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Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

Medford, MA



This plan has been made possible with generous support from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



The Department of Housing and Community Development, through its community and business partners, provides affordable housing options, financial assistance, and other support to Massachusetts communities. We oversee different types of assistance and funding for consumers, businesses, and non-profit partners.

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The Planning Team would also like to thank the following individuals for participating as key stakeholders throughout the planning process:

Portuguese Interpreter & Advisor

Bianca Weissman

Oasis Brazilian Restaurant

Luiz Paulo, Owner

Milano Beauty Salon

Flavia Renaud, Owner

The Corner Studio

Jenna Palm, Co-owner

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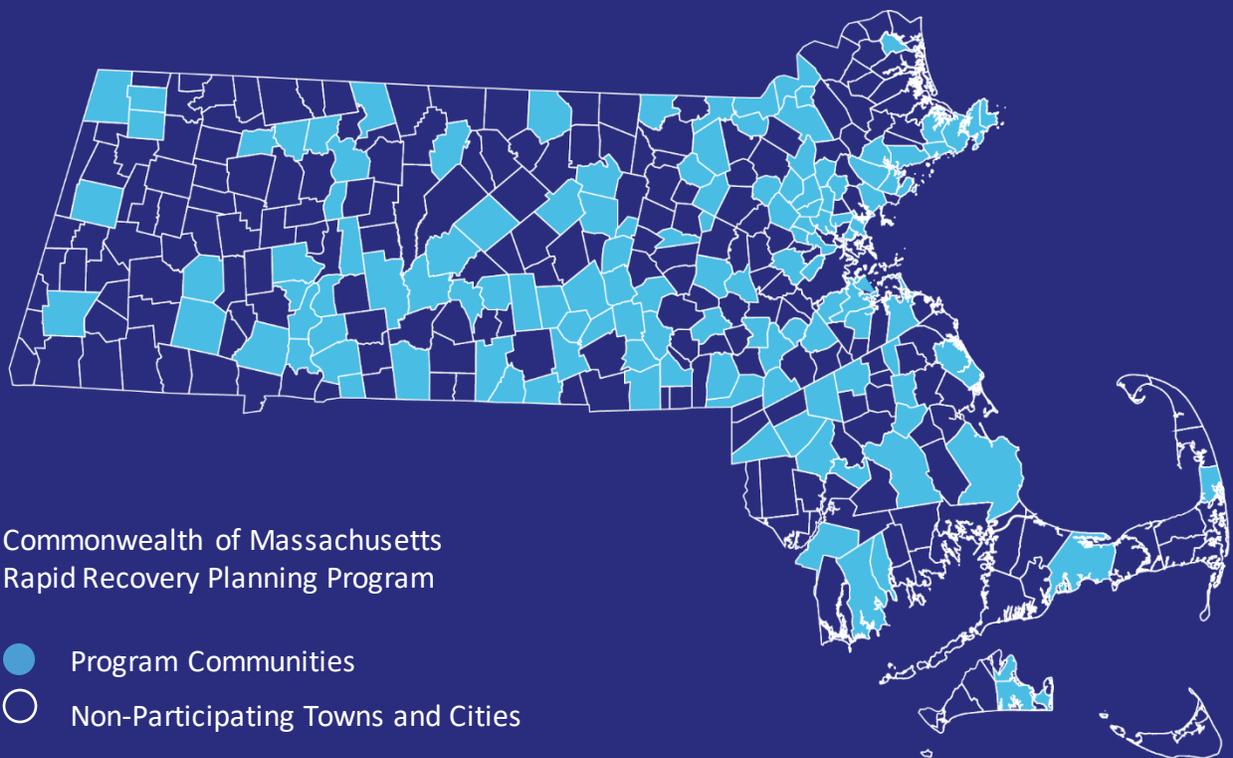
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Appendix

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.



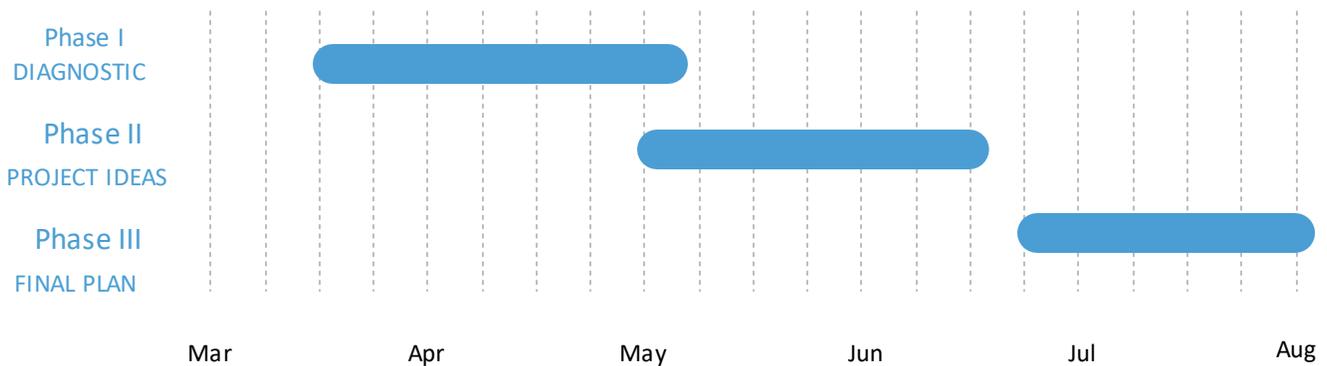
Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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 plans summarize 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

An urban community with a suburban feel

Medford has the charm of a small town of larger municipality in the Greater Boston region. Paying homage to its historic past, there are many historic preservation sites amidst the ever-modernizing mixed use and commercial developments. The Mystic River provides scenic views and the proximity to Interstate highway 93 make for quicker access into Boston and surrounding communities.

Growing amount of small light industrial design and technology companies migrating to Medford. The proximity to Boston, Somerville and Cambridge and affordability draws a mix of students, young professionals and multi-generational families to the high-residential community. Medford has majorly single-family homes but there are a number of two-family homes, and a perpetually increasing amount of multi-unit residential facilities.

