses in South Hanson Village is limited.



How do things get done?

The zoning in South Hanson Village, like the rest of the Town, is dated, poorly organized, and difficult to interpret. It is not easy for property owners or prospective developers to understand what is permitted or required. Additionally, Town staff is limited in their capacity to tackle significant projects in South Hanson Village. A new Town Planner will be hired soon to fill a vacancy. The recently formed Economic Development Committee will be focusing on the RRP plan and South Hanson Village as one of their initial priorities.

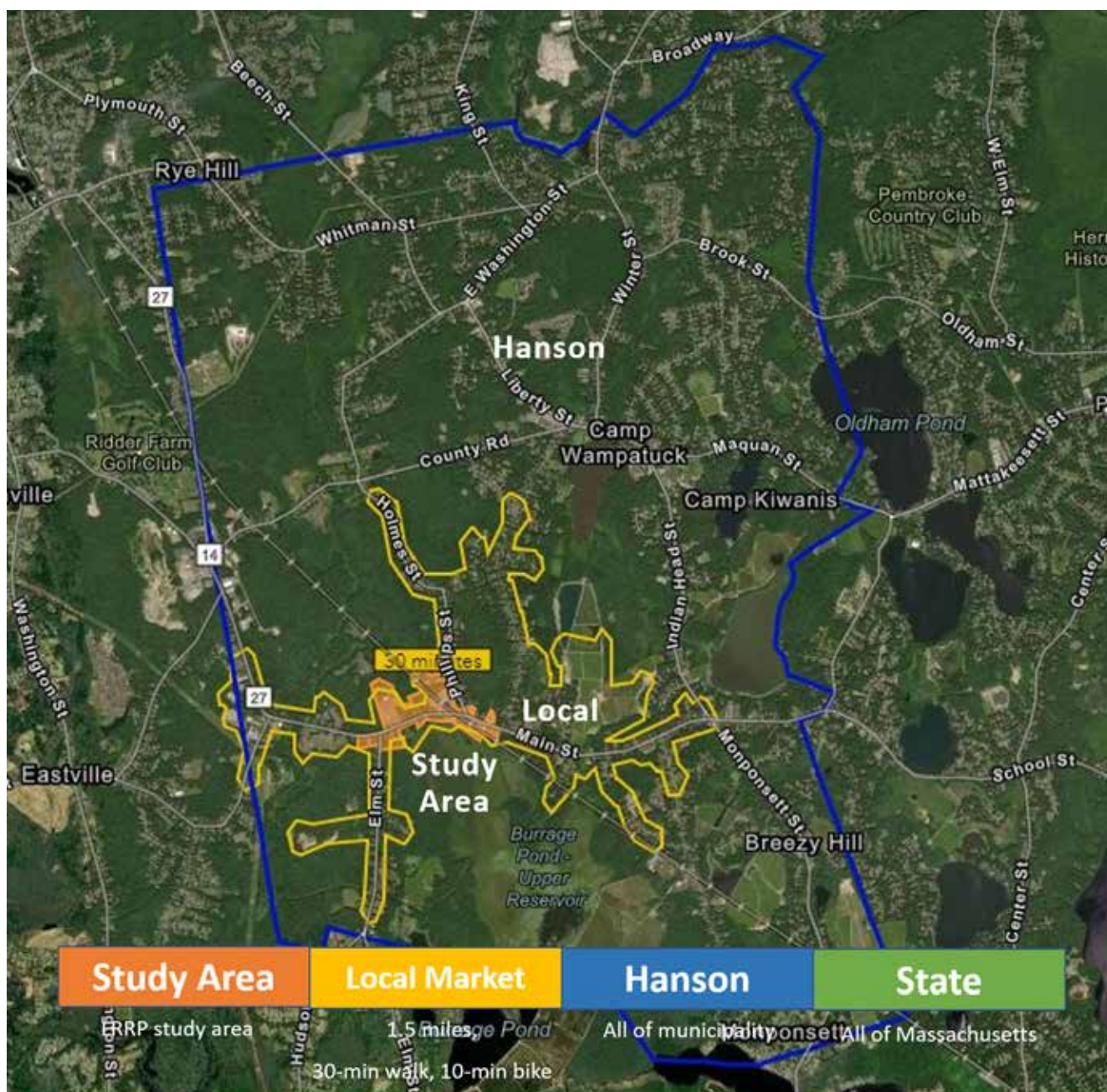


CUSTOMER BASE

Highlights from the Customer Base Data

Customer Base Comparison Areas

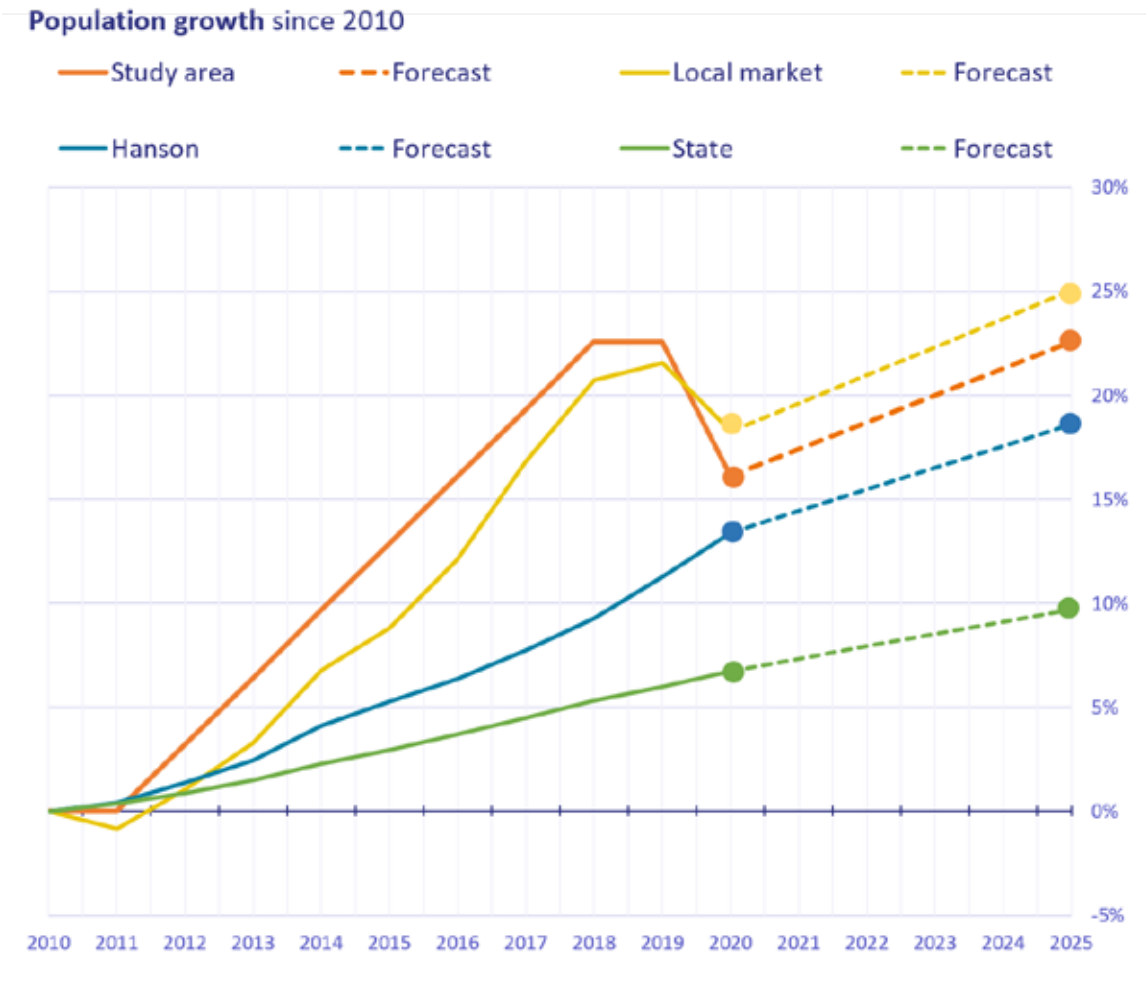
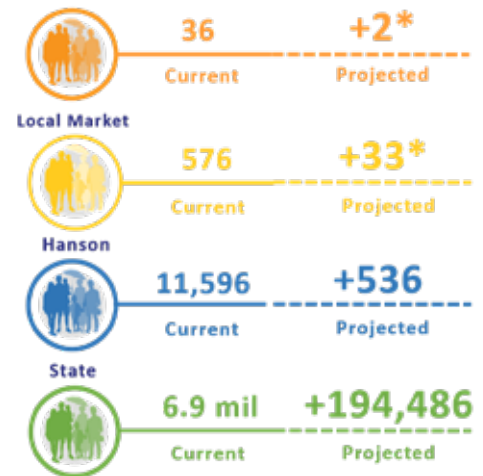
The study area's extent is the South Hanson Village area specified in the application to DHCD. To understand the local market this analysis also looks at a 1.5-mile ring (30-minute walk, 10-minute bike ride) around downtown, the entire municipality, and statewide.





POPULATION TREND FROM 2010 TO 2025

The study area's population is very small so demographic information is limited. The local market's population is 576, which is a better indicator for the area. Hanson and the study area are surpassing the state's historic and forecasted growth.

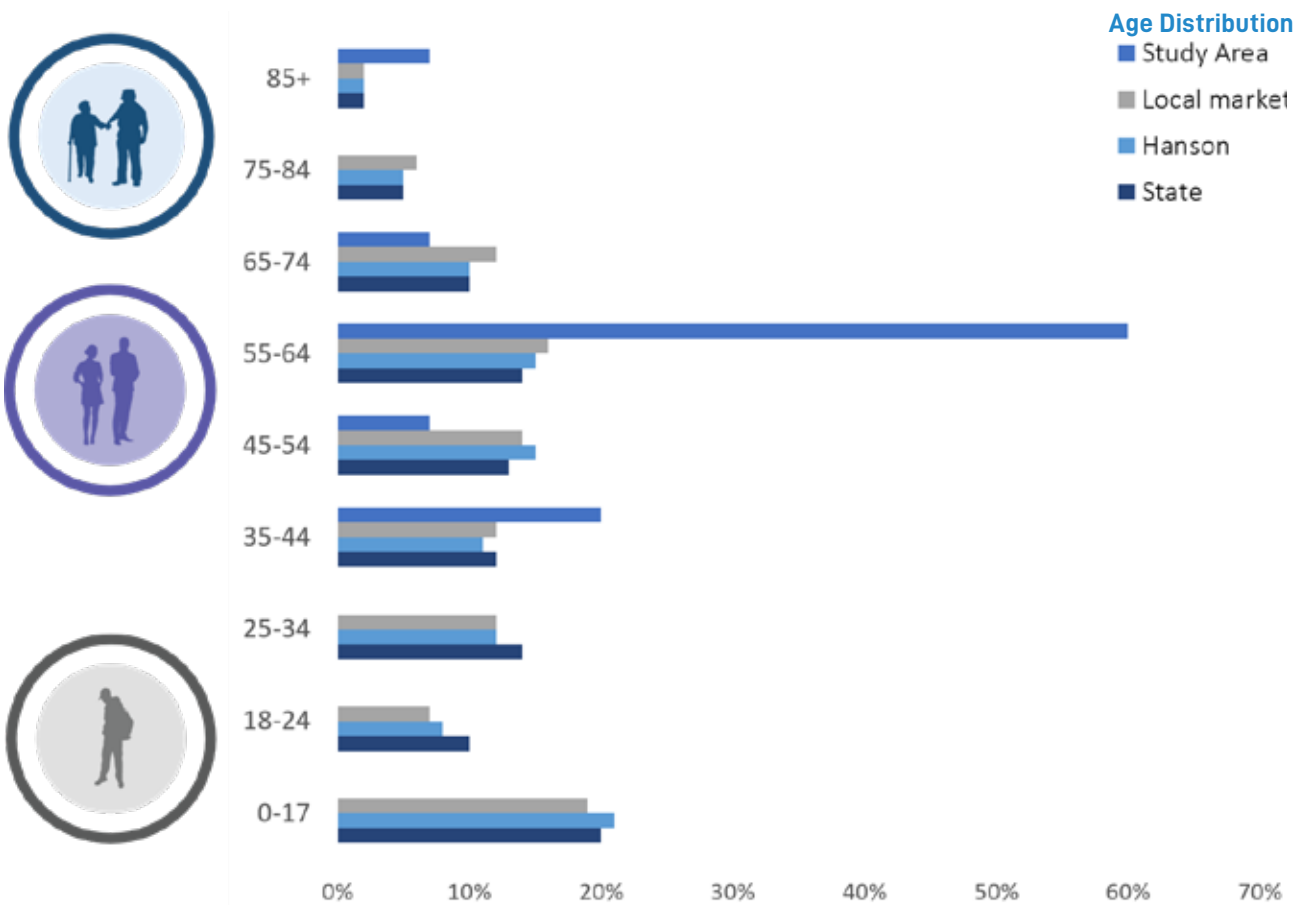


Source: ESRI Business Analyst



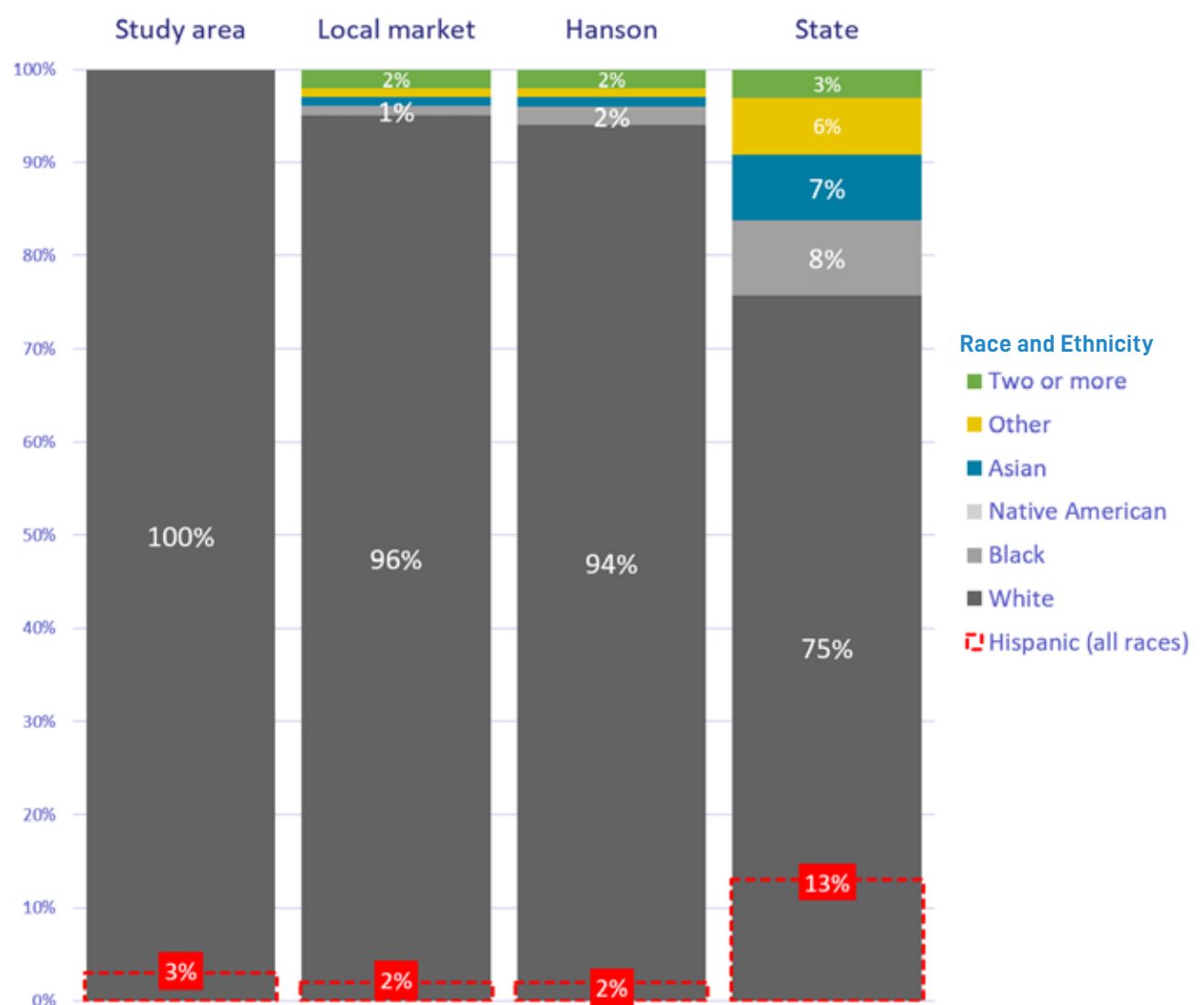
DEMOGRAPHICS

The study area's low population skews statistics. The local area's age distribution closely matches that of the state. The Town's median age is older than the state's.





