



# Rapid Recovery Plan

2021

New Bedford



# Acknowledgments



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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.

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

Downtown New Bedford Inc.

Elissa Paquette, President

The New Bedford Whaling Museum

Amanda McMullen, President/CEO

Zeiterion Theatre

Rosemary Gill, Executive Director

New Bedford Whaling National  
Historical Park

Jennifer Smith, Superintendent

UMass Dartmouth College of Visual  
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Lawrence Jenkins, Dean

AHA! (Art, History, Architecture)

Candace Lee Heald, Director

Co-Creative Center

Dena Haden, Director



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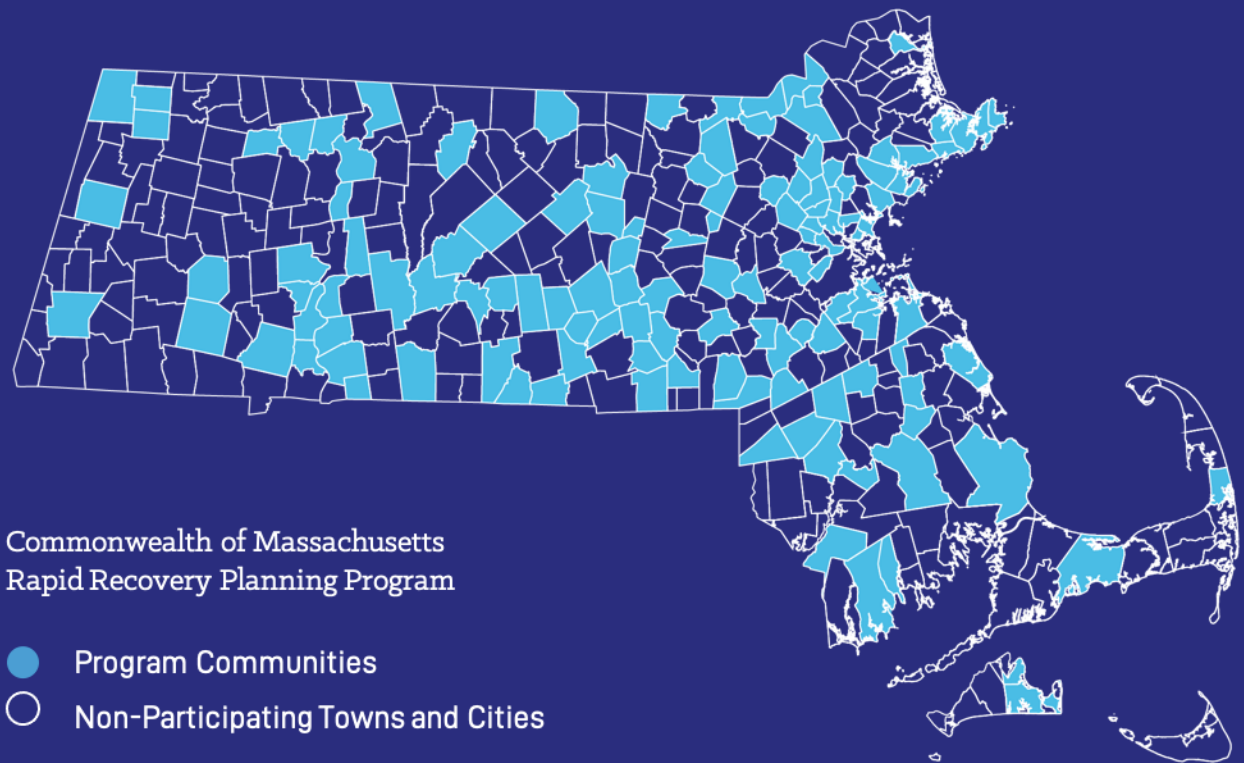
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## 125 communities participated in the Rapid Recovery Plan Program

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.



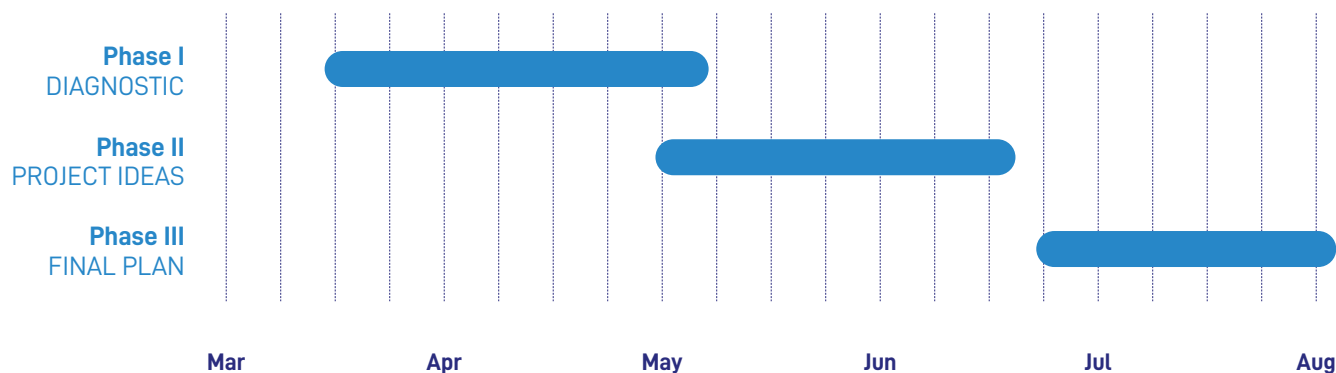
# Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program

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 I - Diagnostic, Phase II - Project Recommendations, Phase III - Plan.



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

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



## Rapid Recovery Plan Diagnostic Framework



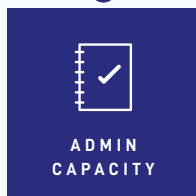
Who are the customers of businesses in the Study Area?



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



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



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

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



Public Realm



Private Realm



Tenant Mix



Revenue & Sales



Admin Capacity



Cultural/Arts



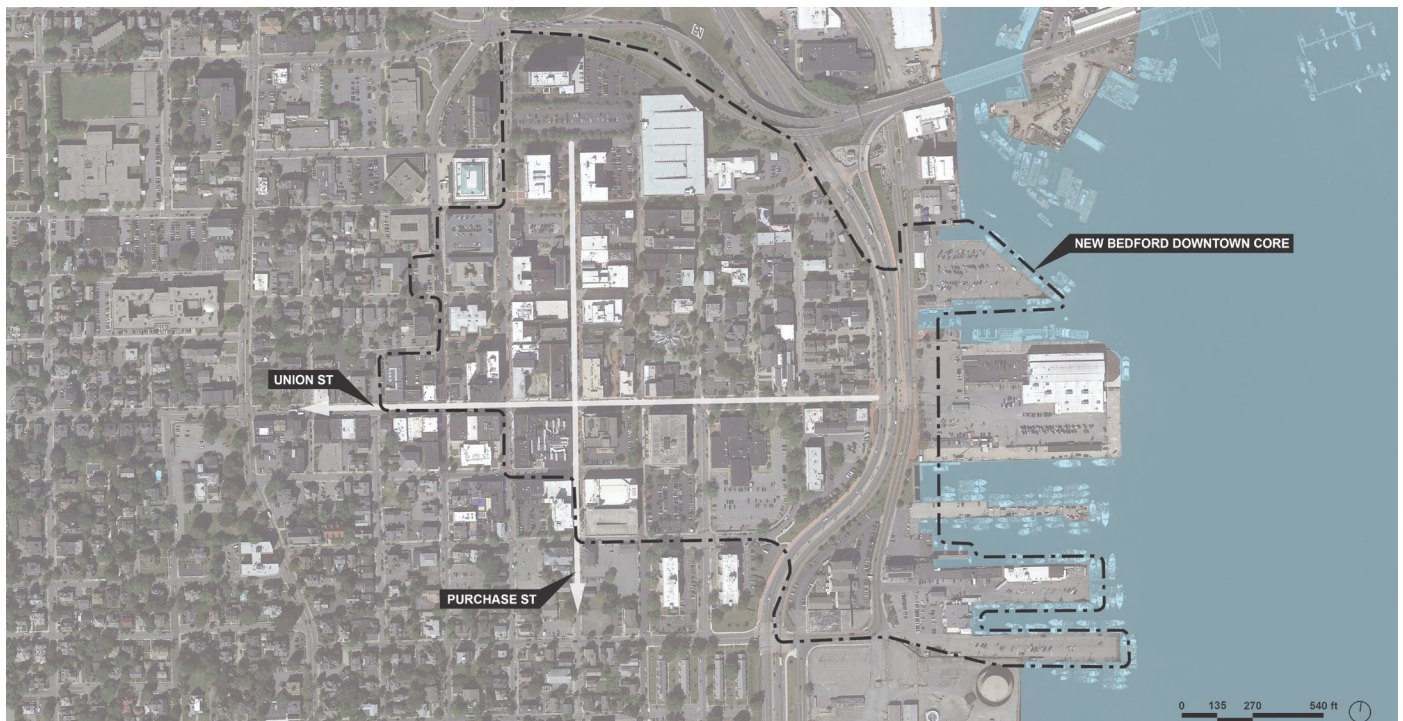
Other

# Executive Summary

## A City Full of Character

With the assistance of the Local Rapid Recovery Plan (LRRP) Program, the City of New Bedford's goal is to re-engage a regional audience to return to downtown for dining, shopping, and arts and culture-based programming. The primary focus of the team was on the retention of the high-quality businesses already in place through business assistance programs and reactivating the public realm. The second was to attract new businesses to fill vacancies in the downtown. The city developed flexible and streamlined policies for permitting which the team identified an opportunity to use as a marketing tool for business retention, adaptation, and recruitment.

By incorporating the feedback from stakeholders, the community, and a review of data collected, the LRRP Program team designed projects which will provide an immediate boost to businesses, organizations, and performance venues that have suffered revenue loss during the pandemic. The project strategies showcase Downtown New Bedford as a safe and vibrant district through a combination of physical placemaking, outdoor arts and cultural programming, district marketing, and technical assistance programs to businesses.



**Study Area: Downtown New Bedford**  
**Source: WGI**



# Key Findings



## Downtown New Bedford has a diverse cultural scene attracting an active local customer base and reaching surrounding communities.

Downtown New Bedford (DNB) enjoys a loyal customer base that shops local and supports its downtown business environment. There is a wealth of organizations informing the community about organized downtown events and festivals.

There is greater opportunity for Downtown New Bedford to inform outside visitors about the businesses active in the community, their promotions, evening events, and all the events that are already being well organized and taking place on a regular basis. A mid to long term goal for the community to build back stronger after the pandemic is to expand its customer base to attract neighboring communities. This is an endeavor that the Zeiterion Theater and the Whaling Museum do well and perhaps in pairing up downtown businesses with the larger events led by those two larger institutions anchoring downtown, there is a path already shaped to expand Downtown New Bedford's customer base.



## New Bedford's Downtown Core features well-maintained sidewalks and roadbeds but lacks seating and sidewalk activity.

Overall, Downtown New Bedford enjoys well-maintained streets and sidewalks. The Downtown Core area consists of two different roadbed styles - those in the Historic District feature cobble stone roadbeds and flagstone sidewalks, while the rest of the downtown area features newer infrastructure elements such as concrete roadbeds and concrete or brick sidewalks. This contrast adds to the charm and showcases the layered history of Downtown New Bedford.

The downtown's sidewalks are generally narrow, however where possible, activating the sidewalks with the placement of physical pedestrian amenities such as awnings and sidewalk seating should be explored and could be further offset by creating an activated central downtown living space featuring areas for seating and/or large gatherings.



## Downtown New Bedford is anchored by cultural and entertainment venues and supported by a variety of small local businesses.

The downtown enjoys the presence and programming put out by several significant cultural and entertainment venues - the New Bedford Whaling Museum, located in the New Bedford Whaling National Historic Park, and the Zeiterion Theater. All three institutions attract not only regional, but national and international visitors to the downtown.

The Whaling Museum finds itself in a prominent location at the entrance to downtown from the waterfront area. It represents the historical culture of New Bedford and brings great pride to the residents of the city. The museum maintained its staff and programming by pivoting its activities online during the pandemic. Amanda McMullen, President and CEO of the Whaling Museum, expressed that the museum is hopeful to pick up where it left off before the pandemic.

The Whaling Museum had taken part in monthly evening events to activate downtown by opening its doors to visitors for a smaller fee and to members for free to enjoy an evening of dancing and mingling. Downtown business owners have expressed what a great asset these events are to attract foot traffic for downtown businesses and the Whaling Museum has expressed a desire to continue to participate in such events in the future.

Due to the nature of a performing arts venue, the Zeiterion Theater had a more difficult time navigating business throughout the pandemic. It pivoted some of its programming online, and has hosted weekly concerts in the downtown's Custom House Square Park, but the organization has a longer road to recovery post pandemic.

Supporting the Zeiterion Theater is key to Downtown Recovery, given that evening events provide significant foot traffic for downtown businesses. The Zeiterion also supports downtown life by organizing festivals that draw visitors from neighboring communities - such as the 2-day Folk Festival.

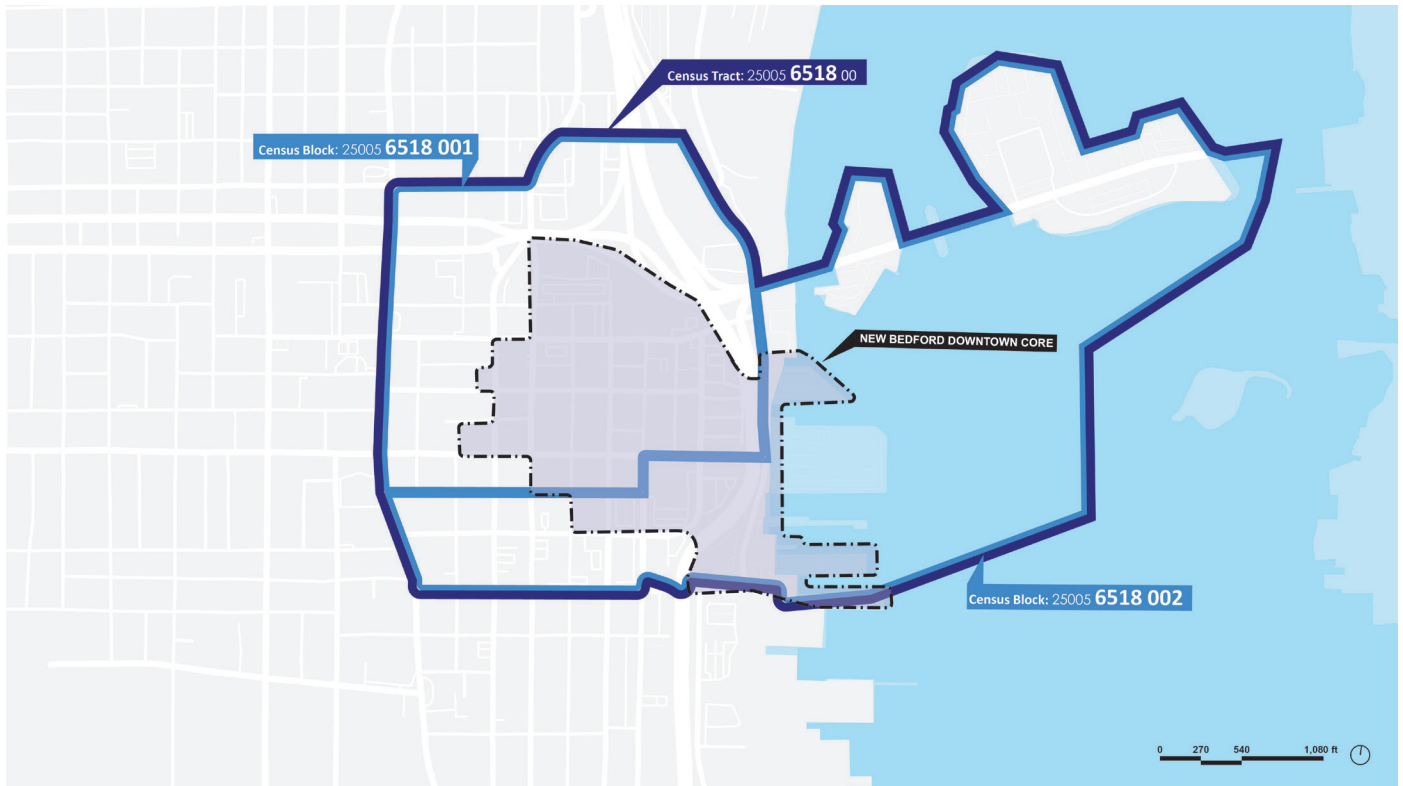


## New Bedford has a wealth of well-organized groups to oversee recovery efforts.

Established businesses and art organizations are active throughout the community. These include Downtown New Bedford Inc. (DNBinc) - a non-profit organization overseeing small business affairs and managing much of the downtown's branding strategy. However, DNBinc is a small organization that has seen its funding diminished significantly due to the pandemic, straining efforts to get back to full capacity after the pandemic.

There is a wealth of activities and festivals happening downtown on a monthly basis - among these the most popular is AHA! (Arts, History, and Architecture!) Night. Locals are well informed about events, and although the City's Tourism and Marketing Department hosts a web-based event calendar, there exists a perception that there is no central calendar to keep the outside public informed as to the events happening downtown. A more prominent web and social media presence may address this challenge.

Apart from festival nights, the downtown appears quiet during the weekdays, particularly in the evenings, giving visitors a sense that it is unwelcoming to spend time downtown after daylight hours.



**Map: Census Tracts Studies**  
**Source: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profile**



## Local and Out-of-Town Customer Bases

### LOCAL CUSTOMER BASE

The local customer base is well informed about the day to day happenings downtown, either by word of mouth or through social media channels. While locals find themselves downtown for special events and festivals, the perception is that there is not a lot to do downtown on a consistent basis. Having weekly programming to bring more foot traffic downtown has been a major request from the local customer base, to engage with downtown more often.

Anecdotally, Downtown New Bedford had been perceived as unsafe or unclean by out-of-towners. However, this negative perception is not supported by the local customer base. Patrons noted feeling safe while walking downtown, even during early evening outings, but that it did feel empty in the evenings - presumably due to a lack of programming.

### OUT OF TOWN CUSTOMER BASE

The out of town customer base finds itself downtown during large festivals, shopping events or long holiday weekends. Casual visitors stop downtown for lunch or a quick walk on the way to catch a ferry at the state

pier, and limit their visits to the historical core area - rarely venturing to more local oriented shops along Purchase Street.

When out of town customers do venture to restaurants and shops closer to the downtown center core it is due to programmed events such as the Shop Small Crawl or the Folk Festival.

Who shops downtown?

Maybe 50% of patrons are local, most people stop by on the way to Martha's Vineyard.

Anecdotal description of downtown's customer base - by Ramon Silva, NBECD. April 28, 2021.

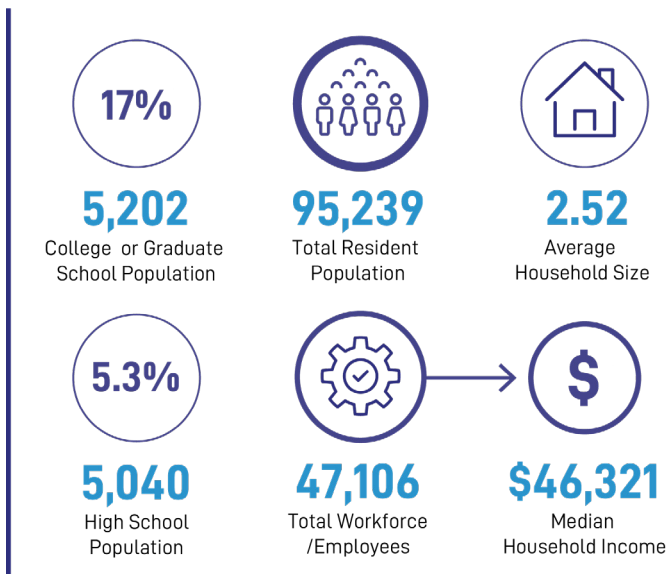


## Local Population Overview

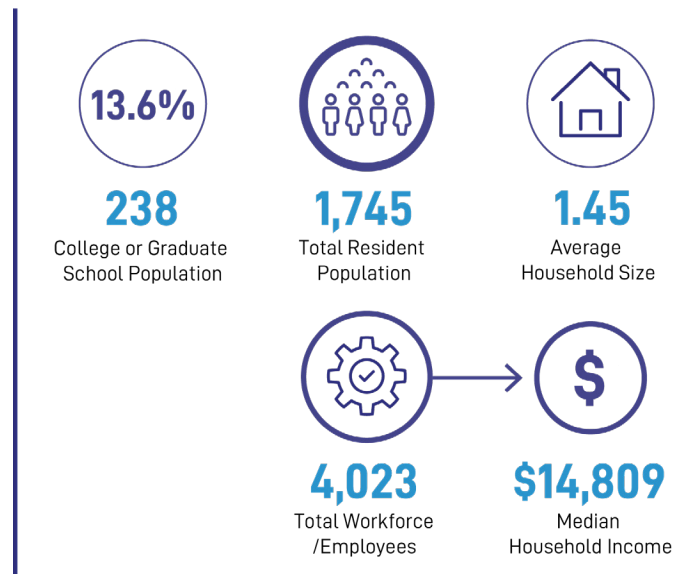
### NEW BEDFORD VS DOWNTOWN NEW BEDFORD

Residents of Downtown New Bedford (DNB) represent 1.83% of the total New Bedford population. In a snapshot, residents living in DNB are significantly older than in the rest of the city and live in smaller

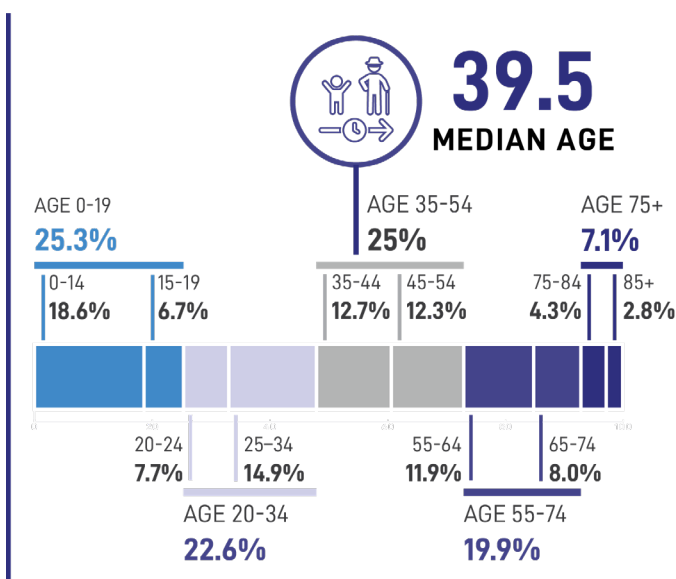
household compositions. In contrast with its small residential population, downtown employees represent 8.5% of New Bedford's total workforce and their median earnings are approximately \$31,000 less than that of the overall New Bedford population.