The population grew 6.2% from 56,173 in 2010 to 59,659 in 2020. With access to public transit with several bus routes, rapid rail at the Wellington station on the Orange Line, the commuter rail, and the pending Green Line Extension, the population is expected to grow rapidly in the coming years. As such, the city has been preparing by enacting policy such as the inclusionary zoning ordinance passed in 2019.

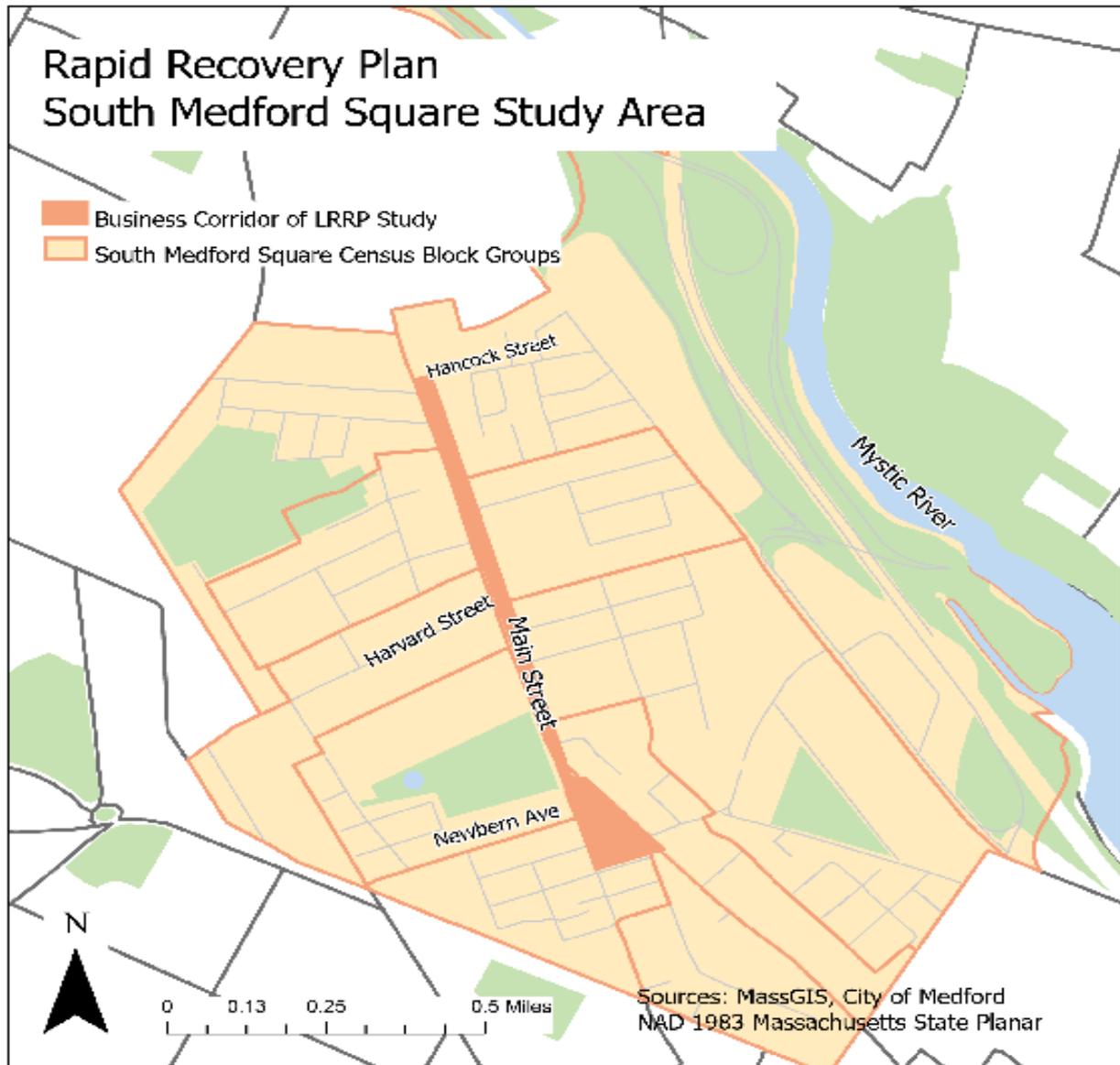
According to the Medford Chamber of Commerce, there are approximately 285 businesses in Medford. South Medford is the site of the study area - The Main St commercial corridor. South Medford is one of five business districts (the others being West Medford, Medford Square, Cane's Square and Hillside). Traditionally an Italian neighborhood there is a growing amount of diversity and strong representation of business owners of Brazilian descent amongst others.

It is the home to over 50 amenities, including salons, health services, café's, bakeries, convenience stores, and popular restaurants like Oasis Café and Steakhouse, and Bob's Italian Foods. Most of the business are small and independent. There are some franchises but those are minimal.

The City had been engaged in the process implementing the recommendations of several studies and projects which began since 2017. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted much of those processes and had broad impacts on the small businesses. It also revealed some human capital needs to support the planning and economic development staff.

The corridor is approximately 2,900 feet from Hancock Street/Frederick Street to Medford Street. In general, the corridor has one travel lane in each direction with parking on either side.

Below is a map of the South Medford Main St study area, extending from Albion street to Hancock street.



The city of Medford has experienced steady growth in population, household income, housing values, education levels, and diversity since the 2000 Census. While its population grew by a modest 3%, Medford’s median household income grew by 40%, and its median house or condo value increased by 71%. South Medford is predicted to be a growing real estate market.

In the past decade, Medford as a city and South Medford as a neighborhood within it have experienced growth in population, household income, housing values, education levels and ethnic and racial diversity. Table 1 shows these levels at the city and neighborhood levels. Compared to the whole city, South Medford’s population is more diverse, less densely populated, younger, has lower levels of education, and more non-English speakers.