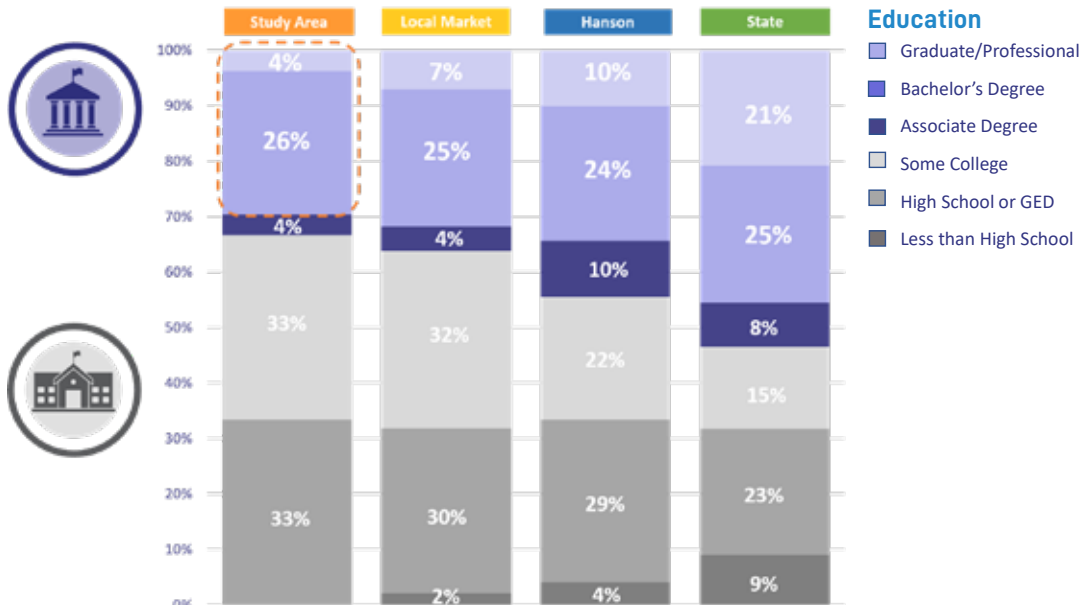
The local community is less diverse than the state. The area has a relatively lower proportion of people with Hispanic origin.





EDUCATION

Approximately 30% of the study area population has a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 34% for the Town and 46% for the State.



CUSTOMER STATISTICS

The study area's low population skews statistics. The local area's population is expected to grow in the next five years*. Actual growth will be driven primarily by new housing projects.



Population	Customer Statistics			
	Study Area	Local Market	Hanson	State
Avg. household size	2.6	2.5	2.9	2.5
Residential population	36	576	11,596	6,993,463
Households	14	228	3,942	2,702,578
5-year forecast, population change	+2*	+33*	+536	+194,486
5-year forecast, household change	+1*	+13*	+181	+73,332
Median age	44	45	42	40

* Based on ESRI projections



JOBS AND HOUSING

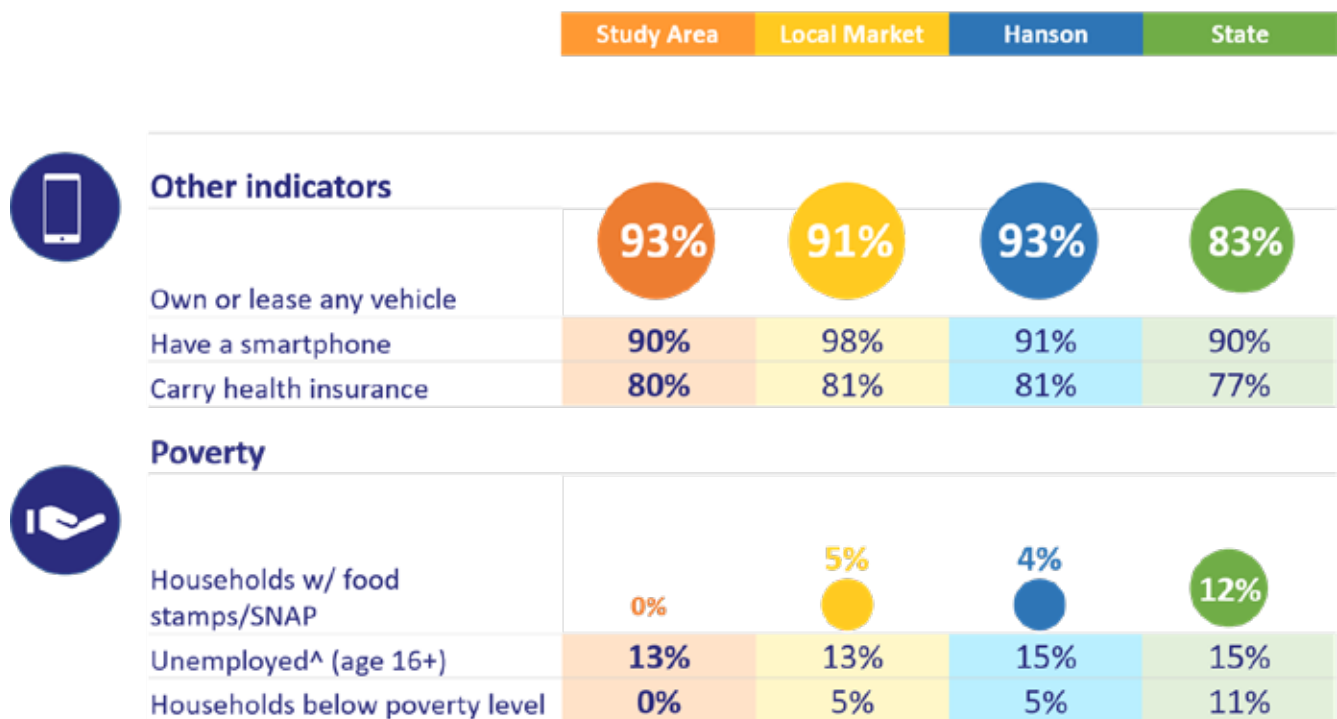
Unlike the Town overall, the study area has more jobs than residents. Median household income is high. New housing projects in the South Hanson Village study area and local market will add to population growth. Residents will benefit from walkable destinations nearby. Depot Village will have 48 1-3 bedroom units and there are preliminary discussions about 50+ new units at other locations in the study area.

	Study Area	Local Market	Hanson	State
 Employment and income				
Median household income	\$121k	\$113k	\$108k	\$81k
Employees	47	261	3,839	3,384,476
Students (secondary & above)	3	37	1,416	933,098
Jobs-to-residents ratio	1.3	0.5	0.3	0.5
 Housing				
Median home value	\$367k	\$359k	\$376k	\$415k
5-year forecast, home value growth	9%	11%	11%	17%
Owner-occupied housing	86%	86%	88%	61%



ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

The proportion of households below the poverty level and unemployment in the study area is lower the statewide average. Most study area residents have access to a vehicle.



^ as of mid-2020. Town of Hanson preliminary unemployment rate 5.6% in April 2021 (latest available from MA DOL).Massachusetts preliminary unemployment rate 5.9% in April 2021Recent estimates for Study Area and Local Market unavailable.



Highlights from the Physical Environment

The visual appearance and condition of public infrastructure, private buildings and storefronts plays an important role in the visitor and customer experience of a downtown. Accessibility from parking to the sidewalk, comfort while walking on sidewalks, and inviting storefront windows all have an impact on the vitality of a commercial district. It is helpful to look at the physical environment as two closely related but distinct elements: the public realm typically controlled by the municipality and the private realm controlled by individual property owners. Each of these requires fundamentally different tactics and funding mechanisms to make improvements.

Public Realm

Most public realm elements in the South Hanson Village study area scored very low in the diagnostic which illustrates that the streetscape and public realm experience of users is not pedestrian friendly and significant improvements are required. Major takeaways include:

- **The sidewalk network requires major improvements.** The only existing sidewalk is located on the north side of Main Street, a narrow asphalt path immediately adjacent to traffic. Numerous wide curb cuts pose additional challenges to pedestrian movement.
- **Wayfinding is needed.** There is no signage for nearby attractions and Town destinations or information about the local history.
- **Streetscape amenities are lacking.** None exist today, but better crosswalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, and street trees or other landscape improvements would improve the physical appearance of the study area.

Private Realm

Private realm elements in the South Hanson Village study area scored fairly low in the diagnostic illustrating that there is significant room for improvement in terms of visual aesthetics and the business offerings. Major takeaways include:

- **Building exteriors need repairs.** Several notable buildings require extensive repairs to improve the physical appearance of the study area.
- **Business signage needed for both drivers and pedestrians.** While some businesses have clear signage, others lack any making it difficult to attract customers. A consistent visual brand identity for the relatively small study area may also improve the look and feel of the built environment.
- **Vacant storefronts and buildings detract from appeal.** These further detract from potential investment within the area and do not attract prospective tenants. Additional lighting could help improve the attractiveness and safety of the area.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT GRADING FRAMEWORK: PUBLIC REALM

Physical Environment: Public Realm					
Element	Guiding Principles	A	B	C	FAIL
Sidewalks	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.	More than 75% of sidewalks in the study area are cleaned, well-maintained and accessible to multiple users across different ages and abilities	About 50% of sidewalks in the study area are cleaned and well-maintained.	More than 25% of sidewalks in the study area pose challenges to the pedestrian experience (including narrow sidewalks and lack of cleanliness/maintenance).	There are no sidewalks in the study area.
Street Trees & Benches	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.	Street trees and benches are readily available throughout the study area. They are well-designed, well-maintained, and offer shade and comfort to pedestrians.	Although street trees and benches are available across the study area, these amenities have not been cleaned or well-maintained, and require improvements.	Limited availability of street trees and benches creating uncomfortable pedestrian experience.	There are no street trees and benches in the study area.
Lighting	Street lighting improves pedestrian visibility and personal safety, as well as aids in geographic orientation.	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.	About 50% of the study area is serviced by street lighting that supports pedestrian visibility and safety.	Street lighting on the primary street in the study area does not support pedestrian visibility and safety.	There is no street lighting in the study area.
Wayfinding/ Signage	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.	There is a comprehensive and cohesive wayfinding system that offers geographic orientation to pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. Signage reflect the brand and identity of the area.	Wayfinding in the study area is primarily geared towards directing motorists across the study area. There is limited signage to identify key assets and destinations to pedestrians.	Limited to no signage available throughout the study area.	There is no wayfinding/ signage in the study area.
Roadbed & Crosswalks	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.	Roads are designed to balance the needs of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians and create a safe environment for all users.	Roads are designed primarily to move motor vehicles across the study area efficiently, with limited crosswalks for pedestrians.	Roads are hazardous to all users.	The study area is not connected by any major roads.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT GRADING FRAMEWORK: PRIVATE REALM

Physical Environment: Private Realm					
Element	Guiding Principles	A	B	C	FAIL
Window	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.	More than 75% of storefronts maintain windows with at least 70% transparency.	About 50% of storefront windows maintain windows with at least 70% transparency.	More than 25% of storefronts have windows with limited transparency.	All storefronts are boarded up and/or have limited transparency.
Outdoor Display/ Dining	Attractive window displays and spillover retail/restaurant activity on sidewalks or adjacent parking spaces can help contribute to overall district vibrancy.	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.	About 50% of storefronts maintain an attractive window display with limited spillover merchandise and/or dining areas.	More than 25% of storefronts have spillover merchandise display and outdoor dining that pose challenges to the pedestrian experience.	There is no spillover retail/ restaurant activity in the district.
Signage	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.	More than 75% of storefront signs reflect the unique brand identity of tenants and can be easily seen from more than 10 ft distance.	About 50% of storefronts have clear signage that reflect basic business information and can easily be seen from adjacent sidewalks.	More than 25% of storefronts have signage that does not communicate names of business or types of products/services being offered.	Storefronts in the study area do not have signage.
Awning	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.	More than 75% of properties in the study area have retractable awnings that have been well-maintained and cleaned.	About 50% of properties in the study area have functioning awnings that have been well-maintained and cleaned	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.	Storefronts in the study area are not equipped with awnings.



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT GRADING FRAMEWORK: PRIVATE REALM

Physical Environment: Private Realm					
Element	Guiding Principles	A	B	C	FAIL
Facade	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	More than 75% of properties have well-maintained façades. Limited structural enhancements are required.	Although most properties in the study area have clean and well-maintained façades, there is at least one significant property requiring structural façade improvements.	More than 25% of properties require significant building façades improvements, including power washing, painting, and structural enhancements.	All properties in the study area require significant façade improvements.
Lighting	Storefront interior lighting after business hours help enliven the corridor and boost security on the street.	More than 75% of storefronts have lighting that help illuminate sidewalks.	About 50% of storefronts have some interior lighting that help illuminate sidewalks.	More than 25% of storefronts do not have lighting.	All storefronts in the study area are shuttered and dark at night.



PUBLIC REALM: SIDEWALK GRADE



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



Existing
Source: Stantec Field Imagery

PUBLIC REALM: STREET TREES & BENCHES GRADE



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



Caption
Source: Stantec Field Imagery



PUBLIC REALM: LIGHTING GRADE



There is no street lighting in the study area.



*Existing Lighting Structures in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery*

PUBLIC REALM: WAYFINDING/SIGNAGE GRADE



There is no wayfinding/signage in the study area.



*Existing Wayfinding and Signage Infrastructure in the Study Area
Source: Stantec Field Imagery*



PUBLIC REALM: ROADBED & CROSSWALKS GRADE



Roads are hazardous to all users.