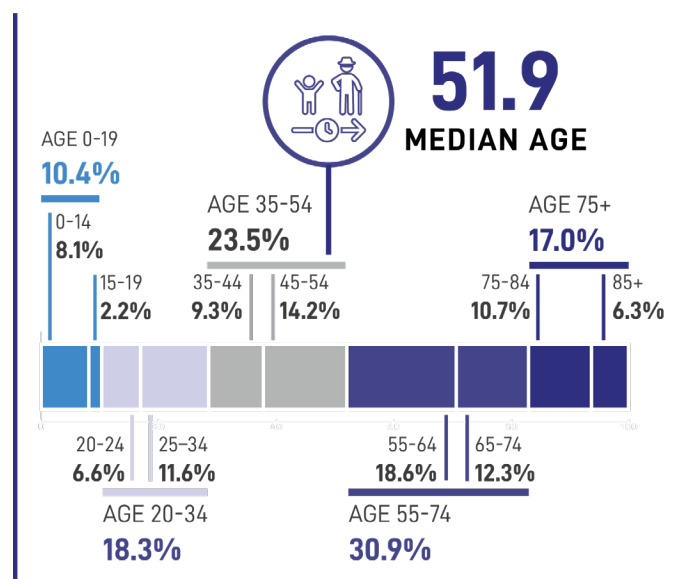
*The City of New Bedford, population overview.  
Source: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profile.*



*Downtown New Bedford, population overview.  
Source: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profile.*



*The City of New Bedford, population age distribution.  
Source: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profile.*



*Downtown New Bedford, population age distribution.  
Source: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profile.*

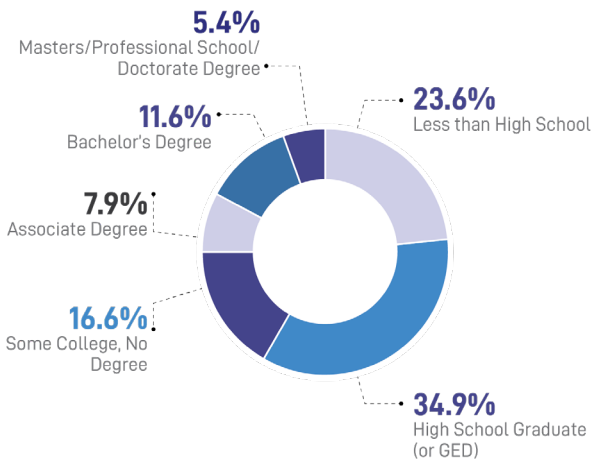




## Local Population Overview, cont.

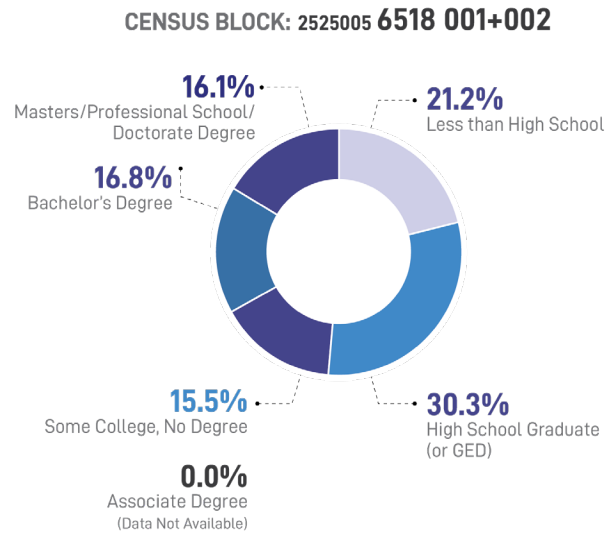
### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Residents of DNB are twice as likely (32.9%) to have a college degree or higher level of educational attainment than New Bedford as a city (17.0%).



### RACE AND ETHNICITY

DNB residents have a similar racial and ethnic composition as that of the rest of the city.

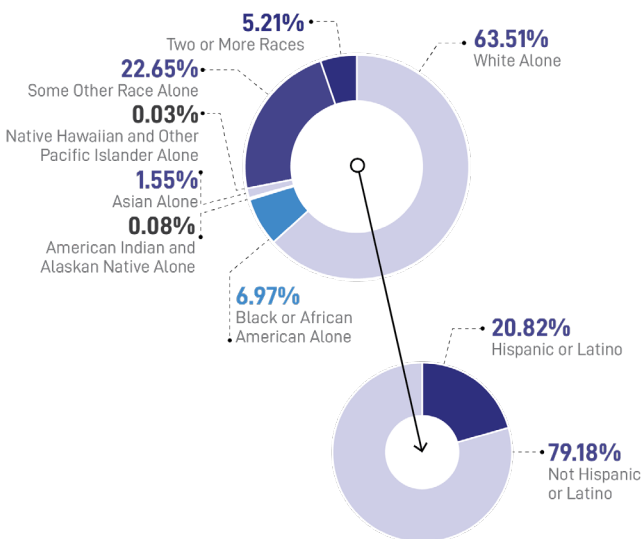


*New Bedford, educational attainment.*

*Source: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profile.*

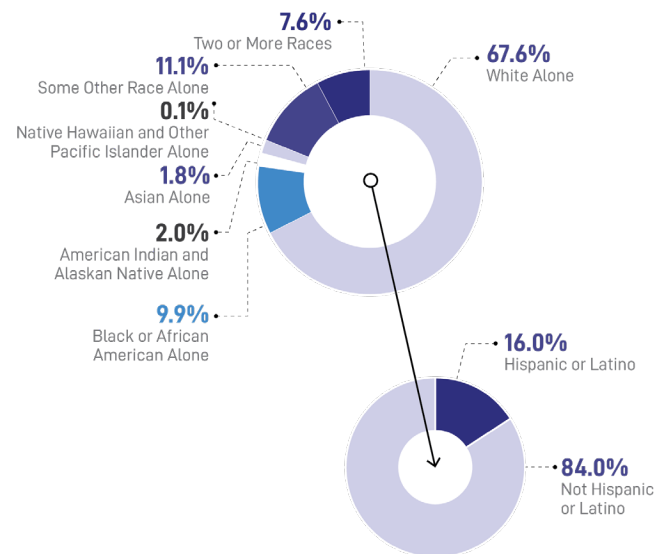
*Downtown New Bedford, educational attainment.*

*Source: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profile.*



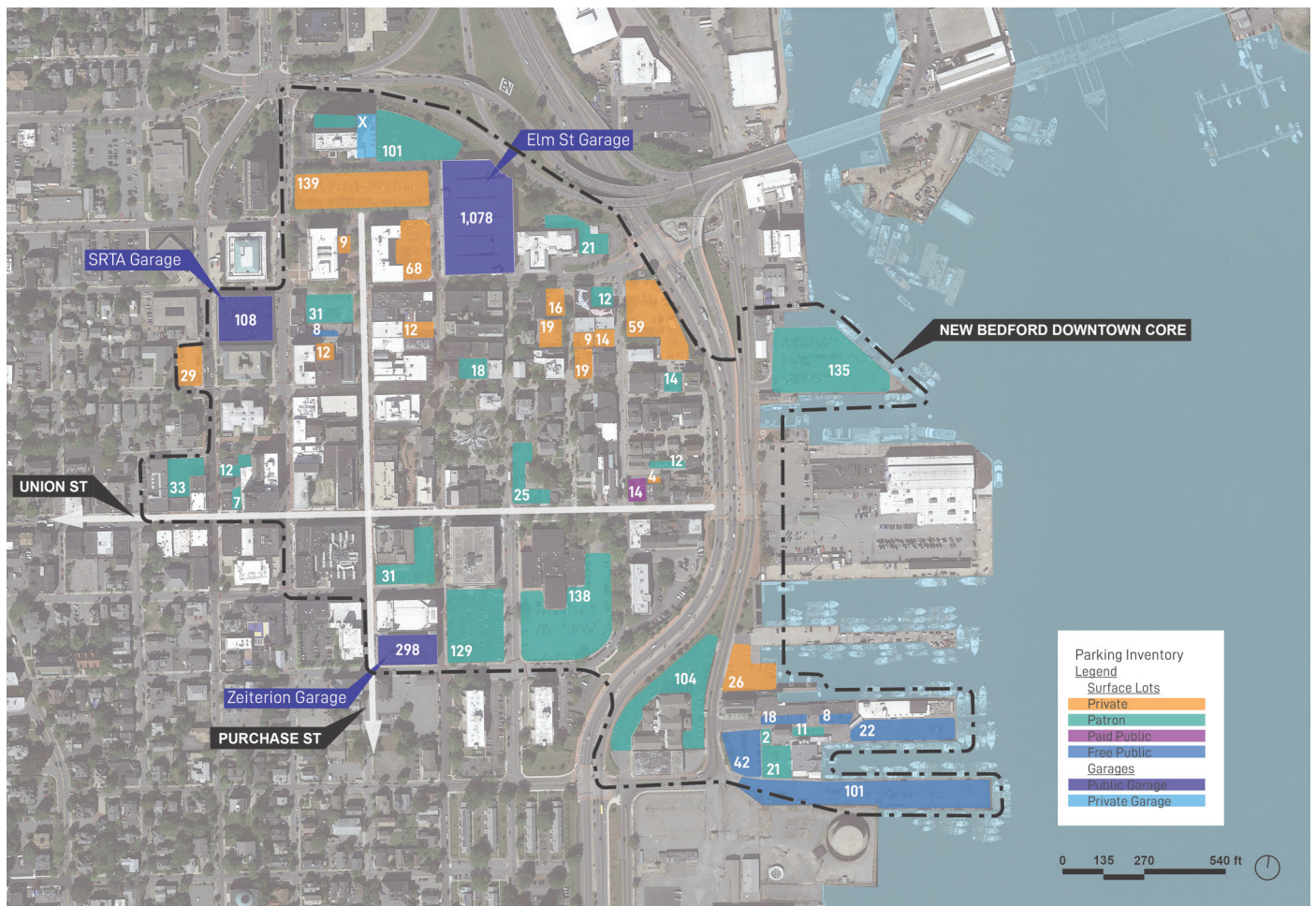
*New Bedford, racial and ethnic composition.*

*Source: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profile.*



*Downtown New Bedford, racial and ethnic composition.*

*Source: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profile.*



**Map: Surface Parking Lots and Structured Garages in Downtown New Bedford.**  
**Source: Aerial Survey, confirmed during site visit in April 2021.**



Downtown New Bedford has adequate parking, but finding it is a key issue.

#### PARKING STUDY: RECAP

In 2018, New Bedford commissioned a study to understand the issues related to accessibility and parking in Downtown New Bedford. The study found that there are conflicting views regarding the public's perception of parking - some stakeholders felt that parking was adequate and easily managed, while others expressed that parking was such an inconvenience that it deterred people from venturing downtown.

#### RESERVED VS. AVAILABLE PARKING

There are 1,484 spaces publicly available in structured parking garages within the Downtown Core area. 910 (61.3%) spaces are sold on a per month basis, leaving 574 (38.7%) spaces available to other daily visitors to be used per hour or day.

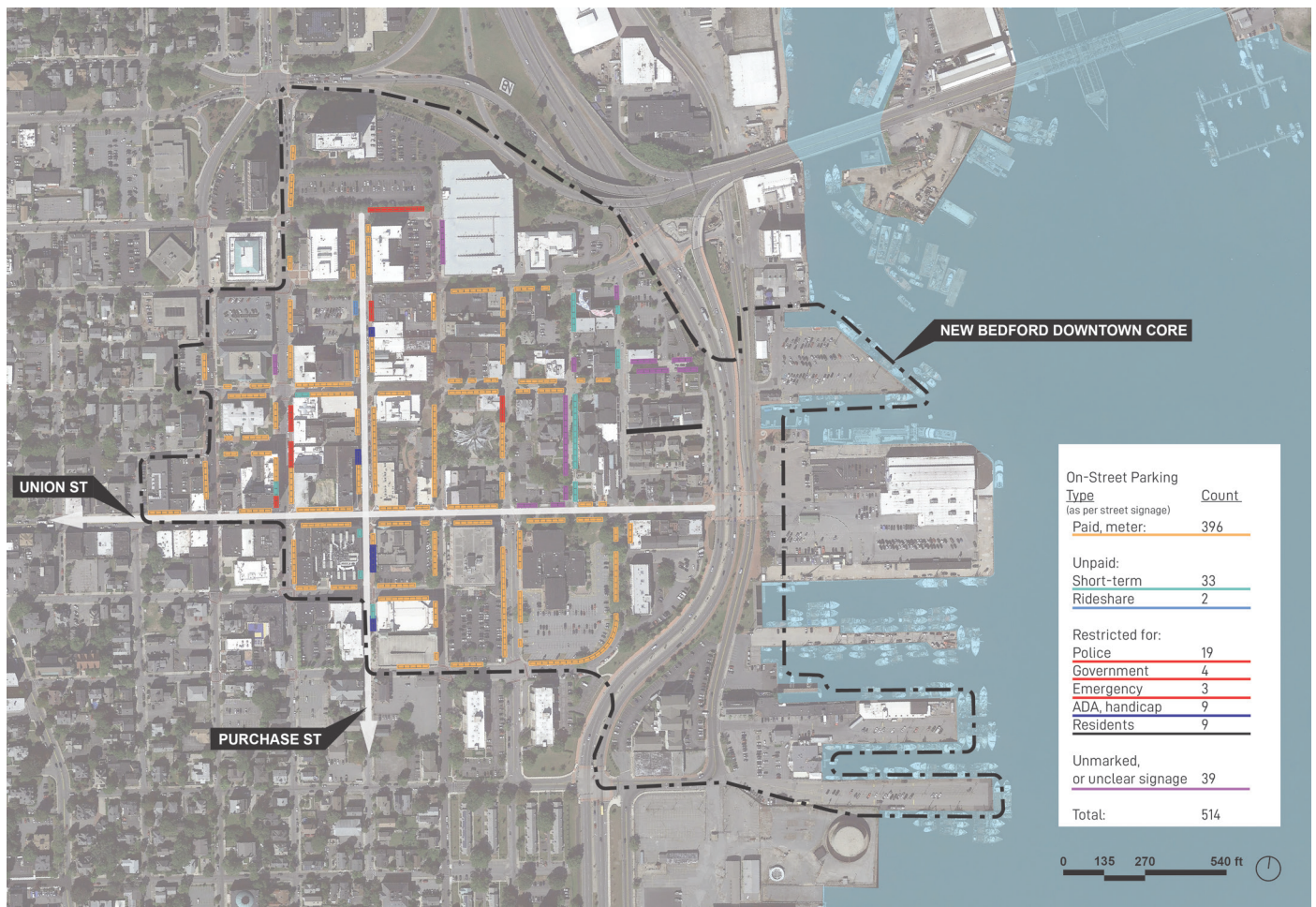
The ratio of reserved parking as compared to the number of parking spaces opened for visitors may contribute to the perception that parking is lacking in the downtown core.

#### PARKING IN SURFACE LOTS

There are 871 spaces in surface lots available to visitors in the downtown core. 199 additional spaces may be found in free public lots mainly in the wharf areas. Surface parking lots represent 42.3% of the total parking available in downtown New Bedford.

Most parking lots are designated for patron use only - leaving short term visitors to park on the street or in one of the two city-owned structured parking garages opened to the public.





Map: On-street Parking in Downtown New Bedford.  
Source: Aerial Survey, confirmed during site visit in April 2021.



## On-street parking

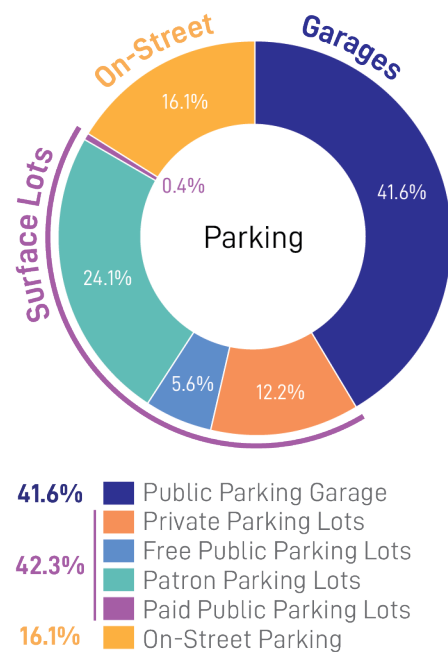
### ON-STREET VS. GARAGES

While those who visit for longer periods of time (during weekend trips, for events, or festivals) know to use the parking garages, on-street parking is the go-to option for daily visitors. On-street parking only represents 16.1% of the total parking available in DNB.

While the city reviewed the parking time limits in response to the 2018 parking study, the public is still expressing frustration at how times are managed:

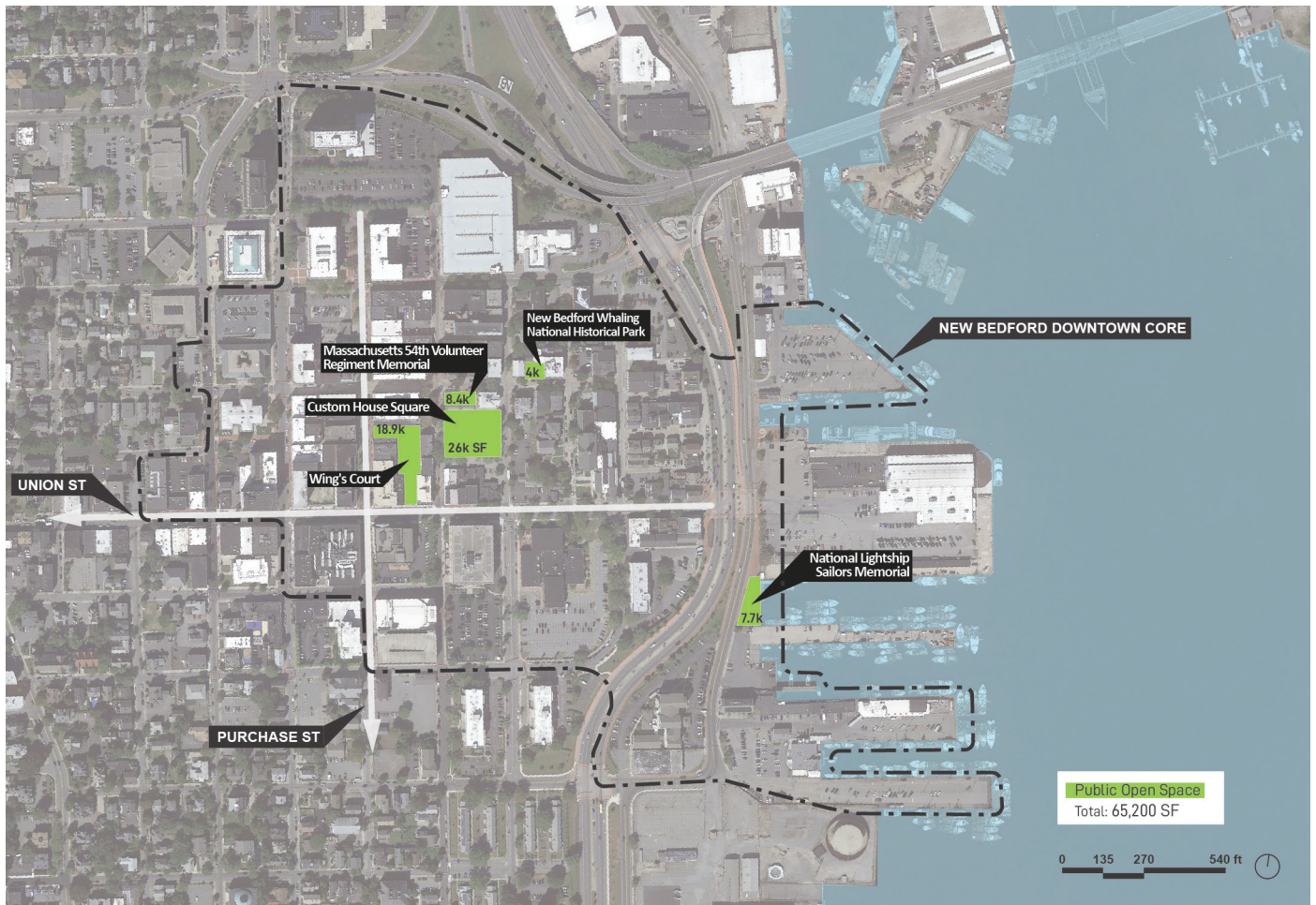
"People park and stay for hours in front of a business and go to the restaurants. Meanwhile, the clients that come to the business don't have parking. It is supposed to be one hour and half hour parking and sometimes there are cars out there all day."