The 2016 report *Shaping Medford: Community Conversations to Guide our Economic Future* synthesized major plans in Medford, two of which were focused on Medford Square and one on the Mystic River. South Medford, despite predictions that it will be a growing real estate market (Redfin) has been given less political and economic prioritization. This sentiment was also echoed by multiple business owners, as will be elaborated upon in survey findings.

The following tables is a comparative demographic breakdown of Medford and South Medford. The study area is approximated by Census block groups and American Community Survey data (2014).

	Medford	South Medford
Total Population	57, 600 (6,651 people per square mile)	9074 (2,256 people per square mile)
Average Age	36.6 years old	30 years old
Median Household Income	\$ 96,455	\$81,359
Housing Values	\$500,800 in 2019 (it was \$229,500 in 2000)	
Education Levels	53.8% above Bachelor’s	40%
Racial Makeup	87% white; 6% Black or African American; 4% Asian; 3% Hispanic or Latinx	63% white; 14% Asian; 13% Black or African American; 8% Hispanic or Latinx
Non-English speakers	22%	28.8%

South Medford's Requires Administrative Capacity & Infrastructure

The Main St Corridor

Improving Mobility and Connectivity: The Town should implement strategies and streetscape improvements that improve connectivity through the corridor and between the sub-sections such as walkability and public transit access. This includes roadway design changes for motorists and pedestrians to access business clusters. Recent roadway reconstruction projects on Albion and Water streets present opportunities for expanding Complete Streets opportunities. Much of this can be determined through a needs assessment and subsequent studies.

Strategic Small Business Support: Survey results and discussions with business leaders have found that businesses overall have felt supported by Town administrators but need nuanced support so they can adjust to necessary pivots in their business operations as a result of the pandemic, such as online marketing and redesigns to the physical exterior and interior of their spaces. These needs are largely financial to help recoup costs of those pivots.

Resources to Promote Business Marketing and Development: The Town can execute placemaking tactics and other creative strategies to draw a growing diverse audience to patronize local establishments at commercial hubs. These strategies can build on existing local branding efforts and support anticipated changes of the Town's demographics.

The Greenwood Corridor is a smaller cluster of shops, restaurants and other businesses. To support recovery efforts and attract foot traffic and economic development opportunity overall, the Project Team has identified two main themes for COVID-19 Recovery:

Improving Marketing and Promotions: The proximity to the Greenwood Commuter rail station has created an opportunity for the area, however it is limited by transience. Patrons engage at limited time frames and therefore the activity dissipates. An assessment of business amenities to identify needs gaps can help to establish a business attraction and retention plan to incorporate diverse activity opportunities.

Placemaking/Marketing of the Corridor: The Town should employ placemaking tactics and other creative strategies that will draw a growing diverse audience and patronize local establishments to commercial corridor. These strategies can build on existing local branding efforts and support growing diversity of the Town's demographics.

Diagnostic

Diagnostic Process

Our process involved a combination of data research inquiry and field work. The goals were to identify how businesses were affected the COVID-19 pandemic, what challenges they experienced in their attempts to adjust, and how those necessary pivots impacted recovery. In summary, the process consisted of the following:

- 1. Business Survey:** In the spring of 2021, a survey developed by DHCD was administered via email to a listserv of local businesses in the both corridors.
- 2. Land Use and Planning Research:** We conducted research to understand the challenges and opportunities presented in the streetscape and public realm which impact business growth. We did this by analyzing multiple recent and current studies and planning processes. This included transportation and streetscape projects, and recent business development and support initiatives.
- 3. Field Work:** As part of learning about the community and current conditions in the corridor and business needs, members of the Favermann Design team conducted two field walks from the beginning to the end of the study area. We documented observations of the façade and storefront conditions, roadway conditions, and other observations to provide input on the what are existing needs and issues. Further, we hired Joseph Braggan, a subject matter expert in transportation and traffic and parking management. He met with the Director of Economic Development and the Director of Transportation, then conducted a field walk of his own to study the roadway conditions and provides insight into several recommendations.
- 4. Anecdotes from Business Owners** were captured after several formal and informal discussion with business owners who described their nuanced challenges and how they are attempting to adjust spatial accommodations on account of the pandemic. These insights were very helpful to inform the differences in businesses and the cross-cutting challenges they faced, and their suggestions.
- 5. Stakeholder meeting:** In the summer of 2021, the plan facilitator and Town staff presented a summary of the Local Rapid Response project and findings to stakeholders including business leaders, the Town administrator and a representative of the Chamber of commerce. Additional feedback for recommendations was collected.

Key Findings



The Corridors Need Infrastructure Changes

We examined the conditions of the public and private realms during field work analysis. There is a need to upgrade the façade of facilities, storefronts, and business signs. Business owners corroborated this anecdotally. There is a great need for streetscape and roadway improvements which will impact parking, walkability, biking and overall navigation in the area. Follow up studies and resources are necessary to implement improvement projects. There have also been positive work local buying programs, but outreach and engagement methods must be improved, if all be it, reformed.



The Main Street Businesses Are Diverse

The business which make up the study area have described that while they feel supported by the City, they limited they limited support on what specific area of assistance. Many of the businesses expressed concerns about having access to marketing tools, funding to cover necessary interior redesign and reconstruction, and identified wanting to see more activities taking place in the public such as arts and culture programming and cultural branding to attract patrons.



The Town's consumer and resident base is changing

The demographic changes means that strategies and approaches to reach an incoming consumer market will need to shift. The corridor has remained largely unchanged for decades. Many of the retail facilities are single story sites and could benefit from upzoning. As the population of Medford continues to diversity, land use activity will have to reflect the needs of all residents.



The Team Needs to Grow

The Medford planning staff are currently operating at a deficit. Two planners recently left their positions, including the planner who main point of contact for this project. The direct staff being engaged are the director of economic development and an intern. While both parties have provided what they can, the team is understaffed which make it difficult to support the South Medford business district yet alone the four other business districts.