Existing Roadbed and crosswalks in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery

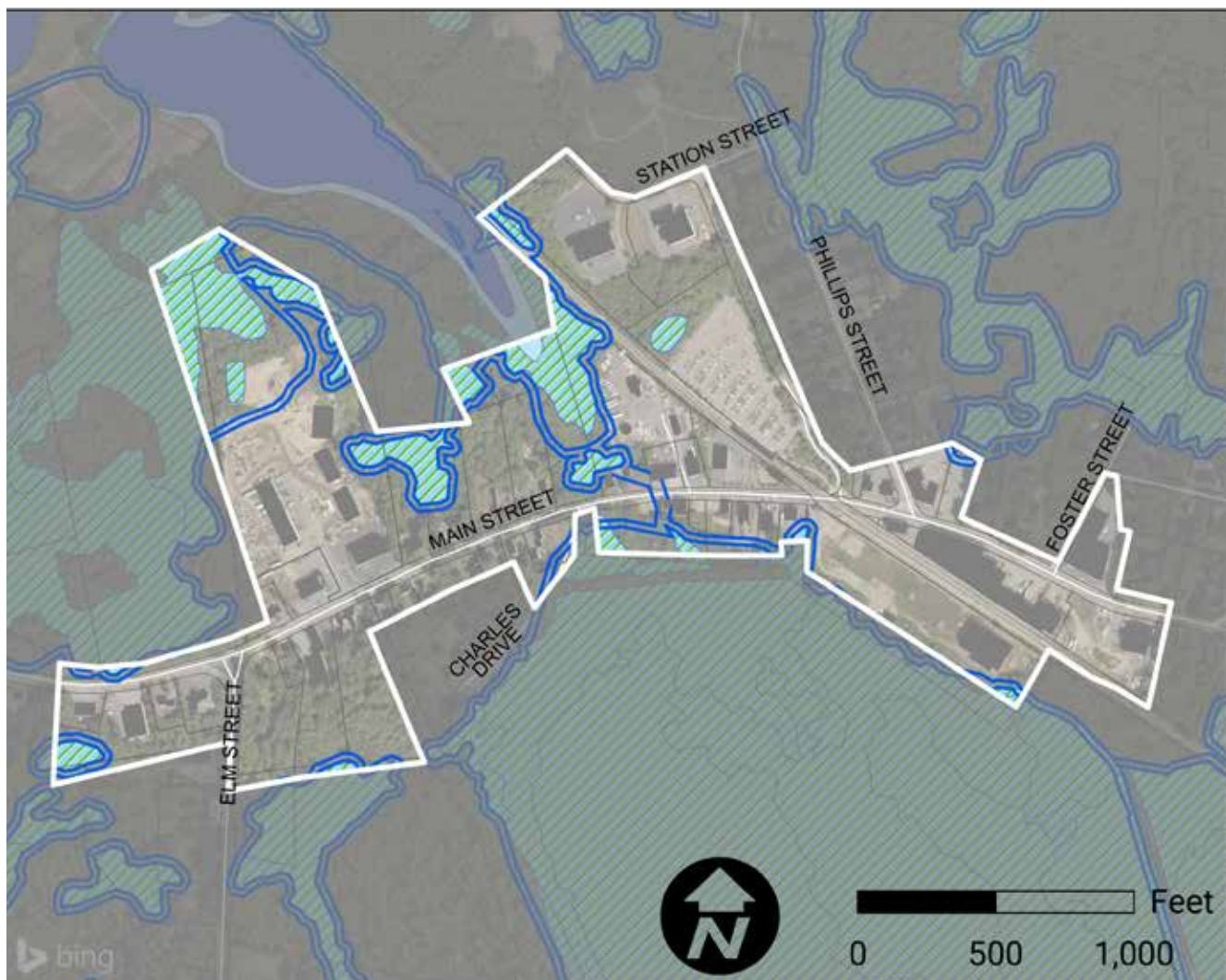


PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Constraints

Extensive wetlands surround the study area

South Hanson Village is constrained by environmental resources on all sides. The Great Cedar Swamp, also known as Burrage Pond, is located just south of Main Street. Extensive wetlands exist to the northwest and northeast, including Urann's Pond. Localized flooding has occurred in the past due in part to artificially altered flows.





PRIVATE REALM: WINDOW GRADE



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



Existing windows in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery

PRIVATE REALM: OUTDOOR DISPLAY & DINING GRADE



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



Existing outdoor displays and dining in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery



PRIVATE REALM: SIGNAGE GRADE



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



Existing signage in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery

PRIVATE REALM: AWNING GRADE



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.



Existing awnings in
Source: Stantec Field Imagery



PRIVATE REALM: FACADE GRADE



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



Existing facade conditions at
Source: Stantec Field Imagery

PRIVATE REALM: LIGHTING GRADE

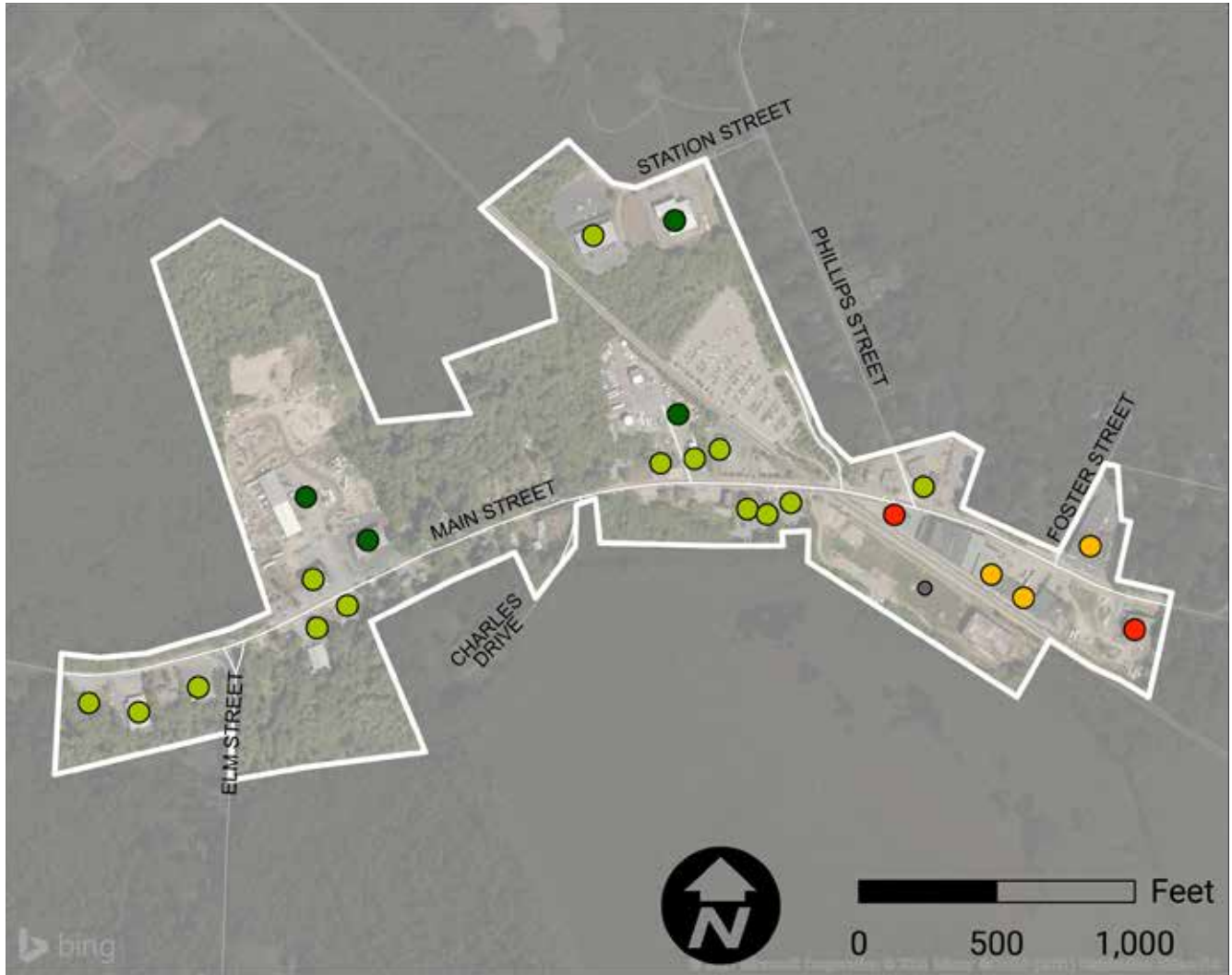


All storefronts in the study area are shuttered and dark at night.



Existing lighting fixtures at
Source: Stantec Field Imagery

Facade Conditions



Facade Condition

- Maintained
- Adequately Maintained
- Deteriorating
- Poorly Maintained
- No Data Available

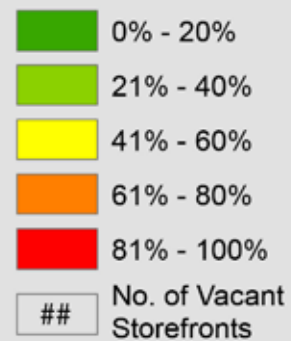


PHYSICAL
ENVIRONMENT

Storefront Vacancies



Storefront Vacancies





Highlights from the Business Environment

What is the Business Environment Diagnostic?

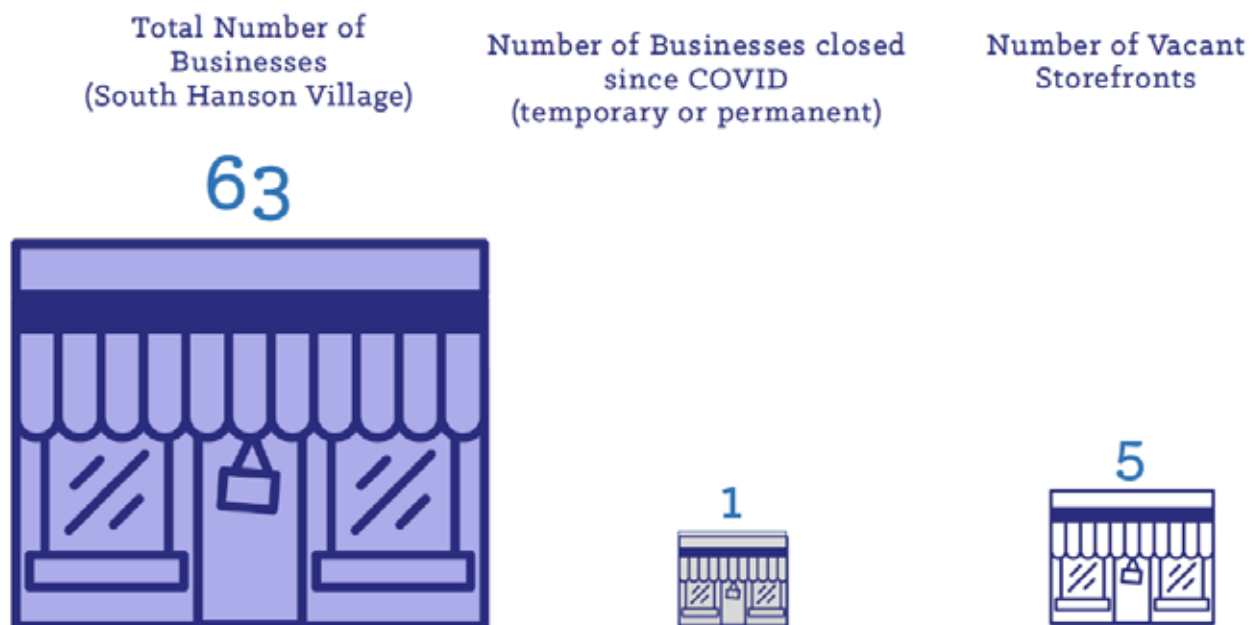
The conditions of the local business environment - including business density, quality, and type of offerings - play a critical role in how successful businesses are meeting the needs of the district's customers. Collecting data related to the tenant mix and concentration of stores provides an insight 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 question:

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

Business Environment Results in South Hanson Village

There are more than 60 businesses of varying sizes in South Hanson Village. These are mostly service commercial or light industrial uses but also include several restaurants, antique/thrift stores, and a local artist. Several vacant storefronts on Main Street detract from the environment. Most likely would need significant investment to bring them up to modern standards.





BUSINESS SURVEY

The RRP Business Survey aimed to obtain input to guide plan development, gain feedback from the local business community, and collect data across all LRRP communities to inform statewide programs and policy. The survey addressed topics including business satisfaction with various aspects of South Hanson Village's commercial district, business conditions and the impacts from COVID-19, and input from the business community regarding potential strategies and types of assistance.

The South Hanson Village survey received a limited response from business owners, but among those who participated:

- More than half are somewhat or very dissatisfied with both the condition of streets and sidewalks and the condition of private buildings and storefronts.
- Almost three-quarters rate the need for marketing strategies for the district as important or very important
- All respondents felt that a recruitment program to attract additional businesses is important or very important.

The top 3 business impacts due to COVID-19 were:

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

86%
of businesses
had fewer on-site
customers

81%
of businesses generated less
revenue in 2020 than they did in
2019, and **43%** saw revenues
decline by 25% or more



Administrative Capacity Diagnostic Elements

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 Findings in Hanson

The Town of Hanson has a small municipal staff with limited capacity. The Town will be hiring a Town Planner to fill the vacant position soon and there is no economic development staff. The Economic Development Committee is a newly formed group to focus on business issues in Hanson. Its initial priority is South Hanson Village.

The Hanson Business Network is a townwide group of owners who advocate for local businesses and share knowledge among members. It hosts Hanson Day, a two-year-old community event that showcases local businesses. There is no business group specific to South Hanson Village and little atmosphere of collaboration.

Zoning in the study area is primarily Commercial-Industrial with a Flexible Overlay Zone. Parcels near Elm Street are zoned Business with a Flexible Overlay Zone. The zoning code in general is dated, difficult to interpret clearly, and not very user-friendly, making improvements to existing sites or new development somewhat more difficult. In addition, there are numerous environmental constraints that place additional restrictions on growth in this area.

Summary of Needs

Key Findings

The diagnostic inventory and conversations with Town staff and the Economic Development Committee revealed clear needs. The South Hanson Village faces barriers to growth as a result of a lack of shared vision for the area, physical and environmental constraints, and the current condition of many streets, sidewalks, and buildings. However, the diagnostic grades and data-driven analyses give the Town the opportunity to seek funding for capital investments and encourage the development of resources to promote economic development in South Hanson Village.

Translating Needs into Project Recommendations

Based on the identified needs for South Hanson Village and previous studies like the Hanson's 2019 Economic Development Plan, the project team worked with Town staff and EDC members to develop a list of potential projects. These projects, described in the next section, address the primary challenges facing the LRRP study area.

Project Recommendations & Implementation



Identification & Prioritization of Projects

Project Identification

The project development phase built on the findings from the diagnostic phase to create a list of potential projects. Many project ideas emerged from conversations about how best to address a need. Several came from community suggestions. These ideas were discussed with Town staff to refine them to the unique characteristics of South Hanson Village.

Subject Matter Expert (SME) Guidance

The project team worked with three SME's to take a focused look at three projects. These experts provided insights and advice from their specialized experience, recommended best practices to consider, and strengthened elements of the project rubrics.

Project Prioritization

Based on the identified needs, public input, and guidance from the Town and Economic Development Committee, several projects emerged as priorities. Funding opportunities and partnerships will ultimately direct project implementation.

- Conduct Town-wide visioning process to define South Hanson Village's future role in the Town and its desired character.
- Improve building facades and business storefronts.
- Promote local businesses within Hanson and the region.
- Improve the pedestrian environment near the MBTA station.

Public Engagement Efforts



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The project team spoke with Town staff and Economic Development Committee (EDC) members to better understand the issues and opportunities in South Hanson Village. These conversations informed the planning process and provided on-the-ground insights about public realm needs, private building conditions, and local economic development.

KICK-OFF AND DIAGNOSTIC DATA PUBLIC MEETING

Early in the planning process, the project team presented at a joint Select Board - EDC meeting to introduce the LRRP process. At this virtual meeting, the project team presented the program goals and schedule, diagnostic

approach, and key findings. Participants discussed several topics including the desire to clean up the area and make it more pedestrian friendly, create a common character among buildings, and the need for infrastructure improvements.

PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS PUBLIC MEETING

As the project team was finalizing project recommendations, the LRRP was again featured at a Select Board meeting to present the draft recommendations. This hybrid in-person and virtual meeting provided an opportunity to discuss potential priorities among the projects.



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.