- Anecdote from community meeting held June 22nd, 2021.



Parking Snapshot, parking distribution in Downtown New Bedford.  
Source: Aerial Survey, confirmed during site visit in April 2021.





**Map: Public Open Space Area**

*Source: Aerial Survey, confirmed during site visit in April 2021.*



## The Character of the Public Open Spaces

DNB has two major Public Open spaces: Custom House Square and Wing's Court.

### CUSTOM HOUSE SQUARE

Custom House Square is a central open space in DNB that has the potential to stitch together the western downtown commercial core, including restaurants and small shops along Purchase Street, and the eastern edge of downtown, which holds the Whaling Museum, the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, and connects to the waterfront.

Custom House Square was previously a surface parking lot, that was converted into a plaza within the last 10 years. When the square served as a parking lot, the city used its flat surface for large events. In its current state, Custom Square lacks the surface area to support a weekend market or any other such large gathering.

Stakeholders have noted during interviews that the green mounds and lack of seating or large gathering area, leave the square largely unattended.

### WING'S COURT

Wing's Court has had incremental improvements over the last decade to better serve as a gathering spot for small programming events and a place to simply enjoy lunch. The Court is lined by the backs of the businesses that face Purchase Street along its western edge and by largely empty properties facing Acushnet Avenue on its eastern edge. Several businesses do have auxillary entrances into the Court and provide tables and chairs for patrons.

Recently, the community has been trying to increase the activity in Wing's Court by supporting murals, sculptures, and seating. However, the inconsistent schedule and lack of activity surrounding it, keep it from being the living room space that DNB needs.



## Highlights from the Physical Environment

### SIDEWALK GRADE: A

- More than 75% of the sidewalks in the study area are cleaned and well maintained.
- Issues with accessibility exist, mainly in areas where historical features, such as cobble stones, have been in place for a while or where old-growth trees have conflicted with the sidewalk.

### ROADBED AND CROSSWALK GRADE: B

- Roads are designed primarily to move motor vehicles and curbside priority is given to car parking.
- Roadbed is well-maintained throughout the study area.
- Where cobblestone roadbed exists, the sidewalks provide for an accessible, even path.

### STREET TREES AND BENCHES GRADE: B

- While there are street trees throughout most of the study area, there is limited availability of benches.

### WAYFINDING / SIGNAGE GRADE: C

- Finding major gathering places such as Wing's Court or Custom Square is difficult unless one is familiar with the area.
- There is no wayfinding to direct visitors from the waterfront to the downtown area businesses, or from the National Park to restaurants along Purchase Street.

### LIGHTING GRADE: C

- Street lighting along the primary street in the study area supports pedestrian visibility and safety.
- There is limited lighting strategies used along some major public spaces and corridors, limiting a visitor's ability to feel safe during the evenings.
- Feedback from the community suggests people feel unsafe to visit the study area at night.

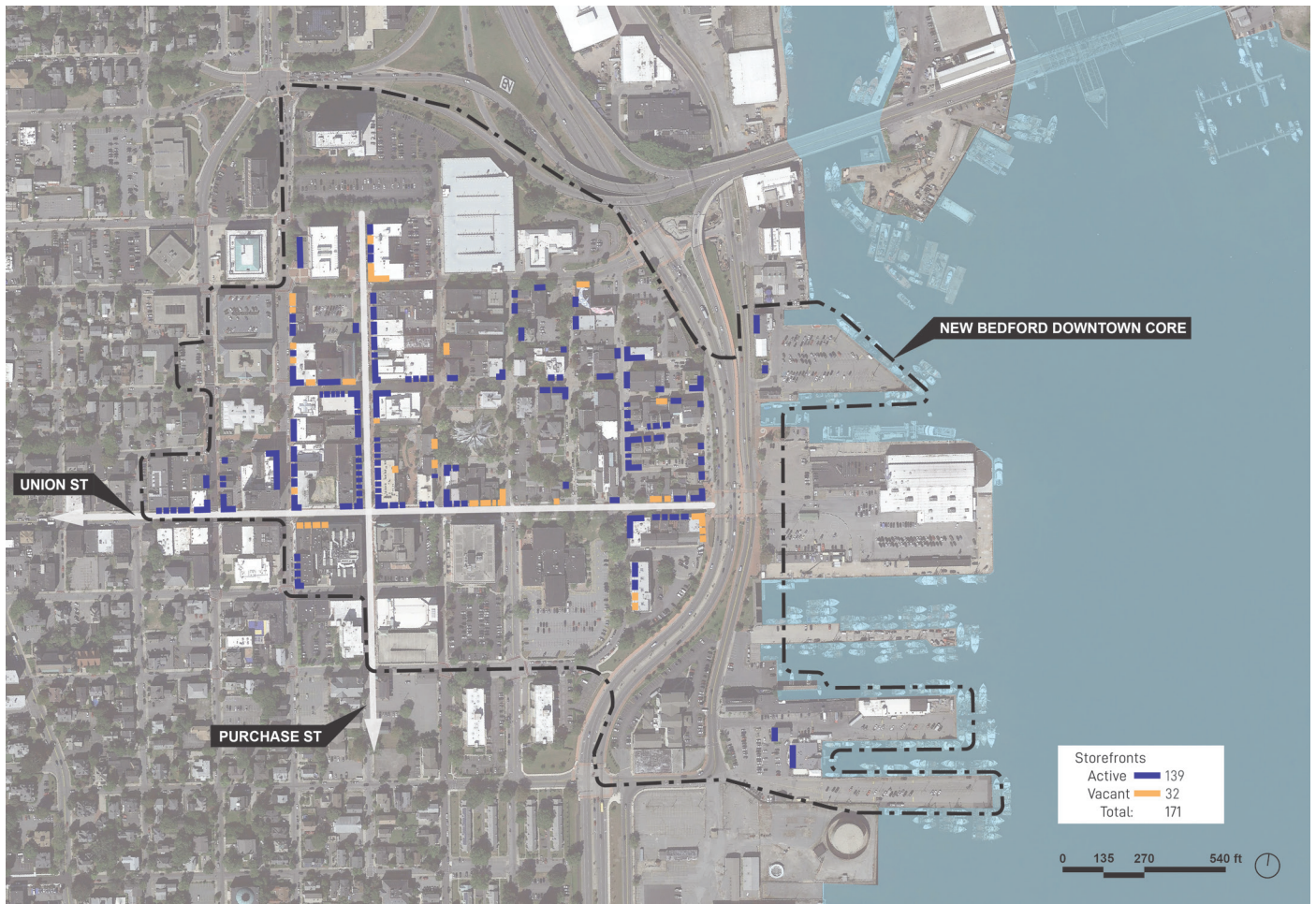


*Cobblestone roadbed, North Water Street.  
Photo: WGI, April 2021.*



*Wing's Court, looking south.  
Photo: WGI, April 2021.*





**Map: Storefronts**

*Source: Aerial Survey, confirmed during site visit in April 2021.*



## Highlights from the Private Realm's Physical Environment

Storefronts in DNB are generally well maintained. Businesses within the Historic District are housed in older historic structures that have been restored and well kept - recently painted, cleaned windows, and effective signage and branding.

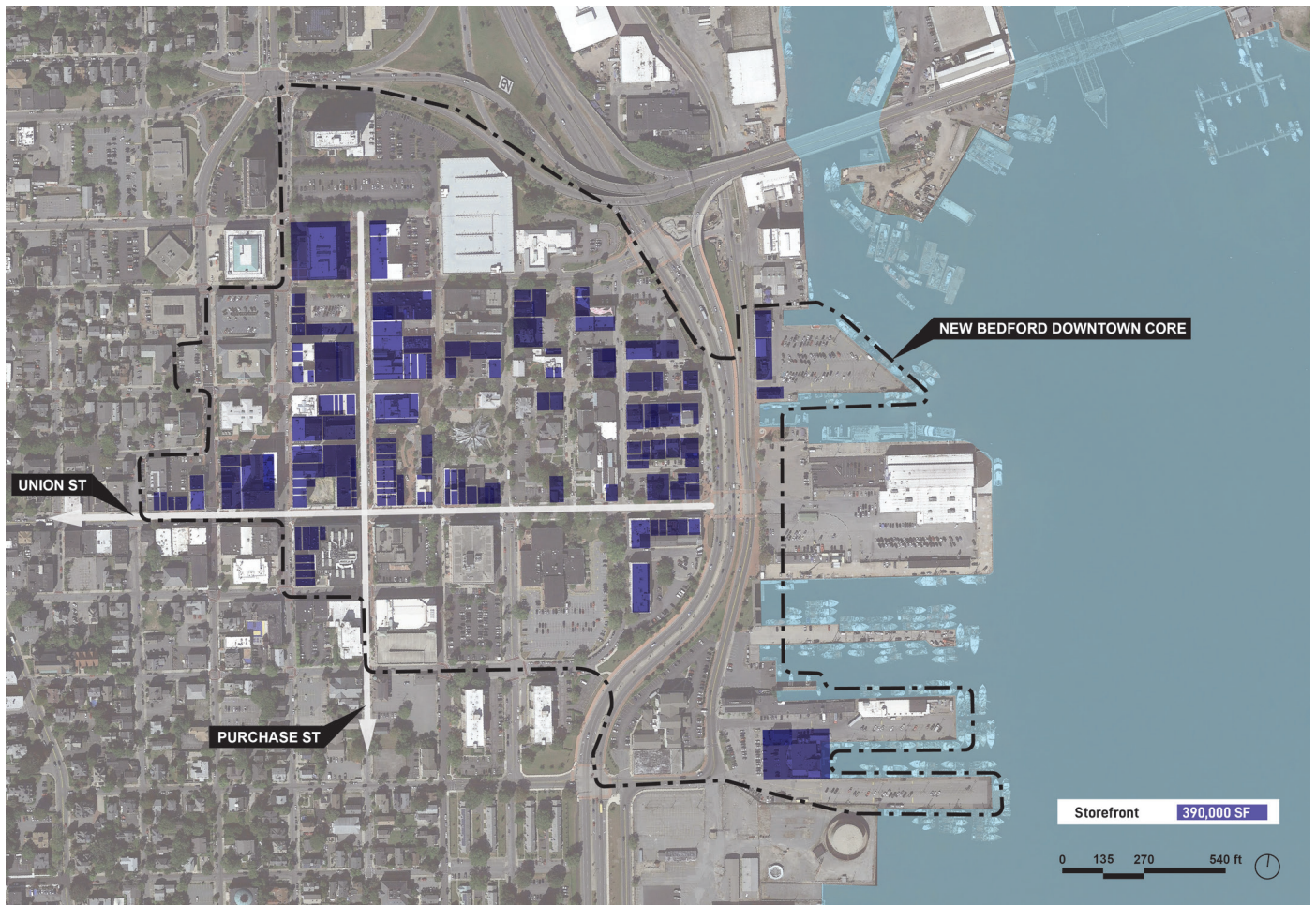
Businesses in the commercial core, along Purchase Street, occupy more contemporary structures with slightly bigger storefronts providing slightly more transparency.

Both architectural styles display limited transparency and relatively small signage. Awnings and retail spillage are limited throughout the DNB.



**Green Bean, at the corner of Purchase St and Union St.**  
*Photo: WGI, April 2021.*





**Map: Storefronts**

*Source: Aerial Survey, confirmed during site visit in April 2021.*



## Highlights from the Private Realm's Physical Environment, cont.

### FACADE GRADE: A

- Storefronts are well-maintained throughout the Downtown Core.
- Materials are durable, and facades have been painted recently.
- There are a few facades in the Downtown Core that require significant structural upgrades - such as the buildings in the corner of Pleasant Street and Elm Street.



**Bristol Community College Coffee Shop.**  
*Photo: WGI, April 2021.*



## Highlights from the Private Realm's Physical Environment, cont.

### WINDOW GRADE: B

- Storefronts along commercial corridors, such as Purchase Street or Pleasant Street, display transparencies of at least 70%. Storefronts within the Historic District display smaller punched openings, windowsills, and richer textures.
- Approximately 18% of storefronts are boarded up and vacant and several others which are occupied display limited transparency.

### LIGHTING GRADE: B

- About 50% of the storefronts have lighting that helps to illuminate the sidewalks in the evenings.
- Illumination is highly dependent on streetlamps in the Public Realm.

### AWNING GRADE: C

- About 50% of the Businesses along Purchase Street have retractable awnings that are well maintained.
- Businesses along Union Street generally do not display retractable awnings.
- More than 25% of the properties in the study area do not have awnings.

### OUTDOOR DISPLAY/DINING GRADE: C

- While New Bedford started a parklet program in response to the pandemic to provide more outdoor dining along major commercial corridors (such as Purchase Street), outdoor dining throughout the study area is very limited.
- Outdoor display and spillovers are rare throughout the Downtown Core area. Displays are typically limited to window decorations.

### SIGNAGE GRADE: A

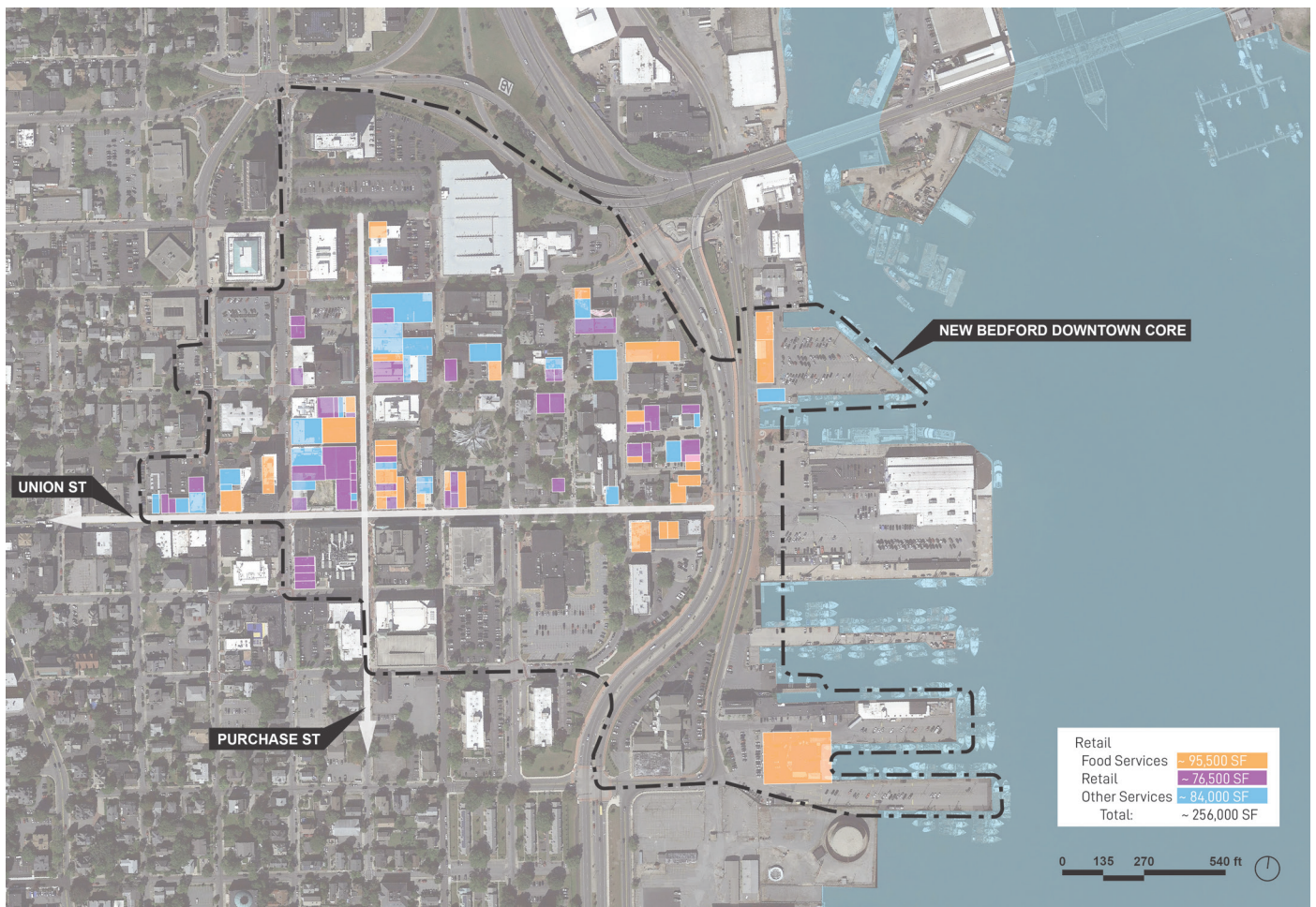
- Business information is typically displayed through window decals (such as Calico) and small banners pedestrians can see when walking along the sidewalk (such as Sugar Plum Sweets banner).



*Outdoor seating at Greasy, Purchase Street.  
Photo: WGI, April 2021.*



*No Problemo, Purchase Street.  
Photo: WGI, April 2021.*



Map: Ground Retail Space

Source: New Bedford Parcel Information - District Data Base

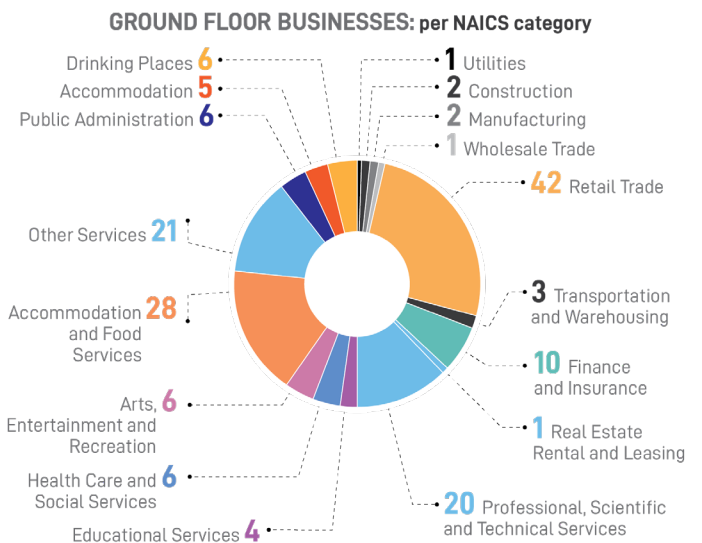


## Retail Environment

DNB has two core activity zones: the locally oriented commerce along Purchase and Pleasant Streets, and the tourist oriented businesses closer to the waterfront along North Water and Centre Streets.

