



Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Maynard, MA

This plan has been made possible through technical assistance provided by the Baker-Polito Administration's Local Rapid Recovery Planning program.



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

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

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

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Acknowledgements



Maynard, MA

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| | |
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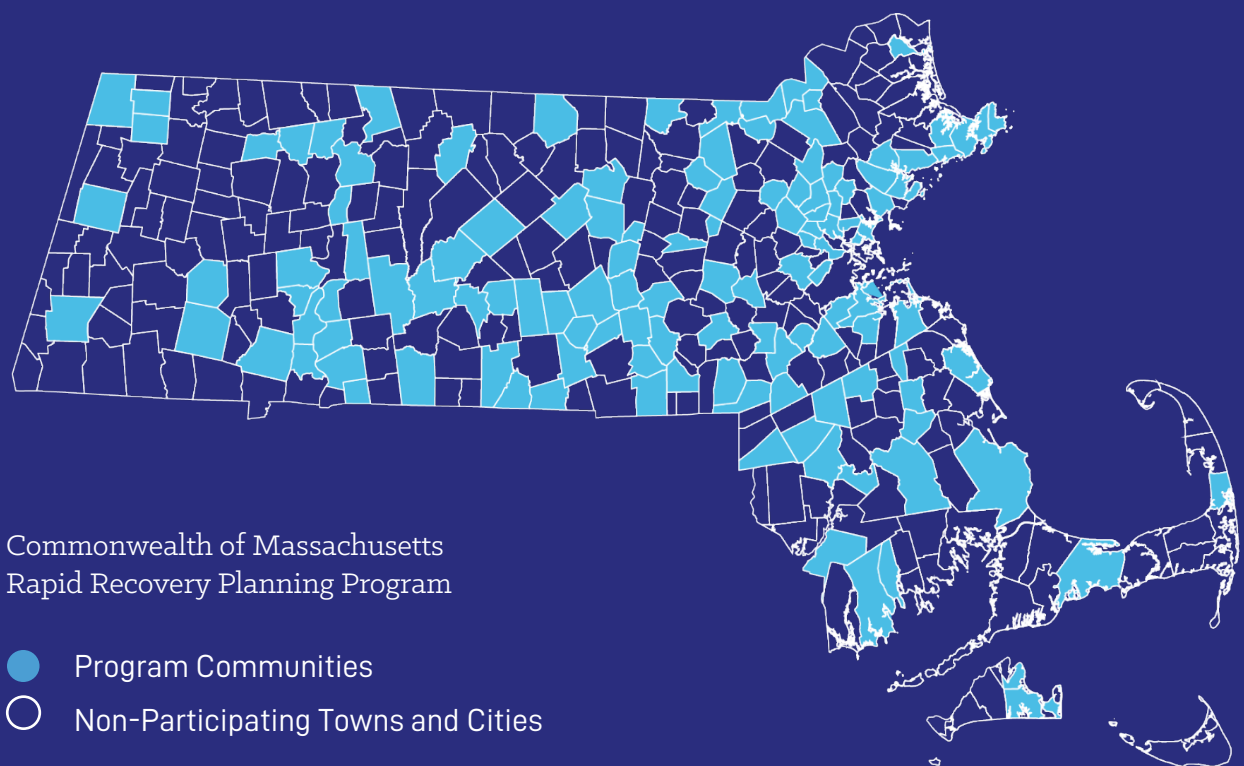
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125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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.



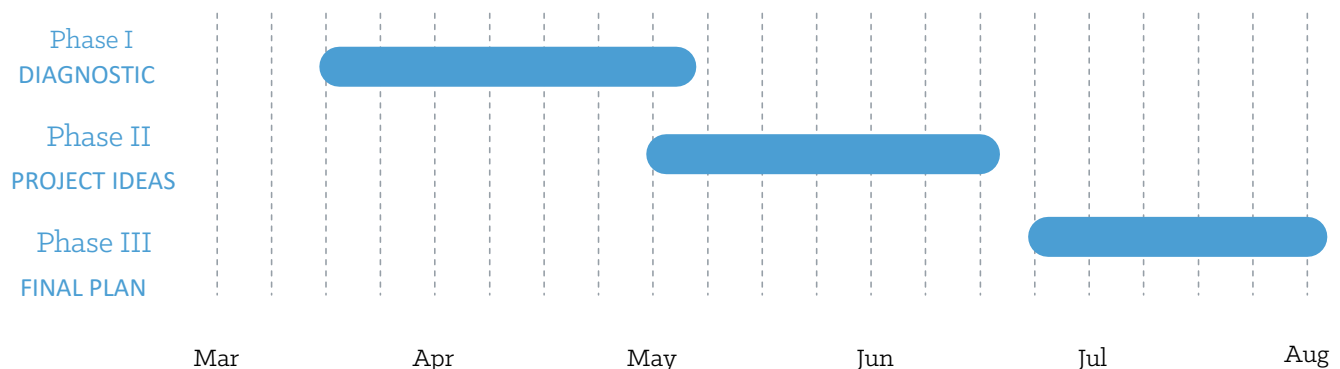
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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



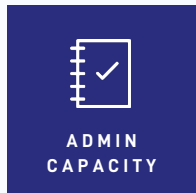
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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

Downtown Maynard is building a reputation as a cultural destination

Maynard is a compact New England Mill town located approximately 25 miles west of Boston and 10 minutes from Route 2 and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) commuter line. Maynard is home to 10,746 residents¹, and the town's median household income of \$105,088 is less than the four neighboring towns of Acton, Concord, Stow, and Sudbury, whose median income is between approximately \$140,000-\$150,000.² The Assabet River Rail Trail traverses downtown Maynard, the focus of the Town's Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP), and links to the neighboring towns of Acton, Hudson, and Stow.

The Downtown Maynard study area, as defined for this RRP program, generally aligns with the Maynard Cultural District. Maynard's study area is predominately a commercial and mixed-use district with a variety of local business offerings including restaurants, retail, and business services. The study area also encompasses a former mill that has been converted into a first-class office complex known as Mill & Main, and is home to a range of companies representing technology, communications, logistics, and other business-facing enterprises. Just under 500 people currently live within the boundaries of the downtown study area.

There are 97 ground floor storefronts in downtown Maynard including restaurants, retail, services, banks, and offices. As of spring 2021, 8 storefronts (8%) were vacant. It is estimated that 5 business closures occurred since March 2020, though not necessarily due to impacts of COVID-19. Through the diagnostic phase of this project, a business survey was conducted to measure the impact of COVID-19 on business operations. Generally, respondents to the survey stated they suffered impacts such as fewer customers on site, a decline in revenue, reduced operating hours/capacity, business closures (temporary or permanent), and incurred expenses to implement safety measures.

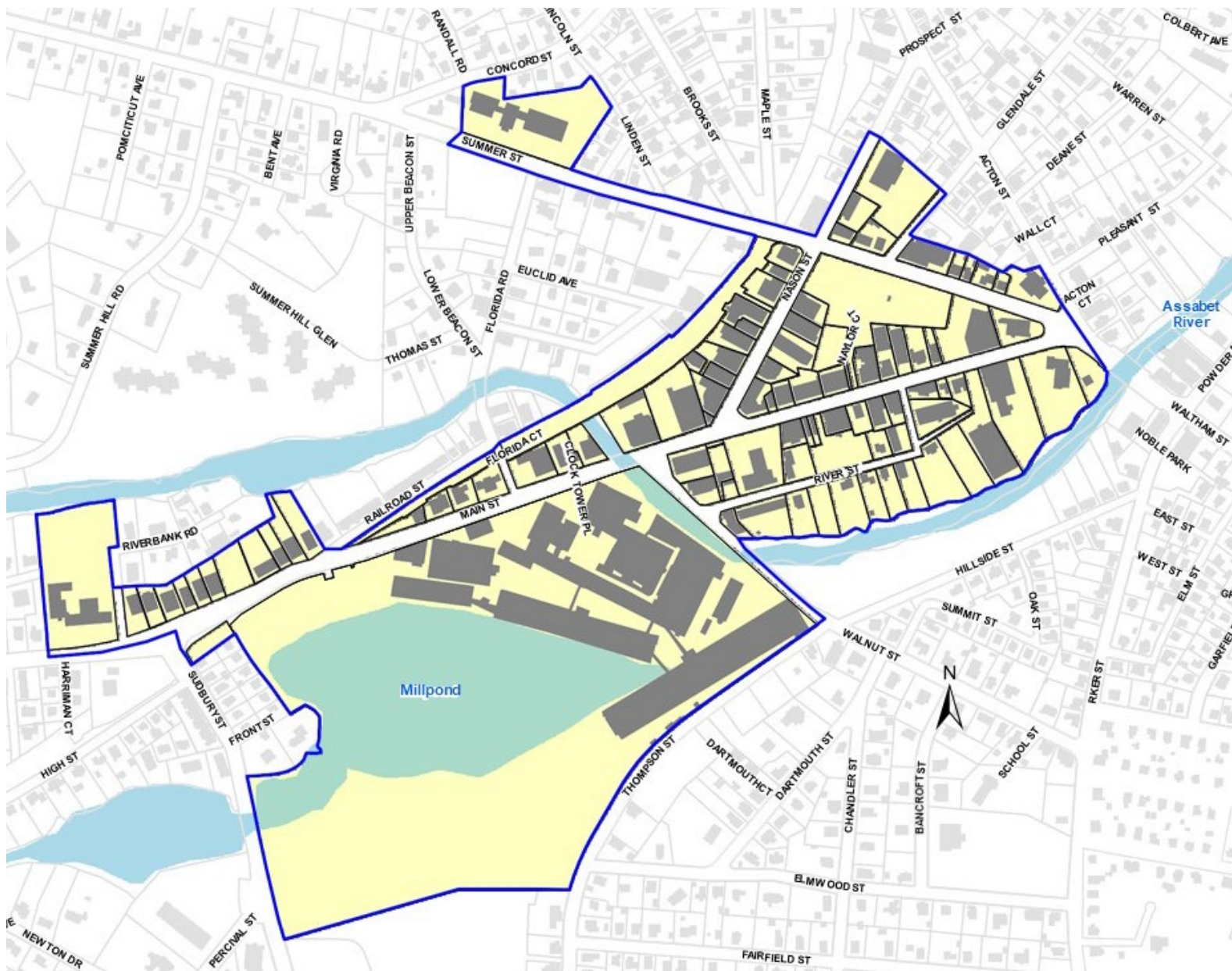
Downtown Maynard has many active stakeholders including the Town of Maynard, which has accomplished much with limited staff, including being responsive to the needs of businesses to assist in recovery efforts. In summer 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation awarded Maynard \$31,525 to temporarily extend outdoor dining on public and private property while also providing traffic calming equipment. The Town offered a retail parklet program at the same time as the outdoor dining program, but it did not receive the same amount of interest. The successful temporary outdoor dining program is being considered as a model for permanent outdoor dining.

Other important downtown stakeholders include the Maynard Cultural Council, which oversees the Maynard Cultural District. There is the opportunity to build the capacity of the Cultural Council to take a leadership role to help improve communication and collaboration among creative businesses, artists, and cultural organizations, undertake collective arts and cultural programming, and support creative economy businesses and cultural organizations to further COVID recovery. Currently, the Cultural District has volunteer leadership and limited organizational, financial, and administrative capacity to undertake this effort.

Maynard has done considerable work prior to and during the pandemic to determine its vision for its economic future. The Economic Development Committee has established a vision to focus Downtown's economic development on experience-based businesses such as art, dining, personal services, and has identified a strategy that "markets Downtown Maynard as a place for residents and visitors to have a great experience, and for entrepreneurs and creatives to serve artists, art-lovers, and all who value the community that comes with doing things together" as a top priority (*Economic Development Vision Discussion Paper*, February 2021). Building upon these efforts will help position downtown Maynard for success in the post-pandemic world.

¹Source: 2020 Decennial Census

²Source: ESRI Demographic Indicators, 2020



The Downtown Maynard Study Area
coincides with the Maynard Cultural District

*Map of Downtown Maynard Study Area
Source: BSC Group*

Downtown Maynard's recovery will depend on the Town's ability to further enhance the public realm, build downtown stakeholder capacity, create great public art, and make economic development a priority.

The ten project recommendations developed through the RRP process are intended to build upon the strengths of the Maynard Cultural District and enhance the downtown experience for residents, businesses, and visitors in order to draw more people into the downtown and support Maynard's recovery from the impacts of the pandemic.

| Recommendation | Project Category |
|--|-------------------------|
| Activate Naylor Court through Enhanced Placemaking | Public Realm |
| Develop a Downtown Public Realm Action Plan | Public Realm |
| Develop an Access Plan for the Assabet River | Public Realm |
| Implement Wayfinding for Municipal Parking | Public Realm |
| Encourage Private Realm Improvements Through Revamped Business Environment Enhancement Program | Private Realm |
| Incentivize Upper Floor Residential Development | Private Realm |
| Enhance Code Enforcement Efforts to Improve Downtown Aesthetics | Private Realm |
| Create a Branding and Marketing Campaign | Revenue/Sales |
| Build Organizational Capacity of the Cultural District | Administrative Capacity |
| Create a Commercial Tenant Attraction and Retention Strategy | Tenant Mix |

Diagnostic

Key Findings



CUSTOMER BASE

A relatively small population adds to the downtown charm

Maynard is home to 10,746 residents¹, and just under 500 people currently live within the boundaries of the downtown study area. Median household income in the study area is \$95,627, which is slightly lower than the rest of Maynard overall at \$105,088. Maynard's median household income is less than its four neighboring towns Acton, Concord, Stow, and Sudbury, whose median income is between approximately \$140,000-\$150,000.

The population in Maynard is relatively well-educated - 56% of residents age 25+ have earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 43.7% statewide. Maynard is also slightly older than the statewide average with a median age of 43 years. However, 30% of the population is under age 25 and 17% is aged 65 years or older. The town is 89% white, 5.6% Hispanic, 4.4% Asian, and 2.3% Black/African American.²

Despite the small residential population within the study area, the presence of businesses that provide personal services, such as barbershops and salons, as well as restaurants, bars, performance venues, and art galleries provide a draw for residents and visitors alike.

¹Source: 2020 Decennial Census

²Source: ESRI Demographic Indicators, 2020



PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

A desirable village feel with a variety of local business offerings

Maynard is a compact New England Mill town with access to both Routes 128 and 495, and the Assabet River Rail Trail links to the neighboring towns of Acton, Hudson, and Stow. The Downtown Maynard study area, as defined for this RRP program, generally aligns with the Maynard Cultural District; however, it excludes the area bounded by Florida Road, Summer Street, and Florida Court, which is primarily residential.

The current condition of downtown's public realm varies. When surveyed, business owners in the area were generally satisfied with the downtown's safety, comfort, and access for customers and employees. Business owners felt more neutral about the condition of public spaces, streets, and sidewalks (see *Business Survey Report* in the Appendix). While some areas, including those around the Mill & Main development, have been recently updated, other sidewalks and streets show signs of deterioration.

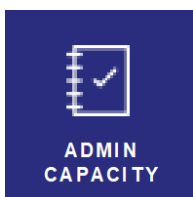
Despite downtown's compact, walkable commercial district with a variety of local business offerings, the private realm is somewhat lackluster. The RRP private realm scoring exercise found that privately owned properties in the study area are in decent condition but could be improved. Four of the private realm categories (window, outdoor display/dining, façade, and lighting) were graded at B (out of A, B, C, or F), indicating that improvements to commercial buildings would help boost the attractiveness of the downtown.



Arts and culture is a driving force for downtown businesses

Maynard's study area (.12 square miles) is predominately a commercial district that includes a mix of restaurant, retail, and business services. There are 97 ground floor storefronts in downtown including personal services, restaurants, retail, art galleries, banks, and offices. As of spring 2021, 8 storefronts (8%) were vacant. It is estimated that 5 business closures occurred since March 2020 though not necessarily due to impacts of COVID-19. The study area also encompasses a former mill that has been converted into first-class office space known as Mill & Main, and is home to a range of companies representing technology, communications, logistics, and other business-facing enterprises. Mill & Main was approximately 50% occupied as of spring 2021.

155 businesses were operating in the downtown in spring 2021 including the Maynard Outdoor Store, a well-established retail anchor. There is no single dominant business type in the downtown. Services such as salons and personal care represent the highest proportion of businesses at 17% followed by professional, scientific, and technical services (15%), accommodation and food service (15%), and retail trade (11%). Given the overlap with the Cultural District, arts, entertainment, and recreation currently comprise 6% of businesses. ArtSpace, located less than ¼ mile from the business district, is home to 80 artisan studios, a gallery and the Acme Theater. ArtSpace also temporarily opened a satellite gallery called UFO ArtSpace within the downtown study area during the RRP process.



Town capacity is bolstered by dedicated volunteers

Downtown Maynard has many active stakeholders including the Town of Maynard, which has accomplished much with limited staff. Other active municipal stakeholders include the Maynard Economic Development Committee and the Maynard Cultural Council. The latter entity has volunteer leadership and oversees the Maynard Cultural District.

Maynard's sizable art community is very active but has little formal structure and is seemingly underutilized as an economic development asset. There is interest in developing the organizational and administrative capacity of the Cultural District to partner with the Town and Economic Development Committee to improve collaboration, leverage impact of events, and spur economic development. This capacity building will help enable the Cultural Council to formalize partnerships between groups currently working independently within the district on various events and consolidate their coordination under the Cultural District. This will allow the town to leverage existing and new events as much as possible in order to benefit short-term recovery and create a model for medium and long-range recovery.



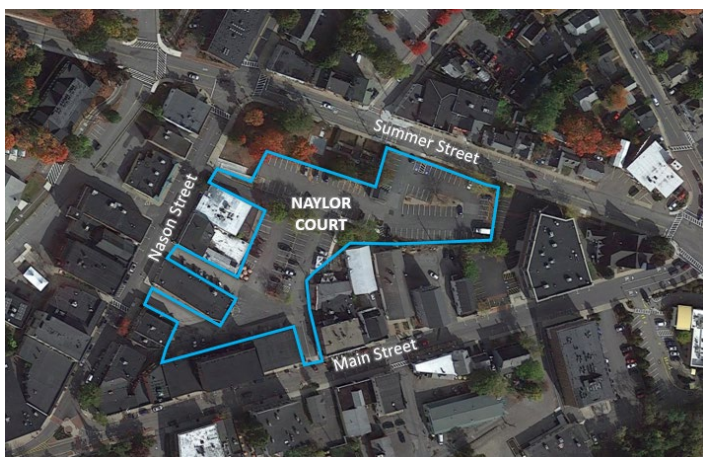
Highlights from the Physical Environment

OUTDOOR SPACES FOR DINING AND SOCIALIZING

COVID-19 has placed increased emphasis on the importance of having attractive and inviting outdoor spaces for dining, socializing, and other events. This importance is reflected in downtown Maynard's RRP business survey, with 85% of respondents rating the improvement/development of public spaces and seating areas as moderately to very important. Moreover, 87% of respondents rated more opportunities for outdoor dining and selling as moderately to very important – with 51% rating it as very important.

In downtown Maynard, the awarding of a Shared Streets and Spaces grant enabled the Town to temporarily extend outdoor dining on public and private property while also providing traffic calming equipment. The Town offered a retail parklet program at the same time as the outdoor dining program, but it did not receive the same amount of interest. The current and successful temporary outdoor dining program is being considered as a model for permanent outdoor dining.

Outdoor spaces are likely to continue to be important in downtowns post-COVID. Naylor Court, located in the heart of Maynard's downtown, is ripe with potential as an outdoor public space and destination. The area is a triangle framed by Summer, Nason, and Main Streets, and contains a significant collection of businesses, including restaurants; a large municipal parking area; and Veterans' Memorial Park. Activating underutilized public spaces – like Naylor Court – will help support the economic recovery of downtown businesses.