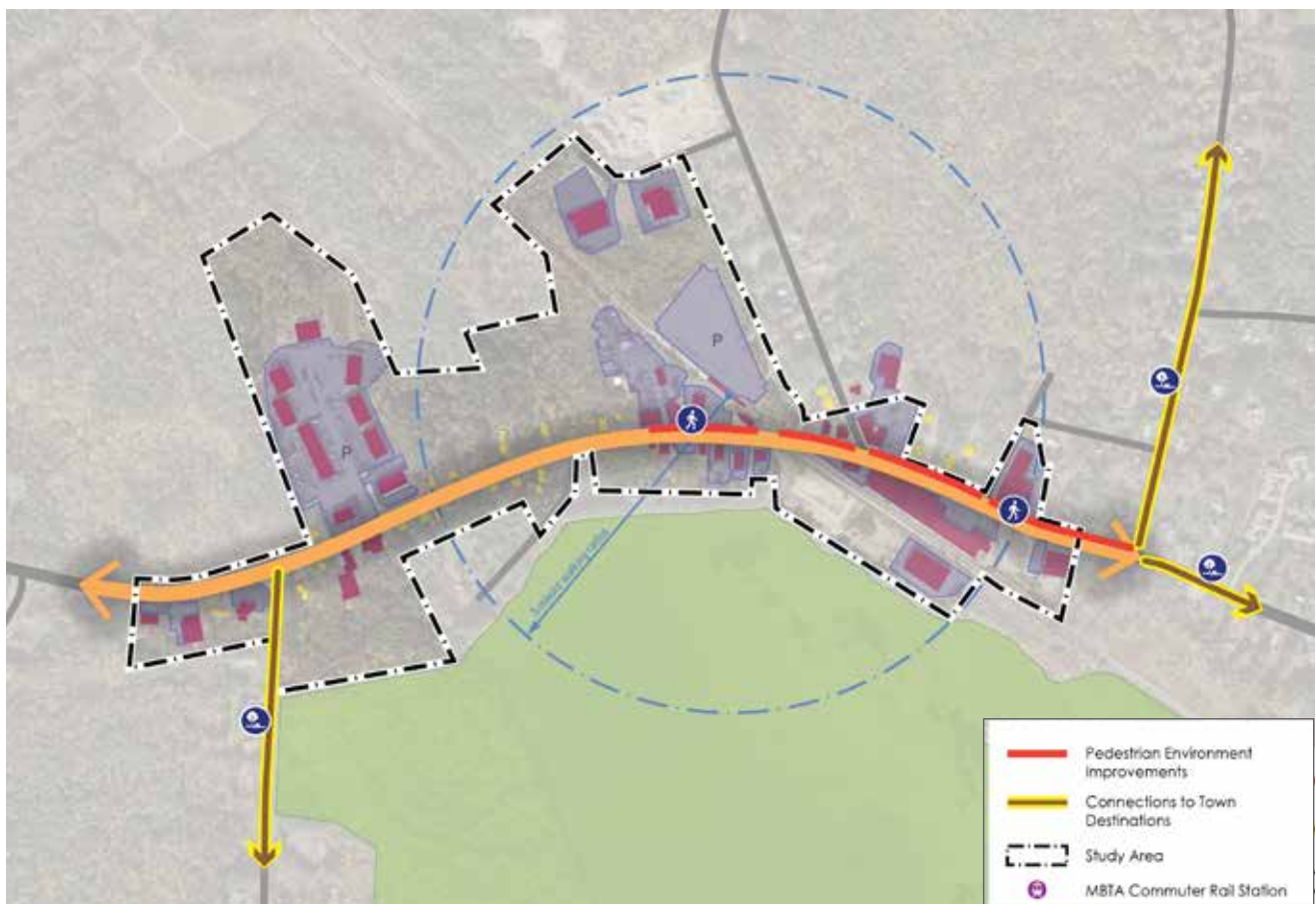
Hanson LRRP Project List

Project Idea	Description	Project Theme	Budget
Improve Pedestrian Environment near MBTA Station	This project will assess the feasibility of walkability improvements to Main Street/Route 27 in the heart of South Hanson Village, design those improvements, and construct them. Both the roadway design and sidewalk will be assessed.	Public Realm	Large Budget (>\$200K)
Evaluate Necessary Infrastructure Upgrades to Support Desired Growth	This project will assess existing infrastructure in South Hanson Village to determine its condition and capacity to accommodate new development. Stormwater management, wastewater management, natural resources, and traffic will be evaluated.	Public Realm	Low-Medium Budget (< \$200K)
Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections Between the Study Area and Other Town Destinations	This project will assess the feasibility of extending the sidewalk and/or bicycling network beyond South Hanson Village to connect it with other centers of activity in Town.	Public Realm	Large Budget (>\$200k)
Evaluate feasibility of Boardwalk Connecting Main Street to Burrage Pond Trails	This project will conduct a preliminary planning and engineering study to evaluate the feasibility of a pedestrian connection to Burrage Pond and the associated wayfinding/signage opportunities.	Public Realm	Small Budget (<\$50k)
Improve Building Facades and Business Storefronts	This project will help building and business owners in South Hanson Village make exterior improvements and repairs that will help attract customers back post-Covid and generally enhance the appearance of the district.	Private Realm	Medium Budget (\$50k – \$200k)
Promote Local Businesses within Hanson and the Region to Encourage “Buy Local” and Increase Sales	This initiative will assist businesses growing their local customer base by raising awareness and encouraging a “buy local” mindset.	Revenue/Sales	Low Budget (<\$50K)
Facilitate Third Party Technical Support for Local Businesses to Create/ Improve Online Sales and Marketing	This project will match interested business owners with third party technical advisors to provide advice and guidance related to online sales and marketing, website design, customer relationship management (CRM), and other operations aspects.	Revenue/Sales	Small Budget (<\$50K)
Celebrate Local History and Nearby Natural Resources within Public Realm	This project will identify notable historic and natural resources in and near the study area then develop and install signage and other markers to highlight these elements.	Culture/Arts	Small Budget (<\$50K)
Assess Zoning in Study Area and Implement Improvements to Facilitate Business Environment	This audit will identify zoning changes and permitting processes needed to align regulations with the type of growth the Town desires to see here.	Administrative Capacity	Small Budget < \$50K)
Conduct Town-Wide Visioning Process to Clearly Define South Hanson’s Role/Purpose	This project will conduct a public visioning process to talk about South Hanson Village with residents and stakeholders and define a shared sense of its desired future character.	Other	Medium Budget (\$50-\$200K)
Create Design Guidelines for Study Area	This project will create design guidelines that express the desired future character of South Hanson Village to help implement the shared vision and assist building owners who want to make repairs.	Other	Small Budget < \$50K)

Project Map

Project Locations

Recommended projects with a specific location in mind are mapped below. These are primarily public realm projects. Other projects such as business assistance and administrative projects would apply throughout the study area and are not mapped.



Improve Pedestrian Environment near MBTA Station

Category



Public Realm

Location

Main Street (Census tract 5221.02)

- Charles Drive to High Street (~0.5 mi)

Origin

Project Idea from the Town Planning Department and the Hanson Economic Development Plan (2019).
Project would be led by Town Highway Department.

Budget



Large Budget (>\$200K)

Primary Costs:

- Staff/Administrative time to engage stakeholders
- Staff/Administrative time to develop conceptual designs
- Contractor and Construction Costs

Potential Funding Sources

- MassWorks, MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program, TIP, Town General Fund



Existing Main Street sidewalk near the MBTA station

Timeframe**Short Term (<5 years)**

- Ongoing: Engage stakeholders including MBTA, MassDOT, property owners, and residents.
- 2 months: Analyze Main Street's physical and functional characteristics and uses to identify key issues and opportunities
- 6 - 18 months: Design, approvals, and contractor procurement
- 6 - 18 months: Construct improvements

Risk**Medium Risk**

- Dimensional constraints within ROW
- Environmental constraints near ROW
- Coordination with private property owners and MBTA
- Cost of improvements

Key Performance Indicators

- Linear feet of pedestrian improvements
- Change in pedestrian counts along improved sidewalks
- Private investment in adjacent buildings and properties
- Change in perception of area among residents

Partners & Resources

Old Colony Planning Council, Town Planning Department, MBTA, MassDOT, private property owners

Diagnostic

Narrow sidewalks next to fast-moving traffic and a lack of pedestrian amenities make walking an unattractive option in South Hanson Village. The MBTA commuter rail station is near local businesses, recent multifamily developments, and existing neighborhoods but pedestrian activity is sparse.

Diagnostic:

- The Main Street sidewalk is ~5' wide and located immediately adjacent to the curb. This asphalt surface with granite curb is located only on the north side of the street.
- There is very little separation from traffic on the 30 mph roadway with ~14' lane widths which encourage faster travel speed.
- Over half of business survey respondents are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the condition of streets, sidewalks, and public spaces.
- Sidewalks and crosswalks generally were rated a C. Street trees, benches, and lighting were rated a F.

Covid impacts:

- People tended to spend more time outdoors during Covid. Walking and bike riding are two easy ways to be active outside but Hanson lacks the sidewalk network or street design to encourage safe use by a range of ages and abilities.
- Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, studies have found that more Americans are choosing to cycle and/or walk as a safer transportation mode to reduce exposure to the virus by maintaining social distancing. It is anticipated that active transportation methods will remain and improving walkability within Hanson will encourage a healthy population.



Existing Main Street sidewalk near the former Ocean Spray building.

Action Item	<p>This project will assess the feasibility of walkability improvements to Main Street/Route 27 in the heart of South Hanson Village, design those improvements, and construct them. Both the roadway design and sidewalk will be assessed. Improvements may include lane narrowing, sidewalk reconstruction and/or widening, pedestrian-scale lighting, landscaping, planters and hanging baskets, public art, and other elements to enhance the pedestrian experience.</p> <p>Action Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish project team and approach • Conduct feasibility analysis and initial outreach • Design pedestrian improvements, assuming feasibility analysis concludes that improvements are possible • Construct pedestrian improvements
Process	<p>Establish project team and approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify project lead within Town and relevant departments to coordinate with throughout process. • Define project scope and success measures. • Develop RFP for consultant, make selection and complete contracting. <p>Conduct feasibility analysis and initial outreach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a feasibility analysis to understand opportunities and constraints related to available space in the public right-of-way (ROW), utilities, environmental, etc. • Develop a public engagement plan to share ideas with adjacent property owners and community throughout the process. <p>Design pedestrian improvements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine construction project delivery method: design/build, design/bid/build, CM at risk, CM Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP), etc • Develop conceptual design for potential improvements with preliminary opinion of probable construction costs (OPCC) and share for feedback. • Refine design through schematic, design development, and construction documentation phases with OPCC at each phase. • Confirm construction budget and secure funding. • Depending on project delivery method: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Prepare bid package for public improvements » Complete contractor procurement and award <p>Construct pedestrian improvements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate construction timing with any potential infrastructure improvements. • Complete construction, project punchlist, and closeout • Measure pedestrian activity after improvements and conduct intercept surveys.



Origin	The project was envisioned in a master plan for the Whately Center Historic District.
Budget	 <p>Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) for construction Design and engineering funded by the Town of Whately Additional public participation process and construction funded through Massachusetts Complete Streets grant</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Short Term (Less than 5 years)</p>
Risk	 <p>Medium Risk</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Measures of the positive impacts of the improvements are an increased number of events, visitors, and restaurant receipts as well as a reduction in traffic speeds.
Partners & Resources	Municipal committees focused on the target area and technical assistance providers, including a landscape architecture school and the regional planning agency.

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Creating Safe Pedestrian Access in a Rural Village Center



Provided by SME Consultant

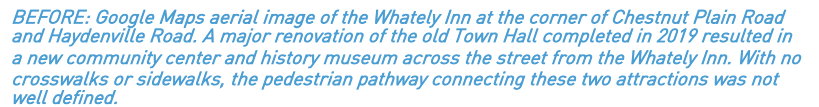
Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Location

Whately, MA

Chestnut Plain Road has a wide linear town common layout and is an integral part of the character and landscape of the town center historic district.

Therefore, to move forward, this project needed to have broad and strong community support. The project was successfully implemented because public outreach and an engaged planning process had taken place during the town center master planning process before the initiation of the final design and implementation of the improvements.





AFTER: With new crosswalks and sidewalks, pedestrians have safe access to the Whately Inn as well as the new community center and history museum, Post Office and public library across the street.

Importance of Public Engagement

Early in the project development the interests, concerns, and perspectives of many residents were considered through a master plan development process. Concerns related to the preservation of the historic streetscape while updating the sidewalks and crossings to improve accessibility for pedestrians was a challenge. Specifically, a robust public outreach process was completed that included a solicitation of input from those who would be impacted by the project. Two major considerations/challenges to implementation were making sure to preserve the historic double row of trees and to avoid damaging the root systems and also making sure that any signs did not detract from the historic character of the neighborhood. The project involved balancing pedestrian and motorist safety while also not detract from the historic qualities and feel of the area.

With the approval of the Select Board, the Whately Historical Commission formed an ad hoc committee to focus on the Whately Center Historic District. The ad hoc committee included a broad range of representation. They engaged the Conway School of Landscape Design to facilitate a visioning process and create conceptual designs for a Whately Center Historic District master plan. Since the visioning took place early in the project development, many interests and concerns were considered and incorporated into the conceptual designs that helped communicate proposed improvements.

Later, during the development of the design plans for the Chestnut Plain Road sidewalk, representatives of the Whately Inn were also consulted to discuss and brainstorm a solution to the parking issue. The solution was developed that improved the access to the parking lot and the configuration of the parking to allow for the construction of the sidewalk. The Inn donated towards the construction costs to compensate for a portion of the project that was on their property.

Evaluate Necessary Infrastructure Upgrades to Support Desired Growth

Category		Public Realm
Location		RRP Study Area (Census tract 5221.02)
Origin		Project idea from the Town's Planning Department and from the first Community Meeting. Project would be led by Town Water and Highway Departments.
Budget		<p>Low-Medium Budget (< \$200K)</p> <p>Primary Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff/Administrative Costs to undertake evaluation of local infrastructure.• Engineering consultant <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• General Fund• American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
Timeframe		<p>Short Term (<5 yrs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 - 8 months: Stormwater Infrastructure Evaluation• 4 - 8 months: Wastewater Conditions Evaluation• 6 months: Natural Resources Evaluation• 6 months: Traffic Infrastructure Evaluation



Water and Wastewater Infrastructure.
Source: Adobe Stock

Risk



Low Risk

- Financial limitations on Town Budget (if not partially or fully funded by a grant)
- Need for political will and support
- Need for public support
- Labor constraints for existing staff to shift responsibilities to complete evaluation studies

Key Performance Indicators

- Infrastructure capacity and reliability to meet current needs and future growth
- Dollar amount of infrastructure improvements identified
- Linear feet of new infrastructure needs identified

Partners & Resources

Water Department, Highway Department, Board of Health, Conservation Commission

Diagnostic

Diagnostic:

- The study area has aging infrastructure and an abundance of natural resources that place limitations on the amount and type of development that could take place here. Localized flooding, on-site septic systems, altered wetland flows, and potential traffic issues will need to be addressed to facilitate any significant growth here.
- The recent Integrated Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness and Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies the Ocean Spray property on Main Street as a "hot spot" for needed drainage improvements.

Covid impacts:

- Covid has not had a direct impact on infrastructure needs in the study area.
- Water and sewer infrastructure projects are eligible uses of state and local ARPA funds.

Action Item

This project will assess existing infrastructure in South Hanson Village to determine its condition and capacity to accommodate new development. Stormwater management, wastewater management, natural resources, and traffic will need to be evaluated. Likely issues include:

1. **Assess Stormwater Infrastructure** – Drainage is impacted by nearby wetlands and localized flooding occurs. Federal and State MS4s will need to be addressed and stormwater treatment BMP's will likely need to be provided.
2. **Assess Wastewater Infrastructure** – There is no Town wastewater system and on-site septic systems are constrained by surrounding wetlands. A shared wastewater treatment plant for the area may be needed to support new development.
3. **Assess Natural resources** – Re-naturalizing existing wetlands and mitigating further impacts will likely be needed to protect existing resources.
4. **Assess Traffic Infrastructure** – Pavement conditions, traffic counts, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and parking will need to be evaluated and addressed to determine the capacity for potential additional travel brought by new development.

Process

Action: Assess Stormwater Infrastructure, Wastewater Infrastructure, Natural Resources, and Traffic Infrastructure

- Meet with Town departments for an initial discussion of existing infrastructure in study area and potential study scope.
- Develop a project scope and work plan to analyze key infrastructure elements in the study area.
- Determine whether to use in-house staff resources or consultant to analyze infrastructure condition, capacity, constraints, and other issues affecting future development potential.
- Develop and publicize an RFP for the infrastructure assessment project, identify a preferred consultant and contract (if needed)
- Complete study scope: analysis, identify needs, and makes recommendations.
- Town takes analysis into consideration for future budgeting cycles and funding applications.
- Complete improvements as funding is secured.

Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections to Other Town Destinations

Category



Public Realm

Location

From Main Street to:

- Bay Circuit Trail access (High Street to Crooker Place) - approx. 0.5 miles
- Planned open space at former Plymouth County Hospital site (High Street north of Pierce) – approx. 1 mile northeast
- Liberty Street civic/commercial area (Rt 58/14) - approx. 2 miles northeast
- Indian Head commercial area (Rt.27/58) – approx. 1.5 miles east

Census tract 5221.02

Origin



Project idea from Planning Department, Hanson Economic Development Plan (2019).
Project would be led by Town Highway Department.



Existing sidewalk heading toward High Street.

