



# Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

**Town of Mendon**



# Acknowledgements



Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

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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. For more information, contact DHCD:

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

Town of Mendon

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Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

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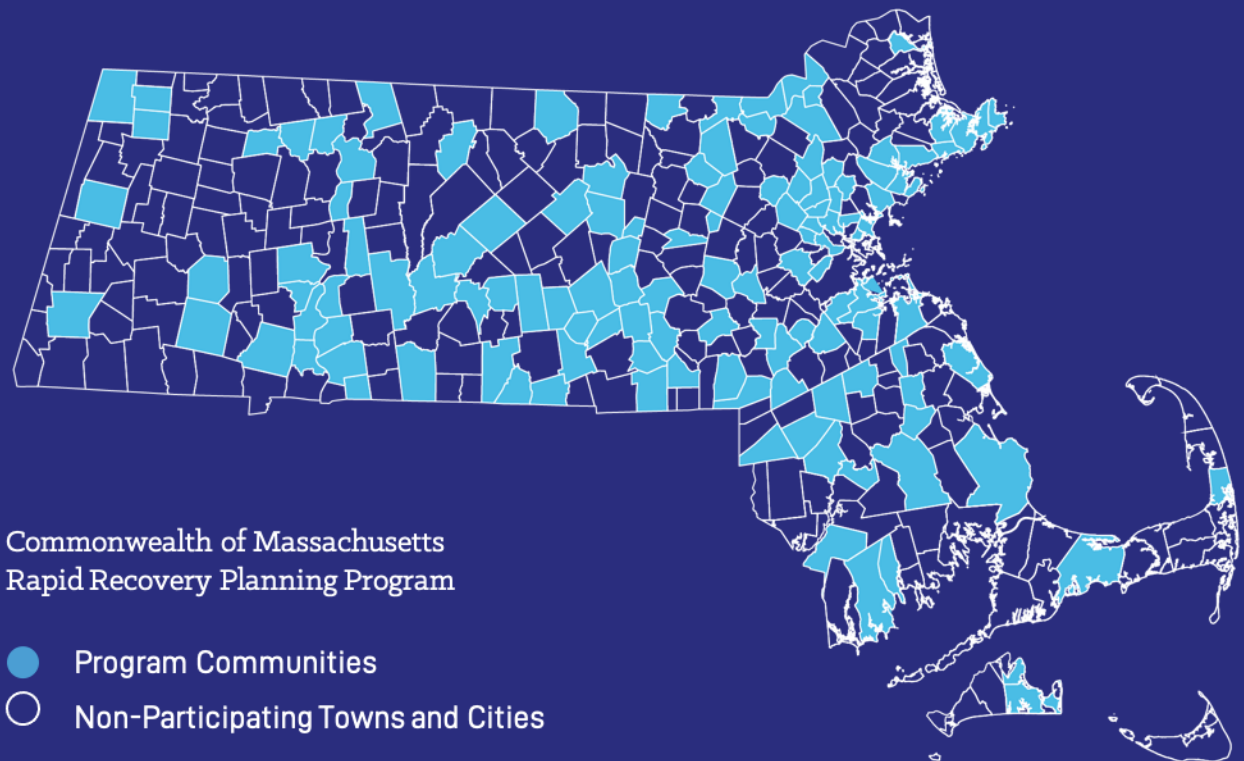
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## 125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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.



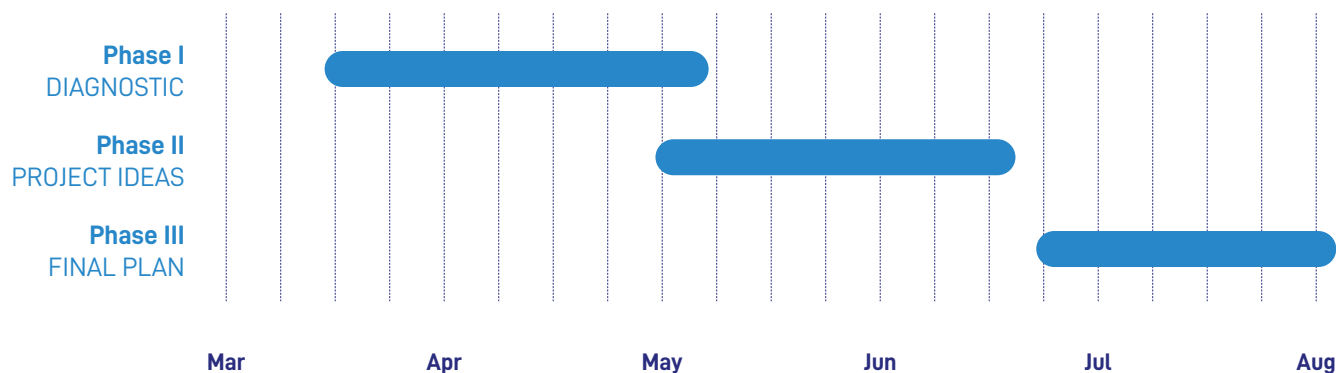
# Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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



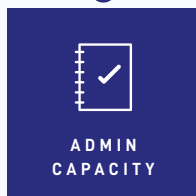
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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

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## Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

## A Regional Hub with Infrastructure Needs

Mendon is a quaint New England town in the heart of the Blackstone River Valley in Worcester County, Massachusetts. First incorporated in 1735, Mendon has grown into a small but vibrant community of just over 6,000 residents. The town is well-connected regionally, not only forming an important part of the Blackstone Valley and Worcester County communities but even feeding into the greater Boston metro area. However, Mendon is more than a commuter suburb: the town has a unique character driven by engaged residents, thriving local businesses, and a rich historical feel complemented by modern amenities.

Mendon's Route 16 corridor is the commercial heart of the town. Stretching from the Imperial Car Dealerships in the west to the Mendon Twin Drive-In in the east, the district is adjacent to the Town Hall district. With thriving restaurants, retail storefronts, and auto and financial services, the corridor offers a diverse array of commercial amenities for locals and visitors alike. These amenities are complemented by historical attractions like Founders Park and the Mendon Historical Society Museum, as well as family-friendly recreational sites like the Drive-In and a mini golf course and driving range. Though much of the traffic along Route 16 is commuters passing through Mendon, this vibrant collection of commercial, historical, and recreational amenities attracts visitors from across the region.

Mendon is currently in the process of developing its first Master Plan in partnership with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC). When complete, the new Master Plan will guide development and economic growth in Mendon for years to come. The Route 16 corridor figures to play a significant role in this plan as a central location for the town's economic activity. Several specific sites along the corridor have been targeted for redevelopment through this plan, led by a large parcel at the northern corner of the intersection of Route 16 and North Avenue. Route 16 will also be redeveloped by MassDOT, which will improve the roadway and add sidewalks to both sides of the road.

As the master planning process remains underway, the Town's focus along this corridor currently emphasizes improvements to infrastructure and administrative capacity which will facilitate economic growth in the future. The area's lack of water and sewer infrastructure is a major concern. Improvements to storefronts, landscaping, and wayfinding signage will help make the district more attractive to pedestrians and vehicular traffic alike. Steps to attract more businesses will be an important catalyst for economic growth and attractiveness to visitors from across the region.

The six projects proposed in this report are largely short-term, low budget improvements that will help the Town develop water and sewer infrastructure, attract new businesses and facilitate improvements to existing businesses. These projects will help improve the region in the short term and prepare it to act as the center of the forthcoming Mendon Master Plan. In tandem with future initiatives put forth through the Master Plan, these projects will help the Route 16 corridor move towards its potential as a thriving business district.

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## Diagnostic

# Key Findings



## The Town is family-oriented and highly educated

Mendon is a family-oriented, middle class community in the heart of Worcester County. The population of 6,374 residents is mostly comprised of children and middle-aged adults between the ages of 45 and 65. Upton residents are primarily well-educated: nearly half of adults have a Bachelor's degree or higher. As a result, the median household income of over \$130,000 is well above the regional figure of \$73,500. About 97% of Upton residents are white; no other racial group makes up greater than 1% of the population. There are around 3,276 jobs in Mendon; many residents commute to cities such as Milford, Worcester, and even Boston for work.

The Route 16 corridor has similar demographics to the town as a whole among its 106 residents. It is also a family-dominated community with low numbers of young adults and elderly residents. The median income of about \$102,000 is lower than the town as a whole, although residents of the corridor are even more highly-educated, with more than half of adults holding a Bachelor's degree or higher. Just over 94% of residents in this area are white, slightly lower than the Town as a whole.



## The Town lacks infrastructure to attract businesses and customers

The Route 16 corridor is described by Town leaders and residents alike as an area that is unfriendly to pedestrians. High speeds of traffic along Route 16, combined with insufficient pedestrian paths and crossings, serve as a major barrier to walkability. Side streets are quieter, but lack adequate sidewalks, road crossings, lighting, and wayfinding signage for pedestrians. Public spaces, such as the Founders Park, have few critical amenities such as restrooms, tables and benches, lighting, greenery, and art. Many businesses and other structures are in need of facade improvements and aesthetic upgrades, including artistic and wayfinding elements. Given the existing conditions, Mendon residents feel that Route 16 is a car-centric district, often driving even between adjacent businesses.

Another key condition of Mendon's physical environment is the lack of municipal water and sewer infrastructure throughout the study area. Mendon has limited municipal water and sewer in other areas, but none along Route 16 in this district. The absence of water and sewer connections are a major barrier to development. Prospective developers are currently required to build private wells and septic systems for any new construction, which often carries a prohibitive price tag. For example, the Town owns a large parcel at the intersection of Route 16 and North Avenue that it would like to develop, but marketing efforts have proven unsuccessful thus far, partly due to the challenges of adding water and sewer infrastructure to the site.



## The Town has a thriving economic base

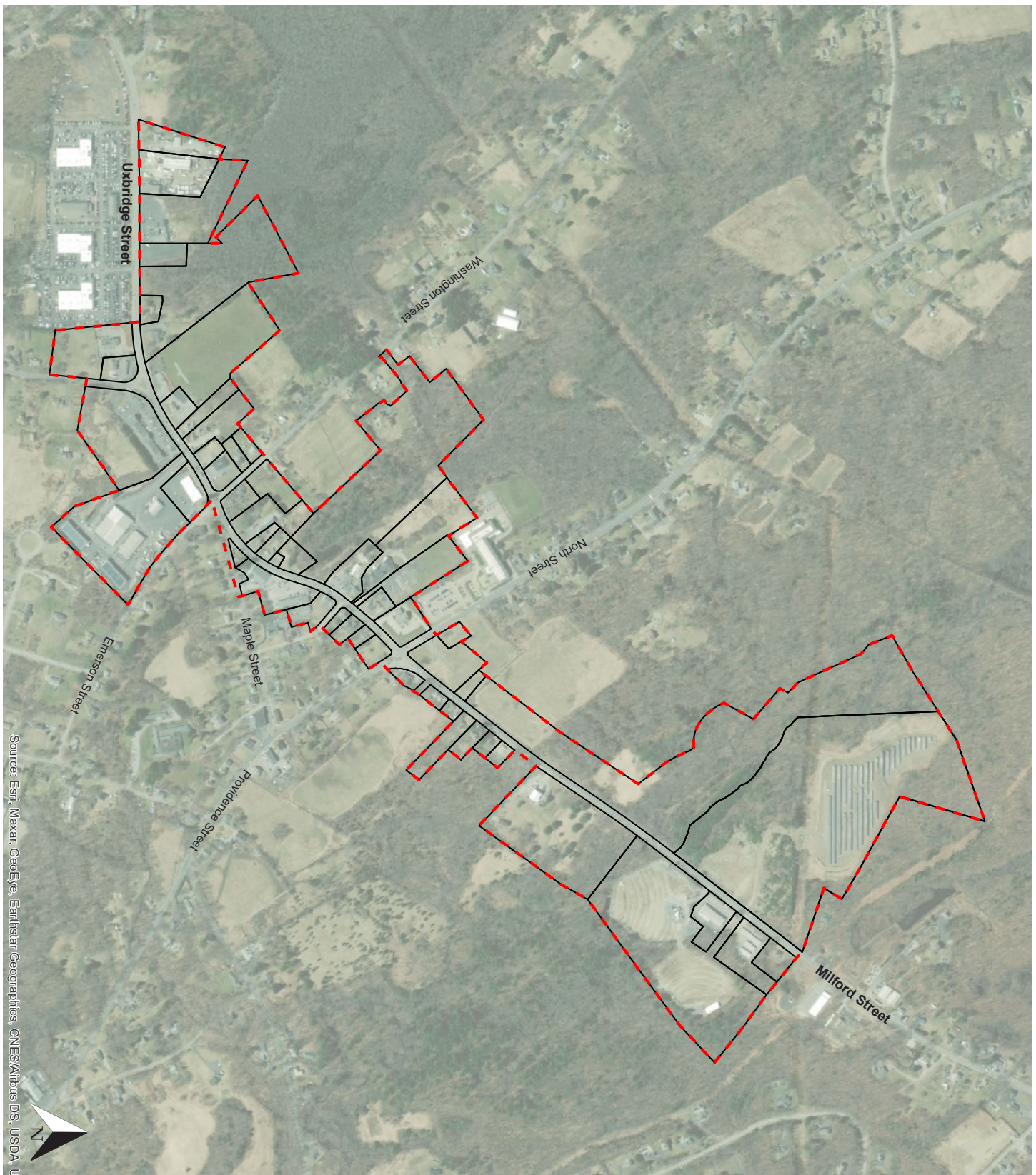
Mendon is home to 62 businesses within the study area along Route 16. Of these, 24 are retail establishments and 18 are service-based businesses. The Imperial Car Dealerships are the largest business in the area, operating several large lots on Route 16. The Route 16 corridor is saturated with businesses, and there is only one vacant storefront in the area. However, several vacant lots remain undeveloped with the potential for future construction.

Two businesses responded to the LRRP business survey in March and April of 2021. These businesses expressed no issues with the physical or regulatory environments in Mendon. Additionally, no businesses closed in the Route 16 area during the COVID-19 pandemic. Town leaders and community stakeholders identified several key areas for improvement. Storefronts and signage are perceived as an area of weakness. The lack of water and sewer infrastructure is also seen as a significant barrier to additional economic development in the area.



## The Town is developing its first Master Plan

Mendon is in the process of creating a master plan, which the Town does not currently have. Planning efforts in Mendon to date have been handled by bodies including the Planning Board, Select Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Economic Development Committee. Various board members have described municipal governance as largely siloed within individual boards and committees, without a formalized process for communication between entities. Town leaders have expressed a desire for more connections to develop between Town boards and departments through the master planning process.