Naylor Court. Source: BSC Group

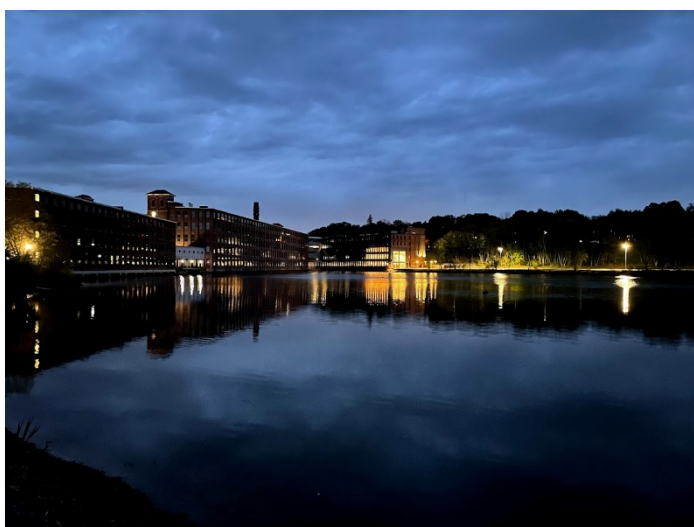


Assabet River along the Mill & Main complex. Photo: BSC Group

THE ASSABET RIVER: A HIDDEN ASSET IN DOWNTOWN MAYNARD

A vital but unused resource in the downtown experience is the Assabet River. Over the years, like many New England communities, the town has turned its back on the river with many commercial uses hiding and blocking access to the river. Restoring physical and visual access to the river can provide recreational opportunities for community members, many of whom may spend more time in Maynard as the work from home trend continues. Moreover, as the COVID-19 pandemic revealed, access to open space resources is crucial for the well-being of communities.

River access will create another downtown destination for visitors, helping to bring people into Maynard's downtown to experience its local businesses and culture. Restoring visibility of the river can also become an opportunity for historic and ecological education as well as support businesses such as restaurants and bars with riverfront decks.



Clockwise from top left: View of Main Street near Mill + Main; Storefronts along Nason Street; New dispensary on Nason Street; Temporary outdoor dining on Main Street; Main Street storefronts; Mill Pond at Mill & Main.

Photos: BSC Group



Highlights from the Business Environment

DOWNTOWN MAYNARD: A CULTURAL VILLAGE

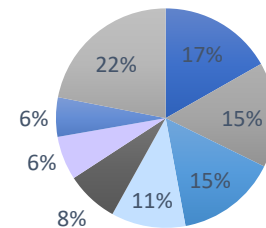
In 2017, Maynard established the Maynard Cultural District bringing art, history, and recreation into the forefront of the downtown. Cultural anchors in the downtown include the Maynard Public Library, ArtSpace, Acme Theater, art galleries, the Fine Arts Theatre, and access to the Assabet River Rail Trail. Despite the social disruption created by the COVID-19 pandemic, Maynard's arts community continues to contribute to the life of the town with a full calendar of much-loved activities, including the annual Maynard Fest.

The town's growing arts scene includes a newer music and event venue in The Sanctuary, a converted church. It also has coffee shops, pubs, and restaurants that showcase food from around the world including Thai, Mexican, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Indian.

BOOSTING FOOT TRAFFIC TO SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES

66% of respondents to the RRP survey of downtown businesses indicated that COVID-19 resulted in a loss of revenue. Moreover, 64% of businesses reported having fewer on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID, with 54% of businesses reporting a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more. One contributing factor was the pandemic's influence on behavior changes toward more online shopping, remote work, and other virtual interactions. As the Town and downtown recover from COVID's economic impacts, attracting customers and businesses will be crucial for creating a sustainable economic base. Enhancing the public realm, improving the facades of commercial buildings, activating underutilized public space, and other efforts to create an even more vibrant downtown will go a long way toward achieving this goal.

Mix of Businesses



- Other Services (except Public Administration)
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- Accommodation & Food Services
- Retail Trade
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Educational Services
- Arts, Entertainment and Recreation
- Other

Mix of business by NAICS category. Source: Field Data Collection, April 2021



The Maynard Outdoor Store. Photo: BSC Group

Project Recommendations

Activate Naylor Court through Enhanced Placemaking

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | Naylor Court (Downtown Maynard) |
| Origin | Town of Maynard & Economic Development Committee |
| Budget |  Low Budget (<\$50,000)/Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) – Budget will depend upon design, fabrication, installation |
| Timeframe |  Short-term (< 5 Years) |
| Risk |  Medium Risk – Potential push back from businesses over loss of parking; funding availability; design/implementation costs; legal and liability concerns; damage to installations |
| Key Performance Indicators | Increase in downtown pedestrian activity; increase in downtown sales/receipts; overall user sentiment of Naylor Court; event attendee numbers; number of events; abutter buy-in for consolidated refuse area |
| Partners & Resources | <p>Maynard Office of Municipal Services, Cultural Council, Economic Development Committee, Council on Aging, Parking Authority, Naylor Court businesses, Maynard Farmers' Market, local businesses and organizations</p> <p>Potential Funding Sources: MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces; ARPA funding (TBD); Commonwealth Places, MassDevelopment; CDBG; Foundation support; Crowdfunding (Patronicity); NEFA; National Association of Realtors Placemaking Grants; Massachusetts Cultural Council; AARP Community Challenge</p> |



Naylor Court. Photo: BSC Group

Diagnostic

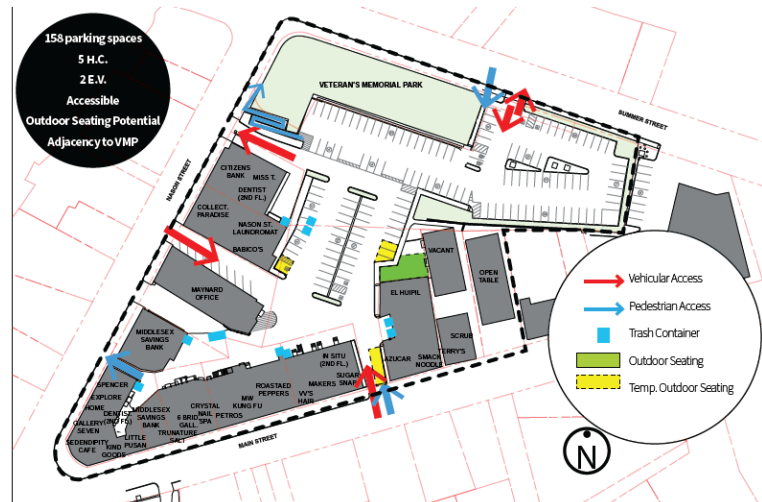
COVID-19 has placed increased emphasis on the importance of having attractive and inviting outdoor spaces for dining, socializing, and other events. This importance is reflected in downtown Maynard's RRP business survey, with 85% of respondents rating the improvement/development of public spaces and seating areas as moderately to very important. Moreover, 87% of respondents rated more opportunities for outdoor dining and selling as moderately to very important – with 51% rating it as very important.

Naylor Court is the heart of Maynard's downtown. The area is a triangle framed by Summer, Nason, and Main Streets, and contains a significant collection of businesses, including restaurants; a large municipal parking area; and Veterans' Memorial Park. The area is a combination of buildings, parking, driveways, outdoor storage, storefronts (and rear), offices, and a modest amount of outdoor dining. However, the convenient location of the parking lot connects Naylor Court to the larger downtown and its fabric of businesses. The area currently lacks cohesion and is dangerous for pedestrians yet has been identified in previous planning studies as having a tremendous potential for being transformed into a vibrant destination.

A placemaking study was completed for Naylor Court in January 2021 through the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, which paired the Town with a consultant to investigate the possibilities of moving the dumpsters in Naylor Court to a centralized collection point as part of a larger economic development strategy. The planning team conducted a survey using two layout scenarios, with only three businesses in Naylor Court responding – and their responses were mixed. Input from residents was also mixed in terms of support for this specific project; in general, people were in favor but had more questions.

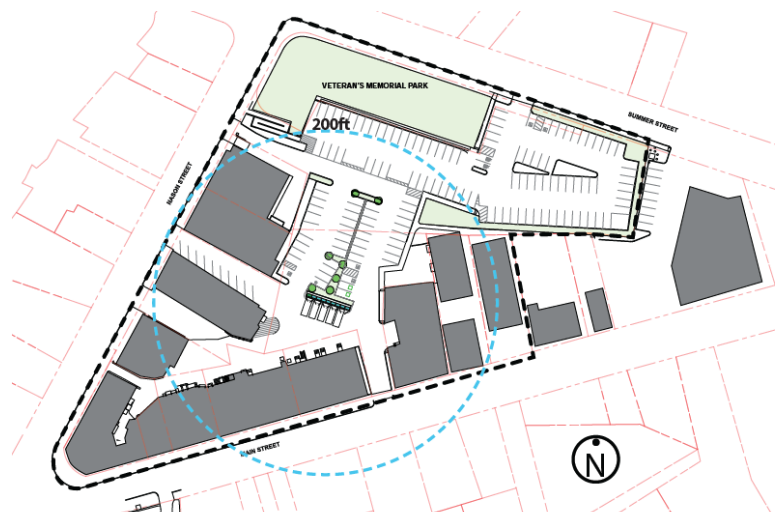
Activating Naylor Court through temporary improvements and pop-up events will serve two purposes – it will draw visitors to this area and support area businesses while building support for permanent placemaking improvements such as the refuse consolidation.

Parking, Access, and Usage



Existing Parking, Access, and Usage in Naylor Court. Source: Harriman

Proposed Layout



Proposed Layout for Centralized Dumpsters in Naylor Court. Source: Harriman

Action Item

Activate Naylor Court through temporary placemaking activities to draw visitors to this area and support area businesses. Events and temporary improvements can build support for permanent improvements such as the proposed dumpster consolidation.

Short-Term Action Items

- Convert north parking row and drive aisle to temporary park space with public seating and planters (potential to reuse moveable barriers the Town acquired through a Shared Streets and Spaces grant)
- Install lighting (e.g., festive string lighting) to create a sense of increased comfort for visitors
- Add asphalt art to temporarily address pedestrian circulation issues
- Install temporary wayfinding signage designed by local artist(s) to guide visitors to/from nearby businesses and attractions
- Host pop-up event(s) in the temporary park space

Longer-Term Action Items

- Move dumpsters in Naylor Court to a centralized collection point
- Develop a safe and effective pedestrian circulation network throughout Naylor Court
- Carve out permanent public space within Naylor Court

Process

Engage the Community: Invite the community to offer their vision, inspiration, examples, and ideas as to how to activate Naylor Court through placemaking.

Develop: Translate the community’s vision into a plan and program of uses for Naylor Court (e.g., temporary installations such as string lights, asphalt art, and planters, types of pop-up events, and potentially more permanent improvements).

Plan: Identify/obtain funding sources and a project implementation timeline. Determine permanency of installments and determine what success looks like prior to any project implementation.

Partner: Partner with business and community organizations that have the capacity and desire to assist with placemaking efforts in Naylor Court.

Find: Find appropriate artists and include them in the process.

Implement: Demonstrate impact through a temporary pilot event or project (e.g., partner with the Maynard Farmers' Market to host popup markets on a Sunday or a series of Sundays, partner with a local brewery to host a pop-up beer garden). Create a series of special events surrounding the project.

Build: Build off momentum for future efforts. Obtain feedback and adapt efforts for future programming.

Expand: Consider implementing larger-scale and more permanent improvements to solidify Naylor Court as a destination. Events and temporary improvements can build support for permanent improvements such as the proposed refuse consolidation for Naylor Court.



Best Practice

Attracting People to Under-Activated Spaces in Downtown



Location

Frost Alley, Somerville, MA

Origin

Rafi Properties LLC / Somernova Campus, Neighborways Design & Principal Group

Budget

Labor (Planning, Design, Outreach): \$30,000
Materials: \$20,000

Activation Strategies

Engagement

- Outreach and engagement with City, abutters, tenants
- Online and in-person

Traffic Calming and Placemaking

- Greenery
- Art
- Temporary Closures

Programming Potential

- Art Markets
- Urban Frisbee Golf
- Meetups
- Movie Nights

Provided by RRP SME Consultant:
Neighborways Design

Source: Public Realm Best Practice Compendium:
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/public-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download> (p. 117)

Develop a Downtown Public Realm Action Plan

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | Downtown Maynard Census Tracts 3641.01 and 3641.02 |
| Origin | Town of Maynard staff & site visits & stakeholder engagement (business owner and property owner) |
| Budget |  <p>Low budget for planning effort & large budget for implementation</p> <p>Funding: MA Downtown Initiative (planning); State Transportation Improvement Program; MA Complete Streets (via an update to Tier 3 Prioritization Plan); MA Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program; MassWorks funding (in conjunction with any future development projects in Maynard); ARPA funding sources; Town funds and development agreements</p> |
| Timeframe |  <p>Short-term for the plan; medium to long-term for implementation</p> |
| Risk |  <p>Medium risk: political will (if improvements impact parking); fiscal constraints</p> |
| Key Performance Indicators | <p>Plan development phase: number of partners engaged in plan development; public input supporting plan strategies; and completion of streetscape improvement plan that achieves broad community support</p> <p>Implementation phase: number of projects completed that were identified in plan; annual revisiting of plan with partners; number of funding partners in projects; reduction in the number of pedestrian/vehicle conflicts and collisions; more pedestrian activity (increased foot traffic); more bicyclists attracted from the Assabet River Rail Trail into downtown</p> |
| Partners & Resources | <p>Town staff (Municipal Services and DPW), Economic Development Committee, Planning Board, Cultural Council, Council on Aging, downtown businesses and property owners, community members, local organizations, and elected officials</p> <p>Resources: A MassDOT Complete Streets Tier 3 application was submitted in Fall 2021 that includes pedestrian improvements at the intersection of Summer Street and Nason Street</p> |



Main Street, Maynard. Source: BSC Group

Diagnostic

With strategically located nodes in and on Main, Nason, and Summer Streets, the Maynard Cultural District contains numerous key destinations including the de facto heart of downtown. In general, the area is very walkable, with a continuous pedestrian loop around the downtown and Naylor Court. However, the public realm is somewhat lackluster, and there is a noticeable absence of benches and trash receptacles, as well as a significant gap in activated frontage on the eastern portion of the loop. These gaps serve to discourage visitors from strolling, browsing, and shopping. The importance of improving the streetscape downtown is also reflected in the RRP business survey, with 77% of respondents indicating that it is moderately to very important.

In response to unforeseen challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis, the process of developing a public realm action plan can support the reimagining of how the public right-of-way can be used to support local businesses and the Cultural District as a whole. As businesses and offices reopen, public spaces and streets play an even bigger role as catalysts for economic activity, paths for multi-modal travel, and spaces for safe movement. A cohesive and attractive public realm will reinforce the downtown experience and help solidify Maynard as a destination.

Development of a public realm action plan for the Cultural District can help sustain the momentum that has harnessed many factions of the cultural and business economy together for a short-term economic recovery and provide a model for economic recovery in the future. Implementing the plan will help cement and sustain a vibrant, welcoming, and economically viable district for all stakeholders.



River Street Municipal Parking Lot. Source: Google Maps.

Action Item

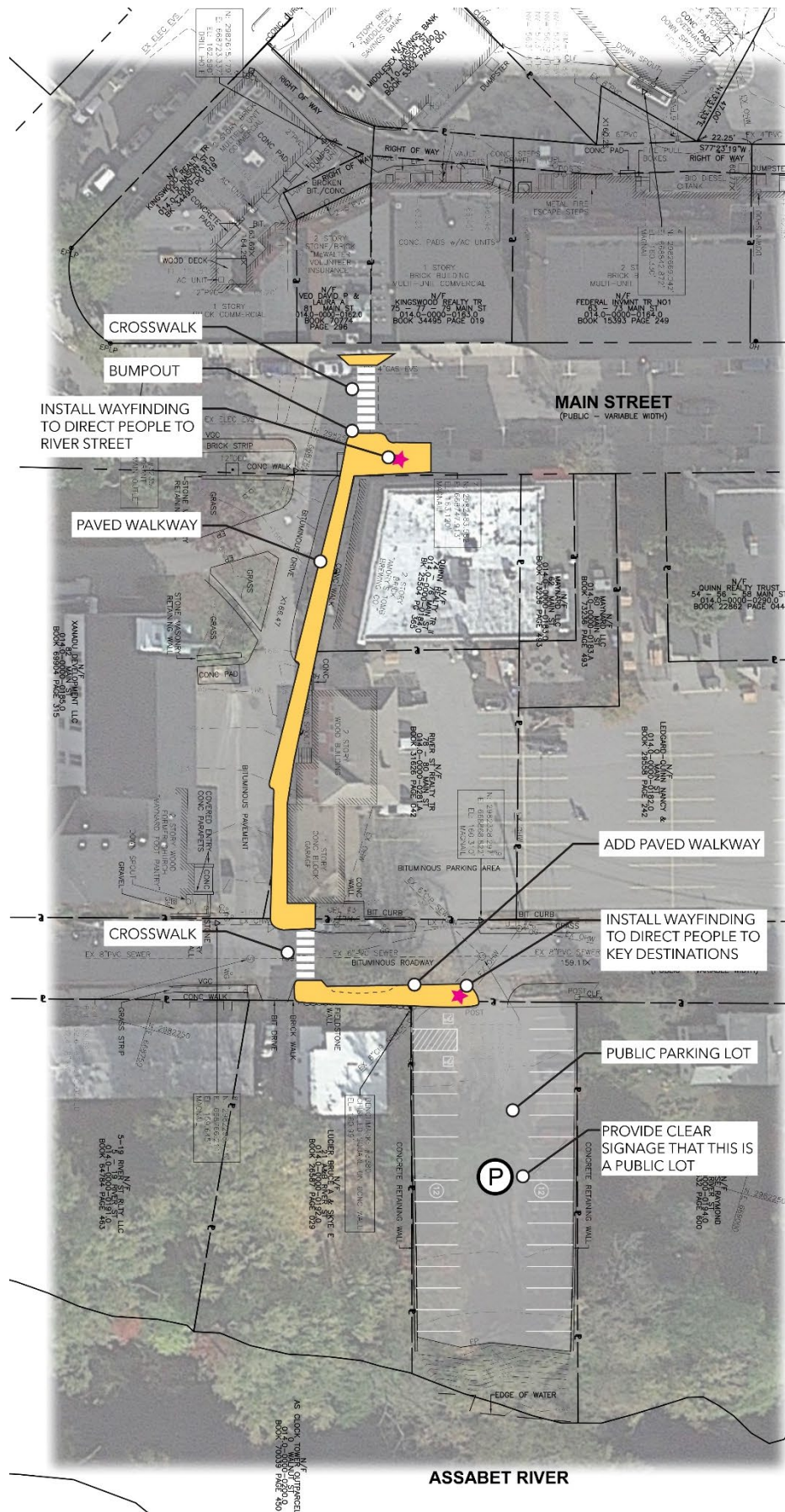
Develop a comprehensive Public Realm Action Plan to address downtown infrastructure to support small businesses, with a focus on multimodal improvements and connectivity, including Complete Streets / shared streets, accessibility, parking, and aesthetics. In addition to major capital projects, there are opportunities for “tactical” interventions that can transform the public realm through lower-cost, rapid implementation. The Public Realm Action Plan will allow the Town to identify, celebrate, and leverage placemaking opportunities in the downtown street network.

Some of the priority public realm projects already identified include the following:

- **Improvement of the River Street municipal parking lot and its pedestrian connections.** The River Street municipal parking lot is an underutilized asset that can support commercial activity along Main Street and the downtown area. To increase its utilization the town needs to provide signage directing motorists to its location and provide a clear and safe pedestrian path from the parking lot to Main Street. Specific actions include:
 - Improve parking lot pavement and add lighting
 - Install signage directing motorists to the parking lot and provide clear signage identifying the lot as a public parking facility
 - Install a sidewalk, crosswalk, and paved walking path connecting the parking lot to Main Street - see diagram on the following page
- **Widening of Main Street sidewalks in appropriate locations between Nason and Waltham Streets.** Sidewalks along Main Street in downtown need to be upgraded, and when doing so the Town should widen sidewalks to better accommodate pedestrian activity and safety. Widening the sidewalks in strategic locations will enable permanent outdoor dining, enhance the commercial environment, and bolster the economic vitality of abutting businesses. Where sidewalks will be widened will be determined in the Public Realm Plan described in the Process section.
- **Provision of additional streetscape amenities.** Install benches, trash receptacles, plantings and other streetscape amenities to enhance the pedestrian experience and create a more cohesive district.