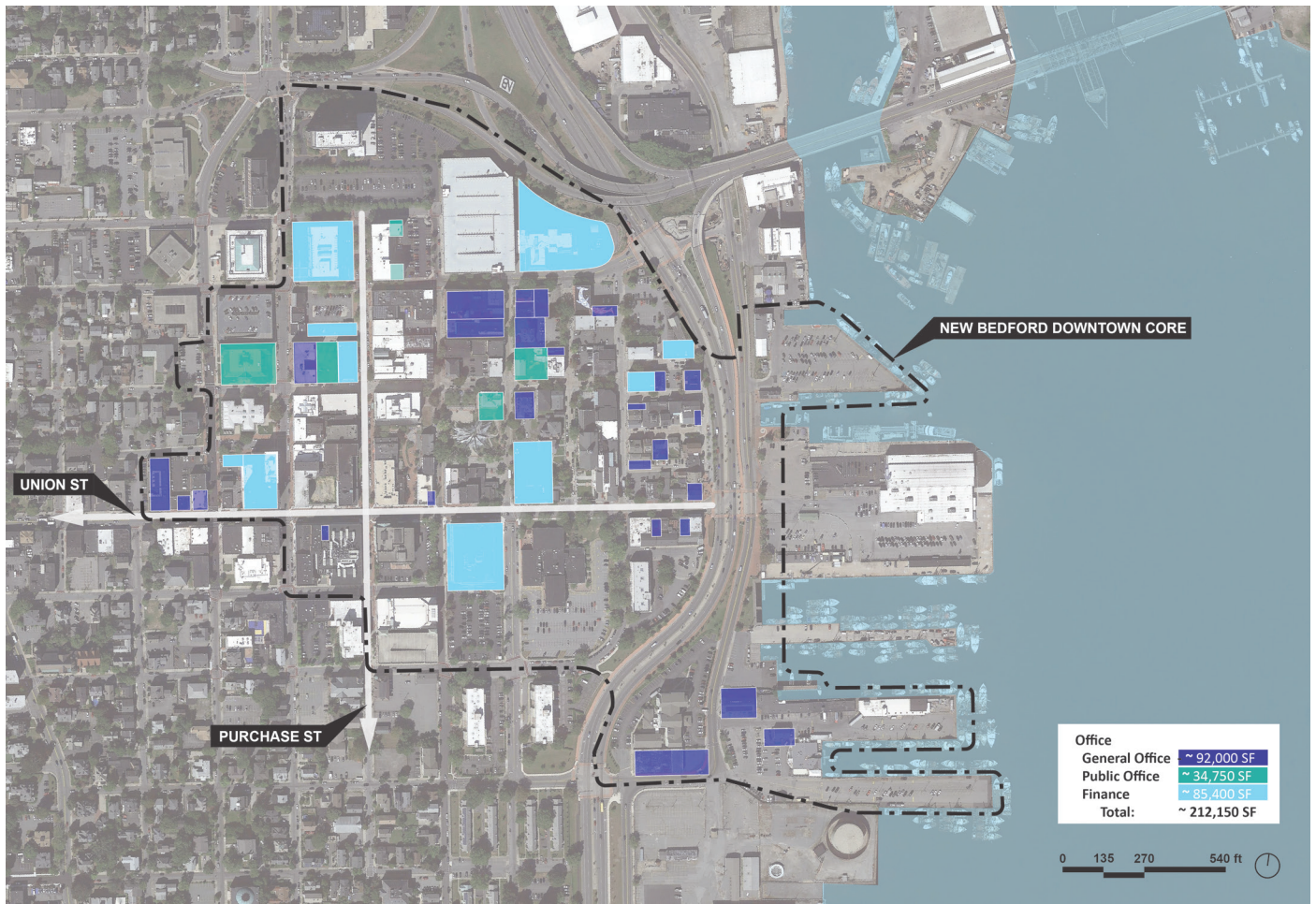
Purchase and Pleasant Streets feature educational services, financial resources, and other professional and technical services mainly catering to local needs.

The area along North Water and Centre Streets is composed of restaurants and boutique shops targeting potential out of town customers that stop by on their way to the catch the Ferry to Martha's Vineyard or come to visit the Whaling Museum and the New Bedford Whaling national Historical Park.



Ground Floor Businesses.  
WGI, April 2021 site visit





**Map: Ground Office Space**  
**Source: New Bedford Parcel Information, District Data Base.**  
**Confirmed by WGI during April 2021 Site Visit.**



## The Downtown Office Environment

Offices towards the western edge of downtown hold mainly financial services and public offices. The offices located closer to the waterfront are occupied by smaller leaseholders providing personal and professional services.

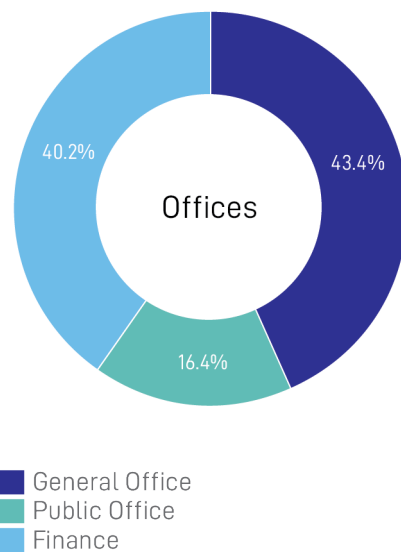
The following is an estimate of per square foot rents for retail and office spaces in the downtown core:

**\$19.48**

per square foot (psf) - the average asking rent for ground floor retail space (Current/2021)

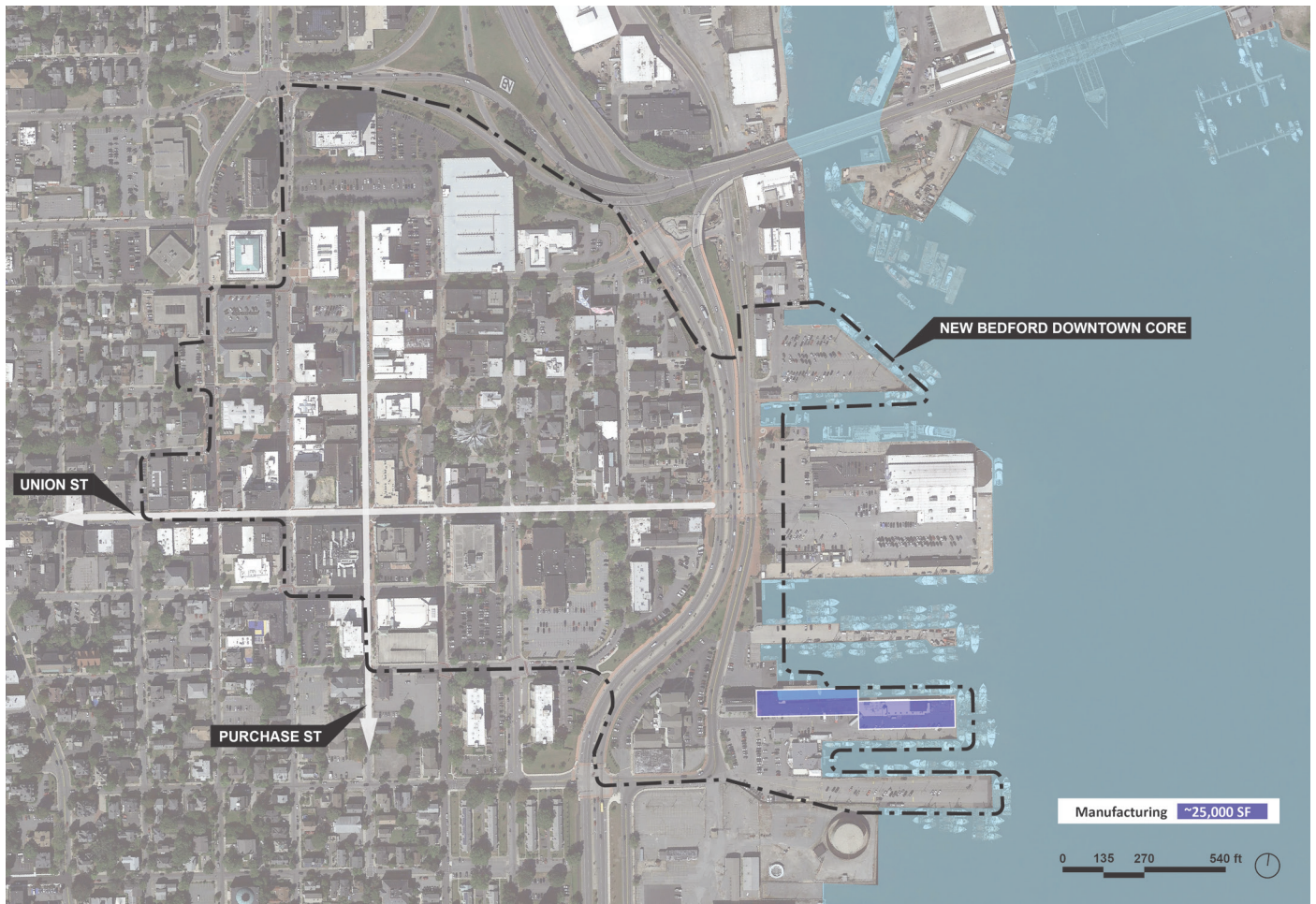
**\$13.99**

per square foot (psf) - the average asking rent for ground floor office space (Current/2021)



**Snapshot: Types of Offices in Downtown New Bedford.**  
**Source: New Bedford Parcel Information, District Data Base. Confirmed by WGI during April 2021 Site Visit.**





**Map: Ground Manufacturing Space**  
**Source: New Bedford Parcel Information, District Data Base.**  
**Confirmed by WGI during April 2021 Site Visit.**



## Manufacturing: the Wharfs

### THE FISHING PORT

New Bedford's waterfront lands the largest value of seafood in the nation.<sup>1</sup> The manufacturing warehouses along the port serve to process the seafood it receives.

In keeping with the seaport economy, the wharves also house several seafood restaurants along MacArthur Drive that separates the rest of Downtown New Bedford from the waterfront.

### THE FERRY

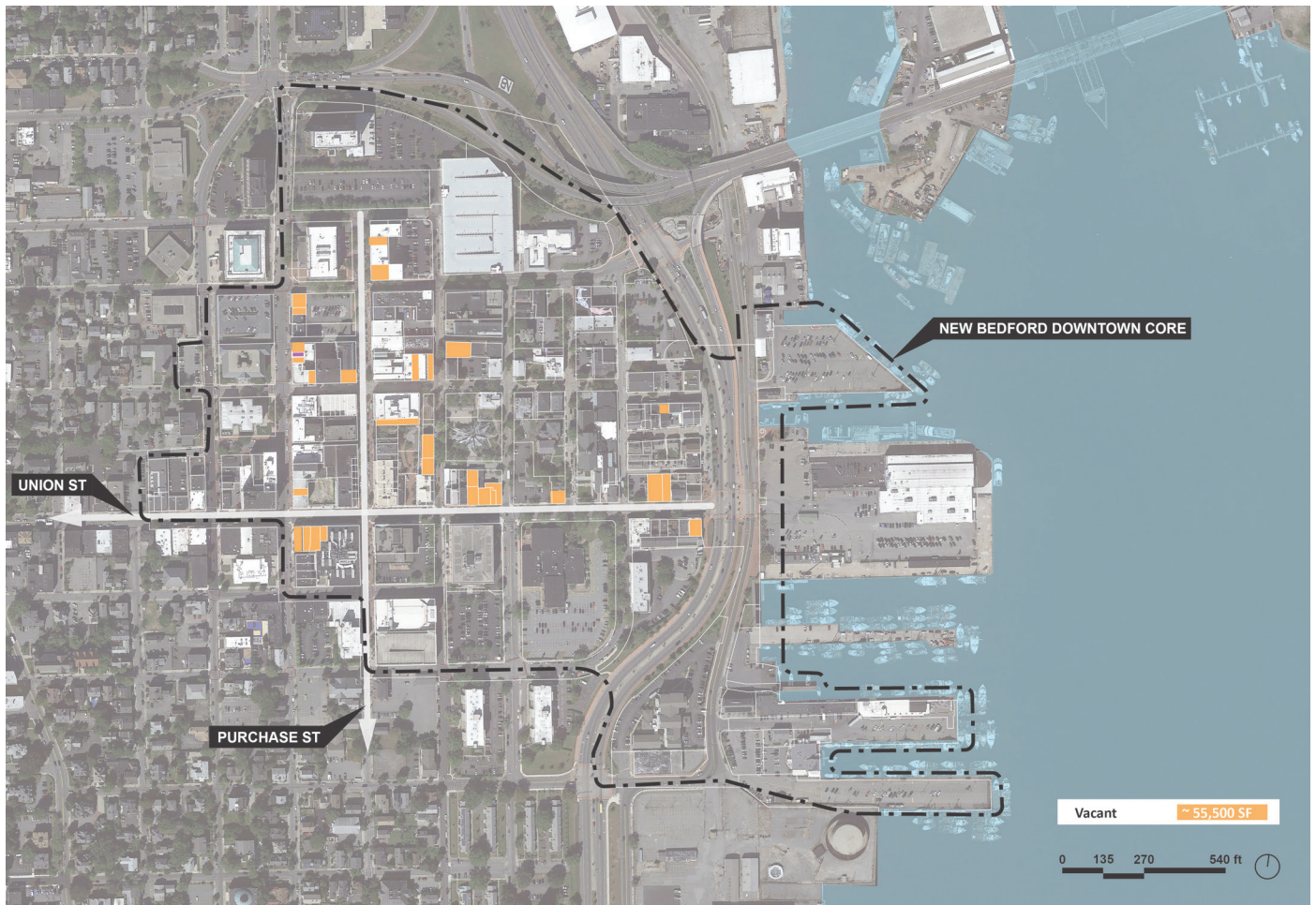
The ferry attracts out of town visitors on their way to Martha's Vineyard and other destinations. Informing passersby of the cultural and shopping events happening downtown is key to bringing in regular out of town clientele into the city.

<sup>1</sup> New Bedford is America's most lucrative fishing port for 20th straight year, WPRI, May 20, 2021



**The fishing port.**  
**Photo: WGI, April 2021.**





Map: Ground Vacant Space  
Source: WGI, April 2021 Site Visit.



## Vacant Storefronts

As of April 2021, there are 32 vacant storefronts<sup>1</sup> in Downtown New Bedford. Given that there are approximately 171 storefronts in the downtown core, vacancies represent 18.7% of the total street frontage.

Vacancies tend to be located along less trafficked corridors, such as Acushnet Avenue. However, several of the empty buildings along Union Street were either permitted prior to COVID-19, or recently permitted for development and are on a pathway to active use.

Empty storefronts tend to be boarded up or papered over.



Vacant Storefront along Union Street.  
Photo: WGI, April 2021.

<sup>1</sup> Empty storefronts verified by WGI during a site visit in April 2021.



Brochures and handouts from various downtown organizations serving Downtown New Bedford.  
Photo: WGI, May 2021



## Downtown has solid leadership

Downtown New Bedford is organized by a diverse set of organizations lifting the local arts and culture scene.

### DOWNTOWN NEW BEDFORD INC.

'Downtown New Bedford Inc. is a non-profit organization providing marketing, education, and advocacy to downtown's stakeholders.'<sup>1</sup>

### AHA!

'AHA! (Art, History & Architecture) is New Bedford's free Downtown Cultural Night and collaborative cultural organization with over 60 downtown venue partners.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DNBinc. - [downtownnb.org/wp/about/](https://downtownnb.org/wp/about/)

<sup>2</sup> AHA! - [ahanewbedford.org/about-aha/](https://ahanewbedford.org/about-aha/)

### NEW BEDFORD CREATIVE

'The New Bedford Creative Consortium is the leadership group whose purpose is overseeing the execution of the citywide strategic Arts and Culture Plan entitled New Bedford Creative: our art, our culture, our future.'<sup>3</sup>

### 3RD EYE UNLIMITED

'3rd EyE Youth Empowerment engages, unites, and activates the community through hip hop culture and mentorship to become transformative leaders.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> New Bedford Creative - [newbedfordcreative.org/about/](https://newbedfordcreative.org/about/)

<sup>4</sup> 3rd Eye Unlimited - [3rdeyeunlimited.org/](https://3rdeyeunlimited.org/)



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## Project Recommendations

# Enhance Sense of Security & Comfort for Visitors

Category		Public Realm
Location		Downtown Commercial Core
Origin		Business survey, community meetings
Budget		High Budget (>\$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Medium Risk – Minimal downside risks, except poor organization and implementation.
Key Performance Indicators		Improvement to visitor experience, Reduction of nuisance calls to city police, Increased perception of safety by city residents and business owners
Partners & Resources		City police department, code enforcement, local business community



**Downtown Security Ambassador**  
Source: <https://www.hartfordchamberct.com/>



**University Campus Ambassador**  
Source: <https://www.dailytrojan.com/>



## Diagnostics

Historically, New Bedford had a dedicated officer patrol for the downtown area. This officer provided a consistent neighborhood presence and “friendly face” that residents and business owners had grown to count on. Due to COVID-19, there are fewer workers and customers who come in daily to downtown. With less activity and fewer eyes on the streets, there has been a perceived increase of negative activities. Empty streets and those with a high visibility of homeless persons are also a deterrent for tourists and visitors. The business survey reported that 94% of respondents felt that safety improvements were moderately to very important.

The role of the Hospitality Ambassador Program is to provide a security type presence with a level of hospitality for properties, businesses, workers, customers, visitors, and residents. The ambassadors act as the eyes and ears of the downtown to preserve a safe and secure environment. The team wears a unique uniform with high visibility colors and logo to patrol the streets.

## Action Items

By creating a welcoming, safe, and clean environment, this project supports the City's COVID recovery and placemaking efforts and creates a destination local and regional visitors will feel compelled to return to. In addition, it will support existing local businesses by enhancing the sense of security in the downtown, deter crime, and aid in employee retention. This type of community support can also be a draw for new businesses looking to establish in the area.

The goals of the project include:

- **Ensure a positive and welcoming environment for everyone.** Act as true ambassadors for the city, by assisting tourists with directions, distributing maps, highlighting historical sites, and providing suggestions for local activities.
- **Increase the perception of safety in Downtown.** The ambassadors can deter crime by being a visible presence. They are unarmed and have no arrest powers. Ambassadors can provide a safe walking environment for visitors or employees who may want an escort back to their car at night.
- **Support city code enforcement staff and police.** Their patrols can enhance quality of life by decreasing nuisance issues and reporting health, safety and environmental hazards.

## Process

- Establish a funding mechanism – explore the possibility of funding through the proposed BID
- Develop a list of partners, including business owners to serve as ambassadors to patrol
- Define hours and areas served
- Advertise for security company contract
- Establish a hotline for employees or customers to call to provide safe walk services

# Enhance Sense of Security & Comfort for Visitors



Public Realm

## Pompano Beach Security Ambassador Program

"Under the direction of Redevelopment Management Associates, the City hired a private security firm to implement a Security Ambassador Program. Security Ambassadors are unarmed security professionals, many of whom are hired from the community, assigned to work with residents and business owners to "take ownership" of the area in which they live and work. These ambassadors function as the eyes, ears, and heart of the community as they actively patrol to keep their area safe. Since they are usually the first at the scene within their patrol boundaries, they can assist local law enforcement as a reliable source of information regarding accidents, as well as suspicious or illegal activities.... Within the first year, illegal dumping, loitering, drug dealing, prostitution, vagrancy and other practices in the downtown were noticeably reduced. The community residents and business owners also said they felt safer seeing the Security Ambassadors patrolling the downtown."

<https://rma.us.com/how-a-security-ambassador-program-can-increase-safety-help-businesses-and-monitor-homelessness/>



**Security Ambassador Assisting Tourist**

Source: <https://rma.us.com/how-a-security-ambassador-program-can-increase-safety-help-businesses-and-monitor-homelessness/>

## Downtown Delray Beach Security Ambassador Pilot Program Debuts

"The Delray Beach Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has launched a new initiative to further enhance its Placemaking goal of fostering a compelling destination by enhancing the physical elements of the downtown, and its strategy to maintain a clean, safe and welcoming environment.... The role of the Ambassadors is to be a constant "security type presence with a hospitality side", providing customer service support such as giving directions and information about Downtown to the public, Safe Walk services for employees or customers, and serving as the extra set of eyes and ears for safety, lighting, banners, trash, etc. The Ambassadors will have cell phone contact with the Police Department and businesses and will be on radio with the Clean and Safe Sergeant and the DDA team."

<https://downtowndelraybeach.com/blog/downtown-delray-beach-security-ambassador-pilot-program-debuts>



**Safety Ambassador Assisting the Elderly**

Source: <http://downtownwilmingtonde.com/blog/tag/increased+safety+patrol+hours+wilmington+de>



# Enhance Sense of Security & Comfort for Visitors

## 125th Street Business Improvement District's Public Safety Program

"The 125th Street BID's Ambassador/Public Safety team acts as the eyes and ears of the BID- working hard to preserve a safe and secure environment in the corridor. The Public Safety team wears a unique uniform with the BID colors and logo and patrol the street five days a week from 11:00 am until 7:00pm. Working closely with NYPD, the ambassadors will:

1. Provide visible foot patrol from West of Fifth Avenue through East of Morningside Avenue, bordering the North and South side of 125th street and the side streets where property fronts 125th Street.
2. Report and call for help to assist the sick, injured, or lost persons until Police and/or emergency medical technicians arrive via supplied radios.
3. Provide travel directions and information regarding the many entertainment, restaurant, retail, historical sites, ATM services and any other venues and tourism services requested.
4. Inspection of the BID corridor while on foot patrol to identify safety hazards, health hazards, environmental hazards, excessive garbage, illegal disposal of garbage, broken lights and traffic light signals, flooding, abnormal traffic conditions or any other street conditions that require attention.
5. Perform their duties as true ambassadors of the 125th Street Business Improvement District, displaying professionalism, courtesy, and respect. This also includes distributing BID literature, maps and other informational pamphlets which are helpful to tourists, merchants and many others who traverse this historical street."