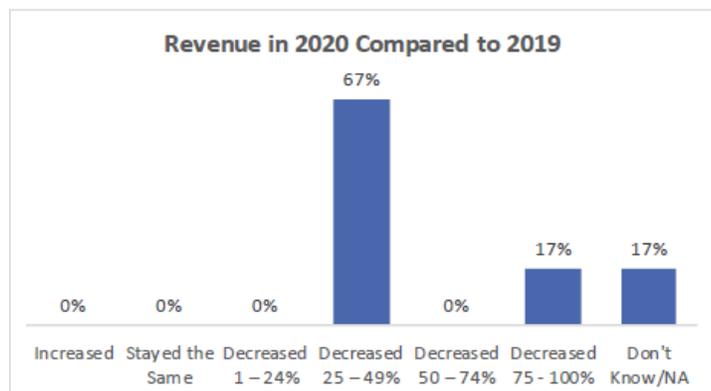
Investing in strategic staff positions is critical for rapid recovery success. Additional roles such as a business development specialist is essential to meeting the needs as described by the small businesses.

Survey & Additional Inquiry Results

Despite outreach to nearly 40 businesses, only 6 completed the survey online, with another business completing a printed copy, making a total of 7 submitted surveys. As a result, we invested additional time and resources to meeting with business owners and managers in formal and informal means. The storytelling and anecdotes they provides gave us broader insight in the needs and conditions of business es and the overall public realm of the area.

REVENUE & INCOME LOSS

84% of respondents to the survey reported a decrease in revenue comparatively between 2019 and 2020. Of that 84%, all of the businesses reported a decline in revenue by 25% or more. 17% reported a decline of revenue of 75% or more. A decline in foot traffic was a major factor in decreased revenue. 100% of businesses reported less on-site customers in January and February of 2021 than before COVID. 100% of businesses reported a reduction in on-site customers of 25% or more. At the time of the survey, all of the businesses reported that they were operating at reduced capacity and/or hours.



STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

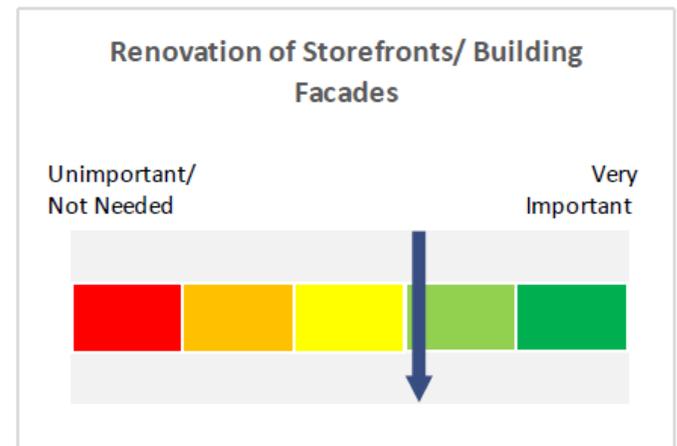
Business owners reported moderate satisfaction with conditions of the streets and sidewalks in the survey. However further dialogue proved that they have more nuanced concerned such as the conditions of the sidewalks, parking, wayfinding and signage. Business owners shared that they would like to see more uniform alignment of markings and parking spots. They also shared that some parts of the sidewalks were too narrow to accommodate outdoor seating and tree roots were breaking through the concrete, making it difficult to walk.



OTHER IMPACTS

While it was not a priority because sustaining their business operations during this time has taken precedence, business owners did comment that they would appreciate funding to update their storefronts and awnings. Survey results show a slightly above-moderate satisfaction with storefront conditions.

Further insights reveal however that business owners have had to make changes to their interiors in response to maintain safety conditions and keep to public guidelines like social distancing. For example, one Milano beauty removed an internal wall which divided the space into two rooms to accommodate social distancing. As a result, they had to eliminate some of their services which they previously provided. The Corner Studio rearranged their space which led to a limited capacity of customers can physically be present in their space at a given. All of the business owners we spoke to are concerned about the inability to recoup the losses of those necessary expenses.



Project Recommendations

1. Complete Streets Concept Plan

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Study Area
Origin	Business Leaders: Economic Development Director; 1:1 discussions
Budget	 Medium Budget \$100,000
Timeframe	 Short Term 6 months
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Improved traffic flow
Partners & Resources	Director of Transportation, Director of Economic Development, Town, Public Works



Main St near Tufts Park. Source: Allentza Michel

Diagnostic

Based on our observations and the analysis conducted by the subject matter expert, Main St's current streetscape is irregular, with some parts having streets marking and more detailed parking infrastructure, whilst the next block has little to know street marking. This calls for a Complete Streets planning initiative.

We recommend that the City develop a comprehensive concept plan of Complete Streets improvements for the Main Street corridor. The plan should include modes of active transportation, including bike and pedestrian infrastructure. Bike lanes, bicycle parking. Joseph Braggan recommends the following:

- Installation of bike markings.
- Exploration of one or more BlueBike stations.



No parking markings on Main St outside Bob's Italian Food restaurant. Photo Credit: Allentza Michel

Action Items

Conduct a Complete Streets study analyzing the following:

- Walkability
- Crosswalks
- Lighting conditions during the day and evening
- Bike infrastructure capacity
- Pedestrian infrastructure

Submit the study results and prioritize projects.

Begin implementing the projects as soon as possible.

Process

- Hire a consultant(s) to develop the plan
- Consultant conducts study
- Identify and prioritize elements of the streetscape to implement.
- Identify indicators which connect built environment elements to the neighborhood and Town's character and identity.
- Schedule a timetable for implementation

2. Sidewalk Improvements

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Study Area
Origin	Business Leaders: Community and Economic Development Director; 1:1 discussions and Stakeholder Meeting
Budget	 Medium Budget \$150,000
Timeframe	 Medium term: 1 year
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Improved walkability; ADA compliance
Partners & Resources	Director of Transportation, Director of Economic Development, Town, Public Works



The sidewalk outside Dello Russo Funeral Home. Source: Allentza Michel

Diagnostic

Public sidewalk dimensions are in the range of 8-9 feet wide with a few notable exceptions in South Medford Square where sidewalks are 12-16 feet wide. Private hardscape in front of a few establishments like La Cascia's Bakery, 379 Main Street and John Devito's Barber Shop widens the pedestrian environment in front of these stores.