Budget

Large Budget (>\$200k)

Primary Costs:

- Project design
- Construction costs

Potential funding sources:

- MassWorks
- MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program
- TIP
- Town general fund

Timeframe



Medium Term (5-10 yrs)

- 3 months - Identify and confirm desired connections
- Ongoing - Engage stakeholders including Highway Department and property owners
- 3 months - Assess feasibility of connections (ROW, cost, etc)
- 3 months - Develop conceptual designs
- 6 months - Finalize design and prepare bid package
- 2 months - Solicit and review bids
- 6-12 months - Construct improvements

Risk



Medium Risk.

- Public perception of sidewalks relative to Town identity
- Dimensional constraints within ROW
- Environmental constraints near ROW
- Coordination with private property owners
- Cost of improvements

Key Performance Indicators

- Linear feet of pedestrian/bicycle improvements
- Pedestrian counts along new sidewalks
- Private investment in adjacent buildings and properties
- Change in perception among residents

Partners & Resources

Old Colony Planning Council, Planning Department, private property owners

Diagnostic

The station area is a potential center of community life for Town residents but is relatively isolated from neighborhoods and other commercial clusters.

Diagnostic:

- The Main Street sidewalk is ~5' wide and located immediately adjacent to the curb. This asphalt surface with granite curb extends from just west of the Dunkin Donuts east to the entrance of the Dunham Farm residential community driveway. The sidewalk is located only on the north side of the street.
- There are no sidewalks further along Main or on High Street.
- Over half of business survey respondents are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the condition of streets, sidewalks, and public spaces.
- Sidewalks and crosswalks generally were rated a C. Street trees, benches, and lighting were rated a F.

Covid impacts:

- People tended to spend more time outdoors during Covid. Walking and bike riding are two easy ways to be active outside but Hanson lacks the sidewalk network or street design to encourage safe use by a range of ages and abilities.

Covid influence:

- Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, studies have found that more Americans are choosing to cycle and/or walk as a safer transportation mode to reduce exposure to the virus by maintaining social distancing. It is anticipated that active transportation methods will remain and improving walkability within Hanson will encourage a healthy population.

Action Item

1. **Network Extension Feasibility:** This project will assess the feasibility of extending the sidewalk and/or bicycling network beyond the station area. Nearby community destinations include the planned open space at the former Plymouth County Hospital on High Street, the Liberty Street commercial/civic area further north on High that includes Town Hall, and the Indian Head commercial area. Making safe pedestrian and/or bicycling connections to these places would also link residents living along the way.
2. **Design and Construct Connection Improvements:** Once the feasibility of such connections is defined, the Town will design those improvements and construct them. Both the roadway design and sidewalk options will be assessed. Improvements may include lane narrowing, sidewalk installation and/or widening, crosswalks, signage, or pedestrian-scale lighting to enhance safety and visual appeal.

Process

Establish project team and approach

- Identify project lead within Town and relevant departments to coordinate with throughout process.
- Define project scope and success measures.
- Develop RFP for consultant, make selection and complete contracting.

Conduct network extension feasibility

- Conduct a feasibility analysis to understand opportunities and constraints related to available space in the public right-of-way (ROW), utilities, adjacent property owner interest, etc.
- Develop a public engagement plan to share ideas with adjacent property owners and community throughout the process.
- Develop preliminary design for potential pedestrian and bicycle improvements with initial cost estimates to determine order of magnitude investment needed.
- Determine phasing of improvements as funding dictates, prioritizing connections that complete gaps in the network and/or connect to major community destinations like schools, open spaces, and transit.


Design and construct network improvements

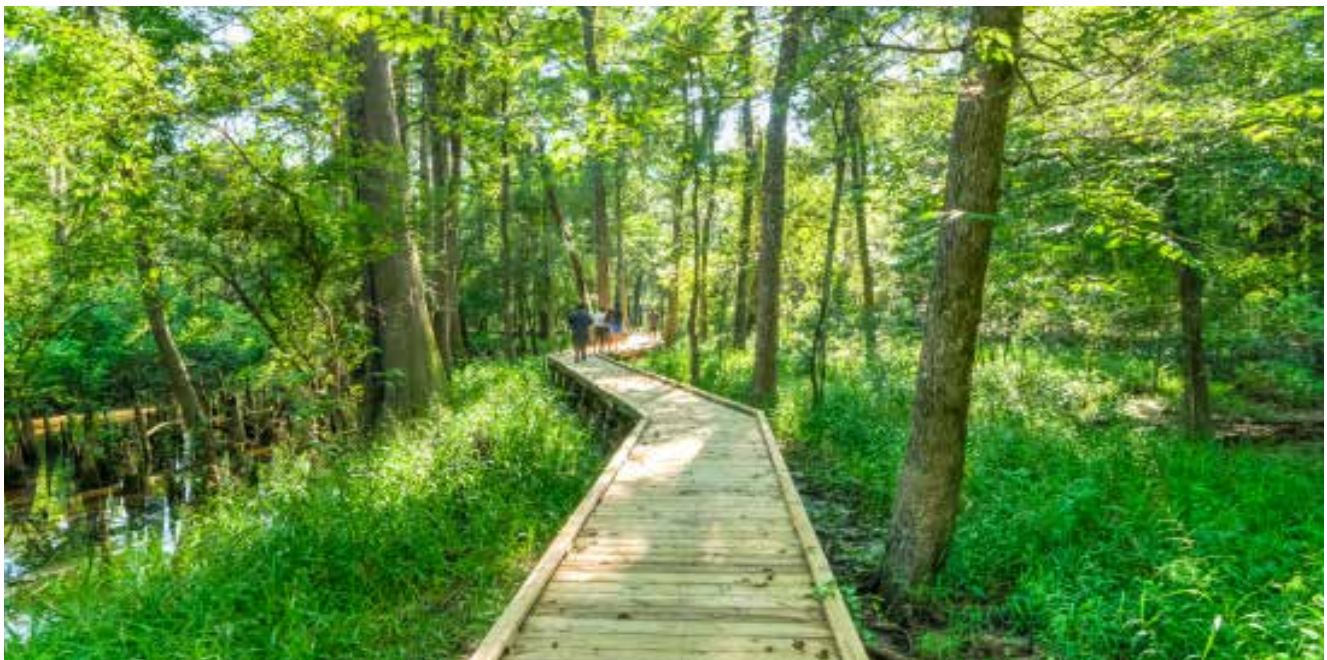
- Determine construction project delivery method: design/build, design/bid/build, CM at risk, CM Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP), etc
- Develop conceptual design for potential improvements with preliminary opinion of probable construction costs (OPCC) and share for feedback.
- Refine design through schematic, design development, and construction documentation phases with OPCC at each phase.
- Confirm construction budget and secure funding.
- Depending on project delivery method:
 - » Prepare bid package for public improvements
 - » Complete contractor procurement and award

Construct pedestrian improvements

- Coordinate construction timing with any potential infrastructure improvements.
- Complete construction, project punchlist, and closeout
- Measure pedestrian activity after improvements and conduct intercept surveys.

Evaluate Feasibility of Boardwalk Connecting Main Street to Burrage Pond Trails

Category		Public Realm
Location		RRP study area, Census Tract 5221.02
Origin		Project idea generated from first community meeting. Project would be led by Town Conservation Agent.
Budget		Small – Small Budget (<\$50k) Primary Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff/Administrative time Potential Funding Sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MassTrails Grant, Town of Hanson General Fund
Timeframe		Medium Term (5-10 years) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 months: Identify access options (on-street, off-street, boardwalk; pedestrian and bicyclist) and potential routes • 3 months: Evaluate feasibility of each strategy: ROW, property easements/acquisitions, environmental constraints, improvement costs, etc. • 1 month: Identify signage and wayfinding options for each strategy • 2 months: Discuss options with Town and public • 1 month: Identify preferred alternative • 5 years: Implementation of preferred alternative



Boardwalk Nature Trail, Jesse Park & Nature Centre, TX
Source: Adobe Stock

Risk



Medium Risk.

- Environmental constraints
- Regulatory permitting
- Property owner cooperation
- Cost
- Public support/political will

Key Performance Indicators

- Feasibility of connection
- Number of trail users

Partners & Resources

Highway Department, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Diagnostic

Diagnostic:

- The study area is near existing trail networks but no signage or direct connection to them exists.
- Wayfinding/signage was evaluated as an F. Very few signs exist in the study area, and none for nearby attractions.

Covid impacts:

- Covid increased the use of parks and outdoor spaces for recreation and exercise.
- Use of outdoor space for recreation and exercise reduces the chances of infection and improves physical activity

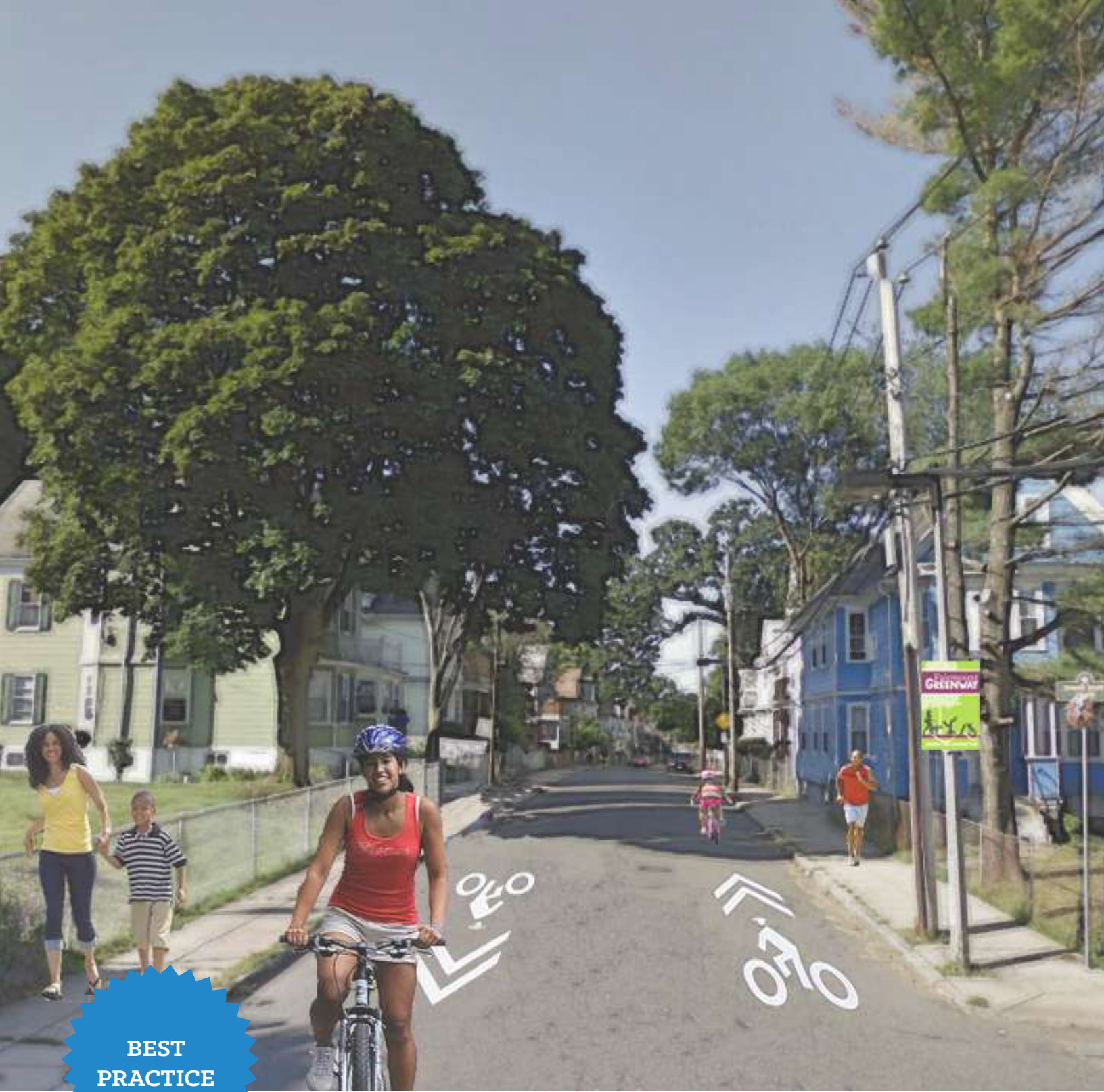
Action Item

The Burrage Pond Wildlife Management Area is an important natural resource which offers more than 10 miles of public walking trails with wildlife viewing opportunities. Improved wayfinding and access from the study area will attract visitors (and potential customers). This project will conduct a preliminary planning and engineering study to evaluate the feasibility of such a connection and the associated wayfinding/signage opportunities.

Process

Action: Preliminary Planning and Engineering Study to improve Wayfinding and Attract Visitors/Tourists/Customers

- Determine whether Town staff will conduct study or if Town will hire a consultant.
- Develop a proposed project scope and desired deliverables.
- Write RFP for consultant, solicit bids, and contract with preferred consultant (if needed)
- Identify improved access options (on-street, off-street, boardwalk; pedestrian and bicyclist) and potential routes to explore.
- Evaluate feasibility of each strategy: ROW availability, property easements/acquisitions, environmental constraints, improvement costs, etc.
- Identify signage and wayfinding options for each strategy.
- Discuss options with Town staff and elected officials.
- Present options to public for feedback.
- Identify preferred alternative and refine cost estimates.
- Identify funding source(s) for improvements and implementation timeline.



**BEST
PRACTICE**

Wayfinding on Fairmount Greenway



**PUBLIC
REALM**

Provided by SME Consultant

Civic Space Collaborative

Location

Boston, MA

Origin	Fairmount Greenway Task Force
Budget	 Low Budget (approximately \$10,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (approximately 10 weeks)
Risk	 Low Risk: Temporary installation requiring no major construction, low cost, no City approvals needed
Key Performance Indicators	Installation of twelve wayfinding signs to mark 1.5 miles of the Fairmount Greenway route. Increase usage of bike share programs, pedestrian walkways, and T-ridership.
Partners & Resources	Fairmount Greenway Task Force, Neighborhood Associations, DotBike, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, City of Boston Transportation Department, The Trust for Public Land, Civic Space Collaborative
Diagnostic	<p>The Fairmount Greenway is an on-street cycling and walking route, also known as a “neighborhood greenway” or “neighborway”, that links MBTA stations, business districts, open space, and other developing neighborhood amenities along the MBTA’s Fairmount/Indigo Rail Line. Currently, along the Fairmount Corridor in Dorchester residents fear cycling and walking in their neighborhoods due to a lack of safe infrastructure. Wayfinding signs, combined with on-street improvements part of the Boston Transportation Department’s Slow Zone program such as shared lane markings (“sharrows”), district signage, speed humps, and bulb-outs, comprise the treatments for the Greenway. In addition, Blue Bike Stations have been installed further south in Dorchester with four stations along this 1.5-mile stretch.</p> <p>During the pandemic, we have seen a rise in cycling across the nation, in Boston, and especially among Black and Brown people. With the increase in people cycling and walking, the Fairmount Greenway route signs are incredibly timely. This summer, we anticipate seeing an increase in walking and cycling along the Fairmount Greenway to reach business districts, the Fairmount Line, and recreation to reach regional parks and greenways, such as the Neponset River Greenway, Franklin Park, the Emerald Necklace, and Southwest Corridor.</p>
Action Item	<p>Boston’s nine-mile Fairmount Greenway is a life-changing development, connecting Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and Hyde Park with a route that links parks, green space, on-street bike routes, trails, transit stations, and city squares. Since 2008, the Greenway’s 10-member task force have been working with the City of Boston and multiple other organizations on this long-term vision to connect the Fairmount communities to the heart of Boston. More than 1,000 residents have joined in planning, designing, and implementing Greenway park, streets, and greenway projects.</p> <p>In 2021, the Fairmount Greenway installed wayfinding signs to mark a 1.5-mile on-street route of the Fairmount Greenway in Dorchester near Four Corners and Codman Square. The wayfinding signs were updated to include key neighborhood destinations and mark the on-street route in February 2021. Twelve signs were printed on corrugated plastic and installed with residents in May 2021.</p>

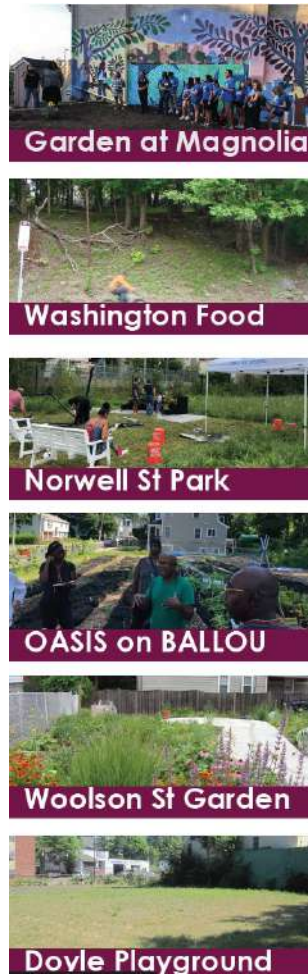
Process

Planning + Design

- Fairmount Greenway concept development (2008 – 2010):** The Fairmount Greenway concept first emerged in 2008 for an on-street walking and biking route that loosely follows the MBTA Fairmount Rail Line. In 2011, the Fairmount Greenway Concept Plan was published, outlining 10 to 20 years of phased developments, portions of which were incorporated into the Mayor's Go Boston 2030 plan.
- Signage branding, design, and placement (2013 – 2014):** The Fairmount Greenway Task Force (FGTF) worked with MAPC to create a wayfinding system, utilizing existing street poles to attach signs. The FGTF worked on branding the Greenway sign design process and solicited feedback from the City of Boston's transportation department. Based on the City's comments, additional destinations were added to the signs to create wayfinding signs.
- Approval Process:** The original request to the City was to install metal signs, but due to lack of funding for the required CAD drawings, the signs were not installed.
- Finalizing wayfinding sign design (2021 – 4 weeks):** In 2020, the FGTF received funding for temporary signs through a grant from The Trust for Public Land. The temporary signs did not require approval from the City as they were made of corrugated plastic. The wayfinding signs design were updated for 1.5 miles on Fairmount Greenway to include the route directions, Fairmount Station, and local parks.