**Map of the Mendon Route 16 Corridor (Study Area for this Planning Process)**  
**Source: ESRI, USDA, and USGS**

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## Project Recommendations

# Provide Site and Facade Improvement Grants

Category	 Private Realm
Location	Route 16 Corridor
Origin	Town leaders identified that facade upgrades could help businesses along Route 16 adhere to a more cohesive design aesthetic and attract more customers.
Budget	 Low Budget (Under \$50,000): This project is scalable to meet the needs of the Town and potential funding sources. Program management expenses would be limited, and expenditures would primarily fund building supplies reimbursed for local businesses.
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years): This project can be planned and executed in under a year. Implementation of site and facade upgrades may take several years. If a revolving loan or grant program is selected, this process may repeat in the future.
Risk	 Low Risk: This is a low-budget, short-term project that requires limited time for Town staff and is unlikely to face budgetary concerns. A potential risk is perceived unfairness in the grant process from businesses who are not awarded a grant.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of facade grants awarded</li><li>• Additional funds spent on facade improvement beyond grant funding</li><li>• Complete execution of planned improvements</li><li>• Adherence to design guidelines</li></ul>



*Facade improvements to businesses like this bar in New Albany, Indiana, are an effective, low-cost way to bring new life to historic business districts like Mendon's Route 16 corridor.*  
*Source: City of New Albany, Indiana (2018)*

### Action Item

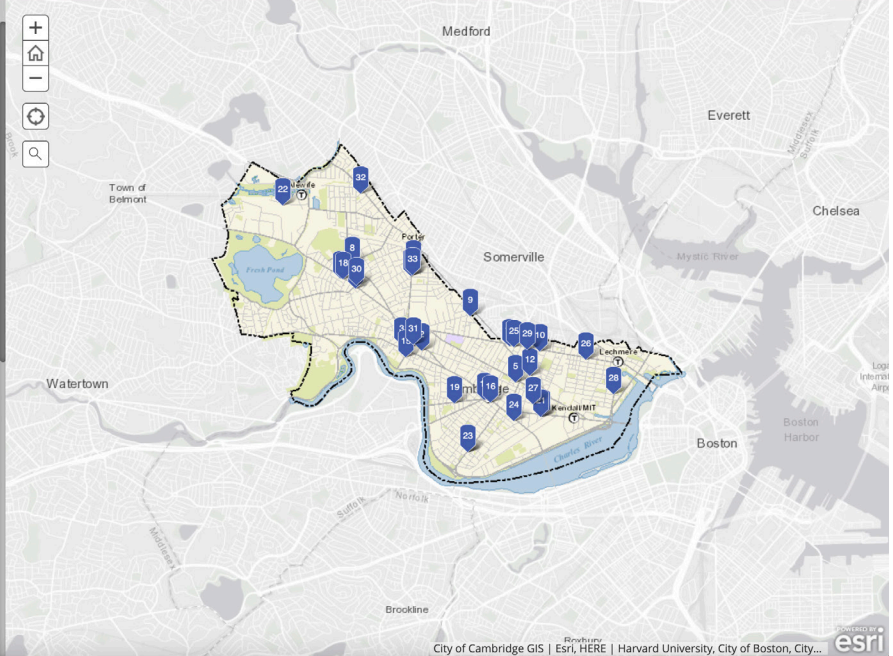
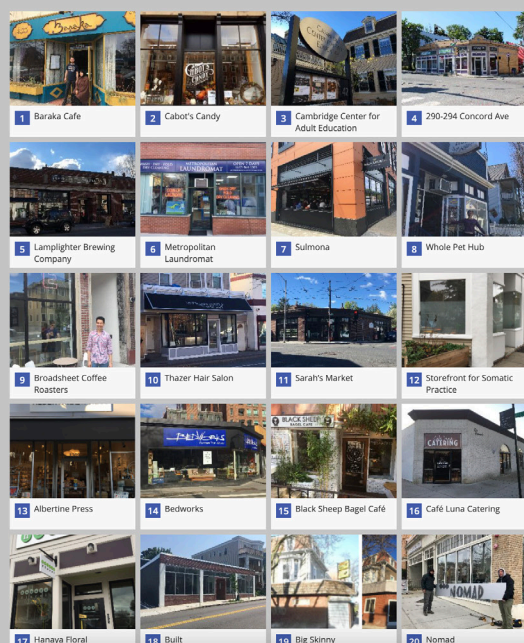
The Town may create a Site Facade Improvement Grants program for businesses along Route 16. This grant could support Mendon's transformation toward the vision desired by Town leadership. Businesses could receive partial or full financial support to upgrade the exteriors of their buildings in alignment with desired design guidelines. A to-be-determined committee can manage the grants program including the creation of an application and evaluation system, grant and fund management, and program execution.

## Diagnostic

Town leaders identified facade improvements for several businesses along Route 16 as an effective short-term step to improve downtown. The Town would like businesses in this corridor to have a more cohesive New England aesthetic. Additionally, many facades and storefronts lack attraction value for customers. As Mendon is a town with significant through traffic by commuters, there is an opportunity to attract more of these people to local businesses. Facade improvements are a potential way to make storefronts more appealing to passersby.

## Storefront Improvement Program

Cambridge, MA CDD   



## AFTER



BEFORE



*Facade improvement programs in other towns like Cambridge, MA (top), and Vista, CA (bottom), have been highly successful. Source: City of Cambridge, Massachusetts (2021); and City of Vista, CA (2019)*

## Partners & Resources

### Implementation Partners

- Mendon Historical Commission, Mendon Economic Development Committee, and/or Mendon Community Preservation Commission
- These public entities in Mendon have the ability to manage, and/or support the facade improvement program.

### Implementation Tools

- Design Guidelines are an effective way for the Town to guide facade and site improvements towards a cohesive aesthetic across the district.
- Consult with local architects to seek input on Design Guidelines, ideal facade and site improvements, and prioritization strategies for funding allocation.
- Host a block party or other form of community event to garner support for and interest in the initiative.

### Funding Sources

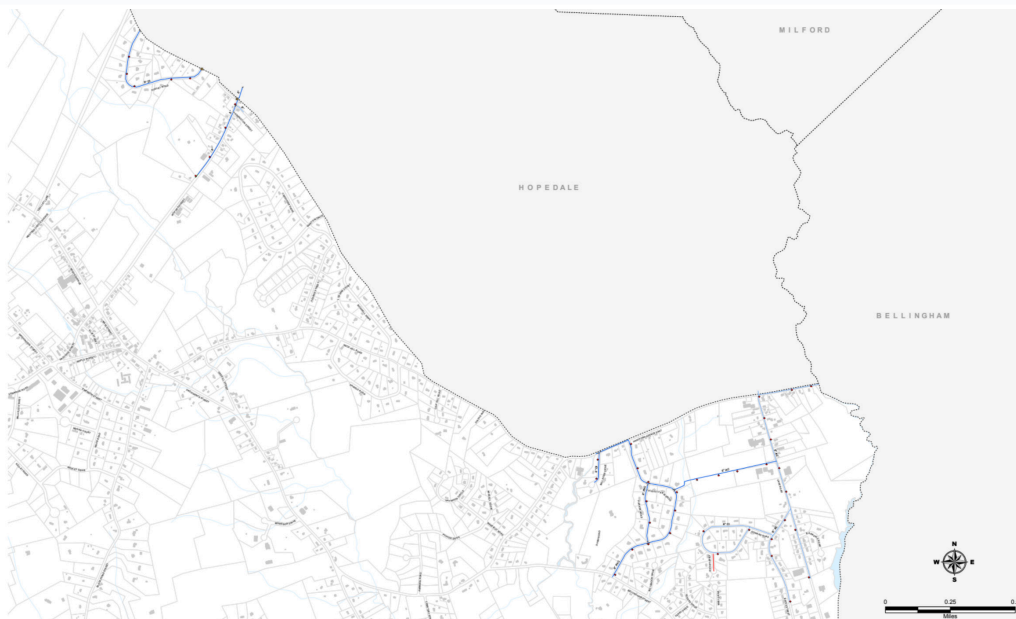
- MassDevelopment Commonwealth Places grant program: This grant program is designed to advance locally driven placemaking in downtown and neighborhood commercial districts in central MA towns. It is primarily targeted at COVID-19 recovery and economic development efforts. These funds can be used for many public space and commercial district improvement projects to facilitate improved attraction and safety for customers and pedestrians.
- Mass CPC Community Preservation Act (CPA) Funds: The CPA allows towns to set up a community preservation fund to generate funds for local preservation projects. Mendon has already created a CPA fund that has been used for other purposes. CPA funds can be raised through multiple mechanisms:
  - Property tax surcharge, up to 3%;
  - Fund matching from statewide CPA fund; and/or
  - Bonds issued against future CPA revenue.
- EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation: EDA's grant can award anywhere between \$100,000 and \$10,000,000. This grant is designed to provide a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions to rebuild and strengthen their travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industry through various infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects.
- EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Regional Build Back Better Challenge: EDA will award funds in two phases to regional coalitions who are implementing recovery projects in a wide range of areas. Phase I grants up to \$500,000 to coalitions for technical assistance developing projects. Phase II awards between \$25 and \$75 million for project implementation. This would require the Town to combine this project with others as a part of a regional development coalition.
- EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Economic Adjustment Assistance: This broad grant program will provide funding for communities to plan, build, innovate, and put people back to work through construction or non-construction projects designed to meet local needs.
- Mass Community One Stop for Growth Grants: A single application portal allows applicants to be considered for ten grant programs from three state agencies. Funding is available for planning, infrastructure, capital, and programmatic projects
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Technical Assistance Program (TAP): The TAP is a funding program that enables and assists municipalities in implementing projects that are beneficial to the community. TAP can fund a diverse range of projects including housing, economic development, shared services, municipal effectiveness, public engagement, public safety, public health, climate change, clean energy, equitable transit-oriented development, bicycle/pedestrian mobility, environmental protection, creative placemaking, and arts and culture planning. Municipalities can submit concepts for individual community-specific projects and for multi-community projects. Projects that promote regional collaboration and serve multiple communities, advance racial equity in the region, and/or promote COVID recovery will receive preference.

## Process

1. Secure funding for the grants. The specific process for this step will vary based on the funding source(s) used.
2. Determine an award mechanism for funds distributed to businesses. The Town may elect to provide grants or distribute funds through a revolving, low-interest loan program. The appropriate funding mechanism should be determined based on the funding source and input from prospective applicants.
3. Identify whether an existing entity such as the Historical Commission or Planning Board can oversee this program or whether a new decision-making body is needed. The Historical Commission should be consulted in some capacity throughout the project, as some structures in the study area may be subject to historic preservation guidelines.
4. Convene the decision-making body to administer the grants or loans, as determined in step 2.
5. Set goals and evaluation measures. Define any design guidelines for site and facade improvements and determine business eligibility, geographic scope, eligible improvements and line-items, and any financial commitment for applicants. These criteria should be determined in accordance with other improvements and branding efforts in Mendon and should also be applied to future new developments.
6. Develop a rubric and scoring system for evaluating applications from businesses, including the funding range for recipients. Businesses with the highest need for site upgrades should be prioritized. If funds are distributed as loans, applicants' ability to repay the loans may be a factor as well.
7. Coordinate financial details, including timelines, payout mechanisms, and reporting requirements. If funds are distributed as loans, this should account for loan repayment details as well.
8. Coordinate contracting mechanisms with the Town's legal counsel.
9. Create an application that businesses and other property owners can use which shares the selection criteria, design guidelines, and eligibility requirements. The application should be as simple and easy to access as possible to accommodate businesses with limited administrative capacity. Online application submission should be permitted, if possible.
10. Market the application to all potential recipients based on pre-determined eligibility.
11. Develop a Q&A mechanism, set a Q&A period, and respond to questions. Multiple avenues of inquiry should be made available to businesses, including in-person and online formats.
12. Review applications to score adherence to design guidelines and other criteria as determined in steps 3-4.
13. Determine grant/loan winners and award amounts. The number of awardees should be determined by the amount of available funding and the level of demonstrated need from applicants.
14. Coordinate with the Town Financial Committee to distribute funds based on the mechanism determined in step 2.
15. Alert winners, and set up agreements and legal documents.
16. Communicate construction milestone expectations in partnership with the Financial Committee, the Historical Commission, and the Planning Board.
17. Monitor construction progress and troubleshoot issues as needed. Applicants should be evaluated for their adherence to proposed timelines and designs.
18. Review final outcomes based on project review. Create any necessary reports or presentational documents to highlight improvements made through the program.
19. Report back to the funding source and the Mendon community. Successful improvements should be marketed via press releases, social media, and other publication media.
20. If a revolving loan structure is utilized for fund distribution, these steps may be repeated as the Town reclaims funds from initial awardees.

# Coordinate a Municipal Water and Sewer System Expansion Study

Category		Public Realm
Location		Intersection of Main Street and North Avenue, and/or All of Mendon
Origin		Town leaders consistently identified limited municipal water and sewer access as a barrier to development, including during Karp Strategies' visit to Mendon and the public presentation in July. Local business owners reiterated this need in several one-on-one interviews.
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000 to \$200,000): An expansion study is likely to cost upwards of \$50,000, which will include contractors and engineers to determine the feasibility of various expansion methods. The full system expansion will cost well upwards of \$200,000.
Timeframe		Short Term (Less than 5 years): A study to determine the cost and feasibility of expanding municipal water and sewer can be planned and executed in under five years. Execution and construction of a water and sewer expansion is likely to take at least five years.
Risk		High Risk: This is a logistically challenging project, as Mendon has struggled with its water and sewer systems for decades. Risks of the study itself include high costs, undesirable study conclusions or outcomes, and friction with nearby towns.
Key Performance Indicators		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Production of an evidence-based estimation of the costs &amp; logistics of expanding water/sewer systems</li> </ul>



**Mendon's municipal water system currently consists of two separate local networks, both sourced from Hopedale.**  
Source: Tighe & Bond Engineers, MassDEP (2017)

## Action Item

The Town may hire an engineering firm to conduct a feasibility study for expanding Mendon's municipal water and sewer systems. The lack of municipal water and sewer systems along Route 16 is a barrier to development, particularly for multi-family residential and restaurant uses. In particular, the lack of interest from developers in the Town-owned parcel at the northern corner of the intersection of Main Street and North Avenue is likely exacerbated by the absence of municipal water and sewer connections. Expanding these systems to this and other parcels could attract new commercial development opportunities.

## Diagnostic

Limitations in Mendon's municipal water and sewer systems are a major barrier to future economic development, especially along the Route 16 corridor. Many potential spots for development, such as the vacant lot at the NE corner of Main and Hastings Streets, are not currently connected to the municipal water or sewer systems. The current use of ad-hoc septic and well systems on each property is unlikely to support any major development in these areas. Developers face prohibitive costs given the need to build their own connections to the water and sewer systems or to construct expansive well and septic systems. Additionally, while some commercial properties already have access to municipal water, these sites cannot feasibly change use because of consumption restrictions imposed by the adjacent towns that provide the water.

Mendon currently has two municipal water systems combining for roughly 150 hookups, both of which are adjacent to the border with Hopedale. Water in both of these systems is currently sourced from Hopedale, for which Mendon pays at a metered rate. All other Mendon residences and businesses have private well water. Hopedale has expressed that it is unable and unwilling to provide any additional water to Mendon beyond the existing systems. Other nearby communities like Uxbridge have expressed an interest in providing water to Mendon, but the feasibility of such a partnership has yet to be determined. The Town has also considered implementing municipal wells to provide water to certain areas, such as the Town Hall district. There is no viable source of surface water in Mendon, so any new water sourced within municipal limits would need to come from a well.

Mendon's municipal sewer system is similarly limited in scale, with most residences and businesses expelling waste via private septic systems. The Town has conducted less research into the feasibility of expanding the sewer system than water. However, there are fewer logistical and permitting barriers to a sewer system expansion. Uxbridge has expressed clear interest in partnering with Mendon should it decide to expand its municipal sewer system. Other nearby municipalities may also be interested in such a partnership.

## Partners & Resources

### Implementation Partners

- Mendon Water Commission: The Water Commission has the highest level of expertise regarding Mendon's existing water system, as well as resources from past studies and surveys.
- Mendon Department of Public Works (DPW): The DPW can oversee capital projects to public services, including water and sewer systems.
- Nearby municipalities like Hopedale, Uxbridge, and Bellingham: Mendon may source new water and/or sewer connections from adjacent towns.
- Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC): CMRPC offers assistance to municipalities for water planning efforts and infrastructure-related capital projects. For example, CMRPC has developed a regional water management plan for other adjacent towns near Mendon to help manage sharing of water resources across municipal boundaries.

### Implementation Tools

- Where possible, work with local engineers, construction companies, and contractors for survey and construction services. This is a way to support local businesses while simultaneously improving the public realm.