Tree plantings are sparse along the corridor and are challenged by the presence of overhead wires on the east side of the street.

Like the road, the sidewalks along the Main St corridor lack alignment. During our field walk, we observed varying sidewalk widths, tree rooted breaking through the concrete, limited ramps, and minimal design to support public safety such as synchronized crosswalk lights and curb bump outs. These observations raised safety concerns.

Throughout the entire study area, we observed a single small bike rack, at a significant distance from the restaurant and retail cluster between Alexander and Harvard streets.

We also noticed that there are a few street trees on the right side of Main St, but slightly more on the left.

We propose a study, separate from the Complete Streets plan specifically focused on addressing sidewalk improvements. This assessment will inform which projects and design changes. The same consultant or consulting group which would prepare the Complete Streets would ideally also lead this project



*A single bike rack outside Bob's Italian Food. Main Street.
Source: Allentza Michel*

Action Items

Conduct a sidewalk improvement study which includes:

- Universal design limitations
- ADA accessible pathways
- Uprooted trees
- Specific sites with capacity for outdoor seating
- wheelchair access
- Broken pavement
- Bus stop locations
- Sites to add more bike racks
- Wayfinding and signage

Select priority projects

Begin implementation

Process

- Hire a consultant(s) to develop the plan
- Consultant conducts study
- Identify and prioritize elements of the streetscape to implement.
- Identify indicators which connect built environment elements to the neighborhood and Town's character and identity.
- Schedule a timetable for implementation



The sidewalk outside Dello Russo Funeral home. Source: Allentza Michel

3. Parking Utilization Study

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Corridor and surrounding streets
Origin	Business Leaders
Budget	 Medium Budget \$75,000
Timeframe	 Medium Term: 1 – 1.5 years
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Physical improvements to the streetscape; easier access to establishments
Partners & Resources	Director of Transportation, Director of Economic Development, Town, Public Works



Angle parking outside Oasis restaurant. Source: Allentza Michel

Diagnostic

The curb-to-curb width of the vehicular travel way in the corridor varies by location. Within South Medford Square it is approximately 44 feet south of Harvard Street and 56 feet north of Harvard Street where the angled parking is located.

There are approximately 79 unregulated “legal” spaces.

Our rough estimates observed the following number of potential parking spots on the right side of Main St:

- 7 between Willard Ave and Mayberry St
- 7 between Bonner and Alexander Sts
- 5 parking spots between Alexander and Sgt sg, due to the bus stop
- 7 parking spots between Harvard and Wright
- 6 parking availability between Wright and Golden Ave
- 7 sedan size parking spots between Golden Ave and Bowen St
- About 12 parking availability between Billings and Eliot (Note: parking may be limited/reserved during funeral service at Dello Russo funeral home)
- 9 parking availability space between Eliot and Hancock

The lack of parking infrastructure also presents a missed opportunity as parking meters begin at Alexander St and are only provided for two blocks.



A “no Parking” sign. Source: Allentza Michel

Parking markings begin at Alexander and Harvard, the only blocks where there are parking meters. Delineation of legal parking spaces with appropriate parking regulations and signage, based on the parking utilization study will support traffic calming and other safety interventions.

We also observed this is the only block where there is angle parking. The business owner at Oasis expressed concern that cars sometimes bunch and double outside his restaurant and cafe, which also has a bus stop where people gather and wait for the bus. It presents a challenge for food delivery trucks to easily access the restaurant and deliver goods.

Other components of the unitization study should include:

- A parking accumulation to count the number and vehicle types parked along the corridor during a typical day, such as passenger versus delivery vehicles during the course of a typical day.
- A parking turnover study in South Medford Square to estimate the amount of long-term and short-term parking, the average turnover rate per space for the 30-minute and two-hour parking spaces and the number and amount of loading activity within the square.

Action Items

Engage the same consultant or consulting group to conduct the Complete Streets Study.

Perform a detailed audit of the sidewalk conditions.

Issue a parking utilization study to understand how on-street parking is used during different times of day by residential users and to identify demand for commercial vehicle loading spaces.

Cross reference the conditions of the sidewalks and their potential impact on business activity and accessibility in the corridor.

Determine a set of projects to be carried out immediately.

Process

- Identify a consulting agency to assist in administering the program. Designate which municipal department staff will manage the project.
- Develop the language and issue an RFP to recruit a consultant team.
- Consider the implementation of consistent times (e.g., 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM or 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM) for short-term parking to simplify regulations.
- Evaluate the need for TNC drop-off/pick-up spaces.
- Engage the public, businesses and other stakeholders via creative and culturally responsive engagement strategies.
- Ask stakeholders to weigh in on the project prioritization process.

4. Study: Reconfigure Medford Square

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Corridor and surrounding streets
Origin	Business Leaders; Subject Matter Expert
Budget	 Medium Budget \$200,000
Timeframe	 Long Term: 2 -3 years
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Improved wayfinding; accessibility improvements
Partners & Resources	Director of Transportation, Director of Economic Development, Community Development Staff; Town, Public Works



The Greenline Extension brings anticipation of growth in South Medford Square. Source: Patch

Diagnostic

In tandem with a more rapid Complete Streets study, a long-term redesign strategy is necessary to address expected changes and zoning reforms to accommodate a rowing Medford Square.