Installation

- Material Acquisition:** The wayfinding signs PDF were sent to a local, minority-owned print shop in Mattapan. A test sign and twelve final signs were printed on 12 x 18-inch corrugated plastic sheets for \$250. Additional materials needed include zip-ties to attach the signs to street poles and a drill to add holes to the signs.
- Installation Day:** A group of 4-6 volunteers will install the signs in May.



Key spaces to connect and a Fairmount Greenway map



A photo of Michelle Moon with the test print, final signage design

Improve Building Facades and Business Storefronts

Category



Private Realm

Location

RRP study area, Census Tract 5221.02

Origin

Project idea from Town Planning Department, Hanson Economic Development Plan (2019).
Project would be led by the Planning Department.

Budget



Medium Budget (\$50k – \$200k)

Primary Costs:

- Staff/Administrative time
- Project improvement costs

Potential Funding Sources:

- Regional Economic Development Organization Grant Program (REDO)
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
- Hometown Grants (T-Mobile)
- Community One Stop for Growth



*A conceptual rendering of the original South Hanson train station renovated to bring more activity to Main Street.
Source: Stantec*

Timeframe



Short-term (Less than 5 years)

- 1-3 months: Identify properties in need of improvement and engage local property owners to identify priority needs
- 6 months: Advertise program to the community
- 1-2 years: Completion of private façade and building improvements

Risk



Medium Risk

- Participation by 'do-it-yourself' independent-minded business owners.
- Funding constraints.
- Improvement costs.
- No facade design guidelines in place to align private improvements

Key Performance Indicators

- Creation of the program
- Number of program applicants
- Number of storefront improvements completed
- Number of building façade improvements completed
- Maintenance of improvements after a set number of years
- Change in business revenue
- Change in vacancy
- Change in traffic and parking counts

Partners & Resources

- Economic Development Committee
- Planning Board
- Business owners
- Property owners

Diagnostic

Many buildings in the study area need some degree of façade improvements. Most notably, the former Ocean Spray building on Main Street near the train station is in need of significant exterior improvements. Investments in the interior of that building are not matched with exterior maintenance and repair.

Diagnostic:

- Building facades were graded a C in the diagnostic. Awnings were a C, business signage a B, and storefront lighting an F.

Covid impacts:

- Covid impacted many businesses' bottom-line, further limiting their ability to invest in physical improvements.
- The lingering impacts of long-standing building maintenance issues have been exacerbated by Covid's limitations on in-person dining and shopping, further contributing to a general sense of disinvestment and inactivity in the study area. Significant exterior improvements across multiple buildings will begin to change the perception of this area and improve businesses' outlook post-Covid.

Action Item

1. **Improve building facades and storefronts:** This project will help building and business owners in South Hanson Village make exterior improvements and repairs that will help attract customers back post-Covid and generally enhance the appearance of the district.
2. **Identify funding sources:** Many owners lack the funding, time, and/or ability to identify and complete needed repairs and improvements. This initiative will identify funding sources to assist owners with repairs and improvements.
3. **Activate empty storefronts:** Building owners of vacant storefront spaces will be connected with local artists or entrepreneurs to create temporary installations that will attract positive attention to the area and help recruit potential tenants.

Process

Improve building facades and storefronts

- Conduct physical assessment of buildings and prioritize needs
- Create Design Guidelines that property and business owners can use to repair storefronts and facades
- Recruit key property and business owners to participate in the improvement of storefronts.
- Designate a 'go-to' staff member that will be available to assist applicants in gaining necessary approvals and permits
- Encourage completion of improvement work in a timely Manner

Identify funding sources to assist building and business owners

- Identify funding sources and requirements
- Create an advertising campaign to make key property and business owners aware of the outside funding sources.
- Create landing page on the Town's website that has direct links to the various funding sources and a 'Step-by-Step' Guide for applicants
- Identify repairs and improvements that would fit available funding

Activate empty storefronts

- Establish a team of local artists
- Identify vacant buildings/storefronts that could benefit from temporary installations
- Assist in the creation of partnership agreements between artists and owners





APPLICATION FOR SIGN & FAÇADE PROGRAM

Purpose:

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

Eligibility Requirements:

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

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

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

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

APPLICATION

BUSINESS INFORMATION

Name of Business:

Business Address:

Contact Name:

Contact Phone:

Contact Email:

Please indicate if this business is new or existing:

Type of Business:

PROJECT INFORMATION

Please describe the scope of work for the proposed renovation project:

Please indicate the estimated total project cost of the total amount budgeted for improvements:

Does the project require you to obtain a building permit? Attach copies of permits.

Characteristics

- Preferred target area (high traffic streets) but is open to all businesses in Ashland.
- Includes building improvements (accessibility, signs, awnings, painting).
- Includes site improvements (parking lots, planters, landscaping)

Cost

50% match up to \$5,000

Funding By:

Home Rule petition for annual appropriation and Home Rulepetitionforrevolvingfund –both approved by Town Meeting.

<https://www.ashlandmass.com/669/Business-Incentive-Programs>

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Signage and Façade Improvements

Location: Ashland, MA

Promote Local Businesses within Hanson and the Region

Category		Revenue/Sales
Location		RRP study area, Census Tract 5221.02
Origin		Project Idea from the Planning Department and the Hanson Business Network. Project would be led by the Economic Development Committee.
Budget		<p>Low Budget (<\$50K)</p> <p>Primary Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff/Administrative time• Cost of marketing materials, websites, etc. <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town of Hanson General Fund, ARPA
Timeframe		<p>Short Term (<5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2-4 months: Engage local business owners to identify shared needs• 3-6 months: Develop marketing and promotional campaign• Ongoing: Launch local promotion campaign
Risk		<p>Low Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation by local business owners• Support from residents



Shop Local Campaign Ideas
Source: Adobe Stock

Key Performance Indicators

- Referrals from marketing campaign
- Change in business sales
- Specific mention of the marketing campaign by buyers

Partners & Resources

- Economic Development Committee
- Business owners
- Old Colony Planning Council
- Metro South and Plymouth Area Chambers of Commerce

Diagnostic

Within the study area, many businesses rely on word-of-mouth. The Hanson Business Network was founded to create visibility and build awareness for businesses in Hanson.

Diagnostic:

- 63 businesses were identified in the study area but only 26 storefronts. Many businesses lack a storefront presence or appropriate signage to attract drive-by traffic.
- 43% of business survey respondents are interested in participating in shared marketing/advertising.
- Over two-thirds of business survey respondents rated 'implementing marketing strategies for the commercial district' as important or very important.

Covid impacts:

- Covid significantly reduced drive-by traffic for local businesses. Many people turned to online shopping instead. Many businesses in the study area lack a modern website which limits their ability to tap into these potential customers.
- 81% of business survey respondents generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019.
- Hanson Day was cancelled in 2020. This event provides a community event for local businesses to advertise and raise awareness of their services locally.
- As businesses look to recover from Covid, they need every available marketing and promotion tool to attract returning and new customers.

Action Item

This initiative will assist businesses growing their local customer base by raising awareness and encouraging a "buy local" mindset. It will engage local business owners to understand their biggest marketing needs and determine how best to address those.

- Determine priority business needs
- Identify marketing options to address needs
- Develop and implement marketing strategies

Process

Action: Determine priority needs

- Form a project committee to lead this initiative.
- Engage local business owners to determine their marketing capabilities and needs (website, social media, etc).
- Identify the priority needs among businesses and develop strategies to address.

Action: Identify options to address needs

- Consider district branding, social media, and/or print/digital district brochure as potential near-term strategies to build awareness.
- Identify funding sources to implement marketing initiative

Action: Implement marketing efforts

- District branding:
 - » Gather information - market survey, perceptions of local businesses
 - » Create branding campaign - identify style options that align with current or desired character of district
 - » Develop outreach strategy to publicize new brand
- Social media:
 - » Identify best platforms for messaging depending on desired audiences
 - » Create and automate a regular schedule of postings
 - » Follow relevant accounts to increase awareness
 - » Encourage local businesses to share online content
- Business brochure:
 - » Build inventory of businesses in South Hanson Village to include
 - » Develop draft brochure using district brand
 - » Sell sponsorships and/or advertising space in brochure to offset costs
 - » Identify locations to provide print version

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



BEST
PRACTICE

Municipal Branding Toolkit for Small Businesses



Location: Salisbury, MD

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

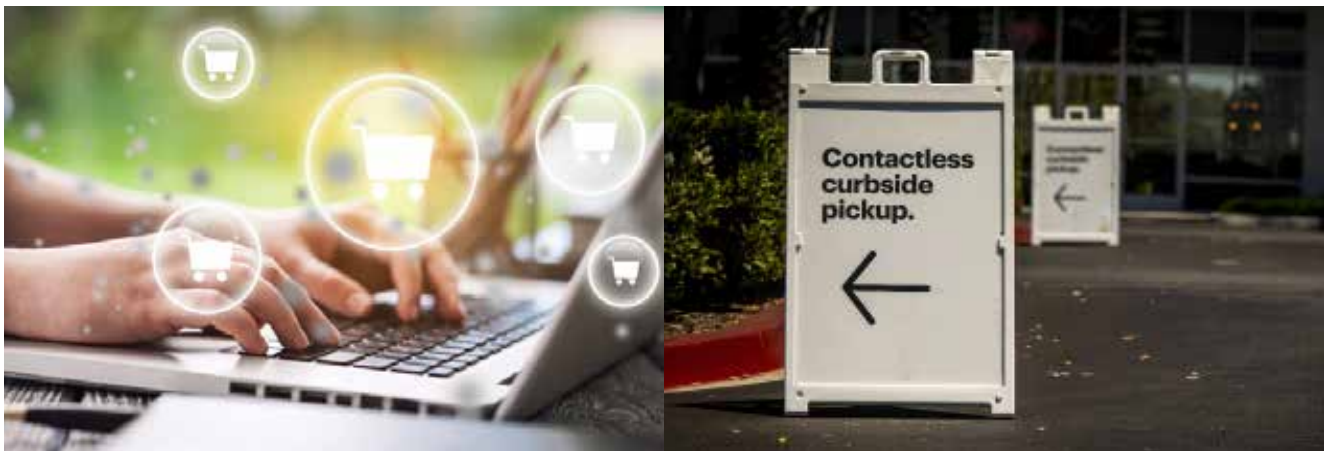
Locally owned and operated businesses are more likely to give back to the community than those that aren't.

City of Salisbury Shop Local Campaign

Source: City of Salisbury, MD

Facilitate Third Party Technical Support for Local Businesses to Create/Improve Online Sales and Marketing

Category		Revenue/Sales
Location		Study area, Census tract 5221.02
Origin		Project idea generated by the Planning Department and the Hanson Business Network.
Budget		<p>Small Budget (<\$50K)</p> <p>Primary Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff/Administrative time to assess need and business owner interest• Hiring of a third party technical support contractor to implement online sales and marketing tool <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town of Hanson General Fund
Timeframe		<p>Short Term (<5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 months: Assess need and business owner interest in assistance in gaining a web presence• 1 month: Write RFP for third party technical online and marketing assistance• 6 months - 1 year: third party consultant builds online presence for interested business owners
Risk		<p>Low Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town capacity to implement• Business owner interest• Project cost to Town



Ecommerce and curbside pick-up options available with Online Presence
Source: Adobe Stock

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of businesses assisted
- Change in number of sales
- Change in type of sales (online order versus in-store)
- Website visit counts

Partners & Resources

- Economic Development Committee
- Hanson Business Network
- Massachusetts Small Business Development Center
- SCORE
- Business owners

Diagnostic**Diagnostic:**

- 86% of business survey respondents reported a decline in revenue but only 29% established an alternative mode to sell and deliver products.
- 29% of business survey respondents were interested in assistance setting up an online store or other online selling channel, and 14% creating new service(s) such as delivery.

Covid impacts:

- The transition to online sales and marketing during the pandemic limited some business' sales and reduced revenue.

Covid influence:

- The pandemic highlighted the importance of business adaptations to growing trends like e-commerce and online marketing.

Action Item

Businesses in the study area have a range of ability, funding, and time to assess their operations and implement improvements that could boost sales, reduce costs, or make physical changes. This project will provide readily-available technical assistance to work with interested business owners to assess and enhance their operations.

- Identify the needs of the business community
- Identify options to address these needs
- Launch program and track participants

Process

Action: Identify the needs of the business community

- Engage local business owners to determine their obstacles to greater success or areas they want to improve (marketing, ecommerce, etc).
- Identify the priority needs among businesses and develop strategies to address.

Action: Identify options to address needs

- Design strategies to address most prevalent needs:
 - Develop a simple, clear "Guide to Starting a Business in Hanson" – how to work with Town regulations, permitting, and licensing; a process flowchart; pre-application checklist of required information.
 - Provide technical assistance to develop modern websites optimized for mobile and desktop.
 - Provide training to local business owners and managers on social media and online marketing.
- Contact business assistance organizations like SCORE and Massachusetts Small Business Development Center about partnering to provide training, resources, and technical assistance.
- Create a screening process to vet applicants and assess capacity and commitment to implement recommendations.

Action: Launch program and track participants

- Recruit local business participants and provide assistance.
- Conduct follow-up interviews to assess program efficacy and business results.
- Promote business improvements with other owners to encourage participation.
- Track KPI to promote success and identify areas for program improvement.



ReLaunch is a collaborative effort to drive business resilience and opportunity in 2021. Companies will receive tailored tools and professional assistance to revitalize, strengthen and transform their businesses. For detailed information please visit: www.relaunch.business

**BEST
PRACTICE**

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



Location: Arlington, VA



ReLaunch participant, Rincome Thai Cuisine
Source: ReLaunch website, Rincome Thai Cuisine

ReLaunch is designed to provide service to diverse communities, particularly those that have limited digital infrastructure, making them more exposed to the business decline during COVID-19 business disruptions.