Other Considerations:

- Coordinate with town-wide branding and wayfinding efforts: Signage, colors, and other design features included as part of this effort should align with concurrent efforts related to branding and placemaking throughout the town.
- Incorporate green infrastructure elements to help achieve both environmental and mobility goals, e.g. bioswales.
- Promote community branding through functional public art, like Chelmsford's beech tree themed street furniture.



River Street Municipal Lot Pedestrian Access Concept Plan. Source: BSC Group

Process

1. **Scope**
Establish goals and evaluation criteria along with deliverables. The Town should consider whether to focus on the entire study area (including connections to Mill + Main and ArtSpace) or specific streets within the downtown (e.g., Main Street and Summer Street) to maximize their resources and available funding.
2. **Funding**
Identify a funding source and secure funding to prepare a Public Realm Action Plan. Funding sources could include, but are not limited to, Town funding, mitigation funds from local development projects, or potential state funding sources. When requesting funding, the Town should highlight that investment in this initial planning effort will provide the Town with a document to then apply for substantial grant funding for implementation.
3. **Planning Process with Advisory Committee**
The lead entities (potentially the Town of Maynard and Maynard Economic Development Committee) will convene an advisory committee, with representation from major stakeholders. The leads will develop an RFP for consulting services to develop a Downtown Streetscape/Public Realm Action Plan. The leads, with the support of the advisory committee, will publicize the RFP to solicit proposals, review submissions, and hire a consultant.
4. **Refine and begin scope of work with consultant.**
Once the consultant is selected, they should finalize a scope of services with the lead entities, to include some or all the following:
 - A public realm action plan document detailing the processes, vision, goals, strategies, findings, implementation guidelines, and recommendations. The document should contain visuals to simplify complex concepts.
 - Specific design concepts with short- and mid-term solutions that are graphic in nature with limited text to describe concepts.
 - Cost estimate and phasing plan to describe a logical implementation strategy.
 - A summary of community engagement process and findings.
 - Presentations to Downtown Maynard stakeholders.
 - A phased implementation schedule that contemplates levels of funding availability.



View of Summer Street and the Fine Arts Theatre in Maynard. Source: BSC Group



Best Practice

Downtown Hudson Rotary Redesign



Location

Hudson, MA

Thoughtful Public Engagement Leads to Community Endorsed Public Realm Design

Source: BSC Group

Main Street in Downtown Hudson has been experiencing an economic and cultural renaissance. Dark and empty just a few years ago, storefronts along Main Street are now occupied with a mix of locally-owned retail shops, restaurants, and an award-winning brewery. With its urban vibe, and the close proximity to the Assabet River Rail Trail, Downtown Hudson has become a premier destination in the 495/Metrowest region. Downtown is located just east of I-495 at the confluence of Route 85 and Route 62, and is anchored by an iconic traffic rotary.

In early 2016, a fateful decision was made to cut down some existing landscaping in the center of the Rotary in the middle of the night, which was an emotional shock to the Community. Planning Department Staff realized the community's attachment to this iconic rotary, and that this rotary was the true gateway into Hudson knitting together the Downtown streetscape. Department Staff decided to turn this unfortunate set of events into a positive, community-driven rotary redesign process, recognizing that the rotary was more than just transportation infrastructure. Over the course of 8 months, the Project Team—consisting of the Planning Department, the BSC Group, a Steering Committee (DPW, ADA Coordinator, local business owners, and the Chamber of Commerce)—worked hand in hand with the community to re-imagine the function of this iconic rotary for all users and how it knits together the Downtown.

At the beginning of the Hudson Rotary project, it was clear that a comprehensive, engaging and innovative public outreach program would be needed to generate successful design solutions to gain widespread community support. The planning effort incorporated presentation and dialogue techniques to ensure all community engagements were thoughtful, productive, and inclusive. The robust, transparent, and community-driven design process included:

- Assembling historic images of the project area and encouraging the public to bring pictures to all meetings, allowing the community to engage in a positive reflection of “Rotary nostalgia,” and to describe what elements and attributes of the Rotary should be preserved and/or enhanced.
- Clear, visually stimulating graphics at public forums, posted on the Planning Department Facebook page, and sent out via a “Rotary project newsletter” on MailChimp, helped the community understand the concepts and the various tradeoffs with each concept - the graphics encouraged and challenged the community to think “outside of the box” and not limit improvements to only traditional transportation solutions.
- A large conversation about the future of the rotary during project steering committee meetings, on social media, at business association meetings, and at the official public forms.

This planning process could be replicated in any community setting to develop concepts and priorities for complex urban design and transportation challenges. By putting the pencil into the community's hand, the placemaking process can successfully guide the development of multimodal transportation solutions, not the other way around. Other successful aspects of this planning process that other planners should consider include: 1) understanding asset management and maintenance of streetscape elements; 2) fire department and emergency; and 3) preservation (to the greatest extent feasible) of existing on-street parking. Throughout this process while the community was challenged to develop design concepts, the Project Team ensured that the Department of Public Works, Police Department, and most importantly, the Board of Selectmen, provided the “reality checks,” especially related to budgetary constraints.

Develop an Access Plan for the Assabet River

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | Downtown Maynard, especially riverfront properties Census Tracts 3641.01 and 3641.02 |
| Origin | Maynard Economic Development Committee & 2020 Maynard Master Plan |
| Budget |  Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000) – lower initial cost to complete plans and obtain permits, higher cost for installation |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) – timeline refers to plan development only; implementation will require longer timeline |
| Risk |  Low Risk – project requires funding and a project champion to manage the planning process, but otherwise no major risks |
| Key Performance Indicators | The number of partners who get engaged in plan development; public input supporting plan strategies; completion of river access plan that achieves broad community support; completion of project(s) identified in plan |
| Partners & Resources | <p>Town Staff (Office of Municipal Services, Department of Public Works), Conservation Commission, Economic Development Committee, OARS, Inc.</p> <p>Potential Funding Sources: EDA Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Competitive Grant Program; Mass Trails Grant Program; Community Preservation Act Funding; Massachusetts Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program; Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant; Planning Assistance Grants (if a climate resiliency lens is used)</p> |



View of Assabet River and Rail Trail bridge from Main Street, Maynard. Photo: BSC Group

Diagnostic

Maynard has chosen to prioritize the downtown experience in its economic recovery and future growth. A vital but unutilized resource in the downtown experience is the Assabet River. As with many communities, rivers provided a valuable resource around which communities grew and prospered. Not only a valuable natural and water resource, rivers were also used for power generation and other industrial, manufacturing and commerce needs. Over the years, like many New England communities, the town has turned its back on the river with many commercial uses hiding and blocking access to the river.

Restoring physical and visual access to the river can provide recreational and well-being opportunities for community members, many of whom may spend more time in Maynard as the work from home trend continues. As the COVID-19 pandemic revealed, access to open space resources is crucial for the well-being of communities.

Access to the river can open up new recreational opportunities for residents. The use of the river for non-motorized boating, fishing and other passive recreational uses may be possible. River access creates a destination for visitors, helping to bring people into Maynard's downtown to experience its local businesses and culture. Access to and visibility of the river can become an opportunity for historic and ecological interpretation and education. River access can support businesses such as restaurants and bars with riverfront decks. It also has the opportunity to build community and stewardship of the river and local ecosystem as was experienced in Great Barrington, MA (see best practice sheet).

Action Items

Restoring river access is a long-term project (>10 years), therefore, a phased approach will be necessary

- Define the project area, including points of access from neighboring streets and the location of pathways the public will use to access the river, i.e. ADA issues and kayak/canoe portage
- Identify private and public land parcels along the river corridor that provide opportunities for river access and explore what actions should be taken for priority access points and to preserve future options for river access
- Encourage the formation of a local independent "friends of" group to help with access development as well as long-term stewardship and maintenance
- Engage existing aligned stakeholders such as OARS, Inc. and Friends of the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge
- Conduct outreach to potential public partners and funding sources

The following are considerations for all phases of river access planning and implementation:

- Public/stakeholder engagement
- Public, private, and non-profit partners
- Regulatory and environmental conditions
- Planning and design
- Protecting and enhancing the riverfront environment
- Identifying different waterfront and in-water activities and uses
- Funding sources
- Stewardship/management

Process

Phase I: Visioning and Assessment

Visioning and Assessment defines and establishes overall goals and collection of baseline information for the project area and begins the stakeholder and partner engagement process. Elements for this phase include the following:

- Establish a river access committee and establish project goals and priorities
- Quantify river access needs, uses, opportunities and constraints
- Gain a thorough understanding of land ownership and rights along the Maynard Assabet River corridor
- Gain a thorough understanding of the environmental and cultural histories/conditions along the Maynard Assabet River corridor
- Gain a thorough understanding of any Town, State and Federal regulatory jurisdiction along the Maynard Assabet River corridor
- Research the potential of any site contamination along the riverbank which is not unusual in any older industrial area

Phase II: Design & Permitting

Design and Permitting begins with a consensus building process and continues through vetting the feasibility of access option designs, and then final design and permitting of selected options. Process steps for this phase include:

- Formalize a design review stakeholder group
- Hold regular public design information presentations
- Outreach to funding sources as the project gains definition
- Build consensus on project priorities and program elements
- Develop and initial estimate of costs for design, construction and acquisition
- Secure funding for project design - either the entire project or priority project(s)
- Complete site survey, locate property line boundaries, wetland delineation and documentation of other base conditions
- Prepare construction documents for the preferred design to be used for permitting and then bidding documentation
- Apply for and obtain permits for the preferred design

Phase III: Implementation

Implementation involves:

- Finalizing property acquisitions or easements
- Procuring construction services
- Construction of river access amenities and features
- Putting into place river access maintenance management and stewardship plans



View of Assabet River adjacent to Mill + Main. Photo: BSC Group



Best Practice

Housatonic River Walk



Location

Great Barrington, MA

The Cultural Landscape Foundation

<https://tclf.org/landscapes/housatonic-river-walk>

Although native son W.E.B. Du Bois first appealed to the citizens of Great Barrington in 1930 to clean up the Housatonic River, which had been polluted by decades of toxic dumping, efforts to restore the waterway weren't undertaken until 1988. What began as a volunteer clean-up project resulted in the establishment of a half-mile greenway trail along the western bank of the river in the town's center. Over the course of 25 years, community members have restored the riverbanks' native vegetation and constructed a riverside pathway, designed by Peter S. Jensen. The landscape reclamation replaced invasive species with native dogwood, ferns, willows and asters.

The pathway traverses private property, running behind commercial and residential buildings, and comprises two completed sections linked by River Street. The looped upstream section, first opened in 1992, terminates at the William Stanley Overlook. The downstream section includes the W.E.B. Du Bois River Garden, a park constructed in 2000 on a former trash heap, very near where Du Bois was born in 1868. The raised garden beds contain native woodland plants, while a berm is planted with sumac and native understory. The adjacent rain garden filters runoff and curbs erosion with native wetland plants, and the trail surface is permeable to further infiltrate rain water.

Managed by the Great Barrington Land Conservancy and now cared for by Greenagers, the Housatonic River Walk was designated a National Recreation Trail in 2009.

Implement Wayfinding for Municipal Parking

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Public Realm |
| Location | Downtown Maynard Census Tracts 3641.01 and 3641.02 |
| Origin | Town of Maynard and Stakeholder Engagement Meeting (Property Owner) |
| Budget |  Low Budget (<\$50,000) |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) – design and installation could occur in < 1 year |
| Risk |  Low Risk – project requires funding but otherwise no major risks |
| Key Performance Indicators | Municipal parking lots with official names; # of standardized public parking signs installed |
| Partners & Resources | Town Staff (Municipal Services, Department of Public Works), Maynard Cultural Council Potential Funding Sources: DHCD Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (planning); MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Program (implementation) & Local Funds |



Existing Parking Conditions Map. Source: Maynard Parking Study prepared by Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Diagnostic

A well-run downtown parking program supports economic well-being by maximizing availability and convenience for downtown visitors, residents, and employees. While local parking studies (conducted in 2006, 2015, and 2017) have shown that current downtown parking inventory is adequate, 26% of downtown business owners surveyed for this RRP note that parking regulations pose obstacles to business operation and changes in public parking availability, management or policies was the rated the second most important physical environment change needed to support downtown recovery. Inconsistent signage and enforcement are two specific challenges that have been identified.

As part of Maynard's overall downtown strategy and recovery plan, the town expects higher parking demand due to increased use of the rail trail and other recreational amenities, greater occupancy at Mill and Main, increased retail traffic from marijuana dispensaries, and increased activities/events driven by the Cultural District, among others.

Maynard's downtown has several municipal lots that are available for downtown visitors and residents. Currently, there is no advance wayfinding signage to direct visitors and residents to these lots, nor are the lots identified by consistent names. This creates challenges for people looking for parking and encourages longer-term parkers to lots while leaving street parking for short-term visits.

Action Item

Establish official names for each public lot -

Municipal lots are identified by different names in town documents. Consistent names assist with wayfinding and allow the names to be used in a variety of tools and guides. Ensure consistency at the start of a wayfinding effort.

Identify key locations for directional signage –

Drivers need to be provided with advance notice of available parking so they can make decisions about the most efficient route to travel to find parking. Identifying key travel locations to place vehicle-oriented signage, in advance of parking lot entrances, will help drivers make decisions and efficiently reach their destination.

Install standardized parking wayfinding signs at key locations –

Municipal parking sign designs should be standardized and designed appropriately for drivers. Including travel distance and walking times can further assist in driver decisions. These signs may also educate drivers about less well-known or utilized lots.

Maintain wayfinding program –

Maynard should seek feedback from businesses and the public about the wayfinding signs. The Town may also compare lot utilization before and after installation. A designated entity should be responsible for monitoring the condition of and maintaining signs once installed.



Entrance and Signage to the Naylor Court Parking Lot, Maynard. Photo Credit: BSC Group

Other Considerations:

- Coordinate with town-wide branding and wayfinding efforts: Signage, colors, and other design features included as part of this effort should align with concurrent efforts to enhancing branding and placemaking throughout the town.
- This recommendation ties directly into the proposed improvement of the River Street municipal parking lot and its pedestrian connections. Wayfinding signage must be consistent to reinforce downtown Maynard as a destination.

Process

1. Because stakeholders have identified challenges with unclear or inconsistent parking policies and enforcement, Maynard should conduct an audit of parking policies throughout the downtown and address any discrepancies first. This will ensure support the inclusion of current and clear information in the wayfinding system.
2. Issue an RFP to develop a wayfinding system to include (Maynard has conducted some of the initial data gathering steps in-house):
 - Audit of existing signage
 - Establishment of clear wayfinding goals and objectives, and agreement on project boundaries
 - Stakeholder engagement – Cultural Council, businesses, residents, etc.
 - User identification and journey mapping
 - A family of wayfinding sign types
 - Key destinations to be included in the sign program (if any others beyond public parking lots)
 - A sign location plan
 - A signage message schedule with consistent nomenclature
 - Conceptual and final sign design concepts
 - Materials and mounting recommendations
 - A design intent bid package that can be issued to signage fabricators for pricing and installation
 - Sign fabrication and installation oversight (review shop drawings, answer RFIs, develop punch lists, etc.)
 - Bid package to sign fabricators should include developing and installing prototype signage at one or two locations before rollout of the full system.
3. Identify what Town department(s) will be responsible for installation, maintenance, and periodic updating of sign system.



BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Directional sign system for a historic downtown (Santa Barbara, CA).

The system:


- Reflects a unique visual identity that separates the waterfront from the downtown
- Design themes based on local architecture
- Includes pedestrian maps and parking signage

Source: Hunt Design

More at: <https://www.huntdesign.com/projects/signage-wayfinding/cities/santa-barbara-signage-wayfinding/>

Photo Credit: Matt Givot Photography.

Encourage Private Realm Improvements Through Revamped Business Environment Enhancement Program

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Private Realm |
| Location | Downtown Maynard Census Tracts 3641.01 and 3641.02 |
| Origin | Diagnostic phase & stakeholder engagement (property owner) & Maynard Economic Development Committee “Coming to Consensus” document |
| Budget |  Low Budget (<\$50,000) to Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000) – On-going costs: staff to manage program, design assistance (if provided), program funds for projects |
| Timeframe |  Short-Term (< 5 years) – Town is able to implement quickly provided allocation of funds |
| Risk |  Low Risk – Biggest risks are: a) obtaining new and sustainable funding sources to support this program; b) securing contractors to complete the façade improvement program upgrades |
| Key Performance Indicators | Amount (\$) of external funding obtained for this program; number of business and property owners submitting applications; number of completed projects and private investment leveraged |
| Partners & Resources | Town of Maynard (Planning Division of the Office of Municipal Services, Select Board, Planning Board), Maynard Business Alliance, property owners, business owners, Chamber of Commerce Funding: ARPA Small Business Support; Community Development Block Grants; Revolving Loan Funds (see text box in recommendation for additional ideas) |
| Diagnostic | <p>Despite Maynard’s compact, walkable downtown featuring a diverse mix of local commercial establishments, respondents to the business survey conducted during the first phase of the RRP program indicated that they were least satisfied with the condition of private buildings, storefronts, and signs in the downtown. Relatedly, the RRP business survey results indicate that the renovation of storefronts and building facades is an important strategy for improving the physical environment and atmosphere of the downtown commercial district – 87% of respondents rated it as moderately to very important.</p> <p>The Town of Maynard Planning Division has administered the Business Environment Enhancement Program (BEEP) since 2016. It grew out of the former “Facade and Signage Improvement” grant program (FSI) that was established by the Town in the early 2000s. Limited response to the FSI led the Maynard Economic Development Committee to develop the BEEP as a way to encourage general investment throughout the business community. Program goals include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improvement of Maynard’s businesses exterior aesthetics, e.g. façade, permanent signage, exterior lighting or other items that improve the appearance from the street of an establishment or structure. 2. Provide targeted infrastructure improvements that the Town may not be able or scheduled to fund, but that clearly benefit the overall business community, e.g. installation of bike racks or outdoor seating unique to a public location. 3. Encourage creative approaches that result in a benefit for the business community, e.g., the addition of hanging flower baskets or creating promotional material of general use to the business community. <p>Since 2016, the BEEP has awarded matching grants totaling over \$100,000 for projects including four (4) façade/signage improvements, assistance for a restaurant to obtain a grant to make improvements for outdoor dining, annual funding of hanging flower baskets throughout downtown, and a public art mural. The BEEP was originally funded through a combination of developer mitigation, unrestricted CDBG funds, and parking meter receipts. It has since been depleted, and there is a need to identify a sustainable funding source to continue the program.</p> |

Action Items

When developing enhancements to the Business Environment Enhancement Program (BEEP) proponents should strongly consider:

Funding Structure— Depending on the source of funding, the program can be structured as a grant or a loan. There are various options including a matching grant (current BEEP structure) or a grant with set maximum dollar amount per improvement. In terms of loan structures, low or no-interest loans through a revolving loan fund enable future funding cycles upon payback, and forgivable loans create incentives to maintain improvements over time. However, loan programs are more complicated to administer than grant programs.

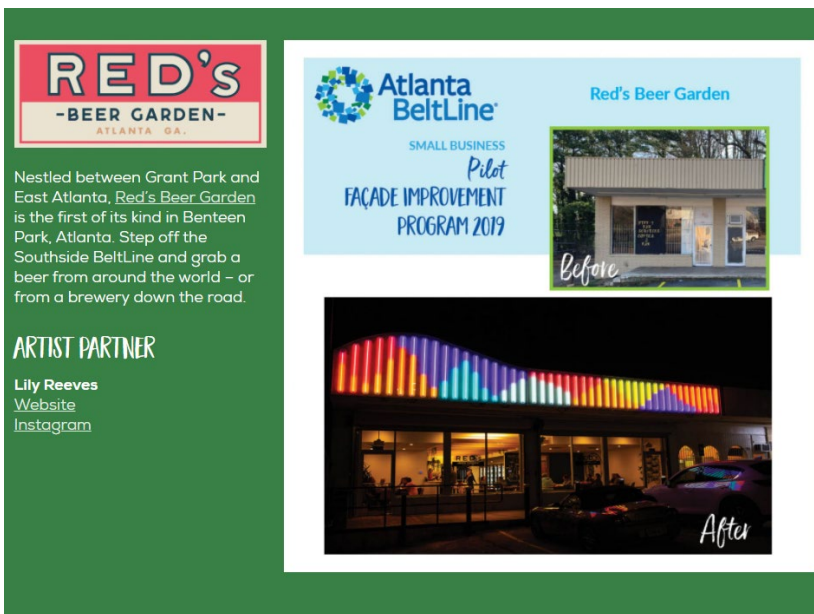
Administration— The Town has successfully implemented the BEEP. If the program is restructured to provide low or no-interest loans, the Town may want to consider an alternative administrative structure or entity. Most storefront and façade programs are developed and managed by organizations with a vested interest in civic improvements, including municipalities, chambers of commerce, and others.