## Partners & Resources (continued)

### Funding Sources:

- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Solid Waste Management Grants: This program reduces or eliminates pollution of water resources by granting funding to organizations that provide technical assistance or training to improve the planning and management of solid waste sites. These grants can be used for evaluating current landfill conditions to identify threats to water resources, provide technical assistance to enhance O&M of active landfills and future use of landfill sites.
- USDA Water & Waste Disposal & Loan Grant Program: This program provides funding for clean and reliable drinking water systems, sanitary sewage disposal, sanitary solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage to households and businesses in eligible rural areas. Funds may be used to finance the acquisition, construction or improvement of drinking water sourcing, treatment, storage and distribution; sewer collection, transmission, treatment and disposal; solid waste collection, disposal and closure; and storm water collection, transmission and disposal.
- EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Regional Build Back Better Challenge: EDA will award funds in two phases to regional coalitions who are implementing recovery projects in a wide range of areas. Phase I grants up to \$500,000 to coalitions for technical assistance developing projects. Phase II awards between \$25 and \$75 million for project implementation. This would require the Town to combine this project with others as a part of a regional development coalition.
- EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Economic Adjustment Assistance: This broad grant program will provide funding for communities to plan, build, innovate, and put people back to work through construction or non-construction projects designed to meet local needs.
- Mass Community One Stop for Growth Grants: A single application portal allows applicants to be considered for ten grant programs from three state agencies.

## Process





1. Select or create an entity to oversee the expansion of a water system expansion project. This may be the Town Water Commission, Planning Board, or other existing entity, or a newly-created oversight body. Planners and experts from multiple Town bodies should be involved in this process, including the Water Commission and the Planning Department.
2. Convene the oversight body to determine the desired scope of the water system expansion, including the capacity and location of new access points. The scope of the expansion may range from a small new local system near the intersection of Route 16 and North Avenue to a comprehensive expansion that will provide municipal water to nearly all commercial and residential properties in Mendon. The oversight body should determine multiple potential scales, including a best-case scenario with the largest desirable scope and several more moderate options to account for financial limitations and logistical barriers.
3. Coordinate with adjacent municipalities to gauge willingness and feasibility of partnering on a Mendon water expansion project. This outreach may include Upton, Uxbridge, Milford, Bellingham, and Hopedale (Mendon's current source of municipal water). Mendon should speak with each of these municipalities to discuss their interest and ability to source Mendon's expanded water system, in full or in part. While logistical considerations such as installing piping and filtration systems may eventually eliminate some or all of these partnerships as viable options, the Town should develop an initial understanding of whether each town is willing and able to partner with Mendon.
4. Create an initial prioritization plan of the most desirable and feasible expansion methods, including potential hookups with all interested adjacent towns as well as a municipal well. Eliminate options which are politically and/or financially infeasible out of hand, such as partnerships with municipalities that are unwilling or unable to provide water to Mendon.

## Process

5. Procure an engineering firm to conduct a more rigorous study of all options for water expansion. Two primary expansion options should be considered in greater depth:
  - a. Mendon may develop a new drinking water source, such as a well. Projects of this nature typically take about five years to complete once a well site is identified, although various permitting, environmental, and logistical challenges may extend this timeline. At a high level, this process would require several key steps:
    - i. Identify potential well locations;
    - ii. Obtain access rights to conduct exploratory well drilling and testing at each potential site;
    - iii. Select a final site and acquire the land;
    - iv. Complete all local, state, and federal permitting requirements, including compliance with the Water Management Act and Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review;
    - v. Procure a contractor to install the well;
    - vi. Test the well for water quality and compliance with all applicable regulations;
    - vii. Pass an inspection from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP); and
    - viii. Install infrastructure and water treatment technology to supply the new water to the existing distribution system.
  - b. Alternatively, Mendon may expand existing consecutive systems via Hopedale and Bellingham to increase the capacity of Mendon's municipal system. This option requires much less time and permitting effort than a new source. However, new infrastructure including pipes, meters, and connections would need to be installed.
  - c. Mendon may also explore the creation of new connections to other municipalities such as Uxbridge or Upton, though the costs and logistical challenges of connecting to such distant systems may be prohibitive.

The engineer should consider at least options (a) and (b) in their study. For each option studied, the engineer should provide a detailed description of the cost, timeframe, scope and location, permitting and inspection requirements, infrastructure expansions, potential challenges, and relative benefits and drawbacks.
6. Conduct regular check-ins with the engineer throughout the course of the study to monitor progress and provide any required materials and information.
7. Based on conclusions from the engineering study, determine which option and scope of water expansion are most viable for the Town. Federal and state funding sources may be available to offset some or all of the costs of expansion, such as forthcoming funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).
8. Repeat this process to evaluate options for a municipal sewer expansion. Various options may be considered, including additional municipal septic tanks and connections to adjacent towns such as Uxbridge. While infrastructure upgrades may be necessary, sewer expansion has far less rigorous permitting and inspection requirements than water and is therefore likely to require much less time, effort, and cost.

# Develop and Install Wayfinding Signage

Category	 Public Realm
Location	Route 16 Corridor (Option to Include All of Mendon)
Origin	Town leadership identified a need for improved wayfinding elements in Mendon during the Karp Strategies team's visit. Subject matter experts affirmed the importance of wayfinding in the public space webinars.
Budget	 Low Budget (Under \$50,000): Wayfinding materials can be designed and procured cheaply. Costs may rise if a design firm is used to create the materials.
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years): Designing, procuring, and installing wayfinding signage can be done in fewer than five years.
Risk	 Low Risk: This is a low-budget, short-term project with few risks. A potential risk is public discontent about the placement or style of public art installations.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of new signs installed</li> <li>• Number of visitors to Mendon</li> <li>• Pedestrian activity in Mendon</li> <li>• Increase in events/activities in Mendon</li> </ul>



Wayfinding signage can incorporate a wide range of designs, materials, installation sites, and content.  
Source: Burlington, Vermont, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront (2015)

<b>Action Item</b>	The Town may develop and install new wayfinding signage that showcases the Route 16 corridor's businesses, landmarks, parking, and other features. These would be created to help create a unified brand for the district, ease navigation, and align branding for Route 16 and the surrounding area.
<b>Diagnostic</b>	The Route 16 corridor has a large amount of through-traffic created by regional commuters. Mendon has many attractions along and close to this corridor, including businesses, historical landmarks, and recreational amenities. However, drivers on Route 16, especially commuters from outside Mendon, may not be aware of these attractions. Wayfinding signage to brand the Route 16 corridor as a historic commercial district and highlight various amenities would help attract more visitors to Mendon.
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>	<p><b>Implementation Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mendon Department of Public Works, Planning Board, Land Use Committee, Community Preservation Committee, and Mendon Historical Commission: These departments and committees have led previous open space improvement and pedestrianization efforts. They can provide oversight for designing signage that fits the site context and draws visitors to attractions of interest.</li> <li>• Local businesses and neighborhood associations: Local businesses and organizations can be a partner for public space elements that go on or near their properties.</li> <li>• Design firms: Firms such as <a href="#">Civic Space Collaborative</a> who have experience in designing open spaces and wayfinding elements can bring added value to the project by creating a cohesive design that aligns with Mendon's vision for public space.</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)</a>: The Community Development Fund (CDF) awards grants to communities throughout the Commonwealth. This program helps eligible cities and towns to meet a broad range of community development needs in housing, infrastructure, revitalization, economic development and public social services. Eligible activities include but are not limited to: planning, downtown or area revitalization, community/public facilities, infrastructure, etc.</li> <li>• <a href="#">EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Regional Build Back Better Challenge</a>: EDA will award funds in two phases to regional coalitions who are implementing recovery projects in a wide range of areas. Phase I grants up to \$500,000 to coalitions for technical assistance developing projects. Phase II awards between \$25 and \$75 million for project implementation. This would require the Town to combine this project with others as a part of a regional development coalition.</li> <li>• <a href="#">EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Economic Adjustment Assistance</a>: This broad grant program will provide funding for communities to plan, build, innovate, and put people back to work through construction or non-construction projects designed to meet local needs.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Mass Community One Stop for Growth Grants</a>: A single application portal allows applicants to be considered for ten grant programs from three state agencies. Funding is available for planning, infrastructure, capital, and programmatic projects.</li> </ul>

## Process

1. Create a steering committee to oversee the creation of wayfinding materials. Existing Mendon entities may be considered for this role, such as the Planning Board, the Department of Public Works, and the Economic Development Committee. Representatives from other local and regional entities should be considered for a role on the steering committee, including:
  - a. Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC);
  - b. Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce;
  - c. Mendon Land Use Committee;
  - d. Mendon Highway Department;
  - e. Mendon Police Department; and
  - f. Local residents and business owners.
2. Determine a specific vision for branding in Mendon. The new wayfinding signage should align with the broader branding goals for the region. The content and design of all new signage should contribute to this sense of place.
3. Identify existing deficiencies and needs within the pedestrian network, parking opportunities, and overall transportation network in Mendon. The new wayfinding signage should aim to clearly direct pedestrians and cars to nearby amenities including restaurants and businesses, parks and open space, and parking opportunities. This step may require a full pedestrian needs assessment in collaboration with local residents and businesses and outside experts.
4. Determine a comprehensive vision and implementation plan for the new wayfinding materials, including its location and desired purpose and audience. This should incorporate the branding vision for Mendon and needs identified in step (3) to create a detailed implementation plan for the new wayfinding signage, including quantity and location, design and branding elements, and amenities highlighted by the signs.
5. Determine the process for signage procurement and installation. This may require a public RFP process in collaboration with the Town's legal counsel and financial committee. It may also be possible to procure signs via direct purchase from a sign manufacturer. Installation may be handled by a contractor or assigned to Town staff, such as employees at the Department of Public Works.
6. Coordinate and execute installation including logistics, site inspections, and necessary permitting including coordination with relevant Town agencies.
7. Develop a maintenance and upkeep plan for all new elements. Maintenance may be assigned to a Town entity, such as the Department of Public Works, or contracted to a third party.



*In addition to a wide range of signage types, wayfinding can also be integrated with artistic and historical attractions, infrastructure like streets and sidewalks, and environmental sustainability improvements.*

*Sources (left to right): Town of Worcester, MA (2021); London Festival of Architecture (2020); and DCL Boston (2019).*

# Develop a Business Attraction Strategy

Category		Tenant Mix
Location		Route 16 Corridor (Option to Include All of Mendon)
Origin		Town leaders identified an improved marketing approach as a need during Karp Strategies's site visit to Mendon. This need was supported by stakeholder interviews and feedback received during the public presentation.
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000): The primary cost is to contract with a consultant to carry out a financial feasibility assessment for the study area and brokerage fee for a real estate agent to sell the parcels.
Timeframe		Short Term (Less than 5 years): A marketing approach and business attraction strategy can be developed in less than a year.
Risk		Medium Risk: The Town's RFI for development on the parcel at Main Street and North Avenue received no responses last time it was released. This marketing approach will need to improve upon the previous version to ensure that a partner developer is found. Other barriers to business attraction have also been identified, such as limited municipal water and sewer access and difficulty attracting commuters to stop at local businesses.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of new businesses in Mendon</li> <li>Number of respondents to the RFI Q&amp;A period</li> <li>Viable applications received</li> <li>Successful procurement of a developer through the RFI process</li> </ul>	



*This Town-owned parcel at the northern corner of the intersection of Main Street and North Avenue was the subject of a recent RFI for development proposals. However, the initial release of the RFI received no responses from developers.*  
 Source: Google Earth (2021)

<p><b>Action Item</b></p>	<p>The Town may hire a marketing consultant to create web and/or print materials for business attraction purposes. These would be branded to align with the upcoming Master Plan and could be geared toward either developers or retail/restaurant businesses. This could help recruit additional businesses to the Route 16 corridor and facilitate greater success for future RFPs for commercial development. Additionally, the Town may develop a marketing approach to attract developers and businesses to vacant Town-owned parcels, such as the large parcel at Main Street and North Avenue.</p>
<p><b>Diagnostic</b></p>	<p>Town leaders in Mendon have expressed interest in attracting new businesses to the Route 16 corridor to complement the thriving existing business mix. There is one vacant storefront in the study area, as well as several undeveloped lots with potential for future commercial development. The most significant opportunity for future development is a 21-acre parcel at the northern corner of the intersection of Route 16 and North Avenue. The Town released an RFI in February 2021 to solicit proposals for a mixed-use senior housing development on the site, but did not receive any responses. The creation of a business attraction strategy would help the Town draw new businesses into existing commercial spaces and develop successful RFPs for future development.</p>
<p><b>Partners &amp; Resources</b></p>	<p><b>Implementation Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mendon Economic Development Committee (EDC):</b> The EDC plays a significant role in business support in Mendon. This committee can lead future business attraction strategies and coordinate with the Town Administrator to improve the RFI for development at Main Street and North Avenue.</li> <li>• <b>Professional Commercial Real Estate Firms:</b> Professional firms will provide valuable insight on how to improve the RFI, as well as helping the Town connect with regional developers who may be interested in this development.</li> <li>• <b>Local and Regional Developers:</b> Local and regional developers can help the Town identify issues in the original RFP that prevented any developers from responding to it.</li> <li>• <b>Mendon Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Town Administrator:</b> Municipal planning staff can assist with review of land subdivision and development proposals to ensure conformity with local, state, and federal laws and regulations.</li> <li>• <b>Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD):</b> DHCD offers support and insight to municipalities to help navigate changes to zoning regulations and potential incentives for new development projects.</li> <li>• <b><u>The Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network Central Regional Office (MSBDC):</u></b> MSBDC provides free and confidential one-to-one management advice and technical assistance to prospective and existing small businesses.</li> <li>• <b>Worcester Chamber of Commerce:</b> The chamber's <u>Connect for Success</u> program offers three groups which meet twice a month. Groups from non-competing industries make connections to grow their business through this networking opportunity.</li> <li>• <b>MassHire or Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce:</b> These organizations create and sustain connections between property owners, businesses, and funding to meet their recruiting and industry needs. They provide free resources for business growth and maintenance. This can be leveraged by Mendon to attract new businesses.</li> <li>• <b>Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC):</b> This business and economic development support corporation provides resources towards the recovery, resiliency, and growth of small businesses in communities post COVID-19 by providing matching capital to eligible non-profit community-based lenders. They offer microloans and emergency loans for businesses to assist with working capital, or the purchase of furniture, fixtures, supplies, materials, and/or equipment.</li> </ul> <p><b>Implementation Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Massachusetts Shared Service Manual: A Toolkit for Regionalization Best Practices for City and Town Officials</u></b> (Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies, 2013): This guide provides information about certain regulations and where to find more information about specific zoning applications, etc.</li> </ul>

## Partners & Resources (continued)

### Implementation Tools

- Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC): CMRPC's [Resource Development Assistance](#) program shares information about current funding opportunities via direct email and/or newsletters. For some funding sources, CMRPC may be available to assist resource development (fund raising) and grant administration (contact person: [Chris Ryan](#))
- [EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Good Jobs Challenge](#): Regional workforce training systems and sectoral partnerships funded under this grant should connect employers in an industry with key regional stakeholders, including state and local governmental entities, economic development organizations, workforce development boards, employer-facing organizations, education and training providers, community-based organizations (CBOs), worker-serving organizations (WSOs), and/or labor unions. The grant requires the initiative be led by a System Lead Entity or Backbone Organization, which in this case could be the Mendon EDC or a designated Chamber of Commerce with the capacity to coordinate between multiple stakeholders.
- [EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Regional Build Back Better Challenge](#): EDA will award funds in two phases to regional coalitions who are implementing recovery projects in a wide range of areas. Phase I grants up to \$500,000 to coalitions for technical assistance developing projects. Phase II awards between \$25 and \$75 million for project implementation. This would require the Town to combine this project with others as a part of a regional development coalition.
- [EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Economic Adjustment Assistance](#): This broad grant program will provide funding for communities to plan, build, innovate, and put people back to work through construction or non-construction projects designed to meet local needs.
- [Mass Community One Stop for Growth Grants](#): A single application portal allows applicants to be considered for ten grant programs from three state agencies. Funding is available for planning, infrastructure, capital, and programmatic projects.
- Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC) [Small Business Resources](#): Their website frequently updates grant opportunities ranging from Restaurant Revitalization, Shuttered Venue Operations, Economic Injury Disaster, etc.