<https://www.125thstreet.nyc/about-us/what-we-do/public-safety-security/>




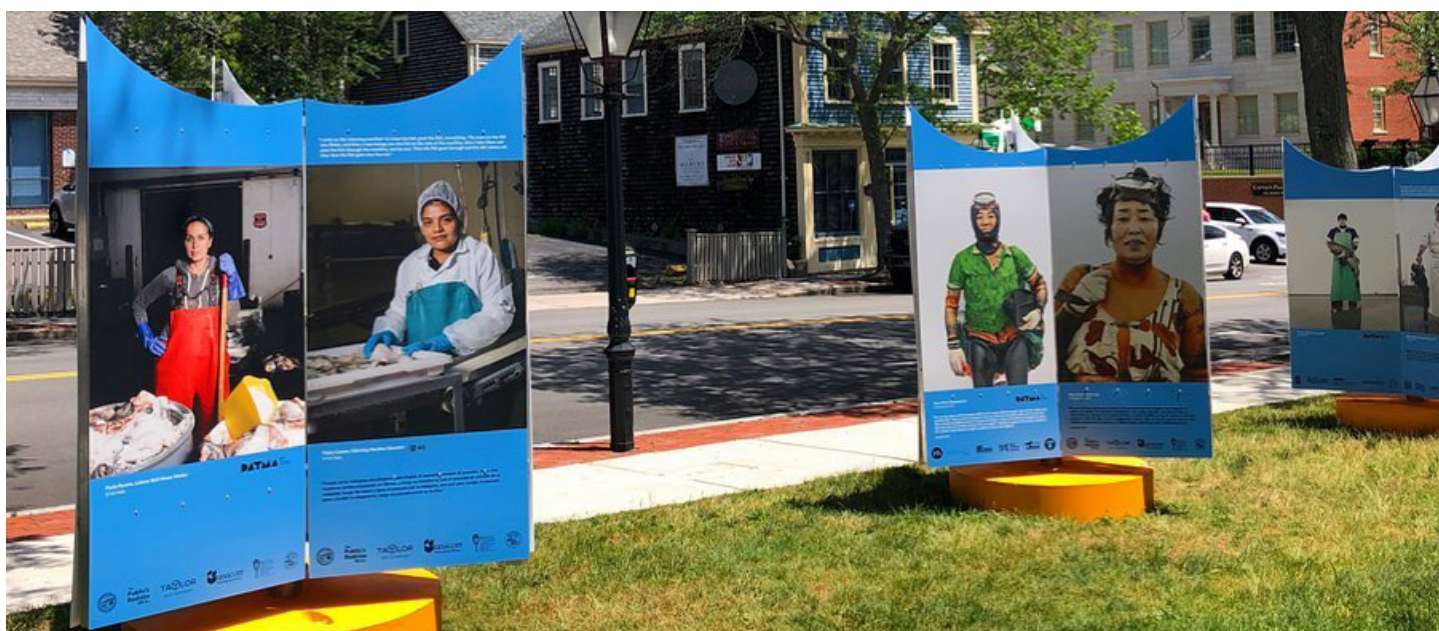
*Security Ambassador Cleaning the Neighborhood*

Source: <https://thebrownandwhite.com/2014/11/10/south-side-ambassadors/>



# Maintain Year-Round Special Event Public Realm Activation

Category		Public Realm
Location		#1 – Purchase Street from Union to William #2 – Lower Union #3 – The Zeiterion Theater
Origin		Business survey, stakeholder interviews, community meeting
Budget		High Budget (>\$200,000)- with brand deployment
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		High- This project requires significant participation and financial support from the business community.
Key Performance Indicators		Increase pedestrian traffic, Increase business revenue, Increase engagement with community and businesses
Partners & Resources		City staff, Business community leaders, local arts and cultural organizations.



*DATMA'S Summer Installation on lawn of the YWCA  
Source: City of New Bedford, May 2021*

## Diagnostic

The city enjoys the presence and programming put out by several large cultural and entertainment venues. While activity does exist in the area on a regular basis, the community members still complain there is a lack of consistent programming. During a business survey, 87% of respondents felt that more cultural events that bring people into the district are moderately to very important. Pre-COVID, venues like the Whaling Museum and the Zeiterion Theater hosted successful monthly events. COVID caused these venues to pivot some of their programming online, and the arts and culture community has a long road to recovery post pandemic.

A mid to long term goal for the community to build back stronger after the pandemic is to expand its customer base to attract visitors from neighboring communities. This is an endeavor that the Zeiterion Theater and the Whaling Museum do well, and in pairing up downtown businesses with the larger events led by those two larger institutions anchoring downtown, there is a path already shaped to expand Downtown New Bedford's customer base.

Spaces like Custom House Square and Wing's Courts have frequent but inconsistent programming and lack the large flat surfaces needed to support bigger events. This project will create "new" public spaces by utilizing the street to draw a crowd and provide necessary gathering areas. Rotating through different venue locations will expand the reach and diversity exposure to more businesses. The goal is to expand upon the success of existing events and to maintain programming year-round.



*Example of Existing Downtown Event Programming- AHA! New Bedford*

**Source:** <https://www.facebook.com/AHANewBedford/photos/10159245801116665>



## Action Item

The goal of this project is to enable the local business community to develop and conduct year-round placemaking events throughout key locations in the downtown. These events will be lead and organized by the private business community and will be scheduled to provide consistent, coordinated programming around existing city-led and cultural organization events.

These type of placemaking events can support COVID recovery by providing an opportunity for visitors, businesses, and cultural organizations to come together to revitalize downtown. The downtown area has seen positive attendance with existing events like the Winter Places programming and Summer Saturdays. This project will dovetail into the scheduling, and build upon the success, of those current events. Additionally, these types of privately initiated events will fill in the programming gaps and provide consistent activation and programming without a large burden on city resources.

Partnerships with established arts and culture organizations is encouraged and ensures that the local arts community has equal access and the program supports a variety of arts forms. This bolsters the goal of the City to re-establish Downtown New Bedford as a regional arts and culture destination.

## Process

Spaces should be selected that are highly visible and accessible and can be used to activate under-utilized spaces. Closing a street for a block and utilizing the entire limit of the right-of-way area is ideal. To ensure equitable access for all businesses, locations should be alternated so that all areas of downtown can benefit from the program. This will expose visitors to businesses and areas that they otherwise may have not been aware of.

- Conduct outreach to businesses and organizations to determine interest in hosting an event.
- Establish timing of events. Identify where gaps are in the days, location, and types of activities.
- Establish a budget and develop a fundraising plan.
- Develop a site plan for installments at each location.
- Develop a plan and check list that guides staff, volunteers, rental agencies in procurement, mobilization, installation, and removal.
- Identify staffing needs. This can include security, maintenance, traffic control and day-off management and supervision.
- Secure all necessary all permits.
- Coordinate a marketing campaign with other city-led arts and culture initiatives.



**Summer in The Seaport Event Advertisement**  
**Source: City of New Bedford, 2021**



# Maintain Year-Round Special Event Public Realm Activation



Public Realm

## Social Zones & Shared Streets

"Downtown Grand Rapids piloted a number of outdoor "social zones" last year on a rapid implementation basis in response to the impacts of the pandemic. The goal was to get visitors downtown and provide a safe outdoor space for people to spend time and consume food and beverages... The idea is that encouraging people to visit the district, stop and stay longer while making it not just an errand but also an experience, solving for some of the issues facing brick & mortar retail pre pandemic.

**LOCATE:** These types of interventions are best suited to commercial settings. Typically they will involve reclaiming some street space for people and you'll want to be strategic about the type of street treatment that makes the most sense for your community, whether that's shared street, or a full open street or a part time open street.

**PARTNER:** In Grand Rapids downtown BID was the project lead while city officials supported with municipal resources and area pedestrian and cycling organizations stepped up to ensure these spaces were fully adopted and supported by the community with "adopt a social zone" campaigns.

**PLAN:** Planning for an initiative like this involves an extensive array of program partners, from the state level to change the liquor licensing laws to local partners to close the street and support of businesses and restaurant community to ensure all changes work well for everyone and police to ensure security for attendees and the City. Ensure vehicle access levels

**IMPLEMENT:** DPW and other local contractors supported the installation while area restaurants were given the ability to spruce up their shared spaces. In addition "adopt a social zone" programs created volunteer groups able to clean and maintain the spaces, taking some of the onerous off the City, BID and restaurant.

**ITERATE:** After a very rapidly deployed year 1 of the Social Zone experiment which occurred during the pandemic, year two features some changes to the layout and demarcation of the downtown social zones as well as an expansion into over a dozen social zones across the rest of Grand Rapids to encourage support of other neighborhood business districts without drawing too much business away from those districts by focusing on Downtown only."

**Page 87- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/public-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>**



Source: Public Realm Best Practice Compendium

# Maintain Year-Round Special Event Public Realm Activation



Public Realm

## Winter Activation at the Panoway in Downtown Wayzata

"Wayzata is a lakefront main street community located 15 miles west of Minneapolis, MN long known as a destination for shopping and dining. A 2-block long parking lot turned linear park- the Panoway- lies between the downtown and lake. The new park was viewed by the city as a strategic feature to help drive customer traffic downtown during the coldest months of the year. In order to remain responsive and iterative with the changing COVID-19 landscape, the city adopted a gradual implementation that focused on providing a variety of activities within regularly scheduled times and serving the needs of the community members already present, while building to safe in-person gatherings for signature events. Key opportunities included- Leveraging the views of the lake, providing high quality outdoor places for people to enjoy take out, and working with existing habits of the community. Challenges included- ensuring that visitors could stay warm and/or warm up, the need to create experiences that didn't need to be actively staffed, and how to translate a long-standing one-time event into a season long experience. The project took a holistic approach to the activation of the space and its impact on the entire downtown. We combined the physical enhancement of the space with a spectrum of programming and promotion to support a continuum visitation – from daily, to weekly outing, to first-time local tourist.

### Action #1 – Persona Generation + Experience Mapping

At the onset we mapped out the different audience/user types (personas), identifying their characteristics, wants, desires, and pain points. We then collated these together to craft the key experiences that the overall project should aim to deliver.

### Action #2 - Building Partnerships

Once the core event and improvement framework had been set, we engaged with local businesses and organizations to co-produce events as part of the activation. Critically, budget was allocated to pay the partners for their participation. These efforts brought in additional resources, promotional capacity, and generated heightened feelings of community ownership.

### Action #3 – Physical improvements

Throughout the activation, improvements were made to support programming and everyday use. The two-fold focus of these were to enhance visitor warmth and to create more things to do. Enhancements included: a winter garden / wind block, curling court, activity cart, fire pits, ice sculptures, light installations, and a pop-up dog run.

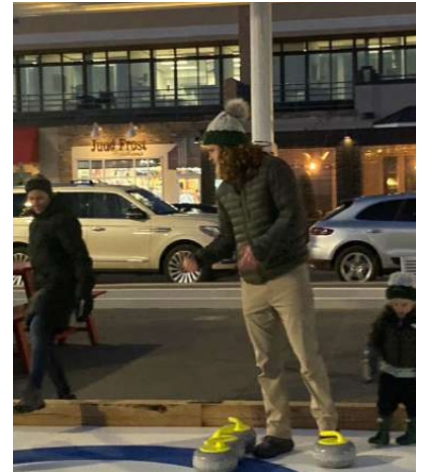
### Action #4 – Execute Programming

Each Friday new small and large scale events would occur, providing both regularity and variety – which together serve to build an audience over time.

### Action #5 – Promotion


Through multichannel marketing, PR, and the events themselves the brand and awareness of the space downtown grew which drove continued increases in daily visitation, weekly rituals, and destination tourists."

**Page 114- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/public-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>**



*Examples of Winter Public Space Activation  
Source: Public Realm Best Practice Compendium*

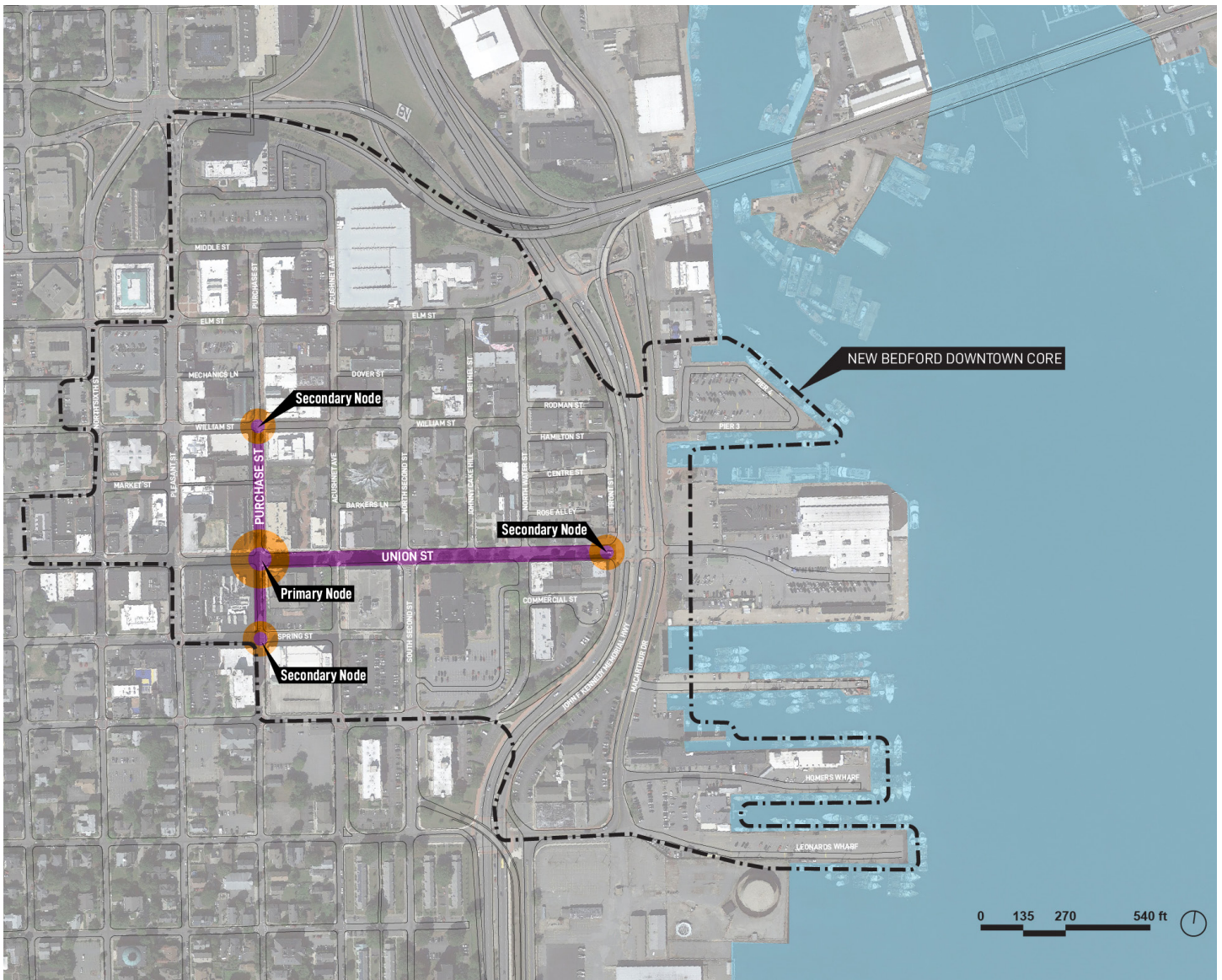
# Activate the Gap – Primary Node

Category		Public Realm
Location		Intersection of Union and Purchase Streets
Origin		Field data
Budget		High Budget (>\$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		High Risk- Due to funding availability and the complexity of installation this is a high-risk-reward project.
Key Performance Indicators		Increase foot traffic along Union and Purchase Streets, Increase of non-local patrons at Purchase Street businesses and restaurants, Increase sense of security
Partners & Resources		New Bedford Cultural Council, AHA! New Bedford, tenants/landlords, and local artist community,



*Existing View of Intersection of Union and Purchase Streets*  
Source: Google Earth





**Activate the Gap Proposed Intervention Locations**  
Source: WGI

## Diagnostic

There is currently a disconnect between the Historic District and the shopping area of Purchase Street. A primary pedestrian route from the Historic District to Purchase Street is along Union Street. However, there is a three block stretch which is inactive due to existing building placement and types of uses. This creates an unwelcoming pedestrian environment where visitors may not realize there is more of downtown to explore.

Permanent or iconic art installations can occur at the nodes identified above with temporary activations to connect them. This project will activate and create a connection between the two business areas and will draw visitors outside of the Historic District to discover the local shops and restaurants.

This project directly supports the City's goal of re-establishing New Bedford as an arts and culture destination and increasing the number of local and regional visitors to downtown. This project can capitalize on the draw of the waterfront by directing tourist foot traffic to other parts of the district and can encourage a new customer base to support the local businesses. Art installations and creative placemaking will activate the area and draw visitors to other parts of the downtown core. By activating less traveled spaces, the project can also increase the sense of security in the downtown with the increased pedestrian activity, lighting, and programming that will be associated with the project.





*Example of Primary Node Feature- GE Chandelier at Playhouse Square, Cleveland, OH*  
 Source: <https://www.playhousesquare.org/news/detail/all-about-our-ge-chandelier>

## Action Item

Activate the Gap is the composite of 3 individual projects sharing the intent of visually encouraging pedestrians to travel west along Union Street from the Historic District to Purchase Street- 1) Primary Node, 2) Secondary Nodes, and 3) Temporary Activations. While the projects ultimately work together as one, they are each able to function independently from, or in any combination with, the other projects. The focus of Activate the Gap- Primary Node is the focal point art installation at the intersection of Union Street and Purchase Street.

This project involves the design and installation of a permanent and iconic art installation at the intersection of Union and Purchase Streets. Serving as the focal point for the district, the project establishes a visual connection to encourage visitors to explore the city beyond typical tourist areas. By drawing regional visitors to Purchase Street, shops and restaurants will have access to a new revenue source as new visitors patronize the traditionally locals-only establishments. The project's impact can be maximized by executing it along with the two other Activate the Gap projects, other arts and culture installations, and improved wayfinding.

The project will include the following elements:

- Primary focal point art installation at the intersection of Union and Purchase Streets

A case study for this project is Cleveland Ohio's GE Chandelier in Playhouse Square (above). The GE Chandelier is a visual beacon intended to draw visitors into the district that stands 44 tall above Euclid Ave. This "go big or go home" approach serves as the heart of the district and defines the identity of the historic theater district.

## Process

- Identify possible local artists and organizations to partner with, to design and execute the project.
- Identify an aesthetic and design strategy that properly reflects the culture and traditions of New Bedford.
- Issue a call to artists or design competition.
- Ensure the design is compliant with local, state, and federal laws regarding street safety.
- Identify approvals that will be required to implement the installations.
- Identify a timeframe for installation and advertise to prevent local disruption due to street closure during installation.
- Make the installation a community event where people can see the project being executed.
- The completed project should be heavily featured on the City's social media accounts and be a stop-along art crawls such as AHA! to draw interest.