Art Inclusion— The inclusion of art into the BEEP can enhance the overall character and experience in the public and private realm and reinforce the Cultural District identity. External, art-focused improvements visible to the public right of way should be encouraged through the BEEP. One model to consider is Atlanta's BeltLine façade improvement program, which partners local artists/makers with businesses to complete capital improvements.

Design Services— The BEEP does not require properties to engage design professionals for projects. Many programs include design services as a benefit of program participation. During this period of COVID recovery, funds may be available to include this type of small business assistance.

Options to Diversify Storefront Improvement Program Funding

- **General Fund**— Through an allocation from a municipality, this type of funding tends to offer the greatest flexibility for program structure with the least amount of reporting restrictions.
- **Local Municipal Funding (Set-Aside)**— Municipal allocation set-aside from a special revenue stream for a set amount of time (e.g. permit revenues, sales tax set-aside, special fees such as landfill tipping/disposal fees, etc.)
- **Special Taxing Bodies**— Business district designation (creating an additional sales tax) or special service area (additional property tax), TIF districts
- **Federal American Rescue Plan Funding (ARPA)**— Communities may use ARPA funding for small business assistance, such as to enhance outdoor spaces for COVID-19 mitigation (e.g., restaurant patios) or to improve the built environment of the neighborhood (e.g., façade improvements).
- **Federal CDBG**— Applicants must meet and adhere to federal requirements and compliance issues. The Massachusetts CDBG Program is a competitive program that is available to all municipalities that are not Entitlement Communities and encourages joint or regional applications. Communities may apply for funds for downtown or commercial district related projects including sign/facade programs.
- **Private/Nonprofit/Foundation funding**— Low-interest or no-interest loans or grants from private lenders, often those with a community focus or a small, local bank or nonprofit organization with community interest.
- **Historic funding**— Historic preservation and landmarks organizations such as Main Street America receive grant funding from the National Park Service specifically for rural "Main Street" communities.



Red's Beer Garden façade improvement completed in partnership with artist, Lily Reeves. Source: Atlanta BeltLine, <https://beltline.org/the-project/economic-development-commercial-real-estate/business-facade-partnership-grant-program/>

Process

1. **Engage:** Collect feedback on the current Business Environment Enhancement Program (BEEP) and solicit input on what property owners and businesses would like moving forward. This is the time to discuss eligible projects, the application process, funding models and limits, and any assistance awardees might need.
2. **Plan:** Explore feasibility of program enhancements identified by the Town, downtown stakeholders, and best practices. Arrange for new funding mechanisms (e.g., allocation of ARPA funds, if applicable), update program guidelines and paperwork, and engage any new program partners such as artists or design professionals.
3. **Advertise and Implement:** Update town webpage containing program information. Cross market with partners such as Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce, on social media, and through PSAs. Solicit project participants and administer the program.
4. **Evaluate and Decide Future:** Determine program metrics (e.g., business sales, property value, number of completed projects and private investment leveraged) and measure at appropriate time intervals. Seek feedback from program participants; utilize feedback to improve and market the program.



MetroWest Kung Fu used Maynard Business Environment Enhancement Program funds for signage upgrades. Photo: BSC Group



Serendipity Café in Downtown Maynard. Photo: BSC Group

*Before and After Photos for 455 Pleasant Street, Worcester, MA: participant in Worcester Façade Improvement Program.
Source: Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development*

Incentivize Upper Floor Residential Development

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Private Realm |
| Location | Downtown Maynard Census Tracts 3641.01 and 3641.02 |
| Origin | Town of Maynard staff |
| Budget |  Medium Budget - or High depending on how many properties are affected |
| Timeframe |  Short-Term to develop program – program will be ongoing |
| Risk |  Medium Risk – political will; funding/fiscal limitations; Town staff capacity; property owner participation |
| Key Performance Indicators | Number of vacant upper floors renovated into residential units; number of new residential units; number of people renting renovated units; increased traffic to local businesses by new residents |
| Partners & Resources | Town staff (Municipal Services), Economic Development Committee, Property Owners Funding: ARPA, MA Downtown Initiative Grants, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) |



Example of a two-story building in downtown Maynard. Photo: BSC Group

Diagnostic/ COVID-19 Impacts

One of the Town's medium and long-term challenges is to continue creating a range of income-based housing opportunities within the Cultural District. This area is currently zoned under the town's "Downtown Overlay District." This zoning designation provides a regulatory framework for the creation of mixed-use and multi-family residential units. Additionally, the current zoning provides development incentives for the private creation of affordable units.

In the last three years mixed-use projects have been constructed and reflect the increasing interest in ongoing addition of residential uses downtown. This directly contributes to the creation of the critical mass necessary for sustainable economic recovery and development within the Cultural District.

The recent update to the Town's Housing Production Plan (HPP) identifies the downtown as an area where the Town should encourage housing development, including adaptive reuse, and notes that intentional programming can also support the growth of the downtown art community while addressing housing demand. In addition, the HPP found that community members were supportive of multifamily housing, conversion of existing structures to residential use, and mixed-use development with residential units. This indicates the existence of community support for developing a program to incentivize the conversion of vacant upper floors into housing.

During the RRP process, it was noted that the costs to meet code compliance requirements in older buildings have proven to be a barrier to renovating and redeveloping upper floors into residential units. Building owners and investors believe that the available rents do not justify the costs of meeting the current requirements, as measured by their Return on Investment.

In an effort to build the downtown area back better than it was prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic, the reuse and habitation of vacant upper floors is crucial to creating a livable downtown.

Action Items

Identify, design, and implement financial incentives to assist property owners and developers with meeting the fire suppression and/or other code compliance requirements associated with upper floor residential development. The financial incentives must be adequate to raise the owner/investors Return on Investment to acceptable levels, typically 18% or higher.

A survey of existing upper story vacant space that could potentially be reused for future development of housing units in the downtown area, including Mill & Main, may help foster community buy-in for the incentives.

Process

Establish a program of specific financial incentives aimed at assisting and encouraging property owners and developers to convert vacant upper floor space into usable residential unit(s) by improving their Return on Investment. This program can include, for example, property tax incentives (tax abatements, tax fixing or tax deferral programs), a simplified and rapid regulatory framework and plan review and permitting process, reduced or eliminated building permit fees, and/or a dedicated building official with specific expertise in renovation and rehabilitation.

Assemble and summarize information on the market area. This should include a map of the subject area, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, information on current market conditions including rents and vacancy rates, traffic counts through the subject area, key drivers of visits and economic activity, major employers in or near the area, drive/commute times to major employment nodes and any notable recent investment activity.

Process (continued)

Prepare and distribute a marketing information package that includes a clear and simple summary of the available financial incentives and the market information described above.

Contact the owners of the subject buildings and establish a schedule for visiting the upper floor vacant space(s) in their building. This contact should include a detailed discussion of the financial incentive programs which have been established. The marketing information package described herein should be sent to the owner/investor following the initial contact and before the site visit.

Conduct site visits to each subject property. From observations during the site visit, prepare a detailed inventory and assessment of vacant upper floor spaces within the downtown. The inventory should include the property address, property owner's name, assessed value of the property, approximate square footage and photographs of the available space, and notes regarding the condition of the space. The notes should include observations about the overall condition of the space, any previous use, availability of utilities, accessibility of the vacant space, presence/absence of fire suppression, and any other code or general condition issues observed. We suggest that particular attention be paid to determining whether the owner is an active real estate investor, their level of experience, and whether they are local or non-local.

Using the information from the assessment, prepare:

- a) **An estimated Scope of Work** for what will be required to convert each vacant space into leasable residential unit(s), b) a cost estimate,
- b) **A general timeline** for the necessary work, and
- c) **An estimate** of the Return on Investment resulting from the converted spaces.

Based upon the foregoing, rank the vacant spaces according to the estimated ease & cost of converting the space into leasable residential units. The goal is to focus on those spaces which can be most easily converted to usable residential use in order to get some "early wins."

Schedule initial meetings with the building owners to share the results of the assessment, and the conclusions and recommendations based upon the ease and cost of conversion of the vacant space. Include information about the available financial incentives.

If the owner is not an active investor or isn't interested in investing in their property, suggest that they consider selling the property. Provide the owner with a list of commercial real estate brokers who are active in the market. Explain that the building must be kept code-compliant.

Schedule follow up meetings with the building owners.

Note: Depending upon the civic importance of the subject property, the municipality may want to consider purchasing the property in order to facilitate a change in ownership which would lead to the redevelopment of the property.



*Residential above a ground floor commercial space in downtown Maynard.
Photo: BSC Group*

Local Financial Incentives for Residential Conversions



Location

Various

Downtown Housing Incentive Program Charlevoix, MI

The Downtown Housing Grant offered by the Charlevoix Downtown Development Authority (DDA) supports property owners seeking to build or convert square footage for residential use. The matching grant provides financial incentive to help downtown building owners better utilize their vacant or underperforming space. The program was specifically created with the purpose to incentivize the expansion of housing options – apartment units, condos, or loft-style apartments – in the DDA district; both of which support initiatives clearly identified in local strategic planning documents including the city's master plan.

Each grant can provide up to \$25,000, or \$15.00 per square foot of newly constructed or renovated residential space, whichever amount is lower. Eligible projects include permanent building improvements with universal functionality, electrical/plumbing/HVAC improvements conducive to residential uses, and improvements to meet state and local Building, Fire & Life Safety codes.

For more information, visit <http://charlevoixmi.gov/431/Downtown-Housing-Incentive-Program>.

Tool: Incentives to Develop

A local government may employ a variety of mechanisms to incentivize the development of housing, whether by altering regulatory restrictions or by providing direct and indirect forms of support. Whatever the mechanism, these incentives ultimately increase revenue streams or decrease costs for a given development, thus increasing a project's likelihood of being developed. The *Housing Affordability Toolkit* contains a section that serves as a primer for the various types of incentives that a municipality may employ to induce residential development: <https://housingtoolkit.nmhc.org/#incentives-to-develop>.

What Are Housing Development Incentives?

Local policies designed to stimulate the development of housing. A local government may employ a variety of mechanisms to incentivize the development of housing, whether by altering regulatory restrictions or by providing direct and indirect forms of support. Whatever the mechanism, these incentives ultimately increase revenue streams or decrease costs for a given development, thus increasing a project's likelihood of being developed.



REGULATORY INCENTIVES





Flexibility around project approvals, development rights, density, parking, and design.



FUNDING INCENTIVES

Direct or indirect funding or financing, to ease development costs or operating expenses.

Enhance Code Enforcement Efforts to Improve Downtown Aesthetics

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Category |  Private Realm |
| Location | Downtown Maynard Census Tracts 3641.01 and 3641.02 |
| Origin | Diagnostic phase findings & stakeholder engagement (Maynard Economic Development Committee member) |
| Budget |  Low to Medium Budget; Funding: CDBG; ARPA; MA Department of Public Health Shared Public Health Services Grant (for shared code enforcement staff - see Best Practice sidebar) |
| Timeframe |  Short-Term (< 5 Years) – The establishment of the project is short-term; however, this will be an on-going program |
| Risk |  Medium Risk politically; other risks include Town capacity, legal and building code barriers and costs, as well as owner interest/willingness to participate |
| Key Performance Indicators | Investment by property owners in commercial properties; increase in permitted improvements and improved buildings; improved longevity of businesses; positive response from customers; subjective evaluations by participants and providers |
| Partners & Resources | Town of Maynard staff including Building & Inspections Division, legal counsel, and elected officials; local property owners and real estate professionals |
| Diagnostic | <p>Maynard, like many other communities, realized that COVID-19 served to exacerbate issues related to lack of property owner investment in maintaining and upgrading commercial properties. While Downtown Maynard has a desirable village feel with diverse offerings including a variety of restaurants, coffeehouses, retail shops, and art galleries, some of the occupied buildings look rundown and reflect a lack of property owner investment. These buildings detract from the appeal of the otherwise attractive and accessible downtown. Maynard recently passed a Minimum Maintenance Ordinance, but enforcement has been lackluster and the Town wants to determine what more can be done.</p> <p>Some of the questions that arose during the RRP diagnostic phase include: is the Town doing enough regarding its minimum maintenance standards? Is the bar set too low and is it too easy to comply? Is the Town enforcing to the extent possible?</p> |

Action Items

The plan of action to address rundown commercial buildings in Downtown Maynard will include:

- Assess current code enforcement issues and develop a plan that will address the current conditions of derelict buildings and put in place programs to support the economic development of those properties— this will be a combined effort with the Town and a consultant.
- Strengthen enforcement activities and incentivize owners to encourage the upgrading of commercial buildings to help ensure public health and safety and to enhance economic development in downtown Maynard. This ties directly into the RRP project recommendation "Encourage Private Realm Improvements Through Revamped Business Environment Enhancement Program."
- Develop a database to track building conditions; as this is developed it will also serve as a communication tool with building owners as it will be regularly updated. This may be as simple as an Excel spreadsheet.
- Key actions include hiring an expert or consultant to provide some or all of the following:
 - Code enforcement program review and analysis
 - Municipal code review and recommendations

Process

Review the current regulations in place including the Minimum Maintenance Ordinance. This should be a combined effort within the Town – e.g., Planning, Building & Inspections, Board of Health, and Town Counsel. Communication between these groups will be essential to the effectiveness, enforcement and evaluation of this program. If a consultant is hired to assist in this process, see below.

Sub-procedure for hiring a consultant – key officials should first outline their expectations before engaging a consultant, which include: RFP process and/or interviewing to procure consultant; draft contract, budget, and funding; analysis/evaluation of findings; recommendations for code, tax/incentive programs, and/or programmatic changes.

- The consultant should provide some or all of the following:
 - Code enforcement program review and analysis
 - Municipal code review and recommendations
 - Design program to address new enforcement challenges
 - Establish/revise minimum standards, fines and/or tax incentives or disincentives programs
 - Staff support needed for implementation of the targeted program or consultant if additional staff is not hired by the Town

Process (continued)

Increase municipal capacity for code enforcement - Inter-municipal shared service agreements contribute to improvements in local code enforcement capacity. By pooling resources, functions, and expertise, a consortium of cities and towns, especially those that are smaller, can improve compliance with their statutory and regulatory mandates and expand the public health protections and services they offer residents. The Cities of Methuen and Lawrence and the Town of Dracut received a Shared Public Health Services Grant to share certain services to provide for increased code enforcement – to read more, visit:

<https://www.mma.org/listing/code-enforcement-officer-shared-services-grant-funded/>

Database Development - Develop a list/database of all buildings in the target area (Excel may be the simplest tool) capturing relevant information (contact information, ownership, square footage, number of floors, tenants, residences, conditions, violations, and structural inspections; tie to GIS/Assessor's information, etc.). This will require ownership by a Town division and data input by a designated champion on a regular basis.

Instituting and Phasing in the Program – With the database in place, it will be easier for the Town officials to approach the building owners as the program is launched. Before fines are levied on ownership all other remedies should be exhausted to work with them to repair/upgrade the property.





Communication of the Program - The Town Administrator or another town official should communicate the new program through one-on-one meetings, community sessions with property owners, showcasing owners that are “Building a Better Downtown Maynard,” and press releases on the program citing and focusing on the positive elements of the program, i.e., renewing blighted buildings, economic development initiatives, livability of the area, etc.

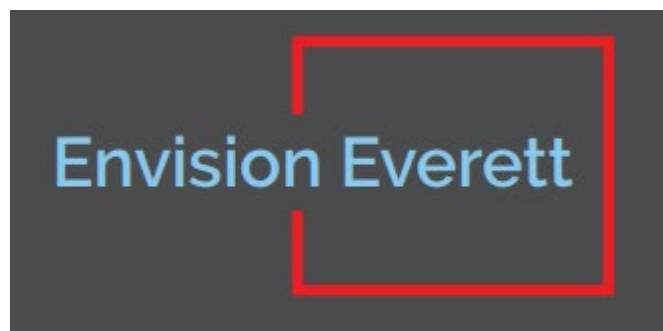
Evaluation of the program – It is important to evaluate the program and its effectiveness as it is instituted. What is the response from building owners, are they receptive to the program? There may be a need to modify it as the Town works through the process.



Photo: BSC Group

Create a Branding and Marketing Campaign

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Category |  Revenue/Sales |
| Location | Downtown Maynard Census Tracts 3641.01 and 3641.02 |
| Origin | Town of Maynard staff and Economic Development Committee |
| Budget |  Medium Budget including planning and fabrication – designer fee est. ~\$30,000-\$50,000; fabrication of gateway signs \$50,000+ each. |
| Timeframe |  Short-term (< 5 years) |
| Risk |  Medium Risk – Key town leaders have already begun planning for branding and it has been adopted as a goal in the Town’s master plan; because the streamlined approach proposed in this recommendation is building on existing brands and visions, it includes limited public engagement which may affect the level of ownership by the community at large and longevity/impact of the brand |
| Key Performance Indicators | Level of ownership of brand by stakeholders; installation/development of branded collateral; change in perception of downtown Maynard following branding effort |
| Partners & Resources | <p>Maynard Office of Municipal Services, Economic Development Committee, Cultural Council, local businesses, designer (local preferred)</p> <p>Potential Funding Source: Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT); DHCD Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (planning); MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Program (gateway signage); and local funding sources</p> <p><i>If MOTT provides another round of the Travel & Tourism Recovery Grant, the Chamber of Commerce or Maynard Business Alliance, a (501(c)(6), could apply for a comprehensive marketing campaign including brand development.</i></p> |



Logos and Taglines from Fall River, MA “Make it Here” and Everett, MA “Envision Everett”

Diagnostic

66% of respondents to the RRP survey of downtown businesses indicated that COVID-19 resulted in a loss of revenue. Moreover, 64% of businesses reported having fewer on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID, with 54% of businesses reporting a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more. One contributing factor was the pandemic's influence on behavior changes toward more online shopping, remote work, and other virtual interactions. As the Town and downtown recover from COVID's economic impacts, attracting customers and businesses will be crucial for creating a sustainable economic base.

Fortunately, Maynard has done considerable work prior to and during the pandemic to determine its vision for its economic future. Pre-pandemic, it correctly observed the virtual shift and recent planning documents have focused on establishing Maynard, particularly downtown Maynard, as a destination for makers, artists, and entrepreneurs. The Town's most recent Master Plan includes a goal "to elevate Maynard's profile as a regional destination." Additionally, the Economic Development Committee has established a vision to focus Downtown's economic development on experience-based businesses (art, dining, personal services) and has identified a branding campaign that "markets Downtown Maynard as a place for residents and visitors to have a great experience, and for entrepreneurs and creatives to serve artists, art-lovers, and all who value the community that comes with doing things together" as a top priority.

Given limited capacity to manage a major branding project, the Town seeks to conduct a streamlined branding project that builds upon past research and visioning (described above) to integrate existing brands (e.g., Town Seal, "Made in Maynard" tagline, Maynard Cultural District branding, etc.) and produces a limited set of new branded collateral that will be practical and impactful. This project will support the Town's efforts to establish itself as a destination for businesses and customers while providing a critical foundational element that other programs and initiatives, such as a downtown wayfinding system, can build upon.

Action Items

Pre-Branding Activities - Many branding campaigns begin with an audit of community assets and brands to understand what features the community would like to highlight in the brand as well as ways the community is already branding itself. Pre-branding work includes:

- Assessment of key documents including Master Plan, Cultural District & Cultural Council priorities
- Mapping of businesses & resources
- Listing of events and festivals
- Key priorities for the town
- Notable arts & cultural elements (outdoor)

Some of this work has already been completed by the Economic Development Committee branding subgroup, the Maynard Cultural District, and Town staff.