## Process

### Business Attraction Strategy

1. Identify stakeholders in Mendon and set up a representative committee to create a unified vision for business attraction to the district. Current business owners and other stakeholders should be at the forefront of preparing a vision for the area and attracting new businesses and services to bring it to life.
2. Identify needs and gaps to business development along the Route 16 corridor. Create a list of business and service types that are currently missing or underrepresented that would help make the area a more active, desirable downtown district. Highlight current barriers and opportunities for improvement in Town incentives and regulation for businesses. Incentives such as property tax reductions, parking requirement exemptions, zoning variances, pedestrian-only streets, and outdoor dining permits are proven examples of Town-led initiatives that make a downtown district more appealing to prospective businesses.
3. Implement any up-front changes and incentives to make the Route 16 corridor a more supportive and appealing environment. The incentives identified in step (2) are one key area of improvement. Upgrades to the public realm such as placemaking, event programming, pedestrian infrastructure upgrades, open space developments, and wayfinding signage are other potential strategies to increase the economic appeal of Mendon. Another key step is to improve the Town's resources for businesses, such as the EDC website. Prior to reaching out to any prospective businesses, the Town should seek to make the physical environment as appealing to businesses and customers as possible, as well as creating incentives and programs to overcome potential financial, logistical, and administrative barriers to business development.
4. Design an ideal tenant mix in collaboration with local stakeholders, Town leaders, and business development experts. This step should create a list of the ideal distribution of commercial amenities in Mendon based on the needs of customers and insight from outside experts regarding ways to attract new visitors. The ideal mix may include both specific businesses as well as general business categories or typologies. In either case, this list will be used to target and contact prospective businesses who best fit the needs and gaps of the existing business community.

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## Process (continued)

5. Assemble recruiting and marketing materials to distribute to prospective businesses. A wide range of materials should be developed to maximize the reach of attraction marketing efforts. The focus of all materials should emphasize the appeal of establishing or moving a business to Mendon. This should include photos, maps, stories, testimonials, data, and any other media to emphasize amenities in the physical environment, business community, and Town support for businesses in the area. Maps are a particularly useful way to demonstrate amenities in the physical environment, from open space and pedestrian infrastructure to existing and potential sites for thriving businesses. Site-specific materials should also be included for any specific lots or buildings that the Town would like new businesses to occupy.
6. Identify prospective tenants who fit the criteria established in step (5). The Town should compile a list of specific potential tenants who are strong fits for the needs and culture of the Route 16 business community. These prospective businesses may include:
  - a. Existing businesses in and around Mendon who may want to relocate;
  - b. Existing businesses from surrounding communities who may want to relocate to Mendon;
  - c. Emerging entrepreneurs looking to establish a new physical location; and
  - d. National chains who may be interested in opening a new location in Mendon.
7. Conduct general marketing efforts to reach prospective business tenants who are not specifically identified by the Town in step (6). While direct identification is an important step to reaching strong candidates for business growth in Mendon, the Town should also create opportunities for other businesses to express interest in relocating to the district. The Town can take several steps to market this district openly:
  - a. Identify commercial real estate brokers in the area who can help market the opportunities in Mendon. Set up meetings with these brokers to discuss their role in helping the town to market retail opportunities. Create marketing materials in the form of brochures and retail availability databases, and real estate pro formas. Encourage brokers to send marketing materials to potential business owners or investors looking to start a business.
  - b. Partner with technical assistance providers like the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce for targeted recruitment/business attraction. Work with these organizations and current business owners to identify opportunities for training and technical assistance.
  - c. Post marketing materials in public locations such as the Town and EDC websites, social media, newspapers and newsletters, emails, and billboards.
  - d. Encourage local businesses to spread information about the district via word of mouth to their business contacts in other locations.
8. Contact prospective business tenants identified in steps (6) and (7). The Town should directly reach out to all businesses who may be interested in relocating to Mendon to gauge their interest and capacity for doing so. Outreach may be conducted through various media:
  - a. Letters of introduction (physical mail or email);
  - b. Recruitment phone calls;
  - c. In-person visits to existing businesses; and
  - d. Open houses or other opportunities for prospective businesses to visit Mendon.
9. Finalize agreements with all interested businesses to secure their relocation to or within Mendon. Leadership from the Town should work with businesses to identify vacant lots or buildings for their new commercial space. This information could be collected by representatives from the Town physically surveying the area regularly and by sourcing them from real estate agents. Any Town incentives, such as tax credits, construction subsidies, and permitting exemptions, should be negotiated and finalized to support building and site upgrades that are required. All businesses should complete any necessary permitting processes and register in the Town's commercial registry.
10. Publicize all successful business attraction efforts through marketing campaigns. Social media, news coverage, newsletters, and website postings are effective ways to spread awareness of all new businesses attracted to the area. The Town should partner with local businesses and regional entities such as the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce to spread awareness of these new businesses.

**RFI and Marketing Improvements**

1. Convene a small oversight body to manage the development and rollout of an updated RFI for the parcel at Route 16 and North Avenue.
2. Identify a real estate advisory firm to conduct a financial feasibility assessment for developing this parcel. Providing figures on the feasibility of development in this area is critical for attracting developers. The assessment should specifically account for various options for installing water and sewer infrastructure.
3. Identify incentives, flexibility, and requirements that the RFI can outline in areas including uses and design. This can include concessions to facilitate development, such as waived land cost, Town-subsidized engineering or design studies, copayment of costs, tax credits, and/or other incentives for prospective developers. If applicable, include any opportunities for partnership with the Town on water and sewer infrastructure development.
4. Seek draft RFI review from field experts and practitioners. Ideally, this would include feedback from a developer who received the previous RFI but chose not to bid. To maintain procurement integrity, any developer asked to consult on the RFI must agree not to bid on the project.
5. Restructure the RFI to focus on three main elements:
  - a. Vision: Attract developers to the site with a clear vision of the community's existing conditions and possibilities for growth. Include attractive photos of the site, including the exterior and interior of all existing buildings. The community should be presented in a human-centered manner that emphasizes the existing residents and businesses.
  - b. Opportunity: Provide pertinent information about the properties available for development. This should include:
    - i. History of the area and Mendon as a whole;
    - ii. Desired uses and/or designs, including any sample floor plans or sketches;
    - iii. Assessment of conditions, including appraisals and structural analyses of existing buildings;
    - iv. Relevant site restrictions and guidelines, including zoning codes, covenants, and any other limitations;
    - v. Market research report for the site and the Route 16 corridor; and
    - vi. Financial feasibility estimates for development based on the study in step 2.
  - c. Expectations: Set expectations on how and when development should take place. This should outline any preferred uses, design guidelines, potential incentives or partnerships, review processes, construction timelines, and opportunities for in-person site visits.

Overall, the restructured RFI should be grounded in a human-centered vision for the site and supplement this with all pertinent information that developers may need. Elements such as photos, local contact information, and highlights of current and future amenities are critical to presenting Mendon as an attractive site for development. Explicit attention should also be given to the logistics of property disposition once the bid is awarded.
6. Set a realistic RFI response timeframe that allows prospective developers to conduct all necessary due diligence. This timeline should include explicit opportunities for prospective developers to tour the site in-person and speak with local businesses and residents about potential uses.
7. Distribute the RFI to prospective developers using active and passive sharing methods:
  - a. Circulate the RFI to the Town's list of developer contacts.
  - b. Post the RFI on the Town register. The RFI should be easily downloadable and the website should track who downloads the document.
  - c. Find a commercial service, such as Keller Williams or the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, to market the RFI to a broader base of developers.
8. Facilitate ample opportunities for prospective developers to visit the site and connect with local residents and other developers. Given the unique nature of this site, getting developers on the ground is the most likely way to facilitate vision development.
9. Repeat the response and procurement schedule from the previous RFP release on an extended timeline, as determined in step 6. Once the RFP is successfully restructured and marketed, with connections established with prospective developers, the Town's existing administrative structure for selecting a bid and awarding a contract can be followed.

# Establish a Farmers or Artisans Market

Category	 Cultural/Arts
Location	Route 16 Corridor
Origin	Town leaders identified a need for increased programming in Mendon during Karp Strategies' site visit and suggested a farmers market as an event of interest to residents and businesses. This perspective was reiterated by local stakeholders during the interview phase.
Budget	 Low Budget (Under \$50,000): A farmers market can be organized for relatively low costs, which might include supplies, venue rentals, entertainment, insurance, and food and drink. Revenue from sales and booth rentals to local merchants can help offset costs.
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years): A farmers market can be planned and implemented in under a year (though with the expectation that it will repeat in the future).
Risk	 Low Risk: This is a low-budget, short-term project that will likely be backed by town support. Potential risks include budget and administrative capacity limitations.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of businesses and merchants who participate</li><li>• Ongoing leadership by residents or businesses</li><li>• Number of recurring customers</li></ul>



Farmers and artisans markets, like this one in Durham, NC, can simultaneously activate public spaces, draw new visitors to downtown districts, and provide retail opportunities for local farmers and businesses.  
Source: Ecophiles (2019)

<b>Action Item</b>	The Town may establish a Farmers Market or Artisans Market to attract visitors to the Route 16 Corridor. This would serve as a sales opportunity for local businesses and could be coordinated with other brick-and-mortar businesses in the area.
<b>Diagnostic</b>	Mendon has a strong base of local businesses and merchants who would benefit from increased opportunities to sell products and market themselves to the community. Farmers and Artisans markets are a popular way to support local businesses, activate public spaces, and attract more pedestrians and visitors to downtown districts.
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>	<p><b>Implementation Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mendon Economic Development Committee (EDC), Agricultural Commission, Department of Public Works, and Land Use Committee: These are some of the Town entities that could provide leadership, insights, recommendations and networking opportunities to the project.</li> <li>• Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce: The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce offers counseling and support for local businesses on how to attract customers and grow. They could be a useful resource providing recommendations on how local businesses can take advantage of surrounding outdoor spaces in collaboration with the Town to attract local and other customers.</li> <li>• Local businesses and merchants: Businesses can be a partner for public space elements that go on or near their properties.</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)</u>: The Community Development Fund (CDF) awards grants to communities throughout the Commonwealth. This program helps eligible cities and towns to meet a broad range of community development needs in housing, infrastructure, revitalization, economic development and public social services. Eligible activities include but are not limited to: planning, downtown or area revitalization, community/public facilities, infrastructure, etc.</li> <li>• <u>Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program</u> offered by Division of Conservation Services: The PARC Program was established to assist cities and towns in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. These grants can be used by municipalities to acquire parkland, build a new park, or to renovate an existing park. Note: The FY22 Grant Round is now closed.</li> <li>• <u>EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Regional Build Back Better Challenge</u>: EDA will award funds in two phases to regional coalitions who are implementing recovery projects in a wide range of areas. Phase I grants up to \$500,000 to coalitions for technical assistance developing projects. Phase II awards between \$25 and \$75 million for project implementation. This would require the Town to combine this project with others as a part of a regional development coalition.</li> <li>• <u>EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Economic Adjustment Assistance</u>: This broad grant program will provide funding for communities to plan, build, innovate, and put people back to work through construction or non-construction projects designed to meet local needs.</li> <li>• <u>Mass Community One Stop for Growth Grants</u>: A single application portal allows applicants to be considered for ten grant programs from three state agencies. Funding is available for planning, infrastructure, capital, and programmatic projects.</li> </ul>

## Process

1. Convene a steering committee of leaders and organizers for the farmers market, including external advocates who may be able to take over the event in the future. Town leaders should be present, as should representatives from community organizations who may have an interest in leading the event in the future. The Mendon Agricultural Commission should be heavily involved given its connections with local farmers and businesses.
2. Identify the vision and goals for the farmers market and determine the target audience. This may be done in coordination with community members to determine how the event can best serve the community.
3. Establish a project plan including schedule, procurement, budget, needs assessment, project leads/point people, capacity, and other project-specific needs. Coordinate with the Town's legal counsel and financial committee for all contracting and budgeting items.
4. Find and secure a venue. Potential locations include the parking lot of the Willow Brook Restaurant, Henry P. Clough School, Founders Park, or the new Town Hall campus. Other private property owners may also be willing to host all or part of a market.
5. Identify sponsors and create sponsorship materials, such as a pitch deck, photos and renderings, and community testimonials. Prospective sponsors are most likely to financially contribute to events which have a clear vision and plan for adding benefit to the community.
6. Coordinate fundraising and sponsorship with Town legal and finance departments. This can also involve financial support from the Town to existing groups in the community that may take ongoing leadership of the farmers market.
7. Secure necessary permits, event and liability insurance, and safety and emergency procedures with relevant Town entities. Each of these steps should be taken based on standard Town procedures.
8. Conduct outreach to vendors, suppliers, and other event participants to procure necessary equipment, personnel, and other materials. Where possible, local businesses should be prioritized for procurement. Entities like the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, Mendon Agricultural Commission, and Mendon EDC are likely to provide connections to local businesses and merchants, including small farmers and home-based businesses.
9. Determine and coordinate elected official presence. Appearances by elected officials are an effective way to promote future events and demonstrate the Town's commitment to providing events for the community.
10. Market the event to the Mendon community including creating a webpage for the event, social media materials, mailing lists, and other marketing materials. Postings on the Town's website should be created.
11. Create materials including signage and wayfinding to promote the event and direct visitors. These materials may be temporarily added to existing signage or created as standalone products.
12. Coordinate press coverage of the event. Local and regional media should be present to promote the event. Successful promotion will help future events attract more visitors and secure additional funding sources.
13. Coordinate day-of logistics including run-of-show, volunteer management, setup and teardown, crowd management, parking, wayfinding, and safety procedures.
14. Execute the event plan and troubleshoot issues as needed.
15. Conduct an after-actions review to evaluate the farmers market. Reach out to visitors, vendors, sponsors, and event planners to solicit feedback and suggestions for improvements in the future. Determine whether the event was successful in meeting the goals and vision determined in step (2).
16. Publish promotional materials showing highlights from the market. These may include photos and videos, testimonials from visitors, and profiles of sponsors or vendors. All promotional materials should be distributed through a variety of media, including social media and website posts, newspaper and newsletter sections, public mailings (including email), and discussion at Town meetings and events.
17. Determine an ongoing schedule and event plan for the farmers market to take place on a repeating basis. The market may be held weekly, biweekly, monthly, or at any other interval based on administrative capacity and customer interest. The Town may aim to pass off leadership of the market to a private or non-profit entity when possible. Local businesses and organizations who participate heavily in the market may be contacted to gauge their interest in an ongoing leadership role.