# Activate the Gap – Secondary Nodes

Category		Public Realm
Location		Intersections of Purchase and Spring Streets, Purchase and Williams Streets, and Union and S. Water Streets
Origin		Field data
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		High Risk- High Risk- Due to funding availability and the complexity of installation this is a high-risk-reward project
Key Performance Indicators		Increase foot traffic along Union and Purchase Streets, Increase of non-local patrons at Purchase Street businesses and restaurants, Increase sense of security
Partners & Resources		New Bedford Cultural Council, AHA! New Bedford, tenants/landlords, and local artist community,

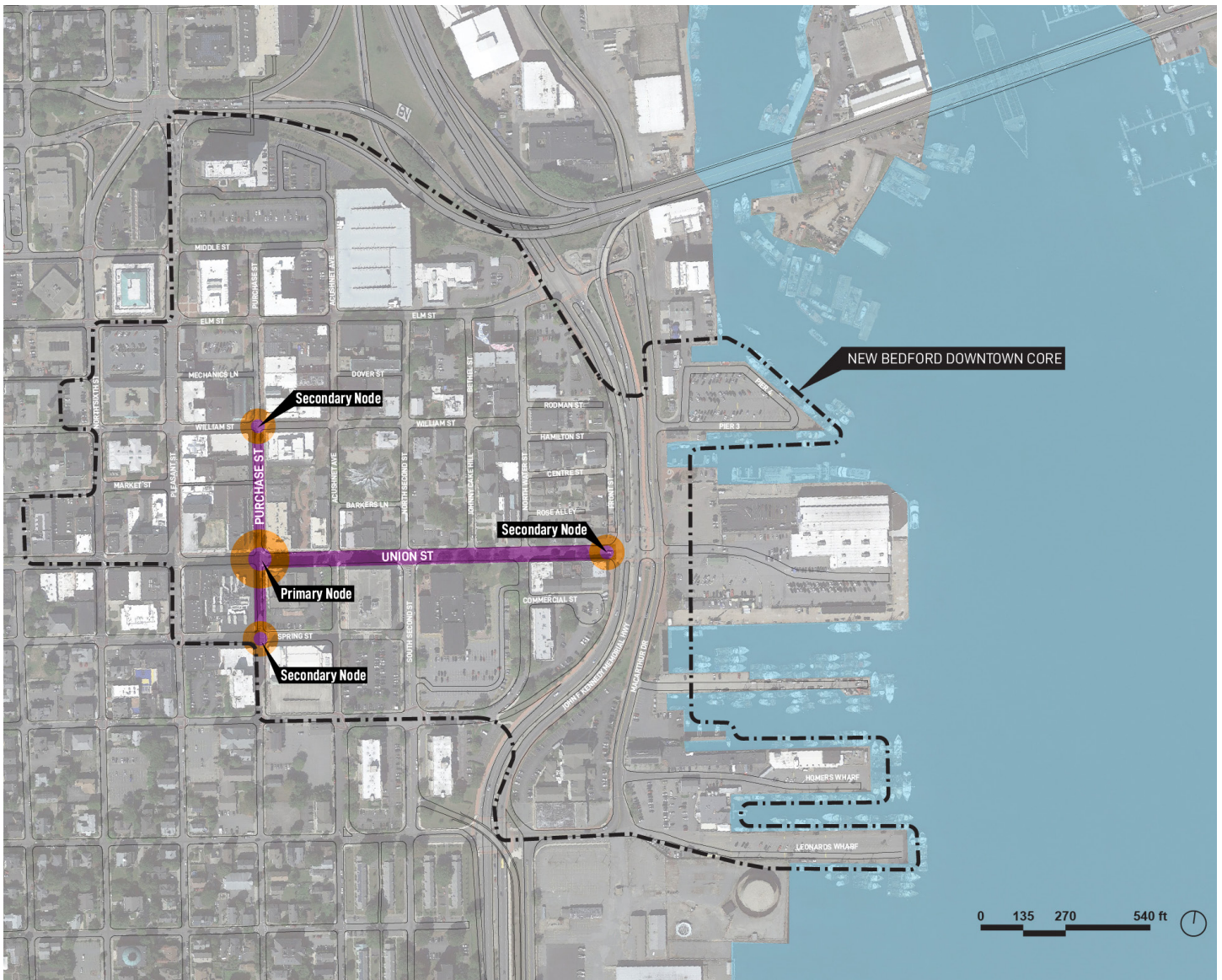


*Existing View of Union Street*  
Source: WGI, May 2021



*Example of Secondary Node-  
The City of New Bedford Consultant Assisted Proposal*  
Source: City of New Bedford





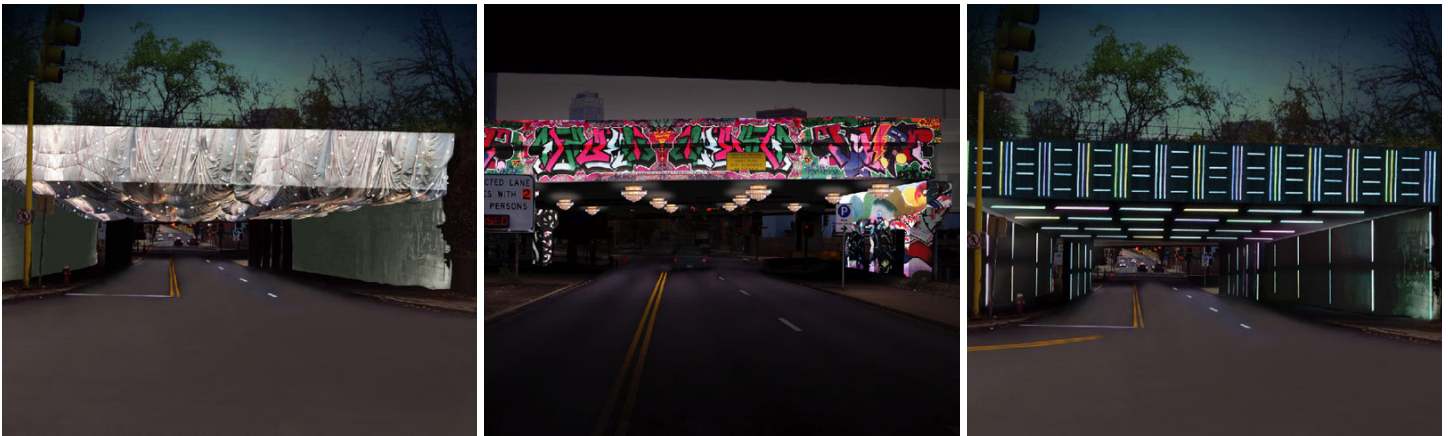
**Activate the Gap Proposed Intervention Locations**  
Source: WGI

## Diagnostic

There is currently a disconnect between the Historic District and the shopping area of Purchase Street. A primary pedestrian route from the Historic District to Purchase Street is along Union Street. However, there is a three block stretch which is inactivated due to existing building placement and types of uses. This creates an unwelcoming pedestrian environment where visitors may not realize there is more of downtown to explore.

Permanent or iconic art installations can occur at the nodes identified above with temporary activations to connect them. This project will activate and create a connection between the two business areas and will draw visitors outside of the Historic District to discover the local shops and restaurants.

This project directly supports the City's goal of re-establishing New Bedford as an arts and culture destination and increasing the number of local and regional visitors to downtown. This project can capitalize on the draw of the waterfront by directing tourist foot traffic to other parts of the district and can encourage a new customer base to support the local businesses. Art installations and creative placemaking will activate the area and draw visitors to other parts of the downtown core. By activating less traveled spaces, the project can also increase the sense of the security of the downtown with the increased pedestrian activity, lighting, and programming that will be associated with the project.



*Example of a Secondary Node Feature- Paula Scher Overpass Digital Art Installation*

*Source: <https://processandskillsdotcom.wordpress.com/2014/10/25/paula-scher-designer-at-play/>*

### Action Item

Activate the Gap is the composite of 3 individual projects sharing the intent of visually encouraging pedestrians to travel west along Union Street from the Historic District to Purchase Street- 1) Primary Node, 2) Secondary Nodes, and 3) Temporary Activations. While the projects ultimately work together as one, they are each able to function independently from, or in any combination with, the other projects. The focus of this Activate the Gap -Secondary Nodes is the three secondary node art installations at the gateways to the corridor at the intersections of- Purchase and Spring Streets, Purchase and Williams Streets, and Union and S. Water Streets.

This project will utilize human-scale art installations to identify the gateways to the district. Establishing and extending a visual connection to encourage visitors to explore the city beyond the typical tourist areas. By drawing regional visitors to Purchase Street, shops and restaurants will have access to a new revenue source as new visitors patronize the traditionally locals-only establishments. The project's impact can be maximized by executing it along with the two other Activate the Gap projects, other arts and culture installations, and improved wayfinding.

The project will include the following elements:

- Secondary iconic art installations at key intersections and gateways




Case studies that can be used for this project are The City of New Bedford Consultant Assisted Proposal on page 40 and Paula Sher's highway overpass digital art installation (above). Paula Scher transformed an overpass that people avoided and functioned as a barrier into something that encouraged people to walk through it, forming connections to each side.

### Process

- Identify possible local artists and organizations to partner with, to design and execute the project.
- Identify an aesthetic and design strategy that properly reflects the culture and traditions of New Bedford.
- Issue a call to artists or design competition.
- Ensure the design is compliant with local, state, and federal laws regarding street safety.
- Identify approvals that will be required to implement the installations.
- Identify a timeframe for installation and advertise to prevent local disruption due to street closure during installation.
- Make the installation a community event where people can see the project being executed.
- The completed project should be heavily featured on the City's social media accounts and be a stop-along art crawls such as AHA! to draw interest.



# Activate the Gap – Temporary Activations

Category		Public Realm
Location		Union Street from N. Water Street to Purchase Street
Origin		Field data
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000-\$200,000)- including design, materials, and installation
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators		Increase foot traffic along Union and Purchase Streets, Increase of non-local patrons at Purchase Street businesses and restaurants, Increase sense of security
Partners & Resources		New Bedford Cultural Council, AHA! New Bedford, tenants/landlords, and local artist community,

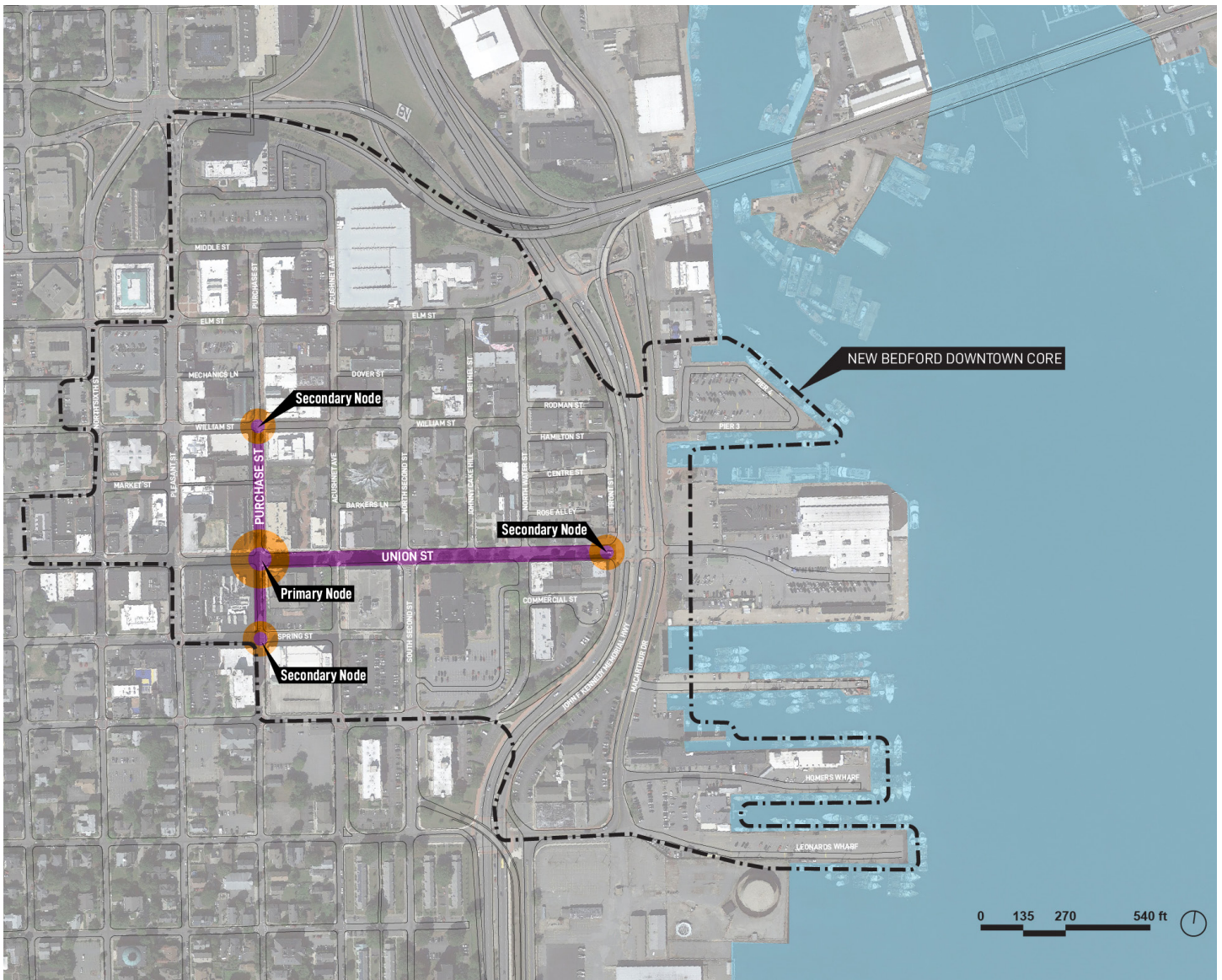


*Existing View of Union Street from Waterfront*  
Source: WGI, May 2021



*Existing View of Union Streetscape*  
Source: City of New Bedford





**Activate the Gap Proposed Intervention Locations**  
Source: WGI

## Diagnostic

There is currently a disconnect between the Historic District and the shopping area of Purchase Street. A primary pedestrian route from the Historic District to Purchase Street is along Union Street. However, there is a three block stretch which is inactivated due to existing building placement and types of uses. This creates an unwelcoming pedestrian environment where visitors may not realize there is more of downtown to explore.

Permanent or iconic art installations can occur at the nodes identified above with temporary activations to connect them. This project will activate and create a connection between the two business areas and will draw visitors outside of the Historic District to discover the local shops and restaurants.

This project directly supports the City's goal of re-establishing New Bedford as an arts and culture destination and increasing the number of local and regional visitors to downtown. This project can capitalize on the draw of the waterfront by directing tourist foot traffic to other parts of the district and can encourage a new customer base to support the local businesses. Art installations and creative placemaking will activate the area and draw visitors to other parts of the downtown core. By activating less traveled spaces, the project can also increase the sense of the security of the downtown with the increased pedestrian activity, lighting, and programming that will be associated with the project.



*Example of Temporary Activation- Street Mural in Williamsburg*

*Source: Luisa Rollenhagen <https://bedfordandbowery.com/2016/06/dot-mural-in-williamsburg/>*

## Action Item

Activate the Gap is the composite of 3 individual projects sharing the intent of visually encouraging pedestrians to travel west along Union Street from the Historic District to Purchase Street- 1) Primary Node, 2) Secondary Nodes, and 3) Temporary Activations. While the projects ultimately work together as one, they are each able to function independently from, or in any combination with, the other projects. The focus of Activate the Gap- Temporary Activations is to visually connect the iconic art installation included in the two other Activate the Gap projects with temporary activations.

This project will utilize temporary and easy-to-install elements such as road/sidewalk paint, modular infrastructure, and temporary art installations to create a visual connection, and encourage visitors to explore the City beyond the typical tourist areas. By drawing regional visitors to Purchase Street, shops and restaurants will have access to a new revenue source as new visitors patronize the traditionally locals-only establishments. The project's impact can be maximized by executing it along with the two other Activate the Gap projects, other arts and culture installations, and improved wayfinding.

The project will include the following elements:

- Temporarily painted designs on Union Street and adjacent sidewalks
- Temporarily painted and designed crosswalks
- Supporting temporary art or signage along the route

A case study that can be used for this project is Grove Street Crossing Pop-up Park + Plaza in East Boston. The Grove Street crossing park and plaza utilized low-cost strategies such as pavement paint to create a vibrant and unique space.

## Process

- Identify possible local artists and organizations to partner with, to design and execute the project.
- Identify an aesthetic and design strategy that properly reflects the culture and traditions of New Bedford.
- Issue a call for artists or design competition.
- Ensure the design is compliant with local, state, and federal laws regarding street safety.
- Identify approvals that will be required to implement the installations.
- Identify a timeframe for installation and advertise to prevent local disruption due to street closure during installation.
- Make the installation a community event where people can see the project being executed.
- The completed project should be heavily featured on the City's social media accounts and be a stop-along art crawls such as AHA! to draw interest.



# Activate the Gap



Public Realm

## Gove Street Crossing: Pop-up Park + Plaza

"With everyone spending a lot of time in their neighborhoods this past year, it is important to make spaces a little more exciting

### PROCESS

#### Design Competition

- **Design Challenge:** FoMEWG worked with BSLA to host a design competition for the Gove Street section of the Greenway. Eight entries were submitted that included both long and short-term ideas for the Greenway at Gove Street....
- **Design Selection:** The entries did not include the names of the individuals or firms in order to ensure a blind judgment of the designs. The 12-member jury of East Boston residents selected Toole Design to work on a seasonal installation. The final design was selected since it successfully active the spaces....

### POP-UP INSTALLATION PLANNING + DESIGN

**Planning + Design:** Over three months in Spring 2019, Toole Design worked to refine the tactical short-term installation by engaging East Boston residents and FoMEWG. The design was shared at the monthly Greenway meeting, and the Project Team engaged youth at the East Boston Public Library. The final tactical design with pavement graphic and seating including:

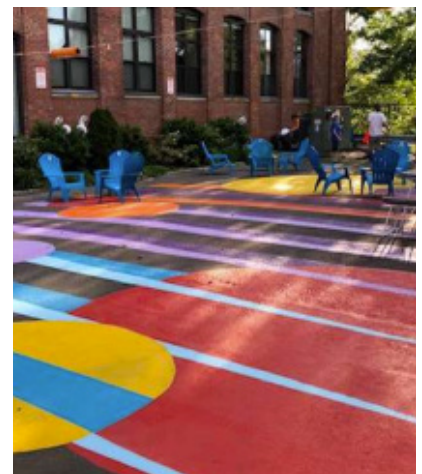
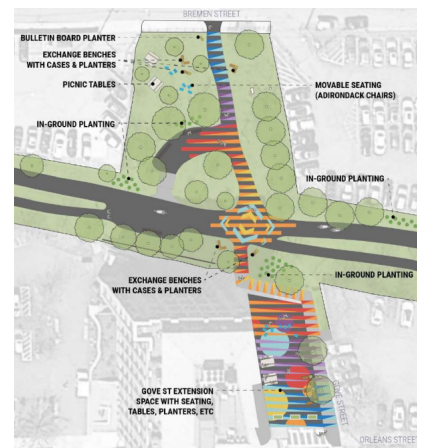
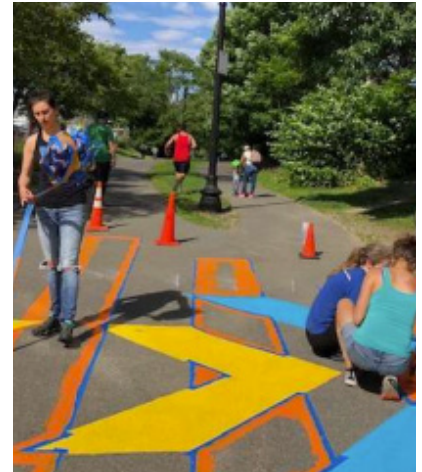
1. a pop-up plaza on Gove Street next to a residential apartment building, and
2. a seasonal installation on the Greenway.

**Approvals for Boston Parks:** The Project Team met with Boston Parks to review the proposed design, and Boston Parks was asked to weigh on the seating structures and painting before the design was final. The FoMEWG submitted a "Small Projects Form" ... for Parks to review and approve.

**Approvals from Boston Transportation Department:** The Project Team met with the City of Boston's Public Realm Director to discuss the plaza concept. For the one-week temporary plaza installation, the project team applied for a 1-week event permit and posted "No Parking" signs.

### Implementation

- **Material Acquisition:** In June, the project team acquired the materials...
- **Installation:** Toole Design staff worked to build the exchange benches off-site and then assisted the benches on site. The Project Team planned for two installation days, which included a Saturday. Toole Design outlined the pavement graphics prior to volunteers arriving each day. Volunteers painted the pavement graphics on the Greenway and plaza, planted plants in the planters, and placed the seating...
- **Programs:** The FoMEWG hosted several programs at the pop-up plaza, including music in the evenings by local musicians, a piñata party with a local artist, Krina Patel, and games for children...
- **Removal:** The one-week pop-up plazas were removed, and the chairs and tables were relocated to the seasonal Parks installation on the Greenway. In the fall, the Parks installation with the benches were removed and put into storage for the winter.
- **Re-Installation:** In Summer 2020, the benches and Adirondack chairs were placed in the Parks section of the Greenway."



Source: Public Realm Best Practice Compendium

Page 39- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/public-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>



# Navigating New Bedford – Downtown Wayfinding (Design)

Category		Public Realm
Location		Downtown Commercial Core
Origin		Business Survey
Budget		Low Budget (<\$50,000) – Including design and development of wayfinding/branding plan with supporting construction documentation
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Medium Risk - The major constraints are obtaining funding and establishing a brand
Key Performance Indicators		Functionality of signage, Use by visitors and residents
Partners & Resources		The City of New Bedford, Economic Development Council, National Parks Service- New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park



*Existing Wayfinding Maps*  
Source: WGI, May 2021



*Mix of Existing Wayfinding Signage*  
Source: WGI, May 2021



*Possible Wayfinding Partner Organization*  
Source: <https://www.americanationalparks.com/>

## Diagnostic

New Bedford has a robust mix of restaurants, retail, historic sites, and tourist destinations located in a relatively compact and walkable downtown core. Pre-COVID-19, the city was establishing itself as a regional arts & culture destination with numerous events drawing visitors from surrounding areas. However, visitors arrive in New Bedford for one event or resource (the Ferry) and do not spend time exploring neighborhoods.

This project will establish a wayfinding system that introduces visitors to the City of New Bedford and allows them to easily identify and travel to points of interest around the downtown area. The wayfinding system will entice visitors who are in the area for a specific purpose to venture further into New Bedford, discovering the City beyond the tourist limits, spending money at local businesses, and encouraging return trips.

New technology and the rise of "smart kiosks" allow information to be digital, interactive, and can work in conjunction with City event marketing. The kiosks for New Bedford can utilize this type of approach while displaying it in a way that does not clash with the surrounding historic environment.

## Action Item

The Navigating New Bedford- Downtown Wayfinding is subdivided into two projects that correspond to the phases of the project- design and deployment. This project is for branding, design and master planning of the wayfinding and signage elements. The wayfinding system will consist of interactive kiosks and supporting wayfinding. The kiosk will introduce visitors to New Bedford and reveal all of the things to see and do in the City. The kiosks will show visitors that there is a lot of activity in the area, educate them on the dates and times of these events, as well as identify how to find and enjoy these experiences. The kiosk itself should visually act as a piece of art that reflects the character and vibe of the City, reinforcing the message that New Bedford is an art town.