Focus Collateral Development on Practical and Impactful Elements - Establishing an integrated brand that allows multiple users to consistently market Maynard will be useful in itself as it can then be utilized for future projects. As part of this initial effort, a limited collection of physical, online, and print collateral can be created. Recent discussions have prioritized:

- Use of the brand on the Town website and a new page that communicates the vision described in the diagnostic section above
- A promotional kit, used for business attraction, comprised of a folder with 6-12 inserts each focusing on a different topic (demographics, cultural district, business districts, recreation, etc.)
- Use of the brand for gateway signs at entry points into the town

A brand guide, which provides detail about the brand and appropriate / inappropriate use, should also be developed to ensure consistent use of the brand by approved stakeholders.

Stay Local – Given the cultural focus of Maynard's vision, working with a local designer provides the added benefit of creating an identity that comes from within. It can also serve as an entry point to future artistic activities or installations featuring the brand.

Process

The following process includes a streamlined approach to branding taking into consideration previously completed work as well as local capacity to execute the project. This approach allows for a practical and effective project that can be built upon in the future.

- 1) Town lead assembles project team (Town lead, business representative, Cultural Council representative, and EDC branding subcommittee).
- 2) EDC branding subcommittee completes pre-branding tasks.
- 3) Town lead prepares and issues RFP (*See example RFPs on best practice sheet*).
- 4) Project team selects designer/design firm.
- 5) Project team hosts stakeholder meeting to:
 - a. Discuss value of branding and project scope.
 - b. Review results of pre-branding activities and the plan to start with Town Seal and “Made in Maynard” as foundations to campaign.
 - c. Seek business, resident, creative, entrepreneur input before designer begins work.
- 6) Designer prepares brand concept including colors, image style, copy tone/voice.
- 7) Designer shares brand concepts for project team feedback. Some constituent testing may occur depending on chosen scope/budget.
- 8) Designer refines brand and develops design for limited collateral as chosen by project team (e.g., page on town website, promotional packet, gateway signs, and brand guide).
- 9) Project team pursues fabrication of branding and promotional materials.
- 10) Future related tasks may include:
 - Integration of branding into wayfinding system
 - Public art competition/mural installation building on “Made in Maynard” and brand guidelines



Logos and Brands used by Maynard Cultural District, DiscoverMaynard.com, and Town of Maynard



*Integration of art into Worcester, MA's branding and wayfinding program
Source: Selbert Perkins Design*

Branding Initiative Resources



Location

Various

Sample RFPs

Pallyup, WA:
<https://www.cityofpuyallup.org/DocumentCenter/View/14675/REQUEST-FOR-PROPOSALS-Destination-Marketing-Campaign-FINAL?bidId=>

Coachella, CA:
<https://www.coachella.org/home/showpublisheddocument/4510/635932019822230000>

New Rochelle, NY:
<https://www.newrochelleny.com/DocumentCenter/View/3221/RFP-NR-5004-Marking-and-Branding-Suite?bidId=>

Brand Guides

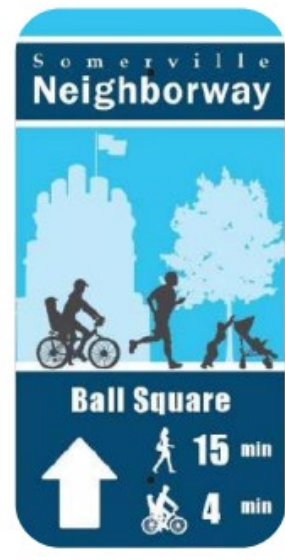
Boston, MA:
<https://www.boston.gov/departments/innovation-and-technology/brand-guidelines>

Union City, CA:
<https://www.unioncity.org/DocumentCenter/View/1375/Union-City-Style-Guide--Digital?bidId=>

Sample Municipal Branding Project Budget

Franklin, Wisconsin
<https://www.jsonline.com/story/communities/south/news/franklin/2019/04/17/franklin-rebranding-project-cost-city-officials-81-000/3176620002/>

| Item | Cost |
|---|----------|
| Logo design | \$7,500 |
| Surveys, Audits, Benchmarking | \$28,000 |
| Brand Profile, Look & Feel, Brand Usage Guide | \$44,500 |
| Marketing Plan | \$9,000 |
| Total | \$81,500 |



Best Practice

Branding and Wayfinding Examples



Location

Various

Integrate Brand and Art Into Your Wayfinding System

More info:
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/public-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download> (page. 55)

Connect Neighborhood to Business Districts via Neighborways

More info:
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/public-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download> (page. 95)

Worcester, MA undertook an effort to increase awareness and tourism, and to improve the overall image of the City by creating an iconic brand and functional wayfinding system for visitors and residents. As a large city, it was important to create consistency but also provide distinctions between districts to help people navigate and understand the unique character and stories of each area. Tasks included:

- City-wide logo
- District identities
- Storytelling and interpretive elements
- Signage design
- Art opportunities

Neighborways, also known as neighborhood greenways or bicycle boulevards, are low stress, comfortable, designated biking and walking routes. They are typically local roadways that connect neighborhoods and destinations such as downtown business districts, transit stops, schools, and employment centers. Somerville, MA is the Boston Region's first Neighborway network which began in 2014 as student projects. The evolution of the program has grown each year to span 2+ miles of connected streets. The City developed guidelines for treatments based on research, testing, and implementing tactical traffic calming treatments.

Process:

- Project initiation & planning
- Community design process
- Implementation
- Ongoing monitoring/maintenance
- Evaluation

Build Organizational Capacity of the Maynard Cultural District

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Category |  Admin Capacity |
| Location | Downtown Maynard Census Tracts 3641.01 and 3641.02 |
| Origin | Town of Maynard Staff, Maynard Economic Development Committee, Stakeholder Engagement |
| Budget |  Low to Medium Budget depending upon the organizational model selected |
| Timeframe |  Short Term (<5 years) |
| Risk |  Medium Risk - fiscal limitations, reliance on volunteers, Town capacity, and political will |
| Key Performance Indicators | Number of events that fall under the umbrella of the Cultural District; amount of donations and grant funding secured; number of paid staff supporting the Cultural District |
| Partners & Resources | <p>Partners: Town staff (Municipal Services), Cultural Council, Economic Development Committee, Cultural District businesses, ArtSpace tenants, gallery owners/operators, artists, event producers, and other cultural stakeholders</p> <p>Maynard Cultural Council serves as the local representative of the Massachusetts Cultural Council for the purpose of supporting arts and humanities initiatives in Maynard by granting funds allocated to the town by the Commonwealth.</p> <p>Funding: Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, MAPC Technical Assistance Program, ARPA funds (if the development of the organization is tied to implementing COVID recovery activities); Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC); local Institutions, foundations and key stakeholders/individual contributors may be sources for seed money; local community foundations or arts focused foundations like the Barr Foundation may be sources for capacity building and training grants</p> |



Diagnostic

Maynard's sizable art community is very active but has little formal structure and is seemingly underutilized as an economic development asset. Current activities within the Maynard Cultural District, which overlaps with the downtown, lack coordination and collaboration to fully leverage the impact of the creative placemaking events happening within the district. There is the opportunity to build the capacity of the Cultural Council to take a leadership role to help improve communication and collaboration among creative businesses, artists, and cultural organizations, undertake collective arts and cultural programming, and support creative economy businesses and cultural organizations to further COVID recovery. Currently the Cultural District has volunteer leadership and limited organizational, financial, and administrative capacity to undertake this effort. The Town does not have an arts coordinator or staff dedicated solely to supporting the creative economy in Maynard - rather, the Assistant Town Manager and the Planning Director are members of the Cultural Council, amongst their many other responsibilities.

There is interest in developing the organizational and administrative capacity of the Cultural District to partner with the Town and Economic Development Committee to improve collaboration, expand staff capacity, leverage impact of events, and spur economic development. This capacity building will help enable the Cultural Council to formalize partnerships between groups currently working independently within the district on various events and consolidating their coordination under the Cultural District. The goal of this would be to effectively leverage existing and new events as much as possible in order to benefit short-term recovery and create a model for medium and long-range recovery.

Action Items

Getting Started - The Town of Maynard may partner with the Cultural Council to initiate this project by creating a working partnership comprised of the Town, Economic Development Committee, Cultural District businesses, ArtSpace tenants, gallery owners, artists, event producers and other cultural stakeholders to develop a new organizational model for the Cultural Council. The opportunity exists to use the RRP Plan as a launching point for stakeholder engagement to explore strategies that capitalize on the arts as an economic engine and destination driver for Maynard.

Develop the Value Proposition - It will be essential to develop the value proposition for investing human capital and the financial resources into the Maynard Cultural District organizational model and communicate to the Town and private stakeholders the impact of their investment. The goal of a Cultural District Organization will be to improve communication and create opportunities to collaborate on events, marketing, communication, and other business support activities to aid in COVID recovery and beyond. Key talking points include:

- Formation of a 501c3 organization or designation of a fiscal agent will encourage more companies and individuals to consider charitable gifts and unlock funding from philanthropic organizations such as foundations (some grantors require an organization to have a nonprofit status)
- Ability to collectively and cost effectively undertake priority programs to achieve scale and economic impact
- Provide a unified voice / "seat at the table" for the Cultural District and cultural district business priorities
- Produce and execute cultural and event programming and cultural placemaking
- Ability to respond to crisis - COVID
- Leverage resources and collaborations
- Improve communication

Action Items (continued)

Stakeholder Engagement/Leadership & Partnerships – The Town and Cultural District partnership will identify key arts organizations and business owners to discuss an organizational model that will enhance connections and collaboration to benefit the arts and cultural district businesses. The clear demonstration of a public / private partnership will help move this effort forward.

Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy - The Town and core arts groups and cultural district businesses could initiate community outreach efforts to engage arts organizations, patrons, cultural district businesses and other stakeholders to identify their priorities and opportunities to collaborate. This work has begun through the RRP process but will need to continue to refine the work program for a proposed Cultural District organization. Additionally, this outreach offers the opportunity to provide community education about a Cultural District organizational model, identify needs and opportunities as well as the potential leadership to spearhead organizational development and actively participate in governance of the organization.

Resources for Startup and Sustainability – Seed money is needed to start a 501c3 organization for the Cultural District. Sources include TA through the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, ARPA funds (if the development of the organization is tied to implementing COVID recovery activities), or MCC. Additionally, local institutions, foundations and key stakeholders/individual contributors may be sources for seed money to launch an effort. Local community foundations or arts focused Foundations like the Barr Foundation may be sources for capacity building and training grants. By formally creating a 501c3 umbrella, the Cultural District will unlock additional opportunities for funding.

A Cultural District 501c3 and Cultural Compact – An example of this approach is the Springfield Cultural Partnership. The Springfield Cultural Partnership (SCP) is a 501c3 formed in 2016 to connect artists, institutions, and audiences in Springfield. The SCP is a member-based organization with multiple membership levels that has fostered a diverse mix of individuals and organizations. The SCP also oversees the downtown Cultural District. In 2018, the Springfield Central Cultural District, Springfield Cultural Council, City of Springfield, and MCC formed the Springfield Cultural Compact. The compact was a formal agreement between these partners to work on cultural activities to support economic development, and increase collaboration and partnerships.

Direct Funding of Arts Coordinator Position by Town – Aligned with the formation of a 501c3 organization, the Town may consider funding an Arts Coordinator position. The Town could either establish a position as a town employee or enter into a grant agreement or contract with the Cultural District organization to pay for staff to execute strategic arts and cultural economic development initiatives as part of a larger economic development strategic plan. One example of this partnership approach is Easthampton, MA, and the Town's investment in the Easthampton City Arts (ECA). The ECA is a cultural initiative of the City of Easthampton. It consists of a City Arts coordinator and several subcommittees that execute arts and cultural programming and cultural placemaking. In addition, the ECA is supported by over 100 volunteers, sponsors, individual donors, and other in-kind services. The ECA is wholly integrated into Easthampton's vision of using arts and cultural as one of their strategic pillars for economic development.

Process

Given the limited Cultural Council and Town staff capacity to launch this capacity building effort alone, the first step should be to apply for technical assistance through the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (now part of the One Stop), for support to continue to discuss organizational options. In addition, the Cultural Council should consider initiating fundraising efforts to assist with programming and capacity building efforts, as they are able to accept gifts.

Cultural District Organization Process

Maynard may consider the following steps to begin the process of building support for a Cultural District Organization.

- Create a Cultural District partnership with Town, key property owners, Cultural District businesses, local arts organizations, cultural destination businesses, and artists to launch the effort
- Form a broad-based advisory committee to provide input and feedback
- Secure seed funding for technical assistance to form a 501c3 organizational model through Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (now part of the One Stop), ARPA, and other stakeholder support
- Employ engagement tools to develop program priorities, such as:
 - Community Forums - fun, engaging and informational visioning sessions held at local arts spaces or community gathering space
 - Peer Learning Panels - Executive Directors from Cultural Districts in other similar communities
 - Visits to other communities with active Cultural District organizations to see programs in action
 - Surveys of needs and priorities (broad distribution to residents, cultural stakeholders, patrons, and cultural district businesses)
 - Focus groups
 - Websites/social media
- Conduct one on one conversations with stakeholders to secure support and engagement in process
- Consensus building with stakeholders on model/programming plan/budget
- Execute MOU / grant agreement with Town
- File for 501c3 designation, create bylaws and articles of organization (seek out pro bono services from an attorney if funding is not available)
- Establish a Board of Directors
- Develop sponsorship opportunities booklet
- Develop membership categories and corporate and individual membership recruitment strategy
- Consider executing a demonstration project that could "show" potential programs and services provided through a Cultural District organization. This may be a signature Special event series building on existing programming or festivals featuring cultural placemaking events, Cultural attractions, galleries, and businesses.
- Identify and conduct board of director training on nonprofit management and fiscal

Alternatives to a Forming a 501c3

- In order to collect funds and apply for grants, the Cultural Council may seek out an organization who will act as a fiscal agent for the district. The Chamber of Commerce or an existing nonprofit could play this role.
- Consider altering/expanding the Cultural District Board of Directors to include a broader circle of stakeholders including artists, organizations, funders, interested businesses, and people from the community who understand and support the mission.
- The Town could establish an Arts Coordinator position as a town employee that supports the Cultural District and furthers the arts as an economic engine and destination driver for Maynard.

Easthampton City Arts



Location

Easthampton, MA

Establishment of the ECA

Easthampton City Arts was founded in 2005 as an entity within the Easthampton City Planning Department as the result of a thoughtfully facilitated process initiated and led by the City. Local artists, local businesses, and residents were engaged in the visioning, planning, and establishment of this arts-related economic development initiative. This dedicated group, consisting primarily of volunteers, met twice a month over the course of two years to share ideas, explore possibilities for governance, and to create the structure that would become ECA.

Evolution of the ECA

The Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) granted funding for Easthampton to hire a City Arts Coordinator to manage the new ECA initiative. While it began as a part-time position, the ECA Coordinator role has expanded steadily since — and became a full-time position in 2011. During its first 11 years, MCC's John and Abigail Adams Arts Program was instrumental in securing necessary funds to establish and cultivate a burgeoning year-round lineup of arts programming and cultural events, many of which continue today drawing audiences from all over New England seeking a vibrant arts experience.

ECA Governance

The ECA governing board consists of the City Arts Coordinator, the City Planner, and the Coordinating Committee. This 9-seat municipal Committee is comprised of volunteer artists, local business owners, and community leaders. The ECA Coordinating Committee oversees the activities of the Art Walk Subcommittee, Cottage Street Cultural District Subcommittee, Literary Arts Subcommittee, and the Public Art Subcommittee.

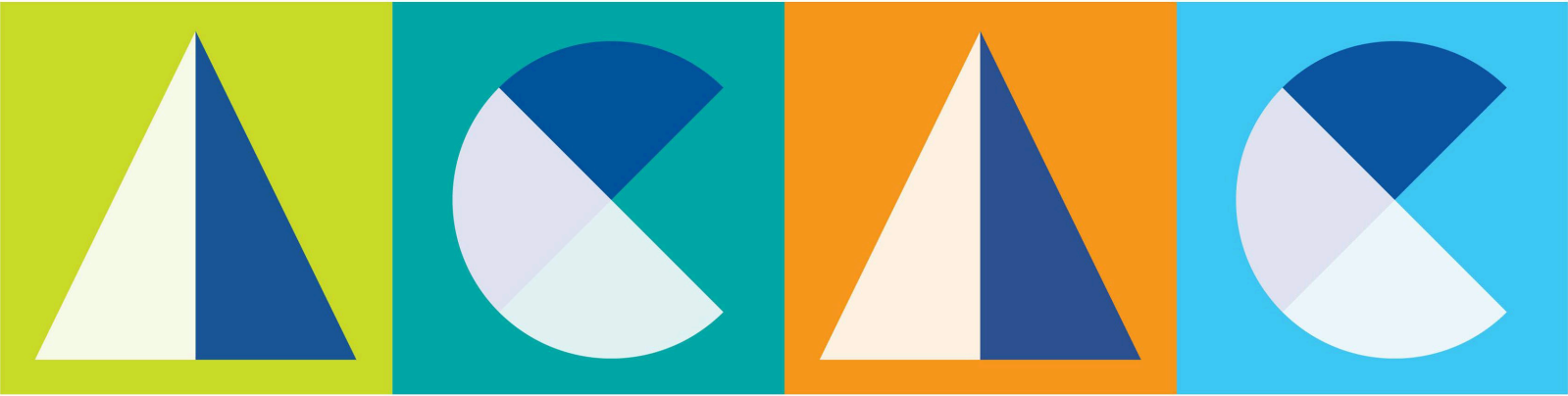
Sponsors & Community Partners

The ECA functions within the municipal government of the City of Easthampton and is fueled and supported by an extensive network of dedicated community members, partners, and sponsors.

The ECA:

- Consists of one staff person
- Is a grassroots, community-fueled organization
- Appreciates the dedicated efforts of its 100+ dedicated volunteers each year
- Produces positive, engaging, and accessible arts and cultural programming
- Serves tens of thousands of people annually
- Relies on the generous contributions of sponsors, both financial and in-kind

<https://www.easthamptoncityarts.com/>



ARLINGTON COMMISSION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

Best Practice

Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture



Location

Arlington, MA



<http://artsarlington.org/>

The Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture serves as the umbrella organization for all town-related arts and culture activities. The Commission consists of a core committee and four main standing subcommittees: Marketing and Evaluation, Grant Making, Fundraising and Resource Development, and Community Engagement (formerly Public Art and Programs and Festivals). The Commission's responsibilities include actively promoting and advocating for arts and culture, managing the Arlington Cultural District, seeking and distributing arts-related grants and supporting a robust public art program for the Town.


While the Commission was originally written into the town bylaws since 1993, it was not activated until 2014. In June 2012, the Arlington Cultural Council in partnership with the Arlington Center for the Arts, the newly formed Arlington Public Art, Arlington Tourism and Economic Development Committee and Sustainable Arlington, held a town wide meeting with the goal to foster collaborative opportunities between the town, businesses, non-profits, artists and residents that capitalize on arts and culture for the benefit of our community and local economy.

Eighty-five people attended including Town Meeting members, owners of restaurants and other businesses, representatives of non-profit organizations, local artists and residents. The meeting result in three top priorities:

- A centralized arts and culture website and brand,
- A signature event,
- A leadership body to coordinate and implement arts and culture initiatives.

Recognizing the importance of arts, culture and creativity to Arlington's vibrancy, the Town Manager appointed commissioners to the Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture (ACAC), formerly the Arlington Cultural Commission, in 2013. Among the Commission's duties was to create a long-term cultural plan for the town. In summer of 2016, town staff and community leaders from the Arlington Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) and the Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture (ACAC) joined forces to initiate the Arlington Arts and Culture Action Plan, which was created through a technical assistance grant from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and a hired consultant. The Commission is now charged with implementing the plan in partnership with the Department of Planning and Community Development.