# Support Outdoor Dining for Local Businesses

Category	 Private Realm
Location	Route 16 Corridor (Option to Include All of Mendon)
Origin	Town leaders identified outdoor dining as a need in Mendon during Karp Strategies' visit to the site. Restaurant owners reiterated this as an area for improvement during one-on-one interviews.
Budget	 Low Budget (Under \$50,000): Costs to the Town for this project will likely be limited to time and materials for business outreach and changes to permitting processes. If desired, the Town may also elect to provide financial support to businesses for materials such as tables and chairs, dining structures, parking, signage, and/or other elements.
Timeframe	 Short Term (Less than 5 years): Streamlined permitting processes for outdoor dining can be coordinated in under a year. Further changes and support programs may be implemented on an iterative basis in the future.
Risk	 Low Risk: Restaurants and customers alike have demonstrated a clear interest in outdoor dining across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses who implemented this in nearby towns have demonstrated revenue gains despite the pandemic. A primary risk is the loss of parking and safety risks to customers that accompany the placement of outdoor seating in roads and parking lots.
Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of restaurants that add outdoor dining</li> <li>• Number of new customers to restaurants with outdoor dining (assessed via a business survey)</li> <li>• Revenue growth of restaurants with outdoor dining (assessed via a business survey)</li> </ul>



*Restaurants on Route 16 like Willow Brook (left) and New England Steak and Seafood (right) offered outdoor dining during the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased municipal support for outdoor dining may allow similar arrangements to thrive long-term. Source: Willow Brook Restaurant and New England Steak and Seafood via Facebook (2020)*

<b>Action Item</b>	<p>The Town may implement additional support systems for local restaurants that would like to introduce or increase outdoor dining capacity. Outdoor dining was a great success for many businesses across the country during the pandemic, but Mendon restaurants have not yet maximized this benefit. The Town may take steps to reduce permitting and parking requirements, provide support to businesses for purchasing materials and constructing outdoor dining spaces, and linking restaurants with available open space to increase capacity.</p>
<b>Diagnostic</b>	<p>Outdoor dining is limited in Mendon but has been a significant boon for surrounding communities. Willow Brook Restaurant, the Muffin House Cafe, and others have some outdoor patio capacity, but do not offer outdoor dining. Supporting the permitting and working with the businesses to create outdoor dining could increase business to those restaurants and surrounding retailers.</p>
<b>Partners &amp; Resources</b>	<p><b>Implementation Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mendon Economic Development Committee (EDC), Planning Board, and Land Use Committee: These Departments and committees can oversee permitting, environmental and commercial assessments, and other elements of the outdoor dining implementation and permitting process. The EDC has a directory of local businesses and information that could be useful in determining which restaurants already have outdoor dining permits and those who need support in obtaining them.</li> <li>Local restaurants: Connecting with local restaurants early on in their process of applying for permits will help streamline the process.</li> </ul> <p><b>Implementation Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">"Let's Go Out" campaign</a> by Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT): This up-to-date directory lists restaurants across the state that offer outdoor dining. Local restaurants who register with this service can receive free publicity that may attract customers from within and outside Mendon.</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC) <a href="#">Small Business Resources</a>: Their website frequently updates grant opportunities ranging from Restaurant Revitalization, Shuttered Venue Operations, Economic Injury Disaster, etc.</li> <li><a href="#">Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program</a> offered by The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT): This grant supports municipalities and transit authorities to improve plazas, sidewalks, curbs, streets, bus stops, parking areas, and other public spaces in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce.</li> <li><a href="#">EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Regional Build Back Better Challenge</a>: EDA will award funds in two phases to regional coalitions who are implementing recovery projects in a wide range of areas. Phase I grants up to \$500,000 to coalitions for technical assistance developing projects. Phase II awards between \$25 and \$75 million for project implementation. This would require the Town to combine this project with others as a part of a regional development coalition.</li> <li><a href="#">EDA FY 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, Economic Adjustment Assistance</a>: This broad grant program will provide funding for communities to plan, build, innovate, and put people back to work through construction or non-construction projects designed to meet local needs.</li> <li><a href="#">Mass Community One Stop for Growth Grants</a>: A single application portal allows applicants to be considered for ten grant programs from three state agencies. Funding is available for planning, infrastructure, capital, and programmatic projects.</li> </ul>

## Process

1. Identify an oversight body to manage outdoor dining support programs and serve as a liaison to Mendon restaurants. This body may be an existing Mendon entity such as the Planning Board, the Economic Development Committee, or the Recreation Commission, or it may be a newly-created committee with representatives from multiple Town agencies. The committee may also include representatives from the restaurant community.
2. Convene the oversight committee and determine a set of goals for outdoor dining in Mendon. This should include a vision for where and how much outdoor dining will be available in the district. Among others, the following considerations should be discussed:
  - a. Location of dining infrastructure (eg. parking lots, public parks, streets and parklets, etc.);
  - b. Temporal availability (eg. summer only, year-round, etc.);
  - c. Social distancing requirements;
  - d. Safety requirements with regards to vehicle traffic; and
  - e. Uses and availability (eg. restaurant-specific, shared spaces, public spaces, etc.).
3. Conduct outreach with restaurants in Mendon to determine their desires and needs for outdoor dining. Businesses should have ample opportunity to provide feedback on what their goals for outdoor dining are and what barriers exist to realizing them. Feedback can be obtained through multiple outreach methods, including one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and online surveys or feedback forms.
4. Identify best practices in other municipalities through research and outreach with experts. Many places have implemented creative and successful strategies for facilitating outdoor dining during the pandemic. The Town should research these practices and speak with experts from other jurisdictions who have successfully implemented these practices to solicit ideas on how to optimize outdoor dining in Mendon.
5. Review the Town's permitting processes and requirements for outdoor dining to identify opportunities for improvement. Reduced or altered parking requirements for businesses who implement outdoor dining is one potential way to ease the strain on restaurants. Other permitting changes to requirements such as safety, construction, and location can help facilitate an easier outdoor dining process for restaurants.
6. Identify funding opportunities for businesses to cover costs such as tents, tables and chairs, and construction materials and labor. These costs can be steep for small businesses to cover and often must be funded up-front to facilitate successful outdoor dining development. The Town could help connect businesses with grants or loans to ease this initial financial burden. These funds may come directly from the Town's budget or may be third-party sources which the Town supports businesses in obtaining.
7. Release promotional materials to advertise new outdoor dining spaces and attract visitors from within and outside Mendon to the area. This may include social media posts, newspaper articles, local news segments, flyers and posters, and promotion at Town meetings and events.



*Many restaurants turned to outdoor dining to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, but safe and welcoming outdoor seating can help restaurants thrive even under non-pandemic conditions.*

*Sources: Modern Restaurant Management (2020)*

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# Appendix

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## Appendix A: Site and Facade Improvement Grants

Provided by: Innes Associates Ltd.  
Emily Innes, Principal



## MEMORANDUM

<b>To</b>	Gopinath Gnanakumar Malathi, Analyst, Karp Strategies Erik Plan Facilitator for Mendon
<b>From</b>	Emily Keys Innes, AICP, LEED AP ND, Principal
<b>Date</b>	August 30, 2021
<b>Project</b>	RRP – Town of Mendon
<b>Subject</b>	SME Request for Provide Façade Improvement Grants
<b>Cc:</b>	

The following information is intended to enhance and/or supplement the Project Rubric you submitted in your request for SME services for Provide Façade Improvement Grants. I have followed the structure of the rubric and provided a best practices project sheet with this memorandum. The intent is to allow you to cut and paste information directly into your report for the Town of Mendon.

Based on our conversation and our subsequent meeting with Jack Hunter, I understood the following concerns:

- Jack is familiar with façade and sign improvements through the CDBG program, but not with site improvements.
- Area is inconsistent; lots not maintained, and façade conditions vary.
- The corridor is highway oriented; Route 16 acts as a long commercial area; Mendon does not have a traditional town center.
- Wayfinding signage could complement improvements for the façades, sites, and signs.
- Mechanism will be needed for the program – who decides what the improvements are and what they look like.
- Owner of property will want input.
- Forgivable loans rather than grant – loan is forgiven if improvement is maintained.
- Town could create a bid process to have an on-call sign installer.
- Similar program for landscaper – owner to pay for materials?
- Façades and sites are not in the historic district.
- Connectivity is important.

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emily@innes-design.com  
(857) 226-3815

I reviewed the existing Town of Mendon Design Guidelines Handbook. While these could form the basis of the guidelines required for a façade improvement program, the content is not specific enough to be incorporated directly into the criteria for the program.

The Town should start by defining what their design goals are for the area and then incorporating those goals into the improvement program. The Town of Ashland, one of the examples in the best practices sheet, used their program for site improvements and established a regular appropriation and revolving fund. ARPA funds could be used to seed such a fund for this project.

### **Project Rubric: Provide Façade Improvement Grants**

I am providing you with three documents. The table and images below are tailored to the draft project rubric – I am providing additional comments based on the specific needs we identified for the Town.

I am also providing you with two best practices sheets that can also address the Town’s concerns for this project. One addresses façade improvement programs and the other discusses design guidelines. These sheets have more general information that will supplement the comments below.

<b>Budget</b>	I agree with the budget for creating the program. The budget for implementation may be a medium-scale project. The best practices sheet has more guidance on funding.
<b>Timeframe</b>	Timeframe for creating the program should be about 12 months. Implementation will take longer. In the short term, labor shortages and supply chain issues may lengthen the program. In the long-term, if successful, this program could become a permanent tool for business development.
<b>Risks</b>	This program will require management from Town staff, unless the Town hires a coordinator for the program. Depending on how the Town structures the program – for example, a forgivable loan, the project could require cash at the beginning of the process. See the best practices sheet for some additional thoughts.
<b>KPI</b>	These are good – see the best practices sheet for some additional thoughts.
<b>Partners</b>	I would also add business and property owners and land use boards, who may be able to put in place an expedited permitting process for projects under this program. Note that CPA funds apply only in specific circumstances (historic façades might count, with the appropriate easements) and Commonwealth Place is for placemaking programs rather than site improvements.
<b>Action Item</b>	This was missing from the draft – feel free to draw from the best practices sheet.

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<b>Process</b>	I would add outreach to business and property owners and to the public. Such outreach could help with the development of the design guidelines and support for any funding appropriations at Town Meeting.
<b>Best Practices</b>	I would pay particular attention to Ashland's example.



Newburyport

# Create or update design guidelines for a downtown, village center, or commercial corridor.






Provided by SME Consultant

Emily Keys Innes, AICP, LEED AP ND, Innes Associates Ltd.

Location

Any downtown, commercial corridor, or village center.

Origin	Innes Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Rapid Recovery Program sponsored by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Budget	 Low (less than \$50,000)
Timeframe	 Short Term (1-5 years)
Risk	 Medium
Budget: Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Costs will include the consultant’s time, if a consultant is used. If the design guidelines are fully incorporated into the municipal zoning bylaw or ordinance, review by municipal counsel is recommended.</li> <li>The range for the consultant’s time is between \$20,000-\$50,000, depending on the level of public engagement and how illustrative the code is. Review by municipal counsel may be covered by the municipal on-call agreement or may need to be added to the cost of the project.</li> </ul>

## Budget: Sources

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

### American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Assistance to small businesses includes loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance, or other services. These funds should cover assistance with the design of façade, storefront, or site improvements when tied to a specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Creating or revising design guidelines may be linked to a façade/storefront improvement program. Possible impacts are addressed in the sections on Key Performance Indicators and Diagnostic.

### Commonwealth of Massachusetts One Stop for Growth Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (project limit \$25,000) Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

All communities are eligible to apply. Some of the funding for this program is reserved for non-entitlement Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) communities. MDI staff will assign a consultant to assist the community with the technical services, which would include developing the design guidelines. The MDI grant should be sufficient for the full project for a smaller community unless the community is looking for a more extensive set of illustrations or a significant public engagement process. A larger community may need additional funding.

### Community Planning Grants (project limit \$25,000-\$75,000) Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

A Community Planning Grant may be used for Zoning Review and Updates, which could include design guidelines if it is part of the municipality's zoning bylaws or ordinance. In 2021, the priorities for this grant included mitigation of climate change through zoning and other regulations; design guidelines and standards integrated into the municipality's zoning and incorporating elements to reduce the impact of climate change would qualify.

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

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

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

### Survey and Planning Grant Program Massachusetts Historical Commission

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

### Complete Streets Funding Program Massachusetts Department of Transportation

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

<p>Risk: Explanation</p>	<p>The risk for this project is in part dependent on the form of government and whether the design guidelines will be an advisory document or incorporated into the zoning bylaw/ordinance as specific standards.</p> <p>The highest risk would be a Town form of government in which the design guidelines become part of the zoning bylaws and municipal regulations have been controversial in the community.</p> <p>In general, experienced developers and builders like the predictability of a clear set of design guidelines which is consistently applied by a municipality. Property owners with less development experience are likely to have more concerns.</p> <p>A second risk category is creating design guidelines that are too restrictive. This sends a negative message to those who are considering investing in the community. Guidelines that are too subjective send a similar negative message in that applicants cannot be certain as to how the guidelines will apply to them.</p>
<p>Key Performance Indicators</p>	<p>Design guidelines help reinforce a community's identity and provide a clear message that the municipality is balancing the needs of the community with a streamlined approval process for new development. Codifying community values about the physical environment into the guidelines allows applicants to present proposals for new construction, rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse that are consistent with those values.</p> <p>KPIs for this project could include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful adoption of the new design guidelines.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of applications that are consistent with the design guidelines.</li> <li>• Decrease in the number of meetings dedicated to design in the site plan or special permit approval process.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of buildings constructed, renovated, or rehabilitated that meet the design guidelines.</li> </ul> <p>If this project is accompanied by a façade/storefront improvement project, additional KPI related to the number of façades or storefronts improved under the program could be added. Without such a program, changes will take more time as they will be dependent on applications for approval process that trigger the use of the guidelines. Without an application for site plan, special permit, and/or PUD approval, property owners are not obligated to meet the design guidelines.</p>
<p>Partners &amp; Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal staff (planning and economic development, building and/or zoning inspector)</li> <li>• Municipal boards (City Council/Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Design Review Board, Economic Development Committee)</li> <li>• Property/business owners</li> <li>• Downtown organizations</li> </ul>

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## Diagnostic

Creating or updating design guidelines and combining the update with financial assistance to property owners to update buildings and sites to be consistent with the new guidelines addresses several negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Design guidelines can sometime be seen primarily as an aesthetic requirement. However, they can also have significant impacts on the economic and public health of an area, both of which are directly related to the continuing impacts of the pandemic:

- Small businesses in deteriorating downtowns, villages, and corridors are less likely to recover quickly because of a perception of a lack of safety or viability. Design guidelines that are responsive to community identity will reinforce a revitalized, vibrant area.
- Design guidelines that include landscape requirements can help improve air quality and reduce the heat island effect, improving public health for people who live, work, and shop in the target area.
- Design guidelines can also address accessibility for people with physical disabilities by requiring appropriate access that is well-integrated into the building and the site.
- Tools such as outdoor dining, outdoor retail display, serving windows, and upgraded HVAC systems can be integrated into the design guidelines to encourage permanent solutions that address the health and safety of the target area.

#### Action Item

Key actions include the following:

- Understand why the municipality feels that design guidelines are necessary. Is this part of a façade/sign improvement program, a new local historic district, and/or to control new development in an existing area? What are the areas of greatest concern?
- Decide whether this is a project that can be done in-house or requires a consultant with appropriate expertise.
- Decide which funding source is appropriate and, if the source is a grant program, apply for funds.
- If a consultant is deemed appropriate, go through the Commonwealth's procurement process (unless the grant program has an on-call consultant).
- Identify the people/organizations who need to be part of this process.
- Develop an engagement process appropriate for the municipality and the required approval process.
- Once the design guidelines have been approved, consider a public education program to inform people on a regular basis about the new requirements and their implications. Key targets for this campaign include property owners and real estate brokers.

#### Process

The timeframe will vary depending on whether the municipality has a city form of government or requires Town Meeting to approve bylaw changes (and of course, whether the design guidelines are specifically incorporated into the zoning). From the kick-off to entering the municipal approval process, the project should take 8-12 months.

- **Months 1-2:** Review existing zoning bylaws for embedded design guidelines and standards; develop inventory of historic and current buildings and site treatments; interview municipal staff, boards with approval responsibility, former applicants, local land use lawyers, others with relevant experience and concerns.
- **Months 3-4:** Research appropriate precedents; develop public outreach/engagement program. Consider a public kick-off/charrette, depending on the needs of the community. Discuss the thresholds for use and the appropriate review body and process.
- **Months 5-7:** Engage with business/property owners and public on options and concerns; develop draft guidelines; develop illustrations. Decide (with municipality) whether design guidelines are a separate, advisory document or part of the zoning bylaw/ordinance. If the guidelines are integrated into the zoning, decide whether illustrations are part of the zoning or a separate document. Consider meeting with the appropriate boards to introduce the draft design guidelines and receive feedback.
- **Months 8-9:** Revise the design guidelines to its final draft prior to the municipal approval process. Publicize the final draft prior to City Council/Town Meeting review and approval.