We recommend a study to develop potential options to reconfigure South Medford Square. This study should establish the various trade-offs of different design approaches, such as impacts to parking, impacts to pedestrian mobility and safety, ADA-compliance, transit service and operations, bicycle accommodations, utility implications, opportunities for new public spaces and landscaped areas. Potential options for consideration could include:



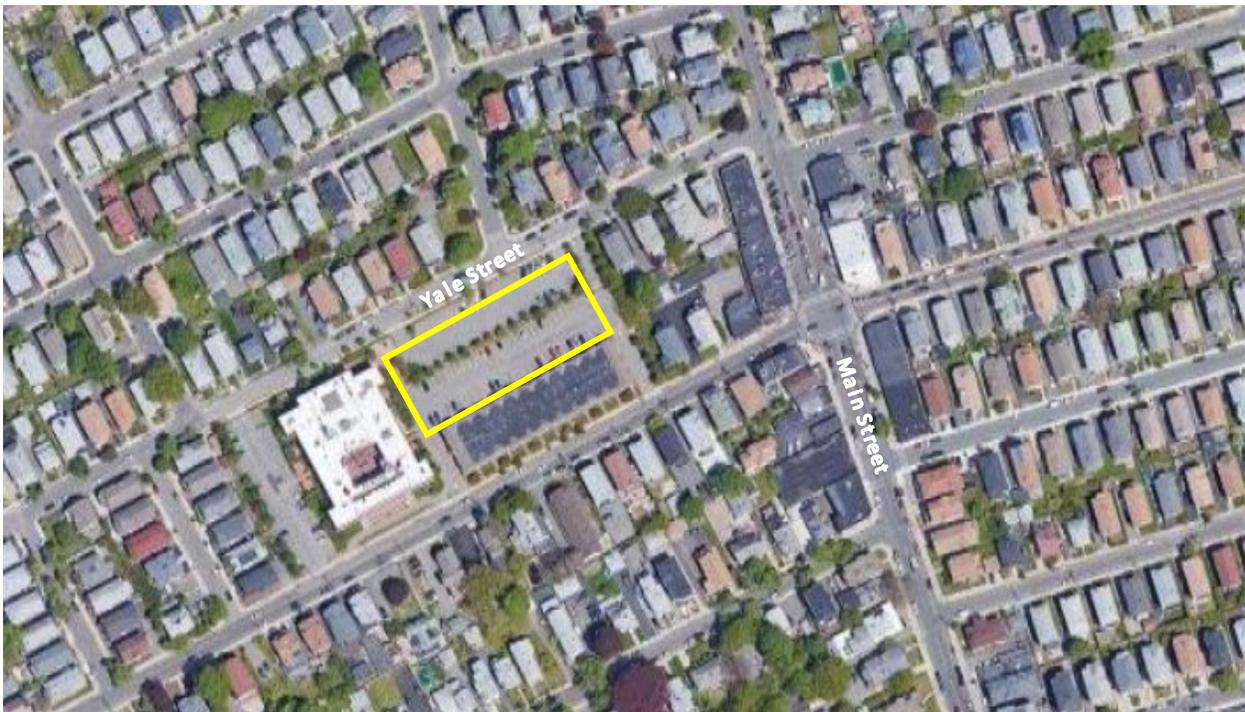
A commemorative sign. Source: Allentza Michel

Action Items

- Extend the Complete Streets initiative with a long-term reconfiguration study.
- Maintain angle parking but relocate the southbound Route 101 bus stop from its existing location before the intersection with Harvard Street to a location south of Harvard Street.
- Replace the angle parking with parallel parking and re-use the available right-of-way with a combination of uses, such as wider sidewalks, outdoor dining, etc.
- Reconfiguration of the large curb radii at the Main Street/Harvard Street intersection to reduce pedestrian crossing dimensions and slow vehicles entering and exiting the corridor while appropriately accommodating truck turning maneuvers.
- Reconfiguration of the southwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and Yale Street to create the opportunity for a pedestrian crossing and an identifiable gateway at the northern end of the square by reducing the paved area at this corner.

5. Yale Street Parking Lot Assessment

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Yale Street Parking Lot
Origin	Subject Matter Expert
Budget	 Low Budget \$45,000
Timeframe	 Short Term: 1 year
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Improved use of the Yale Street parking lot
Partners & Resources	Director of Transportation, Director of Economic Development, Town, Public Works



Aerial Map of Yale Street Parking Lot: Source: Google Maps

Diagnostic

Just a three-minute walk from Main St is a parking lot on Yale Street. The 39-space Yale Street lot is an underutilized resource for South Medford Square. It has excess capacity and the Mr. Braggan reported open parking spaces during peak time during his field observations.

The Yale Street parking is an opportunity to address parking overflow on Main Street and could serve more uses.

Lack of signage and wayfinding make the open parcel invisible to motorists.

We recommend an assessment take place to discover opportunities for additional uses of the Yale Street parking lot.

Some explorations include but are not limited to designating ZipCar space(s) and electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. Braggan recommends the development of a parking program for merchants and their employees to use the lot as a way to improve parking turnover in South Medford Square.

Planning staff report that the City is looking to install EV charging stations in public and school parcels, and already have applied for funding from MassDEP for two other locations.

An installer has already been engaged to survey the proposed sites. We recommend the City engage the agency to include Yale Street and apply Rapid Response funding to supplement the costs.

Action Items

- Hire a consultant
- Conduct the assessment
- Engage stakeholders to inform them of the process and collect feedback
- Set a schedule for projects
- Begin implementation and installations

Process

- Collect feedback from the LRRP team and subject matter expert.
- Recruit a consultant and/or work with installer to survey the parking lot.
- Conduct the assessment, incorporating notes from field observations and survey work.
- Hold stakeholder engagements through meetings and other strategies
- Identify priorities
- Present findings to the Council
- Set a timeline for implementation and installations



Yale Street Parking Lot: Source: Google Streetview

6. Wayfinding and Signage Improvements

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Corridor and surrounding streets
Origin	Business Leaders; Subject Matter Expert
Budget	 Medium Budget \$120,000
Timeframe	 Short to Medium Term: 6 months – 1 year
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Improved wayfinding; accessibility improvements
Partners & Resources	Director of Transportation, Director of Economic Development, Town, Public Works



*A faded bus stop sign at Main St and Harvard St.
Source: Allentza Michel*



*A handicap parking sign on Main St.
Source: Allentza Michel*

Diagnostic

As with other streetscape improvement needs, wayfinding and instructional signage need to be updated. Some signs need to be repainted, whilst others would benefit from redesign. Improved directional signage is essential on Main Street and adjacent streets to South Medford Square, Tufts Square and other key destinations.

The update to signage about parking limits, space delineations and meters will help patrons in navigating the district. And some of the signs could be enlarged to accommodate the visually impaired.