Create a Commercial Tenant Attraction and Retention Strategy

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Category |  Tenant Mix |
| Location | Downtown Maynard Census Tracts 3641.01 and 3641.02 |
| Origin | Maynard Select Board & Economic Development Committee (EDC) |
| Budget |  Low Budget – could be higher depending upon the scope of the market assessment and desired deliverables |
| Timeframe |  Short-Term – A complete market analysis could be completed in a 6 to 12 month timetable. A more streamlined assessment could be completed in a shorter timeframe |
| Risk |  Low Risk – Implementation: dedication of economic development staffing capacity at the town level |
| Key Performance Indicators | Completion of a market assessment for Downtown Maynard; development of a recruitment/marketing strategy and tool for business attraction and retention; # of new downtown commercial tenants; # of expanded downtown commercial tenants |
| Partners & Resources | Town of Maynard Planning Division, Economic Development Committee (EDC), and Cultural District; Maynard Business Alliance; Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce Potential Funding Source: Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) and MAPC Technical Assistance Program (TAP); Regional Economic Development Organization Grant (through 495/MetroWest Partnership) |
| Diagnostic | <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has quickened the speed at which the business environment is changing and in dramatic ways. Rapidly changing consumer preferences and buying patterns mean that businesses must be willing and able to adapt quickly. As the Town of Maynard recovers from COVID's economic impacts, attracting and retaining downtown tenants will be crucial for creating a sustainable economic base. This need was reflected during the RRP's diagnostic phase, with downtown stakeholders emphasizing their desire for proactive outreach to potential business tenants for economic development in Maynard.</p> <p>Fortunately, Maynard has done considerable work prior to and during the pandemic to determine its vision for its economic future. The Economic Development Committee has established a vision to focus Downtown's economic development on experience-based businesses (art, dining, personal services) and has identified a strategy that "markets Downtown Maynard as a place for residents and visitors to have a great experience, and for entrepreneurs and creatives to serve artists, art-lovers, and all who value the community that comes with doing things together" as a top priority. These efforts should be built upon to position downtown Maynard for success in the post-pandemic world. A data-informed marketing strategy will help ensure Maynard's story is shared in the most effective manner and gets in front of the right audiences.</p> |

Action Items

Engage a consultant to conduct a market assessment for Downtown Maynard to help inform economic development efforts and develop a recruitment/marketing strategy and tool for business attraction, retention, and expansion.

The assessment will help create an accurate and realistic picture of the downtown area's market potential within the region. General goals include:

- Understanding of the gaps in the retail marketplace and the potential for increased development.
- Understanding of the needs and preferences of downtown Maynard's key target markets, including creative economy businesses, residents, area employees, and potential visitors.
- Providing user-friendly market facts for promoting target business opportunities.
- Providing actionable recommendations and next steps to strengthen economic development in Maynard.

Process

Scope

Establish goals and evaluation criteria along with deliverables. The EDC has undertaken some of the initial visioning work, and the scope should reflect this to maximize resources and funding.

Funding

Identify a funding source and secure funding to prepare a market assessment. Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) and MAPC Technical Assistance Program (TAP) are two potential technical assistance resources for this effort.

Planning Process with Advisory Committee

The lead entities (the Town of Maynard and Maynard Economic Development Committee) will convene an advisory committee, with representation from major stakeholders. The leads will develop an RFP for consulting services to conduct a market assessment. The leads, with the support of the advisory committee, will publicize the RFP to solicit proposals, review submissions, and hire a consultant. The Advisory Committee will also review and provide early feedback on the project scope of work, the market analyses, and the final deliverable (e.g., marketing strategy and tool.)

Refine and begin scope of work with consultant.

Once the consultant is selected, they should finalize a scope of services with the lead entities, to include some or all the following:

- Market analyses:
 - Retail market analysis
 - Office market analysis
 - Residential market analysis
 - Demographics & Lifestyle Analysis
 - Local & Regional Economic Analysis
- Community engagement, which could include but is not limited to:
 - Interviews with business owners, brokers, and property owners within the study area
 - Business owners survey
 - Resident survey
 - Focus groups
 - Public meetings
- Development of a market-driven promotional strategy and tool
- Creation of an action plan to recruit new downtown tenants and support and retain existing businesses

Implementation of the marketing strategy

The market assessment should inform the efforts outlined in the "Create a Branding and Marketing Campaign" project recommendation. The assessment will likely identify recommendations for enhancing local resources and capacity for implementing the marketing strategy.



Best Practice

Three Rivers Downtown Market Assessment & Business Recruitment Tool



Location

Palmer, MA

A Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) Sponsored Downtown Market Assessment

Report:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/economics-of-downtown-town-of-palmer/download>

A market assessment was undertaken for the Three Rivers Downtown Business District in the town Palmer, MA, through the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI). The Three Rivers Downtown Task Force – a partnership of the Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce, Town of Palmer, and Palmer Redevelopment Authority – was matched with a consultant to conduct the market assessment to help inform revitalization efforts and develop a business recruitment brochure/marketing tool that could be used in conjunction with a planned business recruitment program.

The market assessment identified potential market segments (residents of the surrounding area, employees working nearby, visitors to the historical and cultural center, users of nearby recreation facilities, and e-commerce and business-to-business enterprises). This data was used to inform the development of a business recruitment and marketing document, which was included as part of the deliverable.



Appendix

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

Maynard

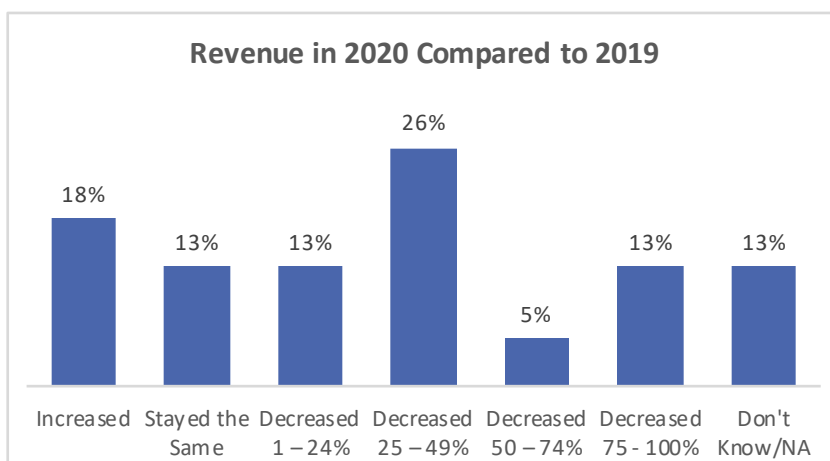
Downtown Maynard

Responses: 39

Impacts of COVID-19**Decline in Business Revenue**

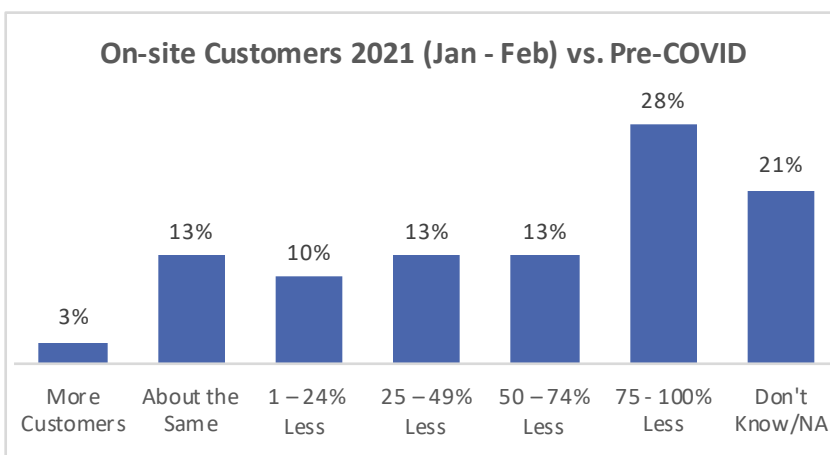
57% of businesses generated less revenue in 2020 than they did in 2019.

For 44% of businesses, revenue declined by 25% or more.

**Less Foot Traffic in Commercial Area**

64% of businesses had less on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID.

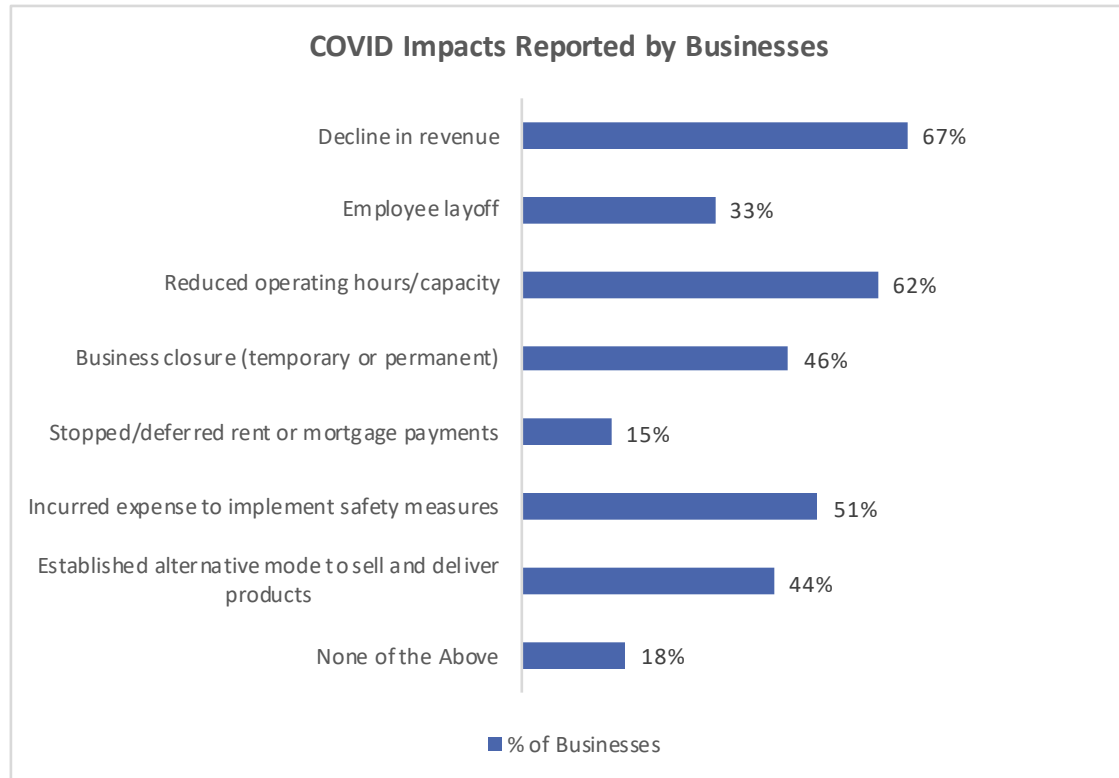
54% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more.



Impacts of COVID-19 (cont'd)

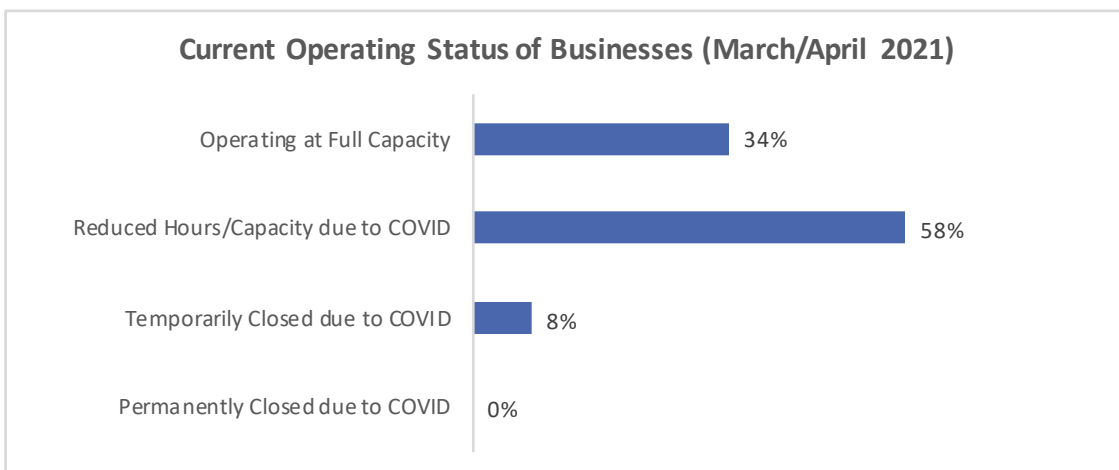
Reported Impacts

82% of businesses reported being impacted by COVID.



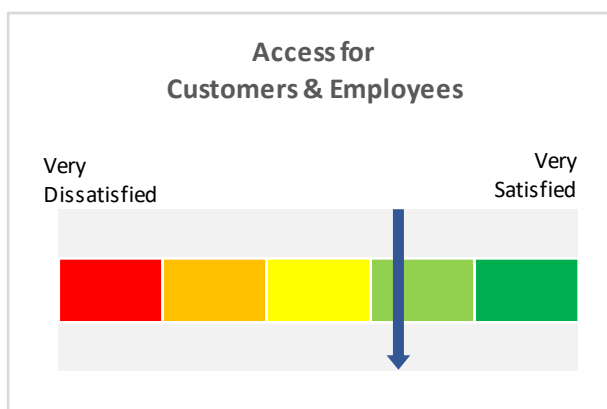
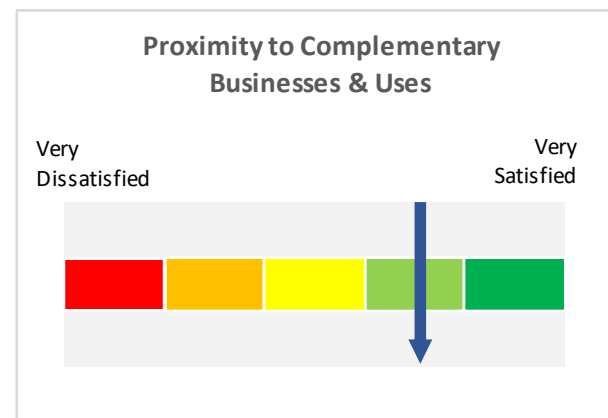
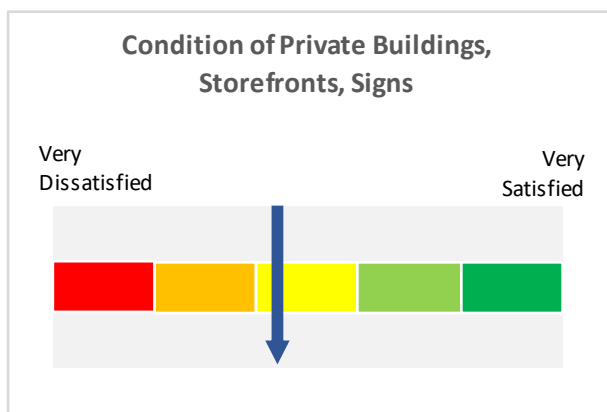
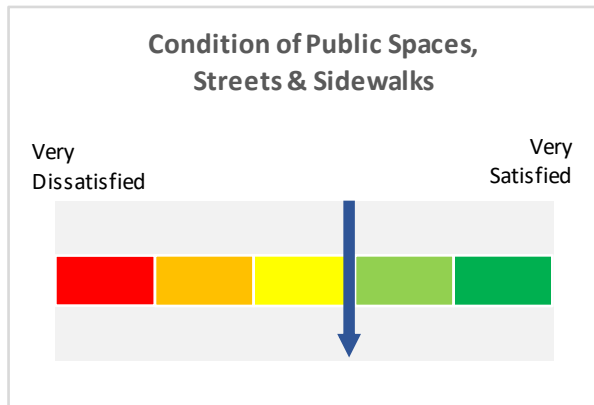
Operating Status

At the time of the survey, 66% of businesses reported they were operating at reduced hours/capacity or closed.



Business Satisfaction with Commercial District

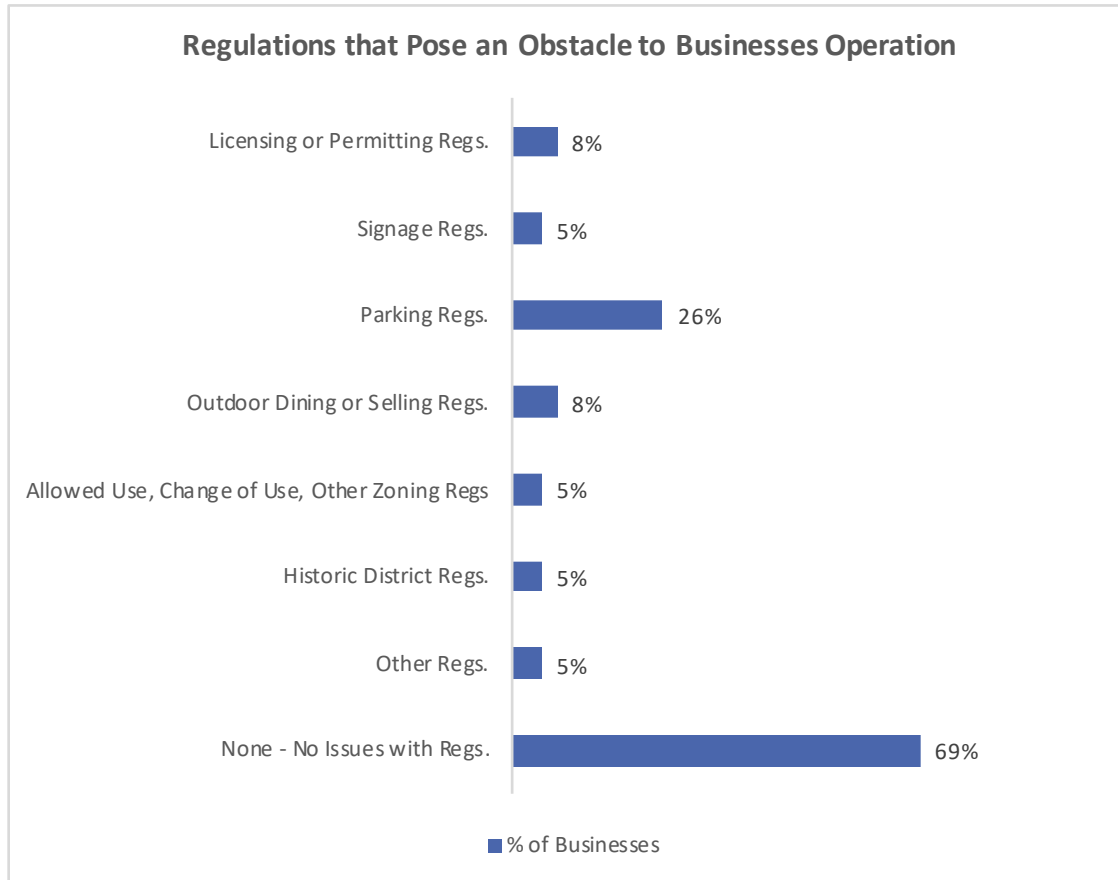
The charts below illustrate the average satisfaction rating among respondents regarding various elements.