### Example 1: Town Center Design Guidelines

Sterling, Massachusetts

#### Town Contact

Domenica Tatasciore

Town Planner

dtatasciore@sterling-ma.gov

#### Consultant

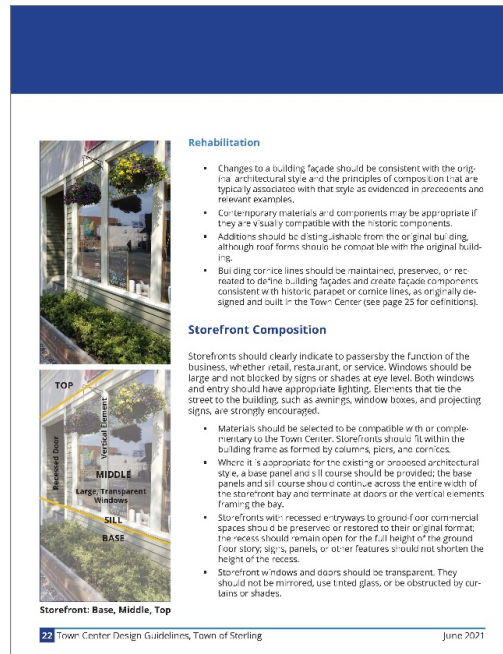
Innes Associates Ltd./Harriman

#### Cost

\$15,000 (Massachusetts Downtown Initiative)

#### Characteristics

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



Courtesy of the Town of Sterling, Innes Associates, and Harriman

### Example 2: Residential Design Guidelines

Arlington, Massachusetts

#### Town Contact

Jenny Raitt

Director

Department of Planning and

Community Development

jraitt@town.arlington.ma.us

#### Consultant

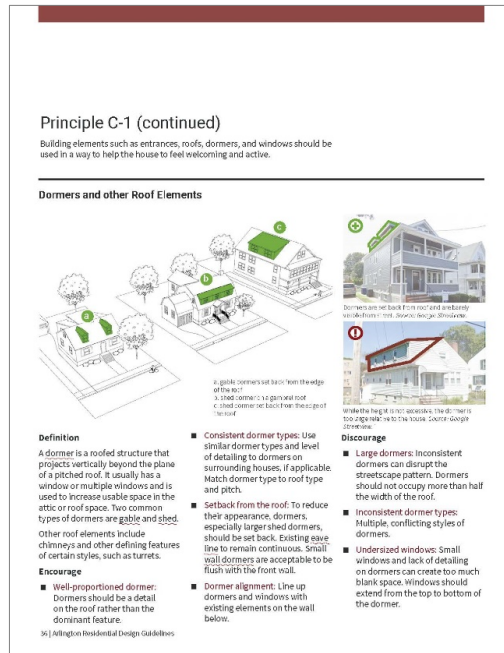
Harriman

#### Cost

\$49,000

#### Characteristics

- Advisory
- Applicable to Residential zoning districts
- Included analysis of neighborhood characteristics
- Included in-depth public outreach



Courtesy of the Town of Arlington and Harriman

### Example 3: Dedham Square Design Guidelines

Dedham, Massachusetts

#### Town Contact

Jeremy Rosenberger

Town Planner

[jrosenberger@dedham-ma.gov](mailto:jrosenberger@dedham-ma.gov)

#### Consultant

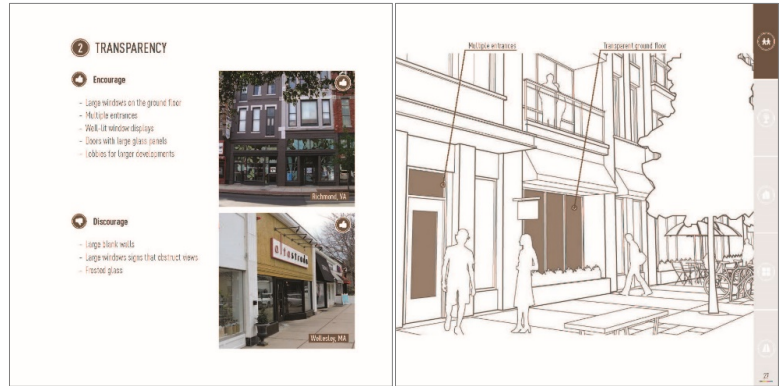
Gamble Associates

#### Cost

\$30,000

#### Characteristics

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



Courtesy of the Town of Dedham and Gamble Associates

### Example 4: Kendall Square Design Guidelines

Cambridge, Massachusetts

#### City Contact

Jeff Roberts

Zoning and Development Director

Community Development Department

[jroberts@cambridge.gov](mailto:jroberts@cambridge.gov)

#### Consultant

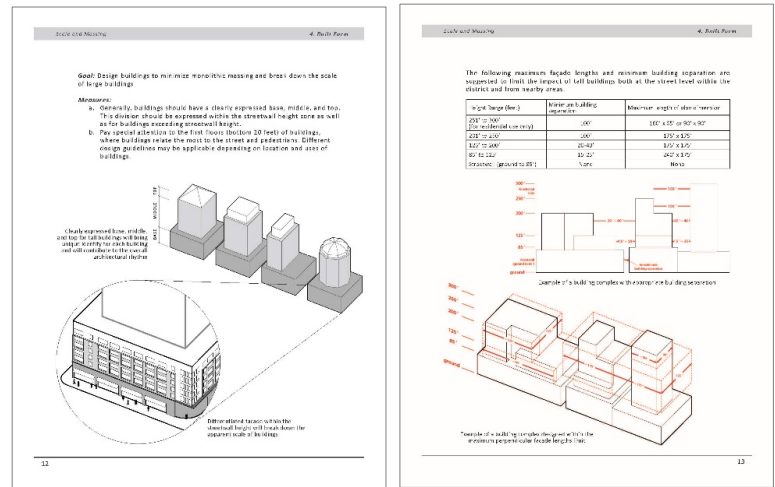
Goody Clancy

#### Cost

Unknown (part of larger project)

#### Characteristics

- Tied to zoning, including special permit and PUD applications
- Applicable to Kendall Square
- Addresses different building uses, including residential and academic buildings.



Courtesy of the City of Cambridge and Goody Clancy



Andover

# Develop a façade/storefront/site improvement program.



Provided by SME Consultant      Emily Keys Innes, AICP, LEED AP ND, Innes Associates Ltd.

Location      Any downtown, commercial corridor, or village center.

Origin	Innes Associates Ltd.
Budget	<div>  Low (less than \$50,000)            Medium (\$50,000-\$200,000)         </div>
Timeframe	<div>  Short Term (1-5 years)         </div>
Risk	<div>  Medium         </div>
Budget: Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop design guidelines for the façade elements to be improved.</li> <li>Develop the structure of the program.</li> <li>Manage the program over time.</li> <li>Design assistance.</li> <li>Implementation, including construction.</li> <li>Displacement protection programs.</li> </ul>

## Budget: Sources

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

### **Funding Sources for All Façade Improvement Programs**

#### American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Assistance to small businesses includes loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance, or other services. These funds should cover assistance with the design of façade, storefront, or site improvements when tied to a specific impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Possible impacts are addressed in the sections on **Key Performance Indicators** and **Diagnostic**.

#### Hometown Grants

##### *T-Mobile*

This program will fund up to \$50,000 per town and may be used to rebuild or refresh community spaces, including historic buildings.

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

#### Local Banks and other Community Development Financial Institutions

Local banks with a community development financing program for small businesses may be able to help provide low or no interest loans to small businesses for their share of the improvements, especially for a storefront or sign upgrade. The focus of the program at each bank is different; contact your local bank(s) and discuss how they could participate in investing in the community.

#### Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community One-Stop for Growth

##### *Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (project limit \$25,000)*

All communities are eligible to apply. Some of the funding for this program is reserved for non-entitlement Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) communities. MDI staff will assign a consultant to assist the community with the technical services, which could include creating the program, developing the design guidelines, and providing conceptual designs for improvements, depending on the complexity of the project. This program could be used to develop the design guidelines for the façade improvement program.

#### Business Improvement District or Other Downtown District

Funds from a BID may be used for a façade improvement program.

### **Funding Sources that May be Leveraged**

A façade improvement program may be used to address components of the façade (including awnings and signs), a storefront system, accessibility, the entire façade or façades visible from a public way, and/or components of the site (including signage, planters, restriping for outdoor dining or retail display, or adding more permanent landscaping). However, within a target area such as a downtown, corridor, or other commercial area, some buildings may have more extensive needs. For example, many historic buildings require elevators for access to upper floors. Other buildings may require structural repairs to the façade or interior.

The sources on the next page are examples that can work in tandem with a façade improvement program to address buildings with larger needs.

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## Budget: Leveraging Other Sources

### Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community One-Stop for Growth: Underutilized Properties Program

#### *MassDevelopment*

As with the historic tax credits below, this funding source is for a much larger project. It could be used to help address larger buildings in a target area that have more significant issues. Bundling this program and a few of the other more specialized grants could help a municipality address smaller properties with the façade improvement program and larger ones with these more targeted funds.

### Municipal Vacant Storefronts Program

#### *Economic Assistance Coordinating Council*

This program will not fund façade improvements. The municipality would form a district. Businesses the district then apply for the funds to address vacant storefronts. This could help reduce the number of vacant storefronts while the façade improvement program addresses accessibility, deferred maintenance, and design issues on the exterior or the site.

### Collaborative Workspace Program

#### *MassDevelopment*

This grant provides another option to address both the exterior and the interior of this space while also helping to support local jobs and job creation.

### Community Preservation Act

This source only applies in those communities that have adopted the CPA. CPA funds may be used to acquire, preserve, and rehabilitate and/or restore historic assets. A municipality could tie this to the design guidelines for a façade improvement program and consider, for example, acquiring a downtown historic building, updating the façade and ground floor for commercial use, and adding an elevator to allow for housing on the upper floors.

### Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund

#### *Massachusetts Historical Commission (project limit \$3,000-\$100,000, depending on project type)*

This is a 50% reimbursable matching grant for preserving properties, landscapes, and sites listed in the State Register of Historic Preservation.

Applicants are limited to municipalities and nonprofits. Many downtown and village centers include nonprofit and municipal anchors. This grant could be used to ensure that all properties in a target area are brought, over time, to the same standard of repair. The program does have limitation on allowable costs. A preservation restriction is required.

### Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

#### *Massachusetts Historical Commission*

This is available for significant rehabilitation of historic buildings and may help supplement a larger project in a downtown. This is included in this best practice sheet because the guidelines developed for the municipal façade/storefront improvement program could be incorporated into the review of larger projects.

#### Risk: Explanation

The risk level depends on the community and the relationships of the property owners with the municipality. The highest level of risk occurs in conversations with property owners; for various reasons, the owners of the most distressed properties may be reluctant to participate. Once funding is secured and a few projects have been successfully completed, this risk level is likely to drop. Early engagement with property and business owners will also reduce this level of risk.

Some communities have indicated that that owners will not want to participate in programs funded by Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds because of the number of requirements. Communities using these funds should consider helping with the paperwork and providing a list of local designers and contractors who meet the program's eligibility requirements.

Façade improvements can also be about community values relative to the physical space; a third level of risk occurs within the community conversations around the design standards for the program. In some communities, a façade improvement program may be an implementation step in an earlier planning process. In others, developing a community vision for the area before creating the program will be necessary to receive support for the program.

The final risk is the displacement of smaller businesses as property values, and rents, increase to match the upgrades to the physical environment. Since many smaller businesses are often also local businesses, improvements without protection for those small businesses may result in attractive, but empty, storefronts. Municipalities should consider structuring the criteria for participation in their façade improvement programs to reduce the risk of displacement.

#### Key Performance Indicators

Improvements as a result of these programs include safety, accessibility, pedestrian comfort, and aesthetics. Over time, upgrades to façades and sites contribute to a perception that an area is vibrant, safe, and attractive to businesses and their customers. The increase in value attracts investment and contributes to a higher tax base.

KPI for this project could include the following:

- Creation of the program.
- Number of applicants over a specific timeframe.
- Number of façades, storefronts, and/or sites improved within a specific timeframe.
- Maintenance of the improvements after a set number of years.
- Increase in visitors to the target area.
- Increase in sales at the property/business improved and within the target area.
- Ability to extend the program to other commercial areas within the municipality (if appropriate).
- If anti-displacement measures are included in the program:
  - Number of local businesses within improved properties that are still there after a set number of years.
  - Number of new local businesses that have started or relocated to the target area within a set number of years.

Partners & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal staff (planning and economic development, building and/or zoning inspector)</li> <li>• Municipal boards (City Council/Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Design Review Board, Economic Development Committee)</li> <li>• Property/business owners</li> <li>• Downtown organizations</li> </ul>
Diagnostic	<p>Reasons for undertaking a façade or storefront improvement program may include one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirements to address the transmissibility of COVID-19, such as new windows, doors, or HVAC system may be unaffordable to a small business owner and/or may have a negative impact on the façade if improperly sourced and installed.</li> <li>• On-site parking spaces are poorly organized and, if reorganized, can provide room for outdoor dining or retail display.</li> <li>• Local small businesses do not have the resources (time, money, expertise) to address substandard storefronts.</li> <li>• Distressed properties have a negative impact on people’s impression of the viability and/or safety of a business district and property owners are unable to make the improvements themselves.</li> <li>• Storefronts are not accessible to those who have problems with mobility, whether temporary or permanent.</li> <li>• Historic downtowns often have empty upper floors because of the lack of accessible elevators. A major improvement project could provide grants to address both interior and exterior accessibility.</li> <li>• Historic properties may have been “improved” with inappropriate materials or repairs.</li> </ul> <p>Site improvements that reduce asphalt and add landscape can address public health issues by reducing the heat island effect, planting trees to address air quality, and using low impact design to manage stormwater onsite.</p>
Action Item	<p>The municipality needs to make certain decisions prior to and during the creation of this program. If the municipality already knows the answers, then staff can proceed with developing the program. If not, the municipality can work the decision points into a scope of work for assistance in development and perhaps managing the program. See <b>Process</b> for some of these questions.</p> <p>If starting from scratch, the municipality will need to accomplish the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify capacity within the municipality to guide the program and bring on additional capacity.</li> <li>• Develop an appropriate level of design guidelines.</li> <li>• Engage the businesses, property owners, and community to get buy-in for the program.</li> <li>• Develop the criteria for application, approval, installation, and maintenance.</li> <li>• Develop the funding and oversight structures.</li> </ul>

**Pre-program development**

1. Identify who in the municipality will manage this program: municipal staff, existing downtown committee/organization, volunteer committee, or a hybrid.
2. If the municipality does not already have design guidelines for the area that are suitable for this program, then decide how those guidelines will be developed. Will the design guidelines be just for the façade improvement program, or will they be more broadly applicable?  
Note that the entity managing this process does not have to be the municipality. For example, a Community Development Corporation or other nonprofit could sponsor the program.
3. Discuss the potential focus of the program: components of a storefront, the entire storefront, the entire façade, all façades, the site? Will signage, lighting, awnings and other smaller elements be included? Will interior improvements to address accessibility be included? Will the municipality fund the design, all or some of the improvements, or both?
4. Discuss what will not be eligible. Eligibility may also be determined by the funding source (for example, CDBG funds).
5. Discuss the length of time that improvements must be maintained and the enforcement process for ensuring that improvements are maintained. Maintenance requirements could be tied to the length of the tenant's lease.
6. Consider the funding structures. The program can provide grants or loans to property owners/businesses for the improvements. Grants may provide a greater incentive to participate while loans (no or low interest) provide a revolving fund to assist more properties. Forgiving loans after a certain time if the improvement are maintained is another option.  
If the property owners are less interested in the program, the municipality might consider offering grants to the first 3-5 to sign up (depending on resources) or through a lottery process and transitioning later applicants to a loan program. This method would also allow the municipality to assist specific properties as catalysts for the rest of the target area. This would need to be a highly transparent process.
7. Decide whether the guidelines and program will be developed in-house or whether the municipality will seek outside help. The funding source may determine the type of outside assistance; for example, certain programs will assign on-call consultants. For others, the municipality may need to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP).

**Developing the Guidelines**

1. If the municipality already has design guidelines that can be used for the façade improvement program, skip to the next section.
2. For developing the guidelines, review the Best Practices for Design Guidelines.

#### Developing the Program

1. Decide the following:
  - a. Grant, loan, or hybrid
  - b. Which elements will the program fund and which are the responsibility of the property owner?
  - c. What are the eligibility requirements for participating in the program?
  - d. What is the length of the program?
  - e. How long will property owners be required to maintain the improvements?
  - f. What is the enforcement procedure for maintenance? (This could be repayment of a grant or a lien on a property.)
  - g. Will the responsibility for maintenance transfer to a new owner if the property is sold?
2. Differentiating between the responsibilities of the tenant (often the small business) and the landlord (the property owner) is critical – a small business may be enthusiastic about the assistance, but the landlord may not. The municipality may need to consider parallel outreach processes.
3. Decide on the application process and how applicants will be evaluated. Are certain property types or improvements given priority over others? Make sure the process of choosing participants is transparent.
4. Develop the forms and train the people who will be evaluating the applications.