Enhancements to MBTA bus stops are important to address safety and design deficiencies.



A commemorative sign. Source: Allentza Michel

Action Items

- Incorporate wayfinding and signage as part of overall Complete Streets improvements projects
- Survey the district and categorize the types of signs which need updating, and any locations which could benefit from directional signage
- Perform the updates

Process

- When recruiting a consultant for the Complete Streets project, offer wayfinding as an extension of the work.
- Conduct research and catalogue the where existing signage is placed
- Prepare a budget to estimate costs
- Get the projects approved
- Identify a contractor
- Install the upgraded and new signs

7. Crosswalk Improvement Program

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Corridor and surrounding streets
Origin	Business Leaders; Subject Matter Expert
Budget	 Medium Budget \$200,000
Timeframe	 Short to Medium Term: 6 months – 1 year
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Improved wayfinding; accessibility improvements
Partners & Resources	Director of Transportation, Director of Economic Development, Town, Public Works



Crosswalks at opposites sides of Main St and Hancock Streets handicap parking sign on Main St. Source: Allentza Michel

Diagnostic

Six of the eight pedestrian crossings in the corridor are unsignalized. The intersection of Harvard Street and Main Street is fully signalized with a push-button activated exclusive pedestrian phase. An older pedestrian signal is located at the intersection of Main Street with Frederick and Hancock Street.

New and enhanced pedestrian crossings to meet ADA requirements, reduce crossing distances where practical and provide better connectivity across Medford Street, particularly at MBTA stops and commercial districts.

Reconfiguration of the southwest corner of the intersection of Main Street and Yale Street to create the opportunity for a pedestrian crossing and an identifiable gateway at the northern end of the square by reducing the paved area at this corner.

Action Items

- Hire a transportation engineering consultant
- Scan the corridor and document the placement of crosswalks, their conditions, and their proximity to amenities.
- Evaluate the pedestrian signal and crossings at the intersection of Main Street with Hancock Street and Frederick Street to determine appropriate upgrades to signal equipment and intersection geometry.
- Improve crosswalks, including raised crosswalks, crosswalk blinking lights and/or signals

Process

This process should be included as part of the overall Complete Streets plan. See the Completes Streets recommendations.



The curb at Bowen Ave and Main St. Source: Allentza Michel

8. Green Infrastructure

Category	 Private Realm
Location	Main Steet
Origin	Business Leaders
Budget	 Medium Budget \$200,000
Timeframe	 Short Term: 1 year
Risk	 Medium Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Physical improvements to business façade
Partners & Resources	Community and Economic Development Staff; Public Works



Rendering of green infrastructure projects. Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development

Diagnostic

An opportunity for beautification and attracting patrons, we recommend improved green infrastructure along the corridor.

Activities including sidewalk-strip plantings, tree maintenance and plantings, by engaging community groups and residents in plantings and maintenance.

By having businesses participate in stewardship of the planters, they will have more buy-in and interest in supporting the look and sustainability of the corridor.

Action Items

Public Works will identify areas along the corridor where additional planters can be placed and other green projects.

Develop a stewardship program

Evaluate efficacy after 1 year

Process

Arrange meetings with Public works and other municipal staff to gauge interest.

Present the project idea before the Council.

Brainstorm the criteria for a stewardship program.

Release an application form.

Meet with residents after the first pilot to evaluate effectiveness.

9. Storefront Improvement Initiative

Category	 Private Realm
Location	Main Steet
Origin	Business Leaders
Budget	 Medium Budget \$200,000
Timeframe	 Short Term: 1 year
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Physical improvements to business façade
Partners & Resources	Director of Economic Development; Chamber of Commerce



La Cascia's Bakery, before and after façade upgrades. Source, photo to the left: Yellow pages. Source, photo to the right: Allentza Michel

Diagnostic

Improve signage on business facades and along the street to improve cohesive 'branding' of the area through and support a sense of character and belonging in the corridor using 'identity signage'. Activation could include a temporary installation of banners and could be coordinated with an event in Tufts Park, a public art installation, and/or an open streets day

As most of the small businesses rent their spaces, such beautification tasks are cost-prohibitive, and must undergo a review process.

A storefront improvement program supports business owners and property owners by providing funding to alleviating the expense burden and helps to enhance aesthetics to build a customer base. The district will also be more attractive to potential tenants to incentivize filling vacancies.

Action Items

A Storefront Improvement program can consist of the following activities:

1. Hire a Consultant team- an expert in retail management and a design consultant.
2. Determine the program stipulations and objectives
3. Decide on guidelines such as eligibility criteria and program timeline
4. Select funding caps for select project types
5. Prepare program materials such as documentation and outreach collateral
6. Launch the Program
7. Issue a program evaluation process

Process

- Identify a consulting agency to assist in administering the program. Designate which municipal department staff and/or partner will co-administer the program, such as Main Streets or the Chamber of Commerce.
- Develop the language and issue an RFP to recruit a consultant team.
- Decide on the program focus and specify which elements of a storefront which are included in the funding opportunity and award amounts.

10. Hire a Business Specialist

Category	 Admin Capacity
Location	Main St commercial district; Tufts Park
Origin	Business Leaders; Economic Development Director;
Budget	 Medium Budget \$200,000
Timeframe	 Long Term: 2 years
Risk	 Medium Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Increase in customer activity; increased foot traffic during peak hours
Partners & Resources	Community and Economic development Staff; Medford Arts Council



Medford Summer Band performs at the gazebo near Lake. Credit: Medford Summer Band



A band performs at Washington Park in New York City. Source: The Village Sun

Diagnostic

In our communications with small business owners, many of them commented how they appreciated the interaction from the former planner. They also commented how that would appreciate if there were a municipal staff person whose primary role was to provide business development support.

The role would be a content expert who is also experienced in working with immigrant entrepreneurs and small business owners. This role could lead the design and facilitation of the marketing workshops.

In order to be effective, the position should be funded for at least two years.



Stock photo. Source: Darren Matthews

Action Items

- Hold feedback sessions with businesses.
- Issue a job description.
- Form a diverse hiring committee.
- Hire the top candidate.