Business Satisfaction with Commercial District (cont'd)

Regulatory Environment

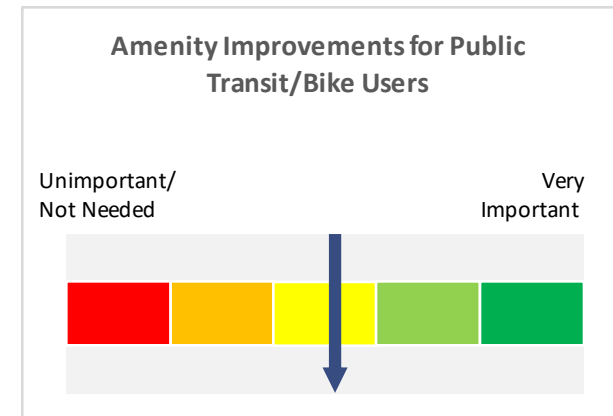
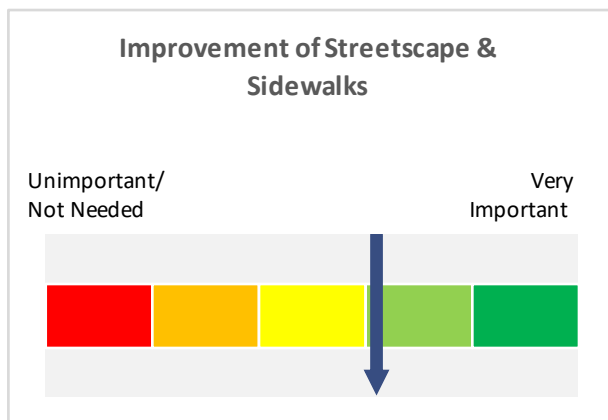
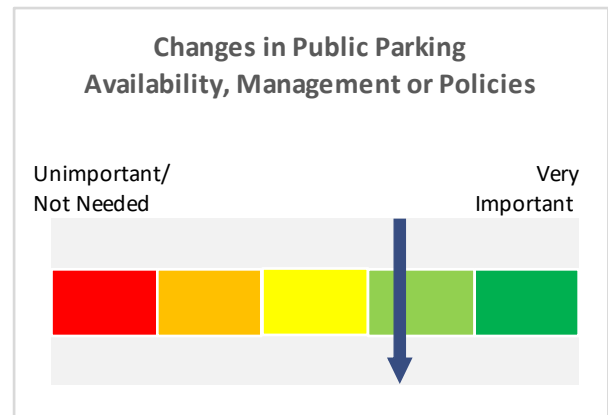
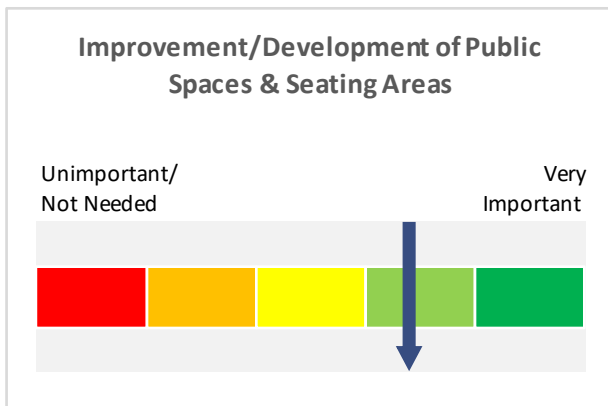
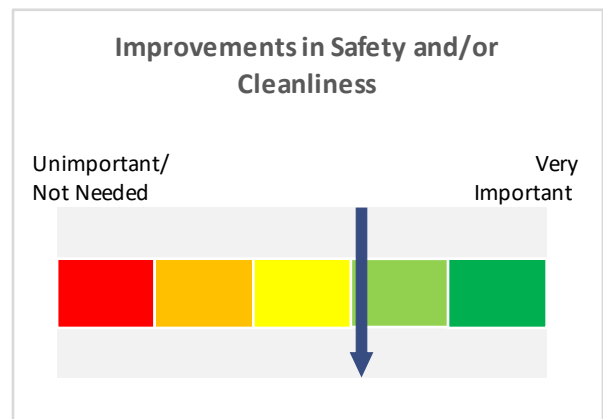
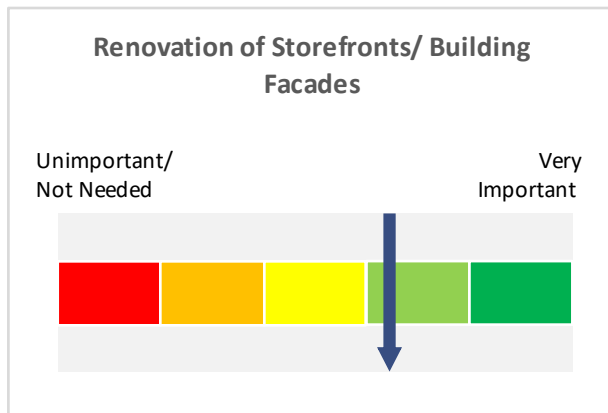
31% of businesses indicated that the regulatory environment poses an obstacle to business operation.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies

Physical Environment, Atmosphere and Access

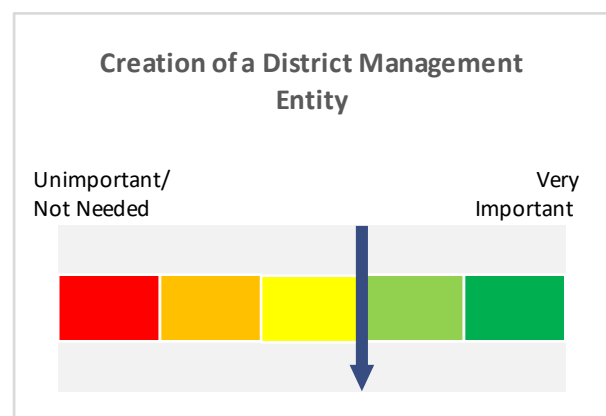
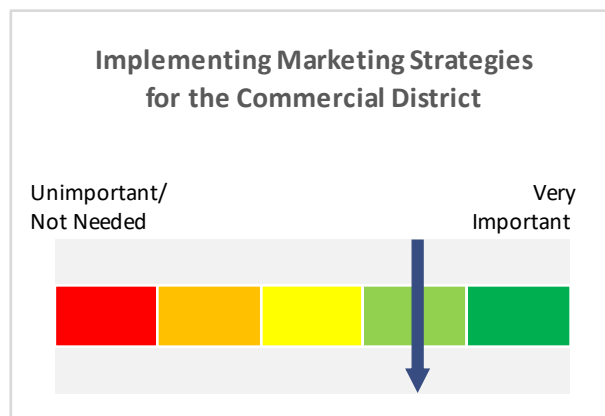
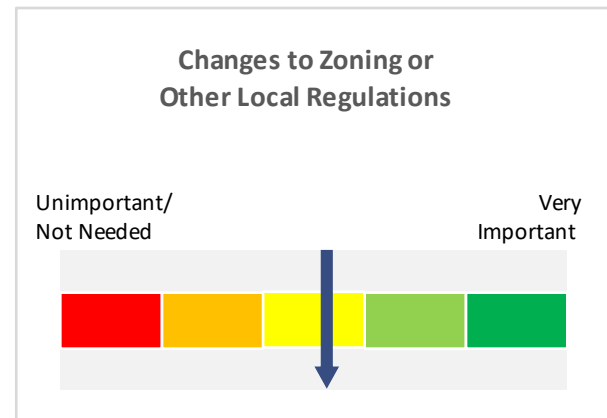
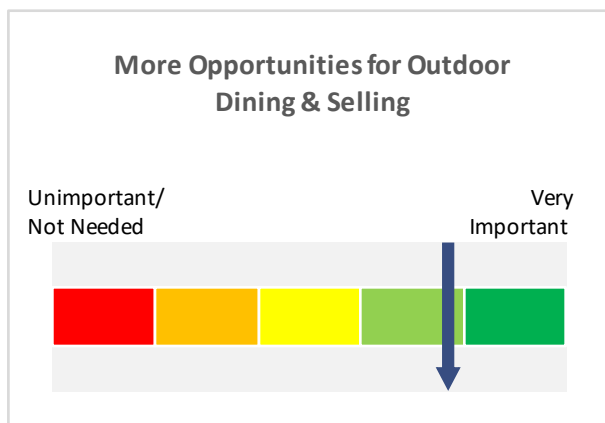
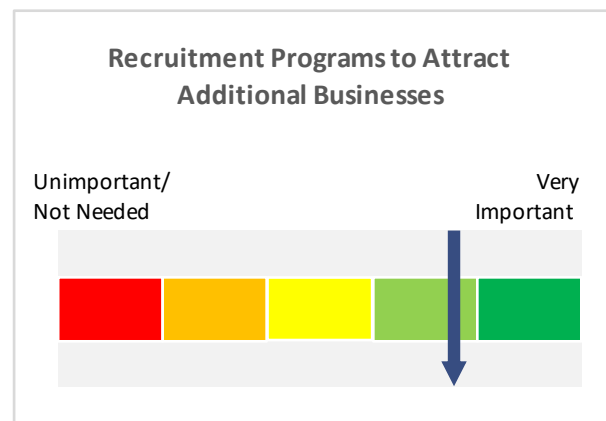
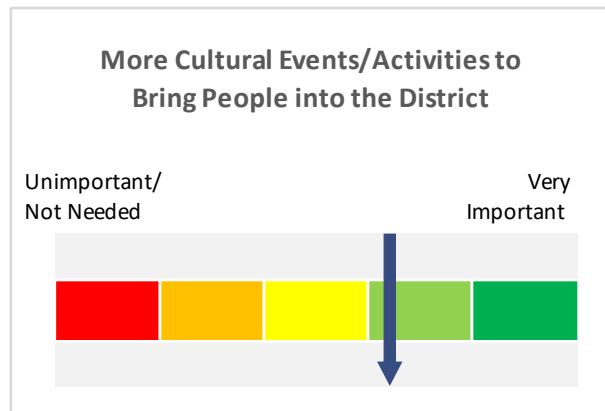
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

Attraction/Retention of Customers and Businesses

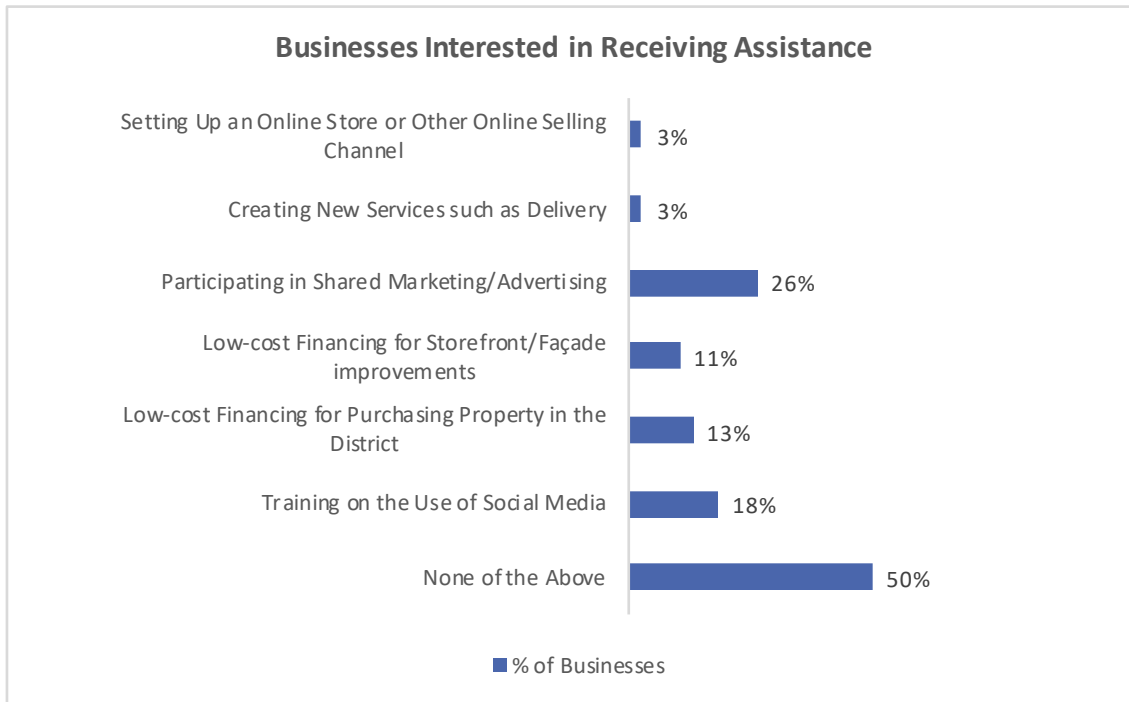
The charts below illustrate the average rating among respondents regarding importance of various strategies.



Business Input Related to Possible Strategies (cont'd)

Businesses Support

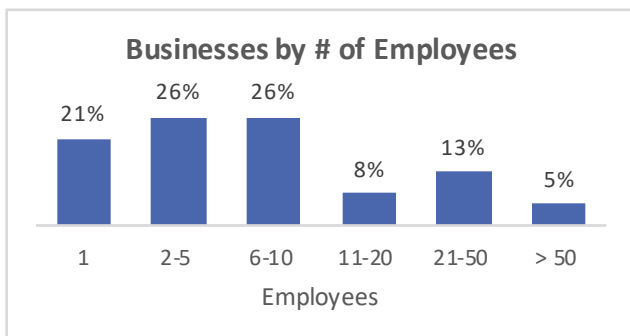
50% of businesses expressed interest in receiving some kind of assistance.



Business Characteristics

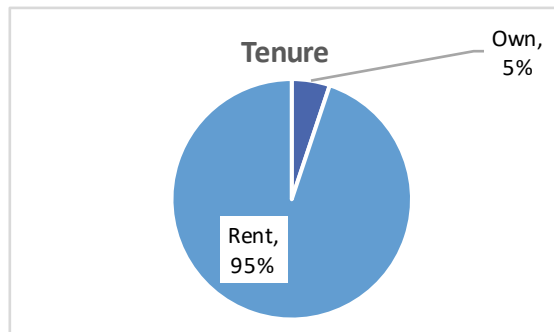
Business Size

47% of businesses are microenterprises (≤ 5 employees).



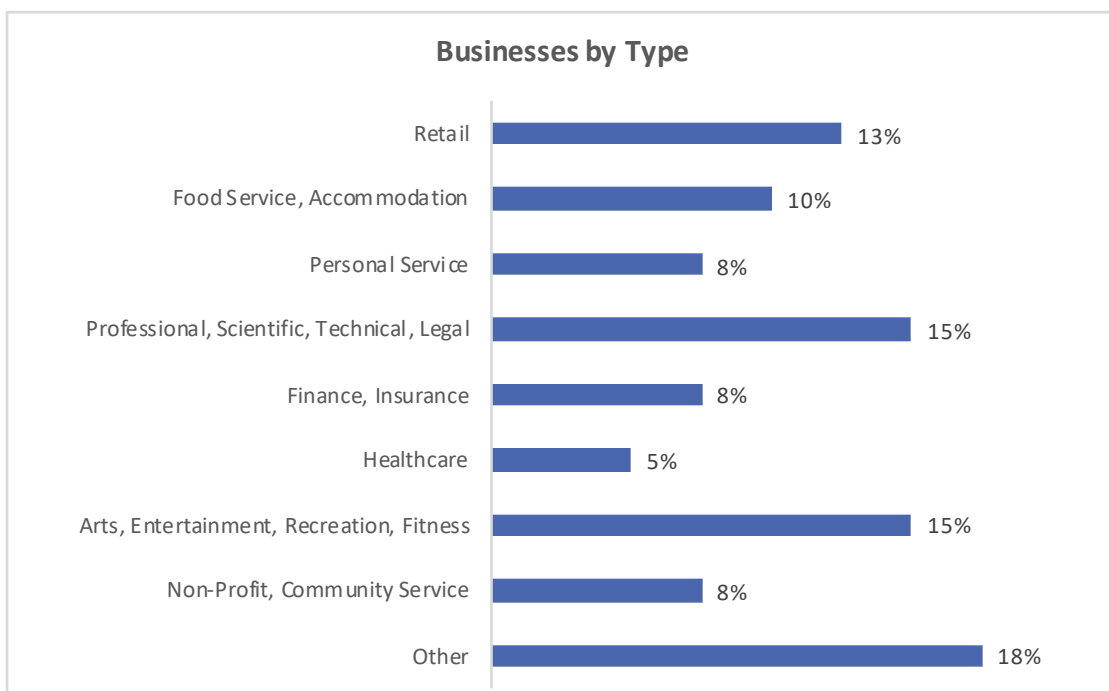
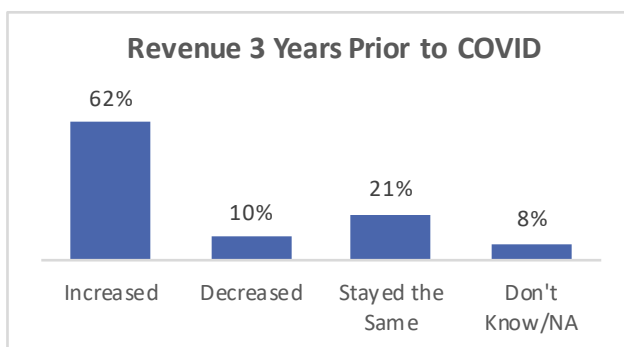
Business Tenure

95% of businesses rent their space.



Revenue Trend Prior to COVID

62% of businesses reported increase in revenue during the 3 years prior to COVID.



Business Survey Results - Data Tables

Community Where Targeted Downtown or Commercial District is Located

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

| | |
|---------|----|
| Maynard | 39 |
|---------|----|

Business Characteristics & Satisfaction with Commercial Area

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

| | | |
|--------------|----|------|
| 1 | 8 | 21% |
| 2 to 5 | 10 | 26% |
| 6 to 10 | 10 | 26% |
| 11 to 20 | 3 | 8% |
| 21 to 50 | 5 | 13% |
| More than 50 | 2 | 5% |
| Total | 38 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|-------|----|------|
| Own | 2 | 5% |
| Rent | 37 | 95% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|---------------------------|----|------|
| Increased | 24 | 62% |
| Decreased | 4 | 10% |
| Stayed about the Same | 8 | 21% |
| Don't Know/Not Applicable | 3 | 8% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|---|----|------|
| Retail (NAICS 44-45) | 5 | 13% |
| Food Service (restaurants, bars), Accommodation (NAICS 72) | 4 | 10% |
| Personal Service (hair, skin, nails, dry cleaning) (NAICS 81) | 3 | 8% |
| Professional Scientific, Technical, Legal (NAICS 54) | 6 | 15% |
| Finance, Insurance (NAICS 52) | 3 | 8% |
| Healthcare (medical, dental, other health practitioners) (NAICS 62) | 2 | 5% |
| Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Fitness (NAICS 71) | 6 | 15% |
| Non-Profit, Community Services | 3 | 8% |
| Other | 7 | 18% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

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

Condition of public spaces, streets, sidewalks

| | | |
|-------------------|----|------|
| Very Dissatisfied | 4 | 10% |
| Dissatisfied | 3 | 8% |
| Neutral | 10 | 26% |
| Satisfied | 19 | 49% |
| Very Satisfied | 3 | 8% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

Condition of Private Buildings, Facades, Storefronts, Signage

| | | |
|-------------------|----|------|
| Very Dissatisfied | 5 | 13% |
| Dissatisfied | 10 | 26% |
| Neutral | 14 | 37% |
| Satisfied | 7 | 18% |
| Very Satisfied | 2 | 5% |
| Total | 38 | 100% |

Access for Customers & Employees

| | | |
|-------------------|----|------|
| Very Dissatisfied | 1 | 3% |
| Dissatisfied | 4 | 10% |
| Neutral | 9 | 23% |
| Satisfied | 20 | 51% |
| Very Satisfied | 5 | 13% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

Safety and Comfort of Customers & Employees

| | | |
|-------------------|----|------|
| Very Dissatisfied | 1 | 3% |
| Dissatisfied | 1 | 3% |
| Neutral | 10 | 26% |
| Satisfied | 20 | 53% |
| Very Satisfied | 6 | 16% |
| Total | 38 | 100% |

Proximity to Complementary Businesses or Uses

| | | |
|-------------------|----|------|
| Very Dissatisfied | 1 | 3% |
| Dissatisfied | 0 | 0% |
| Neutral | 8 | 21% |
| Satisfied | 25 | 64% |
| Very Satisfied | 5 | 13% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|---|----|-----|
| Licensing or permitting regulations | 3 | 8% |
| Signage regulations | 2 | 5% |
| Parking regulations | 10 | 26% |
| Outdoor dining or selling regulations | 3 | 8% |
| Allowed uses, change of use or other zoning regulations | 2 | 5% |
| Historic District regulations | 2 | 5% |
| Other regulations (not related to COVID) | 2 | 5% |
| None - No Issues with regulations | 27 | 69% |

Impacts of COVID

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

| | | |
|---|----|-----|
| Decline in revenue | 26 | 67% |
| Employee layoff | 13 | 33% |
| Reduced operating hours/capacity | 24 | 62% |
| Business closure (temporary or permanent) | 18 | 46% |
| Stopped/deferred rent or mortgage payments | 6 | 15% |
| Incurred expense to implement safety measures | 20 | 51% |
| Established alternative mode to sell and deliver products (on-line platforms, delivery, etc.) | 17 | 44% |
| None of the Above | 7 | 18% |