The kiosks will be in high pedestrian traffic areas where tourists gather (Ferry Terminal, Front St. Plaza in Historic District, Whaling Museum Plaza, and Elm St. parking garage entrance). They will consist of:

- A map of the downtown area;
- A directory of points of interest including historic sites, parks, public art, and dining/shopping areas;
- Information regarding upcoming festivals and cultural events;
- History of the City; and
- QR links to webpages for more information.

The kiosks will be supported by additional wayfinding signage. The wayfinding elements should visually be consistent with the aesthetic chosen for the kiosks to create a cohesive system. Distances to nearby attractions should be shown in 'walking minutes' instead of feet. This will showcase how compact and close by things are in the City, and that walking is a preferred transportation mode. It will also encourage people to walk around the town, discovering new businesses, public art, and historic structures. This will allow people to explore and experience the City in a more thorough manner and make a deeper connection with the City, encouraging a return visit.

## Process

Develop a branding and signage master plan with supporting construction documentation for the downtown. The plan should:

- Identify and establish a cohesive branding strategy and aesthetic that properly reflects the culture and traditions of New Bedford.
- Conduct a signage inventory to remove and or replaced redundant/unnecessary, outdated signage.
- Identify high-traffic areas to place information kiosks. Recommend: Ferry Terminal, Front St. Plaza in Historic District, Whaling Museum Plaza, and Elm St. parking garage entrance.
- Identify places for supporting wayfinding signage.
- Identify a company or firm to run the smart kiosk data. Smart kiosks information should be coordinated and support City marketing efforts. Possible sponsorship opportunities are available for private organizations.
- Provide a full set of sign elements and street furnishings fabrication specifications for bid purposes.



# Navigating New Bedford – Downtown Wayfinding



Public Realm

## Integrate Brand and Art Into Your Wayfinding System

SPD created a unified brand identity and wayfinding master plan for the City of Worcester, including:

- City-wide Logo
- District Identity
- Storytelling and Interpretive Elements
- Signage Design
- Art Opportunities

SPD collaborated with the project team to increase awareness and tourism, and to improve the overall image of the City by creating an iconic brand and functional wayfinding system for visitors and residents.

As a large City, it was important to create consistency but also provide distinctions between districts to help people navigate and understand the unique character and stories of each area.

The brand reflects the colors of each district and creates a scalable kit-of-parts still in use some 15 years later. Worcester implemented a sampling of signs and landmarks to raise capital for the larger system, which is being installed now.

## Process

- Understand who the stakeholders and decision-makers will be.
- Visit site to audit of existing conditions.
- Conduct a Wayfinding Analysis including; multi-modal circulation, main decision points, key destinations, etc.
- Identify opportunities for art/placemaking.
- Research the history of the place, uncover stories that might inspire the design.
- Engage with stakeholders and the public to understand needs and perceptions. If possible, create a survey to get feedback from a larger cross-section of people.
- Develop project goals and a positioning statement to guide design efforts.
- Design concepts for brand and wayfinding elements.
- Develop the preferred design into a family of sign types with materials, colors, etc.
- Provide a sign location plan and message schedule.
- Create Design Intent drawings and a bid document to solicit pricing from fabricators
- Update the budget and project schedule
- Assist with communication between the fabricator and municipality.
- Provide Construction Administration, Site Visits, and Punch List as-needed.
- Celebrate!

**Page 54- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/public-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>**



**Source: Public Realm Best Practice Compendium**

# Navigating New Bedford – Downtown Wayfinding



Public Realm

## Create a Way-Finding System to Help Reinforce the Downtown Experience

The Town of Wakefield is a north of Boston middle-income suburban community. Most residents work outside of Wakefield and commute to work. There are two MBTA Commuter rail stations in Wakefield—Wakefield Center and Greenwood.

There was no universally accepted brand or wayfinding system for the Town of Wakefield.

On the edge of Wakefield Center, Lake Quannapowitt is a popular setting for walkers, joggers, bikers, and in-line skaters off Route 128 in Middlesex County.... However, rarely do outside visitors travel beyond the lakeside the 200 yards to the Town of Wakefield's Downtown. This is a lost opportunity to support restaurants and shops in the Downtown.

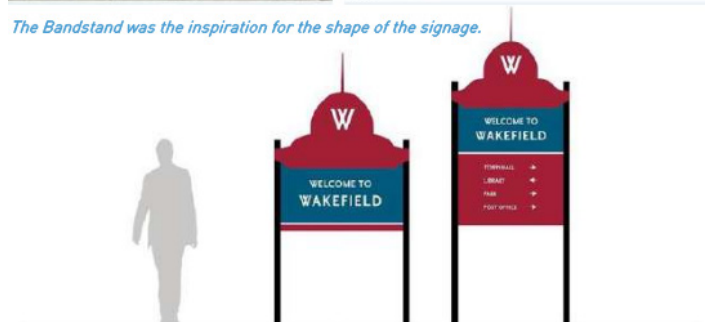
With a vital mix of restaurants, goods and services, the downtown appeared robust. However, things could be improved by an effort for better direction and more on-street communication. Here was an opportunity to build on the downtown's commercial base and solidify Wakefield as a Northshore destination.

The Town's administration allotted funding to design a branding and wayfinding system. Seven months later a Massachusetts Legislative Earmark was granted to the Wakefield Main Streets Program for the design and fabrication of informational kiosks.

Page 45- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/public-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>







*The Bandstand was the inspiration for the shape of the signage.*



Source: Public Realm Best Practice Compendium

# Navigating New Bedford – Downtown Wayfinding (Deployment)

Category		Public Realm
Location		Downtown Commercial Core
Origin		Business Survey
Budget		High Budget (>\$200,000) – Deployment of wayfinding/branding plan-production, fabrication, removal, and installation costs
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Medium Risk - The major constraints are obtaining funding and establishing a brand
Key Performance Indicators		Functionality of signage, Use by visitors and residents
Partners & Resources		The City of New Bedford, Economic Development Council, National Parks Service- New Bedford Whaling national Historical Park



*Example of Core Sign Family from the Seamless Seattle Pedestrian Wayfinding Program*  
 Source: <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/urban-design-program/pedestrian-wayfinding>



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## Diagnostic

New Bedford has a robust mix of restaurants, retail, historic sites, and tourist destinations located in a relatively compact and walkable downtown core. Pre-COVID-19, the city was establishing itself as a regional arts & culture destination with numerous events drawing visitors from surrounding areas. However, visitors arrive in New Bedford for one event or resource (the Ferry) and do not spend time exploring neighborhoods.

This project will establish a wayfinding system that introduces visitors to the City of New Bedford and allows them to easily identify and travel to points of interest around the downtown area. The wayfinding system will entice visitors who are in the area for a specific purpose to venture further into New Bedford, discovering the City beyond the tourist limits, spending money at local businesses, and encouraging return trips.

New technology and the rise of "smart kiosks" allow information to be digital, interactive, and can work in conjunction with City event marketing. The kiosks for New Bedford can utilize this type of approach while displaying it in a way that does not clash with the surrounding historic environment.

## Action Item

The Navigating New Bedford- Downtown Wayfinding is subdivided into two projects that correspond to the phases of the project- design and deployment. This project for brand deployment is focused on the costs and efforts associated with the production, fabrication, removal, and installation of the branding and signage master plan. The wayfinding system will consist of interactive kiosks and supporting wayfinding. The kiosk will introduce visitors to New Bedford and reveal all of the things to see and do in the City. The kiosks will show visitors that there is a lot of activity in the area, educate them on the dates and times of these events, as well as identify how to find and enjoy these experiences. The kiosk itself should visually act as a piece of art that reflects the character and vibe of the City, reinforcing the message that New Bedford is an art town.

The kiosks will be in high pedestrian traffic areas where tourists gather and will be supported by additional wayfinding signage. The wayfinding elements should visually be consistent with the aesthetic chosen for the kiosks to create a cohesive system. Distances to nearby attractions should be shown in 'walking minutes' instead of feet. This will showcase how compact and close by things are in the City, and that walking is a preferred transportation mode. It will also encourage people to walk around the town, discovering new businesses, public art, and historic structures. This will allow people to explore and experience the City in a more thorough manner and make a deeper connection with the City, encouraging a return visit.

## Process

After the cohesive branding strategy and wayfinding plan is approved by the city the Brand Deployment project begins. Tasks involved with this project include but are not limited to:

- Develop a vendor list based on appropriate fabricator/installers;
- Develop cost estimates in collaboration with fabricators/installers;
- Issue an RFP to bidders; and
- Select and hire the appropriate project contractors for installation.

The City of New Bedford should look to the case study of "Create a way-finding theme based on the community's seaside location" in Well, ME for guidance and inspiration for the design and deployment of their new brand and wayfinding system. This case study applies to both Navigating New Bedford- Downtown Wayfinding projects due to its seaside location and the process of design and implementation.

# Navigating New Bedford – Downtown Wayfinding



Public Realm

## Create a Way-Finding Theme Based on The Community's Seaside Location

### Public Realm

- Wells, Maine is a seaside community in Southern, Maine. It is located between the two more affluent communities of Ogunquit and Kennebunkport.
- Besides being a summer seaside resort, it is a fishing village and lobster boat harbor as well as being the site of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge.
- There is no concentrated downtown area. Instead commercial businesses are spread along US Route 1 or Post Road in Wells.
- The town administration felt that the town needed a branding and wayfinding sign system that also had applications for internal communications and even street furniture and public art.
- A national competition was administered, and Favermann Design was designated the consultant.
- Our firm did a visual survey of the various parts of the community including ways to the beach, commercial activities and feeder streets and roads.
- Historic buildings, structures and various types of estates and campuses were reviewed.
- An advisory committee was appointed by the town administrator to discuss and review project components.

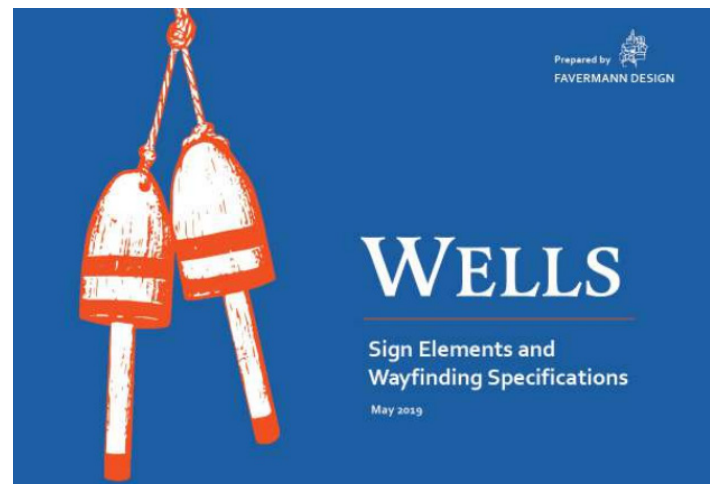
### Desired Outcomes

- A full set of detailed fabrications specifications was created for vendors to make proposals and to fabricate wayfinding and sign elements as well as street furniture units.
- The wayfinding elements included sculpture as "landmarks" in a Kevin Lynch way that were to serve as external reference points.
- The themed street furniture also had sculptural qualities marrying form and function with aesthetics.
- The notion of the Wells brand was to make the town more of a destination than just a pass-through place on the Southern coast of Maine.
- The Wells brand visually spoke to the hominess of the community and hard-working residents.
- Signs were designed to be durable, easily maintained, and cost-effective. Replacement if damaged was easily done as well.

**Page 58- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/public-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>**



Source: Public Realm Best Practice Compendium



Source: Public Realm Best Practice Compendium

# Storefront Assessment and Improvement Program

Category		Private Realm
Location		Downtown Core
Origin		Business survey, city leadership
Budget		Low Budget (Under \$50,000) The city has an existing CDBG program that has funded a similar project. There is also a potential to utilize ARPA recovery funds.
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators		Number of storefronts 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
Partners & Resources		City staff, business owners/tenants, downtown business organizations to promote the program



*Example of Underutilized Storefront*  
Source: WGI, May 2021



*Rose House Storefront*  
Source: City of New Bedford, August 2021



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## Diagnostic

75% of business owners surveyed indicated that providing support for storefront renovations was moderate to very important. A clean and well-designed storefront is a critical marketing tool for a business and its appearance is the first impression a customer has. Small business owners and tenants may not have the resources or know-how to create an engaging storefront. This can negatively affect the viability of the district by instilling a sense of lack of maintenance, uninviting street frontage, and discourage pedestrian activities.

As stated in the attached Innes and Associates case study, "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."

This program will provide direct assistance and support to local businesses to aid in COVID recovery and ensure they make an impactful first impression on returning visitors to the area. This will support this City's goal of retaining the high-quality local business establishments in the downtown.

## Action Item

This program will assist owners or tenants with an assessment of their storefront display area. This will include a professional consultation of the existing conditions, owner/tenant's vision, and recommendations for improvements. Recommendations can range from cleaning windows and replacing damaged window treatments to lighting improvements and seasonal merchandise displays.

While the city facilitated a similar program in the past, it had limited participation potentially due to the complex requirements of the program which was funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. To encourage participation, the program must be heavily promoted within the business community and through local business organizations. Rather than being strictly a grant program, implementation of the suggested improvements should be required as an in-kind match for the consultation services.

## Process

- Develop an appropriate level of design guidelines and desired scope of the improvements. This should at a minimum include the window display but could be expanded to include the entire façade, exterior features like signage and awnings, or indoor and sidewalk display recommendations.
- Establish the criteria for the in-kind match. This should include the implementation and maintenance of the recommendations for a designated period.
- Engage a specialist to provide the assessment services.
- Develop a marketing strategy to promote the program to the business community.
- Develop the criteria for the program application, approval, installation, and maintenance.
- Establish expedited permit review procedures for more significant improvements associated with the program.

# Storefront Assessment and Improvement Program



Private Realm

## Develop a façade/storefront/site improvement program

Intro for the case study:

Innes and Associates, Ltd. has developed a storefront improvement program template and provides several valuable funding sources and case studies which can be utilized by New Bedford. The template suggests the following steps be taken when establishing the program:

- Develop design guidelines for the facade elements to be improved;
- Develop the structure of the program;
- Manage the program over time;
- Design assistance;
- Implementation, including construction; and
- Displacement protection programs.

New Bedford can tailor this template to their storefront program development and implementation.

**Page 22- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/private-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>**



*Example of Well Designed Storefront in New Bedford*

*Source: WGI, May 2021*

# Centralize the Downtown Marketing Operations

Category		Revenues & Sales
Location		Downtown Commercial Core
Origin		Business survey, stakeholder interviews, community meetings
Budget		Medium Budget (\$50,000 - \$200,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (Less than 5 years)
Risk		Low Risk – This has been an attractive option to all stakeholders. Minimal downside risks, except poor organization and implementation. Must be sensitive to messaging, opt-out, and privacy issues.
Key Performance Indicators		Increase in attendees to events , Message impressions, Number of followers (media department)
Partners & Resources		New Bedford Inc., Community Administration, Department of Economic Development, Chambers of Commerce, Business Community, Sources of Training, the traditional media (Radio/TV/Newspaper). There is strength in numbers and this coordinated and unified communication strategy aims to collectively highlight and promote the unique voices of the community.



Brochures and handouts from various downtown organizations serving Downtown New Bedford.  
Photo: WGI, May 2021



## Diagnostics

In the New Bedford business survey, 59% of participants are interested in shared marketing, 22% are interested in social media training, 91% are interested in improved marketing strategies, and 59% are interested in receiving assistance for shared marketing. The city has also noted that many visitors have commented, "there is always something going on downtown, but I don't know where to find out about it all." The focus of this project is to address these issues with a holistic and collaborative marketing strategy that supports a more effective dialogue between visitors/community members and city/ local business.

COVID-19 heightened the importance of having a collective and coordinated approach to and location for messaging and marketing. The initial goal is to create awareness and engagement with the project and to provide the community with a common location(s) for communication. The coordinated marketing strategy aims to increase event attendance, tourism, and to encourage retail in downtown New Bedford.

The three dimensions of success in this arena are:

- **Activity and Deployment** – are each of the tools fully utilized.
- **Skills Competency** – do business owners understand the tools they have to work with and are they proficient in their use.
- **Integration and Coordination** – are the stakeholders collaborating towards a common goal.

## Action Items

This project involves both a centralized marketing campaign for all local businesses and organizations who wish to participate but also includes training to support the independent marketing and advertising efforts of those businesses/organizations. The training component directly supports the New Bedford COVID recovery goal of providing programs to aid in the retention of existing business establishments.

By providing marketing support, this project will also support the goal of re-establishing and increasing the number of local and regional visitors to downtown events

- Initial planning session
- Training (on-going but 2.5 hour initial self-paced training course)
- Provide workshops on marketing best practices and social media strategies
- Interview Stakeholder(s)
- Setup Social media accounts
- Content Development (monthly)
- Operate Program (weekly posts)
- Planning & coordination
- Program Reporting (monthly)



Source: Creative Commons

<https://mediacause.com/wp-content/uploads/social-media-students-713x523.png>

## Process

### Phase 1 - Activity and Deployment

- Engage a marketing consultant to provide expertise to the business community.
- Meet with Stakeholders and set goals such as:
  1. desired audience
  2. how to help businesses attract customers downtown
  3. unified message for downtown
  4. practice collaboration, etc.
- Criteria for selecting the best strategy to move forward with will also be identified. A point person for community and marketing consultant coordination will be selected and initial timeline and objectives will be identified and shared.
- Develop the unified New Bedford marketing and critical training topics.
- Meet with stakeholders to introduce draft marketing strategy to possibly include new websites, social media pages, logo/branding, flyers, etc. Refine concepts with community input to ensure flexibility and ease of use.
- Organize and create a strategic guide to marketing in New Bedford.
- Launch unified social media pages and marketing strategy.

### Phase 2 – Skills Competency

- Deliver a 1-hour workshop, "Best Practices in Marketing" for the business owners. The workshop will cover branding, traditional and digital marketing strategies, and social media tip & tricks.
- Host training workshop for key items identified by stakeholders, such as: social media, digital marketing, etc. Training will be an ongoing activity, but initial training will be focused on the most pressing and/or critical topics identified.

### Phase 3 - Integration and Coordination

- Check-in weekly with marketing consultant to review status of strategy during the first season of implementation. After the first season, continue to check in quarterly to review and assess the status of the strategy.
- Training, implementation, and monitoring are on-going activities.



Source: Creative Commons

<https://technofaq.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Event-Marketing-Collage.jpg>

# Centralize the Downtown Marketing Operations



Revenue &amp; Sales

## #IAMherst Welcome

#IAMherst Welcome is a case study for creating a marketing campaign that can launch a unified message "Amherst Wide" on all available platforms that address the immediate concerns of the pandemic while reminding all that we are welcome, safe, and in this together. The message and sharing platforms developed to share Covid-19 updates were all envisioned to serve the community through uncertain and certain times and maintain a positive, happy, and heartening message for all when in their downtown. Critical aspects of the process included- bringing on board a Graphic/ Web designer, maintaining the thread We, YOU, I am/are WELCOME, and developing a message able to be easily separated from the COVID-19 related part.

**Page 22-** <https://www.mass.gov/doc/revenue-sales-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>



Source: Revenue and Sales Best Practice Compendium

## Coordinated Social Media Marketing

Simply stated in the first line of this case study, "If you JUST Build it, they will NOT Come!". The Coordinated Social Media Marketing project is an example of how to leverage the combined strength of many voices to create a unified and effective communication eco-system. Taking the more voices and participation the better approach, the project focuses on a unified location for messaging in contrast to developing a singular powerful marketing group. New Bedford should look to this case study to reference the process to enable its diverse voices in the community. The project focuses on initial training, activity and deployment, and integration and collaboration. Though the majority of the effort is upfront it's worth noting that establishing weekly, monthly, and quarterly goals check-ins and discourse of adjustments is critical to the project's success. The process listed in the "Action items" mirrors that which is being proposed in the proposed Centralize Downtown Marketing Operations project in the city of New Bedford.

**Page 26-** <https://www.mass.gov/doc/revenue-sales-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>



Source: Revenue and Sales Best Practice Compendium



# Promote Parking Facility Improvements

Category		Admin Capacity
Location		Downtown Commercial Core
Origin		Business survey, stakeholder interviews, community meetings
Budget		Low Budget (<\$50,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) 1-3 months to develop and market message
Risk		Low Risk – Minimal downside risks, except poor organization and implementation.
Key Performance Indicators		Increase in visitors to downtown as measured by parking revenue, Reduction of parking violations and/or appeals to parking citations
Partners & Resources		The City of New Bedford, Economic Development Council, Business Community, and the traditional media (Radio/TV/Newspaper)



Existing City Parking Meter  
Source: WGI, May 2021



Passport Parking App Signage  
Source: <https://www.passportparking.com/>



Passport Parking App Advertisement on Meter:  
<https://www.passportparking.com/>

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### Diagnostic

In 2018 the City of New Bedford completed a Downtown and Waterfront Parking Study. Following this study, improvements were made to the parking meter system and garage pricing. However, more than 3 years following this study, few seem to be aware of the improvements as parking availability is still seen as a concern. In a 2021 business survey, 48% of participants are interested in improved parking regulations and 94% favor changes to public parking.