COMMUNITY ACTION ITEMS

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

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDER ACTION ITEMS

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

PROCESS

Community Process

- Research needs of hard impacted small businesses
- Interview organizations which are currently doing work to assist businesses during the health pandemic. Identify best practices and improve deliverables
- Design framework for ReLaunch program. (ReVitalize = Technical Assistance & ReNew = Technology Assistance)
- Develop working budget
- Work with purchasing office to develop criteria for vendor's who can provide assistance
- Advertise for assistance with formal RFP process
- Hire technical assistance vendors
- Train vendors and staff
- Develop CRM system to keep track of businesses accepted/rejected or pushed forward.

- 10-month communications plan designed - yard signs, direct mail campaign, blogs, social media strategy etc.
- Select businesses eligible for ReLaunch program
- Communicate with vendors. Repeat for the next 10 months
- Program ends December 31, 2021

TA Provider Process

- Meet with the BizLaunch team at least once a month to discuss any logistics topics or feedback on the TA activity with the current cohort of business owners.
- For each monthly cohort of approximately 15 businesses, send out an introduction email with a link to schedule a first meeting within the next 2 weeks.
- Identify any business owners that need special accommodations to participate in a virtual meeting (i.e., need access to a laptop)
- Conduct introduction meetings (virtually, over Zoom) with each business owner. Goal of the first call is to build rapport and a shared understanding of the TA format, confirm the need and objectives the business owner identified in their application, and mutually agree upon a plan for their working session.
- Spend time researching and preparing for the TA working session. Prepare a multi-page document to aid the discussion during the working session.
- Conduct a 1-hour virtual working session on the topic(s) agreed upon. Ensure to conduct the session with empathy and patience while providing a high quality and effective session in terms of content and business & marketing best practices.
- Provide a document that the business may use for ongoing guidance. Provide a total of 3 – 4 hours of TA work per business.

ReVitalize

Are you seeking ways to strengthen your business with assistance in financial management and sourcing capital, branding and marketing, digital presence, business knowledge, legal structures and strategic planning? For more information and to apply.

[Learn More](#)

ReBuild

Are you looking for additional tools to streamline and expand your business during the pandemic? Explore the latest free resources to help sustain and grow your business and check back for frequent updates.

[Learn More](#)

ReNew

Your online footprint is vital now and in the future. Does your website need a refresher? Can your clients make purchases on your website? Are you using the right tech to expand your opportunities? For more information and to apply.

[Learn More](#)

ReLaunch's three components

Source: ReLaunch website

Celebrate Local History and Natural Resources

Category		Culture/Arts
Location		<p>Study area, primarily Main Street. Possible locations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ocean Spray complex• Marcus Urann house• Train depot (1878)• Great Cedar Swamp• Burrage Pond Wildlife Management Area <p>Census tract 5221.02</p>
Origin		<p>Project idea from Town Planning Department and through the first Community Meeting. Project would be led by Historical Commission and Conservation Agent</p>
Budget		<p>Small Budget (<\$50K) Primary Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff/Administrative time for designing signage• Manufacturing of signs and installation of signage <p>Potential Funding Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town of Hanson General Fund, Community Preservation Act
Timeframe		<p>Short Term (<5 years)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 month: Confirm list of resources to be identified• 3 months: Design elements that will identify historic and natural resources• 1 month: Install signage• 1 month: Promote effort locally



Risk



Low Risk

- Competing priorities Townwide
- Limited Town capacity to implement process

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of historic markers installed
- Number of natural resource markers installed
- Change in visitors

Partners & Resources

North and South Rivers Watershed Assoc, Mass Audubon (Burrage Pond), local Indigenous population, Residents

Diagnostic

Diagnostic:

- The public realm in South Hanson Village is utilitarian and lacks any distinguishing features. Signage is limited to basic roadway and directional signage.

Covid impacts:

- Reduction in Town budget/finances
- Limiting staffing capabilities (to manage signage project and take on additional responsibility)
- With restrictions placed on global travel to reduce the spread of Covid, people were given an opportunity to travel locally and explore their own communities better. Local signage that celebrates Hanson's history and natural resources will allow for the residents and visitors to learn more about Hanson's rich history.

Action Item

South Hanson Village is enriched by the history of the area and nearby natural resources like Burrage Pond. Most notably, the Ocean Spray cranberry collaborative was first established in the district in the early 1900's and grew to become an important part of the Town's economy. This project will identify notable historic or natural resources in and near the study area then develop and install signage and other markers to highlight these elements in the public realm. The process may include a community engagement effort and/or outreach to local and regional artists to design components.

- Identify notable historic or natural resources
- Develop and install signage to identify notable features

Process

Action: Identify notable historic or natural resources

- Assess notable historic and/or natural resources in and near the study area that will be marked.
- Consult local historians, members of local Indigenous groups, and members of the public to confirm notable local historic and/or natural resources.

Action: Develop and install signage to identify notable features

- Determine strategy to identify within public realm: signage, markers, public art like murals.
- Determine whether a digital component will complement physical elements (eg QR code links to more information, existing websites, etc).
- Design program elements: signage, markers, murals, etc.
- Install elements.
- Publicize installation with local print media, social media, etc.

Action Items

Recommendations for signage and wayfinding include:

- Develop additional wayfinding as a placemaking element in Melrose to help residents and visitors find their way around the city.
- Create a signage pilot to roll out less expensive sign types throughout the city.
- Earmark funding for implementation over the next 1-2 years.
- Prioritize directing visitors and residents to downtown to support the local Melrose commerce.
- Install trail signage to help residents and visitors successfully utilize trails and greenspace in Melrose.
- Include walking distances on major signage to encourage walking as a method of transportation.
- Initiate outdoor seating, street narrowing, and other measures to support small business in the downtown and other commercial areas.
- Partner with local organizations to help envision and manage these programs to further support Melrose commerce.
- Consider a regular "open main street" program, closing streets to car traffic to encourage outdoor activity and support local downtown businesses.

Process

- Understand who the stakeholders and decision-makers will be.
- Form a committee to oversee the process.
- Visit the site to audit of existing conditions.
- Conduct a Wayfinding Analysis including; multi-modal circulation, main decision points, and key destinations.
- Research the history of the place, uncover stories that might inspire the design.
- Identify opportunities for art/placemaking.
- Engage with stakeholders and the public to understand needs and preferences. If possible, create a survey and/or focus groups to get feedback from a larger cross-section of people.
- Develop project goals and a positioning statement to guide design efforts.
- Design concepts for brand and wayfinding elements.
- Develop the preferred design into a family of sign types with materials, colors, etc.
- Provide a sign location plan and order of magnitude budget.
- Create public art criteria and develop a call-for-art to identify qualified public artists.
- Release the call for art or bid and select artists/vendors.
- Oversee installation.

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Public Wayfinding Campaign

Location: Melrose, Massachusetts



Assess Zoning and Implement Improvements to Support Business Environment

Category



Administrative Capacity

Location

RRP study area, Census Tract 5221.02

Origin

Project idea from Town Planning Department, Town Administrator, and Hanson Economic Development Plan (2019). Project would be led by Zoning Bylaw Committee.

Budget



Small Budget (< \$50K)

Primary Costs:

- Staff/Administrative time and/or consultant costs to undertake zoning review.

Potential Funding Sources:

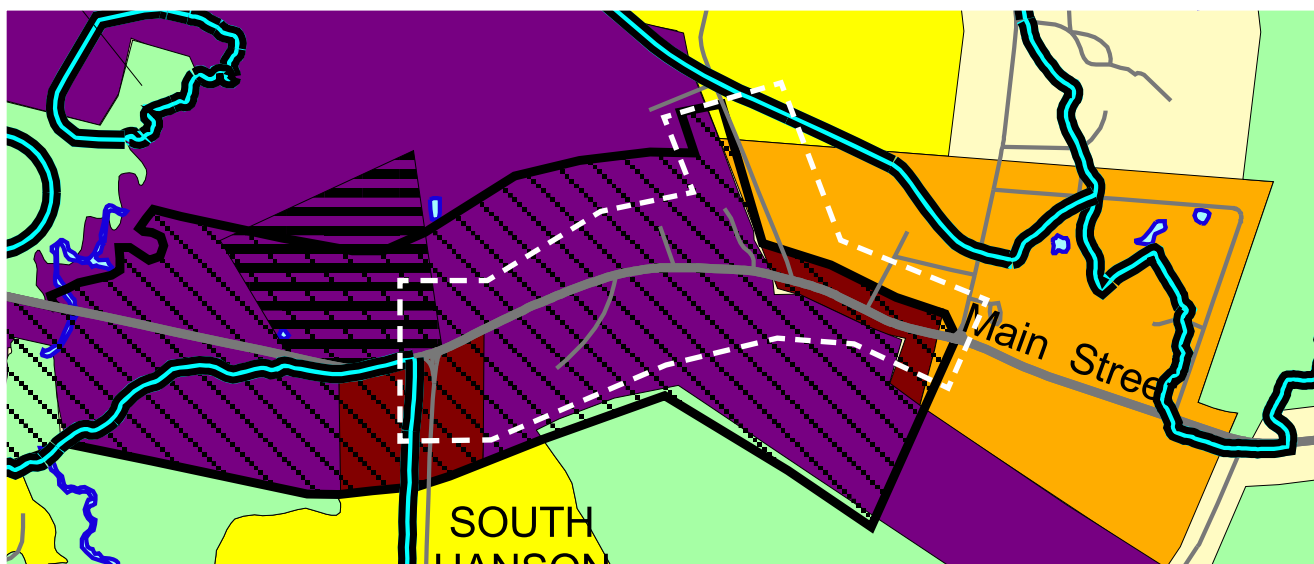
- Planning Assistance Grant (EEOEEA), Direct Local Technical Assistance Program (OCPC), Town of Hanson General Fund

Timeframe



Short Term (<5 yrs)

- Complete: Form Zoning Bylaw Committee
- 6-9 months: Conduct community engagement effort to determine shared vision for future of station area
- 2 months: Conduct zoning diagnostic to identify priority areas for change
- 2-4 months: Determine need for zoning consultant to draft proposed zoning changes to implement vision. Develop RFP if needed and contract with selected consultant
- 6-9 months: Develop draft zoning text
- 3 months: Provide draft to relevant Boards and Commissions for feedback
- 3 months: Finalize zoning text and adopt



Town of Hanson Zoning Map with approximate RRP study area outlined in white

Risk



Medium Risk

- Political will to approve zoning and permitting change
- Support from local business and property owners
- Environmental and infrastructure constraints to significant new development

Key Performance Indicators

- Adoption of proposed zoning changes
- New development applications after adoption
- Survival and growth of existing businesses
- Number of business expansions

Partners & Resources

- Town Planner
- Planning Board
- Economic Development Committee

Diagnostic

"While providing a potentially desirable location for new residential and mixed-use development, the area around the train station presents regulatory, infrastructure, and environmental constraints. These conditions have an impact on the South Hanson real estate market." Hanson Economic Development Plan by FXM Associates (2019). Zoning near the commuter rail station also needs to conform to recently adopted "Act Enabling Partnerships for Smart Growth" legislation.

Diagnostic:

- Zoning near the station is mostly Commercial-Industrial with a Flexible Zone Overlay (FZO). Parcels near Elm Street are zoned Business with a Flexible Zone Overlay.
 - Multifamily and mixed-use is allowed by Special Permit in the FZO. Multifamily is limited to no more than 8 dwelling units per structure and 2 parking spaces per unit are required.
 - Minimum lot size in the FZO is 35,000sf, of which at least 80% (28,000sf) must be upland.
- Significant environmental constraints exist near the station. The Aquifer and Well Protection district in the study area constrains development, and the Rivers Protection Act setback also impacts parts of the study area.
- There is no Town sewer in the station area.

Covid impacts:

- Covid did not create this issue but highlighted the need for flexibility that zoning does not allow.
- Covid has exposed the need for businesses to quickly adapt and experiment. Large lot requirements, vague and dated zoning language, and other impediments exist that limit flexibility and new development.

Action Item	<p>This review will modernize requirements near the station and seek to mitigate some of the natural constraints. Zoning and permitting changes are intended to make development applications near the station more user-friendly, allow for the type of development desired by the community and supported by the market, and provide greater flexibility for local businesses to change and adapt over time. The revisions will also align station-area zoning with the Commonwealth's recently adopted Housing Choice legislation, specifically requirements for MBTA communities to have a zoning district of "reasonable size" that allows for multifamily residential development by right, at a minimum density of 15 units per acre (subject to limitations imposed by Wetlands Protection Act and state wastewater regulations). The creation of a 40R "Smart Growth" district will be considered as a way to establish the type of development desired for the station area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop shared vision for future of South Hanson Village • Review local zoning and permitting within the study area • Recommend improvements to zoning and permitting to align with vision • Promote zoning changes to encourage investment in area
Process	<p>Action: Develop shared vision for future of South Hanson Village</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch community engagement process to develop a shared vision for the future of the station area (see project recommendation for description). <p>Action: Review local zoning and permitting within the Study Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Zoning Bylaw Committee • Clarify overall zoning organization for user-friendliness • Audit use table, dimensional requirements, signage, parking, and other regulations. Identify 1-3 "test sites" to apply existing zoning and determine development feasibility. Note impediments to creating the type of desired development. • Review 40R requirements to determine whether it is a desirable zoning tool to adopt in the station area. <p>Action: Recommend improvements to zoning and permitting to align with vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify recommended changes and draft new zoning text and/or map amendments for review and approval. • Collaborate with Planning Board to build support and address any concerns proactively. • Promote benefits of potential changes with local business and property owners to build constituency. • Formally adopt zoning changes via Town Meeting. <p>Action: Promote changes to encourage investment in area by existing property owners and prospective developers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicize changes and encourage businesses and property owners to take advantage of new requirements. • Identify local and regional developers with relevant experience and strong track records of success and proactively engage them to promote the district. • Track new applications to understand how changes are being used.

Origin	Economic Study of Industrial Zoning District and Recommended Zoning Changes
Budget	 Medium (\$50,000-\$200,000) – Operating Funds Other options include Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, MassDevelopment Technical Assistance
Timeframe	 Short Term (1-5 years) – Analyze existing zoning and conditions, including current market, test fit studies, develop and approve zoning changes.
Risk	 Medium – Political risk may delay passage or cause modifications.
Key Performance Indicators	New businesses relocating to the Industrial District. Number of public realm components incorporated into new developments.
Partners & Resources	Municipal Boards and Committees; Residents, Property owners, Employers, Institutions; Municipal Planning Staff
Diagnostic	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic required municipalities to become creative around strategies for using the public and private realms in our downtowns. This included outdoor dining, retail display, expanded outdoor seating, and small events.</p> <p>Many communities did not have the regulations in place to allow for such use and relied on COVID-19 Order 50 from Governor Baker to allow outdoor dining. Other communities did not have the physical space for these uses.</p> <p>Development standards integrated into a zoning ordinance or bylaw can address aspects of the public realm that became critically important during the pandemic, such as public plazas for outdoor eating or seating and appropriate pedestrian and bicycle connections from a private development to amenities, such as open space, goods, services, jobs, and housing. Development standards can also address future crises, such as climate change, by requiring the integration of stormwater management, resource efficient architecture, and energy-generating systems.</p> <p>The key to development standards is to tie them to the ability of a developer to finance the construction of both the development and the required amenities while still making a profit sufficient to justify the investment. Without such analysis, communities with high standards may not see the development they anticipate because the cost of meeting those standards is too high.</p>

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Incorporate development standards into zoning to address public realm



Action Item

The process involved a parallel analysis of the existing zoning bylaws for the industrial district and the existing market conditions for industrial development given new trends for industrial areas.

Community engagement included a steering committee and public meetings to discuss the current conditions and community values and vision for the future of this area.

Fit studies tested the amount of development volume that could fit on selected sites while pro forma analysis identified whether such volumes would be profitable enough to support community desires for sustainable development and a pedestrian-focused public realm. Such studies should be included in the public engagement process for discussion and can be checked by working with the local real estate community to understand potential impacts.

Zoning changes incorporated development standards that matched community values for new development and provided a menu of options for required amenities. Such a menu allows for a flexible response from projects of varying sizes, densities, and uses.