#### Implementation

The program can provide grants or loans to property owners/businesses for the improvements. Grants may provide a greater incentive to participate for reluctant property owners, while loans (no or low interest) provide a revolving fund to assist more properties. Some communities have indicated that requiring a match from the property owner may create longer-term support of the program.

If the property owners are less interested in the program, the municipality might consider offering grants to the first 3-5 participants to sign up (depending on resources) and transitioning later applicants to a loan program. This method would also allow the municipality to assist specific properties as catalysts for the rest of the target area.

Education of all people involved in the program needs to be an ongoing component. A municipality that is short on project management resources should consider hiring a dedicated staff member or consultant to manage this program.

Finally, the municipality should consider streamlining approvals of projects under this program to reduce the time needed for implementation.

### Example 1: Sign & Façade Improvement Program

Ashland, Massachusetts

#### Town Contact

Beth Reynolds  
Economic Development Director  
breynolds@ashlandmass.com

#### Funding by:

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

#### Structure

50% match up to \$5,000

#### Characteristics

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

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

**Note: Many existing programs use CDBG funds. Examples 1 and 2 both use municipal funding sources. Examples 3 and 4, which are both Main Streets Programs, provide a model for using historic preservation funds.**

**APPLICATION FOR SIGN & FAÇADE PROGRAM**

**Purpose:**  
The Sign & Façade Program was established to provide financial and technical assistance to businesses in Ashland to improve their storefronts and signage. The program matches up to half of the project cost (up to \$5,000) for businesses that improve their storefronts with new or improved signage, awnings, and landscaping. The program is designed to improve the visual appearance of the town and to provide a model for other towns.

**Eligibility Requirements:**  
This program is open to all businesses in Ashland but is limited to properties located on streets in the downtown area (Main Street, Pleasant Street, Route 225, First Street). The applicant must own the property or have a letter of authorization from the owner. Moreover, the applicant must have a valid business license from the Town of Ashland.

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

- Accessibility by improvements (e.g., handicapped accessible ramp)
- Exterior signs
- Awnings
- Lighting energy conservation for windows & doors
- Painting
- Surface parking lots
- Planters and landscaping
- Greenhouse effects
- Program funds may not be used for improvements to the interior of the business or to sidewalks or public walkways.

**PROJECT INFORMATION**  
Please describe the scope of work for the proposed storefront project:  
  
Please indicate the estimated project cost of the total amount budgeted for improvements:  
  
Does the project require you to obtain a building permit or other city or town permits?

Courtesy of the Town of Ashland

### Example 2: Storefront Improvement Program

Cambridge, Massachusetts

#### City Contact

Christina DiLisio  
Project Manager  
cdilisio@cambridgema.gov

#### Funding by:

Municipal capital funds

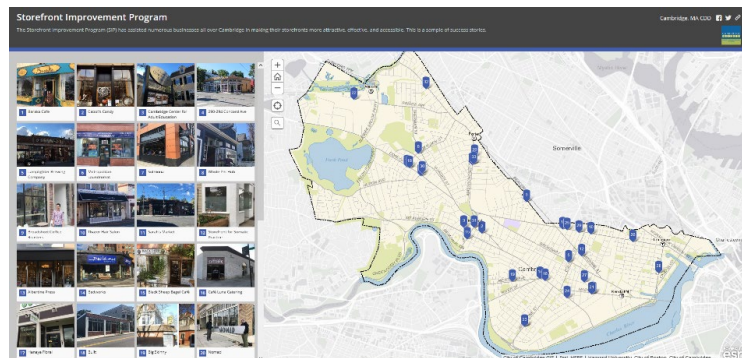
#### Structure

Tiered matching grants based on improvement type

#### Characteristics

- Includes increasing accessibility to the store (part of their Storefronts-for-All program) and improving or replacing windows and doors to address COVID-19 restrictions.
- Also recommends tax credit programs to address accessibility, historic preservation, and energy efficiency

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/economic/smallbusinessassistance/smallbusinessprograms/storefront>



Courtesy of the City of Cambridge

### Example 3: NPS Main Street Façade Improvement Grant

Main Street America

<https://www.mainstreet.org/ourwork/projectspotlight/facadeimprovements/npsgrant>

- Main Street America announced a façade improvement grant program using funds from the Historic Revitalization Subgrant Program, now the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program. This grant is sponsored by the National Park Service.
- This example is not given as a funding source, rather, it is an option for using historic preservation funds, such as CPA funds, to create a façade improvement program that would address the historic buildings in a target area. This option is provided because some communities were looking at non-CDBG sources for a façade improvement program. This may be a useful model for a local program.
- The site provides a link to each of the communities chosen for this program. The awards are expected to be \$25,000 per project, and the site has the preservation covenants, grant agreements, and two webinars which may be useful.

### Example 4: Historic Commercial District Revolving Fund

Main Street America

<https://www.mainstreet.org/ourwork/projectspotlight/facadeimprovements/hcdf>

- State-by-state program – in 2016, it was Texas and in 2019, it was Maine.
- This is not a funding source, but an example of a program that could serve as a model for communities with a significant number of historic buildings in their commercial centers.
- The Texas program includes a PDF of before-and-after pictures, the scope of work, and the cost for each building.
- This program also serves as a reminder that historic photos of a downtown can be used to as a base for developing design guidelines for the program, reinforcing characteristics specific and unique to each community.

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## Appendix B: Mendon Water System Expansion

Provided by: BETA Group, Inc.  
Andrew Dennehy, Senior Associate



September 22, 2021

Gopinath Gnanakumar Malathi, Analyst  
Karp Strategies  
26 Broadway, 3rd Floor  
New York, NY 10004

**Re: Mendon Water System Expansion**

Dear Mr. Malathi:

BETA has reviewed information related to the existing water distribution system in Mendon and the desire to expand this system to allow for future development, especially along the Rte. 16 corridor. The following is our understanding, analysis and recommendations to move the project forward.

## PROJECT UNDERSTANDING AND BACKGROUND

The Town of Mendon currently relies largely on individual private wells as the source of drinking water supply. There are two subsystems that are currently fed by surrounding communities.

The Cape Road subsystem is presently fed as a “consecutive” system from Hopedale with the meter pit located just north of the junction of Cape Road (Route 140) and Hartford Avenue East in Mendon and South Main Street (Route 140) in Hopedale. The Cape Road subsystem consists of parts of Hartford Avenue East; parts of Cape Road; the industrial subdivision known as both Williams Street and Whitin Street (next to the GASCO service station); part of Bates Street; Edwards Road; Joseph Road; Talbott Farm Drive; Parker Road; and Mill River Drive. The water main which feeds Talbott Farm Drive, Parker Road, Mill River Drive, and two residences on Hartford Ave East runs along the side of Williams St (aka Whitin St) from Cape Rd.

The Dudley Road subsystem is fed as a “consecutive” system from Westcott Road in Hopedale, with an emergency and maintenance feed from Ballou Road in Hopedale.

In the past, the Cape Cod subsystem was fed by from Bellingham at the town line on Hartford Avenue East in Mendon/Hartford Avenue in Bellingham. Bellingham feed was discontinued due to poor water quality at some time in the past.

Limitations in Mendon’s drinking water system are a barrier to future economic development, especially along the Route 16 corridor. Additionally, recent issues pertaining to the quality of water derived from private wells and development along Interstate 495 has raised the need to identify and protect water resources should a public water system within the town be desired. A water source with a sustained yield of approximately 550 gallons per minute or 0.80 million gallons per day would be required to meet the peak water demands and fire flows of Mendon’s current population of 6,149. None of the surface water features in the Town are favorable for development as drinking water supplies. The fractured bedrock aquifer that underlies the Town appears to have favorable potential as a high yield source of supply, however, test well drilling, pump testing and water quality testing would be required to verify this.

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The Town has previously investigated the potential for exploring new well locations. Limited test well drilling conducted in the Mill River Aquifer along the Mill River and Muddy Brook in the southeast portion of Town indicates that further test well drilling is warranted.

## ANALYSIS

To expand the Town's water distribution system, there are two potential options: 1) Explore and develop a new drinking water source within the town, and 2) expand the existing systems connected to adjacent towns.

### New Drinking Water Source

There are several steps required to develop a new drinking water source. They are, but not limited to:

- Identifying potential source locations
- Obtaining access rights to conduct exploratory well drilling and testing
- Land acquisition
- Permitting a new well, including:
  - Notice of Intent
  - New Source approval
  - Water Management Act Permit
  - MEPA Review and Certification
- Construction and testing of the new well
- New well inspection by DEP
- Infrastructure/Treatment to supply water to the existing distribution system.

Typically, this process can take up to five years, assuming identification of a source is obtained. There are a number of hurdles to developing a new source, and those issues should be considered prior to embarking on this option.

### Expand Existing Consecutive Systems

Utilizing the existing connections to Hopedale's and Bellingham's system could provide additional water to Mendon's existing distribution system. If neighboring communities have sufficient capacity and are willing to provide water, this option may be a more viable option and will require much less time and permitting effort. This option would require additional water infrastructure be installed in Mendon to expand the distribution system.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

BETA recommends that a comprehensive feasibility study be conducted to explore these two options for future water expansion in Mendon. This study would include:

- Review of previous studies with regards to developing a new source of water within the town
- Investigate locations for potential new water sources
- Identify timelines and permits required for a new source
- Begin conversations with neighboring communities regarding ability and interest in expanding the consecutive systems
- Provide recommendations to move forward with expanding Mendon's water system to serve areas in Mendon, particularly the Route 16 corridor.

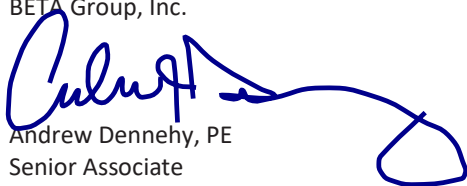


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Gopinath Gnanakumar Malathi, Analyst  
September 22, 2021  
Page 3 of 3

If we can be of any further assistance regarding this matter, please contact us at our office.

Very truly yours,  
BETA Group, Inc.



Andrew Dennehy, PE  
Senior Associate



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## Appendix C:

# Develop and Install Wayfinding Signage

Provided by: BSC Group  
Michael A. Santos, Project Manager

August 30, 2021

Joseph Sutowski  
Erik Strand  
Karp Strategies  
26 Broadway, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10004

RE: Mendon Subject Matter Expert Response – Local Rapid Recovery Program

Dear Joe and Erik;

BSC Group, Inc. (BSC) has prepared this document in response to your request for a Subject Matter Expert (SME) related to wayfinding signage in the Main Street district in the Town of Mendon, Massachusetts. This information was prepared to assist you with your ongoing work with the Town's involvement with the Local Rapid Recovery Plan (LRRP) to revitalize the Main Street district of Mendon and address the effects of COVID-19 on local businesses. The following information includes the summary provided in the initial rubric prepared for the project and offers specific recommendations to meet the Town's goals. The rubric included the development of a wayfinding signage program along the Route 16 (Uxbridge Road and Hastings Street) corridor between the existing Dunkin' Donuts west of Millville Road and the DB Mart east of Main Street/North Avenue.

### **Develop and Install Wayfinding Signage Mendon, Massachusetts**

Origin	Town of Mendon	
Budget	Low budget (Under \$50k): Wayfinding signage is a low-budget project related to the installation of signage throughout the district.	
Timeframe	Short term (Less than 5 years)	
Risk	Low risk: The wayfinding signage element of this project is a low-budget, short term project. Potential risks include public discontent about the placement or style of wayfinding elements and lack of interest by local businesses.	Engineers
Key Performance Indicators	Number of new signs installed Number of visitors to the Main Street district Pedestrian activity within the Main Street district Increase in events and activities in the Main Street district	Environmental Scientists Custom Software Developers
Partners & Resources	Town of Mendon -Historical Commission -Department of Public Works -Police Department	Landscape Architects Planners Surveyors



	<p>-Economic Development Committee</p> <p>Mendon Historical Society Local businesses Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)</p>
Diagnostic	<p>The Main Street district in Mendon is an historical district between Millville Road and Main Street along the current Route 16 alignment and the triangle formed by Route 16, Maple Street, and Main Street.</p> <p>Route 16 is a MassDOT owned roadway that travels through the district while also serving as a regional east-west thoroughfare between Route 146 to the west and Interstate 495 to the east connecting the Towns of Uxbridge, Mendon, Hopedale and Milford.</p> <p>The Project area is approximately 3,000 feet in length, generally situated between Millville Road and Main Street, extending beyond both intersections by a few hundred feet. This segment consists of a mix of small plaza-style commercial buildings some residential properties and is defined by colonial-style architecture. Founders Park is located on the eastern end of the Project area at the intersection of Route 16 and Main Street. This Park is the site of Mendon's first meetinghouse, dating back to the 1600's and currently serves as the location for the Mendon Historical Society Museum. Also known as the "Mother Town", The Town of Mendon is one of the older municipalities in Massachusetts, incorporated in 1667, and encompassed some of the neighboring communities.</p> <p>The Main Street district is included as part of the George Washington Presidential Trail, as indicated by a series of small signs, and is within the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. The district is not the site of a major industrial village, but rather served as the source of farm products that served the surrounding villages. A portion of the district is designated by the National Heritage Corridor as a historical walking trail that can be enhanced through a wayfinding program.</p> <p>This segment of Route 16 is currently under design review for improvements by MassDOT, with an expected construction start date in the later part of 2023 or early 2024.</p> <p>The Project area is also adjacent to Maple Street, which also serves as one of the primary roadways in the Main Street district of Mendon. The area lacks a sense of walkability and pedestrian accessibility and does not currently have a distinctive, unique feel as the historical center of Mendon for motorists traveling through along Route 16.</p> <p>A wayfinding signage program can complement the ongoing</p>



	MassDOT project and improve the area by creating a specific brand and feel as well as connecting existing assets by drawing attention to attractions and enhancing the historical character of the area.
Action Item to Consider	<p>The process for developing an improved pedestrian environment and wayfinding signage program should involve community stakeholders, public officials, and regional entities (e.g. chambers of commerce, historic commissions, etc.).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. A steering committee should be developed through the Town of Mendon. Individuals from the following groups should be considered for inclusion on the committee:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mendon Planning Department</li><li>• Mendon Highway Department</li><li>• Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission</li><li>• Mendon Economic Development Committee</li><li>• Mendon Cultural Council</li><li>• Mendon Historical Commission</li><li>• Mendon Parks &amp; Recreation</li><li>• Mendon Police Department</li><li>• Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (National Park Service)</li><li>• Local business owners</li><li>• Local residents and any neighborhood groups that represent Mendon's Main Street district</li></ul></li><li>2. The steering committee should determine a specific vision for branding and identify pedestrian needs throughout Mendon's Main Street district.</li><li>3. The steering committee should identify existing deficiencies with the pedestrian network, parking opportunities, and overall transportation network in Mendon's Main Street district. The steering committee should provide commentary on the ongoing MassDOT design of Route 16 to address any deficiencies that are identified.</li><li>4. The goal of the steering committee should develop a comprehensive plan for implementation of wayfinding signage and a branding program.</li><li>5. Procurement for the installation of wayfinding signage should be determined by the steering committee. A list of potential funding sources is provided in the next section.</li></ol>
Recommendations to Consider	A successful wayfinding program should be implemented to enhance the district's character and visibility and promote local businesses and the historical resources. The district has a rich