COVID-19 emphasized the importance of communicating changes to public policy promptly with a simple and coherent message. The goal of this project is to announce the roll-out of changes to the parking management system, via a targeted marketing strategy.

### Action Item

The project will highlight the ease of access and convenience of visiting Downtown New Bedford which can encourage the return of local and regional visitors whose primary mode of transportation is by private vehicle.

While the quantity of parking is not a problem, there is a perception amongst business owners that lack of parking directly adjacent to their business can discourage visitors. This program will alleviate those concerns by highlighting the ease of using the parking meter system, identifying alternative public parking locations that may not be previously known, and to provide locations of long-term parking that is best used by employees and those visitors parking longer than a couple of hours.

- Create a marketing campaign to announce New Bedford's parking improvements on all available platforms.
- Continue to implement the improvements identified in the 2018 Downtown and Waterfront Parking Study.

### Process

- Establish a parking management updates roll-out committee
- Meet to discuss and define the message being shared, identify the desired audience, and develop a marketing strategy.
- Develop print, digital, and social media announcements with information including but not limited, to parking locations, rates, penalties, and how to pay.
- Consult and collaborate with other city departments and stakeholders to identify co-marketing opportunities.
- Distribute marketing materials including a stop date for the grace/introductory period. Involve local businesses in the distribution of the materials.
- Offer a minimum of two-week introductory period that allows for persons affected to become familiar with the changes.
- Officially launch new parking management system.

# Business-Friendly Permitting Interactions

Category		Admin Capacity
Location		Downtown Commercial Core
Origin		Business survey, stakeholder interviews,
Budget		Low Budget (<\$50,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years) 1-3 months to develop and market message
Risk		Medium Risk – Minimal downside risks, except poor organization and implementation.
Key Performance Indicators		Reduction in the number of violations, Decrease in time of permit issuance
Partners & Resources		The City of New Bedford, Economic Development Council, Business Community, and Business District Leadership



*Outdoor Dinning at Tia Maria's in New Bedford*  
Source: WGI, May 2021



## Diagnostics

In response to COVID-19, the City of New Bedford began revising their permitting process after they identified the need for businesses to respond to pandemic social distancing. These actions eased the burden of applying for permits by expediting the process specifically for special event and outdoor dining permitting. COVID-19 also emphasized the importance of communicating changes to public policy promptly with simple and coherent messaging. The goal of this project is to announce the roll-out of changes to the permitting process via a targeted marketing strategy.

While these permitting changes started as a result of existing business needs, applying these changes, and associated best practices can also be used to recruit and attract additional business to the commercial district.



*Expanded Outdoor Dining at Whaler's  
Source: WGI, May 2021*

## Action Items

The project will highlight the ease and convenience of doing business in Downtown New Bedford. It will directly support the City's COVID recovery goals by providing assistance to existing businesses in their own recovery efforts and will encourage new businesses to establish in the area. This project will be targeted to guide applicants through a streamlined permitting process for certain permits, specifically for special events and outdoor dining, and will involve implementing four best practices:

- Customer Service
- Communication
- Documents
- Training
- 

By focusing on special event and outdoor dining permitting, this also supports the City's recovery goal of encouraging impactful placemaking activities.



*Outdoor Dining at Greasy in New Bedford  
Source: WGI, May 2021*

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## Process

### Customer Service

- Establish a roll-out committee with leaders from the business community who can promote and advocate for the permitting changes and provide feedback to the City on the process.
- Implement a process for pre-application meetings to review projects and applications with an applicant and/or their agent prior to submission of a request.

### Communication

- Provide easy, online access to primary information such as land use and zoning maps, comprehensive plans and land development codes, applications, calendars, and staff contact information including descriptions of each position and its responsibilities. Useful links that are easily accessible are encouraged.
- Meet to discuss and define the message being shared, desired audience, and marketing strategy.
- Consult and collaborate with other city departments and stakeholders to identify co-marketing opportunities.

### Documents

- Create and make available user- friendly toolkits for frequently used processes.
- Distribute expedited permitting toolkit documents. This toolkit provides information about submittal requirements for plan review, required fees, and inspections.
- Develop print, digital, and social media announcements with information including but not limited to how to apply for a permit, where to apply, estimated time frames, etc.

### Training

- Provide simple, easy to access training videos for applicants.
- Host a "Streamlined Permitting Procedures" workshop and invite identified target audience. Workshop to include but not limited to a tutorial of the permit application process and visual presentation of information in marketing materials.

## NEXT STEPS

### Evaluate temporary regulations to become permanent

- In addition to the streamlining that has been done to date, consider making the temporary changes that were done for COVID permanent.

### Roll-over permits

- For those temporary or short-term permits that were issued to comply with COVID social distancing requirement and regulations, consider allowing them to renewed or rolled-over with a written request rather than a full permit re-application.

# Business-Friendly Permitting Interactions



Admin Capacity

## Improve Zoning, Licensing, and Permitting Interactions

"Throughout Massachusetts, municipalities and businesses met the COVID challenge by taking chances, being flexible, pivoting business models, and thinking creatively and "outside the box." Critical to the success was the transition to online permitting processes, permits and approvals for new approaches to deliver products/food to customers, leniency for outdoor eating and drinking, and other unique and creative solutions....

The following actions were proven to be successful. These actions were either initiated by municipalities or requested by business owners and then approved by municipalities. (Edited list)

- Improve municipal websites and outreach to businesses to explain current as well as changes to the regulatory framework
- Waive some permitting requirements and fast-track others for a more efficient permitting process to allow businesses to quickly take advantage of a more flexible regulatory framework.

Key to the project's success were the following procedural elements.

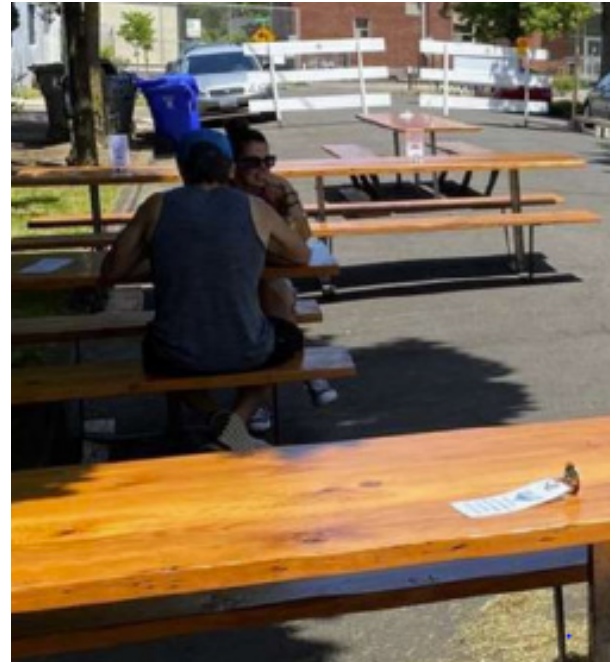
Promote associations who can speak for the greater good. Form new or strengthen existing business associations who speak for all the businesses in a commercial area to advocate for permitting and regulatory changes to benefit all businesses. This minimizes pitting the interests of one business versus another and provides a unified voice in promoting change.

Make it easier for businesses to find the information they need. Municipalities should consolidate all relevant business information in a single location on the municipality's website including permitting and regulatory items. Streamlined permitting and joint meetings of permitting boards is also encouraged to expedite permit requests.

Propose that successful temporary regulations to become permanent. Where permitting changes made to accommodate COVID have proven successful, municipalities should consider making temporary changes permanent.

Roll-over permits. Some municipalities who issued permits in 2020 for COVID related accommodations have agreed to allow those permits to "roll-over" to 2021 through a written request from the business, and therefore avoiding a full permit re-application."

**[Page 2- https://www.mass.gov/doc/admin-capacity-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download](https://www.mass.gov/doc/admin-capacity-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download)**



*Source: Admin Capacity Best Practice Compendium*



# Business-Friendly Permitting Interactions



Admin Capacity

## Streamlining Special Event Permitting


"More efficient and easier permitting processes can lead to quicker turn-around and peace of mind for those organizing these events for the community. Streamlining event permitting can help agencies organizing events to use their resources more efficiently and will result in better events when permitted on a singular parcel as zoning dictates...."

The following Best Practices can be used to improve communication between stakeholders and the community about the local permitting process for special events. For this best practice, the Osceola County Board of County Commissioners utilizes these techniques to ensure an expedient, open permitting process for their special events.

- Single Point of Contact
- Users' Guide to Permitting with Permitting Flow Charts & Checklists
- Clear Submittal Requirements
- Concurrent Applications
- Combined Public Hearings, if needed
- Pre-Application Process
- Development Review Committee (DRC)
- Regularly scheduled inter-departmental meetings
- Physical proximity of professional staff to review





These best practices apply to streamlining special event applications that are allowed in specific areas of a community. In most cases, the zoning district would dictate the type of uses allowed in a community. This particular example permits special events as a type of use in commercially zoned areas and have a limitation of occurrences per calendar year."

**Page 26- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/admin-capacity-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>**

 <b>Osceola County Special Event Application</b>	
Osceola County Board of County Commissioners Community Development Department 1 Courthouse Square, Suite 1400 Kissimmee, FL 34741 Phone: (407)742-0200 Specialpermits@osceola.org	
Application No.: _____ Date Received: _____	
<b>Submittal Checklist</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Property Owner Authorization <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of Ownership <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Description <input type="checkbox"/> Narrative describing the event in detail. Including: • Sounds which will project beyond the property lines. • Vehicular Traffic and parking <input type="checkbox"/> Site plan showing: • Lot Dimensions. • Location of Special Event (with all details of set-up). Setbacks of set-up from property and right-of-way lines, Driveways, identifying parking and access, roads, tents, signs, portable toilets, and any other structures and setbacks from property lines and any other existing site improvements <input type="checkbox"/> Application Fees \$620.00	
In accordance with Chapter 3, Article 3.8, Section 3.8.1.O of the Osceola County Land Development Code, authorization for a Special Event is issued to:	
<b>Applicant</b> Name: _____ Agent/Lessee: _____ Tax ID# _____ Address: _____ Email: _____ Phone: _____	
<b>Event Details</b> Address of Event: _____ Parcel Number: _____ Dates of Event: _____ Hours: _____	
Event on County property? Yes ( <input type="checkbox"/> ) No ( <input type="checkbox"/> ) If yes provide liability Insurance. The insurance shall have a limit not less than \$1 million per occurrence for the general aggregate.	
Details of Event: (a narrative may be attached to describe the event in detail.) _____ _____ _____ _____	

Source: Admin Capacity Best Practice Compendium

# Storefront Activation

Category		Cultural/ Arts
Location		Purchase Street and Union Street
Origin		Business survey, field survey
Budget		Low Budget (Under \$50,000)
Timeframe		Short Term (<5 years)
Risk		Low Risk
Key Performance Indicators		Increase in foot traffic
Partners & Resources		New Bedford Cultural Council, AHA! New Bedford, tenants/landlords, local artist community,



*Example of Underutilized Storefront*  
Source: WGI, May 2021



*Example of Activated Storefront*  
Source: WGI, May 2021

## Diagnostic

Downtown New Bedford has seen a significant reduction in foot traffic and loss of business due to COVID-19. At the time of this study, approximately 18% of storefronts were vacant and several others occupied but displays had limited transparency. 65% of business survey respondents felt that renovation of storefronts/building facades in the commercial district is moderate to very important. The importance of active and transparent ground floor storefronts is two-fold. A clean, well-designed storefront gives visitors the impression that the area is safe and vibrant and can attract customers. Secondly, storefronts that have limited transparency, either vacant or limited night-time or weekend activity such as a medical office, leave the public realm feeling empty to a pedestrian walking down the street. Engaging and interesting window displays can be used to activate these spaces and create welcoming, inviting streetscapes.

There is already strong support of the City's outdoor arts and cultural programming by residents and visitors. Capitalizing on the active arts community, New Bedford can utilize inactivated windows and storefronts to house art installations and to draw visitors to less-traveled areas downtown and activate the streetscape.

## Action Item

This project will create temporary art installations utilizing storefronts that have limited activity, transparency, or are vacant. This can enhance the draw of customers and support other ongoing arts and cultural activities.

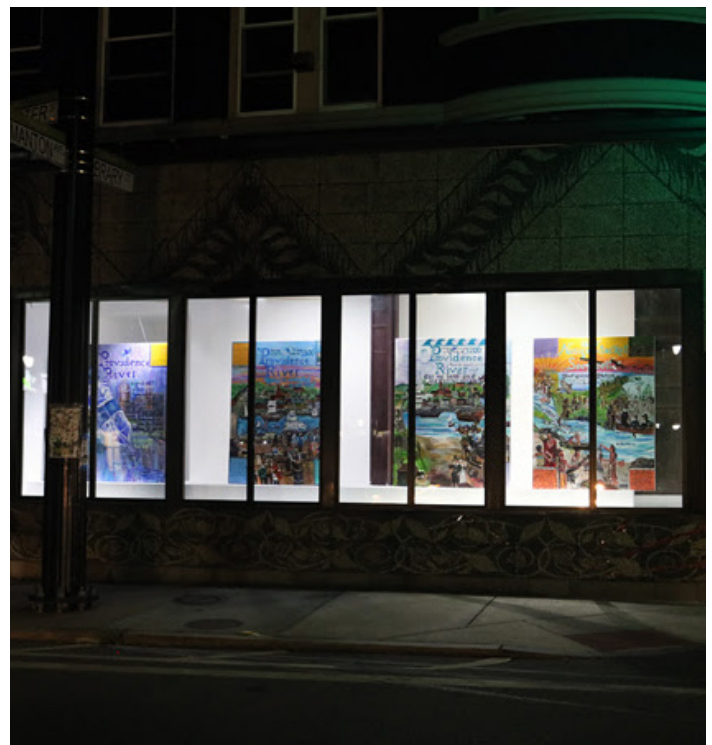
Options for the installations can be:

- Partnering with the New Bedford School of Art Program to showcase student art;
- Incorporate live performance art like the UMass Dartmouth's CVPA Star Series;
- Painted seasonal or other thematic "murals" on the windows;
- Showcase the engaging and artistic displays of the business itself; or
- Videos or digital display showcasing Downtown Businesses and/or printed portraits of individual business owners and their unique COVID stories.



*Example of Pop-up Art Exhibition*

*Source: <https://www.timeout.com/newyork/art/the-art-of-healing-gallery-walk>*



*Example of Pop-up of Featured Artist Exhibition*

*Source: <http://dirtpalace.blogspot.com/2019/07/river-art-night-cafe-made-of-water.html>*



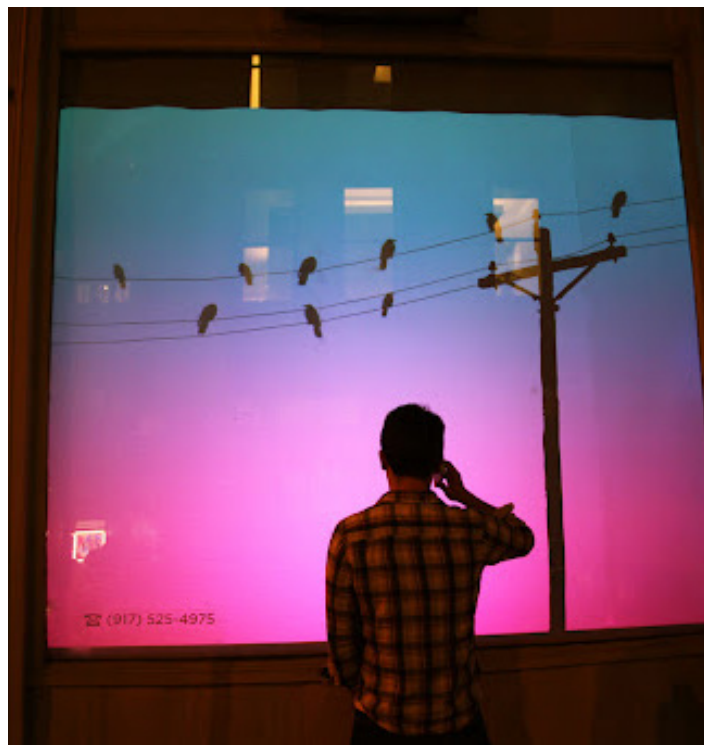
## Process

- Identify storefronts willing to participate in the program. Incentivize by waving empty storefront fines from the Regulation of Empty Buildings if they participate and host pop-ups or art installations.
- Identify partners to work with including artist organizations, small businesses, and non-profit organizations. Identify large employers in town who would be willing to sponsor art installations
  - › Window/Dressing in Spokane WA as a case study.
- Identify the vacant storefront's priority via high-, med-, and low-priority to focus the funding and energy of the program on important street sections and corners. This will maximize benefits by establishing art installations in high-visibility areas.
- Establish a streamlined process for temporary tenants to access short-term liability insurance. This can be accomplished through a non-profit partner who has liability insurance that can act as a master licensor/policyholder and can add temporary tenants as "additional insured"
  - › St Anthony's Park Pop Up Shop as an example
  - › City of Cambridge CDD Small Business Challenge is another example
  - › Milwaukee's Dept of Neighborhood Services' Artistic Board-Up Program (partnered with Well's Fargo, an example of getting cooperation and sponsorship from a major employer)
- Market the program, regulations, and how to apply to get the maximum amount of buy-in from local artists, small business owners, and landlords.
- This project should be paired with projects to activate the public realm to maximize impact.



*Example of Storefront Performance- UMass Dartmouth at Star Series*

*Source: <https://www.facebook.com/umassdcvpa/photos/a.10150629841859492/10158122192669492>*



*"Bird on a Wire" by NYU Graduate Students*

*Source: <http://thebwd.com/bird-on-a-wire-interactive-window-display-by-masters-students-at-nyus-ntp/>*

# Storefront Activation



Cultural/Arts

## Interactive Storefronts: Engage Residents Through Artistic Installations in Storefronts

Interactive Storefronts were a direct response to the shifting COVID-19 landscape, where social distancing was a key factor to maintain public health, yet engaging the community in public processes remained an important goal.

The Interactive Storefronts operated simultaneously with an online survey and the development of a Downtown Placemaking Plan. Interactive Storefronts enabled civic art for public engagement in a creative and safe manner according to current COVID-19 best practices for public safety. Staggered installation times and viewing art through a storefront was a COVID-friendly activity. The use of photography, social media, and QR codes were engaged. The project helped bring art to a diminished Downtown, support a local artist community, and engage residents in a planning process while maintaining public health.

### Process Planning

In Worcester, the Interactive Storefronts served multiple purposes: engaging the community to participate in the Downtown Worcester Placemaking Plan, activating empty storefronts, supporting the local artists community, and keeping public health as a priority during Covid-19. The Interactive Storefront Committee emerged from these desired outcomes. Our Interactive Storefront Committee met weekly for several weeks and communicated by email to get from concept to implementation efficiently.

It is important to engage the community around a common issue: Identify a local policy, public realm / placemaking, or community / environmental issue that would benefit from creative community engagement. For Worcester Interactive Storefronts, the project engaged residents to participate in a survey for the Downtown Worcester Placemaking Plan.

- Create an Interactive Storefront Committee
- Identify a Project Lead, clarify roles for the Committee members, and create a project implementation timeline, and clear budget
- Identify location(s)
- Build and support the local artist community

### Call for Art + Artist Selection

- Issue a Call for Storefront Art
- Support artistic freedom in public art
- Distribute the Call for Art
- Select the artist(s)

### Installation + Removal

- Preparing for Installation
- Publicize and promote the installation
- Installation day and events
- Help visitors view and understand the storefront art
- Removal of installation

Page 21- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/cultural-arts-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>



Source: Cultural/ Arts Best Practice Compendium



Source: Cultural/ Arts Best Practice Compendium



# Storefront Activation



Private Realm

## Windows Before Stores

"Windows to Stores will engage four stakeholders -- local government, building owners, visual arts organizations and artists, and community members -- to activate vacant stores by employing local artists to create dynamic sculptural and movement-oriented pieces inside windows that the public can view from the street. Artwork will be highlighted in "Opening Night" evenings. Following increased interest in spaces, potential commercial tenants can request access to stores from business owners to evaluate their fit for commercial tenancy.

Key actions for the project include identifying willing building owners; having local government serve as a matchmaker between building owners and visual arts organizations and artists; and streamlining legal, zoning, and/or regulatory challenges that hinder short-term activation (e.g., insurance, certificate of occupancy).

Community members will be invited to play a central role in the project to ensure local buy-in. As an example, high-school youth and college students will be provided stipends to serve on art selection committees and act as docents in front of store windows.

...

The project has a proposed budget of \$20,000 to \$35,000. The budget will be used to pay 14 artists (\$1K each) and building owners (\$1K each @ 7 sites). Money will also be applied toward stipends for docents (\$500 for 7), public relations/publicity, and a website. Funds will be sought from MCC, local philanthropies that support the arts, youth, and economic development projects, and in-kind donations from larger businesses, including community lenders."

**Page 42- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/private-realm-best-practice-sheets-compendium/download>**



Source: Private Realm Best Practice Compendium