Process

- The feedback sessions are intended to understand what are the nuanced needs of the local businesses.
- The job description should be fielded by an equity and diversity expert, to ensure that person hired has knowledge of cultural competency.
- The staff person would report to the Director of Economic Development.
- The staff person in the role would be responsible for presenting occasional updates to the City Council and other key staff.
- Develop and implement an evaluation process.

11. Place-based and Cultural Community Branding through Murals

Category	 Public Realm  Cultural Arts
Location	Corridors and extending commercial streets
Origin	Business Leaders: Community and Economic Development Director; 1:1 discussions and Stakeholder Meeting
Budget	 Medium Budget \$200,000
Timeframe	 Short Term: 1 year, with renewal if successful
Risk	 Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Increase in customer activity; increased foot traffic during peak hours
Partners & Resources	Community and Economic Development staff; Medford Arts Council; Public Works



Community mural. Source: muralarts.org

Diagnostic

Creative placemaking presents an opportunity to combine tactical urbanism and community revitalization.

A mural program is a cost-effective way to bring local cultural branding and vibrancy to the streetscape and facades.

Local artists can be hired to paint the murals.

Action Items

- Hire a coordinating consultant.
- Assess projects which are most feasible.
- Establish a schedule to pilot programming.
- Collect feedback on efficacy from businesses and residents.
- Relaunch successful programs.

Process

- Prepare a projects proposal based on a feasibility rating.
- Present the proposal before Town Administrator and Town Council.
- Recruit and hire a programs coordinator.
- Coordinator will recruit artists.
- Artists are expected to meet with the business owners to identify branding interests.
- Work with the coordinator to develop an evaluation process.

'Buy Local' graphic for Bedford, MA. Source: Town of Bedford

12. Art in the Park: Outdoor Performances

Category	 Public Realm  Cultural Arts
Location	Main St commercial district; Tufts Park
Origin	Business Leaders: Community and Economic Development Director; Town Administrator
Budget	 Medium Budget \$50,000
Timeframe	 Short Term: seasonal during the summer, with renewal if successful
Risk	 Medium Risk
Key Performance Indicators	Increase in customer activity; increased foot traffic during peak hours
Partners & Resources	Community and Economic development Staff; Medford Arts Council



Medford Summer Band performs at the gazebo near Lake. Credit: Medford Summer Band



A band performs at Washington Park in New York City. Source: The Village Sun

Diagnostic

Particularly amenable during the warmer months, we recommend identifying usable outdoor open and common spaces for public performances such as music and family friendly programming. Many of the businesses expressed an interest to see more lively entertainment as a means to draw foot traffic to the district. A roster of local artists can perform, providing outdoor music to attract diverse audiences and foster patronage of the nearby establishments.

Performances can take place at Tufts Park, or on the sidewalk closer to business activity.

It is important to test out this project and treat the first few sessions as a trial period. There is moderate risk that nearby residents and businesses will be concerned about the music being too loud or disruptive. Therefore, a period of inquiry and stakeholder engagements is necessary to conduct prior to confirming implementation.

Action Items

- Hire a coordinator. This could be the same coordinator managing the jersey painting project.
- Assess feasibility.
- Establish a schedule to pilot programming.
- Recruit and schedule performers.
- Collect feedback on efficacy from businesses and residents.
- Relaunch the program the following summer if successful.



A band performs outdoors on a designated sidewalk. Credit: The Chronicle

Process

- Collect feedback from local business owners and abutters.
- Present the proposal before Town Administrator and Town Council.
- Prepare an outreach plan and recruit performers.
- Develop and implement an evaluation process.

13. Additional Proposed Project:

Culturally Competent Engagement Strategy

Present times call for rethinking and reframing outreach and meetings. Despite sending emails to our business database and distributing fliers along the corridor for two separate days in advance of the stakeholder meeting, we saw a low turnout. There are a few possible factors including the morning meeting time. A more culturally responsive approach may have been necessary, which involves not holding a conventional style meeting but engaging the businesses owners where they are. It was visiting the businesses and speaking with the businesses that which had the greatest impact.

Our experience was like that of other business outreach events. Our Portuguese interpreters and advisor noted that meetings of conventional design are not the most effective way to draw a community of Brazilian business owners. Some cultures have a preference for more direct interaction. She suggested that the City forgo scheduling meetings altogether and go door to door.

While this tactic is likely to be most effective, it reinforces the staffing and administrative capacity challenges the City's economic development staff currently faces. Hence, should a business development specialist be hired, the individual must either speak languages other than English and are reflective of language spoken of business owners along the corridor. At the very least, the business development specialist will have undergone training to improve their cultural sensitivities and have the capacity to recruit the assistance of cultural interpreters.

For example, the launched a promising 'Shop Local' campaign. This campaign is intended to encourage diverse locals to patronize their neighborhood small businesses.

The outreach materials were bright and colorful and attractive. However, the translation for a few languages may be too literal, a common error when translated through devices or apps. For example, the Haitian Creole interpretation of "shop local" was interpreted as "boutik local"; the term "shop" was translated as a noun instead of the verb. Therefore, the erroneous translation reads as, "store local." This kind of mistake happens often enough in municipalities that it merits attention. The City will need to invest in fluent interpreters.

13. Additional Proposed Project, cont.

Culturally Competent Engagement Strategy

Bringing engagement opportunities to residents and business owners rather than asking for their engagement at places outside of their workspaces. Physically demanding tasks and long hours often prevent outside opportunities for engagement. Examples include door-knocking, phone calls, and other targeted forms of outreach. Include language interpretation at all events and in all communications materials. Other suggestions are to collect feedback, ideas, and contact information at public events and other engagements. Providing meetings over Zoom even after the pandemic can yield strong turnout results.

Staff training is recommended so that planners and municipal staff have better culturally responsive tools and methods for community engagement. This direction is especially important as more communities are centering social equity in their community development initiatives.



Shop Local Campaign Graphics in Portuguese, Haitian Creole and English. Source: The City of Medford

TAKE-OUT
AVAILABLE

TAKE-OUT
AVAILABLE