	<p>history and any existing historical resources such as markers, monuments, and buildings should be preserved and enhanced.</p> <p>Through this process, the district should become a more attractive place to attract visitors, enhance the walkability for pedestrians, and promote local businesses and historical assets for motorists that are traveling through the area.</p> <p>The wayfinding signage program should be supplemented with improvements to the pedestrian infrastructure and parking management to provide safe, efficient, and orderly modes of mobility for visitors to the district.</p> <p>Recommendations have been developed for the implementation of a wayfinding signage and branding program and are described below:</p> <p><b>Wayfinding and Branding Program</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Develop a brand related to the history of the Main Street district of Mendon and incorporate the “Mother Town” heritage. The Project area is the historical center of Mendon dating back to the 1600’s. Founder’s Park is the site of some of the first buildings and public gathering places in the Town and its visibility should be highlighted for all travelers through the district. The steering committee should consider incorporating the historical colonial nature of the area and its role in the industrial era of the Blackstone River Valley in the branding.</li><li>2. The steering committee should consider incorporating the segment of Maple Street between Route 16 and Main Street and the segment of Main Street between Route 16 and Maple Street into the study area. The intersection of Main Street and Maple Street serves as the southern node to the district. Features at this intersection include the Mendon Town Hall and historical markers at the intersection.</li><li>3. The steering committee should review the walking tour brochure published as part of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor documentation and incorporate the specific points of interest into the wayfinding program for pedestrians. Additional wayfinding signage should be installed at the gateways to the district to showcase the historical features and to direct motorists to appropriate parking locations to allow people to stop and enjoy the historical sites. Currently, motorists are not provided with information on the sites or where to stop and park to explore the district. The walking tour brochure is provided as an attachment for your reference.</li></ol>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. It is recommended that the Town of Mendon work with local businesses and other stakeholders to install banners along Route 16 and Main Street. These would be installed on the existing utility poles for a short-term solution. Should the Town of Mendon decide to upgrade street lighting and install decorative luminaires, banners could be placed on these.</li><li>5. A pedestrian and bicycle-oriented wayfinding signage system should be installed throughout the district on Route 16, Main Street, and Maple Street. The signage can be made from aluminum panels and should provide information related to the local historical sites, the George Washington Presidential Trail, and would enhance the existing walking tour routes being promoted by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. Specific distances on the signage can be shown in various ways such as through mileage or the approximate number of steps required for pedestrians to reach a specific destination.</li><li>6. The installation of an informational kiosk should be considered at Founders Park. The kiosk can include information related to the local businesses and recreational opportunities in the district. The kiosk may also include historical information related to both the district and the Town of Mendon. The kiosk should include branding consistent with the wayfinding signage.</li><li>7. The steering committee should review existing pedestrian facilities such as crosswalks, sidewalks, curb ramps, and street lighting. These features will require upgrades to create a truly walkable district. Decorative street lighting should be considered for the district to create a human-scale pedestrian environment. Sidewalks should be considered on both sides of the roadways throughout the districts, with crosswalks and improved geometry at intersections to create safe and visible locations for pedestrians to cross. Accessibility should be reviewed and upgraded to meet ADA requirements.</li><li>8. Future redevelopment along Route 16 or within the district should follow the guidelines recently published in the Town of Mendon Design Guidelines Handbook. Curb cuts and access to adjacent sites should be reviewed to reduce the width and improve pedestrian/vehicle conflicts.</li></ol>
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Potential Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MassDOT Complete Streets program: The Town of Mendon can update their prioritization plan every three years. Based on a review of the plan, it is eligible for updating to include wayfinding signage, pedestrian improvements, and street lighting on Town-owned roadways. Main Street and Maple Street are two roadways that should be considered to submit additional projects.</li><li>• Massachusetts Downtown Initiative</li><li>• Massachusetts Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program</li><li>• Chapter 90 funding</li><li>• MassWorks funding (in conjunction with any future development projects in Mendon)</li><li>• Local funding sources</li><li>• Local area business contributions</li></ul>
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The information contained above provides a summary of the project, the goals of the project, the issues that need to be addressed, and a list of recommendations to consider. The success of the implementation of these recommendations will be dependent upon the involvement of Town staff and the development of an appropriate steering committee that will ultimately fine-tune the recommendations and determine a prioritization plan for implementation.

Please do not hesitate to contact our office with any inquiries you may have. We look forward to continuing to assist you with your work in the Town of Mendon.

Very truly yours,

BSC Group, Inc.

Michael A. Santos, PE  
Project Manager

**Attachment:**  
**Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Town of Mendon Walking Tour brochure**

# Walking Tour

## MENDON, MA



Known by many as the "Mother Town," Mendon gave birth to communities destined to become giants in the Industrial Revolution: Uxbridge, Northbridge, Milford, Blackstone, Hopedale, Millville, and parts of Upton and Bellingham. Photo courtesy Christopher Noonan.

**Explore an historic crossroads village.**

[Intro](#)

[Walking Tour](#)

[Directions](#)



**WATER POWERED!**

[BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org](http://BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org)

# Mendon

It is hard to tell whether Mendon is better known as the mother town of all the towns that abut it, or as the town that did *not* let George Washington sleep there.

While both stories are rooted in fact (an innkeeper's wife turned the President away in 1789), there is another truth about Mendon that is more immediately apparent to the passing visitor: to visit Mendon is to glimpse a 19th-century farming community unaltered by industrialization.

Unlike many towns within the Blackstone Valley, Mendon never became the site of major industrial villages. Instead, it became an important source of farm products to an increasingly industrialized population. Perched on a hilltop at a crossroads to four major manufacturing centers, Mendon's farm production increased in the late 19th century to meet the growing demands of nearby manufacturing centers. Even today, Mendon's agrarian roots can be seen in its winding roads, tranquil pastures, and sturdy stone walls.

The second-oldest town in Worcester County, Lancaster being the oldest, Mendon began as an eight mile square tract purchased for twenty-four pounds from several Native American tribes in 1662. John Eliot, historically famous "Apostle to the Indians," was one of the witnesses of the deed.

In 1663, fifteen families, mostly from Braintree and Weymouth, undertook the arduous task of creating a new settlement in what was then considered the western frontier. Squinshapauke Plantation, as the isolated settlement was originally known, was incorporated as the town of Mendon in 1667.

Eight years later, Mendon was the first town in the Massachusetts Bay Colony to be attacked in the Native American uprising known as King Philip's War. Five residents were killed, the entire town was burned to the ground, and the community was not resettled until 1679.

Over the next 200 years, "Mother Mendon" lost the furthestmost portions of her territory when inhabitants of those distant parishes successfully petitioned the courts to incorporate as separate towns. Lacking the abundant water that powered the early mills of the Industrial Revolution, Mendon residents continued to pursue farming and cottage industries. Even the railroads passed the town by.



Christopher Noonan

Today, quiet Mendon is becoming a bedroom community as many of its pastures are filled with new housing. Cars whiz along the intersecting thoroughfares. Yet the past is everywhere evident, in the tiny triangular village, the weathered farm buildings, the sleepy cemeteries, the timeless vistas in "Mother Mendon," one can still find living vestiges of old New England.

# Walking Tour

1

## Founders' Park

Begin your tour at Founders' Park, site of Mendon's first three meeting houses, where residents held town meetings and worship services. The first meeting house, a 22-foot square structure built in 1668, was burned to the ground along with the rest of the town during King Philip's War. Metacomet, known by white settlers as King Philip, was the son of the great

Wampanoag Chief Massasoit. King Philip led his people into a desperate battle with white settlers in an attempt to prevent further encroachment onto ancestral lands.

By 1680, the war was over and Mendon had begun to rebuild. A plaque on the property tells the story of the two subsequent meeting houses built here. Also of interest on the property is a Franklin mile marker in the Northwest corner.



This plaque on Providence Street at the intersection of East Hartford Avenue, marks the beginning of King Philip's War in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.



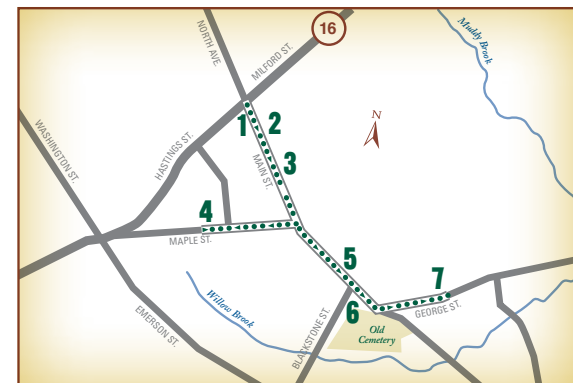
MENDON, MA

2

## Ammidon Tavern:

Looking across Main Street you will see Ammidon Tavern. Built in 1745, this building is a relatively rare Worcester County example of a Georgian public house. Famous guests included Nathan Hale but not George Washington.

Legend has it that President Washington, during his triumphal inaugural journey in 1789, had planned to stay at the tavern upon his return trip to New York. But the innkeeper's wife did not recognize the presidential party and advised them to continue down the road to the Taft Tavern in Uxbridge. There is no known account of how the president reacted to this unexpected refusal, but an existing letter from Washington reveals that he was greatly pleased by the hospitality he received from the Tafts, ancestors of future president William H. Taft.



# Walking Tour continued

3

## Main Street

A walk down Main Street enables you to imagine the town as it was in the 19th century. The Mendon Historical Society building, adjacent to Founders' Park, was built as the Mendon Bank in 1825. It subsequently served as a law office, a private school, a dwelling, and the public library. What is now the Baptist Church was built in 1830 by Congregationalists who separated from the Unitarian Church during the religious upheaval that swept New England in the 1830s.

The Adin Ballou house at 9 Main Street is named for the preacher who founded the Utopian

society at Hopedale in 1842. Ballou was a minister in Mendon's Unitarian Church for a decade before he and 44 followers withdrew from town to begin their great experiment in Practical Christian communal living. From this house he published his weekly newsletter, the *Independent Messenger*, from 1831 to 1842.

The tiny brick building at 13 Main Street was built in the 1820s as a law office. It subsequently housed town offices, a tailor's shop, and a general store. It is commonly referred to as the "record room" because it was used to store town records. As you approach Memorial Square, note the long two-story structure to your right. This 1830s commercial building has housed

a number of general stores where residents have met for generations to discuss news of the day.

4

## Unitarian Church

Turn right on Maple Street and walk one block to the Unitarian Church, the oldest church building in town. Designed by master builder Elias Carter in 1820, it is a classic example of early 19th-century church architecture. The spire, rising 130 feet, was damaged by fire caused by lightning in 1936 and was duly replaced.

Turn back along Maple Street and return to Main Street, noting the modest 19th century houses that form the nucleus of the town. Holding pride of place in the town center is Memorial Square — dedicated to Mendon's sons and daughters who served their country in times of war.



Lake Nipmuc Park was a popular resort for many years. Its theater drew top-notch vaudeville acts and its ballroom attracted the best in the musical world. Transportation to the park was originally by trolley from Milford and from Uxbridge. On weekends, the cars ran about every 15 minutes.



Nipmuc Park employees around the turn of the century.

# Walking Tour continued

## 5 George House

Looking south down Main Street, you will see a grand Federal style house on the left side of the street. It was built in 1810 by the George family, a notable family of lawyers, town officers, farmers, boot and shoe manufacturers, and, in the late 19th century, bottlers of Miscoe Spring Water. This is the most architecturally sophisticated Federal house in town. The property presents a memorable vignette of a prosperous early 19th-century farm, with its old stone walls, period slat-work fencing, farm buildings of various vintages, old trees, and open fields.

Return to your car and drive to the Old Cemetery. At Memorial Square, continue down Main Street past the George House. The Old Cemetery will be on your right.

## 6 Old Cemetery

Established in 1669, the Old Cemetery contains the graves of 40 Revolutionary War soldiers. Many of the older headstones, carved with such traditional mourning symbols as the cherub or urn and willow, have been worn down by years of weathering. The oldest graves were marked with simple fieldstone.

*Turn down George Street, directly across from the cemetery, to visit two other old cemeteries.*

## 7 George Street

A short drive down George Street brings you to two old burial grounds. On the right is the site of Mendon's first Friends Meeting House and Quaker Cemetery. Note the many weathered fieldstone markers. Worship services were held here regularly from 1729 to 1841, when they were discontinued by the Smithfield Monthly Meeting. The building was sold in 1850 to Colonel Israel Plummer of Northbridge, who dismantled it and used its timbers to construct a train depot near his granite quarry and store in Whitinsville. Across the street is the George Cemetery, an excellent example of a family burial ground. Its orderly plantings and marker arrangement are typical of the classical orientation of formal landscaping in the early 1800s. Burials took place there from the 1820s to the 1980s. The cemetery was formerly the site of Mendon's first school house, built in 1709.



Many people enjoy an afternoon in the Old Cemetery because of its interesting art and epitaphs such as this one:  
*My children dear, this place draw near, a mother's grave to see.  
Not long ago I was with you, and soon you'll be with me.*



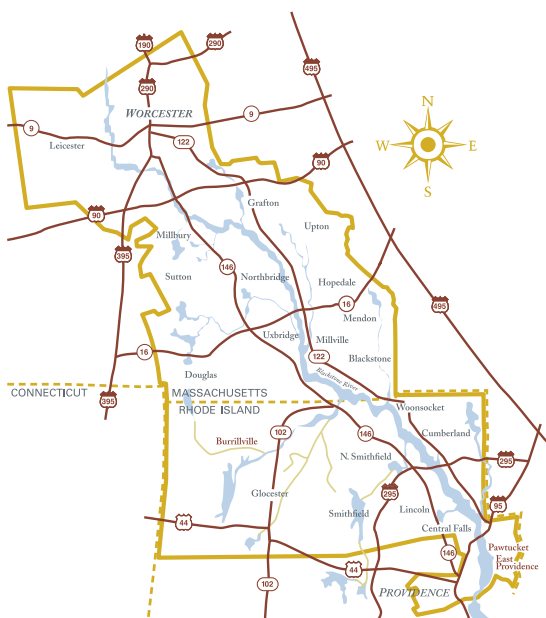
This 1830s commercial block once housed the town's post office.



The mile stone on Founders' Park marks 37 miles from Boston. It was erected in 1772, during Benjamin Franklin's administration as Postmaster General for the Colonies. Franklin had the markers erected at varying intervals on all post roads from Boston to Philadelphia. Route 16 was at that time known as the Middle Post Road, and was the major route from Boston to Hartford and New Haven.

# Directions

Mendon is located just off Route 16. To get there from Route 146, follow Route 16 East through Uxbridge to Mendon, approximately six miles. Turn right at the traffic lights onto Main Street and park at Founders' Park. From Route 495, take Exit 20 for Milford/Rt.85. Follow Rt. 85 South to Rt. 16. Follow Route 16 West past Hopedale to Mendon and turn left at the traffic lights and proceed to 1 Main Street, Mendon.



## Along the Way

- Free parking is on Main Street along Founders' Park.
- Refreshments are available in the town center.
- Good resting areas are Founders' Park and the cemeteries on the tour.
- For information about events, restaurants, and lodging in the Valley, call the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce at 508-234-9090 or visit [www.blackstonerivervalley.com](http://www.blackstonerivervalley.com).
- Be sure to visit the Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park and River Bend Farm Visitor Center—just five miles away at 287 Oak Street in historic Uxbridge, MA. Canal tow path walk, canoe launch sites, hiking trails, free maps, brochures, interpretive tours, and exhibits with videos, and more. Free parking and free admission. Open seven days. 508-278-7604.
- Visit a historic working mill museum, just 25 miles south of Hopedale at Exit 28 on Interstate Route 95—Slater Mill Historic Site, Pawtucket, RI. Free parking. Restrooms. For hours of operation and admission prices, please visit [www.slatermill.org](http://www.slatermill.org) or call 401-725-8636.
- To take a riverboat excursion—spring, summer, or fall—call for the schedule for The Explorer, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. 401-724-1500.

- For further information consult *Mendon, Massachusetts, 1667-1967 - Mother of Municipalities*, written by Peter Hackett for the Mendon Tercentenary Celebration, or call the town hall at 508-473-1085.

**Congress established the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission in 1986, recognizing the national significance of the region between Providence, RI and Worcester, MA—the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor is an affiliated area of the National Park Service.**



**This brochure was developed under the direction of The Rhode Island Historical Society in partnership with the Heritage Corridor Commission.**

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