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

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|----|------|
| Increased compared to 2019 | 7 | 18% |
| Stayed about the same as 2019 | 5 | 13% |
| Decreased 1 – 24% compared to 2019 | 5 | 13% |
| Decreased 25 – 49% compared to 2019 | 10 | 26% |
| Decreased 75 - 100% compared to 2019 | 2 | 5% |
| Decreased 50 – 74% compared to 2019 | 5 | 13% |
| Don't Know/Not Applicable | 5 | 13% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|--|----|------|
| More customers than before COVID | 1 | 3% |
| About the same number as before COVID | 5 | 13% |
| 1 – 24% less customers than before COVID | 4 | 10% |
| 25 – 49% less customers than before COVID | 5 | 13% |
| 50 – 74% less customers than before COVID | 5 | 13% |
| 75 – 100% less customers than before COVID | 11 | 28% |
| Don't Know/Not Applicable | 8 | 21% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|--|----|------|
| Operating at full capacity | 13 | 34% |
| Operating at reduced hours/capacity due to COVID | 22 | 58% |
| Temporarily closed due to COVID | 3 | 8% |
| Permanently closed due to COVID | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 38 | 100% |

Strategies for Supporting Businesses and Improving the Commercial District

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

Renovation of Storefronts/Building Facades

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 3 | 8% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 2 | 5% |
| Moderately Important | 14 | 37% |
| Important | 8 | 21% |
| Very Important | 11 | 29% |
| Total | 38 | 100% |

Improvement/Development of Public Spaces & Seating Areas

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 2 | 5% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 4 | 10% |
| Moderately Important | 11 | 28% |
| Important | 8 | 21% |
| Very Important | 14 | 36% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

Improvement of Streetscape & Sidewalks

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 2 | 5% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 7 | 18% |
| Moderately Important | 9 | 23% |
| Important | 12 | 31% |
| Very Important | 9 | 23% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

Improvements in Safety and/or Cleanliness

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 2 | 5% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 4 | 10% |
| Moderately Important | 16 | 41% |
| Important | 7 | 18% |
| Very Important | 10 | 26% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

Changes in Public Parking Availability, Management or Policies

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 3 | 8% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 7 | 18% |
| Moderately Important | 6 | 15% |
| Important | 8 | 21% |
| Very Important | 15 | 38% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

Amenity Improvements for Public Transit Users and/or Bike Riders

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 8 | 21% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 8 | 21% |
| Moderately Important | 6 | 15% |
| Important | 7 | 18% |
| Very Important | 10 | 26% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

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

More Cultural Events/Activities to Bring People into the District

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 2 | 5% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 7 | 18% |
| Moderately Important | 8 | 21% |
| Important | 11 | 28% |
| Very Important | 11 | 28% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

More Opportunities for Outdoor Dining and Selling

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 2 | 5% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 3 | 8% |
| Moderately Important | 5 | 13% |
| Important | 9 | 23% |
| Very Important | 20 | 51% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

Implementing Marketing Strategies for the Commercial District

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 3 | 8% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 5 | 13% |
| Moderately Important | 4 | 10% |
| Important | 11 | 28% |
| Very Important | 16 | 41% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

Recruitment Programs to Attract Additional Businesses

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 3 | 8% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 2 | 5% |
| Moderately Important | 4 | 10% |
| Important | 12 | 31% |
| Very Important | 18 | 46% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 5 | 13% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 7 | 18% |
| Moderately Important | 12 | 31% |
| Important | 9 | 23% |
| Very Important | 6 | 15% |
| Total | 39 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------|
| Unimportant/Not Needed | 3 | 8% |
| Of Little Importance or Need | 6 | 16% |
| Moderately Important | 10 | 26% |
| Important | 11 | 29% |
| Very Important | 8 | 21% |
| Total | 38 | 100% |

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

| | | |
|---|----|-----|
| Setting up an online store or other online selling channel | 1 | 3% |
| Creating new services such as delivery | 1 | 3% |
| Participating in shared marketing/advertising | 10 | 26% |
| Low-cost financing for storefront/façade improvements | 4 | 11% |
| Low-cost financing for purchasing property in the commercial district | 5 | 13% |
| Training on the use of social media | 7 | 18% |
| None of the above | 19 | 50% |

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

Comments

| |
|---|
| Cambridge Focus |
| InsuranceBee, Inc |
| Better parking and no meters, why would folks want to find the coins and worry about getting a ticket when they can go to a shopping center or mall and not pay anything. |
| hiring local talent first. Documenting via HS film crew business covid stories |
| OLIVERS WANDS AND WIZARDING WARES |
| — |
| — |
| — |
| no answer |
| Tea Forte |
| Exponent, Inc. |
| — |
| EmpiraMed, Inc. |
| — |
| — |
| — |
| Kaon Interactive, Inc |
| Top Cat Promotions |
| Maynard Food Pantry |
| Commercial taxes need to be reduced and restrictions eased to attract more businesses. |
| — |
| Raspberry beret |
| A program that incentivized / forced investment in properties downtown so that it looks nicer. |
| — |

| |
|--|
| — |
| Incentivize small business owners to come to- and stay in-Maynard, NOT by adding more rules and regulations, though! Stop holding business back. We need a NEW planning board! |
| — |
| Maynard has such promise but is floundering! Why is Hudson booming? The EDC has been in place for years, but what are they doing? We need help! |
| The Flower Pot |
| — |
| — |
| Free parking pass for business owners and employees |
| — |
| — |
| — |
| Town Market place (on-line) listing all business located in Maynard with service and pricing which are essential to the consumers |
| Removal of parking meters, water/sewer and infrastructure upgrades, addition of designated bicycle and car parking facility in downtown basin, roadway maintenance, better snow removal |
| Improvements to landlord owned structures/facades, is not helpful/important following a pandemic. It is the businesses and local business owners inside these spaces that matter! |
| — |
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Massachusetts Local Rapid Recovery Program SME Consultation Report

To: Maynard

From: Revby LLC

Project: Build on the existing brand of the Cultural District and integrate with Town-wide branding

Leverage and market existing successful programs of Maynard and the Cultural District to benefit short-term recovery and create a strategy for medium and long-term resilience. This is seen as key to encourage visitors and private investment in the area.

Project Considerations and Examples

RFP examples

Considering the advanced stage of your project planning and the desired focus for feedback on RFP content, we have provided several RFPs that we see as good examples to adapt for your purposes.

City of Rancho Mirage - Request for Proposals for Marketing, Branding, Campaign Development and Strategic Planning Services

See file: [RFP-for-Marketing-Branding-Campaign-Development-Strategic-Planning-Services.pdf](#)

**CITY OF RANCHO MIRAGE
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FOR
MARKETING, BRANDING, CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENT
AND
STRATEGIC PLANNING SERVICES**

ANNOUNCEMENT:

The City of Rancho Mirage ("City") invites proposals from qualified, competent, knowledgeable, and experienced marketing agencies that will provide strategic planning, brand development, marketing, advertising, social media strategy and design and assist the City of Rancho Mirage marketing department with drafting and finalizing a 4-year strategic marketing, communications and events plan, establishing brand positioning and guidelines and the creation of 3-4 brand campaign concepts the City's marketing department can select and build out for use in the coming years and administer the duties and responsibilities set forth in this Request for Proposals ("RFP") for the benefit of the City of Rancho Mirage ("City"), in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, policies and procedures. Firms submitting proposals must be prepared to immediately enter into a contract ("Agreement") for the services and duties as set forth in this RFP.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Rancho Mirage is in the Coachella Valley, near Palm Springs, California. Situated between Cathedral City (to the West) and Palm Desert (to the East). Rancho Mirage has a population of approximately 18,000 residents. Median age is 64 years old and Median income is \$80,000.

The Coachella Valley is a seasonal resort area within Southern California. Rancho Mirage seeks to encourage new business, domestic and international tourism and maintain the high quality of life and services to residents.

The City of Rancho Mirage has an opportunity to create a 4-year strategic plan and define its branding and positioning.

FUTURE

Recently, the City approved of a project that would provide for a mix of resort hotel, residential, commercial, and open space/recreation uses oriented around a Grand Oasis Crystal Lagoon. The Project would allow development of up to 1,932 residential units,

Additional RFP examples:

- <https://www.cityofpuyallup.org/DocumentCenter/View/14675/REQUEST-FOR-PROPOSALS-Destination-Marketing-Campaign-FINAL?bidId=>
- <https://www.coachella.org/home/showpublisheddocument/4510/635932019822230000>
- <https://www.newrochelleny.com/DocumentCenter/View/3221/RFP-NR-5004-Marking-and-Branding-Suite?bidId=>

Funding Sources

- Funding sources could include opportunities linked to particular sectors such as: arts & culture, business development, open space....
 - <https://www.arts.gov/grants/our-town/program-description>
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/community-development-block-grant-cdbg>
- Local Foundations
 - <https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/key-initiatives/tdi/>

Brief summary on Process:

Pre-branding:

1. Assessment of Key Documents including City Plan, Cultural District & Cultural Council Priorities and
2. Comprehensive survey of business owners & customer, residents
3. Mapping of businesses & resources
4. Listing of events and festivals
5. Key priorities for the town
6. Notable arts & cultural elements (outdoor)

Create a position OR committee to lead through pre-branding activities

- Carrying out the day-to-day efforts

Possible Job Titles:

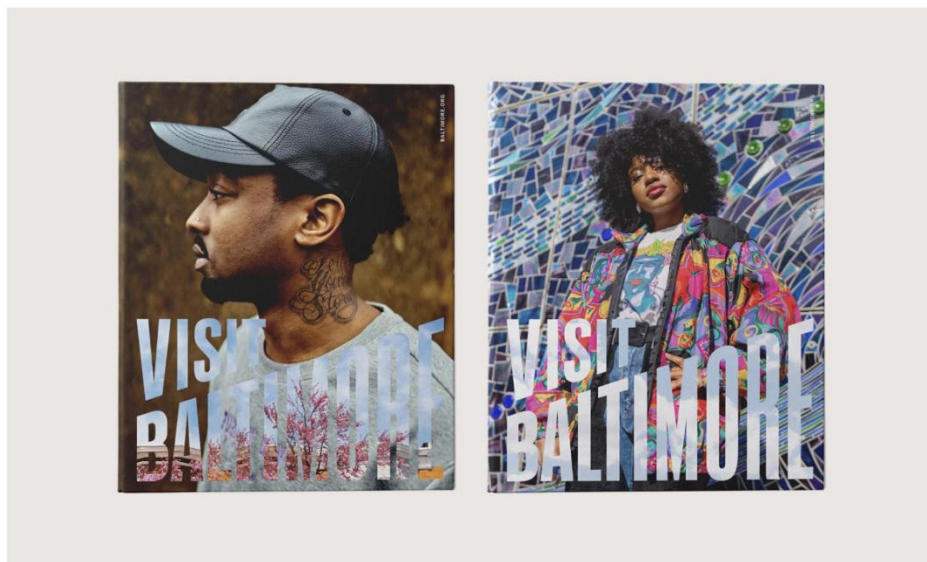
1. Community Engagement Coordinator
2. Community Engagement Manager
3. Community Engagement Director

Job Descriptions Examples:

- <https://charlestonpromise.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Community-Engagement-Program-Manager-Job-Description-FINAL.pdf>
- <http://apps.mesaaz.gov/jobdescriptions/documents/JobDescriptions/cs4648.pdf>
- <https://jobs.smartrecruiters.com/CityofPhiladelphia/743999719105758-community-engagement-director>
- https://www.rochesternh.net/sites/g/files/vyhlf1131/f/pages/public_information_community_engagement_manager_-_final_draft_6-8-2020.pdf

Branding Firm Specific Support

1. Examples of city branding and marketing materials



- <https://www.san-marcos.net/home/showdocument?id=20401>
- <https://bellweather.agency/case-studies/visit-baltimore-campaign-city-branding/>
- <https://bellweather.agency/case-studies/napa-valley-website/>
- <https://bellweather.agency/case-studies/danville-california-destination-marketing/>

- <https://www.unioncity.org/DocumentCenter/View/1375/Union-City-Style-Guide---Digital?bidId=>
- <https://www.boston.gov/departments/innovation-and-technology/brand-guidelines>



2. Local & National suggested firms

- <https://bellweather.agency/jobs/>
- <https://www.civicbrand.com>
- <https://proverbagency.com>

3. Price range

- \$80,000 - \$200,000

How to get businesses excited about the branding and integration and focus on the Creative Economy

1. Kick off meeting / Explain funding opportunities
 1. Providing a clear explanation on the ways that this can positively impact their businesses
 2. Ways that it can create interesting partnerships
 3. Create mutual benefit for artists, creatives and small businesses
2. Small Business Arts Activation Funds
 1. Examples
 1. Outdoor music / Outdoor dining
 2. Indoor exhibits
 3. Spoken word OR 1 person short play
 4. Host an event that integrates artists and creative
 2. Could provide \$2500 - \$5000 for partnerships that integrate an artist/creative and small business
 3. Track impact (This information can be used to seek additional funds and inspire others to think about identifying ways to collaborate)
 1. Dollars spent
 2. Foot traffic
 3. Additional opportunities created for artist/creative
 4. Press



Ann McFarland Burke
Consultant Vibrant downtowns,
healthy communities.



SME Administrative/Organizational Capacity Consultation

To: Jeanette Tozer
Plan Facilitator -Maynard

From: Ann McFarland Burke

**RE: SME Consultation on Organizational and Administrative Capacity for
the Cultural Council/ Cultural District in Maynard MA**

Thank you for the opportunity to collaborate with you on strategies to enhance the organizational and administrative capacity of the Cultural Council and Cultural District in Maynard, MA. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Notes and recommendations are below.

Project Understanding- In Maynard, there is interest in developing the organizational and administrative capacity of the Cultural District to partner with the Town and Economic Development Committee to improve collaboration, expand staff capacity, leverage impact of events, and spur economic development.

The cultural assets of the Town include an active artist community, Artspace studios, performance spaces, galleries, a maker space, numerous cultural events, and arts and cultural related businesses in the downtown cultural district. Additionally, various arts related groups stage events and other programming that are destination drivers for downtown Maynard. The Town would like to build on this activity as part of their COVID recovery efforts and as a longer-range economic development strategy for Maynard. Current activities lack coordination and collaboration to fully leverage the impact of the creative placemaking events happening in the Cultural District. There is the opportunity to build the capacity of the Cultural Council to take a leadership role to help improve communication and collaboration among creative businesses, artists, and cultural organizations, undertake collective arts and cultural programming, and support creative economy businesses and cultural organizations to further COVID recovery. Currently the Cultural District has volunteer leadership and limited organizational, financial, and administrative capacity to undertake this effort.

The Town has been supportive of the creative economy in Maynard and has indicated a willingness to partner with the Cultural Council to help convene stakeholders to begin this discussion.

Action Items: The PF may consider these action items when developing the project rubric for expanding the administrative and organizational capacity of the Cultural Council /Cultural District in Maynard.

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

Getting Started - The Town of Maynard may partner with the Cultural Council to initiate this project by creating a working partnership comprised of the Town, Economic Development Committee, Cultural District businesses, Artspace tenants, Makerspace, gallery owners, artists, event producers and other cultural stakeholders to develop a new organizational model for the Cultural Council. The opportunity exists to use the LRRP Plan as a launching point for stakeholder engagement to explore strategies capitalize on the arts as an economic engine and destination driver for Maynard.

Develop the Value Proposition - It will be essential to develop the value proposition for investing human capital and the financial resources into the Maynard Cultural District organizational model and communicate to the Town and private stakeholders the impact of their investment. The goal of a Cultural District Organization will be to improve communication and create opportunities to collaborate on events, marketing, communication, and other business support activities to aid in COVID recovery and beyond. Key talking points include:

- Ability to collectively and cost effectively undertake priority programs to achieve scale and economic impact
- Provide a unified voice / "seat at the table" for the Cultural District and cultural district business priorities
- Produce and execute cultural and event programming and cultural placemaking
- Ability to respond to crisis - COVID
- Leverage resources and collaborations
- Improve communication
- Create formal partnerships with Town and between cultural organizations

Stakeholder Engagement/ Leadership and Partnerships - The Town and Cultural District partnership will identify key arts organizations and business owners to discuss an organizational model that will enhance connections and collaboration to benefit the arts and cultural district businesses. The clear demonstration of a public / private partnership will help move this effort forward.

Create a Community Outreach and Engagement Strategy - The Town and core arts groups and cultural district businesses could initiate community outreach efforts to engage arts organizations, patrons, cultural district businesses and other stakeholders to identify their priorities and opportunities to collaborate. This work has begun through the LRRP process but will need to continue to refine the work program for a proposed Cultural District organization. Additionally, this outreach offers the opportunity to provide community education about a Cultural District organizational model, identify needs and opportunities as well as the potential leadership to spearhead organizational development and actively participate in governance of the organization. This could happen in a variety of ways Including:

- Community Forums - fun, engaging and informational visioning sessions held at local arts spaces, or community gathering space.
- Peer Learning Panels - Executive Directors from Cultural Districts in other similar communities.
- Visits to other communities with active Cultural District organizations to see programs in action.
- Surveys of needs and priorities (broad distribution to residents, cultural stakeholders, patrons, and cultural district businesses).
- Focus Groups
- Websites/social media.

Resources for Startup and Sustainability: Seed money is needed to start a 501c3 organization for the Cultural District. Sources include TA through the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, ARPA funds (if the development of the organization is tied to implementing COVID recovery activities), or MCC. Additionally, local Institutions, foundations and key stakeholders/Individual contributors may be sources for seed money to launch an effort. Local community foundations or arts focused Foundations like the Barr Foundation may be sources for capacity building and training grants. By formally creating a 501c3 umbrella, the Cultural District will unlock additional opportunities for funding.

Example: A Cultural District 501c3 and Cultural Compact -- An example of this approach is the Springfield Cultural Partnership. The Springfield Cultural Partnership (SCP) is a 501c3 formed in 2016 to connect artists, institutions, and audiences in Springfield. The SCP is a member-based organization with multiple membership levels that has fostered a diverse mix of individuals and organizations. The SCP also oversees the downtown Cultural District. In 2018, the Springfield Central Cultural District, Springfield Cultural Council City of Springfield and MCC became one of 6 municipalities to form the Springfield Cultural Compact. The compact was a formal agreement

between these partners to work on cultural activities to support economic development, increase collaboration and partnership.

Direct Funding of Arts Coordinator Position by Town - Aligned with the formation of a 501c3 organization, the Town may consider funding an Arts Coordinator position. The Town could either establish a position as a town employee or enter into a grant agreement or contract with the Cultural District organization to pay for staff to execute strategic arts and cultural economic development initiatives as part of a larger economic development strategic plan. One example of this partnership approach is Easthampton MA, and the Town's investment in the Easthampton City Arts (ECA). The ECA is a cultural initiative of the City of Easthampton. It consists of a City Arts coordinator and several subcommittees that execute arts and cultural programming and cultural placemaking. In addition, the ECA is supported by over 100 volunteers, sponsors, individual donors, and other in-kind services. The ECA is wholly integrated into Easthampton's vision of using arts and cultural as one of their strategic pillars for economic development.

PROCESS

Maynard may consider the following steps to begin the process of building support for a Cultural District Organization.

- Create a Cultural District partnership with Town, key property owners, Cultural District Businesses, local arts organizations and cultural destination businesses, and artists to launch the effort.
- Form a broad-based advisory committee to provide input and feedback
- Secure seed funding for TA to form a 501c3 organizational model through Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (now part of the One Stop), ARPA, and other stakeholder support.
- Create community outreach events, widely distribute surveys, hold focus groups, and employ other engagement tools to develop program priorities.
- One on one conversations with stakeholders to secure support and engagement in process.
- Consensus building with stakeholders on model /programming plan /budget.
- Execute MOU / grant agreement with Town
- File for 501c3 designation, create bylaws and articles of organization
- Establish a Board of Directors
- Develop sponsorship opportunities booklet.
- Develop membership categories and corporate and individual membership recruitment strategy
- Consider executing a demonstration project that could "show" potential programs and services provided through a Cultural District organization. This may be a signature Special event series building on existing programming or festivals featuring cultural placemaking events, Cultural attractions, galleries, and businesses.

- Consider forming a Cultural Compact agreement with Town, MCC, Cultural District organization. (See Springfield Example)
- Identify and conduct board of director training on nonprofit management and fiscal management.

Resources:

<https://www.easthamptoncityarts.com>

<https://springfieldculture.org>

<http://barrfoundation.org>

<http://massculturalcouncil.org>

<http://www.mass.gov/services-details/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi>