



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Marblehead



Acknowledgments



Town of Marblehead

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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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The Planning Team would also like to thank the following individuals for participating in interviews during the planning process:

Shubie's Marketplace

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TOWN WORKING GROUP

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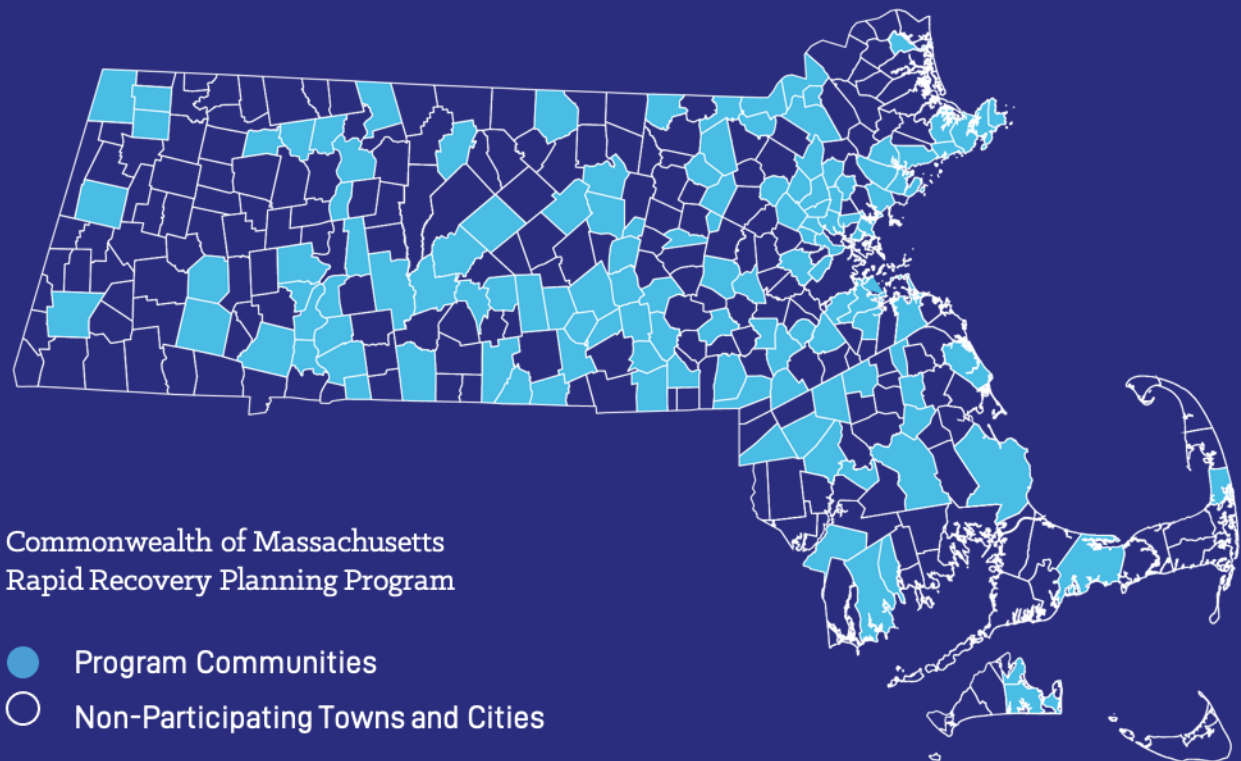
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125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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

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



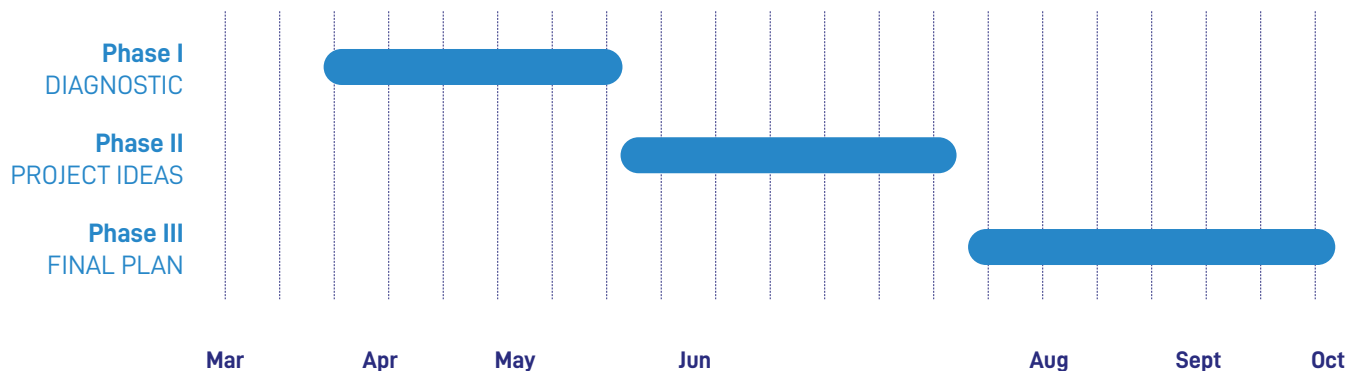
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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

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

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

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



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

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

Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



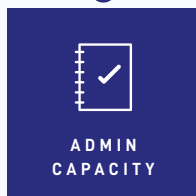
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue & Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



Other

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Charming, Historic Community with 21st Century Challenges

The Town of Marblehead has a rich history. The area was originally inhabited by the Naumkeag Tribe; British settlers arrive in the early 1600s as part of an expanded settlement from Salem. Two smallpox epidemics eradicated most of the members of the Naumkeag Tribe. Marblehead became a separate town, with its own Board of Selectmen from Salem, in 1648. The town then purchased the land of what is now Marblehead from the heirs of the original leader of the Naumkeag Tribe in 1684.

Marblehead was an important port for fishing, until a storm in 1846 decimated the fishing fleet. Marblehead's harbor has been an important contributor to the history of the nation: contributing to the first navy, providing a place of safety for the USS Constitution when it was under attack, witnessing the birth of the first seaplane. The harbor later transformed into a center for recreational boating and racing.

The Historic Business District is significant for its historic architecture, some of the earliest examples in the United States, and its charming but narrow streets. Washington Street in the Historic Business District is higher than the harbor to the east and connects to the lower Atlantic/Pleasant District (defined by Pleasant Street and Atlantic Avenue). Historic buildings line the narrow streets; although Washington Street has sidewalks on both sides, they narrow significantly at certain buildings or topographical features. Side streets have few, if any, sidewalks. The commercial part of the Historic Business District runs from Washington Street down State Street to the water and then returns up Front Street and Darling Street.

Washington Street connects to Pleasant Street both in the Historic Business District and again in the Atlantic/Pleasant District; the two enclose a primarily residential neighborhood that becomes more commercial further south-southwest. This commercial area is the start of the Atlantic/Pleasant District. Pleasant Street runs parallel to Atlantic Street; the two arms form the remainder of the business district that is the second part of the study.

At the beginning of the process, Town staff identified a series of goals for the planning process to evaluate. The original goals, below, have been incorporated into the recommendations for this plan; others have been added as a result of public input and evaluation of best practices to address some of the challenges discovered during this process.

The original goals are as follows:

- Help businesses with online options
- Develop a shop local program.
- Investigate in public spaces permanent/better designed outdoor dining and shopping.
- Allow outdoor dining permanently.
- Address façade improvements, including empty storefronts.

The two areas had many similar challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic that limited the ability of businesses to fully respond to the restrictions of the initial lockdowns and the social distancing requirements. These challenges included a lack of adjacent space for outdoor dining and retail; unfamiliarity with e-commerce and the lack of an online presence for some



Map of LRRP Area

Source: Innes Associates, ESRI, MassGIS

businesses; and no single entity that could coordinate assistance and information cross all businesses. During the public input process, participants also identified the lack of parking, especially during the typical summer season, as an issue.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, outdoor activity became increasingly critical as it was identified as the safest way for people to interact. COVID-19 is an airborne virus that spreads less easily outdoors. Outdoor dining became a response to help restaurants survive during this period. Very few restaurants in Marblehead had sufficient room on-site to allow outdoor dining; most restaurants have little to no outdoor space. The Town temporarily reconfigured the intersection at five corners (Washington, Essex, and School Streets and Atlantic Avenue) to provide space for three restaurants to have outdoor dining.

Most downtowns seek a "park once" strategy – people park at a single spot and walk from one place to the next. Marblehead has 2-hour on-street parking throughout the LRRP area; however, there are few public parking lots. Anecdotal reports from participants in this process suggest that parking is not always available to potential customers. In addition, the topography of the Historic Business District and the condition of some of the sidewalks makes a park once strategy difficult for those who are less mobile. For businesses relying on curbside delivery or take-out, the lack of short-term parking may hinder their ability to fully recover without other measures, especially as the Delta variant continues disruptions to efforts to reopen to full capacity.

Finally, the Chamber of Commerce is a natural partner for supporting businesses. However, anecdotal information indicated that the Chamber suffered its own negative impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic and was unable to be as effective as it normally is in supporting businesses during 2020. Several people expressed concern that the needs of retail businesses were not met during this period.

The evaluation of existing conditions (the diagnostic stage of this planning process) and public engagement sought to confirm the needs suggested by the Town's goals and establish other actions to help address the negative impacts felt by the businesses in the two districts and exacerbated by existing conditions. A summary of the diagnostic research completed in March and April is provided in the next section. Public engagement in June and July supplemented the research with the experiences of residents and local business owners.

Four business owners were interviewed about their experiences during the pandemic and provided insight into strategies for recovery. These insights are incorporated into the key findings and project recommendations. One business owner noted how quiet the area was during 2020. Owners mentioned the lack of visual consistency in the streets and shops, the need to tie Atlantic Avenue to the downtown, the need for signage or kiosks, events, more stores to support the area as a destination, and the need for storefront windows to be more engaging. Parking was also a concern, but some noted that trolleys had been tried.

An online survey/virtual site walk conducted in June received 12 responses (the in-person site walk was scheduled during an unexpected heat wave). Four people used online maps for a virtual tour and seven walked one or both of the indicated routes. Eleven were residents and one of those was also a business owner; the twelfth was an employee of a Marblehead business.

Respondents were enthusiastic about outdoor dining - one person because they felt uncomfortable eating inside and the remainder because they enjoy eating outside. One respondent noted that the town looked more celebratory and inviting with outdoor dining.

Respondents mentioned the condition of sidewalks as a barrier to walking downtown and listed parking and traffic as other problems. A few mentioned the need for signage and one suggested street trees on Atlantic Avenue. One person suggested closing streets at strategic times to encourage more foot traffic; another suggested later opening hours for stores as they finish work too late to shop at most of them.

Key Findings

The diagnostic process included two site walks, a survey of businesses, and research. The key findings from this process are grouped into four categories: customer base, physical environment, business environment, and administrative capacity. For Marblehead, the four key findings are as follows:



Customers vary between local, repeat visitors, and regional.



History and accessibility sometimes collide.



Impacts varied by business size and type.



The Town has no downtown organization overseeing recovery efforts.

The findings above are supported by input from an online survey (June 2021) and a virtual public meeting (July 20, 2021). Participants in that meeting identified the lack of parking and the lack of visitors to Town as problems. They were inventive about solutions: a Town-sponsored Business Development Committee; a water taxi from Salem Harbor; a trolley during the summer months; outdoor music and smaller events; linking the Salem Bike Path to the business districts; tying a bike path into 5 Corners; increasing enforcement of parking; creating a business association; creating a social media platform to connect businesses; add grant writers to Town staff; add wayfinding signage with distances/times to destinations; add lighting, and receptacles for trash and recycling; and reaching out to the concierges of Boston hotels to reinforce Marblehead as a destination for tourists.

Help our Businesses Recover from COVID!
Join us to discuss recommendations
for businesses in the Downtown
and the adjacent business district.



July 20, 2021
at 9 AM

To join us on Zoom, go to the following
link at 9am on July 20:
<https://bit.ly/MHD-BusinessRecs>



Summary of Actions for Recovery

Recovery for Marblehead's Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District requires a combination of physical improvements and direct technical assistance to small businesses to build online skills. Increased organizational capacity is also an identified need for the Town and the businesses themselves.

This plan recommends a series of actions the Town, with partners, can take to address the needs of Marblehead's Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District. In the short-term, these actions will focus on supporting the businesses as they recover from the negative impacts of the pandemic. Longer-term actions will address physical conditions that detracted from the businesses ability to operate successfully during the pandemic.

The categories with recommendations specific to Marblehead are as follows: Admin Capacity, Public Realm, Private Realm, and Revenue & Sales. While all actions are important, immediate priorities for Town staff are in **bold** text.



ADMIN CAPACITY

1. **Hire a Town business liaison.** *(page 25)*
2. Support a business-led organization for the Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District and/or help strengthen the Marblehead Chamber of Commerce. *(page 28)*
3. Revise zoning and other regulations to allow outdoor dining on public and private land on a permanent basis. *(page 32)*



PUBLIC REALM

4. **Conduct Traffic and Parking Studies.** *(page 36)*
5. **Redesign Five Corners to allow for permanent outdoor dining and greater pedestrian safety.** *(page 39)*
6. **Activate public spaces for outdoor gathering, dining, and events.** *(page 45)*
7. Develop a wayfinding/signage strategy that leads people to and between the two business districts. *(page 52)*



PRIVATE REALM

8. Create a design initiative for empty storefronts. *(page 57)*



REVENUE & SALES

9. Develop program to educate store owners about an effective online presence. *(page 62)*
10. Develop a coordinated approach to marketing the districts, including events. *(page 69)*

Diagnostic

Key Findings



Customers vary between local, repeat visitors, and regional.

THE CUSTOMER BASE IS LOCAL WITH A MIX OF REGIONAL VISITORS YEAR-ROUND AND REPEAT SUMMER VISITORS. TOURISTS REPRESENT A LOWER AMOUNT OF BUSINESS.

Businesses in the Historic Business District and the Atlantic/Pleasant District serve residents and repeat summer visitors. Certain businesses act as regional draws and provide goods, services, and/or experiences not available elsewhere. One interviewee described the local market as cake and the tourists as frosting.

The current mix of small stores (some boutiques and some with more day-to-day offerings), restaurants, and some professional offices reflects the customer base.



History and accessibility sometimes collide.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND STEEP HILLS MAKE WALKABILITY DIFFICULT FOR THOSE WHO ARE LESS MOBILE BUT CONTRIBUTE A STRONG SENSE OF PLACE AND CHARM.

The 17th and 18th century buildings and winding, narrow streets provide a strong sense of place in the Historic Business District. Atlantic Avenue's lower scale and varying storefronts provide a different type of experience as does the more contemporary mix along Pleasant Street. However, the Historic Business District's identity is reinforced by pedestrian-scale lighting and consistent sidewalk materials while the public realm on Atlantic Avenue and Pleasant Street is less well-considered.

As noted in the discussion on the physical environment, below, the historic development patterns and the topography make walking difficult in some parts of the LRRP area. Marblehead is a Complete Streets community, but the rights-of-way on some streets are too narrow for a full sidewalk on both sides and vehicular travel lanes. Some of the existing sidewalks are in poor shape or, where new, may vary in materials depending on when the adjacent building was updated or built. Historic storefronts also present accessibility challenges as they respond to the changing slope; some require customers to step up and into the store.

Storefronts are, in general, well cared for. People noted the condition of some vacant storefronts as detracting from the area; others noted a recent lease of a prominent corner storefront to a small office as a negative impact on the streetscape because of the reduced activity on that corner. Input from the public engagement process suggests that some people are frustrated with the appearance of some of the buildings (as opposed to the storefronts) in the LRRP area.



Impacts varied by business size and type.

SMALL SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS WERE HIT HARDEST; BUSINESSES WITH A MORE DIVERSIFIED CUSTOMER BASE FARED BETTER.

Interviews with four business owners indicated a variety of experiences during 2020 and the shifting business environment in 2021 as a result of the Delta variant of COVID-19. One business was able to react quickly: the goods the business sold were in demand; they already had a delivery service, and they had room to accommodate outdoor dining/retail. The business had the resources to upgrade their website and point of sale (POS) system to allow for online ordering. This business's largest problem in 2021 is staffing.

A retail business was forced to close for three months in 2020; they had and have no online presence. After reopening, the hours were reduced although business has picked back up. Customers are either locals or repeat visitors. In 2021, supply is an issue for some products.

Two other retail businesses with service/manufacturing components had a more robust response and were able to shift how they did business by closing the store to drop-in customers while allowing visits by appointment. These businesses staggered their hours. Both have a more regional base of customers and repeat customers. One business made good use of social media; for the other, their website was not a big factor. Supply chain issues are a problem for both; staffing is a worry for one.



The Town has no downtown organization overseeing recovery efforts.

THE BUSINESSES IN THE CORRIDOR DO NOT HAVE EITHER AN ORGANIZATION OR TOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LIAISON FOCUSED ON THEIR NEEDS.

The Marblehead Chamber of Commerce became inactive about the time of the business shutdowns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews with business owners suggest that the primary focus of the Chamber had not been retail. Leadership is currently in flux.

The Town Administrator, Jason Silva, and the Town Planner, Becky Curran, have been fully involved in the LRRP effort and would like to ensure that efforts during the pandemic, such as outdoor dining, can be made permanent. However, both have significant responsibilities beyond the downtown and a dedicated business liaison would be an appropriate investment in the continued recovery of Marblehead's business community.



Highlights from the Physical Environment

ACCESS TO THE AREA

Although within an easy drive from Boston, Marblehead feels isolated – two regional roads connect it to the rest of the state: Route 114 through Salem and Route 129 through Clifton and Swampscott. Both lead to Route 1A, but Marblehead is distant from the more heavily traveled Route 1 and I-93. This feeling of isolation is part of its charm for visitors, but the lack of wayfinding signage means that visitors who come to Marblehead are not quite sure where they are going; nothing really identifies or differentiates one district from the other. In addition, no signage directs a visitor from one district to the other – it would be possible to visit a restaurant on Atlantic Avenue without knowing the Historic Business District exists. Proposed upgrades to the Chamber of Commerce's information booth at Memorial Park (the triangle formed by Pleasant Street, Bassett Street, and Essex Street) will help, but signage directing people from Routes 114 and 129 to the business districts and signage within the districts is critical.

ACCESS TO BUSINESSES

The development patterns and topographical changes contribute to one of the challenges for these two areas: accessibility for customers. Sidewalk conditions vary by place, with larger sidewalks in good condition along some streets and narrow sidewalks, constrained by buildings or topographical features, along others. The narrowness of the rights-of-way means that even though Marblehead is a Complete Streets community, not all streets can be upgraded for full accessibility to all users.

PARKING

The Historic Business District and the Atlantic/Pleasant District are less than a mile from each other, but along Pleasant and Washington Streets, the steep slope between the business district and the Historic Business District are barriers for the less mobile. On-street parking is available (limited to 2 hours) but the Town has few public parking lots. During public input into this process, business owners mentioned parking as a major concern; this was also reflected in the online business survey completed this spring. Suggestions included creating a shuttle loop to school lots during the summer season when there is higher demand for spaces.

PUBLIC REALM

The Historic Business District has a strong identity and cohesion along Washington Street as the placement of the historic buildings and the narrowness of the street provide a specific experience for visitors. This is reinforced by consistent pedestrian-scale lighting in a style compatible with the architecture. Sidewalks, although varying in width, are generally consistent concrete with granite curbs.

However, as Washington Street drops towards the Atlantic/Pleasant District, the cohesion lessens. In this area, lighting changes to a higher, more anonymous cobra-head light and the sidewalk materials vary by the adjacent property and are thus not consistent throughout the entire area. The fact that this report continually refers to the area as "the Atlantic/Pleasant District" is evidence of its lack of identity. Some people refer to this area simply as Atlantic Avenue, but that leaves out the Pleasant Street businesses.

PRIVATE REALM

In general, storefronts and spaces in front were well-cared for and the two districts, for the most part, presented an appearance that would attract a visitor to spend time in the area. A few storefronts, either vacant or under interior construction, detracted from the overall appearance, and the Town has indicated that they would like to address such vacant spaces. Given the narrowness of the sidewalks, some business owners were creative in offering seating and/or container plantings to liven their storefronts. Other businesses had creative window displays.



ROAD BEDS AND CROSSWALKS

A

STREET AMENITIES

B

SIDEWALKS

C

STREET LIGHTING

C

WAYFINDING/SIGNAGE

N/A



Public Realm Conditions in Marblehead
Photographs: Innes Associates



FAÇADE

A

LIGHTING

B

SIGNAGE

A

WINDOW

A

AWNING

A

OUTDOOR DISPLAY/DINING

A



Private Realm Conditions in Marblehead
Photographs: Innes Associates

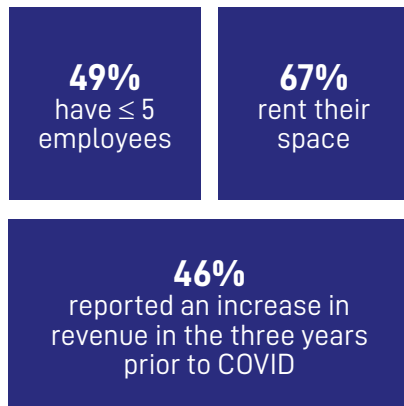


Highlights from the Business Environment

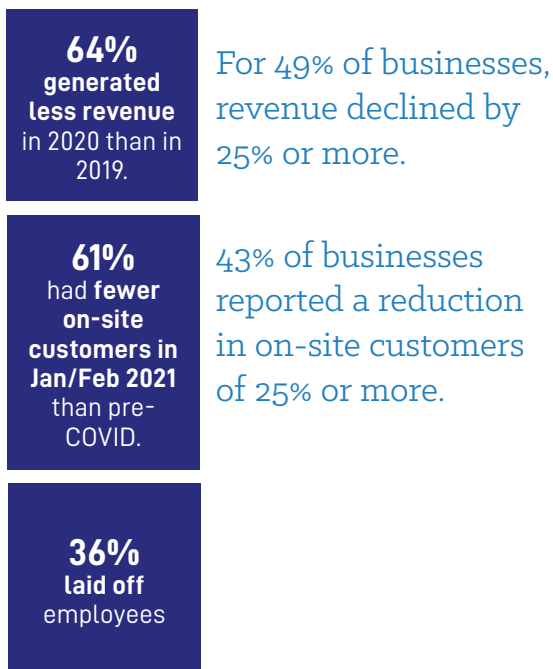
IMPACT FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Of the approximately 651 businesses within a one-mile radius of the center of the two districts, thirty-nine businesses responded to the business survey developed for the RRP. Although the sample size was small, the information provided was helpful to this process. These businesses reported the following:

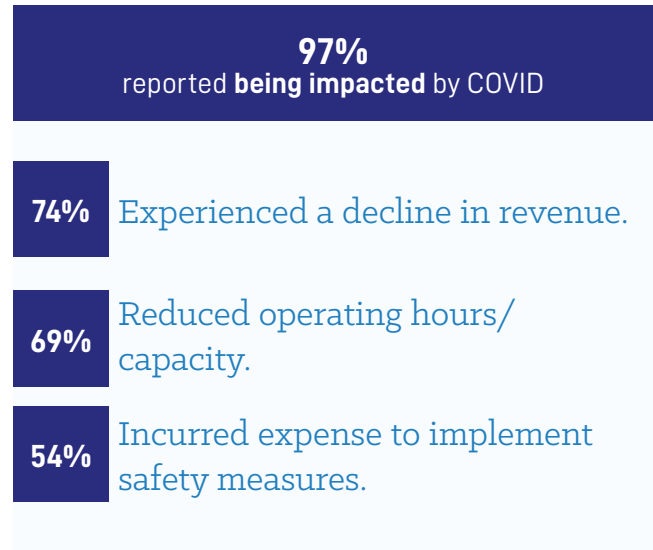
BUSINESS CHARACTERISTICS



CHANGES



SPECIFIC IMPACTS



At the time of the survey, 67% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed.

SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT CONDITIONS

Condition	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks	58%	16%
Proximity to complementary businesses and uses	50%	18%
Safety and comfort of customers and employees	39%	24%
Condition of private buildings, storefronts, and signs	32%	16%
Access for customers and employees	32%	16%

49% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation: parking (31%); signage (13%); and outdoor dining or selling (13%).

PREFERENCES AND PRIORITIES

In terms of the physical environment, atmosphere, and access, respondents ranked the potential strategies in order of importance (items ranked by highest combined score):

Strategies	Important	Very Important
Improvement/development of public spaces and seating areas.	45%	13%
Changes in public parking availability, management, or policies.	32%	32%
Improvement of streetscape and sidewalks.	38%	24%
Improvements in safety and/or cleanliness.	30%	3%
Renovation of storefronts/building façades.	21%	5%
Amenity improvements for public transit/bike users.	11%	8%

In terms of attraction/retention of customers and businesses, respondents ranked the potential strategies in order of importance (percentages shown are important/very important):

Strategies	Important	Very Important
Implementing marketing strategies for the commercial district.	24%	46%
More opportunities for outdoor dining and selling.	34%	32%
Recruitment programs to attract additional businesses.	32%	32%
More cultural events/activities to bring people into the district.	19%	32%
Creation of a district management entity.	27%	19%
Changes to zoning or other local regulations.	14%	11%

42%
expressed interest in receiving **some kind of assistance.**

Assistance (top 3)

Participating in shared marketing/ advertising.	31%
Training on the use of social media.	22%
Setting up an online store or other selling channel.	17%



Highlights from the Customer Base

SELECTED POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS WITHIN ONE-MILE RADIUS

Over half the residents in the town live within a mile of the geographic center of Marblehead's two business districts (roughly the Chamber of Commerce kiosk). About 19% of the town's workforce is employed within the two districts.

Household incomes within this one-mile radius are lower than the town overall; the average age is higher and the average household size is smaller.

	Marblehead	LRRP area
Total Resident Population*	20,500	11,952
Working-Age Population* (20-64)	10,825	6,147
Median Household Income*	\$123,333	\$93,037
Median Age*	48.3	49.3
Avg. Household Size*	2.44	2.22
*ESRI Business Analyst (2021 estimate)		
	Marblehead	LRRP area
Total Workforce**	5,071	960
**On the Map (2018 or later)		



Highlights from Admin Capacity

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Marblehead Chamber of Commerce

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- The North Shore Chamber of Commerce includes Marblehead within its region.
- The regional planning agency for Marblehead is the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.



Project Recommendations

Hire a Town Business Liaison.

Category		Admin Capacity
Location		Town Hall
Origin		Town Planning Staff; Public input
Budget		Medium: \$65,000-\$85,000 per annum.
Timeframe		Short-term: Within six months.
Risk		Low: Requires approval by the Board of Selectmen.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Position filled.• Development of a town-wide contact list of businesses.• Support for a business-led organization.• Grants applied for, funds received, funds distributed.• Successful implementation of other recommendations in this report.
Partners & Resources		Board of Selectmen, Town Planning Staff



Abbot Hall

Source: John Phelan; https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6b/Abbot_Hall%2C_Marblehead_MA.jpg

Action Item

Hire a Town coordinator to help with management of projects related to the LRRP program, including distribution of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds to meet Town goals for COVID recovery.

- Staff member should have expertise in economic development and grant management.
- Staff member should become a single point of contact for local businesses within the Town.
- Future duties could include applying for additional grants to supplement ARPA funds and support implementation of this plan.
- This position could help implement the following recommendations:
 - Support a business-led organization for the Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District and/or help strengthen the existing Marblehead Chamber of Commerce with a renewed focus on these two business districts.
 - Support the efforts of the Marblehead Chamber of Commerce in working with the wider business community.
 - Develop program to educate store owners about an effective online presence.
 - Develop a coordinated, regular program for marketing the districts, including events.
 - Engage regional partners in strengthening tourist links, especially those dedicated to arts, culture, and history.\

Diagnostic

The Town does not have designated economic development staff to act as a liaison to the business community. Addressing the existing conditions will require someone who can coordinate the projects and work with businesses on a daily basis to increase communication.

Existing Town staff spent a lot of time reaching out to businesses during this process, but small business owners rarely have additional time. A dedicated staff member should be a liaison to the business community to support the development of a business-led association and act as a single point of contact for all business communication with the Town.

The Delta variant has created a retreat from indoor public gatherings in many communities. Should these conditions reoccur, or a series of lockdowns and reopenings become a normal pattern, consistent communication with Town Hall will be critical to the continued success of the businesses within Historic Business District and the Atlantic/Pleasant District.

Process

- Develop roles and responsibilities for position.
- Define goals for first six months - one year.
- Research salary ranges.
- Identify department and reporting structure.
- Place ad in appropriate locations (traditional media, online hiring boards, appropriate professional organizations).
- On-board new employee with introduction to Town staff, area, key business owners.
- Develop regular reporting of goals achieved.
- Evaluate success of initiatives supported by this role and reconfigure position as necessary.

Budget

The budget for this action item is the salary and benefits for the person hired and will be dependent on whether the person hired is part-time or full-time, their responsibilities, and their experience.

Funds from the American Recovery Plan Act may be used for the first few years of the position (see notes on funding in the Appendix). After 2026, this position could become a regular line item in the Town's budget.

If the person hired has grant-writing experience, a portion of their salary may be covered by future grants.

Develop a business-led organization.

Category		Admin Capacity
Location		Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District
Origin		Town Staff With additional information from SME Consultant: Perch Advisors
Budget		Low: Support may be part of business liaison's duties.
Timeframe		Short-term: <2 years
Risk		Medium: Requires buy-in from a variety of business types and sizes.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town facilitation of initial meetings to discuss the organization.• Establishment of an organization with the capacity to independently raise funds for marketing, promotion and other activities related to the health of the Historic Business District and the Atlantic/Pleasant District.• Number of engaged stakeholders that have/maintain an active role in the information gathering and decision making processes.• Ongoing, regular meetings of the organization.• Achievement of other goals in this report requiring business support.



Abbot Hall

Source: John Phelan; https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6b/Abbot_Hall%2C_Marblehead_MA.jpg

Town staff, Town liaison to businesses; Business owners, Marblehead Chamber of Commerce

Action Item	<p>Support businesses in forming a business-led organization to better collaborate on issues important to the Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District. This organization could be the Marblehead Chamber of Commerce if its mission includes a focus on the Downtown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Steering Committee and identify leadership. • Establish a purpose for the association. • Create an information database and structure.
Diagnostic	<p>Town staff, while very supportive of local businesses, have other responsibilities.</p> <p>The Chamber of Commerce is a natural partner for supporting businesses. However, anecdotal information indicated that the Chamber suffered its own negative impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic and was unable to be as effective as it normally is in supporting businesses during 2020. Several people expressed concern that the needs of retail businesses were not met during this period.</p> <p>The other recommendations of this report would be more easily implemented with a strong business organization that could be an effective voice for the needs of the businesses, a resource for tools for recover, and a partner with the Town for future efforts.</p>
Risk Factors	<p>Mitigation of the risk factor identified above could include the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include all businesses in outreach and conversation, not just the most engaged. • Sustain, engage and support leaders and other volunteers throughout the creation process. • Guarantee continued funding for programs and activities (annual dues, fundraising campaigns, merchandise). • Gain the trust of businesses by listening and following up. • Engage with property owners when advocating for small businesses.
Budget	<p>The estimated cost for this project is \$15,000. This includes a project manager to help with the formation, development of an initial website, and administrative needs for the creation of the initial database. If the Town hires a business liaison, the project management costs could be part of that role. Funds from the American Recovery Plan Act may be used for this project.</p>

Process

Develop Steering Committee and identify leadership.

- Identify merchants capable of playing an active role in the formation and leadership of a merchants association.

Establish a purpose for the merchants association.

- Develop a set of goals that respond to the identified corridor needs and challenges.
- Solidify goals into a purpose or mission statement which can be communicated to neighborhood stakeholders.
- Articulate achievable goals
- Create Vision and Mission Statements.
- Create and seat interim/permanent leadership (i.e. Advisory Committee, Board of Directors).
- Create standing and ad-hoc committees as needed to address different projects.
- Schedule meetings (ideally quarterly); agendas, attendance records, meeting minutes.

Create an information database.

- Engage steering committee to assist in the development of a database containing property and business owners, and commercial vacancies.
- Complete business and property survey with contact information and key data points (i.e., key retail groups and organizations, regular vacancy updates, property transactions, partner organizations with synergy).

D. Next Steps

- Create a formal organization structure (501(c)3, 501(c)6, etc.) dedicated to independently marketing and promoting the district.
- Create by-laws for the organization.
- Evaluate whether organization should become a formal Business Improvement District (see Best Practice on next page).



Source: Ann Burke

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE ADMIN CAPACITY COMPENDIUM

Formation of a Business Improvement District in Hudson, MA



Admin Capacity

Hudson, MA

SME Consultant: Ann McFarland Burke, Downtown Consultant

Action Item

Note: Although this recommendation is not for the formation of a BID, the lessons learned from this Best Practice are applicable to this process.

To form a BID, a community must have the support of 60 % of the property owners representing 51% of the assessed within the proposed district. Hudson is a small BID with 120 parcels in the district.

The Downtown Hudson Business Association, in partnership with the Town of Hudson, spearheaded activities to form a BID and executed the step-by-step process to successfully create a BID in Hudson. This included:

- Identification of staff and financial resources.
- Establishment of a strong property owner based steering committee.
- Creation of a property owner outreach strategy.
- Consensus among stakeholders on program priorities, fee structure, boundaries and budget.
- Execution of the petition process and formal approval by Board of Selectmen.
- Initialization of BID services.

Revise Zoning for Outdoor Dining.

Category		Admin Capacity
Location		Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District
Origin		Town Planning Staff
Budget		Low: Approximately \$15,000-\$25,000.
Timeframe		Short-term: Less than 6 months; depends on the timing of Town Meeting.
Risk		Low: Public input suggest that outdoor dining has been very popular.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Passage of the regulations.• Number of restaurants with available outdoor space who install outdoor dining.
Partners & Resources		Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Town Planning Staff, Owners of restaurants and other food-based businesses.



Outdoor Dining n Marblehead 2021
Source: Innes Associates Ltd.

Action Item	<p>Revise zoning and other regulations to allow outdoor dining on a permanent basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage businesses, residents, and members of land use and boards with regulatory jurisdiction to understand benefits and obstacles. • Evaluate existing regulations to see what needs to be changed. • Consider licensing process (see Best Practice from Tyngsborough, below). • Educate public about the changes and the reasons, including supporting local business during recovery. • Map which businesses have the ability to have outdoor eating either on-site or in appropriate public spaces. Businesses with a need for outdoor dining may not be restaurants. • Consider design of outdoor dining (See Best Practice from Salem, below). • Take proposed changes through the Town's approval process.
Diagnostic	<p>Governor Baker declared a state of emergency on March 10, 2020 because of COVID-19 as part of the measures to address the closure of brick-and-mortar places of business and the social distancing requirements; the state overrode local and state regulations for restaurant-sponsored outdoor dining, including the serving of alcohol. These permissions have been extended to April 1, 2022.</p> <p>Many restaurants, including some in Marblehead, successfully added outdoor dining either on their own property or in on-street parking spaces or other public areas sponsored by municipalities as an effort to assist businesses. Outdoor dining was a critical tool in keeping restaurants operating during 2020 and into 2021.</p> <p>However, the current regulatory override will end in 2022. To continue outdoor dining, which has had a positive reception, Marblehead will need to implement its own regulations.</p>
Budget	<p>If Town staff have the capacity, this work may be done in-house and may only require funds for printing and one or more surveys (although there are free on-line survey options).</p> <p>If a consultant is required to assist town staff, then the cost is likely \$15,000-\$25,000 depending on the level of public engagement and the depth of regulatory review and changes required.</p>
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate existing zoning regulations and Town bylaws for requirements that might affect outdoor dining. • Consider allowable uses within setbacks, Board of Health regulations, liquor licenses, hours of operations, and restrictions on noise and lighting. • Conduct a survey of businesses who had or wanted outdoor dining to understand what worked and what were limitations. • Conduct a public survey to understand preferences for options. • Revise regulations; hire a consultant if Town staff do not have capacity (time). • Consult with Planning Board, ZBA, and Board of Selectmen. • Ask Town Meeting to approve the changes.



Source: Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE ADMIN CAPACITY COMPENDIUM

Tyngsborough: Expedite License Modifications for Outdoor Dining



Admin Capacity

Location

Tyngsborough, MA

SME Consultant: Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

Action Item



Cazadores Restaurante Mexicano Tent with Outdoor Seating

Source: Jeff Owen, NMCOG

In June 2020, the Massachusetts Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) notified Local Licensing Authorities that due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with the Reopening Massachusetts Plan issued by Governor Baker, local authorities could streamline applications for temporary modifications to licenses for serving alcohol on premise.

In Tyngsborough, holders of licenses for on premise liquor consumption applied to the Board of Selectmen for a temporary modification of their premises to include a designated area outside. The application did not need to be reviewed during a duly posted public hearing, the selectmen did not need to advertise the hearing in a local newspaper and did not need to notify abutters. Additionally, the selectmen did not need to get ABCC approval prior to issuing the temporary modification. This changed the process of getting a modification from 60 days to a week.

The Board of Selectmen utilized this same application process to consider modifications to Common Victualler Licenses, which are the license required to serve food in Tyngsborough. If a business possessed both types of licenses, they were able to apply for both modifications with a single application.



Source: Civic Space Collaborative

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PRIVATE REALM COMPENDIUM

Provide Welcoming Outdoor Dining



Private Realm

Location

Salem, MA

SME Consultant: Civic Space Collaborative

Action Item



Source: Civic Space Collaborative

- The outdoor dining program was a successful transformation of public and private spaces into outdoor "streeteries" for the benefit of restaurants and the Salem community, including residents and tourists.
- Over 50 restaurants participated in the program in 2020, and 56 have applied for the 2021 season.
- Local artists were employed to transform protective jersey barriers into works of art.
- With an eye towards making the program permanent, the design and implementation of these spaces has already evolved to be more safe, accessible, usable, and attractive.

Conduct Traffic and Parking Studies.

Category		Public Realm
Location		Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District
Origin		SME Consultant Nelson\Nygaard
Budget		Low: \$30,000-\$40,000 for both studies.
Timeframe		Short-term: Could be completed in 18 months; funding availability may delay implementation.
Risk		Medium: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriations may depend on Town Meeting vote. • Requires business and political support. • Some funding sources are competitive.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition and appropriation of funding. • Public outreach program that results in measurable support for the next stage of the process. • Completion of planning studies.
Partners & Resources		Board of Selectmen, Residents, Town Planning Staff, Owners of restaurants and other food-based businesses.



Five Corners from Washington Street
Source: Innes Associates Ltd.

Action Item

The intersection of School Street, Essex Street, Washington Street, and Atlantic Avenue is a complex, unsignalized, five-leg intersection that accommodates a variety of activity types and travel patterns.

The Town of Marblehead seeks to make improvements to this intersection that will:

- Make on-street dining facilities in the area permanent, and potentially expand the scale of such facilities, to increase patronage of nearby restaurants.
- Improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- Improve sight-lines for vehicles.
- Reduce conflicts between transportation modes at the intersection.
- Retain adequate commercial parking in the area, both short-term and long-term.
- Minimize conflicts between entering/exiting parked vehicles and through traffic.

Diagnostic

The closure of brick-and-mortar places of business in Spring 2020 and the subsequent social distancing requirements in 2020 severely affected the ability of restaurants to survive. Restaurants in Marblehead have few spaces available on-site for outdoor eating. The Town sponsored temporary dining spaces at the intersection at Five Corners, and is interested in making those options permanent, but local businesses are concerned about the impact of the conversion of these and other parking spaces may have on access to their businesses. The first step is to conduct traffic and parking studies in the area centered on the intersection. The second step is implementation, which is covered in the next Project Recommendation: Redesign Five Corners. Best Practices for both projects follow that recommendation.

Budget

Task	Estimated Cost	Timeline
Traffic Study	\$15,000 - \$20,000	Fall 2021
Parking Study	\$15,000 - \$20,000	Fall 2021
Community Outreach	--	Ongoing

Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Possible Sources:

- American Rescue Plan Act
- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (parking study)

Process

A redesign process for this intersection should incorporate the following steps:

- Conduct traffic study to understand multimodal traffic patterns through the intersection and adjacent intersections.
 - a. The traffic study must consider vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic flows.
 - b. The traffic study must consider crash rates and safety issues at the intersection.
 - c. The traffic study must document considerations around sight-lines under the existing intersection configuration.
- Conduct a parking study to determine current demand for on- and off-street parking facilities within a 1000 foot radius (five minute walk) of the study intersection.
 - a. The parking study must document the full inventory and regulation of publicly available parking spaces within the study area, both on- and off-street.
 - b. The parking study must assess utilization of these spaces at two hour intervals throughout the day, for all periods when commercial activity is present in the study area.
 - c. The parking study must include turnover counts for key blocks adjacent to the intersection to understand demand for long-term vs. short-term parking.
 - d. The parking study must investigate the feasibility of shared parking arrangements to provide additional public parking supply near the intersection.
 - e. The parking study must consider integration with alternative transportation options such as shuttles and public transit in order to reduce parking demand on adjacent blocks.



*Center of Traffic and Parking Studies: Intersection of School Street, Essex Street, Washington Street, and Atlantic Avenue (Aerial Imagery, June 2021)
Source: Nelson\Nygaard*

- Facilitate community conversations with local stakeholders, property owners, and visitors to discuss the plan for the Traffic and Parking Studies, the results, and the implications.
- Use community discussions to build support for the safety improvements for both pedestrians and vehicle and the provision of space for outdoor dining.

Redesign Five Corners to allow for permanent outdoor dining and greater pedestrian safety.

Category		Public Realm
Location		School Street, Essex Street, Washington Street, and Atlantic Avenue
Origin		Town Planning Staff SME Consultant: Nelson\Nygaard
Budget		High: \$35,000 for Concept Development; \$1.2 - \$2.2 million for 100% design and construction. Concept Development could be included in the Traffic and Parking Studies in the previous Project Recommendation.
Timeframe		Short-term: Could be completed in 18 months; funding availability may delay implementation.
Risk		Medium: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriations may depend on Town Meeting vote.• Requires business and political support.• Some funding sources are competitive.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completion of design process.• Acquisition and appropriation of funding.• Implementation.• Satisfaction with project from residents and businesses.
Partners & Resources		Board of Selectmen, Residents, Town Planning Staff, Owners of restaurants and other food-based businesses.



Five Corners from Washington Street
Source: Innes Associates Ltd.

Action Items

The intersection of School Street, Essex Street, Washington Street, and Atlantic Avenue is a complex, unsignalized, five-leg intersection that accommodates a variety of activity types and travel patterns.

The intersection features crosswalks allowing pedestrian travel across all legs of the intersection. Bicyclist activity is also present in the area. On-street parking and loading activities take place along curbs on all approaches to the intersection. Beginning in 2020, some adjacent curb space has also been allocated to on-street dining activity for three restaurants.

The School Street (SE-bound) approach to the intersections is stop controlled. The Washington Street (EB and WB) approaches to the intersection are also stop controlled. The Atlantic Avenue (NB) approach is free flowing, and the Essex Street approach is one-way NB, away from the intersection.

The Town of Marblehead seeks to make improvements to this intersection that will:

- Make on-street dining facilities in the area permanent, and potentially expand the scale of such facilities, to increase patronage of nearby restaurants.
- Improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.
- Improve sight-lines for vehicles.
- Reduce conflicts between transportation modes at the intersection.
- Retain adequate commercial parking in the area, both short-term and long-term.
- Minimize conflicts between entering/exiting parked vehicles and through traffic.

Diagnostic

The closure of brick-and-mortar places of business in Spring 2020 and the subsequent social distancing requirements in 2020 severely affected the ability of restaurants to survive. Restaurants in Marblehead have few spaces available on-site for outdoor eating.

The intersection at Five Corners is wide enough that the Town could sponsor outdoor eating by temporarily redesigning the intersection with jersey barriers to protect diners. This was only a short-term solution, but a successful one. In the long-term, the intersection must be redesigned to allow for outdoor dining and improve pedestrian safety. This Project Recommendation is related to the Previous Project Recommendation for Traffic and Parking Studies and contains Best Practices for both.



Five Corners looking toward Washington Street



Five Corners Essex Street (left); Washington Street (right)



Washington Street (foreground); School (middle); Essex (upper right)



*Five Corners Washington Street (left); Atlantic Avenue (right)
All photos: Innes Associates Ltd.*

Process

A redesign process for this intersection should incorporate the following steps:

- Continue to facilitate community conversations with local stakeholders, property owners, and visitors to determine goals for potential right-of-way allocation.
 - a. Community conversations should clearly identify objectives for the intersection redesign.
 - b. Community conversations should be comprehensive and seek input from business owners, visitors, and neighbors who use the intersection.
- Create up to three roadway improvement concepts which address community needs and respond to findings of traffic and parking studies.
 - a. Improvement concepts should address the need to provide adequate parking near the intersection for a variety of stakeholders.
 - b. Improvement concepts should provide adequate outdoor dining space for restaurants in the area who desire it.
 - c. Improvements should address all safety issues identified as part of the traffic study.
 - d. Improvements should make the intersection more comfortable for bicycles and pedestrians by reducing the length of crosswalks, providing separation between cyclists and vehicles, and improving sightlines for all users.
- Vet the design concepts through a public process.
 - a. The proposed redesigns should be offered for public comment.
 - b. The redesign concept with the greatest support should be selected for further refinement.
- Develop 100% design for the preferred improvement concept.
- Construct the improvements.



Intersection of School Street, Essex Street, Washington Street, and Atlantic Avenue (Aerial Imagery, June 2021)
Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Budget

Task	Estimated Cost	Timeline
Community Outreach	--	Ongoing
Concept Development	\$35,000	Winter 2022
Public Process	Part of Concept Development	Winter 2022
Develop 100% Design	\$100,000 - \$200,000	Spring 2022
Construct Improvements	\$1,000,000 - \$2,000,000	Summer 2022

Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Potential funding sources:

- Chapter 90
- American Recovery Act
- Shared Streets and Spaces (MassDOT)
- Complete Streets Funding Program (MassDOT)



Improved Intersections

Location

Various, MA
SME Consultant: Nelson\Nygaard

Many complex intersections throughout New England and elsewhere have successfully accommodated outdoor dining and multimodal transportation in a dense urban context such as Marblehead. Many of the design treatments applied in these scenarios can be applied using temporary / low-cost materials and paint before being made more permanent. The following images show examples of design features which may help to facilitate goals for the redesign of the intersection of School Street, Essex Street, Washington Street, and Atlantic Avenue.



Arch and Franklin Streets, Boston, MA
Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Curb Extension to Reduce Crosswalk Width
Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Outdoor Dining and Traffic Calming Installation, Beverly, MA
Source: Nelson\Nygaard



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

Create Calm Street Pilots and Pop-Up Curbside “Streeteries”



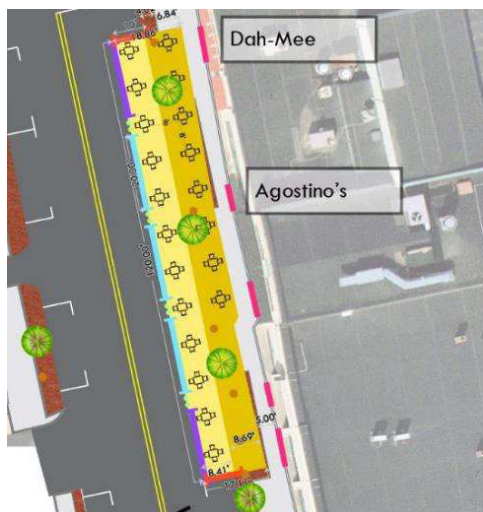
Public Realm

Location

Natick, MA

SME Consultant: Nelson\Nygaard

Action Item



Source: Nelson\Nygaard

Overly-large intersections and wide travel lanes were contributing to higher speeds of travel through the heart of Natick's pedestrian core. In order to create a more comfortable and attractive walking and biking environment, lane and intersection diets could be deployed to achieve safer operations while sustaining the same vehicle throughput.

In early pandemic social distancing, while indoor dining was unsafe, the Town was seeking quick solutions to help local businesses continue serving and attracting customers. Retrofitting on-street parking spaces for outdoor dining could help create interim options for safer dining and company.

Natick Center Cultural District also found ways to engage creative placemaking elements into the process in order to support local artists during the economic struggles of the pandemic.

Key actions included:

- A kickoff meeting with all department officials to confirm project goals.
- Site analysis and issues identification.
- Business owner outreach.
- Design concept development.
- Stakeholder presentations and tactical event promotion.
- Traffic calming testing in the field.
- Confirming longer-term trial design and installing materials.
- Processing feedback and engagement.



Source: Dodson & Flinker

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

Undertake a Public Planning and Visioning Process for the Public Realm



Public Realm

Location

Florence, MA
SME Consultant: Dodson & Flinker

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 plan and/or design strategy and prepare an action plan to implement it.

Activate public spaces for outdoor gathering, dining, and events.

Category		Public Realm
Location		Public spaces throughout the Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District
Origin		Town staff; public input
Budget		Medium: \$50,000-\$100,000 depending on components of space.
Timeframe		Short-term: Six month to one year.
Risk		Low: Requires approval of the Board of Selectmen.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spaces converted.• Number of users.• Number of satisfied users.
Partners & Resources		Board of Selectmen, Town Planning staff, Businesses, Harbors & Waters Board, Marblehead Cultural Council, Marblehead Arts Association



Marblehead waterfront (The Landing Restaurant in the background)
Source: Innes Associates

Action Item	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convert publicly-owned spaces: underutilized parks, plazas, and parking spaces to active spaces. • Use the conversion of the spaces as community-building tools to bring businesses, artists, and volunteers together to plan and execute spaces. • Create accessible spaces for gathering, seating, dining, and small events.
Diagnostic	<p>During 2020, outdoor spaces for gathering, seating, and dining became increasingly important as the airborne transmission of the COVID-19 coronavirus became more widely understood. Communities raced to open up outdoor spaces to help businesses survive and preserve activity in suddenly deserted downtowns. As the Delta variant spread in summer 2021, these outdoor spaces continued to be important.</p> <p>The survey sponsored by the Town had a small response, but the respondents overwhelmingly expressed their desire for continued outdoor eating. With few spaces available for restaurants, the Town of Marblehead has been creative in finding space by using publicly-owned spots such as parking spaces, the green adjacent to Abbot Hall, and other spots. However, the Town had to move quickly to create the spaces; the efforts were a test rather than a permanent solution.</p> <p>This recommendation suggests a more considered and permanent approach to take advantage of people's rediscovery of the outdoors and address the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 virus.</p>
Budget	<p>Projects are likely to range from \$5,000 (installation) to \$50,000 or more (permanent installation), depending on the level of construction and materials needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Recovery Plan Act • Commonwealth Places • Mass Cultural Council or Marblehead Cultural Council

Process

Define areas to be addressed and level of improvement:

- Temporary, seasonal, or permanent.
- Fixed or moveable.
- Function: seating, eating, activity.

Define necessary components:

- Furniture, plantings, hardscape.
- Wall or ground murals.
- Public art.
- Lighting.
- Fun stuff! Interactive sculptures, water, games, fitness stations.
- Signage: informational, instructional, but not commercial.

Identify partners for implementation:

- DPW and other Town staff.
- Volunteers.
- Paid contractors.

Secure funding.

- Grants, donations, Town resources.

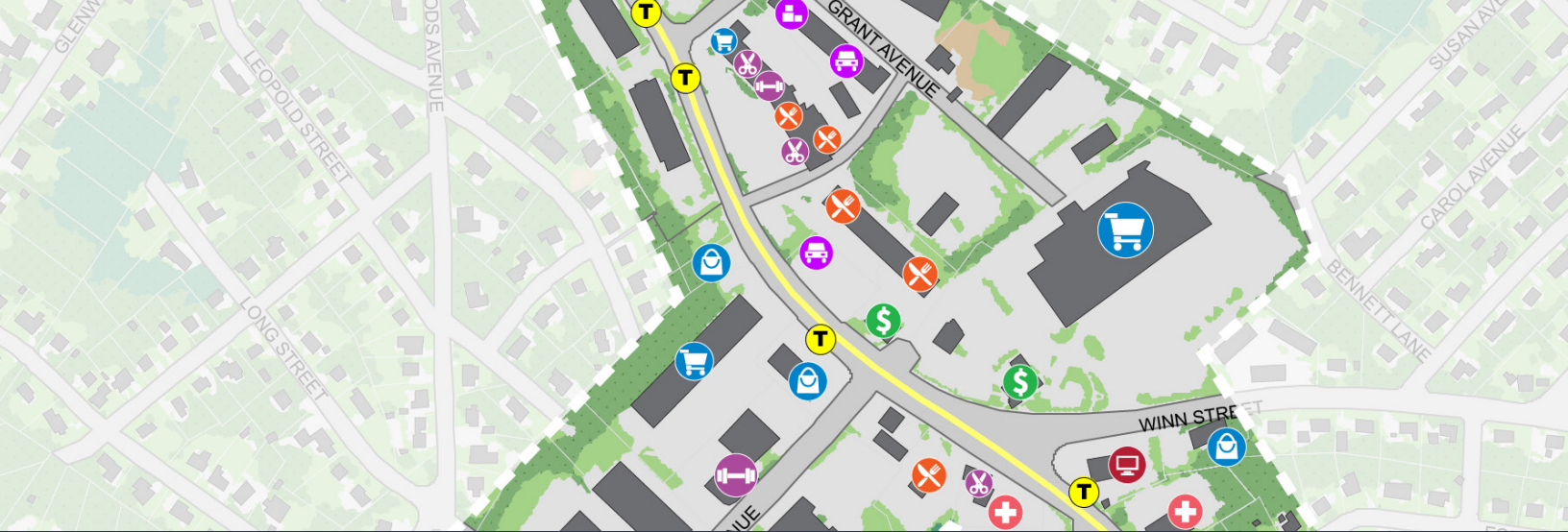
Order and Install

- Watch lead times for supplies.
- Materials should be durable and address likely weather, sun, and salt conditions.

Enjoy!



Source: Innes Associates



Source: Harriman/Innes Associates

BEST PRACTICE

Placemaking Playbook



Public Realm

Location

Burlington, MA

SME Consultant: Innes Associates Ltd.

Action Item

The Massachusetts Downtown Initiative sponsored this report for the Town of Burlington. The project examined Burlington's Town Center and identified strategies to help bring a stronger sense of place to this corridor. Strategies included wayfinding, murals, spaces for outdoor eating and gathering.

A follow-on project included a design for one of the areas identified in the plan. Because of a significant slope to the area and the need to make it accessible, the proposed placemaking project was about \$50,000. However, strategies in the plan identified less costly options, some of which could be implemented by volunteers.



Source: Harriman/Innes Associates



Source: Toole Design

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

Gove Street Crossing: Pop-up Park + Plaza



Public Realm

Location

East Boston, MA

SME Consultant: Civic Space Collaborative

Action Item



Source: Toole Design

The budget for this project included a grant of \$16,000 from the Barr Foundation and \$20,000 in pro bono design from Toole Design.

The Friends of the Mary Ellen Greenway (FoMEWG) worked with the Boston Society of Landscape Architects (BSLA) to host a design competition for the Gove Street section of the Mary Ellen Greenway. A 12-member jury selected Toole Design to work on a seasonal installation.

Over three months, Toole Design worked to refine the design by engaging East Boston residents. The final design and project included:

1. A pop-up plaza on Gove Street next to a residential apartment building, and
2. A seasonal installation on the Greenway.

Both designs included a pavement graphic and seating. The FoMEWG hosted several programs at the pop-up plaza.

This project was funded by a Barr Foundation grant to the Friends of the Mary Ellen Welch Greenway.



Source: Bench Consulting

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

The Corner Spot



Public Realm

Location

Ashland, MA
SME Consultant: Bench Consulting (from Patronicity)

Action Item



Source: Bench Consulting

Total funding was \$59,000, including a Commonwealth Places grant that match the crowd-funding raised through Patronicity.

The Corner Spot is a placemaking opportunity for downtown Ashland where businesses can test drive the market and residents can come together to increase the sense of community and help revitalize the downtown area.

The Corner Spot is intended to stimulate economic activity in Ashland, attract new developers and business owners as well as increase foot traffic downtown to help support existing and future business. You'll need to locate a prime site for this, ideally on a property controlled by the town, whether municipal parking lot, vacant lot or centrally located space. Once you have the space determine any initial permitting issues that may preclude or hinder you from using the site for certain passive or commercial activities. Develop a site layout plan and a rough preliminary budget and allocate any funding opportunities including grants and private donations that may be available. Ensure you have an adequate programming plan and maintenance plan lined up for the site. Maintenance could require some funding so ensure you have long term funding set aside to operate the site.



Source: The Musciant Group

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

Winter Activation at the Panoway in Downtown Wayzata



Public Realm

Location

Wayzata, MN
SME Consultant: The Musciant Group

Action Item

The project took a holistic approach to the activation of the space and its impact on the entire downtown. We combined the physical enhancement of the space with a spectrum of programming and promotion to support a continuum visitation – from daily, to weekly outing, to first-time local tourist.

- Action #1 – Persona Generation + Experience Mapping
- Action #2 – Building Partnerships
- Action #3 – Physical improvements
- Action #4 – Execute Programming
- Action #5 – Promotion



Source: The Musciant Group

Develop a wayfinding/signage strategy that directs people to and between the two business districts.

Category		Public Realm
Location		Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District
Origin		Town Staff
Budget		Medium: \$30,000 design fee + \$80,000 for implementation
Timeframe		Short-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Phase 1 (1 year) – Planning and Design• Phase 2 (1-3 years) – Procurement and Installation
Risk		Medium: Project is contingent upon Town or state funding. Buy-in and agreement from businesses and Town on branding and style.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wayfinding plan complete.• Number of signs installed in key locations.• Increase in new customers to corridor.
Partners & Resources		Town elected officials, Town staff, local businesses, Marblehead Chamber of Commerce or new business-led group.



Source: Innes Associates

Action Item

Actions for this program include the following:

- Develop a working group including Town staff, business owners and residents from the corridor, and representatives from the historic and arts communities in Marblehead.
- Hire a wayfinding consultant to assist the working group with the development of the program.
- Identify which signs are needed (who is being directed to what from where) and locations for those signs.
- Develop a hierarchy of sign types based on the information being conveyed and how far the destination is from the sign location.
- Identify colors, logo, and photos or graphics for the different sign types. These should be coordinated with the marketing recommendation in this report.
- Work with the wayfinding consultant to develop designs for each sign type.

Diagnostic

The lack of wayfinding signage means that visitors who come to Marblehead are not quite sure where they are going; nothing really identifies or differentiates one district from the other. In addition, no signage directs a visitor from one district to the other – it would be possible to visit a restaurant on Atlantic Avenue without knowing the Historic Business District exists. Proposed upgrades to the Chamber of Commerce's information booth at Memorial Park (the triangle formed by Pleasant Street, Bassett Street, and Essex Street) will help, but signage directing people from Routes 114 and 129 to the business districts and signage within the districts is critical to driving new customers to Marblehead's business districts.

Budget

Costs include the following:

- Staff time for review and management.
- Hire consultant to develop wayfinding and branding design and implementation plans.
- Hire local businesses to manufacture signs.
- Hire contractors install wayfinding signs.

In addition to municipal funds, the following are appropriate sources:

- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).
- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative.
- District Local Technical Assistance Grant.
- Commonwealth Places.

Process

- Document existing signage in and around the Historic Business District and the Atlantic/Pleasant District with photography and mapping.
- Identify relevant case studies from other communities.
- Develop sign hierarchy and identify locations.
- Develop design options for each sign type and overall program.
- Evaluate options for goals: directing people to businesses, incorporating the history of Marblehead, and incorporating public art.
- Define a single package.
- Develop a vendor list and cost estimates.
- Choose a vendor and begin fabrication.
- Install new signs in coordination with Marblehead DPW.



Source: Innes Associates



Source: Favermann Design

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

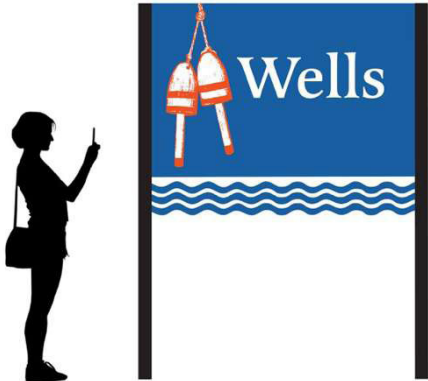
Create a wayfinding theme based on the community’s seaside location



Location

Wells, ME
SME Consultant: Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Action Item



Source: Favermann Design

- Meetings with the Advisory Committee were scheduled over the next four (4) months.
- Utilizing existing conditions, community history and natural areas, each meeting looked at another aspect of the program.
- Locations were explored in terms of decision points and directional element considerations.
- After accessing needs, street furniture design versions were explored.
- Public art was looked at as potential focal point and visual markers.
- Local capability for fabrication was reviewed and discussed.
- New and existing public buildings, signage needs were considered.
- Colors were tested and explored.



Source: Selbert Perkins Design

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PUBLIC REALM COMPENDIUM

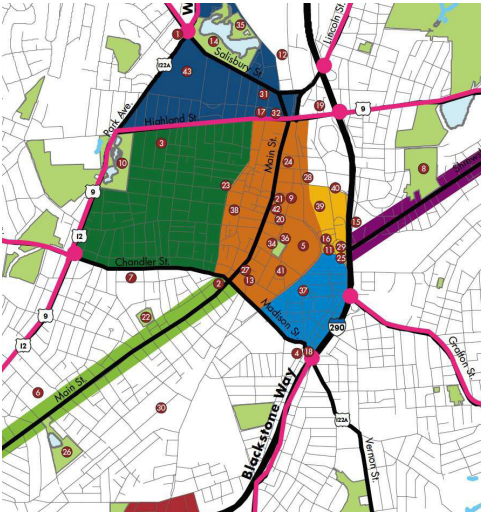
Integrate Brand and Art into your Wayfinding System



Public Realm

Location Worcester, MA
SME Consultant: Selbert Perkins Design

Action Item



Source: Selbert Perkins Design

As this project continues to roll out it will be important to look at it in light of current development, updating locations and messages as-needed. Things to consider adding in the future:

- Dynamic signage.
- Walking distances.
- Sculptural landmarks.
- Integrated elements to reinforce District stories.
- Revenue generation.

Create a Design Initiative for Empty Storefronts.

Category		Private Realm
Location		Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District
Origin		Town Planning Staff, Public input SME Consultant: Christine Moynihan, RetailVisioning
Budget		Low: \$5,000-\$10,000
Timeframe		Short-term: Program could be implemented in less than a year.
Risk		Low: Program is voluntary. Risk can be mitigated by outreach to landlord and strong ties to the real estate community to know when a space is becoming vacant.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program approved by Board of Selectmen.• Graphic/message approved.• Number of storefronts participating.
Partners & Resources		Board of Selectmen, Marblehead Design Review Board, Town Planning Staff, Property and Business Owners



Empty Storefronts: Renovation (left); Vacant (right)
Source: Innes Associates Ltd.

Action Item

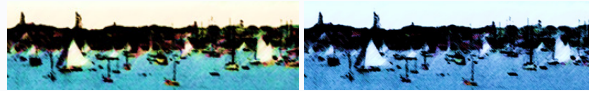
Create a design initiative for empty spaces.

Develop a clear message, such as:

- Welcome to Marblehead!
- Get to know MHD!
- Visit Marblehead.
- Shop Marblehead.

Develop a Marblehead specific graphic to go with the message, such as:

- Light blue field with black and white silhouetted sailboats in Marblehead Harbor



- Colorful village of homes and shops



Engage artists or high school students to paint the windows with a selected image or images.

Diagnostic

Although Marblehead had few permanent vacancies as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, storefronts did have a change in tenants and the spaces were either vacant or being reconfigured for some time. Empty windows with either nothing or trash in the retail space or windows that were papered over do not contribute to the sense of either vibrancy or security to draw people to the area.

Rather than being seen as a condition that detracts from the area, empty windows offer an opportunity to build excitement for what comes next or reinforce the area branding, another recommendation of this report.

Budget

The budget for this project is \$5,000 – \$10,000 to cover either paint and painters or pre-printed changeable vinyl graphics that can go up in windows as needed.

Funds from the American Rescue Plan Act could be used for any of these initiatives in full or in a 50-50 share program as long as the goal is to improve the look of downtown to remediate the loss of business due to COVID.

Other sources:

- Marblehead Cultural Council

Process

- Secure grant funding to provide consultant and help private businesses with improvements.
- Retain a store design consultant.
- Gather a committee to create messaging and graphic.
- Gather volunteers to paint.
- Work with landlords to gain access.
- Create timeline and see if acrylic paint can be donated.
- Reimburse expenses for making improvements.

Additional Recommendations

Use the same messaging and imagery on web pages, Facebook page, and other communications that promote Marblehead storefront businesses.

- Keep this messaging supportive of retail and restaurants and not mix it with the history of Marblehead. It should play to the seaside village vibe that makes shopping and dining in Marblehead fun, spirited and cool.

Support the storefront program with other façade improvements, such as:

- Ask each business / landlord to refresh their painting with that the goal of reinforcing the existing aesthetic of a colorful village with each property having a signature color.
- Add an awning in the same color as their building or an appropriate accent color for retail properties that face south or west and have very sunny exposures (which means that their windows do not really work well as products in them fade). Awnings also protect visitors from hot sun or rain. Attracting more visitors/customers to Marblehead's stores and restaurants will help mitigate losses incurred during the 2020 shut down.
- Every business that has a window should have vinyl lettering along the bottom edge with the name of the business. A signature color will help with wayfinding and reinforce the vibrancy of the two districts.
- Add illustrations to existing design guidelines to make the document a more effective tool for business owners.



Lenox, MA
Source: Retail Visioning



Before (top) Source: RetailVisioning
After (bottom) Source: RetailVisioning and innes Associates

Reopening Soon

Source: RetailVisioning

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PRIVATE REALM COMPENDIUM

Retail Reboot: Updating Retail Store Design *(With COVID 19 implications in mind)*



Private Realm

Location

Westfield, Lincoln, Agawam, Walpole, Lowell, North Adams + other MA communities
SME Consultant: Christine Moynihan, RetailVisioning

Action Item



Source: RetailVisioning

- Identify business owners who are in need of assistance to reopen businesses safely.
- Communicate a program to help businesses update their businesses and implement store design improvements required by Covid-19 mitigation requirements. This could include signage inside and out, sanitization materials and protocols for shared space like dressing rooms, acrylic panels, creating extra space in stores among other considerations.
- Create application for participation in program



Source: Favermann Design

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE PRIVATE REALM COMPENDIUM

Creative empty storefront treatments by Newton Community Pride's WindowArt



Private Realm

Location

Newton, MA

SME Consultant: Mark Favermann, Favermann Design

Action Item



Source: Favermann Design

- Document the empty storefronts in a particular commercial area. In the City of Newton's case, there are 13 separate villages with some commercial district located in eight (8) of them.
- Select focus areas. In Newton's case, focus was centered upon the greatest concentration of stores and empty storefronts.
- Identify landlords and reach out to landlords through cold calls, e-mails, and online and print publications. Persistence in reaching out seemed to payoff the most.
- To augment the "Call for Interested Landlords," Newton Community Pride used local media through press releases including The Boston Globe, local online publications, social media and their own website to communicate the program.
- Discuss and agree with landlords on the organization's approach to the empty storefront. Individual property managers made final decisions about what went where.
- Develop an approach to the installations or create an inventory of existing artwork by local artists. In this case, the artwork already existed and had been used as part of the previously funded Newton Community Pride program, FenceArt. FenceArt produced a juried "call to artist" that generated an inventory of artwork.
- All art was previously printed on vinyl banners, and this allowed for an easy installation behind storefront windows.
- The results of the initial effort were disappointing to the organization who desired much more landlord participation. However, the lessons learned here allow for future project application.

Develop program to educate store owners about an effective online presence.

Category		Revenue & Sales
Location		Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District
Origin		Town Planning Staff SME Consultant: Revby LLC
Budget		Low - Medium: \$20,000-\$200,000
Timeframe		Short-term: Program could happen within the next six-nine months.
Risk		Low: Program is voluntary for business and property owners.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses in the online directory. • Number of businesses participating in the educational component. • Number of businesses with first-time online platforms. • Number of businesses with first-time social media presence. • Increase in online sales. • Increase in overall sales.
Partners & Resources		Town of Marblehead, business owners, Marblehead Chamber of Commerce, business-led organization



*Businesses on Atlantic Avenue
Source: Innes Associates Ltd.*

Diagnostic

Businesses in Marblehead suffered negative Impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, including a decline in revenue, reduced operating hours/capacity, additional expenses for safety measures, temporary business closures and employee layoffs, and alternative modes of sales and delivery. Selling online as an alternative method revenue stream was not available to business owners who did not have the knowledge or capacity to develop such a program themselves.

Businesses without the ability to market and sell online were more likely to have significant negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. In their response to the business survey, some business owners indicated a need for training on the use of social media and setting up an online store. Others indicated a desire for coordinated and shared marketing strategies. An online directory that showcased businesses within the Historic Business District and the Atlantic/Pleasant District and linked to online sales platforms coupled with a program to develop those platforms would benefit many businesses in Marblehead.

Action Item

- Develop a webinar/presentation to communicate strategies for developing online platforms, including a website, a sales platform, and a social media strategy.
- Develop a program to assist interested businesses with design and implementation.

Process

1. Begin with outreach and engagement to provide business owners with a voice; provide an opportunity to listen before there is any perception that you are "pushing" something to them that is not relevant considering their current mindset. Workshops can help business owners understand the subject matter and help them define what "online" and "eCommerce" can mean for them, on their terms, for their brand, and their comfort level. Sample questions to raise during in-person conversations or a survey:
 - What about your business keeps you up at night? What is top of mind right now?
 - What is your comfort level and time capacity to manage technology aspects of your business, including your POS system and website? What help would be most welcome in these areas?
 - Would you welcome resources that can help you bring more customer traffic to your store? Resources that may include help with your Google My Business listing and presence elsewhere online?
 - Do you have a system in place to collect customer information, such as name, email address, cell phone number, or purchase history?
 - Reflecting on the last year and a half, what resource or knowledge could have helped you be more resilient through the pandemic?

Process *(continued)*

2. One-on-One TA to work on a customer acquisition, retention, and online presence plan. Attention should also be spent on helping the business owner establish a plan to maintain activity, either through in-house staff support or through delegation to freelancers / contractors. Empower the business owner to not take everything on their own. Subject matter categories to consider:
 - Business resilience and growth planning, including supply chain management and hiring/staff management topics.
 - Digital tool capabilities, including POS systems and bookkeeping (strategy and/or implementation).
 - eCommerce platform setup (e.g., Shopify, WooCommerce, marketplaces such as Etsy).
 - Digital marketing:
 - Website design, development, and maintenance planning.
 - Social Media management (organic and paid).
 - Google My Business profile setup and optimization plan.
 - Review sites (e.g., Yelp, TripAdvisor, industry specific sites).
3. The Technical Assistance (TA) format may be in workshop format, one-on-one format, and/or a combination of workshop and one-on-one TA.

Budget

Costs:

- Staff time for review and management.
- Assistance with developing educational program.
- Design.
- Funding for grants.

Potential sources:

- Funds from the American Rescue Plan Act
- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative.
- Local community bank loan programs.

The best practices from Arlington, MA and Arlington, VA (see next two pages) provide budget ranges. For Arlington, MA, the budget, which included technical assistance, webinars, and grants, was as follows:

- \$10,000 working capital grants to 25 eligible businesses (the number of businesses can be scaled down to match the community's needs and budget).
- Approximately \$20,000 for one-on-one technical assistance for 6 selected businesses and 4 workshops for all 25 grant recipients.
- The one-on-one technical assistance and workshops focused on digital marketing.
- Total budget was \$270,000, including the grants. a program that is technical assistance and webinars only would be much less.

The program for Arlington, VA can also can be scaled to match the community's needs and budget, depending on the number of businesses served.

- Approx. \$800-1,600 per business for one-on-one technical assistance to review and help improve a business's online presence (other business and marketing topics are also part of the program).
- The total first year budget was approximately \$120,000 for technical assistance. Additional funds were required for marketing of the program, including street signs, emails, and social media.

Other Considerations

1. Is the project a combination of micro-grant and TA?
 - Grant to fund platform subscriptions, contractors, digital materials, ongoing maintenance.
 - TA to create a digital marketing / eCommerce plan and help with initial implementation.
 - TA to help with other business management topics, such as supply chain and hiring staff, as pointed out in the initial business owner interviews.
2. What is learned from current engagement/interaction between the Town and business owners? Be mindful of the pitfall, "if you build it, they will come." Program design and language should reflect the outcomes that business owners can relate to and the shared goals
 - What existing TA resources are currently available for Marblehead business owners? For example, Small Business Strong (<https://www.smallbstrong.com/>). How can those resources be used to begin early engagement and learn about your own program design?
3. What is the long-term plan to make sure businesses have support with digital marketing? Will you contract with TA providers on a longer term bases (e.g., 2 or 3+ years)?
4. Who will coordinate the RFP process and small business owner TA application process? What criteria will you use to select businesses? How will you keep track of businesses accepted and outcomes?

Additional Partners / Resources:

- Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network, Northeast Regional Office:
 - <http://sbdc.salemstate.edu/>
- North Shore CDC:
 - <http://northshorecdc.org/programs/small-business-development/>
 - <http://northshorecdc.org/programs/covid-19-emergency-assistance/>

Online Directory to Showcase Downtown Businesses



Revenue & Sales

Location

Salisbury, MD

SME Consultant: Reby LLC

Action Item

This is a good idea as a way for the municipality to sponsor additional online coverage, SEO opportunity, and local commercial district collaboration. However, it must be coupled with sufficient online presence practices by the individual business.

"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."¹

- Business directory page: <https://salisbury.md/businessdirectory>

The campaign includes a toolkit with free marketing materials and tips for participating business owners. <https://salisbury.md/shop-local-toolkit>

- The toolkit includes social media material, such as a Facebook business page cover photo, an Instagram story, and flyers.



Source: Salisbury, MD

¹ <https://salisbury.md/10/05/2020/city-launches-shop-local-campaign-to-encourage-support-of-local-businesses>

ReLaunch

Source: Revby LLC

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE TENANT MIX COMPENDIUM

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



Tenant Mix

Location

Arlington, VA
SME Consultant: Reby LLC

Action Item

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.

Revby (the TA 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.

Provide Funding and Technical Assistance to Enable Business Viability During COVID-19



Tenant Mix

Location

Arlington, MA

SME Consultant: Revby LLC

Action Item

The Department of Planning and Community Development Action Items:

- Administering a relief program for Arlington businesses with twenty or fewer full-time-equivalent employees, including the owner.
- The program provides short-term working capital assistance and technical assistance to enable the viability of the business during the severe economic interruption related to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing restrictions.

Technical Assistance Project Action Items (consultant):

- Build trust with the business owner during the first sessions and collaboratively work on a plan on how the technical assistance time allotted may be used to support the business owner in the best way possible.
- Conduct several TA sessions over Zoom.
- Provide a final project deliverable that outlines the work completed and provides resources and recommendations for the business owner's ongoing use.
- Provide workshops on topics including business resilience and digital marketing.

Develop a coordinated approach to marketing the districts, including events.

Category		Revenue & Sales
Location		Historic Business District and Atlantic/Pleasant District
Origin		Town Planning Staff, Public input SME Consultant: Christine Moynihan, RetailVisioning
Budget		Low to Medium: Depends on the number of events and the amount of technical assistance given.
Timeframe		Short-term: Several events over 18 to 24 months as a series of pilot programs.
Risk		Low to medium: Participation in technical assistance is voluntary for businesses but events will require dedicated volunteers.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of events held and attendance at each event. • Business participating in webinar. • Businesses applying for and receiving technical assistance. • Website completion. • Hits to website and Facebook page.
Partners & Resources		Board of Selectmen, Town Planning Staff, Business Owners, Marblehead Chamber of Commerce, Marblehead Chamber of Commerce or new business-led organization, Marblehead Cultural Council



Sign on Marblehead business
Source: Innes Associates Ltd.

Diagnostic

Businesses in Marblehead suffered losses as a result of the shut-downs in spring 2020 and the subsequent social distancing requirements. Of the businesses that responded to the survey, 74% reported a decline in revenue. 70% reported that "implementing marketing strategies for the commercial district" was either Important or Very Important.

The individual strategies listed in this Project Recommendation address two main goals:

- Let potential customers know the businesses exist and that they are open.
- Bring people to the area who might not otherwise think to come.

A steady and persistent increase in customers will help offset the losses in 2020 and beyond, as the Delta variant contributes to a reluctance on the part of many to resume former shopping and dining habits.

Action Item

Communicate the town's commitment to help storefront business owners recover from the effects of COVID 19 during 2020.

1. Add "Shopping and Dining" as a sub-page on the Marblehead.org website under: Welcome to Marblehead – Explore Marblehead.
2. Launch a Shop Marblehead Facebook Page. Showcase businesses, events, dining, new business opportunities, etc. Be consistent with names – Historic Business District, Old Town, etc.
3. Recruit businesses for vacant spaces – create a brochure with demographic data, tourism data, history, arts, annual events, etc.
4. Design a map that features walking routes between the two business districts and make available in all stores.
 - Example: red route – history, museums; blue route – coffee, ATM.
5. Provide Technical Assistance to Storefront Businesses. Offer a workshop on the use of websites and social media to sustain sales.
6. Provide Technical Assistance to Storefront Businesses. Offer a workshop on visual merchandising. How to present your products for sale – inside, outside, in windows, with lighting, telling "stories", etc.
7. Working with the Chamber or other interested town committees, create and market a few "Downtown Activation Events" and put them on public calendars.

Budget

Funds from the American Rescue Plan Act could be used for any of these initiatives. The Downtown Activation Events could be funded by grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council or the Marblehead Cultural Council.

Action	Amount
1 Add Shop/Dine Marblehead page to Town's website.	\$1,000
2 Link Town's site to Facebook.	
3 Create brochure.	\$2,000 + printing
4 Design map.	\$1,000 + printing
5 + 6 Workshops	\$2-3,000 per workshop
One-on-one consultations	\$500-\$1,000 per business
7 Volunteers and posters, decorations, entertainment, prizes	\$5,000 per event

Process

Build Capacity

All items below require management, administration, and leadership. Capacity to focus on these tasks in most towns is a challenge. In some cases, volunteers, student interns or pro bono providers with specific talents in writing, social media, design, painting, etc. can be supported by an interested manager from town hall. In some cases, a paid provider (as in the case of workshops) can manage 90% of their own program with support in recruiting local participation being the main effort needed from the town. In a third scenario, however, a paid coordinator may well be needed to oversee events and projects that require integration among departments, tenants, landlords, and over a duration of time.

The business liaison in the first Project Recommendation can fulfill this role (Downtown Revitalization Coordinator) on a short-term contract; ARPA funds can pay for this role through 2026 if funds are committed by 2024.

Process for Actions 1 and 2

1. Add "Shopping and Dining" as a sub-page on the Marblehead.org website. Sample topics could include:
 - About Marblehead
 - Beaches & Parks
 - Photos of the Town
 - Visiting & History (special events in here?)
 - Shopping and Dining
2. Launch a Shop Marblehead Facebook Page.
 - Engage whoever manages the town website to add a new page about shopping and dining. Ask them to coordinate with Chamber of Commerce and list events.
 - Hire an intern or student interested in social media to follow up, post listings and write "features" about different businesses weekly.
 - Send a letter to each storefront business and restaurant asking them for Facebook content: logo; photo of their store, café, salon, etc.; description of their offerings; menus; hours; etc.

Process for Actions 3 and 4

3. Recruit businesses for vacant spaces – create a brochure.
4. Design a map to show walking routes between shopping districts.
 - Work with a volunteer to design a sell-sheet and a map. Provide maps to businesses to distribute to visitors. Provide brochures to Realtors, landlords, and any one asking about starting a business in Marblehead.

Process (continued)

Process for Actions 5 and 6

Technical Assistance Programming

- Secure a grant to offer a workshop on the use of websites and social media to sustain sales.
- Secure a grant to offer a workshop on visual merchandising. How to present your products for sale – inside, outside, in windows, with lighting, telling “stories”, etc.
- Send out an RFP to Subject Matter Experts in these areas to conduct these workshops.
- Secure a location with audio-video capacity, such as the library. Hold each workshop on a Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday from 8-9:30 – assuring business owners that they will be back at their store in time to open.
- Announce the event, inviting retailers to participate and make their businesses safer (access to customers if/when brick and mortar is not open) and more attractive/successful with better visual merchandising.
- OPTION – Add one-on-one consultations with interested business owners on either topic. Provide funding directly to the business owner to set up website or improve displays based on recommendations of the consultant. A pre-requisite for one-on-one consultation and funding is that they attend workshop. Funds are paid out as a reimbursement when project is complete and paid receipt submitted.

Managing Technical Assistance Programs does take some attention to detail. While the Technical Assistance provider will supply their own materials and even some marketing support (fliers and press releases), recruiting participation and administering the funds requires a project manager. This person could be the recommended business liaison.

Technical Assistance Timeline

- Hire consultant: 4 weeks (if RFP)
- Announce event: 3 weeks
- 1:1 Consultations: 2 weeks
- Recommendation/follow-up: 1 week

If including grant program:

- Grant requests submitted: 2 weeks
- Grants fulfilled: 3 weeks



Marblehead store advertising online ordering
Source: Innes Associates

Process (continued)

Process for Action 7

Downtown Activation Events

- Define event:
 - "First Annual Spring Celebration"?
 - Sidewalk Sale Days?
 - Restaurant Week?
 - Holiday Stroll?
 - Art Festival with en plein air painting and other art-focused activities
- Engage a committee and find pro bono designers to help with communications.
 - Select dates approximately 3 months in advance of event.
 - Announce event.
 - Engage retailers to look their best and participate fully. Ask them what they are going to do that is special.
- Encourage retailers to bring their business OUT to the customer, clear out inventory with deep discounts, offer coupons for return trips to the business, give away small items, create attractive displays, and add fun to their space.
- Advertise in local papers, on social media, local airways, fliers, etc.





Source: CivicMoxie

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE REVENUE & SALES COMPENDIUM

Host a block party to support ground floor activation efforts downtown



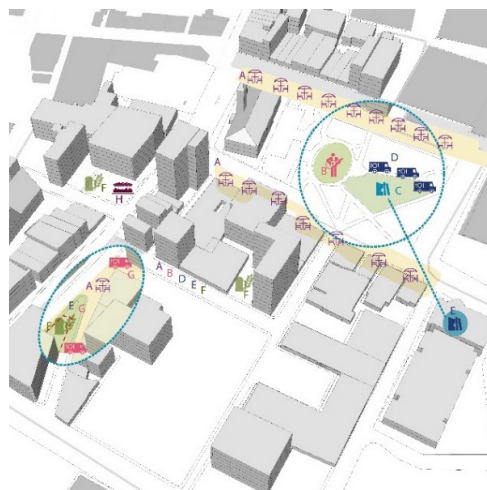
Revenue & Sales

Location

Worcester, MA

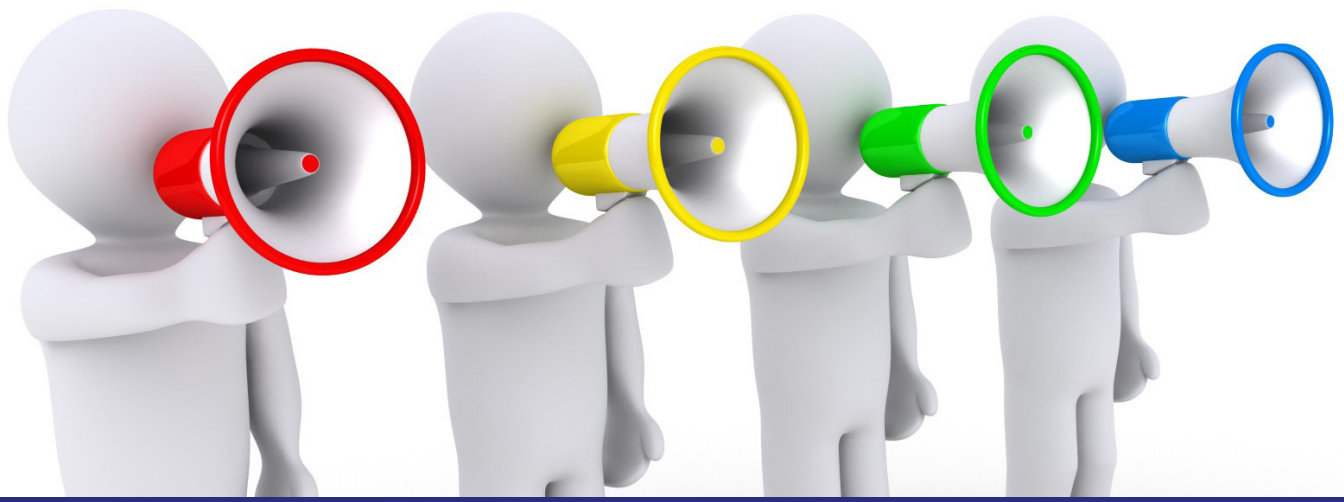
SME Consultant: Susan Silverberg, CivicMoxie

Action Item



Source: CivicMoxie

The Block Party was a means to test the "collaborative muscle" of various partners, including MassDevelopment, The City of Worcester, Worcester Business Development Corp, and the Hanover Theatre, as well as shift the perception of downtown. The partners came together to divide tasks based on skills and capacity and reached out to others in the community to provide entertainment, food, and drink. The City was a key partner in streamlining permitting and providing public safety and sanitation services the day of the event. To ensure good turnout and a diversity of participants the block party was planned in conjunction with a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Hanover Theatre Conservatory. Combining the events allowed organizers to highlight positive change and investment in the downtown. The block party included music, a beer garden, food trucks, and ribbon cutting ceremony. Interactive activities encouraged attendees to share their desires for downtown and offer ideas for improvements. Over 500 people attended the block party, meeting the goals set by the organizers.



Source: Bench Consulting

BEST PRACTICE FROM THE REVENUE & SALES COMPENDIUM

Coordinated Social Media Marketing



Revenue & Sales

Location

Online

SME Consultant: Cepheid Solutions

Action Item

- Initial planning session (1hr – one time).
- Training (ongoing – but i2.5 hour initial self-paced training course).
- Interview Stakeholder(s) (1hr – one time).
- Setup Social Media Accounts (3 hrs one time).
- Content Development (1-10 hrs monthly).
- Operate Program (4hrs monthly - assuming weekly posts).
- Planning & Coordination (1 hr weekly).
- Program Reporting (1 hr monthly).

Rapid Website Development



Revenue & Sales

Location

Boston, MA

SME Consultant: Cambridge Retail Advisors

Process

Onboarding Phase

1. Explain the simple design process and benefits of the end website.
2. Purchase the desired domain name.
3. Set manageable goals with clear timeframes.

Discovery Phase

1. Gather content and determine look/feel for the website.
2. Collect media such as photos and video (Schedule photographer if required).
3. Link Social Media (if applicable).
4. Link online selling platforms (if applicable).

Review/Finalization Phase

1. Review website with business owner prior to publishing live.
2. Publish site and encourage business owner to incorporate their new website into their marketing plan.
3. Hand off website to business owner and encourage frequent edits!

Appendix

List of Funding Opportunities

This appendix contains more information about each of the funding opportunities listed in the Project Recommendations above. Information for each opportunity is based on information provided directly from the grant program's website and supplemented, where appropriate. Additional funding sources can be found on the RRP website, under Funding: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program>

Funding cycles and requirements will vary by source and some funding sources are competitive. The information in the Project Recommendations is designed to assist in the preparation of grant applications. Best Practice Compendiums for each project category (Admin Capacity, Public Realm, Private Realm, Revenue & Sales, Tenant Mix, and Cultural/Arts) are provided as separate documents. The information in the compendiums can also help in the preparation of grants. One or more relevant best practices are identified with each of the Project Recommendations above.

The primary source of funding for most of the Project Recommendations is the **American Rescue Plan Act**, or ARPA. ARPA funding must be committed by 2024 and expended by 2026. These funds may be used for the following purposes:¹

- a. To respond to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel, and hospitality;
- b. To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to eligible workers;
- c. For the provision of government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue due to the COVID-19 public health emergency relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year prior to the emergency; and
- d. To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

The Project Recommendations in this report meet the requirements of a., above. Each recommendation has as its primary purpose the need to assist local businesses with recovery. Certain projects focus on short-term interventions, designed to bring customers into businesses as quickly as possible through technical assistance and skills-building, marketing support, and/or community events designed to attract new and repeat customers.

Other projects address systemic changes: for example, reconfiguring streets or reducing the need for parking to allow space for outdoor dining and/or retail, a critical survival strategy for certain businesses during 2020-2021. Some recommendations address regulatory changes designed to assist with the visibility of businesses to potential customers. Such changes include design guidelines, sign codes, municipal regulations for outdoor dining; many of these are also paired with façade, site, and sign improvement programs to assist small businesses with implementation. Such programs can also address accessibility and public health, by creating physical changes (the removal of barriers, addition of ramps, planting of trees) that address those who have been negatively impacted by the effects of the pandemic.

While municipalities have many claims upon the use of ARPA funds, this report provides guidelines for the strategic disbursement of those funds to assist those with the most negative impacts and reinvigorate the local economy. Municipalities should designate a portion of their funds towards these recommendations and use other funding sources to leverage the ARPA funds. Short descriptions of other funding sources mentioned in this report follow this page.

For more information:

[https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-resources-and-guidance-for-municipal-officials#american-recovery-plan-act-\(arpa\)-](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-resources-and-guidance-for-municipal-officials#american-recovery-plan-act-(arpa)-)

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2021/07/12/the-american-rescue-plan-can-be-a-lifeline-for-business-districts/>

¹ <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/FRF-Interim-Final-Rule.pdf>

Community One Stop for Growth

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/community-one-stop-for-growth>

This source is probably the second most important funding source for Project Recommendations. In 2021, the commonwealth of Massachusetts rolled the application process for ten grant programs into a single process. The programs are as follows:

- Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
 - **MassWorks**
 - Urban Agenda
 - 43D Expedited Permitting
- Department of Housing and Community Development
 - Housing Choice Community Capital Grants
 - **Massachusetts Downtown Initiative**
 - **NEW Community Planning Grants**
 - NEW Rural Development Fund
- MassDevelopment
 - Brownfields
 - Site Readiness
 - **NEW Underutilized Properties**

Many of these grants are competitive. The process has two stages: the first is for the municipality to submit an Expression of Interest, which will be reviewed. In 2021, this submission period was February 8-April 2. The full application cycle was open from May 3-June 4. Communities are notified of the award in October/November.

Grants highlighted in bold are appropriate for several Project Recommendations and will be discussed in more depth in this appendix.

MassWorks

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massworks>

MassWorks provides funding for infrastructure and is particularly useful in supporting private development with public infrastructure improvements. This funding source may be used to leverage some of the longer-term Project Recommendations.

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (\$25,000)

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi>

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/business-improvement-districts-bid>

The focus of this grant is downtown revitalization. The Technical Assistance program provides a consultant and funding for that consultant's work to communities who need help with specific problems. Project Recommendation for which this grant would be appropriate include the development of design guidelines, revision of a sign code, a wayfinding study, a pilot project or projects for façade improvements, design for streetscape improvements, economic development studies (including housing), and parking studies. MDI also provides assistance with the development of a Business Improvement District, or BID.

Community Planning Grants
(\$25,000-\$75,000)

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/planning-and-zoning-grants>

This is a new program and provides funding for planning projects at a larger scale than the MDI program. Project Recommendation for which this grant would be appropriate might include zoning changes, particularly those that support density, studies for development within a 1/2-mile of a commuter rail station or a multi-town corridor that look at both density and multimodal connections, or other similar planning processes.

As with the MassWorks grant, this grant is appropriate for leveraging Project Recommendations as part of longer-term or larger projects.

District Local Technical Assistance Grant (DLTA)
Regional Planning Agencies and DHCD

Funds for this program are allocated to the regional planning agencies. These funds may be used for planning projects. Each Regional Planning Agency (RPA) has a different focus on how these funds may be used to meet the state's funding goals.

All municipalities are eligible to apply directly to their RPA. The RPA will work with the municipality on the program; a separate consultant is not usually required.

Survey and Planning Grant Program
Massachusetts Historical Commission

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/surveyandplanning.htm>

This grant is a 50/50 matching program that support planning activities that help preserve significant historic resources. For communities, whose target area contains significant resources, this source may help fund design guidelines that include specific requirements for the preservation of significant historic resources. Interested communities are encouraged to reach out to the Massachusetts Historic Commission directly about this grant; it may be tied to the creation of a local historic district.

Complete Streets Funding Program
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

<https://www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program>

This program provides funds to municipalities who have adopted a Complete Streets Policy and created a Prioritization Plan. Any street infrastructure recommended in this report should be added to the Prioritization Plan. This grant program can help address recommended improvements for pedestrian and bicyclist mobility, safety, and comfort.

This grant can also assist with a design guidelines; these do not have to be limited to the private realm. Creating consistency in a downtown, village, or corridor is an important part of defining its identity both within and beyond the community. As part of a Complete Streets Project, a municipality should identify the specific materials, street furniture, trees, and public signage (including wayfinding) that will be used in the target area. These choices can be incorporated into the overall design guidelines to address both public and private realms.

This program could potentially be leverage with the municipality's funding under Chapter 90 to ensure that multimodal infrastructure is connected, over time, throughout the community.

Hometown Grants
T-Mobile

<https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants>

This program will fund up to \$50,000 per town and may be used to rebuild or refresh community spaces, including parks and historic buildings. The grant is awarded to up to 100 towns per year.

Mass Cultural Council

<https://massculturalcouncil.org/organizations/cultural-investment-portfolio/projects/>

The Mass Cultural Council has one-year project grants for specific public programming.

Projects are for public programming, which Mass Cultural Council defines as activities that engage with the public.

The municipality's own Local Cultural Council may have additional grants to support local arts and culture; this could include partnering on those Project Recommendations that support the integration of local arts, history, and culture into the LRRP area.

**Commonwealth Places
MassDevelopment**

<https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/commonwealth-places/>

This program is another source of funding for place-making strategies with a unique twist. MassDevelopment matches funds raised by the municipality through crowd-sourcing for projects that help improve the quality of public spaces.

**Shared Streets and Spaces
Massachusetts Department of
Transportation**

<https://www.mass.gov/shared-streets-and-spaces-grant-program>

This program provides funds to support the improvement of "plazas, sidewalks, curbs, streets, bus stops, parking areas, and other public spaces." The focus is on public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce.

In the new funding round, starting in January 2022, the program will emphasize safety, funding "projects that improve safety for all road users through interventions that achieve safer conditions and safer speeds."

This program would partner well with other programs to support mobility and outdoor spaces for gathering and dining.