Process

The post-study implementation process are as follows:

- Develop the draft zoning language (see Process, below).
- Discuss draft language with appropriate land use boards and modify as needed to address concerns.
- Submit the draft language to the municipal approval process which will vary by municipality but will include the Planning Board and either City Council/Ordinance Committee or Select Board/Finance or Bylaw Review Committee/Town Meeting.
- (If the zoning change is successful) Publicize the new zoning broadly prior to new applications for development.
- Track and evaluate the applications and which public realm components were most successful in terms of implementation. Evaluate whether the development standards need to be modified to address changing conditions.

Conduct Townwide Visioning Process to Clearly Define South Hanson's Future Role and Character

Category		Other
Location		Study area Census tract 5221.02
Origin		Economic Development Commission
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50-\$200K) Primary Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff/administrative time and/or planning consultant Potential Funding Sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Assistance Grant (EOEEA), Direct Local Technical Assistance Program (OCPC)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 yrs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 months: Form visioning steering committee 2 months: Develop public engagement plan 2 months: Promote community meetings and input opportunities 4 months: Hold meetings, review input, propose vision 2 months: Define shared vision for South Hanson Village
Risk		Low Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public perception of South Hanson Village Competing priorities Townwide Limited Town capacity to implement process
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of attendees at events Number of participants online Number of 'Likes/Shares' on social media platforms Shared vision adoption
Partners & Resources		Local businesses, community organizations, resident groups



Historic buildings in South Hanson that could guide the vision for the Town

Diagnostic	<p>South Hanson Village has both historical significance and gateway qualities but also lacks visual appeal and community destinations. A visioning process is needed to define a shared outlook on the desired future character of this area. Once agreed upon, this vision will guide project development, implementation efforts, and funding allocation.</p> <p>Diagnostic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public realm is utilitarian and car-oriented. • Several significant buildings need basic repair and maintenance. Others would benefit from improvements to enhance their visual appeal. • The MBTA station provides regional access for residents and could support nearby growth. <p>Covid impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid did not influence the need for a vision plan for South Hanson Village
Action Item	<p>This project will conduct a public visioning process to talk about South Hanson Village and define a shared sense of its desired future character. It will address questions such as the type of growth allowed by physical constraints, its role within the Town, and the level of priority residents would give to improvements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch visioning process planning • Implement planning process
Process	<p>Action: Launch visioning process planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a visioning steering committee comprised of Town staff, elected and appointed officials, local business owners, and residents. • Develop a public engagement plan combining in-person and online opportunities to meet and discuss South Hanson Village. <p>Action: Implement planning process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote community meetings and input opportunities through Town communications, social media, and existing networks. • Hold interactive public meetings to share the opportunities and constraints in South Hanson Village and discuss viewpoints about what the area should be like. • Review input with steering committee members and develop a draft vision for feedback. • Revise the vision based on community feedback. • Define the implementation steps necessary to achieve the vision – infrastructure improvements, pedestrian and bicyclist improvements, zoning changes, business retention and recruitment efforts, etc. Draw from the RRP recommendations and adapt to community input. • Pursue funding to implement the vision over time.



Origin	Planning and visioning is a common function of community planning departments, regional planning agencies, and their consultants, and there are many great examples. Those included here are drawn from the experience of Dodson & Flinker and our client teams in Northampton, Turners Falls and Williamsburg.
Budget	 <p>Low Budget: (Under \$50k) depending on size and extent of project area and the goals of the project.</p>
Timeframe	 <p>Short term: (less than 5 years) a typical master-planning and visioning process can be accomplished in less than a year, but the time frame needs to fit the community's specific needs and challenges relative to outreach, public involvement and consensus-building.</p>
Risk	 <p>Low to Medium: With careful preparation and inclusion of all interests and community stakeholders, most people can be brought to the table. Forging a consensus among them is the point of the process.</p>
Key Performance Indicators	Public support for necessary zoning and regulatory changes; increased funding and public investment in improvements and infrastructure; physical and policy changes adopted to implement the vision.
Partners & Resources	Downtown residents, landowners, businesses, government agencies, boards and commissions, non-profits, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association.

**BEST
PRACTICE**

Undertake a Public Planning and Visioning Process for the Public Realm



Provided by SME Consultant

Dodson & Flinker

Location

Florence, Massachusetts

Diagnostic

The typical public realm planning process starts with a desire to improve physical and aesthetic conditions to bring people downtown, to make the area safer and more accessible, to accommodate new uses, or all of the above. Often there is a real or perceived conflict that arises when different groups of people need to share a limited space. Landowners and businesses that have invested in a place may need parking and amenities for their tenants and customers, while residents and visitors may have other needs.

Often the varied stakeholders in a village or downtown setting have little to do with each other until there is a conflict, or when that conflict comes before a local board, commission, council or town meeting. Along with creating a physical plan and action strategies, the purpose of the planning and visioning process is to bring diverse stakeholders together to have a conversation about the future; to build a shared understanding of the facts of the matter; to evaluate alternatives and their resulting costs and benefits; and to forge a consensus in support of that alternative that will achieve broad and lasting improvement for the whole community.

Action Item

The actions required to develop a plan or vision for the public realm follow the traditional planning process of inventory, analysis, exploration of alternatives and selection of a preferred approach. Each step requires a level of public involvement and review appropriate to the specific location and issues at hand, but the most durable plans are usually rooted in a shared consensus that cannot be achieved in a vacuum. Typical steps in the planning process include:

1. Define the specific study area and its planning context.
2. Establish a steering committee and determine the means of organizing the public process, either through a representative working group, a series of open public meetings, or some combination of the two.
3. Collect and review all relevant topographic surveys, GIS data, publicly available and proprietary data, previous reports and other materials relevant to the project area.
4. Prepare a detailed survey and analysis of existing conditions, including dimension of streets and sidewalks, architecture, use patterns, materials, etc. as appropriate to the scope of the effort.
5. Prepare an analysis of trends and likely future conditions, based on zoning, demographics, real estate market, business conditions.
6. Develop and visualize alternatives for redesign and redevelopment of the public realm within this larger physical, economic, social and environmental context.
7. Evaluate alternatives within a robust public discussion and build consensus in support of a preferred alternative.
8. Document the preferred alternative within a final masterplan and/or design strategy and prepare an action plan to implement it.

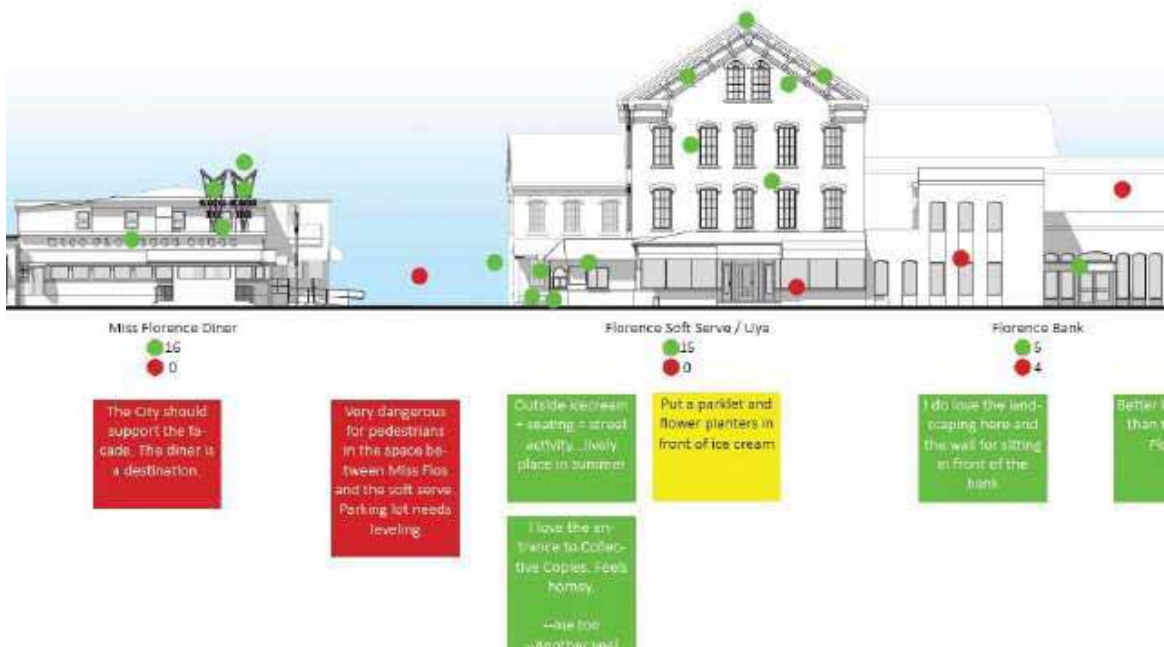
Process

Implementing the plan begins with a detailed action strategy that should be part of the plan itself. The best action plans detail realistic and achievable objectives and list the specific actions necessary to achieve them. The description of each action includes the time frame, needed resources (whether funding or staff time), and most importantly, the party responsible for carrying out that action. If that party has not accepted that responsibility, at least on a preliminary basis, that action should not be included in the final plan.

Implementation of a typical public realm plan includes using staff or volunteers to identify and apply for grant funding (or secure town funds) to pursue detailed design and construction, but it can also include zoning and regulatory changes, establishment of formal or informal improvement organizations, and partnerships with local institutions, landowners, non-profits and developers. Even after changing zoning to enable redevelopment, in many places the potential rental rates will not support private redevelopment efforts. Some form of direct investment or subsidy by government or institutions may be required to overcome these inherent economic challenges.

Best Practices:

- Get public input early and often
- Ask "What's Working?" and "What Needs to be Fixed?"
- Reach out to Town staff, business owners, and residents
- Document how the public realm works today
- Celebrate what's working well
- Take stock of what's not working so well
- Test alternatives and get public feedback (pilot projects, temporary installations)
- Visualize alternatives with digital renderings



Create Design Guidelines for South Hanson Village

Category		Administrative Capacity
Location		RRP study area, Census Tract 5221.02
Origin		Project idea was generated by Innes Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Rapid Recovery Program Project would be led by Town Planning Department
Budget		Small Budget (< \$50K) Primary Costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultant's time, if a consultant is used.• Municipal Counsel review (If the design guidelines are fully incorporated into the municipal zoning bylaw) Potential Funding Sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town General Fund• Commonwealth of Massachusetts One Stop for Growth• District Local Technical Assistance Grant (RPA and DHCD)• Massachusetts Historical Commission
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 yrs) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Months 1-2: Review existing zoning bylaws.• Months 3-4: Research appropriate precedents; develop public outreach/engagement program.• Months 5-7: Develop draft guidelines.• Months 8-9: Complete municipal approval process.
Risk		Medium Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Controversial• Political• Builders/developers wanting guidance versus property owners having concerns over lack of control• Too restrictive/subjective guidelines
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Successful adoption of the new design guidelines.• Increase in the number of applications that are consistent with the design guidelines.• Decrease in the number of meetings dedicated to design in the siteplan or special permit approval process.• Increase in the number of buildings constructed, renovated, or rehabilitated to meet the design guidelines
Partners & Resources		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Municipal staff and Municipal boards• Property/business owners• Downtown organizations

Diagnostic	<p>Creating design guidelines and combining with financial assistance to property owners to update buildings and sites to be consistent with the new guidelines will greatly enhance the visual appearance and character of South Hanson Village.</p> <p>Diagnostic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of building conditions and styles • Lack of architectural cohesion among buildings, and even within single building • Poor visual appearance contributes to negative public perception of area <p>Covid impacts:</p> <p>Design guidelines can sometime be seen primarily as an aesthetic requirement. However, they can also have significant impacts on the economic and public health of an area, both of which are directly related to the continuing impacts of the pandemic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small businesses in deteriorating downtowns, villages, and corridors are less likely to recover quickly because of a perception of a lack of safety or viability. Design guidelines that are responsive to community identity will reinforce a revitalized, vibrant area. • Design guidelines that include landscape requirements can help improve air quality and reduce the heat island effect, improving public health for people who live, work, and shop in the target area. • Design guidelines can also address accessibility for people with physical disabilities by requiring appropriate access that is well-integrated into the building and the site. • Tools such as outdoor dining, outdoor retail display, serving windows, and upgraded HVAC systems can be integrated into the design guidelines to encourage permanent solutions that address the health and safety of the target area.
Action Item	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand why the municipality feels that design guidelines are necessary. Is this part of a façade/sign improvement program, a new local historic district, and/or to control new development in an existing area? What are the areas of greatest concern? 2. Decide whether this is a project that can be done in-house or requires a consultant with appropriate expertise. 3. Decide which funding source is appropriate and, if the source is a grant program, apply for funds. 4. If a consultant is deemed appropriate, go through the Commonwealth's procurement process (unless the grant program has an on-call consultant). 5. Identify the people/organizations who need to be part of this process. 6. Develop an engagement process appropriate for the municipality and the required approval process. 7. Once the design guidelines have been approved, consider a public education program to inform people on a regular basis about the new requirements and their implications. Key targets for this campaign include property owners and real estate brokers.

Process

Action: Review existing design controls and identify issues

- Review existing zoning bylaws for embedded design guidelines and standards
- develop inventory of historic and current buildings and site treatments;
- interview municipal staff, boards with approval responsibility, former applicants, local land use lawyers, others with relevant experience and concerns.

Action: Launch public engagement effort

- Develop public outreach/engagement program. Consider a public kick-off/charrette, depending on the needs of the community.
- Engage with business/property owners and public on options and concerns;

Action: Develop draft guidelines

- Research appropriate precedents;
- develop draft guidelines and supporting illustrations.
- Discuss the thresholds for use and the appropriate review body and process.
- Decide (with municipality) whether design guidelines are a separate, advisory document or part of the zoning bylaw/ordinance. If the guidelines are integrated into the zoning, decide whether illustrations are part of the zoning or a separate document.

Action: Share guidelines for review, finalize and approve

- Consider meeting with the appropriate boards to introduce the draft design guidelines and receive feedback.
- Revise the design guidelines to its final draft prior to the municipal approval process.
- Publicize the final draft prior to Town Council/Town Meeting review and approval.

Characteristics

- Advisory
- Applicable to Town Center only
- Includes discussion of design elements for public right-of-way
- References historic buildings as context for new development.

Cost

\$15,000 (Massachusetts Downtown Initiative)



Storefront: Base, Middle, Top

Rehabilitation

- Changes to a building façade should be consistent with the original architectural style and the principles of composition that are typically associated with that style as evidenced in precedents and relevant examples.
- Contemporary materials and components may be appropriate if they are visually compatible with the historic components.
- Additions should be distinguishable from the original building, although roof forms should be compatible with the original building.
- Building cornice lines should be maintained, preserved, or recreated to define building façades and create façade components consistent with historic parapet or cornice lines, as originally designed and built in the Town Center (see page 25 for definitions).

Storefront Composition

Storefronts should clearly indicate to passersby the function of the business, whether retail, restaurant, or service. Windows should be large and not blocked by signs or shades at eye level. Both windows and entry should have appropriate lighting. Elements that tie the street to the building, such as awnings, window boxes, and projecting signs, are strongly encouraged.

- Materials should be selected to be compatible with or complementary to the Town Center. Storefronts should fit within the building frame as formed by columns, piers, and cornices.
- Where it is appropriate for the existing or proposed architectural style, a base panel and sill course should be provided; the base panels and sill course should continue across the entire width of the storefront bay and terminate at doors or the vertical elements framing the bay.
- Storefronts with recessed entryways to ground-floor commercial spaces should be preserved or restored to their original format; the recess should remain open for the full height of the ground floor story; signs, panels, or other features should not shorten the height of the recess.
- Storefront windows and doors should be transparent. They should not be mirrored, use tinted glass, or be obstructed by curtains or shades.

BEST
PRACTICE

Town Centre Design Guidelines

Location: Sterling, Massachusetts

Characteristics

- Advisory
- Applicable to Dedham Square and gateway streets
- Includes discussion of design elements for pocket parks and connections to open spaces.
- References historic development patterns.

Cost

\$30,000

2 TRANSPARENCY

Encourage

- Large windows on the ground floor
- Multiple entrances
- Well-lit window displays
- Doors with large glass panels
- Lobbies for larger developments



Discourage

- Large blank walls
- Large windows signs that obstruct views
- Frosted glass



**BEST
PRACTICE**

Dedham Square Design Guidelines

Location: Dedham, Massachusetts